

HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



September 2014



Wildlife Austin

City of Austin
Parks and Recreation
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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday September 9
6:00pm - 7:30pm
Get Growing: Soil Health & Composting , Grow Local Class Series
sustainablefood.nonprofitsoapbox.com/calendar/event/407

Saturday September 13
9:00am - 3:30pm
Urban Forest Steward Session #1: Advocating for Trees
<http://www.treefolks.org/ufs/>

Saturday, September 13
Monarch Appreciation Day
10:00am - 4:00pm
Zilker Botanical Garden
<http://www.zilker garden.org/about/events/MonarchDay2014.html>

Friday, September 26
7:30 AM -10:30 AM
Birding the Balcones Canyonlands/ Water Quality Preserves-Part 1
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/birding-the-balcones-canyonlandswater-quality-preserves-part-1-tickets-12398922511>

Saturday, September 27
National Public Lands Day
Visit the link below to register as a leader or to participate for a project
<http://www.austinparks.org/npld>

Hello,

In this edition of the Habitat Herald we have an exciting article about prescribe burning that took place in Indian Grass Wildlife Sanctuary this past August.

An epic volunteer opportunity is available September 27th during National Public Lands Day. Volunteers are encouraged to partner up with Texas Conservation Corps and Austin Parks Foundations to lead or participate in projects on our public lands around the city of Austin.

Lastly the school yard update depicts some creative ancient irrigation techniques used by schools around the city to conserve water and protect their habitats from the devastating effects of the drought. Enjoy this edition.

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Would you like to receive the newsletter?

E-mail us at

wildlife@austintexas.gov



Living In a WUI

Prescribed Burning

Last month brought about some exciting events at Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary in east Austin! As part of the Austin Fire Department's wildfire training, Austin fire fighters, Texas Forest Service fire fighters, and City of Austin Park Rangers participated in a prescribed burn at Indian-grass Wildlife Sanctuary. The burn held August 21st and 22nd helped to train firefighters in



wildfire behavior as well as help with restoration efforts of the blackland prairie. The burn site included over 50 acres. Much of the area has been overgrown with giant cane and King Ranch bluestem. These invasive plants choke out native grasses and wildflowers and create a monoculture resulting in less biodiversity and poorer soil quality, two characteristics that make blackland prairie so valuable. Blackland prairie systems naturally have a relatively high turnover rate of vegetation and nutrient cycles. This makes the soil extremely well suited for agricultural uses. This high turnover is also partially a result of historically frequent burns from

lightning strikes. With the increase in urbanization along with fire suppression, these prairie systems that rely on burning are suffering. Our hope is that with combined efforts from the City of Austin Fire Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Texas Forest Service that we can help bring some naturally occurring processes back in to these systems in a more safe, controlled manner. For more information on the bene-



fits of prescribed burning please visit <http://texasforests-service.tamu.edu>.

Flex your volunteer muscle

on

National Public Lands Day

Wildlife Austin and the Park Ranger Unit will be in attendance for National Public Lands Day. We will join hardworking volunteers to celebrate our public lands at the after party, held at Rosewood Park. If you are interested in learning more about Wildlife Austin we will have informational giveaways about the most common invasive species found in our parks. Volunteer sign ups start on 9/2/2014.

You can register at www.austinparks.org/npld and be a part of this great celebration of community. Last year nearly 700 Austinites volunteered in local parks and public spaces to celebrate National Public Lands Day. The city's reputation for volunteerism and recreation did not let us down in 2013. Help us make 2014's event even bigger by volunteering. There are worksites available all over the city and an after party at Rosewood Park for NPLD participants. To thank our volunteers, we'll be giving away: One-of-a-kind NPLD t-shirts only available in Austin, food and beverages, a chance to win ACL tickets and other cool prizes

2014 NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY



PRESENTED BY
**AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION
AND
TEXAS CONSERVATION CORPS**

NPL is Sponsored by: C3 presents, Kind bars, REI, Hops & Grain, Texas Tea, Thundercloud Subs, and Bicycle Sports Shop

School Yard Habitat Update

AISD Schools Experiment with Ancient Irrigation Techniques

Several campuses in Austin ISD are experimenting with using the ancient irrigation method of ollas, including Fulmore Middle School and Small Middle School. Ollas are unglazed clay pots with a neck and sometimes a lid that are fired at low temperatures, allowing them to stay porous. Ollas are buried into a garden bed and allow the gardener or farmer to place water directly into the olla. The olla then steadily releases water into the soil at the roots of the plants decreasing the occurrence of soil compaction and weed growth. Depending on the time of year, ollas need to be refilled 1 to 2 times a week. With our current drought, lots of school gardens and dedicated teachers, AISD schools are now seeking alternatives to hand watering and traditional drip irrigation systems. Ollas can be hand made at home or purchased from local vendors.



Fulmore Middle School collects condensate off the AC units on the portable buildings and pipes that condensate into the ollas where it is then dispersed out to the adjacent plants.



Small Middle School fills the ollas by hand and then uses a lid to further decrease evaporation.

School Yard Habitat Update



Ollas made at home using caulking, clay pots and a rubber stopper



A more traditional store bought olla

School Yard Habitat Update

Donations and volunteers needed!

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

Compost and/or soil
Native seeds, plants, shrubs and trees
Tools
4 inch pots
Limestone blocks
Cedar logs
Decomposed Granite
Bird Feeders and/or bird seed



Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!

Volunteer Opportunities:

September 6th, 9am to 12:00pm

Lamar Middle School Garden (on Burnet between 2222 and White Horse Trail).

We will be mulching and prepping beds for our fall garden. Bring a water bottle and gloves if you have them. Tools will be provided.

For more upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact:

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