



# VISIONS

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## These May Be the Last Steps I Take...

*By John Miller-Missouri*

My most scary interpretive moment took place on a field trip during the 2003 Region Workshop in Oklahoma. The field trip was to the beautiful Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge near Lawton, Oklahoma. I was looking forward to the field trip not just to see this historic 70,000 acre wildlife area, but to be able to experience it at dark.

The main tour ended with all of us getting off the bus and hiking into the refuge for about a mile. Along the way, the refuge manager was mentioning the wildlife in the area including bison, but also the small population of mountain lions. We arrive at a secluded semi-wooded area with lots of rocks. The manager is explaining the land use by the public and various management practices such as prescribed burns. No sooner as had he mentioned how they had recently had a bison killed by a mountain lion, as if on cue, we heard something large walking slowly just over the ridge behind us.

At this point it became difficult to pay attention to the refuge manager. Between 10 and 12 of the 20 participants were now looking away from the manager to see what was making the slow methodical foot falls on the leaves and grass. The manager, to his credit, reassured us that even as the sun was now going down, the mountain lions did not see us as a food source. While that was true, we still started hovering to the trail to make a potential retreat. Having my camera in hand and thinking what a great photo this might be (a mountain lion at sunset!), I just had to see what was there.

Knowing full well that these might be the last steps I ever take, I crested the hill and looked at an empty forest ravine.

After ten seconds of silence, it moved.

It turned out to be a bumbling armadillo and not a giant mountain lion as my

mind had prepared for. I was able to invite a few other participants to look and listen. The foot falls of the armadillo in the leaves made it appear to be a rather large animal stalking us. It turns out, the only stalking was by the armadillo on unsuspecting grubs and earthworms.

Scary experience behind us, we were able to enjoy the hike back and even get to spend time in the refuge in total darkness. It was a memory I will never forget. Because we had experienced a perceived threat that turned out humorous, we were now able to focus on the sensory experiences of the beautiful refuge. In this case the fear set us up for an even more immersive experience. All of us thanked the organizers for planning the trip to take place in the dark. In doing so we had a unique experience that will last a lifetime. A big thanks to the armadillo for adding the extra spice of fright.



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

## Director's Corner

# It Was a Privilege to Serve

*John Miller-Region 6 Director*

While this is my last Director's Corner for the VIisions newsletter, it definitely won't be my last article for this Region. It has been a privilege to serve this wonderful region as your Director over the past few years. I want to especially thank the officers, state coordinators, and appointees who have shared their passion, expertise, and cooperation.

In looking back over the things that I wated to accomplish, I feel good that this region has continued to grow, has been more responsive to members, and continued to innovate in many directions. Region 6 has thrived due to members like you who see the future as a golden opportunity for yourself, your organization, and your profession. I am extremely proud of the "Humble and Hospitable" South Central Region.

With the new NAI bylaws and the creation of the Advisory Council, our region has identified four core member services. Under the new Unit guidelines, each unit not only submits a detailed budget, but also identifies their own core member services and how they are going to accomplish them. Region 6's four core member services are:

1. Annual Unit Workshop
2. Unit Newsletter
3. Scholarships / Financial Aid
4. Leadership / Professional Development Opportunities

Thanks to you and the region leadership, we have accomplished each of these core services and more. I am pleased that our leaders view opportunities for leadership/professional development as an ongoing service and not a one-and-done service. As with any member services, please continue to provide input to your state coordinator or region officer to keep them relevant and accessible.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed ideas and concerns over my tenure director. Those comments make this one of the best units in the NAI organization. I ask all of you to continue to communicate with your Region leadership to voice your concerns and comments. I do have one leftover from my spring newsletter message of the three ways you can make yourself indispensable to your organization:

- Give your best effort to all you do.
- Always make the effort to further the mission of your organization.
- In good times as well as bad, be professional.

I hope you keep striving to learn and improve your craft as an interpreter.

Finally, I leave you with one personal story to answer a long-standing question that I get from people who receive my emails. I have chosen to end nearly all of

my email correspondence with the word, "Cheers!" Over the years, many people have asked why I don't use the typical "sincerely" or "thank you." Well, anyone who knows me, knows that I am not typical. The real reason is from a single autograph in the days before email in, yes, 1985! While working on my Master's degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia, I happened to see a flyer that a cartoonist named Gary Larson would be at the MU Bookstore to sign his *Far Side* books. Luckily, I had just been give one of his books just a month earlier and was an immediate fan. Standing in line was a chore, but getting to meet him was true inspiration. He signed my two books and shared his love of biology with me and the rest of us in line. It was not until I got back to my dorm room that I noticed that he had signed it, "Cheers! Gary Larson". What a great way to make a positive impression and make someone smile. Of all the thing he could have written, he wrote a simple word that to this day still keeps me smiling: Cheers! So to this day, I want to keep sharing that joy of inspiration that Gary Larson had shared with me as an infectious perpetual smile.

I wish to thank everyone who keeps smiling and keeps the light of interpretation burning bright. You are the future of Region 6, NAI, and interpretation.

"Cheers!"

-John Miller

(and Gary Larson)

# Dark Tourism

*Jon Kobl-Kansas*



A beautiful day at Skogskyrkogården, Sweden.



World Heritage Tower, London



Jon and Marisol happily visit the Salem Witch Museum.

During Halloween in the United States, the number of interpreters suddenly surges in theaters, haunted mansions, and regular homes awaiting the arrival of unsuspecting trick-or-treaters. Then on 1 November those numbers quickly die off like soldiers strewn across a battlefield.

Despite little costumed kids seeking treats, dark tourism or as academics say, “thanatourism” or “thanatopsis” is a real market segment, including heritage sites related to death such as battlefields (Battle of Hastings, England), cemeteries (World Heritage Skogskyrkogården, Sweden, see photo), memorials (World Heritage Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Japan), prisons (World Heritage Tower of London, see photo), concentration camps (World Herit-



Jon and Marisol happily visit Buchenwald, Germany

age Auschwitz in Poland or Buchenwald, Germany, see photo) execution and massacre sites (Salem, Massachusetts, see photo), real haunted houses (The House of Witches in Guanajato, Mexico), and no doubt shopping malls taken over by zombie hordes risen from hell. For this segment, interpretation should be key, right?

A recent study entitled [Battlefield sites as dark tourism attractions: an analysis of experience](#) by Stephen Miles wanted to know if tourists to battlefields in England actually sought a more macabre experience than regular tourists. He conducted a survey of visitors at 4 British battlefields and coded for “dark words” in their responses. He found that people were not particularly thanatopic: they arrived in search of a variety of experiences. Often times they wanted simply to enjoy the scen-

ery. He did notice, however, that weather strongly affected people’s dark experience. Apparently dark days are better for dark experiences.

Indeed when my wife and I visited the World Heritage cemetery Skogskyrkogården (where Greta Garbo rests) on a bright sunny day, we really enjoyed the forested scenery. On another occasion, however, we visited Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany. Marisol couldn’t even enter, stricken with thanatopic overpoweringness. But I entered not because of a fascination with death, but to experience my Jewish history, a very non-dark reason.

So commercialization and weather can darken or lighten the visitor experience. I’m still not sure, nevertheless, how much interpretation can truly influence it. But I’m dying to find out.

# Empathetic Interpretation

*Kathy Miller-Missouri*



Emotions can be a very scary side of interpretation. Once we befriend guests, making them comfortable enough to be open for new information, we sometimes learn why she or he is really there.

At the Butterfly Palace and Rainforest Adventure, we have butterflies and the other rainforest animals that I work with. We think people are coming for fun, beauty, and a little adventure and education for the kids, and that seems usually to be the case

However, symbolism peeks in to the experience. A woman is found sobbing in a chair in the Aviary where the butterflies surround the visitors. An astute young worker, Molly, sees, takes a deep breath, kneels down to the woman and asks if she is okay. For the next half hour they make a deep connection as the woman explains the death of her daughter who loved butterflies. She had chosen to come for that reason but had no idea the effect the beauty and numbers of butterflies would have on her emotionally. Molly empathized and asked her questions about her

daughter to help her through this experience as they both cried. Then Molly left the woman long enough to find a butterfly which had emerged and was ready to fly. You guessed it; Mom got to release that butterfly and experienced calm from the experience. This guest "need" is now watched for by our staff in all areas of the building, and various empathic responses offered.

Repeatedly we hear of a guest's loved one whose interest was butterflies, and after they passed, butterflies come to them at the most unexpected places. This happened to me at a recent craft show. For six years we have set up in the same place and never saw a butterfly. But this year a guest appeared along with a butterfly. She always wore butterfly motif clothing, she explained, because after her husband passed away, she seems to always be accompanied by a butterfly. And yes, the butterfly followed her on her way! We, as well as all the surrounding guests, were touched by her story. Keep in mind the importance of a sense of place. The empathetic

staff under these circumstances can create encounters that are highly appreciated and remembered.

Just when we are ready to discuss tangible aspects of our resources such as skeletal structures, scales, metamorphosis, life spans, origin, or rainforest issues, the guest sometimes makes surprising intangible connections to the resource and *with us*. This connection can sometimes be dramatic and tearful. As we learn our resource, we need to be aware not only of the emotional and cultural connections which could be made, but also that we can hone our empathetic responses as well. Continue to find ways to know your audience and don't be afraid of responding so that you know where they are emotionally coming from.

***SAVE THE DATE!***

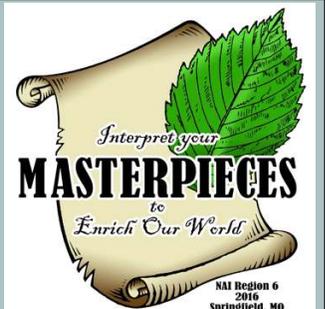
**NAI REGION 6 WORKSHOP**

February 21-25, 2016 Springfield, MO

***"Interpret Your Masterpieces to Enrich Our World"***

View the teaser trailer at

<https://nairegion6.wordpress.com/>





## Financial Aid Stipends Are Available Towards the 2016 Workshop Registration!



Thanks to generous donors and funding from the members of NAI Region 6, financial assistance for the Region 6 Workshop is available in the form of a **Free Workshop Registration**. These stipends are open to any current NAI Region 6 member (not just students and volunteers, but also professionals, seasonals, and vendors) demonstrating **need** and **service** to the field of interpretation. Stipends are only available to those who are NAI members at the time of application.

**There are 6 stipends available this year for 100% of the workshop registration fee** (does not include field trips, or travel costs). Stipend recipients are responsible for covering their own travel and lodging costs.

Selections will be made by a board committee in a blind review (names, states, and site names removed), and all applications will remain confidential.

Priority will be based on:

- Financial Need
- Service to NAI and the profession
- Responses questions on page 2 of this application.

*Applicants who do not adhere to these instructions will not be considered.*

**Applications for financial assistance must be received no later than January 4, 2016 to be considered.** You may send your application via email (preferred), fax, or snail-mail. So that you may register properly for the conference, you will be notified whether or not you are receiving financial assistance by January 15, 2016.

Applications can be submitted by email, fax, or mail to:

John Miller, Region 6 Director  
john.miller@mdc.mo.gov (**Subject Line: 2016 Region 6 Financial Aid**)  
Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center  
483 Hatchery Road  
Branson MO 65616  
FAX: (417) 334-4881

**Questions?** Contact Region 6 Director John Miller at (417) 334-4865 ext 0 or the email listed above.

**Applications for financial assistance must be received no later than January 4, 2016 to be considered.**

## Financial Aid Stipends...cont.



### Application Instructions:

You must be a current NAI member at the time of Application.

Non-NAI members will not be considered for stipends.

2015 Stipend recipients are not eligible for the 2016 Stipends.

Unsuccessful applicants from 2015 & recipients/applicants previous to 2015 are eligible.

*One condition of accepting the stipend is that you must provide NAI with your Social Security number for IRS purposes. This information will only be requested if you receive a stipend.*

Your application should be as complete as possible and consist of a document not longer than three pages, containing following information:

### **Page 1:** (all information must be provided)

At the top, type "Application for NAI Region 6 Workshop Registration Stipend"

Your Name

Your Mailing Address (Street, City, State, Zip)

Your E-mail

Your Daytime Phone Number

### **Pages 2 (and 3 if necessary)**

Provided specific information as necessary, but should not exceed a total of 3 pages:

*[Scoring is based on responses to items 1-8, not including all 8 items reduces your score; please answer each question in as much detail as possible]*

Are you a member of NAI?      *yes or no*

*Must be a paid NAI Member by January 4, 2016 to be eligible*

2. Do you currently reside within Region 6?      *yes or no*

3. How long have you been a member of NAI or its parent organizations?

4. Are you currently certified or attempting certification in any of these categories? CHI, CIT, CIM, CIP, CIG, CIH

5. Please provide a short statement about why you wish to attend the Region 6 Workshop.

6. What benefits will your attendance at this workshop provide to NAI, your organization, and the interpretive profession?

7. What NAI regional or national offices or committee positions have you held?

Please provide a short statement explaining your need for financial assistance



## Awards and Scholarship Winners for 2015

### George Kastler Interpretive Scholarships



Left to right: **Yun Ho** (graduate), Janet Price (nominator), **Aubree Schmid** (undergraduate), and **Ashleigh Long** (undergraduate)

### Outstanding Professional Interpreter



Left to right: Steve Jacobsen (committee), Cyndi Cogbill (committee), **Kathleen Savaiano** (award winner), Lisa Richter

### Outstanding Interpretive Media-*Discover Nature* podcasts and radio spots by Candice Davis, Media Specialist, Missouri Department of Conservation



Left to right: Amber Edwards (committee), Wyatt Layman accepting for **Candice Davis**, Cyndi Cogbill (committee)

### Outstanding New Interpreter-Elizabeth Bradley



Left to right: Cyndi Cogbill (committee), **Elizabeth Bradley**, Janet Price (nominator)

### Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer-the "Wild Ones" volunteers at Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center



Left to right: Amber Edwards (committee), Cyndi Cogbill (committee), **Ruth Farrand-Cox**, **Dianna Lentz**, **Kathy Torres**, **Judy Oetting**, **Phyllis Boyd**, Lisa LaCombe (nominator)

The Association of Missouri Interpreters Annual Conference was held on September 13-16 in Kansas City, Missouri. Congratulations to all of the scholarship and awards recipients!

The 2016 Association of Missouri Interpreters Conference will be held September 11-14 at Cuivre River State Park in Troy, Missouri. All are welcome, even non-Missourians! For more information, visit [www.mointerp.net](http://www.mointerp.net)



## 2015 Interpretive Naturalist Section Awards August 5, 2015 Mount Magazine State Park-Arkansas

### 2015 Outstanding Event or Program

#### Superheroes and the Curse of Alien Invaders

While a costumed evening trail hike is not new, the *Super Heroes and the curse of the Alien Invaders* was an original approach in the way that they got super heroes and even super villains to help fight a common alien. In that regard, they get high marks for originality. Their original script was as much entertaining as it was interpretively informative. Visitors were transformed by the connections between superheroes fighting against alien invaders that were ravaging the resources they came to enjoy. What was extremely remarkable was their approach to make connections with younger audiences. They paired up the following super heroes and aliens at the following stations:

Spiderman vs Emerald Ash Borer  
 Batman & Poison Ivy vs Bush Honeysuckle  
 Kermit the Frog & Miss Wonder Piggy vs Chytrid Fungus  
 Aqua Woman vs Asian Carp  
 Cat Woman vs Feral Cats

By getting them involved with super heroes they were able to understand some of the concepts of invasive and alien species. But more than anything else, the passion and commitment to a high quality event was exemplary. Their creativity and commitment to detail made for a highly memorable interpretive event that was enjoyed by all.

### Thomas Say Award of Excellence

#### Outstanding Naturalist 2015

John Miller

Thomas Say focused on insects and molluscs, but he studied all fauna. He first described to science some reptiles very well known today such as the Queen Snake and Black Rat Snake. The Bull Snake *Pituophis catenifer sayi* was named for him. He began his career as one of the founders of the Philadelphia Academy of Science and served as long-term editor of its journal.

John Miller interprets all flora and fauna, and considers reptiles and amphibians his favorite. He has written an award-winning book about the "herps" of his state of Missouri and has edited the Missouri Association of Interpreters newsletter for soon-to-be-17 years. John has been an exemplary interpretive naturalist with the Missouri Department of Conservation, and a devoted member of our National Association for Interpretation. During the last 30 years, John Miller has presented hundreds of both natural and cultural history programs.

He began as a paid Naturalist in 1990 (August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Center, St. Charles Missouri). Promoted to Interpretive Center Manager in 1999 (Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center, Branson, Missouri). From 1981-1998, had the BEST part-time naturalist job ever for the Missouri Department of Conservation. During this part-time job, he was able to house, feed, and care for a wide variety of orphaned or injured wild animals during the summer.



**ARKANSAS  
State Report**

Don Simons

**Mount Magazine State Park** hosted the first **Interpretive Naturalist Section workshop** in August. Forty members from Region 6 and other areas of the country were in attendance.

**Arkansas State Parks** held its annual interpretation workshop at the **Ozark Folk Center** in August. Seventy-five state interpreters and supervisors participated in sessions, demonstrations, crafts, an interpreter quiz, and a very lively interpreter challenge.

Mark your calendars now! The **2017 Region 6 Workshop** is scheduled for February 26-March 1, 2017 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Rogers, Arkansas, located right off the interstate near the Pinnacle Promenade and close to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Our working theme is "Building Bridges Connecting Art, Nature, and History." Workshop chair Lori Spencer is looking for a few additional committee members. Contact Lori at [bflyspencer8@gmail.com](mailto:bflyspencer8@gmail.com) for more details and discussion. Conference calls and meetings are coming soon.



2015 Annual Interpretation Workshop

Interpreters from around the state gathered for the 2015 interpretation workshop.



**OKLAHOMA  
State Report**

Karina Minor

Park Ranger **Kyle Thoreson** at **Osage Hills State Park** taught classes in September and October for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, an opportunity for seniors to participate in "continuing education" opportunities...without having the hassle of enrolling in college classes for credit and without having to pay the expensive fees for college tuition. Kyle has done a lot of investigation on the history of the 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps' involvement in getting that state park constructed.

Oklahoma City's **PaddleSports** conducted a "moonlight paddle" on one of the large lakes in Oklahoma City with the opportunity to view the total lunar eclipse earlier this fall. The novel thing about the activity was that the staff sprinkled lunar-oriented trivia questions throughout the after-sundown paddle with the lucky quiz winners being awarded Moon Pies as their reward! What a sweet treat! Come for the education.....stay for the snacks!

The July 2015 edition of the *National Geographic* magazine featured a photo-rich write-up on the modern revival of mountain man re-enactments. Tulsa's **Eddie Reese**, director of the Oxley Nature Center, was at the event at which the photos were taken.

The **Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation** is hosted the annual **Oklahoma Wildlife Expo** on the last weekend of September. This year was the tenth installment of that venture! One of the purposes of the expo is to emphasize the role that birders, mountain bikers, and kayakers can play in the conservation of our state's wildlife resources. . On average, about 55,000 people attend the three-day event. Region Sixers **Neil Garrison** and **Karena Minor** manned educational booths at this year's event.

**Doug Tallamy** presented *Bringing Nature Home by Creating Living Landscapes* at Oklahoma State University in August. Mr. Tallamy is an entomologist and ornithologist at the University of Delaware.





**TEXAS State Report**

Tara Humphreys

**Tara Humphreys** is thrilled to welcome **Katie Raney** (our VIions co-editor) back to Texas State Parks! Previously the park interpreter at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks for over four years, Katie has spent the last two and a half years building her skills at the Bullock Texas State History Museum as their Family Programs Manager. She is starting back with **Texas State Parks** as the **Region 6 Interpretive Specialist** in Tyler, Texas. Glad to have you back, Katie!

Tara would also like to welcome two new interpreters to Texas State Parks. **Wendi Laws** is the new park interpreter at **Pedernales Falls State Park**, coming from Travis County Parks in Austin. **Kristen Williams**, new interpreter at **Bastrop and Buescher State Parks**, comes to Texas State Parks from the Fort Worth Zoo. Welcome to you both!

**Lari Jo Johnston** of the **Coastal Bend Bays and Estuary Program** is excited to welcome their new Education Coordinator, **Leigh Perry**, who started in August. Leigh, a CIG, is a go-getter and is already presenting programs and helping with the 2016 NAI National Workshop.

What an honor! Staff from **Dinosaur Valley State Park** was invited to present at the National Fossil Day at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. **Philip Helling, Kathy Lenz, and Jason Sanchez** represented **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** and the citizens of Texas very, very well! Great job y'all! Texas to have earned the coveted Dark Sky Places recognition. Enchanted Rock had a successful Rock Star Festival on Feb. 21 featuring speakers, astronomy clubs, hikes and booths to celebrate night skies.



Philip Helling, Kathy Lenz, and Jason Sanchez at the Smithsonian.

**Alisa Koslowski** reports that the **Biodiversity Education Center** at **Coppell Nature Park** has had a great first year and a half, providing many different types of programs. The Friends of Coppell Nature Park board has begun the second season of fall lectures and will cover topics such as urban wildlife, citizen science, and raptors of North Texas just to name a few. In July, the BEC started the "Wild Weekdays" series. Every Wednesday morning in July for 90 minutes, families could come and enjoy a come-and-go activity. We partnered with the local National Honor Society students to help. We used "Incredible Journey" from Project Wet, "Everybody Needs a Home" from Project Wild, "Trees in Trouble" from Project Learning Tree, and an in-house developed backyard bird feeding program. While the summer was successful, a second run of three of the programs this fall in the evenings to try to reach those who couldn't come during the day was not highly attended. We will try Saturdays this spring and from there make a decision on when is best to offer this series of classes. It is all about trial and error this first few years. (Editor's Note: It's *always* about trial and error!)



**KANSAS State Report**

Pat Silovsky

Thoughts on Fright and Interpretation from Kansas Interpreters

NAI Certifications: Not so scary after all

Recently, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go through the Certified Interpretive Trainer Course in Carlisle, PA. At the end of the week we were required to give a 20-minute training demonstration in front of our peers and a video camera. As all of us know interpreters are some of the best people out there. We support each other and want to see each other succeed. So why is it that we are all so nervous and scared to do a 20-minute training session? My guess is that we are all passionate about our chosen profession and want to do the best job possible. I met some of the brightest people around--folks from NASA, Pennsylvania State Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, zoos, national parks, and more. It didn't seem to matter from where we came or our experience level--all of us were nervous. In the end though, we did just fine and passed with flying colors. So, if you have ever considered going through an NAI training, but were worried about that SCARY required final presentation--just do it! I guarantee that while there will be some nerves, you will likely do just fine. You will be exhausted, but you will have met some amazing people and you will have been given lots of tools to help you become a better interpreter. I guarantee it!



- Delia Lister, PSU Nature Reach

Scary interpretation to me is a program that goes okay but feels like it is missing something that would make it better, but you don't have a good idea that would fit. When you know it is an incomplete program, it makes it harder to present. Of course, you can lay out the bones of the subject and the details but as any interpreter will tell you, until you run through the program with a real group you don't know for sure if it is a good program. All programs need a few tweaks from time to time as things change and I am comfortable to do that, but when there is not a good solution--that is scary. Usually those programs get put on the "extinct" list at Lakewood. The other scary thing that you can encounter along the trail is an 8-year-old that knows more than you do! That is a little spooky.



Brian Underwood, Lakewood Discovery Center

Milford Nature Center has presented "Monster Myths By Moonlight" as our Halloween program for 25 years. Visitors ride our hayrack to the start of our trail walk at night. We start an hour or so before dark so if you don't want to walk the trail at night, you don't have to. Along the trail you stop at stations where you meet a "scary" monster like a spider, bat, owl, or vulture. The presenters are dressed in costume, too. We have a witch with the vulture, Little Red Riding Hood with a predator station, Batman and the bats, a wizard with the owls, a snake charmer with a snake, and a spider at the spider station. As they leave the trail, Mother Nature serves cookies and cider.

Pat Silovsky, Mildford Nature Center



### LOUISIANA State Report

Rusty Scarborough

**Louisiana** has seen some weather extremes in 2015! The first half of the year brought flooding and almost a year's worth of rain by June 30. Then since the 4<sup>th</sup> of July there has been no significant rain. And here in October we are setting records for highs, in the mid to upper 90's.

In late August, Certified Interpretive Guide class at **Walter Jacobs Nature Park** and had six participants, from four different agencies. The class went very well and every student was certified. Louisiana now has six new CIGs! Congratulations, all.

Changes are also afoot at **Walter Jacobs**, and the exhibit hall has a new look. Gone are the taxidermy mount exhibits; over many years, the specimens had deteriorated. We relocated the live animal to the former botanical room, the former botanical specimens now reside in the classroom, and the larger exhibit room that the animals were in is not a children's activity room with a puppet theater painted by our own naturalist **Hulya Onel**. Also we have added a natural block building table, a reading nook and a puzzle table. All of these changes have been very well received!

Park Naturalist **Stacy Gray** has taken a new fulltime position with **Caddo Parish Parks** as education coordinator. Congratulations!



NAI Class participants making animal faces (Lily Jonsek, Dave Young, Nodie Williams, Rusty Scarborough (CIT), Anne Lutz, Natalie Hunsicker and Cindy Cason)



Puppet Theater (Corey Bryant, Stacy Gray, Liz Irvin, Hulya Onel and Lily Jonsek)



**John Miller** reports that the **Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center** was fortunate to have a very good student intern this summer. **Christy Wilder**, student at College of the Ozarks in Branson, spent the entire summer giving tours, helping with fish production, updating exhibits, and re-writing a trail brochure. Christy had recently completed her NAI Certified Interpretive Guide training prior to the summer and was a breath of fresh air.

**MISSOURI State Report**

Michelle Soenksen

John also reports that there are two big programs coming up at the Fish Hatchery. One is the annual Halloween event called “Which is Which?” on October 23 and the site’s signature event, “Vulture Venture” on February 20, 2016.

**Catherine McGrane** announces that **Robyn Parker** has accepted the naturalist position at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, effective September 16, 2015. Robyn has been an hourly naturalist at Powder Valley for the last four years and has a full working knowledge of the facility, its programs, animals, and resources, as well as a strong knowledge base of interpretation. As an hourly naturalist, Robyn has been working with volunteers, assisting with invasive plant species management, and care of our native gardens, in addition to developing and presenting programs. Robyn has a BS in Education from Missouri Baptist University. She is a Certified Interpretive Guide through the National Association for Interpretation. Robyn previously worked at the St. Louis Zoo presenting education programs for the public and had animal care responsibilities. She taught remedial reading to students at the Imagine Academy of Careers Elementary School in St. Louis. Robyn is a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving as an intelligence analyst.

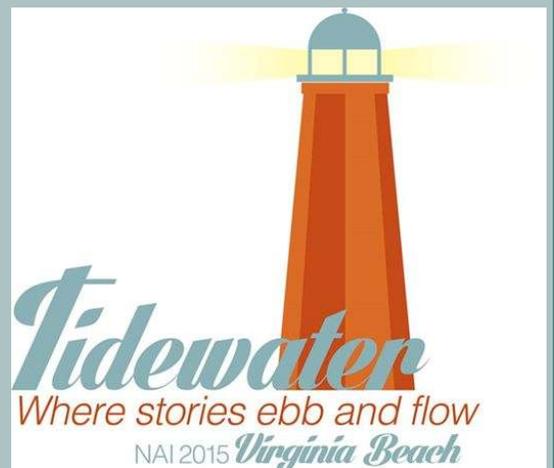
2015 NAI National Conference  
 November 10-14, 2015  
 Virginia Beach, Virginia



Registration will be open soon!

Virginia’s historic hospitality awaits you at this year’s NAI National Conference in Virginia Beach, November 10-14. Located in the natural and cultural epicenter of Virginia called “Tidewater,” the area is home to one of the largest sea ports in the world as well as hundreds of miles of coast line. With hundreds of museums, nature centers, parks, and a world-class zoo and aquarium, there is something for everyone in Virginia’s Tidewater!

For more information visit [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com)



## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Articles submitted for publication in Visions should be sent to the editors at:

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### DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE:

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