

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

May, 2021 Volume 2 Number 5

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/>

Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

Mother Nature is beginning to smile after recovering from the ice storm and finally enjoying some substantial rain for the first time in months. The Oak trees are finally pushing out spring vegetation almost 2 months late, and most of our spring wildflowers are at least making some kind of a showing. Gaillardia and Englemann's Daisies are providing a decent following act to the no-show Bluebonnets. You can still catch the tail end of the avian Spring Migration, and the Butterflies are increasingly present.

Mother Nature is demonstrating her resilience, so it's time to show yours. Get out and hike the trails or visit the Bird Blind or one of our gardens. Revel in the moment NOW! Summer heat is not far down the road.

Please take notice that all that we have accomplished over the years at the nature center rests on the backs and ingenuity of volunteer labor. The pandemic negatively affected our volunteer corps somewhat with the delay of Master Naturalist's classes and the general safety precautions. One of our missions this year is to rejuvenate our volunteer team, so please read Gracie Waggener's article on the merits of volunteering with FFNC. Yes, it is work. But it's work outside in a beautiful setting surrounded by nature with birds singing to you and butterflies fluttering past in tribute. Visitors walk past and tell you thanks for your hard work. I guarantee that you will learn and laugh with a wonderful team of volunteer colleagues. No experience necessary.

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT: “To enhance, protect and interpret the natural ecosystems of the Texas hill country while providing educational and quality of life opportunities for members of the community and visitors”

Volunteer Work at FNC

Our volunteer crews have been hard at work performing spring maintenance and making improvements. The recent rainfall (~8 inches at the park) created some new maintenance tasks for us along the trails, but we will gladly take the tradeoff for the rain! Following is a summary of our recent work activities.

Butterfly Habitat: We have completed the revamp of the irrigation system, and under the leadership of Jane Crone, we are installing some new plantings to attract the butterflies. Look for a floral outburst here in the near future. Thanks to Tom Hynes, our engineer in residence, for re-plumbing the irrigation control valves.

Cactus and Hummingbird Garden: We are just beginning on a major upgrade of this garden at the far end of the Live Oak Wilderness Trail. We have installed some fencing to exclude the marauding deer—we love them just not in our garden. Our 15 ft. Yucca did not survive the freeze, so we reluctantly cut it down. Fortunately, we have new offsets emerging from the roots, so we have replacements in the making. After a little more maintenance, we will be installing some new plantings under the guidance of Sharon Rodriguez who has been keeping the garden going for awhile on her own. The cavalry is on the way!

Pollinator Garden: Gracie Waggener and team have been performing routine spring maintenance along with some fill-in plantings. Flowers are beginning to show, albeit a little late this year, but it should be another great year at the PG.

Trails: Under the new leadership of Billy Guinn, The Trails crew has been clearing freeze damaged limbs and other overgrowth for easier access. We cleared limbs at the Kuchenbauer bench (see below) and the bench at the dam for better views. Go sit and enjoy them! We also used some of the cut branches to block cut-throughs along the trail. Please stay on the trails!

Projects underway in the near future include adding new plant identification tags and installing new wayfinding signs along the trails.



View from Kuchenbauer Bench near the Entry Kiosk.

If you are not up to a hike, then just take a seat here and enjoy the view! It will calm the nerves and sooth the soul.

We also have 650 ft. of handicap accessible trail starting at the kiosk that provides views of the creek and access to the Butterfly Habitat, Geology Exhibit, and the Bird Blind. Come and check it out!



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead

Why Volunteer with FFNC?

By Gracie Waggener

The creation and continued development of the Fredericksburg Nature Center (FNC) over the last 20 years has almost exclusively been accomplished via the hard and dedicated work of volunteers, many of whom are Texas Master Naturalists. Without them, FNC would literally not exist. We have plans for continued improvements and additions at the park, and those efforts require the continuing support of veteran and new volunteers. Read what Gracie has to offer about the value of volunteering. Editor

The Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center (FFNC) offers many opportunities to get out and volunteer, not only on our regular Tuesday workdays, but also with adult and child education through school field days and nature workshops. You do not need to be an expert in a particular skill, just bring a willingness to work and learn. But what is in it for you if you volunteer with the Friends group?

The benefits of volunteering include:

- Volunteering can help you gain confidence by giving you a chance to try something new and build a real sense of achievement.
- Make a difference
- Meet people
- Be part of a community
- Learn new skills
- Take on a challenge
- Qualifies as certification hours for Texas Master Naturalists
- Volunteering provides many benefits to both mental and physical health:
 - > Volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress, anger and anxiety
 - > Volunteering combats depression
 - > Volunteering makes you happy
- Come out to the park and Have Fun!!

Come and join us at Lady Bird Johnson Park on Tuesday mornings, and enjoy the benefits of nature and volunteering. To join the volunteer contact list, just send an email to:

Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com

Following is a list of roles that you might volunteer for within FFNC:

1. Gardening at the Pollinator Garden, Butterfly Habitat, or Bird Blind
2. Trail Maintenance
3. Lead or assist with Educational Programs for adults and youth
 - > Assist with 3rd Grade Day 2022



"Nature is loved by what is best in us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Why Volunteer with FFNC? Cont'd

- 4. Publicity including social media management
 - > Assist with maintenance/inventory of marketing materials
- 5. Membership recruitment and retention
- 6. Interpretative materials and offerings
- 7. Board of Director positions—we are actively seeking two members



**We Love Our
Volunteers!**

Nature's News of the Weird

*Bringing you the
Humorous, Strange,
& Awesome Stories
From Mother Nature*



*Mother Nature Sculpts the Earth and Geology is Her Tool
Right Click [Here](#), and Open Hyperlink to Learn More*



"But which is the stone that supports the bridge? "

Kublai Khan

Live Oak Bridge Dedication



Photo by Penny McBride

On April 27, 2021, we held a bridge dedication for the new pedestrian bridge over Live Oak Creek. We were honored that Mayor Carley Kiehne, and council members, Tom Musseleman and Bobby Watson, participated. Chamber of Commerce CEO, Penny McBride, and Fredericksburg Director of Parks and Recreation, Andrea Schmidt, were also in attendance. Cutting the ribbon was FFNC President, Lonnie Childs, assisted by FFNC founding President, Bill Lindemann. Other attendees included our FFNC volunteers and supporters.



"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant."

Robert Louis Stevenson

Observations Along the Trail

While the roadside wildflowers were disappointing this year, plenty of attractive species dot our trails this year for your viewing with more to come. So go take a hike!



It's always great to see Rain Lilies (*Cooperia pedunculata*) pop up, because it means that we have had rain! We have a spring species (above), and we have a taller species that rises in Sept-Oct—*Cooperia drummondii*.



Zexmenia (*Wedelia acapulcensis* var. *hispidata*) aka *Wedelia* is an Aster with a very distinguishable yellow-orange color identifiable as you drive by at 60mph. It is a hardy bushy forb to 3 ft tall..



Lazy Daisy (*Aphanostephus* sp.) is a short Aster with 2 local species. Find it growing en masse on the sandstone bluff along the Vista Loop Trail



Square-bud or Texas Primrose (*Calylophus berlandieri*) growing on Live Oak Trail near the dam. Our variety is a taller sprawling type.

All photos by Lonnie Childs



"Colors are the smiles of nature."

Leigh Hunt

Observations Along the Trail

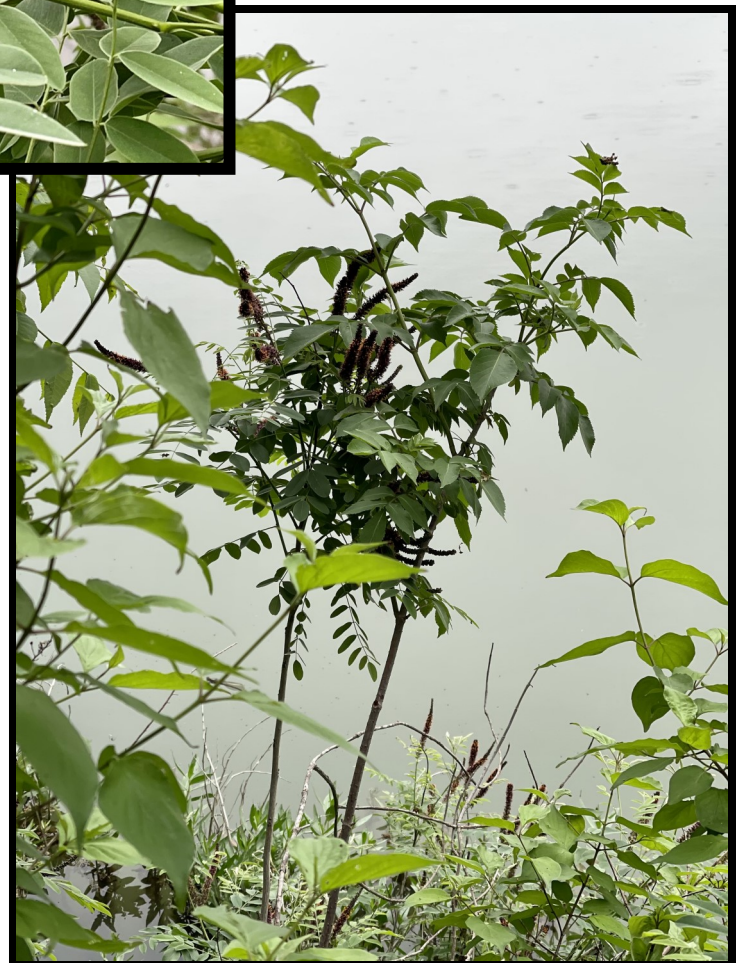


Indigo is a deep color close to the color wheel blue, as well as to some variants of ultramarine, based on the ancient dye of the same name. The word "indigo" comes from the Latin for Indian, because the dye was originally exported to Europe from India. It is traditionally considered as a color in the visible spectrum, as well as one of the 7 colors of the rainbow between blue and violet. Wikipedia

False Indigo or Indigo Bush (*Amorpha fruticosa*)

False Indigo Bush is a light, airy shrub that grows to 6-12 ft. Its favored habitat is along stream-sides, ditches, and ponds and will grow into thickets if allowed. When in bloom, it is quite an eye-catcher with its long spikes of purple flowers punctuated by yellow anthers.

Its native distribution ranges from Alaska to Florida, and it is considered invasive in the northeast. We were happy find our population growing on Live Oak Creek along our trail near where it ascends to the Cactus Garden.



Photos by Mary Ellen Terrell

"A cactus doesn't live in the desert because it likes the desert; it lives there because the desert hasn't killed it yet."

Hope Jahren

More Observations Along the Trail



Bigroot or Plains/Prairie Prickly Pear

(Opuntia macrorhiza)

This is the low growing, spreading pear often found in pastures and meadows, identifiable by the red 8-pointed pattern in its bloom. Since its traditional control by wild-fires has been eliminated, it has become invasive and vexatious. But then that bloom appears once a year, and for a brief time, it brings a little joy, until the next prick!

The Flower and the Spine—Beauty and Pain

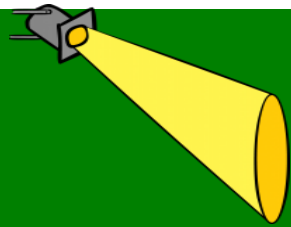
Opuntias, aka Prickly Pears, where Mother Nature tantalizes us with beautiful blooms nested in a heap of spines.



Texas or Lindheimer's Prickly Pear

(Opuntia engelmanni var. Lindheimer)

This is the larger 5ft prickly pear that is commonly seen, especially on overgrazed land. Over-grazing plus the lack of traditional wildfire control has allowed it to become invasive also. This pear does serve as habitat for quail and other small mammals such as skunks and armadillos.



Volunteer Spotlight

Carol Knutson

If you walk by the Bird Blind repeatedly and see a lady watering our new understory landscape and smiling at the birds, it is probably Carol. She is one of our newer volunteers who has dedicated herself to making our new plantings a success. We, the plants, and the birds all give her a round of applause! Following is her story in her own words. Editor

Born and raised in San Antonio and on our family ranch in Bandera County. I attended Bandera schools, and graduated from Alamo Heights HS in San Antonio. My three children all attended Bandera ISD, both sons entering the Texas A&M system, where they each played football at that level; and my daughter is a graduate of UT Austin. I now have six quite delightful grandchildren!



After my children were grown, I was fortunate enough to own a ranch in northwestern Medina County for 12 years, which I worked and managed mostly on my own, loving every minute of doing so. After a brief one-year stop-over on a beautiful Kerr County ranch, I bought this small place which straddles the Pedernales River between Fredericksburg and Harper.

Having lived most of my life on ranches, I have always been a student of the natural world. Over the years, I have participated in workshops and programs that furthered my education and understanding of the land, including participation in TPWD and Texas Wildlife Association workshops, Agri-Life educational programs, workshops at the Bamberger Ranch (where I first learned what a 'master naturalist' was from the late Margaret Bamberger), county hay shows, and 4-H and junior livestock shows with my children. I was also a member of the South Texas Area Farm & Ranch Club in San Antonio for 10 years.

While I was aware for some time of the Master Naturalist program, it finally became logistically practical for me to enroll in the 2019 class when I moved to the Kerrville ranch. I became involved in helping out at Lady Bird Park as part of my volunteer requirement after relocating to Gillespie County, where I found my niche watering the plantings in and around the Bird Blind there. My interests and commitment have always been primarily to my own land, but I entered the Master Naturalist program to have access and exposure to an even greater variety of the earth sciences and to add to my on-going learning experience.

What do I enjoy most about working at the Nature Center? The birds! It is so peaceful to be watering down in the blind, listening to the waterfall, and watching the birds.



Thanks Carol!



"Nature is pleased with simplicity. And nature is no dummy. "

Isaac Newton

What's Blomen at the Pollinator Garten?

Blooms!

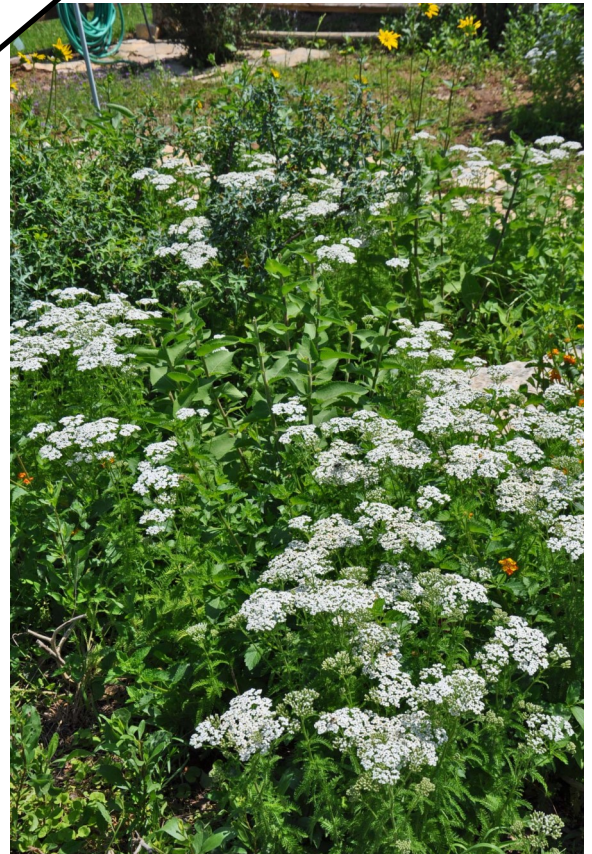
Ice Storm Uri delayed some Spring blooms, but the Pollinator Garten is beginning to show !



Yarrow or Milfoil
Achillea millefolium



Mealy Blue Sage
Salvia farinacea



Photos by
Lonnie Childs

More Blumen in the Pollinator Garten

Blooms!



Photo by
Lonnie Childs

Lantana or Calico Bush

(*Lantana urticoides*)

This is our native Lantana, once known as *L. horrida* due to its pungent odor. *L. camara* is a non-native naturalized species with pink & yellow flowers which is found growing in area pastures and is invasive around the world. There are also many Lantana non-native cultivars found in the nursery trade—yellow, white, and purple flowered. Lantanas are in the Verbenaceae family.



Coral or False Yucca
Hesperaloe parviflora

Photo by
Lonnie Childs



Photo by
Bill Lindemann

Sonoran Bumblebee (*Bombus sonorus*)

One of our largest native bees that ranges from E. Texas to S. California & south to Mexico. It is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need, so our garden is important to this constant visitor.



"Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?"
David Attenborough

Some Avian Friends You Might See in the Park in May



American Coot (*Fulica americana*) This duck - looking marsh bird is actually in the Rail family. We have a year-round flock inhabiting the lake. Look for the black head & whitish bill.



Male Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) They have arrived for summer breeding. The female is mustard colored and immature males are a red-yellow mix. Look for them at water features.



Mourning Warbler (*Geothlypis Philadelphia*) This late migrant may still be visible in our area.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo, aka Rainbird (*Coccyzus americanus*) This summer breeder is seldom seen but often heard. Right click [here](#) & Open Hyperlink to hear their distinctive kuk-kuk-kuk.



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”

Rachel Carson

Feature Story: 2021 Spring Migration Winding Down By Bill Lindemann

Without question, most avid birders' favorite time of the year is the spring migration season that runs from early-March to mid-May. This is the season that features the return of the summer breeding birds from their winter respite in Central and South America. Many of our wintering birds have drab plumages which blend into the earth tone colors of vegetation cover. Adding cold cloudy weather prompts many birders to dream of the warmer times when colorful bird and wildflowers create a more pleasant atmosphere.

We are getting to the end of the 2021 spring migration parade, so try not to think of the following months when “hot and dry” become the key words in describing the season. Late spring and summer are also the time when birds are busiest trying to raise their families. This is the time when the males are actively singing to stake out their territories while their mates are nest building and incubating one or more clutches of eggs. When the climate is favorable for excellent food generation, many bird species will try to raise two (possibly three) families.

Besides protecting their territories, some species' males share in the family raising activities while males of other species play no role in helping the females. Northern Cardinal males are an example of sharing in all of the family activities from nest building to fledging the immature children. Hummingbird males, on the other hand, only pass on their genes for fertilizing the eggs and move on in search of other females. The delegation of duties in family responsibilities has been worked out over the past thousand to million years.

I feed American Goldfinches all winter to have them hang around for me to see them go through their molt from olive drab to bright yellow plumages. Birders who live in the northern sections of the country and Canada get to enjoy these colorful creatures all summer. A similar inequity is that our winter resident Hermit Thrushes, with wonderful singing voices, are mostly silent other than making their calls or tuning their singing voice for a few weeks; whereas our northern birder friends get serenaded for several summer months.

My favorite family of birds are the American Wood Warblers, most of which only pass through our area in their beautiful breeding plumages during the spring migrating season. We are fortunate to have the only real Texan warbler, the Golden-cheek, breed here. Several dozen warbler species migrate through Texas in the spring showing off their breeding plumages and musical songs. If you get a chance to walk the Lady Bird Johnson nature trails, look for a late migrant warbler, the Mourning Warbler, with its yellow breast and dark gray hood, sans white eye ring. I have seen over the years several along the lake in early to mid-May. Currently on the trails at Lady Bird Johnson Park, you might listen for a calling Yellow-billed Cuckoo, also known as the Rain Bird for its penchant for sounding off with a rapid series of “kuks” followed by “kowlp, kowlp” just prior to summer thunderstorms passing through the Hill Country. The colorful Painted Buntings are also on territory



"Birds are indicators of the environment. If they are in trouble, we know we'll soon be in trouble."

Roger Tory Peterson

Feature Story: (cont'd) 2021 Spring Migration Winding Down

in the nature area. Spend some time at the beautiful water feature in the bird blind area as you never know what might show up.

If you did not get your fill of spring migrants, you might pack your bags and head to the mountains in the Trans-Pecos region of West Texas. The migration period there extends a couple of weeks longer than in our area. The Chisos and Davis mountains are good venues to visit before the hot days of summer set in.

**See you at
the Bird Blind!**



Photo by Bill Lindemann

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) One of the most prized birds to be seen by birders. It migrates here for summer breeding. Not seen much at feeders, it does love a water feature and a patch of cupgrass.

Lights Out for Birds Tonight!

Did you know that many birds, most notably warblers, actually migrate at night? Find out from Travis Audubon why it's important to turn out your night lights or have "dark sky" lighting to help them migrate. Right click [Here](#) and Open Hyperlink for more information.



"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time."

John Lubbock

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



Please consider continuing to support FFNC.

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