It’s hard to believe summer 2013 is winding down.

Our Riverside Guides welcomed a record number of walk-in guests, an increase of 33 percent over last year. WICKED (Wild in the City of Kerrville Every Day) has been a wonderful success, with hundreds of children learning about nature and coming to love it, through WICKED and/or our tours for children. We are quarterly changing exhibit themes and displays. Our next exhibit opening reception on Sept. 30 will introduce, “17,000 YEARS OF HILL COUNTRY LIFE.” This exhibit is produced in partnership with the Hill Country Archeology Association and has all the earmarks of success.

As we celebrate the many progressive steps taken this year, and looking back over our astounding accomplishments of the past quarter century, it is my responsibility to raise a flag concerning the slowly widening gap between our revenue and expense. While expenses such as utilities, repairs (our building is almost 15 years old now), and the costs of delivering services continually creep up, we are not seeing equal incremental increases in revenue. We restructured our membership program, increasing the fees, and thus modestly increasing our membership revenue. We restructured our facility-use fees to better cover property insurance, utilities, and building upkeep. In response, some groups left rather than pay an increase (or to pay at all) and others have changed their time or frequency of use to patterns which ultimately yields no revenue increase.

I must confess I am concerned about Riverside Nature Center’s long-term financial viability.

What sustains and motivates me is knowing how very important our mission is to life in the Texas Hill Country, and knowing that you share this knowledge. I am confident that you can recognize the gravity of our situation and are motivated to sustain and grow our legacy into the next quarter century. Only through your support and by the support of the business and philanthropic community, will we be able to continue to inspire the preservation and conservation of our natural resources— for now and for the next generations.

As you consider where to invest your philanthropic dollars, or as you weigh the cost of being a member of Riverside Nature Center, please reflect on the importance of our mission as we seek the paths of responsible, harmonious stewardship in nature. If you count it as a blessing to live in Texas Hill Country, please give back by supporting Riverside Nature Center as much and as often as you are able.

Please join me as we step lightly on the earth,

Mary Muse

Riverside Nature Notes

Dear Members & Friends by Mary Muse, Executive Director

‘17,000 Years of Hill Country Life’

RNC’s New Exhibit for Autumn

Riverside Nature Center’s upcoming seasonal exhibit, “17,000 Years of Hill Country Life,” opens Monday, Sept. 30 and runs through December. It takes a look at local history, as perceived by the pros. Created in partnership with Hill Country Archeological Association, the displays explain ancient climates and ecosystems hereabouts, celebrating the humans who first made our area their home. These Native Americans used a trove of assets that were abundant in the area, bison, fish, water, as well as technology to build earthen ovens and to utilize numerous flint deposits for tools and weapons.

As with “WICKED”—it’s still open, until Sept. 22—the autumn exhibition launches with an opening reception. Our fall programs, such as October’s “Brown Bag Lunch & Learn,” will pointedly have a historical slant. The November brown-bag, about the five-year study of the fish that first fed our native people, and later became the state fish of Texas, the Guadalupe bass.

Archeologist Bryant Saner, a member of HCAA, will speak at our Fall Native Plant Sale & Festival (aka Down by the Riverside), on Saturday, Oct. 5. His topic is ‘Archeological History of the Hill Country.‘

We hope you’ll be on hand for these events and will enjoy partaking as much as HCAA and the atrium committee have enjoyed creating this new event.
The Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas has announced they will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 10. Speaker Bill Lindemann will discuss the evolution of the Texas Hill Country region from over a billion and one-half years ago to the present. In addition to the geological history, the talk will cover the past and present inhabitants, the changes that have occurred since settlement, and what the future might hold. The presentation will conclude with a brief discussion regarding stewardship of our land and natural resources.

A geologist for a major oil company for 32 years, Lindemann retired to Fredericksburg, where he helped found the Fredericksburg Nature Center. For 15 years he wrote a newspaper column on birding in the Hill Country. He is currently serving as vice-president of the Hill Country Land Trust.

Visitors are welcome at the NPSOT meeting. It is set for 3 p.m. at Riverside Nature Center. For more information contact Melinda Wasson at 830-895-2521.

Editor’s note to out-of-town readers: Sept. 10 is also the date for RNC’s first brown-bag luncheon of the fall-spring season, about Monarch butterflies. Arrive for the luncheon and stick around for the NPSOT meeting.

BIG CHANGES by Martha Hix

Back in October 2011, I joined RNC as volunteer coordinator. Almost immediately, I took on other responsibilities, particularly public relations and communication. Getting the RNC word out is a job in itself. As is being volunteer coordinator. When Mary Muse got the great idea for the Riverside Guides, the very organized, imminently qualified Melinda Wasson accepted the challenge to coordinate the group. She’s done a fantastic job. Riverside Guides quickly became our invaluable goodwill ambassadors, as well as being much-needed Visitors Center co-workers. A big thank you to each Guide, with a special nod to Melinda.

Naturally Speaking
by Susan Sander, RNC Naturalist

Wicked fun was had by all....

WICKED—Riverside Nature Center’s “Wild in the City of Kerrville Every Day” multimedia experience that focuses on the wild things that share our space or yard, or even our homes—is attracting a large number of visitors, both to the exhibit and for special events.

The focus is to challenge visitors young and old to practice their observation skills to find critters, big and small, in the diorama (a mini-yard and house).

RNC also partnered with the Kroc Center and the YMCA this summer, offering field trips to 156 kids. Other area daycare centers brought children to learn how to tell the difference between predator and prey animals, based only on their skulls!

Family Nature Nights were well attended with many repeat participants who got to see live snakes, to touch animal pelts, to watch bats emerge from our Rocket House, and to identify songbirds.

Our collection of live critters captivated visitors as well. Special thanks to our summer intern from Schreiner University, Joey Castiglione, for his help in developing and leading programs. Julie Rodgers and Devin Trejo also assisted.

If you’ve not seen our WICKED exhibit, there’s still time. The display will be up until the 22nd of September. As always, if you need a cool place to learn about wildlife, stop by!
What’s Growing in our Native Healing Garden: the Prickly Pear

By Martha Hix

*Opuntia macrorhiza* is also called the beavertail cactus, nopal, and tuna.

The mucilage in the pad can be used much like aloe vera, externally, wiped over a burn or sunburn to replenish body cells that dry out in those occasions.

The juice has been known to treat hyperglycemic patients, and also to relieve inflammation and pain in the urinary tract, particularly with cystitis.

The dried flowers help to strengthen capillary beds, where there is chronic inflammation. They promote tissue regeneration in colitis, pulmonary problems, vaginitis, and diverticulosis.

*This advice is general. Neither RNC nor Coward and Garrett, herbalists, intend to give medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek medical instruction for specific conditions. When using herbs, they should be carefully identified. Always check for warnings, such as “not to be used during pregnancy.”*

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“Honey Dos” Done

By Jeannette Watson

With all the seasonal help, RNC was able to accomplish several large projects this summer.

1. Probably the most obvious is the newly stained fence.

2. The nature lab has a new entryway.

3. The berm behind the meadow is clear.

4. We’ve laid out a new trail to divert visitors from walking across the crabapple area.

5. A new planting area, next to the Native Plant Society of Texas’ deer-resistant garden, is finished.

6. The planting area beside the Lawson Store is now defined by a retaining wall.

Finishing those projects was great, but onward to the remaining projects to be finished as the days get cooler, i.e., painting signboards and kiosks. The potholes and ditches in the parking lot are a challenge. As for the latter, I will speak with John Quinby about finding someone to donate road grader or backhoe services. If you know of someone, suggestions are welcome! Call me at 257-4837.
Please mark your calendars and plan to attend

Riverside Nature Center Annual Meeting

Tuesday, September 17, 2013, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

MEETING AGENDA
Recap and recognition, 2013-2014
Vote on Bylaws change
Board Nomination Committee Report and Ballot
Goals for 2013-2014
New Initiatives
Wine and Cheese Social
President — Judy Ferguson
Vice President — Rick Ertel
Secretary — Gwynn Groggel
Treasurer — Taylor Scogin
New Directors: Wynn Kilgore, Barbara Oates, Peggy Thompson, Mindy Wendele
Returning Director: Peter Lewis

(Proposed bylaws will be sent by email)

BIRDSEYE VIEWERS - BIG SITTERS

As previously reported, RNC’s resident birder, Tom Collins, and his team, the Guadalupe Kingfishers, won first place in May’s Big Sit bird survey, sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife. Tom and team are gearing up for an international Big Sit, on Saturday, October 12, sponsored by Bird Watcher’s Digest, the New Haven Bird Club of Connecticut, and Swarovski Optik.

Here’s how you can participate: come and join in the 50-foot diameter circle anytime during the day (no experience is required), and/or make a pledge for each species of bird spotted to raise money for RNC. The most species seen in October has been 65, so Tom is hoping for at least 50. Tom is also hoping to have 50 people in the circle at noon for a team photo.

Send your name, the best way to contact you, and your pledge amount to info@riversidenaturecenter.org. Also let us know if you want to join the birding team.

At press time, the team was still looking for a catchy name. Guadalupe Kingfishers is out. If you have a suggestion, please let us know via the email above, or in person.

So save the date, make the pledge, join the fun. Come on down to RNC’s stretch of the river!
FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE & FESTIVAL*
Oct. 4 & 5, 2013
*formerly Down by the Riverside

Co-sponsored by Hill Country Master Naturalists and Riverside Nature Center, the event’s purpose is to educate the community about the value of native plants and rainwater harvesting in the Hill Country, and how to live in harmony with our eco system.

2013 ACTIVITIES & LEADERS

10:00 “Making Your Landscape a Wildscape,” by Barbara Lowenthal & Susan Sander
DESCRIPTION: When Texans consciously create a habitat—food, water, and shelter—for wildlife, birds, or butterflies in their landscaping, Texas Parks and Wildlife calls that “Wildscaping.” Barbara Lowenthal, caretaker of the butterfly garden and meadow supervisor at RNC, and who works with the butterfly garden at Kerrville-Schreiner Park, will talk about how to develop and maintain a landscape that creates habitat for the critters of your choice—butterflies, specific birds, or various mammals. Learn how to make your place WICKED, Wild in the City of Kerrville Every Day.

11:30 ‘Archeological History of the Texas Hill Country,’ by archeologist Bryant Saner, Jr.
DESCRIPTION: Saner’s talk contains details about lesser-known Kerr County sites, and he intends to show a collection of artifacts that aren’t part of the RNC/HCAA exhibit, “17,000 Years of Hill Country Life.”

2013 SCHEDULED EVENTS

Friday, 5-6:30 p.m. NATIVE PLANT PRE-SALE & Ask the Plant Expert (Open only to HCMN/RNC members)
Saturday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE & FESTIVAL, with Ask the Plant Expert, selling a large variety of trees, shrubs and perennials that are native to the Hill Country.

REFRESHMENTS

7:30-9:00 a.m. Coffee and doughnuts, supplied by Andy Pesez ~ 2-3 p.m., bottled water

LUNCH

9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pit morning rolls, BBQ, and beverages sold by CAL-BOB’s Smoke Shack

ONGOING ACTIVITIES and ATTRACTIONS

9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Butterfly Tent available to all ages

DISPLAY TABLES

Ask the Plant Experts
Display – Riverside Nature Center Association
Display – Texas Master Naturalists-Hill Country Chapter
Display – Kerr County Cactus and Succulent Society
Display – Native Plant Society of Texas – Kerrville Chapter
Display – Hill Country Master Gardeners
Display – Texas Public Radio
Display - Hill Country Fly Fishers

KIDS’ ACTIVITIES - Nature Lab

9-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-2:30 p.m., Craft Projects
8-9 a.m. and 2:30-3 p.m., Nature Walk with Angelo

Fall Native Plant Sale & Festival Jobs Available

FRIDAY: Membership verification, docent. SATURDAY: Parking lot, Greeting table, Plant cashiers, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. or 1-3 p.m. Credit card processor, Docents. Plant loading, 7:30-9 a.m. and 9-11 a.m. Kids’ activities. Pre-sale labeling and signage. Post-sale takedown and clean-up. Which job would you like? Call 830-257-4037, email me@w4d@gmail.com, or drop by the office to claim your choice.
Barbara Lowenthal

After a spectacular spring showing of wildflowers in the meadow, the meadow is once again under stress from a lack of rain. Some plants are going dormant, others are curling their leaves to conserve moisture, and some of the trees are self-pruning. Supplemental watering is done once a week, for the most part. It is worth a visit to the meadow to see how the native plants are coping and which plants are showing less stress. Mulching is definitely helping the shrubs and forbs that were added this spring.

Some of our fall blooming plants are beginning to put on a show. These include: gray golden aster (*Heterotheca canescens*) which grows to about 8” tall, colonizes and has yellow flowers, prairie goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*), another yellow blooming colonizer, is an erect plant that grows to 24” and, finally, tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) which is an erect plant that grows to 30”, has red blooms and grows well in shade and dappled shade. Additional plants, which will soon produce blooms of white, blue and yellow colors, include: various asters (*Aster sp.*), gayfeathers (*Liatris mucronata*), and maximilian sunflowers (*Helianthus maximilian*).

Come by and stroll around the meadow to see the changes.
Maids of the Meadow
By Martha Hix

Every Wednesday, and sometimes in between, dedicated volunteers arrive at Riverside, ready to work. boy, do they work! Rain or shine, hot or cold, they are in the meadow, tending the soil and plants. Barbara Lowenthal, meadow supervisor, would like to introduce her meadow workers—a group of professionals with former careers that run the gamut from teachers to a university professor, to a psychologist to a yoga professional, to an IBM exec to a human resources expert to a petroleum geologist. That’s the short list!

Barbara said, “Julie Clay, besides her work in the meadow, maintains a database on the native plant species found in the meadow. Susan Longacre, the geologist, organizes the gleaners’ program. Nancy Alford and Kay Harter are both avid cyclists. Nancy actually cycles halfway across town on our workdays, and Kay shares her time by helping as a Riverside Guide.

“Marion Worthington says her hobby is opera and the Grateful Dead, and all music in between!”

Donna E. Oliver-Leep travels from Junction to help us out. Liz Ross, now attending the Master Naturalist class, is a Big Sister and brought her Little Sister to the meadow this summer to spend time among wildflowers.

Speaking of helping youngsters, Betty Clyburn not only volunteers at RNC, she is a CASA volunteer. You’ll also find her working with the children’s nature-study programs at the Kroc Center, along with Martha Miesch.

You know Martha from her frequent to this newsletter’s “Notes from the Meadow,” and she keeps up with the What’s in Bloom display on the back porch. Phyllis Muska travels in from Harper, and is recovering from a fall. Barbara said, “Have a speedy recovery, Phyllis.”

Gwynn Groggle, Yoga Space owner, takes time to help, bringing her portable weed-eater along when it’s needed. Sandra Meineke belongs to the Town Creek Cleanup Team. She recently won an award for perfect attendance/toil in all TCCT projects since inception. Melissa Seymour and Marcia Valvo are recent recruits. Melissa says her great fondness is animals, but Melissa enjoys meadow work, because she is learning more about plants. “Marcia spent a short stint with the roller derby gals and had a part in the King and I this summer.”

“Bill Stone helps out on special projects, like tilling and removal of alien species. He is very active in the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas.”

Barbara Lowenthal, who won top volunteer honors last year, as did John Quinby, modestly downplays her meadow contributions. Be it known that she is the glue that keeps the meadow project going.

RNC is very grateful for everyone who gives time and toil to the mission that is Riverside Nature Center. If you’d like to join the corps, please do. Call 257-4837,
NEW MEMBERS

July
Mac & Carol McIntyre (who donated a mountain lion to RNC) and Ward Moodhart

August
Anthony & Audra Arr
The following are open to all Kerrville-area residents and visitors. No reservations required for most events, but RSVPs are appreciated. Changes happen. Please always check for changes/cancelations. Drop by, or call 257-4837, for more info.

**WICKED, THROUGH SEPT. 22**
“Wild in the City of Kerrville Every Day” exhibit celebrates the wildlife living within the city limits. Meet our newest resident critters, then check out a wildscape diorama and take the “Find the Critters” quiz. Free. Donations appreciated.

‘Monarchs & Milkweeds,’ Tuesday, Sept. 10, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Second Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn. Butterfly expert and educator Cathy Downs will talk about the Monarch butterfly, the state insect of Texas. Downs is a seasoned pro who chairs the “Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas” program, a habitat conservation partnership, and she presents workshops throughout the state as a certified Monarch Larval Monitoring Project educator. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers; free if attendee joins RNC at the luncheon.

RNC Annual Meeting, Tuesday, Sept. 17, 5-6:30 p.m. Vote on directors, officers and new bylaws, with new initiatives and goals for 2013-2014. Wine and cheese social.

Riverside Guides Social, Wednesday, Sept. 18, 10 a.m.-noon. Get acquainted gathering, with Carl Hix speaking on credit-card processing. Interested in joining the Guides? You’re welcome to attend.

Native Healing Garden, Thursday, Sept. 19, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Due to drought, no new planting. “Biodynamic gardening” and “composting” will be discussed by certified herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett, M.S. Donations fund the garden. Bring your own utensils and a healthy dish—preferably seasoned with herbs—to share at the potluck. Herbal tea served.

River Trail Guided Tour, Sunday, Sept. 22, 6:30-7:23 p.m. Celebrate the autumnal equinox by taking an informative stroll on the River Trail with naturalist Susan Sanders. Suggested donation is $3, or $5 for a family.

Herbs at Twilight, Thursday, Sept. 26, 6-7:30 p.m. How to plan and plant a fall herb garden is presented by certified herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett, M.S. Reservations to 257-4837 are highly recommended. Cost is $20 RNC members, $25 nonmembers.

Riverside Guides Orientation, Monday, Sept. 30, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Get acquainted with the new exhibit, and enjoy the company of your peers. Bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch.

17,000 Years of Hill Country Life,’ Monday, Sept. 30, 5:30 p.m. New exhibit launches with an opening reception. Co-created with Hill Country Archeological Association, this exhibit celebrates the humans who first made our area their home, and how they used available natural resources, from water to fish to bison, and how they used their primitive technology to build earthen ovens and the numerous flint deposits hereabouts to make tools and weapons. No charge to attend but donations are appreciated.

**RECURRING EVENTS**

**GROUNDS & BUILDING MAINTENANCE, Wednesdays a.m.** Volunteers needed to keep the grounds & improvements in working order and looking nice.

**FAUNA CENSUS, 1st Fridays, 9 a.m.** Walk the property for about an hour, recording the fauna census, particularly of birds. Meets 2nd Friday in January. ALWAYS check for date changes.

**MEADOW TENDING, Every Wednesday, 9-11 a.m.**

RNC meadow is undergoing a renovation with help of dedicated volunteers. Or tend a demonstration garden.

**NATIVE HEALING GARDEN, 3rd Thursday, 11:30 a.m.**

Learn about native medicinal herbs, then plant and tend the garden. Bring a healthy dish to share.

**TOWN CREEK CLEANUP, Quarterly, Saturday a.m.** Work with Upper Guadalupe River Authority on quarterly cleanup of Town Creek.

**SAVE THE DATES**

Saturday, Oct. 5. Fall Native Plant Sale & Festival, More info here.

Tuesday, Oct. 8, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn. TBA.

Saturday, Oct. 12, International Big Sit (bird count), all day. Gather at noon for team photo.

Sunday, Oct. 13, 2 p.m., River Trail walk with naturalist Susan Sanders.

Thursday, Oct. 17, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Native Healing Garden. Saturday.

Oct. 26, 7 p.m., Harvest Moon Celebration with wine and music. Watch for details.

NOTE: There will be no “Herbs at Twilight” in October.