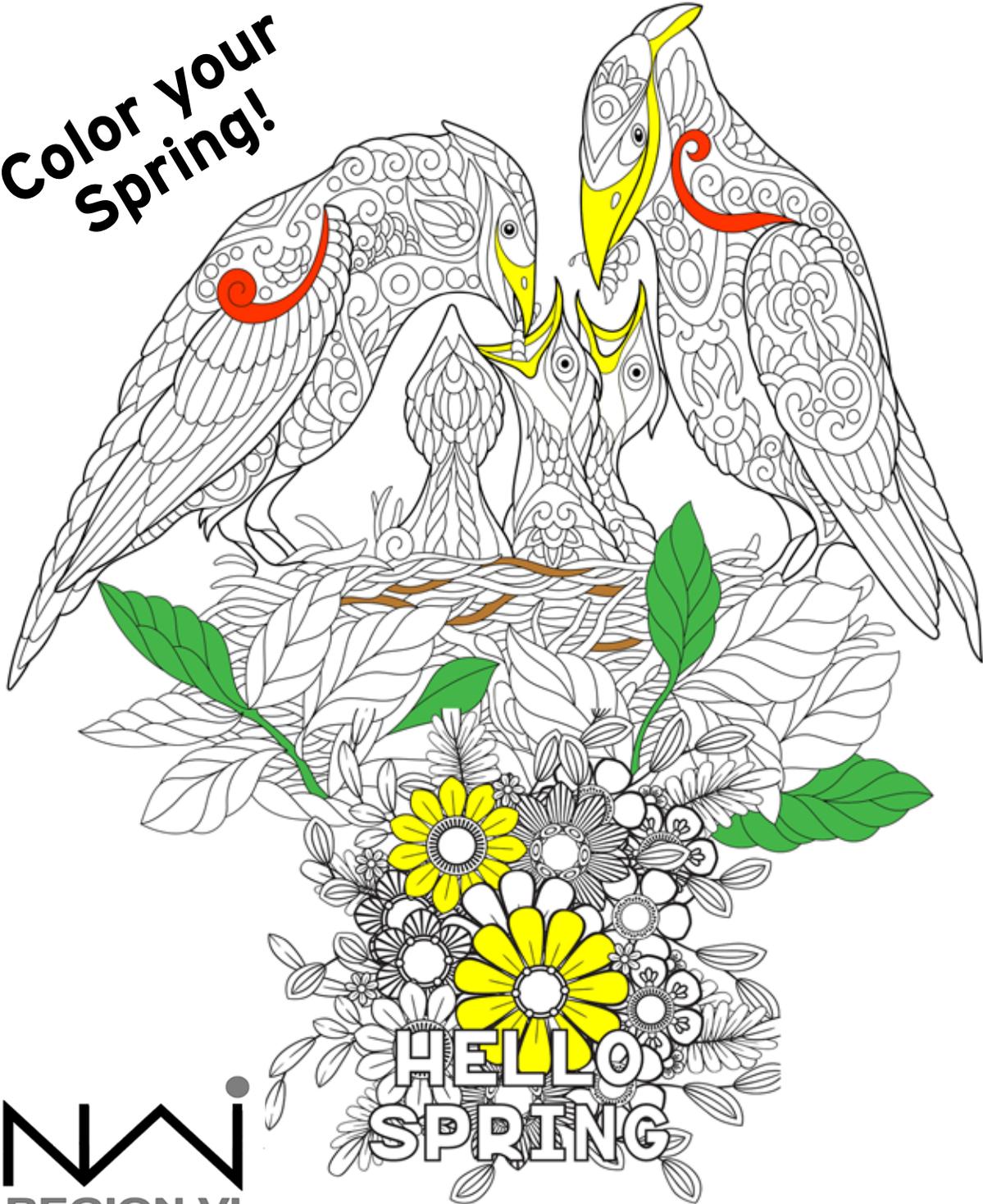


# VISIONS

NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

SPRING 2021 • VOLUME 35, ISSUE 1

**Color your  
Spring!**



# VISIONS

## Newsletter for NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

SPRING 2021 • VOLUME 35, ISSUE 1

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*The word cloud on the cover was created from the CDC Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind at Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces.*

PG 28

- An Editor's 2020 Resolution

# Never too late

By Ruth Nasrullah

## Editor's Note:

*New Region 6 members as well as long-timers are encouraged to contribute to Visions with their stories, information, or interesting tidbits. Ms. Ruth Nasrullah is a new member who offered to share her story with the rest of us. She has a fresh writing style and we look forward to reading more from her. Welcome Ms. Nasrullah to Region 6.*

I generally have to agree with the adage that it's "never too late to [insert activity]." I got my bachelor's degree at 41, and started my journalism career in my mid-40s. I can't help myself. I always want to learn more and do more.

When I moved to Houston almost 17 years ago from the east coast I really missed the hiking trails near my former home. The Lone Star Hiking Trail, about 70 miles north of my home, served as a meager

substitute. I went there for day hikes and overnight camping trips. I tried to write about it, but was never able to describe what I saw in detail.

Tall pine trees, short palmettos, a yellow-green snake sitting on a log, the owl hooting over my head all night... their names and characteristics were a mystery to me. I sought a way to address my knowledge deficit. The Texas Master Naturalist program added the missing pieces. I completed my initial training this spring and have completed my certification requirements. I now volunteer as an assistant trail guide at Armand Bayou Nature Center in southeast Houston where I accompany seasoned volunteer guides on night hikes, leading families on tours of the preserve's natural highlights.

When I was searching for a niche after completing my initial

training, I was naturally drawn to communications – outreach and education. I joined NAI and re-joined Toastmasters, the communications and leadership organization that a decade ago helped me overcome my terror of public speaking. I gave a speech to my Toastmasters club defining interpretation, using sculptures in a Birmingham park as a sample topic. I contrasted the "just the facts" version with the version that told the history of the student protests against segregation and the dawn of the civil rights movement. They loved it, and several people shared that they had learned a lot from my presentation. I look forward to learning more and better skills as an NAI member. Yes, it's true that I'm getting close to the age at which many people retire, but as I know well, it's never too late.

## Region 6 2021 Virtual Conference

### ***Boldly Going Where No Interpreter Has Gone Before***

2020 has no doubt been full of challenges and changes but venturing into the unknown and walking new paths also holds the opportunity for growth, ingenuity, and reflection. Join your fellow Region 6'ers at our first ever virtual conference February 23-25, 2021 to connect with and learn from others who have been boldly going where no interpreters have gone before!

Even though the virtual format of the conference is new, you will still find your favorite conference traditions like the Scholarship Auction, the Brian Barnette's All-American Interpreter's Quiz, networking opportunities, and recognizing each other at the Awards Ceremony. Please contact us if you'd like to submit a program proposal. We look forward to seeing you soon and blazing this new trail together. Until then, stay safe and take care!

**Humbly,  
Stacy Gray  
Shreveport, LA  
2021 NAI Region 6 Workshop Chair**

Interpreting an important historic site is challenging enough in this new now. Developing an important historic site for interpretation is doubly so. Here's a sneak peek into the whys and wherefores of the current progress of developing a meaningful interpretation opportunity at Arkansas's "oldest public structure".  
Eratta -- Last issue in a tease for this article I misspelled the author's name and misidentified the state agency overseeing the site. It is with humble apologies that I regret those errors.  
Now, without further ado, here is:

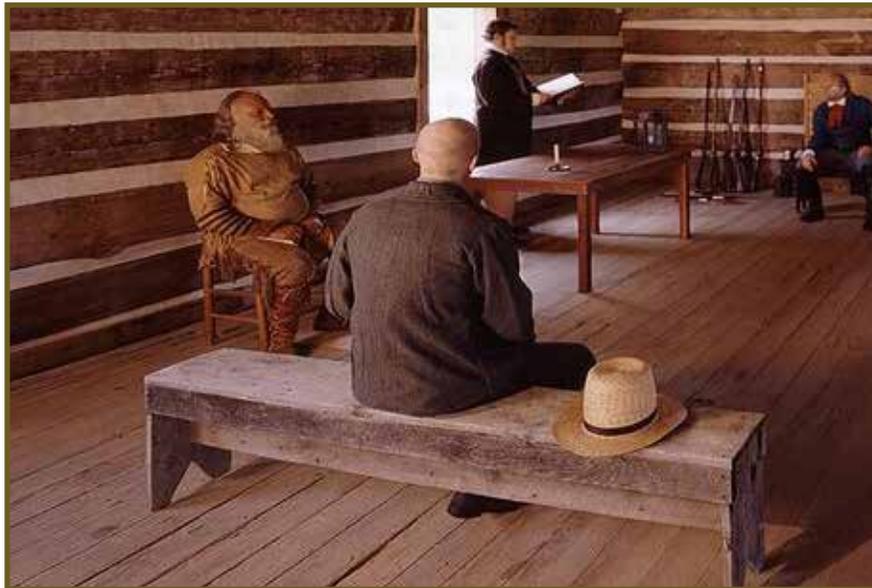
# The Future of the Past

by Marlon Mowdy, CHI  
Historic Site Manager

The year is 1835 and riverboat traffic is heavy pulling into Liberty, Arkansas, a port located at the confluence of the White and North Fork rivers. People are off-boarding and walking up the hill to Jacob Wolf's mercantile to barter, sell, and trade while riverboat captains resupply their vessels. Keelboats and flatboats are a common occurrence traveling north and south along the river to other towns and markets as far away as New Orleans.

Albeit the first paddle wheel steamship landed at Liberty by 1831, a more common means of travel is still in place. Jacob was elected to the Territorial Legislative Council in 1826 as a representative of Izard County and the surrounding area. He authored a bill to be presented to the Territorial Legislative Session in 1829 for the approval of the construction of a new perma-

nent seat of justice in Izard County. Language in the bill directed the new seat of justice to be located near the present temporary seat of justice—Jacob's home. Now, of course, Jacob wanted to be fair about



the proposed work going out to bid so the common man could have a chance to put a little money in his pocket. He was well versed in serving his constituents and always kept a keen eye on the political horizon. Thus, the second part of the bill had a "reverter clause" inserted into it. In the event the seat of justice moved to another area, then the property would revert to who built it.

Considering that Jacob owned the 76 acres of land he originally donated to Izard County for the construction of the new courthouse, and he spent the previous four years cutting, hewing, and curing the yellow

pine timbers for the construction of the courthouse, Jacob can certainly be regarded as a visionary for his time.

Jacob Wolf was awarded the bid. No one realized, (admitted), that there was a conflict of interest with what transpired. After all, Jacob was considered a master log

builder and the construction of a new courthouse for Izard County served the better good within the new upstart community of Liberty. Jacob used his sons, slaves, and a faction of Shawnee and Delaware Indians from the west side of the White river to "raise-up"

**See Jacob Wolf**

# Jacob Wolf house

continued from page 3

the new courthouse. When the seat of justice moved 20 miles south to Athens, Arkansas in 1835, the ownership reverted to Jacob Wolf and at that time it became the Wolf family home until Jacob's death in 1863. Jacob, among many things, was a very astute businessman

TODAY -- travelers approach the same destination either by means of highway five or if you are an avid fisherman, you are traveling the same waterways as prior keelboat captains. Either way, you have arrived at the Jacob Wolf House Historic Site. The site is managed by the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism. Specifically, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP) is the governing body and is a division of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The Jacob Wolf House is the center piece of the property and is the last remaining landmark from the historic town of Liberty, Arkansas. Jacob was instrumental in the planning and direction of the new upstart frontier community. Jacob and his family moved to the north central region of the Arkansas Territory around

1820 from Hopkins County, Kentucky. It is believed that Jacob brought with him the very design for the structure from a similar log-built dog trot courthouse in Kentucky. However, the "Wolf House" was not



their first Arkansas residence. The original Wolf family home was a few feet north of today's structure. It housed not only his large extended family, but served as the temporary seat of justice for Izard County in 1825. Thus, the structure that exists today was built first and foremost as the first permanent seat of justice for Izard County in 1829. Educational and interpretive programming at this historic site is the driving force behind our continued preservation and protection efforts. The Jacob Wolf House is the oldest public structure in Arkansas. Visitors experience history where it happened! The Jacob Wolf House is the last remain-

ing two-story dogtrot public structure in the United States. We follow the National Park Service's historic preservation guidelines to not only be technically correct with our applications to the historic structures at the site, but to ensure that the structures receive the correct care and planning for years to come—it is our future.

The Future of the Past is not only through our interpretive and educational programming; however, it is through our timely development of the state's newest

historic site. The Department of Arkansas Heritage acquired the site from the Baxter County Quorum Court in 2017—that is when possession of the property took place. The planning of much needed development followed suit. Phase I Development included: new restoration work to the Wolf House, installing a new 1840 style split rail fencing on two sides of the property, a new overlay of the parking lot, new signage, the exterior restoration of the 1832 John Wolf Cabin, the interior renovation of a timber structure on the

*See Jacob Wolf*

Page 5

# Jacob Wolf house

continued from page 4

south end of the site to be used as our visitor center, a new ADA walkway across the property, and a refurbishing of the boardwalk.

A state sponsored grant, the Arkansas Natural Cultural Resource Council Grant (ANCRC), was used to pay for the



\$292,000.00 projects. A second ANCRC grant was submitted in January of 2020 for Phase II Development at an estimated cost of \$270,000.00. Phase II Development will include: a new fire retardant wood shake shingle roof on the Wolf House, continuation of the 1840 split rail fence on the west side of the property, an interior restoration of the John Wolf Cabin—(replica nineteenth century Ozark cabin furnishings), a new period correct chimney and fireplace at the John Wolf Cabin, restoration of the 1865 cistern, new wayside interpretive panels highlighting our interpretive topics along the ADA walkway, and a new roof and windows at the visitor center. Lastly, a new picnic pavilion will be constructed on the south end of the property. Phase II De-

velopment will likely start in the spring of 2021. Architectural planning and design will precede actual renovation and

restoration work at the property. The time line for Phase II Development will be approximately 6-9 months. The property will be open; however, it is recommended that visitors take caution while visiting the site and it is recommended you check in with staff at the visitor center upon your arrival.

The property has come a long way since its inception in 1829! Thousands of people have found their way up and down the White River corridor traveling to new places, following dreams, starting anew, and settling this rugged Ozark region. The area is abundant in resources, wildlife, and remnants of the past that speak to the long-lasting heritage that aligns itself with so many families that trace their descen-

dants to these north central highlands. Storytelling about the Ozarks has always played an intricate role in the folklore that highlighted early frontier journeys into Territorial Arkansas. We are proud to continue that tradition with our educational and interpretive programming at the Jacob Wolf House Historic

Site—come see us! New challenges with interpreting our story started with COVID-19. However, you can follow us on Facebook, visit our website, and engage our new YouTube video highlighting a virtual tour of the Wolf House. We still give introductions at our visitor center.

Please like us on Facebook at Jacobwolfhouse and visit our web page at [www.jacobwolfhouse.com](http://www.jacobwolfhouse.com)

# NAI Region Six Director's Report

I hope this newsletter finds all our members enjoying some great winter weather. As I write this the snow is coming down and filling the view with clean white haze. I love winter. This year has been a challenging difficult time, my thoughts are with all your families who have lost loved ones and have experienced COVID-19 firsthand.

## Virtual Workshop

The 2021 Region 6 Virtual Workshop in February is looking to be a great investment in our members, I hope to see many familiar faces and welcome new members into our family. See you on-line soon!

If you are needing financial assistance, please e-mail me at [jayinterp@yahoo.com](mailto:jayinterp@yahoo.com) as we have a way to help our members attend.

## Thanks for your Service

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 including fostering new leadership on the board.



NAI Region Six Director -  
Jay Schneider, Arkansas

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 dedicated efforts of Lyndzee Rhine, Scholarship & Professional Development Chair and Rachel Roth, Digital Communications Chair, 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!

## Board Positions Needed:

If you are interested in serving on the board we need a Scholarship & Professional Development Chair and a Digital Communications Chair.

Please e-mail questions or send me your intentions at [jayinterp@yahoo.com](mailto:jayinterp@yahoo.com) so the board may consider your application.

Do Today Well!  
Jay

## NAI Fellow Named a Parks and Recreation Legend



Ted Cable  
(from KSU website)

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) has recognized Dr. Ted Cable, NAI Fellow and Professor Emeritus of Park Management and Conservation at Kansas State University as a Legend in the field of parks and recreation. The Legend Award recognizes distinguished practitioners and scholars who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the park and recreation field.

The Academy's Legends Program is the only visual history of individuals involved in parks, recreation, and conservation efforts in the United States. Through one-on-one interviews, these Legends share stories about their contributions to the profession as well as their professional insights, advice and philosophical beliefs.

Over his long career, Dr. Cable authored 15 books and more than 250 articles, and he received numerous awards for teaching, advising, mentorship and scholarly activities. In naming Dr. Cable as a Legend, AAPRA noted "his humble and caring approach to education and research that strives for benefit of others over his own personal reward" and his "passion, enthusiasm, deep wealth of knowledge, and perhaps most importantly, his jovial and fun-loving approach to education which has made a profound impact on our profession."

# Region 6 Members Receive National Recognition

*These were presented during the 2020 NAI virtual national conference November 10-13th. Congratulations to all recipients. These awards are well-deserved.*

NAI 2020 National Awards

## George Kastler

### 2020 Outstanding Senior/Retired Interpreter Award

**G**eorge Kastler, Retired Chief Park Naturalist with Missouri State Parks in Willard Missouri is the recipient of the **2020 Outstanding Senior/Retired Interpreter Award** from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). The Outstanding Senior/Retired Interpreter award is presented to an NAI member and lifelong interpreter who is no longer working full-time in the profession (may be working part-time or as a volunteer) and who has dedicated his/her lifetime career to interpretation as a front-line interpreter, interpretive manager/administrator, or both.



*Missouri State Parks – a division of the  
Missouri Department of Natural Resources*



George Kastler has supported interpretation for over 50 years.

One of the most significant

and continuing aspects of George's contribution to the field of

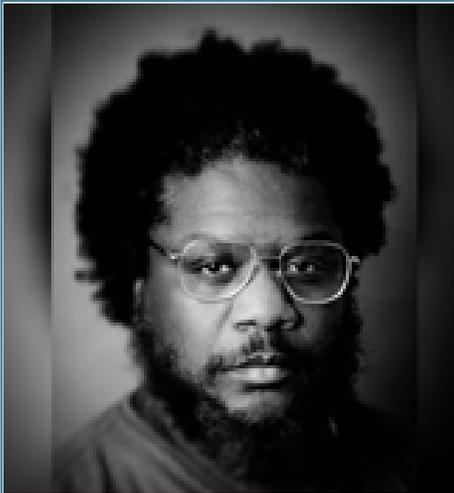
interpretation has been recruitment. Many of these students have gone on to become some of the very best interpreters in the field. This influence continues today, as these interpreters recruit and inspire others. George's influence reaches beyond Missouri's borders into neighboring states and across the nation. Interpretation, and more importantly, interpreters are George's life. He has touched and supported so many, regardless of affiliation. Though George has been retired since 2008, he is never forgotten. George has led by example.

During his 35-year career with Missouri State Parks, George taught his interpreters that interpretive programs should be fun for visitors, a principal of effective interpretation. One of George's legacies is the award-winning Missouri State Parks Spring Interpreters Training that has provided a high standard of training for over 30 years. His vision has taken Missouri State Parks to a level of interagency and interstate recognition as one of the finest interpretation training programs anywhere.

**NAI National Awards continued on page 8**

## **James Allen Jr.**

### **2020 Outstanding New Interpreter Award**



**J**ames Allen Jr., National Park Service Volunteer, Arkansas State Park Volunteer and AmeriCorps member of the Arkansas Full Circle FarmCorps program in Little Rock Arkansas is the recipient of the **2020 Outstanding New Interpreter Award** from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). The Outstanding New Interpreter award is presented to an NAI member who has worked fewer than five years in the profession, full- or part-time, and who demonstrates a recognized potential



in interpretation, assumption of leadership roles, creativity in programming or facility development, and a commitment to the profession and NAI.

James is deeply committed to issues of equity, social justice, engaging people of color in the outdoors, and working with youth. He has spent years as a licensed psychotherapist working with children to help them understand their challenges and develop treatment plans. One of James' long-term goals is to use his counseling expertise and his passion for the environment to engage youth of color in the outdoors, particularly African Americans living in cities. James epitomizes the very definition of life-long learner and is actively working towards gaining a deeper understanding of nature and the environment so he can bring those ideas to light for others. For example, in the past year he became a Certified Interpretive Guide through the NAI and an Arkansas Master Naturalist, as well as earned an online degree in wildlife and forestry conservation. He also became very active in NAI and has multiple articles published in the journal, *Legacy*, around topics such as the racist history of national parks and the impact on African Americans' visitation to them. He is an emerging leader in the fields of interpretation and natural resources and enthusiastically shares his insights, experience, and expertise with everyone.

*NAI 2020 National Awards*

# **Shirley Pecoraro**

## **2020 Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer Award**

**Shirley Pecoraro**, Volunteer with the Historic Daniel Boone Home and Village in St. Charles County Missouri is the recipient of the **2020 Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer Award** from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

The Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer award is presented to an NAI member who has worked five or more years as a volunteer interpreter, whose educational background is not in interpretation, and whose current volunteer duties are in



front-line interpretation or administration of an interpretive program. Must demonstrate a mastery of interpretive techniques and program development and must demonstrate initiative and a dedication to the affiliated institution.

For over 12 years Shirley Pecoraro has served as an outstanding volunteer for St. Charles County Parks & Recreation. Shirley has filled the mission of preserving the historic and natural features with unsurpassed passion She has touched the lives of thousands of visitors to the Historic Daniel Boone home. Through first- and third-person interpretation, she has brought to life Rebecca Boone (wife of Daniel Boone), Ann Filson (wife of Boone's famous biographer John Filson), and Elizabeth Kenton (wife of pioneer Simon Kenton). During countless tours you will find Shirley giving spectacular interpretive interactions on the main floor of the home. Wearing her 1800s attire, which she made with precision, she interprets the Boone family story and their lives.

Shirley shares her passion through presentations with her husband Robert at both Region 6 and National conferences. Shirley is a beloved by staff and visitors. In addition to being a stellar volunteer, she is a valued leader and mentor.

*NAI National Awards continued on page 10*

# **Michelle Soenksen**

## **2020 Outstanding Front-line Interpreter Award**

**M**ichelle Soenksen, Interpretive Resource Specialist III at Sam A. Baker State Park in Patterson, Missouri, is the recipient of the **2020 Master Front-line Interpreter Award** from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). The Master Front-line Interpreter award is presented to an NAI member who has worked for five or more years in the profession and whose current duties are at least 60 percent front-line interpretation. Must demonstrate a mastery of interpretive techniques, program development, and design of creative projects. Michelle is one of two recipients for this year's award.



Michelle Soenksen's lengthy resume includes interpretive work, at four Missouri State Parks and as a college instructor, all of which gave her a wide array of experiences. What is really important is that she has touched people with her interpretation. Her passion for the resource and her genuine caring for her audience shines through. She is not just going through the motions. Interpretation is so much more than just a job for her. It is truly "who she is", not just



"what she does". Michelle is a quiet force in interpretation. Without fanfare she builds strong programs on that foundation. She is very organized and versatile. She had to have flexibility in style and subject matter to make those valuable connections with her audiences. She thrived as an interpreter and mentor. Knowing what it was like as a seasonal interpreter herself, she made hiring her own seasonal park staff and training other DNR staff a memorable experience. Like many of us, she made the most with what she had. This often included a smaller than adequate budget. Michelle is strong in spirit. Despite personal and professional adversity, Michelle has never lost her spirit or her passion. Michelle's legacy endures as an interpreter and mentor.

# **Tara Humphreys**

## **2020 Outstanding Interpretive Manager Award**

**Tara Humphreys**, Field Interpretation Coordinator, Texas State Parks; Austin, Texas, is the recipient of the **2020 Master Interpretive Manager Award** from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).

The Master Interpretive Manager Award is presented to an NAI member who has worked for a minimum of 5 years in the profession and whose current duties are at least 60% supervisory or administrative. Recipients demonstrate a mastery of interpretive techniques, site and staff management and a respected ability to pass these skills to others. The awards committee looks for a well-rounded and talented recipient for this award. Tara is one of two recipients for this year's award.

Tara Humphreys has nurtured a thriving culture of interpretation in Texas where she served as NAI Texas State Coordinator for 11 years. Each year, her leadership as the Coordinator of Field Interpretation supports over 700,000 interpretive contacts in Texas State Parks. As she has moved up the ranks, Tara has never let go of her roots as a field interpreter. She has served the State Parks of Texas for 12 years, the past four of which as the manager of our Interpretive Specialists Team. Despite her leadership role,



you can still find her in uniform on many busy Saturdays serving our under-staffed parks. Tara is the keeper of the vision for interpretation in Texas State Parks.



**Life's better outside.®**

Tara has fostered a commitment to high-quality interpretive training. Her six-member team are all NAI Certified Trainers, and they host two NAI Certified Interpretive Guide courses each year for our park interpreters. As she stepped into her management role, she brought structure to her team to better serve a diverse network of 89 parks. Tara crafts clear work plans to support each team member's strength and the needs of their regions. The team

is the highest functioning they have ever been, recently receiving the agency's highest recognition award, and yet Tara still finds deliberate ways to coach each individual toward more success.

Ky Harkey (Director of TX State Parks) says, "As supervisor and partner on many projects, I am eternally grateful for her servant leadership, her vision, and the mentorship she provides to field interpreters, interpretive specialists, and me." NAI congratulates Tara Humphreys as the 2020 recipient of the Master Interpretive Manager Award.

# **Texas Outdoor Education and Outreach Team, TPWD**

## **2020 NAI Special Award**

**T**exas Outdoor Education and Outreach Team, with the Texas Parks and Wildlife is the recipient of the **2020 NAI Special Award** from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). The NAI Special Award is presented to members or nonmembers, individuals, agencies, or organizations whose service to NAI and its members is recognized for outstanding achievements and accomplishments.

When COVID-19 forced stay at home precautionary in March of 2020, the Outdoor Education and Outreach Team (OEO) of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was suddenly faced with stay at home orders and facility closures, thereby immediately impacting their ability to conduct in-person interpretive programs. Without missing a beat and with limited virtual programming experience, the OEO team quickly adapted and produced two months' worth of virtual interpretive content. Understanding the background of the OEO team's traditional offerings helps illustrate exactly how incredible this feat was. Not only did their programming survive, it thrived and served as a model for other interpreters who were also new to virtual programming. Over the course of two months, these virtual programs resulted in right at 237,000 video views and reached new audiences who are excited to participate with OEO programming when they return to the field. Again, for a team who up until the pandemic spent most of their time in the field, transitioning to online programming so masterfully in such a short period of time.





## State reports

Arkansas - Chris Pistole

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.*



**Chris Pistole, Hobbs State Park - Conservation Area** – Here at Hobbs we have had a busy fall with lots of hikers and mountain bikers enjoying the fall weather while exploring our 52 miles of trails. Sometimes the trail head parking lots were filled. According to Joe Jacobs, Marketing and Revenue Manager for Arkansas State Parks, the MTBProject, the most popular mapping app for mountain biking in the country has ranked the Karst Loop Trail at Hobbs as the #1 mountain bike trail in Arkansas based on user input. There are currently 572 Arkansas trails listed in the app. The Little Clifty Loop, again at Hobbs State Park, is #9. We will soon open 6 primitive campsites on the Karst Loop Trail that are available to reserve for a fee and are accessible only by foot or by bike. A new parking lot and rest room mainly for the bicyclists will soon open at the Tunnel Connector Trail head. Our new education pavilion, partially funded by the Friends of Hobbs, is complete, with native landscaping for pollinators to begin around it this spring.

We have been doing roving interpretation mainly at an outdoor booth at the Visitor Center on various topics as a safer alternative to formal programs. The colder weather has put a damper on that now. We have also continued to create digital media to post on the Arkansas State Parks Digital Discovery web page, and we have our first virtual school field trips scheduled for December. We are also planning for a scaled-back version of First Day Hikes on Jan. 1st – 3rd with just a drop-in information station and no guided hikes through the whole first weekend of January.

Our seasonal interpreter for the past year and 9 months, Kiara Bjornstad, delivered a healthy baby boy on Nov. 11th and both are doing well. This was her second child, and she has decided to be a full-time Mom and we will definitely miss her.

**James Allen, Jr.** - I am a Region 6 member from Little Rock, Arkansas and am the recipient of the 2020 NAI Outstanding New Interpreter Award. (Congratulations to James! We hope to “see” him at our next Region 6 conference!)

**Megan Ayres Moore, Lake Dardanelle State Park** - During summer 2019 Lake Dardanelle State Park received a \$5,000 grant from the Con-Agra Brands 2018 Sustainable Development Award Winners here at the Russellville plant through the Arkansas Parks and Recreation Foundation to update and replace the wayside exhibits along the boardwalk. The third shift team made changes on the line that created a significant reduction in water usage. As part of their award, they got to choose a resource-based project to fund in the community. Installation of these wayside exhibits was recently completed in early November! They look great, and we are so thankful for our community’s investment in the park.

**AR Report continued  
Page 15**

**Leslie Patrick, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission** - Like many others, we are conducting educational programs via Zoom and continuing to connect with the public through our weekly social media posts. Many of our regular volunteers/citizen scientists are doing online transcribing of herbarium specimens through the Notes from Nature - Plants of Arkansas project through Zooniverse. This is a great way for them to contribute to science from home, anytime!

**Ashley Waymouth, Hot Springs National Park** - Hot Springs National Park will be celebrating its 100th anniversary as a national park in 2021. All year long the park will be hosting events virtually, and (eventually) in person. The park's centennial website has more information, Hot Springs Centennial - Hot Springs National Park (U.S. National Park Service) ([nps.gov](https://nps.gov)) If you have specific questions or would like more information, you can reach out to the park's centennial coordinator, Ashley Waymouth, at [hosp\\_anniversary@nps.gov](mailto:hosp_anniversary@nps.gov). They are excited to promote the centennial and are willing to do virtual interviews, presentations, or other things along those lines.

**Denise Di Maio Klinger** - I am a member of Arkansas Master Naturalists, specifically the Northwest chapter, which is Benton and Washington counties, plus Eureka Springs, and in November over the course of two weekends, ten of our members obtained their CIG designation via Zoom with Jay Miller. We now have a total of 15 members who are CIG's and are excited to launch an Interpretation Group. This is significant for our partner agencies as it increases our professional credibility and helps us accomplish our mission of being volunteer educators, citizen scientists and stewards of the environment while protecting and preserving Arkansas' natural beauty.

**Jeanette Larson, Ozark Folk Center State Park** - We just wrapped up a very strange season at the Ozark Folk Center State Park in Mountain View, Arkansas. We had no live music at all this season, in the town that calls itself the Folk Music Capital of the World. All our big events were cancelled, right down to our nationally famous Thanksgiving Day Dinner at the Skillet Restaurant. But the Craft Village was open mid-May through November 7, and in a year when many craft shows were cancelled, we held our Green Friday, Small Business Saturday, Still Happening Craft Show, November 27 and 28.

Local musicians are still making music and finding ways to share it virtually. Ozark Highlands Radio has been produced by park staff for going on five years. It is aired weekly on more than 175 public radio stations across the county. Our radio team has been able to produce many good shows this year, some with a "hard times" focus. They used some archived recordings but were also able to bring musicians into the studio to record, thanks to the support of our friends group The Committee of One Hundred for the Ozark Folk Center.

The Heritage Herb Garden, which grows throughout the park, holds two big events in the park most years. We cancelled the Medicinal Plant Symposium in May but wanted to find a way to hold our Herb Harvest Fall Festival in September. Our focus this year was on Canada. We looked at various ways of linking in the presenters virtually, setting up to sell tickets, and using a virtual live classroom. We decided to offer a pared down Festival free on Facebook. We offered 10 mini-workshops in the Virtual Herb Harvest Fall Festival 2020. We had a total of 11,992 views of the workshops. Of course, the Widder Wilcox, much loved by many generations of herbalists and park visitors alike, had the most views, at 2,700.

**AR Report continued  
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Hopefully, this year was outreach, and we will be able to hold the Festival in person with lots of new visitors in 2021.

The Craft Village at the **Ozark Folk Center State Park** is a unique place where working artisans contract with the park to set up in one of our buildings and make, demonstrate, and sell their handcrafted works. We have 20 shops that include crafts such as Knifemaking, Blacksmithing, Bow Making, Letterpress Printing, Broom Making, Pottery, Stained Glass, Quilting and more. This year our craft artisans found that visitors to the park seemed more interested in their crafts than ever before. COVID-19 safety restrictions did make for some awkwardness, as the shops are small and so were limited to 2 or 3 visitors at a time. So, when people wanted to stay and talk, the people waiting outside occasionally grew frustrated. However, the connections that the crafts people made with visitors increased their sales. That income will help many of them get through the winter. These connections and sales also inspired many of our artisans to develop internet sales platforms. Several of them have been successful with shops on Etsy, through Shopify, Squarespace, and posting newly made items on Facebook. This is not only a way for them to support their families year-around, it is outreach for the Ozark Folk Center State Park, and affirmation that our mission of perpetuating the Crafts of the Ozarks is valuable in today's world.

As a park we continue to plan for 2021, keeping in mind the lessons we have learned in 2020 about flexibility, ingenuity, and the importance of connections. We are thankful for the folks we work with, the folks who come to visit us, and the folks who connect with us virtually.

Here are some comments from other members on what they are thankful for:

- I am thankful for all the grocery stores with pick-up/curbside services. It helps me stick to my grocery list and social distance. More importantly, it means I can stay in my warm car and bring my dog along for the ride!
- My family and friends are healthy!
- The older I get, the more thankful I am that I still have my five senses. I can see colors of mosses and lichens on a tree, feel their textures, hear the toots of nuthatches, smell the lavender and mint in my garden, and taste my cuppa hot tea!
- Democracy
- Freedom
- I'm most thankful for my home, my family, my pets, and my job. I know that doesn't sound very creative and might sound trite – but this year has made me realize (even more than usual) how very lucky I am.
- I am thankful for the beautiful public lands in Arkansas. Time spent in them has helped me cope with 2020.
- I am grateful for my agency's response to COVID-19. It has given me a chance to stretch my knowledge and gain new skills. I gained new insight into the truly important things in my life (experiences, family, friends) and what is much less important (material things). Oh, and I'm a better bread baker now, too, because of the time spent at home.
- One thing I am grateful for as I reflect on the end of 2020, is that this was a great year for me to go birding (mostly in Arkansas) and add 17 bird species to my life list - including Roseate Spoonbill!



Hello from Louisiana!

Here at Walter B. Jacobs things are still quite slow. Administration for our Parish/Parks has kept all except our outdoor trails and aviary closed to keep the public and staff safe from the pandemic.



We did offer two fun public events in October. In lieu of our annual Bugs, Bats & Bones event we held two Saturday evening movie nights. We have an inflatable movie screen and, on the October 17th, we showed *A Bugs Life*. We marked off spaces for 10 pods or groups in our parking lot and abided by COVID-19 protocols and it was a fun night geared to a younger audience. The following Saturday we showed *Arachnophobia* to a more mature audience! Both nights were near capacity and we received many nice comments.

Our incredibly talented staff has switched gears and produced a volume of digital programs that have been offered via our social media pages. Check them out!



The project to re-build Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park's exhibit/office building has continued on its path. The project was approved by the full Caddo Parish Commission to present to the State for some matching funds, so fingers crossed this project will continue to its fruition of a greatly expanded and more up to date facility for the citizens of our region as well as travelers.



Here are the reports I received from the other areas of the state:

From **Mark Brink**, Park Manager, **Poverty Point World Heritage Site**

Things have been going well at Poverty Point World Heritage Site. The site has been especially busy on Saturdays where we're sometimes seeing up to 100+ visitors during the course of the day. This was certainly the case on Nov. 14th for our Acorn Cooking program with over 50 visitors in attendance. It continues to be a popular program each year. Visitors get a feel for identifying oak varieties and their acorns, along with processing and cooking them. Many participants stay behind afterward

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to ask questions and to seek further resources so they can gather their own acorns to process and eat themselves. This is especially true after folks get to try some of the acorn cookies and freshly baked acorn bread which are prepared so that program participants get a sense and appreciation for what acorn products taste like.



Myself and other members of Louisiana State Parks staff attended the virtual Southeastern State Parks Programs Seminar (SSPPS) this week which was helpful in learning about how other park systems in the region have been tackling pandemic related challenges as well as this destructive hurricane season. Many park systems in other states have seen record years because more people have been taking to outdoor recreation. I have noticed this trend at Poverty Point. While overall visitation is down

due to the lack of school groups, the visitation we receive from regular day use has increased. During the course of the pandemic, Poverty Point has consistently seen higher visitation compared to the other historic sites in the Louisiana State Parks system.



From **Becky Larkins**, Supervisory Refuge Ranger, **Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges Complex**

### Boo on the Bayou: A Drive-thru Halloween Experience

What do spiders, owls, snakes, alligators and bats have in common? These are all creatures that many people have misperceptions about, or think are spooky or scary. They are also animals that were featured at “Boo on the Bayou,” a drive-through Halloween event hosted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in October. The Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges and the Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc. co-hosted this family-friendly experience at the Refuge’s headquarters – the historic Bayou Lacombe Center.

Since COVID-19 became a public health issue last March, many people have realized that getting outdoors is a great way to get a nature Rx and spend time with family or people in their “bubble” while practicing social distancing. According to Project Leader Neil Lalonde, Refuges across the nation saw an increase in visitation as people sought out nearby nature for relaxation and a safe, socially distant activity outside. While our community was able to enjoy the refuges, they expressed that they missed the free nature programs, special events and education activities we typically host throughout the year. So, a brainstorm began, and our partners and refuge staff came together to create a unique autumn themed special event, “Boo on the Bayou.”

The event consisted of an auto tour route winding through the Bayou Lacombe Center grounds and featured five learning stations where participants viewed animal ambassadors and learned about these unique species

**LA Report continued  
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from their own safe, socially distant vehicle. Staff and volunteers show-cased native Louisiana spiders, owls, snakes, alligators and bats. “At the end of the driving tour kids got a goody bag with an owl pellet exploration kit and information about wildlife as well as a small treat,” said Sue Wilder, Treasurer of the Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc.

Over 350 visitors participated in the “Boo on the Bayou” event and judging from the happy faces peering out from car windows, the event succeeded in sharing the wonders of our native wildlife. This event helped our local community to have a fun, safe Halloween despite the challenges brought by COVID-19. “It was great to see the community get out during these trying times to enjoy and learn about nature, said Jay Schwander, President of the Friends of Louisiana Refuges, Inc., people are looking for outside activities, and I’m glad we could come together to satisfy that need.”

BELIEVE Lights the Night has arrived at **Shreveport Aquarium!** In this safe Christmas extravaganza, each child is assigned their own Magic Wand from Santa, and can use that wand to interact with exhibits throughout the aquarium. Wands can turn on lights, activate Louisiana’s biggest snow globe, and even help the Grinch’s heart grow. If children complete their mission and generate enough Christmas Magic, they can turn their wand in for a gift from Santa.

**The Recreation and Parks Commission of East Baton Rouge Parish’s Conservation, Outdoor Recreation, and Environmental Education** division (BREC CORE) was



compelled to rapidly evolve in how we present natural resource programming throughout East Baton Rouge Parish, much like everyone in this industry. Some of our major educational programming, like Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center’s Rockin’ at the Swamp and Conservation’s Geaux Fish Catfish Rodeo were quickly followed by the March shutdown. Following this, spring interpretation leaned toward social media content educating about the flora and fauna that could be found at our sites in



a way to encourage more distant, self-guided exploration. BREC CORE addressed summer camps in a variety of ways ranging from a Virtual Nature Explorer’s Camp that provided natural resource education in an electronic setting to Bluebonnet Swamp providing a modified in-person experience (ensuring strict sanitation and distancing protocols).

BREC Conservation staff found that as of late interest in virtual experience has waned as people want more in-person opportunities. We’ve balanced this need for in-person programs by instituting group size limits (10 to 15 instead of 25+) while increasing program frequency, using our conservation areas and open space when possible, and requiring masks and distancing even when outside. Mainstay and new programs like our Woods Walks, Night Hikes, and Urban Nature Hikes benefited from this because it brought back a level of intimacy to these programs that allowed patrons to make larger emotional connections to our

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# LOUISIANA REPORT

CONTINUED

sites. Our Birds and Beyond Birding Kayak trip, which was in the works pre-COVID-19, allowed our Conservation Specialist to interpret a local bayou connected to one of our sites in a unique, socially-distanced way. Moving into 2021, we plan to continue to use this expanded programming model while increasing patron counts as restrictions allow.

**Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center**, since COVID-19, has been focused on providing the access to safe exhibits inside of the nature center while also providing a broad range of programming in both in-person and virtual environments. The Nature Center has been continuously open following all local, state, and federal guidelines to continue to meet the needs of the public. They've also been able to provide modified Trail Time for Toddlers and holiday camps. For historically larger events like Duck Duck Goose Day and Swamp Haunted Hikes, Bluebonnet Swamp staff instituted modified programming with similar thematics taking into account whatever restrictions were being mandated at the time with a focus on outdoor and virtual opportunities over more limited capacity indoor features.

That's all the news I received. If you want your news in the issue please contact me at [Rscarborough@caddo.org](mailto:Rscarborough@caddo.org)



Kelsey Koppelberger, Conservation Educator; leading the 9/11/20 End of Summer Night Hike discussing how animals use different senses to thrive in the wild at night.



Sara Anderson, Educator at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, explain different snake tooth patterns during Trail Time for Toddlers.



Moe Richert, Conservation Specialist, leading an Urban Nature Hike covering the ins and outs of Urban Birding during migration.



It has been an interesting year, no doubt! The Kansas membership has little to report, due to such a change in our programming and the reduced number of contacts we have had due to the pandemic.

The **Prairie Park Nature Center** in Lawrence has rolled out take-home science kits that include owl pellet dissection, astronomy, and homemade reusable wax wraps.

**Milford Nature Center** got the approval for the annual Halloween event “Monster Myths by Moonlight” by the county health department. To help with crowd management, EventBrite was the key. Participants signed up for their desired time and arrived and departed before the next group. It was a great way to help manage the expected audience and something they had not tried before. This change may be something to continue.

Milford Nature Center’s next big event is January 9th - Eagle Day. Visitors will get to connect with live birds of prey in a tent outdoors, view videos about Bald Eagle population and nesting news, and see wild Bald Eagles at spotting scopes set up around Milford Reservoir.

**Pittsburg State University’s Nature Reach** will host a CIG course this spring for PSU biology students.

The **Flint Hills Discovery Center’s** annual Breakfast with Santa event went on in a whole new way! Participants got to visit with Santa virtually and they received a kit full of fun winter activities.

**Pat Silovsky** recommends visiting the NCDA roundtable session from the 2020 virtual conference to discover how other nature centers are dealing with the pandemic and programming.

We would love to exchange ideas with other states about how you are doing your virtual programs. Share what you’ve learned and any tips and tricks.

**Stephen Bridenstine**, Curator of Education for Flint Hills Discovery Center reports: In December 2020, the Flint Hills Discovery Center in Manhattan, KS won a \$15,000 grant to support distance learning technology and virtual programs. This includes a new distance learning cart, traveling trunk resource kits, virtual field trip subsidies for K-12 classrooms, and a new “Ask an Expert” video series.

**Deliha Lister**... reports: The Natural Encounters, Inc., Training and Education Center (NEI TEC) is proud to announce that all the recorded webinar sessions from the latest week of “TEC Talks” are now available for purchase!

CEUs may be available for these recordings depending on the requirements of the organization. Contact [ceus@naturalencounters.com](mailto:ceus@naturalencounters.com) for further information.

# MISSOURI REPORT



**Jessie Ballard**

**Jessie Ballard** accepted a full-time position with the Missouri Department of Conservation at **Shoal Creek Education Center** in Joplin. “I am toad-ly excited to announce I have accepted a full time Naturalist position with the Missouri Department of Conservation! I am beyond excited to provide the community with nature and conservation education opportunities. Whether you have virtual learners or looking to learn a little more about the world around you, check out upcoming programs at [mdc.mo.gov/events](https://mdc.mo.gov/events).”

Congratulations goes out to our Missouri members who took home third place in the **Show-Me Challenge**. This competition is open to members of all Missouri agencies and allows teams to pitch ideas that might save money or improve efficiency in state government to a panel of judges in a “Shark Tank” style.

Team “**MO State Parks Education Resources Website**” is composed of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The team proposed the creation of a centralized website with virtual education materials that would better assist educators unable to bring their students to visit Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites for in-person learning. Team members included Alison Dubbert, Melissa Blank, Patricia Chambers, Chris Edmondson, Jamie Henry, Jamie Hubert, Kelly Koch, Brooke Mahar and Kristen McKinney.

Despite postponing this year’s conference, the **Association of Missouri Interpreters** (AMI) acknowledged scholarship and award-winners in the state. Congratulations to the following 2020 AMI award recipients!

- Bailee Romaker** – Aubree Schmid Undergraduate Scholarship
- Shayleen Richert** – Aubree Schmid Undergraduate Scholarship
- Teddy Pashia** – George Kastler Graduate Scholarship
- Chris Edmondson** – Interpretive Media Award
- Cyndi Cogbill** – Best Interpretive Effort
- Michelle Soenksen** – Outstanding Professional Interpreter
- Shelby Smith** – Outstanding New Interpreter

More information about the Association of Missouri Interpreters is at [www.mointerp.net](http://www.mointerp.net).

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To honor the 2021 Missouri Bicentennial, volunteers and staff of Missouri State Parks collaborated to create a new traveling exhibit-The **Missouri State Park Bicentennial Quilt**. The idea was created by Bennett Springs State Park volunteer Vicky Harding, and the project grew with the assistance of park staff, Holly Welch and Patricia Chambers.

The project has now grown to include over 100 handmade quilt squares by state parks and historic sites. The exhibit, which will include interpretative materials, will begin its trip around Missouri beginning January 2021.



Quilting has had a long history in the United States. "The patch work" quilt, originating here, is the art of taking small pieces of fabric and sewing them together to make a quilt top and sometimes the back. This form of quilting began out of necessity, a

way to use up every scrap of fabric, which was expensive and often hard to come by. Before patch work, all quilts were made with two large sheets of fabric with some type of lining sandwiched in the middle; today called a comforter. The art of quilting was almost lost in the early 1900's. However, with renewed interest in "Folk Art", quilting has made a resurgence around the world. However, in rural United States and most of Missouri the art of making and using quilts for bedding and home décor never really stopped. The hanging of quilts on walls may be for show now, but the origin of this practice can be traced back to mid-evil Europe as a form of insolation and privacy. Since quilting is such a huge part of our history, we now make them to commemorate special events like births, weddings and even deaths. So



it is only natural that we commemorate our states bicentennial with a quilt that shows off our unique and diverse state parks and historic sites.



### ***People:***

Congratulations to retired naturalist (and current Region 6 Deputy Director) **Neil Garrison**, whose weekly nature education column in the OKC newspaper was granted a prominent place on the front page! Wow! Not only that, it was “above the fold”! Double wow! It was Neil’s November 16th article about tree foliage colors.

### ***Events:***

This year, the OK Biological Survey celebrated its 20th year of BioBlitz! events. Due to the pandemic, **Bioblitz! OK 2020** was conducted on October 2-4 as a statewide, virtual/on-line event (using iNaturalist), instead of its usual autumn format of an in-person event at a particular site. The species most often reported, out of 5,275 observations by 332 observers, was Virginia Creeper, followed by Pearl Crescent, Eastern Red Cedar, Bold Jumping Spider, Spotted Cucumber Beetle, and Poison Ivy. A total of 1,302 species were observed. BioBlitz! is more than just a snapshot of observable nature; it has a goal of raising public awareness and developing citizen science. So this year, instead of the interpretive programming for the public, the organizers presented a Virtual Nature Center. Hosted on the OK Biological Survey’s website, the Virtual Nature Center featured links to scout badge requirements for Citizen Science and downloadable activity pages.

It was also the 20th year for **North American Butterfly Association (NABA) butterfly surveys** at Oxley Nature Center. Similar to the National Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Count, the annual butterfly counts track population and distribution trends of indicator species across North America, in this case, butterflies, which are much more visible and easier to tally than most other insect species. Three of the 410 counts took place in Oklahoma. The 2020 results have not yet been published, but here are some preliminary figures for the Tulsa counts:

*Spring Count, April 22:* (50th anniversary of Earth Day!), 21 species (31 in 2019, 19 in 2018). The Spring Count may not see very many butterflies, compared to the other two count dates, and is much more dependent on the weather conditions, but it gives us data on the early fliers like Falcate Orangetips and Juvenal’s Duskywings. This year the count teams tallied 78 Eastern Tailed-Blues, 58 Pearl Crescents, and 11 Painted Ladies.

*4th of July Count, July 6:* 37 species (28 in 2019, 40 in 2018). The top five species observed were Sagem (95), Fiery Skipper (51), and Eastern Tailed-Blue (43) Two Bell’s Roadside-Skippers may not sound like much, but only a handful of these tiny brown butterflies ever make it onto the list for North America. Tulsa is often one of the top ten places to find them. The habitat at Oxley Nature Center is ideal for the constellation of species that prefer the ecotone of damp woods meeting meadow and wet prairie.

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*Fall Count, September 24:* 51 species (44 in 2019, 33 in 2018). The Fall Count fell during the peak of the Monarch migration and tallied 373 adults, 16 caterpillars, 1 chrysalis, and 3 eggs. The most numerous species was Sachem (545 individuals observed). The 15-mile count circle also includes a wetland site along the Osage Biking/Hiking Trail that is home to a colony of Broad-winged Skippers (7) and Bronze Coppers (2). Observer Lisa Miller managed to snap a picture of a Bronze Copper with her phone.

### **Places:**

**Oklahoma's state parks** have experienced 20% more visitors, compared to the same months in the previous year. Who would have guessed that, if a pandemic closes down movie theaters, restaurants and bars, bowling alleys, the state fair, most major events, and family celebrations, millions of people will turn to their parks for recreation, entertainment, and restoration?

Nineteen Oklahoma State Parks will offer First Day Hikes on January 1st. Most parks will offer 1 or 2 different times, but Sequoyah State Park will have hikes from sunrise to sunset, with each hike limited to 15 participants. Most First Day Hikes allow pets on leashes to participate, too. For more information or to find out how to make your reservation for a First Day Hike, go to [https://www.travelok.com/article\\_page/first-day-hikes-at-oklahoma-state-parks](https://www.travelok.com/article_page/first-day-hikes-at-oklahoma-state-parks).

"We've taken 54% budget cuts in the last 12 years," Bob Blackburn said. Bob is the executive director of the **Oklahoma Historical Society**. Bob went on to say: "So, where possible, we reach out to our partners in Indian Country and find a way to accomplish our mission, which is to collect, preserve and share history." On November 4th, Will Rogers' birthday, the OK Historical Society sold Will Rogers' Birthplace Ranch/Museum (Oologah, OK) to the Cherokee Nation.

Oklahoma's segment of "The Mother Road" was recently awarded a \$22 million federal grant to aid in its restoration. **Route 66** is the Chicago-to-Santa Monica highway that was built in 1933. The money will be used to do some much-needed safety improvements on the bridge that spans the Canadian River. The bridge was featured in the 1939 movie: "The Grapes of Wrath."

**"Thrive Outside."** It is a program in OKC that professes to grant inner-city youth the opportunity to experience outdoor recreation activities. On the face of it, that sounds great. A closer examination, however, reveals that it is a couple of indoor activities — a simulation of downhill snow skiing (indoors!) and a simulation of surfing ocean waves (indoors!). Go figure!

Back in those years when Oklahoma was a territory, not a state, William Harn established a homestead in what is now downtown Oklahoma City. The **Harn Homestead Museum** now occupies that site. During the months of November & December, 2020, the museum teamed up with Lyric Theater Oklahoma for an outdoor play based on Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." The 75-minute production provided no seating and required participants to walk from scene to scene.

Instead of Man Bites Dog, we have Retail Spaces Enter Interpretation. OKC's Quail Springs Mall has a new feature: the **"Blue Zoo."** It is billed as: "more than an aquarium, more than a zoo". It professes to be "an interactive aquarium." It hosts birthday parties and has "touch and feed areas" (i.e., stingrays, birds and lizards). Also

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included is a pirate ship and play tables.

Inland state/ocean connections. The mayors of Tahlequah, Oklahoma and Des Moines, Washington entered into a “sister community” project. The Oklahoma town shares a name with an adult female Orca (a.k.a., “killer whale”) that is the live, ocean-residing wild whale mascot there in the Pacific Northwest. **Tahlequah the Orca Whale** was an on-line media celebrity in 2018 when she displayed extra-powerful maternal behavior over the grief associated with the loss of her stillborn calf. A fund-raising project is currently underway to benefit a marine mammal rehab & research facility in Tacoma, Washington. An Oklahoma organization (The Kirkpatrick Foundation) is committed to a fund-raising goal of \$20,000.00. In the end, the potential is to raise a total of \$80,000.00 for the whale conservation facility.

“Hallowmarine” was the catchy program title of an event at the **Oklahoma Aquarium** (Jenks, Oklahoma) at the end of October. Program participants were encouraged to wear costumes for this indoor trick-or-treating event.

The staff at **Science Museum Oklahoma** (OKC) put on their thinking caps and came up with some ghoulish programming to coincide with the Halloween holiday. The target audience was adults — ages 21 years and up. The ZOOM platform was the vehicle that they used to bring the event to the program participants. Their program description was the following: “...a live, adults-only comically macabre circus with disgustingly delicious treats and tricky explosive experiments.” Sounds spooky!

“Bang the drum and celebrate with us! #HashtagTheCowboy Thanks, Tim” That’s from Tim’s latest Facebook post about paintings from the current exhibit on Women’s Suffrage at **OKC’s National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum** (a.k.a., “The Cowboy Hall of Fame”). If you are not familiar with security chief/social media director Tim Tiller, you should know that he has become a popular figure this year on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. We look forward to what he’ll have to show and tell us about an outstanding recent donation: two of Annie Oakley’s rifles. Annie was western America’s sharpshooting super star. The firearms are currently on display in the museum.

The popular bus tours back into the “closed” areas of southwestern Oklahoma’s **Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge** were cancelled for the 2020 autumn season. (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Damn virus pandemic!

On the other hand, a bit of positive news is the revelation that the City of OKC had collected \$8 million in unanticipated sales tax revenues — the full amount was then allocated to the building of new walking trails in the metro area. Good!

# TEXAS REPORTS

**Cait McCann** with the Austin Water Wildland Conservation tells us, “With the assistance of a local Austin filmmaker, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve staff made a short video focused on dispelling commonly held beliefs about the Ashe juniper trees that are such an important part of the Central Texas landscape. Preserve neighbor and longtime rancher Don Gardner discusses how Ashe juniper can help in soil building, decrease erosion, and contribute to the healthy forests that the endangered Golden-cheeked Warblers call home. Take a look!” Visit [www.austintexas.gov/BCPstory](http://www.austintexas.gov/BCPstory), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG6FR-2jrfw>



**Khrystyne Jamerson** of Sea Turtle, Inc. reports, “Sea Turtle, Inc. is a non-profit sea turtle hospital on South Padre Island, TX. We host a summer program for kids called Be a Vet! This program walks children through the steps that are taken when a new sea turtle patient arrives at our hospital. Starting November 1st, we are now offering that

program virtually! Be a Vet program kits will be sent to the participant’s home and they will connect with one of our educators using Zoom for the hour-long program.” Visit [www.seaturtleinc.org](http://www.seaturtleinc.org).



**Kimberly Ogden** of Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program - Nueces Delta Preserve reports that, “this winter, the Nueces Delta Preserve offers content and process skills development for students and teachers via in-person and virtual field formats. Our hope is to communicate to them that we see their efforts and offer the opportunity to support them. Here is an idea of what we’re offering:

- Virtual Field Trips - We have trail hikes, water quality, microscopic wonders, and geology trips just to name a few. The students watch a short 20-minute video and then we join the classroom in-person or virtually.

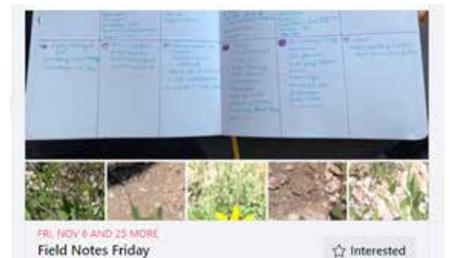


- Teacher Tuesdays - Our Teacher Tuesdays happen on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. One session will be content focused, and another will be response/collaboration focused. These are presented in collaboration with our area scientific educational partners.

- Field Notes Friday - This is a chance to have one of our educators lead classes in a science-based nature journaling session to develop students’ observational process skills. Whether classes are meeting in-person or virtually, these sessions guide students to develop skills and practice document-

ing observations in their nearby nature.

- Delta Discovery Picnics - When teachers and families need a time to relax and decompress from the pressures of teaching and have time in nature with friends and family, we invite them to our monthly Delta Discovery Picnics. Participants are requested bring a picnic lunch and plenty of water for everyone. We offer an informal interpretive theme fitting with in the moment phenology. We are still hosting socially distanced outreach events monthly with limited registration.” Visit [www.nuecesdeltapreserve.org](http://www.nuecesdeltapreserve.org).





# An Editor's 2021 Resolution

by Jerrel Geisler, Visions Co-Editor

First, I would like to thank all of you who have submitted articles and content during this trying year. Also, thanks to Ken Forman. As Co-Editor he takes care of the hard part. I have the fun task of designing each issue, to add a little entertainment to your NAI Region 6 experience.

Generally, as I put these issues together I do it during down times at work, in the evenings sitting on the sofa with my wife watching *Dancing with the Stars*, or some other nighttime TV show.

This time I did it during an interesting way to bring in the new year. My wife and I rented a travel trailer and spent 5-days enjoying the wonders of nature at one of Texas' great state parks, Lake Livingston State Park. The park did not disappoint, and we had some great weather – at least at the beginning of the week.

It was enjoyable sitting outside at the picnic table, with an inquisitive (or hungry) squirrel stopping by now and again, and putting together your content which I mentioned to my wife, was much like the jigsaw puzzle she was working on. Making sure where the pieces fit best and appropriately.

Of course, 2020 did not go quietly for a lot of us in Region 6. It went out kicking and screaming, with wind, rain, thunderstorms, snow, and cold weather. (We got all but the snow.) I just moved inside

the trailer and finished the rest.

Your articles are, and always are great and congrats to all the award winners from the national conference.

Now to 2021 – What will happen? What can we expect? What will your resolution be? Will you make one? What was yours for 2020? What was anyone's?

Was it to spend more time with family? See the kids more often? Spend less time in the office? Spend more time outdoors? Call relatives more? These were surely accomplished and much more often?

What will they be for 2021? Will any resolution be without a caveat? "Once things get better . . ."? Haven't we all been doing this already. We can only hope and pray that it will be better.

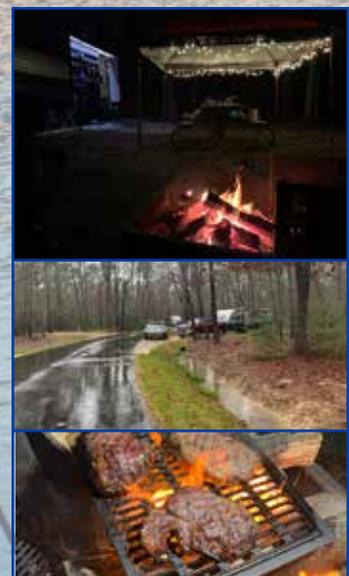
But just think of what you have accomplished in 2020. How many of you thought you would be video producers, publishers, on-screen celebrities, social media influencers? I have seen some of the great work you have accomplished and all those "who would have ever thought" should be congratulated, (i.e., the Texas Parks & Wildlife team mentioned in their award wrap-up, and many others that took their example.)

Wow – with all that talent and when we get back to in-person teachings and interpreting as well, the sky's the limit.

My resolution for 2021? Well with regards to this newsletter, it is to keep doing what I do and maybe make things timelier and getting stuff out sooner. Please continue to submit content, provide content if you have not in the past, or just let us know if you have any added ideas to make this newsletter better. It belongs to you!

The picture I am using on this page is one of the last great sunsets I saw in 2020. (The remaining nights were cloudy, hazy, or rainy). Let us hope for bunches of great sunsets in 2021.

"See" you soon – during the 2021 Virtual Region 6 Conference and hopefully in-person also. Have a great one.



## NAI REGION 6 VISIONS

# PUBLICATION INFORMATION<sup>is</sup>



for Interpretation (NAI). Region 6 includes states of Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. For Region 6 information go to [www.com](http://www.com).

The national office for NAI is located in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Their website is [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com).

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