

H-Zapril24column THERE'S A NEW OAK IN LANDA PARK!

"Lizzie-the-live-oak" has taken her chosen space just over from the kiddie wading pool in Landa Park. "Lizzie" is placed by current and former board members of Comal Conservation in appreciation for the extraordinary efforts building and shaping a viable voice for conservation by former President Elizabeth Bowerman. Selecting a promising oak is a forceful statement about future intentions in conservation building upon the shoulders of founding citizens. Trees, trails, parks, acreage set aside in perpetuity will owe part of their existence to the voice for land, water and wildlife promoted by Comal Conservation. What a splendid manner of thanks with a long future of spirited message! Check out [comalconservation.org](http://comalconservation.org) for photos and information.

The OAK TREE has such a prominent place across our American landscape as well as beyond. Our Texas Hill Country live oaks, along with others in the oak family, express a vitality and persevering spirit that share multitudinous gifts. So many of our grand heritage oaks in the hills provide hospitality, sheltering cover, resting place and nourishment for a multitude of life. When I take some moments to pause, reflect and take in the natural gifts that surround us, I know we are blessed beyond measure. In looking about while still observant or quietly walking through some of the woods that surround our fortunate home setting, the listing of liveliness is beyond measure. From the crescendo of song and tweet of our many birds to the dart of a deer to find better cover to the slithering reptile of a striped or colorful lizard or snake on the hunt to the hawk perched high to observe, I consider myself so fortunate and cherish the same for so many, particularly the young.

In reflecting upon my decades of life adventures, I am aware that in most of the places I regard as important for me there is an oak with deep expansive roots and glorious reaching limbs. In each of these encounters the oaks in my memory stream provided me safe, comfortable space and inspiration while serving a far more generous purpose for so many before and since my own encounters. My most vivid early oak experience was on a hammock that hung between two heritage oaks. I went there intending to read but much of the time looked up and around observing the micro and sometimes frenzied liveliness in the sheltering and supporting oaks. I still would wish I had the devices to capture all the avian chatter and decode some of the communication exchanges. My awareness expanded to the tiny and larger critters and creatures to behold. I think I recall the first time a butterfly gently landed on a colorful shirt before pursuing more beneficial sources for nectar. Each oak along the way in decades of adventures and observations have added to the encyclopedic array of gifts which early on I accepted as for me as well as many others. When storms came and damaged one of the oaks, I grieved and pondered how life would bring healing and move on. May Lizzie the Landa oak become a source of inspiration, hospitality and shelter as she joins the array of Landa specimen.

Douglas Tallamy in his **The Nature of Oaks** notes, "Unfortunately, the diverse web of life that is associated with oaks goes unnoticed and thus unappreciated by most homeowners and even many trained biologists." Such leads to many dire consequences!

We of Comal Conservation invite you to lend a voice in setting aside precious parcels of Comal County while such acreage still thrives.

(Oh, yes! Be sure to gather to learn about our local ONE WATER efforts 16 April, 6 p.m. @ McKenna Center.)