

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POST OAK

**VOLUME 21, NUMBER 6
JUNE 2020**



GIANT CONEFLOWER AT UTA



June Meeting Canceled

Stay Safe



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From the President

Dick Schoech

Things Won't Be the Same After the Coronavirus, but What is the New Normal for ACC?

Experts are telling us that this pandemic will change the way humans interact with each other and their environment. But what does this mean?

Last month I mentioned the emotional and intellectual stages people go through during a major change. We are entering the final stage, acceptance-retrospection. We can either sit passively by as we shelter in place or take advantage of the coronavirus by defining what this new normal means for people's interaction with other people, with other species, and most importantly with the planet, which seems to be telling us that our old views and interactions have to change. We can help define how this new normal translates into ACC's actions in Arlington and DFW. In this and future messages, I will speculate on this new normal. And since we are all in this together, your thoughts are welcomed and the *Post Oak* agrees to publish them, be they a phrase, quote, sentence, or more substantial discussion.

Our complex planet is telling us that we must find ways to live in harmony with it or suffer more severe pandemics, food shortages, floods, fires, wars, human migrations, etc. If the bioblitzes that we have been conducting in our parks over the last several years tell us anything, it is that most people know very little about how our planet works. I grew up on a sustainable dairy farm where our practices were based on what worked in the past for my European ancestors. I enjoyed nature, but thought little about the intricacies of our ecosystem. I understood little about animals except that people needed milk and we could earn money by raising and milking domesticated cows and selling the milk. To give milk, our cows needed hay and grain and a barn to live in during the cold winter months. We needed a large garden for our family of six kids to survive. Our busy life left little time to speculate on how our planet worked or how sustainable our life style was.

In my small German community, Benedictine nuns from Switzerland lovingly pounded the value of education into our lives. Sadly, we had

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ACC POST OAK

Our mission: ACC works to protect Arlington's natural environment through education, community service, and advocacy for a sustainable future

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Bits & Pieces

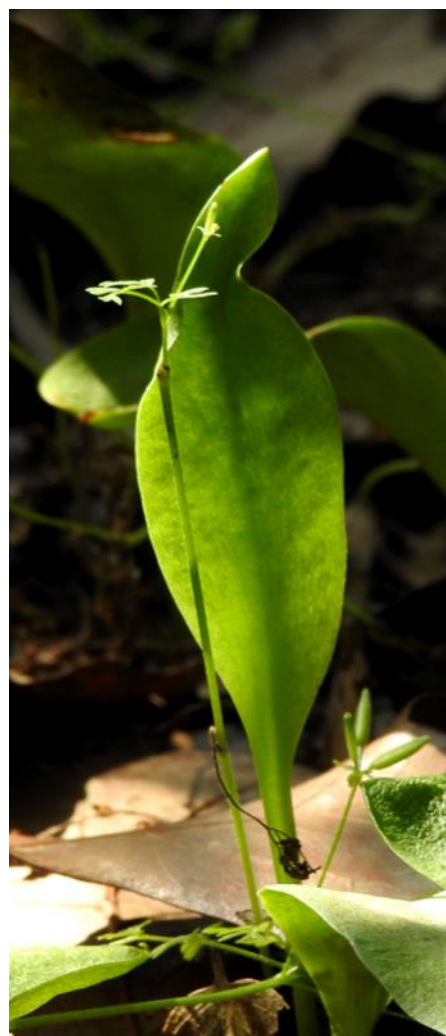
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National Prairie Day

The day is coming right up on Saturday, June 6 in case you need an extra reason to appreciate our grasslands, local and otherwise. Our little Blackland Prairie Natural Area is looking wonderful (page 10), but it's fair to say that a visit will require plenty of bug spray and steady feet to push through the wonderfully tall, lush growth. The easiest path: Stroll over to the latest Prairie Notes for a beautiful look at the early summer blooms of Tandy Hills. Better yet, get out there and walk around on the trails. Now is surely one of the best times of the year to enjoy this gem.

Bad Beetle?

The other night we bumped into a black caterpillar hunter beetle. This brute is a fast, active nocturnal hunter that captures moth and butterfly caterpillars with its large jaws. When attacked, the beetle releases a foul-smelling chemical or dashes away. It may live 2 – 3 years, an unusually long time. So why bad?



Of course it's neither good nor bad. Like songbirds, it doesn't care about our pollinator crisis; it seems that everything just wants to eat caterpillars or feed them to their young. Somehow we've got to do all we can to get the numbers back up to satisfy every urgent need.

Join us and act locally.
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on the back page.



Question Corner John Darling

Q: I'm still bored and starting to think you're not a very nice person. All that mockingbird stuff from last month was just way too hard. I still want to connect with nature without actually exerting myself. Don't you have any good ideas at all?

A: Nothing that would fit smoothly into a family newsletter. However, here's an easy one: Drag your recliner over to the window and start observing fox squirrels. For a little background, here's [a site for kids](#) that you should understand. The question for you: Can you figure out how to tell a few individuals apart so you can learn anything about the dominance patterns of those in your yard? We read that they're territorial, weakly territorial, or non-territorial. (Really.) So all that chasing is about establishing and maintaining dominance. But how is that related to territoriality? Good luck.



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From the President continued from page 3

no quick way to get at the vast information that is now instantaneously available via Wikipedia and Google. Books expanded our horizons about what was beyond our small farm when we had time to read them. In the 1950s, television not only gave us Gunsmoke and Saturday Night Wrestling but also opened up the wonders of the world. Nature TV shows explored this wonderful planet but rarely focused on what damage our human practices were doing to it.

In thinking about the future, it is often important to review the past because history tells us that those who fail to learn from our mistakes are bound to repeat them.¹ I often think back to James Bradshaw's May ACC 2019 presentation on what DFW was like before Europeans arrived. Surprisingly, James described a vibrant DFW area with major trading and cultural attractions. The Trinity River, rich prairie soil, hospitable climate, and vibrant ecosystem attracted hundreds of thousands of humans living somewhat harmoniously together while interconnected with tribes throughout the Americas. This culture lasted for hundreds of years and was sustainable until the European culture arrived. European diseases killed 9 out of 10 indigenous people and the rest were removed to

reservations in Oklahoma and beyond brought on by settlers wanting land. While the invading Europeans typically considered natural resources an asset to be exploited, indigenous people called these resources their relatives to be treasured and respected. It is interesting to speculate what the DFW area would be like if Europeans never arrived. However, a more pressing activity is to see whether indigenous people's interaction with their environment can help us establish a sustainable new normal.

One concept that our new normal must challenge is that bigger is better, i.e., growth is good. This concept was and often still is blindly accepted. However, it may be a major source of many of our current problems. Growth is like a recreational drug; it gives a quick high but is not sustainable. Just like drugs, over time growth leads to all the associated difficulties that come with any addiction. The DFW area brags about being one

of the fastest growing areas of the U.S. Growth pumps money into city economies and allows opportunities such as parks, sports, art museums, good restaurants, etc. We know that DFW and Arlington's growth are not sustainable, but we are in the middle of our addiction with little time and resources devoted to sustainability. The neighboring cities of Dallas and Fort Worth are taking this sustainability much more seriously than Arlington.² My feeling is that urban growth and sustainability are like oil and vinegar, they do not mix well without constant agitation. It is groups like ACC that must provide this agitation.

We can't go on growing by abusing our earth. We can't continue extinguishing other species just to multiply our own. Cutting down and paving our natural landscape is short-term stupid. Why have we come to expect that we should not fish

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Trash in the Trinity River

From the President continued from page 6

and swim in our creeks and rivers due to human-caused pollution. All the flooding in Arlington over the past several years is the earth telling us that things have to change. Arlington's major response to flooding has been to seek funds to buy out homes and move angry homeowners to higher ground, but this is a poor solution. Arlington needs to see its creeks and rivers as major assets rather than as hazards to be controlled or relegated to parks and recreation. Fracking is another short-term stupid approach that a city unconcerned with sustainability welcomes. The earth responds with earthquakes that illustrate just one of the many problems future generations will face due to fracked wells that are quickly abandoned. The coronavirus forced us to stay at home and stop abusing the earth so we could see what cleaner air, less litter on our streets, friendlier neighbors, etc., are like, but sadly many humans are eager to get back to the old normal.

The coronavirus is just another way the planet is telling humans that our current interaction with the earth is unsustainable. Environmentalists have a responsibility and difficult job

ahead figuring out what sustainable living on the planet means and how to achieve it. Organizations like ACC whose mission involves educating citizens about environmentalism and sustainability are needed now more than ever. Roll up your sleeves, it's time to get to work and map out what a sustainable future looks like for our air, water, energy, food, i.e., our planet. What concepts other than growth must be challenged? This is my initial attempt, so I welcome any ideas related to what a new normal might mean for ACC, Arlington, and DFW. More important, how can a sustainable "new normal" be achieved? The coronavirus has people searching for answers. Send your comments to ACC at postoak@acctexas.org or newnormal@acctexas.org.

Additional information

1. <http://www.nffonline.com/industry-news/2014/08/28/those-who-fail-learn-history-are-doomed-repeat-it>
2. http://www.dallascitynews.net/city-council-unanimously-passes-citys-first-comprehensive-environmental-climate-action?fbclid=IwAR0iabiVsYIW3Muys6XA0YUX10V803sC3j_t0lxzE8teeKt7G5l-xpmncmw

TO BLOOM ONCE AGAIN **John I. Blair**

Yesterday
I was stumbling around
Trimming the weeds
Near the edge of the house.

As I turned to the side
I suddenly saw
Hiding behind
An old mock orange

A bright flash of red
Where nothing bright
Had appeared in years,
Nothing lovely.

An amaryllis
Missed by my spade
Three decades ago
When I planted the bush

Had somehow survived,
Tucked deep in the soil,
Hiding in shade,
Undisturbed;

And thirty years later
Conditions were right
Despite utter abuse
To bloom once again,

To bloom once again.

©2020 John I. Blair,
4/29/2020

The Arlington Environmental Hall of Fame

We read that pollinator gardens of any size can help the bees, butterflies, beetles and other insects that are suffering catastrophic decline. But can a garden be too little to help? Here's a very small pollinator garden at the UTA/City community garden that seems to say you can do a lot in a tiny space. Gardener Cheryl Coy and others made this oasis happen, and it's good to all the insects here, doing just what they should do.



Bonus E-Hall of Fame

More UTA, more good plant choices. This flood mitigation area includes some natives that take flooding, the only milkweed on campus (apparently) and curb cuts to drain parking lot water into planting beds before it's slowly released into a small tributary of Johnson Creek. *(The Hall needs your help. Want less fame and more shame? That's easy: Just take a photo and send it in.)*



A Few May Moths From Around the House



Blackland Prairie Site Photos by Guy Random



Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason

For a while there, injury and COVID-19 were thinning out the WS volunteers.

Having family members with compromised immune systems kept Teresa Day-Fickel and Bev Crawford away. Just plain caution has kept Joe Martinez away.

Greenhouse volunteer Glenn Troutman broke his thumb, Charley Amos hurt his leg, Marylee Thomason fell from a tree while attempting to get back on a ladder and sprained her shoulder. Larry Norris got a pacemaker.

Whew. But! Two new hard-working regulars came along and lifted our Wednesday energy and enthusiasm to pre-virus levels.

Introducing Ramona Gratton, former wildscape volunteer who has returned with vigor. She grew up on a farm in Rowena, OK, the second of six children and the only girl. The farm crops were cotton and maize. They also had chickens and cows and a large vegetable garden.

She left for college at Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio and graduated with a degree in American studies. At the University of Oklahoma she became a programmer steeped in COBOL. You know, one of those people



Ramona Gratton at the wildscape decked out for work

who saved the planet from Y2K when computers had to learn to go from 1999 to 2000. Mention that scare and emotional memories flash across her face.

Ramona has always enjoyed being outdoors. She loves to hike, ride bikes and dig in the dirt. She and husband Terry both took Master Gardener training and came to the wildscape to get their service hours. Terry is very involved in Master Composters, and the

wildscape is lucky to have Ramona as an active volunteer.

Then there's Robin Agee, local girl furloughed from work and anxious to get back to nature. Robin and her sister had an amazing childhood growing up on Lake Molly Hollar in Woodland West. She went to Baylor and then UTA while working at Raignone Galleries, an art gallery with locations in Las Colinas and Arlington.



Robin Agee

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Wildscape Update continued from page 11

After college she traveled Europe for a five-month summer, returning to settle in Hollywood, where she worked on a video for The Ramones as well as a United Artists horror film. Leaving the “glamour” of the movies behind, Texas beckoned, and Robin slid into the luxury of regular hours and benefits in the insurance industry, where she remained for over a decade.

Eventually restless and seeking more independence, she changed hats again to work at Al’s Hamburgers, the iconic North Arlington burger and beer joint. After a few years, she had an opportunity to go to Waters, a fine dining, sustainable seafood restaurant in Sundance Square, where she mingled with the fine folk of Fort Worth until COVID-19 rode into town.

A chance stop to compliment Marylee’s beautiful columbine brought Robin to the wildscape. Here she found her tribe, a chance to make a difference, and brought full circle the boundless curiosity and passion for every living thing she found as a child.

.....
Wednesday, May 27, was a lucky day with a band of volunteers showing up to work, plus a family visiting — mom Katherine, sons Ethan and Nate, daughter Lydia.



Joe Martinez and visitors. Mother Katherine said they live close by and experience Veterans Park frequently. They could only visit once last year but hope to come more often this summer.



Ethan spreading the mulch that Joe dumped on the path



Lydia and Nate helping shovel

voted Best Grandpa at a WOW, took them under his wing. He must have some magic because they worked for hours!

The high point was finding two ground snakes in the mulch pile. It was so exciting to hold snakes because they might bite you, but fun because they didn’t. Lydia collected a family of roly-polys and only reluctantly put them down when it was time to go home. The snakes had to be released, too. They slithered back into the pile, and that place was seriously designated as a No Dig-

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Wildscape Update continued from page 12

Spring weeding continues at a furious pace — sometimes.



"Ann, is that you napping?"

"Me? I'm just hanging out here on the prairie with my friend Carol."

O fearless leader, Wildscape band,
We know you cannot sleep,
At least at night in comfy bed.
Mattress lumpy? Paul steals the sheet?

But when you lie on ground so firm
Where weeds abound and spiders nest,
With the warming sun and grass so sweet
You can give in to welcome rest.



Carol Marcotte: "Hi, there. I'm over here social distancing 20 feet away in my own patch of weeds."

Lessons worth passing on: Carol Marcotte showed the weeders how to recognize Virginia wild rye, which we don't want, versus Canada wild rye, which we do. The key is the length of the seed head and the position of the first leaf below it.

The former has a 3-inch to 4-inch seedhead with the first leaf below so close that the two make a V when held together (for Virginia, don't you see). Canada wild rye has a seedhead up to 10 inches long and a longer space between it and the first leaf on the stem below.

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Wildscape Update continued from page 14

Ann Knudsen took interested volunteers on a trip around the upper trail in search of the devil's own shrub, which is currently in full-scented bloom. Privet is an invasive non-native that creates thick masses, blocking out the sun for native plants of all sizes. Privet-pull parties commemorate Molly Hollar's birthday in honor of her perpetual battle with it.

It is important to differentiate privet from yaupon holly, which is native to Texas, blooms in the spring and produces prodigious bright red berries on female plants. Privet plants have twins — two leaves growing directly opposite each other. Yaupons



alternate



opposite

have staggered leaves, each leaf about half an inch from the next one on the stem.

Whispers from the Hollar-scape.

Jane Oosterhuis told all, and they were intently listening, about how butterflies have sex. She recently noticed two butterflies that seemed to be tightly joined

fluttering around on the ground in her yard. Why would they risk being so vulnerable? And for so long!

Research was required. Jane found a book on butterflies and watched a *Nature* program that showed how butterflies attach at their abdomens facing away from each other during sex. A male will cling to the female for hours (six hours in Jane's yard) to prevent another male from mating with her.

Jane approached the couple occasionally, wondering if she could scare them into separation, to no avail. She closed the door on them at dusk, hoping for the best.



Privet

Yaupon holly

ging area.



Marylee Thomason

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One Last Wildscape Thing

From Josephine Keeney: *Above*, The new kiosk from the front. All plants around the kiosk are volunteers planted by Mother Nature. *Below*, Looking at the kiosk from downhill. In the foreground, the Butterfly Garden, which is amazing this year.



Urban Tree Deaths

Have been linked to leaks from natural gas pipelines. A [recent study](#) in Massachusetts found that dying city trees are 30 times more likely to have roots exposed to methane in the soil from leaking natural gas pipelines.

BARRED OWL John I. Blair

Last night while looking for the moon
I turned to view the sky above my chimney
And saw an outline, dark against the haze,
Perched high atop the corner of the brick.

It was clear that something there
Was looking back at me.

Wrapped in the gloom we traded stares,
Equally surprised no doubt;
And then the shadow blinked,
Took silent flight, and flapped away.

Later, in the house, I scanned my books,
Seeking a name by which to call my prize.

Likeliest surmise: a barred owl
(Known by many other names as well),
Commonest of urban owls of size,
Secretive enough that few will spy them.

I prefer to pick a name some give it by mistake:
Bard owl. The poet's owl.

©2013 John I. Blair



Southwest Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy, Jan Miller

Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve

Friends of SWNP events and programs are free and open to the public.

For more information about Southwest Nature Preserve and to sign up for email updates, see www.swnp.org

No activities or meetings are scheduled at this time.

Due to continuing concerns about protecting ourselves and each other from COVID-19, we are cancelling our June and July programs. And following the same guidelines, we are postponing most of the planned Friends projects. But a couple of really essential activities continue, with social distancing. Jim Frisinger is taking on removal of Johnsongrass in the Pollinator Meadow's trail and Rudy Arnold continues trail improvements. Many thanks to Rudy and Jim.

Despite everything, the Pollinator Meadow continues to develop. Here is a sampling of images from this and previous years. The photographers are Laura Capik, Annabelle Corboy, and Jim Frisinger.



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Southwest Nature Preserve continued from page 17



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Southwest Nature Preserve continued from page 18

Yucca moths at SWNP *John Darling*

Last November in this newsletter I wrote a little bit about yuccas and moths, foolishly ending with, “Make a note for a night walk in April.” Easy to say, but the more I learn, the worse it gets in terms of new questions sprouting out of one simple little question: What’s going on with our SWNP yuccas? I don’t know much more than I did six months ago, but here’s my update.

Things I know:

- Yuccas require yucca moths for pollination and yucca moths require yuccas for their eggs and young. Seems like everybody on the Internet tells this story.



Here’s a good version. And another.

- The Glen Rose yucca (*Yucca necopina*) occurs at SWNP.
- The plants are producing seeds, presumably fertile, so a yucca moth is pollinating them.
- Something is eating some of the seeds. Larvae of yucca moths eat only yucca seeds.

Things that might be happening here:

- Of the true yucca moths, *Tegeticula yuccasella* (the yucca moth) appears most likely to be the species involved. That moth is widespread and it pollinates the most species of yucca, maybe about seven. *T. yuccasella* is referred to as a complex that could easily be a number of distinct species, each possibly pollinating only one — or maybe more — species of yucca. (I’m really not set up to do the required mitochondrial DNA analysis; I can barely spell DNA.)
- However, we could (also?) have the bogus yucca moth, *Prodoxus*



decepiens, a parasite that looks very similar to the yucca moth but does not pollinate yuccas. It lays eggs in the flower stalk and the young develop there. I have not yet looked at flower stalks for evidence.



On May 17, my supervisor (aka Grace/Gracie) and I took photographs of a white moth on yucca flowers at SWNP and submitted them to iNaturalist. We suggested yucca moth and one person agreed, but this is the only iNaturalist record for the whole state. (Huh?) Several scientific papers include records for *T. yuccasella* from Texas, but not from our area. So the moth could be here, but iNat somehow doesn’t know that.

The photo appears to show a female about to insert pollen into a yucca’s stigma. If so, this is a true mutualistic yucca moth, probably *Tegeticula yuccasella*.

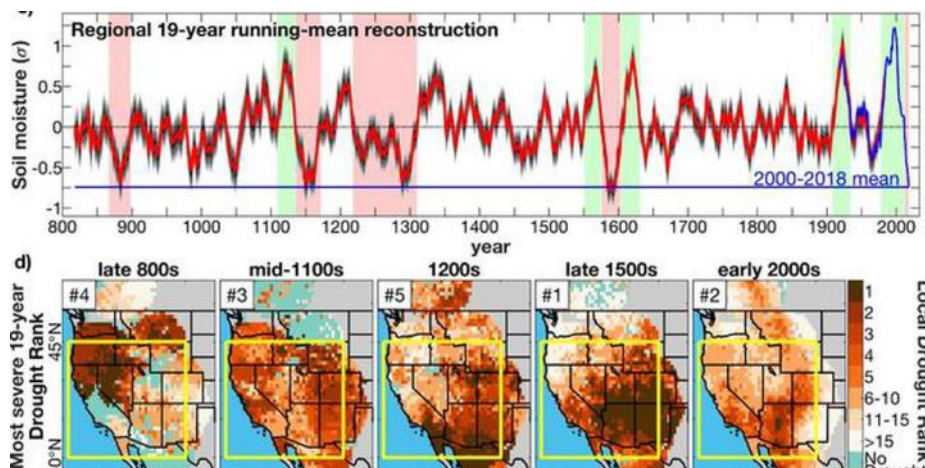


In Case You Missed It Grace Darling

There is no pandemic. It was a hoax after all, concocted by those blankety-blank liberals to keep righteous 'Mercans from getting their paychecks. Why else, on this last weekend in May, would Cooper Street look like it does every Friday evening between Thanksgiving and Christmas? None of those silly masks that fog up your glasses and steam limp your beard, please. And if you want "social distancing," well, you'd better look out for me, little lady, 'cuz I'm coming through anyhow.

If you were not dropped on your head as a baby but are nevertheless a bit tired of C-19 news *all the time*, I bring glad tidings: We still have a whole planet out there to enjoy and worry about. Here are some tidbits from the natural world, both good and bad.

U.S. Southwest in grip of historic "megadrought," research finds. Intensified by cli-



mate change, the current 20-year arid period is one of the worst on record, with wide-ranging effects. A recent [study](#) published in *Science* helps explain how the current period of severe aridity is stoking fires, depleting reservoirs, and putting a strain on water supplies to the region. "You see impacts everywhere, in snowpacks, reservoir levels, agriculture, groundwater, and tree mortality," said a co-author. "Droughts are these amazingly disruptive events. Water sits at the foundation of everything." According to NASA, 19 of the 20

warmest years on record have occurred since 2001. Climate change, if unchecked, will hit the American Southwest particularly hard. "Global warming has made the drought much worse than it otherwise would have been," said the researcher. "We estimate 30% to 50% is attributed to climate change." (*The Guardian*, May 29, 2020)

The EU's green recovery package sets a marker for the world. The EU's plan seeks to pour money into emissions-busting sectors: home energy efficiency and green heating, renewable energy, clean cars and charging points within 2 years. Up to 60 billion euros (~\$66.64B) will go to zero-emissions trains and clean hydrogen production. At least a million green jobs will be created, with workers in polluting industries helped into new roles, a critical part of the plan. A large chunk of



In Case You Missed It continued from page 20

the investment will go to states with the heaviest coal use, such as Poland, Germany, and Romania, to minimize the risk of protests against green measures. This is politically necessary despite investment in the green economy already being a no-brainer. The EU plan may even have a direct impact on the rest of the world, with a border tax on carbon-intensive industrial imports from other nations potentially raising revenue to subsidize elements of the scheme. In the words of the EU commission president, Ursula von der Leyen: "Sooner or later we will find a vaccine for the coronavirus. But there is no vaccine for climate change. Therefore [we] need a recovery plan designed for the future." (*The Guardian*, May 28, 2020).

Closer to home, the Dallas City Council on 5/27 unanimously approved its **Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan (CECAP)**, to the delight of most right-minded folks. Years in the making, the plan's eight overarching goals are to:

- Make buildings more efficient.
- Generate and encourage renewable, reliable, and affordable energy.
- Ensure Dallas communities have access to sustainable and



affordable transportation options.

- Make Dallas a zero-waste community.
- Protect water resources and communities from flooding and drought.
- Protect and enhance the city's ecosystems, trees, and green spaces that in turn improve public health.
- Provide all communities with access to healthy, locally grown, and sustainable food.
- Ensure all Dallas communities breathe clean air.

(from *The Dallas Weekly*, May 28, 2020)

The Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex has been identified as a **top mosquito city** by

Orkin's analysts based on the number of residential and commercial customers who requested mosquito treatment between 4/1/19 and 3/31/20. Presumably, higher than normal rainfall and higher than normal temperatures led to a speeded-up mosquito life cycle and increased population numbers. Of the 176 or so mosquito species in the U.S., all of the females want to drink our blood, but *Aedes aegypti* is the most important vector.



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Min Case You Missed It continued from page 21

According to the CDC, **West Nile virus** (WNV) is the leading cause of mosquito-borne illness in the U.S., and there are no vaccines or medications for the disease.

Although most symptoms are mild, WNV can cause inflammation of the brain. The **Zika virus** is spread primarily through mosquito bites, and there's no vaccine or medicine for it either. In pregnant women it can cause birth defects, miscarriage, and stillbirth.

Malaria is caused by *Plasmodium* sp., a trypanosome parasite transmitted by mosquitoes. About 2,000 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States each year, the vast majority in travelers returning from countries where malaria occurs, many from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Globally, the WHO estimates that in 2018 about 228 million clinical cases occurred and 405,000 people died of malaria, most of them children in Africa. The WHO also lists **Yellow Fever** (YF), a mosquito-borne viral disease of humans and other primates that is currently endemic in over 43 countries in the tropical regions of Africa and the Americas (read Deep South).

Infection with the YF virus can be asymptomatic or cause a wide spectrum of disease, from mild symptoms to severe illness with bleeding, jaundice and ultimately death.

Over 30,000 deaths occur each year and this figure would be much higher without vaccination. (from *CDC.gov* and *WHO.int*, accessed May 29, 2020)

Finally, the good news, or as close to it as we get this month: In 2019 Texas voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment dedicating **94% of the tax from select sporting goods items to the park system** with the remaining 6% going to Texas Historical Commission. What voters approved was not a new tax, but the dedication of revenue from an existing sales tax. It was an idea first approved by voters in 1993, but over the years the majority of the funds were hijacked by the legislature for other purposes. The sporting goods tax revenue, along with entrance fees, was expected to be a much-needed infusion because as recently as 2015 the system had identified \$800 million in needs. In 2018 the

sporting goods tax had generated \$165 million, and everyone was rubbing their hands for a chance to tackle some of that deferred maintenance . . . and then came the coronavirus. Already the state sales tax overall is down 9.8% in April. Maybe more important than the lost admission revenue in March and April has been the shutdown of retail stores and reduced sales of certain items that fund the sporting goods sales tax. But TPWD officials remain optimistic: What is different in this setback compared to the past is that it is just that, a setback and not a death sentence. As the economy returns so will the revenue, and that long-delayed road maintenance and construction will get started. (from [The Panola Watchman](#).)



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June Meeting Canceled
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