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Photograph (Interpret) Like You Mean It!

John Miller-Branson, MO

Taking photo is easy, creating photos is the challenge. What once took days or weeks to plan, prepare, and execute in order to get "the shot," now takes a few seconds with a digital camera or cell phone. I find myself doing this exact same thing. I see and I shoot -- sometimes repeatedly. With little thought of making a quality shot, I fall into the trap of simply recording and not creating. I have seen this in our auditorium where a visitor walks from display to display, not reading or interacting, just clicking photo after photo. Sadly at the end of the day the visitor may see little need to keep any of the photos taken because there is no connection to the facility.

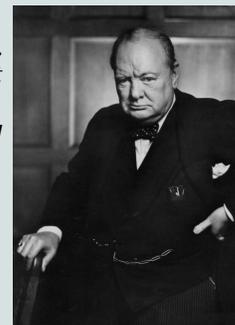
What I enjoy most about photography is "creating" an emotion or message for the viewer. Looking at a subject and allowing it to tell a story with a twist is very rewarding. But it takes practice. A classic example is this photo of Winston Churchill. This photo was taken by Yousuf Karsh in 1941. Yousuf wanted to capture the essence of "The Lion of England". But how on Earth do you capture the "look" of the man who kept a physically- and emotionally-battered country to keep fighting in the darkest days of World War II? Do you just ask Mr. Churchill to show the face with that look? He would never do a thing like that. The key to getting this famous photo was removing something from Churchill so that it would not appear in the photo: a cigar. This photo has become the widely reproduced photo in history. (Winston Churchill 1941 photo at right by Yousuf Karsh)

Is it acceptable that our photos capture emotion and personal connections? Yes, whenever possible.

The key is planning and taking risks. Like photos, your interpretive programs need to be more than random unfocused experiences. Take the time to plan how to make the connections and facilitate your audience to process what you are presenting. If you take that extra effort, your efforts will have long lasting impact. Making a presentation is easy, but creating a meaningful interpretive program takes quality effort. In the end, photos like your interpretive focus should be something special. Take photos and give presentations like you mean it.

Here is Karsh's description of his famous 1941 photo:

My portrait of Winston Churchill changed my life. I knew after I had taken it that it was an important picture, but I could hardly have dreamed that it would become one of the most widely reproduced images in the history of photography. In 1941, Churchill visited first Washington and then Ottawa. The Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, invited me to be present. After the electrifying speech, I waited in the Speaker's Chamber where, the evening before, I had set up my lights and camera. The Prime Minister, arm-in-arm with Churchill and followed by his entourage, started to lead him into the room. I switched on my floodlights; a surprised Churchill growled, "What's this, what's this?" No one had the courage to explain. I timidly stepped forward and said, "Sir, I hope I will be fortunate enough to make a portrait worthy of this historic occasion." He glanced at me and demanded, "Why was I not told?" When his entourage began to laugh, this hardly helped matters for me. Churchill lit a fresh cigar, puffed at it with a mischievous air, and then magnanimously relented. "You may take one." Churchill's cigar was ever present. I held out an ashtray, but he would not dispose of it. I went back to my camera and made sure that everything was all right technically. I waited; he continued to chomp vigorously at his cigar. I waited. Then I stepped toward him and, without premeditation, but ever so respectfully, I said, "Forgive me, sir," and plucked the cigar out of his mouth. By the time I got back to my camera, he looked so beligerent he could have devoured me. It was at that instant that I took the photograph.



Word from the Editors: A Visual Visions

Jamie Hubert

A while back, Katie emailed me and asked me with I thought of her idea of doing the next issue of Visions as a photography issue. Being an amateur photographer myself, naturally I thought it was a great idea. I also knew that we had plenty of talented interpreters out there who could contribute to this issue-and I was not disappointed!

Tilden taught us that "Interpretation is an art...that combines many arts". He also taught us that we should relate and connect emotionally with our audience. Photography is an art that accomplishes that very easily. We see beautiful photos of landscapes that touch us and take our breath away, a macro shot of an insect fills us with awe as we try and grasp the awesome complexity of nature, and a photo of a child playing in nature takes us back emotionally to our own childhood when we experienced feelings of curiosity and wonder. Not to mention that we use photographs to take us back to places we have been and the memories made there.

Using photography as part of interpretive presentation or having it be an interpretive activity can be a powerful tool for connecting the visitor to the resource. It can also be a way for you to make new connections at your site. I've often found myself giddy with delight at the things I discover at my park through my camera lens.

I hope that in the following pages you find inspiration and delight from those who contributed their knowledge and talents with us this month. On a related note, when you submit a report to the state coordinators for the report, please include a photo or two. We like seeing interpreters in action!



The correlation between a mediocre shot and a great shot is directly proportional to the amount of tongue sticking out before snapping the photograph. (Taken at Amidon Conservation Area, Fredericktown, Missouri)

CALL FOR WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

EARTH, WIND AND FIRE is more than the answer to the question, "Which rock group had the 1970's hits *Shining Star* and *Boogie Wonderland*"? Earth, Wind and Fire are the forces that shaped the Flint Hills of Kansas and it is the theme of the 2013 NAI Region 6 Workshop to be held in Manhattan, KS. As the gateway to the Flint Hills and the world's largest remaining track of tallgrass prairie, Manhattan might not be a boogie wonderland (although after this Workshop it may be known as that!), but you certainly will see many shining stars in the brilliant Kansas night sky as well as your colleagues who are the shining stars of interpretation.

Region 6 invites you to apply to present a session that will ground us in the roots of our profession and nurture our professional growth (EARTH), that will inspire and refresh us (WIND) and that will ignite the flames of passion for the people we serve and resources we protect (FIRE). The deadline for submissions is Friday, November 30, 2012.

The workshop committee will announce its selections and make all notifications by December 17, 2012. All speakers must register for the workshop and early registration pricing will be available through January 18, 2013.

Please send presentation proposals to:

Dr. Ted Cable
Dept. HFFR
2021 Throckmorton
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506
(785) 532-1408

OR tcable@ksu.edu

Please submit information to include name, job title, organization, address, phone, email, and a title and presentation abstract/summary of 200 words or less.



Region 6 Awards and Scholarship applications due SOON!

Through its awards program, Region 6 recognizes outstanding achievements and showcases the successes of its NAI members who work to advance the profession of interpretation. Region 6 Awards are presented at the annual Region 6 Workshop. Nominations forms and criteria are available on the website www.nairegions.org/6/awards-scholarships/ **Nominations for professional awards must be submitted no later than November 15. Student scholarship applications are due October 31.**



Director's Report: Get Out and Vote

John Miller

By now most of you have seen the ballot information regarding the new NAI Bylaws. It is *very* important that you take the time to read over *both* the blog postings at <http://www.interpnet.com/restructure> and the actual bylaws proposal.

The most important thing to understand is that these new bylaws are a working document that helps guide NAI to doing more positive things for our members as well as the organization. These new bylaws were *not* intended to answer every issue or question that has ever come up now or in the future. Even the world's best document ever written, the US Constitution, has had to have amendments to keep up with a changing world. The Board of Directors and the Reorganization Task Force have worked very hard over the past two years to propose this new set of bylaws in order to give NAI the framework to be a more responsive, accountable, and a forward-thinking organization.

The next most important thing about this election is for you to be a part of it. This is your time to have your voice heard because NAI is truly only as good and active as its members. If you decide to sit on the sidelines and let the bylaws decided by only a small group of members, then you are giving up one of the key principles of NAI. I enjoy telling everyone that NAI's official title is the "National Association for Interpretation". Of all those words in our organizations title, the most IMPORTANT word is "**for**." NAI is **for** the betterment of our members. As a member, however, you have a responsibility to be **for** active participation so that this organization has decisions made by its members. NAI is at its best when it has active and informed members.

Another comment that many have asked me about is about the timing of the ballot. Originally the NAI Board had tried to get the ballot out early this summer. Thankfully the board had the foresight to seek advice from an attorney who specializes in non-profit organizations in Colorado. Amazingly, we found that our current bylaws were not in compliance with Colorado law (which is needed because the national office resides in that state). So instead of having an article by article vote this early summer, resulted in a major overhaul of the bylaws and included the changes proposed by the Reorganization Task Force (from 3 years of input from members and a variety of focus groups). Needless to say, the Task Force and Board did herculean job of getting this bylaws proposal out the end of the summer.

Finally, except for letting you know that I do fully support the new bylaws changes being proposed, I am not going to try to sway your vote. I want you to read the proposal and the documents that have been posted so that you can see the merits of these bylaws for yourself. The only thing I truly wish to sway is your call to vote. Please take the few minutes to vote. This is very important to the future of NAI and your vote does matter. Your vote, for or against, needs to be cast. As mentioned before, NAI is at its very best when we have active members. What could be more important than deciding NAI's future? The answer is your participation. Get out and vote!



Region 6 Director John Miller is the Facility Manager at Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center in Branson, Missouri.

"This is your time to have your voice heard because NAI is truly only as good and active as its members."



Registration online now! We invite you to join us to reflect on the resources of the Chesapeake, to see how interpreters meet the challenge of integrated, diverse, and constantly changing resources, and to take home new ideas on how to overcome these challenges with your own resource. With over 100 concurrent sessions, field experiences, and special events you will have many opportunities to taste history, witness the bounty of one of the country's most fragile ecosystems, and be a part of stories that connect them all. Join us "Down by the Bay" to share with friends old and new and to find inspiration in the stories of the past, present, and future that we discover in our Chesapeake reflections.

Getting the Most CRAP Out of Your Photos

John Miller-Branson, MO

They say that a photo is worth a thousand words. This is often true, but which 1000 words do YOU want to convey?

The beauty and challenge of photography is that how a photo is taken can say as much if not more than what is in the photo. Thanks to my "License to Steal" card, I have lifted from my friend Pat Whalen 4 basic design components that when used effectively or in combination, help you to create fantastic photos. I am of course talking about CRAP or Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, and Proximity. The beauty of each of these components is that they align perfectly with Tilden's 6 principles.

CRAP is :

C = Contrast

R = Repetition

A = Alignment

P = Proximity

Relates

Reveals

Teachable Art

Provokes

Whole

Varied approach for children



Here are examples of how each might be used.

C ontrast

Contrast can be more than simply light versus dark; it can also be a contrast of style or time.



The first contrast is in the orange leaves compared to the green leaves. You can also show the contrast in the shapes of the leaves. The photo may help to illuminate that sassafras is one of the few trees with 3 different shaped leaves.



Has anyone ever told you NOT to take a photo into the sun? Silhouettes are very striking and can give you more impact than the normal photo. Silhouettes can also show contrast between living and non living thing items.



Getting people to really look at your photo may often be a challenge. Try putting something in your photo that does not belong. Can you find the 'new' pair of scissors in this photo? Would it have been correct to the early 1900's that you were trying to capture? Also, the photo uses black and white to convey even more details. Don't feel that color is the only way to shoot.

Repetition

Repetition not only within a photo but among a series of photos can have a striking impact. Look for things that give your audience looking for patterns or commonality. Sometimes the same subject photographed from multiple vantage points can give you repetition as well.



The compound leaves of this tree provide a striking form of repetition. The repetition may help to 'fill' the frame or get you to focus on familiar lines. There is also repetition in the seeds forming the seed head. Those repeating seeds help focus attention.



The repeating layers of the logs in this cabin photo help to give the observer some tiny sense of the effort it would have taken to make this cabin. The repetition of work is easy to convey with photos like this.

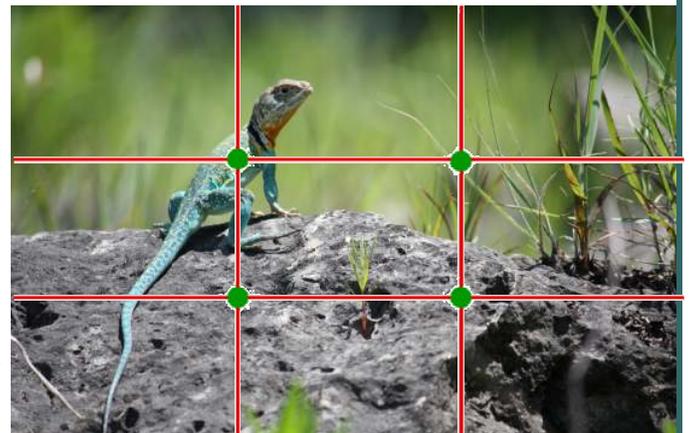
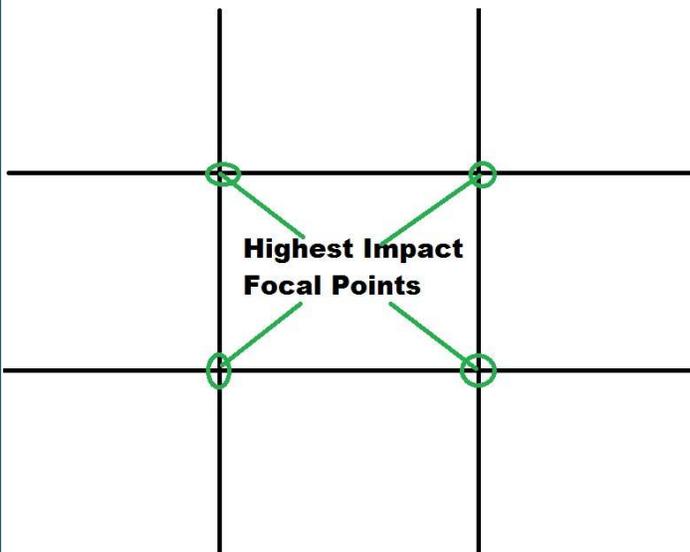


Repetition does not have to be uniform. In fact, it is actually refreshing to see a little bit of randomness. In this photo of Dodder (a plant parasite which produces no chlorophyll) the feeling that the other plants are being suffocated is very strong. The unorganized repetition of a photo may also give the viewer the chance to come up with their own imaginative descriptions. One of the best descriptions of this photo is 'uneaten spaghetti'.

Alignment

Probably one of the easiest components to control, it is one of the most often forgotten pieces of photography. I tell my students that anyone can take a photo where the object is in the center or 'bullseye'. We all do this. Go ahead and get it out of your system...then try a couple new alignments.

If you were to divide each photo into a 3 by 3 grid, the four intersecting points become the most important focal points for the image. Placing your object into one of these points creates a photo with more impact than shooting the typical 'bullseye'.



Instead of putting the collared lizard in the bullseye, placing this right-facing subject to the left of the photo leads the viewer's eye to the center of the image. If the lizard had been facing left, you would want to place him on the upper right focal point. (Photo by Jamie Hubert)

Alignment



In this photo, the head of the interpreter and the bulk of the audience fill the upper two focal points. Had the photo shot the interpreter or the audience in a 'bulls eye' the photo would not have the same feel.



This photo is trying to convey a "root digger" in the Ozarks. The two main focal points feature the shovel and the bag over the shoulder. By the way the shovel used is more for grain and snow and not for roots. The alignment of the hillside behind the hillbilly is also done to show the rugged terrain. Had the photo not included the hills an just the hillbilly, it would not have the same impact.



This photo uses alignment to get the viewer to look down the line of people. Your eye has a more natural tendency to look down the line than if this had been a straight on shot (which you will see shortly).

Proximity

This is another component that has many tangible and intangible ways to create. Proximity is not just the relationship to the camera or audience. Proximity may include the distance of time, or absence of other objects. Proximity is often used to add emphasis or make something 'larger than life'.

This component gives you very powerful images especially when used in interpretive presentations.



In this photo, the green wooden frog looks the same size as the kids. This type of shot is used by fishermen to show off a fish that is really not as big as it appears. Recently, photos of snakes on the internet are photographed this way to make the snake look 3-5 times its real size. The proximity does indeed put the focus on the frog and not so much emphasis on the participants.



In this photo the chair is the focal point due to its proximity to the camera. This can often have a dramatic effect to show things like loneliness, independence, or strength. The chair being separated from the chair near the window was done on purpose to create a more dramatic photo. Would this photo have been the same if both chairs were together in the back?



Jamie's note: Proximity can create interesting illusions. This trick of forced perception that John eluded to is not only a way to create fun images, but also how those viral internet photos of "15 foot, 100 lb rattlesnakes" get created. This photo is one of the best forced perception photos I've ever seen. (I hope John doesn't mind this inclusion, simply for the sake of continuity...)

Getting the Most CRAP Out of Your Photos

Continued from page 6

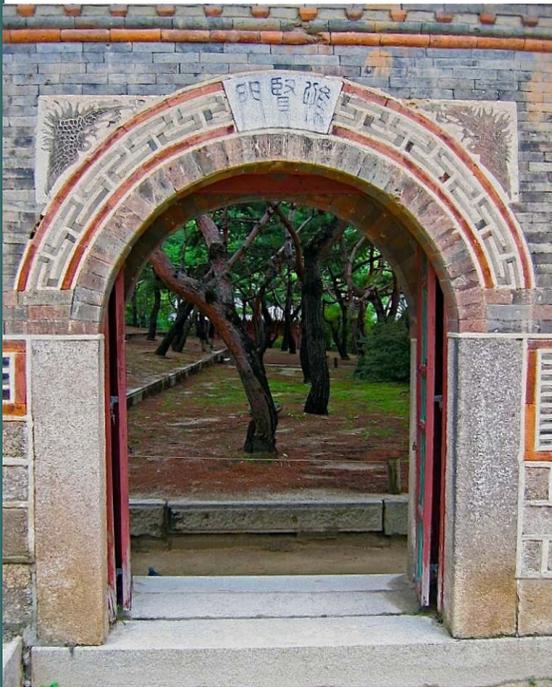
TEST! Yes, there is a test.

Below are two photos. Look at these photos and see what CRAP you can find.



In the end, our photos can give us more than we ever imagined if we take the time to shoot with a purpose. By using your Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, and Proximity, your photos can tell stories that are tangible and intangible. If you truly want to touch the heart of your audience, then learn to shoot more with CRAP.

These Region 6 member's photos are full of CRAP...



Jay Miller, Arkansas State Parks

I photographed this gate, or doorway, in South Korea while there with NAI. It is a passageway into another place and in that "other" place, the world is different. Interpretation is a gateway to other worlds. Those worlds are always there, but often unnoticed until a gatekeeper, an interpreter, leads to the portal and helps you look more closely, to see with new eyes the wonders of our world.



Jamie Hubert, Missouri State Parks

What I love most about this photo is it's not just another photo of a purple coneflower. You can look at it and almost feel the warm summer breeze on your skin. The photo was really dumb luck on my part, as the wind was whipping this flower around like crazy that day (meaning I had about 30 blurred coneflower photos!)



What CRAP do you see in this photo?



These are the actions that accompany Texas' Estero Llano Grande State Park's most common question: "What's that?"



Amy Stephens, Oklahoma City Zoo

Seasonal photography is a great nature-writing prompt. I take pictures of the same spot each season; in this case, a hillside that looks up to our Treehouse where birthday rentals take place.



"Students are asked to note the differences in colors, plant materials, amount of flowers, foliage height, etc. Then they visit the actual site, no matter which season, and describe observations that use senses other than vision, such as temperature, smell or surrounding sounds."

Finding the Art in Nature

Amanda Christian-Bonne Terre, MO

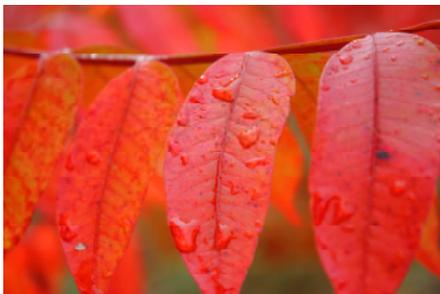
There is a natural beauty outside...from the sediment to the living organisms that make up the earth: rushing water, thick green forest, bright red clay, dark moist soil, the watchful eyes of an alert creature and so much more. It is almost like a different realm- a different world from the concrete, manmade cities that many on our planet frequent, and the other goes forgotten. There are some; however, who revel in its existence, whose souls thrive on the beauty of it, and they will fight to maintain the wild.

One of persons is Ansel Adams,(1902-1984). Ansel was born in San Francisco and grew up playing in the sand dunes. This sparked a love for the outdoors in him that flamed throughout his life. He first visited Yosemite in 1916 and soon became a custodian at a lodge there that served as headquarters to the Sierra Club. Adams became active with the club, his role in it growing over time. After a year he became their official photographer, then a board member. His photographs and writings were published in the club bulletin. He became known as an artist as well as a defender of Yosemite. He was a board member while the club evolved from a small group to a national organization that lobbied for environmental protection and the creation of national parks. Adams' photography was influential in swaying politicians to create Kings Canyon National Park in 1940. In 1968 he received the Conservation Service Award, the Interior Departments highest honor, which recognized his years of work as a photographer, artist, interpreter, and conservationist. In 1980 he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom to recognize his efforts to preserve the wild across the country.

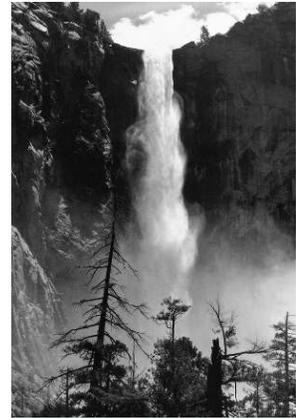
Another who recognizes the beauty in nature and will fight to preserve it is nature photographer Jim Brandenburg. Brandenburg was born in 1945 and is based in Minnesota. He worked 10 years as a photojournalist, and 30 years as a contract photographer for National Geographic. Brandenburg was commissioned by the United States Postal Service to create a series of wildlife stamps, which were released to the public in May of 1981. His work has been featured in Life, News Week, and the Smithsonian magazines. Brandenburg saw the importance of educating the public and spreading awareness of the ecological significance of the environment, and in 1999 founded the Brandenburg Prairie Foundation. The purpose was to promote, preserve and expand the native prairie that exists in Southwest Minnesota.

There is a group who searches out these people, called The North American Photography Association. The mission of this group is as follows: *"NANPA promotes the art and science of nature photography as a medium of communication, nature appreciation, and environmental protection; NANPA provides information, education, inspiration and opportunity for all persons interested in nature photography; NANPA fosters excellence and ethical conduct in all aspects of endeavors, and especially encourages responsible photography in the wild."* This organization offers multiple scholarships and grants to individuals studying or working in the fields related to photography and the environment. They also host summits and events for nature photography and environmental protection. More information can be found at www.nanpa.org.

There is art all around us. We breathe it in, walk through it, it surrounds us and blankets us with its wonder. This power of nature fuels us, inspires us to dream. Some capture a small piece of it, an image to share with others. An even more select few can use this tool to inspire those who have yet to discover the wild.



Photos by Jamie Hubert



Ansel Adams inspired a whole generation of nature photographers.

"There is art all around us. We breathe it in, walk through it, it surrounds us and blankets us with its wonder."



The North American Nature Photography Association was created to promote the art of nature photography. Visit their website at www.nanpa.org

Capturing the “So What” Moment

One of my favorite things to do with photography is catch people “in the moment”. No posing, no fake smiles...just genuine emotion and a sense of really capturing the essence of a single moment in time. Here are some examples of interpreters capturing those “moments” happening with their visitors.



Houston Zoo Volunteer Dale Martin snapped a picture of these two “toads” hopping through the Houston toad maze at an event at Bastrop State Park in March 2012. The maze gives kids hands-on experience about the life of the endangered Houston toad. They travel through obstacles that these amphibians encounter throughout their lives. Here, the toads are jumping through bunchgrass, plants that provide natural cover from predators.



Katie Raney, interpreter at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks in Texas

At each astronomy program I present, I am always asking the question, “Do you see it?” In this case, we were looking at the transit of the planet Venus across the sun. This little girl came up to the telescope eight or ten times, fascinated by the sun and its tiny orbiter. Later, her dad told me that she was sure to remember, for a long time, her first look at the sun and her first visit to our park.



Mary Clark, Dillon Nature Center, Kansas

A photo of items found off the nature center’s hiking trails was the list for families participating in a scavenger hunt this spring. Each family received a picture to work from and sought the items from the picture, even if they had no idea what some of the items were, what they came from and where they were located.



Jayson May, interpreter at South Llano River State Park in Texas

Jayson seines in the scenic river with park visitors .

AMI Invades the Ozarks

Jamie Hubert, AMI President



Alley Spring and mill, Eminence, MO (photo by Jamie Hubert)

In late August, the Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI) gathered in Van Buren, Missouri, right in the heart of the Missouri Ozarks (and arguably the most highly photogenic places in the state). This year's workshop theme was "Rivers connect us to life-sustaining resources through time." Participants were able to explore the plentiful natural resources found within the Ozark National Scenic Riverways and take a step back in time while visiting some of the numerous turn of the century gristmills in the region.

The crystal clear, spring-fed Current and Jacks Fork rivers set the perfect stage for a group of resource interpreters. About 80 professionals from around the state enjoyed sessions about storytelling, ways to help visitors connect to the resource at their site and even how to do a crosscut saw demonstration.

A day of field trips gave participants a chance to head out with experts to explore the springs and karst of the Ozarks, float the Current River, visit local nature centers or discover the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Big Spring.

As an official chapter of NAI, AMI strives to provide the same level of support and networking opportunities that can be found at Region and National workshops. Our scholarship auction helps raise money so we can offer both undergraduate and graduate scholarships as well as professional development stipends. The awards banquet gives AMI members a chance to recognize their fellow interpreters for their contribution to the profession. Though we are the Association of Missouri interpreters, out of staters are welcome too! Anyone interested in more information about AMI can visit our website at www.mointerp.net.



Sessions offered during the workshop included crosscut saw demonstrations and traditional Ozark crafts. (photos by John Miller)



You can invest in the future of NAI and the profession by making a contribution to the Enos Mills Fund. For the past 54 years National Association for Interpretation (NAI) has served as a professional family for people working with parks, historic sites, zoos, aquariums, museums, nature centers, and tour companies.

NAI has grown to more than 5,500 members to date, committed to our mission of "inspiring leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession." Member services are fundamental to NAI's success, such as:

- Rebates to regions and sections for newsletters
- Regional, national, and international workshops and conferences
- Publication of magazines and books
- Peer-juried Journal of Interpretation Research

- Interpnet.com website with online Member Directory and Member Forum
- On-line Legacy magazine
- Training courses
- 7,000 individuals certified in six categories
- Association store
- Interpretunities – jobs listings
- Standards of Practices – NEW publications on best practices
- Interpretation Roadmap coalition – NEW collaboration to help members find the right professional development and recognition opportunities

Please join us in support of the interpretive profession and insuring the long-term stability of NAI by making a donation or a pledge to the Enos Mills Fund today.

Enos Mills, a pioneer in the field of heritage interpretation, could not have imagined the many ways NAI would continue his early work. The legacy of his books live on almost a century after he began a nature guide school on the slopes of Long's Peak in Colorado. There, he gave inspiration to generations of interpreters who would follow in his footsteps. The Enos Mills Fund honors his memory by providing long-term stability for the NAI family of interpreters who continue to help people discover themselves, their history and their natural world. We hope you'll plan to become a part of this important program at whatever level you find comfortable. We all work together to preserve the integrity of our global heritage resources and the Enos Mills Fund will be an investment in the future of the profession charged with that important mission.

Buffalo National River is celebrating its 40th anniversary at the first National River. Creation of the National River in 1972 stopped three dam proposals and protected one of the most beautiful free-flowing river corridors and watersheds in America. An open house at park headquarters drew visitors and congressional representatives to displays of park resources.



ARKANSAS State Report
Jay Miller

Arkansas State Parks enjoyed bringing **Wren Smith** to our annual workshop. Wren made three presentations to our about 70 attendees and was very well received. Also presenting was **Jane Jones-Shultz** who had been challenged to present a Civil War program related to Arkansas's natural areas. Jane's program used reports of soldiers to compare the nature of Arkansas then to now.

The **Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association**, **Arkansas State Parks** and the **Healthy Foods Coalition** will host "Picnic @ the Park: Healthy Parks, Healthy Foods, Healthy People" on October 20th. Taking place in city and state parks across Arkansas, the coalition hopes to draw attention to the connection between eating wisely, enjoying good parks, and being healthy.

Superintendent **John Morrow**, Interpreter **Tara Gillanders** and Academy Studios are charging ahead furiously on exhibits for **Mississippi River State Park**, slated to open sometime this fall.

The **Arkansas Game & Fish Commission** plans to launch the **Youth Conservation Institute**, a merit-based statewide initiative for Arkansas high schoolers. Students will be involved in conservation projects around the state, to include AGFC sites, national parks and forests, USFW areas, and state parks.

Interpreters **Ornett Grind** and **Betty Crowder** have teamed up to create a unique living history program containing multiple perspectives of time, place, and meaning. Betty takes on the character of an Arkansas schoolteacher who became one of the most prolific interviewers and writers of the New Deal era. She interviews Ornett, who portrays an ex-slave, based on actual slave narratives. In their very effective presentation they discuss the New Deal, slavery, decisions made following slavery, and other issues from each of their characters' viewpoints.

Beginning October 1, the Fordyce Bathhouse at **Hot Springs National Park** will be closed for heat and air conditioning systems renovation. The park store, Bathhouse Row Emporium, in the Lamar Bathhouse will serve as the visitor center until the Fordyce Bathhouse Visitor Center reopens. In the Lamar Bathhouse visitors will be able to view exhibits, the park movies, and the interactive exhibit about African Americans and the Hot Springs baths. Also beginning October 1, park rangers will lead daily walks along the Grand Promenade and Bathhouse Row. These will begin at the Lamar Bathhouse at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., weather permitting. Rangers will also lead a daily fitness walk around the Grand Promenade and Bathhouse Row at 1 p.m., beginning from the Lamar. The Fordyce will remain closed for 8-12 months.

Long-time friend and interpreter at **Hot Springs National Park**, **Gail Sears**, who many of you know, is retiring November 2. A thoughtful, creative interpreter, she will be missed.

Among the biggest things in Arkansas this summer was our booby. Yes, a **Brown Booby** was a visitor here for almost a month and people from 13 states and as far away as New York and Montana made the trip to add it to their life list. The only access to the lake was through resident's homes, and the local folks were very welcoming to this horde of strangers, even shuttling folks out on the lake to get better views. Earlier in the year, Interpreter **Don Simons** spotted another rare bird to Arkansas: the **Gray-crowned Rosy Finch**. This bird of the highest Rockies is possibly the highest-altitude breeding bird in North America, found the highest place in Arkansas. Like the brown booby, it is a first state record.



Birders from all over the US came to see the booby.



Brian Underwood of Lakewood Nature Center says that they have just installed two new learning stations, featuring interactive touch screens, which focus on Kansas birds and mammals. Local junior high students have worked this summer to establish an outdoor native area, designed to prevent erosion and rehabilitate the lakeshore. The students contributed 500 hours of labor and planted a suspended native garden in the middle of a large sitting area that allows visual access to the growing root system that forms the lifeline of prairie plants.

KANSAS State Report
Pat Silovsky

From the **Great Plains Nature Center**, Jim Mason reports that City Naturalist **Bob Gress** is retiring this month. After almost 34 years of service to the Wichita Park Department, Bob's accomplishments include:



Retirement won't stop Bob from connecting people with nature.

Guiding and overseeing the creation of the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita and serving as director since 1997
Establishing the Wichita Wild nature education program in 1986
Co-authoring six books on the natural history of the prairie, most recently the monumental *Birds of Kansas* in 2012
Editing, and often co-authoring and/or acting as principal photographer for, the Great Plains Nature Center series of Pocket Guides (ten to date) and Faces of the Great Plains posters (nine to date)
Published hundreds of wildlife photographs in many magazines and books
Presented hundreds of interpretive programs to tens of thousands of people in Wichita and elsewhere.

Bob's talents were not unnoticed within our profession. He is the recipient of:

Distinguished Young Professional, NAI Region 6, 1983
Conservation Educator of the Year, 1989, Kansas Wildlife Federation
Outstanding Interpretive Program, NAI Region 6, 1994
Distinguished Professional Interpreter, NAI Region 6, 1994
Dr. Lennel I. Wright Conservation Award, 1995, Sedgwick County Conservation District

Meritorious Service Award, 1999, Wichita Audubon Society
Outstanding Site Publication, 2000, NAI (national)
First Place, 2001 NAI Media Competition, Visual Communications Section of national NAI
Conservationist of the Year, 2004, Kansas Wildlife Federation

Bob is excited about using his new-found free time to expand his work with the nature photography business *Birds In Focus* and conduct guided photography trips to all points of the compass. But most immediately, Bob and Mary plan to travel the U.S. in their RV over the next year, so be watching for them to show up at your place and give them a hearty welcome if they do!

Jill Haukos of Konza Prairie reports: "Every two years Konza Prairie opens its doors to the general public to show what Konza does for scientific research and environmental education. The Konza Prairie Biological Station is known worldwide as the preeminent center for grassland research and is dedicated to ecological research on a long-term basis, environmental education, and prairie conservation. To get a chance to see this magnificent prairie first hand, attend Visitor's Day, Saturday, September 29th.



Local middle school students sweep the prairie for insects

Robin Grumm reports that **Becky Matney**, naturalist at **Runge Conservation Nature Center** in Jefferson City, and her husband, Eric welcomed their second son into the world on Sunday, August 12, 2012. Jace Austin joins his big brother, Jackson as a part of the Matney family and as a future outdoor adventurer.

Pam Doty with **COE District** in St. Louis has accepted a promotion as National Water Safety Manager with the Corps of Engineers in Fort Worth, Texas. Even though she is leaving our great state of Missouri, we are thankful that she remains in Region 6.

Amanda Coonce of **Watkins Woolen Mill State Park & State Historic Site** reports that the **Music Festival and Back Porch Jam** will be held on Saturday, September 22, 2012 from 12:00-5:00 p.m. Featured musicians will perform on the front porch of the Watkins house in 30 minute sets. All attendees are invited to bring their own instruments, as an informal jam session will be taking place on the back porch of the house.

Dana Hoisington reports that **Prairie State Park's** will be featuring their annual **Prairie Jubilee** on September 29, so mark your calendars! This day-long celebration about the prairie will include guided bison tours, a living history loop, face painting, native plant sale, bison meat lunch, and musical entertainment. Prairie State Park will also be celebrating their 30-year anniversary during the Prairie Jubilee.

Greetings from Branson! The **Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center** had a busy summer. Their biggest event, **Family Fishing Fair**, coordinated by **Leah Eden**, had nearly 500 attendees. Held in conjunction with Free Fishing Days each June, this event offered hands on fishing opportunities, instruction, and fun. Over the next 12 months the hatchery will conduct a Visitor Use Survey to gather information about visitors. So far data collected for July (during several 100+ degree days) revealed that our site received 65,000 visitors (plus or minus 14,000), making Shepherd of the Hills one of the most highly-visited MDC facilities in the state. Finally, Shepherd of the Hills will once again conduct an annual Halloween program entitled "**Going Batty in Branson**" on October 26th. This program is in conjunction with 2012: International Year of the Bat to show how bats are important, largely misunderstood, and very interesting.

John Miller (Branson) wished to thank the staff and volunteers at both the **Daniel Boone Homestead and Village** and the **August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Center** for hosting the spring meeting of the NAI National Board. This was the first time in many years that the spring board meeting had been held outside of Fort Collins CO. The board was impressed with the St. Louis/St. Charles area and the wonderful facilities. These board meetings will be conducted across the US in future years and we *highly* encourage members to see *your* board in action.

What do you get when you cross frogs, snakes, turtles and 300 excited guests? You get the first annual **Herp-O-Rama!** **Shelly Cox** reports that on July 28th the Missouri Department of Conservation's regional office in St. Joseph Missouri hosted a public event designed to educate the public about the importance of these animals to our ecosystems in a fun, interactive way. **John Miller** from Shephard of the Hills Hatchery in Branson brought numerous snakes and turtles to share with the public and hosted Herp Jeopardy for competitive attendees. **Jonn Casey** of Casey's Creatures brought his family and his exotic snakes and shared his passion for these creatures. He also provided education about the importance of making sure pets remain pets and are not released into our delicate ecosystem. **Dr. Mills** from MWSU, who was a key event planner, captured numerous turtles, and members of the wildlife society shared their knowledge about these much-loved herps. Members of the **Loess Hills chapter of the Missouri Master Naturalists** offered their assistance in a variety of ways, including a frog jumping contest, crafts for the kids and by answering the many questions the public had about snakes. **Squaw Creek NWR** was on hand with live snakes including the state endangered Western Massasauga Rattlesnake. The response to this event was enormous and everyone had a great time and came away with a renewed respect for the misunderstood side of Missouri's wild creatures.



MISSOURI State Report
Michelle Soenksen



Attendees at a previous Prairie Jubilee learn about prairie history from living history interpreters.



Cindy Benson, volunteer with MDC, holds the program snake "Blakely" the black rat snake and shares him with a guest.

Missouri State Report (Continued)

Greg Jacobs of the **Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center** would like to inform every one of their upcoming event, **Mighty Marvels of Missouri**, October 26th and 27th from 6:30 – 9:30pm. The forest is alive with beings of strange and wonderful powers! Come on out to meet them and decide for yourself whether these odd characters use their super powers for the benefit of conservation in Missouri, or as a hindrance.



Participants at Learn 2 Camp discover tips and tricks for outdoor cooking.

Tyler Schwartze reports on the **Learn2 Programs in Missouri State Parks**.

Throughout this summer, Missouri State Parks have provided opportunities for visitors to learn outdoor skills through the Learn2 programs. At each park, different families found unique programs and opportunities for them to experience Missouri State Parks and the outdoors. In June, families who were inexperienced and new to camping were selected to participate in the Learn2 Camp program at one of four state parks. Each of the 41 families received instructions on how to make camp and set up tents, as well as cook food using a campfire, camp stove and Dutch oven. The next part of the series, Learn2 Paddle, took place in July. Learn2 and park staff taught them about safety on the water and paddling techniques then let them put their new skills to the test. Getting out on the water was a great way to deal with the record heat. Learn2 Experience the Outdoors was the third phase of the Learn2 series and took place in August. This program provided a variety of different sessions at each park, including archery, kayaking, geocaching and Dutch oven cooking.

Andrea Putnam, Chief Naturalist for Missouri State Parks (and Region 6 secretary) left Missouri State Parks on September 14 to be a stay at home mom to her daughter, Carli. She plans to remain active with NAI and continue to serve as the Region 6 secretary. She will be missed!



LOUISIANA
State Report
Rusty
Scarborough

Louise Todd, of the **Audubon Aquarium of the Americas** reports: “The Aquarium, Zoo and Insectarium are winding down from a busy summer. Hurricane Isaac sent summer out with a splash though fortunately all facilities made it through the storm with minimal damage. We held training for our new youth volunteers in July and are looking forward to those new volunteers joining us during the school year. The start of the school year means an increase in school groups in the building and our outreach team is busy almost every day of the week! The aquarium’s annual fundraiser, Scales & Ales, is coming up September 14th and proceeds from the event benefit education and conservation at the Aquarium.”

Cane River Creole National Historical Park wrapped up another successful summer season, according to **Nathan Hatfield**. The summer was highlighted by contributions from interns, teachers, and volunteers. Cultural Resource Diversity intern **Simone Sanders** contributed two new site bulletins highlighting the enslaved populations and the importance of the plantation stores. Teacher-Ranger-Teacher, **Pierre LaCaze** assisted in the front-line interpretive operation while also creating a plant identification guide. Volunteers from the **Natchitoches Goodwill Industries Transitional Living Program** assisted in the up keep of the park’s demonstration garden and historic buildings.

Rachel Demascal at **Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park** reports on the success of Earth Camp 2012, a place-based, experiential summer day camp program consisting field trips designed to increase awareness of and appreciation for the natural world, promote responsible environmental action for healthier communities, and bolster readiness to learn Life Science and Social Studies in the classroom. Earth Camp 2012 was a partner program of Caddo Parish Parks, Shreveport Green, and ShrevCORPS, with many other agencies contributing as well.

Stacy Gray has hit the ground running with new programs such as Nature Storytime, Silver Naturalists and Babes in the Woods.

Leann Bunn, the naturalist at **Lake Tenkiller State Park** in Gore, OK, reports they will be hosting a "Women In The Outdoors" workshop on November 3-4, 2012. "For the past six years, we have hosted the biggest WITO event in the state," says Bunn.

Neil Garrison will be one of the instructors at the "Women In The Outdoors" event. Neil's course is entitled: "C.S.I. -- The Nature Version." The description of this unique program is as follows: "Detectives are adept at finding and analyzing clues. Join us for this nature hike that is designed to root out those easily-overlooked hints that tell us the story of what happened at that location last night or the day before. We'll search for wild animal tracks and figure out which wild creatures wore those particular 'shoes.' Can we find remnants of the last meal that some wild critter feasted upon? What about that hole over there that is dug into the earth? Who did that? And listen! Did you hear that dogwood bark? What tactile clues can we gain by placing our hands upon tree 'skin?' This nature exploration foray will be a real eye-opener. Will you tag along with us?"

Tough times? Cutbacks? Doing more with less? Well, that's not what we're hearing from the folks over in **Tulsa**. A private revenue fundraising campaign has just been launched in that community. They project that, in three to five years, they will have enough to fund the purchase of a 32-acre tract that is near the junction of 121st and Yale (i.e., where it borders the Arkansas River). It will be the site of a pioneer farm"complete with an old school house and other historical buildings. It will function as a satellite of the **Oxley Nature Center**. It is heartening to hear this good news!

WildCare, wildlife rehabilitation center in Noble OK, has some great news, too! They released the last of over 400 Mississippi Kites on September 1. These insect eating raptors were abandoned in their nests during the June heat wave.

Naturalist **Kathy Furneaux** celebrated "Frog Day" at **Lake Thunderbird State Park's** Discovery Cove Nature Center on Saturday, June 16th. She presented the program "OK Amphibians" four times throughout the day.

The **J.T. Nickel Family Nature and Wildlife Preserve** is located near the Illinois River over by Tahlequah, OK. It is a unit of The Nature Conservancy (Oklahoma Chapter). On Saturday, November 10th, they will be leading a public tour entitled "Hike to Big Spring."

First-person interpreters from the **Oklahoma History Center** have partnered up with **Oklahoma River Cruises** in order to give the boat tour passengers a unique perspective on the history of central Oklahoma. The special tours were done in June, July and August.



OKLAHOMA State Report
Kenton Peters

Happy anniversary! **Karl Pierce** of **Guadalupe Mountains National Park** says the park is celebrating its 40th anniversary on Saturday, October 6, 2012 from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM. The day's activities will include musical performances, hay rides, pony rides, special guest speakers, delicious BBQ at Frijole Ranch, living history at the Pinery Butterfield Stage Ruins and lectures, films, and special photograph and mural exhibits at the Pine Springs Visitor Center. Guadalupe Mountains National Park will also formally launch the Peak Fitness Challenge on October 6, along with partners **Franklin Mountains State Park** in El Paso, the **Texas Mountain Trail**, and **GeoBetty**.



TEXAS State Report
Tara Humphreys

Rediscover **Bastrop State Park!** The devastating Bastrop County Complex Wildfire in September 2011 affected 96 percent of Bastrop State Park, but recovery is well underway. A "Rediscover Bastrop State Park" event on September 1, 2012 commemorated the historic fire through guided hikes, fire exhibits and bridge-building demonstrations. Over 350 visitors created their own toad abodes, met an endangered Houston toad, talked to firefighters and learned about volunteer opportunities to restore the Lost Pines area back to its former glory.

Want to go on a Texas-sized treasure hunt? The next statewide **Texas State Parks Geocache Challenge** is set to kick off on October 1, 2012. It's a great way to experience state parks! Check it out here: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/activities/outdoor_recreation/geocache/



Visitors speak to regional biologist Greg Creacy about reforestation efforts in Bastrop State Park.



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