



## Fall 2017 NEWSLETTER

# Friends of Guadalupe River, Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization

### Halloween in the Park, Saturday, October 28th

by Holly Camero

It's amazing to think October is right around the corner while its 95 plus degrees outside! But when October comes it brings so many awesome happenings. Of course, the one we're thinking of is Halloween in the Park! For almost 15 years we have put on this Halloween event and with the help of the Park and the hundreds of wonderful volunteers. It has been one of the best community events offered by the Park.

Initially trick or treating was done amongst the stores on Hwy 46 in Bulverde, since the area was mostly rural. That was a somewhat dangerous situation for the kids. We came up with the idea to have folks come to the Park for a safe environment to trick or treat, on a trail in the "Day Use Area". The trail makes a loop from the Discovery Center amphitheater and back. This is the Haunted Trail. The trail is manned by volunteers who come to the designated areas that they chose to decorate. They bring in the treats and dress up in their awesome costumes and hand out the treats to the trick or treaters as they come by. Many of these station volunteers or sponsors, have been assisting us for years and consider this event to be a family tradition. And, of course there are many participants who feel the same way.

*The event is an evening of fun, stories, food and fright of the fun kind. Halloween in the Park is designed for children of every age in a safe, not-too-scary environment. The fee is \$10 per carload which includes entrance, parking & the event. The program begins at the Amphitheater behind the Discovery Center at 6:00pm then continues for trick or treating. First the little tots (2-6 years old), go out on the spooky forest trail. Then at 7:00pm, when the haunted trail has become scarier, the Big Spooks (7-12 years old) get to go out and trick or treat. During the event, there will be Halloween storytelling & complementary refreshments.*

If you'd like to join the amazing group of volunteers whether you're a business, scout group, church group, family or individual you can help make this an awesome community event, once again.

There are many areas where you can help. And what a wonderful way to earn community service hours! So, mark your calendars for Saturday October 28<sup>th</sup> for Halloween in the Park! Then put on your best costume, load up the family & friends and come join us!

For information about the event call: Guadalupe River State Park at 830 438-2656

For information on volunteering contact:

Holly Camero at [eyesthatfly@aol.com](mailto:eyesthatfly@aol.com) or 210 861-5004 or

Tom Anderson at [tanderson46@satx.rr.com](mailto:tanderson46@satx.rr.com) or 210 241-1916

### Honey Creek Interpretive Guide Training

by Nancy Grey

**Sunday, November 12**  
(postponed from September 10)

Do you like to share your love of nature with others? Looking for a new volunteer opportunity that combines the outdoors with cultural and natural history interpretation? Then the Friends of Guadalupe River and Honey Creek would like to invite you to become a Honey Creek Interpretive Guide.

We are offering training starting in the month of November for new Honey Creek interpretive guides. The training will begin with a session to be held on Sunday, November 12 in the afternoon from 1:00-5:00 PM. This meeting will cover the expectations and responsibilities of a Honey Creek guide and the process to become a certified guide. Craig Hensley, the park's interpretive ranger, will lead a session on interpretive techniques and skills and demonstrate those skills on a short hike. This will provide you a first-hand look at what being a guide entails. After the hike, we will provide an electronic copy of material that will cover a number of topics specific to Honey Creek's flora, fauna and cultural history as well as interpretive techniques.

You will be expected to study the material provided for you on an individual basis and then come assist regular Honey Creek hikes. We will provide contact information for mentors who can answer questions as you continue this process. Because becoming an Interpretive Guide is a significant undertaking, we will require a minimum of three hikes in an assisting capacity. If you are interested please consider registering for this unique volunteer experience.

A fee of \$20, which covers all the material and a one year family membership to the Friends group, is required. Please contact Nancy Gray, [grayabbott@aol.com](mailto:grayabbott@aol.com), 210-464-0532 to reserve a spot in the training or to request more information.

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## St. Joseph Honey Creek - Catholic Church Old Stone Church along the Boerne - New Braunfels Road

In the early 1890s, St. Joseph Honey Creek Catholic Church relocated three miles south from its 1876 roots (originally it was sited less than a couple of miles outside and south of Guadalupe River State Park) to a one-acre parcel on the Boerne – New Braunfels road (today’s Highway 46)...it is said that Boerne priest Father Gerlach engineered the relocation to get the church onto the main thoroughfare and closer to a growing parish population in Bulverde. As one old-timer pined, **“The church kept its original name although there is no creek nearby nor is there any honey.”**

Herman Scheel, son of one of the original Catholic family patriarchs, Bernard Joseph Scheel, sold one acre of his father’s land to the church: it was officially recorded in 1893 for \$5.00. Sold, not gifted, because as descendant Clarence Scheel says **“our family was too poor to have given the land away.”** In 1892 a new large wood - frame church was built. Father Henry Gerlach, who coordinated the relocation and the construction of the new wood church, operated out of Boerne. When he left in 1892, St. Joseph Honey Creek continued to be supported as a mission church by other priests from Boerne’s St. Peters.

1898 was the year the church’s first resident priest, Father Draessel arrived. Alfred Engel, who detailed early church heritage, shared: **Honey Creek received its first resident priest in the person of Virgilius Draessel. He was all German, barely could talk or understand a word of English. Since all the people of the parish were of German descent, the Bishop thought this Honey Creek was the ideal place for him. He was originally from... Austria.** Little did anyone know that his arrival would impact and shape St. Joseph – Honey Creek for decades. Father was considered sickly but didn’t act like it. He helped construct his first residence. In 1899 he consecrated a new mission church in his jurisdiction at Twin Sisters. And while, in 1904, he constructed the Immaculate Conception Chapel, Father Draessel’s grandest physical legacy was still to come...the old stone church.



Tucked away in another early parishioner’s diary, Alfred Scheel details one of Father Draessel’s activities: **He also founded a church fund.**

In the 1905 Archdiocese report, he lists **\$378.15 Fund of Church Building.** Jumping to the 1909 report, he pens: **Fund of Church Building \$2667.05.** So with money in the fund and plenty of available rock in the area, these hardy Germans would soon launch into the construction phase. Our early parishioners, Mr. Engel and Mr. Scheel, both guardedly introduce the efforts to construct the parish’s first rock church. Mr. Scheel wrote: **... the new rock church was started; again plenty of objections and commotion were brought about by our good busy Father Draessel.** Mr. Engel’s account follows: **So after different meetings and discussions, he got serious and ... this project began to get under way. However, there was only a small amount of money on hand and not 100% of cooperation or willingness to go along with the idea.** From these pioneers it is obvious there was a difference of opinion between the priest and his congregation over the construction of the church.

**Continued...**

## Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

This would be a major undertaking. The men of the parish supplied the manpower. The rock that was used to build the church was quarried just over the hill, less than two football fields away from the church's front door at the adjacent Laubach family's property. The Laubachs were St. Joseph parishioners. Synthesizing family lore and church documents, construction most likely began in 1909, proceeding to a sufficient level by 1910 as highlighted in a neatly chiseled cap rock over the archway to the church's main entrance door. Then construction of the church slowed to a crawl before coming to a complete stop, as Mr. Engel describes: ... **money was about exhausted and field work took away most of the free working help, and so with walls about half way up the building came to a halt. All this was very discouraging for the Father and since he had wanted to go back to his homeland, Tyrol, Austria, for a rest and vacation, he decided this would be a good time to do so. Perhaps things would change by the time he returned. ... After about three months Father Draessel returned to Honey Creek. New energy had developed and the work on the Church was resumed.**

So Father Draessel returned to St. Joseph's and its helpful parishioners. This church was hand-made by its parishioners, rock by rock, maneuvering and hoisting immense blocks of rock more than 50 and 60 feet in the air, nearly six stories up to the top of the bell tower. It has been said that the height of the church from the ground at its front entrance to the top of its cross is more than 70 feet. File blueprints show 73 feet. With renewed energy, the construction of the rock church continued until complete in late 1912 or early 1913. Alfred Engel's final words on the church construction are: ...**and dedicated debt free.** While around \$200 of debt is carried on the books for years 1913 thru 1916...on the 1917 report, the balance is zero. Father Draessel and the parishioners of St. Joseph – Honey Creek had pulled it off. That they built a beautiful church cannot be denied.



What is the oldest part of the old stone church? While you might guess the rock foundations, this is a trick question, since the answer involves ten large stained glass windows that were installed after the construction of the old stone church. Heritage holds that the windows were gifted by the Sisters of the Divine Providence sometime after 1922 (a 1922 photo shows simpler windows); this generous and expensive donation came about due to connections and timing. Upon the completion of St. Joseph's rock church in 1913, the older wooden church (which no longer exists) was repurposed as a schoolhouse. Father Draessel named the new school St. Anthony's and invited the Sisters of the Divine Providence to serve as teachers. Correspondence from the archivist with the Sisters of the Divine Providence explains that in 1923, after the Sisters of the Divine Providence (San Antonio) completed the construction of their new Sacred Heart Chapel, **some of the stained windows (from their old chapel) were used in this new chapel, others were either stored or given to given to poor churches...it is thought that they were purchased around 1907.....they came from Munich, Germany.** And since the old church's construction started around 1909, the gifted windows are the oldest part of the old stone Church.



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

# Nature opportunities at the Park

by R. Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter

## A Summer of Fun in the Outdoors

This summer saw the addition of several wonderful folks to the interpretive staff. Three interns, Meagan Bell, Allison Mattern and Kenlynn Volz were joined by our seasonal interpreter Patti Lozano. Their creativity and enthusiasm provided our park visitors and guests with a variety of new and fun programs. Rather than try to explain all that happened, we share the following photographs of fun in the summer sun. Enjoy!



Intern Allison Mattern shares her love of insects with excited children.



Who doesn't like a good ol' fashioned s'more!



A former Eagle Scout project, our stream table provided children with the opportunity to learn about erosion, runoff and well, playing in a sandbox is always fun!



Children literally loved hanging out at the Reading Tree for our summer reading program.



Fun in the summer sun (and shade) involved playing fun, group activity camp games.



Cornelius the Gray-banded Kingsnake made a visit to the park to the delight on many children and adults, alike.



Arts and crafts help teach children about the natural world



Intern Meagan Bell taught youth the fine points of successful archery.



A program on yucca ended with the making of a take-home yucca bracelet the old-fashioned way.



## Nature opportunities at the Park

by Linda Gindler

### Come on out – the birding is GREAT

By September, summer nesting is completed. Young fledglings are weaned from their parent’s watchful eyes and are now making it on their own. The summer residents, with domestic duties completed, began departing in July and are mostly gone by September. Birds that nested further north will pass through the park on their annual migration with September and October being peak months. Each day can bring new arrivals.

The start of the school year brings a sharp decline in park visitors yet the summer heat still has a hold on the park for another few weeks. It’s a good time to visit the Day Use Area and stroll under the shade trees or take a dip in the river. While there, keep an eye and ear out for three of the year round park vocalists, all in the wren family – Carolina, Bewick’s, and a park star, the Canyon.

These wrens are small, with intricate brown & gray patterns, and loud complex songs. They are active insect and spider eaters that are delightful to watch and hear. The park is the western edge of the Carolina’s territory and the eastern edge of the Canyon so is lucky to have all three year round.

The Carolina Wren distinguishes itself with its rich cinnamon color, bright eyebrow stripe and a rich musical song. Listen for the characteristic “teakettle – teakettle” vocalizations. Males can have a number of variations to their song. They are common in the woodlands of the park and can be found near the bird blind where a pair has nested in recent years. Watch for them scooting along tree trunks and branches in search of insects. They live in pairs year round and may offer up a “duet” song at any season.



Carolina Wren (Photo by John Prentice)



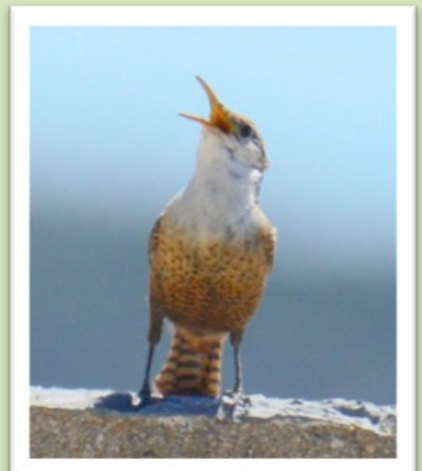
Bewick’s Wren (Photo by John Prentice)

The Bewick’s Wren (pronounced “Buick”) is similar in appearance to the Carolina but a duller brown-gray color. They have a longer tail with white outer edges and are more slender than their cousin. They too, sport an eyebrow stripe. They are master vocalists belting out jumbles of notes that include short whistles, warbles, burrs, and trills. Look for Bewick’s throughout the park in the tangles and shrubs. They particularly like brush piles.

The Canyon Wren, perhaps the best songsters of the park, is usually heard before it is seen. This wren lacks the eyebrow stripe sported by its two cousins, but instead has a covering of fine spots at the crown, nape and back. They love steep canyon walls and can be found along the rock wall in the park’s swimming area where they jump back and forth in the jumbled rocks and crevices. Be patient while watching and you

may be rewarded with one jumping to the top of an outcropping to belt out its musical rippling cascade of notes that bounces off the rock wall.

If you are not sure you can find one of these special wrens, come out for one of Ranger Craig’s monthly “Big Year Bird Hikes”. Fall hikes are scheduled for September 10, October 1, and November 5, beginning at 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. If you want to join a hike, contact Ranger Craig by email ([craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov)) to learn more about early entry into the park (park opens at 8:00 a.m.). Participants will meet the park ranger at the front gate at 7:30a.m. Bring along a pair of binoculars and/or camera. Wear hiking shoes and bring water. Also, watch the Park Calendar for other bird programs including the very popular “Bird in Hand” program that features demonstration bird banding. It’s an up close look at our feathered friends. “Bird in Hand” is the second Saturday of each month during the school year (9:00 a.m. to noon) at the Discovery Center Amphitheater. All programs are subject to cancelation/time changes due to weather. Contact the park for more details or watch for updates on Facebook.



Canyon Wren (Photo by John Prentice)

## Rattlesnake Reflections

by Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter

The voice on the radio stated that a dead snake had been found along the park road. My first thought was, how in the world, on a road with a 20 mph speed limit, could any critter be run over in broad daylight? Then, of course, I remembered it was the despised rattlesnake. This was followed by the realization that the snake could be the same one I had so carefully moved from the road a few days prior – first capturing photos, of course.

When I compared my photos with the dead snake, much to my dismay I realized that my effort to extend this snake's life had been snuffed out by another human. My heart hurt.

As long as humans have walked the Earth there has been an unspoken war between man and beast. One of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's greatest conservationists, Aldo Leopold, early in his career was at war with wolves, mountain lions and other predators. However, after shooting yet another wolf he came to understand that this view was lacking. He later wrote about that encounter in his book *A Sand County Almanac*:

*"We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. ...I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."*

While wolves and rattlesnakes are very different, the sentiment is similar for they are both predators, and both saddled with great misunderstanding and even loathing. Snakes, particularly rattlesnakes, fit the bill perfectly for some people, representing something evil, something that we seemingly must kill for killing sake.

If we do a reality check however, we find that snakes are, it turns out, incredibly important animals in the scheme of things. They are significant predators of rodents and other rapidly reproducing creatures that would overrun us without predatory control. They serve as prey for a wide variety of predators, from hawks to other snakes. And to top it off, the vast majority of snakes are in fact quite harmless to us.

And of course, there are the stories...oh the stories.

Only one was a surprise – and boy was it. While GPSing the breeding territory of the only known successfully nesting Black-capped Vireo at Honey Creek in 2013 – paying more attention to the bird, less to the ground in front of me, I suddenly found myself simultaneously levitating and moving horizontally while airborne! At least according to my colleagues. On the ground destined for my right foot was a large, tightly coiled rattlesnake – quietly paying me no apparent heed. Why I happened to look down at that moment I will never know, but I did learn what my go-to word is in time of sheer panic.



Then there was the time five years ago, that a call of a rattlesnake in day use came over the radio, with a request for its removal. Excitedly I raced to the area to find my supervisor Clay with a five-gallon bucket and a section of PVC pipe through which a rope extended, noose on one end.

Apparently, one puts the noose around the snake's neck, tightens it and then removal is perfunctory. Amazingly enough the snake cooperated, lifting its head for the noose as if it knew the routine. Placed in the bucket my boss asks me something to the effect of "think the snake will stay in the bucket?" I looked at him incredulously, "Not without a lid" I stammered.

No lid present, we found a way to move the snake away from the gawking public, noose still intact. Then it got interesting – the noose would not release the snake. "So what are you going to do now, Hensley?" my boss asked. Good question.

Moments later my hands were wrapped around the snake. Did I mention it was a live, very unhappy western diamondback rattlesnake, mouth wide open, the noose being the only thing between a slightly shaking hand and the snake's fangs?

We slipped the noose off. Now I REALLY am holding a live rattlesnake. "So what are you going to do now, Hensley?" Another good question.

"Well, first you are going to get my cell phone out and take a picture!" I responded. That accomplished, it was time for release. I figured I would toss it away from me as quickly as possible all the while thinking it would be quick enough to somehow defy gravity, spin around to pay me back for my disturbance of its day. Well, that didn't happen and the snake slithered away. Another story – and a photo to boot!

Sadly, that snake too most likely ended up dead for two days later a snake of similar size was discovered lifelessly hanging over a tree branch, head and rattles missing. I have run into people that have coffee cans full of rattles, and it gives me pause. Do those persons have a need to play predator; to count coup, adding yet another rattle to his or her collection? Or was it a simple lack of education, of understanding the role predators play in the great scheme of life? Perhaps it is a bit of each.

The reality is that there will always be people who kill rattlesnakes, and certainly there are times for safety reasons that it can be justified. What I hope is that instead of our – your – first thought being "kill the snake" perhaps instead we might respectfully reflect on its role in nature, snap a photo and then let it on its way. I know that's what I'll do, will you?



## Solar Eclipse of 2017 a Huge Success

by Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter

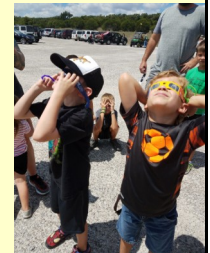
On Monday, August 21 more than 400 people descended upon the park to join rangers Craig and Meagan along with volunteers Lisa and Bill to view the much-anticipated solar eclipse. In-between clouds, participants young and old watched as the moon slowly ate away the sun until nearly 70% of the sun was blocked before receding. Thanks to Meagan and her mom for staffing the table with sun-related activities and to all the office staff that spent a very busy morning handling all the visitors.

Park staff and volunteers handed out nearly 140 pairs of solar glasses for safe viewing. Thanks to the San Antonio Astronomical Association for providing nearly half of the glasses for free distribution.

Children check out the eclipse with cereal box viewer with Ranger Meagan.

Long lines at the telescopes still allowed everyone a first-class view of the eclipse. Many thanks to volunteers Greg and Jana Gibbons for the donation of a 10-inch solar filter for our larger telescope.

Taken through our telescope eyepiece, the moon is shown moving over the sun.



## Park Program Highlights

by Craig Hensley

This fall the park will host a variety of public programs ranging from bird banding to hikes into the night. Below is a sampling of those programs. As always, programs are free of charge after first paying the park entrance fee of \$7 per person ages 13 and above. Unless otherwise noted, all programs begin at the amphitheater, located behind the Discovery Center. For a complete listing of monthly programs, go to: [https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/guadalupe-river/park\\_events](https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/guadalupe-river/park_events).

**Bird in the Hand.** Check out the diversity of songbirds that live in the park and learn about the science of bird banding. These programs from 9 a.m. to Noon on the second Saturday of each month during fall.

**Upcoming Dates:** September 9, October 14, November 11, December 9, 2017.

**Stories in the Stars.** Join our Ranger along with members of the San Antonio Astronomical Association for these evenings of stargazing. We'll provide the telescopes to view everything from the moon and planets to galaxies, nebulas and more.

**Upcoming Dates:** Saturdays, September 30, October 28, and November 25, 2017. Times vary.

**Prowlin' for Owls.** A popular program, you'll learn about the owls of Texas and then head out in search of them along Barred Owl Overlook trail. Be sure to bring a flashlight.

**Upcoming Dates:** Saturdays, September 16, October 14, November 11, December 9. Times vary.

**Texas Pollinator Bioblitz.** Throughout Texas agencies will be celebrating pollinators of all kinds during this two week celebration by highlighting everything from our native bees and butterflies to all the services provided by all pollinators. Guadalupe River State Park will host the following programs.

**Bugs-R-U's** Saturday, September 23, 2017 9:30-11 a.m.  
Join Ranger Craig for a morning of butterflies, bugs and beetles as we grab our nets and head out in search of insects of all kinds. You'll learn what makes an insect an insect and more during this sure-to-be-fun morning.

**What's all the BUZZ About?** Saturday, September 30, 2017 9:30-12 a.m.  
Learn about the wonders of Bee's and why they are important for our ecosystems, food, and EVEN OUR livelihood. Ranger Meagan will read "The BEE", then everyone can build a Mason Bee Hive from all recycled materials to put in your own yard! Please bring a recycled tin can.

**Wildflower and Butterfly Walk** Saturday, October 8 9:30-11 a.m.  
Join Ranger Craig for a walk among the wildflowers of fall as we enjoy their beauty and the butterflies and other critters that visit them.

**Public Hunt Program for 2017-18**  
Each fall and winter the Park conducts a series of public hunts. These hunts provide opportunities for hunting on public land for youth and adults alike and also serve to provide a limited amount of deer management. During each of the following hunts, the unit/area being hunted is closed to public access.

Friday-Sunday, November 3-5, 2017 (Youth Only) Bauer Unit	Friday-Sunday, December 1-3, 2017 (Youth Only) Bauer Unit
Friday-Sunday, November 10-12, 2017 (Youth Only) Bauer Unit	Friday-Sunday, December 8-10, 2017 Honey Creek SNA
Friday-Sunday, November 17-19, 2017 Bauer Unit	Monday-Thursday, December 11-14, 2017 Honey Creek SNA

## 2017 Dues

by Bill Beach

### 2017 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 2017 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!**