The New Year is a perfect time to reflect, to dream, and to remember...

WHO WE ARE

We are a public resource for questions regarding Texas Hill Country trees, plants, wildflowers, wildlife, landscape/xeriscape, rainwater harvesting, and land management—through library service, networking, literature, workshops, and events. Truly the audience we serve is the next generation; in order to do so we must work to inspire parents and grandparents to bring children to us for shared experiences.

Thanks to the opening of the River Trail, RNC is experiencing an exponential increase in visitors. Our Visitors Center has been reconfigured, opening up considerably more educational opportunities than ever before. We envision using today’s technology to support learning experiences and exhibits that can be frequently changed allowing visitors to learn something new each time they come to visit.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

An intergenerational camp for grandparents and grandchildren; interpretative River Trail walks; Junior Naturalist program; school field trips; Brown Bag lectures; seminars & classes, on and off site; scouting programs for badges and service projects; and we serve as native plant consultants for individuals as well as Habitat for Humanity, K-Star, summer camps.

We have a rainwater collection system, Texas’ largest arboretum of native trees, and a collection of wood samples representing species in our arboretum. Also a butterfly garden and cased displays of butterflies & insects. A meadow demonstration area with story signs; native grasses; and the new Native Healing Garden. This year the Kerrville chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas is adding a deer-resistant plant demonstration area. Of course we continue our signature annual festivals and plant sales, Earth Day and Down by the Riverside.

WHAT ARE OUR DREAMS?

• Exhibits with interactive touch-screen capability with an array of fun, educational quizzes and searches that both entertain and educate.

• An exhibit cabinet that houses a number of tactile displays.

• Professional educational video presentations specific to the Texas Hill Country.

• Professional, consistent signs with QR codes in our gardens and on the River Trail.

• Geological interpretative display of regional aquifers illustrating the relationship between rain and limestone, along with recharge and water usage.

• “Wildscape” demonstration area.

WHY WE ARE DOING IT?

Our Texas Hill Country is a one of the most unique eco-regions in the world—it’s the jewel and heart of Texas.

It is home to rare plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. It is where the big red sage grows, and the golden cheek warbler nests. We are the summer home and nursery to the world’s largest concentration of mammals. Think bats. And the Guadalupe River is home to Texas’ state fish and the Cagle’s map turtle. It is up to us, today’s caretakers, to be the stewards of this land’s natural resources, training the next generation of stewards.

If we fail, this paradise will slip through our fingers like sand in an hourglass. How we manage water use, land use, rivers, streams, plants, wildlife, and geology will determine if the Hill Country will be the heart of Texas for the next generation.

These truths are why the RNC mission—to develop public awareness and stewardship of the Hill Country’s environment and natural resources through education, information, and example—is so very important and time sensitive.

Happy New Year, and please take joy in sharing our mission!
Coming Events

TUESDAY, JAN. 22
Volunteer Appreciation Celebration & First Peek at the Visitors Center
4 to 6 p.m. Annual celebration of RNC’s most precious resource, the volunteers. Volunteers of the Year, plus 100 Hours Club. Chance for everyone to say thanks to Cita Ann Ruthstrom on her retirement after 14 years of service to RNC.

SATURDAY, JAN. 26
Town Creek Cleanup
8:30 a.m. RNC volunteers work in conjunction with Upper Guadalupe River Authority on quarterly cleanup of Town Creek. Wear work clothes, gloves, and boots. Call 257-4837, or email Tim Lewis at lewistw43@yahoo.com for more information. Tim will send details via email prior to the cleanup.

SATURDAY, FEB. 16
Junior Naturalist program
10 to 11:30 a.m. Semester begins. THERE’S STILL TIME TO ENROLL, but don’t tarry in signing up your favorite elementary-age children. Cost is $95 a semester, with scholarships available. Call or stop by the office, asap.

THURSDAY, FEB. 14
River Trail Interpretive Walk, “Love the Guadalupe, Hug a Tree”
5:30 p.m. Naturalist Susan Sander gives comprehensive details about the flora and fauna along the River Walk. Meet at the Town Creek overlook. Cost is $3 a person or $5 for a family.

THURSDAY, FEB. 21
Native Healing Garden
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Meeting, potluck meal and tending the native medicinal plants. Donations fund the garden. No reservations needed.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12
Second Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St. “Introduction to Falconry,” by Cynthia Burgin, who will bring a live raptor to the meeting. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting. No RSVP needed.

THURSDAY, MARCH 17
River Trail Interpretive Walk, “Go Green on St. Paddy’s Day”
2 p.m. Naturalist Susan Sander gives comprehensive details about the flora and fauna along the River Walk. Meet at the Town Creek overlook. Cost is $3 a person or $5 for a family.

THURSDAY, MARCH 21
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. Focus TBA. Donations fund the garden. No reservations needed.

SAVE THE DATES
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, Second Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
THURSDAY, APRIL 18, Native Healing Garden
FRIDAY, APRIL 19, Earth Day members only plant sale
SATURDAY, APRIL 20, Earth Day festival and native-plant sale & River Trail walk

Be sure to double-check the times and dates by calling the office, 257-4837, if you would like to attend any of these RNC events. Thank you, and we look forward to your participation.
We Salute the HEROES of HARVEST MOON

Late last October, RNC held its annual fundraising gala, Harvest Moon. Kevin McCormick played classical guitar under the harvest moon. We had food, we had drink, and we had fun. We couldn’t have done it by ourselves. We want to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to our benefactors:

- Broadway Bank
- Canine Cuts
- Cecil Atkission Motors
- Community Foundation of the Hill Country
- Davidson Freedle Espenhover & Overby, P.C., CPAs
- Dr. Fane Downs
- Dr. Shannon Smith, botanist
- Guadalupe National Bank
- Hill Country Arts Foundation – The Point Theatre
- Hometown Crafts
- Janet McKinney
- Kars for Hire
- Kenai River Salmon, Tracy Gournay
- Kerrville Daily Times
- Kerrville Hills Winery
- Maggiano’s Restaurant of San Antonio
- Michael R. Borchers, D.D.S.
- Moss Motors
- Nancy Watts Interiors
- National Car Rental
- Next Generation
- Rails – A Café at the Depot
- Route 66 Salon
- Schreiner Goods
- Schreiner University
- Security Savings Bank & Trust
- Shalise Mein
- Union State Bank
- Wash Tub
**RNC’s FAUNA CENSUS** by Tom Collins

Some five-plus years ago Susan Sander asked me to put together a list of birds and butterflies for a program she was giving to the volunteers who worked in the gardens. The idea was to introduce volunteers whose primary interest was in flora (grass, flowers, and trees) to the fauna (birds, insects, reptiles, etc.) that make Riverside Nature Center their home. I decided that pulling a onetime list together would be fine for her training class, but perhaps a more structured process might be put in place to identify the fauna.

I approached Susan—RNC Executive Director at that time—and the Hill County Master Naturalist Board, proposing a five-year project to census the fauna at RNC. The project was approved and during the early spring of 2007 I began a multiple-week training program of HCMN volunteers interested in helping with the program.

The protocol of the project was to do a weekly census of about one hour following a fixed route that covered the RNC property while recording all the fauna species seen or heard, keeping an individual count of each species at the same time. In other words, at the end of a census we might have recorded 20 species of birds and a total of 65 individuals. The initial project goal of five years was completed in April 2012.

During the five year period many volunteers participated in our weekly census. The temperature sometimes approached the high 90s, or sub-32 degrees, yet, even on rainy days, members of our small group would brave the elements.

One of the remarkable outcomes of the census was the number of butterfly species we encountered. Of the more than 250 census days, our group compiled a species list of 154 birds, 89 butterflies (6 Kerr County records), 38 dragonflies/damselflies plus many species of other insects, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

The data collected has been used to create a RNC Nature Checklist and can be used by the RNC executive director, board members, docents, and volunteers to better understand and educate visitors to the overall natural history of this urban nature center.

Now that the five-year study is complete, the project has moved from weekly to monthly. Anyone interested is invited to join our group in the RNC parking lot at 9 a.m. the first Friday of each month, except for January which will be the second Friday. Occasionally the schedule is modified; a note will be sent out, so if you are interested in participating or only want to see the census reports, then send your email address to towhee@hctc.net.

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**ENJOYING THE EVERGREENS** by Amy Coward, R.N., traditional herbalist

This time of year the evergreens seem to say, “Look at me, I am still strong and healthy.”

A favorite evergreen of mine is Agarita, Berberis trifoliolata. We are fortunate to have the useful plant in the Riverside Nature Center. There is a grand specimen not far down the trail on the left if you enter the trail on the side closest to Francisco Lemos St.

Agarita has been used for food and medicine for centuries.

The dusty prickly green leaves in threes (trifoliolata) can be painful if one is careless. But don’t let those spiky leaves keep you away. Agarita is just protecting her powerful medicine deep in the stems. In addition to being drought tolerant and low maintenance, Agarita is among spring’s earliest to flower. Small fragrant yellow flowers, that some say smell like saffron have been seen as early as February. This is fantastic for bees as nectar and pollen are scarce at this time of year. I wait with anticipation to see these little yellow flowers.

This month at the Native Healing Garden gathering we will spend time learning about the medicinal properties of this hardy plant. As an herbalist, I am thrilled to have this plant so available to us, not just for medicine, but for those yummy little red berries that appear in May and June. Many birds and other small animals that are willing to withstand the prickles enjoy this natural food. I want to catch a peek of a bird enjoying the fruit of Agarita. Maybe I can learn how to harvest berries without getting poked!

If you would like to try some agarita jam, tincture, and decoction, along with learning about berberine, the medicine in Agarita, join the Native Healers on Jan. 17, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. We will be doing some hands on harvesting and medicine making, so bring some gloves and snippers if you would like to participate.

I encourage all to spend some quiet time with Agarita. A few deep breaths close to her, maybe a few kind words of thanks, and then check back regularly for little yellow flowers. They will be coming soon.
What can you see in the Meadow in the dead of winter? More than you may think. If you have noticed volunteers in the Meadow staring intently at the ground at what you may think is nothing of interest you would be wrong.

Plant nerds take great pleasure in discovering wildflowers in their infancy called rosettes. But you don’t have to be a plant enthusiast to take pleasure in anticipating wildflowers that will soon be blooming in that location. Looking at the tiny green rosettes, you can imagine the beauty of the bloom you will see in the near future.

Take a tour to stimulate your imagination and look closely at five rosettes you can see in the Meadow, namely, Standing Cypress, Scarlet Penstemon, Big Red Sage, Bluebonnet, and Spiderwort. Some signage is in place now and all will be well identified by the end of the month. Below are examples of the bluebonnet, mature and rosette.

Pick up a Meadow Rosettes handout in the office to help you spot the others.

Some of the rosettes, or new plant growth, are little beauties. All can be seen along the paths. Standing Cypress rosettes can be seen in the area we call the Butterfly Garden. The new growth can be compared to a lovely lace doily with its delicate pattern of leaves that are a circular pattern of growth. Look for a sign that identifies this plant. Also in this Butterfly Garden you will see the new growth of Scarlet Penstemon. Notice a touch of purple on the back side of a few leaves.

Continue on the path to the bend that will turn to the right. Here you will see new rosettes of varying heights of Big Red Sage which is considered an endangered wildflower. Deer have hammered this beauty down to a barebones existence so its health depends on fencing or growth along steep slopes that are not accessible to deer.

Continue along the path till you come to the area that is gifted with a zillion Bluebonnet rosettes huddled close to the granite pathway. These little rosettes are like little green flowers that are perfectly formed. Last but not least, look for the small petal-like leaves of the Spiderwort. This beautiful purple flower will be an early bloomer along with the Bluebonnets.

Every season has its wonders of nature. If you believe nature has something beautiful to show you only in the milder weather of spring, summer, and fall, guess again. Test your skills of observation and look for wildflower rosettes.

Good Luck in your Retirement,
CITA ANN!
VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION

I’ve been looking forward to Tuesday, Jan. 22. Like last year, this special day is most likely going to be my favorite day of the year. Why? That’s when RNC will honor its most precious resource. Our volunteers.

Last summer we paid special tribute to Susan Sander, and Mary Muse has heard a number of suggestions on whom next to honor. Two names repeatedly came up, Barbara Lowenthal and John Quinby. Thus, we’re pleased to say meadow leader Barbara and grounds supervisor John will be honored at the celebration.

100 HOURS CLUB

Mary has created a new honor society, the 100 Hours Club. Those of you who gave 100 or more hours to RNC in 2012 will receive special recognition at the celebration, with emphasis on the top three of you. Matter of fact, we have plans for ALL of you.

So be there! The celebration starts at 4 p.m. Everyone will have the opportunity to tour our brand-spankin’-new atrium and gift shop area, and to take a look at the new offices.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE…

If you’re not part of the 100 Hours elite, why not?

As I’ve said in the past, RNC is owned by its members. We receive no funding from any government entity. We have a very, very small staff. At the moment, there is only one full-time person, our executive director. Jeanette Watson is part-time, and Carl Hix and yours truly work very limited hours. RNC must depend on VOLUNTEERS to carry out the everyday work of this nature center. We can’t survive without volunteers. We need you.

THE TOWN CREEK CLEANUP TEAM by Martha Hix

Tim Lewis and his intrepid Riverside Nature Center cleanup team have taken up the gauntlet to keep a certain section of Town Creek tidy, particularly the part near RNC, where the creek meets the Guadalupe River. Says Tim, “We are sponsored by the Upper Guadalupe River Authority, with Tara Bushnoe being our contact there. We partner with the city of Kerrville, RNC, Schreiner University, and the Hill Country chapter, Texas Master Naturalists.”

The next cleanup is schedule for 8 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 26.

He explained that the group meets quarterly. They rendezvous in the RNC parking lot. It’s easy to locate the team. They are all wearing hats, gloves, and boots. They’ll be near Tim’s pickup, which has a magnetic sign that reads, “Town Creek Cleanup Team.”

The formidable organization and discipline that earned Tim Lewis the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army is evident in the detail that he gives to the humble task of trash removal: He distributes trash grabbers and safety vests before conducting a safety meeting. The group is reminded not to go on private property, and they are to stay with at least one other team member, all the time. “Ingress locations are assigned and then members are instructed to go up or down the creek from that location to the next ingress point until they meet with other members assigned that location.”

How long does the cleanup take? “I do not have a good sense of time requirement as it is dependent on number of people who show up.”

The first group worked last October. In addition to Tim, they were Becky Etzler, Donna Oliver-Leep, Jack Millikan, James Noe, Milby Moore, Rick Ertel, and Sandra Meineke. This group was able to remove trash downstream from the Schreiner Street bridge to the river in about two hours.

It’s heartwarming to hear about the Town Creek Cleanup Team giving back to the community. Anyone who might be interested in joining the team should contact Tim, either through the RNC office, 257-4837, or email to lewistw43@yahoo.com.

If you can’t make the Jan. 26 cleanup, the next will be Saturday, April 27. Same time, same place.
**RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER MEMBERSHIP**

Effective Jan. 1, 2013

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**MEMBERSHIP LEVEL** (CIRCLE CHOICE)

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| Mesquite | $5 | 60 |
| Live Oak | $15 | 180 |
| Pecan | $25 | 400 |
| Cypress | $100 | 1200 |

**BUSINESS & NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIPS**

| MONTHLY | ANNUAL |

| Quartz | $25 | 400 |
| Sapphire | $50 | 600 |
| Emerald | $75 | 900 |
| Diamond | $100 | 1200 |

RNC members receive an RNC reusable grocery bag, newsletter, discounts on programs, rental fees and gift shop purchases, and reciprocal member benefits at over 150 nature centers in the U.S. and Canada.

**PLEASE CONTACT MARY MUSE**  
FOR FURTHER DETAILS, 257-4837 or director@riversidenaturecenter.org.
Welcome

New Members of RNC

Rob McCorkle * Curt & Karen Shirer * Troy Birge