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NEWSLETTER INFO

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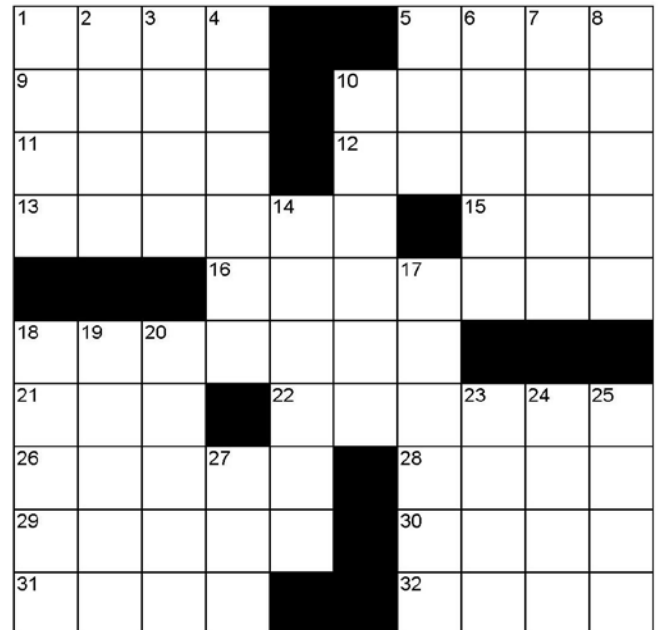
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ACROSS

1. Chances of winning
5. Association (abbr.)
9. Rise (2 wds.)
10. Horse-like animal
11. Eye
12. Foreign
13. Substitute
15. What a nurse gives
16. Heavy
18. Luau guitar
21. Moved quickly
22. Despot
26. Filth
28. Water (Spanish)
29. Devourer
30. Quieted
31. Brood
32. Glen

DOWN

1. Stare at
2. One who gets things done
3. Fees
4. Spread out on the couch
5. Entire
6. Quoth
7. Melt ore
8. Girl detective Drew
10. Idly
14. ___-totter
17. President Ford
18. Goads
19. Gold weight
20. Marry
23. Accent mark
24. Void
25. Leggy
27. Kitten's cry

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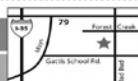
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You are cordially invited to attend one of our monthly luncheons and coffees.

To find out more about these events and who to contact, please visit our website at www.rrnewneighbors.org



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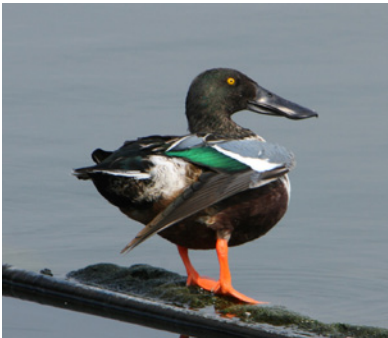
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NATURE WATCH

DABBLERS AND DIVERS

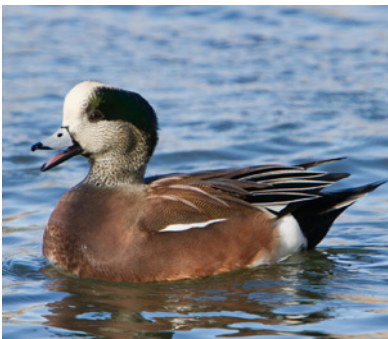
by Jim and Lynne Weber

Wintertime is the perfect time to look for ducks in Central Texas. Several species that breed far north of our state's border return to Texas in the colder months to feed in our unfrozen freshwater lakes and rivers. From the Old English 'duce', the word duck is a derivative of the verb meaning to duck or dive, or bend down low as if to get under something. It best describes the way many ducks feed, by upending or diving under the water in search of a wide variety of food sources, such as small aquatic plants, grasses, fish, insects, amphibians, worms and mollusks. Most ducks fall into either the dabbler or diver category. Dabblers feed on the surface of the water, and sometimes on land, while divers disappear completely beneath the surface and forage deep underwater. In general, divers are heavier than dabblers, which gives them the ability to submerge more easily, but they often pay the price by having more difficulty when taking off to fly.



Northern Shoveler

The most distinctive dabbling duck is the Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeada*). True to its name, it possesses a two and a half inch long bill, which is spoon-shaped and has a comb-like structure called a pecten at the edge of its beak. The pecten is used to filter food from the water and to aid in preening its feathers. A medium-sized duck, the adult male (or drake) has an iridescent green head, rusty sides, and a white chest. When flushed from her nest, the adult female (or hen) will often defecate on the eggs, presumably to deter predators from eating them. This species of duck is monogamous, and stays together longer than any other known pairs of dabbling duck species.



American Wigeon

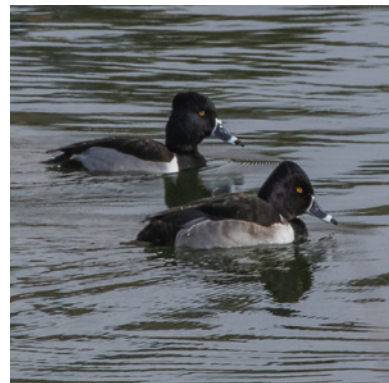
Another common dabbler is the American Wigeon (*Anas americana*), whose population is increasing throughout its range. The male has a white crown, green face patch, large white patches in its wings, and a black rear end bordered by white. At one time this duck was known as 'baldpate' due to the white crown

resembling a man's bald head. Its feeding behavior is distinctive among the dabbling ducks, as its short bill allows it to be much more efficient at plucking vegetation from both the water and sometimes even agricultural fields. The diet of this duck has been shown to include a much higher proportion of plant matter than any other dabbler species.



Lesser Scaup

Among the most abundant and widespread freshwater diving ducks is the Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*). The male has a slight bump or peak on the back of the head, a bluish bill with a small black tip, grey sides (black on the ends with white in the middle), and a black head, chest, and rear end. When grasped by a predator like a Gray Fox, an adult Lesser Scaup may play dead, rendering itself immobile with its head extended, eyes open, and wings folded close to its body. They are capable of diving underwater the day they are hatched, but are too buoyant to stay under for long, until maturity gives them the body composition and strength they need to stay underwater for longer periods of time.



Ring-necked Ducks

Usually found on smaller, calmer bodies of water like ponds, Ring-necked Ducks (*Aythya collaris*) are more readily identified by the bold white ring around their bill that the subtle purplish band around their necks for which they are named. A medium-sized diving duck, they also have a small bump or peak on the back of their black heads, with the male having a black chest, back, and rear end, with grey sides and a white stripe up the shoulder.

The next time you visit a lake, river, or pond this winter, venture out to the quiet corners to see if you can spot one of our best known dabblers or divers!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, *Nature Watch Austin* and *Nature Watch Big Bend* (both published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.

WHY YOU SHOULD HOST AN EXCHANGE STUDENT – YES, YOU!

“International exchanges are not a great tide to sweep away all differences, but they will slowly wear away at the obstacles to peace as surely as water wears away a hard stone.”

– Former President George H.W. Bush

This time of year, the 100 or so high school exchange student programs in the U.S. are beginning to seek host families for the coming academic year for both one semester and full academic year students.

About 28,000 students come to the U.S. each year for youth exchange programs of varying lengths. Not surprisingly, their motivations vary. They want to improve their English-speaking skills. They want to establish their independence from their parents. They want to see the America of Hollywood and the streets of New York. If they don't have siblings, they would like one. They want to share the beauty and complexity of Japanese or Italian cooking. They want to play American football and be on the cheerleading team. They want to travel and see new places.

They want to live life as an American teenager.

Families who welcome these exchange students into their homes and hearts not only enrich the life of an exceptional young person, they help build people-to-people connections that span the globe and last of a lifetime.

– Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Summer 2010

I think cultural exchanges, including hosting high school exchange students, offer benefits far beyond being “a good citizen.” Beyond actually learning about another culture and how things might be done differently on a daily basis, it challenges one's assumptions about other cultures, teaches communication skills, and helps develop patience and flexibility.

Few experiences can teach you – and your children — the small but critical differences between cultures as living with someone from another country.

The benefits to America children – both our own children and others who are attending school with exchange students – are significant in ways that are difficult (if not impossible) to quantify. It's not something adults often think about. Even school administrators don't always think through how exposure to other cultures can benefit students in their districts. Think about communication for just a moment. Although your children will, of course, speak English to their exchange student, the potential for miscommunication is huge when you are talking to non-native English speakers. The processes of learning how to re-shape your thoughts, speak more clearly, and make sure what you intend to say is what is heard are important skills. Think about your assumptions about other cultures – your assumptions,

and those of your children and their friends, about another country's foods, habits, or attitudes. Think about relationships, and learning how to adapt, become more cooperative, and developing an ability to be flexible.

You *do* have something to offer.

Many families tell me they can't host because “we aren't a good host family.” People assume they must be outgoing, that they need to be a family that travels a lot, or that they must be a family that goes to museums, events, and activities all the time. People assume that it is critical for a host family to live in a big city so it will be “fun” for a teen, that it is important to provide a student with his or her own bedroom, or that they must live near the high school. Many people assume you must have a high school student in your home in order to host a high school exchange student. The list of “why we're not a good family” goes on, but most of these pre-conceptions simply aren't accurate. Is it nice to travel with your student? Of course, because it's fun to share your city, your state, or your country's beautiful places. But not everyone travels much. Is it nice to live next to the high school? Of course. But let's face it, most people don't. Is it “fun” for a teen to live in the city? Sure. But nice people who have the desire, capability, and emotional intelligence to be a host family live everywhere.

The truth is, there is no typical American host family, because there is no single “typical” American family. American host families have teens and don't have teens. They have young children and toddlers. They have children who are now grown and living elsewhere, or no children at all. They have dogs or not, large homes or small ones. Single parents are families, as are grandparents. American families live in large cities, suburban areas, and in small communities. The students are not here to travel, have a tour guide, just have “fun,” or to have an easy life with a five-minute school commute. They're here to go to school, learn about our country, live with a family, and to learn what life is like for an American teen. They can play on the soccer team or have a role in the school play no matter where they live and no matter what the composition of their host family.

The key to hosting a student is not in who is in your family, but who you are as people. Good host families are people who want to share their own culture and community, and learn about someone else's. Good host parents look to give their families a glimpse of the world and introduce them to new customs and cultures.

STS Foundation is currently looking for host families in our area. If you are interested in hosting a student and enjoying this enriching experience, please contact Vicki Odom at 832-455-7881 or email me at vicki.stsfoundation@gmail.com for more information.

The Forum

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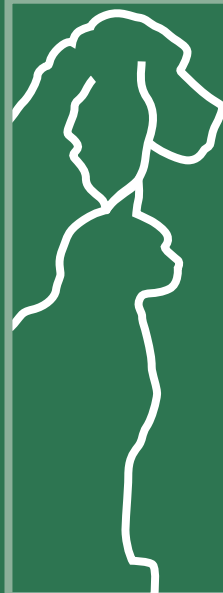
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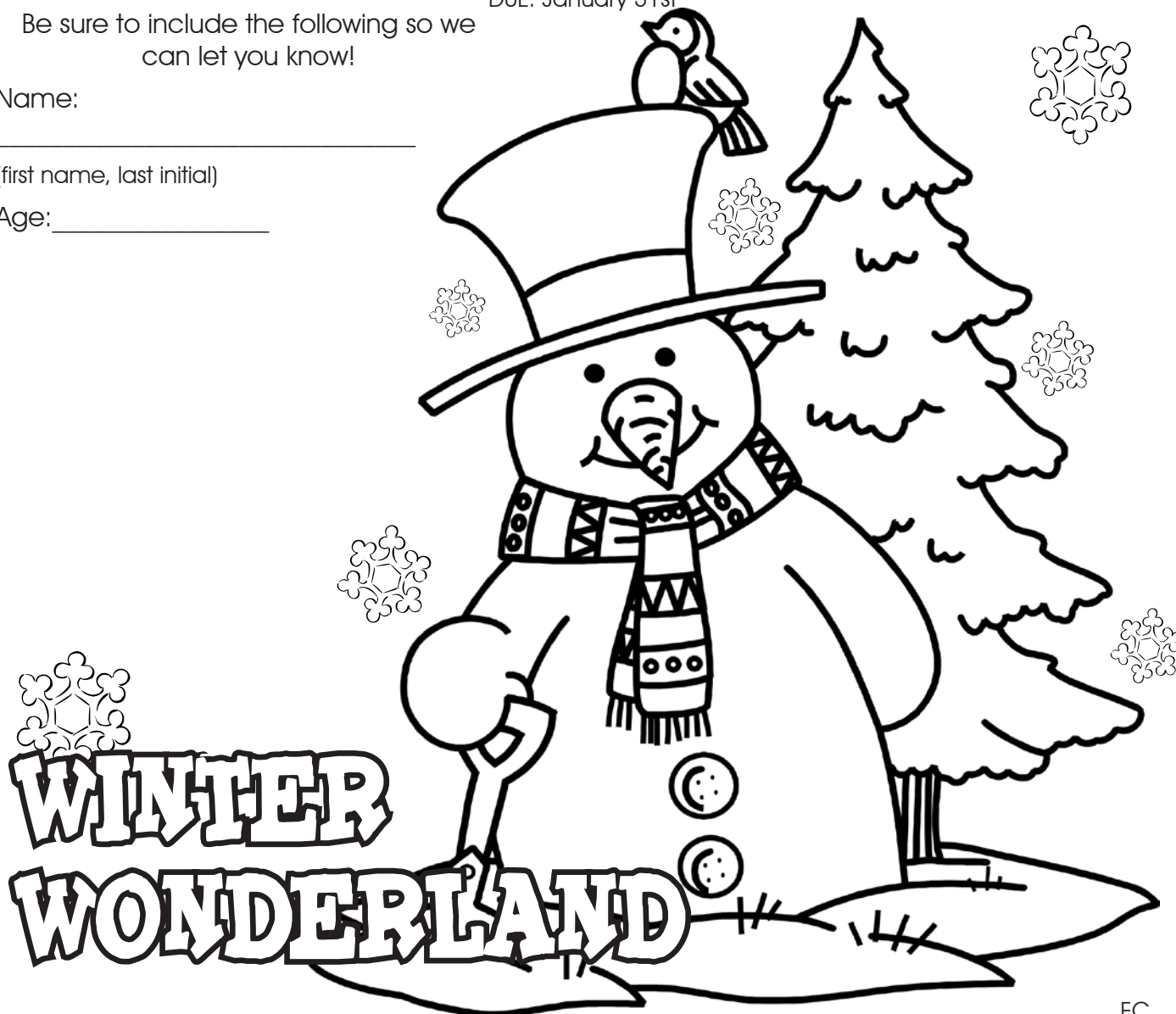
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