

ARKANSAS • KANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSOURI • OKLAHOMA • TEXAS

Interpretation in the Big City

Tara Tucker, Houston Zoo, Houston, TX



Excitement. Apprehension. Curiosity. Uncertainty. These were all emotions I carried on my trek from rural Missouri to the big, no, HUGE city of Houston, Texas. Jumping from a Missouri state park with predominantly rural visitors and native Missouri fauna/flora to a zoo in the nation's 4th largest city was a slight change to say the least. Snow leopards were a far cry from bobcats, and 1.4 million annual guests to the zoo were going to be just a few more than I was used to seeing.

I wasn't exactly sure how the change would transpire, but the zoo's animals and visitors have made the transition easy and full of surprises. Now, just two and a half short years later, I am no longer apprehensive or uncertain. However, I am still excited and even more curious about the animals and interested in imparting conservation messages to zoo guests. As I lead scouts and families around the zoo, I am in awe of the giraffes as

they fold their long legs beneath them to take rests, and of the ocelots as they jump on the side of the enclosure to hunt for frogs and insects in the adjacent tree. I often find myself watching the animals as much as the visitors, and it's easy to remember to let the resource "speak for itself." There are numerous unplanned, magical moments that seem to happen on cue, such as the elephants trumpeting and siamangs hooting/barking, and African lions pawing at the glass while the visitors scream with sheer excitement.

However, as amazed as this rural interpreter is at all of these exotic species, a recurring exclamation exists in every *single* program. "Look! A rabbit! There's another one! Miss Tara, where do all of those rabbits come from? How did they get in here? Are they the Zoo's rabbits?" Wow. There are giraffes, elephants, lions, tigers and bears, oh my! Yet these children and adults alike are just as excited about the rabbits, squirrels and doves. It's truly an eye opener into the world of the urban population. While I grew up seeing these animals, a plethora of birds and other species daily, the zoo in the middle of the city is often one of the few places that "city kids and adults" can come to see "nature." So we count the rabbits and make them a part of the program, just as much as the black leopards and sea lions.

Not all of the animals at the zoo are non-native species. Just as important is the Children's Zoo, which presents native Texas animals of the prairie, forest, coastal habitat, farm, and desert. It takes approximately 15 hours to get from one side of Texas to the other, so our visitors may not see all of these habitats in their home state, much less all of these animals in their lifetime. As they walk around the Children's Zoo section, some children are astonished to discover, "Aw, look at the cute prairie dogs!" "Wow, American alligators are found around here? Don't they eat you?"

We proceed to talk about their questions and their scary moments of the night, including the mosquito-eating bats flying around the lights (since the children are convinced at first that they are vampire bats). And, "Are the animals going to escape and hurt me?" "It's dark out here. I'm scared." We talk about the magic of the night and how wonderful it is that we have the zoo all to ourselves for the night program. The animals are more active and they are secure in their enclosures. And those bats are keeping the mosquitoes at bay.

How many times have I changed my programs to fulfill the visitors needs? Often. How many times do I have teachable moments? Countless. How many times have I made a difference in a child's life? Hopefully many. Will they practice conservation at home? I sure hope so. And when I need to go see a native Missouri animal to remind me of the rural life, I just walk over to the Children's Zoo to see the white-tailed deer or the great horned owls. Life is good indeed.



Director's Report

Pat Silovsky

Having just returned from the spring Board meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I can report that many good things are happening within your organization. Be on the lookout for a ballot coming your way within the next week or two. The ballot concerns the bylaws changes that were discussed and finalized at the Albuquerque meeting. Here are the highlights of the changes:

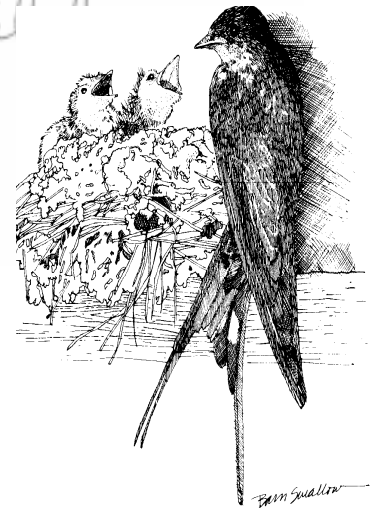
- Term limits for officers were extended to three terms. This will allow a Regional Director(or any member of the Regional Executive Committee) to serve for three terms (6 years total). This should allow more continuity on the National Board. If a Regional Director (RD) is elected to the National Board as a representative of the RLC, then the RD must serve a full two years on the National Board. Without the ability to serve three terms, the elections of RD's to the Board could be hampered by the term limits. (An RD will probably not be elected to the Board during their first term)
- Regions will have the flexibility to elect all officers on a slate OR choose to elect officers on a staggered system to allow for more continuity at the regional level.
- The position of Secretary and Treasurer may be combined at the Region's discretion.
- There are no upper limits on the number of Regions and the lower limit has been established at four. This would allow for the creation of new regions.
- Language for the Regional Leadership Council and the Sectional Leadership Council was made parallel.

There are other changes of a minor nature that were also proposed. I would encourage anyone who is interested in examining the changes to the bylaws to visit the web site www.interpnet.com and click on the proposed bylaw changes to view the old and the new bylaws side by side. If you do not have internet access, you may call the National Office toll free and request a fax or mail copy.

I would also like to report that the Regional Leadership Council spent one day prior to the Board meeting discussing several things, largely trying to resolve what makes a "region in good standing" as referred to in the bylaws. We have come up with a series of criteria such as positive balance in the bank, workshop held annually, and a biannual meeting of the Executive Committee, to name a few. Regions will produce a "report card" each year (annual report) that addresses the criteria established for a region.

While the topic of bylaws and reorganization may seem a little dry, I really feel the changes being proposed will make our organization much more flexible and able to meet new challenges. Thanks for listening.

Pat Silovsky



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

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



NAI Region Six 2006 Freeman Tilden Scholarships

Summary

Region Six of the National Association for Interpretation is pleased to announce a scholarship program for college students—undergraduate and graduate—studying in the field of interpretation (i.e. biology, parks and recreation, wildlife management, outdoor education, history, museum studies, etc.). The goal of the Freeman Tilden Scholarship Program is to recognize students who have demonstrated academic and professional success and have the potential to make an outstanding contribution to the field of interpretation.

Scholarships include: — Up to two \$700 scholarships for undergraduate students
— One \$700 scholarship for graduate students

Each winner must be able to attend the annual Region Six workshop in Houston, Texas, March 25-28, 2006. Recipients will receive free registration for the workshop and \$150 for travel expenses. Students will be recognized at the annual awards banquet during the workshop and will also participate in the annual scholarship auction to raise funds for next year's awards.

Eligibility requirements

- Applicant must be an undergraduate enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited institution of higher learning within Region Six **or** a graduate student enrolled in a minimum of two graduate level classes in an accredited institution of higher learning within Region Six (Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana).
- Applicant must be a junior, senior, or graduate student at the time of the award.
- Applicants must have an undergraduate cumulative grade point average of at least 2.8 on a four-point scale. Graduate students shall have a minimum of 3.4 on a four point scale. Graduate students applying during their first graduate semester must have a cumulative undergraduate gpa of 2.8 on a four-point scale.
- Applicants must be able to attend the regional workshop in Houston TX, March 25-28, 2006.

Judging criteria

Applications will be evaluated and ranked by the scholarship committee in the following areas: interpretive work experience, academic achievement, written communication skills, appearance of the application, and adherence to instructions.

Selection Procedure and Timetable

- Applications postmarked to Scholarship Chair: No later than December 12, 2005
- Scholarship Committee reviews applications: January 2006
- Students notified by Scholarship Chair: Early February, 2006
- Students receive checks and attend workshop: March 26-29, 2006

Inquiries and Contact Information

Inquiries and scholarship application (next page of this newsletter) should be directed to:

Kelly Farrell, Chair
Region Six Scholarship Committee
Field Interpreter, CHI, CIT
One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72206

Phone: (501) 682-2187
Fax: (501) 682-1364
E-mail: kelly.farrell@arkansas.gov



NAI Region Six 2006 Freeman Tilden Scholarships

1. Application Form (please type or print legibly in ink)

Check one: undergraduate
 graduate

Name: _____

Permanent Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Street/Apt.

Phone: Home: _____ School: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

College or University you are currently attending: _____

Major area of study: _____

Academic status by spring 2006 (check one): junior senior graduate student

Academic advisor:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

2. Supporting Materials

Your application packet must include the following items, which are limited to two pages each:

- A letter of recommendation from a current or former employer (preferably in the interpretive field).
- A letter of recommendation from a current or former college instructor.
- A copy of your current college transcript (*this may be more than two pages*). Note: If you are a graduate student applying during your first graduate semester, submit copies of both your undergraduate transcript and your current graduate transcript (to indicate that you are enrolled in the minimum of two graduate-level courses).
- An essay about a memorable first-hand interpretive experience (as either an interpreter or an audience member).
- An essay describing why you are interested in the field of interpretation, what your aspirations in the interpretive field are, and where you think the profession as a whole should go.
- A resume that includes your interpretive work experience (dates, locations, duties) and three references.

3. Deadline

Five collated copies of this cover sheet and supporting materials should be sent to the Chair of the Scholarship Committee. **Packets must be postmarked no later than December 12, 2005.**

Mail your application packet to Kelly Farrell, Chair, NAI Region Six Scholarship Committee (contact information on the reverse side of this application).

The National Association for Interpretation Region Six Awards

Jay Miller from Arkansas State Parks received the **Distinguished Professional Interpreter Award 2004**. The seemingly endless list of Jay's qualifications for this award include: 28 years with Arkansas State Parks, 20 years as Administrator of Program Services, supervision of the interpretive exhibits at three new visitor/nature centers, writing many, many interpretive publications, presentations at regional and national NAI workshops, the organization of the Trail of Tears Master Planning Meeting, international interpretive consulting and the NAI Region Six Meritorious Service Award in 1997.

The Richard Baldauf/Outstanding New Interpreter Award 2004 went to **Amber Mascuilli**. Amber works at Lake Dardanelle for Arkansas State Parks. Although new to the profession, Amber's dedication to the field of interpretation is apparent. She wrote and received two major grants, coordinates the volunteer program for her site, planned and operated the park's first day camp, attended a Certified Heritage Interpreter workshop and was on the planning committee for the recent workshop in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The **Outstanding Site Publication Award 2004** was awarded to the cooperative effort of **Ernie Miller Nature Center** and Galyan's, a local business, for their Outdoor Skills Program bandana. Animal tracks, plant identification, useful tools and environmental messages are printed on each bandana. The very popular bandanas serve as promotional items, trail markers, blindfolds, color coding for the division of large groups, games and more.

Missouri Department of Natural Resources/Division of State Parks was awarded the **Outstanding Interpretive Program Award 2004** for the Spring Interpretive Training School. Each year in May, seasonal and full-time employees may attend an intensive five-day workshop teaching interpretation principles, techniques and hands-on skills to present programs to the public. The 2004 committee members were **Tiffani Addington, John Cunning, Wanda Doolen, Cyndi A. Evans, George Kastler, Dakota Russell, Jennifer Schumacher** and **Brian Stith**.

David Owens from Lake Mineral Wells State Park in Texas received the **2005 Best Workshop Presentation** for his program "The Evolution of an Interpretive Program." He shared a basic program idea and his progressive steps to make it an outstanding program.

Congratulations to all of the winners!

At the National Workshop, the Region was well represented in awards:

Bob Jennings- Fellow
Don Simons- Master Front-Line Interpreter

In the media awards:
Poster- *Send You Back to Arkansas: Our Own Sweet Sounds II Exhibit*, **The Old State House Museum** and **The Freelance Company**

Wayside Exhibits- *The Dino Pit*, **Texas Vertebrate Paleontology Lab**

The state leaders in the Brian Barnette Great American Interpreter's Quiz at the 2005 Region Six Workshop were:

Texas: Tara Tucker
Arkansas: Rusty Scarborough (Winner)
Louisiana: David Latona
Kansas: Mike Rader
Missouri: John Miller
Oklahoma: Eddie Reese
Colorado: Tim Merriman

A new tradition I would like to start is to have the leaders from each state host the quiz when the next Region Six Workshop comes to his or her state. Therefore, Tim Merriman will have to host it when Region Six goes to Colorado. Estes Park would be a great place for us to have a workshop. Perhaps we should annex Colorado into our region.

Don R. Simons
Certified Heritage Interpreter

Editors' Note: Our apologies for the tardiness in printing the award winners for 2004. The Spring 2005 issue of Visions was simply too full for us to fit everything in. Our congratulations, though belated, are certainly sincere!



ARKANSAS State Report

Jay Miller

We in Arkansas are proud to be home to the recently-rediscovered Ivory-billed Woodpecker! What a remarkable thing! This underscores one of my pet topics—the need for us folks in interpretation to continually celebrate the good work done by environmentalists and conservationists in the years before us. The Ivory-billed would not be here today if people had not stopped channelization of the Cache River 30 years ago. Wherever you live your life is a little richer because of that. Celebrate that success. In the late 1960's things like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Wilderness Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Trails Act, the Environmental Protection Act, and many more pieces of legislation were passed and signed into law. These make our world and our life immensely better today, but this generation doesn't know the history of those hard fought battles and takes those huge efforts for granted. Please cheer those heroes and celebrate that success publicly and daily through your programs.

Hot Springs National Park offered their new “*Bathhouse Row Insiders Tour*” during National Park Week. They were so successful that the tour will be offered all summer, taking visitors inside selected bathhouses to see ongoing preservation work. Plus, the park will have an interpreter on the city trolley to tell the story of the park as the trolley goes up Hot Springs Mountain to the tower. Over the July 4th weekend you can try the Oertel Graduated System for Physical Fitness with a Park Ranger. Established on park roads in 1904, the yellow route has a gradual grade while the red route is more challenging—then have lemonade and watermelon!

I took my staff to the **Forrest L. Woods Crowley's Ridge Nature Center** in Jonesboro last month and must say it is amazing. **Neil Curry, Jodi Morris** and others of the Game and Fish Commission have created a wonderful audiovisual and discovery exhibit experience. I won't tell you more, but it's a “must stop” next time you pass through east Arkansas.

In state parks we graduated two classes of seasonal interpreters this spring. With **Kelly Farrell** and me being Certified Interpretive trainers, we have incorporated the CIG requirements into our training with wonderful results. Many took the option of becoming NAI members and gaining their CIG certification. Comments from those being trained and their supervisors are excellent. We are looking forward to a very good summer of interpretation.

Harry Harnish of **Devil's Den** was thrilled to learn that Rob Mies of the Organization for Bat Conservation

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“You Might Be a Naturalist If...”

Sue Hughtart, Park Manager, Lake Eufaula State Park Checotah, OK

You Might Be a Nat If...While on a hike with a scout group, the biggest Southern Copperhead you have ever seen slithers out from behind a rock and you hold your group back for the safety and protection of the snake rather than your group.

You Might Be a Nat If...Some enterprising camper has brought you a catfish skull to identify and you promptly rip off a fin and show them how to make a bone needle with it and they stare at you with fascination over how you could be such a MacGyver type person.

You Might Be a Nat If...You are fishing around in your fanny pack for something and you fin your-

self with the above-mentioned bone needle that you forgot was in there.

You Might Be a Nat If... You overhear a conversation that goes something like, “Are you a pisher or a squeaker?” and you know exactly what they are talking about.

You Might Be a Nat If... At any given moment you can carry on a semi-intelligent conversation about zooplankton, phytoplankton, Van Gogh, Handel's Messiah, the Civil War, Shakespeare, brain tanning buckskin, and somehow weave them into any point you want to make.

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KANSAS State Report

Schanée Anderson _____

Events and Brag Bag

Sunset Zoo

- The Zoo is hosting four summer-long camps for ages four to thirteen years old. Each week a different theme is offered and campers meet animals throughout the zoo, prepare crafts, participate in group activities, and perform skits relating to their theme at the end of the week for family and friends.
- Sloth bear and parma wallaby joeys doing well with more babies expected throughout the summer.

Wilson State Park

- They had a special event on Father's Day weekend, including OK Kids Day events on Saturday, (a fishing clinic, dog bite prevention program, kids games, a free hotdog lunch and home-made ice cream, a visit from the Sunset Zoomobile and a late-night movie). On Sunday morning, Mike Rader led a bird walk at the State Park. The weekend also marks the centennial celebration for the department and is also Free Park Entrance Weekend.

Sedgwick County Zoo


- Construction is moving fast on the expansion of the education building. The building is scheduled to be completed soon.
- Four otters, many birds, lots of goats and sheep, and one chimpanzee were born at Sedgwick County Zoo over the spring. The Zoo is looking forward to seeing the frolicking otter pups playing in the water.

Conferences/Meetings/Workshops

Konza Prairie


The Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) held the annual teachers' workshop June 20-25 at Konza Prairie. This year they had teachers from across the state who learned about prairies in Kansas. Five teachers were from the shortgrass region of western Kansas (Sharon Springs, Johnson, Meade, Garden City), two were from the midgrass region (Wichita, Hays), three were from the Flint Hills, and three were from the south and eastern tallgrass, including Fredonia and Neodesha. The teachers have a long-term commitment with KEEP to collect data each year with their students at a site near their school. Their students enter the data into long-term databases available on the KEEP web site (www.ksu.edu/konza/keep). From the classroom, students will be able to compare the differences and similarities between the three major prairie regions of Kansas. Join us on the Internet as this project gains more schools and more information through the years.

Wonderful staff and volunteers

- **Kara Pace** will be replacing **Craig Lang** as the education specialist in charge of elementary program at **Sedgwick County Zoo**. Craig will be teaching sixth grade science full-time at an area school district.
- **Jim Ballou**, docent at Sedgwick County Zoo, received his Certified Interpretive Guide certificate from the NAI this spring. 

Arkansas State Report, continued from page 6

will make an appearance at Bat-O-Rama XVI. He'll be showing several bat species, including an African flying fox. Harry's May program highlight was doing a bat detector demonstration for 98 people the Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend.

The **Diamond Discovery Center** at Crater of Diamonds State Park will be opening in early June. This center is the gateway to the diamond field. When visitors leave this center they will know why diamonds are found there, what natural diamonds look like, and how they can find them. Exhibits, classrooms, Diamond Mining 101 classes, equipment rentals and entry to the diamond field and to the Diamond Springs Water Play Area are all in the DDC. Exhibits and a unique AV experience were completed by Taylor Studios, Inc. 



LOUISIANA State Report

David Latona

Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park naturalists facilitated several well-attended spring events in addition to normal programming for school and other community groups. In March, a camouflaged egg hunt in the park drew more than 250 children and adults. The following weekend park naturalist **Rachel Demascal**, with an assist from senior park naturalist **Judy Sneed** and naturalist **Rhonda Clay**, held an April Fools fun day in the park that had more than 125 participants. *Highlights* magazine was one of the sponsors for this unnatural scavenger hunt which was patterned after their popular "What's wrong with this picture?" activity. Nature Park staff completed a Louisiana Recreational Trails Grant wayside sign project and erected 18 signs that have been in the planning stages for two years. Park staff worked with **Jay Miller** of **Interpretive Communications, Inc.** in Arkansas and local wildlife artist **Don Edwards** to complete the signs. They interpret the importance of the park's old growth forest and vernal ponds along one trail and the role of plants and wildflowers along another of the park's trails.

The park will again partner with **Shreveport Green** and the **City of Shreveport's** recreation department to host Earth Camp for eight weeks this summer. Park naturalists Rachel Demascal and **Kim Warren** are both involved in this camp, directed by retired Caddo Parish science supervisor **Robert Williams**. The environmental day camp targets children who usually would not have a summer camp experience. Park naturalist Rhonda Clay is scheduled to provide programs throughout the summer to many of the Parish's branch libraries as part of the Summer Reading Program.

Past, present and future are always in the mix at **Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve**.

- To honor the past, nine commemorative markers were dedicated at Chalmette Battlefield during the 190th anniversary remembrance of the Battle of New Orleans. The markers honor the troops who fought with Major Andrew Jackson in the last major battle of the War of 1812 and are the first new memorials on the battlefield since the completion of Chalmette Monument in 1908.
- To link the past with the present, the park's Acadian Cultural Center in Lafayette, Prairie Acadian Center in Eunice, and Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux are hosting the *Brasse dans le couche-couche* film and video series. The series is presented by *Louisiane à la carte*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and developing Louisiana French products and services. Screenings are attended by people featured in the documentaries and audiences are encouraged to discuss critical issues of French heritage, language, and culture and look for solutions to community problems.
- And to prepare for the future, the JASON Expedition (formerly JASON Project) brought 1.7 million students and 33,000 teachers in classrooms around the world to the Barataria Preserve. The program links fifth- through ninth-graders from around the world with real science expeditions via internet resources, expedition broadcasts, hands-on exercises, videos, digital laboratories, and research articles. JASON scientists broadcast live from the preserve to share the story of Louisiana's disappearing wetlands.

Gay Brantley, Interpretive Ranger at **Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge**, reports that the March "Wild Friday" Swamp Stroll attracted over 140 participants. Looking back from half way around the mile long boardwalk nature trail, there was a meandering line of red lights all the way to the trail head. Because of the program's popularity, it was repeated in April and drew over 120. May's "Wild Friday" was a very timely presentation and book signing by Phillip Hoose, author of *The Race to Save the Lord God Bird*, the saga of the disappearance of the ivory-billed woodpecker. The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in bringing Mr. Hoose to Louisiana. He and Keith Ouchley, Director of TNC of Louisiana, also updated the group of 80 on the recent rediscovery of this bird on **Cache River National Wildlife Refuge** in Arkansas. Gay partnered with the Monroe City Schools Instructional Technology staff to create a web site called Monroe City Schools at Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The site has K-8 cross-curriculum lesson plans centered around refuge resources and correlated to standards and benchmarks; printable supporting materials; assessment tools; links to many related or supportive sites; and information about refuge field trips. On April 15 the site was introduced to Instructional Technology teachers from 15 school districts at the refuge visitor center. The response has been overwhelming. You can visit the site at http://www.mcschools.net/mcs/black_bayou_files. This is a work in progress and any suggestions to improve the site would be appreciated. Contact Gay at gay_brantley@fws.gov.



MISSOURI State Report

John Miller _____


George Kastler (Jefferson City) reports another successful Spring Seasonal Training for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the Division of State Parks. This was the 66th year for this training, which was attended by 75 people from Missouri, Illinois, and Kansas. In addition to a variety of outstanding training sessions for summer seasonals state park interpreters, Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) Training was conducted by **Tiffani Addington** and assisted by **Chanda Regier**. Fifteen interpreters completed the training and are poised to become some of the newest CIG's in Missouri. George wishes to thank all the presenters and participants for their hard work and dedication to the DNR Seasonal Training. If anyone would like to know how to participate or present at next year's training they can contact George at george.kastler@dnr.mo.gov.

April Dozier (Cape Girardeau) reports that MDC's newest nature center is now open. The **Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus** held its open house on May 14 & 15. This state-of-the-art facility focuses on involving the visitor with conservation activities and issues. April has assembled a great staff which includes Assistant Nature Center Manager **Steve Juhlin** and two Education Specialists, **Jeremy Soucy** and **Sara Scheper**. For more information about this new interpretive facility contact April at april.dozier@mdc.mo.gov or go to www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cncl/cape.

Cyndi Ties the Knot!!! **Cyndi Cogbill**, formerly Cyndi Evans, was married to Jamie Cobill in a private ceremony on May 8. She and Jamie had known each other for some time and knew this was a perfect match. You can still contact Cyndi at prairie.state.park@dnr.mo.gov or cyndi.cogbill@dnr.mo.gov.

The **Association of Missouri Interpreters** (AMI) will conduct their annual workshop August 16-18 in St. Louis. The theme is: "Interpretation does not end where the sidewalk begins." If you would like more information about this workshop contact **Michelle Neubauer** at (636) 938-7198 or at route.66.state.park@dnr.mo.gov or visit the AMI web site at www.mointerp.net.

News from MO Department of Conservation: Several MDC interpretive sites across Missouri have new faces on their staff. Besides the new staff at Cape Girardeau (above) these new faces include: **Wayne Grein** (Asst. Nature Center Manager at **Powder Valley Nature Center**); **Lisa Lacombe** (Asst. Nature Center Manager at **Burr Oak Woods Nature Center**); **Julie Eulinger**, **Kim Banner**, **Kendra Swee**, and **Alan Reed** (Naturalists at **Springfield Nature Center**); **Trana Madsen**, **Amber Edwards**, and **Alane Dubbert** (Naturalists at **Runge Nature Center**); and **Gladys Rigsby** (Public Service Assistant, **Joplin Office**). The Missouri Department of Conservation has set off on a second Lewis & Clark Journaling activity. From June 1, 2005 through May 31, 2006 everyone can traverse the state to fill journal activities at nine sites. Each site will reward these intrepid travellers with a free lapel pin. Upon completion of the journal at all nine sites, participants will get a tenth pin and be entered into a drawing for camping gear. For more information about this second round of Lewis & Clark journaling, contact any MDC Nature Center or **Veronica Feilner** at veronica.feilner@mdc.mo.gov.

Leah Eden (Branson) reports on another successful Family Fishing Fair event at the **Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center**. Although the event focused on fishing, the aquatic habitat and fishing ethics were a large portion of the activities and information. The wacky Fishin' Magicians were again a big hit as they dazzled the audience with magic, aquatic trivia, and jokes. A big thanks to Trout Unlimited, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wal-Mart and MDC volunteers for making this another wonderful event. 

You might be a naturalist, continued from page 6

You Might Be a Nat If... You view baby Starlings and English Sparrows as a snake snack without one whit of a twinge of conscience.

You Might Be a Nat If.... You can add at least five other bizarre facts to this list without even thinking really hard.

You Might Be a Nat If... You just read the above list and say to yourself, "What was her point?" because it

all sounds perfectly "natural" to you.

You Might Be a Nat If... When your relatives and friends visit other parts of the country they bring back assorted animal scat for your souvenir because they know you're interested in this type of thing.

You Might Be a Nat If... Strangers come up to you on the street and say, "I saw this dead animal on the road the other day and thought of you."



OKLAHOMA State Report

Neil Garrison _____

Amy Stephens reports that teenage volunteers at the **Oklahoma City Zoo** teamed up with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to build a pond on St. Patrick's Day. The program, sponsored by Ponds for Kids and Continental Ponds, will be used as a demonstration site for anyone interested in beginning a pond project. The pond is self-sustaining, and over time will become an undisturbed ecosystem. In May, the zoo reached out to the community by participating in both the International Plant Conservation Day and the International Migratory Bird Day. Visitors were educated about these causes through booths and activities, as well as an early-morning bird count.

Judy Kane of the **Kuriakos Nature Center** announced that they celebrated their tenth Anniversary in April. Over the past ten years, they have presented their on-the-road programs to thousands of children and adults throughout Oklahoma. Several years ago, they constructed a Permanent Orienteering Course at **Lake Thunderbird State Park** which has been employed by the Army and Navy ROTC units from OU and several Boy Scout troops. They also teach Orienteering and a number of other hands-on classes at the lake. The KNC recently received a grant from the Department of Environmental Quality which is being used to develop an ECO-Caching program. Participants will use a GPS to locate "caches" which will contain the instructions for an environmental activity. They hope to have this program on their fall schedule.

Eddie Reese along with the **Oxley Nature Center** (Tulsa) staff and volunteers conducted a prescribed burn in February. Three sites in the nature center and two areas outside the nature center boundaries, in all about twenty acres, were burned. The purpose of these burns is to preserve the prairie habitats and encourage the formation of diverse and healthy prairie ecology. ONCA has contracted with **Taylor Studios** to design an exhibit plan for the interpretive building. They have been meeting with Taylor technicians to define the story the center wants to tell. In light of America's increasing urbanization of its children, they hope to bridge the gap for Tulsa's children by providing a wilderness experience.

Rusty Grimpe is the Education Director at the **Tulsa Zoo**. He has this to report: "Here at America's Favorite Zoo in Tulsa, OK, our Education Department just completed the spring sessions of Animal Tales. For children 4-5 years of age and an adult, the six weeks of classes highlighted Australia and marsupials (we have koalas visiting from the San Diego Zoo through July). Our spring animal art classes for children and adults also came to a close. **Brenda Knapp**, our instructor, has degrees in biology and art and she uses our collection of animals and biofacts as models. Using her background, she is able to not only teach drawing techniques, but explain why animals might look the way they do. The sessions for children fill to capacity every time, the adults — so, so. Our summer Wildlife Discoveries workshops begin in early June. Classes are for those 5-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11-14 years of age. While a wide range of subjects are offered, many will concentrate on the 'wonders of water' this season which is the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums' theme for 2005."

It has been a war, of sorts, at **Oklahoma City's Martin Park Nature Center**. The battle that is being fought is one that is waged against a tough and determined foe: the musk thistle. It is a plant that came from Europe. It is not native to Oklahoma. Its growth habit has earned it classification as a noxious weed. About 30-50 of the plants first appeared in the park last summer. At the time, it did not seem too alarming. The flowers are exceptionally beautiful, and American goldfinches love to eat the seeds. What possible harm could it cause? The answer to that question is this: PLENTY!!!! At the start of this year, about 10,000 of the seeds had germinated and were quickly determined to take over the wildflower meadow. An army of court-mandated community service workers were sent in to tackle this enemy. They dug each plant up by its roots and tossed them aside to die. On about four separate occasions now, victory has been proclaimed.....only to discover (to our fright!) that a handful of the plants had survived....and were determined to flower and go to seed. As of this writing, the battle is still being fought. The ticks and chiggers have signed on as allies of the noxious weed, and the conflict is getting worse and worse and worse. Stay tuned for further updates.

The employees of the U.S. Forest Service offered up a series of interesting programs in conjunction with the National Trails Day (i.e., June 4th) at southeastern Oklahoma's **Ouachita National Forest**. Volunteers from the "Friends of the Ouachita Trail" organization also assisted with the event. The theme of the guided nature hikes was this: "Take the Path to Health." Experienced hikers led the guided nature hikes into the forest.

The NAI Regional Workshop will be in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2009. The first planning meeting was conducted on May 9. **Laura Motley** and **Neil Garrison** are the co-chairs of the workshop committee. Lots of exciting activities are being planned and formulated.





TEXAS State Report

Tara Tucker

Attention educators and environmental enthusiasts! **Jill Nugent** in the Biology Department at the **University of North Texas** in Denton reports on great summer educational opportunities: **“Teaching Environmental Science”** is a three-hour graduate credit course opportunity offered by the University of North Texas in Denton July 11-29 Monday thru Friday 8am to 1pm through funds from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). All tuition and fees are underwritten by TCEQ. Credits may also be applied towards a TEEAC (Texas Environmental Education Advisory Committee) Certificate of Recognition. Interested parties are invited to e-mail jnugent@unt.edu for the application forms. Space is limited so don't delay! In addition, UNT in Denton is hosting the **Texas Society for Ecological Restoration** Conference this June. Programs will focus on environmental education, prairie, wetland, and cross timbers ecosystem restoration. All info can be found at: <http://www.cep.unt.edu/sertex.html>.

Congratulations to **Catherine McCarthy** from San Antonio, TX! According to **Dr. Michael Legg**, Catherine was the first student to graduate in the online Masters program in Resource Interpretation from **Stephen F. Austin State University** in Nacogdoches. More students will be following in her footsteps by graduating this fall. Dr. Legg also reports that SFASU just signed a memorandum of understanding with **Texas Parks and Wildlife's Freshwater Fisheries Center** in Athens, Texas to cooperate in distance environmental education programs for them that will reach teachers and students all across Texas.

Kudos to **Dr. Pat Stephens Williams**, who helped get the **Stephen F. Austin State University's NAI student chapter** back up and running! She is now co-advisor to the program and **Zaina Farrar** is the new student president. Their leadership skills have resulted in many activities, such as a dutch oven skills workshop where students ate the results, and speaker **Katherine Crippens** from TPWD coming to speak to them about her interpretive work at Martin Dies Jr. State Park. The NAI student chapter was also represented with a whopping eight students attending the NAI Regional Workshop in Fort Smith! (You were probably able to spot them in their bright orange t-shirts.) It's great to have such student involvement in NAI!

Calling all book lovers! (everyone!) Co-author **Mark Klym** says his book, *Hummingbirds of Texas, With Their Arizona and New Mexico Ranges*, is due out this fall from TAMU Press.

Lucas Miller, the “Singing Zoologist” from Austin, has a new CD entitled, “I Was a Supa Dupa Pupa!” This is his third CD and most lushly produced collection of science songs. There are eleven tracks covering such subjects as the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone, tadpoles & metamorphosis, mutualism, symbiosis, pollination, carnivores/insectivores/herbivores & omnivores, the worker honeybee lifecycle, seed dispersal and, yes, the ecological importance of buffalo dung, bird droppings & earthworm poop! For more information, go to <http://www.lucasmiller.net/NewCD.htm>.

According to **Katie Facker**, the **Houston Zoo** launched a program entitled, “Dreamnight” on Friday, June 3 for the first time this year! “Dreamnight,” an international event in over 80 zoos in 23 countries around the world, allows chronically ill and disabled children access to their local zoo for a free, fun-filled night of animals, excitement, and entertainment. Interpretive activities such as ice sculpting, storytelling, exhibit interpretation, live animals and unique crafts made the event unforgettable for the 200+ participants involved. If you would like to host this amazing evening at your Zoo, please visit www.dreamnightatthezoo.nl for more information.

On Friday, April 29, over 400 schoolchildren from the nearby school districts of Bridge City and Port Neches-Groves attended the first annual Civil War Living History Day at **Sabine Pass Battleground State Park and Historic Site**. The program targeted eighth grade students, who visited six stations that presented different aspects of Civil War Life, including Civil War Medicine, Field Blacksmithing, and Civil War Flags, as well as stations illustrating the life of the common soldier in the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Students especially enjoyed volunteering for mock gun crews and listening to the consecutive blasts of three Civil War field cannons. The event was sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife in conjunction with the Orange Chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp 1745, Walter P. Lane, the Order of the Confederate Rose, and other heritage groups from Texas and Louisiana. “Thanks to the hard work of our heritage group partners, this year's event was a great success,” says Park Interpreter **Jonathan Plant**. Plans are being made to expand next year's event to two days to accommodate more school districts.





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DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE::

Summer 2005: May 20
Fall 2005: August 20
Winter 05/06: November 20
Spring 2006: February 20

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