

# Fredericksburg Nature Notes



## Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

February, 2021 Volume 2 Number 2

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/>

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

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

Despite the ongoing Covid pandemic, we had a successful year at the Nature Center in completing a number of significant projects. The Bird Blind got a major re-do with a diverse planting of native species that will make it a showcase demonstration garden, and the birds will love it. We also added a water feature that both the birds and birdwatchers enjoy. The upgrade of the downhill section of the Vista Loop Trail near the blind makes for a much easier descent for hikers. Stone walkways were installed in the Pollinator Garden. And finally, our new engineered bridge allows for a less precarious traverse of the creek. A year-end assessment of our accomplishments in 2020 prompts a group pat on the back for the efforts of our volunteers.

Our volunteer corps took a hiatus for the holidays and January but will be resuming efforts in February with a spring prep in the gardens and routine maintenance along the trails. We will be initiating a revamp of the Cactus and Butterfly Garden at the far end of the Live Oak Trail along with some other projects.

One piece of significant of FFNC news is the announcement that Bill Lindemann will be stepping down as our President after 20 years of service. See the "Volunteer Spotlight" section for more information.

Mary Ellen Terrell also retired from the Board in the fall after many years of service to FFNC. She has contributed many hours of service and great ingenuity and creativity to many projects. Perhaps her magnum opus could be considered her leadership in re-planting the Bird Blind area which all will enjoy for many years to come. Thanks to Mary Ellen!



Happy Nature Trails !

*Lonnie*

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*"There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."*

**Rachel Carson**

## Winter Butterflies

### Where do Butterflies go for the winter?

*"Most butterflies that live in cold climates spend the winter as caterpillars, while almost as many spend the winter as pupas. A few species, mainly tortoiseshells (Nymphalis) and anglewings (Polygonia), spend the winter as adults, hibernating in holes in trees, in crevices in man-made structures, or in other shelters."*

Source: North American Butterfly Association

**Here are three Butterfly species who managed to overwinter at the Nature Center and were spotted in January.**



Pipevine Swallowtail

*Battus philenor*



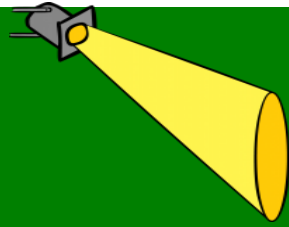
Red Admiral

*Vanessa atalanta*



Variegated Gulf Fritillary

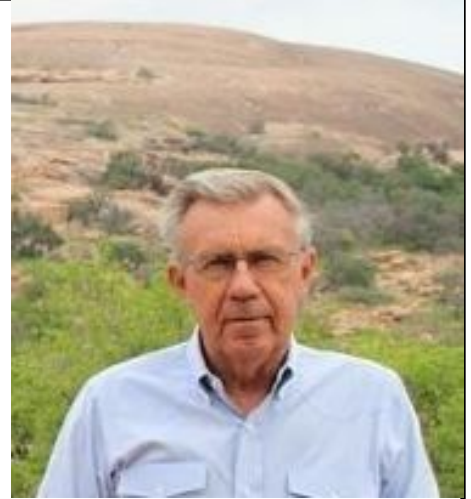
*Agraulis vanillae*



# Volunteer Spotlight:

## Bill Lindemann

*The volunteer that we are recognizing this month really should be titled as our volunteer extraordinaire. Twenty years ago, he initiated the creation of the Fredericksburg Nature Center and the supporting Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center (FFNC) and has guided both entities through the ensuing years. On any given day, Bill can be found at the FNC attending to some task and demonstrating his commitment. Bill recently announced that he is retiring from the President's role in 2021 but will continue to serve the organization in a reduced role. Following is Bill's story and only an abbreviated list of his many accomplishments in service to our community. Editor*



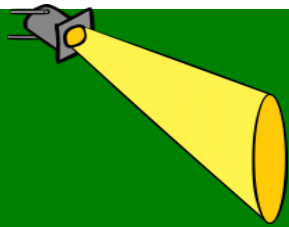
Bill Lindemann was born on October 12, 1937, on a farm in Gonzales County, Texas. He graduated from Gonzales High School in 1955 and went on to pursue college studies at the University of Texas at Austin from which he graduated in 1960 with a BS in geology and an MA in geology in 1963. He married Janet Hagler Lindemann in 1961, and they share two children and three grandchildren.

Bill's interest in nature started at an early age, sitting in his grandfather's lap listening to stories (tales) about everything nature. His grandfather grew up in the Hill Country and over time became a self-taught naturalist. Bill fondly remembers his grandfather driving him around the countryside in his Model T Ford looking at and naming the wildflowers. Bill's grandfather inspired in him not just a love of nature, but also an enduring curiosity about nature and its infinite changes and variations. His love of nature was cemented during his summers as a college student working in the pristine forests of Northern Idaho. He worked in the forest every day until it was time to fight forest fires. He says he never carried a water canteen and drank the cold clear water from the streams like every other animal who lived in the forest.

After university completion, Bill was employed by Humble Oil and Refining Co. (Exxon predecessor) as an exploration geologist. He worked for 32 years with Exxon in the search for oil, gas, uranium, coal, synthetic fuels, and copper. During this period, the Lindemanns lived in Australia for three years, and Bill travelled extensively in Indonesia, Thailand, China and other Far East and African countries.

He retired from Exxon in 1994 and re-located to a 29 acre tract in Fredericksburg. Although he did not have immediate connections to the community at the time, his grandfather had served as a circuit rider Methodist minister in the Mason area and later as pastor of Edison St. Methodist Church in Fredericksburg in the late 19th century.

After retirement, Bill found time to pursue his many interests in the natural world. Having been a long-time birder, he proceeded to become expert in his knowledge of native plants, butterflies, and dragonflies. He began writing a weekly birding column for the Fredericksburg Standard Radio-Post and the Kerrville Daily Times which lasted nineteen years until he retired after writing his 1,000th column in 2016. Bill also became a frequent speaker in the Hill Country, Texas and the Southwest on natural history subjects to schools, gar-



# Volunteer Spotlight:

## Bill Lindemann (continued)

den clubs, and professional and service organizations. His pursuit of an interest in photographing nature subjects has resulted in many of his beautiful photos enhancing the pages of this newsletter (the Editor sends his thanks!). His current stated interests are promoting historical and natural preservation in the Texas Hill Country through education, outreach and example.

In retrospect, Bill did not really retire, he simply changed careers by volunteering his leadership skills to many local organizations who were supportive of his interests in natural and historical preservation. His new career as volunteer leader did not pay well in monetary terms, but the personal rewards no doubt satisfied his civic spirit. He became involved with numerous local and regional non-profits over the years. Following is a summary of them.

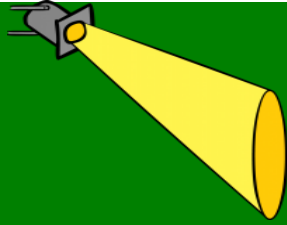


**Bill instructing our BSA volunteers on trail maintenance.**

- In 1997, re-started the local chapter of the Native Plant of Society (NPSOT) and served as President
- State President of the Native Plant Society of Texas (2001 and 2006)
- Founder and President of the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center since its founding in 2000
- Chair of the Wings Over the Hill Nature Festival steering committee for eight years
- Former member of the Board of Directors of the Hill Country Land Trust from 2003-2018; served as president for four years (2009-2013)
- Serves on the Board of Directors for the Hill Country Historical Foundation

Following is a list of awards that Bill has been presented for his volunteer service

- Received the “Star of Texas” award from the Gillespie County Historical Society in 2006 for his work in creating the Fredericksburg Nature Center and for the preservation of the natural and historical heritage of the Texas Hill Country
- Awarded the Nancy Benedict Memorial Award by the Native Plant Society of Texas (2003) for an act of Conservation/Public Service by establishing the Fredericksburg Nature Center and the FFNC organization
- Awarded the Benny J. Simpson Fellows Award by the Native Plant Society of Texas (2006) for service by a member for the enrichment of the society
- Fredericksburg City Council proclaimed December 4, 2017, as “Bill Lindemann Day” for contributions in developing the nature center in Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park.



# Volunteer Spotlight:

## Bill Lindemann (continued)

And now for a brief history of Bill's leadership accomplishments in founding and leading FFNC.

In 2000, Bill hatched the idea to create a Fredericksburg Nature Center as a result of two converging events. He had recently visited the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne in response to a friend's request to assist but found the drive too far. At about the same time, the Fredericksburg Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) requested from Bill some birding locations to advertise to tourists, but he found that he had few local options to offer that were public venues. Marrying the two events, the idea for a local nature center was born.

After working with Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation, Bill identified the current acreage in LBJ Municipal Park as a candidate. The city considered the inaccessible plot as not being conducive to the type of development defined in their park master plan. What Bill found in the site was an amazing diversity of wildlife suitable for a nature center, because it was left alone for many decades. After signing a service agreement with the city, the Fredericksburg Nature Center was hatched. In subsequent years, a supporting non-profit organization entitled Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center was formed to recruit and provide volunteer labor and raise financial support for the fulfillment of their mission statement. The stated mission statement is *"to enhance, protect, and interpret the natural ecosystem of the Texas Hill Country while providing educational and quality of life opportunities for members of the community and visitors."* An immediate goal of FFNC was to provide a venue for outdoor classrooms for local and area schools to study nature and enjoy hiking in a natural setting.

The last 20 years of FNC's history has been one of constant additions and improvements to the nature center under Bill's leadership with the constant support of our members and volunteers. After the initial formation of the organization, trail work began resulting in the Live Oak Trail. By 2002, the Vista Loop Trail was completed followed in later years by the Handicapped Awareness Trail (HAT) which provides access to views of Live Oak Creek, the butterfly garden, geology exhibit, and bird blind. In pursuit of our goal to educate our youth, the creation of 3rd Grade Day in 2004 brought over 200 students to the park to learn about an array of natural subjects. The year 2004 also saw the formation of the Hill Country Master Naturalist chapter who have provided an endless cadre of dedicated volunteers whose labor has proven invaluable in implementing many projects. "Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival, a Celebration of Natural Flight" came to fruition in 2010 in partnership with Fredericksburg Rotary Club. In 2012, FFNC took responsibility for the deteriorating rose garden near the municipal pool and converted it to the Pollinator Garden. Even in 2020, we managed to complete a water feature in the bird blind and revamp the bird blind area funded by an LCRA grant. Finally, after several generations of bridges over Live Oak Creek, Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation constructed an engineered bridge that provides better trail access and improved flood resistance. What an amazing history of consistent accomplishments contributing to an evolving nature center that is dedicated to the education and enjoyment of the local community. Although Bill will quickly tell you that FNC is the result of the efforts of



Bill burning debris from the 2018 flood.



**"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves. "**

**Lao Tzu**

## **Bill Lindemann (continued)**

many volunteers over the years, it is not hyperbole to state that none of this would have been possible without Bill's vision and leadership.

The Board and members of FFNC, the city of Fredericksburg, and the local community will be forever indebted for his leadership in founding the nature center and necessary support organization to sustain the effort and ensure its continuance for perpetuity. We look forward to his continued guidance and wisdom with FFNC, and maybe he won't have to work quite as hard in the future!

**Thanks Bill!**

## **Winter Birds**

### **Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*)**

You may have noticed gregarious flocks of these small birds congregating at your feeder with Goldfinches. Audubon reports that the species has irrupted across the US in the winter of 2020-21 searching for food due to the shortage of conifer seeds in their normal range of Canada and the northern US. It's one of the biggest irruption years in recorded history for the finches.

*"weird how every bird on Earth is now a Pine Siskin"*

— The Birdist (@TheBirdist) October 19, 2020



### **Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*)**

This eastern flycatcher is one of our earliest returning spring birds. They have adapted to the human presence by learning to use nooks on bridges, barns, and houses as nesting sites. However, they will still use natural nesting sites or man-made nesting boxes. These birds are loners often found sitting upright and wagging their tails from prominent, low perches.

**Photos by Bill Lindemann**



**“In order to see birds, it is necessary to become a part of the silence.”**

**Robert Lynd**

## **Feature Story: “Cavity Nesting Birds” by Bill Lindemann**

*Note: This article was reprinted from one of Bill’s one thousand columns that he wrote for the Kerrville Daily Times and the Fredericksburg Standard Radio-Post.*

Birds are generally very creative in developing nests and finding ways to hide them from predators. Almost all of the families of small to medium-size birds have a few members who have broken from the family tradition of building nests in vegetation to moving to available cavities to protect their young from the elements. Almost all of the warblers either build their nests on tree branches or on the ground, but the Prothonotary Warbler has decided old Woodpecker cavities provide a better nesting site.

In the flycatcher family, most build nests out on limbs or in mistletoe, but the Ash-throated Flycatcher and its closest relatives chose to move “indoors.” It would be interesting to know how many years it took these Flycatchers to get the entire population to use cavity nests. I would guess that it took thousands of years for this switch to occur because in nature most changes take place over very long periods of time in a slow evolving process.

Some members of the bird world are opportunistic and can make changes rather rapidly when a better way presents itself. The Chimney Swifts are an example - they lived in hollow trees and rock crevices until man came along and built chimneys for home fireplaces. Once the birds discovered this ideal nesting opportunity available to them, they moved right in. Unfortunately, the tables have turned on them as now we are capping our chimneys and forcing the birds to look for other venues.

Woodpeckers are considered the principal home builders in the bird world. They carve out holes in trees in search of beetles and grubs, and the resulting hollowed out cavity makes an ideal place to raise the family. Smaller birds such as Titmice, Chickadees, Nuthatches, Swallows and Bluebirds will take over any available sites as their own homes. As Woodpeckers are always in search of food, they are able to provide homes for many of their bird brethren.

The larger cavity nesters like Owls and Ducks must depend on natural decay in trees to form hollows for their homes. The smaller Owls can use Woodpecker home sites, but the Barn, Great Horned and Barred Owls need homes many times larger than the Woodpecker cavities and must rely on other natural cavities. Among the Ducks in North America, a half dozen of them use tree cavities as nesting sites. Here in the Hill Country, Wood Ducks and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks prefer these high rise home sites.

Bank Swallows and Kingfishers tunnel into mud and siltstone banks along streams to build their nesting cavities. They generally build their own tunnels, but will use abandoned tunnels when available. The tunnels are typically three to five feet into the bank, but tunnels as deep as fifteen feet have been recorded. Very few predators are able to negotiate the crumbly vertical banks to get to the Swallow and Kingfisher nests, making them safe nest sites from predators.

Cavity nest sites are very good at protecting the nests from the elements of weather, but do not provide complete safety from predators. Rat Snakes, Raccoons, Ringtails, and other birds are among the creatures that prey on nests in cavities. Introduced European Starlings and House Sparrows are competitors for nest



**Chimney Swift Tower  
Michigan Audubon**



***The Woodpecker knocks its brains out for a meal, What an appetite!  
Or is he really building houses, and just snacking along the way?  
Woodrow Avisman***

## **Feature Story: "Cavity Nesting Birds" (continued)**

sites. Starlings will kill young birds to force abandonment of the cavity nest site.

We can and do help the cavity nesters by providing nest boxes when there are shortages of Woodpecker constructed or natural cavities. Bluebirds, Titmice and Chickadees are among those birds who readily accept our man-made habitats for avians.

**Note: If you have constructed bird boxes for the cavity nesters, now is the time of year to clean and repair them in preparation for spring nesting.**

To watch a Golden-fronted Woodpecker delivering a moth to its hungry brood, Right clicker [here](#), and then click Open HyperLink.



**Golden fronted Woodpecker  
(*Melanerpes aurifrons*)**

***Our local Master Cavity Builder***

***Courtesy of Cornell Ornithology***





***"The Peregrine sees and remembers patterns we do not know exist: the neat squares of orchard and woodland, the endlessly varying quadrilateral shapes of fields."***

**J.A. Baker**

## **Avian Backyard Terrorists**

These attractive mid-size hawks always appreciate a backyard feeder which invites in some of their favorite prey. They swoop in and snatch them mid-air for the capture. If you are suffering this problem, simply take the feeder down until the hawk leaves. Or maybe you want to watch the carnage?



Photo by Bill Lindemann

### **Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)**

Although Sharpies resemble their larger Cooper cousins in coloration, they are much smaller, being the smallest hawk in North America. They are also distinguishable by their shorter rounded tail and smaller head. These raptors have distinctive proportions: long legs, short wings, and very long tails, which they use for navigating the deep-woods in pursuit of songbirds and mice. Sharpies are daring, acrobatic fliers who appear in a blur of motion and then disappear in a flurry of feathers. Sharpies use their long toes and talons to impale and hold moving prey until death ensues. Sharp-shinned Hawks migrate south out of Canada in the fall and are observed at hawk watches in very large numbers.

Some individuals do overwinter in Texas.

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

### **Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)**

Found sitting on utility poles or in treetops along woodland edges or open fields, they are known for tearing through cluttered tree canopies in high speed pursuit of other birds. In one study of Cooper's skeletons, 23 percent showed old, healed-over fractures in the bones of the chest. They are identifiable by their upright posture and a longer roundish tail with dark gray back. The dark capped head contrasts with its piercing red eyes. A dense reddish barring pattern stands out against its whitish colored underparts. Cooper's Hawks capture a bird with their feet and kill it by repeated squeezing. Its' sharply hooked beak is very effective for eating its' prey. Cooper's Hawks are permanent residents in central Texas.

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



Photo by Bill Lindemann



*"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order."*  
John Burroughs

## Backyard Birds

# Bird Feeder Tip of the Month

So you bought your first feeder and have had great success attracting an array of birds. Maybe you started with a good seed mix and then discovered that Black Oil Sunflower seeds improved the bird diversity on your feeder but at a higher cost. However, those messy birds sure spill a lot to the ground below for the squirrels to clean up. Are you ready to try something new in your backyard bird buffet?

Consider advancing to a Thistle or Nyjer seed feeder. These are special feeders with a tiny opening that only allow one seed to be extracted at a time. Only three species of our birds can remove the seeds because of their thin, pointed bills. Lesser Goldfinches, American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins, the latter two being winter residents. The seed comes from Africa and is nuked to prevent germination of another unwanted alien species in our country. The Nyjer seed can also be dispersed using a mesh sack. What is the advantage of a Nyjer feeder? While Nyjer is more expensive than larger seeds, it is a good economic value because little is wasted. *Suggested by Bill Lindemann*



**American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)** on Seedbag  
A common wintering bird found at our feeders & on roadsides or "weedy" fields snacking on thistles,



**Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*)** on Nyjer feeder. Common summer/spring resident near open fields

Photos by Bill Lindemann



*"For most of history, man has had to fight nature to survive; in this century he is beginning to realize that, in order to survive, he must protect it."*

Jacques-Yves Cousteau

**Membership Dues  
are due!**

**Go to our website  
for online renewal  
or  
print & mail our  
membership form.**

**Please consider continuing to support FFNC.**

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Board of Directors

Bill Lindemann—President	Sharon Rodriguez—Secretary	Carl Luckenbach - Treasurer	
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**Go to <http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/membership> for more information**

**Comments, questions, or future newsletter submissions can be sent to  
Lonnie Childs, Newsletter Editor, at [lonniechilds@utexas.edu](mailto:lonniechilds@utexas.edu)**