



# The Jester Warbler

Official Publication of Jester Homeowners Association, Inc.

July 2016

Volume 11, Issue 7

## WILDFIRE...is Jester Prepared?

*by Jeff Shapiro, Jester Firewise Committee*

Nearly four years ago, Jester began focusing on a neighborhood-wide program to help protect ourselves from the risk of a wildfire in the Balconies Canyonlands spreading into and through the neighborhood. EVERY home in Jester, not just those along the canyon, has a wildfire exposure risk. It's the price we pay to be on top of a plateau overlooking the beautiful wooded canyons below.

Our effort earned Jester national recognition as a Firewise Community, one of less than 1,000 such communities nationwide at the time. Perhaps you've seen the Firewise Community street signs posted at the neighborhood entrances. The Jester Firewise Committee, with cooperation from the Austin Fire Department, has since conducted more than 120 voluntary "home ignition zone" inspections for our homeowners, and we've had over 200 homes participate in our "30-feet for Fire Safety" events in the past three years. Pretty good for a community with a total of about 900 homes!

In addition to improving safety for the community, this program has also produced a tangible benefit to homeowners who insure with USAA. USAA now offers a specific discount on homeowners' policies written for properties in Firewise Communities in Texas and three other states. Our Firewise Community status also qualified Jester to receive a significant contribution of resources from the City of Austin and the Austin Fire Department to conduct brush clearing in the preserve surrounding Jester.

While recent rains have helped reduce our wildfire risk in the short term, the long-term risk has actually increased because the rain boosted plant growth. Grasses and low brush that now fill the canyon will eventually dry out, and when they do, a single spark will be enough to set it all ablaze. This is what happened in Bastrop, Steiner Ranch and other communities just a few years ago after Tropical Storm Hermine came through.

A few simple steps and a little effort on your part can dramatically reduce the risk of a wildfire impacting your home, and that's what our Firewise Committee is all about...teaching homeowners how to protect their property, coordinating community wildfire safety events, and working as a liaison with the Austin Fire Department and the Texas A&M Forest Service to promote wildfire safety.

To maintain our Firewise Community certification and keep our program going, the Jester Firewise Committee needs new volunteers to replace former members who have relocated out of the neighborhood. Unless we get some new volunteers to help keep the program going, our certification will expire at the end of the year and the program will be discontinued. Are you willing to do something that REALLY benefits your community? Contact Jeff Shapiro at [firewise@jesterneighbors.com](mailto:firewise@jesterneighbors.com) to volunteer, and for more information about Firewise Communities and how to protect your home today, check out <http://www.firewise.org/>.

**JULY 4th**  
**Parade & Activities**  
**Monday, July 4 - 9:30am**

Paint your wagons, decorate your bikes, your pets, and yourself, and join in this festive parade! Gather at Jester Club at 9:30 am (you don't need to be a member of the club to participate). Parade route will be up Jester, around Basil, and back. Games and activities to follow!

Please contact Teresa at 512-751-8000 or [tgouldie@gmail.com](mailto:tgouldie@gmail.com) if you would like to help at this event!

## Board of Directors

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## ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Interested in submitting an article? You can do so by emailing  
diana0777@att.net or by going to:

[www.peelinc.com/articleSubmit.php](http://www.peelinc.com/articleSubmit.php).

*All news must be received by the 12th  
of the month prior to the issue.*

# Texting and Cell Phone Use while Driving

*By the National Highway Safety Administration (edited for space)*



In 2014, 3,179 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. One of the most alarming and widespread forms of distracted driving is cell phone usage. According to a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds, the equivalent of driving blind at 55-mph for the length of an entire football field. And a 2014 special article in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the risk of a crash or near-crash among novice drivers increased with the performance of many secondary tasks, including texting and dialing cell phones.

Text messaging is of heightened concern because it combines three types of distraction – visual, manual and cognitive. In other words, texting involves taking your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off the task of driving.

NHTSA's message is simple – “One Text or Call Could Wreck it All.” Legislation is being passed across the nation to discourage distracted driving. We hope drivers get the message loud and clear.

So the next time you are pressed for time, and it seems like multitasking in the car is the best decision, remember those 3,179 lives that were taken because someone decided they could do two things at once. A text or call is not worth your life, or anyone else's.

# New Water Restrictions

by Dale Bulla

Here are the new water restrictions for the City of Austin:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/watering-restrictions>

## WATER RESTRICTIONS

Austin Water is currently in Conservation Stage\*. Remember to adjust your automatic sprinklers or manual watering times based on your address. Failure to follow the water restrictions may result in enforcement action, including fines of up to \$500 per violation. Report violations by calling 3-1-1 or by submitting a report online.

## CONSERVATION STAGE

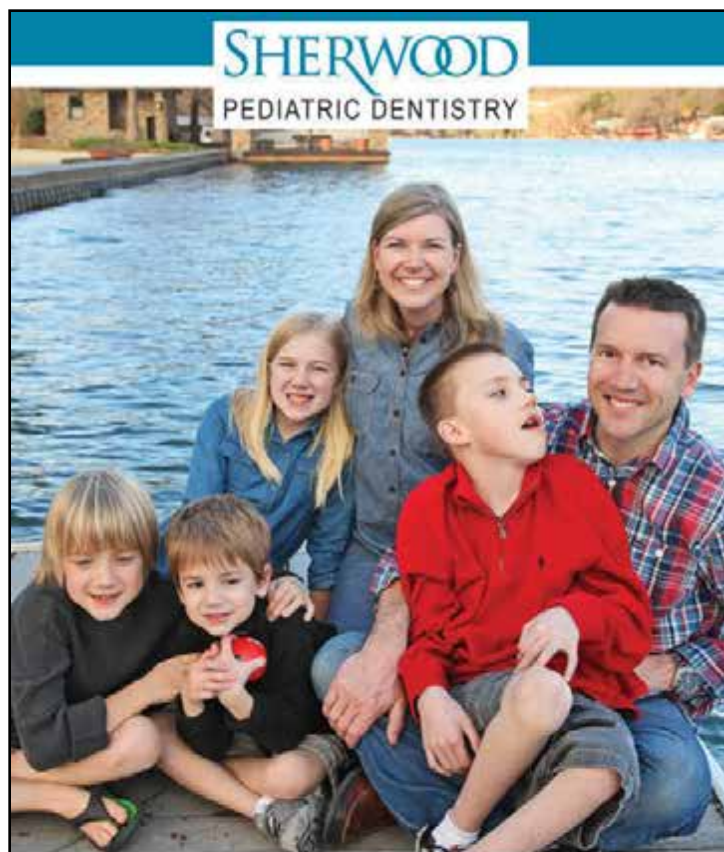
Water only on your assigned day:

- Hose-end sprinklers
  - two days per week - midnight to 10 a.m. and/or 7 p.m. to midnight
- Automatic irrigation\*
  - one day per week - midnight to 10 a.m. and/or 7 p.m. to midnight
- Washing vehicles at home is permitted with an auto shut-off hose or bucket
- Charity car washes are only allowed at a commercial carwash
- Fountains must re-circulate water
- Restaurants may not serve water unless requested by a customer
- Commercial properties (including restaurants and bars) may only operate patio misters between 4 p.m. and midnight
- Wasting water is prohibited
- \*make sure your sprinkler system has a working rain sensor or run it manually when rain is forecasted. If you water one-day per week with an automatic sprinkler system, you can also water a second day in a week with a hose-end sprinkler.

## CONSERVATION STAGE WATER EXEMPTIONS

The following are allowed at any time on any day of the week:

- Watering with drip irrigation, a hand-held hose or a refillable container
- Watering trees with a Treegator®, soaker hose or automatic tree bubbler
- Watering vegetable gardens with a soaker hose
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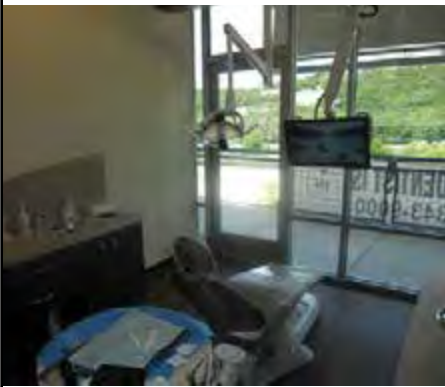


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## NatureWatch ANT ANTICS

by Lynne & Jim Weber

The most infamous ant species in Texas is the imported red fire ant, but did you know that there are many native or adapted ant species in our area that compete with them? While any ant species can be considered a nuisance when locally abundant, with a little study of their characteristics and habits, these beneficial species may even help us humans in the war against imported fire ants.

Like all insects, ants have six jointed legs, three main body parts (head, thorax, and abdomen), a pair of antennae, and a hard exoskeleton that provides a protective casing around the body. The head contains jointed antennae and powerful mandibles or jaws, the thorax is where the legs attach, and the abdomen houses important internal organs including those of the respiratory, reproductive, and excretory systems.

Of the many species of native or adapted ants in Texas, some of the most interesting are the Big-headed Ant (*Pheidole* spp.), the Longhorn Crazy Ant (*Paratrechina longicornis*), and the Little Black Ant (*Monomorium minimum*). Reddish-brown in color, Big-headed Ants come in two sizes – soldiers or major workers about ¼ inch in length, and minor workers about 1/8 of an inch in length. The major workers have big heads in proportion to the rest of their bodies. Because they usually nest in the soil either in open areas or under wood, rocks, landscape timbers, and patio pavers, they are often confused with imported fire ants. While they typically feed on dead or live insects, they also eat tiny seeds and honeydew produced by aphids and scale insects. Big-headed Ants are considered major predators of imported fire ant queens which can be present in large numbers following a fire ant swarm.

Adapted in Texas, Longhorn Crazy Ants are grayish-black ants 1/8 of an inch in length that are recognizable due to their extremely long legs and antennae. Colonies of these ants can often be found in soil under items such as logs, stones, and debris, and they generally feed on the larvae of fleas and flies. Longhorn Crazy Ants get part of their common name from their behavior, which includes the habit of erratically running about with no apparent sense of direction. However, immediately following an imported fire ant swarm, they have been observed carrying away the imported fire ant queens.

Only 1/16 of an inch in length and overall black in color, Little Black Ants can be found feeding on honeydew, but they more typically scavenge dead insects and other arthropods during the heat of the day. Once these foraging workers find a suitable meal, they release a pheromone to recruit other nest mates to help them cut up larger items or cart away smaller ones. When these ants run across other ant species that may compete for a food source, they resort to ‘gaster-flagging’, a behavior in which they raise and vibrate their gasters, or the enlarged part of their abdomens, to release a poisonous gland secretion that chases away their rivals. Like the other ants described here, these little ants can pack a real punch and often invade imported fire ant colonies and take right over!

**Bigheaded Ant (soldier or major worker)**



**Longhorn Crazy Ant**



**Little Black Ant**



Send your nature-related questions to [naturewatch@austin.rr.com](mailto:naturewatch@austin.rr.com) and we'll do our best to answer them. Check out our book, *Nature Watch Austin*, published by Texas A&M University Press, and our blog at [naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com](http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com) if you enjoy reading these articles!





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Happy 4th  
of July!

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## July Events



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July 1 - 31	<b>Go Texan Restaurant Round-Up</b> <i>Participating restaurants donate a portion of proceeds to food banks.</i>	<a href="http://gotexanrestaurantroundup.com">gotexanrestaurantroundup.com</a>
July 6 & 20, Aug. 10 & 17	<b>Sound &amp; Cinema</b> <i>Great live bands paired with classic Hollywood movies</i>	Long Center lawn <a href="http://thelongcenter.org">thelongcenter.org</a>
Jul. 8 - Aug. 13	<b>Shrek: The Musical (Thur. - Sun.)</b>	<a href="http://zilker.org">zilker.org</a>
July 9 - 17	<b>Trouble on the Double</b> <i>A new play follows the story of young twins</i>	Long Center <a href="http://thelongcenter.org">thelongcenter.org</a>
July 9 & 23	<b>Deep Eddy Splash Party Movie Nights</b> <i>Enjoy a movie while you cool off in the 72 degree pool or picnic on the hill</i>	Deep Eddy Pool <a href="http://austintexas.gov">austintexas.gov</a>
July 15	<b>Bob Schneider with Tosca String Quartet</b> <i>One of the most sought after entertainers in Austin</i>	Long Center <a href="http://thelongcenter.org">thelongcenter.org</a>
July 16	<b>The Comedy Get Down</b> <i>See 5 members of comedy royalty come together</i>	Frank Erwin Center <a href="http://uterwincenter.com">uterwincenter.com</a>
Jul. 20 - Sep. 4	<b>Mary Poppins - Everyone's practically perfect nanny</b>	<a href="http://zachtheatre.org">zachtheatre.org</a>
July 22 - 24	<b>Custom Sounds Texas Heatwave</b> <i>One of the largest custom truck &amp; car shows in the nation</i>	Travis County Expo Center <a href="http://heatwaveshow.com">heatwaveshow.com</a>
Jul. 22 - Aug. 13	<b>The Addams Family - Summer Stock Austin musical</b>	<a href="http://thelongcenter.org">thelongcenter.org</a>
July 23 - 24	<b>Body Mind Spirit Expo - natural health, personal growth</b>	Palmer Events <a href="http://bmse.net">bmse.net</a>
July 26	<b>Steven Tyler - Legendary singer/entertainer</b>	<a href="http://texasperformingarts.org">texasperformingarts.org</a>
July 28 - 30	<b>Texas Robot Roundup</b> <i>Robotics teams from all over Texas compete</i>	Austin Convention Center <a href="http://trr.txfirst.org">trr.txfirst.org</a>
July 30 - 31	<b>Classic Game Fest - Video games, retro game tournaments, costume contests and more</b>	Palmer Events Center <a href="http://classicgamefest.com">classicgamefest.com</a>

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