

UNDER OUR LAND: Such Gifts!

Our Comal County and surrounding Hill Country region are the beneficiaries of marvelous under land sources of water and adventure! The Edwards and Trinity Aquifers are the primary source for wondrous fresh waters for community and private wells as well as Springs that flow with freshness.

It was about sixteen years ago that a discovery journey began with a series of young grandchildren. We took regular trips south to San Antonio's Witte Museum. Prior to exploring displays and exhibits of interest and playing at the HEB adventure along the river, we regularly (sometimes twice in a visit!) went to the little theater where the Edwards Aquifer Authority exhibit invited viewers into an excursion into and through the aquifer. Quite imaginatively we were introduced to subterranean life beneath the surface as well as explanations as to the filters that brought surface waters into the great dynamic underground. Other adventures helping them "connect the dots" were to springs and sights to prompt the imagination so vivid in young curious minds. Back at the ranch, we'd walk about to observe the wells and places where karsts exhibited natural drainage toward the great aquifer that we were getting to know. We took note of drainage patterns and discussed the variety of rainfall that came to gently get soaked into the fields and pastures or the rush of rising creek beds we usually hiked through when mostly dry.

Requests at quiet time or before bed created imaginative adventures in some of the caves near or far. Those were fed by explorations when age appropriate to nearby offerings as well. The San Marcos Springs glass bottom boats became another favorite.

As the youngsters of those adventure days have gotten on with school and years of activities and discoveries, it is interesting the links made to those early adventures. Science reports, projects, art, water conservation and protection, adventure stories about "the down under land" amaze. The grandfather gets pleased when the recognitions about the values of our natural environment get reiterated and discussed.

I've enjoyed pointing toward the adventures of caverns open for exploration or a trek through the Gorge at Canyon Lake. Swims in the wading pool or the spring-fed pool at Landa Park establish the connection to all the gifts under our land. Fishing and floating become a natural follow-up as the years unfold as well.

Serious discourse about protecting the water sources comes with age and learning. So, too, the vast yet to be discovered stories and marvels of caves that remain a secret or for later discovery and exploration. I've painfully avoided discussion of reports where karsts and caves have served for convenient landfill purposes. Hopefully, uninformed usages that would threaten the waters so needed as life source will be prevented!

As we discuss early and later adventures and discoveries about all under our Hill Country land, it becomes easy to make the case with our young enthusiasts to become protectors and enhancers of all that flows! The future is promising as a cherished sense of natural gifts strengthens and broadens.

Some will want to take note of the upcoming Speleological gathering to be hosted this fall in San Marcos for global adventurers. Others might find *A THIRSTY LAND* by Seamus McGraw informative and inviting for keener engagement in assuring our future has good waters. An imaginative adventure is offered by the amazing writer, Robert Macfarlane, whose book, *UNDERLAND: A Deep Time Journey*, ties

monumental geological features to historic and current exploring. Of course, visit CCCA discussions at comalconservation.org. for more information.