

# VISIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAI SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

VOLUME 39, ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2025



## Treasurer's Report

By Cathy Combs

National Association for Interpretation  
Region 6 - South Central  
3/31/2025

	JULY-SEPT 2024	OCT-DEC 2024	JAN-MAR 2025	APR-JUNE 2025	FISCAL YEAR 2025
<b>REVENUE</b>					
4100 Workshop Revenue	\$ -	\$ 17,485.00	\$ 19,380.00	\$ -	\$ 36,865.00
4200 Member Networking Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100.00	\$ -	\$ 100.00
4300 Fundraising Revenue		\$ 30.00	\$ 1,203.45	\$ -	\$ 1,233.45
4400 Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 410.28	\$ -	\$ 410.28
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
5100 Workshop Expenses			\$ (31,906.76)	\$ -	\$ (31,906.76)
5200 Member Networking Expenses	\$ (70.50)	\$ (2,748.00)	\$ (200.00)	\$ -	\$ (3,018.50)
5300 Administrative Expenses	\$ (70.50)	\$ (824.53)	\$ (1,140.94)		\$ (2,035.97)
5400 Fundraising/Scholarship Expenses	\$ (1,400.00)	\$ (1,280.00)	\$ (4,310.57)	\$ -	\$ (6,990.57)
5500 Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>NET PROFIT/LOSS</b>	<b>\$ (1,541.00)</b>	<b>\$ 12,662.47</b>	<b>\$ (16,464.54)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ (5,343.07)</b>
<b>ENDING ACCOUNT BALANCE</b>	<b>\$ 38,103.48</b>	<b>\$ 50,765.95</b>	<b>\$ 34,301.41</b>	<b>\$ 34,301.41</b>	

*No Director's Report Submitted*  
*No Deputy Director's Report Submitted*

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# Scholarships Available: Don't Wait to Apply!

By Jeanne Spencer,  
Scholarship Chair



*Did you hear about the scholarship opportunities for South Central members?*

Each year, our fabulous region offers multiple opportunities for students and professionals to attend regional and national events, as well as Professional Development courses. Check out our website for full details, [naisouthcentral.com](http://naisouthcentral.com).

**Have you yearned to attend the National Conference, but your agency can't pay?** Apply for the **Freeman Tilden Scholarship** from NAI South Central Region and you could be selected as a recipient to attend the **November 11-15 NAI Conference in Virginia Beach, VA**. Two regional winners, a student and a professional, will receive conference registration PLUS reimbursement for their travel expenses. That's easily \$1,000 in free money!

How does one apply for such a grand opportunity? It's easy. **Look for the scholarship info at <https://naisouthcentral.com/scholarships/>**. The deadline for the 2025 National Workshop is **August 1**, so don't fiddle about. Get your applications in soon!

**Explore Virginia Beach  
Nov 11-15**  
Scholarships available  
Apply today!

Thanks to generous donors and funding from the members of NAI South Central Region, financial assistance for the 2026 South Central Workshop is available. Applications will open later this summer, so check our website and your email often!

1. The **Connie Elpers-Leger Scholarship Program** will award up to three scholarships for students who demonstrate academic and professional success and have the potential to make an outstanding contribution to the field of interpretation. Each winner must be able to attend the South Central Workshop in February 2026. The scholarship will cover the registration fee plus a portion of travel expenses.
2. **Financial Aid Stipends** will be open to all current NAI South Central members (not just

students and volunteers, but also professionals, seasonal employees, and vendors) demonstrating need and service to the field of interpretation. These stipends will cover the 2026 South Central Region Conference in February 2026. Members are eligible to apply once every twelve months. Applications open in October.

Don't miss these opportunities to grow, connect, and represent our region on the national stage.

Whether you're just starting your journey in interpretation or have been inspiring audiences for years, we encourage you to apply. Your voice matters, and we want it to be heard at the National and Regional Conferences. Let's elevate our region - together!



The graphic features the NAI South Central Region logo on the left, which consists of a stylized mountain range in black and orange, with the text "SOUTH CENTRAL REGION" below it. To the right of the logo, the text "Scholarships Available" is written in large, bold, black font, and "Apply Soon!" is written in a smaller, bold, orange font below it. The entire graphic is set against a light green background with a subtle pattern of small, dark green lines.

# South Central Region Award Categories

By Victoria Wright, Awards Chair

*Happy summer everyone! I know fall feels forever away, but now is the time to start thinking of awards and who you would like to nominate for next year's conference.*



Award nominations will start being accepted October 1<sup>st</sup> and are due no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to reach out for advice on gathering information for an application or getting letters of recommendation, feel free to reach out to me, the awards chair, or our general NAI email and I will get the message!

I will have updated requirements and descriptions of each award by the end of August posted for our region in PDF format, but here is a quick summary for now.

What can you start now? Each of the below awards needs 3 letters of support, details pertaining to how this professional, article, program, etc. meets the requirements of their award, and a summary of the impact to your community or organization these have had. When the awards applications are open, you'll have everything you need to fill in the blanks!

The awards available for nomination are as follows:

**Fellow/Lifetime Achievement Award:** an honor for a member exemplifying career achievement in guiding the interpretive profession through instruction, mentoring, research, writing, front-line interpretation and management and provides strong support to NAI.

**Master/Distinguished Professional Interpreter Award:** an individual who has worked for five or more years in the profession, whose duties are at least 60 percent supervisory and administrative or front-line interpretation. Must demonstrate a mastery of interpretive techniques, site or program development, design of creative projects or staff management, and includes the ability to pass these skills on to others.

**Outstanding New Interpreter Award:** an individual who has worked fewer than five years in the profession, full or part-time, and who has demonstrated a recognized potential in interpretation, assumption of leadership roles, creativity in programming or facility development and a commitment to the profession and NAI.

**Keepers of Interpretation Award:** presented to a lifetime 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 management/administrator or both.

**Bob Jennings Meritorious Service Award:** presented to an individual who has performed extensive and invaluable service to NAI on the national or regional level and the field of interpretation.

**Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer Award:** an individual 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. This individual must demonstrate a mastery of interpretive techniques and program development, and must demonstrate initiative and a dedication to the affiliated organization.

**Outstanding Interpretive Site Publication Award:** a publication in any printed format that introduces or orients a visitor to an interpretive site or regional route, and/or to activities and experiences available within it. Submission material may be an electronic or written publication such as trail guides, Junior Ranger publications, site poster, brochure, flyer, newsletter, or similar material.

**Outstanding Multimedia Award:** this award is for honoring a member or department (with membership ties to NAI South Central Region) who designs graphic media exemplifying interpretation. The media will be judged as interpretive, not informational.

**Outstanding Interpretive Program Award:** a single presentation (daily program, not special event) of exceptional standards, given by an individual or small group. This program can currently be presented or a past program. This award is also for a product designed to provide the curriculum for interactive programs held either inside or outside the classroom.

**Outstanding Special Event Award:** an event of exceptional interpretive quality presented for an outstanding interpretive event, such as a special event, day camp, workshop, training or other activity beyond the scope of a daily program currently being presented or a past

**Outstanding Written Article Award:** a thought-provoking article concerning information appropriate to interpretation. The article may be printed or online in *Visions*, *Legacy*, newsletters, newspapers or other similar medium. Please keep articles to current ones published in the last 5 years.

**Outstanding Book Award:** an interpretive publication pertaining directly to a natural or cultural resource or interpretive facility. Books published in the last 10 years are eligible. Electronic books are eligible in this category. You do not have to send multiple copies of the book, just include some pages, which gives us an idea of the content. For example, make a copy of the cover, table of contents, and a few pages within the book to give the committee an idea of the book and its contents/pages.

**Excellence in an Interpretive Support Award:** presented to an individual member or nonmember, governing body or official, administrator, business, agency, or organization who has shown recognition of the value of interpretation, through exceptional and sustained support. This support may be broad-based financial, administrative, or executive (or a combination of these), and serves as a respected model for other interpretive venues and contributors. Recognition may be for (but is not limited to) sponsorship or support for interpretive programs and enhancement of interpretive facilities.

**Community Interpretive Service Award:** an award recognizing member or nonmember businesses, individuals or civic groups whose major focus is not interpretation but have worked in their region or community to demonstrate financial or program support for a local organization or agency (or group of

*(Cont. on next page)*

partnering agencies) with interpretive projects or facilities.

It is important to recognize all of our peers and mentors who work so hard to educate the public and protect what's wild and historic in our world. I look forward to receiving nominations from everyone and hope your seasons are going well!

## TIPS AND TRICKS FOR INTERPRETERS

This is a new section of the newsletter that we hope will be useful to many of you. Please consider submitting an article for this section for future newsletters!

# Impactful Programming Ponderings

By Angel Ray

I imagine most of us are in the throes of summer camps presently. Our days filled with heat, laughter, discovery, redirecting, and satisfied exhaustion. Some of us basking in the moment, others counting the days until Fall programming can resume with a break from the sun's swelter.

Already, our organization has us submitting Program Approval Forms (PAFs), for the Sept-Dec trimester. Which means, wiping the sweat from one's brow and asking, what does the public want, what does the public need that my site can provide? And, what do I need the forethought to collect, buy, schedule, make, research, to bring impactful programming to fruition?

Years ago (a lifetime ago), I wanted to offer a WWII history-based homeschool class but was told by a friend that I shouldn't because I would only be discouraged when the

participants weren't as deeply engaged as I would want them to be. I was disappointed, yet knew she was right. I had to rethink my approach, how could I give them a history lesson that they needed and make them want it? I churned several thoughts about in my head before landing on teaching an Art History class with a studio component. This not only ticked the boxes of the parents but also created lasting impression on the students. Assigning them to watch the documentary, *The Rape of Europa*, then having them make art that would have been considered degenerate by Hitler, such as that of Max Beckmann and Marc Chagall, resonated with the teen group.

Since then, I have tried to take the same approach to my programming in Parks. I lean strongly into tangibles. Recently, I taught a penny rug making class for homeschoolers in a house with a Civil War history. As stitches and designs were being laid out in felted wool, I spoke of the site's history and the adorning scraps of wool in households of the time. We listened to music of the era as well. One eleven-year-old girl was shocked that she was learning history when she didn't like history. She insisted that (*cont. on next page*)

we were doing art and that the music was art. A bit sneaky on my part, yet effective! My roster was full, I had not talked them to death, and they made a memory worthy of keeping.

Being on the cusp of fall programming, I look to sense of place, immersion in the outdoors, harvest, and preparation for winter's chill as well as winter's celebrations. What can I offer at my site that visitors want and need? What will make them choose my site over other Fall offerings? The time for planning, ordering, and preparation is upon us, even though creek time is still at its height!

## What's in a Name?

By Neil Garrison

It's really nothing new. When we attempt to describe a recent phenomenon, we often become quite innovative when it comes to naming things. But...darn it!...some wording can be downright offensive!

A recent article in the *New York Times* newspaper introduced the term, "kid rotting." It is a phrase that is steeped in lots of negative stereotypes, which is downright surprising because they are talking about children that spend their idle hours outdoors. And I have to ask you, what is so doggone terrible about that?

Are we to believe that those children who partake of a highly structured and regulated schedule of youth camp experiences are to be commended...and that the other block of kids that amuse themselves in activities in the natural world are to be the subject of pity? I think not!

Surprise, surprise! I am not a big fan of the phrase, "kid rotting."

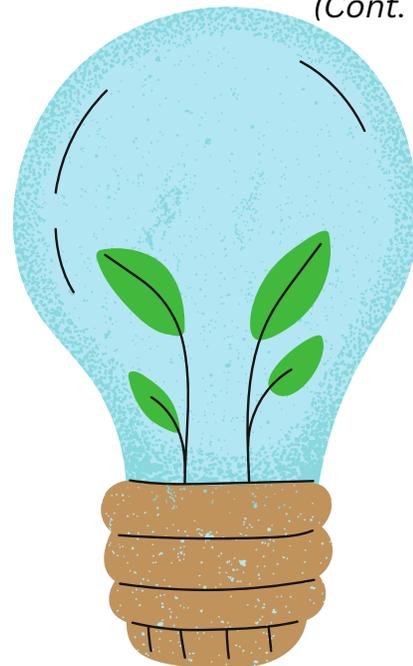
# Promoting Green Jobs

By Rob Beadel

What began in 2022 as a collaboration between the Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation and the Arkansas Environmental Education Association, the Green Careers Expo has grown into an annual event attracting hundreds of students and educators providing hands-on and interactive experiences promoting environmental, natural resources, and conservation fields, including but not limited to:

- natural resource management
- outdoor recreation
- renewable energy
- environmental science
- green building
- wildlife conservation
- energy efficiency
- water and air quality
- sustainable transportation
- clean manufacturing
- and more

(Cont. on page 9)





*Top: Students operate a tree harvesting simulator in the Be Pro Be Proud Mobile Workstation*

*Right: Students try their hand at the knot tying station presented by arborists from Raines Tree Service*

*Bottom: Students learn about wildlife habitat needs from Little Rock Zoo staff*



“I had this idea back in 2022 to get natural resource professionals, industry folks, and conservation staff together with students to share their stories of why they do what they do and what drove them to their chosen professions,” stated Rob Beadel, Director of Forestry Education with the Arkansas Forestry Association and Arkansas Project Learning Tree Coordinator. “What better way for students to get inspired about careers than hearing from those professionals actually doing the work.”



*Biologists with the USFWS show students a variety of mammal skulls and pelts*

This free event was designed to be a mobile program that could be moved to different venues across the state, potentially reaching more students and schools. Moving around the state also provides different organizations, businesses, and agencies working in those regions to join in as exhibitors.

Over the past three years, over 750 students from grades 8-12 representing 35 schools have interacted with natural resource professionals from over 30 local/state/federal agencies, academia, businesses/industries, and conservation organizations in this one-day educational event promoting Green Careers.

“This is one of my favorite events of the year,” said Ericka Hincke with the USDA Forest Service. “It’s a great time to connect with students who are in that stage of thinking about potential careers. It is a special thing to see the wheels turning in their mind and watch their eyes light up when they see all the different opportunities that are out there.”

You can read more about last year’s event at [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.arkforests.org/resource/resmgr/plt/tct/2024\\_green\\_careers\\_expo\\_stor.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.arkforests.org/resource/resmgr/plt/tct/2024_green_careers_expo_stor.pdf) and see a news video segment about the 2024 Green Careers Expo at <https://shorturl.at/sl1Ts>.

This year’s event will be held at the El Dorado Conference Center in El Dorado, Arkansas on October 29, 2025.

Feel free to contact Beadel at [rbeadel@arkforests.org](mailto:rbeadel@arkforests.org) if you want to discuss how this event can be recreated in your state.

Rob Beadel  
Director of Forestry Education/CIG  
Arkansas Project Learning Tree Coordinator  
AFA Education Foundation  
[rbeadel@arkforests.com](mailto:rbeadel@arkforests.com)



*Students use an increment borer to determine the age of a tree*

# STATE NEWS



**Chris with Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area** reports that 2 training sessions for new and seasonal interpreters within Arkansas State Parks were held in April and May. The April session was held at Ozark Folk Center and the May session was held at Mt. Magazine state Park, the highest point in the state. Chris, Kelly Farrell, and Kayla Gomance were the trainers for the May session.



If you are interested in joining the interpretive team at Arkansas State Parks as either a full-time or seasonal interpreter, there are openings that still need to be filled statewide. Some seasonal positions are up to 9 month appointments. Hobbs is looking for a 9 month seasonal interpreter after Trish Redus decided to pursue a higher degree. Contact Chris if interested in learning more: [chris.pistole@arkansas.gov](mailto:chris.pistole@arkansas.gov).

The first ever Bird Fest! was held at Hobbs on Apr. 26 and was a success with nearly 300 people in attendance making connections to the world of birds. The timing coincided with the annual Arkansas Audubon meeting held in nearby Fayetteville, and they led 2 birding hikes at Hobbs during the day. Having our last of 4 monthly Birds and Breakfast events during this special event, a week later than usual, allowed for a variety of migratory birds to be caught by ornithologists from the Univ. of Arkansas and then introduced to the public inside. We partnered with the Ozark Bird Conservancy and Morning Star Wildlife Rehabilitation Center during the event, with each non-profit receiving donations to support their conservation and bird rehab efforts. Chris was thrilled to get to release his “spark bird,” this male rose-breasted grosbeak that was captured and banded during the event. (For you non-birders, a “spark bird” is the species that inspired you to become a birder).

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The grosbeak and this ovenbird (named for how their nest resembles an oven), were the first of their species to be caught during a Birds and Breakfast event.



*Left: Chris Pistole with rose-breasted grosbeak*



*Above: Ovenbird*

## Kansas

Compiled By  
Lindsay Evans

**Lindsay with Ernie Miller Nature Center reports,** “We have an answer!” If you caught the teaser in last quarter’s newsletter, you’ve been wondering where our next regional conference will take place...and now the mystery is solved: Lawrence, Kansas will host the 2026 South Central Regional Conference, happening February 22-26, 2026!

We’ll gather at the beautiful DoubleTree by Hilton Lawrence - yes, the very same hotel that once hosted President Obama! Get ready for a conference full of heartland

hospitality, deep cultural roots, and rich stories of the plains. Stay tuned for more updates via email, newsletter, and Facebook!

### **Why Attend a Regional Conference?**

Don’t take our word for it - here’s a reflection from one of our own members:

“Attending my first NAI Conference was an incredible experience! It was inspiring to be surrounded by like-minded individuals who share a passion for interpretation and storytelling. The sessions were engaging, the networking opportunities were invaluable, and the sense of community was truly energizing. Plus, it was just SO fun to visit Amarillo, Texas. I left feeling motivated, with new ideas and connections that will stay with me for a long time!”

**Bailey Ritchey,**  
**Lead Naturalist, Great Plains Nature Center**  
*(Cont. on next page)*

Whether you're a seasoned veteran or brand new to interpretation, there's a place for you in South Central! More news, contests, and updates coming soon - until then, keep sharing stories and may the forest be with you.

### **Kansas Event Spotlight: "May the Forest Be With You"**

Held at **Ernie Miller Nature Center in Olathe, KS**, this wildly popular annual event combines nature, astronomy, and pop culture to create a truly unforgettable family experience. With both indoor and outdoor stations, it's a force-filled adventure for all ages. This amazing event has taken Ernie Miller Nature Center by storm and is a great way to branch out. Here are some things to expect and pictures of another successful event!



Jedi® Training Academy – Learn sword techniques from Jedi Master Luminara Unduli®.



Swamps of Dagobah® Obstacle Challenge – Navigate a wild course with the Mandalorian® and discover Kansas amphibians!



Rey's® Rebel Nest – Meet diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey at the Amphitheater.



Galactic Expo – Includes a Build-Your-Own Droid Makerspace, model rocketry demos, REAL meteorite exploration, a full-dome planetarium experience, and telescope observing (weather permitting), thanks to amazing community partners like Remake Learning Days KC and the Astronomical Society of Kansas City.



Rusty says greetings from the steamy, hot and humid state of Louisiana! Summer came early this year and we are fighting with July and August heat temps in June. We also have had a very prolific rainfall this year, but in spite of the weather the **Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park** construction has gone on with few delays and we are still on schedule. The contractor still intends to have significant completion by September 22 and we are planning on opening in October of this year! Our first scheduled installation of exhibit elements will be installed on July 9. We have a number of large fabricated trees in our exhibit area and they will need to be moved into the building prior to the last windows being installed. After that the building can be closed in and climate controlled and the painting can work towards completion.

**Red River National Wildlife Refuge** has had the retirement of Ranger Terri Jacobson in May and they have not as yet filled her position, and don't know if they will.

**Mark Brink at Poverty Point World Heritage Site reports:** We've had a great time interpreting public archaeology at Poverty Point World Heritage Site this season. Archaeologists under the direction of T.R. Kidder, Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis conducted a series of re-excavations on site from May 15th through June 15th this year. Rangers enjoyed bringing visitors to the excavation sites to learn about the ongoing work and the big implications for interpreting the ancient cultural resources here.



At the same time, we've been incorporating new interpretive programs this year. Our first atlatl making workshop was a great way for visitors to connect with our shared past of hunting.

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We also began offering an archaeologically themed landscape photography program that is run by our rangers and a local photography professor at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. This program captures a different audience than usual and provokes deeper connections to the landscapes created by indigenous peoples.

**Marty Young at LSUS Pioneer Heritage Center reports:** The LSUS Pioneer Heritage Center staff has been busy since our last report. We had just over 800 school kids visit our facility. Through our interpretive educational tours they learned about the diverse cultures that settled the Northwest Louisiana Red River Region. As always the Center took the show on the road with interpretive demonstrations done at several local schools, attractions and festivals. Demonstrations were conducted at Caddo and Bossier Parish Schools, several Louisiana State Historic Sites (Fort St. Jean Baptiste and Fort Jesup), The Louisiana State Exhibit Building and Cane River Creole National Historical Park. Festivals included The Minden Scottish Tartan Festival and The Louisiana Folklife Festival. The Center staff also conducted over 35 speaking engagements for local clubs, church groups and organizations. The Pioneer Heritage Center also had several opportunities to teach pioneer skills in small classroom settings. We hope to continue our success as the year continues.





Hello South Central!! My name is John Hagermann, I am the Park and Historic Site Specialist at Annie and Abel Van Meter State Park also known as Missouri's American Indian Cultural Center and a proud member of NAI South Central and thrilled to begin to serve as your Missouri State Coordinator. I was born and raised right here in the great state of Missouri, and absolutely love the beauty of it. That love for the state's beauty is what has brought me into the exciting world of interpretation. I feel I get to serve as the "voice" of our cultural and natural resources as an interpreter. I have worked for Missouri State Parks full time for going on five years, but have been with State Parks for closer to seven years. I plan to retire from Missouri Department of Natural Resources, so I am going to likely be around for a while, so please, say howdy and reach out to me. Talk to you all soon.



**Leah Eden, Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Education Center & Fish Hatchery:** The new Conservation Education Center at Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery in Branson, MO opened with much fanfare on December 19, 2024. Since then staff have been busy with the surge of visitors and schools coming out to tour the new facility. Since opening, more than 60,000 people have walked through our doors! We expect visitation to increase as we head into July, our busiest month. On June 7th, in conjunction with Free Fishing Weekend in Missouri, we hosted the annual Kids Fishing Day at our education pond. Despite the deluge of rain the night before, approximately 200 people attended the event. Overcast skies led to the catch of many sunfish and some impressive channel catfish in the 3-5 pound range. Twelve kids caught their first fish! For the rest of summer we will be concentrating on hatchery tours, but as we head into the fall we will be rolling out a full slate of programs. This includes a new monthly program for 3-6 year-olds called Small Fry.

The Conservation Education Center is also hosting an intern for the summer. Mary Sellers is a sophomore at the University of Missouri-Columbia, studying Natural Resource Science and Management. She is active in the Mizzou Forestry Club and the Women in Natural Resources Club. She graduated from Reeds Spring High School near Branson and is enjoying being back home for the summer! Mary has previously worked as a tour guide  
*(Cont. on next page)*

at Talking Rocks Cavern in Branson West, MO, so she is familiar with giving tours during the busy visitation months in Branson. Her work at the hatchery this summer will utilize her previous experience and give her the opportunity to learn more about conservation education and hatchery management.

The Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI) will be hosting its annual conference September 7-9 in Springfield, MO. The event will include concurrent sessions, field sessions, an auction to raise money for student scholarships, and an awards banquet. Register by August 15th for the early bird rate. More information and registration will be posted on the new AMI website, which should be available in early July.



*Mary Sellers*



**Amy Stephens from the Edmond History Museum** reports that they are undergoing a period of growth. Not only did we double attendance last year, it is still going up this year. Amazingly, 52% of our visitors are children—which is rather unusual for a history museum! So, we are about to undergo two big projects to add a classroom space and to redesign our current children’s room. It is a play area themed like a generic pioneer town, but

we envision a space much more Edmond-specific. The new design includes a pioneer section, but also a mid-century era (leaning into our Route 66 and industry history), plus a modern section that focuses on parks and businesses the children see in their daily lives.

The **George M. Sutton Avian Research Center (Bartlesville, OK)** has partnered their education program with the YMCA in order to present after-school programs at elementary schools in the Bartlesville area. Students will learn about birds and interact with a live bird (an American kestrel). Participants will also receive field guides and learn how to use them to identify birds. The Sutton Center is grateful to the Bartlesville Rotary Club Foundation for their support which makes these programs possible.

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As part of the George M. Sutton Avian Research Center's (B'ville, OK) effort to educate the public on wildlife, the Sutton Center partnered with Tulsa's River Parks to design interpretive signage for the **Turkey Mountain Wilderness Area**. The six signs installed along the Tulsa Nene Trail feature vibrant photos and descriptions of the habitats and wildlife found in the Turkey Mountain area. These interpretive signs enhance the experience of visitors by providing opportunities to learn about native Oklahoma wildlife while visiting the winding trails.

The **OKC Zoo** conducted a "LIGHTS OUT OKC" songbird conservation program this spring. The goal was to reduce the number of songbird collisions with urban glass windows. They also conducted "Zoo Caretaker Chats" on Saturdays in the month of May. \$2 from each ticket sale was donated to monarch butterfly conservation efforts.

The **Muskogee War Memorial Park** is home to a WWII submarine (the USS Batfish). (Which, surprisingly, is no small feat – what with the fact that Oklahoma is a land-locked state ... far from any ocean water.). The submarine was open to onboard visitors up until recently; catastrophic flooding inundated the vessel and that made internal views of the sub impossible. (There's a joke in there somewhere ... i.e., one wouldn't think that the mere incident of being immersed would be a situation for which something like a submarine would not be designed! Go figure!). Long story short? A fund-raising effort is bearing fruit. Operations are underway to re-float the craft and transport it to a better location.

Saturday, May 24th, was the date of the TONY TOUR. Clear as mud? "T.O.N.Y." is the abbreviation for the **"Tour OKC Native Yards."** The sponsoring organization was the **Oklahoma Native Plant Society**. The event showcased how Oklahoma native plants can be incorporated into the homeowner's landscape. Yet one other feature of this event was that native plant vendors conducted native plant sales in each of the front yards of the showcase homes in the tour.

Come November 1st, a new law goes into effect in Oklahoma. State parks will now be open to those persons who are foraging (morel mushrooms, nuts, berries, etc.) for personal consumption. Good idea? Bad idea? Time will tell.

**Neil Garrison** shares that he is scheduled to be the guest speaker at the June 28th "Sustainable Urban Landscaping Conference", in OKC. The topic of my presentation: "ethnobotany."

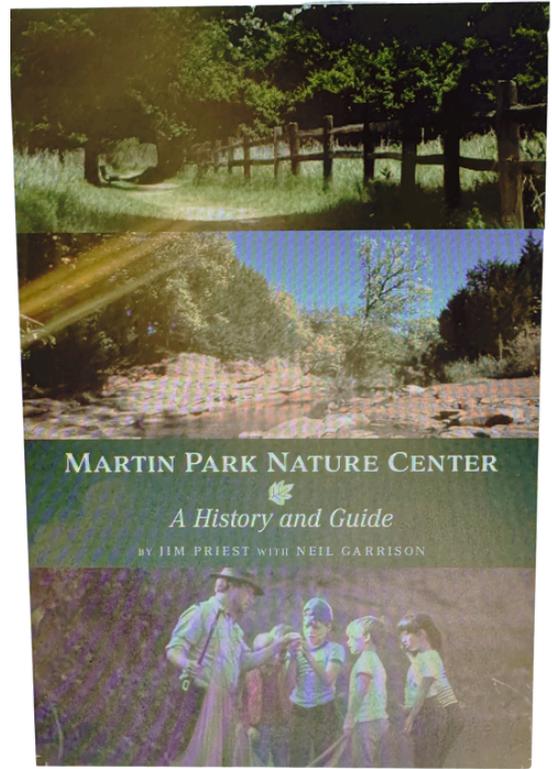
Also, I am doing some volunteering on August 18th...leading a birding hike for military veterans (via the "CONNECT TO NATURE CLINIC" ... a program of the Veterans Administration).

It has been said: "If you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life." I was the Naturalist at OKC's Martin Park Nature Center for 30 years (1978 to 2009 ... I retired in 2009). I have continued to lead nature hikes at the nature center for all of my post-retirement years (.....as a volunteer.....) I was the recipient of the "Mighty Oak" Award at the May 10th Volunteer Recognition Ceremony at the nature center.

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I am a co-author with Jim Priest of a new book, “Martin Park Nature Center: A History and Guide.”



**Ann E. Hobing, Senior Director of Education and Community Outreach at the Lone Star Flight Museum (Houston)**, shared information about the museum’s recently launched Texas Aviation Hall of Fame Presents. This is a new interpretive series featuring some of the 100 inductees of the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame. Honoring Texans who have made significant and lasting contributions to the advancement of aviation, this program showcases legends like Bessie Coleman along with military trailblazers like the Tuskegee Airmen and Women Airforce Service Pilots.

Lone Star Flight Museum is also celebrating the one-year anniversary of the WINGS Speaker Series. Women Inspiring the Next Generation through STEM is an inspiring interview-style monthly program featuring women in aviation and STEM sharing their

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fields of expertise and addressing the importance of innovation, curiosity, and perseverance. Young women and girls interested in aviation and STEM are encouraged to attend and ask questions to soak up the wisdom shared by the trailblazing women who came before. Learn more at [www.lonestarflight.org](http://www.lonestarflight.org).



Julianne Lane is the new Museum Programs Manager at Lone Star Flight Museum. She holds a Master of Library Science degree from Texas Woman's University and has over 20 years of experience in educational institutions. Her experience in program development and community partnerships will be instrumental as she leads public programs, camps, and Girls in Aviation programming.

#### **In Texas State Parks news:**

**Goose Island State Park (Rockport)** proudly participated in several major coastal birding events this spring, including Rockport Bird Day, the Birdiest Festival in America, the Whooping Crane Festival (February), and its own Goose Island Birding Festival with over 80 visitors. Park rangers led guided bird walks and staffed outreach tables, engaging hundreds of visitors and highlighting the

park's diverse species and habitats. These efforts supported TPWD's mission of stewardship, education and community engagement.

**Inks Lake State Park (Burnet)** hosted a successful third-annual Fun-For-All event on April 12 with nearly 400 participants. Fun-For-All offers adaptive equipment and opportunities for more people to enjoy the great outdoors. Adaptive activities this year included archery, kayaking, a Freedom GRIT wheelchair obstacle course, a derby fishing pond, and a trap-shooting range where guests could try out their target shooting skills. The event was supported by the Friends of Inks Lake SP, Texas State Park Police, Texas Game Wardens, TPWD Accessibility Team, Lone Star Paralysis, Highland Lakes Master Naturalists, Texas School for the Deaf, Texas Special Olympics, Texas Outdoor Women, UT Center for Disability Studies, and many others.

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#### **Editor's Note**

If you value your newsletter, please help us out by contributing news or articles, accompanied by photos if possible, to your state representative when they reach out to you. We hope that you enjoy reading the newsletter and that it helps to build a sense of community among all of us in the interpretive field in the great South Central Region of NAI.

What started off as an April Fool's joke for **Dinosaur Valley State Park (Glen Rose)** turned into a statewide sensation involving all 89 Texas State Parks, other agencies and businesses, news media, and more. Their concrete, life-sized dinosaur statue "Bronto" went "missing" and ended up on a walkabout through Texas. There were Bronto sightings at each state park. She

even began popping up at city and county parks, libraries, private business, and other locations who couldn't resist joining the fun. The posts were a huge hit that successfully introduced new parks to many people. Check it out at #whereisbronto on Facebook and Instagram. (link: <https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/whereisbronto>)

**WHAT STATE PARK WILL SHE VISIT NEXT?**



# #WHEREISBRONTO TEXAS STATE PARKS

SCRATCH OFF



TRAVEL MAP