

NON-CIRCULATING

# texas parks & wildlife news

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744

In the December 20, 1991 issue:

1991 Year of Change At Parks and Wildlife .....	1
Bluebird Nest Boxes Available.....	14
Fishing Report	

## 1991 YEAR OF CHANGE AT PARKS AND WILDLIFE

AUSTIN--1991 was a year of many changes for those associated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The department and its new executive director, Andrew Sansom, went through a major reorganization, a legislative session and came up with a new budget providing pay raises for many of the department's employees.

In January, Sansom, who had been on the job since August 1990, reorganized the department. New divisions included the fisheries and wildlife division, public lands, conservation communications, legal services, human resources and chief financial officer. The law enforcement and resource protection divisions remained intact.

"The reorganization is probably 80 percent complete, and that's good," Sansom said. "We are in the midst of decentralization that will transfer decision-making power and responsibility out to the front lines where it needs to be."

During the recent legislative session the department's dependence on general tax revenues was significantly reduced, however, the operating budget for fiscal year 1992 is consistent with what the department requested from the legislature.

"We look pretty good on paper, but those figures are based upon our projections of license sales and park admittance fees," said Commission Chairman Ygnacio Garza. Garza was named chairman by Gov. Ann Richards in September. "We're treading on some new ground here. There's risk in taking yourself off general funds, which is a solid check every month, and basing the budget upon your ability to produce in terms of customer services and selling those services to the people of Texas."

"Our priorities in this budget are clear," Sansom said. "We plan on providing better services to the public who depend on us for the enjoyment and conservation of our natural and cultural resources."

The budget includes funds for 89 new positions and as well as \$2.9 million for salary equity for existing positions. "We can't afford not to pay for the best qualified people out there," said Sansom. "We are losing our top talent to higher paying jobs in other agencies and in the private sector."

The budget also makes a commitment to resource protection by doubling the resource protection division budget. The increase and new positions in resource protection, Sansom said, will support the functional areas of habitat protection, geographic information systems (GIS) needs, aquatic assessment and contaminants monitoring as well as endangered species.

The creation of a legal division was necessary in order to improve management. Paul Shinkawa, division director, said if the department lost all of the cases pending against it, TPWD would be liable for \$6 million to \$10 million. Two new attorneys are needed to address areas of the law not presently being represented at the department and two paralegals will be able to respond to a six-month backlog in permit review and issuance.

Another critical area being addressed is human resources. This new division will address deficiencies in minority recruitment and classification review, training for a Total Quality Service program and it will provide avenues for complaints and grievances other than through lawsuits.

"This budget will allow us to do exactly what the commission directed us to do at the beginning of the budget process. We wanted to strengthen our commitment to our core constituencies and broaden our efforts to reach new constituents. We wanted to strengthen the agency and improve our operating efficiency.

"We also wanted to increase our capacity to defend the environment, find new sources of revenue, enhance internal and external communications and operate ethically and with accountability to the people of Texas. With this budget we'll be able to do that."

Several bills affecting TPWD were passed during the regular and special sessions and went into effect Sept. 1

- \* House Bill 1207 created the \$25 Texas Conservation Passport, opening thousands of acres of previously inaccessible areas to the public through special tours and activities, as well as providing discounts at state parks.

- \* Senate Bill 1062 created a turkey stamp. Anyone hunting turkeys in Texas must purchase a \$5 stamp in addition to a valid Texas hunting license. The stamp is expected to raise about \$600,000 yearly for the eastern turkey restoration program.

- \* SB 744, creates a non-resident spring turkey license for \$75. Previously, non-residents had to pay \$200 for a big game license. The \$75 license is designed to enhance the economy by drawing more out-of-state turkey hunters.

- \* HB 1425 requires a \$1.50 crab trap tag along the coast. This will allow TPWD to identify the number of crab traps in the bays and monitor blue crab fishing pressure.

- \* HB 1809 gives the department the authority to sell ancillary products.

- \* HB 1770 allows the department to use volunteers in all departmental programs.

- \* HB 1771 gives the department the authority to establish humanitarian standards for the handling of wildlife resources in captivity.

- \* HB 2494 allows for additional controls on the commercialization of aquatic products and commercially prohibited finfish.

- \* SB 748 allows TPWD to continue regulating oysters and shrimp. The department's authority on these resources would have expired Sept. 1

- \* HB 1773 and 1774 speeds up the process of buying a hunting or fishing license by allowing the buyer to complete all the information required instead of having the sales clerk do it.

- \* HB 2195 allows the department to confiscate all unlawful fishing devices.

The first fee increase in six years also went into effect on Sept. 1. A fishing or hunting license now costs \$13, a combination hunting/fishing license is \$25. Daily entrance fees to all state parks range from \$3-\$5. Camping fees, from primitive sites to screened shelters, now cost \$4-\$18 depending on the park and time of year

All stamps except the new turkey stamp (\$5) were increased to \$7. Those stamps include Texas waterfowl, archery, saltwater fishing, freshwater trout and white-winged dove.

A state law that went into effect Oct. 1 requires Texans who buy a taxable boat or motor to pay a 6.25 percent sales or use tax. The law imposes the sales tax on all sales of taxable boats and motors. Also, new residents who bring a boat registered in another state to Texas must pay \$15 for the boat and \$15 for the motor.

A taxable boat is a boat other than a canoe, kayak, rowboat, raft, punt or other vessel designed to be propelled by paddle, oar or pole. A taxable motor is an outboard motor with an internal combustion engine.

During the coming year the department will chart a strategic course for our work through the end of the century. Sansom said. 'We will undertake a strategic planning process to include every person who works at the Parks and Wildlife Department and the commission. It will be opened to the voices and aspirations of our user groups and the industries our actions affect. It is designed to set firm, clear attainable conservation and outdoor recreation goals for the decade.

Here are some of the other achievements of the department during 1991

## **FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE DIVISION**

### *Regulations*

Some of the more notable regulations changes made during the year were:

- \* An experimental catfish limit on six lakes. The minimum length was increased from nine to 14 inches and the daily bag limit was decreased from 25 to 15.
- \* Spotted and Guadalupe bass minimum length was changed from 14 inches to 12 inches. The 10-inch minimum length on yellow bass was eliminated.
- \* At Lake Fork and Lake O'the Pines, there is no minimum length limit on crappie from December through January. The first 25 crappie caught must be kept.
- \* Texas and Louisiana officials agreed on standardized bass limits for Toledo Bend and Caddo reservoirs. The regulations were changed from a 12-inch minimum length and 10 fish daily bag to a 14-inch minimum length and eight fish daily bag.
- \* Regulations on bag and possession limits on Gulf species of fish were modified to make state and federal limits more similar. In addition, mullet stocks were protected against a target fishery for mullet roe.

\* New provisions of the Type I public hunting program included 400 positions for muzzleloader hunts for deer exotics and feral hogs on five areas, Seminole Canyon SHP Choke Canyon-North Shore, Lost Maples SNA, Enchanted Rock SNA and Guadalupe River SP. Also, 61 Type II units were opened to either-sex deer hunting during the October archery season, up from five in 1990.

#### *Wildlife Branch*

The department kicked off the new Texas Big Game Awards program in an effort to recognize the importance of habitat and wildlife population management. The program is designed to recognize the quality of animals reflective of management efforts by land managers, to show the importance of hunting as a population management tool, and to encourage participation by young and new hunters.

The program is open to entries for typical and non-typical white-tailed deer and mule deer and for pronghorn antelope. The state has been divided into eight regions and a special "Texas 400" certificate will be awarded to the top 50 typical whitetails in each region.

For the first time, non-toxic shot is required statewide for hunting waterfowl and coots in Texas. It is illegal to possess lead shot, either in shot shells or as loose shot for muzzleloading while hunting waterfowl and coots. The entire nation is going to non-toxic shot to reduce losses to waterfowl populations from lead poisoning. Birds ingest lead shot while feeding and the shot grinds down in the gizzard where it's absorbed into the bloodstream.

The department stocked a record 816 wild-trapped eastern turkeys in several East Texas counties as part of the ongoing eastern turkey restoration program. Since 1987 TPWD has stocked 2,056 turkeys in 26 counties. Plans for 1992 are to stock 932 turkeys in 11 counties. The turkeys are obtained from other states for \$500 each. Money paid to other state agencies covers the cost of trapping the birds.

Seven people representing alligator-related activities in Texas were chosen as members of the new Texas Alligator Resources Advisory Board. They will help the department develop an alligator management program. The board will serve as an advisory body during the development and implementation of a statewide alligator management and research program.

### *Fish Hatcheries Branch*

Renovation of the Dundee State Fish Hatchery is underway with phase one near completion. The total project calls for 101 production ponds, water supply, a 40,000 square-foot hatchery building, utilities and site work. Seventy-five percent of the \$6 million price tag for phase one will be paid by federal Wallop-Breaux Sport Fish Restoration Program funds while the other 25 percent will come from in-kind contributions of the value of existing property.

The department's saltwater hatcheries produced 21.9 million red drum fingerlings during the year 19.5 million for stocking in the bays and 2.4 million for stocking in freshwater reservoirs. This is the first time annual fingerling production has topped 20 million.

Gene McCarty, a 13-year veteran of the department, was named chief of fish hatcheries in February after serving as acting chief for three months. McCarty was largely responsible for the design, construction and operation of the GCCA/CPL Marine Development Center in Corpus Christi from 1982-87. Since assuming his new responsibilities, fish production has reached an all-time high of almost 40 million fingerlings and more than 200 million fry.

### *Coastal Fisheries Branch*

The first artificial reef under the Texas Artificial Reef Plan was created after Phillips Petroleum Company donated and toppled a 220-foot-tall section of an offshore oil rig into about 200 feet of water in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to toppling the rig for the 'Rigs to Reefs' program, Phillips donated \$156,000 to the Texas Artificial Reef fund. That money will be used to continue developing and promoting the artificial reef potential off the Texas coast. Additional donations from Phillips, Oxy Petroleum Freeport McMoRan and Mobil have been placed as reefs, and other oil and gas companies have potential donations in the advanced planning stages.

On Sept. 1 tarpon fishing in Texas waters became catch and release only because the department was concerned about a decline in the sub-adult population. A catch and release fishery maximizes the opportunity for anglers to catch more fish while at the same time allowing the maximum number of fish possible to spawn.

The department's tarpon restoration program will continue with renewed efforts to re-establish a viable sport fishery through a variety of research projects, including hatchery rearing and stocking techniques, cooperative tagging and life history studies, social and economic characterization of the fishery and cooperation with Mexican fishery agencies.

#### *Inland Fisheries Branch*

The first Freshwater Fishery Advisory Board was appointed to help evaluate management options that affect Texas freshwater fisheries and fishing. This group represents the state's freshwater angling public, the aquaculture industry, freshwater fishing industry, fisheries educators and conservation groups. The board will advise TPWD on freshwater fisheries management programs, management and research priorities, priorities for expenditures of angler financed programs and will aid in the dissemination of information regarding freshwater fisheries issues.

The Operation Share A Lone Star Lunker program enjoyed another successful year with 27 bass weighing more than 13 pounds being donated to the program. This was the first year that two bass weighing more than 17 pounds have been added to the program. Jerry New of Marshall donated a 17.63-pound largemouth from Lake Fork and Troy Coates of Emory donated a 17.08-pounder from Fork. New's fish ranks third overall behind the state record of 17.67 pounds caught by Mark Stevenson in 1986 and a 17.64-pounder caught by Stan Moss in 1989. Twenty of the bass came from Lake Fork, two from Mill Creek and one each from the Nueces River, Baylor Creek, Spindletop (all three donating fish for the first time), Murvaul and Possum Kingdom. Twenty-one lakes have contributed fish to the program since it began in 1987.

Phil Durocher, who has been with the department since 1974, was named chief of the inland fisheries branch recently after serving as acting chief since June. His successes include staging the first freshwater advisory committee meeting and developing the strategy to permit the citizens of Texas to use sterile grass carp to control aquatic vegetation problems. Durocher had been director of management for inland fisheries since 1984.

### **PUBLIC LANDS DIVISION**

While some state parks were celebrating anniversaries, the division created a new visitor program and made wide ranging internal changes.

Fifty years ago, with the Great Depression coming to an end and Europe at war Texans working with the Civilian Conservation Corps completed and opened Garner State Park, President Franklin D. Roosevelt disbanded the CCC and on Dec. 7 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

This year in remembrance of 1941, Garner State Park celebrated its 50th anniversary, the Texas CCC held its 50th reunion at Bastrop State Park and the Admiral Nimitz Museum State Historical Park hosted the first national commemorative event for Pearl Harbor

Behind the scenes the state park system was undergoing a major reorganization. In January parks became part of a larger operational unit within the department's newly created public lands division, which includes wildlife management areas.

In addition to the name change, internal changes brought emphasis to customer service with the development of a marketing and tourism function and the introduction of high profile marketing speakers at the annual park managers meeting. The reorganization of headquarters and field staff positions now provides more direct visitor services.

During the year Lake Casa Blanca State Park in Laredo was acquired, Cedar Hill State Park in the Dallas area and Big Bend Ranch State Natural Area on the Rio Grande were opened.

New transportation services to some of the system's remote areas were provided, including a passenger ferry to Matagorda Island, bus transportation for both Matagorda and Big Bend Ranch and an air boat for the marshes at Sea Rim State Park.

Three undeveloped park properties were opened for limited use with advance reservations: Kickapoo Cavern in Edwards County, Devil's River in Val Verde County and Lake Bastrop near Bastrop State Park.

New state park programs were established to meet visitor demands. A volunteer host program brought retired couples, living in their own recreational vehicles, into parks to provide after hours visitor assistance at 48 parks. The volunteer program generated a total of 84,554 volunteer hours with a net value to the department of \$530,206.

A system for computerizing reservations was field tested at Garner State Park, found to be successful and is scheduled to be on-line at the park in 1992.



In September state park fees were increased for the first time in six years in a move to bring park revenues more in line with actual costs.

A uniform statewide \$2 entry fee was converted to a sliding scale fee ranging from \$3 to \$5 in relation to actual customer demand. Campsite fees and other overnight fees also were increased in a structure similar to the one used nationwide by hotels and motels. Parks off the beaten track don't cost as much as parks in mainstream locations and low use periods are cheaper than high use periods.

The Texas Conservation Passport was introduced in 1991. This innovative program will provide Texans with new opportunities to experience more of Texas' vast natural resources while contributing financially to their conservation.

The Conservation Passport provides access to newly opened wildlife management areas and undeveloped state parks and natural areas. The outdoor experience is enhanced by the availability of special interpretative tours conducted for Conservation Passport holders by TPWD personnel.

In addition, the \$25 annual passport provides free admission to state parks, a \$1 per night discount on camping, a discount on Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine and other benefits. Proceeds from passport sales will help acquire, develop and operate state parks and other public lands under department control.

Through Dec. 10, Conservation Passport sales totaled 19,192, about 14 percent ahead of sales projections.

Reorganizing administrative and fee structures were steps taken to make the public lands division operations more cost effective.

In past years, money collected from state park visitors has equalled about one-third the front-line costs of operating the parks. Now, with general tax appropriations for 1992 state park operation down from \$15.8 million to only \$6.25 million, it is important for park operations to become more self-sufficient.

More than 23.9 million people visited state parks in the fiscal year just ended. This is an all-time high and is the fourth consecutive year in which state park visitation exceeded 20 million visitors.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Thirty-three cadets joined the game warden ranks after successfully completing the six-month 42nd Game Warden School. Graduates of the training school come from an original list of 1,508 people who took a written test in February 1990.

The new and veteran wardens alike stayed busy during the year enforcing game and fish regulations, including investigating the death of a whooping crane, an undercover operation and following many tips from Operation Game Thief callers.

San Saba High School teacher Raena Wharton received a \$7,500 cash reward from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a plaque from TPWD after reporting a game violation. The violation turned out to be shooting an endangered whooping crane.

Billy Dale Inman of Marble Falls was sentenced to incarceration, probation, a fine, community service and forfeiture of his shotgun and shooting rights after pleading guilty to shooting the crane during a fishing trip April 15 along the Colorado River in Lampasas County. Curtis Collier Sayers, also of Marble Falls, pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting in the crime and was sentenced to jail time, probation, a fine and community service. Both will pay civil restitution to the state.

In early December after an 11-month undercover operation, 26 people were arrested for allegedly selling flathead catfish, striped and white bass and crappie taken from Lake Texoma and along the Red River. Texas game wardens filed 120 misdemeanor charges against 12 people in Grayson and Cooke counties. The USFWS and Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation filed charges against 14 others.

The defendants are charged with illegally selling an estimated 10,000 pounds of fish, all but about 300 pounds involving flathead catfish. Most of the fish were taken on trotlines or by using electroshocking devices. Most of the cases are still pending. Civil restitution charges will be assessed later.

Wardens spent much of their time investigating calls received on the Operation Game Thief hotline. Through 10 years, the hotline has received 12,055 calls with 1,125 resulting in arrests. Wardens apprehended 2,366 violators and filed 4,667 cases during the decade. Since the program began, violators have been assessed \$646,568.22 in fines and callers have been authorized \$87,130 in rewards by the Operation Game Thief Committee.

Members of the nine-member committee voted to increase reward payments in the future, all of which come from private funds. The department is authorized to approve and pay a maximum of \$300 to a caller during the year but the committee may vote to substantially increase the reward during the semiannual meetings.

Violations of game and fish laws may be reported by calling 1-800-792-GAME at any time. Callers may remain anonymous. Codes are provided to anonymous callers and used later for confirmation of identity for consideration of reward payments.

Donations may be made by sending a check or money order to Operation Game Thief, TPWD, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. For more information on the program call Capt. Steve Pritchett at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 4626, or (512) 389-4626.

During fiscal year 1991 game wardens confiscated thousands of feet of illegal fishing nets and hundreds of pieces of equipment. The department confiscated 375,567 feet of gill nets; 762,169 feet of illegally set trotlines; 238 fish traps; 1,222 crab traps; 12 electric shocking devices; and 82 other illegal devices.

Game wardens also confiscated thousands of illegally obtained fish. Confiscated fish include 80 flounder; 176 red drum; 120 spotted seatrout; 312 black drum; 4,184 freshwater bass; 5,745 catfish; and 6,330 for all other species of fish.

### **RESOURCE PROTECTION DIVISION**

The department received an \$80,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to map the vegetation, wetlands and develop the basis for an eventual management plan for the San Marcos River

Officials will map the vegetation within a one-mile corridor on both sides of the river and look at land use and habitats adjacent to the river. The department will develop information on the fishery, hold public meetings as part of an assessment to determine interests of landowners and work with appropriate public entities, review the literature on past work performed and identify manmade structures and other features of the river.

The department sponsored an endangered resources forum last spring to find out what the endangered resources goals and priorities are of various conservation organizations, and to encourage public discussion of endangered resources issues.

Texas receives about \$330,000 in federal funds to spend on endangered species projects. Educating the public about endangered resources issues emerged as a top priority, as did better coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on projects in Texas.

The Upper Laguna Madre experienced a new brown tide during most of the year. Under the right conditions brown tide can cause fish kills, although Texas never experienced any major die-offs.

National and international experts met with Texas officials in Port Aransas to compare notes and pool knowledge about this new phenomena. "The Laguna Madre is unique in the world," said Dr. Larry McKinney, resource protection division director. "What has been happening there over the last two years is frightening because it could mean the loss of the Laguna's characteristic and productive sea grasses and there doesn't seem to be anything we can do about it.

The brown tide organism is not toxic, yet it is so abundant that with calm winds, warm temperatures and shallow depths, the blooms can deplete oxygen in the water and cause fish kills. More importantly, it can become so dense that it cuts off light to submerged sea grasses, killing them.

### **HONORS AND AWARDS**

\* The USFWS commended wildlife biologist Gary Waggerman of Edinburg for his efforts to preserve wildlife habitat along the 25-mile long Delta Lake Irrigation Canal in Hidalgo County. Waggerman suggested a cooperative agreement between the Delta Lake Irrigation Canal and the USFWS that would allow canal cleaning and access for maintenance while leaving much of the nearly 1,000 acres of brush intact.

\* Ron George, wildlife biologist in Austin, and five co-authors received the Outstanding Publication Award from the National Wildlife Health Research Center in Madison, Wisc. The award is for their article, 'Fusarium Mycotoxins from Peanuts Suspected as a Cause of Sandhill Crane Mortality.

\* The Private Lands Enhancement Program was presented the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Texas Chapter The Wildlife Society. In 1989-90, the year for which the award was given, initial wildlife management plans were written for 52 tracts covering more than 350,000 acres, while 334 other tracts of almost 3.5 million acres had existing plans updated or tracked for progress toward the landowner's wildlife goals.

\* Game warden Larry Boyd of Rockwall was named the 1990 Shikar-Safari International Outstanding Wildlife Officer of the Year for his role in an undercover operation at Lake Texoma. Boyd made the necessary buys of illegal fish and observed illegal fishing activities to make a solid case.

\* K.E. Mott and Eugene Maxwell, park rangers at Martin Dies Jr. State Park, were honored for rescuing a man trapped in the Neches River

\* Two men associated with the department were honored by Sportsmen Conservationists of Texas. Commissioner Chuck Nash was named Conservationist of the Year and Rod Chalmers, game warden from Ozona, was named Conservation Officer of the Year

\* Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine staff won three awards at the Regional Publisher's Association conference. The magazine won gold medals for best cover (February 1990) and best overall design. Managing editor Mary-Love Bigony won an award of merit for her story on the Hogg Family in the February 1990 issue, 'Biography of a Native Son.'

\* The department placed six entries in the Association for Conservation Information 1990 awards, the most ever won by the department at the national competition. The department's PBS television series won first and third place in the Television Program category. A video news release about the 'Paddlefish Recovery Project' took top honors in the Audio/Visual News category and an employee video newsletter placed first in the Internal Communications category. In the Television Public Service Announcement category, the department won second for its PSA on hunter safety. Another second place was won in the Special Efforts category. Nine other entrants from the department finished in the top 10 in several different categories.

\* Jerry Hopkins, superintendent at Cedar Hill State Park, was named the first recipient of the Park Superintendent of the Year Award, given by the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association.

\* Project WILD was a recipient of the President's Environment and Conservation Challenge Award for Education and Communication. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture was cited by President George Bush in the Partnership Category.

\* Deirdre E. Hisler, park ranger at Guadalupe River State Park, was honored for saving a 17-year-old girl from drowning during a flood at the park.

\* Donnie Harmel, manager of the Kerr Wildlife Management Area, and Bill Armstrong, assistant manager received the Society for Range Management's W.R. Chapline Land Stewardship Award during an international meeting in Washington, D.C. They were honored for promoting sound resource management on the 6,500-acre WMA.

\* The resource protection division was presented with the Nature Conservancy's Public Service Award for their work on the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan and Diamond Y Springs.

\* Lt. game warden Jack King of Corpus Christi was honored for the best presentation of a paper at the 45th Annual Southeastern Association of Fish and Game Agencies conference. The paper and oral presentation described the Texas Coast Watcher Program.

\* Game warden Warren Bluntzer of Lampasas was named Texas Game Warden of the Year by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Game Agencies.

LW 12/20/91

BLUEBIRD NEST  
BOXES AVAILABLE

AUSTIN--A limited number of bluebird nest boxes will be available free to the public from the Nongame Resources Program in January.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department believes the cooperative project will increase the availability of nesting sites for eastern bluebirds and other cavity nesters such as chickadees, wrens and some flycatchers.

Artificial nest boxes are needed to increase the breeding success of bluebirds and other cavity nesters since natural nesting cavities, usually found in dead and hollow trees, have declined in recent years.

The department's boxes are made of specially treated, weather-resistant cardboard material and may last one to two years. They must be placed at least 100 yards apart to prevent territorial disputes among nesting birds. Those accepting boxes will be asked to keep a written record on usage by bluebirds and other nesting species observed.

About 2,000 boxes will be available and will be provided to those contacting the department by Jan. 27. Send requests to TPWD, Nongame Resources Program, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. Indicate how many boxes you would like to receive.

LW 12/20/91

(NOTE: TPWD NEWS WILL TAKE OFF THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. THE WEEKLY NEWS PACKETS WILL RESUME JAN. 8.)

AUSTIN: Here is the weekly fishing report as compiled by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for Dec. 19:

#### CENTRAL

BASTROP: Water clear, 59 degrees, normal level; black bass are fair to 4 pounds on jigs and worms; crappie are slow; catfish are slow.

BELTON: Water clear, 58 degrees, normal level; black bass are good to 4 pounds on black and blue jigs, black and blue pork and spinners; striper are slow; crappie are slow; white bass are good on slabs and jigs; catfish are good to 6 pounds on Bokers and other commercial bait.

BROWNWOOD: Water clear, 56 degrees, spillway level; black bass are slow due to lack of fishermen; striper are slow due to winds and lack of fishermen; crappie are good around docks in 20 feet of water on chartreuse jigs with red head and tail; white bass are slow; catfish to 4 pounds are fairly good on trotlines; yellow catfish are good in the 5-15 pound range on live shad.

CANYON: Water clear, 57 degrees, 7 1/2 feet low; black bass are slow; striper are fair but most are too small to keep on minnows at night, some keepers have been caught on Pico Perch; crappie are slow; white bass are slow, catfish are slow; few fishermen out midweek; trout fishing has been very good to 4 pounds, most in the 9-10 inch range, on Power Nuggets, salmon eggs, nightcrawlers, cheese and corn. The Guadalupe River is a little murky because of rain and flowing at 237 CFS. Fisheries biologists are planning to stock additional trout Dec. 19.

FAYETTE: Water clear, 66 degrees, normal level; black bass are good to 7 pounds on Slug-Gos and Long As in shallow water; crappie are slow; catfish are fairly slow due to lack of fishermen.

GIBBONS CREEK: Water fairly clear, 65 degrees, 18 inches low; black bass are good to 9 pounds, 6 ounces on minnows in the discharge area; crappie are fairly good sized but the numbers are short, on minnows; catfish are fairly good to 4 pounds on rods and reels baited with minnows.

LIMESTONE: Water clear, 58 degrees, normal level; black bass are fair to 5 pounds on spinners; crappie are slow; channel catfish are fair to 15 pounds on shrimp baited trotline.

SQUAW CREEK: Water clear with 5-8 feet visibility, 57 degrees, normal level; black bass are good in the 14-16 inch range in 2-25 feet of water on cranks, Rattle Traps and worms; smallmouth are good in the 3-6 pound range to 30 feet of water on jigging spoons, minnows and cranks; some hybrid striper have been caught; striper are slow; crappie are slow; white bass are slow; catfish are good in the 4-6 pound range in 20-60 feet of water on commercial catfish bait and cranks; walleye are slow.

TRAVIS: Water clear, 61 degrees, 5 feet low; largemouth bass are good to 35 fish per boat per day to 4 pounds on shad Weenie Worms, brown jigs and pigs and salt and pepper Fat Getzits; Guadalupe bass are good to 16 1/2 inches or 2 pounds, 12 ounces on same baits; striper are slow; crappie are slow white bass are slow; catfish are slow.

WACO: Water off color, 54 degrees, normal level; black bass are good to 8 pounds on spinners and jigs; striper are slow; crappie are fair to 25 fish per string on minnows; white bass are slow; catfish are slow.

WHITNEY: Water clearing, 56 degrees, 9 inches above normal level; black bass are good to 4 pounds, the largest weighed 5 1/2 pounds, on Rattle Traps and cranks; striper are good to 16 pounds on Mann's Shadows with many limits; crappie are excellent in number from the barges on minnows and jigs, with limits to 1 3/4 pounds; white bass are good on slabs and spoons with limits to 2 pounds under the birds; catfish are slow.

#### NORTHEAST

BRIDGEPORT: Water clear, 54 degrees, normal level; black bass are fairly good with numbers of small bass on cranks; striper are fairly slow; crappie are good with good sized fish around docks and off points on minnows; white bass are slow; catfish are fair to 42 pounds on trotlines and live bait.

CADDO: Water clear, normal level; black bass are good to 3 1/2 pounds on worms and Rattle Traps; crappie are good to 1 1/2 pounds on minnows in Big Lake; white bass are slow; catfish are fair to 2 pounds at night on minnow baited set hooks.

CYPRESS SPRINGS: Water clear, 70 degrees, normal level; black bass are good to 6 pounds on jig and pig in 8 feet of water; crappie are good in 25 feet of water on minnows; catfish are good to 12 pounds on nightcrawlers.

FAIRFIELD: Water clear, 60-63 degrees, 6 inches above normal level; black bass are good to 7 pounds on buzz baits; catfish are good to 10 pounds on natural baits; redbird are slow to 20 pounds on cranks; hybrid striper are good to 10 pounds on shad lures.

FORK: Water clear, 54 degrees, 1 foot high; black bass are good to 9.8 pounds on cranks; crappie are good on minnows in 35 to 40 feet of water; catfish are slow.

JOE POOL: Water muddy, 63 degrees, 5 inches above normal; black bass are good to 6 1/2 pounds on grape firetailed worms and dark cranks; crappie are good to 1.75 pounds on minnows; white bass are slow; catfish are good to 8 pounds on shrimp and shad gizzards.

LAKE O THE PINES: Water clear, 61 degrees, 8 inches above normal level; black bass are fair to 6 1/2 pounds on blue worms and Rattle Traps; crappie are good above 259 bridge on minnows and jigs and also around Brushy and Johnson Creeks; white bass are slow; catfish are fair to 13 pounds on nightcrawlers.

LAVON: Water clear, 46 degrees, 4 feet above normal level; black bass are slow; all fishing slow due to lack of fishermen.

MARTIN CREEK: Water clear, normal level; black bass are slow; striper are slow; crappie are slow; white bass are slow; catfish are slow.

MONTICELLO: Water clear, 70 degrees, normal level; black bass are good to 7 pounds, 1 ounce on 8-inch black and blue worms; crappie are fair to 2 pounds each on minnows; catfish are good to 50 pounds drifting with live perch.

MOSS LAKE: Water clear, 50 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow; crappie are fair to 1 pound; white bass are slow;

catfish are fair to 2 pounds on rod and reel baited with shrimp. MURVAUL: Water clear, 58 degrees, normal level; black bass are good to 6 1/2 pounds on jigs, worms and spinners; crappie are picking up around brush piles and 1971 bridge on minnows; catfish are fairly good on trotline to 4 pounds with cut shad.

PALESTINE: Water clear, 48 degrees, 6 inches above normal level; black bass are good to 8 3/4 pounds on jig and eel; striper are slow; crappie are good to 2 pounds on minnows; white bass are slow; catfish are good to 14 pounds on trotlines baited with cut bait; few fishermen were out midweek.

PURTIS CREEK: Water clear, 52 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow; crappie are fair on minnows; catfish are fair on dough bait and a variety of other baits; rainbow trout are good in number, fish were stocked on Dec. 12.

RAY HUBBARD: Water murky, 52 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow; striper are good to 4 pounds on slabs; crappie are good to 25 fish per string on minnows; white bass are fair to 9 fish per string to 2 pounds each on slabs; catfish are good to 5 pounds on chicken liver.

RAY ROBERTS: Water clear, 52 degrees, 1 foot above normal level; black bass are good to 20 inches on blue shad cranks and blue back jigs; crappie are poor; white bass are good to 15 inches on slabs and spoons in deep water; channel catfish are good to 16 inches on frozen shad.

RICHLAND-CHAMBERS: Water clear, 55 degrees, 5 inches above normal; black bass are fair in number, only a few fish caught because of the weather.

TEXOMA: Water clear, 52 degrees, 2 feet above normal level; largemouth bass are good to 5 1/2 pounds on cranks; smallmouth bass are good to 6 pounds, 9 1/2 ounces; striper are good to 13 pounds on Sassy Shad; crappie are fair to 9 fish per string on live bait; catfish are good to 24 pounds on cut bait.

WRIGHT PATMAN: Water muddy on south end, murky in the middle and clear on the north end, 52 degrees, 10 feet above normal seasonal level; black bass are poor to 3 1/4 pounds on jig and pig and minnows; crappie are poor on minnows; white bass are poor, some small fish were caught below the dam; catfish are fair to good to 18 pounds on trotlines baited with whole shad or cut shad, chicken liver and large shiners.

#### SOUTHEAST

CONROE: Water clear, normal level; black bass are fair to good to 4 pounds on worms and Rattle Traps and Lightning spoons and worms; white bass are good on spoons, white bass are full of eggs; crappie are fair with some beginning to spawn; catfish are improving to 40 pounds on spoons.

HOUSTON COUNTY: Water clear, 75 degrees, normal level; black bass are fair to 5 1/2 pounds on purple Ringworms; crappie are fair to 10 fish per string on minnows; white bass are schooling in the early evening, some strings to 15 fish per string on minnows; catfish are slow.

LIVINGSTON: Water clear, 58 degrees, 3 inches high; black bass are fair to 4 pounds in the creeks on light colored spinners; striper are slow; crappie are good early on minnows; white bass are



up the river, fishing in the lake has been slow; catfish are good on in 2-25 pound range on wide variety of baits.

**RAYBURN:** Water fairly clear, 63-65 degrees, 1 foot low; black bass are fair to 8 pounds on topwaters, Long As and spinners; striper are slow; crappie are slow; white bass are slow; catfish are slow; very few fishermen on the lake during the week, most fish on weekends.

**TOLEDO BEND:** Water clear, 62 degrees, 10 feet low; black bass are fair to 5 pounds on spinners, Rattle Traps and purple worms; striper are slow; crappie are fair on shiners in baited holes; white bass are slow; catfish are fair to 6 pounds in baited holes.

#### SOUTH

**AMISTAD:** Water clear, 60 degrees, 3 feet above normal level; black bass are good to 7 pounds on worms in 15 to 25 feet of water; striper are fair on Ponyhead jigs and silver Zara Spooks around Marker 17 and 24 and in San Pedro Canyon; crappie are fair on minnows; white bass are good on white and chartreuse slabs in Caballo, San Pedro and Zorro Canyons; catfish are good in 45 to 100 feet of water on cheese baits and shrimp.

**BRAUNIG:** Water murky, 60 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow and small; catfish are good to 4 pounds on nightcrawlers and shrimp; redfish are slow to 17 pounds on crawfish.

**CALAVERAS:** Water murky, 74 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow; striper are beginning to hit on lures; catfish are fairly good on a variety of worms, cutbait and shad; redfish are slow; corvina are slow.

**CHOKO:** Water clear, 60 degrees, 18 1/2 feet low; black bass are good to 9 pounds in the creeks and coves in 1-5 feet of water on white spinners, black or blue chrome Rattle Traps and plastic worms in black and chartreuse; striper are slow; crappie are fair in the river channels at the 99 bridge in the river channel, fishermen should move if they find not fish in 15 minutes; white bass are fair in the river at San Miguel, most white bass are males in 5-10 feet of water, females should show up in mid January; catfish are good in 1-5 feet of water in the heavy brush of the South Shore Flats on cheese baits; catfish to 40 pounds are caught at night on trotlines with cut carp in 20-40 feet of water.

**COLETO CREEK:** Water clear, 63 degrees at the dam and 70 degrees at Dike 2, 1 foot low; black bass are good in number with many below keeper size and some above on Slug-Gos and minnows; striper are fair on jigs and spoons but most are under 18 inches at the discharge; crappie are poor on minnows; catfish are good to 5 pounds on artificials at night.

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** Water clear, 60 degrees, 7 feet low; black bass are good to 7 1/2 pounds in 3-5 feet of water on gold willow leaf spoons; striper are slow; crappie are slowing down, some caught from the state park piers on minnows; white bass are fairly good all over the lake on chrome slabs and Roadrunners; blue catfish are good to 18 pounds on trotlines baited with cut sunfish; yellow catfish are good to 40 pounds on trotlines baited with live sunfish; ducks and geese are plentiful on the north end of the lake; good

numbers of snows, speckle bellies and mallards.

**FALCON:** Water clear, 66 degrees, 1 1/4 feet above normal level; black bass are good to 8 1/4 pounds on spinners and topwaters; striper are slow and small; crappie are slow; white bass are fairly good in the river on Knocker Spoons; catfish are good to 8 1/2 pounds on shrimp baited rod and reel.

**MEDINA:** Water clear, 37 feet low; black bass are slow to 4 pounds on deep diving cranks; striper are slow; crappie are slow; white bass are fair on slabs and L'il Georges, no limits caught; catfish are fair to 3 pounds on nightcrawlers and shrimp.

**TEXANA:** Water murky, normal level; black bass and all fishing slow; a few catfish caught on trotlines baited with cut bait and shad, most in the 2-5 pound range.

#### WEST

**FORT PHANTOM HILL:** Water murky, 54 degrees, lake full; black bass are slow; striper are fair to 6 pounds on shad; crappie are fair in the 10-inch range on minnows; white bass are poor; catfish are fair to 6 pounds on shad.

**GRANBURY:** Water clear, 67 degrees, 6 inches low; black bass are slow; striper are fair early and late at the hot water outlet on jigs and live bait; crappie are slow; white bass are slow; channel catfish have been very good to 7 pounds on bloodbait and Mr. Whiskers catfish bait, many limits caught.

**GREENBELT:** Water clear, 48 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow; crappie are good on slabs in 15 feet of water; white bass are good on slabs in 20 feet of water; catfish are good to 5 pounds on chicken livers and rabbit livers; walleye are good in the 28-30 inch range on night crawlers; rainbow trout are good to 20 inches below the dam on salmon eggs and Power Nuggets.

**IVIE:** Water slightly murky, 54.7 degrees, 25.8 feet low and rising; black bass are fair with scattered reports on chartreuse spinners and silver jigging spoons in 15 feet of water in the creek channels; crappie are very good on minnows in creeks and coves; catfish are fair to 2 pounds; yellow catfish are good to 5 pounds on live bait and trotlines.

**MEREDITH:** Water clear; black bass are slow; crappie are slow; white bass are slow; catfish are fair on shad; walleye are good to 8 pounds on live shad.

**POSSUM KINGDOM:** Water clear, 58 degrees, normal level; black bass are slow; striper are good to 13 pounds on slabs; crappie are good around boat docks and in crappie houses in the 1/2 pound range; white bass are slow; catfish are slow.

**PROCTOR:** Water murky, 1 foot above normal level; black bass are fair to 4 pounds on cranks; striper are slow; crappie are slow; catfish are fair but most are small to 2 pounds on shad. Duck hunting has been good with limits at the north end of the lake.

**SPENCE:** Water clear, 34 1/2 feet low; black bass and all fishing has been slow due to lack of fishermen and weather.

**TWIN BUTTES:** Water clear, 53 degrees, 10 feet low; black bass are slow, some caught in 15 feet of water on jig and pig, some have been caught in shallow water on spinners; striper are slow; hybrid striper are fair while fishing for

white bass on jigging spoc 70 feet of water; crappie are good near the cage and the dam in 45 feet of water about 12 feet from the surface on crappie minnows; white bass are good around the ledges in 40 feet of water, limits caught on Kastmasters; catfish are good in the 3-4 pound range on minnows fished on the bottom. TPWD biologists stocked 2,000 rainbow trout on Dec. 12 in Foster Park; trout are hitting salmon eggs and whole kernel corn, most are in the 8-11 inch range.

#### COASTAL

**NORTH SABINE LAKE:** Fishing was good through Sunday with good sized trout, drum, redfish, sheepshead and fresh water catfish; a 10 inch rain early this week made the lake fresh, fishing has been fairly slow since; rains falling midweek; no live bait shrimp.

**GALVESTON:** Rains and winds midweek have been keeping fishermen away; a few fishermen are catching whiting along the beach front, an occasional keeper redfish and scattered keeper redfish in the bays and good numbers of undersized redfish; good numbers of sandtrout in the ship channels; live bait shrimp available at \$8.50 to \$10 per quart.

**PORT OCONNOR:** Fishing has been slowed down because of rains; fish have moved from deeper holes and into the flats; some of the more popular areas are still producing fish; few fishermen out; fish should be going back into the deeper holes; jetties are still producing oversized redfish.

**MATAGORDA:** Weather is miserable and raining midweek.

**PALACIOS:** Fairly good fishing success around the Baptist Encampment and in the turning basin, primarily around the jetties; trout good with some limits to 4 1/2 pounds on chartreuse metal flake Hogies Super Jacks, Cordell's and jumping minnows; some redfish to 8 pounds caught at Coon Island; Tres Palacios River is fresh, Carancahua River is fresh; goose hunting has been excellent, many limits taken.

**ROCKPORT:** Rains falling midweek; before the rains came, good strings of redfish and drum were caught in Port and Copano Bays on red and purple Cacohoe minnows with white tails and avocado green Cacohoe minnows with a red tail; St. Charles Bay has been producing fairly good numbers of redfish in the keeper range; Aransas and Redfish Bays both are producing good numbers of specks; live bait shrimp available but not plentiful at \$7.50 per quart.

**PORT ARANSAS:** Redfish are fairly good in South Bay and Hog Island Hole on dead shrimp and live mullet; some specks caught near City-By-The-Sea on live shrimp; some trout caught around Dagger Island on shrimp also; the north jetties are producing good numbers of sheepshead on live and dead shrimp; some good sized trout also caught at the north jetty; live bait shrimp available at \$7.50 per quart.

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** A 12-pound speck caught Tuesday afternoon south of the JFK Causeway in the Intracoastal on Kelley Wigglers; some redfish caught in the boat hole; live bait shrimp available at 12 cents each.

**PORT MANSFIELD:** Some redfish and trout caught down south on

artificial; live bait shrimp available.

SOUTH PADRE: Rains falling midweek, few fishermen out; redfish and drum are good with limits in South Bay with dead shrimp fished on the bottom; trout in fairly good numbers near Three Islands; surf fishermen are catching good numbers of whiting to 17 inches on dead shrimp and squid; live bait shrimp plentiful at \$10 per quart; pier fishermen are catching good strings of sand trout; specks, drum and redfish caught from the pier late at night.

PH 12/18/91