

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 7

JULY-AUGUST 2020



IT'S OFFICIAL: SAY GOODBYE TO THIS "MARSHY MESS" • SEE PAGE 12

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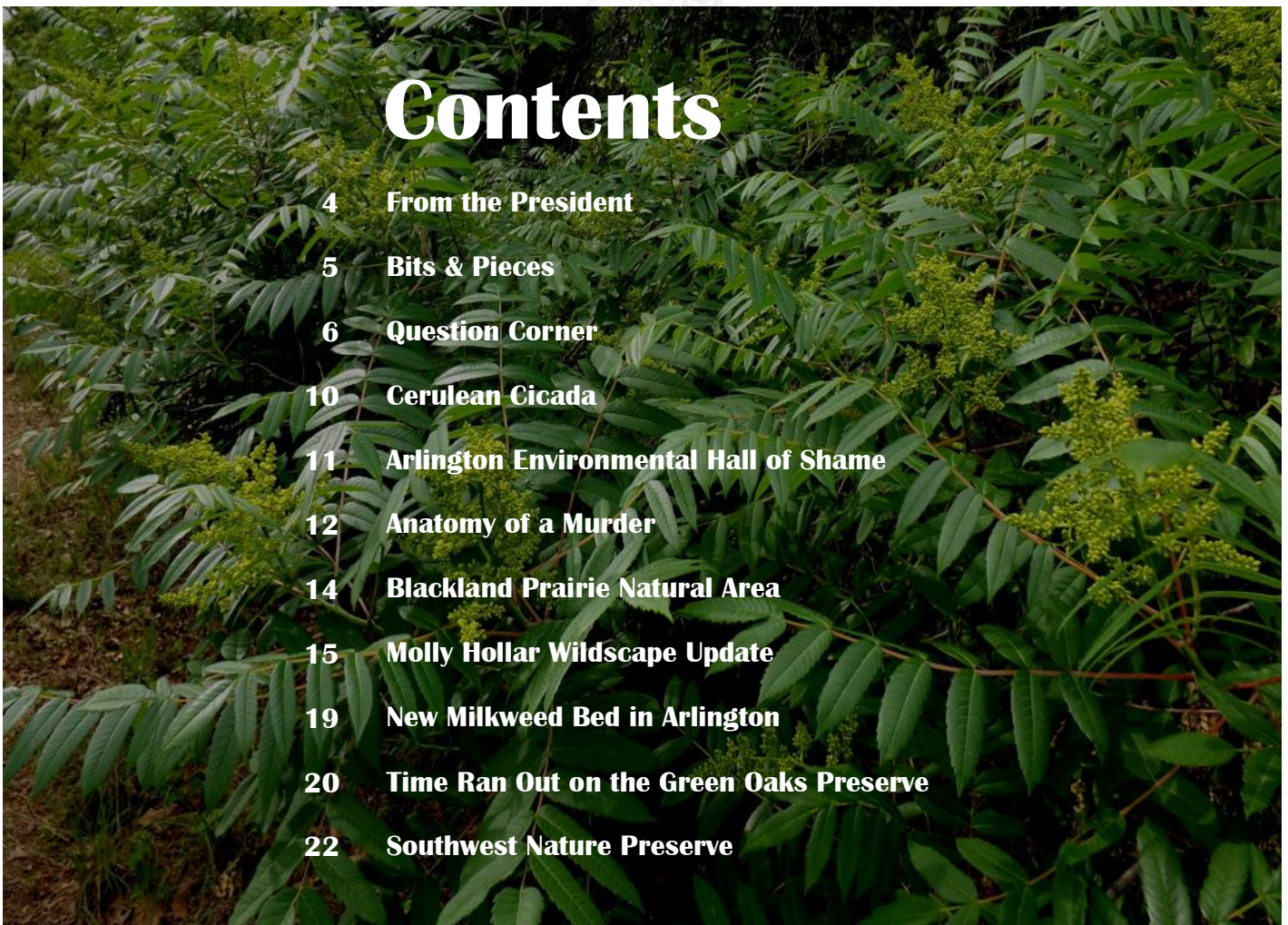


THAT'S RIGHT — TWO MONTHS,
TWO COVERS, SAME GREAT PRICE

TOO LATE FOR GOODBYE: NOTHING LEFT TO PRESERVE • SEE PAGE 20



**No parade
No meeting
Stay safe**



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From the President

Dick Schoech

New Normal After the Coronavirus — the Need for Increased Diversity

“Variety is the very spice of life, that gives it all its flavour.”

William Cowper, *The Task*, 1785

Last month I focused on the need to challenge and temper our “growth is good” attitude with concerns for the environment and sustainability. This month’s message focuses on how the coronavirus has exposed the need for diversity, especially biodiversity, in many aspects of our lives.

The coronavirus spread and videos of overly aggressive policing have made our society eager to rethink and change basic systems, concepts and values. Protesters in cities across America have risked catching the coronavirus to demand change from elected officials in many areas of society. Young people are especially looking for a new normal since they will inherit all the business-as-usual systems with fewer resources to change them. Their demand for action is urgent:

“Adults keep saying, ‘We owe it to the young people to give them hope.’ But I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act as if your house is on fire. Because it is.”

– Greta Thunberg

Many of today’s hot spots for the coronavirus are places involving similar people doing similar things in similar situations, e.g., nursing homes, meat-packing plants, prisons, etc. Food production offers a good example of how the virus requires us to rethink current practices to develop the new normal. In the old model, family farms supported by a network of county extension agents were able to change quickly when problems arose and solutions were proposed. Today’s factory farms and large-scale operations proliferate because they allow concentration and mechanization to do things a little cheaper. We now have monoculture farming supported by multiple pesticides applied by GPS-controlled equipment.

continued on page 7



ACC POST OAK

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

Published 10 times a year by
Arlington Conservation Council
P.O. Box 216, Arlington, TX
76004-0216

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Bits & Pieces

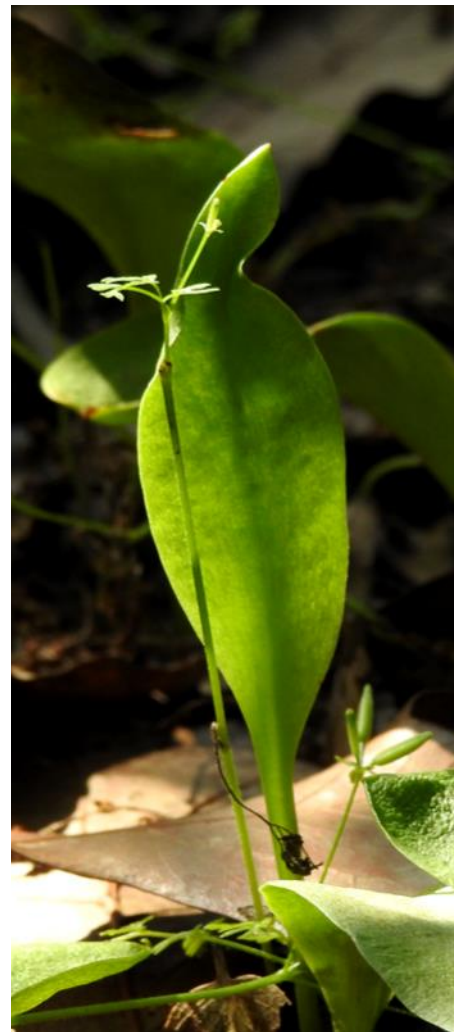
The terse tree hugger

New campus cleanup crew.

Low bid.



visit us on the web
www.acctexas.org



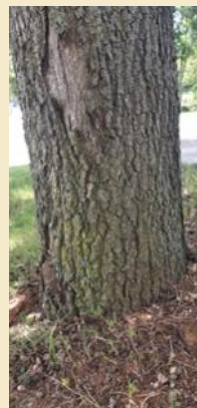
Big Money for the Outdoors

The U.S. Senate passed the [Great American Outdoors Act](#) on June 17 and sent it to the House for a vote. The bill would create the new National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. This fund would receive 50 percent of receipts from the development of oil, gas, coal and renewable energy on federal lands and waters. The Restoration Fund would direct 70 percent of funding to the National Park Service, 15 percent to the U.S. Forest Service, and 5 percent each to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Education. Deposits to the Restoration Fund would be authorized for 5 years (FY 2021 to FY 2025) and capped at \$1.9 billion annually.

You Gonna Die or Not?

A few years ago workers added dirt to a strip with several live oaks after the adjacent parking lot was paved. This oak fared worst as it got 6-8" of dirt piled around its trunk and onto its surface roots. We know you can't do that; you'll kill the tree.

Now what? Do we hope for tree death so we can say, "I told you so"? It looks okay so far, so maybe we can just be glad it's ignoring the rules and hope it thrives.



Join us and act locally.
Use the application form
on the back page.



Question Corner John Darling

Q: Okay, time to get serious and explain this bird to me. For the record, I'm not your usual made-up supplier of questions; I'm a real person who has become fascinated by this odd bird. It seems familiar somehow, but the more I look at it, the more confusing it becomes. (And by the way, if you have to make up imaginary question people because real ones won't talk to you, do a better job.)

A: I will treat your ridiculous question with unwarranted sincerity. It is unlikely that your bird is real, but it possesses a number of almost interesting features. Somehow, woodpecker is the overall impression, but the plumage, crest and neck band hint at blue jay. Certainly the toes could belong to any number of passerines (not woodpeckers), while the beak invokes some raven relative, except for the color, of course. The frontally directed eyes are incorrect for anything other than owls. Finally, the leg color would be appropriate primarily for certain sandpipers. You're welcome. Next!



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

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From the President continued from page 4

A simpler example of the need for diversity is in our food. Advocates for healthy eating tell us to “Eat the Rainbow” by having at least three colors on your plate for every meal. They suggest eating vegetables and fruits with all different colors because they top the list as powerhouses of nutrition.¹

The benefits of a diverse, healthy native ecosystem are being explored. Birders point out that the lack of diversity in bird populations indicates a degraded environment. For example, shopping centers typically concentrate look-alike stores surrounded by parking lots containing a few species of trees. As a result of this lack of diversity, they are typically overrun by a few bird species like pigeons and blackbirds such as grackles. Songbirds, butterflies, and other pollinators are nowhere to be seen around shopping centers.

Arlington illustrates the problem of a lack of diversity in landscaping. Fifty- to 200-year-old post oaks and other native species are continually being replaced with non-native, fast-growing species that may look pretty but are not suited to the environment or nurturing to wildlife — e.g., Bradford pears, red-tipped photinias, nandinas,

and the nightmare privet that is taking over our parks and suffocating local species. ACC has been sounding the alarm and working to diversify the plants in parks like O.S. Gray, the Wildscape, and Southwest Nature Preserve. However, these few victories just hide the fact that we are losing the battle to keep native plant diversity throughout Arlington.

The non-native St. Augustine and Bermuda grasses seen on most lawns present another problem. Their lack of biodiversity is compounded by excessive water requirements, constant mowing, and the need to treat them with weed killers and pesticides to keep them looking good. DFW was much cooler before its diverse vegetation was cut down, plowed, and eventually turned into practically a monocultural metropolis.² The benefits of exposure to natural surroundings are well known.³ Studies of women show that those who live in the most natural and green environments have about a 12% lower mortality rate from all causes.⁴ Researchers report that 30 minutes of nature exposure per week is associated with reduced rates of depression by up to 7% and of high blood pressure by up to 9%.⁵ Natural areas are some of the safest places to exercise during this pandemic;

social distancing is easier to practice and the nature-induced endorphins flood the bloodstream.

One example of an ACC effort to foster biodiversity in our natural areas is Friends of Arlington Unique Natural Areas or FAUNA. This group advocates for the establishment and maintenance of public natural areas that are often neglected because they do not generate the income that comes from park picnic pavilions and ballparks.

Sustainable diversity must be a guiding principle of the new normal for humans and their environment. How do we get there? We welcome your ideas. Send your comments to ACC at postoak@acctexas.org or newnormal@acctexas.org.

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Reaction to June's Presidential Message John Darling

Last month Dick invited responses to his column. I've condensed his thoughtful piece (maybe badly) to this:

1. Experts say the pandemic will change how we interact with each other and with the environment.
2. We can't go on treating the environment as we have.
3. We should challenge the idea that growth is automatically good.
4. We must work toward a sustainable future. How?

Just by chance, I am working on this newsletter on [World Population Day](#). Dick's third point made me flash back 50 years to Zero Population Growth posters that proclaimed something like, "If ZPG isn't your main cause, then your cause is lost." Another flashback: Flying into DFW, mesmerized by endless evidence of people, wondering how many iterations of the suburb, the strip mall, the parking lot do we need before we get bored and do something else?

I am stuck on Dick's growth point, and that's not good. For me it's the only point, and it's the meanest one. When I was born, there were about 2.5 billion people on Earth. Now there are 7.8 billion. They say global population will stabilize at 10 billion – 12 billion by 2100.

Stabilize how? Will everyone be extras in a Mad Max movie? Will we even make it to 2100, or will we all be heat-resistant cannibal cockroaches thriving without oxygen?

We take it for granted that we must grow or somehow fail. I used to ask city officials if the growth of something or other was necessary. Never got a good answer and took a long time to think that it's people. Always more people, therefore more McDonald's, more SUVs, more water, more pollution, and the latest nightmare, bigger, faster, stronger global warming.

Problems with worrying about overpopulation: 1) It's too hard to fix in a civilized way, and 2) the ugly implications. For example, some places will hit stability long before others whose starving residents will risk death to live in a half-decent place. That sounds horribly familiar. So if you crave ZPG, are you anti-immigrant? (Not in this house.)

And yes, the environmental connection is huge. More people means destroying more of the natural world — we're burning more than 150 acres of Amazonian rainforest every

minute of every day to make pastures for future hamburgers. Even if we all became vegans overnight, more people will still need more houses, more sewage treatment plants, more everything.

Closing thought from an environmental restoration class: There's often a strong relationship between the way many businesses treat their workers and how they deal with the environment. The classic example is coal companies, their horribly treated workers, and their environmental devastation. And of course, having more people has until recently meant more coal.

Well, I honestly don't know why, but I'm still the editor here and I say my word limit is about up. Is my response more than a self-indulgent rant? I can't find anything useful or hopeful in it. No, wait: Habitat is the thing and crises are everywhere. For me that means whatever we protect now will have even greater value tomorrow. Habitat is an ACC thing, so let's please, please do that. Somehow. (Bad timing for this plea; see pages 12 and 20.)

Response from Dick Schoech

I agree totally with your comments. It's sad that no one today is talking about population growth as the real overarching problem. The nonprofit advocacy group ZPG has even changed its name to the bland "Population Connection." What on earth does population connection mean?

I am reading *Touch the Earth* by T.C. McLuhan, which contains speeches of American Indian chiefs (1) as wars with the white man killed their brave men along with women and children, (2) as their land was taken, and (3) as they were moved to reservations. The predominant complaint in these speeches is that the white man keeps multiplying and consuming the land that Native Americans inhabited, respected and loved. The white men were like viruses, spreading rapidly and devouring everything in their path. Like President Trump, they lied, made and quickly broke promises, and had no connection to Mother Earth — only to themselves. The white man did not even practice the teachings of their religion. Even when American Indian tribes retreated to small reservations to isolate themselves

to get peace from the white man, the white man would not leave them alone. They got the Native Americans addicted to rum, stole their possessions, discovered gold or oil on their reservations, which the white man's legal system would then take away from the Indians. Even today, the coronavirus is devastating American Indian populations the worst.

Western civilization has much beauty and value to offer, but it has a dark side that needs to be recognized and controlled to make it more friendly and amenable to humans and especially to Mother Earth.

By the way, I think it is much more civilized to fix population growth than to have people suffer its consequences such as famine, war, permanent refugee settlements, and the struggle for resources to live.

The only other problem as big as population growth is income inequality, which is out of control in autocratic and democratic countries worldwide. Only a few Scandinavian countries have bucked the trend.

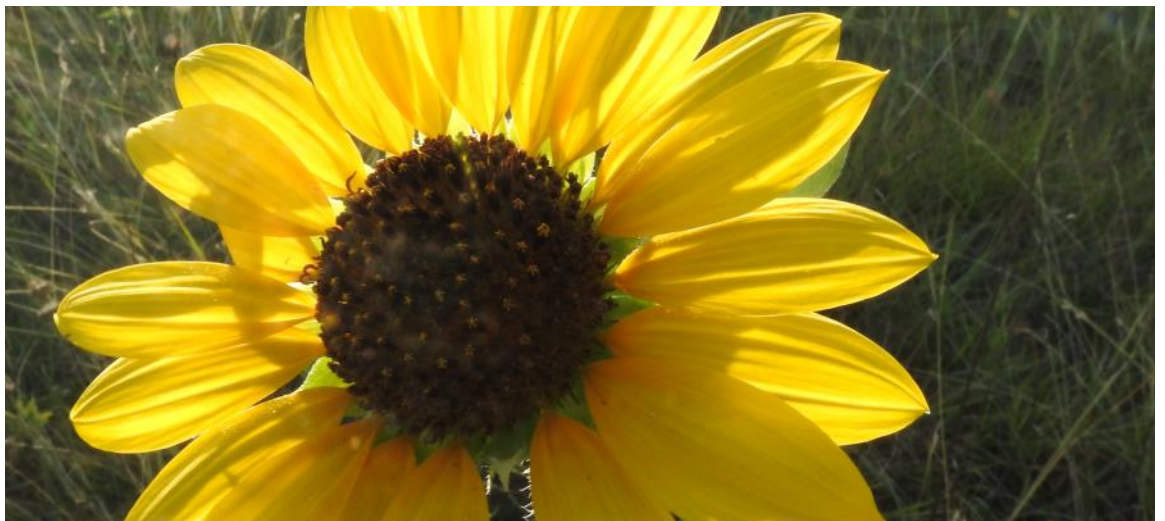


A Cerulean Cicada Carol Marcotte

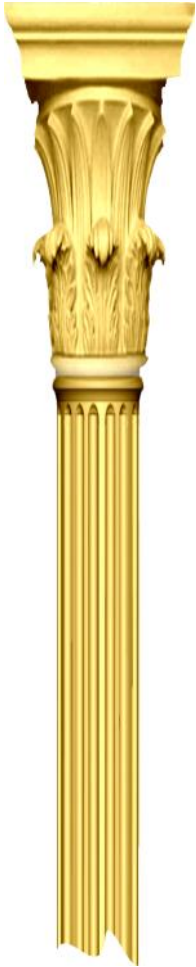
From Carol Marcotte, a brand new adult cicada at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge begins a radically different life as it emerges from the exoskeleton of its last-stage nymph. For more on cicada life, [read this](#).



A sunflower,
unrelated to
cicadas, or to
anything really.
Just because
we all need
more sunflowers.



Arlington Environmental Hall of Shame



This one's too easy: What do you do when it's time to move and (I guess) you've run out of trash bags? Here's one answer. Not exactly an environmental catastrophe, but really now, couldn't we aim a little higher?



Assorted Bits

“Healthy feet can hear the very heart of Holy Earth,” Sitting Bull would say.
He was usually up before dawn, walking barefoot in the shortgrass.

A good review on a sad subject: [What's gone wrong with plastic recycling?](#)

On a local note, watch historian OK Carter on [Marrow Bone Springs](#).

Big donation from Amazon: **Family Forest Carbon Program**

Let's hope we can attend in person: The [1st Annual RCE North Texas Symposium](#) will bridge silos between education, public sector, private sector, and non-profit in support of education for sustainable development (ESD).

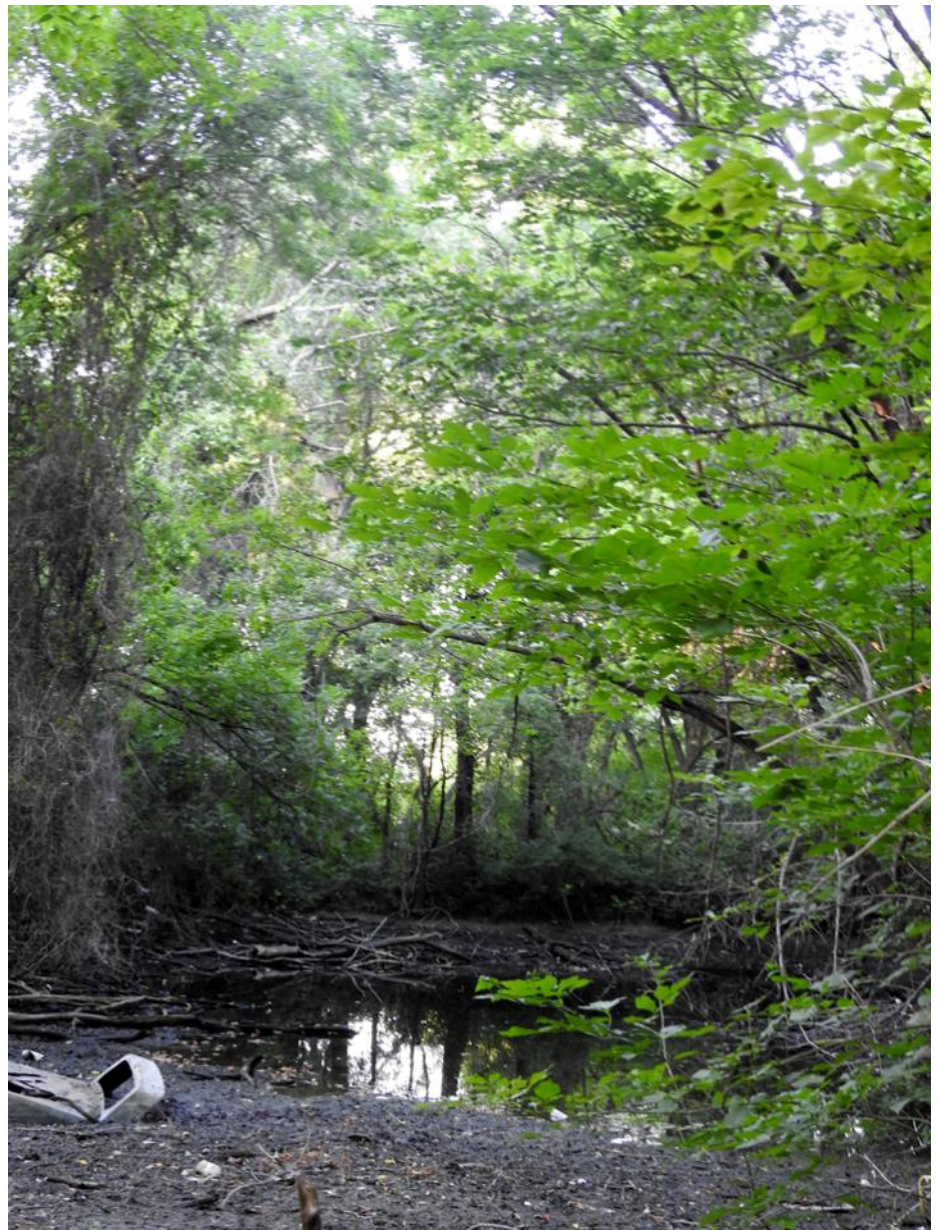
And don't forget, **July 16 is World Snake Day**

Anatomy of a Murder — Part 1 Grace Darling

On June 30, the Arlington City Council voted 6-2 to approve a 64-townhome development project in a wetland (PD19-12) on Mayfield Road just east of South Cooper Street. Local tree huggers wrote letters trying to persuade city leaders to deny the rezoning application on the basis of increased flooding risk and 800+ trees that would be sacrificed by the proposed construction. They lost.

In their presentation that evening, the developer's consultants showed a series of historical aerial views as evidence of scarce tree cover on the property until the early 1970s, arguing that the mature trees on the site were but a few decades old and not deserving of preservation. Ironically, the photos underscored the presence of a riparian wetland thriving on the very spot they plan to pave over — a point lost to all but the few of us who had visited the property after a rain and seen the enormous quantities of water the place now holds.

“Riparian zones dissipate stream energy with vegetation and root systems [to] slow the flow of water, which reduces soil erosion and flood damage. Sediment is trapped, reducing suspended solids to create less turbid water, replenish soils, and build stream banks. Pollutants are filtered from surface runoff, enhancing water quality via biofiltration. The riparian zones also provide wildlife habitat, increased biodiversity, and wildlife corridors” (Wikipedia). Small wonder that our state has a *Texas Wetlands Conservation Plan* designed to protect and preserve such a valuable resource. At its debut in 1997, Gov. G. W. Bush said, “The plan also focuses on providing private landowners with information to assist them in making informed, economically beneficial management decisions,



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Anatomy of a Murder continued from page 12



while at the same time protecting wetland functions and maximizing the benefits that wetlands provide to all citizens.”

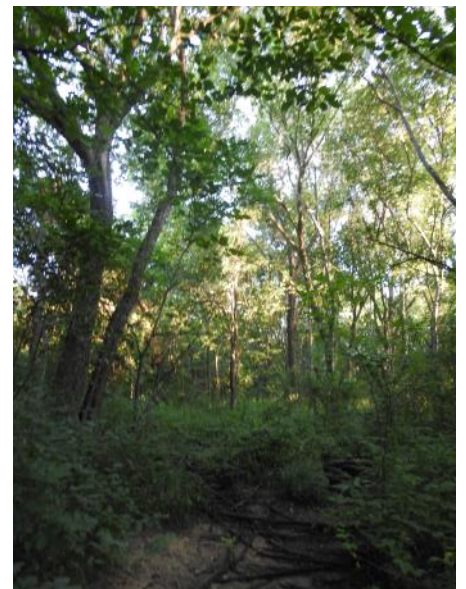
Sadly, city officials did not recognize the 9.5-acre site with a seasonal stream and riparian corridor for the wetland it is. The environmentalists’ cries for a delay in the proceedings to conduct local stormwater assessments and independent tree valuation studies went unheard.

With their approval of the project, the council condemned this wetland to oblivion, opting instead for the complex engineering scheme of culverts, channels, and off-site retention pond offered by the developer. To their eternal shame, these ill-

informed stewards of the land rushed to approve the project without independent confirmation of the applicant’s drainage claims, relying on a totally inadequate ordinance and antiquated tree list, and in direct contradiction of current best management practices for wetlands and riparian zones. In their ignorance, council

members gambled the natural site’s real value to the community for the dubious hook of economic development of the area. Now let’s talk about a bridge I have in Brooklyn.

[Note: Part 2 will examine the systemic failures of this case and what can be done to prevent them.]



Blackland Prairie Site Photos by Guy Random



Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason

A day at the Molly Hollar Wildscape is a day of adventure for volunteers and visitors. This month there was a big bug, a four-legged feral hog hunter and two snakes discovered. One family came three times to help dig and trim and ride in the Kubota. Thanks to Joe Martinez, progress was made on the second rain garden despite a downpour delay, and several painted rocks were found and re-hidden. We even had our tools sharpened for free on the spot.

How many ways can you have fun outdoors? Sorry if you missed it!

June 10

Weeding was the order of the day for most of us. Three outliers managed their separate tasks.

Josephine Keeney and Ramona Gratton tended the beautiful butterfly garden at the entrance,



Joe Martinez with a load of supplies for the day's activities.



Joe at the rain garden with Nate helping. "I thought I was almost finished," Joe said, "when Ann looked and told me she wanted it dug down six more feet."

which always needs watering and trimming and invites admiration. Joe Martinez brings shovels, forks, rakes, loppers, kneeling pads, weed bags, water connectors, hoses and traffic cones from the vault, then puts everything away at the end of the day. He disdains weeding and chooses the tougher up-right jobs instead.

If weeding along the sidewalk sounds boring, it most decidedly

was not. Volunteers Carol Marcotte, Jane Oosterhuis, Robin Agee and Ann Knudsen made great progress and received many compliments from people enjoying the park.

The past few weeks, Joe Martinez has been digging the second rain garden, aka Joe's Ditch.

On the First Saturday, he commandeered Eric Strickland to

continued on page 16

Wildscape Update continued from page 15



Marylee Thomason (left) and friend ride in style.



Ethan dumping the load. This is serious business.



Lydia gets the hydraulics lesson and admires her handiwork.



This visiting family had spent the morning finding and gathering painted rocks with plans to bring them back to re-hide them for future adventurers. Jane Oosterhuis helped by donating a bag of painted rocks she had picked up. The kids were thrilled and set right off to hide them. "Who cares if we haven't had breakfast yet!"

help move mulch by wheelbarrow from the parking lot all the way over the No Horse bridge up the hill to the top of the sidewalk. It's a long hard slog one time; they did multiples.

Being a smart guy, Eric drove his Kubota over to do the job the next week.



Loading compost into the back of the Kubota.

When you are the boy with the best toy, you get the girls and the kids. Marylee Thomason thumbed a ride as soon as he showed up. The kids — Ethan, Ryan and ydia — were helping weed and trim with their mother, Katherine, and they were next in line.

A snake! A snake! Nate spotted a green garden snake in the Mexican plum tree near the weeders. So exciting. He wanted very badly to go get it out of the tree, but a phalanx of wildscapers were equally determined to leave the snake in its home. Nate went off muttering that if his brother had been there, he would have had that snake.

The next big find was a wheel bug, named for its spiny ridge. A shy creature, it preys on soft-

continued on page 17

Wildscape Update continued from page 16

bodied insects, not people (no matter how soft-bodied they are). Everything is scary because it might bite, but Robin Agee showed no fear.

With that good example Nate braved up and let the bug crawl on him. Lydia wanted to be brave, too, but just couldn't. Next time.

June 17

Eric Strickland brought the Kubota again, and work progressed on Joe's Ditch.

Did Ramona Gratton strong arm her husband into coming to sharpen our tools? We may never know. He professes to love doing it, and he did a great job.

Always the unexpected. Joe Martinez spotted a large rat snake near the culvert under the



Volunteers brave the poison ivy pit.



Terry Gratton sharpening tools. Jane Oosterhuis: "He made them like new!"

sidewalk. Its eyes were still covered and the scales were still gray. Apparently, it had just shed. Slowly it slithered under the sidewalk and out of sight.

June 24

Muddy day after an all-night rain. Jane Oosterhuis suggested and Ann Knudsen concurred: It was a splendid time to pull privet. We all headed to the poison ivy pit near the LTV bridge where the privet grows like crazy. Carol

Marcotte and Jane, wearing long-sleeved shirts, dived right in. Ann Knudsen, fearless with knowledge that Technu poison ivy scrub was in the shed, identified privet for demolition.

Joe Martinez took the job of cutting up the branches for spreading on the hill that some kids challenge themselves to run up. Note to Molly: There were no berries on the privet so no danger of reseeding.

continued on page 18

Wildscape Update continued from page 17

Reinforcements arrived about mid-morning. Hooray for 9-year-old Olivia, a student at Merryhill School. Eric Stickland and his Kubota met us in the parking lot. It was too muddy to work on the rain garden, so Olivia helped Eric and Marylee shovel mulch into the Kubota and deliver it to some newly planted beds.

See what you missed? Watering, planting, trimming, weeding, lots of learning about plants, and camaraderie to spare. We're there every Wednesday from 9 am to noon. Come when you can, leave when you have to.

Also the first Saturday of every month. Same hours, same slogan.

Join us. We look forward to meeting you.

A Little Household Recycling

From Carol Marcotte:

These are two ideas I use around my house to use everything twice.

- 1) The cardboard roll from bathroom tissue is now an electric cord holder.
- 2) Plastic & styrofoam containers are now pots for plants. (Thank you, Dick Schoech.)



CAT BEHIND GLASS

John I. Blair

My shaggy cat
On the countertop
Stares out the window
At a squirrel on the sill
Eating sunflower seeds
From the feeder there.

The squirrel's
Well aware
A cat is sitting
Two feet away
Inside the house
But doesn't care.

Squirrels in my yard
Know two kinds of cats –
Those who lurk
Behind flower pots
Poised to pounce
And dine on prey
Whenever skill
And luck prevail,

The other kind
Behind glass,
No more to fear
Than is the pale man
With shaggy hair
Behind the glass
Who also sits and stares.

©2020 John I. Blair,
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New Milkweed Bed in Arlington Josephine Keeney

We were very happy that on June 16 our NPSOT president, Gordon Scruggs, came to Knapp Heritage to help us plant the milkweed that our chapter had purchased for the demonstration pollinator gardens.

There was no good space in our existing beds, so we made a small bed in full sun by the windmill and planted the milkweed there. Gordon made the little bed.

Thank you very much, Gordon!

We also installed the Demo sign that Troy made for us at the front gate garden. It all looks great!



Our faithful helpers. Charlie and Phyl Baloga, Jane Oosterhuis, Kay Dansby. Demo sign in back.



Gordon with the finished bed he made and planted.



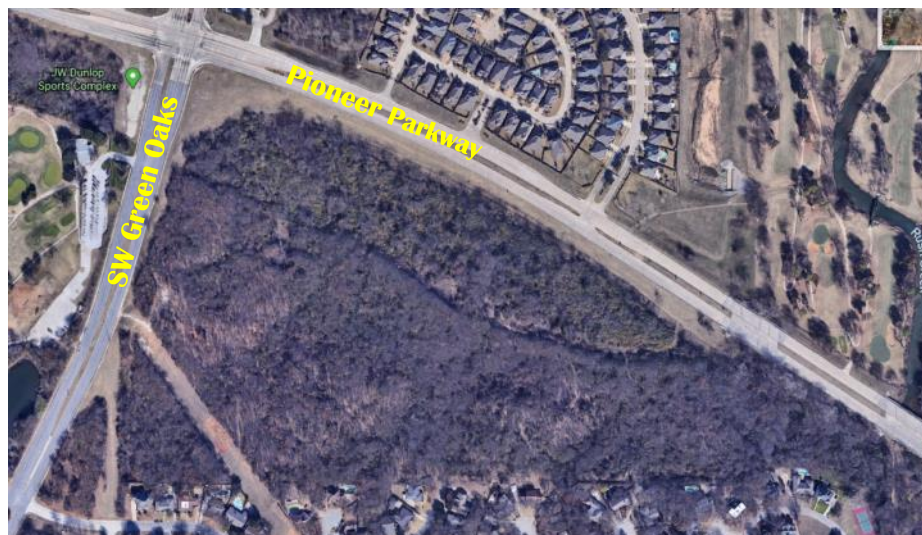
The front bed and signs.



Charley Amos, Jane Oosterhuis, Josephine Keeney, Gordon Scruggs.

Time Ran Out in the Worst Possible Way John Darling

Much of a 60-acre tract of mature post oak woodland at Pioneer Parkway and Southwest Green Oaks Boulevard was already destroyed when I photographed it June 14. Years ago it was slated for gas well development that never happened; it has been living on borrowed time ever since. Now the denuded land will hold houses and commercial buildings, including offices, a take-out restaurant, and a wedding chapel.



This irreplaceable loss is roughly comparable to bulldozing all of the Southwest Nature Preserve. Ironically, the development is named The Green Oaks Preserve.



continued on page 21

Time Ran Out continued from page 20



Southwest Nature Preserve John Darling

Here's more on our little population of Glen Rose yuccas at the preserve. On June 16, Grace and I went out to see if anything might still be happening with the yucca moths we saw May 17. A few yuccas were still blooming, but we found no adult moths.

The big surprise was yucca flowers and seed pods often covered with several species of true bugs (hemipterans) that are known to suck juices from plants. Seems like our yuccas can't get a break: Moth larvae are eating seeds inside the pods while gangs of bugs are sucking them dry on the outside. And of course, there was a predator, the wheel bug, looking for an insect meal along with a couple of other insects, all using the yuccas in some way.



From left, brown stink bug, western leaf-footed bug, eastern leaf-footed bug.



Below from left, moonseed moth larva; wheel bug; and a cuckoo wasp, *Chrysis angolensis*, that parasitizes the larvae of solitary bees or other wasps.



continued on page 23

Southwest Nature Preserve

Below, Unknown bug with reddish immature bugs on yucca seed pod. *Right*, four species of hemipterans on old yucca flower stalk. *From bottom up*, western leaf-footed bug, *Acanthocephala terminalis*, eastern leaf-footed bug, brown stink bug.



Below left to right, yucca seed pod showing characteristic dimples said to be evidence that a yucca moth has laid eggs in the developing ovary; adult yucca moth from May 17; seed pod with partly exposed moth larva. Did some predator make the hole to reach the larva, or did the larva eat carelessly and expose itself to attack?



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POST OAK

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No parade
No meeting
Stay safe