

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POST OAK

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 2

MARCH 2024



BLACKLAND PRAIRIE PRESERVE • GUY RANDOM PHOTO

March Zoom Meeting



Read more about this program on page 5

Join by Zoom <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88951554206>

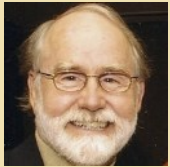
**For assistance accessing the meeting, contact Frank Keeney,
webmaster@acctexas.org**

6:30 pm social time and equipment check, 7 pm presentation



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From the President **Dick Schoech**



The Healing Power of Volunteering in Nature

Solutions to human problems that are not supported by data or don't turn a profit are often ignored. Dogs proven to detect COVID in airports and schools are infrequently used. Health providers rarely prescribe adopting a dog or cat, although research suggests that caring for a pet improves mental health. It is difficult to bottle and sell the experience of being in nature the same way companies can bottle and sell pills and other money-making treatments.

In today's social media world, quackery abounds. You can find opinions that almost anything will improve mental health. Only when researchers discover promising solutions do funds become available for additional research, widespread dissemination, and use. During the last few years of COVID, getting out into nature was documented as safe from infection, so park natural areas have been heavily used. While many small studies have documented the mental health value of this, rigorous studies to measure and monetize it have not been conducted. However ...

Employee mental health services have become a billion-dollar industry. New hires, once they have found the restrooms and enrolled in 401(k) plans, are presented with a panoply of digital wellness solutions, mindfulness seminars, massage classes, resilience workshops, coaching sessions and sleep apps. But a British researcher who analyzed survey responses from 46,336 workers at companies that offered such programs found that people who participated in them were no better off than colleagues who did not. The study considered the outcomes of 90 different interventions and found a single notable exception: Workers who were given the opportunity to do charity or volunteer work did seem to have improved well-being.^{REF}

Environmentalists have long known the power of volunteering in nature but have not had supporting data. Doctors don't typically prescribe caring for a pet or hiking for fear of being labeled a charlatan. Health insurance companies decline to cover treatments not proven effective by substantial research. The study quoted above points to the need for much better measures of volunteerism as a mental health treatment.

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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

What are the implications for your volunteering in nature? Many volunteers do not see the value of recording their hours. But documenting helps nature, community mental health, and the environmental movement. Volunteering and volunteers should be held in high esteem, especially by those prescribing mental health solutions. Volunteering in nature improves your mental health and society's well-being. Documenting your work gives volunteering the value it deserves for the volunteer, the natural environment, and society. If you know people who struggle with depression, encourage them to seek treatment and to supplement it by volunteering that involves exploring nature. Nature volunteering, especially in social groups, should be seen as a free mental health treatment that is rewarding, fun, and has no side effects.

Additional reading

REF: Jan 15, 2024: Workplace wellness offerings such as apps, coaching, and courses in time management or financial well-being had no positive effect, according to the study, while resilience and stress management training seemed to have a negative effect. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/15/health/employee-wellness-benefits.html?smid=nytcore-android-share>

Other:

In Chile's oldest and most overcrowded prison, inmates have found solace in the hundreds of stray cats. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/31/world/americas/cat-prison-chile.html?searchResultPosition=1>

In one study, specially trained dogs were 97% accurate in sniffing out COVID-19 from sweat samples taken from 335 people. Infection was found in 31 individuals with no symptoms. <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/specially-trained-dogs-can-sniff-out-covid-19-infection>

Could exercise save your brain? Randomized controlled trials say yes. Following a DASH diet may help even more. https://www.peoplespharmacy.com/articles/could-exercise-save-your-brain?utm_source=The%20People%27s%20Pharmacy%20Newsletter&utm_campaign=8e61b9fdff-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_02_12_03_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7300006d3c-8e61b9fdff-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Therapists Trade the Couch for the Great Outdoors

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/05/well/mind/outdoor-therapy-depression-anxiety.html?smid=nytcore-android-share>

Our March Zoom Program

Wednesday, March 6, 7 pm

From his time as a cadet at West Point where he graduated with a bachelor of science in foreign languages and civil engineering, followed by 5 years of active duty service as a U.S. Army captain honing his leadership and planning skills, through lengthy stints in non-profit community development serving marginalized communities, and as a transportation planner with NCTCOG, Clint has now taken the plunge and started his own ecologically minded landscape consultancy, design, management, and maintenance company. Based in Midlothian, Trinity Prairie Co. is “a Texas-native landscaping company in DFW passionate about uniting nature, beauty, and place.”

Please join us as we welcome Clint and hear his insights on prairie restoration in the DFW Metroplex.

IVAN QUERIDO'S REAL HERITAGE TREE

Special field correspondent Ivan Querido almost sounds better this month. Can't be easy acting the renegade every minute: So what's wrong with eastern red cedars anyway? But see, they got the evergreen thing going, and they only look terrible after we chop those low branches.



BARRED OWL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Bits & Pieces

The Terse Treehugger



A *Dallas Morning News* photo of the year? Or evidence of criminal mischief?

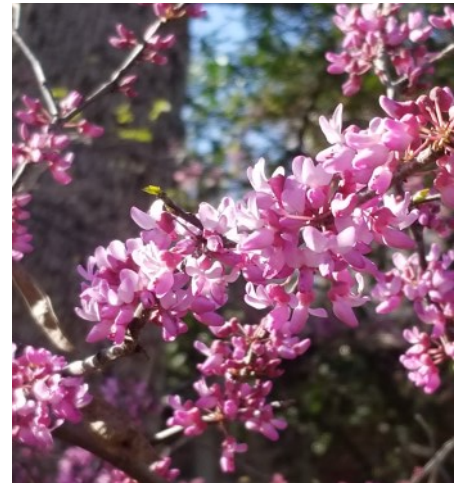
That's an easy one.
Too harsh?
Nope.

**Visit ACC's
Facebook page
and
Arlington
Conservation
Council
Discussion Group**

Street Scene



Here's a pair of unused disposable chopsticks. So what? [Read this](#) 12-year-old article on the topic while you consider: "Each year, the equivalent of 3.8 million trees go into the manufacture of about 57 billion disposable pairs of chopsticks in China..."



Redbud, of course. Too trite?

We Still Don't Get It



Sadly, in a university where people are thinking a lot about sustainability, workers fail to recycle dozens (if not more) of easily recyclable plastic bottles every day. This is happening even as industry groups are promoting [initiatives](#) to increase plastic recycling.

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



Question Corner John Darling

Q: I love gardening and composting and think about worms in both contexts. But recently I'm becoming concerned about reports of destructive, invasive worms. Can you tell me anything that will make me feel better about worms? — *Chronically befuddled academic*

A: Mostly no, but with one more or less bright spot. **Asian jumping worms** (top) act like composting worms on steroids by consuming the humus layer, outcompeting natives, stripping the forest floor, and depriving many plants and animals of critical habitat. Very bad. The **red wiggler** (middle), a common composting worm, appears to be benign in the wild. Okay, I guess. **Hammerhead flatworms** (bottom) are poisonous predators that eat crucial native earthworms. Very terrible. Don't touch them, and get some kid to turn on your computer so you can look this stuff up. Next!



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Hours 10 - 6 Mon - Sat,
Closed Sun



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Mexican plum, another sign of the season

GOOD WORK. ON TIME.

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Working Toward a Healthy Community
On a
Liveable Planet

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Yes, We're Talking to YOU

You Can Still 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 issue for information on submitting your 2024 dues.

Through with writing checks? Pay your dues via credit card or PayPal.

Renew or join here*

* https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=JN2N25FEK2ZWL



ACC Heritage Trees

ACC Heritage Trees

Is this a proper heritage tree or just another weak cottonwood waiting to drop limbs and die young? Maybe in this setting — Julia Burgen Park, away from houses and with wet feet in Johnson Creek — we can simply admire this [rainforest emergent](#) look. Funny thing: A quick Internet scan tells us cottonwoods typically grow to 70-100 feet and live about 70-100 years. That's an organized tree.



We're **Still** Doing Something Big

The ACC-UTA Endowment — established to support future environmentalists, promote environmental integrity and strengthen climate resilience — is a success!

Thanks to you, it has awarded a scholarship each of the last two years. Watch one awardee's presentation of his research [here](#).

And it is getting bigger.

This year it will award a \$1,000 scholarship and a \$3,000 research grant.

Please help the endowment make an even greater impact benefitting even more students. Keep it growing.

ACC-UTA Endowment
For good.
Forever.
[Donate here.](#)



My Nature Notebook

No yelling today!

I took my little brother to play in the leaves in the creepy old guy's yard because nobody else has any. He says he leaves the leaves on purpose Ha Ha but Mom says he's just very odd



and we really really have to stay away from him. And all his flower gardens are really messy and that's on purpose too. But anyway we broke off dry sunflower sticks to use as swords and the C.O.G. caught us but for once he didn't yell. He says because Molly would have wanted him to be nice to kids and teach them all about nature things in a fun way. Sure, okay, but the creepy old guy is never ever going to be fun no matter what this Molly wanted. Maybe if he listened to her better, but at least he's not yelling today so we should be glad he learned anything from Molly.

Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte text and photos

Right, Arlington Water Utilities has been replacing the main water line in Randol Mill Park for about two weeks. The pond parking lot is closed for now while heavy equipment is used.

At its core, trenchless technology is a collection of construction methods that requires little to no digging into the earth. Instead of completely exposing pipes, the ground is drilled or bored into at small entry and exit points. This allows access to the pipes so they can be worked with. Learn more about this [here](#).

Below, Recently, Arlington Parks & Recreation Department has repaired one of the columns on a bridge in the park. Thank you, APRD, for continuing to make the park attractive to visitors.

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Randol Mill Park continued from page 12

Right, Charles Richards is a real champ, especially when it comes to getting litter out of RMP waterways. He was spotted Feb. 5 (*photo at right*) and 8; however, he's cleaning up our park much more often. On Feb. 8, Carol Marcotte and Charles collected litter.

February each year is the time to check all 13 blue-bird nest boxes for repairs and maintenance before breeding begins.

Below, Dick Schoech, Jamie Brunner, and Carol Marcotte (*not shown*) checking boxes and preparing for the breeding season to begin.

Lower right, Dick Schoech, Charles Richards, and Carol Marcotte battled privet on Feb 9. They cleared a large area, but there is so much more.

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Randol Mill Park continued from page 13



A promise of Randol Mill Bluebonnets and an early floral assortment: *clockwise from left above*, young Bluebonnets on the restoration prairie, Spring beauty, Dandelion and honey bee on a sunny winter day, Four-nerve daisy blooming in February.



Social Media

Be sure to visit
ACC's Facebook page
and
Arlington Conservation Council
Discussion Group



**Our ACC board members love to
talk whenever they're not busy**

ACC on YouTube

Arlington Conservation Council recently set up its own [YouTube](#) channel to upload presentations given at its monthly meetings. Speakers address a range of environmental topics including local issues, wildlife, native plants, and natural areas. Be sure to check the channel soon after each monthly meeting for the latest program upload. From time to time, videos of related interest will be uploaded as well.

Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marian Hiler

Planting continues in various parts of the wildscape thanks to John Snowden and Ann Knudsen who keep running rescue missions to save many wonderful forbs and grasses from the doomed prairie site in Burleson. The rescued are arriving at a perfect time for areas getting needed attention. More Prairie Foxglove [*Penstemon cobaea*] was added to the pocket prairie still under development. Volunteers also planted Standing Winecup [*Callirhoe digitata*], False Pennyroyal [*Hedeoma reverchonii*], and Barbara's-buttons [*Marshallia caespitosa*] there. Plenty of Barbara's-buttons were also available to go in the photo-op and twin oaks areas. More Four-nerve Daisy [*Tetrameuris scaposa*] filled in the existing ones on the berm by the main entrance.

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Volunteers braved a cold January day to plant Seep muhly [*Muhlenbergia reverchonii*], Big bluestem [*Andropogon gerardii*], Little bluestem [*Schizachyrium scoparium*], and Gayfeather [*Liatris sp.*] along the western side of the wildscape by the disc golf course. Right, Joe Martinez and Dana Austin. Below, Carol Marcotte and Katy Walsh.



Wildscape Update continued from page 16, continued on page 18



Left above, Marylee Thomason, Kathi Miller, Rebecca Hill and Bonnie Garcia remove weeds from the Buffalo grass patch. Right above, Tackling winter weeds are Mary Lou Yost, Ann Knudsen, Marylee Thomason and Karen Knight. Below, Getting ahead of the weeds in the pocket prairie. From left front, Patsy Miller, Marylee Thomason, Joe Martinez, Christine Brinson. In far back, Jane Oosterhuis, Rebecca Hill and Bonnie Garcia. Ann Knudsen photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 17

The wooden boards that had provided walkers a much-used crossover at the rill between the west sidewalk and the disc golf 18th fairway finally gave way. Starting in December, Christine Brinson and Marian Hiler spent three workdays replacing them with a more permanent solution. They installed some of the stones donated a couple of years ago and added Cherokee sedge transplanted from the woodland area to deter additional erosion and make the walk more attractive. The new crossover should last much longer than the planks did.

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Left, Stone crossing beginning: Christine Brinson walking it off after hauling and unloading the heavy stones.

Ann Knudsen photo. Right, Stone crossing end: Christine Brinson and Marian Hiler giving the crossing one final check.
Marylee Thomason photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 18

First Saturday mini-classes In December, Hester Schwarzer, Master Gardener and Master Naturalist, talked about "Native Bees and Wasps in Your Backyard."

The January mini-class was given by Kyle Vyers, Arlington City Forester, who answered all the questions thrown at him, including the challenges and hoops to go through to conduct a prescribed burn at the New York Blackland prairie.

At the mini-class scheduled for **March 2**, Master Naturalist and Wildscape super volunteer Josephine Keeney will present "From Grass to Texas Native Plants." She will talk about her personal experience converting the Keeney front yard to Texas native plants. Come join us, if only for the class, in the compost area. The class begins about 11:30 as the workday volunteers put away the day's tools.

Volunteer Opportunities 9:00 – noon Wednesdays and first Saturdays

All are welcome, no experience necessary. Members of ecology and garden groups can receive credit hours. For more information contact info@thewildscape.org

*Left, Hester Schwarzer shows an example of a bug house that can provide shelter for bees and wasps.
Right, Kyle Vyers ready to answer questions. Marylee Thomason photo.*

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Wildscape Update continued from page 19



Above, The Molly Hollar Wildscape sign was removed a couple of years ago because its frame was sinking and needed replacing. As we await the new sign, the old sign was reframed and installed in memory of Molly's passing.

Below left, Mexican plums signaling spring is arriving. Below right, The possumhaw hollies have put on a splendid show of orange-red berries this winter and are still going strong.



In Case You Missed It Grace Darling

As I write this on March 1, the **Smokehouse Creek fire** in the northern Texas Panhandle — the largest and most destructive in Texas history and second-largest wildfire in U.S. history — has burned through more than 1.2 million acres and is only ~15% contained. Firefighters and dozers from all over the state are helping to hold the lines along the north perimeter of the fire even as southwest winds, rising ambient temperatures, and low relative humidity may push flames to the northeast. The wildfires are spreading east into Oklahoma, where at least 12 fires are currently burning, covering more than 115,000 acres [[reference here](#)]. Two people are confirmed dead, about 500 structures destroyed, lampposts are melted, power line posts split in half, and homes and properties have been reduced to charred remains; so far, 60 Texas counties have been declared disaster areas by the governor. The economic impact of such human, animal, crop, and infrastructure waste is simply enormous: "Over 85% of the state's cattle population is located on ranches in the panhandle . . . the losses could be catastrophic for those counties," said Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller. That 85% of the state's cattle comes to about 12 million cows, according to The New York Times, and "10,000 cattle expected to be slaughtered by the Smokehouse Creek Fire"



reads the headline from USA Today. [[read more here](#)] The heat and high winds — forecast to gust at 20 to 35 mph — are likely to cause "critical fire weather conditions again for Saturday and Sunday," the National Weather Service in Amarillo said.



Texas farmers claim company sold them **PFAS-contaminated sludge that killed livestock**, read the headline [<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/01/texas-farmers-pfas-killed-livestock>].

Two ranches also allege biosolids with "forever chemicals" ruined crops, polluted drinking water, and left their properties worthless. PFAS are a class of around 15,000 compounds that are dubbed "forever chemicals" because they don't naturally break down, and accumulate in the human body and environment. The chemicals are linked to a range of serious health problems like cancer, liver disease, kidney issues, high cholesterol, birth defects and decreased immunity. Sewage sludge is produced when wastewater treatment plants clean sewer system water. Disposal of the industrial waste is highly expensive, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) allows it to be spread on cropland as

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In Case continued from page 21



“biosolid” fertilizer because it is also rich in plant nutrients. Regulators in Maine and Michigan have found PFAS in every sample they have tested, as did a 2001 federal review of the nation’s sewage sludge. Crops can absorb the chemicals from the soil, and the chemicals also can end up in dairy, beef, and other agricultural products at levels the EPA states are dangerous to humans.

The sludge spread near the Grandview, Texas, farms came from the city of Fort Worth’s wastewater treatment facility, about 30 miles north. Sludge was spread on a crop field across the street from the plaintiffs’ farms in late 2022, and the highly mobile chemicals migrated to their properties, the suit alleges. The farms’ drinking water was found to be contaminated at levels over 65m times higher than the federal health advisory for PFOS, one kind of PFAS compound, and affected meat was as much as 250,000 times above safe levels. The complaint alleges the families will likely have to abandon their ranches from which they sell livestock.

With help from local partners, NCTCOG is leading the development of the **Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan** (DFW AQIP) to be funded through the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) program. The DFW AQIP is a

comprehensive plan to improve air quality, enhance sustainability, prevent and mitigate effects from climate change, and promote equity — [read the plan here](#).



From minutes of the January 8 meeting of stakeholders of the DFW Air Quality Improvement Plan, City of Arlington (virtual): Concerns were expressed regarding urban drilling and local health issues (especially childhood asthma rates), food access, and bike accidents. Attendees recommended staff identify ways to create less carbon-intensive construction, electrify appliances and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (H-VAC), add more high-density housing, provide free transit passes, add community solar and solar arrays to parking garages, decarbonize airports, create a regional bus rapid transit network, add bike and bus only lanes, make sure diesel vehicles are meeting current emission standards, and add more electric vehicle charging stations.

Attendees expressed lack of support for carbon trading and requiring electric vehicle owners to pay additional registration fees.

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In Case continued from page 22



NCTCOG was encouraged to reach out to younger community members through avenues such as TikTok, Instagram, FB, collect feedback by meeting people where they are (such as grocery stores, schools, etc.), focus on environmental justice, and host a community meeting in Spanish only.



Environmental injustice in housing? At the February 27 public session of the Arlington City Council, zoning case PD23-25 came up for appeal after having been denied earlier by the P&Z commissioners on a 5 to 4 vote. The proposed rezoning project, located at 1940 Ballpark Way, consisted of 70 — later revised to 68 — mostly two-story townhomes designed to meet the Comprehensive Plan strategy that calls for

“[providing] a mix of quality housing [to] encourage the development of housing choices that meet the needs of current and emerging populations, including singles, couples, small and large families, empty nesters and seniors.” According to the staff report, “Townhouses can provide the additional housing diversity called for . . . [and] the townhouse use can be a good buffering transition between single-family detached and commercial properties” in the area. So what’s the catch, you ask? The developer plans to sell these townhouses starting at \$425,000 for the basic 2-bedroom to \$650,000 for the upper end, 3-bedroom units. Two-car garages, no backyard, cookie-cutter architecture and pointy black roofs . . . are you tempted yet? Not likely any of the Arlington families I know — what about the teenager’s car? — could afford the down payment, let alone build wealth at those prices, and 47 neighbors who opposed it agreed. Still, a supermajority of council members green-lighted the project, perhaps hoping for that “emerging population” to show up.



From the staff report: **Tree Preservation** “The UDC requires 35% preservation for a single family (attached/detached) development site. This site has several Post Oak trees, a Cross Timbers tree species, which are being removed. Some of these trees are 30 inches in diameter. The updated tree survey from the applicant preserves 28.4 percent.”

Rudy: the Trail Boss

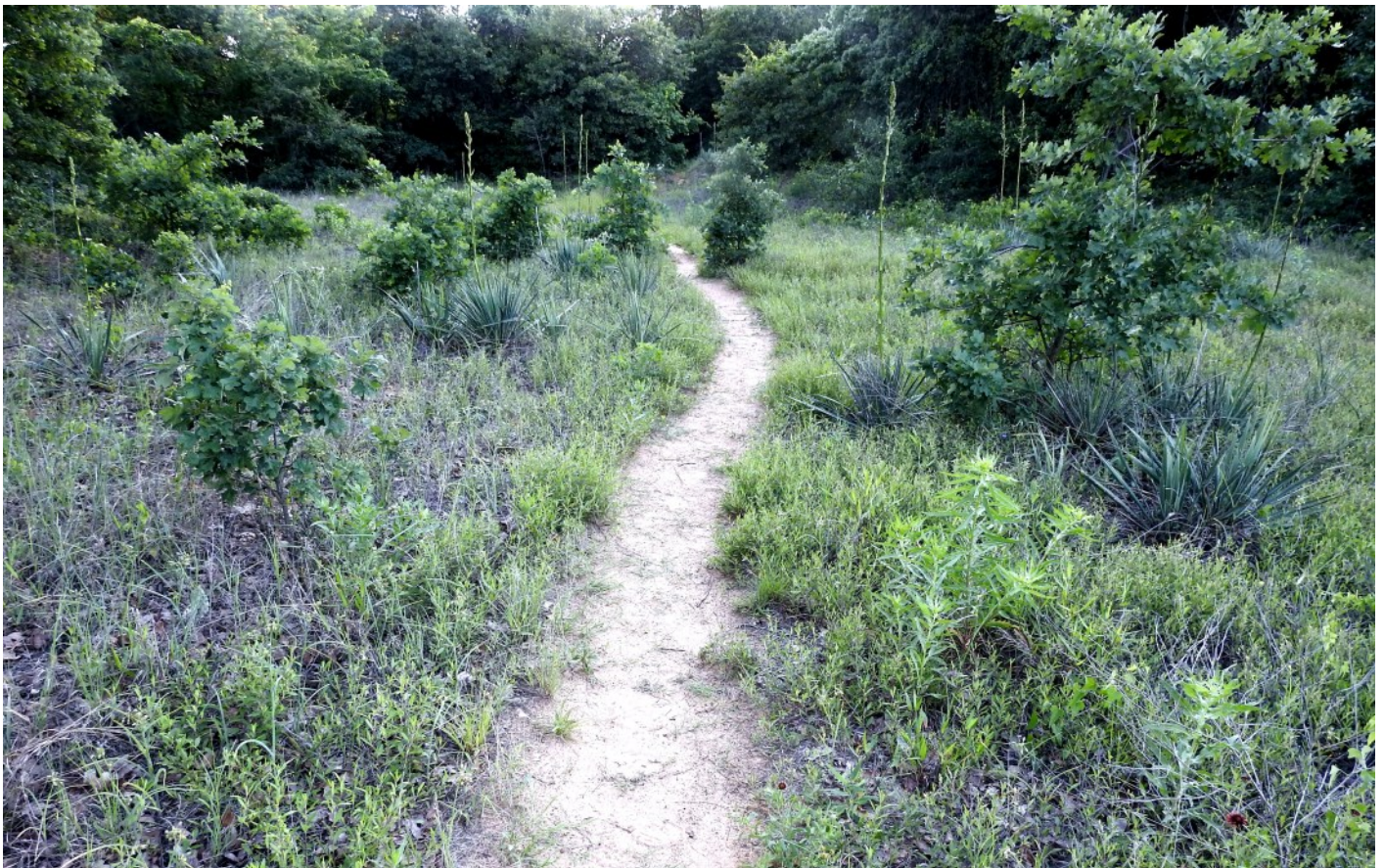
This month, Arlington Parks and Recreation staff and volunteers nominated Rudy Arnold as Volunteer of the Month! Rudy has been volunteering at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve for several years now. You will find him on the preserve's two miles of trails many Tuesday and Thursday mornings, restoring areas eroded from rain and foot traffic and creating better paths to replace too steep or environmentally inappropriate rogue trails. He works closely with APRD who have given him an official yellow vest and have delivered materials to the preserve for his use in trail maintenance. The other Friends of SCNP refer to him as the Trail Boss. Thank you, Rudy, for your dedication, skill, and passion for nature and for serving our Arlington community.

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH



RUDY ARNOLD

FEBRUARY 2024



The trail through the Yucca Meadow at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy

Coming Up

Mini-Bioblitz: Know Your Nature Neighbors

Saturday, Mar. 9, 10 – noon

Led by Michael Smith

Let's take a walk, meet some cool plant and animal species, and contribute to citizen science. You don't have to be an expert. Maybe you're interested in finding cacti, flowers, lizards, or birds and uploading photos of them to the nature app "iNaturalist" or other citizen science app like eBird. You're also welcome if you just want to come along, enjoy nature, and learn a little.

We will have folks who know the preserve well and know iNaturalist and can help you use it. There may be one or more Texas Master Naturalists with us who can give you pointers on discovering nature at the preserve.

These walks will begin March 9, then we'll do it again April 27 as a participation in [City Nature Challenge](#). In most months we will do this on the second Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

We'll meet at the picnic tables off the parking lot at the preserve, introduce ourselves, and we might talk a little about a kind of plant or animal we are focusing on. Then we'll go explore for a while, finding and documenting that species or any plant or animal that catches our interest. You can walk with the group leader(s) or explore on your own. We will meet back at the picnic tables at 11:30 a.m. to review what we found and be done by 12:00.

If you are interested, please keep up with us and check for last minute-changes [here](#). If you are not on Facebook, you can contact us at info@scnpfriends.org. In some months we will have a special topic on a different day and time instead of the second Saturday. The walks are subject to canceling and rescheduling based on weather.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve is a city-owned 59-acre preserve near I-20 in southwest Arlington. It conserves and protects some of the remaining Eastern Cross Timbers ecoregion in the DFW area, with oak woodlands, patches of prairie grasses, and several ponds. The Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve is a nonprofit group that supports the city of Arlington's efforts in conservation and education.

People like you have documented 17,758 observations on [iNaturalist](#), reflecting 1,667 species. There's a lot to see!

If you are a member of the CTMN master naturalist chapter, these hours will count as volunteer hours, report as "Southwest Nature Preserve:TMN Report Hours."



iNat observations made on the preserve

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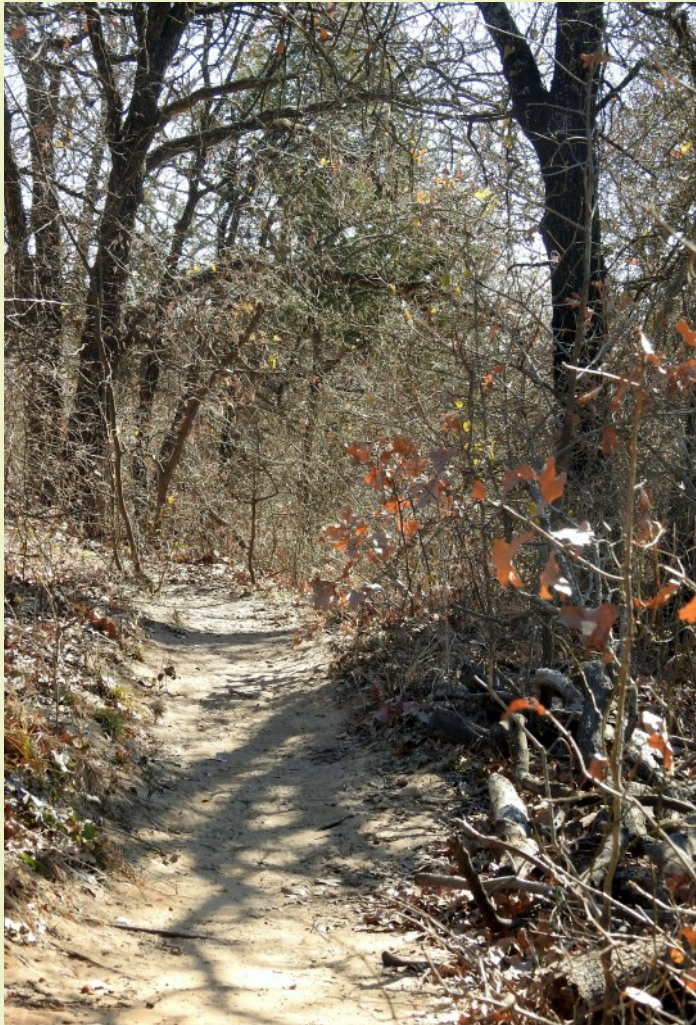
Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 25

Coming Up

Let's Explore Nature with Mindfulness and Journaling

Saturday, March 16, 2 pm

Led by Michael Smith, M.A.



We will meet at the preserve at 2:00 pm, at the north end of the parking lot (closest to the hill). After introducing mindfulness, we will climb up to the bluff and walk in several parts of the preserve. Adults and older children (over ten years) welcome. Please register at <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofSCNP> for this free event.

Let's take a walk and let go of distractions and stresses. Time spent in nature benefits our mood, thinking, and health, according to many research studies. We can spend some time among the trees and grasses, breathing easily and noticing what it is like to live in the present moment.

Mindfulness involves very intentionally paying attention to our present experience, accepting it just as it is. Mindfulness also has a good track record of benefits to such things as mood and attention, and it can promote kindness and empathy. When we practice it in nature, we are likely to appreciate our surroundings as if seeing and hearing them for the first time.

We can then take a little time to reflect on what is around us and within us, writing or drawing in a

nature journal. Doing this helps us organize our thoughts, adds to our self-understanding, and may benefit our mental wellness in other ways. Bring a notebook and pen and/or pencil!

Your walk leader: Michael Smith has been licensed as a Psychological Associate for over 38 years. He is author of the forthcoming book, *Mindfulness in Texas Nature*, from Texas A&M University Press. You can find him at <https://livesinnature.com>.

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 26

Arlington Fire Department Walkabout Jim Frisinger text

At the invitation of Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve, the Arlington Fire Department walked the preserve to provide their perspective on how we can best manage the forest and prairies. The department recognizes that it needs to attend to urban wildland interface issues after 150 years of fire suppression here. The department is beefing up its training in wildfire control, currently training in Fort Worth. It is looking to do such training in Arlington. Partnerships with nature preserves, where prairie fires are beneficial to a healthy ecosystem, may be one place this training could take place.

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Devin Stewart and Matt King from Arlington Parks & Recreation, Arlington Fire Department personnel including Deputy Chief Jeff Durand and Lt. Sean Cordero, and far right, Jim Frisinger of the Friends. Jan Miller photo.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 27

Review: Winter Tree ID Walk Annabelle Corboy text and photos

February 11, led by Suzanne Tuttle

For the cold-tolerant folks who wanted to learn to identify a tree in winter, this was a perfect afternoon! Suzanne Tuttle led us down the boardwalk, and then along the not-very-muddy Blue Trail to the top of the preserve.

One of the tips that Suzanne shared is to start with the easy stuff. Are there still a few lingering leaves on the tree, or even ones starting to bud out already? How about remaining berries, galls, or nut husks? If the tree is somewhat isolated, are there leaves or nuts on the ground underneath it. But if none of those are present, there's still a lot to learn from the tree. We noted the different growth habits, bark, twigs, buds and leaf scars that help to identify trees in winter. The two most plentiful oaks at SCNP are the Blackjack oak and the Post oak. These trees are tough ones, thriving in the Cross Timbers climate. A professor at University of Arkansas, David Stahle, has created a project to study the tree rings of these and other ancient trees in the Southwest. Here's a link to his project, the Ancient Cross Timbers Consortium, <https://xtimbers.uark.edu/>

Suzanne Tuttle (*right, red top and tan coat*) is a plant ecologist and retired manager of Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. She also serves as a director for the Fort Worth Chapter of the Native Prairies Association of Texas as well as the John Bunker Sands Wetland.

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 28

Volunteer Opportunity Jan Miller text and photos

There's a prime spot at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve just waiting for someone's inspiration and some native plants. Could it be you? This high-visibility spot is a raised planter overlooking SCNP's feature pond near the amphitheater. It currently has one cedar elm, handsome sandstone boulders, some blanket flowers, etc. As you can see, it also has tie vine and other less-desirables that need to be managed. But it could be a great opportunity for a demonstration pollinator garden with native plants. Can you see it buzzing with native bees, wasps and butterflies? There's plenty of sun until early afternoon, with shade from late afternoon heat. Access is easy using the concrete sidewalk from the parking lot. All it needs is a native gardener's knowledge of plants, an inspired design and planting. Friends of SCNP can even assist with funding for seed and plants.



Mid-late winter is a prime time for planning, and early spring is great for planting. Would you think about it? If you'd like more information or to sign on, please contact us at info@scnpfriends.org and thanks for considering!

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 29

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species – January 2024

Annabelle Corboy

January totals: 116 Observations, 74 Species, and 8 Observers. For January, we're going to take a look at our winter avian visitors. Special thanks to our Observer/Photographers who captured some outstanding shots. We usually just list their inaturalist names, but this month seems to require some special recognition:

Trish Terrell (outdoorcrazy), Sam Moore (sam_moore_), Charley Amos (charley), Sam Kieschnick (sambiology) and Jeff Terrell (jaytee60)



Above from left, Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) – outdoorcrazy, Dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*) - sambiology, Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*) - sam_moore_

Below from left, Lesser scaup (*Aythya affinis*) - outdoorcrazy, Pied-billed grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) - sam_moore_, Yellow-rumped warbler (*Setophaga coronata*) - jaytee60



Blackland Prairie Preserve

Guy Random



*Old photos this month
because they mowed our prairie
just in time, we hope.
It's pretty sad now,
so don't look for a while.
It will get better.*



Parting Thought

“We never fully move on,
We leave a piece of ourselves behind
Like leaves and trunks molded into the earth
And forest floor, we give what we know
And others take it up and use it to grow.
I stand under the shade of giants.”

Eric Overby, *Legacy*



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

March Zoom Meeting


**A Framework for
Prairie Restoration in
the Built Environment**

Clint Hail
 Trinity Prairie Co.
 Owner | President

7 pm Wed, Mar 6, 2024

Zoom meeting hosted by
 Arlington Conservation Council

See pages 2 and 5 for more on this presentation.