



March 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, for periodic updates and program information.

Appeal to Friends of Our Natural Areas

FSANA desperately needs your help. Please consider joining as a board member today.

Do YOU enjoy hiking? Especially hiking in
Friedrich Wilderness Park
Crownridge Canyon Park
Eisenhower Park

Do YOU want to preserve those northwest Natural Areas?

Do YOU want to contribute to the Educational Programs provided in those Parks?

The **Friends of San Antonio's Natural Areas**, formerly Friends of Friedrich Wilderness Park, begun by dedicated Docents, and continued by subsequent generations of volunteers, is in **Great Need** of new **Board Members**.

We work to provide support for the Education Programs supervised by SA Parks and Recreation.

We work to obtain Grants, which have provided Friedrich Natural Area with FIVE miles of new trails, Eisenhower with a New Observation Tower, and Park Pavilion construction.

We work to limit the adverse effects of Development encroaching on the Parks.

We work to provide funds for Educational programs including guest lecturers, supplies for early childhood programs, training for volunteers, outreach efforts, online content, and more.

Our Board is all Volunteer, nearly all working full-time jobs. Our numbers have reached a critical low point. **Without new Board Members** prepared to contribute to the missions noted above, **FOSANA cannot sustain operations and will be forced to dissolve.**

Please give us an opportunity to explain our operations, introduce you to our current Members and Park Staff, and find a niche for your capabilities and interests.

Please CONTACT US at: friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com

From the FoSANA Board; Mike, Lance, Jyotsna, Gina, and Shana.



A severe freeze and heavy snowfall in Texas in mid-February saw temperatures below freezing that lasted about five days. While occasional freezing temperatures occur in south Texas, this was an unusual event as seen in the photos taken at Friedrich Wilderness Park.

When discussing how urban forests in Central Texas are vulnerable to climate change, Dr. Gordon described how the Arctic Vortex may alter the landscape. Noting the recent snow in her own yard, she pointed out how the Ashe Juniper tree branches became weighed down with sleet and snow, making them susceptible to breakage. In addition, evergreen tree leaves provide yet more surface area to gather ice and snow causing collapse or breakage. Over time, she noted, the newly opened spaces created in tree canopies would provide an opportunity for new shrubs and woody plants to grow in the understory. Other effects of climate change would be the proliferation of plant species with high adaptability scores (both native and non-native) such as bald cypress, Texas persimmon, live oak species, and possumhaw, to name a few. Trees with low adaptability scores included black and little walnut, black hickory, escarpment black cherry, pecan, and lacey oak. With this knowledge, it will be harder to make choices in deciding what and how to plant. Do we plant for the next 10 years or 75 years?

Moreover, the unexpected drop in temperatures and snow also brought detrimental impacts to wildlife. [Texas Parks and Wildlife](#) biologists have noted that insectivore bird species such as purple martins suffered mortality especially where snowfall and below-freezing temperatures had covered seed resources. Biologists also reported birds congregating near roads due to melted snow and searching for water sources. Unfortunately, this also resulted in an increase in wildlife-vehicle collisions. Making matters worse, the Mexican [free-tailed](#) bat colonies have also suffered major impacts across Texas. Hundreds of these migratory bats have been found dead under the bridges in downtown San Antonio. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is asking the general public to share observations of bat fatalities on the [iNaturalist](#) app so they can better understand the impacts of the winter storm on wildlife. iNaturalist is an app used by the general public to document and record wildlife and provides much needed data to scientists.

SA Parks Naturalists have noted leaf damage on huisache, evergreen sumac, some live oaks, particularly younger ones, as well as bud and flower damage on the huisache and agarita. Only time will tell how these plants recover on their own.

Natural Resource Management Update

Moving into fiscal year 2021 (October 2020), Natural Areas has continued management of natural resources such as grasslands, pollinator gardens, and invasive species.

Grassland management has involved 19 volunteers, 48 staff, 210 person hours, and approximately 17 acres. The management practices include, chipping slash to encourage herbaceous cover, removal of invasive (e.g. old world bluestems), disturbance driven (e.g. *Amphiachyris* spp.), and early successional (e.g. *Juniperus ashei*) species.

Natural Areas is proud to support San Antonio's "Mayor's Monarch Pledge" by managing pollinator habitat and multiple gardens across sites. Management this fiscal year has involved 29 volunteers, 30 staff, 94 person hours, 25lbs of grass and/or wildflower seed, 49 grass plugs, 932 perennials, 5 trees, covering approximately 7 acres.

Invasive species removal promotes a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Hand removal of invasive species has included 10 volunteers, 9 staff, 27 person hours, and removal of 50 plants totaling approximately 1 acre. In addition, chemical treatment has included approximately 5 acres.

Other active management and research includes rare species, feral hog removal, endangered birds, wildlife use on the new Robert L.B. Tobin Land Bridge, and karst.

Thank you for supporting your San Antonio Natural Areas – it is because of you that this important work can be accomplished.

Casey Cowan
Parks Naturalist

Education



While last week was an unexpected severe winter storm, I woke up to the chatter of kids playing outdoors making their own version of a sled, building a snowman, and creating snow angels. I peered out my window periodically observing the children playing, checking the greenhouse, covering and recovering plants, and wondering what implications the snow might have on the wildlife, and all of the (mostly native) plants I've been planting over the years. Indeed, the snow was magical but a challenging time for so many families across Texas with rolling blackouts and temperatures dipping into the single digits.

Not living close to Friedrich Wilderness Park, and without electricity or running water for long stretches of time, I found excitement in the spectacular sun-filled and snowy days across downtown San Antonio. I explored the areas around the Alamo, and relished the beauty of the blanketed snow on the branches of the live oak trees along Alamo St. On some days, the sun felt so bright—a reminder that fresh white snow reflects the light back into the atmosphere. In fact, it is said that fresh snow reflects about 90 percent of the sunlight which means the sun is essentially powerless to melt the snow. For many kids across South Texas, the new snow experience likely brought up conversations about [snowflakes](#) and how they're formed, when snow begins to melt, or the types of snow that make a good snowball. Regrettably, mine fell apart almost immediately. There must be a word in the English language for this type of non-sticky snow, I wondered.

Interestingly, the Scots have about 421 words and expressions for [snow](#) including "snaw" (snow), "snees!" (to begin to rain or snow) and "skelf" (a large snowflake). No doubt, it's easy to fall into a rabbit hole of interesting linguistic phenomena but snow (and rain) is of particular importance in some parts of the world, including Scotland. If you're curious, check out this short [video](#) to learn more. It is also widely known that Inuit have at least 50 words for [snow](#), and likely hundreds of ways to describe it. And, with that, here's some food for thought, and a few ideas for hands-on activities for your little ones, inspired by the snow!

[Grow Snowflakes in a Bottle](#)

[Learn How Snowflakes are Formed](#)

[Learn How an Igloo is Built](#)

[The Arctic vs. the Antarctic](#)

[Make a Snow Storm in a Jar](#)

[Simple Science –Snow Experiments](#)

And finally, there are some new updates to the FOSANA website including activities as well as a new video. Please share these resources with your friends, family and teachers!

Sincerely,
Nicole McLeod
Education Coordinator



San Antonio is officially a Bird City Community!

Did you know San Antonio is officially designated as a [Bird City](#)? Through the dedication of many committed volunteers and the support of [Bexar Audubon](#) and [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#), as well as other partners, San Antonio became an official Bird City community in February 2021, and continuing through December 2023. The primary purpose behind this initiative is to protect birds and their natural habitats. This comes at a time when many people are turning to nature as a place for respite and finding a deeper appreciation for nature when social distancing has become the new normal.

This community-focused certification program builds awareness on factors that impact bird communities such as the importance of using native plants, habitat loss and fragmentation, preservation and restoration of natural plant communities. While most value their green spaces and parks, Bird City takes this to the next level, encouraging schools, organizations, and communities to work together to become more involved in building awareness and appreciation for birds. Moreover, as many researchers have noted, birding communities boost tourism which generates more money in the local economy, thereby [economically](#) benefiting the community. Take a look at the recent San Antonio Report's [article](#) outlining the application advantages and challenges.

With over 400 documented bird species in Bexar County, the Natural Areas are home to the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo. While the Golden-cheeked warbler remains a federally listed endangered species, the Black-capped Vireo was delisted in 2018. Although it no longer nests at Friedrich Wilderness Park in recent years, it has been seen along the Mission Reach area in 2020. Perhaps it goes without saying, San Antonio has always been a bird community in many ways, but having an official designation is just another reason to keep working toward public awareness and promoting environmental stewardship and protecting our green spaces.



Cedar waxwings in San Antonio this winter.

While hiking on trails, keep group size small, and ALWAYS stay on the designated trails for the safety of others. 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 on 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](#)
