



## Summer 2015 NEWSLETTER

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

A non-profit organization

### PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by JW Pieper

### Board of Directors

#### The Park is Green Again

Last fall our weather prognosticators were telling us that there was a chance of an El Nino winter and spring, providing additional chances of a wet winter and early spring in order to produce a healthy crop of wildflowers. Their forecasts were accurate, and the rains came. As a result, there is a greater flow in the Guadalupe River, the wildflower crop in March and April was above average, and summer should be greener this year than in recent years. The prescribed burn in the Park was very timely, and nature has begun to heal herself. Grasses and forbs are bursting forth from the burned areas.

Speaking of the prescribed burn, please observe as you enter the park that the heavy fuel load from the downed ash juniper trees that were eliminated caused many of the live oak and cedar elms to be singed. It will be interesting to watch them through the summer and fall to see how many spring back to life, and to see how many of those trees we have lost. Hopefully Mother Nature will again populate the wooded areas with new trees in such numbers that the deer will leave some to fill in the skyline where others have been lost. Cedar Elm trees, when small, are a favorite menu item for white-tailed deer.

With the increased flow of the river through the Park there should be a natural increase in the number of canoes, kayakers, and tubers enjoying the water sports this year. Fishing in the Park should also improve with higher water levels, and Craig Hensley will be scheduling fishing classes for our visitors. Watch the kiosks and check at the headquarters for Craig's class schedule for adults and kids, and take advantage of these free introductions to nature in the Park.

The Honey Creek Saturday Hikes, which begin at 9 AM every Saturday, have been very popular this past Spring. A group of camping families from Houston spent a weekend in the Park, and they stated to their Honey Creek guide that the Saturday Hike was their primary reason for coming. Many of these weekend campers are very knowledgeable about nature and the outdoors, and are interested in seeing and learning more. Come out and enjoy this Saturday hike, and be sure to bring your camera. Honey Creek is beautiful this time of year!

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## Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

## One Spring Branch Pioneering Homestead Time Travel along Two Unique Trails

Spring Branch's Knibbe Ranch was the site of our 2015 Homesteader Homecoming. Hosts Chuck & Sharon Knibbe's homestead ranch, coupled with our recently generous rainfall, created the picture perfect setting for our 9th Homesteader Homecoming excursion, where we sat within a stone's throw of Spring Branch Creek.



Although created 100 years apart, both H. G. Wells' 1895 *The Time Machine* and the American comic science fiction film, *Back to the Future*, released in 1985, contained the common element of time travel. And at this year's gathering, we once again fired up our time machine and dialed back the clock, only on this late April afternoon outing, without leaving the Knibbe Ranch, we were able to utilize our time machine twice. The first setting took us on a predictable trail, tracking the early settlement of the Hill Country. So as our guests and members settled in, we cranked up our time machine and set the dial for 1852.

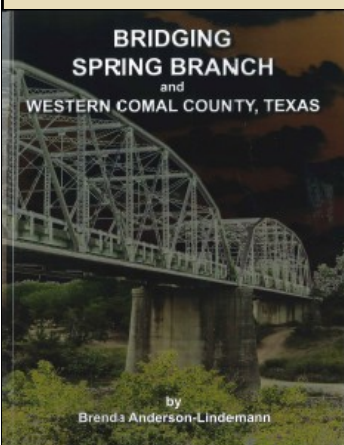


1852 was the year that Hans Heinrich Dietrich Knibbe put down roots, becoming the first settler in what would evolve into the Spring Branch community. The Hans Dietrich Knibbe family was joined between 1854 and 1856 by five additional families. These six farms were equally divided along opposite banks of Spring Creek, which flowed for 1.5 miles into the Guadalupe River. Initially without a community name, this status changed with the acceptance of a postal application: the Spring Branch Post Office was established on July 1, 1858. The new name of Spring Branch was totally adopted - the stream's name changed from "Spring" to "Spring Branch."



At the Knibbe Ranch we were treated to the introduction of regional historian and author Brenda Anderson-Lindemann's much anticipated and well researched book, *Bridging Spring Branch and Western Comal County, Texas*; her new publication is an enhanced, expanded and refined reprise of her 1998 *Spring Branch and Western Comal County*.

Brenda shared her passion for Spring Branch history and reminded everyone that at Knibbe's homestead, we were "sited" in the real Spring Branch.



## Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

Regarding the “1852” setting on our time machine, Knibbe’s entry in 1852 is pretty early for settlement in our region of the Hill Country...in eastern Kendall County & western Comal County, the local competition is thin. Bulverde uses the arrival of Anton August Pieper in 1851. Land documents for Curry’s Creek region’s Samuel Boyd Patton say that he had completed his three-year requirements on 2/13/54, so that would make his arrival in early 1851. While locally there may have been others, only the pioneering efforts of Pieper in Bulverde and Patton in Curry’s Creek evolved into defined communities that predated Spring Branch’s Knibbe.

Yet as impressive as German immigrant Knibbe’s mid-19<sup>th</sup> century entry date was, when host Chuck Knibbe led us a short distance to an open field, we entered our second journey of time travel; our time machine dial registered “off the charts.” This second pathway was ancient and indiscernible, covered up by time and drifting terrain...it carried us into prehistoric



Texas. As we stood in a vacant field and stared at the base of a cliff, Chuck related that it all started in 2001 with an unexpected “knock on his door”. Archeologists suggested that this area on his property might be the ideal location of an early Native-American cultural site and asked permission to verify their assumptions. Permission granted, the scientists delved five feet down and shifted the dirt from a 20 meter by 30 meter area. The archeologists’ hunches proved to be correct. Their efforts during this dig unearthed a significant deposit of artifacts, primarily spear points, with estimated dates that ranged from 500 to 6000 BC.

Now if setting the needle back almost 8000 years did not get our attention, Chuck pointed to the cliff and added that as the researchers were winding down, they dug a trench along the base of the cliff and found evidence of buffalo bones. The bones, coupled with associated “early American” tools, and burn dumps or middens, led the archeologists to conclude that at one time the primitive locals drove buffalo over the ridge...Chuck’s Great, Great, Grandfather’s land contained a rare Buffalo Jump.



A big “thank you” to our Friends members and family who pitched in before, during and after this year’s event: Bill Beach, Joan Nitschke, Dave & Judy Kibler, Kay Moon, J. W. Pieper, Wilt Shaw, as well as Scott Taylor, Joel Parker, and Craig Hensley of Guadalupe River State Park. And a big thanks to our hosts, Chuck and Sharon Knibbe for sustaining the legacy of Spring Branch pioneer, Hans Knibbe, and to author Brenda Anderson-Lindemann. And finally thank you to all who provided treats.

**Photo credits - special thanks to Wilt Shaw.**

**There are more stories to be told!**



**Guadalupe River at the Park**

by Ted Stevens (Park Police Officer)

On Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> around 4:30pm due to the rising level of the river and the large amount of rain in the forecast, Rangers began removing picnic tables and trashcans from the low lying areas of day use in anticipation of the river reaching levels that would compromise this area. As soon as the work concluded around 6:00pm a tornado warning went into effect for the area. Campers were notified by Park Police to take shelter in the campground bathrooms. After the tornado warning ceased, as a precaution, campers in the Wagon Ford Camping Area were asked to evacuate with their belongings and move to Cedar Sage Camping Loop due the rising river levels. Important items were



relocated from the Discovery Center to other park buildings on higher ground. Because it was Memorial Day weekend, many of our staff were working later shifts to accommodate the increased visitation, however it continued to rain through the evening and into the night making the roads impassable for some Park Rangers to return home. Scott Taylor, Park Superintendent, and Joel Parker, Assistant Superintendent, opened their park residences so the three rangers had somewhere high and dry to sleep that night. The next morning at 9am Sunday, May



24<sup>th</sup> the river had risen over 30 feet and was lap-



ping at the second step at the top of the day use pipe railing staircase. At this point in time, the Comfort river gauge read 69,000cfs and the Spring Branch gauge read 72,000cfs. In preparation of the river rising higher from all the rain the Guadalupe River watershed had received, the picnic tables and trash cans were relocated from the upper day use area to higher ground and the vending machines were relocated from the day use bathroom. At 8am on Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup> park staff was able to access lower day use again to assess the damage. Most, if not all the grills will need to be replaced, large amounts

of debris will need to be removed and transported out of the area and trees that were severely damaged from the flood waters will need to be removed before the day use area can be reopened to the public. The park is currently closed to camping and day use for the foreseeable future. The rainwater caused damage to our parks waste water system that needs to be rectified and park staff is currently assessing/repairing this issue and many others throughout the park as quickly as possible so that we can reopen to the public in a timely fashion. Park staff and park hosts did a great job of protecting our guests and minimizing damage to park property.

-Ted Stevens (Park Police Officer)







**SERVICE PROJECT AT THE PARK**

by Dave Kibler

**11 APRIL 2015**

On Saturday, 11 April, a group of fifty-three enthusiastic volunteers from Boy Scout Troop 285, sponsored by Coker Methodist Church in San Antonio, returned to the park for the fifteenth time over the past nine years to improve the condition and appearance of the park. This time the target area was a large field near the Doepenschmidt House in the Honey Creek State Natural Area, which was covered with hundreds of new growth Ashe Juniper trees. Work proceeded for three hours in the pleasant April temperatures



with volunteers again displaying their spirit of cheerful service in performing these needed tasks to clear the field. After

completing the work, all hands were treated to a hot lunch of sausage and all the trimmings prepared by several of the Scout parents. Food was donated by the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area and by a Scout family. The boys and adults of Troop 285 always look forward to this semi-annual service project as a way to demonstrate their Scout Spirit.





## He Speaks To Owls

by Robert Landry

My name is Robert. In my role as a Customer Service Representative at Guadalupe River State Park, it's likely that when you telephone the park or pull up to the entrance station, I'm the guy you'll talk to first. Our park management understands that the more knowledgeable I am with the unique programs and features that our park offers, the better I'll be able to serve our customers. In that spirit, I was encouraged to participate in two ranger-led hikes and write about my experiences.

In the winter months our park interpreter, Craig Hensley, aims to conduct both the "Who Goes There" hike and the "Prowlin' For Owls" hike about once a month. Here is the flyer for the hikes I joined.

I am personally a great lover of the outdoors and someone who likes to think that he has *some* general knowledge of the wildlife in our region. The "Who Goes There" hike was an eye opening experience for me. The hike began with track and scat identification. Our trail was soft and moist

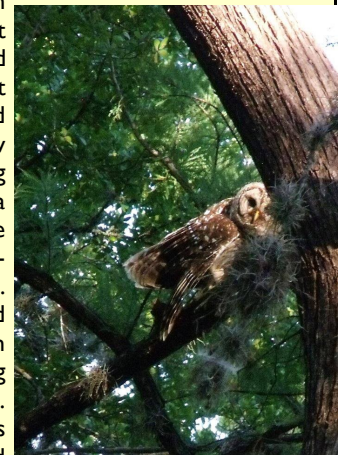
on account of the much needed recent rainfall, offering signs of all the usual suspects as it cut its way through the characteristic craggy Texas Hill Country landscape of limestone rock, live oak, and cedar trees. The trail led us from the Discovery Center to a flat open stretch that overlooks the Guadalupe River. Craig was keen to point out signs of deer, raccoon, armadillo, opossum, turkey, and several areas that had been torn up by feral hogs. At one point along the hike we were viewing some sparrows and cardinals when Craig began using a birding technique called pishing. Pishing is a sound a person makes to draw birds closer in. I was astonished to observe the birds we were viewing being joined by other species of birds flying in to seemingly investigate the commotion. Craig explained that pishing imitates a general distress signal amongst birds and can often have this effect. I had never before witnessed a pishing demonstration and it left me a bit stunned as we continued along the trail, binoculars around our necks, toward the overlook. We hiked on for a short distance and then seated ourselves on the shelf-like cliff top of the overlook and enjoyed about 45 minutes of solid bird watching. The highlight came when just minutes after seeing a Belted Kingfisher dive beak first into the river after its prey, we spotted the smaller and more rarely seen Green Kingfisher across the river about two hundred yards from where we sat. Craig's excitement over seeing the two Kingfishers was contagious. We were all smiles and talked enthusiastically for a few minutes about the birding experience we just had before hiking back to the Discovery Center. I headed back up to headquarters to finish my day looking forward to "Prowlin' For Owls" with Craig later on that evening.



Craig Hensley and fellow birder photo Robert Landry

One of the most interesting questions I've been asked so far while working at headquarters was from a middle aged man coming into the park with his family. I was handing this man a park map when he looked right at me and asked, "will the *wild* man be here tonight?" Realizing that this was in fact a serious question, I responded by asking him who he was referring to. He then clarified himself by identifying his subject as, "the man who speaks to owls."

Craig Hensley began the owl hike with a twenty minute power point presentation equipping our group of twenty or so people with some facts about owls. One fact I learned during the presentation, which made me feel a little silly for not knowing, is that an owl can rotate its head as much as 270 degrees. An owl must be able to do this because, unlike most birds, its eyes are fixed into its sockets; an owl's anatomy requires it to move its entire head to change views. I also learned that there are seventeen documented species of owls in Texas and nine confirmed resident birds. The three species of owls most likely heard or seen at Guadalupe River State Park are the Eastern Screech Owl, The Great-horned Owl, and the Barred Owl. Craig was very clear during the conclusion of the presentation when he told the group that there was no guarantee that any owl would respond to his calls but that one of our resident barred owls had been heard and seen in the neighborhood recently. The sky was clear, the air was cool, and the sun was now well below the horizon as we set out with flashlights along the same trail I had been on earlier that day during the "Who Goes There" hike. Our destination on this hike was again, the overlook. Craig stopped us in a meadow along the way and directed our attention to the clear night sky overhead. The feeling of deep awe one gets when gazing upward at a sky full of stars was heightened on this night by the Geminid meteor shower. In the fifteen minutes we stood in that meadow looking skyward we saw close to a dozen shooting stars. The most impressive one I saw appeared low on the horizon and very bright in the eastern sky as it trailed slowly for maybe two whole seconds, tracing the tree tops with its long tail before vanishing in the southern sky. It was truly spectacular. Once we reached the overlook Craig addressed the group with a whispering voice. He instructed everyone to remain silent as he prepared himself to mimic the sound of the barred owl. Several excited children huddled around him as he cupped his hands over his mouth and bellowed out his first call – "WHO COOKS FOR YOUUUU, WHO COOKS FOR YOUUUUU ALLLLLLL." We stood



Barred Owl photo Craig Hensley

### Programs, Hikes & Activities at Guadalupe River State Park & Honey Creek State Natural Area

Saturday, December 13, 2014

#### Who Goes There?\*

Saturday, December 13, 10-11:30am

Join Park Rangers for a nature hike in search of the clues of wildlife activity. We'll use binoculars and magnifiers and all of our senses to figure out who's out and about along our trails and within the park. Junior Ranger books will be available for everyone.

#### Prowlin' For Owls\*

Saturday, December 13, 7-8:30pm

Head out with Park Naturalist for a hootin' good time as we call and listen for Barred and possibly other owls that inhabit the park. Start at the amphitheater to learn about owls and their adaptations before going out for a short walk. Dress for the weather and bring some patience!

\*Programs meet at the Amphitheater behind the Discovery Center



## Upcoming programs at Guadalupe River State Park

by Craig Hensley

in the silence for a couple of minutes and listened. I found a flat rock and sat down to look up at the stars and listen as Craig called out several more times over the next ten minutes. It was almost immediately after Craig's sixth or seventh call when we heard the unmistakable answer of a barred owl calling from across the river and close to the bank. Excitement within the group ensued. Craig called again and the owl answered loudly from the same spot. I jumped up and joined the group of kids huddled around Craig as he used a powerful flashlight to scan the trees across the river in search of the nocturnal predator he was conversing with. It didn't take long before he had the barred owl illuminated. The huge bird was perched on an exposed limb of a bald cypress tree right on the bank of the river just a little ways downstream. Craig held the spotlight on the owl while it called once more and then took to flight heading downstream and further back into the line of trees across the river. Craig called again and was answered with what sounded like three different owl voices calling from at least two hundred yards away, across the river and back into the interior of the trees. The sound of the owls' calling took an abrupt turn at this point. "Who cooks for you" switched into what Craig referred to as "monkey calls." If you've never heard barred owls making monkey calls but have heard the sound of monkeys chattering with each other then you have a pretty good idea of what these owls sounded like. Craig gave a couple more "who cooks for you" calls and the assumed three owls maintained their monkey calling for a few more minutes before the group was left standing on the overlook in the night's silence. A little girl amongst the group of kids still standing close to Craig asked, "what were those owls saying?" Craig jokingly responded by telling her, "I don't know; I'm only beginning to understand their language." Once back at the discovery center, Craig thanked everyone for coming out. The "Prowlin' For Owls" hike was a great success on this night and a wonderful time was had by all.

The following week I asked Craig about the monkey calls we had heard during the hike and he told me that some biologists believe that monkey calls could be related to courtship and might possibly be related to territory but cautioned against anthropomorphizing exactly what is being communicated between these animals. I thoroughly enjoyed these two hikes and am thankful for the knowledge I gained from attending them. Special thanks to Craig Hensley. I've found that participating in these programs has certainly increased my ability to accurately answer questions that customers have about our hikes. "Bird in the Hand," "Stories in the Stars" with the San Antonio Astronomical Association, and "Bat-astic Geocaching" are some of the other programs offered here at Guadalupe River State Park. Our park programs provide such a fantastic opportunity to learn about the outdoors. I encourage everyone to take advantage of the programs offered by our State Parks.

## 2015 Dues

by Bill Beach

### 2015 Membership Dues Are Now Payable

It is a time of renewal, and if you have not renewed your Friends of GRSP/Honey Creek membership for 2015 it is time to do so. As you know, this newsletter keeps you current with the activities at the Park, but the costs of sending out the newsletter are continuing to increase.

As a reminder, we are a 501 (c) 3 organization which means that contributions to the Friends organization are tax deductible. Just use the application on the inside back cover of this newsletter and mail your check to the official address for the Friends, 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, Texas 78070 or drop it off at Park Headquarters on your next visit.

The Board of Directors has authorized the cancellation of subscription privileges to the Quarterly Newsletter in February for all members who are in arrears.

### 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.org](http://www.honeycreekfriends.org)

**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 first  
Thursday at 6:30 pm.  
And bring a friend!**