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NEW NAPA PRESERVE IN LANCASTER

Dr. Wilma Shields has increased the size of the Veda Farrington Preserve by a conservation easement on 237 beautiful acres of her land in Lancaster. Dr. Shields had previously given NAPA five acres fronting on I-35. The new easement is quite diverse. There are meadows with many grasses and wild flowers, small creek branches with lush vegetation; many large oaks, Eastern red cedar, elms, ash, and an abundance of understory trees and shrubs. Land stewards Mary Anderson and Dora Sylvester of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas have already begun making the plant inventory which promises to be extensive.

Dr. Shields has graciously offered to host the NAPA annual meeting in her lovely Lancaster home. There will be guided walks through the new preserve from 1:00 to 3:00 after which the meeting will begin. The January 27 annual meeting is one that you surely do not want to miss!

HIGH WINDS TOPPLE EAST TEXAS TREES

High winds, close to tornado force, roared through East Texas in the late spring causing severe damage to the trees on many of the preserves. Rampant clear cutting adjacent to some of our areas took away the buffer around the already drought stressed trees.

Larry Shelton, donor of the easement on the Naconiche Creek preserve, lost in excess of 100 trees with trunks over six inches in diameter. The larger trees seemed to be more vulnerable. Most of the downed trees were along the edge of a slough or a creek bank. Trees with roots in deeper sand broke instead of falling.

Kay Humphreys lost several big trees at her Hickory Ridge Preserve, however, her land is considerably more sheltered than Larry's is. A recent clear cut directly across the road from

Hickory Ridge may make her trees more vulnerable to wind in the future.

Charlotte Montgomery lost a few Hackberry trees near her house, but the Banita Creek trees seemed to have escaped much damage.

Another early fall wind storm took its toll on Winters Bayou. James Jackson reports that a lot of big trees were blown down. One huge tree fell on the little cabin in the woods, completely demolishing it. A big limb fell on the roof of James' house damaging his chimney. The Champion Laurel oak is still standing, but one large limb was blown off.

It is never easy to lose a tree, but somehow it seems a little bit easier to accept when the cause is a natural force instead of a chain saw. Who knows what lovely little plants will spring up in the pools of sunlight created by the fallen trees.

OUR PEOPLE

Janice Bezanson attended the October conference of the Land Trust Alliance in Vermont. NAPA is an affiliate of this national organization. She reports in glowing terms of the high quality of the information. All of the sessions were practical and very well presented, and she returned with much valuable information on well managed land trusts. Of course, the scenery at that time of the year was glorious.

Early this summer, the Dallas Morning News ran a column about Allen Steelman, our new NAPA director. We are honored to have Mr. Steelman join our board and look forward to a long association.

In November, Valley House Gallery in Dallas had a large display of Deep East Texas, a book of photographs by David H. Gibson. This book includes a photograph of Grass Lake, a 30 acre natural lake owned by NAPA.

TRASH TREES AND PESKY CRITTERS

As you walk through the beautiful forest, do you look with scorn at the Hackberry trees and think of them as being totally unworthy? Do you utter sharp expletives about the Greenbrier vines whose only purpose is to trip you? Are you convinced that there is no earthly reason for Ragweed and Poison ivy to exist at all? And what are your thoughts about Mistletoe and Horse nettle? Do animals feel the same way you do about these plants?

An interesting article in the Wild Vision newsletter points out that "Winter is the time of hardship for animals - the abundance of spring nibbles and succulent fruits, summer insect feasts and the fat-rich nuts of fall fade in the bleak light of short days and long cold nights. Many fruits and seeds that fall to the ground are washed away or become buried in leaves. Plants that hold on to their fruits take on new importance and are sought out."

The authors have compiled a list of the common plants that have winter food available in Dallas and Collin Counties and what is eating them. The list includes the fact that 33 species eat Ragweed seeds, 30 species eat Poison ivy seed, 28 species eat Hackberry seed, 19 species eat Greenbrier seed, 12 species eat Horse nettle seed and 7 species eat mistletoe.

What about those irritating insects that fly in your face, eat holes in the lovely leaves and crawl to the top of your sock to bite your leg? Well, you may not be their only food source, and there are other critters that eat them. Somewhere out there a lizard will eat the insect, a rat snake will eat the lizard and an opossum will eat the rat snake. They all belong in a good, balanced ecosystem.

As Harold Laughlin says in The Heard Museum newsletter, "It is easy to imagine that, if the grasshopper population was ever drastically reduced by some cause, the predator populations would also be severely affected. However, most grasshopper eaters have alternative food sources. The effects of scarcity of a major food source are more easily balanced in a large, complex ecosystem than in a simpler one. To me, this is a very significant reason for preserving as much natural area as possible. The

more natural places we have, the more stable our environment will be."

PHOTO GROUP VISITS THE GLADES

On November 2, members of the Trinity Arts Photo Club were guided on a trip into the Glades by Sharon Reed, Sandy Penz and Katherine Goodbar. The club members had come thinking that they would be able to photograph fall color. The trees there had not turned, and they might have been disappointed if it hadn't been for the mushrooms. They were everywhere! There were funnel shaped green mushrooms, small brilliant red mushrooms, flat white dinner plate sized mushrooms, logs that were completely covered with little tan button mushrooms, mushrooms with wavy tops and long stems, dark brown velvety turkey tail fungi, and brilliant yellow mushrooms hiding in the fallen leaves. What a mushroom bonanza!

The water level in the swamp was lower than we had seen it since we had been coming here in 1988 due to the long drought, but the swamp grasses were thriving and the sugar cane plume grass was spectacular. After about five hours of exploring the wonders of The Glades, the photographers left well satisfied with what they had found.



