

# WOODDUCK WHISTLER



Volume 6 Issue 8  
August 2011

## Greetings Friends and Neighbors,

In June, I took a trip down to Hondo, Texas just southwest of San Antonio on highway 90 for the Texas Archeology Society's Annual Field School (a week long). My good friend Doug Boyd and I teach the Youth Program. Doug teaches the kids and parents, grandparents, and aunts or uncles the excavation process. Some of the adults have a great deal of archeological field experience to assist Doug. My part of the program is working with the 50 to 60 kids we normally have a day and teach primitive technology and natural history with as much hands-on activity as possible in small groups. This includes activities such as atlatls, rabbit sticks, rabbit clubs, friction fire starting, stone tools, bone tools, plant usage and identification and Native American hand games through out the week where time permits.

Our first day starts with a wake-up call at 5:00am, breakfast at 5:30am, starting work in the field at 7:00am, and stopping time at 1:00pm. This continues all through the week. Generally I choose the first group of kids at 7:30am and we start off with the atlatl, hunting strategies/habitats, and hands-on with the atlatl. The favorite target is a round bale of hay when we're lucky enough to have one available. The second class I teach is friction fire starting. The first thing I talk to the kids about is fire and its importance in cooking, keeping warm, light, and keeping wild animals away, as well as the plants that can be used in fire starting. Next we do the hands-on part with the assisted hand drill friction fire tools.

The third class I teach about is the rabbit sticks and rabbit clubs and their importance to the hunter-gatherers. I also talk about rabbits and their habits and habitat. After the discussion is the hands-on with rabbit hunting tools with plastic jug targets.

The fourth class I teach covers bone tools and what parts of the body the bones come from. A second type of tool discussed and demonstrated is the stone tool. These tool range from projectile points, knives, awls, drills, scrapers, and chopping tools. Hands-on activities include handling these tools and use of the pump drill. When the opportunity arises and small tree logs are available chopping can be conducted.

Sometimes the sites where we work give the opportunity to dig an earth oven, make pottery and fire it. I've been doing this program for the Texas Archeology Society for 16 years with 11 of those years co-directing with my friend, archeologist Doug Boyd.

Neal

### Special Points of Interest

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Finally.....technology and the outdoors are finally together!

Thinking of an iphone class. What do you think?

Let Janet Cook or Laura Wilson know you are interested.

What is your passion?

What Program would you like to see?

How can we keep the classes interesting?

## The Pioneer Oak

This magnificent southern red oak is a sister to the oak under which District Judge O. M. Roberts convened the first session of the Third Judicial Court, October 2, 1850. At the close of the first day of that historic session, Judge Roberts had the following statement entered into the records: "This court is being held under the shade of an oak tree near the center of the public square in Athens, which public authorities are requested to preserve as a memorial to the habits of early Texans."

In 1886, the courthouse was destroyed by a fire, which also killed the historic oak. Citizens of Athens fashioned from one of the limbs a walking stick with a golden head and presented it to Judge Roberts, who by that time was Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court. When Roberts became governor of Texas, he presented the cane to the Texas Archives, where it is today.

The 117th anniversary of the first district court session was commemorated October 2, 1967, when District Court Judge Wayne Lawrence convened his court under the Pioneer Oak to dedicate a historic marker designating this tree as the "Pioneer Oak" and thus perpetuated Judge Roberts' "memorial to the early Texans."

The age of this giant has been estimated at 347 years. This means it has been growing since 1664. The tree is located a block east of the Henderson County Courthouse, on the north side of East Corsicana (US Highway 175), in Athens.

Reference: Famous Trees of Texas, published by Texas Forest Service in 1984.

**Submitted by: Mike Price**



# **Environmental Co-op's Backyard Habitat Workshop Series**

**Kaufman County Xeric Garden  
200 E Main St. Forney, TX**



## **Attracting Birds to Your Yard**

**July 16, 9:00- 11:00am**

**habitat | bird baths | feed and seed**

## **Square-foot Gardening all Year Long**

**August 20, 9:00 – 11:00 am**

**grow all year long | care-free & companion plants | save water**

## **Let's Grow Together**

**September 17, 9:00 – 11:00 am**

**gardening in a budget | grow from seeds & cuttings | seeds swap**

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**CWD | City of Forney | Environmental Co-op | \$5 per class**

## **WILDLIFE HOTLINE TRAINING**

Prudence Martin-Koeninger, co-founder of the DFW Wildlife Coalition, came to the American Legion in Lindale on July 16 to offer training to interested Master Naturalists and others for the wildlife hotline. (See article in July 2011 newsletter.) Prudi has been a wildlife rehabilitator since 1995, when she started working with raccoons. She now rehabs all Texas native mammals at her facility in Naples, Texas (near Omaha), called Rascals' Retreat. In 2011 she was awarded the Krammer Award "In Honor of Superior Efforts to Rescue and Rehabilitate Indigenous Wildlife."

From the first year in which the hotline was established in 2003, the number of calls about injured or orphaned wildlife or human-animal conflicts has grown from 350 to 15,000 a year. Clearly, there is always a need to train new volunteers to respond to these calls to resolve conflicts and help save little lives. With this training, the Coalition has begun to expand its network of volunteers and rehabilitator into east Texas.

Prudi's presentation included detailed information on the natural history of cottontail rabbits, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, deer, coyotes, and other animals. We learned how to tell if a baby animal is an orphan, how to reunite it with its mother, and when to call a wildlife rehabilitator for help. We were surprised to learn that any time a baby animal has been cared for by humans, however well-intentioned, the situation is considered a wildlife emergency. This is because what baby animals eat is critically important to their survival and well-being. Captive animals often develop metabolic bone disease, a condition that results from being fed the wrong food. Baby rabbits can die from simply being handled too much.

We also learned how to exclude or evict animals humanely from places humans would prefer that they not occupy—attics, chimneys, and crawl spaces under houses and between walls. Many times, if proper procedures are followed, the animal will leave on its own, along with its young. Trapping and relocation is almost always a bad idea because relocated animals do not do well in a new environment far from their home territory.

Prudi discussed in depth the protocol if an animal is suspected of having rabies or if someone is bitten by an animal that is ill. She explained that we do not have a high incidence of rabies among raccoons here in Texas; the east coast strain of the disease has not moved this far west. We should, however, be concerned about rabies in bats and skunks. Any mammal can be a rabies vector species, so it is important to know the facts about the disease.

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At the end of her presentation, Prudi discussed coyotes and the statewide quarantine, imposed in the 1990s, that, because of a brief rabies outbreak among coyotes at that time, prohibits rehabilitator from helping these animals in perpetuity; even though the disease is no longer such a concern, the quarantine has never been lifted, resulting in a sad situation for these interesting and beautiful animals.

Throughout her presentation, Prudi gave us instructions on how to use the knowledge of native animals to educate the public. She told us how to resolve conflicts and deal with difficult callers who either want to keep the animal as a pet (a “hostage situation”) or insist on feeding it the wrong food. As a last resort, we were told we could mention to callers that there are state and federal laws protecting wildlife (except the unfortunate coyote and fox), making it illegal to hold animals any longer than it takes to transport them to a wildlife rehabilitator. All birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Act. Of course, there are also laws permitting harvesting of certain wildlife, such as ducks or deer, during certain times of the year. The situation of feral hogs was mentioned and everyone agreed it is a difficult problem (and a sad one for the hogs) with no happy solution.

Participants were sent home with the assignment to read the contents of their wildlife binders, familiarize themselves with the DFW Wildlife Coalition website ([www.dfwwildlife.org](http://www.dfwwildlife.org)) and all the information therein, and await further instructions on how to sign on for their shifts and transfer the hotline to their home phones. The rewarding adventure of helping native wildlife begins!

**Submitted: Helen Mar Parkin**

Membership Manager  
DFW Wildlife Coalition hotline volunteer since 2005



OK, Valentine's Day has come and gone. Folks went out and bought all sorts of things in an attempt to convey their love for one another. Some bought diamonds, flowers, chocolate and all sorts of stuff. My husband, ever the romantic, saved me the dead dragonfly that he found in his car. And, you know what? I couldn't have been happier! I relish trying to get a close up view of these flying creatures and now I could.

Devil's darning needle, water witch, blind stinger, hell's mare, eye poker, adder's servant, horse biter and troll's spindle are all names for what we call a dragonfly. Other folk lore attributed to the lovely dragonfly is that it could stitch an injured snake back together. On the frontier, folks believed that the dragonfly could sew the mouths shut of lying children, scolding women and cursing men as they slept. In Japan, dragonflies symbolize courage, strength and happiness and in China they are symbols for summer and also for instability and feebleness. Dragonfly motif is ever popular now as it once was appearing on Zuni pottery and Southwestern rock art.

There are over 5,000 species of dragonflies in the world, 450 of those call America home with 223 of those species in Texas. Dragonflies are characterized by large multifaceted eyes; two pairs of sturdy, transparent wings netted with web-like veins and the ability to hover in flight. They belong to the Odonata order. Dragonflies are often confused with Damselflies which are in different suborders.

Dragonflies are generally found near water because their larvae (nymphs or naiads) are aquatic. If you should observe a dragonfly hovering above the water and dipping its tail into the water what you have is a female depositing her eggs on the water's surface. The female has cut slits with its ovipositor into plant stems to form pockets for the eggs. The egg will hatch into a larva which will eat most anything. Its diet can consist of tadpoles, mosquito larvae, small fish, midges and other small insects. Most of a dragonfly's life is spent in this larval stage with only a few months on the wing. Bevis and Butthead would love these creatures as their gills grow from the rectal walls, so that they literally breathe through their anuses. Over a year's time the larva will grow and shed its outer skin several times until it reaches full size. At maturation, the nymph climbs out of the water and sheds its skin one more time and the beautiful dragonfly emerges. Dragonflies come in many colors and patterns and their wings can be patterned or clear. The fastest dragonflies fly at 35 mph. Their eyes are made of 20-plus-thousand facets fused together and can come in different colors. They see every color we see plus ultraviolet and polarized light.

The dragonfly's beautiful colors emerge prior to mating. At that time the dragonfly returns to the water. Conventional insect-mating techniques are impossible because the males insist on starting in the tandem position, which leaves their primary sex organs anchored uselessly on top of their mates' head. I think there is a joke here but I digress. The male will grab the female by the head and become joined in a circle shape or what entomologists call the "mating wheel." Some dragonflies mate while perched and some on the wing. Being territorial and keeping the female from being mated again, the male will guard the female as she deposits her eggs. If another female comes by the male will discontinue guarding, mate with the newcomer and guard both females.

Dragonflies predate dinosaurs. These insects evolved in the tropics about 300 million years ago in the Carboniferous period. One species of dragonfly that lived 250 million years ago had an 18 inch body and a 30 inch wingspan.

Now, I wonder what lovely gifts I will receive for my birthday and Christmas!

**Submitted: Ann Reynolds**

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Deadline is 15th of every month!!



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## Our Officers, Committee Chairs, & Meeting Dates

The East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists meetings are on the  
LAST Thursday of every month @ 6:45 pm. Texas Nature Center

**Neal Stilley - President**

**Clyde McKinney – Vice President**

**Carol Wilcox - Secretary**

**Mike Price - Treasurer**

**Cindi McCullough - Database Mgr**

**Helen Mar Parkin - Membership**

**Curriculum Chair Laura Wilson - Newsletter & Web-Mistress**

### **Our Advisors:**

**Kevin Herriman**

