

# Texas Bluebonnet and Wildflower Routes

Hill Country Area

Provided by WildflowerHaven.com



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# About this eBook

The Texas Hill Country Area edition provides some of the more popular routes for finding bluebonnet and other wildflower displays. It represents the collective experience of several professional and semi-professional photographers. However, this eBook is just a guide and does not guarantee that the reader will find displays of Texas Bluebonnets along any of the routes mentioned. It is hoped that the information shared here will encourage you, the reader, to safely and respectfully venture out to enjoy the wonder and beauty of our state flower and the many other wildflowers in Texas. For current reports on bluebonnet and other wildflower sightings visit our Facebook page – Texas Wildflower Report. Also see the Resources Page at the end of the eBook for other sighting report sources.

When you do venture out to enjoy our Texas Bluebonnets and other wildflowers in bloom, please travel safely and be respectful of the private property of others. We **do not** encourage nor do we condone trespassing on private property to get that annual “kids in the bluebonnets” photo or any photo. The Texas Department of Public Safety provides some important [guidelines](#) on how to safely and legally enjoy viewing and photographing our Texas Wildflowers. You are strongly encouraged to read those guidelines before venturing out to explore.

If you find this guide to be helpful in your search for Texas Wildflowers, please like our [Texas Wildflower Report](#) Facebook page and share a copy of this guide with your friends. Also, we have a large selection of bluebonnet and wildflower images in our [Texas Wildflower Report Galleries](#). Prints or licenses to use are available for most of these images. WildflowerHaven.com is a for-profit organization, but we do attempt to provide these and many other sources of information without charge. If you would like to help fund our efforts consider purchasing a print or make a small donation via PayPal.

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# What is needed for a good season?

Most of our spring wildflowers including most of the varieties of bluebonnets in Texas germinate in the fall. So, sufficient fall rainfall at the right time when soil temperatures are warm enough will help ensure a healthy crop of wildflower seedlings. It is important to understand that although fall rainfall is very important, rainfall is only one factor that leads to an above average wildflower show in the spring. Some other factors for a great spring wildflower show include:

- **Late winter and early spring rainfall** is very key to rosette root and plant growth. Usually the rosettes with deeper and better developed root systems are the ones that yield larger plants with more blooms.
- **Warming temps** in March are needed to encourage growth of plants and bloom stalks. Usually when the night-time temperatures are averaging 50 to 60 F, bluebonnet plants will increase plant growth and send out bloom stalks. Cooler temperatures in March will tend to delay the blooming period. Warm temperatures with good rainfall will tend to promote an early and longer season. Extreme heat in late March and April with less than average rainfall will promote a quick and shortened season.
- **Plenty of sunshine** during the typical flowering time is important especially for sun hungry bluebonnets. Long periods of overcast skies with warm/damp weather can encourage development of plant and root diseases. I have seen entire bluebonnet crops wiped out by root/stem diseases.
- **Less competing vegetation** - Dead vegetation from previous seasons not removed can result in excessive shading thus limiting rosette and seedling development. Often aggressive invasive species will use this tactic to push out native wildflowers. In recent years the giant common mustard([Rapistrum rugosum](#)) has taken over entire pastures resulting in little or no native wildflower growth.
- **Proper mowing/grazing** - Grass mowed/grazed in late August and again in late January (but not too low to remove seedling rosettes) will help in removing/reducing dead/competing vegetation. Roadside mowing during the prime blooming months of Mar-May can literally kill a good wildflower display. Also, pasture lands overgrazed by livestock will often be completely barren of any wildflowers. This is particularly true of pastures grazed by goats and sheep. Deer usually do not choose native wildflowers as a food source, but where there is overcrowding and fewer food sources they will munch on native plant seedlings.
- **Topography and soil:** Although bluebonnets will grow in most any soil, they tend to do much better in areas that drain well and in soils with less clay. They depend on a rhizobium bacteria that help to fix nitrogen from the air. Soils poor in this bacteria will not likely produce a good crop of bluebonnets. Rangeland is often better at producing those photographic worthy landscapes of wildflowers including bluebonnets than farmland. Farmland wildflower displays are limited mainly to roadsides if the area is not sprayed with herbicide. Abandoned rangeland or farmland without proper restoration to native grasses/wildflowers can lead to spread of invasive species like the giant common mustard plant.

# Overview of Hill Country Area

I love Texas! – all of Texas, but I must confess that the Texas Hill Country is my favorite area of Texas. I grew up in Central Texas right on the edge of the Hill Country. My father had this dream of having a ranch, so we took many road trips into the Hill Country on spring and summer weekends checking out property for sale. I got a chance to experience the Hill Country up close and immersed in its beauty. We fished, camped and hiked in many of the Hill Country's parks and natural areas. Inks Lake State Park was our favorite location, since it was the closest to where we lived. So many really great memories not only for me, but also for my family.

There are a number of definitions for what constitutes the Texas Hill Country. Generally speaking the Hill Country includes those counties within the boundary of the Balcones (escarpment) Fault on the south and east and what is geologically termed the Edwards Plateau. Some of the better bluebonnet and other wildflower displays are found where there is good drainage and in sandy loam type soils. This includes, but is not limited to areas in Burnet, Gillespie, Llano, Mason, and San Saba counties. Once you get into the rocky yellowish caliche clay soils the displays are not as extensive.

Aside from the scenic wildflower displays that usually cover the Hill Country from March through June, the roads through the Hill Country are very scenic. This is especially true of areas south of I-10 and west of I-35. Travel along RR-337 from Medina through Vanderpool and Leakey to Camp Wood, and you will begin to understand how uniquely beautiful Texas is. Although not known for its extensive wildflower displays, in good years its roadsides are lined with a complete artist's palette of colors from red, blue, white, purple and yellow wildflowers.

Spend a weekend or two traveling the main roads and side roads of the Hill Country and you will know why it has a special place in my heart. Visit the many towns with some of the most unique shops and restaurants. Two of my favorite Texas Natural Areas are in the Hill Country: Enchanted Rock Natural Area and Lost Maples Natural Area.

Burnet, Gillespie, Llano, Mason, and San Saba counties have some of the best scenic wildflower displays. This eBook will focus mainly on the routes within those counties along with a few spots outside of those counties. We will also highlight those areas based on rainfall that should provide a better than average display. If you enjoy scenic drives often lined with colorful wildflowers then head out on the roads of the Texas Hill Country!


**Bluebonnet Peak:** Historically bluebonnets in the Hill Country peak during 1<sup>st</sup> week in April, it could be early due to the recent trend of above normal temperatures in February. March weather is really critical for even an average season. Normal temperatures and normal rainfall in March will keep things on track for a peak between the end of March through the first week of April. A hot and dry March can cause roadsides to bloom out early and put fields in jeopardy of having significant displays of wildflowers at all. Mason County peaks closer to the second week. Due to the increasing effect of urban heat island effect the bloom-line for the Hill Country will move from east to west. Areas east of Texas 16 will tend to bloom much early than areas to the west. Roadsides and south-facing embankments tend to bloom earlier, because they get more exposure to the sun. Check the current season outlook and reports before deciding when you should venture out into the Hill Country for the best displays. In an average season the Hill Country will experience several stages of wildflower displays beginning with the bluebonnets and paintbrush in late March, followed by the reds and yellows in late April through mid-May. June and July bring their own displays of sunflowers and bluebells.

# Routes and Maps

The routes and maps presented here have been over the years ones that produced either roadside or field displays of bluebonnets. These are not all of the possible routes in the Hill Country. Rough often narrow dirt/gravel county roads crisscross the Hill Country. Some of these out of the way remote routes can provide dramatic displays of bluebonnets. But these routes are also so rough at times that only trucks and SUVs should be used to travel them.

If you have only a couple days or just a week, it is not practical to travel all of the routes listed in this eBook. Most of the routes highlighted on one map can be covered within a day, some might require another visit others less than a day. Pick an area or two closer to where you are staying and concentrate on the routes within those areas. Also, check the updates and reports on our Texas Wildflower Report Facebook page and WildflowerHaven.com. That way if something really spectacular is found you can plan a side trip to that area.

Typically, bluebonnets and other wildflowers bloom in generally the same locations each year, but factors like rainfall, flash floods, wildfires, competing vegetation, and temperature can change the quality of a display within that area. So one year a field along a road might be covered 100% with bluebonnets and the next year only 50%. This is true for all wildflowers. Analysis of rainfall and temperature patterns combined with topography can help predict, but not guarantee that a specific location in an area will have great displays of bluebonnets.

 The blue stars on the maps indicate areas that usually do well each year. Photos shown on the maps are examples of past displays and not necessarily represent what can be seen this season. Some routes listed are not shown on the maps included.

The red stars indicate where Texas paintbrush areas have been found in the past.

# I-35 Corridor (Austin to San Antonio)

[Muleshoe and Turkey Bend](#): The rising waters of the Colorado River have reclaimed much of the vast river of bluebonnets many were able to see and experience in the past couple years. Some large areas of an acre or two might still emerge along the edges of the river, especially in the Turkey Bend area.

[Hamilton Pool Road](#): This is another location that produced some excellent displays in past years and once again it is in the area that received above normal fall rainfall and at or slightly below winter rainfall.

**FM-306**: There is usually a small field of bluebonnets along FM-306 just past the second bridge going west from I-35. Increasing urban development could threaten this area. This just north of the small town of Gruene which is known for its small shops, B&Bs and dance hall.

**Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center**: Spring is the highlight season for the Wildflower Center located in South Austin. Several events including the annual native plant sale along with special programs make the center a worthwhile visit. Certainly, if you are staying in the Austin area and this is your first visit to see Texas Wildflowers, a visit to the center is a great way to get acquainted with the wide variety of wildflowers in Texas. There are wildflower gardens, exhibits and fields along with a wildflower café. - <http://www.wildflower.org/activities/>

**Loop 337 and Texas 46**: Located on the west side of New Braunfels, Loop 337 usually has some nice large stretches of bluebonnets as well as down Texas 46 from Loop 337.

**Selma - Schertz**: In years past there were some large multi-acre fields of bluebonnets along I-35 just as you approach the FM-1518 intersection right before the bridge heading south on I-35. Sadly, many of those fields have been lost to urban development, but there still might be a few smaller fields in that area. Travel down FM-1518 southeast from I-35 to FM-78 and you might find a field or two.

**\*\*Due to the above normal rainfall in the past two years that significantly raised the river levels, the large bluebonnet fields at Muleshoe Bend Recreation Area are now under water. \*\***

Turkey Bend Recreation Area

Muleshoe Bend Recreation Area



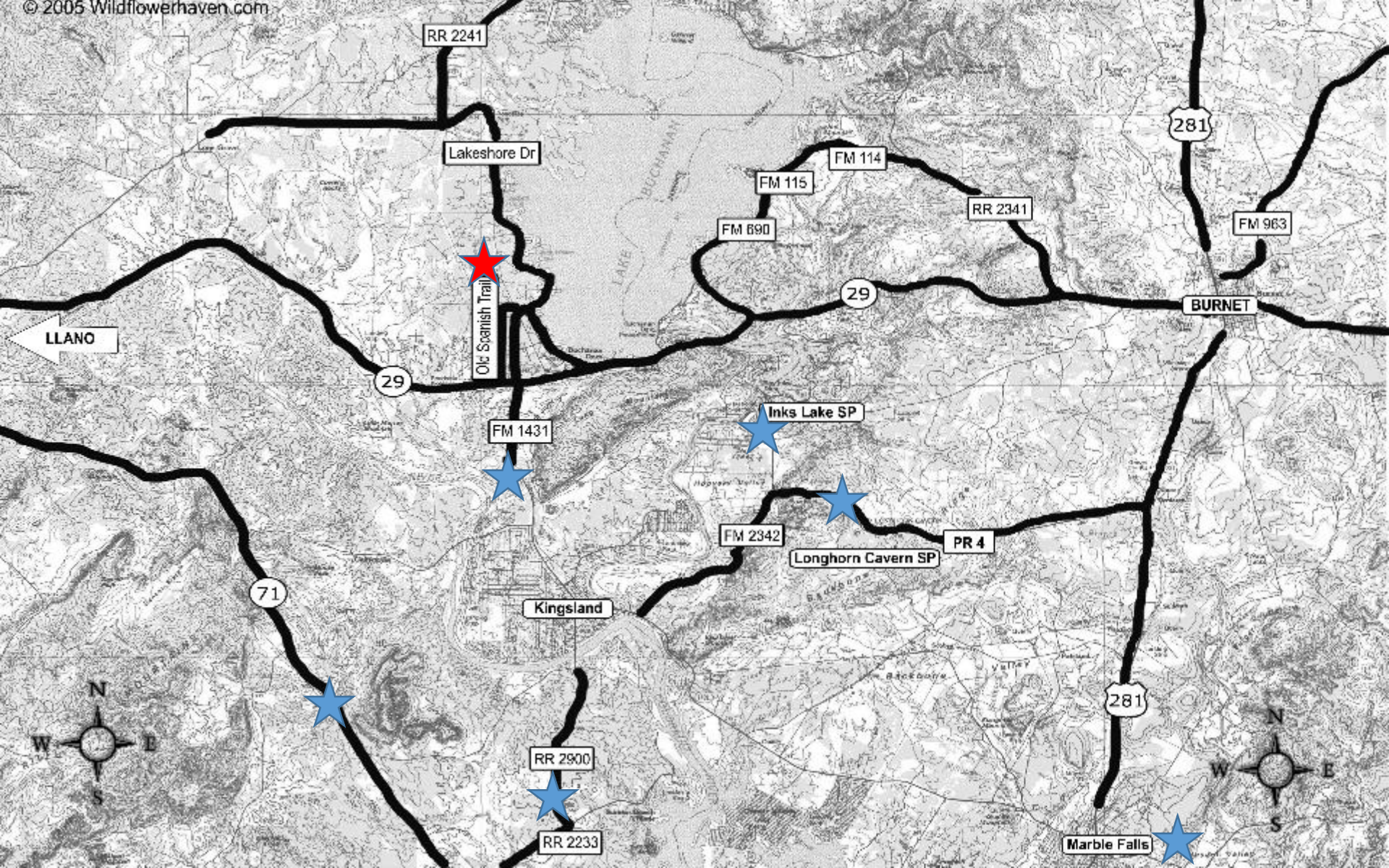


# Burnet County Routes

[Texas 71 and County RDs](#): Texas 71 is a favorite scenic route for those large field displays of bluebonnets. It is also an extremely busy and dangerous road during wildflower season. There are some areas where you can pull over to get better views, but be very careful when you do. Along Texas 71, you will find a few county roads that lead to safer ways to view some bluebonnet covered pastures. A journey along some of these roads could lead to some awesome views, but be advised that some of the roads are not paved. Also, please be respectful of the local property owners. At least one road now has signs posted warning people not to stop along the road. No fence does not mean you can enter the property without permission.

[RR-1431 and Kingsland](#): Those looking for bluebonnet lined railroad tracks and red paintbrush covered yards might find both along RR-1431 north of Kingsland. If you are heading north on RR-1431 from Kingsland turn left onto CR-321 just passed the railroad crossing. This county road will cross over the same railroad tracks. In good years this county road railroad crossing provides some stunning views of bluebonnet lined railroad tracks. Note: The road that roads down and along the railroad tracks is a private road. Continue north on RR-1431 to Texas 29. Turn left on Texas 29 and then right on Old Spanish Trail RD for large yards often painted red with Texas Paintbrush.

[Inks Lake State Park and Park RD 4](#): Granite rocks mixed in with colorful wildflowers is just one of the views along Park RD 4 from US 281 past Longhorn Cavern and Inks Lake State Park to Texas 29. In good years this route provides a bounty of bluebonnet lined roadsides, rolling fields of bluebonnets and pink granite rocks surrounded by wildflowers. Be sure to stop at the roadside park just west of Longhorn Cavern State Park for an incredible view of the valley below.



# Blanco County: Johnson City – Stonewall Area

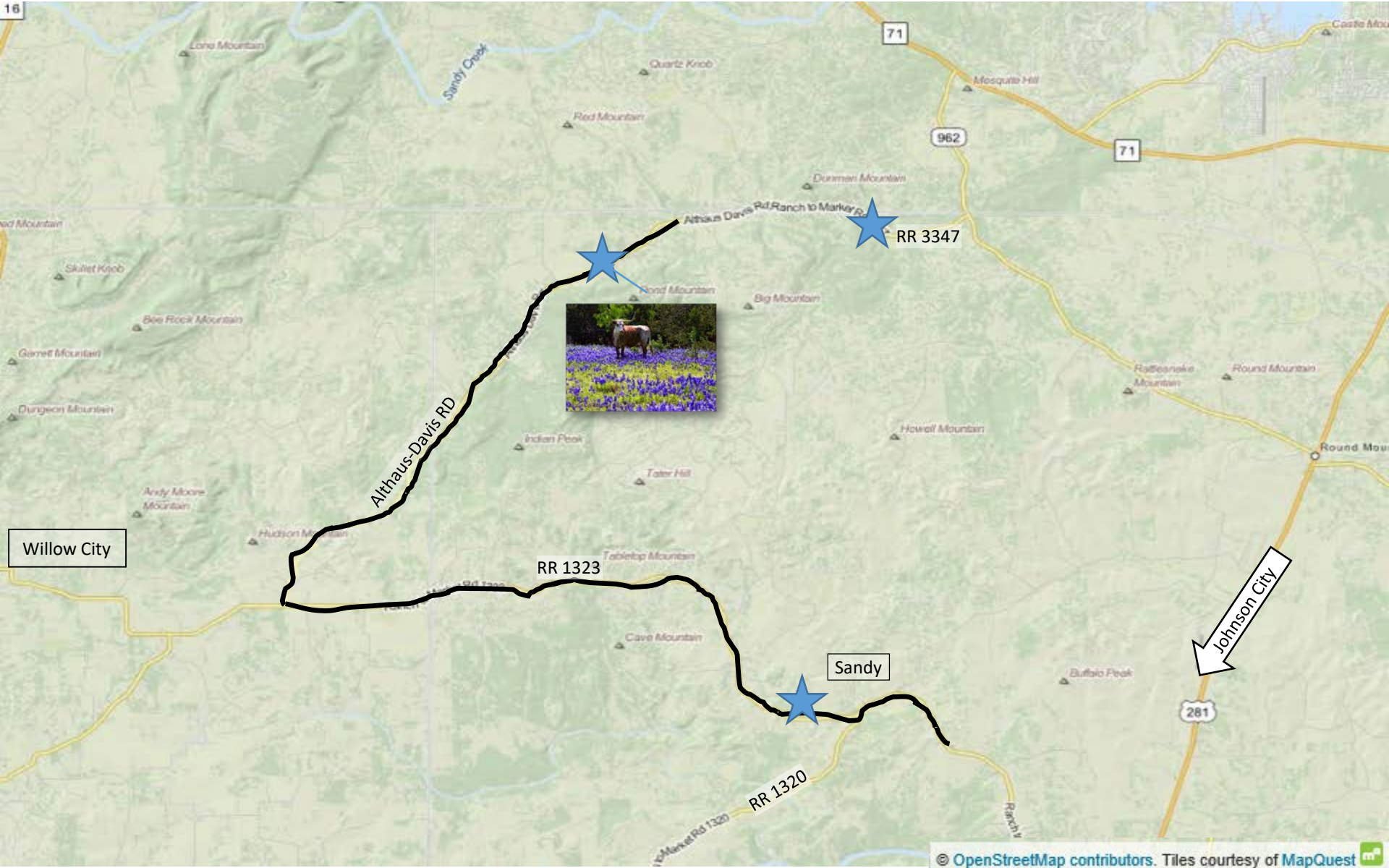
[FM-962 from Round Mountain to Texas 71](#): Rose vervain (verbena), daisies, and butterflies are the featured attractions along this route. If you are looking for a variety of wildflowers then FM-962 usually provides that. A field of bluebonnets might be found at times, but usually not until you pass the intersection with RR-3347.

[The Wildflower Loop](#): Take US 281 north from Johnson City then left at RR-1323 to Sandy, and then left at RR-1320 to US 290. Best areas for bluebonnets are usually found before and after Sandy. Scouting trip in March found bluebonnet plants along the roadsides of RR-1323 and RR-1320.

[Althaus-Davis RD – RR 3347](#): Along RR-1323 you will come to Althaus-Davis RD. This ranch road winds through hilly cattle country and often provides some great opportunities to pull over and get some up close-up photos of wildflowers that lined the roadside. There have also been some nice bluebonnet displays in pastures tucked in between the hills. This route is in the same general area of Willow City Loop, but much quieter and way less traffic. Parts of the route is paved, but some of it is just a graded rough rocky road yet passable for most vehicles if you go slow. Althaus-Davis RD eventually connects with RR 3347 which provides even more rolling hillside pastures sometimes with bluebonnets or a mixture of bluebonnets and other wildflowers. As you travel along this route, please keep a watch for cattle that often graze along the roadsides. Exposed rocky patches can be great places for snakes to take their daily sunbath, so do not ventured into private property and disturb them.

[RR-1 and LBJ State Park](#): RR-1 runs along the back border of the LBJ State Park and Historic Site. At the Danz cabins there is usually a field of bluebonnets. The entrance to the park is along US 290, but you can visit the Danz cabins via RR-1. The park also features the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm. Walk along the Hill Country botanical trail and you might be able to spot some bison, deer, longhorn cattle, wild turkeys and other wildlife. Great picnic spot for some fun and educational activities and entrance is free!











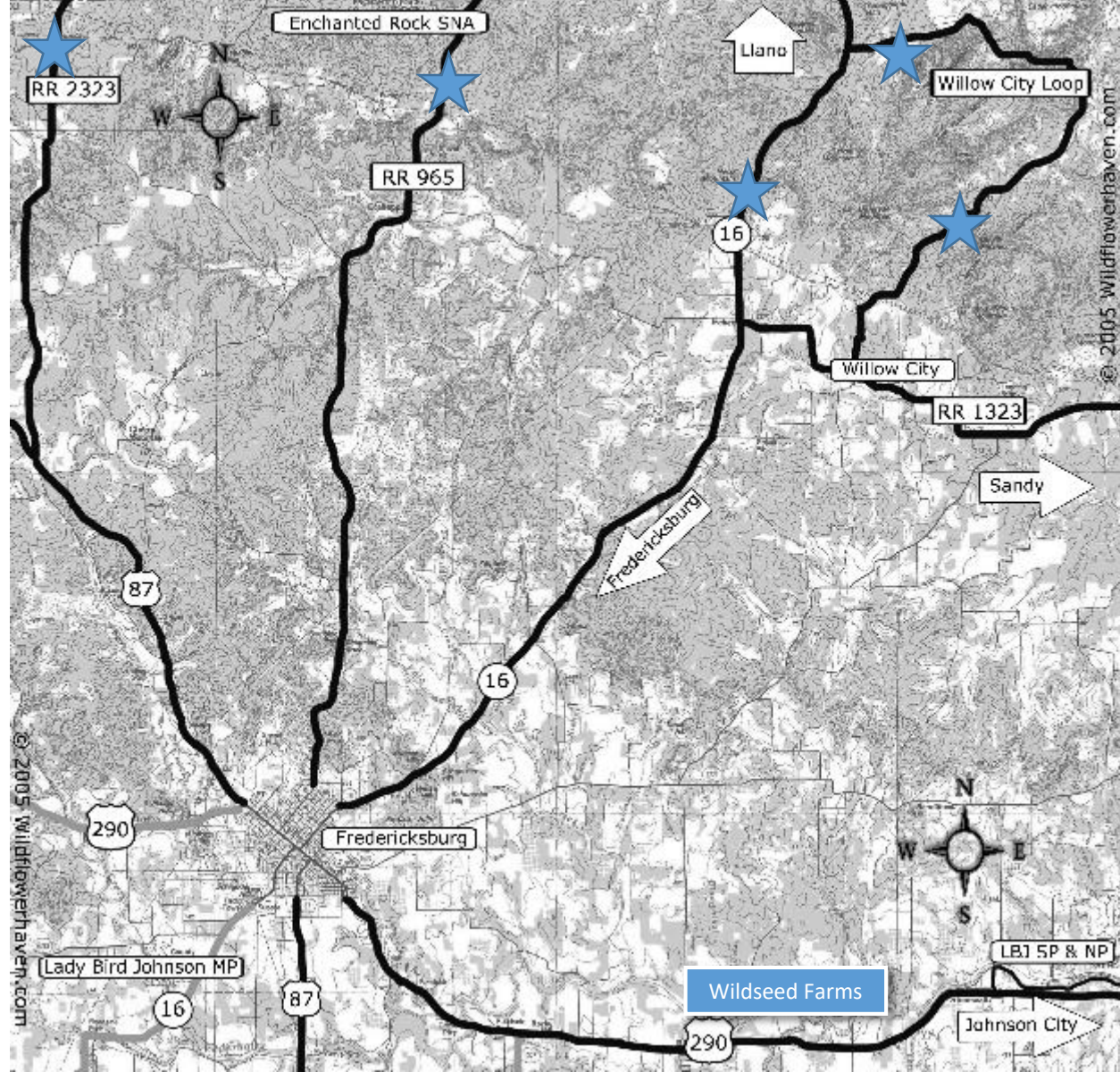
# Gillespie County: Fredericksburg and Willow City Areas

[RR-1323 from Sandy to Willow City](#): In best years this route provides some nice roadside displays often mixed in with rock outcrops with bluebonnets growing right in and through the rocks.

[Texas 16 and Willow City Loop](#): The drive north on Texas 16 to Llano from Fredericksburg is another very scenic road that sometimes will provide incredible vast displays of wildflowers. Usually the roadsides are lined with bluebonnets when they are in bloom. In 2010, Texas 16 provided jaw dropping, wide-eyed stares of people who took the time to drive the route. **Willow City Loop** is a classic route that now has become way too popular. The loop is a ranch road that travels north out of Willow City and eventually ends at Texas 16. The local property owners have grown very weary from all of the traffic that now winds its way through their cattle country in the spring. Signs are usually posted warning folks to not stop and get out. In the peak of a good season, sometimes the local sheriff's department will patrol the loop urging people to move it along. All that said, it is probably one of if not the most scenic routes in the central part of the Hill Country. It is worth a drive through, but if you do please be respectful of the local property owners especially the ranchers. Cattle are sometimes roaming freely in pastures along parts of the Loop that do not have any fences.

[US 290: From Austin to Fredericksburg](#): US 290 often has some large stretches of bluebonnets along sides of the road and in the median. This is another very busy and dangerous road to stop and attempt to get out to take that annual in the bluebonnets photo.

[Wildseed Farms](#): Wildseed Farms is a working wildflower and native plant seed farm. As you travel west on US 290 past Stonewall, Texas you cannot miss seeing the large open wildflower fields on the right. You can get plants and seed both at Wildseed Farms. Snacks, ice cream and sandwiches are available. While you are there take a walk to the wildflower meadows and visit the Butterfly Garden.



# Llano County: South of Llano

**Llano:** A great spot to top off the gas tank for the car and yourself. Cooper's Old Time BBQ is a favorite for lunch, as well as several spots around the town square.

[RR-2323](#): Sections of this route from Texas 16 to US 87 are sometimes moderately-to heavily covered with bluebonnets along the roadside. At times, the coverage extends into adjoining fields. In average-to-good years, this route is well worth the time to travel the entire 33-mile distance from Llano south to US 87. The better sections tend to be from Texas 16 to just past Prairie Mountain Schoolhouse.

[Prairie Mountain Schoolhouse](#): Bluebonnets used to cover the field and completely engulf the swing set in front of this historic site. In recent years the coverage has not been as good. Prairie Mountain is located on RR-2323, 18 miles southwest of the intersection of RR-2323 and Texas 16.

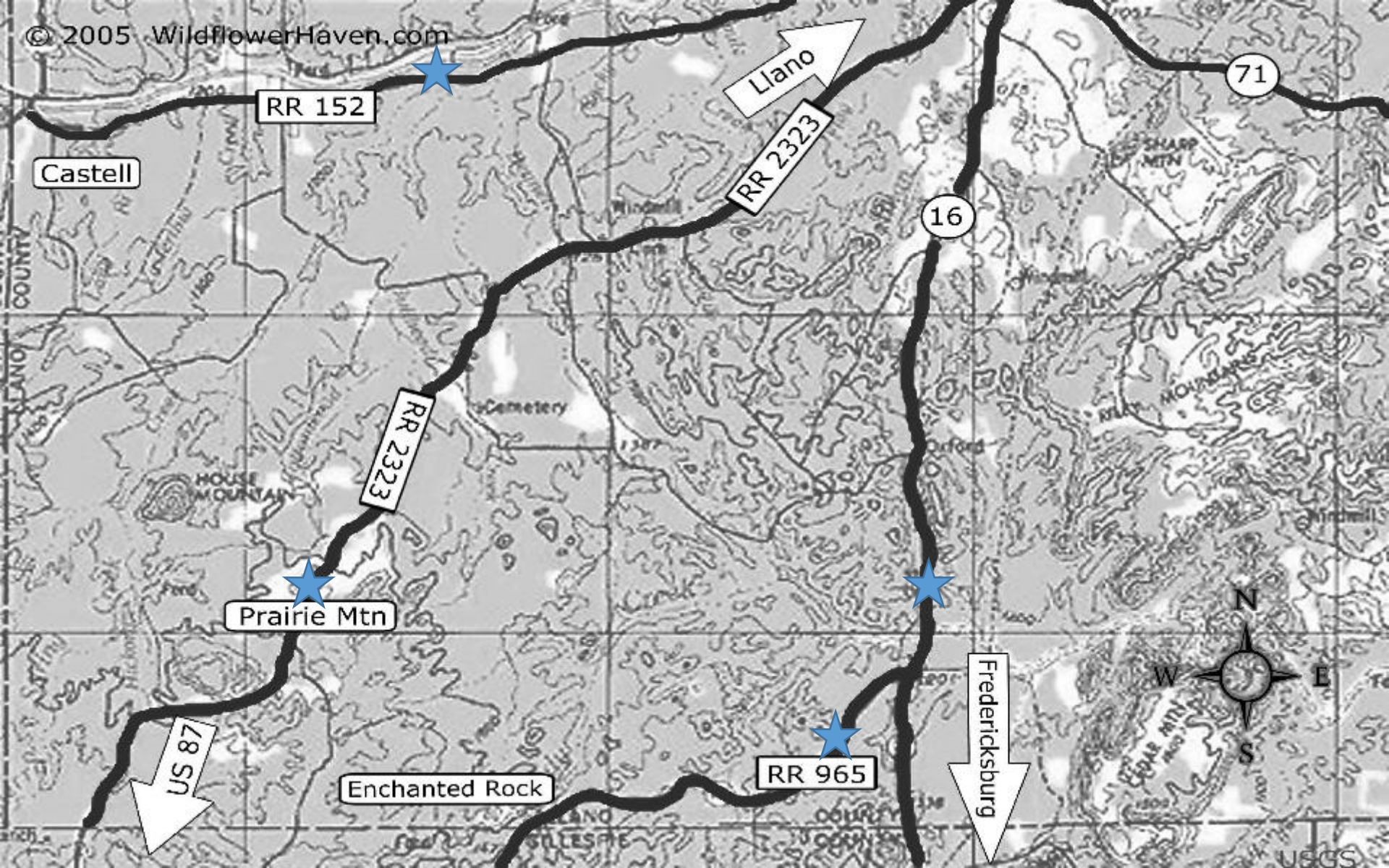
[RR-965](#): Although not as extensively covered with wildflowers as RR-2323, RR-965 does provide sporadic spots moderately covered with bluebonnets along the segment of the route from Texas 16 to just beyond the entrance to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area.

[Enchanted Rock State Natural Area](#): Enchanted Rock SNA is a great place to take that midday or late afternoon picnic break. Cone flowers, bluebonnets, and giant spiderworts can all be seen along the main trails. If you are looking for a place where you can set up your macro-photography equipment to get a few close-up wildflowers shots then this is one of those spots.

[RR-152](#): Sporadic spots of bluebonnets mixed with other wildflowers can be viewed along this route from Castell to Llano. In some years, several large fields of bluebonnets can be seen along this route before Castell. This used to be one of the published bluebonnet trails for Llano.

**Castell:** For more snacks, water, gas and BBQ, stop in at Castell's General Store.





# Llano County: North of Llano

[Texas 16](#): North of Llano, the roadsides of Texas 16 can be lightly-to-moderately covered with bluebonnets mixed with other wildflowers. There are usually several views of large fields beginning about six miles north of Llano and extending to Cherokee.

[CR-216](#): A leisurely drive along this route from Texas 16 to RR-2241 can provide you with views of bluebonnets mixed with other wildflowers.

[CR-226](#): The roadsides of CR-226 (Baby Head Road) near the intersection with Texas 16 are at times moderately-to-heavily covered with bluebonnets and lightly mixed with other wildflowers at times.

[CR-215](#): Another county road that can provide both bluebonnet displays and a mixture of wildflowers.





# Mason County: North of Mason

[Pontotoc](#): Pontotoc is a small community with a few old red brick ruins. These ruins have been slowly disappearing over the years, but a few remain. Sometimes they present a nice backdrop to a patch of bluebonnets or other wildflowers.

[RR-501](#): This road connects from Pontotoc to Cherokee. During really good seasons this route and the county roads off this route can surprise you with some really dramatic bluebonnet displays. Also patches of prairie paintbrush have been found along the roadsides of RR-501

[Texas 71 from Fredonia to Pontotoc](#): There are usually a number of spots along Texas 71 from Fredonia to Pontotoc with bluebonnets lining the roadside and a few fields. Fields of phlox have also been found along this route. The topography is rolling rangeland.

*Union Band Cemetery* is near the intersection of Texas 71 and CR-243 about 4.5 miles west of Pontotoc. Sometimes this cemetery is covered in bluebonnets. The grave stones can look like they rise up from the ground as if they were floating on a cloud of bluebonnets.

[Fredonia](#): Another small community, but one that does have a couple streets running along fields that in the past have been covered with bluebonnets. Old Katemcy RD is one of those streets. You can come down Oak street from Texas 71 to Old Katemcy RD then turn right towards RR-386.

[RR-386 to RR-2618](#): In a good season the displays along this route are light to moderate.

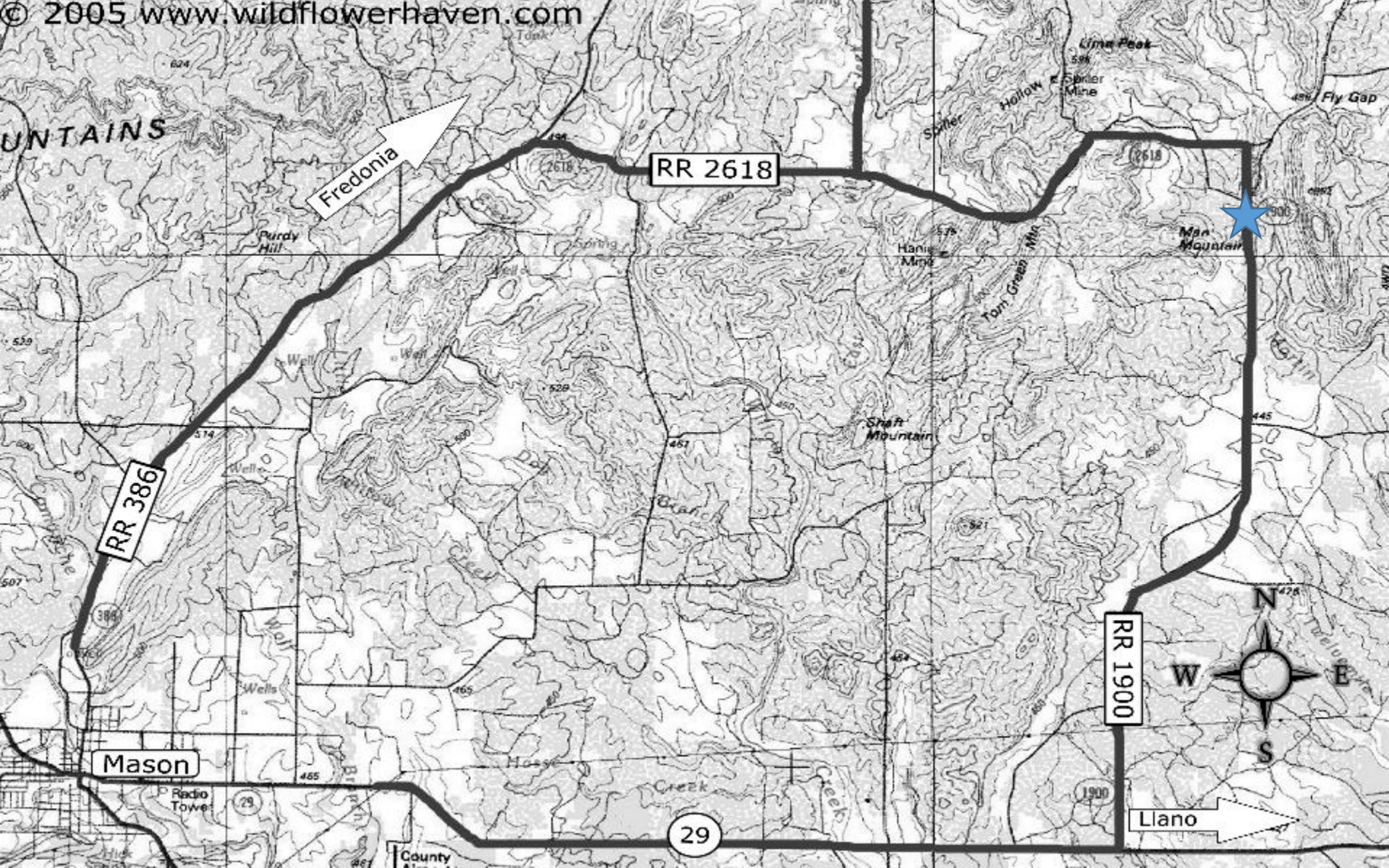
[RR-2618 to RR-1900](#): This route can have some really dramatic roadside displays of bluebonnets and field displays of other wildflowers. Side roads off this route can also provide some field display opportunities.

[RR-1900](#): On several spots along this route, the roadsides here can be heavily covered with bluebonnets. Views of a few large fields can be seen at times from the road. Shoulders are sometimes wide enough to pull over and stop

**Mason**: In good seasons many of the yards on the north side of Mason have good coverage of wildflowers. Also check out Fort Mason on the south side. Stop and have a home cooked style meal at the Square Plate restaurant.







# Mason County: South of Mason

[Art-Hedwigs Hill Road](#): This route will take you through pastures and roadsides covered with bluebonnets. You can connect from the routes north of Mason via this road. This is mainly a gravel/dirt road and more suited to higher clearance vehicles like trucks and SUVs.

[RR-1723 to Simonsville Road](#): Spotted coverage of bluebonnets can be seen along RR-1723 until it merges into Simonsville Road. After that, light-to-moderate coverage can be seen along the roadside with spots where bluebonnets spread into adjoining fields.

Kettner-Willmann Road: Just before RR-1723 turns into Simonsville Road, you will come to Kettner-Willmann Road. A few miles east of the intersection with Simonsville Road, there used to be medium size field moderately covered with bluebonnets in abundance. This road is a dirt, gravel road and not easily traveled in low clearance vehicles (not shown on map).

[RR-2389 to James River Road](#): RR-1723 leads into RR-2389 south of the city of Mason. Lightly-to-moderately covered spots of wildflowers can be seen where RR-2389 intersects with RR-1723. Just before the intersection with James River Road, RR-2389 crosses the Llano River where spots of bluebonnets can be seen growing in the river rocks and along driftwood.

[James River Road](#): Along James River Road beginning 3.6 miles west of the intersection of Schep Creek Road, roadside coverage is moderate to heavy at times. Several places along this road the bluebonnets will spread into the side fields. One field at the 5.4 mile mark was solid bluebonnets one year. WARNING: This road goes through a working ranch with cattle. It is a rough road with low water crossings. Past the 5.4 mile marker this route eventually crosses the James River (a fork of the Llano River). Water was rushing over the low water bridge, and I did not attempt to cross it in my CRV.

[RR-2389 to Schep Creek Road](#): RR-2389 splits into James River Road and Schep Creek Road. Schep Creek Road will take you up into a mixture of hills and rocky rangeland covered with cacti, bluebonnets, and a variety of other wildflowers. I personally like the more rustic and natural view of bluebonnets mixed with other wildflowers along this route.

[US 87](#): If you are traveling from Fredericksburg, you will enter Mason County via US 87. Road-cuts through rolling hills will give you the first view of bluebonnets growing in the rock outcropping. Moderately covered strips of bluebonnets can be seen after you pass RR-152.





Mason

29

Llano

County Airport

RR 1723

87

Art-Hedwigs Hill Rd

RR 2389

Hedwigs Hill

James River Rd

Schep Creek Rd

Llano

RR 152

RR 783

Fredericksburg

# Mason County: Southeast of Mason

[RR-152](#): You can use RR-152 as an alternate route to Llano or just journey down it for a few miles. There are sporadic spots along this road that are moderately-to-heavily covered with bluebonnets at times.

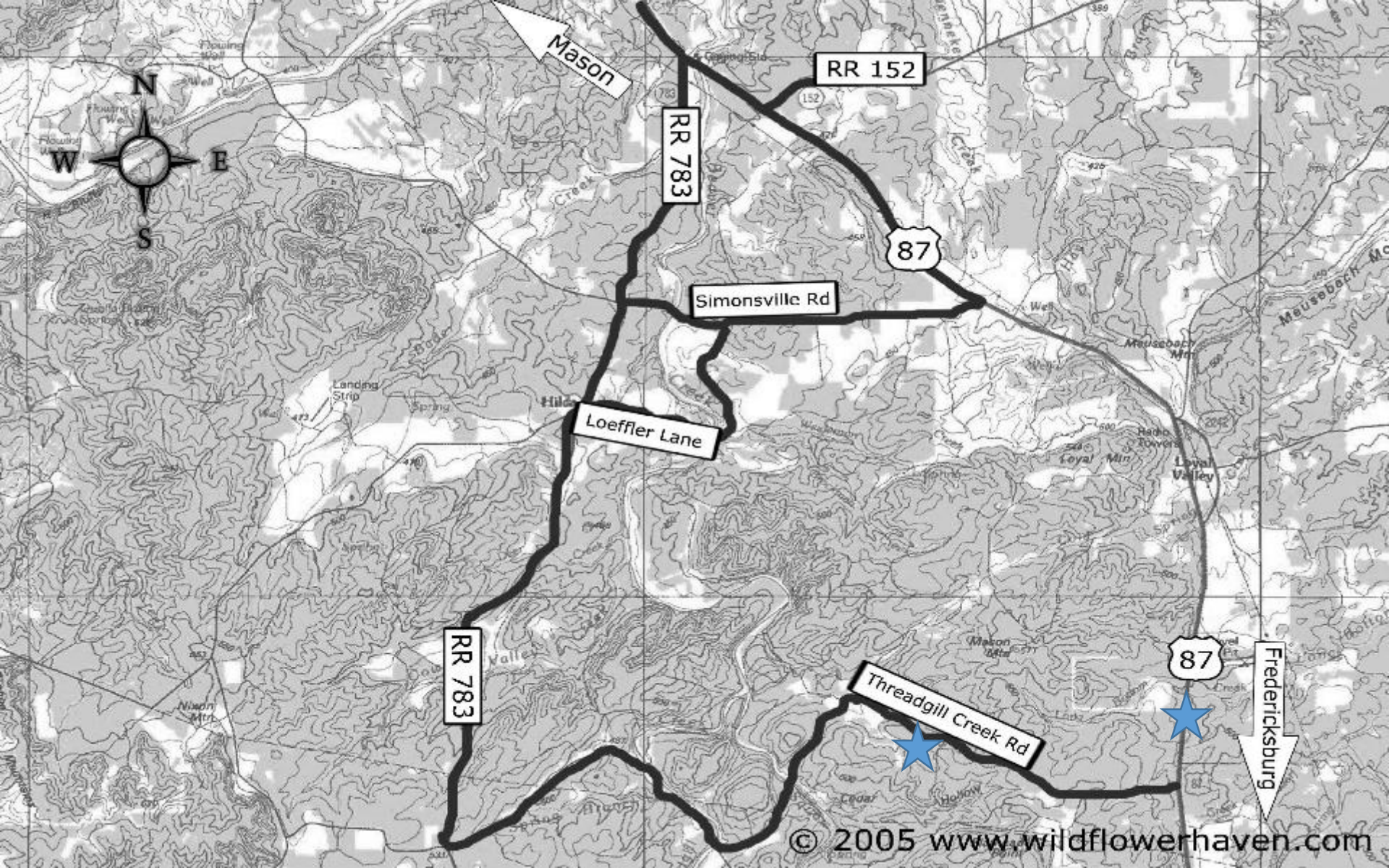
[RR-783 to Loeffler Lane](#): Along RR-783 the coverage of wildflowers is usually light and spotted until you get to Loeffler Lane.

[Loeffler Lane to Simonsville Road](#): The roadsides of Loeffler Lane can be moderately–to–heavily covered with bluebonnets. The road is primarily red dirt, but can be easily traveled.

[Simonsville Road](#): At the intersection of Loeffler Lane and Simonsville Road, you can turn left on Simonsville Road to travel back to RR-783 or turn right to travel to US 87. Either route will sometimes provide views of moderately-to-heavily covered roadsides with bluebonnets and mixed wildflowers extending into some fields.

[Threadgill Creek Road](#): If you want to experience a bit of wild rangeland sprinkled with a variety of wildflowers, take the Threadgill Road route. This is a long, remote, winding, and often rough dirt road best suited for vehicles that can withstand such treatment. You can get to Threadgill Road from RR-783 or US 87.





Mason

RR 152

RR 783

87

Simonsville Rd

Loeffler Lane

RR 783

Threadgill Creek Rd

87

Fredericksburg



# Sample Hill Country Photos

A small sample of the types of views and photo opportunities that are available in the Hill Country area. Click on each photo for more information including location. These are from previous seasons and do not necessarily reflect the current season.



Purchase Prints

# References and Resources

## Wildflower Reports

For bluebonnet and other wildflower reports for the Texas Hill Country area check:

[WildflowerHaven Wildflower Reports](#)

[Texas Wildflower Report on Facebook](#)

[Other Wildflower Resources](#)

Special thanks to Johnny Boyd, [Texas Wildflower Photos](#), Mike Jones, Michael Biggs and the many others on our Texas Wildflower Report Facebook page who submitted detailed scouting reports for the Texas Hill Country area.

## [Wildflower Identification Resources](#)

## Photographer Galleries

[Texas Wildflower Report](#) and [Texas Bluebonnet Photos](#) – Photos by the author, Rich Olivieri.

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