

TEXAS  
**parks &  
wildlife**

**FOR THE LOVE OF TEXAS**  
\$100 million for Texas land  
and water conservation

**UNDISCOVERED PALO DURO**  
Exploring the park's wild  
slot canyons and hoodoos

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Geology & wildflowers beckon  
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# APRIL 2018

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### ANGLER VS. FISH

YEAR OF EPIC CHALLENGES

The Texas State Bass Tournament keeps the spirit of competition alive.

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### Undiscovered Palo Duro

Exploring the park's hidden corners reveals wild slot canyons and hoodoos.

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### For the Love of Texas

What can \$100 million mean to Texas land and water conservation?

by **Karen Hoffman Blizzard**

**ON THE COVER:** Bass anglers cast for big fish at tournaments around the state. Photo by Sonja Sommerfeld / TPWD

**THIS PAGE:** Slot canyon at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Photo © Rob Greebon / Images from Texas

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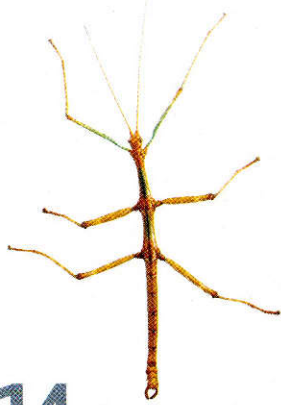


PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

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PHOTO © ABBOTT NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY



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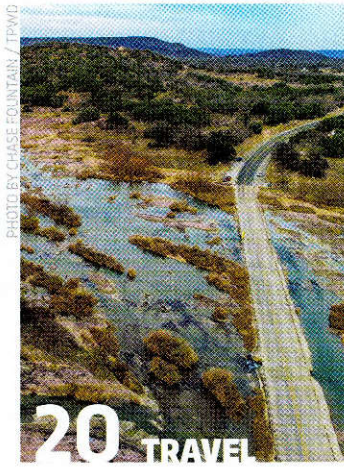


PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

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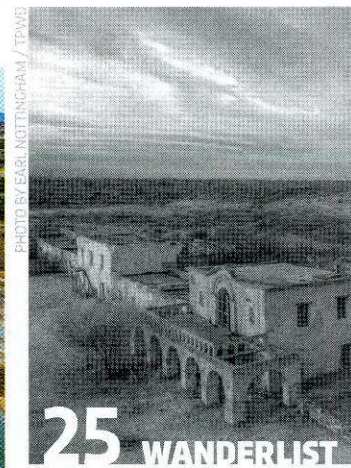


PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

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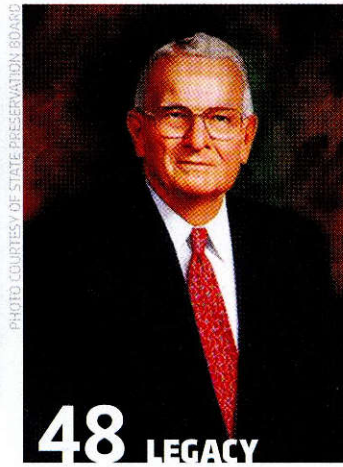


PHOTO COURTESY OF STATE PRESERVATION, BDA/SIS

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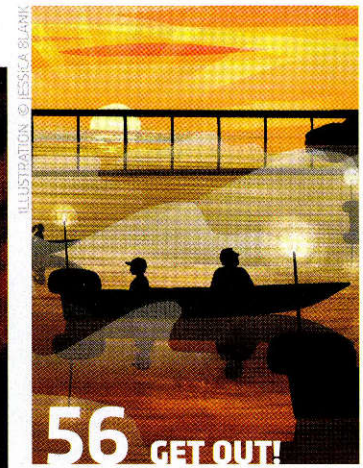


ILLUSTRATION © JESSICA BLANK

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Explore the world of bass tournaments

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**FOR COMPETITIVE BASS ANGLERS**, there's no better feeling than pulling the biggest largemouth out of the lake on just the right day. After all, they put a lot into their passion: buying a boat, stockpiling more gear than they can ever use (or confess to their spouse about), and paying for gas, insurance, entry fees, motels and more. It's not an inexpensive pastime.

But on any given weekend, thousands of hopefuls will rise way before the sun and try their luck at one of Texas' big bass lakes. On just one weekend in late February, 300-plus anglers spread across Lake Fork for one bass tournament, while 125 boats vied for a title at Canyon Lake. And that's not even accounting for the hundreds at events on Lake Sam Rayburn, Toledo Bend and others. You can be sure there are thousands of hopeful anglers pursuing the dream on any given weekend.

Publisher Randy Brudnicki is our resident bass maniac, so he's our guide for our April Epic Texas Challenge, the Texas State Bass Tournament, on Page 34. If the idea of catching your own bass (and maybe your own championship title, to boot) appeals to you, flip to the back of the issue to our Get Out section for a few pointers on how to get started.

If you've been keeping up with us the past few years, you know our managing editor, Russell Roe, loves a good outdoor adventure, especially one that tests his endurance and captures his imagination. The slot canyons and hoodoos of "undiscovered" areas of Palo Duro Canyon fill the bill in every way. The breathtaking beauty of candy-striped rock walls is the payoff for a hiking trip that is definitely not for beginners. Nobody has fun when someone gets hurt, so we encourage you to tackle trails suitable for your skill level, and always be sure to check in at the park office to learn how to stay safe when you hike.

Whether you set out to see the wildflowers along the roadside on your way to Llano or visit old movie sets across the state, or even to compete in your first fishing tournament, get out and enjoy Texas in April. She's put on her prettiest skirts just for the season!

*Louie Bond*

Louie Bond, Editor





# A NONPROFIT FOR A WILD TEXAS

**AS THE OFFICIAL NONPROFIT PARTNER** of our department, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation advances a compelling mission and an unwavering purpose — the sense and sentiment that taking care of our lands, waters, fish, wildlife and parks matters to us all, now and forever.

Since its launch more than 25 years ago, the foundation's stated vision has embodied, and amplified, a pretty fundamental notion — that all Texans will have access to the wild things and wild places in our state for generations to come.

In the conservation space — and arguably the public and political ones, too — it is the rarest of the proverbial big tents still left standing. It is a space that transcends party and politics, city and town, ideology and demography, profession and person.

Within its supporters can be found private rights advocates and public lands defenders, big-game hunters and big-list bird watchers, ardent nature enthusiasts and economic developers, big-city dwellers and rural ranchers, and progressive leaners and conservative thinkers. Pick your label, and you'll find someone there among them.

What really counts to those who have embraced the foundation over the years is a deep and abiding concern for this place we call home. Quite simply, its calling speaks to the very heart of who we are as Texans and what we love about our home ground and the people and places and fish and wildlife that occupy it.

Over the years, the organization's impact has been both generational in scope and expansive in scale. Thanks to the power of philanthropy originally imagined by both Governors Bill Clements (see Page 48) and Ann Richards, who played roles in launching it, the foundation has quietly attracted and harnessed a deep spirit of generosity among its many supporters. The commonality is found in those who still believe that wildness matters deeply to Texas and to Texans, that untold riches and rewards exist for kids in experiences within nature, that parks should be acquired for a growing public, and that private lands must be respected and conserved for their intrinsic natural values, both seen and unseen.

The foundation has more than put its money where its mission is, funding worthy conservation and recreation projects that likely otherwise would have sat idle were

it not for the considerable passions of supporters. With programs such as getting more kids and families into nature, expanding the state park and wildlife management area systems, rebuilding oyster reefs along the coast, restoring pronghorn antelope in Trans-Pecos grasslands, helping “gear up” our game wardens and combating aquatic invasives, the foundation has invested mightily and purposefully in things that matter to outdoor enthusiasts.

As the foundation looks forward to its next 25 years of both doing “well” and doing “good” for conservation, it has launched a new public awareness campaign: “We Will Not Be Tamed.” In partnership with a host of other well-known and iconic Texas brands, the foundation will encourage all Texans to appreciate the wildness of our state, the vastness of our spirit and the will to conserve what makes our state so special. Featuring the stories of a diverse collection of outdoor enthusiasts who cherish their time afield paddling in kayaks or casting fly rods, chasing quail or hiking and biking the trails, this campaign will bring to life many of the reasons not only to enjoy the outdoors, but to invest in conserving them as well.

So, as you peruse the pages following this one, taking in stories and pictures about bass tournaments and Bill Clements, Llano and Lockhart, Palo Duro Canyon and old movie sets, I also hope you'll take time to read Karen Blizzard's excellent piece on the foundation called “For the Love of Texas” (Page 42). Whether your family has been here for generations or you just arrived here last year, I think you'll find that you, too, can help us love Texas.

Thanks for caring about our wild things and wild places. They need you now more than ever.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT:

*To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*






# We will not be Tamed



TPWF



TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE FOUNDATION is raising awareness and encouraging all Texans to get involved in conserving the wild things and wild places of our state. "We Will Not Be Tamed" calls you to appreciate the wildness of Texas, the vastness of our Texas spirit and why we should be inspired to conserve it.

Join us at [WeWillNotBeTamed.org](http://WeWillNotBeTamed.org)

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PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES

## THE TRICKSTER

I had to smile as I read Dale Weisman’s article on urban coyotes (“Wild in the ‘Hood,” March 2018).

It brought to mind something a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife biologist said in closing his talk on predator “control” at a range management workshop many years ago.

After describing the futile efforts to “control” the coyote population on a large Rolling Plains ranch, he said, “My vision of the last day of Earth’s existence is of a coyote lying under a mesquite tree eating a cockroach.” The urbanization of coyotes makes his vision seem prescient.

**JIM CONYERS**  
 San Saba

### COME AND TAKE IT

This 86-year-old proud Tejano Marine veteran sincerely appreciated the great piece of writing by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers in the January/February issue (“Game Warden’s Gonzales”).

I learned something about a historic event — namely, that the wording “Come and take it!” originated in Gonzales. Just about every day I come across a photo of the beautiful black and white flag that highlights the cannon and the now-famous words.

Also, the now-retired public servant Glen Sachtleben should one day be featured in a book giving him historical coverage for all of us to read and enjoy. Gracias for his service!

**MOSES SALDAÑA**  
 Austin

### CANOE RACE LIKE NO OTHER

Just a suggestion for a story: the Texas Water Safari boat race. This is the oldest extreme sports event now at 55 years old.

It’s 260 miles nonstop from San Marcos to Seadrift — San Marcos and Guadalupe rivers, nine dams, logjams, rapids, no sleep!

I’ve entered about 20 times. This is a truly Texas-style event. No other state does a canoe race of this type.

**JOE HUNT**  
 Montalba

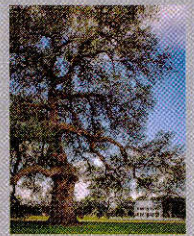
### Texas Parks & Wildlife responds:

Great idea! We were thinking the same thing. Look for a story on the Texas Water Safari in our June issue as part of our Year of Epic Texas Challenges.

**CORRECTION:** In March’s story on Guadalupe bass, we misstated TPWD’s partner in fish restoration efforts on the upper Guadalupe River. It was the Upper Guadalupe River Authority, not the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority.

## WHERE IN TEXAS?

Our readers know their history — and their trees. They knew that the tree featured in March’s *Where in Texas?* is the Sam Houston



Oak, also known as the Runaway Scrape Oak, outside Gonzales.

In the dark times after the 1836 fall of the Alamo, Gen. Sam Houston ordered that Gonzales be evacuated and burned. Soldiers and settlers fled east in the Runaway Scrape, and Houston and his soldiers set up their first encampment under this centuries-old live oak.

Reader Paul Barner stopped by to see the tree recently when he visited Palmetto State Park.

The historic 1840s McClure-Braches House tipped off some readers.

Reader Walter Stubbs lived in the house, a former stagecoach stop, with relatives during World War II. A water well near the big oak is “where we took our baths in a number two washtub, using lye soap, every Saturday night, year-round. Brrrr!”

Tommie Ann Mudd Knesek “couldn’t believe it” when she saw the photo. Her dad and his family farmed the land and experienced a few ghostly occurrences, including phantom horses and rattling chains, at the house.

Find this month’s *Where in Texas?* on Page 58.



# TPWD Creates Prosecutor of the Year Honor

**TEXAS GAME WARDENS** can spend months investigating and building cases against lawbreakers who shoot endangered whooping cranes, poach white-tailed deer or dump polluting chemicals in waterways, but it takes working partnerships with local

prosecutors to bring violators to justice.

A new award created by TPWD aims to formally recognize a courtroom champion each year for exemplary efforts in prosecuting fish, wildlife, water safety, natural resource, cultural resource or environmental

crimes in Texas. Nominees may include any prosecutor at the county, district, state or federal level whose action occurred during the previous two calendar years.

Find nomination forms, due May 15, at [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov).

# Historic Port Isabel Lighthouse Reopens

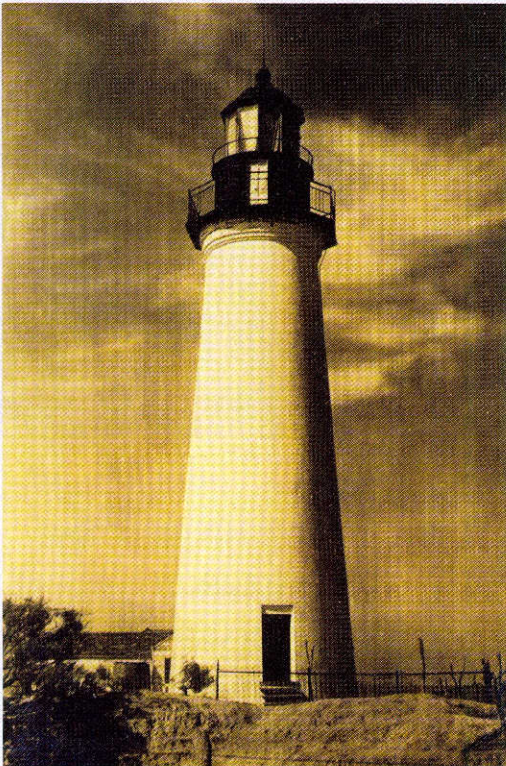


PHOTO COURTESY OF PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE

**STANDING TALL** in a plaza overlooking the Lower Laguna Madre, the historic 72-foot Port Isabel Lighthouse is reopening its doors to visitors after much-needed repairs closed the site to the public in early 2016.

"As the only accessible lighthouse in Texas, we are very excited to reopen the historic Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site and give it back to the people of Port Isabel and Texas," says Brent Leisure, director of Texas state parks.

Repairs included the replacement of the exterior hand railings, stucco repair, painting, repair of three casement windows, replacement of a glass panel on the lantern, new wood doors at the lantern level, repair of a roof leak and the repainting of the exposed exterior iron surfaces at the watch room level.

Lit for the first time in 1853, the lighthouse spent the next seven

years guiding American, European and Mexican ships to the blossoming Brazos Santiago port. During the Civil War, the lighthouse was used as a lookout for both Union and Confederate forces.

The Texas State Parks Board acquired the property in 1950, and the lighthouse was opened to the public in 1952. Since then, generations of Texans have climbed to the top of the lighthouse to enjoy the view of the Gulf of Mexico.

For more information visit [tpwd.texas.gov/portisabellighthouse](http://tpwd.texas.gov/portisabellighthouse).

## RADIO

Passport to Texas is your guide to the great Texas outdoors. Any time you tune in, you'll remember why you love Texas. Go to [www.passporttotexas.org](http://www.passporttotexas.org) to find a station near you that airs the series.



## ON TV

An enterprising Austin photographer has turned a trailer into a giant camera. Watch the week of April 8-14.

Winner of 30 Emmy Awards, our television series is broadcast throughout Texas on local PBS affiliates. In stereo with closed captions. [www.tpwd.texas.gov/tv](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/tv)

**APRIL 1-7:**  
Hunting dog competition; swift fox research; relaxing South Llano River State Park.

**APRIL 8-14:**  
The trailer camera; training canine wardens; Valley birds; grasslands sunset.

**APRIL 15-21:**  
Coastal crabbing; Fulton harbor; Martin Creek Lake; traveling photographer; wet wardens.

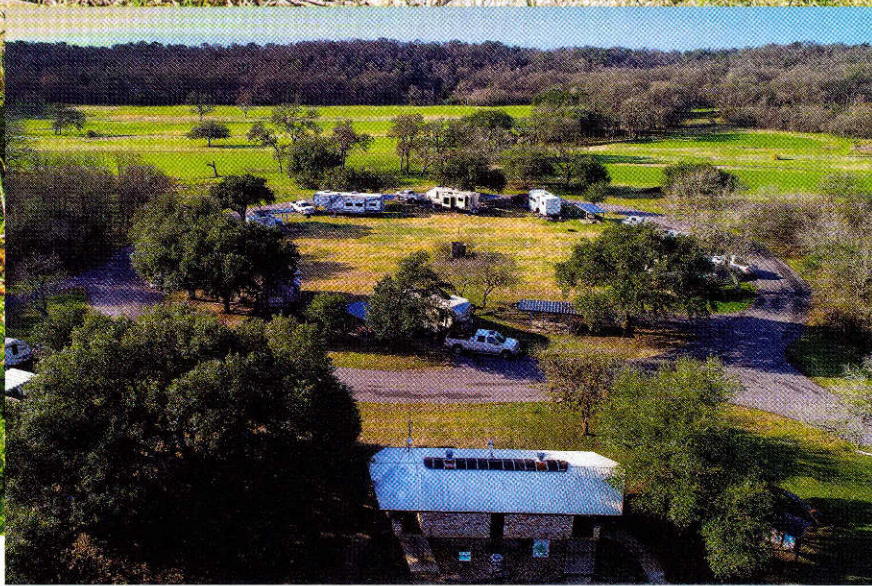
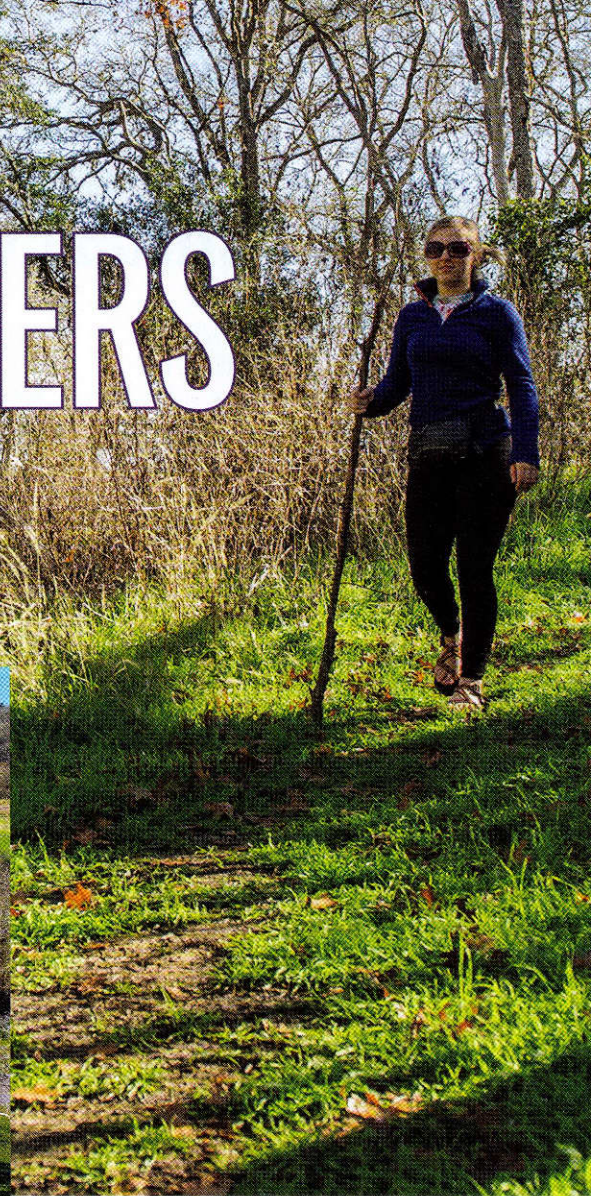
**APRIL 22-28:**  
Radio birds; shotgun tips; monarch roost; invertebrate biologist; traveling turkeys.

**APRIL 29-MAY 5:**  
Sea Center stocking; Sea Rim State Park; Dixon Water Foundation; tree stand safety.





# TIME TRAVELERS



*Indulge in daydreams of days past at uncrowded Lockhart State Park.*

**BY LAUREN HARTWICK**



PHOTOS BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

**“HELLO, AND WELCOME TO YEAR ZERO!”**

I shout out to the gaggle of students and their entourage, rubbing my chilly hands together to warm them. This home-school history class has come to Lockhart State Park to learn about the past, so we’re traveling back in time together.

We start with the Native Americans who lived on the land long ago. To understand their ways of surviving, we





When I ask visitors what makes Lockhart State Park special, they tell me that it's more than the golf course and swimming pool, or even the natural beauty. As the home-school class discovered, the friendly ghosts of the past enhance your visit. Try visiting midweek fall through spring to have lots of space to let your imagination run wild.

Imagine swimming in the old CCC-built pool in the 1950s or swaying on the dance terrace to a 1960s popular tune. Think of special occasions celebrated in the Recreation Hall, or the last spot you

camped before the kids started leaving for college.

Maybe you have a secret spot at the park that holds special meaning for you. For me it's the scenic overlook, because this is where I chose to marry. History happens in special places, and memories are made there, too.

Travel one mile south of Lockhart on U.S. Highway 183 to FM 20; turn southwest on FM 20 for two miles, then continue one mile south on Park Road 10. For information, call (512) 398-3479 or visit [tpwd.texas.gov/lockhart](http://tpwd.texas.gov/lockhart). ★

take aim at a foam model of a bison with atlatls and darts, then head up the Hilltop Trail to search for edible plants. Here, we stage a mock re-enactment of the Battle of Plum Creek, a conflict between Native Americans and Texans that occurred near the park in 1840.

By the time we reach the Creekview Trail, we've come back to the 20th century to hear the story of Civilian Conservation Corps Company 3803, which built Lockhart State Park during the 1930s. We spot several CCC-built remnants along the trail. It's been almost 80 years since the men in the CCC left the area, but you can still see their legacy in the unique features that remain in the park, a short drive southeast of Austin.

Lockhart State Park boasts the only state-run golf course in Texas, built during the New Deal. It's also one of the few state parks with a swimming pool, as well as great camping, hiking and fishing.

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# STICK FIGURE

PHOTO © ABBOTT NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

*No worries — lackadaisical giant walkingsticks don't care to bite you.*

BY BEN HUTCHINS

Texas is home to a number of really big “bugs” like giant redheaded centipedes, goliath beetles, giant swallowtail butterflies — even giant water bugs that can catch and eat small fish. Not surprisingly, Texas is also the best place to see the nation’s longest insect.

Although individuals may reach 7 inches in length, the giant walkingstick can be surprisingly well hidden. Leaf insects and stick insects like the giant walkingstick are famous for their spectacular camouflage. Especially in the tropics, some of these amazing insects take camouflage to the next level, mimicking leaf-covered branches or lichen-covered twigs. Our giant walkingstick not only looks like a piece of vegetation but mimics one in movement, too, gently swaying from side to side to blend in with nearby leaves and twigs waving in the breeze.

This strange appearance and peculiar movement may have given rise to the myth that giant walkingsticks are highly venomous. In reality, the giant walkingstick is not venomous; it’s not even known to bite.

Indeed, there is no better example of a gentle giant: They don’t scratch, sting or pinch, although their ability to autotomize legs (a defensive behavior where a leg pops off) can be disconcerting.

Autotomy isn’t the only unusual behavior exhibited by giant walkingsticks. Like many stick and leaf insects, giant walkingsticks are capable of parthenogenetic reproduction. What’s that? Unmated female walkingsticks can produce viable, female offspring on their own — no males required.

Males and females do mate, but, unlike many insects, males do not appear to compete for females, and females do not appear to be choosy about males. Indeed, one researcher suggested that mating among giant walkingsticks occurs on a “first-find, first-mate” basis. What giant walkingsticks lack in passion, however, they make up for with endurance; pairs have been observed mating for more than 60 consecutive hours.

Giant walkingsticks seemingly have a lackadaisical outlook on life. They rarely fight, and don’t fly, jump, run or make sound. Losing a leg or two is apparently no big deal. Females lay eggs randomly, letting them fall to the ground, where they remain until hatching the following year — no adult supervision required.

Giant walkingsticks are not even picky eaters, and they have been found on a variety of trees and shrubs including

## COMMON NAME

*Giant walkingstick*

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Megaphasma denticrus*

## HABITAT

*Varied species of trees and shrubs.*

## DIET

*Leaves of trees, grapevines and tall grasses.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

*The largest walking stick ever reported is a whopping 22-inch-long specimen from Borneo.*

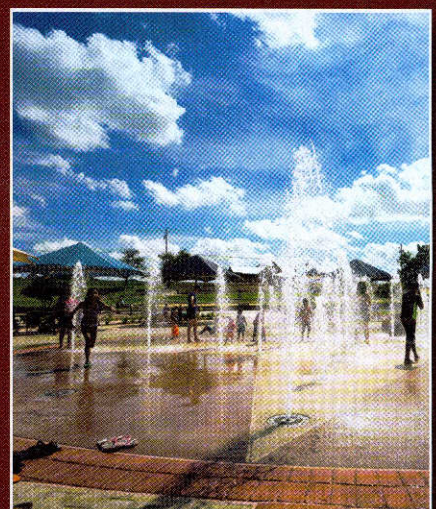
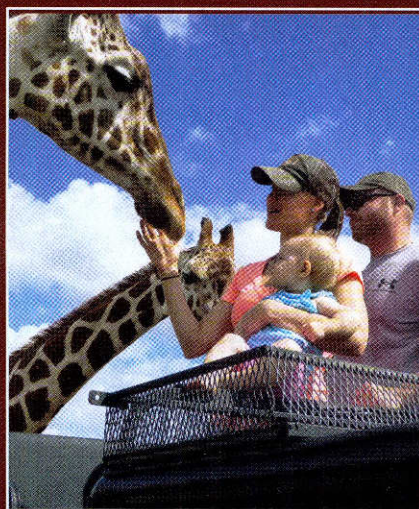
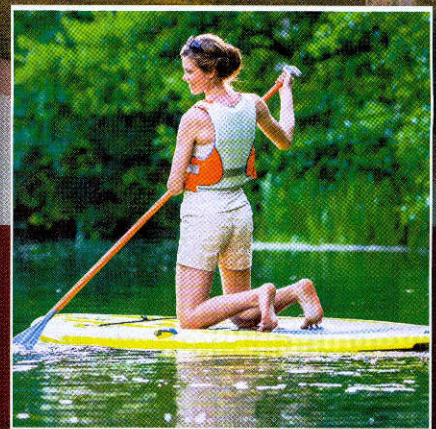
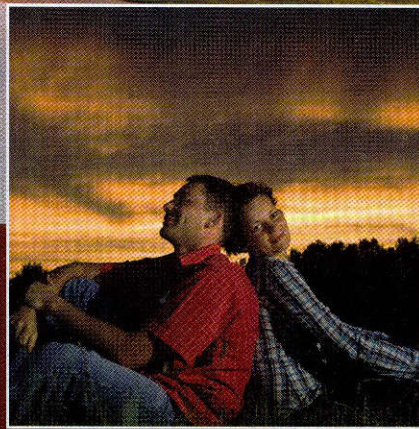
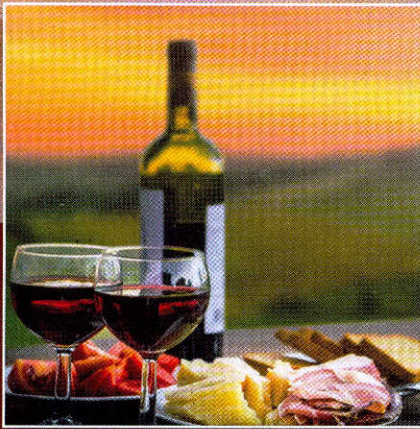
mesquite, hackberry, oak, elm, juniper and grapevines.

Home is never far away for the giant walkingstick. Part of the species’ charm may very well be its untroubled demeanor. These giants of the insect world are as alien in appearance as any creature in Texas, but they prefer to fade into the background and not cause a commotion. ★



# Retreat. Relax.

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The River Trail on the Guadalupe River  
runs through historic downtown  
with paddle board, kayak and  
bike rentals available along the trail.



After a childhood of meticulously colored tree drawings — brown bark, green leaves, blue sky — the first paloverde tree I saw turned my idea of trees upside-down. Here was a mid-sized tree with standard green leaves and lush yellow flowers with red flecks, but something was off about the color of the bark: bright yellow-green.

# GOING GREEN

*When rain stops, paloverde trees drop their leaves and photosynthesize through their bark.*



## COMMON NAME

Paloverde

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Parkinsonia aculeata*,  
*Parkinsonia texana*

## SIZE

Texas paloverde can reach a height of 25 feet. Jerusalem thorn can grow to 36 feet.

## DID YOU KNOW?

This good neighbor's roots can take nitrogen and convert it into fertilizer for nearby plants.

BY EVA FREDERICK



After a few years and additional research, the iconic Southwestern tree's green bark made a lot more sense to me. Paloverde is Spanish for "green stick," and the tree's surprising bark is not just for decoration — it's part of what makes the paloverde so suited to harsh Texas heat.

Paloverde trees are drought-deciduous. They drop their leaves in times of water stress but continue to turn sunlight and water into sugar with their bark. The green color tells us that there's lots of chlorophyll in the bark for photosynthesis.

One product of photosynthesis is oxygen, which plants release in exchange for carbon dioxide.

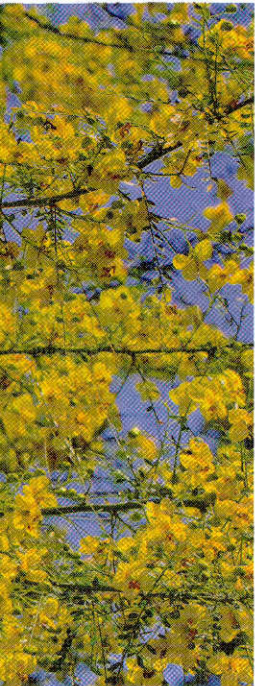
This exchange is done through tiny pores on the plant's leaves, called stomata. Stomata also release water in a process called transpiration.

Transpiration serves several purposes. It keeps a steady flow of water moving through the plant — as if the water's being sucked through a straw. The evaporating water cools the plant and keeps leaves from overheating.

However, in times of severe drought, losing water vapor through holes in leaves is less than ideal. To prevent this, paloverde trees drop their tiny leaves and survive with the help of those unusual green trunks.



Texas has two main types of paloverde: **Texas (border) paloverde** and **Jerusalem thorn** (or retama). These delicate plants can be seen in much of South and Central Texas.

When paloverde trees bloom, they look like bright yellow puffs of smoke, and those flowers are edible — usually eaten raw in salads or candied for desserts. Paloverde trees are members of the legume family and produce edible beans, which can be eaten raw or cooked in savory dishes. ★



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# THE AGE OF IMAGES

*Today, it's not just how you take a photo, it's how you use it.*

BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

**WHILE WE USUALLY THINK** of photography trends as the latest cameras and lenses, today it's not so much about the equipment but the ways in which we use our images.

Photography has traditionally been used as a creative endeavor, producing images intended for walls, photo albums and publications. However, in recent years, the art of photography has morphed into something much broader.

Capturing images is now a routine part of daily life because of the expansion — no, the explosion — of

social media and messaging platforms, the de facto methods of communication today to interact with friends, family and society in general. It's no surprise, therefore, that the exponential use of photography (and video) in social media and other messaging platforms represents one of the greatest current trends in photography.





## SOCIAL MEDIA

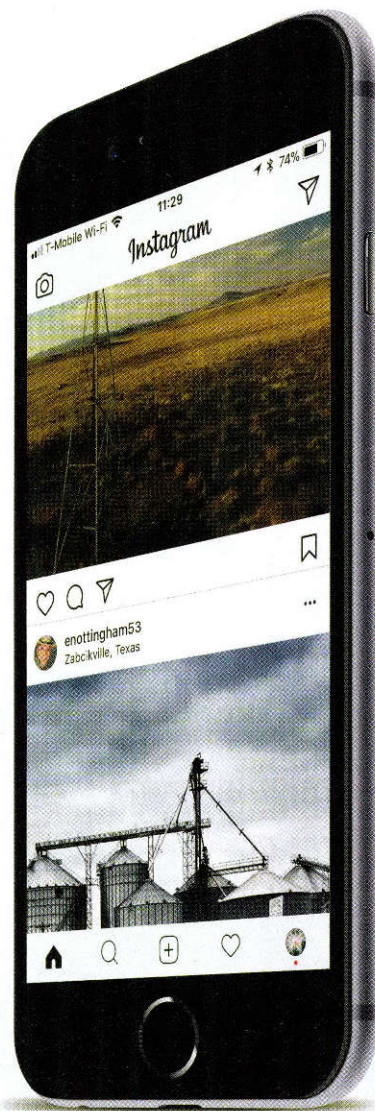
As the quality and ease of use of newer cameras and smartphones increase, so does the ability to quickly upload high-quality photos and video to the internet. Wireless connectivity allows images to go straight from camera to web; smartphone users can send images directly from their phone to any number of social media platforms with just a couple of taps. Some apps allow for posting to multiple social sites and even let you schedule the optimum times to post.

## STORYTELLING

In the past few years, the word "storytelling" has become commonplace vernacular in the journalism and social media worlds. Vlogs (video blogs) and live video posts enable individuals and groups to tell stories and engage viewers visually instead of through traditional text. New social media platforms for storytelling allow anyone to easily publish a visual journal or diary from the field in real time. As a result, the advent of this type of first-person "citizen" journalism can offer a fresh perspective that's different from traditional methods of print or broadcast journalism.

## CREATIVE OPTIONS

For the creative photographer or videographer, there are a plethora of apps available to re-create traditional photo "looks" or to manipulate the aesthetics of an image in an infinite number of ways, ranging from elegant to cheesy. Shooting, editing and delivering high-quality video is easier thanks to both native camera





apps and third-party apps. Be forewarned that while photographers and artists have always been able to manipulate images, the ease in which a digital image can be "enhanced" can raise ethical questions about an image's reality.

## VIDEO

Video's already bright future is being enhanced by easier-to-use cameras along with better low-light sensors, creative software and more video-oriented social media platforms, combined with an increasingly visually literate population. Video production value is increased by factors such as better sound quality and camera stabilization. ★



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Please send questions and comments to Earl at [earl.nottingham@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:earl.nottingham@tpwd.texas.gov).  
For more tips on outdoor photography, visit the magazine's photography page  
at [www.tpwmagazine.com/photography](http://www.tpwmagazine.com/photography).





## ROCK HEAVEN

*Llano's geology and wildflowers provide a stunning backdrop for spring getaways.*

BY JOHN H. OSTDICK  
PHOTOS BY CHASE FOUNTAIN



Binky Morgan sits in Juice Mammias, a juice and health shop she owns with several other Llano women. Local historical postcards, part of a collection she's been amassing since she was 20, are scattered about our table.

### HOUSTON

3.75 hours

### DALLAS

3.5 hours

### EL PASO

7.25 hours

### SAN ANTONIO

2 hours

### BROWNSVILLE

6 hours

### LUBBOCK

4.75 hours

As my host shares insights into her Hill Country home, I sip "Green Juice" (blended veggie-fruit-herb bliss) and munch on no-dairy creamed broccoli soup and gluten-free crackers.

Morgan, sixth-generation Llano County on both sides of her family, recalls visiting this North Historical Business District building as a child with her father. A large weighing scale in the renovated stamped-tin, high-ceilinged structure is a nod to its agricultural past.

Like many of Llano's young adults, Morgan "got out of here as soon as I could, thinking there is so much more of the world out there." And, like quite

a few of those who wander away, she's returned to the town of 3,500-plus.

"Locals say that Llano (*LAN-oh*) gets its native people back," she says. "We came back about 14 years ago. We really discovered there wasn't any other place more wonderful, more beautiful than my native land."

Llano's charms start with the area's abundant natural beauty.

The Llano Uplift, a roughly circular geologic dome of Precambrian rock, primarily granite, covers about 50 miles along Texas Highway 29 and was 1.5 billion years in the making. Call it Rock Heaven: Geologists



identify 241 rocks and minerals in Llano County, including llanite, a blue-specked dark granite found nowhere else in the world. (The bar top in the historical 1891 Badu House, a recently renovated dining/live music venue, is the world's largest assembly of polished llanite.)

At Enchanted Rocks and Jewelry on Llano's town square, proprietor Frank Rowell offers valuable insights on Llano's rich geology and the river's best rock-hunting spots (because everything gets washed there eventually).

"The Llano River is such a gem," Morgan says. "It's the second-cleanest in Texas, behind Devils River."

Morgan's husband, Ron Anderson, who has joined us. "Sometimes, when the artists pull their hands away and a rock doesn't hold, the crowd will moan."

As April arrives, Morgan is most likely taking her grandkids to the river — at one of the three in-town parks with river access, or at The Slab, along FM 3404 in Kingsland.

The Slab's low-water crossing has about a 2-mile expanse of public access. Over time, the Llano has carved channels into the broad riverbed and created tiny islands with sandy beaches. As the weather warms, locals head out on "Slab Road" to laze, picnic and swim.

intersection of U.S. Highway 290, go east to Johnson City, then follow U.S. Highway 281 to Marble Falls and on to Burnet. From Burnet, travel Highway 29 back to Llano. That's about 155 miles, almost three hours if you don't stop to take a photo — as if that's going to happen.

On this Sunday late afternoon, however, I seek another kind of scenery.

I pull into Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que during a lunch-dinner lull. Smoke billows from sheltered steel pits beyond a sign reading "Caution: Hot Pit." Savory aromas rush to greet me.

A young man opens a large serving



## FEATURED ATTRACTIONS (LEFT - RIGHT):

- ★ Binky Morgan at Juice Mammias
- ★ Llano welcomes hunters as the Deer Capital of Texas
- ★ Guitars line the wall at the Texas Music Depot
- ★ The Lantex Theater

Morgan spends much of her year planning the Llano Earth Art Fest and World Rock Stacking Championship, during which far-flung "rock stars" gather to stack river rocks in gravity-defying designs.

The March events are held in Grenwedge Park. While amateurs toil on dry land, the rock stars work the middle of the river, harvesting stones for their magic. "Hundreds of people sit on the river banks," says

Spring also ushers in wildflower explosions. Bluebonnets. Indian paintbrushes. Buttercups. Llano and Burnet counties share an "Official Bluebonnet Co-Capital of Texas" title. (Hunters also know Llano well as the "Deer Capital of Texas," as the county has more deer per acre than anywhere else in the state.)

"We'll be among those driving around looking at wildflowers," Morgan says. "We take the grandkids camping at my family's first ranch; the bluebonnets will be thick. And we like to drive the Willow City Loop."

Seeking full immersion? Try this: From Llano, take Texas Highway 16 south and turn left onto the Willow City Loop for a leisurely 13-mile stretch past hills painted with wildflowers. When you reach FM 1323, turn right and head into Willow City. Reconnect with Highway 16 and enjoy the scenery into Fredericksburg. At the

pit brimming with meats separated into trays. At my behest, he cuts off a healthy sampling of jalapeño sausage, brisket, chicken and two pork ribs (the highly esteemed beef ribs are sold out) and piles it onto a butcher-paper-covered tray. Inside, each meat is sliced to my preference. I add some of Cooper's delicious jalapeño mac-and-cheese and scoop up free beans and sauce from a dining room station. Long wooden tables are amply supplied with paper towel rolls, loaves of sliced Butter Krust white bread, bottles of squeezable margarine, tubs of pickles, ketchup and hot sauce — and people, heads down, intently gnawing on the 'cue.

I take my bounty back to Perry's Cottage at Mustard Seed Bed and Breakfast for a front-porch-rocking-chair sampling, stowing the rest in the cottage fridge for later.

Famed barbecue hound and Texas writer John Morthland once wrote





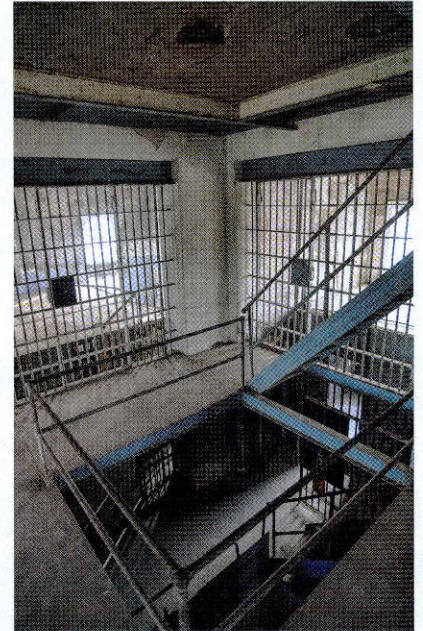
*Clockwise from top left: The 1936 Inks Bridge crosses the Llano River north of downtown Llano; The "Red Top" Jail is being restored by a local friends group. Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que serves up a variety of smoked meats; Joaquin Cortez's sand sculptures adorn the grounds of the "Red Top" Jail and can be seen at the Llano Earth Art Fest.*

that "in barbecue terms, Llano is where the West begins," noting barbecue was prepared here basically the way cowboys cooked. The Texas barbecue landscape has changed significantly since those 1992 observations, but Llano retains its unique spot on the map.

Inman's Kitchen Bar-B-Q and Catering, a stone's throw from Cooper's, has ardent local fans and a

hunter following. Walk past branded apparel ("We've Been Smoking the Good Stuff Since 1972") below an army of mounted trophy heads peering from above, and sample its celebrated turkey sausage (cased fresh, then barbecued), served with all the fixings.

As evening settles, I turn my attention to Inks Bridge, a 1936 truss connecting Llano's two halves, looming nearby. Locals hail sunrises



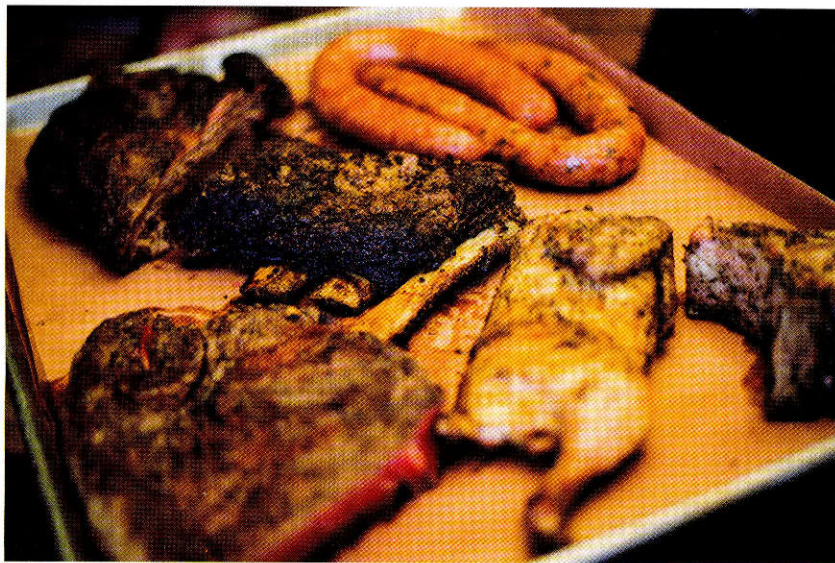
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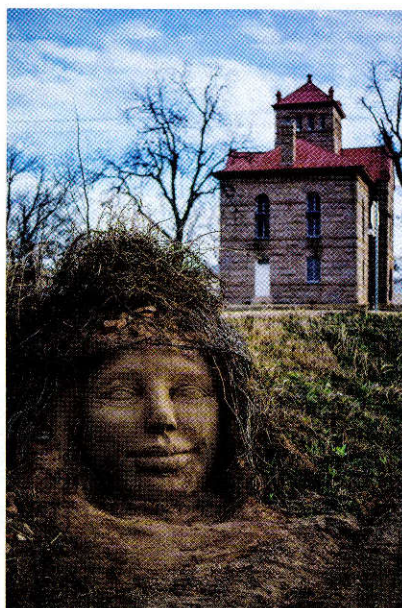
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and sunsets witnessed from its pedestrian walkways.

Gazing up from my stoop, the sky is all black and vivid sparkles. The stars at night are particularly big and bright here, and Llano has taken measures to reduce light pollution.

Llano, Mason and Fredericksburg have created a regional partnership to protect their dark skies.

"We like to set up a telescope, but on a clear night the view is incredible even without one," Anderson told me earlier.

Nearby Enchanted Rock State Natural Area is one of a handful of state parks to achieve dark-sky designation from the International Dark-Sky Association.

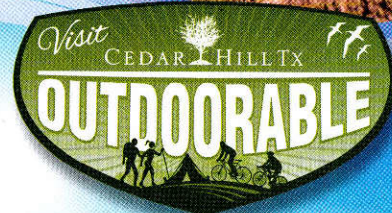
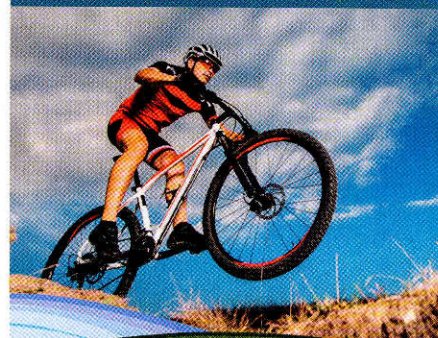
Enchanted Rock can prompt some

lively local conversation, as both Llano and Gillespie counties claim the 640-acre, 425-foot-high pink granite dome rising above Central Texas as their own. Truth be told, the 1,640-plus-acre state natural area, which features some of the oldest exposed rock in North America, straddles the two counties.

"Don't you dare say that. Them's fighting words," Morgan warns me the next day, laughing. "The entrance may be in Gillespie County, but ask anybody in Llano and they'll be quick to note that 'the Rock' itself resides in Llano County. We definitely claim it."

The next day, the town's historic preservation officer, Terry "Tex" Toler, lets me inside the "Red Top" Jail, built from pink granite in 1895 and

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operational until 1982. A local friends group is restoring the Romanesque Revival-style structure, which over the years suffered severe foundation problems. (The 1893-constructed Llano County Courthouse is another wonderful example of the style.)

Our boots scuffle on the four-story building's metal stairway. A pale light filters through its windows, casting deep shadows. On the second floor, Toler pulls on a large metal lever next to a closed cell door. A startling, resounding boom announces the cell secure.

"Sounds like something from *Shawshank Redemption*, doesn't it?" he asks.

Tour completed, I poke around the stores in town.

At the well-regarded Junk Sisters, a collectibles store stocked full of the quaint and quirky, Ken Cline stands behind the counter, sorting invoices.

The former Burlington Northern Railroad Chicago terminal manager retired to Llano years ago (he remains a railroad consultant).

When the previous junk shop owner decided to close up shop, Cline purchased it in August.

At Cline's urging, I head across Bessemer Street, where Fredericksburg-Austin transplant Gary Cox and his sister, Keri Miller, recently started the Texas Music Depot in a green building Cline owns. The structure's exterior shape hints at its original purpose, a Texaco station that closed in 1953.

The bearded, gimme-capped Cox monitors a lesson in progress as he explains how he was a traveling musician who sold instruments online for years before starting the shop in 2017. He hosts live music on his covered patio Wednesday evenings and a free local musicians' potluck lunch and songfest on Sunday afternoons.

Llano has a lively, broad musical culture. I check out a Texas Hill Country Chamber Orchestra concert at the restored Lantex Theater on the square. The Lantex, built in 1927, is one of the few remaining single-

screen theaters showing new and classic film releases.

The theater has undergone technical upgrades and had its glowing neon sign restored and remounted last year through a Main Street grant. Llano has been a part of the national Main Street program since 2003. Its facade program has been integral in helping strip the 1960s-era slip covers off Main Street storefronts, restoring them to their original condition.

Besides weekly movie showings, on the second Saturday of every month, the 400-person-capacity Lantex hosts the Heart of Texas Country Music Association's Llano Country Opry. The theater also hosts the annual Llano Fiddle Fest the first weekend in April, which attracts fiddlers of all ages.

I've not begun to dig up *all* of the Llano treasures that keep Morgan and other reformed expats returning to the fold, but I leave knowing where to find them when I come back. ★

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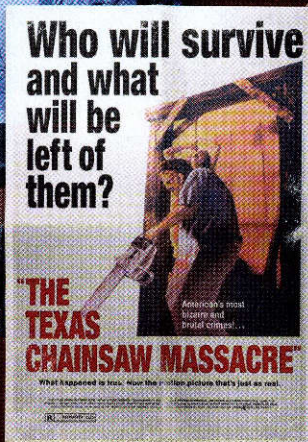
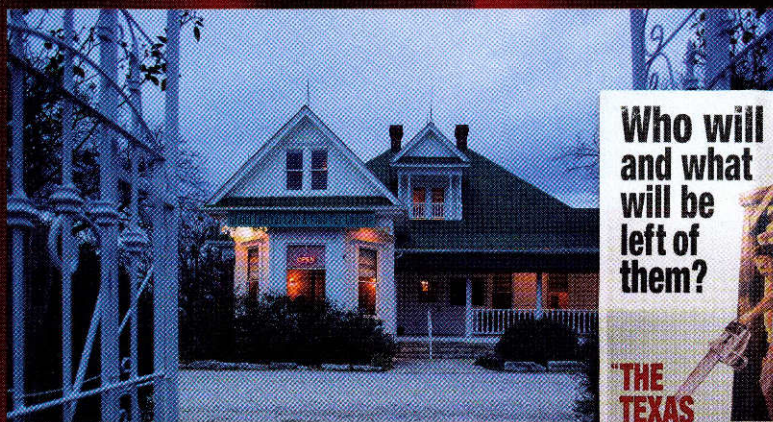
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## TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (1974)

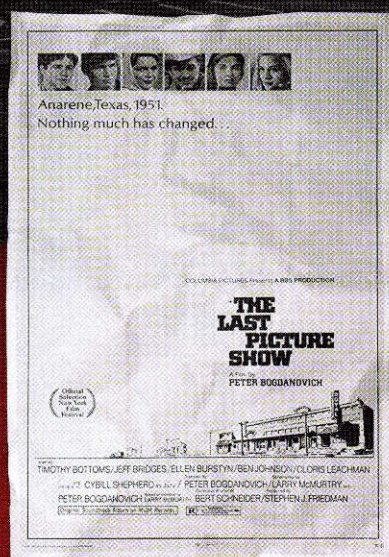
KINGSLAND

Always wanted to eat in the same room as a family of cannibals? Then the Grand Central Cafe in Kingsland (near Lake LB) is just the place for you. Reinvented as a fine-dining establishment, the instantly recognizable farmhouse was built in 1909 and includes the infamous dining room from the original 1974 *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, a horror film inspired by serial killer Ed Gein.



OLD MOVIE SETS ARE SCATTERED  
ACROSS THE LONE STAR STATE

by Kayla Meyertons  
photos by Earl Nottingham

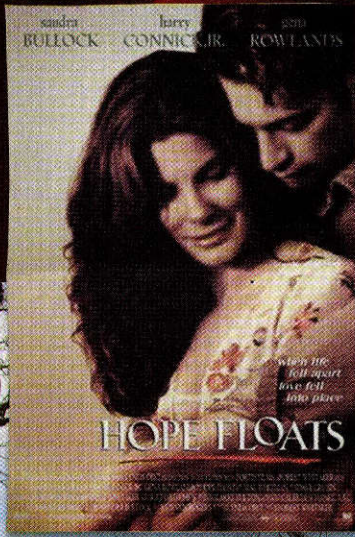


## THE LAST PICTURE SHOW (1971)

ARCHER CITY

Archer City's iconic Royal Theater burned in 1965 but was rebuilt as an exterior set for the Academy Award-winning 1971 film *The Last Picture Show*, starring Cybill Shepherd and Jeff Bridges, and the sequel, *Texasville*. Interiors were shot in a theater in nearby Olney. The theater was fully rebuilt in 2000 and serves as an arts center in this North Texas town.

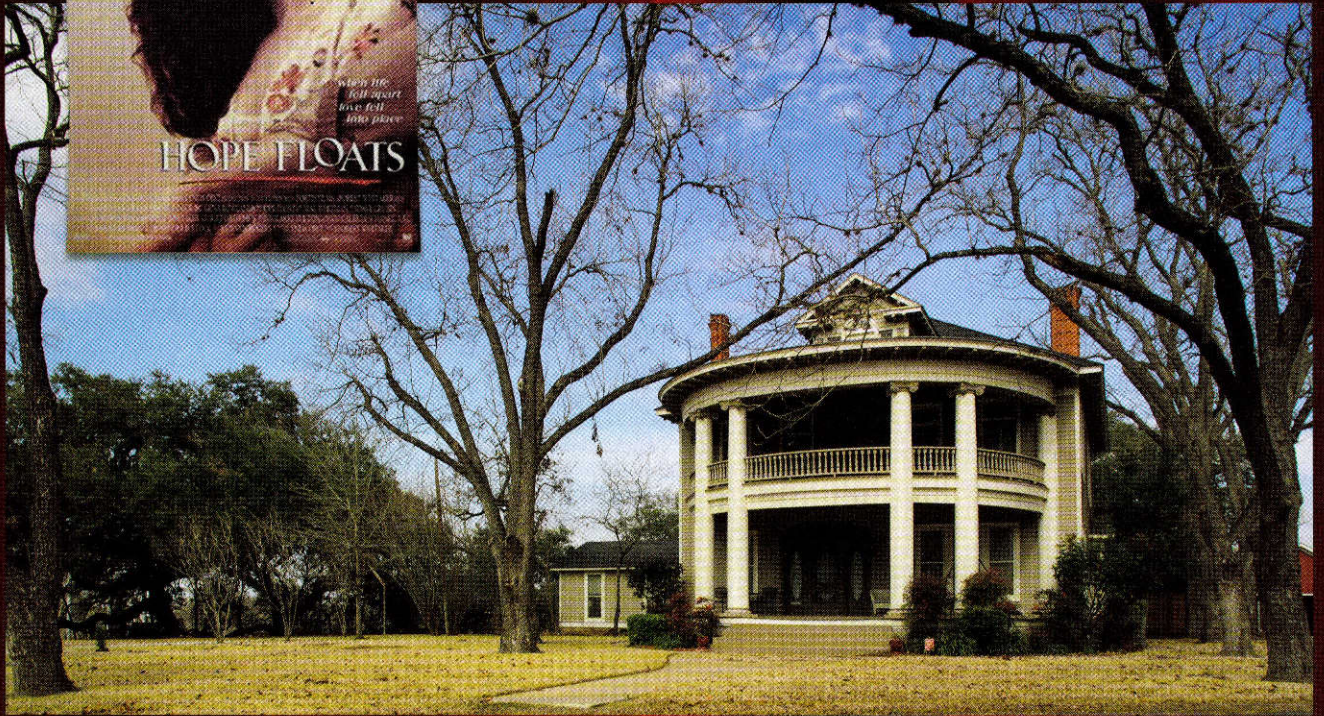




## HOPE FLOATS (1998)

### SMITHVILLE

Built in 1908, the McCollum-Chapman-Trousdale House is familiar to fans as the main house in the Sandra Bullock 1998 romantic drama. Visitors can tour the neoclassical-style residence in Smithville, where they'll also find the façade for Honey's Diner, a restaurant front created specifically for *Hope Floats*.



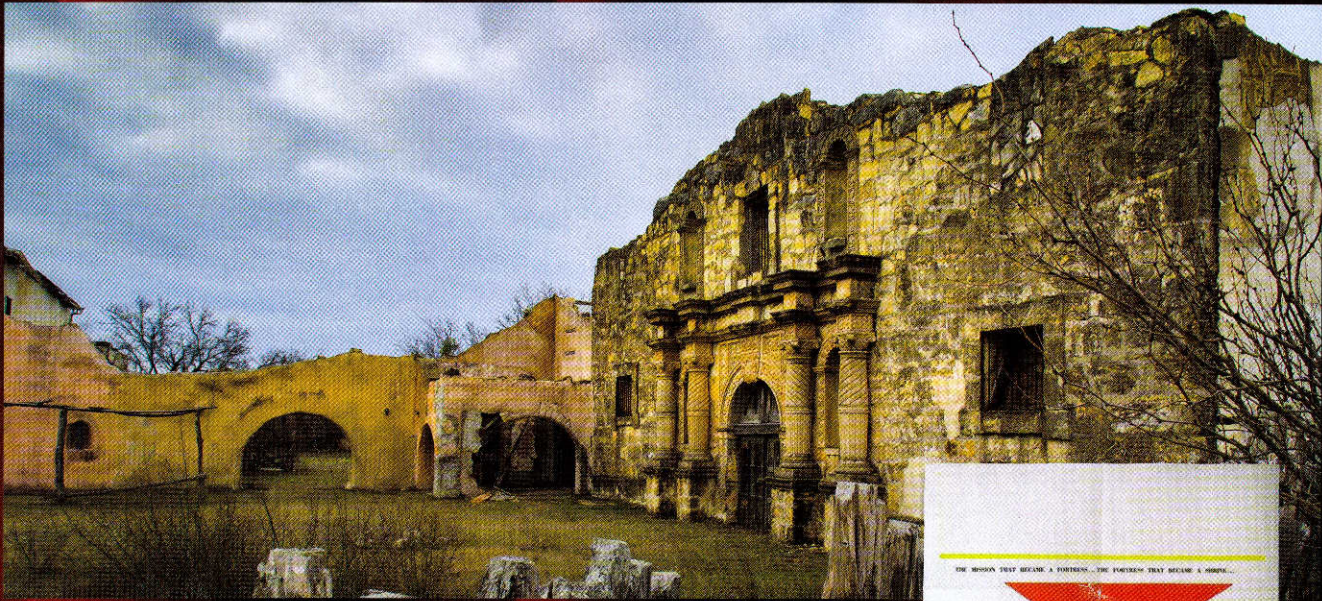
## TRUE GRIT (2010)

### GRANGER

Granger's 100-foot-wide Davilla Street was paved with red bricks in 1912, only to be covered with a layer of dirt for the 19th-century movie set used for the remake of *True Grit*. When production ended, all the dirt and, well, grit was sucked back up, and movie stars Hailee Steinfeld, Matt Damon and Jeff Bridges headed home, leaving the quiet Central Texas brick road to return to normal.

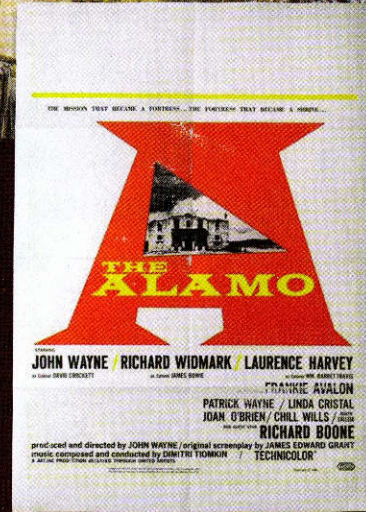






## THE ALAMO (1960) BRACKETTVILLE

Director John Wayne used this 400-acre plot of land in Brackettville, west of San Antonio, to create a replica Alamo village for the Oscar-nominated 1960 Western, *The Alamo*. James Tullis "Happy" Shahan constructed this first movie set built in Texas; dozens of movies and TV shows have been filmed there since its creation. The Alamo set includes a full-scale replica of the mission, plus a cantina, trading post, jail and blacksmith shop. It was closed to the public in 2010.





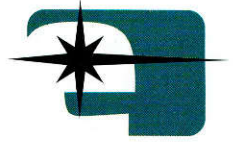
# The Texas State Bass Tournament keeps the spirit of competition alive.

Story and Photography  
by Randy Brudnicki

A photograph of two anglers in a small motorboat on a large body of water. The anglers are wearing light blue shirts and are actively fishing. The background shows a shoreline with trees and a wooden dock structure. The overall scene is calm and scenic.

# ANGLER





In 1955, Earl Golding, outdoors editor for the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, invited fellow writers and various characters and cohorts to what turned out to be a well-attended bass fishing challenge. It was likely the very first Texas bass tournament of this type and magnitude.

Word spread quickly. So many people contacted Golding wanting to join in that he changed the format to an open bass fishing tournament. Could this epic event be the longest continuously held bass tournament in Texas? Likely.

What makes an event “epic” worthy? Perhaps it’s a combination of elements such as a storied history, unpredictable weather, venue vagaries and a high level of fierce competition.

The Texas State Bass Tournament embodies all of that and more. Part competition, part family gathering and part angler fellowship, the Texas State Bass Tournament has kept the man vs. fish vs. man challenge alive for 63 years.

“It is a rewarding weekend, low cost and very competitive,” says tournament director Sam Scroggins. “It’s fun for the family.”

Fishing is — by its nature — competitive, and bass anglers are particularly passionate. As early as the 1930s, a group of Washington state bass anglers began to meet at noon Saturdays, contribute to a pot of money and fish for 24 hours. The lucky guy who caught the biggest fish took all the money home on Sunday. These may have been the earliest bass tournaments.

At the Texas State Bass Tournament, anglers vie for bragging rights and trophies — no prize money here. (The winning high school two-person team takes home scholarships, though.)

The tournament divisions include adult/boy, adult/girl, senior team, high school team, adult team and individual. Anglers from age 8 to 80 compete.

# VS. FISH



## BRING ON THE EPIC WEATHER

The first day of competition last April on Toledo Bend Reservoir, where the tournament's been held for the last five years and 31 times overall, started out in what many consider ideal bass-catching conditions: calm water with cloudy, overcast skies and aggressive, biting fish. By mid-morning, the weather turned bad. Extreme winds made boating dangerous, and a torrential rain slashed down sideways, making it nearly impossible to stay dry. The temperature dropped dramatically as well, adding to the challenge.

"We got off the water by 11 a.m. on day one because of the storms," says Kenney Sherrell, who won the adult/boy division with his son, Weldon. The pair threw buzzbaits and other top-water baits. "We had a limit by 7 a.m. that weighed 14.1 pounds. After the rain let up a little we went back out but didn't catch any more."

Eleven-year-old Skylar Iversen didn't let being drenched by the storm faze her at all, as she and her grandfather, Mike Knight, took first place in the adult/girl division. Knight has participated a dozen times with his boys, but this was the first time with his granddaughter.



"We caught about 14 total fish on Saturday; eight were keepers," he says. "We caught some solid fish, but did not get a kicker. We caught the fish on spinner baits, frogs and Senkos."

In tournament-speak, a "kicker" is a fish larger than the others in the bag limit. For example, four fish might weigh 2 to 3 pounds each, and a kicker could weigh 5 pounds or more. In most bass tournaments, it takes a kicker or two to propel you up the leaderboard.

High school teams fish for just one day, so their awards start after their weigh-in on Saturday afternoon. Braden Clifton and Holden Lott finished first among high school teams and placed third overall in team competition. These young guns caught fish by using top-water lures and by punching hay grass mats. Their 5.43-pound "kicker" made the difference in the win over the second-place high school team.

Their kicker fish was caught on a Strike King Rage Tail Space Monkey bait from a tackle pack of free baits from event sponsors. This bait can be very effective, but the technique used is what sets it apart: "punching."

Punching is a technique used to penetrate thick clumps of aquatic vegetation that form a nearly impenetrable mat or a dense canopy of green or dead plants above the fish. Normal presentations of lures will not pierce through the mat to where the bass can be found. Anglers put a heavy weight (1 to 4 ounces) on their line above and pegged against a hook rigged with a compact plastic bait. The weight is thrown hard onto the matted vegetation, so it penetrates or "punches" through. Anglers let it fall until it makes contact with the lake bottom under the canopy, a very effective tactic at times.







Top row (L-R): Tournament contestants receive a tackle pack from sponsors; the parking lot at one of the boat ramps fills up with trucks and trailers. Second row (L-R): Volunteers help keep the tournament on track; these octogenarians have been fishing the event for decades; a granddaughter/grandfather win their division; these student anglers take first in the high school division; newlyweds fish as a couple for the first time. Bottom row (L-R): Fin & Feather Resort serves as the host facility; a catered meal feeds the anglers and their families; everyone is having a good time — even when cold and wet; an 8-year-old participates with his father.



## SORTING OUT THE TERMS

Bass anglers have a vocabulary of strange names for their lures.

The high school team fished “top-water” — using lures that float on the surface. Usually when bass are hitting on top, a variety of sizes, styles and brands can be effective.

A spinner bait is a wire-framed lure shaped much like a safety pin. It has a blade on the top wire and a hook on the bottom wire.

A frog is a hollow plastic lure, which may or may not resemble the shape of a frog. It floats on the surface, and the hooks are close to the body, so the lure comes through vegetation such as matted weeds without snagging up. When a bass bites down, the plastic collapses, exposing the hooks to catch in the bass’s mouth.

A Senko is the most nondescript plastic bait you may ever see. Liquid plastisol is injected into a mold that’s shaped almost like a Bic pen, which the inventor claims was his source of inspiration for the design. It does catch fish.

## SUNDAY BRINGS SUNSHINE

Saturday’s storm front was the first time in 20 years that weather played such a pivotal role in the competition. Sunday brought calmer, sunnier and warmer conditions, as late April’s changeable weather can often do.

*The 2018 Texas State Bass Tournament will be held April 28 – 29.*

For all divisions except high school, it’s a two-day tournament. Friday night before the next day’s competition, anglers register at the Fin & Feather Resort pavilion, where participants get tackle packs and their boat number, used to identify themselves when checking in for the weigh-in on tournament days.

The anglers are allowed to begin fishing at 6 a.m. both days. Some participants navigate to their fishing spot in the dark so they are ready to make the first cast on their preferred spot at that precise moment. There’s a staggered weigh-in time (with mandatory punctual check-in) based on division.

All fish are kept alive in a livewell in the boat and transferred to a large plastic bag full of water to take to the weighing area. After the fish are weighed, they’re released back into the lake.

“I’ve been fishing all my life and this lake [Toledo Bend] since a year after it opened,” says sixth-place team finisher and 50-year participant Leonard Watson of Fort Worth, who’s competed with his son, now 52, for 12 years. “I do it because I like the competitive feel of it — because I’m a competitive person.”

The Sunday awards ceremony first honors anglers in the Texas State Bass Tournament Hall of Fame (introduced in 1998), new inductees and anglers who passed away, then hands out the winners’ plaques and trophies. The adult/boy, adult/girl, individual and senior divisions award five places, and the highly competitive team and couples divisions award 15–20 places, so there are lots of winners.

In recognition of its honored place in Texas fishing, the Texas State Bass Tournament was inducted into the Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in 2016. Find out more about the tournament at [texasstatebass.com](http://texasstatebass.com).

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*Randy Brudnicki is the publisher of Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine and an avid bass fisherman.*



*Bass boats are equipped with a livewell to keep fish alive.*

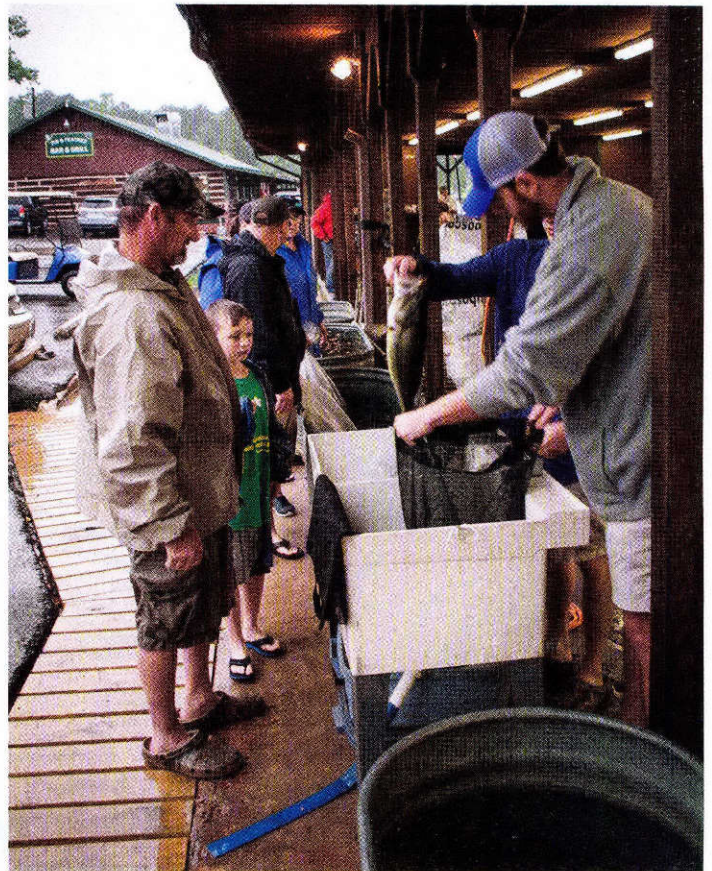


*Bass are transferred to a mesh bag before being placed on the scale.*

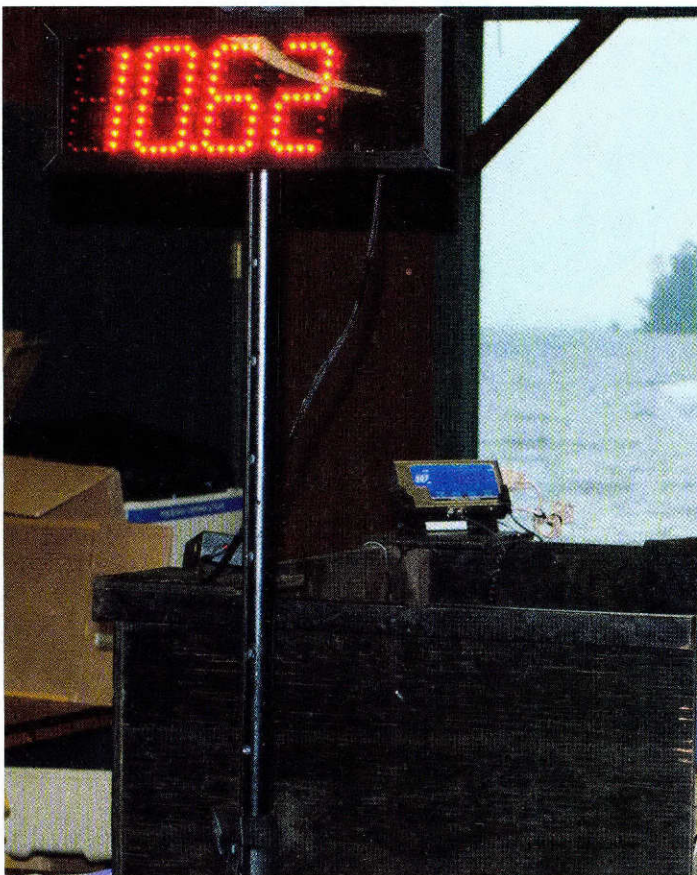




*Live bass are carried to the weigh-in area in water-filled bags.*



*The anglers' bass are checked for length and mortality.*



*The bass are quickly weighed and moved to a holding tank.*

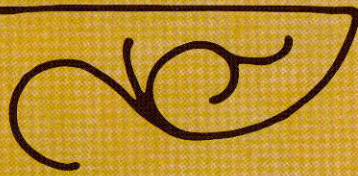


*Bass are released from the holding tank to the lake.*



UNDISCOVERED

# PAL DURO



BY RUSSELL ROE

with photos by Laurence Parent

**Exploring the  
park's hidden  
corners reveals  
wild slot  
canyons and  
hoodoos.**









**A**t sunrise on a cold December day, we set off on a quest to find one of the little-known treasures of Palo Duro Canyon — a series of narrow slot canyons — somewhere deep in the backcountry of the state park.

After stepping out of our cars, our guide Bary Nusz leads us straight up the side of a 600-foot mesa covered in loose rocks. We struggle to gain our footing — suffering from an inefficient two-steps-forward-one-step-back method of ascent. In little time, we're scared, scraped up and gasping for breath. Bary calmly waits for us to catch up. Why isn't he breathing hard?

As we'll come to find out, he's full of surprises, and so are the canyons and mesas we've come to explore. Thankfully, Bary and Palo Duro Canyon are willing to share their secrets.

Most people who visit Palo Duro Canyon State Park take in the big views, pitch a tent, watch the musical *Texas* and head down the trail to the Lighthouse, the park's signature formation. That's what I had done in my visits to the park. But those who are willing to further explore the park will find that it contains slot canyons, box canyons, caves, big boulders, hoodoos, scenic mesa tops, giant junipers and other natural and cultural wonders. That's what we've come to explore — the lesser-known side of Palo Duro.

I'm joined by photographer Laurence Parent and a few friends:

Jim MacKay and Peter and Elizabeth Comer. Laurence is a super-hiker, Jim is a hard-core bike commuter and the Comers are ultra-marathoners. Bary, though, with his black leather hat, Santa Claus beard, extra-tall hiking pole and gleam in his eye, is the only one who seems to have expended no energy on our ascent up this mesa.

One section requires us to climb a short section of sandstone rock. Elizabeth isn't so sure about it after watching us. "Are we coming back this way?" she asks. "Don't tell me. I don't want to know."

The narrow canyons, called slot canyons, we hope to visit are similar to those found in remote areas of northern Arizona and southern Utah. The Palo Duro slots have been visited by very few people because of the difficulty in reaching them.

"The guy who found these slots thought they looked like slots he'd seen in Utah," Bary says, "so we call them the Utah Slots."

Once on top of the mesa, we hike across a vast, almost featureless



expanse, populated by grasses, cactuses and mesquites. Finally, a side canyon reveals itself. How Bary got here is a wonder of navigation.

As we work our way down a creekbed, we get a glimpse of the first slot — a long, deep gash in the Trujillo sandstone layer of the park.

Water has carved this deep, sinuous canyon only a couple of feet wide and 20 feet deep. We climb down into it, able to touch both sides of the canyon walls at the same time.

Amazing patterns of reflected light change the undulating canyon walls from purple to gray to orange. We *ooh* and *ahh* and *wow* our way through the narrow hallway of rock, pausing often to take in as much as we can of this natural wonder.

Downstream from the first slot is a second slot. Approached from the bottom, it envelops us in a rock corridor created by time and water. Sunlight filtering in from the lower portion of the slot creates a warm glow.

This is the first destination in our treks to the hidden treasures of Palo Duro, and we've already hit the jackpot.

After returning to the main part of the park, Bary suggests a visit to Red Star Ridge, a hoodoo about a mile's hike down a trail. Red Star's capstone protects the softer mudstone beneath it, forming a pillar. These pillars, or hoodoos, are scattered throughout Palo Duro. Red Star, perched on a ridge, proves to be an exceptionally nice one, enhanced by the presence of a miniature version of itself nearby.

Bary, a Renaissance man from nearby Amarillo who offered to show us around the park, loves remote places and extreme nature. He's a tornado chaser, with a hail-pockmarked car full of camera mounts to record twisters and big thunderstorms. He's a software developer, creating programs to count cattle in feedlots using his drone. Bary's a backcountry hiker and photographer. He's also a fencing instructor.

Palo Duro Canyon is one of his special places.

People have lived in the canyon, the second largest in the U.S., for 12,000 years. The rocks tell an older story, representing a time span of

**Left:** Bary Nusz likes exploring the hidden corners of Palo Duro. **Right:** Elizabeth Comer checks out a rock fissure.

240 million years. In more recent centuries, the canyon was a stronghold for the Apache, Kiowa and Comanche tribes. When the Native Americans were gone, rancher Charles Goodnight and his longhorn cattle moved in.

The State of Texas bought land for a state park in 1933, and the federal Civilian Conservation Corps came in to build cabins, trails and the park road. The National Park Service considered Palo Duro for national park status, envisioning it and the surrounding territory as a "National Park of the Plains," but land acquisition proved troublesome.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park occupied 16,000 acres for much of its existence. Since the turn of the 21st century, however, the acquisitions of the Cañoncita and Harrell Ranch properties have increased the park's area to 28,000 acres.

The new territory protects the site of the 1874 Battle of Palo Duro Canyon, an event of great importance in Texas history.

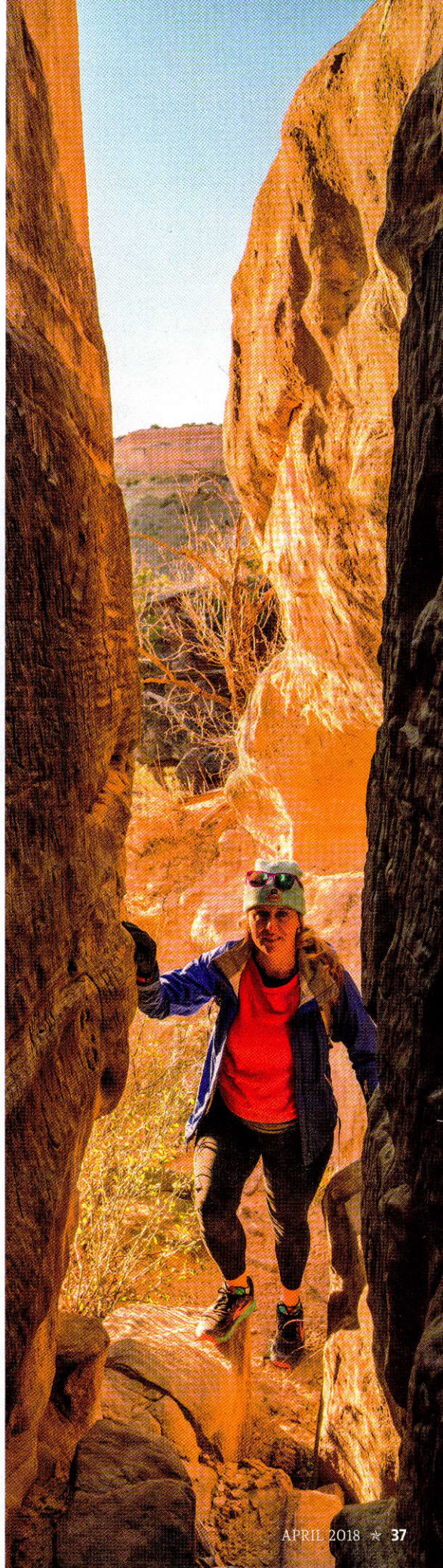
It also incorporates a big chunk of North Cita Canyon and part of South Cita Canyon — dramatic offshoots of Palo Duro Canyon — and provides a route to access them, something the park had been missing. The state park system hopes to eventually open public access to those canyons, and when it does, they are destined to be some of the premier backcountry destinations in Texas state parks.

Visit [tpwd.texas.gov/palodurocanyon](http://tpwd.texas.gov/palodurocanyon) for information on trails and safe hiking.

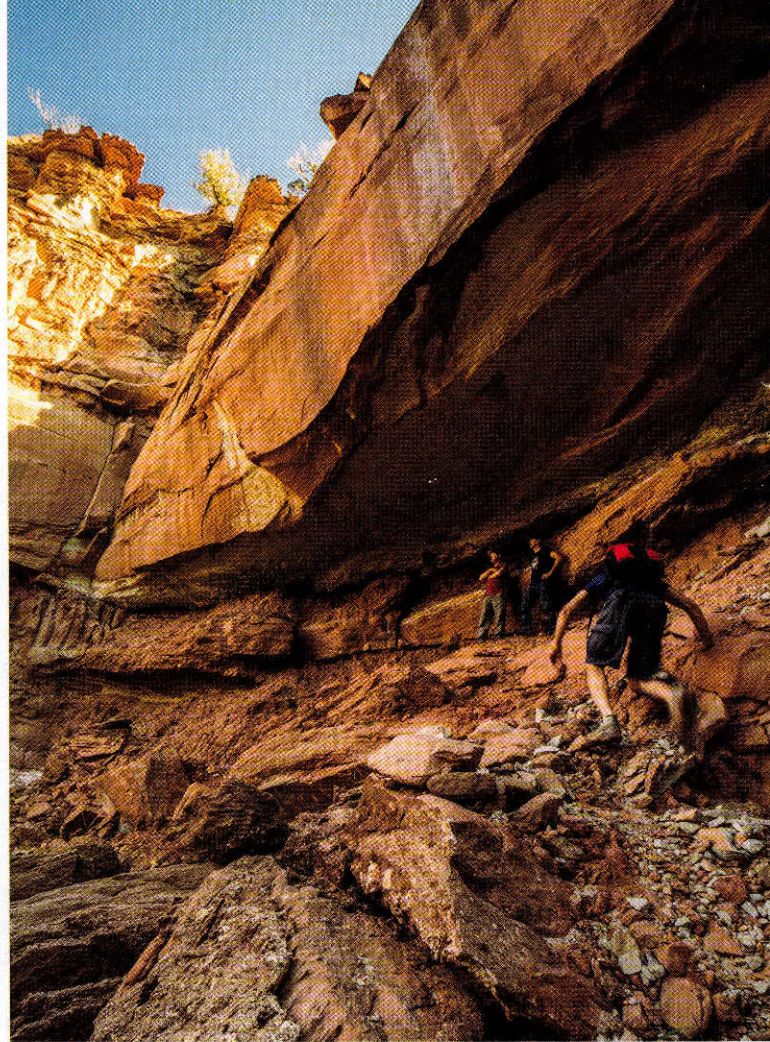
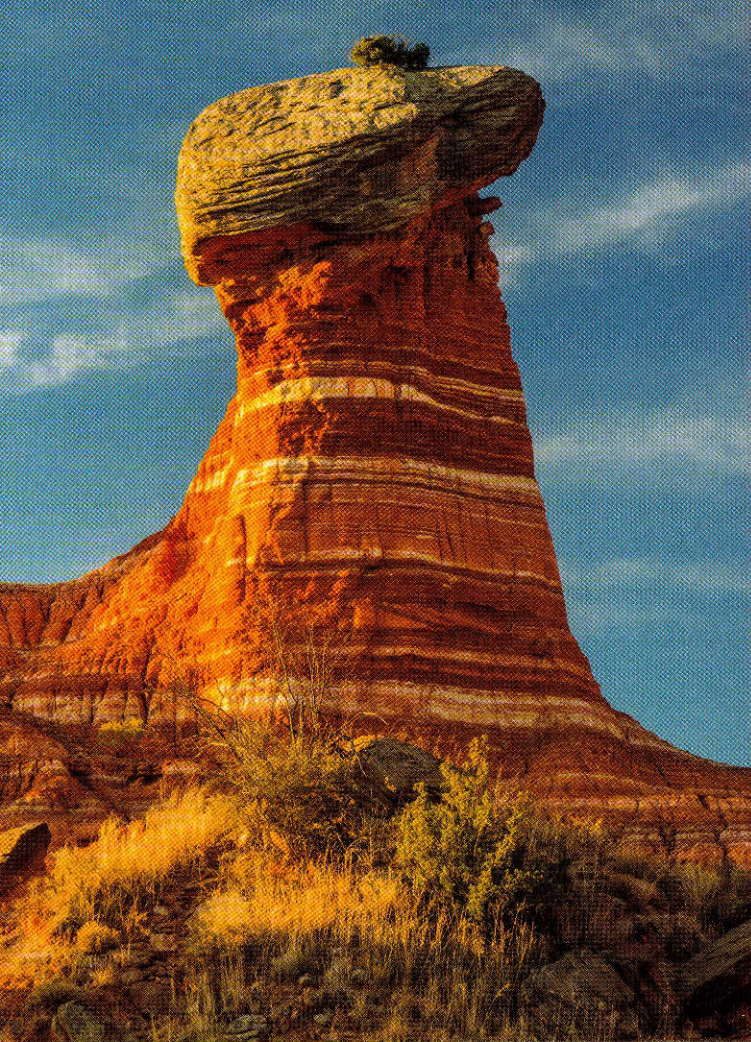
### CANYONS, CAVES AND PICTOGRAPHS

Palo Duro Canyon stands out as the most striking, spectacular and unexpected feature of the Panhandle.

"There are so many beautiful areas here — you just have to get out and walk to them," Erik Buzzard says as we hike up to Sorenson Peak, a prominent outcrop of rock high above the Hackberry Campground, on our second day in the park.







**Above:** The hoodoo known as Red Star Ridge reflects the late-afternoon light. Hikers reach the overhang found at the head of Red Canyon.

Trail runners Buzzard and Phillip Schmidt and mountain biker Chris Podzemny have joined us for the day's explorations. The morning's itinerary involves a hike up Sorenson Peak, a walk over to a slot in an adjacent canyon and then a descent down the Burnt Draw creekbed. As always, some surprises are in store along the way.

We huff and puff our way to the top of Sorenson Peak, able to see our breath in the frosty air of the morning. From the top of Sorenson, the rising sun illuminates the vast canyon below and brings out its vivid colors — the deep reds of the Quartermaster layer, the yellows and lavenders of the Tecovas formation and the reddish-gray of the Trujillo and Ogallala formations.

Artist Georgia O'Keeffe called Palo Duro "a burning, seething cauldron,

filled with dramatic light and color."

This morning's sunrise certainly lives up to that.

After taking in the view, we hike over to a small slot canyon carved in the rock at the top of Burnt Draw. It's not as deep or extensive as the slots from the previous day, but it's still an interesting geological feature. It ends abruptly into a pour-off chute into the canyon below that makes a dramatic 50-foot waterfall when it rains.

On the canyon floor below, we come across a grove of Rocky Mountain junipers, soaring dozens of feet into the air with trunks several feet thick. These are the trees that give Palo Duro ("hard wood") its name. Trees this big — a rarity in an arid land of mesquites and grasses — indicate a regular source of water, and we find water frozen into ice in shallow puddles.

We spend several minutes walking down the creekbed before we encounter an unexpected development. The creek disappears into a cave. Chris has gone ahead of

us, and we hear his voice echoing out from darkness inside.

Luckily, I have my headlamp with me, so we decide, with a little nervousness, to see where the cave takes us. After ducking our heads to enter, we find we can stand in the cave with no problem, and we walk the 50 feet to the exit, where we have to crawl to get out the small opening. Well, that was fun!

We reach a point where the creekbed crosses Comanche Trail, and Chris points out some of his handiwork on this rediscovered old CCC trail on the eastern side of the park. Runners and mountain bikers have been the driving forces in creating an extensive trail network that provides some of the best mountain biking in the state.

Chris decides to take us to a little-known rock etching left by CCC workers 80 years ago. Just a stone's throw from one of the park's main campgrounds, on a band of rock about 20 feet off the ground, CCC



workers inscribed “U.S. VETERANS, 1934” in block letters into the sandstone, marking the year Palo Duro became a state park.

We’ve already seen a lot, and the day is still young.

We next hike out to a set of pictographs and mortar holes left by Native Americans — a reminder of the long, rich history of Native American habitation of the canyon. Apache, Comanche and Kiowa tribes used the canyon’s bountiful resources to thrive here for centuries. The Red River War ended that. The 1874 Battle of Palo Duro Canyon, which occurred just south of us on what is now park property, proved to be the decisive battle. The Native Americans fled up this very canyon. Tub Springs Draw, haunted by the desperate realization that their way of life, the freedom of the plains, was coming to an end.

Our next destination is Red Canyon, a little-visited canyon next to Red Mesa. Bary has told us there’s a double box canyon at the end —

one box canyon above another at the head of the canyon.

Our hike — hopping from rock to rock, glooping through sections of mud and listening to Chris regale us with Palo Duro tales of guns, gold and murder — brings us to a seeming dead end. The steep red rock walls of the box canyon enclose us on three sides, marking the head of the canyon. If there’s another part of the canyon above this, we can’t see it.

Chris decides to find a way up and around, and he reports the existence of a grotto-like canyon above the portion of the canyon we’re in. Intrigued, we follow him up to stare down into the improbable hole, accessible only to birds and the most agile of climbing creatures.

### MESA TOPS AND MISADVENTURES

We had heard about some interesting-looking fissures at the top of Capitol Mesa, and from the top of Sorenson Peak, we saw that the area got good morning light. On our third

day, we decide to hike to the top of the mesa for sunrise.

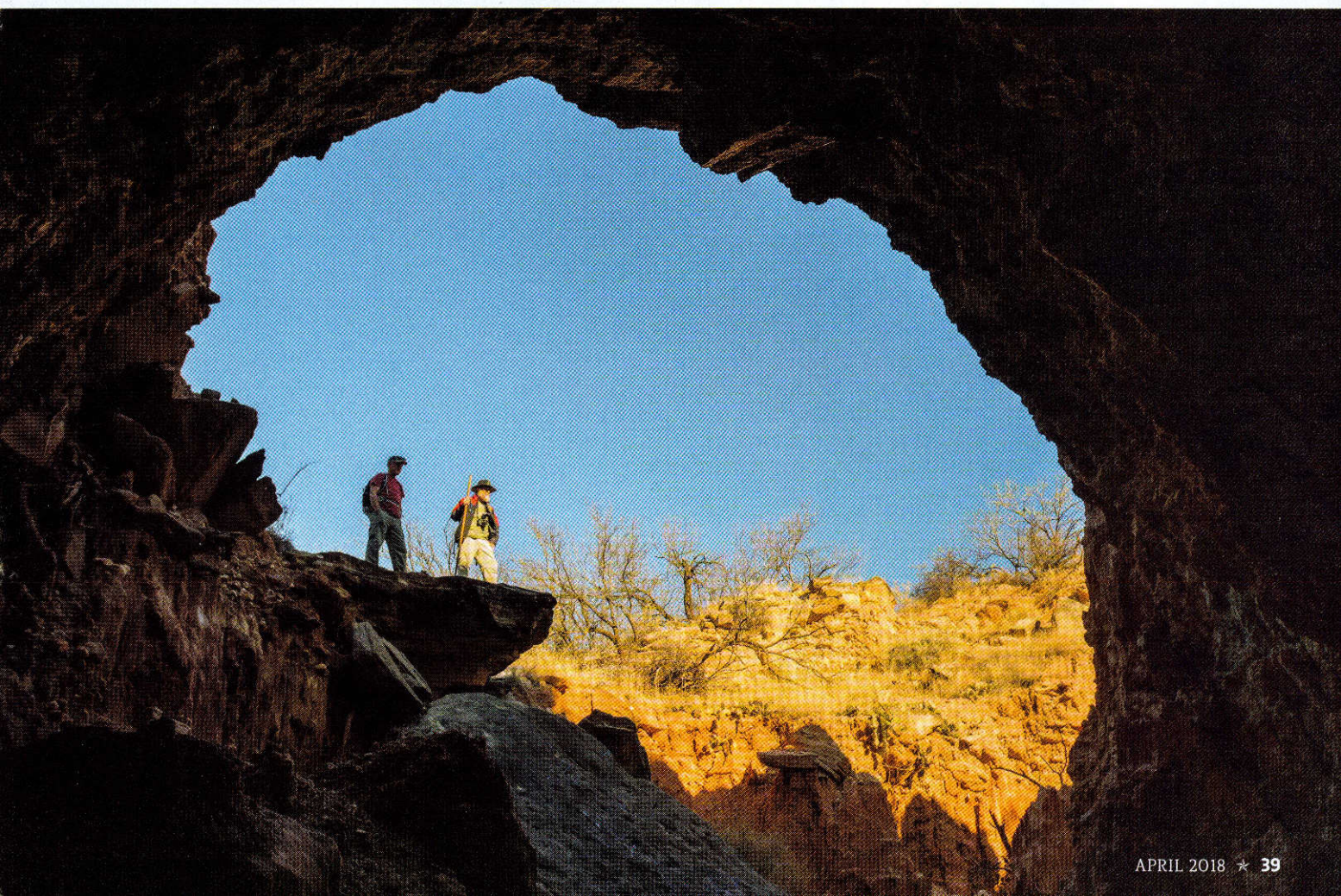
Once on top of the mesa, we walk out to a prominent point where big chunks of incised sandstone create a series of tunnels and fractures. They’re not exactly slot canyons, but the rock hallways offer enjoyable exploration. We work our way through, over and around the fissures as the sun peeks over the horizon. Some of the large cracks are angled just right so the sun comes shining through, bouncing off the walls. Nearby Capitol Peak glows with reds, yellows, oranges and lavenders.

Jim points out how a landslide of the loose Tecovas layer on Capitol Peak has spilled down to cover the Quartermaster layer below, mixing millions of years of geologic time.

“There’s a lot of geology going on here,” he says.

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**Below:** A cave entrance frames hikers at a spot where the creekbed in Burnt Draw suddenly goes underground.









**Left:** Standing on a group of incised sandstone rocks atop Capitol Mesa, Jim MackKay soaks up the sunrise and the multicolored splendor of Palo Duro's Capitol Peak.

**Right:** Author Russell Roe explores a network of fractures and fissures at the top of Capitol Mesa.

The afternoon brings us to what we think will be one of the biggest challenges of our trip — North Spur Draw. The prize is a small slot canyon at the head of the canyon. The problem, as we have noticed from afar, is that the cliff band at the head of the canyon appears to be really steep.

We start our hike up a creekbed but somehow end up in the wrong draw. We decide to go up and over a cactus-filled ridge to get back to the right place.

"It looks like we're making progress," says Jim, pulling multiple cactus spines out of his sock. "Progress without cactus — that's my new motto."

As we get closer, the cliff band at the head of the canyon looks no less steep.

We find a weathered rope hanging down the cliff face, placed there by some enterprising adventurer. We're wary. The rocks crumble in our hands, making any type of climbing a dangerous venture. Using the rope without knowing how it's attached at the top seems foolhardy.

"I like old ropes even less than I like loose rock," Jim says.

Laurence and I pull on the rope as hard as we can, but the chances of us venturing up this cliff are dwindling to zero. It will have to remain The Slot Canyon That Got Away. For now.

Our final night in the park coincides with the peak of the Geminid meteor shower. Jim and I are both Geminis, and we lie in the bed of our pickup like twins, watching meteors streak across the sky — an amazing sight to conclude a trip full of amazing sights.

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*Russell Roe serves as the managing editor and resident outdoor adventurer of Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine.*







**FOR THE**

# **LOVE**

**OF TEXAS**

What can **\$100 million** mean to Texas land and water conservation?

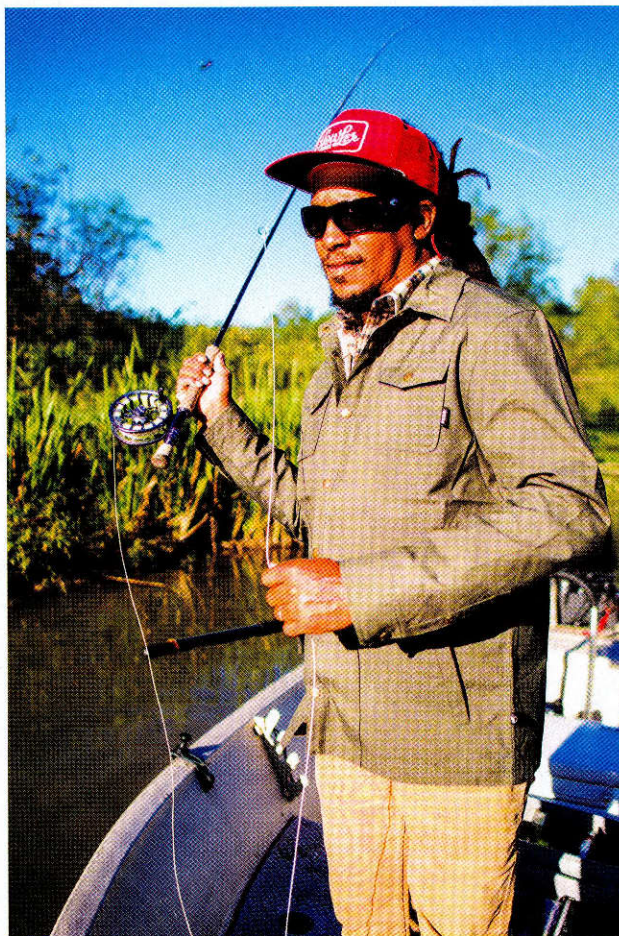
by **Karen Hoffman Blizzard**  
photos by **Jonathan Vail**







It's a misty morning on the lower Colorado River near Austin. Fly-fishing guide Alvin Dedeaux makes a striking figure against the gray backdrop, fly rod in hand, dreadlocks streaming from the back of his red baseball cap.



"I've been fly-fishing since I was a kid," says Dedeaux, who grew up around the Houston bayous. "After moving to Austin in the mid-'80s, I got a canoe, which opened up a whole new world ... miles and miles of water you could never get to otherwise."

A former musician who spent time in nature to counter the stress of concert tours, Dedeaux began exploring the sparkling rivers of the Hill Country. His passion led him to become a professional fly-fishing guide.

In 2016, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department invited Dedeaux to join the Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee, and he got involved with TPWD's Conserving Texas Rivers Initiative, a 10-year partnership with biologists, landowners, the Hill Country Alliance and nonprofit organizations to conserve Hill Country rivers through watershed-scale projects.

Since 2010, the partners in the rivers initiative have restored nearly 10,000 acres of springs, creeks and streamside habitats and improved

the management of over 100,000 acres of ranchland. The state fish of Texas, the Guadalupe bass, has been restored to the South Llano River and reintroduced to the Blanco and San Antonio rivers.

TPWD's rivers initiative receives key support from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, TPWD's nonprofit funding partner. The foundation is wrapping up a fundraising campaign to raise \$100 million for strategic conservation priorities like the rivers initiative, game warden training and coastal conservation. The campaign — the biggest ever undertaken by the group — is funding transformational projects identified by TPWD leadership that support conservation, stewardship and outdoor recreation.

As part of the rivers initiative, TPWD has entered into lease agreements with landowners allowing fishing and nonmotorized boat access to 19 areas along 10 rivers.

"Without access, you can't use the resource," explains Dedeaux, who owns All Water Guides and Alvin

Dedeaux Fly Fishing and serves as an ambassador for Yeti, Howler Brothers and Costa del Mar. "On the Colorado, it used to be a 25-mile trip from Bastrop to Smithville. But now, it's an easy day trip from one of the new access points down to Smithville."

River fishing in the Hill Country generates approximately \$70 million annually, which benefits local communities. Spending time on the river encourages stewardship and conservation of river watersheds. And having the additional access points makes it easier for guides to take people on the river for a few hours at a time.

"You have to get to where all you can hear is the wind and the birds," Dedeaux reflects. "Get some quiet, so you can hear yourself think."

United by a deep passion for the land, the work of Dedeaux and others involves sacrifice, commitment and pride in our Texas heritage. When you do right by the land, you improve the lives of its people. Here are a few more examples of the impact from the foundation's fundraising campaign.



## POWDERHORN RANCH

I'm walking with James and Loretta Brown along the shoreline of Powderhorn Ranch, on Matagorda Bay, where the Browns have managed cattle and recreational hunting since 1996.

The storied past meets the present here, where Karankawa Indians lived 2,000 years ago, and where European colonists settled the land in the 17th through 19th centuries.

I learn that Loretta is a descendant of Mexican empresario Martín De León, who settled Powderhorn and

\$37.7 million — below its commercial value. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation contributed funds received in the wake of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and the foundation led fundraising efforts to raise nearly \$50 million for the total initial cost of the project.

Ownership of Powderhorn dates back to 1834, when Irish immigrant Thomas O'Connor purchased the land through a De León land grant. At that time, European immigrants streamed into Texas through the nearby port

wanted it to go to a conservation purpose, not a commercial one."

TPWF is raising additional funds to restore the native habitat of this coastal treasure. Its 11-mile shoreline, native grasses, oak mottes and wetlands provide shelter for many species of fish and wildlife. The Browns use land restoration practices, such as rotational cattle grazing and fire, to support the overall ecosystem. In the future, Powderhorn will become a wildlife management area and a state park.



the land surrounding it in 1825 following Mexico's independence from Spain. Loretta explains that the pendant hanging from her neck is a symbol of Espiritu de Jesús, Texas' first cattle brand, which De León registered in 1807.

"I think it's destiny," says Loretta. "God gifted us the opportunity to steward a piece of land that was my great-great-great-grandfather's, and we still use his brand on our cattle today."

In 2014, TPWF seized an extraordinary opportunity to purchase 17,351-acre Powderhorn for

of Indianola until it was devastated by a hurricane in 1875. In 1909, the railroad finally reached the area, and a new port was established on the coast and named for O'Connor.

The Denman family bought Powderhorn in 1936 and managed it as a cattle ranch and game preserve for several decades. In 2002, the land was sold to Cumberland & Western Resources LLC, which in turn sold it to the foundation in 2014.

"We were fortunate that the former landowner really cared about conservation," James says. "He





## TRANS-PECOS PRONGHORN RESTORATION PROGRAM

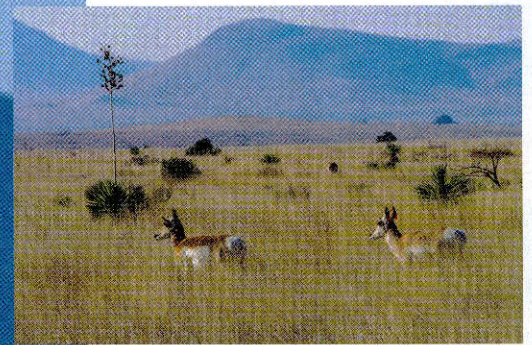
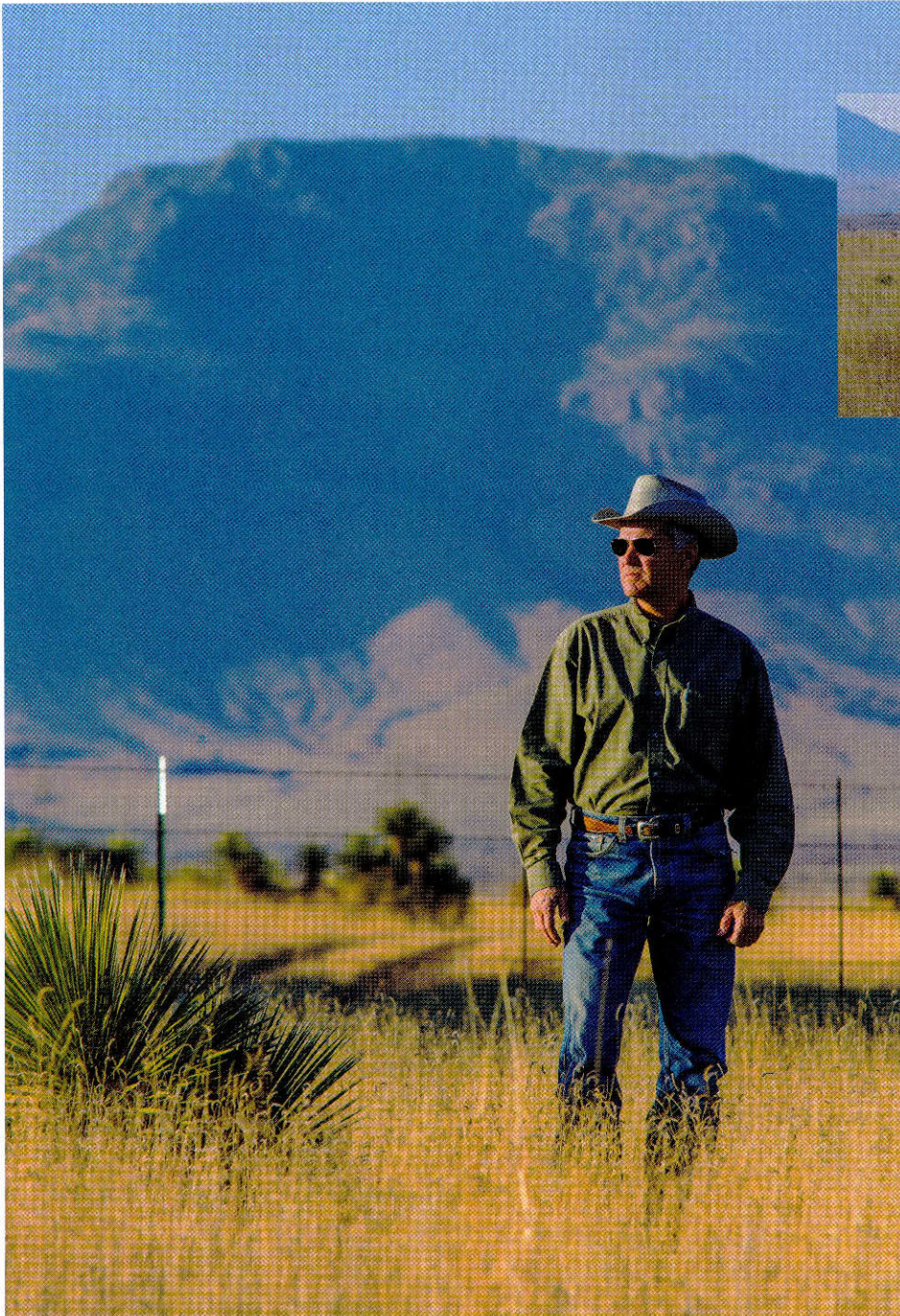
Bobby McKnight gazes out at the family of pronghorn resting in the grasslands on his ranch outside Fort Davis. They are a welcome sight, considering that their numbers in the Trans-Pecos ecoregion had dwindled from 17,000 in the 1980s to less than 3,000 in 2012. This decline was due to factors such as fencing methods that limited their movement, severe drought conditions, predation and parasites such as the deadly barber pole worm.

Today, native pronghorn are rebounding, thanks to the Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Restoration Program, a \$1.4 million public/private partnership involving TPWF. Partners include TPWD, USDA-Wildlife Services, the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University and the Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Working Group, made up of landowners, scientists and other stakeholders.

“The passion around that table, that’s the real story,” McKnight says. “From ranchers to scientists to veterinarians to TPWD, everyone was

in it to make things better for the pronghorn, and that was pretty neat.”

A sixth-generation Texas rancher, McKnight joined the working group in 2011. Since then, the project team has translocated 780 pronghorn from the Panhandle to areas near Marfa and Marathon. They have implemented predator control methods and added water sources. To allow the pronghorn to roam, McKnight and other landowners have constructed fencing with an 18- to 20-inch gap at the bottom. The fastest land mammals in North America — able to speed across the grasslands at up to 60 miles per hour — aren’t jumpers, but they will scoot under the fencing.



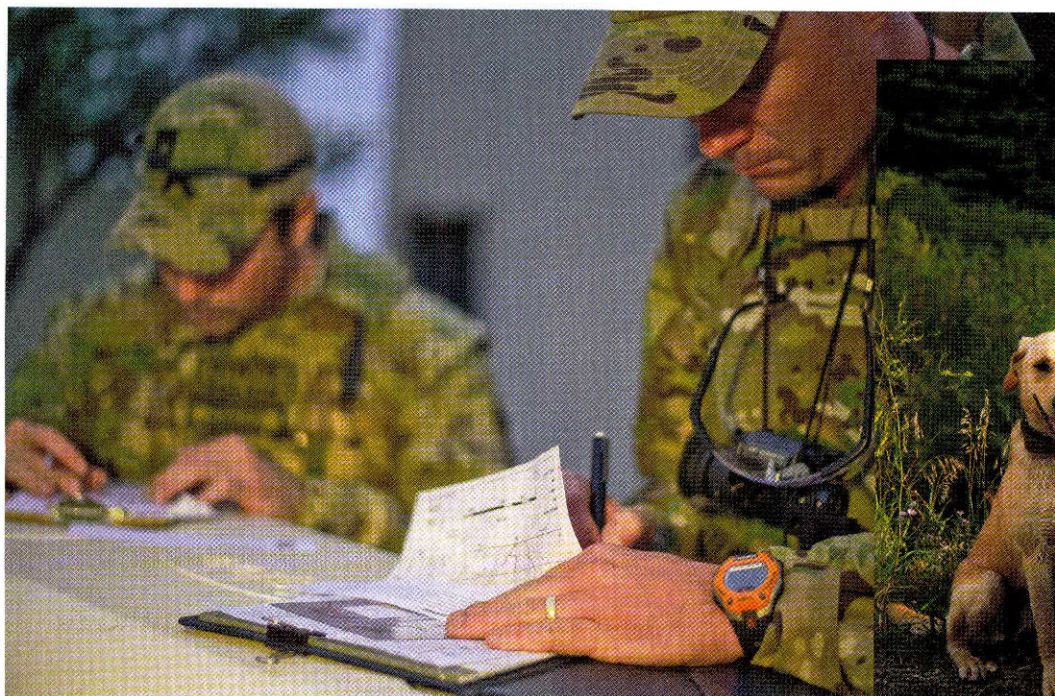
The team overcame obstacles along the way. In April-May 2011, after the first 200 pronghorn were released near Marfa, the Rockhouse fire swept through the area, devastating 325,000 acres of grasslands, including the McKnight ranch and McKnight’s childhood home.

“A lot of the wildlife habitat was ashes,” he recalls. “There was nothing here, just dirt and black everywhere. It was awful.”

The most severe drought in Texas history followed the fires. Due to these and other factors, the survival rate of the first transplanted group was only 20–25 percent. Yet, the team persevered, and additional releases achieved an overall survival rate of 70–85 percent. As of summer 2017, the pronghorn population had doubled to more than 6,000.

“A healthy pronghorn population is indicative of a healthy landscape, which helps everything,” McKnight says. “It all rolls together, and I like the antelope. They’ve been here forever, and I can’t imagine why you wouldn’t do something to help them.”





## TEXAS GAME WARDEN TRAINING CENTER

K9 game warden Christy Vales brings her Labrador retriever, Ruger, out of the truck to meet me. He is alert, energetic and ready for action. “Sit!” I say, and he quickly poses with his partner for a photo. He’s done this a few times before.

In addition to her regular duties as a game warden K9 handler, Vales supervises the statewide K9 team, established in 2013 with support from TPWF. The 10 statewide units on this team are trained to assist game wardens with emergency response, search and rescue, narcotics detection, and detection of poachers and illegally obtained fish and wildlife. The K9s are in demand statewide, and the Texas program serves as a model for other states.

In February 2015, Ruger became a local hero when he led a search-and-rescue team to four Bastrop County boys who had been missing for eight hours. It was past midnight and near-freezing by the time the boys were airlifted to safety. Now, Vales and Ruger are called on frequently to assist with search-and-rescue missions in other counties around the state.

“I can’t imagine not having a K9,” Vales says. “The sense of pride when we’re able to help a game warden track down a poacher or find a missing

person — nothing compares to that.”

Vales and Ruger keep their skills sharp at the Game Warden Training Center, a state-of-the-art facility located in Hamilton County. The new facility prepares future cadet classes to meet the demands of the job and ensures that Texas game wardens maintain their reputation as the best-trained conservation officers in the country.

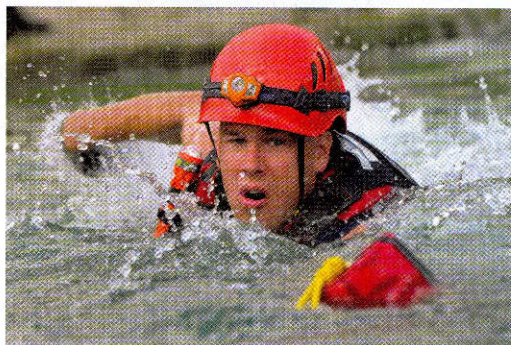
The center is being constructed with funds raised by TPWF. Phase I, completed in 2010, includes administration and education buildings, a fitness center, a firearms training range and a dining hall.

In 2014, the foundation began a capital campaign to raise \$9 million to complete Phase II of construction. Phase II funded new cadet dormitories, as well as renovation of the existing kitchen, instructor’s quarters and medical center.

“Having these facilities saves time on travel and keeps us from having to rely on using other facilities,” Vales says. “We would not be where we are, and have the equipment that we do, without the support of TPWF.”

### THE WORK TO BE DONE

It takes many dedicated partners and collaborators to keep Texas wild. From biologists, landowners, stewards, scientists and river guides to game wardens, outdoor education leaders



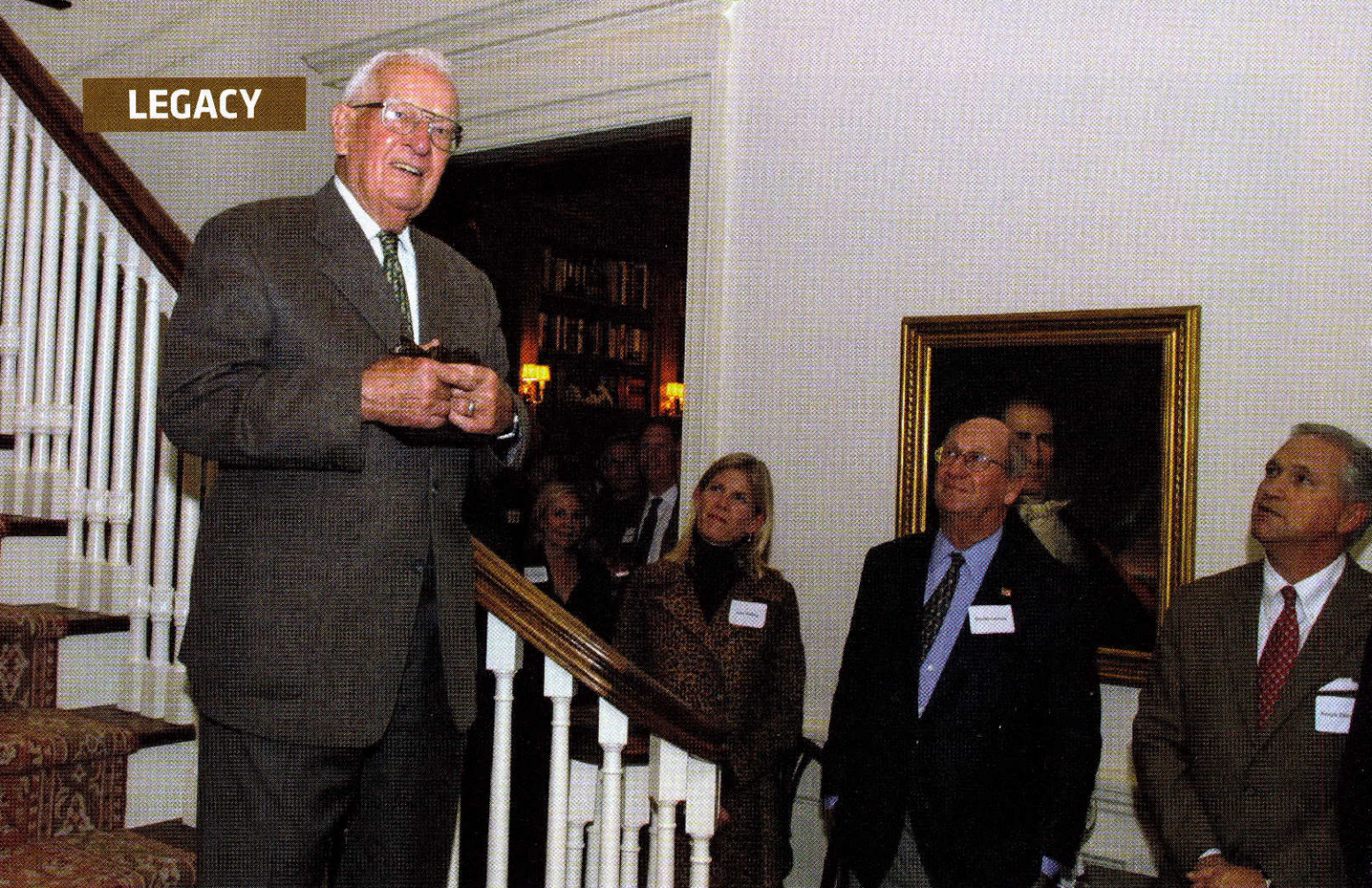
GAME WARDEN PHOTOS BY TPWF

and citizen volunteers, every Texan has a role to play. These projects will help safeguard the wildlife, historic legacy and natural resources of Texas for future generations.

With the first phase of the fundraising campaign wrapped up, the foundation is turning its attention to raising awareness of the work still to be done. Encouraging the next generation to get involved in conserving the wild things and wild places of Texas is the goal of a TPWF public awareness effort that launched earlier this year. The “We Will Not Be Tamed” campaign calls on all Texans to appreciate the wildness of Texas, the vastness of our Texas spirit and the reasons why we should all be inspired to protect it. Find out more at [wewillnotbetamed.org](http://wewillnotbetamed.org).

*Karen Hoffman Blizzard is a freelance writer and former TPWF employee.*





# POLITICAL TRAILBLAZER

*Gov. Bill Clements promoted parks, game wardens and TPWD's foundation.*

By Lydia Saldaña

Bill Clements was a trailblazer throughout his long life. He turned his early experience as a roughneck in the oil fields of Texas into the world's largest offshore oil drilling contracting firm, making a fortune along the way. When he turned his attention to Texas politics, he was elected governor in 1978 in a stunning upset, becoming the first Republican to win that seat in more than a century.

He lost his first re-election bid to Mark White in 1982 but turned the table four years later by challenging him and winning a second term. His two nonconsecutive terms set the stage for the next generation of Republican leaders in Texas, turning a blue state red in the process.

From his very early years, Clements was grounded in strong outdoor traditions. On his 12th birthday, he joined the Boy Scouts and decided he would earn Eagle Scout status in the minimum time possible.



Former Gov. Bill Clements was an avid outdoorsman and a strong proponent of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He supported the creation of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation and helped raise money for game wardens.

“From the time you start out as a Tenderfoot, if you do everything exactly on time, you can become an Eagle Scout in 14 months,” Clements recalled in an interview 60 years later. “So I did it.”

Clements’ father was one of the founders of a now-legendary hunting and fishing club in East Texas, still going strong today. The bond between father and son was cemented in the outdoors. Clements also shared his love of hunting and fishing with family, friends and business colleagues throughout his life.

“My dad was not a hunter, and he prevailed on Governor Clements when I was 7 or 8 to take me hunting,” recalls Ed Cox Jr. “And he took me on my first deer hunt. And my first duck hunt. I remember him taking me on his back through a duck marsh and setting me on a beaver mound. That was an absolute thrill.”

Soon after the 1978 election, Clements called Cox and told him he wanted to appoint him to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, the body that oversees the work of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

“Governor Clements’ awareness and support of Texas Parks and Wildlife — the commission and the department — was unprecedented,” Cox says. “He was very adamant about his conservation perspective and really took it very seriously when he became governor. I can remember the conversations he had with new appointments to the commission — that it was our duty to take care of the fish, wildlife and parks of our state for future generations of Texans.”

At the time, there was more emphasis on hunting and fishing than state parks.

“While many of us were focused

on the hunting and fishing side of things, he also came to have a deep concern for the park system and how the money was spent,” Cox says. “Even back then, Texas was having a very hard time taking care of the parks.”

Longtime TPW Commission-watcher and Clements family friend Bubba Wood observes that Clements’ commission appointments were not just political picks.

“He got real sportsmen that were really interested and knew they would have to answer to him,” Wood says. “And they all knew this wasn’t just a way to say thank you for helping him get elected. Governor Clements expected them to work hard and run the Parks and Wildlife Department for the benefit of the people of Texas.”

At the tail end of Clements’ second term, a discussion began about the creation of a nonprofit with a single focus of supporting TPWD’s mission. Clements appointee Chuck Nash was serving as chairman of the commission at the time.

“Governor Clements always understood the power of philanthropy,” Nash says. “He was very involved in the early discussion about the creation of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. The idea was percolating in 1990 in the months leading up to the

gubernatorial election.”

Ann Richards won that election, and with her support, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation was created in 1991. Since then, TPWF has invested more than \$170 million in transformational conservation projects across the state.

“While Governor Clements was in office, and up until the very end of his life, we never asked for one thing he didn’t support,” Nash says. “He hosted early fundraisers that helped get the foundation off the ground and supported key projects in the years to follow.”

One of those projects was the Game Warden Training Center in Hamilton County. The foundation led fundraising efforts for the facility. Clements always had a strong affinity for the work game wardens do across the state.

“He was a very strong supporter of TPWD from the outset of his first term,” says Pat Oles, who served as chairman of the foundation’s board of trustees and helped raise money for the Game Warden Training Center. “One reason among many was his admiration for the game wardens. He knew Texas game wardens as an elite law enforcement unit, a group that had its act together.”

Oles remembers taking Clements

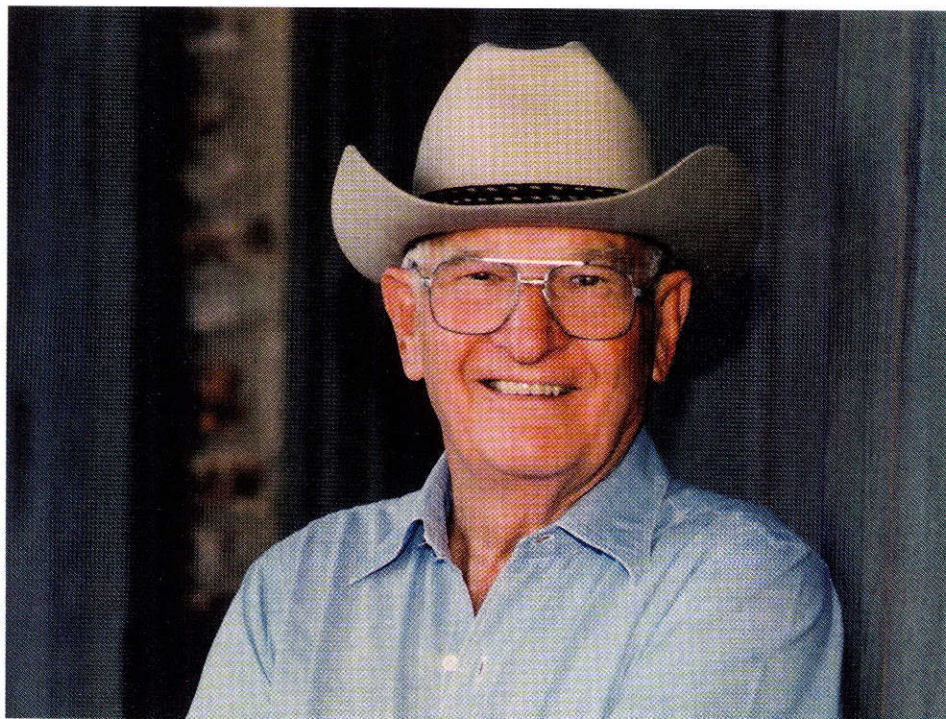
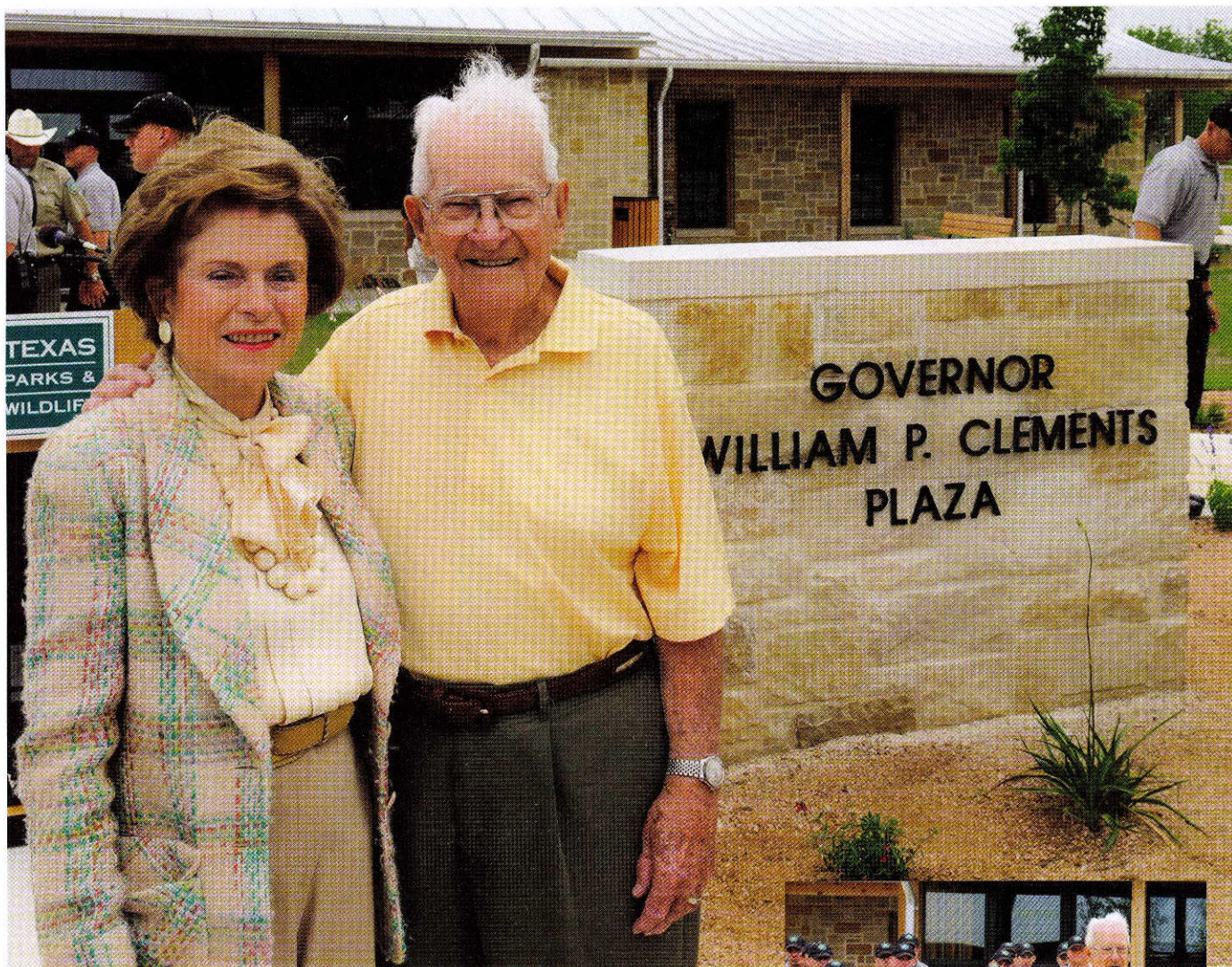


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLEMENTS FOUNDATION; ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY TPWF





Rita and Bill Clements attended the dedication of the Game Warden Training Center in 2010. Clements admired the state's game wardens and made a sizable donation to the center.



to lunch to update him on the activities of the foundation, and specifically the fundraising efforts for the training center.

"He zeroed in as he always did and immediately got to the heart of the matter," Oles recalls.

"The governor said, 'Tell me about the money. How much do you need?' I told him our goal was \$10 million in private support. He looked at me and said, 'I'll give you two. One now and one later.'"

Clements was also TPWF's landlord, offering free rent to the new foundation in its first 20 years of existence. Clements had an office in the same building. Oles laughs as he remembers the call from an intern in the office the same day as that lunch.

"She called and said, 'Mr. Oles,

an old man just walked in with a wrinkled-up check for \$1 million. What am I supposed to do with it? He also told me to have you call him to remind him about the other million.'"

Clements attended the dedication of the Game Warden Training Center in 2010 and was delighted to see the state-of-the-art facility.

"His view was that Texas game wardens lead the country in terms of quality and performance, and he wanted to make sure our wardens had the best training and facilities possible," Oles says. "He couldn't have been clearer on his intentions and desire to make that happen."

Clements had a rich, full life with Texas-sized accomplishments. For those who spent time with him in the field, he is also remembered for his accomplishments in the state's

woods and waters.

"He could look at a stretch of water and just read the water and know where the fish were," Nash says. "He was just a natural outdoorsman."

He was also a role model.

"Growing up and for many years afterward, he was my hero," Cox says. "I really looked up to him. He was hard-core, and he believed what he believed, but by God, if he believed it, he was going to make something happen. I always had such great respect for that." ★

*Lydia Saldaña is the communications director for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.*



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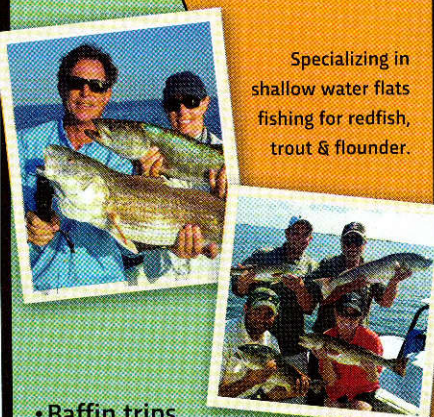
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Find tournaments at [www.basstournamentfinder.com](http://www.basstournamentfinder.com), categorized by region and month.

You can find team events where you and a buddy fish together and individual events where you are the only competitor in the boat. You'll need a boat; if you don't have one, some events allow nonboaters to be paired with boat owners.

Get a head start by scouting the lake before the "off-limits" period. Rules differ, so check them first. Off-limits means no competitor may be on the lake during a certain time frame, except for official practice days, which are usually a day or two prior to the tournament. Some events prohibit the gathering of nonpublic information from anyone who is not competing in the event.

*By Randy Brudnicki*

## FISHING TIPS



- **ORGANIZE YOUR FISHING GEAR FOR OPTIMUM EFFICIENCY.** Replace line if necessary; pre-tie lures on rods (most tournament anglers use multiple rods). Bring a measuring board.



- **DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR CONDITIONS** with foul-weather gear and cooling, moisture-wicking fabrics.



- **MAKE SURE YOUR BOAT IS IN GOOD WORKING CONDITION;** the fun stops when you get stranded.



- **BE ON TIME** for tournament weigh-in or you'll be penalized (weight deduction) or disqualified.



- On competition day, **DON'T FORGET TO EAT AND DRINK.** Stay hydrated.

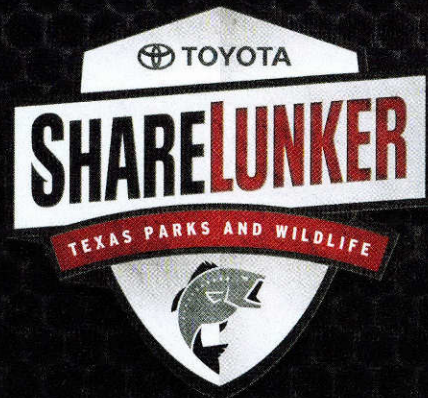
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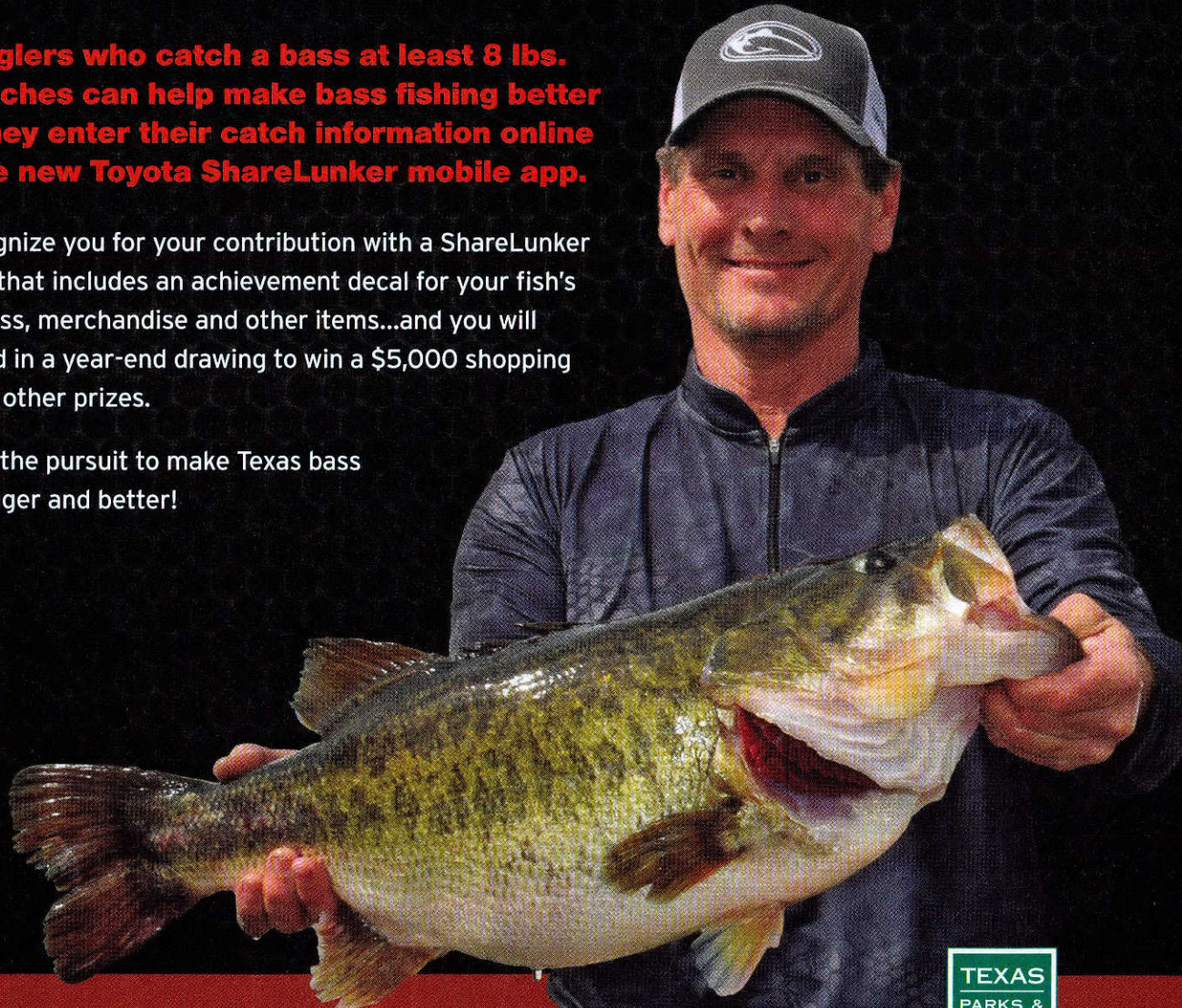
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## WHERE IN TEXAS?



Red poppies brighten the field next to an Alsatian house in this Hill Country town known as "The Little Alsace of Texas." The house, originally built in the 1600s and shipped from France in the 1990s, serves as the town's visitor center.

If you recognize this *fachwerk* house or the town where it resides, send us a note at *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744 (write "Where in Texas?" on the envelope); email us at [magazine@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:magazine@tpwd.texas.gov); let us know on Facebook; or post a comment to [tpwmagazine.com](http://tpwmagazine.com). We'll reveal the answer in a future issue.

Photo by Theresa DiMenno  
**TOOLS:** Nikon D800 camera, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens, f/14 at 1/320th of a second, ISO 400.



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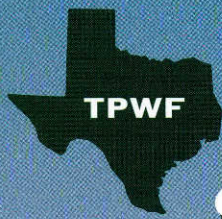
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