

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

February, 2025 Volume 6 Number 2

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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Editor's Musings: Lonnie Childs

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

We've had a week of false Spring followed by some typical February weather—cold and miserably damp. Temperatures have bounced up and down, and the rain clouds taunt us but never deliver. Bluebonnet rosettes are currently sparse and could pop up in late March if we get some rainfall, but the chances decrease with each passing day. The later blooming floral species could make it, but that may be wishful optimism. It seems that drier is the new normal, and the paucity of Spring wildflowers is the symptom.

We can still anticipate the arboreal sentinels of Spring—grape scented Mountain Laurel and the flashy pink pom-pom crown of Texas Redbuds. I think of February as the misunderstood *wanna be* month—it is officially part of meteorological Winter, but it would prefer being known as pre-Spring announcing the coming of sunnier weather punctuated by fields of royal blue blooms. For this year, the clarion may be silent with nothing to declare, and February will slink back to the calendar mumbling “just wait until next year.”

Another less desirable herald of February is the proliferation of “*dead skunks in the middle of the road, stinking to high heaven.*” February reigns as skunk mating season, and most of those black and white carcasses are deceased males who might have caught a heavenly scent (to them), and in their delirium, they forgot to look both ways. Blame it on their negligent parents for a lesson unlearned. Or more appropriately, point the finger at human technology which does not respect love in the four-legged variety. February, as the host of Valentine's Day, brands itself as the month of Love. Unfortunately for skunks, that quest for love is mixed with highway peril. Give them a break and slow down in the “name of love.”

On that odoriferous note, Happy Valentine's Day!

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

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- **FFNC Programs in 2025— Check them out!**
- Tom and Patsy Inglet—Bird Conservationists
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OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

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

Volunteer with FFNC

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!

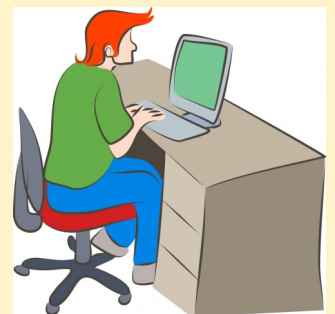


Work sessions are typically scheduled for Tuesdays at 9:00am—11:00am during Winter months, weather permitting. Gardening activities are suspended until Spring cleaning begins, typically in February.

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:

- **Social Media** — Assist with maintaining & posting content on Facebook & other media
- **Newsletter**—write articles, editing and production
- **Website**—content management, website maintenance
- **Membership management**—recruitment and support
- **Programs**—Assist with planning and organizing workshops and children's activities



For more information, contact Lonnie Childs at lonniechilds@utexas.edu



OUR VISION STATEMENT:

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

Volunteers in Service to Nature

The Purple Martins are Coming!

Our first Purple Martin was seen at FNC on February 11th. That means it's time to clean out your houses and gourds in readiness for their approaching return.



Billy Guin whacks dead grass.

Below, Marsha Beste does some pre-spring cleaning.



Mary Ellen Terrell cleans out our Purple Martin houses. Note the proper hygiene with masks & gloves. See the article on page 8 about Bird Flu precautions.



Lonnie Childs, Dave Oelreich, Gordon Downey, & Carl Luckenbach re-surface the HAT trail with fresh granite.

Kudos to Our Covert Volunteers!

In this edition, we'd like to recognize and thank two "covert" volunteers whose jobs keep them from joining our regularly scheduled Tuesday workdays.

Nicolás Gonzales, who put his fence building skills to good use at the bird blind two years ago, has stepped up again to build a screened storage area in which we can keep materials and supplies. Thank you, Nicolás, for supplying cedar posts and for your hard work to quickly complete this project.

Jonathon Watt, who is employed as a Maintenance Tech at the airport, walks the trails at the Nature Central several times each week. He is frequently spotted picking up litter or trimming back the vegetation that impedes passage along the trails and has also grown native plants whose sale proceeds benefit FFNC. Jonathon also serves as the President of the Fredericksburg chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT).



Jonathon Watt

Nicolás Gonzales

Photos by Mary Ellen Terrell

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

2025 PROGRAMS

February Programs

Saturday - February 8

**Monarch Butterfly Conservation Through
Citizen Science**

Saturday - February 22

What's That Bird?

Presenters: Tom & Patsy Inglet

March Programs

Saturday - March 1

Guided Trail Walk with Lonnie Childs

April Programs

Saturday - April 5

**Guided Trail Walk with Phil and Rebecca
Stapleton**

Saturday - April 19

Kids Easter Program and Story Walk

Saturday - April 26

**City Nature Challenge (iNaturalist
BioBlitz)**

Trail Guides: Lonnie Childs and Billy Guin

June Programs

Saturday - June 7

Lessons From Leopold

Presenter: Natural Resource Specialist and
Wildlife Biologist Steve Nelle

Saturday - June 7

**Guided Trail Walk with Phil & Rebecca
Stapleton**

July Programs

Saturday - July 19

B. K. Bones (The Dinosaur Lady)

August Programs

Thursday - August 7

Bugs in the Backyard

Presenter: Molly Keck, Entomologist
& Texas AgriLife Extension
Integrated Pest Management
Program Specialist

September Programs

TBD

November Programs

TBD

Additional Programs for Kids:

*Summer Story Time
at the Pollinator Garden*

Tuesdays @ 10:15 a.m.

June 17 through August 5

Holiday Story walks at the Park

**Easter, Memorial Day, Labor Day &
Thanksgiving**

What's That Bird?



**Another Nature Series Workshop
Sponsored By:**

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

Saturday, February 22, 2025

10:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon

Texas AgriLife Building, 38 Business Court, Fredericksburg

Presenters: Patsy & Tom Inglet

With years of experience and a passion for ornithology, Patsy and Tom Inglet will share their knowledge on identifying birds through various chirps, whistles, songs, and calls. Attendees will learn tips and tricks to distinguish different bird species by their sounds. A highlight of the workshop will be practical guidance on using cellphone birding apps to verify bird identities. These modern tools have revolutionized birdwatching, making it easier for enthusiasts to confirm their observations and learn more about the avian world.

Reserve Your Spot Today!

RSVP to Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com

Approved for 2 Hours of TMN Advanced Training

Design by Patti Guin

Tom and Patsy Inglet: Champions of Bird Conservation by Patti Guin

Bird enthusiasts, Tom and Patsy Inglet, are set to be guest presenters at the “What’s That Bird?” workshop sponsored by Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center on Saturday, February 22, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Texas AgriLife Extension Office located at 38 Business Court, Fredericksburg. With a profound dedication to ornithology and conservation, they are sure to bring a wealth of knowledge and passion to the event.

Tom and Patsy Inglet are native Texans, originally hailing from the Houston area. Although their professional lives initially took them on a different path, they always found solace and joy in the natural world. They lived and worked overseas for 25 years, gaining diverse life experiences and per-

spectives that have enriched their current endeavors. In 1999, Tom and Patsy retired to the San Antonio area and embarked on a new journey as “professional volunteers.” This transition marked the beginning of a deeply fulfilling chapter in their lives. What started as a volunteer interest in birds quickly evolved into a passion and a central focus of their educational, conservation efforts and their recreational activities.

Tom and Patsy’s commitment to birding is nothing short of remarkable. They have traveled to every continent, driven by the desire to see as many bird species as possible. Their adventures have taken them to diverse habitats and ecosystems, where they have not only observed but also contributed to the study and conservation of avian species. They have banded birds in the field, monitored nests, and shared their knowledge with countless individuals, both young and old.

As Texas Master Naturalists, Tom and Patsy have made significant contributions to bird education. They teach bird classes for the Alamo, Lindheimer, and Hill Country Chapters, imparting their extensive knowledge and fostering a love for birding in their students. Their roles as docents at the San Antonio Zoo further highlight their dedication. Patsy has served as a docent since 1999, and Tom joined her in 2006. They also train new docents, ensuring that the public gains a deeper understanding and appreciation of the zoo’s avian collection.

Beyond their educational endeavors, Tom and Patsy are actively involved in citizen science and advocacy. They serve as docents and citizen scientists at Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, and Texas Audubon. Their advocacy efforts include active membership in the Bexar Audubon Society, where Patsy currently serves as President.

Tom and Patsy also understand the importance of engaging the younger generation in birding and conservation. To this end, they lead the San Antonio Young Birders Club, which attracts children and teenagers aged



Photo courtesy of Alamo Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist

Tom and Patsy Inglet: Champions of Bird Conservation (cont'd)

8-18 who share a passion for birds. They also serve as Flying WILD facilitators, teaching schoolteachers how to incorporate birds into their lesson plans at all levels of education. By nurturing this interest, they are ensuring the continuity of bird conservation efforts and inspiring future generations to value and protect avian species.

Tom and Patsy's commitment to bird conservation is reflected in their support for numerous birding organizations. They are active members of the National Audubon Society, Texas Ornithological Society, American Bird Conservancy, American Birding Association, and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. These organizations, renowned for their focus on bird conservation, benefit greatly from the Inglets' participation and support.

Tom and Patsy Inglet are exemplary figures in the world of birding and conservation. Their journey from casual bird enthusiasts to dedicated educators, advocates, and conservationists is truly inspiring. As they continue to share their knowledge and passion, they are making a lasting impact on bird conservation efforts locally and globally. Their contributions to the "What's That Bird?" Workshop and beyond are a testament to their enduring commitment to the avian world.

Bird Lover Tip of the Month

Beware the Bird Flu!

(Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza—HPAI) is a type of influenza virus that primarily infects birds, but can also infect other animals and humans. It currently is decimating millions of chickens and is the reason for the high cost of eggs. Recent cases in wild bird populations have been reported in El Paso, Galveston, Harris, Potter and Wharton counties in Texas and recently in Muscovy ducks in north Austin. **Texas Parks & Wildlife** recommends the following. For more info, right click [HERE](#) and Open Hyperlink.

- 1) Remove bird feeders and bird baths.
- 2) Avoid handling sick or dead birds.
- 3) Keep pets away.
- 4) Take extra care in practicing good hygiene.

Report sick or dead birds (> 5) to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) 24-hour Communications Center (512-389-4848)

Bexar Audubon offers a more measured approach of keeping your feeders and birdbaths clean and monitoring the situation.

If you raise poultry OR cannot follow the guidelines below, please take in your feeders and drain you bird baths until further notice.

- 1) *Clean and disinfect bird feeders regularly; wear disposable gloves and wash your hands afterward.*
- 2) *Clean bird baths regularly; wear disposable gloves and wash your hands afterward.*
- 3) *Do not handle any birds or wildlife with your bare hands.*
- 4) *If you find dead birds, take in feeders and empty bird baths temporarily to limit exposure of wild birds to possible infection.*
- 5) *Do not allow pets to consume carcasses.*

For more information from Bexar Audubon, right click [HERE](#) and Open Hyperlink.

We will continue to monitor the situation and report any updates. Please let us know if you find evidence of Bird Flu in the area.



Saturday

IN THE PARK



First Saturday Hikes at Fredericksburg Nature Center

“The Habitats and Wildflowers of FNC”

Hike Leaders: Hill Country Master Naturalists

When: March 1, April 5, April 26 (instead of May 3) and June 7

Time: 9:00-10:30am

Where: Live Oak Trail at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park

Approved for 1.5 hours of TMN Advanced Training Credit

Description: The walk will begin at the entrance kiosk near the start of the trailhead directly across Lady Bird Drive from the park office. Look for the green and white sign that denotes “Fredericksburg Nature Center.”

We will take a hike of approximately 45-60 minutes and 1 mile in length along a loop trail which parallels Live Oak Creek. The hike will venture through all of the seven micro-habitats contained within FNC. You will briefly learn about habitats, their characteristics, and why healthy habitats are essential to the preservation of our natural resources in the Hill Country. The hike will focus on the many wildflowers inhabiting FNC which will be identified and discussed.

Along the way, you will also view a Butterfly Habitat, Bird Blind, and Pollinator Garden, all of which are man-made habitats constructed to mimic natural habitats and attract birds and pollinators. The Pollinator Garden will present a large array of native flowers designed to attract pollinators and will inform you about the many great choices of native wildflowers that you might plant in your home landscape.

The hike will be easy to moderate with a few short sections of difficult terrain. Participants should wear good hiking shoes, comfortable clothing, & a hat. Bring a bottle of water & a hiking stick if needed. **RSVP to: info@fredericksburgnaturecenter.com**



Nature Journaling:

Tis the Season! By Rebecca Stapleton, Texas Master Naturalist

It's February, and although the weather has a chill, it's the start of nesting season here in Central Texas! Our feathered friends will be looking for a suitable place to raise a family. Location and construction is everything when it comes to selecting just the right nesting box.

After you have selected the correct size and shape of the nesting box for the type of bird you wish to attract, try to find a location that closely resembles the natural habitat of the bird. Be sure to not place the nesting box too close to bird feeders as it might attract unwelcome visitors.

Entry hole sizes differ for different birds. The proper size entry hole will help to keep larger birds from taking over the nest box and will deter predators looking for an easy meal. Height and placement is equally important. Different birds prefer to nest at different heights facing either south or east. While pretty, bright colors are attractive to us, the same bright color can potentially attract predators to the nest box. Natural is best!

If you wish to help our feathered friends with nest construction it's important to offer only materials found in nature free from pesticides or herbicides. Grasses, shredded leaves, straw or hay, coco fiber, short lengths of twigs or weed stems, moss or lichens just to name a few are good options. Avoid offering dyed yarn, strings, pet or human hair, lint from the clothes dryer and ribbons. These can be toxic and dangerous for the birds and chicks.

By following these guidelines you will ensure success in attracting birds looking for nest sites to your property and be rewarded with joy and satisfaction as you observe the nesting process and the miracle we call birds!

Sources : Perky Pets, Birds and Blooms, Texas Parks and Wildlife



Artwork by
Rebecca Stapleton

The True Snow Birds



Pop Quiz:

Is this Canada Goose:

- 1) Showing off its acrobatic skill by doing a head stand?
- 2) “Dabbling” for food?
- 3) Mooning the photographer?
- 4) All of the above?

Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*)

Are normally a migratory species, but this small population remains year round as do other small populations around Texas. I have a gaggle of about 50 that live near me year round. They are herbivores who can eat grasses (including Bermuda) on shore or aquatic plants which they do by “dabbling”.



Sentinels of the Spillway

Dabbling geese and ducks will generally have legs positioned mid torso which allows them to walk on land better and forage for food. They enjoy lawn habitats where they can forage for seed & have unobstructed views.

Their distinctive honks, barks, & cackles can be interesting. Right click [HERE](#) to listen.



Photos by Phil Stapleton

More Snow Birds



Photo by Phil Stapleton

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) is the elegant bird of Russian ballets and European fairy tales. Imported to the US in the 1800s, *their aggressive behavior and voracious appetites often disturb local ecosystems, displace native species, and even pose a hazard to humans.* Give them plenty of space & do not approach.



Our common **Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*)** that live year round on Live Oak Lake.

Above: Male Mallard (Domestic type)

Right Above: Breeding Male

Right: A raft of Mallards showing their variety.



Some Winter Greenery Along the Trail



Left: Texas Sedge (*Carex texensis*) low growing grass-like plant that is shade loving, especially under Oaks.

Below: Giant Sedge aka Sawgrass (*Carex gigantea*) grows along streambeds & is an excellent soil bank retainer.



Nolina texensis is a member of the Asparagaceae family & is not a grass despite the appearance. It prefers to cascade on well drained slopes & is also a great soil bank retainer.



Photos by Lonnie Childs

More Winter Greenery Along the Trail

Yuccas are members of the *Asparagaceae* family & were very useful to indigenous peoples as a food source & to make other products. These three Yuccas all grow in Gillespie County.

Right: Twist-leaf Yucca (*Yucca rupicola*) is endemic to the Hill Country.



Photo by Lonnie Childs



Photo by Patti Guin

Spanish Dagger (*Yucca treculeana*) is a tree-like plant that can reach 20 feet in south Texas & 12 feet in the Llano R. basin & on the Willow City Loop. This specimen was planted in the Cactus Garden & reached 10-12 feet before the 2021 freeze killed it back to the roots. Because of the support of its large, healthy root system, the head has grown to be unusually large.

Buckley's Yucca (*Yucca constricta*) may or may not grow an above ground trunk & can often be found in groups in open areas.



Photo by Lonnie Childs

In Closing...

You're kind of
the strong, silent
type, huh?



Photo by Phil Stapleton

We have some recent Bluebonnet seedlings popping up at FNC , but it is too little too late probably to produce much of a Bluebonnet display this spring. Pray for some rain in the next few weeks to at least support other late Spring bloomers.



Photo by Jane Crone



Photo by Lonnie Childs 2023



Support FNC in 2025!



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/>



Find the latest news about FFNC at
[Facebook@fredericksburgnaturecenter](https://www.facebook.com/fredericksburgnaturecenter)

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