



Tree NOTES

CROSS TIMBERS URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL ♦ 4200 SOUTH FREEWAY, SUITE 2200 ♦ FORT WORTH ♦ TEXAS ♦ 761 15-1499

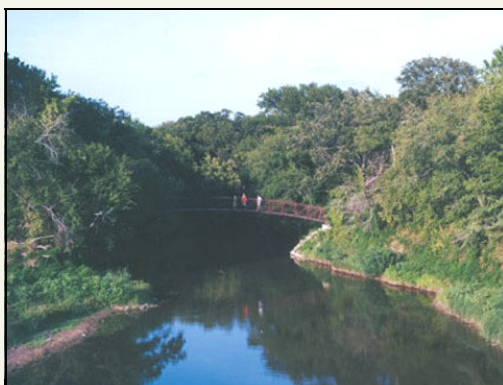
MISSION: TO PROMOTE PROGRAMS IN THE REGION TO INCREASE INTEREST IN URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

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CROSS TIMBERS UFC ANNUAL MEETING

Friday, October 5, 10 am—Noon

Lloyd Park on Joe Pool Lake, Grand Prairie



Lloyd Bridge at Grand Prairie's Lloyd Park on Joe Pool Lake

Clear your calendar to attend Cross Timbers UFC's annual meeting on October 5 at Lloyd Park. Vote on board positions and give input on planned future activities. Lunch is provided.

Visitors to Lloyd Park will enjoy a tranquil, natural tree-filled setting located in the heart of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. This 791-acre park is located on the northwest side of Joe Pool Lake, east of SH 360 off Ragland Road.

Stay for the day or the weekend! There are 8 cabins now available for rent at Lloyd Park. Call 817-467-2104 for reservations. For directions and a list of other park amenities, visit www.loydpark.com.



CTUFC

Board of Directors

Officers:

Stevon Smith	President
Susan Henson	Vice Pres/Pres Elect
Michelle Villafranca	Secretary/Treasurer
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Melinda Adams	Past President

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Jared Martin	Nona Muncie
Gene Gehring	Emily Galpin
Keith Martin	Carrie Atchison

Director (Non-voting):

Courtney Blevins

WANTED: 5th Grade Artists

In celebration of Arbor Day 2008, and in appreciation of trees where we live, work and play, the Texas Forest Service is sponsoring the National Arbor Day Foundation's poster contest in Texas.

The contest is open to 5th grade students. This year's theme is "Trees are Terrific... inside and out!"

Each participating school selects one winning poster to represent them and submits it by Friday, December 14, 2007, to the Texas Forest Service for competition in the local, regional, state and national categories.

Cross Timbers UFC will award \$100 cash both to the student who submits the winning entry from the Cross Timbers region and his or her teacher. The student's entire class will receive a party valued at \$100.

For more contest details, visit <http://txforestservice.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1292>



This artwork, created by El Paso 5th-grader, Edgar Murillo, was the statewide winner in the 2007 National Arbor Day Poster Contest.

Around The Region!

GO OUT ON A LIMB...Get Involved With The Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council

At this year's annual meeting on October 5 at Loyd Park in Grand Prairie from 10 am—Noon, Cross Timbers membership will elect new members to serve in leadership positions on the Executive Committee.

Three positions on the Board of Directors are up for grabs. The following Officer positions are also available: Vice President (includes a commitment to serve as President the following term), Newsletter Editor and Secretary-Treasurer. Directors serve a two year term while officers serve a one year term.

To nominate someone for one of these positions or for more information about the responsibilities of these positions, please contact Courtney Blevins by phone at 817-926-8203 or by e-mail at cblevins@tfs.tamu.edu.



Floating The Trinity



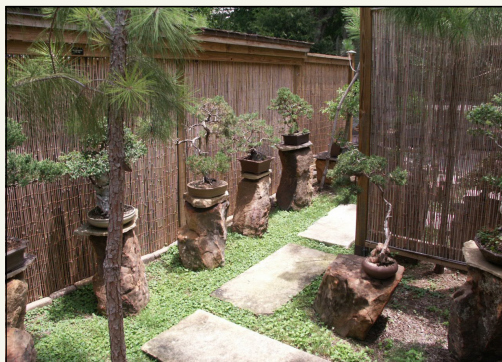
Michael Blevins and Larry Schaapveld were part of a recent excursion down the Trinity River organized by the Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council.

Members of the Cross Timbers UFC floated the Trinity River earlier this year. The group put-in at the Benbrook Lake dam in Pecan Valley Golf Course with both kayaks and canoes. The goal was a 10 mile float down to Fort Worth's Trinity Park, near the Botanic Gardens. Despite a few spills and a rain shower it was an excellent trip, *especially* the first 4 miles or so. It was in this stretch that the river is not channelized and we had native woodlands, wildlife and limestone cliffs everywhere. The river is also narrower here so there was more whitewater to play in. We'll be doing it again so be ready!

~ *Photo and story submitted by Courtney Blevins, Regional Urban Forester, Texas Forest Service*

Thank You, Sanderson Creek Bonsai

The Board of Directors for Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council extends a special thank you to Dan and Jerry Hammack of Sanderson Creek



Bonsai for graciously serving as the hosts of our June meeting. Sanderson Creek Bonsai is located off of Riverside Drive, south of I-30 in Fort Worth. For more information, visit their website at <http://sandersonbonsai.com/catalog/> ~ *Photos provided courtesy of Stevon Smith, Landscape Administrator, City of Mansfield*

Train Festival Captivates Spirit

The child in me smiled at the sights and sounds of a garden brought to life by several G-scale model garden trains in motion on over 700 feet of track meandering by scaled-down buildings, across small streams spanned by miniature bridges, through tunnels and over my head on natural willow trestles.

It was a pleasant Sunday afternoon and I'd headed over to the fall Garden Train Festival held earlier this month at Clark Gardens. I'd been so distracted in recent weeks by the daily busy-ness of life, that it seemed I had lost sight of that which truly matters. Realizing a

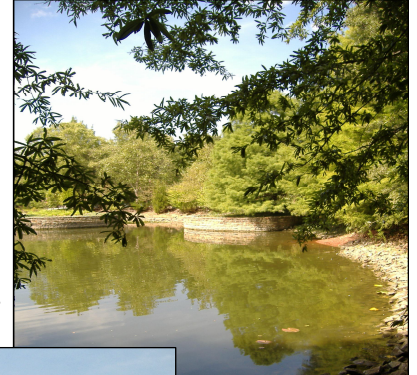


"Whooh-whooh!" sounds the train as it passes over two bridges and along an intricate outdoor track at Clark Gardens Botanical Park.

break was in order, the Garden Train Festival seemed the perfect solution. Besides, what better reason could there be to visit one of my favorite places that's less than 30-minutes away from my home in Weatherford?

The trains in motion captivated young and old alike. I can't remember when I last saw so many little boys and their parents enjoying a garden. In no time at all, I had found my lost perspective

Clark Gardens Botanical Park is located at 567 Maddux Road, 3 miles east of Mineral Wells off U.S. Highway 180. Turn north at the Lake Mineral Wells State Park and Trailway pedestrian bridge. For more info., visit <http://www.clarkgardens.com/clark.gardens.home.htm>



Above. Visitors can relax at Clark Gardens while enjoying the mirror image reflection of bald cypress trees growing near a pond.



Right. Visitors are welcome year round at the 35-acre Clark Gardens Botanical Park, located 3 miles east of Mineral Wells, TX.

~ Story and photos by Melanie Migura, Forester, City of Fort Worth

Citizen Foresters...

...In Action!

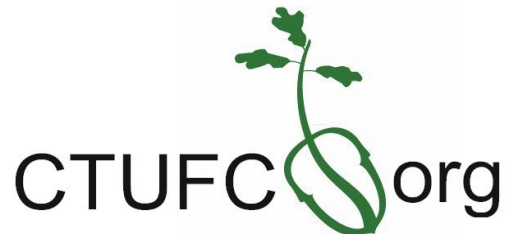
The Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council and Texas Forest Service footed the bill; the City of Fort Worth Parks Department trained them, now they are everywhere. That's them planting trees at Kingswood and C.P. Hadley Parks. In their orange safety vests, they can be seen pruning trees along the I-30/I-35 corridor and in the Camp Bowie medians. You might even see them pushing around the five-gallon trees at the City tree farm and getting it organized.

They are the Citizen Foresters. The City of Fort Worth's Park Board publicly recognized 15 members of the Citizen Forester 2006 Pioneer Class who have completed 36 hours of training and a minimum of 25 hours of volunteer service. The honor was presented by Assistant Director of Planning and Resource Management, Harold Pitchford.

~ Story by Marilyn Sallee, Citizen Forester



Regional Urban Forester for Texas Forest Service Courtney Blevins, Forester Melanie Migura, Citizen Forester Jerry Johnson, City Forester Melinda Adams, Citizen Forester Patsy Johnson, Director of the Parks and Community Services Department Richard Zavala, Citizen Forester Marilyn Sallee, Chair of the Parks and Community Services Advisory Board Steve Relyea, and Assistant Director of Planning and Resource Management, Harold Pitchford.



A Special Thanks To Our Newsletter Contributors...

- Anita Baker, Courtney Blevins, Steven Chamblee, John Dycus, Molly Hollar, Oscar Mestas, Melanie Migura, Marilyn Sallee, Hubert Schmidt, Stevon Smith, Suzanne Tuttle, Keith Vaughn, and Michelle Villafranca

This Issue Of TreeNOTES Isn't Possible Without Them!

Old Growth In North Central Texas

What type of landscape do you imagine when you hear the phrase "old-growth forest"? Perhaps you envision the giant redwoods of the Pacific Northwest, the boreal forest that circumnavigates the Arctic region or the tropical equatorial jungles

"This urban patch of ancient Western Cross Timbers forest grows on a huge sandbar named Todd Island, within an oxbow created by the flows of the previously untamed West Fork of the Trinity River."

of the Amazon Basin, African Congo or Indonesia. You may be surprised to learn that North Central Texas contains our own unique old-growth forest right within the city limits of Fort Worth.

A grove of ancient post oaks (*Quercus stellata*) exists inside the city-owned Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge (FWNC&R) in the northwest corner of town. Some of these trees have been officially aged at over 300 years old which classifies them as first-growth. The significance of this forest was first discovered in 1980 when Dr. David Stahle, then a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Arkansas, cored and aged a number of these oaks to gather data for his dissertation on using long-lived species of trees to track climatic fluctuations.

Based on Dr. Stahle's data, staff and supporters of the FWNC&R applied to the National Park Service for special recognition. In November 1980, the Park Service granted National Natural Landmark status to the FWNC&R as an



A glimpse of the Todd Island riparian forest at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge.



Enjoy the view of Todd Island from the boardwalk at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge.

outstanding example of the natural heritage of the U.S. on non-federal land.

This urban patch of ancient Western Cross Timbers forest grows on a huge sandbar named Todd Island, within an oxbow created by the flows of the previously untamed West Fork of the Trinity River. Visitors to the FWNC&R can access this area by canoe or kayak, with special staff-guided tours, or on foot during low water periods via the three-mile Cross Timbers Trail. The ancient trees are surprisingly small; their slow growth is attributed to the harsh growing conditions they endure on the very sandy, well-drained, nutrient-poor soils.

The forest is quiet and peaceful with frequent sightings of white-tailed deer, resident and migratory birds, and armadillos which find hunting for insects easy in the loose soil. Todd Island also hosts a healthy population of Comanche harvester ants (*Pogonomyrmex comanche*), an unusual species for our area. This population is currently being researched as part of a larger, Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*) reintroduction study.

More information about the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge can be found on our website: www.fwnaturecenter.org or by calling the Hardwicke Interpretive Center at 817-237-1111. We invite you to join us for a walk in the old-growth forest of North Central Texas.



~ Photo and story submitted by Suzanne Tuttle, Manager, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge

Wild about Wildscape!

Members of the Arlington Conservation Council and the Arlington Organic Garden Club founded the Molly Hollar Wildscape on half an acre in 1994 to trumpet ecosystem preservation and the benefits of native plants. The organizations did the heavy lifting — literally, as in boulders — plus helped to match \$3,000 from their meager treasuries with a like amount from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the game was on.

Twenty thousand volunteer hours later, the Wildscape has expanded into a splendid three-acre enhancement of a last lone stretch of the Eastern Cross Timbers, which runs through central Arlington but has been devastated by development.

Tucked away in one of the city's most popular parks, the Wildscape serves as a living lab, the natural elements providing a backdrop for programs and tours.

It beckons, on many levels, the tree hugger and the good corporate citizen.

Funding from the Native Plant Society of Texas bought 28 understory trees, which were planted five years ago. Volunteers snagged 150 Carolina buckthorns from another city park and have rescued from private property countless Mexican plums, Carolina cherry laurels, Hercules' club, possumhaws and redbuds, destined to live out their days in the Wildscape.

In 2000, Northrop Grumman employees, for the company's Good Turn Project, built a pavilion, benches, kiosks, bridges, boardwalk and much more. The Wildscape attracts all manner of similar enthusiasts, from Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, to Rotarians and Scouts, to young people in (volunteered by) Tarrant County Juvenile Services, to the occasional passer-by. It is a designated site for Master Naturalist training field trips.

Volunteers have grown many, many plants, which have either been planted in the Wildscape (more than \$20,000 worth) or been

sold at fundraisers (\$10,000 proceeds, and counting). This human return on investment has extended outreach to volunteers who are physically challenged or of advanced years, who delight in gardening but cannot participate in strenuous digging, bending and planting.

Then there's the "Walk on the Wild Side," where school students come through in small groups to hear of the Eastern Cross Timbers and native plants, see butterflies emerging from their pupae

and mosquito larvae swimming in magnified containers, and learn how to identify bird songs. The Arlington Conservation Council celebrated Earth Day this year at the Wildscape with 150 visitors learning about environmental issues.

Garden clubs, church groups, civic organizations — all may arrange a tour. Impromptu teaching of visitors frequently interrupts the weekly workdays. The new Wildscape website: <http://www.thewildscape.org> is up, and though now in its infancy, it will be growing rapidly.

For its advocates and tireless volunteers, the Wildscape is a little piece of heaven.

One they're happy to share.

~ *Article written by John Dycus, retired UTA journalism professor and Wildscape volunteer. Photo provided courtesy of the Molly Hollar Wildscape*





What is ***YOUR*** Tree Story?

Editor's Note: Thank you to the readers who responded to the plea in the Spring issue of TreeNOTES to send in your favorite personal encounters with trees. Their stories are found on these next 4 pages. Enjoy!

Home Sweet Home

My husband and I moved to the country several years ago seeking the solitude and privacy we never had in the city of Arlington. But to our surprise we found ourselves right next door to a housing complex that is filled with constant music and chatter. A cluster of 12 live oaks with large branches that bend outward to seek the sun are constantly filled with the music of dozens of birds who daily come to our feeders and the chatter of a family of squirrels that live in a hollow at the base of a dead branch.

I have been amazed at the variety of birds, butterflies, deer, fox and an assortment of opossums, armadillos and skunks that have landed in the branches or trotted under the limbs since we moved here. In winter, we have dozens of white crowned sparrows and American goldfinches coming for lunch. In summer, four kinds of dove, painted buntings and house finches join the usual array of blue jays, cardinals and chickadees. Two types of woodpeckers are regular visitors at the feeder and rat-a-tat on the branches. I have seen great-horned owls and red-tailed hawks land on its branches, probably hoping to catch a smaller bird for supper.

One morning when I went out to drink my tea on a small second story balcony we have that looks into the canopy of the trees, more than 30 Monarch butterflies were sitting on the tips of the branches warming their wings in the early sunlight. Often on other mornings, a Bewick wren lights on a close branch to scold me for messing up her daily ritual of looking for insects.

In early fall, if I awaken in the middle of the night, I stumble through the darkened house to peek out a west window to watch deer feasting on acorns. Winter snows give it a silhouette that is breath taking.

And just as all the other birds and animals do, I find myself drawn to a swing underneath the branches. Even on the hottest days of summer, I can sit in its shade and feel cool in the breeze that blows through its branches. It's my second home that gives me more joy than my first.

~ Tree story submitted by Anita Baker



The Morning The Fog Lifted

I believe a particular tree experience had a lot to do with me choosing forestry as a profession.

My parents were a school principal and a teacher so we always had the long summer vacations and not a lot of money! So what we would usually do is spend a few weeks driving through places in the western U.S. These were all



great trips but one in particular had a profound impact on me and involved trees, not just any trees but the tallest ones on the planet!

I was probably about 9 years old and we were spending a few days in San Francisco. One day, my Mom and Dad drove north of the Golden Gate bridge to a place called Muir Woods. It was a typically foggy day so we couldn't see much of where we were going. However, once we were off the main highway and heading down a small, deserted road, the fog at ground level starting lifting and we were suddenly able to see these gigantic tree trunks all around us. We got out of the car and started walking up the hillside. It was completely quiet and everywhere we looked were these monstrous trees that just

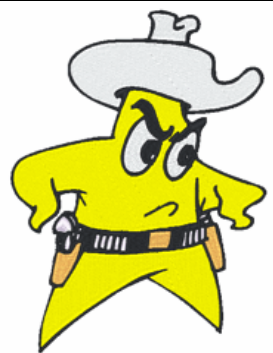
disappeared up into the fog hundreds of feet above us. I was in awe and unlike many childhood memories this one has always remained very fresh in my mind.

~ Tree story submitted by Courtney Blevins, Regional Urban Forester, Texas Forest Service

West Texas Tree Man

My story is really four long stories made short; all with the theme of coming to the defense of champion trees.

I have over my years been able to come to the aid of several champion trees. My first was in Harris County, near Tomball, in what is now known as Burroughs Park within the Pct. 4 management area. In order to save what is now recognized as the largest winged elm in the county, I had to convince the architects and engineers of Pct. 4 to move or



The West Texas Tree Man rides again!

shift two roads over about 100 feet on either side of the tree. A big change from the original plan to construct

the roads with only 10 feet on either side of the tree. So, instead of a small island for the tree to grow, there is now a very large island and fence protecting the tree. That was rescue #1.

Rescue #2 involved the state champion Aleppo pine near downtown El Paso that was headed for destruction with a new mass transit project by Sun Metro. With a little convincing and a lot of begging, I was able to persuade the City's engineering department to hire a consulting arborist and place a chain link fence around the tree and manually perform all demolition around the tree. Not only did they stop the crisscrossing of irrigation lines, but even went as far as hiring a firm to do a subsurface exploration to map out the root system of the tree using

ground penetrating radar and electrical conductivity tests.

Another state champion tree under attack led to Rescue #3. This time, Fort Bliss was demolishing an outdated housing complex. As is so often the case, they were knocking down trees and houses to make room for new and improved housing. Unfortunately, it was too late to help protect the 100's of mature trees already stressed and dying by the time they called me. We did however, save the champion desert willow.

I'd guess I'd have to say that Rescue #4 is more of a title defense rather than an actual rescue. Our national champion Rio Grande cottonwood in Jeff Davis County was in danger of being dethroned by a supposedly larger cottonwood in Albuquerque, NM.

I was invited by the locals in Albuquerque to come up and measure the tree for myself. Unbeknownst to me, they had arranged to have the papers and TV reporters watching my every move. I tried and tried but just could not come up with the same measurements that they came up with. Even after bending the rules in their favor, my numbers came up short so Texas still has the national champion.

Just here recently, in 2006, the Albuquerque folks tried again with a different tree. After gently shooting them down via e-mail and pictures, they just dropped the second attempt.

I don't know how many more trees I will be called to help, but as long as I can, I will continue to be the West Texas Tree Man, who when needed, will speak for the trees.

~ Tree story by Oscar Mestas, Regional Urban Forester, Texas Forest Service

Editor's Note: Because of the line of work for much of our membership, most likely, protecting trees was the topic of several tree stories. Unfortunately, not all stories like "West Texas Tree Man" have happy endings. Such is the case below:

A Knight's Tale

I met an old gentleman the other day.
They said he was in the wrong place,
He was in the way.

He was alone; noble and grand in his stance.
He took my breath away,
Love at first glance.

Looking up to the sky he held his arms wide.
He smiled and beckoned me
To stand by his side.

"Champion me" he whispered in a sigh.
I quivered at the challenge,
Tears welled in my eyes.

I knew I was small, and a warrior not.
His life was in my hands,
My heart in a knot.

I rallied for troops to find there were none.
Don't fight a battle
That cannot be won.

I was alone, small, insignificant.
Unworthy to champion
One so magnificent.

Trembling, I drew my sword and took up a stance.
My gauche attempt discounted
Without second glance.

I pleaded for mercy, it fell on deaf ears.
I requested trial
Received only jeers.

In the end the battle was lost.
And with it my spirit
Was part of the cost.

How many before me had took up the fight?
Had championed the old man
And vectored with might?

From this day forward I shall question my worth.
I curse my weakness
Loath my birth.

I couldn't face him again, knowing we hadn't won.
There were no goodbye kisses.
He died alone.

~ Anonymous

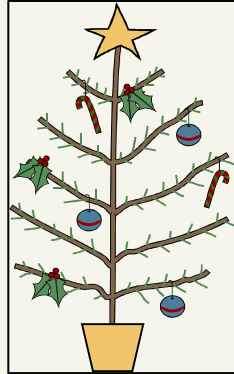


More Tree Stories...

Beebe's Tree

Perhaps my favorite tree story was on Christmas Day at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden a few years back. As is my annual tradition, I had arranged to plant a tree on that day with my 86 year-old friend, Elizabeth Parrish. We were dedicating a Chitalpa to the memory of her recently deceased 20 year old Boston Terrier, Beebe.

I had asked the guys (Mark Carter and Daniel Longoria) working that day if they would trim a nearby branch or two to make more room for the Chitalpa, and when I got to the site, they were covered in sweat and sawdust, having just finished the task. I parked my truck nearby and didn't say, "Nice job" or anything, but rather abruptly told them to get over there and unload my truck. I'll never forget the "we've



been busting our humps on Christmas Day and all you can say is unload the truck?" looks on their astonished faces and the way their shoulders slumped in disbelief. When they got to the truck, they both turned back at me with big smiles and happy eyes. The only thing in the back of the truck was a box with two homemade peach pies, two forks, and two half gallons of milk.

We ate pie and planted the tree and sang songs and made up poetry and laughed a bit too loud, just the way Beebe would have wanted it. Finally, we hung his little dog tag way up high in the tree, held hands while we said a consecration prayer, and finally each kissed the tree. It was truly the best of times...just the way Beebe would have wanted it.

~ *Tree story submitted by Steven L. Chamblee, Chief Horticulturist, Chandor Gardens, City of Weatherford*

Grand Paw's Chinaberry

Well, my tree story begins some 44 years ago when I was a young boy, visiting my Grand Paw and Grand Maw Vaughan on their truck farm in White Settlement, Texas, just west of the General Dynamics aircraft plant.

Grand Paw had this great big, old Chinaberry tree out in the back yard. All of the grandkids use to love climbing and swinging in that big, old tree.

On this particular day we were having a family reunion over at my grandparents farm and everyone was there. So, as usual, I was



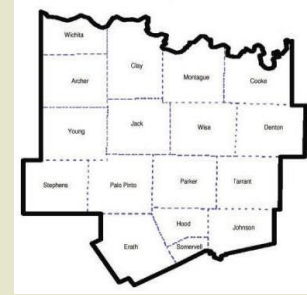
going out to play in the tree. It must have been some time since any of the grandkids had been up in this big, old tree, well... 'Cause I hadn't been in the tree very long before I managed to find the only yellow jackets (bee's) nest in the tree.

Needless to say, I was stung several times by the bees and everyone doctored me.

But, to tell you the truth, now that I'm setting here telling everyone this story, I do not ever recall climbing in that big, old tree ever again!

~ *Tree story submitted by Keith Vaughn, Resource Specialist II, Texas Forest Service*

What's going on in your neck of the woods?



TREENOTES wants to hear from you!

e-mail your comments, suggestions and newsletter articles to:
melanie.migura@fortworthgov.org

**The Cross Timbers:
A Natural Wonder**



The Cross Timbers: A Natural Wonder traveling exhibit is available at no cost to municipalities, schools, libraries, town halls and other venues to educate citizens about the importance of the Cross Timbers ecosystem.

For more information or to schedule the exhibit for your area, contact Emily Galpin at:
galpin@charter.net

got empties?

Recycle your old cell phones and used print cartridges by donating them to the CTUFC

For more information, call: Melinda Adams, 817-871-5705



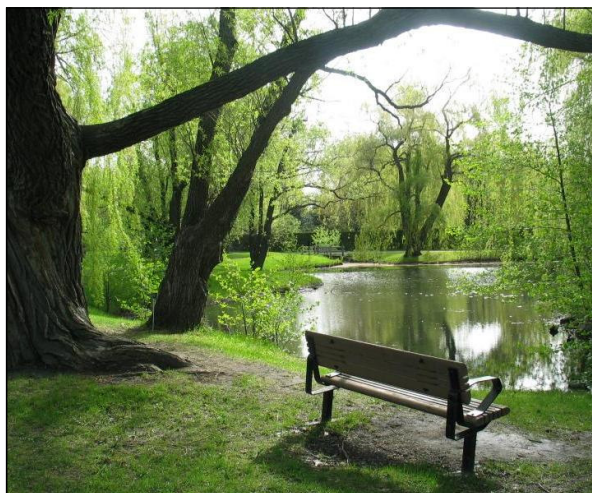
More Tree Stories...**A Lover Of Trees**

Quite a few years ago, a boy grew up on the lush, green plains of Oklahoma. He lived in the country and had lots of time to roam the pastures and canyons between house and barnyard chores. He took special interest in the variety of trees that grew on the family farm and noticed that the canyon cedars all leaned toward the north because of the strong southern winds that blew all year round. These cedars generally had a good crop of Wedgwood blue berries each year that were scattered over the surrounding pastures of little blue stem. Ever few years, it was necessary to cut out these seedlings before they got too big.

Along the canyons were old oaks that were stunted from strong winds, too dry of summers and too cold of winters. There were cottonwood trees that would shower the pastures in the spring with their white fluff. Down in the canyons, willows grew and reached for the sun. The only place you didn't readily find a tree was in the cultivated fields.

As the boy grew older, his mother encouraged his interest in trees and other plants and started taking him with her to the closest nursery, which was 35 miles away. While his mother looked at roses and bedding plants,

the budding teenager looked at the trees growing in the gallon tin cans. (This was in the days before plastic was used for everything.) He had the idea to get interesting and unusual trees that did not grow on the family farm and plant them in the yard in honor or memory of people he admired. He had trees for Eleanor Roosevelt, the three Kennedy brothers, his sister, and others. If



money was a little tight, he would tag trees in the canyons and pastures to move to the yard – usually on New Year's Day because they always seemed to survive the move.

The boy grew and left the farm. Family members and historic figures died, but the trees continued to grow. Wherever the young man moved, it was always an interest to see what the native trees were of that area – ginkgo, mesquite, pecan, loblolly pine,

blackjack oak, etc. And, there was always an opportunity to plant a new tree in honor of or memory of one that was admired or loved.

Romantics like Robert Frost the poet talked about two roads diverged in a yellow wood; he also mentioned one could do worse than be a lover of birches. He painted a lovely picture with words of woods filling up with snow. Joyce Kilmer, the brave soldier who died in battle during World War I, might have summed up the beauty of trees best:

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray.

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

One really could do worse than be
a lover of trees.

~ Tree story submitted by Hubert Schmidt

Congratulations, Hubert Schmidt!

Winner of a free copy of
*Tree Stories: A Collection of
Extraordinary Encounters*
by Warren Jacobs and Karen Shragg.



Your tree story was randomly selected from all entries received.

Cross Timbers sportswear now available!

Don't miss out on this limited, introductory offer to get your high quality, embroidered Cross Timbers denim, polo or t-shirt.

Order by October 5th

Order form available at <http://ctufc.org/shop.htm>





diversions and excursions...

In Pursuit of the Golden-cheeked Warbler

What's yellow, black and white and visits Texas only a few months out of the year? The Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA). This beautiful, vibrantly-marked bird is on the Federal Endangered Species List and nests and breeds



exclusively in central Texas.

Earlier this year, Cross Timbers UFC members and their guests embarked on an eco-excursion to Dinosaur Valley State Park near Glen Rose, Texas, to observe this rare bird. Led by Michelle Villafranca, who formerly conducted GCWA surveys for

the Nature Conservancy, the group met at the park early one Saturday morning and waded across the Paluxy River in their quest to locate Golden-cheeked Warblers.

Golden-cheeked Warblers are neotropical migrant birds that winter in southern Mexico down to Honduras. The birds then spend the spring and summer (their breeding season) in central Texas; with some birds establishing territories locally as far north as Palo Pinto County. Their habitat requirements are very specific. The birds can be found only in closed-canopy, old growth Ashe Juniper woodlands with mixed deciduous trees. Prime habitat consists of steep, north-facing slopes and ravines; although these birds can sometimes be



Participants in the Cross Timbers UFC bird-watching hike don shoes after crossing the Paluxy River at Dinosaur Valley State Park.

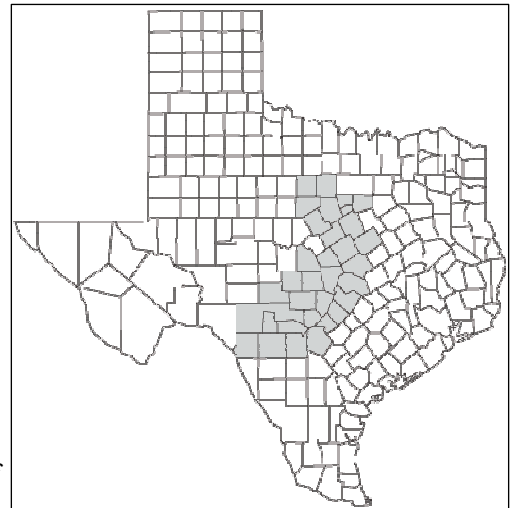
found in marginal habitat of flat areas and younger woodlands.

Upon arriving from Central America, the male GCWA establishes a territory and begins singing to attract a mate. In quality habitat, the territory may be from 3 to 6 acres. In marginal habitat, the territory may be up to 12 acres. The male guards his territory fiercely; flying the perimeters, singing from the edges to delineate his home. Males often return to the same territory each year.

Once the male GCWA attracts a mate, the female begins weaving the cup-shaped nest. The nest is made of stripped juniper bark and spider webs. It is usually established in the fork of a tree about 15 feet above the ground. While the female incubates the eggs, the male guards the nest and catches food for the female. After the eggs hatch, both parents take care of the nestlings.

GCWA are not as prolific as some of our resident songbird species. They will usually only nest once, thus producing one clutch of 2 - 4 eggs. Predation is a major concern. Blue Jays, Western Scrub Jays, Brown-headed Cowbirds, snakes, opossums, other mammals and fire ants all prey upon GCWA nests. Brown-headed Cowbirds are a special concern because they lay their eggs in the unsuspecting GCWA nest and then let the host bird care for the eggs. Brown-headed Cowbird eggs hatch first. The nestlings are larger than the host-bird nestlings and they aggressively out-compete for food and attention of the mother GCWA. Sometimes the GCWA nestlings are even pushed from the nest by the invasive Brown-headed Cowbird chicks.

Nest predation creates a decline in successful GCWA nests. They are also faced with habitat destruction. Because their nesting and breeding range is limited to only central Texas, land-use practices have a critical influence on these birds. The very specific habitat requirements of Golden-cheeked Warblers conflict with land-use practices by humans. Urban development, habitat fragmentation, cattle grazing and agriculture all have negative impacts on the success and survival of these beautiful birds.



In Texas, golden-cheeked warblers are found in the Edwards Plateau and locally north to Palo Pinto County. Graphic courtesy of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's website.

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diversions and excursions...

(continued from page 10)

For this reason, State parks, non-profit conservation groups, private landowners and regional conservation plans involve many groups in the protection and enhancement of habitat for the GCWA as well as other species of concern. Texas does have some land set aside to protect this important habitat and these unique birds that utilize it. Dinosaur Valley State Park is one such place that protects the Golden-cheeked Warbler and its habitat.

The park is also known for having some of the world's best-preserved dinosaur tracks. On the hike, the group crossed the Paluxy where some dinosaur tracks are, but did not get to see them because of the depth of the river. The hilly, limestone trail picks up on the east side of the river, emerging quickly from the riparian area and weaving steeply into Edwards Plateau vegetation. The Cross Timbers UFC hikers got to look at some vegetation that is representative of the hill country including Nolina, Ashe Juniper, Texas Red Oak, Texas Ash, Shin Oak, Sideoats Grama, and Turnsole.

Along the trail, several birds were heard or seen including White-eyed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Summer Tanager, Painted Bunting, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Carolina Wren, and Dickcissel. The big payoff of the hike, though, was a good view of the male Golden-cheeked Warbler. He was finally located singing his territorial song from the perch of a juniper. He gave the group a good show before flying off to finish his daily business.

If you were unable to join us for the hike this year, consider joining us next year!

~ Article and photos by Michelle Villafranca, Forester, City of Fort Worth



Birding by the seat of our pants on a recent eco-excursion to Dinosaur Valley State Park.



Adventure hiking across the Paluxy River to reach the trails and hopefully catch a glimpse of the Golden-cheeked Warbler.

Editor's Note:

Ever since I moved to the area three years ago this September, I've had an affinity for Glen Rose, the county seat of Somervell County. Perhaps it's because I grew up in a small town of similar size, also boasting of friendly folks and a courthouse in the center of the town square. Whatever the case, I feel at home in Glen Rose and am a frequent visitor to this small Texas town. It doesn't hurt that it's located only 45-minutes from my home in Weatherford and en route to my Mom's, who is a couple of hours South of Waco.

For such a small town, there's plenty to do besides camping, hiking, birding and looking at the ancient dinosaur tracks at Dinosaur Valley State Park, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/dinosaur/. Consider including some of these other area attractions to your itinerary for your less adventuresome traveling companions:

- Pick your own fragrant, lavender bouquet in May at **Rhineland Farm**, 3157 C.R. 411, Glen Rose, TX 76043. Ph#: 254-897-4517.
- Looking for the 1950s style, metal chairs and gliders for your patio? **Tracks In Time Antiques & Gifts** (ph#: 254-898-1122), located west of town on Hwy 67, usually has a good selection to choose from.
- Sunbathe or wade in the clear water of the Paluxy River at the town's **Big Rocks Park** located just outside downtown Glen Rose.
- Find the perfect Christmas gift for every person on your list at **Earthly Possessions** on the square on Walnut. To my delight, the shop carries several nostalgic toys and games from my childhood that have been fun to give to my nieces and nephews.
- Enjoy a delicious piece of homemade pie at the **Pie Peddlers**, <http://piepeddlers.com/>, just off the square at 104 SW Barnard, and operated by two school teachers on the weekends. Blackberry is my absolute favorite!

Check out the Glen Rose Convention and Visitors Bureau website, <http://www.glenrosetexas.net/index.htm> and <http://www.glenrosearea.com/> for a more comprehensive list of attractions, calendar of events, and accommodations.

E-mail your submissions for future "diversions and excursions..." to Melanie at Melanie.Migura@fortworthgov.org

COME GROW WITH US!

CROSS TIMBERS URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Come see us! We are at ctufc.org