



Filling My Days With Sunshine

By Neil Garrison-Oklahoma

Inside this issue:

<i>Director's Corner</i>	2
<i>Director's Corner (cont.)</i>	3
<i>Transitions</i>	4
<i>ASP Launches NRID</i>	
<i>Under Construction But Open for Business</i>	5
<i>Region 6 Members Receive National Awards</i>	6
<i>Arkansas State Report</i>	7
<i>Oklahoma State Report</i>	8
<i>Texas State Report</i>	
<i>Texas State Report (cont.)</i>	9
<i>Kansas State Report</i>	
<i>Louisiana State Report</i>	10
<i>Missouri State Report</i>	11
<i>Missouri State Report (cont.)</i>	12
<i>All About Region 6</i>	14

The theme of this issue of the Visions newsletter is "Transitions." In my estimation, going from a 40-hours-a-week/work-every-weekend career to a new life of retirement surely qualifies as a "transition" -- big time!

There are probably very few other examples of life changes that embrace such a "night vs. day" contrast. For 30 years, I was employed as a naturalist at a municipal park and nature center in central Oklahoma.

All of that changed when I retired in 2009. I thoroughly enjoyed my job (or else I probably would not have stuck with it for three decades!). I have often quipped that my employer paid me to do what I would, otherwise, have done just for fun.

It was a big change when my former employer transi-

tioned over to paying me to stay home! (...i.e., my monthly pension payments). That initiated some soul-searching.

What was I to do, now, to fill my days with thoughtful and meaningful activities? I looked upon it as an opportunity. I could now consciously fill my days with pleasant things.

Life is not perfect, of course. There is no escaping death and taxes. I could, however, minimize the unpleasant aspects of my world while, at the same time, attempting to maximize the pleasant aspects of life.

After retirement, I transitioned into weeks filled to the brim with fun volunteer duties. I lead scores of nature hikes. Quite a few of the public libraries invited me to be the guest speaker at children's programs. The natural



history museum put my life skills to work. The local nature center has a volunteer support group, and I have been kept very busy as a consultant (again: as a volunteer).

It's a work in progress. I've yet to explore every possible way to put my volunteering to full effectiveness. It's a transition ... from one workaday world to another, of sorts.

It's been an adventure!



Ever wonder what an Eastern Screech Owl looks like in "transition?"

This is one of the education birds at Pittsburg State University's Nature Reach program. Every July or August, the screech owls molt their feathers. The feathers on their heads are always the last to come in.



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

Director's Corner

A New Path for NAI and Region 6

John Miller-Region 6 Director

Change can be a little unnerving and may make it seem like we are on our own. Whether the change was by choice or not, it means we are now going in a new direction. We can all relate to our transition from junior high to high school. At the time, it was a big step and one we had to take. In looking back, we made the most of it and it turned out to be a very positive experience. Not all transitions are smooth and not all are the result of something that had been going wrong. More often than not they are the result of a need to take a new direction that shows promise.

This fall, NAI made a significant transition to steer this world-class organization in a new direction. One of the biggest things that took place at the NAI Board Meeting was the approval of a new and comprehensive strategic plan. This document (which I hope you will take the time to read at: <http://naiplanning.wordpress.com/full-plan-draft/>) took over three years of effort by many

dedicated members like you to become reality. Your comments and concerns are reflected into this new document. I invite you to look over the three top tabs of "About the Strategic Plan," "Definition, Mission and Vision," and "Draft Strategic Imperatives". These pages will provide you even more framework on how the strategic plan is to be implemented. You will be very impressed with the detail and the new goals for NAI.

A very positive sidenote to approving the NAI Strategic Plan was that this same document can now be used by all NAI Units for their individual strategic plans. In other words, the Advisory Council gave its blessing to any unit to use this new plan for their unit's strategic plan. Units like Region 6 can simply adopt the NAI Strategic Plan as their Unit Strategic Plan. This was met with overwhelming support by all Unit representatives. Units still have the option to strengthen their strategic plans in the future, but for now they don't have

to struggle to get one in placed by the end of the year.

From this point on, your Region 6 Officers and leadership committee are putting the final touches on our Core Member Services. These are the services that the unit leaders believe are the most important services that are or will be providing to their unit members. The Board of Directors will view these as the minimum services that the Organizational Unit will provide. As such, these must be strongly connected to the mission and goals of NAI. Annual goals and objectives for these Core Member Services will provide the backbone of the Organizational Units annual evaluation.

(continued on page 3)

"More often than not [transitions] are the result of a need to take a new direction that shows promise."

Clarification of units and regions/sections: Don't get hung up on the term unit. Regions and Sections still exist. The term "unit" is simply an administrative term that shows no favoritism towards region or section. In the past there was a perception that Regions (based on geography) were a more elevated status than Sections (based on interests). By administratively calling all regions and sections "units," the perception of a hierarchy was taken away. All units are equal in the eyes of NAI and can continue to call themselves Regions and Sections. In fact, Region 3 has already take the step to remove the number from their name and now calls themselves the Sunny Southeast Region. We can still call ourselves by any name we want, so we will continue to call ourselves Region 6 until we decide if a name change is needed.



Director's Corner (cont.)

Another extremely positive transition for NAI is its financial situation. Thanks in large part to Executive Director, Margo Carlock, and support of the NAI Board, NAI's line of credit has been reduced from \$250,000 in 2012 to \$0 in 2014. What a dramatic and impressive change to take place. I encourage you to periodically look at NAI's financial statements at http://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Resources/NAI_Administrative_Documents/Financial_Information/nai_resources/Admin_Docs/Financial_Information.aspx?hkey=a243f64c-d08d-424c-a73b-ad68a4e6b7d3. There is a very informative financial webinar on the left side of that page.

Additionally, there will be some changes to the structure membership fees in 2015. The biggest of these positive changes is the addition of seasonal interpreter and no

minimum age for a retiree membership. There will be more about that structure in 2015. Also in 2015, there will be a new award for a member to be recognized each month. As the NAI Professional Awards Chair, I will unveil that award program in one of the January *NAI Now* newsletters. Be looking for it and how to recognize a deserving fellow interpreter.

Finally, Region 6 will continue to be as strong advocate for its members. One of the ways to help members is to have strong leaders. Congratulations to Clark Hancock and Lisa Cole for being re-elected to their respective Deputy Director and Secretary positions. I also wish to thank Mystina Swaim for running as a candidate in this last election. Region 6 is on a very good path for the future. I hope that many of you will join us for our Region 6 Workshop in Natchitoches (NAK-ə-təsh) Louisiana in March. It looks to be a very

promising workshop.

All of these transitions will breathe new life into our outstanding organization. In doing so, we will create a positive opportunities for members, improve member satisfaction, and even increase membership worldwide. There was a new phrase being used at the last NAI Workshop: "**One NAI.**" The message is simple: no matter level of membership or where you are in the country, you are not alone. You are part of the same NAI Organization...One NAI. As both Region Director and NAI Board Member, I welcome you to feel that we are all equals in this world-class organization and together we are on a new positive path.

"You are a part of the same NAI Organization...One NAI."

Save the dates!
2015 Workshop

Experience Louisiana!
Crawfish, Cranes, and Creole



Natchitoches, Louisiana
March 1 - 4, 2015

Watch for info @
nairegion6.wordpress.com/annual-workshop/

Transitions—A Way of Life

George Kastler-Missouri



George Kastler transitioned into retirement—but that hasn't slowed him down!

Transitions—who doesn't have them one time or another in life? Sometimes we don't even notice them and other times we wish that they did not happen.

For me, the biggest transition was retirement. I have known folks who did not give a second thought to what and how they would deal with retirement. And very often they ended up puttering around the house, watching television, and not doing much of anything. I started thinking about my retirement about 10 years before I actually did retire. My plan was to continue with modeling of HO-scale trains in the MKT style and to expand my iris collection with more new hybridized varieties that I could develop. I wanted to take trips around the U.S. to locations that we had never been to and

still visit England to visit Elizabeth's folks and friends. Well so far, it has worked that way. Between the every other year trip to England, we have been to the great southwest, the northwest, and Canada by way of bus and train.

But, some things have changed. Our sons and their wives had kids, two each for each family. And it seems as though we are visiting one or the other every other week and sometimes every week for the last four years as their parents have jobs that require long hours and odd hours. It gives us grandparents a chance to do something that grandparents do best...re-train the kids!

Other than the traveling on a regular bases, I actually have more time to be involved in

professional meetings and, to some extent, tracking what is happening in various state agencies. I'm currently involved with 10 professional organizations, and I dropped six when I retired to put more energy into those 10 that meant the most to me. So I regularly have communication with other professional folks all over the country and internationally.

As humans, we have transitions that take place on a daily basis. Some days there are not enough hours in the day to get done what we want to get done, especially at work. For transitions to occur in a reasonable fashion we must plan ahead, and not just with plan A, but with plan B and even plan C — they might need to be called into make things work and move on smoothly.

Arkansas State Parks launches NRID



Arkansas State Parks hopes to launch NRID in 2015.

Arkansas State Parks is preparing to roll out Natural Resource Inventory Database (NRID). It will bring all the resource inventory records of every park into one archived, searchable, real-time computer server. NRID has the ability to help us understand all the resources that our parks have to offer, keep a living record, connect guests to the park in a new way, and make a concerted effort to conserve our resources.

NRID offers a web-based user interface for park staff. On the administrative end, information is stored and sorted using open-source software. The project steering committee

compiled master lists for each taxa that occurs in Arkansas and the database uses that list to create a drop-down menu. This menu eliminates grammar mistakes, helps with misidentification, and will help manage taxonomy changes as they occur in the future. By keeping a record of our resources we can reach a new level of understanding of our parks.

NRID will also help visitors (and draw potential visitors) by providing a publicly-viewable website where individuals can query for similar data as listed above. Birders can pull custom checklists before traveling to parks. Wildflower lovers can seek parks where seasonal

blooms occur. Students working on reports can better understand species and where they occur by habitat. NRID will also be used for park programming: Connecting guests to the resources of the park is the goal of all interpretive programs, and a great way to do that is through citizen science.

The NRID committee, chaired by Adam Leslie of Devil's Den State Park is working with a private contractor to develop this new system. We have secured the domain name www.ASPnrid.com, and eventually the site will also link directly from ArkansasStateParks.com. We are aiming for a public launch in 2015.

Under Construction But Open For Business

Diane Key-Biggs-Missouri



The Gateway Arch grounds are undergoing a facelift, but is still open for visitation.

“Under construction but open for business!” Our new undisclosed slogan for the next few years will be this at the Gateway Arch. We park service employees should wear glow in the dark construction vest throughout the park with signs and shirts stating that yes we are open. Every day is an adventure with the visitors implementing another layer to our day with bulldozers, dirt, and plywood. You never know what street is going to be closed or how high the mighty Mississippi will be. As an interpreter, one needs to be ready for anything. For those who may encounter their institution going through major construction, let me offer some advice:

Rule Number One

Expect the worse but prepare for the best!

Now is the time to take advantage of cleaning out your desk and locker. You never know what you might have forgotten in the back of your draw or saved for a future program.

Rule number Two

A spoon full of sugar makes the medicine go down!

A donut always makes my day! Give yourself a special treat or do something special for yourself if you have had a hard week.

Rule Number Three

Stay positive!

Being negative and giving into only seeing the bad side of the construction will just aggravate the level of stress.

Rule Number Four

Have a contingency plan! Plan A will not always work so have a plan B through K at least!

If living history objects are low or have to go in storage, try using a large photograph or another prop for your program.

Rule Number Five

Be flexible! The institution is being remolded and some of the historic pieces will be replaced or placed in permanent storage. Realize that you are witnessing history and can add this in your repertoire as an interpreter (“remember when...”). You can say in the old museum as a starting point for a great conversation with a visitor.

Rule Number Six

Take a break!

Change is stressful. Go for a walk or read a book but be sure to take time in your day to just breathe some fresh air outside and not think about the changes.

Rule Number Seven

Change is hard!

It will be like going to a new school with feelings of apprehension but excitement as well. Accessibility for your patrons will be in the foremost of the designers. Some of the daily problems in the current museum will disappear!

Rule Number Eight

Call the supervisor!

Sharing information and updates on the construction plans is key to helping the staff with the renovation.

Rule Number Nine

Let the Visitors Talk!

As an interpreter one of the key things I have learned about the amazing part of being successful at my job is letting the public talk about their grievances of the construction or about their interest in history of our museum. Emphasize how amazing it will be when it is finished. Post a website of the changes taking place of the museum and a camera so the public can witness the changes.

Rule Number Ten

This too shall pass!

Construction will not last forever though it may feel like it. In the end, the institution will be incredible and up to date making your job even easier!

Check out the updates on the remodeling of the Arch at:

www.cityarchriver.org

Region 6 Members Receive National Awards

During the 2014 NAI Professional Awards, **Bill McGowan**, Manager of the Ernie Miller Nature Center in Olathe KS, received the **Master Interpretive Manager Award**.

Bill has been in the field of interpretation since 1980 and as a manager for 30 years. Starting as a river ranger on the Buffalo River, Bill has developed a range of interpretive skills and expertise that is truly impressive. He serves as a local contact for media for natural history information. His outdoor skills include canoeing, challenge course facilitation, and night hikes. Bill is an exceptional presenter of animal programs, including birds of prey and reptiles. He has developed several personalized costumed characters for interpretive programs. Bill's responsibilities as outdoor education manager at Ernie Miller Nature Center encompass a broad array of interpretive programming. His primary duty is overseeing the daily operations of the Ernie Miller Nature Center and the Timber Ridge Adventure Center of the Johnson County Park and Recreation District of Kansas (JCPRD). The success of Bill's leadership is reflected in the many awards that the Ernie Miller Nature Center programs have received from NAI, as well as the National Storytelling Network, Kansas Humanities, and the Girl Scouts.

During the 2014 "Excellence in Interpretation" awards ceremony, agencies such as the National Park Service, US Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and NAI give their highest awards. For the US Army Corps of Engineers their top award was the **Hiram M. Chittenden Award**. This national award recognizes outstanding contributions in interpretation and environmental education by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee in a district or field office. This year's award was given to **Erin Hilligoss-Volkman**, Natural Resource Specialist for the Rivers Project Office, St. Louis District. *SPECIAL NOTE: 4 of the last 8 Hiram Chittenden Award Winners have been from the St. Louis District!*

Erin was chosen for her outstanding contributions as a motivational interpreter and outreach specialist through the facilitation of innovative ideas, partnerships, education and outreach within the Mississippi River Watershed and beyond. Erin's commitment to education and outreach with an emphasis on engaging current and future generations to actively sustain our natural and cultural resources is exemplary. Through her vision and ability to combine non-traditional partners with original interpretive programs, the Rivers Project Office has come to the forefront of the Corps' ability to integrate multiple themes into an assembly of interactive programs and events. She coordinated more than 250 interpretive and outreach programs for more than 30,000 participants this past year.

During the 2014 NAI Media Awards, two members of Region 6 received national awards.

In the Book Category, **Amy Griffin Ouchley** (Louisiana) took **2nd Place** for her book "**Swamper, Letters from a Louisiana Swamp Rabbit**". Amy was not able to attend the Denver Workshop so she requested Kathy Miller to accept her award in her place.

Swamper, a fictitious swamp rabbit, lives in the bottomland hardwood forest, or overflow swamp, which is a very real environment. In twelve "letters" addressed to his human friends, Swamper shares his vivid observations about life in a Louisiana swamp. With excitement and captivating detail, he explains ecological concepts such as food webs, energy flow, decomposition, and reproduction. He recounts adventures like escaping his predators, the great horned owl and the red fox, and swimming for his life after a flood forces him to find higher ground. The alert swamp rabbit even describes the seasonal migration of birds and the monthly phases of the moon. While educating students about the interconnected life cycles found in a natural habitat, Swamper's first-hand account of the richness and value of the wetlands will also help young readers develop a deeper appreciation for this delicate ecosystem. Though written for all ages to enjoy, the content specifically aligns with life science and environmental science educational standards for 4th through 7th grades. Copies of Swamper can be purchased at: <http://lsupress.org/books/detail/swamper/>.

In the Short Video Category, **Arlene Jackson** with the **Ulysses S. Grant Historic Site** took **3rd Place** for their video "**The Hidden Stories of Lesser Known Parks**". Jefferson National Parks Association is honored to receive the third place award in the short film category for the National Association for Interpretation's 2014 Media Awards Competition. Created on behalf of the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, Jefferson National Parks Association presents a compilation of hidden stories such as "A Thousand Kisses: The Love Story of President Ulysses S. Grant and Julia Dent Grant" and "Sunlight and Shadows: Slavery at Ulysses S. Grant's White Haven". The videos can be seen on the YouTube channel, JeffNatIParks or follow the links <http://youtu.be/29s0W4D9d0A> and <http://youtu.be/FQd6wRBDsBk>.



Bill McGowan accepts his award from Amy Lethbridge.



Erin Hilligoss-Volkman received the Hiram M. Chittenden Award.



Kathy Miller (right) accepting Amy's award from President Margo Carlock.



Arlene Jackson (right) accepts her award from President Margo Carlock.



**ARKANSAS
State Report**

Don Simons

A visitor from Louisiana found a 2.89-carat white diamond at the **Crater of Diamonds State Park**. According to **Park Interpreter Margi Jenks**, “No two diamonds in the rough are alike. This is a triangular-shaped diamond with a metallic appearance, and it’s about the size of an English pea.” She noted that this was visitor Brandon Kalenda’s first visit to the park and he searched for only 20 minutes. Jenks said. “We encourage park visitors to look for pockets or layers on the surface of gravel, and search there. That’s exactly what Brandon was doing.” Jenks noted that at the time of its discovery in March the Jax Diamond is the 47th diamond registered by a park visitor this year, and the fourth diamond weighing over a carat found at the park since the middle of February.



A visitor found a 2.89 carat diamond at Crater of Diamonds

A historic school house at **Parkin Archeological State Park** was recently added to the **National Register of Historic Places**, but not one of ancient significance. Parkin Archeological State Park was originally created to preserve and interpret a prehistoric native mound village that was probably visited by explorer Hernando de Soto. However, the park’s scope broadened when the school house was discovered on the site. The Northern Ohio School at Parkin, a plain traditional-style building with craftsman-style details, was built around 1910 to serve the area’s African American students. The schoolhouse is also a compelling story about preservation. Early research on the schoolhouse was done by former Interpreter Jodi Morris (now a lead interpreter at Central High School National Historic Site in Little Rock). Her attention to detail and persistence led to the discovery of the schoolhouse remains inside a structure that was very nearly demolished.



Former Parkin Interpreter Mary Anne Parker leads a program at the Northern Ohio schoolhouse.

The **Interpretive Naturalist section** is planning its first workshop for August 2-5, 2015 at **Mount Magazine State Park**. Lori Spencer is the workshop chair. It will have a similar format to a regional workshop.

Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park held its biannual reenactment, Arkansas’s largest, of a Civil War battle that occurred there on December 7, 1862. Over 700 reenactors demonstrated period life for 5,500 spectators during the two day event. (see photo below)





OKLAHOMA State Report

Karina Minor

Congratulations to **Amy Stephens!** She is the author of the new book *Oklahoma City Zoo: 1960-2013*.

The **Environmental Protection Agency (Region 6)** awarded the out-of-school programs at **St. Mary's Episcopal School** in Edmund their Presidential Environmental Youth Award for "outstanding environmental stewardship."

Welcome to **Bonnie Farris!** She is the new naturalist at **Tucker Tower Nature Center** in Lake Murray State Park. She is a graduate of Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

Science Museum Oklahoma launched a marketing campaign that feature Emmy Award winner Jabee -- a rapper in the local hip-hop scene. It has gone viral through social media outlets. Check it out here: <http://vimeo.com/85505963>

Golf grass. Bermuda grass. The typical suburban lawn is a virtual biological desert. The **Nature Conservancy's** Oklahoma City office hosted an event in mid-November entitled "**The Pocket Prairie Garden.**" Landscape architect/eco-regional specialist **Jamie Csizmadia** discussed how property owners can convert sterile lawns into eco-friendly landscapes.

Historic Fort Reno will celebrate an old-fashioned Christmas tradition at its **Fort Reno's Christmas Guns** event. This unique tradition was brought to America by German immigrants. According to legend, the loud noise produced by the firearms dispels evil spirits before the upcoming holiday. After Christmas Guns there will be storytelling, snacks and a visit from Santa.

The **Tulsa Zoo** is holding its Winter Break Camp series "**Creature Feature**" this December. Participants learn about some amazing animal adaptations. Camps include special animal visitors, zoo hikes, keeper chats, and activities throughout each of these two-day camps.



TEXAS State Report

Tara Humphreys

Julie Galbraith is retiring after 21.5 years of fun and frolic at the **Texas State Aquarium!** She's compiling one last enormous information database, and will wrap up on December 31. Whether through live interpretive staff or colorful posts on the walls, Julie's handiwork is in every exhibit and she's blessed to say the people she's met along the path, including NAI buddies, have touched her immensely. As always, she's available to teach/certify interpretive guides via the NAI certification program. Julie will come up for air and a new adventure beginning January 1, 2015. Congrats and best wishes to you Julie!

Contact information:

Julie Galbraith
CIT, CTA
(361) 947-1252
cjcg@hotmail.com

After 18 ½ years with **Texas State Parks**, **Linda Hedges** is retiring. Congrats to you, Linda, for years of hard work and dedication to interpretation and staff support— you're already missed! The Texas State Parks Region 1 Interpretive Specialist, stationed in Fort Davis, TX, will be open soon.

Dennis A. Vásquez, a 36-year veteran of the National Park Service, has been named superintendent of **Petroglyph National Monument** in New Mexico. Since June 2011, Dennis Vásquez has served as Superintendent of Guadalupe Mountains National Park in West Texas. In that capacity, he completed a General Management Plan for the park and led efforts to emphasize wilderness values and restore ecosystem processes while expanding opportunities for visitors to enjoy easier access to some park settings.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park announced that the new Salt Basin Dunes Day Use Area has opened. The area was added to the park in 1998, but previously had only been accessible to the public on a limited basis since that time. The Salt Basin Dunes Contact Station, on Main Street in Dell City is staffed intermittently.

According to Karl Pierce, the **National Park Service** is seeking public input on a Final Environmental Assessment for a new Wilderness Stewardship and Trail Management Plan for **Guadalupe Mountains**



TEXAS State Report (cont.)

Tara Humphreys

Guadalupe Mountains National Park announced that the new Salt Basin Dunes Day Use Area has opened. The area was added to the park in 1998, but previously had only been accessible to the public on a limited basis since that time. The Salt Basin Dunes Contact Station, on Main Street in Dell City is staffed intermittently.

According to Karl Pierce, the **National Park Service** is seeking public input on a Final Environmental Assessment for a new Wilderness Stewardship and Trail Management Plan for **Guadalupe Mountains National Park**. The purpose of this plan is to guide park staff when making decisions regarding the future use and protection of the park’s Congressionally-designated wilderness, as well as improving the park’s trail system. A copy of the *Final Wilderness Stewardship and Trail Management Plan and Environmental Assessment* may be downloaded from the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment site at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=34722> or by contacting Guadalupe Mountains National Park Chief or Resource Management Janet Coles at Janet_Coles@nps.gov, or, in writing, to: Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Attn.: Wilderness Stewardship Plan, 400 Pine Canyon Drive, Salt Flat, Texas 79847. For more information, please call Chief of Resource Management Janet Coles at (915) 828-3251 x 2400. Public comments may be submitted from December 15, 2014 through January 14, 2015.

A group of 18 **Texas State Park interpreters** went through CIG training at **Lake Brownwood State Park** in early December. Congrats to all of these candidates who successfully delivered their programs, outlines, and coursework. We’re eagerly looking forward to hearing the results of the literature review as we look forward to (hopefully) welcoming this amazing group of interpreters to the CIG “club.”



Welcome new Texas CIGs!



KANSAS State Report

Pat Silovsky

Change is definitely in the air at the **Great Plains Nature Center! Lorrie Beck** retired in December after thirteen years at the GPNC, the last two as its Director. Her career with the federal government spanned three decades with the Corps of Engineers initially and then the Fish & Wildlife Service, and her personal travels took her to every continent as well as all over the US. We wish her well and will miss her infectious chuckle! Taking her place is **Jim Mason**, a 36-year veteran of the Wichita Department of Park & Recreation, who has been with the GPNC since before it was a twinkle in anyone’s eye. Jim will be coordinating the newly-replenished interpretive staff at the GPNC, including **Todd Volkmann** and **Kristen Remaly**, the current Americorps volunteers onsite. **Joyce Lent**, Friends of the Great Plains Nature Center employee, retired in November after 12 years as the Friends naturalist, and more than 43 years as an educator in the Wichita area. **Rebecca Matrow** has been hired to replace Joyce as one of the Friends-GPNC naturalists.

Also joining the GPNC staff include **Amanda Alessi** and **Emma Shrack** as fulltime City-funded Friends-GPNC naturalists.



**LOUISIANA
State Report**

Rusty
Scarborough

Louisiana is in a fever pitch to wrap up the **Region VI Workshop** in Natchitoches, Louisiana March 1-3, 2015. Things are getting aligned pretty well though many challenges have arisen we are stepping forward on the mission of providing a great opportunity to Experience Louisiana: Crawfish, Cranes & Creole. Check the Region 6 website for updates and more information: <http://nairegion6.wordpress.com/>

Tentative Workshop Schedule

Sunday March 1st

2:30-6:00	Registration open	Holiday Inn
3:00-5:00	Region 6 Board Meeting	Holiday Inn
6:30-10:00	Opening Reception	Samuel Guy
House		

Monday March 2nd

8:00	Registration open	Event Center
8:30-9:45	Welcome and Keynote	
10:05-4:00	Concurrent Sessions and Lunch	
	Dinner on your own/Optional Evening Activities	

Tuesday March 3rd

8:00-5:00	Field Experiences	
6:30-10:30	Scholarship Auction, featuring crawfish, gumbo, red beans and rice	

Wednesday March 4th

8:00-8:30	Registration open	Event Center
8:30-9:30	Opening /Keynote	
9:40-11:40	Brian Barnette Interpreter’s Quiz	
9:40-4:00	Concurrent Sessions and Lunch	
6:00-10:30	Awards Banquet and Live Music	



MISSOURI State Report

Michelle Soenksen

More than 40 **First Day Hikes** will take place on trails in **Missouri state parks and historic sites** on January 1. As a part of the national effort, people from all 50 states are expected to join to celebrate the New Year with a hike in a state park. In Missouri, the guided hikes range from a half mile to four miles and are taking place on trails varying from thick forests to the open prairie.

John Miller invites you to take part in Missouri’s most unique wildlife event, Vulture Venture on February 21, 2015 from noon to 5pm. This will be the 19th year for the **Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery** to host this event. Socrates, a live turkey vulture from the WOW Museum in Springfield is the star of the event and will make several hourly appearances. Kids of all ages are encouraged to take part in a variety of activities including Road Kill Café, Scavenge Like a Vulture, Create Your Thermal, and Fill the Roost Trivia. If that is not enough, volunteers will help you to view one of the largest wintering populations of vultures in the state. To find out more about this event call us at (417) 334-4865 ext 0 or www.mdc.mo.gov/node/290.

Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center welcomed five new volunteers who completed their training in October. These new volunteers are Jacob Anderson, Stuart Brisco, Kyle Graville, Brody Huff, and Julie Sorrell. They make a great addition to the Conservation Center team.

Ozark National Scenic Riverways will once again be holding Junior Ranger Day at Alley Spring on May 1, 2015. We expect over 500 fourth and fifth graders to attend and enjoy a live flight raptor program from the World Bird Sanctuary in St Louis as well as a variety of activities and informational booths. One of those booths could be yours! If you'd like to join the event and interpret some aspect of Ozark natural history or engage the kids in a nature themed hands on activity, contact Bill O'Donnell at ohiobill@aol.com

Ranger **Bill O'Donnell** will be retiring in December after thirty years in the National Park Service, twenty one of them at **Ozark National Scenic Riverways**. Known to children across the Ozarks simply as Ranger Bill, he worked with schools throughout the region providing educational programs, field trips, and cave tours as the park’s Resource Education Specialist. He was also the supervisor at Alley Spring, Big Spring, and Round Spring at various times. Several times over the past two decades he’s been called upon to serve the park as Chief of Interpretation. Regardless of the title, he says working in the local schools was the best part. “Working with children has been the most rewarding part of this job,” O'Donnell said, “ If I have in any small way inspired a single young person to have a greater respect, appreciation, and love of nature, then I’ve accomplished something with my life.”



Visitors to the Ozark National Scenic Riverways will miss “Ranger Bill” when he retires this month.



MISSOURI State Report (Cont.)

Michelle Soenksen

Jamie Hubert & John Miller report that the **Association of Missouri Interpreters** (AMI) conducted their annual workshop in Sedalia MO on September 14-16th. Over 70 participants attended this year's event that included concurrent speakers, a great keynote speaker, field trips, awards, scholarship auction, and business meeting. Scholarships and awards presented this year went to:

Laura Hagen (University of Missouri-Columbia) Undergraduate Scholarship
Victoria "Tori" Carson (Missouri State University) Undergraduate Scholarship

Russell Feurst - Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer

John Miller - Outstanding Professional Interpreter

Amanda Coonce - Outstanding Interpretive Media, for "The Power of a Sunrise"

Kendra Swee, Michelle Soenksen, and Jamie Hubert - Outstanding Interpretive Effort for "Shine" Program

Dakota Price and Andy Senters - Outstanding Concurrent Session, for "Tune in Your Audience with Music"

A big thank you to the workshop committee members: Jan Weaver (chair), Peter Hayes, Amber Edwards, Mark Morgan, Robin Grumm, Andy Tribble, Kendra Swee, and John Cunning.

To learn more about the AMI go to www.mointerp.net.

Jamie Hubert reports that the 2015 AMI workshop will be held September 13-16, 2015, in beautiful Kansas City, Missouri. Each month, the conference committee is releasing the "KC Connection" newsletter, which provides the reader with a snippet of Kansas City History. To follow the newsletter or get up-to-date information on this conference, visit www.mointerp.net. Anyone is welcome to attend the AMI workshops-we love hosting to our other Region 6 friends!





REGISTER NOW!

Online registration now open

BIODIVERSITY FOR A BETTER WORLD

Wild Ideas Worth Sharing

St. Louis, MO • April 26–May 1, 2015

BGCI's 9th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens

Connect with a global network of botanic garden professionals from around the world and inspire each other to shape a world in which biodiversity is understood, valued, conserved, and strengthened.

More than 170 botanic garden educators and directors will lead panel discussions, workshops, world cafés, and more; and a series of tours, including a 3-day tour to Chicago Botanic Garden, will let you experience St. Louis's and the Midwest's culture, history, neighborhoods, and natural areas.



To learn more and to register, visit

www.bgcieducationcongress2015.org

#BGCI2015EDU



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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

Katie Raney, CIG, PO Box 12874, Austin TX 78711, 512-936-4682, katie.raney@gmail.com

Jamie Hubert, CIT, St. Francois State Park, 8920 U.S. Highway 67 North, Bonne Terre MO 63628, 573-358-2173, jamie.hubert@dnr.mo.gov

DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE:

Spring 2012: February 20 Summer 2012: May 20

Fall 2012: August 20 Winter 2012: November 20

INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE SENT TO ANY OF THE VISIONS STATE COODINATORS:

Arkansas: Don R. Simons, Mount Magazine State Park, Paris, AR, 479-963-8502, don.simons@arkansas.gov

Kansas: Pat Silovsky, CIG, Milford Nature Center, Junction City, KS, 785-238-5323, pat.silovsky@ksoutdoors.com

Louisiana: Rusty Scarborough, Walter Jacobs Memorial Nature Park, Shreveport, LA, 318-929-2806, rscarborough@caddo.org

Missouri: Michelle Soenksen, CIT, Sam A. Baker State Park, Patterson, MO, 573-856-4514, michelle.soenksen@dnr.mo.gov

Oklahoma: Karena Minor, CIG, Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City, OK, 405-609-8854, karena_minor@nps.gov

Texas: Tara Humphreys, CIT, TX Parks & Wildlife, Bastrop, TX, 512-308-1475 ext. 29, tara.humphreys@tpwd.tx.gov

REGION SIX OFFICERS

John Miller, CIT, CIG, Director: Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery, Branson, MO, 417-334-4865, john.miller@mdc.mo.gov

Clark Hancock, CIT, Deputy Director: Exhibit Coordinator, Austin Nature and Science Center, Austin, TX, 512-507-1627, clark.hancock@austintexas.gov

Lisa Cole, Secretary: Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area, Lewisville, TX, 972-219-3930, lisacole@unt.edu

Andrea Johnson, Treasurer: Ernie Miller Park Nature Center, Olathe, KS, 913-764-8580, Andrea.Johnson@jocogov.org

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Scholarship: Heather Runyon, Crowley's Ridge State Park, Paragould, AR, 870-573-6751, heather.runyon@arkansas.gov

Awards: Laura Motley, Oklahoma City, OK, 405-760-5667, laura.motley@us.army.mil

Elections: Robin Gabe, Arkansas State Parks, robin.gabe@arkansas.gov

Membership: Janette Larson, Arkansas State Parks, janette.larson@arkansas.gov

Shelley Flannary, Arkansas State Parks, shelley.flannary@arkansas.gov

REGION SIX WEB MASTER

Dakota Russell, Nathan Boone Homestead State Historic Site, Ash Grove, MO, 417-751-3266, dakota.russell@dnr.mo.gov

NAI National Office:

P.O. Box 2246

Fort Collins, CO 80522

Phone: 970-484-8283 Toll free @888-900-8283

Fax: 970-484-8179

