



## SPRING 2007 NEWSLETTER

# Friends of Guadalupe River, Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization

## President's Letter

by Wilt Shaw

## Board of Directors

### Celebrating Our Hard-Working Friends

After two years serving as your president, I would say I'm long overdue in making you aware of some of our hard working Friends. We have a core group of such phenomenal, dedicated folks. I am in awe of what they do and how they find the time to do it in spite of them running the same rat race as the rest of us. There isn't space here to individually acknowledge all the hard working folks. But here are a few of the outstanding achievements for 2006.

Come to the Park to see the Rust House. It's fabulous, thanks to Dave Kibler providing leadership, coordination and direction to other hard-working volunteers who, after carpentry, spent over 500 hours on scraping and painting. Thanks also to Dave for all the other work he does with the Friends, his community, the Native Plant Society of Texas, and the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne.

Last year Nancy Gray took it upon herself to take over the organization of the Park Saturday Night Programs. They have been outstanding! What she has done makes the Park and the Friends just shine. Thanks to Nancy for all the hours she spends on bringing quality speakers to the program.

We all need to applaud Tom Anderson for being there to coordinate Saturday morning hikes, all those special hikes throughout the year, and for the time and great work he put in at Halloween--and for just always, always being there throughout all the years, especially those early years in which he solely undertook the Saturday morning hikes.

Terry Urbanczyk has the best juggling act around. How she manages all the Park and community tasks is beyond my comprehension. Among many other projects, she leads and organizes Halloween at the Park, our main fund raising event of the year. In 2006, we broke attendance and collection records as we have done every year since event inception. She also puts together this wonderful newsletter. Thank you, Terry, for your time and dedication.

JW Pieper, besides being a Honey Creek Interpretive Guide, is our financial expert, keeping our books with impeccable accuracy. He does so much, not only for the Park, but also for Texas Master Naturalists where he currently serves as president of the Alamo Chapter. He is a member of the Canyon Lake Gorge committee and an Outdoor Program Trail Guide for the Cibolo Nature Center, and is heavily involved in the creation of a new local volunteer fire department—among other things. Thank you for being such a friend to all of us.

Likewise for Holly Camero, who has served as president of the Alamo Area Master Naturalists and continues to do so much for environmental education at the Park, Honey Creek and Bexar and surrounding counties. Among other things, she provides expertise in bird watching and bugs. Most of you probably don't know that she gives lectures to children on insects and is known as "The Bug Lady."

Bryden Moon is our new Historian. We all are looking forward to sharing in and learning from what he will bring to the table in the years to come. Through his hard work and enthusiasm, he has in a very short time increased our historical knowledge of Park a hundred-fold.

Have you visited our outstanding website lately? Our webmaster, Dan Freeman is in the US Army not only serving our country, but also managing to perform this much appreciated task. We are so fortunate to have Dan's expertise. Please pay us a visit at [www.honeycreekfriends.com/](http://www.honeycreekfriends.com/).

Last and most certainly not least I would like to acknowledge Charlee McCarl for her tireless efforts as a Saturday hike leader and for all the work she does throughout the community with environmental education for children and adults. She is a true Master Naturalist.

Please feel free to take the time to participate. We'd love to see you back out at the Park to volunteer your time or just to do the hike again. We can all look forward to 2007 and the years to come for more outstanding achievements.

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**From the Park Superintendent's Perch**

by Mark Abolafia-Rosenzweig

**From the Superintendent's Perch**

Spring is upon us! Hopefully we have received or are receiving some much needed rain to bring up the river level and bring out the wild flowers. Starting with President's Weekend, activity in the park has certainly picked up and spring weekend reservations are coming in by the droves. Saturday morning guided tours of Honey Creek have resumed and regularly scheduled Saturday evening programs are scheduled to resume on March 17<sup>th</sup>. These activities are led or coordinated by Friends members. Thankfully, hazards and debris caused by the January ice storm have almost entirely been removed and all park use areas are once again open. I sincerely thank all the volunteers who gave their time and sweat to help us with this monumental task. The last of the debris along the park roadsides and behind the amphitheater should be removed by the time this article is published. While I'm handing out "thanks" I must talk again about the Rust House. This beautiful old home, which I hope someday soon will be a centerpiece of our environmental education programs, has been leveled, new porches installed, and now painted – all fruits of Friends' labor. About 300 volunteer hours were put towards the painting effort alone. Obviously a labor of love, the house really looks GREAT! This is truly a testament to how much a dedicated group of individuals can accomplish and this work will be a significant legacy from these wonderful folks. If you are new to this park or this area please consider joining The Friends of Guadalupe River and Honey Creek to support their efforts. If you have the time to actively contribute to the groups' efforts to support these precious sites and to provide outstanding environmental education programming that would be even better.

**Rust House Renovations Completed**

by Dave Kibler

During the last week of February volunteers put the finishing touches on the final phase of the Friends project to renovate the exterior of the historic Rust House at Guadalupe river State Park. Built in 1917, the house had fallen into significant disrepair and was no longer an attractive part of the park experience. The Friends board selected this project as its major focus, and in the winter of 2005 the first phase was completed. This involved the stabilization of the pier and beam foundation of the entire structure and the replacement of all the cedar piers under the house. This work was done by a professional concern specializing in such work on historic structures. As a result the house again had level floors, and deterioration of the east porch was halted. The Friends invested approximately \$7,000 in this phase. During the summer of 2006, phase two was begun. Here the Friends paid approximately \$7000 to a professional restoration carpenter who replaced the entire floor decking on both porches, as well as constructing two sets of stair steps. In addition, rotting structural lumber was replaced where needed.

Phase three began last November when volunteer crews gathered for a number of workdays to scrape the entire exterior of the house and to apply primer to all surfaces. In addition, the Rust House received two coats of white paint just before the Thanksgiving holiday. In late January, work resumed to complete the painting phase. Crews met, weather permitting, for several days each week into February, to apply two coats of green trim to all windows, doors, and porch trim areas. In addition the metal house skirting received the same treatment. The final sessions saw the application of blue paint to the porch ceilings and the two coats of gray deck paint to the two porch floors. Only a little touchup and some window screen repair remains for later in the spring.

Many thanks go to the members of the work crews who donated over three hundred hours to this great project. These fine folks included Bob Hamilton, J. W. Pieper, Wilt Shaw, Bob Gray, Prem Nored, Larry Mickey and spouse Kathy, Tom Anderson, Bryden and Kay Moon, and Dave Kibler. Additional thanks go to park staff, especially Greg Nash, who supported these painters at every turn.

**Be sure to come by the Rust House soon to see the striking appearance of this wonderful old structure, which is now one of the park's highlights.**



**Legislative Issues**

**Talking Points – HB 6 and SB 252:** The state legislature is currently debating the funding crisis facing our state park system. These are some thoughts for consideration:

**Positives:**

- There are 114 state park units which provide natural and historic sites for youth education programs, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, family outings and pride in Texas.
- 13 of the 28 reasons out of state visitors choose to visit Texas are State Park experiences.
- 10 million park visitors spend money in local communities generating over \$1.45 billion in economic activity annually. State Parks visitor expenditures support over 14,000 jobs in Texas communities annually. Park use fees and taxes along with the "Sporting Goods Tax" practically pay for the current State Parks operating budget of \$56 million.

**Negatives:**

- Among all 50 states, Texas ranks 49 in per capita expenditure for parks and recreation.
- In 1990, operating expenditures by the state on parks accounted for 0.40% of the state's operating budget. By 2003, this had dropped to 0.15% (fifteen one hundredths) of the state budget. Because of this decline, coupled with ever-increasing costs, additional areas to manage (legislatively mandated) and un-funded personnel costs, the state parks' current budget shortfall has lead to lay-offs, partial closings and curtailment of park programs, especially for youth. The status quo or a band aid approach is not a solution

**Solution:**

It must be stressed that HB 6 and HB 252 are enabling legislation to remove the cap on the "Sporting Goods Tax" – entirely. They are not the appropriating bills. While it would be great to accomplish full funding (@\$112 million in FY '08 and \$116 million in FY '09, according to the latest Comptroller estimate), we must be prepared to fight for the "bottom line" which was recommended by the Texas State Parks Advisory Committee and unanimously accepted by the TPWD Commissioners who in turn made those recommendations part of the TPWD's legislative request. That number is as follows: \$106 million annually for each year for 10 years. **This is not a one-shot request.** Only with this substantial and sustained funding over 10 years can we accomplish the goal of returning our parks to a state of excellence.

Below are the categories of recommended and requested amounts:

Current Uses of funding (2006 from Sporting Goods Tax)	\$20,639, 529
State Park Funding	\$15,408,287
Local Park Funding	\$ 5,231,242
Recommended Additional Above FY 2006 Through Direct Expenditures from Annual Appropriations	
Operating Needs	\$16,796,879
Department Support	\$ 2,000,000
Equipment Replacement	\$ 6,637,104
Major Repairs	\$25,000,000
Acquisition and Development	\$15,000,000
Local Park Grants	\$20,000,000
Total Annual New TPWD Expenses (if paying from annual revenue)	\$85,433,983
Total TPWD Annual Needs Funded by Sporting Goods Tax	\$106,073,512

The Committee also considered the option of financing the above Major Repairs and Acquisition Development needs using bonds. The approximate annual debt service for \$400 million in bonds is \$34,340,000 annually, which would reduce funding needs by approximately \$6 million for each of the 10 years.

Finally, it is clear that some would like to do their part to save parks on the cheap and are now saying that while they love state parks, it is their unstudied opinion that TPWD cannot spend the funds requested in a timely and fiscally sound manner.

Again, TSPAC and the present commissioners came to the conclusion that there is sufficient planning and staffing in place.

The principle argument to rebut this is that we will never return our park system to excellence unless we begin to have trust in the professionals that dedicate their lives to the proper management, restoration and preservation of Texas' natural and historic sites and let them get the job done. There is very adequate oversight in place to gauge progress and success.

**Give Greatness a Chance!**



Big Bend National Park always deserves at least one visit each year. It is easy for me to feel one with nature there. In the remoteness, my imagination wanders over the desert, hills, peaks and other-worldly horizons, momentarily wondering, "Am I the only one in the park?" The Spanish called the area "el despoblado" – the uninhabited land. However, park literature tells us that Big Bend lands were not an unoccupied, desert wasteland. From the native-Americans to the Spanish to the Mexican and American settlers, there was a procession of denizens who lived and roamed and scratched out a living within the land now contained within the park's boundaries: harvesting the wax from candelaria plants, quicksilver mining operations, cotton farming, and ranching. When the park opened for business in 1944, there were still 50 active ranchers that were given a year's grace to remove their 25,000 cattle, and 20,000 to 30,000 sheep and goats. Today the settlements, long since evacuated and abandoned, have morphed into ghost towns with legends and stories unique to Texas.

Now you might be wondering, why the discussion of Big Bend? What does it have to do with Guadalupe River State Park/ Honey Creek State Natural Area (GRSP/HCSNA)?

While we may have the longer name, everything else is bigger there: its mountain peaks, the elevations, length of the river that runs through it, open nearly forty years longer. With 800,000+ acres, it is more than 100 times the size our park.

Here is my point. We are lucky. When we want our fix of nature, we do not have to drive seven hours to get it. Right in our own backyard, while taking a tour of Honey Creek, you too can feel one with nature. And if you let your mind drift with the isolation of the area, one can achieve just as much solitude. It is easy to feel that your next step is touching land never trod before. What you may not be aware of as you stand there, is that you are also but a short distance from history. If Big Bend with its vast openness has a history, our slice of heaven - our river, our cliff, and the surrounding area too has a rich human past. Except for mining, our pioneers also chose to earn a living from ranching, farming, and harvesting.

So in my introduction to you, let me say that we will explore the past, both inside and outside the park boundaries, in an attempt to fill the void between the calm quiet of our natural setting, and faded past of the people, buildings, lives, roads, and events.

While we have initially defined a broad area (Spring Branch to Bulverde to Bergheim to Kendalia), we would like to explore more detail in our immediate area.

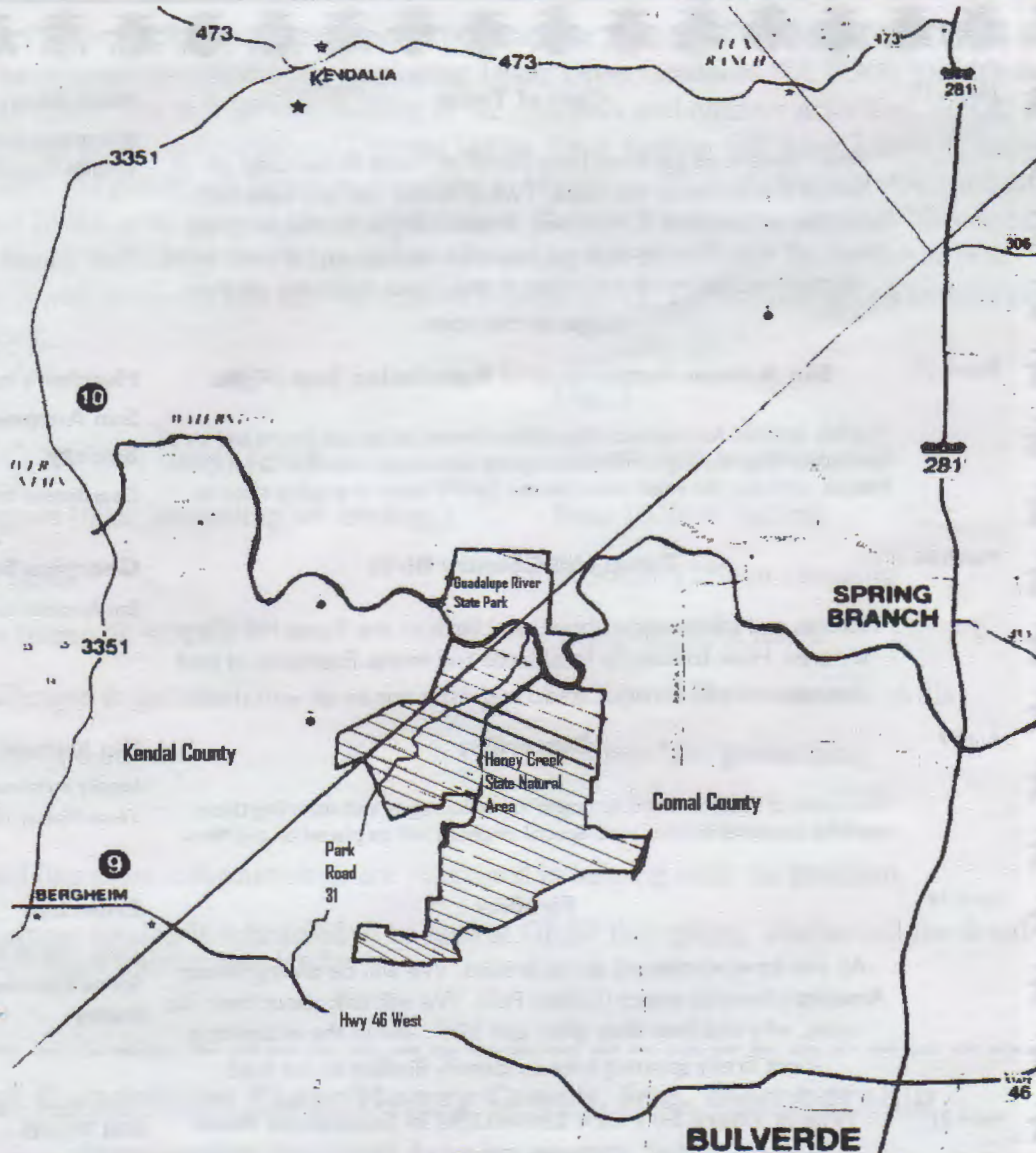
I originally signed on to simply serve as a volunteer to help with the recording of the first-hand to third-hand stories from the descendents of local pioneers. That remains my focus. In the back of my mind is a nagging fear that the stories, words, tall tales (we will call it lore) are scattered, lost and forever silenced. Secondly, the same concerns exist regarding the written history....that the letters, documents, and pictures are being tossed from attics, falling apart and fading fast.

I need your help. Besides the obvious, you can help by talking to a neighbor and explaining our needs. Many times the smallest things can be of interest and help: an introduction to a friend, an idea for a source. Of course obtaining letters written in the settlers own words (even German) translated or not, would be a treasure. We are looking for connections and interrelations, as nothing happens in a vacuum. Sometimes, a story can evolve, from more recent events. For example, at the "Friends" Christmas party, I was able to sit with Hilmar and Barbara Wehe. It was an enjoyable evening and many interesting stories were told. One that never had been recorded before was Hilmar's story about his father's membership in the Anhalt Farmer's Verein. One of the benefits to membership was a \$500 death benefit, a lot of money in the early days. The tradition held that when a member passed away, each member of the Verein would be notified.



Upon that notification, each living member would mail in \$1. Hilmar's father, Alfred, was convinced that his family would be way ahead of the game, netting much more from the \$500 benefit, than the total of individual dollars he would mail in. While he was right, it was close. After Mr. Wehe passed away, while going through his paperwork, Barbara unearthed 464 notifications. The story touched me: a tradition, coupled in a unique way to a very real member of our community.

*There are more stories to be told!*



## “Wild Fest” of San Antonio

by Judit Green

### Volunteers Needed for WildFest San Antonio

San Antonio's 1<sup>st</sup> annual Bird & Nature Festival will be held on May 4-6, 2007 offering the community and nationwide visitors an opportunity to experience local natural and historical sites and to learn more about these exciting environments through lectures, workshops, and fieldtrips that will offer something for everyone.

In order to make WildFest a success, we will need volunteers. Volunteers will be needed to register participants and vendors, serve as room monitors for conference speakers, serve as guides on field trips, assist with field activities, in addition to other necessities required to put on this first time festival. If you are interested in assisting us with this event, please contact Judit Green with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. at 210-688-6444 or at [Judit.Green@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:Judit.Green@tpwd.state.tx.us)

The event will be headquartered at the Norris Center at Crossroads (near IH 10 and Loop 410). For more information about the festival please log onto [www.wildfestsanantonio.com](http://www.wildfestsanantonio.com).



March 19

**Cats of Texas**

Seven species of cat have been found in Texas historically, six of which are native to the state. Two of these cats are now extirpated, and another 2 have very limited ranges. In this program, Mark will introduce us to these beautiful animals, and discuss some of their habitat needs and what, if any, limits there are on their ranges in this state.

**Mark Klym**

Information Specialist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

March 24

**San Antonio Astronomical Association Star Night**

The San Antonio Astronomical Association invites you to see Saturn and it's spectacular rings through professional grade telescopes. View the Great Orion Nebula, a nursery for infant stars. See the Earth's moon in amazing close-up

**Members of the San Antonio Astronomical Society,**

Coordinated by Don Baker

March 31

**Texas Hill Country Birds**

Pictures and information about local birds in the Texas Hill Country area. How to identify local birds and more. Examples of bird houses and info on what to do and what not to do with them.

**Georgina Schwartz**

San Antonio Audubon Society

April 7

**Butterflies**

Discussion of butterflies and strategies for encouraging and attracting these beautiful creatures to your yard. Special emphasis will be placed on the Mon-

**Kip Kiphart**

Locally acclaimed Monarch Expert and Texas Master Naturalist

April 14

**Fireflies**

All you have wondered about fireflies. We will be talking about America's favorite insect (Gallop Poll). We will talk about their life cycle, why and how they glow and blink, and in the end take a short firefly spotting hike to identify fireflies in the field

**Ernie Lee**

Texas Master Naturalist  
Special Knowledge of and interest in fireflies

April 21

**Why is There So Much Limestone in Guadalupe River State Park**

What is limestone and why is it so abundant in this area? To answer this question we'll have to consider the last 120 years of geologic history of this part of the Edwards Plateau.

**Bill Ward**

Emeritus Professor of Geology, University of New Orleans, now retired to the Hill Country, columnist for the Boerne Star

April 28

**Texas Bats**

Special focus on behaviors and characteristics of Mexican free tailed bats. Brief observations on the other kinds of bats found in Texas and elsewhere. Bats and rabies. Bat superstitions. Ecological and economic contributions of local bats.

**Rollo Newsom**

Texas Master Naturalist, Member of Bat Conservation International, interpretive volunteer at the Old Tunnel

Please call the park for additional programs.

If you have interesting information/artifacts to share with park visitors please call Nancy Gray to volunteer!



Seguin Outdoor Learning Center (SOLC) has developed a program for young ladies using Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant Funds. The program is called Girls Exploring Texas Great Outdoors (GETGO), and it's designed to give young girls (10-13 yrs old) an introduction to the outdoors and outdoor activities. SOLC will have 10 trips this spring, with each trip limited to 12 young ladies. Each session will have 2 days of activities. The first day of each session the group will begin by traveling to Honey Creek State Natural Area and enjoy a nature experience to one of the great natural places of the state. They will learn about human history of the area, geology, flora and fauna, hydrology, and many other interesting tidbits of what makes nature AW-SOME. The first session is March 10-11, and the last session is June 16-17. The following is a tentative itinerary for the 2 day sessions:

**Day 1**

Meet @ 8:30am @ SOLC; travel to Honey Creek  
 10am-2pm HCSNA program (hike, journaling/art, birding,)  
 2pm-3pm travel back to SOLC  
 3pm-6pm camping skills (camp @ SOLC)  
 6pm-8pm teamwork challenges & games  
 8pm-10pm campfire, relax @ campsite

**Day 2**

730am-9am camping skills  
 9am-1020am fishing  
 1030am-1150am canoeing  
 12pm-1230pm lunch  
 1230pm-130pm compass skills  
 130pm-3pm geocaching

Call the park if you would like more information or are interested in helping with the program.

An Interpretive Guide training session is scheduled to be held at GRSP this spring. Please call for detail if you are interested in becoming a trained hike leader.

**Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. Membership**

**(Membership Renewal date is January 1st)**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Type:**     New Member     Renewal     Change of Address

**Level of Membership:**     \$5 Education or Youth Organization     \$50 Sustaining Member  
     \$5 Student (under 18)     \$100 Contributing Member  
     \$10 Individual (over 18)     \$500 Corporate Partner  
     \$15 Family     \$1000 Life Membership

**I would like to help the Friends by volunteering for:**

Interpretive hikes     Outdoor Ed. Programs     Trail Maintenance  
 Historical Drama     Evening Programs     South Island Beautification  
 Trail Ride Event     Fundraising     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Send checks payable to "Friends of GR/HC, Inc. Mail to: 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, TX 78070  
 Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible.



**Friends of Guadalupe River  
and Honey Creek, Inc.**

3350 Park Road 31  
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

We're on the web!  
[www.honeycreekfriends.com](http://www.honeycreekfriends.com)

*The Friends of Guadalupe River and  
Honey Creek, Inc. is a non-profit  
organization working with Guadalupe  
River State Park and Honey Creek  
State Natural Area.*

*The "Friends" meet monthly at the  
Park. Please join us on the second  
Thursday at 7:00 pm.  
And bring a friend!*