



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.

For more information 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 unit, Chickasaw National Recreation Area has been a refuge for outdoor traditions for over a century. Springs, streams, and lakes attract visitors to the park, named for the Indian nation from whom the United States purchased the land for the park in 1902.

For more stories and information about Chickasaw National Recreation Area, 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 the 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.



Park Guide Doug Lowthian and visitor looking for Bald Eagles at Lake of the Arbuckles

Eagle Watch at Chickasaw NRA

On a chilly but sunny Saturday morning in January a crowd of around 70 people gathered at the Travertine Nature Center in Chickasaw NRA to learn about Bald Eagles. Up on the big screen behind the ranger, a live video feed of an eagle nest from near Vian, OK competed for the group's attention. The crowd was fascinated by the tender care the eagle paid to the clutch of 3 eggs. "The male likes to arrange them in a triangle, while the female likes to line them up parallel," the ranger observed. Using the live eagle cam and some props, an hour long talk with lots of audience questions preceded a visit to Buckhorn boat launch parking area to find some live eagles of our own. The Annual Chickasaw Eagle Watch was held January 14 and 21. The weather cooperated as did the eagles. While the habitat is suitable, there are currently no eagles nesting on Lake of the Arbuckles, however it does play host to several wintering juveniles and adults. Altogether,

three adults and four juvenile birds were seen.

The population of bald eagles in Oklahoma has seen a major recovery from the days when it was listed as a nationally endangered species. In 1990, researchers from the Oklahoma Biological Survey found no nests in the entire state of Oklahoma. Today the nesting population stands at approximately 65 pair. Most of the state's population of Bald Eagles lies in the eastern side of the state. Chickasaw NRA's large lake, abundant fish population and forested shoreline are an attraction to eagles who are wandering during the winter and juveniles who have yet to stake a breeding territory.

The juveniles are characterized by a mottled brown and white appearance, very unlike the classic white head and tail of the adult. It takes a good five years for the

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Chickasaw National Recreation Area

Red Cedar Prescribed Burn

On March 15, 2012 39 firefighters from Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Arkansas and Arizona came together at Chickasaw National Recreation Area, in order to conduct prescribed burns in portions of the park. The burns are part of a continuing prairie restoration project, started in 2010 and funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The aims of the project are to remove eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) from portions of the park and restore native grasslands to the park.

In 2011 fire crews burned 2,184 acres of red cedar slash that had been left to dry after cutting. This year fire crews burned an additional 650 acres, mostly in the south boundary unit along Goddard Youth Camp Road from the Arbuckle Dam to the eastern border of the park. In addition they burned a section of the park near the Five Lakes area and small areas in the Guy Sandy vicinity.

Eagle Watch continued:

birds to fully mature into the image we have of the symbol of our nation. On Saturday morning at Buckhorn, a juvenile obliged the crowd gathered below by soaring into view overhead giving all a good look at the size and shape, able to contrast it with the vultures gliding overhead as well. The bird then landed in a tree, close enough that all in attendance were able to get an up close personal view of the majestic beak, head and massive size through the spotting scope. Attracting visitors from around the park's boundaries as well as from as far away as Oklahoma City, the annual event was a great way to pass a couple of January mornings at Chickasaw NRA

From the Oklahoma State Coordinator

Having now lived in Oklahoma for over five years, I have learned that there's no such thing as "normal" weather in the Sooner state. It sometimes seems that we lurch from floods to drought and then back again. That said, we certainly hope that the heat and drought we experienced last year are a thing of the distant past. At the moment, we seem to be experiencing more typical rainfall and I am optimistic that the park's streams and streams will continue to flow throughout the coming summer months.

Despite the return of rain to the region, we certainly have plenty of water issues to discuss. Near the top of the list are the recommendations for water usage within the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer that emerged from the five year aquifer study mandated by Senate Bill 288. The implementation proposal coming from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) calls for water usage in the aquifer to go from the current 2 acre feet per acre to .2 acre feet per acre. There will be a five year phase-in period for this transition to take effect. During this phase-in period, expect to see some of our municipalities in the region and other big water users seeking to acquire more surface acreage as a means of gaining access to the increased water rights that accompany that acreage.

Before implementing this proposal, OWRB will be accepting testimony on this topic. Testimony will be heard at a hearing scheduled to be held in the Murray County Expo Center on May 15, 2012. If necessary, additional testimony will be heard on May 22-23. If you receive this newsletter prior to those dates, please consider attending

the hearings to make your opinions known and/or to learn more about the importance of water issues in our area.

Another important water topic involves the recent passage of Senate Bill 597 by the Oklahoma Legislature. For many years, aggregate mines in the Arbuckle-Simpson region had not been required to account for the usage of water from their mining pits. Senate Bill 597 calls for the development of rules guiding the use of pit water by aggregate mines. An inclusive rule-making process is underway that seeks to accommodate the ability of the aggregate mines to produce their product in such a way that also provides protection to the fragile aquifer from which their water is drawn. This is a challenging endeavor, but it does appear that progress is being made.

Another exciting water-related project involves the proposed Sulphur pipeline. Although Sulphur has made annual payments to maintain their rights to a percentage of water in the Lake of the Arbuckles for many years, the City has never been able to utilize that water because of the lack of a pipeline connecting the lake to the municipal water system. Thus far, the City has not felt a powerful urge to take advantage of their rights to lake water because of their ability to draw water from municipal wells tapping into the aquifer. However, current estimates project that growth in the area will mean that the City will lose its ability to satisfy its water needs sometime between 2030 and 2040. This may seem like the distant future, but plans have to begin soon in order for the City to be able to meet its water needs by piping water from the lake.

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Chickasaw NRA welcomes new staff

Chickasaw National Recreation Area welcomed new staff for the park. “We are excited to have new employees join us in Sulphur to tell the important story of the Chickasaw National Recreation Area,” Superintendent Bruce Noble said.

Joining the staff at the Nature Center is Park Ranger Dan Winings and Park Guide Charles Lassiter. Joining the staff as the administrative officer is Wanda Lassiter at park headquarters.

Dan comes to Chickasaw National Recreation area after spending 24 years in our nation’s capital, Washington, DC. First at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park as an interpreter on their replica canal boats, he has spent the last 16 years at Rock Creek Park where he worked at an 18th century



Charles and Wanda Lassiter

colonial home, a 19th century grist mill and spent most of his time there at the oldest nature center in the National Park System.

He received his B.S. in Biology at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA where he also studied for his M.S. in Environmental Biology.

Charles grew up in small town in eastern North Carolina. He attended college at Appalachian State University and Southwestern Community College.

He started his career with the National Park Service as a seasonal park guide on the Blue Ridge Parkway in 2003. From there he landed as a term ranger with the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail working on the Corps of Discovery II traveling exhibit during the bicentennial years.

He has also served as a lead park ranger at Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana (Bureau of Land Management) and as a district supervisory ranger at Ozark National Scenic Riverways. In addition, he has worked at Isle Royale National Park, Zion National Park, Petrified Forest National Park, and Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

Wanda spent her early years in Northwest Oregon, where she lived in a very rural community on a small sustenance farm. In the sixth grade,

her family moved to Port Orchard, Washington, which is across Puget Sound from Seattle and located on the lower Olympic Peninsula. “After that initial move, I just kept moving.” said Wanda.

Wanda began her park career at Grand Canyon National Park working for Fred Harvey (a Harvey Girl) in 1989. She got her first permanent National Park Service position at San Juan Island National Historical Park in 1991, where she was an Administrative Technician and staffed the visitor center.

In 1997 she accepted the position of Administrative Assistant at a newly authorized park, not yet open to the public, called Cane River Creole National Historical Site in Natchitoches, LA. She has also worked at Glacier National Park, Isle Royale National Park, Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery II exhibit, and as Chief of Administration for the Southern Four Corners Group, which includes Hubbell Trading Post National Historical Site, Canyon de Chelly National Monument and Navajo National Monument.

Wanda says, “I am very much looking forward to starting this next chapter of my life.”



Park Ranger Dan Winings



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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.

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

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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.

Oklahoma City National Memorial

In Brief

Junior Ranger Challenge

The beautiful March weather brought spring breakers out in droves. The increase in visitation provided an ideal opportunity to reach out to the younger visitors and to boost participation in the Jr. Ranger Program. Park Guide Mike Washington said, "We had the highest monthly recorded number of children sworn in as Junior Rangers during the month of March at 204." Staff at the memorial attributes the success to the weather and the new found enthusiasm for the Jr. Ranger Program.

Park Ranger Skip Wheeler and Park Guide Karena Minor have been working on a Jr. Ranger Challenge geared towards adolescents. The addition of the Jr. Ranger Challenge will provide individuals above the age of 12 with the opportunity to participate in the Jr. Ranger Program at a higher intellectual level. Skip and Karen hope the program will be completed for Jr. Ranger Day, April 28, 2012.

Park Guides attend Interpretive Conference

Oklahoma City National Memorial Park Guides Karena Minor, Nathan Kerswill, and Melanie Sander attended the 2012 National Association for Interpreters Region VI conference in Austin, Texas February 26-29. Nathan, a first time attendee stated, "I learned that NAI Region 6 is full of fun and energetic people who are passionate about connecting people to culture, history, and nature and who are keen to share their knowledge and experience with fellow interpreters." Sessions provided insight on the new and innovative ideas parks are implementing to increase visitation while utilizing new

technologies to maintain interest with younger audiences. As the only National Park Service employees in attendance, we were repeatedly encouraged to return with more Park Service employees for next year's conference. "I feel that the Park Service has a lot to offer the region through increased participation in it, but that we can also learn quite a bit from people working at the state, local and private levels as well" Nathan said. Next year's conference will be held in Manhattan, Kansas and will return to Oklahoma in 2014.

Oklahoma City hosts events

The Oklahoma City National Memorial had a busy month of April hosting two annual events. April 19, 2012 was the seventeenth anniversary of the bombing. Friends, family and community members gathered on this special day to remember their loved ones. Park Guide Michael Washington says that "the anniversary is a unique opportunity to interact with family members, survivors, and rescue workers, and it is an affirmation to why this memorial is a powerful symbol of America's resilience." On April 29th the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum hosted the 12th Annual Memorial Marathon. Runner's World magazine named it one of the 12 Must-Run Marathons in the world! The motto for the race is "we run to remember." Many runners remember loved ones that have passed. One respondent to the official Memorial Marathon webpage, Tara, says she runs because "I am a native Oklahoman. I run to honor and to remember, for my fellow Oklahomans and to celebrate life and love. I will never forget."

From the State Coordinator continued:

Luckily, Sulphur received a grant of approximately \$200,000 from the Bureau of Reclamation to begin exploring the possibility of building a pipeline to connect the Lake of the Arbuckles to the City's water system. A preferred route has been tentatively selected and now the process must shift toward the need to secure funding to construct the pipeline. From the park's perspective, the pipeline would be extremely desirable because it would make the City less dependent on the aquifer-fed ground water that also supplies the springs and streams in the park.

From the standpoint of the 1.3 million annual visitors to Chickasaw National Recreation Area, all that really matters is that they find water in the springs, streams, and lakes when they visit the park. A recent study has determined that those same visitors injected \$17 million into our local economy in 2010. The availability of water is obviously important to all of us in Oklahoma, but it has particular importance to the park and our neighboring communities as the foundation of a recreation-based economy in our region.

With summer approaching and gas prices higher than normal, I hope that everyone will consider the great vacation opportunities that are available right here in Oklahoma. Whether it be Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, or the Oklahoma City National Memorial, we hope you will make these Oklahoma destinations part of your travel plans for this summer. We hope to see you soon at one of these sites that are so intimately connected with the identity of our state.

Bruce Noble
Superintendent & Oklahoma State
Coordinator



Chairs with flowers

9/11 Steel

Melanie Sander

Firefighters from Carmel, California brought a piece of the World Trade Center right here to the Oklahoma City National Memorial. It is not unusual for firefighters to visit the memorial. However, on this Sunday a unique set of three firefighters visited the memorial. After asking if they had questions one of them slipped a large business card into my hand. I instantly recognized the Twin Towers placed atop a background of the United States Flag. There must have been a look of intrigue on my face because the three enthusiastically offered an explanation of their visit. “We’re driving from Carmel, New York to Carmel, California with a piece of the Trade Center that will become a part of our community memorial.” They are taking the time to stop at memorials and fire stations along the way to share their new treasure. It took two of the firefighters to carry the case designed to resemble a miniature replica of the 9/11

Memorial reflection pools. Within the case rested a piece of the now sacred steel. It was like any other piece of steel I had seen. Burnt orange rust covered the majority of the piece except for one small strip where it had been cut away from the larger beam. This piece of steel held the interest of visitors and park guides alike. One visitor said, “We are so familiar with the story from the media, but this makes it different, more real!” Visitors and park guides alike felt a sense of gratitude towards these firefighters for providing such a unique experience. However, as quickly as they had arrived the trio of firefighters drove away towards Oklahoma City’s Fire Station #1, another stop on their quest. Their visit, having left a meaningful and impactful connection to an experience so similar to our own.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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.

Oklahoma City National Memorial

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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.



Firefighters from Carmel, California and Park Rangers from the Oklahoma City National Memorial holding case containing steel from the World Trade Center.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

Local volunteers to participate in Living History Program



New Feature Unveiled at the Overlook

A new entrance sign at the Washita Battlefield NHS Overlook area has replaced the original wooden sign placed at the site over twelve years ago. The attractive 12' x 3' double-sided paneled identity sign, designed by the National Park Service's Harpers Ferry Center, is constructed of composite wood materials with metal frames. To prevent serious injury to motorists, the sign was mounted on custom made breakaway metal posts. A future goal of the park is to provide a border around the overlook sign to surround it with landscaping for increased aesthetics.

The sign was installed by a maintenance crew (C.T. Hill, Pete Graves, and Fred Thompkins) from Chickasaw National Recreation Area, in Sulphur, Oklahoma, led by Chief of Facility Maintenance Jackie Messer. The crew worked with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the City of Cheyenne in following city and state requirements to assure all rules and regulations were met. "This was such a hard working group from Chickasaw," said Washita Superintendent Lisa Conard Frost. In addition to installing the sign, the work crew sealed the asphalt cracks in the parking lot and painted the handicap parking spaces at the visitor center. They provided training to some of the Washita staff to operate a Lift-a-Loft machine, to replace light bulbs and clean windows high above in the visitor center gallery.

In early October, Loren Smith and Scott Martin of Cheyenne approached park staff with a dream they had been nurturing over the years. They were interested in becoming volunteers for a living history program at the park, serving as two members of the 7th U.S. Cavalry.

Chief of Interpretation Frank Torres saw this as an opportunity to help our visitors learn about an interesting part of the Washita story – what daily life might have been like for the average horse soldier during the engagements between the

Plains tribes and the United States Army. Working with the ranger staff, Loren and Scott have now been outfitted with replica 7th U.S. Cavalry uniforms, and are hard at work researching and learning the stories of a sergeant and a private riding with the cavalry on the Southern Great Plains in the 1860's.

While the living history program at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site is in its early stages of development, a long-range goal is to incorporate military narratives into the historical interpretation of this nationally significant site.



Volunteers Loren Smith and Scott Martin in 7th Cavalry Uniforms

Girl Scouts and Visitors Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count at Washita

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” “A bird watcher!” This was one child’s response after taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, an event used to introduce bird watching to students. This was the first year that Washita Battlefield National Historic Site took part in the annual event which was held throughout the United States and Canada from February 17-20. During that time, birds were observed and counted twice per day with the help of local Girl Scout troop 710 and park visitors. Binoculars and field guides were provided to participants to help with proper identifica-



Girl Scout taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count

tion. This count contributed to data that scientists will use to answer many questions about migration patterns and populations. Although the weather was not ideal, 11 species were observed with

a total number of 2,344 individual birds. For more information on the Great Backyard Bird Count, please visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc. Park information is available at www.nps.gov/waba.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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 Month of the Snow Moon

For the second year, park staff offered a program to local school children and park visitors called Stories from the Elders on consecutive Friday afternoons in February (the month of the Snow Moon).

Storytelling was a vital part of Cheyenne life and honored elders, sitting around the campfire during the cold winter months, passing on the tribe’s history, culture and tradition to the next generation. Some of these stories “told about the beginning of time when animals could speak and humans and animals could travel easily back and forth into the sky. . . .some described the way things are or how they came to be.”



On February 24th the park was honored to have Eugene Blackbear, Sr., a highly regarded tribal elder and Sundance Priest, conclude the Stories of the Elder series with his narrative of the Washita event.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Chickasaw National Recreation Area
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Oklahoma Update Spring 2012

The Oklahoma Update is the official newsletter of the units of the national park system located in the State of Oklahoma.

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Support your parks

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.