



June
2020

Riverside Nature Notes

Dear Members and Friends... by Becky Etzler, Executive Director



It's summer time in Texas! Here at the nature center that usually means the meadow is beginning to look a bit more like a golden grassland than a wildflower bouquet. The birds are finishing up rearing their young. The next generation of butterflies are quietly transforming in hidden, and some not so hidden, chrysalises. All of these are signs of change and transition.

At the nature center, we are undergoing a similar process. We are transitioning from a group based, hands-on place of learning and exploration to one that is focusing on guidance and empowering young and old to observe and discover on a more personal level. Don't get me wrong, group activities and community building are still part of our curriculum. They have merely been put on a temporary hold.

We are offering a couple new opportunities that allow for a more personal interaction. 1on1 with a Naturalist encourages folks to bring their questions and curiosity and share them with Jim Stanley. Jim's sitting on the back porch instead of standing at the front of a lecture hall. The quiet, personal interaction allows for a certain kind of intimacy that lends to deeper discussions. We are also introducing a monthly Plant Walk & Talk. Kim Ort, Texas Master Naturalist, will lead a small group of interested folks on exploratory walks pointing out interesting plants and sharing fascinating details of their cultural uses. Both of these are designed to get you outdoors, asking questions and allowing you to springboard

yourself into new discoveries.

We are also transitioning our NEd Talks to online webinars. This is new to us and believe me for a non-technical person, it has been a steep learning curve. But this change of venue allows us to keep working our mission and provide quality environmental education. I hope to see you on the "web".

It is said that change is good. It keeps us from becoming stagnant. Though I may say "I can't wait till we're back to normal", perhaps what I mean is "I can't wait till we can all be together again". The changes we are going through right now may be the beginning of better things to come. It has pulled us into areas we had not explored. I like to think, we are undergoing a metamorphosis and I can't wait to see the creation that emerges.

Before signing off, I would like to extend my deepest and sincerest gratitude to those who have given freely and generously to Riverside Nature Center in this time of uncertainty. Your support has allowed us to stay afloat and retain our staff, which is quite a feat today. We always welcome donations but especially now every penny counts.

I'll be looking for you out back under the trees...





RNC.Kerrville@gmail.com

(830) 257-4837

www.riversidenaturecenter.org

Riverside Nature Center Upcoming Events & Programs

1on1 With a Naturalist

Every Friday @ RNC

10am-12pm

Have a nature related question?
Need a specimen identified? Just curious?
Hill Country Naturalist, Jim Stanley will be on hand, Fridays from 10-12 to assist you in unlocking some of nature's mysteries. Please be mindful of those around you by practicing physical distancing and preferably the wearing of a mask.

NEd Talk Webinar: Birding Hotspots

June 3rd

10am-11:30am

Join local birder and photographer, Dale Bargmann on a journey to 7 local hotspots for birding. This will be conducted through Zoom.

Please register online

**@ <https://riversidenaturecenter.org/> or
call 257-4837.**

There is no registration fee but we always welcome donations.

Plant Walk & Talk

June 13th

8:30am-9:30am

Kim Ort, Texas Master Naturalist will be your guide as you take a stroll along the river trail to discover the Riparian plants in the area and learn more about their uses and why they are important.

Meet in front of the RNC Visitor Center

**Please RSVP by 6/12 @
257-4837 or rnc.kerrville@gmail.com**

Nature Nights

Beginning June 11

6pm-7pm

Join us for an evening of nature exploration. We will observe, create and learn something new about our natural world. Free Family Fun!

Donations are always welcome.

**Space is limited, please RSVP to
rnc.kerrville@gmail.com or 257-4837.**

NEd Talk Webinar: Axis Deer Control

June 16th

1pm-2pm

Join Daniel Oppenheimer, Landowner Outreach and Development Manager, Hill Country Alliance in a discussion of the regional impacts of free-ranging Axis deer. **Registration for the webinar may be done @ <https://riversidenaturecenter.org/> or 257-4837 or rnc.kerrville@gmail.com.** This is a free event. Donations are always welcome.

Bird Walk & Talk

June 20th

8am-9:30am

Meet Paul & Deloris Sellin in front of the RNC Visitor center for a walk along the Guadalupe River Trail in search of our fine, feathered friends. All levels of experience and age are welcome. Please be mindful of each other and maintain the recommended physical distance and if you prefer, please do wear a mask.

**Limited Space, please RSVP by 6/19 to
257-4837 or rnc.kerrville@gmail.com**



RNC Presents:



NEd Talk Webinar

Presented by
Daniel Oppenheimer,
Hill Country Alliance

June 16th 1pm-2pm

Join us for a discussion on the environmental impacts of free ranging Axis deer.

Please register at riversidenaturecenter.org or call (830)257-4837.

This is a free webinar but donations always welcome!

Riverside Nature Center Presents:

NEd Talk Webinar: Birding Hotspots

Wed. June 3rd

10am-11am

Join local birder and photographer, Dale Bargmann on a journey to 7 local birding hotspots.

Please register online at <https://riversidenaturecenter.org/> or call 257-4837.

There is no registration fee but we always welcome donations.

<https://riversidenaturecenter.org/about-rnc/donate/>



PLANT WALK & TALK

June 13th

8:30am-9:30am

Kim Ort, Texas Master Naturalist will be your guide along the river trail to discover riparian plants & explore their importance and uses.

Meet in front of the RNC Visitor Center.

Please RSVP by 6/12 @ 257-4837 or rnc.kerrville@gmail.com

BIRD WALK & TALK

June 20

8:00am-9:30am

Paul & Deloris Sellin will lead a bird search along the Guadalupe River Trail. Meet at the RNC Visitor Center.

All level of experience & ages are welcome.

Masks are welcome but not required.

Spaces are limited. Please RSVP by 6/19 to 257-4837 or rnc.kerrville@gmail.com



Barbara Lowenthal Memorial Fund

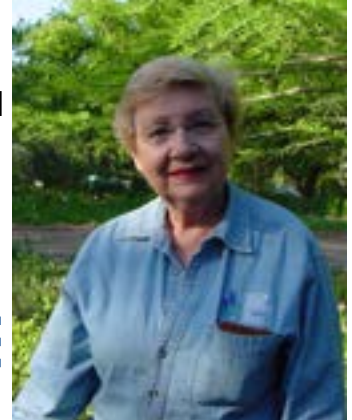
Last month we said a tearfully fond farewell to our dear friend Barbara Lowenthal. In her honor, a special fund has been set up to which you may donate.

Donations will be applied toward activities close to Barbara's heart.

- The maintenance and enhancement of the meadow and pollinator garden.
- The continuation and development of educational opportunities promoting environmental awareness.

Please remember to make reference to The Barbara Lowenthal Memorial Fund when making a donation.

Barbara may be gone physically but her spirit will forever inspire.



UGRA River Cleanup Is A Go!



Each summer, UGRA hosts a River Clean Up to remove trash from the Guadalupe River and remind us that keeping our river clean is a year-round responsibility. We plan to hold the 17th Annual River Clean Up on July 25th and will implement a modified format to comply with recommendations for public gatherings at the time of the event.

The River Clean Up will be staged at Flat Rock Park in Kerrville and participants will work throughout Kerr County to remove trash from swimming holes, water crossings, drainage ditches, creek beds, and roadways. Once volunteers return to Flat Rock Park with their trash, they will stop their vehicle at several stations spaced throughout the park to drop off trash, return supplies, and pick up snacks, drinks, prizes, and t-shirts.

Even with this modified format, we still plan to reward our hardworking volunteers, so make sure you register today because the first 300 registered volunteers will receive a free 2020 River Clean Up t-shirt designed by a local student artist. Last year, the River Clean Up was a great success thanks to many generous sponsors and the 526 participants who collected over 10,695 pounds of trash.

Visit www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/river-clean-up for more information and to register.

What You May See

Written By Martha Miesch

Photos by Marilyn Knight

Blackfoot Daisy is one of a few plants that will bloom through hot Texas summers. It is a bushy perennial that will grow 6 to 18 inches tall on dry caliche soils found in the Hill Country. The white 1/2 inch wide flower is an attractive ray flower. It is frequently seen along the roadside.



Heartleaf Skullcap has stems that can be 1 to 2 ft. tall. It has light bluish purple flowers that are accented with green heart shaped leaves along the stem. The blue flower with a white lip is distinctive.



Add Tropical Sage with its scarlet-red, 1 inch long flowers and you have the perfect mixture for a red, white and blue patriotic combo.





We're All In It Together!

Written By Susan Sander



When I transplanted to Texas I thought I had landed in a totally alien world. Now almost 37 years later, I'm still seeing new things, new patterns, but also connections to my own haunts. Truly, the Hill Country is not separate from other parts of the planet. Here are a few things I've learned.

1. Limestone layers are pages of ancient history. I hadn't studied geology before Texas but I got hooked when it dawned on me that the island I had lived on in Lake Michigan was limestone. So it was a form of time-travel to leave Wisconsin's Silurian seabed (440

million years old) to arrive in the Hill Country's Cretaceous inland seabed (110 million years old). The fossils are different but both reflect diversity in the marine environments.

2. We are walking water bags. Water is in everything living thing; it's constantly being reused; it moves through plants, soil, rocks, oceans. The same goes for the air we breathe – it's been in and out of all kinds of life-forms (as we are discovering this year). It travels around the planet, internally and externally. These 2 cycles are our connection to all life on the planet – even if it's a delayed event.

3. Water always moves downhill, a no-brainer but I never lived in a canyon before. Prior watersheds covered broad areas of rolling land, not narrow canyons. Within 3-4 miles you can gain 300+ elevation from the Guadalupe, the river bed itself stair-steps down 30 feet from Tranquility Island to Kerrville-Schreiner Park. It's good to know your place in the watershed, it could save your life.

4. Rivers have personalities based on different environments. Wisconsin-Illinois' Fox River meanders with each flood, carving into soil banks, moving islands of loose soil downstream. Muddy waters. I will miss seeing the rock bottom of the Guadalupe. The confined canyon walls create a sluice for rain to rise up and flash-flood without much rain (I won't miss that). I have a greater respect for the power of water. And an appreciation of rain.

5. Plant communities are shaped by the local geology and climate.

Hence, the "short" but big live oaks I first saw were just adapting to life between rock and hard places (little rain and summer heat).

6. Over decades I found that many plant families have an extended range that can cover 2000 miles in latitude. Same family and genus but often different species that are adapted to the growing conditions where they are rooted. The range for plants has been an eye-opener, and gives me hope how they adapt to changing climates. Our very lives depend on plants in so many ways.

7. I found out where robins went in the winter – up north if I saw a dozen during the summer they were pulling worms out of the ground. Here, they congregate in the hundreds as winter Texans, feeding on berries (mostly cedar). They are truly an American bird ranging throughout North America.





8. I grew up with Black-capped chickadees and quickly was set straight that here we have Carolina Chickadees (a different species). I still can't see the difference, yet the song isn't quite the same. As many wintering birds nest and breed up north, this gives me a different perspective on the imperative of migration. Where is home? How many different habitats are really needed?

9. Monarchs return from Mexico and fly through Texas but it's the upper Midwest that produces the super-generation, the one that flies south to Mexico, overwinters, then heads back north to Texas to lay eggs of the next generation. The fourth-fifth generation will consume Wisconsin milkweeds before heading south. My 5-year old grandniece is already a butterfly fan (and birder); I can't wait to share her enthusiasm and delights.

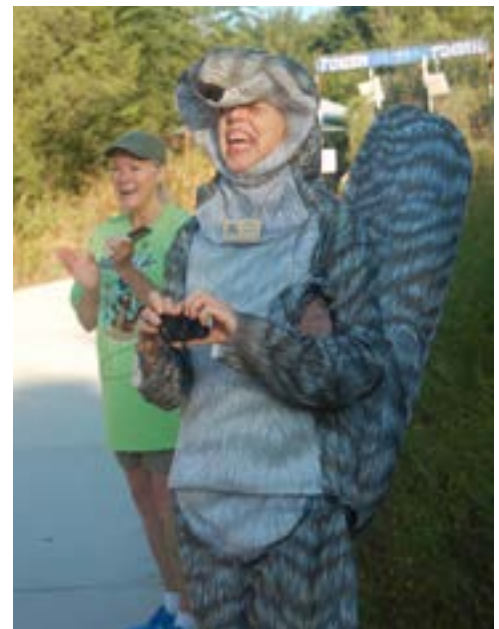
10. The role of a land steward takes on new meaning and an urgency when one is confronted with endemic plants and animals. Canyons are inverse islands, confining slow-moving or rooted species into smaller habitats/ refugia. Specialization is a great experiment but without the diversity could be a dead-end. Carving up habitats creates a similar isolation, something we can identify with, too.

11. Introduction of non-native species does have an impact. In nature, bare ground is a clean slate for some plant to take hold. Nature may not judge what takes root, but that first stage is about survival and those that can colonize the quickest can set the stage for what kind of habitat will evolve. Without the right plants, the insects will falter, and then the birds that need them to feed their young, as well as other plants that need pollinators. Lots of nuts and bolts we can easily overlook.

12. Most importantly, I've learned that it takes more than observing to insure the survival of wild things. I participate by adding native plants that provide for wild things in terms of food and shelter. And I learn from the birds what is working. It is my way to keep connected to the wild things.

Soon I will move back to southeast Wisconsin; I look forward to rediscovering that landscape, and broadening my appreciation of how connected all the elements of the planet truly are.

Consider this a huge virtual hug of heart-felt thanks to everyone. You have been part of my Texas chapter. My hat is off to those who set me straight, provided encouragement as well as challenges, and inspired others to help provide opportunities to the next generation to learn about where they live. It has been the most rewarding endeavor, and it took all of us to pull it off, to create a refugia for wild at Riverside Nature Center. Carry on! Be a good human, and strive to be a mentor/ guide/example to the upcoming generations! And most certainly, keep it WICKED (Wild in the City of Kerrville, Every Day). signing off.





Wednesday Workday Volunteers Needed

Every Wednesday morning a group of intrepid workers with a passion for plants & a love of the outdoors, meets at Riverside Nature Center to help maintain some of RNC's gardens.

This is an excellent opportunity to learn about native plants and their place in the Hill Country ecosystem from others who share your passion for nature. Whether you are an experienced nature lover or just getting started in your journey learning about our local plants, you are welcome to join this group as we experience the beauty of our Hill Country home.

This is a wonderful way for you to get some fresh air outdoors while our gardens provide plenty of availability for proper social distancing.

Volunteer hours are counted by both Riverside Nature Center & Texas Master Naturalists.

For further information, please contact Lydia Jetson at rnc.kerrville@gmail.com





Emerald Ash Borer

Written By Dr. Mike Merchant

When Denton urban forester Haywood Morgan moved to Texas from Milwaukee, Wisconsin six years ago he thought he was leaving the devastating emerald ash borer behind. Instead the ash borer found him again.

Morgan became reacquainted with EAB this month during a trip to look at some sick ash trees along a Denton, Texas street. After inspecting ash borer-like damage on the 11 year old ash, his experienced eye caught a glimpse of shiny green. A quick grab and he had it—what appears to be the first emerald ash borer to be found in Denton county.



According to Morgan the insects appear to have been in this neighborhood for several years, based on extensive damage seen to a half dozen or so ash trees.

Arborist Scott Geer with Tree Shepherds also visited the site. In addition to the landscape trees around the house Morgan inspected, Geer reported other neighbors with damage, as well as damaged native green ash in an adjacent forest.

“Ash are not the predominant tree in Denton County,” said Geer. “Green ash are found in pockets, mostly along the creeks; but Denton county is dominated by post oak, blackjack oak and cedar elm with some ash scattered in pockets.”

The emerald ash borer attacks ash trees almost exclusively*, so non-ash tree species will be safe.

The insect Morgan collected has been sent to USDA experts for official verification, but everyone who saw the insect was convinced. This makes the second active EAB site in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, but the first in an urban neighborhood in Texas.

Most tree experts agree that emerald ash borer may be the most important exotic tree pest to enter the country since chestnut blight, which caused the near-extinction of wild chestnut trees in the U.S. This beetle may be nearly as devastating, with some experts worrying that die-back of natural populations could threaten extinction for the 15-plus species of native ash in the U.S.



Damage to trees is not immediately visible as the beetles typically start their attack at the top of the tree. Symptoms to look for include canopy thinning in the upper tree, bark splitting, and sprouting or vigorous new growth from the ground and lower portions of the tree. Only later will the 1/8 inch, D-shaped emergence holes of the beetle be visible.

If you suspect your ash tree has symptoms of the borer you will need to either treat it, if damage is not severe, or cut it down. Borer damaged trees quickly dry out and become brittle, making them hazardous to people and property. Local tree care companies have treatments that will provide 2-3 years of protection against the borer. Do-it-yourself treatments are also available from garden centers. They involve drenches with insecticides containing imidacloprid, azadirachtin or dinotefuran. Home treatments must be reapplied annually.



For more information on EAB, it's ID, biology and control, go to <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/> Also, reports of suspected EAB may be submitted through the Sentinel Pest reporting function of the Texas Invasives website. Experts from USDA there are ready to evaluate samples, but keep in mind some simple guidelines for sending in pictures. For more information about how to recognize EAB damage, check out this guide.

Insect Updates will keep you informed about continued spread of EAB through the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

* Cases of EAB attacking *Chionanthus virginicus* (white fringetree) have also been documented.

High risk zones for emerald ash borer based on known locations where the borers are established. May 2020.

Circles show the areas within 15 miles of known EAB infestations; any ash trees of value within these circles should be treated this year to ensure protection from attack.



Photos by Haywood Morgan

No EABs have been reported locally. However, it does sound inevitable that our ash trees will eventually be impacted. More reason to ensure and increase native biodiversity.



You'll Miss Them When They're Gone

Written By Jim Stanley



The most recent copy of the National Geographic magazine (May 2020) shows a photo of several dozen different flying insects taken of a collection screen in Arizona. Then in large print on the cover are the words, "You'll Miss Them When They're Gone." The subtitle on the cover reads, "Insects are disappearing at alarming rates. That could be disastrous for the planet."

It immediately made me think back a few weeks ago when I had a dead bug on my windshield and what I thought about when I saw it. Years ago, from the time I first started driving and for many years thereafter, it was common, especially if you had been driving at night, to have bugs plastered on your windshield and the grill of your car. These days, it is not rare, but certainly unusual for you to have any dead bugs on your windshield.

The article described a very well documented study in Germany that found a decline in insect biomass of 76% between 1989 and 2016.

Now before those of you who dislike insects in general think this is all good news, you should think about all of the important ecosystem services insects contribute as providers, decomposers, pest control, pollinators and soil maintenance.

Insects provide food for many species of higher animals including birds, bats, reptiles, amphibians, armadillos, and fish, all of which then provide food for higher animal species.

Decomposers degrade dung, dead plants and carrion. Predatory insects control many kinds of insect pests thus reducing the amount of insecticides used every year and the amount contaminating our food supply.

Ninety percent of all flowering plant species, including 75% of all crop species, depend on pollination by animals, mostly by insects. It was pointed out that, "one out of every 3 bites of food humans eat relies on animal pollination."

Finally, insects provide valuable soil service by producing tunnels making the soil more porous and capturing more water as well as adding to the fertility of the soil.



Here are some orders of insects and the number of species in each order that are declining: dragonflies and damselflies—27%, butterflies and moths—36%, bees, wasps and ants—42%, beetles—61% and grasshoppers and crickets—85%.

Why is all of this happening? David Wagner, an entomologist at U. of Connecticut, says “We’d expect things to be declining with seven billion people on the planet. In the process of feeding, clothing, housing and transporting themselves, people are altering the planet...mowing down forests, plowing up grasslands, planting monocultures, pouring pollutants into the air...We know we are in a biodiversity crisis.”

Interestingly, insects were among the earliest animals to colonize the land. That was over 400 million years ago—which is 200 million years before the dinosaurs! And we are wiping them out in a matter of decades.

The renowned biologist, E.O. Wilson famously said of microorganisms, “They don’t need us but we need them.” He also observed, “If humans were to suddenly disappear, the Earth would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed 10,000 years ago. But if insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.”

Historically, insects have had a very low extinction record as shown by fossil records, which makes these recent observations even more disturbing.

I have been growing a wide variety of native plants for 20 years without any insecticides, and I have never had any native plant die from insect damage. In fact, native plants evolved to be here with native insects—if they had not survived, we wouldn’t have them now.

Readers: Today’s column represents 10 years of columns in the Kerrville Daily Times. I want to thank all of you for your interest and encouragement. I especially want to thank Jeanette Nash, the editor at KDT who has corrected most of my mis punctuations and especially coming up with better titles than I do for all of this time. Thanks also for the other Hill Country papers that have been publishing these columns for the last several years.

A couple of years ago, my aim was to get to 10 years and then to quit writing these columns. Now that I have reached that goal, however, I have decided to continue for as long as I think I am helping people understand our Natural World, and as long as I can think of topics to write about. We need everyone to understand nature and appreciate man’s interaction with it and to be as good stewards of nature as possible.

Until next time...

Go to <https://riversidenaturecenter.org/blogs-from-our-friends/> to read more blogs from Jim Stanley



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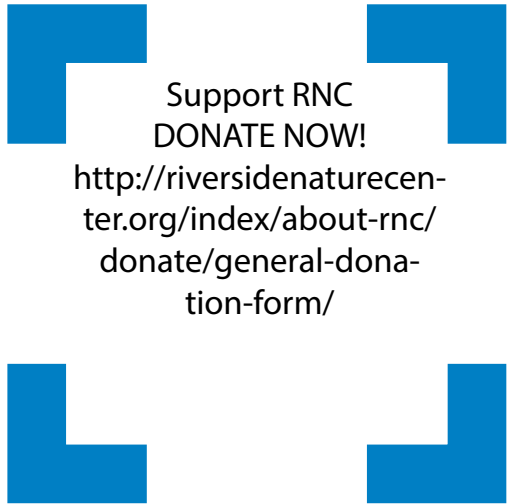
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<http://riversidenaturecenter.org/index/about-rnc/donate/general-donation-form/>

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 advance the stewardship of our natural environment. 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.

Riverside Nature Center

*150 Francisco Lemos St.
Kerrville, Texas 78028
(830)257-4837*

www.riversidenaturecenter.org



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