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JUNE 2018

VOLUME 76 • NUMBER 5

Owen West has entered the Texas Water Safari every year since 1969 — more times than any other person.



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Survival of the Fittest YEAR OF EPIC CHALLENGES

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Bronze Beauty

Texans hunt for redfish in a wide variety of ways and places.

by Danno Wise

PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

ON THE COVER: Two members of the Cowboys paddling team navigate a rapid at the beginning of the 2017 Texas Water Safari. Photo by Chase Fountain / TPWD
BACK COVER: Bees are key pollinators of Texas plants. Photo © Jose Madrigal

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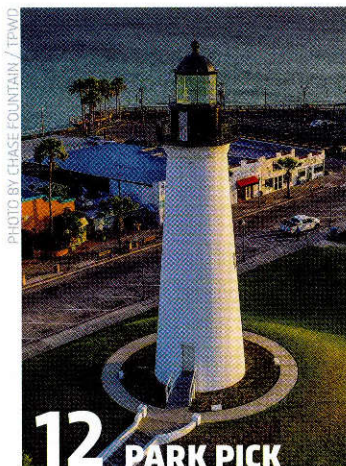


PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

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Port Isabel Lighthouse watches over the coast.

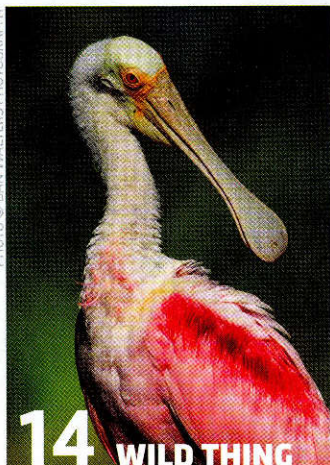


PHOTO © DAN WALTERS PHOTOGRAPHY

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MANUFACTURER

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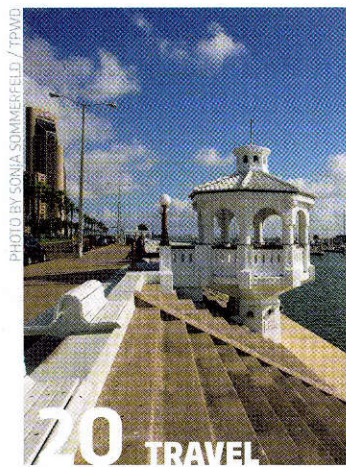


PHOTO BY SONIA SOMMERFELD / TPWD

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PHOTO BY SONIA SOMMERFELD / TPWD

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PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

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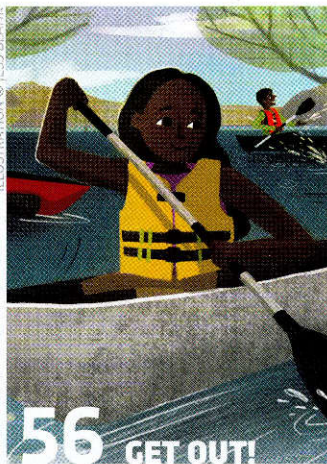


ILLUSTRATION © TESS BLAKE

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From rapids to calm waters, let's go canoeing.

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MANY PROCLAIM IT to be the world's toughest river race. So, of course, the Texas Water Safari (Page 28) was our first choice for the Year of Epic Texas Challenges. While we researched and plotted issue selections on the calendar, this entry remained entrenched as the June escapade. Our excitement grew as we encountered tales of Hallucination Alley and the sagas of the "almost made it" contestants dogged by misfortune and fatigue.

We sent Managing Editor Russell Roe to cover it, using his expertise in tackling book-length topics and reducing them to a satisfying feature length. The safari proved nearly as difficult to photograph as it was to cover editorially, so we sent a crack team armed with drones, waders and persistence. We hope you enjoy the results, an edge-of-your-seat play-by-play of the 2017 race. Maybe you'll be inspired to start a paddling workout now to ready yourself for the 2019 Texas Water Safari.

Beginning each March and continuing through the warm weather months, our Texas yards and roadways are filled with golden-powdered blooms that beckon an array of pollinators: bees, butterflies, birds, beetles and more. Alarming stories about colony collapse disorder, decreasing monarch numbers, habitat loss and pesticide use may cause worry, but contributor Melissa Gaskill shares how we can participate in the solution

(Page 36). As Crockett County rancher Philip Walker says, "If the land is healthy for pollinators, that's probably a good sign that it is healthy for everything else. If you don't have pollinators, you probably have a problem."

Since it's June, we're out on the coast searching for redfish, traveling to Corpus Christi to see sea turtle recovery and pondering our existence around a campfire with contributor Larry Hodge. There's just something about the lazy days of summer that invites slowing down, sitting a spell and thinking about life.

We're also thinking about all the great fathers who inspire us this month as we celebrate Father's Day. What a perfect opportunity to take that fishing trip you've been putting off, with your child, dad or grandpa along to make memories that last a lifetime. Enjoy!

Louie Bond
 Louie Bond, Editor



SEA TURTLE EFFORTS OFFER HOPE

THE SHARP RAPS ON OUR BEDROOM DOOR and the loud call — “Wake up, wake up, time to get ready. The release is on.” — could mean only one thing. The eggs had hatched!

Our friends Molly and Jim had volunteered the night before to get up in the wee hours of the morning to check the status of a clutch of Kemp’s ridley sea turtle eggs under the watchful and expert care of Jeff George and his able team at Sea Turtle Inc. The eggs had been collected from a nesting turtle on South Padre Island and taken for incubation to the facilities at Sea Turtle Inc. to protect them from predators and to maximize the chance of a successful hatch.

Sure enough, another bunch of hatchlings had just come into the world and would soon be released onto the island sands before heading into the Gulf, where they would spend the remainder of their lives. The hope was that any female turtles that survived into adulthood would imprint onto that very same beach and ultimately make their way back to the island to make their own nests.

We weren’t about to miss it.

As we assembled at the designated release site in the near-dawn hour with a rapidly growing crowd, the excitement was palpable. Kids and adults of all ages huddled and whispered and otherwise anxiously waited as Jeff and his team made final preparations for the release. When the appointed time got nearer, the Sea Turtle Inc. staff carefully showed off some of the hatchlings for quick peeks and photographs. The squeals of delight from the kids were infectious as they saw baby sea turtles for the first time.

And, in no time at all, more than 100 hatchling turtles, each the size of a silver dollar, were released onto the beach. Their ensuing scramble, or waddle, toward the surf was not exactly a picture of perfect synchronization. Some raced right over to the water’s edge and were immediately caught up and swept out to sea by the lapping Gulf waves. Others took a more circumspect, even circuitous, approach, taking their own sweet time to enter the Gulf. Still others attempted to meander farther down the beach, where circling gulls, waved off by vigilant Sea Turtle Inc. staff, threatened to end their journey before it even began.

Ultimately, all of them made it into the Gulf, bringing a raucous cheer from the sea of onlookers. The whole sight was simply awe-inspiring.

So, too, have been the conservation efforts aimed at recovering the Kemp’s ridley, the most endangered of the five imperiled sea turtles found in Texas waters. Brought back from near-extinction from overexploitation in Mexico, where their primary nesting beaches are found, the endangered Kemp’s ridley has survived in spite of the longest of odds and other pressures, including bycatch-related impacts from commercial shrimping in the Gulf. Not surprisingly, their recovery is also a great testament to the persistence of a dedicated few who have labored over decades to make possible what we saw that early July morning.

At the top of that list in Texas is Donna Shaver, a biologist stationed at Padre Island National Seashore who doubles as chief of the National Park Service’s Sea Turtle Science and Recovery Division. As described in John Ostidick’s accompanying piece in this magazine, Donna has made the recovery of the Kemp’s ridley turtles her literal life’s work.

Conservation is not for the faint of heart, particularly for those working in the oftentimes acrimonious realm of protecting endangered species. Thankfully, there has been nothing fainthearted about Donna, who over the course of her distinguished career has worked tirelessly to inspire scientists, fishermen, shrimpers, naturalists, landowners, developers, volunteers and others to get engaged in efforts to ensure that the Kemp’s ridley will be around for generations to come.

And, while we aren’t ready to take the Kemp’s ridley off our proverbial worry list, there are a number of positive signs to show that the efforts of conservationists like Donna are making a material difference. Last year’s record number of turtle nests along the Texas coast is certainly one of them.

A special thanks to Donna for caring about our wild things and wild places. They need her now more than ever.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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STATE PARK MEMORIES

Just finished the April issue, and really enjoyed the memory “two-fer” with your articles about walking sticks and Palo Duro Canyon.

Palo Duro was the inaugural trip for us, our three kids and new pop-up camper in 1999. On the 15th anniversary of that trip, almost to the day in 2014, we reprised the trip with our kids and three grandkids. Our hike to the Big Cave with its “wine cellar” temperatures mid-August was something we missed the first time. The grandkids got a special treat with a seeming migration of tarantulas that were moving everywhere each evening.

The following year we visited McKinney Falls, where a different migration seemed to be taking place, with giant walking sticks all over! We’re still deciding where to go this summer, but as always I’m sure we’ll be adding more moments to treasure. Thanks for the memories!

DAVID KELLY
 Spring

THE COWBOY ACTOR

“On Location” (April 2018) was a very enjoyable article. In your *The Last Picture Show* piece, however, in recognizing the actors, you neglected to mention my favorite, Ben Johnson, who won an Oscar for best supporting actor for his role in the movie. Born and raised on a ranch in Oklahoma, he had a movie career as both actor and horse wrangler. Love your mag!

GENE DAMMON
 Port Neches

EXPANDING THE BRIGADES

I had my first look at your magazine when I was visiting my

daughters at their home in Angleton. The October 2017 issue told about the Texas Brigades and their different wildlife programs and how both the state and its youth benefit greatly from them. I brought that issue home with me to Michigan, and my son-in-law has bought me a subscription. I want to talk to our Michigan legislators about the possibility of having similar programs for our state.

I am still active in hunting and fishing even though I am soon to be 85. I hope that I may be of some help to Michigan in setting up and working with programs like the Brigades.

WILLIAM F. MILLER
 Auburn, Michigan

WHERE IN TEXAS?



May’s *Where in Texas?* presented a striking scene showing a set of ruins with lightning flashing in the background. The ruins are part of Fort Griffin State Historic Site. This was a land long dominated by bison and the Kiowa and Comanche of the Southern Plains. Fort Griffin was established in 1867 to help settle the frontier. The nearby town called The Flat was one of the West’s wildest places, filled with buffalo hunters, cattle drivers and gamblers. The area’s history is commemorated each June in the Fort Griffin Fandangle, an outdoor musical.

Reader Carolyn Buckley noted similarities between the ruins at Forts Davis, Lancaster and Griffin but recognized these as Fort Griffin’s.

Paul Barner says he immediately turns to *Where in Texas?* when his issue arrives and is “still battling 100 percent on having visited all the places you have photographed.” He noted that Fort Griffin and The Flat are chock full of Texas history.

Bill Webb says he travels from his Fort Worth-area home “to photograph the night sky at this great spot.”

Deadly Bat Fungus Spreads

THE FUNGUS THAT causes white-nose syndrome in bats, detected for the first time in Texas in early 2017 in the Panhandle, has now spread into Central Texas.

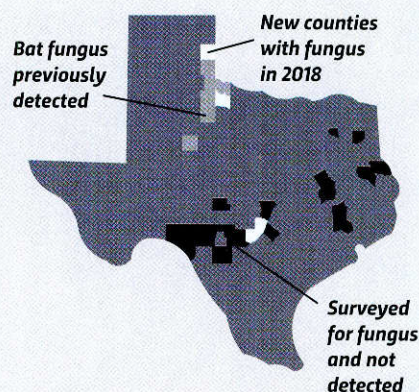
Though no bat deaths have been attributed to WNS in Texas, the syndrome has killed millions of bats in the eastern parts of the United States, raising national concern. A coalition of groups in Texas is continuing work to monitor the spread of the disease.

The fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, was detected at several sites in four new counties (10 total) this year, including two sites each in Blanco and Kendall counties and one site each in Foard and Wheeler counties. The fungus was

detected on cave bats, tri-colored bats, Townsend's big-eared bats and a single Mexican free-tailed bat. No signs of WNS were reported. Biologists say it usually takes a few years after detecting the fungus for the disease to manifest.

The detection on a Mexican free-tailed bat occurred at Old Tunnel State Park in Central Texas — the first-ever detection of the fungus on this species.

"Treating white-nose syndrome is extremely difficult," says TPWD mammalogist Jonah Evans, explaining that bats can spread the fungus long distances, and the fungus can persist in the environment for long periods of time.



Plus, cave ecosystems are sensitive and frequently contain rare species that may be affected by treatments. "TPWD is supporting treatment development and field trials when possible while working to ensure potential impacts to caves and non-target species are minimized," Evans says. ★

Snapper Season Doubles

PRIVATE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS fishing in federal waters off the Texas coast will see a projected 82-day red snapper season starting June 1 under an agreement between TPWD and the National Marine Fisheries Service, an increase of 40 days from last year.

The agreement will allow TPWD to establish the opening and closing of the red snapper fishery in federal waters off the Texas coast for private recreational anglers fishing from their own vessels in 2018 and 2019.

State waters (out to 9 nautical miles) are expected to remain open year-round. Bag and size limits will remain unchanged under the permit.

Help TPWD better manage this resource by downloading the iSnapper app on your smartphone and reporting your red snapper landings. ★

TPWD Unveils New Alligator Gar Website

TPWD HAS A new web page — tpwd.texas.gov/texasgar — to educate and inform Texans about alligator gar, the largest freshwater fish in Texas and one of the largest in North America. The site features information on alligator gar identification, management, distribution and fishing tips and tactics, as well as findings from TPWD biologists' studies.

To date, TPWD research has focused on understanding how long alligator gar live, how fast they grow, how often they successfully reproduce and how healthy our populations currently are. But while they have learned a great deal about these topics, researchers know relatively little about the anglers



who fish for them.

To help answer this question, the new alligator gar web page is hosting a constituent survey to gather information about people's preferences, attitudes and opinions about these fish. This information will be used by researchers to help inform upcoming management decisions about fishing rules and regulations for alligator gar. ★

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MAY 27-JUNE 2:

Creating fish habitat; Cleburne State Park; restoring beach dunes; hummingbirds.

JUNE 3-9:

D-Day remembered; Pecos pupfish; fishing educator; South Llano River.

JUNE 10-16:

The 100-mile hike; Alamito Creek; ranch conservation.

JUNE 17-23:

Texas' bird man; history on the Brazos; Lake Corpus Christi; cup crusaders.

JUNE 24-30:

Game warden support; quail habitat work; mule deer research; Franklin Mountains biking.







BEACON OF THE PAST

BY JENNIFER CARPENTER

Port Isabel Lighthouse stands watch over the South Texas coast.

Whenever I travel, my sightseeing priorities are old buildings and local food specialties. Civic pride is evident in architecture and appetite, so I find it a great way to connect quickly with a city or town.

A late summer trip took me about as far south in Texas as one can go, to Port Isabel and South Padre Island. I had never visited, and, having only heard about the island's appeal to spring break thrill-seekers, was unsure what awaited me there.

Before I crossed the Queen Isabella Causeway to the island, I passed through the center of Port Isabel. Though road-weary after the long drive from

Austin, I pulled over. In the center of the square was a green hill topped with a white lighthouse. The lighthouse was clad in scaffolding, a sign of coming improvements. (The lighthouse reopened in January after extensive repairs.) While small when compared to others I'd seen along the Atlantic Coast, its petite size added to its charm.

The U.S. government built the Port Isabel Lighthouse for \$7,000 in 1852. Its light, provided by 15 lamps and 21 reflectors, shone for 16 miles. The new brick structure signaled the town's growing regional importance as a cotton shipping port. By the decade's end, \$10 million worth of cotton exports passed through Port Isabel annually.

The Civil War stymied trade, although Port Isabel's proximity to Mexico appealed to blockade runners. The lighthouse sustained minor damage when Confederate Col. John S. Ford buried its light and lenses (which were never recovered), but it resumed operations shortly after the war's end. Equipment and building upgrades came, too (except for another hiccup in the 1880s, when the government discovered it didn't hold the title to the land).

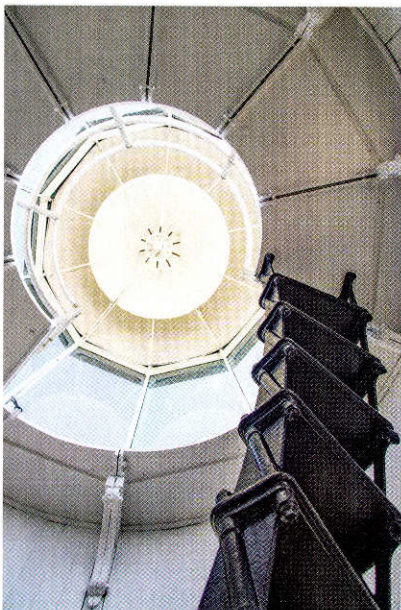
The lighthouse's working days

were drawing to a close at the turn of the century. Lighthouses with more powerful technology eclipsed their older, smaller counterparts. Railroads between Texas and Mexico reduced the need for commercial shipping. Port Isabel's beacon operated until 1905, when its light was extinguished.

A designated state historic site, the lighthouse opened to the public in 1952. Today, it remains a symbol of community pride. Port Isabel's Chamber of Commerce houses its offices in the reconstructed Keeper's Cottage. Movie nights on the square bring families out to watch a film projected on the side of the structure. A witness to hurricanes, war and modern development, the Port Isabel Lighthouse stands tall, connecting visitors and residents alike to the history of this Texas coastal town.

Don't worry, I didn't forget my other priority. Although captivated by the charm of the lighthouse, I indulged in plenty of local, fresh-caught seafood.

Check the park website (tpwd.texas.gov/portisabellighthouse) for more information about events and activities. Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site is located on the Lower Laguna Madre in Port Isabel, on Texas Highway 100. ★



PHOTOS BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD



TICKLED PINK

BY EVA FREDERICK

Magenta plumage makes the roseate spoonbill Texas' prettiest crustacean cruncher.

When the roseate spoonbill, Texas' pinkest water bird, forages for food, it uses its bill like a pair of tongs grabbing hot dogs off a grill. Pacing and foraging the muddy shallow-water shores, it moves a slightly open bill back and forth, feeling for prey with special touch receptors on the paddle-shaped end. Once it encounters an unlucky fish, crab or shrimp, the roseate spoonbill snaps it up.

Birders travel far to see this coral-colored creature, which nests in the spring and summer on the Gulf shores, forest wetlands and swamps of Texas, Mexico and several southern states.

Like the flamingo, the spoonbill's pink prey — mostly crabs and shrimp — are responsible for the namesake shade of magenta. These pink, orange or red

marine organisms get their color in turn from the algae they eat, full of pigments called carotenoids.

One famous carotenoid is beta-carotene, a fat-soluble pigment found in carrots, sweet potatoes and spinach. Your palm might turn orange temporarily if you eat way too many carrots because fat-soluble beta-carotene is retained in

fat deposits in skin and feathers. This means that spoonbills, which begin their lives with white plumage tinged with pink, slowly become pinker as they eat more carotenoid-containing creatures.

Hats or fans adorned with roseate spoonbill feathers were fashionable in the 1800s — so fashionable, in fact, that the spoonbill was nearly hunted to extinction. In the early 1900s, conservation organizations like Audubon stepped in, and the species has recovered so well that it is a common sight on the Texas coast. Turns out the joke's on those fashionistas — spoonbill feathers quickly lose their vibrant pink color and fade to a much lighter shade.

Adult spoonbills are pale pink all over with darker pink patches on their wings. Their heads are yellowish-green, and their eyes glow a luminescent red.



Spoonbills are grown and ready to breed at 2–3 years old.

Male spoonbills — true romantics — court females by bringing them gifts, usually nest-building materials. Once the female picks a mate, the two birds will work together to build a nest in shrubs or trees by the water's edge; mangrove trees are a popular choice. The female will lay two to four eggs; both parents take turns incubating and feeding the chicks until they are ready to leave the nest at 7 or 8 weeks old.

Spoonbills are social birds, living in colonies with other species of water birds such as ibises and egrets. In October, they migrate to the warmer waters of Central and South America, returning in March. A single roseate spoonbill might make this trip many times, because the birds can live up to 10 years. ★

COMMON NAME

Roseate spoonbill

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Platalea ajaja

BREEDING HABITAT

Spoonbills breed each spring in the shallows of Texas rivers, marshes and bays.

DIET

Small fish, crustaceans, shrimp, other marine/freshwater invertebrates.

DID YOU KNOW?

The roseate spoonbill is a relative of another famous pink bird, the flamingo.

LEMONY BALM

Purple horsemint leaves smell like citrus, taste bad to deer.

BY DYANNE FRY CORTEZ

COMMON NAMES

Purple horsemint, lemon mint, lemon beebalm

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Monarda citriodora

SIZE

Mature plants stand up to 2.5 feet tall.

DID YOU KNOW?

Purple horsemint is a source of citronellol, the active ingredient in the citronella oil used in patio torches and insect-repellent candles.

Bees and butterflies love purple horsemint — deer and mosquitoes, not so much. Tall blooms, appearing in late spring, add splashes of vivid color to fields and roadsides. There's a lot to like about this native wildflower.

Horsemint is easily recognized by its distinctive flowering habit. Flowers are arranged in circles or whorls about the stalk, and they appear in ranks set off by layers of leaf-like bracts. The clusters look like miniature pom-poms, stacked three to six on a stem.

Several species of horsemint are native to our state; *Monarda citriodora* is the most common. It's found all over Texas and in most of the southern United States.

Like many wildflowers, purple horsemint is a winter annual. Seeds germinate in fall, and the plants lie low until warm weather triggers a growth spurt in spring. Mature plants stand up to 2.5 feet tall with four-sided stems and long, narrow, downward-curving



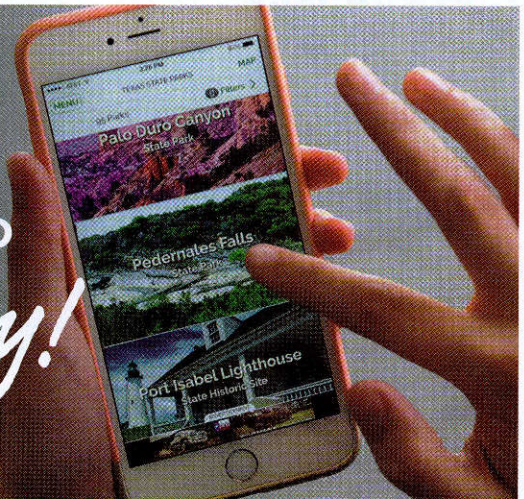
leaves. Short, stiff hairs cover the stem. Individual flowers are small and typical of the mint family, with five petals fused into upper and lower lips. Petals are lavender, pink or whitish, often with purple spots. Bracts under the whorls may turn a deeper purple.

Although it can live in partial shade, purple horsemint prefers the sunshine. It will grow in sandy or rocky soil, and easily tolerates dry, hot weather. The colorful blooms attract butterflies, moths and hummingbirds; they're especially enticing to bees, both wild and domestic. Most home-grown Texas honey contains nectar from at least one species of horsemint.

Other common names — lemon mint, lemon beebalm — refer to the citrus-like fragrance of rubbed or crushed leaves. The plant contains volatile oils that don't taste good to browsing herbivores, which makes it a good candidate for a deer-resistant garden.

The spicy scent also discourages biting insects. I always try to gather horsemint for my May/June camping trips. A pinch of leaves in the campfire helps keep mosquitoes away, and I usually hang a bouquet of drying flowers in my tent. Rubbing fresh or dried horsemint on the feet and ankles offers some protection against chiggers and ticks. ★

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SMALLER, SHARPER, FASTER

Camera companies continue to make strides in photo technology.

BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

Each year, the National Association of Broadcasters puts together one of the world's largest trade shows featuring the latest hardware, software and products driving the convergence of media, entertainment and technology. Much of the show revolves around the photographic industry, encompassing still photography, video and filmmaking. With all of the latest and greatest tools and toys for photographers in one location, it is a microcosm of the current state of the industry and a barometer of the trends we can expect to see in the future.

Although it was difficult to wade through more than 100,000 attendees and 1,700-plus exhibits at the 2018 NAB Show, several trends surfaced. The common thread that emerged was that manufacturers are competing ferociously to introduce smaller cameras, lenses and accessories that are able to produce sharper photographs and video via better sensors, processors and stabilization. With increasing expectations to share images quickly, most new cameras include some type of wireless connectivity.

The trend can be summed up in three words — smaller, sharper and faster. Among the thousands of new products at the show, here are three that illustrate the trend.

SONY ALPHA A7 III MIRRORLESS DIGITAL CAMERA

The new Sony Alpha a7 III mirrorless digital camera is a good indicator of where the digital camera market is headed. Photographers want a camera that does it all, and this new member of the Alpha family has the perfect combination of features, resolution and speed. Its 24-megapixel sensor combined with a new BIONZ X processor produces a still image with 14-bit color depth, ultra-high-definition 4K video and greater low-light sensitivity with an ISO range of 100-51,200 (which can be expanded to ISO 50-204,800). It offers features such as a filmmaker-friendly 120-frames-per-second filming rate (for slow motion), a greater dynamic range of 14 stops and a variety of customizable S-Log curves for color correction in post-production. Action shooters will appreciate its faster auto-focus, internal five-axis stabilization and 10-frames-per-second shooting speed.



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

DJI OSMO 2 →

Although not a camera per se, a handheld stabilizer is a useful tool to use with a camera to produce sharper images or smoother video for active photographers, vloggers or filmmakers. While DJI is primarily known for its drones such as the Phantom and Mavic series, it also produces a line of handheld gimbal stabilizers for cameras and smartphones that keep the camera smooth and level, eliminating shake or bounce as the photographer moves. The new Osmo 2 gimbal stabilizer will accept any smartphone up to 3.3 inches wide, and when used with the DJI GO app it can provide a variety of creative shooting modes and functions. It differs from its predecessor because controls have been simplified, battery life extended and cost cut almost in half.



CANON M50 MIRRORLESS CAMERA ↑

Although slightly behind the curve in introducing larger-sensor mirrorless cameras, Canon adds to its line of M-series with the EOS M50, considered an entry-level mirrorless camera yet featuring a 24-megapixel APS-C sensor, electronic OLED viewfinder and a fully articulating touchscreen. Its latest DIGIC 8 processor, combined with Canon's Dual Pixel autofocus, allows quick capture of stills at up to 10 frames per second and video resolution up to 4K. It also features Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and NFC connectivity as well as a more robust lens and body-based stabilization system, making it a perfect on-the-move camera for the traveler or vlogger.

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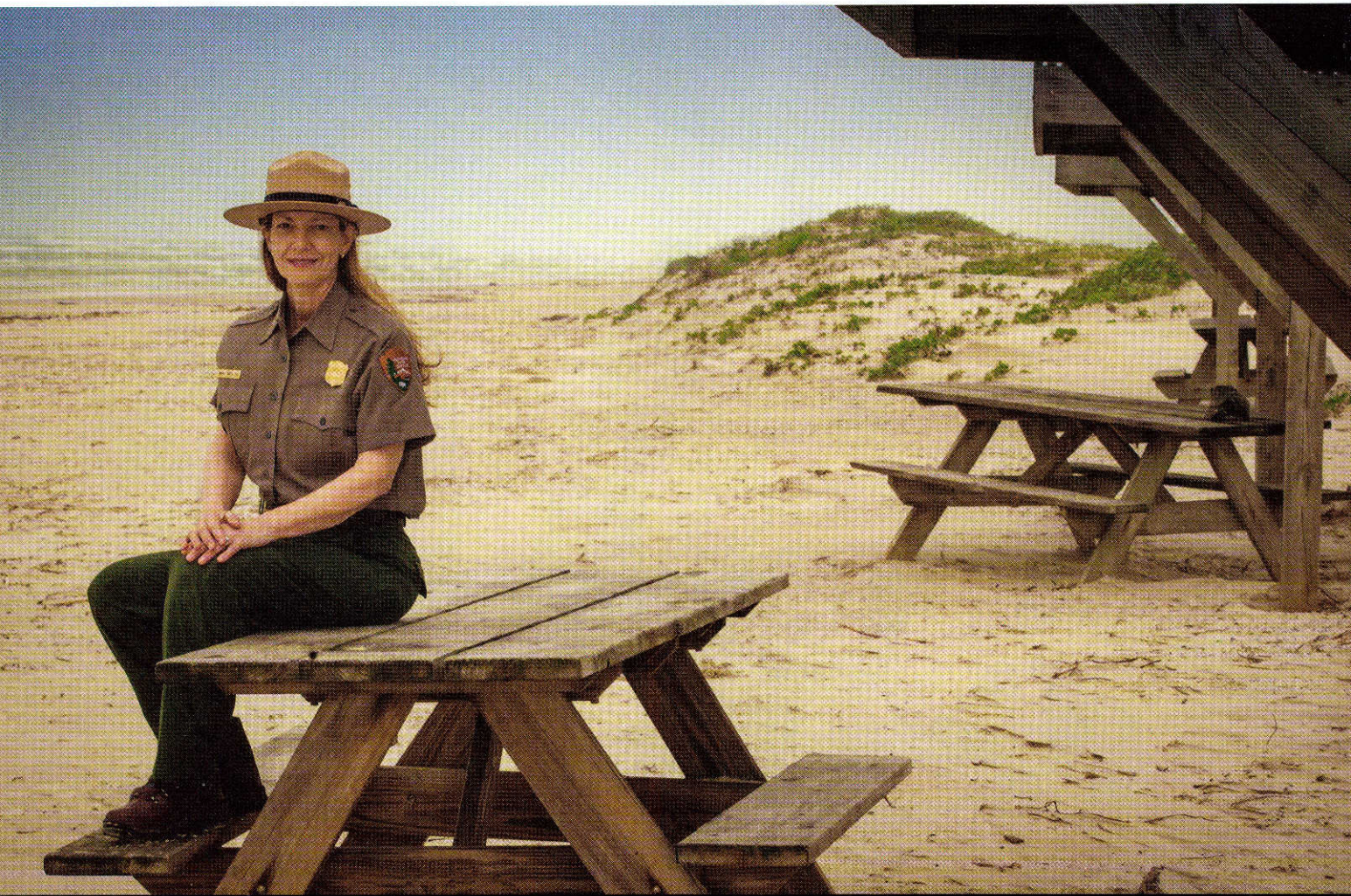
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TURTLE DANCERS

Wildlife and culture abound in Corpus Christi, where sea turtle hatchlings can steal the show.

BY JOHN H. OSTDICK

PHOTOS BY SONJA SOMMERFELD



When Syracuse-born Donna Shaver arrived at Padre Island National Seashore in 1980, she fell in love with her first taste of Texas coastal life and the notion of working to save an endangered species.

AUSTIN
3.5 hours

DALLAS
6 hours

HOUSTON
3.5 hours

EL PASO
9.5 hours

SAN ANTONIO
2 hours

LUBBOCK
8 hours

"I had never seen the ocean or a live sea turtle before," she says, reflecting on her first day as a volunteer with the National Park Service during Cornell University undergraduate work. "My boss cautioned it was unusual, but that first day we collected two live-stranded turtles and took them up to a rehabilitation facility."

Shaver was hooked.

South Texas' largest coastal city, at the mouth of the Nueces River on Corpus Christi Bay's west end, soon became her forever home. After working summers through 1984, Shaver accepted a permanent NPS role in 1985. By 1986, she was leading its sea turtle conservation efforts.

After years of shoestring budgets, research and grant writing, the tide is beginning to turn, says Shaver, chief of the agency's Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery and Texas coordinator of the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network.

"We haven't won the Super Bowl yet," she cautions.

Early morning darkness clings to the park service's remote national seashore offices as Shaver shifts gingerly in a chair. A flare-up of a balky back — "too many years of picking up large turtles," she jokes — doesn't deter her from sharing insights from a 38-year connection to Texas coastal turtles and this town.

Turtle images are everywhere: dangling, tiny gold

turtle earrings that complement Shaver's green NPS uniform, decorative turtles climbing up a lamp, turtle magnets on a mini-fridge, wood-carved turtles on her desk, framed news stories on the turtles and the program.

The only NPS division of its kind is celebrating the turtle initiative's 40-year anniversary this summer. In the late 1970s, Padre Island National Seashore joined a 20-agency U.S.-Mexico effort to restore Kemp's ridley turtles, which once nested from Mustang Island to Veracruz, Mexico. Since its inception, the program has expanded to include protection and conservation measures for four other

nesting season, staff and volunteers scour the seashore for often hard-to-find nests. The turtles, which spend 99 percent of their lives in the water, traveling thousands of miles, tend to nest in synchronous emergences called *arribadas* (Spanish for "mass arrival"), often on windy days or during incoming fronts that obliterate tracks quickly.

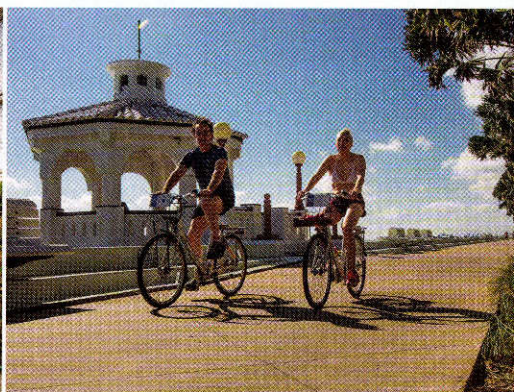
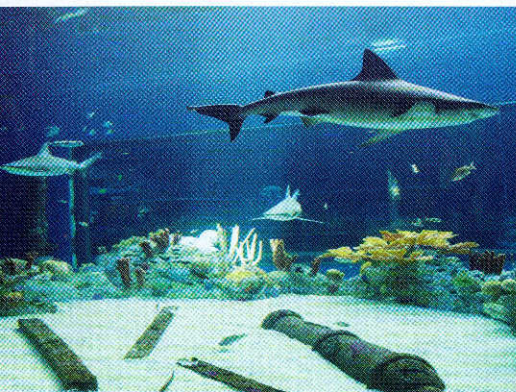
They dig a nest cavity in the sand, and then fall into a trancelike state, virtually motionless for about 15 minutes as they lay their eggs. After the eggs drop, the turtles move their rear flippers to put sand back into the hole. They spread the sand with their front flippers, and vigorously rock

The agency's website lists when the eggs go into the incubation facility and the projected release schedule. As many as 2,000 people have attended a single release.

"At every release, adult women and men with tears in their eyes will tell me that this is something they wanted to see for years," Shaver says.

When she's not working, Shaver and her husband like to walk their dog on the jetties at Packery Channel. "It's our natural aquarium; you can see green turtles swimming all around."

Sometimes on their way into town they will slip into the quirky, cozy Dragonfly restaurant, where chef Dominique Cordier, a cruise ship



FEATURED ATTRACTIONS (LEFT - RIGHT):

- ★ Donna Shaver at Malaquite Beach, Padre Island National Seashore
- ★ Texas State Aquarium
- ★ South Texas Botanical Gardens
- ★ Cyclists on the seawall at North Bayfront Park

threatened or endangered sea turtle species (green, loggerhead, hawksbill and leatherback).

The number of Kemp's ridley nests reached a low point of only 702 worldwide in 1985, a dramatic drop from an estimated 121,500 nests recorded in Tamaulipas, Mexico, in 1947. Padre Island National Seashore listed a record 219 Kemp's ridley nests in 2017, and a total 353 statewide.

During the April to mid-July

back and forth — *boom, boom, boom.*

"If you are standing there, you can feel the vibrations in the sand through your feet and up your legs," Shaver says. "I've heard people say, 'Oh, I saw a turtle dancing!' That's a good way to describe it."

Mother then returns to the water and swims away. She will not return to the eggs. The seashore program improves their 1-in-400 odds of survival by digging them up and taking them to a hatchling station, where they are kept in sand, in boxes similar to beer coolers, until they hatch.

"June is a great month for visitors because typically that's when our free public hatchling releases start," says Shaver, who has participated in almost 750 such events. "We have about 25 releases of Kemp's ridley sea turtle hatchlings from June through mid-August, depending on when the eggs are laid."

chef for many years, brings his own French flair to the Padre Island palate.

After leaving Shaver's office, I drive farther down the island to Malaquite Pavilion and join a few isolated couples for a mid-morning beach walk. The area's expansive state and national parks and refuges offer bountiful opportunities for boating, swimming, fishing, camping and bird-watching.

A cotillion of royal terns is posted at the surf's edge, picking at what the receding waves leave behind. The sand beneath my toes and the sea breeze across my face are invigorating.

All this works up an appetite, and Taqueria Jalisco is just the spot to deal with that.

Jalisco is a Corpus staple. Most mornings, cars pack its various-location drive-up windows for its breakfast tacos. I beat the lunch swarm to Taqueria Jalisco No. 1 on South Port Avenue. The tables are mostly full, the staff's busy, and



Clockwise from top: The illuminated Harbor Bridge connects downtown Corpus Christi to North Beach's attractions. The Texas Surf Museum displays vintage surfboards and showcases the state's surfing culture. The Art Museum of South Texas features regional visual fine art and offers a variety of workshops and classes.





MORE INFO:

PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

(361) 949-8068
www.nps.gov/pais

TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM

(361) 881-1200
www.texasstateaquarium.org

USS LEXINGTON

(361) 888-4873
usslexington.com

SOUTH TEXAS BOTANICAL GARDENS

(361) 852-2100
www.stxbot.org

TEXAS SURF MUSEUM

(361) 882-2364
www.texasurfmuseum.org

ART MUSEUM OF SOUTH TEXAS

(361) 825-3500
www.artmuseumofsouthtexas.org

the room's buzzing with Spanish conversations and laughter.

Another Shaver favorite, the Texas State Aquarium, provides a fascinating place to walk off some calories.

The aquarium, renovated in 2017, has 320 species of exotic fish, mammals and birds on its 7.3-acre North Beach site. It also operates a separate Wildlife Rescue and Recovery Center to rehabilitate stranded and injured local animals and birds.

Moments into my visit, I become engrossed with an employee feeding Zena, a 2-year-old Linnaeus two-toed sloth hanging upside down from a tree in the Caribbean Journey section.

There's no hurrying Zena. She spends 20 minutes on a nut before reaching for her favorite diet staple, uber-green romaine lettuce (Fun fact: Two-toed sloths are so slow that algae can grow in their fur, giving them a greenish, camouflaging tint in the wild).

I move on to Underwater World, where great sand sharks cruise a 400,000-gallon habitat among other fetching fish.

A little boy and his mom move past smaller observation tanks. The boy stops at every portal, points and says, "Shark!" His mother patiently corrects

him with the proper fish name at each stop. Undeterred, the boy moves on to the next display. "Shark!"

Next door, a big Blue Ghost beckons.

More than 7 million visitors have walked 1943-commissioned USS Lexington's decks since she opened as a naval aviation museum in 1992. The world's oldest aircraft carrier is rife with historical detail and cool planes. "The Blue Ghost," as it is known, starred as the USS Hornet and a Japanese ship during filming for the 2001 film *Pearl Harbor*. It remains ship-shape and ready for its close-up.

The next morning begins with a visit to the 182-acre South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center on the far edge of the city's Southside zone.

Locals birthed the privately funded gardens in 1983 when there was nothing but fields nearby, executive director Michael Womack says. Since moving in 1996 to its current site along Oso Creek, the complex is part of a cobbled greenbelt adjacent to the creek that a spreading Corpus is trying to protect, stretching from Oso Bay to the edge of King Ranch.

"Every time you come you will see something different," says Womack, involved here for 20 years. "You

DALLAS/FORT WORTH

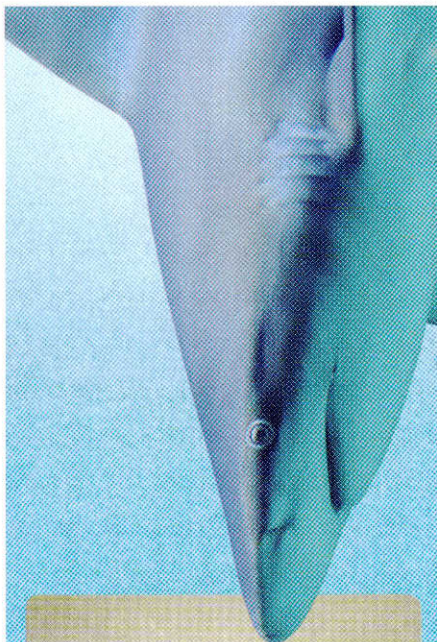
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Corpus Christi



 TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM

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will see different flowers in bloom, different birds or animals.”

Two miles of trails wind through gardens and conservatories of orchids, bromeliads, roses and plumeria. Wetlands cover 165 acres.

Don't leave town without getting a taste of the city's vibrant local art community.

Southside's Art Center of Corpus Christi has a mission to nurture regional artists. Its hallways and exhibition space pop with lively regional works; some brighten the adjacent Citrus Bayfront Bistro. The Art Museum of South Texas features 100 pieces of Mexican folk art gathered over the past two decades among its 1,500 permanent works.

The museums extend their hours the first Friday of each month during Artwalk, when La Retama Park is filled with music, food trucks and art vendors.

At Southside's Water Street Market, the Texas Surf Museum (“Just like the waves, the museum is free!”) is a visual feast of the state's underappreciated surfing culture. Every imaginable type of surfboard is on display.

Moving through a courtyard to the Executive Surf Club (a live music, food and craft beer haven for locals), you'll find tiled stars marking the

South Texas Music Walk of Fame. The walk, founded in 2004, honors South Texas musical artists in diverse musical traditions. Each year on the first Friday of June, six new stars are added, with a flurry of parties and live music. Among the honorees: Guy Clark, Selena, Freddy Fender, Flaco Jiménez, Doug Sahm, George Strait and Kris Kristofferson.

There is no live music on the Surf Club patio this night, but an eclectic group of locals filters through.

Deep into the club's funky buzz, Shaver's recent comments about her adopted home reverberate.

“I love living by the water, being by the water. I couldn't imagine not being by the water now.” ★



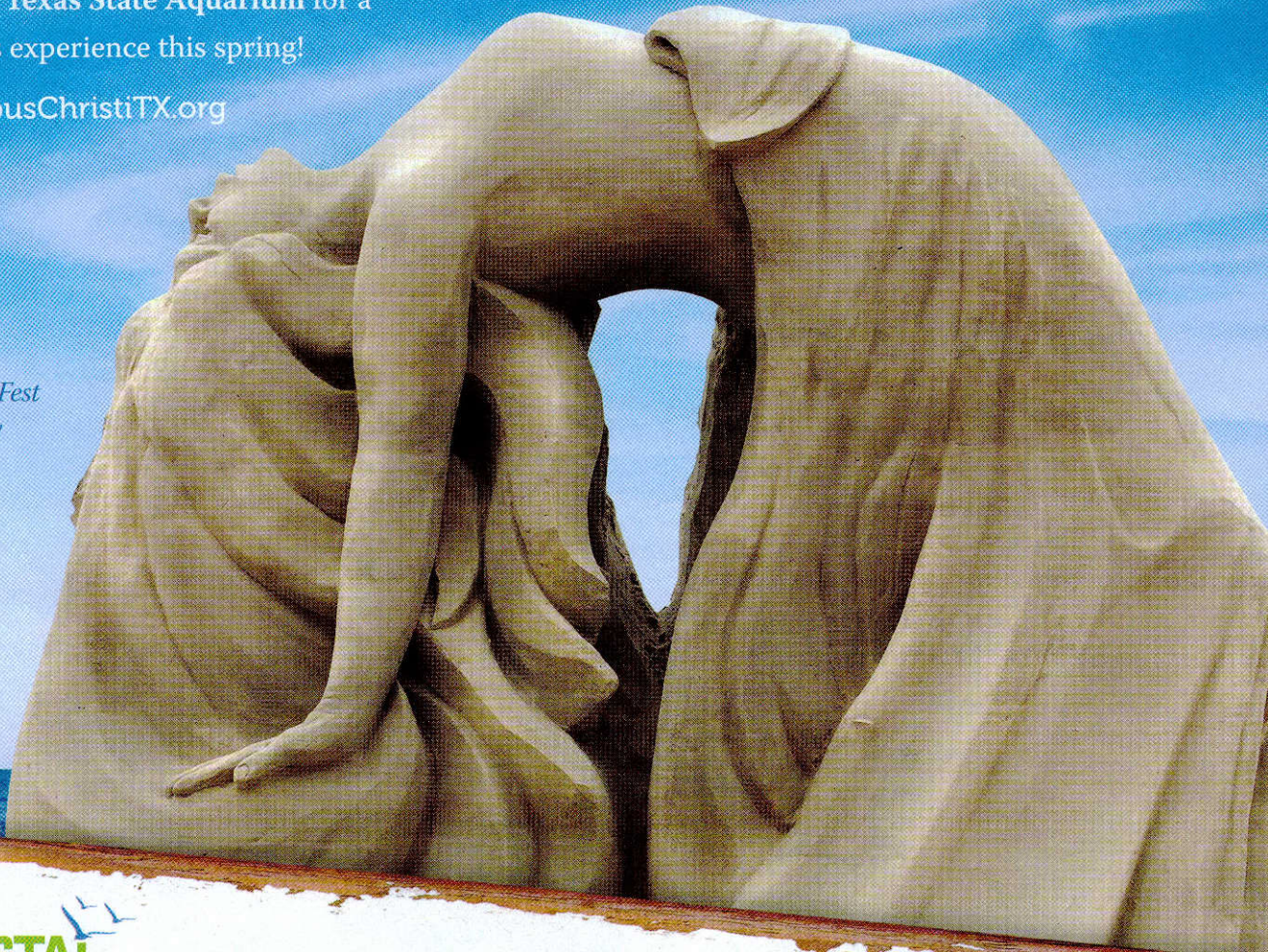
Cyclists ride the trail along the bay at Cole Park (above), which also features a playground, pier and skate park. A Día de los Muertos mural brings color to the pedestrian staircase at Starr Street and Broadway in downtown Corpus Christi.

reDiscover BEAUTY ON THE BEACH

Visit Corpus Christi and the Texas Coastal Bend where sandcastles rise to a whole new level (*literally*), with sculpting masters from around the globe creating epic sculptures this April at Texas SandFest. Want more? We've got a smorgasbord of spring festivals including Fiesta de la Flor, Oysterfest, The Birdiest Festival in America and Buc Days. Come down for a combo of beach, festival and fun—and loop in a trip to the massive USS Lexington and the newly expanded Texas State Aquarium for a can't-miss experience this spring!

VisitCorpusChristiTX.org

*Texas SandFest
sculpture by
Jeff Strong*





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Coastal Bend United is a non-profit coalition of ten Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce created to support small businesses affected by Hurricane Harvey in the Coastal Bend. The best way that you, as a Texan, can help your neighbors is to rediscover the coast. Come visit. Eat in our restaurants. Shop in our stores. Swim on our beaches. Stay for a while. **We appreciate your support.** CoastalBendUnited.org

TUBING RIVERS

When you examine a map of the 11,000-plus rivers and streams that crisscross our state, Texas looks like a giant water park. We have 40,000 miles of waterways offering relief from the sizzling June sun. For an easy way to cool off, grab some friends and an inner tube, and you're all set for a refreshing and relaxing summer day.

BY KAYLA MEYERTONS



COMAL RIVER • NEW BRAUNFELS

Although it's the shortest river in Texas, the Comal River (pictured here) is long on fun. Beginning at Comal Springs in Landa Park, the river flows 2.5 miles through New Braunfels until it joins the Guadalupe River. The spring-fed Comal provides clear water at a refreshing 70–72 degrees, perfect for tubing. The City Tube Chute offers some excitement on an otherwise relaxing float.

FRIO RIVER • CONCAN

Cold and secluded, the Frio River is ideal for escaping the summertime crowds. A Hill Country beauty, the Frio passes high limestone bluffs, shady cypress sentinels and lots of scenic Texas countryside. Access can be found near Leakey, Concan and Garner State Park.

GUADALUPE RIVER • NEW BRAUNFELS

The most popular river to tube in Texas, the Guadalupe can get crowded and rowdy on summer weekends. Ever-changing, the Guadalupe's flow fluctuates with the release rate of water from Canyon Dam, from calm to raging. The Guadalupe's fast water is shaded by stately pecan and bald cypress trees. There are plenty of outfitters to choose from between New Braunfels and Canyon Dam.

MEDINA RIVER • BANDERA

The calm, more secluded Medina River offers a picturesque tubing experience for all ages. Small rapids occur along the winding, crystal-clear river, but the experience is mostly one of beauty and relaxation, with only one caution: Look out for low branches.





Survival

Tired of fighting the choppy waves along the seawall in Seadrift, the paddlers of team Double the Dose pull their canoe ashore and start dragging it toward the Texas Water Safari finish line. They're so desperate to complete the 260-mile Texas Water Safari, they don't care whether they finish on land or water.

Once across the finish line, one team member flops onto the ground face-first, utterly exhausted from their two-day expedition down the San Marcos and Guadalupe rivers.

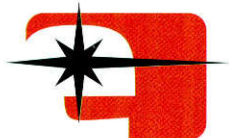
He lies there motionless, his eyes closed, his arms helplessly by his side, his standard-issue orange life jacket bunched up around his neck. This is what "the world's toughest canoe race" will do to you.

of the Fittest

Days and nights of struggle face the paddlers of the Texas Water Safari.

Other finishers are sprawled nearby, too, in chairs, on mats or on the grass. Their hands are blistered, their feet are waterlogged, and every part of their bodies aches from days of nonstop paddling. A stone marker nearby states that the race they just completed "is known throughout the world as the ultimate test of endurance, strength and will."

"I don't think people can really appreciate it until they've done it," says Bob Spain, head race judge and four-time racer. "There are longer races, but they don't have all the portages, they don't have the logjams, they don't have the bay you have to cross. There are all these obstacles that make this much more than just a flat-water canoe race. It's survival of the fittest."



by Russell Roe



AT THE STARTING LINE

The 55th running of the Texas Water Safari starts on a sunny Saturday morning in June at Spring Lake, the headwaters of the San Marcos River. A record number of boats — 141 — crowd the clear, spring-fed waters of the lake, once home to the Aquarena Springs theme park. The paddlers face a deadline of 100 hours to make it to the coastal hamlet of Seadrift.

Solo boats, two-person boats, sleek six-person carbon racing boats, homemade boats, plastic kayaks and summer-camp-style aluminum canoes fill the lake. The race's only rule: the boat must be human-powered. Teams may receive water, ice and food along the way, but they must take everything else with them.

Competitors are a mix of old-timers and young guns. Race veteran John Bugge is hoping to complete his 39th safari. The Cowboys, a team of six men in cowboy hats, are back, as expected. Curt Slaten's going solo in a boat that broke up a few years earlier in the first big rapid in the race. Gray Powell and Jeff Davis and the 24 other novice teams — a record — are bursting with nervous anticipation, hoping but not knowing if they have what it takes to finish.

A five-woman boat expected to be a top contender has the bad luck of being stuck on one of the last starting rows. Team member Holly Orr says their priority is to pass as many boats as possible before the first portage over the dam at the foot of the lake.

AND THEY'RE OFF...

A starting horn blasts to begin the race, and the lake becomes a flurry of paddles powering through the water, a chaotic jumble of canoes jockeying for position.

Along the shore, glass-bottom boats stand tethered to the dock, the only remaining signs of the lake's

On the Friday before the race, paddlers double-check their gear and supplies at the check-in tent in San Marcos. On race morning, teams take their positions in Spring Lake and wait for the start.



theme park days. The mermaids and swimming pigs that made Aquarena Springs a popular destination have been long gone; now they sound like the kind of things paddlers see in the section of the race known as Hallucination Alley.

In addition to hallucinations, challenges in the race include whitewater rapids, grueling portages, gear malfunction, logjams, snakes, alligators, too many spiders to count, vomiting (repeatedly), twisted ankles, sunburns, rashes, fevers, egg-frying Texas heat, broken boats and, just as likely, broken wills.

"Our strategy is the ER or the finish line," says Charles Hickman of the Hellgrammites, a team formed by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, which sponsors the race.

This first part of the race along the San Marcos River is characterized by splashy rapids, twisting channels and multiple dam portages. When the San Marcos reaches the Guadalupe, the river widens, and the race becomes a long slog to Victoria. Below Victoria, the river gets slower and swampier. Finally, there's the crossing of San

Antonio Bay, which often proves to be the biggest wild card in the race.

"This is a race that literally gets worse and worse all the way to the end," says 10-time finisher Tim Curry, who is competing in a three-man boat.

The water safari began in 1962 when Frank Brown and Bill "Big Willie" George decided to see if they could take their fishing boat from San Marcos to Corpus Christi. The next year, they organized the first Texas Water Safari and invited other adventurers to follow their river journey.

Allen Spelce, Texas Water Safari president, says that traditionally, the water safari attracted paddlers from towns along the river, but it has grown over the years to draw national and international racers.

Joe Mann traveled from Missouri to compete.

"If you paddle competitively, you know the Texas Water Safari," he says, describing the safari as the mountain bike version of a canoe race, with all the obstacles and portages. "It's a magical, mystical legend of a race."

Rio Vista Dam presents a major challenge early in the race. Some teams run the falls, while others choose to portage around to avoid a swamping.

TROUBLE AHEAD

For Slaten, it doesn't take long for trouble to strike. This time, he flips his boat in the first bend in the river.

"I just didn't get around that first turn," he says, hoping it wasn't a bad omen for the rest of the race.

Luckily, nothing breaks this time. When he gets to the big rapid at Rio Vista Dam where he previously crashed, he wisely decides to portage.

At Cottonseed, one of the best-known rapids on the river at Mile 9, crowds gather to watch the paddlers navigate the rocks and tricky turns that have spilled many a boat over the years. If there's a place to crash, this is it.

Team Touch of Gray, a six-man boat with experienced paddlers who are heavily favored to win the race, makes it through smoothly, the bowmen drawing the front of the long boat around to avoid the old concrete dam.

The Cowboys, a crowd favorite, elicit whoops as they come through.

"Let's go, Cowboys!" some fans shout. The outside of the boat displays the whimsical race names of the men: Possum Belly, Pole Cat, Blister and others. The cowboy hats worn by the team members give them a trademark style.

"There's a practical reason for the hats," says longtime Cowboy John Mark Harras. "They provide lots of shade, plus the hat takes a shot before your head does if you run into a branch or something."

Harras has 31 safari finishes to his name and says the Cowboys have operated as a six-man team since 2003.

Slaten misjudges the turn at Cottonseed and swamps his boat again. He pulls his boat onto the remains of the dam to assess the damage. He's lost his headlamp and all his batteries — gear he will desperately miss during the two nights of paddling ahead of him.

Powell, of the novice team, says the crowds along the San Marcos portion add to his excitement. "There are so many people cheering you on. It gets your adrenaline going. We put 'No Sleep Till Seadrift' on the side of the boat, and I don't know how many comments we got on that."

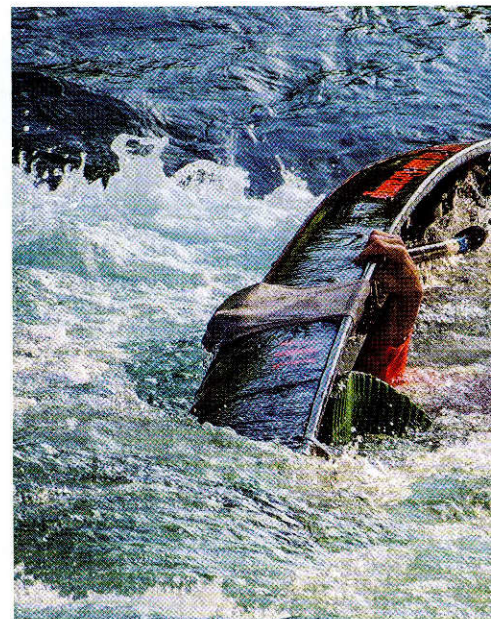
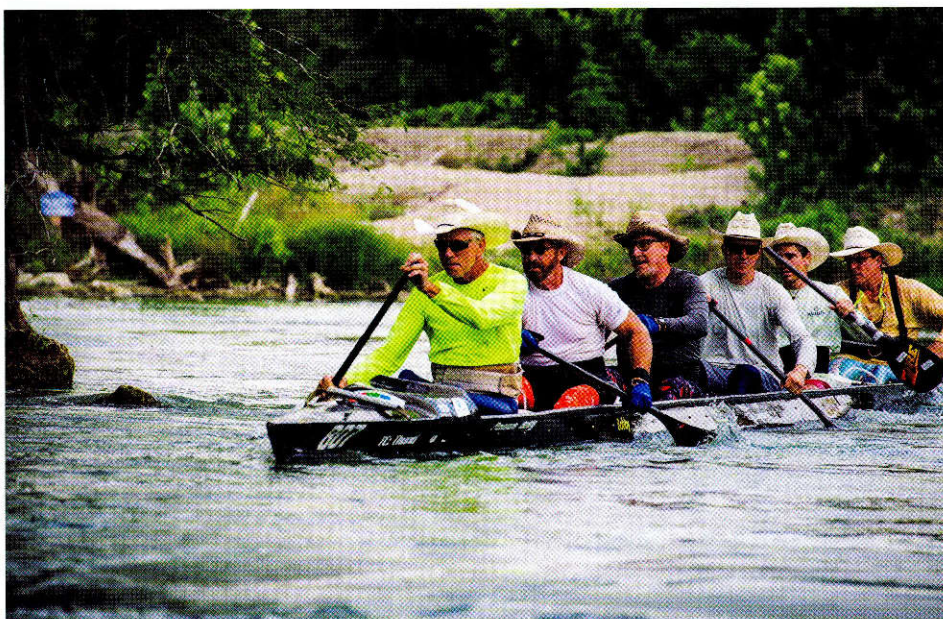
From there, the paddlers make their way through Staples, Luling and

her aluminum canoe for ballast and continued down the river.

"I don't think anybody expected me to keep going," she says.

Exhausted, she considered quitting at every checkpoint, but people encouraged her to go on. She made the cutoff times at the checkpoints and thought she might be capable of finishing.

The logjams proved to be a challenge for James. The most brutal portages happen along the river south of Victoria, and every year teams get lost or give up there. Battling fatigue, mosquitoes and hallucinations, James portaged her aluminum canoe by herself up and over the logjams.



"We've been doing this for so long," he says. "We do it because we love the river. We'll see parts of the river and remember a story from 25 years ago."

The five-woman boat, the Miss Fits, passes several teams by the time it reaches Cottonseed Rapid. The women, with matching blue shirts and Orr working the stern, look like a model of paddling efficiency. Except for short stops at the checkpoints, they plan to paddle continuously for the 43 hours it will take to reach the finish. Orr says each team member is allowed to take a one-minute break every hour and a half to eat, drink, pee and take care of any body maintenance issues. Otherwise, it's paddle, paddle, paddle.

Palmetto State Park, portaging over several dams along the way. The top teams approach Gonzales as the long, dark night starts to settle in.

At Gonzales, the San Marcos River meets the Guadalupe, and the river gets bigger and wider. In the long middle section of the race, racers just hunker down and keep paddling.

"That middle section is just drudgery," Curry says.

WINNERS NEVER QUIT

One of the Miss Fits, Melissa James, says that when she did the race a couple of years earlier, her partner decided to quit at Gonzales. She, however, wasn't ready to give up. She put a big log in the front of

She fought her way across the bay, and, once on the other side, she began walking in the knee-deep water toward the finish, pulling her boat behind her.

"I got to the seawall and saw the crowd waiting for me and cheering me on," she says, adding that it was one of the most emotional moments of the race.

Unfortunately, she arrived a little too late — finishing one hour and one minute past the 100-hour cutoff time.

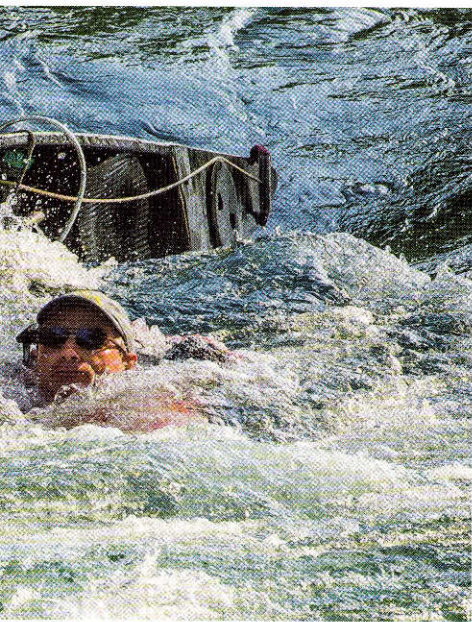
Her teammate Orr says that despite James' time disqualification, her perseverance caught the eye of experienced paddlers. She was asked to join the Miss Fits despite having the least experience of the group.

THROUGH THE NIGHT

Orr, James and the Miss Fits blast through Gonzales and paddle through the night, passing checkpoints such as Hochheim and Cheapside, outposts that don't mean anything to ordinary people but loom large in the consciousness of safari veterans.

Teams stream into Cuero throughout the day Sunday as the racers spread out along the course of the river.

Bugge, a race legend, pulls into the Cuero checkpoint complaining about back pain. Bugge has finished the safari 38 times and is determined to finish his 39th. In addition to the snack-size bags of candy and caramel popcorn neatly secured to the inside of



his boat, Bugge brings along a variety of lotions, tinctures and painkillers.

The rivalry between Bugge and the Mynar family is one for the ages in safari lore. During the 1980s and '90s, Bugge's boat and the Mynar brothers' boat took turns winning the safari every year. Few people could challenge their dominance.

"It's been described as the Hatfields and McCoys," Spelce says. "The rivalry did get heated."

Slaten pulls into Cuero a few minutes after Bugge. He complains to Mike Drost, his resupply man, about fatigue, the heat, the sun and his rough night.

"My will is continuously being tested!" Slaten says.

Between Cuero and Victoria, trouble shows up in an unexpected place — Nursery Rapids.

Larry and Sonja St. Clair of team GDFR are entering their second night of no sleep, and after making it through the rapid, they start to fall asleep in the boat. They forget that there's one more section of rough water.

"I heard the roar of the rapid," Sonja says. "I opened my eyes at the last second and there's a huge boulder in front of me."

They hit the rock. Their boat gets pinned against it and fills up with water. In the darkness of the night, it takes them more than an hour to free it.



HALLUCINATION ALLEY

Victoria represents a landmark destination on the race, sitting at Mile 200 of the 260-mile race. If paddlers think the race is almost over, they should think again.

"Those are the most brutal 60 miles of the race," says Karim Aziz, who has finished the safari nine times. "From Victoria on down, you're entering a whole new world."

The river is sinewy, slow and swampy. If there are logjams, this is where they'll be. Many teams are fighting fatigue as they enter their second night in this stretch. While some teams have stopped to nap, others are paddling straight through. Most teams at this point are dealing

The Cowboys, with their trademark hats, are longtime competitors in the Texas Water Safari. Joseph Geisinger finds himself waterlogged when his canoe flips over in a rapid. Members of team Double Trouble work together to portage their boat over the dam at Staples.

with body issues, psychological stress, stomach problems and sleep deprivation. Constant exertion starts to warp the mind. The body starts consuming itself. Hallucinations are so common that this section is known as Hallucination Alley.

"Funny things happen," Aziz says. "Your lights reflect off the trees, and

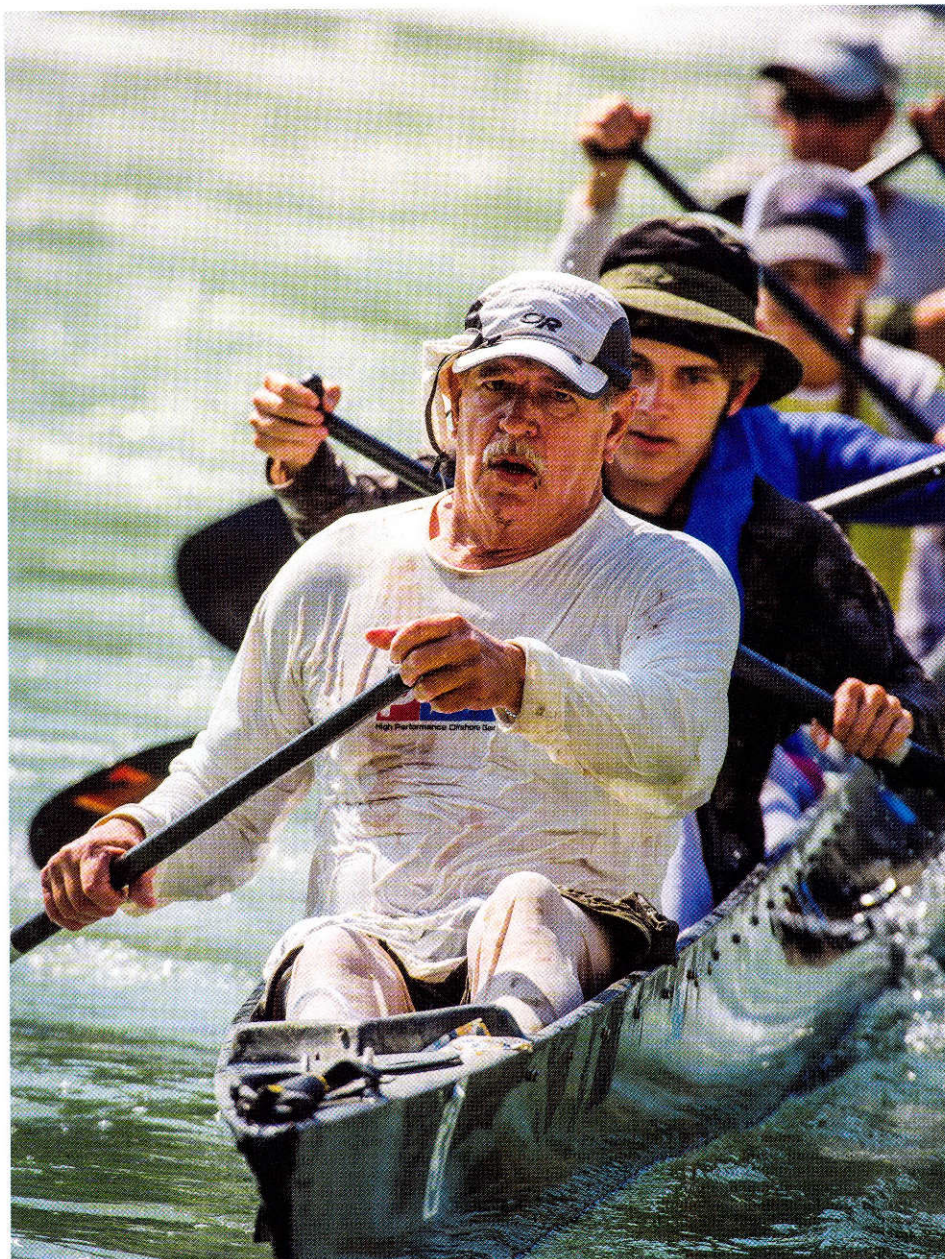
you see things in the trees. Everybody sees them. Most common are clown faces — faces the size of a two-story house. When the wind blows, the faces move. It'll freak you out."

Paddlers might see Mickey Mouse running along the bank. Sometimes, he says, it looks as if you're going uphill, and sometimes the river appears to come to an end.

Powell claims that every stick he sees in the river turns into some kind of animal.

"I swear I saw a hippo in the river," he says.

Slaten thinks seriously about quitting the race on this stretch. Since he lost his lights at Cottonseed, he's tried to keep up with other boats with



lights during the nighttime stretches. On this night, he's paddling with some other boats, and then, all of a sudden, he isn't. It's dark, he's alone, and he doesn't see any boats for a long time. In the winding watercourse of the lower Guadalupe, he thinks he might have taken a wrong turn.

"I thought: 'Am I going the wrong way?'" Slaten says later. "I kind of had an emotional breakdown."

After Hallucination Alley, the crossing of San Antonio Bay remains the last major obstacle of the race.

"The bay crossing is sometimes the worst part of the race," Aziz says. "It can take you an hour and a half to cross, or it can take you 24 hours."

The safari conducted a record five bay rescues in 2017.

"A number of novice teams got down to the bay after paddling 254 miles and, unfortunately — whether they were exhausted, disoriented or had just had enough — had to fire off their flares," Spelce says.

Erin Magee, a veteran solo paddler, makes it most of the way across the bay before the wind and choppy waves start pushing her back. She doesn't want to risk flipping her boat, so she just lets the wind blow her back across the bay. She spends a lonely night by herself on a point of land and tries the bay crossing again the next morning.

CROSSING THE FINISH LINE

At the finish line on Sunday night, the air is thick with the smell of saltwater. A modest, weather-beaten sign with the words "Texas Water Safari" on one side and "Finish Line" on the other mark the end of the race. Lights from the Seadrift pier cast a glow across the water. Cheers go up as the crowd spots the first boat in the darkness. It is, of course, Touch of Gray, the six-man team that was never seriously challenged in the race, finishing in 36 hours and 50 minutes.

Pete Binion, who has finished the safari more than two dozen times, paddles in the front of a boat filled with various family members. A six-person team headed toward Seadrift enters San Antonio Bay, at the mouth of the Guadalupe River, as the sun sets.

At the finish in Seadrift, boats are lined up as competitors recover from the grueling race. Members of team Touch of Gray celebrate their safari victory; they finished the 260-mile course in 36 hours and 50 minutes. Fourteen-year-old Payton Binion is welcomed at the finish as he completes his first safari.

The Cowboys finish later that night, as do the Miss Fits. Slaten arrives around noon on Monday. Powell and Davis finish Monday night — the “No Sleep Till Seadrift” paddlers can finally get some shut-eye.

Spelce says that one year, amid the relief and chaos of finishing, a team of paddlers fired off their red aerial flare in celebration; they were disqualified for using the flare in a non-emergency situation.

Paddlers continue to arrive over the next day and a half, finishing with a mixture of exhilaration and exhaustion.

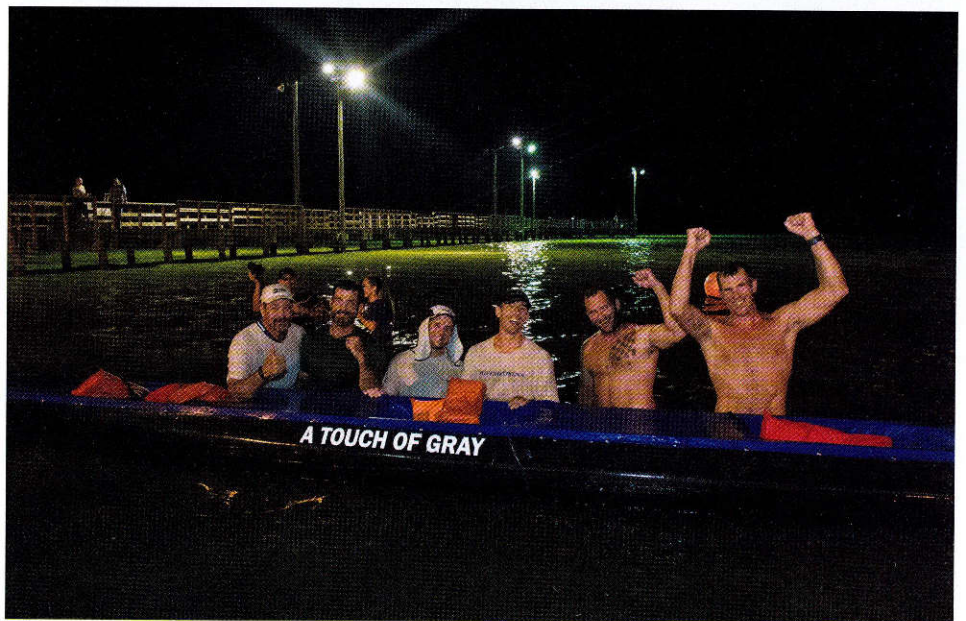
“We can make ourselves do things we didn’t know we could do,” Aziz says. “It’s amazing. The race pushes you to those limits. And beyond. And beyond that.”

The last boat on the course belongs to 72-year-old Owen West, the man who has entered the Texas Water Safari more times than any other person — every year since 1969. West has finished the race 27 times, but he hasn’t completed it in the past several years. This time, with two grown grandsons in his boat, he makes every checkpoint along the way before the cutoff times. Four days after starting the race, he makes it across the bay, with the finish line almost in sight. Unfortunately, with just a mile to go, time runs out for West.

“He got all the way down there,” Spelce says. “I really thought this was going to be his year.”

The safari defeats some paddlers. It lifts others up, and it puts all of them through a grueling test of endurance and will. For West, and for all the other paddlers, there’s always next year.

Russell Roe, managing editor of Texas Parks & Wildlife, followed the safari from San Marcos to the coast in 2017 and plans to watch the first portions of the race this year.



TPWD
guidelines
help you
fill your
yard with
butterflies,
birds and
bees.

On the **WINGS of** **POLLINATORS**

by Melissa Gaskill





Jim and Mitzi Wittliff

Jim Wittliff steers a well-traveled four-by-four utility vehicle down a slope and stops to point out piles of brush surrounding small trees. The brush, he explains, protects the seedlings from browsing deer, trampling livestock, wind and rain. Wittliff and his wife, Mitzi, have spent the past few years making these and other improvements on their 300-acre Blanco County ranch, Agarita Hills, which has been in the family for 150 years.

The Wittliffs based many of their improvements on land management guidelines developed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to support native pollinators. Their efforts created an oasis of native plants that attract pollinators (as well as a wildlife tax valuation). But, as the couple zigzags across the property's gently rolling hills, naming dozens of species of trees, grasses and wildflowers, it becomes clear the tax break was merely a bonus.

TPWD's pollinator guidelines join

a flurry of pollinator programs from other organizations and agencies. Examples include Texan by Nature's Monarch Wrangler; the National Wildlife Federation's Butterfly Heroes and Mayor's Monarch Pledge; the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service's Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project; and Monarch Joint Venture (which involves the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service, the Native Plant Society of Texas, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower

Center, the Nature Conservancy, TPWD and dozens of other partners). All represent a response to dramatic declines in populations of the native insects that pollinate wildflowers and agricultural crops. For example, the population of monarchs, those iconic butterflies that migrate through Texas every spring and fall, has plummeted 90 percent in the past 20 years. The U.S. also has lost more than 50 percent of the managed European honeybee colonies that provide pollination services for agriculture.

PRODUCE PRODUCERS

A vital part of natural ecosystems and agriculture alike, pollination is the transfer of pollen grains from the male part, or anther, of one plant to the female part, or stigma, of another. This fertilization results in development of seeds and fruits, which are the means of reproduction for the plant as well as sources of food for people and animals. Some plants self-pollinate, but many rely on insects, birds, bats or wind to transfer pollen between different plants. This cross-pollination creates



PHOTO © JOSE MADRICAL

greater genetic diversity and, overall, a healthier plant community.

As much as 80 percent of all plant species need pollinators, including the majority of flowering plants in diverse ecosystems across Texas. On the agricultural side, insects pollinate U.S. crops with an estimated annual worth of more than \$15 billion. Bees alone pollinate 30 percent of our food sources, including apples, tomatoes, broccoli, sunflowers, strawberries, nuts and onions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture lists 130 crops pollinated by bees. Livestock crops such as alfalfa and clover also rely on insect pollinators.

Many crops, including blueberries, grapes, olives, peanuts, pumpkins, squash, strawberries and tomatoes, are more effectively pollinated by native bees than the non-native honeybee. The added benefit to farmers is that pollination by native bees is essentially free, as opposed to leasing commercial honeybee hives for crop pollination. The pollination service provided to U.S. agriculture by native bees has been estimated to be more than \$3 billion annually.

Texas has several hundred native bee species, including bumblebees, carpenter bees, mason bees, leafcutter bees and long-horned bees. These species play a critical role in the maintenance of various ecosystems, pollinating plants that produce food for native birds, mammals and other insects. Bees tend to be more effective pollinators than other insects such as beetles, butterflies, moths and wasps, transferring pollen from flower to flower as they collect it to feed their offspring. A female bee may visit several hundred flowers a day and pollinate 5,000 blossoms in her lifetime. Bees also tend to visit only the flowers of one particular species on any one foraging trip, ensuring that pollen is transferred between flowers of the same species.

Butterflies pollinate many species of wildflowers, primarily those that are brightly colored, grow in clusters, stay open during the day and have flat surfaces for landing. In addition, butterflies are themselves food for birds, small animals and other insects.



PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

CREATING HABITAT

The possibility of losing the valuable services of native pollinators spurred TPWD to look at how to encourage landowners to create wildlife management plans that protect and support these species. Private landowner involvement is critical because more than 95 percent of Texas land is privately owned. The resulting "Management Recommendations for Native Insect Pollinators in Texas" outlines a variety of practices including prescribed burning, native plant reseeding, installation of native pollinator plots and creation of nest sites. Most apply to small backyards and large ranches alike.

Landowners who follow the management practices not only may qualify for an agricultural tax appraisal based on wildlife management use, but also create natural habitat that benefits farms and fields nearby in addition to their own property.

At Agarita Hills, the Wittliffs worked closely with Blake Hendon,

TPWD wildlife biologist for Blanco, Hays and Travis counties, employing a few of what Jim calls "country boy methods" to restore native vegetation. In addition to brush cages, they built slash piles and tepees to protect small seedlings, trimmed back junipers to increase plant diversity, and added berms of rock and brush, which Jim refers to as tranches, to slow runoff of water.

Trincheras is the Spanish word for trench, and many landowners use berms to slow water along with trenches to direct water to ponds or other impoundments, according to Hendon.

"Jim was initially excited about the construction of *trincheras* based on the idea of capturing water on the property," Hendon says. "Over the years, we've discussed the pros and cons of this type of manipulation, and based on those discussions, he has moved more to using brush and limbs placed on the ground to slow water, aid plant establishment, build soil and develop healthy plant communities."

Those healthy plant communities in turn serve to capture water, without the need for constructing impoundments.

In addition to selectively planting native trees and grasses, the Wittliffs routinely carry paper bags when out on their land. They fill these with seeds they hand-harvest from existing plants and, in the fall, scatter those seeds on areas where they notice that a particular plant seems to do well.

DON'T EAT THE DAISIES

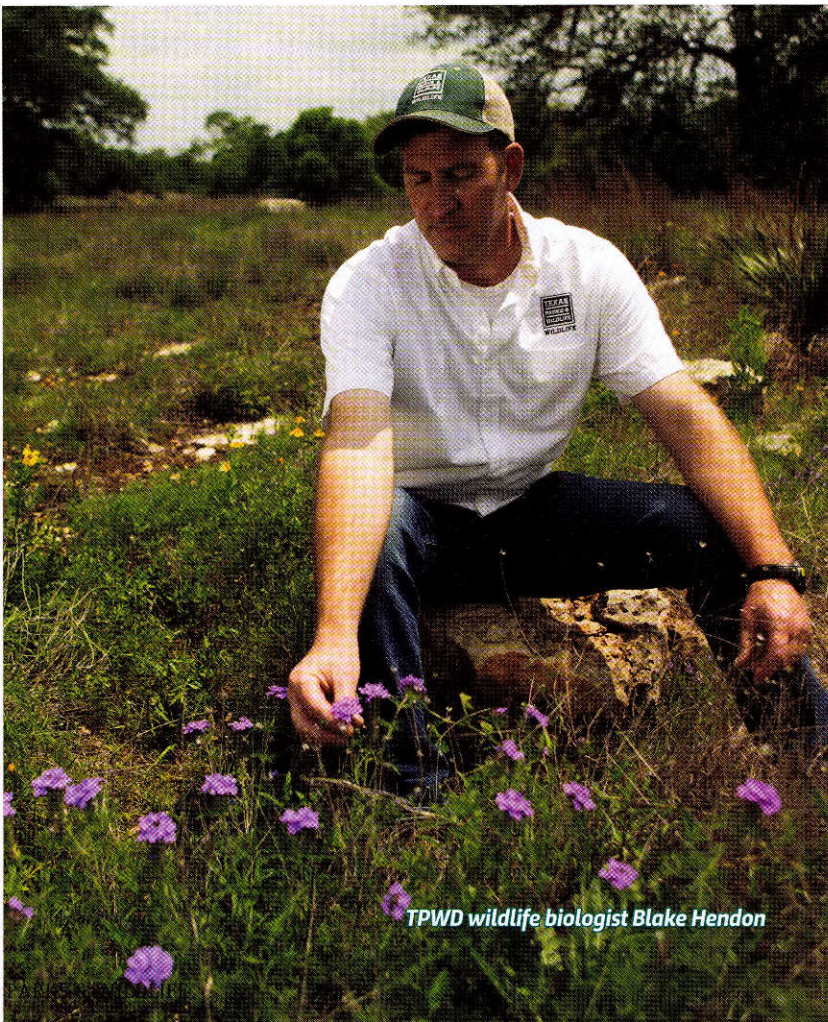
The Wittliffs completely removed livestock from the property roughly 10 years ago, but the TPWD guidelines note that cattle grazing intensity can be managed to protect and enhance nectar and pollen plants. Goats and sheep feed heavily on nectar- and pollen-bearing wildflowers and should not be grazed on land managed for pollinators. In addition, ponds, streams and other water sources may need protection from trampling by grazing livestock.

In the Texas Hill Country, browsing by deer limits the growth of many pollinator plants. So, Agarita Hills sports a two-acre plot surrounded by a deer-proof fence. Here, Jim and Mitzi planted a variety of native plants and regularly scatter those seeds they collect. Several years in, the plot bursts with mountain laurel, Engelmann daisy, Texas star, horsemint, bluebonnets, Indian blanket, big bluestem and more, the riotous growth ending abruptly at the fence line.

The addition of three ponds brought back a variety of native grasses around the property, and bushy bluestem and muhly grasses planted near natural seeps flourish. Healthy native plant ecosystems serve to improve the quality of water sources on the ranch. In addition, these plants support a variety of wildlife.

"When we first started, we didn't see any quail on the property," Jim says. "Now, we hear them all the time. We're returning the ranch to similar conditions that I enjoyed as a boy growing up. Just the least little bit of care makes a big difference."

PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



TPWD wildlife biologist Blake Hendon



PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER PHOTOGRAPHY

PLANTING FOR MONARCHS

On his family ranch in Crockett County, Philip Walker first started taking steps to improve the health of his land and the wildlife on it about 10 years ago. More recently, he connected with Texan by Nature and Monarch Watch to create better habitat specifically for monarchs. Walker planted a lot of antelope horn, one of 37 species of milkweed native to Texas. Monarchs lay their eggs only on milkweed, and the caterpillars rely on it for food. Loss of native milkweed and habitat is a primary factor behind the decline of the butterfly species.

“The ranch was overgrazed for many decades,” Walker says. “We started to incorporate prescribed fire, which has really turned the place around, along with some mechanical removal of cedar and planting of grasses and flowers.”

Expert input from the monarch programs and TPWD biologists Mary Humphrey and Joyce Moore has proved invaluable, Walker says.

“It’s been thrilling to see the land change, and it’s nice to have land to be able to do things like help out pollinators,” he says. “As far as we’re concerned, it’s part of being a good land steward. It’s part of the management, along with cattle, oil and gas, and hunting.”

Walker sees pollinators as the proverbial “canary in a coal mine” for a landowner.

“If the land is healthy for pollinators, that’s probably a good sign that it is healthy for everything else,” he says. “If you don’t have pollinators, you probably have a problem.”

His benefits didn’t end with healthy land, either.

“The icing on the cake through all these projects has been the great people we’ve met along the way,” Walker says. “People have given us their time, their knowledge and support. It’s been tremendous, the willingness to help wildlife. Wildlife people are passionate and organized.”

Writer Melissa Gaskill's Austin yard is designated a certified wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation and Texas Conservation Alliance.

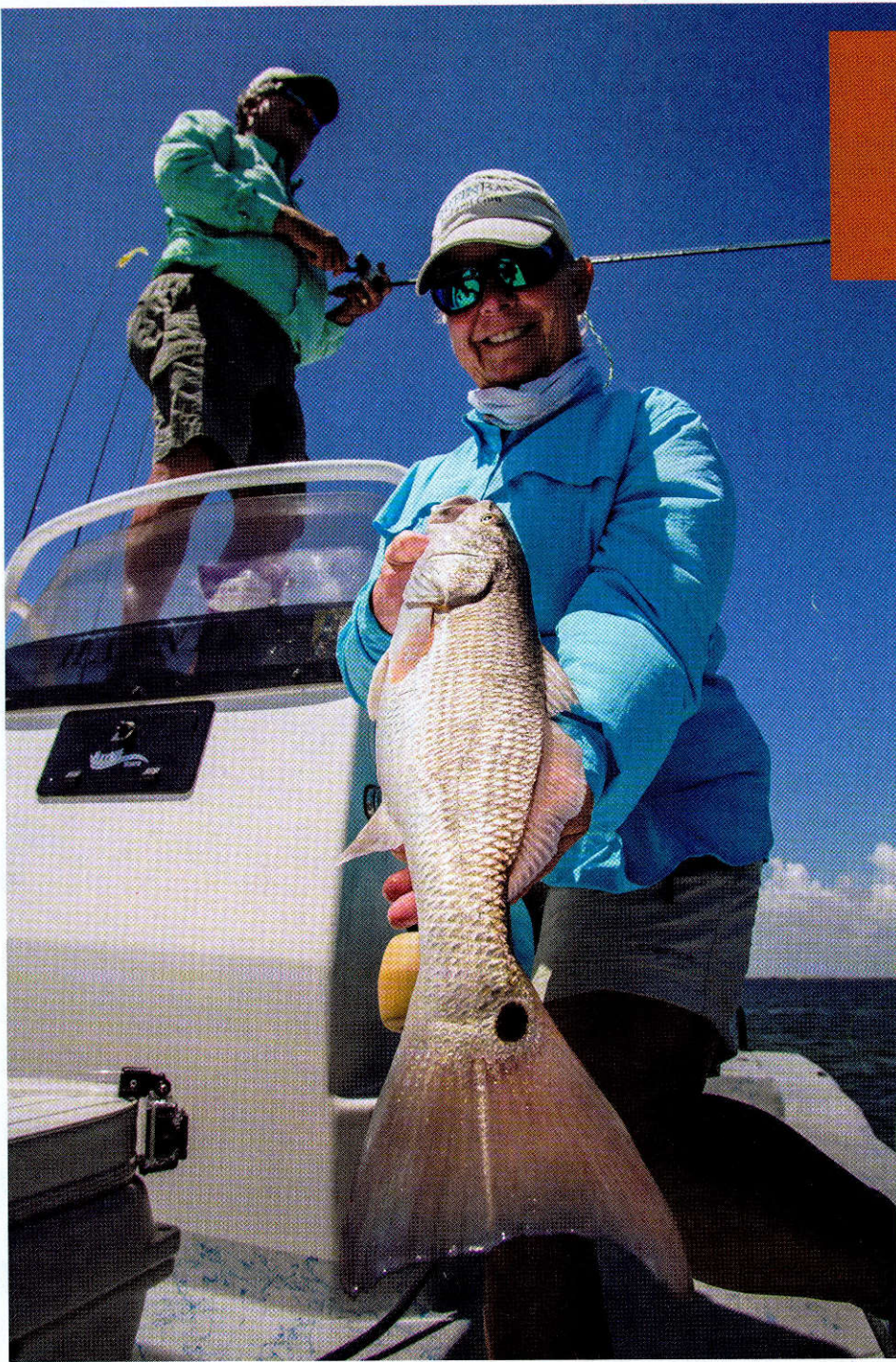


Bronze Beauty

Texans hunt for redfish in a wide variety of ways and places.



by Danno Wise
Photos by Chase Fountain



Fishing guide Sally Black (above) shows off a just-caught redfish in Baffin Bay. Aubrey and Sally Black (opposite page) of the Baffin Bay Rod and Gun Club take time to do a little fishing themselves.

Red drum, more commonly known as redfish, have always been a popular target species among anglers along the Texas coast. In fact, at one time, their popularity almost did them in — and at the same time led to their resurgence.

Gillnetters and commercial fishermen sought redfish to feed the blackened redfish food craze that started in the 1970s. Scarcity gave rise to the creation of the largest saltwater fishery conservation group in the country, the Coastal Conservation Association, which famously started as the Gulf Coast Conservation Association in a Houston tackle shop.

After decades of conservation, wise management and aggressive stocking programs by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, redfish are plentiful in every bay in Texas.

In large part due to the mystique surrounding this bronze beauty, it seems as if everyone wants to catch redfish. There are just as many opinions on how best to do so. There's no single path to follow to consistently tangle with redfish. As this popular gamefish has multiplied, so have the methods that anglers have perfected to catch them.

As a result, the common question of "How do I catch a redfish?" can hardly be answered in a single sentence. But, that's one of the great things about the official state saltwater fish of Texas (as designated by the 82nd Legislature) — they can

be caught in a wide variety of ways and in different habitats. While reds can present a tactically challenging target for technically advanced anglers sight-casting on the skinny flats, they can also give a good pull for inexperienced fishermen. Along the Texas coast, anglers and guides have preferred methods and areas for targeting spottails.

BACK LAKES AND MARSHES

The Texas coast is peppered with back lakes, marshes and bayous. These small offshoots from the main bays are particularly prominent along the middle and upper Texas coasts. Although they are relatively small bodies of water, they can hold a surprising amount of redfish.

Captain Greg Verm, a Galveston guide, says he spends as much time as possible looking for redfish in these backwater areas.

“Our back lakes and bayous are loaded with reds, beginning in spring,” Verm says. “When water is flowing

out of backwater areas, fish will stack up in front of the drains and fishing can be phenomenal. Really, the back lakes hold fish throughout the year, but spring and fall are particularly good.”

SHALLOW FLATS

Fishing the flats for redfish is as iconic as it gets for Texas coastal fishermen. Sight-casting with artificial lures is the preferred method for Baffin Bay husband-and-wife guide team, Captains Aubrey and Sally Black. They don't get to fish together often, but when they do, they work efficiently, helping each other sight fish. Although Baffin is best known as a big trout destination — and the pair still target trophy trout — they've begun spending more time chasing what Sally refers to as the “ghosts of Baffin Bay.”

“Our fish don't leave like they do in most other bays,” Sally says, “so we end up catching some really big redfish in shallow water. That's what makes fishing for reds in Baffin so

cool. There are not many places where you can catch fish in the upper 30- to mid-40-inch range in a foot or two of water. But you can here!”

Most people think Baffin's water is too murky for sight-casting, but that's not true, Sally claims.

“Our grass has really flourished and, as a result, we have some really nice, clear flats that are awesome for sight-casting,” she says.

Port Mansfield guide Captain Steve “JR” Ellis also loves to sight-cast but prefers to use a fly rod.

“Fly fishing takes sight-casting to a whole different level,” Ellis says. “It's a more direct connection to the fish.”

Anglers can use a fly rod when wading, drifting or poling, even if the water's not completely calm.

“It's actually easier to see the fish with a little riffle on the surface,” he explains. “When it's too slick, the surface of the water reflects and makes it hard to see beneath. When there is a little riffle or even a slight chop, you can use the face (front) of





the wavelets like windows to see down into the water. So, while you do want it to be kind of calm for fly casting, you do want some wind to help you see the fish.”

Of course, not all anglers who use artificial lures are sight-fishing. Laguna Vista guide Captain Mike Mahl likes to power-drift the flats using popping corks with artificial lures pinned beneath.

“I like to cover a lot of water when I’m fishing for reds,” Mahl says. “I’ll work my popping corks a lot more aggressively than most people do. I also like to make long casts to cover a lot of water. A lot of times, I’ll hook a fish at the end of a long cast, so I use braided line (less stretch) to help set the hook.”

While many flats fishermen choose to target redfish with artificial lures and flies, just as many (or more) employ natural baits in various manners.

One such individual is Rockport

Sally Black and Tammy Jo Patrick head to one of their favorite wade-fishing spots in Baffin Bay. Patrick (opposite page) finds success while sight-casting in the shallows. Redfish are known for having a distinctive black dot on the tail.

guide Captain Scott McCune. Even Hurricane Harvey, which destroyed McCune’s home and ranch, couldn’t dampen this former rodeo competitor’s enthusiasm for fishing. His natural zeal is on full display as the “Saltwater Cowboy” and his pair of retrievers — Kona and Trigger — explore the bays surrounding Rockport in search of redfish.

“I’ll target redfish with live croaker and piggies (pinfish),” McCune says. “People think you only catch trout on those baits, but redfish will eat them, too. If we sit for 10 or 15 minutes without getting bit, we’ll move. We’ll do the same thing with live shrimp.”

McCune says sometimes he fishes these baits below corks, but he prefers to freeline them, using just a leader and hook.

“If the current is strong, I’ll add a little bit of weight,” he says, “but I like to keep my rigs simple.”

While speckled trout prefer live bait, redfish aren’t quite as picky and will readily gulp down dead baits as well. Port Isabel guide Captain Andy Salinas says his main method for catching redfish is using dead bait on the bottom.

“We can almost always catch

redfish using cut bait on the bottom,” Salinas says. “Whether it is ballyhoo, ladyfish or shad, redfish are attracted to those smelly, oily baits.”

Salinas says he prefers two methods: humping and anchoring up to fish potholes. Humping involves casting downwind from the boat and drifting toward the bait, then repeating the process again. This allows anglers to cover water while fishing a bottom rig.

“You won’t cover as much water when anchoring, so you need to pick a spot that is likely holding fish,” Salinas advises. “In either instance, the key is to look for baitfish activity or wakes or schools of redfish to let you know fish are in the area. Then, just let the scent of the bait draw them in.”

SURF AND JETTIES

One of the more fabled annual angling events — the bull redfish run — makes the surf and jetties popular venues among redfish hunters during late summer and fall. Captain Mike Segall, a Freeport guide, says anglers are missing out by targeting giant reds only at that time of year.

“There are bull reds at jetties all year-round,” Segall says. “During

winter and early spring, you'll find those bull reds in 28 to 40 feet of water. We just fish for them with sardines on bottom. They're there and they'll bite."

Good bull red action begins as soon as the water starts warming up.

"Of course, they will be there in even greater numbers in summer and fall," he says. "We'll fish for them pretty much the same way throughout the year, except in summer and fall we'll also see schools near the surface at times, which makes them much easier to target."

ANY TIME OF YEAR

It is also worth mentioning that there is no "season" — legal or otherwise — for catching redfish. While spring through fall are the most common times for fishermen to target reds, they can be caught throughout the winter as well. In fact, Captain Tommy Countz, a Matagorda guide, says some of his finest days have come in the dead of winter.

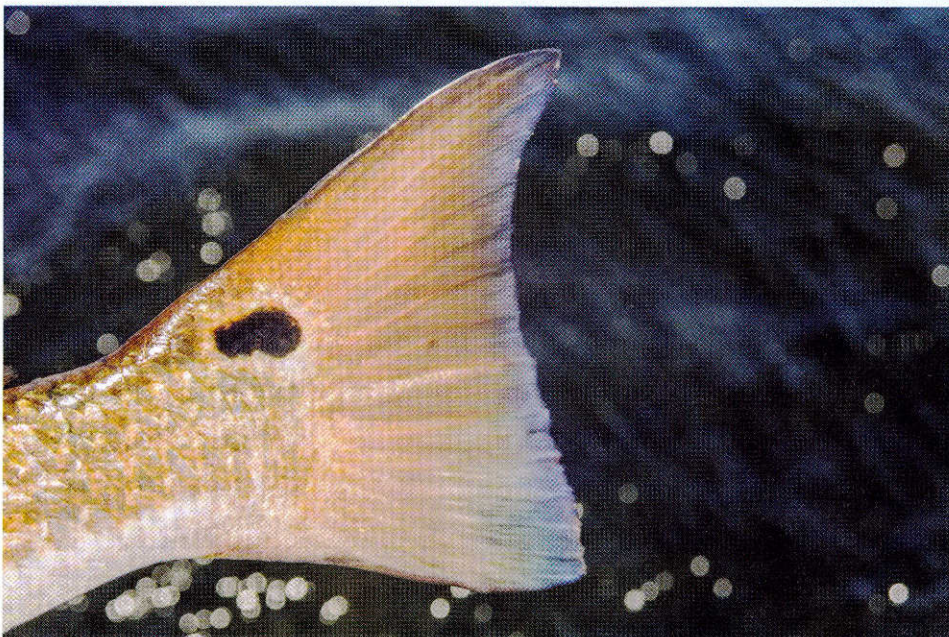
"One of my favorite things to do during winter is to run to West Matagorda Bay and look for redfish," Countz says. "After a hard front knocks all the water out of West Bay, the fishing can be fantastic. With all the water gone, the redfish come out of the back lakes and get stacked up in the guts."

Countz says that when conditions are right, there can be great redfish action in December and January.

"There are times in West Bay during December when you can stand in one spot and catch redfish until you get tired of it," he says. "I've seen it happen."

So, regardless of season, time, place or method used, redfish remain the most highly sought-after species among inshore anglers in Texas. Since fishermen can target them throughout the year and use a variety of methods to catch them, it makes chasing redfish an exciting, ever-evolving game of cat and mouse.

Longtime outdoor writer and former fishing guide Danno Wise lives along the shores of the Lower Laguna Madre in Port Isabel and takes every opportunity to sight-cast for redfish with fly and light tackle.



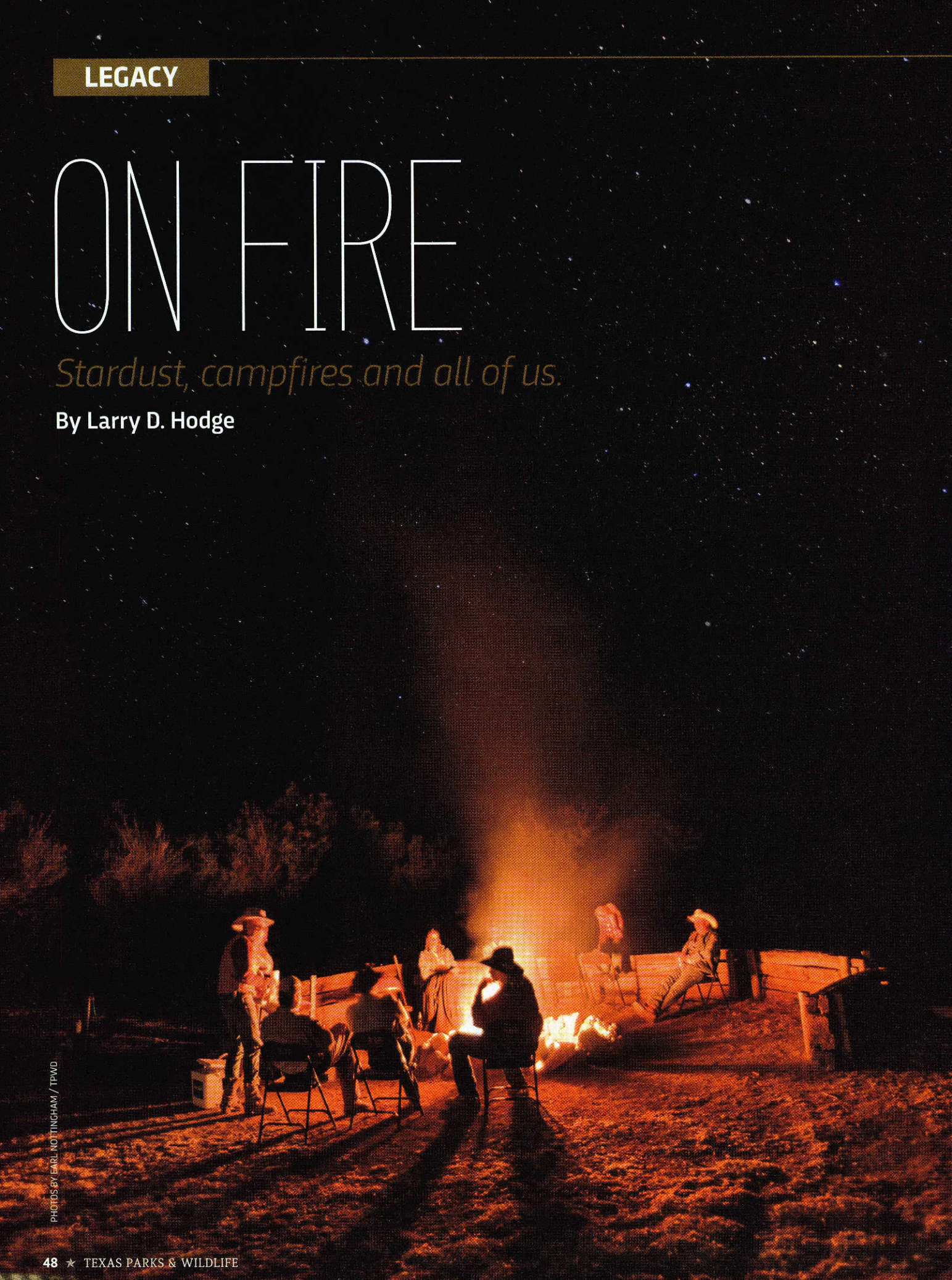
LEGACY

ON FIRE

Stardust, campfires and all of us.

By Larry D. Hodge

PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



A camp without a campfire is like chili without pepper, marriage without love, space without stars. Fire is the heat, the light, the joy. A camp without a fire is cold, dark, melancholy. Life without fire might well be, as Thomas Hobbes described it, “nasty, brutish and short.”

There’s no doubt that fire defines and draws us, but why? A surprising amount of effort has gone into attempting to answer that question, but perhaps the best explanation is from Daniel Fessler, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. He argues that an adult fascination with fire is a consequence of not having mastered it as a child.

Fessler points out that in so-called primitive societies where fire is a part of daily life, children are interested in it until about age 7. After that time, having played with fire and learned to use it as a tool, they simply use it as they would any other tool. He infers that adults who are fascinated by fire never went through this process.

Oh, the cold, hard lens of science.

Archaeological evidence exists for the use of fire by human ancestors as much as a million years ago. Fire played a key role in the development of the beings that became us.

Fire provided warmth that allowed its users to survive in colder climates, making possible migration from Africa into Asia and Europe. Food cooked over fire was more easily digested and provided more calories and better nutrition, possibly playing a part in the development of larger brains. (Michelangelo, Mozart, the Manhattan Project and Microsoft followed.) Fire kept predators at bay, helping early humans survive in a world populated by cave bears and saber-toothed tigers.

Food, warmth and protection were powerful reasons for humans to congregate around campfires, which likely facilitated the development of language (“Please pass the marrowbone”) and socialization (“You’re kind of cute, as Neanderthals go”).



Fire also prolonged the waking hours of early humans, and sitting around the campfire at night looking up at the stars no doubt led those bigger, better-fed brains to begin speculating about what was Out There, and Who We Are and other Big Questions. Religion, creation myths and oral traditions were likely sparked by attempts to answer those questions.

We’re still working on it, as the talk around any good campfire will prove.

I’ve shared campfires from Texas to Alaska to South Africa, and the same cast of characters appears time and again. There’s the Artless Dodger (also known as the Smoke Jumper), who can’t stand to breathe smoke and seems cursed to be followed by it no matter which side of the fire he or she occupies. The Artless Dodger circles the fire seeking a smoke-free spot, thereby creating a cyclonic circulation that carries the smoke wherever he or she goes.

Every group sharing a campfire seems to include a Needless Poker, who is determined to rearrange the logs to the point that combustion ceases while being under the impression that the fire would not burn without relentless prodding.

A campfire’s worst enemy is the Forgetful Feeder, who seems to forget that fire needs heat, oxygen and fuel and fails to add logs as needed, exposing fellow campers to possible annihilation by cave bears and saber-toothed tigers. This person is the opposite of the Timely Tender, who adds fuel only at opportune times and without scattering burning coals among the bystanders.

Providing entertainment around the campfire is the Broadbeamed Backer, who places his posterior regions near the fire for warmth, forgetting that moving will bring superheated clothing into contact with skin, resulting in an amusing dance. The



effect is amplified should the clothing in question be damp and prone to emit clouds of steam, giving warning of the forthcoming eruption.

A campfire captures the universe in a flame. The chemical elements that make up wood — principally carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen with small amounts of calcium, potassium, sodium, magnesium and manganese — were spewed out from dying stars millennia before being captured by the Earth and, in a process powered by our own star, the sun, transformed into a tree. Subjected to sufficient heat in the presence of oxygen, the molecules in that wood break apart and then recombine to form water, carbon dioxide and other products while releasing heat and light.

It burns.

So here's the thing. Like the elements in that wood, we began as stardust floating through space. Like that wood, we are made up of bits and pieces of other things brought together by the mysterious process called life. And when we die, those

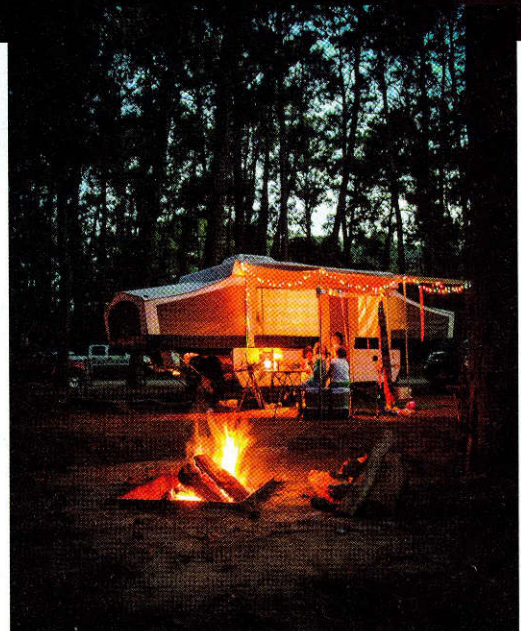
bits and pieces get recycled into other things. Some wind up in trees. Those trees fuel our campfires. So when we burn wood, we are burning dead stars, dead dinosaurs, dead cave bears, dead ancestors. We are burning our past — but at the same time we are also passing it on to the future.

As I look into the flames of a campfire, I like to reflect on the fact that someday, long after I am gone, the atoms that make up my body will someday fuel the fire that warms someone yet unborn. This stardust that is me will glow in the eyes of generations to come, toast their marshmallows and ward off their night frights as it did for those beings long ago who took fire and used it to change their very selves.

We are all of us, through all time, one, through fire.

And the best part? Finally, I get to time travel, and be "hot."

Larry D. Hodge, who retired from TPWD in 2016, once shared a campfire with Elvis (not "that" Elvis — a tame meerkat in South Africa).



TOP AND BOTTOM PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD; CENTER PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

How to Be Cut Off From Civilization

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This knife boasts a full tang blade, meaning the blade doesn't stop at the handle, it runs the full length of the knife. According to *Gear Patrol*, a full tang blade is key, saying "A full tang lends structural strength to the knife, allowing for better leverage ...think one long steel beam versus two."

With our limited edition *River Canyon Bowie Knife* you're getting the best in 21st-century construction with a classic look inspired by legendary American pioneers. What you won't get is the trumped up price tag. We know a thing or two about the hunt—like how to seek out and capture an outstanding, collector's-quality knife that won't cut into your bank account.

This quintessential knife can be yours to use out in the field or to display as the art piece it truly is. But don't wait. A knife of this caliber typically cost hundreds. Priced at an amazing **\$49**, we can't guarantee this knife will stick around for long. So call today!

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price. But we believe that once you wrap your fingers around the *River Canyon's* handle, you'll be ready to carve your own niche into the wild frontier.

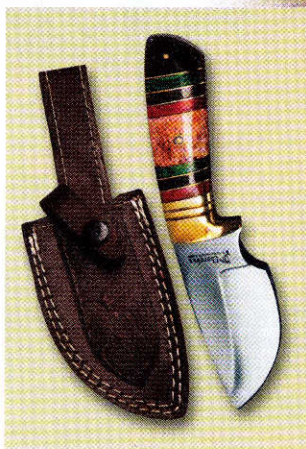
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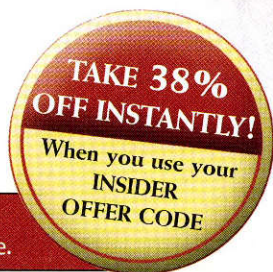
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— D., Houston, Texas



Not shown
actual size.

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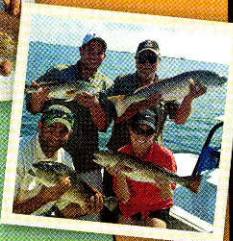
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The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours and many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded while driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare with danger arising from reflected light off another vehicle, the pavement, or even from waxed and oily windshields that can make matters worse. Early morning dew can exacerbate this situation. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare that can cause countless accidents every year.

Not all sunglasses are created equal. Protecting your eyes is serious business. With all the fancy fashion frames out there it can be easy to overlook what really matters—the lenses. So we did our research and looked to the very best in optic innovation and technology.

Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist. A NASA rocket scientist. Some ordinary sunglasses can obscure your vision by exposing your eyes to harmful UV rays, blue light, and reflective glare. They can also darken useful vision-enhancing light. But now, independent research conducted by scientists from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has brought forth ground-breaking technology to help protect human eyesight from the harmful effects of solar radiation



Slip on a pair of Eagle Eyes® and everything instantly appears more vivid and sharp. You'll immediately notice that your eyes are more comfortable and relaxed and you'll feel no need to squint. The scientifically designed sunglasses are not just fashion accessories—they are necessary to protect your eyes from those harmful rays produced by the sun during peak driving times.

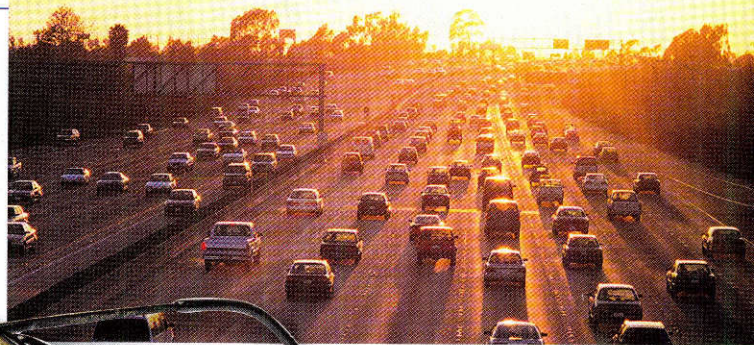
light. This superior lens technology was first discovered when NASA scientists looked to nature for a means to superior eye protection—specifically, by studying the eyes of eagles, known for their extreme visual acuity. This discovery resulted in what is now known as Eagle Eyes®.

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Canoeing

ILLUSTRATION © JESSICA BLANK

READ OUR FEATURE on the Texas Water Safari in this issue and you might think that canoeing is grueling and exhausting. In reality, canoeing can be the gentlest of river or lake recreations — it all depends on the water. While small children (in life jackets!) can enjoy a serene ride down a calm stream, enthusiasts may instead seek to paddle their way through the wildest rapids.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has partnered with communities to offer inland and coastal paddling trails. Be sure to check approximate float times and respective local weather conditions when planning a trip. On inland trails, check out the flow rate; it can vary from day to day. You don't want to get caught unaware by rising, swift water, especially if you're a novice.

Stay on the river and respect landowners by not trespassing on private property.

Canoe rentals, also called liveries, are often available at popular canoeing destinations. Children under 13 must wear life jackets when their boats are not beached, tied-up or anchored.

Need some instruction to get started? The Texas Outdoor Family program offers great weekend camping opportunities at parks around the state, and many include paddling. June workshops are already full, so sign up in advance at tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/paddling.

Check tpwd.texas.gov/paddlingtrails for maps, river guides, events and more information about Texas paddling trails.

By Kayla Meyertons

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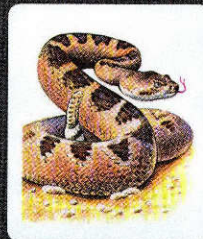
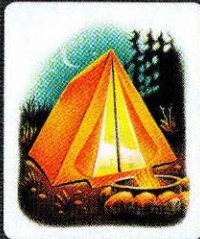
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If you recognize this scenic spot, send us a note at *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744 (write "Where in Texas?" on the envelope); email us at magazine@tpwd.texas.gov; let us know on Facebook; or post a comment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

Photo by Earl Nottingham

TOOLS: Canon EOS-1D Mark II camera, 24-70mm f/2.8 lens, f/22 at eight seconds, ISO 50

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