

Nature Festival News

By Don Travis

Our **First Annual Milam County Nature Festival** is coming up fast—on Friday and Saturday this coming June 11 and 12 at Wilson-Ledbetter Park in Cameron.

Our slogan "**Nature At Its Best**" was chosen in a contest with many excellent suggestions by members. The winning slogan was independently submitted by both Janice Pelzel and Paul Unger. Congratulations!

Under the creative and enthusiastic leadership of Ann Collins, a growing number of Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners have been hard at work since earlier this year planning and organizing what will be the premier nature event in the region. We are making plans to handle about 2000 visitors, and we will have family oriented activities and events for every age group or nature interest. While detailed plans are still fluid, this is what we have tentatively planned so far.

Starting off on Friday evening at 6pm, the park is going to be designated a bird sanctuary—"The Francis Nabors Griffen Bird Sanctuary at Wilson-Ledbetter Park", with a ceremony including a dedication of the sanctuary sign by her grandson Chancy Lewis.

At 7pm will be our keynote speaker, Andrew Sansom, Executive Director of River Systems Institute. He will be speaking from the bridge over the creek and tell us all about water conservation issues. "We've already committed for use more water from our rivers and streams than is actually in them," Sansom warns, as a way of pointing out the urgency of water issues. "We face a future in Texas in which rivers that we identify with Texas, like the Guadalupe, could literally dry up."

Following that, at dusk, amphibian lovers will really enjoy a "Sounds of the Night" program put on by Lee



Wilson-Ledbetter Park

Ann Linam and Marsha May, leaders of the Amphibian Watch program with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Listen to those croakers! Then after dark, there will be an outdoor movie, complete with popcorn!

Saturday's all day long activities and events are numerous and varied. Some will be presentations at several scheduled times, and oth-

ers will run more or less continually.

We are building a "native prairie exhibit" with native grasses taken from around Milam County, and Dr Barron Rector, Associate Professor at Texas A&M will lead discussions on these wonderful grasses.

Our own "wildflower meadow" has already been seeded, and Flo Oxley, Director of Education and Conservation at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center will speak on "Wildflowers—Legends and Lore", and along with Debbie Harris will lead a children's activity on making Lollipop Flowers.



Wildflowers in our Meadow already.

We also have a "wildscape" under way, and Mark Klym, co-author of the beautifully photographed *Hummingbirds of Texas* and an employee of Texas Parks and Wildlife, will discuss components of wildscapes and how to build one at your own home.

Jeff Williams, from Sam Houston State University, will speak on the fascinating history of the El Camino Real de los Tejas Heritage Trail, which runs right through Milam County.

Jill Nokes, landscape designer and author of *Yard Art and Handmade Places: Extraordinary Expressions of Home* will share her expertise on native plants of Texas.

(Continued on page 2)



We will have twenty bluebird houses installed around the perimeter of the park, and the Texas Bluebird Society will be on hand to demonstrate how to build and maintain a bluebird trail on your property. Bluebird houses, and plans for how to build them and mount them, will also be available.



Alston Thoms, professor of Anthropology Texas A&M University, will speak on digging for artifacts and other archaeology topics.

Mark Ellet will conduct a session on raptors, those beautiful and powerful birds of prey.

Joe Lapp, otherwise known as "Spider Joe", will lead folks on a walking and learning excursion through the trees to discover and discuss those spiders we all love so much(!). Maybe you can take some home with you!



Other activities and events will cover such topics as: Snakes, Butterflies, Pollinators, Bats, Enviroscapes, Animal track molds, Amphibians, Horned Lizards, Birds and Hummingbirds, Dragonflies, and the

list goes on and on....

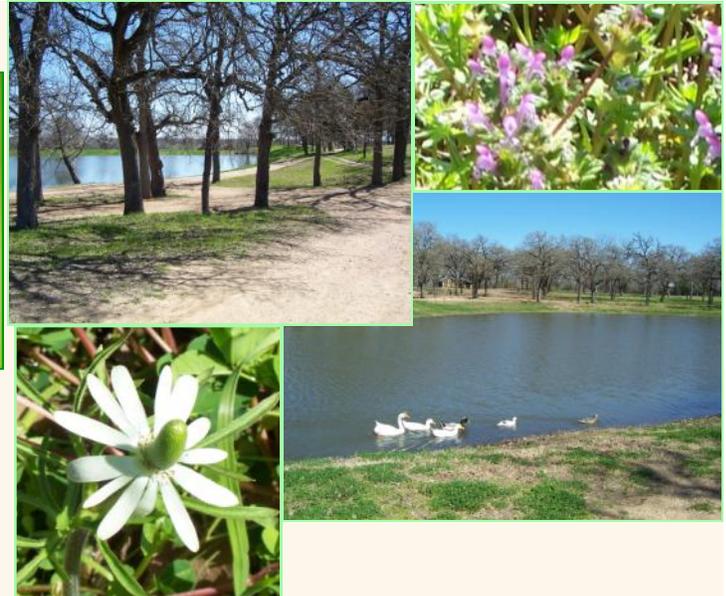
Lots of wonderful food vendors will be there to satisfy every kind of taste.

There are other sites to visit in the county as well, such as our town square and historic courthouse; the fascinating old county jail and museum dating from 1895; the Rockdale Train Depot; and the Cameron swimming pool!

For those attending from out of town, we've got some great motels and a variety of fantastic local restaurants. Visit the Cameron Chamber of Commerce web site at www.cameron-tx.com, and Rockdale's at www.rockdalechamber.com.

Mark your calendar now, and tell everyone you know to come join you and your family at this major local event. Make a whole weekend out of it.

You'll be glad you did!



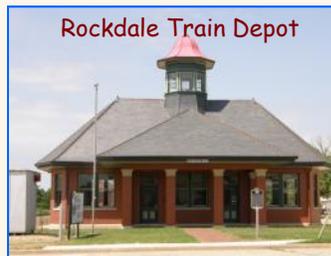
Building our bluebird houses



Sowing wildflower seeds, and raking them in.



County Courthouse



Rockdale Train Depot



Cameron Pool