

# Sun City Democrats

[www.suncitydems.org](http://www.suncitydems.org)

August 2009



## General Meeting

The General Meeting is typically on the first Saturday of each month. The meetings are free and open to the public. For additional information on the Sun City Democrats, please contact President **Jodi Salyers** at 864-2812 or Communications Chair **Carol Flynn** at 864-3544.

**NOTE: Summer Hiatus!** *There will be no General Saturday morning meetings in July, August and September.*

**Saturday, October 3, 2009**

**9:30 AM Coffee, 10:00 AM Speaker**

**Place:** Sun City Activities Center Atrium

**Program:** **Becky Moeller** is president of the Texas AFL-CIO, overseeing the 220,000-member labor federation's legislative, political education and community service programs.



Moeller is the first woman to hold statewide elected office in the **Texas AFL-CIO**, having broken that barrier in 2003 when she became secretary-treasurer. During her four-year term in that office, she brought efficiencies and oversight to the state federation budget that kept programs going even after the departure of a substantial chunk of membership from the AFL-CIO umbrella.

## Issues Group

The Issues Group meets typically on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 2:00 PM in member's homes. For additional information on the Issues Group, please contact the host or hostess of the next meeting.

**NOTE: Summer Hiatus!** *There will be no Issues Group meetings in July or August.*

**Wednesday, September 23, 2009**

**2:00 PM**

**Place:** Jay Pierson's, 103 Rain Lily Lane

**Program:** The Issues Group will be having its next meeting on Wednesday, September 23, at 2:00 PM at the home of Jay Pierson at 103 Rain Lily Lane. The topic for discussion is "**Alternatives to the Way Our Education System Works.**"

**Please let Jay know if you will be attending by calling 864-9909 or emailing: [jaypie@aol.com](mailto:jaypie@aol.com).**

## SUN CITY DEMOCRATS OFFICERS

President: Jodi Salyers 864-2812 [jodotcom@aol.com](mailto:jodotcom@aol.com)

Vice-Pres: Jim Stauber 515-0486 [jcstauber@prismnet.com](mailto:jcstauber@prismnet.com)

Secretary: Joan Baker 869-5611 [mizbaker@suddenlink.net](mailto:mizbaker@suddenlink.net)

Treas: Margaret Donaldson 818-1594 [marjohndonaldson@yahoo.com](mailto:marjohndonaldson@yahoo.com)

Past Pres: Mary Kay Pierson 864-9909 [mkatpie@aol.com](mailto:mkatpie@aol.com)

Communication: Carol Flynn 864-3544 [flycar@verizon.net](mailto:flycar@verizon.net)

Hospitality: Fred Becker 864-0704 [fb.becker@suddenlink.net](mailto:fb.becker@suddenlink.net)

IMPACT: Don Lelong 869-1714 [donandjackie@verizon.net](mailto:donandjackie@verizon.net)

Membership: Frank Wentworth 864-3385 [f\\_wentworth@yahoo.com](mailto:f_wentworth@yahoo.com)

Programs: Craig Whitney 869-2690 [cbwhitney@verizon.net](mailto:cbwhitney@verizon.net)

Special Events: Nancy Danley 864-1544 [nrdanley@suddenlink.net](mailto:nrdanley@suddenlink.net)

## **You've Been Caught Doing Something Good!**

Please remember to thank **George Wagner** and **Fred Becker** for providing coffee for our general meetings. **Betty Bendewald** is the wonderful member who provides, at her own expense, all the yummy goodies that appear at our general meetings. **Give them a hug or a high five the next time you see them!**

## **Please SUPPORT Your Local Club**

Have you noticed that the **Sun City Democrats** have become a growing and vital presence in Sun City, Georgetown, and Williamson County? Wasn't it wonderful seeing so many Obama yard signs displayed in Sun City during the last election? Please join us by supporting our activities and help us continue to elect more Democrats by paying your annual dues.

Dues are **\$20** per member. You may pay at the sign-in table at the meetings or mail a check made out to Sun City Democrats to our Treasurer: **Margaret Donaldson**, 107 Rosecliff Drive, Georgetown TX 78633.



Sun City Democrats

SUN CITY DEMOCRATS

## Support the Sun City Democrats POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Our PAC is known as **IMPACT: Informed Members Political Action Committee of Texas**. **IMPACT** is the way that the Sun City Democrats organization can legally contribute to candidates. Send donations to **IMPACT** Treasurer, **Don Lelong**, 101 Crosby Street, Georgetown TX 78633.

**IMPACT** 's goal is to raise **10 Grand By 2010**, just after the primaries. That's about the same as we raised during the last election cycle. We are shooting for broad participation and modest, frequent contributions (of course large ones will be gratefully accepted too). Be on the watch for **IMPACT** mailings, fundraisers, and other opportunities to support Democratic candidates.

## DEMOCRATIC PARTY INFORMATION

### Texas Democratic Party

**Boyd Richie**, Chairman. [www.txdemocrats.org](http://www.txdemocrats.org)  
707 Rio Grande Street, Austin, TX 78701  
Telephone: (512) 478-9800

### Williamson County Democratic Party

**Richard Torres**, Chairman. Phone #: 512-964-5054  
[www.williamsoncountymdemocrats.org](http://www.williamsoncountymdemocrats.org).

**Monthly meetings:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Party headquarters, 110 South I-35 (corner of I-35 and Highway 620 behind McDonald's in Round Rock).

### Williamson County Democratic Headquarters

needs volunteer workers. Address: 110 North Interstate 35 (at Highway 620). Phone: 512-388-1993

**Office Hours:** Mon-Fri: 11 AM to 6 PM  
Saturday 10 AM to 2 PM

**Williamson County Obama Store** is located at the Williamson County Democratic Headquarters, featuring T-shirts, hats, posters, calendars, etc.

### PRECINCT 381

~**Kay Walker**, Precinct Chair  
864-2874 [klwalker@suddenlink.net](mailto:klwalker@suddenlink.net)

### PRECINCT 394

~**Don Mohr**, Precinct Chair  
868-2850 [donmohr@netzero.net](mailto:donmohr@netzero.net)

### PRECINCT 396

~**Billie Reaney**, Precinct Chair  
868-0098 [billie\\_reaney@msn.com](mailto:billie_reaney@msn.com)

### PRECINCT 399

~**Bill Blair**, Precinct Chair  
868-9180 [billblair3@verizon.net](mailto:billblair3@verizon.net)

## KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING, SUN CITY DEMOCRATS!

*We are being published,  
and we are making a difference.*

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

~ Margaret Mead



**Jim Stauber's** Letter to the Editor was published in the **Williamson County Sun** on July 15, 2009:

### "Tee-hee"

Isn't it ironic that the people who attended the Tea Party in Sun City never held one when George W. Bush was President. He started an illegal war in Iraq, no Tea Party. He illegally tapped people's phones, no Tea Party. He stepped all over the Constitution of the United States, no Tea Party. He got this country into a financial disaster, no Tea Party; and the list goes on.

Now that there is a Democrat in the White House, these right wingers come have out of the closet with their goofy sign's, "President Palin" and "Obama Nation". Sarah Palin can't even serve out her term; is that the kind of President these people want, a quitter? President Obama has done more good work in less than 200 days than Bush did in 8 years. Mr. Obama has restored integrity to the office of the President of the United States. No one is perfect, but at least President Obama is trying to do a good job; and so far for the most part he has.

~ Jim Stauber



# SEVEN AMERICAN SPECIES THREATENED BY GLOBAL WARMING

Global Warming is having an impact in nearly every ecological zone in America. Learn more about seven "ambassador species" – living plants and animals already feeling the heat.



## 1. American Pika: Mountain Critter at Risk

An endearing little furball, the American Pika is well-known to hikers who hear these hamster-sized mammals whistling from rockpiles and talus slopes.

Their range includes Canada and the Mountain West, occurring at cool northern latitudes and high altitudes. Until recently, they were not considered especially threatened.

But a 2003 study in the Journal of Mammalogy reported that 7 out of 25 historic Great Basin populations had disappeared, and 2 more Great Basin population extinctions were discovered after publication.

### **Global Warming Threats**

Some may like it hot but not the Pika. Even brief exposures (as little as a few hours) at temperatures above 78 degrees F can be fatal. Plus they rely on snowpack for insulation in the winter.

In the southern portions of its range, some populations already occupy the highest altitudes, with no place to move upward to escape the heat.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is currently considering the Pika for listing under the Endangered Species Act, which would make it the first mammal in the lower 48 to be listed due to global warming.

### **Wider Implications**

Pikas have frequently been described as the 'canaries in the coal mine' of alpine and montane ecosystems in the western U.S. – their disappearance is an alarming signal of sweeping climate disruptions.

And, like Prairie Dogs, Pikas are pruners and help maintain the diversity and abundance of alpine meadow plant species.

## **Other Western Species at Risk**

The American West is in global warming's crosshairs. Warmer winters will lead to less snowpack in the mountains, which will exacerbate already worsening droughts in the region. There has already been a four-fold increase in the number of major wildfires in western forests.

According to the National Wildlife Federation, western sagebrush habitats could decline by 59 percent before the end of this century, devastating sage grouse, mule deer, pronghorn and other species.

Higher stream temperatures and less water flow could threaten trout and other western cold-water fish.



## 2. Canada Lynx: Snow Hunter at Risk

With its pointed ear tufts and beard-like ruff, the Canada Lynx looks like a huge house cat re-imagined by Dr. Seuss.

Its long legs and wide furry feet permit the Lynx to hunt well in snow, which is historically common across its range. The Lynx has an intimate biological relationship with the snowshoe hare, its favorite prey.

Elusive solitary hunters, the Lynx in mythology is known as the keeper of forest secrets. The Canada Lynx's Eurasian cousin is the national animal of Macedonia and Romania.

### **Global Warming Threats**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service originally listed the Canada Lynx as threatened primarily because of habitat loss and overtrapping. The impact of climate change on U.S. populations in the lower 48 states is raising new concerns.

The Lynx and its main prey, the Snowshoe Hare, are adapted to deep snow cover. Lynx hunting success (and therefore prey availability) has a great deal to do with snow conditions.

Warm winter periods can affect snow texture, depth, and extent of snow cover. Climate change may also reduce the extent and composition of their primary habitat – boreal and alpine forests.

Deep snow typically excludes the Lynx's main competitors – Coyotes and Bobcats – and its predator, the Mountain Lion, from its winter habitat. Less snow cover could mean more competition and predation from other carnivores.

### ***Wider Implications***

The hare is the primary herbivore of the boreal forest. Too many or too few hares will have a profound impact on vegetation structure and composition, which in turn may jeopardize food and shelter needs for countless forest birds and other animal species

### ***Other Boreal Forest Species at Risk***

According to the International Boreal Conservation Campaign, "The boreal forest ecosystem supports nearly 50% of the world's remaining intact forests," and is home to "billions of migratory birds and some of the world's largest populations of wolves, bear, and caribou."

Because global warming is occurring at a faster rate closer to the poles, the boreal forest is particularly vulnerable. As forests warm, they become more vulnerable to insect infestations. Bark Beetles are ravaging millions of acres of trees. The dead trees become kindling for forest fires throughout the region.



## **3. Leatherback Sea Turtles: Ocean Wanderers at Risk**

Of seven living sea turtle species in the world, Leatherbacks are the largest, with one individual measured at more than 9 feet long and weighing nearly a ton. It is the only sea turtle species that lacks a hard, bony shell.

Leatherbacks have the broadest range of any sea turtle and can be found in the tropical and temperate waters of the world's oceans.

### ***Global Warming Threats***

Leatherbacks were listed as endangered in 1970 and confront multiple threats from humans, from unintentionally being caught in fishing nets to intentionally being harvested for meat. Their estimated numbers are down to 26,000 – 43,000 nesting females, a dramatic decline from the 115,000 estimated in 1980.

Climate change presents the already endangered species with a new quadruple threat:

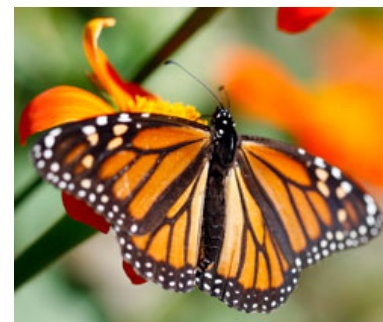
- Sea level rise from melting glaciers and warmer, expanding ocean water threatens to inundate beaches where Leatherbacks and other sea turtles dig their nests.
- Stronger tropical storms fueled by warmer seas may destroy Leatherbacks' exposed nesting beaches and damage nests. Leatherbacks' nesting grounds could be further disturbed as humans respond to greater storm threats with beach armoring and new sea walls.
- Sea turtle reproduction is extremely temperature sensitive. Higher air and sand temperatures can lead to fewer eggs hatching and more embryos developing into females, especially when nest temperatures exceed 29 degrees Celsius.
- The predicted change in ocean currents brought about by global warming is another significant threat. Leatherback turtles and their hatchlings use these currents to travel and follow their drifting jellyfish prey.

### ***Wider Implications***

Leatherbacks are global open ocean wanderers, which means they encounter every one of the many problems now facing the oceans. Declining sea turtle numbers are also possibly responsible for a population explosion of jellyfish, the Leatherbacks' principal diet.

### ***Other Sea Turtles at Risk***

All sea turtles are vulnerable to hotter air and sand temperatures, changing ocean currents, changing food sources, sea level rise and stronger storms caused by warmer seas.



## **4. Monarch Butterfly: Vibrant Fliers at Risk**

With their tiger coloring and 4-inch wingspans, the Monarch spends at least part of its life in every state of the lower 48. Seven states, from Texas to Idaho to Vermont, have designated the Monarch the state insect.

Monarchs carry on one of the most spectacular seasonal migrations of any creature on earth. The population east of the Rockies overwinters in small isolated "islands" of Oyamel Fir trees in the mountains of central Mexico. In the spring, these individuals only get as far as the

southern U.S. before they breed and die. Their descendants continue the migration cycle.

### **Global Warming Threats**

Climate change poses a two-barreled threat to these beautiful travelers, affecting both their wintering grounds and summer breeding grounds.

In the high altitude conifer forests of central Mexico where they spend the winter, wetter, colder conditions are predicted over next 50 years. Rain followed by freezing temperatures can be lethal to overwintering Monarchs.

The hotter, drier summer conditions predicted for eastern U.S. and Canada could shift suitable habitats northward, possibly extending migration distances. High temperatures or drought could affect food resources, reproductive success and adult survival. It's unclear whether the range of the larval Monarch's host plant, milkweed, will shift with the butterfly's range.

### **Wider Implications**

The Monarch's awe-inspiring migration story is a wonder of nature. Monarchs may not be the proficient pollinators that bees are, but because they migrate over vast distance, they pollinate plants across the country.

### **Other Butterflies at Risk**

Many butterfly species are particularly vulnerable to global warming because of their complex life cycles and sensitivity to climate. They may be fatally affected by heavy precipitation, drought, or "false springs" that result in early flights followed by winter storms. And they tend to rely on specific food sources that can be impacted by climate change.

Some, like California's Edith's Checkerspot Butterfly, are already exhibiting range shifts northward or moving upslope in response to climate change. Others, like the Uncompahgre Fritillary, a butterfly species that inhabits snow willow patches above 13,000 ft in southwestern Colorado, will have no higher places to go as its glacier-like environment warms.



## **5. Polar Bear: Arctic Icon at Risk**

The Polar Bear has become the iconic symbol of the threat of warming and rightly so – its survival is

absolutely dependent on Arctic sea ice, which is rapidly disappearing.

Believed to have diverged from its cousin the brown bear around the time of the last ice age, Polar Bears are relative newcomers among bear species. Unlike their forebears, polar bears are full-time carnivores, depending almost entirely in seals to maintain their nearly 4 inch thick insulating layer of blubber.

An adult male can tilt the scales at 1500 lbs; females, half that.

### **Global Warming Threats**

Bears hunt seals, their primary food source, at the edge of Arctic sea ice. As sea ice disappears, bear mortality rises. There are documented instances of bears drowning, unable to make the long swim from one ice flow to the next.

Polar Bears also appear to be shrinking in size – researchers say the bears are a third smaller than they were 30 years ago as melting ice makes it harder for them to catch seals. Some are now even resorting to eating other bears to survive.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) Red List has rated the Polar Bear as a "vulnerable species," defined as subject to a "high risk of extinction in the wild."

In 2008, the Polar Bear became the first animal to be added to the Endangered Species Act list of threatened species because of global warming. An estimated 20,000 - 25,000 Polar Bears remain in the wild.

### **Wider Implications**

The ice edge is the closest thing to a biological hotspot in the far North – many Arctic creatures make their homes there.

As Polar Bears are top predators, their disappearance could trigger a cascade of ecological consequences. Arctic Foxes and gulls are among the species known to feed regularly on the remains of polar bear kills.

Bearded and Ringed Seals, Polar Bears' favorite foods, may also find survival difficult without the ice edge, presently the seals' breeding grounds.

### **Other Arctic Species at Risk**

Seals, including ringed and bearded.

Arctic Fox





## 6. Sugar Maple: Sweet Forest Icon at Risk

The Sugar Maple is a New England icon. For centuries, the trees' sap has provided a livelihood for generations of farmers.

The Sugar Maple is also the source of the brilliant autumn reds that make them the jewels of New England's fall landscape, attracting tourists from around the world.

### **Global Warming Threats**

Sugar Maples are cold weather trees, built to survive and thrive in the cold, moist New England climate.

A warmer climate poses several threats to Sugar Maples. First, Sugar Maples require cold winters to convert the starch it has stored in the summer to sucrose that will promote new buds in the spring. Sugar Maples are also vulnerable to climate-induced drought. And, warmer winters have left the trees more vulnerable to infestations.

Warm spells have led to earlier and shorter "sugaring" seasons, the period when the trees' sap is running. Maple syrup is a \$65 million per year industry in New England. Foliage tourism, which depends on the maples, is worth billions more.

Some see the northward distribution shift of the maple out of the United States as nearly inevitable.

### **Wider Implications**

It's hard to imagine New England without the Sugar Maple. It is estimated that one in four trees in Vermont is a Sugar Maple. If the trees die off, the New England forests will be a dramatically different place.

Sugar Maples also provide important habitat for wildlife - mammals eat the seeds, bark, buds, and leaves of this species; songbirds eat its seeds and nest in its branches and trunk cavities.

### **Other New England Species at Risk**

Other trees like spruce, birch and fir are expected to decline.

Cold water fish, including Rainbow, Brook and Brown Trout, could be partially or completely eliminated in the White Mountains.

Marine ecosystems are changing as colder water species, like Flounder, are losing out to warmer water species, like Scup.



## 7. Tufted Puffins: Sea Clowns at Risk

The Tufted Puffin has a bright and humorous appearance. With their orange bills and feet and golden feather tufts wisping behind their heads, they are sometimes called the Clown of the Sea.

These beautiful foot-long sea birds are "underwater fliers" – more graceful thrusting through the sea than flapping in the air.

### **Global Warming Threats**

Tufted Puffins feed on small fish that are sensitive to sea surface temperatures. Scientists have observed that when sea surface temperatures rise, puffins have poorer breeding success.

A study on Triangle Island in British Columbia showed that puffin hatch dates, chick growth, and fledging success decreased with warmer sea surface temperatures.

While the global population of Tufted Puffins is still quite large, they are declining in southern parts of their range – Washington, Oregon and British Columbia, California and Japan. Global warming is thought to be one stressful factor among others -- oil spills, gill nets, habitat deterioration, competitors and introduced mammal predators on nesting islands.

### **Wider Implications**

Puffins may be an indicator species – harbingers of more widespread ecological chaos to come.

### **Other North Pacific Species at Risk**

Cassin's Auklet  
Rhinoceros Auklet

**NOTE:** For more in-depth information and a bibliography for this article, please refer to the **Environmental Defense Fund website:** <http://www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=42590> .

