



## January 2021 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.

---

### Happy New Year

As we turn the page on 2020, we recognize that this has certainly been a challenging year for all of us. Yet, we are fortunate to have city Parks and Natural Areas in which to find respite. We've also found new and meaningful ways of interacting with nature during the last ten months. Spending time out at the parks has provided opportunities for relatively safe visits with friends and family, given that the COVID-19 virus is less transmissible outside. Moreover, even though education programs like Starting Out Wild and Growing Up Wild could not be held in classrooms, there are many self-guided activities and videos that are posted on the [FoSANA website](#).

We are grateful to all those who donated to FoSANA and renewed their memberships. Your contributions support education and our efforts to protect our Natural Areas from the potential negative impacts of nearby development. The FoSANA Board wishes you all a happy and healthy New Year.

---

### January's Featured Plant: One with Good Scents

Jayne Neal

Common this time of year in savanna areas in our Natural Areas is the delightful desert rue (*Thamnosma texana*). If you happen to step on it, you may be treated to a lemony scent filling the air. The fragrance is the result of crushing the plant's leaves and stems. This delightful little plant has [glands on the flowers](#) that have fragrant oils. While other vegetation is dead or dormant, *T. texana* spreads green, almost succulent, stems just above the ground surface. Its common name, desert rue, derives from the plant's membership in the Rutaceae (Citrus) family and from its growth on rocky areas in the southwest. Because of the resemblance of the flower to a pair of pantaloons, desert rue is also known as Dutchman's breeches. It is also a [host plant for larvae](#) of the Eastern Black Swallowtail. But do not look for the flower yet—you will have to wait until March. Meantime enjoy knowing even in the barrenness of January, good scents can still fill the air.



Desert rue (Photo: [Marcus Joseph](#))

---

The [Phil Hardberger Park, Robert L.B. Tobin Land Bridge](#) opened to the public on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This accomplishment creates a unique experience for humans and provides a safe crossing over Wurzbach Parkway for wildlife. Upon completing the bridge, Parks Naturalists will be implementing a study of wildlife and human movement over the unique structure.

The study's objectives are to quantify and describe total movements of all detected wildlife visiting the Land Bridge and nearby culverts, including successful (crossing over) and not successful (turning back) movements. In addition to studying wildlife movement, human movement over the Land Bridge will also be documented; there is very limited literature regarding mixed-use (human and wildlife) crossing structures so conclusions should be important to the scientific community.

Unfortunately, there are no reliable historical data sources regarding wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC) under (or nearby) the bridge. If staff could collect those data and compare them to the current WVC, it would be exciting to correlate differences with the bridge's completion. However, studies regarding WVC and wildlife crossings in other cities allow us to predict the number of WVC will likely decrease over time.

Staff are excited to begin the study, as well as the opportunity to share unique photos and data with the public. If you have not done so yet, take some time to walk the Land Bridge and sit for a while in one (or both) of the wildlife viewing blinds.

As we close out 2020, I would like to take a moment to thank all of you. It is because of your commitment to conservation and environmental education that we can go a step above. So, thank you for your attention, donations, volunteer hours, and most of all, your love for San Antonio Natural Areas. Here's to hoping 2021 looks much different than 2020. Happy New Year!

### **Friedrich Wilderness Parks Naturalist Volunteer Contributions**

Due to the global pandemic (Covid-19), volunteer workdays were halted in March 2020.

In sum, FWP provided 18 workdays with 67 volunteers in attendance, totaling 198.5 volunteer hours. The work these individuals contribute is typically centered on land management (i.e. wildlife enclosures, woody and invasive species removal). In addition to land management, few workdays are spent maintaining trails.

The total volunteer contributions for Jewell and I combined is much higher. The following text is from our executive summary:

#### Outreach Activities, Volunteer Contributions, and Partnerships

Providing education and volunteer opportunities to the public is an integral part of the Natural Area's mission. Additionally, collaborating with partners on surveys and providing space for research is critical. These relationships foster and promote conservation of our natural and cultural resources. It is important to note that these metrics include only Parks Naturalist's activities.

- 6 educational outreach programs; 1 Park Bench; 1 booklet; numerous articles
- 6 partnerships: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Texas Parks and Wildlife; University of Texas at San Antonio; Texas State University; Texas Speleological Association; Texas Forest Service
- 49 volunteer programs totaling 1,161 volunteer service hours.

On behalf of Education, happy holidays to you and yours! As with many of you, we're ready to say goodbye to 2020 and welcome 2021. With classes and group hikes still on hold, we continue to develop new and engaging content including nature videos, scavenger hunts, as well as grab and go activity bags—we hope you'll find these activities fun and useful for your little ones.

With the holidays around the corner, chances are you have an empty box somewhere nearby. Using a box and a few other basic supplies, you can create a unique and skillfully designed [Pollinator Shadow Puppet Show!](#) This is the perfect activity that will be sure to sharpen those artistic skills (of course there's a [science connection](#) too, can you guess?). Use the lesson plan at the link above to guide you through the steps, and create your own story to go along with the puppets. We've even created templates of the pollinator puppets and a writing prompt to help you get started! But if you're shooting for the stars, don't miss this [video](#) about the movement of flowers floating in the lake. Inspired by Cambodia's history of shadow puppetry, this folk song takes the viewer on a journey across the lake—and if you're feeling inspired, move along to the sounds of the music. Can you think of other dances that represent nature? Consider including those in your pollinator shadow puppet show!



[Pollinator Puppet Show](#)

And if you missed last month's activity—we're sharing the link [here](#) for the 'Tis the Season scavenger hunt. Learn why leaves change colors and look for all things RED in the park! You may be surprised on what you find. Now is a great time to explore the Natural Area parks and learn some new plants.

**Happy holidays to everyone and we hope to see you in 2021!**

With gratitude,  
Nicole McLeod  
Education Coordinator

---

**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.

# 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.

**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](mailto: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](#)**

---

---