

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 5

MAY 2016

www.acctexas.org

May Meeting

Teaming with Wildlife

Rachel Richter,
DFW Urban Wildlife Biologist
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Wednesday, May 4,
7 pm
Fielder Museum,
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



Teaming with Wildlife is a national coalition of businesses and organizations committed to restoring and conserving our native wildlife. The goal of Teaming with Wildlife is to find sustainable funding to support wildlife conservation and management efforts. Recently, significant developments have created the potential to secure \$1.3 billion annually to fund state-based conservation efforts. Come and find out how you can help participate in one of the biggest "wins" in conservation history!

Bring Something for the Raffle

Bits & Pieces

Osmeterium anyone?

It turns out that larvae of the black swallowtail butterfly are, like so many insects, complicated. They start life as bird dropping mimics, then change into a raggedy thing that's hard to see, and finally become the beauty on the right. And they have an osmeterium, a foul-smelling organ that they can pop out when threatened. The larvae will use this to try to smear a chemical repellent on a predator.

It gets even better: Some predators locate the larvae by odors from their poop, but may be foiled because the caterpillars throw the pellets away with their mandibles.



Today's Inspirational Moment

Nature is not a place to visit. It is home.

Gary Snyder



Neil Sperry: One Good Thing

Star-Telegram, April 23 At last, the Plant Guru surprised us by including privet in his list of shrubs not to plant as screens. Mr Sperry notes that birds eat the berries, spread the seeds, and the plants then "...overtake our stream banks and woodlands."

On the other hand, his April 30 column contains a recommendation for not one, but two varieties of Nandina as useful short shrubs. Nandina, like Japanese privet, is included in the Texas Invasives database, so why not attempt consistency and warn readers against privet and nandina?



From the President Jan Miller

Earth Day, over already? That “all things green and glorious” time of year, always too brief, is starting to wane. But this year, it’s been prolonged with a re-viewing of Ken Burn’s excellent series, “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea,” honoring this centennial year of the National Park Service. Beyond the beauty of the images, the series is a tremendous lesson in environmental advocacy, democratic process, and contests of individual, public and private sector interests. Today, as much as “we the people” seem to value parks, it never seems enough and those contests continue.¹ Lately, an anti-parks caucus has been reported,² lobbying to sell public lands, defund parks and/or roll back environmental protections. Added to that are pressures from business interests in and around parks^{3,4} as well as the public’s use and expectations. Are parks for badly needed public recreation or for conservation of (relatively) unspoiled natural resources? Can these interests be compatible?⁵

In Texas it’s no different. After languishing for years from diverted funding, Texas state parks got a slice of their just desserts from the 2015 legislature, enough to begin work on a long list of repairs, but little more.⁶ Conservation funding to assess and manage the state’s wildlife and their habitats is still lacking. TPWD has a roadmap, the 2012 Texas Conservation Action Plan,⁷ but it needs funding and that’s where “Teaming With Wildlife: True to Texas”⁸ comes in. Please plan to come meet Rachel Richter at ACC’s May meeting, hear her message, and find out how we can be part of the “team” to conserve Texas’ wildlife and habitats.

1. <http://www.kera.org/2016/04/27/a-century-with-the-national-park-service/>
2. <https://medium.com/@LCVoters/introducing-the-anti-parks-caucus-d1328d219d7c#.r8ryotnh4>
3. <http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/03/02/us/bitter-contract-dispute-extends-to-who-owns-yosemite-national-park-names.html>
4. http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/nungesser_suggests_selling_nam.html
5. <http://www.outsideonline.com/2059261/big-idea-conservationist-recreationist-wilderness-clash>
6. <http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/improvement/>
7. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/tcap/>
8. <http://teamingtruetotx.com>

THE POST OAK

Published 10 times a year by
Arlington Conservation Council
P.O. Box 216, Arlington, TX
78004-0216.

John Darling, Editor
ldarling@sbcglobal.net

Contributors

Grace Darling, John Darling,
Jan Miller, Wesley Miller,
Dick Schoech, Marylee Thomason

Proofreaders

Marian Hiler, Grace Darling

Join us today!
Use the handy
application form
on the back page.

The *Post Oak* will not knowingly accept sponsors who are deceptive, misleading, or expressly incompatible with its mission. The *Post Oak* does not endorse, advocate, or guarantee any offer, viewpoint or representation made by its sponsors.



redenta's
garden shops
landscape design

arlington dallas landscape
817.451.2149 214.823.9421 817.469.6786

www.redentas.com

"an experience in gardening the way it was meant to be"

GOOD WORK. ON TIME.

John DYCUS

3607 Shady Park Drive
Arlington, TX 76013
(817) 271-2138
john@xdycus.com

**LAW OFFICE OF
SHANE GOETZ**

1304 WEST ABRAM STREET LOCAL: 817-274-2905
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76013 METRO: 817-265-2902
SHANEGOETZ@SBCGLOBAL.NET FACSIMILE: 817-861-8909



Herb 'n Health

Natural Foods Market & Herb Shoppe

3759 E. Lancaster St. Ft. Worth, TX 76103
Karen Foley 817-553-1152

**Thanks A.C.C. for working to
conserve Arlington's
natural resources.**

m|m|a

mycoskie + mcinnis + associates
civil engineering surveying landscape architecture planning
www.mmtexas.com
817-469-9671

Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve photos by Wes Miller**Nine plants** John Darling

Note: Published previously in Native Plant Society News, North Central Chapter, May 2016

On Saturday afternoon, April 23, Jim Varnum led three of us on a short plant walk as the crowds at the Tandy Hills BioBlitz were thinning out. Two days later Jim left us, and I can't stop thinking about that little walk.

It should have been stocked with serious prairie enthusiasts, tossing obscure botanical tidbits back and forth, but it wasn't. Just Gracie and me, both well known for our inability to retain plant names, and a very tall guy who was subjected to the Varnum Effect as he was pulled in by Jim's quiet enthusiasm. We were too, as always, but it was fun to watch a stranger experience the Effect for the first time.

The walk was short, but not the effort, the knowledge, and Jim's wonderful ability to engage: It was so clear that he cared about those plants, and almost at once, we did, too. You could tell by the increasing frequency of the standard question: "Hey, Jim, what's this?" And of course (no surprise) Jim showed that you don't have to cover a lot of ground to cover a lot of nature.

Somehow, all week it's felt important to remember the plants from that little walk. There were more than nine, but some (of course) have fled. We have instead the image of Jim waving as he walks away and we're saying, "Thanks a lot, see you at the next one."



Wildscape Update **Marylee Thomason**

Anderson Elementary School Walk on the Wildside, April 8, 2016

Blind dates can be anything from terrific to disastrous. How would the Anderson Elementary third-graders meeting with the wildscape volunteers turn out? It would certainly be one wild adventure. Even the teachers didn't know exactly what to expect.



Mud pies become seed tacos, but still they're made with squishy mud.

All field trips are by definition "Good!" They bring excitement, anticipation, curiosity and a little trepidation. These children all would have been to a playground. Most would have been to a park. None would ever



The simplest things are often the most intriguing. Spider webs in the shrubbery.

have been to the woods where the plants and creatures in their natural setting were explained the way they would be at the WOW.

Two big yellow school buses delivered 87 students, five teachers and six parents. The children were divided into groups of approximately 10, each with a guide who took them to the various presentations and helped find the items on their scavenger hunt card.



Velcro weed. Funny how it sticks to your clothes and to the science teacher, who wore it proudly.



Holding a discovered inchworm in your hand is so brave.

Structural changes to the WOW this year made it work better. Topics were reduced to five from eight with two stations for each subject located a few yards from each other. This configuration allowed one teacher to monitor two groups with the help of a parent. And fewer stations reduced the amount of information the students were asked to absorb.

The Anderson Elementary WOW was the second this spring. All of the presentations were practiced, refreshed



Who knew flowers had so many parts?

continued on page 5

Wildscape Update continued from page 4



Trees are important for a lot of reasons you didn't know before.

and revised. This was a blind date for the volunteers, too, but at least they had been on a date with third-graders before. For the students this was a whole new world.

It seems that everyone hit it off well. Anderson science teacher Mr. Jose C. Diaz declared this first date so successful that he wants to see us again a year from now!

For pictures of Charlie Amos gallantly lying out on a rock to rescue lost glasses while dodging a huge snapping turtle — and the rest of the glorious WOW story in pictures by Ann Knudsen — go to: <https://goo.gl/photos/XcCThUhrm1g2mr34A>

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all of the wildscape volunteers who brought equipment, helped set up and take down stations and provided precision timed guiding and enthusiastic interaction with the students.

Presenters

Seed Tacos:

Molly Hollar with aide Callie Mitchell
Anne Alderfer with aide Jennifer Hiler

Woodland Ecosystems:

Marylee Thomason and Joe Martinez

Erosion and Weathering:

Hester Schwarzer with aide Larry Norris

Sharon Schoech with aide Peggy Quinn

Butterflies in Their Ecosystem:

Josephine Keeney and Jane Oosterhuis

Flower Parts:

Dawn Hancock and Joyce Duty



Erosion damage is a new concept.

Guides/Timekeepers

Carol Shinsky

Dick Schoech

Susan Marchbanks

Ann Trenton

Diane Kocurek

Danny Kocurek

Patsy Miller

Charley Amos

Nancy Price

Sandra Van Meer

Coordinators

Peggy Quinn

Hester Schwarzer

Molly Hollar

Ann Knudsen



Butterflies are so beautiful and fascinating.



Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller

Friends of SWNP Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, May 17, 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.

Comings and Goings at Southwest Nature Preserve: 10 Centuries of Dynamic Change to 58 Acres in the Cross Timbers

presented by **Jim Frisinger, organizer of Friends birding classes**

Jim will walk us through a little neighborhood history: Waves of human migration, cycles of drought and rains, invasions of new plants, and disappearances of others. Gone are the bison — but there are more woody plants and water here than ever. Ecosystems are dynamic, buffeted by outside forces and ever-changing. Now the 58 acres head back to the future as a wildlife preserve.

Jim Frisinger left a decades-long career as a daily newspaper journalist in Dallas-Fort Worth to join the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fort Worth District. He now writes and films stories about the Corps' work on endangered species, ecosystem restoration, flood-risk management, sustainability and national security construction.

More calendar events:

- 5/3 8:30am - 2pm Volunteer event with Fellowship Academy
Volunteers needed to lead groups of high school students. This event takes the place of regular 3rd Thursday and 4th Saturday volunteer events.
- 5/14 9 am – noon Fly Fishing 101 Workshop ([RSVP to mccorkfly@att.net](mailto:mccorkfly@att.net))
Organized by [Fort Worth Fly Fishers](#). Fly fishing information and casting demonstrations will be followed by opportunities for supervised fishing. Fly fishing equipment will be supplied by FWFF.
- 5/15 4 pm - dusk Aquatic Survey and Night Walk/Owl Prowl
Sponsored by [Crosstimbers Connection](#), whose experts will survey aquatic species in and around "Middle Pond." All types of life will be logged and photographed. The project will probably take a couple of hours. Everyone is welcome to observe this project.
Around dusk, a night walk and owl prowling are planned.

For details, see www.swnp.org
or e-mail info@swnp.org



In Case You Missed It Grace Darling

The National Parks: America's Best Idea will run on our local PBS station starting June 6 and continuing on June 13, 20, and 27. There will be four opportunities to watch each episode, and you can get a reminder email with airing times by going to kera.org/tv/schedule and searching for "national parks." The service is free, though of course you'll have a chance to donate to the station at that time, too. Their programming is worth it many times over.

We missed the airing of *Texas National Parks: In Contact with Beauty* this past week and are sick about it. From an interview with the producer, this lovely quote:

"The phrase 'in contact with beauty' comes from a speech that Lyndon Johnson gave in 1965. He was talking about

a pretty global effort for conservation. ... His point was that everyone everywhere deserves to have beauty around them, and that there's something that matters about that in people's lives; that it's important to preserve these places that are remote and wild, like Big Bend and the Guadalupe Mountains, but it's equally important to preserve things that are in the middle of cities, like Chamizal in El Paso, to give people green space where they live, to make sure everyone has access to a place like that."

That's what Arlington Conservation Council strives for, here in your own back yard, and why the organization needs your participation, not just for financial support but for a show of hands, a reassurance that you share our enthusiasm for nature and a validation that our efforts are on the right track.



Coming soon:
A look at an innovative approach to native plant groupings on the UTA campus



Tandy Hills BioBlitz

Lots of people saw about a million creatures last week during the big survey. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/tandy.hillsnaturalarea/> and scroll down to see the photographs.

Variegated fritillary at Tandy Hills. Photo by Dick Schoech



Thanks to our Last Speaker



Dick Schoech and Diane Piercy at the April ACC meeting.

At our last meeting we heard an enthusiastic presentation on Project Bluebird: Local efforts to increase bluebird numbers. Bluebird extraordinaire Diane Piercy spoke to us about helping birds, especially embattled cavity nesters, in our landscapes and recounted her considerable successes with a series of bluebird nesting boxes at Tierra Verde Golf Course.

Should You be a worm farmer? Dick Schoech



Since we have depleted our soils due to monocultures, excess tilling, pesticides, synthetic fertilizers and other non-organic farming and gardening practices, there is increasing interest in making our soil healthy. Healthy soils are a living, diverse, complex, balanced, and sustainable ecosystem of living organisms. They help to control plant disease, pests, insects, and weeds. They also form beneficial symbiotic associations with plant roots; recycle essential plant nutrients; improve soil structure with positive repercussions for soil water and nutrient holding capacity, and ultimately improve crop production.¹ One teaspoon of healthy soil can contain billions of microbes, thousands of species of protozoa and fungi, mites, and nematodes, and a couple of termite species.²

Why would I want to farm worms?

So what's the poor homeowner to do who purchased a house on a lot where the developer scraped off all the topsoil and compacted all the remaining dirt? Your local hardware store will sell you many soil conditioners and enhancers which promise beautiful flowers and plentiful gardens. But before you buy, be sure to read the labels and fine print for research that supports the claims, ingredients, and scary warnings.

Fortunately, there is an easy and cheap way to get healthy soil. To discover it, find a place in the corner of a yard under a bush that has been unat-

tended for years and dig a little. You will soon find nature's miracle soil conditioners, worms. A worm farm is all you need to improve your soil if you have a little time or have a youngster in your household who likes projects or needs one for school. However, a worm farm is not for everyone. Answer these questions to find out if you should become a worm farmer.

- Have you dreamt about being a farmer but don't have room in your yard for chickens, goats, or other urban farm critters?
 - Can you look fondly at worms and maybe even touch or cuddle one?
 - Do you buy worms for fishing and want to save money?
 - Do you buy expensive compost or worm castings for your plants, e.g., seed starter mix?
 - Do you buy fertilizer to feed your household and garden plants?
 - Could your house or garden plants use a "pick me up?"
 - Does your household generate a lot of table scraps but you don't want a compost pile in your yard?
 - Do you need low-maintenance, non-demanding pets that take care of themselves during your month-long vacations?
 - Are you bored and need a hobby?
- If you answered yes to many of these questions, then a worm farm may be your salvation. If your answers were iffy, then you may want to take a slow and inexpensive approach to worm farming. If you have stopped reading by this point, then a worm farm is not for you.

Worm farms (vermicomposters)

So you want to take the plunge into worms and need to consider your choices. You can make a cheap worm farm using a 5-gallon bucket with a lid with some holes, some composting leaves from your yard, table scraps, shredded junk mail, and of course some worms. Or, you can go online and spend around \$100 to get a worm farm specifically designed for success



A 4-bin worm farm capable of housing 10,000 worms. You put food in the top bin and remove worm castings from the bottom bin.

Just Google worm farms and you can see the many options that are available. Or, go to Amazon and search for "worm farm." You may want to sort the search results by average customer reviews and read the negative reviews from verified customers to find out if a worm farm has problems. Note that some worm farms will advertise that they are odorless, have great ventilation,

Worm Farming continued from page 8

are easy to clean out, etc. These are hints of problems that could exist with certain types of worm farms.

Worms

One key to successful worm farming is having the right kind of worms. There are over 7,000 varieties of earthworms in good garden soil. But don't go out in your back yard and dig up a few worms, throw them in your newly constructed worm farm with scraps, and think you're done. The worms in your yard or from most fishing shops are probably night crawlers. As their name implies, these worms will crawl away the first chance they get. You want a variety of worm that can tolerate being crammed together like prisoners. You want red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida* for you Latin scholars) because they like living in very close quarters with thousands of other worms.



A wad of worms enjoying their scraps.

You can buy them online, or better yet, find someone with a worm farm and ask for a starter bag of worms. Worm populations double every 3 months, so most worm farmers are happy to help out. Worms can live up to 15 years and young can reproduce when only a few months old. Worms lay eggs that are incubated in cocoons.

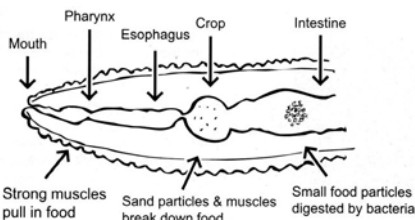
Location

Worms have few requirements, but need to be kept in a well ventilated, dry, cool, covered area that stays between

60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. If you have a cabinet or closet close to the kitchen, that might be a great choice because it will make feeding table scraps easy. Or, a basement or garage might be more convenient, especially for emptying the worm castings and cleaning the empty worm bin.

Maintenance

I have found that worms are not picky eaters. They eat most table scraps except meats, oils, dairy, and citrus products (lemons, oranges). Also, avoid things like plastic-coated paper, fresh grass clippings, leaves from eucalyptus or magnolia trees, and needles from pine, fir, or cedar trees. A diet of 50% table scraps and 50% fiber (e.g., shredded leaves or paper) is ideal. Worms have little mouths and no teeth, so they love to suck in moist, mushy food like sweet potato peelings, overripe bananas, coffee grounds, pulp from a juicer, and cantaloupe rinds. They also like mushy shredded paper and shredded leaves.



Worm anatomy from the Worm Factory manual.

A well-established 3-bin worm farm with 10,000 well-fed worms can process 5 pounds of food waste, shredded paper, etc. to produce several inches of castings a month. Collecting worm castings depends on the type of worm farm you have. With a several bin system, you remove the bottom bin, scrape out the castings, make the empty bin the top bin, and add layers of food scraps, some castings from another bin, and

shredded leaves or paper to get the worms to move to the top bin for food.

Using worm castings

Worm castings can be used on household plants, to enrich compost as in a starter mix, or can be applied directly to garden flowers or vegetable plants. I discovered that the most useful product of my worm farm is the occasional container of a dark brown coffee-looking liquid called leachate that drains off as the worms eat through their moist food. You can use leachate straight on outdoor plants or mix it with equal parts water for a house plant fertilizer. I have found that plants respond quickly after a helping of leachate. Google "benefits of worm castings" to find other uses such as fighting off plant diseases and pests, etc. Worm castings are even touted as a way to get rid of fire ants. They seemed to work for me, but controlled research is needed to determine if, when, and how castings work. Worm farmers seem to be excellent at describing the benefits of castings and leachate similar to the way parents are excellent at describing the achievements of their kids.

To summarize, worm farming is a non-demanding way for home owners, gardeners, and plant lovers to save money and enrich their soil. Worms are probably the best low maintenance pets you can have.

References

1. <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/spi/soil-biodiversity/the-nature-of-soil/what-is-a-healthy-soil/en/>
2. <http://foodtank.com/news/2016/03/twenty-two-organizations-working-to-restore-soils-in-2016>

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Membership Information

Name _____	First-year member \$10.00	
Address _____	Individual \$15.00	New Member ☐
_____	Family \$25.00	
Phone _____	Supporting \$40.00	Renewing member ☐
E-mail _____	Sponsor \$100.00	
	Lifetime Individual \$250.00	
	Other \$ _____	

How did you hear about us? _____

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible. Note: If you cannot pay, please let any board member know. The only available newsletter format is electronic, and it can be obtained via e-mail and the ACC Web site.

President Jan Miller
Vice President Dick Schoech
Treasurer Marian Hiler

Secretary/Program Coordinator
Dick Schoech
Webmaster Frank Keeney
Editor John Darling

Board Members
Grace Darling
Danny Kocurek
Roy Miliner

THE POST OAK
Arlington Conservation Council
PO Box 216
Arlington, TX 76004-216

Don't Forget!
Wednesday, May 4
Fielder Museum
7:00 – 8:00 pm
Rachel Richter
Teaming with Wildlife