“Spring is the time of plans and projects.” – Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

I have to agree with Mr. Tolstoy. Riverside Nature Center is reverberating with activity.

The 2016 Wildlife Tax Valuation workshop concluded the latter part of February but has spurred the planning for several follow up sessions this spring and summer. Participants expressed interest in learning how to identify grasses, trees and woody vegetation of the Hill Country. Riparian area management and erosion control seem to be of particular interest as well. Watch the calendar for these upcoming classes.

In cooperation with the Hill Country Master Gardeners, RNC is hosting a new three part workshop, *Landscape for Life*. If the registration response is any indicator, this workshop will become an annual offering at RNC.

The Plant Sale Committee is busy organizing this year’s Spring Native Plant Sale & Festival. It will be held on Saturday, April 23rd, with a member-only sale Friday evening on the 22nd. The focus this year will be on both host and nectar pollinator plants. The sale falls on Earth Day, even more reason to get out and celebrate our native plants and natural resources.

Final preparations are being made for *A Conversation with a Conservationist* on March 31st. Be sure to stop by the gift shop and purchase a copy of Mark Gustafson’s *A Naturalist’s Guide to the Texas Hill Country*. Dr. Gustafson will be available for a book signing before the conversation begins.

If you have not strolled through the gardens you should. The wildflowers, trees, and shrubs are all showing signs of new growth and spring emergence. Of course in the next month or so it will be a wondrous sight to behold. But I especially like this time of the year. Each day brings a new discovery and the prospect of what is to come.

Speaking of the gardens, it’s not just the plants that are active. Lately it’s been a common sight to see the garden tenders out and about early in the morning to well past closing. They are clearing out the winterkill, removing undesirable forbs (I refrain from saying “weeds”), pruning, trimming and preparing the soil. A new garden is being put in along the base of the stone wall on Francisco Lemos St. It will feature flowering shrubs, which we hope the deer find less desirable and the public will find inviting. Marion and Morgan have been pulling double duty as well ensuring there is plenty of compost, mulch and worms. I cannot thank everyone enough for all your hard work!!!!

I’m sure you’ve notice the construction on the River Trail. The extension to Lowery Park is well underway and should be completed by mid-April. You may also have noticed quite a bit of bare soil and slope too. Not to worry. Plans are in the works with the City of Kerrville to plant these areas.

Speaking of cooperating with the City of Kerrville. We should all applaud Mayor Pratt for signing the *National Wildlife Federation’s Mayors’ Monarch Pledge*. By signing the pledge Mayor Pratt has said he is committed to both restoring monarch habitat in Kerrville and encouraging citizens to do the same. Mayor Pratt has invited RNC to spearhead this effort, which we have enthusiastically accepted. I will keep you posted on the details of the action plan as they develop. No doubt we will need your help in carrying out the plan.

Unfortunately, all this planning and promotion does not come without a cost. RNC is fortunate to be located in an area where several foundations are available who have an interest in preserving, conserving and increasing awareness about our natural resources. We have often times benefited from their generosity for our projects and programs. However, we are experiencing an all too common financial situation. Our undesignated revenues do not match our daily expenses. Many of you already give generously of your time and expertise and for that I am most appreciative and thankfull. At this time, I humbly ask that you give even more. Please consider increasing your membership to the next level or making a tax deductible donation now. Riverside Nature Center’s needs are year around and your annual donation need not wait until the end of the year.

Let us together herald in a prosperous spring.

Until next time...Becky
March 2016 Calendar of RNC Activities

**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.

**RNC Lunch & Learn**, Tuesday, March 8, 2016
11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m. Speaker: R. Craig Hensley, Guadalupe State Park Interpreter & Resource Specialist
“A River Runs Through It: Ecology of Guadalupe State Park & Honey Creek State Natural Area”
(read more on page 3)

**Second Saturday Spiffy Up**, Saturday, March 12, 2016 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Bring your gloves and be a part of the preparation to get RNC ready for spring!

**Conversation with Conservationist Series**, Thursday, March 31, 2016, 5:30 -7 p.m.
Wine & cheese reception. RSVP $20 suggested donation. (read more page 9)

**SAVE THE DATES!**

**RNC Brown Bag Lunch & Learn**, Tuesday, April 12, 2016 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

**RNC Spring Festival & Plant Sale**, Saturday, April 23; RNC Members only Pre Sale Friday, April 22

**BigGive SA, May 3, 2016**

**RNC hosts First Friday Wineshare**, Friday, July 8

**2nd Annual Run 4 Riverside 5K**, September 10, 2016

These events will occur at the Riverside Nature Center. Watch this space for the time of day, speakers and presenters announcements.

**Save the Date!**

May 3, 2016

Riverside Nature Center is part of

**The BIG GIVE S.A.**

**What is The Big Give S.A.?**

The Big Give S.A. is a 24-hour day of giving that will take place from midnight to midnight on May 3, 2016. The purpose of this community-wide giving challenge is to increase public awareness of the impact local nonprofits make in addressing our community’s social challenges, bring nonprofits and donors together, expand the idea of online giving, connect people to the causes that move them the most and, of course, make giving FUN.

Stay tuned for more information
**A New Untitled RNC Project**

Have you ever noticed the space just to the right as you enter the front doors of the Visitors’ Center and said to yourself “I wish somebody would make it look better?”

The Building and Grounds Committee will be discussing an idea to create a place of ‘reflection’ for those who might want to honor persons, both living and gone before, with an area of rest and contemplation.

 Thoughts include a sand-based, paver stone patio and a bench. Also mentioned is the possibility of a flowing water feature to create a restful atmosphere, combined with native plants that could be rotated for best seasonal interest.

**Honorariums** could be made with the names engraved on the pavers or maybe on some other medium.

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**R. Craig Hensley, Park Ranger with Guadalupe River State Park is our BBL&L March Speaker**

_Tuesday, March 8th, 2016_

11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

_Bring your lunch or snack and enjoy_

$8 RNC Members-$10 Nonmembers-Free with new RNC Membership

**A River Runs Through It: Ecology of Guadalupe River State Park & Honey Creek State Natural Area**

_By R. Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter & Resource Specialist Guadalupe River State Park_

More than thirty years ago, two significant pieces of land were set aside along the Guadalupe River near Spring Branch. Today, Guadalupe River State Park is one of the top ten state park destinations for outdoor recreationists of all ages. The adjacent Honey Creek State Natural Area includes a remarkable, and to this day pristine, creek with towering bald cypress trees, springs and a great diversity of flora and fauna. This presentation will introduce you to the beauty found along this stretch of the Guadalupe River, from cliff formations to the Golden-cheeked Warblers that call it home.

_Craig Hensley has been the Park Interpreter and Resource Specialist at Guadalupe River State Park for nearly six years. He is an enthusiastic and passionate naturalist that opens the door to the nature of the park and natural area through more than 150 programs per year on topics ranging from the night skies, birds and butterflies to geocaching and archery. He has recently become a grandfather of two beautiful girls._
Many beautiful native plants have been added in recent months to the unfenced front landscape of RNC. The skillful landscape design has given all a new reason to check out the species. This area is adjacent to Town Creek, which has been nicknamed a wildlife corridor. That means that deer, rabbits, and other critters climb that bank and are always searching for fresh veggies. You can be sure that deer-resistant plants will be tasted while they are young and tender. However, when these plants mature, they are of no interest to the wildlife population.

There are a few noticeable plants you might want to consider for your own landscape. As always, RNC is an open textbook of learning about native plants. Check out damianita, *Chrysactina mexicana*, that needs little water and blooms late spring. Pruning in January and June will assure a double set of blooms. Silver dalea, *Dalea bicolor*, is another great deer-proof native. Look at the beautiful clumps of Lindheimer's muhly, *Muhlenbergia*, that is not touched by wildlife. Lindheimer's muhly is bunch grass you can count on to be undisturbed. Autumn sage, *Salvia greggi*, is a pollinator and produces good bloom periods if pruned.

Look closely at what you see growing at RNC and ask questions. Lovers of native plants can usually be found on the grounds and are happy to share what they have learned while volunteering.

A spring plant sale will be coming soon and you can count on buying healthy natives April 23rd at RNC.
Nature in Print

*The Forest Unseen A Year’s Watch in Nature*

By David George Haskell

David Haskell is professor of biology at the University of the South in Tennessee. Along with his scholarly research, he has published essays and poetry. His unique ability to combine science and poetic prose is evident in this book.

This is a yearlong study of an area, a little over a meter across, in an old-growth forest in the hills of Tennessee. Haskell’s concept began with the mandala. *Mandala* (Sanskrit: lit, circle) is a spiritual and ritual symbol in Indian religions, representing the universe. In common use, mandala has become a generic term for any diagram, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically; a microcosm of the universe.

In the preface, Haskell says “I sit next to the mandala on a flat slab of sandstone. My rules at the mandala are simple: visit often, watching a year circle past; be quiet, keep disturbance to a minimum; no killing, no removal of creatures, no digging in or crawling over the mandala. The occasional thoughtful touch is enough. I have no set schedule for visits, but I watch here many times a week. This book relates the events in the mandala as they happen.”

Can the whole forest be seen by observing such a small area? This is the question Haskell asks and one which you may have contemplated yourself. No spoiler here! Read this one for yourself.

Calling all volunteers who like to work with children. Organization for our third annual KISD 4th Grade Days is underway. On May 19, 20, 23 & 24th RNC will be presenting local 4th graders a full day of natural resource education. Join us all four days or just for one.

If you are interested, please call Becky for more information: 257-4837
TRUCKS! Please view these collectibles. Thank you to RNC member Jim Wills, who generously donated his collection of vintage toy trucks to raise funds for Riverside Nature Center.

We are hoping to find interested buyers. The trucks are currently in our Gift Shop. There one can view complete descriptions and pricing, as well as purchase items prior to being displayed soon on a website.

Tonka Toys took standard, current year, production trucks, added customer specified paint colors, graphics and in many instances, unique packaging. These efforts created a unique, private label Tonka truck. The trucks were designed by and available through a specific customer and the trucks were not featured in any Tonka dealer catalog. Because records were not maintained by Tonka, exact production quantities are unknown. It is known, however, the production quantities were substantially less than typical mass produced Tonka trucks.

Tonka private label trucks can command very high prices in the collector market!

“STRUCTO TOYS MAKES MEN OF BOYS!” proclaimed the 1916 Popular Mechanics advertisement. Now, 95 years later, those same Structo Toys have the reverse-effect: making boys of men! Structo Manufacturing was founded in Freeport, Illinois in 1908, originally as the “Thompson Manufacturing Company” and later changed to “Structo Manufacturing” in 1911 a play on the “indestructible” quality of their steel building sets.

Wyandotte Toys produced some great all-steel toys from the 1920s through 1956. The quality of these products allowed them to stay in fine condition through the years.
Riverside Nature Center will host a Birthday Party for up to 20 Children (between the ages of 4 & 12)

To be held at Riverside Nature Center

Package Price: $200

(Please contact RNC at least 60 days in advance to schedule; some dates are blackout dates)

This Birthday Party package includes Nature Themed decorations as well as:
- Cake & Punch
- Plates, Cups, Napkins and Forks
- Guided Nature Walk
- Thematic E-Invitations and Distribution

Thank you February Spiffy Up

RSVP to 257-4837 - www.riversidenaturecenter.org - RNC.Kerrville@gmail.com
Please mark your Calendars... Saturday - April 23, 2016

Spring Native Plant Sale & Festival   Free Family Fun New Hours 9am-2pm

Co-sponsored by Native Plant Society of Texas - Kerrville Chapter & Riverside Nature Center

Our expert volunteers are gathering beautiful species of plants native to our region. These wildflowers, shrubs, grasses, and small trees are sourced from local growers. Native plants require lower maintenance – saving you time and money. Plus, they create a habitat for a host of native wildlife – including songbirds, butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. Come early for the best selection! Experts will be available to answer questions and to help you select plants that will thrive in your particular landscape conditions.

All net proceeds benefit the RNC and NPSOT education efforts.
Enjoy tax free shopping at this special event.

Members of RNC and NPSOT can enjoy exclusive preview sale on Friday April 22 from 5-6:30pm. Non-members can join either or both of these organizations at the pre-sale and start shopping.

Check back next month or on our website as we confirm plans for
free talks, displays and fun kids’ activities

We could not do this without our wonderful volunteers. If you want to help, please contact the office.

ADOPT-A-SPOT

The purpose of the Adopt-a-Spot program is to give volunteers the opportunity to pick a spot or task with Riverside Nature Center that they will be responsible for. This allows the volunteer to maintain an area or accomplish a task on their own at whatever time or interval they deem necessary to keep that area in good shape.

The RNC Adopt-A-Spot Program ground rules are:

• The B&G will create and maintain a list of spots or tasks up for adoption. This will make it clear what is actually required for that area or task.
• Every member of the organization is encouraged to adopt some ‘spot’ or task.
• A ‘spot’ or task can consist of a very small area or job. It doesn’t have to be an entire garden area or a large task.
• The list with adopted spots and spots still open for adoption will soon be posted in a prominent area in the entryway where everyone can see it and sign up for a spot.

A spot can really be anything one might think of that needs to be done either inside or outside on RNC property. Remember it doesn’t need to be a physically demanding task.

Some examples: the butterfly garden (or some portion thereof), the entry/exit island (we know the cactus garden is already adopted), a given walkway anywhere on the grounds, the kitchen area, the restroom, an island in the parking lot, change the furnace filters, paint the buildings, monitor the light bulbs for replacement, keep the outdoor display board up to date (already adopted), water or weed a designated spot.

The list of spots indicates to everyone what needs to be done. Please be sure to drop by the RNC Visitor Center and see what ‘spots’ need to be adopted and sign up. The B&G committee will have an ongoing list of the areas for adoption and we will put you in touch with them for tips and suggestions in how to proceed with your spot.
A Conversation with a Conservationist

Riverside Nature Center Welcomes

Dr. Mark Gustafson, professor of biology & Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Texas Lutheran University

Dr. Gustafson will share his intimate relationship with the Texas Hill Country.

“It is a crossroads of life, with species present that are typical of the desert to the west, the grasslands to the north, the forests to the east, and the tropics to the south.”

Wine & Cheese Reception
Book Signing

Thursday, March 31
5:30 – 7:00 pm

Suggested donation $20.00
RSVP: rnc.kerrville@gmail.com
830.257.4837
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 - Secretary
Kris Bobbitt - Treasurer

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

Support RNC - DONATE NOW!
http://riversidenaturecenter.org/index/about-rnc/donate/general-donation-form/

MEMBERS JOINING January 25 through February 24
Kristine Johnson - Dale Bargmann - Lee Gilmer - Melayne Arnold