

HIGHLAND PARK WEST BALCONES AREA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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www.hpwbana.org

Little Free Libraries

Have you ever heard of a Little Free Library? It is a place where neighbors share their favorite literature and stories with a "take a book, leave a book" approach. And they are popping up around our neighborhood!

The Bells, Joe and Ellen, on Madrona Avenue recently built a Little Free Library. Mrs. Bell found a page in a catalog that offered little library boxes for purchase. Her husband Joe decided it would be easier and cheaper to build one himself using an old wooden beer case he already had in his woodworking studio.

"I looked some more on the internet and found a whole organization of people with these out in their yards," he said. "I figured that Austin, being a university town, should be in on giving books to people, so I finished off the box and put books in it that are just sitting around the house. "

Mr. Bell says that he thinks putting books out in the Little Free Library is more direct than giving them to Goodwill. He said that he was told that most books donated to Goodwill wind up being pulped for cardboard. The most popular books in the Bell's Little Free Library seem to be history books, cookbooks, and novels.

" I make it a policy to take any books that have been in the box for a couple of weeks to the public library Recycled Reads place over on Burnet Road," he says. "They seem to be able to get them into use and are always nice about getting books."

Over on Ridge Oak, Mark Stanford constructed a Little Free Library about a year ago. He got the idea when he traveled to Frankfurt and Berlin with his sons in 2010 and saw them there.

According to Mr. Stanford, the idea was popularized in Hudson, Wisconsin by Todd Bol, who mounted a wooden container on his lawn as a tribute to his mother, a book lover and school teacher. From there, the idea spread rapidly. The original vision was to build more than 2,150 Little Free Libraries, to equal the number of libraries founded by Andrew Carnegie. To date, over 15,000 Little



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NEWS

HPWBANA

(l to r) The Bell's Little Free Library on Madrona; Little Free Library on Ridge Oak.

Free Libraries have been built in all 50 states and over 40 countries.

Mr. Stanford was inspired by the achievements of Miss Lutie Stearns, a librarian who brought books to nearly 1,400 locations in Wisconsin between 1895 and 1914.

"And," he writes, "by my own elementary school librarian, Mrs. Neibald, glasses so thick, eyes like fish in a bowl, and absolute heart of gold."

How can neighbors get more involved with sharing books through the little libraries?

"First, and easiest," says Mr. Bell, "would be to take a book out of one of the Little Free Libraries. If they read it and like it, they can put it back in a different little library. And if they don't like it, they can take it to Recycled Reads. And finally, it isn't hard to cobble up a little house, paint it, and stick it out on the front curb."

For more information, visit littlefreelibrary.org — or one of your neighborhood Little Free Libraries!

Have we missed a Little Free Library in the neighborhood? Let us know at newsletter@hpwbana.org

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Austin Citywide Information Center. 974-2000 or 311
Emergency Police
Non-emergency Police (coyote sighting, etc.)
Social Services (during work hours)211
Wildlife Rescue 24 Hour Hot Line 210-698-1709
APD REP Officer Darrell Grayson 512-974-5242

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The HPWBANA Board meets on the third Monday of each month except December. Please go to HPWBANA.org for our current meeting location or contact president@HPWBANA.org.

HWPBANA is bordered on the north by 2222, on the south by 35th St., on the west by Mt. Bonnell Rd., and on the east by MoPac and by Bull Creek Rd. between Hancock Dr. and 45th St. Mail your membership dues to HPWBANA, P.O. Box 26101, Austin, Texas 78755

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New Mount Bonnell Monument Installed

Following November's ground breaking, the new granite monument commemorating the 75th anniversary of the 1939 Covert family gift of Mount Bonnell for use as a park was installed at the base of the stairs on Mount Bonnell Road on the 16th of December.

The monument, designed by O'Connell Robertson of Austin, is carved in the form of a north/south cross section of Mount Bonnell. The native Texas granite is from Marble Falls, and the general contractor supervising the fabrication and installation is Gilbert Beall of Beall Memorial Art of Austin. The entire project was funded by contributions from the Covert family.

The broken limestone marker on the summit dedicated to Frank Covert, Sr. in 1939 is being partially protected from further deterioration by a roofed wire cage. It is to be restored by direction of the City Historic Landmark Commission and supported by Preservation Austin with a \$25,000 restoration grant from the Texas Historical Commission and an additional \$25,000 provided by the city. No firm schedule for restoration has been established by the city.

The West Point Society continues to work with PARD, APW and O'Connell Robertson to finalize plans to enhance the viewing area atop the peak (see below). Already approved in concept by the Historic Landmark Commission, they include removing the outermost row of seven view obstructing pillars, cantilevering the trellis covering on the remaining inner pillars, and significantly extending the viewing platform. Major fundraising efforts to support this project will begin in 2015, following this month's installation of the new commemorative marker.

As always, the Austin Parks Foundation's Friends of Mount Bonnell fiduciary account gratefully accepts contributions to support these and other planned improvements as well as our quarterly park clean-ups. Contributions may be by check made out to Austin Parks Foundation, with "Mt. Bonnell/Covert Park" indicated on the memo line, and sent to Austin Parks Foundation, 507 Calles Street, Ste. 116, Austin, Texas 78702, or by going online to the secure site at https://www.austinparks.org/adopter-donations.html, checking the block near the top of the second column labeled "Mount Bonnell/ Covert Park, Friends of", entering the contribution amount, and completing the information below.



(l to r) Rendering of the current pergola with pillars at Mount Bonnell; Rendering of the planned view enhancement at Mount Bonnell.

JANUARY 2015 THE SMITH TEAM Smart. Service. Sold.



We expect great things for our neighborhood in 2015. For starters.... Mopac construction is over 50% complete! The Mopac Man recently told us to expect these activities in early 2015:

- Pour decks to expand 45th St. bridge and build retaining walls along southbound MoPac at 45th St. for roadway base material to widen MoPac as it crosses the southbound bridge. The same in the northbound direction, however retaining wall construction isn't necessary.
- At the request of local residents, the Mobility Authority agreed to widen the southbound exit ramp at 45th Street.

Making New Year's Resolutions?

Read Gary Keller's best selling book, THE ONE THING! Learn to focus on the ONE THING that will bring you results.

Want the book? Be one of the first 10 people to email us a request for a complimentary copy at Jennifer@smartservicesold.com.

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We can help you!

JANUARY EVENTS 1/1-30 - Fly Girls of WWII **Bullock Texas State History Museum**

HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS Are you a new homeowner and need help

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Tip from THE ONE THING:

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Highland Park West Balcones Area

JANUARY NATURE NOTES Austin's Parakeets

By Peter English

I am getting lots of questions these days about the green parakeets that are all over Austin. They are Monk Parakeets, sometimes called Quaker Parakeets, and it seems like there are more of them everyday...because there are. Let me share my story about how these little guys ended up in Austin.

Way back when I was a kid, there was a whole row of RV Parks along Barton Springs road near Zilker Park (they started back when the area was the outskirts of town - a 1925 map of Austin shows Barton Springs as "Free Tourist Camp"). In the 1970s, the RV parks were full of all manner of eccentric people and one of my favorites was the lady who had tons and tons of birds, most of which were parrots in cages all around the outside of her trailer. Every year some of her parrots would inevitably escape and every year or two in the the winter they would freeze when the really cold weather came. Most parrots are from warm places and can't take cold weather. But a few species of parrots are from cold places, and those are the ones that can live through the Austin winters.

Monk Parakeets come from central and southern South America, so they evolved in approximately the same latitudes and weather as the U. S. In the late 60s and early 70s, it was still acceptable to catch and import wild parrots, so most of the "pets" at that time were actually wild animals. The Austin Monk Parakeets originally escaped in the early 1970s, so were from that early batch of wild birds, not captive-bred birds like almost all parrots in the U. S. today. Captivebred birds have a hard time surviving in the wild. In other cities (like Dallas) parakeets escaped from the airport quarantine stations, but that is not what happened in Austin - if you hear that airport story it is a conflation with the Dallas parakeet population. There is also a story kicking around that a woman named Janet Giles released 19 parakeets on purpose in 1991, but the birds were already in Austin for 20 years before that happened.



The "free tourist camp" at Barton Springs where Austin's parakeets were originally released.



Monk Parakeet

The Austin birds escaped very near the downtown YMCA, which is lucky for them. Monk Parakeets build individual stick nests in a group with up to 30 other pairs so the resulting mass of nests looks like a giant pile of sticks. In their native habitats, they build the nests in tall trees. This preference for putting their nests in trees is what kept the parakeet numbers in check for a couple of decades - the Texas trees just wouldn't cut it. For whatever reason, the fields at Lamar and 1st Street had the perfect wooden light poles, and that was initially the only place the parakeets would nest. They later expanded north to the Intramural Fields near 45th and Lamar, which at the time also had those same wooden light poles. For decades that was mostly where the parakeets lived - surveys of the Austin parakeet population in 90s showed only about 250 Monk Parakeets living in Austin.

Then one day it happened: a parakeet landed on a cell tower and liked it. Nesting locations are often a constraint on bird populations. Oddly, the preference for wooden poles with cross members at the top was the constraint for Monk Parakeets in Austin. It is my personal belief that the cell tower-like light fixtures at Intramural Fields are what taught the parakeets to try nesting on metal structures, but who knows? Once they discovered cell towers, the population began the current era of explosive growth. No one is officially studying the spread of Monk Parakeets in Austin, but there are several attempts to map nesting sites in limited portions of the city. These attempts have found over 100 nesting locations some hosting up to 30 pairs of parakeets. There are likely far more than 100 nesting locations and the population is growing at an exponential rate – probably approaching 10,000 parakeets soon.

Monk Parakeets are now all over Austin. There are still piles of them at their Intramural Fields "homeland," but they are now in every area of the city. They are particularly easy to find along the Burnet Road corridor (look at the cell tower behind the Frisco) and have recently moved over near the HEB on Far West. If you hear a squawk, look up and you'll probably see 12" long green birds with pointy tails flying in a group of 3-8 bird. That's the parakeets!

WHERE'S THE MONEY?

By Rebecca Wolfe Spratlin

If you haven't been in the real estate market for a while, you may not be familiar with the process buyers use to purchase residential real estate here in Austin. A key component needed when making an offer on a property is a Mortgage Pre-Approval letter and/or a Proof-of-Funds.

The Pre-Approval letter is a letter from the lender of a buyer in a residential real estate transaction. This letter contains information stating that the buyer is pre-qualified for the mortgage needed to purchase a selected property. Each lender has its own underwriting criteria, but in most cases they review their past relationships with the buyer and may require the past two years of tax returns and/or information about employment, income and debt. In some cases, they pull the buyer's credit report. This is a very preliminary view of the creditworthiness of the buyer.

Proof-of-Funds is a document prepared by a buyer's financial institution, such as his bank or investment broker. It provides proof that a buyer has the funds necessary to make the cash down-payment, and in the case of a cash sale, the document provides proof that the buyer has the cash available to complete the transaction.

The pre-approval letter and/or the proof-offunds are submitted to a seller, along with the initial offer, to buy a residential property. Sellers usually require this information so they have some assurances that, if they agree to enter into a sale contract with a buyer, that buyer has the financial resources necessary to close the transaction.

The pre-approval letter does not mean that the buyer has for certain qualified for a mortgage in the amount of one needed to buy a specific property...but it does indicate that the buyer is likely to qualify. The mortgage company or bank will start their full underwriting process once a contract for sale is signed by all parties.

Before you even start looking for a property to buy, speak to your lender and/or your investment broker to have a letters prepared and readily accessible in the event you find a property on which you will want to make an offer. Most Austin mortgage lenders are aware of the need for this letter and can make the process very simple.





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New board member Noel Stout



At the November Meeting, the Board appointed HPWBANA neighbor Noel Stout to a vacant position on the Board. Welcome to the Board, Noel! He can be reached by writing to board@ hpwbana.org

Noel and his wife, Tillery, have lived in the neighborhood since 2012. Noel grew up in Austin before moving away to attend college and law school. Noel and his wife returned to Austin in 2005 and they have two children,

Finn (4) and Cade (2). He is an attorney with Almanza, Blackburn & Dickie, LLP and his practice includes real estate, probate and estate planning. Noel's interest in the board includes assisting with planning neighborhood events and neighborhood preservation.



Movie in the Park Planning has Begun!

The annual HPWBANA Movie in the Park is a popular event with neighbors and their families. The next Movie in the Park will take place this Spring, and the Board is looking for potential volunteers to help with planning and fundraising for the event. If you'd like to get involved, or have suggestions, please email events@hpwbana.org.

HPWBANA Board Meeting Time Change

At the November HPWBANA Board meeting, among other business, the Board decided to change the monthly Board meeting day from the third Monday of each month to the first Monday.

Board meetings take place at the Yarborough Library meeting room from 7:00pm - 8:30pm, and will now happen on the first Monday of each month. The meeting schedule for 2015 is:

January 5 February 2

• May 4 • June 1 September 7October 5

- March 2
- April 6

- November 2
- December 7

Put them on your calendar and plan to attend! These meetings are a great opportunity to meet your Board members and to get involved with neighborhood activities. Additionally, the agenda contains space for community members to address the Board each month. If you would like to address the Board or get on the agenda, please email president@hpwbana.org

• July 6

• August 3



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High School and Middle School Youth are invited to TEDxYouthAustin

TEDxYouth is an annual forum created to bring youths into the **TEDx** movement. A group of youth speakers, adult speakers and performers will come together to share their "ideas worth spreading."

Explore this year's theme: (in)visible *"engaging stories, inspiring performances, and intriguing presentations"*

When: February 14, 2015 Where: Westlake High school Registration: FREE. Register Now! Find Out More: www.tedxyouthaustin.com

Facebook: TEDxYouthAustin | Twitter: @TEDxYouthAustin | Youtube: http://goo.gl.kwzQPi

(in)visible

Hidden meaning discovered. Risk and faith intertwined. The power of fresh light. The courage of a declaration. The safety of anonymity when breaking new ground.

Welcome to (in)visible.

Our 2015 experience will celebrate what it means to make the invisible visible (... or not) as we strive to design a unique environment where brave ideas transform from timid whispers in the back of one mind to inspiring roars in the minds of many. Where important issues are exposed and preconceived notions thrown to the wayside. And exciting new connections become inevitable as we delve into the unknown of ourselves and the potential lying in wait all around us.

This is what (in)visible means to us in this moment, but what will it mean when our hard work has illuminated so much more? What will you discover? We can't wait to dive in together on Feb 14th. Nika Torabi, CPHS Ambassador

Rebecca Spratlin's Current Listings



3409 Monte Vista

Balcones Park \$1,650,000



3904 Jefferson Street

\$535,000



Ridgelea

17409 Rush Pea Circle Rocky Creek Ranch \$548,000



TEXAS A&M GRILIFE EXTENSION

FRUIT FLIES

by Wizzie Brown

Fruit flies can become a problem at any time of year because they are attracted to ripe or fermenting fruit. Fruit flies can be brought into the home from ripe fruits or vegetables picked from the garden or items purchased at the grocery store.

Adults are small (about 1/8 of an inch) and usually have red eyes. The front portion of the body is tan while the back portion is dark brown or black. If given the opportunity, females can lay up to 500 eggs. Larvae feed near the surface of fermenting foods or other organic matter.

Prevention is the best way to deal with fruit flies. Do not purchase over-ripened fruit or vegetables. Fruit and

vegetables should be eaten in a timely manner or stored in the refrigerator. If storage in the refrigerator is not an option because you are ripening the item, place it in a paper bag and use a clothespin or chip clip to close the bag. All recyclables should be rinsed thoroughly



before placing them into the recycling bin. The recycling bin and garbage can should be cleaned out on a regular basis to eliminate any spilled material.

To eliminate a fruit fly infestation, all sources must be located and eliminated. Insecticides will not help if sources are not eliminated. While searching and eliminating breeding sources, a trap can be constructed to capture adult flies. Create a paper funnel by rolling notebook paper and place the funnel into a jar that contains a small amount of apple cider vinegar in the bottom.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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Amanda N. Cooper, M.D.



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