



May 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.

Natural Resources Update

Natural Areas offers many volunteer opportunities across the city, from southern Medina River Natural Area to northern Friedrich Wilderness Park. Every Thursday staff hosts volunteers at our northern properties where we manage invasive species, improve grasslands and forests, conduct surveys, and trail maintenance.

In March and April, Thursday volunteers have continued removing brush from an old fairway at Friedrich Wilderness Park. These old fairways were created when the property was slated to be a resort, including a golf course. Since purchasing the property, staff have maintained the fairways as grasslands. Managing the fairway meant removal of a significant amount of new growth juniper (*Juniperus ashei*). The juniper was cut then spread to combat erosion. In late 2019 staff and volunteers began removing the cut juniper (slash) in an effort to increase herbaceous cover. In March of 2020 volunteers and staff conducted baseline frequency sampling in the fairway where slash was removed. This survey gave us an idea of the frequency of 'live grass' within the surveyed area. The result of 'live grass' in 2020 was a frequency of 80%. In March of 2021 volunteers and staff repeated the survey. The result of a year of growth found a frequency of 89% 'live grass'. These data could indicate that removing slash is, in fact, increasing herbaceous cover. We will continue the management of removing slash and frequency sampling throughout the fairways.

If you are interested in joining the Thursday volunteer list, please send me an email at casey.cowan@sanantonio.gov. Joining the list is not a commitment to volunteer – you will simply get the info each week in the event you are available to come out with us.

Smiles,
Casey Cowan, CWB
Parks Naturalist



Photographing Nature with a Cell Phone Camera

Fred Loxsom

Taking photos with a digital camera is a fun way to document the plants and animals that you see in your backyard, neighborhood, and in San Antonio's natural areas. Some photographers use expensive cameras equipped with telephoto lenses and macro lenses to produce stunning photos of birds and beautiful close-up views of plants and insects. In spite of the technical advantages of these sophisticated cameras, cell phone cameras (as well as simple "point and shoot" digital cameras that are small enough to fit into your pocket or backpack) have some practical advantages for [photographing the natural world](#) around you. Our cell phones are always close at hand (most of us carry one whenever we step outdoors); they are easy to use and they produce good pictures. Here's some advice about using your cell phone as a tool to observe and document the natural environment around you.

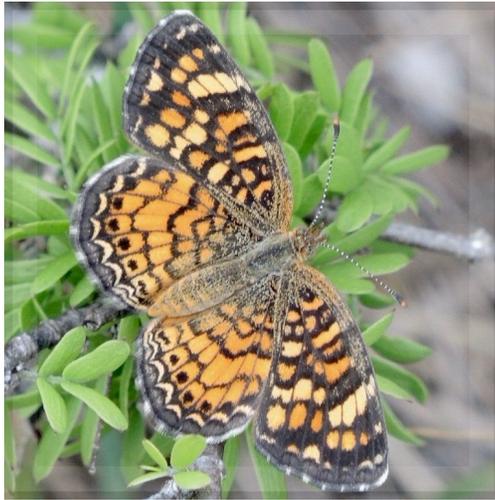
Learn to operate your cell phone camera. Spend time to understand and practice with this camera. Make sure you understand how to adjust the focus and brightness. Try to produce very sharp clear images. Also learn how you to attach notes to the images you produce. You might also want to purchase and learn to use a small very inexpensive macro lens that clips onto your phone.

Use good composition principles. Learn about and practice using photographic composition principles. This includes the rule of thirds, framing, symmetry, etc. There is good [online advice](#) about composition and it is worth spending time learning about this, but remember the most important composition rule: Break all the rules when you need to.

Take shots from different viewpoints. When you see something interesting, don't just take a single photo from a single viewpoint. Take shots from different viewpoints: far back, up close, standing up, lying down, from the top, from the side. Always take shots from **four** different perspectives. If you are photographing a flower, include the leaves and stem as well as the bloom. If you are shooting an insect, include the leaf or flower that it is on. Always try to get photos that provide information about the environment of the plant or animal. These photos will help you not only ID the species, it will also help you understand and document its environment.

Develop a theme. It may be helpful to restrict each of your outdoor photo sessions to a single topic such as flowers, flowers and insects, tree trunks and leaves, limestone layers and other geology, walls and fences, seeds and fruits, water and waterways, scat and animal tracks. Since you will be taking multiple pictures of each subject, a photo session will probably not involve more than 10 subjects. That's plenty, because you'll want to keep notes on what you've seen.

Take Notes. Take notes as you are taking photos, add notations to your photos, and add notes after you have carefully examined and edited your photos. An unexamined photo is not worth taking. After you have edited your photos, deleted the poor ones, and labeled all keeper photos, store your photos and document your whole photo session. These records will let you come back to look at the same plant, stream bed or animal crossing to see how it looks a month or a year later. You will be collecting your own personal record of the natural environment and how it changes through the seasons.



Vesta Crescent, MRNA, 4/26/21 F. Loxsom



Cutleaf daisy, FWP, 4/16/21, F. Loxsom



Pink Mimosa FWP, 4/16/21, F. Loxsom



Pearl Milkweed, FWP, 4/26/21, F. Loxsom

I'm humbled and inspired by the tenacity of our youth and hope to continue providing a platform where their voices are heard and their work is shared with the community at large. If you missed this talk, visit the Zoom link [here](#) and use passcode f+eBmQp6 to access.

Nicole McLeod
Education Coordinator
nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov

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 activities, please visit FOSANA.org.

[Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas Website](#)
