

*For Immediate Release*

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## 2020 Hill Country photo contest winners announced

The Texas Hill Country is a unique region filled with diverse wildlife, clear springs, sprawling rural landscapes, historic towns, and some of the starriest night skies in the country. With a rapidly growing population and increasing development coming into the region, many of these special qualities are at risk of being lost forever. Each year the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) holds a photo contest encouraging photographers to capture images of the Texas Hill Country they would like to protect forever. Winning photo contest entries are then selected and displayed in the Hill Country Calendar, now available for purchase on the Hill Country Alliance website.



While 2020 has challenged us as a region, a state, and a country in ways that no one could have anticipated, through it all the Texas Hill Country has given us a steady stream of beauty, resilience, and inspiration. Those of us who have the privilege of calling this place home found that in moments of great difficulty and unrest, our spirits could be eased, for a moment, beside a spring-fed creek. In tumultuous times, the quiet of the stars at night could bring peace.

Between March and May, HCA received over 400 entries in the 2020 Hill Country Photo Contest from amateur and professional photographers alike. Submissions, ranging from fluttering hummingbirds to the brilliant beauty of fall on the Frio, encapsulated this year's theme: The Wild and Wonderful Texas Hill Country.

The four winning photographs were selected by a panel of judges and will be featured in HCA's popular 2021 Texas Hill Country Calendar, available now on the HCA website. For the third year, the public had the opportunity to view the photo contest entries and vote for their favorites. The People's Choice recipient, Steger Chapman, received a cash prize and a photo feature in the 2021 calendar for his image titled *Wimberley Reflection*.



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Tricia Daniel captured the grand prize-winning shot, *Green Heron*, in Austin, Texas. While this photo was taken in Travis County, green herons are a common sight across the Hill Country and are often found standing at the edge of shallow water, searching for their next meal. Hill Country birders will recognize the familiar face of this patient heron, waiting to surprise a fish with its daggerlike bill.



Mike Jones earned first place with his photo *Fall into the Frio*, taken on the Frio River in

Uvalde County. While Texas is well-known for many things, ample fall colors are not typically one of them. However, Hill Country rivers hosting deciduous trees get plenty of love from Texas photographers

in the autumn months. This image, taken on the hike down from Mt. Baldy at Garner State Park captures the beautiful gradient of rich green, brilliant turquoise, and fiery red. Now who says Texas doesn't have seasons?



Taking second place, Carol Serur's *Hiding in Plain Sight* shows a classic Texas scene – a sneaky gray fox “hiding” behind a large prickly pear cactus. While this image was taken in San Marcos, near Spring Lake Preserve, the gray fox is a common and charismatic sight across the Hill Country. Even more common than the gray fox, however, is the prickly pear – the official state

plant of Texas. Texas is home to more than 100 different species of prickly pear, whose stems can be used to make nopales, a common ingredient of many traditional Mexican and Latin American dishes.

The photo *Male Vermillion Flycatcher*, submitted by Kimberlee Smith, was selected as this year's third place winner. This brightly colored bird was photographed perching on a branch in Montell, Texas. Of the many species of flycatchers in our region, the male Vermillion Flycatcher is truly one of the most striking. Vibrant red with contrasting black make these birds easy to identify and a pleasure to behold.



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In addition to these photo contest winners, the Hill Country Alliance would like to recognize the following contestants whose photography is featured in the 2021 Hill Country Calendar:

Airon Mothershed  
Al Braden  
Andy Graham  
April Ferrino  
Baba Arimilli  
Brian Thomas  
Carolyn Whiteside  
Caryl Zimmerman  
David Calkins  
Hannah Evans

Jerry Sargent  
Jesus Corona  
John Pace  
Jordan Moore  
Karl Ulrich  
Kay Wilson  
Khanh V. Le  
Kimberlee Smith  
Michael Smith  
Patricia Lucas

Ray Uherek  
Rob Pettengill  
Robert Currie  
Robin Carter  
Tim Speer  
Tom Torget  
Tommie Calfee  
Tuhin Baucus  
Winifred Simon

You can enjoy all these photos and much more in the 2021 Hill Country Calendar, available for purchase now on the Hill Country Alliance website. HCA's annual Texas Hill Country Calendar features stunning photography from the prior year's photo contest, highlights the beauty of the region, and provides an informative resource on Hill Country conservation. Now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, the Hill Country Alliance hopes their annual photo contest and calendar will inspire residents to learn more about the environment and biology of the Texas Hill Country and to become involved in protecting the natural resources of this special region.

*The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. Visit us at [www.hillcountryalliance.org](http://www.hillcountryalliance.org).*

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