

WILDFLOWER

Newsletter of the National Wildflower Research Center

Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1984

Lady Bird Finds Wildflower Lovers Everywhere

In all walks of life, I've taken my hat off to survivors. As I drive down the highway, to my great joy, wildflowers are there--colorful banners of daisies, primroses and many others. This hardiness and ability to bloom after the grueling conditions of this past winter and spring have reaffirmed my faith in the future of what we are about at the Center!

As I write this we have just completed our first blooming season at the National Wildflower Research Center. We are at last in our new building, and the quarters are functional and attractive. Our capable, small staff is in high spirits and ready to tackle every job with enthusiasm; the many volunteers are a bulwark and a joy; and the Texas Endowment Fund Drive moves ahead vigorously and more productively than I dared hope.

The bad news--we have had the worst winter on record in five decades here in Central Texas. It began with a freeze in mid-December followed by more than 30 days of below-freezing temperatures. (This phenomenon simply doesn't happen here.) A drought which set in during autumn has continued with record-breaking severity. From December 1 through May 10, over five months, only 3.67 inches of rain has been recorded at the weather station close to the Ranch (where some of our test plots have been put in) and only slightly more at the Wildflower Center. On my walks the fields crunch under foot, and there are cracks in the earth you could drop a pencil down. The consensus here is that Mother Nature decided to challenge us this year.

Despite our cruel spring, we have had some successes! Early in the season at the center, good stands of Gaillardia and red phlox bravely appeared, with surprisingly good germination and density, as well as some coreopsis and bluebonnets. We felt like cheering! Alas, on May 10th, the blossoms are short and sparse, instead of the lush Persian carpet we would have had with more rain!

I am excited about the generous reception wildflowers have gotten on my travels. I instinctively believed there was "a constituency out there" interested in wildflowers, grasses and the native plants which



In a festive mood, from left, Luci Johnson Turpin, Lady Bird Johnson and guest of honor Helen Hayes enjoy the Country Fair atmosphere of the Center's first benefit picnic with party-goers numbering over 1000. See story page 4.

make up the face of the land--but I must confess to a little timidity about finding them. To my delight, everywhere I went I found fellow-believers, and a sense of searching and real enthusiasm! I have talked about my hopes for our fledgling Center to reporters, Rotary-Club members, corporate executives, college students, the National School Boards Association, the annual Williamsburg Garden Club Symposium in Virginia, and at our Texas Wildflower Day at Texas Women's University. Often I found information to pass along to our clearinghouse. It has been so satisfying to discover and get to know our wildflower constituency.

In mid-May we held a stimulating, two-day Trustees meeting. Activities culminated in a festive "Country Fair" on May 12th at the LBJ Ranch--all provided for us by an incredibly dedicated and talented corps of volunteers. It has been a great boost to our spirits and our treasury.

With weather as our only adversary and the support of so many fine folks, we go forward undaunted, preparing for fall planting and long-term learning.

Lady Bird Johnson

Memo from the Director

Center Expands with New Building, More Staff

As spring wildflowers increase in numbers and beauty, the Research Center facility and staff also blossom. We are delighted to be in our new building complete with administrative offices, research laboratories, and space for the library and clearinghouse. Our small staff has dedicated many long hours to initiating new research projects and responding to increasing numbers of inquiries. The staff has grown to seven full-time and two part-time employees.



When the center began in December of 1982, there was an idea, a small house on a plot of undeveloped land, and a Board of Trustees headed by Nash Castro. From the beginning, the support of Mrs. Johnson and many other nationally prominent enthusiasts, gave substance to the development of this Center.

Our first employee was assistant director, Kathryn Kennedy, who began working at the Center in January, 1983. Kathryn is a plant ecologist with a M.S. degree in Botany from New Mexico State University. Her background includes experience in administration, editing, horticulture and field research. All of these skills were aptly used during the beginning months of the National Wildflower Research Center. From establishing the first field research plots to coordinating the administrative functions, Kathryn has done an outstanding job of utilizing volunteers to meet the Center's objectives and goals. With additional staff, Kathryn is able to focus her talents on research, clearinghouse, and the publication of this newsletter.

Joining Kathryn in April, 1983, was Caroline Howard as a "part-time assistant." Caroline is no stranger to work--or to starting new agencies. A mover and doer on the Austin--and Texas-- scene for many years, she has helped start such programs as Volunteers for Vision, Recording for the Blind, and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. A true adventurer, she is willing to take on any job. She is now a full-time staffer, and invaluable aid in the work of the clearinghouse, by helping to find answers for the thousands of requests for information that we receive. She also assists in coordinating surveys and volunteer projects.

Last July, we were financially able to hire expert office management assistance, and the position was filled by Wendy Wood, our administrative coordinator. Wendy has impressive credentials, having worked in the executive offices of The Rockefeller University and The American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Her years of experience with boards of directors, corporate executives and academic researchers are invaluable to us. So is her flexibility, as she is willing to bounce from typewriter to computer to office manager to blue jean-clad planting assistant on a moment's notice.

This year we expanded the staff to include Carolyn Curtis as Development Director. Carolyn is ex-

perienced in helping agencies meet their financial needs. She has worked as assistant director of development at the University of Texas at Austin, is a past president of the Austin Junior League, and is on the Board of the local United Way, Seton Medical Center Development Fund, and a local bank. Since accepting the position in January, Carolyn has devoted many hours to development activities. She has initiated the two-year Founders' Fund drive, the Capital Development Campaign, and a spring benefit at the LBJ Ranch. Carolyn is also working with a committee of Trustees, chaired by Carlton Lees, to establish a national membership program.

Dr. Richard Hilsenbeck, who recently completed his Ph. D. in Botany at UT Austin, has worked for the Center half-time since November, 1983. Assisting in data collection and analysis on our local research plots, Richard's expertise will be missed when he leaves soon for a faculty position at Sul Ross University in Alpine, TX.

Thanks to a research grant to investigate the potential of using native grasses and wildflowers for landscaping commercial developments, in March we hired Julie Willcott half-time to collect and analyze data on the project. Jointly funded by Melvin Simon Associates, a national shopping mall developer, and Walter Vackar Properties of Austin, this research project will fully utilize all of Julie's training. An honors botany graduate of UT Austin, Julie received her M. S. in Plant and Soil Science at the University of Massachusetts.

In mid-May Stephanie Transou joined our staff as a secretary. She is a spring graduate of UT Austin, and has a B. A. in marketing. Stephanie has a long term interest in nonprofit agency work. She gained valuable experience in her previous employment with the Houston Foundation for the Retarded and with several college organizations. She will be assisting in our development efforts and other projects.

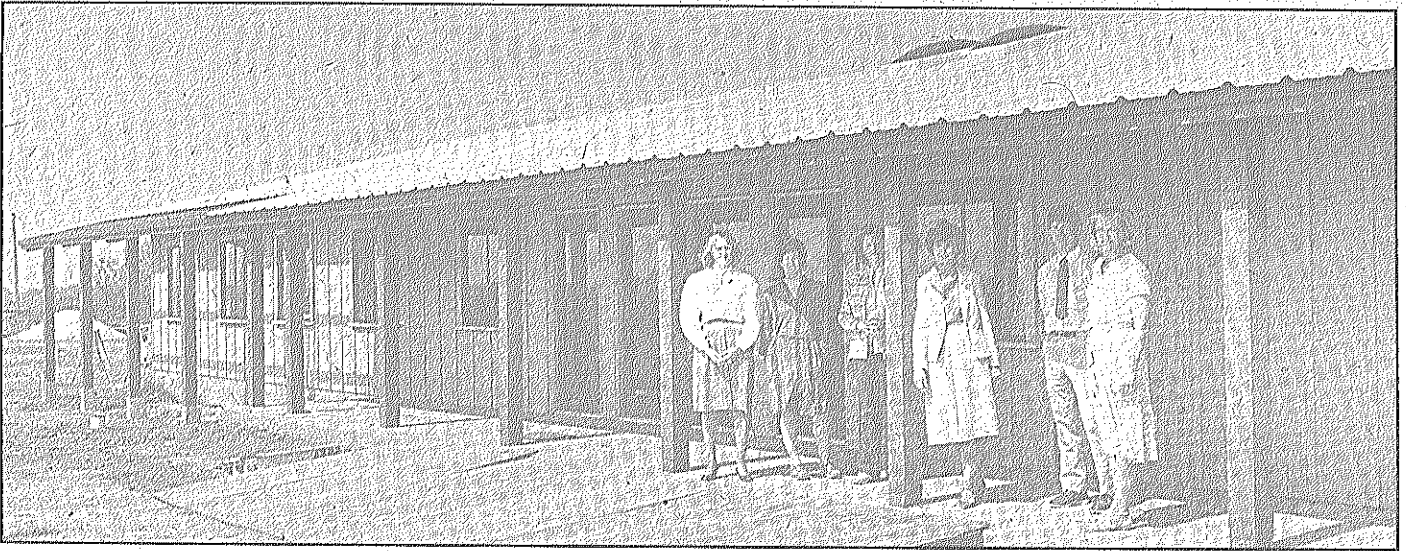
Our newest full-time staff member is Pam Jones who joined the Center as a research botanist on June 1. Pam comes to us fresh from graduation from Texas Tech University. With a B. S. in Botany and with several summers of ecological field research work, we plan to use Pam's expertise in several research areas.

For obvious reasons, I look forward to working with this talented and dedicated staff. With increasing support, we eagerly and enthusiastically continue to expand our research, clearinghouse and educational

Continued on Page 3

Executive Director: Dr. David Northington
 Assistant Director: Kathryn Kennedy
 Development Director: Carolyn Curtis
 Editor: Leslie Kjellstrand
 Photographer: David Kennedy
 Graphic designers: Linda Adkins, Kelly Leahy

Wildflower is the newsletter of the National Wildflower Research Center. It is financed through contributions from friends. None of the material contained herein may be reprinted without the proper written acknowledgement of the editor. Address all correspondence to Wildflower, The National Wildflower Research Center, 2600 FM 973 North, Austin, TX 78725



Most of the staff members of the National Wildflower Research Center stand near the newly completed headquarter building just north of Austin, TX. They are, from left to right, Kathryn Kennedy, Assistant Director; Julie Willcott, Research Assistant; Wendy Wood, Administrative Coordinator; Carolyn Curtis, Development Director; Dr. David North-

ington, Executive Director; and Caroline Howard, Administrative Assistant. The staff moved into the building in mid-May. Besides staff office space, the building includes a library, computer room, herbarium room and laboratory, conference room and reception area with a visitor's gallery to be developed.

Continued from Page 2

Wildflower Center Keeps Growing

programs. We are delighted by--almost amazed at--the national response to our efforts in promoting the use of wildflowers, native grasses, shrubs and trees in beautification, landscaping, land reclamation and conservation.



Kelly Leahy

WHY WILDFLOWERS?

The small rosy-orange flowers that cheerfully cluster along southern roadsides and ranchlands could be the answer to one aspect of a wildlife management problem, according to the United States Forest Service.

The flower is Globe Mallow, *Sphaeralcea coccinea*, a spring bloomer with gray green foliage, growing in the semiarid grasslands of the Southwest. It is also known as the sore-eye poppy because it was reputed to have been used by the Pima and Hopi Indians for certain eye and intestinal disorders.

This innocent flower is rich in Vitamin A, scientists have found, and may be the answer to nutrient problems for young antelope. Vitamin A is vital to the development of antelope and it is difficult to find in the early spring months. By cultivating seeds of the Globe Mallow, foresters hope to provide more nutrients in semiarid rangelands.

Earl Aldon, project leader of Watershed Management Research at the U.S. Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station said, "Most wildflowers are generally classified as forb species. This is an area of research that has been neglected. Forb seeds are very hard to get."

To remedy this situation, the Forest Service is working with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service's Plant Materials Center at Los Lunas, NM. They are attempting to develop a reliable seed source for Globe Mallow and other forb-type wildflowers.



Globe Mallow, *Sphaeralcea coccinea*

Become a Charter Member

Charter membership in the National Wildflower Research Center is now being offered at the special rate of \$20.00 per year per member.

Members will receive our quarterly newsletter, information about wildflowers and an invitation to visit the Center. In addition members will receive notification of other special opportunities and events.

Please send your membership checks along with your name, address, city and zip code to The National Wildflower Research Center, 2600 FM 973 North, Austin, TX, 78725.

Your contributions are tax deductible.

Yes, I would like to be a member of the National Wildflower Research Center. I am enclosing my check or money order for \$20.00 for annual membership.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please mail to: The National Wildflower Research Center, 2600 FM 973, Austin, TX 78725

Over 1000 Attend Center's "Country Fair" Benefit

Hot air balloons sailing into the sunset, strains of *Texas When I Die*, gift bags full of wildflower items, gourmet foods from the distinct regions of Texas, quilts on haybales, 25 aircraft landing with guests, a poetry reading by Helen Hayes—all these and more were the exciting facets of the first benefit of the National Wildflower Research Center. General Chairman was Maline McCalla of Austin whose hardworking committee converted the peaceful banks of the Pedernales River by the LBJ Ranch House into an old-fashioned country fairground and elaborate picnic.

Hostess to a crowd of over 1000, Mrs. Johnson told the group, "I think it's deep in the heart of a lot of people that they love their country, their heritage and the look of their land. They see it changing in front of their faces. They do not want to say good bye to all of those beautiful fields and meadows and open land that they remember."

Supporters agreed. They paid either \$125 or \$500 per ticket to support the wildflower research underway at the center, as well as to mingle with Texas' elite including Governor Mark White, U. S. Representative Jake Pickle, Mayor Ron Mullen of Austin, actress Amanda Blake, Lynda Johnson Robb, Luci Johnson Turpin, and members of the Center's Board of Trustees.

Guests strolled among informational displays by local environmental groups, wildflower education exhibits and booths offering wildflower crafts, books and art for sale to benefit the center.

After a gourmet picnic, Master of Ceremonies and humorist Cactus Pryor introduced Darryl Royal who presented country singer Ed Bruce of Nashville. Following a poetry reading by Helen Hayes, Lady Bird Johnson thanked the guests and led the group in singing *America, the Beautiful* in an unforgettable moment at sunset.

Proceeds of more than \$150,000 will go towards covering the operating costs of the National Wildflower Research Center.

Much of the success of the event was due to Mrs. McCalla, member of the Center's Board of

Trustees, who assembled over 100 individuals, many representing area businesses, associations and support groups to plan, organize, and promote the event. Many guests volunteered to work as bartenders, docents, parking assistants and clean-up crew, to insure that more of the funds raised would directly benefit the Center. The event was an impressive outpouring of generosity, and its success sets a precedent for future Wildflower Center benefits around the state and nation.

We Need Your Help

The computer for the clearinghouse at the Center has arrived! We need information to build a quality reference service. Your knowledge about wildflower projects, research, and organizations working with wildflowers would be helpful. We are also anxious to obtain articles, books and publications with any information that relates to wildflowers or to native plants and grasses.

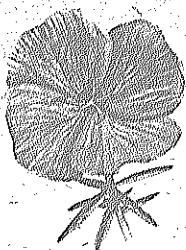
The Center still has a number of items needed to equip our expanding offices, clearinghouse and research operation. These include three IBM correcting typewriters, two computer work stations, a cassette tape recorder, both two- and four-drawer filing cabinets, a small gas lawnmower, a small tractor, library shelving, two binocular microscopes, herbarium specimen cases and a carousel slide projector. These items are also tax-deductible.

For those who live nearby and can donate a few hours, there are many jobs to do for the Center. We need office help, docents, groundskeepers, computer assistants and gardening helpers.

If you can help us out, call us at 512-929-3600, or write the National Wildflower Research Center, 2600 FM 973 North, Austin, TX 78725.

National Wildflower Research Center

2600 FM 973 North
Austin, TX 78725



NATIONAL WILDFLOWER RESEARCH CENTER
4801 LaCrosse Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78739
(512) 292-4200

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1005
AUSTIN, TEXAS