I am delighted to report our progress on instituting Riverside Guides to greet guests in the RNC Visitors Center. Thanks to Melinda Wasson’s wonderful organizational abilities, we now have 16 trained Riverside Guides. Our goal is to have two on the premises during business hours so that one is available to give tours of the grounds while the other is available to meet and greet folks who walk in or call. Currently, Melinda has scheduled one and sometimes two guides virtually all weekdays, with some spots still open. And we’re looking for Guides to help on weekends and as substitutes. If you are interested, please stop by and pick up an application.

I’m writing this piece earlier than usual; I am scheduled to be out of town for the April newsletter deadline. Consequently, I don’t know if you will read this before or after April 5. If beforehand, I do hope to see you at 5:30 p.m. Friday, April 5 for our exhibition launch and the Grand Re-Opening of the RNC Visitors Center followed by the community event, First Friday WineShare which we are hosting at 6 p.m. If you are interested in helping us host that evening, please let Martha Hix know!

Another important event this month is our annual Earth Day Celebration and Native Plant Sale which we co-host with the Native Plant Society of Texas. The members-only pre-sale begins at 5 p.m. Friday, April 19 with Earth Day events starting at 8 a.m. on Saturday. For those of you with children or grandchildren, please help them participate in the “Things with Wings” parade at 12:30 p.m. I hear the Butterfly Tent and the Kids Activities will be over-the-top wonderful this year.

We have recently installed a security system for the Visitors Center. Trouble is, we aren’t certain our list of key holders is comprehensive. If you have a VC door key, please either return it, or come in and see me for instructions on how to disengage the alarm. This is a must—we’ll incur a significant expense for dispatching the police on false alarms.

While we are talking about money, we made a good run at the Community Foundation Grand Slam grants, but, alas, we did not come away with any additional funding. Meanwhile, we are experiencing an explosion of new visitors, we have installed that new security system, we just learned one of our two commercial capacity air conditioning units is broken… Well, you know where I am going. The bottom line is, we need your support to keep our doors open, the Visitor Center in good operation, and to provide the information, exhibits, programs, and gardens that collectively fulfill our mission to teach good stewardship for the often-threatened Hill Country natural resources. One of the discussion topics among the RNC leadership is constantly asking the question of how best to raise money. This month, we are going to try something different.

We have all been to fundraising events. For a couple, the evening costs about $150 for a pair of tickets, $40 for drinks, $300 for silent auction items, and another $35 for raffle tickets. Oh, and for some of these events, let’s not forget you may have rented a tux and purchased a new party outfit, as well. In total, this fun evening could cost you anywhere from $400 to $700. Seriously! So, what if we offered you a simpler alternative? Think about that, and I’ll leave it there as a teaser for a proposal you will receive a little later this month.

In closing, as I reach my first anniversary as Executive Director of Riverside Nature Center, I am beginning to understand how much I still need to learn. I have stumbled into dilemmas I never dreamed of, and I am still adjusting to the Kerrville nonprofit world. These things are certainly challenges. Still, I must add that to be at a place in constant celebration of nature, to work with volunteers who are passionate about what they support and generous with their time, talents, and money...is a wonderful gift.

Mary
**TUESDAYS, APRIL 2, 16, 30 & MAY 14, 28, “Wildflower Bunches”**

9-10:30 a.m. Five forbs classes, studying wildflowers. Alternating Tuesdays, meets on the Pavilion. Cost is $3 per session. Contact Donna Oliver-Leep to register, 325-446-3583 or email to deo.08@verizon.net.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 5, Ribbon-cutting, “The Guadalupe: Our River of Life”**

5:30 p.m. RNC celebrates Visitor Center revitalization with first of many exhibits, this one centering on the Guadalupe and what it means to our everyday existence; followed by First Friday WineShare.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn, ‘Firewise Landscaping’**

11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Certified Master Gardeners and fire-wise landscaping specialists Carol Hagemeier and Leigh Thomas will speak on how to protect your property and landscaping from the ravages of fire. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting. No RSVP required.

**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. See info herein.

**TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn, “Gleaners”**

11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., “How they do it, seed gleaning.” Barbara Lowenthal and her gleaners will show how they collect seeds from native plants. Cost is $3 RNC members, $6 nonmembers, free to those joining at the meeting. Reservations not required.

**MONDAY-FRIDAY, July 15-19, Intergenerational Adventure Day Camp**

Time, TBA. 5 action-packed days, with one grandparent and one elementary-age grandchild, enjoying field trips, nature, water fun, music and the arts—creating a lifetime of memories; $200 per person, RNC members; $250 nonmembers; $50 deposit due at registration.

**RECURRING EVENTS AT RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER**

**MEADOW TENDING ~ Every Wednesday**

RNC meadow is undergoing a renovation with help of dedicated volunteers. There is also a demonstration garden needing to be tended. Meadow volunteers usually work Wednesday mornings from 9 to 11. Barbara Lowenthal, meadow supervisor, sends out a reminder each week for those who are able to work any given Wednesday; volunteers meet behind the Visitors’ Center.

**GROUNDS and BUILDING MAINTENANCE ~ Every Wednesday**

Volunteers with maintenance or mowing skills are needed to keep the grounds and improvements in working order and looking nice. Equipment supplied, but do bring your own gloves. Report to the office about 9 a.m.

**FAUNA CENSUS ~ 1st Fridays**

Walk the RNC property with like-minded birders to record the monthly fauna census. Takes about an hour. Group leader is Thomas Collins. Meet in the RNC parking lot at 9 a.m.

**NATIVE HEALING GARDEN ~ 3rd Thursdays**

Learn about native medicinal herbs, then plant and tend them. A different herb is featured each month. Gathering lasts about 2 hours. Group leaders are certified herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett. Meet at 11:30 a.m.

**TOWN CREEK CLEANUP ~ Quarterly, Saturdays mornings, April 27 & July 27**

RNC volunteers work in conjunction with Upper Guadalupe River Authority on quarterly cleanup of Town Creek. Wear work clothes, gloves, and boots. Usually takes about two hours. Email Tim Lewis, lewistw43@yahoo.com. Details sent via email prior to cleanup.

Times and events are always subject to changes. Please check with the office, 257-4837, to confirm details.
One Friday evening in March, 23 Girl Scouts from San Antonio were joined by a Kerrville scout for the ultimate sleepover—nature adventures, hikes, fun foods, sleeping bags—that ended Saturday morning with the girls and their parents finding lots to love in the gift shop.

This was the first scouts program of 2013, but the RNC Education Committee has more activities on tap for this summer and fall.

A big thank-you goes to each of our RNC Leaders and Assistants who made this event happen. Fane Downs, Judy Ferguson, Melinda Wasson, Nancy Alford, Susan Sander, Tracy Gournay, and our Schreiner intern from last summer who will be returning this summer, Victoria Ponse. Big thanks also to Kerrville Junior Service Guild volunteers Liz Wilfong and Stephanie Herman for their help.

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**RESEEDING WILDFLOWERS**

When we see a gorgeous wildflower like the perennial prairie paintbrush, *Castilleja purpurea*, in bloom we look forward to a larger splash of color the next blooming season. Productive seeding just takes longer with some perennials than with annuals.

Paintbrush is a favorite in the Hill Country and thrives in dry, rocky, caliche soil. Its range extends from southern Kansas to South Texas. The name of this wildflower suits its bracts that appear to be bristles of a brush and the flowers that are like a splash of colorful paint on the extended bristles. Colors can be purple or rosy pink, yellow, or shades of orange. It grows to a height of 6 to 18 inches and the leaves are linear to lanceolate with alternate leaves. They bloom from March into June.

You can see examples that have started to bloom in the demonstration garden on the right side of the meadow. We take a bi-annual survey of each and every wildflower that is sowed in the meadow, giving us documented information of growth and reproduction. This survey shows that some annuals appear to be more prolific than others, since they reseed more quickly and in greater numbers than perennials. Huisache daisy, yellow flax and Englemann’s daisy are good examples of quick-reproducing annuals after one season seeding. An explanation for the slow reseeding of the perennial paintbrush may be that the plant grows on grass roots, making it ideal for a short grass meadow.

For whatever reason our perennial prairie paintbrush decided it was time to reseed, and we are grateful to see more plants that will attract hummingbirds and bees to nectar at this beautiful herb.
Earth Day Celebration & Native Plant Sale
Saturday - April 20, 2013

Speakers, Displays, Kids Activities & Free Family Fun 8am-3pm

Spring is almost here! With the Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter we are making plans to celebrate here at Riverside Nature Center. If you have not seen the new Atrium design and new River Trail, this will be a great day to visit.

Native Plant Sale

Sale begins at 8am. Come early for the best selection! If you are new to the area, our sale is special because of our people! Experts from the Native Plant Society of Texas will be available to help you select plants that will thrive in your particular landscape conditions. There will be a variety of shrubs, perennials, succulents, some native trees and more that have been selected from nurseries across Central Texas. Native plants will grow better in the Hill Country soil and are well-adapted to our drought conditions. As always, a special pre-sale will be held the night before, 5pm-6:30pm Friday April 19th for RNC and NPSOT members only. Non-members can join either or both of these organizations at the pre-sale and start shopping.

Extra savings... April 20 will be a sales-tax-free day for all plant and gift store purchases at RNC.

Three Fun & Informative Free Talks

10am: ‘Rainwater Harvesting Why & How’ - Jim Stanley

DESCRIPTION: The reasons for harvesting rainwater will be discussed as well as the basics of how to collect rainwater, the equipment needed and its availability. Details of the Stanley’s own 15,000 gallon system will be discussed. Questions & Answers followed by a tour of RNC’s Rainwater Harvesting system


11:30 AM: “The Magic of Monarchs” Cathy Downs

DESCRIPTION: Texas provides critical habitat on the primary migration pathway to the Monarch’s wintering grounds in Mexico. Texas availability of the milkweed host plants so necessary to assure successive generations continuing north have declined. Join Cathy Downs, Monarch Conservation Specialist, as she takes us on a journey into the wonderful world of Monarch Butterflies. See live caterpillars, chrysalis and adults while learning about Monarch biology, habitat and migration. Suitable for both children and adults!

Cathy Downs, Texas Master Naturalist with the Hill Country Chapter. She has been a RNC volunteer for many years and you may have met her in the butterfly tents here and at other festivals. She currently chairs the Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas (BBMT) program, a monarch habitat project in cooperation with Native Plant Society of Texas and Monarch Watch, is a certified Monarch Larval Monitoring Project educator, and a Monarch Conservation Specialist with Monarch Watch. Cathy has served as Volunteer Coordinator for the Butterfly Theater at Kerrville Schreiner Park for 6 years. Since 2005, she has been teaching children and adults about native Texas butterflies and their host plants with an emphasis on Monarch biology and migration.
Informative Exhibits & Displays

- Ask the Plant Experts
- Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter
- Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival
- Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District
- Kerr County Cactus and Succulent Society
- Hill Country Master Gardeners
- UGRA – Water Quality & Conservation
- Hill Country Fly Fishers
- Native Plant Society of Texas – Kerrville Chapter
- Riverside Nature Center Association

Live Butterfly and Life Cycle Pavilion

9am - 1pm
Always fun and educational for all ages

Fun, Free Kids Activities

9am to 11:15am & 1pm to 2:30pm Nature Craft Projects (in the Nature Lab)
Join the “Things with Wings Parade” at 12:30pm - Prizes for Best Costume
Wear your costume inspired by winged things in nature and
join a fun parade around the grounds.
2:30–3pm Nature Walk with Angelo

Guided River Trail Walk at 2pm
with RNC naturalist and founder Susan Sanders

Refreshments by Cal-Bob’s Smoke Shack

8–11am Breakfast Wraps, Coffee & Donuts
11am–2 pm Sandwiches, Chips, Tea, Lemonade, Soda, & Bottled water
Available for Purchase
Visit them at www.calbobssmokeshack.com North of I-10 on Hwy. 16

SO.....members, friends, nature lovers....
Put it on your calendar and 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 office, 257-4837.
GIFT SHOP GLORY

From its beginning, the Riverside Nature Center gift shop has played an important part in the center’s success, both financially and as an asset that visitors enjoy and appreciate. Our recent renovations have provided an even bigger boost to the shop’s popularity. All those the colorful and interesting offerings catch the eye, the very moment someone walks in the front door. This is especially obvious with children—their eyes round with delight as they tug their parents to the likes of wooden frogs and horn whistles.

Adults favor nature guides and the t-shirts—particularly the ones that turn into a kaleidoscope of color in the sunlight—and the fauna-inspired jewelry.

The gift shop has for years been under the co-management of Ann Laughlin, Barbara Staggs, and Laurie Pesez. Karen Burkett joined the team about a year ago, not long after she and her husband, Mike, moved to Kerrville from Fort Worth. The Burketts quickly became regulars at RNC, volunteers to count on, even while Karen has been recovering from knee surgery.

Ann and her husband are long-time RNC members, have always volunteered. Ann grew up in the Texas Valley, where her father was a Pearl Beer distributor. Jim Laughlin’s work took him to Chicago Bridge and Iron, and the couple would spend 30 years in the Dallas area. Ann’s career was as business manager for an Apparel Mart clothing store. The Laughlins collected quite a family during all that. One son, two daughters, seven grandkids, and two great-grands, not to mention a couple of Boston terriers, Rags and Patches.

As for Ann’s work at RNC, her allergies forced her indoors, and the gift shop was born, with “little bookshelves in an old house,” the Lawson Store.

Laurie Pesez began with the gift shop “when Ann asked” her to help. That was the Lawson Store days, prior to 1999. Laurie’s husband devotes countless hours to the less glamorous aspect of volunteering at RNC, as a grounds supervisor. Andy would like for younger volunteers to give the grounds team a break. (Any takers?)

The Pesezes are the parents of a son and a daughter. A native of Providence, RI, Laurie taught English and French in upstate New York and then in Houston before she and Andy, aka Andre Pesez, retired to Kerrville. When asked if she made a point of marrying a man with a French name, she assures us that it’s only a coincidence. “Mais bien sûr.” (But of course...)

Born and reared in Corpus Christi, Barbara Staggs left the coast for the Panhandle to attend Texas Tech, where she met her Big Spring-native husband, David. The parents of a son and a daughter, the couple lived in Lubbock, Richardson, and Austin. Barbara had a gift shop in what has now become a suburb of Austin: Round Rock. Her heart is in antiques.

After moving to Hunt, Barbara took an active interest in RNC. She says, “I started volunteering at RNC in the office in 2007, and then Ann asked me to help with the gift shop.”

She and Ann do the ordering for the RNC gift shop. Laurie takes care of the books, with Karen assisting her.

Thank you for a job well done, ladies.

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!”
The corm (underground stem similar to a bulb but solid instead of in layers) has been used to treat sore throat & rattlesnake bite (Ajilvsgi).

Poultice of boiled root applied for swellings.

The root and flower are used to treat sore throat & tonsillitis. The plant is also believed to have protective powers, Roots are carried to ward off the ”evil eye” (Davidow).

Flowers are woven with salvia into smudge sticks for protective & cleansing properties by D. Clarke.

SKULLCAP
Nervine with antispasmodic, sedative, anti convulsive, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and tonic properties.

Used for convulsions, delirium tremens, insomnia, hysteria, neuralgia, headaches, PMS, Tourettes.

High in potassium and zinc. Its bitter taste is strengthening and stimulating to digestion.

The Native Healing Garden meets the 3rd Thursday of the month, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Riverside Guides in Action
by Melinda Wasson, program coordinator

The Riverside Nature Center has several Riverside Guides in place at the front desk during the week, morning and afternoon. They are prepared to greet our visitors by showing them around the atrium area and/or by walking the grounds with them. Training has also included instructions on how to rent rooms to outside groups, support scheduled events, provide CPR and first aid, operate our new laptop computer, play the DVD displays, sign up visitors who wish more information, sell merchandise, direct visitors to reference materials, answer phone calls, and to offer a sign-in sheet for people who want more information.

Guides already on duty are Diane McMahon, Donna Brewnon, Fane Downs, Joy Bradford, Judy Ferguson, Karen Burkett, Maggie Tatum, Marion Worthington, Martha Miesch, Nancy Alford, Pat Nelson, Vickie Bagwell, and Nina Wagner.

More guides are needed for all shifts, as well as for weekends. If you’re interested in joining Riverside Guides, call the office, 257-4837, or contact Martha Hix, RNCmembership@gmail.com, or Melinda Wasson, melindaw@windstream.net.

Please Join the Riverside Nature Center
Friday, April 5, 2013, at 5:30 p.m.
Ribbon-Cutting to Celebrate
Riverside Nature Center’s
Revitalized Visitor Center
Featuring our First Exhibit
The Guadalupe: Our River of Life
First Friday WineShare follows the Ribbon Cutting

The Guadalupe: Our River of Life
Riverside Nature Center
New Members of RNC, Joining in March
Linda Poelma, Susanne Graham,
James & Patty Feagan, Clara Horton, & Rachael McDonnell