



May 2018 Newsletter

Welcome to the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FOSANA) 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. Please check our website, www.fosana.org, for periodic updates and program information.

Endangered Bird Songs Changing Right Between Our Ears

The black-capped vireo (BCVI) and the golden-cheeked warbler (GCWA) have a connection to the Natural Areas: both once did or currently nest in at least three of our Natural Area Parks. Over the years, Park Naturalist Jayne Neal has observed and documented changes in these birds' songs. The BCVI, formerly a nester at Friedrich Wilderness Park (FWP), no longer has a reliable presence there. The male GCWA no longer sings three variations of his song. For years, biologists have only heard two different male GCWA songs, one that was commonly believed to be primarily for defending a territory, the other mainly for attracting a female.

Until the last two years, male GCWAs sang the "defend a territory" song when they first arrived after migration in the spring. As the nesting season progressed, male GCWAs typically sang the "attract a mate" song. Late in the season, male GCWAs might be heard singing either song. In the last two years, Jayne observed GCWA males singing the attract a mate song much earlier than ever before. She also noted that, early in the season, some of the birds intermixed their territory defense and mate attraction songs. One of Jayne's volunteers suggested that perhaps the change in GCWA song order is due to the bird needing to attract a mate first. Jayne and her volunteer speculate that perhaps there is no need to defend a territory if there is no partner with which to fledge young.

What, you might ask, do changes in bird presence/absence and song have to do with the big picture? Consider this: perhaps the black-capped vireo is no longer reliably nesting at FWP because of habitat loss. Perhaps the golden-cheeked warbler must attract a mate first because there is not enough habitat for every male GCWA to have a territory. Or what if it is noise that is driving birds away or making it increasingly challenging for them to successfully mate and raise young? Think about this as you make choices about contesting zoning cases. Think about this as you decide whether or not to follow the posted rules at the parks, rules that are designed to promote both the Natural Areas fragile habitats and positive human experience. Your choices do make a difference: it's in the sound of silence, and the songs of birds.

Noise Pollution

With increasing use of electronic devices, you may have heard some loud music in the park. The noise may disturb your solitude on the trails, but it is more disruptive to wildlife. Loud noise

affects bird communities by [affecting the interactions between species](#). Some species experience more direct stress, as the loud noise can interfere with signs of predators or associated alarm calls by other birds. Bird songs function in territory defense and mate attraction and when these sounds are masked, bird reproduction is affected.

The [National Park Service](#) aims to preserve natural sounds. In view of this goal, Gordon Hempton founded the [One Square Inch of Silence](#) project to bring awareness of natural sounds. They note that: if a loud noise, such as the passing of an aircraft, can impact many square miles, then a natural place, if maintained in a 100% noise-free condition, will also impact many square miles around it. It is predicted that protecting a single square inch of land from noise pollution will benefit large areas of the park. There is a [lot of noise from traffic](#) that wildlife is accustomed to but we do not need to add our sounds. The parks have many opportunities to hear the sounds of nature and experience the occasional quiet moment if given the chance.

Please be considerate of others and keep your voices low if you are in a group, and if you must listen to music, use earphones. Accepted appropriate birding etiquette is NEVER to play bird songs where the birds can hear them.

Upcoming Natural Areas Events

- **A Tale of Two Grasses**

- 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. | Saturday, May 5 | Crownridge Canyon Natural Area
If you're looking for a healthy alternative to turf grass in the home landscape then this class is for you! We'll start the morning with a native grass walk led by Donald Ewers. For the second half of the class, Peter Hernandez ([Texas Master Naturalist](#) and [Texas Master Gardener](#)) will give a short history on turf grass, review its maintenance needs and most importantly, how to minimize chemical runoff and pollution during rain. Peter will also discuss how to use our native grasses alongside turf grass by creating a pocket prairie, rain garden or wildlife habitat. Wear sturdy shoes and come prepared to walk the trails at Crownridge Canyon Natural Area. To register, please visit Green Spaces Alliance of South Texas or call (210) 207-3782 for questions. Workshop fee: \$15.

This workshop qualifies for Advanced Training for [Alamo Area Texas Master Naturalists](#) and [SAWS WaterSaver Reward](#)

- **Starting Out Wild: Blooming Blossoms** (ages 1-3)

- 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, May 4 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
Learn about flowers, seeds, leaves, stems, and blossoms! 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 take place outdoors. RSVP required. Visit [fosana.org](#) to reserve your spot. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family. For more information, call 210-207-3782 or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.

- **Growing Up Wild: Ants on a Parade** (ages 4-7)

- 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Tuesday, May 8 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
Observe ant behavior and discover insect characteristics through stories, hands-on activities, and a guided hike. 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 or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.

- **Starting Out Wild: Blooming Blossoms** (ages 1-3)

- 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, May 18 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
Learn about flowers, seeds, leaves, stems, and blossoms! 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 take place outdoors. RSVP required. Visit fosana.org to reserve your spot. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family. For more information, call 210-207-3782 or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov.

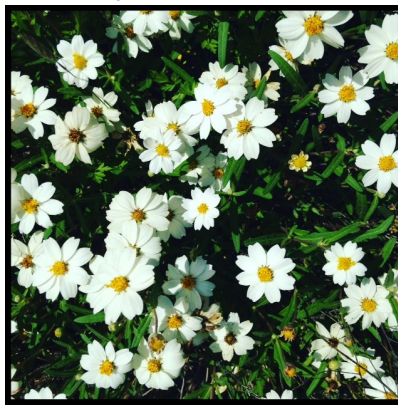
- **Growing Up Wild: Ants on a Parade** (ages 4-7)
 - 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Tuesday, May 15 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
Observe ant behavior and discover insect characteristics through stories, hands-on activities, and a guided hike. Growing Up Wild builds on a child's sense of wonder about 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 or email nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov

Native Flowers in the Parks

When hiking in Friedrich park recently, you may have noticed clusters of blackfoot daisies as you walk along the entrance to the trailhead. The Latin name, *Melampodium leucanthum*, is derived from the Greek words melas (black) and pod (foot), leucos (white) and anthos (flower). This native plant is a perennial that flowers from March to October and is usually 6-12 inches tall.

The flowers have white petals with a yellow disc and attract butterflies and other pollinators. Recent [studies](#) by Dr. Susan Mooberry and her colleagues at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio have shown that compounds isolated from the leaves and branches of this plant are effective in killing human prostate and cervical cancer cells. The medicinal value of these plant compounds continues to be studied before it can be made available as an anticancer drug.

See [Wildflowers of the United States](#) for other interesting facts about blackfoot daisy, including speculation about the origin of both the species name and the common name "blackfoot".



Insects on Agarita plants

There has been an explosion of small bugs that seem to like Agarita plants, but may also be found in cracks. The [white-margined burrowing bug](#) (*Sehirus cinctus*) is found in the soil as nymphs that hatch into adults after a rain. They may be abundant but are harmless as they feed on seeds of nettles and plants in the mint family such as horsemint and henbit.



Adult White-Margined Burrowing Bug

(Photo: /citybugs.tamu.edu)

San Antonio Budget

Have you taken the City of San Antonio [survey](#) to share your views on how the city funds should be allocated? This is an excellent opportunity to give your opinion on the importance of parks, mass transit and neighborhood services.

Are you connected to San Antonio Natural Areas on social media?

You can like us on [Facebook](#).

Find us on [Instagram](#) @sanaturalareas.

Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas is dedicated to promoting stewardship of San Antonio's Natural Areas, and to the understanding and appreciation of nature through educational and scientific programs.

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

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