

## dallas sierra club news

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### Welcome to the Dallas Sierra Club's New Email Newsletter

Due to ever increasing printing and postage costs, the Executive Committee of the Dallas Sierra Club decided to end publication of our paper newsletter, *The Compass*, after the May-June issue. In its place, we will be publishing this monthly email newsletter. We hope you enjoy our second issue.

### Notes From The Chair

#### Dallas Sierra Club Plans for the Future While Celebrating the Past

As all of you know, the Club has taken the first major step toward streamlining its communication abilities by switching to an electronic newsletter while still using regular mail for special events and announcements.

On September 27, 2009, the Dallas Sierra Club will join conservationist all over the country to celebrate the glorious past of our National Park System known as "Americas Best Idea". The club is planning a watch party of the first episode of Ken Burns- 12 part series on the National Parks. Of special interest, the voice of John Muir in the series is our very own friend, Lee Stetson, whose stirring portrayal of John Muir in performances in Dallas, Yosemite National Park, and all over the country have brought the message of conservation and protection to thousands of future "environmentalist".

So mark your calendar for Sept. 27, 2009 and watch our website as well as this newsletter for details so all of us can pay tribute to these great parks while preparing to lead the next generation of protectors of "Americas Best Idea".

Your Chair, Wendel Withrow

**Sierra Club General Meeting** - Tuesday, August 11 at 7 pm

## Not Yet Famous Author to Speak at August Meeting

After two years of on-site research and 35 years of wandering the back roads of Texas, Author and current Dallas Chair Wendel Withrow, will discuss his recently published book entitled: The Best in Tent Camping - Texas. With a sub-title of "A Guide for Car Campers Who Hate Rvs, Concrete Slabs and Loud Portable Stereos." the author will discuss and cuss the necessary research and the rating system for the 50 best tent campgrounds in Texas. He will share photographs of some of his favorites and answer questions from the audience (sure to be large, of course).



After the program, the Not Yet Famous (not by a long shot) Author will sign books, sure to be collector-s items or perfect gifts for that favorite friend who is impossible to buy for.

Be sure to arrive early for free beer, wine and snacks to properly prepare the crowd for this exciting program and opportunity to purchase the book prior to hitting the local bookstore shelves.

The meeting starts at 7:00 pm, but come at 6:30 for snacks and refreshment while you visit with old friends and make new ones. Our volunteer leaders will be available to answer all of your questions about the Sierra Club and its many activities.

[Visit our website](#) for complete information about our General Meeting, including a map.

Also, mark your calendar for our September meeting on Sept. 8, when we will learn all about Sex in the Garden!

## Outings Highlights

### Advanced Backpacking Class, August 20

You've got a few local weekend backpacks under your belt; so you want to do more: a fly-drive or multi-night outing, or even try a cold weather trip. This class will cover advanced backpacking tips and skills including winter camping, fly-drive planning and equipment, bear barrel packing, and week-long trekking. Location: REI, 4515 LBJ Freeway, Farmers Branch, TX 75244 (north side of LBJ between Midway and Welch). This class will start promptly at 6:30 PM and will finish at about 8:45 PM. The fee for the class is \$15 for Sierra Club members and \$20 for non-members (cash or check). No reservations are necessary; just show up. For more information: [Laura Kimberly](#) 972-307-8364(H)

### Labor Day Bus Trip to the Weminuche Wilderness in Colorado, September 3-8

Escape the Texas heat this Labor Day weekend and join us for our trip to the cool Colorado mountains of the Weminuche Wilderness. This trip has mountains, lakes, streams, and valleys. Trips will range from car camping with day hikes to strenuous long hikes. The Weminuche Wilderness offers a great diversity and all the miles you want to hike. It is a hidden jewel and one of our most popular trips.



[Here are a few pictures](#) that will give you a hint of the wonderful scenery in the Weminuche. [Complete information is available here](#) (PDF file). To sign up, download and print the information file, fill in the forms, and send them with your check to the address provided.

### Young Sierrans Happy Hour/Dinner, August 12

Please join us for a Happy Hour/Dinner at Park on Wednesday, August 12th! Park is a casual restaurant and bar located in the lower Henderson neighborhood. Park-s kitchen strives to use local,

sustainable & organic products wherever possible and is “recycling” the restaurant-s kitchen scraps to local produce purveyor, Tom Spicer, for him to compost on his urban farm. Arrive anytime after 6:00 pm for happy hour; dinner at 7:00 pm. Please RSVP by noon on 8/12 to the Pingg invitation or the [youngsierrans@dallassierraclub.org](mailto:youngsierrans@dallassierraclub.org) email address so we have a rough estimate for seating. All 20s/30s welcome; you don-t have to be a Young Sierran or Sierra Club member to attend. See you there! \*\*Address: 1921 Henderson Avenue | Dallas, Texas 75206 | 214.824.3343 \*\* Contact: [Candace Weinberg](#)

For a complete list of our outings, [visit our outings page](#).

## The Outings Corner

### Zamberlans Go to Windmill Hill

by Mark Stein

New boots motivated me to discover a trail near Dallas where I might break them in. I was going to the White Mountains of New Mexico in a week and I didn-t want to arrive with boots fresh out of a box.

I loved my old boots, but the Vibram soles were approaching the texture of a snake-s belly. That hadn-t been a pleasant realization as I crab-walked down a slick rock ledge at Colorado Bend State Park weeks ago. I wore the old boots to an outings gear store, wherein my young saleswoman observed, “Your boots have some miles on them!” After I-d tried on almost every boot worthy of a serious backpacker, my patient young advisor urged me, “Try the Zamberlans.” Why not?

“Yes!” I exhaled, mentally pumping my arms in the air as I laced them. They might be top-of-the-line boots, I thought, but they-re perfect! I pictured a workshop in Vicenza where Italian craftsmen stitched boots like these to exacting standards. I read the sales pitch about Giuseppe Zamberlan and Vitale Bramani pioneering Vibram soles. I thought of my wife-s collection of Ferragamo shoes and reasoned, “Well, why would she fault me for buying good Italian boots?”

Now the challenge was finding a dirt trail where I could give the Zamberlans a workout before next week end. Fortunately, the Patroness of Ferragamo had given me a book for Christmas called, 60 Hikes within 60 Miles. I flipped its pages and discovered the Windmill Hill Preserve in DeSoto. It was near, it had no admission fee and, most importantly, trails were dirt and rock—no sidewalk hiking as at White Rock, the Katy Trail or Arbor Hills.

Finding the trailhead was easy. Head south from Dallas on I-35, then take US 67 to the exit at South Main Street in Duncanville. Turn left (south) onto South Main. After a half mile, there-s the trailhead and a small parking lot at the southeast corner of South Main and Wintergreen. The Windmill Hills Preserve is in DeSoto, exactly where DeSoto, Duncanville and Cedar Hill come together. The City of Desoto has a long-term lease on the property from Dallas County, which owns it. The park was dedicated in 1993.

Trails lead in two directions from the corner parking lot. An aerial photo displayed in the lot shows numerous short trails that lace this preserve of 70+/-acres. Trails have names like Bluebonnet, Eagle and Cotton, but my advice is to forget the names and just walk. A zealous Scout troop has buried stone markers with trail names, but you might need to do crayon rubbings on paper to read some of the worn engravings. You can-t get lost long here because the whole preserve is bounded by roads or alleys. If you follow the distant sounds of cars, you-ll find your way out.

I pursued the trail on my right and continued turning right at every junction, knowing I-d bump the perimeters of the preserve, but ultimately cover a large double loop. Sometimes that strategy led me

on short spur trails to gated yards of big homes backing up to the preserve, but my reward was always a discovery of somebody-s private access. The outermost trail loops cover a total distance of about two miles, but one can wander on connecting loops to add miles.

The prevalent vegetation in the Windmill Hill preserve is cedar, but with abundant deciduous trees. Trails are mostly shaded, but there are small clearings perfect for pitching tents. But, no, you may not camp here overnight. Some of the clearings feature prickly pears (with bright yellow blooms in May). Parts of the preserve appear to have been cleared for farm roads or structures years ago, but if so, the land went back to nature long ago. The cedars, the cacti and the limestone outcrops make this landscape look more like the Texas Hill Country than the Blackland Prairie or the Cross Timbers.

Those limestone outcrops make parts of the trails downright rocky. You get to use your thighs and calves a bit to climb some real inclines. Other trail segments are packed dirt—gray-white stuff, unlike the black dirt at my house. I was here the day after a hard rain, yet there was no mud. The variety of trail cross-sections impressed me: wide trails in dense trees, narrow trails with grass swaths on both sides and roller-coaster segments for trail bikers. But on the weekday I was here, I saw not a soul on the trails.

The Dallas Observer pronounced Windmill Hill the “Best Urban Hiking Trail” in the Metroplex in 2001, so don-t just accept my word that it-s a cool trail network. A sign in the parking lot says the preserve is maintained by Paul Dryer. I don-t know who Paul is, but he-s doing a fine job maintaining these trails.

I never found a windmill or remnant of one, only a poem about Windmill Hill on a marker in the parking lot. Neither did I see a hill, although I walked a lot of inclines. The one landmark in the park is a footbridge with signs marking it as the Stevie Ray Vaughan Crossing. That bridge near the middle of the park, crossing the Stewart Branch of Ten-Mile Creek, funnels all trails to itself, pinching them into two looping systems. I like any kind of public work named for an entertainer. It-s a refreshing break from features named for elected officials and highway engineers. This winter the Patroness of Ferragamos was sweet enough to humor me at walking to the Ray Charles Soul Center of the Universe Footbridge in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. So, duh, why wouldn-t I love a trail network that looks and feels on a good day like the Hill Country and where all trails lead to a Stevie Ray Vaughan memorial bridge?

And the Zamberlans lived up to my hopes and they got to go to New Mexico with a little bit of dirt and sweat on them.

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## Conservation

### Recycling News

by Rita Raccoon

#### Keep Drugs Out of the Water Supply

This issue I want to focus on a disposal problem that could seriously affect the environment, our drinking water and aquatic life.

Doctors, pharmacists, and until recently, the federal government, long advised patients to flush unused pharmaceuticals down the toilet. Then trace amounts of drugs began showing up in the nation's water supply.

Members of the AP National Investigative Team reviewed hundreds of scientific reports, analyzed federal drinking water databases, visited environmental study sites and treatment plants and

interviewed more than 230 officials, academics and scientists. They also surveyed the nation's 50 largest cities and a dozen other major water providers, as well as smaller community water providers in all 50 states.

Here are some of the key test results obtained by the AP:

- Officials in Philadelphia said testing there discovered 56 pharmaceuticals or byproducts in treated drinking water, including medicines for pain, infection, high cholesterol, asthma, epilepsy, mental illness and heart problems. Sixty-three pharmaceuticals or byproducts were found in the city's watersheds.
- Anti-epileptic and anti-anxiety medications were detected in a portion of the treated drinking water for 18.5 million people in Southern California.
- Researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey analyzed a Passaic Valley Water Commission drinking water treatment plant, which serves 850,000 people in Northern New Jersey, and found a metabolized angina medicine and the mood-stabilizing carbamazepine in drinking water.
- A sex hormone was detected in San Francisco's drinking water.
- The drinking water for Washington, D.C., and surrounding areas tested positive for six pharmaceuticals.
- Three medications, including an antibiotic, were found in drinking water supplied to Tucson.

Of the 28 major metropolitan areas where tests were performed on drinking water supplies, only Albuquerque; Austin, Texas; and Virginia Beach; said tests were negative. The drinking water in Dallas has been tested, but officials are awaiting results. Arlington, Texas, acknowledged that traces of a pharmaceutical were detected in its drinking water but cited post-9/11 security concerns in refusing to identify the drug.

#### PROBLEM SOLUTION

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy is now urging consumers to seek out "drug take-back programs" instead of flushing their pills. There are problems with controlled substances. Legislation introduced this year would require the Justice Department to develop simplified rules for take-back facilities. Check [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) or the programs listed on [http://www.takebacknetwork.com/local\\_efforts.html](http://www.takebacknetwork.com/local_efforts.html) for drug take-back programs. The City of Ft. Worth Environmental Center will take unused or expired medications. If you can't find a take-back program, mix your meds with an undesirable substance like coffee grounds or kitty litter, entombing them in sealed containers and throwing them in the trash.

#### **Sierra Club Roll Beyond Coal Bike Ride**

SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2009

Plans are afoot for the fabulous Sierra Club Roll Beyond Coal Bike Ride.

WHERE: White Rock Lake

WHEN: Saturday morning, October 31 (Halloween!)

WHY: To raise awareness in Texas to move beyond coal, to increase clean energy and green jobs, lower global warming emissions, clean up the air and to have fun outdoors.

WHO: YOU! This event is open to anyone who likes to bike and who likes to breathe clean air.

More information and registration link coming soon.

If you want to help with this event contact [lori.peniche@hotmail.com](mailto:lori.peniche@hotmail.com).

The *Dallas Sierra Club News* e-newsletter, sent monthly, keeps you up-to-date on meetings, activities, issues and special events.

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