

## What is Project P151112 DCAC?



*Jh*

The Denton County Administrative Complex (DCAC) is 25 acres located at Morse Road and Loop 288 in Denton. Most members have seen some part of this facility when attending monthly meetings in the Elections and Technical building. Photo follows.

It is a joint education effort between Denton County Facilities Management Landscape Manager Fred Burrell, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent and Advisor Janet Laminack and the Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist. Chapter Members serving on the committee are Jan Deatherage, Van Elliott, Mary Morrow, Judy Riley, Dave Rowley, Brenda Wellenreiter and Angilee Wilkerson.

In December 2014 Fred Burrell asked Janet's assistance in connecting with EFC. She referred him to Van Elliott and the three met to discuss expectations and goals for the project. A trial run was outlined to determine if the project was a fit for each of the organizations.

At the end of a successful year of working together, it was decided a long-term relationship would be beneficial. The EFC Board approved the project on December 11, 2015.

The goal is to educate Denton County employees and the public about ecology, the environment and the importance of each in our world today. Our charter is to use signage, marketing materials and meetings with employees and contractors to get the message out. EFC is serving in an advisory capacity to establish the best methods to educate employees and contractors on better ways to conserve and utilize natural resources.

Four locations within the 25 acre complex have been selected to display educational signs, kiosks about wildflowers, pollinator gardens and the Denton County ecoregions and water resources. These displays will be placed on walking paths for Denton County employees as well as others using the facility. The attached photo shows the complex and the four designated areas where the signs will be on display.

We are making steady progress and are developing a better relationship with our community. The Chapter is already benefiting from this relationship.

1. A nice monthly meeting facility at the Elections and Technology building.
2. Access to a modern conference room for training and online meetings at the Facilities Management building.
3. Chances to communicate with a variety of county officials about our MN program.

Thank you for your support and encouragement.

**The DCAC Joint Education Committee / by Van Elliott**



## Palo Pinto Mountains park among 5 in Texas waiting to open

*The Associated Press* FORT WORTH, TEXAS - JANUARY 31, 2016

A planned state park in the Palo Pinto Mountains region west of Fort Worth is one of five across Texas waiting to be completed.

The planned 4,395-acre park needs an estimated \$30 million for roads and other improvements before it can open to the public, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department officials told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

"We really won't know until the design work is done and the bids go out," said Brent Leisure, the department's director of state parks. Palo Pinto Mountains State Park is a top priority for the state, Leisure said.

Located near Strawn, about 75 miles west of Fort Worth, the park features a lake and a forest of oak, mesquite, cedar elms and pecan trees.



The opening of the park, which will take at least until 2020, is expected to be a boon for a town best known for the chicken-fried steak served at local Mary's Café.

"I grew up roaming around that land as a kid and I can't wait for people to see it," said Danny Miller, the city secretary. "It's really something special."

Other parks still in development include the Albert and Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area northwest of San Antonio, Davis Hill State Park in Liberty County, the Dan A. Hughes Unit of The Devils River State Natural Area, and the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area.

Read more here: <http://www.star-telegram.com/news/state/texas/article57601368.html#storylink=cpy>

## Vive la Différence! The Right ID is Often in the Fine Print

One of the tried and true methods of birding is known by a couple of acronyms. GISS, General Impression, Size and Shape, or BBI Birding By Impression. This is probably the best tool in the birding box for narrowing down what you might, or might not, be looking at. But the final clincher almost always comes down to some small detail. Take the two winter visitors at the top of the page. The American goldfinch and the ruby-crowned kinglet. Two little grey green birds with wing bars. Yeah, that ID's easy, the goldfinch is a bit larger, has much more business on the wings, some striping, a second wing bar and a bigger seed eater bill, Oh! and the kinglet has that prominent white eyering. Sticks out like a sore thumb.



American goldfinch

### Ruby Crowned Kinglet



So much for the patiently, carefully, perfectly shot Larry Brennan, Jonathan Reynolds style photographs. None of that on this particular bird walk. You're wandering along the path at Clear Creek dodging tree roots exposed by all the rain and see a little bird above you working along the top branches. Since this little one is a ways up there, all you're getting is a partially obscured view of its bottom side and the start of a case of "warbler neck." The underside, the ventral side, of birds is woefully under-described in field guides. Which is not a good thing. Quite often it is the only view available for birds that forage the canopy. So, you're looking straight up and balancing the bins just off your nose. Hence the origin of "warbler neck."

OK, Time for a little GISS, it's a small greenish, grayish bird that doesn't sit much and it's cold out. Warbler? Kinglet? Finch? Siskin? When clear visual ID isn't possible; look first to behavior.

What do you look for? Let's start with the surroundings. Is this bird alone, or are there several other birds up there? Is the bird perched and maybe chatting with the neighbors? Or, is it solitary and in constant motion? Kinglets may join winter feeding flocks with chickadees and titmice, but often they forage singly or as pairs, and they rarely sit still, They hop from branch to branch occasionally fluttering their wings in the process. Goldfinches however are amongst the most convivial companions. If you see one alone, he or she is being shunned after committing some major avian faux pas. And, they are always gossiping with each other, even while flying; a constant chatter of trills and musical "swee" notes and the occasional "per-chic-oree". Kinglets are pretty quiet, intent on the business of finding dinner, at most you'll get a fine high pitched "Tsee, Tsee".

All right, our mystery bird appears to be alone, moving pretty much continuously through the branches and not saying much. Preliminary nod goes to the kinglet, Then, a bit of luck, you manage to get a quick glimpse at the undertail coverts, the feathers that cover the base of the body above the tail, just as it moves to another tree. A flash of bright yellow,

Excellent! New information. Still haven't really seen any other detail, even though the little guy has just moved to a nearby tree and is still in view. Well ... what are the other options? Golden crowned Kinglet? The most the field guide has to say is lighter colored underside, no comment on yellow. Back to behavior. What other birds might act like our possible kinglet. Warblers? Well they are small, move a lot, and some at least work the upper canopy looking for insects so maybe ....

What warblers are around here in the winter? Yellow rumps for sure, but their whole body is streaky, they tend to travel in packs, sit for a bit now and then, and even forage on the ground. This little bird so far hasn't stopped except to pick at the bark. Pine warblers certainly have yellow highlights, but no mention of the coverts and they are rather deliberate foragers stopping to look around before moving on. That narrows it down, as we really have only one other warbler around in the cooler part of the year. Orange-crowned warblers are just as "Plain Jane" as they come (yes there are some orange feathers up there, but I've never seen them). A nice, little grey green songbird that flits through the trees hunting insects tucked into the bark and occasionally hitting up the suet feeder. Now compare that to the ruby-crowned kinglet. No wing bars, in fact no difference much at all in overall body plumage. But the field guide does point out that the undertail coverts are yellow and conspicuous.



Orange Crowned Warbler

Ergo, orange-crowned warbler. Over time and with practice, this process, which took nearly two pages to walk through on paper takes a few seconds. A quick consult with fellow birders is always good practice. Nobody remembers everything and everybody has a unique blend of knowledge. So neither goldfinch, nor kinglet. Always start with a first impression, but remember to finish it often takes a fine detail!

Scott

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The best thing about animals is that they don't talk much.

Thornton Wilder