



# NATURE NOTES

Dedicated to the Enjoyment and Conservation of the Natural Beauty of Sun City Texas at Georgetown

VOLUME 25

Issue 3

March 2023

**Tuesday, March 14, 2:30 p.m., SCB**

**Make Your Yard Come Alive-Garden for Birds with Native Plants**

*Presented by Jane Tillman, Capital Area Master Naturalist*

**Tuesday, April 11, 2:30 p.m., SCB**

**The Strange Creatures in Texas Caves and Springs and the Efforts to Protect Them**

*Presented by Kemble White*

## MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$12 for 2023

Dues include our monthly programs and all Special Interest Group programs and activities.

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

Nature Club activities are posted on the [Nature Club](#) website calendar. E-mails are sent to Club members only.

## REPTILES & MAMMALS

### REPTILE ID, RELOCATION & MAPPING

FREE service, call:

- Jim Christiansen 512-868-3504
- Steve Kelley 512-639-0539
- John Leek 713-825-0145
- Joe Plunkett 774-226-0810
- City of Georgetown Animal Control 512-930-3592



We encourage residents to leave harmless, beneficial reptiles in their landscapes, but call us so we can identify and map all reptiles.

## ASTRONOMY SIG

Mon., **March 20**, 7:00 p.m., CCF. "TBD"

Mon., **April 17**, 7:00 p.m., CCF. "TBD"

*Check the Calendar for up-to-date info and watch for Special Viewing announcements.*

*SIG Chair: Richard Wagoner*



## BIRDING SIG

Tues., **March 7**, 2:30 p.m., RLSR – *"The Remarkable Tropical Bird Life of Panama"*, by Martin Byhower

No SIG Meeting in **April**.



## BIRD WALKS

*Bird walks:* Thurs., **March 2** and Wed., **March 15**, Thurs., **April 6** and Wed., **April 19**.

*All walks 8:00 a.m., meet at LHPP parking lot near the lake. Any changes will be emailed.*

*SIG Chairs: Ed Rozenburg & Martin Byhower*

## BUTTERFLY/MOTH SIG

No SIG Meeting in **March**.

Tues., **April 4**, 2:30 p.m., RLSR – *"Looking at Pollinators: Birds, Bats, Insects and More"*



## BUTTERFLY WALKS

Tues., **March 28**, 10:00 a.m and Wed., **April 26**, 10:00 a.m.

Meet at the Tranquility trailhead off Lone Star.

*SIG Chair: Ed Rozenburg*

## EARTH SCIENCE SIG

Starting in **March** the SIG will be known as **"Earth Science"** SIG combining the sciences of geology, archeology and paleontology.

*SIG Chair: Paul Swetland*



## Living With Wildlife SIG

Thurs., **March 23**, 10:00 a.m., ACA, *"Landscaping with Wildlife in Mind"* Presented by Mary Ann Melton.

Thurs., **April 27**, 10:00 a.m., ACA, *"Snakes of Sun City"* Presented by John Leek.

*SIG Chair: Nancy Wagoner*



## NATIVE PLANTS SIG

### PLANT WALKS

Mon., **March 6**, 9:00 a.m. - Meet at the Rocky Hollow Trailhead (Pedernales @ Bridge),

Thurs., **March 9**, 9:00 a.m. – Meet at the Berry Creek Trailhead (Great Frontier),

Mon., **April 3**, 8:00 a.m. – Meet at Berry Creek (Legacy Pavilion) and,

Thurs., **April 6**, 8:00 a.m. – Tranquility Trailhead (Lone Star).

*SIG Chair: Pat Garren*



## Speaker Bio

Jane Tillman

Jane presents the ***Make Your Yard Come Alive- Garden for Birds.***

Your plant choices, landscape design and gardening practices all have an impact on birds. Find out what you can do to increase your yard, greenbelt or park's appeal to them.

Jane Tillman is a retired University of Texas lecturer in Nutritional Sciences whose twin passions are birds and native plants. She is an active member of the Travis Audubon Society where she is the co-chair of the Speaker's Bureau and Program Committee, a member of the Education Committee and leads field trips. She teaches beginning backyard birding classes and gives talks about Central Texas birds and gardening for birds to garden clubs, neighborhood associations, bird festivals and libraries. She gardens for wildlife, and has a Best of Texas Backyard Wildlife Habitat. She has 94 species of birds on her yard list. Jane is a past president of the Native Plant Society of Texas, Austin chapter. She writes a monthly bird forecast blog post for a local TV station. She has been a Capital Area Master Naturalist since 2001.

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## Trees Forever!

Martin Byhower

As you are all aware, our trees took a big hit during the recent ice storm. It's estimated that about 30% of the tree cover throughout Central Texas is gone.

Moreover, Sun City is not immune to the rapid development and subsequent loss of trees in this, the fastest growing region of the country. Many, if not most of our remaining trees are found along waterways and in a few protected park and greenbelt areas. Unfortunately, most of these trees could be the last of their generation. They may not be able to replace themselves, to support new generations of wildlife and be enjoyed by future residents, without our help.

The reason for this is the unnaturally high concentration and population of White-tailed deer. Lacking predators and being squeezed into smaller areas, their concentrations have built up to the point where they are overgrazing the natural landscape. Tree seedlings are particularly vulnerable, because they are exposed and, in most cases, lack the natural compounds, called phytotoxins, which repel raising by deer and other animals.

Our valuable and majestic oaks, which are the most important *keystone* species supporting our wildlife, are particularly vulnerable. Even though large numbers of acorns were produced last year, few will germinate and even fewer will become mature trees. The reason? As soon as an acorn hits the ground, all types of grazers, parasites, and



decomposers attack it. In fact, the only time most oak species are able to reproduce happens when a Blue Jay or squirrel finds an acorn soon after it falls, buries it for later consumption, and then either dies before it can return or forgets about it. (And any forgetful squirrel gets a second shot at the acorn because they will also eat it after it germinates.)

In fact, overgrazing by Whitetail deer is actually considered by most to be the biggest single threat to eastern forest ecosystems. However, there is a solution that does not involve eliminating the deer. Simple wire *exclosures* around small areas keep out deer and other grazers and allows trees to germinate, grow, and eventually rise above browse level. This solution is being utilized broadly, both in the US and abroad, wherever overgrazing occurs, and it is working!

I will be seeking approval to start piloting a test project to install about 10 small exclosures in the undeveloped areas of Sun City in order to promote sustainability of our wild areas. Utilizing donated materials from the CA and funding from the Nature Club, it will require only a few volunteers to install them. The Wildlife Committee supports this project, and I will be presenting it to the Property and Grounds committee in April. Though I won't live to see the seedlings become mature trees, it gives me peace and hope to have this chance to leave a legacy for future generations of Nature and those who appreciate her.

