

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

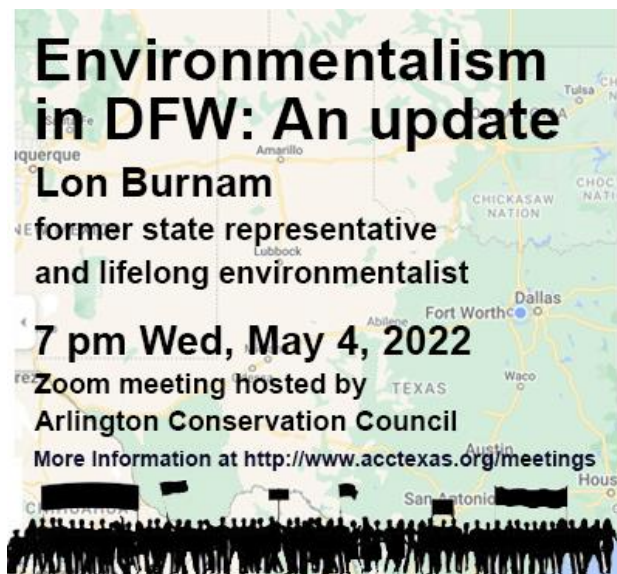
VOLUME 23, NUMBER 5

MAY 2022



OPOSSUMS FLEEING CROWS
PHOTO BY DONNA PIERCY

May Zoom Meeting



Join Zoom meeting with this link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81319727422>

6:30 p.m. Wednesday social time and equipment check
7 p.m. presentation

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From the President **Dick Schoech**



Ah, Spring!

Raindrops glisten on tender spring leaves
 like Christmas tree lights on a damp moonlit night.
 Post oaks mulch earth with their green-yellow tassels
 forcing holdout leaves to drop after one last color burst.
 Critters pairing up in mating rituals
 hurrying from courtship, to home building, to rearing young.
 Nature hikes, trash pickups, native plant sales, in-person meetings,
 where chatting with friends seemed like old times again.
 If spring doesn't make you fall in love with Mother Nature
 it's time to change your life.
 In other words, writing a president's message
 is the farthest thing from my mind.



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



American sycamore, the country's biggest tree. Let's say 100 feet tall, maybe four feet in diameter.

Can live 600 years. But not this one.

A local university needs to knock down the house. Tree was in the way.

visit us on the web
www.acctexas.org



False indigo bush is making hordes of very tiny insects happy.

Mandatory Moth



This common spragueia moth stopped by the other night, just long enough to make all the other moths feel frumpy. You might think, "Just another pretty face" — but you'd be wrong. The preferred larval food plant is the universally hated bindweed. Also ragweed, and that's nothing to sneeze at.

Happy Choice



Want to enjoy exuberant cross vine in an unlikely place? Try the north side of the otherwise unattractive parking garage just east of the Central Library. This long planter could have gone wrong so easily, but someone made a great choice.

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



Question Corner John Darling

Q: In my advance copy of the *Post Oak*, I see that lots of fish died suddenly, apparently from natural events (page 18). Now let's say that many of your readers wanted to make a living and were therefore too intelligent to major in biology. So it's likely that we don't understand why something natural would kill fish, which are, after all, natural. What's the deal here?

A: You nearly hurt my feelings, and besides, I was raised in semi-desert grassland and never thought about fish. But here goes: The basic problem is that warm water holds less oxygen than cold. Then add things that compete for O₂, like dead leaves. Microorganisms rot that dead stuff and need O₂ that might already be in short supply. Some living aquatic plants can use more O₂ than they contribute. Rainwater can agitate the surface and introduce O₂, but it doesn't contribute much and may carry pollutants picked up from the air. Heavy rains wash excess fertilizer off lawns, and that promotes algae growth, and that can also reduce O₂. The deck is stacked, especially in small ponds loaded with fish. Next!



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Common evening-primrose. Photo by Dick Schoech.



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Our May Speaker

Former state Rep. Lon Burnam reached Tarrant County before he was 9 weeks old and, except for under-graduate school, has lived here ever since. He considers himself a lifelong environmentalist, helping organize his high school activities for the first Earth Day in 1970 and joining Zero Population Growth that same year.

He served in the Texas House of Representatives for 18 years and during that time was on the Environmental Regulation and Energy Resources Committee. He served on the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center board and is a founder of the Water District Accountability Project.

Most recently he spoke at two Arlington City Council meetings in support of the Liveable Arlington campaign to prevent more natural gas pumping near a child care facility. His primary focus is on dealing with toxics.

Spillway Garden Update **Jim Domke**

The UTA community volunteer day, the Big Event, on April 9 was a big hit with local groups. Lake Arlington Native Plant and Pollinator Gardens adjacent to the Lake Arlington dam had several groups, including Arlington's Bee City USA committee members, some ACC people, and UTA students help get plants in the ground. UTA groups enjoyed working there so much they wanted to come back and do more! The organizers welcome help from Arlington residents in the morning on Tuesday, May 3 and Saturday, May 21. Other community workdays are planned throughout the summer. Follow news at SaveArlingtonWater.com or contact traci.peterson@arlingtontx.gov to volunteer.



Upper left and center, photos by Jim Domke. Upper right and below, photos by Melissa Walker.



My Nature Notebook

Totally cool. But also gross.

So we found these cool things that are really hard, and each one has a tiny hole in it. A real mystery. Then this creepy old man came by and said they are goldenrod galls left over from last fall. And right before Mama yelled get away from that guy, he said that a tiny fly lays one egg there but sometimes a tiny wasp lays an egg on the baby fly and does terrible things to it. So the hole was made by the wasp escaping and the fly is just rotting bits and pieces. I love nature!



Photo by Grace Darling

Shake & Fold Marian Hiler

How to Prevent Paper Towel Waste

Editor's note: Never doubt that we are your all-purpose tree-hugger newsletter, pushing the boundaries in America's least environmentally conscious city. Evidence, right here:

Americans use 13 billion pounds of paper towels a year. That's a lot of tonnage for something we handle for a few seconds only to toss in a bin. Instead of tearing off a wad of paper towels from the public bathroom dispenser, you actually only need one sheet to dry your hands. Really.

Just use this simple two-step common sense Shake and Fold method.

Shake Flick away excess water off your hands. Mind the person next to you.

Fold (This is the science-y step.) Fold the towel in half to take advantage of "interstitial suspension." A highfalutin term meaning the water gets suspended in the empty space between the paper towel's layers helping the towel be more absorbent.

Joe Smith, a former Oregon District Attorney and passionate advocate for this hand drying method, gave an engaging 4.5-minute Tedx Talk on how to shake and fold effectively. Watch it [here](#). His talk so inspired Cecelia Warner that she created the [Shake & Fold](#) nonprofit organization and campaign to reduce paper towel waste.

If you aren't already shaking and folding, become aware of your current autopilot method of drying your hands in public. Then try this method. You might be pleasantly surprised.



DEAD POSSUM

Walking through my shaggy garden
And looking past the patio
At the brilliant show of pink oxalis
Growing (as they do)
Between the weathered bricks
I laid there thirty years ago
I became aware of death,
Sprawled across the masonry
As polished bones and matted fur.

Only then the awful odor
Started to assail my nose,
Confirming what my neighbor said
When he told me this was here,
The fragments of a possum
Who used to visit nightly
Seeking supper at my door.

I was glad then I'd decided
Not to name the animals
Who come into my yard
And for a time are members
Of my outside family,
For names bestow a personhood
That I might not be prepared
To bid good-bye.

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We're Doing Something Big



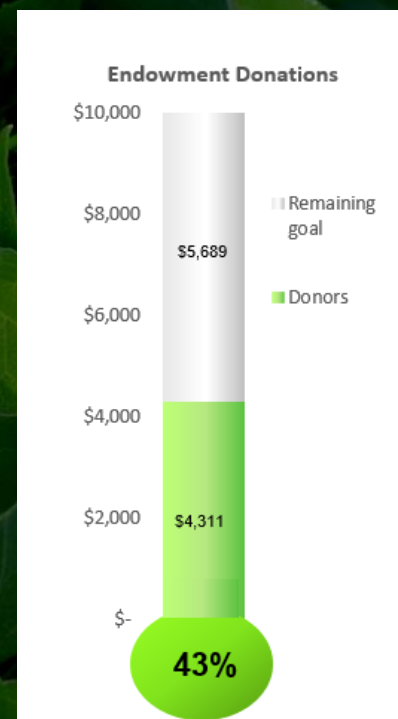
ACC has established an endowment with UTA to aid future environmentalists*

The first \$10,000 will be matched 3 to 1. Donate \$100, and like magic you have given \$400.

**What goes in this spot?
You, thinking of the future,
helping it happen.**

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.**



Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte

Earth Day in Randol Mill Park

It was an especially nice day for the first Earth Day event at Randol Mill Park on Saturday April 23, 2022.

Arlington Conservation Council (ACC), The University of Texas at Arlington College of Science (COS), and the Neighbors of Randol Mill Park (NORMP) sponsored the Earth Day celebration.

Charley Amos kicked off the event with a bird walk through the natural area.



Charley Amos at a tree with a basal scar. He explained the scar is caused by fire or some impact when the tree was young. Over time the scar will close up. Notice this tree is healing from the top down.



Above, Earth Day volunteers plant trees in the park. Below, Josephine Keeney, Joe Martinez, Dana Austin, and UTA students pot sedges in the greenhouse.



Volunteer opportunities included picking up litter, weeding gardens, removing privet, monitoring bluebird nest boxes, planting trees and native plants, and potting sedge in the greenhouse for future erosion control.

The event was a great way to celebrate Earth Day by protecting our planet. Approximately 40

ACC, COS, and NORMP members were joined by several park visitors eager to help. UTA students, faculty, and staff especially loved the hands-on approach to learning about the activities in which they participated.

The Stormwater Division of Arlington Public Works, Tarrant

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Randol Mill Park continued from page 10

Regional Water District, and several individuals donated food, water and promotional items for the volunteers. Arlington Parks and Recreation Department donated shovels, compost, grabbers, gloves, trash bags, and other tools. Molly Hollar Wildscape lent tools and contributed potting soil.

The ACC organizers thank everyone for participating in Earth Day and look forward to similar events.

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Clockwise from upper left, Montana Williams, Arlington Parks & Rec Department Volunteer Coordinator, and Carol Marcotte; some particularly challenging litter removal; Neighbors of Randol Mill Park Kevin McCarty, Jon Stewart, and Joanne Stewart; bluebird box monitor Jamie Brunner.



Randol Mill Park continued from page 11

Randol Mill's Earth Day event brought together a diverse group that included local environmental experts, neighbors, and UTA students for a variety of activities.

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Clockwise from upper left, naturalist and bird authority Charley Amos with native plant specialist Josephine Keeney; UTA students install native plants to help retard erosion along the creek; Star of Bethlehem in full bloom; ACC's Wayne Halliburton and Dick Schoech plant trees with UTA students; Jamie Brunner discusses bluebirds with a park neighbor.



Randol Mill Park continued from page 12



Clockwise from upper left, Josephine Keeney, members of the greenhouse plant team, and UTA students prepare native sedges for planting along the creek; Master Naturalist Kay Sekio; Carol Marcotte and UTA students remove invasive plants from the park's wild area; this yellow-crowned night heron will be one of the many beneficiaries of this day's restoration efforts.



Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason

Family stories are the best. Maybe not the absolute truth, but told with affection and humor. Here are three from the wildscape.

Story #1

Most readers will recognize this old English proverb as adapted by Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanac*. If you don't, don't admit it.

"For want of a nail, the shoe was lost.

For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.

For want of a horse, the rider was lost.

For want of a rider, the battle was lost.

For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.

And all for the want of a horseshoe nail."

Dick Schoech just wanted a simple stone plaque added to Sharon's memorial stones. He and Ann Knudsen agreed on the inscription. Ann was to find the stone, get it engraved and bring it to the wildscape for placement. With her busy schedule, the project got put off until one day she and Marylee Thomason drove to Whiz-Q Stone to see what they could find.

The perfect size, shape and slant arose out of the multitude, and they grabbed it. The process at Whiz-Q is to get some bright blue tape from a salesman, go

back out to the piles to mark your choice, then return to the office where all the important questions are asked and answered. *What do you want on the plaque? What color should the engraving be? Are you in our system? Here's my card. Someone will take your stone to be sent to the engraver. When it's finished, we'll call you.*

Two months passed. Wildscape volunteers kept asking about the memorial stone. Its installation came up as an action item at board meetings. Always the answer was the same: "It has been ordered, and we're waiting to hear." But Ann never did.

When she couldn't find the man's business card, she called Marylee. "What do you remember about our trip to Whiz-Q for the memorial stone?" "Everything except the salesman's name. Let's go out there and choose another one."

Again they went directly to the stone piles. As they got close they spotted a stone right on top of a heap that was exactly the right size, shape and slant. It was perfect. In fact, it was the perfect stone they found the first time, and still with Ann's bright blue tape. They headed straight for the desk. Nope, no record of the order, but happy to make another one. *Are you in our system?* Yes, we

have bought from you before. At the end of the transaction, the man gave Ann a copy of the order. She had been racking her brain over why the first one wasn't processed. One glance at the page and she laughed. The contact name was Molly Hollar, and the phone number was hers, too!

Moral of the story? Assume nothing.

For lack of a question — "What contact information do you have in your system?" — the contact was lost.

For lack of a contact, the confirmation was lost.

For lack of a confirmation, the order was tossed.

For lack of an order, the rock wasn't embossed.

For lack of a rock, the memorial was unfinished.

And all for the lack of one simple question.

Story #2 John Henry Molly and the Buried Treasure

Volunteers have worked on the bioswale bordering the disc golf runway for months. They planted native grasses to limit erosion and re-establish the property line. Since the city mowers don't recognize newly planted anything, we desperately needed

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Wildscape Update continued from page 14

a sturdy border to deter them. The answer was to find and reposition the original large stones that were buried close by. Ann Knudsen identified the probable location. Joe Martinez and Marylee probed the soil to find the right clunk. Joe took a crowbar, Marylee Thomason carried a shovel, Patsy Miller stood ready with her gloves on, and we went to work.

The stones were buried in eight inches of runoff and the remains of a mulch pile. When we found one, Joe got his pry bar underneath. Marylee dug out some of the dirt. Patsy was

impressive the way she rolled the 25-pound-plus stones out of their holes. With a nod to Bev Crawford, who has a theme song for every activity, Patsy sang "Rollin', rollin', rollin' " as she worked.

Joe was sure that Molly had put the stones in originally. The consensus was that Molly in her John Henry stance had slung those big stones over her shoulder and placed them where she wanted. Josephine Keeney confirmed the logic of that. Joe suggested we might find a body. Patsy asked, "What would we do if we did?" and Robin Agee

immediately responded, "Call Dana." Dana Austin is our favorite retired forensic anthropologist.

As if on cue, Dana came walking down the hill. Joe called, "We think we found a body." The change in Dana's composure was immediate. Her pace increased, and we sensed we should all get out of the way so she could do her work. Ah, but there was nothing to investigate. A disappointed Dana laughed and admitted that any forensics expert would get excited by the possibility of such a find.

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Improving the bioswale was easier said than done. There was plenty of digging and lifting. Patsy Miller claimed that she could roll those big stones right out of their holes as soon as they were exposed. And she did!



Dana Austin, retired forensic anthropologist, was hoping for a skull; we almost promised her a body. With her usual good humor, she settled for bringing up another border stone.



Joe Martinez did the original heavy lifting with his sturdy pry bar. "Just a little shift the better to elevate you, my dear." You have to talk nicely to the stones or they might not cooperate. Joe had the magic touch.

Wildscape Update continued from page 15

We were nearly finished when Bob Siglin and new volunteer Jude Dainton arrived. Ursula Nuñez joined the party, too. The three of them pulled rocks, handed them out of the dirt and arranged them along the developing curve.

We're pretty sure Molly could have manhandled those stones into place. It's just a shame that we didn't stab into the dirt where the body is buried.

Story #3

What would family stories be without a little funny business revealed? On the first Saturday in

April, Master Naturalist and NPSOT member Morgan Chivers presented our mini-class with the story of Alternation of Generations, the gametophyte/ sporophyte cycle in plants. It is a magic that often goes under-appreciated due to the onerous vocabulary that gets in the way.

Morgan used simple visual aids to sidestep the jargon. In plain words he told us how our beloved plants came to be. Some have a pretty unusual sex life.

By switching around six sheets of colored paper, he explained that three forms of reproduction are

possible. Did you know that some plants produce a little interim bud that can't grow up until it combines with another? And that those little buds do it in the rain and even fog?

Some plants make the mistake of "intermarrying," which Ann Knudsen suggested produces "royals." Those family trees end up with a dying breed such as a previous strain of bananas.

So much explained. Nothing like the family stories to tell you what's actually going on in your own back yard.



Left, If this looks awkward, well, it was. Bob Siglin hefted one of the large stones and Marylee Thomason held back the branches that overhung the work area. Right, Morgan Chivers carefully and delicately explained the sometimes unusual sex life of plants. Six pieces of color-coded paper and plain words made the subject fascinating and easy to grasp.

You Need a Cat John Dycus

Editor's note: By a strange twist of fate, we're promoting cats. You never thought you'd see it here, but it has happened for two reasons: We want to help the cats. We are hoping you'll take one and make it a lovable indoor cat, not an invasive predator that kills birds just for fun. Second, we want to help John, a great guy who has raised the grammatical and visual level of your newsletter to new heights. Also, he writes real good. Thanks.

My friend Laurie Ward embraces with single-minded gusto the cat rescuer's creed: Trap. Neuter. Vaccinate. Release, or better, find a home.

A noble philosophy, kind and environmentally progressive, it has filled my bathroom and garage with cats.

I like cats. I like them more in your bathroom and garage.

The accompanying lovelies (Peachy and Butter Schmalz, but a sampling) can be yours to cherish for a lifetime or foster for a fortnight, to own or to lease, in exchange for your agreement with [Meowtown Animal Rescue Fort Worth](#) that you can and will provide love and care.

Laurie will deliver to you a handsome cat, an affectionate cat, a cat sanctified, purified and golden eyed. You will melt like a Twix on a griddle.

Contact me if I can talk you into something. Meanwhile, I would invoke Henny Youngman:

Take my cats.

Please.

John Dycus | john@xdycus.com, 817-264-3106



Crisis Averted, for Now Grace Darling

The phone call came Thursday morning from an old friend of ACC: Fish were dying in his neighborhood pond and he was scooping them up. He hated the idea of wasting them in the landfill, so could he bring them to the UTA compost site? By the following afternoon, Good Friday, 17 large bagfuls of decomposing fish had been processed for composting.

But the fish kept floating up dead and the university facility was closed for Easter weekend, so the Good Samaritan (GS) put in a call to his HOA and on Saturday morning about a dozen neighbors showed up to help collect and dispose of the carnage. Those who couldn't wade or shovel offered encouragement, advice, and snacks. Pickups were loaded and 1,000+ pounds of smelly cargo were taken to the Arlington landfill (place of last resort) before closing time.

From first finding dead fish on Wednesday evening, GS rented oxygen-measuring equipment and took repeated readings of the problem pond that showed very low dissolved O₂ in the water. Through the weekend he also placed at least two calls to the City of Arlington emergency response desk and left messages that went unanswered. On Friday he reached one of the two Tyler-

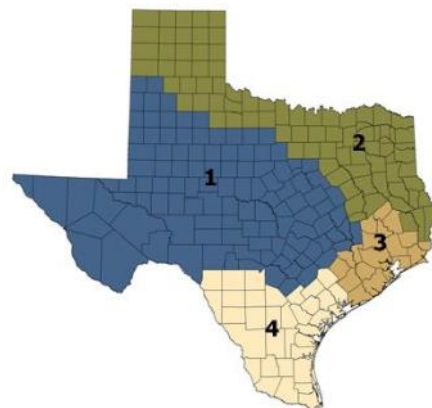


The first load of fish on a UTA compost pile before being buried under dead leaves to mask the unpleasant odor and promote composting.

based Texas Parks and Wildlife fish-kill specialists for our district (which extends from the Panhandle to the Louisiana state line — see map), who “reassured him” that the die-off was most likely from natural causes — low oxygen levels from a combination of high temperatures, poor aeration, and a hard rain the

previous night that had washed a lot of organic debris into the pond's creek inlet — while explaining that TPWD could not get involved because said pond was on private property.

On Monday morning, a frustrated GS vented to an Ask Arlington operator, who sent out a broad email that prompted a call and site visit from Patrick Strong, senior environmental specialist for the city (Environment is now part of the city's Public Works department; go figure). Patrick was able to confirm the non-toxic cause of the fish massacre — many bass



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Crisis continued from page 18

and shad 15+-inch long among them — and the fact that management (cleanup) of the pond and its fish stock was the responsibility of the neighbors through their HOA dues.

Had it not been for GS's swift intervention, the smell of dead fish and tons of methane could now be wafting all over the Dream City. That's a timely band-aid but hardly a permanent solution. What can be done about it?

There are those among us who believe that the rich folk who want a private pond in their backyards should pay for the

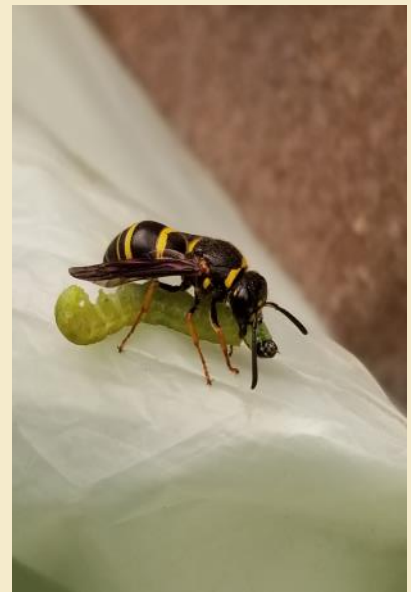
privilege — but that's not realistic or ultimately fair. Some of those homeowners may have bought into a desirable property many years ago, unaware of the need for frequent dredging and constant aeration; their HOA fees most likely have not kept up with the rising costs of those services. How can they face expensive assessments for dredging every few years when they may be on a fixed income or in failing health?

In my opinion, this is a city-wide issue that must be dealt with at the City Council level. One idea is to establish a fund that developers pay into when applying for a permit involving

any stream or body of water. This fund would be administered by the city for the express purpose of helping, on a cost-sharing basis, with the management of man-made ponds or lakes within city limits. I don't know if a mechanism exists to grandfather in the many such neighborhoods we have in Arlington, and I certainly would not recommend further buyouts and demolition of structures adjacent to flooding areas; we should be well past that.

I invite you to weigh in with your suggestions. Please address your thoughts to the editor and we will pass them along to the authorities.

Bonus Bug Bits



From left, The first Four-spotted mantidfly of the year recently stopped at a UV light. Josephine Keeney watches the release of a polyphemus moth she raised from an egg. Euodynerus foraminatus drags a caterpillar to its ugly fate.

Blackland Prairie Site Guy Random



Much more green than brown, but so much less than last year at this time. And flowers? One tiny bluebonnet patch, then scattered yellow. Just be happy with new green and old spiderwebs.



Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy and Jim Frisinger

Friends of SCNP monthly meeting recap Annabelle Corboy

On April 9 our program was SEEING and REMEMBERING your visit to SCNP with the camera app on your smartphone by Jim Domke.

Jim's presentation covered multiple topics on how to get better photos from your smartphone, including how to use depth of field to highlight your subject, how to take advantage of the lighting provided by a cloudy day, and how shooting from a different angle can enhance your photos. To illustrate these topics, Jim used a series of wonderful photos — some dramatic, some peaceful, all lovely images taken at the nature preserve. The quality of the Facebook Live doesn't do justice to the photos, but please take a look; you can still enjoy the artistry and get some good tips as well. <https://fb.watch/czG2rJXTwm/>

For more information about Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve and to sign up for email updates, see www.scnp.org or e-mail info@swnp.org

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Summit Meeting Annabelle Corboy



On April 10, Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve got a chance for the first time to sit down and strategize with its namesake. From left, Lynn Healy, Annabelle Corboy, Laura Capik, and Sheri Capehart visit at one of the picnic tables

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 21

SCNP Planting Progress Jim Frisinger

Master Naturalists from the Cross Timbers Chapter have been the backbone of efforts to restore a prairie on the north side of the Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve. Working alternate Sunday mornings, they have cleared, trimmed, hauled away trash, seeded and now propagated native species using stock from elsewhere in the preserve. This month the crew dug marine bluestem (*Andropogon tenuispatheus*) from the shores of the Main Pond. A dozen plants were placed in a swale on the North Prairie that we expect will be a nice fit for their wet-loving feet.

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From upper left, Sami Cline and Dana Austin dig up a marine bluestem near the Main Pond at the Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve. (Jim Frisinger photo), A prairie restoration seeding on the North Prairie of the Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve gets a little protection from nearby hikers. (Jim Domke photo), Jim Domke and Sami Cline place a marine bluestem in a really swale new home. (Jim Frisinger photo). Below, A caravan carries marine bluestems from the Main Pond toward their new home on a North Prairie swale on April 17. Left to right, Taylor Thorns, Morgan Chivers, Sami Cline, Dana Austin and Jim Frisinger (Jim Domke photo).



Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 22

UTA Big Event at SCNP **Annabelle Corboy**

The Friends of SCNP hosted an enthusiastic and hard-working group of volunteers as part of UTA's Big Event on Saturday, April 9th. The group cleaned up a couple of areas of old trash and tackled two areas designated for recovery with seeds of native wildflowers and grasses. Both are key to our project to restore the preserve's north prairie. We filled up 10 garbage bags and prepped and planted seeds in a plot across from the Caddo Oak. We also prepped a second area (the hardest part), and a couple of our regular volunteers easily finished the planting soon after. Most of the Big Event Volunteers were from the Climbing Mavericks Club, and being up to all challenges, have already volunteered to come back for another work-day, to be led by Jim Frisinger.

The volunteers from the Friends of SCNP were Lynn Healy, Sami Cline, and Annabelle Corboy. Jan Miller and Jim Frisinger did much of the preparation work but weren't able to be there Saturday.

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 23

Selected SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species for April 2022

Annabelle Corboy



Engelmann Daisy (*Engelmannia peristenia*) – joshmols, Dakota Mock Vervain (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*) – joshmols, Mexican Buckeye (*Ungnadia speciosa*) – lynnjhealy



Rusty Blackhaw (*Viburnum rufidulum*) – squaylei2000, Texas Paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*) – joshmols

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POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
P.O. Box 216
Arlington, TX 76004-0216

May Zoom Meeting
Wednesday, May 4, 7 pm

Environmentalism in DFW:
An Update

Lon Burnam,

Former State Representative and Lifelong Environmentalist