

# Fredericksburg Nature Notes



## Newsletter of the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

August, 2024 Volume 5 Number 8

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

One of our strategic goals is to increase and improve our educational offerings to the public and specifically to our youth post-pandemic. Our **Program Committee** deserves special recognition for their efforts over the last two years with 2024 topping the prior year. This year, we offered well attended workshops on topics covering screech owls, cemetery birding, perspectives of the Hill Country from 19th C. naturalists, snakes, and the upcoming September workshop on Horned Lizards. Our team held a Bioblitz in April, featured a Monarch butterfly exhibit at the Touch the Truck event, and conducted StoryWalks during major holidays.

Our latest success has been the Summer Storytime program implemented this summer which offered weekly the reading a story followed by a craft exercise and a walk in the Pollinator Garden. An average of a dozen of young children enjoyed a bit of literacy training couched in fun all in an outdoor setting with a chance of a pollinator or flower sighting to pique their interest in nature. These largely pre-school youth are an important group for us to reach in their formative years as we seek to develop our land stewards of the future (the impetus of our Vision statement). This type of program speaks to the heart of our nature center project themes—**Community, Education, and Nature.**

The future of our educational programming will accelerate with the hiring of a professional educational programming resource to lead our volunteers, which we aspire to do when we secure the funding. For now, we are very proud of what we have been able to accomplish with only volunteer resources. **A huge thanks to our Program Committee!**

Happy Nature Trails!

*Lonnie*

### In this Issue:

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# THE HORNED LIZARD'S HOMECOMING

## Reintroducing the Horned Lizard to the Texas Hill Country

*Sponsored by The Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center*

**Saturday, September 21, 2024 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

**Fredricksburg AgriLife Extension Office  
38 Business Court, Fredericksburg, Texas**



Did you know that the Texas Horned Lizard, also known as a horny toad, is the official state reptile of Texas and was once found in large numbers throughout the state? Everyone loves horny toads, but for many Texans the fierce-looking yet good-natured reptile is only a fond childhood memory. Currently, the Texas Horned Lizard is listed as a threatened species, but thanks to the efforts of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and other interested organizations, this beloved reptile is being reintroduced in areas across the state where it has disappeared in recent years. But we need YOU to help in this conservation effort! To learn more about the plight of the horny toad and find out what you can do to ensure the return of this beloved reptile to the Texas Hill Country, make plans to attend this one-hour presentation sponsored by the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center. **RSVP to Gracie at [gwaggener@flow-apps.com](mailto:gwaggener@flow-apps.com). This presentation has been approved for one hour of Texas Master Naturalist advanced training credit.**



Guest speaker Nathan Rains is a Regional Wildlife Diversity Biologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He obtained a B.S. degree in Wildlife Biology in 1994 from Texas A&M University, and an M.S. degree in Wildlife Biology in 1998 from Louisiana State University. Upon graduation, Nathan began his employment with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries as a Wildlife Biologist. From 2000 to 2008, he worked as a Private Lands Biologist with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, and from 2008 to present he has served as a TPWD Regional Wildlife Diversity Biologist, working primarily with threatened and endangered species as well as species of greatest conservation need. Rains also specializes in research and conservation of reptiles.



## OUR VISION STATEMENT:

*To create a community of Land Stewards to protect our natural resources into the future.*

## Storytime @ FNC Goes Batty!



On Tuesday, August 6th, "**Miss Barb**" (Dr. Barbara Jansen, Librarian and Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin) entertained a large group of children at the "Going Batty" Storytime recently held at the Fredericksburg Nature Center Pollinator Garden. In addition to reading a children's book, she introduced them to the furry creature of the night with the use of a hand puppet.

Thanks to Barb Jansen for the batterrific presentation and to FFNC volunteers Katie Collins and Trudy Eberhardt for organizing this event!

Thanks to Laura Grant for the photos.



## OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

*Promoting the preservation of our Texas Hill Country ecosystems through education and experiences.*

## Snakes Alive Strives to Create Some Goodwill for Snakes



On July 19th, attendees to our Summer Nature Series were treated to a presentation about & hands-on show display of Texas snakes by **Kory Perlichek**, veteran Wildlife Biologist of 19 years with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. The audience learned about the ecological importance of snakes, snake safety, & identification. Kids made their own take home snakes as a remembrance. Hopefully we created some new-found appreciation & at least a Live & Let Live attitude towards our serpent neighbors.



Photos by Patti Guin



***"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve."***

**Martin Luther King Jr.**

## **FFNC Volunteers Opportunities**

### **Fun Tuesdays at FNC**

**Typical tasks** involve **gardening skills** and **trail improvement and maintenance projects**, 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. If you would like to join us at the park, we would love to have you!



**Work sessions are typically scheduled for Tuesdays at 8:30am (Spring to Fall). We shorten our work period in summer to avoid heat exhaustion!**

Contact Gracie Waggener at [gwaggener@flow-apps.com](mailto:gwaggener@flow-apps.com) to receive a weekly email notification about scheduled work tasks for the coming week.

### **Other Volunteer Opportunities that don't require physical labor:**

- **Newsletter**—write articles, editing and production
- **Website**—content management, website maintenance
- **Membership management**
- **Programs**



**For more information about these opportunities,  
contact Lonnie Childs @ [lonniechilds@utexas.edu](mailto:lonniechilds@utexas.edu)**

***Our projects are approved for service hours by the Hill Country Master Naturalist chapter.***



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

**Nelson Henderson**

## Help Plant Native Trees at the Soccer Fields



# Native Trees Project

## Planting Roots to Reach Our Goals

Your donation will help fund the purchase, planting, and ongoing upkeep of 50 trees at the new soccer fields at Oak Crest Park.

With your participation at one of the levels below, your name will be listed on a plaque at the fields, but any donation amount is greatly appreciated. All donors will be recognized in the Fredericksburg Standard upon planting this fall.

### Sponsorship Levels:

\$10,000 | Treetop Circle

\$5,000 | Mighty Oak

\$2,500 | Evergreen

\$1,000 | Tree Hugger



Donate Online: [fbgparks.org/donate](https://fbgparks.org/donate)

Donate by Check: Fredericksburg Parks Foundation  
P.O. Box 3066  
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

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## Blumen Along the Trails



Photo by Dot Maginot

**Purple Bindweed or Tievine**  
***Ipomoea cordatotriloba***

It's a beautiful plant in the wild but can be a weed in the garden as its' 15ft vine binds itself around other supporting plants.

**Fall Obedient Plant**  
***Physostegia virginiana***

A member of the Mint family, if you manipulate a flower stalk into a new position, it will obediently hold the pose, for awhile.



Photo by Lonnie Childs

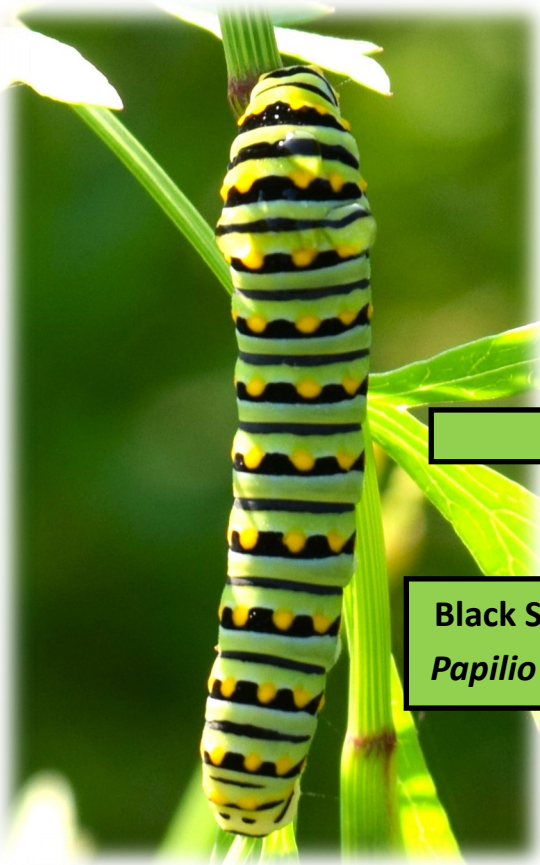


Photo by Lonnie Childs

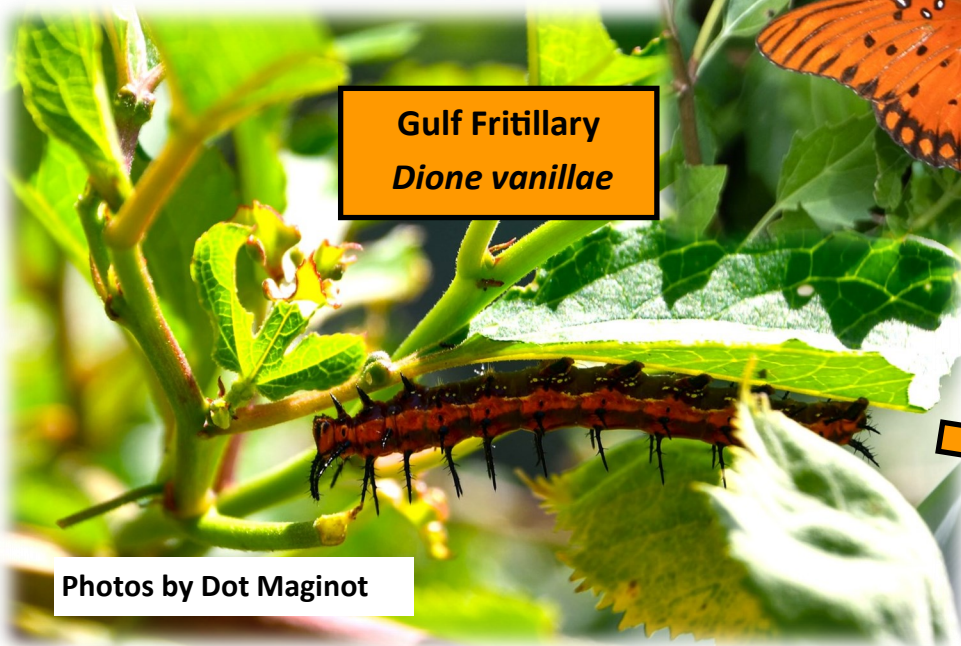
**Golden Dalea or Prairie Clover**  
***Dalea aurea***

You will find it growing on our Prairie habitat where it likes the dry, gravelly soil.

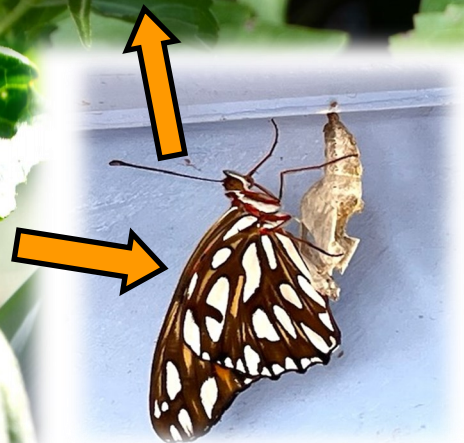
## Crawlin' & Flutterin' at the Pollinator Garten



Black Swallowtail  
*Papilio polyxenes*



Gulf Fritillary  
*Dione vanillae*







**"The next time you see a spider web, please, pause and look a little closer. You'll be seeing one of the most high-performance materials known to man."**  
**Cheryl Hayashi**

## **An Insect & an Arachnid Share the Garden**

### **Banded Longhorn Beetle**

#### ***Typocerus velutinus***

Resemble wasps but are in the Flower Longhorn sub-family, part of the Longhorn Beetle family. They visit flowers for nectar.



### **Yellow Garden Spider *Argiope aurantia***

Has many common names. An orb weaver that spins a circular web. The function of the zigzag feature known as a Stabilimentum is unknown. One hypothesis is that it is a warning sign for birds not to fly into the web.

### **Differences Between Insects & Arachnids (Spiders)**

- **Insects** have three segments to their bodies: head, thorax, and abdomen. **Arachnids** have only two segments: the cephalothorax and the abdomen.
- **Insects** have six legs, while **Arachnids** have eight.
- **Insects** undergo metamorphosis from a larva stage to an adult stage, while **Arachnids** retain their adult shape and molt as they grow larger.
- **Insects** have wings and antennae, while **Arachnids** have neither.

**Photos by Dot Maginot**



***“Lessons from a Great Blue Heron: Be patient for opportunity and then strike like lightning.”***

**Anonymous**

## **Our Photogenic Great Blue Heron Puts on a Show**



### **Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*)**

GBHs eat nearly anything within striking distance - fish, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, insects, & other birds. They grab smaller prey in their strong mandibles or use their dagger-like bills to impale larger fish, often shaking them to break or relax the sharp spines before gulping them down. With specially shaped neck vertebrae, GBHs can quickly strike prey at a distance & can hunt day & night. This one is a year round resident at FNC.

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great Blue Heron/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great%20Blue%20Heron/overview)



**Photos by Dot Maginot**

**"My grandmother used to say Grackles were the eyes of the devil, but even he is not that obnoxious."** **Anonymous**

## The Brash Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)



**Prances**



**Stalks**



**Postures**



Photos by Lonnie Childs

**Strikes**

**Right Click [HERE](#) & Open Hyperlink to hear the impressive array of sounds of Great-tailed Grackles that range from sweet tinkling sounds to whistling crescendos "best heard from a distance."**

Since the 1960s, their range has spread from south Texas into the Great Plains, as they followed the spread of irrigated agriculture & urban development. Currently, they are one of North America's fastest expanding species. In winter, enormous flocks gather in "roost trees" which can contain thousands of individuals. In the Rio Grande Valley, flocks of up to half a million may gather in sugarcane fields.

In past years, I have personally experienced a mass roost in trees at my house —an obnoxious cacophony of raucous sound accompanied by a deluge of fecal deposits will test your love of birds. In 2007, a massive die-off in Austin was found to result from a parasite infestation enabled by dense populations.

In the mid 1980's at UT-Austin, an attempt to scare off aggravating flocks via blank shotgun blasts resulted in the flock flying south to roost at the Governor's Mansion. How appropriate!

## What's this Bill?

### Bird Drawings & Photos

by Bill Lindemann

In addition to founding FNC & FFNC, Bill was a geologist, birder, botanist, odontologist, writer, photographer, woodcarver, and artist. This feature showcases some of Bill's photos & attendant drawings. Enjoy!



### Vermilion Flycatcher

*Pyrocephalus rubinus* ("red fire-headed")

This is a delightful small flycatcher that flashes brilliant red as it pursues flying insects from conspicuous perches on tree tops and fences. It inhabits central Texas in the summer. FNC hosts an individual each year which can often be found along open areas of Live Oak Creek.



**"A walk in nature walks the soul back home."  
Mary Davis**



Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*) FNC logo species  
by Dot Maginot

**Support FNC in 2024!**

Please consider becoming a Member of FFNC.  
Our operations are funded by membership fees & donations.

Donate to the Bill Lindemann Capital Fund  
which will fund our future Interpretive Center project.

Go to <https://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/>

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Comments, questions, or future newsletter submissions can be sent to  
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