



NATURE NOTES

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

VOLUME 24

Issue 2

February 2022

Tuesday, February 15, 2:30 p.m., SCB

Desalination Technology

Presented by Mike Morrison

Tuesday, March 15, 2:30 p.m., SCB

Top Texas Native Plants for Williamson County

Presented by Randy Pensabene

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$12 for 2022

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: Open

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., **February 28**, 7:00 p.m., CCF, program TBA

Mon., **March 28**, 7:00 p.m., CCF, program TBA



Watch for Special Viewing announcements.

SIG Chairs: Richard Wagoner & David Lingo

BIRDING SIG

No Birding SIG Meeting in February

Tues., **March 1**, 2:30 p.m., ACA – *"Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest"* Presented by Karen McBride



BIRD WALKS

Wed., **February 3**, Thurs., **February 16**, Wed., **March 3** & Thurs., **March 16**. 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

Tues., **February 1**, 2:30 p.m., ACA – *"Butterflies in the Rio Grande Valley"*
No SIG Meeting in March

BUTTERFLY WALKS

Look for announcements

Meet at the Tranquility trailhead.

SIG Chair: Ed Rozenburg

GEOLOGY SIG

Tues., **February 22**, 4 p.m., ACA. Jim Tobin will present *"Minerals that Rocked the World: Quartz"*

Tues., **March 22**, 4 p.m., ACA. Paul Swetland will present *"Geology and Wine"*

SIG Chair: Paul Swetland



Living With Wildlife SIG

Wed., **February 2**, 9:00 a.m., Andice, Kickoff Meeting for SIG

Fri., **February 18**, 1:00 p.m., Atrium, Roger Rucker from All Things Wild Presents, *"What to Do With Orphaned or Injured Wildlife"*

SIG Chairs: Nancy Wagoner and Barbara Meisner

NATIVE PLANTS SIG

No SIG Meeting in February or March

Plant Walks Mon., **March 7** and Wed., **March 9**. All plant walks start at 8:00 on Meadow Trail.

SIG Chair: Pat Garren



Living with Wildlife

A new SIG, Living with Wildlife, has been added to the Nature Club. While the Nature Club has various SIGs focusing on individual species and plants, Living with Wildlife ties together how wildlife affects our human residents and vice versa. As Sun City grows and native habitats are removed or altered, we need to understand how we can preserve the wildlife population within Sun City.

The charter of the SIG is the following:

- To provide current, research-based information and education about issues affecting the wildlife within Sun City.
- To determine actions that we individually, and as a community, can carry out to make a positive difference for the health of Sun City wildlife.
- To foster an environment where wildlife and Sun City residents can live in harmony.

To achieve these goals, the Living with Wildlife SIG will gather information from other SIGs, Charter Clubs, the CA and outside sources to identify best practices for preserving wildlife in an urban environment. This research will form the core of the educational programs developed by the Wildlife SIG.

The Wildlife SIG will create Wildlife Education Ambassadors to give presentations to neighborhoods, new residents and other groups interested in resources available for preserving our wildlife habitat.

The CA Wildlife Management Committee and the Wildlife SIG will work together to educate Sun City residents on how to live in harmony with our wildlife.

The Wildlife SIG will provide support for community efforts to improve native habitats within Sun City.

If you are interested in joining this new SIG, please contact nancywagoner@yahoo.com or barbmeisner@xtremexhibits.com.

Study: Small Gardens are Just as Crucial for Bee Conservation as Large Ones

Whether it's [leaving hollow plant stems as nesting sites](#) or [making a watering hole](#) for native bees, Treehugger is not short of tips and tricks for more pollinator-friendly gardening practices. Yet if you have only a small, urban garden to tend, it can sometimes be tempting to wish for a lot more space with which to help our furry, flying friends. It turns out, however, that size doesn't matter all that much. At least, that's the findings of a paper, titled "[Turnover in floral composition explains species diversity and temporal stability in the nectar supply of urban residential gardens](#)," recently published in the Journal of Applied Ecology. Nicholas E. Tew of the University of Bristol and his team found—based on a survey of 59 urban gardens in Bristol, England—that while the amount of nectar produced by urban gardens varies widely, the variation has little to do with the size of a garden. Instead, factors like gardening practices and, interestingly, the relative wealth of a neighborhood were much more closely correlated.

The study also found that not only are urban gardens a critical source of food and habitat for pollinators but that no single garden is a haven by itself. Instead, they are best seen as a patchwork of resources which, when combined together, become more than a sum of their parts.

Tew told [The Guardian](#) one of the main reasons why size is less important than management practices is simply that the vast majority of nectar production occurs around the edges of gardens, in the form of shrubs and other landscaping plants. Because the majority of British gardens big and small are made up of lawns and/or hardscaping, the size of the plot itself is unlikely to have a huge impact on nectar supply. Does this equation change when lawns are managed differently? Tew told Treehugger via email: "Lawns can provide a lot of food if they are managed to be very flower rich (cut less frequently and soil not fertilised). We found very few gardens where lawn flowers made up a large proportion of nectar resources partly because so few were flower-rich (huge room for improvement), but also because shrubs can have so many more flowers in a small space. Replacing lawns with more borders and flowering shrubs would increase the food supply, but letting lawns grow long and flowery can be great for nectar and other resources. The study was conducted in Bristol, England, which raises the question of whether its findings can be applied across the globe. Tew explained to Treehugger that, while certain specifics may differ, the broad principles likely apply.

"While the precise shape of the seasonal nectar supply curve and the contributions of specific plant taxa will differ in other cities and years," said Tew, "the general findings of extreme variability and turnover among single gardens but temporal stability across multiple gardens are very likely to apply in other cities because the principle that gardens comprise many small habitat patches which differ independently in their management remains true wherever they are located."

As for what gardeners can specifically do, Tew suggested prioritizing shrubs, climbers, and trees—these made up for most nectar supply in the study. He also encouraged the planting of deep, tubular, open flowers that become important later in the year for hoverflies and solitary bees. And he recommended ensuring both year-round flowering and a variety of different habitats to support pollinators at different stages of their lifecycles.

Unsurprisingly, the research backs up much of what Treehugger permaculture expert Elizabeth Waddington has been advising in her articles. Whether it's [choosing bee-friendly plants](#), [designing and maintaining a garden for bumblebees](#), or [letting your lawn become a little less manicured](#), the general principles appear to encourage diversity, be OK with a little mess, and plant a whole bunch of flowers.

Seems easy. And now that we know that we can do it on any scale and make a difference, there's even more reason to get started next spring.

By Sami Grover; [Treehugger.com](https://www.treehugger.com) January 24, 2022