

HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



March 2014



Hello Everyone,

Happy March and the return of spring weather! I hope everyone is getting excited about the coming season and all the outdoor festivities that come with this time of year. Please check out the list of upcoming events and also keep in mind that the registration for Habitat Steward training is now open. Check out page 7 for details and for the registration link. Also, our Habitat Challenge winners were honored last month with a proclamation by Mayor Lee Leffingwell. More details are on page 6.

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Wildlife Austin

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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 6, 10A-12P, Rainwater Harvesting, Travis County East Service Center, 6011 Blue Bluff Road, Austin, TX 78724
<http://austintexas.gov/event/dealing-drought-landscape-series-rainwater-harvesting>

March 8, 10A-12P, Heirloom Plants, Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin, TX 78746
<http://austintexas.gov/event/zilker-botanical-garden-tcmga-educational-workshop-heirloom-plants-spring-garden>

March 9-15, National Groundwater Awareness Week,
<http://austintexas.gov/event/national-groundwater-awareness-week-0>

March 26, 6:30-7:30P, Free Composting Class, City Hall, <http://austintexas.gov/event/free-composting-class-city-hall-1>

March 29-30, Zilker Garden Fest, 10A-5P, <http://austintexas.gov/event/zilker-garden-festival-3>

Would you like to receive the newsletter?

E-mail us at wildlife@austintexas.gov

Garden of the Month

This month's garden of the month is from the new North Austin Community Garden! Although still in construction, this garden will combine not only the regular benefits of a community garden but also has many artistic features as part of the Art in Public Places Program. Artists Lucy Begg and Robert Gay of Thoughtbarn designed the garden



and helped create a leadership group for the garden. Lucy and Robert worked with the YMCA, Sustainable Food Center, and the City of Austin to create a garden that incorporates functional art in an outdoor setting. The



garden will also have a section of raised beds for flowers or vegetables. To learn more about the garden or to sign up for a plot please visit www.AustinYMCA.org or call 512-973-9622. You can also sign up for their newsletter at <http://nacgarden.tumblr.com>. Stay tuned for updates!

Would you like to share your yard with other gardeners? If so please write to wildlife@austintexas.gov for more details!

LIVING IN A WUI WITHOUT ALL THE HOOEY

Citizen Science

Have you ever dreamed of being an ecologist? It's not too late! The rise of the internet and ease of data sharing over the past few decades has opened the door to a boom in citizen science (also called "civic science" or "crowd-sourced science.") With minimal training, members of the public can contribute important data to various research projects, helping scientists better understand the natural world around us. Whether your interest is in plants, insects, birds, fish, frogs, or any other kind of animal, your observations about your interests can be turned into data with the help of these organizations:

Digital Fishers- <http://digitalfishers.net/> If you're interested in citizen science but prefer to stay indoors, you can help the NEPTUNE Canada observatory document deep-sea life by watching portions of their underwater camera footage and reporting animals observed.

Museum of Science's Firefly Watch- <https://legacy.mos.org/fireflywatch/> Help scientists understand population trends of fireflies by recording your backyard observations.

FrogWatch USA- <http://frogwatch.fieldscope.org/v3> Amphibian populations are declining worldwide at an alarming rate. You can help scientists understand the state of frogs and toads in the United States by contributing information about sightings and calls heard.

Project Budburst- <http://budburst.org/aboutus.php> Help scientists understand local and broad-scale climate trends by logging the timing of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of your local trees and plants.

Project Feederwatch- <http://feederwatch.org/about/project-overview/> Help ornithologists understand winter movements and population trends of birds by recording observations of birds at your backyard feeders from November to April.

Project NestWatch- <http://nestwatch.org/about/overview/> Help ornithologists understand nesting ecology and reproductive success of local birds by observing nests. (Be sure not to approach any bird nests without carefully reading the training materials!)

eBird- <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/> Contribute your bird observations to this large database to help scientists and the public see trends in migration timing, species ranges, and rarities reports. eBird is also a great resource to find good birding locations.

iNaturalist- <http://www.inaturalist.org/> Contribute observations of any organism you're interested in (plants or animals) to this database. Also a great place to learn from other naturalist volunteers and their observations!

Invaders of Texas- <http://www.texasinvasives.org/invaders/> For those interested in a locally-oriented project, the Invaders of Texas program recruits local volunteers to help alert land management agencies to the presence of invasive plant species in your Texas community.

~ Julie Webber





Schoolyard Habitat Update



Why Schoolyard Habitats?

School Yard Habitats provide campuses with a field trip opportunity without having to leave their school! By providing natural habitat space for local wildlife, a school yard habitat becomes an immediate learning space for students. The habitat acts as an extension of the classroom and the science lab where students can see science in action! In addition, a habitat is a place where students can engage their other senses and academic interests. Gardens provide endless inspiration for artistic endeavors as well as the topics for writing and reading! Lessons in math and social studies can easily be taken outside to the habitat for more learning opportunities. The excitement, creativity, and inspiration that comes from being outside and engaging in a natural setting is one that cannot be recreated inside in the classroom.



Austin High School Gardening Club sells the fruits of their labor to fund their work on their campus gardens.





Schoolyard Habitat Update



Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!

Volunteer Opportunities:

March 1

10-12 Cunningham ES

10-2 Pease ES

9-12 Baldwin ES

March 8

9am Casis ES

March 22

9-12 Discovery Hill

10-12 Cunningham ES

8-12 Webb MS

March 29

10-1 Williams ES

10-2 and 2-5 Zavala ES

8am Hill ES

Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist amuller@austinisd.org or 841



Williams ES students collect artifacts from their habitat and use them in art class to make gorgeous collages.



Donations 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



Habitat Challenge Winners

On February 13th, 2014 Windsor Park Neighborhood and Mueller Neighborhood were honored with a proclamation at City Hall for being the 2013 Habitat Challenge Winners! Windsor Park won first place with 20 new certified habitats and worked hard to get Bartholomew Park certified as a wildlife habitat. Mueller won second place with 12 new certified habitats and their ongoing Mueller Prairie restoration project. Thank you so much to both neighborhoods for competing and showing Austin that when we work together we can accomplish so many great things!



Become a Habitat Steward!

The 2014 Wildlife Austin Habitat Stewards' Training registration is open! Become an important part of YOUR city's efforts to Keep Austin Wild! Austin is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country to receive the designation as a Community Wildlife Habitat™ by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). This success has been made possible by people like you, who have made the effort to create native wildscapes at their homes and in public places and to teach and assist others. That's what the Wildlife Austin Habitat Stewards' Training is all about. 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™.

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department and their partner, NWF are offering a specialized training to teach you how to help others create and restore wildlife habitat in backyards, schoolyards, and other private and public areas. This training is engaging, fun and highly informative and you get to meet and interact with local conservation professionals and other similarly interested folks! **Spring 2014 training classes will be every Thursday night and Saturday morning/afternoon starting March 20, 2014 to April 10, 2014.**

You'll Learn About:

- How to Create Wildlife Friendly Habitats
- Native and Invasive Plants
- Landscape Design Principles
- Ways to Support Habitat in the Community
- Beneficial Insects
- Native and Local Wildlife
- Water conservation and riparian restoration

Habitat Stewards Receive:

- 25+ Hours of Intensive, Hands-On Training
- Engaging Field Trips and Habitat Activities
- A Comprehensive Training Manual with Local Resources
- Instruction from Local Conservation Professionals



An important part of becoming a Habitat Steward is giving back. We ask that each Steward commit to 30 hours of volunteer habitat work in the community. The course fee is \$45 and covers the cost of materials. To register please visit <https://www.formstack.com/forms/?1616799-ry9nftdrmD>.

For questions please call 512-978-2606 or e-mail us at wildlife@austintexas.gov for more information.