



May
2020

Riverside Nature Notes

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



How do I miss you? Let me count the ways. I miss your smile, your laughter, your passion and your hard work and support. I miss spending time with our RNC family members.

It may not be too long before we can all get together and share our adventures and stories. I bet there will be some doozies!

The Nature Center represents many things but most importantly it is a symbol of dedication to the environmental health of our community. You and I are inhabitants of this local ecosystem, hence our health matters too. Adhering to this philosophy, Riverside Nature will take an incremental strategy to its reopening.

The Gardens and Arboretum will reopen to the public and volunteers beginning May 4. The staff will return to work for regular hours on the same date. However, the Visitor Center will remain closed to the public and volunteers until further notice. We will conduct a reassessment on May 18th in regards to opening the Visitor Center. Watch your inbox for updates.

I had hoped to send everyone a video of the gardens mid-April but not being well versed in the world of movie making, editing and then uploading to a useable platform...well obviously it took a lot longer than I anticipated. But alas, I can share it with you now. Enjoy!



(If viewing the newsletter in PDF form, click the video link to be redirected to the video.

If viewing on the website in JPEG form, the video link will be located above the newsletter.)

https://youtu.be/cv4dv5V_Hb4



Riverside Nature Center Upcoming Events & Programs

Go to

<https://riversidenaturecenter.org/2020/03/27/educational-activities-to-do-at-home/>
**for kid & family friendly
educational activities to
do at home.**

**Watch our group calendar for
information of upcoming live
chats & webinars.**

<http://riversidenaturecenter.org/about-rnc/calander/>



Remembering Barbara Lowenthal

Written By Susan Sander

“Be an opener of doors for such as come after thee.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Do you remember the first time you were showed something in Nature, something you walked by on a daily basis but wasn't on your radar? Maybe it was hidden among other leaves. Maybe it just needed some rain to make itself visible. Then someone pointed it out with such delight that you couldn't wait to show someone else the hidden treasure.

Opening the door to wonder is a gift. It awakens a sense that there are many more things right before our eyes, IF we only took a closer look. It propels us to re-gift.

Back in 1993 RNC began the first steps of creating a native garden in downtown Kerrville. What we see today is the result of many people sharing a love and passion about Nature.

Bob Dewer's design resulted in a very unique urban forest. But it was his neighbor Barbara Lowenthal who advocated for the wildflowers. When RNC began to offer on-site field trips a cadre of volunteer Nature Guides became the opener of doors, sharing the delight of wild things with the next generations.

Melinda Wasson organized the guides while Barbara put program ideas into a format for grades pre-K to high school calling it "A Closer Look." The underlying approach for the guides shifted from teaching to discovery, to help kids look closer at the details of wildflowers, to find bugs on the plants, and to help open doors to their own discoveries.

Over the years Barbara took on the creation of a wildflower meadow; despite much weeding of the non-native bur clover (it's still a bane) plus seeding and transplanting rescue plants from the highway her enthusiasm attracted others. Every week the dedicated group got together, with Barbara pointing out details of identification.



And as it often happens when one takes a closer look at one thing, another thing comes into view, especially if one adopts the pace of Nature over the year.

Flowers attract pollinators, resulting in an incredible variety of seeds. Edith Bettinger put together a seed-collecting guide for Gleaners and when she moved, Barbara continued holding workshops to show people the tricks of seedy characters, preparing seeds for the meadow, packing as give-aways for Run for Riverside participants, and then for making seed balls with 4th graders. In turn she inspired others to also be openers of doors.

Barbara loved to look closer and closer, with an eye also on how-to share the information, so together with Raul Pena they embarked on creating a digital herbarium of the Hill Country's wildflowers.

Barbara loved the wild beauty of the Hill Country. She loved to share what she learned and she did it with such grace and delight. I count myself most fortunate that our paths merged.

She put finishing touches on so many ideas, so many projects at RNC over 3 decades. Even when cancer forced her and Eric to give up their house, she still found delight in being closer to the river.

She was definitely an opener of doors to Nature.



Barbara Lowenthal
July 31, 1940-April 15, 2020



What You Have Seen



Photo by Becky Etzler

We asked for fellow nature lovers to share their Nature Photos with us on our RNC Facebook & Instagram page. Here are a few wonderful images that were sent to us.

If you have a photo you would like to share feel free to post it on our Facebook page or share on Instagram using the hashtag #RNCKerrville.



Photo by Kathie Wiederspan



Photo by Ruth Carlson



Photo by Marilyn Knight



Photo by Connie Fluegel



UGRA News & Programs



UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY
UGRA River Clean Up Art Contest
 ALL KERR COUNTY STUDENTS K-12TH GRADE ARE ELIGIBLE
 ENTRY DEADLINE IS MAY 8, 2020

Cash Prizes
 Winning Design Printed on All River Clean Up T-shirts

16TH ANNUAL RIVER CLEAN UP
 We Can Do It!

Entry Forms at www.ugra.org or Call (830) 896-5445

Join Us for the 17th Annual River Clean Up on July 25th!

UGRA is holding an art contest to design the t-shirt for their annual river clean up.

Entries are due May 8th.

Click the link to watch a short video about the contest.

<https://youtu.be/CD4vf-ixQ-A>

Individuals and entities interested in initiating a rainwater catchment system or expanding a current system in Kerr County are eligible.

Apply now through 11/30/20 for up to \$2,500 towards a new rainwater catchment system.

Visit UGRA's website for program guidelines and applications:

www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/rainwater-catchment

Large Rainwater System Incentive Program

Individuals and entities interested in initiating a rainwater catchment system or expanding a current system in Kerr County are eligible. Apply now through 11/30/20 for up to \$2,500 towards a new rainwater catchment system.

Visit UGRA's website for program guidelines and applications:
www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/rainwater-catchment

UGRA Volunteer Summer Study Program is where you will Assist UGRA by collecting weekly water samples from the Guadalupe River or its tributaries in Kerr County for E. coli bacteria testing.

The program not only encourages the participation of local citizens in water quality testing, but the information collected by the volunteers helps identify areas in need of further investigation.

Program begins June 1, 2020 and runs through August 31, 2020. Contact Tara Bushnoe at UGRA for more information or to register (tbushnoe@ugra.org).



Spying On My Neighbors

Written By Susan Sander

Last night as it was getting dark I noticed some movement out the front window. So I grabbed the binoculars to see who was out there. Turns out that the homeless were settling in for the night and using the bur oak in my front yard for shelter.

The choicest spot seemed to be the ends of the branches where the new leaves (they get big fast) were bunched together and thicker. One particular cedar waxwing looked as if it was tucking the leaves around its body. It makes perfect sense since it was windy and going to drop into the 40s.

This morning I got the binoculars again just as it was getting light. I could barely make out the birds but some were snuggled together. As it got lighter I could see movement as they started to wake up (very well hidden). Then one by one they flew to the top of the neighbor's pecan that is just leafing out - and where the first rays of the sun would land on them. Waiting to greet the day.

If you're going to be without a permanent home you would need to figure out each night where is the best place to seek shelter.

These birds are eating up the ligustrum berries and nibbling on whatever it is they are doing in the trees (bugs or small budworms like the chickadee was finding in the retama the day before). Cedar waxwings seem to wait for the ripening of the mulberries as their last southern meal before the big push to head north. No big rush since it's another snowstorm crossing that path. Their diet switches to forest insects that love newly emerged leaves. That can be a dicey menu -if the winter is still lingering the leaves could be late, or frost damaged. IF the weather is warmer than usual the leaves get past tasty morsels stage for the caterpillars. And since the birds move in flocks they need a lot of food in one place (a flock can consume thousands of insects in a month - and then there's the competition from the warblers).

Stay-home is a test for us - but by watching wildlife fend with whatever Nature is stirring up for that day, a reliable place to shelter, to call home doesn't seem too bad.

At least a dozen different birds are busy out in my yard (ok it's probably their yard). Baby wrens, white-winged doves just finished nest 2. Cardinals have to start over either because of insane winds that came out of nowhere the other night or the Texas rat snake. A small flock of clay-colored sparrows are moving around in the bushes, nibbling on something in the acacia. Each going about their day being alive.



Pollinator Garden Assistance & Recognition Program Update

Written By Richard Coleman

April 22nd was the 50th annual Earth Day. The United States mainland's average temperature has warmed 2.4 degrees since the first Earth Day in 1970.

With the Riverside Nature Center closed because of the pandemic we are not able to visit the arboretum right now but our pollinators have been very busy this spring. With the slow, steady rains we've had over the last month our native pollinator plants are thriving, the bees and butterflies are definitely not practicing social distancing with their nectar sources.

Teresa's Monarch Larval Monitoring team spotted a bumper crop of eggs and n-stars at Kerr Wildlife Management last week, the most her team has found in the three years she's been participating.

The Courthouse Pollinator Garden, the Kerrville-Schreiner Park Pollinator Garden, and the UGRA EduScape gardens are hives of pollinator activity. These are all projects of Hill Country Master Naturalists, Native Plant Society of Texas/Kerrville, and Kerrville Master Gardeners. Stop by one to get your nature fix.



(Continued on next page)



The Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program has suspended all site visits through April 2020 and will assess the situation as it unfolds. A determination will be made in the coming weeks as to when we can resume our in-person site visits.

During this time we will conduct “Virtual Site Visits” where you can exchange images and videos of your property and get feedback from our team of Pollinator Champions. The world needs Pollinator Champions now more than ever.

Please try our virtual service for your garden.
Visit <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/PGARP/> to register.



Craig Hensley and Terry Lashley submitted a request for PGARP recognition of their yard in Boerne this month and it is magnificent.

They have planted five beds and have two more they are developing, in reality the whole yard is a pollinator paradise.





Thank You All Plastics



We would like to extend a warm and heartfelt thank you to one of our Partners In Nature, All Plastics, for the work they have been doing to help our community during this difficult time.



RNC Could Use Your Donations

Donations
are greatly
Appreciated!

This time of social distancing has been unfortunately difficult for the donations usually received by visitors and through various programs held at Riverside Nature Center.

We would like to thank our visitors and friends for their continued support of RNC, and to send out a gentle reminder that donations are able to be made online at

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

You can also become a member or renew your membership at

<https://riversidenaturecenter.org/about-rnc/become-a-member/>.



RNC New Members

3/26/20 thru 4/20/20

Max Traweek

RNC Donors

3/26/20 thru 4/20/20

Mary Jones
 Jim Stanley
 Don Gray
 Pam Clark
 Cathy Downs
 Richard Smith
 Lonnie Childs
 Karen Johnson
 Michael Tayloe
 Elaine Horobec
 Cynthia Thomas
 Katy & Carl Kappel
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 Mike & Karen Burkett
 Lillian & Jim Skogsberg
 Lyneen & Morgan Williams
 Malcolm & Peggy Matthews
 Richard and Teresa Coleman
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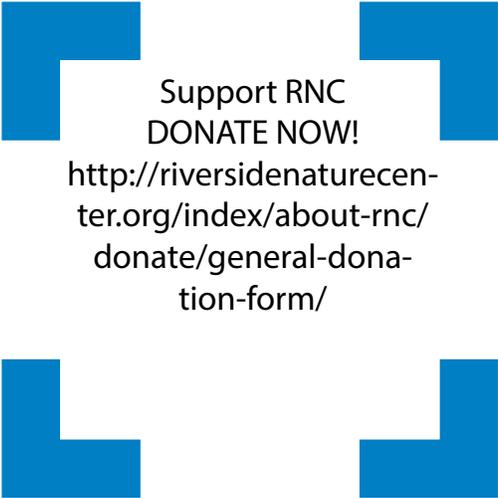
Susan McKinley
 Mary Jane Figard
 Kelly & Jane Clark
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Support RNC
DONATE NOW!

<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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We would love it if you will
Like us on Facebook
(Riverside Nature Center Association)



and follow us on Instagram
(riversidenaturecenter)