



# Texas Land Conservancy

*Protecting the Nature of Texas.*

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**We want you--**

*To help us recruit new members. Learn about new ways to give and a new partnership you can help us develop!*

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## Ned Fritz: The Lorax of Texas Trees

The Lorax, the tiny, mustachioed creature who famously spoke for the Truffula trees in Dr. Seuss' environmental cautionary tale, *The Lorax*, has quite a bit in common with our founder, Ned Fritz, who passed away in December. Indeed, many of the Fritzes' Dallas neighbors would likely describe the way to Ned and Genie's unlandscaped three-acres as being, "At the far end of town where the Grickle-grass grows." Like the Lorax, Ned spent his entire life speaking and actively fighting for the protection of voiceless Texas trees, as well as many other conservation issues. Unlike the Lorax, though, Ned never "lifted himself by the seat of his pants" and went away, much to the chagrin of his opponents. The legacy of his conservation campaigns live on in Texas' national forests, in state and national policies, and in the hearts and minds of his friends and family.

Ned was born in Philadelphia in 1916, but spent most of his childhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where participation in Boy Scouts and frequent trips into the wilderness around his family's home incited a passion for birding and nature. In an interview with the Conservation History Association of Texas in 1999, Ned laughed as he recalled the first "proactive action" he took in the environmental movement being the publication of a poem he wrote, published in the Tulsa Daily World. He was



eight. Seventy-two years later, Ned remembered the words to that poem.

"I wish I were a Robin; far over I would fly from the Alaska cabin to Frosty Eskimo—to sultry Eskimo...I mean, Mexico, there we go, etc." He trailed off. "It went on for a while..."

It was clear even then what type of man Ned would grow up to be. Never one to write a poem and stick in the drawer, Ned spent his entire life making sure his words were heard, considered, and acted upon. Following graduation from the University of Chicago, his scrappy nature led him to pursue a law degree from Southern Methodist University. He practiced consumer protection law for nearly 30 years, interrupted only by a stint as a flight instructor during World War II, during which he coached a young George H.W. Bush, who "tended to keep his right wing lower than his left."

As a successful lawyer, Ned still found time to be a vocal advocate for environmental causes, whether defending his unkept yard in the face of neighborhood opposition, or establishing the Texas Committee of Natural Resources in 1966, which he chaired for many years. TCONR is still hard at work, now called the Texas Conservation Alliance and directed by Janice Bezanson.

Ned once explained how he used his experience with law to work for the environment. "In the field of environment, I represent [a] normally unrepresented class, and that is Nature itself, which cannot speak verbally and has no ability to hire lawyers." These words could have been written by Dr. Seuss himself.

Ned officially closed his practice in order to volunteer for environmental causes full-time around 1974. His work took him all over the state and to Washington, D.C., where he lobbied Congress to designate wilderness areas in the National Forest of Texas, thereby stopping clearcutting and the subsequent destruction of wildlife habitat.

"Clearcutting is a real evil for what it does to native biodiversity," he said in a 1991 interview. He spread his message through three important books as well. *Sterile Forest*, published in 1983, received significant literary acclaim. Two other books, *Realms of Beauty: The Wilderness Areas of East Texas* (1986), and *Clearcutting: A Crime Against Nature* (1989), also brought more folks into Ned's sphere of influence.

Ned firmly believed that one of the biggest

roadblocks to responsible forestry policies was the incestuous relationship between government and the timber industry.

"We need to have more government independence from industry in order to help industry and the rest of society solve the problems of over-exploitation of natural resources," he said in 1999.

While Ned and his loyal followers lost many battles, they often won the war. Ned's efforts led to the creation of the Big Thicket National

*"It is not enough to assert high-sounding phrases of our need for imagination and bold methods. We must take action in a bold and imaginative way!"*

--Edward C. Fritz  
*All Men Shall Be Free*, 1963

Preserve, as well as five other wilderness areas: Upland Island, Turkey Hill, Big Slough, Indian Mounds, and Little Lake Creek.

"I think that some people are just more eager and bold and vociferous than others other and I happen to be in the first category."

Ned's vociferous nature also inspired him to start a number of other organizations that continue to carry on his legacy. The impressive list includes the Texas chapter of the Nature Conservancy, the Texas League of Conservation Voters, the Texas Consumers Association, and the Dallas chapter of the Audubon Society. The Nature Conservancy of Texas, for which Ned chaired the acquisitions committee for many years, eventually grew too large to be able to take every property that came its way, particularly smaller ones. In response, Ned founded TLC, then known as the Natural Area Preservation Association, in 1982 to be a catchall for conservation lands.

While Ned remained the driving energy behind TLC for years, his official position remained that of Secretary. He was always extremely proud of the fact that the heart and soul of the organization depended on the

efforts of volunteers. TLC remained a volunteer organization until 2000.

"So it comes down to citizen participation -- citizen input. It depends upon the citizens to do this, and only in a democracy can the citizens fully exploit their talents and can government fully benefit from that utilization of the talents of the individual human beings working together," Ned once said.

Ned's own efforts were recognized by a variety of organizations. He was presented the Theodore Roosevelt Award by President George H.W. Bush in 1991, and received lifetime achievement awards from the National Wildlife Federation, Natural Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, League of Women Voters, and Texas Conservation Alliance.

As he grew older, Ned became more reflective about his love for the nature he worked so hard to preserve.

"Well those of us who don't believe in life after death anymore, still can get a growing satisfaction from life, especially as they get older like me because we know that we had better enjoy it to the utmost in the next few months or years. It will not be sad after death but it will be wonderful to enjoy the last few years of life—life being for human beings and for all the species that still survive with us."

He envisioned a plaque at the entrance to one of his beloved preserves with a Yeates-inspired epitaph: *Take a long gaze on earth, on life. Traveler, come in.*

Edwards C. Fritz passed away from complications of kidney failure at the age of 92 on Friday, December 19, 2008. He is survived by his wife Eugenia (Genie); three daughters, Gayle Fritz of St. Louis, Eileen McKee of Dallas and Judy Gaskell of Grover Beach, California; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. Ned's determination to preserve Texas land continues with his family members. Genie serves as the secretary on the TLC Board of Directors, and Eileen is also a board member. TLC continues to accept donations in honor of Ned's life and work.

Ned leaves us all with a renewed passion and sense of duty to continue his work. In the words of the Onceler, who gives the little boy the last *Truffula* seed at the end of *The Lorax*:

"UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better.

It's not."

Ned would certainly agree.



# New preserves protect rare species

*Pitcher plants, California satintail, and the American burying beetle are among the species now under TLC's conservation easement protection*

Photo by Kerry Olenick

## White Creek Canyon Ranch

We continue to make positive conservation gains in eastern Gillespie and western Blanco Counties near Willow City. Last year's easement on the 215-acre Ferguson Ranch led to the protection of the adjoining 175-acre Willow Springs Ranch and now the 310-acre White Creek Canyon Ranch, pictured above.

White Creek is a perennial stream that runs south to north through the central portion of the property. This area is characterized by large Hickory Sandstone outcrops, with numerous boulders interspersed with live oak (*Quercus fusiformis*), post oak (*Quercus stellata*), and native grasses to create an oak/juniper parkland.

One of the most unique features is the riparian floodplain. The area is characterized by an abundance of moisture, provided by both natural creek flow as well as seepage and runoff flow from adjacent upland sites. Where the flow of White Creek is above-ground, a matrix of wetland obligate forbs, grasses, and woody plants occur in and near the water and associated mudflats.

Most notably, a rare grass species, California satintail (*Imperata brevifolia*), was discovered along White Creek. This conspicuous grass was first



California satintail

noticed by our stewardship director, Kerry Olenick, who could only identify the plant to the genus level. After a follow-up visit with Bill Carr, botanist for the Nature Conservancy, samples were sent to the S.M. Tracy Herbarium at Texas A&M University-College Station for positive identification by Dr. Stephan Hatch. The native, tall, stout perennial grass is rhizomatous with a white, feathery inflorescence (the feathery-looking end of a grass stem, which is actually a collection of flowers on a common axis).

California satintail has a global status of G2, meaning it is "imperiled" worldwide. NatureServe reports that the species once had a wide distribution, occupying moist sites in southern California, Nevada, Utah, and western Texas. Currently, the only known population, besides White Creek Canyon Ranch is at the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. Reasons for the rarity of the plant include the development of water bodies, housing, and agriculture.

## Soutendijk Bog

TLC's involvement with the Soutendijk Bog began in 2006 as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Program. The Soutendijk Bog represents our second endeavor with NRDA which offsets environmental damages by protecting other properties. The NRDA Trustees identify high quality environmental sites for protection through conservation easements or restoration projects. The bog was chosen as a conservation property, the value of which would offset a crude oil spill in Wood County in 2002. The protection of the Soutendijk's 16 acres is an important and valuable step

towards protecting Wood County.

The Soutendijk Bog represents a unique wetland which has four distinct vegetation communities including a stream valley bog along Glade Creek, a lower hillside seepage bog, a seep forest in wooded and an oak/hickory woodland.

Bogs are known for their biodiversity, and Soutendijk does not disappoint; the bog contains over 120 species of plants. Of particular interest is the trumpet pitcher plants (*Sarracenia alata*), which makes this



Trumpet pitcher plant

the first conservation easement in Texas to protect a pitcher plant bog. While not an endangered species, pitcher plants are a rare find in Texas. They use a musky odor to attract small insects. Once lured to the "mouth" of the plant, the insect tumbles over the slippery edge into the stem, which has digestive juices that dissolve the insect's body into digestible nutrients.

Another notable plant found at the Soutendijk bog is the purplestem aster (*Aster puniceus* var. *scabricaulis*), a herbaceous perennial with blue or purple flowers found in boggy areas. Globally, only a few populations exist in Texas and Louisiana. The *scabricaulis* variety of *Aster puniceus* is imperiled globally because of vulnerability to

extinction due highway mowing during bloom time, invasive grasses, and alterations of drainage patterns in and around their bog habitat.

**Lennox Woods Preserve**

We talk a lot about partnerships here at TLC, and the 2008 conservation easement on Lennox Woods Preserve is a perfect example. The Nature Conservancy owns the total 375-acre Lennox Woods Preserve, and through a NRDA project, TLC now holds a conservation easement on 77 acres. The preserve was dedicated in 1990 in honor of the Lennox family, who originally acquired the property in 1863, saved it from loggers for four generations, and donated it to TNC in the late 1980s. Lennox Woods is now our northeastern-most preserve and is the first in Red River County, bringing the total number of counties in which we hold conserved land up to 56.

This bottomland hardwood forest is dominated by water oaks, willow oaks, bur oaks, overcup oaks, sweetgum and some hickory species. Most hardwood forests of this type were logged to extinction in the 1800s, but Lennox Woods, with the help of wise stewards, features trees that are several hundred years old. Birds, like the red-tailed hawk, northern bobwhite, great horned owl, belted kingfisher, and cedar waxwing certainly appreciate those!



Lady's slipper orchid

We are excited about several critical species now under protection. The hooked buttercup (*Ranunculus recurvatus*) and Wildenow's sedge (*Carex wildenovii*) are rare in Texas, but both can be found beneath the towering trees.

Southern lady's slipper orchids (*Cypripedium kentuckiense*) is another gem found on the preserve. This orchid is a critically imperiled species in Texas due to habitat destruction.

Even more surprising is the presence of the American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*), a federally listed endangered species. Only 2,500 individuals are thought to still exist. These black, shiny beetles with large orange spots are easily identified if you're lucky enough to see one and are vital to the decomposition system.

# Spring Round Up

*You know about bluebonnets, but what about these beauties?*



**Flowering Dogwood**

The flowering dogwood is a sure sign that spring has arrived in the South. Common throughout the eastern U.S., it is found only in east Texas. Flowering dogwood features graceful, horizontal-tiered branching, red fruits, and scarlet-red fall foliage. Relatively short (20-40 feet), these deciduous trees bloom in March, April, and May. The white, fragrant flowers of *Cornus florida* are lovely and the fruit is eaten by many animals, and at least 28 species of birds through the fall. While the flowering dogwood is presently in stable condition, it is being threatened by an aggressive, fatal fungus, *Discula destructiva*, and has already been labeled an endangered species in Ontario, Canada. Trees near water are most susceptible. For excellent dogwood exploration, we recommend the Dogwood Trails Festival in Palestine, Texas. More information can be found on page 5.



**Winged Migrations**

Whether you are a seasoned birder, or a novice, we recommend taking a gander at any of the numerous bird species on the wing this time of year. The Upper Texas coast is a particularly good spot to catch the action. Thousands of colorful neotropical warblers, buntings, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, and Broad-wing hawks. Flying near these hawks, one can often see the **Mississippi kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), a medium-sized hawk with a thinly whistled "phee, phew" sound. These lovely birds are highly migratory. They winter in central South America, traveling in the fall and spring along three major routes: overland, through Mexico and Central America; across the Gulf of Mexico (rarely, and at great risk due to lack of food or resting places); or via island-hopping across the Caribbean. In spring, watch for groups of 20 to 30 birds migrating to their nesting sights in Arizona, east to southeastern Colorado, southern Kansas, southern Missouri and the southeastern states.

Kites begin to appear in large groups typically in mid-April and early May. According to Eric Bolen and Dan Flores, authors of *The Mississippi Kite: Portrait of a Southern Hawk*, the single best place to view large groups (as many as 1,500 in a day) is the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, located seven miles south of Alamo. If you visit, note that the Harriet B. Ginsbach Wilderness area, a 312-acre preserve owned by TLC is just three miles from Santa Ana's headquarters. The Ginsbach preserve includes many of the same habitats as Santa Ana; a TLC-member once reported seeing 83 bird species in a single day.



Another springtime beauty is the **monarch butterfly** (*Danaus plexippus*), which begins its spring migration beginning mid-March. Unlike most insects, monarchs undertake a 3000-mile migration to Mexico every fall, often wintering in the same trees year after year. As the days lengthen, the monarch populations know it's time to head north again; eggs have to be laid on milkweed plants along the way. These eggs will hatch a new generation of monarchs who will join the southern migration the following fall. During the spring, though, the eastern-US monarch population funnels through a single flight path through Texas on their treacherous trip north. Clouds of bright orange and black butterflies can be seen throughout Texas, particularly along the Gulf coast, and the central corridor. Texas Parks & Wildlife sponsors a Monarch Watch program in the fall--more information to come!

# Coming Attractions:

## TLC-SPONSORED EVENTS:

### **Nature Tours at Ivy Payne Wildlife Refuge, March 21-22**

Join TLC board member Earl Matthew for a weekend of nature tours, information sessions, and a potluck dinner. Our event runs in conjunction with the Dogwood Trails Celebration in Palestine (see right); Ivy's Wildlife Refuge is only 30 minutes from Palestine.

### **Earth Day Bike Ride, Saturday, April 25**

Our first big fundraising event of the year, the Earth Day Bike Ride will start at our Oak Cliff Nature Preserve in Dallas. Events include: breakfast, self-guided road biking, mountain biking at the preserve, lunch, silent auction, raffle, and nature walks. This is a kid and family friendly event--not a race! We will have 10, 20, and 40-mile road routes set up, as well as 8 miles of single-track mountain bike trails on the preserve. If you are not interested in riding, but would like to join us for the day, we will be leading nature walks on the preserve; you can enjoy the hard work Kerry Olenick put into the new nature interpretive signs! The Dallas Off-Road Bicycle Association ([www.dorba.org](http://www.dorba.org)) maintains the trails as well much of the day-to-day upkeep of the preserve. We are very grateful for their help! Proceeds from the event will benefit both TLC and DORBA. Registration is \$30/person, \$50/family, or \$50/person with a year TLC membership.

MORE INFO AT [WWW.TEXASLANDCONSERVANCY.ORG](http://WWW.TEXASLANDCONSERVANCY.ORG)

## TLC-RECOMMENDED EVENTS:

### **Dogwood Festival, March 21-22 and 28-29**

To enjoy the flowering dogwood here in Texas, we recommend the City of Palestine's annual Dogwood Trails Celebration. This year will be the 71st year of the festival; more information can be found at Palestine's Visitor Bureau: [www.visitpalestine.com](http://www.visitpalestine.com).

### **Oak Cliff Earth Day, Sunday, April 19**

Come join TLC at the OCED celebration at Lake Cliff Park just south of Dallas. Earth Day is a great chance to get outside and enjoy what Oak Cliff's sustainable community has to offer: art, music, food, community, and environmental organizations (including TLC!). More information at: [www.oakcliffearthday.com](http://www.oakcliffearthday.com).

### **Great Texas Birding Classic, April 26 – May 3**

In keeping with our "winged migration" theme, we recommend the Great Texas Birding Classic as a great way to see some of those birds. Sponsored by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, GTBC is a friendly, but serious birding tournament. During the tournament, teams vie to see who can spot and record the most bird species in a given time-period. The adult teams with the highest species counts win the privilege of choosing the conservation projects that will be awarded Conservation Grant Grand Prizes. More information at: [www.gcco.org](http://www.gcco.org). Register by March 9th!

## Membership goal!

**With your help, we will increase our membership 100% by the end of 2009.**

This lofty goal will only be possible with your support. To get started, we are asking each of you to get someone you know to become a TLC member. Visit our website's "Refer a Friend" page to provide us with their contact information. We will mail them a packet of information and you will receive a Texas Land Conservancy bumper-sticker for your effort. To make giving to TLC even easier for you and our new members, please take a look at **JustGive**, our secure, online donation option.

We also have a new email-list, which you can sign up for online--the "subscribe now" button will take you to a simple form. This paperless option will send updates and events right to your inbox.

**Check out another new membership effort!**



## TLC pursues new partnerships in Real Estate

TLC is working on a new partnership with realtors from all over the state of Texas. Starting with our local Austin companies, we are gathering allies in the real estate industry who will help connect us with new Texas homeowners whose values align with ours. Recent studies conducted at Michigan State University show that assets like green infrastructure (think hike-and-bike trails, open green spaces in and around cities, and clean waterways) leads to higher property values for entire communities. See [www.landpolicy.msu.edu](http://www.landpolicy.msu.edu) for more information.

We are hopeful that forging these kinds of relationships with the industry bringing new residents to Texas will be incredibly symbiotic. Specifically, we are hoping to connect with agencies who work in the following areas: re-selling homes in the city, selling new homes in multi-use, low-impact communities, selling green homes, and selling large tracts of rural lands to conservation-minded buyers. These types of real estate transactions help balance our area's tremendous growth with an appreciation of the abundant natural beauty in our region.

Our first partnership of this kind is with Dugg Tankersley, of Tankersley Realty-Austin. Dugg approached TLC about a partnership because of his passion for conservation efforts in Texas. "Working with the Texas Land Conservancy is a great way for me to help those who preserve the nature of Texas – lands that my children can enjoy as I did as a child," he says. Through this, TLC will receive 25% of Dugg's commission on any real estate transaction that was referred to him through TLC. He has a referral form on his website for folks who are interested, which can be found at [www.realestateservicesaustin.com/TLCReferral](http://www.realestateservicesaustin.com/TLCReferral). Please think of Dugg if you are moving in or around Austin!

We are hoping that this pilot program will lead to a wide network of Realtors who share Dugg's values. If you know an agent or company who might be interested in joining our network of partners, please put them in touch with us.





*The Texas Land Conservancy is working to protect our vanishing landscape. With the help of our supporters, we are making meaningful progress conserving thousands of acres of open space with conservation easements, the purchase of development rights, and outright acquisition of lands.*

Photo by Matt Hicks. See <http://hix.smugmug.com> for more Texas photography from one of our own landowners!

