Dear Riverside Nature Center Members & Friends,

We’ve heard the expression, “March comes in like a lion and out like a lamb.” Our weather forecast for February 28 and March 1 was accurate, and we know it was a good call to re-schedule our Spring Cleaning Day for Feb. 28 to March 7. We hope the lion’s roar will diminish enough this week to make our time productive! And, my husband and I are looking forward to serving volunteers one of our favorite breakfasts; waffles and bacon.

Spring Break is March 14-22, and – if this year is like last year - we are really hoping the weather improves so we can welcome the influx of local guests and visitors. We have many great events planned for March, including some very special Spring Break activities. (See the Calendar of Events included in the Newsletter for details.)

If you have not yet visited our new exhibit, “Hill Country Rocks!,” you are missing out. Even with the outstanding array of specimens on display and great interpretative information, we called the opening “soft” because we are still building this exhibit. By Spring Break we will have a locator map identifying all the area caverns (karst formations), caves that are bat homes, and state parks that feature interesting hill country geological features. We have a collection of crystals and minerals donated by Mike McGinnis on display also, and our goal is to have some interactive components in place for Spring Break. This exhibit will continue to morph and change from now until the end of summer. We are having much fun planning an array of summer programs and displays to focus on the Cretaceous Age of Dinos. The exhibit is receiving rave reviews from visitors. And, this exhibit is dedicated to Riverside Nature Center’s very own Rock Star, Bill Laing. A photo of this important RNC founder along with a narrative about him is on display. And, in case any of you know any of the folks associated with the McLaughlin Doty Foundation, please shout out a big thanks to them for funding “Hill Country Rocks!”

It is amazing to think spring is already on its way. With the intermittent moisture we have had throughout the winter months, the word from the meadow is: expect a beautiful wildflower show this year – I do hope so! I have a group of girlfriends from North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama & Tennessee (they call themselves the Kudzu Queens) coming to see the Texas wildflowers in the middle of April. Anticipating their visit, I look forward to sharing my passion for Riverside Nature Center, my pride in Kerrville, and my love for this beautiful land with these women. So each of these early March drizzly days, I am reminding myself to look up with a smile and a thanks because Mother Nature is setting the stage for a real show-off wildflower season.

In closing, I just came across a recipe for a coconut cake that must be made before long. If you stop in soon, perhaps the day you choose will be the day we celebrate the coming of spring and visitors will be invited to join us with a slice of coconut-orange cake!
SATURDAY MARCH 7
RNC Grounds Clean –Up, Part 2 (rescheduled)
8:30 a.m.-Noon We had so much fun at the last one, and if the weather will cooperate, we hope to see you again with your gloves. Our Executive Director, Mary Muse and her husband, Bill Muse, will be serving waffles & bacon for volunteers. RSVP

TUESDAY MARCH 10
2nd Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
“Alligator Gar: A Fish Out of Time”
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. The alligator gar dates back 100 million years (Cretaceous Period). TPWD fisheries biologist Nate Smith will share its life history and unique adaptations, and his work with this living fossil.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 11
Hill Country ROCKS! Field Trip
Big Spring Ranch, Leakey, TX
Hike through geological formations to the spring site with Sue Longacre, geologist, Susan Sander, naturalist, Tony Gallucci, biologist with Hill Country Youth Ranch (see more info page 6)

SATURDAY MARCH 14
Medicine Bluff Home Tour
Tours at 10:00 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. Rick & Stephanie Ertel's off-grid home sits on 56 acres above Johnson Creek near Mountain Home.
Tours are limited to 20 people and reservations are required. Tickets are $10 per person $15 for a couple and must be purchased in advance at Riverside Nature Center. (Much more info page 7)

THURSDAY MARCH 19
Conversations with Conservationists Series:
“Genuine Land Stewardship” with Steve Nelle
5:30 p.m. Wine & Cheese Reception
6:00 p.m. begins the conversation with Mr. Nelle (Please see page 4)
FRIDAY MARCH 20
Native Healing Garden 9:30–11:30 a.m.
Meeting and tending the native medicinal plants. Bring your gloves and connect to the earth.

SATURDAY MARCH 21
RNC Grounds Beautification Day
8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
With your help, our grounds are being groomed to perfection. Join us for a workday of fun. Bring your favorite garden tools and gloves.

Riverside Nature Center’s 2nd Tuesday Brown Bag, Lunch & Learn
March 10, 11:30-12:45pm ($5 members/$8 non-members)

**Alligator Gar: A Fish Out of Time**

For the past 100 million years, the alligator gar has reigned as one of the largest freshwater fish in North America (10’ in length & up to 300 pounds!). TPWD fisheries biologist, Nate Smith will talk about the gar’s unique life history and adaptations, and its role in the coastal river systems.
Riverside Nature Center Presents

Conversations with Conservationists:

“Genuine Land Stewardship”

with Steve Nelle

Thursday, March 19, 2015

At Riverside Nature Center

150 Francisco Lemos St.

5:30 p.m. Wine & Cheese Reception

Conversation with Mr. Nelle begins at 6:00

No Charge, Recommended donation $20 per person

Nelle provides natural resource assistance, helping landowners plan and carry out comprehensive management plans for best practices in sustaining range land, wildlife, and healthy watershed management. His areas of special interest include plant ecology, range and wildlife management, watershed and riparian management and land stewardship ethics.

Steve Nelle has worked with Texas landowners on more than a thousand different ranches across the state of Texas. Through his work he has gleaned relevant and practical insights into land management and stewardship issues.

Nelle will talk with guests about, “Genuine land stewardship,” which he defines as a “…deeply held inner conviction that motivates landowners and land managers to care for the land. It is the ethic that generates, inspires and guides responsible and sustainable land management. Land stewardship is about who are on the inside.”

To reserve a seat or for additional information, go to RiversideNatureCenter.org or call (830) 257 4837.
March 2015  You have to give the volunteers a high five for their Sat. Feb 7th clean-up put in gear by the Building and Landscape “commander and chief, “John Quinby. Volunteers who wanted to help the Nature Center came with work gloves and tools in hand. Yet, this is old news.

The new news is how Meadow Tenders transformed the pathetic winter look of the Meadow into an area showing promise on that day. Before dead stems of wildflowers and plants were cleared away, it was difficult to see many of the rosettes, or new growth, on the surface of the soil. Also, clearing away dead stems gave an incentive for growth spurts. You could almost imagine these plants saying to the volunteers, "Thank you, I needed that incentive for growth."

Some people may wonder what these volunteers get out of freely giving their time to labor in a garden that doesn't belong to them. Many times I've heard volunteers state without a doubt that they learn so much from the shared experience of working alongside other volunteers. They share stories about what grows in their home landscapes. They learn the names and growing characteristics of countless species of native plants. They learn the benefits of using native plants in their home landscapes to conserve water which is an invaluable resource as Texas rainfall has become increasingly scarce. They laugh and talk about everything under the sun except politics. They patiently pull up invasive natives like bur clover, crane's bill, and ragweed that hinder plant diversity. At the end of 2 to 3 hours they feel a collective sense of accomplishment. Sounds great, right?

As rain comes forecasting spring, we know more rosettes will appear because every species does not bloom at the same time. The blooms are staggered through spring, into summer, and finally fall. You can depend on bluebonnets and spider wort to be one of the first splashes of color in the Meadow. As temps warm up, there will be Indian blanket and scarlet paintbrush along the roadways and in the Meadow. Thoroughwort is a dependable fall bloomer in the Meadow and in your own landscape if you're lucky. One of the longest bloomers that is also deer resistant is mealy blue sage.

Most of us remember what a blaze of color we could see in the Meadow early last summer at the Nature Center when we stood on the back porch of the Visitor’s Center. Orange, yellow, blue, purple, pink, rose, and green. It resembled a painter's palette. This palette of color represented a wide diversity of native plants and wildflowers. It won't be long before we see nature's beauty again. The bees, butterflies, birds, and dragonflies flying, plus humans walking the nature center paths will be grateful.

If you want to be involved in gardening at Riverside Nature Center contact Barbara Lowenthal lowbar2@hot.rr.com.
Hill Country Rocks! - Field Trip!

Big Spring Ranch, Leakey, TX

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Depart Kerrville by 8:15; tour begins at 9:00 a.m. – noon.

$10 Per Person (proceeds will be shared by RNC & HCYR)

Ever see geological formations and other natural wonders and muse, “What is this? Or, how was this formed?” Here’s a chance to ask the experts.

Riverside Nature Center is hosting an exploratory geological field trip to Big Springs Ranch. The ranch, privately owned by the Hill Country Youth Ranch, is located north of Leakey.

Leaders are -
- Susan Longacre, geologist,
- Susan Sander, RNC naturalist
- Tony Gallucci, biologist with Hill Country Youth Ranch

- Attendees must register at Riverside Nature Center by 4:00 p.m. Monday, March 9.
- Tour is limited to 20 people.
- Directions will be provided OR attendees may meet at Riverside Nature Center Wednesday (3/11) at 8:00 a.m. to caravan.
- High-clearance vehicle required (crossing creek), car-pooling recommended.
- The Tour will start promptly 9 am at BSR front gate.
- The gate is kept lock and cell service is unreliable, so be on time.
- Guests will hike at least a mile over rugged terrain to the spring site and then back (another mile).
- There are no amenities!
- If the weather is questionable, call RNC (257-4837) no later than 8:15 am Wed 3/11.

The Big Spring ranch was named for the large spring that fed the creek that drained into the headwaters of the Frio River. Travertine pool terraces are still evident despite the drought.
Riverside Nature Center presents

MEDICINE BLUFF HOME TOUR &
Observation of Blue Heron rookery on Johnson Creek

Saturday, March 14, 2015
10:00 - 11:00 a.m. or 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

Tickets: $10 per person; $15 per couple
Tour sizes are limited & tickets must be purchased by 4:00 Friday, March 13
at Riverside Nature Center; guests are welcome to car pool from Riverside Nature Center

You are invited to a guided tour of the
off-grid home of Rick & Stephanie Ertel featuring:

- Passive solar power system
- Rainwater catchment water supply
- Heat and energy for cooking from wood stoves
- Sustainable materials and finishes including:
  - ICF walls,
  - reclaimed wood ceilings,
  - ashe juniper pillars, and
  - American Clay plaster wall finishes.

The contemporary-styled Ertel home, situated on 56 acres of land, off Highway 27, 10 miles west of Ingram is rated LEED Platinum by the U.S. Green Building Council and was recognized with a Gold Award for the custom/hot climate category in the National Association of Homebuilders Energy Value Home competition in 2010.

Construction was completed in November, 2008 and has served as the Ertel's residence since March, 2009.

Architect: Steve Lochte, Lochte Architectural Group, San Francisco, CA
Builder: David Fransik, Sierra Homes, Fredericksburg, TX

For more information, come to or call Riverside Nature Center at 257-4837
We're on the Web
www.riversidenaturecenter.org

Dedicated to appreciation of the Texas Hill Country education, information, and example

RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER
ASSOCIATION

Board of Directors

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
Lisa A. Williams
Morgan Willliams