



# FRIENDS



## OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK HONEY CREEK SNA



### FALL NEWSLETTER 2023

A Message from the President

by Bob Morris

From the Editors

Drought in the Park

Howdy Folks,

Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area lost a **Great Friend** on July 11 when Tom Anderson passed away. Please find our tribute to this outstanding individual in this issue.

Well, it has been mighty hot and dry. We are under a high pressure dome that just will not budge. South Texas had a little help from tropical storm Harold in late August, but the Hill Country, including Comal and Kendall Counties, remains in exceptional drought conditions. Droughts are common in Texas. But unlike tornadoes, wildfires and floods, their devastation unfolds over months or years. One frustrating problem with droughts is we cannot predict their frequency, duration, and when they will arrive or end. The Guadalupe River in the Park, alas, has been without flow for several weeks (see photos to the right), and Canyon Lake is at a record low.

If you have noticed Live Oaks shedding leaves and other trees turning color or the leaves becoming brittle, this is a common reaction when we have early spring rains and little rain during the summer. Essentially, the root system cannot support continued foliar growth. Established native trees and grasses are going into survival mode. If their vegetative stock is healthy, they will likely survive.

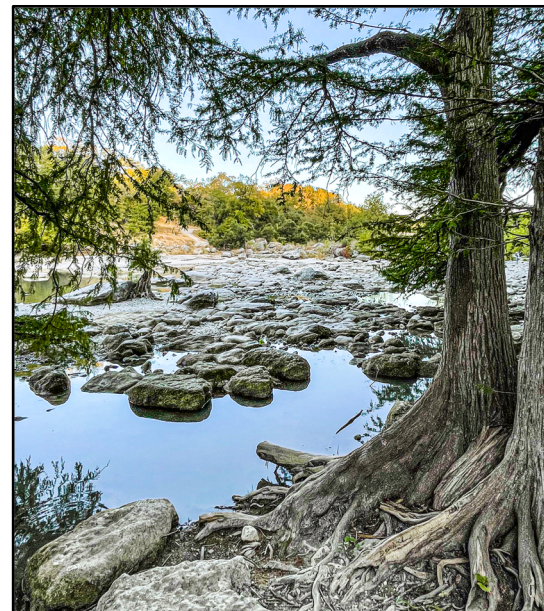
The Friends are planning a gathering in the first quarter of next year at Honey Creek Ranch. The program is about Honey Creek Ranch and provides an opportunity for folks to view the grounds. To receive an invitation you must be a Member of the Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc.

Be safe and kind. Regards to all. 



Where has all the water gone?  
Day-Use Area, August 17, 2023

This year San Antonio and Austin had the hottest Summer (June-July-August) ever recorded and one of the driest.



Wagon Ford Crossing, August 17, 2023

## Tribute to Tom Anderson

by Thea Platz



**Thomas "Tom" Olin Anderson**  
June 3, 1943 - July 11, 2023

Everyone is special, important, and unique; however, some seem more so and they leave a bigger void when they leave us. Such is the case with Tom Anderson, co-founder of our existing Friends group who passed away July 11. Tom left a positive impression on everything he did. He did not know how to do anything less than 110% and never met a barrier he didn't see as a challenge. Although he won many awards over the years in his profession as a teacher and coach, as well as for his many community contributions as a volunteer, he was driven by his passion for people and places, not accolades.

Lucky for us, one of the places he became passionate about was here at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area (GRSP/HCSNA). Tapping into his calling as a teacher, Tom saw the potential to use the site as an educational resource almost immediately. Tom, along with many others he recruited along the way, was responsible for turnkey educational programs which did not require additional strain on park staff. He personally led all of the Saturday morning hikes at one point and was instrumental in developing school programs for multiple grade levels and school districts through the years.

These programs served to connect people of all ages with the nature he loved and a philosophy he had which is evident in a self-explanatory phrase he coined "awareness to careness."

After helping to form the Friends group, Tom served on the board in various capacities for more than two decades -including as president numerous times. Among many other events, Tom's organizational skills and fundraising were instrumental in the tremendous success of the spooky trail and treats Halloween event at the Park, a community favorite, that was held for many years.

After stepping away from being an active member of the board Tom continued to serve as editor of the seasonal Friends of GRSP/HCSNA newsletter including the printing and distribution.

Indeed, Tom Anderson was a special, important and unique person, and certainly will be missed as a beloved board member, advocate for the Park, and for the Friends Group for Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area for years to come.

Tom's obituary as well as a tribute wall can be found at the following link:

<https://www.porterloring.com/obituaries/Thomas-Tom-Olin-Anderson?obId=28469298>.

**From our digital archives: First mention of Tom Anderson in the Friends' Newsletter (May-July, 1995, p. 2), an early testament to his passion for introducing kids to nature:**

"Spring Break Kid's activities were a great success thanks to Project Wild facilitator, Tom Anderson. Tom teaches Environmental Science at Churchill High School and his class has also helped build many of the Blue Bird nest boxes seen along the park road. Some 30 children and parents enjoyed playing Oh, Dear!, Habitat Lap Sit, Bird and Worm and other activities."



### The Amazing Hummers

by Linda Gindler

Thank goodness fall is on the way. The spring rains were terrific while they lasted, but all too soon transitioned to the rainless brutal heat we experienced in July and August. Sadly, vegetation became parched and most likely will result in a poor yield of flowers, seeds, and fruits for our avian friends. Still the scarcity may result in more bird activity as birds hunt harder for their next meal making them easier to find. It can also mean more spectacular sights at the Park's wildlife viewing blinds. Whether you choose to visit a viewing blind or go for a hike, one family of birds to look for this fall are the hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds are simply amazing birds! The hummingbird family is large with over 300 species all within North, Central and South America. Seventeen species are known to breed in the United States and three visit the park. Hummingbirds all share some unique attributes:

- Their name comes from the noise their wings make, not vocalization.
- Hummingbirds are tiny, on average weighing less than a nickel and most are only three to five inches in length.
- Their brilliant iridescence coloring is not due to feather pigmentation, but rather light intensity, viewing angle, and feather quality.
- Hummingbirds have wing beats of 10-200 beats per second and can reach speeds of 60 mph in a dive with speeds of 20-45 common in straight flight.
- While there are flightless birds, most birds (including hummingbirds) can easily fly forwards. Hummers however can also fly backward, sideways, straight up, and hover. Watch one carefully and you may catch it doing a backward somersault.
- Hummingbirds build compact cup shaped nests and use spider silk as thread to bind the materials together. The nests are elastic and will stretch as the young grow.
- Hummingbirds lay the smallest eggs of all birds and an egg can equal as much as 10 percent of the mother's weight when laid.

- Hummingbirds use their slender pointed bills to probe deep inside of flowers and lick (not suck) the contents with their long tongue. They consume approximately half their weight in sugary nectar daily. They also eat small insects and spiders and will sip juice from broken fruits.



Male Black-chinned Hummingbird  
(photo by Ken Butler)

The Black-chinned Hummingbird is the most common hummer found in the Park. From spring until fall they are found in the ten most western states with Texas being on the eastern edge of their range. They arrive March through April and then spend the next few months focused on raising their young. By mid-summer, with family duties complete, they are busy bulking up before migrating south. By late September they have departed the Park so don't wait too long to start your search.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the second most common hummer in the Park but is only found during migration as they pass through the area, the most frequent sightings being in April, May, September, and October. Ruby-throats come to the eastern half of the United States for the breeding season. They are the only hummingbird found regularly east of the Mississippi. During the winter they call Central America home. They often prefer a direct route during migration and will fly over the gulf rather than taking the longer land route over Mexico. An amazing feat for such a small bird.



Male Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
(photo by John Prentice)

The Black-chinned and Ruby-throated can be difficult to identify when they occur in the same region as they do at the Park in some months. Here are a few tips to tell them apart:

- **Back, Flank and Head:** Rubies are a brighter emerald green on both the male and female. Black-chins have a duller green back and flank. The head of a female Black-chin looks grayish while Rubies are green.
- **Throat:** The best identification of a male in the right light is the brilliant iridescent red throat of the Ruby vs the Black-chin's black chin with an iridescent purple bottom border (again in the right light). Beware that in poor light they both have a dark throat so be patient.
- **Tail:** Female Rubies have a longer tail that extends beyond the wing tips. On Black-chins the wings extend beyond the end of the tail. Again, be patient; this trait is only visible when the bird is perched.

On rare occasions, the park hosts a third hummingbird species called the Rufous Hummingbird. There are a few sightings of Rufous each year in Bexar and Comal counties as birds migrate through with an occasional few over wintering. But there has only been a single sighting reported at the Park. Perhaps this is because not enough people are looking in the key months of September and October.

The male Rufous is an unmistakable brilliant orange and the female sports green and orange. It is one of the feistiest hummingbirds in North America and a treat to watch.



Male Rufous Hummingbird  
(photo by John Prentice)

Hummingbirds are easy to find at the Park in the Day-Use Area's Woodland Blind which has a hummingbird feeder. Also check out the Park's pollinator garden near the Discovery Center whenever flowers are in bloom. By the way, hummingbirds are easy to attract in your backyard and they put on a big show sure to delight young and old. Hummingbird feeders come in a wide variety of styles and sizes. You can purchase pre-mixed commercial nectar or make your own (1/4 cup sugar to 1 cup water, stir until the sugar is dissolved). You do not need to boil the mixture if you use tap or bottled water. Also, you do not need to add red dye. Augment your hummingbird feeder with native flowers and you have a hummingbird's dream out your window.

Be sure to look for hummingbirds on your next park visit. To learn more about birds in the Park, pick up a birding checklist at the entry ranger station, Discovery Center, or viewing blinds. Watch the park calendar and join in on a birding program or take a seat in one of the two wildlife viewing blinds. Mother nature is always in action and full of wonders!



What could be more fun for a young boy or girl to spend the day at Grandma's and Grandpa's house in the country? Jimmy Weidner had that pleasure as a child when he visited the old Weidner ranch that would later become Honey Creek State Natural Area. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Jimmy and his sister Sara and cousins spent many happy hours at their grandparents' ranch, swimming in Honey Creek, playing with the goats, and, in Jimmy's case, finding lots of arrowheads (or projectile points as archeologists call them). Jimmy still has a case of them on display in his home (Fig. 1). His first cousin, Errol Weidner, sometimes joined him in his point-collecting hunts.

The ranchland that was owned by his grandparents, Otto Carl Weidner and Meta Wilhelmina (Rust) Weidner, was later purchased by the Nature Conservancy before it became the Honey Creek State Natural Area (SNA). During the Nature Conservancy's stewardship, Luke Thompson managed the ranch and lived in Jimmy's grandparents' house. Thompson also found projectile points on the ranch, along with artifacts from more recent times (Fig. 2). Needless to say, collecting points or other artifacts in the Park or SNA today is strictly prohibited!



Fig. 1. Jimmy Weidner's collection of points found at Honey Creek.



Fig. 2. Luke Thompson's collection. This photo appeared in *Texas Monthly*, Feb, 1984. Photo courtesy Tx/DOT.

The authors contacted Jimmy Weidner about his point-collecting days on his grandparents' ranch. He has generously shared with us a remarkable account of his youthful archaeological pursuits, as well as the photo of his findings in Figure 1. Here is his account:

As a kid I would spend a lot of weekends at the Honey Creek. My dad, Oswald, was always available to help my grandparents on the ranch. There were always chores to tend to like cutting wood with a steam powered "buzz saw," plowing two gardens with mules, rounding up cattle, sheep, and goats to drench, shear, or take to market to sell. There was always something to do. On occasion we would do some hunting and fishing. My dad was an avid trot line fisherman. This was in the Guadalupe River. Part of trot line fishing was securing good quality bait. This was usually seining for Red Horse minnows in the Honey Creek. There were several locations for this activity. The bottom of the creek had to be flat rock, shallow, and not too swift. On one particular day we were seining for bait and I noticed that part of the upper bank had been eroded. So I asked my dad about the erosion. He said that it was not erosion, but it

was an archeological dig site. He explained that some folks came out looking for remnants of the hunters and gatherers of long ago. This site was considered to be a camp ground. I asked what would they find and he said mostly arrowheads. And that's how I began my hunt for flint points. The Flint rock was the key. In my spare time I would look for flint rock and the arrowheads were usually close by. As I became better self-educated, knowing what to look for, I found 6 different camp sites up and down the Honey Creek. For the most part the points I found were either broken before completion or a larger piece of flint still to be knapped. On some very rare occasions I would find a complete arrowhead. And that made it all worthwhile. These are boyhood memories that have lasted a life time.

Jimmy further noted that the arrowheads he found were mostly on the slopes of gully washes or just on top, on high ground but near Honey Creek, and generally on the surface or just below, requiring just a little digging. His most impressive find is the large point in the center of his display.

As a kid, he used just to look and admire the arrowheads he found. Later, he wanted to know more about his finds and thus began reading books on Texas archaeology. Two books that gave him good insights into what he had collected were *Digging into South Texas Prehistory*, by Thomas R. Hester, and *Ancient Texans; Rock Art & Lifeways Along the Lower Pecos*, by Harry J. Shafer. These books contained arrowhead charts that helped Jimmy identify the various points he had collected, including their estimated age, and their general use or function. Jimmy reports: "I believe most were used in some kind of hunting activity and for self preservation. There were some tools but mostly scrapers used to remove fat and meat from the animal hides." He further notes: "I believe the arrowhead makers got better with time and they improved on the knapping techniques. Some of the different sizes were part of the evolution from the spear to the atlatl to the bow and arrow."

We asked Jimmy about his most impressive find, the one in the center of his display in Figure 1, enlarged here in Figure 3. He recalled the actual find: "Yes, that is a nice point. I do remember. It was totally exposed lying on one of the gully slopes. I searched for others, but to no avail. A single find. But it was pretty exciting to find a perfect arrowhead."



Fig. 3. Jimmy's prize point

Jimmy is correct when he said that the arrowhead makers got better with time and developed points that first worked with spears and atlatls and later with the more accurate bows. We will explore the findings from several archeological surveys in the Park and SNA in a future article.



**PUBLIC TOUR**

**Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Ranch  
in Honey Creek State Natural Area**



Saturday, October 28, 2023  
Rain Date: Saturday, November 4, 2023  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Join us for a rare tour of the  
Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Ranch  
Explore the ranch site of the earliest settlers  
in Honey Creek State Natural Area  
Visit the grave of Jacob Doeppenschmidt (d. 1872)  
Meet some of the Weidner descendants  
Learn about ranching in the early-mid 20th century

Space is limited, Register early  
Contact Mackenzie Brown  
[mbrown@trinity.edu](mailto:mbrown@trinity.edu) or 210-748-1110

\$20 Paid Members, Friends of  
Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc.  
\$30 Non-Members

**SAVE THE DATE**

December 2, 2023

Friends, Staff, and Volunteers  
Holiday Dinner at Honey Creek Ranch  
We welcome items for the Silent Auction  
Contact Charleen Moore, [mackandchuck@gmail.com](mailto:mackandchuck@gmail.com)

To submit articles for publication in the Friends  
Newsletter, email them to one of the Co-Editors:  
Mackenzie Brown, [mbrown@trinity.edu](mailto:mbrown@trinity.edu)  
Charleen Moore, [mackandchuck@gmail.com](mailto:mackandchuck@gmail.com)  
Deadlines are the 20<sup>th</sup> of Feb, May, Aug, Nov.

**\*2023 Membership Dues\***

**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. Membership dues renew in January.

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

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Student or Senior (over 62) \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Family \$40 \_\_\_\_\_ Lifetime \$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.  
We will not share your information or clutter your inbox.

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

3350 Park Road 31  
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

**Visit us on the web:**  
**<https://friendsofgrhc>**



**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, usually on the third Thursday  
at 5:30 p.m. Please join us and bring a friend!**

**For meeting venue and possible change of date or time, contact us  
at:**

**[friendsofgrhc@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofgrhc@gmail.com)**