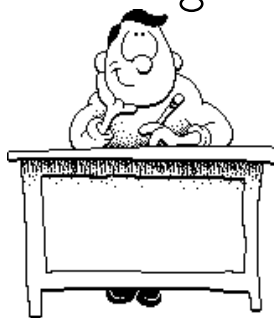


## Everyone Has an Idea That Won't Work

K.C. Rudy, Lacerte Family Children's Zoo at the Dallas Zoo



Forgive me for choosing an old corollary to Murphy's Law as the title for this article. But it's true. I was reminded of it the other day while I was visiting with a friend. This person (who asks to remain nameless) is at another institution (also wishing to remain nameless), and she spent a substantial amount of money and many hours of staff time developing a new program for visitors. While some of the collaborators had some reservations, most were enthusiastically optimistic. Until the first presentation, that is... See, even though it was promoted well and professionally deployed, few people attended. And some who attended did not stay for the entire program.

Fortunately, none of us has ever been (or at least would ever admit to being) directly involved in such an unfortunate thing. On the other hand, we've probably all seen or heard of a new program or exhibit that underwhelmed its intended audience. How does this happen? We all know that people who design and implement these things tend to be talented, intelligent, dedicated, and often intuitive. (And I'm not just saying that for the benefit of my staff, who will probably read this.) What could possibly go wrong?

For some reason, it is easier to recognize what we like in a program or exhibit than to create an effective one. An exhibit sign may have too many graphics, too few graphics, confounding graphics, too many words, words that are too technical, words that are too simple, misspellings, bad grammar, incorrect "facts", etc. Any one of these missteps can result in a lost opportunity. Similarly, a new program can be boring, confusing, irrelevant, or just poorly presented. (By the way, for the purposes of this article, the terms "programs" and "exhibits" can generally be interchanged.)

Evaluation is generally thought of as a tool to see (1) how you did and (2) why. While these are fine reasons for evaluation, there are other, often more important, considerations. All that is needed to be sure every base is covered is to have some sort of comprehensive evaluation. Then you are guaranteed a successful program. Well, pretty much.

The best starting point may be something like "How does this program support our mission statement? And how does it support our objectives?" There should always be some clear connections. See what your potential audience thinks.

1. Front-end evaluation ("needs assessment" to those wishing to sound less formal) generally takes place following the development of an idea, prior to any implementation. This may be the most important--not to mention the least utilized--type of evaluation. It should provide an indication of interest or need (at least perceived) on the part of your potential audience. Before you do anything else, you must figure out your visitors' knowledge, perceptions, motivations, and strategies--their "agenda", as Falk, et. al. (1998) put it. This can save you the time, expense, and embarrassment of putting on a program no one is interested in.

One way to conduct a needs assessment is simply to ask people, usually by some sort of standardized questionnaire, their level of interest in various topics. Use simple questions with simple answers. Scaled responses (say, ranging from 1 to 5) make subsequent data analysis easier. Additionally, you could enact a scaled-down version (prototype) of your program, possibly involving fewer or simpler props. Interviews and focus groups are appropriate for larger projects requiring more specific and more detailed information.

2. OK, so now you think you have confirmation for a  
*continued on page 6*

# Little Boxes

Julie Coombes, Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife  
Reprinted with permission from the "Hands-On Texas" newsletter

Lately I've been thinking a lot about boxes.

Most of us were born in a big box called a hospital. Most of us will die in a similar box and be buried in a 6'x 2' x 2' wooden box. In between birth and death, we travel in boxes with wheels on them to get from the boxes we live in to the boxes where we work, play, shop, worship, and go to school.

I spend my working days in a box-within-a-box called a "cubicle" (which is just a fancy name for a box), staring at a box-shaped screen. When we go to our home-boxes at night, many of us (after checking the mail box) will take a box of food from the refrigerator box, stick it in the microwave box, and eat it while sitting in front of a television-shaped box on a box-shaped sofa. On weekends, we might go to the zoo to look at animals in boxes, while they look back at us inside their visitor-center boxes.

With apologies to 1960's songwriter Malvina Reynolds, not all boxes are made out of ticky-tacky all looking just the same--some boxes come in more abstract forms. Conceptual boxes include nation-state boxes, "Us" and "Them" boxes, Boxes of Life that can be hard to get out of, and boxes of perspectives that we're supposed to think outside.

More importantly, many of these boxes in our lives are illusions--sometimes harmful ones. Physical and ideological boxes give us a sense of security that, while often comforting or useful, may keep us from experiencing the wholeness of life. The box you live in will one day crumble; the car you drive will rust; the box you will be buried in will become one with the earth. Sacred beliefs and "facts" can be overturned by slow changes in culture or sudden dramatic discoveries. The boxes we create are impermanent attempts at separation, mirages of boundaries where none actually exist.

Animals know this. The idea of a "wilderness-box" never crosses the minds of the deer running through Cedar Park, a suburb of north Austin. Children know this. They scramble across lawns, sidewalks, and streets with total disregard for notions of property lines. Nature knows this. A box means nothing to rain, or fog, or wind.

In many people's minds, especially city dwellers, even wilderness and parks are boxes. Asphalt surround urban parks, separating these islands of nature from the surrounding metropolis, both literally and psychologically. Some folks see wilderness as something separate, something to be contained, to be enjoyed in its place then left when one returns to the "real" world.

What is needed is more balance between rigid boxes and organic, flowing, unbounded life. Nature shows us good examples of this balance in the controlled messiness of birds' nests, the predictable yet ever-changing cycling of seasons, and the eerie pattern-logic of chaos theory.

Now don't get me wrong--not all boxes are bad. Boxes help us stay organized, sheltered, categorized, and even tidy. Some of my favorite things come in boxes or ARE boxes, but too many boxes make for a rigid life.

Many cultures have created words and symbols to describe this balance between limits and eternal motion. The swirling Asian yin-yang symbol, the Greek Ouroboros (a snake forming a ring by biting its own tail), and the infinity symbol all attempt to communicate this idea. The Navajo word for this "dynamic harmony" is **hozho**.

So what do boxes and dynamic harmony have to do with parks? Everything. Many of you are privileged to work where you can escape your boxes daily. You are also in a unique position to help visitors remember that boxes, even park-shaped ones, are illusions. We all need to touch nature and feel our interconnection with the greater, ever-changing yet balanced whole. With this insight, we understand that the only box that really matters is the one that contains us all.

# Director's Report

## Shea Lewis

Working the NAI Region Six booth in the exhibit hall in Des Moines proved to be a valuable experience. I had an opportunity not only to meet and greet the great members of our region but to also show other regions and sections what we do so well in Region Six. Something of interest did happen though. While speaking to a lady from our region she said to me, "So, you're Shea Lewis?" looking at me with confusion on her face. With concern, I replied, "Yes, I am." She then said, "That's funny, I voted for you because I thought you were a woman!" Needless to say, I'm thankful for those who voted for me regardless of what gender they thought I was. It's true, I am a man.

Several people have said that I have big shoes to fill. I realize this. Wallace Keck has set a precedence that will be hard to follow. He will be missed from Region Six. For those that don't know, Wallace has now taken up residence in Idaho again. Wallace's work would not have been possible without support from a great board. Many thanks to Neil Garrison, K.C. Rudy, and Cindy Ford for serving on the board and giving back to NAI. Even though they are officially off the board, they are still involved in many ways. Thank you for your support of the region. Pat Silovsky is the new Deputy Director, Sarah Keating is the new Treasurer, and Shanna Raeker is the new Secretary.

The board has changed in many ways in the last few weeks. My philosophy is, smart people surround themselves with smarter people. I took this to heart in pulling together the new board. I'm proud to say several members contacted me to fill a position on the board. This is not the case in many regions, where begging and bribery takes place to fill leadership roles. Serious arm-twisting has worked best for our region. New to committee chairs include: Kelly Farrell (Scholarship Chair); Brian Stith (Membership Chair); Karen Westcamp-Johnson (Webmaster). After 12 years, Pam Tooley has stepped down as Texas State Coordinator but will continue as Co-Editor of Visions. Thanks for all of your hard work Pam! Brian Barnette is the new Texas State Coordinator. Pat Silovsky has turned over the Kansas State Coordinator position to Schanee Anderson. A warm thanks to those who have stepped forward to lead, as well as those who signed on for another tour of duty. Contact information for all board members is located on the back of this newsletter. The next two years look promising for Region Six. NAI and Region Six are managed by members, so make your opinion or ideas heard. Don't hesitate to contact anyone on the board to share ideas or express what NAI can do to improve.



### A Last Word from Wallace...

If you know of the recent best seller, "Who Moved My Cheese," you can appreciate the news I now share with you.

I am leaving region Six again, perhaps this time forever. I have been made an offer I cannot refuse back in Idaho, and so for the third and final time, my career heads west. I have accepted the Park Superintendent position at City of Rocks National Reserve in Almo, Idaho (population 40). Yes, this is the same place I moved from four years ago, but it is the top manager position, not the assistant manager position which I previously held.

Such a move puts me deep into the dark side, but I do have one shining hope. One of my first duties will be to recruit and hire an interpreter (higher paid than rangers) and launch him/her into the 25 square mile unofficial wilderness area that is the reserve. My connection to NAI will remain. City of Rocks is a partnership between the National Park Service and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

If ever you desire an incredible Idaho vacation, be sure to let Susan and me know. We love company and always keep a spare room for guests. The park is one leg of a triangle that includes Salt Lake City and Yellowstone National Park. It makes for a great loop trip if you fly into Salt Lake City, rent a car and tour the intermountain west.

Don Simons made the trip (twice?) when we were there before, so we know it can be done. Jay Miller knows the area well and can vouch for its attraction. Until I know my address, I can be contacted at City of Rocks National Reserve; PO Box 169; Almo Idaho 83312 or through my e-mail wfkeck@hotmail.com.

I can be reached at this e-mail and place of employment for another three weeks.

Once again, I have enjoyed our professional and personal relationships....and if you know of any interpreters looking to relocate to paradise, have them give me a call.

## Certification Program Off and Running!

NAI's internationally recognized certification program took a quantum leap forward with the addition of the Certified Interpretive Guide category in 2000. Begun in 1998, the certification program included four professional categories--Certified Heritage Interpreter, Certified Interpretive Manager, Certified Interpretive Planner, and Certified Interpretive Trainer. Minimum qualifications to apply for these categories include education background or previous experience in interpretation. These categories were intended to recognize an individual's current expertise, inspiring excellence in the field. In 2000, the needs of a different market segment became evident as a growing number of seasonals, temporaries, new hires, docents, and volunteers expressed interest in becoming certified. Many of these individuals lack the education or experience background required for the four professional categories, but in sheer numbers, they are also the primary workforce that has contact with the public through program delivery.

In 2000, the Certified Interpretive Guide category was created to address the needs of this segment which is estimated to include over a half-million individuals nationwide. The CIG program includes a 32-hour training course based on an NAI curriculum that blends many of the leading philosophies and techniques in the field today. Participants must complete the same open-book exam that is required in all certification categories, prepare a presentation outline according to NAI standards and perform a ten-minute presentation in addition to attending the course. Passing scores result in a four-year certifica-

tion that can be extended by additional training.

The CIG course can be delivered at any location by a Certified Interpretive Trainer who has taken NAI's "Train the Trainers" workshop. Over 120 individuals have participated in the trainers' workshops, and over 30 are now qualified to deliver the course in university classes, for their staff or volunteers at zoos, aquaria, nature centers, museums, and park sites, or as contractors. For a list of qualified CIG instructors, visit the NAI website. If you're interested in becoming a CIG instructor, plan to attend one of the CIG "Train the Trainers" workshops offered around the country (see the website for details of locations and dates).

In our region, CIG courses will be offered regularly around the Austin area by the program's co-developer, Lisa Brochu. Anyone is welcome to attend these courses (people are coming from as far away as Alaska to participate). Check the NAI website for dates. CIG courses can also be arranged at other locations by calling Lisa (512-285-4105) or any of the other qualified CIG instructors if you're interested in bringing this training program to your location. Because the curriculum focuses on process rather than content, it is applicable to any site and can be an exciting and productive addition to your training program. The CIG program has traveled throughout the United States and is now being used by over 30 institutions and agencies as standard training to improve the quality of interpretive services. It has been successful in Mexico and China, and other countries are also expressing interest in adopting the program.

### A big "WAY TO GO, BUB!" ...

...goes out to Oxley Nature Center's Bob Jennings (Director; Tulsa, OK). Bob earned an NAI national award ("Outstanding NAI Volunteer"); the award was presented to him at the 2001 National Interpreters Workshop that was held in Des Moines, Iowa, in the latter part of '01. This is the only time that this award has been presented. Bob has served on the national NAI board of directors twice (as Director of Region Six...and as National Secretary). He is currently national elections chair and has served as national awards chair, on fund-raising and workshop committees, as newsletter editor for both Region Six and the Nature Center Directors/Administrators Section. Currently, he is involved in starting an interest section for interpretive naturalists (although he's trying hard not to get elected to another office!).



## Get Ready for WRIST...(Western Regional Skills Interpretive Training)

Want to refresh, renew, or re-sharpen the tools in your interpretive tool belt? Want to complete your CIG or get your CHI certification rolling? Savoring the idea of a fabulous five-day interpretive skills training in the ponderosa pines of the Black Forest near Colorado Springs? If you, a seasonal, or a new permanent employee, answered "YES" to any of these questions, then grab your calendar now and mark it for the week of June 3rd - June 7th.

Sponsored by NAI and Colorado State Parks, WRIST 2002 will feature three action-packed tracks: Essentials of Interpretation, Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG), and Certified Heritage Interpreter (CHI).

The "Essentials" track is a skills-building course for new interpreters as well as those who could use some inspiration or re-grounding. It will focus on specific techniques for improving guided hikes, campfire programs, and other interpretive opportunities.

The CIG course provides the opportunity to learn basic interpretive principles and theory, and how to apply them in the development and delivery of a program. Participants in this track will complete all CIG requirements (open book exam, program outline, and delivery of a 10-minute program) while on site,

earning the CIG credential by the end of the week. This is the perfect course for those beginning a career and wanting to earn a professional credential.

Participants in the CHI course will get a great start on all CHI requirements, including a two-day refresher on personal interpretation and two days of in-depth instruction on non-personal interpretive techniques including interpretive writing, exhibit design, and brochure development. Participants will complete the open book exam and deliver a 20-minute presentation that fulfills the videotape requirement for the CHI credential. This course is designed for the advanced interpreter wishing to earn a journeyman credential as a Certified Heritage Interpreter. Minimum education or experience requirements must be met to participate in this class (see Certification Handbook and Study Guide at [www.interpnet.org](http://www.interpnet.org) for details).

Each of these five-day workshops allow you to learn with some of the best instructors in the profession, while enjoying the peace and quiet of the Colorado's scenic Black Forest.

If you would like more information on WRIST 2002, please visit the NAI website at [www.interpnet.org](http://www.interpnet.org) or call the NAI office at 888-900-8283.

## Interpretive Naturalist Section Up and Running

NAI is happy to announce the launch of the Interpretive Naturalist interest section. This new section will seek to address the needs of interpreters working in natural history as the core function of their duties. Sparked by a petition circulated in the Tucson NIW, the section is now ready to enroll members, start a newsletter, and begin other service to NAI members.

Please join us if this section meets your area of interest. You may join in one of the following ways.

If you wish to change your section membership to INS, please notify Heather at the Fort Collins office ([membership@interpnet.com](mailto:membership@interpnet.com)) that you wish to change your section affiliation.

If you wish to keep your current section choice and add INS as another section affiliation, you may do so by sending \$10 with an explanatory note to the National Office in Fort Collins.

If your current membership does not include a section membership, you'll need to upgrade your membership category.

The section will be led by the following acting officers until elections can be held: Mary Loan (Section Chair), Don Simons (Vice-Chair), Karen Westcamp-Johnson (Secretary/Treasurer), and Bob Jennings (Newsletter Editor).

Visions -- the newsletter of Region VI of the National Association for Interpretation -- is edited by Lisa Cole, Heard Natural Science Museum, McKinney, TX, and Pam Tooley, Environmental Education Specialist, Lucas, TX. Articles and other newsletter correspon-

dence should be sent to us at one of our addresses (see back page). We use a Macintosh system and will gladly accept submissions on 3.5 disks or by e-mail in a text-only format. Please send a hard copy as well. Printed on recycled paper.

## Everyone Has an Idea, continued from page 1

particular project. It is during the ensuing development phase that formative evaluation is done. This is due largely to the fact that it is very difficult to predict the effectiveness of instructional content. For one thing, people learn differently. Also, the program designer usually can't see the forest for the trees. (i.e., Just because the designer built what he/she felt would be an effective program does not mean it will be.)

Formative evaluation is evolutionary and can consist of the following segments:

**Review**--This will ensure that the interpretive goal corresponds well with items identified in the needs assessment and that the information is factual and up-to-date. It will make sure the approach is appropriate for the intended audience. A review, generally performed by an appropriate supervisor, can also check to see that any examples and exercises are realistic and appropriate.

**Testing**--Small group testing and field trials can be employed to check the success of individual program components. After implementation, periodic checks are important to be sure that the message is still being effectively communicated. This spills over into our final category.

3. Summative evaluation refers to evaluation following the completion of a program. Think of it as an assessment of how you did. (Many people who conduct evaluations do only this step.) The primary focus is on the visitor's behavior and experiences, including learning.

Gathering data at this stage is often done both indirectly and directly. When making direct observations of visitors' movements, actions, and interactions, try to be inconspicuous. Visitors tend to behave differently when they know they are being observed. Questionnaires need to be relatively short and done by the visitor alone, while interviews are longer with the experimenter asking questions and recording answers. It is a good idea to offer something (free passes, free concessions, gift shop coupons, etc.) for visitors' participation.

Some possible summative evaluation items for an exhibit:

**Observation** (sometimes referred to as "stalking")

- Are all audience members attentive?
- What do people ask questions about?
- What is being discussed as people leave the program?

- Do people respond to the humor or portions designed for participation?
- At which components do visitors stop?
- How much time do visitors spend at a particular spot?
- Which features do visitors notice (or fail to notice) most?
- How often are visitors waiting to use interactive components?
- How often do visitors encounter broken exhibits?

### Questionnaire/Interview

- What are the visitors' opinions of various exhibits?
- What are visitors' cognitive experiences in each gallery?

Similar items could be developed for programming; however, people have fewer constraints while observing exhibits.

In addition to questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, systematic observations can help determine effectiveness. For example, in the interview process, the visitor could simply be asked, "What did you get out of the program?" Responses could be put into, say, three categories that would provide an indication of how well they got the intended message. These results could then be quantified and analyzed.

For results to be as indicative as possible, make an effort to get a good cross-section of your potential audience. Randomization and a "large" sample size are important. And, finally, statistical analysis of the data may be necessary to draw proper conclusions. Having said that, I would like to add that the most beneficial data will be qualitative and difficult to analyze, since our primary interest is what motivates people. Bitgood, et. al. (1991), give a good overview of the summative evaluation process.

While most people find the evaluation process less than exciting, you can adapt to it. And when you do, your exhibits and programs will be even more successful than they are now. Then you can be the first one to have ideas that all work.

Bitgood, S., Benefield, A., and Patterson, D. (Eds.). 1991. "Visitor Studies: Theory, Research, and Practice," Vol. 3. Proceedings of the 1990 Visitor Studies Conference. Jacksonville, AL: Center for Social Design.

Falk, J.H., T. Moussouri, and D. Coulson. 1998. "The Effect of Visitors' Agendas on Museum Learning." *Curator* 41(2): 107-120.



## ARKANSAS

Jay Miller

Welcome to new NAI members, Jason Parrie (interpreter at **Plantation Agriculture Museum**); **Brian Westfall** (Corps of Engineers office on **DeGray Lake**); **Craig Johnson** (Interpreter at **Crater of Diamonds State Park**); **Brandy Ballard** (Interpreter at **Mt. Nebo State Park**); and **Barbara Miller** (Interpreter at **Parkin Archeological State Park**).

**Pinnacle Mountain** interpreters report that their interpretive boat tours on the Maumelle River are a big hit with the public. They have had rave reviews from teachers, and they are lining up to get their classes on board.

**Old Washington Historic State Park** hosted the Southeastern Region of the Association of Living History Farms and Museums in late February. They received many compliments on the organization, speakers and the beauty of this 19th century museum village.

Three state parks will have grand openings in May. On May 14, the Governor will be at Jacksonport where the 1870's courthouse and the 1931 sternwheeler, Mary Woods No. 2, will be officially rededicated. Both were heavily damaged by a tornado three years ago. They have undergone thorough restoration, and exhibits have been installed. **Mount Magazine** has been open and keeping interpreter **Don Simons** busy for several months. The governor will cut the ribbon to dedicate this new state park on May 16. Plus, the first four miles of the 73-mile **Delta Heritage Trail** will be dedicated in May.

**Jay Miller** is writing the state park department's e-newsletter. An issue goes out about the first of each month providing an update of completed projects, programs and events around the system. Sign up to receive the newsletter on the state park website, [ArkansasStateParks.com](http://ArkansasStateParks.com).

### From Our Webmaster's Keyboard...

As the new Region VI Web Master, I am revamping the entire Region Six web site (though I have to say Shea has done a magnificent job up to this point). But I will need the help of all our members to make this a quality reconstruction.

I have two favors to ask. First, if you have some nice, quality digital images of your site--trails, programs, kids in action, park interpreters in action, etc.--could you send me some of the images? If you are one of the lucky sites to have a way to save these to disk, and you'd feel better snail mailing them to me, that is fine. If you would prefer to e-mail these pictures to me, that is also great. I just ask that you don't put very many large picture files in one e-mail, because it has been known to crash my outlook. Whether or not you are a member of the NAI, your site, your park, your programs reflect Region Six.

Secondly, if you know of any excellent interpretation

related web sites, please send me the links. I'd like to include a very comprehensive links page on the Region Six web site of



sites where programming info can be found, nice background for slide shows, nature sounds, images, or great children's activities, etc.

I look forward to hearing from all of you.

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Fax: 501-727-5458  
[www.ArkansasStateParks.com](http://www.ArkansasStateParks.com)  
Coming soon, [www.PetitJeanStatePark.com](http://www.PetitJeanStatePark.com)

## KANSAS

Schanée Anderson

Spring is filled with exciting programs for Kansas interpreters.

## Earth Day Events

Rolling Hills Refuge	Sunday, April 21, from 1-4	Endangered species cemetery and quilt, and rainforest investigations
Lee Richardson Zoo	Monday, April 22, 8:30-2:30	Games and conservation activities
Sunset Zoo	Sunday, April 21, from 12-6	Conservation Carnival and Envirofair

## International Migratory Bird Day

Rolling Hills Refuge	Saturday, May 11 from 1-4	Breeding bird survey station, build your own nest, coffee stand
Sunset Zoo	Saturday, May 11	Migratory bird stations throughout the zoo
Topeka Zoo	Saturday, May 4	Home Depot will be giving away birdhouses

## Other Events

EGGstravaganza	Sunset Zoo	March 31, 1-4
Reptile Day	Sunset Zoo	April 28, 1-5
OK Kids	Wilson State Lake	May 4-5
Ark River Water Festival	Lee Richardson Zoo	May 20-21
ZOObilation	Sunset Zoo	May 25 and 26

## Conferences

- \* Rolling Hills Refuge hosted the Kansas Zoo Educators meeting on January 18. It was a great time for zoo educators to get reacquainted, share ideas, and discuss zoo education issues.
- \* The Kansas Naturalist Association meeting will be postponed until August.
- \* Regional Wetlands and Water Resources Meeting will be held April 2 through April 4 at the Hyatt Regency in Kansas City. Scholarships are available for students. For more information contact Jason Daniels at daniels.Jason@epa.gov

## Springing into spring

- \* **Rolling Hills Refuge** is offering free programs focusing on endangered species, rainforests, and primates on Tuesday, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
- \* **Wilson State Park** is in the process of completing a new handicap accessible trail which will also feature native plants that encourage wildlife.
- \* **Konza Prairie** now has a state of the art composting toilet along the Konza Prairie Nature Trail.
- \* **Lakewood Discovery Center** in Salina is in the middle of upgrading educational displays with fully interactive computer stations focusing on birds of Kansas, natural disasters, weather, dinosaurs, and earth science.
- \* **Milford Nature Center** is presenting after school programs for middle school children loosely based on the *Survivor* reality TV show. This program is part of the Geary County USD 475 21st Century Grant.
- \* **Kaufman Museum** celebrated Kansas Day with more than 850 people. Events included everything from wagon rides to tortilla making.
- \* **Topeka Zoo** is proud to announce their new mascot Pekasue. This new character will be launched on March 16th. The costume character is based on one of the community's favorite animals, a hippopotamus named Pekasue. The costume will be made available throughout the community.
- \* To find out more about spring programs at **The Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library**, an Environmental Learning Center in Kansas City, you can log onto [www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/schlagle/ACTIVITY/Calendar.htm](http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/schlagle/ACTIVITY/Calendar.htm).
- \* **Kansas StreamLink Program** will hold a (K-12) stream study training session on March 9 outside of Manhattan, KS. For more information see [www.streamlink.org](http://www.streamlink.org).
- \* **Dillon Nature Center**, Hutchinson is preparing to start its second phase of new indoor displays which will focus on displays on mammals, birds, arthropods, herps, plants, and geology.
- \* **The Martin and Osa Safari Museum** in Chanute hosts "Faces of Africa" until May. It features signed reproductions of paintings by **Joy Adamson**. Adamson is known for her work with big cat conservation and is also recognized worldwide for her portraits of several east African peoples.
- \* Panels focusing on Black History Month have been added to the Visitor Center at the **Nicodemus Historic Site**.

**MISSOURI**

John Miller



The **Association of Missouri Interpreters** (a chapter of NAI Region Six) will be conducting their annual workshop August 26-28, 2002 at the **Runge Nature Center** in Jefferson City. The theme for this year's workshop is "The Big Muddy-Crossing the Currents of Time." In addition to several great presentations, the keynote speaker will be **Dr. Ted Cable** from **Kansas State University**. For more information and updates on the workshop, see the AMI web site at [www.mointerp.net](http://www.mointerp.net).

**Bill O'Donnell** (**Ozark National Scenic Riverways**-Van Buren) reports that it has expanded its permanent interpretive staff from one to three with the addition of NAI members **Bryan Culpepper** and **Pam Eddy**. Both will be working on expanding the park's interpretive and environmental education programs. Bill also reports that the ONSR has made its popular teachers' guide to caves and groundwater, "More Than Skin Deep," available on-line. The teachers' guide, as well as a listing of our current environmental education offerings is available at the park website: [www.nps.gov/ozar/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/ozar/index.htm).

**George Kastler** (DNR, Jefferson City) reports that the **Missouri Department of Natural Resources** has combined the tourist assistant and park naturalist positions into a five-level professional ladder for interpreters with a new pay scale. The new merit titles are: Interpretive Resource Technician, Interpretive Resource Specialist I, Interpretive Resource Specialist II, Interpretive Resource Supervisor, and Interpretive Resource Coordinator. Anyone on any of the old registers needs to update their information. You can contact George by phone at 573-751-5384 or e-mail at [nrkastg@mail.dnr.state.mo.us](mailto:nrkastg@mail.dnr.state.mo.us). Regardless of how you contact George, be sure to give a mailing address or fax number so he can send the detailed job description to you. Currently there is one opening at the Interpretive Resource Coordinator level.

**Bob Fluchel** and **Joe Ryan** (MDC-Kansas City) report that there will soon be a new hub to connect people and conservation in Kansas City. Officials will dedicate the **Discovery Center** on Saturday, April 13, 2002. The discovery center is located near the north bank of Brush Creek at 4750 Troost, on the ten-acre urban conservation campus in **Kauffman Legacy Park**. It is a joint project initiated by the **Missouri Department of Conservation**, which was then joined by the **Missouri Department of Natural Resources**. Both agencies will provide staffing to serve the public. For more information about the Discovery Center, go to [www.kcconservation.com](http://www.kcconservation.com).

**Christine Tiedt** (**Wilson's Creek National Battlefield**, near Springfield) reports that the following special events are scheduled for the spring: May 25-27-the Robert Willey Civil War collection of artifacts will be on display in the visitor center, May 25-a special living history program "The Parade of the American Soldier, The United States Soldier from 1776 to Desert Storm," June 22-23-a Civil War music program presented by The Rose of Elanoy Minstrels at the Ray House, June 29-30-a special living history program "Sigel's Germans at Wilson's Creek." For more information, go to [www.nps.gov/wicr/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wicr/index.htm).

The **Wonders of Wildlife** (WOW) museum in Springfield has made major strides in education. **Amy Dooley**, who started March 1, becomes the WOW Museum's first Director of Education. Amy comes to Missouri from the Memphis Zoo and stood out for her program development experience (including her experience using live animals), her ability to create programs with wide appeal, her knowledge of the AZA accreditation process and her overall energy and attitude. In a memorandum of understanding between WOW and MDC, the WOW Museum will fund up to five positions within the Missouri Department of Conservation to deliver the museum's conservation education program. MDC will be reimbursed for salary, benefits, and museum-related expenses associated with the positions. To find out more about the education programs at the WOW Museum, go to [www.wondersofwildlife.org](http://www.wondersofwildlife.org).

**Rhonda Anderson** (MDC, St. Charles) reports that the St. Louis area is gearing up for three special events: Wetlands for Kids (April 6 at the **August A. Busch Conservation Area**), Wonders of the Outdoor World (May 305, **Babler State Park**), and Kids Fishing Fair (May 18 at the August A. Busch Conservation Area). For more information, call 636-441-4554.

**Allison Hansma** (St. Ann) has recently stepped down from her position at **Powder Valley Nature Center** in order to concentrate her efforts full-time on her nature rubber stamp business and giving nature programs/discovery tables for groups and events. She will continue with her volunteer services. If you would like to contact her, she is at [www.tn-nature-stamps.com](http://www.tn-nature-stamps.com) or at [trvlntrlst@juno.com](mailto:trvlntrlst@juno.com).



## OKLAHOMA

Steve Black

**Washita Battlefield National Historic Site** (Cheyenne, OK) has received funding from the “National Parks as Classrooms” program. This funding will be used with the funds that the Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education received from the National Geographic Education Foundation to write a curriculum-based education program about the story of Washita. (George Armstrong Custer and the U.S. Army Seventh Cavalry attacked a winter camp of Cheyenne Indians in 1868; the peace chief Black Kettle was massacred during that event.) If you would like to receive more information about this exciting project, please phone the park at 580-497-2742 or OKAGE at 405-325-5832.

On January 15 and 16, a large group of Oklahoma interpreters gathered at the **Chickasaw National Recreation Area** (Sulphur, OK). This National Park Service facility is putting together an interpretive master plan and this “brain-storming” session was designed to get as much input as possible. Chief of Interpretation **Ron Parker** spearheaded this event.

An “antler drive” was conducted at **Sequoyah State Park** on January 19. (This state park is located near Wagoner, OK). **Three Forks Nature Center’s Doug McGee** led the program participants on this shoulder-to-shoulder walk through the forests in a search for shed deer antlers.

We bid farewell to naturalist **Denise Nunn (Roman Nose State Park; Watonga, OK)**. She has resigned from her job so that she can spend more time at home with her husband and her children at their dairy farm up near Fairview, OK. She will be helping in the operation of this agricultural endeavor and will be home-schooling her young ones. We wish her the best in her new life challenges.

In the winter of 2000-2001, a massive ice storm slammed into the southeastern portion of our state. The impact on Oklahoma’s interpretive facilities was catastrophic. Power lines/poles were snapped and felled trees were everywhere. Wanna guess what happened the second year in a row? Yep! A devastating ice storm pounded central Oklahoma at the end of January this year. Oklahoma City’s **Martin Park Nature Center** was without power for eight days. Mother Nature can have a mean-spirited edge to her at times.

Budget funding shortfalls and the very real possibilities of budget cuts seems to be a common thread of concern in a lot of our state’s interpretive sites. The future is a tad murky at this point in time. It is not known how any of this will impact the interpretive operations in Oklahoma.

Many municipal areas all over the nation are faced with the very real headache of figuring out how to best manage urban pest bird populations. Oklahoma City, in particular, has huge flocks of “blackbirds” congregating in downtown portions of the city at sundown. Are any of you readers of this newsletter aware of any innovative solutions to this universal problem? If so, please share your thoughts with **Neil Garrison** at **Martin Park Nature Center**, 5000 West Memorial Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73142.

### Free NAI Memberships??

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naimbrmgr@aol.com





## TEXAS

Brian Barnette



My fellow Texans . . . This Report is my first as your new State Coordinator. Let me start by thanking **Pam Tooley** for the excellent job she's done over the past few years serving as both State Coordinator and Visions co-editor. Thanks, Pam, for the words of encouragement . . . the e-mail list . . . and for burning the negatives after I agreed to take this job (just kidding!) For those of you that don't know me, I'm the Chief Naturalist at the **Dallas Museum of Natural History**, where I started my nature studies as a wee lad nearly 40 years ago. I've been a member of NAI (AIN) some 20 years, and I'm looking forward to getting to know y'all better in this position . . .

Just to get the ball rolling, I'll mention that this spring, the DMNH will host "SuperCroc", a National Geographic exhibit on one of the largest prehistoric crocodiles ever found (Steve Irwin, eat your heart out). We plan to follow that up with a summer exhibit on Texas' scariest and deadliest plants and animals.

**Kelly Drinnen**, Education Curator for **Moody Gardens in Galveston**, reports a brand new frog exhibit opened in the Rainforest Pyramid March 8. This exhibit, called "Toadally Frogs," is the largest, most diverse exhibit of frogs and toads in the United States, with over 50 spectacular frog species and 32 striking exhibits. In conjunction with "Toadally Frogs," Moody Gardens is also presenting Epiphyte Extravaganza, a stunning plant exhibit with a special focus on Orchids, Bromeliads and Pitcher plants. This extraordinary display of colorful flowers and unusual foliage features plants customarily seen in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

This quote was sent in by **Julie Coombes**, Interpretive Planner with **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**: Exhibit Writer's job description: "You've got to tell a story that will have the same impact as a feature film in about 1/10 the time to an audience that is most likely bored, hot and distracted. It's like trying to write a Stephen King novel on the head of a pin...using a Marks-A-Lot . . . while wearing oven mitts."-Richard Procter

Raising Appaloosas, writing books, and freelance consulting work are keeping **Lisa Brochu** busy. Her projects include an interpretive plan for the **San Antonio Botanical Garden's** 11-acre native plants exhibit (a "Walk Across Texas" that shows all the different ecozones of Texas). Everything else she's working on is out of the region (some as far away as China - ask her about pandas sometime). She's also enjoying developing and teaching certification classes for NAI all over the country in all certification categories (people are welcome to call or mail Lisa if they have any questions about NAI certification). She has a Certified Interpretive Planner class coming up April 18-22 in Austin which has only two spots left, and a Certified Interpretive Guide class coming up May 16-19 in Austin which is still wide open at this writing. And of course, she's still raising Appaloosas and writing books . . .

. . . and you're all invited! **Cherry Payne**, formerly Chief of Interpretation with the **San Antonio Missions National Historic Park**, has moved. She's now the Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services for **Everglades National Park** and **Dry Tortugas National Park** (which Cherry says is 70 miles west of Key West by boat or seaplane). You can reach Cherry at 305-242-7750. Cherry's successor in San Antonio is Elizabeth Dupree (welcome Elizabeth!).

From the "Wish I'd Thought of That" department . . . the Nature Exchange in the **Lacerte Family Children's Zoo** at the **Dallas Zoo** has to be the most amazingly effective place imaginable for not just turning kids on to nature but keeping them interested, says **K. C. Rudy**, Education Coordinator. In a little over a year of operation, roughly 3000 kids have participated in the program (look for an article on the Nature Exchange in a future issue of Visions).

Oh Brother, Where Art Thou? When I sent out my first e-mail solicitation for news, a few addresses got kicked back. **Mike Gaddis**, **Nettie Ramsay**, **Perry Ground** . . . if you're out there, let's hear from you! That goes for anybody else - let me know what you're up to at your place, and we'll share it with the rest of the region. My phone number is 214-421-3466 x 230 and my e-mail is [bbarnette@dmnhnet.org](mailto:bbarnette@dmnhnet.org).

*A note from Pam: I appreciate Brian taking over this position. (And yes, I will burn the negatives! We go back a long way- you looked great in bell bottoms and sideburns.) I've enjoyed keeping up with all of the activities of the Texas interpreters, "visiting" new places on paper, and watching the art of interpretation grow throughout the State. See you around! 🍀*



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