



## January 2020 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](http://www.fosana.org), for periodic updates and program information.

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### **Life and Beauty Hold On....**

As the leaves from deciduous trees fall, snags, deadwood, logs, and tree holes seem to almost jump out. At first sight, they may appear unsightly but they serve many important ecological purposes and have value on their own. Thus, the preferred method for managing "non-safety hazard" snags is to let them decompose naturally.

One definition for a snag is a standing dead tree, but snag can also be a verb, meaning to catch something. Almost immediately, snags do, indeed, snag all kinds of things: seeds drifting through the air; leaves, twigs, and other pieces of dislodged vegetation; perhaps even a floating feather. Thus begins the next phase of the dead tree's life, a time during which it may do some of the same things it did while it was alive. Additionally, a snag provides new services and opportunities for nature to renew. For example, the species of bird that nest in the tree may change from those that build on tree limbs to those that inhabit holes. Insects that feed on the tree may diversify and include those that break down wood fiber. Mammals that once leapt from branch to branch may now rest in cavities. New relationships deepen as fungi, lichens, mosses continue to penetrate and/or differentiate as the snag itself metamorphoses—all the result of changing relationships with the other creatures in the ecosystem. The interplay also includes the impact of water, wind, and sun as the tree loses its leaves, limbs, and even its protective bark in the process called decomposition.

There are some things a snag is particularly well suited to do: the high branches are a good lookout point for larger birds, such as hawks and vultures; cavities and holes are excellent places for wildlife to store food; decaying limbs collect rain and detritus that are the beginnings of soil.

Over time, the snag may fall and become a 'log' that also is [important habitat for wildlife](#). Logs offer animals places to hide, shelters for new seeds to get their starts and microclimates with unique opportunities for diversity and renewal. By some accounts, "the removal of dead material from forests can mean a [loss of habitat for up to one-fifth of the animals in the ecosystem](#)". And that estimate does not include the impact on plants and fungi!

No wonder it is essential to allow snags to snag and trees to decompose in place. If you have a dead tree or an old log on the ground, consider leaving it. Imagine not only the loss of cavities, but the loss of the

songs of the insects and of the birds that use those holes. Envision the disappearance of the wonderful textures and colors of fungi gently breaking down the dead tree. Without the critical structure they provide and functions they serve, we would lose not only snags' ecological services but their beauty and reminders of renewal.



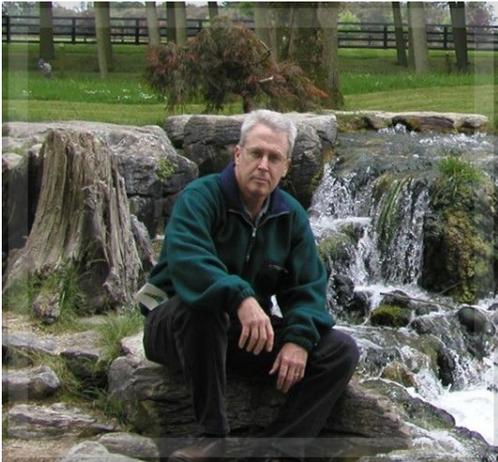
How many creatures could you find on this snag?



Bracket fungi on a log

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**A message from the President, Board of Directors, San Antonio Natural areas**



Does anyone remember the Forest Service commercial with the American Indian shedding a tear for unkind treatment of our Natural Parks. You can Google it; [Keep America Beautiful – Crying Indian](#).

On a recent walk through Friedrich Wilderness Park, my wife and I encountered evidence that some of the Park's visitors have forgotten, or perhaps never knew, that our Parks require that special attention. We found, over a distance of only 0.6 mile, trash (both the kind that will dissolve in less than a year and the kind that lasts for centuries), Christmas tree bulbs in trees, and numerous dog droppings – in the middle of the trail.

All these items are not simply unsightly. There are many instances of animals starving to death with their snouts trapped inside plastic or glass containers or dying of intestinal obstruction or laceration, having eaten plastics or attractive shiny objects – like tree ornaments.

There is no reason we should see dog remnants – ever. The only dogs allowed in Crownridge Canyon or Friederich Parks are legally designated Service Animals – so the total number should be quite small. Persons who must bring such animals to those parks, or to other parks where non-service dogs are allowed, should keep them on leash and carry bags to collect the dogs' remnants and remove them from the park.

All of us might consider carrying a bag and perhaps a disposable glove on our walks. If we encounter these types of items we can help remove them. It is the **Holiday Season**. Walking through our parks is a great way to enjoy this time of year. Leave the ornaments at home and take your trash out of the park so everyone has the same beautiful view.

Dr. Michael Startzell,  
President, Board of Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas  
**Please, Take Nothing – Leave Nothing Behind.**

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## Upcoming Events

### JANUARY

- **Winter Fitness Hike** (recommended ages: 10 & up)
    - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Saturday, January 4 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
    - Feel the calming effect of nature with a two-hour fitness hike along Main Loop and Vista Loop trails at Friedrich Wilderness Park. This hike will cover approximately 2.75 miles of picturesque trails across canyon tops and through woodlands. Be sure to bring adequate water! RSVP required. Visit [fosana.org](https://fosana.org) to reserve your spot. FREE.
  - **Growing Up Wild: Camouflage** (ages 4-7)
    - 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Thursday, January 9 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
    - Learn how animals camouflage themselves! Growing Up Wild builds on a child's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them.
  - **Guided Walk: Trail Sustainability** (ages: 13 & up)\ul>  - 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. | Saturday, January 11 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
  - Enjoy a guided walk while learning about trail sustainability with Wildlife Biologist and Naturalist Jayne Neal. Experience and learn about what makes a trail sustainable and how you can enjoy trails while also minimizing negative impacts. Jayne will share the history, science, and art of trail construction and maintenance. We will hike the Juniper Ridge trail as well as parts of Main Loop and Fern del. The walk will include elevation changes and uneven surfaces—be sure to adequately prepare with sturdy shoes and plenty of water.
- **Starting Out Wild: Camouflage** (ages 1-3)
  - 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, January 17 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom

- Learn how animals camouflage themselves! 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.
- **Drop in Family Fun: Wild Things!**
  - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Saturday, January 18 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
  - Southern Wildlife Rehabilitation will be on site at the Park Pavilion with their education ambassador animals to discuss animal adaptations and other fun facts. Learn about skunks, opossums, bats, and more!

## FEbruary

- **Wildlife Walk at Friedrich Wilderness Park (all ages)**
  - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Saturday, February 1 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
  - Ever wonder what lives in the park? Take a walk with Nature Preserve Officer Thomas Paine and discover signs of wildlife and unique features that make Friedrich Wilderness Park a special place in the winter. RSVP required. Visit [FOSANA.org](http://FOSANA.org) to reserve your spot. FREE. For more information, email [Thomas.paine@sanantonio.gov](mailto:Thomas.paine@sanantonio.gov), or call (210) 207-3781.
- **Starting Out Wild: Wild Things! (ages 1-3)**
  - 10:00-11:00 a.m. | Friday, February 7 & 21 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
  - Get up close with wildlife in this hands-on class! Southern Wildlife Rehab will bring their animal rescues, including skunks, bats, and an opossum to Friedrich. 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.
- **Growing Up Wild: Animal Tracks (ages 4-7)**
  - 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Thursday, February 13 | Friedrich Wilderness Park classroom
  - Learn about animal tracks and search for animal tracks along the trails at Friedrich. Growing Up Wild builds on a child's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them.

**All programs (unless otherwise noted):** RSVP required. Visit [fosana.org](http://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](mailto:nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov).

Education Coordinator  
 San Antonio Natural Areas  
 Parks & Recreation Department  
[saparksandrec.com/fosana.org](http://saparksandrec.com/fosana.org)  
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### Are you connected to San Antonio Natural Areas on social media?

You can like us on [Facebook](#).  
 Find us on [Instagram](#) @sanaturalareas.

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### Are you a member of Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FoSANA)?

Please support FoSANA on the preservation and educational outreach of natural areas around San Antonio by joining or renewing your membership [online](#) today.

Your membership this year will help us continue to

- offer over 400 environmental programs for families and adults at the Natural Areas.
- serve over 14,000 families and adults through education and outreach programs.
- coordinate over 400 volunteer programs and 7,500 volunteer hours supported trail maintenance, habitat conservation and restoration, and native landscapes and gardens.

Plus, when you renew your membership, you'll receive our monthly newsletter that provides updates on natural areas happenings and timely information on upcoming events.

Should you need any assistance or have any questions or comments about your membership, please feel free to email us at [friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
FoSANA Board

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**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](#)**

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