

ARKANSAS • KANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSOURI • OKLAHOMA • TEXAS

## In Remembrance

Region Six'ers are a close-knit bunch. When one of us is lost, it hits home...hard. Unfortunately, we lost two people we loved and respected last month. We have decided to put the regular newsletter on hold to spend some time remembering Brian Barnette and Kristi Silvey. As it happens, both Brian and Kristi have written for *Visions*. We have included two of their articles, in memory of two people who did so much good in their lives.

*Brian Barnette*



Brian Barnette loved being a naturalist. He knew that he wanted to work at the Dallas Museum of Natural History from the age of six, when he started taking classes at the museum. He died on February 22, 2004 of a heart attack. He was 48. As the chief naturalist at the Dallas Museum of Natural History, Brian was a consummate teacher and exhibit planner, and a wealth of knowledge. We've lost track of the number of times he won or placed in the Great All-American Interpreter's Quiz in the region. Rarely did he miss a Workshop, either regional or national. Brian was active in NAI from the days of the merger, working on committees, workshops, as the state coordinator for Texas and as an inspiring writer to the newsletters. In 1990, he was awarded *The Dallas Morning News'* Golden Pen Award twice. (*We'll miss him most b/c of his "gift of the gab."* Ed.)

*Kristi Silvey*



On February 10, 2004, Kristi Silvey, park naturalist for the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, died of cancer. Kristi served at Beavers Bend State Resort Park from September 1, 1980 until her death. She was diagnosed with cancer two weeks before her death; she was 49 years old.

Kristi was a dedicated professional and a long-time member of NAI. She loved her job, and delighted in sharing her knowledge of nature. She touched the lives of thousands upon thousands of park visitors and school children. A licensed wildlife rehabilitator, Kristi helped countless injured animals return to the wild. Her gentle manner and caring attitude made her nature center the heartbeat of the park. Kristi will be greatly missed.

## What Do You Say?

Kristi Silvey

I'm sure most of you have been in the position of someone asking you if you enjoy what you do, why do you do this job, how long, what classes, and such. It's all part of the job, and besides, some of those questions come from our next generation of interpreters—some will volunteer, some will make it a career. Why DO you do what you do? Why put up with the long hours? The great pay! "As for others, I cannot say, but for myself..."

I admit that I had never heard of the position of interpreter or interpretive naturalist until I got a job as one. Even then I wasn't quite sure just what was expected of me! A college graduate with a degree in wildlife ecology—what kind of a job can you get? I lucked into a job with CETA—a training program in the 1970's that, for me, really paid off! I knew within a month of working that THIS was what I wanted to do with my life!

Do you ever ponder really deep questions? Wonder just why we do what we do? Sometimes we get asked questions like that and have to come up with an answer really quickly. What do you say? Tell the truth that you are just in it for the money? Or that you really like to think you make a difference here? Or, "Hey, I really love kids!" Next time you are asked, give it some thought before you respond with a flip comment.

I've been doing what I'm doing for over 20 years and have seen lots of folks come and go. But the people I really remember, both naturalists and visitors, all have something in common—they like people and they like nature. Here we get to put them together and make something really special! What can compare to the thrill of watching a visitor when they see their first bald eagle? Or a kid (of any age!) touching a snake for the first time and realizing they are NOT slimy or even really cold! Or their amazement at watching a bat

hunting on the wing? What about their first experience with a flying squirrel? For so many of our visitors, we are their first experience with so much of the outdoor world (maybe that's why they call us



front-line interpreters!) So many of our visitors are blank slates, just waiting to be written on.

Last weekend, a visitor asked me if I enjoy what I do, and like the smart aleck I am, I popped off, "No, I really don't. They have to drag me to work every day, even on my day off. I hate people, hate animals, yuck!" She turned and looked at me with a really surprised look on her face! She said it was obvious that I want to do what I do. I wonder, if it is so obvious, why did she ask? How many people do you know who really look forward to coming to work? Who come in on their days off, because they care and want to make sure that everything is as it should be, or maybe because they know that a visitor who really wanted to see the nature center could not make it until after closing? I have visitors who comment that I would be here whether they paid me or not. That, I'm not so sure of, but they might be right! I cannot imagine doing anything else with my life. My visitors are here because they want to be here and they want to have a good time. I'm here because they are here. If not for them, I wouldn't have a job! So bring on the visitors! Bring on the questions, the astonishment, the surprise, the joy, and even the animosity—we will work with it and try to make it better. I can learn something from everyone I meet, and I try to do so. There is so much information out there, so many ideas, so much creativity, that there is no way I can assimilate it all. Relying on visitors makes them a vital part of this nature center and what we hope to accomplish here.

If Beavers Bend has a good nature center, it is not just because of the naturalists who work here, or management, but because of the visitors. They offer ideas on programs, schedules, brochures, displays, new additions, recycling, and on and on. Thanks to our visitors, Beavers Bend has an active, growing nature center. Hopefully, it will never stop developing, even if it does get moved into a new building. We have to keep the idea that it is never finished, but an ongoing project that never ends.

*This article was first published in "Visions" in the Winter 2001 issue.*

In lieu of flowers, Kristi's family requests that donations be made to:

The Friends of Beavers Bend  
c/o Nature Center Building Fund  
P.O. Box 10  
Broken Bow, OK 74728  
580-494-6556

## On Being Listless

Brian Barnette

Back on August 27, in the wee hours of the morning, my car was stolen.

Now, if you've ever seen my vehicle, your first reaction might be quite similar to mine: "What kind of sick, demented person would steal something that looked like that?" My ten-year-old Suburban, with 200,000 miles under its belts, was not exactly a thing of beauty. Its finish was equal parts paint and rust, the windshield had more cracks than a plumbers' convention, and it hadn't been washed in years. But it was paid for, and it ran, and it was mine. Was. Now there was just a big empty space on the street in front of my house.

Having never dealt with this situation before, I immediately set about trying to do all the right things. I called the police ("Stolen car? Don't call us, we'll call you.") The insurance company ("Don't you remember? Our records show that you dropped that coverage.") The Museum ("I'm going to be a little late...") My brother and sister ("Hey, guess what happened...") I also began trying to compile a list of the vehicle's contents—the stuff that was stolen with it. Camping gear. Tools. My snake sticks. A box of field guides.

It was while I was talking to co-worker Barb Peterman, whom I had called to bum a ride into work, that it hit me. *My life list!* My life list was in the box of stolen field guides!

Ouch.

A "life list" is the record of all the birds one has seen and identified. To a birder, it's the equivalent of a big game hunter's trophy room—all the species "bagged" over a lifetime of pursuit in the wild. It may represent hours, days, perhaps even years spent seeking a particular bird, as well as chance encounters and surprise sightings. For convenience, most birders use the checklists that are included in their field guides. Mine was in my well-worn copy of Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds of Texas.

My list comprised a modest 300 or so species, observed over a period of about 30 years. In many cases, there was a notation of the date and locality of my first sighting of the bird. Of all the items in the car, it was the most irreplaceable. I could buy another tent. I could make some more snake sticks. But my life list! How could I ever remember all the details it encompassed?

As I set about trying to reconstruct the list, I began to realize its true significance. For instance, they say you

never forget your first one (birds...we're talking birds). I remember clearly the first unfamiliar bird that I successfully observed and identified. I was eleven or twelve at the time, on a hunting trip with my Dad in central Texas. I was sitting on a board fork of a cedar elm, waiting for a deer to appear, when a small bird hopped in the tree below me. I had no binoculars, so I trained the 2x telescopic sight on my rifle on the little ball of feathers. (If you're not familiar with optics, a 2x 'scope gives you approximately the same effect as looking through the cardboard tube from a roll of toilet paper).

The bird, in a gesture of cooperation quite atypical for its kind, overlooked my lapse in firearms etiquette and hopped around for several minutes so that I could get a good look at it. It was tiny, with a small, thin beak. It was mostly olive green with white bars on its wings and white rings around its eyes. And it had a bright red spot on the top of its head.

Later, back home, I found a copy of the Golden Guide to the Birds of North America in the Sanger-Harris book department at Big Town Mall (this was a while back). Sure enough, there he was, in living color—the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. I had my first bird. I was hooked.

Now I was faced with a blank list...no entries at all. As I read off the names of the birds, other memories came flooding back. There was the female Redstart that I saw on a float trip down the Buffalo River in Arkansas...the Eurasian Sparrows that surprised us at the conference in St. Louis...and the Red Crossbills in the ponderosa pines at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. I remembered the White-fronted (now White-tipped) Doves in the citrus groves down in Harlingen...the American Woodcock in the deep woods of the Big Thicket...and the Red-headed Woodpecker in my grandmother's East Dallas backyard. I saw again the bright orange bill of the Black Oystercatcher that we passed as we drove off the ferry in Vancouver...the yellow of the Goldfinch on the feeder outside Bruce Boardman's window in Stephenville...and the ridiculous red, blue, and green



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(continued on page 4)

## On Being Listless, continued from page 3

of a Painted Bunting on a Possum Kingdom morning. And there were the ones that were extra special because I saw them on our family's San Saba ranch: Pyrrhuloxia, Green Kingfisher, and Black-shouldered Kite.

Gradually, it began to sink in...the real measure of a life list was not in the length of the list, but in the life it represented. Sure, it's a thrill to add a new bird to your total, and there's always a little good-natured one-ups-manship in comparing lists with other birders to see whose is longer. But that's not what's important. What matters are the memories—of field trips and campouts, of family and friends—the experiences that are somehow symbolized by the birds seen along the way. And while it was certainly disappointing to “lose” some of the species I had “bagged,” there will be

other opportunities. In the meantime, I've still got my memories...my 'nocs...and a brand new bird list to fill in. Only this time, I'm going to try to keep in mind that old adage, “Don't put all your egg layers in one basket.” Or is it, “A bird list in the hand is worth two in the car?”

Oh, by the way, my Suburban turned up last week—minus my stuff, the battery, and the radio—but otherwise intact and operable. It's gratifying to know that even car thieves have some standards.

*This article, for which Brian received the 1998 Region Six Best Newsletter Article Award, originally appeared in the March-April 1998 issue of "Visions."*

### Memorial Funds for Brian:

Dallas Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 150349, Dallas, TX 75315

Boy Scouts of America, Circle 10

## Here's your chance to help NAI...

### CALL FOR NIW VOLUNTEERS

Be the first on your block to volunteer at the NIW this year, in Grand Rapids, MI, November 16-20. There are many positions available. Look for a detailed list of volunteer jobs on the website later in the year. We need about 150 volunteers to handle everything efficiently, so start your planning early to work with other professionals and enjoy your NAI.

### History of Interpretation Project

NAI Region Four is working with me to produce a video/DVD on the “History of Interpretation in the United States” by next fall's annual conference. **We would really like this to be a product of the entire interpretive community and therefore request your input!**

It will be important to note historically and nationally significant individuals and events that shaped this profession, including the creation of the Association of Interpretive Naturalists and the Western Interpreters' Association which led to the birth of the National Association for Interpretation in 1988. Certainly there are also significant stories regarding the history of our profession on statewide and provincial levels that led to the development of interpretation as a profession throughout the United States. These stories should also be documented. “Why interpreters inter-

Please e-mail me at spiderlass@hotmail.com, or call me at 810.789.8567. I hope to hear from a lot of you. Thanks.

Diantha Martin  
Volunteer Chair, NIW 2004

pret” will also be an important theme of this production.

Please send articles, memories, photographs, film, stories, books, suggestions, or videotapes to “Kids Explore Productions,” E 9096 Westshore Drive, Munising, MI 49862 or email to Dkronk@up.net. Please indicate whether you have obtained copyright permission or are providing copyright permission to use the items in this production. All items will be returned if desired and your contribution/suggestion will be noted in the program credits. The majority of the proceeds from this project will be retained by NAI. Thank you very much for your help!

David Kronk  
Kids Explore Productions, Munising, MI

# *I'll Take You There With Me*

*This poem was written by Barb Peterman of the Dallas Museum of Natural History for Brian's memorial service. Molly Postlewait read it to the group at the Region Six Workshop a couple of weeks ago. We're printing it in memory of both Kristi and Brian.*

I'm going to the woods today, do you want to come along?  
A front blew in this morning and the air is full of song.  
I'll find that life-list bird for you--that one you want to see...  
I'm going to the woods today. I'll take you there with me.

I'm going to the river where the water smooths the stone,  
To search her banks for artifacts and bits of fossil bone,  
And splashes of your laughter there will keep me company.  
I'm going to the river, and I'll take you there with me.

I'm heading out to sea again, will you come along once more?  
Stand in the spray beside me, while fish fly, and seabirds soar?  
And wink at me from sparkling starlit skies above the sea--  
I'm heading out to sea again. I'll take you there with me.

I'm going to teach a class today on butterflies and bees.  
Fifty first-grade kids are going to bring me to my knees.  
Unless...will you team-teach with me? I need your expertise.  
I'm going to the classroom, and I'll take you there with me.

I'm going to the wetlands, will you be my guide again?  
(So I won't step on a 'gator while I'm looking for a wren).  
I'll still look up, while you look down, that's how it's always been.  
I'm going to the wetlands, and I'll take you there, my friend.

I'll take you with me, [my friend], for I just can't give you up.  
You've given me so much of you, you're with me now...you've stuck.

You gave yourself to all of us. I wish that you could know  
How many hearts will carry you, and all the places you will go.  
The kids who love you--they will take you with them as they grow.  
Family, friends--we'll take you with us all, and so...

Let's photograph some wildflowers. Let's catch a garter snake.  
Let's have lunch at Barbec's, and eat chicken-fried steak.  
Let's tell a tale. Let's walk a trail. Let's sing a campfire song.  
Because [you're] living in our lives, and [you'll] always come along.



## ARKANSAS State Report

Jay Miller

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Former Region Six director **Shea Lewis** has left Idaho to return to Arkansas as Superintendent of Parkin Archeological State Park. Welcome back to Region Six, Shea!

We are very pleased to announce that **Kelly Farrell**, interpreter at **DeGray Lake Resort State Park**, has been recognized as a Certified Heritage Interpreter. Congratulations Kelly – Good work! Arkansas State Parks have put 16 interpreters through the CHI training led by Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman with outstanding results. We should have several CHI awards very soon.

**Jay Schneider** has been selected as the interpreter at wildlife-rich **Cane Creek State Park** in southeast Arkansas.

Nature Center Director **Kelly Mulvihill** tells me that work is progressing on the Game and Fish Commission's **Arkansas River Valley Nature Center** in Fort Smith. Surveys are in the works for the building site and for property boundaries. A prescribed burn will occur soon to enhance wildlife habitat and interpretation opportunities. The estimated groundbreaking date is late this fall, with the opening planned for Fall 2005.

**Eric Leonard**, recently the interpreter at **Arkansas Post National Memorial**, has accepted the interpreter position at **Big Bend National Park**. He will continue to be the Region Six webmaster even though he is 120 miles from nowhere! **Dee Evans** has come to Arkansas Post as a park guide. Previously she worked at Vicksburg and Natchez National Historical Parks. The vacant interpreter position will soon be filled.

**Gail Sears** notes **Hot Springs National Park** will celebrate the bicentennial of the Dunbar-Hunter Expedition to the hot springs with two special events. A commemorative stamp cachet on October 9 will mark the beginning of the expedition. Two Dunbar and Hunter reenactors will present programs that day. On December 4, the Early Arkansas Reenactors will have an encampment on the Arlington Lawn, very near the site of the original encampment in 1804.

This summer, **Hot Springs NP** will launch an Artist-in-Residence program. With this program, artists will come to the park for several weeks and spend some of their working time in view of and interacting with the public. At the end of their time, each artist will donate one original piece of art to the park. The art will be displayed at the Fordyce visitor center and featured for each of the city's Gallery Walks, held the first Friday of each month.

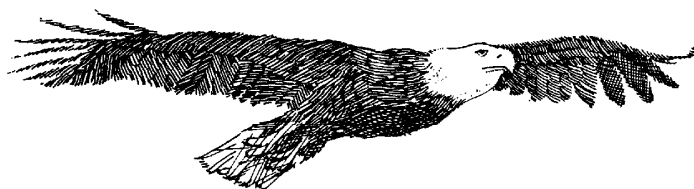
Accolades go to **Ashlie Dodson** and the staff of **Bull Shoals-White River State Park** for a very successful Eagle Awareness weekend program. Attendance has grown so large they had to move to the local theater to hold the crowds.

**Stephen Walker** reports that the WET team studying the Cossatot River learned about the deadly dangers of inhalation of dihydrogen monoxide or long exposures to it in solid state. Dihydrogen monoxide is common in the river and can be very harmful. More often we call it water!

**Amber Hamilton** and **Rachel Engebrecht** are developing AV programs on tips for finding diamonds and the volcanic activity that created the diamonds, for the opening of the Diamond Discovery Center at Crater of Diamonds State Park.

The National Park Service's National Trails Unit is partnering with Arkansas State Parks to kick off interpretative planning for the **Trail of Tears** sites at **Lake Dardanelle** and **Village Creek State Parks** in late April. This will these two very significant ToT sites.

**Jay Miller** has completed leading three interpretation planning/exhibit planning workshops around the state for the Arkansas Humanities Council. ■





## KANSAS State Report

Schanée Anderson \_\_\_\_\_

### Events

- **Sunset Zoo:** A wonderful line-up of exciting new special events and programs is scheduled for this spring and summer! The summer will kick off with Survive the Night Family Challenge - this is a fun filled evening where families compete in challenges throughout the zoo similar to the "Amazing Race" TV show.
- **Wilson State Park:** Annual Earth Day activities will be held on April 21 for more than 140 area 5<sup>th</sup> graders.
- **Topeka Zoo, Topeka Kansas:** Staff and volunteers are proud to announce the opening of a new entry/education complex which provides much-needed classroom and office space.
- **Lee Richardson Zoo, Garden City:** During April and May the zoo will be bursting with people as the zoo celebrates Earth Day, hosts the Ark River Water Festival, April 26-27 and International Migratory Bird Day on May 8 where guests will be able to participate in behind-the-scenes tours.
- **Milford Nature Center and Corps of Engineers at Milford Lake:** The 16<sup>th</sup> annual Kids Fishing Clinic/Derby will be held on June 5. Along with the regular Clinic/Derby there will also be a dedication of the Family Fishing Project. All K-8th grade school children in Geary County have been invited to participate in the "Name the Pond" contest to select a new name for the area.
- **Sedgwick County Zoo:** The spring is full of exciting events, including celebrations for Easter and Earth Day. "Boeing Earth Day at the Zoo" will host more than 15,000 students as they participate in different environmental education activities throughout the Zoo.

### Conference/Meetings/Workshops

- The spring **Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE)** Spring Meeting will be held Wednesday April 7 at the Navarre Hall, Haskell Indian Nations University of Lawrence in Lawrence, Kansas. Please Contact KACEE by April 2 if you are interested in going to the meeting, 785-532-3322.
- **Ted Cable, PhD (Kansas State University)** and **Schaneé Anderson (Sedgwick County Zoo)** will be presenting an interpretation training workshop for Corps of Engineers Water Safety Rangers in Kansas City the end of May.
- **Sedgwick County Zoo, Topeka Zoo, Sunset Zoo, and Rolling Hills Zoo** have been invited to participate in a week long environmental education workshop held at the Bronx Zoo. The workshop will present the HELP education curriculum, focusing on different habitats.

### New for the Spring

- **Sedgwick County Zoo** is proud to announce a gift from Cargill for the expansion of the existing education building. The building will be named Cargill Learning Center. It will feature four large classrooms, two education animal holding areas, an expanded library and office space.
- **Lee Richardson Zoo, Garden City:** The zoo broke ground for the Kansas Waters Exhibit, which will house river otters and native fish. The naturalistic exhibit will be set in a cut out of a dry river bed and give visitors above ground and underwater viewing of the otters.
- **Ted Cable, PhD, Kansas State University,** just returned from two months of teaching interpretation to tour guide students at Blaise Pascal University and the University of Grenoble in France. Interpretation students from these will be attending KSU and hopefully becoming involved in NAI.
- Are you looking for Nemo? **Sunset Zoo** in Manhattan, Kansas has found him in their new saltwater exhibit. The zoo is also excited to welcome two new female chimpanzees and a giant anteater.

### Wonderful staff and volunteers

- Welcome to **Kara Pace**, who has filled two new positions at **Sedgwick County Zoo**--Office Assistant and Program Assistant. You may reach Kara at kpace@scz.org.
- Welcome to **Ryan Hansen**, who is a new Program Assistant at **Sedgwick County Zoo**.
- Welcome to **Andrea Smith**, the new Education Assistant at Garden City Zoo. She replaces **Gail Sheridan**.

**Jackie Borgeson** of the **Martin & Osa Johnson Safari Museum** has received an AMA grant to partner with a museum in Borneo. She will be spending six weeks exploring the work Martin & Osa Johnson did in this area during their careers. Her partner in Borneo will then come to the USA to further the exchange program. We also wish to offer our condolences to Jackie. She and Brian Barnette, who recently passed away, met at NAI and were engaged last year. ■■■



## LOUISIANA State Report

David Latona

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During National Wildlife Refuge week, last October 12-18, hundreds of northeast Louisiana folks participated in nature oriented activities and interpretive walks/talks at **Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge** just north of Monroe. The week's activities culminated in the annual Fall Celebration, which included a dedication ceremony for the flagpole and newly bricked walks at the visitor center. Also featured at the celebration were an artist's mockup of an outdoor art piece that will double as a wildlife observation blind and the architectural plans for a wetlab/aquarium facility to be built adjacent to the visitor center. Evening walks and talks to the public on the fourth Friday of each month are a new addition to the refuge. The first was a winter campfire program at their amphitheater featuring songs, stories and interesting trivia about nocturnal animals of the refuge. In addition to seasonal campfires, monthly topics may include: eagles in north Louisiana, migratory birds/migration mysteries, owls, sights and sounds of the night/hike, poisonous animals of Louisiana, bats, fishes, and nature photography. **Gay Brantley** is still trying to come up with a catchy name for this monthly series. If anybody out there has a suggestion, she would like to hear it. Her e-mail address is [gay\\_brantley@fws.gov](mailto:gay_brantley@fws.gov).

**Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park** welcomes its newest park naturalist, **Rhonda Clay**. Rhonda brings to the park several years of experience as an employee of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. She worked as a refuge operations specialist at the Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, Manteo, NC, and as an environmental education and public use specialist at the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery in Louisiana. Last September, park naturalists **Katie Hall** and **Kim Warren** staffed an exhibit about the nature park at the National Hunting and Fishing Day activities held annually at **Bodcau Wildlife Management Area** in Bossier Parish. Approximately 2,000 people participate in this event each year. Rhonda participated in the City of Shreveport's annual Halloween Party held at the downtown Expo Hall on behalf of the park. Hundreds of children attended this event. Naturalists **Judy Sneed**, **Katie Hall**, and **Kim Warren** also staffed an exhibit about the park at the Bass Pro Outdoor World Grand Opening held on the evening of November 5. Parks director **Larry Raymond** recently confirmed a sighting of retired senior park naturalist **Fred Christian** in the park without having to consult a field guide. **Fred** and his wife, **Marilyn**, weeded and cleaned the herb gardens in the park in preparation for an upcoming meeting of the Ark-La-Tex Herb Society. The park's staff thanks Fred and Marilyn for the assist on this one.

**Experience Atchafalaya Days** was brought to visitors by many of Louisiana's organizations, agencies, and individuals, including the **Office of State Parks**. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual **Experience Atchafalaya Days** took place in October, with over 40 opportunities to explore and enjoy this unique natural area. Experience Atchafalaya Days is a different kind of festival. It focuses on the richness and diversity of the Atchafalaya Swamp, a unique wetland area that has shaped the culture and history of the south central Louisiana area that surrounds it. Inside the levees that bound the east and west sides of the Basin, Experience Atchafalaya events are small, guided by individuals who know and love the swamp. Outside the levees, events ranged from hands-on opportunities to large festivals with plenty of variety. Families learned about birding and experienced how life might have been in the Basin before Columbus by throwing an atlatl. They also learned how to milk a cow, found out how Acadians farmed, and saw the common birds of the region at the **University of Louisiana at Lafayette Model Sustainable Farm**. A guided hike, a bike trip, and a horseback trail ride at Indian Bayou allowed exploration of the public trails and provided wildlife viewing opportunities. Do you think exploring the swamp at night is crazy? Well, some folks found out on their guided night hike at **Lake Fausse Pointe State Park**. **Lake End Park** at Morgan City celebrated Experience Atchafalaya Days with music, food, storytelling, boat races, fishing, canoeing, a swamp walk, and dancing. The **Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve Acadian Cultural Center** in Lafayette had all-day hands-on activities for children, demonstrations, and exhibits. Throughout the Atchafalaya area, a wide variety of festivals, demonstrations, re-enactments, and tours acquainted visitors with the ways and people of the Atchafalaya Basin.

**Kristy Wallisch of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve** reported that:

- ❑ The park played host to 200 living history experts from throughout North America during the Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial closing ceremonies last December. The living history volunteers re-enacted the "hoisting of the flag" ceremony that took place on December 20, 1803.
- ❑ At the **Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center** in Thibodaux and the **Acadian Cultural Center** in Lafayette, the park is partnering with local organizations and artisans to build boats and give bayou tours. Acadian Cultural Center rangers also work with **Acadian Village** in Lafayette to share information about the National Park Service and the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana.
- ❑ At the **French Quarter Visitor Center** in New Orleans, the park is offering special programs about the

- music and culture of south Louisiana in conjunction with **New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park**.
- In October, the **Barataria Preserve** and the town of Jean Lafitte will be the site of Wings Over the Wetlands, an annual birding festival that features nationally known speakers, exhibits, and birding by foot, boat, and canoe.
- **Chalmette Battlefield** in Chalmette is working with local high school Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets as part of their living history program, training the cadets in 1815 military procedures for school programs and special events like the annual commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.
- The **Prairie Acadian Cultural Center** in Eunice is keeping local traditions alive through partnerships with local organizations that offer Saturday night music shows and lessons in Cajun French, dancing, and a variety of instruments.
- And to bring it all together, Mid City Publishing of New Orleans is publishing Explore Jean Lafitte, a book about the park and its home in south Louisiana, with notes on history, culture, food, and Mardi Gras.

What's the common thread that's running through all these activities and events? Working with the community. Whether it's working with living history volunteers, local organizations, businesses, schools, or other parks, being part of the community doesn't just mean offering programs to visitors. It also means becoming part of those visitors' lives, asking for their assistance and expertise, and encouraging them to make the park their own. Add in the benefits of the knowledge only local folks acquire and some fresh perspectives, and working with the community is a pretty unbeatable idea. 📌



## MISSOURI State Report

John Miller \_\_\_\_\_

A big JOB WELL DONE to the steering, planning, and individual committees for another memorable Region Six Workshop in Blue Springs. Missouri was proud to host this year's conference and we hope that everyone had a great time. If you get the chance, say "Thanks" to any of the NAI members who worked hard on putting this event together and making it run smoothly. The **Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI)** was proud to sponsor several students to the workshop. It is AMI's goal to get more involvement by these students with our outstanding professional organization.

**Lisa LaCombe** (Blue Springs) reports the arrival of a new Naturalist, **Logan Patrick Neal** to proud parents **Diane** and **Eric Neal**. He was born on February 13 and weighed 7 lb and 15 oz. Diane is a Naturalist at **Burr Oak Woods Nature Center**.

**Leah Eden & John Miller** (Branson) report the biggest and best ever "Vulture Venture" event on February 28. The combination of great weather, outstanding staff & volunteers, a receptive crowd, and a show off turkey vulture named Socrates resulted in a record 445 people for the event. **Julie Thien** from the **WOW Museum** (Springfield) provided the live indoor vulture programs which featured Socrates. The games, activities, and vulture viewing went on from noon until 6 p.m. The 2005 event will be the 10th Anniversary of "Vulture Venture."

**Ginny Wallace** (Jefferson City) reports that the **Missouri Master Naturalist** program is up and running. This cooperative program with the Missouri Department of Conservation and the University of Missouri Extension Service is based in part on the Texas Master Naturalist and Master Gardener programs. The first two chapters of the Missouri Master Naturalist program will be in Columbia and West Plains. For more details on the Missouri Master Naturalist program, contact Ginny at [Ginny.Wallace@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Ginny.Wallace@mdc.mo.gov)

**Shanna Raeker** (St. Charles) reports that **KyLee Brockmann** was hired as a new part-time naturalist at the August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area. KyLee replaces **Ben Pursley**, who transferred to **Rockwoods Reservation** in Glencoe.

**George Kastler** (Jefferson City) reports that there are **Seasonal Naturalist positions available** in the **Missouri Department of Natural Resources**. There are 70 positions across the state for anyone interested in gaining interpretive experience. Training for these seasonal naturalists will take place at **Dr. Edmund Babler State Park** May 23-27, 2004. If you would like more information or an application, contact George Kastler at (573) 751-5384 or [george.kastler@dnr.mo.gov](mailto:george.kastler@dnr.mo.gov).

George also reports that this past November, staff from **Missouri DNR – Division of State Parks** made a trip to **Kansas State University** to provide special training to students at the invitation of **Ted Cable**. The training provided by **John Cunning**, **George Kastler**, **Janet Price**, **Cyndi Evans**, **Tiffani Addington**, and **Jamie Hubert** included interpretive techniques and resource stewardship in Missouri. 📌



## OKLAHOMA State Report

Neil Garrison \_\_\_\_\_

The editors are going to “toot Neil’s horn” for him. He is tickled pick for being selected as the recipient of the Sierra Club “Service Award” (Oklahoma’s Cimarron Group-central and northwestern Oklahoma.) He uses a large portion of his vacation leave from work in order to lead nature hikes and other interpretive programs for this conservation organization.

Are you familiar with the time-honored fairy tale entitled “The Shoemaker and the Elves” by the Brothers Grimm? (The gist of the story is this: A cobbler gets way behind in his work..Falls asleep at his work bench...some tiny elves come in and finish his work...and then the elves sneak back out...and eventually the cobbler awakes and discovers that somebody mysteriously finished all of his work for him). Well, something similar happened at Oklahoma City’s **Martin Park Nature Center**. Some person(s) unknown came into the park and installed three expensive wooden latticework panels on the park’s gazebo. The park employees haven’t got a clue who did them this nice deed. It is a professionally done job...and is a nice addition to the park.

Out with the old! In with the new! The volunteer support group for Tulsa’s **Oxley Nature Center** is providing the funding for a renovation project at their interpretive center. They’re going to rip out the carpet in the library ... and replace it with a new cement floor that will be textured (and colored) so that it is indistinguishable from sandstone. Best of all: it will have wild animal tracks of all sorts wandering around. WAY COOL!!!!” How do you measure success? One way would be to keep tabs on the number of participants that take part in a program. The folks at Tulsa’s **Oxley Nature Center** partnered with the Tulsa Astronomy Club this past autumn for a ‘Mars Watch’ program. Over 5,000 people attended. In January, they conducted a program entitled “Naturalist’s Closet.” In February there was a fascinating field trip billed as “Winter Twigs”.

“Neighbor, when was the last time that you had a big, hot, steaming bowl of Wolf Brand Chili? Well...that’s too long!” That’s the popular little ditty that you hear quite often on the radio. However, the folks up at **Waynoka** do it a little bit differently. There was a partnership forged between the Waynoka Chamber of Commerce and **Little Sahara State Park**. They hosted a “Waynoka Wild Game Feed” in February. A \$10 donation gave the participants and opportunity to dine on beaver, bear, raccoon...well...you get the idea. The proceeds were used to further the efforts of nature programming at the state park and for other tourism efforts.

**Oklahoma City Zoo** naturalist supervisor, **David Walker**, hosted a “sleepover” for educators to learn more about Project Wild curriculum. The event included a night hike on the grounds of the Zoo. The event was a partnership between the OKC Zoo, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. The \$35 fee included two activity manuals and a continental breakfast. Professional development credit was also offered.

**Leann Rogers**, naturalist at **Lake Tenkiller State Park** (Gore, OK) reported on the birdwatching activities that she had this winter. Visitors were treated to loon watching; mostly common, but Leann reports that she also saw Pacific loons, red-throated loons, and one lone individual yellow-billed loon. She even had a couple of folks from Minnesota (a loon-rich state, if ever there was one) stop in on their vacation trip and participate in the “loon watch.”

“Best session so far!” is the feedback that naturalist **Julie Tarver** received from a workshop participant in her February Dutch Oven Cooking program. Julie works at the Crow’s Secret Nature Center at **Lake Thunderbird State Park** (Norman, OK), but she was doing this pioneer cooking demo for a group at the Southwest Parks and Recreation Institute’s training sessions that were held this year at **Lake Texhoma State Park** (Kingson, OK). Julie says that the biggest hurdle to overcome was to condense her usual 4-hour program into the 75-minute time slot. The training institute’s participants were from all over the southwestern U.S.

Oklahoma City’s **National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum** has successfully managed to meet the challenge of declining school field trips due to budget cuts affecting bus transportation and associated field trip costs. They have received a grant from an anonymous donor that will provide money for 66 percent of the museum tour fees and, thus, encourage more participation in the museum’s educational programs.

Sometimes, interpretation isn’t pretty! A good case in point is the traveling exhibit that is currently available for viewing at Oklahoma City’s **Omniplex Science Museum**. It is entitled “Grossology.” The exhibit will be at the museum until September. It is based on a popular book of the same title that is written by a middle school teacher. The author said that she wrote the book in order to make science interesting for her most-reluctant students.



## TEXAS State Report

Brian Barnette

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*Note: The editors received Brian's state report the Friday before he passed away.*

Snow on Sunday . . . shorts on Thursday . . . aaaahhh, spring in Texas!

**Amber Keller** reports that the **Botanical Research Institute of Texas** and the **Fort Worth Nature Center** are co-hosting a two-day workshop on "Native Prairies and Wildflowers" April 17-18. The first day will take place at BRIT, where participants will learn about prairies, wildflowers, collecting, and conservation. The second day will consist of field work at the FWNC, identifying prairie plants and helping with conservation projects. The event is open to educators, families, and the general public.

The property formerly known as the Dallas Nature Center is showing new life as the Audubon Society's **Cedar Ridge Preserve**. **K.C. Rudy**, Regional Director of Education for Audubon Texas, informs us that a substantial volunteer corps has been recruited and is now hosting field trips, and that a curriculum-component 4<sup>th</sup> grade program will begin in the fall. By the way, K.C.'s new e-mail address is [kcrudy@charter.net](mailto:kcrudy@charter.net).

**River Bend Nature Works** out in Wichita Falls has received grants from both the National Gardening Association and the local Junior League to upgrade their "My Big Backyard" program/exhibit area, according to **Sue Davis**. The program introduces very young and special needs visitors to conservation through hands-on gardening. In less than a year, over 1600 people have participated in the program. River Bend has also received the Texas Excellence in Environmental Education Award from the League of Women Voters. Way to go, River Bend!

Down in Houston, the **Houston Arboretum & Nature Center** survived the Super Bowl last month . . . the Super Bowl of Trees, that is! That's what **Lori Hutson** says they called their Arbor Day Celebration, at which busloads of students come out to meet Smokey Bear and Johnny Appleseed. March 21, their next festival, will focus mainly on birds, including a performance by the Bird Brain Dance project. Lori has some sad news, too - long-time staff naturalist **Carol Huelbig** is hanging up her binoculars after 23 years at the Nature Center. Carol started the center's pre-school programs many years ago, and was starting to see a second generation of children come through (yes, the pre-school kids of her one-time pre-school kids). Thanks, and good luck, Carol!

Want to learn more about the opportunities for nature tourism on ranches? Contact **Miles Phillips**, the ecotourism specialist with the Texas Cooperative Extension down in Corpus Christi. Miles leads tours at the **La Copita Ranch**, a demonstration and research facility covering some 2700 acres near Alice. They'll also be hosting a Certified Interpretive Guide course in Corpus March 2 - 5.

**Chris True** is happy to have a new Park Interpreter on board up at **Lake Ray Roberts State Park Complex**. The arrival of **Don Whited** seems especially timely, since the park will be working on its Comprehensive Interpretive Plan this spring. Welcome Don!

Other TPWD news (provided by the ever helpful **Julie Coombs**): A number of new exhibits were completed in the Caddo Lake Visitor Center over the winter, including a life-size hollow cypress tree, dioramas of lake habitats, a cypress tree-slice timeline, a Caddo village scene, and contemporary fishing guides . . . Over at **Bastrop** and **Buescher State Parks**, **Chris Holmes** and **Todd McClanahan** held an interpretive training session for 22 members of the Lost Pines Master Naturalists last October. The Master Naturalists then led hikes every Saturday in November, with over 100 participants. It's certainly been a win-win partnership between the parks and a group of educated (and motivated) volunteers.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is gearing up for an exciting spring of wildflowers and programs. Staff spent the fall and winter months preparing gardens and programs to meet the needs of their peak spring audience. To see what's going on this spring, visit [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org). In addition to gardening, Wildflower Center staff have also been busy focusing on interpretation; both on and off-site. On-site, an interpretive team has been working on the Center's interpretive master plan. The plan is developed around the overarching theme, "Native Plants are Important to Me!" and five supporting sub-themes. Off site, the consulting team has combined their expertise in landscape restoration and interpretation. Over the fall and winter, staff worked on a key project at Texas Tech University - Junction, Texas, a 411-acre property dedicated to the creation of a new Outdoor Learning and Research Center. Wildflower Center staff conducted a site analysis, developed land management recommendations, facilitated an interpretive planning session, and worked with TTU staff to develop the site master plan.

That's all the news this time 'round. Thanks to all who submitted items! 🌱



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**DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE::**

Summer 2004: May 20  
Fall 2004: August 20  
Winter 04/05: November 20  
Spring 2005: February 20

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