

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

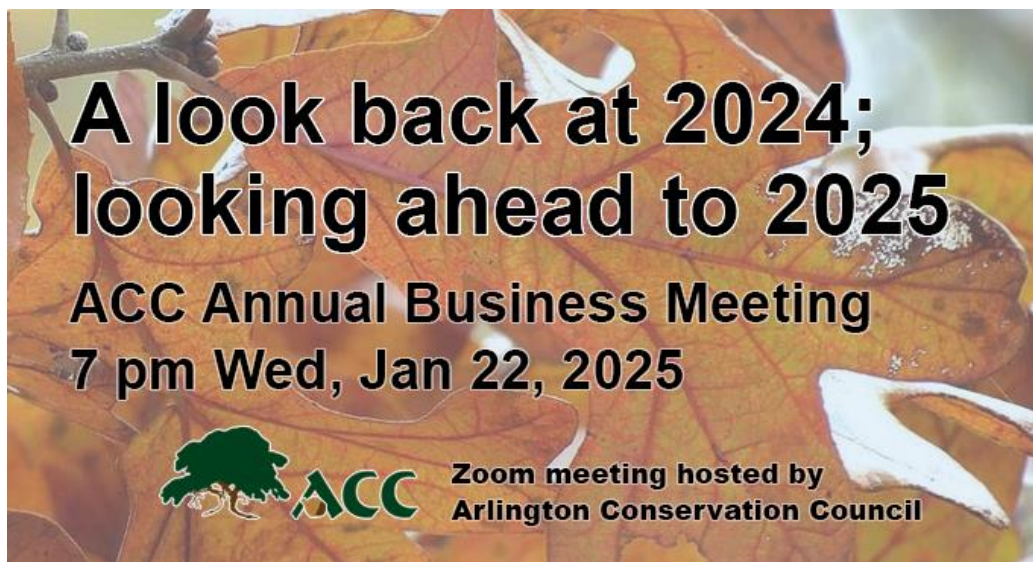
VOLUME 24, NUMBER 10

DECEMBER 2024 – JANUARY 2025



RED-SHOULDERED HAWK • ARLINGTON • DICK SCHOECH PHOTO

January Zoom Meeting



Read more about this program on page 5

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81168322546>

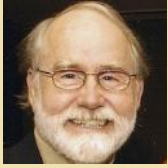
For assistance accessing the meeting, contact Frank Keeney,
webmaster@acctexas.org

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

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From the President **Dick Schoech**



Giving

The holidays are a time for giving. If 2024 has been fruitful, then share your blessings because giving is as rewarding for the recipient as the giver. Giving improves the giver's mental health by reducing stress and creating a sense of purpose and fulfillment because your brain secretes feel-good chemicals such as serotonin (regulates your mood), dopamine (delivers a sense of pleasure), and others that create a sense of connection.

Many good environmental causes involve humans, wildlife, critters of all kinds, and our planet, which is reacting to climate change with droughts, floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and other disasters. The current decline of most wildlife species will continue as our human population peaks from the current 8 billion to 10.3 billion in the mid-2080s.

One easy way to give wisely is to help local causes that you're confident will do what they say. You can give all sorts of things — cash, equities, vehicles, food, plants. I overplanted elephant garlic one year and gave the excess to the Arlington Life Shelter. The staff's joy and appreciation gave me a "helper's high" as if I had donated hundreds of dollars.

Most *Post Oak* readers are online where giving can be easy but also risky. Technology lets charities easily put their cause in front of potential donors. Sites like [Charity Watch](#), [Charity Navigator](#), and [Give.org](#) use charities' nonprofit tax filings, surveys, and other available information to educate givers by providing information like the amount a charity spends on fundraising compared to the amount spent on addressing its mission.

Giving or just investigating organizations online can allow your contact information to be traded or sold to unscrupulous organizations. This opens you up to unwanted solicitations — lots of them.

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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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Please send them to
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From the President continued from page 3

Scams are common and hard to detect, like when a scammer uses a name that sounds very similar to a well-known reputable charity. Based on a solicitation letter, I entered the American Cancer Society in the three charity rating sites linked above and found that at least 39 U.S. organizations have American Cancer Society in their name. Ratings ranged from 4 star to not recommended. It seems many organizations put American Cancer Society in their name. I concluded that I need to do more research on this charity.

Issues with online giving, like solicitations on your television, should not deter you from giving. Standard advice is not to give “in the moment” but only after you have investigated a charity. Also, keep a record of when you give because charities know that our memory about giving is not good and that the more recent the latest gift, the better chance of another.

Since our editor likes pictures, I asked a free artificial intelligence phone app to generate an image of a hiker in the woods feeling good after helping an animal. ChatGPT almost immediately generated the image to the right, saying, “Here’s your image with the hiker showing a warm, satisfied expression, reflecting his happiness for helping the dog. Let me know if there’s anything you’d like to adjust!”



I wish for ACC members a warm, satisfied expression from holiday giving.

Fun with Moths John Darling

It started with a small, drab moth (a Scale-feeding snout moth) whose photo I sent to iNat, where Urban Biologist Sam Kieschnick noted that its larvae prey on scale insects, among them those living on prickly pear cactus. That’s odd enough, but there’s more. The sedentary females of those scale insects (cochineal bugs) form white, cottony clumps and produce carminic acid as a defense against predators. The moth larvae aren’t deterred; they incorporate their prey’s acid, also to ward off predators. But there’s still more: If you crush a cochineal bug, you see a red blob. That’s the acid, which was used, among many other things, to dye the coats of British Redcoats red. It’s still making things red, like cosmetics, artists’ paints, and textiles. What have we learned? This little moth was actually a treasure, and ain’t nature grand? Thanks, Sam. You’re the real deal.



Our January Program

Arlington Conservation Council Annual Business Meeting Wednesday, Jan. 22, 7 pm

Join ACC to review the 2024 environmental year and elect officers. And of course it's time to express your biggest local environmental concerns, share your interests, and be sure ACC knows what you think it should be doing in 2025. In addition, members of the award-winning FAUNA (Friends of Arlington's Unique Natural Areas) will present their accomplishments and plans.

As a small preview, below are views of the member sites, each submitted by volunteers who are actively involved in a wide variety of projects at the areas they are devoted to preserving and enhancing.



Above left, Interpretative sign at Rosser's Meadow in O.S. Gray Natural Area. This is a recent successful restoration project in progress that the Friends group is very proud of. Carrie Donovan photo. *Center*, Mosses on shallow sandstone soil at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve. In this natural area, volunteers work on renewing grasslands as well as removing exotics in the wooded portions. Michael Smith photo. *Right*, Post oaks with vibrant fall foliage at Randol Mill Park, where erosion control with native plants, a pollinator garden, and meadow improvements are pursued by volunteers. Carol Marcotte photo.



Above left, One of the entrances to the Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park. The latest major project here is the establishment of a very large native grassland to control erosion. Marian Hiler photo. *Center*, Blackland Prairie Preserve in April. At this time of year the dark green sedges that occupy the relatively moist linear gilgai show up well against the lighter grasses and forbs. Guy Random photo. *Right*, Julia Burgen Linear Park, where a varied mix of native and exotic trees and brush form a narrow green corridor along Johnson Creek. John Darling photo.

It's Dues Time. Look on the Back Page.



Do you hear something?

No, it's just the wind.

Bits & Pieces

The Terse Treehugger



Okay, Morning glory plume moth. Sure.

Does it have guts?
Where?

Can it fly? How?

What's going on here?

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

Is Recycling Doomed?



Maybe we're the ones on the block who do their best to follow the rules. But so many people seem to struggle with recycling. Then their stuff gets mixed with ours, and all of it can end up as contaminated junk in the landfill. Why is it so hard?



Eve's necklace.

Would You Like Plastic with Your Tea?



No, thanks. But it's gotten harder to avoid with all those plastic mesh tea bags. And there's no composting them, these little worthless bits of unnecessary trash. Funny thing: Reading a [page](#) on this topic, you see ads for the company whose plastic bag is shown here.

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



ACC Trees



From Sylvia Kultur: How can you possibly ignore the Post oaks in Parkdale Cemetery? Granted, only a handful remain, thanks to the sad choices made in 1928 when “Chinese elms [were] planted every 24 feet...with Lombardy poplars all around, also Chinese cedars.” Arlington Journal, May 25, 1928.

Just look at the magnificent Post oak I am sending to you. The cemetery is slightly less than 100 years old, and this must have been a fine large tree well before it opened. Of course, like so many others, it stands alone, lacking any chance of contributing to a functional Post oak woodland, its nearest neighbor a miserable crepe myrtle whose uprooting would surely improve the view.



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 awarded 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.

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ACC-UTA Endowment

For good.

Forever.

[Donate here.](#)



We're **Still** Doing Something Big continued from page 9

Architecture major Knowme Tasfia has accepted the ACC endowment's summer 2024 research award.

Research Project:

Knowme is passionate about building resilient and environmentally conscious communities and studies sustainable urban planning. Her project is focused on creating child-friendly communities amid the busy landscapes of metropolitan places through the study of the complex, vital roles that nonprofits play in both influencing urban landscaping and advancing children's well-being in the City of Dallas. Such child-friendly communities will promote the preservation of urban ecosystems and biodiversity through the conservation of green spaces, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and nature-centric design.

With the help of the ACC award, Knowme plans to diversify her interdisciplinary research in natural resource conservation and hopes to assist the City of Arlington in the larger conversation on sustainable urban planning and environmental preservation. She acknowledges the award as a catalyst for networking and collaboration that will provide further opportunities to work with a larger variety of stakeholders, establish alliances, and promote collaborative effort toward the creation of a sustainable future. She hopes to make a real impact on Arlington's physical landscape by promoting a culture of environmental stewardship among its citizens through research projects that prioritize the preservation of natural resources, the advancement of sustainable practices, and the improvement of urban green spaces. She wants to create a connection between academics and practice by actively participating in local communities, advocating sustainable policies, and sharing research findings.

ACC-UTA Endowment

For good.

Forever.

[Donate here.](#)



Question Corner John Darling

Q: I've got a couple of feral children who won't stay away from the old guy next door. The cops say he's creepy but harmless. The guy doesn't even have a lawn, just a mess of weeds that make my yard look bad even though mine's the best one on the block. I found a disgusting grub and I'm ready to go with a complete lawn insect killer as soon as the season is right. But now my rotten kids are lecturing me about lawn care, and I know it's coming from that codger. Tell me something to shut them all up.



A: Sure. Forget the poisons, smother your grass and go crazy with native plants. Make a mini-prairie if you have sun, fill it with nectar and host plants, places for ground-nesting bees, leave it messy all winter, and don't forget different water sources for birds and butterflies. And even if you don't do that, remember the obvious: Grubs are part of life in the soil; they may eat bad things and are eaten by lots of creatures. Get some life in your sterile yard and maybe your kids will stay home and leave that poor guy alone. Next!

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Passionflower vine after Gulf fritillary invasion.



The Page with No Name

Report from the field

Ivan Querido

Now what? There's our special field correspondent wandering around the editorial conference room, bumping into things, and acting more confused than usual: What? Am I the only one watching habitat destroyed in Dream City while you and the other suits sip lattes around your mahogany conference table that used to be home for the last Harpy eagles in Belize? Look what they did now: For one tiny footbridge over a nothing stream, they dumped a mess of ugly rocks, stripped the banks, wiped out dense shrubs and little trees, and capped it off with a sterile blanket of Bermuda grass. Sure it was packed with privet, but what about all those bugs and snails and moths and all those winter birds? Our advice now: "You all just hunker down on that half-dead Bermuda. Don't worry about that blue norther, you'll be fine."



SOLIDAGO

The goldenrod that flashes in the autumn sun
Beside a stream or massed along a field edge
Signals the season's change like nothing else.

Almost overnight the weedy clumps
That went unnoticed all the summer long
Slip on royal raiment, shining sprays

That dip and droop and sway
Like kingly banners in the wind,
Showing to all around the regal presence.

And courtiers come calling, butterflies,
Bees and other feasters on the gilded gift,
Swarming happy in October air,

Oblivious to their frosty fate on some tomorrow,
Only aware today has brought munificence
Of nectar, pollen, sweet perfume to everyone.

©2012 John I. Blair



My Nature Notebook

Poop!

There was nothing fun in our yard so we snuck over to the Creepy Old Guy's place again and there was a big pile of poop from his funny-looking pig and I dared Stupid to see how much poop he could pick up on a stick. So he was trying and all of a sudden there was a couple of shiny pretty beetles making poop into a little ball! And rolling it around! Then the Creepy Old Guy caught us but this time he forgot to yell because he liked the beetles too. He said they were Rainbow scarabs and we should leave them alone because they help the soil when they dig tunnels and push the poop balls down to little rooms under the ground. And Stupid said why? And he said they lay an egg in the ball so the baby has food when it hatches. What? The babies eat poop? Yes, you should look it up. It's the kind of thing you would really like. And I said what do you mean? That I'm gross? But he just gave me a look.



Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte

We held workdays at the park on Oct. 12 and 26 and Nov. 21. Volunteers trimmed, weeded, and planted in the Pond Triangle Garden. Texas native plants are the focus of the garden and throughout the park. Privet, Nandina, and Ligustrum are the non-native and invasive plants we remove most often. It's not just removal though, new species have been discovered coming up after mowing the pond and creek areas.

Below from left, volunteers on Oct. 12 were Patsy Miller, Patty Newcomb, Josephine Keeney, Josh Parkerson, and Dick Schoech. Carol Marcotte photo.

Not shown, volunteers on the Nov. 21 workday were Dick Schoech, Laurie Jagielski, Nikki Slobodin, Karen Eiland, and Carol Marcotte.

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Randol Mill Park continued from page 14

iNaturalist activity From October 12, 2024, to November 21, 2024, in the park we had 71 observations and 60 species. **WOW!**

Would you like to see the iNaturalist observations for Randol Mill Park? Just click on [this link](#) and you will find them all. By the way, if you're not already enjoying iNaturalist, consider these links:

[What is iNaturalist?](#) And [how can I join?](#)

Remember to mark your calendar for the 4th Thursday each month (but not Thanksgiving) to volunteer at Randol Mill Park.

Call, text, or email Carol Marcotte to be placed on the contact list of volunteers. Cell (817) 793-3917 or carol@carolmarcotte.com

Bat houses for the park

Volunteer Dick Schoech is orchestrating the placement of bat houses in the park. Assisting in this effort is Dr. Tory Bennett, Associate Professor and Department Chair, Department of Environmental and Sustainability Sciences, Texas Christian University, who graciously came over to discuss our bat situation and tour the park with Dick Schoech, Jamie Brunner and Carol Marcotte (the “bat committee”). They explored the possibility of bat houses, location of the boxes, how to build them, the species to expect as occupants, and their habits.

Next step is to build the boxes.

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Above, Dick Schoech with Dr. Tory Bennett. Carol Marcotte photo. Below, Evening bat, detail of a bat house.



Randol Mill Park continued from page 15

A few recent examples of Randol Mill plants. *Above from left*, Lindheimer's senna, Button bush.
Below from left, Esperanza, Willowleaf Aster.



The North Central Texas Water Conundrum — Options and Dreams

Grace Darling

“Many parallels can be drawn between the electric grid and water infrastructure considering both are utilities that generate, store, and distribute an essential product that has been identified as a basic human right.”

Gregory J. Falco, 2015

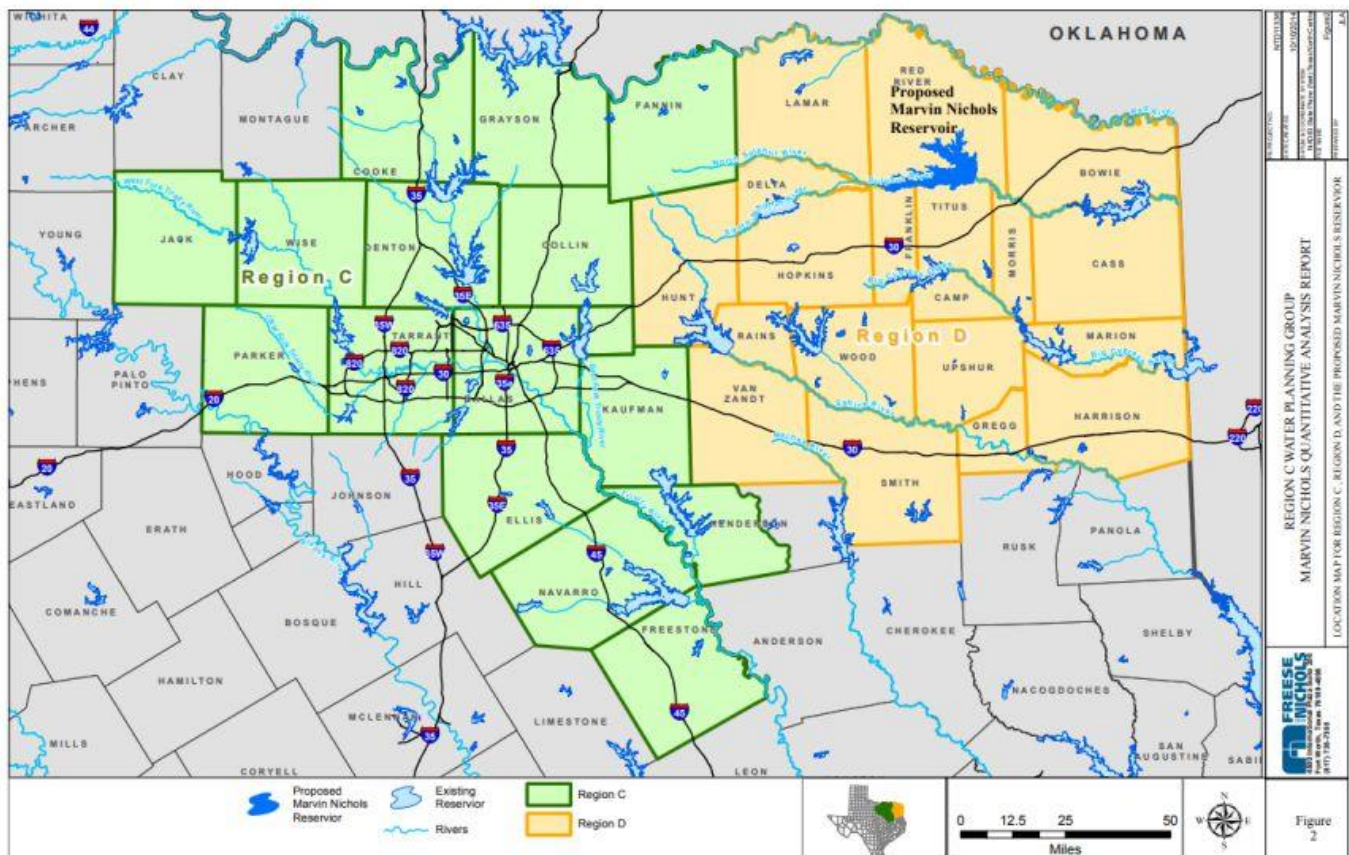
If you are new to DFW, you may not be aware of the conflict over water that has been brewing for many decades. A brief summary of the current situation goes something like this:

Dallas and some 15 counties in and around DFW — Region C Water Planning Group — anticipate running out of water for their fast-growing populations within 25-30 years, and – so as not to

stymie that growth – they want the state to build a reservoir in the Sulphur River basin to the east — in Region D WPG — to pipe water to the Metroplex. The proposed reservoir has been named Marvin Nichols (after one of the founders of Freese and Nichols, the engineering consulting firm advising our water planning group) and was first suggested as a water-supply strategy in the late 1960s.

As designed, the proposed reservoir would inundate 67,000 acres in Red River, Titus, and Franklin counties and claim at least 100,000 more acres for access, pipes, maintenance, and pumping stations, at an estimated cost of \$7 billion. Once approved by the Texas Water Development Board, the new

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The two water planning regions in conflict: Region C (green) and Region D (pale orange).

Water Conundrum continued from page 17

lake would go online by 2050, with current flows and conserved water making up about 67% of its total supply.

At the conservation pool level of 328 feet, in 2006 the calculated firm yield of Marvin Nichols Reservoir by the TWDB was 602,000 acre-feet/yr, which "will decrease if one or more of the proposed reservoirs in the Sulphur Basin (Ralph Hall, Parkhouse I, and/or Parkhouse II) are built." [twdb.texas.gov] As of this writing, Ralph Hall Lake is under construction and expected to deliver water in 2026; the destiny of the other proposed projects - the George Parkhouse Reservoirs - will be determined after the Marvin

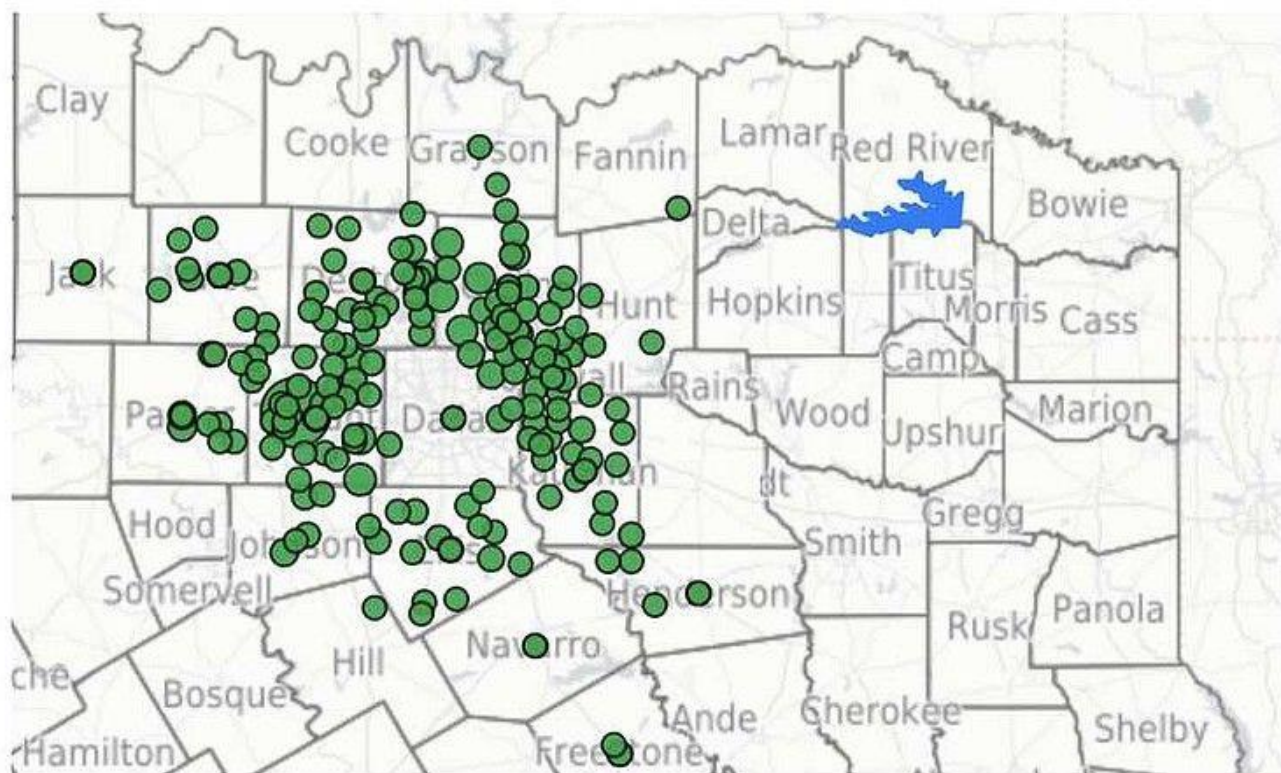
Nichols proposal gets its final thumbs-up or thumbs-down. [<https://www.ketr.org/news/2014-03-10/>]

Regardless of outcome, the consultant estimates by 2080 the North Central Texas region will require 1.3 million acres worth of water supply to meet the ever-increasing demand of its users, so water planners in both Region C and Region D are pursuing other options in addition to Marvin Nichols. [[fortworthreport.org, 10/2/24](https://fortworthreport.org/10/2/24/)]

Fast-rewind to the present and the outrage of residents of Northeast Texas, who claim "this is just

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Figure 1. Marvin Nichols Reservoir location (blue) and anticipated users in 2070



Green dots indicate benefitting water user groups in the 2022 State Water Plan.

Source: 2022.texasstatewaterplan.org/wms/2429

Water Conundrum continued from page 18

a land grab . . . this is more greed than need” [FWS-T 10/30/24], and headlines such as “Homes and dreams of NE Texas residents could end up underwater.” [KTALNews, 10/24/24] “It’s just sinful. . . . I would tell people, if you think it’s gonna be nice to have less expensive water for your lawn or a longer bath or a swimming pool, if you’ve derived it from a lake called Marvin Nichols, you’ve destroyed people who will never be back again together in that community,” says a rancher in the area. “What Metroplex officials tout as a necessary and sensible strategy to plug future holes in the region’s water supply, critics dismiss as a pointless, damaging boondoggle, putting their livelihoods and businesses at risk.” [FWS-T, 10/30/24]

The following is reprinted directly from *Texas Living Waters’* case study:

“The proposed massive Marvin Nichols dam and reservoir in Northeast Texas is a prime example of the unnecessary reliance on new reservoirs and pipelines instead of water conservation. This project would result in one of the largest reservoirs in Texas, flooding over 72,000 acres of land adjacent to the Sulphur River in rural Northeast Texas. The majority of the project’s water would be piped roughly 170 miles uphill to cities in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

Almost half of the area to be flooded – 30,000 acres – is an increasingly rare type of habitat known as bottomland hardwood forests found only along rivers and streams. Over the past two hundred years, over three-quarters of East Texas’ bottomland forests have been destroyed. These wooded wetlands, nurtured by

the regular ebb and flow of a free-flowing river, are one of the most biologically diverse ecosystem types in the state. Consequently, the construction of Marvin Nichols would have statewide implications for wildlife habitat, [including black bear](#). The construction of Marvin Nichols dam and reservoir would also eliminate many local jobs in farming, ranching, logging, and livestock because a significant amount of working land would be flooded by the reservoir. In addition, the reservoir would flood several family cemeteries and historic Native American sites.

Because of the economic and environmental impacts, there is [strong opposition](#) to the project in the Northeast Texas area. In fact, the Regional Water Plan for Northeast Texas (Region D), which covers the area where the proposed reservoir would be built, recommends *against* building the dam. In light of the [local opposition](#) and clear environmental impacts the project would have, it is important to note that the Dallas-Ft. Worth area (a.k.a. North Texas Regional Water Planning area or Region C) can meet its water needs without building this dam. Many of the cities and water supply entities advocating for this project have some of the highest levels of municipal water use in Texas. Additional conservation over and above the modest levels recommended in the Region C water plan could save much or all of the water that would be provided by the Marvin Nichols dam & reservoir.”

[\[texaslivingwaters.org\]](https://texaslivingwaters.org)

Our challenge will be to identify, implement, and enforce those water conservation measures that will make this project unnecessary.



Social Media? Yup.

**Be sure to visit
ACC's Facebook page
(851 followers)
and
Arlington Conservation Council
Discussion Group
(141 members)**



What do you want to talk about today?

Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marian Hiler

November is a great time to get plants in the ground so they can develop their roots during the winter and the autumn temps make weeding almost fun. Almost. In addition to the usual activities, the wildscape had three different groups come out to take advantage of its excellent examples of native flora and fauna.

With the help of volunteers, several blooming plants from the greenhouse found their final home in the wildscape areas to add more color. Missouri primrose was planted along the sidewalk near the Lonesome Oak. Over in the woodland area, Obedient plants were added to both rain gardens, and Columbines were placed along the east-west sidewalk.

Most of the weeding took place in the Lonesome Oak area, formerly known as the Twin Oaks until out of the blue one of the twins collapsed. The fallen oak laid in place for several months before it was removed, allowing obnoxious Bermuda grass and nut grass the opportunity to make a comeback. Many volunteer hours resulted in pushing the sneaky weeds back, but more are needed to reclaim the spot. We may never truly get rid of either one, but we will keep them at bay.

The Molly Hollar Wildscape was, once again, one of the sites selected for the Urban Systems field trip for the 2024 Cross Timbers Master Naturalists class. Volunteers Ann Knudsen, Carol Marcotte, and Joe Martinez were the tour guides. Since the class visited on the first Saturday, they had a bonus opportunity to attend our extra special mini-class on tarantulas. If you are interested in taking the Master Naturalist training in 2025, go [here](#).

NPSOT also brought one of its classes here for the outdoor plant identification session of the Installation

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Bermuda grass removal team, from left to right, Patsy Miller, Melanie Harris, and Marylee Thomason. Ann Knudsen photo.



Ann Knudsen also working on the removal team in the Lonesome Oak area. Marian Hiler photo.



Ann Knudsen welcoming the CTMN class of 2024 to the wildscape. Carol Marcotte photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 21

& Maintenance of Native Landscapes course, the Level 3 class in NPSOT's Native Landscape Certification Program. The goal of NLCP classes is educating NPSOT members and the public about the value of natives and how best to use them. Go [here](#) for more information on NLCP and course schedules.

We squeezed in a small Walk on the Wildside mid-November. Marylee Thomason organized volunteers for a three-station WOW for about 10 children of Arlington Texas 1st Ward Primary of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. In her usual enthusiastic approach, she put together fun games to engage the kids in learning about nature. There was a scavenger hunt to pay attention to what's around them, e.g., flying insects and birds singing. She built a food pyramid to demonstrate how larger animals' survival depends on the existential foundation of smaller creatures. It all worked because the kids were definitely engaged.

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Below, NPSOT class looks over natives and invasives not found in the wildscape. Marian Hiler photo.



Above, Ann Knudsen explains how to tell the difference between evergreen sumac and aromatic sumac to the NPSOT class. Marian Hiler photo.

Below, Ann points out to the NPSOT class that the big bluestem's flower appears in groups of three looking like a turkey foot, hence its nickname "Turkey Foot Grass." Marian Hiler photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 22, continued on page 24



Above, Melanie Harris tells the WOW kids the story of about how Alice Algae and Freddie Fungus took a lichen to each other. Marian Hiler photo. Below left, Marylee Thomason shows the wonderful results of organic waste decomposing over time. Marian Hiler photo. Below right, Kids fixated on the dead roaches that once were decomposers and soon will decompose themselves. Marian Hiler photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 23, continued on page 25



The WOW class: *Above*, Marylee describes the animal food pyramid to the kids, asking what they think would happen to the pyramid if one of the smaller creatures was removed from its base. Ann Knudsen photo.

Below, A favorite was the tree cookie lanyards made from cross sections of a branch. As students decorated one with their name, Hester Schwarzer used them in a lesson about tree growth. Ann Knudsen photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 24, continued on page 26

First Saturday mini-classes

Mini-classes are held in the compost area and begin about 11:30 after the workday volunteers put away the day's tools.

At the November 2 mini-class, Master Naturalist Erika Swyryn (*right*) presented "Tarantulas and why they're amazing!" She covered the three types of tarantulas: arboreal (tree-dwelling), terrestrial (ground-dwelling), and fossorial (burrowing underground). Our area of Texas primarily has terrestrial

tarantulas. At the mini-class, Erika regaled volunteers and CTMN trainees with the wonderfulness of her favorite creatures. Interesting and important fact: She warned against holding tarantulas as pets due to their irritating hairs, which can cause severe itching if they come into contact with skin or eyes. Ann Knudsen photo.

At the December 7 mini-class, UTA Campus Composter John Darling will present "Compost Considerations." He will review topics home composters might find useful.

Right, The Mexican redknee (*Brachypelma hamorii*) is a terrestrial tarantula that is not native to this area. One of the live tarantulas Erika brought for the class to see. Ann Knudsen photo.



Wildscape Update

continued from page 25, continued on page 27



Coming back from a break, the Fall aster blooms filled with a variety of pollinators caught the eyes of the volunteers. Then the photo shoot began.

Above, Dainty sulfur butterfly (*Nathalis iole*) on Fall aster. Ann Knudsen photo.

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



Above, Sleepy orange butterfly (*Abaeis nicippe*). Ann Knudsen photo. Below, White checkered-skipper (*Burnsius albezans*) with Fall aster. Ann Knudsen photo.



Wildscape Update continued from page 26



Above, Yellow-collared scape moth (*Cisseps fulvicollis*).
Below, A bee fly, *Poecilanthrax lucifer* (*Poecilanthrax lucifer*). Left, Yellow-legged flower fly (*Syrphus rectus*). Ann Knudsen photos.



In Case You Missed It Grace Darling



“It’s imperative that our state prioritize **water conservation and reuse**,” the headline read. “If there’s one thing every Texan should be able to agree on, it’s the need to secure enough water for our growing state’s future.” In an August op-ed in the Dallas Morning News, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller raised the alarm on the state’s need to plan better for its water future. Miller hit many of the right notes about crumbling infrastructure, conservation, and reuse, emphasizing the need to fix leaky pipes, encouraging water-smart landscaping techniques — including planting native grasses that endure drought better, e.g., buffalo grass — and using brackish water for fracking instead of fresh water, harvesting rainwater, and reusing treated water. “Conservation isn’t a left-wing or right-wing issue. ... [Miller] knows that for Texas to succeed, our farms and our cities need more water. And one of the best ways to get it is to save it in the first place.” [[DMN 11/29/24](#)]

“Fourteen gas well sites across Arlington have demonstrated continuous and severe **leaks of methane** and other VOCs (volatile organic compounds) harmful to human health. Earthworks surveyed Arlington gas well sites and a compressor station with an Optical Gas Imaging camera over 6 months. In 300+ site visits, they filmed severe emissions 85 times that were often continuing over multiple visits. We also have many, many reports of odors, illnesses, symptoms from people who live close to these Arlington sites. [As to what can we do about it,] monitoring, regulation, but most importantly protective setbacks. Arlington’s 300 feet

is a joke and it facilitates drilling right next door to homes, playgrounds, childcare and medical facilities.” [*Livable Arlington, Facebook 11/5/24.*]

Hyundai’s recall of 1545 **Hyundai Nexo** SUVs accounts for nearly all examples of the hydrogen fuel-cell vehicle sold in the U.S. since 2019. A glass safety device, designed to emit hydrogen gas if the fuel tanks overheat to prevent over-pressurization, could develop cracks that let the gas escape prematurely. Hyundai will replace it with a metal unit instead. Owners of affected vehicles are asked to park “outside and away from structures” until the recall is carried out because of the risk of fire. The NHTSA documents show that only about 1% of the recalled vehicles are expected to have the defect, however. [*caranddriver.com, 10/22/24.*]

New York City placed under drought warning as reservoirs dry up, fire risk high, read the headline. The restrictions are meant to curtail more fires and conserve the city’s water supply and will mandate that city and state agencies take actions [that mean] fleets of LIRR, MetroNorth and MTA trains and buses will be washed less frequently, water in parks will be restricted and the Sanitation Department will suspend street flushing. [*New York Daily News, 11/18/24.*]

A hidden **reserve of lithium** has been discovered — and it’s massive. A new study reveals that ancient brines beneath southwestern Arkansas (the Smackover Formation, a porous limestone aquifer already used for bromine extraction) may contain between 5.1 and 19 million tons of lithium — enough to meet 9X the expected global demand for car batteries in 2030. If tapped, this lithium resource could significantly reduce U.S. dependence on

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imports and bolster domestic battery production for electric vehicles (EVs). Lithium demand is skyrocketing, with EV batteries accounting for 85% of global lithium use in 2023. As the U.S. looks to scale up production to meet rising demand, balancing environmental concerns with resource extraction will be essential. The study, published in *Science Advances*, highlights the role of science in advancing sustainable solutions for the transition to green energy. [*Newsweek.com*, 10/22/24.]



Lakota man tags 3000-pound buffalo and draws blood for testing.

An estimated 30 million **bison** dominated the Great Plains by the time Columbus arrived in the Americas in the 15th century. A mere 300 years later, the westward expansion of European settlers, the development of the transcontinental railroad, and the U.S. military's encouragement of bison hunting to force indigenous people into reservations reduced the wild population to fewer than 1,000 animals. But in the last few decades and especially after the 2014 signing of the "buffalo treaty," and with the help of organizations such as the InterTribal Buffalo Council, the National Wildlife Federation, and The

Nature Conservancy, native communities are reclaiming their cultural heritage and autonomy through bison conservation and stewardship, with about 30,000 bison currently on tribal lands. Studies show reintroducing bison to grasslands increases plant diversity, particularly in tallgrass prairies which are resilient to extreme drought. Other animal species also benefit from the bison, such as brown-headed cowbirds, black-billed magpies, long-billed curlews, burrowing owls, prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, and even tadpoles in the wallows. It's this ability to transform the landscape in myriad ways that has earned bison the title of "ecosystem engineers." [*dallasnews.com*, 11/29/24]

Scientists predict **international migration** will grow as the planet gets hotter. Over the next 30 years, 143 million people worldwide are likely to be uprooted by rising seas, drought, searing temperatures, and other climate catastrophes, according to a U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. Researchers looked at 84 agricultural communities in Mexico where growing corn was dependent on weather. They correlated a person's decision to migrate and then return with abnormal changes in temperature and rainfall in their communities during the May-to-August corn growing season. Communities experiencing drought had higher migration rates than those with normal rainfall, and people were less likely to return to Mexico from the U.S. when their communities were unusually dry or wet. The study's findings underscore the inequities of climate resilience based on economic and social factors, where "some of the most vulnerable people aren't those displaced by climate extremes, but are rather trapped in place or lacking the resources to move." [*pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2400524121*]

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy

Coming Up

3rd Saturday Volunteer Day

Saturday Dec. 21, 9 am – noon

The Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve schedule a once-a-month volunteer day on the **third Saturday of the month**. We tackle a wide variety of needs for the preserve. These include brush clearing, seeding, trail maintenance, transplanting and trash pickup. Volunteers get to learn in depth about the preserve and its goals while contributing to sustaining and improving this treasured ecosystem.

Bring gloves, appropriate apparel and suntan lotion/bug repellent as needed. Meet in the parking lot.



Coming Up

A Walk at SCNP with Michael Smith

Saturday Dec. 28

Save the date for a Saturday walk with Michael Smith. Check our website for details.

(www.friendsofscnp.org)

Coming Up

Winter Tree ID Walk with Suzanne Tuttle

Sunday, Feb. 2

Want to learn to identify a tree or shrub in winter when there are no leaves to help? Join us for this walk as we get to know woody plants of the Eastern Cross Timbers by their growth habits, bark, twigs, buds and leaf scars.

This always-popular event is provided by Suzanne Tuttle, plant ecologist and retired manager of Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Fort Worth Chapter of the Native Prairies Association of Texas.



Free, but pre-registration is limited to 20. Please register by emailing events@friendsofscnp.org.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 30

Coming Up

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, Feb. 15, 8 am

The Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve is hosting its 18th Great Backyard Bird Count. Come join us as we gather at 8 am in the parking lot and fan out in small groups for the two-hour count. Bring binoculars, appropriate clothing, and be sure to download and use the Merlin birdsong identification app. It will help!

Checklists submitted help researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society and Birds Canada learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year over 642,000 citizen scientists worldwide submitted their bird observations online, recording 7,920 different species.

At the preserve last year, 176 birds across 34 species were identified on a cold windy day. But while it kept some birds on the ground, others were out in force. An osprey appeared! (*photo above*) The first ever for the count. The final tally was **176 birds counted**, representing **34 different species**. This is about average over the past 17 years of GBBC counts at SCNP.

All skill levels welcome. We all learn by bird-watching with others.

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The Great Backyard
Bird Count



Saturday, Feb. 15, 8 am



Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 31

3rd Saturday Volunteers Jim Frisinger

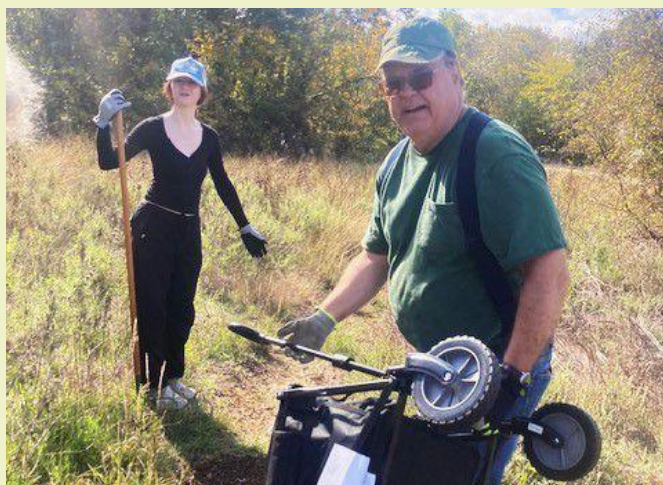
Third Saturday volunteers were out in force in November, boosted by a contingent of 2024 Master Naturalist Class members ready to get their hours in (and a Life Boy Scout candidate needing the same). They cleared a pocket prairie of giant ragweed and cut back honey locusts blocking amphitheater views of the South Pond. Everyone joined in preparing multiple seed beds in the Pollinator Meadow at Sheri Capehart. A bountiful harvest of local little bluestem seeds will hopefully jumpstart some colonies in four locations. Mulch was added to the loop trail.



Denise Pederson helps volunteers clear giant ragweed from a pocket prairie at the South Pond. Jim Frisinger photo.



Third Saturday volunteers seed near the loop trail start at the Pollinator Meadow. Jim Domke photo.



Kayla Curtis and Joseph Zimmerman work mulch into the Pollinator Meadow loop trail. Jim Frisinger photo.



Pollinator Meadow. Jim Domke photo.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 32

Snakes in the Pollinator Meadow Jim Frisinger

The two-acre Pollinator Meadow at Sheri Capehart has become a rich ecosystem pairing diverse plant and animal kingdoms. Two different snake species were spotted Nov. 16 while volunteers were digging in a mulch pile to add to the loop trail: a Rough earth snake and a Western rat snake. The latter, sticking only his head out at first, was forced to reveal the rest of the body when enterprising Master Naturalist classmates coaxed it the rest of the way out. Cool!



Left, Rough earth snake. Annabelle Corboy photo. Western rat snake head. divinecoreopsis photo. Western rat snake body. Hjayne717 photo.

How to Measure Restoration Success? Jim Frisinger

Social trails are the bane of the Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve. Off-trail trekking by visitors at two spots near the entrance were eroding embankments, dumping soil onto the parking lot and amphitheater and scarring the earth. Volunteers went to work eight months ago and it now looks like a wild success as both trails have disappeared from view.

What worked: Signage cut off access to the social trails at each end. Honey locust tree logs blocked some of the eroding waterways; others were blocked by Woodbine sandstone gathered from elsewhere in the preserve. The honey locust branches with their mean thorns were also an excellent impediment to human traffic (just as, scientists speculate, they deterred sloths in the Late Pleistocene era).

What didn't work: Two Bur oak trees didn't survive the drought. Buffalo grass (and other seeding) is inconclusive. However, Mother Nature's healing powers have filled in the old trail with local vegetation.



Signs block social trail entrance. Jim Frisinger photo.

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Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued on page 35

How to Measure restoration Success? Jim Frisinger photos



Honey locust log blocks erosion.



Woodbine sandstone rocks slow drainage.



Honey locust branches discourage access.



Grasses have cloaked the old social trail.

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve continued from page 34

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species October 2024

Annabelle Corboy

What a difference a month makes, and, also what a difference it makes to have two groups come out for walks at the preserve! Total October Observations: 498, Species, 222, Observers 29!

Total September Observations: 45, Species, 34, Observers, 8.

Total August Observations: 299, Species, 153, Observers, 29.

Total July Observations: 1034, Species, 403, Observers, 24.

Total June Observations: 183, Species, 128, Observers, 10.

Current total Observations at SCNP - 21,780; total species count - 1992!

Here are just a few of the most recent Observations:

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) – apcorboy, Heart-Sepal Wild Buckwheat (*Eriogonum multiflorum*) - belucas2, Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) - ben_b41



Find more recent discoveries on the next page. You might not recognize the odd structures there, but you can learn more about them on the following page.

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SCNP continued from page 35, continued on page 37

SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species October 2024



Above, *Amphibolips globulus* - sam_dragon-moore, *Andricus lustrans* - bobbie79,
Below, *Druon pattoni* – Brentano, *Kokkocynips rileyi* – sambiology



SCNP continued from page 36

What ARE those odd blobs?

Footnotes by Jan Miller

Four odd blobs are featured in SCNP's iNaturalist Observations on the previous page. No, not aliens or spooky stuff from Halloween. As you can see, they're named life forms (representing four different genera), but the thing they share in appearance is that they're "blobs:" rusty, fuzzy, hairy, smooth, hard, etc. They're actually plant galls, caused by **gall wasps**, often found on oaks (so SCNP is a hotspot) and are the plant's response to having a wasp lay an egg in its tissue. But what causes the plant to produce each gall wasp species' characteristic gall is yet unknown. (And no, gall wasps cannot sting humans.) Galls are very rarely harmful to the host plant but provide a safe place for the wasp egg to develop and mature, eventually emerging as an adult. But parasitoid wasps lurk and attempt to breach the gall defenses to lay their own egg on the developing gall wasp! Add multiple levels of parasitoid wasp species and varying life cycles and it can get really busy inside that gall! It gets even more interesting with host plant specificities for the wasps and gall wasp specificities for the parasitoid wasps. The plant-host-parasite relationships are still being explored, and with so much unknown about them, give these blobs a closer look and snap a photo for iNaturalist next time you see one! So far, 37 species have been observed at SCNP. For more on gall wasps, see Master Naturalist Kimberlie Sasan's excellent program here (start at 15:00): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYhJkC808Yw>



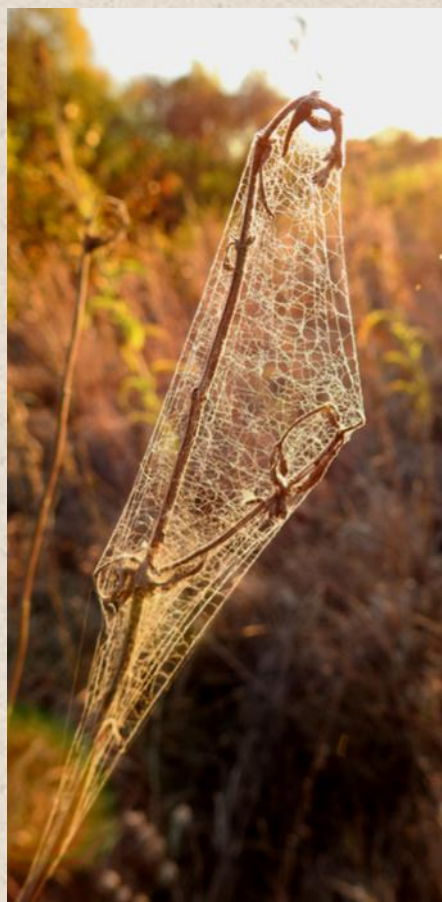
An adult gall wasp, *Andricus texanus*

Find a Nature Challenge at SCNP

Did you know that the Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve are one of the providers on the Nature Challenge website? The Nature Challenge is a project of the Texas A&M Forest Service and others to offer a directory of nature activities for individuals and families.

The Friends of SCNP have created a couple of those activities (or "challenges"), with guides that anyone can use at any time while visiting the preserve. As an example, have a look at our [Dragonfly Challenge](#). And you can find more information about Nature Challenges [here](#).



Blackland Prairie Preserve Guy Random

*Dried plants at sunset?
You'd better get out here then
if you enjoy gold.
But still green down low.
It just lacks all that drama
deep in the shadows.*



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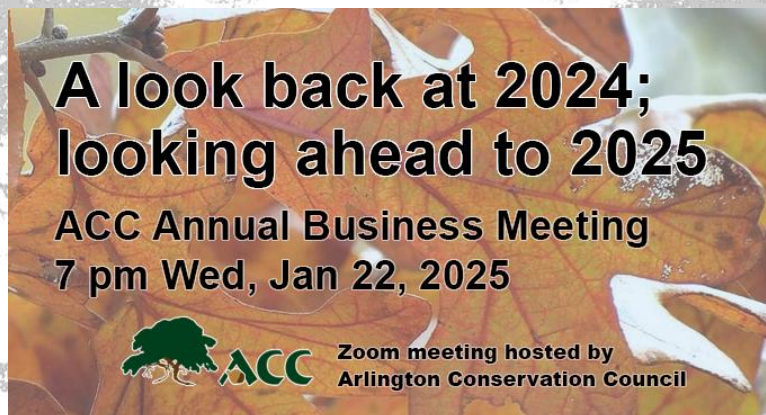
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Arlington Conservation Council
P.O. Box 216
Arlington, TX 76004-0216

Our January Zoom Meeting



See page 5 for more on this meeting.