



# NATURE NOTES

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

VOLUME 24

Issue 3

March 2022

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

***Top Texas Native Plants for Williamson County***

Presented by Randy Pensabene

**Tuesday, April 19, 2:30 p.m., SCB**

***Water Resources Planning***

Presented by Tiffany Diaz

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

Mon., **April 25**, 7:00 p.m., CCF, program TBA



*Watch for Special Viewing announcements.*

*SIG Chairs: Richard Wagoner & David Lingo*

## BIRDING SIG

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

No SIG meeting in April.



## BIRD WALKS

Thurs., **March 2**, Wed., **March 16**, Thurs., **April 7** & Wed., **April 20**. 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 March

Tues., **April 1**, 2:30 p.m., ACA – *Topic TBA*

## BUTTERFLY WALKS

Look for announcements

Meet at the Tranquility trailhead.

*SIG Chair: Ed Rozenburg*



## GEOLOGY SIG

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

Tues., **April 26**, 4 p.m., ACA. Dave Weinberg will present *"Glacier National Park and Then Some?"*

*SIG Chair: Paul Swetland*



## Living With Wildlife SIG

Thurs., **March 24**, 10:00 a.m., ACA, *"Snakes of Sun City"* presented by John Leek, Snake Wrangler

Fri., **April 28**, 10:00 a.m., ACA, *"Coyotes in an Urban Environment"* Kelly Simon, a Wildlife Biologist, TPWD

*SIG Chairs: Nancy Wagoner and Barbara Meisner*

## NATIVE PLANTS SIG

Plant Walks Mon., **March 7**, Wed., **March 9**, Mon., **April 4**, and Wed., **April 6**. All plant walks start at 8:00 on Meadow Trail.

*SIG Chair: Pat Garren*



## Watch out for wildlife babies this spring!

All Things Wild rescues injured and orphaned animals and nurses them until they are ready to be released back into the wild. In 2021 All Things Wild took care of almost 3,000 animals of 160 species at their facility north of Georgetown.

If you find an injured or abandoned animal, you should check out their website to see what steps you should take. It is [Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education - All Things Wild Rehabilitation](#). It may be the animal does not need you to intervene.

If you believe the animal needs care, you should call their hotline at 512-897-0806. Someone will advise you what to do and where to bring the animal.

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## Exploding Trees? Cold Temps Make Texas Trees Burst

*Freezing temperatures in early February caused so-called "frost cracks" in trees across north Texas.*

From cowboy hats and cattle to barbecue and football, Texas is known for many things. One thing the Lone Star State is not known for, however, is winter weather. That changed in February 2021, when winter storm Uri buried Texas in ice and snow. From El Paso, Austin, and Houston in the south to Amarillo, Dallas, and Fort Worth in the north, Uri raged for a total of eight days, 23 hours, and 23 minutes, according to the [National Weather Service](#), which called the storm "one of the most impactful winter events in recent history."

The reason it was so impactful wasn't just because it was so unusual. Rather, it was because it was so disruptive: Because Texas infrastructure wasn't built for cold and snow, Uri caused multiday road closures, widespread power outages, and broken pipes across Texas and surrounding states. At one point, at least [4.5 million homes](#) were without power and heat. Desperate for warmth, families burned furniture in fireplaces and slept in cars with the engines running. The storm killed at least 111 people, many of who died from hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning.

When weather reports this month called for another winter storm the first week of February—just a year after the last—Texans were understandably nervous. This time, however, the state fared much better. Although there was nearly 2 inches of snow in Dallas, and a wind chill of 7 degrees Fahrenheit as far south as Austin, the power grid was mostly spared.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said of trees. According to Texas TV station [KXAS-TV](#), the local NBC affiliate in Dallas, winter storm Landon was so cold that it caused trees across north Texas to "explode," filling local communities with booms, snaps, and pops that sounded more like gunshots than tree branches.

The phenomenon of "exploding trees" isn't as unusual or as apocalyptic as it sounds, according to arborists, who say trees often freeze and burst as a result of rapid temperature changes.

"Our wide temperature swings mean that trees may not be completely dormant or prepared for the cold," Janet Laminack, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension horticulture agent for Denton County, Texas, told KXAS-TV. "Trees have several mechanisms they use to prevent freezing ... Colder climates tend to get cold and stay cold and the tree takes cues to get acclimated and ready for the freeze."

In trees that aren't completely dormant, cold weather causes tree sap to freeze. When that happens, [Newsweek](#) reports, the sap expands beyond what the tree's bark can contain. And so, the tree splits in places that can't withstand the pressure, creating fissures known as "frost cracks." Although trees do not actually explode into splinters when frost cracks happen, there may be loud noises and visible fractures, and heavy limbs can fall to the ground.

"Trees explode in cold weather because the water content in the cells and tissues freeze. We see it mostly on warm sunny winter days and very cold nights that dip well below freezing," said Stuart MacKenzie, a master arborist and expert at [Trees.com](#). "Maples tend to suffer from this phenomenon, just before sugaring season. They will take up water quickly as the sun warms their bark and tissues, sap will freeze and expand at night and crack. This can be heard during the late-night hours, some think it sounds like a shotgun or cannon."

MacKenzie added: "From mid winter to early spring this can occur when the temperature swings, snow melts and warm sun, cold nights work in unison. Maples, cherries, birch, and some pines can behave in this manner. Frost cracks or scars can be apparent and sap dripping or running out of the openings will appear. This is usually a telltale sign of the occurrence. It is usually nothing to be overly concerned about, the tree will start to heal just as quickly. If it is a structural issue, have the tree assessed by an ISA-certified arborist. Watch for disease, pests, and pathogens that may affect the wound. I have been awakened many cold winter nights hearing the trees explode."

The best way to avoid exploding trees in your own yard, KXAS-TV says, is to plant trees that are native to your area, which will be inherently more tolerant of local weather patterns. Plus, native trees are better for the environment, according to the [National Audubon Society](#), which says native plants require less maintenance, less water, and fewer chemicals; are less prone to invasive species; and support biodiversity as critical sources of food and shelter for native animals, birds, and insects.

By Matt Alderton, [Treehugger.com](#) February 21, 2022