

HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



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Wildlife Austin

City of Austin
Parks and Recreation
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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 2rd - It's My Park Day!

www.austinparks.org/its-my-park-day.html

March 2nd - Beginner's Bird Walk at Berry Springs with TAS

travisaudubon.org/get-outdoors/field-trips/beginners-bird-walk-at-berry-springs

March 9th - Monthly bird count at Hornsby Bend

travisaudubon.org/get-outdoors/field-trips/hornsby-bend-monthly-bird-count

March 10th - TAS/FOB Field trip to Balcones Canyonlands NWR

friendsofbalcones.org/calendar?eventId=626406&EventViewMode=EventDetails

March 10th - Creating climate change solutions at the community and individual level (the Pecan Street Project)

www.austineconetwork.com/event/creating-climate-change-solutions-community-and-individual-level-research-insights-pecan-stree

March 16th - West Bouldin Creek Workday

www.austinparks.org/eventinfo.html?eventkey=565

March 16th - Wild Basin Workday

www.KeepAustinBeautiful.org/node/2032

March 2013

Congratulations Jester! They are the winners of the 2012 Neighborhood Habitat Challenge with 57 newly certified habitats including the Jester Neighborhood Clubhouse.



Jester residents led by Dale & Pat Bulla

On January 31, 2013 Mayor Lee Leffingwell honored all the 2012 winners with an official proclamation. It was a great day for wildlife! Congratulations also to our 2nd place winners Travis Heights/SRCC and the Hancock Neighborhood in 3rd place. You all did a fantastic job! 2012 was a great year for keeping Austin wild!



Travis Heights/SRCC



Hancock

2013 Neighborhood Habitat Challenge Kick-Off!

The 2013 Neighborhood Habitat Challenge will be kicking off on **March 15th!** If your neighborhood is interested you can sign up today! Remember, Wildlife Austin has a certain number of pre-paid applications that are available to the public first come first serve. Visit our website to learn more about our prepaid applications and the 2013 Neighborhood Habitat Challenge. Make your neighborhood a winner for wildlife!

www.KeepAustinWild.com

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Notes from Erin



Do you love the outdoors and getting your hands dirty? Do you want to educate your community about the importance of native plants and wildlife habitat? Then the Spring 2013 Habitat Stewards Training is for you!

Becoming a Habitat Steward not only means that you make a big difference here in Austin, but that you join the National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) nationwide team of volunteers who serve their communities as Habitat Stewards. This training is engaging, fun and highly informative and you get to meet and interact with local conservation professionals and other similarly interested folks. Visit our website to learn more and to register!

www.KeepAustinWild.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 16th - Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk

travisaudubon.org/get-outdoors/field-trips/hornsby-bend-monthly-bird-walk

March 16th - Guided hike at the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve

www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/online-registration/registeractivity.cfm

March 17th - Lower Bull Creek Volunteer Day

www.keepaustinbeautiful.org/node/2028

March 23rd - Republic Square Workday with APF

www.austinparks.org/eventinfo.html?eventkey=555

March 23rd - Pease Park Invasive Removal and Trail Walk with PPC

www.keepaustinbeautiful.org/node/2065

March 24th - Guided hike on the BCP Vireo Preserve

www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/online-registration/registeractivity.cfm

Diamondback Water Snake - *Nerodia rhombifer*

By David Papke

With the unexpected temperatures this year, many folks are encountering unexpected animals out on the trails. The diamondback water snake is a nonvenomous reptile that is regularly encountered throughout the parks system. The diamondback water snake prefers to flee from two-legged animals, but can be particularly foul-tempered. Normal adult specimens will strike aggressively upon contact and release a foul smelling substance known as musk. This odor has been most accurately described as "skunky" tinged with "fishiness". With these things in mind, it is imperative for one's own personal safety (More importantly, the safety of the snake...) to give these animals a wide clearance. Otherwise the animal is completely harmless to people. The typical water snake will spend the majority of its time during the day hunting fish, crayfish, amphibians and sometimes young turtles. It will spend the remainder of its time idly soaking up some rays on a log jam, river bank, or streambed.

Many folks see this snake in the water and immediately proclaim it to be a water moccasin. Understandably, seeing a snake in the water is good cause for a person to be startled, but certainly not a time to panic. Unfortunately, the water snake is highly persecuted. The photo to the right illustrates two of the many traits that distinguishes this snake from the venomous water moccasin. First, the pupil openings in this example are round. A water moccasin has vertical pupils like a cat. Second, Water moccasins have a light stripe that extends from the front of the mouth all the way to the back of the head. This trait is missing on the water snake. One might notice that the head of this animal is diamond, or spade shaped. This is a threat display that the animal uses to trick a would-be attacker into thinking it is a water moccasin. Many species of our wonderful snakes exhibit this behavior when threatened. Thus, using the shape of the snake's head as a determinant of whether or not it is venomous is not always the best method. Happy Trails!!!

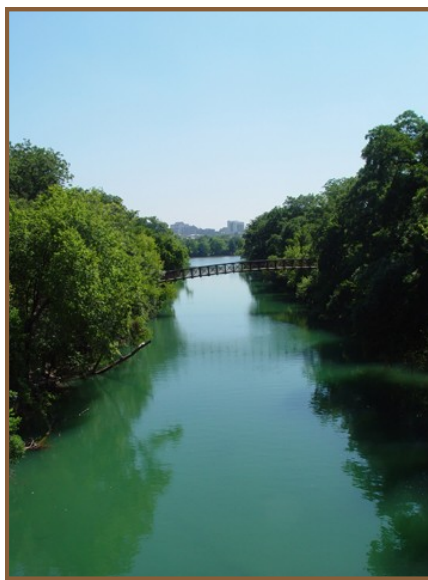


David Papke is a City of Austin Park Ranger and Snake-enthusiast

Congratulations to Austin's Urban Forest!

In February 2013 American Forests (www.americanforests.org) named Austin one of the top ten urban forests in the US! American Forests is one of the oldest national non-profits, and

they work towards the protection and expansion of America's forest. They are involved in a variety of important forest projects; from restoring endangered warbler habitat to re-foresting monarch wintering habitat in Mexico. To be recognized by American Forests is truly an honor for Austin. We should all be very proud of our city and the urban forest that surround us all. Austin is in good company with the other cities on the top ten list, including Portland, New York, Denver, and Seattle. Many of the other cities are in a much more tree-friendly climate where it rains more frequently. The fact that Austin achieved this honor amidst our unpredictable climate should not be overlooked! If you want to read the complete list visit the American Forests website: www.americanforests.org/our-programs/urbanforests/10-best-cities-for-urban-forests/. There are many city departments, non-profits, groups, and citizens that work tirelessly to ensure the health and longevity of our urban forest. If you are interested in volunteering a great place to start is with TreeFolks. They offer many volunteer



opportunities for citizens on their website at treefolks.org. You can also visit the COA Urban Forestry website (austinurbanforestry.org) and the City Arborist Program (www.austintexas.gov/department/city-arborist) to learn more about ways you can be involved with Austin's amazing urban forest.



TREEFOLKS



URBAN FORESTRY



FUNKY
CHICKEN
COOP TOUR®

CHICKEN
COOP TOUR®

March 30, 2013

10 AM - 4 PM

austinfooptour.org

Pre-purchase your tickets online now!
Austin's chickens are waiting to meet you!

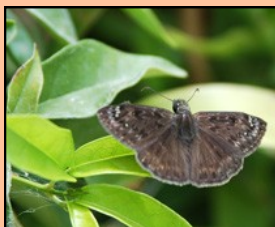
Garden of the Month



This month I am excited to feature Austin's own City Hall. The City Hall landscape was certified as a wildlife habitat in May of 2008, and was the first city hall in Texas to receive this honor. It was the 99,000th habitat certified by the National Wildlife Federation. The landscape was created by joint venture partners Eleanor McKinney and Carolyn Kelley, advocates of sustainable landscape design incorporating native and adapted plant materials and efficient irrigation. The landscape was designed to reflect the two eco-regions found in Austin. Plants on the east side of the building represent the Blackland Prairie, and those on the west side represent the Edwards Plateau. The landscape is irrigated with ground water and the water features are supplied by reusable condensate. City Hall was also created to be a green roof by using limestone planters on top of the underground parking garage. The building itself received the LEED gold certification, meaning that the building excels in several green design categories including water efficiency, sustainable sites, and indoor environmental quality.



Next time you are downtown give City Hall a closer look. It really is an amazing building and something all Austinites can be proud of!





Schoolyard Habitat Update



Covington Colts Native Plants and Animals!

Covington Middle School in Austin ISD partnered with the National Wildlife Federation and Keep Austin Beautiful last year to install a certified habitat. As a result of their outdoor space, Covington created a Native Plants and Animals elective class. This course is designed to teach students about habitats and the benefits of native plants to the water quality and diversity of the landscape, and much more! In the Fall of 2012 students took a field trip where they collected native seeds on a hike and then planted them in a research plot that scientists will study to see if Black Capped Vireos make the plots home. Students were also led on a hike through Golden Cheek Warbler habitat and had lunch under the trees. Covington has truly embraced the meaning of getting their students outdoors and connecting with nature!



Covington Habitat under construction



Native Plants and Animals students are "trapped" as they learn about the Brown-headed Cowbird on a field trip.

Donations Needed!

Campuses are looking for donations of the following materials for spring workdays:

- Compost and/or soil
- Native seeds, plants, shrubs, and trees
- Tools
- 4 inch pots
- Limestone blocks
- Cedar logs
- Decomposed granite

If you would like to donate contact Anne Muller (amuller@austinisd.org)

Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!

Contact Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist

amuller@austinisd.org or 512-841-5070

For an up to date list of work days and volunteer opportunities



Tool Shack, Keep Austin Beautiful's tool lending library, invites community groups to check out rakes, weed wrenches, shovels, pruners, wheelbarrows, and more to complete beautification, improvement and maintenance projects. Save the expense and tap into KAB's quality tools while saving time with their easy check out process. Click the link below to learn more!



www.keepaustinbeautiful.org/toolshack



Would YOU like to receive the the Wildlife Austin newsletter electronically?

E-mail us at wildlife@austintexas.gov



Earth Hour is the single, largest, symbolic mass participation event in the world. Born out of a hope that the World Wildlife Federation could mobilize people to take action on climate change, Earth Hour now inspires a global community of millions of people in 7,001 cities and towns across 152 countries and territories to switch lights off for an hour as a massive show of concern for the environment



To learn more about how you can be involved visit the website:

earthhour.org



“Like”

[Austin Parks and Recreation-Parks in Nature](#)

on Facebook and look for the Wildlife Austin posts!



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-6700.