

FRIENDS



OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK
HONEY CREEK SNA



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026

A Message from the President

by Bob Morris

We had another great year due to the support from friends, members, donors and Honey Creek guides. Honestly, I could not replace that sentence or dress it up in any other way.

We had another outstanding attendance at our Annual Meeting / Christmas Party! Food was great due to the leadership of David Kibler. David continues to tell me that it is easy but my observation is it is not. Everyone brought wonderful desserts. If you were unable to attend, we missed you! No problem, you can "Save the Date" for our next Annual Meeting on Saturday, December 5, 2026.

Wendy Harter was elected to our Board following a midterm appointment. She has unique skills and abilities that will add value to the Board.

The Board has approved a rather aggressive Budget this fiscal year. Our total will approach \$30,000 if all projects come to fruition. Our current Projects are as follows:

- Rust House Improvement. 1 year project
- Dark Skies Improvement. We will be the first State Urban Park to Accomplish. 3-year project
- Enhance Pollinator Fiesta. 2-year project
- Poetry Table. Only seven National Parks have Poetry Tables. To my knowledge we will have the first Poetry Table in the Texas State Parks. 1 to 2-year project

We continue to support the Park with our Honey Creek Walks every Saturday and Sunday except the 5th Sunday. We continue to get requests for special walks. Gilbert Martinez, Park Superintendent for Honey Creek SNA, is expanding opportunities for the public to access this unique setting.

If you have not had an opportunity to renew your membership, please take a moment to do so (see page 8). Your contributions advance the mission of the Friends Group to support our Park and State Natural Area.

Kind Regards,

Bob

A Complex Situation

by Brandon Lopes-Baca, Complex Manager

A major highlight this quarter is our official recognition as a Complex by Texas Parks and Wildlife. While our day-to-day operations remain the same, this designation affirms the unified approach we have taken for years in managing both the state park and the state natural area. This recognition ensures our operations, staffing, and planning are viewed appropriately, important for long-term support and growth.

This designation involves a slight shift in staffing structure. I now serve in the role of Complex Manager. The former Assistant Superintendent position has transitioned into the Park Superintendent role, effectively removing the Assistant Superintendent position for the time being. There were no staffing changes at the natural area.

We've continued to strengthen leadership and support at the natural area. Our Site Manager, Gil Martinez, has truly settled into his role and become an essential part of our operations. See below for his update on ongoing development for the natural area.

Our team continues to look for ways to enhance visitor and staff experiences. We are focusing on accessibility and have made meaningful progress. While some improvements take time, we remain committed to creating greater accessibility.

I also want to express how much this team appreciates our day volunteers, Friends Group, and dedicated Park Hosts. The many positive comments we receive in post-stay surveys are a direct reflection of your hard work, pride, and commitment.

I encourage everyone to explore the programs across the Complex and come out to say hi. We're here not only to steward these sites, but also to connect the public to them and to help inspire the next generation of stewards.

Update on Honey Creek Ranch progress, by Gil Martinez

Construction of the new Honey Creek Ranch trail head and trail system is going smoothly. In the last 2 months, our restrooms, foundation for pavilion, 1 of 3 trails, and parking lot have been finished! We will have approximately 3.5 miles of trail that traverse the mosaic of habitats that are present in the uplands of Honey Creek, with a few stops along the way that showcase the natural and cultural heritage of the site. We hope to have this project wrapped up and ready for public use by late summer or early fall.

Passing of a legend: J. David Bamberger and his hope for humanity

by Mackenzie Brown and Charleen Moore

As our Hill Country Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) class of 2017 entered the grounds of the Bamberger Ranch Preserve, we were confronted with a graying and forlorn gravestone memorializing the passing of a once noble and majestic species (Fig. 1). The gravestone was enclosed within an iron fence, typical of old cemeteries in the Hill Country. We had to strain a bit to see clearly the name of the extinct species. It turned out to be ourselves—as perceived from some future date. As the epitaph informed us, “man” (humankind) is a relatively recent species or family, born just 2 million years B.C. The death date was left undetermined: A.D. 20__?. Our species, it reads, “who once dominated the earth destroyed it with his wastes, his poisons and his own numbers.” It was J. David’s life-long passion to ensure that the death date would be as far into the future as possible.



Fig. 1. Tombstone for “Man.” All photos by the authors unless otherwise noted.

As most of Texas Master Naturalists and conservationists living in the Hill Country today already know, J. David Bamberger passed away on January 17, 2026, at age 97. Many are the obituaries and tributes to this thoughtful, caring, irrepressible man, so if you are interested in the details of his life, you can find them easily on the internet. Noteworthy is the tribute to him by April Sansom, Executive Director of Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve, entitled “In Loving Memory,” available at: <https://www.bambergeranch.org/about>. What the authors offer here are a few personal reminiscences of our encounters with J. David, beginning with our first meeting on the field trip to his ranch as part of our TMN training on September 23, 2017.

Our guide for much of the tour was a big and jovial man by the name of Steven Fulton, ranch manager. One of “Big Steve’s” memorable demonstrations was a contest between vegetation types testing their ability to reduce runoff following rainstorms and to increase water penetration into the underlying soils. The three contestants: Ashe juniper, turf grass, and native grass, each placed in a small, sloping sample box set affixed to a green metal framework, with “rain-making” pans overhead to simulate natural rainfall and collecting jars below. The winner would be the vegetation type that had the least amount of water and sediment in its upper collection jar representing runoff and the most amount of water going into its lower collection jar, simulating ground water recharge that had penetrated about 6” of soil. (Fig. 2). After activation of the rain-making devices, the native grass was the clear winner (no further runoff contest was needed). If you look carefully at Fig. 2, you’ll see two collection jars in the foreground from the native grass box, the higher jar 2/3 filled with relatively clear runoff water, the lower jar 1/3 filled with clear recharge water. Further back is the upper jar from the cedar contestant fully filled with muddy runoff water, the lower jar having no water at all.

This was one of J. David’s favorite public education demonstrations, showing that native grasses are best for recharging our aquifers, with little cost and thus far superior to expensive dams and pipelines to bring water to users. If you are reading this in digital format, click on the inset box to see the video, “Fifty Years of Conservation” at the Bamberger Ranch Preserve, starting at minute 2:15, to see J. David’s own explanation of the runoff contest. (If you are reading a hard copy, the URL for the video is <https://www.bambergeranch.org/our-story>.) The essence of his half-century project was habitat restoration: to show how proper land management—by controlling cedar and seeding the land with native grasses—could rejuvenate abused lands in the Hill Country, restoring them to their native health with water flowing from dried-up springs and allowing native wildlife to flourish again. This is told in his book, *Water from Stone* (Texas A&M University Press, 2007).



Fig. 2. “Big Steve” explaining runoff contest to TMN class.



Fig. 3. TMN class of 2017 at Hes’ Country Store.

J. David loved people. Even when well into his 90s, he made it a point to meet the tour groups visiting his ranch. He chose to meet them at an old country store, Hes’, named for his mother Hester (nee Keggereis) Bamberger (Fig. 3). It was his mother who instilled in him his love of nature. Inside the store were pans, glassware, crockery, rolling pins, and various other items that he had salvaged from his mother’s home in Ohio after her death (Fig. 4). J. David loved to quiz guests on what various odd objects were—objects not found in modern kitchens. Only a few old-timers knew the answers, and not all of them!



Fig. 4. Inside the store, with items from Hes’ home.

The Country Store was especially welcoming during visits in cold weather. Not only was J. David there with his warm greeting, but there was also a big, pot-bellied stove helping chilled visitors to thaw out (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. A warm greeting awaits guests in winter.

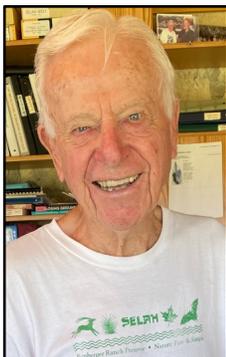
The authors made a few more trips to the ranch with friends and family members (Fig. 6). Charleen’s brother, Don Morizot, a Ph.D. in biology, visited the ranch with us, and although he was confined to a wheelchair, the ranch made full accommodations for him. We are ever grateful for the kindness of J. David and April Sansom, who made this visit possible, as it was one of the last trips outdoors that he was able to make.

Our last time to see J. David was at his ranch house on a hilltop at the Preserve. It was a late June morning in 2021. The desert willow outside the house was in full bloom. J. David had agreed to meet with us to discuss his role in the establishment of Guadalupe River SP. (See the Friends’ Newsletter for Spring 2022 for an essay, “How a State Park was Born on the Banks of the Guadalupe,” for J. David’s role.



Fig. 6. J. David in Hes’ Country Store, with Mackenzie Brown, grandson Brad Maulden, and son Nathan Brown. April 7, 2018.

He shared with us numerous newspaper clippings about the creation of Guadalupe River SP (Fig. 7). He recited several stories about the difficulties in securing the State’s approval to purchase his ranch property that is now part of the Bauer Unit at Guadalupe River SP. As fascinating as these stories were, more memorable for us was his joy, exuberance, passion, and dynamism. As noted above, he loved nature, he loved people, he loved to talk. And he loved to laugh and perform. He led us in a cheering session, shouting “Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!” while pounding fists on his desk and throwing arms in the air (Figs. 8-10).



Figs. 8-10. Some of the many faces of J. David Bamberger. His infectious laughter lives on in spirit for those who knew him.



Fig. 7. One of the clippings J. David shared with us.



Fig. 12. Madrone Lake, a fitting place to stop and pause, and reflect upon the land.

J. David also insisted in taking time to be mindful of what is around us. This contemplative side of the man is reflected in the name *Selah* that he gave to the ranch (Fig. 11). As a youth, he’d come upon the term while reading the Psalms. It often appears at the end of a verse, perhaps a musical cue to pause, or an instruction to weigh things carefully. In the video, “Fifty Years of Conservation,” he interprets the term as a directive “to stop, to pause, to look around you, and reflect on everything you see....What’s my duty as a steward of this ranchland? And I believe it is to take care of it and to share it” (Fig. 12). His closing words in the video affirm his belief in *Selah*: “I’ve given this land to the Foundation.* It will go on in perpetuity. It will never be any different than you see it today. When I leave this world, that’s what I want as part of my legacy.” He has left us; *Selah* lives on.

* “The Bamberger Foundation was formed in 2014 “with the purpose of encouraging and supporting proper land stewardship, conservation, environmental awareness, historical preservation, and services to the community”(<https://bambergerfoundation.org/>).



Fig.11. Screen shot of entrance, from video, “Fifty Years of Conservation.”

Camo Quail in the Park: the Northern Bobwhite

by Linda Gindler

It's almost time! Almost time that is for Spring to spring forth. Spring, that special time when the park transforms into full color. It starts slowly with many shades of green and then almost overnight the wildflowers reign supreme. For those with patience, more color is found bouncing in the trees, shrubs, and grass in the form of birds. Two of the park's most colorful birds, Golden Cheeked Warblers and Painted Buntings, arrive each spring with birding enthusiasts following to catch fleeting glimpses. While these are both gorgeous colorful spring species, the spring is also a great time to look for the elegant camouflaged hues that can sometimes take center stage with surprises too. The Northern Bobwhite (or Bobwhite for short) fits that description and is fun to hear and watch all spring long.

Bobwhites are members of the quail family. Texas boasts four species of quail but, the Bobwhite is the only one found within the park, with the other three found in west Texas. Those four plus two more make up the six quail species found within North America. Bobwhites have the largest range of any of the six, with a home range spanning the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. They also have the distinction of being the only quail found in the eastern half of the U.S. The Bobwhite species boasts over twenty sub-species, making them fun to spot in other parts of the country too. Across the sub-species females mainly look alike, but males vary with differing head and breast markings. The "Texas" subspecies calls the park home.



Northern Bobwhite, Male (photo by John Prentice)

During your next park outing, look and listen for Bobwhites along the Painted Bunting Trail, Prairie Trail, or Little Bluestem Loop, particularly in the open woodlands and fields. They are year-round residents easiest to spot during the spring and early summer when males sing out their presence in hopes of attracting a female. Listening to an online recording (before entering the park) may be helpful for tuning your ears, but the Bobwhite song is one of the easiest to learn of all the bird calls. The two sharp very loud notes really do sound like the bird is saying "BOB-WHITTEE".

Unfortunately for those of us who like to sleep in, Bobwhites are early risers, preferring at or near dawn to belt out their song. But they may sing sporadically throughout the day too if you prefer a later outing. When you hear one, look low for a ten-inch oblong plump shape darting in and around thick vegetation. They often appear in groups called a covey. If you startle them, they may startle you, too, with a bursting upward quick flight. Their camouflaged plumage is one of their best kept secrets and you will want a pair of binoculars to study it. Made up of intricate patterns of brown, rufous, bluff, and black, it is a beautiful mosaic worth the extra effort. Spot the males with their bold black face pattern and females with a buffy throat and eyebrow.

Like all quail, Bobwhites primarily spend their day on the ground seeking out their preferred food of seeds and the occasional insect. They love grasslands, fields, and open woodlands and are known for quickly returning to burned areas. They nest on the ground where both the male and female work together to scrape out a depression six inches wide and two inches deep that they line with grass and weave an arched roof to hide and protect the nest from above. Pairs spend five days courting and bonding, building their nest. Pairs raise the first brood of twelve to fifteen eggs and then may stay together or split up and find other mates to raise a second and even a third brood per season. That means twenty-four to forty-five youngsters per year, but as ground dwellers, the young make for an easy snack for coyotes, foxes, raccoons, bobcats, and birds of prey.

Bobwhites are both prized as game birds and farm-raised protein (both meat and eggs). You can even find farm-raised Bobwhite anytime of the year at your nearby HEB. Or if you are a good marksman, the Texas season is from early November to late February. Because of this dual history, they are one of the most studied bird species in the world. Biologists have studied the impacts of pesticides, prescribed burning, and more. Studies do show a sharp decline for the wild population, most likely caused by habitat loss and increased use of pesticides. The good news for the Bobwhites is the population is still large enough across their range that they respond well to sound habitat initiatives.

If you would like to learn more about birds in the park, pick up a bird checklist at the Ranger Station, Discovery Center, or at one of the Wildlife Viewing Blinds.* Follow the park on Facebook to learn about birding programs. So, gather your binoculars and camera and head on over for a morning of birding, mother nature is sure to surprise you this spring.



Northern Bobwhite, Females (photo by Ken Butler)

* For the current status of the Woodland and Savannah Bird Blinds, see the update on bottom of next page.



The Texan Tetra (*Astyanax argentatus*)

by Gil Martinez

Honey Creek is home to several species of fish, but one that is near and dear to me is the Texan tetra (*Astyanax argentatus*), formally Mexican tetra (*Astyanax mexicanus*). As a kid, I kept a handful of this species in my childhood aquarium, catching them in nearby canals and resacas (oxbows) in the Rio Grande Valley. I would watch them for hours, zipping through the plastic castles and rock ornaments catching bloodworms and fish flakes.

The name *tetra* is the short form of *Tetragonopterus*, Greek for “four-finned.” The four fins refer to the unpaired fins (in red in Fig. 1) on the fish: caudal fin, dorsal fin, anal fin, and the tiny adipose fin. It is this latter that was once considered the distinguishing feature of tetras, but not all tetras have this fin. The term is no longer used in scientific taxonomy but is popular among fish hobbyists with home aquariums.

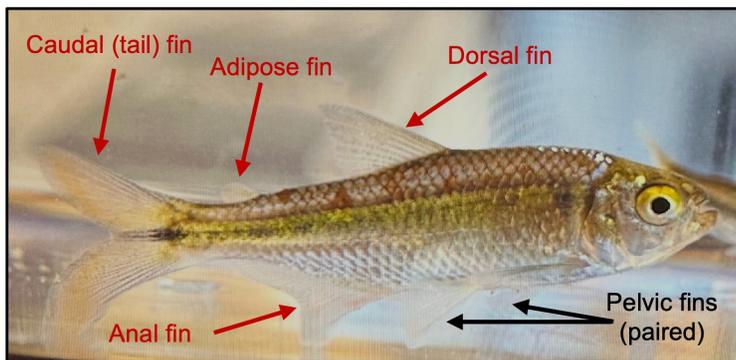


Fig. 1. A Texan tetra

The scientific name of the fish is also of interest. The genus name *Astyanax* comes from a character in Greek mythology wearing armor of large silver plates. The species name, *argentatus*, is Latin for silvery. Indeed, *Astyanax argentatus* is a small, freshwater species covered with silvery plates.

The Texas tetra reaches lengths of up to 4.5 inches and its range is from the Salado River near Temple down south into northern Mexico. In central Texas, they are associated with the cool and clear waters of springs (such as Honey Creek!) where they can be found within the runs and pools of those systems. They are omnivores, feeding on everything from detritus material to small worms and aquatic arthropods. In turn, they are eaten by various large predators such as kingfishers, herons, snakes, and turtles.

During our weekend tours of the creek, look for schools of up to 30 fish in the deeper pools as they zip between clumps of aquatic vegetation! If the sun is shining upon them, imagine them as an army of Greek warriors in their silvery suits of armor!



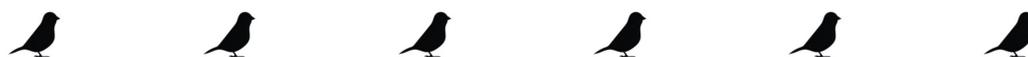
WILDLIFE VIEWING BLINDS UPDATE – by Linda Gindler

Both water features were off and winterized prior to the multi-day freeze back in January. Generally light freezes that only last a few hours at dawn do not cause problems at the bird blinds and need no preventive steps, but when a hard freeze is predicted that will last into daytime hours, it is time to act. That was the case back in January, so the team shut down water features at both blinds prior to the freeze. While the plumbing was safe, the limestone rocks at both blinds were damaged as water in the various nooks and crannies of the rocks froze, causing expansion and cracks.

Woodland: We were able to get Woodland back up and running after the freeze as its damage was minor. Several Care Team volunteers met on February 10 for a morning of repairs and upkeep. During the morning, they repaired freeze damage to the upper portion of the waterfall that required disassembling it and then putting it back in place with fresh mortar. They also cleaned the tank, trough, and gutter, re-painted the benches, placed fresh brush along the fencing, and filled and packed holes around the feeders. We were able to restart Woodland soon after the work morning. A good time was had by all.

Savannah: Savannah's water feature suffered greater freeze damage to its base limestone rock and has been off since the freeze in mid-January. Volunteers met on February 19 to correct freeze damage to the water feature. During the morning, they replaced two of the upper rocks, rebuilt the two pool dikes, filled freeze cracking along the drip edge, and resurfaced the lower pool with fresh cement. They also cleaned the storage tank and trough, repainted benches, and did a bit of landscaping. The water feature will now go through a period of trial and error (on and off) to find and correct any remaining issues. Those will take time due to drying and testing periods. The goal is to have it functional for spring migration.

Cost: Total for rock repair, painting, and cleaning supplies: \$195.



Honey Creek is one of the few pristine creeks left in Texas. Due to its fragility, it is accessible to the public only with certified guides leading interpretive walks. For years, the Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek have trained and certified guides and have provided a public schedule for most Saturdays and Sundays at 9:00 am (8:30 am in the summer months). If you have ever been on one of these guided walks, you will understand the need for protecting this pristine creek by limiting public access. Hundreds of trampling feet everyday scrambling down the creek banks to examine the spatterdock lilies, smallmouth bass, dragonflies, various aquatic insects, and other fauna living in the sparkling waters of Honey Creek would quickly devastate its unspoiled character and wreak havoc on this vulnerable ecosystem. It is unfortunate that all too often, beautiful places in nature that we love to visit can quickly be loved to death.

To find a suitable balance between conservation and responsible public access, Texas Parks and Wildlife encourages various groups to schedule special walks, and they are now planning to have guided public walks during the week, in addition to the currently scheduled walks. To see the schedule for these new weekday walks, check the Park's Events Calendar for "Honey Creek Guided Walks with Ranger Gil." (His walk schedule can be found at: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/guadalupe-river/honey-creek-guided-walk-with-ranger-gil/2026-05-20>.)

As for the special walks, three recent groups are highlighted below.

The Hikerbabes. The Friends were delighted to welcome members of the Hikerbabes San Antonio/Southern Chapter for a special Honey Creek Walk on January 17. The Hikerbabes organization fosters a strong, positive support network for a diverse community of women united by their love of the outdoors. Fifteen members braved the crisp 43-degree morning, exploring the remarkable Bauer Unit before continuing on to Honey Creek State Natural Area for a guided walk. As the sun emerged and the afternoon warmed, the group enjoyed a leisurely and inspiring time discovering the unique beauty and delicate treasures that make Honey Creek so extraordinary. [Note from Mary Habib, guide for the Hikerbabes.]



Hays County Texas Master Naturalist training class of 2026. We are always happy to welcome new Texas Master Naturalists in training to Honey Creek. Members of the 2026 class of the Hays County Chapter of TMN came to Honey Creek on February 15, on a delightful, sunny day. One member-in-training was accompanied by her son, who was extremely helpful in assisting the guides conduct various experiments, including the dissolution of limestone with acid. [Note from Charleen Moore and Mackenzie Brown, guides for the TMN training class.]

UTSA Honors College class. These students were taking a course entitled, "Outdoor Experiences & Wellbeing." Their majors were diverse, including business, literature, art, environmental studies, and computer science. Each student was focused on a particular type of wellbeing: intellectual, creative, physical, occupational, spiritual and mental. Halfway through the interpretive walk, the students took a brief break to journal about their experience while visiting Honey Creek. The bluff overlooking Honey Creek, where visitors first get a glimpse of the creek, was an ideal location. [Note from Charleen Moore and Mackenzie Brown, guides for the Honors class.]



[All event writeups are by Jessica Bergner, Resource Specialist]

A Two-Night Celebration to Remember: Christmas in the Park at Guadalupe River State Park

This past December the holiday spirit glowed a little brighter at Guadalupe River SP as the community came together for a memorable two-night Christmas in the Park celebration. Visitors transformed the Turkey Sink campground into a festive wonderland. Campsites sparkled with twinkling lights draped across RVs and tents, inflatable snowmen standing beneath the trees, and garlands framing campfire circles. Each decorated site reflected the personality and holiday cheer of its campers, turning a beloved campground into a walk-through display of community spirit. Guests strolling through Turkey Sink were treated to dazzling showcases of imagination and heart.



At the amphitheater, the magic continued. Staff, community partners, and dedicated volunteers together created an inviting holiday hub filled with warmth and joy. Live music played on dulcimers set the tone each evening, with festive favorites echoing through the December air. Families gathered around and soaked in the atmosphere.

Children enjoyed hands-on activities designed to spark creativity and celebrate the season. Nearby, the irresistible aroma of hot cocoa and cookies drew smiling visitors to the refreshment tables. There is something timeless about warming your hands on a cup of cocoa while laughter and music fill the background, and this year's event delivered that feeling in abundance.

In addition to celebrating the season, attendees showed incredible generosity by contributing donations for Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Kendalia. Guests brought much-needed supplies and support to help care for injured and orphaned wildlife. The outpouring of donations reflected the compassionate spirit of our park community and extended the impact of the event far beyond the campground.





Christmas in the Park at Guadalupe River SP was more than decorations and activities. It was neighbors supporting neighbors, families creating traditions, and a community coming together to make a difference. The memories made at Turkey Sink and the amphitheater will carry the warmth of the season well into the new year, along with the knowledge that together we helped support local wildlife in need.

We are already looking forward to making next December even brighter.

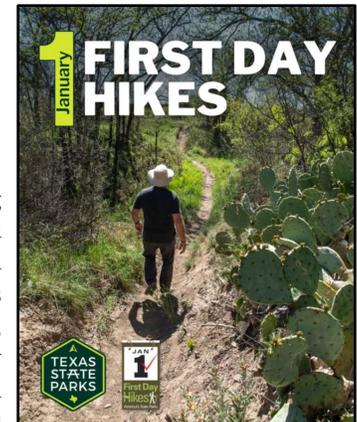


Ring in the New Year on the Trail: Midnight and First Day Hikes at Honey Creek SNA and Guadalupe River SP

The new year began not with fireworks, but with the steady rhythm of boots on trails and the quiet beauty of the Texas Hill Country night sky. This year's Midnight Hike at Honey Creek SNA offered a memorable and meaningful way to welcome January 1. As participants gathered under the stars on New Year's Eve, excitement filled the cool night air. Guided by staff, hikers ventured along the trails, listening to the sounds of nocturnal wildlife and experiencing Honey Creek in a way few get to see. When midnight arrived, the group paused together to mark the turning of the year surrounded by nature. Instead of city noise, there was reflection, laughter, and the shared sense of starting fresh in one of Texas' most pristine landscapes.

Just hours later, the celebration of the outdoors continued with First Day Hikes. At Honey Creek SNA, guided hikes welcomed visitors eager to begin the year with intention, fresh air, and movement. Certified guides provided insights into the area's unique ecosystems, native plants, and wildlife, giving participants a deeper appreciation for the land beneath their feet.

Meanwhile, at Guadalupe River State Park, visitors took part in self-guided First Day Hikes. Families, couples, and solo adventurers set their own pace along scenic trails, enjoying peaceful river views and winter landscapes. The flexibility of self-guided hikes allowed guests to tailor their experience to fit personal interests while still participating in a nationwide tradition. First Day Hikes are part of a broader initiative celebrated in state parks across the country. The program encourages people to start the new year outdoors, promoting physical health, mental well-being, and a connection to natural spaces. By stepping onto a trail on January 1, participants join thousands of others nationwide in committing to exploration, conservation, and time spent in nature. The initiative highlights the vital role public lands play in fostering healthy communities and protecting natural heritage for future generations.



Poster from
<https://www.facebook.com/GuadalupeRiverStatePark/posts/%EF%B8%8F-first-day-hikes-are-almost-here-%EF%B8%8Fcan-you-believe-this-year-has-flown-by-it-fee/1300931488735079/>

Casting into Winter: Trout Fishing Event Reels in Success at Guadalupe River State Park

This past January, winter brought a special opportunity to Guadalupe River State Park as anglers of all ages gathered to take part in the park's annual trout fishing event. Thanks to seasonal stocking of rainbow trout, visitors were able to enjoy a unique cold-weather fishing experience right here in the Texas Hill Country.

The river was stocked with vibrant Rainbow trout, creating excitement along the banks as families, first-time anglers, and seasoned fishermen cast their lines into the clear waters of the Guadalupe. Laughter and cheers echoed across the river as participants reeled in their catches, many experiencing the thrill of landing a trout for the very first time.

Rainbow trout are stocked in Texas during the winter months because they thrive in colder water temperatures but cannot survive once water temperatures consistently rise in late spring and summer. The seasonal stocking program provides a limited-time opportunity for anglers to target a species not typically found in most Texas waters year-round. This makes winter trout fishing a highly anticipated event for many outdoor enthusiasts.



For visitors, the trout stocking program opens the door to new experiences. It offers a chance for beginners to learn basic fishing skills in an accessible setting and provides families with an affordable outdoor activity during the cooler months. For experienced anglers, it brings the excitement of pursuing a species that requires slightly different techniques and approaches than warm-water fish.

As the seasons change and the trout season concludes, we look forward to continuing to provide engaging programs that bring people to the river's edge. Whether casting for trout in winter or enjoying the park in other ways throughout the year, Guadalupe River State Park remains a place where outdoor traditions take root and thrive.



Stewardship in Action: Youth and Adult Public Hunts at Guadalupe River SP and Honey Creek SNA

Both the youth and adult hunts provided safe, well-managed opportunities for hunters to engage with Texas public lands while contributing directly to wildlife management goals. For many young participants, the youth hunts offered more than just time in the field. They provided mentorship, education, and the chance to build lifelong outdoor skills alongside family members and experienced hunters. The adult hunts continued that tradition of responsible harvest and stewardship.



A key component of this year's success was the partnership with the San Antonio Food Bank through its Hunters for the Hungry program. The Food Bank had its trailer stationed at the park, making it convenient and efficient for hunters to donate harvested deer. Having the trailer on-site removed barriers and allowed hunters to give back immediately following their harvest.

This partnership is especially meaningful during a time when many families face food insecurities. Venison donations provide a high-quality protein source to neighbors in need, and hunters once again demonstrated their generosity and community-minded spirit. The ability to turn a successful hunt into meals for local families highlights the broader impact of these public hunts beyond park boundaries.

The hunts also featured the return of the feral and exotic species competition, an important management tool in protecting native ecosystems. Invasive feral hogs and exotic ungulates can cause significant habitat damage, compete with native wildlife, and disrupt sensitive landscapes. By participating in the competition, hunters played a vital role in helping staff manage these populations and reduce their impact on the land.

Support from the park's Friends Group further strengthened the event. The Friends Group provided gift cards to recognize the top hunters in the feral and exotic competition, adding an element of friendly competition while reinforcing the importance of conservation-focused harvest.

The success of this year's public hunts at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area demonstrates what is possible when agencies, nonprofit partners, volunteers, and hunters work together. Through stewardship, generosity, and collaboration, these events continue to support healthy ecosystems and strong communities alike.

Drawing Back for Conservation: “Explore Bowhunting” Hits the Mark

This year’s Explore Bowhunting event at Honey Creek State Natural Area was a resounding success, introducing participants to the skills, ethics, and purpose behind one of the oldest forms of hunting. Designed as an educational, hands-on program, Explore Bowhunting gave attendees the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of archery and bowhunting in a safe and supportive environment. Throughout the event, participants rotated through interactive stations where they practiced proper shooting form, learned about archery equipment, and received instruction on shot placement and safety. Experienced instructors and volunteers provided one-on-one guidance, helping beginners build confidence while reinforcing responsible practices. A highlight of the day was watching participants progress from tentative first shots to confidently grouping arrows on target. For many, it was their first time holding a bow. By the end of the program, smiles and high-fives told the story of new skills learned and new passions discovered.



In addition to target shooting, the program emphasized wildlife conservation, hunting regulations, and ethical decision-making in the field. Participants discussed the role bowhunters play in managing wildlife populations, supporting habitat conservation, and contributing to conservation funding through license sales and equipment purchases. The event made it clear that bowhunting is not simply about harvesting game, but about stewardship, respect for wildlife, and a deep understanding of the outdoors.

Programs like Explore Bowhunting are important because they help bridge the gap between curiosity and responsible participation. They create a welcoming entry point for youth and adults who may not have access to mentors or outdoor traditions. By focusing on safety, ethics and conservation from the very

beginning, the program builds a respect that extends far beyond the range.



Explore Bowhunting also supports long-term conservation goals. Educated, ethical hunters contribute directly to wildlife management and habitat protection, ensuring that Texas’ natural resources remain healthy and sustainable for future generations. Introducing new participants to archery and bowhunting strengthens the connection between people and public lands, fostering a community invested in conservation.



Mark Your Calendars: The Pollinator Fiesta will be Buzzing on March 14



Mark Your Calendars: The Big Sit Takes Flight at Guadalupe River State Park on May 9

Bird lovers, nature enthusiasts, and curious beginners alike are invited to join us on Saturday, May 9, at Guadalupe River State Park for an exciting and unique birding event, the Big Sit. This special program is part of the annual Great Texas Birding Classic, one of the largest birding tournaments in the nation.

The Big Sit offers a fun twist on traditional birding. Instead of traveling across multiple locations, participants remain within a fixed 50-foot diameter circle and identify as many bird species as possible from that single spot. Often described as a tailgate party for birders, teams bring chairs, binoculars, field guides, and snacks as they settle in for a full day of observation, conversation, and discovery.

The Great Texas Birding Classic, coordinated by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, is more than a friendly competition. It is a conservation-driven tournament that raises awareness and funding for bird habitat conservation across the state. Proceeds from the Classic support habitat restoration and conservation grants that benefit birds and other wildlife throughout Texas.

We are proud to share that the park's Friends Group will once again sponsor the Guadalupe River State Park team. Their continued support helps make participation possible and demonstrates their commitment to conservation, education, and community engagement. Partnerships like this strengthen our ability to connect people with the natural world while contributing to meaningful conservation efforts.

The Big Sit is also a welcoming event for beginners. No prior birding experience is required. Park staff and experienced volunteers will be available to assist with bird identification, offer tips on using binoculars, and help participants tune in to bird calls and behaviors. It is an opportunity to slow down, observe closely, and gain a deeper appreciation for the incredible diversity of birds that call Texas home or pass through during migration.

Whether you are a seasoned birder or simply curious about the wildlife around you, the Big Sit on May 9 is a chance to be part of something bigger. By participating, you are supporting conservation, strengthening community partnerships, and celebrating the remarkable role that birds play in our ecosystems.



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

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

2026 Membership Renewal Due Now!

2026 Membership Dues

Become A Friend of the Friends/Renew Your Friendship Today

Please help support Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area. Your membership dues and donations stay within the Park and support its many activities. With your membership, you will be kept up to date on all upcoming programs, events and park news as well information on volunteer opportunities through our quarterly newsletter and park updates. As a member you and your family will also have access to members only events.

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

Name(s): _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Membership Dues: \$25 per year (membership includes all family members). Membership dues renew in January.

Lifetime memberships: \$1,000.

If you are interested in helping the park though volunteering, please let us know your area 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.

Board of Directors	
<p><u>President</u> Bob Morris</p> <p><u>Vice-President</u> Ed Van Reet</p> <p><u>Secretary</u> Lucy Cruz Hudson</p> <p><u>Treasurer</u> Mary Habib</p> <p><u>Director/Co-Historian and Webmaster</u> Mackenzie Brown</p> <p><u>Director/Co-Historian</u> Charleen Moore</p> <p><u>Director/Membership</u> Brady Hansen</p>	<p><u>Director/Honey Creek Interpretive Walks</u> Nancy Gray</p> <p><u>Director at Large</u> Bob Gray</p> <p><u>Director at Large</u> Wendy Harter</p> <p><u>Director at Large</u> John Lack</p> <p><u>Director at Large</u> Pamela Lack</p> <p><u>Director at Large</u> Dave Kibler</p> <p><u>Director at Large</u> Doug Starasinic</p>