

ARKANSAS • KANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSOURI • OKLAHOMA • TEXAS

## The Interpreter as Healer to an Ailing World

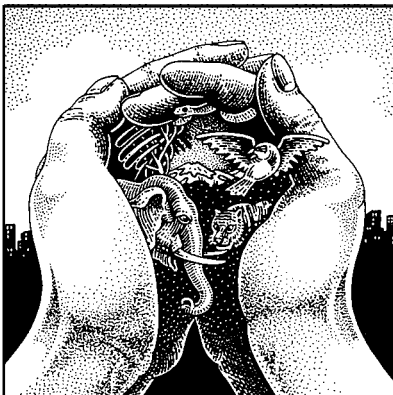
Raymond Berthelot, Louisiana Office of State Parks, Baton Rouge, LA

On a recent early morning hike across Poverty Point State Historic Site, which preserves a pre-agricultural mound complex almost four thousand years old in northeast Louisiana, something occurred to me. Now this occurrence wasn't so much a revelation as it was a confirmation of thoughts I have been contemplating for some time now. It just so happened that these ideas jelled into a theory that I hope to relay in this little article. But first, allow me to digress. The Poverty Point mound site is an early, extensive mound complex made up of earthen ridges, conical mounds, and flat-topped mounds, representing perhaps natural animal shapes and the like. But it is much more than that. Poverty Point also beautifully preserves a natural habitat, complete with fields of grass, wooded areas, and ponds that remain wet throughout the year. This refuge for all manner of species is found in a sea of cotton and, as of the recent downturn in the price of cotton, corn and soybean fields. The northeast corner of Louisiana is locked into an agricultural economy, which is reflected in some of the poorest communities in the nation. In such an environment, an oasis of trees and other natural features is rare at best. With this thought in mind, the thing that occurred to me occurred.

Making my way across an early morning, dew-laden field along a tree line heavy with Spring, boots wet and the whistling of various birds and thumps of woodpeckers echoing out from the trees, I realized, not for the first time, that our natural resources have a rejuvenating quality from which our local communities could, and should, benefit. After the hike, tired yet content, I truly did feel rejuvenation. Not only was I able to contemplate my surroundings on the hike, but I also thought about a wide variety of issues that I face on a daily basis. For the most part, I let my mind wonder, and it is in this state of daydreams that solutions to one's daily problems are found. I can not claim that the environment solved any personal problem, but the natural setting certainly set the stage for problem solving.

And, I might add, this type of experience is in no way unique to me. In fact, it is probably a very common experience for anyone who spends any amount of time in our natural resources. Now, this insight will come as no big surprise to you the interpreter, but it does call forth a question and a mission. The question is this: How do we as interpreters call attention to the rejuvenating qualities of our natural resources? In addition to educating the public on the many fascinating qualities of the flora and fauna found in nature, we are given the task of rejuvenating our communities, whether they be school age or elderly, young couples or large families, and anyone else who might find themselves to be so lucky as to participate in one of your exciting interpretive programs.

As outlined in her fight to preserve our natural wonders, Rachel Carson perhaps put it best. "The lasting pleasures of contact with the natural world are not reserved for scientists but are available to anyone who will place himself under the influence of earth, sea, and sky, and their amazing life." In other words, the "natural world" has an impact on all of us, and it is our, the interpreters', duty to bring about the "influence," or rejuvenating qualities, upon our visitors. Personally, I've been very lucky to have had the experience of hiking in a wide variety of environments, and the ones that I remember the best were the ones that were guided, yet allowed ample opportunity for time to listen and contemplate.



As part of a small expedition in the Pico Bonito National Park (part of the Nombre de Dios Mountain Range on the Caribbean Coast of Honduras), I was truly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of plant life surrounding us. The trail was muddy, steep, and dangerous. The drops were immense. There were more shades of green than imaginable. Several of our party dropped out after the first leg and in the end, wet, exhausted, and miser-

*continued on pages 4 & 5*

## So That's Why I Was There...

by David A. Latona, Louisiana Office of State Parks, Baton Rouge, LA

In my wonderful gift of time at home with my new son, I have had ample opportunities to catch up on some reading, particularly past issues of *Visions* and *Legacy*. The theme of 'job satisfaction' kept resurfacing, and how the authors of various articles have rediscovered "why we are here." From Jason Parrie's beautiful account of his not so beautiful canoe trip to Karen Westcamp-Johson's recollection of a long line of children following her on their bikes, they both reflect on the satisfaction of visitors to their respective programs, each answering the question of "why are we here?" When I first began my civil service as an Interpretive Ranger for the state of Louisiana, I always thought "job satisfaction" meant not to expect too much money. Well, that was true, but that phrase began to really mean something to me. My inaugural guided hike was that in which I led a group of first graders along the only trail I knew. Well, long story short, an enormous Red-tailed Hawk swooped down to capture a squirrel in our faces. It was all the great flying beast could do, to avoid running in to the large group of children all of which had their bottom jaws dropped to the trail on which we stood. Well, needless to say, this was my crash course in "job satisfaction" as I listened to the "thank you's" and the "this is the best field trip ever's."

The reaction of these children in my own story as well as the children mentioned in Jason and Karen's stories got me thinking. Do I as an interpreter have an unforgettable experience that led me to make my career choice, maybe one that answers the question, 'why was I there,?' Well, I do. Please enjoy my account of a day I will never forget, and please share your unforgettable stories with someone.

The memory is stuck in my mind like a Snipe fly on a sundew in August--that is pretty stuck. At the ripe old age of five, my family and I spent what seemed like two months in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. In actuality the family vacation lasted only a week. This week was filled with rock hopping, trail hiking, sight seeing, and critter chasing. Being from a big city in the deeeep south, this was a welcome change to the eyes and other senses of such a young boy.

One evening as my father and older brothers fished, I strayed not-too-far from the reach of my cautious mother's grasp throwing rocks into a clear mountain stream. It did not take me long to scare away any chances for the others to catch supper. We then made our way back to the most "halcyon"(cool word for peaceful) campsite in all of Cades Cove or the whole world for that matter.

After we finished up the home cooked meal of hot dogs, ashes, and mustard on paper plates, we watched as our dishes were being "done" by God's gift of flame.

Later that evening my father suggested we participate in what was called a "nature program." We had never heard of such a thing. As a family we spent countless days on short vacations camping, hunting, fishing or a potpourri of the previous. On all these trips we had never experienced anything that sounded like this.

As the time neared, we stumbled through the campground huddled around my father as he carried the only flashlight. This was his ingenious idea to keep from losing us boys in the night. Soon the light from a wonderful amphitheater was visible. Permission was graciously granted for me and my brothers to run ahead. Well, we had to be on the front row, of course. As we sat, we watched a strange looking man rummage through a large bag and another large briefcase. He charmingly set the stage for an event unheralded in the "Latona Family Archives." As the props being set up on stage took shape, my brothers and I grew more and more anxious.

The time was near for the man to begin his presentation. His booming voice and cheerful demeanor gathered the attention of all who sat in the amphitheater. He introduced himself as "Ranger Jerry." He was entertaining to the children and pleasantly informative to the adults. For the next 37 minutes "Ranger Jerry" captivated us all! He showed us how to find a spider with nothing more than a flashlight. I watched as other members of the audience tried their hand at calling an owl with the guidance of the ranger. Story after story was told that grasped my attention, like a crawfish would a finger. His delightful performance was the best thing that could have come along for rookie program attendants such as us.

After this wonderful event we made our way back to camp. The walk seemed short, because my brothers and I were calling owls and looking for spiders the entire trip. When we finally settled down for the night, my father tucked me into bed. Looking up at him, I told him what I would be doing in the future. Little did I know it would be true (except for the Ferrari, the five horses, and the McDonalds ownership).

Eighteen years and four more trips to the Smokies later, I landed a job as a naturalist in a local state park. I had no plans to pursue this path, but I took to the position like a bear to honey. It was amazing the things I remembered from that wonderful first program I attended. The energy and enjoyment that "Ranger Jerry" had reflected in my performances. My focus would be on entertaining the young as well as informing the adults.

My sense of fulfillment in interpretation can be accredited to the first exciting and informative program I attended so long ago. Thank you, "Ranger Jerry"!

**National Association for Interpretation Region Six Awards for 2003**  
**Presented at "Exploring the Past, Mapping the Future," the RegionSix Workshop**  
**March 9, 2004, Kansas City, Missouri**

Lightning struck twice, twice! In other words, two of our award winners received two different awards. Congratulations to all of the award recipients.

**Corps of Discovery -The Great All-American Interpreter's Quiz**: Award winners were "Five Yanks and a Britt," a team from the St. Louis, Missouri area. The team players consisted of: **Rhonda Anderson** of Columbia Bottom Conservation Area, **Kylee Brockmann** of August A. Busch Conservation Area, **Nick Davis** of August A. Busch Conservation Area and Rockwoods Reservation, **Angie Foster** of Columbia Bottom Conservation Area, **Ben Pursley** of Rockwoods Reservation and **Coleen Scott** of Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center. The quiz has been renamed in honor of **Brian Barnette**, a frequent contestant and winner, who passed away unexpectedly this year.

Participants in the workshop voted **Kelly Farrell's "Interpreting Sensitive Issues: Women Soldiers of the Civil War and other Troubling Topics"** as the **Best Workshop Program**. Kelly used a variety of media, from a PowerPoint presentation to a moving first-person portrayal. She works at DeGray Lake State Park in Arkansas.

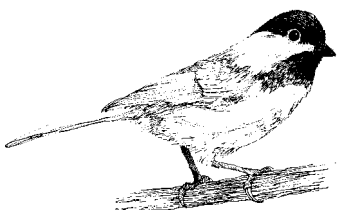
The **Outstanding Interpretive Program Award** was given to the "Vulture Venture Event" at **Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center**, Branson, Missouri. **Bryon Putman** developed the program in 1996 to focus on nearly 700 winter roosting vultures. The event offers three different opportunities for visitors to learn about vultures: live birds, activities to teach various aspects and survival techniques of vultures and spotting the vultures in the wild with scopes and binoculars.

"*Traveling Across Kansas: A guide to I-70*" received the **Outstanding Site Publication Award**. **Ted Cable** (professor at Kansas State University) and **Wayne Maley** provided a description, illustration or fascinating tidbit about each mile marker from Kansas City to Kanorado to interpret the entire state of KS along I- 70.

**Ted Cable** also received the **Best Newsletter Article** with "*Lighthouses*." Nominated by his students and other NAI members, Ted inspired them to "think deeply about our profession and its role in our lives." Ted's article is a guiding light for interpreters to inspire them on their personal interpretive journeys.

The **Richard Baldauf Award, Outstanding New Interpreter** was given to **Tiffani Addington**. Her nominators described her in many ways: "passionate about her work, conscientious, dedicated, energetic, talented and knowledgeable." One nominator summarized Tiffani's qualifications by stating, "I was shocked when I learned that she had only been in the field a few years. I assumed she was a seasoned veteran." Tiffani works at Onondaga Cave State Park for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

**Grady Manus**, from Voice of the Past, Blue Springs, MO, was honored with both the **Distinguished Professional Interpreter** and **Meritorious Service Awards**. Grady is known for his passion for the field of interpretation. He has the special gift transporting listeners to the past with first-person portrayals of individuals such as George Sibley, Nathan Boone and George Drouillard. As the immediate past president of Association of Missouri Interpreters, Grady was instrumental in several changes to the organization: updating the bylaws, becoming a chapter of NAI and development of a website. He writes articles and management plans, mentors and advises other members, presents award-winning sessions at regional and national workshops, and was one of the voices for the *Whisper in the Wind* CD. His dedication to the field of interpretation has been further demonstrated when Grady served as a co-chair of the most recent 2004 NAI Region Six workshop.



*That whimsical fellow called Evolution, having enlarged the dinosaur until he tripped over his own toes, tried shrinking the chickadee until he was just too big to be snapped up by flycatchers as an insect, and just too little to be pursued by hawks and owls as meat. Then he regarded his handiwork and laughed. Everyone laughs at so small a bundle of large enthusiasms.*

—Aldo Leopold

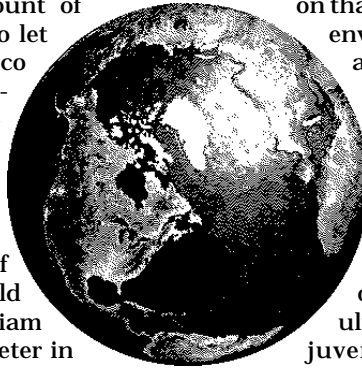
## *The Interpreter as Healer, continued from page 1*

able, the three remaining (myself, my brother-in-law Kevin Bassett, and our guide Francisco Cabañas) reached the most wonderful tropical waterfall ever stumbled across by any Spanish Conquistador in the Americas. Though not the first to reach this spot, we certainly felt like the first. Once we returned to civilization, over beers at the Expatriate Bar, we determined that we had gone through a life-altering experience, a rejuvenating transformation. Worn down to the basics of survival, reduced to getting back alive, in theory at least. And once more, it was the tour guide that made the transformation possible. "How?" you may ask. By offering just the right amount of interpretive information, and backing off to let the natural environment do the rest. Francisco was very thorough in pointing out the exciting flora and fauna surrounding us, but he knew full well when to stop talking and let us, his tour, start listening. The natural world is very capable of selling itself to the public; it simply needs a little help opening the doors of perception. "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite." Poet William Blake could very well have had the interpreter in mind as an instrument of the cleanser when he wrote these lines as part of his "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." The interpreter should present the educational material to the public and then at some point allow the natural environment to take over and rejuvenate. In a very real way, the interpreter is at this point making a strong contribution to society, and by extension can potentially build a legion of conservation-minded individuals.

As many of you recognize, A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold has proven to be nothing short of a liturgical treatise on the wonders of the natural world. What really comes out for me in these sketches is the idea that Leopold was very aware of the rejuvenating qualities of the natural environment. As an interpreter he wanted us, the reader, to experience these qualities, not so much in his environment, but in ours. He does not need to tell us of the qualities of the natural world. Instead, he does his best to describe his place in his natural environment. If we are observant, we can come close to reaching rejuvenation simply by reading Leopold's descriptions of his world. In his description of the top of a particular mountain as a great meadow, Leopold writes, "I . . . often had the feeling, riding into some flower-spangled cove, that if anyone had ever been here before, he must of necessity have sung a song, or written a poem." Powerful description. Leopold does not need to tell us that this mountain can rejuvenate us, he simply needs to point us in the right direction and let the imagination run. This is exactly what we should do on our hikes: point out the power, yet let the environment demonstrate the power. Too often we try to speak for nature, when

we should step back and let nature do the work.

The natural environment need not be so dramatic as a mountaintop to be effective. Hiking with two professional naturalists (I should say two naturalists who happen to be professionals because they both live as naturalists and work at being professionals) through a Longleaf Pine forest located at Sam Houston Jones State Park in Southwest Louisiana, I (surprise) had a very similar rejuvenating experience. Though I scarcely remember the names and points of interest on the items shown to me by David Latona and Jim Robinson on that day, it is their love of the natural environment that opened my mind to appreciate the gift I had of being in that place at that time. Again, they knew when to leave off and let the wildflowers, young, flexible pines, and fleeting glimpses of wildlife tell their story. Actually, this is not true. The flora and fauna allowed me to reflect on my story, my daily issues, and ultimately my solutions. Again, rejuvenation. An individual can go through an experience such as this over and over and every time, I guarantee it, the benefit will be the same.



Sometimes it is best to mention the rejuvenating qualities of nature in the form of art, which still, surprisingly, seems accessible to the public at large. One effective method is through poetry. English poet Edward Thomas recognized this early on in his work. An example can be found in his poem, "Tall Nettles." Thomas writes,

*"Tall nettles cover up, as they have done  
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough  
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:  
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now."*

*This corner of the farmyard I like most:  
As well as any bloom upon a flower  
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost  
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower."*

This one example of a window into Thomas' world, in full recognition of the rejuvenating qualities of his local environment without ever having to mention these qualities. Thomas need not say that his natural environment was rejuvenating; simply by returning to the subject, he proves it.

By allowing the participant in your program the time to reflect, touch, and explore individually, we are fulfilling our mission as interpreters *and* rejuvena-

*continued on page 5*

tors. Our role as interpreter is to first introduce the new explorer to the beauty and science of the local environment, then allow this important flow of information to settle in. It is during this second time, when the information is slowly settling in on the person, that the process of rejuvenation takes place. Remember every one of our visitors, no matter their background, age, or social status, enters their environment with his or her own set of problems, issues, and concerns. If we can give them the freedom to put these issues on the backburner for just a small amount of time, and allow the natural environment to do its work on them, we have taken a giant leap towards creating a better community, not only for the community, but for the natural environment as well. The natural environment needs us as much as we need it in order to survive. We as interpreters have no control over the rate at which the process of rejuvenation takes place, but we have full control over opening the door and letting the process work.

The visitor will walk away from your program rejuvenated and ready to tackle his or her problems from a fresh point in their lives. If they have learned a thing or two about your site, and why it is important to preserve, then you have truly created an interested participant who will only grow in appreciation of the natural world around them for the rest of their life.

Remember, as an interpreter you are nothing short of a doctor to an ailing world. Each and every one of you has been given a gift. Not only are you to share what it is that you know about your corner of the globe, you are to open the doors to the rejuvenating qualities that flow from your corner of the globe. You have at your disposal the opportunity to lay the groundwork for healthier communities. Take full advantage of this gift and opportunity and share in the rejuvenating qualities of our natural environment.

## The Trouble with.... Culvert Bears

Carol Bernstein, Lake Bistineau State Park, Doyline, Louisiana

Lake Bistineau State Park in northwest Louisiana is home to a variety of native species. Animals such as deer, opossums, bobcats, foxes, coyotes and skunks are at home at Lake Bistineau.

One spring morning, a woman approached me at the park office. She was upset. "Are you aware that you folks have a terrible bear problem in the campground?" she said. "Several of them disturbed us all night long. They got into the garbage and I just knew they were going to attack us in our tent."

Although Lake Bistineau is in the historical range of the Louisiana Black Bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*) and confirmed sightings occasionally occur, I could not fathom the campground suddenly being overrun with bears. I asked the woman to describe the bears. "They are about so tall," she said, as she bent over and indicated a height with her hand just below the knee. "They are solid black, too."

"Did you see where they came from or where they went?" I asked.

"They went into those concrete drainage ditch things right near our campsite."

Most every night I walk through the campground and I know that several spotted skunks make homes within the culverts. The markings on these skunks are very faint and undetectable in the darkness. "Do you think they may have been skunks?" I asked.

"NO! They were bears! They did not look anything like skunks. They had no stripe, they did not stink, and skunks have big bushy tails that stick out."

I held back a smile as a vision of the cartoon character Pepe LePew came into my head. As diplomatically as I could, I told her that spotted skunks have no stripe, and that sometimes just the tips of the fur were white and hardly visible at night. And that the tail of a skunk is often curled over the back of the animal, not sticking out.

"They were bears," she again insisted.

As soon as she left the office I quickly went to the campground. I had seen many bear tracks while living in Alaska and knew I could likely identify any tracks made by a bear. I closely looked at the ground surrounding and leading into the culverts near her campsite. I saw many, many tracks! Of skunks.

Having renamed our campground-dwelling skunks *Ursus luteolus culverteolus*, or culvert bears, I am happy to report that they have never attacked anyone...physically or aromatically!



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I know. This is a Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), not a Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale putorius*). However, it is now 9:00 p.m., and my passion for accuracy is NOT what it was a few hours ago...apologies. --editor



## ARKANSAS State Report

Jay Miller

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It was a pleasant surprise to spot several Arkansas folks on the cover of the “Family Album” Legacy Trust Fund solicitation that arrived from NAI a few days ago. There, smiling, were **Kelly Farrell, Sarah Keating, Shea Lewis** and Shea’s wife, **Sebrena**.

**Sarah Keating** has taken a few days off work to tend to other little business – that of giving birth to Emily Amelia Keating. Little Emily (born on April 10), big sister Courtney and Mom and Dad are doing very well. As fate would have it, giving birth was not enough to do...Sarah and family had to move into their new state park house at the same time.

**Central High National Historic Site** has recently produced an excellent Junior Ranger workbook, and **Hot Springs National Park** will have a new one ready to print this summer.

**Dennis Allen**, interpreter at **Moro Bay State Park**, delved deep into his own past when preparing a program on black history. He found relatives that were a part of the slave narrative project and with support from a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, created a dramatic presentation in readers theatre style that is factual, engaging and moving. Another part of the grant funded the creation of quilt blocks and presentation of their meanings to slaves and to us today.

The Arkansas Museum Association has awarded “best program of the year” to a program developed by the **Rogers Historical Museum** and **Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area** where students researched and presented living history characters to over 1,000 students at the park’s Van Winkle Mill historic site.

The Arkansas Environmental Education Association has named **Cossatot State Park-Natural Area** Interpreter **Stephen Walker** “Outstanding Environmental Educator” in the non-formal education category.

**Jay Schneider** is the interpreter at **Cane Creek State Park**, but came to us from Nebraska. He returned to their Region Five workshop this spring, where he was awarded **Master Front Line Interpreter** for “demonstrating outstanding quality, skill and innovation in the field of interpretation.”

**Kelly Farrell** has been promoted to Field Interpreter and serves as assistant to **Jay Miller** in the state parks central office. Kelly will be supervising training and evaluation of interpretation across the state park system. Her completion of the Certified Heritage Interpreter program and the Certified Interpretive Guide program are valuable assets in this work.

**Jeremy Soucy** has moved from Missouri to become the interpreter at **Lake Chicot State Park**. Jeremy has completed his Masters Degree under the tutelage of **Dr. Mark Morgan** of the University of Missouri. **Davy Ashcraft** has been selected as the second interpreter at **Cossatot River-Natural Area State Park**. Construction is complete on the Cossatot River Interpretation Center and Chase Studios will soon be installing the exhibits. The ribbon cutting is scheduled for early October.

**Kendra Harris**, interpreter at **Crowley’s Ridge State Park**, has been selected as assistant Superintendent at **Lake Charles State Park**, and **Kim Richter** has left the interpreter position at **Devil’s Den** to move to south Louisiana. **Brad DePriest**, interpreter at DeGray, has accepted the Ranger position there. ■





## KANSAS State Report

Schanée Anderson \_\_\_\_\_

### Events

- Sunset Zoo-Zoobilation 2004 will be the debut for two male cheetahs.
- The Friends of Konza Prairie hosted their Annual Wildflower Walk on Sunday, June 13, 2004, at 7:00 p.m.
- Sedgwick County Zoo: Sedgwick County Zoo is going ape – gorilla that is. Friday, July 23 will be the grand opening of the Downing Gorilla Forest featuring lowland gorillas, okapi, bongo, greater flamingos and much more.

### Conference/Meetings/Workshops

- KACEE Statewide Water Celebration Planning Workshop, September 23 (workshop) and 24 (Topeka Water Celebration). We are really excited about all of the sessions and resources we're able to offer at the workshop this year, and we try to make it very easy and economical for folks to participate. The workshop fee is only \$15 for 2 days, including all meals and materials. Travel stipends to cover mileage and lodging are also available. Workshop participants are eligible to apply for up to \$2,500 per county served for their water celebration event, and support is available throughout the planning process. Please contact Melissa Arthur, Coordinator of Statewide Water Celebrations & Program Development, Kansas Association for Conservation & Environmental Education (KACEE), 3778 Ferguson Rd., Perry, KS 66073-5004, 785-597-5452, MelisArth7@aol.com, www.kacee.org

### New for the Spring

- A new camp at Sunset Zoo- Ed-ventures at Sunset Zoo- A partnership with the Manhattan schools. After summer school gets out the kids join us for the afternoon for a fun, themed week at Sunset Zoo.
- Sedgwick County Zoo will host several teacher workshops at Friends University, Wichita, Kansas over the summer. Workshop topics will include the zoo as a resource, math at the zoo, a grand slam Project WET, Project WILD, PLT, and Project WILD Aquatic workshop. Please contact 316-266-8213 for more information. ■

### Thanks to all who contributed to the 2004 Region Six Workshop in Kansas City, MO

Acorn Naturalists	Lowe's, Farmington, MO
Amazing Recycled Products	Mandy Hawley
Arabia Steamboat Museum	McDowell's Hallmark, Farmington, MO
Association of MO Interpreters	Missouri Wilderness
Bat Conservation International	MO Department of Conservation
Bittersweet, Inc.	MO Department of Natural Resources
Cedar Valley Lodge and Campground	MO Division of State Parks, Interpretation Section
Conner Prairie	MO Environmental Education Association
Environmental Consulting and Outreach Services	MO Wildlife Nursery
Ernie Miller Nature Center—Johnson County (KS)	Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago
Park and Recreation District	Open Hearts, Missouri
George Kastler	Roger Price
Ha Ha Tonka State Park	Sheri Medlock
Interpretive Site Coalition	Shoji Tabuchi Theatre
James Country Mercantile	Six Flags Over St. Louis
James River Publisher Publications	Songbird Station
Jamie Hubert	The Candy Factory
Jim and Reenie Sailer	University of Oklahoma Press
John and Kathy Miller	University of Nebraska Press
Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park	Wal-mart, Farmington, MO
Kathy's Heirlooms	Wilderness Lodge, Lesterville MO
Lambert's Care, Ozark, MO	Wind Woman Gifts
Landmark Products Corporation	Wonderscope Children's Museum
Life Drawing and Education	



## LOUISIANA State Report

David Latona

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**Gay Brantley**, naturalist at **Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge**, has begun a series of evening programs for the public on the fourth Friday of each month. 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 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). May was a very busy month at Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and there is no sign of it slowing down. Construction of a \$400,000 wetlab/exhibit building should begin by September. Gay is most excited about the live aquatic exhibits and the added restroom facilities. Her monthly "Wild Friday" programs have been very successful. This summer, the refuge is hosting five special wetland studies in conjunction with Ouachita Parish Library's adult (reading **Bayou Farewell**) and child summer reading programs. High school students participating in a Howard Hughes Summer Research Program will be involved in hands-on learning at the refuge each week in June. Two university-sponsored "Integrating Technology" teacher workshops and a "Rhythms of the Refuge" workshop for 35 area teachers are scheduled for July.

Everyone at the **Louisiana Office of State Parks** is very excited about an upcoming cooperative effort. This is the Jason Project. It is a wonderful school based program where a group of children will study a particular habitat all year long and in April will go on an extended field trip to the habitat. Well, lucky for Louisiana, this year's habitat of concentration is "Disappearing Wetlands." Unfortunately we win, hands down. However, it is great to have a new generation of this country's leaders researching what is in our own backyard. You can read more about the Jason Project at [www.jasonproject.org](http://www.jasonproject.org).

**Kristy Wallisch** says new ideas and old traditions are the order of the day at **Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve** :

- 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 Thibodeaux 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 \_\_\_\_\_

### Thanks for the Memories

As of February 2004, **George Kastler begins his 36<sup>th</sup> year** of service to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. George's dedication and hard work have had a tremendous influence on interpretation in Missouri and across Region Six. Well Done George!

### NAI Workshop

**Lynn Youngblood** (Blue Springs) reports that thanks to the generous and timely donation of his three books by Corky Mayo, \$460 was raised at the auction to pay for the Keynote Speaker at the past Region Six Workshop. A big THANKS to Corky and the three bidders at the auction.

**Carla Fairbanks** (Joplin) sends a big thank you to Region Six. "Dear Region Six, I want to extend a great big "Thank You!!" to the Scholarship Committee, as well as everyone in Region Six for awarding me the Graduate Scholarship. Thank you for the opportunity to attend this year's outstanding conference! To all of you that I met, it was great meeting you and thank you for all the career advice about advancing in the interpretation field. After returning from the conference, there's not a shadow of doubt in my mind that I'm choosing the best profession in the world! Thank you again. See you in Fort Smith!"

**Doug Eiken** (Director of MO DNR, Division of State Parks) reports that **Eugene Vale, George Kastler, Cyndi Evans, Tiffani Addington, and Janet Price** have been selected as the Division of State Parks, Masterpiece Award winners in the special group category for their work on the Region Six, 2004 Workshop. This is an award given by the division in various categories.

### Scholarships

**Jamie Hubert** (Sam A. Baker State Park) has been notified that she is the recipient of a 2004 NAI National Undergraduate Scholarship. Her scholarship award will be made at the NIW in Michigan. Great work, Jamie!

**George Kastler** (Jefferson City) reminds all Missouri Interpreters that July 15 will be the deadline for receiving all scholarship and award nominations through the Association for Interpretation. If you need forms go to the AMI web site at [www.mointerp.net](http://www.mointerp.net)


### General News

**Steve Sitton** (Kansas City) reports that the **Thomas Hart Benton Home & Studio State Historic Site** now has a teachers' guide available. It can be viewed at [www.mostateparks.com/benton/teachguide.htm](http://www.mostateparks.com/benton/teachguide.htm) in a PDF format, or picked up at the site at 3616 Belleview, Kansas City MO 64111. Call Steve Sitton at (816)931-5722 for more information.

**Gayle Moody** (Jefferson City) reports that two of DNR's Interpretive Videos have won 2004 Videographer Awards. These videos competed in 185 categories against more than 2,100 submissions from across the country. "The Battle of Pilot Knob" won the first place Award of Excellence in the video production/documentary category. "Butterflies of Missouri" won the second place Award of Distinction in the government/educational category. These videos were written, edited and produced by the Resource Management and Interpretation Program, Division of State Parks, MO DNR. Gayle worked on the Pilot Knob video with the site administrator for Fort Davidson SHS. Gayle and George Kastler worked on the butterfly video.

**Rhonda Anderson** and **Holly Berthold** (St. Louis) report that the **Columbia Bottom Conservation Area** hosted their Open House on Thursday, May 27. In addition to tours of the new Education and Visitor Center, visitors got to experience several learning stations at this area located at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. For more information about this new MDC area call (636) 441-4554.

**A.J. Hendershott** (Cape Girardeau) reports that the **Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus** status is: Construction, Construction, Construction. The building is almost under roof and is making progress. The contract for constructing and installing the exhibits was awarded to Taylor Studio. Exhibit installation will take place in early 2005. The facility could be open in spring 2005. Staff will be hired in winter 2004-2005. Dust off those resumes!

**Tamie Yegge** (Kirkwood) reports that Powder **Valley CNC** is welcoming Carter and Connelley on October 9. Many will know this duo from the Leopold Education Project workshop. They will be playing music from their "Songs from the Seventh Direction" CD. 



## OKLAHOMA State Report

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

First of all, we've learned that **Bob Jennings** is facing some health problems and would appreciate some good wishes.

Secondly, **Neil Garrison** (*our very own Oklahoma State coordinator Ed.*) of **Martin Park Nature Center** in Oklahoma City has written a great story, "The Wayside Flower," with lots of really great pictures of the flowers from the many state parks and nature preserves around Oklahoma for the May/June 2004 *Oklahoma Today*. Comes complete with a bio on our fearless leader. Check it out.

The **Oklahoma City Zoo** has been busy. A whopping number of students (4,400 to be exact!) attended the April 2004 "ScienceFest/Earth Day event. The program was visited by fourth- and fifth- grade students from across Oklahoma. A new exhibit entitled "Oklahoma Trails" will be completed in early 2006. It will feature 11 different "life zones" and terrain as habitats for animals native to Oklahoma.

Glub! Glub! Glub! Naturalist **Leann Rogers** in **Lake Tenkiller State Park** (Vian, OK) reports that a new Scuba Park had its dedication and grand opening in June. Ditto for her new interpretive center, which features an "Observation Bubble." Park visitors can place their heads up inside the Plexiglas dome and then get an eyeball closeup view of the lizards and terrapins that are in the terrarium that surrounds it.

"Bat Education Days" took place at **Alabaster Caverns State Park** (Freedom, OK) in February. Interpreters conducted guided walks through the cave while they spoke on the topic of bat conservation. The park's interpretive center showed bat videos and had special bat displays.

The "Annual Heritage Days" event at the **Fort Gibson Historic Site** included a demonstration of Cherokee marbles. This April event interpreted life in eastern Oklahoma in the 1840's through the 1880's.

You go, girl! **Melissa Willis** (**Oklahoma County Conservation District**) was awarded the honor of "Educator of the Year." This designation by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation was in recognition of Melissa's leadership in the outdoor education programs such as Project W.I.L.D., Project W.E.T. and Project Learning Tree. Melissa also organized numerous fishing clinics for kids. As part of the award, Melissa earned a trip to the American Wilderness Leadership School in Wyoming. Wow!

The Oklahoma Museum Educators organization had their mid-winter meeting at Oklahoma City's **Omniplex Science Museum** in February. For more information about this group of folks, you can call (405)424-7757 or visit [www.okmuseums.org](http://www.okmuseums.org).

Drug-smelling attack raccoon? Here's the story: **Michael Corbett** is the naturalist at the Three Forks Nature Center, **Sequoyah State Park** (Fort Gibson Lake, Hulbert, OK). He does some wildlife rehabilitation at his facility. He tells the story about the time that he and the park ranger (law enforcement) took a rehabilitated raccoon to the lakeshore for release. When they arrived at the secluded location, they smelled marijuana. They discovered a jet ski in the lake cove with two persons aboard. Well, the raccoon swims out to the jet ski and climbs aboard. The ranger tells the jet ski folks that it is a drug-smelling attack raccoon and that they need to remain quiet and calm ... and that they needed to hand over any illegal drugs that they might have. Well, the jet ski folks were petrified! They did as they were told ... and the park ranger made the arrest. Michael and the ranger still get a chuckle when they relate that story.

Naturalist **Julie Tarver** reports that a major renovation project is due to be completed on the interior of the Crow's Secret Nature Center (**Lake Thunderbird State Park**, Norman, OK). Also included in that endeavor will be the construction of an outdoor pavilion for her popular Dutch Oven Cooking Classes.

**Mary Davis** is the new Chief of Interpretation at the National Park Service's **Washita Battlefield National Historic Site** (Cheyenne, OK). She has three seasonal interpreters on her team. These folks have worked out a partnership agreement with the Oklahoma Historical Society and are helping to staff the Black Kettle Museum in downtown Cheyenne, OK. (The national historic site and the museum interpret the story of the massacre of the Kiowa people by George Armstrong Custer in 1868.)



## TEXAS State Report

Tara Tucker

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**Theresa Coble** informs us of a very exciting opportunity here in our own state! **Stephen F. Austin State University** has partnered with the **National Park Service** to offer the first masters degree in resource interpretation. It's a completely online degree program. Over 30 students from NPS sites across the country were admitted for the 2003-2004 academic year. They have been the "test group" so to speak! With your help, they'd like to expand program participation to include non-NPS interpreters and educators! Program information, application procedures and requirements, an overview of current students, staff and faculty, and related information is available at: [www.sfasu.edu/msri](http://www.sfasu.edu/msri)

**Julie Coombes** is pleased to announce a busy season in the **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**, and many certifications earned among staff. Attending Palo Duro Canyon State Park for Certified Interpretive Host Training on January 13-14, 2004 were: **Carole Davis** and **Gary Verstuyft** (both from Goose Island SP), **Joe Green**, **Miguel Renteria**, and **Sylvia C. Aguilar** (all from Big Bend Ranch SP), **Ken Wheeler** (Lake Colorado City SP), **Sonya Hargrove** (Fort Griffin SHP), **Freda Hughes** and **Clyde Dudley** (both from Caprock Canyons SP), **Susan Bryant**, **Jo Ann Ross**, **Johnnie Garcia**, and **Doug Huggins** (all from Palo Duro Canyon SP). Julie also reports that **Jo Ann Toole**, Exhibit Tech II, Starr Family Home SHS, and **Elaine Weaver**, Park Ranger II at Cooper Lake State Park/Doctors Creek Unit both successfully completed Certified Interpretive Host training in October 2003. Congratulations to everyone!

According to **Davis Heinicke (Brazos Bend State Park)** the Earth Day Celebration on April 3 was a great success! It marked the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Earth Day and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Brazos Bend State Park. The park hosted over 3,000 visitors with exhibits, demonstrations and "hands-on" activities from local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations and agencies. Some highlights included a demonstration of a rocket net by TPWD wildlife biologists, the game wardens airboat, the opportunity for children to explore pond water under a microscope, visit a live owl and falcon up close, investigate an owl pellet, nature crafts and get to touch a live hatchling alligator or a snake, all while learning about why they are important to the environment. The day's grand finale was the cutting and eating of a six-foot long birthday cake in the shape of an alligator (the park's most popular resident). The cake served over 300 lucky people!

**Chris True** reports that **Don Whited** and **Sonny Solis** have been busy working on several interpretive projects at **Ray Roberts Lake State Park Complex** this spring. They have coordinated several eagle scout projects including the construction of a new interpretive trail entry way, which has dramatically increased recognition and utilization of the interpretive trail. They are also in the planning process for another interpretive trail to be constructed at the Johnson Branch Unit later this summer. All staff have been busy assisting with ecology programs, campfire activities, and many interpretive/conservation oriented projects.

**Texas State University-San Marcos** has launched a new course titled "Interpretive Environmental Geography," taught by **Dr. Jim Kimmel**, who is a Certified Interpretive Trainer. Sixteen students took the course, which includes the requirements for the NAI Certified Interpretive Guide program. For more information, contact Jim Kimmel at [JK02@txstate.edu](mailto:JK02@txstate.edu).

Ecotourism Specialist, **Miles Phillips**, with **Texas Cooperative Extension of A&M University** is offering at least two NAI Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) Training courses in Texas this summer: June 19-22, in Canadian, Texas and early August 5-8, in Rosenberg, Texas. For more information see <http://www.interpnet.com> or contact Miles Phillips at 361 265 9203, <http://agfacts.tamu.edu/~mphillips>

Miles also reports on resources for travelers & interpreters of the "South Texas Brush Country" or anywhere in Texas! It is now easier than ever to find & share places to explore due to the new tool put on the internet by **Texas Cooperative Extension Department of Parks Recreation & Tourism**. It is called "Texas InFront" and is much more than a simple list of nature activities. It is a way to look for nature activities & lodging by searching specific counties, by looking up the name of the place or simply by entering what activity you would like to try in the area. It is free service to nature tourism providers in Texas. <http://naturetourism.tamu.edu> ALSO JUST RELEASED! Nature Tourism: A Handbook for Evaluating Enterprise Feasibility, available from Texas Cooperative Extension at <http://tcebookstore.org> Item B6147. 📍



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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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