

South Texas Ecotourism Center: STEC Fall Speaker Series

Article by Ed Meza, Rio Grande Valley Chapter

The South Texas Ecotourism Center (STEC) created a Fall Speaker Series for the first and third Wednesdays in the months of October, November and December. The series scheduled various speakers and topics that supported the educational mission of the STEC to promote the preservation and appreciation of our natural resources. During the days of the speakers, the Center was open until 8:30 pm for visitors to have a chance to experience the park in the evening. Presentations were given at 6:30 pm. and refreshments were served. The programs were sponsored by the Laguna Madre Museum Foundation.

October and November topics included: “History of the STEC,” by Edward Meza, STEC Director and Texas Master Naturalist, highlighted the history of the STEC from its very beginnings to what is planned for the future; “Light Pollution” by Jennifer Rektorik, South Texas Border Chapter Texas Master Naturalist, shared the way light can affect the night skies, your vision at night and nature. It was amazing to learn about what light pollution causes and how to help reduce the problem.



Jennifer Rektorik sharing about light pollution



Marilyn Lorenz highlighting backyard birds

The fall Speaker Series continued with “Backyard Birding.” Marilyn Lorenz, Texas Master Naturalist and STEC volunteer, highlighted what birds you can find in your own backyard including native and migrating ones. She used her late husband’s amazing photography to showcase the various birds.

The final November program, “Floating Gardens” by Diana Lehmann, Texas Master Naturalist and STEC volunteer, shared the history of floating gardens and the beneficial and destructive water plants and algae. Her presentation inspired us to make our own floating gardens at home.

Our speakers were all Texas Master Naturalists whose knowledge and experience in their field made the presentations more enjoyable and educational. The Rio Grande Valley is fortunate to have such a group of knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialists who love to share their knowledge with others.



Diana Lehman educating about floating gardens

Education is one of the major goals of the center and the Speaker Series added so much to our events. Our next two topics for the remainder of the series will be on December 7, the screening of the film “Deep in the Heart.” The film is a visually stunning celebration of Texas’ diverse landscapes and remarkable wildlife found nowhere else. The film aims to conserve our remaining wild places, to show the connectivity of water and wildlife and to recognize the importance of conservation on a continental scale. The last presentation of the series will be on December 21. Javier Gonzalez, educator for the SPI Birding Center and Texas Master Naturalist, will be speaking about the Christmas Bird Count that the Birding Center holds annually.

For the spring, we plan to have other events that would enhance the experience of our visitors such as nature walks, noon presentations, and nature-related workshops.

The South Texas Ecotourism Center is a department of Cameron County which is free to the public and open daily from 8 am to 5 pm. It is located at 501 W. State Highway 100, Laguna Vista, Texas. For information please call (956) 772-0210. Please check out our webpage www.stec-lv.org and FB page: www.facebook.com/STECLV.