



**FRIENDS OF
BALCONES CANYONLANDS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

P.O. Box 4678
Lago Vista, TX 78645
(512) 965-2473

friends@friendsofbalcones.org
www.friendsofbalcones.org

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2012

President DUB LYON
Vice President JIM NOSLER
Secretary SHARON MACUT
Treasurer JIM HESSON

Board Directors

BILL CARR
GARY CAYLOR
JANIS SNOW

Outreach Director
CATHY HARRINGTON

Government Affairs Director
SHELIA HARGIS

Proud Partner of



MISSION STATEMENT

*To support, complete, and
enhance the Balcones
Canyonlands National Wildlife
Refuge and its diverse ecology
and promote its use for
recreational, educational, and
scientific purposes.*



DATE: February 2, 2012

PRESS RELEASE

Event Name: *Balcones Songbird Festival- A Celebration of Nature*

Where: *Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge*

Date: April 27 – 30, 2012

Please feel free to use this material in any way you like. You may run it in part or in its entirety, or use it as a source for stories of your own. If I can be of any additional help, please don't hesitate to contact me.

By Sharon Macut

LAGO VISTA, TX – For tourists and residents, the Texas Hill Country has long been one of the most beautiful spots in Texas – a place to wile away the hours on the shores of Lake Travis, catch a few bass in the coves, or travel the farm roads enjoying the wildflowers.

Migrating birds, on the other hand, consider the hill country a sort of freeway rest stop – a way station where they can relax, catch a good meal and gather strength for the rest of their journey. Nestled in the hill country is a 23,000-acre Wildlife Refuge that provides critical habitat for two endangered songbird migrants-the Black-capped Vireo and the Golden-cheeked Warbler. They not only stop to rest., they stop to nest.

The **Balcones Songbird Festival** is a celebration of nature through a collection of interpretive events to experience both birds and their habitat. The festival takes place April 27 through April 30, 2012. While many of the nature tours and events take place across the hill-country, the main event will be located at the Refuge Headquarters on FM 1431 just west of Lago Vista. It's hosted by the **Friends of the Refuge, Travis Audubon Society and Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge** and supported by local and national conservation-minded sponsors who make this event possible.

The refuge offers some of the best bird watching and habitat left in Texas. **Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge** has more than 215 bird species part or all year. Some of the birds at the refuge include the Painted Bunting, Black-crested Titmouse, Vermilion Flycatchers, Bushtits, Black-throated Sparrows, LeConte's Sparrows and Canyon Towhees. Redtails and Red-shouldered Hawks nest regularly as well as Cooper's Hawks.

Kickoff the Festival Friday night at the **Flat Creek Estate Vineyard and Winery. Rick and Madelyn Naber** host our annual benefit for the Refuge - **The Wine and Star Shine**. Share in the joy of accomplishment for volunteers and participants alike. A complete dinner, glass of wine and a look at the stars will be a delightful way to spend the evening.

BIRDING TOURS

See the **endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler** and the **Black-capped Vireo**. Bring your camera and take guided tours with wildlife experts who can help you see the endangered songbirds, unique native plants and wildlife and the natural habitat of the **Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge**. Tours to see the keynote species leave each morning during the event.

Professional leaders from some of our local eco-tourism companies, **Field Guides, BirdQuest, and Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT)** are participating this year, and their guides have graciously donated their time to support the Friends, the Refuge and the Songbird Festival.

Take our **Signature Tours** that will span the refuge in search of its two endangered songbirds. Experts on the species will take you to shady, relatively moist woodlands of oak and juniper to listen and look for Golden-cheeked Warblers. At the other end of the refuge, we will listen for the raspy songs of Black-capped Vireos in and around thickets of scrubby oaks, sumacs, and greenbriars. Join top Texas birders on the **Specialty Bird Tours** to look for Hill Country birds that nest on the Refuge. Attend tours or presentations that focus on Bird songs, backyard birds and Birds of Grasslands and Fire. See how fire is used as a dramatic tool to create and enhance habitat for songbirds.

New to birding? It's not hard to get hooked on birds, but then what do you do? How do you identify birds? Which binoculars are the best? Where do you go to see birds? **Theresa Bayoud** will provide an introduction to the tools required for birding and lead a short walk to learn the common backyard bird sights and sounds. And if you have a budding enthusiast in your midst, sign up for **Cullen Hanks** tour, Young Beginning Birders for the 12-18 year old. No time like the present to start shaping the future of wildlife conservation.

NATURE TOURS

This year we've improved our **plant oriented** programs! The birds do not live in a vacuum. Without the plants, and the insects those plants sustain, we wouldn't have these marvelous birds, or anything else in nature. It really IS all connected!

Bill Carr will be conducting a plant tour with co-leader **Diane Sherrill**. Bill has recently retired from **The Nature Conservancy** to open his own consulting business. He has been called "the best field botanist in Texas", and if you care about native plants, you NEED to take a walk with him!

Attend a workshop on wildflowers and other plants of value to birds and butterflies on Cedar Stump Ranch. Stroll through the wildscape to observe butterflies, birds and plants and practice what we have learned. Finally, for those wanting to stretch their legs we will go on a hike and see what has managed to survive the drought in the fields and woods.

Join **Jean and Seay Nance** exploring one of the most beautiful parts of the Refuge as we walk along Post Oak Creek and venture into the backcountry in an area normally not open to the public. They'll talk about everything, from geology to local wildlife and native plants to weather's influences on habitats.

Take **A Nature Photography Workshop** on composition, lighting, and depth of field. Learn to capture stunning photographs of endangered species on your own camera.

SONGBIRD SAFARI ADVENTURES

On Sunday, April 29, the refuge headquarters will be packed with FREE, fun family events from noon til 5:00pm. Activities begin at the Nature Ranger Passport Station. The Passport involves 14 activity stations. Participate in 7 and get a free bird or animal track magnet. Travel to all 14 and receive another.

Last Chance forever will perform two shows Sunday afternoon. They are a non-profit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned raptors, birds of prey such as hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, and vultures. Become a Junior Firefighter, or head to the pond for some fun identifying water bugs and learn how water tells a story of our ecology. The UT Archery team will be back with demonstrations and an archery range where you can test your talents on the bull's-eye.

Additional Information

Tour fees range from **\$30.00 to \$75.00**, see the registration form for details.

NT = Nature Tours are not recommended for children. (exception-Sunday \$15.00 Young Beginning birders, 12-18 years).

Sunday Family Events Free

Event Location: Refuge Headquarters

Name: Balcones Songbird Festival

Street Address: 24518 FM 1431

City: Marble Falls, TX

Web: www.balconessongbirdfestival.org

Phone: (512) 965-2473

Email: friends@friendsofbaclones.org

Directions: To reach the Refuge Headquarters from Lago Vista, go west on FM 1431 for 5 miles past the intersection with Bar-K Road. If you are coming west on FM 1431, the office will be one mile from Cow Creek Road. The office is on the north side of the highway.

Reference:

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge is intended to preserve the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler, Black-capped Vireo and other wildlife species.

Website: www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/balcones

Friends of Balcones Refuge is a volunteer, 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promote public awareness of, support, and participation in eco-tourism, recreation, and pursuit of nature studies in the Refuge through educational, scientific, civic, and charitable programs.

Website: www.friendsofbalcones.org

Travis Audubon Society promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats in Central Texas.

Website: www.travisaudubon.org

Press Contact Cathy Harrington at (512) 965-2473

friends@friendsofbalcones.org

Friends of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge

P.O.Box 4678 / Lago Vista, Texas 78645

More Images in High Resolution available

