



# Friends of Honeycreek



## My Observations are All Wet

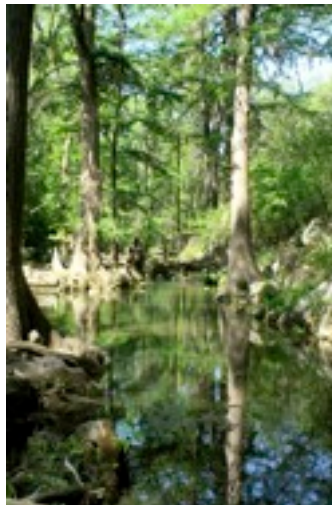
by *President Wilt Shaw*

Ah rain! I never complain about rain, although I came close to grumbles with the events in July. There was quite a bit of flooding, inundated fields, driving mishaps, leaky roof discoveries and so on. I usually try to look at the brighter aspects, especially when, to name a few, we now can observe flowing springs and creeks, sated aquifers, cooler temperatures and a plethora of new plant growth.

The entire State of Texas is now covered with grasses and forbs that these jaundiced eyes can't remember seeing before in such abundance and have only imagined while reading about our historic Texas tall grass prairies.

Not only is there a profusion of the Big Four, Indian grass, switchgrass, little blue stem Even the occasional big blue stem, but perceptibly they are taller and healthier. Even our state grass, side oats grama is making a wonderful, widespread appearance. There is decidedly an abundance of seeds and promise for the future of our prairies. As you drive our highways and country roads, take a quick look around and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Of course if you visit a State Park you'll be able to view these wonders at your leisure, especially at our wonderful park and particularly if you're here on any given Saturday morning, 9 AM, at Honey Creek State Natural Area for a guided hike. Not only will you see the grasses but also experience the wondrous



beauty of the woodlands and the renowned Honey Creek. Please join us, and later in the evening on Saturdays experience one of our out-

standing educational programs at the Park Amphitheater.

Fall marks the beginning of the Friends "New Year" as we kick off events such as Halloween at the Park, the Third Grade Outdoor Learning Program, and a Wildfest nature hike to name a few. Please join us when you can.

## See you at the park!



**Youth Group Walks:**

This Summer I had the pleasure of conducting two special walks this summer. One walk with a past friend, Bulverde United Methodist Summer Youth Camp, and the other a new friend, Roots and Shoots of New Braunfels. Roots and Shoots is an all age's organization that supports improving their environment in the community. Some of the projects they have been involved with include raising awareness of plastic bag consumption, encouraging the use of reusable bags from old clothing.

They coordinated the first Earth Day Celebration in New Braunfels, litter clean-up, and volunteering at local animal shelters. They also have agreed to help with projects at our park. 14 members arrived June 10th for their first

The second group walk took place one month later on July 10th. This is the third year Bulverde United Methodist Church has enjoyed the parks for their summer youth camp. Some of the participants spend the three days camping and some make it a day camp experience.

I am so pleased that our community is making use of the park. Over 40 participants under the direction of Cynthia Deaton, the youth pastor, enjoyed starting off their 3-day experience with a walk to Honey Creek. This was just one of many activities that were planned for their outdoor

ever walk to Honey Creek. The group had many questions about the Rust House and along the trail. The park intern, Daniel Maldonado and I led the walk. After a successful walk the group enjoyed the parks day use area for lunch and leisure.



experience. They really enjoyed all that nature showed them that day.

I am already looking forward to next year this group and others returning for more learning and fun in our park. If your group would like a Honey Creek Walk contact the park office and one will be arranged for you.

*by Tom Anderson*





### Park Superintendent's Perch

Our fiscal year, the time period we in State government use to measure most things, ended August 31st so this is a good time to look back – and look ahead. Looking back, this past year has been an extremely challenging time. It started with draught conditions in the fall of 2006. Low river flows kept guests away throughout the fall. This was followed by a severe ice storm in January. Due to this one storm, the rest of the winter, and even through early spring, our park maintenance team spent most of their time cutting down broken hazard limbs and trees and removing the fallen debris from camp and picnic sites. All other work planned for that time of year when we traditionally repair broken facilities in preparation for the “busy season” was put on hold.

No sooner had we put away our chain saws that it was time to break out our hip-waders. Spring break was ushered in and washed away with 6.75 inches of rain on March 11th. The river rose from a draught level of 61 cubic feet per second (CFS) to over 30,000 CFS and washed away picnic tables, trash

cans, and spring picnic dreams. April continued to be unseasonably cold and rainy. Easter weekend, traditionally one of the busiest weekends of the year for us, was completely rained out.

May brought more of the same, with Memorial Weekend being rained and flooded out. One good weather weekend in early June brought out housebound people in droves to the park and offered the promise of a great



summer for outdoor recreation along the Guadalupe River due to unseasonably good flow levels. The remainder of the month however was rainy and, though we did not have any flooding, the river remained swift and river activities were restricted several times during the month due to the unseasonably high and dangerous flow rates.

Heavy rains, creating hazardous river conditions with the constant threat of flash floods, kept guests away throughout

the month of July, including through the July 4th weekend. In the beginning of August the rains let up, the river settled down, and it appeared that outdoor and river enthusiasts might have part of their summer salvaged. These hopes were dashed however when in mid-August heavy rains sent the river out of its banks to levels not seen since the flooding of 2002. The park’s lower day use area was severely damaged, with many picnic tables washed away or destroyed and most barbecue grills uprooted.

In the midst of all this, we at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area were struggling, along with all other Texas State Parks, through the results of years of under-funding and reductions in paid staffing. Normally creating a very challenging environment regarding the relatively routine aspects of our security and maintenance programs, these funding woes exacerbated our attempts to recover quickly from this year’s ice storms and flooding.

Many Texans, including our Friends, worked hard to make elected representatives aware of the plight of the natural and historical heritage left in the care of the state parks system. Now, at the end of a



year of natural and political turmoil, comes sunshine and hope. This past legislative session yielded some very significant gains for Texas' State Parks System. Here at Guadalupe River & Honey Creek, we gained two new and much needed positions. One position will assume the roles of Park Resource Specialist, Interpreter, and Volunteer Coordinator. This position will provide full time attention to help insure that the park's natural and historical features are managed properly and explained to guests and constituents in a way that promotes awareness, understanding, stewardship, and constituency for these special features we are entrusted with.

As Volunteer Coordinator, this person will be able to devote increased time to recruiting, retaining, and working with our highly valued volunteer work force. We interviewed for this position on August 30th and hope to have the person physically on board by October 1. Our second new position is that of Park Maintenance Ranger – Assistant to the park's Lead Park Ranger. Having this position will en-

able us to work on and manage the park's increasingly complex maintenance program better than we have in recent years. We will interview for this position on September 13th and hope to have the person physically on board on or around October 1.

We expect to interview for our other vacant position, Park Peace Officer, around September 20th and should have that person physically on



board by November 1. Besides positions, there is very good news to report on the budget front. For perhaps the first time in my 25+ year career, Texas State Parks were given a budget based on actual needs rather than on some arbitrary and woefully inadequate numbers allocated to the state parks system and distributed as equitably as possible to the individual parks.

Our fiscal year 2008 operating budget (covers park opera-

tions and maintenance - not including salaries) is up from \$163,000 to \$217,600, a 33% increase and precisely what I requested based on need. Additionally, we received \$37,000 for three prioritized repair projects – Bauer Unit development; Water System improvement; and Foundation and associated repairs to the South Honey Creek Residence. Please take a moment to thank your elected state representatives for showing support for our Texas State Parks System.

Hopefully the sun will shine on us this year and many folks will get to come out to Guadalupe River and Honey Creek and enjoy their parks! We'll work hard to provide the highest levels of customer service we can while managing our time and funding effectively and efficiently.

**Happy New Year Friends!**

*Mark Abolafia-Rosenzweig,*  
Park Superintendent GRSP and  
HCSNA



**Trails to the Past : A Mound of Opportunity**



You are looking at an old snapshot. As you ponder the mound in the picture, I'll tell you that it represents an earlier era: a few generations ago, it was a way of life.... a way to make a livelihood. This era was opened up to me a few months ago, when I met with two ladies, outside the Spring Branch Store. Gabriela Martinez and her daughter, Jesusita "Susie" Martinez Duron, have unique ties to the lands of Guadalupe River State Park, Honey Creek, and Spring Branch. This is because Jesus Villarreal Martinez (their respective father-in-law and grandfather), migrated to the springs of Honey Creek, after leaving Mexico in 1915.

Mr. Martinez came with the same dream as all that had preceded him to the area: to make a better life for himself. Yet, Jesus lived that dream

differently than many families profiled in this newsletter.

Why is that you ask? As Jesus did not have the money to buy any land, he came with his siblings and friends to work on land in which he had no ownership. He was a hired hand, roving from ranch to ranch.

He and his brothers and sister, and their extended families, worked as carpenters and ranch hands. They cut cedar trees to make fences and sign posts, and the surplus had to be freighted. They maintained the fences and took care of the ranchers' livestock. As Jesusita says, **"From birthing to butchering and processing the meat."**

Jesus and his family were totally dependent on his rancher/farmer employers to either provide a roof over their head, or as was the case

many times, simply allow them "to camp" on the land, often just in tents. Mrs. Martinez and Mrs. Duron related that from their families' actual experience, the rancher-provided structure could mean, **"Living in a barn, a goat house, even a hen or smoke house"**.

One of the ranches Mr. Martinez lived and worked on was the Rust's. That's right, the land of the man whose home the trail guides and visitors meet at each week for the Saturday morning tours of Honey Creek.

Mr. Martinez's name officially graces an even more recognizable area landmark as he married his sweetheart, Benita Guerra at St. Joseph's of Honey Creek. Conducting the ceremony on that November

27, 1916 date, a name forever associated with the church, Father Virgilius Draessel.

After working for the Rust family, for a few years, around 1923, the Martinez family (3 children were born on the Rust property) made a move to Ken-

tucky to work in a coal mine. It proved to be brief as he was





soon back, working on ranches in Spring Branch area. Their fifth child, Jesus Junior, (Jesusita's father & Gabriela's husband whom she married in 1949) had been born in Kentucky.

After their return, the family lived on a ranch long associated with the Spring Branch area - the Dietrich Knibbe ranch, of which the family would have a long association.

***“Because there were many Mexican workers in Spring Branch, under the auspices of the St. Joseph Catholic Church at Honey Creek, a smaller church was built on land donated by the Neugebauer family in the mid-1920's and operated until about 1964..... the Mexican and Anglo-residents attended services together like; Avila, Lopez, Martinez, Gonzales, Hildebrand and Neugebauer families.”*** With this description by local Spring Branch historian, Brenda Anderson Lindemann, the Martinez family is again tied to another relic of the region's heritage, that was just “up the road” from the Knibbe Ranch: the church the locals called the “the Mexican Church”, the Maria Guadalupe Catholic Church. This church building, which no longer exists on its original site, has not been forgotten by the family. Gabriela Martinez remembers

that the priest only came once a month. Jesusita relates, ***“Some of our relatives received their sacraments at this church.”***

So we now know that Mr. Jesus Martinez and his family have crossed the paths and thresholds of familiar families and place names within and around Guadalupe River Park land. But Mr. Martinez and his brothers did something that is even more fascinating to me than where they lived, who they worked for or where they worshipped. While I enjoy these connections, it's what they did that intrigues me. Remember that picture that looks like a mound of dirt? Located on the Knibbe Ranch, it is a remnant of a past world: a charcoal burner's kiln. It was Martinez's charcoal kiln. For you see, on the 1930 Comal County census, Jesus and his brothers, and his brother-in-law, list their occupation as “Charcoal”. They practiced the long forgotten industry of charcoal burners, using archaic skills unique to the Guadalupe River Valley: the alchemy of converting junipers to charcoal via a dirt mound and then again to money.

In 1950, Fritz Toepperwein set out to explore the world of “charcoal,” in his Charcoal and Charcoal Burners. He distilled information for his book by interviewing the few

remaining members of this exclusive group, who lived in an area he calls Charcoal City with its loosely defined boundaries of ***“They lived on both the east and west bank of the Guadalupe.....the extent of...Sisterdale on the north and to about New Braunfels on the south.”*** He describes the long lost skill, that provided income for rancher, sharecropper, or hired hand – whether a full time or part time avocation. Converting cedar lumber to charcoal was not as simple as throwing dirt over wood and setting it on fire. To do it right required skill and stamina, for it was a messy, hot, activity which was typically tended to and managed night and day for three days straight. ***“They all worked on it, from the youngest to the oldest to keep the fires burning day and night. When the charcoal was ready, it was bagged and loaded for delivery”***, relates Jesusita. The charcoal was sold to a ready market in San Antonio. In the earliest days, charcoal conversion seemed to be exclusively practiced by the ranchers and then a symbiotic arrangement evolved between rancher/farmer and outsiders: ***“When the first “drifters” came into the Guadalupe Valley, they saw the German farmers burning the charcoal. These people, call them whatever we like, came looking for work.***



**They had no money with which to buy property, not even enough money to buy tools. The German farmer put these newcomers to work clearing the cedar off the land. In turn the farmer had a clean strip of land for another small field, and newcomer had cedar wood.”** Mr. Toepperwein continues in his 1950 book: **“In the immediate surroundings of Charcoal City, there were always a number of families of Latin Americans. They entered the charcoal burning business rather late. It was well after the turn of the twentieth century.....have remained as charcoal burners to this day.....no Latin Americans today that devote their entire time to charcoal burning...may burn a kiln or two between goat and sheep shearing time. Thanks to the Mexicans, we can still get good charcoal and at a reasonable price.”**

Jesus and Benita’s Martinez’s last child (12th) was born in 1938 and they moved to a San Antonio home in 1947. Yet as Jesusita has written, they still kept a place in their hearts for the hill country, **“While living in San Antonio, they still spent a lot of**

**time on the Knibbe Ranch. They rented one of the little houses out there and went out there to get away from city life, and just relax. They held their 50th wedding anniversary celebration out on the ranch, so they could accommodate all the family. Their children, nieces and nephews and grandchildren and the great-grand children spent time with them out under the big shade trees, exploring and discovering just as Jesus and Benita’s own children had done so many years ago.”** Folks, I couldn’t have created a better ending.

**Editors Note:** If you or someone you know has stories or documents that help tell the story of Honey creek and the surrounding area, please contact Bryden Moon about sharing the information with the Friends of GRSP and preserving our vanishing history!



There are more stories to be told!

***Mrs. Jesusita Martinez Duron of San Antonio, Texas provided a portion of the resource documents and all the photos.***

by *Bryden Moon*



**Legislative Update - by State Representative Nathan Macias**



The Guadalupe River State Park is a jewel in our own backyard. I heard from many of you who want to keep this jewel sparkling for years to come. I worked with my colleagues to ensure that much needed funding would go to the parks. While Texas has some of the most beautiful

landscapes and wildlife in the country, our state parks and historic sites have languished in recent years due to under-funding. The state's sporting goods sales tax has long been tied to parks funding – so that those who use our parks and enjoy our natural resources pay to protect them. However, in the past, those funds have been diverted to other purposes. HB 12 recognizes the need to review the sporting goods tax and provides a study to do so; however, immediate action was also taken to make improvements.

During the 80th session, the legislature made increased appropriations to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to boost parks funding. The good news includes record funding over the next biennium for state and local parks:

-Approximately \$182 million in additional funding allocated to parks in the 2008-2009 biennium.

-94% of the sporting goods tax is now dedicated to Texas parks, with the remaining 6% going to historic sites!

-\$25.6 million to operate state parks, including 229 additional employees.

-\$8 million for state park minor repairs.

-\$9.7 million for state park capital equipment, such as vehicles and computers.

-\$3 million in additional support for state parks, including new architects and estimators in TPWD's Infrastructure Division to fulfill recommendations of the recent SAO state park audit.

-\$44 million for major repairs to TPWD sites. This bond package includes the necessary appropriation funding to support bond debt service for FY08-09. Of the total, \$17 million is Proposition 8 bond funding approved by Texas voters in 2001, and \$27 million is a new bond issue that must first be approved by voters this coming November.

-\$13.9 million for land acquisition. This includes \$9.6 million from the sale of the undeveloped Eagle Mountain Lake State Park property near Fort Worth. It also includes \$4.3 million for acquisition of properties adjacent to existing state parks.

-\$36.3 million for local park grants to cities and counties. This restores full funding for local park grants to cities and counties to \$15.5 million per year, plus the appropriations bill allocated an additional \$16.7 million for specific park projects.

As you can see, the legislature heard your voices loud and clear. As a co-author of HB 12, I am very supportive of our need to keep our parks as treasures for the future. Without vibrant state parks, it will be very difficult for Texans to maintain our sense of rural tradition that has made our state so great.





Let me know if there is anything I can do for you, and please know it is my honor to serve you in the Texas House of Representatives.

Have a fabulous day at the park!

**Saturday Evening Programs**  
All Programs Begin at 8:00 pm

by Nancy Gray

**Oct 6**

**Water Quality and Pollution Issues:** Water quality and pollution issues followed by an introduction of Texas Watch water monitoring program. What is water pollution? Where does pollution come from and how does it get into the water? What can we as community members do to prevent pollution in our daily lives? What is the role of Texas Watch in assessing water pollution.

**Speaker: Heidi Moltz.** Volunteer Coordinator, Texas Watch River Systems Institute. Doctoral Student Aquatic Resources - Dept of Biology Texas State University -

**Oct 13**

**San Antonio Astronomical Association Star, Night,**

**8:30 PM:** 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 detail

**Speaker: Don Baker,** leading and Members of the San Antonio Astronomical Society.

**Oct 20**

**San Antonio Astronomical Association Star, Night,**

**8:30 PM:** 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 detail Speaker: Don Baker, leading and Members of the San Antonio Astronomical Society.

**Oct 28**

**Halloween in the park.**

**Interpretive Guide Training** - Tom Anderson & Wilt Shaw

Trail Guides for Honey Creek SNA are **GREATLY NEEDED!** Please consider attending the next training session.



**When:** November 10 8:30am to 4:30pm

**Where:** Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek SNA

**Training will include:**

An Introduction To Interpretation

History of Interpretation

How to Interpret Honey Creek State Natural Area

An Interpretative Walk



State Parks' role in Interpretative Walk Program  
Friends of GRSP/HCSNA role in providing walks

**Participants will receive:**

Training to become an Interpretative Guide for HCSNA  
Handouts for Training Session  
Membership to Friends of GRSP/HCSNA, Inc.  
Interpretative Guide Patch once training is complete  
Snacks and drinks. Participants should bring a lunch.

***\*\*All Participants are expected to become Saturday Morning Honey Creek Hike Guides\*\****

**To register by email:**

Please contact Tom Anderson at [tomander@texas.net](mailto:tomander@texas.net) or call 210-241-1916

**To register by mail:**

Send check to Friends of GRSP/HCSNA, 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, Texas 78070

***Enrollment is limited to the first 30 participants, please register soon!***

**New members are always welcomed**

**to help us preserve our heritage and improve our  
park programs.**

**Please fill out the membership form below and send it in  
today!**



### 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.***