

VISIONS

NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

FALL 2019

VOLUME 33, ISSUE 3

Welcome to Fall!

- *Interpretation Connects Us All*
- *Nature Has a Sinister Side*
- *Interpreting Our Personal Lives*



**State Reports:
pages 6-12**

**Region 6 seeking
two State
Coordinators**

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NAI Region Six Director's Report - September 2019



**NAI Region Six
Director**

- Jay Schneider,
Arkansas

I hope this newsletter finds all our members enjoying the fall weather.

This region has a wealth of great members, natural and historical sites and great resource every direction you turn. Our region continues to grow from 951 members last fall to 1049 members at the time of this report; returning members please join me in welcoming our new members! I consider all of you part of our interpretive family. Do not hesitate to be a part of this family by giving to others and asking of help when needed.

The National Workshop in Denver will be here before we know it. Please stop by the Region Six booth and meet your board members.

The 2020 Region 6 Workshop in Bartlesville, Oklahoma is looking to be a great investment in our members. Please submit your call for papers soon.

Do Today Well

Jay



REGION 6 STATE COORDINATORS NEEDED

As mentioned in the State Reports, the current State Representatives for Kansas and Texas are wishing to step down.

Please contact Pat Silovsky for Kansas, Tara Humphries for Texas, or Region 6 Director Jay Schneider if you or someone you know might be interested.



Interpretation connects us all

by AD Anderson

The children were gazing down at the corpse of an insect wondering if it was a wasp or a honey-bee. It was the perfect teachable moment and no one felt like they were learning! Curiosity fueled the journey.

Inspired by what they saw, they asked questions and wanted to know more. One preschooler (who was used to smashing bugs at home) discovered it was OK to let bugs live outside since killing one might take away a bird's snack. He understood, and watched as the spider by his foot ambled up the brick wall.

As interpreters, it's our job to connect the people around us with nature, culture, and/or history in a way that transforms a field trip into an adventure, providing the foundation for a lasting appreciation for our site. Think about what you most love about where you are and share it today!

--AD (April) Anderson is a naturalist and author of *A Field Guide to Everyday Life: Useful Ways to Reconnect with Nature & Humanity and Flora's Caterpillar*--

Nature Has a Sinister Side

by Neil Garrison

My wife (Becky) and I have been married for 24 years. In early July of 2019, she was at death's door. She spent a full month in the hospital; a good portion of that time in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). It was a darn scary experience, for the patient and the spouse.

Becky's ICU visit was prompted by an infection. It was a tick-borne virus: *Ehrlichia*.

She and I are both outdoors persons. You will not find us pounding out the miles on the treadmill at the local gym. We do not join up with others at the local shopping mall for a bout of circular walking. Instead, we are out in the natural world. Therein lies the rub. It is near impossible to completely protect ourselves from encounters with blood-sucking ticks.

This whole medical ordeal, of course, made me do some serious soul-searching in regards to our future plans for life down the road. Would we continue to go outside and do outdoorsy things? Conversely, would this whole experience cause us to restructure our lives so that we would become more the urban dweller?

As for me, nature is a HUGE part of my very being. You had just as well reach deep inside my body and rip out my very soul if you wished me to give up and abandon my outdoor pursuits. There be sharks in the salty sea, yet the surfer persists in chasing the wave.

The world is fraught with danger. One could elect to hide in a bubble. Such is not to my liking. I will insist on venturing out into the natural world and doing what I can to teach others about the wonders of the outdoor world. I will still be leading nature hikes. I will still be me -- being me.

Ticks be damned!

Interpreting our Personal Lives

A Celebration of US

Interpreting our Personal Lives
You receive *Visions* about four times a year, we all meet up at either the NAI Region 6, the NAI National Conference, or maybe even the International Conference every few years. So, we get to know friends, colleagues, and others, and if we wish to stay connected, we usually join the appropriate social media site.

But maybe we don't always get connected the way some of us would like to. Beginning this issue, *Visions* would like to make room (when available) for an interpretation of our personal lives, travels, and personal journeys. Our State Reports generally stick to "business and professional", but let's get personal!

Please forward your "news" to the *Visions'* editors and we will see

what we find to print about your Region 6 family. Births, travels, interpretive "research" outside of the Region or country (to see how others do it), whatever you might like to share. A story, maybe a picture, and perhaps a personal anecdote not necessarily related to interpretation, but an interpretation of your life.

The next deadline is December 1. Get your information in now.

Jolly Ole' England – by Jerrel Geisler

Well, I guess I'm first. It's good to be the editor!
I have seen personal Facebook and other postings this year from your Region 6 family, from places like San Francisco, Alaska, whale watching off the California Coast

and much more. So, I decided to start this column with my recent 10-day trip to London and south-east England.

This being our first time in England, we saw the token Palaces, touristy spots, did some shopping, and had plenty of "fish & chips" and "bangers & mash". Still not sure about the baked beans for breakfast and room temperature Ales, but I did think about interpretation a little as I listened to several tour guides, interpreters, and "explainers". It is great that our (USA) cultural interpreters can remember 200-300 years of history but interpreting 1,000 years of history and cultural – wow!

Enjoy a few of my pictures and get your stories in for next issue.





State reports

Compiled by State Coordinators
Arkansas - Don R. Simons
Louisiana - Rusty Scarborough
Kansas - Pat Silovsky
Missouri - Michelle Soenksen
Oklahoma - Donna Horton
Texas - Tara Humphreys



The state agency formerly known as the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism has grown into the **Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism (ADPHT)**. This is part of a governor mandated effort to streamline state agencies. Stacy Hurst is our Secretary. She answers directly to the governor and is a strong advocate for interpretation. During this transformation, we switched from brown to green uniforms.

Arkansas State Park interpreters participated in an annual Interpretation Workshop at the **C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center** at Ferncliff. Our theme was “Trailblazing in a Time of Transformation.” We visited several state park and heritage sites in the Little Rock area and ended in the press box of the War Memorial Stadium, a relatively new state park facility.

The National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) held its 2019 convention in Rogers, Arkansas in September. They visited a few state parks and other interpretive sites in northwest Arkansas.

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is rolling out a new, state-wide program to encourage outdoor recreation. The Arkansas Marksmanship Challenge was September 21st with events held at AGFC Nature Centers and Conservation Education Centers. Competitions were held in a variety of events which included Field Archery, 3D Archery, BB Guns, Slingshots, and Casting for Accuracy.

Competitors were broken into age groups by school grade (e.g., 1st - 3rd grade, 4th - 6th grade, 7th - 9 grade, and 10th - 12th grade). Awards for top competitors in each grade category were presented at each of the Centers. A state Grand Champion for each age group also will be recognized.

No Child Left Inside.



**ARKANSAS REPORT
(CONTINUED PAGE 7)**

A while back, you might remember a report about Arkansas's largest maple-leafed oak located in **Mount Magazine State Park**. That tree has been submitted to a list of largest trees in these United States. Since there is no official world listing of champion trees, by default, we will claim it to be the world's largest of its kind.

On top of the maple-leafed oak news, Arkansas's largest Ozark Chinquapin has also been discovered in Mount Magazine State Park and officially declared state champ. We checked and know that it is not a national champ and might get dethroned from the state list. We welcome competition for this title in hopes it brings more awareness to the plight of the Ozark Chinquapin. For more information, go to <https://www.aad.arkansas.gov/champion-tree-program>.



Hello Region VI from the depths of the heat of Hades! Well it has been hot and dry for the month of August but we have had a few things going on here in Louisiana.

Here in Caddo Parish the Parks Department is in search for a new director. The position has been announced and with luck we will have a new leader very soon.

Walter Jacobs Park has hired a new position. We are welcoming **John Michael Kelley** to our team as our Nature Park Technician.

Also recently we held a CIG certification workshop here at the Nature Park and we are excited we had the largest class that we have ever had, and from 5 different agencies (Louisiana State Parks, Caddo Parish Parks & Recreation, Shreveport Aquarium, LSUS Pioneer Heritage Center, and Shreveport Green AmeriCorps).

We are very excited for these new interpreters to get their credentials soon.

Also we are working hard on nailing down some loose ends on the 2021 Region VI workshop in Louisiana. More news to come on that front soon!





Pat Silovsky has finished her EDD with **Dr. Theresa Coble's** program at the University of St. Louis.

Amber Myers at the **Flint Hills Discovery Center** in Kansas won a preregistration for the National Workshop through their social media campaign.

The Education Center has hired a new director. We hope to see her at future NAI functions.

Visions is seeking a new State Representative for Kansas

Pat Silovsky has been on the board for a long time and would like to pass the responsibility of the Kansas Representative to another Kansas member. If interested, please contact her.



Felix Valle State Historic Site developed a series of hands-on history programs for Saturdays through September. During the month of August, visitors learned about frontier games, pioneer medicine, French colonial clothing, and also hosted a children's day! Fall events are already in the works, and can be viewed by visiting our website at <https://mostateparks.com/events/park/felix-valle-house-state-historic-site> .

Site Interpreter **Melissa Blank** is very excited to be selected by Missouri State Parks to take part in CIT training in October. Melissa looks forward with sharing the new knowledge with future interpreters within Missouri!

John and Kathy Miller (Reeds Spring MO) taught a two-day Certified Interpretive Host(CIH) class at the **Springfield Nature Center** on August 20 & 27th. Four volunteers from the Springfield Nature Center and four volunteers from the **Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center** (Branson) participated in the training. One volunteer, **Carri-Ann Bard** took the class for CIH certification. The students melded into a passionate group of Interpreters, discovered methods to re-

**MISSOURI REPORT
(CONTINUED PAGE 9)**

place usual guest conflicts with friendly and informative solutions, and to provide a higher level of service, thus alleviating time-consuming referrals to other staff. They realized that blending guest relations with Interpretation was a better method for the staff, the guest, and management. John and Kathy can be contacted for future CIH programs: miller.john.d@att.net or 417.598.9994.

The **Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI)** held their annual conference September 15-17 at **Roaring River State Park**. Over 80 attendees were on hand to “Let Your Resources Roar” with amazing field sessions, great concurrent sessions, and a lively scholarship auction. To see more details about the 2019 AMI Conference, go to <http://www.mointerp.net>.



(Photo caption: John Miller - far left; Kathy Miller - far right; Carri-Ann Bard - left of Kathy Miller)



Oklahoma’s Summer Report was lost in a glitch, so the Fall Report will be a recap-and-update.

First and foremost: periodical cicadas hatched this spring at Oxley Nature Center in Tulsa and along Medicine Creek in Lawton! None were expected this year. This is thought to be part of Brood Eight, previously undocumented in Oklahoma. A great article in the Tulsa World newspaper by outdoor writer Kelly Bostian may be found at https://www.tulsaworld.com/news/local/crazy-for-cicadas-previously-undocumented-brood-hatching-in-oklahoma-a/article_ed41362b-5c98-52ff-a6cb-f7588a9034e3.html

Widespread flooding and wind/tornado damage occurred this spring across the entire state.

Oklahoma apologizes to Arkansas for the continued release of floodwater in the Arkansas River, but the volume of water that fell continuously for weeks on the watershed was just too great for the rivers and lakes to contain. Some areas of Oxley Nature Center were so wet for so long that pockets of quicksand developed.

During this year’s catastrophic flooding, very little mention has been made of the crucial roles played by places like Oxley Nature Center, which lies along Bird Creek, and the Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge, located along the Arkansas River just upstream from Fort Smith, Arkansas. Both places have very little hard sur-

**OKLAHOMA REPORT
(CONTINUED PAGE 10)**

face development. Both places served as sponges soaking up much of the floodwater. Many of Oklahoma's state parks and federal lands had to curtail camping and recreation as these public areas served in their backup function as temporary reservoirs that ease flooding in other places. Continued development of the landscape, with impermeable pavement and surfaces that force storm water into instant and devastating runoff, will cause more damage each year to whoever lies downstream. Until permeable designs replace ordinary concrete and asphalt, places like nature centers and wildlife refuges will become more valuable for their help in mitigating floods.

Oxley Nature Center's flood damage wasn't just historic in the sense that the flood crests in May were among the highest ever recorded. "History" was uncovered by the floodwater. The previous issue of Visions included a story of how Bird Creek cut into the side of a peninsula that is the site of an old landfill (https://www.tulsaworld.com/news/local/maybe-something-good-can-come-of-this-experts-address-issue/article_07df0d1d-7f4b-56a4-b84c-33b20e6ba014.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=user-share&fbclid=IwAR3B4dFwRs9aqEkhJcQnCin35Mh_MBQOdRvd29IY-i_-ak-p9vTLYyMelkiM).

The floodwaters deposited huge quantities of 50-year-old plastic debris across more than four acres of thicket and forest, twisted and wrapped at all levels in the vegetation. Horrifically, Bird Creek continues to sweep old bread wrappers and other garbage out from under their soil cap every day, with added force after each of this summer's hard rains. The garbage is now all the way down Bird Creek to its confluence with the Verdigris River and the Kerr-McClellan Navigation Channel. It's on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. The global plastic problem has a very visible local presence.



As a result, there is a new road being constructed across part of Oxley Nature Center. It will allow heavy equipment to get in to try to stabilize the riverbank where Bird Creek continues to dig its way through the landfill. It takes priority over fixing the place where Bird Creek undercut one of the roads in Mohawk Park. Once the construction is finished, the gravel road will be allowed to turn into an easy wide trail. It will serve to offset the loss of some trails, along with acreage, due to the new meandering of Bird Creek to the east.

The road just west of Oxley Nature Center's main gate remains closed until then. There is still access through the road that turns immediately south from the main gate to the front entrance of Mohawk Park, but access to Oxley's North Woods unit of trails is complicated. Even when the back gate was closed on weekends, visitors could pick up a map at Oxley's interpretive building and then drive or walk a little over a mile to get to the North Woods trailhead, still inside Mohawk Park. Now it is a 3.5-mile drive out of the park and over to

**OKLAHOMA REPORT
(CONTINUED PAGE 11)**

OKLAHOMA REPORT CONTINUED

the back entrance, which is now locked 24/7 because of the under-cut and collapsing road, creating another half-mile on foot to the trailhead .

Many other sites across the state were affected by weather events, which continued through a stormy wet summer. The Chickasaw National Recreation Area closed one area at the start of the summer camping season due to high water. Naturalist Amanda Wiley says the nature center at Grand Lake State Park at Bernice was isolated for weeks around Memorial Day, when the peninsula it sits on turned into a near island. She had a choice of wading through knee deep water or waist high grass to come and go from her building. In Tulsa, along the west side of the Arkansas River, Turkey Mountain Wilderness Area had to close off its lower trail for a while, and the Oklahoma Aquarium was been sand-bagged, with limited access. On the east side of the river, The Gathering Place closed off some of its areas for a week or two.

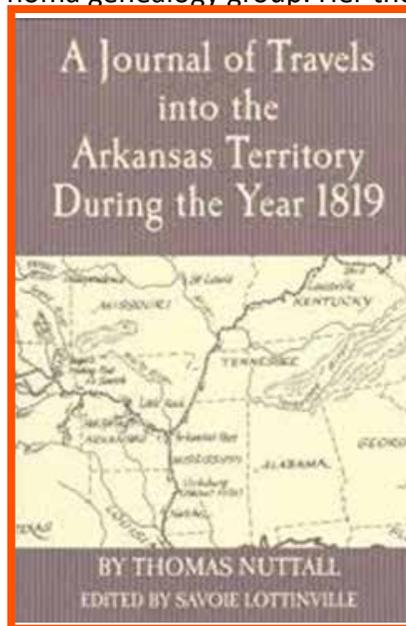
A much-needed ray of sunshine came from the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department with the early-February news that close to a million dollars of state funds were expended to add 77 acres to the popular Honey Creek recreation area on northeastern Oklahoma's Grand Lake.

Neil Garrison spent much of the spring conducting flint-knapping demonstrations at events and locations across the state. He also served as the instructor for a "RUNNING WITH SCISSORS" program in Oklahoma City (OKC). It's a "thinking-outside-the-box" quirky title for a program that employs razor-sharp box knives as the tool-of-choice in the manufacture of hiking sticks.

Neil's busy rounds of freelance interpretation came to a crashing halt when Neil's wife Becky was hospitalized for nearly a month this summer due to a life-threatening episode with a tick-borne disease. Becky is now home and expected to make a full recovery in time.



"Story Quilts" was Brenda Hill's topic at her guest appearance at the February 20th meeting of a central Oklahoma genealogy group. Her theory is that some "heritage quilts" dating from the 1860's contain subtle clues which were used as navigational aids for escaped African American slaves in their journey north on the "Underground Railroad."



History and nature unite in celebrating the bicentennial of the journeys of English botanist Thomas Nuttall's through what is now Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. He was the first to document the biology of the area. Thomas Nuttall's intense focus on science rendered him more quirky and eccentric than most botanists. Prone to wander off from the military expedition he was supposed to accompany, Nuttall was returned to the care of the soldiers more than once by people from the local tribes. It was not clear whether they believed him to be holy or crazy. Read his journal, *A Journal of Travels in the Arkansas Territory During the Year 1819*, edited by Savoie Lottinville. Visit a site he might have been to. Observe a specimen of one the 92 taxa named by Thomas Nuttall during his long career as a biologist/explorer (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Taxa_named_by_Thomas_Nuttall).

TEXAS REPORT

Kudos to the newest Certified Interpretive Guide trainees for Texas State Parks! Participants included superintendents, assistant superintendents, operations trainees, maintenance rangers, clerks and interpreters. This group worked hard and brought great energy and diverse perspectives to the fun week at Bastrop State Park!



Pictured: Front row – Angela Chavez, Maritza Aguirre; 2nd row – Alyssa Rodriguez, Laura Jennings (yep, the one from AR SP!); 3rd row – Augustin Medellin, Diego Aragon, Andrea Boon, Mickey Smith, Laura Wubbolding, Montse Canedo, Kris Simmons, Cody Tatum; Back row – Edwin Quintero, OJ Carranco, Harry Carroll, Alex Stamtis, Jason Castle

Congratulations to Rick Torres, Park Interpreter from Ray Roberts Lake SP – Isle DuBois Unit.

He won the TX Parks and Wildlife Dept. Outreach Award! Ranger Rick does an outstanding job facilitating interpretive connections.



Pictured left to right are: TX Parks and Wildlife Dept. Executive Director Carter Smith, Park Interpreter Rick Torres and TX Parks and Wildlife Dept. Commissioner Jeanne Latimer

Congratulations to the Texas State Park Regional Interpretive Specialists, who won the TX Parks and Wildlife Department Team Award!



Pictured left to right are: TX Parks and Wildlife Dept. Executive Director Carter Smith, Region 2 Interpretive Specialist Ben Horstmann, Region 4 Interpretive Specialist Walt Bailey, Region 3 Interpretive Specialist Katie Raney, Field Interpretation Coordinator Tara Humphreys, Region 5 Interpretive Specialist Annie Hepp, Region 6 Interpretive Specialist Danielle Bradley and TX Parks and Wildlife Dept. Commissioner Jeanne Latimer. Not pic-

tured: Region 1 Interpretive Specialist Cassie Cox.

Thanks! Just one addition – it’s time to pass the reins to someone else, so I’m looking for a TX Coordinator replacement. Let me know if interested!

Thanks, Tara

**CALL FOR PAPERS: WORKSHOP PROPOSAL FORM
PROPOSALS DUE NOVEMBER 1ST, 2019
Notification of Acceptance will occur December 1st**



COME PRESENT IN BARTELLSVILLE, OK

REGION 6 STATE COORDINATORS NEEDED

As mentioned in the State Reports, the current State Representatives for Kansas and Texas are wishing to step down.

Please contact Pat Silovsky for Kansas, Tara Humphries for Texas, or Region 6 Director Jay Schneider if you or someone you know might be interested.

NAI REGION 6 VISIONS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION



Visions Newsletter is the newsletter for Region 6 of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). Region 6 includes states of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. For Region 6 information go to www.nairegion6.wordpress.com. The national office for NAI is located in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Their website is www.interpnet.com.

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DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE:

Spring: March 20 • Summer: June 20 • Fall: September 1 • Winter: December 1