

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

September, 2024 Volume 5 Number 9

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

If you read the **Fredericksburg Standard—Radio Post** this past week, you will have seen our article detailing the origins of the vision of our founder, Bill Lindemann, to construct an Interpretive Center, the educational imperative to do so, and what the culmination of that vision might resemble. The publication of these pictorial renderings and visionary narrative represent two years of dedicated commitment from our Board and Advisory Committee members to complete Conceptual/Schematic Plans.

Our design partners—**Brandon Weinheimer of SKT Architects and Tara Lindberg of Dunaway**, have patiently and creatively translated our vision into Conceptual Plans that enable us to move forward with our fundraising efforts. We have been fortunate that generous donors have funded our efforts to date, but the time has arrived to accelerate our efforts through the solicitation of grant funding, local patrons, and the community. We need funds to sustain our Detail Design phase and ultimately construction. Please consider supporting our capital campaign by going to our website and donating to the Bill Lindemann Capital—A Vision Worth Growing fund or contact me.

In this issue, we have a new contributing writer, Rebecca Stapleton, offering a timely and informative article reminding us that the time is near to plant your wildflower seeds. We are always in need of guest writers and photographers, so let this serve as a motivation to send me your work!

Finally, we extend our thanks to Ken Cooke, publisher of the Fredericksburg Standard, for their generous publication of our recent article and all of our events. In today's environment, having a local newspaper is a blessing, particularly one that is supportive of local non-profits, so please support our paper!

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

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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. 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.

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 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

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



OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

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

Pollinator Gardens Paths Get a Re-do



#1 Base Layer

Some of the paths in the PG recently were revamped to provide a better, wider path for navigating the garden. We also hope to suppress some of the ever persistent Bermuda grass (maybe a false hope?).

Thanks to Billy Guin, Frank Garcia, Carl Luckenbach, Gordon Downey, Katie Collins, Trudy Eberhardt, Ken Dexter, Gracie Waggener, Deb Youngblood, Sandi Kennedy, and Nancy Person for their work efforts through some miserably humid dog days of August.



#2 Weedcloth



#3 Mulch



"Happiness held is the seed; Happiness shared is the flower." Anonymous



If You Plant It, They Will Come by Rebecca Stapleton, TMN

The season is fast approaching to think about seeding your yard or garden with native wildflower seeds! October is the perfect month to prepare your garden or yard for spring wildflowers.

The benefits of having native wildflowers make doing this well worth the effort of preparing your chosen area and sowing seeds. Wildflowers provide nectar for hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies and provide a food source and nesting sites for birds and shelter for wildlife! Native wildflowers have deep root systems that absorb water, thereby stabilizing the soil preventing erosion. They require less water, aren't prone to disease and require no fertilizing or pest management. They will also seed out and return year after year, giving an abundance of beautiful colors while choking out unwanted weeds in the process!

To prepare your site for wildflower seeds, simply rake or till the soil to about one inch, rake over and remove any debris or leaf litter. You can hand sow or use sand mixed with seeds to disperse seeds over the selected area. Broadcast the seeds heavily and uniformly as possible. Tamp the seeds into the soil by walking on them or using a roller. Some of the seeds will remain visible.

You can purchase a wonderful variety of wildflower seeds in bulk or packets from Native American Seed Company online at <https://seedsources.com/>, Wildseed Farms online at <https://www.wildseedfarms.com/seed/> or at 100 Legacy Dr. off highway 290 east of Fredericksburg and at Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Avenue in Austin.



Photos by Phil Stapleton

Berry Bushes at the Bird Blind



I heard a Cardinal joyfully singing,
Berry Bushes at the Bird Blind...
Berry Bushes at the Bird Blind...
Berry Bushes at the Bird Blind...
Now you say that 3x fast!

- 1) *Beautyberry Callicarpa americana*
- 2) Beautyberry—white cultivar
Callicarpa americana
- 3) Texas Hawthorn *Crataegus texana*



"Nature is full of by-ends. A moth feeds on a petal, in a moment the pollen caught on its breast will be wedding this blossom to another in the next county."
George Iles

Sphinx or Hawk Moths @ FNC

The **Sphingidae** are a family of moths commonly called **sphinx moths or hawk moths**, with many of their caterpillars known as hornworms. Some hawk moths, such as the **hummingbird hawk-moth** or the **white-lined sphinx**, hover in midair while they feed on nectar from flowers, & are sometimes mistaken for hummingbirds. Sphingids have evolved the ability to move rapidly from side to side while hovering, called "swing-hovering" to avoid predators. Wikipedia

Carolina sphinx Moth *Manduca sexta* *Tobacco Hornworm* (in larval form)

This individual was newly emerged from its chrysalis. Their caterpillars are voracious pests on tobacco & tomato plants, & occasionally on potato & pepper crops.



White-lined Sphinx Moth *Hyles lineata*

This species inhabits most of the continental US. It can be a garden crop pest but is not as damaging generally as its Carolina cousin.

Blumen Along the Trails



1. Curlycup Gumweed
Grindelia squarrosa
2. Dry Woodland Oats
aka Inland Sea Oats
Chasmanthium latifolium
3. Western Ironwood
Vernonia baldwinii



***"Leaves of three, let them be.
Leaves of five, let them thrive."***

Unknown

The Sting and Itch of Mother Nature



Poison Ivy *Toxicodendron radicans*



Virginia Creeper *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*

Along the margins of the Live Oak Trail are considerable stands of Poison Ivy, which can appear as a crawling/climbing vine or an upright shrub. Stay on the trail to avoid contact which can cause a severe allergic reaction on the skin. If you are exposed, wash the exposed area with warm soapy water as quickly as possible. Remember do not touch "*leaves of three,*" but "*leaves of five*" usually won't harm you. Virginia Creeper is an attractive vine whose berries make for good bird food but are toxic to humans, & exposure to the leaves may also be irritating to some. **New rhyme— "*let them both be.*"**

Nature's News of the Weird



***If you are headed to a Texas beach, better read this story and
Beware the Bearded Fireworms!!***

Right Click [HERE](#) & Open Link



**"A bird does not sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."
Maya Angelou**

Save the Birds Please!

Lights Out Gillespie County!!

The fall bird migration has started, so it's time to implement measures to reduce mortality in the billions of migratory birds that fly over Texas annually.

Full Fall Migration Period: August 15 – November 30

Peak Fall Migration Period: September 5 – October 29

Following are some actions that you can take.

- Turn off all non-essential lights from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. each night during migration season.
- Do not use landscape lighting to light up trees or gardens where birds may be resting.
- For essential lights (security & safety lighting), use the following dark skies friendly lighting practices:
 - > Aim lights down;
 - > Use lighting shields to direct light downwards and avoid light shining into the sky or trees;
 - > Use motion detectors and sensors so lights are only on when you need them;
 - > Close blinds at night to reduce the amount of light being emitted from windows.

For more information, go to <https://tx.audubon.org/urbanconservation/lights-out-texas>

What Kills Birds?

For information on how to prevent bird deaths, go to <https://urbanbird.org/reducing-bird-strike-mortality/>

HAZARD	MINIMUM RANGE	MAXIMUM RANGE	AVERAGE ESTIMATE
Cats	1,400,000,000	3,700,000,000	2,400,000,000
Building Glass Collision	365,000,000	988,000,000	599,000,000
Vehicle Collisions	89,000,000	340,000,000	214,500,000
Poison			72,000,000
Electrical Line Collisions	8,000,000	57,300,000	25,500,000
Hunting (ducks and geese)			19,000,000
Communications Towers Collisions			6,600,000
Electrocutions	900,000	11,600,000	5,600,000
Oil Pits	500,000	1,000,000	750,000
Land-Based Wind Turbine Collisions	140,438	327,586	234,012
Industrial Fishing Bycatch			100,000+

Note: Numbers represent annual estimates.

Credit: USDA Forest Service Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-191. 2005.



A vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more."

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

A Vision Worth Growing

by Lonnie Childs

Reprinted from the Fredericksburg Standard - Radio Post

In 2000, our founder, **Bill Lindemann**, went in search of a site to establish a bird watching venue. He discovered an untouched tract in the corner of Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park straddling Live Oak Creek that could not be conventionally developed, but which to his trained eye manifested great species biodiversity nestled in seven distinct natural habitats. His expertise and imagination enabled him to envision a nature center where the community and visitors could be educated about our precious Hill Country natural resources. A vision was born, and the idea of the Fredericksburg Nature Center (FNC) came into being.

After gaining approval from the City of Fredericksburg, a non-profit organization was created, the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center (FFNC), focused on recruiting volunteers and raising funds to fulfill the vision. The FFNC mission statement defines our purpose as ***"Promoting the preservation of our Texas Hill Country ecosystems through education and experiences."*** Over the past twenty-four years, in furtherance of that mission, a dedicated volunteer force has installed over one mile of hiking trails, two pollinator gardens, a geology exhibit, cactus garden, bird blind, and educational signage that enhances the visitor's experience at the nature center.

In pursuit of our educational objectives, FFNC has conducted numerous workshops, hosted over 3,000 FISD third graders, sponsored nature festivals, held children's educational events, and hosted approximately 3,800 visitors in the past year. While adult education remains important, our greatest priority is to instill in our youth an understanding and love for nature as we pursue our vision ***"To create a community of Land Stewards to protect our natural resources into the future."***

Our imperative. Although we live in a rural environment surrounded by undeveloped land, many of our children suffer from a lack of access to neighborhood parks, trails, and undeveloped wild lands. To compound the issue, they are distracted by modern technology that usually involves engagement with a screen. Statistics reveal that children spend an average of 44 hours per week engaged with a screen with only an average of 10 minutes daily spent outside. Richard Louv, author of [Last Child in the Woods](#), who conceived the concept of *"nature deficit disorder"* notes that *"the shift in our relationship with nature is startling...and that for the new generations, nature is more abstraction than reality."* Our primordial connection to nature may become only a fading memory lost to future generations.

How do we reverse the trend? The Texas Partnership for Children in Nature advocates that we must increase the "environmental literacy" of our children, defined as *"the knowledge, skills, and ability to understand, analyze, and address major natural resource opportunities and challenges."* Would anyone argue that these "opportunities and challenges" are already evident and only growing? Texas even has a law, the 2009 No Child Left Inside Act, which calls for *"every child to be engaged in meaningful outdoor learning experiences"*



"We should preserve every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to humanity."
E. O. Wilson

A Vision Worth Growing

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and achieve natural resource literacy." Of course, this mandate was not funded in our public schools, but who can argue with the intent?

It's time. In pondering how FNC could better address this growing challenge, it became evident that the time had arrived to fulfill a longstanding objective to construct an Interpretive Center. The facility would enable an expanded environmental education program and provide greater experiential opportunities to interact with nature. FFNC had steadily been implementing Bill's original vision over the last two decades, but times called for transformative action to accelerate the growth of his vision.

In partnership with the City of Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation Department, FFNC has developed a plan to construct an Interpretive Center campus and implement an expanded educational program supported by professional staff. Over the past two years, the FFNC Advisory Council, composed of community stakeholders, solicited input from the community and visited a dozen area nature centers resulting in the development of a scope statement that defines the function and features of the future center. We have teamed with SKT Architects, Dunaway, Clarke Design, and Guido Construction as partners in the fulfillment of our expanded vision. In May, 2024, the City Council approved our Development Agreement allowing FFNC to move forward with the plan.

A walk in the future. Today, as you drive into LBJ Municipal Park, glance to the left and you will see an open area, a blank canvas if you will, awaiting the painting of our future Interpretive Center. On that canvas, imagine an appealing building reflecting our natural heritage built of materials that integrate with the natural surroundings. The facility is enveloped by native gardens intersected by winding paths that lead you to an outdoor learning pavilion where you hear laughter and delight in the sight of children learning about the wondrous migration of Monarch butterflies. Nearby, more children are eagerly playing in a natural playscape of logs, stumps, and a tunnel composed of natural materials that provide a tactile experience with nature. Past that, you notice a family birdwatching at the Bird Blind as another family hikes down the Live Oak Trail.

Now venture back to explore the beckoning Interpretive Center building. Entering a foyer staffed by a helpful docent, they provide information about the center and inform you that tomorrow night will feature a lecture on Horned Lizards. Wandering into the Exhibit Hall, you are awed by the innovative exhibits covering an array of topics designed to interest both children and adults. Peek into the Learning and Event Center where tomorrow's lecture will be held, and you see a youth group in a screened-off corner discussing their science project involving the nature center.

Glancing out the back windows with a view into the wild motivates you to walk out onto the inviting covered porch. Take a seat for some peaceful repose, appreciate the vista, and wish that you could sit here all day.



“Good stewardship of the environment is not just a personal responsibility, it is a public value... Our duty is to use the land well, and sometimes not to use it at all. This is our responsibility as citizens, but more than that, it is our calling as stewards of the earth. “ President George W. Bush

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You notice more interesting exhibits on the porch, and nearby, green building features including a water collection tank and solar panels.

Thoughtfully surveying the surroundings, you observe a community of all ages immersed in nature-based experiences, exploring nature’s wonders and mysteries, rediscovering our primeval connection, and becoming invested in a commitment to preserve our Texas natural heritage.

The awareness comes easily that this is ***a vision worth growing***

For more information on how you can support *A Vision Worth Growing* campaign of the Fredericksburg Nature Center, contact Lonnie Childs at lonniechilds@utexas.edu or go to <https://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/>



Front View of future Interpretive Center

Design by SKT Architects & Dunaway



"He who knows what sweets and virtues are in the ground, the waters, the plants, the heavens, and how to come at these enchantments, is the rich and royal man." Ralph Waldo Emerson

A Vision Worth Growing

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Perspective & Rear Views of Future Interpretive Center



Design by SKT Architects & Dunaway



"For if one link in nature's chain might be lost, another might be lost, until the whole of things will vanish by piecemeal."

Thomas Jefferson



Aldo Leopold Bench by Billy Guin

Support FNC in 2024!

Please consider becoming a Member of FFNC.

Our operations are funded by membership fees & donations.

Donate to the A Vision Worth Growing Campaign (Bill Lindemann Capital Fund) which will fund our future Interpretive Center project.

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

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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