I believe we Hill Country folk have all welcomed the recent rains. Its benefits can surely be seen here at the nature center. Our catchment system is now full and standing ready. Take a stroll along our trail and behold the myriad of rain-grateful wildflowers, trees and grasses. Feathered visitors of many sizes and shapes can be seen amongst the color and foliage. Fluttering winged jewels are dancing from winecup to primrose. The mosquitoes are definitely rejoicing even though we do not share in their enthusiasm.

There is much human activity as well. Just in the past few weeks we have been visited by six adult touring groups. Folks from all across the country are introduced to the Hill Country by way of Riverside Nature Center. This is quite a responsibility. Our role as an ambassador to the ecology of the Hill Country is one in which we take great pride. The metaphorical seeds we plant are extremely important. We are always in need of talented and enthusiastic people, such as yourself, to become Riverside Guides. Why not lend a hand and become one or our ambassadors?

Maybe you would rather sow those seeds amongst a younger group. That can be arranged, too. Currently we have eight youth groups scheduled to visit RNC, and the requests will continue throughout the summer.

The extended evening hours on Thursdays are a great opportunity for families to visit us. Informal activities such as scavenger hunts and “Where’s Squirrellock?” are all fun ways to encourage outdoor discovery and exploration. I encourage you to share your love of RNC and dedication to our mission by getting involved. Give me a call or drop by for more details.

The spring dance is in full swing. Pick a partner and do si do down at Riverside Nature Center.

Until next time...Becky
H₂O Lives! Come see how water is the one element that connects all life on this planet, hence the subtitle: “Connect the Drops.” Discover new facts in this exhibit, then take a walk on the River Trail to enjoy the real thing.

Big Give S A
Tuesday, May 3, 2016

May 3rd is the big day for the Big Give. Mark your calendar, set your alarm, charge your phone or laptop.

Past and present members of the RNC Board of Directors have put forward a challenge. They have generously pledged $10,000 to RNC for the Big Give this year. Your mission is to match their pledge. Can you do it? We think so.

Donations may be made all day on May 3rd but we ask you to concentrate your giving during the hours of 6 – 10 am. If we have the greatest number of individual donors during this period, we have the chance to win an additional $500.00 prize from The Community Foundation.

Please use the following link to make your donation: https://thebiggivesa.org/npo/riverside-nature-center-1. The minimum online donation is $10.00. There is no maximum donation.

Please encourage your friends and family to help support Riverside Nature Center on May 3rd.

Second Saturday Spiffy Up
Saturday, May 14, 2016
9 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Bird Walks & Talks
Saturday, May 21, 2016
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Get ready for summer fun!

Plans are underway for the next exhibit to open in June as well as activities to go along with it.

The overall theme will be about exploring and discovering wild secrets in the garden – be it at RNC, along the River Trail or in your own backyard. Since we are now open on Thursdays from 1-8pm we are planning short family activities to go along with the exhibit (perhaps some weekly scavenger hunts). We are also working with the Butt-Holdsworth Library – they will feature books that go along with our theme.

If you have some talents to share – be it for the exhibit itself or in helping with a Thursday night – contact Susan Sander (naturalist@riversidenaturecenter.org).
Note the address to use when you wish to: RSVP an event, find out about a program, or check for weather cancellations/closings, and so forth. Thank you in advance for using the new e-address!
RNC.Kerrville@gmail.com

**Volunteer Picnic  -  WE COULD NOT DO IT WITHOUT YOU!!!!**

RNC celebrated its amazing volunteers on Sunday, April 10th. Great company and good food were shared by all. There was even a spirited game of horse shoes amongst the more competitive attendees.

Congratulations to Rick & Stephanie Ertel and Liz & Michael Ross who were the drawing winners for three-day passes to the Kerrville Folk Festival.

Thank you to our sponsors, Buzzy’s BBQ, Inn of the Hills, Kerrville Folk Festival and the RNC Staff. Most of all thank you to all the people who give selflessly and tirelessly to Riverside Nature Center. You’re the BEST!

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Chow and Chat

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More chow and chat

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Maggie Tatum, Karen Millikan, Martha Miesch

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Stephanie Ertel, Karen Millikan, Rick Ertel

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Liz & Michael Ross in foreground
A NEW BIRD VIEWING AREA AT RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER

By: Julie Clay

Spring brings the start of new things at the Nature Center. RNC meadow volunteers began construction of a new birding area located next to the Stone Circle area and close to the new Waterscape feature. Originally this area was part of the wildflower meadow, but unfortunately this year, the bur clover ran rampant through the garden area. A decision was made to clear the area of the clover and begin the process of restoring it to a bird viewing area. This will be a place where visitors may come and enjoy watching a variety of birds feasting on the native grass and wildflower seeds, while listening to their “melodious chattering.”

The process began in March with the clearing of the area of the bur clover and other invasive plants. It was followed by the addition of compost to enrich the soils. Just last week, volunteers planted a large volume of native grass seeds, followed by a “stomping” dance to ensure that the seeds maintain good soil contact. The “dance” was a unique approach to planting native seeds developed by our volunteers, and brought on by all of us having such a good time. We have tried to capture this in these photos! Our “happy volunteers” included Maria Bowser, Betty Clyburn, Kay Harter, Barbara Marquer, Susan McKinley, Dianne Williams and, behind the camera, Julie Clay.

The seed mixture includes native grasses that provide seeds for granivorous birds, while also serving as larval hosts for butterflies, such as Skippers and Sartyrs. Additional benefits of a number of these grasses include the provision of nesting material and/or structures for our native bees, plus nesting and denning material for the birds, even after the seeds are long gone. Our grass list includes: blue grama, buffalo grass, cane bluestem, little bluestem, green sprangletop, Halls panicum, Indian grass, prairie wildrye, sand dropseed, sand lovegrass, sideoats grama, Texas cupgrass and white tridens. This variety of grasses will provide bird resources from early summer until late into the fall. We will also be adding some wildflowers, such as common sunflower and standing cypress, as additional food and nectar for our “feathered friends.”

In about a month, the seeds should be germinating and by summer we should start seeing a significant change to the area. So be sure to stop by Riverside and check out the new bird viewing area and of course, bring your binoculars!

Also, if you would like to have more frequent interaction with the birding area, the pollinator area and the butterfly area, please consider joining our RNC meadow volunteer group. We are usually out here weekly to witness all the changes, while helping nature along!
Happenings at the RNC Spring Plant Sale by Martha Miesch

The Spring Plant Sale sponsored by the Native Plant Society of Texas, Riverside Nature Center, and assisted by Hill Country Master Naturalists will go down in history as a special day for native plant lovers.

Lots of healthy native plants were purchased by members of RNC or NPSOT on Friday, Earth Day, or by supportive members of the public on Saturday the 23rd. Plant sales proceeded swiftly with a complete sale out. Docents advised choices of the right plant for the right location.

Organizations set up displays of interest throughout the RNC grounds. Hill Country Master Gardeners, UGRA, Monarch Watch, Texas Public Radio, Gardens at The Ridge, Nimitz Elementary Butterfly Garden Drive and Glory Community Garden were available to visit with folks.

As promised, there was a brief program describing the career of Carroll Abbott who was the primary founder of the organization we know as Native Plant Society of Texas read by former state president, Lonnie Childs. Several of Carroll Abbott’s family members including sons Mark and Patrick and friends who were close to the family, stood with the public, NPSOT board members, and garden tenders to listen respectively to the words honoring Carroll Abbott around the garden planted and maintained by the Kerrville Chapter of NPSOT dedicated to him.

Continues, Page 6
More RNC Spring Plant Sale & Festival Photos

Garden tenders set up the two gardens we tend at RNC, but a special thank you goes to Shannon Smith, a friend of Carroll Abbott, Mary Thomas, and Barbara Marquer for plans, planting and labeling of all the plants in this honorary garden. When we drive along a highway ablaze with wildflowers, we can murmur a thank you to Carroll Abbott and Lady Bird Johnson for the National Highway Beautification Act.

Another highlight of the day was the program on Bees and Pollination delivered by Sandra Magee and Deb Windham that was well received by an attentive audience.

The Kid’s Activities were well attended, including a butterfly art craft, and face painting with the KJSG volunteer ladies, Antoinette Hamilton and Karen Millikan.

KJSG Butterfly face painting

Egg to tadpole to frog
It’s spring and that means I have an eye to the sky and my hands in the dirt. This year it’s been a mad rush to keep ahead of the blooming frenzy promoted by a mild winter and enough rain to bring the plant world back to life after drought. Once bare ground is green but unfortunately in many spaces that means a weedy annual like bur clover. Out in the open fields another invader from Europe, bastard mustard, is gaining ground.

I actually like to weed; it certainly does nothing for my nails but it’s a great way to study plants and marvel at the diversity in form and function. Plus Darwin loved to study plants too.

What happens to transform a cell from just duplicating itself to become something that reaches for the sky as a sprout, or dig deep as a root? What switches off/on so that that sprout’s cells begins to differentiate to be a stem, leaf, bud that swells slowly to burst forth into a flower of many parts, then seed! All powered by rainwater and sunlight!

Which leads me to the sky. How does rain make a seed sprout? How is it that a sunflower tracks the sun? What are the mechanics taking place? How is the information transferred to the different parts – such questions are discussed in What A Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses by Daniel Chamovitz, plant / professor from the Tel Aviv University. Turns out, we actually have a lot in common with plants. And, despite the very short life cycle of annuals, scientists are now learning how they make genetic changes in response to their environment. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qv-iluydZOo]

Weather is big news as the climate changes. Too much rain or not enough impact plants. So scientists are checking out field mustard, a common agriculture weed to learn how it makes changes in its genes due to climate changes. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-franks2/climate-change-alters-gen_b_9690292.html]

Turns out that those tiny mustard seeds are packed full of information as well as the ability to change in order to survive. Maybe we could learn something from them.

Stay tuned......
THANK YOU

Donors: March 23, 2016 to April 25
(Does not include renewals)

Jo Ann Redden          Harriet Redwine          Franklin & Laurie Hall
Warren & Judy Ferguson  Barbara Oates            Pete & Martha Miesch
Gwynn & Henry Jackson   Stan & Carolynn Cobbs       Jack Millikan
Ron K. Stoepel          Andy & Laurie Pesez       Linda Christ

SCHREINER GOLF TEAM SELECTS RNC AS ADOPT-A-SPOT PROJECT FOR CSI EVENT

Thank you
Schreiner Golf Team

Anna and Ben Macosko
Marissa Fallis
Phil Stewart
John Tilley
Alyssa Holbrook
Jason Lopez
Lauren Leslie
Courtlynd Miller
Jaimie Hughes
Allyson Graybill
Casey Thompson

As participants with CSI (Community Service Infusion) and CMJC (Christian Men’s Job Corp), the Schreiner Golf Team adopted the project to prepare the reflection patio for paving bricks during the April “Spiffy Up.”
Adopt A Spot Program

Thank you, RNC Volunteers! Your response to our appeal to Adopt A Spot has resulted in making a difference here at Riverside Nature Center. The Building and Grounds Committee reports that the members listed here have adopted spots.

- **Scott Clay** refurbished the kiosk in the butterfly garden.
- **John Quinby** made RNC a tool bench that organized the pavilion shed.
- **Morgan Williams** freshened up our RNC entrance sign.
- **Sandra McGee** has updated the kiosk displays.
- **Paul Devine** is staying ahead of the rain in mowing.
- **Bonnie Powers** has shaped up the front area in the circle.
- **Barbara Quinby, and Gwynn Groggel-Jackson** are berm 5 caretakers.
- **Rick Harter and Zeke Verbeck** are regularly working in all areas.
- **The Schreiner Golf Team** prepared the reflection area for paving.
- **Jack Millikan** eradicated the thistle patch.

Come and see the improvements. There are still many Adopt A Spot projects waiting to be accepted.

*Please come in the office to adopt one soon. You can make a difference at Riverside Nature Center.*

Jack Millikan & Jeanette Watson
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.

RNC BOARD & OFFICERS:

Rick Ertel - President
Peter Lewis - Vice President
Judy Ferguson - Past President
Gwynn Groggel-Jackson - Secretary
Kris Bobbitt - Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS:

Valeska Danielak
Frank Dunlap
Wynn Kilgore
Barbara Oates
Peggy Thompson
Morgan Williams

MEMBERS JOINING March 24 through April 25

John Elbin and Joyce O'Connor