

ARKANSAS • KANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSOURI • OKLAHOMA • TEXAS

Floating Blind

Jason Parrie, Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Roland, Arkansas

It was the worst canoe float I ever guided. My suspicion that it was going to be a challenging day was graphically confirmed right off when I noticed the entire group of inner city youths was sporting painfully bright, brand new shoes. This didn't bode well. The floundering chaos of "bumper" canoes that ensued immediately after launch erased any hope I still held for a successful float. This one was doomed.

The late starting time we scheduled was compounded by the group's late arrival and extra time spent on pre-float instruction. We were very late, in danger of missing our shuttle ride back, and we were barely underway. A close encounter with a gigantic water snake that nearly led to the capsizing of every canoe, followed by the loss of one of the two counselors due to motion sickness, set us back even farther.

The group, comprised mostly of young girls, was positive and energetic enough but lacked the paddling skills and cooperation needed to make serious progress down the river. We switched paddlers around four different times before arriving at a combination that halfway worked. By this time the park staff had gone for the day. We had no shuttle, no support and now the setting sun was becoming a factor.

I gave up on the interpretation part of the float and got busy making calls on my cell phone. Parents and wives were notified of our lateness and an alternative shuttle option had to be found. As my mind raced with the logistics of getting us home, the two girls in my canoe started to sing. They swayed out a few Motown hits and even allowed me to join in a round of *Row Row Row Your Boat*. Before long, though, I lapsed back into logistics mode and was pretty far away when I noticed the next song drifting from the front of the canoe was "*Amazing Grace*."

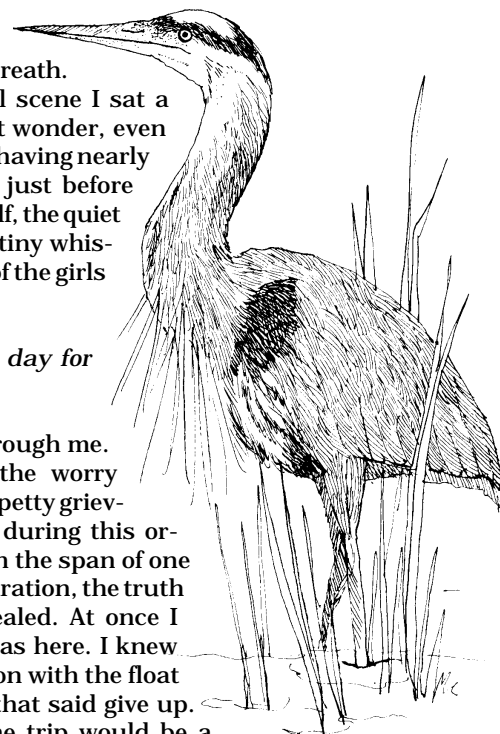
Two soft little voices carried this beautiful harmony out over the water and gently draped it around us. I was captured. Drawn back from schedules and

shuttles and the ever-ticking clock, I found myself in the middle of a river. Lily pads decorated the glassy water, their bright blooms reaching for and basking in the sun. I noticed two Great Egrets stalking unseen prey along the shore and a lone Great Blue Heron gliding in a long, descending arc overhead. The sun, dangerously low in the sky before, now set ablaze the cypress trees standing sentry along the banks—their light orange bark glowing fiery red. Red-winged Blackbirds flitted among the willows and reeds and protruding cypress knees, chasing off one of the egrets that strayed too close to a nest.

The song faded to conclusion, but I remained captive. The aching beauty stretched and woven before me caught my breath. Awed by this magical scene I sat a long moment in silent wonder, even a bit embarrassed for having nearly missed it. And then, just before the moment spent itself, the quiet was interrupted by a tiny whisper wafting from one of the girls up front:

"I'll never forget this day for as long as I live."

The words soaked through me. They washed away the worry and doubt and all the petty grievances I had accrued during this ordeal. She was right. In the span of one song and a quiet declaration, the truth of this float was revealed. At once I knew exactly why I was here. I knew why I had continued on with the float despite all the signs that said give up. I knew the rest of the trip would be a breeze. And I knew that this day was one that I would never forget either. It was the best float I ever guided.



Editors' Corner

Pam Tooley and Lisa Cole

A couple of weeks ago I received a 15-year pin from National with a note that said I'd been a member for probably more years than that, but here was my pin for the years since the merging of WIA and AIN. That got me to thinking about Workshops and how many I had been to. I haven't missed many in those 15 years, and I've worked on all of the Texas workshop committees. I realize that a great deal of what I have instilled in my work ethic has come from these meetings—whether practical or philosophical—the people, ideas, concepts and inspirations have infused my personal as well as work life. So...It's time to see the Missouri side of Kansas City. And will I be there come March? You bet, unless there's a major disaster (personal or otherwise), and so

should you. Whether your organization will send you or not, you should make the effort, because this is where you can get rejuvenated and become really smart! Be sure to go to something that doesn't necessarily have to do with what you do now. It may be very useful in the future. Take it from one who's been there...and there...and there.

Workshop packets have been sent. If you didn't get yours call 913-764-8580 ex.24, or contact Sheila Aaron saaron@powellgardens.org or Susan Walsh cavespring@hotmail.com. I'm looking for partners for the contra dancing!

Exploring the Past--Mapping the Future

The Region Six Workshop is right around the corner!



Mark your calendars for the **NAI Region Six Interpreters' Workshop**. The theme for the workshop is "Exploring The Past--Mapping The Future." We have some great things planned!

Please come early and take part in one of the six pre-conference workshops. Sessions that will be offering sessions

are Environmental Education, Cultural Interpretation and Living History, Nature Center Directors and Administrators (they will offer their now world-famous nature center road show) and the African-American Experience. There will also be a caving trip to "The Devil's Icebox" and a half-day session, "Echoes From the Past" on primitive hide-processing.

The committee has some exciting keynote speakers to inspire you. Corky Mayo, Chief of Interpretation for the National Park Service, will enlighten us on interpretive trends into the next century. Captain William Clark of the recent Corps of Discovery (sometimes known as Bill Weldon, Manager of Living History Program Development at Colonial Williamsburg) will reminisce about the journey to the great Western Ocean and back.

Bring your wooden nickels from the Oklahoma Workshop for our trading post. You'll be able to exchange them for exciting additions to your interpreters' tool kit. You will also need your favorite nametag. You will

receive five nickels for bringing it (and there will be a big bonus for the "most creative" nametag.)

During the opening reception, in addition to the trading post, we will conduct the "GREAT MID-AMERICA CUP SWAP." That's right! Bring a cup ... it doesn't even have to be clean ... well maybe it should be. Participants place a cup on the table and take another of their choice. No fuss, no muss—just cups and mugs going home to new families.

There will be an expanded exhibitor's hall with more vendors, and we'll have extra tables if you'd like to set up a site or agency table. Feel free to bring site brochures and newsletters to share with your fellow interpreters. We will, of course, have our annual auction and awards banquet followed by music and contra dancing.

Hotel rooms can be rented for \$55.00 per night. This price is for up to four people. What a rate! At this price, you can afford to bring your entire interpretive staff, several volunteers, and maybe a cousin or two.

We have saved the best for last. The sessions--that's what we do these workshops for--are going to be great. We already have a special session with a group from the Missouri Department of Conservation that has built several dugout canoes and is presenting some innovative and successful programs using the Lewis and Clark theme.

So please come and join us ... it won't be the same if you're not here with us!

Director's Report

Pat Silovsky

I would first like to wish everyone a Happy Holiday season. I hope 2004 is filled with great things! It has been an honor serving as your regional director over the last several months, and I appreciate your confidence in me.

Now, for all the news from NIW this year in Sparks, Nevada (By the way, I didn't win any money gambling!) Around 35 of our Region Sixer's were in attendance at the workshop. I am pleased to report that the region booth made it, too (thanks to Kelly, who arranged for Jon Brown from Arkansas State Parks to bring it up!) Molly Postelwait, Bill McGowan and I manned the booth, and sold about 20 copies of the "Whisper in the Wind" CD. A lot of interest was generated by the Molly's session, and we also managed to sell a few storytelling books provided by Molly.

While the Board meeting may have been long, we accomplished a number of things. Tim and his staff have done an excellent job this year setting NAI up for the future. Of course, I am talking about the Board's approval of the \$1.1 million building budget to renovate the 30 year-old building purchased as the new headquarters for NAI. This 8,500 square-foot facility is located on Mason Street in the Old Town area of Fort Collins. The dedication for the facility is planned for this spring. When finished, the office will include an international training center, a heritage library, and a rare books collection. In conjunction with the building project, efforts continue to increase the Legacy Trust Fund to insure the future of NAI. If you would like more information about the Legacy Trust Fund,

please contact me.

Two new positions will be hired within the National office. The positions are a Sales/Events Manager and an AV/IT Technician. The National office will be running the nuts and bolts of each National workshop (i.e. establishing hotel contracts, audio-visual equipment, etc). Regional folks will still provide the workshop with local flavor by choosing the off-site sessions, the keynote speakers, and entertainment. Speaking of National Workshops, Wichita, KS will host the 2007 NIW! Get ready, Region Six.

Finally, one of the most challenging tasks the Board is facing in its operation is board reorganization. Your input is important! Please voice your opinions on this issue! Questions for reflection are:

- Who makes up the current board?
- Should representation on the board be equal between sections and regions?
- How could policy-making be done in an efficient manner?
- Does it matter to you that changing the board may well mean changing the existing representation?

Stay tuned, as more about this topic will be coming your way. Region Six is a leader among regions, and your input is important!

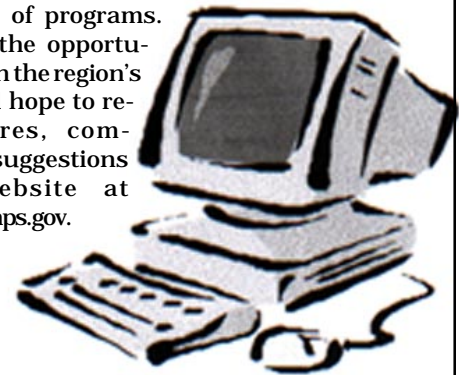
I am looking forward to seeing everyone in Kansas City this March. This is a workshop you won't want to miss!

Pat Silovsky

Meet our new Region Six webmaster...

I've been designing expanded park web sites for the NPS since 1996, and feel very strongly about the interpretive possibilities that the Internet has to offer. As the Region Six webmaster, my main goal for the site is to provide the members of the region the opportunity to contribute. The website should represent the full range of facilities, resources, and people that the region has to offer, and the only way we can do that is by encouraging everyone to participate. What I want most are pictures; pictures of the places where we work,

and pictures of programs. I'm glad for the opportunity to work on the region's web site, and hope to receive pictures, comments, and suggestions for the website at eric_leonard@nps.gov.



Love

Brad Holleman, Queen Wilhelmina State Park, Mena, Arkansas

I'm in love! I am not ashamed to admit it. Somewhere along the line during the last 41 years I fell hopelessly in love with one of the most economically depressed areas in the United States. It would be hard for me to make a rational case for living on the poor mountain soil of Western Arkansas. If I were the Chamber of Commerce President, I would say we have nice people and abundant hunting and fishing opportunities. Hunting and fishing opportunities always whet the appetite of Japanese businessmen looking for the location of new industrial development. I am sure that they would look puzzled for a moment and then look elsewhere. They would look somewhere without the long sweeping ridges, which have always limited transportation. Well, the people are nice.

I don't hunt or fish and I am not particularly nicer than anyone else is. I love seeing deer, turkey, and bear out my back window. No, I don't shoot them, although I have no problem with my neighbors who do. If I am not especially nice and do not hunt or fish, why am I here? Unlike the Japanese businessmen, I love the supple curves of these ridges. I might flirt with the Rockies or the Appalachians, but my heart stays true. The others are tall enough to turn my head, but not to win my complete affection.

My head knows that I could travel to the far-away city and get a good job. I could sell really expensive stuff that no one needs except to prove the size of their disposable income. How else do we know who is important? Society does its best to teach radicals and nonconformists what matters. Every time I get my paycheck I am reminded that telling stories to school kids and talking to tourists about animals are activities low on the economic priority list. That I like to tell stories to school kids and talk about animals does not matter one bit to Adam Smith's invisible hand that doles out just compensation. Money can't buy happiness, but it is useful when you need medical care or food. Yes, I get sick and hungry. Might I be healthier or better fed elsewhere? I'll let you know if the food runs out.

I celebrate the great cities. I often travel there to enjoy the amenities made possible by the economy of scale. The scale is almost beyond the comprehension of a country boy. I have no answer for my urban friends that point out the libraries, museums, cultural activities, sports, schools, high paying jobs, and diversity of their world. All this is good. I wish for these advantages sometimes. All I can reply is that while there may be richer, younger places in this world, I only love one. Besides, I might take up hunting and fishing someday.

Cities are good in another way. All these people have

to live somewhere. If more of them tried to live near me they would scare off the game, put up mercury vapor lights, and demand better roads into the city. Some things can't be completely shared. Isolation is one.

Cows graze idyllically, stars twinkle brightly, and wild animals inhabit every rural corner of America. How do I know that other cows, stars, and animals wouldn't be better? I don't. When you're in love it is unlikely that you will ever find out, either. My heart tells me the present is enough.

I applaud others who seek their bliss elsewhere. I hope they find it, whether it comes in the city or country. If they were unhappy, what logic would tie them to the location of their misery? Once they find what they are looking for no logic could drag them away.

I am glad some find their bliss in urban museums and zoos. I love to visit these places. I hope the folks that made my microwave oven are content in their employment. It has been a useful appliance to my family. That I have chosen this life and they have chosen another does not make either of us poorer. It makes all of us richer. Each person would fill the niche of the economic ecology that they desire. Each would do that little thing they are specialized to perform, each psychologically adapted to thrive where conditions are optimal for them. It may be that a failure to understand this truth leads to much unhappiness. In the end, even if you are able to win the rat race, you're still a rat.

Are we reasoning creatures? Or do we just use our reason to achieve our irrational desires? There is a big difference between these two outlooks. I fall in the second category. There is no logical reason for me to live or work here. I could justify the decision with a thousand well-reasoned arguments, but in the end, I just want to because I love it. Now I must devote my rational resources to making my desire a reality. It is better to listen to your heart instead of your head if happiness is your goal.

Couldn't I be a good interpreter in a state with a higher wage scale? Yes, I could be proficient. The principles of interpretation apply equally to all localities. Much of my knowledge would transfer. I could get up to speed on what I needed to learn. Learning new things would be good for me.

I would lack only one essential ingredient. I would love another place. Am I hopelessly backward and provincial? Probably. Laugh at me, citizens of the world. I don't care. I'm in love.

Arkansas Post 2003

Eric Leonard, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Gillett, Arkansas

Arkansas Post National Memorial is a historical park in a natural setting. The remaining cultural resources on the site today are largely archeological in nature—therefore it is the natural setting of the park that makes the strongest initial impression on most visitors. This reverse dichotomy provides a constant challenge for interpretation: the need to answer the obvious questions about visible flora and fauna, versus the ‘invisible’ but more significant historical legacy of the site.

2003 has been a busy year at Arkansas Post. The bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase has been the focus of the vast majority of interpretive programs.

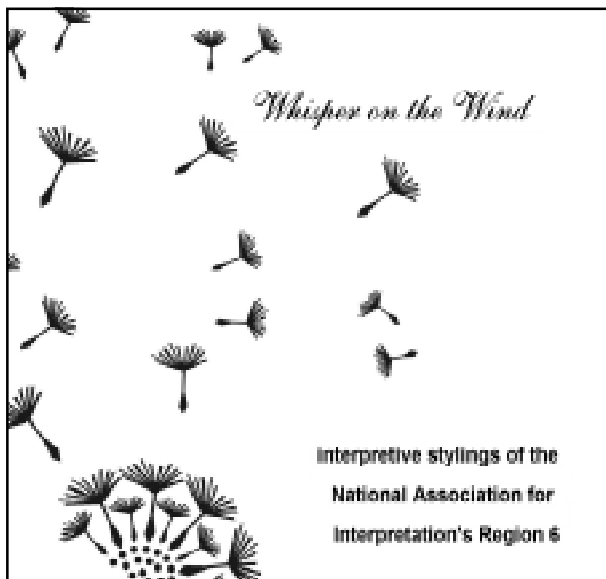
January 11 marked the 140th anniversary of the Civil War battle here. The battle resulted in the destruction of the Confederate earthwork Fort Hindman and the capture of nearly 5,000 Confederate soldiers. A day’s programs commemorated and explored events of the battle. Former Arkansas Post Ranger/Historian Brian McCutchen led tours of the battlefield area, and Frank Arey of the Department of Arkansas Heritage provided an analysis of the battle in the larger context of Civil War Arkansas.

Late February saw the third annual Colonial encampment, a living history event exploring the significance of the Post to European exploration and settlement. Heavy rains put a damper on the event, but over 80 visitors braved the weather to visit the park. For Arkansas Archeology Month in March I assembled a display of artifacts dug from the Montgomery’s Tavern site to illustrate changes that the Louisiana Purchase brought to Arkansas Post. Throughout spring and summer weekly programs were scheduled on aspects

of Arkansas Post’s Colonial era, including: “The most disagreeable hole in the universe”—Life in Colonial Arkansas, the Revolutionary War at Arkansas Post, and the meanings behind the different flags that flew over Arkansas Post.

With the end of the summer came a Civil War encampment in September. The largest interpretive program of the year, “Ghosts of the Past,” was held Friday, October 25. “Ghosts of the Past” is a candle-lit, night-time tour through the park, with scenes of the time periods and stories of the Post. The theme of this year’s program was “First Impressions,” and the scenes brought to life historic accounts of Arkansas Post and what visitors thought of the place and the French community here. My wife and seven-month old son helped out by portraying a French mother and child circa 1820. On November 1 Amber Masculli, from Cane Creek State Park, presented a program on the American Alligator. Her program was so well-received the park’s resident twelve-foot alligator even came close enough for all those who heard the program to get a good look at him sunbathing.

With the winter coming, it’s time to work on projects and look towards next year. After operating as an interpretive division of one all year, Donna Evans will be transferring from Vicksburg NMP in mid-December to fill our park guide position. In mid-November the entire NPS website received a much needed facelift; a great deal of time was spent this fall preparing photographs and material for the new look. Plus, in December you will see an expanded website with new interpretive content and resource material to help raise the exposure of the park.



WHISPER ON THE WIND

Need that gift for the person who has everything? How about an outstanding collection of interpretive stories from across NAI Region Six?

The *Whisper on the Wind* CD is \$15 for non-NAI members and \$12 for NAI members.

To get your copy of *Whisper on the Wind* contact John Miller at (417) 334-4865 ext 0 or at John.Miller@mdc.mo.gov

Proceeds from the sale of this CD go to NAI Region Six.

Small Projects Get Big Help From the Region Six Mini-Grants Program

Lisa Cole, Heard Natural Science Museum, McKinney, Texas

Last March, I was thrilled to learn that my request for a Mini-Grant from Region Six had been awarded. I had been given \$1,000 to complete renovations to the Heard Natural Science Museum's live animal exhibit. After doing a happy little jig at my desk (hey, no visitors could see me!), I immediately began to set my plans in motion.

The Heard has a small reptile, amphibian, and fish exhibit in the basement, housing about 12 species of native North Texas animals. It is a popular stop for visitors, particularly families, on their way to the hiking trails. This is a place for them to view close-up a number of species they normally only glimpse quickly slipping under a log or other cover. The exhibit was renovated about 12 years ago, and while the cages no doubt seemed wonderfully new-fangled at the time, to me they have been a problem from day one--limiting in the species appropriate for exhibit, difficult to clean, hard to maintain. We needed all-new cages, and the supplies to go with them. I also wanted to present the cages in a more attractive setting--the current dark green walls surrounding the cages give the room a dark, dreary feel, that, for lack of a better word, I will call "blah."

I chose to remove the old cages and support structures and build new shelves arranged to hold a variety of sizes/shapes of cages and aquariums. All new lighting and heating fixtures are attached to shelves above the cages, and can be adjusted as needed. Instead of our old large, unmaneuverable cages (one of them was about 3.5 feet tall, was placed five feet off

the floor, and only opened from the top. To clean it, I had to climb to the top of a ladder and hang precariously from the rim of the cage by my waist to reach the bottom), we have smaller cages that can be removed from the shelves for cleaning. This is behind the scenes. What visitors will actually see from the front is a rock wall (limestone donated by a local contractor) with windows set in it. Each window looks into one of the aquariums or cages. Each aquarium will be backed with a laminated photo print depicting that animal's habitat (photos taken on the Heard Wildlife Sanctuary), and preventing visitors from looking right through the glass into the animal maintenance area. New color signs produced in-house will provide visitors with information about each animal's habitat, habits, range, and importance in its ecosystem.

We are working with a local contractor to match part of the grant. The rest will be matched by PetCo (I'm still waiting for a response on that) or by the Heard.

This project, when complete, will make it much easier for our volunteers and staff to provide high quality care for our animals. The renovation will help us present the animals to our visitors in the best light, as the new cages and the rock wall update the room and make it much more accessible and attractive. It will be a pleasant environment in which our visitors can better connect with some of the creatures they may encounter on the Wildlife Sanctuary.

Thank you, RegionSix!

A Short History of Nearly Everything

James Wilborn, Lake Ouachita State Park, Mountain Pine, Arkansas

Realizing the Arkansas issue of *Visions* was coming up, I asked myself a question, "*What have I learned recently that has helped me in the field of interpretation?*" It was clear the book *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson has changed my view of my planet and of my role as an interpreter.

Interpreters are very lucky people because we are always learning new things. This sometimes leads us to share our newfound knowledge with everyone around us; unfortunately my co-workers and my wife don't always appreciate the difference between quarks and gluons and how it is believed they make up protons. My wife remarked after I shared this new information with her, "You are *such* a nerd." Nevertheless, the desire to learn new things is a powerful human trait. After all, the ability to learn sets us apart from many other living things.

In Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, he points out how complex our world is and how very little we know about it. The point of the book is to share history from the beginning of the universe to the latest theories on the structure of an atom. The book is packed full of interesting stories about our planet. One of the most powerful sections of the book deals with conservation. Bryson spends several pages sharing the fate of the dodo bird, passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, and the Tasmanian tiger ("*the only large carnivorous marsupial to live into modern times*"). He does this to illustrate the following quote. "*If you were designing an organism to look after life in our lonely cosmos, to monitor where it is going and keep a record of where it has been, you wouldn't choose humans beings for the job.*" But Bryson goes on to say

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State Report



ARKANSAS

Jay Miller

Congratulations to **Steve Dunlap**, who received the Outstanding Legacy Article award at NIW!

Arkansas State Parks was lucky to be able to send seven people to the NIW in Sparks. Superintendent **Stan Speight** writes: "The conference was very productive and we got some really good ideas on exhibits, kiosks, etc. I am typing up my notes as we speak and will get back with the rest of our group for the presentation. The trip was well worth the time and I think most of the participants know where Arkansas is now!"

Several Arkansas Game and Fish Commission educators, interpreters from the 4-H environmental education program, 'Project Rescue' attended the NIW as did Bill Black, Supt. of Fort Smith NHS, Professor Matt McCoy from the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith and maybe a few more. Arkansas had a significant showing.

Civil War buffs - HEADS UP! Mark Ballard, Superintendent at **Jacksonport State Park**, reports that restoration has been completed on the 1st Arkansas Infantry Company "G," "Jackson Guards" Flag, owned by The Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. This flag left Jacksonport May 5, 1861, with the first soldiers to leave this area for the War. Made by the ladies of Jacksonport, it is an important piece of our history. The Museum of the Confederacy has approved a 12-month loan of this original flag to Jacksonport State Park. The loan period will be January 2004 through December 2004. This is great news and we are excited about this project. A major exhibit is being developed to accompany the flag.

The Mary Woods No. 2, a sternwheel riverboat at **Jacksonport State Park**, has been beautifully restored and is being nominated by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program for National Historic Landmark designation.

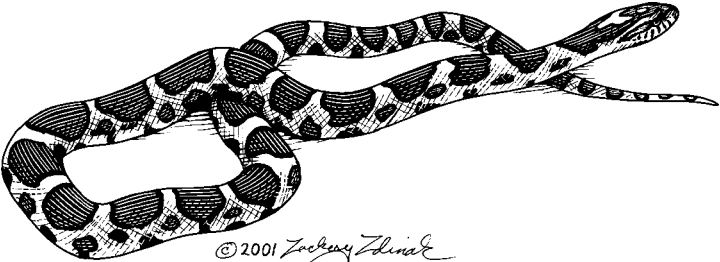
The **Arkansas Historic Preservation Program** is working closely with state parks, the Corps of Engineers, communities and the National Park Service to identify and sign Trail of Tears sites in the state. Some of the most dramatic and significant sites will receive wayside exhibits this year: **Lake Dardanelle State Park**, **Village Creek State Park**, **Cadron Settlement Park** (COE) and the cities of Helena and North Little Rock.

Old Washington Historic State Park has completed renovation of the 1914 schoolhouse into an overnight facility and small conference center. This provides an excellent overnight educational opportunity for teachers and students. Interpreter **Billy Nations**: "As I write *Old Washington is hosting a curriculum workshop for the Southwest Arkansas Educational Cooperative*. These teacher workshops give us an opportunity to showcase our park and the rich, curriculum-driven programming possibilities here." Plus, Old Washington welcomes **Kristi Hoover** as their first ever official "gardener." Kristi brings extensive knowledge and some rather interesting program ideas regarding heritage plants within the park. She should be a great addition to their interpretive mix.

Interpreters continue to move around Arkansas:

Rachel Engebrecht has been hired as the second full-time interpreter at **Crater of Diamonds**, **Amber Masculli** has left **Cane Creek** to join **Sarah Keating** at **Lake Dardanelle**, **Kelly Mulvihill** has left **Parkin** to become the **Fort Smith Nature Center** Director for Game and Fish, and **Barbara Miller** has left **Parkin** to be an education specialist for the Game and Fish Nature Center in Jonesboro. We have some very interesting positions open at **Parkin**, **Powhatan**, **Cane Creek** and **Lake Chicot**; others will follow.

Yours truly continues to lead interpretation/exhibit planning workshops for the **Arkansas Humanities Council**. **Jama Best** of the Council writes: *I cannot thank you enough for everything that you have done for the Council! I thought the workshop went real well yesterday and that the folks got a lot of good information from your presentation. Thanks again for all of your time, your expertise, and the wonderful presentation!* ■



State Report

Kansas

Schanée Anderson

Events

- **Lee Richardson Zoo**, Garden City: The first regional Kansas ECO-Meet was held on Oct. 22. Teams from five area high and middle schools participated, with teams/students from Holcomb, Lakin and Pratt qualifying to compete in the State Eco-Meet at Quivira on Nov. 5.
- **Topeka Zoo**, Topeka: Staff and volunteers are proud to announce the ground breaking of a new entry/education complex. This will provide much needed classroom and office space.
- **Lee Richardson Zoo**, Garden City: The zoo is about to break ground on a new Kansas Waters exhibit for river otters, native fish, and Kansas water education information

Conferences/Meetings/Workshops

- Are you attending "Exploring the Past: Mapping the Future" NAI Region Six Interpreters Workshop March 7-10, 2004 in Kansas City, MO? The **Martin and Osa Johnson Safari Museum**, dedicated to pioneering naturalists and early wildlife filmmakers Martin and Osa Johnson, is offering free admission to all NAI members and guests. If you use the super secret codeword "Congorilla," you can get a 10% discount in the museum store! The Martin and Osa Johnson Safari Museum is open Mon-Sat 10-5 and on Sun. 1-5 and is located in Chanute, Kansas. For current exhibitions and adventures available at the museum please check out www.safarimuseum.com!
- Three Kansas Zoos participate in international conservation: **Sedgwick County Zoo**, **Sunset Zoo**, and **Topeka Zoo** spent two weeks in Paraguay facilitating Project Wild and PLT to 40 sixth and seventh grade students. The team also presented water quality seminars to 40 teachers. It was a tremendously rewarding experience. The team has just heard one of the students was so highly motivated that she will be participating in the Fifth United Nations International Children's Conference on the Environment. This exciting event will be held in Connecticut and will bring together close to 600 young delegates aged 10-13, from 100 countries.

New for the winter

- "City Slickers," an interactive exhibit designed by **Lori Hall**, has been featured in *Interpretive Centers, The History, Design, and Development of Nature & Visitor Centers* by **Dr. Michael Gross** and **Ron Zimmerman**. This exhibit challenges children to place native wildlife blocks in their correct urban habitat.
- **Sedgwick County Zoo** was selected as one of five institutions to participate in the Bronx Zoo's PRISM program. During this two-year program, Sedgwick County Zoo will mentor four other informal science institutes and aid in the development of action plans focused on bringing middle school students closer to science.
- POPULAR KANSAS SCENIC BYWAYS BOOKLETS WIN TWO AWARDS—"The Farm and Ranch Booklet" along with two other Fun Facts booklets, received two awards from the Travel Industry Association of Kansas at its annual conference in Olathe, KS: 1) for booklets produced within the \$15,000 and over budget category; and 2) the People's Choice Award based on balloting of those in attendance at the conference. The booklets are intended to provide basic information in an enjoyable way about what people see as they drive the Byways, to enhance their experience and appreciation of Kansas scenery. The other two booklets are "About Trees, Grasses, Wildflowers and Shrubs" and "About Birds and Wildlife." To obtain a set of the booklets or for further information about the program, a public/private partnership of the Kansas Department of Transportation and the Bucher, Willis & Ratliff Corporation, visit the Kansas Scenic Byways website at ksbyways.org or call 1-800-684-6966.
- **Sunset Zoo** in Manhattan is beginning a new special event "Survive the Night." It is a night at the zoo filled with challenges teams must overcome. It is a teambuilding workshop for families or businesses.

Wonderful staff and volunteers

- **Lori Hall** was one of twelve community leaders chosen to be profiled in the "Becoming the Land" installation at the **Salina Art Center**. This project combined contemporary installation art, paintings, educational activities and films about our relationship to the land.
- Welcome to **Andrea Smith**, who is the new Education Assistant at the **Garden City Zoo**. ■



State Report



MISSOURI

John Miller

On November 25, **Shanna Raeker**, (Naturalist at the **August A. Busch CA** & 2003 Region Six Secretary) and her husband Gus became the proud parents of **Abigail Johanna Raeker**. She weighed 7 lbs 8 oz and was 19 1/2" long. All of the Raekers are doing fine.

New Association of Missouri Interpreters officers for 2004 are:
President = **Kevin Lohraff** (Runge Conservation Nature Center)
Vice President = **Gladys Rigsby** (Lake of the Ozarks State Park)
Secretary = **Jeremy Soucy** (Montauk State Park)
Treasurer = **Leah Eden** (Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center)

Andrea Putnam (Jefferson City) reports that the **Runge Conservation Nature Center** hosted the 2003 Statewide Volunteer Field Trip on September 6 & 7 for all MDC Volunteer Naturalists. With the theme of Lewis & Clark and the Missouri River, their staff put on a wonderful array of field trips and programs. The field trips and activities included a visit to the newly designated Clark's Hill/Norton State Historic Site, learning stations on sandbars on the Missouri River, hands-on activities like flint-and-steel fire building and tomahawk throwing, a presentation on Lewis & Clark by DNR Historian **James Denny**, a Lewis & Clark tour of the Capitol, a fish fry, and a musical performance of "Fiddles and Forests" by **Mike Fraser** and the band Shortleaf. The Statewide Volunteer Field Trip is organized at a different site every year, and is an enrichment trip and a "thank-you" to our volunteers at Missouri Department of Conservation interpretive sites all around the state.

Lana Henry (Diamond) reports that the **George Washington Carver National Monument** conducted two December programs. At the Christmas Open House on December 13, park staff and volunteers invited the public to a holiday celebration of seasonal music, entertainment, and refreshments. A winter tree hike on December 20 gave visitors an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of nature in winter by taking a hike at the park. A park ranger led the hike, pointing out ways to identify trees by their bark texture and branching patterns.

Jamie Hubert (Columbia) reports that **Wanda Doolen** has gotten a promotion to Natural Resource Manager at **Lake Wappapello State Park**. It was hard for Wanda to leave **Sam A. Baker State Park**, but she appears to love her new job.

Rhonda Anderson (St. Louis) reports that she has moved to the **Columbia Bottom Conservation Area**. In addition to working with a new building (which will be completed this spring,) she is creating an interpretive program from scratch. She is in the process of planning school and public programs for this spring as well as training the first ever Volunteer Naturalists at CBCA. Needless to say she and her facility will be busy in 2004 with all the Lewis & Clark events where the two big rivers meet.

Laura Dunn (Liberty) reports on several things at **Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary**. In June they welcomed new Naturalist **Lisa Richter**. Lisa is a Kansas native who comes to us from the Woodland Nature Station at Land Between the Lakes in Kentucky. Lisa's first project is designing and planting a new "sensory" garden. The Butterfly Garden at MLTNS once again benefited from the students of Schumacher Elementary School. They received \$2200.00 from their Earth Week T-shirt sales. Their continued support provides for animal care, educational gardens and their maintenance. Congratulations to young volunteers **Amber Baldwin**, 16 and **Brock Lowe**, 13 who were "Caught in the Act of Doing the Right Thing." The two were recognized and rewarded for their dedication and over 600 hours of volunteer work by the Liberty Alliance For Youth. Finally, recovery from the May 4th tornado is virtually complete. It is still a surprise to find insulation and pictures on the trails after a windy day...and then there's that door 40 feet up in a tree!

John Miller (Branson) reports that **Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center** has just graduated seven new volunteer naturalists. These volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm. They will not only greet visitors, but will provide public programs and hatchery tours. A big Branson welcome to **Sally Barritt**, **Charlie Cox**, **Mary Potter**, **Brian Robertson**, **Jay Schwarz**, **Kendra Swee**, and **Dee Wolfe** for completing their 32-hours of volunteer training.

OKLAHOMA

Steve Black and Neil Garrison

Leann Rogers is the naturalist over at **Tenkiller State Park** (Gore, OK). She reports that she will have a brand new interpretive center up and running this coming spring. She said; "Yahoo!!!"...so I think that she is pretty tickled about this news. Thanks to three National Trails Grants, she has been able to implement a lot of improvements to the park's nature trails. To this, she said: "WOW!"...so, again: I think that she is just a tad pleased with the way that things are going there of late.

Quartz Montain Nature Park staff members **Sue Hokanson** and **Vickie Gilreath** are elated about the new website that they designed: www.Quartzmountain.org. They want you to check it out and give them some feedback on what you think.

Great things have been happening over at Tulsa's **Oxley Nature Center**. They received \$66,500 in financial grants for refurbishing of the interpretive exhibits in their visitor center. **Susie Ruby** is now permanent, full-time and **Eddie Reese** says they've hired **Vinnie Robinson**, who has a horticulture background and worked in turf management. He has full knowledge of all the equipment, getting rid of noxious invasive plants, etc. Eddie says, "I don't think his brakes work, however—he came in the door and didn't even stop, he just jumped in feet first and went to work."

The interpretive staff at **Martin Park Nature Center** (Oklahoma City) has been doing some cooperative programming with the Woodson Park Senior Activity Center in Oklahoma City. In November, two full charter bus loads of seniors were taken to the San Bois Mountains (eastern Oklahoma) for a fall foliage tour. Another group of seniors expressed a desire for activities that are less sedentary..so a "senior hiking club" was born. The trekking group went to the Wichita Mountains (southwestern Oklahoma) for a day hike on one of the trails in the national wildlife refuge. The staff has been writing a "Nature & You" column in the state's largest newspaper on a once-a-month basis, but recently that has changed to twice-a-month. This enables the information to get disseminated to a bunch of folks that might not otherwise actually walk through the doors on the nature center.

Skulls Unlimited headquarters (Moore, OK) has hired **Joey Williams** as the education director of its new interpretive museum.

One of the newest additions to the ranks of the interpreters in Oklahoma is the coach of the professional hockey team in Oklahoma City. **Doug Sauter** dressed up in some authentic-looking period clothing and did first-person interpretation of U.S. Army scout Ben Clark at old Fort Reno's "Tombstone Tales" event (El Reno, OK).

Our "CONGRATULATIONS!" go out to **Bob Jennings** (Tulsa, OK). He received the Interpretive Manager certification from NAI.

A Short History, continued from page 6

"we have been chosen, by fate or Providence or whatever you wish to call it. As far as we can tell, we are the best there is. We may be all there is. It's an unnerving thought that we may be the living universe's supreme achievement and its worst nightmare simultaneously."

This book showed me how fragile and complex life is on our planet. And that as caretakers of our planet, we are the only species capable of making a considerable difference. This book has made a difference in the way I view our world. I hope you will take the opportunity to experience Bill Bryson's A Short History of Nearly Everything.





State Report



TEXAS

Brian Barnette

This year Texas celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.), a public works program created to provide jobs during the Great Depression. The CCC built the foundations of the Texas State Park System. On August 16, 2003, **Fort Parker** was pleased to host the eleventh annual reunion of the veterans from Camp 3807c, the camp that built the park. Camp 3807c was an African American camp formed in 1935, one of only two that are members of the National Association of C.C.C. Alumni. These men came from the Central Texas area, most from Limestone County. Like most C.C.C. enrollees, they were poor, not knowing where the next meal was coming from, and with families that could hardly survive. The C.C.C. meant a job, income for their families, three square meals a day, training in a trade, and most of all—hope. The camp was disbanded in 1941. Most of these men served their country in World War Two. Proud of their accomplishments, they returned to Texas following the war only to find that segregation prevented them from using the park they had built. This injustice continued until the 1960's. The twelve alumni members present were both proud and grateful when a Historical Marker was dedicated in their honor in March of 1998.

Kenneth Fatheree reports that **Fort Lancaster State Historic Site** had its annual living history event on October 18. During the event, visitors were entertained by various reenactors portraying life on a lonely frontier fort from the 1850's through the 1870's. Prominent portrayals this year included U.S. Infantry and Artillery, and Confederate Cavalry and Artillery units. There were participants from **Fort McKavett**, **Fort Richardson** and **Fort Griffin State Historic Sites**, as well as members of the **TPWD Buffalo Soldiers** program and the **Old Fort Lancaster Frontier Garrison**, which provided the bulk of the reenactors.

Jeff Geer says fishing is the big attraction at **Fairfield Lake State Park**. After hosting a successful Junior Angler training at the park last spring and a successful Wal-Mart Kid Fish in June, he began looking for ways to involve more young people in fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities at the park. **Fairfield** and **Fort Parker State Parks** teamed up to prepare a proposal to get the tools they needed to conduct fishing and aquatic programs at the parks and in the surrounding communities. They received money to outfit a trailer as a mobile classroom available for park staff and volunteers. It contains tackle boxes, wall-mounted carriers for the fishing rods, and teaching supplies. Items have been donated from Cabela's, Eagle Claw and Shakespeare.

Beth Dodd-Ellis tells us visitors to **Goliad State Park** on November 7 and 8 were invited to step more than 200 years into the past to experience the Spanish Colonial Era. During the Spanish Tracks and Trails event, Mission Espiritu Santo came to life once again as the busy village it was long ago. Sights and sounds of Spanish Colonial and Native American life from the 1700's filled the Mission compound and visitors had the opportunity to try their hand at many of the activities. The event was a cooperative endeavor between the **Market House Museum** (Goliad County Historical Society) and Goliad State Park. The Presidio La Bahia joined park staff to host a special day for school groups, with 1,554 school children in attendance. Saturday (the day for the general public) was more lightly attended, but it was fun and relaxing for visitors and demonstrators alike. Everyone enjoyed the variety of demonstrations, including blacksmithing, flint-knapping, weaving, Native American pottery and sidesaddle riding demonstrations, among many others.

Jennifer Kirker (Farmers Branch Historical Park) reports the City of Farmers Branch partnered with the Texas Historical Commission, the Dallas Archeological Society and Southern Methodist University's Anthropology Club to celebrate Texas Archeology Awareness Month. The third annual Farmers Branch Archeology Fair was held on October 11 at Farmers Branch Historical Park. In order to increase awareness of Texas prehistory and archeology, the event offered demonstrations of prehistoric flintknapping, historic blacksmithing and weaving, and hands-on activities such as a mock excavation, pottery mending, cornhusk doll making, spear throwing. Over 1500 visitors participated.

Lisa Cole and the folks at the **Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary** had a successful opening of their Raptors of Texas exhibit last month. Atlanta, the albino Black Vulture (the World Bird Sanctuary in St. Louis has the only other albino of this species known to exist) made her public debut. She shares the exhibit with eight other species of raptors. Plans are underway to expand the exhibit to 18 cages total in the fall. The Heard staff is also in the planning stages of a major renovation of the Museum's exhibits, with plans to start tearing up walls for the first bit of it sometime in January.





PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Articles submitted for publication in Visions should be sent to the editors at:

Lisa Cole: Heard Natural Science Museum, One Nature Place, McKinney, TX 75069, (972) 562-5566, fax: (972) 548-9119, Lcole@heardmuseum.org or

Pam Tooley, 29 Manor Lane, Lucas, TX 75002, (972) 727-4189, e-mail pmtool@worldnet.att.net

INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE SENT TO ANY OF THE VISIONS STATE COORDINATORS:

Arkansas: Jay Miller, Arkansas State Parks, Little Rock, AR, 501-682-2187 (work). InterpComm@aol.com

Kansas: Schané Anderson, Sedgwick County Zoo, Wichita, KS, sanderson@scz.org

Louisiana: David Latona, Louisiana Office of State Parks, Baton Rouge, LA, 225-342-1479, dlatona@crt.state.la.us

Missouri: John Miller, Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery Conservation Center, Branson, MO, 417-334-4865, millej@mdc.state.mo.us

Oklahoma: Co-Coordinator: Neil Garrison, Martin Park Nature Center, Oklahoma City, OK, 405-755-0676, atlatlgarrison@hotmail.com

Steve Black, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, Cheyenne, OK, 580-497-2742, steve_black@nps.gov

Texas: Brian Barnette, Dallas Museum of Natural History, Dallas, TX, 214-421-3466 x230, bbarnette@dmnhnet.org

REGION VI OFFICERS

Pat Silovsky, Director: Milford Nature Center, Junction City, KS, 785-238-5323, milnat@flinthills.com

Jodi Morris, Deputy Director: Crowley's Ridge Nature Center, Jonesboro, AR, 870-933-6787, mjmorris@agfc.state.ar.us

Sarah Keating, Treasurer: Lake Dardanelle State Park, Russellville, AR, 501-967-5516, diamond_digger@hotmail.com

Shanna Raeker, Secretary: August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area, St. Charles, MO, 636-441-4554 x327, raekes@mail.conservation.state.mo.us

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Scholarship: Kelly Farrell, DeGray Lake Resort State Park, Bismarck, AR, 501-865-2801, Kelly.Farrell@mail.state.ar.us

Awards: Cyndi Evans, Prairie State Park, Liberal, MO, 417-843-6711, dspevanc2@mail.dnr.state.mo.us

Elections: Don Simons, Mt. Magazine State Park, Paris, AR, 501-963-8502 x203, mutantnnn@hotmail.com

Membership: Brian Stith, Missouri State Museum, Jefferson City, MO, 573-751-2854, nrstib@mail.dnr.state.mo.us

Visions
NAI Region VI
Heard Museum
One Nature Place
McKinney, TX 75069

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERPRETATION

P.O. Box 2246

Fort Collins, CO 80522

Phone: (970) 484-8283 Toll-free @ 888-900-8283

Fax: (970) 484-8179

Region Six Web Master:

Eric Leonard, Arkansas Post National Memorial
1741 Old Post Road, Gillett, AR 72055, 870-548-2207 (phone), 870-548-2431 (fax), eric_leonard@nps.gov

DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE::

Winter 2003: November 20

Spring 2004: February 20

Summer 2004: May 20

Fall 2004: August 20

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