



July 2017 Newsletter

Welcome to the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FSANA) e-newsletter! We share natural areas news, the Friends' efforts, and opportunities to get involved in volunteering or educational programs at San Antonio's natural areas parks. Going forward, we aim to bring you this newsletter quarterly in 2017, at minimum. Please check our website, www.fosana.org, for periodic updates and program information.

Playing Outside in Nature

The importance of playing outdoors was recently highlighted in a [TPR](#) broadcast. Texas Parks and Wildlife initiated the [Texas Children in Nature network](#) in 2009, and notes the many benefits of playing and learning outdoors. Children who spend more time outdoors have better physical and mental health, higher self-esteem, and increased self-discipline. In addition to fresh air and exercise, outdoor activities and play remove children from media, and encourage creativity and observation of nature. While the parks offer several organized activities for parents and children to learn about the natural world, we encourage walks in the park for everyone, as well as unstructured outdoor experiences for children.



San Antonio Parks and Recreation - Natural Areas Stewardship Activities, July 2017

Recent headlines announced that the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) is suing the federal government alleging that the golden-cheeked warbler (GCWA) should no longer be on the endangered species list. According to news reports (San Antonio Express News, June 6, 2017), the TPPF filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Texas General Land Office (GLO). The GCWA nests exclusively in central Texas; stated differently, every GCWA in the world was born in TX. Naturally, then, decisions involving the GCWA are of special importance to us here in San Antonio.

Here are a few facts worth considering.

- 1. The GCWA was originally listed (FR Vol 55, No. 249, pp 53153, 53157) because of the following threats:
 - a. Habitat loss: The golden-cheeked warbler is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, which result from urban encroachment into the range of the warbler and widespread clearing of juniper.
 - b. Other natural or manmade causes: Habitat destruction causes habitat fragmentation which in turn increases the degree of isolation between patches of suitable habitat, and breaks available habitat into smaller pieces. Habitat quality is affected by habitat patch size, distance between patches, configuration (ratio of edge to area), corridor availability, and adjacent land use. An increased ratio of edge/area in small patches of suitable habitat has an impact on breeding bird species because of increased levels of nest predation, brood parasitism (including by the brown-headed cowbird), and interspecific competition in edge habitats.
 - c. Lack of reproduction of deciduous trees (a necessary component of GCWA habitat) which may be caused by browsing by unnaturally high populations of white-tailed deer, introduced feral ungulates including feral and domestic goats, or by an oak wilt fungus (*Ceratocystis fagacearum*) that kills oak trees.
- 2. On June 30, 2015, USFWS (the Service) received a petition dated June 29, 2015, from Nancie G. Marzulla (Marzulla Law, LLC—Washington DC) and Robert Henneke (Texas Public Policy Foundation—Austin TX) requesting that the golden-cheeked warbler be removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (“delisted”) due to recovery or error in information (FR Vol 81, No. 107, p35700). You can download the petition at <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R2-ES-2016-0062-0002> and the USFWS response at <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R2-ES-2016-0062-0003>.
 - a. The petition stated that because the numbers of warblers and extent of warbler habitat is far greater than the Service determined in 1990, the warbler should not have been listed as endangered, and further cited several studies indicating the species is not in danger of extinction throughout all or any significant portion of its range.
 - b. USFWS acknowledged that the known potential range is geographically more extensive than when the golden-cheeked warbler was originally listed. However, the Service also noted that population estimates are very difficult to determine, threats described in the original listing rule remain, and recovery criteria have not been accomplished. This and other pertinent information was evaluated in the 2014 5-year review where the Service recommended that the species remain listed as in danger of extinction throughout its range.
 - The petition cited a 2015 Texas A&M Survey as evidence that the warbler is not and never has been endangered in Texas. The Service disagreed with this conclusion and characterized the 2015 Texas A&M Survey as largely a summary of information already known to, and discussed by, the Service in its 5-year review. The Service did, however, recognize that the modeling studies described in the 2015 Texas A&M Survey represented the most recent and comprehensive efforts to estimate range-wide warbler habitat and population size. However, the Service noted that these efforts represent new estimates rather than indicators of positive trends in warbler habitat and population size, and thus did not imply recovery. Further, according to the Service, an even more recent study reported results of a similar modeling effort that performed well at sites with high known densities but tended to overestimate plots with lower known densities, and concluded that

uncertainty still exists, especially for habitats occupied by warblers at lower-densities.

- c. The petition mentioned warbler habitat loss from 1992-2001, but did not cite newer studies that show increasing urbanization, habitat loss, and habitat fragmentation within the range of the golden-cheeked warbler. As the Service described in the 2014 5-year review, the threat of habitat fragmentation is ongoing and is expected to threaten the continued existence of the golden-cheeked warbler into the foreseeable future (Golden-cheeked warbler 5 yr Review and Summary, 2014, pp 8-9).
- d. The petitioners claimed that neither disease nor predation constituted a significant threat to the continued existence of the warbler (Petition, p. 22). Information provided in the petition is refuted by the 2014 5-year review, in which the Service concluded that multiple factors such as urbanization and fragmentation have likely resulted in increased rates of predation of the warbler.
- e. The petition asserted that, even with protections of the Act removed, the warbler will be protected by existing regulatory mechanisms including: the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, and the 1975 Texas Endangered Species law. However, as discussed in the 2014 5-year review, while these regulations do provide some protections for the birds, neither “prohibits habitat destruction, which is an immediate threat to the warbler” (Service 2014, p. 12).
- f. In 2016, the Service concluded that the “petition does not provide substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted.”

I encourage you to consult the source documents (including those related to the current suit which can be found at <http://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TexasWarbler.pdf>), consider your own experience and observations, and then let the Texas General Land Office (<http://www.glo.texas.gov/contact/email-us/index.html>) know how you want to be represented.

Natural Areas Volunteer Opportunities

Of course, you are welcome to come join us as we continue to work at various City of San Antonio Natural Areas in the northwest part of San Antonio. You must make a reservation for each work day by e-mailing Jayne Neal at Jayne.neal@sanantonio.gov. Jayne will confirm your reservation and give you directions to the specific site and the designated parking area. Work sites will not typically have access to water or restrooms.

- July 6, 13, 20, 27, 2017, 7:30 – 11:00 am, Location to be determined. To reserve a spot, you must contact Jayne Neal, e-mail above.

Upcoming Natural Areas Events

- **First Saturday Hike: Fitness Hike**
 - 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. | Saturday, July 1 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Enjoy a guided fitness hike along Friedrich’s most scenic trails, including Bosque Trail, Vista Loop and Main Loop while learning about the park’s diverse ecosystem. This hike will cover approximately 3.25 miles of trails. RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Wild Wednesday: Spiders and Insects** (ages 5 & up)
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Wednesday, July 5 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Look at the world through an insect’s eyes and discover the differences and similarities between insects and spiders. Nature-based craft included. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Starting Out Wild: Breakfast for a Bird** (ages 1-3)
 - 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, July 7 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about birds of prey, hummingbirds, roosters, penguins, woodpeckers, and more! These high energy, engaging programs are a perfect way to foster an appreciation of the natural world. It is recommended that a child be walking and a parent or caretaker

attend with each child. Most classes will take place outdoors. RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.

- **Second Saturday: Slithering Snakes** (all ages)
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Saturday, July 8 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
 - Meet Blaine, the snake man and shed your fear of snakes in this hands-on, interactive class. Children and families will learn about the benefits of snakes and how the medical industry uses snake venom for research. Nearly 30 snakes will be on display. Following the presentation will be a kid-friendly activity. RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Wild Wednesday: Wildlife Adventure** (ages 5 & up)
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Wednesday, July 12 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about Texas native wildlife and what it means to be a wildlife rehabilitator. Participants will have an opportunity to see an opossum, squirrel, and bats. Courtesy of Southern Wildlife Rehabilitation. RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Growing Up Wild: Grow As We Grow** (ages 4-7)
 - 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Thursday, July 13 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about the life cycle of butterflies and other animals through hands-on fun. Growing Up Wild builds on a child's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Activities are designed to provide an early foundation and appreciation of nature. RSVP required. Visit fosana.org to reserve your spot. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Wild Wednesday: Busy Bees!** (ages 5 & up)
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Wednesday, July 19 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn what it takes to be a beekeeper, the tools you need, and how to harvest the honey. Laura Salazar of Honey Love Bee Removal will share her knowledge and stories about honeybee rescue. Class will conclude with a nature-based activity. RSVP required. Visit fosana.org to reserve your spot. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family. For more information, please call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Starting Out Wild: Breakfast for a Bird** (ages 1-3)
 - 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, July 21 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about birds of prey, hummingbirds, roosters, penguins, woodpeckers, and more! These high energy, engaging programs are a perfect way to foster an appreciation of the natural world. It is recommended that a child be walking and a parent or caretaker attend with each child. Most classes will take place outdoors. RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Wild Wednesday: Reptiles and Amphibians** (ages 5 & up)
 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Wednesday, July 26 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about snakes, lizards, turtles, frogs, and toads! Observe these amazing creatures up close and learn about their adaptations! RSVP required. Visit fosana.org to reserve your spot. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family. For more information, please call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.
- **Growing Up Wild: Grow As We Grow** (ages 4-7)
 - 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Thursday, July 27 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
 - Learn about the life cycle of butterflies and other animals through hands-on fun. Growing Up Wild builds on a child's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Activities are designed to provide an early foundation and appreciation of nature. RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, \$6 per family. For more information, call [210-207-3782](tel:210-207-3782) or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.

through educational and scientific programs.

For the latest updates and more activities, please see the calendar on the FSANA website.

[Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas Website](#)
