

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

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FEBRUARY 2022

BLACKLAND PRAIRIE SITE • FEBRUARY 2022 • PHOTO BY GUY RANDOM

February Zoom Meeting

**How Climate Change Is Affecting DFW
Ted Ryan, Science Operations Officer
National Weather Service, Fort Worth-Dallas Office**

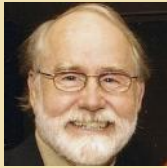
Ted discussed the climate-driven trends in temperature and precipitation that will affect our area in the future, what to expect, and how to prepare for it.

Watch this meeting

<https://megatrans.com/video/acc-2202/>

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From the President

Dick Schoech

What milking cows taught me about raising butterflies

Answer: nothing! Not a thing. But now that I have your attention, let's discuss how intuition and common sense often are not enough when humans try to make living with nature a win-win. We always need to seek the advice of experts with ample experience or from scientists who have studied nature.



Black swallowtail caterpillar. Photo by Carol Marcotte.

When Carol Marcotte asked if I wanted to raise some tiny black swallowtail caterpillars, I quickly said yes since I grew up a nature lover on a sustainable farm and have been a Master Naturalist since 2010. She gave me a container, several caterpillars, and some cuttings of their only food, pipevine leaves. Raising butterflies had to be simple, right? No grooming, petting, buying food from the pet store. I could just toss in some pipevine, sit back, and watch the caterpillars turn into beautiful butterflies that would populate my yard. Was I in for a surprise!

The pipevine cuttings must have contained tiny butterfly eggs because five more caterpillars appeared in several days. Consequently, my seemingly abundant supply of nutritious backyard leaves was quickly being chomped down as the caterpillars grew and grew. A panic call to Carol revealed she had the same problem.

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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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Deadline for submissions is the
15th of every preceding month.
Please send them to
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Bits & Pieces

The Terse Treehugger

Who's in charge here?

Some stupid plant?

Who's going to win,
us or this cypress knee?



visit us on the web
www.acctexas.org



Virginia creeper on post oak

Aptly Named



This question mark butterfly stopped by last week and prompted an Internet search that produced mostly questions. Adults live 6-20 days, but some overwinter. How? Eggs are not laid on host plants, so young caterpillars start by searching for food. Why not stick the eggs on the right leaves? They're said to be good pollinators but only look for nectar if they can't find sap, mud, rotting fruit, dung, or carrion. Good pollinators? Really?

We Made the News

Maybe you've noticed that ACC is doing something with UTA (page 10) to promote our environmental interests. The people at Green Source DFW noticed, and they have posted our news [here](#). And [have a look](#) at the story in the Fort Worth Report while you're at it.



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



Question Corner John Darling

Q: Why don't you ever say anything about tardigrades? I'm reading about them living in wet mosses on a French farm, and yesterday a filmmaker talked about going to Antarctica to film them under the sea ice. They sound amazing! Are you biased? Don't you care?

A: Of course I do. If I were in charge of anything, all puppy videos would be replaced immediately with tardigrades being excessively cute. Not to mention ancient, versatile, and maybe tougher than any other creature on Earth. Thank goodness for scanning electron microscopes; in olden times we saw them only as transparent globs flattened under cover slips on slides. Now we see they're way past cuddly, and any search you feel like trying will convince you beyond a doubt. You could even go crazy and obtain a bunch of actual facts [here](#). Next!



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Liveable Planet

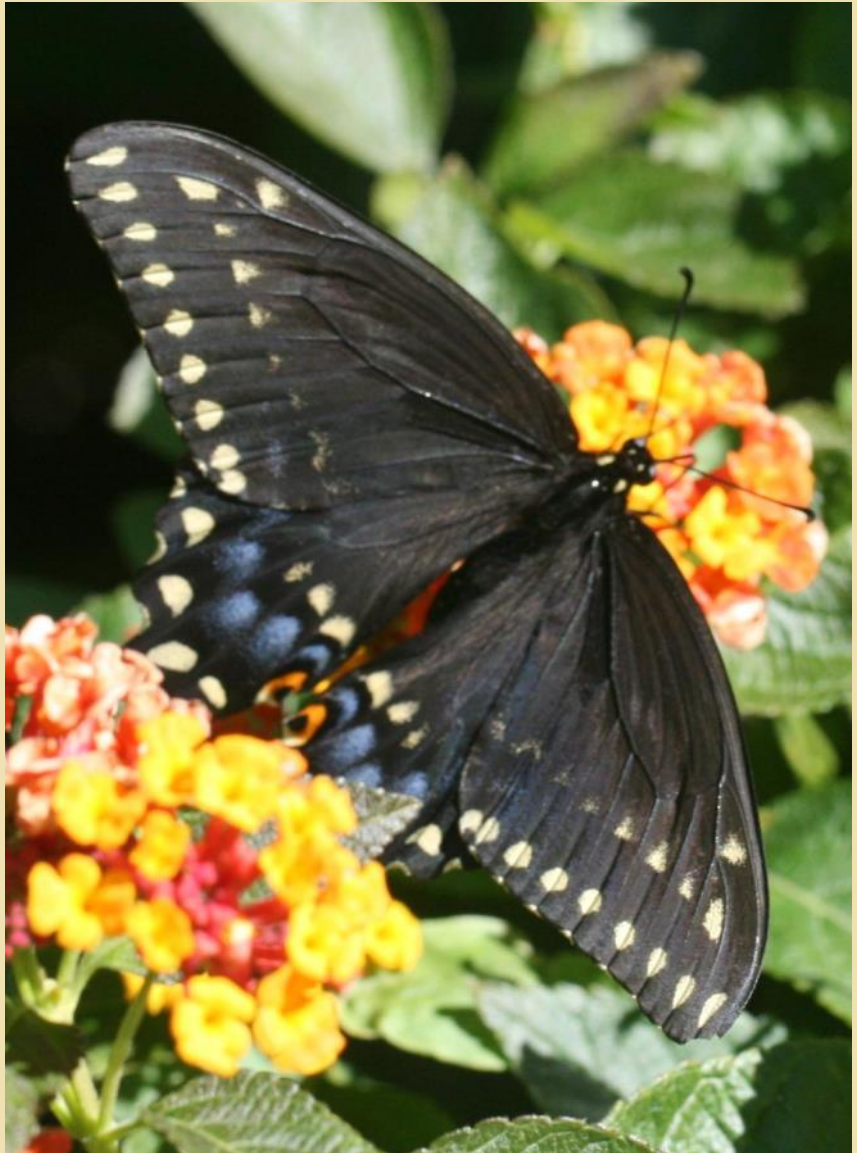


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<https://www.liveablearlington.org>
info@liveablearlington.org

From the President continued from page 3

I remembered reading that the Fielder House pollinator garden had a lot of pipevines, so Carol and I went there to find all we needed. We only found one plant. Turns out native and non-native pipevine look different. The Fielder House and Ann Knudsen's house had the native variety, and Ann could give us plenty. I went home and put some of Ann's native pipevine in the container, but the caterpillars wouldn't touch it. Ann had explained that pipevine caterpillars usually only eat the pipevine on which the female lays eggs. Ours was the non-native variety.

Running out of pipevine leaves would have been a problem but for another issue — some bigger caterpillars began to disappear. Also, our larger black swallowtail caterpillars were crawling around the containers in panic mode trying to escape. Experts told us that as social small caterpillars grow in captivity, they often become cannibalistic.* I quickly had to give each large caterpillar its own container with pipevine leaves.



Adult black swallowtail butterfly. Photo by Dick Schoech.

Thankfully, many larger caterpillars soon dumped a three-inch spot of dark liquid on the container bottom and transformed into chrysalis. However, problems occurred when some chrysalises were not attached properly to the twigs I provided. I carefully used Elmer's to fix the situation. Finally, the chrysalises turned from green to brown, and beautiful butterflies emerged wanting out.

Gently catching and releasing them properly was an important and rewarding task. It was delightful to see them take their first flight, and they hung around the yard several days looking for food. I even think some that flew close to me were thanking me for rearing them.

continued on page 7

From the President continued from page 6

Some chrysalises hatched on cold, rainy days, creating a conundrum. Should the butterflies flapping their wings to leave their containers be released in bad weather? I released one, thinking it would know what to do, only to find it an hour later just sitting on the cold concrete porch. I brought it back in and used Google to determine what the butterflies needed to be fed, what they ate, whether they needed water, and how many days they could go without food. In the end, they all survived and were released on a sunny day.

However, my story does not end with their release. I found a second-generation pipevine caterpillar in my yard several weeks ago and brought it in the house to increase its chances of surviving the winter. When it formed a chrysalis, I followed Google instructions and put it in the cold garage to hibernate until spring. Unfortunately, it turned into a butterfly the first day of the big February cold spell and now frantically wants out. I also spotted another caterpillar trapped under my garage door, and it is recovering but not eating the few pipevine leaves I could find under my oak leaves. I wonder if I am doing the right thing with these two.

This adventure taught me that living with nature is not intuitive. Even well-intentioned humans constantly err, which can lead to serious ecological problems. Note the endangered species list for vast evidence. We lack sufficient information (and political will) for how to balance our overpopulation with our need to coexist with Earth's historic ecosystems.

Saving the planet from human destruction will take expertise from naturalists, historians, technocrats, artists, musicians and change experts. We all must do our share. Time is running out.

*Different butterfly species have their own characteristics, e.g., caterpillars becoming cannibalistic in captivity. Search the web or find a knowledgeable local source for information on your species.

It's Time to Pay Your Dues

Make us bigger so we can be better.

ACC's size is important when voicing members' environmental interests.

See the last page of this newsletter for information on submitting your 2022 dues.

Through with writing checks? You can now pay your dues via PayPal.

[Paypal or credit card HERE](#)

My Nature Notebook

Today this robin nearly barfed!
He (it's a male because he's so bright, really.) was eating berries from a cherry laurel. Right after he ate some, he stopped and looked like he wanted to throw up! Then he swallowed very hard, rested for a minute, then ate some more. Then he did the whole thing again! I do that a lot, too.

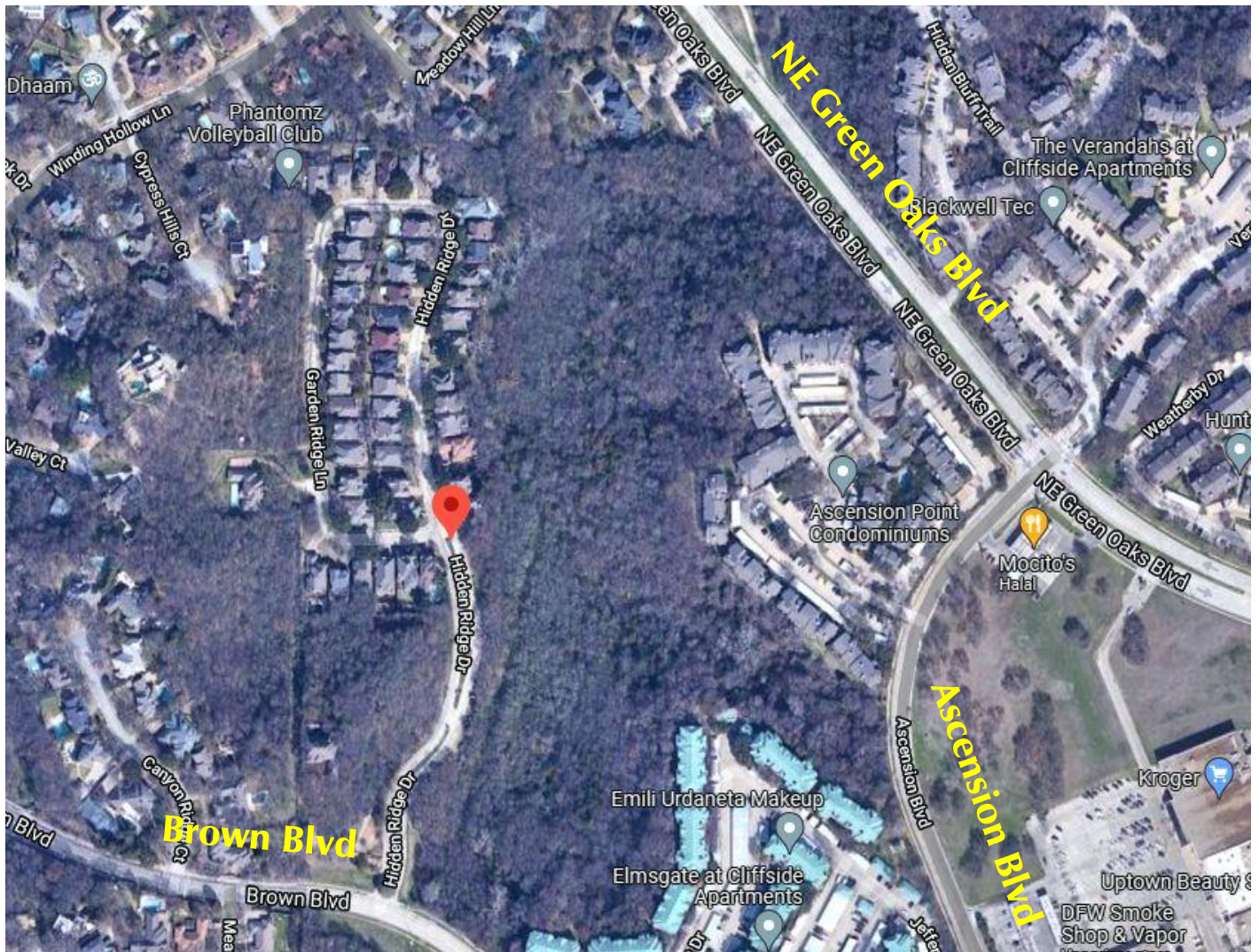


Oak Canyon: A Developing Story

ACC recently learned of plans to develop a portion of Oak Canyon, a densely wooded tract stretching from NE Green Oaks to Brown Boulevard on the east side of Hidden Ridge Drive. Because of its rugged topography, this ~45-acre parcel had escaped the city's relentless efforts to promote development of every square inch of ground — until now. The Green Oaks plat has been sold and the buyer will be asking for a rezoning that will allow the building of townhouses.

Oak Canyon is a hidden gem, rife with majestic post oaks, blackjack oaks, and many other native tree species, which are currently being surveyed as required by Arlington Planning & Development. A stream runs the length of the canyon, fed by multiple rills that now drain the built areas on either side and invisible from above due to the tree canopy. Crucially, Oak Canyon is the central segment of an important wildlife corridor extending from River Legacy East on the north to Clarence Thompson Park on the south. For this reason and so many others this wonderful place must be protected.

We will monitor this all-too-typical situation and will keep you informed of ways you can help. Stay tuned.



Responsibility John Blair



RESPONSIBILITY

Decades-long as time goes
I've fed and watered
Every living thing that moves.

My song was always
Caring for my fellow critters
The only way I knew.

But now I'm old and breakable.
Dragging heavy bags and garden hoses
Down steps and over pavement cracks,

Hefting awkward feeder tubes,
One of these days, as true as true,
Would lay me low, useless at my other tasks.

So I've concluded it is time to quit
And deal with questions of responsibility,
Right and wrong,
Later, from the safety of my windows.

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We're Doing Something Big



ACC has established an endowment with UTA to aid future environmentalists*

The first \$10,000 will be matched 3 to 1. Donate \$100, and like magic you have given \$300.

How's that going?

Looking good so far.

Learn more and donate [here](#)

***ACC has created, with UTA, a funding source for student grants and scholarships in support of environmental integrity and climate resilience.**



Brrr

It hasn't been the worst winter, of course, but a few days ago we couldn't keep from thinking about the Arctic nastiness of last February. This time our members observed the snow and ice through their cameras and, as always, saw things we might not expect.



Jim Domke saw ice and snow on solar panels in SW Arlington, and not even enough melting for an icicle.

Josephine Keeney, native plant grower extraordinaire, saw the tarps in her back yard protecting potted plants that are destined for the Native Plant Society sale, various pollinator gardens, and even for her yard. Josephine says, "We cover them when the temperature is expected to go down below freezing and uncover them when the danger is past. This has worked very well, with the plants surviving freezes just fine. We have been doing this for many years. It is a lot of work but they do the job."



And John Darling listened to chickadees cursing as seeds ran out while a squirrel defeated a new squirrel-proof feeder and blue jays demanded removal of ice from their bath and an agreeable water temperature.



Snowbirds

On the last day of 2021, Dick Schoech and Carol Marcotte saw a wonderful pair of hooded mergansers in Randol Mill Park.



Above, Candy Halliburton saw bluebirds for the first time in her backyard, a nicely posed blue jay, and a Carolina wren with very cold suet. *Below*, Jim Frisinger captured a pine warbler, a dark-sided junco looking much too cold, and a downy woodpecker.



Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason

*Winter crept
through the whispering wood,
hushing fir and oak,
crushed each leaf and froze each web —
but never a word he spoke.*

— excerpt from “Winter” by
Judith Nichols, 1987

January certainly felt like winter. Wednesday workdays were shortened or canceled, but still the stalwart band — Dana Austin, Ramona Gratton, Josephine Keeney, Ann Knudsen, Carol Marcotte, Joe Martinez, Patsy Miller, Ursula Nuñez, Jane Oosterhuis, and Marylee Thomason — managed to weed, water and trim. A stitch in time applies to getting out the burgeoning vetch, chickweed and henbit before they take over the world.



Debbie Stilson displays strong new shovels; the odd-looking one on the right features a serrated root cutter.



From left, Jane Oosterhuis, Joe Martinez, and Carol Marcotte tackled the Amur honeysuckle with loppers and hand clippers before the chainsaw arrived.

The Wildscape Board of Directors approved the purchase of some new tools. Debbie Stilson got with the program, testing two shovels Ann bought. These beauties are rust resistant and have extra-sturdy handles. Note the serrated edges on the one on the right.

Jan. 19 the crew converged to cut down two established invasive Amur honeysuckle bushes in the newly planted Twin Oaks area. Josephine Keeney hated to see us “working so hard” with only loppers, hand clippers, and bow saws, so she called in

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Wildscape Update continued from page 14



Frank Keeney to the rescue.

the cavalry — her husband, Frank — who arrived shortly with a new Black and Decker battery-operated chainsaw. Frank not only brought the saw, he stayed 45 minutes to show us how to operate it. Thanks, Team Keeney.



While Ann Knudsen was watering, a Frisbee whistled by her head. Are we allowed to talk to disc golfers?



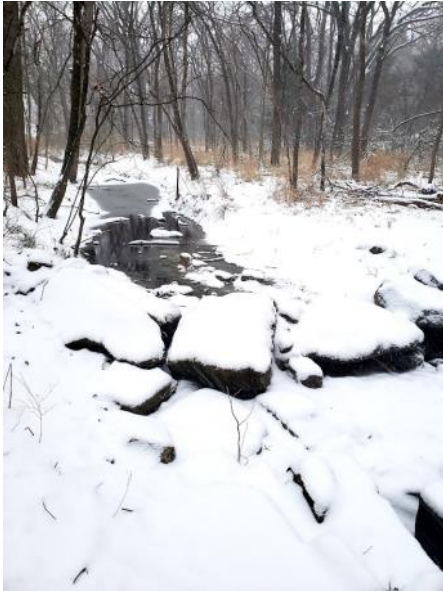
After a long, cold days' work, volunteers emerge from the forest. From left, Jane Oosterhuis, Bob Siglin, Dana Austin, Joe Martinez.

Like Joe Martinez, Bob Siglin isn't crazy about weeding. So he practiced constructive avoidance by installing new hose racks, adding a ledge under the existing tool bars to keep them

more securely on their pegs, cleaning all the tools, and carefully sharpening the shovels. Thank you, Bob. Next time we see you, expect a standing ovation.

Wildscape Flashback: February 2021

photos by Ann Knudsen



Big Bits

Sperry Watch: Stop and Smell the *N-butyl-N-ethyl- α , α , α -trifluoro-2, 6-dinitro-*p*-toluidine!*

It's pre-emergent time, so in the Star-Telegram on Feb. 4, the Garden Guru reminds us not to dawdle when it comes to keeping biodiversity out of your monoculture. He recommends three products. They're below, with notes to consider from the Material Data Safety Sheets for each one. (MSDS are not emotional tree hugger propaganda; they're serious required federal information.) Should we ask ourselves if a perfect, weed-free lawn is worth the possible environmental damage?



Dimension: Prevent from entering into soils, ditches, sewers, waterways, and/or groundwater. Spills or discharge to natural waterways is likely to kill aquatic organisms.

Halts: This pesticide is toxic to fish. Runoff from treated areas may be hazardous to aquatic organisms in neighboring areas. To protect the environment, do not allow pesticide to enter or run off into storm drains, drainage ditches, gutters or surface waters.

Balan: This pesticide is toxic to fish. Do not apply directly to water, or to areas where surface water is present, ... Dirt and runoff from treated areas may be hazardous to aquatic organisms in neighboring areas.

On a closely related note, here's a headline from [a story in The Guardian](#): **One in three Americans have detectable levels of toxic weedkiller, study finds.** The study involves 2,4-D, a weedkiller from the 1940s that was more or less supplanted by glyphosate (Roundup, etc.) but has become more popular recently. Not that Mr. Sperry would advocate more toxins in people, but why not just avoid the whole thing and let those weeds live? After all, henbit feeds early butterflies, then just dies away.

Today's Bird Quiz

How good are you at identifying our backyard birds? A few days ago this timid creature almost came to a feeder but lost its nerve at the last minute. First sighting in this yard in about 45 years. [All About Birds](#) tells us it's an overgrown sparrow that we would expect here only in the winter. It frequents heavy brush and is said to be common at feeders (not these feeders). It has a close western relative that it may interbreed with where ranges overlap.

That should be plenty to go on, but if you need more, check the link and you'll see better photos.

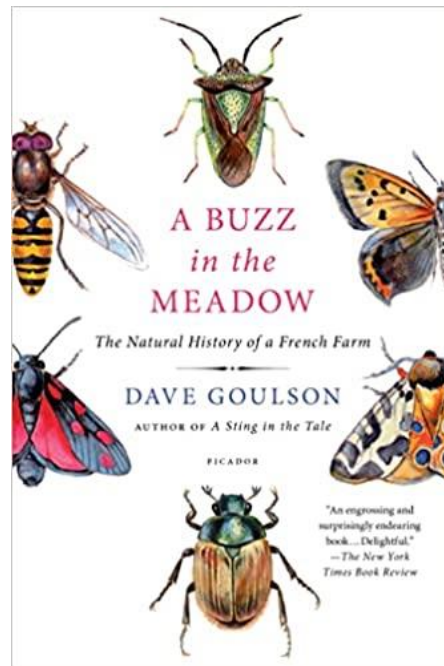


Book Review Grace Darling

A Buzz in the Meadow – the Natural History of a French Farm, by Dave Goulson

In this delightful stroll through “a little corner of the French countryside,” the author introduces us to the natural history of the plants and animals that live there, their complicated lives and roles in the ecosystem, and why they should be protected. A biologist and bumblebee researcher, Dave Goulson aims “to inspire an appreciation for the smaller, everyday creatures that live all around us — the insects and their kin.” He succeeds admirably.

The book is organized in three parts. In the first section Goulson covers the history of the farm and layout of the land, and gives us a first look at some of the creatures on it. This is not a dry scientific treatise — far from it. Chapters on the mating habits of dragonflies — “the couple’s bodies form a rough circle or, more precisely, a rather romantic, lopsided heart shape . . . he hangs on to the female as long as he can . . . they will hunt, sleep, and she will lay eggs while locked together” — and mantises — “once the male’s head has been removed — this is usually the first body part the female consumes — his mating seems to become more enthusiastic, his body pumping vigorously. Of course, his body might as well



give it everything at this point, as it isn’t going anywhere afterwards” — as well as obnoxious house flies, paper wasps, drifting bumblebees, the death-watch beetle and true bugs are preceded by a harrowing account of his PhD research on meadow brown butterflies and the (still unclear) significance of wing-spots on their survival.

Liberally punctuated by footnotes, the book reflects the author’s fascination with the surrounding wildlife in breadth and scope, for example: “Due perhaps to their large size and striking appearance, mantises have long been associated with all sorts of odd beliefs. In North America it was commonly held that they could blind men and kill horses. The French regarded

them as more benign, believing that they would point the way home to lost children, while in parts of Africa they are thought to bring good luck and occasionally resurrect the dead. Not bad for an insect that is but one step removed from a cockroach (they are close relatives).”

In the second section Goulson shows us how the lives of the creatures in the meadow are interwoven with each other and with the wild flowers, how every species is linked, one way or another, to hundreds of others in myriad interactions that we don’t yet understand. Gardeners will rejoice in his assertion that “the bedrock of meadow life is the plants, which capture energy from the sun and transform it into food that ultimately supports more or less everything else.” Of particular interest to the author is pollination, which reveals “a web of deception, competition and robbery.”

Part 3 underscores the book’s purpose, a plea to stop harming the natural environment on which we are completely dependent. By this glimpse at the magnificence of life on a small French farm, still little understood in all its complexity but wondrous and exhilarating despite our ignorance, Goulson hopes to awaken our resolve to conserve it. I’m in.

Blackland Prairie Site Guy Random



How long has it been? 10,000 years, give or take? How much snow and ice? How many blistering droughts? And still you're surprised to see this? We're not playing around here; this is for real.



Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy and Jim Frisinger

Help us count birds for the Great Backyard Bird Count

Join 200,000 citizen scientists counting birds one weekend worldwide

Sat., Feb. 19, 8-10 a.m.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve

5201 S. Bowman Springs, Arlington

Meet at the parking lot



This will be the 15th annual [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) to be held at SCNP. Jim Frisinger will be our leader, and all skill levels are welcome. We all learn by birdwatching with others. Bring binoculars and wear weather-appropriate clothing.

The count will be held rain or shine.

Watch our website (scnpfriends.org) or Facebook for any last-minute changes.

If you have questions, contact us at info@scnpfriends.org or contact Jim Frisinger at jimfrisinger@yahoo.com.

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 20

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species for January, 2022

During January, 8 observers posted 101 observations of 57 species.

One of the highlights of this month was the appearance of some of our winter birds, both songbirds and water birds. A nice treat to see these winter visitors! And a pleasant surprise — maybe due to warmer weather — we had some sightings of dragonflies, butterflies, and grasshoppers.



Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) – Brentano, Fragile Forktail (*Ischnura posita*) – Brentano
Fuzzy Olive-Green Grasshopper (*Campylacantha olivacea*) – Brentano



Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) – Brentano, Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) - jaytee60,
Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) - sam_moore_



Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*)– charley, Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) – charley,
Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) - sam_moore_

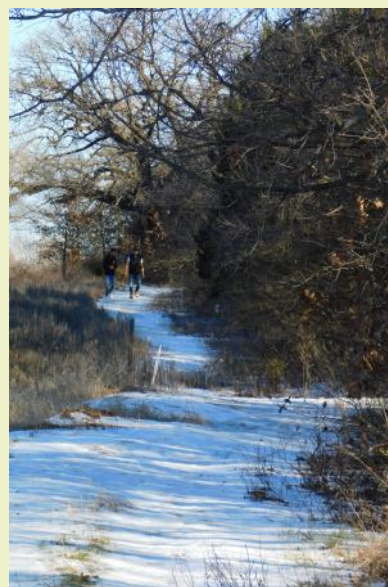
continued on page 22

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 21

No Winter Rest at SCNP

Hard work on restoring land at the northern edge continues. The effort to remove invasive plants, both native and non-native is headed by Jim Frisinger, who has enlisted help from fellow Cross Timber Master Naturalists.

Right, *Volunteers recently removed this exotic Chinaberry.* From left, Karen Shuback, Taylor Thorns, Sami Cline, and Jim Frisinger. *Photo by Jim Domke.* Below, *Yaupon holly, dramatic shadows on the snow, withered coralberries, Caddo oak in the distance.* *Photos by Jim Frisinger.*



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POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
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Arlington, TX 76004-0216

Why is this frozen tree here?
Well, see, it started out as a sophisticated advertisement for the ACC/UTA endowment featuring an original fundraising haiku, possibly the first of its kind. It was an effort to ask for money without being overbearing. But the proofreaders said it ended up pretty much a mess. So, here's an eastern red-cedar instead. Hope you like it.

Not that the editor resents the normally invaluable proof-readers, but he really wants you to have a look at page 11.

Too pushy?

