

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

September, 2021 Volume 2 Number 9

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

We wish to thank everyone who attended the Celebration of Life for Bill Lindemann. The large crowd and warm sentiments were a true testament to his greatness as a leader, naturalist, and friend. I know that the family was comforted by the outpouring of support.

FFNC has also been heartened by the over 40 donations that we have received in honor of Bill. The Board of Directors had agreed earlier this year to reinvigorate our efforts to define and implement an Interpretative Center, whatever that may be. Part of the founding vision of FFNC was to construct a facility to multiply our capability *"to enhance, protect and interpret the natural ecosystems of the Texas hill country while providing educational and quality of life opportunities..."*

It is time that we move forward with that vision. The Board is initiating some working sessions to explore what the process might look like to define our needs and desired outcomes for an Interpretative Center and how to proceed to achieve those goals. The process will include soliciting input from the community to answer two questions. What do you envision for a Nature Center? What services should a Nature Center provide? Stay tuned for information about scheduled sessions where you can provide your input. This is an exciting opportunity for us to pull together to finally deliver on Bill's vision for the Fredericksburg Nature Center. Please plan to participate!

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

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- What's Blumen at the Pollinator Garten?
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- Feature Story: *The Frogs and Toads of FNC*

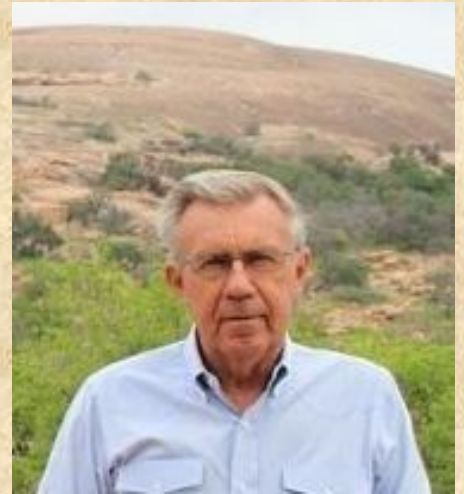




OUR MISSION STATEMENT: "To enhance, protect and interpret the natural ecosystems of the Texas hill country while providing educational and quality of life opportunities for members of the community and visitors"

Memorial Donations in Honor of Bill Lindemann

The Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center would like to extend our gratitude for your generous donations in honor of Bill's contributions to the community and natural world. The donations will fund ongoing projects at the nature center and future plans for an interpretative center.



Thank You!

Liz Althaus

John & Peggy Benson

John & Susie Bernard

Lonnie & Valarie Childs

Reggie Cox

John & Jane Crone

Bill & Fran Dendy

Jimmy & Cathy Eckert

Clifford & Patricia Ernst

Francisco J. Garcia

Gillespie County Historical Society

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Inc.

Joan P. Harris

Hill Country EXXON-MOBIL Retirement

Club c/o Will & Barbara Rathke

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Kathleen Ward

Evelyn Weinheimer

Sue & Charles Wiseman

Michael Smith & Virginia de Wolf

Barbara Scherer & Suzanne Wood

Elizabeth Wunderlich

Norman & Sylvia Young



"He that plants trees loves others besides himself."

Thomas Fuller

Mother Nature Says Lend Me a Hand Please!

Tuesday Fundays at FNC are always on! We gather every **Tuesday at 8:30am** near Pavilion #1 to split up into work parties on the trails, gardens, or the Bird Blind. Typical tasks involve gardening skills and trail maintenance, but no experience is necessary. Use it as a learning opportunity. Work in whatever area you choose for as long as you choose. We work some and have a lot of fun outside in the beauty of nature. It's good exercise for the body and great therapy for the soul.

Contact Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com to receive a weekly email notification.

Texas Pollinator BioBlitz

October 1-17, 2021

Help the Pollinators

How to Participate-

- Pollinator BioBlitz participants observe and identify pollinators.
- All ages and abilities are encouraged to find pollinators and nectar-producing plants, take photos, and share with friends!
- Share observations by posting a photo or video to [Instagram](#), [iNaturalist](#), or the Facebook event pages.

Pollinator observation challenges and informative links will be emailed to all [regis-tered](#) participants regularly to add to the fun

For more information on how to register, go to:

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/bioblitz?
utm_campaign=PollinatorBioBlitz2021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Savethedate](https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/bioblitz?utm_campaign=PollinatorBioBlitz2021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Savethedate)



Bird Feeder Tip of the Month

Not exactly a Bird Feeder Tip, but action that you can take to help our migrating birds.

Lights Out for Migrating Birds

Help protect migrating birds this fall by turning lights out across Texas! Here's how you can help: turn out all non-essential lights from 11 pm - 6 am every night starting now through November 30, **especially during the peak migration period of September 5 - October 29**, when half of the total fall bird migration traffic passes through Texas .
From travisaudubon.org



Observations Along the Trail



American Pokeweed
Phytolacca americana
aka Poke Sallet

Growing in the Bird Blind, it is currently blooming & producing berries. Right click [Here](#) & 'Open Hyperlink' for a short article on Pokeweed in the September, 2020 newsletter. The toxic berries are edible by birds.



Cardinal Flower
Lobelia cardinalis

The aptly named flower is a 1-6 ft perennial that grows along waterways. We have one blooming in the Bird Blind but frequently have individuals growing along Live Oak Creek. There is one currently flowering on a sand bar near the Fern Grotto.

Buffalo or Stink Gourds
Cucurbita foetidissima

Growing near start of Vista Loop Trail.



Photos by
Lonnie Childs



"The bird who dares to fall is the bird who learns to fly."

Anonymous

Observations Along the Trail



Photo by Alan Schmierer

Volunteers at one of our Tuesday Workdays were treated to this **Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albionotatus*)** soaring over the park at low altitude. When seen at higher altitude, they resemble a Turkey Vulture in flight behavior. The dark coloration with the prominent white bands at the base of their tail serve as identifying features. Central Texas is at the eastern boundary of their summer breeding range, so we had a lucky sighting. The southwestern states from Arizona to Texas represent the northern boundary of their summer range, and their winter range dips into South America. Another reason to volunteer at the park—nature sightings that stop all work!



“
It always seems impossible until it's done.”

Nelson Mandela

Hiking the Trails with Karen Kuhlmann



Photo by
Lonnie Childs

If you hike our trails on weekends or weekday evenings, you may have noticed this intrepid hiker fully geared with backpack and hiking poles. If you stay long enough, you will see her multiple times as she logs her current 12 mile distance around the trails. Is she just some obsessive hiker smitten with our FNC trails?

As it turns out, Karen Kuhlmann is a veteran long distance hiker in training for an upcoming adventure. She has previously walked the Appalachian Trail (2200 miles) and most of the Pacific Crest Trail (1900 of 2650 miles) before illness overtook her. Karen's next solo challenge in October will be the Arizona Trail which stretches 800 miles across the entire length of the state to connect deserts, mountains, forests, canyons, wilderness, and includes a rim to rim trek into and out of the Grand Canyon. Her goal is to make the hike in about 45 days.

I guess that explains those endless loops on the FNC trails. We're glad that we could help Karen, and we'll be rooting for you!



Photo by Lonnie Childs



"The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share."

Lady Bird Johnson

What's Blomen at the Pollinator Garten?

Blooms!



Lindheimer's Senna (*Senna lindheimeriana*)

A 3-6 ft bushy perennial with velvety leaves that provides seeds for bird food. It prefers dry, rocky fields & hills.



Simpson's Rosinweed

(*Silphium simpsonii*)

Great nectar source for Butterflies & this Sunflower Bee (*Svastra species*)

Photos by Lonnie Childs



"If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos."

E. O. Wilson

What's Flutterin' & Crawlين' at the Pollinator Garten?



***Aphis sp.*, aka Oleander or Milkweed Aphids** on Milkweed. They damage the plant by sucking out juices. These are all females who reproduce asexually.



Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanilla*) have a chemical defense mechanism in which they release odorous chemicals in response to predator sightings



From creepy, crawly larvae to beautiful Bordered Patch



Photos by Lonnie Childs

"The hum of bees is the voice of the garden."

Elizabeth Lawrence

A Frequent Pollinator at the Garden

Photo by Bill Lindemann



On Beebalm

Photo by Lonnie Childs



On Kidneywood

Photo by Lonnie Childs



On Lantana

Sonoran Bumblebee (*Bombus Sonorus*)

This is one of the most common bumblebees of the western US and Mexico. Sunflowers are a favorite nectar source, but it has adapted to feed on many other flowers as evidenced in our garden—it likes the whole buffet!

Bumblebees "buzz" or sonicate certain flowers with anthers that resemble a saltshaker with two holes. A bumblebee female bites into an anther, curls her body around it, and then buzzes like mad which blasts the pollen out the pores for collection and use as larval food. Bumblebees are excellent buzz pollinators of crop plants including blueberry, cranberry, eggplant and tomato.

Texas Parks & Wildlife considers *B. sonorus* to be a "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" (SGCN).



"The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives."

Native American Proverb

Feature Story: *The Toads and Frogs of FNC*

by Lonnie Childs

Toads and Frogs have not enjoyed great respect from the Human species. Handsome and beautiful are words never associated with these creatures. We accuse them of passing on their warts, and Toads will pee on our groping hands. If a witch really wants to mess with a Prince, she turns him into a Frog.

So what good are they? Toads and Frogs actually provide important ecological service to our ecosystems. As insectivores, they consume insects that are deleterious to agricultural crops and mosquitoes that may be harmful to Humans. They in turn are prey for aquatic birds and other small mammals. Finally, due to their sensitivity to environmental factors, they serve as "canaries in the coal mine".

Given their environmental sensitivities, how are Toads and Frogs faring? Not well. Amphibians have permeable, exposed skin and eggs that may readily absorb toxic substances from the environment. Because water quality is directly affected by pollutants, waterborne pathogens, and climate change, these factors all put Amphibians at great risk.

In 1993, a new danger to the survival of Amphibians was the discovery of Chytridiomycosis, a fatally infectious disease, caused by the Chytrid fungus. Infection of a population can result in 100% mortality. The fungus was initially discovered in Australia but has since been found in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Central America. Evidence of Frog die-offs in the western US suggest that the fungus may exist here but are not absolutely confirmed.

What is current state of Amphibian decline in the world? A United Nations committee on biodiversity posits that 40 percent of all the amphibian species known to science, or about 3,200 species, are endangered and at risk for extinction due to the identified risks, which include human impacts.

Locally, Toads and Frogs have had a good year due to the abundant summer rains and increased availability of insects. I have a bumper crop of Gulf Coast Toads around my home, and I have seen several at FNC. Southern Leopard Frogs also appear to be thriving this year.

Following are some of the Frog and Toad species that you may encounter or hear at FNC.

Gulf Coast Toad (*Bufo* or *Incilius nebulifer*) is one of the more common species in southeastern Texas. Its total distribution ranges from Gulf coastal Mexico north to the Mississippi coast. We are on the north



Photo by
Lonnie Childs

Gulf Coast Toad (*Incilius valliceps*)

"Frogs have it made, they get to eat what bugs them."
Anonymous

Feature Story: The Toads and Frogs of FNC

(continued)

western edge of its distribution but seem to have healthy populations.

This toad unsurprisingly prefers a dark, moist hole to hunker down in, especially in your garden landscape. My wife twice found one hiding in a shoe left outside on our porch. What a surprise when she tried to put the shoe on! I have found them in the underground hose bib at the Pollinator Garden and on the arid sandstone bluff above Live Oak Creek.

The best identifying feature for this species is the white stripe down the middle of its back and the deep furrow between its eyes. Its coloration ranges from almost black to grayish-brown.

The **Texas Toad (*Bufo or Anaxyrus speciosus*)** is brown with yellow-green spots. This dry land species can be found burrowed in loose soil in grasslands, open woodlands and areas with sandy soil across Texas from east of IH35 to the Trans-Pecos. Interestingly, there are no confirmed sightings in Gillespie County, and we have not recorded it in the park. This species is the Texas state Amphibian.



Red-spotted Toad (*Anaxyrus punctatus*)

The **Red-spotted Toad (*Anaxyrus or Bufo punctatus*)** has been spotted at FNC. Another dry land Toad, it lives in the western two-thirds of Texas. For habitat, it prefers rocky canyons, stream sides, and burrowing under rocks. Its name recognizes its most identifiable feature—red/orange warts on gray or brown coloring.

Southern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates sphenoccephalus utricularia*) is a species of "true frogs" (Ranidae) which range around the world. Our Southern species lives in the eastern half of the US. In appearance, it is green or brown in color with a yellowish ridge along each side of the back. Rounded dark spots occur on the back and sides. This frog lives in many types of shallow freshwater habitat and sometimes in slightly brackish water. It is usually found close to water but it can stay on dry land for long periods of time. These frogs are also capable of quite long leaps which are amazing to watch.



Wikipedia

**Southern Leopard Frog
(*Lithobates sphenoccephalus utricularia*)**

Feature Story: *The Toads and Frogs of FNC*

(continued)

Blanchard's Cricket Frog (*Pseudacris crepitans blanchardi*) is a small frog with warty skin that is usually brown, gray, tan, or olive green, with darker bands of color on the legs. It is commonly found in wetlands or ponds. With a lifespan of only one year and a highly vascularized back which makes it susceptible to the absorption of chemicals, that may explain why it is declining in population in some areas and considered threatened. Its distribution is the central and midwestern US.



Photo by Thomas R. Johnson

**Blanchard's Cricket Frog
(*Pseudacris crepitans blanchardi*)**

Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) is the largest frog naturally occurring in North America. Its original distribution ranged from eastern Colorado to the east coast, but it has been introduced in the western states. It occurs throughout Texas. Its normal habitat is on the edges of ponds, lakes and marshes. They are the predominant amphibian species in their habitats and can cause the decline of other amphibian species. Bullfrogs are opportunistic, voracious predators, and prey on any animal smaller than themselves and are even highly prone to cannibalism. Juvenile frogs readily colonize available habitats. Due to their voracious predation and introduction into other geographies, they constitute a real threat to native species around the world.

In spite of all that, they are perhaps our most celebrated species with folklore, a Mark Twain short story, and even pop songs written about them. Its evening croon can be a comforting sound on a warm summers eve.



Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*)



"Each species is a masterpiece, a creation assembled with extreme care and genius."

E.O. Wilson.

Feature Story: *The Toads and Frogs at FNC*

(continued)

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TOADS AND FROGS

FROGS

- 1) Smooth skinned
- 2) Generally found close to water
- 3) Long hind legs for hopping
- 4) In defense, hop away
- 5) Lithe and athletic bodies
- 6) Spawn is laid in gooey clumps
- 7) Usually have big, bulging eyes
- 8) Usually not poisonous

TOADS

- Warty skinned
- May often be found far from water
- Short hind legs for crawling
- In defense, sit still or take short hops
- Squat and dumpy bodies
- Spawn floats in stringy lengths
- Eyes are more subtle
- All are poisonous

There is no taxonomic difference between Frogs and Toads. The descriptors have no scientific basis. In fact, Toads could be considered as Frogs. Both are considered as indicators of a healthy habitat, so keep a look out or an ear out for them in your landscape.

Healthy Habitats = Happy Frogs and Toads

American Toad: Myths and Misconceptions

Myth 1 – Toads will give you warts if you touch them: *False*

Myth 2 – Toads must be completely safe to handle if they do not transmit warts: *False* (All Toads secrete toxins. Most are mild, but always wash your hands after handling them.)

Myth 3 – Wild-caught toads make good pets: *False*. (Leave them where you find them!)

Myth 4 – Toads are terrestrial species and do not need to be near water to thrive: *False* (They need water to breed.)

Myth 5 – Toads are poisonous: *TRUE*.

Source: *Conserve Wildlife Blog*



"If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere."

Laura Ingalls Wilde



*Corona de Cristo
Passiflora foetida*

Please consider continuing to support FFNC.

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Board of Directors

Lonnie Childs—President Sharon Rodriguez—Secretary Carl Luckenbach - Treasurer
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Jane Crone Gracie Waggener

**Thanks to our supporters and the City of Fredericksburg
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Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center!**

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**Comments, questions, or future newsletter submissions can be sent to
Lonnie Childs, Newsletter Editor, at lonniechilds@utexas.edu**