

# Texas Bluebonnet and Wildflower Routes

Ennis Area

Provided by [WildflowerHaven.com](http://WildflowerHaven.com)



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# About this eBook

The Ennis Area edition highlights 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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<http://www.pbase.com/richo/bluebonnets>

<https://www.facebook.com/TexasWildflowerReport>

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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 Ennis Area

Ennis is located 35 miles southeast of Dallas and 205 miles northeast of Houston off I-45. Most of the best routes are actually in or near the communities of Alma, Bristol, Creechville, Palmer and Telico. The terrain includes rolling pasture lands, cultivated farms, and weekend “ranch estates.” Some of the soil is sandy loam, but a good portion is more clay based.

Each year the Ennis Garden Club sponsors the Ennis Bluebonnet Trails (April 1-30) and Festival. Members of the Ennis Garden Club mark 40 miles of bluebonnet routes over all-weather roads. Each week the Garden Club drives the trails and reports back on the bloom status. The main trails are highlighted and marked. There is no charge for touring the 40 miles of marked trails. Some members of the garden club even open their property so wildflower hunters can get a closer look at the bluebonnets. The Garden Club also provides guides for group tours for a small fee.

The Ennis Garden Club does a fantastic job of trying to promote not only the bluebonnet festival, but also the preservation of the bluebonnets in an area dominated by farming and small ranches. The club works to promote proper mowing schedules to help encourage the growth of bluebonnet seedlings and to keep mature plants from being mowed prior to going to seed. If you live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, a visit to Ennis is recommended. There are ample opportunities for the “family photos” or the fine art photo shot. Please, please do not have the kids sit on the bluebonnets. The garden club and the residents really frown on this. Often, there are natural bare spots you can find for the “kids in the bluebonnet” photo.

The Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau provides printed maps and usually provides bloom report updates at [Ennis Bluebonnet Trails](#).

Peak bluebonnet period: Mid-April through the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in April. A warmer than normal February and March could move this up to the first or second week in April.

# Routes

The routes I have listed here are usually included in the Ennis Garden Club Bluebonnet Trails map. I have added some of my notes to those routes and included some side roads not listed in the Garden Club's map. You should still stop by the Ennis Visitor Center and get the most recent copy of their annotated map. Ennis is probably the most visitor friendly area for bluebonnet viewing and photography. They not only make an effort to welcome visitors, the Garden Club members actually help prepare the area for optimum bluebonnet growth and viewing.

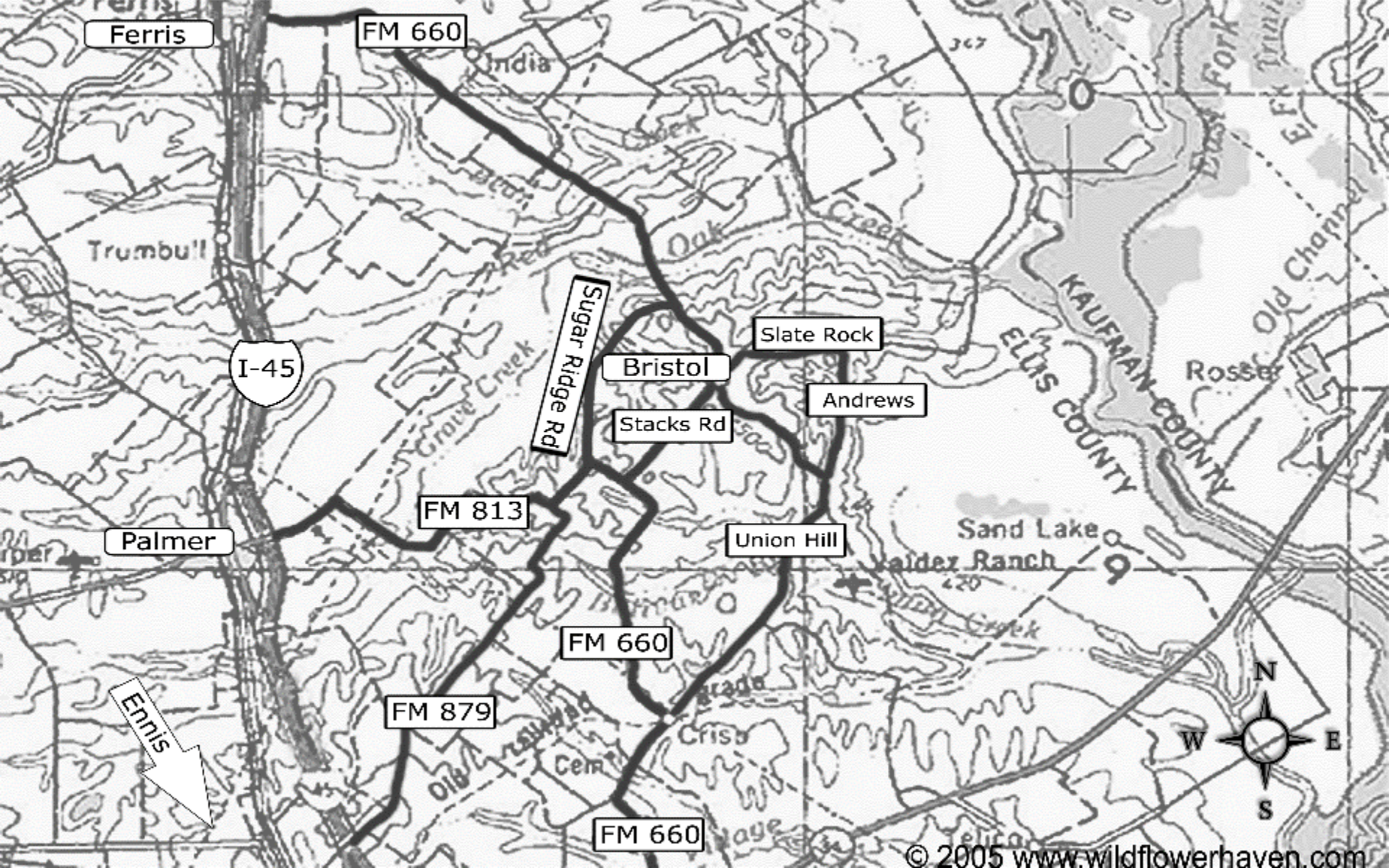
## Bristol Area

**Sugar Ridge Road (Bristol):** This is probably the most well-known and busiest route due to families wanting that “kids in the bluebonnets” photo. Best time to go is during the week. On the weekend the crowds are so heavy that often there are members of the Garden Club present to manage crowd control. There is an open field about 2 miles southwest of the intersection of Sugar Ridge RD with FM-660. One of my most viewed photos was taken along here. If you enter Sugar Ridge RD from FM-660, go slow and check out the tree line field on the right. I have seen some horses graze here. Also just down Sugar Ridge RD on the right is a really nice sloping field that can provide some nice views of bluebonnets mixed with other wildflowers.

**Andrew's RD:** This road has several nice views along the section between Union Hill RD and Slate Rock RD. This is a good spot for morning and evening shots. The road provides some safe spots to pull over and park. It used to be an off-the-beaten path for most visitors, but in recent years has become busier. Weekday trips to this road will provide a quieter experience.

**Stacks, Slate Rock and Pump House:** These three roads form a loop that is worth taking in good seasons. Go slow and travel both ways around the loop. Some fields are hidden by the trees and hedges that line the road.

**Union Hill RD:** Along this route south of where it intersects with Andrew's RD, you can sometimes find longhorns grazing in a pasture. South of the intersection with Valdez RD is a large house built like a barn. Often there is a large field of bluebonnets in front. The owners usually have a sign welcoming visitors so long as they do not trample the bluebonnets.



Ferris

FM 660

India

Trumbull

I-45

Sugar Ridge Rd

Bristol

Slate Rock

Andrews

Stacks Rd

Palmer

FM 813

Union Hill

Sand Lake

Valdez Ranch

FM 660

FM 879

FM 660

Ennis



# Routes contd.

## Palmer Area

**FM-813:** Several nice fields of bluebonnets sometimes mixed with Texas Star can be found along this road just west of the intersection with FM-879.

**FM-879:** A few pastures along this route provide good views at times. Just past the intersection with FM-813 is a nice pond on the right side often with good coverage of bluebonnets on the embankments.

## Creechville

**Cody Road:** Along this road is a large pond with a small island which in very good years is covered with bluebonnets along the banks and on the island. The property is bordered by a white iron fence and sometimes you can get views of bluebonnets streaming under this fence.

**FM-1181:** Just before Lone Oak Road there is usually field open to visitors seeking bluebonnets photos. Be very careful parking along this road and watch the little ones. I saw a toddler nearly enter the roadway just before her mother realized what was happening and scooped the child up in her arms. No photograph is worth an accident or worse the loss of life.

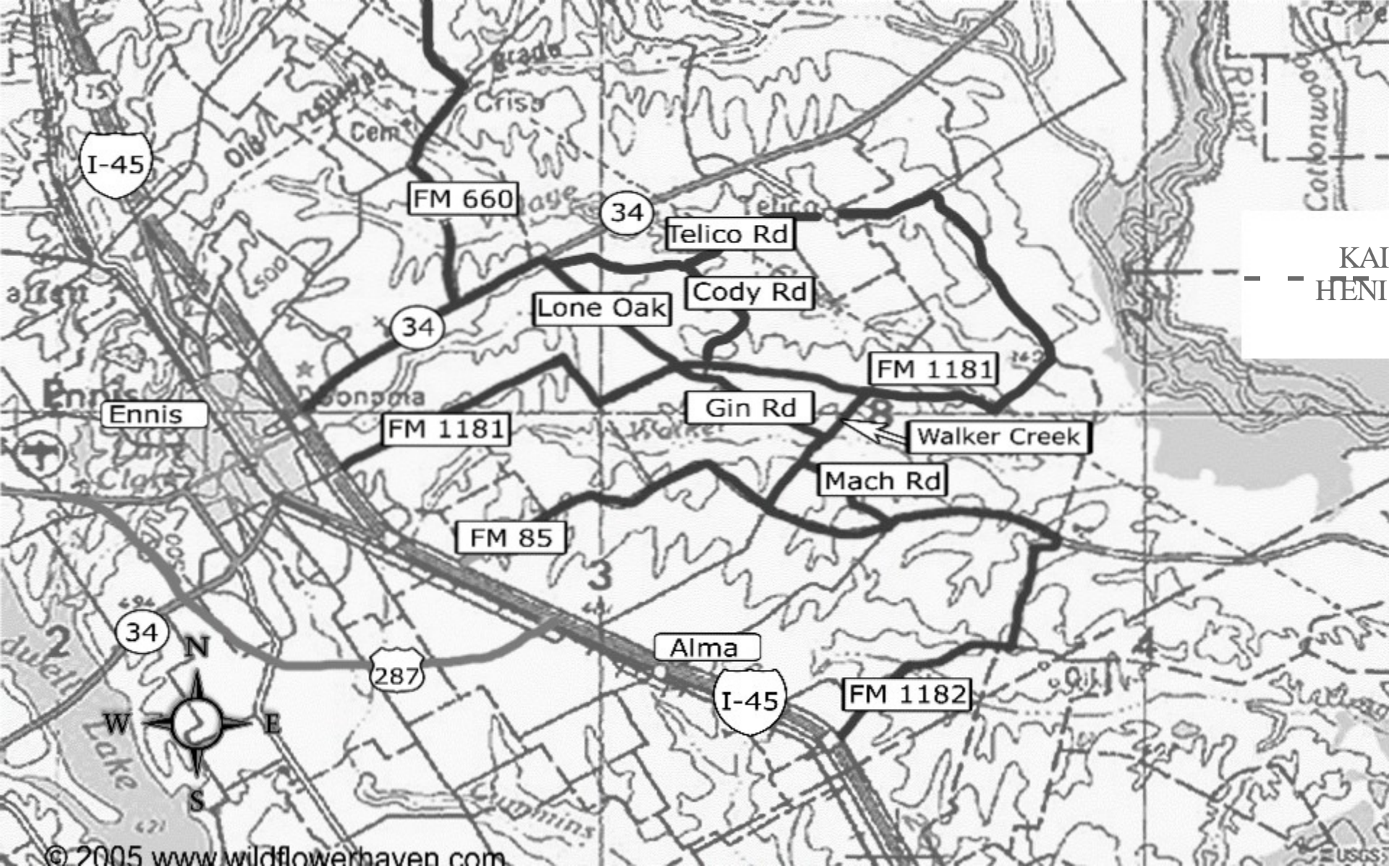
## Telico Area

**Lone Oak Road:** Little bit of a rough road, but sometimes has some nice displays and not as busy as other roads.

**Telico RD:** Another rough road at times, but could provide a surprise field of bluebonnets.

**FM-1181:** Past Lone Oak RD and FM-1181 is a farm that sometimes has a tractor and horses or cows in the pasture. I have seen this pasture solid with bluebonnets.





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# Routes contd.

## Alma Area

**FM-85:** In good years you can see large fields on either side of FM-85, but finding a spot to pull over will be a challenge. It is worth traveling this road all the way out to FM-1129. Then take the side roads including FM-1182.

**Valek and Hornik RD:** Just east of the intersection of FM-85 and I-45 you will come to Valek RD on the left. Take this road and travel it both ways. Hornik RD intersects with Valek RD and is also a good road to check. Valek RD can provide some nice sloping valley views of bluebonnets. Hornik RD fields tend to rise up from the road so you can get a bottom up view. Also along Hornik RD there is large red brick house that looks nice with a bluebonnet yard in front. In the past it has had some farm implements in the yard or next to the house.

**Mach RD:** Has one of the largest fields of bluebonnets. It was awesome in 2012, but not every year is a great year for it. Because of 2012, this road is now a busy spot, so weekday trips will be quieter.

**Walker Creek RD:** This connecting road from Mach RD back to FM-85 is worth traveling. You can get a morning sunrise shot or if at the right time, a moon rise shot at sunset (also back up Mach RD provides similar opportunities). On the right side of Walker Creek RD heading back to FM-85 is a field that usually has some cattle grazing in it.

**FM-1129 South towards SH-31:** This route is usually not included in the Ennis Bluebonnet Trails, but depending on the season it is worth investigating. Sometimes the prime blooms are closer to the Corsicana end of the Ennis wide area. FM-1129 will lead you into this region and may provide some nice surprises.

## Routes contd.

### Other Areas

[Cedar Hill State Park](#): In good seasons it has some really nice trails with bluebonnets and other wildflowers. Also a farm with wildflowers in the fields.

[Trinity River Audubon Center](#): If you like wildflowers with the added attraction of birds and other wildlife then a visit to the Trinity River Audubon Center is recommended. It is located about 30 miles back towards Dallas off Great Trinity Forest Way. I have walked the trails there and found a very nice variety of wildflowers. In the spring the center sometimes has wildflower walks. [Contact them](#) and see if they have any scheduled for the current year.

**Navarro, Limestone and Freestone Counties:** These counties have had some nice displays in the past. This is for the “explorer” to venture out and discover the possibility of a surprise WOW display. SH-31 from Corsicana to Waco is one route I have traveled in the past and found some very nice displays of bluebonnets and other wildflowers. Also check out roads in the Mexia area.

**Tip:** Take a side road off the regularly traveled routes. Most of the photographers I know have county road maps to help them find side roads in targeted areas that might provide that unique and dramatic display. If you have a tablet/phone with GPS that supports Google Maps, you can also get offline maps of areas you plan to tour (not intended to be a sales promotion for Google). For details on how to do this see: [View Offline Maps](#).

## Sample Photos

Here is a small sample of the types of views and photo opportunities that are available in the Ennis 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 Sightings

For bluebonnet and other wildflower sightings for the Ennis area check:

[Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Website](#)

[WildflowerHaven Ennis Forum](#)

[Texas Wildflower Report on Facebook](#)

[Other Wildflower Resources](#)

## [Wildflower Identification Resources](#)

## Photographer Galleries

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

**Your Feedback:** The wildflower travel eBooks presented here are informal guides provided by Texas Wildflower Report and EquipU LLC. We hope these guides will help you plan your visit to view and photograph our beautiful state flower, The Texas Bluebonnet and our many other wildflowers. If you have any questions, suggestions or want to report an error please use the [Feedback Form](#). **Please travel safely and respectfully!**

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