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Using Purposeful Humor

Clark Hancock-Texas

Awhile back, my wife and I were visiting her parents when the discussion found its way to homemade biscuits. My father-in-law had grown up as part of the Czech community in the town of La Grange. He had fond memories of his mother making this flavorful staple of the country kitchen. In a voice that seemed to have grown from the rich Texas farmland, he described how she would mix flour, salt, bacon powder and milk, roll out the resulting dough, use a mason jar to cut the rounds and slide them in a wood-fired oven. Sounded heavenly, but I have never been quick on the up-take so I was a bit confused.

"Bacon powder?" I asked. "What is bacon powder?" A quizzical look came to his eye. "You know, bacon powder!" he said emphatically.

"What, do you fry up some bacon then crush it up?" I said, still confused. "No, bacon powder, you get it at the store," he replied.

Looking at my wife for help, I noticed the traces of a smile stealing across her face and then the truth began to break through as the enormity of my error came crashing down,

"Baking powder!"

"Yeah," he said, smiling, "Bakin' powder."

With that and my face turning a bright red, we all had a big laugh. I thank providence that my father-in-law did not take offense but rather just saw this as another example of his daughter's husband not being the sharpest tack in the box. To this day, when the family gets together and we share memories of Bob, that story gets dusted off and chuckles ensue. It has become something of a touchstone, a portal to a fond remembrance triggering feelings and emotions reaching far beyond that particular moment.

It seems that many of the humorous stories we share are about the times things didn't go according to plan, a miscommunication, misunderstanding, or something unexpected. These are the events that stick in our minds. They become not just part of our long-term memory, but our attitudes and our understanding. Often humor is a mental release from a stressful response – embarrassment, surprise, anxiety. It is a letting-go, a lighting-up. We see things as humorous when we look at them from a different perspective, when we make new connections.

For people to make their own connections with our resources, it helps if they are in what John Cleese calls the open mode of thinking: "We all operate in two contrasting modes, which might be called open and closed. The open mode is more relaxed, more receptive, more exploratory, more democratic, more playful and more humorous ...in that mode we are the most aware, most receptive, most creative, and therefore at our most intelligent." And guess what? Humor is one of the most powerful portals to open mode thinking, the glue by which Sam Ham's "velcro spots" can be applied. For us interpreters, humor can be a powerful tool.

We ought to remember the pitfalls, too, for we do not want to be more interesting than our resource. We are not striving to be "interpertainers." Humor, like all interpretive techniques needs to be used for a purpose: preparing our visitor's pathway to their own discoveries.

John Cleese's 1991 talk on creativity can be found on-line at <http://www.videoarts.com/?category=creativity/&product=creativity-in-management>



Bacon Powder-an essential ingredient to just about any recipe.

Director's Corner: Humor is the Glue of Life

John Miller

The members and officers of Region 6 are truly amazing. Even though we give strive to provide professional interpretive connections, we find ways to make them more exciting. One of the ways to make a more exciting interaction is wish humor.

Over the years, this humor has taken many forms at Region 6 functions. Just last year in Manhattan, Kansas, several members helped to make a snowman for all to see. But that was not enough. The snowman was used to lure Dr. Ted Cable outside where he was pelted by snowballs. Another example was the previous time that the Region 6 Workshop was held in Manhattan, which just happened to fall on April 1st. A special opportunity arose to be able to "touch a baby rattler." Needless to say, several members did not get the connection between the aquarium and April Fool's Day. And of course who would not laugh at seeing their Director get his hair shaved in Eureka Springs, Arkansas in 2011?

Whether at a conference or giving presentations, humor comes in many shapes and forms. Some of us like to tell jokes or get the audience to have a fun interaction. Making that humor positive and inclusive makes for the best ingredients. Having fun is a "spice" to add to any interpretive interaction. One example is on my nature hikes to find a moss-laden tree and ask the scouts the following question, "What side of a tree does the moss grow on?" I give them the opportunity to give responses like North, South, East, or West. When I tell them the correct answer is "The OUTSIDE." I get a few laughs. It then gives me the opportunity to explain that in the central US, moss can grow on any side of the tree.

Probably one of the best examples of humor is when members of Region 6 get together. The common threads that runs through our fellowship is having fun. Humor is a big part of both our lives and interpretation. After all how do you get you motivate ourselves to do that last presentation of the day without having fun or finding some humor along the way? To hear the laughter (sometimes laughing so hard that we cry) is one of the most satisfying aspects of our gatherings.

As Region 6 Director, I know that we have a lively and good-hearted group. We show off our special friendships with our humor and good time. I hope that everyone sees the positive sides of their job and their relationships. Having fun makes life better for you and everyone around you.



Region 6 Director John Miller is the Facility Manager at Shepherd of the Hills Conservation Center in Branson, Missouri.

"Making that humor positive and inclusive makes for the best ingredients."



Photos at left taken by John Miller.



NAI National Workshop
Reno, Nevada
November 6-9, 2013

NAI2013

Make 'em Laugh

Janet Price-Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, Missouri

There are many facets to interpretation. Above all, it must be personal, thought-provoking, and meaningful. Usually, it must also contain an element of entertainment. If it's not fun, your audience can walk away. Humor, well-used, can make them stay.

Sometimes humor presents itself. A little boy selected to be the mouse that is swallowed by the snake runs back to his seat – "Mommy, I don't want to be lunch!" Or perhaps the interpreter is in a bear costume, being very careful not to scare the child she is approaching – unaware that she's moving one step too close to the dog on the other side of the aisle, and its frantic barks send a ripple of laughter through the audience.

Sometimes you have a "flash of brilliance" at an unexpected, but opportune, moment. Bringing out a real bat for the audience to see, a child says "It's dead!" (Chuckles from the audience.) "Yes, it's dead. But fortunately before it died, it had the foresight to sign an organ donor card, so that others might learn from its death." (Laughter.)

Most of the time, however, humor in interpretation is best planned. It's like a pencil – it's no good without a point. Humor should *not* be used for its own sake. Don't tell a joke just because it's funny. If it doesn't help you tell your story, supporting your theme, then *leave it out*.

Properly used, humor is a powerful tool in interpretation. Subtly woven in to your story, it keeps even the most serious program light. Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey struggled in a man's world in the early 1900s Ozarks. Forty minutes of sadness and frustration will send your audience away sad and frustrated. But throw in a lighter moment...

Remember the first time I made cookies? The first panful from the oven was so bad! I didn't know what to do with the rest of the dough, that gooey mess! But I knew I had to destroy the evidence, or I'd never hear the last of it! Couldn't throw it out – the dog might bring it right back to the door. It wouldn't burn! Then I remembered that loose floorboard that I always tripped over. So I just raised up that board and tossed the dough in! Ha!

... and they see her life, like ours, is not all sad, even in the worst of times. It makes her touchable and human.

Costumes can create a sense of humor in interpretive programs. Instead of trying to look like the "real thing", consider a caricature instead – a costume exaggerating the identifying traits of the character or situation. Red balloons make great cicada eyes. Flour sifters highlight fly eyes. A laundry basket is a box turtle shell. Pajamas make the scary hairy bear a cute baby bear. Caricature costumes make it more fun.

Humor can make an average character into a memorable one. The bat acts like Stevie Wonder. The rock sings his version of "Cover of the Rolling Stone", complete with wiggled back-up singers.

And yes, sometimes humor can be gross. (But not too gross!) Weathered diabase rock looks like old horse poop. Taste-testing pre-placed "deer droppings" (Raisinets). And my personal favorite... the spittle bug, who drinks plant juice, then shoots bubbles out of his butt! (Bubble wrap and a bubble machine – Easy!)

Make your interpretive presentation strong – relevant, provoking and revealing. Then, when appropriate, make it fun. But remember, a little humor goes a long way! Use it sparingly. Make it count. Have fun!



Janet Price is famous for her brand of humorous interpretation in which she says, "Take pride in your work but have no pride."



Mark your calendars for the 2014 Region 6 conference in Guthrie, Oklahoma!

And while you're at it...make sure to send the awards committee your nominations for professional awards. Let's recognize the outstanding work in interpretation happening all over our Region! Stay tuned to the Region website for upcoming deadlines.

What's That?

Anna Malcom- Texas

The Austin Nature and Science Center runs a Naturalist Workshop and Trade Center where visitors can bring in natural artifacts and items to be identified by experienced staff, and to trade for other natural items. Sometimes visitors bring in items that give staff pause.

Once, an elderly lady came to the nature center with some photos of animals for identification. She kept her photos with care in a manila file folder, and had great interests in her backyard critters. She asked me to identify a picture of a mangled and dead ball of fur with a rat-like tail that her dog had brought onto her porch. Imagine a typical cartoon picture of road kill, that's what the picture looked like.

"From the rat-like tail, and gray and white fur, it looks like an opossum," I said.

"But, it can't be a possum. Here's a possum." She pulled out another photo. This time the animal was alive. It also had a rat-like tail and beady eyes, and was climbing up one of her bird feeders at night to collect seed.

"Umm, well, no this one's a rat!"

The lady thought she was feeding and photographing her beloved opossums, but they were rats!

I have also started a collection of "man-made" rocks based on samples brought into trade: asphalt, concrete, ceramics, chalk, painted stones, blue aquarium gravel, glass craft stones, broken small chunks of ceramic sewer pipes (eww!), gift shop arrowheads, broken glass, bits of bricks, mulch, decorative stones from a fountain, and more. It's fun to point out the perfect edges, or layers of paint which the kids didn't notice.

Oh, Deer!

Cassie Cox- Texas

On the way to 10,000 finds in Texas State Park's Geocache Challenge, geocachers have had some grand adventures in parks. For example, one geocacher, with the geocaching.com username Shelle518, was at Cooper Lake State Park when she found out that sometimes, being ahead of the group doesn't pay off. This anxious cacher was moving so fast down the trail that she startled two doe that were trailside. Looking for a quick escape, one of the deer ran right into her, knocking her to the ground! Her GPS unit flew one way and she landed another. Shelle518 came out of the ordeal mostly unharmed, with some ripped pants, a great story and another successful geocache find!

Although we don't want everyone to get this up-close and personal with the wildlife we protect, we're glad that people are visiting our parks, having adventures, and sharing their stories with other potential park visitors. Our hope is that they begin planning their return trip for more camping, hiking, and memory making, while absorbing an interpretive message, even if they don't realize it.



You can invest in the future of NAI and the profession by making a contribution to the Enos Mills Fund. For the past 54 years National Association for Interpretation (NAI) has served as a professional family for people working with parks, historic sites, zoos, aquariums, museums, nature centers, and tour companies.

NAI has grown to more than 5,500 members to date, committed to our mission of "inspiring leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession." Member services are fundamental to NAI's success, such as:

- Rebates to regions and sections for newsletters
- Regional, national, and international workshops and conferences

- Publication of magazines and books
- Peer-juried Journal of Interpretation Research
- Interpnet.com website with online Member Directory and Member Forum
- On-line Legacy magazine
- Training courses
- 7,000 individuals certified in six categories
- Association store
- Interpretunities – jobs listings
- Standards of Practices – NEW publications on best practices
- Interpretation Roadmap coalition – NEW collaboration to help members find the right professional development and recognition opportunities

Please join us in support of the interpretive profession and insuring the long-term stability of NAI by making a donation or a pledge to the Enos Mills Fund today.

A Lesson in English

John Miller-Missouri

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
8. A bass was painted on the head of the bass & bass drum.
9. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row
13. They were too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
18. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
19. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
20. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?



Region 6 Director John Miller is a pro at using humor to make interpretive connections.

Let's face it - English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat. We take English for granted.

But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth, beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, 2 meese? One index, 2 indices? Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? Sometimes I think all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which, an alarm goes off by going on.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which, of course, is not a race at all. That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

You lovers of the English language might enjoy this.

There is a two-letter word that perhaps has more meanings than any other two-letter word, and that is 'UP.'

It's easy to understand...

UP, meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list, but when we awaken in the morning, why do we wake UP? At a meeting, why does a topic come UP? Why do we speak UP and why are the officers UP for election and why is it UP to the secretary to write UP a report?

We call UP our friends. And we use it to brighten UP a room, polish UP the silver; we warm UP the leftovers and clean UP the kitchen. We lock UP the house and some guys fix UP the old car. At other

A Lesson in English (continued)

times the little word has real special meaning. People stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses. To be dressed is one thing, but to be dressed UP is special.

And this UP is confusing: A drain must be opened UP because it is stopped UP. We open UP a store in the morning but we close it UP at night.

We seem to be pretty mixed UP about UP ! To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of UP, look the word UP in the dictionary. In a desk-sized dictionary, it takes UP almost 1/4th of the page and can add UP to about thirty definitions. If you are UP to it, you might try building a list of the many ways UP is used. It will take UP a lot of your time, but if you don't give UP, you may wind UP with a hundred or more. When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding UP. When the sun comes out we say it is clearing UP...

When it rains, it wets the earth and often messes things UP. When it doesn't rain for awhile, things dry UP.

One could go on and on, but I'll wrap it UP, for now my time is UP, so.....it is time to shut UP!

Oh.....one more thing:

What is the first thing you do in the morning & the last thing you do at night? U-P

Hissing Petey

Submitted John Miller-Missouri

*John notes this is best read aloud and with a group.

This is the story of Petey the Snake. Petey was a snake only so big. Petey lived in a pit with his mother. One day Petey was hissing in the pit when his mother said, "Petey, don't hiss in our pit. If you must hiss, go outside the pit to hiss." Petey was hissing all around the pit, when he finally leaned over and hissed in the pit. Petey's mother heard Petey hissing in their pit, and said, "Petey, if you must hiss in the pit, go over to Mrs. Potts's pit and hiss in her pit."

So Petey went over to Mrs. Potts's pit and hissed in her pit, but Mrs. Potts was not home. So he hissed anyway. While Petey was hissing in Mrs. Potts's pit, Mrs. Potts came home and found Petey hissing in her pit. She said, "Petey, if you have to hiss in a pit, don't hiss in my pit. Go to your own pit and hiss."

This made Petey very sad, and he cried all the way home. His mother saw him crying and asked, "Petey, what's the matter?"

Petey told his mom that he went over to Mrs. Potts's pit to hiss in her pit, but Mrs. Potts said, "Petey, if you must hiss in a pit, go back to your own pit to hiss. Don't ever hiss in my pit again!"

This made Petey's mother very angry. She said, "Why that mean old lady! I knew Mrs. Potts when she didn't have a pit to hiss in."



Hissing Petey could have been an Eastern Hognose snake. These guys are good at looking BAD.

(Photo by John Miller)

Greg Butts, Director of Arkansas State Parks, announced that **Kelly Farrell** is the new Administrator of Program Services for Arkansas State Parks. Kelly will replace **Jay Miller** effective June 1st, who retired May 30 after an exemplary 37-year career with ASP.

Kelly began her career with ASP in 1999 as seasonal interpreter at Lake Ouachita State Park, spent 4.5 years as interpreter at DeGray Lake Resort State Park, and the last 9 years as Field Interpreter/Education Program Specialist. She's played a key role in interpretive planning, along with recruiting, interviewing, training and evaluating interpreters statewide. She has received numerous professional certifications and honors, is a Certified Public Manager, volunteers in a variety of organizations, and has completed six marathons!"



**ARKANSAS
State Report**
Don Simons

Over 130 interpreters, colleagues, and family members from all over Arkansas gathered at the **Plantation Agriculture Museum** to wish **Jay Miller** well in his retirement. He was presented with a letter from Arkansas's Governor Beebe and a hiking staff adorned with hiking medals from every Arkansas state park. The hiking staff was so tall that Jay will resemble Gandalf conjuring up spells of interpretive wisdom as he explores wilderness trails across the country.

Editors' Note: Jay also acted as an exceptional state coordinator for Region 6 until his retirement. Jay, we thank you for your service, and we welcome Don Simons, interpreter at Mount Magazine State Park, as your new state coordinator!

Rebecca Penny, Interpreter at **Devil's Den State Park**, reports that they celebrated the XXV Annual Ozark Mountain Bike Festival, which makes it the longest running bike festival in the state.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service held a special ceremony at **Mount Magazine State Park** to announce the delisting of the Magazine Mountain Shagreen snail (*Inflectarius magazinensis*) from the Endangered Species List. This small snail is found only on the northern slopes of Mount Magazine and is the first invertebrate to be delisted.



**The Magazine Mountain
Shagreen snail was recently
removed from the Endangered
Species List.**

Editors' Note: Karena Minor replaces Kenton Peters as Oklahoma state coordinator with this issue of Visions. We'd like to thank Kenton for his work, and welcome Karena, who works at Oklahoma City National Memorial.

Lake Tenkiller State Park's very own **Leann Bunn** was honored with the National Wild Turkey Federation's "Woman in the Outdoors Award" this spring. Leann began offering "Women in the Outdoors" events in 2000, with eight participants. This past year, over 200 women joined Leann to learn and enjoy the outdoors. Congratulations!

Lisa Conard Frost, the superintendent at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Cheyenne Oklahoma, has moved to another state in Region 6 and is now the superintendent of **Fort Smith National Historic Site** in Fort Smith Arkansas. Congratulations Lisa!

Personnel of the **Oklahoma City Zoo** report that, in conjunction with the **Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation**, they participated in a scientific census in northwestern Oklahoma this spring. Their listening surveys focused on the Lesser Prairie Chicken, who calls some of the grasslands of Oklahoma, and other nearby states, home.

Oklahoma City will soon see an increase in museum space! The **Science Museum Oklahoma** just recently secured a \$12 million grant which will enable them to build a 21,000-square-foot new children's museum inside of their existing facility.

In coordination with the nationwide celebration of Endangered Species Day on May 17, 2013, the **Oklahoma City Zoo's** Educational Department presented the past, present, and future of endangered plants and animals. To further emphasize Endangered Species Day, the zoo offered a free screening of the full-length documentary titled, "Where Did the Horny Toad Go?"

Jim Jewell, security guard at the **Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History** in Norman, Oklahoma, travelled to Washington, D.C. for a very special reason in April. His sister Sally Jewell was sworn in this April as the Secretary of the Interior!

Les Pulliam is now the park manager at Lake Tenkiller State Park in Eastern Oklahoma. Les started his career with the state parks division many years ago when he was the park naturalist at Three Forks Nature Center at Sequoyah State Park; east of Muskogee, Oklahoma. Congratulations, Les!



**OKLAHOMA
State Report**
Karina Minor



Kenton Peters from the Myriad Botanical Gardens will now be working at the **Martin Nature Park** with Park Naturalist **Emily Hiatt**.

**OKLAHOMA
State Report
(cont)**
Karina Minor

Tara Humphreys reports that **Katie Raney**, park interpreter at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks, has found a wonderful opportunity and is now the **Family Programs Manager** at the **Bullock Texas State History Museum**. We're sad to see her leave Texas State Parks, but excited for her new adventure, and especially glad that she will still be very active in NAI. Congrats Katie!



**TEXAS State
Report**
Tara Humphreys

Kristi Payne, Marketing Coordinator of **River Legacy Living Science Center**, is excited to announce that phase one of their exhibit renovation is nearing completion. A 19-foot aquatic environment wall showcases two 800-plus gallon aquariums featuring red-eared sliders, river cooters, crayfish, a spotted gar, and other native aquatic species. A 17-foot forest habitat wall includes six terrariums with native plants and authentic landscapes for barred tiger salamanders, green and grey tree frogs, toads, skinks, Texas spiny lizards, anoles and snakes.

Lisa Cole, Education Coordinator at **Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area** shares that they introduced participants to a citizen-science effort called GLOBE at Night (www.globeatnight.org) at their "Stars on the Prairie" star-gazing event on April 6. It is a world-wide effort to report and monitor light pollution and its effects. The group collected the data required using the constellation Leo and used a laptop on-site to submit it. Then, they gave each family the info and tools to continue to report to GLOBE in their own neighborhoods.

Kiki Corry, **Project WILD Coordinator**, and **Marc LeFebre**, Sr. Program Manager for the **Council for Environment Education** have exciting news! Project WILD is delighted to announce the release of the expanded **Aquatic WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide**, now better than ever! The 2013 edition contains new activities, new content on student field investigations, In Step with STEM extensions, and WILD Work career components. WILD facilitator work meetings in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Lubbock and Weslaco will produce the new Texas WILD training materials, including content for the first ever WILD facilitator webinar. For more information, visit www.projectwild.org/aquatic.

It's busy at **Palo Duro Canyon State Park** according to Park Interpreter **Bernice Blasingame**! Many of students visiting on field trips have never been to the canyon, so there are many teachable moments: wild turkey toms strutting, animal tracks, lizards, pocket gophers, harvester ants, horned lizards and the ever-fascinating dung beetles. The park is also offering a new interpretive driving tour for those cannot hike or do not want to hike.

Starting this June, **Texas State Parks** is introducing a new program that will give your child or grandchild something exciting to do this summer. The **Junior Ranger Explorer Pack program** gives kids ages 7 to 12 a fun way to explore state parks while learning about nature. Best of all, kids can check out these packs free for the entire day when they are accompanied by a parent or adult. Each pack comes with a pair of binoculars, magnifying glass, animal track key, sketchbook, pencil, crayons, watercolors and kid-friendly field guides, plus a journal so kids can record what they learn. Visit www.texasstateparks.com/JuniorRanger to find out which 30 parks have this new Explorer Pack program.

Cassie Cox with **Texas State Parks** reports that the 2012 Geocache Challenge has hit a milestone, with 10,000 geocache finds since October 1, 2012! The Texas State Parks Geocache Challenge team has worked diligently setting up and maintaining one-hundred and fifty special geocaches in almost every state park in Texas. Lots of find means lots of happy cachers! For more information on the Texas State Park Geocache Challenge visit: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/activities/outdoor_recreation/geocache/.

Clark Hancock reports that the **Austin Nature & Science Center** is welcoming 30 seasonal staff members as they gear up for their summer camp season. They are going to have their hands full as over 1700 day-campers will participate in the center's programs this summer! In April, Clark also reports, the **Hill Country Alliance** hosted a CIG training, and resulted in ten new CIGs and Region 6 members. Congratulations and welcome, folks!



The Hill Country Alliance hosted a CIG training resulting in 10 new CIGs and Region 6 members.

Louise Todd reports that the **Audubon Aquarium of the Americas** has had a busy spring. The aquarium celebrated Earth Day with their Party for the Planet event, which brought in presenters from conservation organizations. In June, they hosted OceanFest, highlighting ways that visitors can protect their oceans. Audubon's G.U.L.F seafood program, Louisiana Marine Mammal, and Sea Turtle Rescue Program shared their efforts to protect our oceans and the animals that live in them.



LOUISIANA
State Report
Rusty
Scarborough

Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center is starting off the summer season with a bang! BSNC conducts summer day camp sessions for children ranging in age from 5 to 14 years; now they've added a Counselor-in-Training unit, too. Our Swamp CIT program will give teens ages 14 to 17 the opportunity to gain skills needed to work as camp counselors at Bluebonnet Swamp. Camper management techniques, leadership training, and camp activity development will be combined with job seeking skills (filling out applications, interviewing, job performance evaluation, etc.) to provide valuable experience for potential employment opportunities.

Terri Jacobsen reports that the **Red River National Wildlife Refuge** has been busy training staff and getting ready for summer camp season as well. Refuge staff just completed archery instructor training, using National Archery in the School Program (NASP) standards. Next up: hosting archery clinics! The refuge is also holding summer camps for the first time, including "Bird Camp for Kids," a week-long day camp where youth will learn to identify birds by sight and song, investigate bird behavior, dissect owl pellets, run a bird seed relay and take the migration challenge. Another camp covers outdoor recreation skills, plant ID, archery, fishing, paddling and more, while a third called "Nature Camp with an Artistic Twist" is for children who love nature and are interested in art, poetry writing, photography and nature journaling.



Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center staff conducting a summer day camp session.

Rusty Scarborough reports that changes are afoot at **Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park**: "We have a new Parks Director, a new Assistant Parks Director and a new Operations Assistant, so we have had a lot of change within our department. **Stacy Gray**, who completed CIG in January has volunteered to take over as Earth Camp Director for the summer and that kicks off the second week of June and runs for 10 weeks."

Staff from **Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park**, **Red River National Wildlife Refuge** and others are also working to make the Shreveport chapter of Master Naturalist Program a reality.

Louisiana has a new NAI member per Region VI Director John Miller. A free membership was offered to **Amy Fultz**, who is the Director of Behavior, Research and Education at **Chimp Haven** in Keithville, Louisiana has been granted that membership. Welcome, Amy!



Region 6 member Lisa Richter holds our newest member, Phaidra Elaine Richter, born May 21, 2013. Congratulations to Lisa and husband John!

Rebecca Miller from **Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center** in Blue Springs is happy to announce the birth of Phaidra Elaine Richter. She was born to Naturalist **Lisa Richter**, and her husband, John, on May 21st 2013. She weighed 7lbs 5oz at birth and both she and Lisa are doing very well. Phaidra's big brother, Errol, is two and a half years old and is glad to have his new little sister at home. [see attached photo]



MISSOURI State
Report
Michelle
Soenksen

LuAnn Cadden and **Ted Cable** would like to announce the publication of their new interpretive travel book, *Traveling Through Illinois: Stories of I-55 Landmarks & Landscapes between Chicago & St. Louis*. The book was published in May 2013 with The History Press. After *Driving Across Kansas* (Ted's state) and *Driving Across Missouri* (LuAnn's state) they're now writing about their native state of Illinois. While some travelers got their kicks on route 66, they hope their book helps you enjoy the drive on I-55 (a flat and heavily-agricultural drive.) Some stories may be corny, but the authors have milked the miles for all their worth and so hope you enjoy the book. Spoiler Alert!-- It ends in Chicago.

No report submitted.



KANSAS
State Report
Pat Silovsky

Saving an Ozark Treasure

Stephen Bost-Salem, MO

“Think about nature as a big symphony. Every species has a part to play. When you’re missing an instrument, it makes the music less sweet.”

Those words were spoken by A.J. Hendershott, Regional Supervisor with the Missouri Department of Conservation on the importance of saving and re-establishing the Ozark Chinquapin tree back to our forest.

You could say A.J. speaks for the trees. In fact you could say he writes articles for newspapers and magazines for the trees as well as researches and even carves musical instruments and bows from the trees and paints, sketches and draws for the trees. It doesn't stop there A.J. has also planted research test plot number #1 on his own property with the help of his children at his home near Cape Girardeau in southeast Missouri.

You see A.J. is an interpreter and he has the unique gift to inspire others. A.J. and I teamed up a few years ago on this “Tree Roots” effort to save and restore the once thought gone for good Ozark Chinquapin tree.

The Ozark Chinquapin (*Castanea ozarkensis*), sometimes called Ozark Chinkapin or Ozark Chestnut, was drought tolerant, grew to heights of 65 feet, 2-3 feet diameter, and grew on acidic dry rocky soils on hilltops and slopes. It bloomed in late May- early June after the threat of frost.

The trees produced a bounty of sweet nuts every year without fail, and was sought as a nutritious food source by humans and wildlife. The wood was highly prized because it was rot resistant and made excellent railroad ties, fence post, furniture, and musical instruments.

The Ozark Chinquapin tree is a close relative to the American Chestnut tree and sadly fell victim to the same fate as the American Chestnut, the introduction of the chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*).

The chestnut blight was first noticed in 1904 at the Bronx Zoo in New York City and it spread gradually over the eastern U.S killing every American Chestnut it encountered as it spread west. By the 1950's the blight began attacking our native Ozark Chestnut (commonly known as the Ozark Chinquapin) and wiped most of them out as well.

Today only blighted stumps remain of this once important Ozark tree. Sprouts emerge from the stumps, rarely managing to produce nuts, but within 4-6 years the blight again strikes killing the sprouts, starting the blighted cycle all over again. The number of surviving stumps and the historic range of the tree continue to shrink.

Today very few people still remember how important the trees once were-

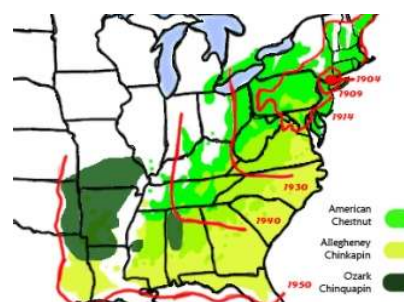
“The Ozark Chinquapin nuts were delicious and we waited for them to fall like you would wait on a crop of corn to ripen,..... they were that important. Up on the hilltop the nuts were so plentiful that we scooped them up with flat blade shovels and loaded them into the wagons to be used as livestock feed, to eat for ourselves, and to sell. Deer, bears, turkeys, squirrels, and a variety of other wildlife fattened up on the sweet crop of nuts that fell every year. But, starting in the 1950's and 60's all of the trees started dying off. Now they are all gone and no one has heard of them.”

--Quote from an 93-year old Missouri outdoorsman describing the trees before the chestnut blight reached the Ozark Mountains.

A.J. is not alone in his efforts. Cheyne Matzenbacher an Interpreter from Roaring River State Park in Southwest Missouri has been putting his unique talents to work for the recovery of the trees as well. Cheyne has literally been out on a limb trying to save these trees by cross pollinating rare trees that are sometimes hundreds of miles from each other.



The multi-talented A.J. Hendershott carved this Ozark dulcimer out of American chestnut wood.



This map shows the spread of the chestnut blight that nearly wiped out the Ozark chinquapin trees.

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Cheyne has also discovered trees that are able to overcome the blight and grow to a large size. Prior to all of this work it was thought no trees could survive the blight. Cheyne has been working collecting nuts, pollen, leaf samples for DNA analysis, blight spores for laboratory work, and even recycling the rot resistant wood of Ozark Chinquapin trees to be used for projects to enhance interpretation.

In addition to all of the great work Cheyne has done over the years he also does interpretive programs at the Ozark Chinquapin Nature Center at Roaring River State Park.

May 21 and 22, 2013 at Hobbs State Park in northeast Arkansas was the day of the newly established OCF Board meeting and yearly OCF meeting. Snow, freezing rain and sleet were making the roads hazardous to travel but they could not wash away the dedication of A.J., Cheyne, and the others gathered to collaborate efforts across state lines to save this important tree.

As a token of appreciation for all of their great work to save and restore the Ozark Chinquapin tree, A.J. Hendershott and Cheyne Matzenbacher were surprised by being presented plaques of pure Ozark Chinquapin wood by all of the meeting attendees and me.

A.J. and Cheyne are not just two interpreters on opposite sides of the state educating others about the loss of this tree,..... they are doing something about it!



Cheyne Matzenbacher with a rare find-a healthy blight-free Ozark chinquapin tree.

Don't let this be the LAST ONE

Problem: Disease is killing this endangered tree.

Ozark Chinquapin

Chinquapin seed in prickly husk

Solution: Plant disease-resistant Chinquapin trees.

Ozark Chinquapin (rare) Chinquapin Oak (common) Swamp Chestnut Oak (common)

What you can do:
Find these trees among look-a-likes.
Collect Ozark Chinquapin seeds.
Plant disease-resistant seeds in the Ozarks.

Visit www.ozarkchinquapin.com for information



To learn more about the foundation and their efforts save the Ozark Chinquapin, visit www.ozarkchinquapin.com.



Cheyne pollinates an Ozark chinquapin tree.



Stephen Bost (third from left) began the Ozark Chinquapin Foundation in an effort to restore the tree to its native range.

Book Review

Neil Garrison-Yukon, OK

BOOK REVIEW

"A Misplaced Massacre:
Struggling Over The Memory Of Sand Creek"

the book's author: Ari Kelman

Publication date: 2013

ISBN 978-0-674-04585-9

Publisher: Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Mass.)

A tragic event occurred in eastern Colorado on the morning of November 29, 1864. A peaceful camp of Cheyennes and Arapaho were brutally attacked by Colorado militia.

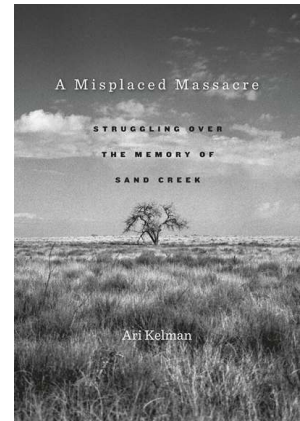
The location of this terrible part of our nation's history was selected as a National Historic Site (National Park Service).but...there was the rub.... Nobody seemed to be able to agree on exactly where the event took place. This book is the "fly on the wall" account of the process of establishing this new addition to our system of national parks. It is a "warts and all" telling of that story.

I enjoyed the book. The telling of the story was not sanitized and simplified...but, instead...the book kept every detail in there. All of the bickering and ego-bruising incidents are recounted in this account. The book is an interesting window into exactly how many hurdles had to be surmounted in order for the project to reach fruition.

I bought my copy of the book; I did not borrow it from the public library. The \$30 cost gave me pause, but now I am glad that I made the purchase.

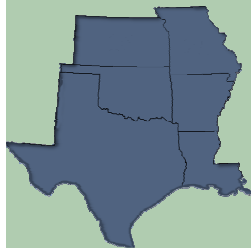
I will say that the book's author seemed to have a better than average fascination with obscure, "fancy" words. In my opinion, it made reading some portions of the text to be more labored than it ought to have been. I kind of get the idea that the book's author was attempting to impress the reader with his mastery of the English language, but all that he actually was able to do was trip me up when I came upon the complex terminology.

Nevertheless, I recommend the book to you. If you are fascinated with the history of the American West (...or...the inner workings of the National Park Service), you will enjoy this book.



The author tells the story of a site that holds a tragic history, and how it came to be a National Historic Site.

"The telling of the story was not sanitized and simplified...The book is an interesting window into exactly how many hurdles had to be surmounted in order for the project to reach fruition."



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