

CHIHUAHUAN DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FEBRUARY THROUGH MAY, 2012

P.O. BOX 905
FORT DAVIS, TX 79734

PLANNING

Goal: Take a close look at our operations and programs through the planning process to identify strengths and opportunities, and develop strategies to take CDRI to the next level.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETS

Following a presentation by Alvidrez Architects at the February board meeting, the building committee and CDRI staff met to discuss the Alvidrez design and to review designs that had been submitted in the past. Committee members expressed disappointment in the Alvidrez plans due to the size (footprint) of the buildings, the anticipated cost of the two buildings, and the apparent disregard to our interest in having the buildings LEED certified. Additional concern was expressed about the lack of responsiveness by the architects to our repeated requests for additional information.

Committee chairman Larry Francell will write a letter to Alvidrez Architects offering them the opportunity to come answer questions about their design and see whether they are responsive to working with another plan.

Land and Site Manager Mark Foreman presented a conceptual design that he drew that would combine all three functions (administration, research, and education) into a single building with a much smaller footprint. The building would provide natural light and air flow to the building, block the wind (providing protected outdoor space for education and special events), and provide the flexibility and functionality needed. Committee members were asked to submit comments to Mark on the new design so that he could redraw the building before the next committee meeting.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal: To provide appropriate, safe, attractive facilities for researchers, visitors, staff, collections, and programs.

TECHNOLOGY

FIBER OPTICS CABLE

This spring, Big Bend Telephone provided an upgrade of service to the CDRI by laying a fiber optics cable to the Visitors' Center. Work continues on this project, but we should be spliced into the system by the end of June.

Fiber optics will provide crisper communications and be more weatherproof. In addition, it provides a larger bandwidth that will allow us to stream and receive data much quicker. This will become important as we develop our research and education programs.

MAINTENANCE & SITE IMPROVEMENTS

MAINTENANCE PROJECTS

- With the use of a 20-ft. extension ladder, Mark Foreman braved a windy day to replace the broken lanyards and pulleys on the flag poles.
- Repair of the fiberglass siding on the Houston Shed. This small building, built with funds from the Houston Cactus and Succulent Society, was the first CDRI greenhouse. Over the years, termites have eaten away the wooden posts, gradually lowering the building and causing the fiberglass sheathing to buckle. The damage to the building is severe and it will have to be removed soon before it falls over. The building is currently used for garden equipment storage.
- After several months of calling, Mark was finally able to motivate Herman Acosta to fix the leaks that continue to plague the maintenance building.
- Prior to spring break in March, the trails were pruned of low-hanging branches and clothes-snagging catclaw. Additional work on the trails will continue this summer.
- Two small, metal storage buildings are slated to be moved to the north side of the maintenance building this summer. The Discovery Building (the white building near the pavilion) is ready to be moved. An attempt is being made to save as much of the old material as possible so that the porch and roof can be reconstructed after the building is moved. By moving the two buildings, we will consolidate all the storage areas into a single place that is out-of-sight to visitors.

FIRE ARM INCIDENT

On March 30, law enforcement personnel were called to the CDRI when a motorcyclist came through the gate from the Beal's property, took out a hand gun and started shooting at a "stump" (actually an iron wellhead) in the CDRI grasslands. He was within approximately 100 ft. of the maintenance building and greenhouse complex. According to the sheriff, the motorcyclist (one of Barry Beal's nephews) said that he was lost, thought that he was still on the Beal ranch, and was waiting for someone to come pick him up because his motorcycle had a flat tire. He said that he didn't know anyone was around although at the time two staff members, a volunteer, and a family with children were in the area.

The sheriff said they believed his story and would give him a warning.

In response to this incident, a lock was put on the back gate. The combination was given to the ranch foreman who was asked not to share it with Beal visitors.

TRAIL SIGNS

In response to increasing complaints from visitors about getting lost on the trails, the trail system was mapped with a Trimble GPS and new trail signs were installed at all trail junctions. An additional trail sign was installed on top of Clayton's Overlook near the geology exhibit. Unfortunately, within two weeks of the installation at least one of the new signs was vandalized by someone scratching through the plastic with a sharp object.

MAINTENANCE BUILDING

It may be called the maintenance building, but the new structure near the greenhouse has proven to be versatile and amazingly useful. Since August, 2011 when the building was completed it has been used as:

- Meeting space for two board meetings and numerous committee meetings
- Office space for staff
- Living space for the Executive Director after her home was destroyed in a fire
- Shop space for various woodworking projects
- Space for the Fort Worth Cactus and Succulent Society to enjoy lunch on a blustery day
- Space for education programs
- Storage and maintenance of equipment
- Storage for archived paperwork
- A place for a photography workshop
- Headquarters for a desert ecology class from the University of North Carolina-Asheville
- Space for a cactus repotting workshop and weekend of work

PROGRAMS

MEMBERSHIP & VOLUNTEER

Goal: To recruit new members, retain current members, and provide quality programs and services to all members.

IMPROVING OUR MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Susan Penney continues to work on improving the membership program. This spring she clarified the membership categories and added several new benefits:

- Clarification of Benefits: The Living Lightly membership category provides free admission to the Nature Center for one person.
- New Benefits: Memberships in the Friend and above categories now include complimentary guest passes and complimentary Living Lightly memberships to give as a gift.

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM TO GIFTWORKS CONTINUES

The transfer of our membership database to the Giftworks program continues. The learning curve has been fairly steep, but Susan is learning how to process mailings and customize the program so that it provides the information that we need. In order to ensure accuracy, Susan and Marty have gone back through all the 2011 membership forms to make sure that all members are listed. The next step is to cross-check the database by going through the files associated with the old program.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What would we do without our volunteers? This great group of people helped with the following projects:

- Leading hikes during spring break. Two new volunteers, Joe Skinner and Jim Glendenning, were trained to lead Modesta Canyon hikes.
- Preparation for the Cactus Frenzy event. This included preparing and repotting cactus, sorting plants for the sale, labeling, removing mealy bugs from plants, and top-dressing pots.
- Brochure design. Heather Gully of Sanderson redesigned the Nature Center brochure. This brochure includes a color map of the hiking trails (produced by Mark Foreman using our GIS program) and general information about what there is to see and do at the Nature Center.
- Transporting cactus. We wanted some landscape-sized cactus and succulents from a wholesale grower in Arizona. Unfortunately, to ship the plants would cost more than the plants themselves. At the time, Ken Smith was living in Arizona and planning a trip back to Alpine. He graciously offered to load up his trailer with cactus and bring them to us in time for the cactus sale.
- Yank and Yak continue to weed the gardens, clean up flower beds, prune, and clean up slash from the botanical gardens.
- Bug Day! Twenty volunteers came to stand in the rain and teach 170 children about bugs. See a complete report on this program in the education section.

EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION

Goal: Continue to expand the scope and maintain the high quality of our education programs.

CHIHUAHUAN DESERT MINING HERITAGE EXHIBIT

The mining heritage exhibit is in desperate need of routine maintenance. Many of the signs are so badly faded they can't be read, paint is peeling, condensation is building up in "waterproof" boxes, and sealant is sagging. Mark Foreman is working with Joe Mussey to take care of the maintenance needs for the exhibit.

SIGNAGE

The Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center is one of the feature destinations on the Far West Texas Wildlife Trail Map. The map was produced as a cooperative project between the Texas Mountain Trail organization, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Texas Pecos Trail region. The map features 10 driving loops and 57 sites extending from El Paso to the Permian Basin to the Big Bend.

Each of the 57 feature destinations was given a large sign with the destination number and logo of the Wildlife Trail. Mark Foreman constructed a sturdy mount for the sign and installed it near the flagpoles at the highway.

For more information about the trail system, visit the Texas Mountain Trail website at <http://www.texasmountaintrail.com>.

YOUTH GROUPS

Programs

Programs were provided to the following youth groups this spring:

- Prude Ranch group (46 students)

- Woodlands Christian Academy (20 students)
- Royse City (12 students)
- Radford (10 students)
- Ambleside School, San Angelo (15 students)
- St. Marks School (28 students)
- Alpine High School (10 students)
- Heritage School (8 students)
- St. Paul Lutheran School (30 students)
- Terry County 4H (34 students)
- Alpine Christian School (7 students)

Bugs, Bugs, Bugs Field Day! May 8

Bug Field Day dawned cloudy and rainy (yes, in early May). Despite the damp, cool weather 170 children from Bessie Hanes Elementary in Pecos and Dirks-Anderson Elementary in Fort Davis arrived full of enthusiasm and curiosity. Staff and volunteers were quick on their feet to get all stations moved and set up out of the rain. Clustered around the porch, under tents, and in the greenhouse and maintenance building, 20 willing and eager volunteers dished out chocolate-dipped crickets, taught children about pollination, and exposed them to the wonders of metamorphosis.

The following stations were available for exploration:

- Here a Bug, There a Bug, Everywhere a Bug: Garden walks and bug collecting
- Pollination: Greenhouse tours and pollination demonstrations
- Life Cycles: Viewing a real chrysalis and learning the butterfly life cycle
- My, My, What Big Eyes You Have: Using microscopes for bug identification
- Forensic Entomology: How bugs are used in science
- Bugs on Critters: The bugs that live on cats, dogs, etc.
- It's Creepy, It's Crawly, and Hisses by Golly: Live worms, hissing cockroaches, larvae, and crickets for students to learn about and touch
- Seedballs: Making seedballs that will attract pollinators to a garden
- Cricket a la Mode: Real edible bugs to taste
- Build-A-Bug: Learning the basic anatomy of an insect by building one out of found materials. (Some were real works of art!)

ADULT GROUPS

Conservation Across Boundaries Teacher's Workshop

Jessica Glasscock spent a great deal of time this spring preparing budgets, site locations, developing the agenda and curriculum, and arranging for catering for this summer's teacher's workshop. Brochures advertising the workshop were taken to all the local schools and an email promoting the workshop was sent to all the Regional Science Coordinators and science teachers in school.

Unfortunately, the minimum of nine teachers was not reached by the deadline for registration and the program was canceled for 2012.

Tours & Site Visits

Tours were given to the following groups this spring:

- Wildlife and Native Vegetation: Rainwater for Landscapes (23 participants)
- Retired historians (group guided by Jim Glendenning) (26 participants)
- Leadership Big Bend
- Fort Worth Cactus & Succulent Society

- Central Texas Master Naturalist group
- Rio Grande Institute conference

Art at the Nature Center

We've always known how beautiful the nature center is. Now, the Nature Center is being discovered by art groups. This spring, photographer Jake Lorfing (www.goslophotos.com) of Austin brought a group out for a workshop on contemplative photography. They started the day down in the quarry area and then reviewed their photos during an afternoon session in the maintenance building. Jake said that everyone had a wonderful time and that they would definitely be back.

Renowned western artist Edgar Sotelo (www.soteloart.com) spent a day painting at the CDRI. Later that week, he and Bill Davis of Fort Davis brought a group of painters out for a landscape painting workshop sponsored by The Gallery at the Fort Davis Drugstore.

Presentations

The following presentations were given this spring:

- Education Programs at the CDRI. Talk given to Delta Kappa Gamma members.
- Earth Science Education at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center. Presentation at the South-Central Section of the Geological Society of America.
- Overview of the CDRI. Presentation to the 2012 class of Leadership Big Bend.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Lectures

- Bears, Fire, and Drought. Lecture by Dr. Diana Doan-Crider (35 attendees)
- Outdoor Lighting. Lecture by Bill Wren, UT McDonald Observatory (14 attendees)

Fieldtrips & Workshops

- Pruning workshop with Oscar Mestas, West Texas Urban Forester.
- Chaa Ranch: Exploring the Chinati Mountains (7 participants)
- Field Trip to the Potrillo Volcanic Field, New Mexico. Cancelled due to lack of participants.
- Birding at the Circle DUG Ranch. Cancelled due to lack of participants.

HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

GOAL: Further develop the Living Plant Collection and gardens so that they are attractive and informative for visitors, accessible to researchers, and meet the standards specified in the CDRI's Plant Collections Policy.

MAINTENANCE PROJECTS

Greenhouse

Leslie Spicer, our new gardener, tackled some big jobs in the greenhouse this spring. These included:

- Getting a mealy bug infestation under control. Mealy bugs and spider mites are a continual problem in the greenhouse. In addition to our routine spraying of the plants with an organic pesticide, Leslie is using a systemic pesticide to knock back the infestation to a level where it can be controlled with our organic mix.
- Cleaning up from the freeze of 2011. Leslie removed dead cactus, empty pots, and weeded in the greenhouse.
- Installation of two more black barrels for passive solar energy and shelving under the tables to maximize space for seedlings.

- Numbering the tables for easier reference.
- Moving seedlings from shelving under the table to temporary tables where they receive more light.
- Salvage of two stems of Mexican Lime Cactus. These are the largest of our barrel cactus and were planted in a half-barrel in the corner of the greenhouse. Over the years, the wooden barrel rotted away. The rotten wood was removed and the cacti were propped up with a stone retaining wall. This spring, two stems of the cacti rotted at the base and fell over. Mark Foreman and Leslie were able to remove the rotten stems, cut off the bad part of the plants, and let the healthy tissue callous. The stems were then planted in the in-ground cactus bed at the end of the greenhouse. Although it will be awhile before we know, the stems appear to be putting out roots.
- Working with Patty Manning from Sul Ross State University to learn more about raising cactus and to develop a watering schedule for our collection.

Garden Maintenance

In addition to the greenhouse, Leslie—with the help of the Yank and Yak volunteers and CDRI staff—has been working on garden maintenance. Some projects included:

- Tons of weedeating. Leslie and crew are weedeating and hand weeding the garden areas to better highlight the specimen plants.
- Repairing and replacing the drip irrigation system.
- Removing plants that did not survive the 2011 freeze and/or the drought.
- Taking piles of slash from the garden to Alpine Recycle where they are chipped and shredded for reuse in landscaping projects.
- Establishing compost piles in the garden to be used for the soft green material removed during pruning and weeding operations.
- Major pruning. The garden is shaping up due to some major pruning efforts.
- Removal of feather grass in the gardens and around the Visitors' Center. This attractive grass has proven to be quite invasive in the gardens. We are removing as much as possible.
- Slash removal. Several volunteer days have been dedicated to removing the piles of woody removal created when the fire crews came through last year to prune and create fire breaks. Piles of slash have also been discovered hidden behind trees by former staff members. These piles are also being picked up and recycled.

PROBLEMS IN THE GARDEN

Several of our madrones have died within the last year and two more appear near death. Discussions with Oscar Mestas (West Texas Urban Forester) and the head horticulturalist at Texas A&M have shown that this is a range-wide problem. Madrones are dying through their range due to the severity of the drought and the spread of a fungal disease similar to oak-wilt disease. Leslie is paying more attention to the watering schedule and trying to gradually increase the soil moisture content.

Leslie has been monitoring the high temperatures in the greenhouse and discovered that our greenhouse gets much too warm—even for a cactus collection. Temperatures routinely reach 118°F (the maximum temperature on our thermometer) during the day. To help this situation, Mark Foreman removed the levered screens over the fan boxes and replaced them with 1/4inch hardware cloth in a wooden frame. This allows for better air flow when the fans are on. In addition, levered screens near the ceiling of the greenhouse at the far end were removed. This reduced the temperature of the greenhouse by about 5 °F within a few minutes. Mark reports that the fans in the greenhouse now turn off about 6:00 in the evening rather than running well into the night.

During the warm weather that we're currently experiencing, the greenhouse is still getting too warm. Mark and Leslie continue to discuss options with the ultimate goal being to maintain a temperature of less than 102 °F.

DATABASES AND INVENTORIES

With more staff and more volunteers, tracking what's been done and when things need to be done is becoming more important. This spring, databases were created to track the watering schedule for plants in the garden and greenhouse and to monitor the temperature in the greenhouse.

In addition, garden staff and volunteers inventoried the plants in the garden and created a database indicating the watering needs of each species represented. This database is proving very useful as we begin designing the new irrigation system.

CACTUS RESCUE IN MARFA

Leslie Spicer and volunteer Candice Covington, removed and repotted a number of cacti from a yard in Marfa. The owner of the property had planted an extensive cactus garden, but then found that she could no longer take care of the garden as she got older. She called the CDRI and offered to give us any cactus that we wanted. Although most of the plants were too big to safely remove, Leslie and Candice "rescued" some prickly pears that were potted up and sold at the plant sale.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CACTUS FRENZY!

Each spring, we host an event focused on cactus and succulents to coincide with spring break and the spring bloom in the greenhouse. To help prepare for this event, Jim and Ann Black of San Antonio came out for a weekend of training for staff and volunteers. During the training event, hundreds of young (and old!) cactus were repotted. Before the weekend, staff and volunteers spent several days unpotting seedlings, washing the roots and setting them out to callous, and sterilizing pots.

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

GOAL: Actively promote, facilitate, and support research in the Chihuahuan Desert region.

BIRD RESEARCH

Bird surveys continue to be conducted at the Nature Center as part of four major projects:

- As part of his MS research, Mark Foreman is conducting weekly bird counts to compare bird diversity in the burned and unburned portions of the Nature Center property. His study will continue through the year and will be presented as a thesis project in the spring of 2013.
- Volunteer Josh Burns continues his baseline bird surveys of the CDRI property. So far in 2012, he has submitted 9 reports to eBird and documented 34 species at the Nature Center. Josh has submitted 148 reports and documented 126 species since he began surveys at the Nature Center in 2008.
- Breeding Bird Census. Every four days in the summer, CDRI staff and volunteers census breeding bird activity in the grasslands. Data collected include number and species of birds engaged in breeding behavior (singing, interacting, visiting an active nest) and the location of the activity (using a GPS, rangefinder, and compass direction). The locational information is used to create maps of breeding bird territories. The breeding bird census is now in its fourth year and is producing interesting information about the shift in breeding bird populations since the juniper removal project, the fire, and the drought. A report on the project will be published in the next newsletter.

- The CDRI continues to participate in national birding initiatives such as the Great Backyard Bird Count held each February. During this citizen scientist event, birders of all levels are encouraged to come to the CDRI to participate in a census of our 500 acres. In 2012, 8 participants documented 12 species of birds during the 2.5 hour survey. The bird count data was submitted to the national database maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

BUTTERFLY RESEARCH

Data collection for three butterfly research projects began again this spring when the weather warmed and the winds quit blowing quite so hard. These projects include:

- Pollard Walk. Butterfly species and numbers are documented once a week along a 2.5 mile transect. This project is designed to collect baseline data for butterfly populations on the Nature Center property as part of a larger project using butterfly populations as indicators of climate change.
- Butterfly Recovery. After the fire last spring, a grant was received from the James A. “Buddy” Davidson Foundation to study the rate of recovery of butterflies in the burned section of the CDRI grasslands. The project is examining the impact of the fire and drought on butterfly populations that overwinter as eggs or pupae and could not escape the early spring fire.
- Fort Davis Butterfly Count Circle. The CDRI organizes three annual butterfly counts in a 15 mile count circle centered on the Jeff Davis County courthouse. This project is part of the North American butterfly counts coordinated by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). Count results are uploaded to the NABA website.

PERMANENT TRANSECTS MARKED

To aid in studies being conducted on the burned and unburned portions of the grasslands, posts marking transect lines were placed marking the beginning and end of each 100 meter transect. This spring, the posts were labeled with a sign that has the transect number and lat/long position.

The transects are being used for a vegetation recovery project, the butterfly recovery project, and a repeat photography project visually documenting changes to the grasslands.

RESEARCH PAPERS PUBLISHED

A number of papers on research conducted at the CDRI were published this spring:

- Farallo VR and Forstner MRJ (2012) Predation and the Maintenance of Color Polymorphism in a Habitat Specialist Squamate. PLoS ONE 7(1): e30316.doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0030316
- McAlister, Cynthia (2012) An insect pollinator survey at the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI), Jeff Davis County, Texas, and a comparison of the native bee diversity of the CDRI's Botanical Gardens to that of the surrounding grasslands using pan traps. M.S. thesis, Department of Biology, Sul Ross State University.
- Hillen, Chris (2012) Conservation and Sustainable Use of Rio Grande Basin Water Resources. M.A. thesis, Department of Communications, Sul Ross State University.
- Foreman, M. (2012) Literature Review for Proposed Thesis on Avifaunal Use of Burned and Unburned Habitat. Unpublished paper, Natural Resource Management 5304, Sul Ross State University.
- Foreman, M. (2012). Prescribed Fire Plan for the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute. Unpublished paper, Fire Ecology MRM 5303, Sul Ross State University.
- Foreman, M. (2012). Linear Regression Analysis of Number of Birds Observed at Different Times of Day. Unpublished paper, Biostatistical Analysis II, NRM 5313, Sul Ross State University.
- Wander, Sharon (ed.) (2012) NABA Butterfly Counts 2011 Report.

VISITING RESEARCHERS

Weatherford College Department of Physical Sciences

In May, students and instructors from the Weatherford College Department of Physical Sciences spent the day at the Nature Center. The focus of their visit was the interpretation of the volcanic and tectonic history of the area, the age and order of geological events, as well as the paleontological history of the area.

University of North Carolina-Asheville

University of North Carolina-Asheville professor Dr. Jonathan Horton brought his desert ecology class to the Nature Center in late May. The group camped for four days at the pavilion and used the maintenance building as their center of operations. In teams of two, students conducted various research projects (such as basking behavior of lizards on different types of igneous rock, pollination ecology of yuccas, and an investigation of bird diversity in the burned and unburned grasslands) during their stay. Several students participated in the long-term bird and butterfly surveys being conducted by Mark Foreman and Cathryn Hoyt. Papers produced for the class will be submitted to the CDRI library.

SPECIAL EVENTS

CACTUS FRENZY (MARCH)

The focus was on cactus during the annual Cactus Frenzy event scheduled for the week of spring break in March. Preparation for the event included updating the Cactus Care brochure, repotting thousands of cactus seedlings, and ordering plants for the sale. This year we were forced to purchase plants from cactus nurseries because our plants were too small and Patty Manning lost many of her cacti in the 2011 freeze.

In addition to the cactus sale, guided hikes into Modesta Canyon were led by CDRI staff members and volunteers each morning and a brief presentation, followed by a garden tour, was given each afternoon. The Talks at 2 included:

- The Many Uses of the Agave
- Cooking with Desert Plants (given twice)
- Recovery from the Rockhouse Fire
- Adaptations to the Desert
- Cactus Care & Potting Tips.

ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE (APRIL)

The Annual Native Plant Sale was held in late April. Due to high fuel costs, one of our major suppliers would not deliver to us so we drove to Austin, rented a UHaul truck, and picked up the plants ourselves.

The figures below reflect income and expenses of plants only. The expense budget does not include staff time, advertising, food for Member's Night or any other non-plant related expense. In order to save some money on this event, the full-color, 4-page brochure that is usually produced and mailed to members was not sent out. Instead, members received a half-sheet postcard announcing the date of the sale and directing them to the website for more information on the plants.

Income	2012	2011	2010
Cactus	5,924*	5,312**	10,456**
Non-succulents	10,220	13,267	11,961
Total	\$16,144	\$18,579	\$22,417
Expenses			
Cactus			
Miles to Go	190		
Mesa Garden	109	280	
Arizona Wholesale Nursery	687	0	0
Sul Ross	541	953	632
Plants			
Mountain States Nursery	1,855	4,370	1,469
Native Ornamentals	1,663	1,248	2,058
SRSU	563	510	632
Native Texas Nursery	2,036	3,128	2,071
McNeal Growers	522	0	0
Total	7696	10,489	6,862
Net	\$8,448	\$8,090	\$15,555

* Through the end of May, 2012

** Through the end of the year.

For the past two years, Melissa Brady was responsible for putting together a beautiful 32-page, color, plant information catalog with images of each plant that we would carry and information about light and drainage requirements, the size of the mature plant, and the common and scientific name. Each catalog cost about \$2.00 to print and was distributed free-of-charge to plant sale visitors.

Although the catalogs were beautiful and informative, they were time-consuming and expensive to produce. This year we chose to make the catalog web-based. By visiting the CDRI website, visitors could see images of the plants and a link would take them to another website (usually the LadyBird Johnson Wildflower Center) where extensive information about the horticultural requirements for the plant could be found.

MANAGEMENT

STAFFING AND BENEFITS

Goal: To attract and retain qualified paid and volunteer staff for all services and activities.

STAFFING AND BENEFITS

Staff Changes

Leslie Spicer was hired as our head gardener this spring. She brings a great deal of energy and enthusiasm to the position and has made remarkable changes in the garden and greenhouse since she arrived.

Mary Lou Saxon was hired to work part-time in the Visitors' Center. Unfortunately, she found the commute from Marfa to be too expensive and time-consuming and found another job closer to home.

To replace Mary Lou, Joe Skinner was hired in late May. Joe will cover visitor's services on Thursday and Friday afternoons and all day on Saturday. All day Monday and in the mornings on Thursday and Friday, Joe will assist Mark and Leslie in the gardens doing various maintenance tasks.

Staff Development

CDRI staff have participated in a variety of professional development opportunities this spring:

- Mark Foreman completed a CPR and First Aid class.
- Susan Penney and Jessica Glasscock attended the Invaders of Texas workshop at Big Bend National Park. The Invaders of Texas is a citizen science program committed to recognizing species of invasive plants and insects and building a database that documents their locations across the state. Susan and Jessica attended to learn more about the program and access whether we should promote it as a citizen science program.
- Leslie Spicer spent time with Patty Manning in the Sul Ross greenhouses to learn about cactus care, potting, pollination, seed collection, and specific potting needs for our cactus collection.
- Leslie attended a two-day workshop at the Albuquerque Botanical Gardens to learn about cactus taxonomy. The workshop included classwork, fieldwork, and a trip to Mesa Gardens Cactus Nursery in Belen, NM.
- Jessica Glasscock successfully passed her oral exams and graduated in the spring with a Masters of Agriculture from Sul Ross. Congratulations, Jessica!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- February 17 Committee Meetings
- February 18 Board of Directors Meeting
- May 23 Building Committee Meeting
- May 30 Garden Committee Meeting
- June 6 Building Committee Meeting

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

GRANTS-IN-HAND

James A. "Buddy" Davidson Foundation Grant. The CDRI received an \$8,000 grant in 2011 to study the effects of the drought and fire on butterfly populations at the Nature Center. A preliminary progress report was submitted in March. Approximately \$6,000 of the grant remains and will be used this summer for data collection and to hire a graduate assistant to help with the vegetation transects.

Parks and Wildlife Trail Grant. This trail improvement grant was received several years ago to construct a more accessible trail to the geology exhibit on top of Clayton's Overlook. The trail was completed last year with the assistance of an AmeriCorp team, leaving us with about \$27,000 of grant funds left to develop interpretive panels and do some "touch-up" work on the trail. Mark Foreman has developed a plan to finish out the grant this summer.

Parks and Wildlife COOP Grant. Work in fulfillment of the goals of the COOP grant is completed. Jessica will send in the final report by the end of June.

Brown Foundation Grant. The CDRI received a generous contribution of \$3,000 last year in support of our educational programming from the Brown Foundation. A final report was submitted in May showing the Brown Foundation trustees how their funds were used to sponsor *The Earth Rocks!!!*, support our first Bug Day program, and support operation expenses for our youth programs.

In response to this final report, Brown Foundation trustee Travis Mathis, arranged for the CDRI to receive another \$2,000 grant in support of education programs in 2012.

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED

Permian Basin Area Foundation. A proposal requesting \$35,000 in funding to provide informal science programs to at least 75% of the elementary, middle-school, and junior high students within five regional school districts. The proposal, if successful, would allow us to hire an education assistant to develop a junior-high program and conduct pre- and post-visits to the schools. The proposal was submitted in May.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Family Crisis Center moved into smaller quarters at the new Alpine Library. Unfortunately for them, their 12 ft. conference table and 12 executive chairs would not fit in their new quarters. They called us and asked if it was something that we could use. An enthusiastic “yes!” later, we found ourselves with a conference table, chairs, wooden desk, and a filing cabinet.

ADMINISTRATION

It’s no fun, but it’s got to be done. Major tasks this spring included:

- Completing and filing the final Gloyd Estate tax report with the IRS.
- CDRI Form 990 completed, submitted to the board for review, and submitted.
- Arranged for Ron Kirby to conduct the 2011 audit.
- Completed and submitted the annual 401k plan audit.
- Arranged for Directors & Officers Liability Insurance for the Board of Directors. The insurance is afforded by Darwin National Assurance Company with a policy term of March 7th, 2012 to March 7th, 2013. The limits of insurance consist of \$1,000,000 each occurrence with an aggregate of \$1,000,000. The policy is on file at the CDRI.
- Adjusted and finalized liability and property insurance policies according to directives from the Board of Directors.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Talk at Ten (Aired May 9th)

Jessica Glasscock and Susan Penney were interviewed on Marfa Public Radio for one of their Talk at Ten segments. During the interview, Jessica and Susan were able to promote volunteer and education opportunities at the CDRI and the upcoming special programs for spring break.

Earth Day Event (April)

Board Member Jennifer Jordan did another great job representing the CDRI at the SRSU Conservation Biology Club’s Earth Day Event in Alpine. Jennifer and Jessica put together a display and gathered materials about the CDRI’s education programs to be handed out to parents and children attending the Earth Day Event. Thank you, Jennifer, for being such a great CDRI ambassador.

Article for the Cenizo Magazine

Cathryn Hoyt was invited to write an article on butterfly gardens for the fall issue of the *Cenizo Magazine*. The article and several photographs was accepted for publication.

ADVERTISING

CDRI staff continue to promote the Nature Center and CDRI programs through a variety of media. This spring promotional outreach included:

- CDRI events promoted on the Texas Events Calendar and the Texas State Travel Guide
- A brochure advertising the Cactus Frenzy! event and spring break activities was designed and printed in-house. Copies of the brochure were then distributed to hotels and motels in Alpine, Fort Davis, and Marfa.
- 400 rack cards were distributed at the Texas Academy of Sciences meeting held in Alpine.
- Several hundred rack cards were provided to organizers of the Texas Star Party for distribution during their event.
- Press releases promoting CDRI events were distributed to regional newspapers.
- Photographs of our botanical gardens were requested for publication in AAA Magazine.
- Advertisement for the next addition of the Big Bend Travel Guide.
- Two advertisements in the quarterly *Cenizo Magazine*.