



Conservation Insider

August 2020

Hello CCCA Friends and volunteers! We are excited to share the latest Comal County Conservation news with you. Let us know if you are enjoying this format while we practice social distancing and please also tell us if you have suggestions to make this a better way of communicating with you.

Get Ready for the BIG GIVE on September 10th!

Please support CCCA in THE BIG GIVE, the 24-Hour Day of Giving on September 10th!

Comal County and New Braunfels are rapidly growing and we understand why. This is a wonderful place to live! Growth brings change and CCCA is working to ensure that healthy rivers and natural areas continue to be the hallmark of our county. Balancing growth with the need to provide parks, natural areas and habitats for wildlife takes planning and funding, and is an important part of protecting the future of Comal County. Our health and well-being depend on it.

Preserving natural land and open space benefits all of us in Comal County, residents and visitors alike. Your support will help CCCA preserve land, allowing Nature to continue doing what it does for us — clean the air, produce oxygen, filter rainwater, provide wildlife habitat, and give people a place to refresh and rejuvenate. We must do our part to protect what we've been given.

The money raised from the Big Give will go into our newly established “Comal Land Conservation Fund” to provide funds for projects dedicated to preserving open space in Comal County.

We are asking you to support these efforts on September 10th. Because we all LOVE Comal County!

Thank you CCCA Friends!

Learn more about the BIG GIVE at <https://www.comalconservation.org/>

NEWS AROUND THE COUNTY

NEW GROUP ---- COMAL COUNTY FRIENDS OF THE NIGHT SKY

There are few places like the Hill Country when it comes to viewing night skies. This newly formed group in Comal County wants to keep it that way as development continues to make it one of the fastest growing counties in the United States.

Municipalities throughout the region, including Comal County, have taken steps to protect the view of the night skies. According to Texas Parks and Wildlife, an estimated 80 percent of Americans have never seen the Milky Way.

“Star-filled night skies are part of Texas heritage,” according to Cliff Kaplan of the Hill Country Alliance. “It’s something that all Texans should be able to enjoy, and we have really extraordinary skies in Central Texas. However, we are losing those skies because of the rapid growth in our region.”

To find out more, join their group on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/Comal-County-Friends-of-the-Night-Sky-102425218116972>

We missed this interesting article for our **Trails Spotlight in July**, but we had such a great response to the topic, we thought many of you would like to read it.

Great Springs Project Envisions a Network of Trails from Austin to San Antonio

Twenty-seven years ago, Deborah Morin watched as the hills, streams, caves, and springs of the Hill Country outside Austin were being gobbled up by construction.

At the time, Morin was serving on the board of the Hill Country Foundation, where she was involved with efforts to map the watershed for the Barton Springs portion of the Edwards Aquifer outside of Austin.

The vast majority of that land is in private hands, meaning the health of the aquifer and Barton Springs was mostly dependent upon the decisions of private landowners. In Morin's view, government regulation alone wouldn't protect these sensitive waterways or preserve the land for generations.

"It doesn't matter how many laws, how many rules you have," Morin told the Rivard Report earlier this month. "You have to buy it."

Almost three decades later, Morin, a San Antonio native, is at the head of a nonprofit working to do just that, but on a much larger scale. She's president of the board of the Great Springs Project, an initiative to preserve land and stitch together a network of hike and bike trails that will eventually connect San Antonio, New Braunfels, San Marcos, Austin, and smaller cities in between.

Continue reading here:

<https://sanantonioreport.org/great-springs-project-envisions-a-network-of-trails-from-austin-to-san-antonio/>

CCCA JOINS CONSERVATION NETWORK

CCCA has become a member of an established Hill Country group, the **TEXAS HILL COUNTRY CONSERVATION NETWORK**, which is led by the Hill Country Alliance and includes such notable conservation groups as the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, and the Nature Conservancy, along with many other conservation and environmental organizations from across the Hill Country. The group was created in a direct response to the threats to the natural systems and natural resources in the region, with a mission to amplify the impact of conservation focused organizations working throughout the Hill Country.

To learn more about the Network and follow their progress, go to: <http://www.hillcountryalliance.org/Network>

MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT ON BIRDS

Our **CCCA SPOTLIGHT** is on Birds this month! You'll want to check it out and learn about birding in the Hill Country. There is a list of birds spotted in Landa Park, Apps you can download to identify birds, and a place for you to share your favorite bird adventure. We've also designed a short questionnaire you can answer, sharing your experiences with backyard birds and birds in our county.

Go to: <https://www.comalconservation.org/birds.html>

If you haven't had a chance to read **Frank Dietz's delightful columns** that appear monthly in the *Herald Zeitung* here is his latest article, which just happens to be about ... birds:

THE BIRDS — in Song and Flight!

By Frank Dietz
August 1, 2020

In the days of our 2020 quarantine when so much came to a halt, an uncanny silence became notable. Flights overhead were rare. Traffic on roadways and rails nearly ceased. It was the perfect moment for an amazing symphonic crescendo in the avian world. Songs and calls in the woods and across expanses of acreage stood out quite notably. I remarked to Karen about our good fortune in having both cover and open space around us. I was ushered back to my earliest life memories with birds.

Many of my early boyhood summer nights were spent sleeping on my Grandfather's screened porch. His small coastal farmstead was graced with grand oaks and tall pines. Early to bed meant the evening transition as some birds headed for their roosts and nests while dusk introduced the nocturnally gifted along with other woodsy chatter. It was a wondrous way to get a restful night. Dawn brought an early excitement to the new morning as the wooded areas came alive with activity, song as well as call among the birds I'd begun to regard as my special friends. This spring and summer have connected me with those early years of observation and listening.

Read the entire column on the CCCA website: <https://www.comalconservation.org/birds.html>

AND you may read Frank's previous columns as well as those written by Ernie Wittwer on our website: <https://www.comalconservation.org/hz-monthly-columns.html>

NEWS COMING SOON TO YOUR INBOX

Our inaugural CCCA Advisory Board is taking shape and includes a mix of local and regional experts in conservation, environmental issues and organizational effectiveness. We'll be publishing the list of members soon.

The new Sentinel Landscape Initiative for Camp Bullis, headed by the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG), has participation from federal, state and local organizations. Working to draft the specifics of a plan to preserve the natural working character of land around Camp Bullis, the group is meeting online. To get an idea of what a Sentinel Landscape can accomplish, click on this link to view a paper describing the Sentinel Landscape established in 2015 around Camp Ripley in Minnesota. <http://www.aacog.com/DocumentCenter/View/49659/Camp-Ripley-SL-Factsheet-2019-REPI?bidId=>

Stay safe, stay healthy, enjoy nature! See you next month.

<https://www.comalconservation.org/>

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