

# HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



## December 2013



### Wildlife Austin

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Parks and Recreation  
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### UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1-Zilker Tree Lighting, from 5:30pm to 7:00pm in Zilker Park

December 2-Clean Energy Beers Social Hour, from 6:00pm to 8:30pm at Uncle Billy's BBQ, 1530 Barton Springs Rd

December 3-SWOOP Social Hour, from 6:00pm to 7:00pm at 3012 Gonzalez St

December 7-South Central Waterfront Walkabout, from 10:00am to 12:00pm at One Texas Center Parking Lot [http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/Urban\\_Design/Flyer\\_draft\\_11-12\\_UA.pd](http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/Urban_Design/Flyer_draft_11-12_UA.pd)

December 8- "Will Austin Move Beyond Coal in 2014?", from 12:00pm to 1:00pm at First Unitarian Church of Austin, Pubic Affairs Forum, Green Sanctuary Committee

December 8-22-Trail of Lights, from 3:00pm to 10:30pm at Zilker Park

Hello Everyone,

With the colder weather comes the end of prime wildflower planting season, but for those of you who still want to add to your backyard habitats, remember that winter is still a great time to plant trees in Texas. Winter planting allows trees some time to establish their roots before spring growing season, and mulching around the tree helps to keep roots warm in the event of a freeze. For those of you who like to plan your plantings in advance, free mulch will be available on a first-come-first-serve basis at Zilker Park on January 23. Free Christmas tree recycling services (the source of all the mulch!) will be provided on the weekends of January 4-5 and 11-12, also at Zilker Park.

A big thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Habitat Challenge! Information about our challenge and this year's winners can be found on pages 7-8. Some tips on managing a public/private property boundary and information about recent changes on allowable HOA restrictions are also included in this month's newsletter.

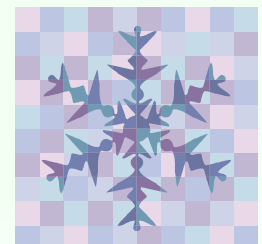
Happy Holidays!

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### Would you like to receive the newsletter?

E-mail us at [wildlife@austintexas.gov](mailto:wildlife@austintexas.gov)



# Garden of the Month

This month's garden of the month is in downtown Austin and belongs to NWFT Habitat Steward Jane Baxter Lynn and her husband Frank Lynn. In 2008 they had the opportunity to design and build a new home in the Old West Austin neighborhood. Starting with a clean slate, Jane and Frank committed to building a 5-star Austin Energy rated home, which included developing a garden that used primarily native and Texas adapted plants listed in the City's Grow Green Guide. Their goal was to limit the amount of water used for landscaping, reduce run-off during storms and provide habitats for birds and other urban wildlife.

Now an NWF Certified garden, the property is surrounded by large oaks, and has a variety of different plant heights. These plants attract many different species of butterflies and birds, including humming birds, Scott's Orioles, red-bellied woodpeckers and many more. Their landscape has, among others, Turks Cap,



plumbago, pomegranate, Texas sage, flame acanthus, firebush, wooly butterfly bush, Mexican bush sage, lantana, blackfoot daisies, Yaupon holly, mountain Laurel, mock orange, batface cuphea, esperanza, guarra, Mexican marigold, rock penstemon, Texas betony, Mexican feathergrass and Grandma's Yellow, Livin' Easy, and Knock Out roses. For the beds



they used Dillo Dirt, along with the existing soil and recycled building material. The pathways are crushed granite. Incorporating native plants into one's garden can be both a pleasure and a challenge. According to Jane it is an ongoing process, with a fair amount of trial and error. Using the Grow Green guide and working with experts in the Austin area made it much easier to do.

# Garden of the Month

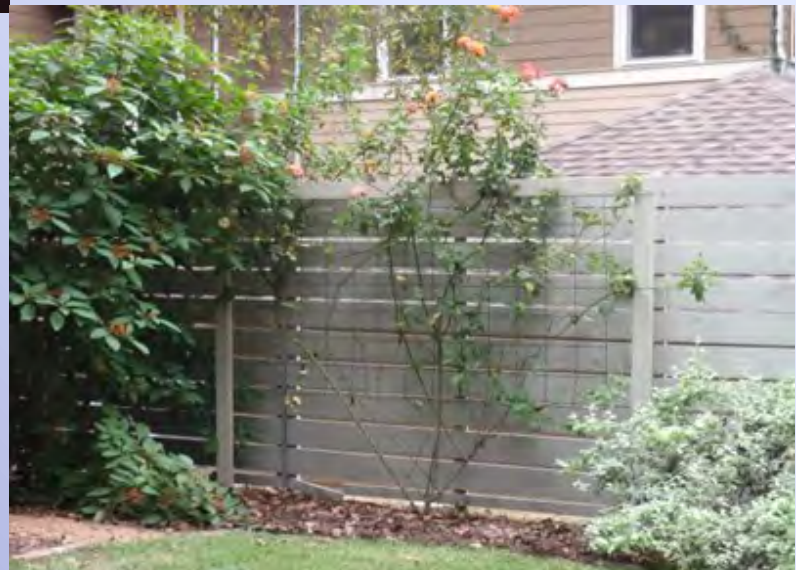
The first two seasons were particularly tough as many of the hardy plants such as the bulbines and agaves, which usually do well in Central Texas, were lost due to the rain and freeze. Some of the grasses (Gulf Muhly) didn't work either because of too much shade and the recent heavy rains destroyed the batface cuphea, a Knock Out rose and one of the remaining agave,



presumably caused by insufficient drainage. Frank and Jane are thrilled with the way their garden is developing and value being able to sit out on their screened porch enjoying the wildlife in their small backyard.



**Would you like to share your yard with other gardeners? If so please write to [wildlife@austintexas.gov](mailto:wildlife@austintexas.gov) for more details!**





# Schoolyard Habitat Update



## Doss Elementary Outdoor Wildlife Learning Center (OWL)

By Jackie Ducharme

Much was accomplished at our OWL Center Work Day Nov. 2, 2013! We improved the area around the pond with beds in preparation for students to do some planting in the coming weeks. About 17 people came out to help on this beautiful fall Saturday.

Jeannie Ferrier of the Austin Pond Society and a National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward donated plants for the pond and added some gambusia (mosquito fish). She and her husband, Steven, fixed the pond pump and hid the liner around the pond. Once the pond improvements were



Stocking the Fish Pond

complete, volunteers prepared the beds, added soil, put down cardboard, and added mulch. We pulled weeds, moved displaced rocks, and carted many wheelbarrows full of soil and mulch.



Preparing the Beds

The Doss OWL Center chairs would like to thank the following folks for taking time out of their day to help out: Jeannie Ferrier and Steven Monfrini; Dawn Robson; Glenda, Ernie and Grayton Beasley; Alicia Hill and Gabe Rumrich; Tom and Ireland Cole; Brandy & Aydan Key; Gary, Johanna and Grayson Gunter; Mira and Olivia Ducharme.



# Schoolyard Habitat Update



Spread Mulch

Weed Removal



Finished Beds!

# Habitat Challenge Winners

It's that time of year again; time to announce this year's Habitat Challenge Winners! Windsor Park Neighborhood won with 20 new habitats certified and Mueller Neighborhood received second place with 12 new habitats. As part of the challenge, each neighborhood had to not only certify the most habitats but also participate in a community wildlife habitat related project, write up a report with pictures about the project and also include an article in their local newspaper or HOA newsletter regarding the Habitat Challenge.

According to Helen Mason, the Mueller Neighborhood banded together to remove invasive plants from the Mueller Prairie.

This restored Texas blackland prairie is a project that has taken the efforts of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center as well as the Friends of Mueller Prairie group to become the beautiful prairie that you see in the accompanying pictures. Many volunteers of the Friends of Mueller Prairie helped to mark and remove invasive species and hold educational workshops on native grasses and plants.

Also in 2013 the Friends group created a pilot project titled Stewards of the Sea Islands in Mueller Prairie. This pilot program includes creating a seed bank and nursery as well as educating residents on the blackland prairie, and to research and test best practices. Areas of Tom Miller Street have also been restored with native grasses and are carefully watered by hand by one of the many active volunteers in the neighborhood.



Plans for the future include possibly creating a partnership with the City of Austin to experiment more with native plant seeding and the effects of native plants on invasive plants.

A special thank you to Helen Mason for being the Mueller Neighborhood's representative for the Habitat Challenge and providing me with these amazing pictures!

If you would like to learn more about the project or if you would like to get involved with the Friends of the Mueller Prairie please visit their website at [http://www.muelleraustinonline.com/friends\\_prairie.php](http://www.muelleraustinonline.com/friends_prairie.php).

# Habitat Challenge Winners



The Windsor Park Neighborhood received the top prize for this year's Habitat Challenge with 20 new certified habitats! Windsor Park Neighborhood decided to focus on specific areas including cutting bamboo, mulching large trees, maintaining the landscaping around the splash pad, rain garden installation, and creating a neighborhood maintenance group. As part of this projects, Bartholomew District Park was also certified as a Wildlife Habitat.

Jeanette Swenson, the Windsor Park Neighborhood Habitat Challenge representative said that almost one acre of bamboo was removed in 2012 and that in April, May, June, September, October and November of 2013 volunteers came out to help remove even more bamboo on the east side of the park. Although it is a hard

task, the neighborhood wanted to make sure that they were removing bamboo in a way that did not include herbicides which could possibly contaminate the nearby Tannehill Creek.

Windsor Park volunteers also helped to maintain the areas surrounding the splash pad. Maintenance tasks included hand watering during the summer, weeding, and replanting when necessary. Also in conjunction with the City of Austin Watershed Department, volunteers helped to install a rain garden near the splash pad. The volunteers continue to work to provide all the maintenance and improvements to the garden.

As the final portion of their project the Windsor Park volunteers decided to create weekly maintenance days where they get together every Friday morning from 9:00AM to 11:00AM to replant, weed, remove invasive plants or do any other necessary tasks to keep the park looking great.

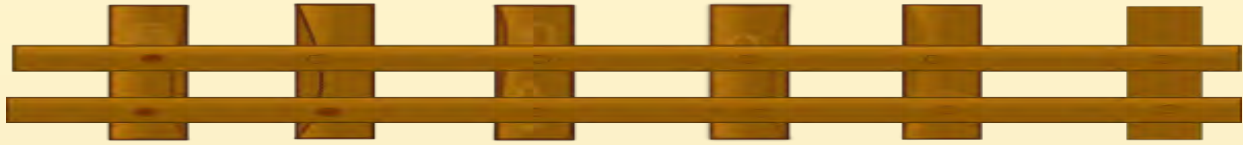
The first place prize for the 2013 Habitat Challenge are trees graciously provided by TreeFolks. Second place winners receive free canoeing through Zilker Canoe Rental on Lady Bird Lake.

I would also like to thank Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful, the Watershed Protection Department and all the volunteers who helped make these projects possible. You are all proof that together we can accomplish so much more than on our own.

A formal proclamation by the mayor will be given in January for the neighborhoods who entered the challenge. Congratulations Windsor and Mueller!



# LIVING IN A WUI WITHOUT ALL THE HOOEY



There are many benefits of maintaining a yard fence if your private property borders public land. Fences can exclude potentially undesirable wildlife, and therefore prevent deer from browsing on garden plants and also prevent dangerous interactions between pets and wildlife.

There are also many good reasons not to put up a fence along a private/public land boundary— an unfenced yard may give the impression of expansive forested property, or you may enjoy opportunities for up-close viewing of wildlife species that other people find undesirable.

Whatever your decision is for managing a boundary between your privately-owned land and public land, it's important to be aware of where the property line lies, and what constitutes an encroachment. An official land survey should be performed before any fences are placed to ensure that accurate property lines are represented and private fencing should not extend into publicly owned land. Encroachments are not just restricted to fencing issues. Storage of personal property (grills, trailers, outdoor furniture) or dumping grass, brush or tree trimmings on public land also constitute encroachments. Some WUI residents may want to “spruce up” the public land directly behind their property by trimming tree branches, mowing grass, stacking fallen wood, or otherwise altering the landscape on public property. While these citizens most likely have only the best of intentions, these actions are also considered unauthorized encroachments on park lands.

If you are interested in working to improve public land near your neighborhood, you may want to get involved in a volunteer organization or park “friends” group, which frequently have authorized park work days. Some organizations and websites to check are [keepaustinbeautiful.org](http://keepaustinbeautiful.org), [austinparks.org](http://austinparks.org) and [austineconetwork.com](http://austineconetwork.com) all of which have volunteer calendars.





# Good To Know

## New HOA Regulations

A few months ago the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 198. This bill forbids HoAs from prohibiting certain landscaping practices. Some of these landscaping practices that can no longer be banned are below:

- Composting of vegetation or yard clippings, including grass
- Installation rain barrels or other rain harvesting equipment
- Installation of drip irrigation systems
- “Using drought-resistant landscaping or water-conserving natural turf”

If you would like to read the entire Senate Bill 198 please go to <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/83R/billtext/pdf/SB00198F.pdf>

## Free Talks and Lectures

CER's Lunchtime Lectures, December 11, 2013 at the Dougherty Arts Center at 12:00 p.m. and December 18, 2013 at City Hall. Come join Dr. Kevin Anderson for a free lecture about Texas Rivers. This month's presentation is titled "Goodbye to the River: A Summary". Bring your lunch and learn!

Monthly Bird Survey, December 14, 2013 at 7:00 am and 4:00pm Starting in 1999, the monthly Bird Survey has taken place at 7am and 4pm on the 2nd Saturday of the month. We meet at Hornsby Bend in the Center for Environmental Research at 7am for the morning survey [Coffee and donuts at 6:30am] and 4pm for the afternoon survey. All levels of birders are welcome - the survey is a great way to improve your skills since we form teams matching experienced and novice birders.

Ecological Literacy Days, December 28, 2013 from 9 am to 1 pm

Combining volunteer work with learning about local ecology, the Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend begins with several hours of outdoor work and ends with at least an hour of learning about local ecology. Wear boots and work clothing, and be sure to bring your binoculars. For more information contact Kevin Anderson at [coordinator@hornsbybend.org](mailto:coordinator@hornsbybend.org) or 512-972-1960

If you have suggestions on what you would like to see in the newsletter please contact [wildlife@austintexas.gov](mailto:wildlife@austintexas.gov), we'd love to hear from you!  
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[Austin Parks and Recreation-Parks in Nature](#)



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