Though fall is my favorite time of year, I must admit spring is pretty amazing. Every day is a lesson in observation. If someone were to watch me walk from the parking lot to the Visitor Center they may think, “Wow, this woman is easily distracted.” I can’t help but zigzag my way, head bobbing up, down and side to side. There is so much that catches my eye. Yesterday the Desert willow was bare but today tiny leaves are emerging up and down its branches. The Trailing dalea with its silver foliage was rather nondescript but now it boasts lovely magenta blossoms. The spiderwort are popping up in unexpected places. Bumblebees are lumbering amongst the Mountain laurel. Lesser goldfinches and Vermilion flycatchers are back. The Flame acanthus with its sparse new growth is hosting Crimson Patch caterpillars. It may take me a bit longer these days to get to the front door but I do and that’s a good thing. The “inside business” is in spring mode, too.

We are ramping up for the Spring Native Plant Sale & Festival later this month on Saturday the 22nd. We are honored to co-host this event with the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the benefits of using native plants. We will be joined by many other local organizations who share our passion for our natural resources. Detailed articles are available further on in this newsletter.

The Big Give is just around the corner. Save the date for May 4th. Our focus this year is the expansion of our elementary age field days. Riverside Nature Center has hosted the KISD 4th graders for a full day of environmental education for the past several years. We would like to expand this program to include 2nd grade students. The Education Committee is developing a curriculum for this program. Fortunately, we have a wonderfully talented volunteer corps, but what we do not have is the funds to provide transportation. The estimated cost for the program is $3,000. Watch your email for details on how to donate to this cause through the Big Give.

More “inside business” which actually you may observe outside, is the renovation of the Nature Lab and the Meadow Courtyard project. You may remember talk of revamping and reorganizing the Nature Lab. Thanks to The Community Foundation, M.E. Hart Foundation and the generous donations from our membership we can finally begin the work. The original plans included a new a/c and heat supply, exterior paint and roof repair. Though these have been put on hold until further funding can be obtained, the interior work will proceed. It is estimated an additional $5,000 would put us back on the original track. Work on the Meadow Courtyard project should begin this month as well.

We continue to bring you and the community educational opportunities through our Brown Bag Lunch & Learns, workshops and Conversation with a Conservationist series. I encourage you to check the website events calendar often for upcoming happenings.

So, if you find me outside stopping, staring or stooping, don’t be alarmed, I’m simply taking a break from the inside business and enjoying the outside business.

Until next time… Becky
Exclusive choice of plants. Join us in getting things ready for the Spring Festival & Native Plant Sale.

April 1, 2017 Saturday
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

April 7, 2017 Friday 1:30 p.m.
“Texas Through Time” with geoscientist Tom Ewing. See page 9 for more information.

April 11, 2017 Tuesday
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
RNC Brown Bag Lunch & Learn. “Lost Kerrville: Scenes from the Past.” The place that enticed Joshua Brown to settle along the Guadalupe River in 1846 is very different today. By the end of the 1900s there were many changes in not only the natural landscape but also the newly built city. Bring your lunch and take a seat on a time-traveler’s trip to the early days with Joe Herring, Jr., local historian and columnist/blogger. How well do you know the history of various places in the downtown? What clues can you still find today of Kerrville’s past? $8 RNC Member $10 Non-member Free with new RNC Membership.

April 15, 2017 Saturday
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
RNC Bird Walks & Talks Meet Paul & Deloris Sellin in front of the Riverside Nature Visitor Center and experience birding along the Guadalupe River. All ages welcome. Free educational family fun.

April 21, 2017 Friday
4:30 – 6:00 p.m. RNC & NPSOT Members Only Native Plant Pre-Sale. Exclusive choice of plants. Join & purchase your spring plants along with expert assistance.

April 22, 2017 Saturday
9 a.m. – 2 p.m. RNC Spring Festival & NPSOT Native Plant Sale. Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter & Riverside Nature Center present: Free Family Fun – See Poster on page 3 for details.
Julie Clay (right) shared the merits of natives last year.
Guest Speaker during the RNC Spring Festival and Native Plant Sale

Znobia Wootan
Native American Seed
Free Informative Talk 11a.m.
Support Pollinators!
Become native to your place

Znobia loves to tell stories about native plants and their connections. She will share experiences encouraging and preserving pollinators. Bring live cut flowers for identification. A door prize of 200 sq. ft. of diverse native wildflower Bee Happy Mix will be awarded to the youngest participant in the audience. Native Pollinator Seed and plants will be available for purchase at the Plant Sale.

The smaller things in life really do make the world go 'round. Just as wildlife has suffered from increased fragmentation of land through urbanization, so have bees, beetles, and butterflies. Not long ago, beekeepers would ask farmers to set beehives near croplands in exchange for some honey. Now farmers are paying beekeepers to bring in hives for their crops. Hives are trucked all over the nation. A third of U.S. food supply depends on pollinators.

Why the decline in pollinators? Could it be the increased use of pesticides… or light pollution to the night sky? Whatever the reasons, many organizations are offering helpful information and incentives for people to plant pollinator habitats.

Choose a path of stewardship and a lifetime of wonder and learning. Healthy ecosystems are essential to the well-being of living things and to our quality of life. A diversity of native grasses and wildflowers provide benefits such as pollination, air and water cleansing, water supply retention, erosion and sediment control and habitat for wildlife.

Znobia “Z” Wootan is a lead customer care staff at Native American Seed and has spent the last 10 years helping people restore the earth. In her spare time, Z and her sister manages a family homestead with honey bee apiary, organic garden and orchard, free-range chickens and dairy goats using sustainable Holistic management practices. She lives in her childhood home on the South Llano River and has a deep love for the rivers, land and community where her grandparents first settled in Kimble County in the early 1900’s. In 2016, Znobia was elected to the City Council of Junction, Texas. Z has an Education degree from Texas A&M University and has taught in public and private Montessori schools for many years.

As a good friend Carol Clark says, “don’t wait around for someone else or the government to take conservation steps. Start now at a size you can handle in your own yard or on any piece of land you have influence over.”
One thing you can always count on when you walk the grounds of the Riverside Nature Center at this time of the year is a new blooming beauty. A few blooms on shrubs and trees will be sure to catch your attention. Look at the flowering trees on the grounds this month. A real beauty is on the side of the back porch and a second one is on the berm running along Francisco Lemos. This tree is called **Anacacho orchid** and its beautiful white bloom will stop you in your tracks. After you see one my guess is that you will crave one in your own landscape. You can usually count on finding this native in a native plant sale. When you see the seed pods follow blooms it's always fun to see if you can grow another. Since there is one in my landscape you can be sure an Anacacho orchid can thrive is poor caliche soil.

**Eve's Necklace** is a good browser for deer or livestock so it would have to be protected while it is a young, tender sapling. You can see this flowering tree on the outside walk of the butterfly garden that is close to the berm mentioned earlier. It's fragrant pale pink blossoms hang in large clusters from March through May. The brown seeds that follow the blooming period account in part for the tree name but the shiny green rounded leaves also resemble beads on the stems. Books state this tree can be found in woods and wouldn't that be a treat to stumble on one while exploring. Bees and Butterflies are attracted to this bloomer.

**Mexican Buckeye** is a beautiful pink spring bloomer. It's showy cluster blooms show up in March through April. Check this out close to the nature lab. This shrub draws butterflies and is host plant for Henry's elfin butterfly plus attracts bees. The large seeds are fun for kids to pick up and collect from the ground. Shady canyons and creek beds are favorite locations for these bloomers.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kerrville were gathered together one evening in March at the Riverside Nature Center. “Bigs and Littles” (as we like to call them at RNC) dined al fresco with us.

They were guided by Susan Sander through the grounds looking for the first signs of spring. A few yellow swallowtails joined the group as they were admiring the Mexican plums in bloom. The evening was fantastically concluded with the emergence of 300+ bats from beneath the bridge on the River Trail.

Thanks to Zoe Van Dyke, David McGuff and Brianna Jones for their hard work and commitment to finding resources for expanding the local BBBS. We look forward to seeing Big Brothers Big Sisters more often.
Lem and the 5 ft root

Lemuel Garcia has been volunteering with Susan Sander and they were pulling weeds, and, voila! the long root kept on appearing!

Thank you, Lem, for rooting for us!

Nature Notes - Getting ready for summer!

Susan Sander, naturalist@riversidenaturecenter.org

St. Patrick’s Day is my benchmark for spring greening! The wide open winter sky is now the backdrop for the new leaves in every shade of green (even the soft mauve of Lacey oaks). Before long that will change to the heavy green of dense canopies of summer. Summer “players” (goldenrods and Maximilian sunflowers) are already growing. Stop in to see the plethora of different plants in bloom, and the butterflies that are delighting in the nectar.

Nature is always changing, sometimes slowly (as in geologic shifts) or suddenly with the temperature drop of a late cold front. Watching the buckeyes slowly unfold their leaves to become green umbrellas or the tiny buds of the various flowers unfurling at a snail’s pace is a good lesson in patience as well as awe. Flowers attract pollinators who spark the next generation of seeds! Nature has vital work to do.

With that in mind, I’m gearing up for the next exhibit with a focus on what makes the Edwards Plateau unique that it inspires people to lend a hand and work towards its conservation. So we’ll be celebrating Nature with some of its biggest supporters, a Hats Off to Nature from the Ground Crew.

If you would like to lend a hand or have some artistic talent please let me know. I can always use some creative input as well as props (particularly things that are realistic so kids can learn to “see” what to look for in their own habitat). Mounted wildlife, photographs, silk wildflowers, replicas of bugs are all welcomed. Summer will be before you know it, grab your hat!
The purpose of this fund has been established by two RNC members to honor the memory of Shannon Smith. The fund will use donations to advance the development of all areas of the grounds at Riverside Nature Center according to Shannon’s vision for Riverside Nature Center. He was dedicated to the use of native plants (and occasionally adaptive plants to the Hill Country) that would enhance the beauty and educational value of the grounds.

Shannon devoted his life to studying, caring for and teaching about plants. He studied horticulture at the University of Tennessee, was a research fellow at the University of Florida, and was a senior lecturer at Massey University in New Zealand. He was the first President and Executive Director at the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. He also worked in research at Lone Star Growers in San Antonio and was Director of Horticulture at Missouri Botanical Gardens. After retiring to his home in the “back of beyond” in Mountain Home, Shannon volunteered at Riverside Nature Center, was an officer in the local Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter and worked part-time at San Antonio Botanical Gardens.

One of the few disappointments he experienced with Riverside Nature Center was the lack of adequate employee/volunteer staff to care for the plants at our site. This fund is an attempt to remedy this occasional shortfall and to provide for better care of the plants and trees of our nature center. The two initial donors spent many hours with Shannon, discussing his vision for the development of Riverside Nature Center. They plan to each donate $2500 to this important fund, in the fervent hope that other members and friends of Riverside will add to the initial amount in memory of Shannon. The initial donors welcome contributions from everyone who supports the future of the RNC grounds as an example of how native Texas plants can be used to beautify our own landscapes. This “Designated Fund” will be administered by the Director of RNC in consultation with the initial donors.

2017 marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of Riverside Nature Center. Please help us to ensure that the grounds will endure for the next 25 years and beyond!

Please call (830)257-4837, or visit Riverside Nature Visitor Center, and a Riverside Guide will assist you with your credit card or cash submission, or mail your donation with “Designated Fund” IHO Shannon Smith to Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Kerrville, TX 78028.

Contributors of $100 or more will receive a special exclusive gift of a wooden box handcrafted by Shannon.
Riverside Nature Center Presents

Dr. Thomas Ewing

Texas Through Time

April 7th @ 1:30

Copies of Texas Through Time will be available for purchase and author personalization.

From 2013 to 2016 Dr. Ewing worked at the Bureau of Economic Geology, a research arm of UT Austin and the state geological survey. He put together a summary volume on the geology of Texas as we currently understand it, designed for a wide audience. The book was published last October. It is 430 pages long, full color with lots of pictures and graphic displays.

The book begins with the landscapes of Texas, points out how those landscapes depend on the rocks underlying them, then proceeds to tell the story of the development of Texas as part of the southern margin of the North American continent; at times, a majestic mountain range; at other times, a shallow Bahamas-like sea, a deep-water trough, or a volcanic field. The story continues to the present, with climate and sea level changes over the last few thousand years to today, and the settlement by humans in the last 15,000 years. There are also thorough chapters on Texas resources and environmental hazards.

$8 RNC Members; $10 Non-Members; FREE with a New Membership

RSVP: rnc.kerrville@gmail.com or (830) 257-4837
Be Flood Aware

Flood awareness video brought to you by the Upper Guadalupe River Authority in conjunction with Kerr County and the City of Kerrville

Topics include:
- Kerr County specific information
- Historic floods in our area
- Local flood warning resources

Who should watch:
- Schools
- Businesses
- Civic groups
- Families
- Visitors
- Waterfront homeowners
- All Kerr County residents

Access video at www.ugra.org
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.

Our mission is to foster greater public awareness and appreciation of the Texas Hill Country’s natural resources through education, information, and by example. We provide quality educational experiences for the community’s children, adults and families; and we serve as a resource center for the community on native plants and nature related information.