

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

October, 2022 Volume 3 Number 10

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

Early October was a busy time for FFNC with a Bird Migration Workshop (see p.2) and our Wings Over FNC event (report in November). Thanks to all of our volunteers who made these events happen!

Speaking of volunteers, this month's newsletter features beautiful photos from our contributing photographer, Dot Maginot, along with new submissions from Deb Youngblood and her daughter, Katie Kliever. I am always looking for contributors and want to appeal once more to you aspiring writers. I know that you are out there, so send me your articles.

Also, on the subject of volunteerism, we would like to initiate two educational programs in 2023. One would be a weekly program with a simple format geared towards pre-K age children that would provide nature education at a formative stage in their lives. The second program would involve regular adult educational workshops/presentations. The details are TBD by two special volunteers looking for an opportunity to utilize their talents, contribute to the nature community, and make a difference.

The FFNC mission is *"to enhance, protect and interpret the natural ecosystems of the Texas hill country."* There is a saying that sums up our approach: we will only preserve what we love, only love what we understand, and only understand what we are taught. FFNC is in the business of connecting people to nature, specifically children. As such, we are focused on rejuvenating our educational programs, but we need your input to help define our priorities and the potential function of a future Interpretive Center. If you have not done so, please complete our online survey by clicking on the link on page 16. Let us hear from you!

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

In this issue:

- Bird Migration Workshop
- Enjoy a Doug Tallamy Zoom presentation
- Our Volunteers Rock!
- Observations Along the Trail & at the Bird Blind
- Blumen, Buzzin', and Flutterin' at the Garten
- Feature Story: *Who Could Love a Hackberry?*





"Native plants can turn a suburbia into a subirdia."

Patsy Inglet

Bird Migration Workshop

Our Bird Migration workshop presented by **Patsy Inglet** on October 1st was a success with 25 attendees who were treated to an entertaining and informative talk. Patsy provided a broad understanding of the how, why, and where of migration with an emphasis on the importance of the central flyway that traverses through Texas. She concluded her presentation with a call to action for us all to reduce the negative human impacts on migration and take action to help improve the success of migration.

Four Actions to Help Birds

1. Plant native plants
2. Bird friendly windows
3. Build a catio for your cat
4. Lights Out @ migration

For more ideas, go to:

[https://
www.birds.cornell.edu/
home/get-involved/10-
ways-to-help-birds/](https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/get-involved/10-ways-to-help-birds/)





**"My central message is that unless we restore native plants to our suburban ecosystems, the future of biodiversity in the United States is dim."
Doug Tallamy**

Doug Tallamy Presentation — November 3rd

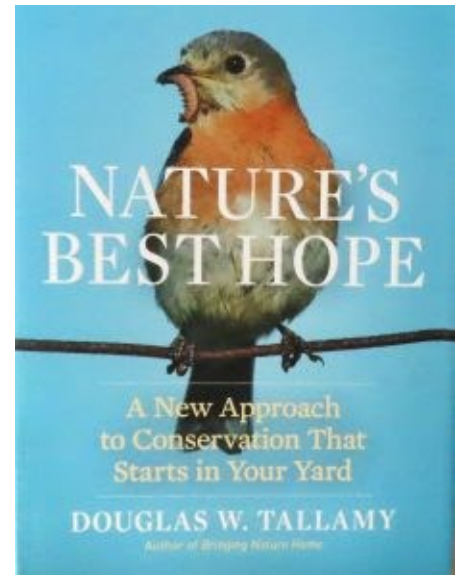
Learn about the concept of the Homegrown National Park and how to convert your own backyard into a viable natural habitat that can be part of a networked national park.

**Bexar Audubon Society and San Antonio Audubon Society
are pleased to present:**

***Nature's Best Hope* by Dr. Doug Tallamy**

**Thursday, November 3 | 6:30 to 8:00 PM (CDT) |
Zoom | \$5**

To create landscapes that enhance local ecosystems rather than degrade them, we must add the native plant communities that sustain food webs, sequester carbon, maintain diverse native bee communities, and manage our watersheds. If we do this in half of the area now in lawn, we can create the [Homegrown National Park](#), a 20-million-acre network of viable habitats that will provide vital corridors connecting the few natural areas that remain.



Dr. Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 106 research publications and has taught insect related courses for 41 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. His book *Bringing Nature Home* was published by Timber Press in 2007, *The Living Landscape*, co-authored with Rick Darke, was published in 2014; *Nature's Best Hope*, a New York Times Best Seller, was released in February 2020, and his latest book *The Nature of Oaks* was released by Timber press in March 2021. His awards include recognition from The Garden Writer's Association, Audubon, The Garden Club of America, and The American Horticultural Association.

RIGHT CLICK [HERE](#) & Open Hyperlink TO REGISTER (\$5)

Once you have purchased your ticket, you'll be sent the Zoom link for the event. All who purchase tickets will be eligible for one of three raffle prizes, which will be an autographed copy of one of Dr. Tallamy's books.



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 Volunteers Having Fun—This Could be You!



Tom Hynes



Deb Youngblood



Patti Guin



Carol Knutsen

Photos by
Dot Maginot



Jane Crone

Tuesday Fundays at FNC are always on! We gather every Tuesday at 8:30am at 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.

Observations Along the Trail

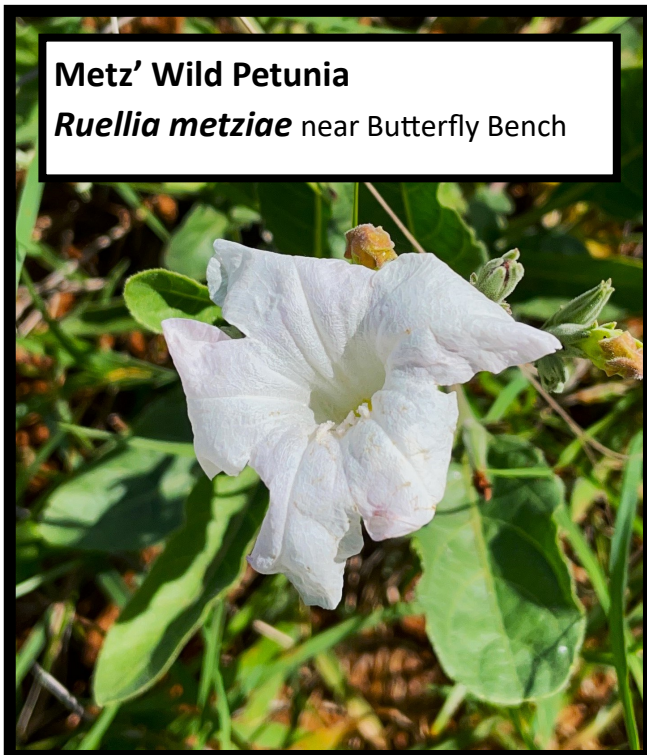
The rainfall in late August/early September provided a brief lifeline to our wildflowers, but the lack of rainfall since has deprived us of our usual fall wildflower display. Still walking the trails will offer you some glimpses of fall flora.



Texas Skeleton Plant

Lygodesmia texana

This beautiful flower can be found standing out alone in a prairie setting from the Rio Grande plain to the Panhandle. Its single stem grows in oddly angled, bony patterns sporting minimal foliage, thus explaining its common name.



Metz' Wild Petunia

Ruellia metziae near Butterfly Bench

Western Ironweed

Vernonia baldwinii along Live Oak Creek





"The real voyage of discovery consists not of seeing new landscapes but in having new eyes"

Marcel Proust

Observations at the Fern Grotto



Photo by Dot Maginot



Photo by Lonnie Childs

Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) festoons the Fern Grotto & the banks of the Live Oak island. Two **Cardinal Flowers (*Lobelia cardinalis*)** have appeared near the creek bridge and the Fern Grotto. The Fern Grotto has continued to seep throughout the drought sustained by rainfall that fell on the sandy bluff above many months ago.



Photo by Lonnie Childs

Birds at the Blind



Photo by
Deb Youngblood

Ladder-backed Woodpecker
***Dryobates scalaris* female**

An inhabitant of the desert southwest able to forage on cactus & mesquite. One of our common local woodpeckers, it is attracted to mealworms in the suet. To hear their chatter, right click [Here](#) & Open Hyperlink



Photo by
Katie Kliewer

White-eyed Vireo
Vireo griseus

These denizens of thickets are singing machines who sing well into the day & are most often heard before seen. To hear their song, right click [Here](#) & Open Hyperlink.

Blumen at the Pollinator Garten



Squarebud or Texas Primrose, Berlandier's Sundrops
Oenothera berlandiera (formerly *Calylophus*)

Excellent rock garden plant often seen growing along our roadsides.

Rock Rose or Rose Pavonia *Pavonia lasiopetala*

Very xeric plant that grows in a variety of conditions & is an excellent nectar source.



Purple Passionflower or Maypop *Passiflora incarnata*

This vine inhabits the southeastern US to eastern Texas. Its name derives from the impression that the floral parts were once said to represent aspects of the Christian crucifixion story. It is aggressive in the garden, but is a larval host for several butterflies including the Gulf Fritillary.



Buzzin' & Flutterin' at the Pollinator Garten



Photo by Dot Maginot

Dot caught this UFI (Unidentified Flying Insect or perhaps a White-lined Sphinx Moth?) buzzing by the **Cowpen Daisies** (*Verbesina encelioides*)

Cowpen Daisies earned their name by virtue of their inhabitation of disturbed soils including cow pens. They are favored nectar sources for many insects, as demonstrated right now at the PG.

White-lined Sphinx (*Hyles lineata*) surveying the Cowpen Daisies. This is a common moth throughout North America which can occasionally occur in large hordes in the dry southwest. Native Americans took advantage of these population explosions & roasted their larvae. At dusk, this is one of the species that resembles a small Hummingbird as it hovers at a flower with its extended proboscis. With a fat body and short wings, it requires rapid wingbeats to sustain its hover.



Photo by Lonnie Childs



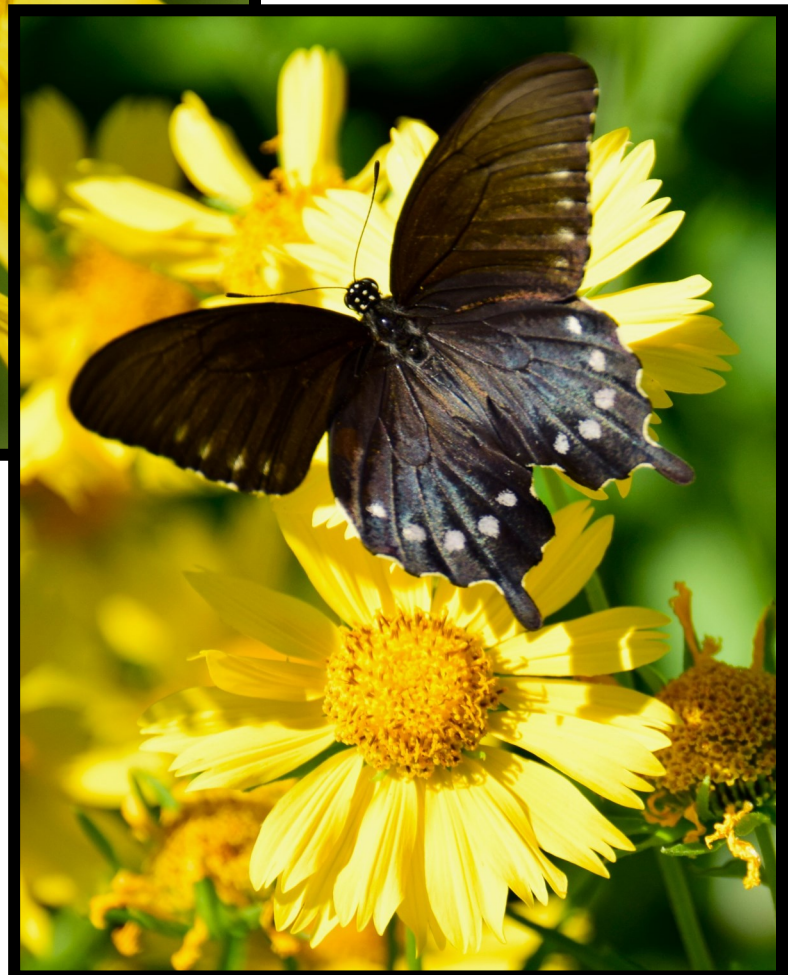
"To feed the Birds, first feed the Bugs."

Doug Tallamy

Buzzin' & Flutterin' at the Pollinator Garten



Native Bee on the ever popular Cowpen Daisy.



Female Pipe-vine Swallowtail
(*Battus philenor*) are one of our more common butterflies. The males display more iridescent blue on the hindwings.

Photos by Deb Youngblood



"Nature's message was always there and for us to see. It was written on the wings of butterflies."

Kjell B. Sandved

Chewin' & Flutterin' at the Pollinator Garten



This **Pipevine Swallowtail** was caught slurping down nectar while oblivious to the munching caterpillar (probably a **Variegated Cutworm Moth**— *Peridroma* sp.) on the opposite side of their shared Cowpen Daisy.

Cutworms can be divided into four types: subterranean, tunnel dwellers, surface feeders, & climbers which is the type in our photo. They have chewing mandibles which allow them to do great damage to landscape plants in a short period of time. If you favor your plants, they need to be removed.



Gulf Fritillary

Agraulis vanillae

Common but not numerous in our garden. Passionflower is its host plant, but it enjoys Cowpen Daisy nectar like all the other insects.

Photos by Dot Maginot



"We are developing all sorts of technologies based on what we have learnt from birds, animals and soils. Pollination is worth £billions. But it also highlights how nature is so interconnected."

Tony Juniper

Queens at the Pollinator Garten

Our ever-present population of **Queens** (*Danaus gilippus*) have exploded this fall all around the county. Come walk through the Pollinator Garden & stir up a cloud of Queens to decorate your photo.

Photo by Deb Youngblood

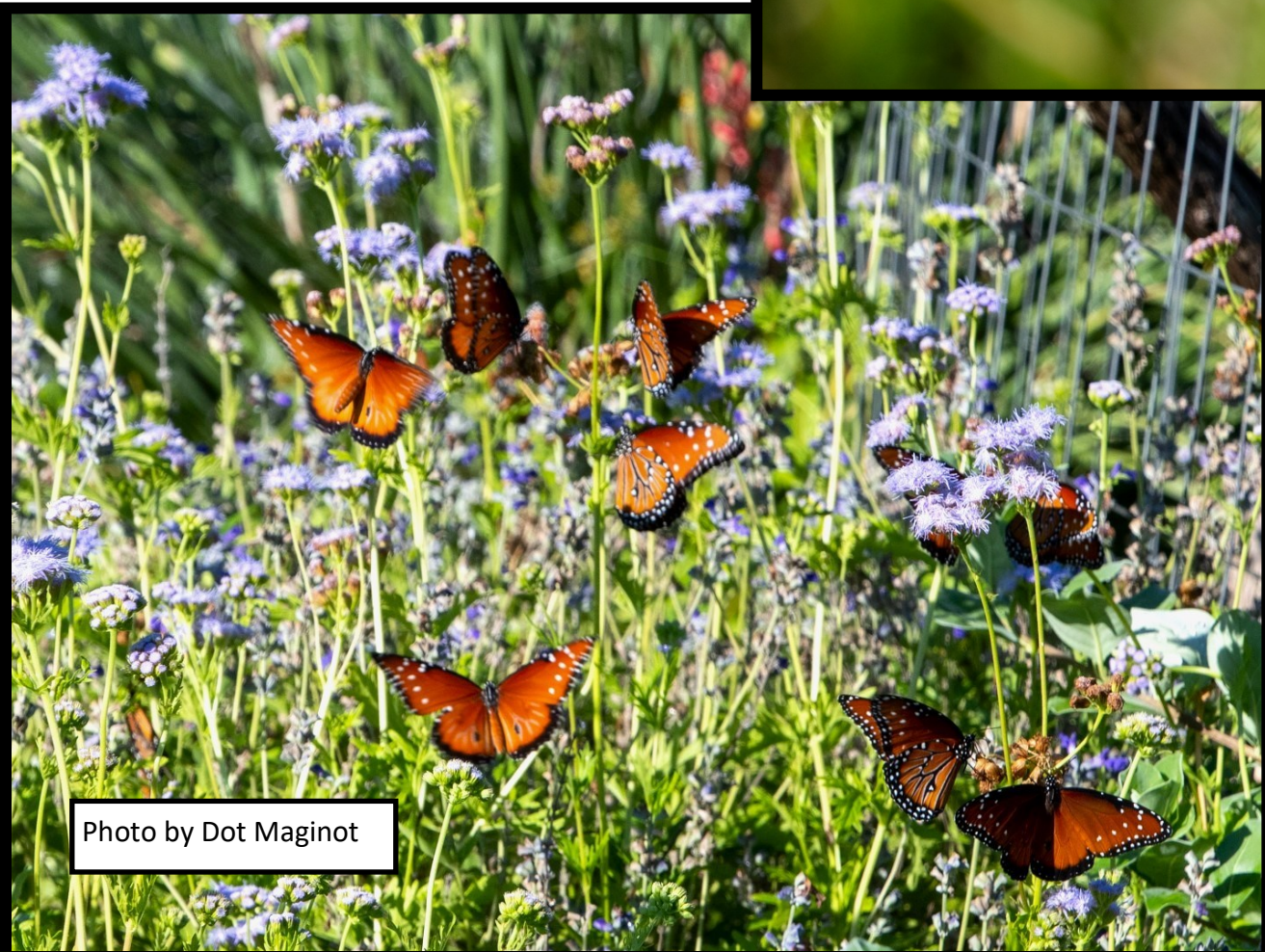


Photo by Dot Maginot



"Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky."

Kahlil Gibran

Feature Story: Who Could Love a Hackberry? by Lonnie Childs

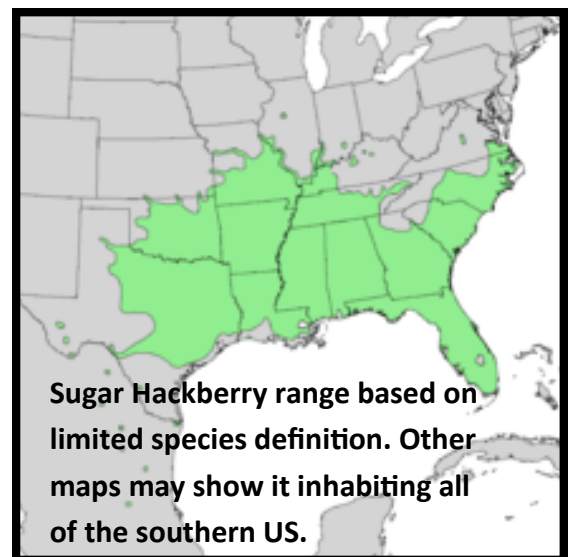
Hackberry Trees must be the Rodney Dangerfield of Texas trees. For those of you too young to remember him, the comedian's opening line was always, "I just can't get no respect." We consider Hackberries to be a weedy tree (weed = a native plant growing in the wrong location), since they continuously sprout in the moist soil of our landscape beds, often right next to our house slab. Hackberries prolifically populate our fence-lines aided by their avian allies who deposit their seeds while perched, thus earning the disdain of farmers and ranchers. And then there are the aesthetics or lack thereof of their oft appearing warty bark pattern which suggests that they may be harboring some undefined malady such as "Hackberry Pox." From a human perspective, Hackberries do not garner a lot of love and admiration.

Who could love a Hackberry? How about at least 10 species of birds who feed on their fruit and many others who inhabit its large canopy; 6 butterflies who use it as a host plant for laying their eggs; numerous caterpillars who feed on its leaves; a variety of small mammals who also enjoy its fruits; and the ecosystems where the Hackberry serves as a keystone floral species providing habitat for other faunal species.

Celtis is a genus of about 60–70 species of deciduous trees, commonly known as hackberries or nettle trees, widespread in warm temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere. The name "Hackberry" is derived from Scottish "Hagberry," or "Bird Cherry."

Classification. Hackberry species occur throughout Texas with five species that are trees, and one shrublike species. The two species most common across the state are *Celtis laevigata*, also called "Sugar Hackberry," and *C. reticulata* (or *C. laevigata* var. *reticulata*), most commonly known as "Netleaf Hackberry" or "Western Hackberry." Taxonomists seem to disagree on whether to combine these two into one species with two varieties or separate them into two species. Additionally, there are numerous other recognized varieties of *C. laevigata*. The geographical ranges of the two species/varieties overlap in Central Texas.

Habitat. I will primarily discuss Sugarberry as it is the most commonly found species in our area. It germinates initially in shade to part shade occurring along stream and river banks, thickets, open woodlands, and in moist soils on floodplains but is very versatile in the soil types to which it has adapted. Although its favored habitat seems to be deeper and moister soils, Hackberries can be found opportunistically growing in drier conditions, poor quality soils, and can tolerate considerable drought and higher temperatures.





"There is always Music amongst the trees in the Garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it."

Minnie Aumonier

Feature Story: Who Could Love a Hackberry?

Characteristics. Sugar Hackberries exhibit a broad, rounded, open crown of spreading or slightly drooping branches. Living to 150 years old, they can grow 60-80 ft. in height (one source says 100 ft.) and equally as wide with a broad crown and graceful, pendulous branches. The Netleaf Hackberry only grows to about 30 ft. perhaps explained by the fact that they primarily inhabit thinner soils in rocky creek canyons in drier conditions. Our signature tree in the center of the Bird Blind is estimated at almost 50 ft. tall.

The leaves of both species are quite similar with an asymmetrical base, lanceolate to ovate shape, pointed tip, rough and green upper side, gray underside, smooth or slightly toothed margins, and the typical "net-veined" pattern. They do hybridize adding to the diversity of leaf shapes. Despite the difficulty in identifying a species or variety, Hackberry leaves are generally easily identifiable. In the spring, from April through May, Sugar Hackberry trees produce male and female flowers with insignificant greenish blooms that become orange/red to black fruits known as druse (i.e. a fruit with exocarp or skin, fleshy mesocarp, and hardened endocarp with seed inside).



Laevigata, the species name of Sugar Hackberry, means smooth, referring to the smooth bark of juvenile trees. What about the warts you say? They develop as the tree matures, possibly as a defense that evolved to protect the trunks from deer that like to rub their antlers against the bark.

Ecological value. As I mentioned, the sweetish fruit of Hackberries is eaten by birds including Robins, Mockingbirds, Cedar Waxwings, and other songbirds and rodents,¹ helping to disperse the seeds. Their large canopy provides habitat for a diversity of other birds and insects. They do grow a deep tap root with lateral roots that serve to anchor stream side soils in floods. However, in defense of their territory, Sugarberry's leaf litter contains allelopathic chemicals that inhibit seed germination and growth in many other plant species.





"The tree is more than first a seed, then a stem, then a living trunk, and then dead timber. The tree is a slow, enduring force straining to win the sky." Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Feature Story: Who Could Love a Hackberry?

The Sugarberry is a **larval host plant for several butterflies**, including: Hackberry Emperor (*Asterocampa celtis*), Tawny Emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*), Question Mark (*Polygonia interrogationis*), Snout Butterflies (*Libytheana carinenta* and *L. carinata*), and Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*). It serves as the sole food for Hackberry Emperors. American Snouts are the non-descript butterfly that periodically explodes in huge population numbers and can be found in large masses along roads.

Cultural Uses. Although its wood is relatively soft, still it is used furniture, athletic goods, and plywood. It is used to a limited extent for flooring, crating, fuel, cooperage, and posts.

The Comanche beat the fruit to a pulp and then mixed it with animal fat, rolled it into balls, and roasted it in the fire. The resulting balls had a long shelf life and became nutritious food reserves. Native people also had other uses for Sugarberry fruit. The Houma used a decoction of bark and ground up shells to treat venereal disease, and a concentrate made from its bark was used to treat sore throats. The Navajo used leaves and branches, boiled down, to make a dark brown or red dye for wool.

In the southeastern US, Sugar Hackberry is a recommended landscape tree. Imagine that!

In writing this article, I did not expect that I would convert you Hackberry Hackers into Hackberry Huggers. However, I did hope to educate you on its ecological importance and convince you to give them their due. Thin them out as needed, but allow some specimens to inhabit and fulfill their ecological purpose. And if you can manage it, try to give them some respect.



All photos except Hackberry Emperor by Lonnie Childs



"Hiking side effects include sweating, euphoria and general awesomeness."
Unknown

We Need Your Input!!

FFNC is developing a Conceptual Scope statement for a potential future **Interpretive Center** at Fredericksburg Nature Center. Our goal is to increase our educational programs, and we believe that a facility would support that objective and aid in our expansion.

What **educational programming, features, or services** would you like to see in an Interpretive Center?

Please complete a short, online survey by November 1st. Do it **NOW!**

Right click on the link below & Open Hyperlink

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MN79LBD>

Nature's News of the Weird



The Godwit's Long, Long Nonstop Journey

Right Click [here](#) & Open Link

Thanks to Sue Bentsch for this article!



*"The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun."
William Wordsworth*

Keep on the sunnyside!



Photo by Dot Maginot

**THANKS
FOR
YOUR
SUPPORT!**

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Board of Directors

Lonnie Childs—President

Paul Person—Vice-president

Carl Luckenbach - Treasurer

Gracie Waggener—Secretary

Jane Crone

Billy Guin

Tom Musselman

Mary Ellen Terell

**Thanks to our supporters and the City of Fredericksburg
for your continued support of the
Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center!**

A 501(c)(3) corporation

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