



Fall 2018 NEWSLETTER

Friends of Guadalupe River, Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization

Newsletter Article

by Thea Platz

Change is in the air our busy summer season is winding down and fall is on the door step.

Kids are back in school and soon temperatures are going to fall and hopefully precious rain will too.

Some changes are hard. Craig Hensley a long time asset to the park has changed divisions within Texas Parks and Wildlife. Craig is excited about having the opportunity to get back to using his natural resource talents. We have been blessed to have had Craig Hensley as the Park Interpreter for so long, his programs and initiatives have been enjoyed by many of our park visitors. The data collected by his survey and bird banding teams have added to the information available that helps researchers far beyond the park boundaries. He will be missed and although this will be a big change we know that our amazing volunteers will continue many of the initiatives that he started and that the new interpreter will bring a wonderful vision and talents of their own to share with the park community.

Another big change- we will not be having the Halloween event this year. The Halloween event, held at the park for many years, began as an opportunity for families that lived in the area to have a fun, safe event because there was nothing else available in the area and homes were few and far between. That is no longer the case (more changes) and we feel that although we love the event, the orchestration of close to 100 volunteers and the time and energy of the entire park staff and Friends board members could be put to better use.

This year we are hosting a free daytime event - Monarch and "Friends" Fiesta on October 27, 10-2.

We will soon be sending out information on new volunteer opportunities, another great change may be for those of you who haven't found your perfect match yet, to jump in and be a part of our great volunteer family.

Monarch Fiesta Article

by Thea Platz

The Friends of Guadalupe River SP and Honey Creek SNA are hosting an exciting event

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend

The Monarch and Friends Fiesta October 27, 10 AM to 2 PM

Plan to join us as we celebrate the Monarch's fall migration with activities celebrating all pollinators- learn about Monarchs and other butterflies, bees, bats and more. You can learn about milkweed and native plants, tour a butterfly garden and learn how to plant your own. We encourage you to dress as your favorite pollinator and participate in the fun costume contest. There will be a wide variety of activities for the whole family, fun crafts for the kids and so much more ... you won't want to miss it!

The Fiesta is free with Park entrance fee.

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Texas Parks and Wildlife has lost a great friend, George Hixon. George was a life member of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek Friends. He was quite active in trying to preserve our states natural resources. Our condolences to his family.

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Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

On and off the beaten path; Eagles and future Eagles gather!

Evidence of prior eagle activity exists throughout Guadalupe River State Park (GRSP)! These details were not obtained from a historical accounting of eagles by a 1850s' naturalist. Yet the eagles', in their case, talon marks, are all over the place. And as it turns out, charting the prior eagle sites is pretty easy. If you've hiked some portion of the park's trail system, either north or south of our stretch of the Guadalupe River, you've probably walked right past tangible remnants. This author learned the details in 2017, upon touring our park's confines with the subject matter expert on the topic (and it wasn't Craig Hensley).



My guide that day was Dave Kibler, who explained that the first sightings of eagle activity were contemporary. Starting at the turn of century, Dave can even pinpoint that this Eagle legacy only dates back to 2000. At this point it probably helps to know that Dave has been the coordinator between GRSP and Boy Scout Troop 285 out of

San Antonio for work projects in the park beginning in 2007. He not only created this partnership for spring and fall team-building work projects at GRSP, but even more relevant, Dave is dedicated to assisting with the Boy Scouts of America's **Eagle Scout** program.



The first Eagle Scout service project at GRSP was conducted in **2000 by Chase Patton**. His crowning achievement: from June to September he planned, organized, and directed the efforts of 25 youth and adults as they cleared the area and then constructed four large composting bins at our Guadalupe River State Park headquarters. The program entailed over 272 volunteer hours of work. The other eight Eagle projects that follow also involved large amounts of time, labor, fundraising and leadership. And the end result is always the same, enhanced or new park facilities.

In **2007, Joseph Grau**, built five riverside benches. These sturdy benches have weathered floods and are still in excellent shape, firmly anchored on the nearby Guadalupe River banks.

In **2009** there were three Eagle Scout projects, by Colby Jackson, Robert Laird, and Diego Sosa. **Colby Jackson's** project involved building two rain simulator demonstration units for use in educational programs (to demonstrate the differences in water use by various plant species). In addition, he built and installed two cowbird trap units designed to remove these birds, which lay their eggs in the nests of endangered Golden Cheeked Warblers, to the detriment of this valuable species. **Robert Laird's** 2009 project involved the construction of a viewing blind/area for birds



Continued...

Eagle Scout With Project Year

Chase Patton, – 2000

Joseph Grau – 2007

Colby Jackson – 2009

Robert Laird – 2009

Diego Sosa – 2009

Christian Vasquez – 2013

Roberto Donahue – 2013

Madison McNair – 2013

Nate Miseli - 2017

Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

and wildlife at the Guadalupe River State Park as well as an interpretative sign with details of ten birds common to the park area. The structure was approximately 24 feet in length and 8 feet high. Also in 2009, **Diego Sosa** constructed three large wooden information kiosks, which were later installed in the park in prominent locations by parking lot areas; they served to communicate GRSP programs and events.

2013 also saw three Eagle Scout projects. **Roberto Donahue** enhanced the Rust House entry with small stone pavers and defined & tied pathways. **Jerry Madison McNair** in **2013** directed the construction of six concrete picnic table pads in the riverfront day use area at the Guadalupe River State Park. In addition, his crews planted 18 large trees, and installed cooking grills, as well as tables. Look for the **BSA** emblem for confirmation on the corner of each pad Madison had installed.



Christian Alejandro Vasquez-Martinez – 2013 directed his crew in building, and installing seven resting benches in the Bauer Unit of the park. In addition, the bench areas all required clearing of rocks and brush before installation of the benches which will benefit hikers in the park.



In **2017 Nate Miseli** designed and created cozy niches for pre or post hike rest. These are always popular and his service project once again provided substantial comfort, however, the construction materials were unique – his benches are made from repurposed Guadalupe River State Park trail signs.



Yes, the presence of Eagles has been incorporated in Guadalupe River State Park. Please come to the park and check out and utilize the “remnants” of their activity.



There are more stories to be told!

Ambassador Bio

by Joel Parker

Hello everyone, my name is Justin Morris. I am a San Antonio native but currently am residing in Austin. I am a student at The University of Texas at Austin (Hook 'Em Horns!) working towards a bachelor's degree in Radio-Television-Film. I have a deep love and appreciation for the Texas outdoors. On August 1st, I began my ambassadorship with Guadalupe River State Park. Over the next few months I will be creating projects, social media content, and reaching out to visitors about the park. I am beyond excited to get to know the park and the wonderful people who make it what it is, a beautiful destination for all!



Habiscape Happenings

by Susan Bogle

This summer's hot temperatures, along with the persistent drought that we have been experiencing have had an obvious impact on the Habiscape, as well as the park in general. Plants are struggling through this demanding season with wilted leaves and very few, if any flowers. Some have even senesced, dropping their leaves and dying back to the ground, just to regrow later in the year. These are just some of the mechanisms that enable these native plants to survive such severe conditions. But given a few cloudy days or even better – some rain – they will readily respond and recover. Native plants have evolved in these conditions and are therefore able to adapt and endure. This of course is one of the reasons native plants are such a popular choice by so many gardeners.

However, because the Habiscape is used as a teaching tool in the park, volunteers have been hand-watering its plants on a limited basis so it can still provide a venue for the opportunity to teach and to learn. The challenge of watering is greater than it first appears because the park had to discontinue water production at the beginning of summer. With no pressurized water flow and a now empty water catchment system, the volunteers went searching for viable options. Luckily, water was made available from one of the wells on the park's property and the volunteers now truck that water over to the Habiscape in a portable tank. Needless to say, with only gravity to move the water through the hose, every drop of this water is very cautiously applied. This is a true example of extreme water conservation in action.

The plan is succeeding, as the plants, while not thriving, are surviving and are poised to respond to the rain that we know will eventually return. Once it does rain, the plants in the Habiscape will green up and bloom more quickly because of the care they have received the last few months. The Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*) is expected to easily survive in these conditions, but one plant that has provided the biggest surprise is Gregg's Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*). This plant is a terrific butterfly attractor and has very soft green leaves. And while it has the appearance of requiring a lot of water, it has proven to be one of the most drought tolerant plants in the Habiscape.

And another surprise has been the unforeseen benefit of the volunteers having the opportunity to interact with park visitors. All sorts of questions are generated from the public as the volunteers stand in the Habiscape watering so very slowly. And the volunteers welcome the opportunity to explain and educate the public about the ecosystem that's found in the Hill Country. It seems the Habiscape is always teaching – just as it was intended to do.





Come on out - the birding is GREAT

by Linda Gindler

After the hot and dry dog days of summer, the park is beginning to give a sigh of relief as Fall is approaching. Early Fall is generally a low time for birds at the park as Summer residents have left and the Winter residents have yet to arrive. Fall migration is underway and each day can bring new arrivals, but typically not in the numbers seen in the spring. Still there are birds to enjoy at the park so be sure to go out for a stroll. One family to look for and study is the Raven.

Texas is home to two species of ravens: Common and Chihuahuan. The Chihuahuan's range is far south and west Texas so not a visitor to the Park. Common Ravens on the other hand are known to nest in the park and are frequently observed year-round. If you see a large black bird it is most likely a Raven, as the American Crow would be a rare sighting at the park. Many times, you hear a Raven before seeing one. Their calls can vary from low, gurgling croaks to harsh grating and shrill alarms. Most often you hear their classic gurgling croak. They make this call often including in flight and it can be heard at some distance.

Common Ravens are entirely black (including feathers, beak, eyes, and legs) with a thick neck, shaggy throat feathers, and large beak. In flight, Common Ravens have long wedge-shaped tails. They measure in as 24" birds with a 53" wing span and are considerably larger than their cousins the Chihuahuan Raven and American Crow. They are omnivorous and extremely versatile in finding food. Their diet includes carrion, insects, grains, berries, fruit, small animals, and food waste.



Common Raven (photo by John Prentice)

Common Ravens are so bold, playful, and clever they are almost always doing something worth watching. They are known to be adept at problem solving and consequently have been the subject of much study. Ravens can be found winging their way across the landscape throughout the park. Most often found in pairs but sometimes singly and rarely in small flocks. They are known to frequent the Day Use Area so start your search there.

If you would like to learn more about birds, watch the Park's Facebook page and website for upcoming birding programs. Programs vary from month to month and include day as well as evening events. Or take a seat in the Park's bird blind located in the Day Use Area. With its shaded seating it is one of the coolest places in the Park. Birds flock to the water feature and provide visitors with up-close views. So, visit soon and often – the birding is GREAT!

A Tale of Two Decomposers

by R. Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter/Resource Specialist

When I was a child my grandpa, a rough and tough farmer – and the man that taught me to fish, referred to them only as buzzards. As I got older and became a bit of a birder I discovered that I could have argued the point that they were really vultures and that ornithologically “buzzards” refer to buteos, or hawks – at least in Europe. Of course, had he accepted it – which he never did, he would have then argued that hawks are nothing more than chicken hawks, not red-tailed or red-shouldered or any other kind.

This I suppose is why there are scientific names, and vultures, of which we have two species in Texas, are members of the family Cathartidae, derived from the Greek word, *kathartes*, which means the purifier. They certainly are that for the natural world, clearing the land of death by eating those animals that have perished, be it at the hands of a vehicle, predation or other natural causes.

And they are always out there. It is a rare day when I don't see at least one of them; the undertakers of the bird world. With bare heads, red in Turkey and black with Black, primarily black feathers and the ability to soar as well as any hawk or eagle, vultures patrol the landscape in search of the freshly perished. In the Hill Country with the great overabundance of white-tailed deer, along with the non-native axis deer, seeing them devouring a recent roadkill – with an occasional Crested Caracara, a carrion-eating member of the falcon family – has become a very common occurrence.

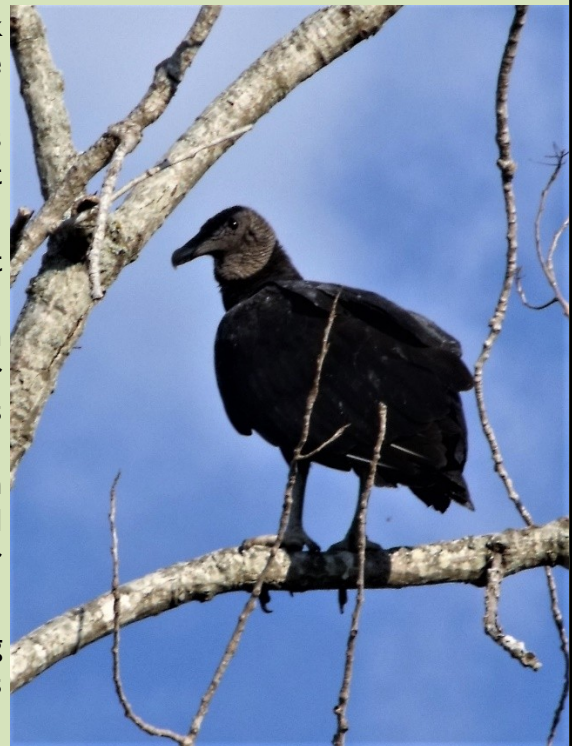
Besides the difference in head color, Black and Turkey vultures can be readily distinguished from one another in flight. With a six-foot wingspan, the Turkey Vulture (TV) soars with wings held in a distinct “V”, often rocking on the wind as it soars overhead on rising warm air thermals. In contrast, the Black Vulture soars on flat, four-foot wings, its soaring ability requiring more flapping to stay aloft. This difference in behavior, along with the silver lining seen on the underside of the primaries and secondaries of TVs versus the white patch on the outer portion of each wing of the Black Vulture distinguishes each, as well.

Behaviorally, TVs tend to soar somewhat closer to the Earth's surface when actively hunting as they, unlike their cousin and most other birds, have a well-developed olfactory sense, able to locate carrion by smell as well as sight. Black Vultures, primarily sight hunters, often soar much higher, using this ability to see more of the landscape while also keeping an eye on the TVs, which often discover food first.

Research has also shown that though smaller, Black Vultures are more aggressive at carrion masses, feeding enmasse at the initial expense of TVs and Crested Caracaras. Additionally, Black Vultures are known to also prey on weak or sick animals or the very young of pigs, deer and even sea turtle eggs that wash up with the tide.

Being somewhat gregarious birds, vultures will roost together in numbers on the tops of trees, towers and even bridges high over rivers such. This allows the sun to hit them sooner than would happen were they in or under the canopy or below a ridge, warming themselves to take flight as soon as possible to begin their search of food. This also allows them, according to research, to keep an eye on those birds that return to the roost with a full crop, an indication that those birds found a food source. The next day they can keep an eye on their counterparts who may well lead them to a kill.

Vultures typically mate for life, producing 1-3 offspring once reaching maturity, laying eggs in caves, abandoned buildings and even hollow logs. Anyone who has found a vulture nest can



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attest that a) it is a smelly place, b) the young are rather homely looking and c) the young can projectile vomit on interlopers. Speaking of odor, one thing that vultures also do is defecate on their own feet. This behavior, known as urohydrolysis, is used to create evaporative cooling. Additionally, this may also function to kill bacteria that might accumulate on their feet when wading through carrion.

Vultures in North America seem to be expanding their ranges northward, but out west, the California Condor is barely hanging on. Worldwide, most Old World Vultures are in deep trouble. Populations have been decimated in India, Africa and elsewhere due to environmental poisoning, pesticides in Africa and a drug fed to cattle known as diclofenac, okay for the cattle, deadly to the vultures that feed upon the carcasses.

It is easy to overlook the roles that vultures play in the natural world, instead focusing on the seemingly disgusting behavior of eating dead things. And yet, we do the same thing, we just cook it first.

Vultures are vital to ecosystems globally and locally. I encourage you to take time to slow down and watch them soaring overhead, appreciate their ability to ride the wind with little apparent effort, and remember that without them, our world would be different and not necessarily in a good way.



2018 Dues

by Bill Beach

2018 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 2018 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

**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!**