

# HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



## December 2014



### Wildlife Austin

City of Austin  
Parks and Recreation  
919 W. 28 1/2 St.  
Austin, TX 78705  
(512) 978-2606  
[wildlife@austintexas.gov](mailto:wildlife@austintexas.gov)

### UPCOMING :

#### Saturday December 6

9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  
McNeil High School Tree Planting  
Green Club Habitat Planting to improve ecosystem near cave system.

#### Saturday December 6

9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.  
Blackshear Elementary School  
Habitat planting for abundant wildlife, shade for humans, reduction of the heat island effect, clean air, enjoyment of community and the beauty of nature

#### Sunday, December 7

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Lady Bird Lake Volunteer Cleanup  
register: [www.keeperaustinbeautiful.org/ladybirdlake](http://www.keeperaustinbeautiful.org/ladybirdlake)

#### Saturday, December 29th

Ecological Literacy Volunteer Day  
Austin Water Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend  
9:00am – 1:00pm  
Help maintain Hornsby Bend! Did you know that all the Hornsby Bend trails, habitat gardens, and kiosks were built and are maintained by volunteers? If you enjoy birding or walking along the Colorado River here, please join us in maintaining these amenities and supporting public access at Hornsby Bend.

<http://www.austintexas.gov/cer>

For more information  
[kevin.anderson@austintexas.gov](mailto:kevin.anderson@austintexas.gov)

As the year comes to a close there are still plenty of opportunities to volunteer and partner with fellow Habitat Stewards. In this edition of the Habitat Herald, we have two school yard planting days hosted by recent graduates of the Habitat Steward Training Program. Tina Vick, a teacher for McNeil High School is using her knowledge to motivate the Green Club to get outside and get planting. This Saturday students will plant native plants to help with filtration of a local cave system. Excellent Work Tina!

Donna Hoffman, sustainability coordinator of Blackshear Bridge, a non-profit organization dedicated to environmental and economic sustainability at Blackshear Elementary and Huston-Tillotson University, continues work at the Blackshear Elementary school yard habitat. In addition Blackshear Bridge has also begun the installation of a habitat at the African American Cultural Heritage District center. Habitat Stewards have teamed up to line out a site plan and to begin the installation which will be featured in subsequent editions of the Habitat Herald.

Finally in this edition, we take a look at the wily *Canis latrans* in the Wildland Urban Interface segment. We will examine healthy tips that we as a community can follow to minimize negative interactions with the coyote. As Austin's peaceful community and beautiful weather draws more people to this great city, Habitat Stewards and concerns citizens will be at the forefront of balancing wildlife needs and human needs.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this edition of the Habitat Herald. Stay wild my friends.

Wildlife Austin Park Ranger LaJuan D. Tucker

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### Would you like to receive the newsletter?

E-mail us at

[wildlife@austintexas.gov](mailto:wildlife@austintexas.gov)



# Living In a WUI

## Coyotes

Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are one Austin's top predators and are often spotted in our Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Coyotes have a large range of habitat that spreads as far south as Panama and as far north as Canada and Alaska. Prior to European settlement, their range is estimated to have been limited to the southwest and plains area of the U.S. and Canada. With the removal of wolves (*Canis lupus* and *Canis rufus*) due to decreasing wilderness lands in the United States and Mexico in the 1900's the coyote's range greatly expanded.

Unlike wolf populations, which generally depend on wilderness settings and larger prey, coyotes are extremely adaptive. With urbanization, their population (and human contact) have increased. **Generally seen at dusk and dawn, coyotes are long and lanky with dark brown to black coloration on the saddle and neck with lighter brown fur covering the flanks and legs.**



Some land managers and scientist agree, that coyotes may be an ecological keystone predator. A keystone predator is thought to be a predator, which if removed, would have dramatic if not devastating effects on the local ecology. As an opportunistic feeder, coyotes play an important ecological role; they assist in the balance of rodent and macro-mammal populations. Although they are primarily hunters, in Austin's WUI, they often find nutrients in yards, parks and other areas frequented by humans. With increased urbanization, coyote habitats are becoming more fragmented, making interactions with humans more likely. As one of Austin's ultimate urban adaptor, they have grown accustomed to living around humans and have even preyed on pets, chickens and birds from birdfeeders.

On November 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, Austin City Council approved a resolution directing the City Manager to adopt the *Coyote Conflict Management Strategy*, recommendations given by the Animal Advisory Commission and City Council's Public Health and Human Services Committee.

# Living In a WUI

## Coyotes

Austin prides itself in being a wildlife friendly city that promotes the healthy interaction of wildlife and humans. In 2009, Austin became the largest city in the United States—and the first in Texas—to be certified as a community wildlife habitat with the National Wildlife Federation. After community wide certification, Wildlife Austin was created to maintain the city's habitat certification with the National Wildlife Federation. Section 3-2-4 of the city code prohibits the shooting, killing or trapping of wildlife without permit issued by the City or by a City Employee acting within their assigned duties. Included in the coyote conflict management strategy are recommended actions to address potentially harmful coyote behavior. This guide is intended to assist communities in identifying and responding appropriately to potentially harmful coyote interactions.



Photo credit <http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/nuisance/coyote/>

The Texas Wildlife Service Program, a part of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension “provides statewide leadership in the science, education and practice of wildlife management to protect the state’s agricultural, industrial and natural resources, as well as the public’s health, safety and property.” In accordance with their mission, Texas Wildlife Service Program provides education to neighborhoods who are concerned about coyotes. Coyotes, like all wildlife need four basic elements to survive: food, water, shelter and a place to raise young. Traditionally, these items have been provided by natural resources found in the Texas Hill Country. With more communities living in the wildland urban interface, coyotes often find easy access to water and food in our yards and neighborhood parks. To minimize the likelihood of harmful interactions between coyotes and human interest, Wildlife Austin, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Wildlife Services recommend these helpful tips.

# Living In a WUI

## Coyotes

- Do not feed coyotes. Feeding coyotes reinforces a positive interaction with humans and encourages return visits by coyotes for future feeding opportunities.
- Secure trash properly—coyotes are attracted to food and trash scraps by their keen sense of smell. Try to eliminate garbage odor by securing particularly smelly refuse in closed quarters, such as a locked garage or shed.
- Avoid leaving pets outdoors unattended—coyotes see our beloved cats and dogs as fair game for feasting. Walk pets on a leash and avoid allowing cats to roam outdoors.
- Feed pet indoors when possible. When feeding pets outdoors, be sure to pick up any leftovers and store any remaining food in a secure location.
- Trim and clean ground level shrubbery. This could provide hiding places for coyotes or their natural prey.
- Purchase bird feeders that discourage small mammals from visiting. This will in turn discourage predation by coyotes.
- Consider fencing in your yard, especially your wildlife habitat, to keep the wildlife you attract safe and secure. Texas Wildlife Services recommend 6 feet in fence height and burying the base of the fence at least 6 inches below the ground.

By following these simple steps we eliminate our yards as attractive habitat for coyotes. If a coyote is sighted in the area make plenty of noise to discourage the coyote from coming closer and repeated visits. This method, avoidance conditioning also referred to as “coyote hazing”, is believed to be more effective and far more humane than snares and chemical control—according to the City of Austin’s *Coyote Conflict Management Policy*. You can report coyote sights and concerns by dialing 3-1-1. To request community education programs call 512-854-2994 or visit <http://austintexas.gov/department/coyotes-central-texas> for more information.

# 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:**

December 6th, 9am to 12:00pm

McNeil High School

5720 McNeil Drive Austin, Texas, 78729

We are planning on planting 75 native plants and trees in a courtyard that has 2 cave entrances. In the caves are the endangered Texeli reyesi (bone cave harvestman). It is a great project for anyone interested in endangered species and in helping us improve the ecosystem around the cave in order to improve the cave ecosystem itself.

Dec. 6th, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Blackshear Elementary School, 1712 E. 11th St., Austin, TX 78702

Tree Planting to promote : Habitat for abundant wildlife, shade for humans, reduction of the heat island effect, clean air, enjoyment of community and the beauty of nature.

#### **For more upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact:**

Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist [amuller@austinisd.org](mailto:amuller@austinisd.org) or 841-5070