



Riverside Nature Notes

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



Becky Etzler

As you're doing all your outdoor chores before the sun rises and it gets too hot for man or beast, ponder this: there are only 20 more weeks until Christmas! I think that you've probably guessed, I'm a cool weather kind of gal. These hot summer days are made for long afternoon siestas and tall glasses of iced tea. It's a good thing not everyone subscribes to my way of thinking.

In the past two months Riverside Nature Center has welcomed close to 1,500 visitors. These visitors hail from all across Texas, the country and from abroad. One family from Israel are repeat visitors. The nature center has become their one "must see" stop each time they visit relatives here in Kerrville.

The Texas Hill Country, with its rivers, wildlife, and abundant native flora, is a destination for many travelers and prospective residents. With Kerrville being conveniently located in this region, it has become an inevitable destination. It is incumbent on Riverside Nature Center to serve as the environmental ambassador and to engage visitors and locals alike in a dialogue of both conservation and preservation of our natural resources.

We have done an admirable job over the past 25 plus years adhering to our mission of providing education, information and examples. It would be very remiss of me not to extend an overwhelming chorus of praise to everyone involved, from our founder, Susan Sander, to every board member, volunteer, RNC member and contributor. But with my congratulations comes a challenge.

How do we take Riverside Nature Center to the next level? How do we keep visitors and locals coming back and engaged? How do we ensure that Riverside Nature Center remains relevant?

This year we have taken steps to upgrade and enhance our physical structure through the renovation of the nature lab and the replacement of the porch decking to accommodate low mobility visitors. The addition of a backyard patio will also further improve public accessibility. We are currently discussing plans for a bird viewing area and we will soon see the completion of *Riverscape*.

Our education program has also seen a few new additions. This year we will be hosting the KISD 2nd graders through a half day environmental education field day. We have recently received a grant from The Community Foundation to augment and upgrade our audio visual capabilities. This will allow us a better means of presenting program material.

On the financial side, our board of directors is presently working on a business partnership program which will encourage engagement of local corporate leaders.

We are definitely making forward progress, but I would very much like to hear from you, our membership, our volunteers and our donors. How does Riverside Nature Center maintain its integrity and become a bright spot in "Kerrville as a destination?" Drop by and let's have a chat!

Until next time...

Becky



RNC.Kerrville@gmail.com



www.riversidenaturecenter.org

830 257 -4837

AUGUST 2017 Riverside Nature Center Upcoming Events/Programs

Saturday, August 19, 2017
Bird Walk & Talk, 8 - 9:30 a.m.
Paul & Deloris Sellin take an early morning birding hike and invite you to meet them in front of the RNC Visitor Center. All ages welcome. Free Family Fun.



Tuesday, August 22, 2017
Walk with Shucks the Corn Snake 9:30 -10:30 a.m.
Our resident corn snake, Shucks, and Karen Millikan demonstrate the things we need to know about snakes. All ages welcome. Free Family Fun.

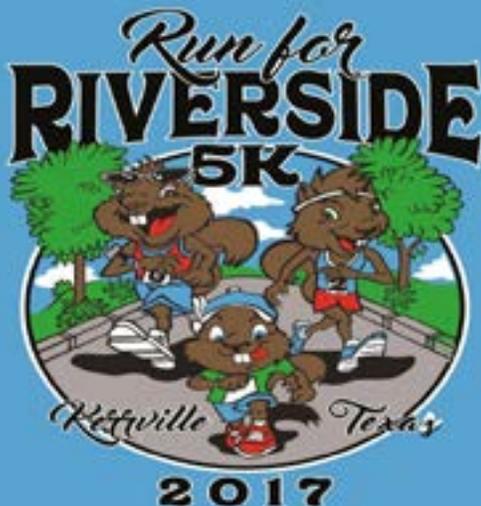


SAVE THE DATE! 2017 RUN 4 RIVERSIDE 5K, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2017



See below and Page 6 for more details

Riverside Nature Center



Run/Walk 5K
September 9, 2017

Register @
RiversideNatureCenter.org

8:00 am

Post Race:
Yoga, Music, Refreshments,
Awards, and Door Prizes



What you may see this month at RNC - August 2017
By Martha Miesch *Photos by Marilyn Knight*

HUNT FOR THE RED

If you have been to RNC recently, my guess is that you will be overwhelmed by the abundance of plants that have gone to seed. We can thank summer heat and lack of moisture for the early seeding. What amazed me were several beautiful red bloomers. We have Marilyn to thank for bringing them to our attention.

Chili Pequin is a strong bloomer. It is not a tall plant but a bright red ball of color. Some people pick the ball for cooking spicy food. You can see it on the street side berm beginning close to the butterfly garden and it continues down the side of the berm. There are several native plants that have historically been used in cooking, and some for medicine as we learned in a NPSOT program last spring.



Chile Pequin --*Capsicum annum* L.
 var. *glabriusculum* (Solanaceae)



Flame Acanthus --*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var.
Wrightii (Acanthaceae)

Flame Acanthus is easy to spot. It's amazing that it is almost cut to the ground each fall and comes back into a healthy bush. It can get 2 - 4 ft. tall and attracts pollinating butterflies and bees. Hummingbirds also love it. You can see a smaller version of this bloomer close to the drive at the front side of the Visitor's Center near the handicap parking. Look for the small hairs along the stem with lanceolate leaves that can be 2 1/4" long. The flower has spikes that make it an easy nectar bloom in June and July. Blooming Flameleaf Acanthus can be seen in several locations inside the gates. Look for this splash of red on the grounds.

Continues on next page →



What you may see this month at RNC - August 2017
By Martha Miesch Photos by Marilyn Knight

Standing Cypress is a favorite bloomer of many native plant lovers . Its tall stem that can be 2-5 ft. tall and grows on sandy or rocky soil. Most of the standing cypress in the back gardens have gone to seed but there are a few splashes of color in the butterfly garden and other locations that get the cooling effects of shade. It's prime blooming period is May and June so even the remaining red blooms won't be seen much longer...just seed.



Standing cypress



Turk's Cap

The prime **Turk's Cap** area is near the Carroll Abbott garden since it loves shade. There are several trees in that area that provide that condition. It quickly grows into a shrub status from 2 to 4 ft. tall. This has pretty green leaves that can be 3-5 lobed. It blooms from June to Oct. Some people think it can be too aggressive, but it gives a splash of red from June – October, and hummingbirds love it.

Challenge yourself to check out the red bloomers. Red is a reminder of summer's heat that can be hot as hell.



← Pigeon berry ↑



Celebrate Nature

Susan Sander, naturalist

We're tipping our **Hats Off to Nature**. It's much more than just a pretty place, it's full of wonder with a wide variety of life that is busy keeping the planet's ecosystems functioning, 24/7.

When the United Nations put together its Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report back in 2000 it listed four main ecosystem services that benefit us: provisioning (food and water), regulating (climate, disease, waste management, air purification), supporting (nutrient cycles, crop pollination), and cultural. The underlying message was that if we don't know the consequences of our actions we could really make a mess of things not only for us, but the entire planet's inhabitants.



Without any input from humans, the Sun shines on plants that transform solar energy into food energy that is cycled through all the earthlings, great and small. It's the ultimate food service with lots of nutrient cycles in the air, above ground and below.

**Wind soil water air
So much life everywhere
We barely know it**
- Amy Fraenkel, from
*Inspired by nature:
Celebrating Biodiversity
with Haikus*

And while the report talks about "services provided by" Nature, it's more like "fair trade" between the various life forms as they go about their lives in search of food and shelter.

The air we breathe is a trade of oxygen from trees and plants for the carbon dioxide we and other creatures give off. Plants also help regulate local climates by blocking/channeling wind, providing shade, and lessening the impact of rain drops on soil. Plant roots anchor soil and provide pathways for rain to infiltrate (and filter) into the soil. Plants are the base of the food system.

Since plants can't move to find a mate, they have developed clever ways to entice a go-between such as bees: trading nectar for the "service" of transferring pollen to a potential mate. (We reap the benefit of fruits and vegetables.) Bugs that feed on plant parts are eaten by other hungry bugs, spiders, lizards, as well as birds (we get free pest control).

In my yard there are numerous sprouts of trees that I did not plant (pecans, walnuts, Chinese pistache and a

plethora of hackberries), all deposited here and there by squirrels, raccoons, opossums and birds. Other seeds, such as beggars lice, hitched rides in animal fur. In the big picture all these parts are essential even if they aren't the species of my choice, or where I want them "planted."

Bioturbation happens when a skunk or armadillo digs in your yard to snack on the bugs in the soil. The divets become small catchments for rain, dust and seeds. Dung beetles roll scat to a hole to start a nursery but a side-benefit is that it also returns nutrients into the soil to feed



plant roots. Hence, the soil is a byproduct of beetles, earthworms, microbes that power-lunch on plant litter/ dead bodies (waste management mixed up with broken down rock). The energy/nutrient cycle keeps flowing, everything is connected, nothing is wasted.

In essence, Nature functions due to a multitude of hungry stomachs; we'd view it as "will work for food." Dragonflies eat mosquitoes not to save us from mosquito bites (and potential diseases); great horned owls hunt skunks (not to control rabies); nor do Mexican free-tailed bats eat their body weight in corn earworm moths each night to keep our agriculture crops pest-free. The spiny lizards scatter up walls to catch insects I really don't like. They are just dining but we get free pest control because of their menu choices.



Rain wiggles through the holes and burrows in the soil and rocks (filtration) to replenish the springs that become our river, to hydrate the plants that return "sweat" moisture to the atmosphere. Indeed, there is so much life everywhere, with relationships so intricately interwoven we can't even imagine what would happen in the long term if some of the parts were to go missing. Nature "wears" many different hats. Which ones do you "see" in your yard? Which ones do you wear?

Run for RIVERSIDE 5K



2017

Run & Walk

September 9th @ 8am

Registration prices:

- \$25 until Aug. 13th
- \$30 Aug 14 - Sep 7th
- \$35 Sep 8 - 9th Race Day

Contact:

Valeska Danielak for info

830-370-2464

run4riverside@gmail.com

 run4riverside

Registered entrants are guaranteed a race T-shirt!

Yoga, Refreshments, Music, Awards, and Door Prizes!

Strollers and dogs are welcome

Proceeds will benefit the Riverside Nature Center, a non-profit, member supported organization. RNC's mission is to develop public awareness and stewardship of the Texas Hill Country's environmental and natural resources through education, information, and example.



Riverside Nature Center

150 Francisco Lemos Street Kerrville, TX 78028

Registration link @ riversidenaturecenter.org





Nature Night Photos Summer 2017



Life Underground



Herps at Nature Night



Herps 2017



Guadalupe Flooding



We enjoyed having a successful summer of nature programs on Thursday nights!
Thank you to all of the volunteers who greeted our guests and were on hand to help!

Look for more Nature Nights once a month coming soon!

Thank you to all of the skillful and engaging presenters:

Tara Bushnoe

Lee Burton

*Susan Longacre
and Gavin Williams*

Susan Sander

Bill Morgenstern

*Ashley Tubbs and
Scott Wahlberg*

Morgan Williams

Valeska Danielak



Lookin' for bugs



Life Underground

**Patricia & Gary
Hatch**

Nell Denman

**Elena L.
Brineman**

**Lynneen &
Morgan
Williams**

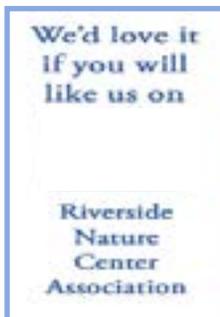
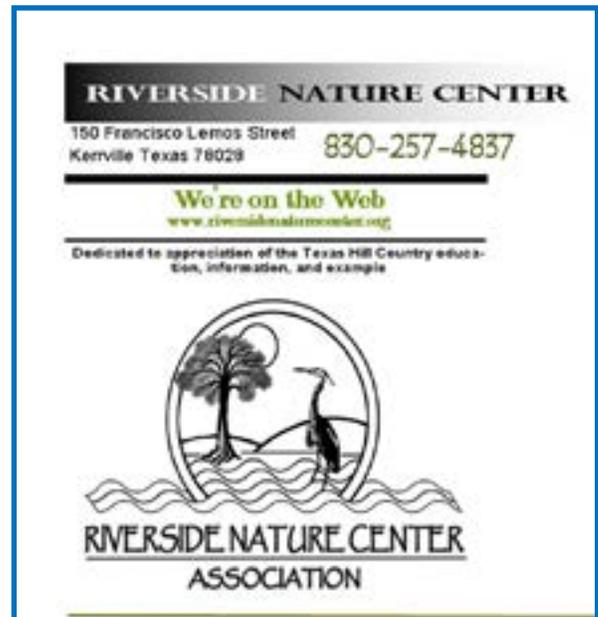
RNC DONORS
June 27 to July 24, 2017
(Does not include renewals)



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 OFFICERS:

Peter Lewis - President
Rick Ertel - Past President
Barbara Oates - Vice President
Judy Ferguson - Secretary
Kris Bobbitt - Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS:

Tara Bushnoe
Frank Dunlap
Wynn Kilgore
Malcolm Matthews
Liz Ross
Peggy Thompson