

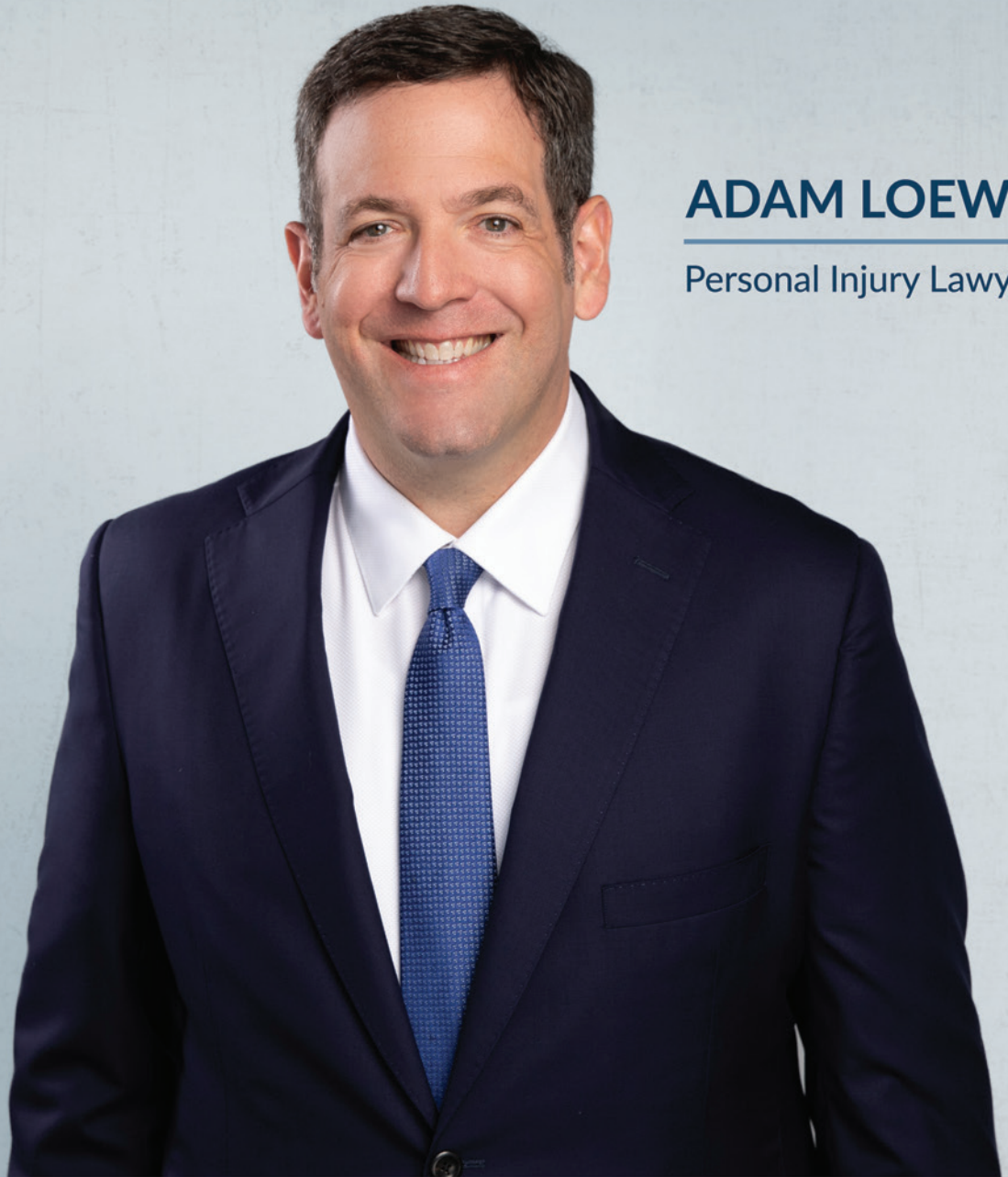
The Community **Connection**

NEWS FOR SWEETWATER RESIDENTS

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Day

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A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Want to bring a little culture into your life and the lives of your children? Why not try hosting a high school foreign exchange student? It's a great way to learn about a new culture all from the comfort of your home.

STS Foundation is currently looking for host families for the 2021/2022 school year. Hosting is such a rewarding experience and it benefits all of those involved.

STS Foundation accepts all types of host families – from single parents, newly marrieds, empty nesters and same sex couples. In order to host, you would need to meet the following qualifications:

- Host must be 25 years or older
- Pass a background check
- Provide food for 3 meals daily
- Ensure reliable transportation to and from school (bus is ok)
- A bed for your student
- A safe and loving home

STS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that places foreign exchange students with American host families. For more information about hosting, please contact me at 832-455-7881 PM me or email at vicki.stsfoundation@yahoo.com.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY	911
Fire.....	911
Ambulance.....	911
Sheriff – Non-Emergency.....	512-974-0845
Travis County ESD No.6/Lake Travis Fire Rescue	
Administration Office.....	512-266-2533
Travis County Animal Control.....	512-972-6060

SCHOOLS

Lake Travis ISD.....	512-533-6000
Lake Travis High School.....	512-533-6100
Lake Travis Middle School.....	512-533-6200
West Cypress Elementary	512-533-7500

UTILITIES

Pedernales Electric.....	888-554-4732
Crossroads Utilities (Water, Sewer, Trash).....	512-246-1400
Texas Gas Service	
Customer Service.....	1-800-700-2443
Emergencies.....	512-370-8609
Call Before You Dig.....	512-472-2822
AT&T.....	1-800-288-2020
Time Warner Cable.....	512-485-5555
Austin/Travis County Hazardous Waste	512-974-4343

OTHER NUMBERS

Bee Cave City Hall.....	512-767-6600
Bee Cave Library.....	512-767-6620
Bee Cave Municipal Court.....	512-767-6630
Lake Travis Post Office	512-263-2458
Baylor Scott & White Medical Center.....	512-571-5000
City of Bee Cave	www.beecavetexas.com
Travis County (General No.)	512-854-9020
.....	www.traviscountytexas.gov

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHER

Peel, Inc.	512-263-9181
News	sweetwater@peelinc.com
Advertising.....	advertising@peelinc.com

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The *Community Connection* is mailed monthly to all Sweetwater residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the *Community Connection* please email it to sweetwater@peelinc.com. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

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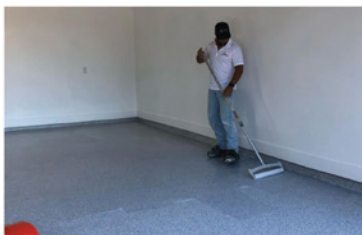
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NATURE WATCH

EARLY SPRING HERALDS

by Jim and Lynne Weber

February is a time of change in Central Texas, with temperatures often ranging from the 30s to the 70s, and it is precisely these large swings in temperature that create challenges for local wildlife. Finding food is essential, and the little things like insects that emerge in early spring rely heavily on the early bloomers in our native landscape.

Elbowbush (*Forestiera pubescens*), also commonly called Stretchberry or Spring Herald, is a multi-branched deciduous shrub with smooth gray bark, long arched branches, and light green leaves. It is most conspicuous, though, in late January and early February, when small, yellow-green, petal-less flowers begin to burst in small clusters on the bare twigs. Common in open woodlands, brushy areas, and near streams, its early flowering period provides



Elbowbush

nectar for native bees and spring butterflies, namely Gray, Juniper, and Great Purple Hairstreaks. Elbowbush gets its common name from branches that typically form in right angles to one another, reminiscent of a bent elbow. It produces a quarter-inch, fleshy, dark blue fruit often devoured by wildlife in the summer, and its leaves turn a unique chartreuse color in the fall. Additionally, Elbowbush is one of the larval food plants for the Incense Cedar Sphinx (*Sphinx libocedrus*).



Two-flowered Anemone

Poking their colorful blooms above the drab winter landscape are two species in the Buttercup Family, Two-flowered Anemone (*Anemone edwardsiana*) and Windflower (*Anemone berlandieri*). While both of these plants bloom from February to April, Two-flowered Anemone is an uncommon plant that is also called the Edwards Plateau Thimbleweed, since it grows only in this region of Central Texas. Windflower is common and has a more widespread range, and is often called Southern

Anemone or Tenpetal Anemone (even though it can have 10 to 20 petal-like sepals).

Two-flowered Anemone grows 6 to 12 inches tall, and is most often found on the moist banks of shaded canyons. Midway or further up the stem are three bracts, with side stems growing from those bracts, and each side stem can produce 1 to 3 flowers, with only 1 flower on the main stem. In reality, most plants carry only 2 or 3 flowers in total, each 0.5 to 1.25 inches wide and typically white, but can exhibit pink, lavender, light blue, or deep blue. In comparison, Windflower grows 6 to 15 inches tall, with low-lying leaves that are divided into three segments and are often reddish-purple on the underside. Its single stem carries only 1 flower, 0.75 to 1.5 inches wide, and it can exhibit the same range of colors as the Two-flowered Anemone.



Windflower

Found on the moist soils in shaded canyons in the southern half of the Hill Country, Golden Groundsel (*Packera obovate*) is a rosette-forming perennial that blooms from February to April. Slender flowering stems rise up to 18 inches above the basal rosette of oval leaves, topped with yellow flower clusters few to many-headed, with each flower 0.5 to 0.75 inches wide. Once established, this plant colonizes quickly, and can create an early-blooming, evergreen ground cover in shady, woodland areas.

Why not plant some of these early bloomers in your landscape, as they not only provide early nectar for bees and butterflies, but they are also welcoming heralds of our coming spring!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, *Nature Watch Austin*, *Nature Watch Big Bend*, and *Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies* (all published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.



Golden Groundsel

IT'S TIME TO CLEAN HOUSE

By Cheryl Conley, TWRC Wildlife Center

If you provide “rental property” for Purple Martins, then you know it’s time to clean out your houses to get ready for their arrival.

The first Martins to arrive are referred to as the “Scouts” and they are the oldest birds. Older females arrive next followed by the younger birds. Martins will return to the same colony site where they resided the previous year. Once they arrive, nest-building will begin in 4 to 6 weeks. They use twigs, pine needles and straw. Once the nest is complete, they add a layer of green leaves. Ornithologists can only guess why they do this but think the leaves may act as an insecticide, may help keep the nest clean or help regulate the temperature and moisture levels. The female lays one egg per day for a total of 2 to 8 eggs. In about 15 days, the eggs begin to hatch which can take 2 to 3 days. Babies are fed up to 60 times a day by both moms and dads.

It takes 2 years for Martins to acquire their full adult plumage. Purple Martins aren’t really purple. Mature Martins are a glossy deep blue—almost black-looking. They feed mostly on flying insects and can eat thousands of mosquitoes in a day. They catch most of the insects in mid-air and even drink water from ponds, lakes and streams while flying.

If you’ve never had a Purple Martin house and you’d like to get one, there are some things you need to know. You’ve heard realtors talk about “location, location, location?” As a Purple Martin landlord, this holds true as well. They prefer large, open areas where the nearest building is a minimum of 30 feet away and from 25 to 60 feet away from trees. Make sure your house is secure and doesn’t spin around when it’s windy out. The birds can become disoriented.

You may be lucky and get renters your first year. Sometimes it takes a couple of years for them to discover your house. There are a couple of things you can do to increase your success. One website I checked suggested playing Purple Martin vocalizations near your Martin house very early in the morning. There are several recordings on YouTube. You can also place life-sized black decoys on your house. If you have a large house with several compartments, you can construct a fake nest in one of them. Don’t forget to put green leaves on the top of the nest.

You should protect your Martin houses with predator guards. You can purchase owl and hawk guards. Predator baffles, or pole guards, will help keep snakes and raccoons from climbing the pole.

In late fall, you can take your Martin house down and put it back up when the Martins return in the spring. The other option is that you can leave it up but make sure you clean it well and block the entrances so other species of birds don’t move in. Remove the blockages in spring when the Martins return.

TWRC Wildlife Center is gearing up for another busy year. Because of Covid-19 we’ve had to cut back on volunteers to work at our Center but we are in need of volunteers who would like to learn to rehabilitate wildlife in their homes. We train you and help you every step of the way. Rehabbing wildlife is the most rewarding thing you will ever do. www.twrcwildlifecenter.org. 713.468.TWRC



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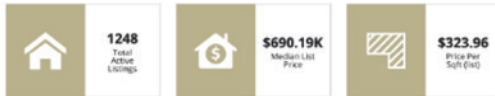
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Median Price Per Sqft:
The median list price per sqft for homes in Austin was \$323.96 in Nov 2020. See the data above for the most up to date price per sqft

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