

HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



May 2014



Wildlife Austin

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 3: Austin Garden Tour, 9A-4P, Various locations, \$15 online, <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/travis/master-gardeners/inside-austin-gardens-tour/>

May 6: Free Composting Class, 6-7P, Howson Branch Library, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-composting-class-howson-branch-library-registration-9774571005>

May 10: Free Composting Class, 2-3P, Recycled Reads Bookstore, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-composting-class-recycled-reads-bookstore-registration-9793088391>

May 17: Free Shred Day, 8A-1:30P, Austin High School, 1715 W. Cesar Chavez

May 17: Free Composting Class, 9:30A-10:30A, SFC Farmer's Market, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-composting-class-sfc-farmers-market-downtown-registration-9787020241>

May 21: Free Composting Class, 6-7P, Milwood Branch Library, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-composting-class-milwood-branch-library-registration-9774633191>

May 31: Free Composting Class, 9:30A-10:30A, Sunset Valley Farmer's Market, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-composting-class-sfc-farmers-market-at-sunset-valley-registration-9787114523>

Hello Everyone!

This month's newsletter features our new class of Habitat Stewards! As part of their 25+ hours of training to become NWF Habitat Stewards, the students helped enhance the Green Garden at the Zilker Botanical Garden. Be sure to check out the pictures of all the algae they managed to scrape out of the ponds!

Also, the Habitat Challenge is in full swing so please contact us at wildlife@austintexas.gov if you would like more information.

On another note, we will be getting a new Wildlife Austin Park Ranger soon, so be sure to check out our June newsletter for more information!

In This Issue...

Garden of the Month	2
Living in a WUI	3
Schoolyard Habitat	4
Pond Society Tour	6
NPSOT Update	7

Would you like to receive the newsletter?

E-mail us at wildlife@austintexas.gov

Garden of the Month

Zilker Botanical Garden Update

This semester we were lucky enough to have 11 very enthusiastic volunteers as part of our National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward training program. As part of their training we participated in hands-on activities to help them understand the basics of gardening, landscape design, and essential components of wildlife habitat creation. For one of our hands-on work days we helped the Zilker Botanical Garden remove excess algae from their ponds as well as add more native plants to the NWF Certified Habitat in the Green Garden area. A big thank you to the Habitat Stewards for all their hard work. Also thank you to Cullen Finnegan for giving us a tour and providing tools and Meredith Gray and Jeanette Spears for their assistance!



Living in a WUI Without All the Hooey

With springtime in full swing, it is almost impossible to resist hitting the trail, jumping into Barton Springs or paddling the river in a canoe. With all this activity in our green spaces, folks are beginning to ask why there are so many turtles wandering around. The red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) is one of the most common members of our riverside reptilian fauna. Springtime is the beginning of nesting season for these animals so don't be alarmed if one happens to wander across your path. She is not lost; she is on a mission! Like a salute to the days of the dinosaurs, these animals venture out of their watery homes and dig nests in the riverbank. The female goes into a half-trance and begins the task at hand.



Often, passersby will think that the animal is in distress and attempt to catch it and take it back to the water. This event is not a time for a person to panic. Instead, this is a golden opportunity to observe and maybe even photograph an event in Nature that has been going on for millennia. Red-eared sliders can lay as many as 23 eggs in these 4-inch pits before the job is done, so they may stay in the same spot for a few hours or more.

The eggs will hatch in about two and a half months and the baby turtles will start their treacherous adventure of life. Typically only about four percent of the lucky ones will survive to adulthood and grow up to the seasoned age of 30 years old. Unfortunately many other animals from wading birds to largemouth bass find the hatchlings to be a tasty morsel on the menu. Additionally, many unfortunate animals must cross roadways in order to return to the water.

While you're out there enjoying this priceless Austin spring weather, be sure and stop by your local river, creek or pond in your park and wish the turtles a safe journey.

David Papke, Park Ranger II
Reprinted from April 2012 newsletter





Schoolyard Habitat Update



Healthier, Happier, Smarter

According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, kids who play and learn outside:

1. Are healthier physically and mentally
2. Do better in school
3. Have higher self-esteem
4. Have good self-discipline
5. Feel more capable and confident
6. Are good problem-solvers
7. Are more cooperative than others
8. Are more creative
9. Feel connected to nature
10. Are tomorrow's conservation leaders



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





Schoolyard Habitat Update



Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!
For upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact:

Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist amuller@austinisd.org or 841-5070





20th Anniversary Pond and Garden Tour

The Austin Pond Society will host its 20th Annual Pond Tour in June and will feature ponds and gardens at over twenty locations in North, Central and South Austin. Ponds of every size and description are included in the tour along with koi, waterlilies, waterfalls, streams, and fountains. Some gardens are Certified Wildlife Habitats, and many have native plants.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Healing Garden Endowment at Dell Children's Medical Center.

Tour Dates and Times

Saturday, June 7 - South and Central Austin (9 AM to 5 PM) Saturday Night - Night pond locations (8 PM to 10:00 PM) Sunday, June 8 - North Austin (9 AM to 5 PM)

Purchasing Wristbands

Wristbands for the three events are \$15 in advance and can be purchased at:

- austinpondsociety.org
- Emerald Garden, Hill Country Water Gardens, McIntire's Garden
- Wildflower Center, Shoal Creek Nursery, The Great Outdoors

Wristbands can be purchased at each site during the event for \$20.

Take the Tour for Free!

Volunteers who work a four-hour shift on either day of the tour will receive entry to all of the tour sites, a tour t-shirt, and an invitation to the SPLASH! Party on May 31. Sign up at volunteers@austinpondsociety.org

[For more information go to austinpondsociety.org](http://austinpondsociety.org)



Native Plant Society of Texas-Williamson County Chapter Update

By Cindy Stone

The chilly and rainy weather did not dampen the souls of those participating in the Field of Flowers event sponsored by the Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery and Prayer Garden.

There was music in the air and a table full of great sandwiches, chips, cookies and plenty of water. The head count is thought to have been between 125 to 150. Marilyn Perz and Pat Shirk took command of the children activity table making seed balls. We welcomed the Goodwater Master Naturalist new class members. Vicki Zardiackas, Michael Brasel, Richard Carmichael and Billye Adams were invaluable to the event. Due to the weather and few children, the adults enjoyed making the seed balls. It brought out the inner child in all of us. Christie Gardner and I walked the trails in the magical backdrop of the misty rain. Lori Merlino did a wonderful job with the educational kiosks that are in place for the first year. People young and old paused along the trail to read the information. Our guests were fascinated by the certifications that the nature trail had received since last year:

- Monarch Waystation thru Monarch Watch, University of Kansas
- Texas Wildscapes Demonstration Site thru Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- Wildlife Habitat thru National Wildlife Federation

Although the wildflower meadow restoration was not in full bloom, it shows incredible promise for the next several weeks. When you have a chance visit the nature trail and meadow; it should take your breath away. Thank you to Native Plant Society of Texas, Goodwater Master Naturalist and Habitat Stewards for the great participation. The project is so blessed by all of you. And a special thank you to the staff of Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery and Prayer Garden and to owners Nick and Ellen Brumder. Your support of our organizations is incredible and such a wonderful venue to demonstrate a sustainable wildlife habitat.

See the NPSOT website for more details or to sign up for your local chapter

<https://npsot.org/wp/wilco/npsot-wilco/about/>