

# TEXAS parks & wildlife

**DEVILS ADVOCATES**  
Working together to  
protect the Devils River

**THE WORLD OF CAVES**  
Where to see soda straws,  
stalactites and speleothems

**SAVING SPECIES SOONER**  
Legislation could give a boost  
to Texas' imperiled wildlife



DISPLAY UNTIL 9/12/18

\$4.95 US

08



AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2018

## HOTTER'N HELL 100



# EXPLORE NATURE'S MOST SCENIC SCREENSAVERS.



*We  
will not  
be  
Tamed*



Toyota is a proud sponsor of the *We Will Not Be Tamed* initiative and encourages Texans to get outside, explore, and help conserve the wild things and wild places of our great state. To find your next adventure, visit [wewillnotbetamed.org](http://wewillnotbetamed.org).





## TOYOTA RAV4

Find your adventure with the 2018 Toyota RAV4. Complete with Toyota Safety Sense™ standard, the RAV4 is equipped to take you near or far.

[toyota.com/RAV4](http://toyota.com/RAV4)

Drivers are responsible for their own safe driving. Always pay attention to your surroundings and drive safely. Depending on the conditions of roads, weather and the vehicle, the system(s) may not work as intended. See Owner's Manual for additional limitations and details.



**TOYOTA**



*Official Vehicle of  
the Texas Parks &  
Wildlife Foundation*



# AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2018

VOLUME 76 • NUMBER 7

## 28

### Sweeter'N Hell

YEAR OF EPIC CHALLENGES

Annual Wichita Falls bike ride tests both strength and heat endurance.

by John H. Ostdick

## 34

### Saving Species Sooner

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act could help protect Texas species in peril.

by Louie Bond

## 40

### Devils Advocates

Landowners and conservation groups work to preserve the pristine Devils River.

by Tom Harvey

PHOTO © RUSSSELL A. GRAVES

**ON THE COVER:** Cyclists brave the heat in the Hotter'N Hell Hundred bike ride, held every August in Wichita Falls. Illustration © Cooper Weinstein

**BACK COVER:** Black skimmers take flight in Rockport. They and other Texas species could benefit from the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. Photo © Richard M. Buquoi

Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine (ISSN 0040-4586) is published monthly with combined issues in January/February and August/September by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. The inclusion of advertising is considered a service to subscribers and is not an endorsement of products or concurrence with advertising claims. Copyright © 2018 by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. No part of the contents of this magazine may be reproduced by any means without the permission of Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine. **Subscription rate:** \$18/year; foreign subscription rate: \$27.95/year. **Postmaster:** If undeliverable, please send notices by form 3579 to Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine, P.O. Box 421103, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1103. Periodicals postage paid at Austin, Texas, with additional mailing offices. **Subscriber:** If the Postal Service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year.



# Refresh Your Screen.



FOR MEN, WOMEN & KIDS



**Whole Earth**  
PROVISION CO.

**WHOLE EARTH STORE LOCATIONS**

Austin • Dallas • Houston • San Antonio • Southlake

Shop us online at [WholeEarthProvision.com](http://WholeEarthProvision.com)





PHOTO BY SONJA SOMMERFELD / TPWD

**12 PARK PICK**

Martin Dies Jr. offers one-of-a-kind experiences.



PHOTO © SYLVIA GARCIA-SMITH

**14 WILD THING**

Giant cicadas provide a loud summer soundtrack.



PHOTO © SALLY B. ANDY WASSON/REI WILDLIFE CENTER

**16 FLORA FACT**

Sand plums make great summer jam.

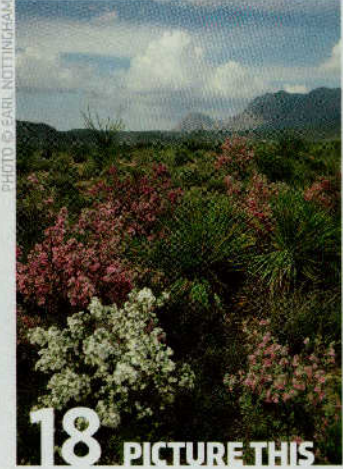


PHOTO © EARL NOTTINGHAM

**18 PICTURE THIS**

Fall photo opportunities go beyond foliage at parks.

WHAT'S INSIDE **08 MAIL CALL** **10 NEWS** **58 WHERE IN TEXAS**

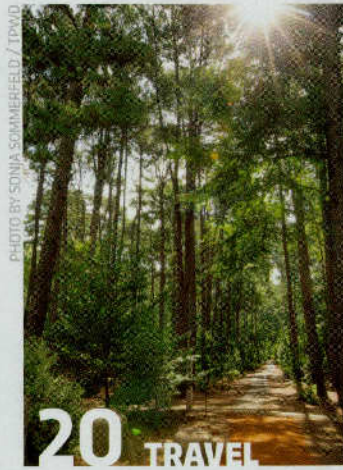


PHOTO BY SONJA SOMMERFELD / TPWD

**20 TRAVEL**

Nacogdoches comes to life along lush creekside trails.



PHOTO © CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

**24 WANDERLIST**

Head underground to see the wonders of Texas caves.



PHOTO © SONJA SOMMERFELD / TPWD

**48 LEGACY**

Legendary state park trees tell the story of Texas.



ILLUSTRATION © LEE BLANK

**56 GET OUT!**

Cycling requires preparation and perspiration.

**GOVERNOR OF TEXAS**  
Greg Abbott

**COMMISSION**

- Ralph H. Duggins, Chairman Fort Worth
- S. Reed Morlan, Vice Chairman Houston
- T. Dan Friedkin Houston
- Anna B. Galo Laredo | Bill Jones Austin
- Jeanne W. Latimer San Antonio
- James H. Lee Houston | Dick Scott Wimberley
- Kelcy L. Warren Dallas
- Lee M. Bass, Chairman-Emeritus Fort Worth

Executive Director Carter P. Smith  
Communications Director Josh M. Havens

**MAGAZINE STAFF**

- Publisher Randy Brudnicki
- Editor Louie Bond
- Managing Editor Russell Roe
- Art Director Nathan Adams
- Photo Editor Sonja Sommerfeld
- Chief Photographer Earl Nottingham
- Photographer Chase Fountain
- Business Manager Traci Anderson
- Editorial Interns Sarah Bloodworth, Justin Wood
- Photography Intern Catherine Groth
- Contributing Writers Steve Lightfoot, Dyanne Fry Cortez, Aubry Buzek, Stephanie Salinas Garcia

**ADVERTISING SALES OFFICE**

StoneWallace Communications, Inc.  
c/o TP&W magazine  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744  
Advertising Director Jim Stone  
jim.stone@tpwd.texas.gov  
(512) 799-1045

**EDITORIAL OFFICES**

4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744  
Phone: (512) 389-TPWD  
Fax: (512) 389-8397  
magazine@tpwd.texas.gov



**FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE, CALL  
(800) 937-9393**



TPWD receives funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. TPWD prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, and gender, pursuant to state and federal law. To request an accommodation or obtain information in an alternative format, please contact TPWD on a Text Telephone (TDD) at (512) 389-8915 or by Relay Texas at 7-1-1 or (800) 735-2989. If you believe you have been discriminated against by TPWD, please contact TPWD or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office for Diversity and Workforce Management, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041.





**IT'S NO COINCIDENCE** that our pages are filled with charismatic photos of Texas' most iconic (and sometimes imperiled) creatures. We fall in love with their soulful eyes and crooked smiles, just as our readers do. So it's easy to catch the excitement of our normally restrained biologists as they dream of what could be accomplished with an additional \$60 million a year in funding for the Texas species in greatest need if the Recovering America's Wildlife Act is enacted by Congress. Our horned lizards and whooping cranes, as well as many other beloved animals, could continue their comebacks, while lesser-known species like the black skimmer and Texas kangaroo rat could also get the attention they need.

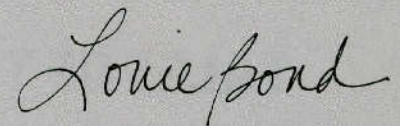
"This is not just a program for fish and wildlife," TPWD biologist Richard Heilbrun reminds me. "It's an opportunity for anyone who loves nature."

You see, one of the key factors in conservation is people. When people participate in conservation of our wild things and places, we can recover populations, restore damaged habitats and protect high-quality habitats. If RAWA passes, we'll be able to engage more Texans in the conservation of our fish and wildlife and habitats. We'll be able to fund more

education programs for kids and families, protect more wild areas near where they live, work and play, and provide more engagement opportunities for kayaking, bird watching, hiking and nature photography as Texans enjoy and appreciate rare fish and wildlife.

After all, isn't that what we all seek when we head outdoors after a long week in school or at the office? A chance to see something rare and special, something that refreshes our souls and inspires us in days to come?

We offer up more "rare and special" experiences in this issue: a look at efforts to conserve the pristine beauty of the Devils River, a ride in the Hotter'N Hell bicycle weekend and a trip to Nacogdoches and several Texas caves. Stay cool — fall's around the corner.



Louie Bond, Editor





**WRITE TO US** Send your letters to  
**Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine**  
 4200 Smith School Road • Austin, TX 78744  
 We reserve the right to edit letters for length  
 and clarity.

✉ [magazine@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:magazine@tpwd.texas.gov)  
 📘 [facebook.com/tpwmagazine](https://facebook.com/tpwmagazine)  
 🐦 [twitter.com/tpwmagazine](https://twitter.com/tpwmagazine)  
 📷 [instagram.com/tpwmagazine](https://instagram.com/tpwmagazine)  
[www.tpwmagazine.com](http://www.tpwmagazine.com)



PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

## TALES OF THE WATER SAFARI

As I write this, 26 boats are still on the river looking for the lights of Seadrift. They are spread out along Alligator Alley and San Antonio Bay. It is Tuesday night, and they have been on the San Marcos and Guadalupe rivers since Saturday morning. They are worried about the gators and snakes, their light batteries and the 500-pound gorilla — the dreaded bay crossing.

But their biggest worry right now is tomorrow's 1 p.m. Texas Water Safari deadline. "I've come so far — I can't be late, dang it — but my tank is on E."

I know this because I finished the Texas Water Safari twice, on E, and way in the back of the pack. As far as hallucinations go, I have been repeatedly assured by maritime experts that no oil tanker has ever navigated the Intracoastal Waterway out in front of Seadrift. Quite impossible, you see — it's only 12 feet deep.

Russell Roe did a splendid job covering the race ("Survival of the Fittest," June 2018). That story about Melissa James putting a log in the front of her boat for ballast, continuing on without her partner and making it to the finish chokes me up. It demonstrates the essence of Texas spirit.

Great pictures! They captured the preparation, the rapids and the many portages. My personal favorite is Chase Fountain's opening shot of the paddler at the finish line. It speaks a thousand words.

**GLEN CLARK**

*Texas Water Safari finisher, 2011 and 2017*

### RETURN OF THE REDFISH

I very much enjoyed reading your article regarding Texas redfish in your June issue ("Bronze Beauty"). I have fished the Texas Gulf Coast my entire life and have been a CCA member since it was the GCCA.

You mention how redfish are now plentiful in Texas bays after decades of conservation. What you don't

mention, however, are probably the two most outstanding reasons for their success. Those are the establishment of the daily bag limit and the legal minimum/maximum, or slot size, for keeper redfish.

An angler may not possess more than three redfish per day, and the fish kept must be between 20-28 inches long. A red drum tag and a red drum

bonus tag are available along with the fishing license to allow an individual angler to keep two oversize redfish per license year. Game wardens will issue tickets to any angler not in compliance with these laws.

Thank you for publishing what I consider to be an outstanding reflection on the wonders of our great state.

**BILL REEVES**

*Georgetown*

## WHERE IN TEXAS?



July's *Where in Texas?* went underwater for a fish-eye view of the state. Spring Lake's clear water offers a view of a nearby building that began as a resort hotel and is now Texas State's Meadows Center for Water and the Environment in San Marcos. The lake was home to the former Aquarena Springs, which featured mermaids and Ralph the Swimming Pig. Several readers recognized the view, including Jill Ralph and Virginia Naumann, who were Aquamaids themselves! See this month's *Where in Texas?* on Page 58.



One of the "Best Places to Learn About History"  
— LendEdu.com

THE PERFECT PLACE TO SIT BACK AND RELAX OR

# step back in time

frontier heritage | festivals & events | over 40 wineries and tasting rooms | museums & historic sites | cycling  
peaches & wildflowers | golf | sophisticated shopping | eclectic art galleries | Hill Country cuisine | live Texas music



VisitFredericksburgTX.com | 866 997 3600

**Fredericksburg**<sup>®</sup>  
THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

*Texas Heart. German Soul.*



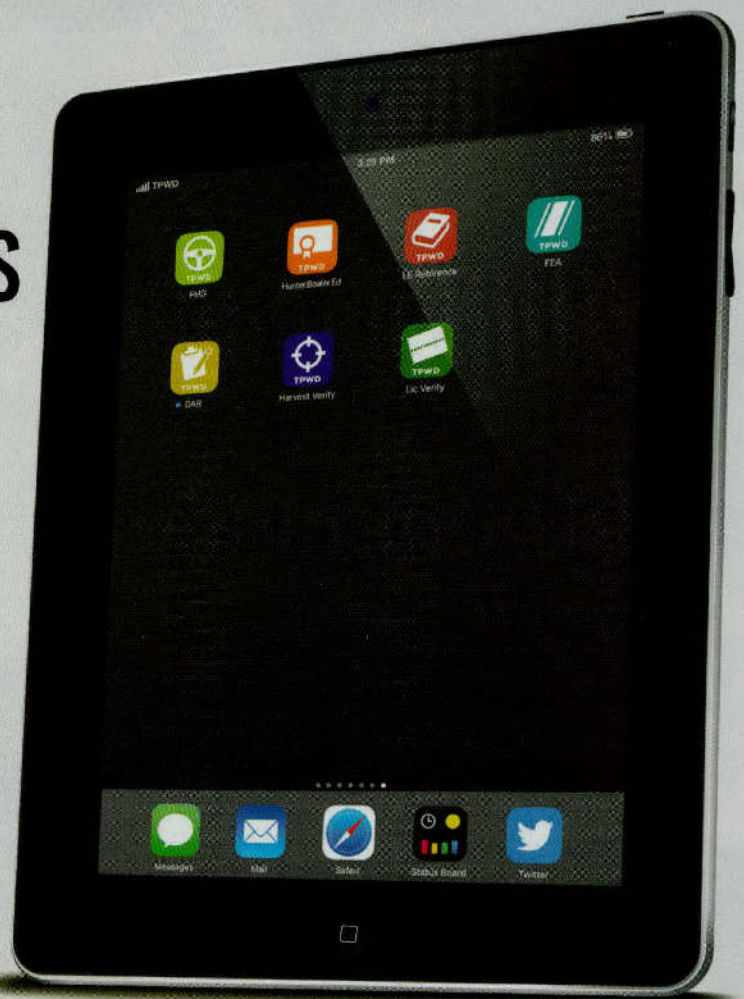
# Game Warden Apps for Everything

THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT has been developing a host of mobile apps designed to help game wardens do their job more effectively from the field.

The apps allow game wardens to perform tasks such as verify someone's hunting or fishing license status, verify hunt harvest data and enter daily reports during disasters quickly and easily — all from a mobile device.

"The officers can get more information more quickly at their fingertips," says Mike Mitchell, assistant commander game warden for technology. "We want to allow our folks to work safer and smarter."

Mitchell saw an opportunity to take the technological leap during the response to the 2013 fertilizer plant explosion in West. He figured there had to be a better way to handle the huge paper stacks of disaster activity reports being generated by law enforcement. There should be an app for that. The



result is a TPWD-developed app that skips the paper forms and collects law enforcement disaster reports instantly into a database that's secure and searchable. The app had its first big test during Hurricane Harvey, and Mitchell says it worked just as it should.

The efforts have made TPWD a leader in the state and nation in developing law enforcement apps.

"It's remarkable that our little agency has taken the lead on this," Mitchell says.

The license verify app, which allows a game warden to check a person's hunting or fishing license status, won a Texas "best app" award in 2015. "It's really smart and fast," Mitchell says, "but always carry your license."

The fisheries enforcement app allows

game wardens to enter commercial fishing enforcement information, including seized items. The hunter/boater ed app facilitates verification of a person's hunter ed or boater ed status. The law enforcement reference app provides violation codes, wildlife regulations and other basic law enforcement information. The harvest verify app checks hunt data and locations as entered by Texas turkey hunters.

The rapid event mapper app provides georeferenced photos and information during times of crisis, allowing state leaders to monitor and manage a crisis visually through photographs and real-time location information. The oyster map app allows game wardens to view georeferenced shellfish harvest maps for oyster enforcement. ★

## RADIO

Passport to Texas is your guide to the great Texas outdoors. Any time you tune in, you'll remember why you love Texas.

Go to [www.passporttotexas.org](http://www.passporttotexas.org) to find a station near you that airs the series.



## ON TV

Winner of 30 Emmy Awards, our television series is broadcast throughout Texas on local PBS affiliates. Also available on YouTube and PBS Online. [www.tpwd.texas.gov/tv](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/tv)

### JULY 29–AUG. 4:

Rita Blanca grasslands; cave crawlers; West Texas birding oasis.

### AUG. 5–11:

Counting parrots; a memorable hunt; bighorn sheep.

### AUG. 12–18:

Crossing El Camino Real; prairie restoration; sand surfing.

### AUG. 19–25:

Paddling the Trinity; hardwood haven; Texas quail.

### AUG. 26–SEPT. 1:

Recreation outreach; protecting dark skies; prairie dogs.

### SEPT. 2–8:

Fishing for trees; wild about turkeys; martin managers.

### SEPT. 9–15:

Underground owls; waterhole wildlife; Goliad State Park.

### SEPT. 16–22:

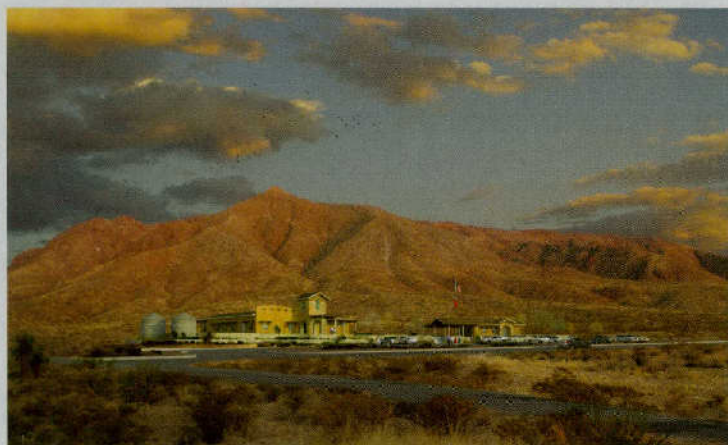
Catching and cooking crappie; bald eagles; Big Bend landscapes.

### SEPT. 23–29:

Guadalupe bass return; East Texas turkeys; Old Tunnel bats.







## Franklin Mountains Getting New Visitors Center

**FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS STATE PARK**, the nation's largest urban wilderness park, broke ground on a new visitors center at the El Paso park's Tom Mays Unit. The current visitors center resides outside main park grounds at McKelligon Canyon. The new center will include an administrative area, retail space, classrooms and cultural/historical park resources. ★

## Lonesome Dove Fest Celebrates Silver Anniversary

**SOUTH TEXAS FAMILIES** will be gathering in Karnes City on Sept. 14-15 for a weekend of festivities to kick off the start of the South Zone dove season and to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Lonesome Dove Fest, the largest dove hunting festival in Texas. The main attraction: mourning and white-winged doves by the thousands to test the skills of the wingshooters in attendance.

Each year in Texas, nearly a half-million hunters participate in dove season, recently extended to 90 days, the longest period allowed under federal law. Texas dove seasons also start early, with special "White-Winged Dove Days" happening the first two weekends of September across the South Zone.

The festival, founded by the Karnes City Rotary Club in 1992, also serves as a fundraiser to create scholarships for students from each of Karnes County's four high schools. Other activities include a parade through town, a live auction, a barbecue cookoff, sporting clays competition and live musical performances.

Working with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Rotary Club is organizing other exhibits for the festival including a helicopter on display, all-terrain vehicles and an Operation Game Thief Wall of Shame.

More information on the festival can be found at the event's website, [www.lonesomedovefest.com](http://www.lonesomedovefest.com). ★

ADVENTURE AWAITS  
conroe,tx  
WWW.VISITCONROE.COM

Whether from land or shore, Conroe is the ideal birding destination come Summer. Converging migratory paths and diverse topography provide us with some pretty special species. Call 1.877.426.6763 or go to [visitconroe.com](http://visitconroe.com) for your free birding guide. ADVENTURE AWAITS. FIND YOURS.



# EAST TEXAS ADVENTURE

*A trip to Martin Dies Jr. State Park offers one-of-a-kind experiences.*

BY D.L. CLAYTON • PHOTOS BY SONJA SOMMERFELD



I've been working in the forests of East Texas from Paris to Brazoria for more than 30 years, but on a recent visit to Martin Dies Jr. State Park, I was pleasantly surprised to experience three "firsts" in this beautiful East Texas park.

Huge loblolly and longleaf pines (with oaks, magnolias and other trees) shaded the cabin area, where I sat by the lake's edge, watching the sun set behind the long bridge that stretches across B.A. Steinhagen Lake. I marveled at a huge bull pine, the biggest pine tree I've ever seen.

A night hike, suggested by my companions, was my first "first." I had never gone out into a state park forest

at night, except to make my way to the well-lit ladies' room. The ranger gave us all flashlights with red gel covering the light to allow our eyes to adjust to the dark. I was amazed at how well I could see the trail and how the sounds of the forest were not only different from day sounds but seemed clearer, closer and more distinct.

Heading to the Island Trail we could hear the loud, deep *harrumph* of what sounded





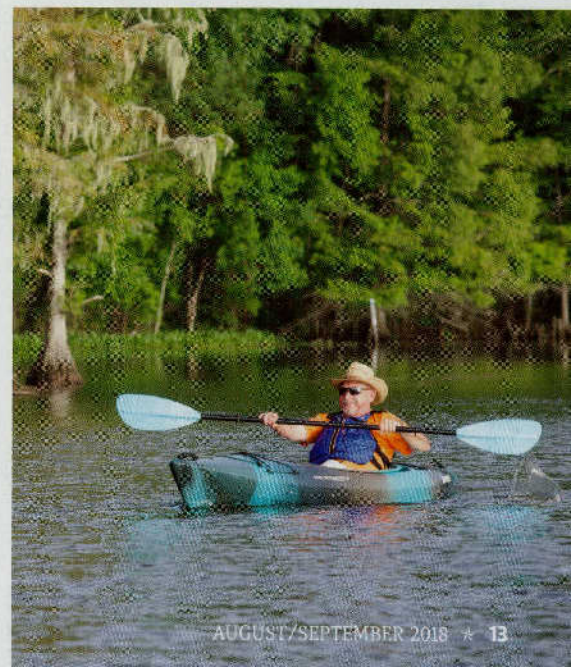
like a gigantic frog. The interpretive ranger pointed out the creature, a little frog smaller than a golf ball, sitting on a lily pad not far from the bridge.

We thrilled at finding phosphorescent fungi (my second “first”) near the trail. After a short three-quarter-mile hike around the island, we went to the observation pier and took the red gel off our flashlights to shine the lights out across the water’s surface. Dozens of glowing eyes looked back; the alligators of East Texas were watching us.

My final “first” was canoeing down the Walnut Slough Paddling Trail. It’s such a different perspective to glide along on top of glassy water, filled with known and unknown creatures. I saw anhingas

that seemed to walk on water, as well as egrets, herons and many other birds. I thought about those alligators, hiding below the lily pads, their eyes just above the water, watching me watching them. The nearly 3-mile trail circumnavigates the island, passing under bridges and through a channel between the island and the mainland, where land animals watched us, seemingly unafraid of the strange two-headed water beast gliding past.

Martin Dies Jr. State Park gave me my first night hike, my first glowing fungus and my first paddling trail. I’ll try to remember as I visit more state parks to plan ahead, be safe, stay hydrated and, for maximum enjoyment, always keep one foot firmly planted outside my comfort zone. ★

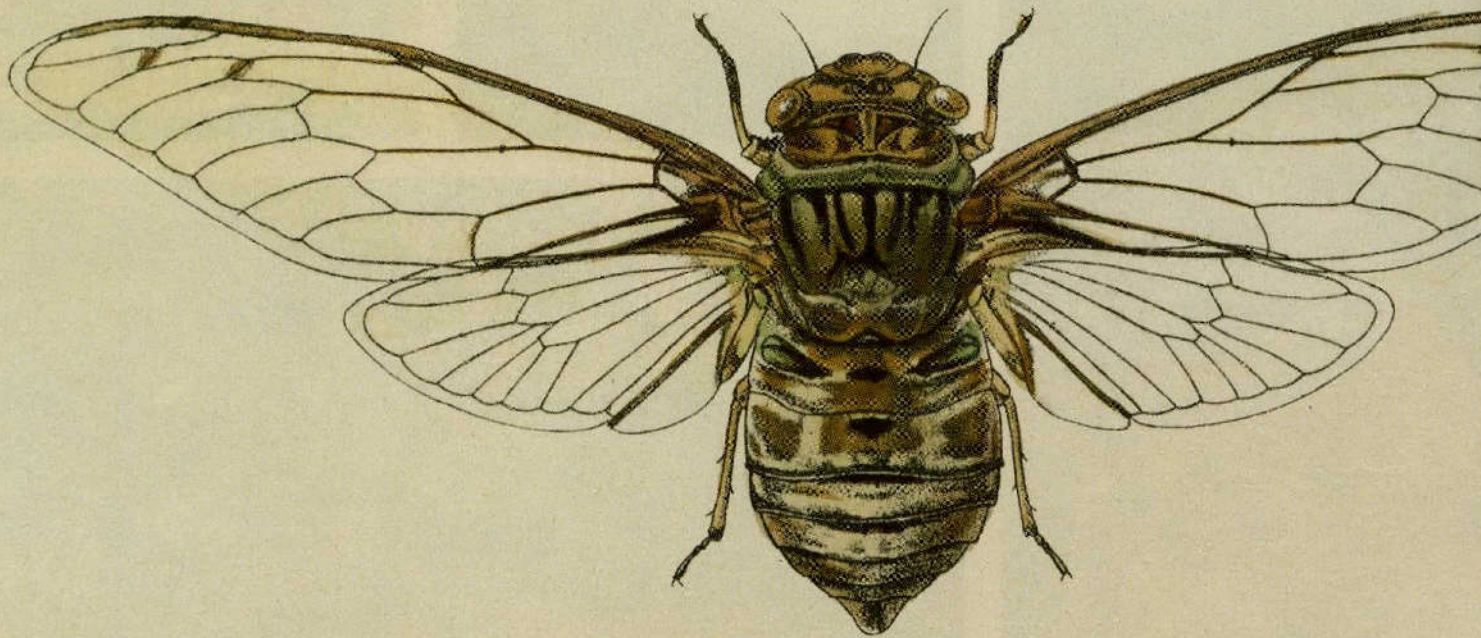




# SHRILL SYMPHONY

BY BEN HUTCHINS

*Giant cicadas provide a loud, rhythmic soundtrack to Texas summers.*



Ah, the sounds of summer: children playing, an ice cream truck in the distance and ... a tree full of screaming steam engines? As the name implies, the giant cicada, *Quesada gigas*, is large compared to Texas' 50-plus other cicada species (the smallest of which, *Beameria venosa*, could sit comfortably on a penny), but the name could be a reference to the species' otherworldly and sometimes deafening call.

In Brazil, researchers recorded the song of the giant cicada hitting 93 decibels at a distance of 50 cm (just over 1.5 feet). That's a bit louder than a lawnmower but not quite as loud as a jackhammer. (Permanent hearing loss can occur with prolonged exposure to volumes as low as 85 decibels.)

Although periodically recorded in the Big Bend region, eastern Hill Country and southern East Texas, giant cicadas are particularly abundant in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where their calls have been compared to various power tools, motors, fan belts and steam engines. Indeed, the species is sometimes called the "locomotive cicada" in parts of Latin America.

Like other cicadas, that prodigious sound is generated from a pair of organs on the abdomen called tymbals. The tymbals act like tiny sheets of metal that,

when flexed, produce a pair of resonant pops as they buckle inward and outward. The tymbals are flexed hundreds of times per second. Then, like the hollow body of a guitar, the sound produced by the tymbals resonates within air sacs in the cicada's large abdomen before radiating out through a thin-membraned organ called a tympanum.

Like other cicadas, giant cicada larvae spend years underground feeding on tree roots. Larvae may be parasitized by an unusual beetle, aptly named the cicada parasite beetle.

Despite their large size and disconcerting appearance, adult cicadas neither sting nor bite. Cicadas may be consumed by a variety of animals and are notably (and horrifically) hunted and paralyzed by adult cicada killer wasps and then eaten alive by the wasp larvae.

As deafening as the giant cicada's



**COMMON NAME**

Giant cicada, chicharra grande, locomotive cicada, coyoyo

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Quesada gigas*



**HABITAT**

South Texas brushlands, from the southern border north to Austin

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Of 50-plus cicada species, the giant's ear-splitting "song" is quite unique, described as "train whistle," "fire alarm" and even "banshees."

call is, it is not the loudest cicada in the Western Hemisphere, or even the loudest in Texas. That distinction goes to the Limpia Canyon scrub cicada, *Diceroprocta cinctifera limpia*, which was recorded at just over 108 decibels, beating out the jackhammer and closing in on loud chainsaws or snowmobiles. However, the Limpia Canyon scrub cicada occurs only in the Davis Mountains of West Texas, and because it calls at a substantially higher frequency than the giant cicada, the sound fades more quickly with distance, making the giant cicada the undisputed noisiest neighbor of the Texas insect world.

Listen for the giant cicada in South Texas during the summer months, starting in June, particularly during dusk or dawn. Depending on weather conditions, the giant cicada's call may travel a mile or more. ★



**THE HUNT IS ON!**

Buy your license for the new season—available August 15

- » [tpwd.texas.gov/buy](http://tpwd.texas.gov/buy)
- » at a retailer near you
- » call (800) 895-4248

**TOUR THE EDGE**

*Texas begins here!*

*Pack your binoculars, over 200 species of birds are awaiting to be admired.*

**Laredo TEXAS** 800.361.3360 VisitLaredo.com

LAREDO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

#HolaLaredo



# PLUM WILD

*Sand plums are bird hotels, critter buffets and the perfect ingredient*

On many sweltering afternoons as I was growing up, my dad and I could be found standing waist-deep in roadside thickets, scratching up our arms as we reached into the bushes for the glowing ornaments of midsummer: sand plums.

The plums, sun-warmed and dusty with caliche kicked up from the county road, were sour and pulpy, but we ate them anyway. The ones we didn't eat, we dropped into plastic grocery bags until they were so heavy we worried the fruits would crush each other, and we headed home to fill Mason jars to the brim with warm, sweet jam.

Texas is home to several species of wild plum, the most common being the sand plum, *Prunus angustifolia*. This plum is also known as the Chickasaw plum, because it was one of the wild plants eaten — and possibly cultivated — by Native Americans. They would eat the plums fresh or use dried sand plums to create pemmican, a high-calorie food designed to sustain them through long winters.

Sand plums are in the same family as

roses, *Rosaceae*, and typically grow in twiggy, thorny thickets that can be hard to navigate for human harvesters. The brush is no problem for other plum-loving creatures such as raccoons, and rabbits, which nibble on the bark of the bushes.

Besides being an all-you-can-eat buffet for raccoons and friends, sand plum thickets also serve as homes or canopies for other types of wildlife. Their twiggy bushes provide shelter for species like the bobwhite quail and lesser prairie-chicken, and they can also help cows find some shade in the dog days of summer.

The plums produce bouquets of fragrant, delicate flowers in March and April, and bear fruit in late June or July. The leaves are glossy and folded over in the shape of a trough. The plums themselves can be red, orange or yellow, and range from being soft and sweet like

grocery store plums to hard and sour.

These plums are good for either jelly, which is made from juice, or jam, which has pieces of fruit in it. The jelly is delicious, and the plums' tangy peels make for a perfectly tart accent to a sweet jam.

This summer, head out to a plum-covered roadside — their range extends over pretty much all of the state — cue some summer tunes and get ready for a jam session!

*Go to our app or website for a sand plum jam recipe. ★*



for summer jam.

BY EVA FREDERICK

**COMMON NAME**

Sand plum, Chickasaw plum

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Prunus angustifolia*

**SIZE**

Sand plum bushes range from 3-10 feet tall, and often form thickets up to 25 feet wide.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The whitish translucent covering is a wax produced to retain water. It can be home to wild yeast — the same fungus used to make bread.

# Discover SAN ANGELO!

An oasis in West Texas—off the beaten path

## discover ART

Made in Texas! 25 Contemporary Quilts - presented by the Texas Quilt Museum

Through Sept. 9

## discover NATURE

14th Annual Lily Fest  
Sept. 15

Monarch Butterfly Migration  
September - October



DiscoverSanAngelo.com

877-655-4136

## WIN A NILGAI ANTELOPE SAFARI FOR TWO IN SOUTH TEXAS!

**NEW**



Nilgai hail from southeast Asia and can tip the scales at 700 lbs! They're challenging to hunt and delicious to eat. Or, choose from **9 other premium hunt packages:**

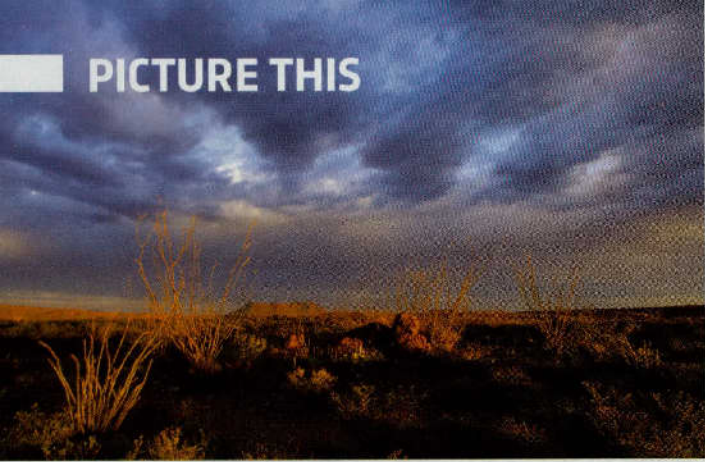
[tpwd.texas.gov/win](http://tpwd.texas.gov/win)

## BIG TIME TEXAS HUNTS

**TOYOTA**  
Proud Sponsor







# 5 *for* FALL

*State parks offer autumn photographic opportunities beyond foliage.*

**BY EARL NOTTINGHAM**



**AS THE DAYS SHORTEN** and temperatures cool in autumn, Mother Nature puts on her show of fall color, making it prime time for photographers to get outside and capture the palettes of yellows, oranges and reds. However, in a state as broad and ecologically diverse as Texas, those pockets of vibrant foliage can range from glorious to sparse, depending on the weather patterns that particular season. Luckily, we have other photographic options available for this time of the year, many of which can be found in our state parks. Here are a few prime locations for you to consider for fall photography. Helpful hint: Plan your visit during midweek when visitorship is typically lower.

#### **BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK**

The Chihuahuan Desert of West Texas isn't exactly the first thing that comes to most photographers' minds when thinking of fall images. However, late September into October can produce spectacular color because of the predictable monsoonal rains that arrive around that time. In fact, it's been called the "fifth season," and it produces a verdant desert with its own variety of colorful wildflowers not seen in springtime. Along creeks and washes, lines of massive cottonwood trees change from chartreuse to a brilliant yellow. Photogenic skies are a given as afternoon thunderheads build and dissipate around sundown, revealing the clearest skies and brightest stars in the state as the result of minimum light pollution.

#### **DAINGERFIELD STATE PARK**

For quintessential fall foliage color, it's hard to beat the hardwood forests of East

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





TOP RIGHT PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD; ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

Texas — and Daingerfield State Park is in the heart of it all. The park comes alive with yellows, oranges and reds from a variety of trees and plants, including oak, elm, hickory, sweetgum and sumac. What makes this park especially inviting for the photographer is scenic Little Pine Lake nestled at its center. On a chilly morning, the lake produces a delicate fog that comes alive at sunrise.

#### ESTERO LLANO GRANDE STATE PARK

For the wildlife photographer, the Rio Grande Valley of Texas is one of the state's top destinations. It is a crossroads for a large variety of species thanks to its semitropical climate. The fall migration of many bird species and the large variety of resident wildlife make for a subject-rich environment. Waterfowl, including ducks and shorebirds, are abundant and can be easily photographed from the banks or boardwalks around the park's wetland areas, as well as from the back deck of the visitors center. Smaller birds can be photographed from blinds set up around water features.

#### SEA RIM STATE PARK

On Texas' upper coast, Sea Rim State Park provides great landscape and nature photo opportunities during the cooler months. Migrating wildlife as well as scenic landscapes can be photographed along its Gulf of Mexico shoreline or from rented canoes or kayaks on paddling trails that traverse much of the 4,100-acre inner wetland area. Primitive campsites on the beach make it easy to catch the morning sunrise. Other camping options include vehicle pads with electricity.

#### SAUER-BECKMANN FARM AT LBJ STATE PARK

Rivaling any Currier and Ives painting, the nostalgic trappings of early-1900s Texas Hill Country farm life at the Sauer-Beckmann farmstead provide a wealth of photogenic opportunities, especially in autumn when the rusty colors of nature blend with the farm's rustic surroundings. Park interpreters dressed in period clothing and friendly livestock are more than willing to "model" as they go about their daily routines. ★



**OCTOBER 12-14**

**T BAR M RANCH  
NEW BRAUNFELS, TX**

**THREE DAYS**

**SIX INSTRUCTORS**

**FREE LUNCHES  
& DINNERS**

**FREE LOANER  
GEAR**

#### INSTRUCTORS

Kara Mercer

Monica Royal

Kellie Bieser

Caroline Jensen

Jen Rozenbaum

Tracie Maglosky

**PRICE: \$449**

**Learn more at:**  
[WWW.PCU.LIFE](http://WWW.PCU.LIFE)



2438 W. Anderson Lane - Austin, Tx 78757  
(512) 467-7676 | (800) 677-1023





## NATURAL NACOGDOCHES

*The oldest town in Texas comes to life along lush creekside trails.*

BY MELISSA GASKILL  
PHOTOS BY SONJA SOMMERFELD



### HOUSTON

2 hours

### DALLAS

3 hours

### EL PASO

12 hours

### SAN ANTONIO

5 hours

### BROWNSVILLE

8 hours

### LUBBOCK

8 hours

The clear, shallow waters of Banita Creek burble over slabs of red rock and swaths of sand, beneath the shade of tall pines, hickories and Florida maples. Here and there, weathered wooden benches overlook the water. This stretch of dirt trail runs about a half-mile, part of more than 6 miles along Banita and Lanana creeks that will eventually form a continuous loop.

“The creeks are why Nacogdoches exists,” explains Jeffrey Abt, a retired landscape designer and my walking companion here in this East Texas town. The high ground between these two streams first attracted Caddo settlers, followed by the Spanish, who established missions in the early 1700s, and, later, Mexican and then U.S. settlers.

Ahead of us, the trees open up to reveal an 8-foot-high purple lawn chair gracing a spacious park, both honoring F.E. Abernethy, who deserves most of the

credit for the creekside trails. Holder of a Ph.D. in literature, Abernethy taught at Stephen F. Austin State University and headed the Texas Folklore Society from 1971 to 2004. He acquired land, cleared brush, built bridges and often simply rounded up helpers (Abt among them) to complete particular trail projects, whether he had official approval or not.

Abt brings me up to speed on this over lunch at Butcher Boys on North Street, an unassuming wooden building with its sign mostly obscured by



tree branches. Opened in 1977 by Billy and Cathy Huddleston, the restaurant serves a wide variety of burgers, barbecue plates, chicken-fried steak and ribeyes. My hamburger is large, juicy and filling, making more time walking the trails almost a necessity. The establishment includes a meat market that features hard-to-find items such as rind-on bacon and is locally famous for its smoked meats.

Next, Abt and I hit the Lanana Creek Trail from Margil Park on East Main Street. First stop: the Eyes of Father Margil, several springs trickling from a bluff above an oxbow lake. Franciscan Father Antonio Margil de Jesus came here with a Spanish

by thickets of paw-paw, dogwood and buckeye. We pass the historic Zion Hill Baptist Church cemetery at Park Road, cross Pecan Park and step onto the Stephen F. Austin campus. Here, Lanana Creek flows through the university's Mast Arboretum. These 10 acres feel like a giant, outdoor treasure, with the list of possible finds including benches, swings, bridges, sculptures, birdbaths, picnic tables, arbors, secluded nooks, gardens, gazebos and even a beehive and a whirligig. Signs provide information about various types of plants and offer gardening tips.

Trees abound on the property too, of course, including pines nearly 100 years old and towering more than 100 feet,

The couple also owns local favorites Auntie Pasta's and Clear Springs Restaurant (more on that later).

This evening, diners fill the hotel restaurants, 1st City Café and upscale Republic Steakhouse, so we pop into Nine Flags Bar and Grill. The menu lists a cocktail for each flag — the well-known six that have flown over Texas plus three from early attempts by Nacogdoches citizens to gain independence for Texas: the Fredonian, Magee-Gutierrez and Long rebellions.

As a nod to our location, I choose one named for the leader of the Fredonian uprising, Haden Edwards, made with Basil Hayden whiskey, muddled basil, lime juice and



## FEATURED ATTRACTIONS (LEFT - RIGHT):

- ★ Jeffry Abt at Banita Creek
- ★ Pecan Park along the Lanana Creek Trail
- ★ Mast Arboretum on the Stephen F. Austin University campus
- ★ Outdoor patio at Fredonia Hotel

expedition in 1716. Legend has it that, during a terrible drought in 1718, when the Lanana and Banita creeks dried up, Father Margil prayed and struck his staff against the bank and the springs began to flow. Abernethy reportedly drank from them regularly and lived to the ripe old age of 89. (He passed away in March 2015.)

The trail varies from wide and smooth to narrow and tangled with tree roots as we head north, shaded

some of the largest Mexican oaks in the United States, the largest Mexican mountain sugar maple in the country and many native oaks and elms.

The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden occupies a corner of the arboretum, home to 550 rhododendron, 100 camellia and 200 hydrangea varieties.

"The azalea garden is first class, but the Japanese maples in fall are even better," Abt says. "The reason I moved here was the stunning beauty of the outdoors."

On Abt's recommendation, I booked a room at the historic Fredonia Hotel downtown. Originally opened in the 1950s and the first East Texas hotel with a swimming pool, it closed in 1985, reopened in 1989, closed again in 2013 and resumed operations in 2017 after an extensive makeover. That renovation happened courtesy of Barbara and Richard DeWitt, who were named Nacogdoches County's 2017 Citizens of the Year as a result.

lemonade, accompanied by Akaushi tacos (three flour tortillas filled with sweet Korean barbecue, cilantro, onion, chimichurri sauce and cotija cheese). Walls of windows, strings of lights and shiny copper seats make the space warm and invite lingering, as does the live music filtering in from poolside.

Abt has as much passion for Nacogdoches history as he does for its landscape, so our second day takes a different focus. We start with breakfast at Dolli's Diner, where I have a view of the town square as I devour a short stack of blueberry "Flap Jacks" (the Stephen F. Austin mascot is a lumberjack, and students are known as Jacks, for short).

"This was originally a Spanish-style plaza, and people lived around it," Abt points out. "Downtown still has old brick buildings and brick streets original to the early 1920s. You can walk down Mound Street and see an old Caddo mound. Sam





*A cyclist rides the trail along Lanana Creek; a statue on Main Street depicts a soldier of the Texas Revolution; the historic Old Stone Fort houses a museum; sculptures can be found along the trail at the Mast Arboretum.*



Houston lived here for a time. Eugenia Sterne Park is land he gave Eugenia for her pony. We have statues and historical markers all around town.”

Visitors can learn a lot from those markers. Such as how the town’s name comes from a Caddo group called the Nacogdoche, and how archaeological evidence dates mounds in the area to around 1250. The French came through in the late 1600s; Spaniard Domingo Ramón

established a mission here in 1716. In 1772, the Spanish viceroy ordered residents to move to San Antonio, but trader Don Antonio Gil Y’Barbo obtained permission for a group to return to the area. They moved into the abandoned mission site in 1779.

On the corner of Main and Fredonia streets, where a bank building currently stands, Y’Barbo built a stone home around 1790. The structure served a variety of functions, including as fortifications during



# SPIRIT OF TEXAS

## BANK

TEXANS HELPING TEXANS

Member  
**FDIC**







battle, before it was torn down in 1901.

Rebuilt on the Stephen F. Austin campus in 1936 and named the Old Stone Fort, it now houses a museum, with exhibits about the building's history and, currently, "Pocket, Purse and Pack: Digging into Everyday Carry." We share some things in common with earlier carriers, such as coins and keys, although their look and size have changed. Some we do not; I doubt anyone today carries a pocketwatch or snuff box, and, of course, no early residents of "Nac" toted cellphones or earbuds.

Main Street follows the original El Camino Real, or San Antonio Road, that ran from Mexico to Caddo settlements in western Louisiana. El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail traces this historic route across the state, designated by roadway signs. I follow them west 26 miles on Texas Highway 21 to Caddo Mounds State Historic Site. While only one mound survived the growth of Nacogdoches, several large ones remain here. A self-guided interpretive trail takes me past the mounds, a borrow pit and a piece

**MORE INFO:**

**FREDONIA HOTEL**  
(936) 564-1234  
[www.thefredonia.com](http://www.thefredonia.com)

**STEPHEN F. AUSTIN GARDENS**  
[sfagardens.sfasu.edu](http://sfagardens.sfasu.edu)

**OLD STONE FORT MUSEUM**  
(936) 468-2408  
[www.sfasu.edu/stonefort](http://www.sfasu.edu/stonefort)

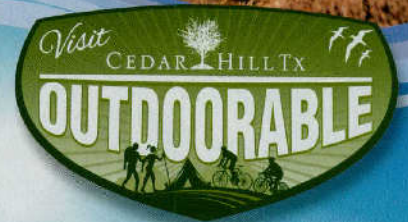
**CADDO MOUNDS**  
[www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/caddo-mounds-state-historic-site](http://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/caddo-mounds-state-historic-site)

of the original El Camino Real. The visitors center and museum exhibits portray life in a Caddo village like the one Nacogdoches once was.

The aforementioned Clear Springs Restaurant, a local favorite, occupies a former refrigerated warehouse, the first one built west of the Mississippi. The inside is spacious, as one would expect a warehouse to be, and filled with historical and other memorabilia, including a large model of the Old Stone Fort hanging from the ceiling. In addition to self-proclaimed world-famous fried seafood, the menu includes salads, chicken-fried steak, grilled steaks, burgers, sandwiches and even tacos. I'm a fried catfish fan from way back, and the slightly spicy, generous portion hits the spot, as does homemade banana pudding for dessert.

One last walk along shady Lanana Creek Trail seems a fitting end to the trip. I expect Jeffrey Abt would heartily approve. ★

**DALLAS/FORT WORTH**



**Natural Beauty  
Breathtaking Views  
Awesome  
Sports & Outdoor  
Recreation**

Year-Round Outdoor Adventure Awaits.

- Cedar Hill State Park in the heart of the DFW Metroplex
- Over 45 miles of multi-purpose, integrated trails and bikeways
- Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center 200-acre preserve
- Beautiful 7,500-acre Joe Pool Lake
- 3,000 acres of protected nature reserves and preserves to explore



**Dallas/Fort Worth  
Hill Country**



469.272.2902

VISITCEDARHILLTX.COM



# DEEP IN THE CAVE

BY  
EMILY  
MOSKAL

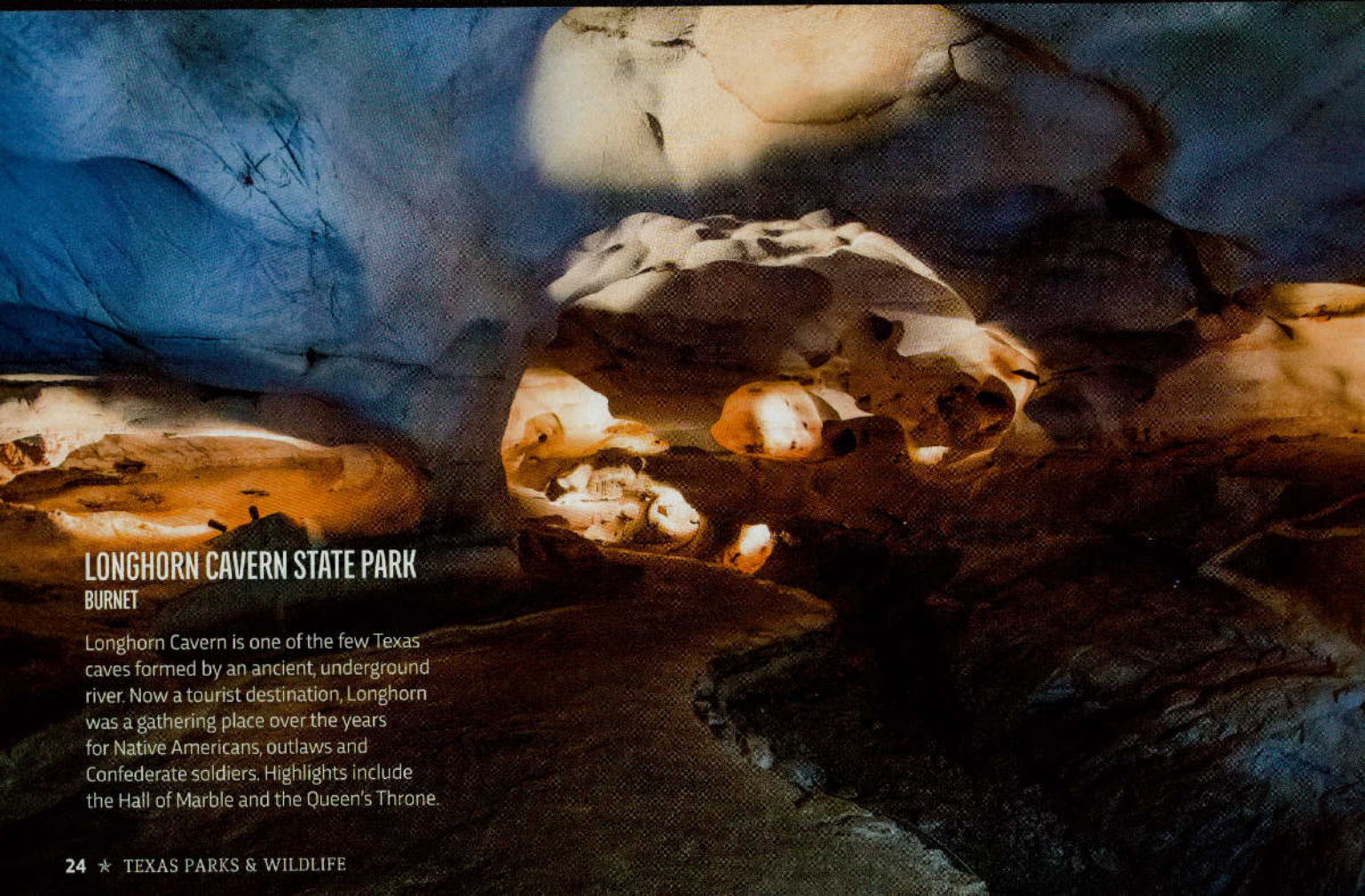
When it's 100 degrees on a Texas summer afternoon, there's no better time to go underground and explore Texas caves, where the temperature sits at little more than 70 degrees all year long. Grab your headlamp and get ready to see some amazing rock formations that have taken centuries to form.



## COLORADO BEND STATE PARK BEND

Guided tours allow visitors to explore some of the 400-plus undeveloped caves here. The Discovery Tour offers less strenuous walking; other tours require crawling on hands and knees and bellies. Join monthly maintenance trips to the park caves with the Texas Speleological Association.

ALL PHOTOS BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD (EXCEPT BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT)



## LONGHORN CAVERN STATE PARK BURNET

Longhorn Cavern is one of the few Texas caves formed by an ancient, underground river. Now a tourist destination, Longhorn was a gathering place over the years for Native Americans, outlaws and Confederate soldiers. Highlights include the Hall of Marble and the Queen's Throne.





## INNER SPACE CAVERN GEORGETOWN

A variety of tour types are offered at one of the best-preserved caves in Texas. Soda straws, drapery, columns, scalloped ceilings and an Inner Cathedral will wow visitors. Prehistoric fossils of 44 different species of animals have been found in the caves, some are on exhibit.

## NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS SAN ANTONIO

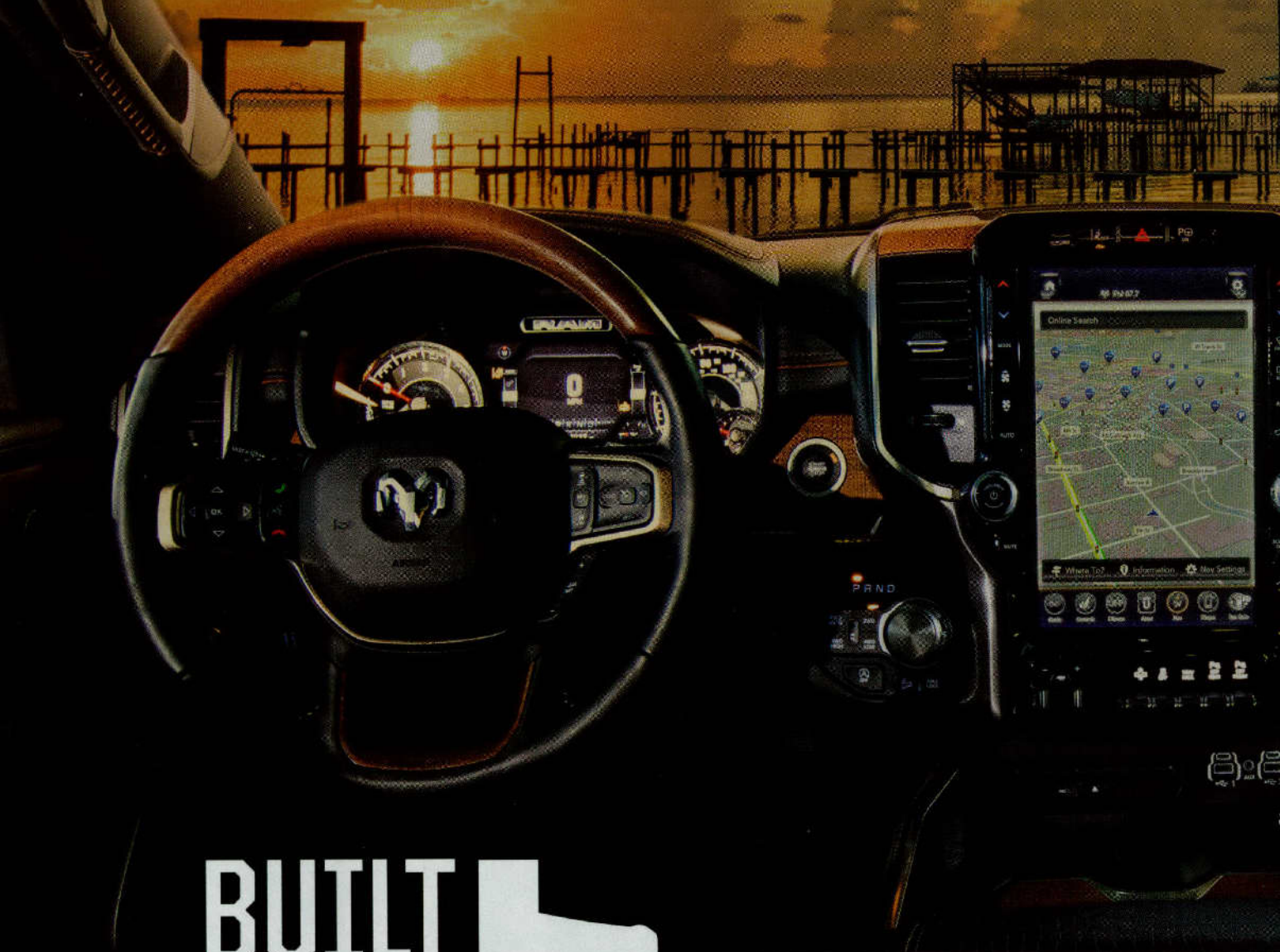
Reaching more than 200 feet below the ground, Natural Bridge Caverns is the largest and deepest commercial cavern in Texas, with massive chambers, amazing formations and emerald pools. Try out a lantern-lit morning tour to feel as if you're the first to discover the wonders below.



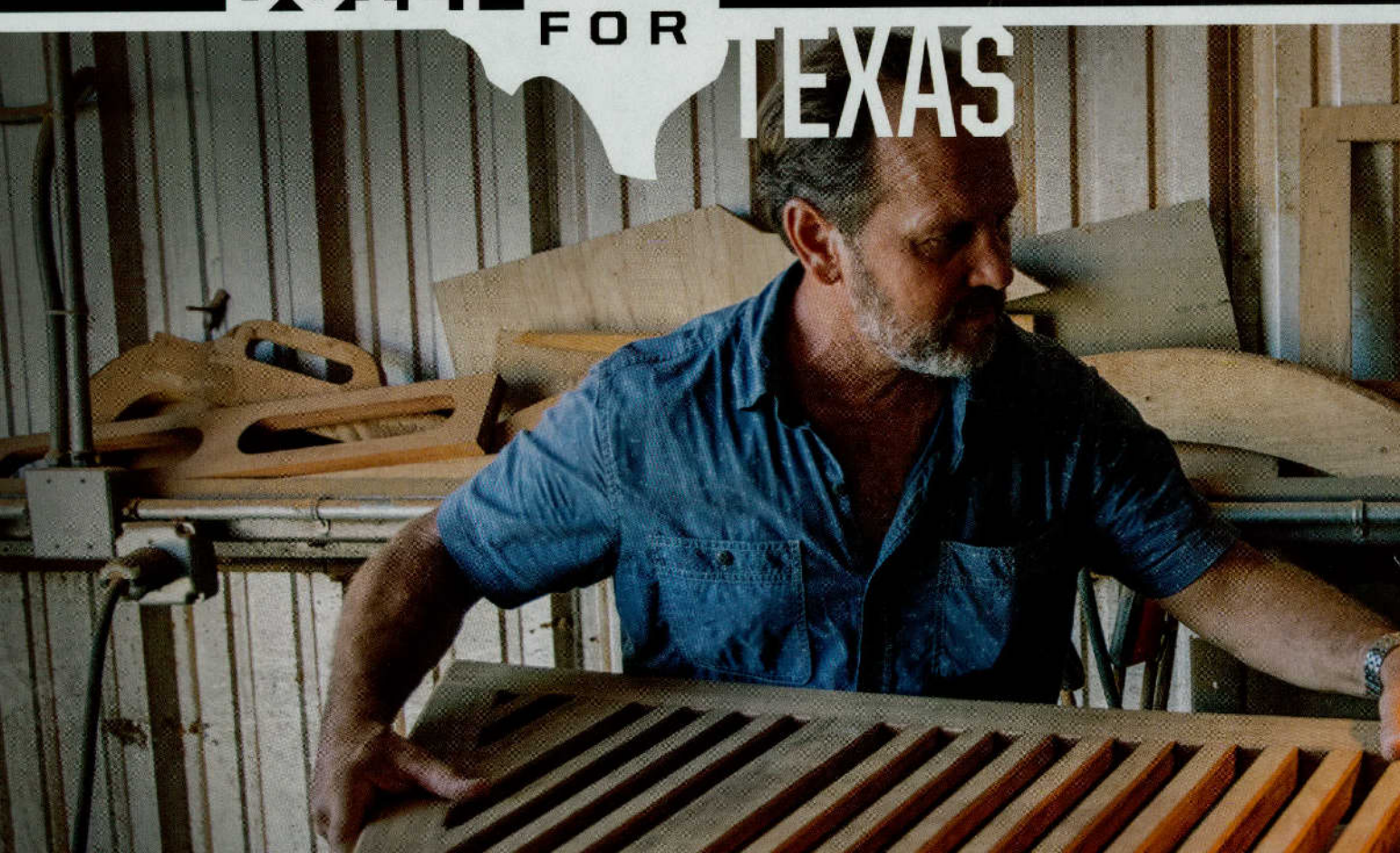
## KICKAPOO CAVERN STATE PARK BRACKETTVILLE

Kickapoo Cavern has 20 known caves; the two largest are publicly accessible. Quarter-mile-long Kickapoo Cavern holds impressive formations. Stuart Bat Cave is home to roosting Mexican free-tailed bats from March through October.





**BUILT**  **FOR** **TEXAS**







## THE ALL-NEW RAM 1500

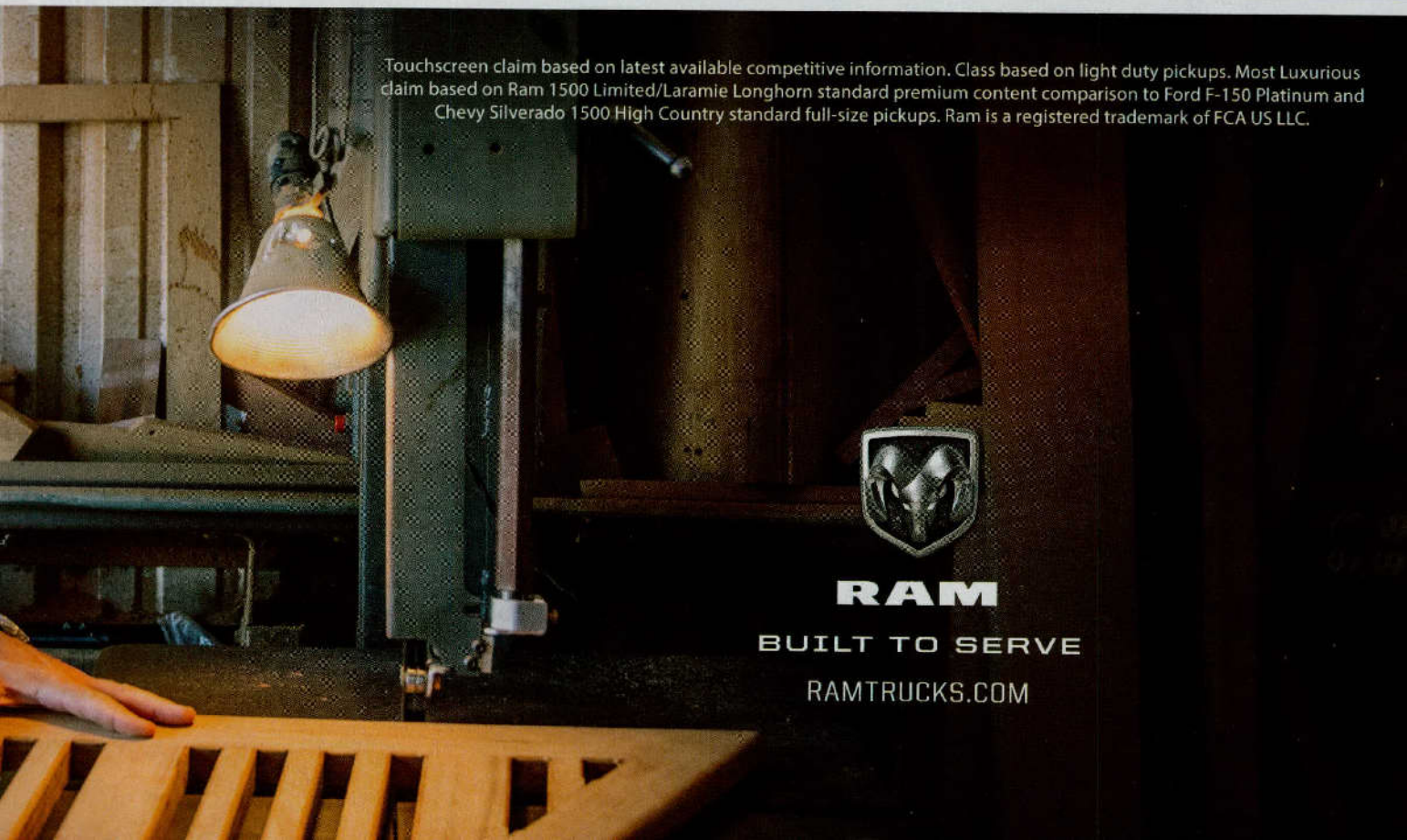
THE MOST LUXURIOUS TRUCK IN ITS CLASS

.....

LARGEST-IN-CLASS 12-INCH TOUCHSCREEN

.....

GENUINE WOOD, LEATHER, AND METAL-TRIMMED INTERIOR



Touchscreen claim based on latest available competitive information. Class based on light duty pickups. Most Luxurious claim based on Ram 1500 Limited/Laramie Longhorn standard premium content comparison to Ford F-150 Platinum and Chevy Silverado 1500 High Country standard full-size pickups. Ram is a registered trademark of FCA US LLC.



**RAM**

BUILT TO SERVE

RAMTRUCKS.COM





# **SWEEP**

**ANNUAL WICHITA FALLS BIKE RIDE**



**AFTER 36 YEARS, WICHITA FALLS' ANNUAL HOTTER'N HELL HUNDRED STILL PLAYS OUT AS BICYCLE HIGH THEATER.**

Although the plot (the course) and local characters (friendly and enthusiastic) remain basically the same each year, the players (up to 13,000) and plot twists — Hotter'N, Windier'N or Wetter'N — can fluctuate wildly. Hence, no two rides are identical.

The ride's century word play is part of Texas lore. Locals developed the idea as the linchpin to the city's centennial celebration in 1982, a 100-mile ride now held annually on a Saturday in late August (always nine days before Labor Day), a time when 100-degree days are the Wichita Falls norm.

# **WETTER'N HELL**

**TESTS BOTH STRENGTH AND HEAT ENDURANCE**

Today's HHH is light-years ahead of original organizer Roby Christie's first 100-miler, when a late registration rush exceeded expectations and 600 riders rode with numbered bibs hand-printed on paper plates pinned to their shirts. No fancy pants or high-tech in sight. Since then, the HHH has added a USA Cycling race, a half-marathon, a mountain bike ride, a trail run and a fixed-gear criterium (a blistering race in which cyclists on fixed-gear, single-speed bicycles with no brakes zoom around a closed circuit) to the weekend. →

**BY JOHN H. OSTDICK**

**PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM**







People from throughout the world join the legions of Texans in the annual pilgrimage to both pedal and sweat prodigiously. Elaine McKinney's infectious enthusiasm is repeated exponentially among the event's 4,000 volunteers.

"We have a saying at the Hotter'N Hell: **You can't quit unless you die, or move away,**" she says, laughing.

McKinney is sitting in her office on a very mild last day of July, perusing a limp flag outside her window. The 61-year-old has ridden in every HHH — "36 years, and knock on wood, I'll be riding in many more." She has varied her ride over the years: Fifty miles on her first, and eight 100-mile finishes (including a "wonderful" 100 to mark her 60th birthday in 2016).

A competitive runner at the time, McKinney was new to cycling for the maiden HHH. Her experience is one repeated by about 330,000 riders since.

"That was the farthest I'd ever ridden in my life, but it proved self-satisfying, so I set my sights for higher things," says McKinney, who has served on the HHH steering committee for the past 10 years. "I'm a social rider — if I can't talk when I ride, I'm not happy. I made friends with a thousand people that year."

Occasionally, annual plot twists have nothing to do with the weather. McKinney recalls being somewhere around the 25-mile marker about 15 years ago when an emu got loose

from a local farm and "ran with us for miles."

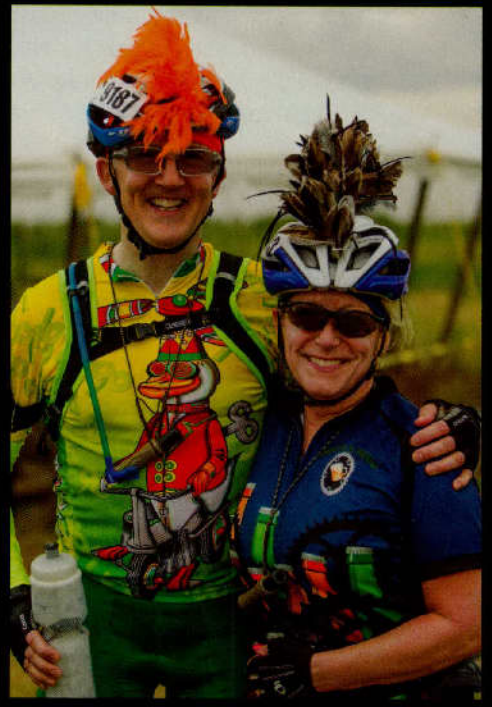
"We just rocked along, and watched that he, she or whatever, never came into the road," she recalls. "That was really fun."

Plano-based "Bikin' Mike" Keel, who worked for a bike shop as a HHH course mechanic in its early days, says he was the inaugural ride's only mechanic.

The rider/trainer started cycling solo in 1974, continuing alone for about 13 years before trying an organized ride. Now a veteran of a handful of 100-mile rides, Keel has been training others for about 25 years. He usually rides the 100-kilometer route so that he can be at his hospitality shelter as his clients finish. He packs chests with towels soaking in an icy slush for post-race cool-downs.

Keel, who pulls a trailer with a sound system, figures he has logged almost 175,000 miles since 1974 without ever entering a timed race.

"I just ride so I can eat more food, and it's working so far," he says, laughing. "One of my big hallmarks is





that in 43 years, I've never cramped on a bike ride. I ride within my limitations. This is ride number 31 for me."

Keel encourages aspiring HHH participants to follow a two-thirds rule: Use spring rides to build up to two-thirds of your Hotter'N Hell target distance and keep that as your long ride.

Riding buddy Don Knight and I are not among the legion of HHH veterans. We have considered doing Wichita Falls since he started riding with me in 2011, but logistics had never clicked. We decided to at least get our feet wet in 2017 by tackling the 50-miler.

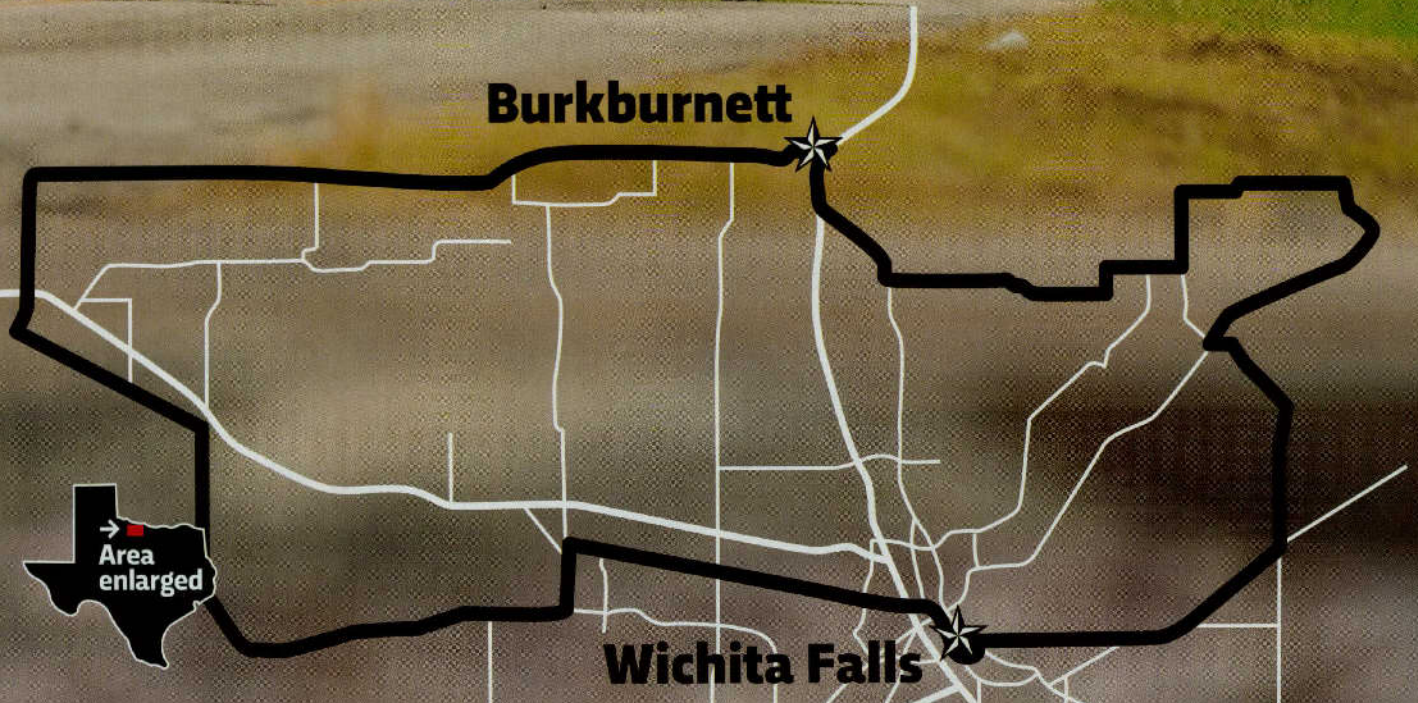
Knight, 59, a Dallas senior assistant city attorney, and I (a year his elder) are not big on formal training. We ride between 55 and 75 miles a week

at a leisurely rate. We joke that while we never finish last on rides, we often have talked a while with those who did. I'm not even real fond of riding with large crowds, yet we've completed a weeklong, 400-plus-mile cross-Iowa ride, and do a couple of organized rides each season.

We figure that we've already done one "hotter-than-hell" odyssey this year, an early-August 42-mile jaunt in Rockwall's Hot Rocks event, where a 108-degree heat index and oppressive humidity almost did us in. So we're delighted when Wichita Falls greets us Friday afternoon with an 80-degree day, and almost giddy when forecasts call for light easterly winds rather than the traditional, daunting, in-your-face southern blast that normally plagues the ride's final 20 miles.

The downtown buildings hosting the packet pick-up, marketplace and dining facilities are bustling Friday evening. Outside, elaborate Austin-based Bike Zoo creations tricked up as a bald eagle and glowing bugs attract countless selfies. Elaine McKinney is at her post at the packet pick-up entrance, answering questions and troubleshooting. This year, 9,238 participants are registered for the various Saturday distances.

We enter the Kay Yeager Coliseum for an HHH ritual — a spaghetti, salad and breadstick all-you-can-eat dinner. North Texas Restaurant Association volunteers started preparing sauce at 7 a.m. to top about 300 pounds of spaghetti being fed to about 2,500 diners (proceeds are donated to community organizations and interfaith ministries). We join a sea





of bent-over heads at tables on the coliseum floor, slurping spaghetti and sauce into carbo-loading mouths.

Our Sweeter'N Hell Saturday begins early, in a dark hotel parking lot loading up our bikes. My good morning greeting — "it's only 72 degrees" — prompts the first of many shared smiles on this day.

We weave through heavy traffic to a downtown parking spot and begin a memorable interlude common to all who ride HHH. We roll slowly through thousands of bikes, bobbing helmets, miles of stretched lycra and the clacking of bike shoes as strangers talk like old friends.

We find the 50-miler staging area (100-mile speedsters front the pack, and then the other 100-milers, 100K riders, 50-milers and so on are staged along 10 city blocks). It's Group Selfie City. The 50-mile contingent includes a whole lot of age and size variation. A grizzled, stout fellow in front of us wears a T-shirt that proclaims, "Team Face Plant Member in Training."

By the time the starting cannon from Fort Belknap thunders eight blocks away at 7:05 and two T-38s from nearby Sheppard Air Force Base do a screaming flyover, more than 1,000 wheel-to-wheel 50-milers hurry up and wait. More than 6,000 riders are crammed among the skyscrapers in front us. About 25 minutes later, we are given the green light and slowly lurch up Scott Avenue and across a bridge above the rusty-brown Wichita River. Locals line the street, standing or seated in lawn chairs, having doughnuts and coffee, waving and encouraging all the riders on.

We fall into a steady rhythm, enjoying a day that will tie the record low for a HHH high temperature, 84, set in 1996 (the high is 106 set in 1988, according to executive director Chip Filer). Clouds shelter our first 25 miles before we ever feel the effects of the full sun. We gulp pickle juice (and, at one stop, slurp on a pickle juice snow cone), suck down water and chew on orange slices at rest stops while being serenaded by Beatles tunes and encouraged by cheery volunteers.

We tire but don't waver from our pace, although we speculate several times that we might be faring differently if it were 102 degrees. We get a real boost as we turn onto Sheppard Air Force Base and pass through hundreds of cheering trainees lining "Airmen's Alley." I extend my hands from my handlebars like wings and make sweeping loops, flying a Sweeter'N Hell grin.

After that boost, the last four miles are a breeze.

As we cross the finish line, an announcer broadcasts, courtesy of the data hookup with my bike bib's electronic chip: "That's John Ostidick finishing 50 miles. It is the 60-year-old's first Hotter'N Hell." (According to "Chiptime," I end up finishing 622nd of the 945 entrants in the 50.)

A small volunteer sea waits with a medal for each still-moving finisher. It's frequently an awkward handoff, but each is bestowed with a grand smile.

Sitting under his awning, Keel beams as he welcomes his clients from their rides. He, like most of the crowd wandering by, wears his finishing medal proudly.

My buddy and I reward ourselves with a cold refreshment and some post-ride nourishment.

"Here's what most people who aren't bicycle enthusiasts don't get," he says in post-game commentary. "You don't have to be a fitness maven or triathlete to finish a long-distance bike ride. You need to train, but you can get in good enough shape without people passing you and saying, 'You must be a marathon runner.' You don't have to look like that to do this and enjoy it. And bottom line, it is enjoyable."

Sweeter'Ndeed.

No telling what players the 2018 HHH will feature — Hotter'N, Windier'N, Wetter'N or even Sweeter Still'N — but Wichita Falls will hold it. And they, by the thousands, will come.

---

*John H. Ostidick is a Dallas freelance writer who keeps moving to stay alive, and writes about the process. So far, it's working.*





White-tailed deer, nearly wiped out by unregulated hunting in the 1900s, are now plentiful.

Texas was down to seven nesting pairs of bald eagles in the 1970s due to DDT and other factors — now there are 200-plus pairs here.

Fewer than 100 brown pelicans existed in the 1970s, and now they're off the endangered species list.

American alligators, with their valuable skin, were upgraded from endangered (1967) to threatened in 20 years.

Aplomado falcons, Kemp's ridley sea turtles, eastern wild turkeys, peregrine falcons and many other Texas animals have come back from near extinction, thanks to the efforts of conservationists.



Eastern meadowlark



# SAVING SPECIES *Sooner*

THE **RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT** COULD  
HELP PROTECT TEXAS SPECIES IN PERIL.

For decades, Texas biologists have toiled over solutions for species teetering on the brink, with some success. But what if we could help more species, and help them earlier, before their situation becomes dire? The answer has come in the form of proposed bipartisan national legislation — the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, or RAWA — that could bring an estimated \$60 million annually to Texas (out of \$1.3 billion nationally) for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives.

by **Louie Bond**



“For Texas, the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act would mean transformative change for people and wildlife, the kind of breakthrough that comes once in a generation,” says Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Executive Director Carter Smith. The agency plans to apply funds to implement the Texas Conservation Action Plan, a statewide “road map” for research, restoration, management and recovery projects addressing Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and important habitats, along with much-needed fish, wildlife and nature education programs.

Passage of the bill — known formally as HR 4647, sponsored by Reps. Jeff Fortenberry and Debbie Dingell, a Republican and a Democrat — would amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of “greatest need” fish and wildlife species determined by the state to be at risk or in need of additional monitoring. Here in Texas, there are more than 1,300 imperiled fish and wildlife species, with another 400 or more at-risk habitat communities.

“This very important and creative legislative initiative provides smart upstream policy to avoid triggering the ‘emergency room procedures’ of the Endangered Species Act,” says bill sponsor Fortenberry. “By effectively putting preventative measures in place, we can now better protect habitat and wildlife from becoming lost or endangered. This will benefit farmers, hunters, anglers, boaters, birders, hikers and other wildlife enthusiasts, as well as the burgeoning field of ecotourism.”

#### **BUILDING CONSENSUS**

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies convened a blue-ribbon panel in 2014, including 26 representatives from environmental/recreational groups and business/industry leaders (like Shell Oil President Bruce Culpepper, Bass Pro Shops CEO Johnny Morris, Hess Corp. CEO Greg Hill and more), chaired by Morris and former Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal. The panel reviewed several funding options, and in the end determined that using existing federal revenues from nonrenewable natural resources, such

as oil and gas, was a solution that would benefit both the economy and our fish and wildlife heritage.

In March 2016, they released a plan to provide \$1.3 billion annually from the up to \$13 billion already collected every year from energy and mineral resources leases on federal lands and waters. There would be no new taxes or additional taxes needed to fund the bill.

States would be required to provide a 25 percent match for the funds.

“This legislation is such a positive thing, such a win all the way around,” says Janice Bezanson of Texas Conservation Alliance. “It’s not just about warm fuzzies, it’s good for business. It’s good for the taxpayer and good for wildlife.”

RAWA was introduced in December 2017 and has gained momentum ever since. More than 70 legislators have signed on to co-sponsor the bill, balanced between both political parties. A national coalition led by the Congressional Sportsman’s Foundation and the National Wildlife Federation is working to pass the RAWA bill. Closer to home, the Texas



### **Spot-tailed earless lizard**

Spot-tailed earless lizards were common historically, but 10 years ago, populations were found in fewer than 20 counties. Recent research has focused on developing habitat models, using radio telemetry to understand habitat use, monitoring known populations and performing surveys to locate additional populations. RAWA funding could fund more habitat restoration projects on private or public lands to increase connectivity between existing populations.



### **Guadalupe bass**

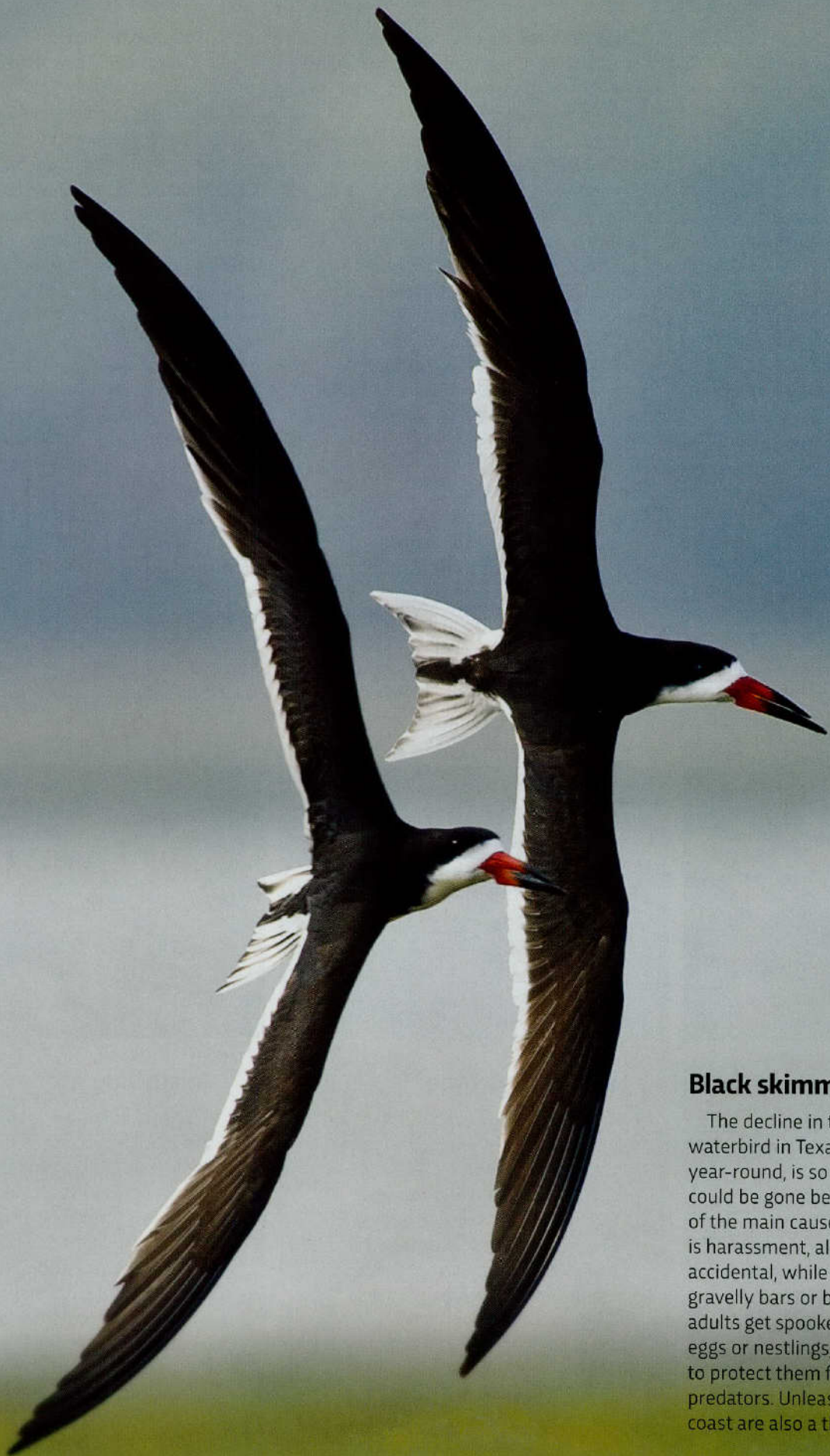
Our official state fish, the Guadalupe bass, is a prized sport fish for Hill Country anglers. The experimental introduction of smallmouth bass to the South Llano River in the late 1950s and other locations in the 1970s resulted in hybrid populations. Since 2010, TPWD biologists have been reintroducing pure Guadalupe bass and helping conserve habitats. The goal is to restore and maintain at least 10 self-sustaining populations of pure Guadalupe bass in Hill Country rivers.



### **Pronghorn**

During the past decade in Texas, more than 750 pronghorns have been captured (via helicopter net gun) from healthy populations in the Panhandle and translocated to the Marfa Plateau and the Marathon Basin to boost populations depleted during a historic decline in 2008–2012. With RAWA funding, TPWD can continue these restocking efforts and help landowners improve habitat connectivity by changing fencing to a style more conducive to pronghorn movement and by treating invasive brush.





## **Black skimmer**

The decline in this coastal waterbird in Texas, where it occurs year-round, is so steep that it could be gone before long. One of the main causes of its decline is harassment, almost always accidental, while the bird nests on gravelly bars or beaches. When adults get spooked from their eggs or nestlings, they're not able to protect them from the sun or predators. Unleashed dogs on the coast are also a threat.



Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife, a coalition of 100-plus organizations representing more than a million Texans, is working diligently to educate the Texas Congressional delegation.

### SAVING TEXAS SPECIES

Texas is blessed with amazing biodiversity — home to nearly 800 species of fish, 450 species of butterflies, 648 species of birds and about 5,000 species of native plants. Texas species and their wild homes are the draw for Texas' multibillion-dollar nature tourism industry.

To date, dedicated funding for Texas game animals has been provided by landmark legislation (Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux), while funding for the most imperiled comes through the Endangered Species Act, but there's not been much left for the vast majority of other species that are declining.

"Investing in species early is like changing the oil in your car — a little preventive investment saves you the outrageous costs of overhauling your engine," says John Davis, TPWD Wildlife Diversity program director. "It's most

fiscally responsible to focus on aiding species prior to precipitous decline. This not only provides ecological stability, but also regulatory certainty for local economies and industry."

TPWD is focusing on the Texas Conservation Action Plan, first created in 2005, then updated, expanded and refined in 2014. The plan serves as a road map for the conservation community to implement collaborative stewardship and identifies 1,310 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Of course, TPWD also works to protect species that are in peril but not yet a "greatest need" species, like monarchs, which can also benefit from RAWA funds used for grassland restoration. Monarch conservation in Texas, like conservation for other insect pollinators, is all about creating, restoring and maintaining native habitat with a diverse mix of nectar-producing plants.

"Any efforts to restore native grasslands with a mix of grasses and forbs for the eastern meadowlark, northern bobwhite, dickcissel, scissor-tailed flycatcher and many other birds would certainly allow

the monarch to ride their coattails towards conservation," says TPWD ornithologist Cliff Shackelford.

TPWD has been involved with the Grassland Restoration Incentive Program to help restore grasslands and forbs (like wildflowers, including the monarch's preferred milkweed) used by many birds as well as lots of pollinators.

"TPWD has worked across the state on public and private lands to restore native prairies, grasslands and savannas, to benefit a suite of species," says TPWD invertebrate biologist Ben Hutchins. "RAWA could help TPWD meet the demand that we are seeing from Texas landowners who want to see these native habitats restored on their private properties."

The transformative funding would help not just fish, wildlife and habitats, but also people. If passed, \$12 million would be available each year to invest in nature education, with an additional \$6 million a year to invest in providing more and better outdoor recreation opportunities like hiking, paddling, bird watching and nature photography.



### Red-headed woodpecker

This U.S. woodpecker has declined by 67 percent in the last half-century due to the loss of open stands of mature timber. Small-scale fire and flooding can create pockets of preferred habitat conditions, but declines are caused by cavity competition from aggressive, non-native European starlings, which steal their nests. The open forests, also referred to as savannas, support lots of insects including aerial ones that this woodpecker is adept at capturing on the fly.



### Whooping crane

The Texas Gulf Coast is the main winter home for whooping cranes that breed in and around Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada. Our continent's largest species of bird is working tirelessly toward a comeback, but it's very slow-going. In 1941, only 16 whooping cranes remained in the wild. Now, they number more than 300. Nature tourists flock to the central Texas coast to see this charismatic species.



### Texas kangaroo rat

The Texas kangaroo rat used to be found in 13 counties (11 in Texas and two in Oklahoma) but is now known only in five. Since 2015, TPWD has funded three research projects: a genetic diversity assessment, a distribution study and new 2018 work on dispersal, fine-scale movement, habitat management and initiation of a captive population. The next step is to restore their habitats on a landscape scale.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Polls and surveys consistently show that Texas residents strongly support land, water and wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation. Land fragmentation, drought, loss of open space, competing demands for water and invasive species can disrupt these species and our enjoyment of them.

Collaborative, creative efforts can ensure that our imperiled populations and habitats survive. Individual action is important, but when we work together, the results can be transformative.

For Texas, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would indeed mean transformative change for people and wildlife, the kind of breakthrough that comes once in a generation. But it won't happen unless people who care get informed, get involved and make their voices heard to their elected officials. For more information about what this would mean for our state, and to find out how to help, visit Texas Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife at [txwildlifealliance.org](http://txwildlifealliance.org).



### American bumblebee

Native bees play a crucial role pollinating plants in native and agricultural settings. TPWD has funded research to conduct surveys for Texas bumblebees like the American bumblebee, which has experienced substantial population decline over much of its range. With nearly 1,000 native bee species in the state, RAWA could be a game changer in terms of how we collect data and enact well-informed conservation measures.



### Texas horned lizard

Texas horned lizards once occurred throughout Texas, but now only a few isolated populations remain. Efforts to move Texas horned lizards from one location in Texas to another, with the hope of establishing new self-sustaining populations in previously occupied habitat, are underway. Several Texas zoos are also working to develop colonies for reintroduction programs. RAWA funding would pay for "lizard factories" to help with reintroduction efforts.









PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

# DEVILS ADVOCATES

**Landowners and conservation groups work to preserve the pristine Devils River.**

At first sight, most anyone can see the Devils River is special. The Caribbean aquamarine color of its crystal-clear water is stunning, winding through arid, rocky canyons.

This is rough country, covered in thorns, jagged rocks and steep cliffs, hence the name “Devils.” But down by the river, it’s heavenly. Prized by anglers for feisty game fish, the river is also home to rare species like the Devils River minnow and the Texas hornshell, a freshwater mussel that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed as endangered in March.

**by Tom Harvey**



There's more here than beauty. In drought-prone Texas, water is life, for people, fish and wildlife, livestock and agriculture; the spring-rich Devils sends benefits way beyond its banks. Somewhere between 15-18 percent of water in the Rio Grande below Lake Amistad comes from the Devils River.

"The Devils is the least disturbed, least developed river in Texas," says Chad Norris, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department aquatic biologist who has made a career of studying springs and their connections with rivers. "By extension it has high water quality and an exceptionally diverse biotic community, which includes endangered species. In terms of how we manage watersheds, the Devils offers an opportunity that many parts of Texas only wish they could achieve."

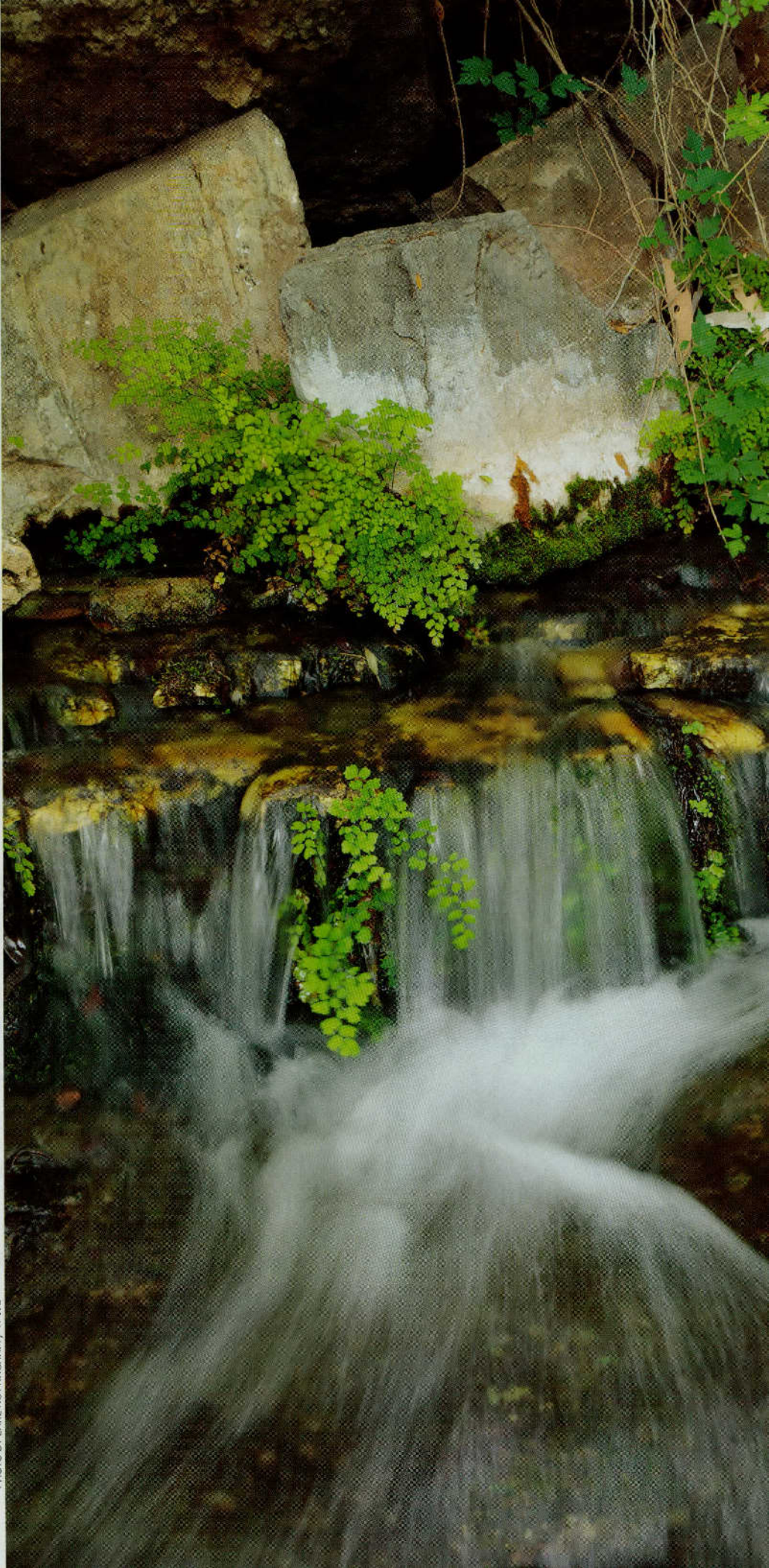
The river is special, but it's also at risk. Today the river's remote beauty, wide-open spaces, clear water and dark skies face a variety of threats.

#### **PRESERVING WILDNESS**

For most of the past century, ranching has been the main land use along the river, and that's helped protect the river and keep the region's wild character intact. Multigenerational ranching families with deep roots in the rocky soil are still prominent conservation advocates. That includes ranchers like Alice Ball Strunk, whose family still owns the river's headwater springs on Hudspeth River Ranch. Their first ranch property was purchased in 1905 by Alice's great-grandfather Claude B. Hudspeth, known as the "cowboy congressman," first a state representative and senator and then serving in the U.S. Congress, 1919-1931.

Because of its beauty and importance, huge public and private investments have gone into safeguarding the Devils River. The state acquired the original 20,000-acre Del Norte Unit of Devils River State Natural Area in 1988, and acquired the newer 18,000-acre Dan A. Hughes Unit in 2011 using \$10 million in private donations. In addition to that, there's the 57,000-acre Amistad National

PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD







Recreation Area into which the river flows. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Devils River Conservancy and others have collaborated for years to set research priorities and develop sound science, fund projects to study and conserve the river, host field days and hold educational workshops.

Yet there is still more. The Devils River watershed represents the nonprofit Nature Conservancy's single largest conservation investment in Texas.

"In 1991, the Dolan Falls property came up for sale and the Nature Conservancy bought it, realizing how special it was," says Laura Huffman, Nature Conservancy of Texas state director. "Since then, we've worked with conservation-minded landowners to safeguard more than 100,000 additional acres along the river through conservation easements — voluntary land-use agreements with private landowners that permanently conserve land and water."

The easements restrict the properties from being subdivided into smaller parcels, prohibit water from being exported off the property and limit development close to the river and in other ecologically sensitive areas, like Fern Cave, one of the state's largest Mexican free-tailed bat maternity colonies. The Texas Agricultural Land Trust also holds conservation easements along the Devils, including one on Sycamore Canyon Ranch owned by the Russell family, who won a Lone Star Land Steward Award in 2014.

"Partnering with private landowners on the Devils is vital — they're some of the most important stewards of Texas' natural resources," Huffman says.

#### **PADDLERS HIT THE WATER**

For decades, adventurers have been drawn to kayak and canoe the Devils River — it has become perhaps a misguided ambition of many Texas paddlers to "conquer" the Devils, making the arduous trip around boulders and over shallow spots from Baker's Crossing down to Lake Amistad. Some adventurers

have come ill-prepared. That's not only dangerous, but it's raised mounting concerns among riverside landowners about trespassing and degradation of the watershed from increasing human impact.

Fortunately, progress has been made to preserve the unique wilderness recreation experience and protect it for future generations. TPWD and the Devils River Conservancy work to educate visitors and manage paddler numbers through a permit system.

#### **GROUNDWATER PUMPING**

However, there is a bigger water challenge. Business conglomerates have shopped plans to do things like pump groundwater in Val Verde County and build a pipeline to ship it north toward San Angelo — as one proposal said, "marketing this water for sale for use in hydrocarbon exploration and by municipalities."

That project has yet to materialize, but it raised concerns that someone could pump large amounts of groundwater, and that might dry up the springs that feed the river.

Such concerns are not guesswork. In 2017, Ron Green, a hydrologist with the nonprofit Southwest Research Institute, completed a study of water resource management of the Devils River watershed.

"What our study did was to show the sensitive linkage between groundwater pumping and surface water flow," Green says. "We developed a model showing what happens when you remove groundwater by pumping."

What happens? There is less water in the river.

"Ron Green's work shows that whether you're pumping groundwater around Lake Amistad or farther up the river," says Norris, "if you're in a high-producing area, for every acre-foot of groundwater pumped that's an acre-foot less of water in the river."

In Texas, where 95 percent of the landscape is privately owned, property rights are paramount. Groundwater use goes by the "rule of capture," a legal principle that has been interpreted to mean that someone can pump all the water they









PHOTO © JENNIFER IDOL / ENGRETSON UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY



want even if that causes neighboring wells to go dry. There is a recourse: Groundwater conservation districts governed by locally elected boards have the power to regulate pumping in various ways. They can limit the withdrawal rate, the spacing of wells and the total volume pumped annually. However, if groundwater is available, they cannot decide who gets to pump and who doesn't.

Val Verde County has yet to form a groundwater district, despite years of talk. It came close two legislative sessions ago, with a bill to create a district filed by Rep. Poncho Nevárez, whose legislative district includes Del Rio and much of West Texas.

"We're starting to enter another drought in our state, and this round may be fiercer," Nevárez notes. "The Devils is the most pristine or cleanest river in Texas; there's not another one like it, and we want to make sure that continues. It boils down to a couple of things: how much water is there, and will pumping it affect the viability of the river. Past that, you add to the mix, if I pump here along the river, what does that mean over

there? In the coming session, I would file another bill as a placeholder. But I won't advance a bill unless I have everyone signing on."

Getting unanimous agreement may not be easy. But mounting evidence, including Green's study, indicates that more landowners may be coming around to the idea of a groundwater district.

Dell Dickinson and his brothers own the 7,000-acre Skyline Ranch in Val Verde County, with about 4.5 miles of riverfront on the west side of the river. He also manages the Toco River Ranch, about 2,000 acres with about 2 miles of river frontage. Dickinson's family first came to the Devils in the late 1800s, when his great-grandfather Tom Wilson bought land near the small community of Juno. His mom's father bought the Skyline Ranch in 1942.

"I'm for having a groundwater management district," Dickinson says. "I would like to see order. Water is becoming the gold standard. We're all going to have to learn to share, whether we like it or not. Without some type of management vehicle,

the chances are too great that some individuals, perhaps thinking of profit only, would ruin things for everybody else."

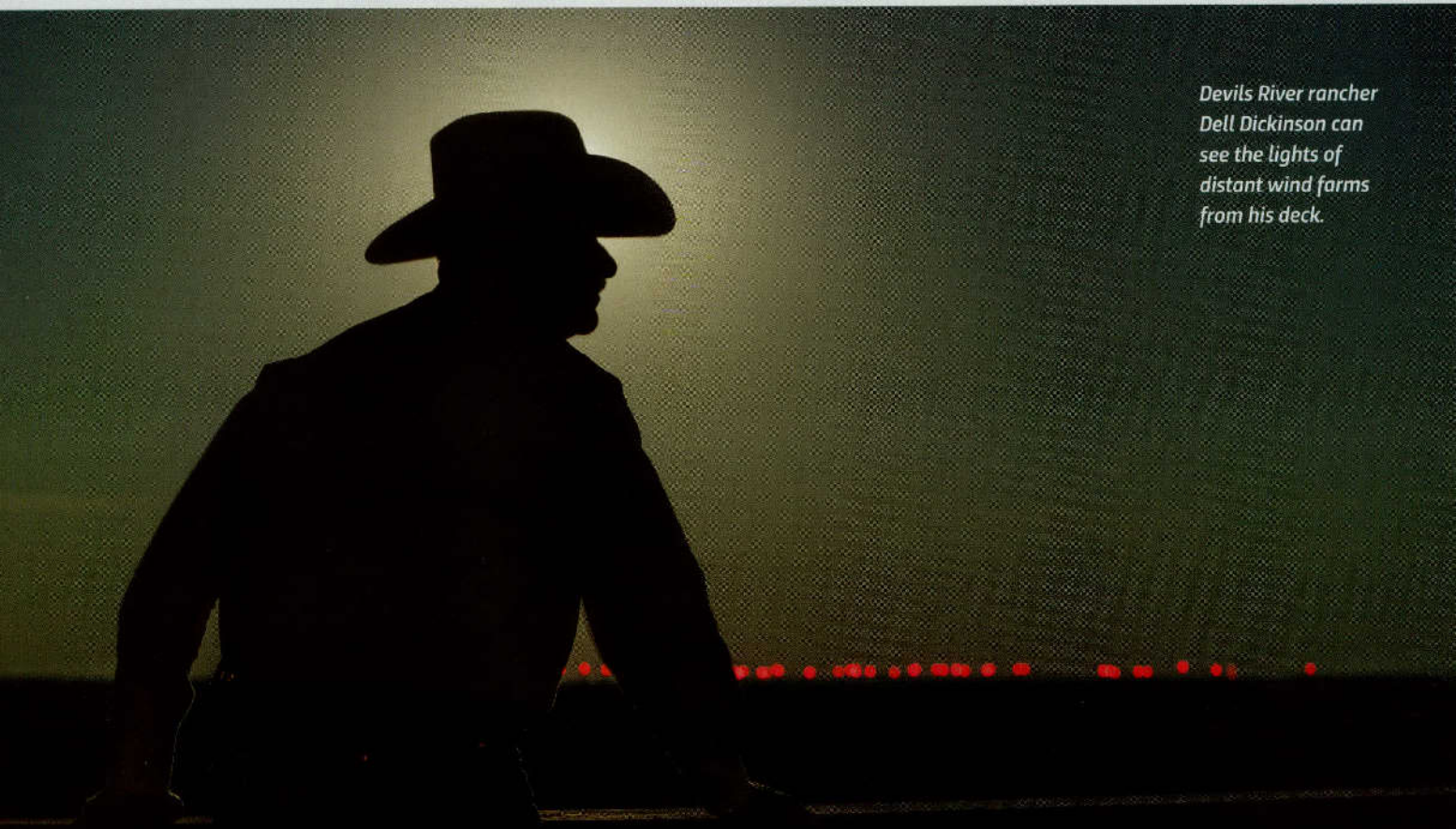
Speaking with Dickinson, you get the impression his attitudes have evolved over time. Like other multigenerational ranch families along the upper Devils, he is a staunch proponent of property rights.

"I am a very strong private property rights advocate," Dickinson says. "However, my personal definition of that is that I can do anything with and on my land as long as it's legal, ethical and doesn't harm my neighbor."

While there has not been total agreement on groundwater, a new issue appears to be uniting many voices in the region, joining against what they perceive as a common threat to all.

#### **WINDMILLS ON THE HORIZON**

In 2017, French wind power company Akuo Energy built a 69-turbine wind project in Val Verde County, the Rocksprings Val Verde Wind Farm. This is about 6 miles



*Devils River rancher Dell Dickinson can see the lights of distant wind farms from his deck.*





east of the southern unit of TPWD's Devils River State Natural Area. One of the major leases in the wind farm is Brazos Highland Properties LP, a Chinese-based investment firm. In addition to its part of the Rocksprings wind farm, Brazos Highland owns tens of thousands of additional acres on both sides of the Devils River, and on the Pecos River. Locals believe Brazos Highland intends to further develop wind energy on these acres, raising the prospect of dozens or hundreds more wind turbines on the horizon. It's a tricky balance since wind power clearly has both environmental benefits and some drawbacks. The issue is where the turbines are built and what might be affected nearby.

"The first night I walked out on the deck at the headquarters house after the Rocksprings wind farm navigation lights were activated, I was appalled," Dickinson says. "One of the things we love about this

country is stargazing. The number of stars visible in these dark skies is stunning. If you can imagine 69 red navigation lights all blinking together in synchronous timing, it looks like the extraterrestrials have landed. Long story short, I no longer visit the deck at night because of this visual and light pollution being foisted on me by a foreign entity, who apparently has no regard for his neighbors."

Dickinson is not alone. Dozens of people, organizations and businesses, led by the Devils River Conservancy, have organized in opposition. And, in a move that surprised some observers, the Val Verde County Commissioners Court passed a resolution this spring opposing wind farm expansion.

"You have to visualize this," Dickinson says. "As the crow flies, the turbines are 18 miles from our ranch house. At 18 miles away, those things are so huge — more than 450 feet tall — that I can count each one individually with my naked eye, and I can see the individual blades rotating."

Opponents say it's about more than dark skies and vistas. They cite safety concerns about the proximity to Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, issues for safely monitoring border security, potential impacts to endangered species, property rights and land values. They say wind turbine construction and operation here undermine decades of public and private conservation investments

along the river, and point out that wind farms are high on the scale in terms of land-use intensity.

"Given that the public currently views wind power as a viable alternative energy source, it only makes sense to locate them to 'disturbed' areas which are already altered to such an extent that they have limited value to support natural communities," Dickinson says. "Studies show that the contiguous United States has more than enough net 'disturbed' areas to site wind farms, thus saving 'non-disturbed' areas like the Devils River watershed. Bottom line, destroying one environment in the name of trying to protect another makes no sense at all."

What happens on the Devils River could set important precedents for other rivers across Texas. Slowly growing consensus built over decades appears to be centering on conservation for the common good. The Devils River Conservancy, relatively new on the scene, is making creative strides to educate paddlers, landowners and others, providing science-based decision-making tools to the community, and working to change the visitor mindset from "conquer the Devils" to "be a Devils advocate." ★

---

*Tom Harvey is the Communications Division deputy director for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.*



# SILENT SENTINELS

*The legendary trees of our state parks tell the story of Texas.*

By Russell Roe



Former Gov. James Stephen Hogg's dying wish was about trees. Before he passed away in 1906, he told his loved ones that he wanted a pecan tree to be planted at the head of his grave instead of a stone or marble monument. He wanted the nuts to be given to the people of Texas with the dream of making the state "a land of trees."

*Trees pictured L-R: Old Baldy (McKinney Falls), La Bahía Pecan (Washington-on-the-Brazos), Goliad Anacua (Goliad), Big Tree (Goose Island).*

PHOTOS L-R BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD; EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD; SONJA SOMMERFELD / TPWD; EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD





The State Horticultural Society, in accordance with Hogg's request, planted two pecan trees at the head of his grave in Austin and a black walnut tree at his feet, and their nuts were in fact distributed across the state. In 1919, with the popularity of the native tree growing, thanks in part to Hogg, the pecan was named the state tree of Texas.

Trees connect us in many ways. Hogg knew that. We gather under them, seeking their shade on a hot day. We admire them for their beauty. We see them as a link to the past and a bridge to the future. Trees have the remarkable ability to combine natural and cultural history in ways that few other objects can. Every tree tells a story, and some of them have great stories to tell.

Our Texas state parks contain many remarkable trees. Four of them have risen to such a level of historical importance that they have been included on the Texas A&M Forest Service's Famous Trees of Texas Registry.

### LA BAHÍA PECAN

When delegates gathered in the town of Washington in March 1836 to declare independence from Mexico, a young pecan tree stood near the ferry

crossing on the Brazos River. These were tumultuous times — the Alamo was under siege, and the delegates were torn between going to the aid of the soldiers and staying to work on a new government. They hunkered down, declared independence and established the Republic of Texas.

After the Alamo fell, settlers started streaming through Washington in a desperate attempt to stay ahead of Mexican Gen. Santa Anna and his advancing army. The fleeing settlers camped out along the river, likely next to the tree, waiting for their turn to load their wagons and families on the ferry in the retreat known as the Runaway Scrape.

The La Bahía Pecan, at what is now Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, bore witness to these events — some of the most important in Texas history.

"This is considered to be what's called a 'witness tree' because of its age and the dramatic events that it has been through here," says Catherine Nolte, park superintendent.

Travelers had been this way before. The historic La Bahía Road, running through the park, started as a Native American trail across Texas and later served as a route for Spanish explorers. DNA testing shows that the

La Bahía Pecan is related to trees in Tamaulipas, Mexico.

"Since the tree is in proximity to La Bahía Road, it lends credence to the idea that people were traveling and there was dispersal of plants and other things, just like we have today," Nolte says. "We don't know for sure how this tree developed here, whether a pecan fell out of a saddlebag, out of a bag on a cart or something like that. It ended up germinating here and taking root."

Washington became the republic's first capital, and the tree grew along with the town and the new nation. Today, the tree stands 60 feet tall and is 5 feet in diameter. It was accepted to the famous tree registry in 2011.

Texans can grow their own piece of history with seedlings propagated from the tree. The park's friends group sells them as a fundraiser.

### GOLIAD ANACUA

For almost 100 years, Goliad's Mission Espíritu Santo sat abandoned after serving as one of the most important settlements in Spanish Texas. An anacua tree, however, kept an eye on the place.

The Spanish began colonizing South Texas in the late 1600s, and they built missions to convert Native Americans to Christianity and to



deter the French. They established Mission Espíritu Santo near the coast in 1722 and moved it to what is now Goliad in 1749. It became the first great cattle ranch in Texas, with as many as 40,000 head of cattle at its peak. The mission struggled at times but survived until the 1820s, when Mexico gained independence from Spain and the mission shut down. Goliad residents started helping themselves to the rocks forming the mission walls.

"The tree was present in this area when not a lot of people were paying attention," says Goliad State Park interpreter Rachel Flinn. "That time from 1830 to the 1930s, the area wasn't really recognized for its historical significance. This tree had its beginning then, in a rough time, and observed this site when nobody else did."

In 1931, Goliad transferred the site to the state, which agreed to preserve it as a historical park. The anacua was a large, mature tree growing out of the ruins when the Civilian Conservation Corps began uncovering the foundations of the mission.

"I couldn't stand to cut that tree," recalled architect Raiford Stripling, who was leading the CCC effort to rebuild the mission. He decided to save it. Workers dug it up and replanted it about 30 feet from its original position. It now stands near the entrance to the chapel, occupying a prominent place at the park.

The tree is large for an anacua tree, a South Texas species also known as the "sandpaper tree" for its rough leaves.

It's still watching over the mission.

"It's a meeting place," Flinn says. "We stand under it and talk to groups. People just tend to congregate under it. It's a great place to stand and observe birds and squirrels."

### THE BIG TREE

When Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Rockport in August 2017, Texans worried about Goose Island's centuries-old Big Tree.

Several trees around it lost limbs or were uprooted, but the former state champion coastal live oak survived intact. A TPWD social media post showed a photo of the tree after the storm and added a simple statement:

"You don't get old by being weak."

Indeed. The tree became a symbol of hope and resilience for coastal Texans in the face of the hurricane, one of the most damaging storms in Texas history.

The Big Tree carries a lot of history in its trunk, roots and branches. Over the centuries, it has survived destructive hurricanes, fires, war and ever-spreading coastal settlement. It has seen the coming and going of Native Americans, European explorers and Texas settlers.

It serves as a landmark and a tourist attraction in the Rockport area.

"Everybody who comes to the park says, 'Where's the Big Tree? I want to see the Big Tree,'" says Sarah Nordlof, park interpreter at Goose Island State Park. "And it's something we tell people: If you're at Goose Island, you have to go see the Big Tree, even if you're here just to go fishing."

Park interpreters have traditionally told people that the tree is more than 1,000 years old. Nordlof says it could be anywhere from 300 to 2,000 years old — nobody knows for sure — so she now tells people it's "centuries old."

The tree stands 44 feet tall with an 89-foot crown spread. The circumference of the trunk is 35 feet. Despite losing the title of state champion, it's still one of the biggest live oaks in the state and nation. Its gnarled branches are supported by braces and cables; a lightning rod protects it during thunderstorms.

Nordlof says the tree imparts an important message: "We really want people to know that if you respect and nurture the plants and animals around you and take care of the environment, something like this can last as long as it has. As long as you're respecting the natural world around you, it can be around for future generations, for your children and your children's children."

### OLD BALDY

Rising 103 feet, Old Baldy stands as a stately beauty along Austin's Onion Creek in McKinney Falls State Park. The bald cypress tree serves as a home for birds and bees and an object of fascination for schoolkids and park visitors. It may have been a campsite for Spanish explorers.

### OTHER FAMOUS TREES

*Boat Landing Cottonwood: This tree, no longer there, was where riverboats on the Brazos tied up to visit San Felipe de Austin, the first capital of the state's provisional government from 1824 to 1836. The tree was located in what is now Stephen F. Austin State Park.*

*Cabinet Oak: President Lyndon B. Johnson liked to conduct the nation's business under this oak, growing at the Texas White House at LBJ National Historical Park, across the Pedernales River from LBJ State Park.*

"It's pretty rare to be able to be near a tree this big," says Kristen Williams, park interpreter at McKinney Falls. "We have a cousin of the redwood right here in our own backyard."

Old Baldy was added to the famous trees registry in 2013 and was named Austin's "Tree of the Year" in 2012.

"They threw a good party," Williams says of the celebration. "There was cake; the mayor was here. It was a big deal."

At 550 years old, it is one of the oldest bald cypress trees on public land in Texas.

Old Baldy grows near the park's rock shelter overhang, where evidence of human habitation goes back 8,000 years. And it's near where Spanish friars camped on a 1716 expedition through Texas. Father Isidro Felix de Espinosa, on his way to establish missions in East Texas, noted in his diary that he camped about a half-mile from the confluence of Onion and Williamson creeks, about where the tree stands, during a thunderstorm in May 1716. El Camino Real, the corridor across Texas established by the Spanish, came through here and brought Espinosa and other travelers by the tree from the late 1600s to the mid-1800s.

A trail and footbridge lead today's visitors to Old Baldy.

"I see a lot of people coming down here and just being quiet, which I think we don't spend enough time doing in our day-to-day lives," Williams says. "The presence of this tree, more than a lot of things in the park, causes people to stop in their tracks and look up." ★



# Field Dress For Success

The hunt for the perfect outdoorsman knife is over. There's only one tool you need: the *Whitetail™ Hunting Knife*—now **ONLY \$49!**

The consummate outdoorsman never goes on deep woods hunting trips without the essentials. Not just the basics for every hunting trip, but the items he's come to depend on over the years.

Our new *Whitetail™ Hunting Knife* will quickly become your go-to blade for every expedition. The *Whitetail™* is a premium fixed-blade hunting knife that's perfect for skinning. With the *Whitetail* at hand, you'll be ready for field dressing in only seconds, and you'll never need a separate gut hook tool ever again. The *Whitetail™* boasts a mighty 420 high carbon, full tang stainless steel 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."

The comfortable handle is made from pakkawood—moisture-resistant and more durable than hardwood. If hunting is your life, then the *Whitetail™* Knife was designed to make your life easier.

With our limited edition *Whitetail™ Hunting 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.



**BONUS!** Call today and you'll also receive this heavy duty sheath!

**EXCLUSIVE  
FREE**

Stauer® 8x21  
Compact  
Binoculars  
-a \$99 value-  
with purchase of  
*Whitetail™* Hunting  
Knife



This 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 sale price. But we believe that once you wrap your fingers around the *Whitetail's* handle, you'll be ready to carve your own niche into the wild frontier.

**What customers are saying about Stauer knives...**



*"Good value. Great looking. Sufficiently sharp. Overall an "A" purchase and I ordered three."*

— B. of Maryland

**Whitetail™ Hunting Knife \$79\***

Offer Code Price Only **\$49** + S&P **Save \$30**

**PLUS Free Stauer Compact Binoculars**

**1-800-333-2045**

Your Insider Offer Code: **WHK262-01**

You must use the insider offer code to get our special price.



**Stauer®** 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. WHK262-01  
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)

\*Discount is only for customers who use the offer code versus the listed original Stauer.com price.

Not shown  
actual size.



• 5 1/4" 420HC stainless steel blade • Full-tang design with gut hook • Pakkawood handle with brass pins • Bonus heavy duty nylon sheath

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.*



## Rockport RedRunner Captain Chad Verburt



Specializing in shallow water flats fishing for redfish, trout & flounder.



- Baffin trips
- Duck Hunting
- Flounder Giggling
- Nature Boat Trips for Photography and Private Whooping Crane Tours

Call (361) 463-6545

rockportredrunner@yahoo.com  
www.rockportredrunner.com

## The EASY DR® Way to TRIM and MOW!



Starting at just **\$349<sup>99</sup>**

TOW-BEHIND MODELS TOO!

The ORIGINAL Trimmer on Wheels!

The DR® TRIMMER MOWER gives you 5X the power and NONE of the backstrain of handheld trimmers!

- Trims and mows thick grass and weeds without bogging down—the ONLY trimmer guaranteed not to wrap!
- Rolls light as a feather on big, easy-rolling wheels!
- Thickest, longest-lasting cutting cord (up to 225 mil) takes seconds to change.

1921EX © 2018

**FREE SHIPPING 6 MONTH TRIAL**

SOME LIMITATIONS APPLY

Call for FREE DVD and Catalog!

TOLL-FREE

**888-212-0730**

DRtrimmers.com



## CRAWFORD & COMPANY



Hand Crafted,  
Personalized Boot  
Jacks and Coaster Sets.

P.O. Box 126  
Uvalde, TX 78802  
Visa/Mastercard.

Call to order a Free Brochure  
Toll Free (888) 301-1967  
www.crawjacks.com

**GREAT FATHER'S DAY/GRADUATION GIFT!**

## Grind Away ANY Size Stump FAST!



LOWEST PRICE EVER!

The DR® STUMP GRINDER uses carbide-tipped cutting teeth (taking 360 "bites" per second) to reduce any stump to a pile of woodchips. Grinds stumps below ground level so they are gone forever!

- Faster, safer and easier than digging, burning, or using chemicals.
- New, more powerful and lower-priced models.
- Now towable with your riding mower or ATV.



1921DX © 2018

NEW Self-Propelled Model Available!

**FREE SHIPPING 6 MONTH TRIAL**

SOME LIMITATIONS APPLY

Call for FREE DVD and Catalog!

TOLL-FREE

**888-212-0730**

DRstumpgrinder.com



## WICHITA COUNTY CHARITY DOVE HUNT SEPTEMBER 7-8, 2018

\$100 ENTRY INCLUDES  
DINNER ON 7TH,  
ALL DAY HUNT ON 8TH,  
CHANCE TO WIN A  
\$500 GIFT CARD.



PROCEEDS BENEFIT BURKBURNETT MEALS ON WHEELS

CALL 940-569-0821  
OR EMAIL FRANKRF4C@ICLOUD.COM

## GET YOUR FREE MOBILE FISHING GUIDE!

Download our app and get our free Texas Fishing Guide, plus great magazine content for iOS and Android.  
www.tpwmagazine.com/app

S&D  
Whitetails  
Guided Hunts



Dale Storch  
325-642-7596

1400 FM 218  
Zephyr, Texas 76890

www.sdwhitetails.com

## Deer Turkey Dove

Hunting 7500 acres high fence in Brown, Mills & Comanche counties.  
Deer from 140 to 220 lbs. Booking dove & deer hunts now.



# THE NEXT GREAT ITALIAN MASTERPIECE

*The Argento Byzantine Bracelet is an impeccable work of art with a price unmatched by any in its class.*

*Raffinato™*  
*Italy*

**D**a Vinci's Mona Lisa, David by Michelangelo, Madame Butterfly by Puccini. Italy has produced some of the world's greatest masterpieces. And, it's no secret it is the epicenter of the best metalworking on earth. Which is why we sought out one of the best artisans to ever melt precious metals to create yet another great Italian masterpiece. For over two decades, Fabio Aguti has pursued his passion for making jewelry of great beauty inspired by the Tuscan countryside. The **Argento Bracelet** is his latest masterpiece. **And, you can own it for under \$40!**

Each bracelet is meticulously made by hand from pure sterling silver and celebrates the traditional woven Byzantine design— an intricate array of woven links that forms a flexible and elegant drape. Passing the test of time and surpassing the definition of beauty, the **Argento Byzantine Bracelet** is perfect for the lady who appreciates fine art. And, priced for those who appreciate a fine value.

**The difference between priceless & overpriced.** While shopping for bracelets, I spotted a 7" woven sterling silver Byzantine bracelet with a big designer name for \$250. Ridiculous. It wasn't Italian made. It wasn't near as nice. High-end design shouldn't carry a high price just because of a big name designer name up-charge.

**No questions asked, 30-day money back guarantee.** We want you glowing with satisfaction.

**Masterpiece, not mass produced.** Because each bracelet is handmade in Italy— taking months to create— we only have a select number available. Don't miss this opportunity to own a piece of impeccable Italian-made jewelry for a truly amazing price. Call today!

• Made in Arezzo, Italy • .925 sterling silver • 7.5" bracelet; lobster clasp

## Argento Byzantine Bracelet

Stunningly well-priced at **\$39** + S&P

*The classic Byzantine chain pattern has stood the test of time for over 2,500 years*



*"She loves it and wears it proudly.*

*The quality is outstanding, and her friends recognize the classy and elegant look."*

—M.B., Minneapolis, MN

Call today. There's never been a better time to let your elegance shine. **1-888-444-5949**

Offer Code: RFJ208-01. You must use the offer code to get our special price.

**Raffinato™** 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. RFJ208-01, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 [www.raffinatoitaly.com](http://www.raffinatoitaly.com)  
*A collection of impeccable design & craftsmanship from Italy.*



# It's Enough to Make You Blue in the Face

Time to take a stand against overpriced watches with the Stauer Urban Blue, **now only \$29.**

It's absolutely possible to have the highest quality, precision classic timepiece without the high and mighty price tag. Case in point: The Stauer *Urban Blue*. It's everything a high-end watch should be. Precision timing that's accurate to four seconds a day—that's more precise than a 27-jewel automatic watch priced at over \$6,000. And, good looking—with simple, clean lines and a striking metallic blue face.

**Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed.** Wear the *Urban Blue* for 30 days. If you're not convinced that you achieved excellence for less, send it back for a refund of the item price. It takes six months to engineer this watch so don't wait. Take a stand against overpriced watches in impeccable style. **Limited to the first 1900 responders to this ad only.** Don't miss out...call today!

- Precision movement
- Stainless steel caseback and crown
- Cotswold™ mineral crystal
- Date window • Water resistant to 3 ATM
- Genuine leather band fits wrists 6 3/4"–8 3/4"

† Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on Stauer.com without your offer code.



Stauer Urban Blue Watch ~~\$199†~~  
Offer Code Price **\$29** + S&P **Save \$170**

**1-800-333-2045**

Offer Code: **UBW349-02**  
You must use this insider offer code to get our special price.

**Stauer®** 14101 Southcross Drive W.,  
Ste 155, Dept. UBW349-02  
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337  
[www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)



## America's ORIGINAL Walk-Behind Brush Mower!

The DR® Field and Brush Mower just got even better—

- ✓ **FASTER.** Up to 20 HP and 34"-wide cut for faster mowing!
- ✓ **EASIER.** New power steering for turn-on-a-dime ease!
- ✓ **LOWER PRICES.** Reduced by up to \$500!
- ✓ **NEW CHOICES:** including PTO and tow-behind models for tractors and ATVs.



\*Assembled in the USA using domestic and foreign parts.

1921FX © 2018

**Now Starting at \$1499<sup>99</sup>**

Mows and mulches weeds, brush, even saplings up to 3" thick!

**FREE SHIPPING**  
**6 MONTH TRIAL**

SOME LIMITATIONS APPLY  
Call or go online for details.

Call for **FREE DVD and Catalog!**

TOLL FREE **888-212-0730**

[DRfieldbrush.com](http://DRfieldbrush.com)



## TEXAS ACCOMMODATIONS

### FREDERICKSBURG

★ **PALO ALTO CREEK FARM.** Landmark historic German-Texas farmstead on the creek. Ancient oaks, abundant wildlife, Hill Country tranquility. Beautifully renovated log cabin, barn, farmhouse, all with private spa therapy rooms.  
[www.paloaltocreekfarm.com](http://www.paloaltocreekfarm.com) (800) 997-0089

★ **SETTLER'S CROSSING BED AND BREAKFAST.** Private historic log cabins and cottages spread over 35 park-like acres, just minutes from town.  
[www.settlerscrossing.com](http://www.settlerscrossing.com) (800) 874-1020

### NEW BRAUNFELS

★ **HISTORIC KUEBLER WALDRIP HAUS BED AND BREAKFAST.** Come relax on 43 scenic wooded acres in 3 restored historic Texas buildings near New Braunfels & Gruene. Couples or families welcome. 10 bedrooms, Jacuzzis, with delicious hot breakfast.  
**FOR RESERVATIONS CALL** (830) 625-8300  
**VISIT US ONLINE AT** [www.kueblerwaldrip.com](http://www.kueblerwaldrip.com)

### COMFORT

★ **MEYER B&B.** On Cypress Creek, Hill Country, mid-1800s stage stop, Texas landmark. Pool, hot tub, fireplaces, golf.  
[www.meyerbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.meyerbedandbreakfast.com) (888) 995-6100

### GRUENE

★ **THE LAMB'S REST INN.** Located on the Guadalupe River. Featuring garden with fountain, pool, and hot tub, private balconies and fireplaces. Delightful breakfasts often served *al fresco*.  
[www.lambstrestinn.com](http://www.lambstrestinn.com) (888) 609-3932

## Bug-Bouncer®

Portable Personal Protection Anytime...Anywhere!

Smells Good to You...Tastes Bad to Bugs!

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED



Visit [Bug-Bouncer.com](http://Bug-Bouncer.com) to find a local retailer near you





Adjustable waist  
and cuffs



Crafted in  
mid-weight denim  
with faux suede  
shoulder yoke

Available in Men's  
sizes from M-XXXL

# TEXAS PRIDE MEN'S DENIM JACKET

An Apparel Exclusive Available Only from The Bradford Exchange

**W**hether you're heading to a local joint for your favorite BBQ or out to do a little two-steppin' with your lady, our "Texas Pride" Men's Denim Jacket fits right in wherever you may roam! This casual jacket is crafted of medium-weight, dark blue denim and is adjustable at the waist and cuffs. The back features a detailed appliqué of Texas's trademark longhorn, flanked by the embroidered words "TEXAS PRIDE". And standing tall and proud on the left sleeve is a fully embroidered state flag patch for that finishing Texas touch! Adding to its authentic cowboy styling is a brown faux suede shoulder yoke, two front flap pockets, two front hip pockets, and antique brass-finish buttons. So if you're looking for a style that makes a Texas-sized statement, we've got you covered!

## A GREAT VALUE WITH YOUR SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

Custom designed with true Texan features, this jacket is a remarkable value at \$139.95\*, payable in four easy installments of \$34.99. Available in 5 sizes (M-XXXL) to ensure a perfect fit. To order this this exclusive apparel design backed by our unconditional, money-back, 30-day guarantee, send no money now; just fill out and send in your Priority Reservation. But hurry... this is a limited-time offer!

\*For information on sales tax you may owe to your state, go to [bradfordexchange.com/use-tax](http://bradfordexchange.com/use-tax)

[www.bradfordexchange.com/29483](http://www.bradfordexchange.com/29483)

PRIORITY RESERVATION

SEND NO MONEY NOW

01-29483-001-BIB ©2018 The Bradford Exchange

THE  
BRADFORD EXCHANGE  
- APPAREL & ACCESSORIES -

9345 Milwaukee Avenue • Niles, IL 60714-1393

**YES.** Please reserve the "Texas Pride" Men's Denim Jacket for me as described in this announcement in the size checked below.

Medium (38-40) 01-29483-011  XL (46-48) 01-29483-013  XXXL (54-56) 01-29483-015  
 Large (42-44) 01-29483-012  XXL (50-52) 01-29483-014

\*Plus a total of \$15.99 shipping and service. (see [bradfordexchange.com](http://bradfordexchange.com)) Please allow 6-8 weeks after initial payment for shipment. All sales are subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Mr. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

E31701





ILLUSTRATION © JESSICA BLANK

**REMEMBER RACING ALONG THE PAVEMENT**, pedaling your feet as fast as they would go and feeling the wind against your face? Kids aren't the only ones who can find that kind of thrill riding a bicycle. Road cycling takes preparation, dedication and, in the Texas heat, a lot of perspiration.

First, set goals that inspire you. Maybe you want to ride in one of the big bike rallies you've heard about. Start by increasing your average speed or boosting the length of your ride by one mile every day or every week. If there are hills, quit going around them and push yourself to the top. Moving from molehills to mountains can be difficult; joining a bike club or group ride is a great way to stay motivated.

Cycling with a group not only introduces you to new routes and new friends, it's also safer than riding alone. Camaraderie can

push you through the toughest parts of training.

Organized cycling events can be intimidating — especially with names like Midnight Massacre, Wheels on Fire 100 and Hotter'N Hell 100 — but they're a perfect way to put your skills to the test. Most cycling events have websites and social media pages, with maps indicating distance and terrain to help you set realistic expectations. With the proper preparation, you can feel the thrill of riding your bike again.

*By Sarah Bloodworth*

## POPULAR RIDES

### MISSIONS TOUR DE GOLIAD:

The missions bike tour stretches through the South Texas countryside in October.

### LANCASTER COUNTRY

**RIDE:** This springtime ride features an opportunity to pedal along the petals at peak wildflower season.

### CONQUER THE COAST

**RIDE:** This September ride through Corpus Christi and Port Aransas even takes you on the ferry.

### TOUR DE GRUENE:

Follow fellow cyclists along the banks of the Guadalupe River in November.

### ANNUAL BIKE THROUGH THE FOREST AND HILLS:

This challenging January cycling event north of Houston is known for beautiful scenery and banana muffins.

### CACTUS AND CRUDE MS150

**BIKE RIDE:** A West Texas two-day ride in July; riders wind down at a winery.

## GEAR UP



### HELMET

Helmet hair is worth avoiding a life-threatening scare.



### INSULATED WATER BOTTLE

Warm water is better than none, but cold water is great on a hot ride.



### BIKE SHORTS

Bike shorts are flexible and padded, important on longer treks.



### PUMP

Pack a frame pump or flat kit; flat tires happen.



### IDENTIFICATION

Carry an ID in case of an accident.



# What will you discover?



## Explore the wildlife and beauty of Texas with 9 regional driving maps.

The **Great Texas Wildlife Trail** maps feature parks, nature centers, historic sites, hiking trails and other hotspots ideal for wildlife viewing and outdoor exploration. Clearly marked routes, GPS coordinates and contacts for the 950+ sites make this a must-have tool on your next Texas adventure.

FIND INTERACTIVE MAPS AND ROUTES AT

[tpwd.texas.gov/wildlifetrails](https://tpwd.texas.gov/wildlifetrails)



Life's better outside.®



## WHERE IN TEXAS?

A short and steep hike takes explorers to these caves in one of Texas' largest state parks, within the city limits of a West Texas city. Named after one of the great civilizations of Mesoamerica, the caves are believed to have begun as air bubbles in ancient lava flows.

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

Photo by Chase Fountain

**TOOLS:** Nikon D2X camera, 10.0-20.0 mm f/4.0-5.6 lens, f/14.0 at 1/250 second, ISO 400



“

NO ONE EVER SAYS,

I'D RATHER BE  
AT THE OFFICE

BUT EVERYONE LOVES TO SAVE MONEY.

”



**GEICO** *for your RV*

[geico.com](http://geico.com)

800-442-9253

Local Office

Some discounts, coverages, payment plans and features are not available in all states or all GEICO companies. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, Washington, D.C. 20076; a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. © 2018 GEICO.



