



September 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.

Birds, Bees, and Social Distancing

by Jayne Neal and Jyotsna Sharma

Over the past six months we have been urged to maintain social distancing, but perhaps it should really be termed physical distancing. This kind of distancing may be new to humans, but it has long been part of the natural world. In fact, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service created a series of public service announcements featuring [examples of animals social distancing](#).

At a basic level, territories can be viewed as an example of natural-world physical distancing. Many animals use territories as a way to space themselves out in order to divide up food and water resources, mating areas, and nesting/denning/roosting sites. While many animals practice social distancing, bird behavior in particular has many examples of the advantages of social distancing to prevent the spread of diseases and pathogens. The [territories of birds](#), whether on rocky cliffs or in a field, could prevent the spread of diseases. Though many parasites have a vector that may limit spread of a pathogen, territories may also help to contain the disease to a small part of the population.

Another example of distancing can be seen in the flight strategies of some species of long distance migratory birds. Think about the familiar "V" formations of ducks and sandhill cranes in which each individual bird seems to maintain a set distance from its neighbors. Scientists think that these large winged birds "carefully position their wingtips and sync their flapping, presumably to catch the preceding bird's updraft—and [save energy during flight](#)."

Bees provide a different take on social distancing. Typically, bee colonies depend on individuals maintaining close contact with other members. For example, when it is cold, bees may draw closer together to conserve heat. When it is time to start a new colony, bees swarm, staying close together. Nurse bees come in close contact with the brood as they feed and care for them. With so many close contacts, scientists wondered how bees control the spread of disease. Studies indicate that bees use social distancing to limit the spread of disease within their own colonies, but not to other colonies. When diseased bees "[are interacting with their nest mates](#)—usually their sisters—infected bees experience fewer contact behaviors—fewer mouth-to-mouth feeding contacts—than bees who are not infected." But the impact of disease is different it seems when it comes to neighboring colonies. One study found that "the guard bees from other colonies were actually less aggressive toward incoming infected bees than they were to uninfected bees...The virus, it seems, alters the chemicals that bees use to communicate who they are and where they're from."

As social animals, maintaining distance is hard for us humans. But it seems in these special times perhaps we humans can learn from animals and do what we have to as individuals in order to benefit the whole.



Bee on Red Yucca

Golden Cheek Warbler

by Casey Cowan

As the Summer season begins to wind down, we say goodbye to some migratory birds, including the Golden-cheeked Warbler.

The Golden-cheeked Warbler is a Federally endangered migratory songbird that spends fall and winter in Mexico and Central America, and spring and summer exclusively in the Texas Hill Country. This warbler is very particular about where it nests in the spring, needing mature Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*), locally known as 'cedar', to build its nest. Although, before nest building begins, the male warbler arrives to the Hill Country in early March where he spends his days defending his territory by singing a buzzy song from the treetops. The females arrive just behind the males at which point they choose a mate and alone build a nest for their brood. After twelve days of incubation the nestlings hatch and subsequently fledge nine days later. Over the next three weeks, the new birds rely on their parents to feed them. By the fourth week, the young birds can feed themselves and are ready for migration. The last Golden-cheeked Warbler is usually on the way to Mexico and Central America by mid-July.

Each year, San Antonio Natural Area staff and volunteers monitor the Golden-cheeked Warbler on five properties: Scenic Canyon, Rancho Diana, Sinkin Natural Area, Eisenhower Park, and Friedrich Wilderness Park. Natural Area staff members are trained to identify the tiny birds by sight and song, and results from surveys are shared with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to estimate the warbler population, which is in decline due to habitat loss from development. This bird survey is just one of many surveys and management practices Natural Area staff implement each year.

Some of those practices and surveys include grassland restoration, rare plant monitoring, invasive species monitoring and removal, stem count survey (white-tailed deer pressure), oak wilt monitoring, and cave and karst monitoring. All these practices and surveys promote healthy ecosystems, guide future resource needs, and most importantly conserve our natural resources for generations to come.



Golden Cheek Warbler

Education Resources List

We are working diligently to post education resources on our website, FOSANA.org. Just click on the tab "Education Resources" on the homepage for a drop down menu. Currently we have **Starting Out Wild** curriculum posted, a haiku activity, and a nature scavenger hunt.

In addition, Parks and Recreation continues to post "how to" videos, including Simple Science and Connecting with Nature. Click on the Parks and Rec Youtube page [here](#). There's something for everyone!

Below is a list of some of the best education resources we can find. We hope these activities will help you and your families stay connected with the outdoors!

[Ted Talk Earth School](#)

[The Kids Should See This](#) (curated art, science, and nature videos)

[Audubon](#) (weekly interactive lessons)

[Khan Academy Kids](#)

[DIY Growing Up Wild & Starting Out Wild lessons](#) (more are added weekly)

[Ranger Rick craft activities](#)

[National Geographic Kids](#)

[Museum of Natural History](#)

[KLRN Science videos](#) (can be filtered by grades)

[PBS Nature Games](#)

[Families in Nature—The Ecologist School](#) (16 weeks of content)



The **Big Give** is a **24-hour** day of giving that will take place **Midnight-Midnight | September 10, 2020**

DO YOU LOVE SAN ANTONIO'S NATURAL AREA PARKS?

ASK friends and family who enjoy and appreciate the parks to contribute to Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas. FOSANA, a nonprofit, uses your donations to support environmental education, stewardship, and preservation.

CREATE momentum before March 26. Share the FOSANA BigGive page on social media and tell your community why the Natural Areas are important to you.

ACQUIRE sponsors for matching gifts or incentives. The Big Give is a great opportunity to entice donors to have a bigger impact on our organization by offering matching donations!

FOSANA.ORG **#BigGive2020** 

The Big Give: September 10, 2020

The annual day of giving will now be held on September 10 and we hope you'll consider donating this year. The needs of the Natural Area parks do not stop as the use of parks continues to increase exponentially during the pandemic. Although education classes have since been halted, we are supporting weekly video content that is posted to the Parks and Recreation Youtube

channel and shared through social media platforms. We also have other education endeavors including education resources posted to our homepage, FOSANA.org.

We are grateful for your continued support and look forward to the time we can gather for hikes, classes, and membership drives. Until then, enjoy the outdoors and help us to care for the Natural Areas.

Covid-19 in Parks

When the city imposed a strict lockdown in early March to stay at home unless working in essential services, normal social interactions came to a halt with the closing of gyms, coffee shops, bars and restaurants. We were encouraged to stay home and walk in our neighborhoods. For most people who are accustomed to going to work, the [lockdown has been stressful](#), but to cope with the lockdown it helps to be resilient, broadly defined as the ability to recover from or adjust easily from adversity. Though there are certain [traits of resilient people](#), a good way to build resilience is by [walks in nature](#) but stay with a small group, wear a mask, and maintain a social distance from others.

Although park trails remain open, we should continue to practice social distancing and avoid groups. Walking in parks also reminds us of the resilience of ecosystems to extreme temperatures we experience in South Texas. With the exception of a few sprinkles, the past few weeks have seen little rain in Bexar County, yet the parks are blooming with several native plants that can tolerate the heat and drought. The wildflower gardens and the open grassy areas always have some flowers blooming.

Notice: Parks closed Labor Day weekend

Closure will be effective Saturday, September 5 – Monday, September 7. Parks will reopen on Tuesday, September 8. As in the past, park trails and greenway trails remain open.

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 using this [TAMU identification guide](#).

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



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.

Please pick up your own trash and deposit it in trash bins at park entrance.



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

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](#)
