

Visions



Spring 2019

Volume 33, Issue 1

First day hikes and Facebook, tools and adventures for the new year

Dana Hoisington Prairie State Park, Mindenmines, MO

There are two things that if you aren't doing yet, you probably should. The first one is offering First Day Hikes. Hiking on January 1 is a great way to reach a new group of visitors and showcase what your site has to offer in the winter. Going out and getting some exercise is a great way to usher in the New Year. Prairie State Park in southwest Missouri offered its initial First Day Hike in 2012 and I jumped at the opportunity to share winter on the tall grass prairie with others.

We had 11 people that came out to experience the prairie in winter. Those hardy souls learned how plants and animals manage to survive the winter. We decided to make a change in 2014 and showcase the bison. Our First Day hikes are now guided bison hikes, and what a difference that has made in being able to share winter on the prairie with visitors! From 2012 to 2019 we have been able to showcase Prairie State Park to 276 visitors for an average of 34.5/hike. Our highest year was 2017 with 64 attending on a

nearly 60° day. Our low was 2018 with 4 when it was 9° at the start of the hike.

The hikes continue to draw in new visitors. This year we had a nearby women's hiking group come that had never been to the park before. Families, couples, singles, scouts, seniors, they are all interested in seeing what there is to do this time of year. I encourage you to share New Year's Day with strangers and showcase your site.

The second thing you should do if you aren't, is Facebook. We started our page December of 2010 and we currently have nearly 2400 people that have "liked" our page. We put our events on there. It is our best way of disseminating information. It reaches local people and then it is shared beyond that. At our last guided bison hike we had about a dozen participants that were new to the park. All



but one heard about it from Facebook. Some people were driving up to 4 hours to attend the hike. It would not have been possible to reach them without Facebook.

As I'm sure you are aware, photos and videos make the largest impact on posts. If it is merely text, it gets glossed over and on to the next post. Take photos of what is going on, tease them, have a recurring feature or contest. Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway – Texas Parks and Wildlife has a photo of the week contest. These types of interactive posts allow for a sense of belonging.

See First Day Hikes, page 3

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Have an idea for a theme for
a future issue? We'd love to
hear it!

Send your ideas to nai6.
visions@gmail.com



NAI Region Six Director
- Jay Miller, Arkansas

Upcoming Workshops and Conferences

Upcoming Certifications in Region Six:

Certified Interpretive Guide Courses

April 1-4, 2019 | Tulsa, OK
Oxley Nature Center
Tulsa, OK

May 13-17, 2019
Saint Louis Zoo
St. Louis, MO

June 4-7, 2019
Houston Downtown Aquarium
Houston, TX

June 11-14, 2019
The Houston Zoo
Houston, TX

December 2-5, 2019
Oxley Nature Center
Tulsa, OK

2019 NAI National Conference

November 12-16, 2019 Denver, Colorado

Kids enjoy birding in Young Birders Club

By Paige Witek – Missouri River Bird Observatory

The Missouri River Bird Observatory first got the idea to start a young birders club in the state a few years ago, but it wasn't until this spring that the idea became a reality. The first young birders club was started by six students in Ohio with the assistance of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory.



They formed what is known as the Ohio Young Birders Club. Since then, young birders clubs have sprung up all over the country with the help of the YBC Toolkit developed by the Black Swamp Bird Observatory and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This spring the Missouri River Bird Observatory hosted the Spring Meeting for the Audubon Society of Missouri. During the Spring Meeting, professionals from all over gathered at a workshop to launch the Missouri Young Birders Club. The MYBC is a new program starting out under the umbrella of the Missouri River Bird Observatory. Its mission is to bring together young Missourians to enjoy, experience and conserve Missouri's birds and other wildlife. The MYBC is part of a framework called the Young Birders Network (YBN). The YBN aims to provide all the resources a young birder needs to know about a life with birds. The YBN is a community of young birders

and Young Birders Clubs (YBCs) from all over the world. The YBN thrives under the philosophy that Young Birders Clubs encourage the next generation of naturalists to grow their interest in the natural world.

The Missouri River Bird Observatory aimed to start a Young Birders Club because Young Birders Clubs increase awareness and appreciation of the natural world and instill a conservation ethic in their members. Many young adults cite young birders clubs, camps, and other networking groups as a turning point for them in their career development. Young birders often have trouble finding similarly-minded peers and YBCs fill this niche.

Our vision for the Missouri Young Birders Club is to have a club that is by kids and for kids. Empowering Missouri's youth is a large part of the MYBC mission. Youth members will be involved in making decisions for all aspects of the club, as well as have the opportunity to mentor younger naturalists. The club will provide field trips to local birding areas and opportunities for members to get involved with various aspects of conservation. Currently, we are recruiting students, ages 8 to 17 years

old. The goal is to establish local chapters in different regions of the state (Ex: Kansas City Region, St. Louis Region, Central, Southwest, Southeast, Ozarks). Local chapters will be guided by adult members, but spearheaded youth members. MYBC will also have a conservation focus. Members will not only be able to enjoy and experience Missouri's birds, but also take action to conserve their habitats. Our hope is to not only involve young Missouri birders, but any young person looking to enjoy the outdoors with their peers. We hope to involve students interested in art, music, design, technology, sports, cooking and any other interest they may have in addition to



their interest the natural world. With this hope in mind, we plan to host various events designed to attract young audiences with a wide diversity of interests. The Missouri Young Birders Club would be a chance for young Missourians to ignite a passion for birds and the outdoors, and be able to share that passion with their peers.

First Day Hikes (from page 1)

Wildlife, flowers, snow, landscapes, prescribed burns, fall colors, anything unusual, are all photos or videos that elicit a positive response. Remember, what may be ordinary to us, is new to others. This short clip of bison with

new calves is our most viewed post with more than 13,000 views. <https://www.facebook.com/PrairieStatePark/videos/10200779152624215/>. The videos don't need to be long, but something that will get the attention

of people and they will share it with others. That post was shared 92 times. Sharing is how the word about your site really gets spread and draw in new visitors.

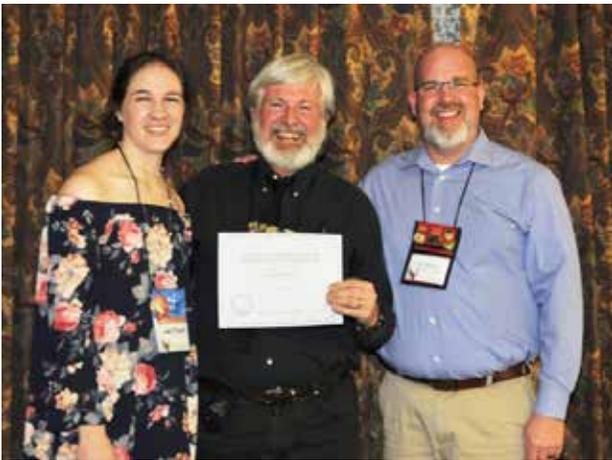
Fun and games from Wichita



NAI Region 6 Workshop
FEB 24 - 27 • WICHITA, KS



More photos from Wichita



Photos by
Melissa Blank, Cassie
Standley, John Miller,
Rachel Roth, Lyndzee
Rhine, and Ken For-
man.

If I Were the Wind
a found poem by Karen Moulton
(Based on *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold)

Stalks hum, loose husks whisk
in playful swirls, every wisp of grass
is drawing circles in the sand.

The tinkle of wavelets
on the shore as long windy waves
surge across grassy sloughs.

Now, a faint bark, the world cocks
its ear at that sound, the honk of geese,
invisible, until the flock emerges, a tattered

banner of birds, blown up and blown
down, blown together and blown apart,
the wind wrestling lovingly with each

winnowing wing. Inland, leaves are off
the hardwoods, and the branches
intertwine. Cerise berries glow so warmly

against November snow, chickadees add choir
to the woods, pileated woodpeckers chisel
living pines, barred owls find surcease

from crows and jays in the hollow heart
of an old basswood, wood ducks nest
in hollow trees. Sundown serenade silenced.

Found poetry is a type of poetry created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them (a literary equivalent of a collage) by making changes in spacing and lines, or by adding or deleting text, thus imparting new meaning.

Hot off the Presses: a book review

A Field Guide to Everyday Life: Useful ways to reconnect with Nature & Humanity is an inspiring, instructional journal (with space for writing and sketching) designed to empower busy people with simple opportunities to reconnect with nature and humanity in ways that will not only improve their lives, but make the world a better place.

Richard Louv (author of *Last Child of the Woods*), Douglas Tallamy (author of *Bringing Nature Home*), climate scientist Dr. Benjamin Santer, *The Art of Abundance* author Candy Paull, mud architect April Magill, and a host of other amazing people offer inspiring stories.

Chad Pregracke (*From the Bottom Up: One Man's Crusade to Clean America's Rivers*) writes: As time goes on, our lives get busier and busier. It always helps me mentally to take time to appreciate all the great outdoors has to offer. I think this book will help people to do just that and much more.

Written by *Flora's Caterpillar* author and Region 6's own A.D. (April) Anderson, *A Field Guide to Everyday Life* invites adults (much the way Flora has done with children) to be part of the solution. To schedule a book talk or use these books to help your center, please e-mail April at team.nature.ed@gmail.com.

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



New visitor center at Jacksonport State Park

Jacksonport State Park will dedicate its new visitor center in March, with an immersive exhibit gallery designed and built by Taylor Studios of Rantoul, Illinois.

New visitor center planned for Petit Jean State Park

A new visitor center is being planned for Petit Jean State Park with exhibits by Taylor Studios.

ASP & APRF partnering to build Monument Trails

Arkansas State Parks is working with the Arkansas Parks & Recreation Foundation on a multi-million dollar project to design and build the Monument Trails in at least six parks. Monument Trails will be multi-use, with mountain biking as the primary use, and designed to modern, sustainable standards. They will also include immersive experiences such as unique architectural features and art installations at trailheads and throughout the trails.

ASP partnering with Girl Scouts Diamonds to host events

Arkansas State Parks is partnering with the Girl Scouts Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas to host events at 30 parks for the National Girl Scouts in State Parks Weekend, coming up this July. This event and further projects under development are part of the National Memorandum of Understanding between the Girl Scouts of the USA and the National Association of State Park Directors, aiming for partnerships in all 50 states.

AGFC unveils an Outdoor Skills Program

Arkansas Game & Fish Commission has unveiled an Outdoor Skills Program featuring 10 different patches

geared toward helping the people of AR learn and continue in their pursuit of outdoor skills.

The Northwest Arkansas Nature Center is in the middle of foundation work and the target for opening the center is July, 2020.

Caleb Coulter was selected by his peers as AGFC 2018 Education Employee of the Year.

The Central Arkansas Nature Center is excited about hosting several events this upcoming spring like the Corp of Engineers Changing of the Guard and the Project Learning Tree National Conference.

Arkansas will be hosting the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) annual conference in Rogers in September 2019. They will be visiting a few state parks in Northwest Arkansas.



The **Walter Jacobs Nature Park** weather station recorded 75.31” of precipitation in 2018 and our yearly average is 55”. This year began with continued heavy rains.

The **National workshop in New Orleans** was a great time! Some snags with the hotel losing power on the arrival day for a lot of us but it all worked out and the session that I attended were very rewarding.

Walter Jacobs Memorial Nature Park just completed their 14th annual Owl Night and what a wonderful time it was, with just under 2000 people attending! Owl enthusiasts got to meet 4 common species of owls out on our Audubon paved LED lighted trail, take night hikes, attend owl seminars, play owl identification games, make owl art, buy owl art, take night hikes into the forest with no flashlights and also make almost 700 s’mores at our pavilion fire place.

In January Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park’s Fairy **Houses & Gnome Homes program** was recognized by the Louisiana Recreation and Parks Association with the Innovative Programming Award. This program was also recognized at NAI Region 6’s workshop last year for Outstanding Special Event Award. We are preparing for this event now and it will be on April 13, 2019 from 11-4.

Lily Jonsek has taken the place of **Judy Sneed** on the Awards Committee, representing Louisiana. I would like to thank Mrs. Judy for her over 13 years of service on this committee. And we are happy to have Lily on the committee. Lily is a naturalist at Walter Jacobs Memorial Nature Park.

Stacy Gray, Caddo Parish Parks & Recreation’s Education Coordinator has agreed to Chair the 2021 Region VI Workshop in Louisiana. Louisiana is looking forward to hosting again and making the conference food and fun even more memorable than Natchitoches was in 2015. Monroe may be the conference location.

Louisiana State Parks are still getting budget cuts.



K₅ansas

No report this issue. But, we had a great conference. See pictures on page 4-5.

M₃issouri



Alison Bleich is the new interpretive center manager at **Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery and Conservation Center**. She replaced **John Miller** when he retired. Leah Eden has announced that Alison Bleich (pronounced “bly”) is the new interpretive center manager at Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery and Conservation Center. Alison grew up on a farm in east central Illinois. She graduated from Missouri State University with a degree in Wildlife Biology in 2013. She has conducted field research with quail, grouse, and sea turtles and spent the past 2 years working for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in western Nebraska. She started out as a Park Naturalist, doing programs and outreach activities around Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area and last year became the Park Superintendent at Ash Hollow State Historical Park.

New chocolate program at Felix Valle State Historic Site

Melissa Blank reports a new chocolate program took place at **Felix Valle State Historic Site** on Saturday, February 2. As part of the city of Ste. Genevieve’s annual Chocolate Walk, Interpreter Melissa Blank, CIG, demonstrated historic methods of chocolate making while sharing the French relationship with the delectable treat!

Felix Valle State Historic Site is also participating in the creation of a new National Park in Ste. Genevieve. Part of the Felix Valle properties will be included in the new National Park site that will generate more visitation to the Ste. Genevieve area.

DNR Spring Interpreters Training School

The **DNR Spring Interpreters Training School** will be held May 19-22 at **Knob Noster State Park**. This training provides the opportunity to learn the basics of developing interpretive programs and earn the Certified Interpretive Guide certificate if you choose. Contact **Jamie Hubert** at Jamie.hubert@dnr.mo.gov to learn more.

Dawn Fredrickson is the new program director for the MSP Grants, Recreation & Interpretation Program

Michelle Soenksen announces **Dawn Fredrickson** as the new program director for the Grants, Recreation &

Missouri - Continued

Interpretation Program with Missouri State Parks. Dawn has been with Missouri State Parks for nearly 17 years. In her current role as director, she oversees a unique program that touches many of the Division's visitor engagement efforts, including recreation, outreach, interpretation, trail planning, and grant administration.

The Grants, Recreation & Interpretation Program can truly be said to include all the fun aspects of Missouri State Parks -- teaching people how to kayak, building new trails, giving money to communities for much-needed recreational facilities and historic preservation, and creating memorable experiences for visitors through interpretation and outreach!

Dawn Fredrickson reports on exciting initiatives in Missouri State Parks for 2019

Women in Nature, or **WIN**, is an initiative that offers outdoor skills classes specifically for women; to increase confidence and encourage independent exploration in the outdoors.

Class offerings include archery, orienteering, fishing, outdoor photography, kayaking, outdoor cooking, etc. Currently, four state parks have been chosen for WIN classes: **Lake of the Ozarks, Finger Lakes, Cuivre River and Lewis and Clark**.

All classes will be taught by women instructors, many of whom are our field interpreters. Class offerings and locations will be expanded in 2020.

National Girl Scouts in State Parks Weekend

Sixteen parks and sites have volunteered to host an event for the National Girl Scouts in State Parks Weekend on July 13-14. This is a national event cosponsored by Girls Scouts USA and the National Association of State Park Directors.

The Missouri State Parks Director and Deputy Director attended the NAI National Conference in New Orleans, which is the first time in history that the directors have attended a NAI conference. The director also attended the regional conference

MSP to partner with Fry's Lyon Foundation on a Missouri Civil War Passport Program

In 2019 Missouri State Parks will partner with Fry's Lyon Foundation on a Missouri Civil War Passport program. The passport program will begin in April 2019 and it will be a one year program. Participants will travel to various sites across the state where Civil War battles occurred.

Eight locations within Missouri State Parks are represented in this passport. Participants who complete the entire passport can receive a certificate of completion.

A new passport program for 2020 will celebrate Missouri's Bicentennial.

Southwest Missouri Herpetological Society

Kathy Miller reports 20 years being celebrated by the **Southwest Missouri Herpetological Society** in Springfield Missouri.



Oklahoma

2020 workshop update -- Moved to the **Tulsa County TriTech**
Sunday night mixer will still be at the Price Tower

A mega-park, **The Gathering Place**, has opened up in Tulsa. They've created a wetlands and planted older tree forests in mid-town Tulsa. The park was created to bring all 4 corners of Tulsa into a central

gathering area (the 4 areas of Tulsa are their own separate communities).

Oklahoma Native Plant Society is celebrating 200 years of Thomas Nuttall and his work

Texas

Lisa Cole, Education Coordinator at **Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area** shares LLELA staff is working with Conservation By Design to create their first-ever Interpretive Plan to guide their efforts. They are at the beginning of the process and are very excited about what's to come.



Amber Pepper, CIT, has available spots in upcoming **Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG)** classes:
Houston Downtown Aquarium: June 4-7, 2019
The Houston Zoo: June 11-14, 2019

Twenty **Texas State Park** interpreters took **CIG** at **Bastrop State Park** in January. Some of the presentation topics included the living dead, monarchs, wood ducks, not so extra-terrestrials, alligators and discontent on the Texas Plains. We're looking forward to their park programs!

Almost 100 **Texas State Park** interpretive staff attended the 4-day **2019 Statewide Interpreters Conference** at Camp Buckner. The theme was "Bringing Balance to Interpretation", and they did just that through sessions on mindfulness, Maslow's for Interpreters, connecting through conversation, resilience, and dimensions of diversity to name a few. Interpreters led concurrent sessions and field trips allowed for exploration and networking.



Jerrel Geisler, CIG, attended a workshop sponsored by the Houston Zoo and Bat Conservation International (BCI). The meeting was attended by members of the Houston Bat Team, sponsored by Texas Parks & Wildlife and the zoo, as well as naturalists and interpreters from the Houston area. BCI is working with zoos in Houston, Dallas and San Antonio to enhance interpretative bat talks in these cities as well as several cities in Florida. Utilizing electronic monitoring and citizen science monitoring they hope to improve the public perception of bats and issues like White Nose Syndrome.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

DEADLINES FOR *VISIONS* ARE:

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

Articles submitted for publication in *Visions* should be sent to :

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