



Volume 1 No. 1

# Friends of Guadalupe River Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization

Park Rd 31, Spring Branch, TX 78070 ☎ 210-438-2656

May - July 1994

## At A Glance

- ✿ Friends Group Created
- ✿ Spring Break
- ✿ Earth Day - April 23
- ✿ Bug Wise
- ✿ Plant Facts
- ✿ Calendar of Events

## Earth Day Celebration Saturday, April 23rd

Make plans to joint us for Earth Day at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area.

**Morning activities** start at 9:00 a.m. with a special walk along Honey Creek Canyon. Along the way learn about local history, geology, and plants with guide Penny Solis, Park Naturalist.

**Afternoon** Kid's activities commence from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Rust Visitor Center. Always a popular event, kids (and adults) of all ages can participate in a variety of play activities.

**Evening events** will feature a Flintknapping demonstration by Richard Dobie at 5:30 p.m., hands-on fire starting with bow fire drills by Ranger Rick, and followed at dark with a slide/lecture program by the Texas Archeological Society on early Native Americans.



KEEP TEXAS

*wild!*

DO SOMETHING

*... in your backyard*



At a time when concrete and cropland are replacing wildlife habitat across Texas, State biologists are trying to work with the forces of civilization by encouraging urbanites to turn businesses and backyards into wildlife havens.

Texas Wildscapes emphasizes providing the basics for good habitat: food, water and shelter. The program is gearing up to send how-to information packets to statewide participants, who can then be "certified" as official wildlife habitat providers.

"Since we emphasize reducing lawn size and planting native species, it not only provides habitat, it's less expensive and easier to maintain," said Matt Wagner of TPWD. "Many native plants are hardy and drought-resistant, so they need little or no water and care. Less lawn means less mowing, plus the joy of seeing wildlife at your back door."

Wildscapes is one of the first major projects of TPWD's recently expanded Non game and Urban Program. In 1993, the agency hired urban wildlife biologists for major metropolitan areas. The move reflects an awareness that 82 % of all Texans now live in nine metropolitan areas, according to recent census data.

"We're going where the people are," said Wagner. "The immediate benefit of Wildscapes is enhanced wildlife habitat in cities. The long-term and potentially greater benefit is a better-educated population that's more supportive of wildlife issues."

"When you see a hummingbird drink from a feeder you hung, or a colorful songbird feed in a fruit tree you planted, these are exciting wildlife experiences. People learn a direct connection between personal action and the benefits of conservation."

Wagner envisions individual Wildscapes as small habitats that will sustain butterflies and other insects, songbirds, reptiles, small mammals and other species. They can be as simple as feeders, birdbaths and nest boxes for birds, or as complex as elaborate landscaping projects of restored native plants. The goal is to provide places for wild creatures to feed, drink, hide from predators and raise young.

A key element of the program is a certification process whereby property owners can register their Wildscape with TPWD's Nongame and Urban Program office. For a \$15 fee, TPWD will send a sizable packet of information on general backyard wildlife, bird feeders, nest boxes, plantings to attract birds and landscaping with native plants.

Depending on where in the state the Wildscape site is located, a regional native plant list is also provided. There are booklets in the packet on hummingbird and butterfly gardening, and a book called "The Backyard Naturalist" by Craig Tufts of the National Wildlife Federation, a non profit conservation group.

To receive a Texas Wildscapes information packet, send a \$15 check or money order made out to Texas Wildscapes, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744.





*Superintendent's Notes*

The date of March 6th is not one I will soon forget. Because, on that Sunday afternoon a special group of people gathered at the Rust House Interpretive Center and brought life to the Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. It was meeting that accomplished organizational substance and just as importantly, produced the leadership, comradely and farsighted vision that is required to propel us toward the direction we should be moving. It was immediately apparent that our President, Richard J. Solis, and our Board of Directors, represented by Patricia Roetman-Martin, Leon "Tink" and Jeanne Manry, Joe G. Vanecek and Henry and Janet Wagner possess the experience and abilities that insure our newly founded Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. is the best thing yet to happen since our facility opened its gate to the public over a decade ago. I am also very pleased, and indeed proud, to know that Joan E. Nitschke is willing to represent our staff as we are asked to have input. Joan serves in many roles for our staff and one of them is being our Volunteer Coordinator. It is exhilarating to be able to participate in the formation of such a vital and vibrant volunteer/membership association.

*Duncan G. Muckelroy*



Board Members of  
Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc.

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| Richard Solis    | President             |
| Jeanne Manry     | Treasurer             |
| Leon Manry       | Board Member          |
| Patti Roetman    | Secretary             |
| Joe G. Vanecek   | Vice-President        |
| Henry Wagner     | Board Member          |
| Janet Wagner     | Board Member          |
| Duncan Muckelroy | Superintendent        |
| Joan Nitschke    | Volunteer Coordinator |

**New Non-Profit Organization To Benefit  
Guadalupe River SP and Honey Creek SNA**

Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. is a newly created corporation. It's main goal will be for the purpose of preservation of the cultural and natural history resources of these two state parks.

Some of our first efforts will be in assisting Guadalupe River SP with the River Clean Up. These efforts help educate and make people aware that littering is unexceptable. Earth Day is April 23rd and the Summer is packed with lots of weekend programs for park guests.

We have many benefits for members such as a quarterly newsletter, special nature programs for adults and for youth groups. And we will keep you informed

about other events with area nature centers and organizations. Join us and share in the excitement of learning about our cultural and natural heritage.

Volunteers take note!! Our new organization has great interpretive opportunities for individuals and clubs. Help us plan and build on our current interpretive programs. We will be building trails and working on habitat restoration. Physical work not for you? We need help on our newsletter, operation of concessions and fundraising events.

Come Join Us. You can make all the difference!!!



**May 14th -- Please Join Our Effort!**  
**Contact Deirdre Hisler, TPWD at (210) 438-2656**



## What is that plant?

### Agarita - Palo Amarillo - (*Berberis trifoliolata*)

#### Native Plants of the Hill Country and their cultural uses.

The Spanish called it agritos, little bitter or tart ones, because of its tiny, but highly acidic, fruits. The name has been altered over the years to agarita, algeritas and aljerita. Agarita is not a holly, but a member of the barberry family. The plant can be enjoyed for the fragrant yellow blooms that cover the plant in early spring and the fruit which feeds wildlife in late spring.

Native Americans and later European immigrants had many uses for agarita. A decoction of the roots was used in frontier times as a remedy for toothache. The root contains berberine and is sometimes used for the treatment of certain tropical sores. Also used as a stomachic. The roasted seed has even been reported as used for a coffee substitute. A yellow dye is made from the wood and roots, hence the name palo amarillo.

We can take advantage of the beautiful and tasty berries of the agarita. The red acid berries are good to eat right off the bush, to



make excellent cobblers, jellies and wine. Agarita Jelly: Berries ripen in late April and May. Pick when deep red. One quart of berries yield 1 quart of juice. Some people beat the bush to shake off the berries, but I find that this damages the plant needlessly. Instead wear a good leather glove and run your hand along the length of each stem knocking the berries off into a container below. The spiny leaves do not penetrate the gloves. This also allows you to pick less "trash" such as bugs and other debris. Take the berries home and wash. The stems must be removed as they contain toxic alkaloids. Place berries in pot, cover with water. Bring to a boil and simmer for about 5 minutes or till tender. Let cool and strain juice through a cloth.

To cook jelly: If you have never canned, don't worry, with highly acidic fruits like agarita its hard to go wrong. But be sure you have the proper cooking equipment. Go to the canning section of your grocery store and there you will find the necessary supplies and a handy little "how to" book on home canning. Once ready to make jelly, measure 3 cups juice and 3 cups sugar. Bring to a simmering boil and stir constantly for 8 - 30 minutes - until it passes the jelly test. Agarita needs no pectin.

#### Honey Creek Geological Studies--by S. Christopher Caran

Geological investigations of Honey Creek and the surrounding area have gone on for more than 140 years. In 1845 Prince Solms and about 200 immigrants settled in Comal County, founding the city of New Braunfels. The settlers were accompanied by a remarkable geologist and naturalist, Ferdinand von Roemer.

Roemer had been selected to conduct a preliminary survey of the geology of Texas, particularly the areas of German settlement. He at once turned his energies to the subtle complexities of Central Texas geology. In two years, before he returned to his homeland, he outlined the tenets that guide geologist working in this region today.

Geology creates special habitats for plants and animals which in turn controls the distribution of the living biota. The geology has affected settlement patterns and the use of earth materials, and thus indirectly controlled the cultural history of the area.

The Glen Rose Formation, is a thick sequence of hard limestone interbedded with softer marls, or clay rich limestone. Fossil remains of a variety of marine invertebrates are scattered irregularly through the Glen Rose Formation. Most of the upper part of the Glen Rose Formation has been eroded

from the Honey Creek area. The Glen Rose is riddled with caves and sinkholes. Many sinkholes can be found here. Honey Creek cave being one of the largest horizontal cave systems in the state.

The oldest rocks exposed in the area are limestones composing the Cow Creek Formation. This area was once a shoal or beach deposit. Abundant marine fossils including corals, clams, snails, and ammonites may be seen in these rocks. The Cow Creek was also quarried locally by the early German settlers. When fresh cut, the soft rock can be shaped easily into blocks. After being cut, the rock begins to "case harden" as traces of iron in the limestone quickly oxidize. Many of the area's buildings, including one on the Honey Creek SNA are made from this durable construction material.

Overlying the Cow Creek limestone is the Hensel Formation, a fine-grained sandstone containing large amounts of clay. These sediments were deposited by broad, meandering rivers. The Hensel contains very few fossils. Excavation sites along many of the roads within the vicinity give evidence of its continued use as a local source of road material. The soil creates a distinct habitat for tall grasses and sedges that thrive even during summer droughts.

Geodes or "Katzenkopfe" (cat heads) as the German settlers called them are often

found in the Hensel Formation. Many of the geodes found in the Hensel consists of quartz.

Exposed in a small area near the mouth of Honey Creek is a black, dense, very fine grained igneous rock similar to basalt. The rock forms a linear intrusion which extends vertically through all the other formations seen at the surface. The igneous rock at Honey Creek intruded late in the Cretaceous Period, perhaps 20 million years after the Glen Rose Formation. The Honey Creek dike is composed of rocks of particular composition known in very few places.

Honey Creek is a geologist's paradise. Faults and stationary fractures are common throughout the area. Floods have eroded the downstream sides of these fractures, forming a series of cascading waterfalls at the stream mouth. Up the stream, travertine, made up of calcite and aragonite, covers the intergrown roots of Cypress trees, creating low dams and small pools.

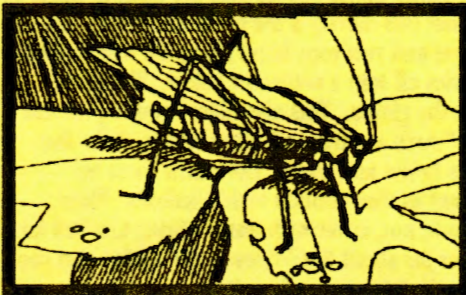
Geology and water sources are important elements of study by which we may begin to understand and protect the fragile ecosystem at Honey Creek. These factors determine the character of the land and its biota. They have influenced the history of land use, and will continue to do so. If we come to understand these relations, we can ensure the protection of this delicate environment while permitting limited, judicious use.



## Something You can Do!

### The Cricket Weather Report.

Want to know the temperature?  
The crickets will tell you.



### What You Need:

- ✓ a warm spring or summer night when crickets are singing
- ✓ a watch
- ✓ pencil and paper
- ✓ an outdoor thermometer, so that you can check your result

### What To Do:

1. Cricket chirps are a familiar sound on late summer nights. Try to count the number of chirps you hear in 15 seconds. Use a watch so that you'll know when 15 seconds are up. Sometimes it's not easy to decide when one chirp ends and another begins. Give it a few tries.

2. Now let's find the temperature. Take the number of cricket chirps you hear in 15 seconds. Add 40. The number you get is the temperature in Fahrenheit. For example, suppose you heard 36 chirps in 15 seconds

$$36 + 40 = 76$$

The temperature is about 76°.

(From *Looking at Insects*, by David Suzuki, published by Warner Books, Inc., 1986)

## The Life And Times of T. Alfred Chigger

*A chigger, I figure is a critter no bigger  
Than a dot on the head of a pin.  
But his bite is a fright and you'll scratch  
it all night,  
Aye, that's where the rub comes in.*

-Anon

Just when you thought it was safe to go back outside -- it's finally warm, the beautiful spring days are calling you out to the park. You settle into your campsite, grab a blanket, find the perfect spot and lie down to soak up the life and beauty surrounding you. Little do you realize how much of this experience you've absorbed. For as you sit or lie innocently on the ground the ninjas of the insect world, chiggers, are absorbing you!

Chiggers are mites and mites live everywhere, from the Arctic snows to the dust bunnies under the bed. There may be as many as half a million species, of which a scant 35,000 have been classified. The chigger you most likely have come to know accounts for 2500 of those creatures, with a bug called *Trombicula alfreddugesi* being the most common.

T. Alfred Chigger, as we'll call him from here out (a.k.a. redbug, rougets, harvest mites, mower's mites), is about the diameter of a human hair, one hundredth to four-hundredths of an inch. He is red and hairy. He has no body segments, but he sports a pair of evil mandibular claws called chelicerae, with which he grabs you or me at dinner time.

T. Alfred does all of his dirty work as a young larvae. His parents deposit him as an egg in the ground. When T. Alfred hatches into larval stage, he climbs up a stalk of grass or a plant and awaits a carbon-dioxide-emitting cafeteria (you or me) to pass by.

It is the detection of a high concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> that prompts T. Alfred to abandon plants for pants. Once aboard, he (and his many friends) wander about until they are stopped by constrictive clothing--socks, underpants, the waistbands of pants, bra straps. There they start to feed.

I've heard a half-dozen tales about what chiggers do at this point: burrow into your skin: lay eggs under your skin (shudder); bite once and fall off, suck your blood. None of these is true. Here is what really happens.

T. Alfred grabs your skin with those chelicerae and injects you with a strong enzyme, which liquefies, digests, and otherwise plays heck with your skin cells. T. Alfred does not burrow under your skin. If you look closely and from now on, I will you can see him there, a red dot hanging on

(literally) for life. When his enzymes have done their job, T. Alfred feeds on your dissolved skin for two or three days. Then he drops off to live out his life, molting to a nymphal stage and finally changing to his adult form. Once a nymph, he feeds solely on plant matter and soil organisms and doesn't have a thing to do anymore with man.

But who cares about grown up chiggers. It's the kids, the larvae, sucking away at our waistbands, that matter.

The injection of chigger enzymes, coupled with the body's immune response, causes a hollow tube called a stylostome to form in the skin. The bite turns red, enlarges, often crests to a small blister, and itches like the devil. Multiply that one bite by a hundred chiggers--the basic chigger tactical unit--and the sensation is unique.

Although the larva will finish feeding in a few days and detach itself on its own, most chiggers are scratched off well before they are satiated. Another week or 10 days must pass, however before the body absorbs the tube of digestive enzymes. And what a week!

There are numerous folk remedies for chigger bites. Nail polish is the favorite recommendation; the polish is said to "smother" the chigger, on the erroneous assumption, I believe, that T. Alfred has burrowed into the skin. We now know that is incorrect, although nail polish may still smother the chigger, which we cannot see, clinging to the skin's surface. But scratching will remove him, too.

A starch bath or calamine lotion works well to relieve itching in mild cases, but for more serious doses you'll need antihistamines and perhaps topical or oral steroids--hence a trip to the doctor. Watch out for infections, too, because all that scratching can contaminate the bites.

The smart course, naturally, is to seal your pants and liberally apply insect repellent to avoid chiggers in the first place. Apply it to the outside of your pant legs, too. Quite by coincidence, Avon's "Skin So Soft" is an excellent repellent. And for the itching, try different medicated cremes until you find the one that works best for you. I've also found that a nice hot shower offers several hours of welcomed relief from the itchy sores.

(Article copied from *Sports Afield*, May 1993, author Lionel Atwill with introduction and conclusion adapted by Penny Solis)



Got an interesting "Something To Do", suggestion or an article for the newsletter? We'd love to hear from you! Write to our Newsletter Editor at the address on the front page.



# Spring Break REPORT



Kid's enjoyed afternoon Spring Break fun at Honey Creek SNA. Trees of all kinds were rubbed to create a booklet identifying each tree species.

The young authors had a great time, but a few trees were a little grumpy from being rubbed the wrong way!

Earlier in the morning geologist Scott Ogden led a plant and geology hike through Honey Creek Canyon.

That evening campers and guests at Guadalupe River State Park were treated to a slide program by Bob

Crowell and Kurt

Menking of Bexar

Grotto Society. We

enjoyed a special program on

bats, cave systems and

aquifers of our area!



## Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

### Annual Membership Dues and categories:

- \$5.00 Classroom: students or youth organizations ages up to 18.
- \$5.00 Student: Age 13 to 18
- \$8.00 Individual: Adult over 18
- \$12.00 Family
- \$50.00 Sustaining
- \$100.00 Contributing
- \$500.00 Corporate
- \$1,000.00 Life

Make check payable to:  
Friends of GR/HC, Inc. 3350 Park Rd. 31  
Spring Branch, TX 78070

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: home, work, fax \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ beyond membership dues to help the Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. support educational programs at these state parks.



# Spring Planning Calendar For Guadalupe River State Park & Surrounding Area

Events from Guadalupe River State Park, Honey Creek SNA (210)438-2656 may require a conservation passport (TCP) to participate. Represented here are events at Friedrich Wilderness Park (210) 698-1057, Bexar Audubon Society (210)657-1665, Cibolo Wilderness Trail (210)537-4141. Dates and programs are subject to change. It is recommended to call to confirm dates, reservations, fees, program information and directions.

**April 23, Honey Creek SNA, Earth Day, 9 - 11:30 a.m. (TCP)** Special walk along Honey Creek Canyon. Along the way learn about local history, geology, and plants with guide Penny Solis, Park Naturalist.

**April 21-Friedrich Park, Golden Cheeked Warbler Walk, 8:00 - 11a.m.** Reservations only.

**April 21-Bexar Audubon general meeting, "Endangered Plants", Ruble Center, 7:30p.m.**

**April 23, Honey Creek SNA, Earth Day, 2-4:00 p.m.** Children can participate in a variety of play and educational activities. Always a popular event. Meet at Rust Visitor Center.

**April 23, Guadalupe River SP, Earth Day, 5:30 to 8:30p.m.** Flintknapping demonstration by Richard Dobie and slide program on Native Americans of South Texas by the Texas Archeological Society. Meet at Park Amphitheater.

**April 23-Cibolo Wilderness Trail, Earth Day Plant Sale. 9a.m.-4p.m.**

**April 30 (TCP) Honey Creek SNA, - 9:00 a.m. to Noon.** Tree and plant identification walk with Paul Cox, Author of Texas Trees, A Friendly Guide. Meet at Rust Visitor Center.

**May 1-Friedrich Wilderness Park, Birdathon.** Travel from Friedrich Park to Mitchell Lake exploring for birds.

**May 7th-Friedrich Wilderness Park, 1st Saturday General Natural History Hike. 9 - 10:30 a.m.**

**May 7 - (TCP) Honey Creek SNA, 9:00 a.m. to Noon.** View Micro-invertebrate life of Honey Creek. Guide Bud Kroschewsky of Edwards Aquatic Research&Data Ctr. Learn how these organisms help us determine quality of water resources. Meet at Rust Visitor Center.

**May 7 - Guadalupe River SP, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.** Exploration of the Universe: An astronomy slide/lecture program covering the splendor of deep space by Bob Gent of the San Antonio Astronomical Assoc. After the program, view the planet Jupiter and other celestial objects through a 6" Newtonian telescope. Meet at Park Amphitheater.

**May 11-13 "Urban Trees: Nurturing Our Changing Society."** Texas Urban Forestry Council Spring Conf. San Antonio. (210)805-8733.

**May 21-Honey Creek SNA (TCP) 9:00 to 11:30a.m.** Botany Walk. Learn about cultural uses of native hill country plants for foods, medicines, fibers. 1 mile hike, wear good shoes and hat, etc. Meet at Rust Visitor Center.

**May 19-Bexar Audubon general meeting. Hornbills. Ruble Center. 7:30 p.m.**

**May 28, Guadalupe River SP, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.** The Fascination of Texas Reptiles by Thomas Vermersch, Wildlife lecturer & Author. Hands-on activities for kids and live reptiles. At 8:00 p.m. the program will be wrapped up with a spectacular multimedia slide program.

**May 28-Cibolo Wilderness Trail, 11a.m. - Noon.** Hawks up close.

**June 4-Friedrich Wilderness Park, 9 - 10:30 a.m.** Insects are the subject of the 2nd Saturday program. Also **Project Wild Workshop 9am - 3pm**, free to teachers and interested individuals. Call for reservations.

**June 4-Honey Creek SNA (TCP) 9:00 - Noon** Aquatic Ecology of Honey Creek. Led by James White of UTSA. Meet at Rust Vistory Center.

**June 11, Honey Creek SNA(TCP) 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.** Nature hike along Honey Creek Canyon. Learn about the cultural and environmental history of the hill country. Meet at Rust Visitor Center.

**June 11 - Guadalupe River SP,(TCP) 1:30 - 4:00 p.m.** Hydrography of Guadalupe River. Bring you mask and snorkle for a fish eye tour after a dry land based intro. Meet at Park Amphitheater.

**June 18-Honey Creek SNA (TCP)9:00 - Noon** Bug Man, Dan Sundberg will lead a trail walk to identify insects with special emphasis on beetles. Meet at Rust Visitor Center.

**June 18-Honey Creek SNA, (TCP)8:00 - 9:00 p.m.** 11,000 years of Cultural History of Central Texas. Fascinating Slide/lecture by Herb Uecker, DBA South Texas Archeological Research Services. Park Amphitheater.

**June 25-Honey Creek SNA, (TCP)9:00 - Noon** Geology of Honey Creek Canyon and the Edwards Plateau. Led by Chris Caran, Author, Geologist & Research Scientist at UT Austin.

**June 25-Guadalupe River SP, 12:30-1:30.** Learn the basics of using a key to identify plants. Also as we go learn cultural uses of local flora. \$4.00 fee for plant key, you keep. Make reservations at headquarters.

**July 2-Guadalupe River SP, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.** David McKelvey Author of childrens books and Naturalist will be here with special animal friends. Park Amphitheater.

**July 9-Guadalupe River SP, 8:00 - 9:00 p.m.** Basic Techniques and Strategies for great Photography. Slide/lecture by Rosco Creed of Woodlawn Camera Club. Park Amphitheater.

**July 9-Guadalupe River SP, 12:30-1:30.** Learn the basics of using a key to identify plants. Also as we go learn cultural uses of local flora. \$4.00 fee for plant key, you keep. Make reservations at headquarters.

**July 16-Guadalupe River SP, (TCP) Dark till ??** Stargazing with The San Antonio Astronomical Assoc. Learn about telescopes, star charts and other heavenly bodies.

**July 23-Honey Creek SNA, (TCP) 9:00 - 11:00p.m.** Childrens's nature activity. easy walk down to Honey Creek with stops along the way to look at plants, bugs. Expect wet feet at creek. Rust Visitor Ctr.

**July 30-Honey Creek SNA, (TCP) 10:30 - 2:00p.m.** Make Mustang grape jelly! Reservations required. \$10.00 fee includes all supplies. Inquire at headquarters.

Friends of Guadalupe River / Honey Creek, Inc.  
3350 Park Rd. 31  
Spring Branch, TX 78070