

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

May, 2025 Volume 6 Number 5

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

Tis the season to enjoy the full force of Spring, such as it is, as the recent rains have provided enough moisture to yield at least some wildflowers. The gardens are in full bloom which attracts the butterflies and bees, and the resident migrant birds have arrived. Bring on the Spring revelry! I was going to write to visit before the weather gets too hot, but so much for that thought. Spring brings renewal to not only the landscape, but it can also rejuvenate the spirit of those who venture out to FNC for some "nature bathing." As a bonus, come out on May 31 for a guided hike with Rebecca and Phil Stapleton, our volunteer nature journalist and photographer respectively, who will add insight to your experience (find the details on pag 4).

FFNC is offering two programming events over the next several months—one for adults and one for kids. Steve Nelle, a well respected land conservationist in Texas, will discuss his new book, *Lessons from Leopold*, which will introduce you to the ideas of the revered conservation ethicist, Aldo Leopold. This is a must attend event for both the initiated or uninitiated to Leopold's philosophy. For parents looking for summer activities, read about our returning Summer Story Time which offers youngsters a fun opportunity to hear stories, do a craft project, and have a nature encounter at FNC. We are endeavoring to better educate the land stewards of today while developing the stewards of tomorrow.

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

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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 8:30am—10:30am .

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
- **Fundraising**

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

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





OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

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

New Features at FNC

A new **Water Conservation exhibit** was installed near the entrance kiosk that features the Varrobook design developed by Clarke Designs. The exhibit introduces concepts such as watersheds, aquifers, the water cycle, and ties it all together with the concept of "One Water" - all of our shared water is part of an integrated system whose components must be preserved in order to preserve the whole. This exhibit previews the style of educational media to be implemented in our future Interpretive Center project.



Carl Luckenbach, Dave Oelrich, Gilly Guin, and Gordon Downey show off the new handrail installed along the steps at the Bird Blind.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers in service!

Thanks guys!





Saturday



IN THE PARK



First Saturday Hikes at Fredericksburg Nature Center "The Habitats and Wildflowers of FNC"

Hike Leaders: Rebecca & Phil Stapleton, Texas Master Naturalists

When: **Saturday, May 31 (originally scheduled for 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. Please reserve a spot today by emailing your

Please RSVP to lonniechilds@utexas.edu





Steve Nelle
with Iliana Peña

Photography by Wyman Meinzer

LESSONS FROM LEOPOLD

Learning from the Land

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

Presents

Steve Nelle

Saturday, June 7, 2025 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

AgriLife Extension Office

38 Business Court - Fredericksburg, Texas

Lessons from Leopold: Learning from the Land takes its inspiration and name from noted Wildlife Biologist and Range Conservationist Steve Nelle's recent book, which delves into the conservation stewardship philosophies of Aldo Leopold, one of the most influential figures in the field of ecological ethics and land management. The book focuses on the relationship between humanity and the land, offering contemporary commentary and practical applications of Leopold's timeless principles. This program will appeal to landowners, ranchers, birders, environmentalists, students, teachers, and anyone who loves nature and cares for land stewardship, and will provide attendees with valuable insights into responsible land management and conservation practices.

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land."

— Aldo Leopold

About Our Speaker

FFNC is proud to host Steve Nelle, a distinguished Wildlife Biologist and Land Management Consultant, as our guest speaker. Nelle brings decades of experience and expertise to the conversation. He holds a B.S. in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas Tech University, renowned for its exceptional rangeland and wildlife habitat education. From 1976 to 2011, he held key roles with the Soil Conservation Service and the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, delivering essential expertise in land, water, and wildlife conservation across South, West, and Central Texas. Following his retirement in 2011, Nelle embarked on a successful career as an independent consultant, collaborating with ranches of various sizes to advance responsible land stewardship and enhance conservation practices.

In addition to *Lessons from Leopold*, Nelle has authored or made substantial contributions to many notable publications in his field including *Your Remarkable Riparian: Owner's Manual and Field Guide*, *Working Effectively with Private Landowners*, an exemplary booklet produced for the NRCS. Collaborative works include *Texas Riparian Areas*, *Common Rangeland Plants of West Central Texas*, and *Wild Turkeys in Texas*, each of which reflects his dedication to advancing knowledge in conservation.

Steve Nelle's body of work serves as a testament to his commitment to Aldo Leopold's conservation philosophies and demonstrates his lifelong dedication to nurturing a deeper understanding of humanity's relationship with the natural world. His contributions continue to inspire landowners, professionals and conservation enthusiasts to adopt sustainable and effective land management practices.

RSVP to gwaggener@flow-apps.com

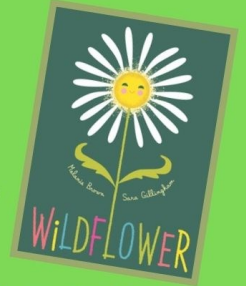
TMN AT25-089 - Approved for 2 hours

SUMMER STORY TIME AT THE PARK

BEGINS TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025



Sponsored by:
Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center



BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND! Each Tuesday from June 10 to July 29, 2025, from 10:15 to 11:00 a.m., Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center will once again host Story Time at the Park. The event will take place under the live oaks adjacent to the Pollinator Garden at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park. Each Tuesday, volunteers will engage and delight children in the reading of a nature-themed storybook. Following the reading, children will participate in a hands-on activity related to the content of the book. Kicking off the series on Tuesday, June 10 will be the reading of "Wildflower" by Melanie Brown, with illustrations by Sarah Gillingham. "Wildflower" is a moving picture book about a daisy who is told she's "just a weed" and then embarks on a journey to find her place in the garden. The guest reader will be FFNC volunteer Nancy Person. Following the reading, children will participate in the making of a seed ball. Additionally, each child will receive a packet of Zinnia seeds to take home and plant in their garden. Parents and children of all ages are invited, keeping in mind that the storybooks are geared for ages 3 to 8. Reservations are encouraged by emailing Gracie at gwaggener@flow-apps.com.



Looking for a fun & educational activity for your younger kids this summer? Check out *Summer Story Time* which combines nature, reading, & crafts for a fun-filled Tuesday morning.

Children's Easter Program at FNC

On Saturday, April 12, FFNC sponsored an educational Easter program and tree planting at the Fredericksburg Nature Center. Attending children enjoyed coloring and decorating a pair of bunny ears to take home with them and listening to a story titled *"The Lumberjack's Beard,"* read by visiting guest, "Lumberjack Billy," aka Billy Guin. Following the reading of the story, the children marched in a parade to the Pollinator Garden where they helped in the planting of a beautiful Texas Ash tree. They were also able to enjoy the beautiful flowers and Easter StoryWalk currently on view at the Pollinator Garden. Patti Guin



Lumberjack Billy aka Billy Guin

Thanks to Matt Kolodzie of Friendly Natives Nursery in Fredericksburg for donating the Texas Ash tree.



Children adorned with Bunny Ears assist in planting the Texas Ash tree while hopefully planting a memory that will be remembered in future visits to the park. "I helped plant that tree!"



2025 City Nature Challenge Bioblitz @ FNC

On April 26th, citizen scientists gathered at FNC to participate in the CNC bioblitz as part of the San Antonio region, which explains it if you saw a group of people bent over staring at the ground or their phone. Using the iNaturalist app, we catalogued species for our FNC species count while contributing to the San Antonio region observation count of 134,000 and the World count of over 3.2M. The San Antonio region logged the most observations in the US and was second in the world for the 2nd consecutive year. We also contributed to the SA species count of 5,349 species which doubled the count from last year. Find out more about the app and its uses at <https://www.inaturalist.org/>



**Sheryl Pender & Dave Oelrich
hike down the trail**



Sheryl Pender & Lonnie Childs



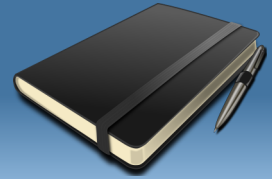
Dave Oelrich uses the iNaturalist app



Patti Guin points out a species

Photos courtesy of Fredericksburg Standard Radio Post

Texas Colonial Medicines



Texas Colonial settlers learned how to gather and use wild crafted medicinal plants from the Native Indian tribes. While the colonists used traditional medicinal plants grown in kitchen gardens, they discovered a pharmacy growing in Nature around them!

Mesquite tree leaves were crushed and made into a tea to use as an antiseptic and anti-inflammatory for the treatment of topical infections, inflammation, and gastrointestinal issues.

Roots from the **Purple Coneflower/ Echinacea** were used as a blood purifier to ease sore throats and to heal wounds. It is still used today to help boost the immune system.

Mullein was used for the relief of headaches, earaches, hemorrhoids, and respiratory problems by using the crushed leaves and flowers to make tea. The seeds were crushed and thrown into the water to poison fish, making them easier to collect.

Fleabane/ Pennyroyal was used for coughs and colds, to treat liver and kidney problems, headaches, fever, to induce abortion, and as insect repellent.

Texas Native Lantana leaves were made into a poultice to help heal open wounds, to treat snake bites, and to relieve stomach ailments.

Senna was and is still used as a laxative. Leaves and pods were made into tea. It was believed that it cleansed the body by purging obstructions, helped get rid of phlegm, and was even used to treat melancholy.



Lantana urticoides

Traditional knowledge of plant medicine has been crucial to the development of modern medicine. Around 40% of our modern medicines are based on traditional plants. We now have synthesized drugs but plant-based compounds served as the starting point.

Caution: The use of these plants for medicinal purposes is not recommended unless you have knowledge of how to prepare and use them. Some of these plants can be toxic.

References:

Worldwide Research Trends on Medicinal Plants, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Highways, 'Al'



Velvet Leaf Senna

Illustration by Rebecca Stapleton

Pollenpalooza in the Opuntias—That's a Mouthful of Pollen



Kern's Flower Beetle
iNaturalist photo

Photo by Phil Stapleton

Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia engelmannii*) infested with Kern's Flower Beetles (*Euphoria kernii*) rolling in the pollen. Watch a video of the pollen rollers in action.

Right click [HERE](#) and Open Link.

Prickly Pear cactus does not hold most favored plant status because of its aggressive spreading (due to land management practices) but mostly due to its prickly personality, which evolved to keep hungry mammals at bay. However, in this season, even the staunchest humans have to enjoy the sight of its glorious yellow blossoms. Think of them as **Cow Pasture Roses**, where every rose has its thorn, or in this case, many spines and glochids. The real fun comes in devoting the time to peer into one of those pollen laden blossoms and observing the diversity of insects that will be rolling and waddling in the luxurious pollen. It is a show to see, and the **Kern's Flower Beetles** are enthusiastic experts in the technique. Watch the video!



The Kern's are members of the **Scarab family of beetles** which includes dung beetles and June bugs. Scarabs are "shaped like rounded rectangles with sturdy, textured wing casings." They spend their youth as larval grubs growing in the homes of ground dwelling rodents. They emerge from the filth and head for the beauty of a pollen packed flower to be joined by 10-12 of their best buddies. They are important pollinators as are many of the other 400K beetle species on the globe.

May Yellows at the Garden



Engelmann Daisy *Engelmannia pinnatifida*



Simpson's Rosinweed *Silphium simpsonii*



Common Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*



Texas Green-eyes *Berlandiera texana*

Photos by Lonnie Childs

The larvae are coming! The larvae are coming!

Recent sightings



Photo by Gracie Waggener

Monarch



Photo by Bill Lindemann

White-lined
Sphinx Moth



Photo by Gracie Waggener



Photo by Dot Maginot

Don't touch!!

Hackberry
Dagger Moth



Photo by Lonnie Childs



iNaturalist Photo

Flutterin' at the Garten



Variegated Fritillary
Euptoieta claudia

American Lady
Vanessa virginiensis



Pipevine Swallowtail
Battus philenor

Avian Friends Hangin' at FNC for the Summer



Black-chinned Hummingbird Female
Archilochus alexandri



Lark Sparrow
Chondestes grammacus
with unidentified friend

Photos by Phil Stapleton

Our Migrating Birds Need Help

World Migratory Bird Day was May 10, 2025—a day to celebrate our birds and educate on what we all can do to promote a healthier world for birds. The theme this year was *SHARED SPACES = CREATING BIRD-FRIENDLY CITIES & COMMUNITIES*.

According to a study the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, “wild bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada have declined by almost 30% since 1970,” which equates to the loss of 3 billion birds. Click on this link to learn how you can support this year’s theme by taking action all year long.

<https://www.migratorybirdday.org/conservation-theme/>

You may ask where are all of these migrating birds? Most migrate in the dark of night. In fact, on the night of May 14, 2,334,600 birds migrated over Gillespie County! How do I know? I stayed up and counted them.

Truthfully, I inquired on [Bird Cast](#), where you can find out some interesting stats by entering Gillespie County on the *Migration Dashboard*.

- From March to May 13, over 107 million birds have passed over Gillespie County.
- They are flying at speeds of 30-60 mph.
- Most fly at altitudes of 3,000ft, but some fly as high as 10,000ft.
- You can see what species are typically migrating in what months.

Even if you are not a data nerd like me, the numbers are a doorway into connecting to what’s occurring in the night sky while you slumber. While you’re snoring, the birds are flying their fannies off to get to their summer homes. Lend them a hand, and turn out the lights!

Three of our local migrating species.
Photos by Bill Lindemann



Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)



Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

Join the Home Grown National Park

In celebration of **Texas Wildflower Day** on April 24th, the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) hosted a presentation by **Doug Tallamy**, entomologist and author of four books including ***Nature's Best Hope***. The book chronicles his realization that if we want to save insects and really all of earth's fauna, then we better work harder at preserving and restoring native plant communities that support the habitats that allow all of us critters to survive.

Tallamy re-created native habitats on the 10 acre tract of his home, and in the process, realized that one avenue for restoration was to convince nature's citizens to convert their backyards to native habitats. There are 20 million acres of national parks measured against 40 million acres of backyards in the US. If we could convert 50% of those backyards to native habitats, we would create our own Home Grown National Park. Thus, a movement was born, and today you can register your home habitat or find out more about this call to action at <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

Books by Doug Tallamy:

Bringing Nature Home—How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants

How Can I Help?: Saving Nature with Your Yard

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard

To view a video of Tallamy's inspiring address to a NPSOT audience entitled "Nature's Best Hope", Right Click on this link <https://youtu.be/aU79XoRk7Wo>

For more information on native plants:

NPSOT State website = <https://www.npsot.org/>

Learn about our Fredericksburg NPSOT chapter at <https://www.npsot.org/chapters/fredericksburg/>



Need some Native Plants at a reasonable price that will benefit FFNC?

Jonathan Watt has unique native plants in 3 & 4" pots & some unique trees in 5 gal containers for sale at reasonable prices. Sales proceeds will benefit FFNC. Give these plants a good home!

To purchase the plants, contact Jonathan at jd watt56@gmail.com or 520 342-9980

Book Review by Lonnie Childs

Lessons from Leopold—Learning from the Land

Steve Nelle with Iliana Pena

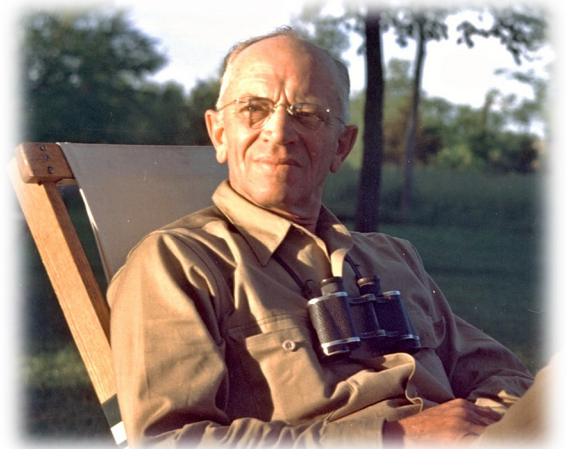
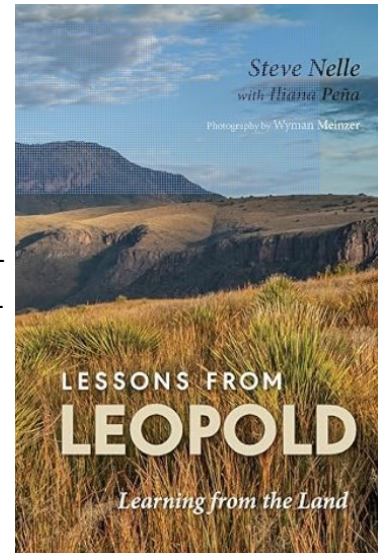
Texas A&M University Press, 162p

For those who are curious but are in a hurry, I am offering you the conclusion of this review first. If you steward 5 acres or 500 acres, want to honor that awesome responsibility, and are searching for some guiding light, you should read this book. If you want to overachieve, then start by reading Aldo Leopold's timeless classic on land management, *A Sand County Almanac*, followed by this wonderful book. I promise that you will find some wisdom in the readings and emerge a better land steward. For those who want more justification for my bold proclamation, please continue to read.

Who was Aldo Leopold? Leopold was a ground-breaking naturalist, scientist, conservationist, and writer who was instrumental in the development of prevailing ideas about wilderness conservation and environmental ethics. After his education in forestry, he began his career as a forester for the US Forest Service in Arizona and New Mexico where he developed the Grand Canyon's first management plan, wrote the Forest Service's first game and fish handbook (which included a concept for scientific wildlife management), and proposed the Gila Wilderness Area—the first designated wilderness area in the US.

His land management philosophy evolved as a result of his western experiences which led him to envision a new definition of wilderness, not just as an area preserved for hunting or recreation, but as an “arena for a healthy biotic community.” His new approach required “an intelligent humility toward Man's place in nature.” Wilderness should be managed not just for the benefit of humans, but for all living species.

The culmination of his evolving philosophy was the 1949 publication of his landmark book, *A Sand County Almanac*, which served as a capstone work in which he advocated for a new “land ethic”. This concept of a new ecologically based land ethic “changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it” and focuses on the holistic preservation of healthy, self-sustaining ecosystems. “The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land...” Leopold would posit that, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” Today, Leopold's ideas are considered mainstream in the conservation community, and his land ethic con-



Aldo Leopold
Courtesy of Sand County Foundation

Book Review by Lonnie Childs

Lessons from Leopold—Learning from the Land **Steve Nelle with Iliana Pena**

cepts provide philosophical guidelines that are instructional but not too prescriptive in the complicated world of land management. Underlying this, Leopold consistently advocated that humans should apply their curiosity to continually investigate the natural world on a personal and scientific level to learn from it.

In the course of working for 35 years as a Range Conservationist and Wildlife Biologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Steve Nelle had the opportunity to work with many landowners and gain experience in how to apply the ideas that Leopold espoused, but also to recognize where they might fall short of the mark or where they are subject to varied interpretation. These writings began as a bi-monthly column for *Texas Wildlife* and have now been compiled into this book to make them accessible to a diverse audience ranging from ranch owners to naturalists, really anyone interested in Leopold's ideas on environmental ethics and how they can be applied.

Organized into seven chapters, each has a theme describing the component lessons placed therein. The first chapter provides a short biography of Aldo Leopold followed by the chapter themes of Ecology, Land Ethics, Learning the Land, Conservation, Land Management, and Wildlife Management.

The book is a collection of fifty five lessons, each of which begins with a quotation or passage from Leopold's work followed by Nelle writing about personal experiences with landowners which validate the truth and relevance of the lesson. He does an excellent job of taking what can be broad guidelines, at times philosophical, and translating them into real world applications that deliver useful insights at two levels—Leopold's concepts paired with Nelle's practical lessons. For example, in the lesson entitled *A Fountain of Energy* (referring to the land as a natural circuitry), Nelle translates that into the novel insight regarding the negative impact of a lack of vegetation as, "*The biggest wastage of energy on a farm or ranch is sunlight striking bare ground.*"

Nelle offers these lessons as a sampler of Leopold's ideas which hopefully will motivate the reader to explore his writings in greater depth. He suggests that while each lesson can be read and digested individually, the best return comes from reading the book as a whole, since the lessons build on each other to provide a synergistic truth greater than the sum of each lesson.

As I stated in my opening, a logical approach to understand Leopold's writing would be to start with reading *A Sand County Almanac*, before proceeding to this book for the practical insights. But for the time conscious reader, Nelle's book will provide an efficient avenue into the world of Aldo Leopold and his approach to land management. If you have an interest in land conservation, these books should be on your reading list. You will not only learn and increase your understanding, but also be inspired to do the "right thing."



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/>



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