



Fredericksburg Nature Notes

Newsletter of the Friends of the
Fredericksburg Nature Center

August 2026 Volume 7 Number 8

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Editor's Musing by Lonnie Childs

Another July, another Hill Country flood. We seem to be fast forwarding from one 500 year flood to the next. Our beautiful canyon land terrain doing battle against the weather, fighting to preserve itself. Just as the recovery efforts were beginning to take hold along the Guadalupe, with hope beginning to sprout, another catastrophe tests our human mettle and the resilience of nature.

The 2025 flood hammered the Guadalupe River watershed while the 2026 weather event democratically spread itself around to the Guadalupe, Pedernales, and other watersheds south. The human loss of life and property are heartbreaking, while the destruction of the magnificent riparian corridors adds to the anguish. Our desire to live on and around these water courses puts us at risk and oftentimes contributes to the problem. Mother Nature will revive itself, but how will we respond? What are we to do?

We can learn how to better contribute to the health of our water ways with improved land management practices that serve as checks on the destructive power of water, while also promoting the conservation of water, and in turn that of the landscape. We must endeavor to be positive influences on our natural resources and not enablers of environmental destruction. If we protect our natural resources, they will better protect us. Come to our September seminar on Protecting the Pedernales, and start the journey towards resilience.

Happy Nature Trails,

Lonnie



Fredericksburg Nature Center Events

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center presents

Protecting the Pedernales Lessons in Conservation and Stewardship

Saturday, September 19, 2026 – 10:00 A.M.

AgriLife Extension Office

38 Business Court, Fredericksburg

Guest Speaker: Lauro Martinez

Landowner Outreach & Stewardship Manager

Hill Country Alliance

Approved for 1 Hour of Texas Master Naturalist AT Credit



**Photo by Alexander Neal, a Texas Rivers Protection
Association Member**

RSVP to gwaggener@flow-apps.com



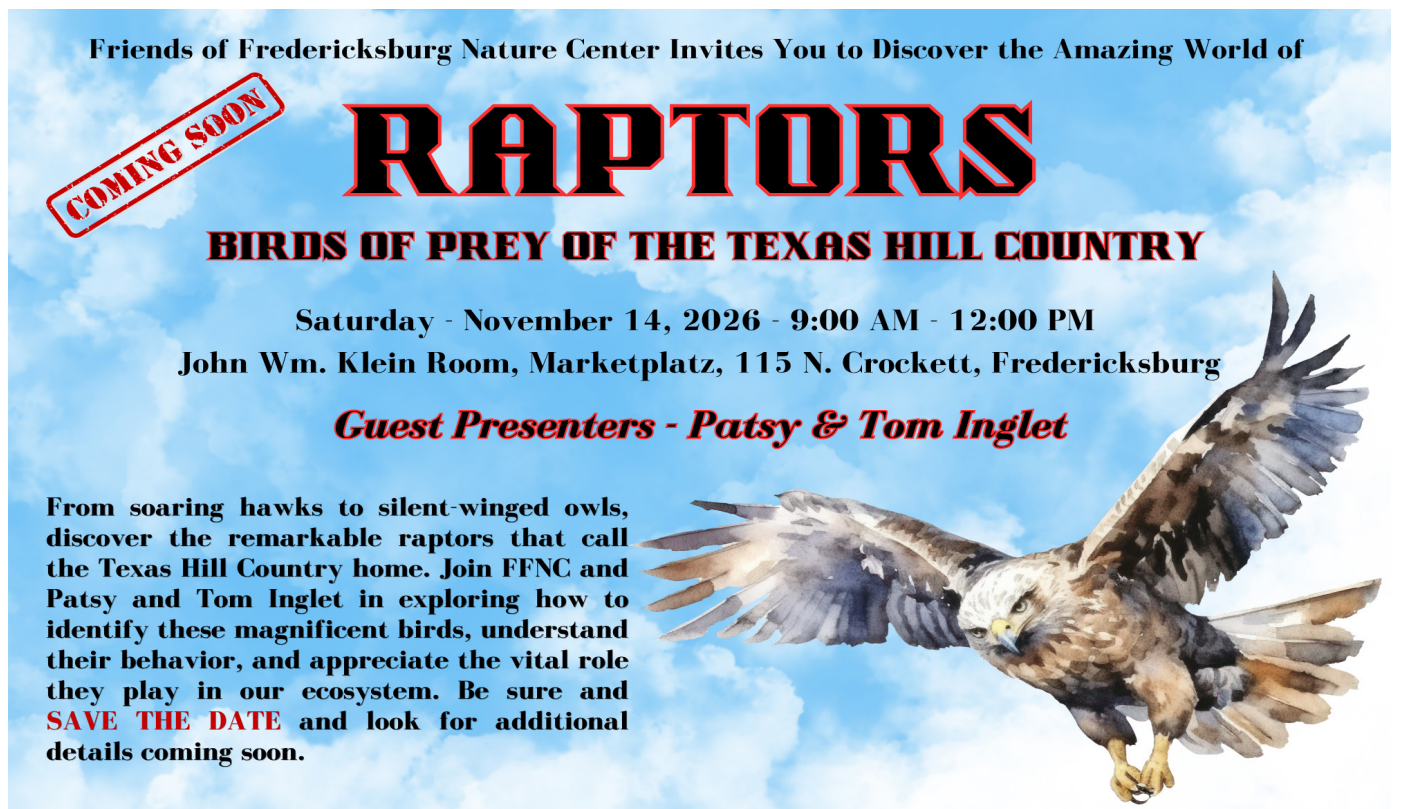
Save the Date!

NEON NIGHTS

HOSTED BY THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

NOVEMBER 6 - 6:00 - 8:00 PM
LADY BIRD JOHNSON MUNICIPAL PARK

FREDERICKSBURG NATURE CENTER WILL BE PARTICIPATING IN THIS NEW FAMILY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY EVENT WHICH OFFERS A FUN EXPERIENCE FOR ALL AGES. MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND STAY TUNED FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.



Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center Invites You to Discover the Amazing World of

RAPTORS

BIRDS OF PREY OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

Saturday - November 14, 2026 - 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
John Wm. Klein Room, Marketplatz, 115 N. Crockett, Fredericksburg

Guest Presenters - Patsy & Tom Inglet

From soaring hawks to silent-winged owls, discover the remarkable raptors that call the Texas Hill Country home. Join FFNC and Patsy and Tom Inglet in exploring how to identify these magnificent birds, understand their behavior, and appreciate the vital role they play in our ecosystem. Be sure and **SAVE THE DATE** and look for additional details coming soon.



Nature Journaling

Meet Your Neighbor!

by Rebecca Stapleton, TMN

The Red Fox **(*Vulpes vulpes*)**

Meet the Red Fox! Red Foxes are beautiful, adaptive, and extremely intelligent members of the family Canidae. They are not native to Texas, finding their way here from Europe when wealthy, early pioneers imported them to Texas to provide training and sport for Fox Hounds.

It is thought that the entire Red Fox population in Texas is descended from Red Foxes released between 1890 - 1895 in the Waco area. They are now found all over Texas, with the exception of the most southern and western desert areas. They prefer a mixed woodland habitat close to farms and open fields but have easily adapted to living in urban areas and can be frequently seen on golf courses.

Red Foxes are thought to mate for life. Mating season is from late December to January or February with one to ten pups (kits) born in March or April.

Females (Vixens) establish the den site in late winter. Both parents are active in raising their offspring, protecting them from predators and training them how to hunt. They are omnivores with a diet that consists of small rodents, rabbits, birds, bird eggs, berries, fruits, grains, and insects but are also opportunistic, taking advantage of easy prey such as chickens or small pets.

The family will remain together until early autumn when the kits become adults and go out into the world in search of a mate and to establish their own territory of one to four square miles. They will remain solitary until finding a mate and are thought to remain in their chosen territory throughout most of their lives, defending it against intruders year around.

Sources~ Texas Tech University and Texas Parks and Wildlife



Art by~ Rebecca Stapleton



Interesting Plants of the Hill Country

Botanical Jewelry – Four Gems in the Milkweed Family

By Lonnie Childs

If I were a forest gnome trying to impress my beloved forest gnomette, I would surely fashion her some jewelry from three delicate Milkweed flowers – perhaps a necklace and ear rings from the Pearl Milkweed Vine, a corsage from the Plateau Milkvine, and finally a bouquet of Purple Milkweed Vine. Mother Nature seems to have evolved these exquisite flora for the purposes of decoration, if not for gnomes, then for nature's parlor. In fact, botanists consider the Milkweed family (Asclepiadaceae) to exhibit some of the most complex flowers of any of the flowering plants, which also might explain their unique beauty and their common propensity for the star shape.

According to Marshall Enquist's Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country, twelve species of Milkweed inhabit the Edward's Plateau ecoregion. The three species that I am highlighting are some of the least noticed, mostly because of their small size and in the case of one because of its rarity. Although they all could serve as host plants for Monarch and Queen butterflies, they are not considered to be prime forage for either, mostly because of their diminutive size and limited populations. Indeed, two of them you have likely walked over or around without notice.

Pearl Milkweed Vine (*Matelea reticulata*), once you pay attention to it and see its jewel-like flower, will become easily recognizable and remembered. *Matelea* represents a genus of approximately 200 species which are commonly referred to as milkvines. The species name of *reticulata* describes the reticulated or net veined pattern on the flowers.

Pearl Milkweed Vine (*Matelea reticulata*)
Photo by Lonnie Childs



Pearl Milkweed Vine is a twining perennial that grows 6-12 feet high by growing through and over other perennials and shrubs. It is typically found on the edges of thickets, woodlands, fence lines, or rocky hillsides where it has structure to grow on and can get part sun to sun.

In the wild, look for an attractive climbing vine with 2-4 inch heart-shaped leaves which have distinctive veins and where the basal lobes curl back into the petioles (stems). Both the leaves and stems are hairy. In the April to July timeframe, find the five lobed pale green flower with the tiny pearl shape at its center, and you will never forget that flower. The reticulated pattern on the flower petals adds to their attractiveness. The pearl shaped structure is a fusion of the stamen and pistil whose evolutionary advantage is unclear – maybe just beauty? I promise that your initial viewing of this dainty flower will inspire awe and fascination at Mother Nature's creativity.

This species is endemic to Texas and is mostly found throughout central Texas to the Trans-Pecos region of west Texas with some populations in far south Texas also. On the Live Oak Trail at LBJ Municipal Park, a large growth of Pearl Milkweed Vine can be found at the far end of the trail approaching and adjacent to the Cactus Garden.



Purple Milkweed (*Matelea biflora*)
Photo by Lonnie Childs



Pearl Milkweed Vine (*Matelea reticulata*)
Photo by Lonnie Childs

Purple Milkweed Vine, aka Star Milkvine, (*Matelea biflora*) is a common but often overlooked trailing vine that grows up to 2 feet long in chalky soils on open ground and prairies in full sun. Since it is a ground hugger, it will be missed if you are hiking quickly and fail to notice their purple star-shaped flowers, which are tiny but real eye-catchers in the April to July period. The species name, biflora, refers to its characteristic of typically growing two flowers from each leaf node. The triangular ovate leaves are opposite and covered with hairs as are the stems.

Purple Milkweed Vine grows in Oklahoma, New Mexico, and in Texas from central to north Texas. Remember, if you are hoofing it down a trail and catch a glimpse of a purple star shape in your peripheral vision, stop and take a look. It will be worth it.

Plateau Milkvine (*Matelea edwardsensis*) is relatively uncommon and thus the least observed of the three. I have never managed to see it myself. It grows mostly on the Balcones Escarpment fault line along the eastern edge of the Edward's Plateau from near Bandera up to south of Dallas. This species resembles Pearl Milkweed Vine in many ways and may be confused with it since they have similar leaf shapes and are both twining vines.

The leaves of Plateau Milkvine are opposite and heart-shaped but have a wavy edge to them. The flowers which bloom from April to July have a distinctly different look, although they are equally alluring. They are bell shaped instead of flat like Pearl Milkweed, have a straight vein instead of net vein, and most noticeably they do not have the distinctive pearl structure.

The preferred habitat for Plateau Milkvine is gravelly soils on the edge of thickets or woodlands where it has structure to climb on and with access to part sun or sun.



**Plateau Milkvine
(*Matelea edwardsensis*)**
Photo by Bill Carr



**Plateau Milkvine
(*Matelea edwardsensis*)**
Photo by Bill Carr

Prairie Milkvine (*Matelea cynanchoides*) resembles Purple Milkweed Vine but is uncommon to the Hill Country, mostly growing in the sandy soils of east Texas to south of San Antonio. Curiously, we have found it growing at FNC on the sandy soils near the Bird Blind, which according to the **Atlas of Vascular Plants of Texas**, is about 100 miles west of its closest observations. Recently, I found it growing on my property in the gravelly, sandy soils of the Pedernales River valley east of Fredericksburg. The species appears to be more prevalent in Gillespie County than thought, but nonetheless seems to be a disjunct population enjoying our Pedernales Valley gravelly, sandy soils. Prairie Milkvine's purple star shaped flower is more bulbous and attractive than that of Purple Milkweed Vine.



Prairie Milkvine (*Matelea cynanchoides*)
Photo by Lonnie Childs



Prairie Milkvine (*Matelea cynanchoides*)
with a seedpod
Photo by Lonnie Childs

As to propagation of all four of these milkvines, your best bet would be to collect some seed if you are lucky enough to find some. All species grow that distinctive milkweed seed capsule shaped like a big okra with warts. When the seed is ripe, the brown capsule will open to display a mass of silky fluff with a singular brown seed attached to each individual fluff. The silky fluff serves as a wing on which the seed can float away to some new growing location. If you are going to collect some seed, please be sparing and only take a small number for personal propagation and leave most of it for Mother Nature. For more information on how to harvest milkweed seed, go to [Collecting Milkweed Seeds 101](#).

So, here are several interesting species to look for on your next hike in the wild. If you will force yourself to slow down and scan the vegetation, the discovery will be worth the patience. These are exotic complex flowers that will easily imprint on your brain for a memorable experience.



Nature News

The 2026 Perseid Meteor Shower

by Barbara Shirley

One of the Year's Best Celestial Events

If you've ever wanted to see a meteor shower, 2026 is the year to do it. The Perseid Meteor Shower is considered one of the most spectacular annual sky events, and this year's peak is expected to be especially impressive because it coincides with a new moon, meaning little to no moonlight will interfere with viewing.

The Perseids occur each August as Earth passes through a trail of dust and tiny debris left behind by Comet Swift-Tuttle. When these particles enter Earth's atmosphere, they burn up, creating the bright streaks of light we call meteors—or "shooting stars."

When and Where to Watch

The Perseids are active from July 17 through August 24, but the best viewing will be on the night of August 12 into the early morning of August 13.

For the best experience:

1. Watch between midnight and 4:00 a.m.
2. Find the darkest location available.
3. Give your eyes about 20 minutes to adjust to the darkness.
4. No telescope or binoculars are needed—your eyes are the best tool for meteor watching.

Although the meteors appear to radiate from the constellation Perseus, they can streak across any part of the sky. Simply find a comfortable place to recline and enjoy the show.



Photo by Clay Banks
on Unsplash

NASA/Bill Ingalls



Photographing of the Perseids

Capturing a meteor requires patience more than perfect timing. Instead of trying to press the shutter when you see a meteor, set your camera to take one long exposure after another. Eventually, one of those images is likely to capture a meteor streaking across the sky.

A DSLR or mirrorless camera on a sturdy tripod works best, but even beginners can produce impressive results by using manual settings and letting the camera do the work.

Quick Photography Cheat Sheet

Setting	Recommendations
Camera Mode	Manual (M)
Lens	14-24mm wide-angle (or widest lens available)
Aperture	f/2.8 or widest your lens allows
ISO	1600-3200
Shutter Speed	15-20 seconds
Focus	Manual - focused to infinity
Image Format	RAW
White Balance	Daylight or 4000-4500 K
Tripod	Required
Remote Shutter/Timer	Recommended to prevent camera shake
Flash	Off - if the flash is built in
Image Stabilization	Off - when camera is on a tripod
Where to Aim	Face northeast and point the camera high into a wide, dark area of sky.
Best Viewing Time	Midnight - 4:00 a.m.
Patience	Keep shooting continuously - the meteor comes to you!



Creating a Time Lapse

A time lapse uses the same basic camera settings as a single meteor photograph, but instead of taking one picture at a time, the camera is set to shoot automatically for an hour or more. Each photograph becomes one frame in the finished video. The key is to use interval shooting so the camera takes one long exposure after another with only a brief pause between shots.

Quick Time Lapse Cheat Sheet

Setting	Recommendations
Mode	Manual
Lens	14-24mm wide-angle or widest available
Aperture	f/2.8 or widest
ISO	1600 - 3200
Exposure	15 - 20 seconds
Focus	Manual at infinity
Shooting	Interval timer
Interval	1 second between shots
Format	RAW
Tripod	Required
Stabilization	Off
Noise Reduction	Off
Aim	High towards the northeast
Shoot For	1 - 4 hours

Set the interval timer to keep taking photographs automatically, with about one second between each 15 - 20 second exposure.

Whether you capture the perfect photograph or simply enjoy watching the night sky, the 2026 Perseid Meteor Shower promises to be a memorable experience. With dark, moonless skies and one of the year's best meteor displays, this is an event you won't want to miss.

Clear skies and happy stargazing!





Pictures in the Garden

Tiny Wonders of the Garden



Acmaeodera beetle (*Acmaeodera.sp*)



**Two Striped Mermiria
(*Mermiria bivittata*)**



**Dusky Dancer Damselfly
(*Argia translata*)**

Photos by Phil Stapleton

Dragons of the Garden



**Common Green Daner
(*Anax junius*)**

Common Green Darners often lay their eggs in tandem, with the male remaining attached to the female while she deposits eggs into aquatic plants or other vegetation near the water's surface. The eggs hatch into aquatic nymphs, which live underwater until they are ready to emerge and transform into adult dragonflies.

**Red-tailed Pennat
(*Brachymesia furcata*)**



**Rose Skimmer - female
(*Orthemis ferruginea*)**

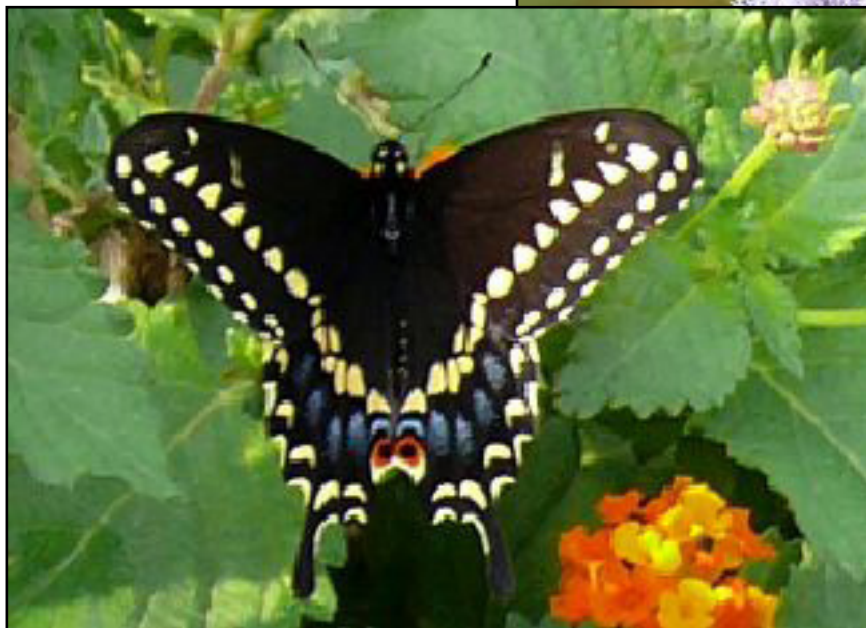
Photos: Bill Lindemann

Wings of Color



Arizona Sister
(Adelpha eulalia)

Giant Swallowtail
(Papilio cresphontes)



Black Swallowtail
(Papilio polyxenes)

Photos: Bill Lindemann



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Volunteer Corner

Fun Tuesdays - Consider Volunteering with the Fredericksburg Nature Center.

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!



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 and support.
- **Membership management** - recruitment and support.
- **Programs** - Assist with planning and organizing workshops and children's activities.

Contact [Gracie Waggener](#) to receive a weekly email notification about scheduled work tasks for the coming week.



For newsletter information, contact [Lonnie Childs](#) or [Barbara Shirley](#)

<http://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com>

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



A Vision Worth Growing

Consider Supporting Fredericksburg Nature Center in 2026

Please consider becoming a Member of FFNC. Our operations are funded by membership fees & donations.

[*Click here to become a member.*](#)

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

[*Click here to donate.*](#)

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**Thanks to our supporters and the City of Fredericksburg
for your continued support of the
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