

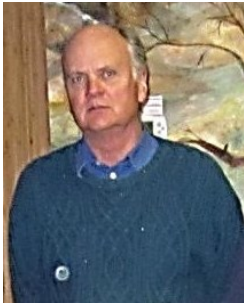
Meet the Board

BOARD OFFICERS 2015-2017

Dave Hutton - President
Ernie Villescascas - Vice President
Jo Fairbanks - Treasurer
Yolanda Garcia - Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS 2015-2017

Bill Balassi
Yolanda Homann
Scott Jordan
Peter Kelling
Laurel Ladwig
Patti Plagge
Sondra Williamson



Dave Hutton
President

A physicist with extensive experience in nuclear physics and high speed electronics development, Dave Hutton has managed the science and engineering departments of several companies in support of various R & D programs. He is currently a manager at Honeywell in Albuquerque. A birder, a supporter of KNME, and commodore/board member of the New Mexico Sailing Club, Dave is a regular bird walk leader and member of the Research Committee.

Ernie Villescascas
Vice President



Jo Fairbanks
Treasurer

Now retired, Jo was on the faculty of the UNM Masters in Public Health degree program and director of the Public Health Outreach Education Program. A New Mexico resident since 1965, she has intensive experience in academia and as a public health practitioner throughout the state. She has co-authored two public health textbooks and conducted research in health disparities. Jo has previous board and supervisory experience and has been a Nature Center enthusiast and volunteer for many years.



Yolanda Garcia
Secretary

“I started visiting the RGNC when I moved here from California in late 2001,” says Yolanda, “after retiring from a defense contracting company in data management. I immediately knew I wanted to volunteer here and I attended the volunteer training class in 2002. Upon completion, I started working in the garden, but when summer arrived, I decided I would move indoors and have been working at the front desk and in the Friends’ office ever since.”



Bill Balassi

Bill Balassi has been a volunteer at the Rio Grande Nature Center for more than 20 years, leading interpretive walks and twilight hikes. For the past few years, he has also lined up bands to provide music for the Friends’ annual Herbfest. Bill plays in a local contra (dance) band called Cheap Shots and serves on the board of the Albuquerque Folk Festival. He holds a Ph.D. in English from UNM and taught English for more than 20 years, primarily at the college level. He then worked as a technical writer and project management specialist for another 20 years. Along the way, he wrote a page-a-day calendar about the history of rock and roll. Recently, he co-founded a group called Science-for-Citizens.org and is currently writing a book on the history of science. Bill enjoys cooking, making music with friends and his wife, Pat, hiking, and being with his family, especially his two grandchildren.



Yolanda Homann

A computer operator employed at GTECH, Yolanda has been with the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center since its inception in 1984. She volunteers “behind the scenes.” Yolanda is a self-proclaimed neighborhood activist who provides balance to the Board of Directors by voicing neighborhood concerns.



Scott Jordan

Formerly a professor in the UNM School of Medicine, Scott did diagnostic cytopathology and surgical pathology there, along with studies in radiation changes in patients and animals. Earlier, he helped with the follow-up of Hiroshima atomic bomb survivors. A birder, thanks to great RGNC mentors, he is now a regular bird walk leader. His longtime interests include New Mexico wildflowers and flower gardening, especially irises.



Peter Kelling

A transplant from the West Coast, retired landscape gardener Peter Kelling provided horticultural services to a long list of distinguished California and Oregon clients including Dianne Feinstein, landscape architect Thomas Church, and the Harry and David Estate before moving to New Mexico in 2004. He has coordinated Bosque del Apache's photo contest at the Festival of the Cranes, is an avid photographer and hiker. At the Nature Center, he has provided invaluable support as director of the Friends' festivals for many years.

Laurel Ladwig



Patti Plagge

Patti Plagge has been an active volunteer in the RGNC native plant garden for over four years and thoroughly enjoys the garden. Retired from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as budget chief for the refuge program, Patti worked for the Department of the Interior for over 30 years in various programs, including the refuge system, fisheries, and administration. She loves birdwatching and gardening in her yard and at the Nature Center. "I am honored to be a part of the Friends' board," she says.



Sondra Williamson

Marking her 29th year as a Nature Center volunteer, Sondra has served as volunteer coordinator and always as expert birder, botanist and garden developer, interpreter, and volunteer training teacher. Her career as a nature enthusiast began in Houston, at the city's Armand Bayou Nature Center, where she served as a volunteer teacher, a digger in the garden, and employee in the nursery and gift shop. She also hired on as a pontoon boat guide on Clear Lake, pointing out wildlife to visitors. At the Nature Center, she has been a member of the Friends' board for many years.