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COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 5

MAY 2008

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May Meeting
A Conversation with the Mayor



Dr Robert Cluck, Mayor of Arlington, will discuss an array of issues with us and hear our environmental concerns.

For this special meeting, please send your questions in advance to 1darling@sbcglobal.net.

Wednesday, May 14 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram Street
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

Bring something
for the raffle

Bits & Pieces

What's That Smell?

Look inside for the latest example of the Molly Effect. Somehow she pulled together yet another volunteer army to help introduce about 300 Dallas inner-city kids to the wonders of the Wildscape. They mostly seemed to love it, but maybe the "smell this great compost" experience was pushing things a little too far.



Today's Inspirational Moment

"You cannot affirm the power plant and condemn the smoke-stack, or affirm the smoke and condemn the cough."

Wendell Berry, *The Gift of the Good Land*, 1981.

Bat Beauty



Have you been wondering about the best-looking bat in Arlington? The eastern red bat spends its days hanging in trees, apparently pretending to be a dead leaf. They're probably plentiful here, but there's evidence that they've declined seriously throughout

their wide range since the 1800s. The cause of this decline? Probably loss of roosting habitat and pesticides.

Where Are Our Environmental Candidates?

We're accustomed to hearing national candidates go on and on about everything except environmental matters. But at least somebody's thinking locally about this omission. On May 4, Bud Kennedy's *Star-Telegram* column was devoted to the absence of clean-air city council candidates in our county. He notes that "an American Lung Association report card gives our air an F, dirtier than Dallas'."

Kennedy focuses on the Keller race where one council member "uses his Web site to poke fun at clean air campaigns" and bloggers mock "greenies" and "eco-totalitarians." Some fun. Read the column at http://www.star-telegram.com/news/columnists/bud_kennedy/.

From the President John Darling



Okay, I'm not going to go on and on about the agents of our neighborhood disintegration: the wretched gas well or the equally wretched

apartments. Maybe one little thing about the apartments: They're working on the third story now, and we almost can't see the gas well anymore. By the time they finish the fourth floor and the roof, it will be completely blocked. Of course, by then the rig will probably be coming down. It's not all bad news on Pecan Street. For the 31st spring a Chuck-will's-widow is calling from the wooded area that is (now) just south of the apartments.

Did you read that the Mayor is coming to our next meeting? I'm excited about this and hope that we will have a dialogue that is both constructive and environmental. At the



last ACC board meeting we all wondered how we could promote the most useful sort of discussion.

Our best idea might sound like something that is designed to stifle spontaneity, but it should help us to keep from wandering away from our green focus. To avoid discussing the perennial problems of potholes, police, and all those other distractions, we will take your questions in advance. Please email them to me at 1darling@sbcglobal.net;

write them down and bring them to the meeting; or consider filling out a card when you get there. But by all means, do get there.

Meanwhile, on Earth Day an interesting thing happened at the City Council meeting. The Mayor recognized inaugural members of the new Arlington Green Team. Here's some of the city's press release:

The Green Team is a voluntary recycling program set up to recognize area businesses for their recycling efforts and to assist Arlington businesses with the setup and expansion of their programs. The program encourages businesses to recycle and track their efforts in reducing the amount of commercial waste going to the city's landfill. For more details, visit www.arlingtongreenteam.com.

It may be slow and long in coming, but it's progress at last. Well done.

THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



What a busy month! For two Saturdays, NYABP hosted volunteer groups: April 12 saw about 20 energetic student and staff volunteers take on the trees and brush

of the prairie as part of UTA's annual "Big Event." They weren't content to just trim; they took on the big trees! Then, on April 19, seven volunteers from Fort Worth area Sierra club removed tree re-growth that really improved the look of the native prairie in preparation for the annual spring tour. Our guest volunteers asked really good questions and some even sampled the toothache tree. Hope they'll be back again soon.

Update on adjacent warehouse construction issues:

- Concrete Batch Plant air quality permit application: This application has been cancelled by TCEQ: Whew!!!
- A temporary perimeter fence is complete around north and east park boundaries. Thank you, APRD!
- Adjacent construction excavation has been tremendous; be prepared if you haven't visited NYABP in awhile. It now sits like a slab of blackland brownie overlooking barren land to the north and east.

This year's spring wildflower walks turned out to be a triple header! A group of 20+ started by touring Southwest



Nature Preserve and being awed by its botanical diversity, many songbirds and a harvester ant colony (Thank you, Ann Mayo!). On the way to lunch, the group stopped for a look at the most news-worthy plant in North Texas: the parasitic invasive exotic branched broomrape, *Orobanche ramosa*, recently discovered along the Hwy 287



access road. (Ref. www-aes.tamu.edu/marty/brmrape/brmrape.htm) Then, for something completely different from the morning's crosstimbers woodlands, we toured the wide-open blackland prairie, rich with blooms of prairie larkspur, primrose, gaillardia, Indian plantain, spiderwort, still a few prairie celestials and many more.

The month's most magical moment: As the UTA group was leaving, Barbara Fleischman and her son Ethan were walking the prairie looking for early wildflowers. They

began watching prairie celestials, which had been tightly closed due to the chilly weather. With the warm noonday sun, they noticed that the flowers were opening before their eyes. They called the rest of the group and soon five of us were crouched as a large colony of prairie celestials unfurled, taking about 10 minutes to open. Celestial, indeed...wishing you magical moments.

Thanks to Wesley Miller for photos and for hosting the guest volunteer groups.

Calendar:

Saturday, May 17. Clymer Meadow (Nature Conservancy) hosts a wildflower tour and dedication of a new prairie remnant.

Contact: Jim Eidson, jeidson@tnc.org or (903) 568-4139 for more information and directions.

Saturday, May 24. Fort Worth Prairie Park

Join CrossTimbers chapter Master Naturalists to tour this Fort Worth prairie; led by Jarid Manos of Great Plains Restoration Council.

Contact: Registration limited; RSVP to Eileen Porter, reporter@uwmmail.com for more information and directions.

Anytime: Trek out to NYABP and enjoy the wildflowers!

Contact: jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net

Wildscape Update: Wildscape Outreach Gaining Momentum John Dycus



They're coming out of the woodwork (and the hedge and the cedar grove) to get a piece of the wildscape.

Impassioned volunteers, the only kind we have, con-

ducted three tours in three days — the largest accompanied walk-through ever undertaken at the wildscape — for all 300 polite, attentive students of Dallas Maynard Jackson Middle School. The Dallas Junior League awarded the school a grant to create a wildscape, and the teachers and students wanted to see the best around.

John Darling and Ann Mayo retooled the script so the information would parallel the lesson plans e-mailed from the teachers. Nancy Swan contributed to basic organization, and Ann Knudsen and Hester Schwarzer, captains of the wildscape outreach team, returned from vacation to participate. Ann completed planning for the big event overnight, quickly masterminding the schedules for

each of the volunteers who responded to short-notice calls for help.

Back at the keyboard, Grace Darling is applying for a Texas Parks and Wildlife grant to fund educational materials, transportation, and lunch for Title I students in the region to tour the wildscape. Outreach is the ultimate purpose of the wildscape, but expansion from its original half-acre to the present four acres has kept everyone too busy to be dirt docents, strolling about and pointing. Now that the wildscape includes all the ecosystems plus the rejuvenated erosion area, maybe it's time to get aggressive about showing it off.

Speaking of spreading the word, Ann Knudsen launched the first Saturday mini-workshop with a talk on making inexpensive rain barrels to catch water from our roofs. On May 3 Julia Burgen continued the series with tips on increasing your backyard bird populations. Mike Warren and his Tarrant County Juvenile Services crew partook of Julia's expertise after they mulched some wildscape trails. Longtime wildscape friend Suzanne

Tuttle, director of the Fort Worth Nature Center, will lead next month's first Saturday mini-class, June 7, on native plants.

The vandalized pond and creek areas will be restored shortly, and the original buffalo grass patch will be reconfigured into a much smaller lawn, in keeping with water conservation recommendations. The area behind the new, smaller turfgrass lawn will be planted with super-drought-resistant native plants — red yucca, agarita, cenizo, black dalea, blackfoot daisy, calylophus, gayfeather, desert willow — that, once established, will need little supplemental water other than rainfall.

On May 17, 50 outstanding high school sophomores at the HOBY Leadership Conference at SMU will visit the wildscape, which was approved as a volunteer environmental project for them. Wildscape volunteers are looking forward to the opportunity to inspire these students to return to their communities and provide sorely needed environmental leadership.



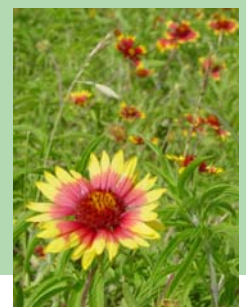
continued on page 5

Wildscape Update *continued from page 4*



Don Misenhimer Park, 201 E. Lonesome Dove

If you don't have a prairie, get one. APRD has planted native wildflowers in a large area at this far south Arlington park. Last fall they sprayed for weeds, tilled the soil, and planted 100 lbs of native Texas seed mix along with some bluebonnets. Conditions must have been perfect as they got a great stand of bluebonnets the very first year. The rest of the wildflowers will continue to bloom through spring and early summer. Now there's less mowing and the idea adds a very nice aesthetic feature with less pollution, less noise — and butterflies are bound to love it. Hope this great idea spreads to other parks and beyond!



Earth Day at the Wildscape John Dycus



Any day you can watch a hawk being spritzed with a water bottle is a good day, and Earth Day at the Wildscape, April 20, certainly was that. Four members of the Texas Hawking Association brought their birds, which are molting this time of year and a bit grumpy. Mindy Halligan misting her hawk with a spray bottle during the afternoon heat was just one aspect of an enjoyable, informative time.

Master Naturalists, Master Composters, Master Gardeners and members of the Native Plant Society of Texas came out in force with information tables and children's activities. Julia Burgen, with aviary blandishment from Danny Hiler, reprised her birdsong

session. Seeing actual nests, even for adults, is always a treat.

Ann Mayo held forth on bioswales, John Bridges on invasive plants, Anne Alderfer on wildscaping and Rosalie Rogers on the edge effect, the remarkable phenomenon where one ecosystem stops and another begins. Nancy Hiler and Meredith Lorenz assisted with nature crafts, and Vicki Dixon, Amy Nogle, Lindsay Tucker, Lauren Dixon and Michelle Nogle from Girl Scout Troop 1863 painted the faces of eager youngsters, while Hester Schwarzer taught how to make seedballs.

"Faithful ACC members and their spouses and families helped a lot," organizer Jo Ann Duman said. "The Burgens, Herrmanns and Briggses had starring roles. Heather Dowell and Martin Sanchez of the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department provided all the help we asked for and more. And the wildscape was wonderful, thanks to the many volunteers who work there month after month and those who made special efforts the week before."

The Earth and Science Club at Sam Houston High School had exhibits and

posters about the carbon cycle and hydrologic cycle. Teacher Denece Newsome let some of the students bring their rats, too. Ten students from Sam Houston's Honor Society helped as trail guides and gameskeepers. For the first time, UTA students volunteered. They were from Beta Alpha Psi.

Josephine Keeney, Nora Green, and Paige King had butterflies for the children to see, plus Jennifer Hiler and Ann Knudsen of the seemingly tireless Hiler clan had caught a hummingbird moth that slipped through aunt/sister Marian Hiler's front door. They put it in a jar and brought it to Earth Day where it was a hit.



2008 Litter Challenge: ACC Wins Again

On April 5 a bunch of ACC people did it again: We gathered over 100 bags of trash and a lot of big nasty stuff and we won our category in the city's annual Litter Challenge. For the second year we cleaned up around the Center/Mesquite bridges over Johnson Creek, and we were joined again by several enthusiastic volunteers from HANA, the Heart of Arlington Neighborhood Association. A number of others also got dirty, including one fellow from Mycoskie McInnis and Associates who said that Cliff Mycoskie had announced this trashy opportunity.

Here's part of the wrapup from organizer Roni Crotty: "First of all, I think everyone who participated in this year's event is a winner. On Saturday we collected 648 bags of litter and assorted trash, 18 shopping carts, 3 tires, 1 battery and one large kiddie pool... It was a wonderful day, great weather, and we had 423 awesome volunteers of assorted ages registered for this year's event."

And here are the results for our category:
 First Place – Arlington Conservation Council (125 bags).
 Second Place – US Navy (54 bags, one shopping cart).
 Third Place – Neighbors of Randol Mill Park (40 bags).



Above right, The Center/Mesquite bridges, our high-profile trashy place for the second year.

Left, The glamour of environmental activism (or something).

Right, Unloading litter from Peggy Quinn's Prius. Does it get any more symbolic than this?

Lower left, Danny Kocurek in the wonderfully spacious Big White Truck.

Lower right, Time to panic: It's almost cutoff time and the place doesn't look quite finished.



Float Help Needed

The 4th of July parade is just around the corner so you know ACC's float is underway. It will promote our Fix It Green Home Fair (see box at right) while tying in with the parade's theme of celebrating the Bill of Rights. After all, we have the right to lower our electric bills.

We can use your help. We still need bottle caps - the sooner the better. We especially need those found on soda and water bottles but we'll take all kinds. What we don't use this year, we'll save for next year's float.



We will have our own twist on the Spirit of '76 fife and drum corps, so if you'd like to ride in costume, let us know. Or if you'd rather walk and don't mind carrying a sign, we can use you, too. For the costumes, we need two drums, utility belts, a hard hat or two (maybe you catch the twist here) and any clothing that could pass for colonial togs.

For more information, contact Marian Hiler, 817-277-3998, or mernhome@sbcglobal.net.

Fix It Green Home Fair: What's that?

It's a free home fair that will educate homeowners on simple, do-it-yourself repairs and updates that will save money, energy, and water. Exhibits will allow hands-on practice of the updates and repairs and free supplies and products will be given out. Lectures and presentations on water and energy conservation will be provided. Admission and parking are free. Sponsored by the Arlington Conservation Council, Green Arlington Foundation, UTA, the City of Arlington, and a grant from the Arlington Tomorrow Foundation.

Location: Bluebonnet Ballroom, E.H. Hereford University Center, UTA
 Date: November 1, 2008
 Time: 10 am - 4 pm

Special June Meeting

Here's a first for ACC: You may already know that we belong to an umbrella group called Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness (TCEA) that also includes local chapters of Audubon and Sierra Club, among others. We've been wanting to join forces for a joint meeting, and in June that will happen for the first time—with a very special speaker on June 11. TCEA President Bonnie Bowman has confirmed that Luke Metzger, Director of Environment Texas, will be our speaker. We've reserved the Central Library auditorium for the event because we're expecting an unusually big crowd. Mark your calendar and don't miss this one!



Prairie Fest Fun Again

ACC shared a table with Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness at the recent event. It was a good time at a great spot on a beautiful day. Couldn't ask for much more. Above, Wesley Miller and Bonnie Bowman. Below, Jan Miller and Ann Mayo.



Diesel Disaster?

Something has been happening to local biodiesel, and the results are dismal: We hear that the Denton biodiesel facility has stopped collecting used kitchen oil and grease and has closed its doors. Is Bio Willy's station really closed too?

Apparently some combination of bad legislation and increased demand is to blame, leaving local producers and consumers as the victims. More on this as it develops. Meanwhile, have a look at www.dfwbiodieselinc.com/ for more information.

Our April speaker

Kenneth Reese gave us a great talk on plans for the environmentally friendly development to be built on the former Green Oaks Inn site. And he showed us what fun it is to hear an unusually talented, enthusiastic speaker. His company, Cawley Wilcox, sounds green and great, and so did he.



Plastic Bag Ban?

What's all this about Arlington city staff working on something that could result in a ban on light weight plastic bags? Could this really happen? Here? A lot of folks will be upset if we turn into a progressive city. Stay tuned — and pick up a couple more of those reusable shopping bags.

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

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 with the Mayor*

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