ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

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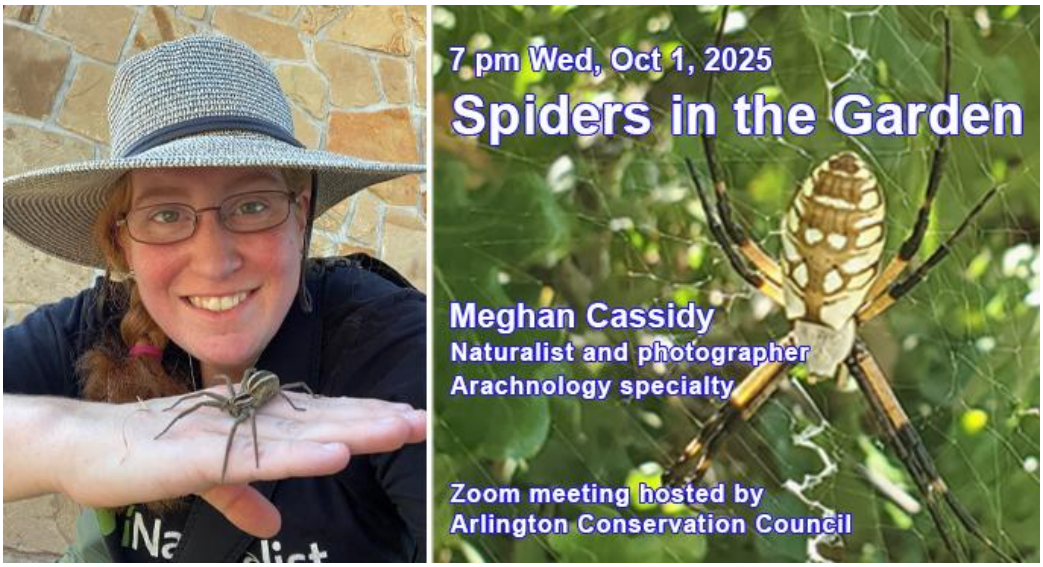
OCTOBER 2025

BORDERED PATCH ON ZEXMENIA, MOLLY HOLLAR WILDSCAPE • ANN KNUDSEN PHOTO

October Zoom Meeting



Read more about this program on page 6

Did you miss this great talk?
Watch it by clicking on
this link.

Contents

From the President Dick Schoech

Help AI Improve Work with Nature

Companies are spending billions on artificial intelligence to improve our future, including our work with nature. Both nature and computers are systems, so examining input, process, and output components can perhaps show us how to improve both.

AI expands computer and internet interactions by rapidly seeking, analyzing, and constructing readable material on almost any topic. AI brings sophisticated analysis of tremendous amounts of internet and user-supplied information — data, images, videos, dialogues, rules, connections, feedback — and then attempts to ensure that well-defined goals are met. Since AI processing happens almost instantaneously and generates intelligent-sounding outputs, AI advice is often mistakenly viewed as trustworthy.

Environmental goals get entangled in culture wars that make agreement difficult. Example: Should environmental goals focus on keeping Earth's climate true to its natural past, reflect what most people want, or manipulate nature to improve human and/or planet survival? Goals not explicitly defined introduce biases that can be difficult for AI users to recognize.

One suggestion during COVID was to stop testing and the virus would go away. This goofball thinking sounds like a joke, but what about decommissioning satellites that track and collect climate data while authorities continually postpone climate actions saying more data is needed?* Rather than being based on the best information available, AI-generated solutions can't escape garbage in, garbage out.

Human solutions hinge on the culture, mindset and experiences of those doing the analysis and announcing the answers. Similarly, AI solutions generated from information collected by diverse groups of well-informed people who think globally yet act locally should generate more credible results.

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ACC POST OAK

Our mission: ACC works to protect Arlington's natural environment through education, community service, and advocacy for a sustainable future

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Deadline for submissions is the 15th of every preceding month. Please send them to *1darling@sbcglobal.net*

From the President continued from page 3

Another AI limitation is that most companies exist in societies where success and power are based on money. Thus an undisclosed yet overarching AI goal is to keep users happy so they continue paying a monthly fee. This adds bias to any "solution." So while AI outputs can be enlightening, some have been hallucinogenic and even deadly.**

AI solutions for nature should be rated tentative until verified by experts. Unfortunately, naturalists often consider documenting their work a tedious task that they can skip — depriving AI of the best information possible. Naturalists should use systems like iNaturalist; the more verified entries iNaturalist contains, the more accurate the AI advice using the data will be. Another suggestion: Have environmental groups upload newsletters, PowerPoints, and expert discussions so naturalists' expertise can be included in AI advice.

Luckily, naturalists are seeing more AI advice based on nature data centers like Merlin, eBird, and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. And we can empower local experts like self-taught botanist Jeff Quayle, who uses GoFundMe to support his gathering, photographing, and categorizing local rare plants while collecting seeds for the BRIT herbarium.

By keeping AI in mind while working in nature, environmentalists can help enhance its guidance about nature.

* "Two Valuable Satellites Are in 'Perfect Health.' They May Be Scrapped." **https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/05/climate/trump-climate-satellites.html**

** More people are turning to general-purpose chatbots for emotional support. At first, Adam Raine, 16, used ChatGPT for schoolwork, but then he started discussing plans to end his life. **https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/26/technology/chatgpt-openai-suicide.html**

Positivity John Darling

Here is more positive environmental news, thanks again to John Dycus. Like me, he sees way too many negative developments, but he has answers you see on this page. Why don't you try it? See something positive you like? Send **me** a link to something good. Just try to spot new things so we don't repeat ourselves.

Who's leading the world in the clean energy transition? Apparently it's not even a race. **China** is alone in the scale, steadiness and magnitude of its commitment to renewables. And that's a very good thing, considering its enormous needs.

Brazil's President Lula announces $1 billion investment in global forest fund. Although Brazil is the first, several other countries — China, the UK, France, Germany, and the UAE — have indicated initial support. **The innovative fund** would support conservation of endangered tropical forests through a variety of approaches.

Portland launches **$100M tree expansion**. The initiative includes planting at least 15,000 trees in the next three years. Over 6,700 trees are planned for planting this coming season. The program ranges from big projects to individual trees for homeowners.

From ***Canary Media***: Solar and batteries had a record -setting, grid-stabilizing summer in Texas. Solar has set 17 power generation records in Texas so far this year, shoring up the grid alongside batteries as some gas plant developers step back.

Our October Zoom Meeting

Spiders in the Garden

Meghan Cassidy
Naturalist and Photographer

Multi-threat naturalist photographer (by night)/data analyst (by day) Meghan Cassidy will probe the not-at-all-scary world of spiders and other arachnids, most of which are misunderstood, if not downright feared. She knows her basic taxonomy, ecology, natural history, and common spider families; come to the presentation and you will, too. She will showcase spiders found in Texas (with pictures!), offer tips to help identify them, and explain how to use iNaturalist as a resource for these amazing animals.

A fierce advocate for everything in class Arachnida, Meghan has conducted nature education with a spider focus for six years (she started studying spiders for fun almost 10 years ago). Many of her photos have enlivened scientific publications, including *Mindfulness in Texas Nature* (Texas A&M Press), by local herp champion Michael Smith, and Sarah Rose's highly recommended field guide, *Spiders of North America*.

In Case You Missed It **Grace Darling**

AI data centers have a big appetite for electricity. The graphic processing units or GPUs that are used to train large language models and respond to ChatGPT queries require more energy than your average microchip and give off more heat. With more data centers coming online almost every week, **AI is already having a profound impact on energy demand around the world** and projections about how much energy will be required to power the AI boom are soaring. Goldman Sachs predicted that data centers would account for 8% of U.S. energy usage in 2030, up from just 3% today. Tech giants Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Meta have all recently announced plans to build new data centers in several states while simultaneously scrambling to get a grip on their energy usage; for a decade now, those same four companies have been at the forefront of corporate efforts to embrace sustainability. To meet the demand, tech companies can tap the existing grid or build new power plants. Microsoft is working on a $10 billion plan to develop renewable energy to power data centers, but when the tech companies themselves are consuming all that electricity to power new AI data centers and the newer, power-hungry Nvidia AI chips, at least for now data centers are doing more harm than good for the climate. "As we are trying to transition our current grid to renewable energy, adding a massive amount of new load poses a grave threat to that transition," said Ben Inskeep, program director at Citizens Action Coalition.

Did you know that over 186 billion gallons of water are lost each year due to leaks in Texas? On November 4, voters will consider **Proposition 4** — a constitutional amendment that will dedicate $1 billion each year for the next 20 years to the Texas Water Fund. The money will come from redirected existing sales tax revenues, not a new tax, and will be invested in water infrastructure and supply projects such as

- fix leaky pipes and conserve large volumes of water
- ensure communities have access to clean and reliable drinking water
- protect water quality so that what flows back into our streams, rivers and coast is healthy for wildlife and natural habitats

This is not a partisan issue but one that all Texans should embrace. Coupled with appropriate

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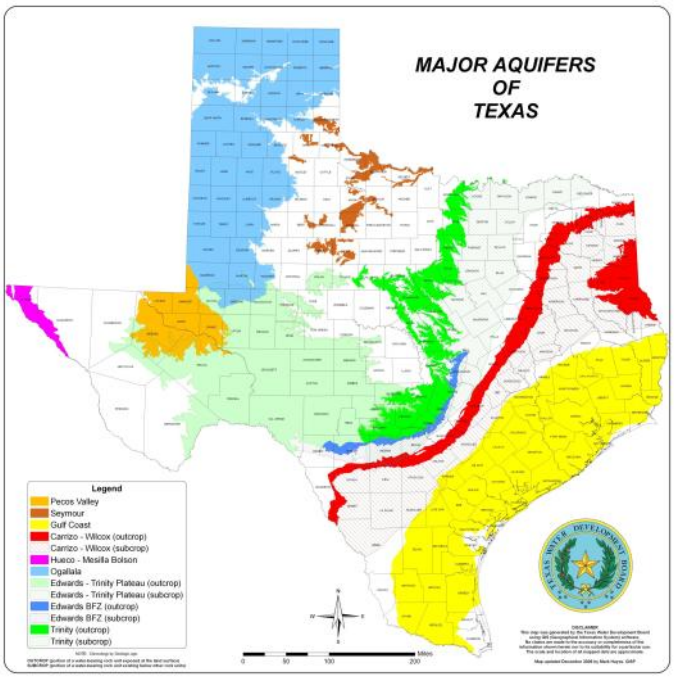
conservation measures and tiered rate structures for water consumption by municipalities, businesses, and industry, the Texas Water Fund will ensure a steady water supply for our ever-growing communities while helping to preserve our natural waterways and the wildlife that depend on them. To learn more, visit TexasWaterFund.com.

Texas avoided breaking records for electricity demand this summer, but energy consumption is still rising. "While we have been relatively flat in peak demands, we have been very rapidly growing in energy consumption," said ERCOT CEO Pablo Vegas last week. Texas' energy consumption is expected to grow more than 5% this year compared to last, which is 5X faster than the national average. Consumption is being driven higher as Texas adds to its already rapid population growth, the boom of data centers extends its march, and oil and gas operations rely more on electricity. The good news: Renewables are on the rise. A recent ERCOT report stated that **Texas led the nation in new solar capacity installed** in 2023 and 2024, **and had nearly 40,000 MW of installed wind capacity as of July, the most of any state.** Moreover, the grid set new records this year for both solar and wind generation, according to the report. [DMN, 10/2/25]



Water is "the new oil" and Texas must find new and smarter ways to manage this vital resource. Surface water, like what's found in lakes and rivers, is owned by the state. Anyone wanting to use it must acquire the rights from the state and abide by long-standing rules and procedures. Groundwater, on the other hand, may or may not be regulated depending on where a well is located. If it's inside a groundwater conservation district — Texas has 98 of these districts covering nearly 70% of the state's area — the district can regulate aspects like well placement and output. But **groundwater outside a conservation district is essentially unregulated** — "the law of the biggest pump" — and some landowners can pump any amount of water out of the ground with near impunity. Given the state's rapid population growth, the proliferation of data centers and other water-intensive uses, and the involvement of private-equity firms driven by profit goals, we need to be smart about how we use what we have and who controls it before it's too late. How it turns out will depend largely on good

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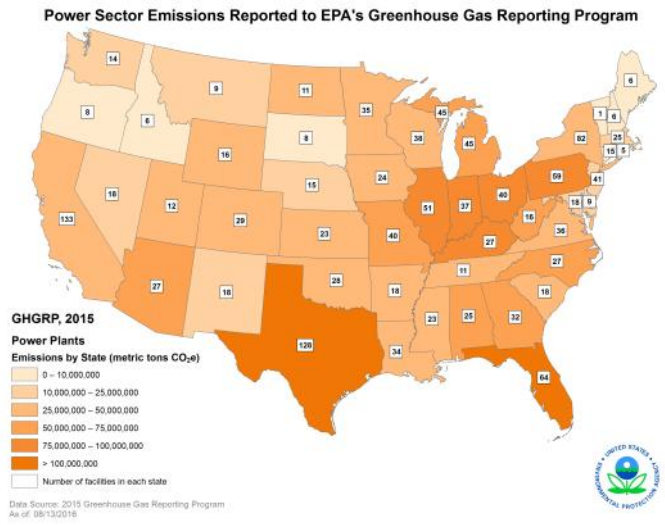
regulation, something Texas lawmakers better get right with water in ways they haven't with oil and gas. [DMN, 9/23/25]

Re: "Trying to avoid a crisis – How does DFW factor into the state's water plans?" [DMN, Letters, 9/12/25] There is an easy first step to **water conservation**: Take out the grass. Plant pollinator-friendly plants, trees and flowers instead. Grass requires a lot of water and fertilizer and does not provide nourishment or a habitat for the birds, bees and [other] insects we need to sustain us. Use gravel around the plants. Or wood chips. The longer we wait to take this step, the harder water conservation becomes.



Earlier last month, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin announced a proposal "to end the burdensome Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP)" — **ending a program that has tracked the climate impact of major polluters** since 2010 — to "save American businesses up to $2.4 billion in regulatory costs." The program required annual reporting of emissions by more than 8,000 polluting facilities, including major oil refineries and power plants. [EPA.gov, 9/12/25]

Climate migration is not a future problem; it is already happening on a significant scale. As the impacts of climate change intensify, the number of people forced to migrate is expected to rise dramatically. More than 170 million people may be internally displaced worldwide by 2050 due to slow-onset impacts of climate change. Most current climate migration occurs within national borders — e.g., from rural to urban centers due to wildfires, flooding, and salinity intrusion — but cross-border movements are also increasing in regions like Central America — e.g., Guatemala and Honduras — where droughts drive migration toward the US. Projections indicate that low-lying coastal areas such as Pacific Islands will face permanent displacement due to rising sea levels while arid regions like the Sahel will see increased migration driven by desertification and water scarcity. Unlike economic migrants, who move primarily for better opportunities or refugees fleeing persecution, climate migrants are driven by the direct and indirect impacts of environmental degradation. [EARTH.org]

Bits & Pieces

ACC Random Dabs of Nature

From Guy Random: That's right, no more Heritage Trees. Not one pitiful submission, even after last month's clear warning. Oh, yeah, not one single sad sapling. No solitary sagging snag. No haggard hackberry or awesome oak. I could go on, but sadly the Editorial Board (Heritage Tree Sub-committee) has ruled: No more Heritage Trees until someone steps up.

We should have just given you a blank page (and it would have served you right), but the board said no, find something good. So here, from Marian Hiler, is a fine Snowy egret showing one golden slipper at Veterans Park pond.

Question Corner John Darling

Q: I'm bothered by the acoustic bat monitoring in our area because the gizmos think they hear Seminole bats and no Red bats. I know an old research museum guy who says he learned that Seminole bats lived in East Texas in forests loaded with Spanish moss. And that Red bats were our most abundant forest species. Now people are saying that Seminoles are expanding westward, so it's okay that the devices are hearing them here. My guy says, "Nuts! Show me the body, you whippersnappers." (Those old museum guys talk like that.) He also claimed female Red bats with big babies were the species most often found on the ground in Arlington. I just read an AI summary (no references) claiming that the two species are virtually indistinguishable using sound alone. What do you think?

A: I haven't found references about the device's ability to separate those two species. Maybe those machines can't tell the difference and they think Seminole sounds cooler than Red. Or is your museum guy just mad because our techno-naturalists haven't paid their hairy-chested field biologist dues and sound too cocky? Next!

Last of the Rough sunflower blooms.

The Page with No Name

Earlier this summer James Orloski, our APRD director for the past three years, returned to Arizona with his family to work as Director of Strategic Initiatives for Coconino County. I speak for all parks volunteers when I say his straightforward, no-nonsense manner and hard work on behalf of the city were much appreciated and will be sorely missed. We are particularly grateful for James's oversight of the construction and staffing of the ACTIV and for organizing periodic meetings with the Friends of Arlington's Unique Natural Areas to receive input from the trenches and to provide assistance whenever possible. Farewell, friend; we thank you for your tenure with us and wish you every success in your new career.

Grace Darling

INTIMATIONS OF PRAIRIE IN DALLAS

Beneath my sleek suburban yard
The black soil cracks in dry years.
The vacant lot behind the mall erupts
In bunchgrass clumps and bindweed.
In Spring I look for line storms;
Autumn jumps from hot to snow.
Sketchy skeins of ducks and geese
Honk south across the rooftops in November.
And somewhere in my city mind
I smile to know
That if I drove the highway fifty miles
I'd need to swerve for meadowlarks.

The Trolling for New Members Page

Blackland Prairie Preserve.

My Nature Notebook

Pleasing? Huh?

So the Creepy Old Guy has this big dead tree that fell over and he just never got rid of it and that makes Dad mad cause it looks messy but we don't care cause there's always something to fool around with on it and last night we found a bunch of pretty bugs there. And then Creepy caught us again but he liked the bugs too and said they were red-banded fungus beetles, a kind of pleasing fungus beetle or something like that. And he started that booooring lecturing again and said they eat fungus that breaks down dead wood but we got tired and just went home. Yes, yes, they're recyclers cause they chew up lots of dead wood into tiny pieces as they're going after the yummy fungus. Sure.

Any Time Is Dues Time! Guilty? Look on the Back Page.

Why join ACC? Their stuff is free.

Sure, the educational meetings and the newsletters are free. But are you missing a big point? (See below.)

Big Point (or two): If ACC is bigger, we carry more weight when we try to influence our city council in matters we care about. Also, you will just feel better as an environmentalist in hostile territory when you commit to a group of like-minded individuals (actual fact).

Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte

August 28. Volunteer Workday.
Dick Schoech, Edward Washington, Patsy Miller, Victoria Ramirez, and Nimer Oweis dug out weeds, trimmed, and removed sunflowers.

Above left, Nimer Oweis. *Right,* Edward Washington. *Below left,* Patsy Miller. *Right,* Dick Schoech.

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Randol Mill Park continued from page 17

August 30. City of Arlington Volunteer Recruitment Drive.
APRD (Arlington Parks & Rec) and FAUNA (Friends of Arlington's Unique Natural Areas) worked together to recruit new volunteers by having current volunteers share their stories, showcase volunteering tools, and conduct onsite interest interviews to confirm a fit at the APRD table.

Also participating in the event were Arlington's Human Resources, Water Department, Arlington Public Library, and others.

Right, Montana Williams (APRD), Ashley Stapleton, (APRD), and Jan Miller (SCNP). Carol Marcotte (RMP) photo.

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September 6 Creek Cleanup

From left, Nimer Oweis, Scott Sykes, Faith Salfen, Carla Frierson, and Donna Sykes. Not pictured, Bob Marcotte. Carol Marcotte photo.

From left, Heather and Andy Morgan, Faith Salfen, Scott Sykes, and Carla Frierson. Carol Marcotte photo.

Randol Mill Park continued from page 18, continued on page 20

September 20. Trail Mulching.
Above, Jimmy Barrera dumping mulch. *Below,* Jamie Brunner, Jorge Amaris, Laurie Jagielski, Dick Schoech. *Right,* Faith Salfen raking mulch.

Randol Mill Park continued from page 19

September 25. Volunteer Day at the Triangle Garden. Volunteers included Nimer Oweis, *below left,* Faith Salfen, Carol Marcotte, and Patsy Miller. Drive by the garden to take a look at the new fall colors.

September 29. The never-ending fight against PRIVET. Karen Knight, *below left,* and Carol Marcotte tackled this invasive evergreen shrub with a vengeance! The berries are immature, green this time of the year, turning black in the early fall. Large piles of cut privet were left behind. We are experimenting with a new technique for cutting the trunks. More details and results later. *Below right,* The Water Goat installed in Randol Mill Creek is working! Litter trapped by the water goat is prevented from going into the RMP pond. If it weren't, litter in the pond would wash into Village Creek, then into the Trinity River. Thanks to APRD for installing it!

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Randol Mill Park continued from page 20

Bats. Texas Nature Trackers and Texas Master Naturalists BAT Project has released the results from the acoustic bat monitor placed in the park during the week of June 9-13, 2025.

The data summary names the bats likely to be in the Randol Mill Park area. *From the summary:*

Bat Species Present*
Highly Likely:
Species 1 – Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus)*
Species 2 – Seminole Bat (*Lasiurus seminolus*)
Species 3 – Evening Bat (*Nycticeius humeralis)*
Likely:
Species 1 – Mexican Free-tailed Bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis)*
Species 2 – Eastern Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis)*
Possible:
Species 1 – None detected
Unlikely:
Species 1 – Silver-Haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans)*

*"Highly Likely" indicates that the species is present to the best of the analysis ability.
"Likely" indicates that the bat is probably present.
"Possible" indicates that the bat may be present; more data would be helpful.
"Unlikely" means that species calls, while indicated, were suspect and inconclusive.

Below, Installing the monitor. Hoary bat. Evening bat. *Below left,* Seminole bat. Bat photos from iNaturalist.

Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marian Hiler

September brought not one but two notable events: the wildscape's first night of mothing plus the annual plant sale. It also brought welcomed lower temperatures enjoyed by the volunteers as they planted, weeded and watered.

First Wildscape Mothing Event

TPWD urban wildlife biologist and perennial winner of Mr. Enthusiasm, Sam Kieschnick played a double-header on September's first Saturday. At the mini-class following the workday, Sam talked about the importance of moths and nocturnal critters for our local ecosystem. Moths are an essential part of it, serving as food sources for birds and other wildlife. Their diversity in turn indicates the plant diversity present in any given area. Approximately 1,200 species of moths have been recorded in the Dallas-Fort Worth area compared to only a few hundred butterfly species, highlighting the significantly greater diversity of moths in the region.

Later that evening, Sam returned to lead a mothing event, where he set up nine stations using UV lights and white sheets to attract and document various moth species. He later reported: "29 citizen scientists observed around 360 species in 1,327 observations on that single day at Molly Hollar Wildscape. That's bonkers!!! More empirical evidence to show what a tremendous refuge this place is for so much urban wildlife. I love it!"

You can catch Sam's doubleheader on the newly created Molly Hollar Wildscape YouTube channel.

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Sam Kieschnick asks some young naturalists to describe what they see on the sheet. Marian Hiler photo.

Sam said,"29 citizen scientists observed around 360 species in 1,327 observations on that single day at Molly Hollar Wildscape. That's bonkers!!!"

Wildscape Update continued from page 22, continued on page 24

More from moth night at the wildscape: *Above left,* Sam introduces young naturalists to a Rough green snake. *Above right,* Hollow-spotted blepharomastix. *Below left,* Thin-lined owlet. *Below right,* Swag-lined wave. Ann Knudsen moth photos.

Wildscape Update continued from page 23, continued on page 25

Moth night, continued: *Left,* Snowberry clearwing. Marian Hiler photo. *Above right,* More than flying invertebrates were observed. Ryan Wiggins holds a rough green snake as Sam takes its picture. Ann Knudsen photo. *Below right,* Brett Franklin presents the large walking stick he discovered at the vehicular bridge. Ann Knudsen photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 24, continued on page 26

Fall Plant Sale

It was a beautiful day for this year's plant sale with the usual inventory of healthy stock and knowledgeable and eager helpers. Josephine Keeney, our head propagator who always makes it work, gave credit and thanks to her helpers. "The greenhouse team — Hester Schwarzer, Kay Sekio, Joe Martinez and Charley Amos — have worked faithfully for many years growing the lovely native plants that make the sale possible." And to the helpers at the plant sale, "Thank you all for a great job. Everything worked perfectly and although the sales were not as high as other years, the work was just as good or better. I am very happy with the results, and I thank you all." Josephine attributed the lower number of customers to several competing events happening that day.

Above, The plant sale setup begins. Ann Knudsen photo. *Below left,* Denise Pederson brings out the *Salvia greggii*. Ann Knudsen photo. *Below right,* Hester Schwarzer helps Ann Knudsen with plant labels. Marian Hiler photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 25, continued on page 27

Above left, Carol Marcotte is ready to write a customer's ticket. *Above right,* Ann Knudsen and Dana Austin help customers with their tree selection. *Below left,* This customer has the right idea. *Below right,* Handmade bird-houses available for different species. John Darling photos.

Below left, Marylee Thomason and Kay Sekio flank a satisfied customer holding his free (surplus) hose. *Below right,* Someone needs help with her selections. John Darling photos.

Wildscape Update continued from page 26, continued on page 28

Plant sale crew. *Seated:* Frank Keeney, Josephine Keeney, Marian Hiler, Hester Schwarzer. *Standing:* Dick Schoech, Carol Marcotte, Kristi Narmore, Jane Oosterhuis, Karen Knight, Kay Sekio, Joe Martinez, Ramona Gratton, Ann Knudsen, Marylee Thomason, Dana Austin, Christine Brinson, Cindy Underwood. *Kneeling:* Rick Narmore. Jim Domke photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 27, continued on page 29

Back to our regularly scheduled activities

Watering. Trimming. Weeding. Planting. Always on the docket. Volunteers ever ready to take it on. Both prairies gained more vegetation last month. Drought-tolerant Southwestern bristlegrass from John Snowden's garden was installed in the pocket prairie. Its seeds are a good food source for songbirds. A friend of John's donated shade-tolerant Missouri violets that we planted under the elm trees in the new prairie on the north side. Fall bloomers such as Liatris, Silver bluestem and Boneset planted in the north prairie earlier this year have already started showing off. It's amazing to see how quickly this prairie has begun looking like one.

Above left, Josephine Keeney keeps her butterfly garden watered. *Above right,* Ann Knudsen removes the excess chips from around the Little bluestem. *Below left,* Patsy Miller spreads compost on the berm in the original wildscape area. *Below right,* Volunteers in the forefront plant Missouri violets while members of the 2025 Master Naturalist class remove *Ruellia nudiflora*. Marian Hiler photos.

Wildscape Update continued from page 28, continued on page 30

Below, Marylee Thomason, Rick Narmore, and Joe Martinez clear an overgrown inner pathway. *Right above,* Joe Martinez digs holes for the Southwestern bristlegrass. *Right below,* Carol Marcotte waters the newly planted bristlegrass. Marian Hiler photos.

Wildscape Update continued from page 29, continued on page 31

Left above, A Gulf coast toad found shelter inside one of the water connections. Marian Hiler photo. *Left below,* A skipper attracted to a Turk's cap bloom. Ann Knudsen photo. *Above,* The much awaited vivid purple blooms of Liatris. Ann Knudsen photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 30

First Saturday mini-classes

At the **October 4** mini-class, naturalist and author, Michael Smith will talk about "Nature Journaling - Enhance Your Experience." Journaling of any kind is an opportunity to reflect on our experience and understand it better. Nature journaling applies that to our time outside, drawing or writing about sunshine, birds, the sound of rain, or the heroic efforts of a small lizard to assert his territory. We will talk about this, focusing primarily on writing (though drawing is valuable, too) and some prompts to help us find what we have to say. We will also talk about encouraging kids to think about and then write or draw about their experience outside.

At the mini-class scheduled for **November 1,** Master Naturalist Karen Knight will give a presentation on "Climate Change and Texas Ecosystems; Actions We Can Take!"

Mini-classes are held at the wildscape pavilion and begin about 11:30 as the workday volunteers put away the day's tools.

Volunteer Opportunities

9 – 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

Below, Liatris and Silver bluestem welcome the early morning light. Marian Hiler photo.

Social Media? Yup.

Be sure to visit

ACC's Facebook page

(849 followers)
and
Discussion Group

(149 members)

What do you want to talk about today?

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve Annabelle Corboy

Coming Up! Spiders in the Park (via ZOOM) Meghan Cassidy

October 21, 7 pm

Join via this link: https://tinyurl.com/3pcw2d43

Meghan Cassidy will give us a foundation of basic info about spiders and other arachnids, most of which are misunderstood and almost all feared. The presentation will include some basic taxonomy, with a touch of ecology and natural history. Meghan will discuss and showcase spiders found in Texas that you may come across while out in Texas nature. She will also offer some strategies to help with identifying spiders. Meghan has many detailed spider photos to show, and she will provide some tips for using iNaturalist as a learning resource for these amazing animals!

Meghan is a data analyst by day and a naturalist and photographer by night! As a strong advocate for everything in class Arachnida, Meghan has been conducting nature education and outreach with a focus on spiders for six years, and has been studying them for fun for over nine years! Many of her photos have been included in scientific publications and books, such as a recent publication from Texas A&M press titled *Mindfulness in Texas Nature* by local herpetologist Michael Smith, and the highly recommended field guide *Spiders of North America* by Sarah Rose.

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SCNP continued from page 33

Bat Monitoring at SCNP Jim Fuquay

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve was one of 13 sites monitored this summer for the presence of bats, a survey that identified at least eight different species, including two that were not detected a year ago.

Jim Fuquay with the bat monitor.

SCNP recorded calls associated only with the Seminole bat, which was detected at all 13 sites this year. That was a bit of a surprise, because the Seminole typically prefers trees with Spanish moss for its nests. But previous studies have shown the bat to be migrating westward. Other species detected during the survey are the Mexican Free-Tail Bat, Evening Bat, Tri-Colored Bat, Eastern Red Bat, Hoary Bat, Silver-Haired Bat and the Cave Myotis bat.

This year saw two improvements in the survey, now in the second year of a planned five-year study. Not only did the number of sites monitored more than double from 2024's six locations, but this year two more-sensitive monitors were used. The monitors recorded the high-pitched calls bats use to find food and navigate in flight. Different species of bats have different calls that can be used to identify them, much like the popular Merlin bird song identification app created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Those species were identified as "highly likely" or "likely" present, based on how closely their calls matched known bat sounds. "Highly likely" is a confidence level of 86 percent to 99 percent, and "likely" is 75 percent to 85 percent confidence level. The only way to have 100 percent confidence identification "is to either have one in our hands or a clear, very detailed photo," says an information brochure for the Acoustic Bat Monitoring Program.

Three board members of SCNP helped place the monitors at various locations: President Jan Miller, Treasurer Jim Fuquay, and volunteer leader Jim Frisinger.

"Texas Nature Trackers, working with the North Atlantic Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) devised a five-year project using Texas Master Naturalists from all over the state to gather information using acoustic monitoring. It began in 2024 and won Project of the Year at the Master Naturalist Annual Meeting last fall," said Tina Olivas, coordinator of the program in the Cross Timbers chapter of Texas Master Naturalists (Tarrant and Parker counties).

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SCNP continued from page 34

Bat Monitoring

Texas Nature Trackers is part of the Wildlife Conservation Program at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. It tracks the status of wild populations of plants and animals throughout Texas. Texas is home to about 30 species of bats, more than any other state.

The Cross Timbers chapter was able to obtain two of the advanced monitors this year, and "in 2026, we hope to add at least 3 more sites," Olivas said. "More species were identified in 2025 in the Cross Timbers region, but we do not know if that is attributable to the device, the milder weather, bat displacement from other areas, or just luck. But nonetheless, it is going to be valuable to NABat," which will use the data to assess population trends and help sustain bat populations facing various stresses, she said.

The Tri-Colored Bat has been recommended for the endangered species list, primarily due to white-nose syndrome (WNS), a fungal infection that has spread to bat colonies across the country.

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The installed bat monitor.

Seminole bat.

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Bats of the Area and How to Find Them — Review

Local bat enthusiasts Ellen Ravkind and Anne Alderfer along with bat expert Kate Rugroden from the Bat World Sanctuary provided our program. Kate talked about the bats in this area, how critical bats are to us, and the role the sanctuary plays in education and rehabilitation. Ellen and Anne demonstrated the use of the echo location devices from Wildlife Acoustics (Echo Meter Touch 2). It was a beautiful moonlit night at the preserve. We didn't detect many bats, maybe a Seminole, but not a good recording. The guests enjoyed the search; many stayed after Kate's informative talk, enjoyed seeing the recordings and learning about the echometers. We had over 40 attendees at what has become an annual event for us.

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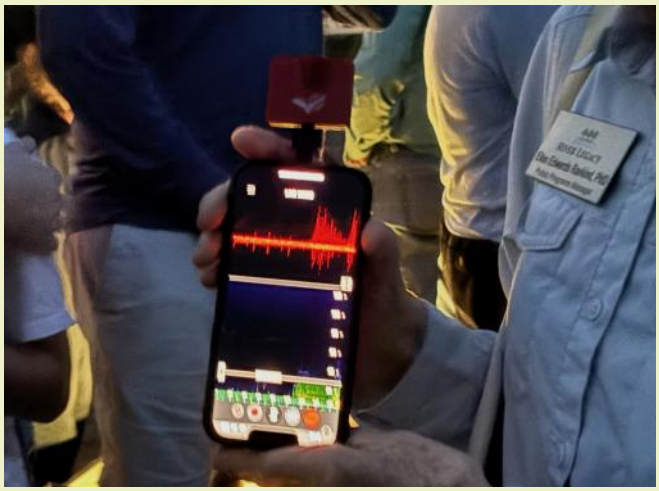

Above left, Echo Meter screen, Above right, Anne and Ellen check their Echo Meters. Below, Kate addresses the crowd. Michael Smith photos.

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Third Saturday Volunteers Jim Frisinger

Third Saturday volunteers did some late summer trail maintenance on Sept. 20 at the Pollinator Meadow. This was a chance to trim back a wet summer's growth along the trail edges and check on the 8-year restoration of the prairie at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve. The meadow was quite alive — a wasp nest was discovered hanging from a Western ragweed plant the day before. There were the late summer purple blooms of prairie false foxglove. Success was marked by plants seeded by volunteers last winter: American basketflower and a nice cluster of Little bluestem, already seeding out!

Left, vigorous growth in the Pollinator Meadow. *Right,* Trail maintenance in the prairie restoration area. *Bottom from left,* Prairie false foxglove, American basketflower, paper wasp nest in Western ragweed. Jim Frisinger photos.

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SCNP iNaturalist Observations and Species — August 2025

For something completely different, we took a look at some of the August observations of species without a common name. As you probably know, a species might not have a common name for a variety of reasons. The most common reason is that the species isn't seen often enough to be recognized by a lay person (that's not us, of course). Sometimes, a species has several common names and the reverse can be true — that a common name can refer to more than one species. You might notice, too, that even though the species below don't have a common name, they belong to a family that has a common name.

Numbers for August:
201 Observations, 143 Species, 11 Observers.

Totals for SCNP at the end of August: 24,503 Observations, 2,131 Species.



Belvosia borealis - cimmarron - Tachinid Flies, *Dendrothele nivosa* - sambiology - Common Gilled Mushrooms and Allies, *Kokkocynips rileyi* - sam_dragon-moore - Oak Gall Wasps



Neogerris hesione - sambiology - Typical Water Striders, *Myrmilloides grandiceps* - sambiology - Velvet Ants, *Villa lateralis* - sambiology - Banded Bee Flies

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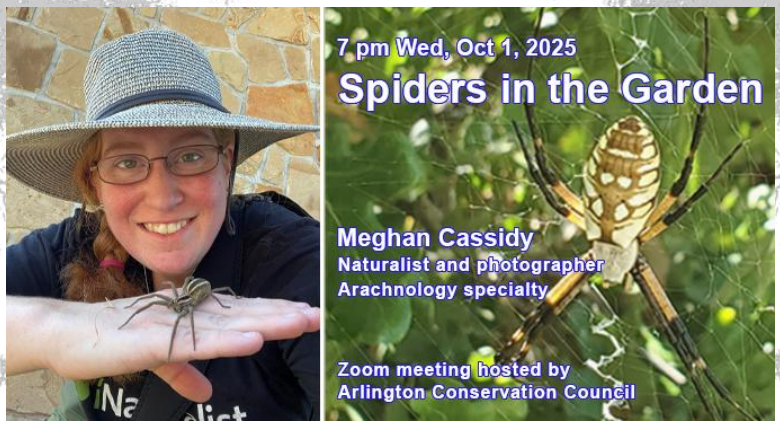
Our October Zoom Meeting



See page 6 for more on this meeting.