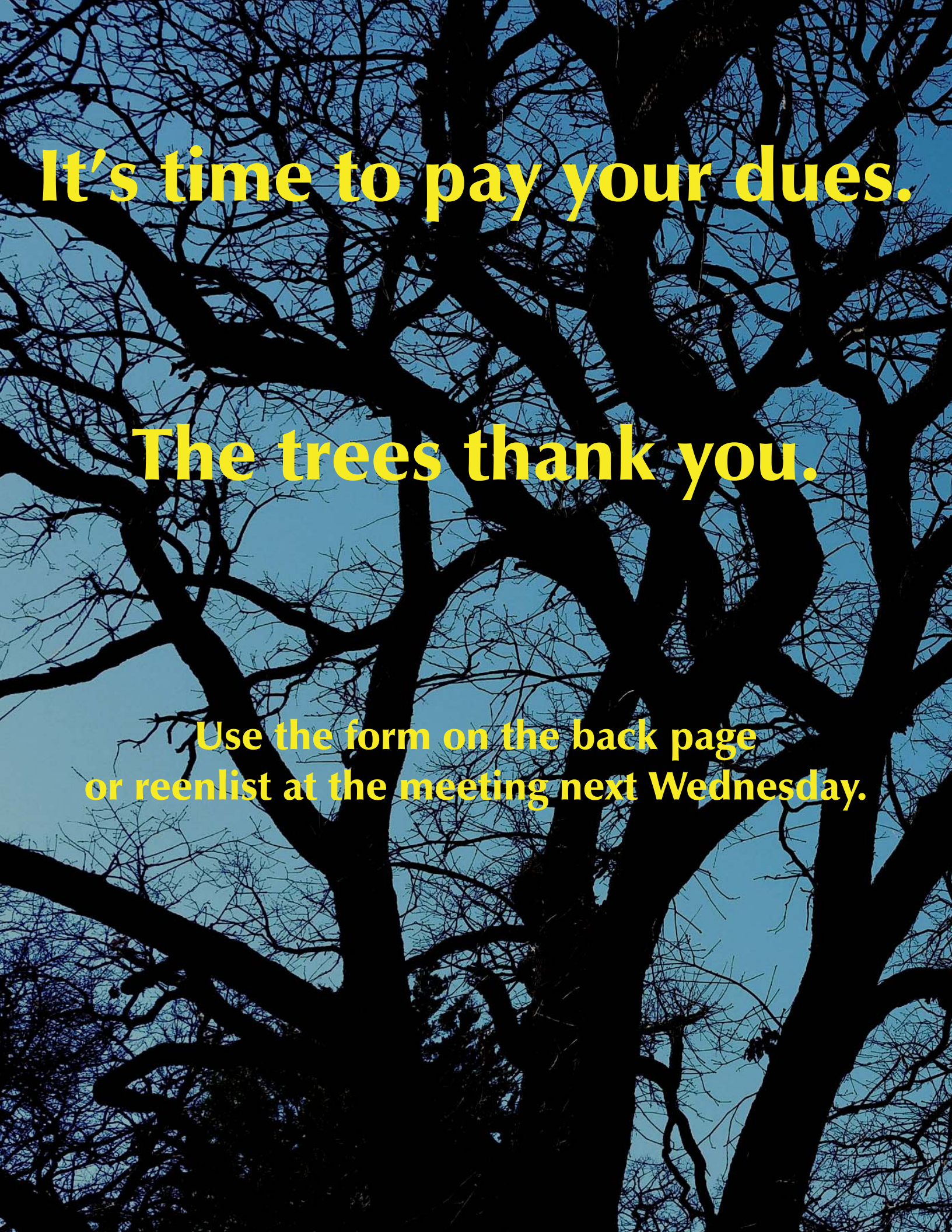


The background of the entire image is a low-angle shot looking up at the intricate, dark silhouettes of bare tree branches against a clear, bright blue sky. The branches are thick and gnarled, with many smaller, thinner branches extending from them, creating a complex web of lines that fills the frame.

It's time to pay your dues.

The trees thank you.

**Use the form on the back page
or reenlist at the meeting next Wednesday.**

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

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

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2016

www.acctexas.org

February Meeting

Herps of the Crosstimbers

Michael Smith, President
Crosstimbers Connection

Wednesday, February 3, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



Michael will tell us about representative reptiles and amphibians of the eastern crosstimbers and our immediate area. He will emphasize our venomous snakes and their behavior, with tips for their identification and safety in the field.

In 1999, Michael Smith co-founded the DFW Herpetological Society, has led field trips for that group and given talks for herpetological societies and other nature organizations.

Bring Something for the Raffle

Bits & Pieces

Yellow Slime!

Last week a dog vomit slime mold (!) appeared as a striking yellow blob on a compost pile, then turned a dark, dirty red and, when poked, released a mass of spores. This remarkable amoeba relative is one of almost 900 species that usually live in forests but may be found in deserts, under snow, or in tree canopies. They move slowly, engulfing bacteria, fungi, and tiny organic bits. In turn they are preyed upon by a number of creatures, including beetles, which disperse the spores. This species tolerates levels of zinc that would kill many organisms by transforming it to a harmless form. Look it up — you'll be glad you did.



Today's Inspirational Moment



You can't be suspicious of a tree, or accuse a bird or a squirrel of subversion, or challenge the ideology of a violet.

Hal Borland

We Are the Flint of Air Quality

On January 21, a big crowd came to an air quality meeting in Arlington. For the most part, speakers ignored State TCEQ staff and spoke directly to representatives of EPA, pleading for the agency to take air quality planning out of the hands of a hostile Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

There's still time for you to help:

[Send an email to EPA](#) urging them to reject the State's awful air plan for DFW.

[Sign the CHANGE.ORG petition](#) urging EPA to reject the State's plan.

[Forward Downwinders two-and-a-half minute video](#) to people you know are concerned about air quality — or should be.

From the President **Danny Kocurek**



Enjoying Nature

My nephew and I went kayaking on Village Creek last week. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the creek that feeds into Lake Arlington, it is a lovely, quiet, animal-rich oasis nestled into our suburban sprawl. I had not been on the creek since the floods last spring, and things had changed quite a bit.

The most disturbing change was seeing plastic bags strewn everywhere. From the edge of the creek up to about 15 feet to the high-water mark, white plastic bags were omnipresent. If you have ever done creek cleanups, you know well how the bags catch tenaciously onto branches and roots and everything else. They often shred when you try to remove them, increasing the horrible mess.

My nephew, who is a wildlife educator in Pennsylvania, commented that people would stop using the bags if they saw the damage. I told him that is the problem. These people don't ever see nature or the damage they are doing. They don't realize, even though they have been told many times, that those bags blow out of their recycling and

trash bins and the next big rain sends them into the creeks.

It will take years for Village Creek to recover but until we ban the use of plastic bags, it will keep happening. Since this will require our politicians to develop spines, we need to work on it ourselves. By using cloth or paper bags and telling the clerk you don't need a bag for two items you can carry in your hands, the problem can be helped tremendously.



THE POST OAK

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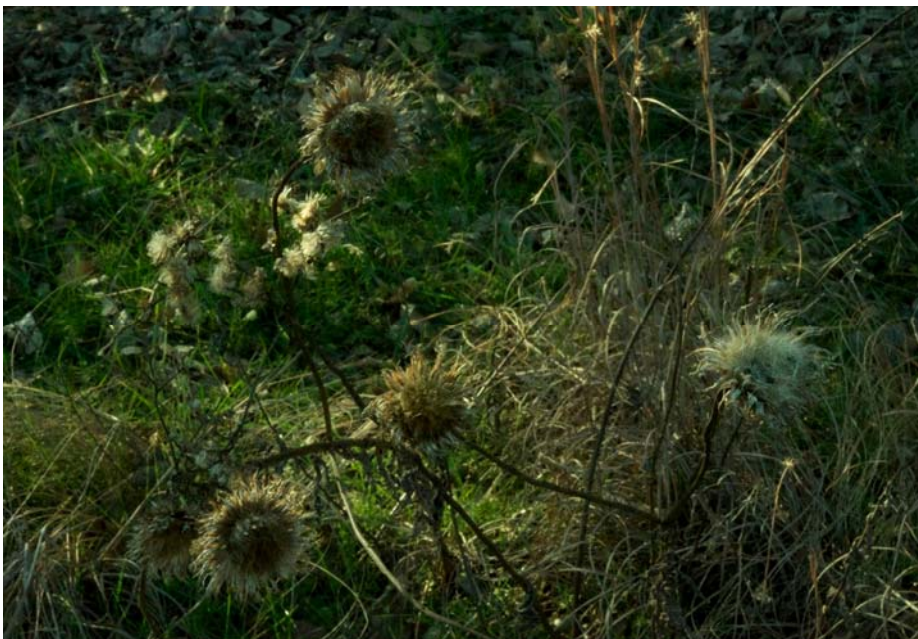
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Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve Photos by Wes Miller

Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with the smallest leaf and take an insect view of its plain.

Henry David Thoreau



Wildscape Update **Marylee Thomason**

Meet new volunteer Luisa Aviles, who heard about the wildscape at Ecofest, thought it a perfect fit for learning more about plants and volunteering close to home.

Luisa has a dream job with the Texas-originated nonprofit Real School Gardens. She trains teachers and writes curriculum to incorporate language arts, math and science into hours outside in a school garden for elementary schools.

When she started teaching kindergarten in the Dallas Independent School District, Luisa's school had a garden, and she frequently took her classes outside for a lesson. For math the children collected leaves before moving to the seating area where they separated and counted them. Surprisingly addition was fun and easy.

Many children can't learn by seeing something on the blackboard or writing it on a piece of paper. "Especially kids with heavier problems can't concentrate being inside all day. Outside they are more relaxed," Luisa explains. "More engaged and energized."

Luisa joined the Dallas Garden Club and soon expanded her lessons to include studying and planting seeds and tracking their growth. Her students learned about different kinds of leaves, the history of some vegetables and what to plant, when.

They kept a journal integrating gardening with reading and writing. To involve the parents, the class even had a broccoli party at school. It was an outstanding success.

Real School Gardens started with one school in Fort Worth in 2003. On Nov. 14, 2015, the program, now headquartered in Washington, D.C. (the Texas office is in Fort Worth), celebrated the construction of its 100th garden at Jerry R. Junkins Elementary School in Carrollton.

The first 100 gardens have been built in Texas schools, but this year a garden is planned for Maryland, with four more regions to be added in the next five years.

"We build gardens to grow successful kids," CEO Jeanne McCarty told The Dallas Morning News. "While all children can benefit from hands-on outdoor instruction, we focus our efforts on [children in low-income schools](#) so that we address the greatest need."

Teachers initially were skeptical about integrating a garden with standard curriculum. They said things like "I don't know anything about plants or gardening." "We can't waste time with a garden." "I don't have a green thumb!" In August 2014 Luisa started training and converting teachers to the garden teaching method. By the time school started all were enthusiastic and anxious to implement the program. This year teachers have recorded more than 20,000 instructional hours outside in school gardens.

Real School Gardens integrates students, parents, volunteers and corporate sponsors into all aspects of planning, construction and education. It gives parents who may lack proficiency in reading or



math a chance to help with their children's schooling. Some have landscaping businesses or know about plants or just participate in building and maintaining the garden.

The RSG curriculum is used with language arts, math, STEM projects or modules, which are lessons done over several weeks. Interactive learning — touch replaces abstraction — yields positive results. One innovative vice principal recruited the most troubled students for a Garden Club, which visits the garden every morning before school for maintenance and clean-up. Those students' behavior has shown marked improvement.

Schools partnering with Real School Gardens have seen a 12%–15% increase in passing rates on standardized tests, according to an independent study. The biggest gains are in science. Principals report that students are happier and healthier, teachers more effective.

Maybe the wildscape can snag Luisa for a WOW this year. She's a natural.



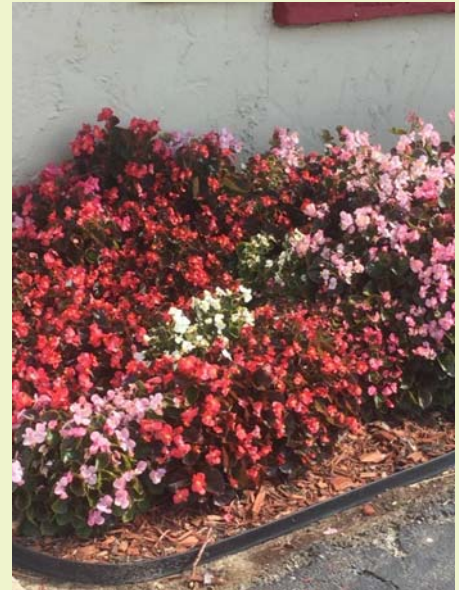
FOCUS 2015: Photo Contest Results captions by Dick Schoech



1st Place Lily Downs

Theme: Life cycle. The toad becomes an adult after 12 to 16 weeks. The adult toad lives on land most of the time.

3rd Grade



2nd Place Leah Rivera

Theme: Flowers



4th Grade

Left 1st Place Daniela Candiloros-Bake
Taken on a hilltop in Arlington.

Theme: Science in nature. The sun starts a life cycle by providing heat and light to plants and animals.

Right 2nd Place Mary Adeleke
Taken in my garden
Theme: Flowers. Yellow flower.

Below 4th Place Bryan Hernandez
Taken in Goodman Schoolyard.

Theme: Ecosystem.
My picture is a red plant.



Above 3rd Place Jordan Oliver
Taken in Goodman courtyard.

Theme: Ecosystem.
I took the picture because the flower had a swirl right in the middle of the flower.

continued on page 7

FOCUS 2015 continued from page 6

5th Grade

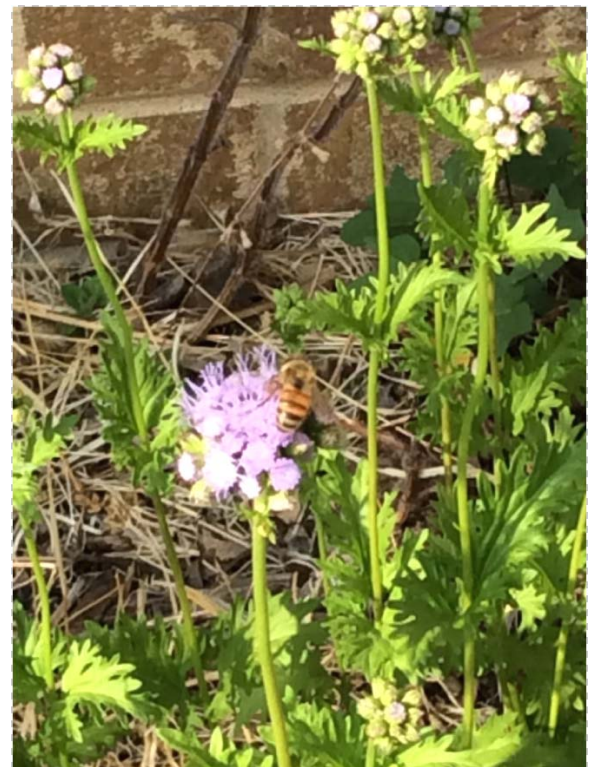


Above 1st Place Cindy Sanders
Taken at a drainage ditch behind our house.
Theme: Habitat.
This crawfish was quick to defend his habitat.



Above 3rd Place Mariah Garcia
Taken in Goodman Schoolyard.
Theme: Ecosystem.
I took a picture of the bees because pollinators are important to the ecosystem.

Right 2nd Place Juana Cruces
Taken in Goodman Schoolyard.
Theme: Pollination.
I choose to enter this picture because it reflects how nature works to make a better place.



Right 4th Place Josias Sanchez
Taken in Goodman Schoolyard.
Theme: Environment.
I took a picture of bees because it is cool and fun.

continued on page 8

FOCUS 2015 continued from page 7



1st Place Jada Church
Taken in River Legacy Park.

Theme: Focus on nature.

The red dragonfly is taking a break from flying and searching for its next prey.

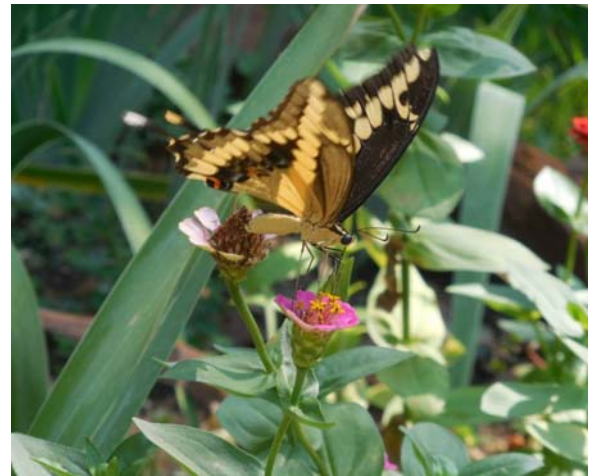


3rd Place Heather van Waasbergen
Taken in River Legacy Park.

Theme: Uncommon sighting.

This picture shows that creatures that aren't very common can be found in nature parks.

6th Grade



2nd Place Ella Downs
Taken in my front yard.

Theme: Interaction.

Nectar attracts butterflies. Pollen is gathered and pollinates the next flower the butterfly visits.



4th Place Diana Amaro
Taken in Goodman Schoolyard.

Theme: Environment.

I chose this theme because plants are a big part of our environment. They help clean our atmosphere.

Environmental Quotes & Dates Julia Burgen

February 2016

“Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit.”
Edward Abbey

- Feb 7** 109th Anniversary of Jewel Cave National Monument, South Dakota, third longest cave in world with over 180 miles of mapped and surveyed passages
- Feb 11** 101st Anniversary of Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico.
Check out www.nps.gov/band/learn/nature/pika.htm for info on pika population
- Feb 12** President Abraham Lincoln’s birthday. He authorized establishment of National Academy of Sciences in 1863. In 1864 he signed one of the first conservation laws that helped lay the foundation for a national park service and also signed a bill to protect Yosemite Valley.
- Feb 25** Howard Zahniser, father of the Wilderness Act, born in 1906. Fought tirelessly to get Wilderness Act passed but faced repeated delays from Congress. He died May, 1964; the bill finally passed August, 1964.
<http://wilderness.org/blog/happy-birthday-howard-zahniser-unsung-architect-wilderness-act>

Bee Talk in January

When I’m planting hardy flowers in pots,
Soaking up the winter sun
And dreaming of the springtime
Yet to come,

Sometimes a humming honeybee
Joins me there, sharing
My appreciation for the sweetness
Of the flowers I’ve brought.

And I talk to it,
Saying nothing much
Besides expressing my delight
To be there in the sunshine.

I know that honeybees
Might not understand
My words, or even care;
Nonetheless I talk.

What I’m talking to
Is a little bee that dwells
Somewhere inside me.

©2014 John I. Blair

Meeting Note:

Remember reading about the process for coming up with a protection plan for the Village Creek watershed and Lake Arlington? Here’s the information for the next meeting:

**Village Creek-Lake Arlington
Watershed**

**Public Stakeholder Meeting
Thursday, February 11, 6:30 pm
Everman City Hall Annex,
213 N. Race St.**

Cross Timbers Connection

Our speaker this month is president of [Cross Timbers Connection](http://www.cross-timbers-connection.org), a non-profit that works to connect people with nature in the woodlands and prairies of North Central Texas. If you crave more information about local natural history, you really ought to visit the Web site, which contains lots of good information and gives you access to their journal and newsletter.

Bluebird Help Wanted



You can still sign up to help Donna Piercy monitor bluebird nest boxes at Tierra Verde Golf Course. For more information, contact Donna at depiercy@hotmail.com. Also, see the article in last month’s *Post Oak*. Lots of background at the North American and Texas Bluebird Societies Web sites: nabluebirdsociety.org and texasbluebirdso-cietty.org.

Climate Change Exchange Grace Darling



Editor's note – Some time ago a concerned reader reacted to Grace Darling's earlier Post Oak article on global warming and prompted the following:

From: (Name withheld)

To: Grace Darling

Subject: Re: Rising CO2 level and plant health

Grace, I'm very allergic to poison ivy and I avoid it. But I've also read that this growth has a beneficial effect on other plants. It bothers me that the scientists and government are using global warming to scare us when they should be learning how to benefit from it.

I have always been an advocate for reducing pollution and I'm suspicious of politicians who implemented a Wall Street commodities program called carbon credits that allow the major polluters to continue polluting and in some cases increase pollution.

Did you know in 1933 FDR commissioned a study on the dust bowl? He learned it was caused by the government and man. He wouldn't tell the people that and instead blamed it on climate change.



Grace Darling responded:

(Name withheld).

Any beneficial effect that plants may derive from global warming is more than offset by the devastating consequences of melting glaciers and polar ice caps, rising sea levels and coastal submersion, more frequent and severe

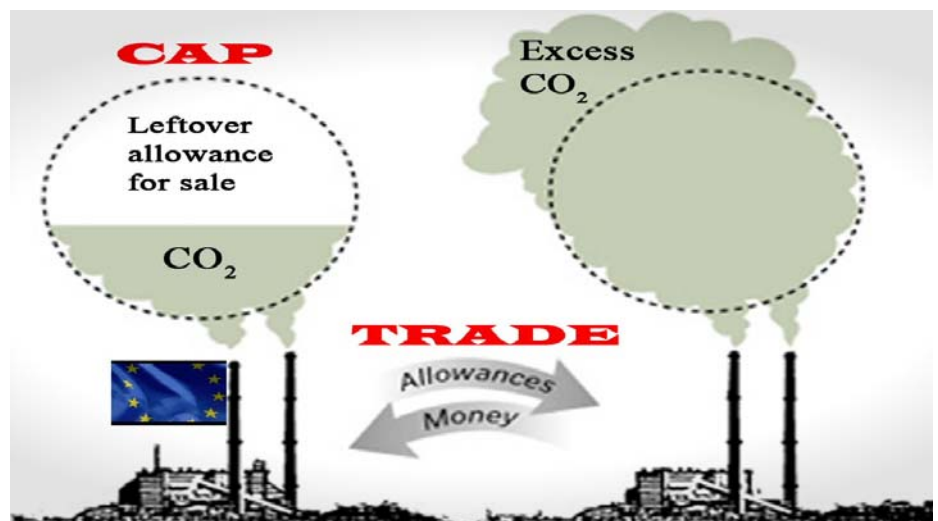
wildfires and heat waves, record-breaking precipitation and widespread flooding, and dangerous pollution levels exacerbated by heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel burning.

We **are** scared of climate change and should all be mobilizing as a country to find solutions to combat it instead of trying to disparage the science behind it. The overwhelming majority of scientists find nothing even remotely good about the prospect of a warmer planet. The head-in-the-sand attitude and spread of misinformation about the causes and reality of our changing climate are not just wrong, but also unpatriotic.

I'm no big fan of cap-and-trade carbon markets, but "carbon trading uses essentially the same simple market instruments as trading in gold, wheat and coal. They have been used over decades and during recent and historical financial cycles without causing crises" (The Guardian, November 16, 2009). China has begun implementing carbon trading schemes in an effort to bring their pollution levels down, and [a recent report](#) attests to the success of a similar program in Europe:

The European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) puts limits on carbon dioxide emissions from more than 11,000 power stations and industrial

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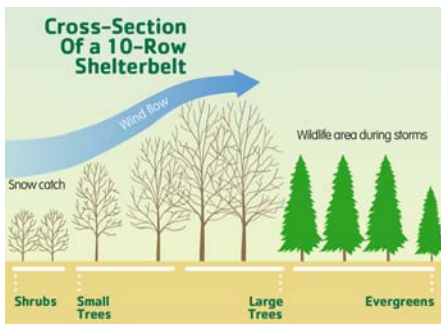


Climate continued from page 10

plants in 30 participating countries, and applies to about 40% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions.

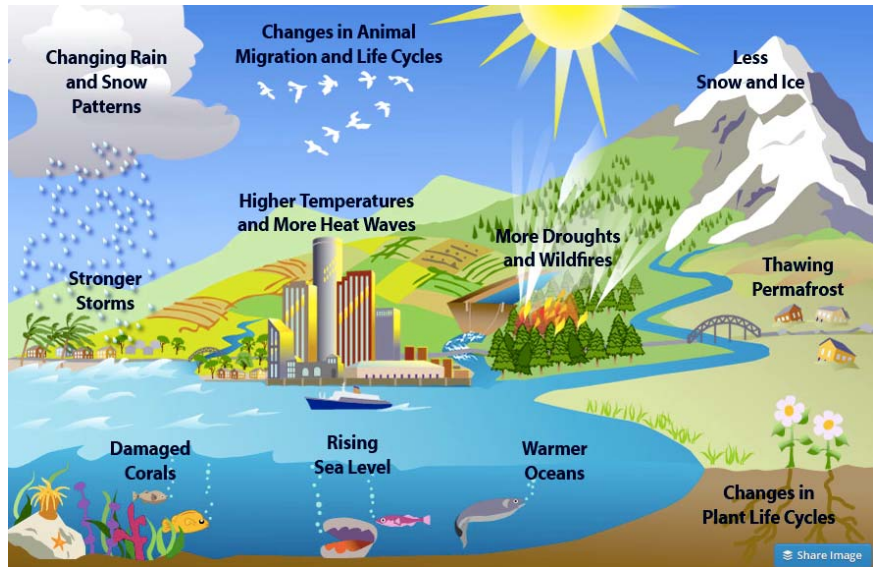
Since its start in 2005, the EU ETS has driven significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions even during periods of growth in Europe's gross domestic product, sparked innovation in low-carbon processes, and achieved these results at just a fraction of predicted costs, with no negative effects on Europe's overall economy. In fact, current discussions in Europe include proposals to tighten the EU ETS pollution limits further — not only to strengthen emission reductions, but also to stimulate economic growth.

Finally, historians disagree with your interpretation of Roosevelt's New Deal response to the dust bowl: "It is thanks to the New Deal's establishment of the Soil Conservation Service and the planting of the Great Plains Shelter Belt that we have not experienced another Dust Bowl" (<http://rooseveltinstitute.org/drought-new-dust-bowl-no-thanks-new-deal/>)



As we start a new year, let me borrow from David Woolner, the author of this essay: "With the right vision and political will, we too could turn the onset of the Great Drought of 2012 [read: climate change] into an opportunity to provide millions of unemployed Americans work in developing green energy while at the same time building a cleaner, more secure future for our children."

Grace

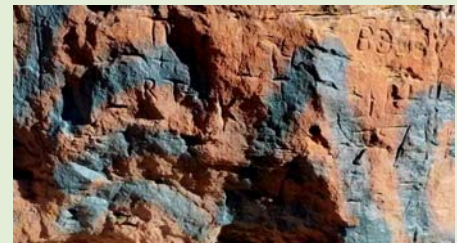


Southwest Nature Preserve John Darling

"This would be a great place if it weren't for the public." That simple thought was offered by a local zoo staffer years ago, and it sums up a fundamental problem for our public spaces. They'd be better off without the public, especially the natural areas.

Southwest Nature Preserve hasn't been pristine for many decades, but its problems have mushroomed since one thing happened: We got a parking lot complete with thieves and vandals. Then we got lumber theft, a boardwalk fire, yucca beheadings, and huge increases in erosion and graffiti. Could we just lock the gate and forget about it? The animals and plants would appreciate it. But what about the decent people? We might open for special events and take turns being Plant Police and Rock Cops, preferably with really cool badges.

Is this all too elitist? Maybe, but the current situation is maddening.



Annual Brunch & Business Meeting

On January 9, we held our annual social/business meeting, kindly hosted once again by the Montessori Academy of Arlington. We talked a lot and ate too much while Dick Schoech's slide show of FOCUS photo contest winners played on the wall. Outgoing President Danny Kocurek reviewed last year's activities and appeared reasonably pleased by our token of gratitude for all his efforts, a gift certificate for an establishment that has something to do with beer.



continued on page 13

Annual Brunch continued from page 12



Uninvited House Guests Bonnie Bradshaw, 911 Wildlife



Here are the top five ways to prevent squirrels, raccoons, opossums and skunks from moving into your home during the winter:

1. Don't provide a midnight buffet.

Birdseed, pet food and table scraps attract wildlife from miles away. Only put the amount of birdseed in your feeder in the morning that will be completely consumed before dusk. Don't leave pet food or unsecured garbage outside overnight. And if you have a pet door, close it at night by sliding a template in place to cover the entrance.

2. Don't put out a welcome mat.

Trim overhanging branches that provide easy access to your roof for squirrels and other wildlife. Loose shingles are the equivalent of a flashing "Vacancy" sign for wildlife. Carefully inspect your roof and eaves. Repair deteriorating

boards, warped siding and damaged shingles. Cover attic openings with heavy gauge, rustproof wire mesh (not chicken wire). If you have a chimney, make sure that it has a secure cap. Chimneys without caps are open invitations to raccoons looking for "hollow trees" in which to give birth and raise their young.

3. Don't forget your friends in low places.

If you have a pier-and-beam foundation, cover vent openings with heavy gauge, rustproof wire mesh. If you have a deck, install an L-shaped barrier around it -- dig a trench 12 inches deep and 8 inches wide around the perimeter of the deck, line the bottom of the trench with heavy gauge wire mesh, bend it 90 degrees up, attach the wire mesh to the base of the deck with screws and washers and then backfill. This barrier will permanently prevent animals from digging underneath a deck or shed.

4. Don't waste time and money.

If you're hearing strange noises in your attic and you suspect that furry guests already have moved in, call 911 Wildlife at 817.737.0911 to humanely evict and permanently exclude them. Wildlife can damage electrical wires, cause

water damage, stain ceilings, destroy attic insulation and create unpleasant odors. If you hear scratching or gnawing sounds, it's important to get expert advice and take action immediately. Don't waste time and money on traps or home remedies that can make the problem worse.

5. Spread the word.

Share this information with your neighbors so they don't end up with uninvited guests.

About 911 Wildlife

911 Wildlife provides homeowners and property managers with fast, affordable, humane solutions for urban wildlife problems. Owned and operated by wildlife rehabilitators, 911 Wildlife is the only wildlife control company in Texas endorsed by the Humane Society of the United States. For more information, please call 817.737.0911 or visit the website at www.911wildlife.com



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