The mountain laurels and agaritas are blooming, sending out aromas of spring. Recently, Barbara Lowenthal led a wonderful program introducing the rosettes popping up in our meadow. Susan Sander leads Junior Naturalists in new nature discoveries. This month we will be welcoming back the Girl Scouts for an overnight learning adventure. And the annual Earth Day celebration and native plant sale is set for April 20. The calendar may not say so, but it certainly feels like spring here at Riverside Nature Center.

Establishing ourselves in the newly renovated Visitors Center is still progress. Jeanette did a fabulous job organizing a re-purpose sale. We are partnering with the Upper Guadalupe River Authority to prepare our first exhibit, “The Guadalupe: Our River of Life” for the April 5th ribbon-cutting. And, we have completed an initial training class for our first set of Riverside Guides who are doing a wonderful job welcoming our guests and helping them find answers to their questions.

Last Tuesday, I threw out a “pitch” for a Community Foundation Grand Slam Grant. We’d hoped to secure funds for our first exhibit opening, but that didn’t happen. This means we need funds to complete the exhibit and to move forward on QR code signage, for our grounds and the River Trail. And, we still need resources to complete the wildscape demonstration area. So, as you read this, please note a new column on Planned Giving. This month is a piece about how to take advantage of a new tax law, take an IRA disbursement, and give to RNC. Your generosity will help us keep up momentum.

The weather is beautiful, spring is calling, and the steady stream of visitors continually motivates us to create ways to educate and delight our members and guests. As I stated in our pitch: we have the location, we have the facility, we have the expertise, and we have the passion—all we need now is the equipment and services to make some pretty amazing imaginings into reality. Please help if you can!

And please take a few minutes to come walk our grounds and make a loop on the River Trail.

**Grand Slam Grants Finals**

Fifty-eight nonprofits applied to compete for a Community Foundation of the Hill Country’s Grand Slam Grants.

RNC was one of ten finalists selected to compete this past Tuesday, March 5. Although RNC did not win a cash award, we did have the opportunity to communicate our vision for:

* Interactive learning stations
* “Please touch” displays
* Museum quality exhibits, and...

I had 90 seconds on the mound to pitch for RNC. I now send a shout-out of thanks to the following members who were on hand to cheer RNC on:

- Donna Brewton
- Julie Clay
- Amy Coward
- Weston Coward
- Wes Dorman
- Rick Ertel
- Stephanie Ertel
- Fane Downs
- Judy Ferguson

- Warren Ferguson
- Tracy Gournay
- Carl Hix
- Peter Lewis
- Susan Longacre
- Barbara Lowenthal
- Bill Muse
- Barbara Quinby
- John Quinby
- Karen Rockoff
- Susan Sander
- Melinda Wasson
- Kristan Weaver
- Ann Witherwax

**Your support is greatly appreciated!**


**TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn**
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. “The Art of Falconry,” by Cynthia Burgin, who will bring a live raptor to the presentation and will also talk about Hill Country birds of prey. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 17, St. Paddy’s Day on the River Trail**
2 p.m., meet at Town Creek overlook, Riverside Nature Center. To celebrate the day of the Irish, join RNC naturalist Susan Sander to find out what’s turning green along the trail. Cost is $3 or $5 a family. No RSVP needed.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, Riverside Guide Basic Training**
10 a.m.-noon. In depth training to join the most elite RNC corps. Coffee and snacks provided. RSVP to Melinda Wasson, RG coordinator, melindaw@windstream.net.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 21, Native Healing Garden**
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Meeting, potluck meal, tending the native medicinal plants. No reservations needed.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 5, “The Guadalupe: Our River of Life”**
5:30 p.m. Ribbon cutting for inaugural exhibit, followed by First Friday WineShare.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn, ‘Fire-wise Landscaping’**
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Certified Master Gardeners and fire-wise landscaping specialists Carol Hagemeier and Leigh Thomas will speak. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 18, Native Healing Garden**
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Meeting, potluck meal and tending the native medicinal plants. Donations fund the garden.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 19, Earth Day members only plant sale**
5 p.m.-6:30 p.m. RNC and/or Native Plant Society-Kerrville members are invited to shop while selection is best, before the Saturday sale. Not a member? Join and shop the same day. Free admission.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20, Earth Day festival and native-plant sale**
- 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. Annual plant sale, open to the public, sponsored by RNC and NPSOT; also seminars on environmental topics, family-oriented activities and fun, educational displays and more. Kids come in costume for the ‘Things with Wings’ parade. Free admission.
- 2 & 4 p.m., River Trail interpretative walk with Susan Sander, “to find out what’s to celebrate in the earth.” No charge for Earth Day.

**Times and events are always subject to changes. Please check with the office, 257-4837, to be sure of times, etc. Thank you. We look forward to seeing you at the events!**
Earth Day Celebration & Native Plant Sale
Saturday - April 20, 2013 - 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Speakers, Displays, Kid's Activities & Free Family Fun

The Native Plant Society of Texas-Kerrville Chapter and Riverside Nature Center celebrate Earth Day at Riverside Nature Center. If you have not seen the redesigned atrium or strolled the new River Trail, this will be a great day for both.

Native Plant Sale, starts at 8 a.m.

Come early for best selection of shrubs, perennials, succulents, native trees, and more. Experts from the Native Plant Society of Texas on-hand to help with selections that are well-adapted to drought conditions.

As always, a special pre-sale will be held from 5-6:30 p.m. Friday, April 19, for RNC and NPSOT members only. Non-members may join either organization, then start shopping.

Two Fun & Informative Free Talks

10 a.m., “Rainwater Harvesting Why & How” with Master Naturalist & author, Jim Stanley

11:30 a.m., “The Magic of Monarchs” with Cathy Downs

A close and interactive look at the world of Monarch butterflies

12:45 p.m. ‘Things with Wings’ costume parade for kids

Informative Exhibits & Displays

Ask the Plant Expert

Riverside Nature Center Association

Texas Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter

Wings Over the Hills

Native Plant Society of Texas – Kerrville Chapter

Kerr County Cactus and Succulent Society

Hill Country Master Gardeners

UGRA – Water Quality & Conservation

Live Monarch Larva, Butterfly & Migration Display, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Kid’s FUN & FREE Craft Activities, 9-11:15 a.m. & 1-2:30 p.m.

Nature Walk with Angelo, 2:30-3 p.m.

8–11 a.m., breakfast wraps, coffee, donuts, snacks, sodas, & bottled water available

11 a.m.–2 p.m., Cal-Bob’s Smoke House sandwiches, chips, lemonade & beverages

Members, friends, nature lovers, do join us for Earth Day—April 20, 2013! As always, we could not do this without our wonderful volunteers. If you can help, please contact the RNC office, 257-4837.

For detailed info, see the RNC newsletter index page, www.riversidenaturecenter.org/newsletter/default.htm (Cut and paste into your browser.)
Planned Giving

By Wes Dorman, Charter Member

Good news! Congress' last minute negotiations made the Charitable IRA Rollover again available for tax-wise gifting! The charitable IRA rollover is now available for 2013 for individuals 70½ or older. This permits you to make tax-free gifts of up to $100,000 to qualified charitable organizations, like Riverside Nature Center, using funds transferred directly from your IRAs.

You are permitted to make a contribution for 2013 anytime between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2013.

How This IRA Rollover Benefits You

- The transfer from your IRA does not increase your taxable income.
- The transfer may count against Required Minimum Distribution.
- You’ll make an immediate impact on Riverside Nature Center, allowing you to witness the benefits of your generosity.

Time is short. Don’t let this tax-wise giving opportunity pass you by.

You can take advantage of this method of being a Riverside Nature Center Benefactor even if you don’t itemize your tax deductions since your contributions made from an IRA are pre-tax funds. If you need help, have questions, need more information or would like to make a gift, please contact the RNC office at 830-257-4837. Your tax or estate-planning attorney or financial advisor can also be a help to you.

RNC Education Committee

by Tracy Gournay, Board Member & Committee Chair

The past few years have reaped sparse attendance by local school children and scouts, but in March the times are a-changing.

On March 19, 10 a.m., we welcome a class of Head Start students who will learn about and observe local insects. March 22-23, a large group of Girl Scouts and their chaperones will travel from San Antonio to spend the night, explore the area and earn their Wildlife Badge. Accompanying will be a professional staff member from the Southwest Texas Office who will “sleep over” as well. A group of mentally challenged adults from Fredericksburg will tour the grounds and River Trail on March 27 in the a.m., searching for evidence and clues of spring.

Action for adults is coming to Cynthia Burgin’s Brown Bag Lunch & Learn presentation, “Birds of Prey and the Art of Falconry,” at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 12. No doubt they and the rest of the audience will enjoy the live raptor Cynthia plans to have on demonstration.

Spring is popping with more to come!

Recently, many “seasoned volunteers” have moved away leaving us in need of folks willing to share their time and love of nature with our visitors. It is great fun and no experience necessary. We can train you quickly. If interested call Susan Sander, 257-4837, or Tracy Gournay, 238-3304.
The meadow continues to show new growth. We are anxious to see what has survived the winter. The earliest native bloomers this year were the dutchman’s breeches (*Thamnosma texana*) and the 4-nerve daisy or slender stem bitterweed (*Tetraneuris linearifolia*). The autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*) is beginning to bloom along with the mountain laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*), found at the edge of the meadow.

We have been noticing butterflies that seem to spend a lot of time on the leaves of some of the plants. This has been a bit of a mystery to us, as we think of flower nectar as being the source of nourishment for them.

Craig Hensley, Interpretive Naturalist at Guadalupe River State Park, has solved the mystery. He reported: “On the 5th of February 2013 I witnessed a diverse menagerie of butterflies, ladybird beetles, honeybees, and various flies all over the leaves of our various thistle plants. These are all rosettes of leaves with no flowers. As I watched I noticed the butterflies appeared to be nectaring on the surfaces and undersides of the thistle leaves. I looked carefully and saw no apparent moisture on the leaves from dew. (There had been no rain – imagine that!)

“I picked a leaf to see what was going on, suspecting that perhaps with all the ladybird beetles present that this behavior had something to do with aphids. Aphids produce a sugary waste that is farmed by ants – honeydew.

An initial inspection of the leaves with my reversed binoculars (make for a great magnifier, by the way) found the leaves covered with lots of white hairs. On the hairs I could see sections that appeared to have a thicker, shiny mass stuck to them. It was then that I also discovered the aphids. I next placed the leaf under one of our magniflscope microscopes for a closer look. As I was watching an aphid, a clear bubble suddenly formed from the upturned abdomen. At this moment, the aphid (and I am not making this up!) raised a leg and essentially popped the bubble! Imagine blowing bubbles – what happens when they pop, the liquid flies out in all directions. Based on this observation, and confirmed by another staff member who witnessed the bubble formation, it became clear to me that the butterflies and honeybees were actually feeding on the sugary excretions of the aphids. Wow, wow, wow! Anyway, I reported this “discovery” to Kip Kiphart and we both, along with his son, witnessed this feeding frenzy two days later. Remember now that at the time the only flowering plants were a few scattered wind flowers and an occasional dutchman’s breeches and slenderstem bitterweed. Apparently, these aphids were helping sustain these early emerging insects! Think of it, two things we often try to rid our landscape of, aphids and thistles, were in fact key to the early survival of our beloved butterflies, ladybird beetles and honeybees. Ain’t nature grand!”

The meadow never ceases to amaze those of us who tend to it. It is always teaching us something. Volunteers are always welcome at RNC, just call and express your interest.

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**RNC WISH LIST**

- Self-feeding scanner
- Label maker
- Popcorn machine

Thank you, Rob McCorkle, for the walkie talkies!
RIVERSIDE GUIDE BASIC TRAINING

10 a.m. to noon
Wednesday, March 20

With their experience and training, the recently created Riverside Guides are rightfully called RNC’s elite corps. These guides, most of whom have been top volunteers for years, have diligently taken further training under their leader, Melinda Wasson.

Yes, they are elite. Quite something, really. Are you up to the challenge?

We will expect a lot out of you. You will be the face of RNC, making first impressions with our visitors. You will guide them through the Visitors Center and/or the grounds. You’ll know the protocol. You’ll have the opportunity to contribute to our storehouse of information.

You need to be knowledgeable, dependable, along with showing a nice smile and a love for our visitors. We can teach everything but the attitude.

Coffee & light snacks provided at the meeting
Bring a friend!

Please RSVP by March 19 to the coordinator melindaw@windstream.net or call 257-4837

WILDFLOWER BUNCHES,
Forbs Learning Sessions

Spring has arrived, time for our forbs classes – otherwise known as the Wildflower Bunches. Class meets under the covered pavilion at Riverside Nature Center from 9 to 10:30 a.m., every other Tuesday, starting April 2. The five sessions will end on May 28.

A maximum of 20 participants, first come, first served. Please enroll only if you can commit to attending all or at least most of the five sessions. Registration closes March 12. To join the Bunches, contact the coordinator, Donna Oliver-Leep: 325-446-3583 or deo.08@verizon.net.

Each session focuses on one blooming forb per Bunch, totaling four forbs each session. Attendees will be tasked with compiling data and participating in session preparation. An RNC donation of at least $3 per meeting is requested this year. Donations will be matched, 1 to 1, by an RNC “angel.”

Orientation is 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 19, at RNC.

More information is available in the RNC Visitors Center. All supporting materials will be emailed to participants prior to this meeting. Questions may be addressed to Julie Clay, jbrazaitis@aol.com or Barbara

ONE GRANDPARENT
ONE GRANDCHILD
A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES

All-inclusive cost is...

$200 per person, RNC members
$250 each, nonmembers
$50 deposit

A 2012 grandparent said, “Doing this got my grandchild outside and away from the computer...in places where we could learn more about one another, and I even learned new things!”

INTERGENERATIONAL ADVENTURE DAY CAMP

July 15-19, 2013

5 ACTION-PACKED DAYS
EXPLORING THE HILL COUNTRY...

Riverside Nature Center
150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville
830-257-4837 - www.riversidenaturecenter.org

Field Trips
Nature
Water Fun
Music & Art
GLOBEMALLOW

Medicinal uses for Globemallow, aka Sphaeraicea ssp, include the early stages of bronchitis, when lungs and throat feel hot and irritated.

Globemallow’s pharmacological activity produces a slight immunological boost to lung environment. Dust cells or macrophages that reside in the alveoli are stimulated by Globemallow’s polysaccharide content; thereby boosting the lung immunity making our lungs more resilient and active. Unproductive coughs will then become productive. The mucilaginous component soothing the sore throat.

Bladder irritation responds well to this soothing plant. It mixes well with appropriate antibacterial herb such as juniper or Uva ursi for urinary tract infections.

Externally, Globemallow makes an excellent emollient poultice. It reduces swelling and expedites bringing abscesses to a head and splinters to skin’s surface. Globemallow’s immunological stimulation quickens the tissue’s natural process of resolution.

Useful parts are aerial.

Use Globemallow as an infusion, tincture, poultice, or as a herb infusion of 4 to 8 ounces, 2 to 3 times per day. Poultice as needed.

Preparations must be strained thoroughly through cheesecloth as the tiny hairs can be irritating.

REFERENCE: Charles W. Kane, p. 149-151

Please join the Board of Directors & Honored Guests
Friday, April 5, 2013
5:30 p.m.
Ribbon-Cutting for
Riverside Nature Center’s
Revitalized Visitor Center
Featuring our First Exhibit
The Guadalupe: Our River of Life
The ribbon-cutting will be followed by the community event, First Friday WineShare

A Naturalist’s View by Susan Sander

Thirty years in Texas and I still can’t predict the weather. However, comparing data from 2010 into 2011’s drought we may be in repeat mode. September and October of last year had average rains, but zero in November, and only 0.27” in December. (The total of 3 rain “events.”) This January’s 2.83” was due to 2.29” on the 9th, our last significant rain this year. February was nada and March is not off to a good start.

So, what does this mean? With warm days sparking leaf growth, trees need soil moisture, so deep water them now. (Our last freeze date is April 24 with an average of 3/31.) According to the Drought Monitor website Kerr County is already in “extreme” drought conditions and the forecast is not good through May. Guadalupe River will drop when bald cypresses start pulling water.

Plan ahead. Look for potential water “sources” in your home. I’ve been lugging dishpan water out to plants for 2 years. Gutters gather fog/ dew into gallons. AC condensate can add up. It’s one way to keep soil moisture somewhat even at least for some new trees. Water is life.
Board of Directors

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Kathleen Boyce, RN
Tracy Crawford-Gournay
 David Johnson
Peter Lewis
Kristan Webster
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Welcome

New Members of RNC, Joining in February
Rebecca Etzler * Kay Harter * Chuck Johnson
Linda McBroom * Kitty Ocker * Julie Sentell