

# Canyon Creek CHRONICLE

SEPTEMBER 2014

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 9

## A Focus on Backpack Safety Tips for Your Family

By: Concentra Urgent Care

### WEAR BOTH STRAPS

The use of one strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By using two shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is evenly distributed. Wear the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles. Pay close attention to the way the backpack is positioned on the back. It should rest evenly in the middle of the back. Shoulder straps should be adjusted to allow the child to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty and allow free movement of the arms. Straps should not be too loose, and the backpack should not extend below the low back.

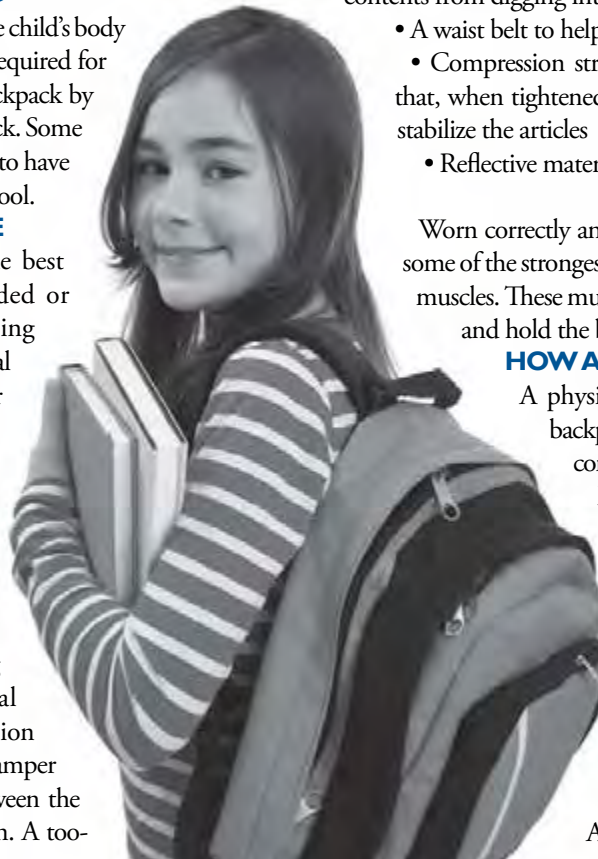
### LIGHTEN THE LOAD

Keep the load at 10%-15% or less of the child's body weight. Carry only those items that are required for the day. Organize the contents of the backpack by placing the heaviest items closest to the back. Some students have two sets of books, so as not to have to carry the heavy books to and from school.

### PROPER BACKPACK USAGE

While a backpack is still one of the best ways to tote homework, an overloaded or improperly worn backpack gets a failing grade, according to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Improper backpack use can cause injury, especially to children with young, growing muscles and joints.

Injury can occur when a child, in trying to adapt to a heavy load, uses harmful postures such as arching the back, leaning forward or, if only one strap is used, leaning to one side. According to physical therapists, these postural adaptations can cause spinal compression and/or improper alignment, and may hamper the proper functioning of the disks between the vertebrae that provide a shock absorption. A too-



heavy load also causes muscles and soft tissues of the back to work harder, leading to strain and fatigue. This leaves the back more vulnerable to injury. A heavy load may also cause stress or compression to the shoulders and arms. When nerves are compressed, the child may experience tingling or numbness in the arms.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BACKPACK

Physical therapists recommend the following features when selecting a backpack:

- A padded back to reduce pressure on the back and prevent the pack's contents from digging into the child's back
- A waist belt to help distribute some of the load to the pelvis
- Compression straps on the sides or bottom of the backpack that, when tightened, compress the contents of the backpack and stabilize the articles
- Reflective material so that the child is visible to drivers at night

### THE RESULTS

Worn correctly and not overloaded, a backpack is supported by some of the strongest muscles in the body: the back and abdominal muscles. These muscle groups work together to stabilize the trunk and hold the body in proper postural alignment.

### HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

A physical therapist can help you choose a proper backpack and fit it specifically to your child. Children come in all shapes and sizes, and some have physical limitations that require special adaptations. Additionally, a physical therapist can help improve posture problems, correct muscle imbalances, and treat pain that can result from improper backpack use. Physical therapists can also design individualized fitness programs to help children get strong and stay strong – and carry their own loads.

For more information on backpack safety, visit the American Physical Therapy Association at [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org).

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# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

## CICADA KILLERS

Large wasps flying low over the lawn can be a common, and sometimes frightening, sight at this time of year. Things can get alarming when those wasps become territorial and fly around your head until you leave the area. These wasps are usually accompanied by holes in the yard or flower beds that are surrounded by small piles of dirt. The wasps are cicada killers and aren't anything to panic over.

Cicada killers are about 1 ½ inches long with a reddish-brown head and thorax and an abdomen that is black with yellow markings. Wings have a rusty tinge. The males can be aggressive and buzz near people, but males are unable to sting. Females are capable of stinging but are rarely aggressive towards humans or animals.

Females dig burrows in the ground and use these burrows as nesting areas. Females sting and paralyze cicadas, take them back to the burrow and then lay an egg upon it. When the egg hatches, the larvae feed upon the cicada provided.

Cicada killers usually do not warrant any control methods. They are actually beneficial insects that help to reduce populations of cicadas. If you feel that you must do something to manage them, you can sprinkle insecticidal dust around the opening of the burrow.

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



Fig. 1. Hole created by a cicada killer.



Fig. 2. Cicada killer.

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## INJURY PREVENTION IN YOUNG ATHLETES

By Brett Neilson and Mike McTague | Doctors of Physical Therapy | Orthopedic Certified Specialists

As another fall sports season approaches, a major goal of the coaches, trainers, and parents is keeping the athletes healthy and contributing to their respective sports. However, injury is inevitable and part of the game. Pediatric athletes present with a variety of injuries, the most common being the overuse type like Osgood-Schlatter disease and stress fractures. These injuries occur due to excessive stress placed on bone, muscle and tendon tissue that are constantly growing and not always at the same rate. Risk factors for these injuries include asymmetry in joint flexibility/mobility and muscle strength, impaired balance, training and recovery errors, and previous injury. There is potential for many overuse injuries to be prevented by knowing and following a few simple principles.

Pre-participation physical exams can be helpful for identifying many of the risk factors mentioned previously. It is recommended that these exams should include at minimum an assessment of joint mobility and flexibility and muscle strength and flexibility, as well as a thorough review of the past medical history to determine if the student is even appropriate for athletics. Recently, functional screening tools have been developed to reveal asymmetries and imbalances during basic movement patterns that are the foundation for many of the movements required during sport.

Training and conditioning play a major role in injury prevention as well. The term “cultural deconditioning” has been coined recently to describe the decrease in physical activity in our youth that has coincided with an increase in video game

and computer use. So when the offseason ends and it's time to get out and enjoy the 105 degree Texas heat, the body is not ready to stand up to the stresses suddenly placed on the body. A way to combat this is to promote an active, healthy lifestyle by putting down the Xbox controller and spending more time outside, taking part in offseason conditioning camps, or participating in local fitness classes.

A guideline known as the “10% rule” has also been developed to allow student athletes to transition back into sports activities. The idea is that the amount of training time, distance, repetitions, or load should not be increased by greater than 10% per week. For example, if a student is running 10 miles per week, they should not run more than 11 miles in the following week.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of overuse injuries is paramount. They are all too often written off as “growing pains” and are allowed to increase in severity, resulting in extensive time away from sport during the recovery process. Common signs and symptoms include pain that is persistent in nature, takes longer than usual to resolve, visible swelling, tenderness that can be localized to one area, and/or require interruption of normal athletic activities.

Finally, having an open-line of communication between the coaches, trainers, other health care professionals, parents, and athletes is imperative in injury prevention. Lack of or inconsistencies in the transfer of information between any of these parties can result in delayed access to proper prevention or treatment techniques and keep the athlete from performing at the highest possible level.

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# TENNIS TIPS



By USPTA/PTR Master Professional  
**Fernando Velasco**



## The Modern Game: the swinging forehand approach shot or volley

In previous newsletters, I offered tips on how to execute the basic strokes for players who are just beginning to play tennis or who want to resume playing.

I am now offering suggestions on how to play the “modern” game mostly geared towards players who are happy with hitting the ball over the net and controlling the point with consistency. These players may be already playing for leagues or in tournaments and are looking for more “weapons” on the court.

In this issue, I will offer instructions on how to execute “The Swinging Forehand Approach Shot or Volley.” This shot is used when an opponent hits a soft shot that is floating high on the service line area. The player will take advantage and will hit the ball on the fly with a huge swing, thus hitting with top spin high over the net and hit with power. When the ball hits the court, it will take a big hop, forcing the opponent to fall back close to the fence, or to hit the ball on the rise. This shot can be used as a “winner” or as an “approach shot.”

In the illustrations, Ryker Heller, one of the top players of the Grey Rock Tennis Academy, shows the proper technique to execute this stroke. Ryker is coached by the Director of the Tennis Academy, Darin Pleasant.

**Step 1: The Back Swing:** When Ryker sees the opportunity, he makes a quick turn of his upper body and takes the racket high and

back. The head of the racket is now at shoulder height, his shoulders are turned, the right hand gripping the racket and arm in front. His weight is on the front foot as his momentum carries him forward to attack the ball. His right wrist is “laid back” to allow maximum point of contact.

**Step 2: The Point of Contact:** The success of a top spin shot is keeping the ball on the strings going from low to high in a 30 degree angle and accelerating the racket head around the outside of the ball. Ryker started the swing high and “looped” it to allow the head of the racket to drop down. He will be brushing around the outside of the ball as he makes contact with it. His left shoulder is almost opening and his weight has is moving through the shot.

**Step 3: The Follow Through:** In order to get maximum control and power, Ryker is keeping his right arm extended through the shot. He has “snapped” his right wrist and has the head of the racket facing down. His weight is going forward.

**Step 4: The Finish:** Ryker’s upper body acceleration forced the head of the racket to “wrap around” his left shoulder, thus creating the most power and topspin on the ball. His legs are already in position to move forward the net for a volley. His right foot should naturally move forward due to his momentum and racket speed. From his looks, he apparently hit a very deep volley for a winner.

*Look in the next Newsletter for: “The Modern Game: The Swinging Backhand Volley”*

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

1. Canned meat brand
5. Recommend
9. Volcanic rock
10. Strength
11. Consumer
12. Refastens
13. Mire
15. Flurry
16. Remove a light bulb
18. Easier to get at
21. Frosty
22. Pretended
26. Spring flower
28. Basic's opposite
29. Buddy
30. Sliding toy
31. Ball player \_\_ Aaron
32. Food

### DOWN

1. Ghetto
2. El \_\_ (Texas city)
3. Maintain
4. Plunder
5. Vase
6. Measuring instrument
7. Point
8. Render capable
10. Public transportation vehicles
14. Short-tempered
17. Put a fold in
18. Catch a ride
19. Sporty car brand
20. Synthetic fiber
23. Ca. University
24. Abstain from certain foods
25. Chances of winning
27. Writing liquid

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# Nature Watch

by Jim and  
Lynne Weber

## Resident Raptors

Raptors, or birds of prey such as eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls, are often birds that migrate in the spring and fall, but there are some species that remain in central Texas year round. The most common are the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), and Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*).

The most common hawk in North America, red-tailed hawks are often seen soaring above open fields or perched on highway utility poles eyes fixed on the ground to catch the movement of any potential prey. Most red-tailed hawks are rich brown above and pale below, with broad, rounded wings and a short, wide tail. On mature adults, the tail is pale below and cinnamon-red above, and on young birds, the tail is alternating bands of brown and cream. These hawks often have a streaked belly and on the underside of their wings, a dark bar extending from shoulder to wrist. Red-tails can be deceiving, however, as they can exhibit a wide variety of plumages.

Red-tailed hawks are amazingly adapted for life in the air. While one of the largest birds you'll ever see at up to 19 inches long with a wingspan topping out at 42 inches, the biggest females weigh in at only 3 pounds. When courting, these raptors put on an amazing aerial display, in which they soar in wide circles at a great height. The male will repeatedly dive steeply then shoot up again, and as he approaches the female from above, he will extend his legs and touch her briefly. When their talons clasp, they plummet in spirals toward the ground before pulling away. Usually mating for life, red-tailed hawks have been seen hunting as a pair, guarding opposite sides of the same tree to catch squirrels.

Another common hawk in our area is the Red-shouldered Hawk, which is a medium-sized hawk that prefers riparian habitats over open fields. It has barred reddish-peachy underparts and a strongly black and white banded tail, with reddish shoulders and wing linings. In flight, these raptors can be identified by the pale crescent near their wingtips. Considered a hawk of the forest, this bird frequents creeks, rivers, and swamps, and hunts prey ranging from mice to frogs and snakes.

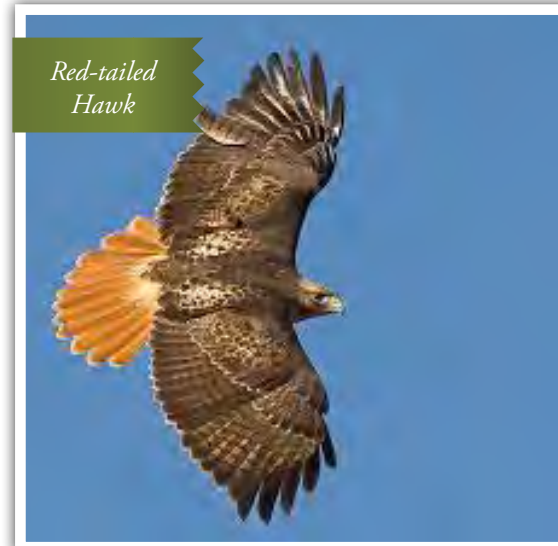
Red-shouldered hawks return to the same nesting territory year after year, often rebuilding the previous year's nest. The male will enact a 'sky dance' as a mating display, where he soars while calling, then making a series of steep dives toward the female, climbs back up in wide spirals before rapidly diving to perch on the female's back. By the times they are five days old, nestling Red-shouldered hawks can shoot their feces over the edge of their nest, making the rearing job much easier for their parents.

The Crested Caracara is a raptor in the falcon family, and is considered a tropical version of a vulture that reaches the United States only in Texas, Arizona, and Florida. Often seen at carrion along with black and turkey vultures, it is a bird of open grasslands. A large, long-legged bird, the caracara has a black body, pale neck, faint barring on the upper back and chest, and a black cap with a short crest. Its tail is white-based with a wide black tip, and it has white patches at the ends of dark wings. A noble looking bird, the caracara is often commonly referred to as the 'Mexican eagle'.

As winter approaches and many other raptor species migrate south, keep an eye to the sky for those that stay -- our resident raptors!

Send your nature-related questions to [naturewatch@austin.rr.com](mailto:naturewatch@austin.rr.com) and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our blog at [naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com](http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com).

*Red-tailed  
Hawk*



*Red-shouldered  
Hawk*



*Crested  
Caracara*





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\*Source: Texas DFPS, Watch Kids Around Water

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