



NATURE NOTES

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

VOLUME 23

Issue 10

October 2021

Tuesday, October 19, 2:30 p.m., SCB

A Walk on the Wild Side

Presented by Ghost Speaker

Check meeting announcement for mask requirements

Tuesday, November 16, 2:30 p.m., SCB

Birds of Williamson County

Presented by Martin Byhower

Check meeting announcement for mask requirements

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$4 for 2021

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

SIG Chair: Steve Kelley



REPTILE ID, RELOCATION & MAPPING

FREE service, call:

- Steve Kelley 512-639-0539
- Jim Christiansen 512-868-3504
- 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



Watch for Special Viewing announcements.

SIG Chairs: Richard Wagoner & David Lingo

BIRDING SIG

No SIG Meeting in October or November

BIRD WALKS

Thurs., **October 7**, Wed., **October 20**, Thurs., **November 4**, & Wed., **November 17**. All walks 8:00 a.m., meet at LHPP parking lot near the lake. Any changes will be emailed. Masks Optional
SIG Chairs: Ed Rozenburg & Martin Byhower



BUTTERFLY/MOTH SIG

No SIG Meeting in October or November



BUTTERFLY WALKS

Look for announcements
Meet at the Tranquility trailhead.

SIG Chair: Ed Rozenburg

GEOLOGY SIG

No SIG Meeting in October and November



SIG Chair: Paul Swetland

NATIVE PLANTS SIG

No SIG Meeting in October or November

Mon., **October 11**, 8:00 a.m. and Wed. **October 13**, 8:00 a.m. Meet at Tranquility Trail
Mon., **November 15**, 9:00 a.m. and Wed. **November 17**, 9:00 a.m. Meet at Tranquility Trail



SIG Chair: Pat Garren

*"Autumn shows us how beautiful it is to let things go."
- Unknown*

"It's the first day of autumn! A time of hot chocolatey mornings, and toasty marshmallow evenings, and, best of all, leaping into leaves!"

- Winnie the Pooh's Grand Adventure

Planting a Butterfly Garden

I get lots of questions about butterfly gardens and lots of requests to create them for people. This article will focus specifically on attracting butterflies (but I hope you will invite other pollinators, including moths, bees, and hummingbirds in your plan!)

I am also gearing this article towards Central Texas, but most of the information probably would apply anywhere.

Here are the most important things to consider:

- Avoid harmful pest control measures
- Deciding what types of plants will you use? Do you want just annuals, or a mix including perennials, vines, shrubs, and even trees?
- The amount of space, sunlight, and irrigation

There are many ways to control unwanted pests and weeds in your butterfly garden. The best one is hand removal (and only planting plants that will be healthy and naturally pest resistant). It's OK to use most of the modern pet friendly snail baits and organic pest control products. But don't spray the flowers! And whatever you do, don't use products containing Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*), which targets caterpillars! If the butterflies lay too many eggs and you get too many caterpillars, simply hand remove and toss them well away from your plants. They make excellent bird food!

A lot depends on the plants you choose! You absolutely must go native, because the butterflies that occur here are specifically adapted to those species! Butterflies are attracted visually by color; moths mostly by scent. Butterflies taste with their feet and (most) feed on nectar with their proboscis. They are particularly attracted to white, red, yellow, orange, pink and purple flowers, and especially ones that are flat-topped or clustered and have relatively short flower tubes. Frostweed, Gregg's Mistflower, Texas Lantana (not any of the other cultivars) Frogfruit, native milkweeds, almost any native white or yellow sunflowers or daisies, Prairie verbena, and native passion vine are probably your best bets. Butterflies are particularly attracted to plants that are the host plants for their caterpillar's, make chemicals they need for reproduction, or produce easily accessible nectar in large quantities. The preceding plant species, when taken together include all of these attributes for several species of our most common butterflies.

Don't buy plants from big box stores or conventional nurseries if possible. Many of them raise their plants with systemic insecticide's that will kill caterpillars and prevent butterflies from being attracted. If you buy from a nursery, ask about this (although employees may not be able to give you an informed answer.)

Finally, Don't try to plant sun loving plants in the shade! The majority of Butterflies like sun-loving plants, in the sun, on sunny days. But some are specifically adapted to foraging in

part shade (or even full shade in some cases). In fact, some species of butterflies will never go to flowers! They are attracted to rotting fruit, animal dung, salt residue, and other things you might not suspect!

For more information including some plant lists go to my website (martinbyhower.com) and check out my "gardening tips for wildlife" section.

