



# FRIENDS

OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK  
HONEY CREEK SNA



## FALL NEWSLETTER 2025

Rising Waters, Rising Resolve: A Photo Essay on the July 4—5<sup>th</sup> Flooding at Guadalupe River State Park

by Jessica Bergner, Resource Specialist

**[EDITORS' NOTE:** Due to the extraordinary and tragic events of July 4-5, 2025, the editors made Jessica Bergner's essay on the impact of the flood on Guadalupe River State Park the lead story. The usual messages from the Friends' President and the Park Superintendent's Desk will be found on p. 10.]

### Introduction

The Guadalupe River is the beating heart of the Park—bringing life to the cypress-lined banks, drawing families for tubing and swimming, and offering a peaceful retreat into nature. But like all rivers, it also has the power to transform overnight. Heavy rain swelled the watershed upstream, and within hours, the familiar river corridor became unrecognizable.

This photo essay documents both the devastation caused by the flood and the determined efforts to restore and reopen the Park in its aftermath.

### Part I: The Flood

The usually gentle Guadalupe pushed past its banks in the late evening of July 4, 2025, cresting in the early hours of the morning on July 5 and spreading across picnic areas and creeping into the Bald Cypress Trail and up the stone steps of the main path from the parking lot to the river (Fig. 1). What is often a quiet, shaded walk became a fast-moving flow of water. The current quickened, carrying branches, leaves, and debris that had been swept loose. Entire trees were submerged and the familiar curve of the river's edge blurred into the floodplain. The scene was calm in places yet carried an undercurrent of steady force as the river moved through.

From the overlook behind the Discovery Center, the river looked wider than usual, spilling into the flats and winding between the trees. The view easily showed how far the flood had reached, stretching the Guadalupe beyond its familiar course (Fig. 2).

The high water from the Guadalupe backed up into Honey Creek, changing the look of the usually clear, spring-fed stream (Fig. 3). What is normally a quiet, winding creek with bright pools and rocky banks was clouded and swollen, blending into the surrounding floodplain. Familiar spots along the creek were difficult to recognize beneath the murky water, showing just how far the flood had reached beyond the river itself.



Fig. 1. The rising river: flood waters cover the stone steps on the main path down to the river, indicated only by the metal handrails. The water rose to the thirteenth step from the bottom. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TPWD.



Fig. 2. View from the Scenic Overlook Trail. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TPWD.



Fig. 3. The Honey Creek picnic table at the end of the public interpretive walk. The table stands in water backed up from the Guadalupe River. Photo by Benjamin Shook, TPWD.

**Part II: The Aftermath**

As the water receded, the Day-Use Area showed the typical signs of flooding. Branches, leaves, and debris were scattered across open spaces and caught high up in trees. Mud coated the ground in places where visitors usually spread out blankets or gathered at picnic tables, leaving the area in need of a thorough cleanup before it could be used again (Figs. 4-7).



Fig. 4. Bald Cypress tree in Day-Use Area bent by the will of the river, but still standing. Photo by Maegan Lanham, TPWD.



Fig. 5. Bilingual caution sign. Photo by Mackenzie Brown.

In just over a week after the flood, the Park was open again to visitors, but with bilingual warning signs under the litter-laden trees along the river bank: “PRECAUCIÓN! NO SE SIENTE DEBAJO DE LOS ÁRBOLES DEBIDO A LOS ESCOMBROS,” or “CAUTION! DO NOT SIT UNDER TREES DUE TO DEBRIS” (Fig. 5). There was still much work to be done!



Fig. 6. At least the slab for this picnic table is still intact. Photo by Maegan Lanham, TPWD.



Fig. 7. Large debris snagged in upper branches of a bald cypress. Photo by Maegan Lanham, TPWD.

### Part III: The Cleanup

Park rangers and staff rolled up their sleeves—chainsaws, rakes, and gloves in hand—to begin the long process of clearing and repairing. They were joined by volunteers from the community, who showed up ready to help wherever they were needed. Some gathered and hauled away branches, while others shoveled mud from pathways or righted picnic table pads. Working side by side, rangers and volunteers turned what could have been a daunting cleanup into a shared effort, restoring familiar spaces piece by piece (Figs. 8-11).



Fig. 8. Loading debris onto trucks. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.



Fig. 9. Still more brush to load. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.



Fig. 10. Almost a full load. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.



Fig. 11. Oh, those great volunteers! Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.

The cleanup became more than just hard, dirty, and sweaty work—it was a reminder of the strength of our community. Neighbors, families, and park visitors pitched in side by side, sharing stories while hauling brush and clearing debris. The effort built camaraderie as much as it restored the Park. A special thanks goes to the Friends group, who kept spirits high by providing cold drinks, snacks, and meals for everyone lending a hand. Their support helped turn a muddy, tiring job into a shared experience that brought people closer together (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. Volunteers enjoying food and drinks provided by Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.

**Part IV: Renewal**

In places, the force of the water cut into the soil, carving out new edges along the riverbank and leaving roots exposed. The fresh cuts revealed layers of sand and silt that had built up over time, a reminder that the landscape is always shifting (Fig. 11). Each flood leaves its mark, reshaping the river's edge in ways both subtle and dramatic.

What were once familiar gravel bars and sandy spots looked different after the waters receded. Some beaches had washed away, while others formed in new places, changing the way the river's edge could be used and enjoyed (Fig. 12). The Guadalupe's banks are never fixed—they move and settle with each season, reflecting the river's constant motion.



Fig. 12. Altered beaches: Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.

**Conclusion**

The flooding at Guadalupe River State Park was a reminder of both nature's destructive power and its resilience. Just as the river reshaped the land, the people who care for the Park reshaped it again, clearing, repairing, and renewing it for future visitors. This cycle of flood and recovery is woven into the story of the Guadalupe—proof that while waters rise and fall, the spirit of the Park remains strong.

Fig. 13. The resilient Guadalupe: the churning, muddy waters of a few days earlier resume their clear, placid journey to the Gulf. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.



Fig. 11. A shifted bank: newly exposed roots and old sediment layers of alternating mud, gravel, and pebbles, with new sandy sediments in foreground. Photo by Jessica Bergner, TWPD.

If we stand back, we quickly realize how powerful the flood had been, and yet also how resilient the Guadalupe is. Though trails, banks, and gathering spaces looked altered, the river will return to its natural rhythm (Fig. 13). In time, the water will clear, trees and plants will regrow, and visitors will once again find beauty in the places that seemed unrecognizable just days before. But we should never forget the angry, churning, muddy waters of a few days earlier, even as the Guadalupe resumes its placid journey down to the Gulf.



Conduits of Danger Revisited

by Mackenzie Brown and Charleen Moore

Back in 2019, for the Spring Newsletter (available on the Friends’ website), we wrote an essay, “A Conduit for Danger: The Guadalupe River in Flood.” We began the essay with a quotation from an early German visitor to Texas, Alwin H. Sörgel, who compared the Guadalupe with the Rhine River back in his home country. It is worth repeating:

“Oh, the Guadalupe; what a river! The water clear as a day, flowing 10 to 20 feet above its rocky bottom. The boulders and the green and verdant plants, the fish, turtles, snakes and alligators do not appear to be in water but floating in a green-hued atmosphere. It is enchanting. The trees and the rocks, how picturesquely they stand at the river’s edge and cool their feet in this beautiful bath. There is no river more beautiful than the Guadalupe. How can you see beauty in the murky and muddy waters of the Rhine River, when you have seen the Guadalupe?” (Alwin H. Sörgel, *A Sojourn in Texas, 1846-47* [1992], 48.)

Sörgel, during his two years in Texas, apparently never observed the Guadalupe in one of its more muddy and menacing modes (Fig. 1). Other early visitors to South Central Texas, however, were well aware of the Guadalupe’s darker, more destructive moods. The geologist Ferdinand Roemer, for instance,



Fig. 1. The flood mode of the Guadalupe, 12 miles upstream from the Park, at 6:15 p.m., July 4, 2025. Photo by the editors.

while in New Braunfels in 1846, contrasted the two radically different aspects of the Guadalupe. On one hand, like Sörgel, he described the River as ornamented “with its abundant, crystal clear, rapidly flowing water, shaded by beautiful cottonwood and other trees.” On the other, Roemer recounts how, following torrential rains, the plain surrounding New Braunfels “was often converted into an inland sea within a few minutes,” with the Guadalupe itself rising 15 feet and carrying down large trees, while ordinarily small, dry brooks became “raging torrents.” (Ferdinand Roemer, *Texas* [2011], 191.)

What about droughts? It is worth remembering that less than 18 months ago, on August 17, 2023, the Guadalupe was practically dry. Only a few, warm and nearly stagnant pools remained on the surface, with the bedrock shelves at the base of the cliffs overlooking the Day-Use Area—normally covered with at least a few inches of water—were totally exposed (Figs. 2, 3).



Fig. 2. The drought mode of the Guadalupe, August 17, 2023. Photo by the editors.



Fig. 3. The river reduced to barely a trickle, August 17, 2023. Photo by the editors.

While one may bemoan the lack of water during times of drought, there is also great beauty revealed that appears at no other time. Down by the rapids near the old Wagon Ford crossing, the usually noisy and dashing river wends its drastically reduced way through a maze of gray, sculpted limestone rock (Fig. 4). Here all the flow, small as it is, can be seen, for there is no gravel bed in which it can hide below the surface. The water is crystal clear with a blue-green cast, reminiscent on a tiny scale of Sörgel’s “green-hued atmosphere” mentioned above.



Fig. 4. The much-reduced river in tiny limestone canyons. Photo by the editors.

In June of 2023, just two and a half months before the worst of the drought in August, visitors were still enjoying knee-deep water in the Day-Use Area (Fig. 5). But when the water level dropped to almost nothing on August 17, the few remaining pools, really just puddles, were quite warm and uninviting.

But it is hard to keep visitors away! Just 8 days after the July 4 -5 flood, of this year, and after strenuous efforts on the part of park staff and volunteers, the Day-Use Area was again open to the public. And despite continuing rainfall, three fishermen were spotted preparing their gear, oblivious to the inclement weather (Fig. 6). As Jessica Bergner writes in her essay above, the “cycle of flood and recovery is

woven into the story of the Guadalupe,” as is the cycle of drought and flood. The cycle of drought and recovery is well illustrated by the photographs in Figures 7 and 8.



Fig. 5. Water sport before worst of 2023 drought. Photo by the editors.



Fig. 6. Fishing in the rain 8 days after the flood. Photo by the editors.

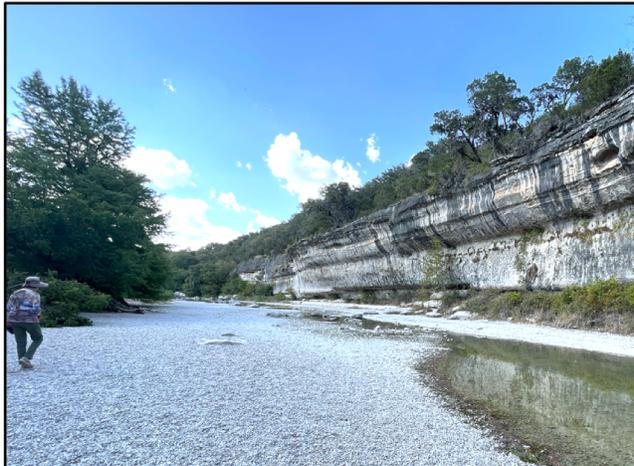


Fig. 7. On August 17, 2023, the Guadalupe in drought: the flow was 0.0 cubic feet per second. There was some flow under the gravel, but only a few non-flowing puddles remained above the gravel bed. Photo by the editors.



Fig. 8. On July 13, 2025, the Guadalupe in recovery: the high waters recede and clear. This photo was taken from nearly the same vantage point as the one in Fig. 7, but to get to the exact same spot, we would have had to wade far out into the stream. Photo by the editors.



## Observing details: Sparrow identification

by Linda Gindler

The plentiful spring and summer rains brought both nourishment for the Park's wildlife and bitter tragedy when flash flooding hit the upper Guadalupe River watershed at near record speed. The July 4<sup>th</sup> event was a reminder that Hill Country rivers harbor beauty, power, and danger. While the Park's staff, volunteers and wildlife dealt with the river's high, swift water and afterwards the mountain of debris left behind, the upper portions of the Park welcomed much needed rain. Both viewing blind water catchment tanks filled to the brim for later use, and several inches of rain fell throughout the savannah areas, giving the many grasses a boost for seed production perfect for the Park's seed lovers. One seed-loving group, the sparrow family, is well represented at the Park and worthy of tracking down during your next visit.

Twenty-two sparrow species have been reported at the Park and neighboring Honey Creek State Natural Area. Four of those are year-round residents, and ten call the Park home during the fall and winter. The others use the Park as a way station during migration. Fall migrants arrive slowly over several weeks making fall a wonderful time to practice sparrow identification with the mix changing daily.

Sparrow identification can be challenging, and it is best to use a pair of binoculars to zero in on field marks for a positive identification. First, look at the head and determine coloring of the crown, bill, and throat. Then get a good look at the patterning around the eye. Is there an eye-ring, streak, or other pattern? Second, the breast can eliminate many species by knowing if it is streaked or unstreaked. Finally, if the bird is in flight, see what flashes of lighter colors you see. Did you see white on the tail or wing bars? Three sparrows to start your identification knowledge with are the Field, Lark, and Rufous-crowned. All are year-round residents and can be found at the Savannah Blind and along the Painted Bunting Trail and Persimmon Path.

Field Sparrows (Fig. 1) range widely, from South Texas north to Canada and east to the Atlantic. They are common in the Park in all seasons, but their numbers swell in the fall and winter as birds from northern states migrate south with many stopping in Texas. Male Field Sparrows are known for their accelerating song that sounds like a bouncing ping-pong ball. They sing prolifically in the spring, but they love to sing so you can hear them in almost any season. It's worth listening to a few recordings before heading to the Park to aid in your search. Practice your ID skills by looking for an unmarked buffy colored breast and distinctive facial features including a white eye-ring, grayish face, rusty crown, and most importantly, a pink bill. All those many details are compacted onto a 5-6" bird with an 8" wingspan. Field Sparrows like open habitat with low perches so the Park's savannah and open woodlands make perfect places to look. In the fall and winter, they feed mainly on grass seeds while foraging on the ground and form loose flocks, so if you find one, look for another.



Fig. 1. Field Sparrow at Savannah Blind. Photo by John Prentice.

Lark Sparrows (Fig. 2) spend the winter in southern Mexico and spring in a large portion of the middle lower 48 states. In between, in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, birds are year-round residents. They are one of the easier sparrows to learn because of their clownish face and white highlighted tail. If a bird is sitting, look at the face for a chestnut crown and cheek patch, pale stripe over the eye and strong mustache stripe. The breast is whitish,



Fig. 2. Lark Sparrow at Savannah Blind. Photo by John Prentice.

with a central dark spot. Lark Sparrows are on the large side for a sparrow, measuring 6-6.5" with an 11" wingspan. When flying, they have a longish tail with outer feathers tipped with white. They feed on the ground but will fly into trees or shrubs when disturbed.



Fig. 3. Rufous-crowned Sparrow. Photo by John Prentice.

The Rufous-crowned Sparrow (Fig. 3) is a rock star for the Park because of its limited range within the United States. It makes its home only in portions of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Mexico, making it a sought-after bird for birding enthusiasts from other states. It favors hot, rocky hillsides of the southwest that look inhospitable on hot summer days. They are a stocky 6" bird with 7.75" wingspan. Grayish overall with streaky backs and a bright reddish (rufous) crown. They have a white eye-ring and white mustache stripes bordered in black. Rufous-crowned Sparrows spend much of their time on and near the ground. They are weak fliers who prefer to run to escape harm.

All three of these sparrows can easily be mistaken for the most common year-round park sparrow, the Chipping Sparrow (Fig. 4). All sport various shades of reddish brown on their crown so you will need to zero in other facial features. Chipping Sparrows have a dark line through the eye and a thick white line over the eye. They lack strong mustache striping, eye-rings, breast spots, and white tail feathers seen on the other species.



Fig. 4. Chipping Sparrow. Photo by John Prentice.

So, head on over to the Park and brush up on your sparrow ID skills. You'll be impressing your friends in no time. To learn more about birds in the Park, pick up a birding checklist or watch the Park's calendar for an upcoming birding program. For a relaxing morning afield take a seat in one of the wildlife viewing blinds.

The Park's viewing blinds are a partnership effort:

- GRSP Staff provide oversight and are always ready to lend a helping hand with know-how and tools.
- The Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek provide financial support for construction, repairs, and supplies.
- Volunteers from nearby Texas Master Naturalist chapters (Alamo, Lindheimer, and Hill Country) make up a 16-member Care Team that bring the blinds to life with daily cleaning, filling, and repair chores.
- The Little Nature Store in Boerne donates the most popular seed eaten at the Woodland blind (black oil sunflower).

For a brief history and update of the Woodland and Savannah Bird Blinds, see p. 11.



*Cottonmouth (Agkistrodon piscivorus)*

by Gilberto Martinez, Site Superintendent, HCSNA

Ah, the cottonmouth! Besides the western diamond-backed rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*), I can't think of another snake that elicits more fear and awe from the general populace. Many tall tales have been passed down through the generations of these serpents chasing individuals walking along their favorite water bodies, or of them falling from limbs onto boats to surprise and attack unsuspecting people. Even pop-culture has added to the bad public relations with a famous western (*Lonesome Dove*) portraying a cowboy falling into a "nest" of cottonmouths as he was crossing a river on horseback, and dying after receiving multiple bites. Stuff of nightmares! But as I sat in my undergraduate herpetology class learning about these chubby snakes, and later as a lab student, cleaning cage upon cage of the very animals that are supposed to chase and envenomate me without mercy, I thought to myself... "Are the cottonmouths that I work with broken?" Joking aside, the truth is the cottonmouth (just like every other ophidian out there) wants nothing to do with you!



Fig. 1. Cottonmouth, aka water moccasin. Photo by Gilberto Martinez.

The cottonmouth is a robust pit viper, with a dark, lackluster body and ill-defined bands. On its head, it sports a dark mask that runs from its eyes to the back of its upper jawline. Its venom is a hemotoxin that breaks down blood cells. It can literally dissolve the affected tissue! Even though it is armed with this weaponry, the cottonmouth's primary use of this is for prey acquisition. When approached by anything larger than itself, this snake tends to either flee or sit still, allowing its camouflage to help it blend into the dark soils and leaf litter that make up the woodland floor. Only when harassed does this snake turn to its classic defense display... head cocked back and mouth gaping, showcasing its white interior and vibrating its tail (Fig. 1). If the tail in motion is among leaves or other debris, the resulting sound may remind you of the buzz of a rattlesnake.

I have spent many hours wandering around their preferred habitats (streams, marshes, rivers and associated bottomland forests of central and east Texas) looking for them and out of the hundreds that I have encountered, not one has ever chased me or jumped into my kayak. If they truly did expose themselves to chase, that would have made my life a bit easier when looking for them!

The truth is, these snakes are a vital component of their ecosystem. They are an important predator and are themselves prey to a multitude of other animals. If encountered, give them the respect they deserve and enjoy their presence from a distance. Watch them for a few minutes among the fallen tree limbs, the green palmettos or the blue hues of Honey Creek, and you will come to appreciate the artwork that they are.

## A Message from the President

by Bob Morris

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Howdy Folks,

The date of July 4, 2025, will forever remain in our memories. This “Perfect Storm” rainfall event put life and property in extreme peril in our beloved Texas Hill Country and led to many heartbreaking tragedies that touched us all. This was personal because it was close, we felt it, some of us lived through it, and at the very least, we all came to know it. The response to this catastrophic natural occurrence was remarkable, inspirational, and instructive. Our people are resilient; we will recover, modify and rebuild.

Several river basins, including the Guadalupe, lie within the Texas Hill Country and all are exposed to occasional high rainfall events which lead to extreme flooding. That is why this area is called “Flash Flood Alley.” It is these rainfall events that helped create the Texas Hill Country that we appreciate and love today. However, this land can be unforgiving at times; we can experience long periods of drought often ending in a heavy rainfall event. Indeed, the infamous “drought of record” in the ’50s ended on April 24, 1957, with 10” inches of rain in a few hours, with the rain continuing for 32 days.

We should be conscious that population growth in the region and land use practices past and present have increased storm water flow and velocity, posing greater threats to life and property. Texas has made a concerted effort in flood mitigation over the last hundred years or so. However, no one knows when another flood will occur. If you live or recreate in a flood plain, it is wise to be ever vigilant and prepared.

Many thanks to all the volunteers and for the extra efforts of Park Staff to clean up in the aftermath. The Park is back to providing recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors as it has done in the past.

Our prayers for the fallen, survivors, their families, and emergency responders.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that we have a new member on the Board, Wendy Harter. Wendy is a retired U.S. Army Brigadier General. After 33 years of service across the globe, she and her husband settled in Bulverde. Wendy is a graduate of the University of California, Santa Barbara (BS in Marine Biology) and the Air War College (MS in International Relations and Strategic Studies). Her love of the outdoors, wildlife, hiking and travel have led to her becoming a certified Texas Master Naturalist (Lindheimer Chapter), a docent at the San Antonio Zoo, a board member of the Gorge Preservation Society, Canyon Lake, and now a board member of the Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek.



Wendy Harter

Bob

## From the Superintendent's Desk

by Brandon Lopes-Baca, GRSP,  
and Gilbert Martinez, Site Superintendent, HCSNA

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Another fiscal year has come and gone! We have accomplished so much this year and we could not have done it without the amazing staff and volunteers that make up the Guadalupe River/Honey Creek SNA team.

We have added a few new staff members at headquarters to help us welcome visitors. We welcome Alicia Gasus and Jason Wieringa as our new Customer Service Representatives.

We have also hired Lucas Langley as a Maintenance Specialist, to help keep the Park running smoothly.

While challenges do arise when managing a state park, this team always figures out how to face adversity and come out stronger on the other side. The July 4<sup>th</sup> flood was a testament to that. Our camp hosts, staff, park police, and volunteers came together and made sure that after the waters receded, we got the Park back up and running as soon and as safely as possible.

We are all looking forward to what the new fiscal year will bring, and as we approach the end of the calendar year we are reminded to find some time among the hustle and bustle to step back and enjoy the perks of belonging to the state park family.

Thank you to all who make every day at the Park be as rewarding and safe as possible.

Now let's get outside!

## Natural &amp; Cultural Resource Updates

by Jessica Bergner, Resource Specialist

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Here's a quick look at what's been happening—and what's coming up.

**Summer Highlights:**

- Day use restoration project
- Post-flood clean-up
- Trail maintenance
- Herbicide application
- Deer surveys & hunt prep

**Community & Education:**

- Co-presented with Olivia Kost, County Biologist, at the Mammen Family Public Library on Chronic Wasting Disease

**Looking Ahead:**

- **Explore Bowhunting, Saturday, October 25**, at Honey Creek State Natural Area from 10am-2pm. Learn sustainable hunting practices and get hands-on experience in a safe, guided setting.
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**Public Tour of the Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Homestead, October 25, 2025**

The third public tour of the Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Homestead will be a bit different from previous tours, as we will take advantage of the Mammen Family Public Library’s excellent presentation venue for the first part of the program, followed by a field trip to the Doeppenschmidt-Weidner property off Spring Branch Road. At the Library, we will present a photographic and documentary history of two of the earliest settler families in what is now the Honey Creek State Natural Area. Further details are available at the Library’s website calendar for the Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Tour:

<https://mammen.librarycalendar.com/event/early-settlers-honey-creek-area-ranch-47293>.

**We Welcome New Honey Creek Guides: Tara Zoll and Tracey Burke**

**Tara:** I am a passionate science educator (8th grade) with a BS in Biology and a deep appreciation for the natural world. As a dedicated naturalist, I thrive on exploring and understanding ecosystems, and I bring this enthusiasm into my teaching. My mission as an educator is to inspire curiosity and foster environmental stewardship among my students by making science both relatable and engaging. As a Texas Master Naturalist, I actively participate in education, outreach, and service focused on the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within communities across the State of Texas.



Tara Zoll



Tracey Burke

**Tracey:** I was in the 50<sup>th</sup> Master Naturalist Class of the Alamo Chapter and finished in April 2024. I love nature. I grew up in Asheville, NC and spent most of my childhood outside. I’m an RN and served 21 ½ years in the U.S. Air Force and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. I currently work for a medical malpractice law firm as a legal nurse consultant. I have one daughter who starts her first year at Texas A&M this fall. I love camping, hiking, birding, and learning more about nature. I’m excited to meet everyone on the trail!

**New Secretary for the Board**

After years of service as secretary of the Friends’ Board, Dave Kibler stepped down in May but will continue to serve on the Board. Lucy Cruz Hudson immediately volunteered to be our new secretary. Thank you, Dave, for your time and outstanding effort, and Lucy, for stepping in to fulfil the often little-noticed but time-consuming tasks of the position.

**Brief History and Update of the Woodland and Savannah Bird Blinds – by Linda Gindler**

**Friends’ Funds Working to Make Repairs**

March: Repaired concrete at Savannah’s water feature due to freeze damage. (Cost < \$20)

May: Replaced solar controller and battery at Savannah. The solar controller stopped doing its primary job which is to manage the battery and not let it over-charge or discharge too much. Too much in either direction ruins the battery which is what happened. (Cost <\$100)

August: Replaced a warped board that was causing a tripping hazard at Savannah. (Cost <\$20)

**Mother Nature Update**

Water: The two water features are the magic that bring the viewing blinds to life. While there is an ability to refill the Woodland water feature from the Park’s water system, water consumption at both blinds is primarily from the rain catchment systems. Plentiful spring and early summer rain filled both reservoirs. As of August, Savannah remains almost full, while Woodland with it’s smaller tank is 2/3 full.

What’s being seen: Spring and summer residents are starting to leave, with Golden-cheeked Warblers being one of the first to go. If you have not seen the Painted and Indigo Buntings, you need to get by soon as they, too, will be leaving shortly. In their place, sparrows will arrive throughout the fall. Also look for the return of Kestrels and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

**Brief Summary of the History of the Bird Blinds at the Park**

The Woodland Blind dates to 2009 when Boy Scout Robert Laird designed and managed its initial construction. Some of his initial work such as the Woodlands water tank and stand and the blind roof are still in use. Other features like the volunteer shed, viewing wall, benches, and water feature were added or refurbished by the Friends, Park Staff, and Master Naturalists over the years. The Savannah Blind was completed in 2022.

**The Care Team Watches Over the Friends’ Investment**

By 2016, park staff decided to form a Volunteer Care Team for on-going maintenance and chores. The new team took on responsibilities for Woodland in the Spring of 2016 and later for Savannah when construction for it was completed in 2022. Today the team is made up of 16 members representing three local Texas Master Naturalist chapters. Blinds are checked daily with each member visiting 2-3 times per month. Their 10-year anniversary will be the spring of 2026. An interesting team tidbit is that 5 of the current 16 served on the original team starting in 2016, and another 7 have served 5 years or more. The blinds remain a popular volunteer activity.

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

3350 Park Road 31  
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

**Visit us:**



<https://www.facebook.com/share/18hSKnam1t/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

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

**The Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc.**  
is a non-profit organization working with  
**Guadalupe River State Park and  
Honey Creek State Natural Area.**

**The Board Members of the Friends meet monthly,**  
usually on the third Thursday at 2:00 p.m.  
at Honey Creek Ranch.

**To request to attend the Board Meeting,**  
contact us at:  
[friendsofgrhc@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofgrhc@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.

**Join Us!**

**\*2025 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type: New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

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.

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