



NATURE NOTES

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

VOLUME 23

Issue 7

September 2020

The Nature Club will hold Zoom meetings as a result of Covid 19 restrictions. These are informative and fun to attend. Last minute details and reminders are sent via e-mail. Hope to see you in a future meeting.

Scheduled Zoom meetings as of September 1, 2020

Tuesday, **Sept. 15, 2:30** p.m., Topic "Creating a Hummingbird Hotspot" by Kathleen Scott

Tuesday, **Sept. 29, 2:30** p.m., Topic "All About Owls" by Roger Rucker

Tuesday, **Oct. 13, 2:30** p.m., Topic "Composting & Earth Friendly Gardening" by Martin Byhower

Tuesday, **Oct. 27, 2:30** p.m., Topic "Food Choices That Can Help Save Nature and Your Health" by Pamela Turner

****Watch you e-mail for Zoom Invitations and reminders****

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$6 for remainder of 2020

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.



AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES & MAMMALS

Watch for emails concerning future meetings
SIG Chair: Steve Kelly

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.



No meetings are currently scheduled.
Watch for emails about the resumption of activities
SIG Chairs: Richard Wagoner & David Lingo

BIRDING SIG

No meetings are currently scheduled.
Watch for emails about the resumption of activities.



BIRD WALKS

No walks are currently scheduled. Watch for emails about the resumption of activities.
SIG Chairs: Ed Rozenburg & Martin Byhower



BUTTERFLY/MOTH SIG

No meetings are currently scheduled. Watch for emails about the resumption of activities.

BUTTERFLY WALKS

No walks are currently scheduled. Watch for emails about the resumption of activities
SIG Chair: Ed Rozenburg

ENVIRONMENTAL SIG

No meetings are currently scheduled.
Watch for emails about the resumption of activities
SIG Chair: Pamela Tanner



GEOLOGY SIG

No meetings are currently scheduled.
Watch for emails about the resumption of activities
SIG Chair: Paul Swetland

NATIVE PLANTS SIG

No meetings are currently scheduled. Watch for emails about the resumption of activities
SIG Chair: Larry Fowler



How to Freeze Food Without Plastic

Say good-bye to a freezer full of Ziplocs, Tupperware, and plastic wrap. There's another, much greener way to freeze food.

Plastic still dominates in the freezer, where Ziploc bags and plastic wrap are easy solutions for sealing nutrients and moisture in food and protecting from freezer burn. This convenience comes with a few problems, though, including [leaching chemicals](#) (bisphenols A and S) and excessive waste. Plastic wrap tends to be single-use and Ziploc bags don't last forever. They end up in the trash, impossible to recycle.

Going plastic-free is a better solution and much easier than you may think. There are a number of good options available, many of which you may already have at home.

Glass - Mason or Ball jars are very good for freezing, as long as you use the wide-mouth variety and do not fill to the very top. Leave a good inch at least for the contents to expand. When I fill Mason jars with homemade stock, I leave them open in the freezer for a few hours before screwing on the lids. It is also recommended to pour a 1/2-inch of water over any frozen food in a glass jar to provide further protection from the freezer air; rinse off this ice seal with warm water before thawing the rest of the contents.

Other kinds of jars are not recommended, since the glass is usually not thick enough to withstand expansion. You might experience some breakage until you get the hang of it, but it's a small price to pay for going plastic-free.

You can buy rectangular glass storage containers, but most come with plastic lids. At least they're indefinitely reusable and don't have to come into contact with the frozen contents.

Metal - Metal is great in the freezer. You can put opened cans of food directly into the freezer (it's safer than storing food in a can in the refrigerator). It thaws quickly in a dish of hot water.

I've also fallen in love with these Korean-made [stainless steel food storage containers](#) that are airtight, watertight, and freezer-proof. They come in various sizes with a silicone seal that continues to seal well for me after several years of hard use. They are not cheap, but they are by far the favorite containers in my kitchen.

Use metal ice cube trays, muffin tins, or bread tins to freeze smaller quantities of food; then transfer to a container or wrap well for longer-term storage.

Paper - If you are freezing food for a shorter period of time (2-3 weeks at most), you can wrap in unbleached butcher paper or waxed paper sheets or bags. Butcher paper doesn't seal the food as well as waxed paper, but it makes a good first-layer wrap. Double or triple for longer freezing periods. Seal any kind of paper wrap with freezer tape.

Aluminum Foil - Foil is fragile, and if there's a single hole that can mean freezer burn for whatever it contains; but if you're careful with wrapping, foil is a great option for the freezer. Use heavy-duty foil instead of regular thickness, and seal well with freezer tape.

(Note: I tend to avoid foil because it cannot be recycled locally and ends up in the trash.)

Waxed Cartons - You can reuse waxed milk, juice, and cream cartons in the freezer. They are especially good for stocks and soups, since they allow for expansion and are waterproof. Cut open at the top, wash out well, and seal up with freezer tape. As with all opaque containers, be sure to label clearly so you know what's inside.

(On a similar note, you can freeze cartons of milk and cream if they are close to expiring.)

Package-free - Many fruits don't need packaging of any kind in the freezer, such as tomatoes, bananas, and peaches. Even better, their skins will slip off easily once thawed.

I learned this last summer when someone gave my parents a bushel of peaches just as they were about to leave on a camping trip. Mom had no time to can or prep the peaches for freezing, so she threw them whole into the freezer. For the rest of the winter, she took one peach out every evening and enjoyed it sliced on her granola each morning.

By [Katherine Martinko](#) – *Treehugger.com*, October 11, 2018

A Note from the Hiking Club

Hiking Club members would like to encourage our fellow outdoor enthusiasts in the Nature Club to explore Sun City's newest trail: **Rocky Hollow Creek Trail** at North Point. Maps are available at the trailhead and can also be downloaded and printed via the **Nature Trail Maps** link on the SCTXCA website's Home Page. Shaded, wide and mostly level, this mulched path is categorized as "Easy" and opened to residents in late May. The trail parallels seasonal waterways while meandering 0.9 mile (one-way) through woodlands and meadows. Birdlife is abundant and a variety of hardwood trees and flowering plants flourish throughout this peaceful greenbelt. The trailhead parking lot accommodates both vehicles and golf carts and is accessible off Pedernales Falls Dr., between Rocky Hollow Creek Dr. and Silver Spur Blvd. **Rocky Hollow Creek Trail** was a joint project of The Pulte Group, the CA and the Hiking Club. This newest nature path increases Sun City's total trail system to an impressive 14 miles!