



May 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, for periodic updates and program information.



50 Years of Earth Days: An Observance Deserving Its Due

By Jayne Neal

April 22, 2020 was the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day. Because of the COVID-19 crisis, Earth Day this year went largely unacknowledged. However, one can make the argument that it is precisely due to COVID-19 that Earth Day should have been enthusiastically observed worldwide, and a headline story. Pandemics, climate change, the scourge of invasive species—these are just some of the challenges that continue to plague our world. If we listen to the scientists, if we all dare to do our part, we can make a difference. We can not only flatten the COVID-19 curve, but also conserve water, prioritize clean air, defend the Endangered Species Act, reduce plastics, and much more.

A review of history shows how powerful a few people collaborating can be. In 1970, Apollo 13 made famous the words, "Houston we've had a problem." The US invaded Cambodia setting off a wave of anti-war protests. The Aswan High Dam was completed across the Nile river, producing massive amounts of hydroelectric power, but also having [negative consequences including](#) "displacement of thousands of people and a decline in the fertility of agricultural lands near the river."

In 1969, Democratic Senator Gaylord Nelson and others were deeply troubled by a massive oil spill on a Santa Barbara, CA beach. As reported in the [LA Times](#), "an estimated 3-million gallons of crude oil" was spewed into the ocean, "creating an oil slick 35 miles long along California's coast and killing thousands of birds, fish and sea mammals". Senator Nelson was so moved that in 1970, he announced the idea for a "national teach-in on the environment." To actualize this, Senator Nelson convinced Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey to serve as a co-chair and recruited 25 year old Harvard student Denis Hayes to serve as a national coordinator. These folks managed to rally 10% of the US population to demonstrate for a "healthy, sustainable environment." [What ensued was](#): "Groups that had been fighting individually against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife united on Earth Day around these shared common values. Earth Day 1970 achieved rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, urban dwellers and farmers, business and labor leaders." By the end of 1970, [the first Earth Day](#) led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts.

Imagine that! While some may say that we have lost ground, that things are getting worse, consider this: the first Earth Day "built a political and educational infrastructure that still bolsters the movement today: lobbying groups, environmental reporters, college environmental-studies programs" (Smithsonian April 2020). One can argue that the original Earth Day laid the foundation for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Plan (EAPP) in San Antonio. While in 1970 there was no EAPP, as of March 2020, this program has protected **more than 165,000 acres** of land with the potential to add even more.

Or consider that when I bought my new house in San Antonio, it was common practice to get a "landscape package." Said package included a line of ligustrums, a couple of Chinese tallow trees, and a sprayed on bermuda grass lawn. While invasive species continue to be sold, now many people have heard the term "xeriscape," and understand that this does NOT mean rocks and cactus only. Certainly more people appreciate the value of native plants and water conservation than did in 1970.

I urge you to continue to celebrate the accomplishments of the last 50 years. Celebrate every organic garden you have planted, every drop of water you have conserved, every child who knows the meaning of reduce-reuse-recycle-renew. Celebrate and continue to seize opportunities to en flesh the ideals of collaboration, innovation, and sustainability. Keep the spirit alive for yourself, our children, and our Earth. Find inspiration and hope in 6 year old Lola McCarver and her drawing below. Let each of us do all we can to ensure that Lola's day at the beach can be enjoyed oil slick, algal bloom, and plastic free. One more thing you can do is actively participate in marking the 15th anniversary of Endangered Species Day on May 15, 2020. For ideas visit endangered.org, click on campaigns and choose endangered species day.



As the social distancing rules continue, we cannot have educational activities in the park. We have posted videos on the [SA Parks and Rec YouTube channel](#) and we encourage everyone to discover nature in your neighborhood.

This week: [Bluebonnets!](#)

Learn about the importance of bluebonnets and other wildflowers in Texas. As you get your daily dose of nature, here's how you can further engage your little ones with some hands-on learning.

1. Don't have Tommie dePaula's book, **Legend of the Bluebonnet**? Check out this reading [here](#) and be sure to check out the [discussion guide](#) by Scholastic.
2. For a list of hands-on activities, click [here](#). Enjoy making a doll out of recycled materials, or re-create the story using finger puppets. Whether you make them from felt, paper, or old gloves, there are plenty of ideas on Youtube. Here's one idea using [paper](#).
3. Kennedy Center has some great arts-integrated lessons, and Moccasins are Made for Dancing explores the role of dance in Native American storytelling. Check it out [here](#) and practice your dance moves! Recommended ages: 11-13, or grades 5-8.
4. The **U.S. Forest Service** has an amazing online collection of not so ordinary printable [coloring pages](#). It includes color by numbers, wildflower facts, part of the flower, and even noxious weeds! Although it isn't specific to our area of Texas, it's still fun nonetheless. Don't stop at the coloring pages, explore other topics as well—this could keep your kiddos engaged for a while!
5. **Did you know bluebonnets are in the legume family?** That's right, that's the same family as peas, lentils, peanuts, and other important food staples, AND it's the 3rd largest plant family. Read more about legumes [here](#) and enjoy this lesson on why you should make legumes an important part of your diet. If you like cooking and making simple meals with the family, check out these fun recipes [here](#).
6. **Can you name the parts of a flower?** Check out this [video](#) from Dr. Binocs and learn the parts of a flower! Also take a look at these activities that reinforce the concepts learned. For early childhood activities, click [here](#), and don't miss the science of how flowers drink experiment and flower scented dough. For older grades (3rd and up), check out this [link](#) for plant structures and functions.
7. Spring has arrived and wildflowers are blooming! **Can you count all the different wildflowers where you live?** As you're spending time outdoors, discovering new plants and flowers, record what you find with the free [iNaturalist app](#). In the app, click 'observe,' snap a picture of the plant you're looking, and hit "what did you see." iNaturalist will then provide you with the name, image, and description of the species it thinks you've found. Now you can ID your flowers and trees and contribute to citizen science.
8. Can you **write your own folktale** about wildflowers? After watching the reading of Legend of the Bluebonnet, write your own story about a wildflower that represents your school. Use this downloadable graphic [outline](#) from Scholastic to help you get started. Here's another [resource](#) to help you and your child(ren) further engage in the storytelling process. For more inspiration, refer to the Texas Wildflowers Legends & Folktales [here](#).



The [restrictions by the City of San Antonio and Bexar county](#) allow people to walk outside to get exercise but maintain a safe distance of 6 ft. The contagious nature of the virus suggests that we must maintain a 'social distance' of 6 ft as it is an airborne virus and one may be infected but not show any symptoms.

It has come to our attention that many people are flooding Friedrich Wilderness Park and Crownridge Canyon Natural Area, and they are doing this in a way that puts themselves, Park staff, and possibly first responders at risk. As you undoubtedly know, Friedrich and Crownridge are nature preserves that are home to wildlife, including federally listed endangered species, snakes, poison ivy, and a host of other plants and animals. The trail systems cover hundreds of acres, and some of the trails are quite remote from the entrance.

IF you feel you MUST hike on trails, keep group size very small, and ALWAYS stay on the designated trails. Failure to do so endangers yourself, others, and the ecosystem.

If you're unable to do that, enjoying nature right where you live is recommended. Discover nature in your neighborhood and you may notice that with less traffic noise you can hear the sound of birds. Take time to identify the trees in your neighborhood with this [TAMU identification guide to trees](#).

If you see people failing to maintain 6' distance or vandalizing parks properties, please call 311 and/or the police non emergency line-- 210-207-SAPD.

COVID-19: SOCIAL DISTANCING IN PUBLIC PARKS AND TRAILS



We hope that you will follow the recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association that emphasize the importance of social distancing in Park trails.

Thank you for helping us protect the Natural Areas and the health of our San Antonio community.

Please note that the **Big Give** has been moved to **September 10, 2020**.

We understand that there are many [local organizations that need immediate help](#), we would appreciate your membership and donation to [Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas](#) also.

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

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

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

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.

Sincerely,
FoSANA Board

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](#)
