

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

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

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 10

NOVEMBER 2016

www.acctexas.org

November Meeting

The Village Creek – Lake Arlington Watershed Protection Project

Aaron Hoff,
Environmental Scientist, Geographic Information
Systems Specialist, Trinity River Authority

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



Village Creek is on the 303(d) list of impaired water bodies and Lake Arlington is on the "Concerns" list. This Trinity River Authority Project is a 3-year voluntary effort to clean up the watershed that feeds Village Creek and our drinking water in Lake Arlington.

continued on page 5

Bring Something for the Raffle

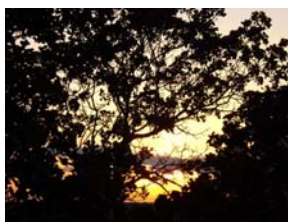
Bits & Pieces

Quiet Cousin

Seems like it's all Monarchs all the time, and that makes a lot of sense given their theatrical life-style, great looks, and terrible decline. But off in a quiet corner, the Queen, a beautiful Monarch cousin, thrives in tropical and some temperate areas throughout the Americas, Asia, and Africa, occurring in various habitats basically wherever milkweeds are found. Females lay single eggs on milkweeds, but here's a difference from Monarchs: The larvae vary widely in their levels of toxicity. Even Viceroys are more uniformly distasteful.



Today's Inspirational Moment



I never saw a discontented tree. They grip the ground as though they liked it, and though fast rooted they travel about as far as we do.

John Muir

Tree City, USA?

A straightforward topic for treehuggers, but is it? To be a Tree City, your town "must organize an Arbor Day observance and proclamation with a simple tree planting event or an award ceremony that honors leading tree planters." Can't find that; the closest thing is the [L.E.A.F. program tree giveaway](#) on November 5. And for what it's worth, the city is looking for members for the [Tree Advisory Committee](#).

Why think about this? The Arbor Day people have [four standards](#) for membership in Tree City USA, but they don't include anything about a member city killing 250 trees on a golf course. Looks like Arlington will kill those trees for the 10% of people who play golf (page 10). Birdwatchers account for about 20%. They'd help twice as many folks (and nature, air pollution, and erosion) by making Ditto golf course into a preserve.



From the President Jan Miller

The fall season seems to teeter as we trudge toward the uncertainty of general election day with temperatures still routinely near 90F. But change is coming, a few leaves starting to turn, Jack o'Lantern mushrooms (and other fungi) mysteriously popping up, frisky squirrels, reports of migrating cranes and monarch butterflies, and first sightings of "snowbirds" (juncos) and other winter residents. And, even more signs of fall:

Saturday, November 12, 8 am - noon

Texas Recycles Day, "Computer RoundUp" on the UTA campus, southeast corner of Mitchell and Cooper. FREE recycling of computers, electronics, TVs, cell phones, etc. For more info, see www.arlington-tx.gov/news/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/10/Roundup-poster-2016.pdf

Leaf Recycling November 1 through January 1, 2017

Drop off bagged leaves at any of four locations around Arlington. See the city of Arlington Web page for more information:

www.arlington-tx.gov/news/2016/10/28/beautify-arlington-through-leaf-recycling-starting-nov-1-2016/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+MyArlingtonTx+%28My+Arlington+TX%29



Remember ACC's November 2 meeting, and don't forget to invite a friend or neighbor. Thanks!

THE POST OAK

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

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Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve photos by Wes Miller

...the care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope.

*Wendell Berry,
The Art of the Commonplace:
The Agrarian Essays*



Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason. Photos by Paul Knudsen



Snippets from the Wildscape

Seventeen, curious, inquisitive, and involved students from Merryhill School's third grade spilled out of two vans for a field trip on a bright sunny morning one Tuesday in October. The students had been to the wildscape before, picking up trash as their personal contribution to the environment.

This time instead of eliminating bottles and papers the goal was discovery. Rotting logs, spider webs, lichen, moss, brush piles, poison ivy, squirrels. "They talked about decomposers and lichen all the way home," texted the students' resourceful teacher, Amy Bradley.

Back at school Ms. Bradley asked them to write reports and draw pictures to reinforce the experience. A day later this email came: "I just had a chance to read through the reports the children wrote. They were amazing! They learned more

from those two hours than they would have ever learned in a week in the classroom."

By universal agreement it was a blast!

President's Volunteer Service Award

Wednesday, October 19, while the volunteer crew took a break in the butterfly area, Hester Schwarzer surreptitiously slipped in to show the pin and tell about the Presidents Volunteer Service Award that Josephine Keeney had received but modestly never revealed.



Hester borrowed the pin to use in a Toastmasters presentation the night before. She thought the wildscape volunteers would enjoy seeing it and others in Josephine's tidy collection. It reads: "The President's Volunteer Service Award is the premier volunteer awards program, encouraging citizens to live a life of service through presidential gratitude and national recognition."

We encourage you to look around, be inspired and take positive

action that changes the world."

[https://
www.presidentialserviceawards.gov](https://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov)

Recipients must have documented 5,000 hours of volunteer service. Along with the beautiful pin, President Obama sent a letter of appreciation. Molly Hollar has one from President Bush, which she earned several years and a gazillion hours ago.

Both Molly and Josephine have a diamond studded golden dragon fly for 5000 volunteer hours as Master Naturalists.



**Bee stings, Wasp stings.
They all make the victim sing,
"Ow!"**

Jane Oosterhuis presented some helpful information on how to take the pain out of a sting. First wash the spot with soap and water. Then for a bee sting, apply a paste of baking soda to neutralize the acid in the venom.

Wasp stings have an alkaline base, so use vinegar or lemon juice as a neutralizer and then a mild astringent such as Witch Hazel to soothe it and help reduce the swelling.



Environmental Dates Julia Burgen

November

November 5	50 th Anniversary of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
November 7, 1805	William Clark wrote, "Ocean in View! O! The Joy!" (Lewis and Clark's Voyage of Discovery, 1804 – 1806)
November 12	Project Feederwatch begins for 2016 – 2017. See Feederwatch.org
November 16	109 th Anniversary of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
November 30	101 st Anniversary of Walnut Canyon National Monument



Our November Program continued from page 1

Bring your questions and concerns about the water quality of Village Creek and Lake Arlington and what is being done to improve it. Aaron's presentation will cover:

What's a watershed? – Aaron will describe the Village Creek-Lake Arlington Watershed boundaries, land use, tributaries, water treatment plants, and uses of water within a watershed (drinking, recreation, commercial, industrial, etc.).

Pollutants – Aaron will review some expected sources of pollution and explain them in the context of stormwater runoff from a watershed standpoint.

Data collection – Aaron will present the current data collection effort and the data from the past decade that got Village Creek on the 303(d) List of impaired water bodies in the first place, as well as the nutrient screening parameters that landed Lake Arlington on the "Concerns" list.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) – Aaron will describe different methods of nonpoint source pollution management (avoid, control, treat) and how the WPP will use the data collected to begin recommending BMPs from a watershed stakeholder perspective.

Project timeline – Aaron will present the steps of the planning phase of the WPP, and how the steps will support the implementation phase of the project where the BMPs are actually put in place using match funding from federal dollars.

Thanks to Our Last Speaker

We enjoyed a good turnout last month for "5 Ways to Price (pay for) Greenhouse Gas Emissions" presented by Ricky Bradley, Information Technology Director and Lead Developer of Citizens' Climate Education and Citizens' Climate Lobby's Web sites.

This could easily have been a tough topic, but Ricky's enthusiasm and clarity guided us through hidden costs and payment options, and we ended up at the best way to pay.



Ricky Bradley, *left*, with ACC Board Member Dick Schoech.

This Just in: Elderly Editor Discovers Cell Phones Have Cameras!



Clockwise from upper left:

Best old American elm in Arlington, near Knapp Heritage Park on Front Street.

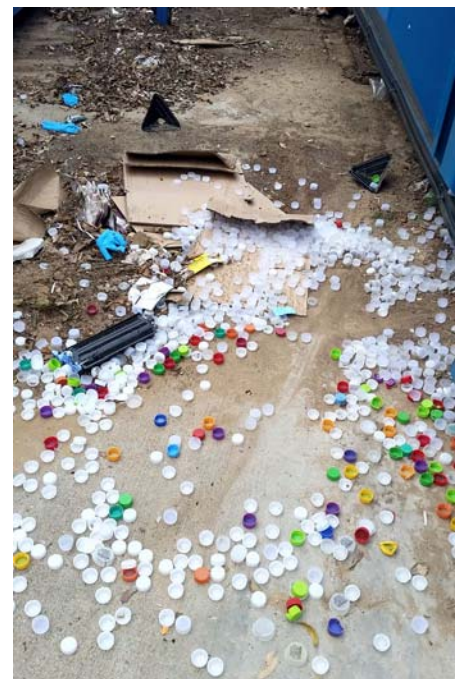
Best lighting on a tree jellyfish.

Best unexpected scattering of trash.

One of the best ways to kill a post oak and deny it 5 years later.

Best katydid name ever: Slightly musical conehead.

Center: Maybe a catalpa sphinx. Not best, just big and impressive.



Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller

Friends of SWNP Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, November 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.

Local Historic Trees and Observations at SWNP

by Wes Culwell

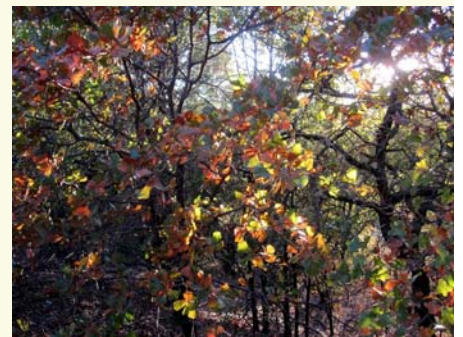
Wes will discuss one of his pet projects – identifying and obtaining recognition for local historic trees in the Tarrant county area. He will also tell us about his observations of SWNP's trees.

Wes Culwell is a board-certified Master Arborist in Texas, an Aggie, Landscape Horticulturist and owner of HortiCare, committed to improving plant health care. He is very involved in historic trees and has Fort Worth Heritage Tree and Famous Trees of Texas designation, as well as one State Champion Tree and four Regional Champion designations. He is chairman-elect of the Tarrant County Historical Commission and serves on the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. He has authored several books, is an artist and has recently initiated a program for recognition of Tarrant County's historic natural resources.

For more information about Southwest Nature Preserve,

see www.swnp.org

or e-mail info@swnp.org.



Opossums: Disrespect or Beloved Creatures of the Night Dick Schoech

“We like foxes and raccoons in our backyard, but possums are just giant rats.” This recent statement from a neighbor typifies the Rodney Dangerfield problem opossums have: They don’t get no respect. This article explores whether disrespect is justified or whether opossums should be beloved creatures of the night.

First, opossums do not have the charming bandito look of the raccoon or the beautiful fur dress coat of the fox. Opossums have a scruffy, hairy coat that makes them look like most humans when they first wake up in the morning. Then there’s that long naked tail that makes them look an overgrown rat. To top it off, opossums have poor hearing and are nearsighted with beady eyes that make them look possessed. And, what’s with those 50 sharp teeth that they often display while hissing and growling? They have to be dangerous since they don’t need those teeth to rip open and rummage into garbage bags. Yuk, they can’t be clean like my cat Fluffy since they rummage through garbage.

Finally, opossums are shy and waddle noisily away if startled by a human. If you disturb a female with babies riding on her back, you have to figure out what to do if one falls off. To top it off, if opossums feel threatened, they literally fall over, close their eyes, drool, stick their tongues out, display a death-like grin, and play dead for hours so successfully that humans call this survival technique *playing opossum*. They have perfected *playing opossum* by simultaneously defecating and exuding a noxious oily green slime from their anal glands. How disgusting is that?

I googled opossum and the first item listed was “We get rid of opossums – \$300 off possum removal service.” Opossums must be ratty creatures if removal costs so much that they give a \$300 discount. This Google listing reveals another problem: Their name is typically misspelled and mispronounced. Is it spelled possum or opossum? Is the O in opossum silent or not when pronounced? Surely they don’t deserve any respect, much less a place in our back yard. Case closed!

However, take a closer look and you will discover why opossums could be considered very noble creatures of the night. Opossums are one of earth’s oldest surviving mammals, tracing their ancestry back 65 million years ago to the period of the dinosaurs. Who among us can trace our ancestry back that far? They are North America’s only marsupial which means they raise their babies (called joeys) in a fur-lined stomach pouch like a kangaroo. Af-

ter a 12-day gestation period, the 7-12 blind and naked newborn joeys the size of a honeybee crawl into the pouch where they nurse on 13 nipples and grow for about 100 days. After leaving the pouch, they will ride on their mother’s back for 10-15 days to learn the ropes of opossum life. Consider the mother like a courageous human parent jogging with triplets in a baby carriage. Eventually, the joeys become too heavy and fall off, fully weaned and ready to start life on their own.

Go out in your back yard sometime and watch an opossum. They use their small brain to the max. That sensitive nose raised in the air will quickly sniff out anything edible in your yard. They are better at finding food than rats, rabbits, dogs and cats and will remember where they find food, making them better at solving maze problems than a cat or laboratory rat. That long naked tail proves to be a valuable fifth limb

continued on page 9



Photo by Dick Schoech

Opossums continued from page 8

used to loop around and carry leaves and grass during nest building in trees or in unused armadillo burrows. This fifth limb also makes the opossum a skillful tree climber, but only young opossums may occasionally hang by their tail. Surprisingly, their hind feet are very human like, with a thumb that assists in climbing.

Opossum eat almost anything, birds, eggs, mice, rats, insects, snails, fish, snakes, nuts, garbage, road kill, you name it. They are the nocturnal neighborhood cleanup crew when humans are asleep. In your garden, opossums may scarf down some vine-ripe tomatoes, but they will also munch plant-eating insects, slugs, and other pests. Since they eat berries and other fruit, they are great seed dispersers. While they rummage through garbage and eat roadkill, they are more fastidious at bathing and grooming than most

other animals, including your Fluffy. They have been known to stop several times during eating just to clean themselves.¹ Many humans could take a cleanliness lesson from them.

Researchers have recently discovered that while opossums accumulate ticks while waddling through neighborhoods doing their nightly cleanup work, during their persistent grooming they may kill or eat 4,000 ticks in a week.² Just think, an opossum may have saved your life by eating the Lyme disease carrying ticks in your yard. How neighborly is that.

If all that isn't impressive enough, opossums are immune to scorpion stings and even to the venom of rattlesnakes, which they will eat. Researchers are studying the toxin-neutralizing factor in opossum blood in hopes that it can be adapted as an antivenom in humans — reason

enough, says Krause, to “consider the opossum in a new light.”³ Also, they are not aggressive and very unlikely to acquire and thus transmit rabies.

The opossum name is from pasum, their Algonquin Indian name. The origin of the O in opossum is unknown, but there is no truth to the rumor that opossum was coined by the O’Possum family of early Irish settlers. The life of opossums is not easy. In captivity, they live several years. In the wild, they live only about a year or two. They are often killed by cars, large dogs, coyotes, bobcats, and even large owls. And older humans can remember Granny in the Beverly Hillbillies preparing possum stew. See below for the recipe.⁴

So, what’s your decision, despised or beloved? Unless opossums have moved into your attic or under your house for the coming winter, I can’t see how you can conclude anything but that opossums are beloved gifts to mankind from God. If mother nature had not evolved opossums, we would have to invent them.

References

1. <http://opossum.craton.net/ofacts.htm>
2. <http://www.caryinstitute.org/newsroom/opossums-killers-ticks>
3. <http://www.nwf.org/news-and-magazines/national-wildlife/animals/archives/2015/opossums.aspx>
4. <http://www.hillbillycrackpot.com/how-to-catch-and-cook-a-possum/>



Photo by Dick Schoech

Ditto's Trees Grace Darling

Overview

The sole municipal golf course in north Arlington, Ditto has been a favorite with the public since it opened in the early 1980s because "it is typically in very good condition, is a very fair layout, and the pricing is reasonable," says *TexasOutside.com*, which rates the course an 8.2 out of 10 overall and 9.5 for value. The publication found the back nine holes of the 157-acre course especially interesting and "fun, with lots of elevation changes, challenges like water and narrow fairways, and tougher greens; hole #5, for example, has "a landing zone pinched by a bunker and trees on one side and water and trees on the other," while #15 boasts "a narrow fairway with water and natural area on the left and a deep dirt ravine on the right and then you need to head uphill along a narrow tree-lined fairway to the green."

But a planned makeover for Ditto will soon change that.

Arguments For and Against Renovation

A Michigan company that specializes in golf course design lists the following justifications for renovation: To:

- update the course to higher design and safety standards
- improve course conditions, playability, and pace of play
- reposition and differentiate the course in the market
- improve green speed, surfaces, and pin locations
- increase environmental sustainability through reduced water and power consumption and fewer chemicals for maintenance



"It's an older-style course that needs to be updated to meet modern expectations," says golf services manager Greg Durante.

In a *Star-Telegram* article from 2014, Susan Schrock explains that the renovation will include installation of modern greens to provide a smoother, faster putting surface; longer, wider, and recontoured (flatter) fairways for better playability; more tees at each hole; more bunkers and water features, including a 5-acre lake visible from the clubhouse; and landscaping to provide buffers between the holes.

The intent of the renovation is to link Ditto Golf Course with the northside entertainment district as a premier golf course sought after by

visitors who come to Arlington for football or baseball games and who now overlook Ditto in favor of the Texas Star golf course in Euless, as well as to serve players residing in the Viridian community and the planned Arlington Commons apartment project on East Lamar Boulevard.

"About half of the \$16 million proposal is for a new clubhouse, which would have a restaurant similar to the Ventana Grille at ... Tierra Verde and a 350-seat banquet facility that could host weddings, meetings, and other events. Ditto now has a small clubhouse with a snack bar that seats 12 people,"

continued on page 11

Ditto continued from page 10

JUNE 22, 2010

CARD OF THE COURSE

HOLE	YARDAGE	PAR	HOLE	YARDAGE	PAR
1	395	5	10	375	4
2	445	4	11	370	4
3	525	3	12	475	4
4	375	4	13	530	5
5	435	4	14	420	4
6	335	3	15	445	4
7	350	4	16	335	4
8	460	4	17	405	4
9	400	5	18	515	5
OUT	39.90	36	IN	34.50	36
			TOTAL	74.40	72



writes Schrock. Arlington Parks and Recreation Department's Assistant Director Gary Packan notes that the city can lose up to \$30,000 a day in golf revenue in bad weather, and hopes the banquet facility will generate sufficient income to sustain operations when golfing is not possible.

Voters approved \$1.5 million for renovations in the 2008 bond election and an additional \$3 million in 2014 for priorities listed in the Ditto Golf Course Master Plan at the time.

Again quoting from Schrock's article, "While some residents say the course is due for improvements, not all are sold on the projected renovation costs. 'I keep asking myself, is it really necessary to spend that kind of money on Ditto Golf Course? That is a lot of money,' said Jan Barry of Arlington, who lives nearby but doesn't play. 'In north

Arlington, the most important thing we need to do is work on the streets.'

[And] some players said they were concerned that renovations might make the course less affordable. 'As far as courses in Arlington, this is the nicest one. We don't see what's wrong with it now,' Steve Jordan of Arlington said. 'Ultimately we

are for the renovation as long as it doesn't raise our rate tremendously, as long as it doesn't put it out of the workingman's reach.' "

Packan said fees would be increased somewhat, from a current weekend rate with golf cart rental of \$39.90 to perhaps \$59.50 after the renovation.

The makeover has been in the works at least since 2008, and proponents say each month its implementation is delayed adds to the cost of the project. Though the basic concept is unchanged, the design has been revised multiple times in response to public hearings and presentations to the city council as well as neighborhood, special interests, and player groups — a testimonial to the perseverance and hard work of APRD staff in trying to accommodate disparate demands.

Visit the Ditto Golf Course page on the city's Web site and you'll see this:

Course plans and financing options are still being discussed. Once a renovation plan and schedule has been finalized, it will be posted here. We recognize that your input and your ideas are vital to providing an exceptional golf experience for all ages and ability levels. [Click Here](#) to view the updated master plan and provide your feedback.

The Ecological Rub

Despite its long history — the plan is now in its 13th revision — it was only in September that we learned the current design entails the removal of 250 mature trees from the golf course. The disclosure was made during an oral presentation to the Parks Board and can be found nowhere else in the many writings about the Ditto makeover, in print or online. No inventory exists of the doomed trees, but undoubtedly many large native oaks will be among them.

Given that post oaks are irreplaceable and that native trees provide so many valuable ecological services to the entire community, we at *The Post Oak* believe the sacrifice of these trees is too high a price to pay for longer fairways. We have no issue, however, with the clubhouse improvements.

If you agree that Ditto's trees should be saved, please add your voice to ours and let Arlington city officials know how you feel.

Preliminary Observations on Parking Lot Biology John Darling

Introduction: It is often stated that we know more about the moon's surface than the ocean depths. An insignificant corollary may well be that we know more about the marine abyss than we do about the nocturnal ecological systems of parking lots. As we learn more about the first human-caused extinction event, it behooves us to take stock of ignored ecosystems such as parking lots — our future Wildscapes.

Materials: Numerous mentally and emotionally challenged dogs that Simply Must Be Walked.

Methods: Laborious pedestrian activity, primarily in and around large university parking lots; similar route almost nightly for about 3 months. Or was it 17, or 93? Probably more.

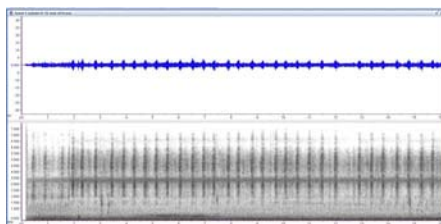
Results — Abiotic factors; While no actual measurements were taken, certain physical factors were evident. The surface was essentially featureless, and water was generally absent (see exception below). At the start of the survey period it was hot and sticky, but recently it has been pretty darned nice. Major changes during study period were construction and a switch from high-pressure sodium to LED lights. Except for the lights, it's a lot like a prairie but with asphalt.

Organisms observed:

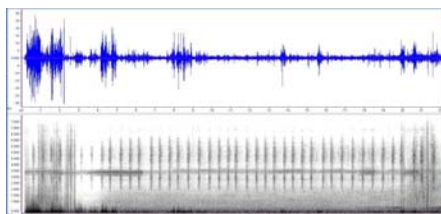
Moths, mayflies, and other small flyers — seen irregularly, flying around certain large lights.



Katydids — heard two kinds of songs in early summer; one abundant species, the other apparently represented by a single individual singing in an isolated tree. In late summer heard only one individual of the previously abundant species. One slightly musical conehead noted on base of light but no singing heard.



Actual sonograms of the katydids — yes, it's Science!



Tiny beetles on light standards — abundant and consistently observed on bases of light poles. Apparently one species, less than 1 mm total length.

Diving beetle — two individuals, one on each of two consecutive nights. Two species? Or male and female of one species?



continued on page 13



Parking Lot continued from page 12

Crickets – not noted until large numbers appeared suddenly, apparently in response to rainfall.



Giant water bug – only one individual observed; appeared within a night or two of rainfall and was moderately frightening.



Gulf coast toad – one to three males calling from a muddy puddle created during parking lot renovation. Present for over a week, until puddle dried up. Now paved over, so this valuable wetland has been lost.



Killdeer – one pair (apparently) heard or seen irregularly over several weeks.



Night heron – possibly Yellow-crowned. Observed only rarely and in dark areas; standing in lot, then flying to live oak.



Common nighthawk – overhead; heard or seen on a very few nights only.



Questions for Further Study

Insects at lights: Why fly at some lights and not others? Why on some calm nights and not others? Has switch to bluer LED lights affected this behavior?

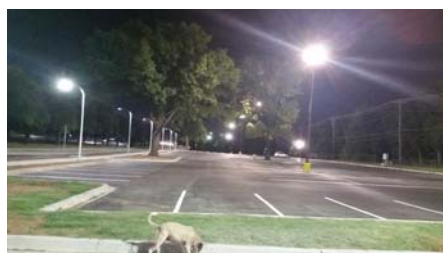
Crickets – Seeking mates or are lights interfering with life cycle? (Bug Guide: Field cricket overwinters as eggs. Nymphs mature through spring and summer; adults most common in late summer and autumn in most regions.)

Tiny beetles: Appear to be resident; what are they eating?

Killdeer – Same pair? Why were they standing in the same general area?

Night heron – Species? One individual or several? Often present but undetected? Not noted during cricket hatch.

Common nighthawk – Why were they heard only on a very few nights? Most activity is known to be crepuscular, so why do they fly so late at times?



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Phone _____	Supporting \$40.00	Renewing member ☐
E-mail _____	Sponsor \$100.00	
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	Other \$ _____	

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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, November 2

Fielder Museum
7:00 – 8:00 pm

Aaron Hoff

***The Village Creek – Lake Arlington
Watershed Protection Project***