



Conservation Insider

December 2021

Seasons Greetings, Friends, Partners and Volunteers!

With holiday time well underway, we find ourselves busy shopping for gifts and food, decorating our homes and planning meals. It's a time of year we look forward to with anticipation and love. It's also a time to give thanks to you - our friends, volunteers and partners. Together, we are making a difference and we appreciate your support!

The past few years have been challenging and we most likely have not seen the end to the pandemic or social and economic uncertainties. But, we have seen people here in Comal County in elected positions as well as staff and volunteer positions who are working tirelessly to make this home of ours, better and better. We thank them for their efforts and for continuing to work for us.

We wish you all - Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!

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"A true community is not just about being geographically close to someone or part of the same social web network. It's about feeling connected and responsible for what happens. Humanity is our ultimate community, and everyone plays a crucial role."

Yehuda Berg

CCCA NEWS

WE HAVE A NEW PARTNER: TEXAS HILL COUNTRY CONSERVATION NETWORK

CCCA is pleased to announce that we are now an official member of the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network. The group was started by Hill Country Alliance several years ago and has grown to over 20 members, including professionals and conservation nonprofits from across the 17-county region known as the Texas Hill Country. Formed to address the impact of increasing rates of land fragmentation and a rapidly growing population, the group seeks to create a regional conservation plan to prevent degradation of water quality and quantity and to preserve the regions scenic beauty and rural character.

Learn more at: <https://hillcountryalliance.org/network>

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Remember to look for us at the New Braunfels Farmers Market:

Saturday – Dec. 18 (9 AM to 1 PM)

Visit CCCA volunteers at our booth at the Farmers Market! We'll demonstrate how karst rock allows recharge of our aquifers, and share what's being done for conservation in Comal County, what still needs to be done, and what you can do to help. Please stop by and say "hi". Bring the whole family! We'll have a special holiday nature make-and-take activity for the kids and a free "KEEP COMAL WILD" sticker for your car or truck to show your support for conservation in Comal County.

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Looking for a way to help protect Nature? We have some ideas!

CCCA is looking for an experienced Development Coordinator or Grant Writer to assist with fundraising to support our work to preserve land, water, and wildlife in Comal County.

We're also looking for a Membership Coordinator who would welcome new members, update our "Friends of CCCA" list, design interest surveys and work with volunteers to help them find the spot that makes the best use of their skills and experience.

There is also a spot for a Communications Coordinator to share information among our various communication and social networking platforms.

We are also looking for interested volunteers to participate in our new Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workgroup to develop CCCA's efforts to engage with the full diversity of Comal County's individuals, groups and communities.

Interested candidates should submit their contact information and brief message at: www.comalconservation.org/donatecontact.html

SAVE THE DATE

Tuesday, January 11, 6:00 - 7:30 PM

CCCA's JANUARY 2022 VIRTUAL COMMUNITY PROGRAM

"FLOODING, CARBON, CLIMATE - OH MY!"

Ever wonder what we can do about flooding, carbon in the air, and climate? Debbie Reid will talk about how conserving land in a watershed can reduce downstream flooding and capture carbon from the atmosphere, thus helping avert the worst consequences of climate change. Healthy soils in parks, open spaces, and undisturbed natural areas can hold vast amounts of water and capture a remarkable amount of atmospheric carbon — just two of the many public benefits of keeping land in its healthy natural state. And we can do it right here!

WHO: Guest speaker, Deborah “Debbie” Reid, Technical Director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance

WHAT: Virtual Community Program on “Floods, Carbon, Climate — Oh My!”

WHEN: Tuesday, January 11, 2022, 6:00 -7:30 pm

WHERE: Click here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82566882187?pwd=dFo2NWxCQU41dnhSdXptZWdwYWtuUT09>

Meeting ID: 825 6688 2187

Passcode: 321755

Free to the public - More info at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/upcoming-events.html#Reid>

CCCA DECEMBER READS

WHAT WILL YOU BE GIVING? by Frank Dietz for the NB Herald-Zeitung

My early years included some special practices for our family holidays. Both at Thanksgiving and Christmas we reached out to share with others in special ways.

On Thanksgiving annually there was a mid-afternoon matinee of the Shrine Circus. That performance was reserved for folks with special needs, most of whom lived in care institutions. It was a time when orphanages housed children without families. There were many paralyzed victims of polio and other diseases who could not be adequately cared for at home with their families. Our family helped push wheelchairs and carry supply packs into the great arena. We were treated to some of the best seats in the theater where clowns and other featured performers came to visit with us. Our parents prepared small snack packs safe for those who had difficulty swallowing to share during the performance.

Both on Thanksgiving and Christmas we routinely had one or two places at our big home table for a person who would be alone. Our lives were blessed with these special folks beyond the immediate family circle. At Christmas such guests always had a special small package to open and take with them. Many of the folks with whom we had shared Thanksgiving got a special small stuffed animal as a companion for their holidays and into the New Year as well.

These early experiences helped “prime” my thinking about how secular and full of “things” our holidays have become. Black Friday, which probably should be “green” day,

and gift lists long and demanding never clicked for the season. It has led to a practice as our grandchildren are maturing to select special gifts in support of needy causes in their names. We have sought to match their interests with the gifts, though this year we're providing them a chance to choose the gift destination.

As the season of holy and holidays ensue, I would challenge you to consider such an alternative approach for some of your giving. In addition, I want to lift up a special opportunity represented in the Comal County Conservation Alliance's Land Fund. This fund serves to assist and enable setting aside precious green space in our rapidly developing Hill Country domicile. Such a gift would touch the lives of many generations to come with green acres, wildlife habitat as well as wholesome fresh air and water. Please continue reading at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/published-columns.html>

In Other News

YOUR HELP NEEDED IN REPORTING WINTER MONARCH SIGHTINGS

Last winter, volunteers from across the Southeast and Gulf states provided more than 5,800 observations of monarch butterflies. This winter, the partnership of universities, agencies and other organizations called Monarchs Overwintering in Southeastern States is requesting the public's continued involvement in reporting sightings.

The public is encouraged to report monarch sightings from Dec. 1-March 1 in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.

Observations are entered in Journey North's online data portal, where they are transformed into real-time mapping visualizations of monarch migration and breeding. Journey North is an organization designed to engage people across North America in tracking wildlife migration and seasonal change.

Learn more at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/wildlife-preservation.html#data>

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HUMMINGBIRDS ARE COOLER THAN ME

By: Maren McLaughlin-Klotz

Article featured in the 2021 Fall/Winter Texas Forever Magazine

Photos by: Yuhang Alan Zhou, TLC member

Every fall, nearly 1 billion birds pass through Texas during their fall migration. As this year's migration reaches its peak, it has been especially exciting to see an influx of hummingbirds as they dart between flowers, rapidly beat their tiny wings, and dazzle us with their beautiful colors. Every time I catch one in my front yard, drinking from the flowers in our Desert Willow, I am captivated by their very existence, while also a little impressed with myself that I caught sight before it fluttered off to its next destination.

Recently, a birder friend of mine casually mentioned that he got a new lens for his camera and had snapped a few pictures of hummingbirds. When he showed me the photos, taken just miles from my own home, I was blown away. I am so grateful that he agreed to let me share them with you. Read the article at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/birds.html#hummingbirds>

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NEW CANYON LAKE BOAT RAMP ALLIANCE OUTLINES NEXT STEPS AT COMMISSIONERS COURT

By Stephanie Johnson, *My Canyon Lake*, November 23, 2021

Six members of the Canyon Lake Boat Ramps Community Alliance (CLBRCA) submitted a proposal for addressing multiple issues at county-operated boat ramps to Comal County Judge Sherman Krause today. The group's three-page document — presented at Commissioners Court and now posted to the group's Facebook page — was drafted at Krause's request after a summer of meetings and public hearings failed to produce any consensus over proposed language changes in an agreement between Comal County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which owns and operates the lake.

CLBRCA is not recognized as an official partner in the information-gathering process, the alliance said. The county will lead and make all decisions about how to proceed over the next year.

Canyon Lake Pct. 1 Commissioner Donna Eccleston in June unwittingly kicked off the huge controversy by proposing the words "free public access" and "free public use" be removed from the agreement, resulting in a split from Canyon Lake's other commissioner, Jen Crownover, Pct. 4.

Crownover also is the driving force behind the Dam Community Alliance, another stakeholder group which partners with USACE to fund amenities and improvements to parks, and plans to take over the operation of North Park.

Although Eccleston said she was merely updating language, Crownover said she was asking for changes to a 1964 document without a plan in place, and Canyon Lake residents were angered about the possibility of losing free access to boat ramps.

With \$30.3 million of \$1.9 trillion in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal funding now headed to Comal County, according to [treasury.gov](https://www.treasury.gov), the stakes are even higher. Parks and recreation is a category included in the funding, although commissioners have not specified how much might be used to fix up boat ramps and add parking on land owned by USACE.

According to the Texas Association of Counties, counties will receive their allocation directly from the Treasury Department in two portions, or tranches: The first 50% started arriving in May, and the remaining 50% will arrive about 12 months later. Each county's allocation is based generally on its share of the U.S. population.

CLBRCA said it will seek meaningful solutions to long-festering problems at boat ramps, which were only meant to serve the small neighborhoods that sprang up around Canyon Lake starting in the 1960s yet are visited by thousands of visitors every day during summer months.

Comal County did not close boat ramps during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when thousands were desperate to find outdoor destinations to escape quarantine restrictions, making the summers of 2020 and 2021 even worse for Canyon Lake residents trying to live, work and enjoy the area's amenities themselves. Please continue reading at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/> or <https://mycanyonlake.com/new-canyon-lake-boat-ramp-alliance-outlines-next-steps-at-commissioners-court/>

Note: CLBRCA has proposed public meetings in early 2022. You may make your opinion known to your County Commissioner by email or by making a personal visit.

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For those last-minute gifts, remember that CCCA is on AmazonSmile – AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com and on phone apps. When you shop with AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same low prices, huge selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. You can choose from over one million organizations to support – we hope you'll choose CCCA and help save natural areas in Comal County.

AND... there is much more information about water, land and wildlife on our website!

Stay safe, stay healthy, enjoy nature! Happy Holidays.

Comal County Conservation Alliance

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

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