

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

January, 2026 Volume 7 Number 1
<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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Editor's Musings: **Lonnie Childs**

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

The page has turned on 2025, and our organizational ledger reveals a significant list of accomplishments over the past year. I won't brag about them here, but will be sending out our annual President's Letter soon to provide you the details. Our Board is updating our Strategic Plan for 2026, and we are excited to share and pursue our plans and objectives. I suppose you could consider them our New Years resolutions. Just to offer a few teasers, our signature youth program, Third Grade Science Day, will return in May along with more news about our *A Vision Worth Growing* campaign. Our success rests on the availability of resources—volunteers and funding—so please consider supporting our cause. In that vein, a wise man once offered this sage advice. "What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year." (Vern McLellan) I translate that to mean that what we accomplish in 2026 can be amplified and multiplied with increased support from the community. Please put us on your list of New Years resolutions. We'll help each other be successful with our resolution scorecards.

Our Education committee is busy planning out a series of workshops for 2026. The first one in February will be in support of Monarch butterfly conservation and will train you to become a citizen scientist in the campaign to save the struggling species. The citizen scientist movement serves as a force multiplier in soliciting individuals to train and actively participate in programs to save our precious natural resources.

Resolution #1—Attend our workshop, and become a citizen scientist!

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

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Happy New Year!
Congrats to FFNC
for 25 years!



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 .

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

Equipment Need:

We could use two metal barstools with backs for use at our Bird Blind. The existing wood chairs are literally on their last legs. Please contact us if you have two to donate.





Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Presents

Migration, Monitoring, and Milkweed

A Monarch Butterfly Conservation Workshop



The annual migration of monarch butterflies is among nature's most remarkable wonders. Every year, countless orange and black monarchs travel over several generations from Canada and the United States to their wintering sites in Mexico. Along the way, the Texas Hill Country offers vital habitat during both autumn and spring migrations. Unfortunately, monarch numbers have dropped sharply in recent decades due mainly to habitat loss, pesticide use, climate shifts, and especially the destruction of milkweed—the only food source for monarch caterpillars.

On Saturday, February 28, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center will host a training program titled “Migration, Monitoring, and Milkweed - A Monarch Conservation Workshop” at the AgriLife Extension Building, 38 Business Court, Fredericksburg. This event aims to empower participants with knowledge and practical tools for monarch conservation. Participants will learn how to track monarchs, how to monitor and report data, what plants to grow to support the butterflies during their migration, and how to propagate and grow milkweed.

Presenters include Carla Stang, Sarah Hilburn, Maura Windlinger, and Gracie Waggener—all experienced Texas Master Naturalists who have been involved for many years in monarch research, tagging, and milkweed propagation. At the end of the workshop, attendees will leave with hands-on skills for use at home or in their communities, plus resources and information to join ongoing monitoring projects or start one themselves.

This free public workshop requires RSVP by emailing Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com. A \$10 donation is suggested to offset the cost of materials. There will be a short lunch break from 12:00 to 12:30, so participants are encouraged to bring a sack lunch. Coffee, hot tea, and water will be provided. This workshop has also been approved for 4.5 hours of Texas Master Naturalist advanced training.

Monarch Menagerie by Lonnie Childs



Learn more about Monarch Conservation efforts at <https://www.monarchwatch.org/>

FFNC Salutes Its Volunteers at our Holiday Party

Thanks Volunteers!



Thanks to hosts Shannon & Dave Oelrich!



On December 14, 2025, FFNC held its annual **Volunteer Appreciation Holiday Party** to give thanks to our dedicated corps of volunteers & recognize all of their accomplishments in 2025. We are ever grateful for their expertise & service. Volunteer & we'll invite you to the 2026 party!



Photos by Patti Guin



The Party Goes On!

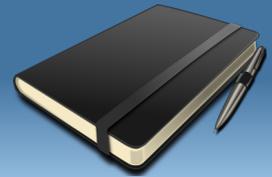


You're the Best!



Photos by Patti Guin

Thirteen Moons



This year we will experience a Blue Moon in May - one full Moon on the 1st of May and a second Blue Moon on the 31st of May. A Blue Moon is the second full moon in a month giving rise to the expression of “Once in a Blue Moon!”

Super Moons look larger and brighter than the usual full moons. This happens when the moon is closest to the Earth on its elliptical orbit. We will have three Super Moons this year - January 3rd, November 24th and December 23rd! A great opportunity to do some nighttime nature journaling!

The Black Moon is the second new moon occurring in a single calendar month, but it never occurs in February! This is because February has fewer days than the lunar month of 29.5 days.

The Blood Moon happens when there is a complete lunar eclipse, making the moon appear to be reddish orange in color. A Blood Moon will occur on March 3rd.

Moon names come from Native American, Colonial American and other traditional sources that have been passed down to us over time through generations. Historically these names were used to track the seasons of the year and related to seasonal activities and events.

These are some common names for seasonal full moons. However, many other names exist for the same seasonal moon.

Full Moons of 2026

January 3: Wolf Moon

February 1: Snow Moon

March 3: Worm Moon/ Total Lunar Eclipse (2026)

April 1: Pink Moon

May 1: Flower Moon

May 31: Blue Moon (2026)

June 29: Strawberry Moon

July 29: Buck Moon

August 28: Sturgeon Moon/ Partial Lunar Eclipse
(2026)

September 26: Harvest Moon

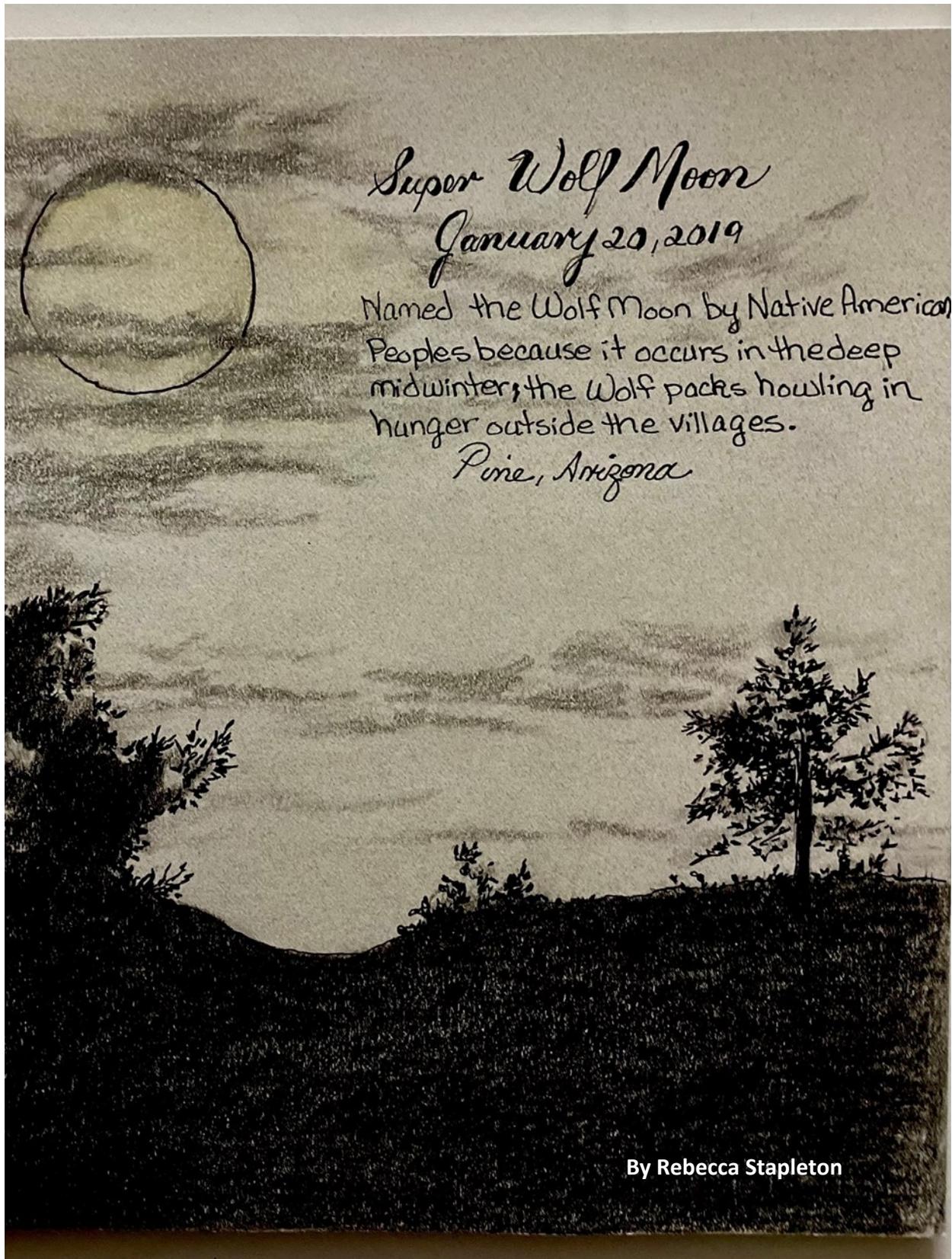
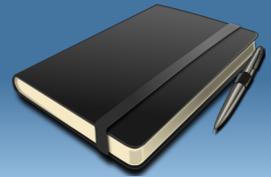
October 26: Hunters Moon

November 24: Beaver Moon

December 23: Cold Moon



Thirteen Moons



*Super Wolf Moon
January 20, 2019*

Named the Wolf Moon by Native American Peoples because it occurs in the deep midwinter, the Wolf packs howling in hunger outside the villages.

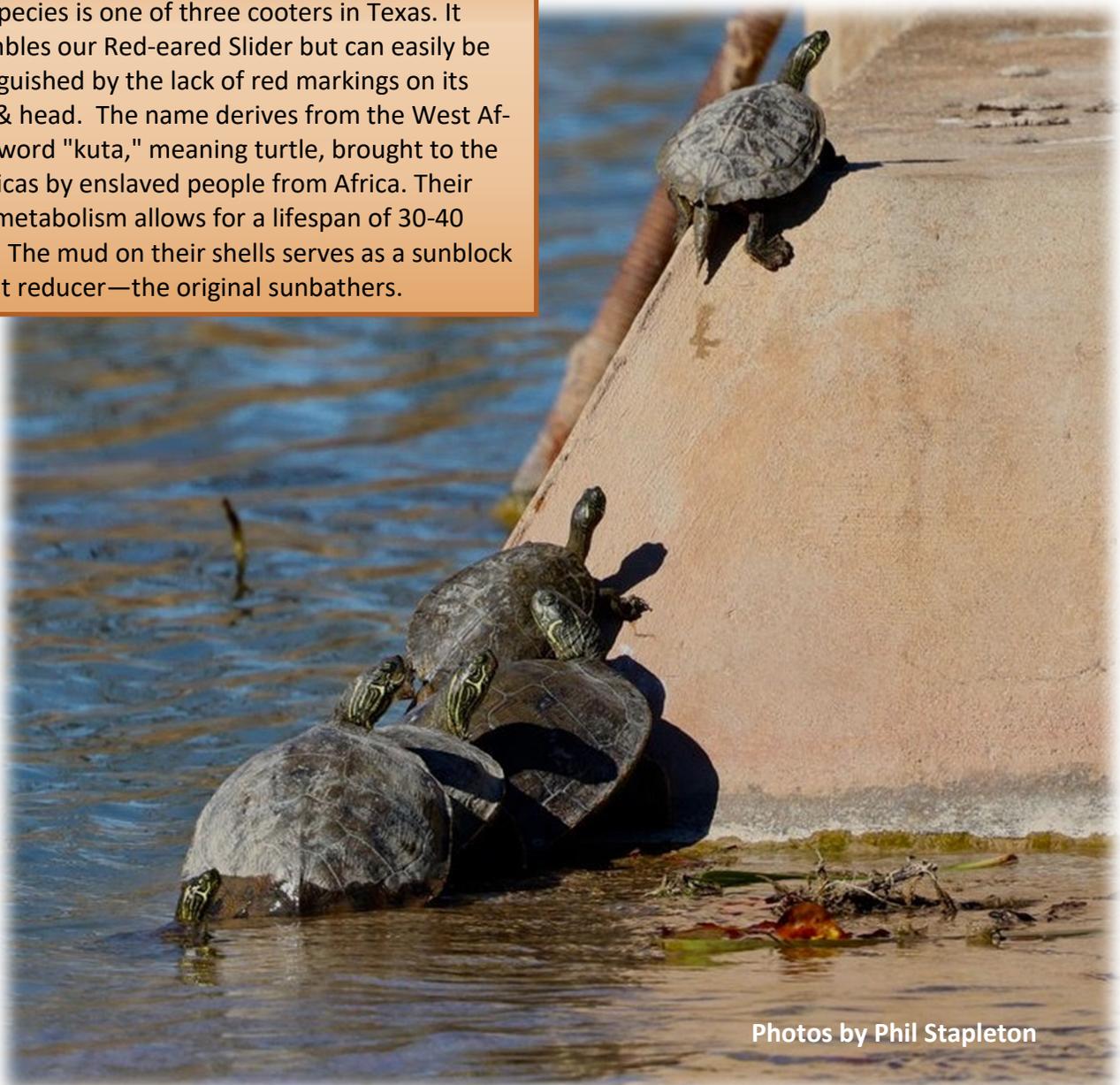
Pine, Arizona

Texas River Cooters



Texas River Cooter (*Pseudemys texana*)

This species is one of three cooters in Texas. It resembles our Red-eared Slider but can easily be distinguished by the lack of red markings on its neck & head. The name derives from the West African word "kuta," meaning turtle, brought to the Americas by enslaved people from Africa. Their slow metabolism allows for a lifespan of 30-40 years. The mud on their shells serves as a sunblock & heat reducer—the original sunbathers.



Photos by Phil Stapleton

Snouts and Spots in the Natural World

American or Common Snout

(Libytheana carinenta)

Their elongated mouthparts combined with their antennae give the impression of a leaf petiole (stem) which add to their camouflaged mimicry of a dead leaf. Their host plant is the Spiny Hackberry. Massive migrations of the species occur during summers around the Hill Country when significant rainfall follows drought.



Spotted Cucumber Beetle

Diabrotica undecimpunctata

This species is a major agricultural pest, since it eats 50 different plants, with the Cucurbita (gourd) family being its favorite. They also readily spread diseases.



The “Snowbirds” That Won’t Leave

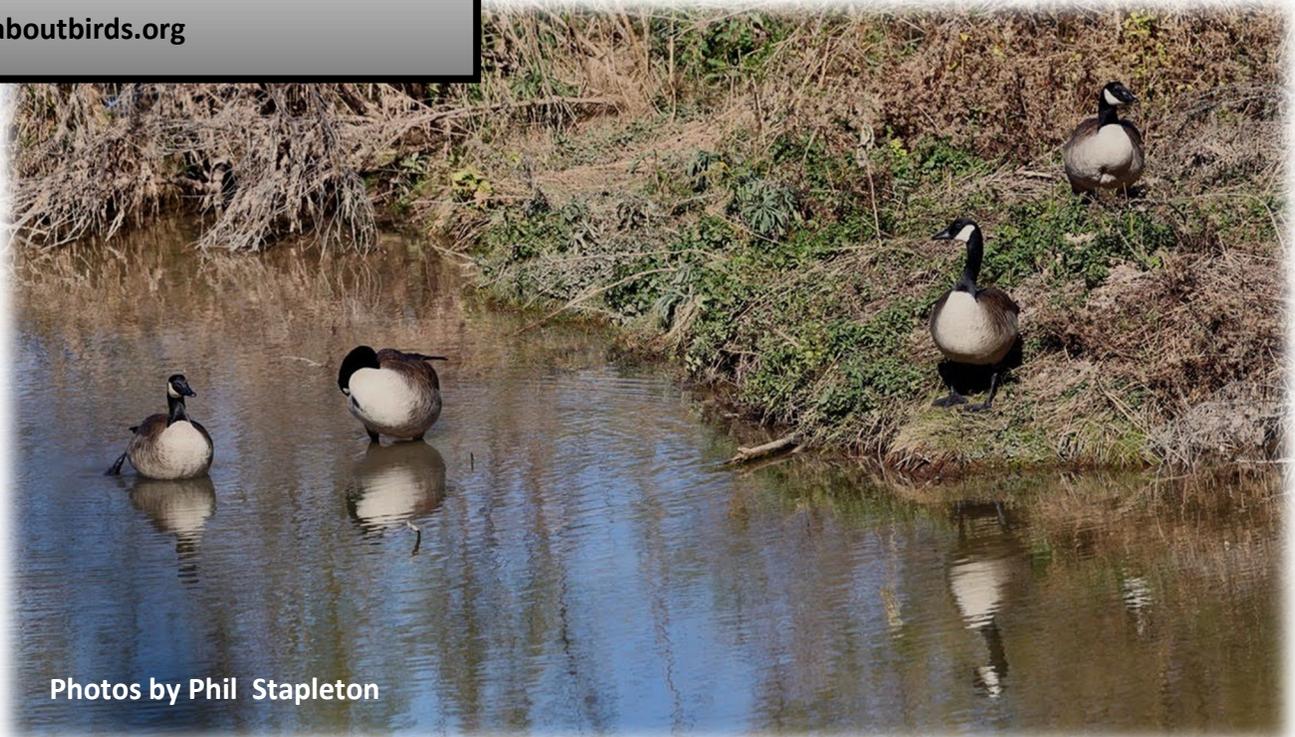
There are four **Canada Geese (*Branta Geese*)** that inhabit Live Oak Creek year round. These grassland adapted birds are attracted to closely mown lawns adjacent to or nearby water’s edge. Significant numbers have abandoned the long & grueling migration to northern sites in the summer for the luxury of our turf grass lawns. A gaggle of 50-60 Canada Geese inhabit an area east of Fredericksburg on a year round basis where they can rotate between three stock ponds with constant water levels.

Other northern gaggles are not migrating as far south in winter due to warming weather & the increased availability of grain.

They are drawn to lawns for two reasons: they can digest grass, & manicured lawns give them an unobstructed view of approaching predators.

In summer, they eat grasses & sedges, while their winter diet consists of berries, seeds, & grains.

Allaboutbirds.org



Photos by Phil Stapleton

Our Crested Companions



These avian inhabitants do not migrate but have evolved to stay put. Observe their poor flying technique with short, rounded wings, adequate only for flying from mid-story tree to tree at most, & you will recognize why they are a non-migrating species.

Above. Our **Northern Cardinal female** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) is our signature backyard feeding bird. Not only do they remain all winter, they do not molt, and thus maintain their attractive coloring. Want more of them? Leave some dense understory shrubs & trees for nesting.

Below. The **Black-crested Titmouse** (*Baeolophus atricristatus*) is another back-yard regular through out the winter. You may hear them first with their distinctive call of “peer, peer, peer.”



Photos by Phil Stapleton

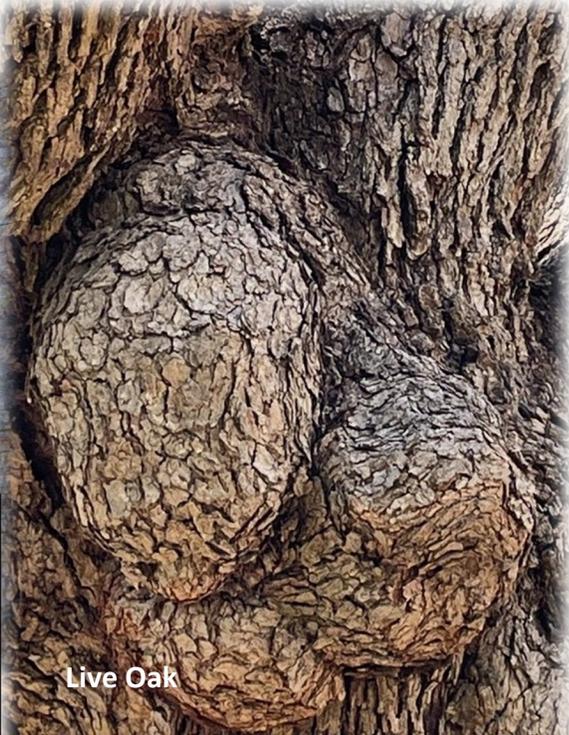
A Study in Wood & Bark



Blackjack Oak



Lichen

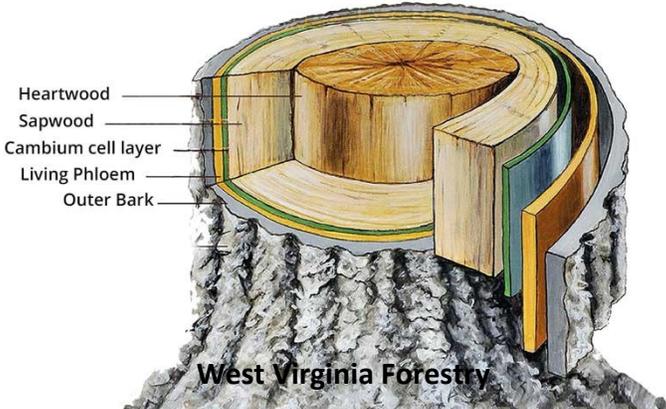


Live Oak

What is bark? The protective outer layer of woody plants consisting of dead outer cells (outer bark) & living inner cells (phloem) that transport food, both emanating from the cambium layer which consists of the growth cells that add girth.
Dead wood consists of decomposing heartwood whose major elements are cellulose, hemicellulose, & lignin.



Photos by Lonnie Childs



Feature Story: *FFNC Celebrates 25 Years!* By Lonnie Childs

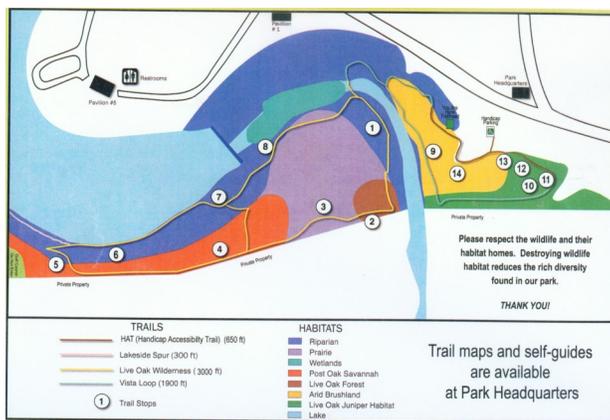
In 2025, the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center (FFNC) and FNC both reached a milestone of twenty-five years in existence. Our continuing presence serves as a testament to the dedicated support of the community and our volunteers and to the vision and persistence of our founder, Bill Lindemann. The following provides a brief overview of our history with a little help from Bill.

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.



Bill Lindemann

2000-2002 After gaining approval from the City of Fredericksburg, Bill created a non-profit volunteer organization, the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center (FFNC), focused on recruiting volunteers and raising funds to fulfill the vision. In the first two years, FFNC'S constructive energy was concentrated on laying out and building the nature trails as they exist today. First came the creation of the **Live Oak Wilderness Trail** on the far side of Live Oak Creek followed by the building of the **Vista Loop Trail** on the entrance side of the creek.



Trails of FNC

Species inventory lists were initially compiled of the relevant fauna and flora as a basis for future planning as well as providing hikers help in species identification. The identification of resident and visiting species has been an ongoing effort that continues today.

2004 The nature center's goal to provide an outdoor classroom was immediately successful as local and area schools brought students to get first-hand knowledge of our ecosystems. The Fredericksburg Elementary School decided in 2004 to bring the school's approximately 200 third graders to the nature area for a Science Day in the Park, aka **Third Grade Science Day**. In the ensuing fifteen years, over 3,000 local students experienced the opportunity to hike in nature and receive short tutorials on various nature topics. Our signature educational program was interrupted by the Covid pandemic for several years, but we are pleased to announce that it will return in May, 2026.



2005 With the formation of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) program, a new

Feature Story:

FFNC Celebrates 25 Years!

partnership was formed with FFNC that provided service opportunities for the TMNs who are required to do service work to fulfill their yearly certification criteria. Even today, most of our volunteers are TMNs who not only offer their labor, but also their expertise gained through their initial educational classes and reinforced yearly with their ongoing Advanced Training needs. TMNs are truly the lifeblood of FNC.

During this period, our first educational enhancements at the park was the installation of the Butterfly Habitat and exhibit that showcases native plants and their role as host and nectar providing habitat for butterflies.

In **2007**, approximately 650 feet of the Vista Loop trail was converted to a **Handicapped Accessibility Trail (HAT)**. This Improvement allowed more individuals to enjoy the nature center trails. This HAT trail features beautiful vistas, access to the butterfly habitat, a bird feeding area, a wildflower pocket prairie, and a rock and geology exhibition site.

In **2008**, as recognition of our status as a nature center and educational organization, FNC became an affiliate of **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center**. Throughout the ensuing years, FFNC continued to offer varied educational programming and guided hikes to the community and interested organizations as key enablers to fulfilling our mission.

The year **2010** brought an invitation from the Fredericksburg Rotary clubs to join them in conducting a nature festival. In the spring of 2011, the **“Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival, a Celebration of Natural Flight” (WOTH)** took its inaugural flight in Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park on the last weekend in April. The successful nature festival continued for seven years, three of those years in partnership with Rotary. Although the festival fit well into FFNC’s mission statement, the FFNC board realized that the capacity to sustain the intensive demands of such a festival over the long term was taxing on the organization’s time, energy, and other commitments. The festival was reluctantly suspended after seven years.

In **2012**, the City of Fredericksburg offered FFNC an abandoned experimental rose garden in Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park to build an additional butterfly habitat. FFNC used this opportunity to showcase the value of pollinators in sustaining a vigorous plant community. With thousands of hours of dedicated volunteer labor, the rose garden was transformed into a “beehive” of activity and beauty. **The Pollinator Garden** has become the most beautiful area in the park and a “must see” destination for park visitors.

In the ensuing years, FFNC volunteers and Boy Scouts have installed an array of new features at the park



Feature Story:

FFNC Celebrates 25 Years!

including a Bird Blind, Entrance Kiosk, Odonate Exhibit, Geology Exhibit, QR Code technology, and the Cactus and Hummingbird gardens. The features augment the visitor experience by adding to their educational knowledge and inspiring them to support the conservation of our natural resources.

In the last few years, much of our physical effort at the park has been focused on **upgrading our trail system** for accessibility and safety. In 2020, the City of Fredericksburg installed a concrete footbridge across Live Oak Creek to replace the outdated and difficult wood plank bridge. Subsequent to that, in 2023, a handrail was installed on the steps leading to the bridge crossing. Handrails were also installed in 2024 on the Live Oak Wilderness Trail where it descends adjacent to the creek, which proved to be a major safety improvement. Finally, a major reroute of the trail descent from the Entrance Kiosk was accomplished along with several other trail improvement projects. In summary, the trail system has received significant upgrades in the last few years which have improved the hiker's experience and will be sustainable for years to come.



After years of interruption by the Covid pandemic, our **educational programs** were resurrected in 2022 with the implementation of our Adult Workshops, Summer Story Time program, Storywalks (with enhanced presentation stands), and guided hikes. Since 2022, we have become a part of the curriculum of the Hill Country Master Naturalist training class by hosting the class for guided hikes and other educational programming. Finally, as mentioned earlier, our signature educational program, Third Grade Science Day, will come to life again in 2026. FFNC remains committed to delivering quality programming that fulfills our mission to educate and inspire the land stewards of tomorrow.



Summer Story Time

In **2023**, the arc of our story led to the initiation of our ***A Vision Worth Growing Campaign***—a project to construct an Interpretive Center facility with full-time professional staff that will significantly enhance our capability to offer quality programming and experiences. We are refining our design and honing our implementation plan, so look for more information to be announced. Most of all, please consider supporting the project. For more information, go to <https://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/a-vision-worth-growing-campaign/>

As **2026** dawns, we are developing an exciting schedule of adult programming, working on our Third Grade Day plans, continuing with our prairie restoration project, and forging ahead with our Interpretive Center plans amongst other efforts. Our future depends on supporters and volunteers like you, so please consider supporting us in whatever form possible. Come be part of our mission to ***promote the preservation of our Texas Hill Country ecosystems and create a community of Land Stewards***.

Promoting Children's Health

Inspiring the Land Stewards of Tomorrow



A Vision Worth Growing Campaign



Find out more about our plans for a future Interpretive Center founded on the themes of **Nature, Youth, Education, & Community** with a focus on developing tomorrow's Land Stewards and promoting the health of our children. See how you can support the **A Vision Worth Growing Campaign** by Right Clicking [Here](#).



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
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