

ARLINGTON  
CONSERVATION  
COUNCIL

# POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES  
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 10

NOVEMBER-  
DECEMBER 2007

Note meeting place:  
**West Police  
Service Center**

[www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org](http://www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org)

## November Meeting

### Bats

Dottie Hyatt of Lone Star Bat Sanctuary will bring some bats she is caring for and you'll get to see them up close.

Wednesday, November 14, 7:00 pm  
West Police Service Center  
2060 W. Green Oaks Blvd.



We have a lot to learn about these fascinating mammals: Did you know that there are 32 species of bats in Texas?

A donation is suggested in furtherance of Bat World Sanctuary and its rescue mission.

### Bits & Pieces

#### Yellowhammer Time

Almost anywhere in town (that still has trees) you can hear the wild call of the northern flicker and maybe see its yellow wing and tail linings. Although the flicker nests in East Texas, we only see it from October to early April. This is our only woodpecker that spends a lot of time feeding on the ground.



#### Today's Inspirational Moment

"We've got to pause and ask ourselves: How much clean air do we need?"

Lee Iacocca, CEO/Chairman, Chrysler Corporation, 1979-1992

#### Pay Those Dues (Please)

Yes, it's unbelievable but another year is nearly over and now is the time to pay your ACC dues. Check the handy form on the back page, or if you're reading this online, just send your check to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216.

Thanks. You know we couldn't exist without you.



Another dramatic photo from Dick Schoech. How many of these wonderful moths are sitting invisibly on our mottled tree trunks?

#### In the News:

- FW housing authority gives its residents energy-efficient appliances and light bulbs
- U.N. official criticizes use of food crops for biofuel
- Sale of Christmas Mountains to be delayed
- Hunting is down nationally, rising in Texas
- Water district manager gets big salary boost
- Gas from cow manure to power 11,000 homes

*(It's all in our Star-Telegram over the last 10 days or so.)*

# From the President John Darling



Is it Arlington, or is it just me? I tell myself that we can hope for shreds of environmental happiness as we sink deeper into our swamp of reactionary

attitudes and blind growth, but it's harder to believe every day.

My latest funk began with the destruction that preceded the football stadium construction and deepened with our failure to get any reaction at all from Jerry Jones to our hopes for a sustainable stadium—despite promises from several of our leaders to get our message through. Then it was something much smaller but much closer to home—apartments just up the street. Then came tearing up the street for a bigger water line needed by the apartments. And now Arlington's first truly suburban gas well is getting underway, and it's also just up the street. But wait, there's more: We've just been notified

that our friends at TXU are sending Asplundh Tree Experts to ply their gentle trade along Pecan Street.

What is it about my street? ACC member Dick Schoech recently posted a fascinating Web site that might provide a demographic answer. When I typed in our zip code at [www.zipskinny.com/](http://www.zipskinny.com/) I learned that we live in Arlington's most densely populated zip code and we have the following virtues: lowest number of high school graduates, highest unemployment, almost the highest poverty level, and the lowest median income. And we have almost 54,000 people crammed into about 9 square miles.

Maybe the numbers for our city council members' zip codes would tell me why their streets aren't mangled in order to help out some carpetbagger who wants to get richer. But it's much more than my temporary inconvenience: All of us have lost a pretty good piece of land that should have become part of Julia Burgen Park. (And I can't believe



those apartments aren't partly in the floodplain.)

It's been quite a while since She Who Must Be Obeyed and I have seriously discussed moving out of Arlington, but that unhappy topic just keeps coming up lately. It took me a long time to reconcile myself to growing old here, and it's partly due to finding ACC that I have been ignoring the call of the many beautiful places where an old guy could watch a sunset without heavy machinery splintering trees in the background.

## THE POST OAK

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John Darling, Editor  
1316 S. Pecan St.  
Arlington TX 76010  
817-274-1077  
[1darling@sbcbglobal.net](mailto:1darling@sbcbglobal.net)

### Contributors

John Blair, Julia Burgen, John Dycus, Molly Hollar, Jan Miller

**Proofreader** Grace Darling  
**Mailing Specialists** Peg and Tom Kennedy

Thanks A.C.C. for working to conserve Arlington's natural resources.

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## New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller



All new and improved! The New York prairie has a new fence across its north boundary. It's split rail, matching and connecting to the fence across the New

York Avenue side, complete with a gate for mowers. It looks great and will help prevent unauthorized vehicle access that can be very damaging to the prairie. Big thanks to Scott DeGrant and his team at Arlington Parks & Rec!

Last month's joint state meeting of the Native Prairie Association of Texas (NPAT) and Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) was super. Well, truthfully, more than one person said it was depressing: Lots of talk about how much prairie is already gone or going, including the USDA/NRCS recent update on prairie loss: 3600 prairie acres per day, compared to a 2001 report of 1200 acres per day. But there were also glorious photos and inspiring programs on restoration and conservation by Bill Neiman of Native American Seed, David Bezanson of The Nature Conservancy, author Matt White, and others. The symposium concluded with opportunities to visit the huge variety of prairies surrounding the Georgetown area.

A teeny factoid from the symposium: Bachman's sparrow, like other rare grassland birds, has stripes on its back that mimic the pattern and color of its winter camouflage.



Also at the state meeting, one of Arlington's best native plant authorities, Gailon Hardin, became President Elect of the Native Plant Society of Texas. She's already served as President of the local chapter, and this is a well-deserved honor. Congratulations, Gailon.

The Austin College Center for Environmental Studies and CORE (Citizens Organizing for Resources and Environment),



sponsored a StepItUp2007 event at the Sneed Prairie Restoration Site near Sherman on November 3. Speakers discussed the goals of the 1 Sky plan and various aspects of global climate change, including the benefits of natural areas. After the program there were guided tours of the prairie restoration project and the green environmental education pavilion, complete with rainwater collection system.



Mark your calendar for prairie-related events:

### Saturday, November 17

Workday at New York Avenue Prairie!  
9:00 am – noon

Let's cruise the prairie and fencerows for brush and trees. Please bring loppers, hand saws, etc. Boots (or sturdy-soled shoes), long sleeves and pants are recommended. Water will be provided, but please bring your own container if you have one. RSVP to [jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net) if you wish, for late info on weather, etc.

### Saturday, November 10, 2007

Cornell Ornithology Lab - Project FeederWatch begins. You could adopt the NYABP site or just watch from home: Join thousands of feeder watchers across the continent counting birds at their feeders. It's as easy as 1) putting up feeders, 2) counting birds that visit and 3) sending the data to scientists. Learn more about birds and bird feeding and to sign up, visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/).

### November 6, 13 & fieldtrip TBD

"North Texas Grasses You Should Know" Botanical Research Institute of Texas & TCU continuing education. See [www.lifelong.tcu.edu](http://www.lifelong.tcu.edu) for more info.

Note: Thanks once again to Wesley Miller for his great photos of our only never-plowed prairie park.

# Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



To solve an erosion problem, wildscape volunteers have worked overtime this fall to complete planting an additional four-fifths of an acre.

The work boosts the wildscape to four acres — quite a nice patch of land, if you ask me.

Arlington Parks & Rec fenced the area and planted half of it with deep-rooted

indigenous grasses to hold the soil. Volunteers planted the other half with more than 2,500 native plants valued in excess of \$123,000.

Understory trees, shrubs, grasses, groundcovers and wildflowers were rescued or grown by volunteers at the greenhouse. After becoming established, these North Texas natives should survive with only normal rainfall and three to six deep waterings in the summer.

Indigenous plants, you'll recall, are

those naturally growing wild within 50 miles. They adapt better to local heat, cold and rainfall patterns than plants grown in other regions.

In just a few years this site will reach its potential as a beautiful and sustainable oasis needing little additional water. Upkeep will consist of occasional privet removal, and this addition to the wildscape will have year 'round color — maximum beauty with minimal maintenance!



*Above left, a prominent corner soon after erosion control planting. Above right, a more recent view of the same corner. Right, happy volunteers in the fight against erosion.*



*Below left, looking down that erosion-plagued slope toward the corner shown above. Only the first grasses have been planted. Below right, the same view, now with lots more plants, a bench and mulched paths.*



## Luna Lessons Julia Burgen

The things that I get myself into! Most of you who know me well, know that I've been soliciting/begging for containers and sweet gum leaves since late September and that I volunteer at Hill Elementary School.

On September 13, Mary Ann Curtis, who manages the Hill computer rooms, brought an adult luna moth to school. She had found it on her house by the door as she was leaving to come to school. She put it in a jar and brought it to school where I was helping that morning in the garden. She had raised silkworm caterpillars just as I had years ago when working with younger children. The next day I got a message that the moth was laying eggs in the jar.

There is always a possibility that eggs can be sterile and the female has to



dump them because no male had found her. That was not to be; on September 24 I learned that they had begun to hatch into 1/8-inch long wriggling caterpillars. Eventually there were about 120, far short of the 400 to 500 eggs that lunas reportedly can lay.

I took the plunge and decided to try to raise them. It was a learning experience from the get go, despite fact that I had raised silkworms 30 years ago. The Internet was very useful, with lots of beautiful pictures and details from many people, including students who had raised the moths. I learned first that the most likely host trees here could be persimmon

and sweet gum. Since the latter is more common I started with sweet gum leaves and had to stay with them as it seems that lunas don't take to a change.

Lots of people helped with providing containers or leaves. From ACC there was John Dycus, Jennie Dycus, Sharon Schoech, Jan Miller, and Marianne Herrmann. Jan solicited help from the Master Naturalists. Josephine Keeney provided both leaves and valuable information. In addition I had neighbors and other Hill gardeners helping out as the caterpillars became little green eating machines. Two friends would drop off packages when they picked up their kids at Bailey. Robbyn Steele handed a package to Jack one day and said, "Meals on Wheels." One day I was getting desperate and thought about the possibility of finding sweet gum trees where homes had once stood in Julia Burgen Park. Sure enough, as I was pruning leaves that were growing from suckers near the bases of healthy trees, Glenn Troutman drove by and stopped to see if I had taken up park tree trimming.

One group of caterpillars went to Carrie Donovan and her classes at Goodman Elementary. Another dozen went to Barbara Adams, sixth grade teacher at Hill. I had several other teachers lined up when I had a serious dieback and lost about 60. I thought it might be due to spraying of sweet gum trees for webworms as sweet gums were also hit by that problem. That possibility made involving students in bringing leaves potentially problematic. In fact Mrs. Adams' class lost all of theirs. Her losses and mine, however, were more likely due to overheating in the containers, but I'm not really sure. The process for the first two weeks was without problems, but after that and the die-off it became dicey.

I ended up with five that made it all the way to being big fat green caterpillars and then going on to cocoon. At the end I think the cool weather that came in late October seemed to send the remaining ones into decline as they just stopped eating, but never went on to cocoon.



Now the big question is managing my five and Carrie's four so as to have them survive in their cocoons until next spring and then to emerge. Lots of problems and iffiness there make me not too hopeful, but we will try.

I have talked with several classes at Hill, showing caterpillars and then cocoons and telling them about the process. Joanne Stewart loaned me a beautiful photography book by Eliot Porter, *The Color of Wildness*, with a pair of mating lunas on the cover. I also found some lovely artistic renderings.

My message for the students has been one of wonder, amazement, curiosity, the extreme importance of observation and using one's powers contained in the five senses. This is the essence of being an amateur scientist, which if not leading to a career can lead to many adventures and interests.



# Our Newest Gas Well *John Darling*

We've known this was coming for some time, but it's still a shock to see the first steps in the construction of a gas well. This one is on the southeast corner of the UTA campus, on what was once Southdale Street. Some time ago, after the houses and the street were removed, a number of trees were cut. But the gas people took about 2 acres for their site, and they cut 32 more trees and ground them into mulch. A crew worked on a recent Sunday morning to complete the fence. At that time the newly installed silt fence was falling apart in several places. This is a concern, particularly because the site is close to Trading House Creek near its confluence with Johnson Creek.



*A couple of days before the work started anybody could tell that the site was badly disturbed. But even here a flock of more than 80 robins worked away at finding things in the grass.*



*Elms were probably the hardest hit by the tree cutters, along with some hackberries and a couple of very large sycamores. Pink ribbons sealed their fate.*



# Energy by Design

On November 27, The Nature Conservancy will host a panel discussion to explore the long-term impacts of drilling in the Barnett Shale in the Crosstimbers and Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion. The event will take place from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, with hors d'oeuvres served afterward, at The Ashton Depot, 1501 Jones St., Fort Worth. Call (817) 716-3963 to RSVP by November 20.

# Front Street Festival Harvest

We must have collected a very high proportion of the recyclable cans and bottles at the recent Front Street Festival, and the bins were so much cleaner than those at the 4th of July parade. It was nearly pleasant going through those bins, and a reminder that we were indebted to Geraldine Mills for our presence at the festival — and for our great meeting place at Fielder Museum. Thanks, Geraldine.



## Southern Autumn

Southern autumn seems to come  
One leaf at a time, slow and shy,  
As if preparing us subliminally for winter.  
In the South so many trees  
Stay evergreen, autumn can appear  
As a passing fling  
That leaves a cleanup problem.  
Nothing like the sudden drama  
Of the New England year  
Where winter bullies past  
The radiant days of Indian summer  
And leaves trees destitute in hours.  
Rather the languid southern autumn  
Disassembles summer so disarmingly  
That winter's often able  
To sneak in the back door  
And spread ice on everything  
Before we know it's here.

©2003 John I. Blair

**Memberships Expire at the End of December  
Please Renew Today or Join Us for the First Time  
Help Bring Out the Best in Arlington  
Thank You**



## Park to Receive LEAF Trees

Officials in Arlington's L.E.A.F. program have awarded the first of what we hope will be many trees needed to reforest the southwestern corner of Julia Burgen Park. We'll be looking for help in a few weeks to get them planted — and we'll be hoping for more trees in the future.

Check the city Web site to learn more about this fine program.

### Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

**Membership Information**

Please circle membership category.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Individual/Family \$24.00

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Renewing member

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor \$100.00

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible. *I want to save trees; send my newsletter to my email address.*

#### Arlington Conservation Council Officers and Board of Directors

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PO Box 216  
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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Don't Forget!**

**Wednesday, November 14,  
7:00 pm  
Dottie Hyatt  
Lone Star Bat Sanctuary**

*Bats*

**Be sure to visit us at  
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org**