

VISIONS

NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

SUMMER 2020 • VOLUME 34, ISSUE 2

In the Times of COVID-19

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#MaskUp

VISIONS

Newsletter for NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

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Nature Interpretation in the Time of a Multi-Month Medical Emergency

by Neil Garrison
Deputy Director, NAI Region VI

The virus pandemic's "Shelter-In-Place" mandate was coincidental with the cancellation of a whole slew of public events at museums here in central Oklahoma. That had a major impact on me — what with me not getting to interact with museum visitors at the education venues that I typically would be manning at this season of the year.

Fortunately, I was able to continue writing my weekly "nature education" column in *THE OKLAHOMAN* newspaper. I could do that pleasant chore from my home and from my

connection to the World Wide Web.

On the second week of June, I was able to resume leading my once-weekly birding hikes for senior citizens. Ditto on my Wednesday afternoon wood whittling classes. Both of these activities are done through the auspices of the local senior citizens center.

A lot of cancelled spring season public events at central-Oklahoma museums have tentatively been rescheduled to the month of September. If the virus outbreak does not experience

a resurgence in late-summer, I will be able to still do some of my "public education" activities at that time.

In the interim, I have been working closely with the State Coordinator for NAI Region VI (...submitting news items to her for inclusion in her newsletter report).

All in all, it has been a new and interesting world.....that is taking some getting used to.....

The "New Normal"?

Whatever that is!



Gooseberry Migration

Photo of the rare migration of the majestic gooseberries. The wedge shape of their flight indicate that their destination was a warm cobbler in Reeds Spring MO. Finally, why aren't two or more gooseberries called geeseberries?

(Photo by John Miller, MO)

Interpretation Inspiration during the Pandemic

by *Mystina Swaim, CHI, CIG*
NAI Region 6 Secretary

In a time of a global pandemic, people need interpretation more than ever. What better way to “escape” the stress everyone is feeling than by virtually exploring our parks, nature centers, zoos, historical sites, and other interpretive sites or spending time out in nature away from the crowds?

I’m sure most of us are tired of hearing about or living with restrictions during this pandemic. Still, we interpreters

have the power to help care for our guests’ emotional and intellectual needs during this time of hardships. We can use our creative minds to find ways of connecting people to our resources and give them a sense of place.

Need ideas to connect your guests to your site safely? The NAI website and newsletters are full of suggestions for virtual tours, discovery videos, blogs, and ways to keep you

and your guests safe during site visits. I encourage all of you to take a look at these ideas or come up with ideas of your own.

We’re all in this together, but as interpreters, we have a responsibility to keep our guests and potential visitors connected to our resources. When all of this is over, we want people to re-discover our sites or discover them for the first time.

Frog Vomit Lozenges

by John Miller, MO

Besides being a brilliant mathematician and physicist, Sir Isaac Newton dabbled in trying to help his fellow man by attempting to find a cure for the plague. In 1665, during the peak of the plague pandemic, Newton came up with his novel if morbid idea of Toad Vomit Lozenges. Yes, toad vomit! Newton describes in detail how to suspend a toad by its legs in a chimney for three

days, until it vomits up “earth with various insects in it.” He adds that this vomit must be caught on “a dish of yellow wax,” Next, grind the toad into a powder and mix it with the vomit until you’ve formed several lozenges. Finally, place your toad vomit lozenges “about the affected area.” The best part of this creepy story is that his handwritten recipe can be yours for a bargain price of \$120K.

As interpreters, we may have to enjoy this document from afar. Thank goodness he was better at math and physics than pharmacy!

To see the entire article and Newton’s hand written note, go to the Smithsonian Magazine Smart News <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/sir-isaac-newtons-plague-prescription-toad-vomit-lozenges-180975039/>

Need a Funny Gross Song?

by John Miller, MO

If you think the story of “Toad Vomit Lozenges” was gross, then how about a timely gross song? This unlikely song was song performed by Bruce Springsteen

(yes, The Boss) in 1990 for a Disney album called “For Our Children: To Benefit Pediatric AIDS Foundation”. Listen to the song “Chicken Lips and Lizard Hips” at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJMrU0scAN0> .

This song is great for camps, Halloween, and getting kids to eat leftovers. Try not to giggle.

The Joy of Backyard Habitat

By Kathy G. Magruder

Missouri, Volunteer at Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery, CIG, and trained at CIH and CIT

Nature in our yard has been a sheer joy this spring.

Retirement and COVID-19 isolation have given us a unique opportunity to explore our almost three acres of woodland and enjoy living again close to nature.

We moved into this habitat about 20 years ago and began eliminating non-native invasive plants at the same time as bringing in Missouri native trees, shrubs, vines, shade & sun-loving flowers, and ground covers. We put out some bird feeders, and excitedly, for a water source, made a pond from a satellite dish left on the property.

Then we certified our backyard habitat through National Wildlife Federation and proudly display our "Certified Backyard Habitat" plaque. Certification is an easy process and a reminder of what habitat needs are. I have given out this application information at many interpretive programs at the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery in Branson where I am a Volunteer. I truly find this habitat enhancement to be a joyful ongoing process. And of course it must be spread out financially.

Also, this spring for our own personal use, we put in a small vegetable garden which we haven't had time to do in years. So we have continued habitat

enhancement over the years.

We've installed several types of birdhouses. Since we live mainly in a woodland, finding appropriate shade wildflowers for the garden off the deck, to meet the needs of wildlife and pleasure ourselves, throughout the year, has been an ongoing and fun search. This is where I also place all my houseplants for the warmer months. We have planted grasses around the pond. In the bit of sunny areas around the driveway and turning area we planted our produce garden this year, and have sunny hillsides full of native plants. Since we live in Stone County, literally, we have also chosen to plant in wooden barrels. I have to add that my husband, John Miller, has added many flat boards for habitat. We do also feed our birds (and squirrels) with seed feeders, suet cakes and hummer sugar water in several locations.

Results? OH MY! In the pond we watch yearly egg masses of salamanders, frogs and toads. So, we see and hear spring peepers, gray tree frogs, southern leopard frogs; narrow-mouthed and American toads, and ringed & spotted salamanders. We have also found this spring four different small box turtles. Under the boards, we have found slimy salamanders, ring-necked snakes, five lined skinks, and speckled kingsnakes. In our woods we have found black rat

snakes (I still prefer that term) and yes an occasional copperhead. Just yesterday, I found 3 separate toads (todallies I call them) which I introduced to each other for a hopeful future. Then added one that was only about an inch long!

We keep a three-toed box turtle and an ornate box turtle which, in the summer, we host in a lovely corral just off the porch.

Twice this spring a visiting male box turtle showed up desiring the turtle beauty in the corral. So we let each one in for a day's visit. Lo and behold, we have three eggs to try hatching. As I have weeded and picked berries I found two young 3" box turtles, one quite friendly. Birds are a continuous joy to experience. Outside the front window are hummer feeders and a variety of bird houses.

Chickadees hatched babies in one of the little houses this spring. So we watched mom and dad bring food to the babies, and even watched one of the parents drink from the hummer feeder. Early spring brought frequent views of 8 or more hummers outside this window and the other hummer feeders too. What joy to watch!

New to our front window hummer feeder this year were

**Joy of Backyard Habitat
Continued on Page 5**

The Joy of Backyard Habitat

(from page 4)

Orioles, male and female! So we put up oranges which she just pulled apart and quickly consumed. We didn't see them for a while, then they come back.

Another visitor new to us this year were summer tanagers, again male and female. We have even had Cooper's hawks nest and had the fun of listening to the sharper juvenile voice as the parents taught their chicks all about life. Turkey vultures create their large shadows periodically over the ground. Sometimes we hear warning calls and watch multiple species scramble. Now I am not a birder, and I do not have a science background. I try to remember the bird's call with the name of the bird, which is not always easy for me. My newest one – tufted titmouse calls

“Peter, Peter, Peter”, spitting out that P like a “tuff” bully. Maybe that hint could help you too.

We have cardinals, bluebirds, blue jays, nuthatches, many types of woodpeckers, goldfinches, mourning doves, and a variety of birds in the upper areas of the trees that I hear but haven't identified yet.

All this nearby bird behavior inspired me to bring out my variety of bird books to take a peek into their little private lives and better understand what makes them tick, or chirp, or caw... And, yes, my husband, John Miller, answers constant questions for me too on birds and especially herps.

For mammals, I mentioned we have squirrels-gray, cute little

intrusive chipmunks, an occasional armadillo, evidence of deer and raccoon early in the garden and on wildflowers. Hot sauce, ground hot pepper, and dog hair helps keep them out of our food.

I know many of you readers are naturalists. And for you historians, we have lots of found artifacts placed strategically for interest. But, you see, I have spent more time outside this spring than I have in many years. I have found as much joy in enhancing our property naturally (and the vegetable garden) as I have in sitting in cozy spots throughout our property viewing nature's beauty and animal antics. Even 10-15 minutes outside make a tremendous difference to my well-being and to wildlife's habitat.

You may frequently get outside for your job and your nature hobbies. Perhaps my close-up backyard experience will inspire a new approach for you, or something to share with your site guests. And I would highly recommend trying the Certification for Backyard Wildlife.



Squirrel munching on a donut in downtown Denver (NAI National - 2014) (Photo by Jerrel Geisler)

NAI Region Six Director's Report

June 2020



NAI Region Six Director -
Jay Schneider, Arkansas

COVID-19, yuck, enough said.

I hope you are doing well and staying safe in this trying time. Some are working from home, some have been furloughed, some have been reassigned, some were laid off, some are working the "new normal," regardless; we have all seen and are continuing to see changes.

+ My thoughts are with you all.

I hope we all find the positive in these changes: a new focus on a passion, a new project, better self-care, a new way to be creative (from a distance, either digitally or another way), just getting back to basics, or even a new way to escape and decompress.

Do not forget to reach out and check on others as they are working through this just like you are. A simple text, email, or phone call can be the greatest gift we can give to each other at this time.

Board Positions Needed:

Each year the NAI Region Six board handles your business, assists in planning the regional workshop, awards scholarships, professional development, and professional awards and plans for the future including fostering new leadership on the board.

Part of fostering new leadership

is to vacate a position on the board, as two of our members have chosen to do.

I would like to show appreciation and gratitude for the decated efforts of Hollie Sanders, Membership Chair and Don Simons, Arkansas State Coordinator, for the time they have dedicated to NAI Region Six and its members. Thank you so much to the both of you for your valuable advice, leadership, and direction of the NAI Region Six as members of the Board of Directors!

If you are interested, in serving on the board we are in need of a membership chair and a state coordinator for Arkansas at this time. Please email questions or send me your intentions so the board may consider your application.

Do Today Well,

Jay

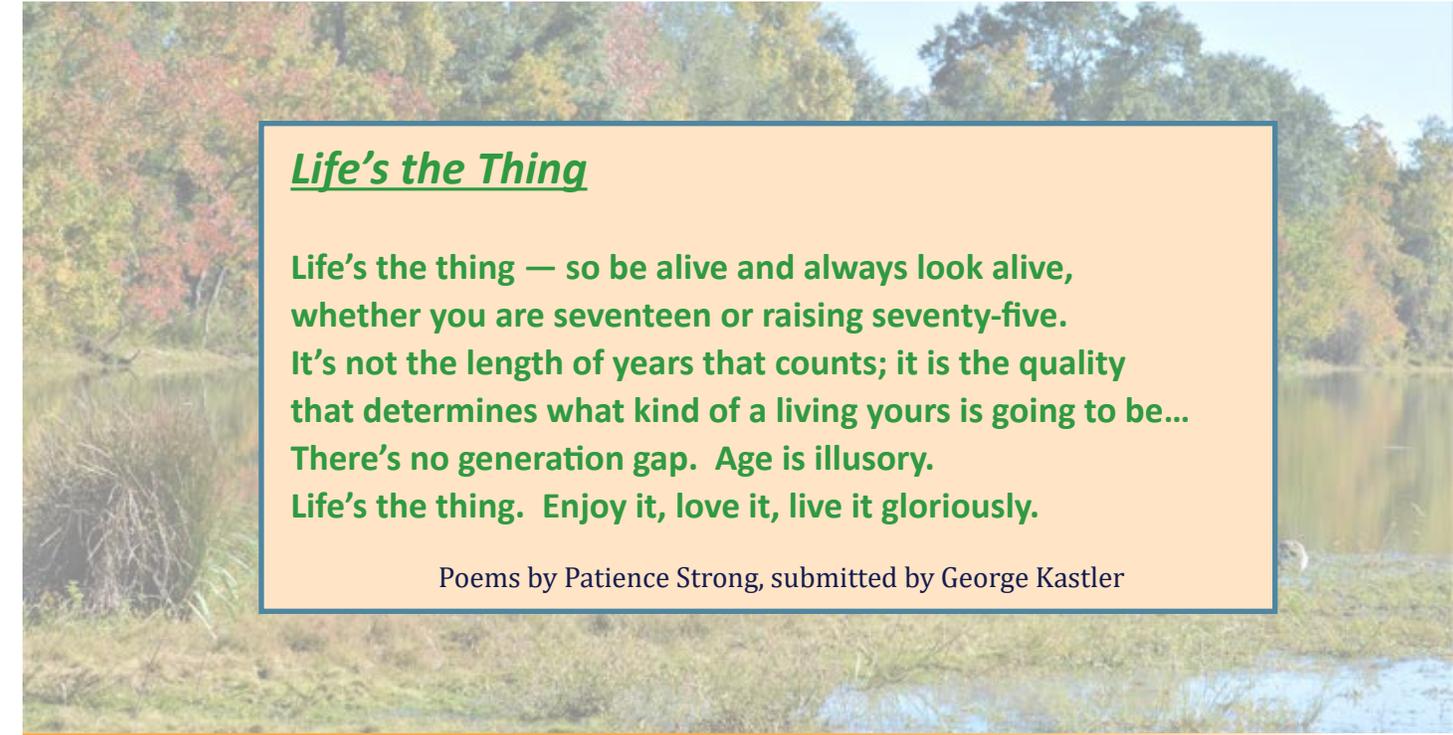
The Last Leaf

Look! Keep looking till it falls, the last leaf on the tree.
When it flutters to your feet, you'll know it cannot be
very long to wait, until the winter's tale is told —
with autumn's glory spent in piled up leaves, bronze, red and gold.

Look and keep on looking through the time you cannot spare —
spare this, one moment more to stand, to wonder and to stare...
This leaf you'll never see again, this autumn too must pass —
unless reflected; given back through Memory's magic glass.

Poems by Patience Strong, submitted by George Kastler





Life's the Thing

Life's the thing — so be alive and always look alive,
whether you are seventeen or raising seventy-five.
It's not the length of years that counts; it is the quality
that determines what kind of a living yours is going to be...
There's no generation gap. Age is illusory.
Life's the thing. Enjoy it, love it, live it gloriously.

Poems by Patience Strong, submitted by George Kastler



State reports

Arkansas - Don R. Simons
Louisiana - Rusty Scarborough
Kansas - Amber Myers
Missouri - Michelle Soenksen
Oklahoma - Donna Horton
Texas - Erin Holley

Editor's note: With COVID-19 and changing work conditions, events and training opportunities reported here may have been postponed. Please contact the state facilitator, or the site directly to learn about updates. Some report items also may be lacking.



Arkansas State Park interpreters have been busy pivoting their efforts since the COVID-19 disruption, with programming in hiatus since late March. Many are assisting with daily park operations and guest services, since State Parks never completely closed and have been experiencing record visitation numbers. A number of interpreters are working on research and writing for updates to exhibits and publications.

In addition, a number of them have authored/created pieces for the division’s new Digital Discovery (<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/digital-discovery>) library online. This page is a hub for blog articles, photo essays, videos, and PDF downloads offering interpretive connections to parks for people, whether or not they are able to visit our sites. Check it out to learn more about the Ozark chinquapin, discover apps for park exploration, enjoy a virtual Solstice celebration, hear nighttime campground sounds, hear the story of the passenger pigeon, and much more.

Construction of **Petit Jean State Park’s** new visitor center is well underway, along with production of the interior exhibit gallery and a few exterior exhibit components – including a life size sculpture of Dr. T.W. Hardison, a key park (and park system) founder. Opening is TBD but likely early 2021.

Twenty-five miles of new, sustainably-built, multi-use (hike/bike) trails are now open at **Mount Nebo State Park**, thanks to generous funding gifts through the Arkansas Park & Recreation Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation. Part of the “Monument Trails” project, these trails are meant to be world-class destinations showcasing the natural scenic beauty of the State Parks they are within, while exemplifying the highest quality in trail craftsmanship, design innovation, beauty, and sustainability. Mount Nebo is the second of several planned Monument Trails locations; the first was about 17 miles of multiuse trail opened last year at **Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area** in northwest Arkansas, and currently about 18 miles of trail are under construction at Pinnacle Mountain State Park in Little Rock. Monument Trails are the largest trail-building project in Arkansas State Parks since the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Arkansas State Parks launched a new Welcome campaign, which includes a TV, radio, and social media ad package, as well as a new Passport program. You can see the video and learn more about the Passport here: <https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/about>

<p>AR Report continued Page 9</p>

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission reports the state's newest nature center is rapidly completing completion in the northwest part of the state. The **J.B and Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highland Nature Center** seeks to marry technology with outdoor education opportunities. The opening date will depend on the progress of COVID-19 relief in the state. Watch here for further updates on this exciting project: <https://www.agfc.com/en/explore-outdoors/nature-and-education-centers/jbjhfohnc/>

AGFC also reports they've hired a facility director for the new nature center. We welcome **Ms. Shelley Corry** to the agency's Education Division and hope everyone in Region 6 (and the rest of NAI) wishes her success in her new position.

In this time of social distancing and closed (or minimally open) facilities, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission created a **Virtual Nature Center** for online visitors to connect with the natural resources of the Natural State. With links to dozens of videos including fishing and hunting tips, cooking wild game, and conservation issues, and new videos added all the time, the Virtual Nature Center serves as a repository of just some of the interpretive opportunities provided by the state's wildlife management agency. Visit often: www.agfcnaturecenter.com

Thaw

When the sun shines through the clouds and shed a golden glow —
on the hard and frosted surface of the dazzling show —
Its gentle warmth will penetrate each frozen crystal flake.
And in the brilliance of its smile a sheet of ice will break.

And human smiles work wonders, too. Like sunshine on the snow —
a frigid nature will respond and melt in friendship's glow
and thaw beneath the warmth of love, of sympathy and trust —
softening with kindly words the old, unhuman crust
of bitterness and grievances that harden with each year.
How often unexpectedly a look will charm and cheer!

It takes some time for snow to melt beneath the sun's bright glow,
so do not be discouraged if response seems faint and slow.
Love's strange magic works beneath the surface.
None can guess how its unseen rays go out to comfort and to bless.

A poem by Patience Strong, submitted by George Kastler
photo by Jerrel Geisler



Hello all from HOT n Humid Louisiana. Here at **Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park** we are, as you all are, under a lot of changes.

COVID-19 protocols unfortunately required that our entire facility be closed for two months, including our outdoor exhibits and trails. This was sad and disappointing but we had to follow protocols from the Governor and our Caddo Parish Administration. Thankfully we were allowed to reopen our outside exhibits (our bird of prey aviary and deer pen and our, nearly 5 miles of hiking trails on May 13. We have been running with a skeleton crew but that has not been too much of a trial as we don't have any programs (except for our virtual programs on social media). In mid-June our part-time naturalist **Daniel Mills**, CIG took on a full-time position with the **Caddo Parish Parks** Maintenance crew. Congratulations to Daniel on full time employment but we will miss him in our weekly programming options. Also in our Main office we have had some transitions as well. The Recreation Coordinator position was vacated and our Office Coordinator Cattina Williams move up into that position. And recently my duties have been reassessed and the administration felt that the tasks I have taken on and the number of people that I supervise was more in line with a "manager" level, so I have now been elevated from Sr. Parks Naturalist to Park Manager, a promotion, for which I am greatly appreciative of and humbled by. SO that's the news from **Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park**.

From **Clair Coco** (Assistant Director – Conservation, Outdoor Recreation, and Environmental Education) with **BREC (Baton Rouge Recreation Commission)**

Who's open? What programs are you offering? What precautions are you implementing? BREC required each entity (program section/facility) to prepare a progressive plan for operating reflective of adapting to changing health & safety guidelines from Stay-at-Home through reopening to fully operational (which at this point is essentially being redefined until further notice). BREC as an agency declared that it will at minimum follow CDC guidelines, but in most cases has gone further (erring on the side of caution) according to what peer professionals and other agencies are doing (YMCA, NRPA, ACA, and some others, in particular). The following breakdown is a "generally speaking" summary:

Stay-at-Home – BREC closed all indoor and admission-based facilities, as well as flagged off all outdoor high contact points (play & spray

**LA Report continued
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grounds, outdoor exercise stations, picnic pavilions, etc.). Open spaces in parks and conservation areas (nature trails) remained accessible to the public. Lots of signs went out regarding physical distancing and group size limits. Reporting staff (those needed at sites or those who were not able to work from home) were staggered or working opposite shifts when feasible to reduce transmission potential. Rangers patrolled to check for social distancing and proper usage of parks. Staff that could work from home did – but were also called upon to do park-checks to assist rangers or respond to reports of unauthorized gatherings or clusters of people at parks with high saturation usage. Basketball, tennis, and volleyball courts were continually problematic. Some nets were removed in some areas. Ball fields were also a little bit of a problem with localized disregard for health & safety guidelines.

Phase 1 brought some opening of outdoor components of restricted facilities and group size allowed to increase to max 10. **Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center** allowed people in (no admission charged) to walk the trail, during restricted hours, and only in one direction along one route in and one route out to reduce “pinch points”. Pavilions and other “gathering places” were kept inaccessible. Staff kept track of people coming, and going. Staff wore masks. No public was allowed inside. **Magnolia Mound Plantation** had similar operations allowing visitors to walk the grounds on their own if they wanted at no charge. No on-site programs allowed in Phase 1. We did plan and carry out 1 week of virtual camp across the board with varied success. The special interest facilities had full rosters and we got some really good feedback – parents were appreciative of our efforts and the kids really enjoyed the social interaction and engagement with staff. The **Community Recreation** camps did not see the same interest and were only running half of their intended sessions. New protocols for virtual camp operations had to be created and equipment & platforms had to be acquired/accessed, primed, and figured out. Top to bottom – we had to figure out a whole new way to “summer camp” (i.e. check-in procedures, cyber-related things like online security, anti-bullying, discipline procedures, online interaction rules of engagement, etc.). Some sections of virtual camp, with sustained enrollment, have continued and intend to through July.

Phase 2 brought increasing usage with greatly restricted capacities (~25%) into buildings provided all persons (staff, patrons, contractors, etc.) entering structures to wear masks, complete COVID screening questionnaires, and have their temperatures taken & recorded. Hands-on components remained inaccessible. Exhibits had visual barriers (tape on floor) encouraging people to view at a distance. Disinfecting protocols followed routinely and periodically for indoor facilities. In addition to some virtual camps continuing, traditional (drop-off) camps resumed (at select sites able to effectively accommodate camps while observing physical distancing and effective disinfecting according to health official guidelines). Enrollment numbers set at levels ensuring social distancing (pretty much for our entire agency, level was at max 15 campers). We had to create all new safety protocols for contact-less drop-off/pick-up, personalization of supplies (no group sharing of resources) – and develop all new camp activity functioning considering no touch activities, trail

LA Report continued
Page 12

hiking management, etc. Staff and kids have to wear masks whenever inside. Greatest challenge has been ensuring steady supply of PPE and sanitizer. Also, some Outdoor Adventure programs have resumed with restrictions (paddling programs, equipment rentals).
What are your plans going into the fall?

Phase 3 was originally defined as “return to normal operations” but we all realize that “normal” (certainly in the short term) is not what it was before COVID-19. We see that face masks and screening may need to continue for some time into the future, as well as reduction in capacity and some physical distancing in most cases. We’ll have to turn “guidelines” and “recommendations” for protocols and procedures into actual agency policies that can be enforced if needed. That will take some researching and legal vetting regarding language and liability. We have no illusions that programming (large events, especially) will “go back to normal” – we’re basically looking at cancellation of all large events and drastic alteration to most other programs (much like what happened with summer camp – lower capacities, restructured activity format, etc.). Rather than alter “tried and true” events (and failing to meet people’s expectations for those programs), I have challenged my teams to develop something related, but entirely different. Circumstances have changed, as must our delivery of programs and relating to the public.

So right now, as we speak, as COVID-19 case numbers are increasing, we’re mobilizing and determining potential response scenarios... and it’s a “stay tuned” situation.

Side note:

One of our most provocative moments for the conservation programming team was a question posed, “Should we actually celebrate being successful at connecting people to nature virtually?” There’s an irony there that stings me to my core. It’s someone saying, “I’ve seen the Grand Canyon! We went on a virtual field trip there last week!” I know so much is out of our hands, and at this time, we have to work within parameters more restrictive than we’ve ever imagined. Still, I have mixed emotions hearing how much people loved virtual nature camp. Part of me shudders even typing those words (lol!). But we have welcomed not only our “regulars” to the roster. We’ve also seen the program not limited by geographical locale or by physical accessibility challenges. We’re more accessible than we’ve ever been. And the program format has opened our eyes to how valuable that is to us, to parents, and to the children we serve. We had 2 enrollees attending virtual nature camp while they vacationed in another state. That was unexpected. But with parents traveling and still staying in, it turned out to be a blessing to them. They hunkered down at a beach house in South Carolina and relaxed while their kiddos were entertained throughout the day by the conservation team with crafts, games, challenges, and short outdoor adventures. So that’s all I can provide with the time I had today – I hope it’s useful. I am looking forward to seeing what you are working on.

Take care & stay well,

From **Mark Brink** (Park Manager)
Poverty Point World Heritage Site

The grounds of all state historic sites have remained open even during quarantine, with the museums being reopened during Phase 1 starting May 15.

Right now, we are open according to Phase 2 guidelines, so we are at half capacity in all buildings open to the public like the museum.

Programs outdoors must be limited to 50 or fewer visitors, which isn't too much of a problem. We are a little wary of scheduling and advertising programming as it may still draw a crowd.

We are recommending masks and social distance guidelines to all visitors with signs and verbally when that is necessary. Park staff are required to wear masks when around others and inside the museum. We are offering our regularly scheduled guided tours on the tram with social distancing guidelines and a reduced capacity of 20. However, the tram is currently out for some repairs. We are offering impromptu atlatl, pump drill, and other such demos to visitors who request them.

I have been giving interpretive talks with visitors around the site as well. Right now, there aren't any tactile displays or hands-on demos, but visitors have been happy to watch for the time being. Guided hikes are going to be helpful going forward with park rangers and visitors wearing masks and keeping a safe distance, and I'll be trying that out next week with a local Boy Scout troop.

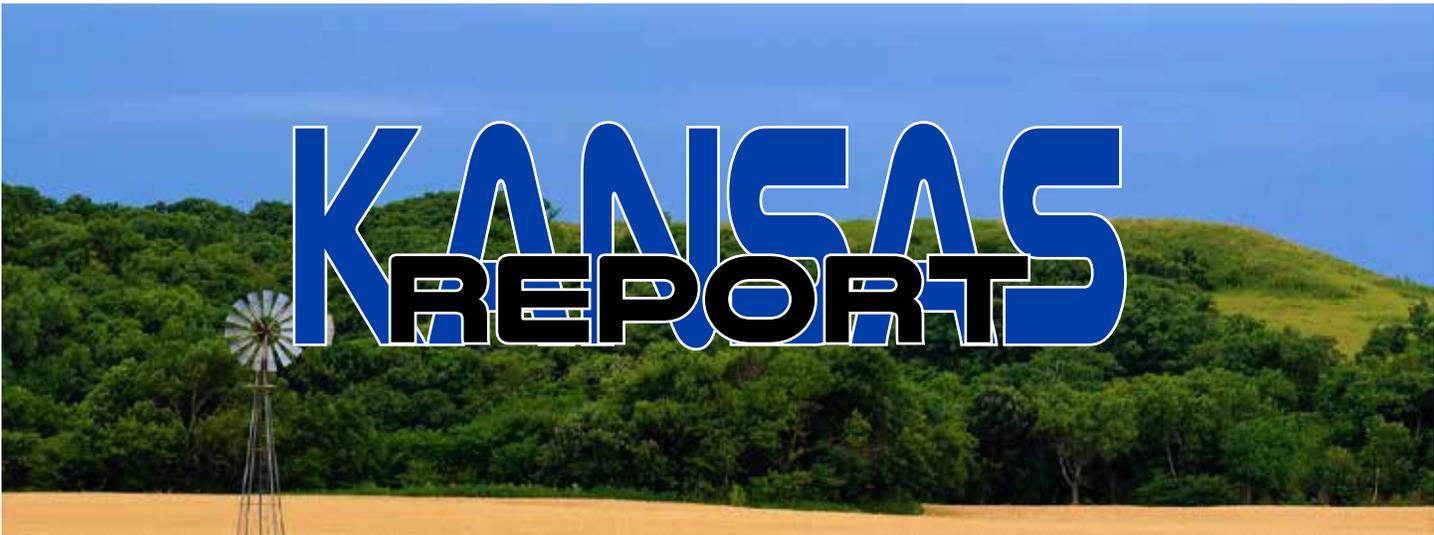


Poverty Point artifacts

Our plans will develop for the fall as we receive more guidance from the LA State Parks Administrative Office. We are currently planning on having more regularly scheduled programs starting in the fall. We have also been taking calls from optimistic school teachers who are scheduling tentative field trips. We've been ramping up our presence on social media, specifically Facebook. I've been doing "artifact talks" that do include a bunch of photos of various projectile points from the current series and other artifacts that were

covered earlier during quarantine.

As everywhere I suppose a lot of facilities are closed and I cannot get information from them.



Kansas is blooming with wildflowers! In the Flint Hills, there has been a high number of black-eyed susans and fleabane that make the meadows and prairies burst with color. There has been a noticeable increase in people getting outdoors and enjoying the State Parks, lakes and other public natural areas. With this blessing, has brought somewhat of a curse. Littering and abuse of some of the treasured public lands has been on the increase as well. How do we encourage these new explorers to keep exploring, but be responsible and ethical in their newfound hobby? It seems the time is now to seize this opportunity to nourish and encourage new caregivers and interpreters.

Delia Lister, Director of **Pittsburg State University's Nature Reach** received the Kansas Association of Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) John Strickler Lifetime Achievement Award. Delia is the youngest ever to receive this honor. She is being recognized for her outstanding service to the profession of environmental education. Nature Reach's summer camp program went virtual. Campers participated in activities through videos and with pre-purchased science kits. Enrollment was down compared to usual camp, but the kids who participated (and the parents) seem to have enjoyed it. Delia says she has certainly learned a lot about digital interpretation over the past few months--as I am sure all of us have...video editing takes more hours than expected! PSU Natural History Reserve has seen some big changes. Thanks to some federal funds earmarked for road safety, the Reserve has been cleared of some of the trees revealing the strip pits that were previously hidden. A new wetland boardwalk has been placed, and the trail is being constructed.

Milford Nature Center staff stayed busy all spring even while the doors were closed to the public. Social media and video programs were developed along with some newfound skills that go along with interpretation from afar. One thing that kept staff on their toes was more phone calls than most years regarding wildlife in people's yards. Perhaps due to all that time spent in their homes, folks started noticing their wild neighbors. The pandemic has offered a great opportunity to educate people to leave wild animals alone.



**KS Report continued
Page 15**

The **Great Plains Nature Center** has released its newest nature guide entitled *A Pocket Guide to Kansas Mushrooms*. The guide is full of wonderful fungus information that applies around the region, not just Kansas, says author and NAI member Lyndzee Rhine. The guide was funded by Every Green Team and the Chickadee Checkoff. Chickadee Checkoff is a program where taxpayers can elect to donate a portion of their tax payment or refund to help with wildlife and nature education within the State. The Friends of the Great Plains Nature Center published the guide.



Melissa Blank reports that **Felix Valle State Historic Site** began new outdoor walking tours in conjunction with the National Park Service, French Colonial America and Foundation for Restoration of Ste. Genevieve. Tours focus on a general history of the French community, and a special women's history tour. More tour topics will be added in the coming weeks. For a look at the current post from Welcome Center, go to <https://www.facebook.com/historicsaintegenevieve/posts/10158264749243397>

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the Association of Missouri Interpreters Conference for September 2020 has been cancelled and rescheduled for next year. The conference for 2021 will be Sunday, September 19 (pre-conference) to Thursday, September 23 (check-out). The location remains the same; Lodge at Port Arrowhead, Lake of the Ozarks. Hope to see you there!

Global Impact of a Missouri Icon

By John Miller

What do the following have in common:

- The US Army's most reliable transport mode until 1956
- An animal not normally found in nature
- The mascot of the University of Central Missouri



[Photo Credit: Missouri Secretary of State]

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- Marilyn Monroe's first film role
- Most prolific winners at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis

If you guessed a mule, then you were correct.

Rarely found as wild animals in nature, the mule is hybrid cross between a female horse and a male donkey. These 'beasts of burden' have been used by humans as early as 3000 BC ⁽¹⁾.

Its strength, temperament, and low maintenance made it the 'get it done' animal under all weather and terrain conditions. The mule was introduced into Missouri soon after being granted statehood in 1820. Missouri mule farmers became so good at breeding mules because it meant a steady revenue. *"The average farmer's income at the turn of the century was around \$700 a year. A pair of mule foals could be sold for \$500 at this time so not only were they strong workers, but breeding mules was a lucrative side business for many farmers."* ⁽²⁾.

This breeding prowess culminated at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis (which also hosted the Olympic the same year!) where mules bred in Missouri took home nearly all of awards. "Missouri Mules" became the gold standard for mules and resulted in good quality animals for decades to come ⁽³⁾.

One of the biggest customers for Missouri mules was the US Army who had been using them since the American Revolution. Mules bred in Missouri would play a critical role in moving troops and supplies in both World Wars. Army Mule units were not decommissioned until December 1956 ⁽⁴⁾.

The story of breeding mules even made it to Hollywood with the movie *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* in 1948. Because the main story was based on a mule breeder in central Missouri the world premiere of this movie was held in Sedalia, MO. The cast included a little-known actress named Marilyn Monroe. ⁽⁵⁾

Mules continued to be a sense of pride for many in the Show-Me state. This included the mule mascot for the University of Central Missouri (Warrensburg). Graduates from this university are either mules or jennies. The culmination of this animal's service to the state and the world would finally see the mule enshrined as the State Animal in 1995 ⁽⁶⁾ and forever be associated with strength, endurance and honesty. Like the Missouri Mule, most of our state symbols have an enriching story to tell. Don't just treat them as a name on a list, but an interpretive opportunity. Once you share these amazing stories with your visitors, they will appreciate your area resources with more depth.

References

MO State Animal: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/symbol/animal>

(1) History of the Mule: <https://www.mulemuseum.org/history-of-the-mule.html>

(2) Mule income: [https://umsl.edu/mercantile/events-and-exhibitions/online-exhibits/missouri-splendor/visions_Mo_mule.htm#:~:text=On%20May%2031%2C%201995%2C%20Governor,a%20jack%20\(male%20donkey\).&text=In%20addition%2C%20the%20Missouri%20mule,in%20moving%20troops%20and%20supplies.](https://umsl.edu/mercantile/events-and-exhibitions/online-exhibits/missouri-splendor/visions_Mo_mule.htm#:~:text=On%20May%2031%2C%201995%2C%20Governor,a%20jack%20(male%20donkey).&text=In%20addition%2C%20the%20Missouri%20mule,in%20moving%20troops%20and%20supplies.)

(3) Mules at the 1904 Worlds Fair: <http://www.lyndonirwin.com/04horse12.htm>

(4) Mules in the US Army: <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2016/01/29/army-mules-the-beast-of-burden-in-war/>

(5) Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0040762/>

(6) Missouri State Animal: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/symbol/animal>

OKLAHOMA REPORT



little wooden box, were Neil Garrison's answer to that question: a pair of hand-chipped flint drills! Thank you, Neil!

At the South Central NAI Regional Conference in Bartlesville, some people made their own bone needles out of catfish spines. The question came up as we used toothpicks and dental floss to clear the bits of tendon from inside the dorsal spine's natural needle eye hole, "How did prehistoric tool makers clear this out?" Shortly after the conference was over, a package arrived at the house of Donna Horton. Inside, packed inside a cool



You may not recognize the name of this dragonfly, the chief reason being that it is a brand new name, for a brand new subspecies: Howery's Clubtail. You may recognize the name of Mark Howery, though, especially if you have ever needed help identifying an odonate in Oklahoma. Mark is one of the Wildlife Diversity biologists at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and has held that job for 28 years, focusing on Oklahoma's rare, declining and endangered species along with common species that aren't hunted or fished. Mark did not actually discover the new insect, but rather, he was honored with the new insect name in commemoration of his long career of working tirelessly for the conservation of Oklahoma's state's wildlife species. Congratulations, Mark!

Photo from Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

The Howery's Clubtail is a subspecies of the Ozark Clubtail, a species that was not described and named until 1975. Its range is believed to occur in the Ozark Plateau and Ouachita highlands of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The

Howery's Clubtail (*Gomphurus ozarkensis howeryi*) differs from the Ozark

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Clubtail (*Gomphurus ozarkensis*) in being slightly larger and having different coloration on the ninth segment of the abdomen and on the thorax. The Howery's Clubtail population is only separated from the nominate Ozark Clubtail population by about 30 miles but the localities are divided by substantial topography and are part of different watersheds. This means the streams in which the dragonflies lay their eggs are not connected and the larvae never intermingle.

The process of identifying and naming the new subspecies began in 2011, when the isolated population of this Ozark Clubtail was discovered by Victor W. Fazio III along Salt Creek, a tributary of the Arkansas River, in western Osage County (northwest of Tulsa.) A 2013 grant made it possible for the Oklahoma Biological Survey's conservation biologists Michael A. Patten and Brenda D. Smith to investigate that original report as part of a three-year survey to determine the status, distribution and ecology of three spring-time-emerging dragonflies considered to be of greatest conservation need, including the Ozark Clubtail. The completed survey effectively doubled the number of known records of the target species, adding dozens of localities of occurrence. The final report of the three-year survey may be found at <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/sites/default/files/Final%20Report%20T-73-1%20Ozark%20Emerald%20F13AF01188.pdf>

The announcement of the new subspecies came this spring, with a May press release.

In related news, a new book "Dragonflies at a Biogeographical Crossroads: the Odonata of Oklahoma and Complexities Beyond its Borders" is planned for release in mid-June. Biologists and co-authors Michael A. Patten and Brenda D. Smith reveal many new details of Oklahoma's 176 species of dragonflies and damselflies.

"Dr. Bob" will be retiring on January 1st. For a total of 41 years, Bob Blackburn has been an employee of the Oklahoma Historical Society. He has been the director for 3/4's of that tenure. Well done, Dr. Bob!

Belated congratulations to Miranda Adams! This winter, she was hired as the new Education Specialist at the Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville. Miranda will be heading up the outreach/off-site programming that the Sutton Center will be conducting. Miranda moved from her position at the Tulsa Zoo to the Sutton Avian Research Center just in time to host the South Central NAI Regional Conference's bird-watching fieldtrip, a highlight of that day's excursion.

Sequoyah State Park's naturalist, Angelina Stancampiano, embraced aspects of the digital age during the virus pandemic. She's conducted virtual field trips using Zoom.com. In addition to that, she has kept the nature center's Facebook page lively with many posted videos.

TAKE THAT PANDEMIC!!! For the fifth year in a row, Oklahoma's "Bioblitz!" citizen-science program was conducted in April — which, this year, coincided with the "Shelter-At-Home" virus pandemic restrictions. Fortunately, this environmental inventory effort was conducted exclusively an on-line event through iNaturalist during the entire month of April. Participation in this year's Virtual Spring BioBlitz! Oklahoma 2020 project was greater than it ever has been. There were 26,809 observations of 2,889 species reported by 1,180 observers confirmed by 1,207 identifiers. Please permit us to repeat: TAKE THAT PANDEMIC!

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“Our doors may be closed, but science doesn’t stop.” The Oklahoma Aquarium in Jenks posts a new online activity every day at 9:30 a.m. on its website and Facebook page. Activities range from coloring sheets to stories to recipes to try at home. Their recipe for Hagfish Slime, along with some truly amazing hagfish interpretation, may be found at <http://okaquarium.org/DocumentCenter/View/559/Hagfish-Slime-Recipe>. The Oklahoma Aquarium is just one of some of the Oklahoma organizations offering free coloring sheets and online activities for children for the summer of 2020. The Oklahoma Historical Society and the Tulsa Botanic Garden also make their online interpretation available via their websites or Facebook pages.

During the virus pandemic, Science Museum Oklahoma (SMO) in Oklahoma City hosted an “at home” live-streaming event just prior to the Mother’s Day holiday. The topic was gardening gifts for mom that didn’t require a shopping outing to the store in town. The SMO video series is titled “What’s Growing On.”

It’s a tongue-twister of a name. LIICHOKOSHKOMO’. It is a word phrase from the Chickasaw Nation, pronounced “Lee-cho-kosh-ko-MO.” In essence, it means: “Let’s play.” This is the name of the new children’s education exhibit at The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum (formerly known as The National Cowboy Hall of Fame). The hefty \$15 million price tag was attained thanks to the very generous support of the Chickasaw Nation. Wow! The grand opening of the new exhibit had to be postponed due to the virus pandemic, but the exhibit is now available to visitors.

It has been a long road to establish a new museum in Oklahoma City. The museum sat half-finished for years, visible to travelers on I-40 from its prominent location on the south bank of the North Canadian River, after the state legislature failed to find the money to complete it. Eighteen months ago we reported that work on the museum was finally back on track, thanks to joint funding from the City of Oklahoma City and the Chickasaw Nation. Originally titled the American Indian Cultural Center and Museum, the museum is now set to open in the spring season of 2021 and will be christened with a brand-new name: the First Americans Museum. We look forward to reporting that opening next year.

Cell phones? A threat to African wildlife habitat???? The OKC Zoo reports that mining activity in Africa poses a direct threat to the habitat used by gorillas and other species of wildlife. One of the components of cell phones comes from these African mining areas. In order to combat this very serious problem, the OKC Zoo awarded free Zoo admission on February 2nd to those persons that donated used cell phones to the Zoo’s phone recycling program. In addition, other zoo visitors who just surrendered their phones for that one-day visit got half-price admission; the phones were returned at the end of the visitors’ stay.

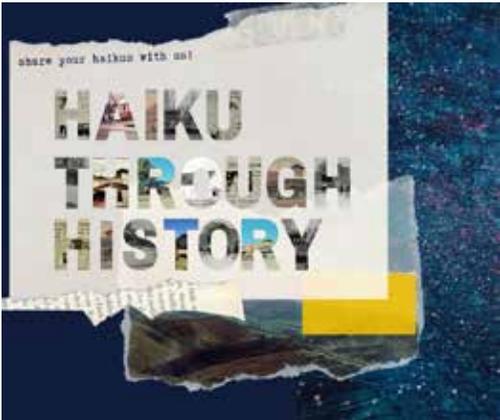
Group outings to some Oklahoma’s premiere natural areas is the focus of a group called “Women’s Hiking Crew Adventures.” For a full list of their events, contact them at womenshikingcrew.com

Just across the lake from the Oklahoma City Zoo is the new urban camp for the Girl Scouts organization. The camp focuses on STEM disciplines (Science Technology Engineering Math.) A “Cookies and Cocktails” fund-raising event will be held in mid-September of 2020 with the goal of showing off the new facility. The gathering will feature food snack items using Girl Scout cookies as a component. Local restaurant staff will be designing the culinary items.



Jeff Campbell, Executive Director for **Plano Conservancy** reports:

Picturing Plano’s Past - We are reaching out with new programs for people social distancing and staying at home. We made our coloring book “Saving Plano’s Treasures” available for download with an English and Spanish version. - Our “Hike Through History” walking tour was cancelled so we came up with “Haiku Through History” - A poetry contest for Plano history. - Also for Historic Preservation Month we are having a “Picturing Plano’s Past” photo contest.



Dr. Clark Wernecke, Executive Director for **The Gault School of Archaeological Research** reports:

Much of our outreach program, tours and speakers, got shut down in Mid-March. Since then we have planned both for reopening the **Gault Archaeological Site** in the future and new initiatives in outreach. We have done speeches remotely and plan to expand our remote reach to schools this fall. We have also concentrated on our social media presence and website updates to both continue our mission of education regarding the peopling of the Americas but also to keep people up-to-date with how this is effecting our nonprofit. Yes, the Gault Site is



closed indefinitely for tours, our lab (on the UTexas research campus) has been closed and the staff is still working from home. We had begun a major fundraising campaign which died before it truly began - between COVID-19 and the dramatic crash in oil prices fundraising in Texas for non-health/welfare nonprofits has dried up.

Stream a Park Ranger or Buffalo Soldier right into your living room! Programs are hosted at 6pm (CST) with Interactive Question and Answer time.

Programs available on Facebook at Facebook/TexasOutdoorFamily and Facebook/TPWDBuffaloSoldiers

Lisa Reznicek, Outdoor Education Specialist - **Texas Outdoor Family Program - Texas**

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Parks and Wildlife reports:

Our **Texas Outdoor Family Program (TOF)** is a camping 101 program for beginners visiting our Texas State Parks, focused on bringing under-served and under-privileged audiences into nature through outdoor recreational opportunities. Since the pandemic, our team of 10 quickly shifted from in-person to online outreach. TOF partnered with the TPWD **Buffalo Soldiers Program** to bring a variety of virtual outdoor, conservation, and historical programs, which this month culminate in a Texas State Parks trivia challenge. - From front-line interpretation and outdoor engagement, our TOF and Buffalo Soldier Programs are working together to bring our signature experiences via Facebook Live, with engaging discussions, resources, and activities for the whole family. We've had to cut all in-person work, which relies upon shared equipment use for outreach and education. While our mission remains, we face new obstacles and shifting circumstances, so we're learning new tricks to reach our audiences and continue community relations. We've gone digital in a hurry and have looked at leaders in InterpTech (like NAI and CA State Parks, amongst others) for shared lessons and tricks of the trade.

Tara Humphreys, Field Interpretation Coordinator, Texas State Parks reports:

Texas State Park interpreters have increased virtual presence during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Social media posts to showcase “zen” moments, Facebook Live programs and distance learning school programs are a few of the ways we're transitioning to this new normal. We created a new Online Events tab on our State Parks events page to capture many of these offerings. The Texas Outdoor Family program and the Buffalo Soldiers program partnered to offer daily programs in April, culminating with a “CampIn” event on May. They're continuing regular programming through May that will culminate with a Trivia Night based on questions from the May program series.

Kimberly Ogden, Education Coordinator of Outreach, CBBEP - Nueces

Delta Preserve reports:

CBBEP's **Nueces Delta Preserve** staff successfully completed our March CIG class just as the Pandemic was reaching Texas. Led by **Lari Jo Edwards**, Director of Environmental Education, our class was enthusiastic, yet small and safely distanced. During that same time, our traditionally offered programs halted. We turned on a dime to brainstorm and create online content that would still meet our standard for program quality, and best serve a new paradigm of home learning.

Matt Hendrix, Education Coordinator, has shined using his passion for video production to produce our online content. We plan to host a variety of one-day Teacher Workshops in June, while limiting person-to-person contact via extra hygiene measures and adequate spacing of participants. In August,

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we are excited to offer another CIG course for which we have already had interest. Throughout these unprecedented circumstances, we have made time to hone our personal naturalist skills and develop a deeper appreciation for our site.



Rick Hammer, President, **West Texas Science Center & Lake Kirby Nature Park** reports:

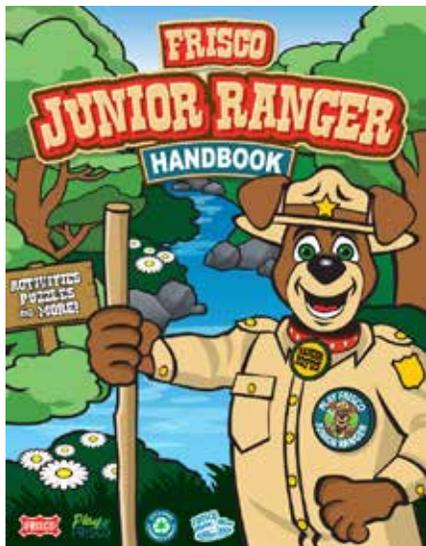
Our spring Discover nature walks for children and adults were cancelled and currently we have no on-site events scheduled. Our main focus of outreach is through daily posts to our Facebook page that I schedule and post each day. These are mostly about the wildflowers currently in bloom and some interesting natural history about them.



We recently installed three new interpretive signs: one featuring images and names of 63 different wildflowers that bloom throughout the year and also 21 associated insects. Second sign interprets our new amphibian and reptile exhibit or sand pit that contains an almost life-size skeleton exposed in sand for children to explore (I can send pics but the FB post for this was last Thursday). Third sign is a history of Lake Kirby.

Stephanie Harbert, Education Manager, **Downtown Aquarium**, Houston reports:

After being closed to the public for six weeks, we have reopened and once again have Guests exploring our exhibits! We continue to regularly clean and sanitize high-touch areas, our employees are screened daily for signs of illness, physical distancing signage has been posted at entrances and throughout the exhibits, and hand sanitizing stations have been placed throughout the building. Certain amenities such as interactive touch screens, the splash pad, and amusement park remain closed. Guests that have visited us have been very kind and supportive. We have received



a lot of positive feedback! - Normally at this time of year, we'd be seeing up to 1,000 students a day and doing back-to-back programs and tours. Instead, we are turning our attention to distance learning and outreach. Our local teachers particularly love coming here and doing Zoom field trips with their classes. We simply send the teacher our self-guided tour packet ahead of time so they can prepare for their visit and we provide a grade-appropriate activity that the students can **complete** at home. It's been widely popular and couldn't be easier!

Mickey Smith, Assistant Office Manager/ Volunteer Coordinator/ CIG, **Purtis Creek State Park** reports:
Arts in the Park (different classes for different seasons), Wild Life Encoun-

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ters, Kayak classes, Basic Fishing, Vulture walk & Bat Watch. We would like to expand on all of the in the coming year with more Edible Plants classes and Under Water Critter classes, but have not been told when we may resume classes and events. - Danielle Bradley has been working on VOPs for our park. I am excited about them.

Danielle Hatch, Education & Outreach Coordinator, City of Frisco reports:

The City of Frisco has a brand new Junior Ranger program! Children can download a free Junior Ranger Handbook and follow along to learn about nature, recycling, and water in order to earn a Junior Ranger badge! - The City of Frisco Natural Resources

Dept. has transitioned to using more social media challenges, educational graphics, and virtual nature programs and videos. Despite the pandemic, we have been able to create a greater online presence and even made a new program called Nature Explorers to encourage families to spend time outside.



Keira Quam, Aquatic Education Training Specialist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department reports:

The same weekend in March the virus began affecting Texas, partnering with BSA Longhorn Council, TPWD Angler Education offered the first TPWD Certified Angler Instructor & BSA CAI (Certified Angler Instructor) workshop in Texas. We had 25 in attendance for the 3 day training and lucky scouts will learn fishing from the expertise of this group. - I was honored to receive the TPWD Employee Recognition Community Outreach award for working with numerous partners across the state of Texas to teach and promote fishing! - Look for upcoming online fishing classes and instructor certifications on our website calendar! - Instead of teaching in-person workshops and supporting fishing events across the state, (which have all been cancelled) we have been working with volunteers to develop methods to teach the majority of our skills online so actual fishing can occur on the water - 6 feet apart! We are also working on best practices to clean equipment that is loaned out for use by our instructors.

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