

# Wildscape Update: Wildscape Outreach Gaining Momentum John Dycus



They're coming out of the woodwork (and the hedge and the cedar grove) to get a piece of the wildscape.

Impassioned volunteers, the only kind we have, con-

ducted three tours in three days — the largest accompanied walk-through ever undertaken at the wildscape — for all 300 polite, attentive students of Dallas Maynard Jackson Middle School. The Dallas Junior League awarded the school a grant to create a wildscape, and the teachers and students wanted to see the best around.

John Darling and Ann Mayo retooled the script so the information would parallel the lesson plans e-mailed from the teachers. Nancy Swan contributed to basic organization, and Ann Knudsen and Hester Schwarzer, captains of the wildscape outreach team, returned from vacation to participate. Ann completed planning for the big event overnight, quickly masterminding the schedules for

each of the volunteers who responded to short-notice calls for help.

Back at the keyboard, Grace Darling is applying for a Texas Parks and Wildlife grant to fund educational materials, transportation, and lunch for Title I students in the region to tour the wildscape. Outreach is the ultimate purpose of the wildscape, but expansion from its original half-acre to the present four acres has kept everyone too busy to be dirt docents, strolling about and pointing. Now that the wildscape includes all the ecosystems plus the rejuvenated erosion area, maybe it's time to get aggressive about showing it off.

Speaking of spreading the word, Ann Knudsen launched the first Saturday mini-workshop with a talk on making inexpensive rain barrels to catch water from our roofs. On May 3 Julia Burgen continued the series with tips on increasing your backyard bird populations. Mike Warren and his Tarrant County Juvenile Services crew partook of Julia's expertise after they mulched some wildscape trails. Longtime wildscape friend Suzanne

Tuttle, director of the Fort Worth Nature Center, will lead next month's first Saturday mini-class, June 7, on native plants.

The vandalized pond and creek areas will be restored shortly, and the original buffalo grass patch will be reconfigured into a much smaller lawn, in keeping with water conservation recommendations. The area behind the new, smaller turf lawn will be planted with super-drought-resistant native plants — red yucca, agarita, cenizo, black dalea, blackfoot daisy, calylophus, gayfeather, desert willow — that, once established, will need little supplemental water other than rainfall.

On May 17, 50 outstanding high school sophomores at the HOBY Leadership Conference at SMU will visit the wildscape, which was approved as a volunteer environmental project for them. Wildscape volunteers are looking forward to the opportunity to inspire these students to return to their communities and provide sorely needed environmental leadership.



*continued on page 5*