

# Fredericksburg Nature Notes



## Newsletter of the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

November, 2022 Volume 3 Number 11

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

Drought has long over-stayed a non-existent welcome and has seemingly become the norm. The disappointing forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is that the La Nina weather pattern in the Pacific will continue through this winter for the third consecutive winter. For Texas, that translates to a 50% probability that temperatures will be warmer than normal and a 60% chance that rainfall will be lower than normal. My apology for bearing such bad news, so prepare accordingly.

Mother Nature has evolved to constantly adjust to the vicissitudes of weather, although of course, relatively recent human events are testing her resilience. We cannot always understand her adjustments and manifestations, and there are two this year that are eliciting comments from folks—Butterflies and Acorns.

You might call this newsletter issue the Butterfly issue. I included many Butterfly photos by our volunteer photographers, because they are providing all the action in the Pollinator Garden this year. The profusely blooming Boneset and Blue Mistflower have attracted hordes of Butterflies and other Pollinators to our native plant garden and elsewhere around the county, perhaps because there is nothing blooming anywhere in the wild. It has been a spectacular show this year and a welcome respite from the drought, but imminent cold weather will soon initiate a curtain call for the Great Butterfly Show of 2022.

The other puzzler this year is how can all the Oaks be prolifically masting (producing acorns) in the midst of such a dearth of rainfall. The short answer seems to be that scientists don't seem to really know. There are various hypotheses as to why Oaks across many species have a cyclical masting cycle— predator control and resource limitations are two. But so far, no detailed scientific study has been completed to explain it. Mother Nature's mysteries provide a constant source of wonder.

Happy Nature Trails!

*Lonnie*

#### In this issue:

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**Please note that there will be  
no newsletter in December. We  
will resume in January, 2023.**



*"There's always something to be thankful for on Thanksgiving. Even if it's just not being a turkey. "*

**Unknown**

## Thanksgiving Expressions



### At FFNC, we are thankful for....

- > the opportunity to be stewards of Mother Nature's bountiful offering,
- > our generous members and supporters,
- > our tireless volunteers including the Hill Country Master Naturalists,
- > our partnership with the City of Fredericksburg,
- > our appreciative visitors,
- > and to Mother Nature for inspiring us with her awe, beauty, and the mystery of her natural wonders.

Our photographers Dot Maginot, Lonnie Childs, and Bill Lindemann (in memoriam)







**"Don't be a parrot in life, be an eagle. A parrot talks way too much and can't fly high, but an eagle is silent and has the will power to touch the sky."  
Unknown**

## Wings Over FNC Flies Again

On October 9th, FFNC sponsored Wings Over Fredericksburg Nature Center which included a guided trail hike, information about our project to construct a future Interpretive Center, and a capstone program provided by Last Chance Forever. Over 100 people were treated to a presentation by falconer, John Karger, about raptors which featured live examples of various birds of prey. The birds did not perform "tricks" but rather demonstrated actual behaviors that they might perform in normal life. These birds are rehabilitated individuals that are not able to return to the wild currently or perhaps ever due to some infirmity.

**Last Chance Forever** is a nonprofit, tax exempt organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned birds of prey, scientific investigation, and also just as importantly, the education of the public. Each year, the project receives between 150-300 birds into the facility for care. They have developed an educational program for presentation to children, civic organizations and interested individuals. This program is seen by over 500,000 people annually throughout the United States. It promotes a common sense attitude towards the interaction of mankind and our environment.



Photos by  
Dot  
Maginot





**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**



**Tom Hynes, Frank Garcia, and Billy Guin** (not pictured) completed the installation of a storage platform that will house a solar powered pump to support increased watering capability for the Hummingbird Garden.

**Photo by Billy Guin**

**Searching for a volunteer opportunity?** While many of our volunteers labor away in the gardens and on the trail at our weekly Tuesday work sessions, we have opportunities for volunteers that do not involve heavy doses of perspiration. We are focused on bolstering our education and communication capabilities which fosters the need for the following volunteer positions. If you have these skills, please consider utilizing your talents in the furtherance of the FFNC missions as we venture towards a future Interpretive Center.

**Webmaster**

**Social Media Coordinator**

**Children's Education Program Leader**

**Adult Education Program Leader**

**To discuss these opportunities, contact Lonnie Childs at [lonniechilds@utexas.edu](mailto:lonniechilds@utexas.edu)**

**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. **Please note that we reduce our work schedule over the holidays and winter months.**

**Contact Gracie Waggener at [gwaggener@flow-apps.com](mailto:gwaggener@flow-apps.com) to receive a weekly email notification.**





*"I had been told that the training procedure with cats was difficult. It's not. Mine had me trained in two days."*

**Bill Dana**



## Sonny Boy Needs a Home!

**The Ballad of Sonny Boy.** We have a large population of feral cats at the park who exact a harsh toll on our bird, reptile, and small mammal population. Most are truly feral and not approachable, but occasionally we have a domesticated cat wander on to our trails or into the gardens. Sonny Boy is just such a cat. He appeared at the Pollinator Garden one day and immediately made friends with all of our volunteers and lovingly meowed until he was rewarded with a friendly rub. Patti Guin generously took him to a veterinarian for a checkup only to find that he was current on shots and actually had a microchip. Patti also anointed him with his appropriate name. Upon contacting his reported owners in San Antonio, they admitted to dumping him in Fredericksburg, since they have a new baby and did not feel that they could keep him. Jane Crone has been generously hosting him at her home, but Sonny Boy needs a permanent home.

**PLEASE CONSIDER GIVING SONNY BOY A HOME, and HE WILL RETURN YOUR LOVE!**

### **Sonny Boy's Stats**

- > Neutered male
- > Current on all shots
- > House trained
- > Does not seem to like co-habiting with other cats
- > Friendly lover-boy

**To learn more about Sonny Boy or to welcome him into your home, call**

**(210) 912-5920**





***"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we are taught"***  
**Babe Dioum**

## **Progress on the Interpretive Center Project**

The **FNC Advisory Committee** continues working on the **Concept Phase** of our project to construct a future Interpretive Center. As you may recall, the product of the Concept Phase will be a scope statement that defines the features, services, programming, and physical form of our Interpretive Center.

**Nature Center Visits.** The Committee has been busy over the past several months visiting various nature center and exploring various possibilities for both facilities and educational programming. Following are the nature centers that we have visited:

Riverside Nature Center (Kerrville)	Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center (Dripping Springs)
Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center (Ft. Davis)	Phil Hardberger Park (San Antonio)
Cibolo Center for Conservation (Boerne)	Confluence Park—(San Antonio River Foundation)
River Ranch County Park (Williamson County)	Big Bend Fossil Exhibit (Big Bend National Park)
South Texas Ecotourism Center (Laguna Vista)	Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (Austin)
Edwards Aquifer Authority Education Outreach Center (San Antonio)	

**Soliciting your input.** In early October, over 100 people attended our Wings Over Fredericksburg Nature Center where they learned about our Interpretive Center project and were invited to offer suggestions for potential features and services in a future center. We also utilized an online survey to solicit ideas which has provided valuable confirmation on our direction, although we would like to have more participation. **Do you have some ideas or suggestions? Send them to us at [info@fredericksburgnaturecenter.com](mailto:info@fredericksburgnaturecenter.com)**

**What ideas have risen to the top to date?** Although our specific number of suggestions number almost 100, and in some cases are very detailed, they generally fall into the following categories and are what you might expect.

### **1. Educational Programming Offerings Ideas**

- a. Children's Programs
- b. Youth education programs – classroom and hands-on space
- c. Adult Workshops/Presentations
- d. Outdoor program venues – pavilion, amphitheater
- e. Learning venue for educators

### **2. Educational Spaces**

- a. Classroom, hands-on space, learning laboratory
- b. Outdoor program venues – pavilion, amphitheater





*“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**

## Progress on the Interpretive Center Project

### 3. Meeting space

- a. Nature groups
- b. Education classes
- c. Flexible, multi-purpose space

### 4. Exhibit space

### 5. Green building as a teaching example – solar, water collection, other features

- a. Natural feature as a branding element

### 6. Facility that integrates into & supports but does not overwhelm natural surroundings

### 7. Outdoor “natural” play area

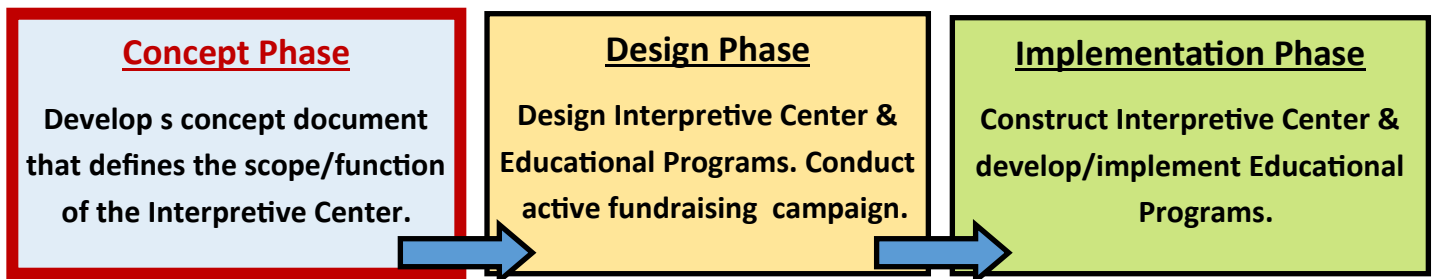
### 8. Public restrooms

### 9. Office space

### 10. Facility that supports FFNC’s mission to educate visitors about Hill Country ecology and its importance

**Concept Phase Conclusion.** Although it may seem that the Committee is moving slowly, it is important that we be diligent and explore all possibilities within this phase, as the decisions that we make in this phase are foundational and will determine our future course of action. We are still on track to complete this phase in early 2023 and release our Concept Statement which will allow us to seek initial approval from the City Council for our project and make a formal public announcement. Stay tuned, and send us your ideas!

## INTERPRETIVE CENTER PROJECT PHASES



**"Ecologists believe that a bird in the bush is worth two in the hand."  
Stanley C. Pearson**

## Observations at the Bird Blind



An immature **Orange-crowned Warbler (*Leiothlypis celata*)** is one of our wintering wood warblers. It arrives here later & leaves earlier than its other warbler cousins. They nest on the ground, perhaps to avoid nest robbing birds. Their calls are far more variable than that of other wood warblers with the males producing distinctive song patterns. Breeding males often form "song neighborhoods," where two to six birds in adjacent territories learn & mimic each other's songs for years.

**Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*)** guarding its stash of **Poke-weed (*Phytolacca americana*)** berries at the bird blind.



Our common **Eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*)** is a regular visitor to our water feature for a drink or a bit of "splooting" - laying down flat on their stomachs with their legs stretched behind them in order to cool their bodies on the wet, rock surface.



## Nectar Mania at the Pollinator Garden—Butterflies



One of our best fall native bloomers is **Shrubby Boneset (*Ageratina havenensis*)**. Our Boneset has bloomed spectacularly this year & has been swarmed by all manner of pollinators, not just fluttering Butterflies but also a horde of other interesting insects including native bees. You can savor the sweet smell, enjoy the flurry of color, and listen for the furious yet calming buzz of the bees. One of Mother Nature’s most spectacular productions—call it Nectar Mania.

All Photos by Lonnie Childs



Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*)



Common Buckeye  
(*Junonia coenia*)





*"Nature is an endless combination and repetition of a very few laws. She hums the old well-known air through innumerable variations."*  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

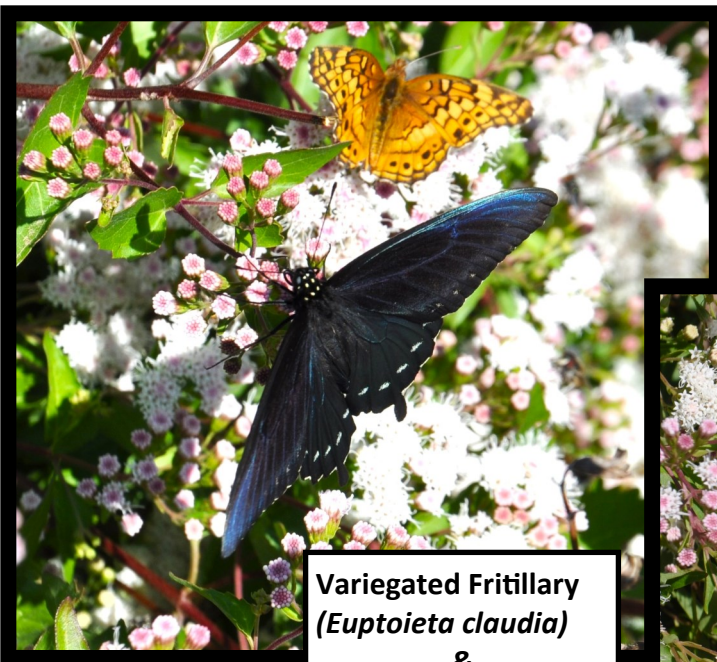
## Nectar Mania at the Pollinator Garden—Butterflies



Shrubby Boneset (*Ageratina havenensis*)



Queen (*Danaus gilippus*)



Variegated Fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*)  
&  
Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*)



Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

All Photos by  
Lonnie Childs



*"Nature has been for me, for as long as I remember, a source of solace, inspiration, venture, and delight; a home, a teacher, a companion."*  
Lorraine Anderson

## More Nectar Mania at the Pollinator Garten—Other Insects

**Mesquite Borer at top.**

*(Placosternus difficilis)* is a wood boring longhorn beetle whose larvae are deposited in mesquite trees.

**Mexican Cactus Fly at bottom.**

*(Copestylum mexicanum)* lays its eggs in rotting plant material, especially rotting cacti.



**American Snout at top.**

*(Libytheana carinenta)* named for its long snout.

**Texas Wasp Moth at bottom.**

*(Horama panthalon)* mimics the appearance of a wasp perhaps for defensive purposes





*"Nature is painting for us, day after day, pictures of infinite beauty."*

John Ruskin

## Addicted to Blue Mist at the Pollinator Garten

Gregg's Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*) is a perennial nectar favorite with many butterflies, particularly Queens in the fall. Its' natural habitat is typically gravelly soils along seasonal streambeds with a distribution from the Trans-Pecos to the Edwards Plateau south to the Rio Grande Plain.



Photo by Lonnie Childs



Photo by Dot Maginot

Right click [Here](#) to watch the Queens perform an aerial fairy dance in the blue mist with friends over for brunch!





**"Conservation is humanity caring for the future."**

**Nancy Newhall**

## **Blue Mist Lovin' & Daisy Delight at the Pollinator Garten**



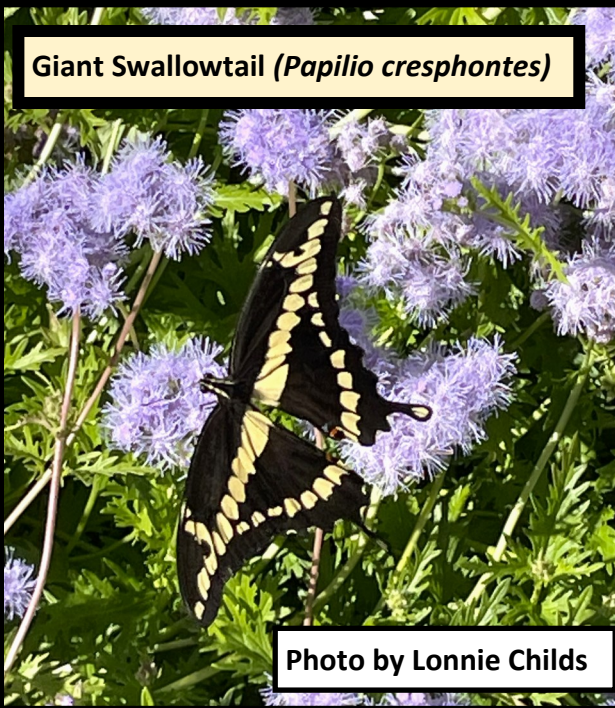
Despite their royal rivalry, a Monarch & Queen share nectar on Blue Mistflower

Photo by Lonnie Childs



Queen on Blue Mistflower

Photo by Deb Youngblood



Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*)

Photo by Lonnie Childs

Sleepy Orange (*Abaeis nicippe*) on Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*)



Photo by Dot Maginot





*"Gardens and life are mirror images of each other. Each provide great dramas of sex and war."*

Unknown

## War and Love at the Pollinator Garten

### Gulf Fritillary

*(Agraulis vanillae)*

seems to be suggesting to the Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), "Hey you, get off of my mistflower!"



### Giant Swallowtails

*(Papilio cresphontes)*

competing for the right to reproduce.

All photos by  
Dot Maginot





***"We need the tonic of wildness [and] ... Nature."  
Henry David Thoreau***

## **Speak up for Mother Nature & let your voice be heard!**

Want more **green and wild** spaces in Fredericksburg? Provide your input to the Fredericksburg Master Plan which is currently in the update process. The plan will also address park needs.

Look for announcements in the newspaper about specific events or open this link where you can find out more information about the Master Plan and provide your input via an online survey at

**[https://www.fbgtx.org/1128/  
Comprehensive-Plan-Update-and-Parks-Mast](https://www.fbgtx.org/1128/Comprehensive-Plan-Update-and-Parks-Mast)**



### **Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Board of Directors**

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**Comments, questions, or future newsletter submissions can be sent to  
Lonnie Childs, Newsletter Editor, at [lonniechilds@utexas.edu](mailto:lonniechilds@utexas.edu)**