

# Fredericksburg Nature Notes



## Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

November, 2021 Volume 2 Number 11

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

We are having another strange season, weather-wise. We had about half a year's rain in May, June, and July, then almost nothing for over 2 months. We did not enjoy our typical September rainfall, so the fall native plant bloom was delayed until mid October, which lasted into mid-November without a freeze to date to snuff it out (see the photo on page 8). Forecasters predict a La Nina winters which portends a warmer and drier season. Beware—last winter's La Nina still allowed for the ice storm!

All this weather weirdness has produced some unusual outcomes in the natural world. Mother Nature's biological clock has gone awry. Texas Redbud (Spring's harbinger) was simultaneously dropping leaves and sporting blooms at my house recently. Monarch butterflies were observed hanging around into November. Where is the fall bird migration? Normally, kettles of Broad-winged Hawks and v-formed sedges of Sandhill Cranes would be passing overhead migrating south., but only a few have been sighted. Stay tuned.

As to more routine news at FNC, there is plenty to report. We welcome Mary Ellen Terrell back to the Board after a year's sabbatical. Fredericksburg city government has installed a handsome bronze plaque in the park in memory of Bill Lindemann. Look for the FFNC float in the upcoming Christmas parade. Check out the new videos by Paula Stone featuring FNC trails and the Pollinator Garden. Finally, any warm day that you look up and see one of our fine blue sky days, go take a hike in the park!

As always, we offer many thanks for Mother Nature's gifts, for a wonderful group of volunteers and supporters, and for great partners like the city of Fredericksburg. Have a safe and happy holiday!

Happy Nature Trails!

*Lonnie*

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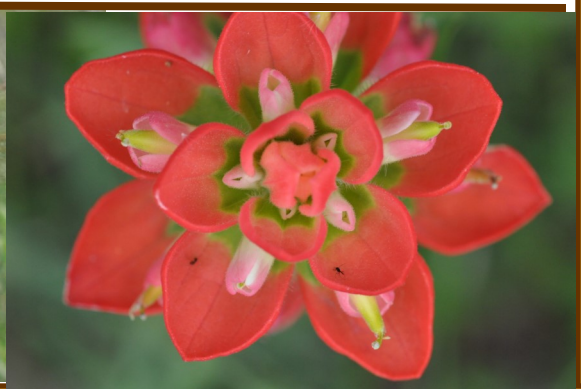
**No newsletter in December.**

**Look for us to be back in January, 2022.**



**"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 supporters, 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.**





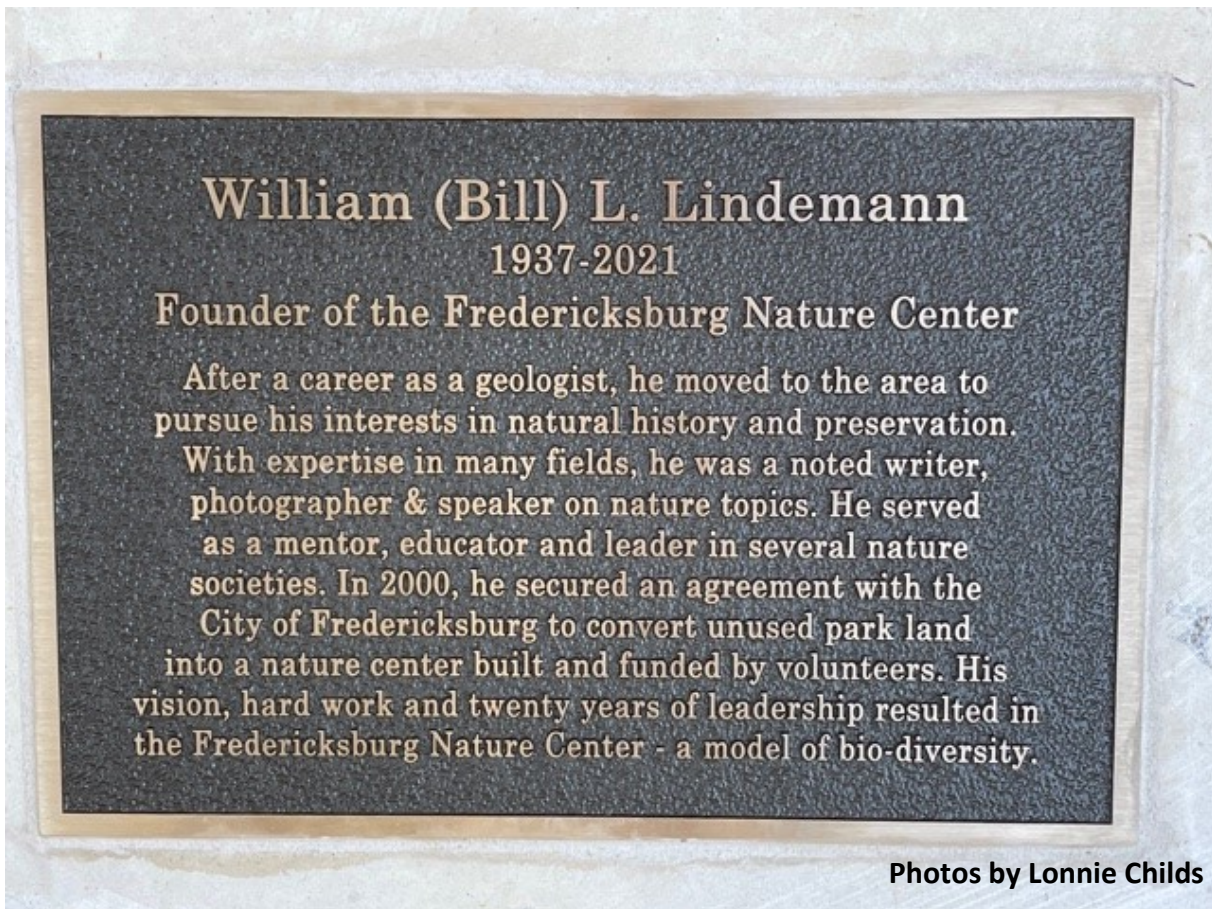


***"Carrying on your friend's legacy is a dutiful task. Trying to live a lesson they taught through their way of life is a way to honor them."***  
**Anonymous**

## Thanks to the City of Fredericksburg



The City of Fredericksburg recently installed this plaque in honor of our founder, Bill Lindemann. The plaque is located near the entrance kiosk at the start of the nature trails. If you are in the park, please stop by and check it out.



Photos by Lonnie Childs





*"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."*

**Gandhi**

## Volunteers at Work and Play



Tom Musselman, Tom Hynes, & Frank Garcia install a railing along the upper Vista Loop Trail.

**Thanks to our  
Volunteers!**



Our volunteers enjoy a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on October 19th.

**Photos by Dot Maginot**



**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](mailto:gwaggener@flow-apps.com) to receive a weekly email notification.





***"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."***

**Dr. Seuss**

## **FFNC Volunteers Tag Some Monarchs**



**Above: Tom Hynes and Gracie Waggener recently assisted in conducting an annual Monarch tagging event at Dobbs Runn Ranch along the West Nueces River. Tagging Monarchs & reporting the location will assist scientists in determining migration pathways if the monarch is recaptured at a later date and different location.**

**Below: One of the rewards for participants is this luncheon setting. Clockwise from L-R are Tom Hynes, Sarah Hilburn, Cathy Downs, Gracie Waggener, and Paula Smith (ranch owner).**



**Photos by  
Veronica Frida**

*"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."*

*William Shakespeare*

## Videos Showcase FNC

The recently held Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) annual symposium featured two videos showcasing FNC and our seven micro-habitats and wonderful Pollinator Garden. The videos were filmed and produced by **Paula Stone of Gilbriar Productions** and also President of the Fredericksburg NPSOT chapter. Thanks Paula!

**Fredericksburg Nature Center Hike** is led by Lonnie Childs as he leads a hike around our trails and highlights our seven micro-habitats.



<https://youtu.be/Y3uxNfXjMo8> (Right Click on link & Open Link or copy & paste into browser).

**Pollinator Garden of Fredericksburg Nature Center** features Gracie Waggener discussing our Pollinator Garden and the details of how and why to create such a garden.

<https://youtu.be/mqI0hnrZZ1c> (Right Click on link & Open Link or copy & paste into browser).



## FFNC at the Parade



Look for our **FFNC float** in the **Fredericksburg "Light the Night Christmas Parade"** on Friday, December 3rd. We will be celebrating the original settlers in commemoration of Fredericksburg's 175th anniversary.

Kudos to Gracie Waggener (chief creative officer), Tom Hynes (chief engineer), and their team for designing and assembling our float. Thanks to Nancy and Paul Person for hosting the effort at their Windmill Meadows Farm.

We also want to thank Andy at Elder Hardwoods in Stonewall for donation of materials for the float.





**"I imagine the life of an atheistic praying mantis to be rather torturous."**

**Brian Celio**

## Observations Along the Trail

All photos by Dot Maginot



**Blacktail Jackrabbit ,aka American Desert Hare, *Lepus californicus***

Its long rear legs enable escape speeds of 30 mph & leaps of 20 ft. They harbor high levels of disease & parasites. They are hares, not rabbits.

**Praying Mantis *Mantis sp.***

There are 2,400 species living in temperate & tropical zones. About 90% of species practice sexual cannibalism—the female eats the male after mating, usually starting with the head. Some suggest that this is further confirmation that males can be really clueless.



**Orb-weaver or Garden Spider *Argiope sp.***

Members of the Araneidae family of spiders. Orb-weavers are so named because of the large circular webs that can span 8 -10 ft. The curlicue silk structure is called a stabilimentum whose purpose is debated. These spiders also practice sexual cannibalism. They make great garden ornaments & function as insect traps.





## Avian Amigos at the Bird Blind



A female **Northern Cardinal** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) enjoys the water feature. She is one of the few North American female songbirds who sings, oftentimes sitting on her nest.

A **White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*) either meditating or imagining how good those Pokeberries are going to taste.



**White-winged Doves** engorging themselves on Pokeberries





*"Another fall, another turned page..."*

Wallace Stegner

## What's Blumen at the Pollinator Garten?



Photo by Lonnie Childs

Our lack of a freeze to date has allowed this bounteous bouquet one last chance to make a dazzling display. Copper **Canyon Daisy** in **yellow**, **Shrubby Boneset** in **white**, and **Red Salvia** provide a final fall drink of nectar for persistent pollinators. Enjoy!

## Nature's News of the Weird

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



*"Jaguar Eats a Caiman"*

Right Click [here](#) & Open Hyperlink

Thanks to James Lasswell for this submission. Send me your stories



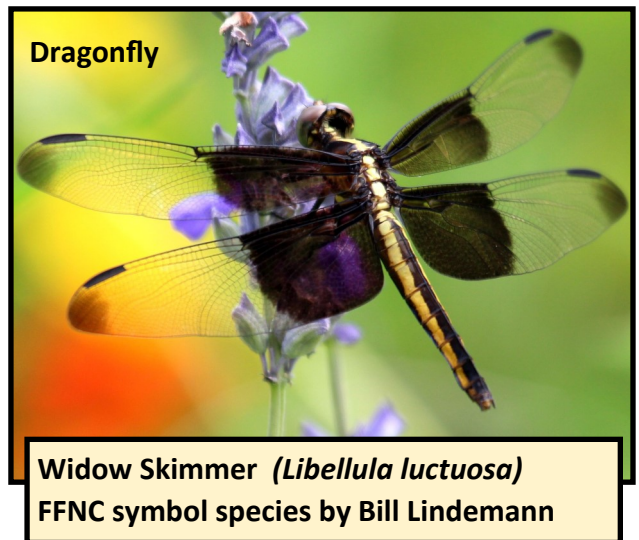
**“Magic is seeing wonder in nature's every little thing, seeing how wonderful the fireflies are and how magical are the dragonflies.”**  
**Ama H.Vanniarachchy**

## **Feature Story: The Odonates—A Brief Primer by Lonnie Childs**

If you hike along Live Oak Creek, particularly below the dam in the wetland area, you are likely to observe one of the fifty plus species of Odonates that we proudly host at FNC. In fact, the Widow Skimmer dragonfly is our FNC symbol. What are Odonates? Dragonflies and Damselflies.

### **Origins**

**Odonata** is an order of flying insects that includes the Dragonflies and Damselflies. Like most other flying insects, they evolved in the early Mesozoic era (252-66 MYA), and their physical appearance makes you accurately imagine that they flew with the Dinosaurs. Although there is still some scientific debate, their prototypes, the giant dragonflies of the Carboniferous (325 MYA) are no longer placed in the Odonata but included in the Protodonata or Meganisoptera. These prototype species sported wingspans measuring up to 28 inches!



**Dragonfly**

**Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*)  
FFNC symbol species by Bill Lindemann**

### **Similarities**

Besides a general resemblance in physical characteristics, **Damselflies** and **Dragonflies** also share other features. They have aquatic larvae called nymphs, and all of them, larvae and adults, are carnivorous, and almost entirely insectivorous. The adults can land, but rarely walk. Their legs are specialized to facilitate catching prey (other insects) in flight. These insects characteristically have large rounded heads covered mostly by well-developed, compound eyes which provide good vision, two pairs of long, transparent wings that move independently, and elongated abdomen

### **Differences**

**Dragonflies** are placed in the suborder **Eiprocta**, usually being larger, with eyes together and wings up or out at rest. **Damselflies**, suborder **Zygoptera**, are usually smaller with eyes placed apart and wings along body at rest.

### **Lifecycle**

Odonates are aquatic or semi-aquatic as juveniles. Adults are generally seen near bodies of water and are often also described as aquatic insects. However, many species adults range far from water.

Adults lay eggs in water or on vegetation near water or wet places. The eggs hatch to produce pronymphs which live off the nutrients that were in the egg. The pronymphs then develop into instars with approximately 9–14 molts that in most species voraciously prey on other aquatic organisms, including small fishes. The nymphs grow and molt into flying immature adults, whose color is not yet developed. These insects later transform into reproductive adults





"Yesterday a child came out to wonder, caught a dragonfly inside a jar..."

Joni Mitchel

## Feature Story: The Odonates—A Brief Primer (continued)

A surprising and interesting fact about Odonates is that, they will spend only a very short part of their life span as actual adults. They will live as nymphs for up to four years, molting their skin between 8 to 17 times depending on the species. When they finally mature into adults, they only live for a few months

### Ecological Services

Ecological Services describes benefits that humans derive from a species or eco-system. The services are many and range from food to building materials to cultural and spiritual benefits. Odonates provide at least four obvious ones.

**First**, Odonates serve as **bioindicators** of water quality in rivers and streams, since they depend on high quality water for proper development in early life. Because their diet consists entirely of insects, Odonate population density is directly proportional to the availability of prey. The abundance of Odonates indicates the abundance of prey in the examined ecosystem.

**Second**, Odonates can also be bioindicators of the health of vascular plant communities. Species richness of vascular plants has also been positively correlated with the species richness of Odonates in a given habitat.

**Third**, since Odonates engage in predation of other insects, they are considered beneficial species in any landscapes but particularly in human landscapes and gardens.

**Finally**, Odonates provide awesome beauty in the natural world which translates into wonder and enjoyment for the human observer. The accompanying photos should seal the deal. Next time that you see that classic Odonate shape dipping and darting about, stop and take a look. You will be not be disappointed.



Dragon fly

Red-tailed Pennant (*Brachymesia furcata*)  
In "obelisking" posture by Bill Lindemann



Dragonfly

Four-striped Leaftail  
*Phyllogomphoides stigmatus*  
By Bill Lindemann



Damselfly

Blue-fronted Darner  
*Argia apicalis*  
by Dot Maginot

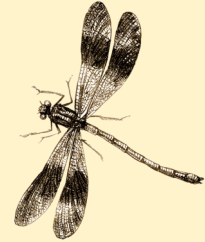


*"The dragonfly charm. Embrace the magic of nature & life will be filled with good fortune."*

Viola Shipman

**Feature Story: The Odonates—A Brief Primer (continued)**

**Myths About Dragonflies**



- Dragonflies sting.** This probably comes from their habit of curling their tail when captured. Not true.
- Dragonflies live just one day.** The adults live from 1 week to two months.
- Dragonflies can sew your mouth (or ears or eyes) shut,** because they are the "Devil's darning needles." What do you think?
- Dragonflies are evil.** They are also known as the "water witch, hobgoblin fly, or devil's horse." In Asian cultures, dragonflies represent good luck or prosperity. Go figure.
- Dragonflies harass horses.** They probably hang around horses to prey on the flies that they attract.

**How to differentiate Dragonflies from Damselflies?**

CHARACTERISTIC	DRAGONFLY	DAMSELFLY
<b>Eyes</b>	Eyes touch or nearly so; Located at top of head	Eyes clearly separated; Mounted on short stalks
<b>Body</b>	Robust & chunky	Usually long & slender
<b>Wing Shape</b>	Dissimilar pairs; Hind wings broader	Both sets of wings similar in shape
<b>Wing Position at Rest</b>	Wings held open or drooping downward	Wings held closed, often over abdomen

**See our information kiosk about Odonates near the Live Oak dam.**





*"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."*  
Henry David Thoreau

Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanilla*)  
by Bill Lindemann



**Please consider continuing to support FFNC.**

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