

# Fredericksburg Nature Notes



## Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

November, 2020 Volume 1 Number 7

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/>

### Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

As Thanksgiving comes upon us with Winter just around the corner, there is still time to see some blooms, butterflies, and more before colder weather strikes. The shrubby boneset has been spectacular lately covered in its white mistflowers and nectar seekers.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, page 2 honors all that continue to contribute to the success of FNC and keep it going as a free amenity to our local and visiting populace. But as FNC reached its 20th anniversary in 2020, we should also say many thanks to Bill Lindemann and the small cohort of volunteers who had the vision and tenacity to take a piece of park land that the city considered to be “trash” land and transform it into a nature park. The odds were against succeeding much less persevering, but 20 years later, here we are going stronger than ever. To paraphrase a Guy Clark song, “They did not know they could not succeed, and so they did.”

Finally, this just in. Scientific studies reveal that those suffering from election fatigue (who isn't) may relieve their symptoms with regular “nature bathing” exercises (i.e. Walking a nature trail, strolling in a pollinator garden, visiting a bird blind.). Please note that the FNC does not charge for its mental health services.

Happy Nature Trails and Happy Thanksgiving!



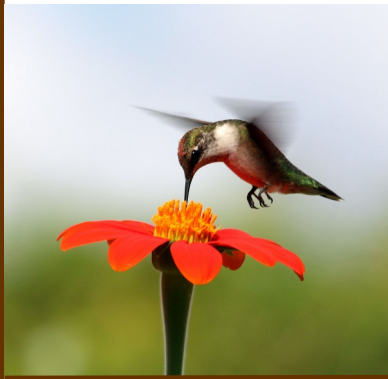
*Lonnie*



### In this issue:

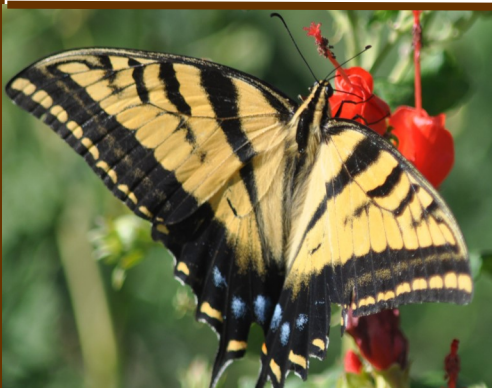
Note: No Newsletter in December.

- Giving Thanks
- Volunteer Spotlight—Carl Luckenbach
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**"There's always something to be thankful for on Thanksgiving.  
Even if it's just not being a turkey. " Unknown**

**At FFNC, we are thankful for our members, our sponsors, our tireless volunteers including the Texas Master Naturalists, our partnership with the City of Fredericksburg, our appreciative visitors, and to Mother Nature for inspiring us with her awe, beauty, and mystery.**





## Volunteer Spotlight:

### Carl Luckenbach



*Carl has been one of our faithful volunteers providing muscle at the Bird Blind and along the trails. He recently assumed the position of Treasurer on our Board of Directors. In his own words, here is his story. Editor*

I grew up in La Grange, Texas, on a farm composed of 111.2 acres, and then we had another farm with 236 acres. My father worked for a feed and flour company headquartered in New Braunfels, plus he raised Aberdeen Angus cattle. My mother was a county agent, plus had a large garden. We had a mixture of pastures, fields, and wooded areas. I spent my childhood and teen years roaming the woods and working as necessary in the pastures and fields. By the time I went off to college, to Texas A&M, I had had enough farm life and wanted to be a city boy.

After graduating from Texas A&M, I spent ten years in the United States Air Force as a supply officer and as a Minuteman Missile Launch Officer. I spent three years in northern Maine, a year in Vietnam, two years in Grand Forks, North Dakota, three years at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas, and part of a year in Tehran, Iran. While I was in North Dakota and Austin, I completed an MBA program from St. Edwards University.

While I was in Tehran, I was diagnosed with glaucoma and experienced detached retinas. This triggered my being medically retired from the Air Force, in San Antonio. After a few months of working for the Texas Employment Commission, I began a 34 year career in commercial property and casualty insurance. I began as a sales representative in San Antonio, then went to Midland as a sales manager, to Lubbock as district manager and then regional manager. I was in Lubbock for 21 years. My last seven working years were with a Houston insurance agency, living in Spring, Texas.

While in Lubbock, I realized that I had enough of being a city boy, and so in 1987, we bought some acreage north of Fredericksburg, on which we now live. About a year before retiring, we built our house, and beginning in 2010, my wife lived here full time, while I spent a final year working in Houston, coming to Fredericksburg on week-ends. In 2011, I retired and moved to Fredericksburg full time.

My great-grandfather, Jacob Luckenbach, was one of the founders of Gillespie County, arriving in April



*"We still do not know one thousandth of one percent of what nature has revealed to us.*

*Albert Einstein*

## Volunteer Spotlight cont'd:

1846. He started the Luckenbach community. His son was Carl Albert Luckenbach, for whom I am named. He married Wilhemina Sophie Engel, who officially named the post office Luckenbach in 1883. A few years later they moved, and named the new place Albert. So, there are two towns in Gillespie County named for my grandfather.

Soon after we settled in in Fredericksburg, we invited over some former Lubbock friends who had retired in Kerrville. They had become Master Naturalists, and interested me in the program. I went through the program in the fall of 2011, and in 2012, I went through the Master Gardener program. Despite completing these programs and completing numerous hours of advance training and volunteer hours, I still have difficulty identifying plants, but I greatly enjoy and value being outdoors.

As I completed the Master Naturalist program, I intended to become active with the Friends of Enchanted Rock. However, Bill Lindemann came along, asking for help in improving the trails at Cross Mountain. The first day I volunteered, it was 31 degrees Fahrenheit. However, I continued, and became part of Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center. After we finished the work at Cross Mountain, the next project was building the Pollinator Garden. After that I became involved with maintaining the various trails, which is what I enjoy the most. I like being in the outdoors, and I enjoy the fellowship of the others involved. I have served on the board of directors for several years, and I have recently assumed the position of treasurer. My immediate plans include figuring out how to use Quickbooks to help carry out the duties of that position.

As far as other interests and activities, I am involved in the Hill Country Master Gardeners, and various capacities at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, American Legion Post 244, the Gillespie County A&M Club, and the Rotary Club of Fredericksburg. I have been in Rotary for 37 continuous years, beginning in Lubbock, then Houston, and now Fredericksburg. Most of my energy has been focused on youth programs, especially the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. In that capacity we have hosted 14 long-term exchange students and I have been the counsellor for another 15 students from various countries in Asia, South America, and Europe.

My family consists of my wife Vickie, a retired educator for 44 years, son David, an Episcopal priest in Tyler, Texas, son Brian, involved in distributing electrical supplies in Abilene and Midland, and daughter Carly, office manager for the local Texas A&M Agrilife office. We have eight grandchildren, ranging in age from seven to eighteen.



*“Conservation biology . . . [is] a discipline with a deadline. “*

E. O. Wilson

## Observations Along the Trail



**Smooth Beggartick (*Bidens laevis*)** is an Aster with yellow-flowers. It likes moist to wet soil which is why it lines Live Oak Creek. Although this year’s display is sub-par, in some years, the blooms completely line the creek. This Aster grows across the US & throughout Texas except the Trans-Pecos where it is rare.

***Baccharis neglecta***, aka Rosevelt Weed, Poverty Weed, or Field Willow is the species with the grayish fluffy flowers. Considered by many to be a trash weed since it spreads on neglected fields & creek banks, it actually is an excellent plant for anchoring & retaining soil along riparian areas. The 6-12 ft shrub serves as a good nectar plant also.



**Tall Aster (*Symphyotrichum praealtum*)** is climbing up through bankside vegetation to a height of 2-5 ft. along the creek to catch some sunshine. As with other fall-blooming asters, it is great nectar source for butterflies , especially Monarchs. It grows in moist areas throughout the southern US.

Photos by Lonnie Childs



## More Observations Along the Trail



**Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*)** grows in moist areas like Live Oak Creek & blooms in the fall. It displays a profusion of flowers that provide nectar & bird seed. The 6 ft plant can colonize.

Photos by Lonnie Childs



**Dry Woodland Oats aka Inland Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)** was recently planted in our Bird Blind understory which mimics its natural dry woodland habitat. It is a 2-4 ft., clump-forming, perennial grass bearing drooping, oat-like flower spikelets and leaves resembling that of bamboo. The combination of the drooping form of the seed-head with the bamboo like leaves make for one of the more interesting native grasses forms. It re-seeds easily and can rapidly spread to fill up an understory area.



## Birds Around the Park



Photos by Bill Lindemann



**Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*)** are frequently seen hovering over Live Oak Lake. Ospreys are unique amongst raptors for its diet of live fish and ability to dive into water to catch them. Ospreys fly with a marked kink in their wings, making an M-shape when seen from below. Their brown & white markings with a solid white underside are identifying features. To hear its call, right click [here](#) & Open Link.

Source: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)



Photo by Lonnie Childs

**Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)** in flight over Live Oak Lake. They are identifiable from other egrets and similar water birds by their all white feathers, yellowish-orange bill,, and their black legs. They hunt in classic heron fashion, standing immobile or wading through wetlands to capture fish with a deadly jab of their yellow bill.

Source: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)

*"We were the product and beneficiary of a vibrant natural world, rather than its master."*

*Douglas W. Tallamy*

## More Birds Around the Park



Photo by  
Lonnie Childs

*When the Red Red Robin Comes Bob-Bob-Bobbin' Along.....  
By Al Jolson*

A nomadic flock of **American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*)** has taken residence in the Bird Blind in search of berries. They form wintering flocks in search of food & return to a more solitary life in the spring & summer. Robins spread plant seeds, contributing to the dispersal of many species & the recovery of ecosystems. The ubiquitous bird can be found in all of the continental states. Although robins are considered harbingers of spring, many American Robins spend the whole winter in their breeding range which includes Texas.

# BIRD FEEDER TIP of the MONTH

A couple of points to make about feeding birds. First, not all birds eat the same thing. Second, different birds will visit your feeders throughout the year. We all start with one general purpose seed feeder, and then maybe we add a hummingbird feeder. But as we learn and consider the possibilities to attract other birds, we need to educate ourselves about other feed and feeder types. Here is a article from Cornell Labs website, *All About Birds*, that will help you understand the various types of feed and feeders.

Go to <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/how-to-choose-the-right-kind-of-bird-feeder/>

If you really want to amplify your efforts to attract birds, add a moving water feature. That can immediately attract other birds that might not like your feed, but all birds need water. Check out this *All About Birds* article on water features at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/attract-birds-with-birdbaths/>

Do you have a Bird Feeder tip to share? Send it to Lonnie at [lonniechilds@utexas.edu](mailto:lonniechilds@utexas.edu)



“Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time. “

Katrina Mayer

## What's Blomen at the Pollinator Garden?

# Blooms

# Blooms

**Pollinator Lollapalooza!** Go to the Pollinator Garden, look for the explosion of fuzzy white blossoms, follow the fragrance until you hear a symphony of buzzing, and then enjoy watching the multitudes of native bees, wasps, and butterflies gorging on what must be the nectar of the gods.



**Shrubby Boneset aka White Mistflower or Thoroughwort (*Ageratina havanensis*)** is a fragrant shrub that grows to 6'x6' and is native to central Texas southwest into northern Mexico. It blooms in the fall providing a much needed nectar source for an array of insects including butterflies and a variety of native bees and wasps. The opportunity to see so many different insect species in one spot makes for an eye-opening experience that you can't leave. **See some of the dining insects on the next page.**







"Every single new idea in chemistry has come not from the minds of chemists but from nature..."

Thomas Eisner

## What's Buzzin' & Flutterin' on the Shrubby Boneset?

Here are just a few species seen on the Shrubby Boneset within a short period!

**Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*)**  
By Bill Lindemann



**Fiery Skipper (*Hylephila phyleus*)**  
By Lonnie Childs



**Great Purple Hairstreak (*Atlides halesus*)**  
By Bill Lindemann



**Band-winged Hover Fly (*Ocyrtamus fascipennis*)**  
By Bill Lindemann



**Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)**  
By Lonnie Childs

**Soldier Bug**  
By Bill Lindemann





*"We know more from nature than we can at will communicate. Its light flows into the mind evermore, and we forget its presence."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## More Butterflies seen at the Pollinator Garden & Butterfly Habitat



This Monarch was tagged by Gracie Waggener & then refused to leave the Pollinator Garden & start its' journey to Mexico.

Checkered White (*Pontia protodice*)  
on Gregg's Mistflower.  
This common butterfly resides from N. Mexico to Canada. This adult will only live 1 week.



Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanilla*)

Passionflower is the host plant for its Orange caterpillar. Emits odorous chemicals in response to predator sightings



All photos by Bill Lindemann



"Rule #1: Eat or be Eaten."

Mother Nature



Insects seen at the Pollinator Garden & Butterfly Habitat.

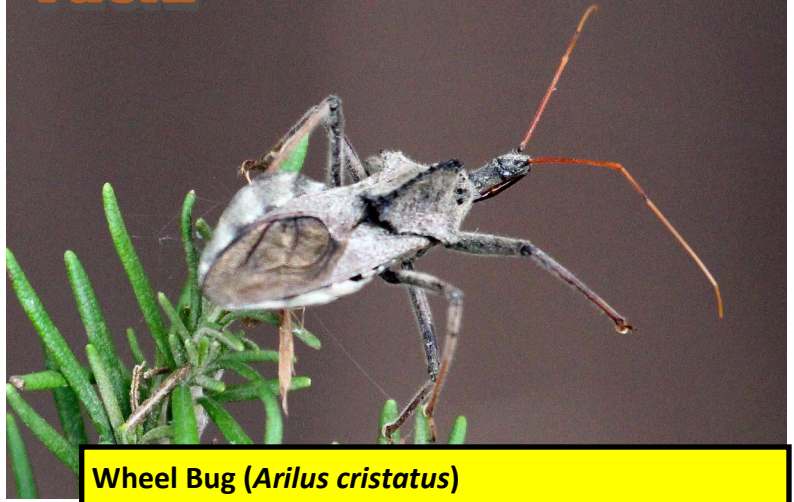
Ouch!!



Tarantula Hawk (*Pepsis thisbe*)

A Spider wasp (Pompilidae) that preys on tarantulas. Avoid its excruciating sting. To watch it take down a tarantula, Right Click [here](#) & Open Link.

Yuck!



Wheel Bug (*Arilus cristatus*)

Large "assassin" bug that grips & pins their prey with their front legs. The bug plunges its beak into its victim before injecting it with enzymes which paralyzes it & dissolves its insides, & the bug then drains the resulting fluids.

Bad karma!



Longhorn Beetle ssp.

A family of beetles with 26,000 species. In Greek mythology, after an argument with nymphs, the shepherd Cerambus was transformed into a large beetle with horns.

Faker!



Texas Wasp Moth (*Horama panthalon*)

Which is it? It's a moth that mimics the coloring of a wasp to deter predators from eating them.

All photos by Bill Lindemann



*"The world is not to be put in order. The world is order. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order."*

Henry Miller

# Butterflies

## What Else is Flutterin' at the Pollinator Garden?

Here are some other Butterflies seen around the Pollinator Garden and Butterfly Habitat.

Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*)  
By Lonnie Childs



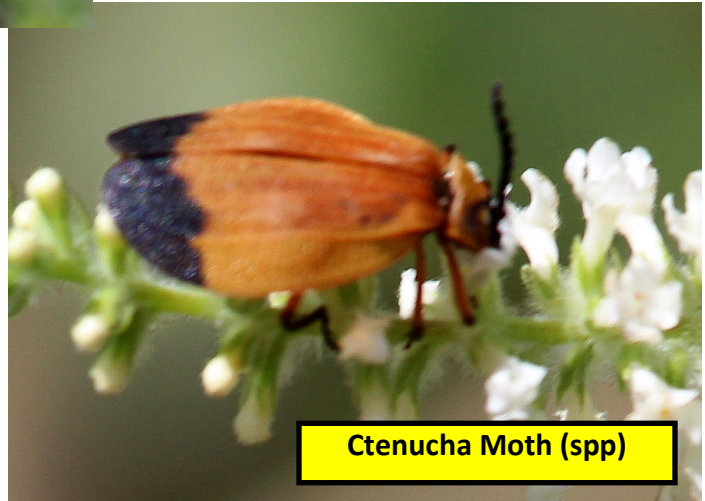
Southern Dogface (*Colias cesonia*)  
on Blue Mistflower



Sachem (*Atalopedes campestris*)  
on Blue Mistflower



Ctenucha Moth (spp)



Desert Checkered Skipper  
(*Pyrgus philetas*)

New species for LBJ Park & Gillespie County seen at the Butterfly Habitat by Bill Lindemann. Bill reports identifying 46 butterfly species in the park from Oct. 15—Nov. 8!

NEW SPECIES!



All photos by Bill Lindemann unless noted.



*"Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain."*

Henry David Thoreau

## Feature: John Meusebach: - Frontier Horticulturist (1812-1897)

By Lonnie Childs

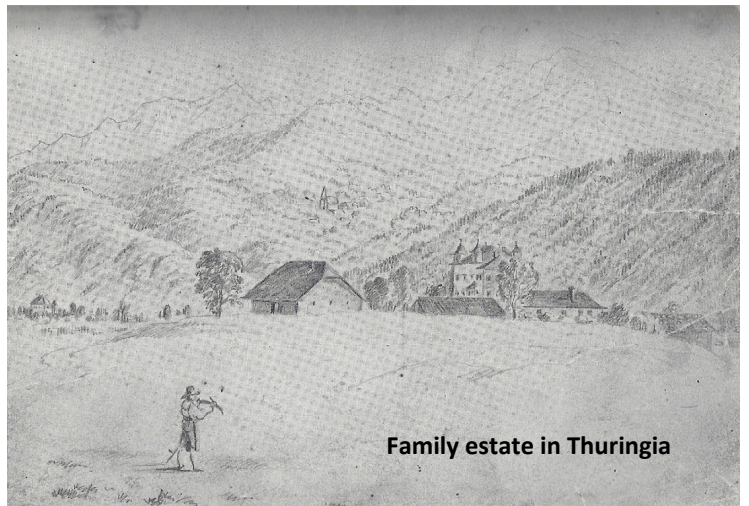
Most of you will recognize the name of John Meusebach as the founder of Fredericksburg. If you know something of his story, you may also recall that he was born a Baron in Germany, practiced law, and was on a path to judgeship before migrating to Texas to assume the thankless role of Commissioner—General of the Adelsverein Society that was attempting to settle Germans in central Texas. However, you might not know that his passion and avocation was Botany and Horticulture which originally attracted him to Texas. In the latter years of his life, he was able to pursue this passion as a pioneer horticulturist and a part-time botanical collector.



Otfried Hans Freiherr von Meusebach (John) was born on May 26, 1812, in Dillenburg, Duchy of Nassau which is in western Germany. His father, Baron Carl Hartwig Gregor von Meusebach, was a judge, poet, bibliophile, intellectual, gardener, and entertained notable guests such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the writer, and Alexander von Humboldt, the preeminent naturalist of that era. The interests of his father heavily influenced the younger Meusebach and made him a clone of his father in many ways.

John enjoyed visits to the family's country estate which was a horticultural paradise with gardens containing grapes, fruit trees, and flowers. Walks with his grandfather provided mini-lectures about various plants and their usage. Thus, Meusebach's story demonstrates the importance of imprinting nature on our youth at an early age.

At age 16, John attended the Mining & Forestry Academy at Clausthal in Harz Mtns., where he studied geology and natural sciences. He would also later attend the University of Halle to study natural sciences. His education no doubt furthered his interest in nature and developed his academic foundation in the natural sciences.



Family estate in Thuringia

Meusebach went on to study law and become a governmental official in the footsteps of his father. He no doubt would have had a successful career in law but wanderlust tugged at him. He had begun to read about



**“Let us learn to appreciate there will be times when the trees will be bare, and look forward to the time when we may pick the fruit.”**

**Anton Chekhov**

## Feature: John Meusebach (continued)

Texas, since it had undoubtedly become a hotbed of interest in Germany with the recent migration efforts of the Adelsverein. As he said in one of his letters to Count Castell of the Adelsverein,

*“For several years I have been considering going to America to obtain a large enough property to be the basis of nature study and furtherance thereof in those rich fields. I have had my eyes especially on Texas.”*

Meusebach had also begun to read all of the popular novels of Charles Sealsfield (Karl Anton Postl) who extolled the natural virtues of Texas (as did the Adelsverein). In *The Cabin Book*, Sealsfield writes glowing passages such as the following.

*“...a Texian primitive forest, in its glorious majesty, overgrown with grapes, climbing a hundred feet or more, along the trees...”* (p. 11)

And

*“There was the most brilliant carpet of red, yellow, violet, and blue flowers that I had ever seen; millions of the most splendid prairie roses, sunflowers, dahlias, and asters such as there is to be found in no botanical garden in the world.”* (p. 13)

In December, 1844, not completely understanding all the imminent issues of the Adelsverein, Meusebach contracted to become Commissioner-General of the society which required him to leave behind the country that he dearly loved, his family, and his new fiancé. As his biographer, Irene Marschall King, posits, his three motivations to come to Texas were

- Noblesse Oblige—an obligation to serve his fellow Germans; to pursue his ideals of individual liberty.
- To pursue his love of botany, geology, and natural studies in Texas which lay at the juncture of temperate and tropical zones which abound in interesting vegetation.
- To have acres to cultivate, improve new plants, and introduce new plants such as olive trees.



**Adelsverein Marketing Brochure. Note the lush Texas vegetation depicted!**



**"A hen is only an egg's way of making another egg."**

**Samuel Butler**

## **Feature: John Meusebach (continued)**

I will fast forward through the almost three years that Meusebach led the Adelsverein through its financial woes, the inability to settle on the Fisher-Miller Land Grant near San Saba, and the establishment of Fredericksburg. Only a man of great intellect and character could have navigated the immigration society through those turbulent times and achieved the successful settlements of both Fredericksburg and New Braunfels.

Upon completion of his Commissioner duties, Meusebach was most assuredly ready to pursue his dreams of engaging in an agricultural lifestyle. He pur-

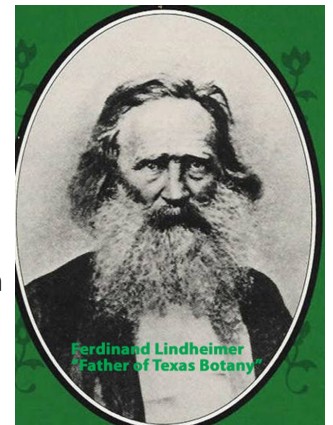
chased a 2577 acre ranch at Comanche Springs in Salado Creek Basin, NW of San Antonio, on what is now Camp Bullis. Unfortunately, his fiancé in Germany had died in his absence, so one might speculate that he poured his energy into his agricultural endeavor for relief. He established a stock farm where he also grew vegetables and flowers. He did subsequently marry Agnes Coreth who would bear 11 children. During this period, Frederick Law Olmstead (landscape architect of Central Park and Biltmore Estate) passed through on his journey through Texas chronicled in his book, *A Journey Through Texas or, a Saddle Trip Through Southwestern Texas*, and wrote these words about Meusebach.

*"At Comanche Spring, we found a German stock-farmer, with a considerable establishment. The spring gushes from the rocks of a hillside, furnishing a great abundance of clear water."*

It was during this period that Meusebach met and not surprisingly befriended Ferdinand Lindheimer, "Father of Texas Botany". They were men of similar intellect and education both committed to the political ideals of individual liberty and both passionately interested in botany. When Meusebach was Commissioner-General, he and Lindheimer had conceptualized the idea of a botanical garden to be constructed in New Braunfels with Lindheimer as director. The garden idea never came to fruition probably because of a lack of financing. Lindheimer subsequently visited and stayed at Meusebach's Comanche Springs farm in 1849 where he reported collecting 298



Photo of Comanche Springs site ca. late 1840's as appeared in *San Antonio Express* ca. 1949







***"Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction."***

**E. O. Wilson**

## **Feature: John Meusebach (continued)**

botanical specimens, some of which Meusebach would send to the University of Halle in Germany.

By the early 1860's, his children were probably in need of schooling and perhaps due to the turbulent Civil War period, Meusebach moved his growing family to Fredericksburg to operate a mercantile store. In 1867, he returned to a property at Huaco Springs on the Guadalupe River where he could return to farming. Bad luck struck in the form of a tornado in 1869 and a flood in 1872, both of which destroyed his home. He remained at this location until 1875, when presumably his children were finished with their local schooling and at which point Meusebach, now 63 years old, was ready for the next phase of a life dedicated to botanical collecting and horticultural experimentation with grapes, fruit trees, and flowers.

In 1869, he had purchased land in Loyal Valley 23 miles north of Fredericksburg and midway between Fredericksburg and Mason. It lay on the Palo Pinto Trail which was a northern route to El Paso and was a potential route for a future railroad. He named it Loyal Valley in recognition of his loyalty to the Union (King, p. 162).

Upon purchase of the land, Meusebach had immediately begun planting an orchard, ornamental shrubs, & a rose garden which had matured by the time that he moved there in 1875. He established a mercantile business, became postmaster and notary public, and opened an experimental nursery.

During the next 20 plus years until his death, Meusebach was able to fulfill his dream and establish his own little Eden in Texas. In tribute to his family estate in Germany, he was finally pursuing the vision that he wrote about in a letter to Berlin many years ago.

*"I should like to obtain a large enough property to be the basis of nature study and the furtherance thereof in those rich fields."* Meusebach October 24, 1844

Unfortunately, the first house that he built in Loyal Valley fell victim to a fire (not again!), so he subsequently constructed a fortress like house of stone whose design would resemble a modern day ranch house style. A



**Loyal Valley today looking north from a Hwy. 87 viewpoint.**



**"What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning."**

**Werner Heisenberg**

## **Feature: John Meusebach (continued)**

re-constructed lay-out of the property revealed a vineyard, fruit tree orchard, and on the south side of the house stood a large rose garden whose aroma would have been captured by the southern breezes to waft up to the porch that overlooked it on the south side of the house. Reports in King's biography indicate that Meusebach grew as many as 250 rose plants representing 85 varieties. To complete Meusebach's paradise, he constructed a Roman Bath (equivalent to a modern day hot tub) for which he said, " I speak gratitude to the Romans in their language for instituting a bath of this style ...".

In 1877, N.A. McDonald and H.F. McDaniel passed by Loyal Valley on a survey trip of the Palo Pinto as a potential railroad route, and this is what they reported in their book, *The Coming Empire; or Two Thousand Miles in Texas on Horseback*", (p. 194).



**Loyal Valley Store in a 1997 photo from the Fredericksburg Radio Post**

"This is indeed a garden in a wilderness, a spot in which one can linger and be happy...

...60 varieties of roses  
...60 varieties of pears  
..40 varieties of peach  
...an army of apples, plums, and grapes  
....His light shines afar off."

In parallel with his horticultural pursuits, Meusebach also pursued his interest in botanical collecting. Ferdinand Lindheimer had died in 1879. His mentor and patron, George Engelmann, in St. Louis was a eminent botanist himself and had funded Lindheimer's collecting trips through a subscription service to museums and individuals. I assume through this relationship that Meusebach and Engelmann had established at least an acquaintance. In a series of 8 letters between 1878 and 1882, the two exchange information about at least 27 native species of interest. Engelmann inquired about grapes of which Meusebach reported that he grows 27 varieties and sold 14. Engelmann also pressed for information about Yuccas whose genus Engelmann described and to which he maintained a life long interest. Meusebach sent some number of specimens to Engelmann.

**"Many Varieties of Fruit Trees, Shrubs and Flowers Grew at Loyal Valley"**

**A Trip to Loyal Valley  
By F.W. Doebbler  
Fredericksburg Weekly ca 1880**

### **FOR SALE**

- Fruit Trees
- Nut Trees
- Shade Tress
- Berries
- Grapevines
- Ornamental Trees & Shrubs
- Roses
- Evergreens
- Bulbs



***"To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival."***

**Wendell Berry**

## **Feature: John Meusebach (continued)**

Meusebach also wrote about the collecting and use of native plants in his personal life. Every Cinco de Mayo, he and his family would make a sojourn to nearby House Mountain to collect Mustang Grapes, presumably for jelly. They also sought out Agarita berries for use as decoration, making jelly, used the wood for a yellow die, and prepared an eye wash from the plant. Twist-leaf Yucca provided soap and shampoo from its roots, and the Meusebach's loved planting Retamas in the yard as yellow was their collective favorite color.



**House Mountain in Loyal Valley**

In closing, Meusebach envisioned that the horticultural work he was doing in his nursery would provide a foundation for the future cultivation of grapes and fruit trees in the area. Indeed, he once said,

*"I am sure that our valley will soon have as fine vineyards, orchards, and gardens as any country in the world, ..."*

*"I am sure that our valley will soon have as fine vineyards, orchards, and gardens as any country in the world, ..."*

It appears that time has proven him to be a true visionary. Or as he might have said it,

**Siehe, ich habe dir besheidt gesagt!**

**(Translation: I told you so!)**

**Sources:** *John O. Meusebach, German Colonizer in Texas* by Irene Marschall King  
Letters from John Meusebach to George Engelmann, 1878-1882

***"Please call my attention repeatedly to plant-forms which grow here or should occur here, and of which you would like to know more or would like to have specimens. Of course my memory, because of age, is somewhat short and my time limited through the "struggle for existence." Nevertheless, from it so much must be put aside so that, if only in the smallest measure, something be done for science."***

**Meusebach letter to Engelmann dated 1/26/1880**





***“There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.”***

***Ray Bradbury***

## **Book Review by Lonnie Childs**



### **UNNATURAL TEXAS? THE INVASIVE SPECIES DILEMMA**



Doughty, Robin W. & Turner, Matt Warnoch; Teks A&M University Press, 2019, 255 pages

Unnatural Texas represents a comprehensive and thorough examination of the cultural, economic, and environmental issues surrounding “the invasive species dilemma” as it affects Texas. With scientists becoming increasingly alarmed at the loss of biodiversity on Earth and its disastrous effects, this book significantly contributes to that continuing discussion. It effectively highlights not only the apparent contributory impacts of invasive species to diversity loss, but also emphasizes mankind’s central role in creating the problem by continually disseminating our favorite species around the world with the misguided intent of “improving” the natural world for our benefit. The book additionally explores in a balanced fashion the complicated and multi-faceted viewpoints on how we might respond to this human created dilemma.

The Introduction section does a yeoman effort at delving into the complex issues involved with invasive species such as what constitutes an invasive species (i.e. a non-native species that does harm), the subjectivity that measures its potential harm, and what if an invasive species eventually provides some benefit (ex. Tamarisk is great habitat for endangered Willow Flycatchers). Indeed, our current Western diet depends heavily on the “Columbian Exchange” whereby edible plants were exchanged between the Americas, Africa, and Europe during the period of colonial exploration. The authors further explore the various viewpoints on how to respond to the invasive species dilemma – 1) return the biome to a pure pre-Columbian state; 2) accept those species and their impacts that have adapted; or 3) find some pragmatic solutions between the extremes. These are just a few of the in-depth issues analyzed in the 21 page Introduction which is packed with material in an attempt to set-up a complicated problem.

The next chapters are the “guidebook” sections that examine the major invasive species including Sparrows and Starlings, Chinese Tallow and Tamarisk, to Hogs and Cats. Each chapter helpfully begins with a summary and includes the origins of the species and their invasions, their impacts, and current efforts at controlling them. For the Birders, the book provides plenty of content with the inclusion of invasive avian species, invasive plants that negatively affect native bird habitats, and discussion of Feral Cats that are major predators of birds. The Feral Cat chapter in particular exemplifies the complexities of the impacts of invasive species and the sometimes controversial debate around how to respond.





*"Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill."*

Barbara W. Tuchman

## Book Review by Lonnie Childs (continued)

The Conclusion chapter deals with how we might respond in general to invasive species as individual citizen scientists and discusses the differences in potential rural vs. urban solutions. The need to recognize and respond quickly to new invasives is also emphasized. Finally, the authors also posit that sometimes a "wait and see" approach may be warranted. Interestingly, the book begins with an examination of the Monk Parakeet as an example invasive that has adapted and is here to stay probably. The authors end with the notion that having exterminated our native Carolina Parakeet, perhaps acceptance of the mostly innocuous but attractive Monk is a fair and pragmatic response that recognizes the "resilience and mutability of the natural world.'

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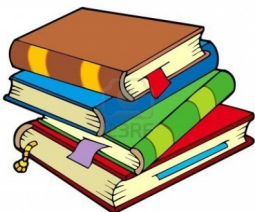
**Monk Parakeets** are a species native to the Southern American temperate lowlands which were inadvertently released in central Austin in the 1970s. They adapted to the Austin climate and habitat along the Colorado River and thrived.



Photo Courtesy of Moonshine Images

The municipal authorities considered them to be somewhat of a nuisance since they prefer nesting on electrical platforms. Today, people have accepted them, and indeed they are considered a fun attraction.

Monk Parakeets present no other obvious negative impact on the natural environment. The author's definition of an invasive species is "a non-native species that does harm." **What should be done about Monk Parakeets?**





*"I just wish the world was twice as big and  
half of it was still unexplored."*

*David Attenborough*



**Phaon Crescent**  
*Phyciodes phaon*

Photo by Bill Lindemann

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