

THIS ISSUE

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UPCOMING EVENTS

For all events, invitations will first go out to members and then to our general contact list at least 2 weeks before the event. You can also stay informed of planned activities on the event calendar published on our website.

SCHEDULE

*The Martin Tract
Guided Hike*

9:00AM - 11:30AM

Saturday, April 18th
Saturday, April 24th
Saturday, May 8th
Saturday, May 22nd
Saturday, June 5th
Sunday, June 13th
Saturday, June 19th

Talk and Walk

Saturday, April 25th
Saturday, May 15th
Saturday, May 22nd

THE MARTIN TRACT: GUIDED HIKE

Have you ever wanted to take a peek behind the curtains of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge? Most of the refuge is closed to the public to allow for restoration and habitat management but now you can see closed parts of the refuge through our new Guided Hike series!

Join an experienced guided hike leader on a walk through time on the Martin tract of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. Learn about how the refuge has changed over time and the conservation work done today to enhance habitats for native Texas Hill Country plants and wildlife.

This 2.8 mile hike will be along a 2-tract road that has 377 feet of elevation gains. The loose rocks combined with short steep slopes make this mostly unshaded trail a moderately difficult 2.5 hour hike.

TALK & WALK

Saturday, April 24th: Native Plants

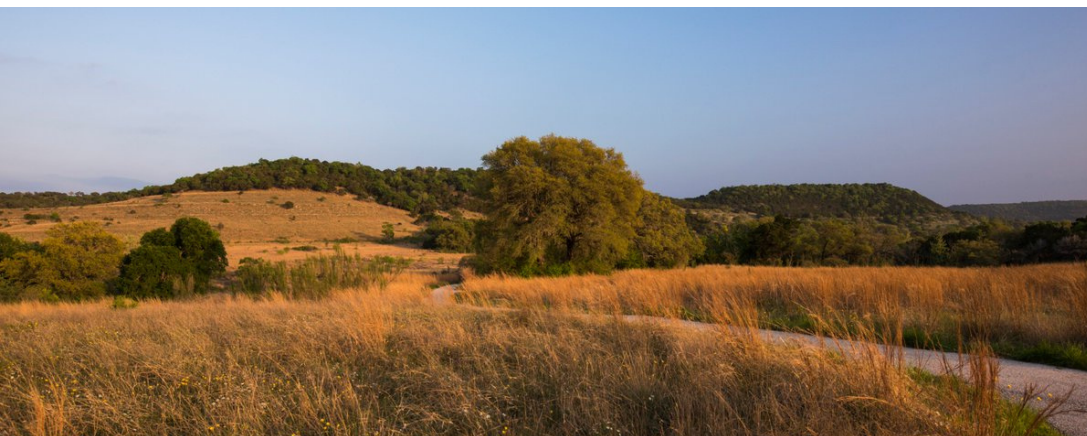
Are you ready to go native? What makes a plant a “native”? Why should we care? If I want to attract birds, bees, and butterflies, what should I plant? Are cedars and mesquite native? Are there good and bad natives? How do I balance the demands of my HOA with water restrictions? What is the difference between a native and an adapted plant? Presenters from the Native Plant Society of Texas will answer these and other questions, followed by a hike to see native plants in the wild.

Saturday, May 15th: Mindfulness in Nature

Marcy Westcott, a Certified Meditation & Mindfulness Teacher, will share techniques of connecting with nature and disconnecting from the distractions and stresses of daily life. Marcy will talk about forest bathing, a form of personal eco-therapy, to help us all consciously with nature and draw solace from the experience.

Saturday, May 22nd: Useful Plants of the Hill Country

Native peoples had few resources, so they made the most of what they did have. Everything that could have a useful purpose, did – from edibles such as herbals, medicinals, and ceremonial plants, to fibers, leaves and stalks for basketry, construction and weapons. Think of nature as your favorite big box store. Master Naturalists Karyn and Mike Parker will share how native peoples made the most of what they had in their environment, as well as what they use themselves such as Agarita Jellies and Yaupon holly teas.



NEWS FROM THE REFUGE

GOLDEN CHEEKED WARBLER STUDY

This month we had the opportunity to speak with Kandace Glanville, one of the Point-Count Technicians working at the refuge this spring, about the two exciting Golden Cheeked Warbler studies currently being conducted within the Balcones Canyonlands.

The first study is tracking the migration patterns of the Golden Cheeked Warblers as they fly in and out of the refuge during the spring breeding season. Last year 20 male Golden Cheeked Warblers had been fitted with lightweight geolocators and now John Macey, the Natural Resource Specialist for Fort Hood, and his team are working to retrieve them. Currently, 3 geolocators have already been retrieved, but they have just discovered that at least 5 more Golden Cheeked Warblers have returned to the refuge. This study is incredibly important when working to preserve this beautiful species' natural habitat. Not only here at the Balcones Canyonlands, but also their southern homes in Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Additionally, Kandace and her team are conducting the first Golden Cheeked Warbler census since 2012 using a Point Count system. Throughout the refuge they have placed 500 points on a grid to identify the exact location of Golden Cheeked Warblers. At each point they administer 3 minute surveys where they listen for Warblers in the area, taking a distance and bearing to every singing male. They have another month of research before they can release the final census numbers, but they are optimistic about the results.

Have a topic you want to read about in the next newsletter?
Send a suggestion to: newsletter@friendsofbalcones.org

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH

The Friends Group is on schedule to have a brand new website by mid-May! A special shout out to Paula Richards, Mark McConaughy, and the UT MIS team who have been working tirelessly to bring everyone an exciting redesign and updated content.

REFUGE SPOTLIGHT MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Spring has officially sprung at the refuge as these iconic pollinators have made their appearance this past weekend. In addition to the Monarchs, caterpillars have also been spotted inching throughout the milkweeds. Head out to the refuge to see these colorful critters!



WE'RE ON INSTAGRAM

The Friends Group is officially on Instagram! Follow us to stay up-to-date on all things Balcones.

Follow us @friendsofbalcones

Have a photo you want to be featured? Email Paula Richards at:
paula@friendsofbalcones.org