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# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist  
Hill Country Chapter

T E X A S



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## October Chapter Meeting

The October Hill Country Chapter meeting will be held on Monday, October 28. Doors will open at 6:00 pm for light refreshments. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and the presentation at 7:00.

Our speaker will be Dr. David Hillis who will speak about Biodiversity in the Texas Hill Country. For more information, please see Alice King's article on page 3.

Zoom attendance: Prior registration is required for attending the meeting/Advanced Training session via Zoom. To register for virtual attendance, click [HERE](#) You will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the meeting. You can then log into Zoom starting at 6:00 pm on October 28th.

If you are attending in person, the location is at Guadalupe Basin Natural Resource Center (GBNRC). 125 Lehman Dr. Kerrville. There is no need to pre-register.

## President's Message ... Jeff Schwarz

### Crab-Apple Wars

The cooler days of fall finally showed up this week, though they only lasted a few days. I took advantage of the weather and went on a long nature walk in one of the neighborhood greenbelts; this one down a dry creek bed, deep in a limestone-walled canyon. Among the jumble of rocks, I wondered how many of the small openings connected to the many caves known to exist in the area. The Cave Without a Name is near – probably a mile from where I was walking.

If you've never been to the Cave Without a Name, located a few minutes north of Boerne, it would be well worth your time to take a scenic drive out there. The cave is filled with spectacular formations of Stalactites, Stalagmites, delicate Soda Straws, Cave Drapery, magnificent Flowstones, Rimstone Dams, and more. They also have a monthly concert in the cave – the acoustics are awesome! See their website for more information: <https://www.cavewithoutaname.com/>

Around one corner of the trail I was walking was a large Bois-D'arc tree (*Maclura pomifera*). It is a somewhat rare and unique native to this area. It is also known as Osage orange, Bodark and Hedge-Apple. I grew up calling it Crab-Apple. There was a large one on the back of the Boerne property where I grew up. While the thorns were to be avoided, young boys were fond of the large, green, hard fruit the size of a baseball or softball as they made wonderful projectiles. When one doesn't grow up where snowball fights can happen, one improvises.

The common name, "bois d'arc" is French for "bow-wood," a reference to the use by Native Americans for bows and war clubs. This species was also widely distributed and planted to make hedgerows and livestock pens prior to the invention of barbed wire. (<http://texasreeid.tamu.edu/content/treedetails/?id=61>)

See CRAB-APPLE, page 4



# This Month We Honor:

## RECERTIFICATIONS

Karolyn Andrews, Diana Armbrust, Rheda Boardman, Lucy Cruz-Hudson, David Drake, Dan Gallagher, Lucy Griffith, Veronica Hawk, Susan Longacre, Pat Lucas, Katherine Peake, Lonnie Phillips, Tony Plutino, Laurel Rhodes, Barbara Romano, Anne Ryan, Robert Shock, Bernard Warren, Constance Weaver, Clark Williams

## MILESTONES

**250 Hours:** Aimee Tennant, Rande Thompson  
**500 Hours:** Kathy Loring  
**1000 Hours:** Patti Guin, Kim Ort

**Congratulations to members who received awards at the September chapter meeting:**



**Recertifications:** (left to right)  
Jane Jamison, Phil Youngblood, Eldon Sheffer, Bob Binney, Robin Hale, John Walker



**Special Certification:**  
Karla Marchell



**1000 Hour Milestone:**  
Jeff Schwarz, Jane Jamison

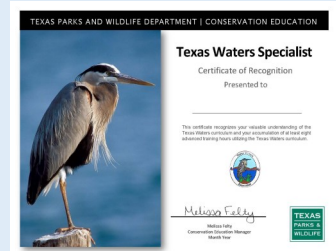
## TEXAS WATERS SPECIALIST CERTIFICATIONS

Karolyn Andrews, Janis Arterbury, Frank Garcia, Bob Hansen, Mark Hults, Travis Linscomb, Michael McCrea, Mark Moldrawski, Phil Youngblood

**Congratulations to members who received awards at the September chapter meeting:**



Frank Garcia, Phil Youngblood, Travis Linscomb



# BIODIVERSITY IN THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

SPEAKER: DR. DAVID M. HILLIS

## BY ALICE KING

Back by popular demand! Dr. Hillis' talk to our 2024 Class was a barnburner so we are pleased to welcome him back to speak to our Chapter meeting. Dr. Hillis' talk will discuss some of the unique aspects of biodiversity in the Texas Hill Country, why this region is so diverse, and how we can protect and restore our native plants and animals.

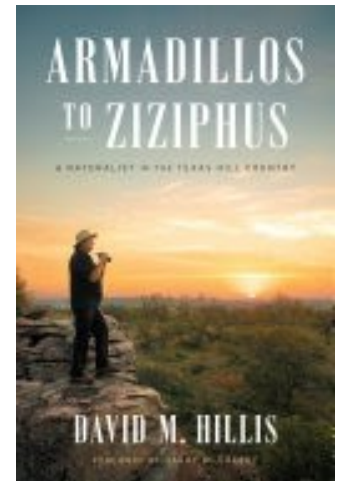
**About Our Speaker:** Dr. Hillis is a research biologist with more accolades than I can fit in this introduction. He is best known for his studies of molecular evolution, phylogeny (evolutionary history of a species or a group), and vertebrate systematics. He created the popular Hillis Plot depiction of the evolutionary tree of life. His full professional biography can be found on the UT Austin website at <https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/component/cobalt/item/7-integrative-biology/214-hillis-david-m?Itemid=1224>

The item that I find most interesting is that he has several species of reptiles and amphibians named for him — Hillis's Dwarf Salamander, (*Eurycea hillisi*), from the southeastern United States; Hillis's Stream Treefrog (*Hyloscirtus hillisi*), from Ecuador; Hillis's Bush Frog (*Raochestes hillisi*), from China; Sticklizard (*Pholidobolus hillisi*), from Ecuador; and the Acapulco Leopard Frog (*Rana hillisi*), from Mexico.

Dr. Hillis is originally from Denmark. He has a ranch in Mason County called the Double Helix where he has worked since the 1990's to restore the natural beauty and diversity of his land.

His recent book, *Armadillos to Ziziphus, A Naturalist in the Texas Hill Country*, is available from the UT Press and other online retailers.

<https://utpress.utexas.edu/9781477326732/> The UT Press description of the book: "*Featuring short nontechnical essays accompanied by vivid color photos, Armadillos to Ziziphus is a charming and casual introduction to the environment of the region. Whether walking the pasture with his Longhorn cattle, explaining the ecological significance of microscopic organisms in springtime mud puddles, or marveling at the local Ziziphus (aka Lotebush, a spiny shrub), Hillis guides first-time visitors and long-term residents alike in an appreciation for the Hill Country's natural beauty and diversity.*"



## Crab-Apple

(Continued from page 1)



I've included a couple of pictures to show this particular tree to you. It's a pretty tree about 30' tall. The ground beneath the tree was littered with fallen fruit. It is located near the dry creek which becomes a raging stream in floods. An interesting feature is how the trunk of the tree was deformed by floodwaters. The battle wounds on my ankle happened when I backed up into a few dead and discarded branches from the tree. I was instantly reminded about the damn thorns!

I brought one of the hedge apples home with me and thought I'd cut it open to get to the seeds. I'd like to try and plant one in my yard. If you're a tree expert, please tell me what I need to know to have success here. My property is on the side of a hill. There's not much dirt, but I do have a swale that fills with runoff water so maybe I can replicate the trail tree's environs. One day, maybe the tree I plant will provide cannon fodder for another generation of boys.



### GIVE MOTHER NATURE A HAND COMMUNITY NATIVE PLANTING DAY IS NOVEMBER 2ND

BY KATY KAPPEL

This project of the Bird City Kerrville Coalition will take place over several days. If you would like to hike the trail of Singing Wind Park (2112-2116 Singing Wind Drive, Kerrville) and spread wildflower seeds on likely spots, join us at 8:30am on Friday, November 1st. This park has two miles of trails and last spring had an incredible bluebonnet display along one of them.

Hiking and spreading seeds at Kerrville-Schreiner Park will take place on Saturday, November 2nd at 8:30am. There are multiple trails. Pick your favorite and look for likely spots. You can bring seeds from your favorite wildflowers, or we will have an assortment to share.

Although we sometimes spend a lot of time preparing beds for our wildflower gardens, in nature they just land on the ground and take off. When (not if) the rain comes, we will be ready.

If you prefer to get your hands dirty and dig holes, meet at the Flat Rock Park Veterans' Pathway at 9:00am on November 2nd for work on erosion control and planting riparian plants. We could use some plants that like shade, agarita and big muhly. The park is located at 3840 Riverside Drive, Kerrville.

Pam Leinhard and her team will be busy at the West entrance of the courthouse in Kerrville and could also use some help. Or you can join Rita Aliperto and the Master Gardeners to work on a pollinator garden in front of the Youth Event Center, also in Kerrville.

If you are willing to lead a team, can donate plants or just need more information, email Katy at [birdcitykerrville@gmail.com](mailto:birdcitykerrville@gmail.com)

# POLLINATOR GARDEN ASSISTANCE & RECOGNITION PROGRAM (PGARP) *ITS PURPOSE AND HISTORY*

**BY MARY FRUSHOUR, PGARP COORDINATOR**

In November 2018, Richard Coleman, a former member of the Hill Country Chapter, came up with the idea of PGARP, Pollinator Garden Assistance & Recognition Program. He presented a letter with the background for the service that PGARP provides, as well as the following concepts. I feel the need to share this information, as many of our members do not understand the concept or the importance of this program.

The three main concepts of the program are:  
Educate our communities

- on the importance of helping our native and migratory pollinators by providing food and shelter along their pathways.
- on the importance of using native plants, for humans, native wildlife, and our environment.
- to share the information with others in the community, thereby expanding the area that assists the pollinators

## **Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program** **By Richard Coleman, November 8, 2018**

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*As a Hill Country plant novice I followed the “wrong plan” due to lack of knowledge and understanding when starting to landscape our new home in early 2016.*

*We’ve all heard the tales of folks moving to the Hill Country, bringing their Houston or Dallas landscaping mindset, removing existing native plants and replacing them with invasive or tropical species from home, only to have them fail because of water, soil or sun issues to which they were not accustomed, or proliferate in places where they shouldn’t.*

*My first volunteer hours were spent at the Kerrville-Schreiner Pollinator Garden with Cathy Downs and Larry Eskridge. This exposed me to a whole new variety of plants of which I was unfamiliar.*

*My wife, Teresa and I also volunteer at the much smaller, Kerr County Courthouse Pollinator Garden under the leadership of Pam Lienhard.*

*The garden is at the east side entrance and gets viewed by everyone coming and going through that side of the building. It never fails that folks will stop to inquire about the plants and pollinators as they come by. Everyone seems curious and complementary of our efforts.*

*I noticed when we were working in the gardens there was usually one group with their butts in the air and others standing around talking plants and pollinators with each other and the folks passing by. I also discovered that NPSOT members and Master Naturalists really love to talk to people about plants and pollinators.*

*I wanted to find a way to harness all that knowledge and promote and recognize people’s contributions to making sure we had pollinators to keep our food sources thriving, even in a small way.*

*I assumed this type of program existed already. After noodling around on the Internet I discovered there were all kinds of programs out there but they were usually local and fragmented.*

*The Monarch Waystation and Monarch Corridor were the closest programs I found, but were solely focused on Monarchs and were much more rigorous than I envisioned.*

*The Wildscape program was similar to what we envisioned but had gone dormant after state funding cuts.*

*(continued on page 6)*



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*I was particularly drawn to the pollinator corridor concept, even though I-35 has claimed that title. The idea of having hundreds of small plots that focused on native plants would be worth recognition of the gardeners who were willing to devote even a small portion of their landscape to pollinators.*

*It also became obvious that we not limit the recognition to homeowners but recognize schools, apartments, HOA's and businesses willing to participate.*

*Our courthouse team, Pam and Chris Lienhard, Mary Frushour, Donna Dutton, Alan Howard, Elaine Horobec, Clarence and Margaret Reed, and Maura Windlinger, started talking about ways to use the garden to inspire local folks to plant for pollinators.*

*Our plan was to establish a network of volunteers in our chapter area that could advise urban and suburban gardeners what native plants might thrive in their specific garden and attract local pollinators, and have an attractive, low maintenance and low water consumption garden year round.*

*We also wanted to recognize gardeners who have already established plots of Native Plants that provide nectar and habitat for native and migrating species of bees, butterflies, moths, birds, beetles and other insects.*

*Our secondary goal is to provide knowledgeable volunteers, able reach out to local groups, institutions and originations to educate people about the importance of native plants and habitat in our unique Hill Country environment. The program would also serve as a soft recruitment vehicle for our local organizations.*

*After hours of group meetings, email discussions and data collection, we developed a program outline and our website content established.*

*The next step was to go before the boards of each of the four entities for approval and request funding. We received modest funds from the Kerrville, Boerne and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters. The Master Naturalist graciously authorized our Webmaster, Kristie Denbow to produce a stunning website from our content and design a rack card and banner for printing.*

*Brenda and Gary Fest, Lisa Flanagan, Chris Anderson, Diana Armbrust, Veronica Hawk, and Clarence Reed were each instrumental in championing the program and getting their respective board's approval.*

*We designed a Certificate that would be presented at local chapter meetings and produced an attractive Garden Plaque that could be purchased for their garden fence for \$25.00.*

*All that was the easy part, now we needed to establish our network of volunteers. Since this type of program would be most successful in growing urban and suburban areas where new people are relocating, we wanted to focus our attention on the three largest cities in our chapter area. Rachel Thompson in Boerne and Joyce Studer in Fredericksburg are the Volunteer Coordinators for those two cities and have recruited volunteers to go out on site visits. We are still looking for someone to take up the torch for Kerrville.*

*Since the website went live in May, we have received 22 Site Visit Requests in six counties and presented or had a table at 14 events, with two presentations already scheduled for next year.*

*Overall the program has been a modest success. With the cooler temperatures we predict everyone's attention to turn towards family and the holidays. We plan to have a group meeting in January to review the program and see what areas need to be tweaked or modified to improve the program and expand our volunteer network.*

*At last month's State Conference I met with the South Texas Border Chapter that has expressed interest in adapting the PGARP program for their very different, but also important region. We are hoping to get other chapters around the state interested in molding the program for their own area as well.*

*For complete information go to <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/pgarp/>*

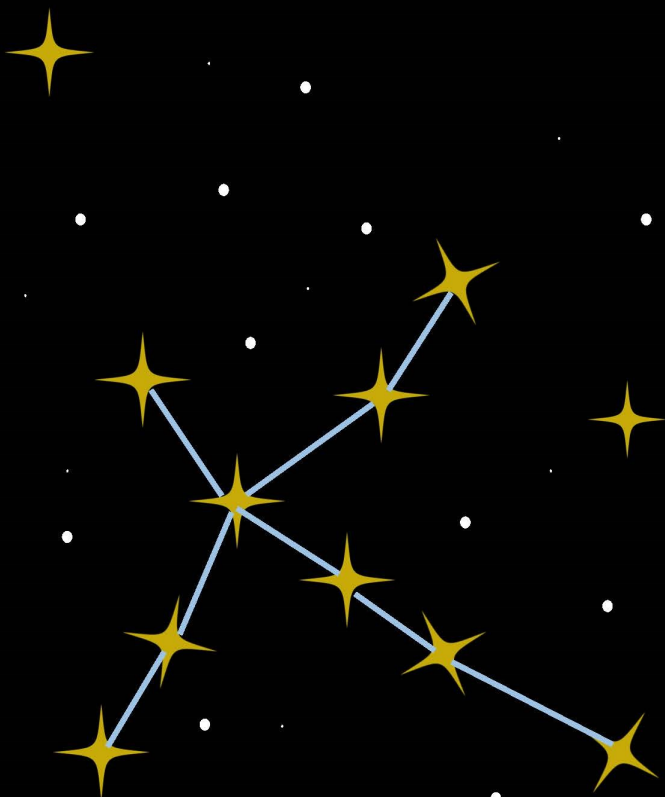
*Richard Coleman  
PGARP Coordinator*



# Globe at Night

Online – Globe at Night Citizen Science Campaign

Oct 24 - Nov 2



Can you see the stars in the Hill Country?

Get Out and Observe the Night Sky!



Globe at Night



For Hill Country Night Sky Month, we are encouraging you to become citizen scientists by using your naked eye to measure sky brightness caused by light pollution for the monthly Globe at Night Citizen Science Campaign!

From October 24th—November 2nd when the moon will not interfere with measurements, go outside at night an hour and a half after sunset and use the Globe at Night webapp to find constellations to help you measure the sky brightness in your area. <https://globeatnight.org/>

This is a Texas Master Naturalist approved volunteer project. Volunteer code: CC-02-A





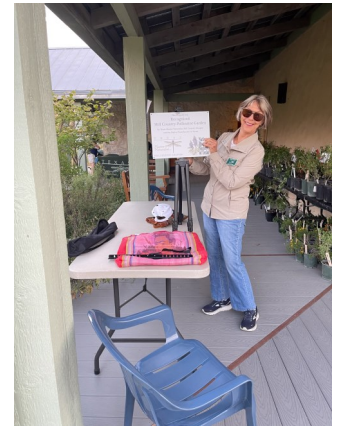
Flora McClung



Katy Kappel



Trudy Eberhardt



Sheryl Pender



Jack Davis



Pictures by Alice King





# The Amazing Monarch Butterfly

After the recent passing of one of the founding members of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter, *The Texas Star* was given permission to publish a series of essays written by Jim Stanley. Following is the first, of hopefully many, that will continue his legacy of providing information about his love and respect for the Texas Hill Country.

An excerpt from “*Hill Country Ecology: Essays on Plants, Animals, Water and Land Management*”

**BY JIM STANLEY**

I have always been amazed that tiny hummingbirds are capable of migrating across the Gulf of Mexico and down into South America and back every year. They are so small (the average ruby-throat only weights 3 grams, a little over a tenth of an ounce), and they have to beat their wings so fast.

But there is one animal that has an even more amazing life story: the Monarch butterfly. We begin sometime around the first of April, give or take a couple of weeks depending on the weather, when the butterflies begin to arrive in the Hill Country. The monarchs have left their wintering ground in Mexico, probably mated there, or maybe as they arrive here, and the females are looking for some milkweed plants on which to lay their eggs. The most common native milkweeds in this area are the antelope horns (*Asclepias asperula*), Texas or white milkweed (*A. texana*), and hierba de zizotes (*A. oenotheroides*). None of these plants are at all common, although they are certainly not rare either.

The eggs hatch in 3 to 6 days into what is called the first instar, or first of 5 successive larvae or caterpillars, each bigger than the previous one. The bigger ones have black, yellow or white bands around their bodies and a pair of antennae near each end. The final instar, after gorging on the milkweed, forms a chrysalis or pupae, and seven to ten days later the adult butterfly emerges. The total time from egg laying to the new adult takes about 5 weeks.

This adult then begins a migration northward, with stops along the way for nectar, to mate, lay its own eggs, and die, and a new generation is born. This process of creating new generations of monarchs continues into the summer all the way up into the Northern U.S. and southern Canada.

But then something really interesting happens. In late summer or early fall, the generation of monarchs that hatch at that time do not mate and lay eggs just then. Instead, they go into what is called “reproductive diapause,” and do not breed. They then begin the long migration south and southwest, across thousands of miles over areas they have never seen to a small wintering ground in the mountains of Mexico where they have never been! In fact, none of the last several generations have been there either!

They tend to wait for favorable north winds to help them along and stop to nectar when the winds are not favorable. A large fraction of all monarchs cross the Red River and travel through central Texas, some from Minnesota, some from New England, arriving sometime in early October. Some butterflies arrive from the eastern Texas coast and travel along the coast to Mexico.

Their migration takes them to the Sierra Madre Oriental Mountains in Mexico, then south and then west to the very small area in central Mexico where the vast majority of all monarchs in North America overwinter hanging from fir trees. Then, those butterflies that survive the winter, as well as having survived predators, disease, automobiles and insecticides, many fewer in numbers now, begin the migration back north in the spring. And here in the Hill Country, they lay their eggs about eight months after they emerged from the pupae in the north.

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Somehow, the genes in the DNA of monarchs, along with whatever serves as their “brain” or nervous system is programmed to cause the butterflies to migrate north in the spring with adults dying and creating new generations along the way. They then sense shortening days and/or cooler temperatures and this causes a new generation to be born that, instead of living only a few weeks, lives for eight months. And in those months, they migrate thousands of miles, winters hanging in a fir tree and then flies back to Texas in the spring to start the cycle all over again.

Because of man’s converting native pastures containing milkweeds into farms, heavy use of insecticides, air pollution, plus the logging of their wintering grounds, the populations of monarchs have declined over the decades, and it continues to fluctuate because of weather conditions. But in spite of all these problems, these amazing little insects persevere and survive and give us something beautiful and inspirational to look at twice a year.



# Volunteer at Lost Maples!

## *The Friends of Lost Maples*

are seeking volunteers to help out in the park this fall. Come share your knowledge at the Visitor Information Table, talking to park visitors about Lost Maples’ facilities and trails, plants and animals, geology and human history. We need volunteers mostly on weekends from mid-October thru November.

If you’re interested, contact Greg Walton at [gregwalton12345@gmail.com](mailto:gregwalton12345@gmail.com) OR contact the park directly at 830-966-3413

# FREDERICKSBURG NATURE CENTER

*A vision worth growing*



BY LONNIE CHILDS



Front view

In 2000, our founder, **Bill Lindemann**, went in search of a site to establish a bird watching venue in Fredericksburg. 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. This site was 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.

After gaining approval from the City of Fredericksburg, a non-profit organization was created, the Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center (FFNC), focused on recruiting volunteers and raising funds to fulfill the vision. The FFNC mission statement defines our purpose as ***“Promoting the preservation of our Texas Hill Country ecosystems through education and experiences.”*** Over the past twenty-four years, in furtherance of that mission, a dedicated volunteer force has installed over one mile of hiking trails, two pollinator gardens, a geology exhibit, a cactus garden, a bird blind, and educational signage that enhances the visitor’s experience at the nature center.

In the past year, in pursuit of our educational objectives, FFNC has conducted numerous workshops, hosted over 3,000 Fisd third graders, sponsored nature festivals, held children’s educational events, and hosted approximately 3,800 visitors. While adult education remains important, our greatest priority is to instill in our youth an understanding and love for nature as we pursue our vision ***“To create a community of Land Stewards to protect our natural resources into the future.”***

**Our imperative.** Although we live in a rural environment surrounded by undeveloped land, many of our children suffer from a lack of access to neighborhood parks, trails, and undeveloped wild lands. To compound the issue, they are distracted by modern technology that usually involves engagement with a screen. Statistics reveal that children spend an average of 44 hours per week engaged with a screen with only an average of 10 minutes daily spent outside. Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods, who conceived the concept of *“nature deficit disorder”* notes that *“the shift in our relationship with nature is startling...and that for the new generations, nature is more abstraction than reality.”* Our primordial connection to nature may become only a fading memory lost to future generations.

***How do we reverse the trend?*** The Texas Partnership for Children in Nature advocates that we must increase the “environmental literacy” of our children, defined as *“the knowledge, skills, and ability to understand, analyze, and address major natural resource opportunities and challenges.”* Would anyone argue that these *“opportunities and challenges”* are already evident and only growing? Texas even has a law, the 2009 No Child Left Inside Act, which calls for *“every child to be engaged in meaningful outdoor learning experiences and achieve natural resource literacy.”* Of course, this mandate was not funded in our public schools, but who can argue with the intent?

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**It's time.** In pondering how FNC could better address this growing challenge, it became evident that the time had arrived to fulfill a longstanding objective to construct an Interpretive Center. The facility would enable an expanded environmental education program and provide greater experiential opportunities to interact with nature. FFNC had steadily been implementing Bill's original vision over the last two decades, but times called for transformative action to accelerate the growth of his vision.

In partnership with the City of Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation Department, FFNC has developed a plan to construct an Interpretive Center campus and implement an expanded educational program supported by professional staff. Over the past two years, the FFNC Advisory Council, composed of community stakeholders, solicited input from the community and visited a dozen area nature centers resulting in the development of a scope statement that defines the function and features of the future center. We have teamed with SKT Architects, Dunaway, Clarke Design, and Guido Construction as partners in the fulfillment of our expanded vision. In May, 2024, the City Council approved our Development Agreement allowing FFNC to move forward with the plan.

**A walk in the future.** Today, as you drive into LBJ Municipal Park, glance to the left and you will see an open area, a blank canvas if you will, awaiting the painting of our future Interpretive Center. On that canvas, imagine an appealing building reflecting our natural heritage built of materials that integrate with the natural surroundings. The facility is enveloped by native gardens intersected by winding paths that lead you to an outdoor learning pavilion where you hear laughter and delight in the sight of children learning about the wondrous migration of Monarch butterflies. Nearby, more children are eagerly playing in a natural playscape of logs, stumps, and a tunnel composed of natural materials that provide a tactile experience with nature. Past that, you notice a family birdwatching at the Bird Blind as another family hikes down the Live Oak Trail.



Back view

Now venture back to explore the beckoning Interpretive Center building. Entering a foyer staffed by a helpful docent, they provide information about the center and inform you that tomorrow night will feature a lecture on Horned Lizards. Wandering into the Exhibit Hall, you are awed by the innovative exhibits covering an array of topics designed to interest both children and adults. Peek into the Learning and Event Center where tomorrow's lecture will be held, and you see a youth group in a screened-off corner discussing their science project involving the nature center.

Glancing out the back windows with a view into the wild motivates you to walk out onto the inviting covered porch. Take a seat for some peaceful repose, appreciate the vista, and wish that you could sit here all day. You notice more interesting exhibits on the porch, and nearby, green building features including a water collection tank and solar panels.

Thoughtfully surveying the surroundings, you observe a community of all ages immersed in nature-based experiences, exploring nature's wonders and mysteries, rediscovering our primeval connection, and becoming invested in a commitment to preserve our Texas natural heritage.

The awareness comes easily that this is ***a vision worth growing.***

**For more information on how you can support *A Vision Worth Growing* campaign of the Fredericksburg Nature Center, contact Lonnie Childs at [lonniechilds@utexas.edu](mailto:lonniechilds@utexas.edu) or go to <https://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/>**

# Mark Your Calendars

**OCTOBER**

**October 23-27**  
TMN (State) Annual Meeting, San Marcos

**NOVEMBER**

**November 2**  
Bird City—Community Planting Day in Kerrville  
Youth Events Center, Singing Wind Park,  
Kerrville—Schreiner Park and  
Flat Rock Park Veterans’ Pathway

**November 16**  
2024 Class Launch and Volunteer Appreciation Day  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Fredericksburg.  
RSVP by October 29th: [rsvp@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:rsvp@hillcountrytmn.org)

**DECEMBER**

**December**  
There will be no chapter meeting or newsletter in December.


*Book Club—Kerrville Chapter*

**2024**

October: Our Native Bees by Paige Embry  
November/  
December: Holiday break

**2025**

January: Entangled Life by Merlin Sheldrake  
February: Sacred Nature by Karen Armstrong



## The View from Rusty Bend



Yellow-throated Warbler looking for fall

### **Haibun with Roadrunner as Velociraptor**

You must have snuck under the gate. This garden is covered in chicken wire, a fortress. Were you hungry for lizards? Were you keeping the snakes at bay? How long have you been in there? I see you tasted my squash. The gate is open now, but you hide in the thicket of asparagus. I'll give you some time.

Are you in there still? I walk around outside the fence. Yes, you answer with a growl. Find the gate! Now you rattle like a kid's toy and throw yourself against the fence. The gate! Right there! Ha, you launch through the gate, across the yard, and down to the river, your feathers flashing barcode, black/white/black/white.

Quick thief.  
Little dinosaur.  
An anthem to speed, feathered fierce.



I strive to be wide-eyed to all possibilities and this September at Rusty Bend tempts me to create an extra season. It seems this shoulder time between summer and fall is changeable by the hour. Has Summer, that trickster, returned? On some days it seems summer's choruses of heat and humidity persist like a bad smell.

Then a little wind shift takes the bite out of the sun's warmth. I hear trees change their songs, their leaves drying and rubbing like sandpaper in the wind. Spots of color bloom to forecast autumn's rusty hues.

This threshold time is the ragged season for the birds. Vulnerable as they molt, some are missing their tails, some sport balding heads. Some look like they got trapped in the spin cycle. Soon they will be ready to migrate with brand new outfits of slick, clean feathers.

As I watch from the porch, flotillas of dragonflies decorate the view. Mostly they are colored a bittersweet orange, but one huge black and gray dragonfly gobbles mosquitos from the birdbath. My favorite kind of pest control.

The Kidneywood bushes have really turned out this year. Must be just the right rain at just the right time. Their cream-colored blossoms strain towards the heavens like a birthday cake for a centenarian. They perfume the wind at dusk and dawn with a bomb of vanilla sweetness.

The autumn light show has begun to show itself with all its subtle pleasures. I remind myself that angled light is underappreciated. The harvest moon was a showstopper, so close, so orange, topped off with a partial eclipse. We watched it rise with a basket of cookies out in the pasture. We listened to Neil Young sing *Harvest Moon*. We held hands. The tree frogs sang a welcome. The air was soft and forgiving as if holding an armload of tenderness.

The drifting leaves will soon remind me of the beauty of letting go. I pledge to shine my full attention on some little thing each day as a kind of gratitude as I say goodbye to this extra season with all its delicate gifts. I am ready to slide off the shoulders of summer and hop onto the red wagon of fall.



Harvest Moon

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2024

*Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages Rusty Bend with her husband, Andy Robinson. She also writes poetry, her muse, a tractor named Mabel. The story of the Burro Lady of West Texas, told in poems, [We Make a Tiny Herd](#), has been awarded the 2020 Willa Literary Award for Poetry as well as the Wrangler Award by the Cowboy Hall of Fame.*

A new collection celebrating the brush country is forthcoming in November from FlowerSong Press and can be pre-ordered from this link:

[The Place the Spiders Waved by Lucy Griffith \(Coming in the Fall of 2024\)](#)  
— FlowerSong Press & Juventud Press

Comments welcome at [lucygriffithwriter@gmail.com](mailto:lucygriffithwriter@gmail.com)

# About us

## TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST MISSION:

To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

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Chapter meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month (except in December). Members and the public are welcome to attend in person or virtually. There is no cost to attend.

We meet in the auditorium at the Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center (GBNRC) Building at 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville.

Doors open at 6:00 pm for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30 pm. Advanced Training session begins at 7:00 pm.

Learn more on our website:

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*The Texas Star* is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. News, essays, comments and ideas are welcome. Please email them to:

[newsletter@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:newsletter@hillcountrytmn.org)

### QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIP?

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