

ARKANSAS • KANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSOURI • OKLAHOMA • TEXAS

IF WE CARED MORE

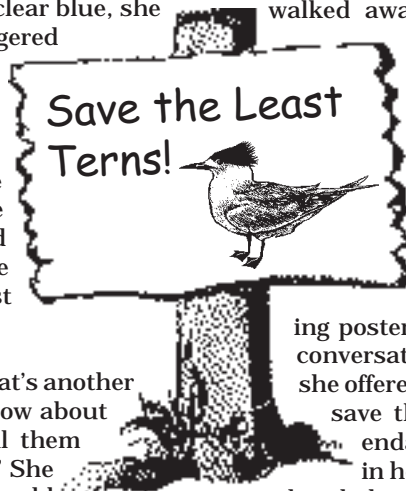
Sue Hughart, Park Manager, Lake Eufaula State Park Checotah, OK

Jane gave me a tune up the other day. Funny how kids do that from time to time. Out of the clear blue, she says to me, "Mom, what's an endangered species in Oklahoma?"

The first one I thought of was the American Alligator. Since she happens to love reptiles, she said, "We need to save them. I'll make posters...Save the Alligators!" I told her, "Jane, they are mostly just in the southeast corner of the state. Most people won't get it."

She thought about it some more. "What's another endangered species?" I said, "Well, how about the Horned Lizard? We used to call them Horny Toads when I was a little girl." She kind of wrinkled her nose up and you could tell the Horned Lizard just wasn't going to be the kind of glamorous poster child she had envisioned.

I said, "What about the Least Tern?" To which she said, "What is a Least Tern?" At this, I got out a bird



book, looked it up in the index, gave it to her, and walked away thinking this conversation was over. I'd stumped her and now I would be able to go about my daily life without answering any more questions.

As Jane so often does, I saw her later drawing intently, with her tongue bearing the brunt of chew marks from heavy concentration. I checked later and she was drawing posters to "Save the Least Terns." In our conversations over the next two or three days, she offered up suggestions as to how we could save them and why she thinks they are endangered in the first place. In no time, in her brief nine years on the planet, she already has surpassed her 40 year-old mother as the "family expert" on Least Terns.

My point is, Jane cares. That is not uncommon with

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POETRY

Neil Garrison, Martin Park Nature Center, Oklahoma City

If it was up to me, I'd encourage each and every one of us to add more poetry to our otherwise-mundane lives.

It's not that I'm talking about camber, meter, and rhyme. Instead, I'm making reference to the lilt and spontaneity of the ordinary things that we might encounter day in and day out.

A good "for instance" is the experience that I had just a couple of days ago. I was over at a cousin's house, and I happened to notice the clouds in the sky above. When I pointed them out, my cousin identified them as alto-cirrus. Of course, he was right.

Nevertheless, I was somewhat shocked that he did not recognize the clouds for what they really were: "mare's tails." The wispy strands of this particular cloud type can make you imagine that they are akin to the hair in a running horse's tail.

And, if you look closely, the world is full of yet more examples of twin names for the same objects. Let me list a few more samples of what I am talking about.

At summer's end, there is an abundance of prairie grass seed heads. The scientist might identify one of the grasses as being one called big bluestem.

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Cooking the Pioneer Way

Julie Tarver, Lake Thunderbird State Park, Norman, Oklahoma

It still amazes me what people take an interest in. This is my eighth year at Lake Thunderbird State Park, and my seventh year to teach Dutch Oven Cooking for Beginners. It is still as popular as it was when I first started. There may be a few odd times when only a dozen or less people show up. Or maybe a day like the one in May 2003 when I had 60 people participate, but there are still a generous number who register each month. Now I am starting to draw attendees from other states, like Texas or Kansas. I think it's a combination of fellowship, historical immersion and good food that seems to be the key.

Each program starts with a 45-minute introduction to the Dutch Oven and the cooking techniques needed to produce an edible meal. We try to cover everything. The cookbook that is given to participants has all of the introductory information in it, so that no one has to feel like they need to take notes as we go. Most of the questions are answered at this time as well. It's a friendly atmosphere with the participants seated in their own lawn chairs around a wood fire that is used later to season the ovens. I even throw in some comical anecdotes to make everyone feel like this is not such a scary thing. Like the time when my fellow naturalists put Indian Blanket seeds in a recipe when I had my back turned, or a moth that they later wanted to dig out. It's all protein right?

After the intro, I read off the recipes, have everyone get into groups to accommodate the recipes and get them started on their charcoal fires. This in itself can be a challenge if your charcoal is cheap or the weather conditions decide to join in. Usually one of the group members tends the fire while the other(s) start preparing the food ingredients. We fix an even amount of meat, vegetable, bread and dessert dishes so that everyone gets an idea of how to do it all and the food spread turns out well, too. I try to pick recipes that will be done in an hour or less and the only rule of the program is that no one eats until it's all done. This can lead to a little grumbling but not much. I once had three teenage girls volunteering on a Dutch Oven day and one of the recipes was Dutch Oven Pizza. If I have a large group I use a portable speaker system with a wireless mike so they can all hear me. I did this program outside the window of my office and would have to go inside for one thing or another carrying the mike as I went. The pizza got done a little early and I had repeated the rule a few times. While in my office, I looked out and the three girls had plates serving themselves. I got on the mike and let them know they had crossed the line. Everyone jumped because they knew I wasn't outside but it sure sounded like it. Those girls had to get into the back of the line when it was all done and got to wash the dishes for everyone.

Whether it is Enchilada Casserole, Garlic Cheddar Chicken, Broccoli Casserole, Chisholm Trail Parsleyed Sour Cream Potatoes, Mexican Corn Bread, Pan de Campo, Easy Dutch Oven Cobbler, Raspberry Cream Cheese Coffee Cake or Chocolate Pudding Cake it all has to be done before anyone eats.

We wash dishes as we go so there is not a lot to do once we eat. I have all kinds of mixing bowls, cutting boards, measuring cups and spoons, plates, silverware, sharp knives and even a sifter. This week I had to buy meat tenderizers for the Garlic Cheddar Chicken. The Dollar Store is a great place to get multiples of all of this stuff and it does take multiples. Garage sales work if you have petty cash to work with or reimbursement methods. I have a wish list that I put out with all of my flyers and that has gotten me quite a few of my cooking utensils. You'll need plastic containers with lids to store your extra flour, sugar, corn meal, etc. I have one plastic container that is full of spices. I do this program once a month except June through September. Storage of some of these things for quite a while in areas where rodents and moths occasionally frequent becomes a big factor.

When the food is finally done, we set it up buffet style and I remind everyone to take small amounts so that everyone gets to try the dishes. Hunger occasionally takes over and I see people ladling large portions. Everyone is usually very appreciative of the others efforts and they all congratulate me on a successful meal. I don't feel like I have done a whole lot but I appreciate their comments. When a dish is too done or crispier than intended I am quizzed on the causes and have to remind someone that it takes practice to get this perfect. Throughout the program I talk about the pioneers and what they cooked or the problems they encountered. By the time we are done, I can see a deeper appreciation for what our ancestors went through as well as a desire to continue learning. Many people tell me they are going out right away and purchase new ovens or to finally utilize what they have.

All participants clean their Dutch Ovens with hot water. They are then asked to oil the inside and outside of each oven as well as its lid. That's when I take over and begin to use the fire we built earlier. I have a large grate stretched over an old bed frame that I put the ovens on to finish the seasoning process. By now it only takes about 10 or 15 minutes of heat. Once cooled they go back on the shelf until the next time. Participants leave around 2 p.m. while I sit back and reflect on another successful program. All in all it was a very good day, and the park made a little bit of money while we were at it.

Director's Report

Pat Silovsky

Well, I'm sorry if you missed the Region workshop this past March. It was a truly wonderful workshop! The welcome from the mayor of Fort Smith was remarkable. I can honestly say I have never been given the key to any city, much less one that will get me out of the jail! Many memorable events occurred during the week and many interpretive connections were made. Here are a few of the highlights:

- Tim Merriman's keynote address and presentations throughout the workshop
- The scholarship auction raised a RECORD \$6,000 which will allow us to fund next year's scholarships and mini-grants.
- The membership voted to fund several "financial aid" grants to region members to attend next year's workshop. These grants will be funded next year through the excess from the scholarship auction. Grant applications will be available online. Kelly Farrell, our scholarship chair, has agreed to manage this program in addition to her already busy schedule.
- Two mini-grants were funded this year—A follow-up/ reinforcement material grant for a tarantula survey conducted by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (\$400) and Civil War Trunks for the Missouri State Museum (\$600).
- *Harmony* from Mountain View, Arkansas, and their stirring performance during the awards banquet.

A few highlights from the Board Meeting:

- The scholarship committee is seeking someone to become a co-chair responsible for the handling of the annual scholarship auction. This position will solicit donations, organize items, and run the auction at the annual workshop. Anyone interested should contact myself or Kelly Farrell.
- Many changes have been undertaken to realign the awards categories to better recognize our peers in this profession. Cyndi Evans and the awards committee has worked tirelessly on this task, and my thanks go out to them for a job well done. The awards titles for 2006 will be:
 - Distinguished Professional Interpreter
 - Richard Bauldaulf/Outstanding New Interpreter
 - Bob Jennings Meritorious Service
 - Fellow/Lifetime Achievement
 - Outstanding Interpretive Article
 - Outstanding Interpretive Site Publication
 - Outstanding Interpretive Program
 - Outstanding Special Event
- The National Workshop will take place in Wichita, KS in 2007, so the normal spring workshop in 2007 will not take place. Since it was Kansas' turn in 2007 to host the spring workshop, Kansas will skip this rotation and 2008 will fall on Louisiana. All awards for 2007 will take place at the National Workshop during a special time set aside for Region Six.



If We Cared More, continued from page 1

young children. Sometimes, we are guilty of what I did. Blow it off and it will go away. It's just a shame that all of us, disregarding our age, don't care more. The only resource Jane has to throw into this cause is her crayons and caring.

How much more could we accomplish as responsible adults *if we cared more*? There is so much that needs to be done out there. The park always needs help. Our citizens and communities need some help. Of course,

the endangered species of Oklahoma need help.

What do you do? Let someone else do the caring, or jump in there yourself and save the "Least Terns" of the area? I hope you choose to care and help make your park and community a better place. By the way, if you are helping out here in the park or in the community, don't be surprised if you see posters that say..."Save the Least Terns."

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.

All Roads Lead Back to NAI

Laura Motley, Oklahoma Army National Guard, Oklahoma City

All roads lead back to NAI, even Army roads. Every conference, people see that I work for the National Guard, and ask me, what am I doing here? I jokingly say that I am heading down a different path, but all roads seem to lead back to NAI. You never know when your NAI contacts will come in handy. You never know who will help you turn an idea into a reality.

I have been working on a project that would not have been possible without my NAI contacts. It started a year ago. I was talking to Lindy. She worked at the Joint Force Headquarters with me. She spoke of a Christian singer who offered to give our soldiers a concert. All we had to do was find a place for the performance. It would be great for the kids and families of our soldiers that have been so supportive of us through years of mobilizations.

I thought right away of the OKC Zoo. They had summer concerts, etc. I contacted Amy Stephens, who worked for the education department. She was a tremendous help in putting the OKC Regional Conference together a few years ago. She put me in contact with the CEO, Mark Campbell. He thought the idea was great. And the Director of the OKC Zoo used to be a keeper at the Tulsa Zoo, back in '89, when I first started volunteering. I thought, "Wow, NAI contacts can help me, even in the Army!" This organization has great helpful and supportive people in it. The Zoo even agreed to allow our soldiers and families in for a discount. This led to April 23rd, which will be the first Annual National Guard Appreciation Day.

We took the idea and ran with it. We started with four people on the committee. Although I was the lowest rank, they let me lead the discussions. I had the NAI contacts, which proved invaluable. A suggestion came up about a month ago, to also have the event at the Tulsa Zoo--we could cover the entire state this way. Once again, I involved my NAI contacts. Amy Morris

at Oxley Nature Center put me in contact with their Zoo Friends. Once again, I encountered helpful and generous staff to put this together.

Ok, this added a complication. Maybe a better word would be challenge. What staff and volunteers would we need at each site? We planned for recruiters, family assistance (they provide assistance for families of guard soldiers) and assorted other volunteers. The Zoo staff and military would work together for VIP's and the media. More people equals more complications. As more people came in, there were longer meetings, and more discussions. We had meetings before meetings. And our e-mail seemed to triple.

So how did we deal with these challenges? Did we cry? (at times), pray? (always), give up? (never), wonder why we got ourselves into this? (absolutely not). We went back to the basic idea. We reminded ourselves what we were doing, why and for whom. In NAI, I have heard multiple times, keep things simple.

Next came getting the word out. We relied on word of mouth, e-mail (to any full-timer I knew), announcements at training meetings, where people statewide gathered, and our own guard newsletter. Kinda sounds like NAI. Now the event is less than a month away. Am I am nervous? You bet, but also excited. I have managed to combine NAI and the Army.

So how about you, do you use the contacts you make within NAI and at the conferences? Do you turn simple ideas or projects into reality? Or do you let complications and problems with the budget challenge you or overwhelm you? I say, let your challenges lead you down whatever road they may. Believe me, the end result gets you in a place better than you ever could have planned for or expected. At the end, look back at your blessings, your NAI contacts, and all the people who helped you along the way.

The story of the NAI Region Six Workshop Quilt (*or, One of the Many Reasons I Love Region Six*)--from Kelly Farrell. Arkansas State Parks, CHI, CIT

Two years ago, on the way home from the Oklahoma City regional workshop, a group of Arkansas interpreters began planning to host the workshop in 2005. Along the way, committee member Kristyn Watts offered to sew a quilt with our workshop theme on it, and donate it to the scholarship auction as a fundraiser. We heard that NAI Associate Director (and longtime Region Six member) Lisa Brochu was planning to attend the '05 workshop, and that she was interested in "winning" the quilt. We were excited about Lisa's attendance, and also pleased that the quilt would be a hot item at the auction, bringing in dollars for the scholarship fund.

This March, we received tragic news that Lisa's husband had passed away. While we certainly understood the reasons that she'd not be able to attend our workshop, we continued to wish that she could, so that her Region Six family might offer comfort and strength.

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Region Six Exhibit Update

Our region's exhibit board is in need of a makeover! There are plenty of you out there who aren't represented, and new pictures are a definite must. So Jay Miller, in all of his spare time, has offered to perform miracles. But like all good miracles, it requires a bit of magic. That's where you come in.

Here are the format requirements:

- Agencies and members of Region Six can add their logo to the NAI exhibit by sending an original graphic file of that logo, such as an Adobe Illustrator file. **(NOT a scanned image, a copy of a letterhead, or a logo in a "Word" document; NOT a .jpeg image file (picture) of the logo).**
- Current images that are sharp, clear, and well composed, showing interpreters in close-up settings with their audiences. Images that show agency patches on sleeves, etc. will look good and help show the diversity of agencies in Region Six.
- Images can be submitted as slides or digital files. Digital images should be 3 megapixel or better, and bigger is better. JPEG and TIFF images are fine.
- All this should be e-mailed to Jay at his home business (Interpretive Communications) address: InterpComm@AOL.com.

So, help out— and remember, just for the price of shipping, you can use the exhibit at any time.

Poetry, continued from page 1

That, however, is not the name that I prefer. My decided preference for a name for that particular grass is "turkey toes." One has but to look at the seed shape only once in order to easily see how this plant got its more-colorful name.

Or, consider the bird called the cardinal. The children who live around here have a different name for this creature. Time and time again, I hear them call it a "red jay." I'll grant you that the field guides do not list this name in their index ... but "red jay" is a name that I have a special fondness for. If you ask me, the kids are on to something here.

The same can be said for another popular name: "roly-poly." You're going to draw some blank stares from folks around here if the scientist in you starts talking about isopods and pillbugs. Again: I'm partial to the vernacular name. "Roly-poly" is the name that I prefer; it has more "color" and "imagination."

And, don't even think about using a name like "cicada" in my part of the country. Nobody will know what you are talking about. But, instead, if you mention the name "locusts," every child's eyes will light up as they recount tales of seeing and hearing these popular bugs. Now I realize that the academically-inclined persons will cringe at the thought of using a word such as "locust" for anything other than migratory types of grasshoppers, but all of that is lost on folks hereabouts.

If you ask me, we need more poetry. I am of the opinion that poetry feeds the soul a lot more masterfully than science can ever hope to do.

Region Six Quilt, continued from page 4

The Fort Smith Workshop arrived and before we knew it, it was Auction Night. The committee was torn: Now we wanted to give the quilt to Lisa, as a tangible means of sharing our sympathy and love, but at the same time, we wanted to honor Kristyn's commitment to sewing this item as a fundraiser for student scholarships. We suddenly hit on the solution: The committee would place the quilt up for auction as the first item of the evening, and as a group, we would purchase the quilt and present it to Lisa. Together, the team members made their way to the stage. We to explained Lisa's situation, and also told how the quilt came to be. We then proposed our plan, thinking we might raise a hundred dollars or so.

We invited the membership to join us in our "purchase." The audience clapped and cheered with approval. People tripped over themselves to come forward and pitch in. Throughout the night, donations continued. Thus the quilt became a gift to Lisa from the entire region. We "purchased" the quilt from ourselves for \$341. Last week, the quilt was boxed and sent to Lisa with a letter explaining this story and why it was arriving on her doorstep. We noted that whether she chooses to use it or display it, Region Six hopes the quilt brings her comfort and warmth.

I love Region Six. My experience is that we take care of each other and love each other like family, and I'm proud to be associated with y'all.

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ARKANSAS State Report

Jay Miller

Janice Denney has been selected as interpreter at **Bull Shoals-White River State Park**. Janice has a Master's degree in Environmental Education from Northern Illinois University and a Bachelor's degree in Biology from Adrian College in Michigan. She has worked previously for Peck Farm Park in Illinois as a Naturalist and at Camp McDowell Environmental Education Center in Alabama as an Environmental Instructor.

Jay Miller and **Kelly Farrell** continue to work with individual parks developing park interpretive plans. The process is time consuming, but is reaping significant rewards. Plus, we are both under NAI scrutiny for CIT and hope to receive that certification soon. We have two CIG workshops scheduled and two more requested within the state park system.

Hot Springs National Park Superintendent **Josie Fernandez** and Interpreter **Jeff Heitzman** are accepting applications for the Artist-In-Residence Program. The Hot Springs program began in the summer of 2004 with eight talented professional artists from the Hot Springs area. In 2005, the program is expanding to include professional photographers, sculptors, craft artists, writers, filmmakers, performers, poets, and composers from across the United States. The 2005 season will start in June and conclude in November. Each selected artist will be offered use of the historic cabin at Gulpha Gorge Campground for one month. Upon completion of the residency, each artist donates an original work to be added to the park's permanent collection.

Amy Peck let us know that Little Rock's **Old State House Museum** held a book signing reception for Ben Johnson, author of *John Barleycorn Must Die: The War Against Drink in Arkansas*, published by the University of Arkansas Press. The museum commissions a publication to accompany each major exhibit. The books and signing receptions have become very popular. The Old State House Museum is also hosting an annual women's history symposium, *Good Work, Sister!*, focusing on war efforts of Arkansas women during WWII. The featured speaker is Emily Yellin, author of the critically acclaimed *Our Mothers' War*.

Ray Paterra, Public Use Specialist, and **Dana Dukes**, Interpretive Ranger on the **White River National Wildlife Refuge** are pleased to announce that their new interpretive center and offices are open for business. The exhibits by Southern Custom Exhibits of Anniston, Alabama are being finished as I write, and are truly remarkable. The focal point of the entry is a 25-foot bald cypress with a black bear family, wood ducks and other wildlife around.

Director **Kelly Mulvihill** reports that construction has begun on the **Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center** in Fort Smith. The site is cleared, and by printing time the basement will have been dug and the footings poured. Simultaneously, exhibit text has been written and exhibit design is underway. Keep an eye out for two education positions to be advertised in the next few months.

In a recognition ceremony on January 25, **Jodi Morris**, director of the **Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center**, and **Monica Acre**, information and education coordinator, unveiled the new center's volunteer recognition plaque. Since the opening on August 25, volunteers have donated over 2,000 hours to the nature center.

"People leave with a whole new aspect of Arkansas," **Phyllis Speer**, AGFC regional educational coordinator, explained. "Many people don't realize we have elk in Arkansas." Elk range through about 315,000 acres along the upper Buffalo National River, and the education division of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission operates the Elk Education Center at Ponca. This interpretive center contains full-body mounts of elk in natural settings. Displays include hands-on hides and skulls, a geology exhibit, interactive computer quizzes, and a birding window. ■

Sign up to be a volunteer at the 2005 National Interpreters' Workshop by visiting www.interpnet.com/niw2005/index.htm



KANSAS State Report

Schanée Anderson

Events and Brag Bag

- **Sunset Zoo**- It's a boy! Sunset Zoo is one of two zoos in the U.S. with baby sloth bears. He's doing well and the first-time mother is taking excellent care of him.
- **Sedgwick County Zoo** -Thanks in part to six large hairy males, the Sedgwick County Zoo has reached record attendance levels, with more than 590,000 people visiting in 2004. The Downing Gorilla Forest, which opened in July 2004, is a factor behind the record year.
- **Ernie Miller Nature Center** - On Jan. 29 (Kansas Day!) Ernie Miller Nature Center was the host site for this year's Interpretive Site Coalition Volunteer Workshop. Approximately 70 people from interpretive sites in the KC metropolitan area attended.

Conferences/Meetings/Workshops

- **Wichita Water Center** - The WATER Center will host an Urban Water Workshop on June 22-23. The workshop will be presented by KACEE and cover Project WET and WET in the City. For registration information or additional information on the workshop, contact **Tonya Bronlewee** at 316-722-7721 / tonyab@oznet.ksu.edu or **Beth Carreno** at 785-233-4721 / bcarreno@swbell.net.
- **Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP)** is gearing up for "Prairies Across Kansas," a new teachers' workshop promoting systematic comparison of Kansas' three prairie types. Science teachers from across the state are being recruited to participate in the workshop at Konza Prairie Biological Station June 20-25, 2005. This workshop will allow participants to collect data at their own native prairie site near their school using existing KEEP science protocols. From their classrooms, the data will be entered into KEEP databases via the Internet. For more information, please visit www.ksu.edu/konza/keep.

New for the Spring

- What is the **Wichita Water Center**? In 1991, routine testing of the groundwater detected the contamination of a 3,850 acre area in the vicinity of downtown Wichita as a result of historical industrial activities in the area. On October 16, 2003, the Wichita Area Treatment, Education & Remediation (WATER) Center, the treatment center for the Gilbert-Mosley Project, opened. A one-of-a kind venture, the WATER Center offers a hands-on, interactive environmental center dedicated to the education and health issues caused by water and pollution. Remediated water flows through aquariums and wetlands before entering the Arkansas River. The water supports native aquatic wildlife that can be viewed through "windows" in the outdoor fish observatory. A series of paths and bridges lead visitors along an artificial creek through wetlands and eventually to the Arkansas River where the treated groundwater joins the river. Another opportunity for visitors is the environmental education building that houses a classroom, an aquarium, and exhibits focused on the Gilbert-Mosley project, pollution, and the unique and life-supporting qualities of water.
- **Sedgwick County Zoo** - The education department is busting out of its walls, literally! In March a \$1.8 million expansion and renovation began on the zoo's existing education building, thanks in part to Cargill. The Cargill Learning Center is scheduled to open in spring 2006 and will include four large classrooms, education animal holding areas, artifact storage, and much more.
- **Lee Richardson Zoo** - Kansas Waters exhibit now open - featuring North American river otters. The exhibit will also feature a series of interactive graphics on water in southwest Kansas.
- **Konza Prairie** - Konza Environmental Education Program began its 2005 Docent Training Program in February. The docent program offers specialized training for those interested in Konza Prairie and tallgrass prairie ecology. After completion of training, volunteer opportunities include guiding hikes, guiding van tours of the bison enclosure, educational in-services, work days, and special events.

Wonderful staff and volunteers

- Welcome **Kathryn Wohlfeil**, the new education assistant at Sunset Zoo. Kathryn has previously worked at Milford Nature Center, Brookfield Zoo, and Sound to Sea Environmental Education Program. **Felicia Walker**, the former education assistant, has accepted a position in the education department at the Oakland Zoo in California.
- Ernie Miller Nature Center Naturalist **Andrea Johnson** received the 4th Quarter (2004) Employee Performance Award for the Park Safety and Interpretive Division of Johnson County Park and Recreation District. Park Naturalist **Chris Pistole** received the same award for the 3rd Quarter of 2004.
- **Ryan Schaffer** is the new Distance Learning Coordinator at the Lee Richardson Zoo. ■■■



LOUISIANA State Report

David Latona _____

Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Gay Brantley reports that the construction of their **Conservation Learning Center** (the name keeps evolving) is well underway and it is so exciting to watch it going up through her office window she has a hard time concentrating on work. She is using ideas from the NIW in Grand Rapids and the Region Six workshop in Missouri to develop plans for utilizing the education room space and for the exhibit area. Her January "Wild Friday" program, "Stories Around the Campfire," was to take place at the amphitheater around a fire, but it was raining and cold that night. Even though she expected no one would come, she found an hour-long videotape of a fire in a fire place, put chairs in a semi-circle facing the screen in the visitor center, put blankets on the floor for kids, heated the water for hot chocolate, turned down the lights, and waited. Twenty-eight people not only came, but enjoyed the stories and microwaved s'mores so much that she had to "stoke the fire" twice that evening. One participant told her the power of suggestion really was strong because, while the fire was on the screen, he felt quite toasty, but when the screen went blue, he felt a chill.

Jean Lafitte NHPP

At **Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve**, the major event of the recent past was the 190th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans at **Chalmette Battlefield**, one of the park's six sites. This year nine bronze and marble markers honoring the American troops and allies were laid in the circle surrounding Chalmette Monument, the first new memorials on the battlefield since the monument's dedication in 1908. Cruising into the future while still connecting with the past, the park's **Acadian Cultural Center** in Lafayette and **Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center** in Thibodaux are now offering boat tours up their local bayous. Each site partnered with local organizations, had a traditional Louisiana wooden boat hand-built by an expert, and worked with local volunteers to provide ranger-guided bayou tours. In the good old days in south Louisiana, boats and bayous were the equivalent of cars and Main Streets, and the new boat tours provide a way to connect visitors with the past, enjoy wildlife on the bayou banks, and discuss the serious problems of Louisiana's disappearing coastline. Nearly 1.7 million students and 33,000 teachers in classrooms around the world will visit the park's **Barataria Preserve** this year, thanks to the JASON Expedition, an innovative education program. The JASON Expedition (formerly JASON Project) 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. The non-profit JASON Foundation for Education was founded by Titanic explorer Robert Ballard. Park ranger **Allyn Rodriguez** explained that Ballard and a group of local scientists broadcast live from the preserve, took young "Argonauts" on field trips through the area, and explained to their worldwide audience why everyone should care that Louisiana's swamps and marshes are washing away.

Louisiana State Parks

Flat Stanley came to the **Louisiana State Arboretum State Preservation Area** by way of District Manager **Bill Roberts'** 7-year-old nephew from Atlanta, Georgia. Bill and his wife Ann have been assisting Flat Stanley—a school project by which students learn about life in other parts of the country—in experiencing life in and around Ville Platte, Louisiana. The official Flat Stanley web site is flatstanley.enoreo.on.ca. During his visit, Flat Stanley participated in several projects at **Chicot State Park**. He assisted site staff in checking 65 wood duck boxes on Chicot Lake, during which fresh wood shavings were added to the boxes for nesting material. He also went along with Bill on his quarterly hiking trail inspection and got to ride on Bill's new ATV. The biggest project Flat Stanley assisted with was the blazing of a new canoe trail in Chicot Lake with 13 Canoe Club volunteers on February 19 and 20. Flat Stanley will have a lot of good stories to share with the school children when he returns to Atlanta. The staff at Chicot SP and the Arboretum wishes to thank Flat Stanley for all his help and wish him a safe return to Atlanta.

In recognition of Black History Month, **Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site** presented a special two-day historic cooking demonstration February 18-19. The third annual program, entitled "African and Caribbean Influence in Southern Antebellum Cooking," was conducted in Rosedown's Old Kitchen outbuilding. Interpretive Ranger **Bryan Stonecipher** and Living History Presenter **Stella Pitts** prepared a selection of dishes whose development can be traced back to African and Caribbean beginnings. They discussed the development of each recipe and showed how southern antebellum cooking was strongly influenced by enslaved African-American and Caribbean workers throughout the South—influences that are commonly seen in today's southern cuisine.



MISSOURI State Report

John Miller _____

George Kastler (Jefferson City) reports that MO Department of Natural Resources has filled several interpretive positions. These new folks are: **Chanda L. Regier**, Interpretive Resource Technician at Prairie State Park; **Andrea L. Putnam**, Interpretive Resource Specialist III at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park; **Michelle L. Soenksen**, Interpretive Resource Specialist III at Sam A. Baker State Park; **H. Chris Sterman**, Interpretive Resource Specialist III at the MO State Capitol; **Jamie M. Hubert**, Interpretive Resource Technician at the MO State Capitol; **Kurt Senn**, Resource Manager at the MO State Museum & Historic Capitol Complex; and **Linda Endersby**, Historic Site Specialist II, at the MO State Museum. George also reports that DNR will be hiring several seasonals for the summer. Training will take place in May in the St. Louis area. If you would like information or applications, send a request to george.kastler@dnr.mo.gov.

Kevin Lohraff (Jefferson City) says there is a salaried Naturalist position open at the **Runge Conservation Center**. The position was vacated by **Jan** and **George Syrigos** who job-shared the same position. The Syrigos duo, the creators of the Emmy Award winning "Critter Rock," has landed a new job at Memorial Baptist Church in Jefferson City. To get an application or to see the job details of this position and other MDC interpretive jobs go to: www.mdc.state.mo.us/about/jobs/.

Craig Hensley (Liberty) is excited to be the new Director of the **Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary**. This is the position recently held by Laura Dunn. Craig had been with the Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center in Blue Springs prior to this promotion. Feel free to contact Craig at craig@naturesanctuary.com or (816)781-8598.


Chris Eckard (St. Louis) says staff at the **Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site** have finally moved the park offices and visitor service operation into their new Visitor Center building. Work is in progress on exhibit fabrication, work on the grounds, and relocation of the historic barn.

According to **Stacy Davis & LuAnn Cadden** (St. Joseph), construction has begun on an Educator Room at the **MDC NW Regional Office**. This room will serve as a research library for teachers and informal educators to learn more about the fish, forests, and wildlife of Missouri. The room will house field guides, activity ideas, children's literature books, Discovery Trunks, and much more. The room is scheduled to open this summer.

Ginny Wallace (Jefferson City) reports the implementation of the **Missouri Master Naturalist Program**. MDC and the University of MO Extension have teamed up as sponsors for this adult, community-based, natural resource education and volunteer program. Pilot chapters were started in West Plains and Columbia in 2004. New chapters are coming on board in 2005 in Joplin, Rolla, and St. Charles. The program is modeled after the very successful Texas Master Naturalist Program. For more information visit www.monaturalist.org.

Kathie May (Kansas City) reports that the **Discovery Center** will have several new education programs this Spring and Summer. They include: SCHOOL'S OWLT (May 26 from 1 - 8 p.m.), BIG OUTDOOR CLINIC (July 23 from 10am - 4pm), DISCOVERY CAMP I - HABITAT HAPPENINGS (June 13 -16), DISCOVERY CAMP II - OUTDOOR SKILLS (July 11 - 14), URBAN BACKPACKING (every day (except Sunday) starting May 1).

George Kastler (Jefferson City) reports on a few other accomplishments across the state. **Carla Fairbanks** has just graduated from Pittsburg State University, where she completed her Master's work in Biology (interpretive survey at Truman State Park). Carla is now working as a Naturalist for the City of Independence. **Eugene Vale** has been elected as Treasurer to the NSS Cave Conservation and Management Section. And **George Kastler** was elected to the office of Archivist/Historian for the Association of Missouri Geologists.

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (St. Louis) is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the construction of the St. Louis arch with a family reunion. Former employees from the National Park Service, Jefferson National Parks Association (formerly Jefferson National Historical Association), Metro (formerly Bi-State), St. Louis Usher Service, Stohner Services, all of the wonderful volunteers and any other members of the Arch family are all invited to attend. Although final plans are not yet set, the date of this reunion will be October 29, 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri. If you worked at the park and are interested in joining this event to celebrate and reminisce, please call (314) 655-1600 or e-mail rose_hoots@nps.gov for more information. 



OKLAHOMA State Report

Neil Garrison _____

The Oklahoma Association for Environmental Education (OKAEE) gave its "Excellence in Media Award" to **Neil Garrison (Martin Park Nature Center, Oklahoma City)** at the February 3rd awards ceremony. This honor is given each year to an individual who supports environmental education in Oklahoma through accurate and objective media coverage. "Neil has inspired young and old with positive conservation messages through his writings and his vast knowledge and appreciation for the natural world," said Richard Bryant, OKAEE Awards Committee Chair. "Numerous environmental education organizations and committees are more successful as a result of Neil's involvement and assistance. His passion and dedication have made him an incredible communicator and strong voice for environmental education." *(Boy, are we proud of you!!!! eds.)*

The event is called "ScienceFest Oklahoma." It was held at the **Oklahoma City Zoo** on April 21st. Approximately 5,500 fourth and fifth grade students attended this educational program. Oklahoma City's Martin Park Nature Center manned a native plant educational booth at the event.

A funding grant from the Land and Water Conservation fund (and matching money from the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department) was used to put new electrical wiring and new light fixtures inside the caves at **Alabaster Caverns State Park (Freedom, OK)**. Frank Florentine was the contractor for the project. Mr. Florentine was the lighting designer for the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. (...and he also designed the lighting system in the Kartchner Caverns State Park; Benson, Arizona).

We wish Linda Fritts good luck and Godspeed. She just recently retired from her job as naturalist at Tulsa's **Oxley Nature Center**.

Do you remember when you were a kid ... and Mom used to berate you for getting those mud stains on your brand new britches? Well, sometimes, life comes full circle. There's a very good chance that your Mom and other people's Moms will be attending an event at Tulsa's **Oxley Nature Center** that is entitled "Painting with Oklahoma Soils." (What a nifty idea!) Night hikes that were conducted at Oxley in March and April were done in conjunction with the return of the full moon. The one in March was dubbed the "Worm Moon" (because of the return of warmer temps and more earthworm activity near the surface of the forest floor.) The other full moon hike in April was called the "Pink Moon" because of the preponderance of pink-blossomed plants. Can you imagine a "Lilliputian" nature preserve? The innovative programming folks did a program entitled "Ant National Park" as part of their popular "Kid's Saturday Programs" during April. It was an opportunity for the children to let their imaginations run free ... and make their own tiny nature center.

A birds of prey interpretive exhibit that is entitled "Hunters of the Sky" will be at the **Oklahoma Museum of Natural History** through May 30. It is a traveling exhibit that is on loan from the Science Museum of Minnesota. The exhibit features various mounted raptor specimens.

We are saddened to report that naturalist **Bob Jenni** died on February 28th. He was employed at Edmond, Oklahoma's **Bob Jenni Nature Center**. 

From NAI Associate Director Lisa Brochu:

"I received the quilt from Region Six and it is more than beautiful. I can't imagine the hours that went into creating it, conceptually and physically. I'm having a difficult time writing this through tears that won't stop. I am so touched by the compassion and kindness of this region. This has been an unbelievably difficult and complicated time for us, but the thoughtfulness shown by the NAI family has been uplifting. Cards, letters, phone calls, donations to the boys' college funds, and now this beautiful quilt have meant so much to all of us. I am so truly overwhelmed

by the concern shown by my colleagues and friends that I just don't even know how to go about saying thank you. It doesn't seem adequate to express what I'm feeling. Without that very genuine support from so many people, I don't think I would have gotten through this. The boys and I still have a long way to go and a lot of difficult things to face in the coming months. Continuing good thoughts and prayers are still very much appreciated. Thank you for orchestrating this effort within the region. I can't even imagine everybody who must have involved themselves on some level. I am so grateful to them all."



TEXAS State Report

Tara Tucker

With the busy summer season quickly approaching, **Deanna Oberheu** reports that **Caprock Canyons** and **Palo Duro Canyon State Parks** both recently held interviews for their park interpreter positions and hope to have new interpreters on board before March.

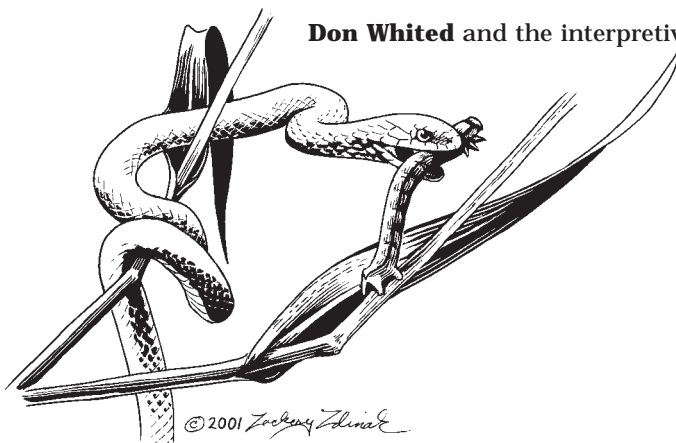
It's a celebration! According to **Charlotte Henley**, the **Ellen Trout Zoo** in Lufkin will sponsor an Earth Day Celebration on Sunday, April 17 from 1:00pm - 6:00pm. The zoo will have a special program on bears, a variety of conservation organizations will be present, and the Lufkin Kiwanis Club will host a Zoo Olympics for younger visitors. The Friends of Ellen Trout Zoo and Brookshire Brothers (grocery stores) have entered an agreement for a corporate sponsorship. The first venture will involve the special display of animal crackers and pictures of the zoo in their 72 stores. Brookshire Brothers will donate \$0.25 for each box of crackers sold.

The **Houston Zoo** hosted its first quarterly CIG training for staff in October. The next session is scheduled for March 2005. Up to 20 staff members will graduate from each training session. After the demand decreases from staff (which won't be for a while!), volunteer manager **Lia McDonald** says the staff plans to start training the zoo volunteers and docents. They already requested the training as a result of the "Interpretation 101 and 102" classes offered in their docent training.

Several Houston Zoo staff members attended a future **Texas Master Naturalist** program training last month. Although staff is not starting this exact program in the area, they plan to partner with this wonderful group of qualified volunteers. Two chapters have already asked zoo staff to give the "Interpretation 101 and 102" training at one of their future meetings. It's exciting to know that another large group of individuals is excited about and dedicated to learning more about the art of interpretation! To learn more about the Texas Master Naturalist program, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/volunteer/txmasnat.

"Huffing and puffing" across the state! Taking history to a new level, dozens of school children from California and Texas crossed much of Texas by wagon train between January 4 and 27 as they retraced the steps of 1849 gold rush adventurer William P. Huff and relived portions of his 300,000 word diary. **Linda Hedges**, Parks Region 1 Interpretive Specialist, reports that **Hueco Tanks State Historic Site** hosted Huff Project students from Madera, California and Socorro, Texas on January 5 and 6. Students camped at the park, worked on lessons, and participated in guided tours conducted by park staff and volunteers. Now *that's* hands-on!

"Fish" was the theme for a January workshop at **Lake Whitney State Park**. **Ann Miller**, Aquatic Education (Austin), presented "Best Practices for Fishing and Aquatic Resources Stewardship and Education." She also shared some aquatic education activities to use with school groups. **Steve Campbell** updated the group on the Angler Education Program and the "Art of Squigglyness." (The "King of Squigglyness" was **Jeffrey Towers** of Lake Whitney State Park.) **Karen Watson** talked about the "Experience Economy" and the FISH philosophy of the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market. Cultural Resources Coordinator **Diane Dismukes** presented "Points to Ponder" to introduce the concept of "context" in archaeology stewardship. Upcoming workshops will focus on interpreting the Texas Cross Timbers (**Eisenhower State Park**) and Texas wildflowers (**Fort Parker State Park**). The workshops count as re-certification hours for NAI Certified Interpretive Guides and Hosts.



Don Whited and the interpretive staff at **Ray Roberts Lake State Park** have plans to enjoy spring with the public, with a series of guided nature hikes, campfire programs, stargazing parties, and a kids fishing derby. Call 940-686-2080 for reservations and a full schedule.

We've heard the **Dallas Museum of Natural History** is naming a hall for our late friend, **Brian Barnette**, who passed away in February, 2004. We'll provide more details in a later issue. 🇹🇽



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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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