

H-ZMay2025column Water makes such a difference!

First, let me salute our local Herald-Zeitung journalists for a fine week of emphasis on the impacts of our severe drought and the increasing need for responsible water usage. The daily front page reporting has been timely and practical. Readers and their families have been made aware of what is happening along with some excellent suggestions for positive water usage.

On the day of this writing, the 25 of April, 2025, I took my regular morning walk from our yard to the roadside to place some recycling and trash while retrieving morning papers. Along the pathway through a wooded section, a herd of cattle was in the pasture that surrounds our yard. I noticed among the grazers both in the open areas and beneath the trees a large cow lying down. While I proceeded on to soon return, I discovered the delivery of a newborn calf had taken place. The calf wobbled then steadied to make contact for first new nourishment from its mom. That's always a holy moment when all goes well. A chorus of symphonic bird songs filled the high cover branches all about us. I wondered if rains will finally come to provide good grazing for this newcomer and its generation. Will the season provide hay for the in between times? All depends upon whether the drought that keeps deepening will finally break apart and we will get sustaining, nourishing rains for both surface needs and to seep into the aquifer recharge in this very acreage.

I spotted turkeys that had dropped to the ground to look as much like large stones if I didn't know better. Recently I observed what seems an effort by a fox to prepare a safe place for soon delivering kits in a hospitable tree base. So much liveliness, yet, I could not help but worry if sufficient rainfall will arrive to nourish and sustain the systems required to keep all of this life generation going.

Then I saw where some additional limbs had fallen from the recently dead elm on the woods' edge. It is one of several dozen such drought casualties among the hackberry and elm trees here at the ranch. The drought and possibly severe cold dips were just too much to sustain the lives even of some tenured trees. The agaritas did bloom early, but were nipped by several mornings of frost, generating a modest output for the birds that have begun settling in again. Both the mountain laurels and wild plums took a year off from producing blossoms. I have to assume this is the consequence of rainfall deprivation.

A further walk over to the historic and reliable tank indicates frightfully low water levels. In these circumstances the raccoons sometimes find a feast as fish run out of fresh waters and become oxygen deprived. I'll never forget in an earlier drought our grandson and his friend heading out early one morning just before school began with bait and poles ready for adventure. To my surprise they returned quickly with a horror story of one of those fish kill events that had come and horrified them. May we be spared that once again.

As more and more waters are being drawn for community supplies in our rapidly developing Comal County, what are the measures that will make some difference? While our legislature remains in session, will some policies for responsible water usage and oversight emerge?

Several opportunities to learn more about our water circumstances going forward are forthcoming. Watch for announcements and check comalconservation.org for dates and times.