

FRIENDS



OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK
HONEY CREEK SNA



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2020

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Come on out - the birding is GREAT

by Linda Glinder

Spring is on the way and the park is once again transforming. Mild temperatures coupled with Mother Nature awakening from her long winter nap makes for eye catching spots of color and activity. And birds are taking notice. Many winter residents will remain at the park through early spring, especially if we have a late season cold front. It's a good time to get close looks while they focus on preparing for their journey. At the same time, year-round residents become more active as they begin to court and select nesting sites. The Park welcomes the season by rolling out a feast of insects and berries. It is a great time to wander the trails along the river, in the woodlands, and savannahs. During your wandering, search for birds in the thrush family.

The thrush family can be found worldwide, and the family is well represented in North America with about sixty species. They tend to be plump looking birds and their songs can be melodious involving clear notes and whistles. Males tend to sit on exposed perches in the spring making them easier to find. At the Park, the family is nicely represented by the American Robin and Eastern Bluebird. Both well worth a trip to the Park.

The American Robin is a winter resident and they tend to stick around into early spring. They are getting ready for their journey to their breeding grounds in northern Texas and up into Canada. Their range is expansive from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts. At ten inches they are a large songbird. They have a roundish body, long legs, and long tail. They have a gray-brown back with an orangish breast. The head is a bit darker than the back with white around the eye and streaked throat. While at the park they are most often found in flocks from a few birds up to several dozen. During the day they can be found anywhere with berries such as on the juniper, yaupon and agarita shrubs or bounding across a grassy area in search of worms and insects. When



American Robin (Photo by John Prentice)

you find a group on the ground take a few moments to watch. They will run a few steps then stop abruptly. Often cocking their head from side to side listening for insects. Look for robins in the Day Use Area or along the Painted Bunting Trail. They also

frequent the bird blind where a group will take a communal bath. Since they breed further north, you won't get to see a nest or eggs, but we can imagine what they must look like because Crayola honored the American Robin by naming one of their colors "Robin's Egg Blue".

The Eastern Bluebird is a year-round Park resident. They tend to be more numerous and easier to find in Spring and Summer when they are more active and courting. They are a small thrush of seven inches with a plump body and alert posture. They have longish wings, but their tail and legs are fairly short. The bill too is short.

Males have a vivid bright blue back and rusty red throat and breast. A white belly makes



Eastern Bluebirds (Photo by Ken Butler)

them a standout bird. Females are similar but duller overall. The Eastern Bluebird has two North American cousins, Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird, both have ranges west of the Park. Bluebirds are cavity nesters and they seek out abandoned woodpecker holes. They readily use bird houses when available and in a preferred spot. That trait has greatly helped the Eastern Bluebird as the introduced European Starling will out compete them for nesting sites. They like open country with trees dispersed throughout and little understory. They eat insects and berries. Look for bluebirds along the Painted Bunting, Prairie, and Savannah Loop Trails. Scan the tops of live oaks as Bluebirds often perch high for a good view.

If you would like to learn more about birding at the park, pick up a birding checklist at the Ranger Station, Discovery Center, or Bird Blind. The checklist outlines by season what species you may encounter. Follow the park on Facebook to learn about upcoming birding programs with Ranger Holly and park volunteers. Stop in at the woodland bird blind located in the Day Use Area for up close looks. The bird blind is supported by the Friends of Guadalupe River and is maintained year-round by a Bird Blind Care Team.



Discovery Center Hours:

Thursday & Friday: 12 - 4 pm
 Saturday & Sunday: 10 am - 4 pm
 Other days open as staffing allows

Program Park Highlights

by Holly Platz

Guadalupe River State Park offers a wide variety of engaging, hands-on programs for children and adults throughout the year. All programs are free with park admission of \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free) or a current TPWD park pass. Unless otherwise indicated, programs do not require pre-registration. All ages are welcome!

While you are in the Park, be sure to stop into our Discovery Center, complete with hands-on exhibits and all sorts of wonderful skins, skulls, artifacts, and more to enjoy. You can also check out a free backpack with binoculars, magnifiers, field guides and more to make your own discoveries along the trails of the Park.

****Save the date!** Reserve your spot online ahead of time to guarantee your entrance to the park -- even if it closes for capacity. You can do this up to 30 days in advance with your credit card, or for free with your Annual Texas State Parks pass: <https://texasstateparks.reserveamerica.com/>

Every Saturday, 9:00 - 11:30 am, and 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays, 9:00 - 11:30 am Honey Creek Nature Hike – Honey Creek State Natural Area – Meet at the Rust House (inside the park). Join our trained volunteer guides for a walk to and along Honey Creek. You'll be immersed in both the natural and cultural history of the area as well as come to understand the importance of Honey Creek and our efforts to conserve this important area. These hikes, sponsored by the Friends of Guadalupe River & Honey Creek, request a \$2 donation per person to support ongoing Friends Group support for the park and natural area, in addition to park admission. No dogs, please.

Friday, March 6th, 3:30 - 4:30 pm: *Young Naturalists Children's Program at Mammen Family Public Library, Bulverde* - (830) 438-4864 - Join Ranger Holly every month for Young Naturalists! We'll find out about nature, read a story and do a craft or activity. Preregistration is required; call the Library for more information and to register: (830) 438-4864

Saturday, March 7th, 6:30 - 8:30 pm: *Star Party with San Antonio Astronomical Association - Held at the large Overflow parking lot (just up the road from the Day Use area)*. The San Antonio Astronomical Association will have a variety of telescopes for viewing and will be glad to explain their operation and more. Cloud coverage could cancel this program – check the park's Facebook page by 4 pm or call the park the day of the event for updates.

Tuesday, March 10th, 7:30 - 9:30 pm: *Honey Creek Night Hike Meet at the Rust House (inside the Park)*. Come experience Honey Creek State Natural Area at night! Access to this protected area is limited to

March 2020 Family Programs

Guadalupe River State Park

3350 Park Road 31

Spring Branch, TX 78070

(830) 438-2656 (Park Headquarters)

Look for more programs and information on the park's webpage:
<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/guadalupe-river>

Spring Break Extended Weekday Hours:

Monday, March 9th - Friday, March 13th: 10 am - 4 pm
 Monday, March 13th - Friday, March 20th: 10 am - 2 pm



Like us on Facebook!

[Facebook.com/GuadalupeRiverStatePark](https://www.facebook.com/GuadalupeRiverStatePark)

guided hikes only, so you won't want to miss it! Wear good walking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring a flashlight or a headlamp (these work better than cell phone flashlights). This moderate hike is about 2 miles. No dogs, please.

Wednesday, March 11th, 12:00 - 2:00 pm: *Archery in the Park at Honey Creek State Natural Area. Meet at the Rust House (inside the Park)*. Join us for the safe and fun sport of archery! This program is for ages 10 and up only, for safety reasons. Join us at any time during the afternoon. Bring water and dress for the weather. All equipment provided.

Thursday, March 12th, 10:00 - 11:30 am: *Birding 101. Meet at the Amphitheater behind the Discovery Center*. How do you tell all those birds apart? Join the park ranger to find out! We'll go over binocular tips and tricks, and then see what birds we can spot at the bird blind. All ages and skill levels welcome! Binoculars provided or bring your own.

Friday, March 13th, 10:00 - 11:30 am: *All-a-Buzz About our Pollinators and Native Wildflowers. Held in front of the Discovery Center*. Join Ranger Holly for the 'buzz' on our pollinator friends. Let's explore our native plant garden, the Habiscape, for our star pollinators--BEES and their favorite native plants! We will discover the importance of these tiny insects and make a beeswax candle to take home.

Saturday, March 14th, 10:00 - 11:30 am: *Discovery Center Loop and Scenic Overlook Nature Hike. Meet in front of the Discovery Center*. Join us for a nature walk on the trails, and check out the beautiful Scenic Overlook for a great view of the river! This easy trail is about 1 mile round trip and mostly level, with a few rocky areas. Wear good walking shoes, bring drinking water, and dress for the weather. All ages welcome!

Tuesday, March 17th, 7:30 - 9:00 pm: *Twilight Hike. Meet at the Amphitheater behind the Discovery Center*. Join us for a twilight hike! Wear good walking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring a flashlight or a headlamp for when it gets dark (these work better than cell phone flashlights). This easy walk is less than 1 mile. All ages welcome! No dogs, please.

Program Park Highlights

by Holly Platz

Wednesday, March 18th, 10:00 - 11:30 am: *Geocaching 101. Meet at the Amphitheater behind the Discovery Center.* Join us for Geocaching, a high-tech treasure hunt you can do anywhere in the world using GPS units! All supplies, including loaner GPS units, will be provided for this program. Wear good walking shoes, bring water, and dress for the weather. All ages welcome!

Thursday, March 19th, 10:00 - 11:00 am (drop-in): *Japanese Fish Printing. Held in front of the Discovery Center.* Try the ancient art of Gyotaku -- a method that Japanese fishermen used to record their catch. Block ink, paper, and rubber fish all provided.

Friday, March 20th, 10:00 - 10:30 am: *Water for Wildlife and More Followed by a Nature Walk along Bald Cypress Trail, 10:30 am - 12 noon* Feel free to join us for either program or stay for both! -- *Held at the Amphitheater behind the Discovery Center.* What happens when the river doesn't flow? Join us for a fun presentation and find out how your actions to conserve water at the park affect you, wildlife, and more! After the presentation, join us for an easy nature walk along Bald Cypress Trail (about 1 mile round-trip). We'll walk to the famous Guadalupe River rapids, exploring all aspects of nature along the way. Wear comfortable walking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring drinking water. All ages welcome!

Saturday, March 28th, 10:00 - 11:00 am: *Birding with a Ranger. Meet in front of the Discovery Center.* Come birding with us! We'll check out the bird blind to see what birds are coming in to eat, bathe, and drink. Then if time permits, we'll take a short walk. Binoculars provided, or bring your own. All ages and skill levels welcome!

Saturday, March 28th, 1:00 - 3:00 pm: *The Legend of the Bluebonnet at Honey Creek State Natural Area - Meet at the Rust House (inside the Park).* Join us as we read Tomie dePaola's The Legend of the Bluebonnet, and then we'll go on a hike into the protected Natural Area to see bluebonnets! Trail is about 1.5 miles round-trip, with a steep hill. Wear good walking shoes and sun protection, and bring drinking water. No dogs, please.

2020 HOMESTEADER HOMECOMING

SAVE THE DATE!

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2020 @ 10:00 AM

Please join us at the Doepenschmidt/Weidner Ranch for a tour of the old homestead and the grave of Jacob Doepenschmidt. We will be seeking information you can provide on the early activities at the ranch and ways we can make this historic site the venue for regular guided hikes. Reservations are required, since the area is not accessible except by prior permission.

For further information and to make a reservation, contact: Mackenzie Brown, mbrown@trinity.edu or cell: 210-748-1110. Details will be provided once reservations are made.

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WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

Interpreter Update

by Holly Platz

I can't believe spring is here, but I'm ready for it. Wildflowers, bird migration, more families enjoying the park -- spring always brings excitement. We have several new things going on at Guadalupe River State Park this spring that I'm eager to share with you. Here's just a sampling:

Once again, we have many schools planning their spring field trips to Guadalupe River State Park. Last spring's field trip season was terrific, thanks to the experience and dedication of our volunteers. Each year more and more schools request to bring their students out for a terrific field experience at the park, which is no surprise. This year we are again developing and restructuring our field trips in order to provide the best experience possible for students, teachers, volunteers, and park staff.

This spring we will once again be conducting surveys for our Texas native, the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler that flies all the way from Central America to nest in the Texas Hill Country. Many of you have volunteered your time for many years, hiking through the cedar brakes, to survey these little birds. This spring we will continue survey efforts with a new protocol put in place by our regional Natural Resources team.

If you haven't stopped by the Discovery Center within the past few months, I hope you can make it out here soon! In the fall we had Interpretive Technicians spend a lot of time doing some repairs and improvements to the exhibits, including putting new lights in all the constellations in the "Dark Park" room! We also have acquired some great new puppets and displays, plus an exciting Dark Sky backpack (currently free to checkout to overnight campers only). Make sure to come visit! We're always open 10 am - 4 pm on the weekends, with special hours for spring break, summer, and holidays -- check our park website for the latest details.

There's always something going on at the park, and spring is a busy and exciting time. I've said it before, and I'll say it again -- I am humbled and truly blessed to work alongside such dedicated and passionate volunteers. You make the park a more beautiful, personable, and meaningful place for the families who visit here. Thank you for all that you do.

#BigGive2020

The Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. has joined the BigGive this year!

March 26, 2020



Please consider making a donation to help support the many activities at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area. Support is needed for

Nature Programs for children and adults, for supplies and equipment for preservation and maintenance, for materials for developing ADA-compliant programs and for restoration of the century-old Rust House. For more information and to make a donation on March 26th, here is the website:

<https://www.thebiggivesa.org/organizations/friends-of-guadalupe-river-honey-creek-inc.>

THANK YOU!

When Grass was as High as a Horse's Belly by Mackenzie Brown & Charleen Moore

What's a convenient way to measure the height of a native grass? Grab a horse, ride onto a grass prairie, make your observation, and record the finding. Many have used this simple equine standard, often with astonishingly similar results: 1) "Nearly the whole country was covered with good though coarse grass, which was as high as a horse's belly..."¹ 2) "Continuing northward they rode through tall dry grass high as their horses' bellies..."³ 3) "Grasses typically grow as 'high as a horse's belly.'" 4) "She was raised on a ranch ...where in a good year, the grass grows as high as a horse's belly." 5) "The meadows of grass grew as high as a horse's belly." 6) "The vast plain waved with tall, rank grass, that swept our horses' bellies." 7) "Early accounts of grasses as high as a horse's belly in these areas could easily hide a cougar..." 8) "Early explorers described [the native grasses] as scraping the bellies of their horses as they waded through a stand, if not completely hiding the horse." 9) "[T]he old-timers told stories of the grass growing as high as a horse's belly." 10) "This was a hard and fickle land long before settlers picked out a spot where the bluestem grass grew as high as a horse's belly and put a plow in the ground, only to see their dreams wash away with their topsoil." 11) "[M]ost folks cannot believe that the area around us was once a lush grassland 'as high as the belly of a horse.'" 12) "But what had been lost [with the settling of the West?]... His children never knowing the wildness of the land: no howl of the Gray Wolf... no tall grasses rubbing under his horse's belly..." 13) "It is almost impossible to imagine what this flood plain looked like a hundred years ago.... There were giant cottonwood, mesquite, willow, sycamore, and paloverde, and grass—grass tall enough to 'brush a horse's belly;.... Today... [w]here the mesquite have not taken hold, the ground is bare except for a rare patch of grass." 14) "[T]he rising sands are part of a new desert forming here on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, a legendary stretch once known for grasses reaching as high as a horse's belly..." 15) "This range is beautiful with grass tall enough to tickle a horse's belly." 16) "[T]he grass came up on the mesas high as a horse's belly." 17) "Its valley floors are covered with lush green grass that in summertime stretches upward as high as a horse's belly." 18) "We can guess that the two [brothers] labored arduously on this land where, in pre-settlement time, native prairie grass grew tall enough to brush the flank of a horse."

Clearly a horse's belly has been a common measure for grass height, and sometime for more sanguinary subjects, as in early biblical accounts: "Blood will flow as high as the belly of a horse..." and perhaps a bit higher than the belly: "The horse will walk through the blood of sinners up to his chest."² Sticking to grasses, we may first ask about the specific environment and context for the quotations above. They come literally from around the world. The first describes a tall grass prairie in Argentina, recorded by Charles Darwin in 1833. The second and third refer to the South Texas coastal plains and Blackland Prairie of North Texas, respectively. The fourth portrays the prairies of Montana; the fifth, of Northern California; the sixth, the Platte River on the Oregon Trail; the seventh, the Midwest; the eighth, the Humboldt River Basin in Nevada. The ninth is of local interest, as it refers to the grasses around the Bamberger Ranch Preserve. The tenth through thirteenth refer to Western Oklahoma, Pipe Springs National Monument in Arizona, Utah, and the Santa Cruz River Basin in Arizona, respectively. The fourteenth refers to the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau in Northwest China undergoing desertification at the end of the twentieth century. The fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth are fictional, set in Texas, Arizona, and Oregon, respectively. And finally, the eighteenth refers to the Doeppenschmidt farmstead in what is today the Honey Creek State Natural Area. At least two of the recent quotations above place the horse-belly-high grass phrase in quotation marks, suggesting it has become a popular stock phrase.

As one astute commentator notes, the image of horse-belly-high grass was often irresistible to film-makers and authors portraying the old West: "In old western movies and novels, wagon masters and settlers often talked of buffalograss so tall that it was belly deep to a horse..."³ It seems that land developers also could not resist the image: "'Grass as high as a horse's belly,' 'Streams as pure as a mountain spring.' This picture of the west was spread by land agents promoting settlement in the mid-late 1800s. Today these myths fuel the environmental concerns of those who blame ranchers for any deterioration of ranchland."⁴

Despite the overwhelming popularity of the horse-belly-highgrass

image in fiction and film, there have been a number of alternative equine-related measurements: "Early American surveyors riding through the virgin tallgrass prairie found the grass stirrup high to their horses," according to a typical report from the federal Environmental Protection Agency.⁵ Another alternative measurement describes a pioneer-era horse ride by Army officer and Western explorer Stephen Kearny: "It was virgin tallgrass prairie, and Kearny and his men rode stirrup-deep through young bluestem and flowers ..." 6 And as Jim Stanley notes, early explorers sometimes referred to grass still higher than the belly of the horse or the stirrups, reaching as high as the saddle horn.⁷ One early adventurer even remarks: "In the low, wet prairies...the traveler often finds [the



Fig. 1. Grass higher than a horse's head⁹

grass] higher than his head, as he rides through it on horseback"⁸ (see Fig. 1). Other early observations include: "[We] [c]rossed the Trinity at Parkers Bluff On the southeastern side at the place of crossing there is a glade prairie 6 miles wide and 10 long . . . It is covered with coarse grass as high as a horse's back, yet so level is it, that when on horse back you can see every part of the plain..."¹⁰ and "In places, the grass was so tall that it was necessary to stand on

the back of a horse to see over the top of the grass."¹¹

Occasionally, other large animals became the measure: "To the east at the distance of a mile a herd of Buffalo were quietly grazing their humps only visible above the tall grass."¹² "North Texas prairies had grass tall enough to hide all but the antlers, necks and tails of bounding deer or the humps of grazing buffalo, while south Texas prairie grass was tall enough and thick enough to hide men crouching on sleds being pulled through it by oxen. What luxuriant cover this was! What a commentary on our greed is the naked, almost barren state of our overgrazed prairie pastures today, which will hardly hide a rabbit."¹³

The very earliest explorers of the American Great Plains saw a mostly treeless and uninhabited expanse of land, leaving the impression among the public in the early 1800s that the plains were a wasteland, a desert. Thus, a government surveyor in the early 1820s reported, with reference to the Great Plains, "I do not hesitate in giving the opinion, that it is almost wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course, uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for their subsistence."¹⁴ Yet this early popular perception of the great prairies, based largely on ignorance of their agricultural potential, soon gave way in the mid-eighteenth century to a very different image. We see this new perception reflected in several of the quotations above that express a sense of loss of the original grasslands, of the tallgrass prairies succumbing to ignorance, overgrazing, and greed. While there is considerable truth to some of these lamentations, there is also at times a bit of nostalgic reimagining of the past. David Bradford, rangeland management specialist in Colorado, for instance, writing about the legendary "stirrup-high grass" of western Colorado, notes: "There are numerous stories of North America as it existed before European settlement. These stories often describe a virtual Garden of Eden. It has become conventional wisdom in popular American culture that European immigrants had a profoundly destructive impact on the North American landscape and that the indigenous peoples lived in perfect harmony with the land." Bradford wondered about the accuracy of these stories, especially in light of the area's scant rainfall (only 4" falling in the growing season). After careful analysis of early pioneer accounts and photographs, he concludes, "I could find not firsthand historical accounts that provide any evidence that [the area] supported stirrup-high grass at any time over the past 250 years."¹⁵

But what about the Hill Country? Eric Lautzenheiser, past president of the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration, addresses a number of myths about the area, beginning with: "The first myth that I'd like to deal with is that this was a sea of grass—that this was predominately a savannah or grassland, with grass belly high to a horse or higher." His enigmatic answer: "Well, it was—but it wasn't." He clarifies: "We did have great grasslands in the Hill Country, but that was just a part of the landscape. And we did have

When Grass was as High as a Horse's Belly by Mackenzie Brown & Charleen Moore

grasses that were three, four and five feet tall—but what's happened over time is we had a percentage of grassland, we had a percentage of brushland, we had a percentage of cedar brakes, and those percentages have shifted drastically, to where now woody species are dominating the landscape...." He concludes: "So, the truth is that this was not a sea of grass. It did have great grassland components in it, but it's always been a shifting matrix of woodlands, brushlands and grasslands."16 Steve Nelle, Wildlife Biologist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, makes a similar argument on the basis of numerous pre-1860 accounts: "[T]he Hill Country of Texas was not predominantly open grassland prior to European settlement as is widely believed....The arrangement of different soils and topography, mixed with the varying effect of fire, resulted in what can only be called a dynamic mosaic of many vegetation types. There is ample evidence from history that the mosaic of the Hill country was predominantly wooded."17

How favorable, then, is the Hill Country to tall grassland prairies? What, specifically, are the climatic conditions favorable to such? Worldwide, as in China and Argentina, as well as in North America, prairies are found in the middle of continents, away from oceans that moderate temperature extremes. Prairies tend to flourish in regions with extreme cold in winter and extreme heat in summer, as well as extended periods of drought. The native grasses that make up the tallgrass prairies in North America, such as the big bluestem, switchgrass, yellow indiagrass, and the shortest of the tall grasses, little bluestem (often 2-4' tall, except under very favorable conditions), have deep roots that survive temperature extremes and drought, while trees and larger woody plants find such conditions unendurable. As for the Hill Country, we are on the southern edge of the tallgrass prairies with about 30-34" of rain per year on average; further west and north, one encounters the mixed grass prairies, and still further west, with still drier conditions, shortgrass prairies, eventually giving way to desert in the American Southwest (see Fig. 2). Some researchers suggest that in our area, the predominant native grass historically was little bluestem.18 Thus, very likely, the grasses in the Honey Creek area would have tickled the bellies of the Doeppenschmidt horses, at least prior to plowing and livestock grazing. Stanley emphasizes that little bluestem is found on healthy Hill Country rangelands today.19

So when and where can we expect to find grass as high as a horse's belly in the future? The late Clem McSpadden, the voice of professional rodeo for many decades, perhaps says it best in the conclusion to his "A Cowboys' Prayer" (1950s): "Help us, Lord, to live our lives in such a manner that when we make that last inevitable ride to the country up there, where the grass grows lush, green and stirrup high, and the water runs cool, clear and deep, that you, as our last Judge, will tell us that our entry fees are paid."21 Stirrup-high grass will always be there in our dreams, so it seems, whatever the realities on the ground.

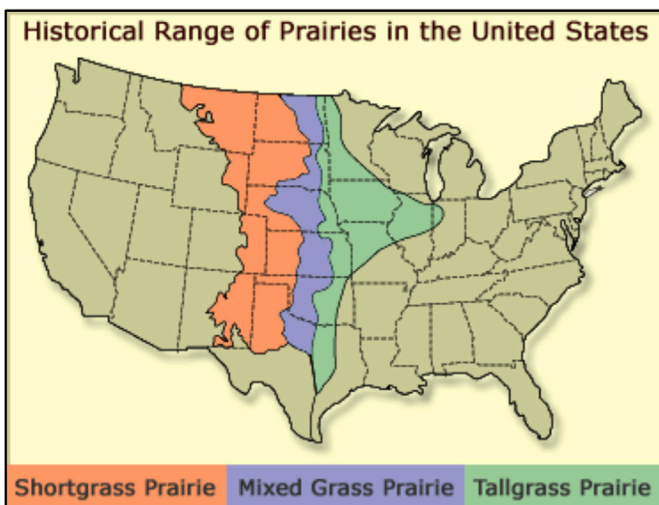


Fig 2. From J.Haukos20

1 The sources for all of the preceding quotations are listed here in order: 1) C. Darwin (1907), *Journal of Researches Into Natural History & Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage Round the World of H. M. S. "Beagle," Under the Command of Captain Fitz Roy, R. N.* [better known today as *Voyage of the Beagle*], p. 147; 2) M.D. Sizer (1999), *King Ranch Story: Truth and Myth*, p. 23; 3) "Our Service Area: Areas in North Texas Served by Connemara Conservancy" (2013), *Connemara Conservancy*; 4) M. Haederle (March 5, 1996), "Capturing the Lives of Women at Home on the Range," *Los Angeles Times*; 5) K.C. Patrick (2008), *The Pomo of Lake County*, p. 9; 6) F. Parkman (1852), *Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life*, 3rd ed., p. 87; 7) J.W. Laundré (2012), *Phantoms of the Prairie: The Return of Cougars to the Midwest*, p. 35; 8) L. Hyslop (July 13, 2013), *Elko Daily Press*; 9) G.E. Mcleod (May 10, 2002), "Selah, Bamberger Ranch redux," *Austin Chronicle*; 10) T. Lindley (January 23, 2005), "Rancher Sees Beauty in Land's History," *The Oklahoman*; 11) "Grass as high as the belly of a horse . . ." (2019), <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=337791076890425>; 12) J.D. Russell (2016), "A Pioneer Story: Tribute to the Unknown Mormon Pioneer," *National Park Service*; 13) D. Sheridan (1981), *Desertification of the United States*, p. 60; 14) L.R. Brown (2001), *Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth*, p. 61; 15) A. Latham (2006), *Riding with John Wayne*, p. 257; 16) D. Coolidge (1910), *Hidden Water*, p. 32; 17) G.L. Hayden (2013), *Mary Martha's Really Truly Stories: Bk 9*, p. 30; 18) Anon. (ca. 1985), *untitled typescript w. handwritten note*, "Written by the Nature Conservancy," from files of Penny Solis.

2 The two biblical quotations are from *Esdras 15:35* (*Common English Bible*), and *1 Enoch 100.3*, quoted in G. R. Osborne (2002), *Revelation*, p. 555, respectively.

3 T.Y. Harris (1992), "Buffalograss."

4 E.M. White (1996), "Are Ranches an Environmental Hazard?" *Rangelands* 18:1.

5 Quoted by R. Ring (November 28, 2013), "Discovery: Good ol' tallgrass was formed by good ol' bacteria," *High Country News*.

6 J. Madson (2005), *The Elemental Prairie: Sixty Tallgrass Plants*, p. 6.

7 J. Stanley, *Hill Country Ecology*, p. 38.

8 Del Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas: The Lands and Waters*, p. 7.

9 Rilana Van Kesteren on Mocha behind seven-foot tall switchgrass; photo by Mackenzie Brown.

10 Del Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*, p. 7.

11 US Army Corps of Engineers (n.d.), "Prairies of the Midwest."

12 Del Weniger, *Explorers' Texas*, p. 8.

13 *Ibid.*

14 J. Haukos (n.d.), "The Tall Grass Prairie." (<https://keep.konza.kstate.edu/prairieecology/TallgrassPrairieEcology.pdf>).

15 D. Bradford (2004), "When the Grass Stood Stirrup-High: Historical Fact or Urban

Myth?" *Rangelands*, 26 (5), pp. 5, 12.

16 E. Lautsenheiser (February 26-27, 2010), "Hill Country Natural History—Myth, Legends and the Record," presentation at the 7th Farm and Range Forum in Fredericksburg, pp. 1-2.

17 S. Nelle (July 2012), "The Great Grassland Myth of the Texas Hill Country," *Texas Wildlife*, p. 51.

18 N. Fowler (11/05/2019), "Central Texas Savannas: Fire, Grazing, and Invasive Species," presentation at Cibolo Nature Center. Cf. J. Stanley, pp. 39, 42.

19 J. Stanley, *Hill Country Ecology*, p. 39.

20 J. Haukos (n.d.) (see note 13 above).

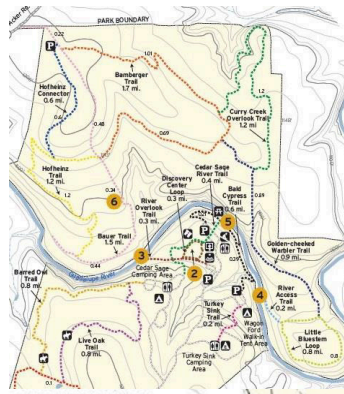
21 Quoted by R. Goldstein (July 14, 2008), "Clem McSpadden, 82, Voice of Pro Rodeo, Dies," *New York Times*.

American Youth Works Trail Crew

by Barrett Durst

Guadalupe River SP/Bauer Unit Trail Upgrades 2019
Texas Conservation Corps Trail Crew-Finished Spring/Summer 2019

One of the greatest joys of being a Park Ranger with Texas Parks and Wildlife is the privilege of working outdoors. Just ask any Park Ranger and they'll tell you that their job is one of a kind. As a Ranger, one day you may find yourself operating a chainsaw cutting down a dead tree that poses a safety risk to visitors, and the next you may be on a trail conducting some trail maintenance (one of my favorite jobs as a Park Ranger), or cleaning bathrooms. Many visitors come to the park to enjoy our trails for that special feeling that they've entered another world away from the busy, congested life of the big city. In 2019, Guadalupe River was fortunate enough to have the Texas Conservation Corps bring some talented men and women who share our love of the outdoors with the purpose of adding more trails to our current system. If you like the trails at Guadalupe River proper (aka-the southside of the park or main park), then you will absolutely love the additions that were added this past year to our North side (aka-Bauer Unit) on the other side of the river.



Bauer Unit Directions:
Turn right onto Hwy. 46 from Park Road 31. Go 3 miles and turn right on FM 3351. Go approx. 3.5 miles and turn right on Edge Falls Road. Continue for 2.4 miles and turn right on Adler Road. Go 2.2 miles to entrance.

Texas Conservation Corps (TxCC) participants engage in hands-on conservation projects on public lands, coastal regions, National Parks and recreational areas across the Central Southern United States. TxCC crews, as part of the greater AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams, are trained and are deployed by FEMA to help communities impacted by natural disasters like the recent hurricanes Harvey and Irma.



Figure 1: Members (left to right)
Top row: top row: Breanna Hild and Joey Dale.
Second row: Crew Leaders, Samuel Walters, and Amber Wisor. Bottom row: Sharla Scantling, John Hayden Smetzer, Yuliya Semenova, Taylor Loera, and Luka Summers.

The Conservation Corps experience builds leadership skills, connection with community, and prepares young people with skills needed to enter the workforce with a strong work ethic and sense of service (americanyouthworks.org, 2019). Guadalupe River State Park is truly grateful to the men and women for their



Figure 2: Members (left to right) Nico Selby, William Fink, Dominic Alahambra, Honora Prince, Crew Leader Eli Penaloza, and Grant McKenzie

service of building some amazing new trails on our Bauer Unit north side of the park.

These trail additions (2.7 miles!) offer some peaceful, fun, adventurous trails for hiking, running, biking and exploring in the quaint TX Hill Country. These wild spaces offer just the place to find some solitude for whatever your heart desires.

One brand new addition is called Curry Creek Overlook. You can take this trail for a shady hike/bike ride along a breezy ridge that follows along some nice draws and see firsthand why this land is called the Hill Country. During the Spring months, stop along this trail and listen to the Black and White Warbler while they sing their chorus or look for the White-tailed deer and the elusive Aoudad who frequent the area. You'll have to be quiet while hiking to hopefully have a mere chance



at seeing these two mammals. They have a keen sense of smell and hearing and will probably hear you before you even have a chance to see them. More than likely you'll see their tracks on the trail as they often use the same trail for travel. When you're on this trail you feel like you have just entered some mythical place that you only see in the movies. A few strands of Spanish moss hang down from the trees, and lichens cling to just about everything in sight. Put on your boots, your favorite hiking attire, and be prepared to remove your sunglasses for this hike, because this hike puts you under tree canopy almost the entire length.

Another addition that was installed is the Hofheinz Connector trail that connects the Hofheinz to the parking lot and back to Bauer Trail. This lovely piece of single-track winds back and forth under full tree canopy cover and offers tons of shade for those summer fun days. While on this trail, keep an eye out for armadillos and listen for the Golden Cheeked Warblers again. They have a chorus that is unmistakable. This cool little bird nests only in the TX Hill Country and resides on the current endangered species list. If biking is your thing, this trail is quite fun heading southbound towards the river but be careful to make sure that your brakes are working well. Speed is not your friend on this rocky decent.



Yet another section of trail that was recently installed at the Bauer Unit is the continuation of the Hofheinz Trail, which now allows you to travel through a hole in an old rock fence. This new section is the most southern portion. It's amazing to think of the men, women and children who built the rock fence. These hardy folks must have had a love for the outdoors, or was it the parents who

really found a good way to discipline their children? Who knows, but this was no small task and it took long hours of hauling and stacking rock. The fences out here are a true statement that have stood the test of time and continue to cover the area reminding us of who was here before us. They were built with such workmanship and so much attention to detail was paid, that the rock was stacked with a cap rock. By the early 1860's, the German settlers in this area had built nearly 160 miles of fence. The rocks were plentiful (typical of the TX Hill Country) and the fencing wire was scarce.

The lower section of the Hofheinz Trail meanders through the trees and along the edges of old fields to eventually intersect with the Bauer Trail. While traversing this area, keep an eye out for the Axis deer, which are an exotic species native to India that were introduced here in Texas in 1932. Their call can be heard from afar and, just a warning, it's kind of spooky if you've never heard one. I would describe it as a person screaming with a sore throat. The bucks use this call during the rut season. If you hear a real short burst, it's more than likely the doe bleat because you spooked her as you were trampling through her backyard. This trail continues beneath the tree canopy at the southern portion. You may have to hike a bike in some sections, but all is good. It's wonderful on foot because you start to hear the roar of the Guadalupe River as it flows over rock embankments. Ah, the sound of running water, how refreshing a sound that soothes the soul. This is where the trail parallels the river and wanders over an old ranch road. You'll notice that you're travelling through what were once fields used to cultivate crops and hay on this old farmstead.



The trails here would not be available to you if it were not for the herculean efforts of these 2 crews of talented men and women who are part of the American Youth Works Conservation Corps. The crew members hail from all over the USA with different life experiences and stories to tell. Now, after a few long months of waking up early, going to bed early, sheltering from thunderstorms, and warding off the rascally racoons; they will have yet another life experience that will live on forever within them and within the boundaries of Guadalupe River State Park.

Whether you're walking, running, hiking or biking; come enjoy the outdoors in its natural state and beauty. It is being outdoors that ultimately make the inside of all of us feel alive and well. This is what we all need to reconnect to our inner self and find the peace in all of us. Enjoy your park, because its our pleasure to steward this land for you.

Spring into Action

by Thea Platz

Spring is just around the corner, a time of new growth, change and renewal. Spring is a time when many of us are more energized as days get longer, the weather becomes consistently warmer and the sun is shining more often than not. We are ready to start new projects and looking for new things to enrich our lives. Now is a good time to jump in as a volunteer at the park. There is something for just about every interest and level of time commitment you have. We will soon be forming committees to organize volunteering in various areas. You can contact me Thea to let me know you are interested. You can also be an individual volunteer, contact me about your interest and I will help you get started. Another good place to start is by signing up on the Texas Parks and Wildlife volunteer webpage. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/volunteer/>

Some examples of volunteer opportunities here at the park are:

Events: Planning and helping with various types of events such as trail races, social events, public outreach events, educational events and more.

Maintenance and improvements: These are the hands-on get dirty kind of projects -but not all require heavy lifting. Examples are pollinator and native plant demonstration gardens, natural resource management projects, upkeep of our historical structures and surrounding areas. And we are currently forming a trail building and maintenance team that that will tackle a trail project monthly (we especially would like to get high school youth and youth groups involved in this project).

Education and outreach: Education about the history and natural resources of the park and beyond geared toward all ages which includes families, individuals or schools. Workshops, community events, leading and helping with programs, interpretive hikes or field trips.

Marketing and fundraising: The Friends of Guadalupe River SP and Honey Creek State Natural Area are doing great things and we want the community to be aware of these events and opportunities. We need someone who is willing to create a social media presence and contact local media about our events.

In addition to our volunteers, the extra hands that are so critical to us being able to support so many worthwhile projects at the park, it takes funds. Our biggest financial project at this time is refurbishing the historic Rust house in the Honey Creek area. It is needing about \$100,000. worth of work. If you enjoy raising funds or know of or have a business that can donate items- such as food or tools for a workday- big or small it all helps toward reaching our goals.

The Friends group is participating in the Big Give this year, this is a way to make it easy to donate to the places that touch your heart in one place, on one day- we hope you will consider choosing the Friends of Guadalupe River/ Honey Creek. Your membership and other donations to the Friends group go a long way in supporting everything we do and we appreciate all of the ways that you support the park so very much.

See page two

City Nature Challenge

by Thea Platz

**Do you enjoy exploring nature?
Taking pictures of plants and wildlife?**

Why not join the 2020 City Nature Challenge. This event is a fun way to gather information on what types of plants and wildlife are found in certain areas from a lot of people gathering and posting pictures of them during a specific timeframe this year's challenge is April 24-27. The area around the park is included in the San Antonio region of the challenge. Let's help our region win the challenge with the most posts in our area. Click on this link Nature Challenge or look up City Nature Challenge-San Antonio for more details.

2020 Membership Dues Are Now Payable

Become A Friend / Renew Your Friendship Today:

Memberships at all levels directly support Guadalupe River State Park /Honey Creek State Natural Area. You will be kept up to date on all the upcoming programs, events and park news as well as information on volunteer opportunities through our quarterly newsletter and park updates. As a Friends member you and your family will also have access to member only events.

Fill out the section below and mail to the address below:

Name(s): _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

Membership Type: _____ New Member _____ Renewal

Student or Senior (over 62) Friend \$20.____, Friend \$25.____,

Family Friend \$40.____,

Best Friend Forever (lifetime level) \$1000. +____ Other____

If you are also interested in helping the park through volunteering, please tell us your areas of interest: _____

Make 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. Membership dues renew in January.
We will not share your information or clutter your inbox.

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Thea Platz

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Director at Large

Janis Merritt

Director / Hikes

Nancy Gray

Director at Large

Anthony Beverly

Director / Co-Historian

Mackenzie Brown

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

3350 Park Road 31
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

We're on the web!

<https://friendsofgrhc.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 5:30 pm.
And bring a friend!**