

THE FOREST CREEK FORUM

*A Newsletter
for the Forest Creek
Community*

The Forest Creek forum is a monthly newsletter mailed to all Forest Creek residents. Each newsletter will be filled with valuable information about the community, local area activities, school information, and more.

If you are involved with a school group, play group, scouts, sports team, social group, etc., and would like to submit an article for the newsletter, you can do so online at www.PEELinc.com. Personal news (announcements, accolades/honors/celebrations, etc.) are also welcome as long as they are from area residents.

GO GREEN! Subscribe via Peelinc.com to have an email sent to you with a link to a PDF of the newsletter, or have an email sent to you instead of having a newsletter mailed to you!



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Did you ever wonder what hosting a foreign exchange student is about? Well here it is in a nutshell....

Hosting an exchange student is a great way to learn about another country and culture without leaving your home town. It provides a cultural exchange experience for the entire family while providing a student from another country with a slice of American life.

Hosting an exchange student is like adding an international branch to your family tree. Many host families develop lifelong friendships with their exchange students and keep in regular touch with them. Some even visit them in their home countries, or invite them back for weddings and graduations

Hosting an exchange student provides your

family, your high school and your community with a direct window into another country and culture, providing an opportunity for life-long learning.

Families of all shapes and sizes can host an international exchange student. We've had host families with young children, no children, high school aged children – as well as empty nesters and single parent households.

Ayusa is a non-profit based in San Francisco that promotes global learning and leadership through foreign exchange and study abroad programs for high school students from around the world.

For more information about hosting a high school foreign exchange student, please contact your local representative Vicki Odom at 832.455.7881 or vodom@ayusa.org or Ayusa at 1.888.552.9872 or by visiting the website at www.ayusa.org.



The Forum

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Editorforestcreek@peelinc.com

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CICADAS



Cicadas are fairly large insects but can vary in size with some growing over 1 ½ inches. Color may also vary depending upon species, but many are brown or green. All cicadas have bulging eyes and, on adults, wings that are held roof-like over the body. The wings are semi-transparent with thick wing veins. The majority of their life cycle is spent underground.

Cicadas have 2-5 year life cycles and appear in Texas in mid to late summer. Females insert egg clusters into branches of trees using their saw-like ovipositor (egg laying structure). Eggs hatch after about 6 weeks and small nymphs drop to the ground where they burrow into the soil. Nymphs feed on sap of tree roots with their piercing-sucking mouthparts. After becoming fully developed, nymphs emerge from the ground at night and climb onto nearby objects such as tree trunk, plants, fences, etc. Adult cicadas emerge from the last nymphal stage leaving behind the exuviae (cast skin). Adults can live 5-6 weeks.

Male cicadas are well known for their “song”. They rest on a tree and produce a whining sound to attract females. The sound is produced by two vibrating membranes on the side of the abdomen. Females do not “sing”. Adults feed on juices from tender twigs, but usually do not cause lasting harm to the plant from feeding.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

NATUREWATCH

by Jim and Lynne Weber

For many of us, the outdoor magic and mystery of summer nights was best embodied by the blink of fireflies or 'lightning bugs', which are neither flies nor bugs, but beetles. With over 170 species of fireflies in North America, and about 36 of those species in Texas, fireflies fall into three main genera: the Photuris, Photinus, and the Pyraetomena. The most common species in Texas is the Pennsylvania Firefly (*Photuris pennsylvanicus*), which ranges from the eastern U.S. to Kansas and into Texas.

Most likely to be spotted at night in fields and near wooded areas, the adult Pennsylvania Firefly's elytra (hardened forewings that form a protective covering over flight wings) are dark brown with yellowish margins and slanted stripes. The head is yellow around the sides and red in the middle, and their overall length is about half an inch. After mating, the female lays tiny, spherical eggs singly or in small groups in damp soil, around grass or moss, and they hatch in about 4 weeks. The larvae feed in the grass on slugs, snails, earthworms, and cutworms, and in this immature phase their light isn't visible unless they are turned over. They overwinter as larvae in small chambers within the ground, waiting for the spring months when they pupate and emerge in early summer as adult fireflies, giving them an average lifespan of approximately two years.

Firefly mating is dependent on the female seeing the distinct flashes of a mate-seeking male, and each must find the exact right blinking pattern in order to mate successfully. Males begin flying after dark, emitting yellow or yellow-green flashes, some flying above

the tree canopy. Interestingly, ambient light around a firefly's natural habitat decreases the chance it will find a mate. In order to rise to the challenge of producing offspring with artificial light around, fireflies must increase the intensity of the flashes they produce in order to be seen. This increased light emission decreases the stored energy supply in the firefly that would normally be used directly for reproduction. Artificial light also exposes the fireflies to nighttime predators, even

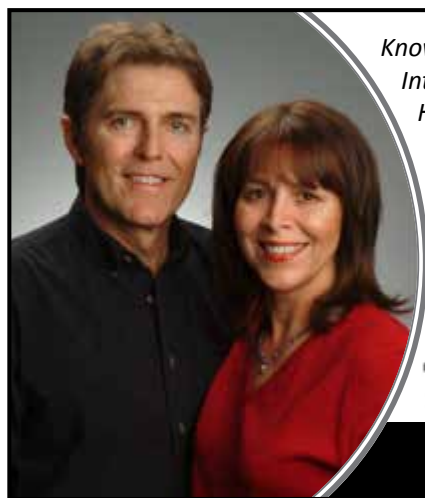
when they are not blinking. This combination of effects from artificial light directly decreases the chance that fireflies will survive and mate.

Flashes of light can be emitted by both male and female fireflies, and can also be used for purposes other than mating. One additional use is to lure prey to them; in fact, females from the *Photuris* genus will often mimic the flashes of a female *Photinus* firefly, and a male *Photinus* that falls for it will quickly be devoured! Not all female fireflies are capable of flight, however, as some species are wingless and bear a strong resemblance to larvae rather

than to adult males of the same species. Often, these types of fireflies are referred to as 'glowworms'.

The abundance of fireflies has been decreasing over the years, greatly challenged by both the increasing presence of artificial light and the rapid development of our open fields and forests. As human light pollution and development continues to spread, fireflies just might disappear altogether, in a blink of an eye!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. Check out our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com if you enjoy reading these articles!



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Mental Health Break

Submitted by Steve Bryan

Who doesn't love a vacation? For many, vacations are a staple of summertime. But have you ever wondered why vacations make us feel so good? Sure, it's the adventure, seeing the sights, having new experiences. It is also about stepping away from our daily routines and taking a break from the mundane grind of daily life. So it may not be surprising to learn that vacations are wonderful for our mental health and sense of well-being.

In terms of brain science, the benefits of vacations are rooted in the idea of novel experience. Our brains love novelty. Our brains thrive with new experiences and flourish when presented with new sights, sounds, smells, ideas, and adventure. In addition, sharing these novel experiences with another person, like your spouse, family, or friend expands the dynamic of novelty while deepening your mutual bond and connection with another.

As we age, we can develop a sense of "been there done that" and lose our childlike wonder of the world. We can easily fall

into a rut because our brains are also designed to simplify and generalize our experience. When we learn something new, our brain tries to integrate it into the mind and move on. As a result, over time, the experiences that once brought us joy and excitement, may no longer do so.

So a vacation is an easy way to re-ignite our sense of awe and wonder. But a far-away adventure is not the only way to experience novelty. Anything that creates a shift in your routine can have a similar effect. Simply taking a walk, connecting with a friend, trying a new restaurant, or even a new dance/yoga class can stimulate your brain toward a more healthy sense of well being. There are infinitely more ways to incorporate novelty into our lives, but before the summer ends, why not take a vacation?

Steven Penn Bryan is a Licensed Professional Counselor Intern at Center for Relational Care, 2312 Western Trails Blvd., Austin, TX 78745. He is supervised by David Burluson, LPC. (512) 492-6200. www.relationalcare.org



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THE DEDICATED RUNNER

Submitted by Steve Bernhardt

The heat is officially on in Central Texas, for the foreseeable future no matter the time of day it will be hot and often humid during our runs. Does this mean it's time to slow down, not run as often, or simply head indoors to the gym to run? If you are a dedicated runner none of these options sounds appealing. Fortunately none of them are necessary either if we take our time to understand how to acclimatize to the higher temperatures and take the necessary measures to run safely and comfortably under the bright Texas sun.

First, it takes our bodies about 7-10 days to begin to make the physiological adjustments needed to adapt to strenuous activity in the heat. Research has shown we can become fully acclimatized in 14-days based on spending at least one hour a day in the heat. During this time our blood plasma volume increases, sodium levels concentrate, and our core body temperature decreases. Keep in mind fitter runners usually adapt quicker, as well as younger runners often do better in the heat than older runners.

Next, dress properly to maximize evaporative heat loss. Wear clothing designed for running that does not hold moisture in the fabric (hydrophobic) and encourages evaporation. Our bodies cool as the heat is pulled away from us in our evaporating sweat. Avoid running in cotton as it holds the moisture in the fabric and makes wide scale evaporation nearly impossible. Running in a soaking wet cotton t-shirt is not cooling, it's basting. Also,

don't forget a breathable hat to keep the sun off your head and sunglasses to fight off the negative effects of UV sunlight on your eyes.

Lastly, our sweat rate increases as our bodies adapt to the stress of running in higher temperatures, because of this we need to replenish our fluids in order to maintain our effort and vital bodily functions. Water is ok for shorter duration runs (30 minutes or less) but for longer efforts we need to add some electrolytes like sodium chloride, magnesium, and potassium. There are many well designed hydration products available that are tasty and effective, as well as several different ways to carry fluids while on your runs like a hand-held water bottle or waist belt. If you are worried about the comfort of carrying a bottle while running, trust me after a few days you'll hardly notice it and grow thankful for having it with you.

Just because it's hot and humid doesn't mean we have to stop doing what we love to do, run. Being patient and giving our bodies time to acclimatize is critical. Wearing the right clothing to protect ourselves for the sun and encourage evaporative cooling is a must. Fluid replacement in order to maintain proper hydration is necessary to avoid heat related illness due to overheating and dehydration. With care and attention to each of these areas you'll be on your way to accomplishing your running goals no matter what the Texas summer decides to throw at us.

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