



The Oklahoma *Update*

National parks in Oklahoma

National park areas are more than just pretty places; they are reflections of America as a whole, with a wide range of stories, experiences, and opportunities. Below are a few items of interest that reflect what's happening in Oklahoma national park areas. For more information on these topics or to plan a trip, please visit our official park websites at www.nps.gov/chic, www.nps.gov/okci, and www.nps.gov/waba

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

Oklahoma's oldest national park area, Chickasaw National Recreation Area has been a refuge for outdoor traditions for over a century. Springs, streams, and lakes attract visitors to Chickasaw National Recreation Area, named for the Indian nation from whom the United States purchased the land for the park in 1902.

For more stories and information about the Chickasaw NRA, please turn to pages 2-3.

Oklahoma City National Memorial

The bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995, killed 168 people, and injured more than 650. The memorial is a public/private partnership established to honor the memory of the victims, their families, the survivors, and their rescuers.

For more stories and information about Oklahoma City National Memorial, please turn to pages 4-5.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

The park preserves the site of the November 27, 1868, battle where the 7th U.S. Cavalry under Lt. Col. George A. Custer destroyed Peace Chief Black Kettle's Cheyenne village. Black Kettle and more than 100 Cheyenne were killed or captured. The controversial attack has been described as both a battle and a massacre.

For more stories and information about Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, please turn to pages 6-7.



Botanist Bruce Hoagland talks about the trees of Chickasaw National Recreation Area at the 2011 Oklahoma BioBlitz
NPS photo/Doug Lowthian

BioBlitz at Chickasaw NRA: 877 Species in 24 hours

Park Guide Douglas Lowthian

The Oklahoma Biological Survey brought its annual BioBlitz to Chickasaw National Recreation Area on the weekend of October 14-15. Part biological inventory, part scientific gathering and part sporting event, a BioBlitz brings together expert scientists in many fields with citizen scientists of all ages to fan out across the land and waters and identify as many living things as possible in a 24 hour period. Prissilla Jones, organizer of the event blew the horn ceremoniously at 3:00 pm on Friday afternoon. For the rest of the day and throughout the night, on up until the horn blew again on Saturday at 3:00 pm, people learned and counted and collected and studied. Field guides were in abundance, small clusters of people with butterfly nets waded through grasslands and tanks at base camp were filled with fish, insects, snakes and turtles.

Some of the visiting scientists were people who quite literally had written the book on the biological resources of Oklahoma. Professors brought college classes and high

school classes from Norman and beyond. Families with young children listened raptly as an entomologist explained the inner working of the mouth parts of the damselfly he held up for inspection. The list of sighted or documented species grew rapidly as the weekend wore on. Nighttime insects were collected and algae sampled from throughout the park. Microscopes revealed diatoms and other nearly invisible invertebrates. Bird watchers went out at sunset and early mornings. Over 100 small mammal traps were deployed to entice mice and other small rodents in for identification.

A record 350 people registered and attended the event. This event is held annually somewhere in one of the protected areas of Oklahoma. Next year's event will be at Foss Lake and the Wichita National Wildlife Refuge.

As the event drew to a close and the clock counted down the last few minute's lists of species continued to flow in to be recorded. The crowd gathered, counted

Continued on page 2

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

In Brief

Murray County Health Fair

Chickasaw National Recreation Area participated in the annual Community Health Fair hosted by Arbuckle Memorial Hospital on October 15, 2011. Activities included a 5K Race/Walk, free health screenings, "Just for Kids" area and dozens of booths set up to dispense information on health, offer food samples and provide demonstrations. Park Guide Nancy Binderim hosted CHIC's booth, inviting visitors to the park and informing them of safety essentials for camping, water sports, hiking, hunting, and venomous snake identification. Pam Chitwood spokesperson for Arbuckle Memorial Hospital estimated 700 people attended the Health Fair.

New Junior Ranger Book Available Now

In September 10000 copies of the newly written Junior Ranger Book arrived at the Travertine Nature Center. The book is a brand new product designed from the ground up to appeal to many age groups and learning styles. Activities are categorized by age group and include age appropriate opportunities for children up to 18 years of age. Spearheaded by Junior Ranger Ambassador and Student Conservation Corps volunteer Nikki Crane, the new books have a dynamic layout, a card stock color cover and material that engages the whole family. Since distribution began, adults as well as children have been seen reading about and actively engaging with park resources.



Wildlife Expo and State Fair

On September 22-25, Chickasaw National Recreation Area joined with Washita Battlefield National Historic Site to staff a display booth at the 2011 Oklahoma Wildlife Expo in Guthrie, OK. The annual event, organized by the state Department of Wildlife Conservation showcased ways in which families could get outside and recreate together in a healthy way. The National Park Service booth had information on hiking in the parks, experiencing its wildlife and learning its history. Chickasaw National Recreation Area provided a collection of skulls and pelts as well as an attention-getting giant NPS arrowhead. Washita Battlefield brought its popular collection of items made from buffalo parts including bladder water bags, hide pouches and bone toys. A record 56,000 people attended the 3 day event. The National Park Service booth was well placed to attract many of these visitors and brought the mission of the parks to many Oklahomans.

Veterans Lake Improvements Celebrated at Ribbon-Cutting

Park Ranger Lauren Gurniewicz



Deputy Regional Director Colin Campbell speaks at Veterans Lake ribbon cutting ceremony.

On Thursday, April 28 park staff, local dignitaries, Sulphur students, and local residents gathered at the Veterans Lake Pavilion to celebrate over \$4million in recently completed improvements in the Veterans Lake area in Chickasaw National Recreation Area. The projects were funded by the NPS Dam Safety Program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

After a welcome by Superintendent Bruce Noble, American Legion Platt National Park Post 148 members presented historic flags before the audience and Sulphur Middle School teacher Jessica Mueller's students led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Local dignitaries included State Representative Wes Hilliard, Murray County Commissioner Bill Lance, Wayne Edgar, and Murray County Development's Kim Little. National Park Service (NPS) Intermountain Region Deputy Director Colin Campbell remarked on the accomplishments of park staff and contractors as the crowd enjoyed a beautiful, sunny morning by the lake.

Beginning during the summer of 2010, several significant projects began in

the area. The lake's 1930s-era dam was rehabilitated in order to bring it into compliance with modern safety standards. The project included the removal of the road across the dam and the parking lot at the south end of the dam. The Veterans Lake Trail was extended along the lake's north shore during the project, including a new trailhead parking area and a connecting trail to Rock Creek Campground. In addition, the lake area was part of an eastern red cedar removal project.

BioBlitz continued:

down the final few seconds and the horn blew again. After thank-yous and a few announcements, the number they were all waiting for was announced. In 24 hours the group positively identified 877 species of living things in CNRA. Included in the tally were 401 invertebrates, 190 plants, 97 algae, 93 birds, 18 mammals, 18 amphibians and reptiles, 19 fungi, 17 fish and 17 lichens. At least three new dragon species were added to the county list, two new fish not previously known to be in the park and, the biggest surprise, a track and scat of a Black Bear, a first for the park.

Travertine Nature Center gets upgrades; gains recognition

Park Guide Douglas Lowthian

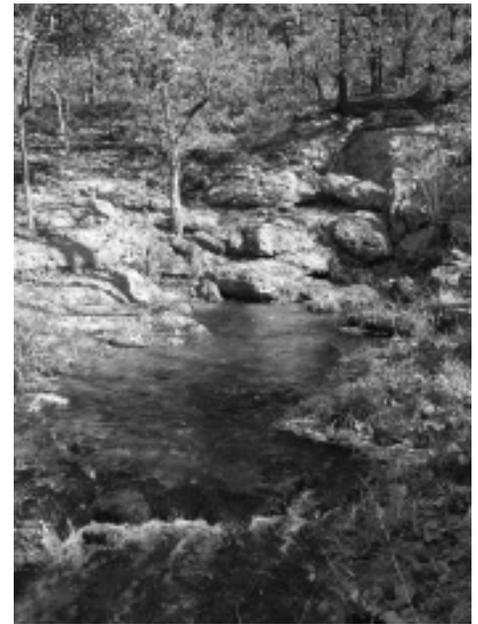
As summer season came to a close, the contractors working on the Travertine Nature Center packed up their tools carted away their dumpster and the center was back in full operation. The 42 year old nature center was in need of some repair and replacement of its systems. Over the course of 8 months the center received a new roof, air conditioning and heating system, lighting, carpets and alarm system. While much of the new work is not visible to the casual visitor, the work and function of the building is greatly improved. The center, which was recently recognized for its historical significance, is ready for 21st century operation.

The roof had leaks and lacked adequate insulation. It was stripped down completely to the decking. New membranes, insulation panels and shingles were then installed. The new roof will help keep the building warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, reducing energy costs. In addition, leaks that were causing damage inside the building are no longer present. The new shingles are in the same style as the old, making the impact on the architecture minimal. One new aspect of the roof is the addition of copper gutters and drain spouts. While gleaming gold now they will weather to a grey patina over time adding to the beauty of the structure.

Electricians spent much of the hot summer in crawl spaces and confined attics running many yards of new wire. The office spaces were fitted with new high efficiency fluorescent light fixtures, all controlled by motion sensors. If a room remains unoccupied the light automatically turns off. The exhibit room is now lit by banks of LED fixtures. These lights are also on motion control switches so when there are no visitors on the floor, the lights go off, leaving minimal lighting from soffit lights. As people move throughout the building, zones of light come on and remain on as long as the room is occupied. These lights use far less energy and produce almost no heat, making the job of air conditioning easier and more efficient.

The air conditioning/heating system is separated into four zones. Sensors modify the amount of airflow based on the occupancy level in the room. In addition, the system can be controlled remotely over the computer network to allow for maximum efficient operating temperatures.

The Travertine Nature Center was originally built in 1969 as one of the only Nature Centers in the National Park Service. On January 25, 2011 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance as a National Park Service Nature Center and outstanding architecture.



Antelope Springs (NPS/Eric Leonard)

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

The park is named to honor the Chickasaw Indian Nation, original occupants of this land. The partially forested hills of southcentral Oklahoma and its springs, streams, and lakes provide swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, camping, hunting, and hiking.

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Oklahoma City National Memorial

Oklahoma City Memorial welcomes new staff

Park Guide M. Tucker Blythe

Chickasaw National Recreation Area's Oklahoma City National Memorial division welcomed four new employees in early October. The new hires include two term park guides and two student park guides. "We are excited to have new employees join us in Oklahoma City to tell the powerful and important story of the Memorial," Superintendent Bruce Noble said.

Joining the staff as a term park guide is Karena Minor. A native of Michigan, Karena comes to Oklahoma City after spending five years as a seasonal park interpreter at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Grand Marais, Michigan, where she developed a series of podcasts on the Au Sable Lighthouse (to see the podcasts go to <http://www.nps.gov/piro>). She received her B.A. in Anthropology and her M.S. in Community, Agriculture, Recreation, and Resources Studies with a focus on Park and Recreation Management and Historical Interpretation from Michigan State University.

Melanie Sander also joins the staff as a term park guide. A former river guide in Utah, Melanie has just returned from a two-year tour of duty as a Peace Corps volunteer in South Africa working on a variety of projects including teaching about permagardening and managing income generation projects for people living with HIV/AIDS. Melanie received a B.S. in Earth Science from the University of Arkansas and brings teaching and interpretive experience to her new position.

New student park guide John Withers also brings a wealth of experience to the interpretive team at the Memorial. He is currently enrolled at Oklahoma State University working towards his M.A. in History with an emphasis on public history. John has worked as interpreter at several historic sites, has served as a museum exhibit curator, and is currently a teaching assistant at OSU. He will be working part time at the Memorial to accommodate his school and teaching assistant responsibilities.

Matt Caire, a native of California, started working on his Ph.D. in History with a focus on Latin American history at the University of Oklahoma in the fall of 2010 where his dissertation research focuses on corn's role in modern Mexican history. Matt has taught in the U.S. and in China and is currently a teaching assistant at OU. Matt's fluency in Spanish is one of the many talents that he brings to the Oklahoma City team as a student park guide.

"We are happy to have Karena, Melanie, John and Matt on board, joining our current staff to provide excellent service to the visitors at the Oklahoma City National Memorial," said acting supervisory park ranger Tucker Blythe.



New Oklahoma City National Memorial employees John Withers, Melanie Sander, Karena Minor, and Matt Caire. NPS photo/Mike Washington.

From the Oklahoma State Coordinator

November 16, 2011 will bring about a long-awaited event at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. At 11 am on that date, the United States Mint and the National Park Service will jointly host a ceremony to release the new Chickasaw National Recreation Area quarter. It will be the tenth coin released in the United States Mint's America the Beautiful Quarters® program. The event will take place in Flower Park near the intersection of highways 7 & 177. In case of inclement weather the ceremony will be at the Murray County Expo Center.

After a brief 30 minute ceremony, the actual release of the quarter will begin. A "coin exchange" will be held during which park visitors may exchange a one-roll minimum (\$10) or up to a 10-roll maximum (\$100) for the equivalent value in new quarters. Children 18 years old and younger may receive a new quarter to commemorate the event. Landmark Bank will handle the coin exchange and I appreciate their efforts to support this important park event.

The reverse (tails side) design of the Chickasaw National Recreation Area quarter will depict a view of Lincoln Bridge with Travertine Creek flowing underneath the bridge in the background. Built in 1909, construction specifications required that the bridge be strong enough to hold up to the stress of a "four horse team at full gallop" across the span of the bridge. This quarter will be distributed nationwide and will help the park, Murray County, and Oklahoma as a whole attract more recognition and hopefully more tourism traffic as well.

Two other events will happen in conjunction with the quarter release. First of all, a coin forum will be held at 7 p.m. (CT) Tuesday, November 15, 2011 at the park's Travertine Nature Center Auditorium. The coin forum will feature a program that will provide the public with more information about how the United States Mint develops and releases coins.

Secondly, the Wednesday, November 16th ceremony will also recognize the recent National Historic Landmark designation of Platt National Park (expanded and renamed Chickasaw National Recreation Area in 1976) with the presentation of a National Historic Landmark plaque.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into both the process of developing the park quarter and also the achievement of the National Historic Landmark designation. Both of these accomplishments will help to draw more attention to the natural and historical features that make Chickasaw National Recreation Area such a special place. Please come and join us for both the coin forum on November 15th and the coin release ceremony on November 16th. We have much to celebrate on those two days. For more information about the quarter launch ceremony and forum, or to learn more about Chickasaw National Recreation Area, check www.nps.gov/chic/ or call the Travertine Nature Center, 580-622-7234.

Otherwise, it is relief to say that the summer heat wave is now a thing of the past. We continue to experience drought conditions, but some recent rain has brought more green to the park landscape. Please visit the park and experience the beautiful fall weather that typically graces southern Oklahoma during this lovely season.

Bruce Noble
Superintendent & Oklahoma State
Coordinator

Bruce Noble, Superintendent



The East Gate (NPS/Amy Trenkle)

Oklahoma City National Memorial

The Oklahoma City National Memorial was created to honor those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever by the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The memorial is a public/private partnership established so that the American public can honor the memory of the victims, their families, the survivors, and their rescuers.

Since 2004, the Oklahoma City National Memorial has been managed as an Affiliated Area of the National Park Service with the Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation owning and operating the Memorial and Museum and the NPS providing interpretive services at the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial.

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Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

What's Been Happening

June 17 – Washita Battlefield NHS hosted 137 members of the Little Bighorn Association (LBHA) at the site. The LBHA were having their 38th Annual Conference in Oklahoma City. Part of their program was an all day visit to the Washita site with a luncheon at the Croton Creek Ranch. Superintendent Lisa Conard-Frost was the guest speaker at the luncheon.

Park Guide Joel Shockley held three battle talk programs for all 137 LBHA members. Noted historians Jerome Greene, Paul Hedren, Sandy Barnard, Gregory Michno, Judith Justus and Rod Beemer attended these programs. Chief of Interpretation Frank Torres and Joel Shockley attended the LBHA Symposium in Oklahoma City on June 18.

October 7 –Over 100 County officers from Oklahoma's nineteen Northwestern counties descended upon Cheyenne, Oklahoma for their annual meeting. All counties west of I 35, north of I 40 and the Oklahoma Panhandle were represented. Those attending included County Assessors and Treasurers, Court and County Clerks, County Commissioners and Sheriffs. The meeting, hosted by Babs Cocker, Roger Mills County Treasurer, won't be held again in Cheyenne until 2030.

Despite a full day, the Northwest District Officers and Deputies selected Washita Battlefield National Historic Site as a destination. Park staff welcomed the group, provided interpretive services and enjoyed introducing everyone to the site.

New Staff at Washita NHS– Mark Shearer, from Chattanooga, Tennessee is the newest member of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site staff. "We're very happy to have Mark as part of our team here at Washita." said Frank Torres, Chief of Interpretation. "He brings a wealth of experience having served as a front-line interpreter at Carlsbad Caverns and Mount Rushmore, in addition to being a Visitor Use Assistant at Yellowstone, Joshua Tree and Death Valley." While Mark's immediate family still resides in Tennessee, he's looking forward to experiencing life in western Oklahoma, "The staff at Washita has made the settling in process so easy for me, and I'm curious to see what the future holds."

Washita Battlefield NHS to host its 15th year anniversary November 11 – 12, 2011

Frank Torres, Chief of Interpretation

Planning is now underway to honor Washita Battlefield National Historic Site's establishment as a unit of the National Park System on November 12, 1996.

This 15th year anniversary event entitled, "Lessons Learned and Lessons to Learn" will be hosted over a two day period with opening ceremonies beginning on Veteran's Day Friday, November 11th at 2:00 pm at the Washita Battlefield NHS park overlook site.

To pay tribute to the people involved at the Washita attack on November 27, 1868, and also to recognize veterans on this special day, Cheyenne Chief Gordon Yellowman will be performing a Blessing Ceremony, and the Red Moon Singers and Drum Group will provide traditional music. After the posting of the colors by the Clinton High School Junior ROTC

Color Guard, noted artist and Marine Corps veteran, Harvey Pratt, will speak. Following the ceremony, the park will host an open house and reception in the Visitor Center gallery. The film, "Braided Path" will also be shown.

On Saturday, November 12th, a symposium will be held at the Cheyenne High School Auditorium. The following speakers, Former NPS historian Jerome Greene, Cheyenne Chief, Gordon Yellowman, Southern Cheyenne Chief, W. Richard West, Jr., Sand Creek NHS historian, Craig Moore, Oklahoma Historical Society historian, Dr. Mary Jane Ward, and writer, Louis Kraft will each give their unique perspectives on the event's theme, "Lessons Learned and Lessons to Learn."

The staff at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site invites everyone to attend this special anniversary celebration.



Park Gains Visitors in Unusual Way

Drew Hughes, Park Guide

“Have you seen a hot air balloon?”

Imagine our surprise hearing that from guests stepping into our visitor center on Saturday, September 17. Interestingly enough hot air balloons have a loose connection with Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. During his time under the command of General William F. “Baldy” Smith, in the spring of 1862, Washita’s prominent figure Lt. Col. George A. Custer was assigned to ascend in one of Prof. Thaddeus Lowe’s hydrogen powered balloons to spy on the Confederate Army at the union siege of Yorktown, VA. But on that particular morning visitors asking about hot air balloons were more curious about the one featured in a recent television commercial not one from the Civil War.

A few weeks ago Chrysler Group LLC launched a marketing campaign challenging people to get out into the real world to find three 2011 Dodge Journey Crossover Vehicles they had left in three random locations throughout the United States. The West Coast Journey was found near Lake Tahoe in the El Dorado National Forest. This first hunt sparked the interest of many to follow the clues to find the Midwest Journey.

Those hoping to find the Midwest Journey would have to decipher the clues left in the television commercial and on the internet. One clue in particular showed the Dodge Journey parked in front of an inflating hot air balloon. But above all they had to get out into the real world and find it. The clues led people along old Route 66, highlighting Oklahoma towns like Yukon, El Reno, Clinton, and Elk City. A live feed of the vehicles actual location was posted on a website and brought journey seekers to the last leg of the hunt, and to the Washita Battlefield visitor center.

The staff at the visitor center welcomed over 83 visitors that Saturday from as far



Park Guide Drew Hughes gets his picture taken with the 2011 Dodge Journey found just 4 miles from Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

away as South Dakota. One woman in a Florida airport even called and asked if it would be worth her time to jump on a plane to come out and search for the vehicle. Park staff monitored the live feed to try and help the journey seekers find the prize and offered visitors their best guesses as to where they thought it might be located.

At around 3:00pm the website flashed that the Journey had been found, and a map pinpointing the actual location was displayed. It turned out that the actual location was four miles away from the park visitor center (nine miles driving distance) on private property just south of Strong City, OK.

After the contest was over journey seekers still came in and visited with park staff about how beautiful the area was and how they would have never come out here had it not been for the Journey marketing campaign, but seeing how beautiful this part of Oklahoma was they would definitely be coming back to hike or hunt or just learn about Oklahoma’s history.

After all was said and done one question that still remained on the minds of visitors and park staff alike. What did the hot air balloon have to do with it? My guess. . . . It was a reference to Roger Mills County being part of one of the world’s largest sources of helium, but I might just be full of hot air.



The Washita River (NPS Photo)

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

The park commemorates the November 27, 1868, attack where the 7th U.S. Cavalry under Lt. Col. George A. Custer destroyed Peace Chief Black Kettle’s Cheyenne village. Black Kettle and over 100 Cheyenne were captured or killed. The controversial attack has been described as both a battle and a massacre.

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage™

Friends of Chickasaw NRA

The purpose of the Friends of Chickasaw National Recreation Area is to promote public appreciation of and support for Chickasaw National Recreation Area. This support includes conducting interpretive programs, increasing public awareness regarding the park and its mission, fundraising, and other volunteer activities. The IRS has certified this group as a private non-profit organization (501c3) and membership fees for joining are tax deductible. Anyone interested in receiving a membership application can send an email to chic_superintendent@nps.gov, or call 580 622-7220.

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Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is a private non-profit organization, and does not receive any annual operating funds from the federal, state or local government. Museum admissions, store sales, the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon, earnings from an endowment and private fundraising allow the Memorial and Museum to be self-sustaining.

Valuable gifts of time, talent and treasure to the Memorial help change lives each and every day. Make your donation to the Memorial and volunteer your time. If you would like to help, write to PO Box 323, Oklahoma City, OK, 73101, or call toll-free at 1-888-542-HOPE.

41st Anniversary Program