Wow! A new year! A year ago, we were quasi-camping out in the Lawson Store during Visitors Center renovations. I remember trusting that the money would come from somewhere to buy the furnishings and exhibit props we needed to complete a totally new look for RNC. And it did. As I count 2013’s blessings, my mind’s eye sees a slide show of faces. To each of them I smile and say thanks. As I enjoy my memories of the generous-hearted visionaries who make things happen at Riverside Nature Center, the one who gives the most and is thanked the least is our board president, Judy Ferguson, pictured below.

I can see her face scrunch up as she reads this. However, she is our unsung heroine.

Whether it is an exhibit opening, a fundraiser, a training program, a brown bag lunch, or a school kid’s tour—you can count on seeing Judy Ferguson here at Riverside Nature Center. About the only thing that causes her to miss an event is if she is out of town. It’s not that Judy just shows up for all our activities; she is typically the leader or an active contributor. She does a wonderful job coordinating and leading the field trips made by preschool groups each spring; she’s planning and hosting the Intergenerational Camps, and she chairs our atrium committee which is committed to developing museum quality rotating exhibits on a quarterly basis. AND she is a Riverside Guide.

Whenever I need a listening ear, some inspiration, or help solving a problem, she somehow gives me just what I need in her no nonsense manner. When I talked to her about the challenge of balancing the need to interact with our volunteers and guests against the need to have productive time to think in paragraphs, Judy’s answer was to give me coverage so that I could have occasional days of focused productive work time at home. What a difference that has made!

On more than one occasion when we faced an unexpected expense or needed a particular something, the Fergusons would drop off a generous check. As tempting as it is to share the amount of support Judy and Warren have given RNC, I suspect it would embarrass Judy to make that publicly known. I respect that. But, suffice it to say, if our income was a pie chart, the Fergusons are more than a sliver.

As I look at their history of giving, I have to smile—it started with a $25 membership in 2007. I say this for two reasons. First, if you value Riverside Nature Center, take a moment to thank Warren and Judy next time you see them. Second, I hope you look to them with respect and for inspiration. I’ve never directly asked Judy why she gives so much of her talent, energy, and money to this association, but I really believe she finds true joy in sharing her gifts. She is a natural educator, a great leader, and has an abiding love for the beauty of the Texas Hill Country. I count 2013 as a banner year for Riverside Nature Center, and I know that it would not have had any of the same outcomes without Judy’s contributions.

The elements of success for a volunteer driven non-profit association are a balance of individual talents, time, and money. Not everyone has the total package that Judy has—but each of us has our own unique blend. Never doubt that this organization survives thanks to daily infusions of these gifts from all of you—our amazing members. Be involved, and let’s make a difference in 2014!

Mary Muse

In 1994, Robert S. Dewers, Ph.D. in dendrology, oversaw the selection and planting of what is now Texas’ largest arboretum of native trees. The planting was made possible by a grant from the Texas Forest Service.

For more old photos, see page 5.
Riverside Nature Center
JANUARY EVENTS

Susan Sander’s
Family Nature Adventure will run monthly, April through September, in 2014

‘17,000 Years of Hill Country Life’ Through February 2014
9 a.m.-4 p.m. M-Fs; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays; 1-4 p.m. Sundays. By popular demand, the exhibit is extended through February. Developed by Hill Country Archeological Assn. and sponsored by Kerrville Elks Lodge #2081, the exhibit celebrates the first Hill Country humans. FREE but donations are appreciated.

BRITAIN 2014 NEWS FLASH!
RNC FOUNDER & NATURALIST SUSAN SANDER WILL BE ON THE TOUR. FIND OUT MORE AT THE GET-TOGETHER ON JAN. 20.

Winter Cleanup, Part 1 Saturday, Jan. 18
9 a.m.-noonish. Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Workday to tidy the grounds via raking and weeding, etc. Wear gloves and bring your favorite rake. Temperature below 40? Work postponed until next Saturday. RSVP please.

RNC Tour, the Beauty of Britain Monday, Jan. 20

Volunteer Appreciation Party Wednesday, Jan. 29
4:30 p.m.-6ish. Enjoy wine, cheese, and other tasty tidbits at the annual celebration for the multitude of volunteers who operate the nature center, from pulling weeds to frontline ambassadors in the Riverside Guides program. No charge for each registered volunteer and their guest. RSVP, please. DON’T FORGET TO LOG YOUR 2013 HOURS!

2nd Tues. Brown Bag Lunch & Learn, Tuesday, Jan. 14
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Paul Fleming, Heart of the Hills Fisheries Science Center, on Texas’ state fish, the Guadalupe bass. Cost $5 RNC members, $8 nonmember, free if joining RNC at the meeting. (New fee for 2014.)

Native Healing Garden Thursday, Jan. 16
11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Learn about native medicinal herbs, then tend the garden. Bring something healthy for the potluck lunch. Led by certified herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett, M.S. Donations fund the garden.

Herbs at Twilight: ‘Herbal Aphrodisiacs’ Thursday, Jan. 23, 6-7:30 p.m.

Town Creek Cleanup Team Saturday, Jan. 25
8:30 a.m. Meet in parking lot. Work with Upper Guadalupe River Authority to detail Town Creek. Necessary to join at least a week in advance. RSVP to 257-4837, or email to: lewistw43@yahoo.com

FEBRUARY

2nd Tuesday
Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 11

Native Healing Garden
11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 20

Herbs at Twilight, ‘Winter Herbal Remedies’ 6-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 27
Keep flu and cold bugs at bay the natural way. Please RSVP to 257-4837 so that sufficient supplies and samples are on-hand.
Travel with RNC Founder & Naturalist Susan Sander...
No extra charge
To pick her brain daily!

Riverside Nature Center presents
The Beauty of Britain

A group of nature lovers from RNC is going next autumn. Want to know about joining this great adventure...?

The Grandeur of London
Windsor Castle & Gardens
Wisley
Cambridge
Sherwood Forest

Yorkshire
Castle Howard
Harlow Carr
Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh
Scottish Night Farewell

SPECIAL TRAVEL PRESENTATION
BY COLLETTE TOURS
Monday, Jan. 20, 2014
2:30 P.M.
REFRESHMENTS SERVED
NO CHARGE TO ATTEND
RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER
150 FRANCISCO LEMOS
“Montana” Joins the Riverside Nature Center Family

By Carol McIntyre

Living in Kerr County has brought my husband Mac and I all kinds of encounters with wildlife—the kind you don’t experience in urban areas. We loved seeing the old bobcat that used to live in the atrium at Riverside Nature Center; there is a difference in seeing an animal in real life, rather than in a book or picture.

When Mac and I came across a mountain lion at the Sunrise Antique Mall on Water Street, we admired her as did every other person who visited the store. I knew that the capture and protection of this cat was very rare. The owner obviously cared about this lion, as quite a bit of money was spent on the quality of her preservation and realistic display.

Immediately, I said to my husband that the mountain lion should be at the Riverside Nature Center so that others could have the opportunity to see her. We didn’t buy her that day, but over the next few days I kept thinking about that cat. I called the store to inquire whether the owner would be willing to donate her to RNC. He said “no.” Ultimately I negotiated a selling price and purchased her to donate.

The Gift of Montana

By Mary Muse

Montana came to us last July. From her first appearance here, she became part of our wildlife interpretation. On day one—July 9—she pulled duty as part of a workshop for animal control officers.

Montana is a perfect introduction to nature’s hierarchy of predators. Just last week, some city officials were visiting, their first since our grand reopening in early 2013. Montana was the culmination of their tour. It was such a delight to educate them on the fact that mountain lions are native to the Texas Hill Country, occasionally still seen in Kerr County.

Less than a week ago, a Cuban family took in our archaeology exhibit. I invited the mother to take a look at Montana. I wish you could have seen her delight, heard her series of questions. Soon, the entire family was looking into “los ojos amarillos,” those yellow eyes!

Such a reaction has prompted Susan Sander into researching the mountain lion’s biology and role in the Hill Country eco-region. We’ll be offering a program on these beautiful creatures and their importance in our environment. We can’t thank Mac and Carol McIntyre enough for their generous and relevant gift!

Thank you!
The Christmas silent auction for Angelo’s Christmas Village
Raised over $2,000 for RNC

Thank you, buyers,
For the support.

To Angelo Falzarano...
A very special
THANK YOU!
Celebrating 25 Years by Looking Back

Photos of the People and the Property
When Riverside Became More Than Just a GRAND IDEA
As space permits, these photos will be an ongoing feature.

Old Farmhouse, Circa 1904, served as headquarters from the 1992 purchase until it was ‘recycled’ in 1996 to become a church in Comfort.

Before the Visitors Center (1999), Nature Lab (1997), Pavilion (1995), and Lawson Store (1995). The Lawson was first given to Joe Herring by H-E-B; he talked the grocers’ into moving it to RNC. Despite popular belief, the Lawson, circa 1904, was NOT Mrs. Butt’s first store. It was a competitor’s.

“I Have a Dream”
Artist’s rendering for the Visitors Center, which opened Sept. 11, 1999.

The Future…
Riverscape
See page 6 for details
As the New Year dawns, a group of Riverside Nature Center leaders are designing the center’s latest plans, which are even bigger than last year’s Visitors Center renovations. Peter Lewis, RNC’s architect from Day One, promises, “It’s going to be real… meaningful…and powerful.”

This expansion is tentatively titled Riverscape. It will show how the Guadalupe River and precipitation affect every aspect of Kerr County life. The center’s president, Judy Ferguson, said, “Riverscape will demonstrate how our water cycle works, and how we can practice good stewardship of this scarce resource.”

The design team is headed by board members Wynn Kilgore and Peter Lewis, and President Ferguson. Also instrumental are Voelkel Land Surveying, survey and topographical consultants; Stan Albus, landscape architect; Gary Hatch, architect; Thomas Collins, birding expert; Weir Labatt, water systems expert; and, Susan Sander, RNC naturalist.

“The Riverscape project evolved from Susan Sander’s original notion of a wildscape,” Executive Director Mary Muse explained. “As water issues have come to the forefront, our board of directors realized it was time to turn the spotlight on water’s role in sustaining life.”

Kilgore elaborated. “We expect Riverscape to show a compelling new visual element that allows the community to better understand the nature of water in our area.”

It will be all that Kilgore and Lewis promise. It will be dramatic. While it is designed for this community, it is also worthy of statewide media coverage. Like our own families, visitors from Austin, San Antonio, or other distant points, will come to read the written descriptions, to study the eye-catching graphics and other visual components, and to drink in the sight of the Hill Country recreated on the westernmost section of the nature center property. Visitors will leave with a greater appreciation for rainfall, topography, vegetation, and soil, along with the geological features that sustain the beautiful Guadalupe River.

While the project is still in the planning stage, the designers have decided on a number of elements. First, a visitor’s line of sight will be drawn to a storyboard that mixes text and graphics to illustrate the Guadalupe River’s formation and flow.

Next, they get the big picture, via an illustrated backdrop, a model of Kerr County’s highest elevations, located at the area known as the Divide. At the Divide, the elevation reaches about 2,400 feet in the limestone bluffs that drop to around 1,900 feet at the headwater springs.

The exhibit will then show terraced landscaping that mimics the drop in elevation into the Kerrville area. The landscape components include seeps, rills, and underground streams that are plumbed to demonstrate how these features behave during times of both heavy rains and times of drought.

Riverscape picks up the background story from the springs at the rocky headwaters, where those headwaters build to gurgling river water. Additional elements to the story of rain and river include:

- a bird-splash creek that takes center stage in a wildscape;
- a rainmaking machine illustrating what happens when rain falls on diverse landscapes—grassland, cedar brakes, and urban areas;
- and a hydrology pavilion that houses a 3-D watershed model of the whole Guadalupe’s river basin and allows interactive demonstrations of rain as it falls on Kerr County and flows to the Gulf.

Water behavior is complicated. This permanent outdoor exhibit will address the impact that good or bad choices have on Kerr County’s water supply—a treasured resource.

Many individuals are contributing to the vision for Riverscape. It will take a community-wide collaboration and investment to bring this project to completion. Solving our region’s water challenges is one of our issues, and a deeper understanding is a fine first step to good stewardship of the Guadalupe… OUR RIVER OF LIFE.
The first time I saw Devil's Claw, *Proboscidea louisianica*, was in a field near our home. We were newcomers to the Hill Country and totally in awe of the neat plants never seen in our city dwelling years. It was such a delicate, showy flower. The second time I saw a blooming Devil's Claw was in the RNC Meadow. I can remember Barbara Lowenthal, our plant guru, calling excitedly to all the volunteers to come see what was just discovered – a blooming Devil's Claw. These little beauties show up when you least expect which is one reason they are so special. Never take them for granted.

It is considered a common weed of cultivated fields, road sides, and waste areas. Its range in North America is in parts of SW United States and Mexico. It also occurs in Europe and has been introduced in Australia and South Africa. Other common names are: unicorn plant, ram's horn, aspid trap, purple flower devil's claw, goat's head, and elephant tusks. After seeing the seed pod, it is easy to see how these names were created.

It is an annual herb with spreading stems up to 30 centimeters wide and 80 centimeters long. The herbage is coated with glandular hairs that carry tiny oil droplets that give a strong scent making it noticeable in the landscape. Its flower is lobed and can be various shades of white to pastels with purple spots. The yellow nectar guides bees to pollinate. Two to four flowers can bloom at the same time. After the bloom resides the plant bears fruit that is like a fleshy pod up to 10 centimeters long with a long narrow beak. As the fruit dries, the flesh falls away and a hard beak splits into 2 horns. The fruit contains seeds and that can be 43 percent oil.

As you know, the visitor’s center has an educational exhibit featuring early Native Americans who lived in the Hill Country. We know that the young green fruits of Devil’s Claw were used as food and the dried fruits were used in basketry. Dry horns were woven into baskets to make patterns or used as a sewing tool. It also provided a black dye and is recorded to be used by Hopi, Apache, Havasupai, and Kawaisu.

Today it is grown as an ornamental novelty that can make Christmas deer if you are clever like Master Naturalists like Gracie Waggoner. Look on the wall shelf on the Visitors Center back porch to see one of these creations. This plant is a June to September bloomer. What you can see now are the great seed pods. We’ll keep our fingers crossed that we can get excited about the appearance of one in 2014 in our Meadow.
What is a “Riverside Nature Center”
Located at the confluence of the Guadalupe River and Town Creek in the Hill Country town of Kerrville—2010 population, 22,347—Riverside Nature Center is a 501[c][3] nonprofit organization, owned by its members and primarily operated by volunteers.

We provide highly valued experiences for the community’s adults, families, and children in order that they not only come to appreciate the region’s natural resources, plants, habitats, and wildlife, but also to become stewards of these resources now and in the future.

**VISITORS CENTER & GIFT SHOP**
9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Weekdays
10 to 3 p.m., Saturdays & 1 to 4 p.m., Sundays