



## Spring 2017 NEWSLETTER

# Friends of Guadalupe River, Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization

## Welcoming

by Tom Anderson

Folks, please join me in welcoming Barrett Durst as your new Superintendent for Guadalupe River State Park. Barrett will begin his new journey at Guadalupe River on January 1<sup>st</sup> and I hope you will welcome him and assist him during this transition. For those of you who don't know Barrett, here is some more information about Barrett.

Barrett was born and raised in Fredericksburg, TX. After graduating from Fredericksburg High School, he attended Texas A&M University where he received a Bachelors' of Science degree in Animal Science and a minor in Wildlife Management. He comes from a background of construction and meat science, having worked for Durst Sheet Metal & Roofing Inc., Dutchman's Meat Market, and co-owning a wild game processing business in Fredericksburg. His first exposure to TPWD was volunteering at the Admiral Nimitz Museum. He started his career with TPWD in May 2007 at Enchanted Rock SNA as a Maintenance Assistant. From there he went to Choke Canyon SP in the new Park Operations Trainee program. Since then, Barrett has been employed as the Assistant Manager at Pedernales Falls SP, the Park Manager at Big Bend Ranch SP, and most recently, the site Superintendent at Lake Somerville State Park Birch Creek Unit. He loves his job within State Parks because it gives him the opportunity to work across the state in many different operations while meeting new faces who share the same enjoyment of the outdoors.

He enjoys all things outside: hiking, biking, jogging, sight-seeing, hunting, fishing, and experiencing places off the beaten path while spending time with family. Barrett's favorite thing about state parks and his job are the visitors and helping others to experience some life-altering moments in our parks, encouraging them to become stewards of our public lands. He married his wife, Meridith, on May 5, 2012 and moved her to the Chihuahuan Desert in Big Bend (its true love when she says yes to the desert!) and has been happily married ever since. He is excited about this new adventure and to work with the great people of Guadalupe River SP to protect our resources in perpetuity and provide the outdoor experience to all who visit the park. "Quality of life is your key to success."

I wanted to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the leadership that Joel Parker has provided during this long transition period. Joel's leadership has been very evident for a long time and I look forward to leadership that he and Barrett will continue to provide at Guadalupe River State Park!

**Hosted by the Friends of Guadalupe River / Honey Creek  
11<sup>th</sup> Homesteader Homecoming  
Gathers in Guadalupe River State Park (GRSP)\*  
Celebrates 100-Year-Old's Birthday  
Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 2:00**

While the original Homesteader Homecoming first started in 2006 at Guadalupe River State Park's amphitheater, since 2010 the last seven *Homesteader Homecomings* have been "off-campus"; held on eastern Kendall County/ western Comal County's historical ranches/farms and at regional icons such as St. Joseph – Honey Creek Church, the Bergheim Store and the old Kandalia Schoolhouse. For our 11<sup>th</sup> gathering we are coming back to our roots to celebrate a birthday at the Rust House. Not just any birthday, it's a 100-year-old's birthday and we can tell you that it is not a member of the GRSP's staff (that we are aware of). It is certainly not GRSP's founding year (although the park's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary is right around the corner in 2018). No, the centennial celebrant is the Rust House itself, constructed in 1917, after Henry and Louise Rust took up 100s of acres of prime Guadalupe River land. The Friends of Guadalupe River / Honey Creek invite you to join them on Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2:00 p.m. at the Rust House in Guadalupe State Park. Learn about the early settlement of Guadalupe River S.P. Park land and Heinrich Rust & family. Hosted by the Friends of Guadalupe River / Honey Creek, Homesteader Homecoming is free and open to the public, please mention *Homesteader Homecoming* at the park gate entrance. As usual, Friends of Guadalupe/Honey Creek will supply the drinks and guests and Friends' members are asked to bring a sweet. Contact: Bryden Moon



**Rust House sited in GRSP**

@ (830) 336-3375 or e-mail [bemoonjr@aol.com](mailto:bemoonjr@aol.com). \* **Guadalupe River State Park is located off of Highway 46 on Park Road 31 (Park Road 31 is approximately 2 miles east of the Kendall County / Comal County line).**

## Board of Directors

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## Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

## Curry's Creek - More Than a Watershed Early Enterprise – Hodge's Mill (Part III)

Last edition we shared a couple of early 1850 vignettes, first by Kendall County pioneer Carl Phillip Beseler followed by excerpts from future landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted's *A Journey Through Texas*, which through their descriptions, established that the Curry's Creek region was one of the earliest outposts in what would become Kendall County. Yet while the Curry's Creek name dominated the region for over three decades, the first Post Office located right on Curry's Creek wasn't named for the creek... officially established on February 17, 1857, it was recorded as the **Hodge's Mills Post Office**. So why name it *Hodge's Mills*... was there a Hodge and were there mills? The short answer to both questions is yes. Welcome back. Today strands of each eye-witnesses' diary from last edition come together in the mill that Olmsted noted (near the junction of Curry's Creek's merge with the Guadalupe, outside the northeast boundary of Guadalupe River State Park) juxtaposed with John Seaborn Hodges, identified by Beseler as "**John Hodge**," one of the Curry's Creek Rangers, that the Sisterdale German settlers initially mistook for Indians.

Apparently Beseler's misspelling of Hodges' last name happened often. As you can see from the original postal registration- while it included the 's' in his name, when recording the official post office name they placed the apostrophe before, not after the 's' and **Hodge's** stuck. That is not the only unique thing

about this registration. Take a closer look and you'll see that there is an "s" after Mill, the second word is **Mills**. There is other primary evidence that it was plural. On an August 7, 1857, Masonic charter for the Twin Sisters Masonic Lodge that was first housed at Hodge's Mill, and the certificate lists the location as "**residing at or near Hodges Mills**," yet **Mills** did not stick. Thus local historians use Hodge's Mill or even more frequently, Hodges Mill. Still there was a reason why it was

originally called "Mills." Regional pioneer Christian Friedrich Bergmann, whose land was just a few miles upstream on the Guadalupe River, provides the background. In his January 16, 1859, letter to family in Saxony he writes, "**Not far from my place is grist mill close to which is also a saw mill where I can have various wood cut into boards and posts and then take it into town.**" Yes there were multiple mills, a grist mill for grinding grain and a saw mill for wood and timber. Mr. Bergmann also utilized Hodge's Mill for his post office and just like everyone else, he too had trouble with spelling the post office's name, as evidenced by his close, "**My address is Mr. C. F. Bergmann, Hodges Mill, Blanco County, Texas.**"

On local land records by 1852, the eponymous John Hodges fit right in with the DNA of the original Curry's Creek pioneers; unique in that they were not German immigrants, and also unique in that this pocket of settlers provided what proved to be a deep source of rangers - including Lawhon, Sansom, Patton, Jones, Nowlin, Robinson, Saunders, as well as Hodges. In some cases it was a family affair as sons of Sam Boyd Patton, William Early Jones, and James C. Nowlin rode for and even assumed leadership positions within the Texas Rangers. John Seaborn Hodges turns up on a Texas Ranger list of leaders; he was mustered as a Lieutenant in December 1857, leading the *Texas Mounted Volunteers for the Upper Blanco and Guadalupe Rivers* through March 1858. And when newly formed Blanco County conducted their first ever elections on April 12, 1858, Hodges was selected as a county commissioner. Yet it was near and during this window of time that his ties to the mill and post office dissolved. From Comal County documents,

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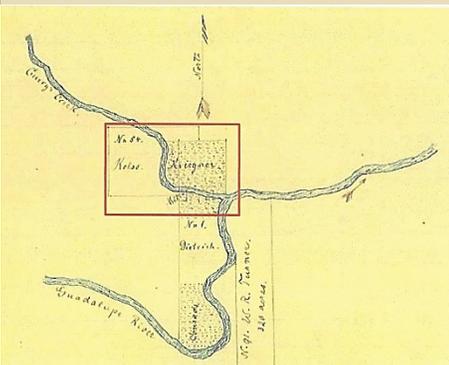
Trails to the Past

by Bryden Moon

recorded on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1857, in New Braunfels, we learn that he lost his mills and land when it was auctioned to the highest bidder to care for debts, **“Georg Pfeffer ...at public auction...who has made the highest and best bid for and in consideration for the sum of Six hundred & two dollars the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, all the right title & interest of said John Hodges in and to a Saw and grist mill & shingle machine by and situated on the mouth of Curry’s Creek about 30 miles N E of New Braunfels together with about 3 acres of land whereon the mill stands...”** And then on February 7<sup>th</sup> 1858, Neill Robison replaces John S. Hodges as the Hodge’s Mill Postmaster. Hodges’ name only appears once in the Kendall County Commissioner Court minutes - a January 27, 1862, transaction where he deeds all his Kendall County land holdings to J. C. Nowlin. Later that year the 1862 Commissioners Court held four meetings and in the year-ending November 17<sup>th</sup> session, **“in response to a petition from citizens in Precinct II to form a patrol, the court approved and appointed Neil Robinson (Capt.) and W. E. Jones, James C. Nowlin, James Patton, W. G. Sansom, and Edward Q. Krieger as privates of said patrol.”** John Hodges was not part of that patrol; he seems to have disappeared from the region.



Since there is evidence citing more than one mill on Curry’s Creek, the original location of Hodge’s Mill is often muddled. However, this map (left) taken from Comal County deed records and illustrating the merge of Curry’s Creek into the Guadalupe River in rare graphic- blue, pinpoints Hodge’s Mill’s original site. From the expanded detail (below) you can see the exact location of the mill, and guess what? From this March 4<sup>th</sup> 1857, illustration we are led back to within the last few hundred yards before Curry’s Creek merged with the Guadalupe River.



We return to the land that Olmsted described during his 1854 visit, **“...we came upon Currie’s Creek, and found an American settler... He is owner of an adjacent sawmill.”** It is certainly possible that the American settler and sawmill owner that Olmsted met was John Hodges. And while it is possible that the mill or post office moved away from its first site, no definitive records have been unearthed. Thus it is possible

that both the mill and post office stayed right here on this spot. Regardless of location, Hodge’s Mill continued its status as the regional post office for 13 years after it was established, transitioning from Comal to Blanco County to Kendall County with locally familiar surnames of Jones, Nowlin, Sansom serving as Postmasters after Hodges and Robison. Then on October 5<sup>th</sup> 1870, Benjamin Patton became Post Master for the newly minted Curry’s Creek Post Office, and the Hodge’s Mill Post Office was officially closed. The 1870 timing is curious because 1869 and 1870 witnessed epic floods. During these back to back “floods of record” regional mills were swept away. Could the demise of the mill have created the need for a new post office? I guess that is a story for another day.



**There are more stories to be told!**

## Nature opportunities at the Park

by R. Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter

### Oh To Know the Night

Guadalupe River State Park

Taped to the black file cabinet in my office is a crinkled 1/3-sheet of slowly decomposing paper with a short poem on it by Wendell Berry, a renowned poet and author, among other credits. It is a poem I often recite to myself prior to each night hike I lead at Guadalupe River State Park. It is so simple yet so dead-on when it comes to getting to know the night.

“To go in the dark with a light is to know the light. To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings, and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.”

Powerful, so powerful.

I am reminded of this poem each time I venture out into the night, on not enough occasions by myself and many times with a trail of excited if not a bit nervous park guests. And while we may encounter bats and moths, owls and chuck-will's-widows, it is always done in the presence of light. For strapped to heads, in our hands and even in the irritating shoes that light up with every step – we are handcuffed by light.

Unlike owls that navigate with extraordinary night vision and acute hearing or bats with their echolocation “calls” bouncing off insects, tree limbs and other things seemingly invisible, we are burdened with eyes that are more readily adapted to sunlight and ears that are not only poorly placed on our head, but less than spectacular when it comes to picking up the feet of a rodent dashing through the understory of a forest. The fact is, in our own right, we are poorly adapted for life at night, and thus the need for light in our travels through the nocturnal world.

So we venture forth with light as our trusty companion, giving us confidence that tripping over unforgiving rocks, catching a face-full of spider webbing and chasing away whatever snapped that twig to our left will leave us upright and safe. There are times when natural light is enough at night, of course, and that is the light provided by our lone rocky satellite, the Moon. To this day (or night as it were) I am always amazed at how much light the moon gives back to the Earth during its march through the field of stars that adorn the night sky. A first quarter moon provides adequate light complete with shadows in the open. A full moon reflects back the Sun's rays, lighting the surrounding night as if under a heavenly spotlight.

I encourage you to leave your lights behind some evening when the moon is on the rise and venture out – even if venturing out means sitting in your backyard. Let the Night welcome you into its world, not with your artificial light, but with light of the natural kind. Meet the Night on its own terms. Your senses will be awakened and, perhaps, you will discover that the dark truly is “...traveled by dark feet and dark wings.”

Also consider joining us for our periodic evening hikes into the night in search of owls, bats, fireflies and more. Check out the Park's website for upcoming programs, as well as the program highlights in this addition of the newsletter.



Experiencing the Night at Guadalupe River State Park.



## Nature opportunities at the Park

by Linda Gindler

### Come on out – the birding is GREAT

Many people visit Guadalupe River State Park each spring to feast their eyes on wildflower color. But because of its unique positioning on the migration flyway, the Park is also an eye-ful of color of the avian variety. Some birds come by land through Mexico, while others take a shorter but more hazardous route over the Gulf of Mexico. They reach Texas and our Park ready to eat and rest. Mother Nature helps by timing an explosion of nectar, berries, seeds and insects. Colorful warblers, buntings, and orioles begin arriving starting mid-March and will continue into May. Each week brings the potential of new species.



Male Golden-cheeked Warbler (Photo by John Prentice)

Most will stay only a few days, but the stars of the Park, Golden-cheeked Warblers and Painted Buntings, will set up territories, breed, and raise their young. They call the Park home until mid summer. It is easy to find these special birds if you know where to look. Both, with a little patience, can be seen at the Bird Blind located near the Discovery Center in the Day Use Area. But if you would like to come out for a hike and find one further afield here are a few tips.

Golden-cheeked Warblers are an endangered species that only breeds in central Texas making them a Texas treasure sought by many birding enthusiasts. Love-struck males return starting in mid-March with a song in their heart. Males are PROLIFIC singers making them easy to find if you know their song. A Google search of “Golden-cheeked Warbler songs” will provide websites that feature the call. Listen to it a few times and you will be ready for a hike. But please do not playback recordings at the Park. Unfortunately recordings confuse the males and put them on the defensive. Something they don’t need after their thousand-mile flight. Golden-cheeks start singing an hour or so after dawn and will continue until early afternoon. They like to sit high in trees and during the past couple of years have been found in both the Cedar Sage and Turkey Sink camping loops. Good hikes to find them are the Bamberger, Hofheinz, and Golden-cheeked Warbler Trails at the Bauer Unit.

are still limited to only a few states making them a wonder where they do occur. You can find them throughout the Park in spring and summer. Good hikes to find them are the Prairie, Oak Savanna, and Painted Bunting Trails. They prefer brushy tangles and scrub and tend to be lower in vegetation. They forage on the ground, strip grass seed from stalks, and snatch insects from spider webs.

If you are still not sure you can find one of these special birds, come out for one of Ranger Craig’s Spring and Summer “Big Year Bird Hikes”. Hikes occur the first Sunday of the month, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Discovery Center. If you want to join a hike, bring along a pair of binoculars and/or camera because the birding really is great!



Male Painted Bunting (Photo by John Prentice)

The Painted Bunting has been described as North American’s most beautiful bird. With the male’s distinct rainbow of colors it is easy to see why. Painted Buntings have a wider distribution than Golden-cheeks but

## A Habiscape in Transition

by Susan Bogle



Master Naturalist volunteers descended on the Habiscape a few weeks ago to diligently prune, weed, trim and even transplant in order to prepare it for the upcoming warmer weather. By doing this, the plants there have already responded with new green growth. A welcome relief from the dreary brown of winter.

One of the plants that recovers earlier than most is the perennial, Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*). It is a favorite among visitors and pollinators alike because this plant blooms almost continuously from April through October. Its purple tubular flowers are densely congested in whorls along the upper stems, creating a 3 to 9 inch spike. The plant itself is a sprawling 2 to 3 feet tall and is relatively (dare we say it) deer resistant. Mealy Blue Sage is a nectar source for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds, and you will find it blooming when other flowers have disappeared in the heat.

but its impact is remarkable while it is in bloom. The plant grows from 3 to 6 feet tall and its large fragrant bloom resembles a thistle, but without the bite. It gets its name from the stiff, straw-colored bracts just beneath the flower head. It is particularly attractive to butterflies, providing not just nectar, but also the perfect landing platform.

Like everything in nature, the Habiscape is never static and is always changing. Be sure to visit it regularly in order to enjoy everything it has to offer.

**Note:** The Friends Group has sponsored the printing of a brand new butterfly guide to the Habiscape and Park in general. You will be able to pick these up at the Discovery Center or Office upon request as of March 15<sup>th</sup>.

A more showy and dramatic annual plant that you will soon find in the Habiscape is the Basket-Flower (*Centaurea americana*). Blooming May through June, it has a much shorter presence,



## March 2017 Programs

by Craig Hensley

Join us for one or more of these programs and look for more throughout the winter months by checking the Park's web page: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/guadalupe-river>.

- Stories in the Stars** Saturday, March 4 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Join members of the San Antonio Astronomical Association and Park staff for a night of stargazing! We'll check out the Moon and other celestial wonders following a presentation at the Amphitheatre, located behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- GRSP Big Year Bird Walk** Sunday, March 5 8:30-11 a.m.  
Join us for the third in a series of Sunday morning walks in search of the birds of the Park as we add to our annual list. Please meet at the Discovery Center. We have a limited number of binoculars for loan. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- Little Naturalists: Naturally Sense-sational!** Wednesday, March 8 10-11:30 a.m.  
Bring your 3-6 year-olds to the park for a special morning of nature exploration at its best. We'll spend the morning learning about and using our five senses to explore. We'll also discover how other animals use their senses to explore the world, too! We'll meet at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- Bird in the Hand** Saturday, March 11 9 a.m.-Noon  
Join Ranger Craig and his merry "band-ing" of volunteers for a morning of beak-to-nose looks at our area songbirds, from cardinals and goldfinches to titmice and chickadees. Join us any time during the morning at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a park pass or \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free).
- Spring Break Honey Creek Hike** Tuesday, March 14 9-11:30 a.m.  
Join one of our trained Honey Creek Guides for a special spring break week hike to the beautiful Honey Creek. Along the way you will learn about both the cultural and natural history of the area. Please meet at the Rust House inside the park. Please note that a \$2 donation is requested to help support the educational activities supported by the Friends group.
- Spring Break Bugs-R-U's** Wednesday, March 15 9:30 a.m. -11 a.m.  
Join us for a morning of chasing six-legged wonders from butterflies to grasshoppers. We'll provide the nets for this insect-catching fun for children and adults, alike. This program is free with a Park Pass or a \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free). Please meet at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center.
- Spring Break Bird in the Hand** Thursday, March 16 9 a.m.-Noon  
Join Ranger Craig and his merry "band-ing" of volunteers for a morning of beak-to-nose looks at our area songbirds, from cardinals and goldfinches to titmice and chickadees. Join us any time during the morning at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a park pass or \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free).
- Spring Break Archery in the Park** Friday, March 17 9-11 a.m.  
Looking to learn a new skill? Then join us to learn the eleven steps to archery success and practice your new skills. This program will be held near the Rust House in the park and is open to anyone ages 10 and up. This program is free with park admission of \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free) or a current TPWD park pass.
- Geocaching 101** Saturday, March 18 1-3 p.m.  
Join Ranger Craig to learn the skills and fun of geocaching – and then head out on our practice course to test yourself. We'll provide the GPS units – one per family. Please email [craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:craig.hensley@tpwd.texas.gov) to reserve a unit for your family. Be sure to dress for the weather including long pants and close-toed shoes. Meet at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with park admission of \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free) or a current TPWD park pass.
- Bats of Texas** Saturday, March 18 7:30-9 p.m.  
Join Park Ranger Craig for a look at the world of Texas bats. You'll discover who they are and how they make their living. We'll even use a bat detector to search for a few following the presentation. We'll meet at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a Park Pass or a \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- Who Goes There?** Saturday, March 25 1-2:30 p.m.  
While they are out there, we don't always see them. Join Ranger Craig to learn what to look for to figure out what animals are out and about when we aren't. From tracks and scat to other traces, we'll become nature detectives out on the trails of the park. Meet at the amphitheater located behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with park admission of \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free) or a current TPWD park pass.
- Prowlin' for Owls** Saturday, March 25 8-9:30 p.m.  
Join Ranger Craig for a hootin' good time as together we explore the world of our denizens of the dark. You'll discover who's whooooo among the owls of Texas and then head out in search of our resident Barred Owls. Be sure to dress for the weather, wear close-toed shoes and meet at the amphitheater, located behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with park admission of \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free) or a current TPWD park pass.

## April 2017 Programs

- Butterfly and Wildflower Walk** Saturday, April 1 1-2:30 p.m.  
The spring rains are bringing out our winged wonders and wildflowers in big numbers. Join Ranger Craig for a walk in search of both and learn how our Park's wildflowers provide important food sources for butterflies and other pollinators. Please plan to join us at the Park Headquarters. Bring binoculars if you have them and wear long pants and close-toed shoes. For ages 8 and up. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- Stories in the Stars** Saturday, April 1 8-10 p.m.  
Join members of the San Antonio Astronomical Association and Park staff for a night of stargazing! We'll check out the Moon and other celestial wonders following a presentation at the Amphitheatre, located behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- GRSP Big Year Bird Walk** Sunday, April 2 8:30-11 a.m.  
Join us for the third in a series of Sunday morning walks in search of the birds of the Park as we add to our annual list. Please meet at the Rust House. We have a limited number of binoculars for loan. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).
- Bird in the Hand** Saturday, April 8 9 a.m.-Noon  
Join Ranger Craig and his merry "band-ing" of volunteers for a morning of beak-to-nose looks at our area songbirds, from cardinals and goldfinches to titmice and chickadees. Join us any time during the morning at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a park pass or \$7 for ages 13 and above (12 and under free).
- Little Naturalists: River Wonders** Wednesday, April 12 10-11:30 a.m.  
Bring your 3-6 year-olds to the park for a special morning of nature exploration at its best. We'll spend the morning at the river learning about the life that abounds there. Be sure to dress your children to get a little wet as we'll safely explore the river's edge for frogs, tadpoles, minnows and other surprises. We'll meet at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center. This program is free with a Park Pass or \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).



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

3350 Park Road 31  
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

We're on the web!  
[www.honeycreekfriends.org](http://www.honeycreekfriends.org)

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

**The "Friends" meet monthly at the Park.  
Please join us on the first  
Thursday at 6:30 pm.  
And bring a friend!**