

# Fredericksburg Nature Notes



## Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

January, 2022 Volume 3 Number 1

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

We have reached the Winter Solstice which always gladdens my heart, as it means that the days are lengthening, and we are moving towards the spring renewal. The many warm days of December were enjoyable until you think about at what price they came. The warm days have been punctuated by some hard freezes of late that will re-set our natural cycles somewhat. La Nina is robbing us of winter rain which means that the Bluebonnets which sprouted early will suffer. We re-seeded our meadow near the new Butterfly Bench and are irrigating it to help it along.

It's a new year, so look for upcoming announcements about input sessions to be held to gather your ideas about a planned Interpretive Center at FNC. I personally want to wait for our Omicron surge to subside before we convene in groups. We also plan to start guided trail hikes on Saturdays for members only in March.

We can always use new volunteers and will have an opening for a new Board member, so make a new year's resolution to join FFNC for some working fun in the park. We also will be sending out reminders that it is time to renew memberships. We have been lax in recent years and are actively working to bring many of you back into the membership fold.

Finally, although there's not a lot of greenery and no flowers to gaze upon, it's still a good time for a hike. I enjoy the absence of vegetative obstruction which allows you to see through the trees and make new discoveries. There are new views to be had—winter negatives of summer pictures stripped down to the bones. Come and see for yourself.

Happy Nature Trails!

*Lonnie*

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# Happy New Year!



**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"**

## **FFNC @ Fredericksburg Light the Night Christmas Parade**



Helping to construct the float are **Frank Garcia, Billy Guin, and Sharon Rodriguez**. The building team was led by our Chief Engineer, **Tom Hynes**.

Photo by Lonnie Childs



Our float commemorated the founding of Fredericksburg by German immigrants and featured a faux log cabin. We took 2nd place in the Historical category. A big thanks to our Chief Creative Officer, **Gracie Waggener**, for another winning float!



We found this motley crew of pioneers to inhabit the float. No wait! It's actually our FFNC volunteer squad **Tom Hynes, Gracie Waggener, Jane Crone, Nancy Person, Billy Guin, and Patti Guin**.

Photos by Paul Person



*"Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more."*

**H. Jackson Brown Jr.**

## Volunteers at Work



Photo by  
Bill Lindemann

Our long-time Board member, volunteer, and Chief Engineer, **Tom Hynes**, has announced that he will retire from the Board of Directors. Tom began volunteering at FNC around 2010 and joined our Board in 2013. Many of the prominent structures around the park have Tom's fingerprints on them including, the Leopold Bench, Pollinator Garden pergola, Christmas float, and the Bird Blind. Fortunately, he will continue to contribute his knowhow on our trail and construction projects. We want to thank Tom for his expertise and technical contributions but also for his teamwork, genial spirit, and willingness to join in wherever needed. He shines as a model Texas Master Naturalist and volunteer for all that follow in his footsteps. The great news is that we get to continue reaping the benefits of his efforts!

**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.



# Volunteer Spotlight



## Dot Maginot

*If you have noticed some great new photos in the newsletter recently, particularly of birds, then you have found the work of Dot Maginot. Dot has agreed to serve as a contributing photographer to our organization. I am grateful and pleased to have another set of eyes and lenses to help capture the fleeting and everchanging beauty of FNC. Thanks Dot! Here is her story in her own words. Editor*

I was born and raised in Olympia, Washington. I am the youngest of 5 girls. My mom still lives in Olympia, and I go up to visit at least twice a year. Whenever I go up to Washington, I always rent a house on Puget Sound, just so I can see the bald eagles, seals, whales, sea lions and whatever else shows up. I appreciate the area so much more, since I moved away.

I have always loved the outdoors. Growing up, we never spent a lot of time inside. My sisters and I would explore the woods, swim in the lakes, and float down the river in the summers. We rode our bicycles everywhere. The rain never stopped us from doing anything.

I moved around in my youth and landed in Houston from 1985-1993. While I was there, I worked full time during the day and went to school at night. After finishing my business degree at the University of Houston, I met my husband, Ken, in 1990 when we both worked at Prudential. We got married a year later, and our son, Kyle, was born a year after that.

Ken is from Chicago, and I'm from the Pacific Northwest, so we had a short conversation about moving away from the heat and humidity of Houston. After a move to Grand Rapids, Michigan for a couple of years, we lived in Naperville, Illinois for 24 years. In June, 2019, we moved to Kerrville with the intent of making this our retirement home. We chose Kerrville for a couple of reasons. Ken wanted to live in Texas, and I agreed, as long as it wasn't in Houston. We settled in the Hill Country where the climate was nice, and there is abundant wildlife to keep me happy.

I became involved with Texas Master Naturalist through a friend whom I met here. After watching me take pictures of wildlife and seeing my interest in nature, my friend mentioned the Texas Master Naturalist program. By taking the class, I knew it would be a great opportunity to discover what was in my own backyard, to be outside, and to learn about everything that I knew nothing about. The class is just a jumping off point for learning what is in the Texas Hill Country. It was better than I ever expected! I have learned so much and still have so much to learn.

What led me to the Fredericksburg Nature Center were some trial-and-error experiences with finding a good



*“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”*

Arthur Ashe

## Volunteer Spotlight—Dot Maginot (continued)

fit to do my volunteer work. In one of our TMN classes, we visited it for a birding class, and I fell in love with the beauty of it. It was raining that morning, the birds were out, and the water was flowing over the dam. I loved the sound and feel of it. I also like how well it's maintained.

While trying to determine where I might volunteer, a classmate encouraged me to volunteer at FNC. I started with weeding in the pollinator garden, then moved over to the bird blind. I started bringing my camera and was asked if I wouldn't mind taking pictures of the nature center. I now rotate with other volunteers feeding birds, and every time I am there, I walk the trails and snap photos of all that I find interesting. I feel a little guilty that I'm not on my hands and knees pulling weeds, but every job is important. I really love what I'm doing.

Since finishing the Master Naturalist classes in May of 2021, I have volunteered in a multitude of other project areas including Monarch larval monitoring, butterfly surveys, water monitoring, and weeding. I am on the 2022 Texas Master Naturalist class committee and will be the class photographer. I am also assuming the role of TMN Hill Country Chapter Membership Director for 2022.

My main area of interest in the natural world is wildlife, mostly mammals, but I'm expanding into learning birds and butterflies. I'm also starting to branch out into learning more about native plants and grasses, and I recently joined NPSOT.

What do I like most about working at FNC? The people, the beauty, how well the volunteers are organized. It's a well-run machine, and I like getting the emails that outline the plan before the workday begins.

I like experiencing the randomness of nature. There's always something new to see there, as long as you are patient. When you think you've seen it all for the day, something new pops up unexpectedly!





*“What if birds aren't singing, they're just screaming because they're scared of heights?”*

*Unknown*

## New Purple Martin House



In early 2021, the Board debated whether to add a second **Purple Martin** house and decided to wait to see the spring habitation levels for the single house already installed. We waited and the Purple Martins came! Funded by a \$1000 donation from Fidelity Charitable fund which was enabled by an anonymous member, we were able to add a second Purple Martin house near the parking area. We hope to double the resident population in 2022. The rambunctious chatter of a colony of Purple Martins will lighten the soul, and let it soar a bit. Come out in March, and hear them sing. In the meantime, Right Click [here](#) and “Open Hyperlink” to hear the sounds of Purple Martins.

## Nature's News of the Weird

Check out the 7 rarest, weirdest creatures found in Texas in 2021

Right Click [here](#) & Open Link



**"I never for a day gave up listening to the songs of our birds, or watching their peculiar habits, or delineating them in the best way I could."**  
**John James Audubon**

## Some Winter Birds at FNC

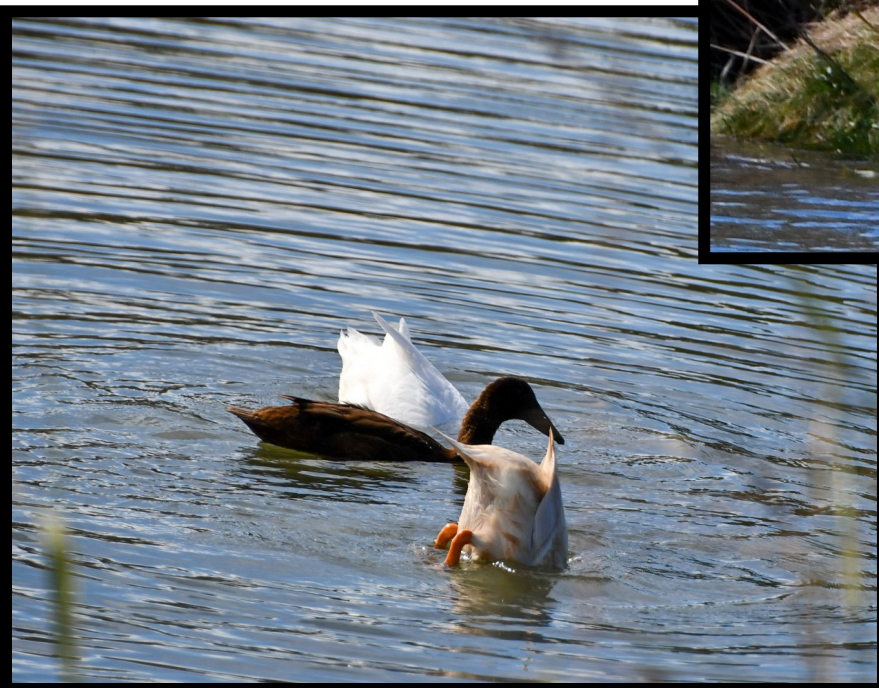
All photos by Dot Maginot



### Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperi*

These woodland hawks are agile fliers who are able to maneuver through the trees. The handsome raptors prey on songbirds. They are very similar in appearance to smaller Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Our resident **Great Egret**, *Ardea alba*, likes to hang out on the Live Oak Creek island area.



Three **Dabbling** ducks that are likely hybrids. Ducks can be divided into 3 families—**Whistling, Dabblers, and Divers**. The **Dabblers** are surface feeders who tip their tails up and reach down to snatch aquatic plants and snails. **Divers** immerse themselves completely to feed off the bottom.



*"I consider myself to have been the bridge between the shotgun and the binoculars in bird watching. Before I came along, the primary way to observe birds was to shoot them and stuff them. "*

**Roger Tory Peterson**

## Our Resident Great Blue Heron Catches Lunch



### *Ardea herodias*    Great Blue Heron

This year-round individual can be regularly seen around the Live Oak Creek island hunkered down or fishing. Often their fishing habit is to stand immobile in shallow water waiting for a fish to unknowingly swim into its reach. Due to specially shaped neck vertebrae, Great Blue Herons can quickly strike prey at a distance



This photo montage by Dot Maginot





*"There will never be a photograph of the Grand Canyon that can adequately describe its depth, breadth, and true beauty."*

Stefanie Payne

## Feature Story: Six Vistas to View FNC by Lonnie Childs

We all traverse our own trails in unique ways. Choice is one of life's perks or horrors, usually judged by the outcome of your choice. To borrow from that great philosopher, Yogi Berra, when you come to a fork in the trail, take it. Consult the map, forge ahead based on intuition, or hike on never realizing that you have just made a decision. Your choice. Your life.

Hiking styles fall into a similar spectrum of possibilities. Some of us enjoy a more athletic style. We hike purely for the exercise and maybe race along to see if we can beat our previous time record.

Life is a race, and that suits them well. The perceptive athlete hiker hopefully realizes that power walking a nature trail somehow feels better and provides greater satisfaction than a busy street setting.

On the opposite end of the spectrum resides the nature nerd. This person cannot hike ten feet without stopping to analyze some find. If you take a group of Nature Plant Society members on a hike, they might navigate a quarter mile in an hour. "Look, what's this over here?" Yet, they can be equally content dissecting only a small section of the trail.

In between these extremes on the hiking style spectrum exist infinite varieties of hikers. Most just want a nice walk in the park, many accompanied by their canine buddy. Some of us engage in a mix of styles on the same hike. I tend to dawdle along in nature nerd mode, until I run out of time and then must switch to athlete mode to hustle back to the car.

Whatever your hiking style, all should learn to slow down, look up, or just pay attention to the views that Mother Nature offers gratis. The Japanese have offered the concept of "nature bathing" as a method to soothe the soul and lower your blood pressure amongst other benefits. A grand view into nature's depths creates an opportunity to cleanse the spirit. If you've gazed into the Grand Canyon or off the South Rim of the Chisos Mountains, you know what I mean. FNC is not the Grand Canyon, but we do have some vistas that will get you there in small doses. All this talk of "nature bathing" too New Age for you? Then at least stop and savor the views. It will take the wrinkles out of your temperament without you even realizing it!

Following are some of the best views that FNC has to offer. Be sure to pause, and take them in on your next hike.





*"All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child."*

Marie Curie

## Feature Story: Six Vistas to View FNC by Lonnie Childs



#1 View from Kuchenbauer Bench  
at Entrance Kiosk

**#1 Kuchenbauer Bench at the Entrance Kiosk .** A nice way to start your hike is to stop and gaze out over the Live Oak Creek drainage. You will have a panoramic view across the dam to the lake and its resident island to the point at the far tree line where the Live Oak Wilderness Trail winds to its far end and starts its return. The highlight for me is to see how Live Oak Creek makes its grand sweep from the right horizon around to the dam and then begins its tighter turn in the opposite direction below your feet heading east towards the Pedernales. You can also garner some sense of the topography that you are about to traverse.

**#2 Live Oak Creek from Vista Loop Trail.** If you take the aptly named Vista Loop Trail east around the Bird Blind, you will descend to a craggy sandstone bluff above the creek.



#2 Live Oak Creek from  
Vista Loop Trail



**"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**

## **Feature Story: Six Vistas to View FNC (continued)**

You are standing on the remnants of a 112 million year old creek bottom which coincidentally ran parallel to the present day creek. Stand on the bluff and enjoy the view into the creek below. Look across to the riparian sand bar on the inside bend of the creek, and then gaze back east for a nice view of the downstream riparian area. This vista is both pleasing and educational as you are viewing a healthy example of a riparian zone.

**#3 Bridge over Live Oak Creek.** Stop on the bridge for a moment, and take it all in. You are now immersed completely in the riparian zone. Look upstream where the creek meanders through a canyon of Sycamore trees headed by a towering Cypress on the bank above. Listen for the gurgle of the creek song. Look downstream and watch the waterflow as it heads for the Gulf.

**#4 The Fern Grotto.** Continue left on the trail along the creek for about 30 yards until you find the Fern Grotto inhabiting the high bank opposite. This is the sandstone bluff that you stood on earlier. Its porous nature allows for the carving out of the grotto by floods or seepage from above. The seeps percolating from above support the Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) clinging to the sandstone and building mats composed of sand and organic matter for its roots. Quite a contrast—lushness below with aridity above.



**#3 Bridge over Live Oak Creek**

**Photos by Lonnie Childs**



**#4 Fern Grotto**



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

John Burroughs

## Feature Story: Six Vistas to View FNC (continued)

**#5 Live Oak Creek from Spur Trail.** This often overlooked vista can be seen from a quiet refuge off the Live Oak Wilderness Trail. As you descend on the trail from the Cactus Garden, take the Spur Trail to the left that heads upstream about 40 yards. You will find a bench to rest your weary bones and quiet your mind. Stop and take the time for a meditative moment. Maybe we will rename it the Reflection Bench.

### **#6 Views along Live Oak Wilderness Trail.**

As you wind along the trail back to the trailhead, there are several viewpoints to be enjoyed between the overhanging trees. Look both upstream and downstream for great views.

**Bonus views:** Sit on the bench near the dam for nice vistas and the hypnotic effect of the falling water. The roar will cleanse the inner noise from your mind. If you have time, drive across from the dam, and enjoy the panorama of Live Oak Trail traversing horizontally along the creek. It's a great cross-section of the park.

Whatever your hiking style, stop and enjoy the view! Mother Nature will smile back.



#5 Live Oak Creek from Spur Trail.

Photos by Lonnie Childs



#6 Views along Live Oak Wilderness Trail.



*"The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit."*

Nelson Henderson



Photo by Dot Maginot

**It's dues time!  
Please consider  
continuing to support FFNC.  
Got to our website  
& click on "Membership."  
Join & become a Member  
or donate to the  
Bill Lindemann Capital Fund.**

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