

FRIENDS

OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK
HONEY CREEK SNA



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Friends

by President, Thea Platz

Now is the perfect time to start planning those park adventures. Nature is a great place to start building family traditions and making memories. Spending time in nature is good for your physical and mental well-being and it is ever changing so no matter how many times you visit it always has something new to inspire you. The Guadalupe River State Park/ Honey Creek Friends group is always working alongside the wonderful park staff to offer you a variety of opportunities to learn and explore the various areas of the park and to enjoy all that being in nature has to offer. Our next event is the Monarch and Friends Pollinator Fiesta March 26 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Various groups including Texas Children in Nature Partners will offer activities and information, we will have speakers that will inspire you as you learn more about Monarchs, pollinators and how to provide for them. We are in the final stretch of being able to offer a new wildlife /bird viewing area in addition to the bird blind we currently maintain near the day use parking area. If you haven't been on the Honey Creek hike you should plan to do so. Our knowledgeable friendly guides will point out many special features, discuss cultural aspects of the area and significant plants you will see

on the tour. The hikes are held every Saturday and most Sundays at 9AM. Check the schedule and reserve a spot on the website Guadalupe River State Park Events — Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, while there check out all of the other programs offered at the park and plan your trip to include those that interest you. Keep in mind that in order to ensure entrance to the park on a planned day it is best to make a reservation. Reservations - Texas State Parks

Regardless of whether you are coming just for the day to have a picnic, the afternoon for a program or for overnight plan to let us know you are coming and check for trail closures or fire bans. Often, especially during the busy seasons and holidays, we reach full capacity and must turn away those without reservations.

Once you see all the wonderful yearlong offerings there are at the park, you might want to consider purchasing a state park pass and plan to come out on a regular basis. Proceeds from the purchase help to support our parks and save you money. The year long pass gets you and passengers in your vehicle into any state park (reservations still needed).

We hope to see you soon and often - Thea

Friends of Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area presents

Monarch & Friends

Pollinator Fiesta

Saturday, March 26th - 10am til 2pm

Crafts, Speakers, Activities and so much more. Fun for all ages!

Held on the trails outside the Discovery Center

This event is free with
Park admission!

Cathy Peterson
3-2022 DESIGN



How a State Park was Born on the Banks of the Guadalupe

by Mackenzie Brown and Charleen Moore

The Guadalupe River and its fertile banks were the focus of early settlers in the Hill Country. By the early twentieth century, land had been acquired and ranches had been in operation through several generations of primarily German immigrants. These included members of the Doepenschmidt, Weidner, Richter and Bauer families. However, with the advent of WWI and numerous droughts in the 1920s and '30s, pressure was placed on the original settlers as new families moved in that were not of the same cultural identity, nor did they rely on ranching for their income. After WWII, this trend continued, resulting in one-third of the land in Comal and Kendall Counties being owned by non-residents (Freeman 1997, p. 36). In the 1950s, severe drought conditions made ranching almost impossible. Deaths in many of the original families and the attendant estate taxes hastened changes in ownership of several tracts of land that now are part of Guadalupe River State Park (GRSP) and Honey Creek State Natural Area (HCSNA).

With the growth of cities like San Antonio and Austin and the development of urban centers in the Hill Country in the early 1970s, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) started looking for additional outdoor recreation sites and evaluated many lakes and rivers in the area for a new state park. At the same time, canoeing was one of America's fastest growing sports. The many rivers in the Hill Country were attracting an increasing number of individual and family canoers. The rapidly growing number of paddling enthusiasts on Hill Country rivers soon ignited a fierce controversy between landowners and canoers involving water access and private property rights along the Guadalupe River. Canoers in Texas had the right to paddle on "navigable" waters—a controversial measure difficult to determine—but very limited rights to be on private property. There were few legal access or exit points along the river for them.

Both canoers and land owners engaged in many illegal and deplorable acts in the 1970s. Canoers, for instance, aside from picnicking and camping on private property, "shot livestock, littered private property, sunbathed on bridges and paddled naked in front of family groups in private camping areas," according to a Boerne game warden (Stephenville Empire Tribune, Jan 10, 1974, p. 9). The Guadalupe River Association (GRA)—formed in 1971 by landowners opposed to canoers and to any state park on the river—complained about canoers abusing other recreationists, cutting fishermen's lines, flaunting nudity, and ransacking camps on private property (New Braunfels Herald Zeitung, Jan 24, 1974, p. 17).

Local sheriffs were in wholehearted sympathy with the landowners. Kendall County Sheriff Lee D'Spain said, "I'm 100 percent behind the landowners. Canoeists have no business getting in the river" (Abilene Reporter News Jan 27, 1974, p. 32). Sheriff's deputies often went out of their way to harass canoers. One deputy in Kendall County watched a party of canoers put into the Guadalupe near Comfort, Texas, asking them "what commune they were from and warned them against smoking marijuana and trespassing on the banks." The deputy followed them downstream, and when they came to a low-clearance bridge with only a few inches to spare, he told one of the women, an Austin artist, and her husband, an electrical engineer, not to get onto the gravel bar to go over the bridge. When the woman was consequently swept broadside into the bridge and fell out of the canoe, to be swept under the bridge, the deputy then, according to the woman who was not seriously injured, "was laughing and making cracks about hippies and murderers and rapists, about people not being safe in their homes, about old ladies being raped and having their heads cut off....It was incredible" (Stephenville Empire Tribune, Jan 10, 1974, p. 9). In another case, in 1973, a canoe was riddled with 22 bullet holes after two boys got stuck on some rocks and had walked on private land to find help (Abilene Reporter News, Jan 27, 1974, p. 32).

Such harassment backfired when a group of legislator's wives had their cars towed away and impounded while they were on a canoe trip down the Guadalupe near today's GRSP. When the deputy met the group

after they returned to find their cars missing, he confronted an angry state senator who declared, "you can tell your propertyowner friends that they have just bought themselves a park" (personal communication, Duncan Muckleroy, Jun 24, 2021).

A critical event at this time was the purchase of the old Bauer ranch in 1971 by J. David Bamberger, a co-founder of Church's Fried Chicken. This ranch, now part of the Bauer Unit of GRSP, lies north of the Guadalupe River. Bamberger bought the Bauer property because of its frontage on the Guadalupe River. The property is also noted for the fachwerk style of the Bauer Ranch House, built by German settlers Phillip and Marie Bauer circa 1870 (see the drawing held by Bamberger in Figure 1)



Fig. 1. J. David Bamberger at 92, with drawing of the Bauer Ranch House.
Photo by authors.

Bamberger wanted to protect the property as well as to enjoy the quiet remote area. It took passing through 5-7 gates just to reach his property. He also wanted the public to be able to enjoy the Guadalupe River and thus approached TPWD about buying his property, consisting of 505.6 acres, for a state park. He encouraged his neighbor "Skip" Bartram, then Executive Vice President of First National Bank in New Braunfels, to sell his 155.9 acres. However, it took two years to get TPWD interested. The state thought Bamberger would want a high price for the property, but J. David told them to set their own price. The state then surveyed the land and realized, as J. David had told them, the greatest value was simply due to the property being on the river and thus providing access for the public. TPWD still wanted to be sure the public was interested, so Bamberger put out trashcans, BBQ pits, and signs that proclaimed "Canoers

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welcome here,” and invited groups such as the Sierra Club to visit. Although the canoers were excited about this, the landowner neighbors of Bamberger were, as might be expected, bitterly opposed. Thus, Bamberger was not welcome in local businesses in Spring Branch or other nearby towns (personal communication, J. David Bamberger, Jun 30, 2021).



Fig. 2. Front page article from *New Braunfels Herald Zeitung*, Dec. 26, 1974, reporting on controversy the new state park had engendered.

After many meetings and discussions over a two-year period, a TPW Commissioner’s meeting was held on Dec 3, 1974, to determine if the state would make an offer for the Bamberger and Bartram properties for the purpose of establishing a state park in the area. All the local landowners showed up to protest, and as the *New Braunfels Herald Zeitung* put it, there was very “spirited testimony” with opposition by the GRA lawyer (*New Braunfels Herald Zeitung*, Dec 5, 1974, p. 1). During the meeting, the TPW Commission Chairman sent a note to J. David asking, “Can we delay vote to next meeting?” J. David replied: “No! Today or nothing.” The chairman then passed David’s note to the other commissioners (personal communication, J. David Bamberger, Jun 30, 2021). The vote passed unanimously to buy 661.52 acres for a state park site and authorized TPWD Executive Director Clayton Garrison to complete the negotiations for the property. And indeed, the Bamberger property was purchased in December 1974 and the Bartram property soon thereafter in January 1975, giving 2.75 miles of river frontage to the new park at a price of \$623,597 (\$940/acre).

The *New Braunfels Herald Zeitung* for Dec. 26, 1974 (Figure 2) summarized the controversy between park advocates and property owners by observing: “One element contends suburban development is the most imminent danger to the terrain, and only state purchase and maintenance can both preserve the river and adjoining terrain yet make it available to the public. The other contends that unlimited access is the most ominous threat to the river, and utilization of the property as a state-owned recreational facility would only hasten the influx of developers into the area.” The *Herald Zeitung* further noted that “[b]oth sides claim to have the best interest of the Guadalupe River at heart” but concluded by indicating that park advocates had the upper hand, as contracts had already

been signed to purchase the 661.5 acres from Bamberger and Bartram.

TPWD wanted to enlarge the park, but further development northward was not successful, so TPWD looked southward. The land south of the Guadalupe River which is now GRSP and HCSNA had been consolidated into the Weidner and Richter ranches by the three daughters of Henry and Louise Rust, when their parents died in 1950. Erna Rust had married Herman Richter and lived in a home that was near the current park headquarters (the Richter property had been divided in 1922 between the two sons, Herman and Arnold Richter. The Herman Richter Ranch was later purchased by David Miller through Charles Duke in 1974). Meta Rust had married Otto Weidner and lived in a home that is now in the HCSNA (the Weidner ranch was acquired by the Texas Nature Conservancy in 1973 and later sold to the state in 1985; see our article in the Winter 2021 Newsletter). Alma Rust had married Willie Gass who had a ranch just south of park property, but after his death, she moved to New Braunfels. In June 1975, two purchases were made by the state for the new park. One was the Herman Richter Ranch of 1,014.57 acres which was then owned by David Miller et al., and the other was a portion of the Arnold Richter Ranch of 224 acres which was then owned by Arnold’s son, Arlon, for a total acreage of 1,238.57 (Freeman 1997, p. 44). These purchases plus the 661.52 acres bought previously that was north of the river then provided almost exactly 1900 acres of outdoor recreation and public access to the Guadalupe River for state residents.

Over the next two years, many surveys and reports were developed to evaluate the condition of the land, the flora and fauna present, and the historical buildings associated with the Bauer, Rust and Richter families. By 1977 a complete development plan was in place as well as an extensive survey of the park completed in 1978 to locate archeological and national register-eligible sites. This plan was followed over the next five years to construct the park with campsites for primitive tents to RVs, areas for day use and picnic sites, and areas for maintenance facilities. The Bauer and Rust Houses were left intact while the Richter house was removed as a vandalism risk (Freeman 1997, pp. 44-45).

In 1983 Duncan Muckelroy was appointed first superintendent of Guadalupe River State Park. For many months, Duncan and his wife had the park to themselves. It was scheduled to open on Wednesday, June 1, 1983, but despite many cars being lined up at the entrance that day, the opening was delayed until Friday, June 3, when final approval was sent from Austin (*New Braunfels Herald Zeitung*, Jun 2, 1983, p. 1). When Duncan’s wife went on her usual walk to the Day Use area, she exclaimed, “OMG, there are people here!” This was the beginning of the park we know and love today.

Reference

Freeman, Martha Doty. 1997. *A History of Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area, Comal and Kendall Counties, Texas*. Austin, Texas: Unpublished manuscript prepared for TPWD.

Come on out - the birding is GREAT

by Linda Glinder

We will soon be saying good-bye to Old Man Winter and welcoming the renewal of spring! Mild temperatures and colorful wildflowers make spring an exciting time at the Park, but spring is especially rewarding for birding enthusiasts. Spring means migration and that means millions of birds will stream from their southern winter-feeding grounds into North America. Guadalupe River State Park is on one of the main flyways making it ideal to experience differing species on a weekly basis. Some birds will stop for only a few days to rest and feast before continuing north. Others will stop, establish territories, find mates, and concentrate all their energy on the next generation.

One family to watch and listen for are the vireos. Previous articles have highlighted another similarly sized songbird family, the wood warblers – vireos are a bit more challenging than warblers and the next step at improving bird identification skills. Vireos are relatively small birds (slightly larger than wood warblers) with a heavy bill that has a slightly hooked tip. They are remarkable vocalists. Vireos can be difficult to id because they generally feed high up in tree canopies or in tangled thickets. With 9 species known to occur at the Park, spring is an excellent season to practice identification skills. You will need to pay attention to eye markings, wing bars, and subtle plumage colorations on your quest. Start with two of the most common vireos you are likely to encounter – the White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos. Both breed in the Park and will be prolific singers in the spring.

The Park lies on the western edge of the White-eyed Vireo range which extends north to Iowa and east to the Atlantic coast. They begin to arrive in late February with their numbers peaking by April. Most will be heading south by September, but a few will stick around well into late fall. White-eyes are small birds

measuring only 4.5 to 5 inches. They have a gray head, white front, yellowish sides, and two white wingbars. When you find one, take time to look for its most distinguishing feature – white eyes surrounded by yellow spectacles. Only adult birds sport the white-eye. Immature birds have similar feather patterns as the adult but will have



White-eyed Vireo (Photo by John Prentice)

a gray eye with paler spectacles. So, you may see a young bird in mid to late summer that does not fit the exact make up of an adult. In the spring, males arrive and choose a territory and begin to sing. Females arrive and may visit several territories before deciding on a mate. Together they will build a nest usually less than 10' above the ground. Outdoor cats are a primary threat because of relatively low nest placement.

Red-eyed vireos have a larger range which extends across southern Canada, and the deciduous forests of the northwest, central and eastern United States. It is one of the most common migratory songbirds of North America, yet most people have never seen one. They have a shorter period at the Park than the White-eyed Vireo, arriving in late March and departing by September. Red-eyed Vireos are slightly larger than White-eyed Vireos at almost 6 inches. They are olive green above and white

Come on out – the birding is GREAT

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Red-eyed Vireo (Photo by Ken Butler)

below with no wingbars. They have a gray crown with a dark border. They sport a black eyeline that is bordered above with a white eyebrow. Adults have the namesake reddyeye, but it can be hard to spot at a distance or in the wrong light. Immature birds have a plain dark eye.

Both the White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos are prolific singers in the spring and summer. Both will sing well into the heat of the day. Because of their singing, it is worth the effort to listen to recordings, which are readily available on-line, before heading to the Park on a vireo quest. Learning their songs will easily give you a notch up in bird location and identification. But please do not play recordings while in the Park as they greatly disturb males who are valiantly defending territories. Any of the Park's woodland trails (including: the Discovery Loop, Live Oak and Hofheinz Trails) are good places to look for these two species. Vireos are also known to visit the Woodland Blind located in the Day Use Area for a quick bath. Listen carefully to find one and then scan the foliage for movement. Use binoculars to follow a bird to observe feeding and nesting behaviors. During the spring and summer vireos eat lots of insects, spiders, and larvae.

If you would like to learn more about

birding at the Park, pick up a birding checklist at the entry Ranger Station, Discovery Center, or Woodland Wildlife Viewing Blind. Follow the Park on Facebook to learn about upcoming birding programs with Ranger Holly and ParkVolunteers. Be sure to stop in at the Woodland blind located in the Day Use Area for up close observation. The Woodland blind as well as the soon to be open Savannah Blind are supported by the Friends of Guadalupe River and Honey Creek and maintained by a volunteer care team. Become a part of this important volunteer activity by contacting Ranger Holly or volunteer, Linda Glinder (xxgindler@gmail.com).



Interpreter Update

by Holly Platz, Park Interpreter

It's hard to believe spring is here once again, and summer is right around the corner! This winter seemed to just speed by, and I'm excited as we ramp things up for our busy spring and summer season.

We have some exciting spring events happening this year, including elementary-school field trips (these had been on hiatus the past few years due to COVID), our Pollinator Fiesta, and more! The Discovery Center is also in full swing, and lately we have had many families taking advantage of the "by appointment" visits during the week, as well as of course the busy weekends.

Always check our online calendar to get the latest details on park events, including any updates or cancellations. As we all know, things can change quickly, and the health and safety of our visitors, volunteers, and park staff will always be our highest priority.

Check our calendar here: https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/guadalupe-river/park_events or just do an online search for "Guadalupe River State Park events". Also make sure to follow the park on Facebook and Instagram! @GuadalupeRiverStatePark

Discovery Center:

Bring your family out and take a closer look at the park's nature through unique interactive exhibits and hands-on displays. Check out a FREE Junior Ranger backpack with tools like magnifying lenses, binoculars, sketchbook, and more to make your own discoveries on the trail! We also have two new Night Sky backpacks, available to overnight campers, for your family to find out all about the moon, stars, constellations, and more! The Discovery Center is open 10 am to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays, and most Fridays 12 to 4 pm. During the week we are often open by appointment as well – text Ranger Holly at 210-549-7103 to check for availability.

Save the Date for these special events:**Monarch and Friends Pollinator Fiesta
– Saturday, March 26th, 10 am – 2 pm**

We are so excited to bring back our

annual Pollinator Fiesta! Sponsored by the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area, the Fiesta celebrates monarch butterflies as they return from Mexico. And along with monarchs, we'll be celebrating all things pollinator: bees and other insects; bats; hummingbirds; and the native plants that depend on them! Join us and our partner organizations on the trails behind the Discovery Center for crafts, activities, speakers, and much more!

"Big Sit" at the bird blind**– Saturday, April 23rd, 8 am – 1 pm**

For the third year in a row, the park plans to participate in the Great Texas Birding Classic by holding a "Big Sit" – sometimes called a tailgate party for birders – at the bird blind. Join us and see how many birds we can see (or hear) from within a 50-foot circle! Drop by anytime, borrow a set of binoculars (or bring your own), and join the park ranger and volunteers to discover the fun of birding!

Recurring events:

All events are posted on our online calendar each month (link above), but here are some of our recurring activities:

Honey Creek Nature Hike: Join experienced Honey Creek interpretive guides to discover the nature and history of Honey Creek State Natural Area. This hike is sponsored by the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area. Come experience the beauty of this protected area, and find out why it's important.

- Every Saturday at 9 am, with additional Sunday dates and times posted online – Registration is currently required for this program; check the park online calendar (link above) for details on hike dates and how to sign up.

Star Parties with San Antonio Astronomical Association: The experienced and knowledgeable members of the San Antonio Astronomical Association come out to the park every month to share their knowledge and their telescopes with park visitors! Join us as we look at the stars, moon, planets, nebulas, and more!

Interpreter Update

by Holly Platz, Park Interpreter

- Saturdays: March 12th, April 9th, May 7th, June 11th. Always check the online calendar for details. Drop in anytime during the 2-hour star party; no registration needed. Times vary based on sunset; check the online calendar for details!

Scenic Overlook Nature Hike: Every Thursday morning! Winter start time continues through the end of March: 10 - 11:30 am. Beginning in April, we'll switch to our "warm season" time: 9 - 10:30 am. Join us every Thursday for an easy guided walk to the beautiful Scenic Overlook! Along the way we'll discover all types of nature. All ages welcome! Meet in front of the Discovery Center.

Other ways to connect with the park's nature:

- Make sure to check out the Story Trail, our park's version of a StoryWalk®. The Story Trail starts just behind and to the right of the Discovery Center, and once you walk the short trail and read the whole book it's just 1/4 mile round-trip—perfect for the littles! We change the book out seasonally, so you and your family can enjoy a new book as you walk along the trail this spring. The Friends of Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek SNA sponsor this exciting self-guided program in partnership with Northeast Independent School District. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Storywalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.
- If you have kids in your family, make sure to pick up their FREE Junior Ranger activity book! This is a great way for your family to explore the nature of the park on your own. Once a child has completed the number of activities based on their age, stop by the Discovery Center and they will earn their Junior Ranger badge! (You can also download the Junior Ranger activity book—just type "TPWD Junior Ranger" into your favorite search engine and you'll find it right away).

A note to all park volunteers:

Thanks to all of you, both new volunteers and returning, who do so much for the park. Everything you do, whether it's cleaning restrooms, working at the Discovery Center, conducting bird surveys, or the myriad of other tasks you all do so faithfully – all of it is important and very appreciated. You make this park the wonderful, welcoming place it is for visitors, and we thank you.

2022 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.____, Individual 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.

President

Thea Platz

Director / Membership

Brady Hansen

Vice President

Holly Camero

Director / Webmaster

Mackenzie Brown

Secretary

Mackenzie Brown

Director / Education and Outreach

Holly Camero

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Director at Large

John Prentice

Director / Co-Historian

Mackenzie Brown

Director at Large

Janis Merritt

Director / Co-Historian

Charleen Moore

Director at Large

Ryan Bass

**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!**