

Fredericksburg Nature Notes



Newsletter of the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

March, 2026 Volume 7 Number 3

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

Facebook@fredericksburgnaturecenter

Editor's Musings: Lonnie Childs

Dear Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center,

Official Spring rests a few weeks away, but the weather already speaks of it and suggests that an early Summer is afoot. Plants are budding or even blooming, and our favorite birds show up everyday with familiar calls and songs. The upshot is a call to go outside, shake off the remnants of Winter, and enjoy the moment. Rejuvenation abounds.

We can satisfy some of your Spring thirst with guided hikes in April and May, a Bioblitz event in late April, and a children's booth at the upcoming City sponsored "Touch a Truck" event. If you prefer more unstructured activity, go Take a Hike on your own at FNC, and then mosey over to the Pollinator Garden, take a rest on the Leopold bench, and revel in the pollination spring lollapalooza. It's show time!

In the words of the poet, Mary Oliver, "Pay attention, Be astonished, Tell about it." Especially to the children.

Happy Nature Trails!

Lonnie

In this Issue:

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Take a Hike
- City Nature Challenge
- HCMN Members in Training 2026
- Monarch Workshop
- Emerald Ash Borer Alert
- The Clarions of Spring
- Buzzin' and Flutterin' at the Gartens
- Bird Games at FNC
- Purple Martins Return
- Bird Lover's Tip of the Month
- Touch a Truck





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.





OUR VISION STATEMENT:

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

Calling for Volunteers to help with

Nature Explorers Day

A Day of Discovery at Fredericksburg Nature Center

(formerly known as 3rd Grade Day)

Our signature educational program is back with a new name and exciting learning opportunities designed to create the land stewards of tomorrow. On May 8th, 2026, FFNC will host approximately 215 Fredericksburg third graders for a day of nature discovery at FNC. Volunteers are needed from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm to help with a variety of activities. There will be multiple nature stations set up, with each station focused on a topic such as birds, wildflowers, butterflies, insects, and more. These sessions will be led by Texas Master Naturalists or subject matter experts. The day will also include rotating group nature hikes, and it will conclude with a raptor show by **Last Chance Forever**.

Volunteer roles include:

- Assisting presenters with setup and/or takedown
- Providing speaker support and backup (5-6 people)
- Helping lead groups during nature hikes (need 4 to 5 people)
- Directing classes to various stations (need 2 to 3 people)

We promise a fun filled and rewarding day that will be repaid by the looks of amazement and awe revealed in those 3rd graders' eyes!

To volunteer, please contact: Nancy Person at nancykperson@gmail.com



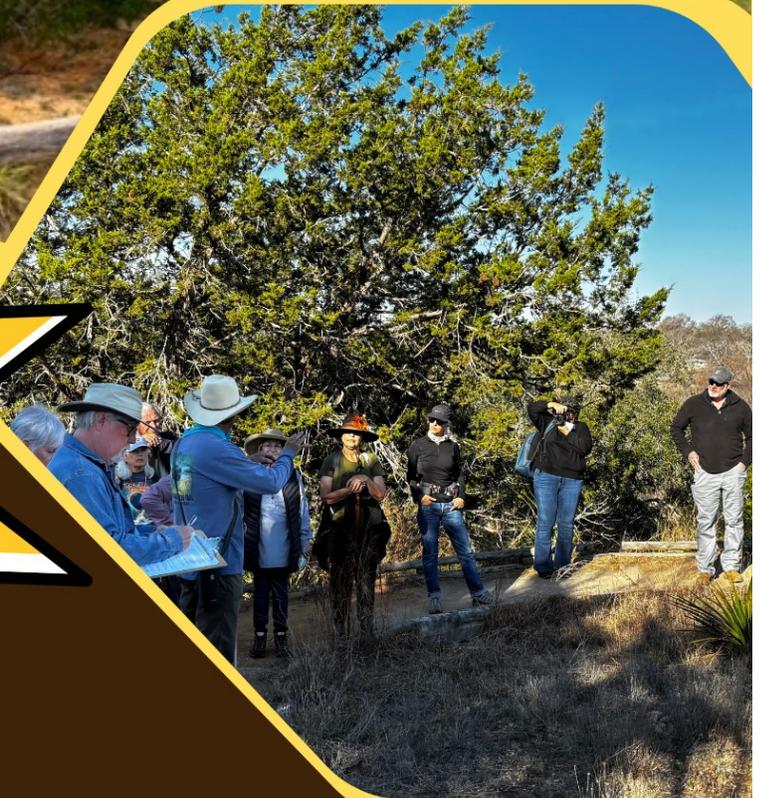
Looking for an unforgettable experience in nature ... If so, the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center invites you to

TAKE A HIKE!

**Saturday, April 11 and Saturday, May 16
9:00 - 10:30 A.M. - Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park**

**RESERVE YOUR
SPOT ON ONE OR
BOTH HIKES BY EMAILING
PHIL STAPLETON AT
philstapleton10@gmail.com**

**BOTH HIKES APPROVED FOR
1.5 HOURS OF TMN
AT CREDIT!**



Rediscover the natural world by joining Texas Master Naturalists Phil and Rebecca Stapleton as they guide you along the Nature trails of Fredericksburg Nature Center. The easy to moderate one-mile hike traverses seven microhabitats and includes visits to a bird blind, butterfly habitat, and a pollinator garden. Hikers should meet at the entrance near the trailhead adjacent to the parking lot across from the park office. Wear comfortable clothing and hiking shoes, bring water, a hiking stick (if needed) and a hat. Binoculars and cameras are also recommended. **TMN AT # 26-134**



BioBlitz Event - Fredericksburg Nature Center

April 25 from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park

Sponsored by: Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

In conjunction with the City Nature Challenge - San Antonio Metro Area, Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center is sponsoring **BioBlitz 2026**. This event is free to the public and will be held Saturday, April 25, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. **City Nature Challenge** is an annual global event that encourages people to document urban biodiversity using an application called iNaturalist that is downloaded onto your cellphone. A BioBlitz focuses on finding, photographing, and identifying as many species as possible in a short period of time.

By participating in the City Nature Challenge BioBlitz, you will become a “Citizen Scientist” and learn how to identify and record species using the iNaturalist app. The event will kick off with a tutorial on how to use the application followed by an immersive educational hike to document findings and contribute to Fredericksburg Nature Center’s biological inventory. **All skill levels are welcome**. The hike will be led by Texas Master Naturalist and Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center President Lonnie Childs.

The hike is easy to moderate, and participants are encouraged to bring water, a hiking stick (if needed), good shoes, comfortable clothing, and a hat. On the day of the event, attendees will meet at the entrance kiosk of the Fredericksburg Nature Center just past the stone entrance to Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park and adjacent to the parking lot across the street from the park office.

For more information on the City Nature Challenge, visit <https://cnc-sa.org/>. On their resources page, you can learn how to use the iNaturalist application by taking the online tutorial. To prepare for the event, download the free app from your preferred app store. The City Nature Challenge will allow the recording of results from Friday, April 24 through Monday, April 27, enabling you to participate in the event throughout the weekend.

RSVP to lonnie@utexas.edu

Welcome to Gillespie County HCMN Members in Training 2026

The 2026 class of the Hill Country Master Naturalists began in February, and FFNC welcomed the Gillespie County members with a Mardi Gras themed celebration. The Members in Training (MITs) will embark on a twelve week educational course including classroom and field trip learning. On March 28th, FNC will host a guided hike for the class. Their training and service will enable them to become better land stewards and assist nature organizations as additional resources in their programs.

For more information on the Texas Master Naturalist program, go to

<https://txmn.org/hillcountry/>



**Gillespie County Members in Training
Hill Country Master Naturalists Class of 2026
Anne Marie Russell, Barbara Shirley, Tabitha Stewart,
Debbie & Gary Arbique**



**Gillespie County Class Mentors
Hill Country Master Naturalists Class of 2026
Ben Dubose, Jackie Gibler, Dave Oelrich, Lori Lester,
Trudy Eberhardt**



**Patti & Billy Guin
Mardi Gras veterans**

**Congratulations
HCMN Class of 2026!
"Laissez les bons temps rouler"**

Photos by
Patti Guin

Migration, Monitoring, and Milkweed - A Monarch Butterfly Conservation Workshop

Over 50 people attended our February workshop where participants gained knowledge and acquired practical tools for monarch conservation. Participants learned 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. Attendees left the workshop with the expertise and inspiration to become citizen scientists in the effort to preserve our Monarch populations. For more information on Monarch conservation, go to <https://www.monarchwatch.org>



Thanks to our Presenters: Gracie Waggener, Sarah Hilburn, Barb Jansen, Carla Stang



Nancy Person & Jackie Gibler (L) register attendees



Jane Crone (L) staffs our info booth



Barb Jansen presents



Photos by Patti Guin

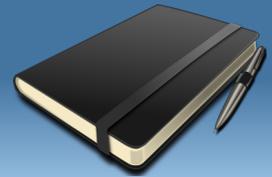


Tom Hynes tells Sandi Kennedy about the Aldo Leopold bench he made for auction



Erika Falbaum enjoys the cypress bench that she purchased for \$450. Thanks Erika! & Tom!

Possums! Mother Nature's Pest Control!



I am pretty sure you have seen one! This odd-looking creature about the size of a house cat, light grey fur on its body but no hair on its ears or prehensile tail! Virginia Opossums, called just plain possums by everyone, are the only marsupial in North America. That fact by itself makes them really special!

Our little Virginia Opossum, affectionately named Opie, until we had an Opal with young ones, resided underneath our house. We had a few generations of Opies sharing space with us. Possums have a life span of only two years.

Before you ask why we allowed “vermin” to live beneath our house, I will tell you that it was a mutual benefit. In exchange for room and board, Opie helped considerably in the elimination of mice, rats, snakes, and insect pests, as well as keeping the snails and grubs in my garden under control. Did I mention that possums eat ticks too?

Contrary to popular belief, possums very rarely carry rabies. Their low body temperature makes it almost impossible for the rabies virus to survive. They also have a peptide in their blood that neutralizes poisonous snake venom, allowing them to survive venomous snake bites. If you live in a rural area, it is quite beneficial to share space with a possum, as it will control the snake population on your property!

As I mentioned, possums are marsupials, meaning that mother possums carry their incompletely developed babies in a pouch on the belly. Baby possums called Pips, Pinkies, or Joeys, are no larger than a honey bee at birth! They must crawl into the mother's pouch and latch onto one of 13 teats. They remain that way for 2 ½ months before making their way to their mother's back. She will carry them for the remaining 4 to 5 months until they will leave her to go on their own into the world.

Possums are solitary animals coming together only to mate during the breeding season from December through October. This makes the males exceptionally vulnerable to being killed by vehicles as they wander from familiar territory in search of a mate. Possums are active from dusk to dawn.

They are docile animals, but when confronted with danger, they will bare their teeth and hiss hoping to frighten away the would be aggressor. Possums have 50 sharp teeth making them look formidable, but they rarely bite. If frightened too much, they will feign death! Predators rarely eat prey that is already dead. This is an involuntary response to fear called tonic immobility. Their bodies go rigid, mouth open with tongue out, eyes open and glazed over, and they emit a foul, dead animal smell emanating from a liquid that is secreted from the anal gland. The possum's respiratory rate drops so low that it looks as if it isn't breathing. This state can last anywhere from a few minutes to hours.

Nature Journaling—By Rebecca Stapleton, TMN

Possums! Mother Nature's Pest Control!

The next time you see a possum around your house remember that even though it isn't the loveliest of Mother Nature's creatures, it is definitely one of her most beneficial ones. Consider sharing your space with it! Did I also mention that possums eat ticks?

References: Texas Parks and Wildlife, AI

Art work by Rebecca Stapleton



Marsupials Previously Thought Extinct for Millennia Discovered in New Guinea

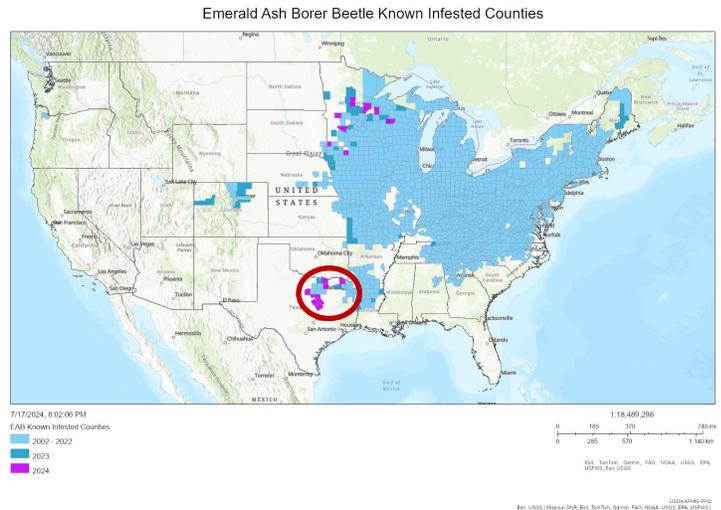
The Guardian

Read all about it!

<https://share.google/zGFpr5aAPNAAL2BTC>

Invasive Alert—Be Aware of the Emerald Ash Borer

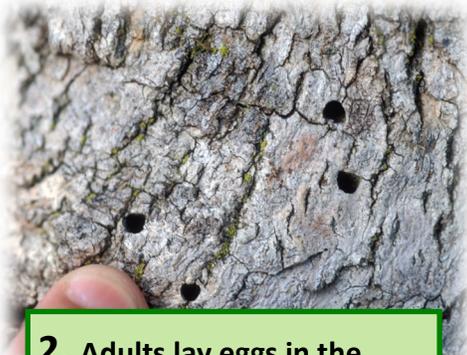
A purple box hanging from an Ash tree at the creek crossing was placed there by the Forest Service to monitor the advance of the **Emerald Ash Borer, *Agrilus planipennis***, which arrived in southeastern Michigan from China in 2002. In the US, with no natural biological controls, the insect is a serious threat to the *Fraxinus* (Ash) genus. It has killed tens of millions of ash trees so far & threatens to kill most of the ash trees throughout North America. The pest has moved south into Texas as close as the Kileen area. Our common local Ash species is the **White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)**. Monitor you're ash trees & contact the FS if you find a specimen or the D-shaped holes.



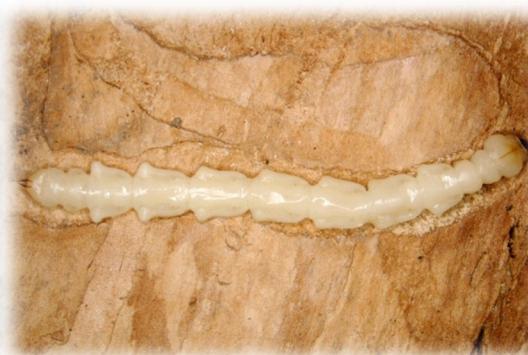
Emerald Ash Borer trap at Live Oak Creek crossing.



1. Adult beetle. Note the bright red upper abdomen as an identification feature. USDA-APHIS



2. Adults lay eggs in the crevices of the bark. The hatched larva bore "D"-shaped holes into the tree which indicate an infected tree. Daniel Herms



3. The larva bore into the vascular system of the tree (xylem & phloem), consuming living tissue as nutrition.

Penn. Dept. Conservation & Nat. Resources



4. The fatal damage is done as the vascular system of the tree is destroyed.

Forest Service-USDA

The Clarions of Spring



Left: Texas Mountain Laurel

Dermatophyllum secundiflorum

Check it out near the Bird Blind. Smells like grape Kool-aid!

Below: Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum

Viburnum rufidulum

Located in the Bird Blind

Below: Texas Redbud

Cercis canadensis var. texensis

Check it out near the Bird Blind

Below right: Mexican Plum

Prunus mexicana

Located in the Pollinator Garden



Photos by Lonnie Childs

Buzzin' and Flutterin' at the Gardens



Eastern Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa virginica*) These prolific pollinators resemble bumblebees but are solitary nesters who bore holes in wood.



Photos by
Phil Stapleton

Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) sips nectar from the fragrant blooms of **Agarita (*Mahonia trifoliolata*)** displayed on a background of Texas Redbud. A color palette that Monet might appreciate.

Bird Games at FNC



After holding a pose & hoping their prey doesn't detect them, our **Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)** really needs to stretch his neck! Or he's just playing that old Egret game, Up Periscope.



Swan Geese (*Anser cygnoides*) from eastern China play their version of "hide and seek." The species was originally brought to the US and domesticated as an ornamental species. It is now endangered in the wilds of the Far East.



Purple Martins Return

The Purple Martins returned on about February 20 in 2026,
compared to February 17 in 2025.



Photo by Phil Stapleton

Bird Lover's Tip of the Month

Spring approaches and birds are returning or passing through on their flight northward. It's time to prepare your home habitat to support the migrants, welcome home the summer residents, and improve your chances for bird sightings. Here are some actions to take.

Maintenance: Clean feeders regularly with a 1:9 bleach-to-water solution to prevent disease.

Hummingbird Feeders: Clean and prepare them as the Hummers' arrival is near.

Provide Water Constantly: Texas heat makes water critical. Use a birdbath or dripper to attract birds by sound.

Native Plantings: Use [Texas native plants](#) which provide natural food & shelter

Year-Round Feeding: Offer black oil sunflower seeds, suet, and peanuts for local birds.

Shelter & Nesting: Allow dead trees (snags) to remain for woodpeckers and create brush piles for shelter. Buy or build bird houses to attract your favorite species.

Turn out the lights, Texas! Migration occurs from March 1-June 15. More info at <https://tx.audubon.org/urbanconservation/lights-out-texas>

Nature's News of the Weird



A 100kg animal with a tongue that looks like a worm!

Right Click [HERE](#) & Open Link

7TH ANNUAL

City of Fredericksburg

2026 OPEN HOUSE & TOUCH-A-TRUCK



Marktplatz

Learn about City Departments & projects
and get close up to your favorite cars,
trucks & equipment!

THURSDAY
MARCH 26

3:30 – 6:30 P.M.



Food will be available for purchase. Stay for dinner!

And VISIT THE
FREDERICKSBURG
FARMERS
MARKET
FROM 4 - 7 P.M.



In the event of inclement weather, the event will be rescheduled to April 2, 2026

Look for the *Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center* booth
at the Open House and Touch a Truck event.

Bring the family for an event guaranteed to bring smiles to your kids' faces!

"Spring is Nature's way of saying, Let's party!!"

Robin Williams

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 2026!

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)

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Board of Directors

Lonnie Childs—President Billy Guin—Vice-President

Carl Luckenbach - Treasurer

Gracie Waggener—Secretary

Jane Crone

Trudy Eberhardt

Laura Grant

Kathy Lewis

Dave Oelrich

Paul Person

Mary Ellen Terell

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