



# VISIONS

VOLUME 20 ● NUMBER 4 ● Winter 2006

ARKANSAS • KANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSOURI • OKLAHOMA • TEXAS

## A Visit with an Old Friend

Rachel Olsen, Graduate Student, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas

Glaring, hurried red lights thin and disappear as I escape the Houston morning traffic. The predawn sky is painted a purplish blue as it expands in front of me. I turn a corner entering a long winding road littered with recently harvested cotton fields. The fields are brown, save for the occasional white of cotton fortunate enough to have dodged the hungry mouth of the combine. Ten more miles, one last turn, and I will have reached my destination - Brazos Bend State Park's nature center.

There the companionship of stately old live oak trees awaits me. I anticipate gazing at the unusual beauty of these aged friends, marveling at their existence, and sitting beneath their sheltering arms reflecting on life both past and present.

***The wind rustles the tree's branches again, and a tiny voice inside urges me to listen to the story it wants to tell...***

I reach the nature center, park my car, grab my camping chair, and head for the

most welcoming of the several live oaks standing ahead of me—the one with inviting hand-made benches encircling its trunk. I say “hello” to my towering friend as I unfold my chair, sit down, and settle in under its umbrella-like canopy. Birds break the silence of the morning with their noisy chatter as the sun rises in the sky. While I sit, I think about live oaks in general, and why they fascinate me. Their wood is as strong as steel. You will never see woodpeckers attempt to peck holes in *these* trees. Such a feat would likely crumple their sharp beaks. Besides their strength, I value the trees for their beauty. If you have ever experienced a south Texas winter, you know it can look brown and dreary. Live oaks hold on to their green leaves during winter, adding welcome color to the otherwise dull landscape.

Quick movements in the oak grab my attention. A sudden clank, clank, clanking racket echoes around me. I look for the perpetrator of this annoying noise. Ha! I

find it. My eyes fix on a grey squirrel scurrying through the oak's highway of limbs. With every leap, the limber outer branches bow downward, slamming acorns against the nature center's metallic roof. The squirrel stops its pesky maneuvers, snaps its tail back and forth, and barks disapproval at my presence. I laugh at its antics, stand my ground, and watch it leap to another tree.

Relaxing, I turn my thoughts to the oak's unusual beauty. It grows stout and sturdy. Large knobby, roots protrude from the ground, some resembling enormous talons grasping the clay-like soil with the same tenacity of a red-tailed hawk gripping a rabbit. The girth of the trunk would take at least three adults linked hand-in-hand to embrace its circumference. Its rough bark is a light grayish brown with deep furrows creasing its surface. Some people think water carves these crevices, but to me it is just time, time etching itself into the tree's skin. Brown shriveled-up resurrection fern, like a costume of death, enshrouds the tree's gigantic arms. But this is only a facade; the plant is fully alive, contently awaiting the downpour of rain, when it will once again emerge refreshed in glorious green attire. Tangled strands of pale green Spanish moss drape the oak's twisting limbs, and as the wind sways the moss back and forth I sink deeper into my thoughts.

Suddenly, a gusty wind replaces the gentle breeze. Branches flex and creak, surrendering to the strength of a forceful gale. A cluster of waxy green leaves falls at my feet. Did this giant drop them intentionally? Does it have something to say? As I lean forward to pick up the clump of leaves, I have the sensation that the tree also leans toward me and whispers: “*You come to admire my unusual beauty and sit beneath my branches reflecting on life's continuum. And I am grateful for your company. But have you ever stopped to wonder how I could enrich your life by telling you stories of mine?*” Wait a minute. Surely my imagination is playing tricks – a talking tree?

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# Director's Report

Kelly Farrell

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## Greetings, Region Sixers!

Wow, autumn has come and gone already! Reports from throughout the region indicate that this year's fall color was the best we've had in years. It certainly was outstanding here in Little Rock and I hope it was the same where you are.

November is always an exciting NAI month, as it brings the annual National Interpreters' Workshop. This year we convened in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 7-11. Early reports estimate around 1,200 participants, with approximately 11% representing Region Six. This is a great showing! I was pleased to see so many of you at our regional business meeting during the workshop. Every state in our region was represented and we had a number of first-time participants. I hope everyone went home with new knowledge, lots of good networking contacts, and great memories. I also hope everyone remembers to **write thank you's** to the supervisors who made it possible for you to attend, whether it was by paying your way or giving you the time away (or both). Also, be sure to share your new knowledge and NAI stories with your peers who weren't able to attend.

Region Six was well-represented in the national workshop Program Guide. It makes me proud to see so many of you stepping up to set an example of professionalism and knowledge-sharing. Congratulations to our presenters: **Walt Allen, Nancy Binderim, and Ron Parker** from Chickasaw NRA (Oklahoma); **Bruce Barnes** from New Orleans Jazz NHP (Louisiana); **Mike Legg, Pat Stephens Williams, Theresa Coble, Ray Darville, Jamie Hart, Tamberly Kerr, and Sylvia Lin** from Stephen F. Austin State University (Texas); **Paul Risk** (Region Six still claims you, Paul); **Case Griffing Jr.** from San Antonio Missions NHP (Texas); **Janet Price and Jamie Hubert** from Missouri State Parks; **Jay Miller, Shea Lewis, Don Simons, Lori Spencer, Sarah Keating, and Jay Schneider** from Arkansas State Parks; **Bernie Kessner** from the Arkansas 4-H Center; and **Nancy Stimson** from Fort Smith NHS (Arkansas). I apologize if I missed anyone; please let me know if I did. Thanks also to everyone who volunteered behind the scenes—in particular **John Miller** (Missouri Department of Conservation) who served as chair of the national Awards Committee this year.

Congratulations are also in order for **Jay Miller** (Chief of Interpretation, Arkansas State Parks), who received NAI's Master Interpretive Manager Award during the national awards banquet. Way to go, Jay—this honor was long overdue.

### Regional board updates:

Members of the regional board of directors gathered at Queen Wilhelmina State Park in southwest Arkansas in early October for a strategic planning session. Participants were deputy director **Sarah Keating**, treasurer **Jay Schneider**, Oklahoma coordinator **Neil Garrison**, awards chair **Laura Motley**, scholarship chair **Amy Stephens**, elections chair **Don Simons**, newsletter editor **Pam Tooley**, and myself. Region Six had a successful strategic plan in the past (2000-2004) but the board had not updated it for several years. During this meeting, we went through a variety of brainstorming exercises and other analyses of our region's business and services. The complete plan will include specific measurable objectives under each goal, with listings of deadlines and persons responsible/accountable. We'll publish the final draft here in *VI*sions and post on the website when it is complete. Major goal areas are as follows.

- Improve communication among Region Six members.
- Recruit and retain membership.
- Develop future leadership.
- Explore new income possibilities.
- Investigate methods to promote agency and individual "buy-in" to interpretation as a profession, and to membership and activity in NAI.

Several new board appointments are pending and will be announced as soon as they're confirmed. The next regional board meeting is tentatively scheduled as a conference call in spring 2007, followed by a face-to-face meeting in fall 2007 in Oklahoma City.

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# Be Our Guest: Guest Experience is Everyone's Business

Geralyn Warfield, Houston Zoo, Houston, Texas

It doesn't matter. Your job title, length of time on the job, whether you are more an "office drone" or "worker bee," if you were stuck in horrible traffic on your way to work this morning, or this is the 50<sup>th</sup> time today you've had to answer the question, "Where's the closest restroom?"—none of this makes any difference to the people that visit your institution. All that matters is that you provide a high quality guest experience to each and every individual who has made the choice to visit your facility.

At the Houston Zoo, we feel so strongly about this that we have a multi-faceted approach to providing these experiences. First, each employee attends Guest Experience Training. Second, we provide an additional "layer" of training—Certified Interpretive Guide—for many of our front-line staff. Third, our dedicated group of volunteers (ages 13 and older) is a critical link to guest service beyond what staff members can provide. Finally, while guest experience is everyone's business, for some staff members it is their entire job.

## Guest Experience Training

It is the role of each and every employee to meet the needs of the guests who visit the Zoo—and the other customers with whom we interact: other staff, volunteers, vendors and people on the phone or with whom we exchange emails. Like guests in our homes, everyone should be treated well.

Beginning in spring 2006, a two-part training course was offered for all employees focusing on guest experience. The first four-hour training focused on both the theory and the reality of dealing with people every day through role playing, small group scenarios, large group discussions and specific examples from both within the zoo and aquarium industry and other businesses. Along with guest experience, one of the most significant results of this training was the opportunity for individuals from across the Zoo to get to learn about—and from—each other, and building a sense of community where each employee sees others as "guests" in their area or at our facility. Another unexpected outcome from the first session was the development of a list of "hard to answer questions" which have been incorporated into our new staff pocket guide.

The second four-hour training session reviewed changes people have made as a result of the knowledge they gained during session one. Guest experience has been identified as a key component in the Zoo's strategic plan, and this training focused more on specific things that each individual does to ensure that

guests have a meaningful experience at our institution. It also included tips on interpreting the Zoo to a variety of visitors, provided practice time for dealing with typical questions and issues employees face, and demonstrated the importance that each individual has in making the Zoo a success. The second session concluded with a commitment card on which participants recorded something they would like to accomplish in the next quarter; instructors will hold onto the cards and then send them to employees at the end of three months so individuals can measure their success and become re-invigorated towards meeting their goals.

## Certified Interpretive Guide Training

For the past two years, the Houston Zoo staff has offered Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) training, which is available to staff, volunteers, and individuals from other institutions. This 32-hour course available through the National Association for Interpretation allows participants to learn a variety of interpretive techniques and to connect their resource (zoo, aquarium, park, museum, etc.) to the visitors. Focusing not just on theory but on the application of the knowledge in the presentation of a 10-minute program to the rest of the participants, this course also offers those interested the possibility of being certified as a CIG.

The CIG course allows educators, keepers, curators and other front-line staff additional information and methods to be effective communicators to further link our guests with the Zoo.

## Volunteers: A Critical Link

The value of volunteers is well documented, and they have influence on guest experience far beyond the reach of staff. Whether the individual is a 13-year-old volunteering for the first time during the summer vacation or a well-tenured volunteer entering his/her 30<sup>th</sup> year of service, each volunteer allows the Zoo to further connect to guests of all ages through additional programming such as handleable animals or informal chats, activities at special events, or even as an additional smiling face.

## Staff Specifically Focused on Guests

While guest experience is part of everyone's job, at the Houston Zoo, there are two groups of people whose primary responsibility is the interactions with our guests.

Our first group of people is our interpretive staff. From stage-style presentations and other organized programming highlighted on the Zoo's map and web site to

*continued on p. 11*

## *A Visit with an Old Friend, continued from p. 1*

Then I realize this oak has stood here and witnessed centuries of events. The wind rustles the tree's branches again, and a tiny voice inside urges me to listen to the story it wants to tell...

*"In 1794 I dropped to the ground as an acorn, sprouted roots and dug them into Spanish soil. I heard early explorers describe the land as endless seas of grass, rolling like the swelling waves of the ocean. During my early years, Karankawa Indians provided companionship as they passed through, following the seasons in search of food. Sometimes massive herds of buffalo blackened the horizon and tromped across my path. Their numbers ranged from a few hundred to a few hundred thousand. During a stampede, the herds charged forward with the fury of a raging flood. As a young tree, I felt fortunate to escape being trampled by thousands of avil-like hooves.*

*By 1821, I stood tall and flexible, bending with the wind as I watched my world change. Mexico won its independence from Spain, making me a Mexican citizen. One day two men rode by on horses and I overheard their conversation. The Mexican government had given a man named Stephen F. Austin permission to settle 300 colonists along the banks of my close neighbor – the Brazos River. Soon the areas surrounding me teemed with strangers. They had sacrificed the comforts of their former homes to take advantage of cheap land prices and establish a booming agricultural economy. As a result, the population exploded but the growth and commerce that ensued were not without consequence.*

*In the following years, I witnessed epidemic diseases ravage the Karankawa population. The new settlers and the Indians clashed repeatedly. The Mexican government attempted to make peace with the Karankawas, but their attempts failed. Considering them a hostile threat, Stephen F. Austin and others waged an attack. Still conflicts continued, and by the mid 185's further expeditions had annihilated the population of my earlier companions. Unfortunately, the buffalo suffered a similar fate. Needless slaughter robbed me of the sight of this majestic animal by the 1870's."*

Suddenly, another acorn bangs against the metallic roof, forcing my focus back to the present. The squirrel announces its return. I pause for moment and think: "I knew the tree's huge stature hinted at its ancient age, but until now I never connected it with any historical significance to life in this area." Another gust of wind blows. Leaves swirl around my feet drawing my attention back to the story...

*Once again change loomed on the horizon. In 1836, bullets of celebration whizzed through my branches as Texans proclaimed their independence from Mexico. I shared a bond with these people who were once strangers – we were Texas citizens. The agricultural industry of the area thrived, and an old neighbor, the Brazos River, emerged as a principal route for exporting goods. This led my owners to sell a portion of my home to cotton brokers. Soon my roots trembled as beast, plow, and slave furrowed nearby ground readying it for cotton seed. At harvest time, the ground was mixed with sweat and blood from enslaved laborers as they plucked cotton bolls from thorny stems, leaving their hands calloused and raw. The shackles and chains that bound these hands fell to the ground twenty years later as Union soldiers read the Emancipation Proclamation. Another era came to a close, and I was making peace with change.*

*As nineteenth century faded into the twentieth century, the Hale family purchased my abode. Cowboys, horses, and cattle became a familiar site as they roamed my woods and fields. With each passing fall, I watched the brown-shelled fruits of pecan trees drop to the ground. November came to represent pecan harvesting time. No doubt some of those pecans added a delicious flavor to decades of Thanksgiving dinners. Seasons came and went and the twentieth century grew older. Eventually, the Hale family decided it was time for a change and they sold the property. The future of my land remained uncertain until it was purchased by Texas Park and Wildlife. Five thousand acres were set aside for the site of Brazos Bend State Park and the gates opened in 1984 - at last I felt truly at home.*

*Since I fell to the ground as an acorn, 212 years have passed. Now, my constant companion is the nature center, once the Hale family's hunting lodge. Caring volunteers have built benches to encircle my trunk. And now I stand sturdy and strong welcoming friends like you who seek refuge under my branches and rest on my benches. I invite all who pass my way to sit and explore the wonders of my world with me."*

Another clatter from a falling acorn jolts me out of my meditative state. This time the noise's instigator remains anonymous. Maybe it came from the...no, never mind. But as I glance again at this stately live oak, I feel an added sense of admiration; not only does it possess unique beauty, but also it holds the treasure of 212 years worth of this land's history.

*A tree stands there accumulating deadwood, mute and rigid as an obelisk, but secretly it seethes; it splits, sucks and stretches; it heaves up tons and hurls them out in a green fringed fling.*

*--Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

**National board updates:**

- The Definitions Project, a "meeting of the minds" of conservation and education leaders from 25+ agencies, is ongoing. The four initial meetings funded by the grant are now complete, and a full report will be released soon. Executive Director Tim Merriman has been participating as NAI's representative and Associate Director Lisa Brochu has served as the overall facilitator.
- Four of NAI's ten regional directors are elected to serve on the national board as representatives of the Regional Leadership Council (RLC). This year I served as an alternate rep and was twice called upon to attend national board meetings. During our RLC meeting in November, I was elected as an actual representative, so starting in 2007 will serve a two-year term in that role (pending re-election as regional director).
- The national board will convene for a long-range visioning and strategic planning session, February 2-4, 2007. Please be sure I receive your comments and ideas to carry to this meeting.

I say this all the time and I'm going to keep on saying it: Thanks for being an NAI member and for all you do to promote this wonderful profession called interpretation. By belonging to the National Association for Interpretation, you demonstrate to those around you that you're a leader who wants to stay informed about trends and best practices in this field. Keep up the good work. Continue to challenge each other to do quality, purposeful, thematic interpretation at all times. Ask yourself and your peers "So what?" about your programs and exhibits. Provoke, relate, and reveal. Over and out.



**What do you remember from 2006?**

Laura Motley, Awards Chair

Looking back at *Visions* or *Legacy*, do you remember an article that touched you? That inspired you? Do you think it's worthy of an award?

What if you nominated it? Do you think it might win? You don't know until you try.

How do you get started? The awards nomination form is on the next page of this newsletter. Award criteria can be found on the NAI web site.

What if you don't know much about the person you'd like to nominate? Who do you contact? Try another interpreter in the state, or the person's agency. Many times a boss or coworker can help fill in the blanks needed for the nomination. You can contact the state coordinator to find the right person to help you, or contact someone on the board to help.

What about a site publication that has caught your eye? An interpretive Program or Special Event? Do you remember any of those? Any that you would like to nominate? Your steps to get started are above.

Do any interpreters stick out in your mind? Any who have been working in the profession for less than five years? How about people who have worked in the pro-

profession over five years? Or how about someone that has done meritorious service? I bet someone has impressed you. It's easy to get started. There are a number of people that can help you fill in the blanks, or write letters of support. All are more than willing to help.

The award deadline is March 1, 2007. Since we do not have a regional workshop for 2007, every effort will be made to present each award at the recipient's agency. I hope the award committee members and regional board members will help me present these. Winners will be announced in the summer issue of *Visions*.

I've served on the awards committee for many years. I've been to many conferences, where we gather and talk about those that have inspired us, and touched us. Those we remember. However, when it comes to awards, we should be seeing more nominations than we are. Many people think that someone else will write it up. But what if they don't? Then there is no nomination for something or someone that has touched so many people.

Help honor our best, help honor those who have touched us this year. Help honor those we remember...

**National Association for Interpretation  
Region Six Awards Nomination Form**

Nominee \_\_\_\_\_ Nominator \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Both the nominee and nominator must be NAI members.  
Mark appropriate membership category for nominator.

Individual \_\_\_\_\_ Through an institution \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional membership name \_\_\_\_\_

Check the appropriate title for the nomination:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| _____ Distinguished Professional Interpreter      | _____ Outstanding Interpretive Article             |
| _____ Richard Baldauf/Outstanding New Interpreter | _____ Outstanding Interpretive Site<br>Publication |
| _____ Bob Jennings Meritorious Service            | _____ Outstanding Interpretive Program             |
| _____ Fellow/Lifetime Achievement                 | _____ Outstanding Special Event                    |

Please see the award criteria and then list relevant information about the nominee. You may use one additional page (two for Meritorious Service and Fellow) if needed.

We would like to inform local newspapers and other media of the winners. Please include the name and address of media contacts appropriate for the nominee if at all possible.

Signature of nominator \_\_\_\_\_

To submit by mail:

Laura Motley  
NAI Region VI Awards Chairperson  
11525 N Meridian Ave Apt 105  
Oklahoma City, OK 73120  
[Laura.motley@ok.ngb.army.mil](mailto:Laura.motley@ok.ngb.army.mil) or [laura.motley@us.army.mil](mailto:laura.motley@us.army.mil)

See guidelines for nominations at [www.nairegions.org/6/](http://www.nairegions.org/6/)

**DEADLINE IS March 1, 2007.**



## ARKANSAS State Report

Jay Miller

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Congratulations to Region Seven for a great NIW in Albuquerque. Arkansas had a solid turnout by the Game and Fish Commission nature centers, 4-H centers, Extension Office, State Parks, Ozark National Forest, and Hot Springs National Park. However, none of them sent me anything for this newsletter.

Arkansas was also well represented in the awards.

—**Brian Westfall** of the Corps of Engineers at **DeGray Lake** received the Hiram M. Chittenden award *“for blending his talents with the Corps mission in educating people, not only locally, but across the nation. Brian provided interpretive topics from water safety, environmental awareness, and land stewardship to Lewis and Clark. His involvement with the National Boy Scout Jamboree and serving during the Katrina disaster have been true success stories.”*

—Yours truly was honored with NAI’s Master Interpretive Manager award.


**Tim Merriman**, Executive Director of NAI, and **Lisa Brochu**, Associate Director, were the headline speakers at this year’s **State Park Superintendents’ meeting** in September. Following their four-hour presentation, many superintendents noted how much they enjoyed the presentation, that it was one of the best presentations they had heard over many Superintendents’ meetings, and that they had a new outlook on interpretation and park management. On the final morning, Parks and Tourism Executive Director Richard Davies took the podium and began the day by stating that Tim and Lisa’s presentation was one of the most important ever made at the meeting and all in attendance should think about what they said and how it applies to operation of their park.

In September, **Bill Gatewood**, director of Arkansas’s **Old State House Museum**, received the **McGimsey Preservation Award** from the Arkansas Archeological Society. The award recognizes efforts to preserve Arkansas’s archeological heritage and was given in tribute to Gatewood’s leadership in developing the exhibit: *Sam Dellinger and Raiders of the Lost Arkansas*. The exhibit received an Award of Commendation from the Southeastern Museums Conference in October.

**Amber Davis** has moved from Hampson Archeological Museum to Parkin Archeological State Park, **Linda Goza**, CIG has moved from Pinnacle Mountain State Park to Plantation Agriculture Museum; **Elizabeth Easley**, CIG has moved from Pinnacle Mountain State Park to Lake Chicot State Park, **Susan Tigert**, CIG has moved from Devil’s Den State Park to Lake Ouachita State Park, and **Adiago (Augie) Bernstein** has been hired as the second interpreter at Mount Magazine State Park.

Park Superintendent **Shea Lewis** led the opening of the **African-American Schoolhouse** at **Parkin Archeological State Park** on October 13 to a crowd estimated at over 300. Among attendees were many former students. There was an outpouring of interest and support from the Parkin community. This addition to the park tells a powerful story of recent history and clearly helps the local folks appreciate the park as a place of relevance and importance in their history of 60 years ago as well as a place to interpret Native Americans of 600 years ago.

On October 19 the **James A. Gaston Visitor Center** at **Bull-Shoals White River State Park** swung its doors open to hundreds of visitors. This striking center is destined to be one of the most visited centers in our state park system. Visitors are welcomed by staff, exhibits, a large, inviting resale area, and a building that seems to place the visitor high in the air above the beautiful scenery along the White River. This will be a boon to tourism and to education in North-Central Arkansas.

The Commissioner of State Lands has received a grant to conserve and scan some 3,750 **original Louisiana Purchase surveyor’s field notes** – notes of the land survey, which began in 1815, the first survey of the new territory. The field notes provide a fascinating glimpse into the character of the land in early 19th-century Arkansas. The site of the beginning of the survey is a National Historic Landmark, an Arkansas Natural Area and Louisiana Purchase State Park. 



## LOUISIANA State Report

David Latona

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### New Orleans Jazz NHP

Visitation is picking up slightly at our Saturday concert series and a successful second line parade/ground breaking ceremony was held in the city-owned Louis Armstrong Park. Perseverance Hall in Louis Armstrong Park will eventually be the New Orleans Jazz NHP's permanent site and is slated to open within the next year. The park will then begin to establish a presence in Armstrong Park with musical events and educational programs. The park's calendar of events can be found online at [www.nps.gov/jazz](http://www.nps.gov/jazz).

**Louisiana State Parks** has introduced its newest addition to the already outstanding website. That would be Louie the Pelican's very own section for kids. Please feel free to go to [lastateparks.com](http://lastateparks.com) and check it out. Let Louie know what you think about it. He is really good about responding back in a timely manner as well as taking suggestions as to how you professionals in the field might see improvement on the page. Check it out and let him know what you think!

Other items of note in Louisiana State Parks:

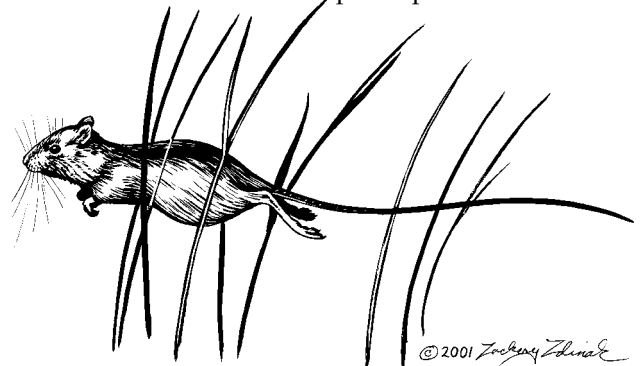
During the weekend of October 17, **Lake Fausse Pointe State Park** hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Camp Bluebird. Camp Bluebird is a three-day, two-night "summer camp" designed for adult cancer survivors. Campers are offered an opportunity to focus on the art of living through activities such as arts and crafts, fishing, and socials. The camp also offers a wellness program featuring humorous guest speakers, low-impact exercise, massage and other relaxation techniques, along with outdoor activities. Other highlights of the weekend are a costume party and a family luncheon. These activities provide an excellent forum for sharing common experiences.

Trails at **Fairview-Riverside State Park** and **Fontainebleau State Park** were recently renamed in memory of Robert Carnahan, an avid bird watcher, BellSouth retiree and a resident of Covington until his death in 2005. State Parks personnel and members of the Ozone Life Member Club, of which Carnahan was a member, were present at the ceremonies dedicating the trails. Carnahan, with other members of Ozone Life and other volunteers, started the bluebird project, which put dozens of boxes throughout the two parks. An enthusiastic bird watcher, Carnahan was concerned about the dwindling number of bluebirds seen in southeastern Louisiana. The birdhouses would provide additional nesting areas for the birds; they are maintained by retired Bellsouth employees and were refurbished after Hurricane Katrina.

Finally: a towboaters' reunion, recently held at **Plaquemine Lock State Historic Site**, brought together former towboaters and their families to share stories about towing barges along the Mississippi River, Intracoastal Canal and other waterways.

**Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park** will host its Fourth Annual Owl Prowl Family Night on February 24, 2007. For the past three years, park naturalists **Rachel Demascal** and **Rhonda Clay**, and Caddo Parish Parks director **Larry Raymond** have collaborated to create a unique experience for park visitors. Program participants rotate through three stations: With Rachel, they take part in educational games and an interactive slide show to learn about native owls. Rhonda gives them an up-close and in-person look at resident Barred, Screech, and Great Horned owls. Larry leads them on a night hike along the trails in search of owls and other nocturnal critters that may be present in the park. This popular program attracts more than a hundred participants each year.

Thank you for keeping our State's update section looking so good!





## MISSOURI State Report

John Miller

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The **Association of Missouri Interpreters** (AMI) presented several awards at their annual AMI Conference September 25-28 in Cape Girardeau, MO. The award winners included:  
Undergraduate Scholarship = **Heather Priest** (University of Missouri-Columbia)  
Undergraduate Scholarship = **Kimberli Watson** (University of Central Missouri –

Warrensburg)

Graduate Scholarship = **Kendra Swee** (Missouri State University – Springfield)

Distinguished Interpreter of the Year – Volunteer Category = **Rick Edwards** (Prairie State Park)

Distinguished Interpreter of the Year – Seasonal Category = **Chad Doolen** (Roaring River State Park)

Distinguished Interpreter of the Year – Professional Category = **Tara Flynn** (Missouri Mines State Historic Site)

Best Interpretive Effort – Individual Category = **Janet Price** (Johnson’s Shut-Ins State Park)

Best Interpretive Effort – Group Category = **Jess & Nancy Thee** (Nathan Boone Homestead State Historic Site)

Best Interpretive Effort – Organization Category = **Bonebreak Center for Nature & History** (Libby Sanders, President)

Best Workshop Presentation = **Katherine McGrane** – Columbia Bottom CA (for Interactive Endangered Species Program)

**Cyndi Cogbill** (Mindenmines) reports that **Prairie State Park** has a new mailing address: 128 NW 150th Lane, Mindenmines, MO 64769.

**Powder Valley** is happy to announce the hiring of **April Hyzer** as part-time naturalist. Since earning her Geology degree from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire she has worked in Minnesota and Colorado.

**Andrea Putnam** (Jefferson City) has accepted the position of Special Events Coordinator for the **MO Department of Natural Resources**. Andrea will supervise the Marketing and Special Events Section, which manages the volunteer program and coordinates all advertising & special activities for the state park system. Andrea was most recently the Interpretive Resource Specialist III at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park.

**Lisa Lacombe** (Blue Springs) reports that **Burr Oak Woods CNC** welcomes two new Naturalists, **Amy Juhala** and **Lori Walker**. Many of you met Amy and Lori at the AMI Conference in Cape Girardeau.

**Kathryn Devany DiFoxfire** (Columbia) says if it’s a wildflower and growing in Missouri, its a good bet that **Rock Bridge Memorial State Park** volunteer **Randal Clark** can not only identify it, but also share with you its folklore, whether or not it’s edible, and if it has any medicinal uses. Clark’s dedication and passion for interpreting wildflowers has recently earned him the **Erna R. Eisendrath Memorial Education Award**. This prestigious award is given by the Missouri Native Plant Society to an individual who, through teaching, writing or other activity has conveyed to others a significant appreciation and knowledge of Missouri’s flora. For the past 23 years, Clark has led weekly wildflower walks mid-March through mid-May in Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and other nearby areas. He has also led day trips, canoe trips and overnight backpack trips all over Missouri, sharing his passion for flora, local history and folklore at each place he goes.

**AJ Hendershott** (Cape Girardeau) reports that **Pat Holloway** is the new MDC Education Consultant in **Poplar Bluff**. Pat replaced the departing Jennifer Ferris.

**Bill O’Donnell** (Eminence) with **Ozark National Scenic Riverways** has been busy this fall. **Pam Eddy** headed up the annual 19th Century “Haunting of the Hills” on October 14-15. This was a traditional storytelling/music/craft demonstration to show off the cool historic extravaganza at Alley Mill. This event was held simultaneously with a large craft show in Eminence. The Haunting drew over a thousand visitors each day. Bill has been busy bringing conservation science to the school kids of Shannon and Carter counties. Eight classrooms in two schools, Eminence and Van Buren, together raised, tagged and released 25 Monarch butterflies as part of the annual fall Butterfly Program. This program allows the children to do hands-on science and learn about the importance of protected areas in American and Mexican national parks. Many have been lucky enough to watch the butterflies hatch and see the wonders of nature first hand.





## OKLAHOMA State Report

Neil Garrison

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“Yours truly” took a day of vacation leave on Saturday, November 4th. I used the time to go do some volunteer work for the **Oklahoma Anthropological Society**. I did a flintknapping demo at an all-day “Archaeology Day” event that they had at Arrowhead State Park (Lake Eufaula, eastern Oklahoma). Ya gotta love it! Makin’ arrowheads at Arrowhead State Park! I also took the opportunity to do a pioneer wooden toys demo. My wife (Becky) went with me, and she conducted a gourd basket workshop...and did a demo on how the one-string Tennessee Music Box is played.

The most exciting news for the staff at **Oxley Nature Center** (Tulsa) is the new roof and siding. They can get rid of the stack of buckets and pans that they used to catch the rain when the roof leaked. There was extensive water and insect damage to the structure and it was near collapse. So they practically have a new building. The new squirrel proof siding ensures they won’t have squirrels barging in uninvited. There will be a **new exhibit at Redbud Valley Nature Preserve** interpreting reptiles and very rare trees found in the preserve. Blue Ash and American Smoke tree are found there. **Taylor Studios** is building the exhibit. **Susie Ruby** is recovering from her second knee replacement and it is good to have her back on the job. She isn’t doing any back handsprings yet but she is walking without a cane.

□  
The **Washita Battlefield National Historic Site** (Cheyenne, OK) and **Southwestern Oklahoma State University’s Academic Coordinator for Underrepresented Students** (Weatherford, OK) □ co-sponsored a three-day speaking tour in western Oklahoma for □ the Academy Award-winning screenwriter and author □ **Michael Blake**. □ His book [Dances with Wolves](#) was a New York Times No. 1 bestseller. □ Blake’s latest □ novel [Indian Yell](#), is on the subject of the Indian wars from 1854 through 1890. □

Our congratulations go out to **Claudine Daniel**. She has just retired as the head of the environmental education department at the **Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge** (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Indianola, OK). Claudine will be spending summers living at her home in Homer, Alaska....and will live the winter months at her home on Foss Lake (i.e., southwestern OK).

Another bit of news comes to us from the **Oklahoma City Zoo**. Naturalist **Amy Stephens’** book ([Oklahoma City Zoo: 1902-1959](#)) sold completely out of its first edition in only five months! Wow! The good news is that the publisher printed up a second batch of the books. That’s quite a “success story,” Amy! Way to go! Then there’s that news flash from the “Bowling for Rhinos” event. Amy Stephens was the contest winner for this year. Due to her amazing fund-raising efforts for this rhino conservation effort, she was awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to Kenya for an ecotourism trip to that country’s world-famous big game parks. Amy, we want to see the pics!

...and...let’s talk about another success: the 161 people who registered as participants in the **BioBlitz 2006 event**. Wow! That’s a lot of people doing a lot of invaluable natural resource research during that 24-hour period on September 15th and 16th. The event was held at the **Quartz Mountain Nature Park** and the adjacent **Lugert Wildlife Management Area** (Lone Wolf, OK). No less than 955 species of organisms were tallied on that momentous occasion. Park Naturalist **Sue Hokanson** is to be commended for this accomplishment. □

### Attention: Are you a “quote” person?

The NAI national office is working on a product for the Association Store that will be a journal with blank pages, nice illustrations and occasional quotes relevant to interpretive work. This journal will be sold in bulk quantities at competitive prices to members, and would be useful for training workshops and other events. If you have a favorite quote or two you would be willing to contribute, please send it to Paul Caputo at t “\_blank” [design@interpnet.com](mailto:design@interpnet.com). Please provide the author and source, if from a specific document. Those contributing quotes will not receive specific recognition in the journal, but your contribution will be greatly appreciated.



## TEXAS State Report

Tara Tucker


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It's Dr. DNA to the rescue! Check out this superhero for animals (who is also an interpreter!) in **Lucas Miller's** newest book, **Dr. DNA & the Anaconda Invasion**. Lucas hopes it will be the first in a very long series, so stay tuned for more.... you can see it at [www.lucasmiller.net/DNApeek.htm](http://www.lucasmiller.net/DNApeek.htm)

According to **Bryan McAuley**, the **George Ranch Historical Park** has been very busy this holiday season! The **annual Campfire Christmas program** held on December 8th, 9th, 15th, 16th, 22nd, and 23rd expanded to the newly opened 1860's plantation home, called "Old Prairie Home" (just like the family on the ranch). The house opened to the public was one of two featured homes for the event. Other program elements included tours of the 1890's Victorian mansion, mule-drawn hay wagon ride, storytelling and caroling by the George Ranch cowboys by the campfire, and a special holiday meal. Check out all of the unique special events at the George Ranch Historical Park throughout the year at [www.georgeranch.org](http://www.georgeranch.org)!

Looking for a great interpretive opportunity? **Randy Ferris**, **TX Parks and Wildlife Park Superintendent** reports there's an opening for an Interpreter (Park Specialist I) at **Fort Richardson State Historic Site and Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway**. To apply, see the job listing at [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/jobs/postings/?page=07\\_07\\_056](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/jobs/postings/?page=07_07_056)

Springs have sprung in San Marcos! **Sonja Mlenar** says that **Aquarena Center's** educational mission is to provide people of all ages with the ability to recognize Spring Lake as a unique freshwater ecosystem through interpretive interactive experiences that engage the audience in an exploration of interconnections between all living things and water. Aquarena conducts daily public glass-bottom boat tours allowing visitors to view the critical habitat, the fault line and springs. Visitors will also enjoy the wetlands walk and an endangered species aquarium. Customized group tours for preschoolers, elementary through high school students, Scouts, and adults are available with advance reservations. For more information, see [www.aquarena.txstate.edu](http://www.aquarena.txstate.edu).

**Tara Tucker** is ecstatic to have a new cohort in the **Certified Interpretive Guide Training** program at **The Houston Zoo**. With the 17+ years of animal expertise and volunteer training she provides at the Zoo, Docent Programs Coordinator **Andrea Anders** is an invaluable asset to the team! 

### *Guest Experience*, continued from p. 3

smaller group interactions at individual exhibits and even "crowd control" as busy times such as at animal births, the interpretive staff covers the entire facility in front of the scenes.

Our second group, the Ranger staff, also aid guests by sharing information about our animals and our facility, providing leadership in emergency situations such as first aid, helping reunite lost family members, driving a tired family to the front of the Zoo, helping out with tours, escorting a large vehicle onto or off Zoo grounds during public hours, and providing a visible presence throughout the Zoo.

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, and it also takes an entire zoo, aquarium or park to fully meet the needs of our guests. Treat every guest as if they sign your paycheck, because they do.

Guest experience. It really does matter.





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**DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE:**

Spring 2007: February 20  
Summer 2007: May 20  
Fall 2007: August 20  
Winter 2007: November 20

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