



STEC Newsletter Editor -Edward Meza **Winter 2024 Edition –Looking Back at 2023**

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Looking Back at 2023

The year 2023 was great for South Texas Ecotourism Center. Attendance doubled from the previous year and our educational programs increased. We introduced hands on educational seminars for both children and adults. We included more seasonal events and participated with more outreach programs to promote our Center. We included a Spring Break camp and expanded our Speaker Series. More of the STEC interpretive features were completed and more animal sculptures added. In this Winter 2024 Edition, we will go back and share the programs and events we presented in 2023. We wish everyone a healthy and happy New Year and look forward to what 2024 has in store for the South Texas Ecotourism Center.

The South Texas Ecotourism Center is a Cameron County operated nature museum and information center dedicated to the education and preservation of South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley's six ecosystems. The Center offers outdoor exhibits with interpretive panels with QR codes, sculpture of native animals, over 48,000 native plants, a look out pavilion with two telescopes and binoculars to view the wildlife at the Center and at the Bahia Grande Unit of the Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge. The Center has brochures on south Texas and Valley nature centers and parks. The Center is located at 501 State Highway 100 in Laguna Vista, Texas. Open 7 days a week from 8 am to 5 pm. Free Admission. (956) 772-0210.

2023: Educational & Seasonal Events

Adult Craft Seminar: Paper Making

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Adult Craft Seminar: Owl Pellet Dissection

Adult Craft Seminar: Leaf Printing

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Kids Summer Program

Natural Ways to Dye
Sunday July 16th 2pm-3pm
Creating Art with Natural Dyes made from Vegetables
\$5.00 Per Child

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Small World
Sunday July 30th 2pm-3pm
Create a Bottle Ecosystem
\$5.00 Per Child

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Kids Summer Program

Slime Time
Sunday July 9th 2pm-3pm
Create a Natural Slime from Native Plants
\$5.00 Per Kid

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Fall Speaker Series 2023

South Texas Ecotourism Center: 2023 Spring Break
"Ecology and Our Ecosy"
(6 to 11 years old)
March 13 to March 19
Register Now!

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Halloween

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Mother's Day Celebration
May 14th
Free Flower & Box of Chocolates

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Film and a Picnic
Tuesday, August 8
11 am—1 pm

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Moth Night
Saturday, July 22, 2023
6:00pm - 12:00am

South Texas Ecotourism Center: August Blue
Wednesday, August 30
8p.m. to 10 p.m.

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Live Animal Presentation
GLADYS PORTER ZOO
Thurs. June 29th
10am - 12pm

South Texas Ecotourism Center: First Year Anniversary

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Spring Speaker Series 2023

South Texas Ecotourism Center: 27th Annual W.O.W.E.
FEBRUARY 9TH-11TH 2023
@ Hilton Garden Inn

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Women in Ag Conference
JULY 21, 2023
8-30 AM-NOON

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Grandparents Day
Sunday November 26th 10am-3pm

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Shade Grown Coffee
Served Free Everyday
9:00 am to 11:00 am

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Christmas at the STEC
Thursday, December 7, 2023
6 to 9 p.m. FREE

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Father's Day
Sunday June 18th
10 am - 2 pm

South Texas Ecotourism Center: Cinco de Mayo
Friday May 5th
6:00-8:00pm

Free Event

South Texas Ecotourism Center



Spring Speaker Series 2024

Complementary Refreshments & Snacks

(956) 772-0210

501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista Tx 78578



Thursday
January 25th
5:30pm-7:00pm

Chery Brummett, a photographer, conservationist, and Texas Master Naturalist, actively contributes to monarch butterfly conservation through citizen science initiatives. Witnessing the lack of habitat for the monarch migration during the butterfly tagging season, Chery co-founded the Rio Grande Valley Pollinator Project with like-minded individuals to address habitat loss concerns. The project has heightened pollinator awareness, advocated for native-plant ecosystems, engaged in community outreach, and rescued/relocated Zizotes Milkweed in the RGV. Securing a grant from Monarch Watch, they distributed milkweed plugs across various locations across the valley. They continue to spread awareness, engage in outreach events, and promote conservation.

Thursday March 14th 6:00-8:00pm



Dr. Sharon Wilcox serves as the Senior Texas Representative for the environmental nonprofit organization Defenders of Wildlife. She has dedicated her efforts to the study, conservation and restoration of the native wild cats that call the U.S.-Mexico borderlands home, including the jaguar, jaguarundi, and ocelot. She leads Defenders' ocelot conservation program in the Rio Grande Valley. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.

Dr. Wilcox's work has been featured in the *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Nature* and on Texas Public Radio. She is the co-author of the book, *Historical Animal Geographies*.



Camille Rich
"Cochineal"
Thursday March
21st
5:30pm-7:00pm



Marylin Lorenz "Bird Migration"

Thursday April 18th
5:30pm-7:00pm

Event Calendar - January to March 2024

January 25: Speaker Series: Chery Brummett, Photographer, Conservationist, and Texas Master Naturalist. RGV Pollinator 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

February 9, 10, 11: WOVE SPI Birding Center STEC Outreach Information Booth. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

February 10 - 17 Valentine Hands on Project at STEC Educational Lab. Valentine Bird Feeders. Free 8 am to 5 pm.

February 24: Winter Texas Appreciation Day, Movie, Popcorn and Hands on Activity. All day.

February 24: "Deep in the Heart" showing of film sponsored by the Laguna Atascosa Refuge at the STEC. Free. 2 p.m.

March 11—14: Spring Break Camp for ages 7—11. 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. \$50 per child.

March 14: Speaker Series: "Ocelot Conservation Lecture," Dr. Shari Wilcox and Associates 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Free

March 21: Speaker Series: "Cochineal" Camille Rich, Texas Master Naturalist and rancher. 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Free

March 31: Easter Craft - All Day—Free..

April 18: : Speakers Series: Marilyn Lorenz – "Bird Migration" 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Free

April 22: Celebrating Earth Day . All day volunteer and work on the gardens.

May 3: Cinco De Mayo Celebration - food ,music and activities 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Free

May 12: Mother's Day celebration. 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Free

June 3 to June 27: STEC Summer Camp ages 7 to 11 9:00 a.m. to Noon. \$ 150 per student.

July 20: Moth Week—July 20 to 28. Evening event on the 20th. 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Free

October 31 : STEC Halloween Festival 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

October 5: Participating with the SPI Birding Center Monarch Festival. 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

November 11 & 12: Participating with an educational booth at the Worlds Birding Festival in Harlingen.

December 7: STEC Christmas Event 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Free

FILM:

Every Tuesday 11:00 a.m. to 1 :00 p.m.: Film and a Picnic. Bring your Lunch and watch a film on a South Texas Nature or Wildlife Center. Free.

TMN BOOK CLUB:

Every Third Tuesday 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. Texas Master Naturalist Book Club meeting when space is available. .

FREE HEALTH CLASSES:

University of Houston & Tu Salud Si Cuenta Health Classes –

Yoga & Meditation: Monday and Wednesday 10 :00 a.m. to 11 :00 a.m.

Exercise & Muscle Tone: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

FREE COFFEE :

Everyday 9:00 to 11:00 am. Breakfast with the Birds. Enjoy your coffee while listening and observing the native birds. Free.

Be sure to log on to our Webpage: www.stec-lv.org

Sign Up to Volunteer at the STEC!

We welcome and appreciate volunteers at the STEC. We have volunteer opportunities for welcoming the public, working in the gardens and exhibits, school tours, and during special events. Hours are flexible. We are open 7 days a week from 8 am to 5 pm. Call (956) 772-0210 for more information and to sign up.



Where to purchase Native Plants in the Valley!

Visitors are always asking where they can purchase native plants in the Valley. Below is a list of nurseries located in the Valley.

RGV Native Plant Resources

(Updated June 2023)

Harlingen

Grimsell Seed Company (956) 423-0370
Heep's Nursery, Mike Heep (956)457-6834
Stuart Place Nursery (956) 428-4439
Wild August Nursery (956)535-2117

La Joya

Perez Ranch Nursery (956) 580-8915

Mission

Oleander Nursery, (956) 607-3304
NABA Butterfly Park (956) 583-5400

Other resources:

Native Plant Project: resources, guides, handbooks, plant listings, etc.
<https://nativeplantproject.com>

"Native Plants of Deep South Texas" by Dr. Alfred Richardson and Ken King - available at the Valley Nature Center gift shop and internet purchase.

Rio Grande City

Rancho Lomita Nursery (956) 486-2576

San Benito

River Oaks Nursery (956) 399-4078

Weslaco

Valley Nature Center (956) 969-2475

Alamo

Mid Valley Garden and Pond (956) 650-0581
Kautsch True Value (956) 787-2721

Schedule Your School and Organizations Tours Now



Look out boardwalk.



Multipurpose Room.



Outdoor Classroom

We recommend that you start scheduling your classes or organizations for touring the South Texas Ecotourism Center at least two weeks prior to your touring date. Please call (956) 772-0210 to reserve your date. Tours are free and last up to one and a half hours depending on the size of the group. If you would like to have your lunch at the Center, we have a multipurpose room that can accommodate 60 people to eat comfortably. Please let us know at the time of your scheduling if you need to use the multipurpose room. We will divide the students up depending on the size of the group and one group will view the short film, the others tour the educational lab and the rest divided throughout the Center's exhibits.

Plan your Special Occasion at the STEC

RENTAL OPPORTUNITIES AT STEC



- MEETING ROOM
- OVERLOOK RAMP
- OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
- BIRD BLINDS
- AMPHITHEATER

CALL (956) 772-0210 FOR INFORMATION

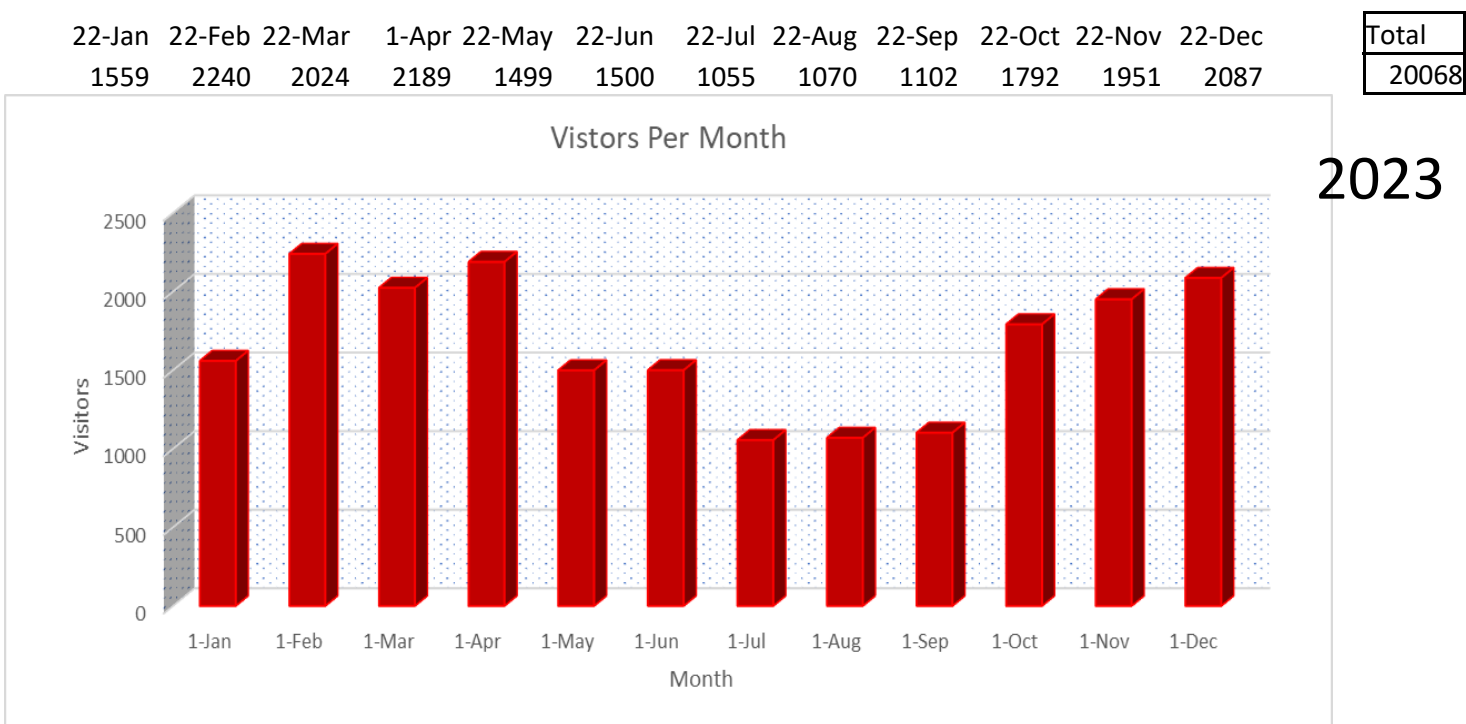
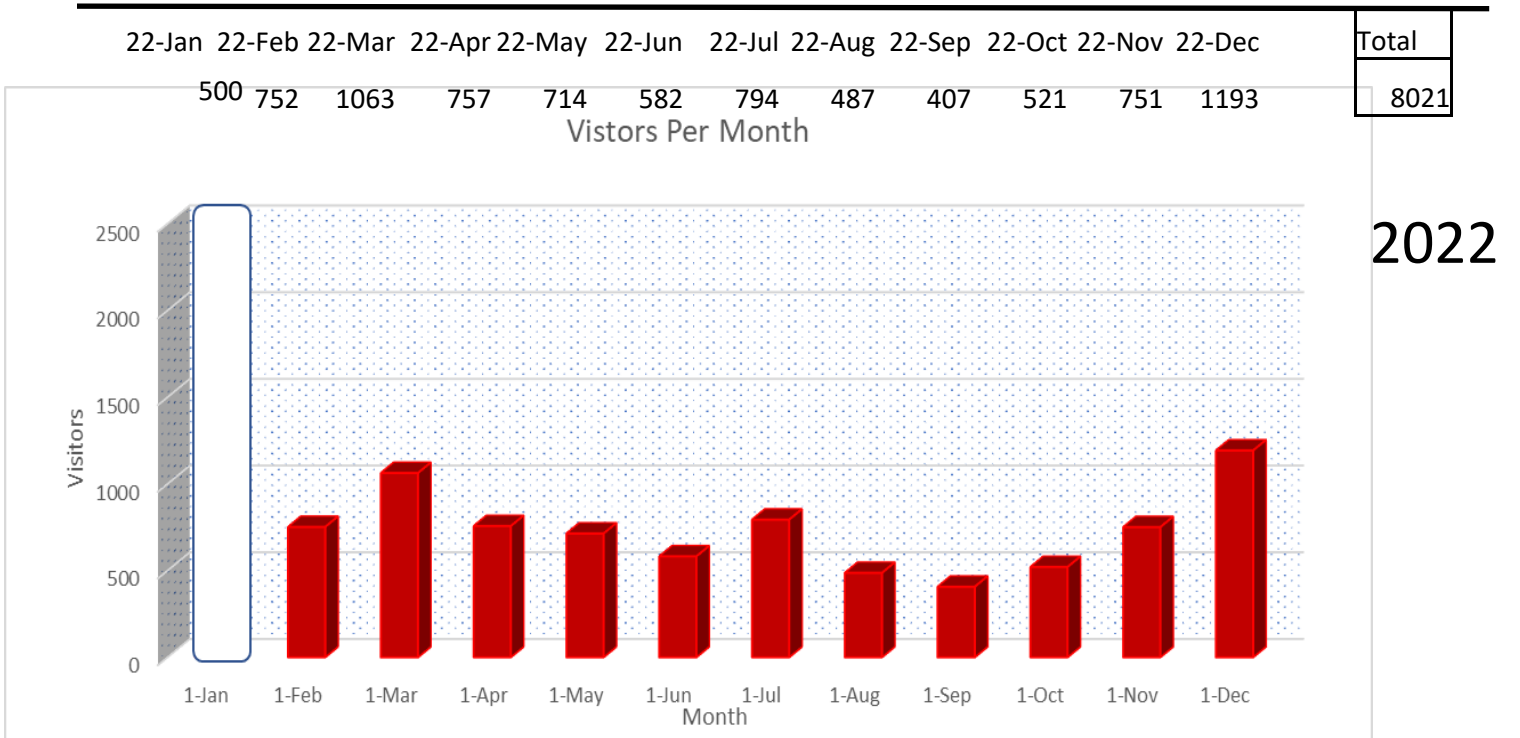
Beautiful , Unique and Affordable Venue!

- WEDDINGS
- BIRTHDAY PARTIES
- ANNIVERSARIES
- GRADUATION PARTIES
- CORPORATE MEETINGS
- ANNUAL MEETINGS
- CHRISTMAS PARTIES
- BUSINESS MEETINGS
- ENGAGEMENTS

Group Size: Multipurpose Room: 60 Amphitheater : 150 Outdoor Classroom: 46 Bird Archway: 10 Viewing Boardwalk Outlook 20

STEC Visitor Attendance More than Doubles in 2023

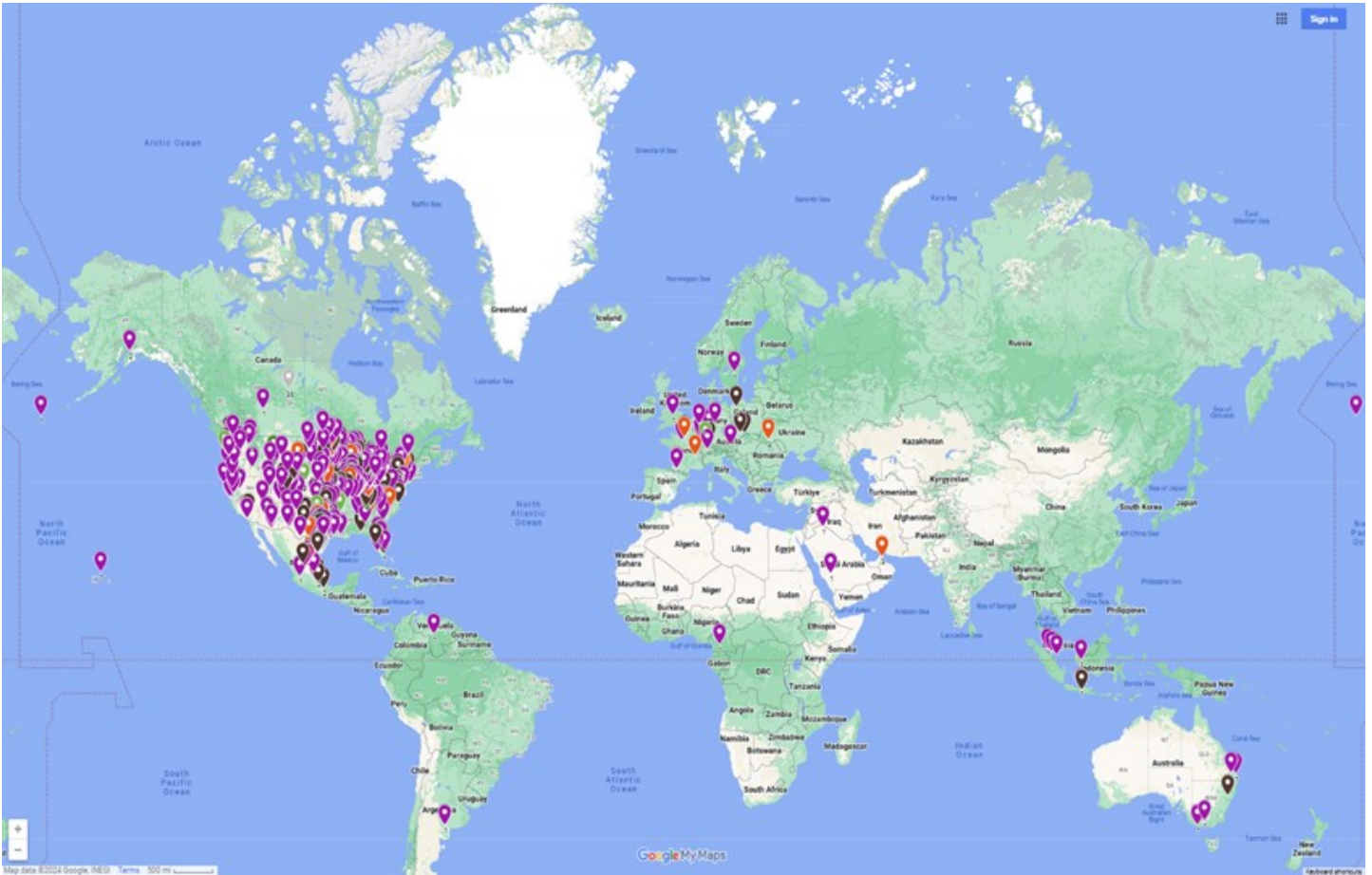
Attendance for the South Texas Ecotourism Center more than doubled in 2023 compared to 2022. The Center opened up on February 22, 2022. The count for 2022 was 8,023 and for 2023 was 20,068. We figured the increase was a result of all the promotions, programs and events the STEC had in 2023. We look forward for our attendance increasing in the coming years.



STEC Visitors from around the World

The STEC has visitors from all over the world including Germany, Italy, France, Slavia, Australia, South Korea, Paraguay (South America), Mexico, Canada, and from all 50 states in the United States.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=17ZpqgAdT03VADr_U00-9thRGhoUzfr8&usp=sharing



EXPLORE, PROTECT, EDUCATE
WWW.STEC-LV.ORG WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/STEC/LV (956) 772-0210
Outdoor Hands On Exhibits • Wildlife Sculptures, 48K native plants, Amphitheatre, Meeting Room, Outdoor Class Room, WiFi, Rentals

SOUTH TEXAS ECOTOURISM CENTER
Explore • Protect • Educate
A Department of Fannin County

OPEN DAILY 8AM-5PM FREE ADMISSION
501 W. STATE HWY 100, LAGUNA VISTA, TEXAS
Preserving the Unique Ecosystems of South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley

STEC Staff:

Edward P. Meza, Director

Mary Shannon McGinley– White, Ecotourism Specialist/Educator

Pablo Medrano, Office Specialist/ Educator

Jose Angel Martinez,

Maintenance Specialist/Educator

Roman C. Martinez

Maintenance Worker

2024 Events:



Winter Texan Appreciation Party
SOUTH TEXAS ECOTOURISM CENTER
Saturday February 24th All Day
Movie Showing: Deep in the Heart @ 2pm
Free Popcorn & Craft Activity

**Winter Texan Appreciation Day!
Matinee Movie**

Deep in the Heart: A Texas Wildlife Story
Documentary

Saturday, February 24, 2024
2:00pm

South Texas Ecotourism Center
501 W. State Highway 100, Laguna Vista



DEEP
IN THE
HEART
NARRATED BY
MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY

South Texas Ecotourism
Center
Easter Craft
Sunday March 31st



HAPPY
Easter

501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista Tx 78578

Shade Grown Coffee



Served **Free** Everyday
9:00 am to 11:00 am

Bring your Breakfast, Laptop, and
Camera and enjoy the Birds and the
Natural Surroundings of the STEC.

South Texas Ecotourism Center
Presents



OCELOT CONSERVATION LECTURE
Dr. Shari Wilcox & Associates

Ocelot Days Event
Thursday March 14th 6-8pm
To Register Call (956) 772-0219

FREE Event

STEC-LV.org 501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista Tx 78578 (956) 772-0210



Register Now!



South Texas Ecotourism Center 2024 Spring Break Camp

Nature Walks

Lab Activities

Birding



Arts & Crafts

Team Games

Scavenger Hunt



**Learn about Native Plants, Birds,
Wildlife, Ecosystems,
and MORE!**

Mon. March 11- Thurs. March 14

9Am- 12Pm (Noon)

Ages 7-11 *Must be 7 at start of Camp*

\$50.00 a Child

Registration Ends March 4th

Call (956) 772-0219 for Registration and More Information!

Visit us at www.STEC-LV.org or in person at [501 W-Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista](https://www.google.com/maps/place/501+W+Tx+Hwy+100+Laguna+Vista,+TX)

 **South Texas Ecotourism
Center**

 **STEC_LvTx**



2024 Events:

**South Texas Ecotourism
Center**
EARTH DAY
22, APRIL



Come Volunteer and Care for Native plants

STEC-LV.org 501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista Tx 78578 (956) 772-0210



**CINCO
DE
MAYO**

South Texas Ecotourism Center
Friday May 3rd 6:00pm-8:00pm
Free Event

STEC-LV.org 501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista Tx 78578 (956) 772-0210

South Texas Ecotourism
Center

**Mother's Day
Celebration**
Sunday May 12th 10:00am-2:00pm



STEC-LV.org
(956) 772-0210
501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista Tx 78578



FREE HEALTH CLASSES AT THE STEC

Yoga & Meditation - Mondays and Wednesdays

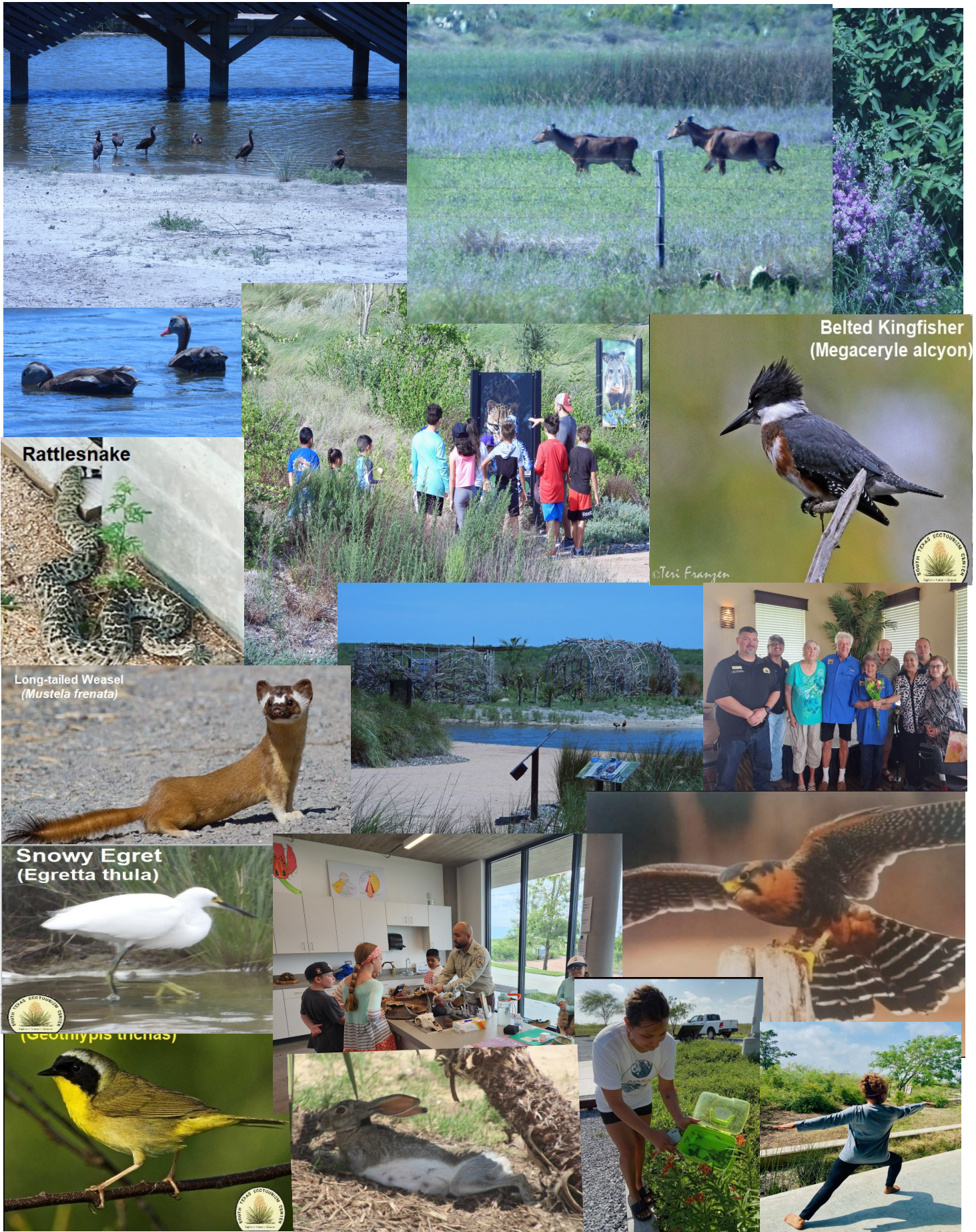
10 am to 11 am

Strength & Toning Tuesdays and Thursdays

10am to 11 am

Sponsored by "Tu Salud Si Cuenta" UTHealth Houston School of Public Health. Free to the Public

Images of the STEC



Belted Kingfisher
(*Megasceryle alcyon*)

Rattlesnake

Long-tailed Weasel
(*Mustela frenata*)

Snowy Egret
(*Egretta thula*)

(*Geothlypis trichas*)

Educational Lab of the STEC

Our educational lab is used for classes, hands on activities and includes displays, an aquarium and microscopes for visitors to use.



Add us on Facebook:
South Texas Ecotourism Center



Follow us on Instagram:
STEC_LVTX

WEBPAGE:

www.stec-lv.org