



“Currents” April 2017

Eyes on the River

Many of us in Kerr County put eyes on the Guadalupe River daily. Maybe you glimpse the North Fork while zooming over low water crossings on your way to town or stare out at Nimitz Lake as you wait in line for coffee. You may even be a keen river watcher, focusing for hours on the water during a kayak trip or bird watching adventure. However the river enters your vision, either consciously or subconsciously, do you benefit from seeing it? I would argue, yes, that even a glimpse is an unintentional acknowledgement of its presence in our community. The river’s natural beauty is an aesthetically pleasing feature, but its benefit to us extends far beyond simply seeing something beautiful.

Without the Guadalupe River, there would be no Kerrville. Or at the very least, Kerrville would not have been situated here. The Guadalupe River supported commercial enterprises like shingle making and mills in the 1800’s and today is the focus of summer camps and restaurants. Well before encouraging businesses along its banks, the river simply supported life as a water and food source for human and animal communities thousands of years before Joshua Brown came to town.

Considering all that, it is easy to see how the river has benefited us, but do the advantages only extend in one direction or has our presence and focus on the river also helped it? I will be the first to admit that I typically overlook any positive outcomes humans may have on the river. You often hear me talking about the impact pollution or degraded riparian areas, among other manmade threats, can have on river health.

Recently, however, I was challenged to consider the positive impact businesses and other development along the banks have by bringing our attention to the Guadalupe River. Both the River Trail and a restaurant dining room perched above the banks were developed to highlight the river. It is reasonable to assume that their presence has created avenues to enjoy the river that weren’t previously there. More attention focused on the river means increased awareness of it as an asset to our community, in terms of both quality of life and economically. Isn’t that essentially a goal of UGRA’s outreach and education programs as well - encouraging people to be aware of the unique and wonderful aspects of our healthy river? Afterwards, you are more likely to engage in opportunities to learn more about the river and how best to protect this fragile environment.

However your curiosity and appreciation of the Guadalupe River is sparked, let’s turn our eyes on it and explore it together. Next month, we’ll highlight the diversity of the Guadalupe River as it travels though Kerr County and how our spring fed, hill country river is different from others and should be treated accordingly.

Let’s Keep *Our* River Clean

Tara Bushnoe, Natural Resources Coordinator for UGRA, tbushnoe@ugra.org or (830) 896-5445