

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 3

MARCH 2016

www.acctexas.org

March Meeting

Stormwater Pollution and Prevention in Arlington

Melissa Walker, Education Specialist,
Arlington Public Works & Transportation Dept

Wednesday, March 2, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



The Public Works and Transportation Department's Stormwater Management Division is responsible for floodplain management, capital improvement projects pertaining to drainage, maintenance of the municipal storm sewer system, stormwater/environmental compliance, and stormwater educational outreach to residents, businesses and other community partners such as Arlington Independent School District.

This presentation will give a brief overview of the department and its structure and will then discuss pollution prevention and flood awareness topics that protect our creeks from flooding, streambank erosion and water quality issues.

Bring Something for the Raffle

Bits & Pieces

Melodious Hermit

One highlight of the recent Great Backyard Bird Count at SW Nature Preserve was the Hermit thrush, a fairly common winter resident that generally avoids suburbs in favor of woodlands with lots of leaf litter to scratch around in while searching for food. The song is described as mournful and flute-like. You can learn much more about this bird and hear that beautiful song at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Web site.



Today's Inspirational Moment



It should not be believed that all things exist for the existence of man. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else.

Maimonides

By Popular Request, Really

Yes, you asked for it, and here it is: yet more dog vomit slime mold, but to avoid cheap sensationalism, here's an actual educational Web site to check out.



From the President Jan Miller

There are big green shoes to fill as Danny Kocurek steps away as ACC's president after three years. But thankfully, he promises that he will continue to serve as a board member. Danny's insight, energy and leadership have been much appreciated. He's been a regular volunteer at the Molly Hollar Wildscape, 4th of July Parade crews, the lead instigator of Fix-It-Green at EcoFest, the Martha Stewart of Green Living practices and much more. That's Sustainability, walking the green talk and making a difference where you live. Thanks, Danny!

...and change goes on! There's been lots of water under the bridge since my maternal great-grand-dad drove a horse and buggy around Arlington and worse, lots of carbon put into the air since I grew up in what's now called Oak Hill neighborhood. Even when ACC started in the 80s, who knew about urban gas drilling, neonicotinoids or Zika virus? So, what's a "small group of thoughtful, committed citizens" to do? That's where ACC comes in — and YOU! Together we can make an impact, so what's most important to you? Is there a program or fieldtrip topic you want to suggest? Maybe there's a project you're interested in? What about a local issue you'd like to research? Maybe a book review to share? What can we do to help ensure that this is the kind of place that the next generations will want to call home?



Passing the baton: outgoing ACC president Danny Kocurek with Jan Miller, our new leader.

THE POST OAK

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

Will it be a shutout? Mowing was postponed in November due to lack of a hard freeze to ensure dormancy. Then heavy rains returned in December and gilgais filled. Soils finally dried out by mid-February. With warm temperatures already in place and the growing season imminent, APRD's Jay Falgout verified conditions were right, then readied a contract for mowing. Volunteers (Thanks, Wes!) picked up trash and litter in advance, but the next two days brought over 3" of rain.

Will soil conditions dry in time for mowing or will those green leaves race skyward? Find out next month!

And, coming soon: an annual meeting of Friends of the Prairie.



**Prairie Stewards
Third Saturday
Blackland Prairie
Nature Preserve
4907 New York Avenue
March 19
9:00 –12:00**

Come see what the latest rains have done while you enjoy our prairie's annual rebirth, remove litter, look for birds, and take photos. There's so much to do!

Wear long sleeves and pants, plus sturdy boots or shoes. Bring gloves, loppers, water container. Consider a camera and/or binoculars because spring blooms and migration will be underway.

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



Wildscape Update **Marylee Thomason**

It's February, and the annual Privet Pull is upon us. Traditionally someone planned a privet pulling party in Molly Hollar's honor. Even though that didn't happen this year, at least one participant was in a party mood.



While waiting for the critical mass to gather, serious gardeners delved right in to other weeding projects. That's Jane Oosterhuis too busy to look up, and Josephine Keeney proudly showing her dedication to the butterfly garden.



Robert Fairies came by to check on Molly and stayed even after learning what the project was for the day. What a good sport. Peggy Quinn, who has a well-deserved reputation for being the life of any party, left early for an undisclosed location. She really missed the fun.



Had she stayed, she could have waded in the creek above her boot tops like Ann Knudsen, center, or braved the briar with Ann Trenton, right, or discovered, as did Robert Fairies, that wax leaf ligustrum is a type of privet, too.

Molly bought three or four man-handling privet pullers a few years ago. This day the crew used two of them to wrestle out the tree-sized invasives. Jim Landers, a Master Naturalist intern, positioned the jaws of death around a privet that mistakenly thought deep roots and a camouflaged location would save it. A deadly miscalculation for it and its hapless buddies.

Jim was raised on a farm in Mississippi. "I have been cutting brush and briar all my life," he said. "It feels comfortable here. I'll be back next week." What got him here the first time? During the Master Naturalist tour, Molly served cookies. Jim liked a place that served cookies!



The privet pile was impressive. "And we thought we didn't have too much privet," Molly noted when the day's work was done.



The problem, it turns out, is that we not only collected a lot of privet, but some briar as well. Marylee Thomason sits in the front of the enormous pile to show off the size and lands squarely on a thorn. Owwww!

If you missed your chance to save the wildscape from the choke of encroaching privet, fear not. There are more sessions planned because there is more privet to pull.

Best of all, the camaraderie with like-minded gardening types during and after an afternoon's hard work makes the boots full of muddy water and the battles with briar and poison ivy (for those who didn't dress properly) all the more enjoyable.

Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller

Friends of SWNP Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, March 15, 7:00 pm

West Arlington Police Service Center, Community Room
2060 W. Green Oaks Blvd, Arlington, TX 76013

Parking is available in front of the building, via Ron McAndrew Drive.

iNaturalist – Social Media for the Naturalist in You

presented by Sam Kieschnick,

Dallas/Fort Worth Urban Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Everyone's invited to the first of a series of monthly programs presented by the Friends of SWNP. The new meeting format features SWNP-specific programs focused on the preserve, its history and the diversity of living things it supports.

iNaturalist is an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature. It's also a crowdsourced species ID system and occurrence recording tool. Sam will show us how to record our own observations, get help with IDs, collaborate with others or access data collected by other iNat users.

For more info: www.swnp.org or e-mail info@swnp.org



Great Backyard Bird Count at SWNP How did we do? On February 13, four teams looked hard and came up with 36 species. (Thanks to Jim Frisinger for keeping and submitting the list.)

Gadwall 7
Mallard 12
Green-winged Teal 9
Bufflehead 1
Pied-billed Grebe 1
Double-crested Cormorant 4
Great Egret 1
Black Vulture 3
Turkey Vulture 1
Red-shouldered Hawk 1
American Coot 1
Ring-billed Gull 1

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 4
Mourning Dove 6
Red-bellied Woodpecker 2
Downy Woodpecker 3
Northern Flicker 1
American Kestrel 1
Eastern Phoebe 4
Blue Jay 9
American Crow 8
Carolina Chickadee 11
Tufted Titmouse 1
Carolina Wren 2

Bewick's Wren 3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3
Eastern Bluebird 6
Hermit Thrush 2
American Robin 1
Yellow-rumped Warbler 26
Dark-eyed Junco 12
White-crowned Sparrow 7
Song Sparrow 1
Northern Cardinal 14
Red-winged Blackbird 13
American Goldfinch 1



Above, Great Backyard Birders Jim Frisinger, Lynn Healy, and Jan Miller. Left, It's not too early to start thinking about our fascinating little population of farkleberries.

Environmental Dates Julia Burgen

March 2016

Noteworthy dates for our public lands and other special places and habitats

“And thus our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stories, and good in everything.” William Shakespeare

March 1, 1872	Yellowstone established as first National Park
March 2, 1889	Casa Grande Ruins National Monument; Mount Rainier National Park established
March 2, 1899	Olympic National Park
March 3, 1891	President Cleveland signs the Forest Reserve Act
March 11, 1907	Chaco Culture National Historical Park
March 14, 1903	Pelican Island, Florida named the first U.S. National Wildlife Refuge
March 20, 1909	Anniversary of Navajo National Monument
March 23, 1910	Anniversary of Sitka National Historical Park
March 27, 1851	Mariposa Battalion discovers Yosemite Valley
March 30, 1867	U.S buys Alaska from Russia

COYOTES

How would my father
Justify to me
The dead brown husks
Of killed coyotes
Strung upon the fences
Down the long road to Camargo?

I'd spied their kin
Loping lean and shrewd
Through the bunchgrass
At dusk or dawn
And could not picture
Trails without them
On the shaggy prairies.

But fools, and friends of fools,
Void of contrition,
Still post these rotting markers —
To celebrate stupidity
And ignorance I guess.

Luckily, coyotes, unlike us,
Have learned from their mistakes
And may be here
Sniffing the fragrant breezes
When we have pawned
Our vagrant way
Into perdition.

John Blair

Thanks to our Last Speaker

It was a big crowd last month for Michael Smith from Crosstimbers Connection. Despite last-minute technical difficulties, Michael grabbed our interest with facts and stories about the reptiles and amphibians of our area. It's a great topic, and he certainly did it justice.

Technical glitch? The projection screen that's always there was gone, so our best minds went to work under pressure and tipped up a folding whitish table that pretty much did the job.

Did we need more herp stories? Yes we did, and we're hoping for an encore, maybe with answers to these burning questions: How can such a gorgeous creature be called a Mud snake? And of course, how does the Hognose snake manage to eat toxic toads that blow up like balloons? Thanks very much, Michael.



Understanding El Niño as Child's Play in the Bathtub Marylee Thomason

In the Pacific Ocean trade winds and currents normally push the surface ocean water along the equator from east to west or from South America toward Southeast Asia. This process actually builds the sea level up about 1½ feet. Shallow seas, hot sun and warm air create a pool of water that is hotter than it is anywhere else in the Pacific Ocean.

An El Niño begins when a persistent low pressure (rising air) cell in the South Pacific causes the trade winds to decline. Without strong surface winds to blow the water westward, the warm water sloshes back east, leveling out the ocean surface.

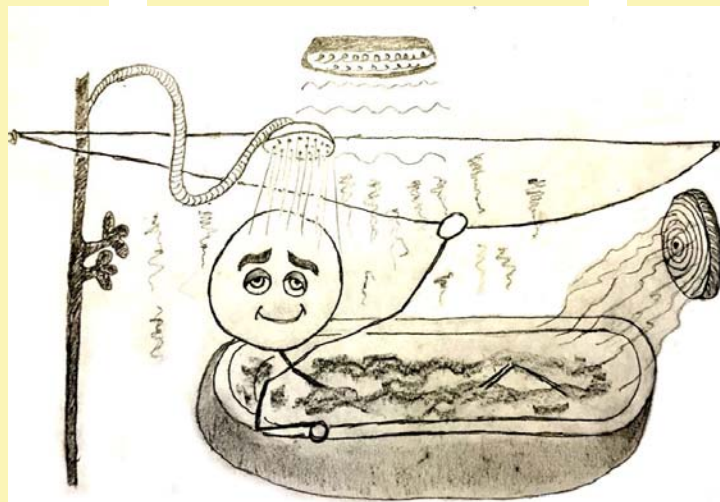
Because warm air rises, it carries the moisture from evaporation up into higher strata of air, creating cumulus clouds. Air cools as it gets higher and cannot hold as much water so it rains. It has been showering on your head, but now clouds move across the ocean, raining less on Indonesia and more on the sea beneath as it travels east until it bumps up against the edge of South America. If there is enough volume and time, the pool of warm water will spread up and down the coasts of North and South America, changing weather patterns across both continents.

Historically, El Niño occurs every four or five years. It was named by Ecuadorian fishermen who declared it El Niño, the Christ child, because it arrived about Christmas time.

With such a reverent name, one would think it was a welcome event. Unfortunately, the weather changes it brings are disastrous on land and sea. The warm water interrupts the delivery of the

Peru or Humboldt current of cold water that normally arrives full of rich nutrients that feed the fish, birds, and ocean mammals along the coast. In North America it is the cold California current that feeds the local populations.

To understand why the upwelling of cold subsurface water is so crucial, think about what happens to terrestrial plants and animals when they die. Something that dies on land stays where it falls to decay and recycle its nutrients.



In the ocean, nutrients are stored in bodies of fish and plankton, which are solid and heavy and sink quickly. The surface layer of warm water is constantly depleted. Even if we sprayed the surface with an ocean fertilizer every day, it would create only a brief algal bloom that would die and sink. A constant upwelling of cold water full of nourishment is needed to replenish the food supply for the growth of microscopic algae (phytoplankton) that feed tiny animals (zooplankton), which provide food for aquatic animals up the food chain to the largest known species on earth.

In El Niño weather, the ocean's food supply is quickly exhausted. There are fewer and less robust food stocks so

large fish, sea lions, turtles and birds, which rely on them, starve; fishermen with them.

Not only a disaster for sea creatures, El Niño weather drops rain on deserts in Chile and Peru that rarely see rain. The result is flooding, which breeds mosquitoes that carry disease. In Southern California, which has long periods of drought, the deluges cause mud slides. In North Central Texas, El Niño ended our drought and filled our reservoirs.

We have also seen an increase in unseasonal tornadoes. Some areas benefit, but others suffer from the unusual and unexpected weather.

The wildscape benefitted from the extra rain, but suffered some damage too. The streams flooded and washed away much of the dirt around the stone waterfall crossing. The plants along the margins of the zigzag bridge are gone. The parks department will

help with the repair of the bank but has no definite plan yet.

Weathermen see a dry season ahead. Volunteers will be needed to fill gator bags and water plants that have not had two to three years to get established. Molly will carefully choose all new additions for their drought tolerance. Once again the wildscape will be a demonstration site for native plants with their ability to survive in challenging times. It takes a long time to change people's perceptions of an attractive landscape. Desperation may accelerate the process.

FOCUS15 Nature Photo Contest Dick Schoech

ACC celebrated the results of the FOCUS Nature Photo Contest for Arlington area 3-6 graders at a River Legacy ceremony on February 6. Twelve happy contest winners received certificates, cash prizes, and Arlington Camera gift certificates. All 23 who submitted received goodie bags from the City of Arlington Naturally Fun program and free bird seed coupons from Wild Birds Unlimited. Sprouts helped with refreshments of fruit, veggies, cheese and cookies. Those submitting photos also received feedback on how to improve their photography skills from three judges with expertise in nature and photography. FOCUS16 begins accepting photos on April 1 at <http://www.acctexas.org/focus>



Josephine Keeney sent in this fine Mountain laurel blooming at Fielder Museum. That plant thinks it's spring, and of course that reminds us we are now a little past time to pay our ACC dues. But it's not too late: You can still bloom and be a beautiful part of Arlington's environment. Do it right now with the handy form on the last page, or get right with Nature at the meeting this Wednesday. Thanks.



PERCH IN A POOL

A long time since
In a far place
I stood on the bank
Of a clear pool
To watch a perch swim.

I could see the perch;
The perch could see me.
The perch did not leave;
I had nowhere else to be.

We stared face to face and,
For half an hour,
That was my perch.
Presumably
I was its man.

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

Membership Information

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Melissa Walker
Stormwater Pollution
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