

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POST OAK

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 6

JULY – AUGUST 2023



ROBBER FLY WITH LACEWING, CENTRAL ARLINGTON • GUY RANDOM PHOTO

August Zoom Meeting



Read more about this program on page 7

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83631942171>

For assistance accessing the meeting, contact Frank Keeney,
webmaster@acctexas.org

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

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From the President **Dick Schoech**



Walking with Wildlife in the African Bush

Travel in other countries is always educational. My recent trip to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Zambia featured a most impressive four-day walking safari in Kruger National Park. The camp was on a savanna (their name for prairie) about an hour from any other people, vehicles, paved roads, or buildings. Recent rains made dirt roads through streams barely passable by our four-wheel-drive raised vehicle, which bottomed out at times on the long ride to camp.



Our group of almost a dozen people from various parts of the world stayed in tents in a compound circled by a two-foot-high, solar-powered, low-voltage wire to keep the wildlife out. I was awakened several times the first night and hoped that whatever was howling stayed out of my tent. At breakfast, I was told it was hyenas.

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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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From the President continued from page 3

We hiked several times a day for four days beginning at 6 a.m. The guides emphasized that we were guests of the natural environment and to only observe, learn, and leave no trace. Our small group never saw other humans or any trash. We experienced what the first pioneers in America experienced — vast numbers of plants and animals interacting in a complex ecosystem, as they had for thousands of years. It was a glorious yet humbling experience that brought up feelings embedded in one's DNA when encountering nature in the raw.

I grew up on a dairy farm, so I was familiar with domestic animals. However, I had never experienced hiking among animals, many of which were large enough to kill or even eat you if the gun-toting hike guides failed to prevent you from making stupid, vulnerable moves. It quickly became obvious that our city survival instincts were not helpful in the bush.



Spotted hyena

continued on page 5



Elephant threatens car

From the President continued from page 4

One hike leader was a former Kruger Park poacher who now works protecting the animals and their ecosystem. Visitors enable indigenous people to earn a living by saving the natural environment for sustainable tourism and scientific study rather than exploiting it for individual wealth. The only weak link is the trophy hunter who pays governments lots of money to kill animals, even some like the endangered black rhino.

We saw many animals up close, including the big five — elephants, lions, leopards, rhinos, and water buffaloes. One rare evening we saw leopards eating an impala they had dragged up a tree while grunting hyenas scuffled below for the scraps. We saw Cape buffaloes in protective mode when our path came

continued on page 6



Cape buffaloes in protective mode.

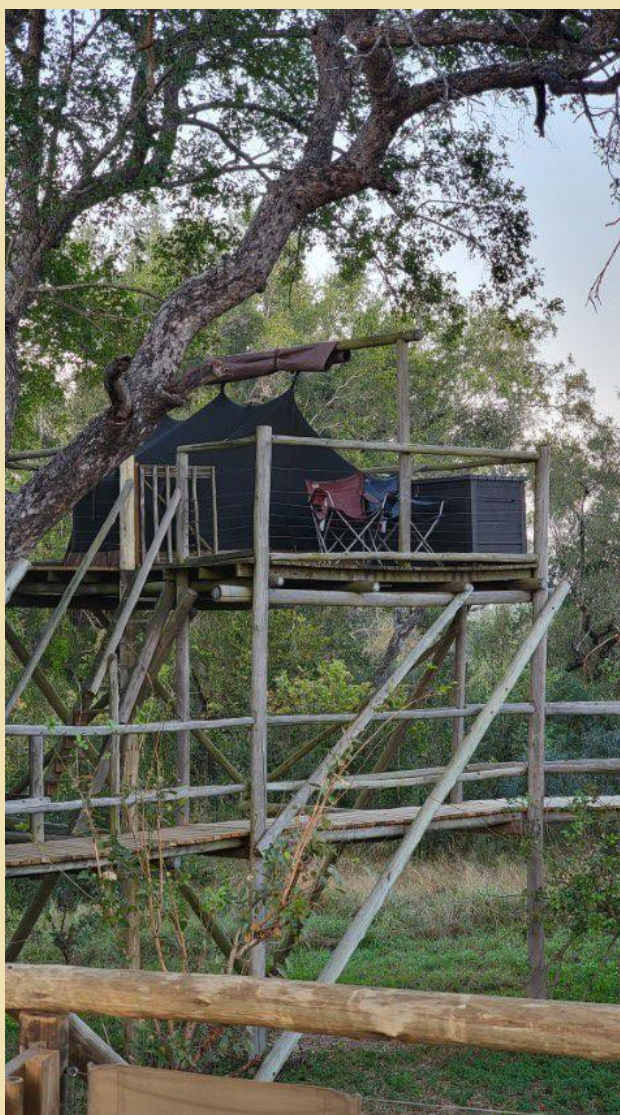
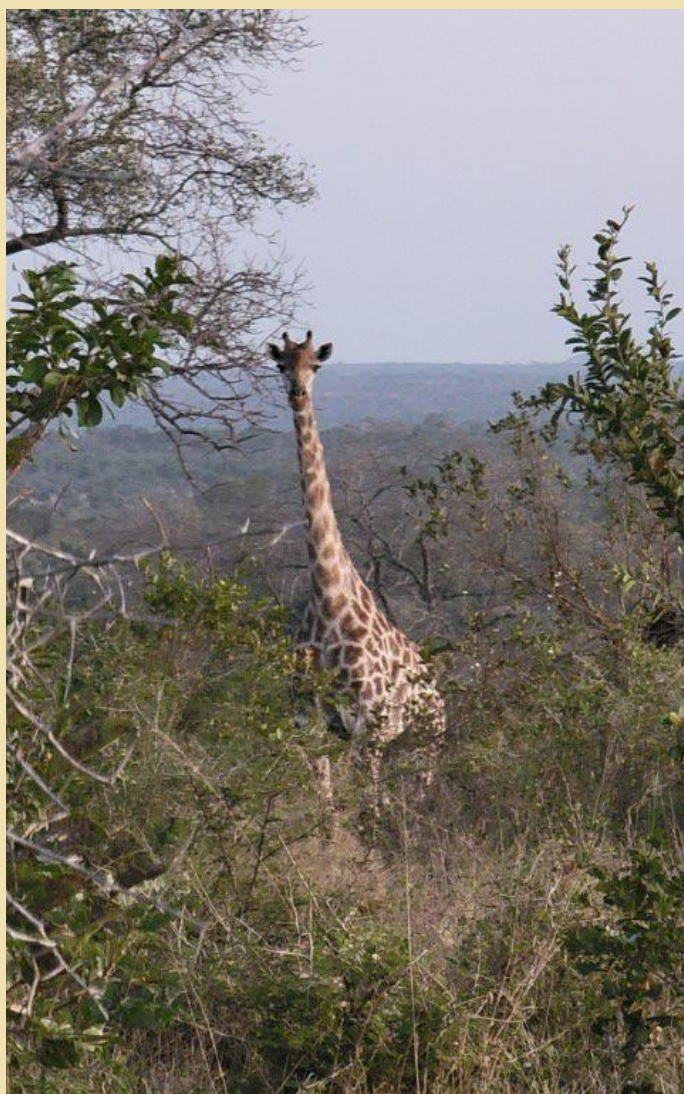


From the President continued from page 5

too close to a newly born calf. We saw giraffes watching our every move, large elephants threatening anything in their path, and lions exhausted by mating 30 seconds every 30 minutes for around five days.

The highlight of the safari was an overnight campout using a sleeping bag on a platform. The platform had a mesh covering so you could see the wonders of the southern sky while experiencing the smells, wildlife sounds, and insects along with everything else the bush has to offer.

To be continued in the next Post Oak.



Kimberlee Peterson, our August Speaker

Kimberlee Peterson will address the impacts that drought and winter have on trees, how they cope, and what we can do to help.

Kimberlee grew up in the South Arlington/Mansfield area and earned a B.S. in wildlife, sustainability, and ecosystems sciences, followed by an M.S. in agriculture and natural resources, at Tarleton State University. She has been with the Texas A&M System for almost six years, first as a student assistant researching native seed phenotypes and grassland restoration, and more recently as a woodland ecologist with the A&M Forest Service.

From her office in Mineral Wells, the position requires her to "provide leadership to municipalities, non-profits, planning groups and other community forestry stakeholders in the [29-county North Central Texas] region to help build sustainable programs that ensure healthy trees and forests ... [and to] deliver education, outreach and technical assistance that support enhancing community tree cover to optimize associated benefits and contribute to the quality of life of residents."

IVAN QUERIDO'S HERITAGE TREE

Special field correspondent Ivan Querido takes exception to our cozy selection of Heritage Trees: Sure, the cool kids have their heritage trees, all big and grand, but what about the boots-on-the-ground serious survivors? What about this actual American elm by the downtown Subway drive-through? Not quite majestic, but the stories it could tell. All those 12" cold cut combos on white. You can't compete with that. Don't even bother.



Texas bluebells in O.S. Gray Park. Dick Schoech photo.

Bits & Pieces

The Terse Treehugger



Dang!

Visit ACC's
[Facebook page](#)
and
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More of This, Please



Might not look like much, but these plant tags were casually lying in the dirt by the UTA greenhouse. Such a small start for a radical development. Tags for inland sea oats installed on this campus! As if they were just more dumb exotic fountain grass! What's next?



Hairy sunflower

Bad Boy Beetle



Dick Schoech found this imposing eastern eyed click beetle in his yard. It's not just the big scary "eyes." Their larvae are unique among click beetle larvae. They prey voraciously on the larvae of wood-boring beetles, some of which are serious pests that injure or even kill trees.

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



Question Corner John Darling

Q: Okay, you seem like the kind of guy who would be attracted to squirrel armpits, so what's all this stuff about splooting? And what about all the other overheated creatures? We don't hear anything about robins splooting. Or bullsnakes. Are snakes just splooting all the time?

A. Forget your armpit fixation long enough to realize that squirrels and many other mammals have different arrangements of sweat glands and don't rely on them for cooling like we do. Lots of them have sweat glands on the feet where sweat may aid in traction and not much in cooling. Splooting exposes the body core to some relatively cool surface, and other mammals also do it. Robins and other birds lack sweat glands. Many species rely on **gular fluttering** for cooling, as well as bathing, increasing blood flow to areas of bare skin, spreading the wings, and fluffing body feathers to expose blood vessels to cooler air. Snakes and other ectotherms must regulate body temperature behaviorally — finding a cool spot when it's hot. Next!



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Everything You Need, Right Here

A TEXAS SUMMER

It's Texas summer
When blazing heat
Feels like an oven door
Propped open.
Like the sun is drifting closer
To the gasping Earth
And as if the cooling rain
Will never fall again.

July is here,
Birds are gasping in the trees
And it seems the breezes
May never fan our brows.
I drag my ragged garden hose
Around the yard,
Bringing first aid
To flowers and shrubs.

My only hope
Is unseasonable showers
Weeping precious rain
On the parched and cracking ground.
This torment happens
Annually, and yet every year
The grasses keep on growing,
The birds keep on singing.

©2023 John I. Blair, 6/30/2023

The Pink-striped oakworm moth text and photo by Dana Austin

We were excited to find the larvae (caterpillars) of the Pink-striped oakworm moth, *Anisota virginiensis*, on the bur oak and a species of red oak at the Molly Hollar Wildscape on June 7. This is a wild silk moth of the family Saturniidae. The adult moth wings are purplish red with ochre-yellow in the female, while the male wings are purplish brown with a transparent space in the middle. These moths are distributed along eastern North American from Montreal to Central Florida and west into Central Texas. Their habitat includes deciduous woodlands and suburban areas. The female lays eggs on the underside of the leaves of various *Quercus* species. The caterpillars are a pretty greenish-gray with brownish yellow or rose-colored stripes. The group we observed was likely newly hatched as they spread out as they mature. To see images of the adult, explore this page <https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Anisota-virginiensis> or iNaturalist.



We're Doing Something Big



ACC has established an endowment with UTA
to aid future environmentalists.
Phase 1 is already helping.*

Now we're working on Phase 2.

But why?

An anonymous donor wants us to help even more
and has come forward with a second challenge.

This donor will match 5 to 1 the next \$4,000
of donations from you.

If met, the endowment will net \$24,000!

Help us help more students with your contribution.

Donate [here](#) and keep it growing.

*The first endowment scholarship has been awarded to a UTA sophomore. It gave him the opportunity to research Vehicle to Grid (V2G) technology, a smart-charging technology allowing car batteries to give back to the power grid. You can watch his presentation [here](#).

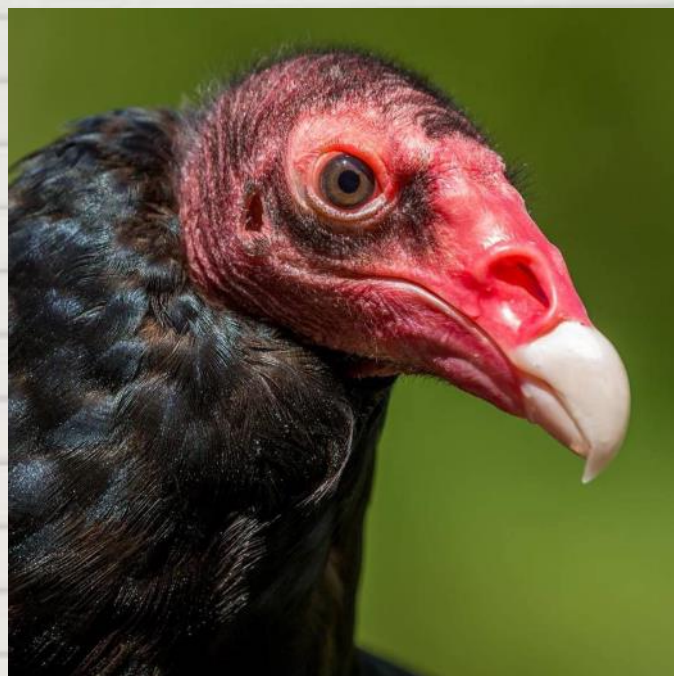
My Nature Notebook

Better than splooting!

We're not supposed to, but we went over to the woods to look at all those big ugly vultures that like to sit in the dead tree. It was really hot and some of them pooped right on their legs!

That was so cool but of course the creepy

old guy came by and said that's not poop and they're cooling themselves off by urohidrosis. And I said you shouldn't talk like that. Anyway it must be pee then and he said no not exactly. They can't sweat, see, and they do number 1 and number 2 all mixed together on their legs to cool themselves. And they're killing germs with it too. So I said this sounds like potty mouth talk and I'm telling and when I did Mom sent me to my room.



Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte

Our most recent Volunteer Day was on the fourth Thursday, June 22. Volunteers Patsy Miller, Karen Knight, and Carol Marcotte trimmed, weeded, and watered the Pond Triangle Garden.

In the summer we start gardening at 8 a.m. Our next Volunteer Day is August 24, 8-11 a.m. Please come join us. We need your help.

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Above left, Patsy Miller and Carol Marcotte. Right, Karen Knight. Recent attractions below from left, black-eyed susan, lemon beebalm, red admiral, Texas lantana.



Randol Mill Park continued from page 13

New Plant Labels

Thank you, Jamie Brunner, for creating, producing, and installing plant labels in the Pond Triangle Garden! Jamie's motivation is to educate park visitors about the names and blooming times of perennials in the garden. Good job. Good thinking.



More Adventures of Izzy Dick Schoech

Readers of the May 2023 Post Oak are demanding more Izzy adventures. A few of the many reader comments are below.

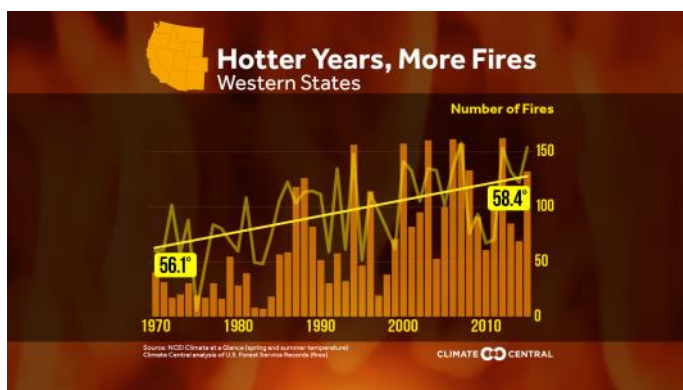
- From [heart emoji] In love: “What a handsome, gentle spiny lizard. If those fighting anoles are not leaving him alone, he can come to my house any day.”
- From Impressed: “If only humans could tolerate other species as well as Izzy tolerated those anoles, the world would be a better place.”
- From Questioning: “He must be smart about cats and hawks; he still has his tail.”
- From More: “Izzy must have other adventures you can tell us about. Please give us more.”
- From Concerned: “Hope the crabby old man who tries to answer questions in the *Post Oak* doesn’t bother Izzy.”

From Dick Schoech: This month I submitted six pictures of Izzy’s adventures, but only the final picture of Izzy and his gravid girlfriend made it past all the *Post Oak* censors. I guess you have to use your imagination on what was in the first five pictures. Where do these censors come from anyway? All critters reproduce, and I don’t think young kids read the *Post Oak*. Hopefully, Izzy has some PG-13 adventures I can picture in the future.



In Case You Missed It Grace Darling

Climate change keeps making wildfires and smoke worse, says climate scientist Michael Mann of the University of Pennsylvania. “It’s a new abnormal. If we continue to warm the planet, [it’ll be] an ever moving baseline of worse and worse.” Numerous studies have linked climate change to increases in North American fires because global warming is increasing extreme weather, especially drought and mostly in the West. Already wildfires are consuming 3X more of the U.S. and Canada each year than in the 1980s; by July 17, more than 25.2 million acres had burned in Canada, forcing 120,000 people to evacuate their homes and darkening skies and polluting the air for millions of people all over North America. More than 100X over the past three months, Canadian wildfires have grown sufficiently large and powerful to produce their own weather, kicking up giant thunderclouds known as pyrocumulonimbus [pyroCbs] and injecting smoke high into the atmosphere. These events can help transport smoke over very long distances. [DMN 7/2/23 and NYT 7/18/23]



New research published in the journal *Current Biology* describes how *hungry ticks can zoom through the air using static electricity* to latch onto people, pets, and other animals. Ticks are ambush predators, hanging out on a branch or a blade of grass with their legs outstretched – a behavior known as “questing” — waiting for [their prey] to pass by. Humans and animals naturally pick up static charges as they go

about their days, and these charges are enough to give ticks a boost to their next meal by expanding their reach. [DMN 7/2/23]



Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) is easy to recognize at a height of 5 to 12 feet, making it one of the tallest plants of the prairie. The thick central stem branches into flowering stems in the upper part of the plant with an abundant number of yellow flowers. The plant’s large leaves have deep lobes and a rough, hairy texture.

This native perennial minimizes its sun exposure by orienting its leaves vertically to avoid the hot overhead sunlight, while the flat surfaces of the leaves face east and west to take advantage of cooler morning and evening light for photosynthesis. This characteristic accounts for its common name,

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In Case continued from page 16

because its leaves are almost perfectly aligned to the north-south direction. Besides its beauty, compass plant is valued in traditional medicine for its sap, which when dried and hardened can be chewed as a gum for cleaning teeth and sweetening the breath, while others pound the root to make a tea for treating “general debility” or ridding horses of worms. [Aldo Leopold Nature Center, Facebook 7/21/23]

The Texas heat has been unrelenting this summer, causing farmers to question if the blazing temperatures will lead to another busted year. In the High Plains, farmers are feeling whiplash from the weather. An unusually high amount of rain in the spring left fields flooded, but the summer’s sweltering heat waves have sapped the moisture from the ground, leaving the looming **possibility of another poor season for crops**. “The question now is, what will our rainfall look like the rest of the year? That could make or break a lot of crops,” said Calvin Trostle, an agronomist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Lubbock. The region’s economy took a big hit last year when drought caused **billions of dollars in losses**. Now there are concerns about the area’s cotton, which supplies 30% of the nation’s cotton, as forecasters say there are no signs of the start of the U.S. summer monsoon season, which usually occurs in mid-July



and typically ends extremely hot temperatures. As extreme temperatures are forecast to only get worse over the years because of climate change, farmers may have to consider changing when crops are planted to avoid exposing crops to the extremes of summer heat. [Texas Tribune, July 24, 2023]



Meteorologists across the country are encountering harassment and even threats from viewers as they tie climate change to extreme temperatures, blizzards, tornadoes, and floods in their local weather reports, “simply for sharing information that they didn’t want to hear,” says one. For on-air meteorologists, the anti-science trend that has emerged in recent years compounds a deepening skepticism of the news media. Many say this is a reflection of a more hostile political landscape that has also affected workers in a variety of jobs previously seen as nonpartisan, including librarians, school board officials, and election workers. A decade ago, far fewer TV meteorologists were talking about climate change on air, although they wanted to do so. Now TV meteorologists report on climate change — not always using those words but at least showing its effects, like highlighting the trend of more days in a year hitting temperatures above 90 degrees. But even if that kind of reporting resonates with most viewers, the small percentage of people who reject climate change make up the overwhelming percentage of the negative comments.

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In Case continued from page 17

“It’s important to keep in mind that [those few] are not representative of what [your state residents] are and what they believe,” says one who nevertheless is quitting his job. [DMN July 9, 2023]

From Neil Sperry’s column on shade trees in landscaping, what to avoid: Large trees in small landscapes; shade trees in parkways (those little grassy strips between the sidewalk and curb); tall trees beneath power lines; line trimmers, dog chains, wire, or anything cutting through the bark around the tree trunk; root-feeding rods, plant food stakes, and holes filled with fertilizer; water bags (gator bags) around tree trunks (feeder roots will be out by drip line; exposing trunks of Shumard red oaks, Chinquapin oaks, red maples, and other thin-barked trees to full afternoon sun when recently planted (use tree wrap from soil line to lowest branches for the first 2 years to prevent sun scald); improper pruning and use of pruning paint.

“Foresters and arborists now suggest that we not apply sealant after we remove branches from our large shade trees* [contending] it actually delays healing.”

*The only exception is with oaks, all types of which must have pruning sealant on any cuts larger than 0.75 inch in diameter to lessen the chances of oak wilt.



In a rare piece of environmental good news, **Lake Tahoe’s** average visibility has increased from 52.8 feet deep to a stunning 71.7 feet in the past 3 years, a level of clarity not seen since the 1980s. The mountain-ringed lake, which straddles the Nevada/California border in the Sierra Nevada, has long been considered a natural wonder for its amazing clarity due mainly to surrounding granite, a relatively small watershed, and few agricultural pollutants. But in recent decades, the lake’s waters had grown increasingly cloudy despite management efforts to reduce runoff from roads, gardens, golf courses, and the construction of new multimillion-dollar homes — because of a non-native shrimp introduced in the early 1960s to provide food for lake trout, Tahoe’s primary sport fish.

Connecting the dots: The Mysis shrimp are sensitive to light, and once in the lake’s clear waters, they spend their days on the dark, deep lake bottom, migrating to the surface only at night. Unfortunately, most fish are sight feeders so the shrimp are not being eaten, and with few predators, they flourished. Voracious consumers of zooplankton, the shrimp annihilated a slew of beneficial native species of algae-eating zooplankton, especially *Daphnia* and *Bosmina*, which are harbingers of good water quality. As their prey species numbers plummeted, the shrimp shifted their diet to a different type of zooplankton, copepods, which are now dying *en masse* from suspected fungal infections. As the copepods populations crash, the shrimp are starving.

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In Case continued from page 18

Enter *Daphnia* and *Bosmina*, whose eggs can sit dormant in lake sediment for up to a century. Now the eggs are hatching and, free of predators, they're booming — and the food they eat, the algae and very fine particles, impact the lake's clarity the most.

Despite the expected large runoff from this year's record snowpack, the lake's clarity is expected to grow and may return to 1970s levels. Sadly, nature's food web is a tale of ebb and flow. Mysis will start eating the newly emerged zooplankton and re-establish itself, scientists predict, returning the lake to its more clouded status. "It's temporary," said one of the scientists. Once introduced, "you can never get rid of things completely." [*The Mercury News*, S-T July 24, 2023]



Mysis diluviana, a species introduced into Lake Tahoe.

Quote of the Month

Neil Sperry's latest contribution to the botanical culture wars:

"...don't assume that just because a plant is native somewhere in Texas that it's going to be a great choice for your landscape."



We can think of this as the Pitcher Plant Ponderosa Pine/Rock Garden Rule: There you are, choosing plants for your full-sun, steep-slope hell-strip rock garden. It happens that you're crazy about pitcher plants and ponderosa pines. You have drunk the native plant Kool-Aid, so you look them up, learn that both are Texas natives and off you go.

But wait! Stop, remember the PPPP/RG Rule and run, don't walk to your nearest big box garden center for professional advice on the best exotics before you make the classic Native Plant Mistake.

Texas Solar for All? Not in Tarrant County Grace Darling

We Hold These Truths to Be Self Evident, . . .

Some concepts and practices are so obviously good for humankind that, when they fail to be accepted by those in charge, we are left wondering about the real reasons for the rejection; this is how conspiracy theories are born. In some cases the wrong decision is based on ethnic, religious, gender, social, or political affiliation, yet the single common denominator is willful ignorance: the intentional disregard of facts that make us uncomfortable.

Take the recent 3:2 negative vote by the Tarrant County Commissioners Court on the resolution to join the Texas Solar for All consortium. A bit of background is needed here:

As a subset of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established a Solar for All grant competition with the expressed purpose of “expanding the number of low-income and disadvantaged communities primed for residential solar investment — enabling millions of low-income households to access affordable, resilient, and clean solar energy.” The total predetermined Texas amount for the grant is \$400 million. Due to the competitive nature of the program and the substantial federal requirements for project vetting and the establishment of a governance structure, a number of Texas’ largest counties have decided to submit a joint application via a consortium, to pool resources and minimize the administrative burden. There is no fiscal impact anticipated with approval of the resolution. The county will not be committing itself to any administrative costs.

Critics speculate that the three No votes were from commissioners beholden to oil and gas interests, misinformed, with personal agendas or blindly following the party line — we don’t know. But I believe the problem — and there is a serious problem that affects us all — is that in this country, and certainly in Texas, the politics of global warming, climate change, and sustainability have been polarized beyond reason, to the detriment of the vast majority of people who just want to find ways to cope with and ultimately adapt to a changing world. I wish our leaders would let us do that.

**Visit ACC’s Facebook page
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Discussion Group**

Arlington's Heritage Trees



Editor's note: This month Ann Knudsen reprises one of Dick Schoech's earlier choices. It's the live oak in Randol Mill Park near the armory. Here's Ann: I felt the first photo didn't fully show how wonderful it is. The trunk itself is about 4.5 ft in diameter, and the graceful limbs on the west side seem to bow toward the setting sun. It is remarkable that this tree has been left to grow the way it wants and that the mowers haven't ruled its fate.

**Do you know a heritage tree just waiting to be admired?
There's room for lots more, so let's see yours.**



Arlington's Heritage Trees



From Dick Schoech: You should recognize this Heritage Tree nomination if you ever attended a wildscape plant sale in Randol Mill Park. This majestic red oak shades the entrance to the greenhouse area where thankful plant buyers pay for their native potted treasures. Wouldn't it be interesting to hear all the conversations that occurred under its canopy from Caddo Indian times onward. Hopefully, it will survive any changes coming to the greenhouse area and will continue to shelter all who gather beneath its limbs.

**Do you know a heritage tree just waiting to be admired?
There's room for lots more, so let's see yours.**



Arlington's Heritage Trees



From Ann Knudsen: This is a tree I first became aware of maybe 30 years ago when I had a job delivering ads for the Star-Telegram. There are some gorgeous old trees on this street off Collins Street, but this one is magnificent and my favorite. You don't see that many where homeowners let the branches swoop to the ground, preferring usually to limb them up to let their precious grass grow. As you can see, this is a massive post oak that spans the front of this large home, and the trunk is about 5.5 - 6 ft in diameter.

**Do you know a heritage tree just waiting to be admired?
There's room for lots more, so let's see yours.**



Buy a Book, Help Green Source DFW Marian Hiler

Originally published in North Central NPSOT News, June-July 2023

Excerpted from “Buy ‘Wild DFW’ on Local Site to Benefit Green Source DFW”

by Julie Thibodeaux, June 2, 2023.

It’s the long-awaited release of Amy Martin’s epic North Texas nature guide, [Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature Around Dallas-Fort Worth](#)

Thanks to the generosity of Martin, and [Pretty Things and Cool Stuff](#), a local independent online shop run by eco-friendly Dallasite Kim Young, ... Young is offering the book in two bundles, which include a signed copy of Martin’s book for \$26. The Get Out and Go bundle includes a 16-ounce Chicago Steel Insulated Water/Tea Infuser Bottle by Grosche to make a stunning gift box for your favorite greenie for \$50.

PURCHASE HERE!

Net proceeds go to GreenSourceDFW.org, which has been offering green news to North Texans for over a decade and is gearing up to update its website.

ABOUT WILD DFW

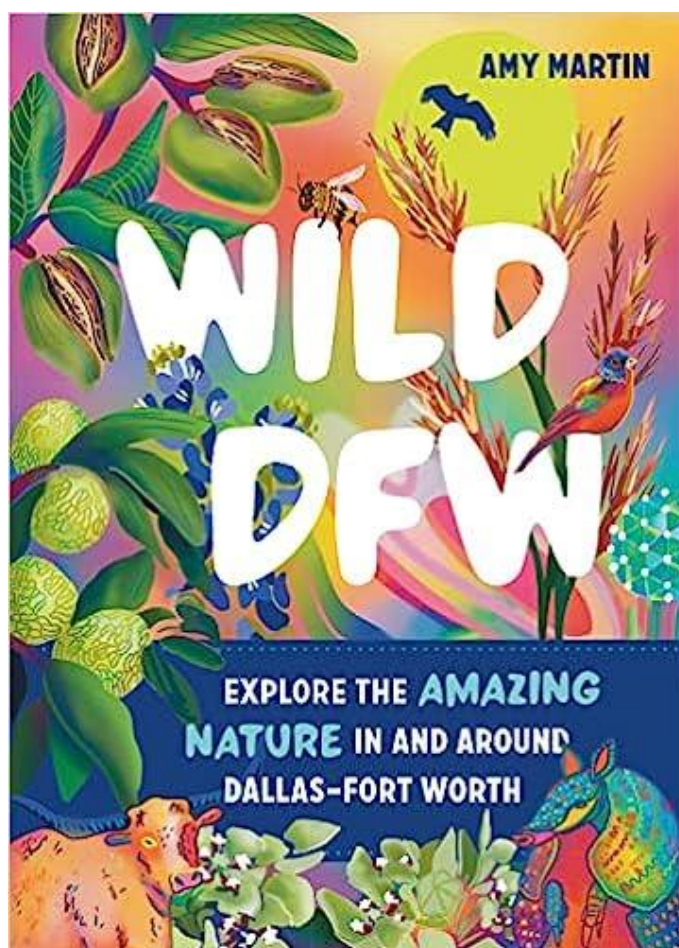
Martin, a reporter for Green Source DFW since 2014, has explored and written about the North Texas nature scene for decades. After being tapped by Timber Press in 2019 to write a sequel to [Wild LA](#), she toiled on the book for two years throughout the pandemic.

She was led on most of the 25 hiking adventure chapters in the book by people who stewarded the location or knew it well.

For her research, Martin recruited experts from [Texas Parks and Wildlife](#), [Botanical Research Institute of Texas](#), universities and nonprofit groups to guide and review her work. She developed a network of highly trained citizen naturalists in specialty fields.

ABOUT GREEN SOURCE DFW

Green Source DFW is an award-winning publication covering environmental news in North Texas. The site was launched in 2011 by the Memnosyne Institute, a Dallas-based humanitarian nonprofit, to educate the community about green living and environmental issues.



Wildscape Update Marian Hiler

This is the season devoted primarily to keeping plants watered and weeds out. Throw in some deadheading and seed gathering for good measure. The higher-than-what-once-were-normal temperatures haven't deterred volunteers from ensuring these goals are addressed each week.

Seeds were recently harvested from the spent Lemon beebalm before cutting it back to the ground. Seeds not spread near the bioswale were shared with Randol Mill Park's natural areas. The lemon beebalm made a spectacular and fragrant show in the butterfly garden in May. As showy as they were, the downside of the bumper crop was that its shade inhibited the growth of Texas lantana, autumn sage, Mexican hat, black-eyed susan, and gaillardia already established in the same area. On the positive side these perennials should look lovely this fall. Lessons-learned for next year will be to keep the lemon beebalm and the towering sunflowers to the back of the butterfly garden area to allow the summer flowers to flourish.



Harvesting lemon beebalm (*Monarda citriodora*) seeds in the butterfly garden. Standing Ann Knudsen and Marylee Thomason and seated Marian Hiler. Photo Carol Marcotte.

Also harvested were Canada wild rye seeds to spread in the Woodland area at the northern side of the wildscape.

In preparation for more fall color, the fall aster was cut back by a third in mid-June. Trimming will stimulate new stems which will produce even more flowers. Fall bloomers should be trimmed for the last time no later than mid-July or risk cutting off newly forming flower buds.

The drip irrigation installed along the sidewalks this past year has been a life saver. Running it on nonwork days allows better water pressure for those areas that must be watered by hand. In addition, it lets us water larger areas more thoroughly.

Usually, no planting is attempted during the hot, dry season, but since John Snowden gave us a couple dozen one-gallon little bluestems he had rescued we

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Karen Knight trims back the fall aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium*) to increase its blooms in the fall. Photo Marian Hiler.

Wildscape Update continued from page 25



Marylee Thomason hauling away the aptly named giant ragweed ([*Ambrosia trifida*](#)) removed from the south woodland area along the sidewalk. Photo Ann Knudsen.



Christine Brinson happily handwatering thirsty scarlet sage ([*Salvia coccinea*](#)). Photo Ann Knudsen.

couldn't say no. They were planted in mid-June along the disc golf 18th hole fairway. Per John's instructions, the tops were cut back to encourage root growth and watered twice weekly for the first 3 weeks. It paid off as they have proven their durability, already sending up new shoots looking happy in their new home.

Color in the wildscape this month

The showcase of summer blooms is down from what we had this time last year. With the extreme 100° plus temperatures for longer periods of time and very little rain, plants tend to shut down and go into survival mode, especially when the temperatures

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Christine Brinson and Dana Austin planting little bluestem ([*Schizachyrium scoparium*](#)) donated by John Snowden. Photo Marian Hiler.



Little bluestem thriving one month later. Photo Marian Hiler.

Wildscape Update continued from page 26



How many does it take to ensure Joe digs up the right plant? At least 4 of our mainstay volunteers. From left, Ramona Gratton, Joe Martinez, Josephine Keeney, Ann Knudsen and Patsy Miller. Photo Carol Marcotte.

don't cool off to below 90° at night. Still, we have had some diehards show their stuff.

Canada wild rye and inland sea oats finished their blooming in June. Both native grasses not only provide visual texture with their nodding seed heads they also supply nesting material, seeds for grain-eating birds and small mammals plus they are larval hosts for skippers.

The buttonbush at the creek-side by the vehicular bridge was full of its unusual globe blossoms mid-June. It is a great plant for naturalizing in wet soils. The buttonbush is a nectar plant for many pollinators including monarchs, skippers and a host plant for some of the largest and showiest moths like the titan sphinx. Drought-tolerant Turk's cap red blooms appear off and on during the summer. It's a nectar plant for hummingbirds, butterflies, moths and other pollinators. Birds and mammals eat its dark red

berries. A healthy stand of Turk's cap by the creek's edge on the Molly's Cutoff trail is starting another blooming cycle.

Flame acanthus is another drought-tolerant plant blooming in the wildscape. Its red-orange tubular flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies, and it is a larval host to crimson patch and Texan crescent butterflies. Underneath the triple kiosk by the south parking lot is a patch of frogfruit, an excellent drought-tolerant low-growing groundcover. It is a nectar plant for several butterflies and a larval host for common buckeye, phaon crescent and white peacock butterflies.

Another one of the many butterfly varieties seen was the striking silvery checkerspot. Its nectar plants are red clover, common milkweed, and dogbane. Many composites are its host plant including black-eyed susan and sunflowers.

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Wildscape Update continued from page 27



Inland sea oats ([*Chasmanthium latifolium*](#)) Photo Marian Hiler.



Canada wild rye ([*Elymus canadensis*](#)). Photo Marian Hiler.



Buttonbush ([*Cephalanthus occidentalis*](#)). Photo Ann Knudsen.

Once in a while a plain-bellied water snake is seen. Ann Knudsen recently spied one crossing the sidewalk. Even though they are shy creatures that try to avoid humans, she was able to snap a photo before it disappeared into the foliage. They are non-venomous snakes but if bothered or threatened they will bite. Interesting fact — This species bears live young (ovoviviparous) like other North American water snakes and garter snakes.

Meanwhile, at the Randol Mill Park greenhouse, the propagators continue to propagate. The remaining small greenhouse available has a covering over the roof preventing enough light for the plants. To give the plants the light they need to grow, they are now kept outdoors. Unfortunately, some wild critters like to forage in the pots, knocking many of them over. The volunteers found an effective solution by

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Silvery checkerspot ([*Chlosyne nycteis*](#)). Photo Marian Hiler.



Plain-bellied water snake ([*Nerodia erythrogaster*](#)). Photo Ann Knudsen.

Wildscape Update continued from page 28



Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*) gets the moisture it needs next to the creek.
Photo Marian Hiler.



Flame acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus*). Photo Marian Hiler.



Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) and common buckeye (*Junonia coenia*).
Photo Marian Hiler.

putting the pots in milk crates and storage tubs. Charley Amos generously came forward donating 30 tubs to the greenhouse to protect the plants from the animals. More milk crates and tubs are always welcome so if you have any you want to get rid of, contact Josephine Keeney, josephine@texasstar.org.

First Saturday mini-classes

In **June** Master Naturalist and NPSOT member Morgan Chivers talked about the Miyawaki Method of Habitat Restoration; a technique developed by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki to create dense forests with native plants. The method re-creates the conditions for a mature natural forest within decades rather than centuries. The critical first step is to rejuvenate the soil with organic material. A Miyawaki forest is more densely planted, which stimulates competition. Mulching is also a critical part of his method. The Miyawaki method has been applied in other countries beyond Japan including Southeast Asia, Jordan, and Brazil.

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Charley Amos holding two of the 30 storage tubs he donated to the greenhouse propagators. Photo Josephine Keeney.

Wildscape Update continued from page 29



Morgan Chivers talks about how Akira Miyawaki developed his method of rapid reforestation. Photo Carol Marcotte.

Morgan provided some links to resources for those interested in learning more:

[Miyawaki Method: A Better Way to Build Forests? Urban Forests methodology](#)

Videos

[Afforestation tutorial series \(Shubhendu Sharma\)](#) [The Mini Forest Revolution : Rapidly Rewild The World Using The Miyawaki Method](#)

At the July mini-class, Master Naturalist Carol Marcotte talked about the data she has been gathering year-round monitoring the eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) boxes in the wildscape and other Arlington city parks. For the four boxes in the wildscape, she recorded an average of 4 clutches with an average of 4.75 eggs and 4.25 fledglings per clutch in 2022. So far this year, there have been 5 clutches with an average of 5.4 eggs and 3.8 fledglings per clutch. She uploads this data to [Nestwatch](#), a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Carol said it is easy for anyone to participate and it's not limited to bluebird monitoring. Go to [How to NestWatch](#) for guidelines on monitoring and recording data on a nest near you.

The mini-class scheduled for **August 5** will be "Our Local Bats." Dr. Ellen Edwards Ravkind, River Legacy's Naturalist Manager, will show us the benefits of these often-misunderstood beneficial mammals, inform us where they can be found and how we might attract them. You won't get any side-eye looks if you come join us only for the class at 10:30 in the compost area. Promise. After all, the Wildscape's mission is to educate the community to use native plants to conserve resources, attract wildlife and connect with nature.

No first Saturday workday in **September** due to the Labor Day holiday.



To minimize disturbing any fledglings that may be in the box, Carol Marcotte uses her phone camera to record the nest contents. Photo Marian Hiler.

A Forest of Beebalm and Other Treasures Michael Smith

(This article first appeared as a couple of posts at <https://livesinnature.substack.com/>)

Well maybe “forest” isn’t quite right when talking about the various flowering plants in the genus *Monarda*, known as beebalm. But the spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*, sometimes called spotted horsemint) had grown tall at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve in Arlington — some plants at least four feet tall. Seemed sorta forest-like.

I love seeing spotted beebalm. The flower head looks like a series of flowers stacked one on top of the other. Those pale, often purple-tinged things are not flower petals, they’re bracts. Bracts are modified leaves with a flower (or cluster of flowers) where the bract attaches to the stem. The real flowers are pale yellow with tiny dark polka-dots. Thus “spotted” beebalm!

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center says that spotted beebalm grows from 6 inches to almost three feet, but several of the ones I saw on June 10 were

between three and four feet. They’re having a really good year at the preserve.

Buzzing around all these flowers were honeybees, native bees, and a variety of wasps. There were a number of red paper wasps (*Polistes carolina*) visiting the beebalm, and I took careful note of them as I brushed through some of the plants. What I’ve read and experienced about these wasps — that they’re pretty nonaggressive unless you threaten a nest — had to compete with all the stories people tell of how bad the sting hurts.

We got along just fine; I watched out not to directly bump into them, and they didn’t bother me. On the way to the ridge top, the trail passes through woodland with a little more closed canopy, and there, on the trunk of a big oak, was a Texas spiny lizard (*Sceloporus olivaceus*). He was watching me, possibly a little like I had watched the red wasps, as if to ask, “Are we gonna have any trouble here?” Not from me — I love these athletic tree-climbers and always approach them slowly for a closer look.

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Flower head of a spotted beebalm, with a wasp browsing the flowers.



Spotted beebalm along the trail.

Beebalm continued from page 31



A red paper wasp visiting the beebalm.

I say “he” because of the vaguely striped pattern on his back. The female pattern is broken up by jagged black crossbars that break up the stripes. When I got a little too close, he skittered to the side of the tree, raised his body and gave me a few head bobs to show me who’s boss. That let me see some of the blue breeding colors that males get along the chest.

The other noticeable thing about this lizard was the last couple of inches of his tail, which was different in texture and color from the rest. At some point he had lost that part of his tail, probably as a predator



Male Texas spiny lizard.

made a grab for him and got only a bit of broken tail. It’s a great survival strategy, having a tail that fairly easily breaks so that you lose your tail rather than your life. It grows back, but with cartilage rather than bones and with a different appearance.

Reaching the top of the ridge, I found a shady spot and wrote about some of what I had seen. I also looked at the high-altitude edge of what looked like a storm cell to the southeast. There had been predictions of storms in our area as the afternoon heated up. In the shade the temperature at the preserve was 93 degrees (with a 54% relative humidity). Not only was it getting hot, the preserve was also dry. The leaves on all those beebalms were drooping and the petals of black-eyed susan flowers were a little shriveled. But the storm cell to the southeast drifted off and no rain fell.

I know a spot on the back side of a little loop trail at the top of the hill where standing cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*) likes to grow. Here and there among the beebalm and other plants there was a stem of standing cypress with its bright scarlet flowers. In



Standing cypress among the spotted beebalm.

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Beebalm continued from page 32

another spot, a big tiger swallowtail added more bright colors, and woods was animated by plenty of other butterflies. There were hairstreaks, hackberry emperors, and common buckeyes.

All this visual beauty was matched by the aural beauty of bird song. Carolina wrens were calling in more than one place, and they were joined by cardinals, Bewick's wren, and a white-eyed vireo.

There was one other sound: the song of summer, the long, pulsing drone of insects in the trees. This is how a hot summer day in Texas sounds. It has been the background song of many a June or July day at the creek, and I suspect that I could start to sweat just by hearing it. The months are slipping by and it's nearly mid-June. Summer has found us, and I am grateful.

...

The following day we did get rain, so I took a walk on June 12th to two of the ponds at the preserve. Among the numerous wonders I ran into (almost literally) was an orb-weaving spider. More about that later.

Walking the trail to the north pond, right away I passed a small exposed slope with pink flowers

among the spotted beebalm and black-eyed susan. Those pink flowers are "meadow pink," or "Texas star," or if you prefer, "prairie rose gentian." Gosh, it's confusing enough to make you want to swear off common names and just use the scientific name, *Sabatia campestris*.

Closer to the pond, I saw a turtle in the path ahead of me. It was a red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), and I jumped to the conclusion that it was looking for a spot to lay eggs. And then I got a little closer and saw that this turtle was fairly melanistic, meaning that the bright yellows and greens that dominate the turtle's pattern are obscured by dark pigment. Old melanistic males completely lose the red patch at the back of the head and are primarily olive and charcoal colored. What were the chances that this was a wandering male? Wherever the turtle was going, I didn't want to disturb him or her, so I did not pick the turtle up for a closer look.

The north pond was edged with floating mats of water primrose, or floating primrose-willow. Oh, goodness, here we go again — we'll just call

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A common buckeye (Junonia coenia).



A woodland opening with several flower species, including "meadow pink."

Beebalm continued from page 33



The red-eared slider.

it *Ludwigia peploides*. According to iNaturalist, it propagates so easily that it is found in North and South America as well as parts of the Old World. It is beautiful but it also grows so well that it can get out of hand.

I sat beside a willow tree and checked the temperature, which was 78 degrees. Above us was a thin cloud deck, and the relative humidity was 74%. It felt comfortable to sit there, listening to a cricket frog calling nearby and a northern cardinal calling from somewhere toward the ridge. A couple of red-eared sliders swam under the surface of the pond.

Walking back, I took the trail through the woods. Walking among the post oaks and blackjack oaks, I passed a burrow entrance just the right size for an armadillo and then almost walked into a spider web spun across the trail. The owner of the web was having breakfast at the time, and I was only able to get a look at her underside. As a result, my friend and spider expert Meghan Cassidy was reluctant to identify the spider any more specifically than the family Araneidae (orb-weavers).



The pond is filling with Ludwigia, the plant with the yellow flowers.

There was a time that I would have panicked if I walked through a spider web, and I'm still not at all a fan of getting a face full of spider. However, years of time in the field, looking for reptiles and amphibians in places where a side order of spider just happens sometimes, have helped a great deal. The pre-eminent treatment for phobia is called exposure therapy, and it involves having some sort of repeated exposure to the feared thing. Hopefully this

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An orb-weaving spider in her web, with breakfast.

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happens gradually in a supportive and safe context, which is how it happened for me. And so today, I was able to appreciate this little arachnid and her breakfast (which might have been an ant or small wasp).

At about 10:30am I walked to the other end of the preserve to look for turtles off the dock of the fishing pond. Along the way, an open area had scattered basketflowers and several lemon bee balm (the other *Monarda* that we see at the preserve, this

one *Monarda citriodora*). Once again the plant gives the appearance of several flowers stacked on top of each other, with lavender bracts surrounding clusters of flowers.

At the fishing pond I looked in the usual spots and did not see any turtles basking. I have seen the red-eared sliders and river cooters in that pond almost enough to know their names, if they gave themselves names, but I'll have to wait until next time to see them.



Lemon beebalm, or purple horsemint (or any of several other common names).



A widow skimmer dragonfly perched near the north pond.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy

Friends of SCNP Monthly Meeting

Free and open to the public

Saturday, Aug. 12, 9 a.m.

Nature Journaling at SCNP

Michael and Jessica Smith

**Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve, Amphitheater at South Pond
5201 Bowman Springs Rd., Arlington, TX 76017**

Parking is available in the preserve parking lot.

We will meet at the preserve, early enough to beat the heat (but bring water!). In the parking lot, facing the woods, follow the sidewalk to the right until you reach the meeting area beside the fishing pond. We will talk about writing and drawing to enrich your time in nature, and then everyone will then have 30-45 minutes to walk within the preserve and write and draw. We will then reconvene by the fishing pond to discuss how it went.

Nature journaling is not only a way to preserve thoughts and images from a day in nature. It also is likely to make your memory of the day richer, it's an opportunity for self-reflection while writing and drawing, and promotes mindful awareness of the present moment.

Please bring a notebook or paper and a pen and pencil (colored pencils if you would like). We will have a notebook and pencil for you if you don't have one. If you have one, you could bring a small camp stool (not required).

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 36

Friends of SCNP Monthly Meeting

Free and open to the public

Saturday, Aug. 19, 7 p.m.

Bats of the Area and How to Find Them

Ellen Ravkind and Anne Alderfer,

local bat enthusiasts

Kate Rugroden, Bat World Sanctuary

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve, Amphitheater at South Pond

5201 Bowman Springs Rd., Arlington, TX 76017

Parking is available in the preserve parking lot.

Local bat enthusiasts Ellen Ravkind and Anne Alderfer along with bat expert Kate Rugroden from the Bat World Sanctuary will provide our program, to be held at the amphitheater overlooking the south pond. Kate can talk about the bats in this area and the role the sanctuary plays in education and rehabilitation. Ellen and Anne will demonstrate the use of the echolocation devices from Wildlife Acoustics (Echo Meter Touch 2).

We will meet in the amphitheater that overlooks the south pond. You might want to bring bug spray and water, and a good flashlight or headlamp with fresh batteries for getting back to the parking lot at the end of the evening.



Kate Rugroden

Kate Rugroden is Director of Special Projects for Bat World Sanctuary and is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, specializing in bats, raccoons, and opossums. Dr. Ellen Ravkind is the Naturalist Manager/Environmental Educator at River Legacy Foundation/River Legacy Living Science Center. Anne Alderfer is a part-time Naturalist at River Legacy Park and a Master Naturalist.

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Anne Alderfer with Jim Frisinger

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 37

Third Saturday Volunteer Day in June Jim Frisinger

The progress, perils and perspiration were all on display during the Third Saturday Volunteer Day at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve June 17. *Jim Frisinger photos.*

The progress: Another solarization cell was completed as we try to fry invasive King Ranch Bluestem in a North Prairie meadow. Two other eradication methods (blue tarp solarization and dig-out-and-reseed) will all be compared in the fall of 2024 to declare a winner! The idea: Launch the four big prairie grasses — big and little bluestem, Indiangrass, and switchgrass — so they can outcompete KR bluestem.

The perils: Charles Meyer and Morgan Chivers did battle with an aggressive American bumble bee after their ground hive was disturbed. Morgan was buzzed; Charles was stung — 6 times. Ouch!

The perspiration: The summer heat got to all of us, calling for an early adjournment. The next several Third Saturday Volunteer Days all start at 7 a.m. Cool!(er).

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Above from left, The privet attack team included Glenn Butler, who wielded an extractigator-style weed wrench, and Jim Domke, who wrestled privet debris down the trail near the North Prairie. Charles Meyer displays his bee stings.

Below from left, Morgan Chivers and Kim Courtney lugged cardboard to the solarization site. Charles Meyer helped prepare the site and joined Morgan in a celebratory lie-in AFTER they had that run-in with a really mad bumble bee.



Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 38

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species June 2023

It got hot! June's totals: 109 Observations, 81 Species, and 7 Observers. Way down from May! But we had three special sightings.

From Jim Frisinger: You know the saying: 90 percent of a job is just showing up. Well, documenting new species at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve proves the point. First, the preserve is not quite 10 years old; a lot of new discoveries await. And the more time you spend out there, well, the better your chances to get lucky! So here is a Blatchley walkingstick (*Manomera blatchleyi*). Cool, eh? Spotted on a sign June 2 at the entrance to the Pollinator Meadow (adjacent to the parking lot). First time documented on iNaturalist — and maybe the first documented in Arlington.



Then there is this box turtle, discovered on the forest floor adjacent to the North Prairie May 20. It's not rare by any means in Arlington, but it happens to be the first one documented on iNaturalist at the preserve. And it's listed as a "vulnerable" species in Texas, according to iNaturalist.



And from Michael Smith: The biodiversity of the preserve is a little richer today, thanks to Rudy and Derek, our amazing trail maintenance volunteers. Ordinarily those two are heroes because of what they do to maintain trails and generally take care of things. This morning I got a call from Rudy because they'd spotted a sizable snake; I got there very quickly, in time to see a western ratsnake (*Pantherophis obsoletus*) cruising through the tree canopy. These snakes are non-venomous. When Derek and Rudy came across this one, it was on the trail and stayed still initially (hoping the humans hadn't noticed its 4-foot length partly stretched across the trail). Then it slowly cruised across the trail and into the nearest tree. They are wonderful climbers, and pretty well camouflaged when in the tree. Anyway, I led a reptile and amphibian survey for a couple of years at the preserve and while we knew that this species turns up from time to time there, we hadn't recorded this rat snake in the survey. Now we have!



It's my guess that the ones we see there may be transients, without actually having a self-sustaining population. You're not likely to see one there but if you do, please watch from a little distance, and don't harass or kill them. They're part of the wildlife and won't hurt you.

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 39

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species June 2023



American basketflower (*Plectocephalus americanus*) – charley, American basketflower (*Plectocephalus americanus*) – drawntoscales, Blatchley walkingstick (*Manomera blatchleyi*)



common box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) – joshmols, Io moth (*Automeris io*) – charley, meadow pink (*Sabatia campestris*) – charley

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 40

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species June 2023



Left,
smooth sumac
(*Rhus glabra*) –
charley,



Right,
shining sumac
(*Rhus copallinum*) –
charley

Below,
western ratsnake
(*Pantherophis
obsoletus*) –
drawntoscales



Blackland Prairie Preserve Guy Random



*Bet you can't name any of these.
Oh, yeah? Watch and learn:
American basketflower, green
milkweed, western ironweed, and
sideoats gramma with common
yarrow. Not just a pretty face, ok?*



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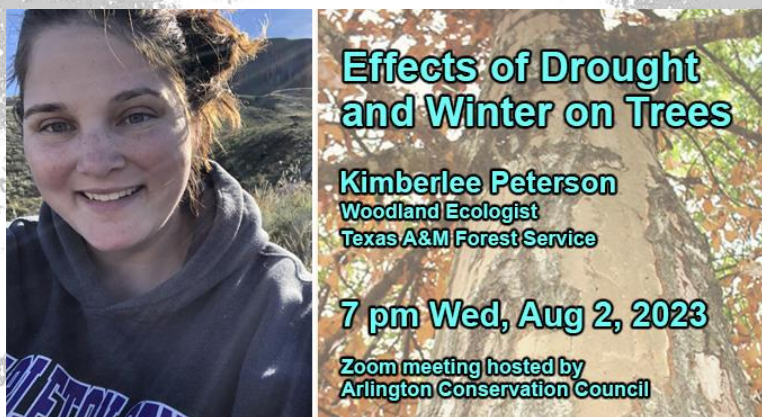
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Our August Zoom Meeting

See page 7 for more on this presentation.