



The HPWBANA News

Volume 7, Number 11

November 2011

www.hpwbana.org

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

For the last four years, I have been a member of the Highland Park West Balcones Area Neighborhood Association (HPWBANA) board. Like many other board members, I have worn many hats and worked on many issues. As a board member, you learn about the intricacies of City government and City ordinances and how to get problems solved. You achieve satisfaction supporting neighbors in their quest for information and action. And you meet a great group of people who care deeply about this neighborhood.

In October, I and three others will have ended our term as board members. We hope that a new group of neighbors will join the five current board members and work on behalf of this great neighborhood. It has been a privilege to work on behalf of our neighbors to make this a fun and safe neighborhood in which to live.

Thank you!

Andra Torres

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS IN AUSTIN

By Steve Sadowsky, City of Austin Preservation Officer

Austin's historic buildings and neighborhoods create the unique character and heritage of our city. In December 2004, the Austin City Council adopted an ordinance authorizing the establishment of local historic districts to recognize and protect those areas with particular historical significance to maintaining Austin's rich heritage.

Local historic districts provide several tools for preservation, starting with a greater appreciation and understanding of the development and history of a neighborhood and its buildings. Historic district nominations contain a detailed history of the district, an inventory, photograph, and history of every building in the district, and an evaluation of which buildings are contributing to the historic character of the district.

Local historic districts provide a higher "bar" for evaluating the demolition or relocation of important buildings in a neighborhood. Currently, the City Historic Preservation Office and the Historic Landmark Commission review applications for demolition or relocation permits to determine whether a building meets the criteria for designation as a historic landmark. The determination is made according to objective criteria, but designed to protect those buildings with exceptional significance to the city because of their architecture and historical associations. Buildings which are contributing to a local historic district may not qualify as individual historic landmarks. The establishment of local historic districts will help protect those properties which are significant to the neighborhood for their architecture ("contributing" to the historic character of the district) but which do not meet the high standards necessary for designation as a historic landmark.

Local historic districts also provide design standards for new construction within the district. The Historic Landmark Commission currently reviews applications for building permits within National Register Historic Districts, and provides recommendations to the property owner to make the new construction more compatible with the historic character of the district. While the Commission encourages the property owner to revise his or her plans to help preserve the historic character of the neighborhood, there is no requirement that the property owner do so. Local historic districts have mandatory design standards, which provide property owners and builders parameters for the design of new construction, as well as providing neighbors within the district a higher level of comfort knowing that new construction will be required to follow accepted design standards based upon the existing architecture within the district. District design standards are individually tailored to meet the needs of the particular district, and may address building materials, height limits, and setbacks for new construction within the district. Additions to contributing buildings and new construction require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Landmark Commission prior to receiving a building permit.

For those who fear that local historic districts will result in onerous burdens and long delays in approval of projects, rest assured that the Historic Landmark Commission meets every month (usually the fourth Monday of the month). As long as an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is filed in time to provide legal notice (generally 21 days in advance of the Landmark Commission

(Continued on Page 2)

Highland Park West Balcones Area

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Austin Citywide Information Center 974-2000 or 311
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David Obermann humbug@texas.net

The HPWBANA Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month except December at the Yarbrough Library on Hancock. Meetings are held from 7:00 – 8:45 p.m. All neighbors are invited to attend. www.hpwbana.org

HPWBANA 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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Local Historic Districts... - (Continued from Cover)

meeting), the Commission will hear and review a case the same month that the application is filed. The Commission has also formed a Certificate of Appropriateness Review Committee, which reviews proposed projects in an informal setting to help guide property owners and applicants in meeting the applicable design standards for the historic district and to promote a successful application. The Committee meets two weeks before the full Commission meeting, which allows time for an applicant to make any appropriate revisions to an application. The City Historic Preservation Office may approve minor projects which comport with the district design standards, such as one-story rear additions, rear decks and porches, and pools without a hearing before the Historic Landmark Commission, streamlining the process further.

Finally, local historic districts enable a new provision to provide a City property tax incentive for rehabilitating buildings within the district. The building must be contributing to the district to qualify for the incentive, or if it is non-contributing, the rehabilitation project must restore the building to contributing status by removing those unsympathetic architectural modifications which made the building non-contributing. An owner-occupant of a contributing or potentially contributing residential property must reinvest at least 25% of the value of the structure in “qualified rehabilitation expenditures”, with at least 5% of the value of the structure spent on exterior rehabilitation.

The Historic Landmark Commission will review rehabilitation proposals and certify the project upon completion, at which time the owner is eligible to receive a City property tax abatement on the added value of the project for 7 years. For example, if the owner of a \$100,000 house invests \$30,000 in rehabilitation work approved by the Landmark Commission and the value of the property jumped to \$150,000 after the completion of the project, the city property tax assessment would be “frozen” at the \$100,000 value of the house for 7 years. The owner of an income-producing contributing (or potentially contributing) property must re-invest at least 40% of the value of the structure, with at least 5% of the value of the structure in exterior rehabilitation to be eligible for a City property tax abatement on the added value of the project for 10 years.

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ANNUAL Holiday Fair Live & Silent Auction

North Austin Women's Connection would like to invite you to their annual Holiday Fair Live & Silent Auction Tuesday, November 8th from 11:30-1:00pm at the River Place Country Club, 4207 River Place Blvd, Austin. Get some great gifts for the holidays and help a great cause! Guest speaker, Carol Graves, author of children's books will speak about "What's Your Focus". Cost is \$15 payable at the door and includes lunch. Bidding begins at 10:30. For reservations, contact Nancy Gregor at 512-608-6686. Childcare available. Affiliated with Stonecroft Ministries.

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Nature Watch - The Fungus Among Us

by Jim and Lynne Weber

Frequently upstaged by the brightly colored autumn leaves and hidden among the leaf litter on the forest floor are several types of interesting fungi. Separated from the plant kingdom because they do not contain chlorophyll, fungi also do not make their own food through photosynthesis but obtain it by breaking down other organic matter and sometimes other plants. Mycology, from the Greek meaning 'fungus', is the branch of biology dedicated to the study of these organisms, and is most often associated with mushrooms.

While mushrooms are the most common form of fungi, some of the more interesting forms that occur in the fall after sufficient rains include puffballs, earthstars, earthballs, and bird's nests. These forms are grouped based on the shape of their fruiting body, or structure that produces the spores needed for reproduction.

Puffballs (*Lycoperdon pyriforme* and *perlatum*) and earthstars (*Geastrum saccatum*) are characterized by fruiting bodies that look like a small ball, unlike a mushroom have no stalk, and are normally found growing on wood or directly on the ground. They can range in size from small marbles to baseballs, with the spores produced inside. Once mature, the spongy inside darkens and dries to a fine powder, and the spores are emitted out of a hole on top of the ball.

Often found around the drip line of trees, this strategic placement serves the dual purpose of providing sufficient moisture until they are grown as well as sufficient force from the water droplets to act as a dispersal agent for the spores. When one translates the genus from Greek to English, 'lyco' meaning wolf and 'perdon' meaning to break wind, it isn't hard to guess that a common name for a puffball is wolf-fart!



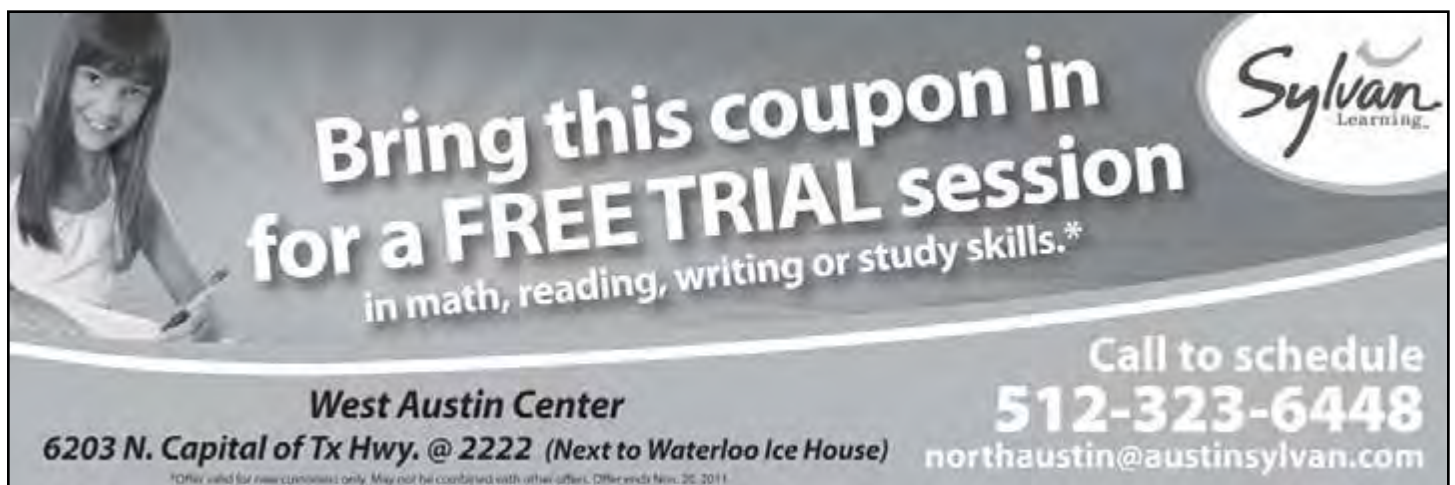
With a somewhat less flamboyant name but a more elaborate display, earthstars get their common name from their thicker outer membrane, which when fully developed splits into rays that curve backward to form a distinctly star-like structure.

Earthballs (*Astraeus hygrometricus*) are often found wholly or partly underground, and have a fruiting body that simulates a ball with a thick, rind-like skin. Their spores are produced in the center of the ball, but unlike earthstars, they are extruded not via a pore at the top but when the entire inner spore sac splits open. Often called a 'false earthstar' the outer rind of this fungus splits into seven to fifteen pointed rays that open when it rains or when humidity is high, and close again during drier periods. This repeated action relates to its species name, as if it were nature's hygrometer, measuring the changes in humidity.

Birds' nests fungi (*Cyathus stercoreus*) have fruiting bodies that resemble clusters of very small cup-shaped structures filled with tiny eggs. *Stercoreus* literally means 'growing on dung', and that is where you are most likely to find this fungi. Also commonly found on woody mulch, each cup is only large enough to hold a drop of water, and the egg-like structures which contain the spores, are delicately attached to the cup by a finely coiled thread. When splashed out of the cup by raindrops, this thread-like structure uncoils, catches on to a chip of wood, blade of grass, or other organic matter, and the 'egg' splits open to release the spores inside.

The next time you take a walk in the woods to admire the colors and changes that define the fall, don't forget to look down at your feet, where you can discover the smaller mysteries of the forest, and appreciate its beauty from the ground up!

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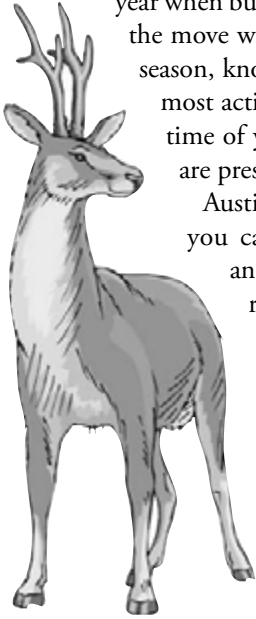


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Highland Park West Balcones Area

DEER SEASON IS HERE

Submitted by Robin Abbott



November through December is deer season in Texas. It is the best deer-watching season of the year. Late fall is the time of year when bucks have grown their antlers and fawns are on the move with their mothers. It is also the deer-mating season, known as the "rut." During this season deer are most active and more likely to run and bolt, so it is a time of year to use extra caution in areas where deer are present.

Austin is one of very few large cities in Texas where you can still experience urban deer. Northwest and southwest Austin are home to most of our remaining neighborhood herds. Many area residents enjoy the deer's charismatic presence and quiet beauty. Young parents report finding teachable moments in watching does care for their fawns, while for seniors interaction with the deer can be life affirming. Others simply value the opportunity to observe wildlife living freely as they go about such daily business as walking the dog or driving to work.

DeerAustin is a group of Austin neighbors and animal lovers who are committed to living compatibly with urban wildlife and especially to protecting and preserving Austin's urban deer herds. Visit us at www.DeerAustin.org. We are providing the following information that is helpful to keep in mind during deer season:

- Always walk dogs on leashes.
- Observe the speed limit.
- Be extra cautious when deer or deer crossing signs are present and when driving from dusk to dawn.

To report an injured deer, call the Game Warden at 389-4848 or Austin 311. To report a dead deer for pickup, call Austin 311. Be prepared to give the operator an address or otherwise be able to describe the location of the deer (for example, "Loop 360 just north of Spicewood" or "the intersection of Mesa and Greystone"). If you need additional help – email admin@DeerAustin.org.

We hope you enjoy the fall season and the opportunity to interact with deer that is a part of what makes Austin a special place to live. Please take care, enjoy the wildlife, and Keep Austin Deered!

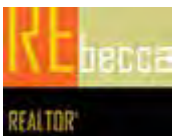


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DATES

- **Wednesday, November 16, 2011**, Annual "Cornucopia of Creative Arts" features arts and crafts created, displayed and for sale by members of Austin Newcomers Club. The luncheon speaker will be Matt Hoggle, Assistant Director of the Art School at Laguna Gloria. The Art School presents an array of art experiences in the fun, informal, and collaborative spirit of Austin. Reservations are required by: November 9th.

- **Wednesday, December 7th**, seasonal music will be performed by the choir of the Fine Arts Academy (FAA) at McCallum High School, directed by Malcolm Nelson. The FAA provides a program for students across Austin to pursue an accelerated arts curriculum as fine art majors. In 2009 the orchestra and choir performed together at Carnegie Hall. Reservations are required by: November 30th.

TIME

11 a.m. Social Hour, Luncheon begins at noon

- For Luncheon Reservations -

Email: LuncheonDirector@AustinNewcomers.com or contact Dotti Thoms, New Member Services, at (512) 314-5100.

For more information visit the website at: www.AustinNewcomers.com

Pet Leash Law

This is a reminder that City of Austin Code (Chapter 3-4) requires you to have your pets on a leash when you are out and about in the neighborhood, including non-fenced areas of your own yard.

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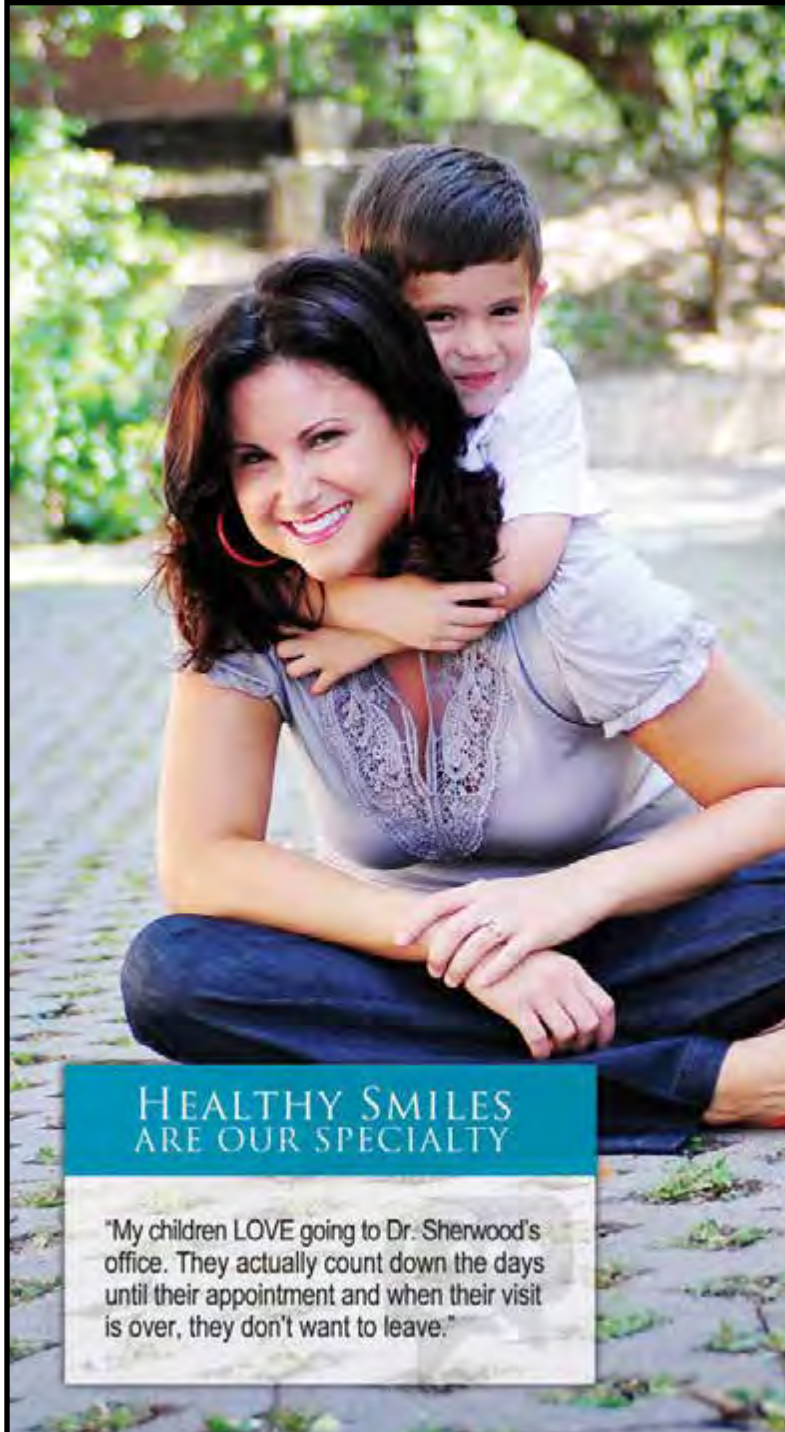


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