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SEPTEMBER 2008

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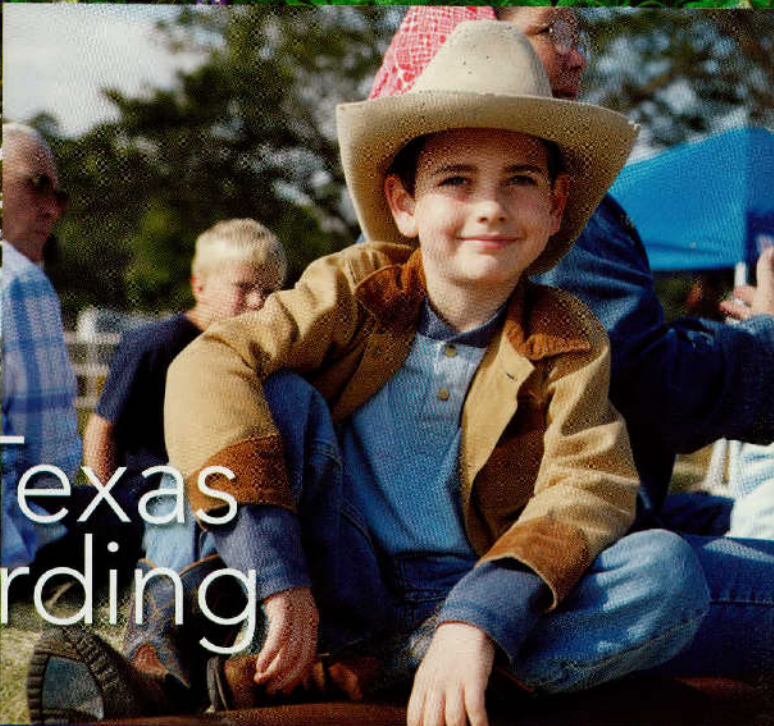
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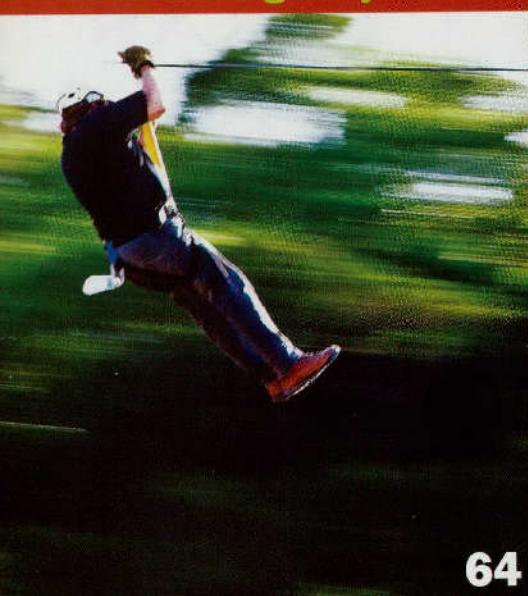


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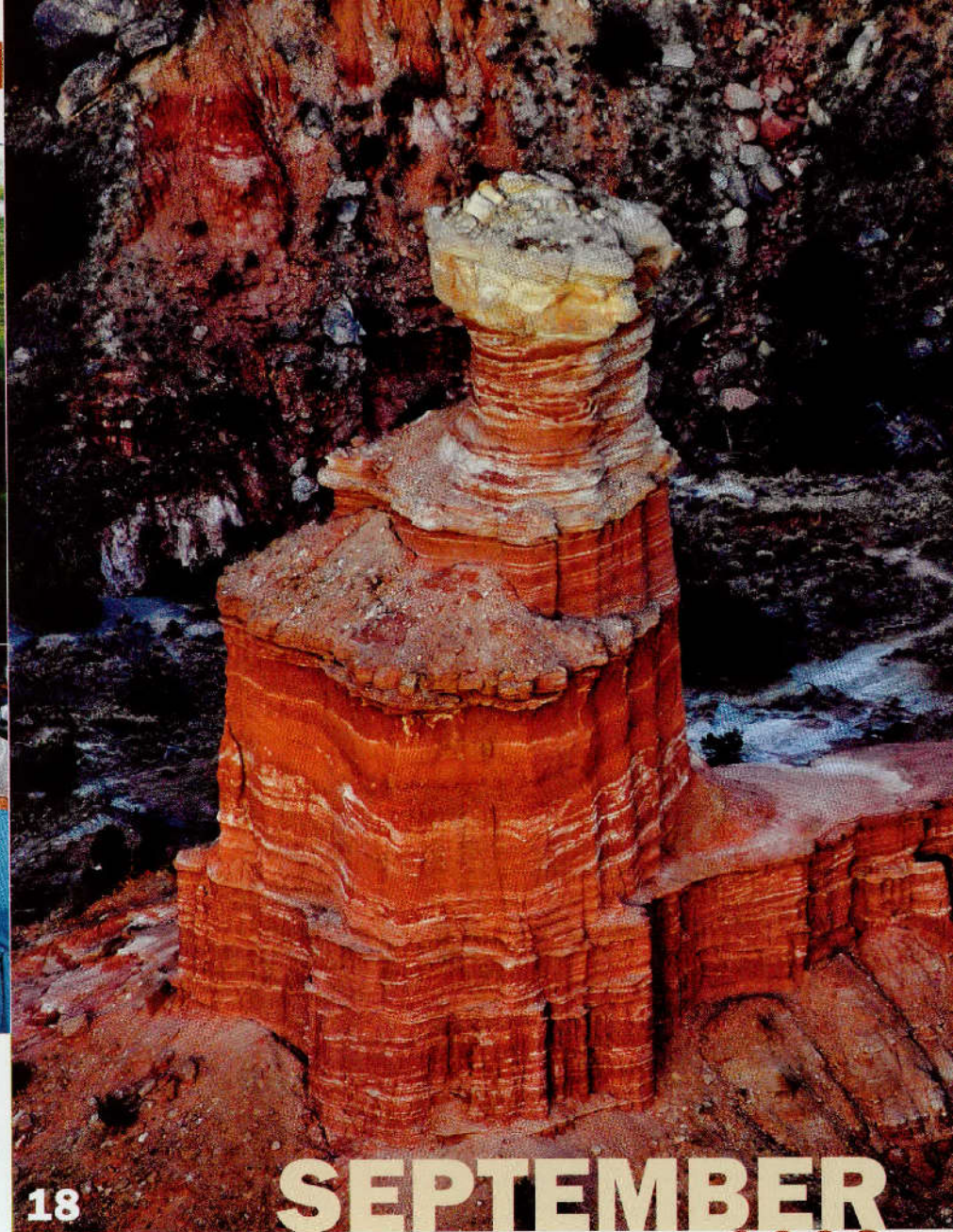
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64



54



18

SEPTEMBER 2008

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 UP FRONT** From the Editor's desk
- 4 TALK TO TH** Readers sound off
- 8 SPOTLIGHT ON ...**
Willie's Place at Carl's Corner
- 10 FOR THE ROAD**
Top picks and places
- 15 SPEAKING OF TEXAS**
History with a travel twist
- 16 TOP TABLES**
Spoonbills/Matagorda
- 64 JUST PASSING THROUGH**
Zip Trips/Wimberley
- 67 TH TRAVELER**
A roundup of September activities
- 72 READERS RECOMMEND**
Travel tips from TH readers

■ **PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS AVAILABLE** Some images in this issue are available as prints in two distinctive formats. For more information, call toll-free 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

FEATURES

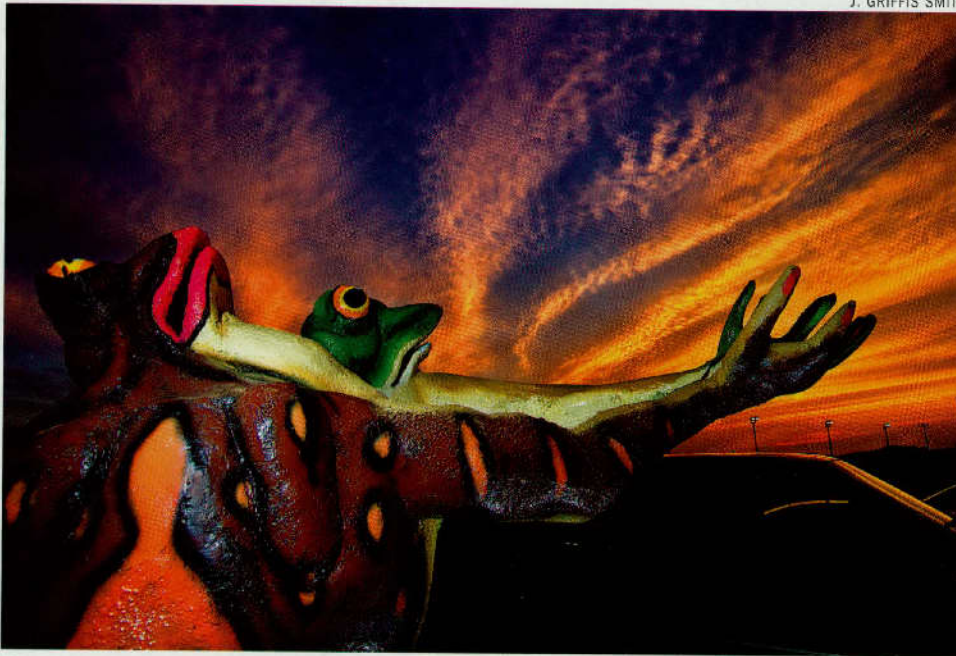
- 18 WONDER-FUL TEXAS** Seven natural treasures exalt the state's great outdoors, luring adventurers over the mountains, through the forests, and down by the sea.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY DICKMAN AND KEVIN VANDIVIER, TEXT BY E. DAN KLEPPER
- 48 TAKE A HIKE!** A hardy naturalist shares his top treks, from the Rustling Leaves Nature Trail in East Texas to a dune hike in the West Texas sandhills.
STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY E. DAN KLEPPER
- 54 FALLING FOR HOMEGROWN FESTIVALS** Kick off the season with a small-town celebration. You can count on civic pride, food on a stick, and loads of fall fun.
BY NOLA McKEY

ABOUT OUR COVERS FRONT: Richard McCaffery, a tour guide with Far-Flung Adventures, exits Big Bend National Park's Santa Elena Canyon, a wondrous site in anyone's book. (To order a print of this photograph, see instructions at left.) BACK: An aerial view showcases the rugged terrain of Guadalupe Mountains National Park, home of the Permian Reef Geology Trail. Both photos © Jay Dickman.

PHOTOS TOP LEFT AND ABOVE: KEVIN VANDIVIER; BOTTOM LEFT: © ARTHUR MEYERSON



J. GRIFFIS SMITH



What makes a Texas icon? TH photographer Griff Smith captured this image of Daddy-O Wade's wildly painted jumbo art-frogs sashaying hand-in-hand into the sunset from Willie's Place at Carl's Corner.

ICONIC IMAGES can originate in strange places. The monumental dancing frogs pictured above (doesn't everyone know them?) originated in the mind of **Bob Wade**, a.k.a. Daddy-O. Even though it's not automatic for me to address a person as "Daddy-O," in Mr. Wade's case, it seems to fit. And that's what I called him at the opening night for **Willie's Place at Carl's Corner**, where the refurbished frogs will tango into eternity. I encountered Daddy-O Bob at the bar of Whiskey River Saloon, and he explained that the three gargantuan amphibians originally numbered six and that he designed them years ago for Shannon Wynne, who was opening a place called Tango's in Dallas. As Wade explained, "I thought Shannon should have Six Frogs Over Tango's since his father, old man Angus Wynne, had started Six Flags Over Texas."

Makes perfect sense to me.

I was musing over Texas icons because I've encountered so many of them of late. Carl's Corner itself earned mythic status in its earlier heyday, and is now taking on the identity of the venerable **Willie Nelson**. Is Nelson synonymous with Texas? I wondered how many

Texans thought so as I watched him sing his signature medley that opens with "Whiskey River" and includes "Crazy," "Time Slips Away," "Night Life," and other (dare I say it) iconic tunes.

And out front sat longtime Nelson fan and golf partner **Darrell Royal**—no one can question his status as Texas icon.

Let's start a list of Texas icons (sports, literary, musical, and otherwise) and see if we can decide on the quintessential one. Send me an e-mail: clohrma@dot.state.tx.us (or send an old-fashioned letter).

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

Win! Corpus Christi

Before you forget, flip the magazine open to the inside back cover and take a look at the *Texas Highways* "Where in Texas Are You?" contest. We put this wonderful, week-long prize package together with the help of **Amie Hacker** and her colleagues at the **Corpus Christi CVB**, as well as **Southwest Airlines**. The drawing is in early October, so don't wait. You can even note your candidate for Texas icon on the entry form.

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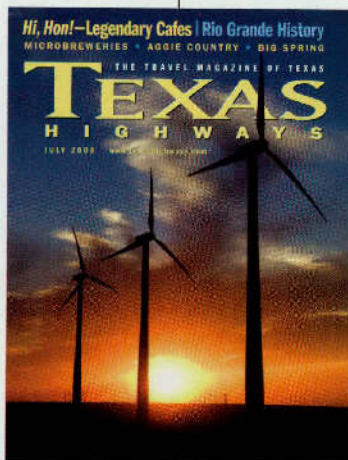
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Big Spring Keep on Turnin'

I WAS born and raised in Big Spring, and was transported back many years as I read Eileen Mattei's fascinating article on the town and saw Michael Amador's wonderful photos [July]. As a boy, I hiked and rode horses with my brother and cousins to Signal Mountain, Scenic Mountain, and South Mountain. The historic municipal auditorium was the site of regular concerts and performances. Senior prom was held in the Settles Hotel Ballroom. Lyndon B. Johnson created headlines in the local newspaper when campaigning for the senate. He came by helicopter to speak on our high school playground. After seminary at SMU, I came back to Big Spring to serve



as a youth pastor for the First United Methodist Church across from the county courthouse. These many years later, I cherish growing up in Big Spring. Thanks for the article.

RICHARD DEATS
Nyack, New York

THE PHOTOS of the wind turbines near Big Spring were interesting and timely; however, I don't believe many readers realize how large the turbines are. On the Discovery Channel show *Dirty Jobs*, host Mike Rowe and a crew were shown at the top of the wind tower in the turbine's nacelle [which holds the turbine's generator].

JOHN GONZALEZ
San Antonio

ED. NOTE: *So true, John. It's a jaw-dropper to see a wind-turbine blade or other part being transported down the highway. According to Terry Wegman, executive director of the Big Spring Economic Development Corporation, some of the larger turbines around Big Spring reach a "hub" height of 300 feet (at the center*

of the blade), with each of the blades stretching 140 feet.

A Teeny Mistake

I NOTED with interest in the July issue that Big Spring (pop. 25,000) claims to be the smallest town in Texas to have its own symphony orchestra. Several years ago, that claim was also made in *TH* in an article about Plainview (pop. 22,000). Both communities are to be commended for having such a cultural amenity. However, Kerrville (pop. 20,500) may well hold the distinction of being the smallest town to have a symphony orchestra. Its outstanding Symphony of the Hills, under the superb direction of Dr. Jay Dunnahoo, draws musicians from as far away as Austin and San Antonio because of its reputation for excellence. With concerts held in Kerrville's 800-seat Cailloux City Center for the Performing Arts, the symphony consistently performs sold-out shows.

DAVID TRITENBACH
Kerrville

ED. NOTE: *Thanks, David. We always hate to overlook someone in an article, but the good news is that there's so much cultural activity in towns of all sizes across Texas. We can all be proud of that!*



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- Marfa Lights Festival – Marfa
- Living with Nature Eco-Construction – Marathon
- Cycle Fest Tour – Fort Davis
- WestFest – Marathon
- Annual Mountain Man Rendezvous – Fort Davis
- Chinati Foundation Open House – Marfa
- Marathon2Marathon – Alpine & Marathon
- Sul Ross State University Homecoming Week – Alpine
- CASI 40th International Chili Championship – Terlingua

October 2008

- Sul Ross State University Marching Invitational – Alpine

November 2008

- Alpine's Gallery Night Art Walk – Alpine

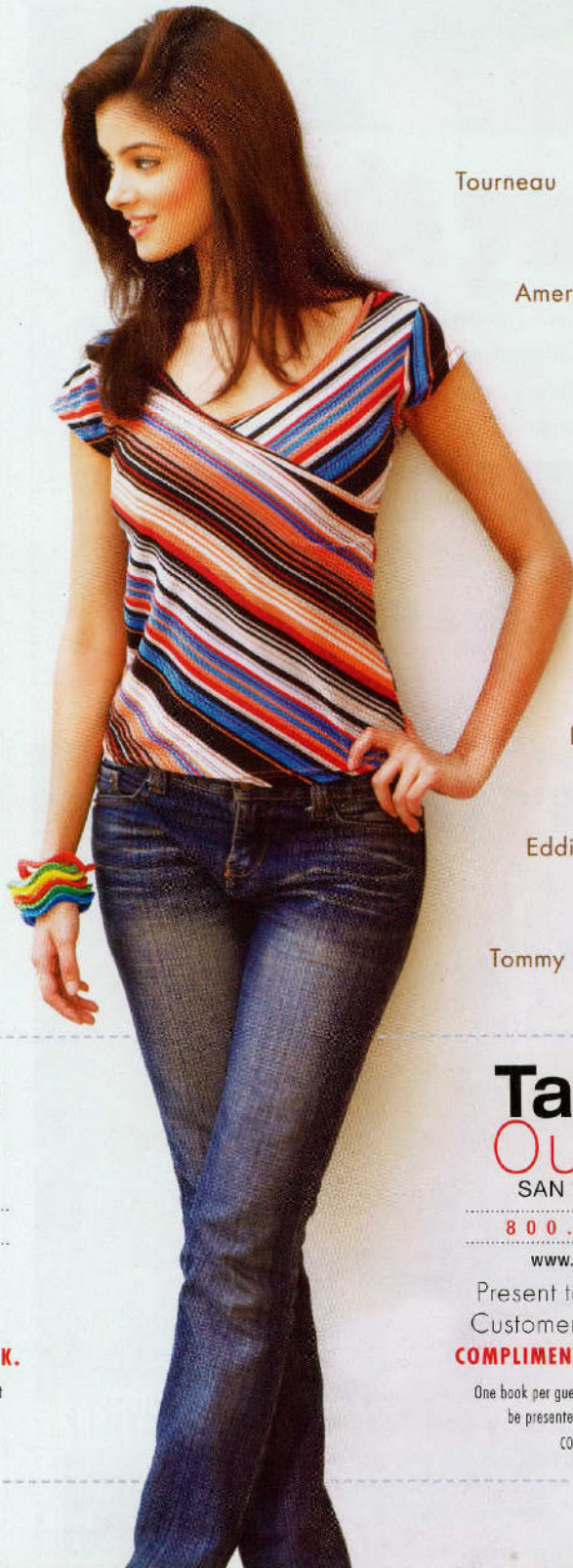
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TALK to TH

Micro-Management

REGARDING Ian Dille's "Texas on Tap" [July]: You didn't include Fredericksburg Brewing Company, Dodging Duck in Boerne, and Blue Star Brewing Company in San Antonio. These smaller breweries are doing every bit of their part to carry on the tradition of Texas brewing and have some darn good brews.

KEVIN HUGHES
Boerne

ED. NOTE: A response from brew guru Ian Dille: "Fredericksburg Brewing Company, Dodging Duck, and Blue Star are brewpubs, which don't distribute their beer statewide (unfortunately). I had to make a conscious decision to exclude them and stick with only microbreweries. However, since this story hit newsstands, two new Texas microbreweries are in the works: Southern Star in Conroe, which makes the Pine Belt Pale Ale (packaged in 16-oz. cans!) and 512 Brewing Company in south Austin."

Rock of Ages

MY FATHER-in-law, who is from Wisconsin, and I like to kid about everything being bigger in Texas. When we took my in-laws to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, I told him he was about to see a Texas-sized rock. He, like anyone who has ever seen the pink granite batholith, was stunned and awed. We took fun pictures, including one of me in front of Dad creeping down the rock. It was much steeper than we thought, so much so that we had to slide down on our backsides. We made it, and he was beaming with pride at his accomplishment. We have a special Texas-only vacation moment we can share with everyone—and my father-in-law does!

KEN WROBEL
Arlington

ED. NOTE: Fun memory, Ken. Congrats on your Enchanted Rock conquest. For more information on the Hill Country wonder, turn to page 30.

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Spotlight on WILLIE'S PLACE

Carl's Corner Revisited

EXPERIENCE NOW TELLS ME THAT NO building can contain the legendary persona of Willie Nelson. I say this in spite of the fact that, when photographer Griff Smith and I idled backstage of the new **Night Life Theater** in **Carl's Corner** just north of **Hillsboro**, the space seemed big enough. As we discussed our options for lighting the scheduled photograph of Nelson and his partners in the rebuilt and tricked-out Carl's Corner truck stop, Griff and I were more concerned with whether we could get the stage lights set. We got the thumbs-up from our contact Juli Hart, who worked feverishly with road manager David Anderson to keep up with the event's schedule.



Willie Nelson and his band charm the opening-night capacity crowd in the 550-seat Night Life Theater, one of the attractions in Willie's Place at Carl's Corner.

It's the unofficial opening night of Willie's Place at Carl's Corner. There are no signs outside that identify the building, but Nelson has blessed a fundraiser for the Freddy Powers Parkinson Organization. The 550-seat theater is packed. From backstage, I can see Coach Darrell Royal sitting right down front, smiling large as he watches the fundraising auction that precedes Nelson's performance.

Suddenly, we're surrounded by a human whirlpool that swirls around the star. Nelson is shaking hands, then stopping to sign a just-auctioned guitar and chat with the instrument's buyer.

The backstage crowd has a mind of its own and defies any serious attempt at organization. The star, apparently, wouldn't have it any other way. And that's one reason why no room is big enough for Willie.

But this is Nelson's house, so his word is law. The building is Willie's Place at Carl's Corner, and, even though XM Radio has soundproofed its studio and is broadcasting Willie's Place Channel 13 around the clock with Eddie Kilroy on the air every weekday morning, workers are still busy fine-tuning the venue for September's public debut.

I check in with Willie's Place Chief Financial Officer Robert Strouse to get a few details. "It's more-or-less 35,000 feet of space, at least two times larger than the original Carl's Corner. We're



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J. GRIFFIS SMITH

hoping to have the pumps working by Labor Day.”

Those pumps—12 of them, called master-satellite-high-flow diesel pumps—are designed to fill up both of an 18-wheeler’s fuel tanks at once. And Carl’s Corner will be known for pumping BioWillie biodiesel (as well as ethanol and the usual gasoline options at its regular pumps).

Because the operation houses two restaurants, the convenience store, the 550-seat Night Life Theater, and the Whiskey River Saloon, it’s easy to see that Hillsboro now hosts an entertainment juggernaut in the making.

At a press conference on July 3, one writer asked Willie and Carl if the performance venue would be a problem for truckers trying to keep on schedule. Willie’s answer, “Well, it should be better than when Carl ran a strip joint here.”

Hence the rogue spirit of the original rough-and-tumble Carl’s Corner will live on. The independent character of the town was established by namesake Carl Cornelius and his cadre of wacky characters who set up shop more than 20 years ago. Cornelius established the town of Carl’s Corner in order to serve thirsty customers in an otherwise-dry county. And, despite the new building’s wood paneling, updated fixtures, omnipresent flat-panel screens, and the polished details, the whole place works to generate a Texas honky-tonk vibe.

And the honky-tonk attitude is going out over the airways from (continued on page 14)

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For THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

A Passion for Collecting

NESTLED IN DOWNTOWN DALLAS' burgeoning arts district, the **Nasher Sculpture Center** marks its fifth anniversary in October. To celebrate that landmark, the center mounts an exhibition called *The Story of the Nasher Collection: a Tribute to Raymond and Patsy Nasher*. The exhibition runs September 20 through January 4, 2009.

"This exhibition is all about the backstory of the collection, about Ray and Patsy's passion for collecting," says acting chief curator Jed Morse. "We're telling the story of their warm relationships with artists like Henry Moore, Andy Warhol, Beverly Pepper, and



PHOTO BY VERNON DOUCETTE, COURTESY OF BOSTONIA MAGAZINE

The six weary commuters in sculptor George Segal's *Rush Hour* (1983) inspire a wry smile from Dallas arts patron Ray Nasher (1921-2007). The Nasher Sculpture Center celebrates its fifth anniversary this year.

On today's menu: Hill Country wine and cuisine.



The historic town of Fredericksburg, just 70 miles west of Austin, makes a great base for exploring the Texas Hill Country wine region, now home to over 30 wineries. Shopping, art galleries, museums, golf, Texas honky-tonks, natural wonders, festivals and romantic accommodations add to the fun! And finish your days with dinners inspired by our German and Texan heritage. So come, savor and enjoy.

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Mark di Suvero; and what it was like for the Nashers to live with some of those incredible works of art."

Some of the pieces, such as Jean Arp's sculpture *Torso With Buds* (1961), which Patsy bought for Ray as a birthday present, have never before been shown at the Nasher Sculpture Center. "The main thing that comes through," says Morse, "is that the collection was a labor a love. They started off collecting very modestly, things they could afford."

Call 214/242-5177; www.nashersculpturecenter.org.

—L.M.

SINGING THE PRAISES OF ACL

WHILE HAVING LUNCH AT THE POPULAR comfort-food restaurant Threadgill's last year during the **Austin City Limits Music Festival**, I met a group of 50- and 60-something Canadians who had come all the way to Austin for the event.

Not only were they attending the festival, but they were also going to various Austin clubs to see as many Texas acts as they could. They shared their joy of interacting with fans, musicians, music-industry people, other festival participants, and the community at large. I marveled at their passion for the music of such Texas artists as Willie Nelson, ZZ Top, Joe Ely, Asleep at the Wheel, Robert Earl Keen, Spoon, Kelly Willis, Old 97's, Marcia Ball, Ruthie Foster, Charlie Robison, Steve Earle, Miranda Lambert, Pat Green, Reckless

Kelly, Doyle Bramhall II, Dale Watson, Grupo Fantasma, Beto y los Fairlanes, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Lyle Lovett, *ad infinitum*. This encounter made abundantly clear the appeal and extensive reach of both Austin and Texas music.

Festival curmudgeons may claim that the heat, crowds, parking, traffic, and accommodations can be problematic. But the thrill of experiencing so many diverse artists in a communal setting clearly trumps any hardships. More than 100 acts will perform this year. Join the fun September 26-28 in Austin's Zilker Park. Call 888/512-SHOW; www.aclfestival.com. —M.L.

COUNTY BOUNTY

A COUNTY FAIR REPRESENTS SMALL-town Texana at its very best. Texas is chock-full of these classics throughout the calendar year, and the month of September is particularly rich. Cotton candy, carnival midways, live country music, corn-on-the-cob, community parades, queen pageants, snow cones, 4-H and FFA livestock shows, and rodeos only begin to account for the many entertaining possibilities. We think it's fair to say you won't be disappointed. Here's a September sampling of longstanding favorites to get you on your way to a delightful day of Ferris wheels, funnel cakes, bingo, and community spirit.

Gregg County Fair, Longview, September 9-13; 903/753-4478; www.greggcountyfair.com.

Colorado County Fair, Columbus, September 11-14; 979/732-9266; www.coloradocountyfair.org.

Washington County Fair (140 years strong), Brenham, September 16-20; 979/836-4112; www.washingtoncofair.com.

Howard County Fair, Big Spring, September 24-27; 432/268-9335; www.howardcountyfairoftexas.com.

Titus County Fair, Mount Pleasant, September 24-27; 903/577-8117; www.tituscountyfair.com.

Comal County Fair, New Braunfels, September 24-28; 830/625-1505; www.comalcountyfair.org. —M.L.

SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL

SPORTING POODLE SKIRTS AND SADDLE shoes, and occasionally demonstrating their Hula-hoop finesse, the four members of the oldies group **Shake Rattle & Roll** take audiences back to the '50s and '60s with their spirited rock-n-roll and doo-wop melodies. Lead singer Tavie Spivey

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of Gilmer created Shake Rattle & Roll—an all-women cover group—to perform at a party a few years ago. The performance was a blast for the group and received so many accolades that Spivey put together a regular line-up: herself, her sister LeAnne Bemis from Longview, Kathy Sutton from Tyler, and Brenda Spencer from Henderson. “Once I heard these ladies sing, I knew right off the bat that they had the voices for Shake Rattle & Roll,” Spivey says.

In November 2007, the group competed in an amateur doo-wop contest in Las Vegas. Their performance of the 1957 hit by The Rays, “Silhouettes on the Shade,” earned them first place, and today, XM radio subscribers can hear the song on the Cool Bobby B Show. The group has more than 50 performances scheduled in the next year, and they’re even working on a CD.

Shake Rattle & Roll will perform at the State Fair of Texas on September 27 and October 18. Along with their big hit, they’ll perform such classic cover tunes as “Lollipop” by The Chordettes, “Lipstick On Your Collar” by Connie Francis, and “Soldier Boy” by The Shirelles.

To see Shake Rattle & Roll’s scheduled performances and times for 2008-2009, check out www.myspace.com/shakerattleroll4.

—LAUREN OAKLEY

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My, fair ladies! Hot dogs and sticky poufs of cotton candy transcend State Fair food trends.

and Cynthia dug through thousands of images chronicling the fair from its inception, as well as years of archival and newsreel footage. They interviewed dozens of key personalities, such as Skip Fletcher, whose relatives introduced the corny dog in 1942, as well as historians knowledgeable about topics ranging from architecture and art to city planning. In documenting the fair, the film also captures the changing social mores of Texas, and of the country.

"We were astounded by the impact the fair has had on families and their traditions," says Allen. "People told us—again and again—how they came to the fair as little ones with their parents and grandparents, and then eventually took their own kids and grandchildren."

The film is available through the Mondells' company Media Projects (www.mediaprojects.com). Learn more about the State Fair of Texas at www.bigtex.com. —L.M.

MEDIEVAL SOUTHWEST

WHILE LUBBOCK IS A RELATIVELY NEW CITY—the High Plains hub celebrates its centennial this year—the area has surprisingly strong connections to late-medieval Europe. A major exhibition highlighting these connections, *The Medieval Southwest: Manifestations of the Old World in the New*, opened at Texas Tech University's Southwest Collection on Aug. 25 and runs through April 4, 2009. Among the items displayed: a chain mail gauntlet, a horseshoe, and two coins from the 1480s, which were left behind by members of Vásquez de Coronado's expedition in the 1600s as they passed through nearby

Blanco Canyon looking for the Lost City of Gold.

The exhibit also includes items from the 18th-Century Mission and Presidio San Sabá sites near Menard, which Texas Tech researchers have been excavating since 2000. The sites have yielded such treasures as a gunstock, knives, mouth harps, dice, glass beads, and kitchen items. Texas Tech scholars at the university's campus in Seville, Spain, have simultaneously searched the Archive of the Indies in an effort to fill in historical gaps and have found maps, orders for equipment, and other documents related to the San Sabá venture.

Medieval Southwest gives visitors a glimpse of the Southwest as it was at the end of the European Middle Ages and reveals how Old World themes and technologies have carried forward. One example: The Texas Tech campus itself, with its original Spanish Renaissance architectural theme, was inspired by the University of Alcalá de Henares near Madrid, Spain, whose main building dates to Coronado's times. Call 806/742-3749; www.swco.ttu.edu/medieval/index/html. —N.M.

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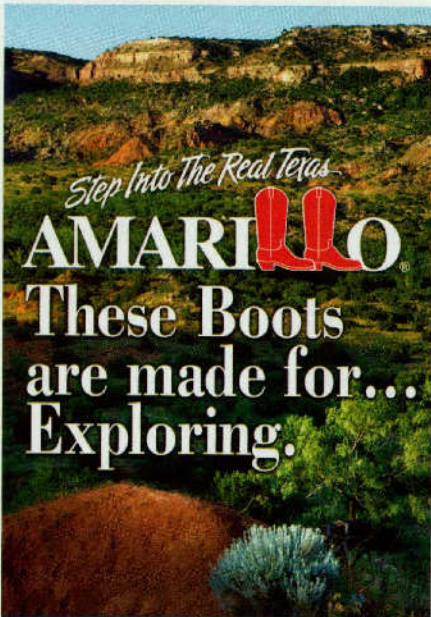


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WILLIE'S PLACE

(continued from page 9)

the XM studio, which is set up to look like an Old West bar, with stools around the brass-railed console and Victorian-era details that visually contradict the digital console and four flat screens surrounding the DJ's seat.

"We call it a studio, but our listeners will be able to smell the beer and the smoke like they could in the old-time honky-tonks that I had to fight my way out of—and sometimes fight my way into—30 years ago," says Eddie Kilroy, who broadcasts from this snazzy room every weekday from 6 to 10 a.m.

In the course of the free concerts on July 3, before Willie performed at his beloved 4th of July picnics, crowds enjoyed Ray Price, Merle Haggard, David Allan Coe, and others. As the music plays, the pilgrims prowl the gift shop, snapping up a few of the 20 or so different Willie T-shirts, the books, and other souvenirs, such as the "Willie Braids" that let anyone build a new persona with the red-bandanna-and-braids.



Multiple biofuels—including BioWillie biodiesel and ethanol—await motorists steering onto exit 374 off I-35E to visit Willie's Place at Carl's Corner.

Even though tour buses dominate the parking area today, a dozen or so big rigs loom at the edge of the 12-acre site and in the field across the state road, the drivers inside enjoying the music. Presumably an image of traffic that will be taking the 374 exit off I-35E to Willie's Place.

And whether they plan to see Nelson himself or not, they'll think of him as they pump BioWillie diesel or slip on a pair of Willie Braids. It will always seem like Nelson might appear out of the back room with his battered guitar, Trigger, in hand and sing a few songs.

—CHARLES LOHRMANN

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FREE SPIRIT

In the 1950s and 1960s, when most jazz artists were producing smooth and danceable tunes that entered the mainstream, pioneer saxophonist Ornette Coleman revitalized and challenged the genre with an innovative and improvisational approach known as free jazz.

Coleman was born in Fort Worth in 1930, a time when there were few opportunities for African Americans. Coleman was only seven when his father died, and his mother worked as a seamstress to provide for him. When Coleman was 14, she bought him his first alto saxophone, and he taught himself how to play it, using a piano book as a guide.

The budding musician soon began playing in local rhythm and blues bands, and he developed an unorthodox style early on, so much so that he had difficulty finding like-minded musicians who were comfortable with his loose treatment of harmony and chord progression. In the late '50s, though, Coleman moved to Los Angeles, where he found band mates in trumpeter Don Cherry, drummer Billy



COURTESY OF BIG HASSLE

Fort Worth native Ornette Coleman revitalized jazz with an improvisational approach to harmony and chord progression.

Higgins, and bassist Charlie Haden. His first recorded albums, *Something Else!!!* and *Tomorrow is the Question!*, featured his trademark plastic saxophone and displayed a concerted, if not

completely developed, effort to carve out new territory in the jazz world.

It was his six-week gig at the legendary Five Spot nightclub in New York, however, that announced Coleman as one of the genre's most exciting and original forces. *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, released in 1959, following his Five Spot residency, eschewed pianos and other chord-playing instruments for simultaneous improvisation.

Coleman's 1960 follow-up, however, made his most lasting impact on jazz culture. *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*, on which Ornette led two separate quartets playing in stereo, fortified a new genre that would adopt the album title as its own. At nearly 40 minutes long, the *Free Jazz* session was the longest recorded continuous session by any ensemble to date.

Coleman has taken his music around the world, recording in Africa, France, and Italy, and making guest appearances on albums by artists as diverse as Lou Reed and Yoko Ono. In 2006, he released the album *Sound Grammar*, his first new material in a decade. In 2007, he was honored with the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and the Texas Medal of Arts, and won the Pulitzer Prize for music. Coleman and his band continue to tour today. See www.ornettecoleman.com for tour dates, a discography, and more information.

—Reggie Ugwu

JAZZ FESTIVALS abound in Texas this fall. Tune in, and turn on.

On September 20-21, thousands of jazz fans convene at downtown San Antonio's Travis Park to enjoy the 25th anniversary of the popular (and free) **Jazz'SAlive** festival. Six national acts play two stages on Saturday and Sunday nights, while local acts fill slots during the day. Bring a picnic blanket or a lawn chair, and settle in for show-

time. Call 210/212-8423; www.jazzsa.org.

From September 26-28, the **11th Annual Jazz Festival in Kemah** brings in dozens of national and local acts to play outdoor sets on the festive Kemah Boardwalk. Shop, eat, listen to music, and repeat. Admission is free. Call 877/ATKEMAH; www.kemahboardwalk.com.

From October 9-12, the **Brownsville Society for the Performing Arts** hosts

the annual **Latin Jazz Festival**, a four-day event that includes free performances by local acts on Thursday, national performers playing paid shows on Friday and Saturday, and an all-day street festival in the downtown historic district on Sunday. Call 956/831-7818; www.brosociety.org.

From October 17-19, the **Texas Jazz Festival in Corpus Christi** attracts 50,000 jazz fans to Heritage Park

and the downtown and waterfront areas. More than 50 local, national, and international acts showcase jazz styles from all over the world. Admission is free. Call 361/883-4500; www.texasjazz-fest.org.

Looking ahead: Mark your 2009 calendar for the annual **Jazz Festival in Addison** (April 16-18, 2009) and the annual **Houston International Jazz Festival** (July 29-August 2, 2009) in Houston.

TOP Tables

NOTEWORTHY CULINARY JOURNEYS

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

Spoonbills Satisfies

IN MY 30-YEAR CAREER as a photojournalist, I've often had the opportunity to try new eateries during my travels. While I've made my living shooting pictures, my growing figure reveals my true talent ... eating. Recently, I hit the road to shoot a story and eat my way from Rockport to Crystal Beach.

When I reached Matagorda, I stayed for the night at the Stanley-Fisher House, one of the best bed-and-breakfast establishments I've ever experienced. There I learned of a great new restaurant called Spoonbills. Though it was late, I headed on over to grab a meal. I arrived to a parking lot full of cars, and folks leaving with big smiles and doggie bags. Usually a good sign!

As soon as I stepped out of the car, my first thought was "Oh my goodness, what is that incredible aroma?!" I climbed the four wood stairs to the deck and opened the



Spoonbills' Fried Green Tomato Tower features fresh shrimp and crab claws, layered with fried green tomatoes and house-made remoulade sauce.

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screen door—yes, it sang to me—and I was greeted by multiple smiles as people looked up from their plates. Not since my kids were young and had found the Christmas chocolate have I seen such smiles. Only one table was open, and I was immediately seated with a menu in hand.

Ahhhh, the choices all looked so good ... fried shrimp; marinated flat-iron steak; nut-crusted, pan-seared fish; and stuffed crab—my all-time favorite seafood dish. I had found my meal. The waiter showed up with a wine list worthy of a five-star restaurant. I ordered one of my favorites, a California pinot noir.

For my starter, the waiter suggested the Fried Green Tomato Tower, a stack of perfectly cooked shrimp and crab claws layered with fried green tomatoes and a house-made remoulade sauce. Torn between that and the Mexican Shrimp Cocktail, I did what all true Texans do in this situation: I ordered both.

Soon my appetizers arrived. WOW! At this point, I started taking notes and photos. As I savored the last of my shrimp appetizers, my stuffed crab arrived, hand-delivered by chef Edie Pruitt, who is also one of the restaurant's owners. By the way, Spoonbills' service is as outstanding as the food.

Presented in a shimmery pink Lion's Paw Scallop shell, the Calypso Stuffed Crab featured loads of crab meat topped with a crispy yet delicate stuffing, bell peppers, jalapeños, and chives. As I devoured my meal and sipped more wine, I invited Edie to share the story of Spoonbills. She told me that after a successful career in the medical prosthetics industry, she decided to pursue her lifelong dream to become chef of her own restaurant. After two years of grueling studies at The Art Institute of Houston, Edie graduated and convinced her sister, Maree Allen, to partner with her and help finance a restaurant in Matagorda.

Edie and Maree opened Spoonbills in July 2007, and it was a success from day one. Having the chef meet the seafood boats at the docks to hand-pick her choices certainly doesn't hurt. "Seafood just caught always tastes best," effuses Edie. She feels the same way about the restaurant's fruits, veg-

SPOONBILLS RESTAURANT is at 773 Cypress St. in Matagorda. Hours: Mon, Tue, Fri, and Sat 11 a.m.-2 p.m. (lunch) and 5:30-9 (dinner); closed Wed-Thu. Sunday brunch from 11-2. Call 979/863-7766; www.spoonbillsrestaurant.com.



etables, and other entrées (yes, Spoonbills serves steaks, chicken, and barbecue, too).

At the six-month mark of her new business, Edie showed her restaurant sales numbers to her former culinary professor; his eyes widened and his jaw dropped in amazement.

After slowly enjoying every bite of my Chocolate Soufflé Roulade, which comes filled with homemade whipped cream and topped with chocolate sauce and toasted pecans, I looked at the dessert choices I hadn't chosen: Bread Pudding served on warm lemon sauce, Key Lime Pie made with a homemade cookie crust, and Chocolate Mousse topped with whipped cream. You know, now that I think about it, being a True Texan, I should have ordered all of them!

After paying the bill, I let Edie know who I worked for and made arrangements to return the next day to shoot more images for this story. As I headed out the door, completely satisfied, I turned and took one more glimpse of what culinary success looks like.

Photography Editor KEVIN VANDIVIER, a self-described "customer-service snob," once owned the nation's top-selling Maggie Moo's Ice Cream & Treatery.

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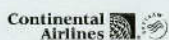


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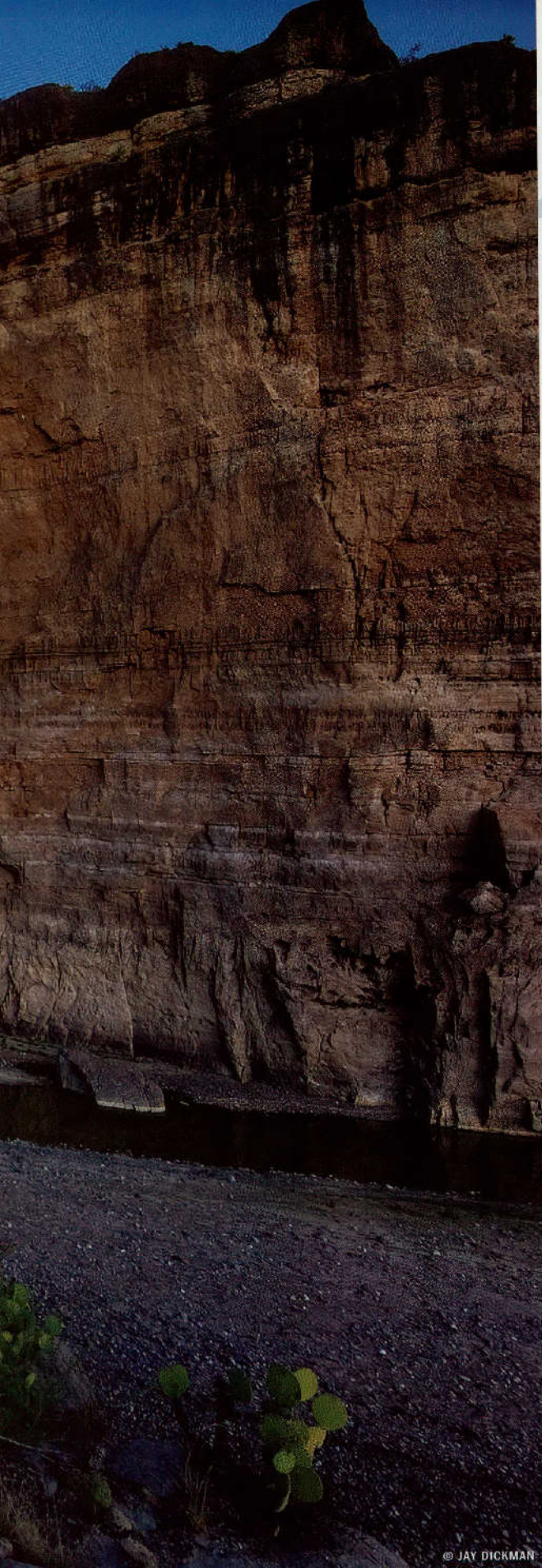
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY DICKMAN AND KEVIN VANDIVIER TEXT BY E. DAN KLEPPER



Texas







TEXAS WONDERS

ON COOL AND WINDLESS

autumn mornings, a low-slung cloud-bank sometimes settles over Guadalupe Peak, enveloping the forest of junipers and pines that clings to the sierra's precipitous incline. The cloud, soft and pearlescent in the rising sun, cloaks the rock's vertical landscape in a long, slow crawl. Scrub jays chatter from the mountain's juniper snags. Thousands of tiny beetles often cluster on the rocky peaks, their bright orange carapaces forming a Persian carpet across the lichen-covered rock. Veins of crystal penetrate the upper reaches of the mountain where, exposed and shattered, they catch the light of dawn.

Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in the state, heads up *Texas Highways'* list of top seven outdoor wonders. It is joined by Santa Elena Canyon in Big Bend National Park, the Panhandle's Palo Duro Canyon, the southeast's Big Thicket National Preserve, the far northeast's Caddo Lake, Padre Island National Seashore along the Gulf Coast, and the Hill Country's Enchanted Rock. While these seven gems are not the sole

A visit to any of these SPECIAL PLACES ALLOWS TIME AND THE NATURAL WORLD TO UNFOLD.

purview of wonder in a state well-known for its profound diversity and abundance of nature's riches, they do highlight some of Texas' best and most compelling landscapes. In fact, every Texan should visit each of them at least once, as each site is guaranteed to inspire awe. Whether you're a novice hiker or veteran backpacker, or whether you simply like to relax in the sun or shade, a visit to any of these special places allows time and the natural world to unfold. Stopping along the trail to catch your breath, admire the view, or simply watch the migration of dawn on its way to dusk means to savor a moment in the Texas natural world unmatched by any that may precede or follow it.

Rain shadows, pronghorn bucks in battle, fogbows, tarantula wasps dragging their prey, scouring dust devils, red-tailed hawks in the coital dive; these events endure in a world that exists independently of our presence. To slow down and walk quietly, observantly, is an opportunity to return to our genesis with eyes wide open: a chance to decipher the "how" and "why" of our inherited state of being. Nature has the power to give us this, a rare and unique gift given with few expectations in return and one that we Texans have the opportunity to receive simply by walking out our own back doors.

Texans have been blessed with some of the last remaining pristine and unspoiled landscapes in the country. These are sanctuaries where nature can perform its greatest service for humankind by freeing the mind of its burdens. There is no better place than the outdoors to clear the head, draw friends closer, see new and wonderful things, fall in love, and feel alive. In return, honor the natural world of Texas with respect and it will deliver you—becalmed and invigorated—to a life uplifted and renewed.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Guadalupe Mountains National Park preserves "the world's finest example of a fossilized reef" and is home to Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas. LEFT: A camper basks in firelight and solitude in Santa Elena Canyon, one of Big Bend National Park's most dramatic spectacles.

■ To order a print of the previous spread photo, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY DICKMAN

A HIKE UP GUADALUPE Peak in Guadalupe Mountains National Park offers Texans access to the highest point in the state. Views from the top, at 8,749 feet, are stunning, particularly on bright, clear mornings. The peak is marine in origin, part of a reef system that resulted from the Delaware Sea, which once covered more than 10,000 square miles of Texas and New Mexico. Algae, along with sponges and other marine organisms that secrete calcium carbonate, thrived in the Delaware Sea, and built a substantial reef by attaching to the sea floor then expanding vertically with each succeeding generation. Once the sea evaporated, much of the reef was buried over time beneath layers of younger rock. Eventually, tectonic forces drove the reef upward, exposing the mountains—including Guadalupe Peak—we see today.

The Guadalupe Peak Trail (8.4 miles round-trip) provides visitors with a way to the top, but it's a strenuous and challenging hike, even for the physically prepared. The trail is well maintained, but steep. But the stellar vistas—the rugged Diablo Mountains to the southwest, the endless salt flats to the west, and the Guadalupe range's El Capitan Peak just below you to the south—are worth the effort. Hikers will find a commemorative spire at the Guadalupe Peak's high point and a metal box beneath it containing a hiker's journal. Feel free to leave your thoughts before starting the long descent down. The round-trip hike requires about six to eight hours to complete. Bring plenty of water and avoid the peak during thunderstorms.

Guadalupe Peak is in Guadalupe Mountains



National Park. Write to 400 Pine Canyon Dr., Salt Flat 79847-9400; call 915/828-3251; www.nps.gov/gumo.



A blur of ocotillo veils the distant Guadalupe. Hikers can explore the park's 80-plus miles of trails, which range from easy desert treks to strenuous, high-country climbs.

TOP GUADALUPE PEAK





Gypsum sands ripple IN DESERT WINDS AT THE SALT



BASIN DUNES IN GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK.



FLOAT TIME



SANTA ELENA CANYON



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY DICKMAN

SANTA ELENA CANYON, IN BIG BEND National Park, is world-renowned for its rugged beauty and spectacular desert landscape. The Rio Grande carved the canyon out of a massive uplift that dominates both the U.S. and Mexican sides of the river. The northern portion of this enormous plateau, called Mesa de Anguila, translates roughly from Spanish as “mesa of eels.” Some literature suggests that the word *anguila* ended up on topographic maps by mistake and that it is actually a corruption of the Spanish word *ángel*, meaning “angel.”

There is nothing angelic, however, about Santa Elena Canyon. On an approach by land to the remote head of Santa Elena (a multi-day hike), the canyon looks as if some great force had begun to split the planet apart. An approach by water, either in a raft, canoe, or kayak, offers an even more dramatic view. (It also requires a several-day commitment.) The river makes a heady curve just below a series of flat, water-worn table rocks before taking a boat-mashing right turn into Santa Elena Canyon, pushing paddlers into a ruckus landscape where boulders, rapids, and canyon walls come together for an unforgiving ride. The

Santa Elena Canyon, from head to mouth, is located in Big



Bend National Park. Contact the park for information on accessing the trails (write to Big Bend National Park, Box 129, Big Bend National Park, TX 79834; call 432/477-2251; www.nps.gov/bibe). Boaters may arrange their own trip by canoe, kayak, or raft, but must acquire a backcountry or river permit at any of the park visitor centers. Visitors may also arrange for float trips through local outfitters in the Terlingua/Study Butte area; see www.visitbigbend.com.

canyon’s sheer rock cliffs dominate the route, depriving boaters of all but a few opportunities to beach their craft until the Rio Grande spits them out miles later at Santa Elena’s mouth.

The mouth of Santa Elena Canyon, on the other hand, can be visited easily via the Santa Elena Canyon Trail, an easy trek (1.7-miles round-trip) that hugs the bluffs along the canyon’s mouth. The trailhead is eight miles west of Castolon (which is at the end of Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive), in the southwestern end of the national park. Hikers often get a chance to see paddlers exiting the mouth in beautiful afternoon light.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: A canoeist plies a placid stretch of the Rio Grande through Santa Elena Canyon. When water levels are high, the canyon’s largest rapid, called the Rock Slide, can reach a turbulent Class IV. **LEFT:** The walls of Santa Elena Canyon soar to 1,500 feet above the riverbed.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

ENCHANTED ROCK, THE 425-foot-high dome that is the centerpiece of Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, has been designated a National Natural Landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. One of the largest exposed batholiths in the country, Enchanted Rock is a massive pink granite dome that formed when molten rock solidified beneath the surface more than a billion years ago. Tectonic forces, along with alternating soil deposits and erosion, have uncovered and buried the rock a number of times. In fact, the exposed dome you see is only the top end of a much larger mass. The dome shape has been formed by centuries of exfoliation, in which granite sheets peel away like dried skin. Legend holds that local Indians believed that the rock spoke to them. The audible expansion and contraction of the granite caused by heating and cooling validate their claim.

Enchanted
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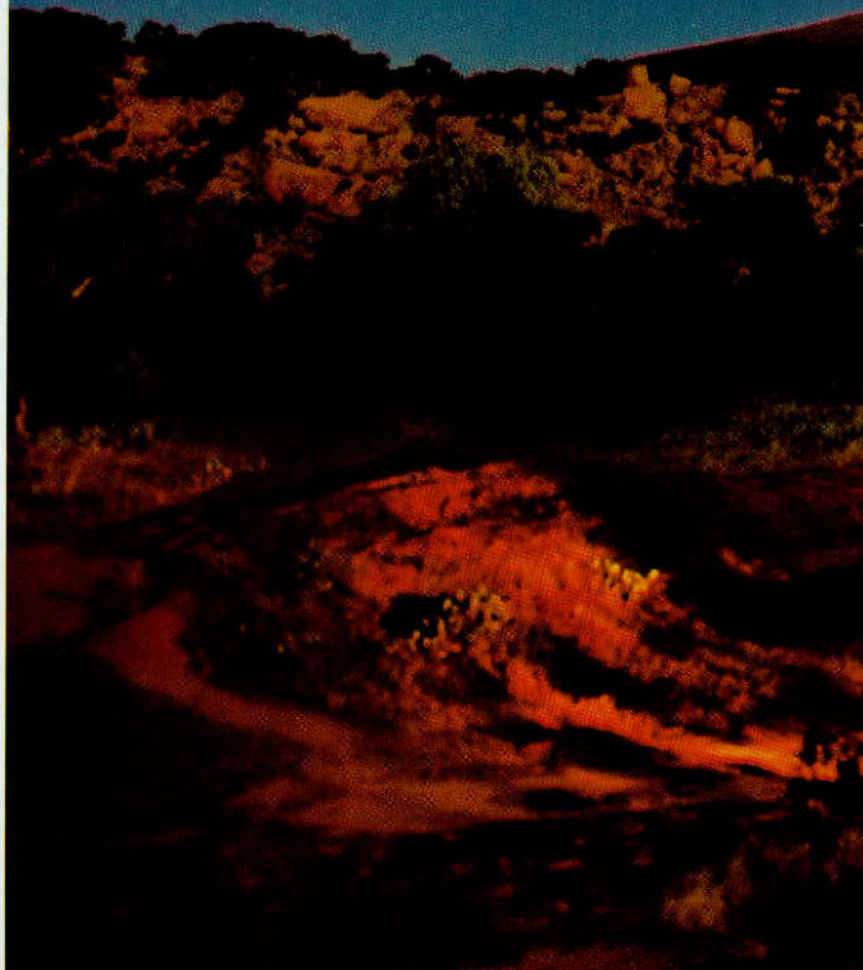


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The summit of Enchanted Rock is easily accessed via the park's Summit Trail. The trail begins at the Westside parking area, where it descends briefly into an arroyo before ascending quickly. The first part of the ascent is aided by steps cut into the granite as the trail works its way through oak and scrub woodland. Soon, the trail leaves almost all plant life behind. Once the steps end, hikers find a fantasy landscape overwhelmed by the dome's pink horizon. The granite is populated with multicolored lichens and Fairy Sword ferns. Small vernal pools appear in pits along the rock's surface, where layers of soil build up and host tiny, isolated habitats.

Once on top, visitors are free to roam the granite dome and explore.

At Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, pink granite domes create a surreal landscape. Wildflowers, ferns, and hardy live oaks grow from fissures and crevices in the stone.



OF ENCHANTED ROCK



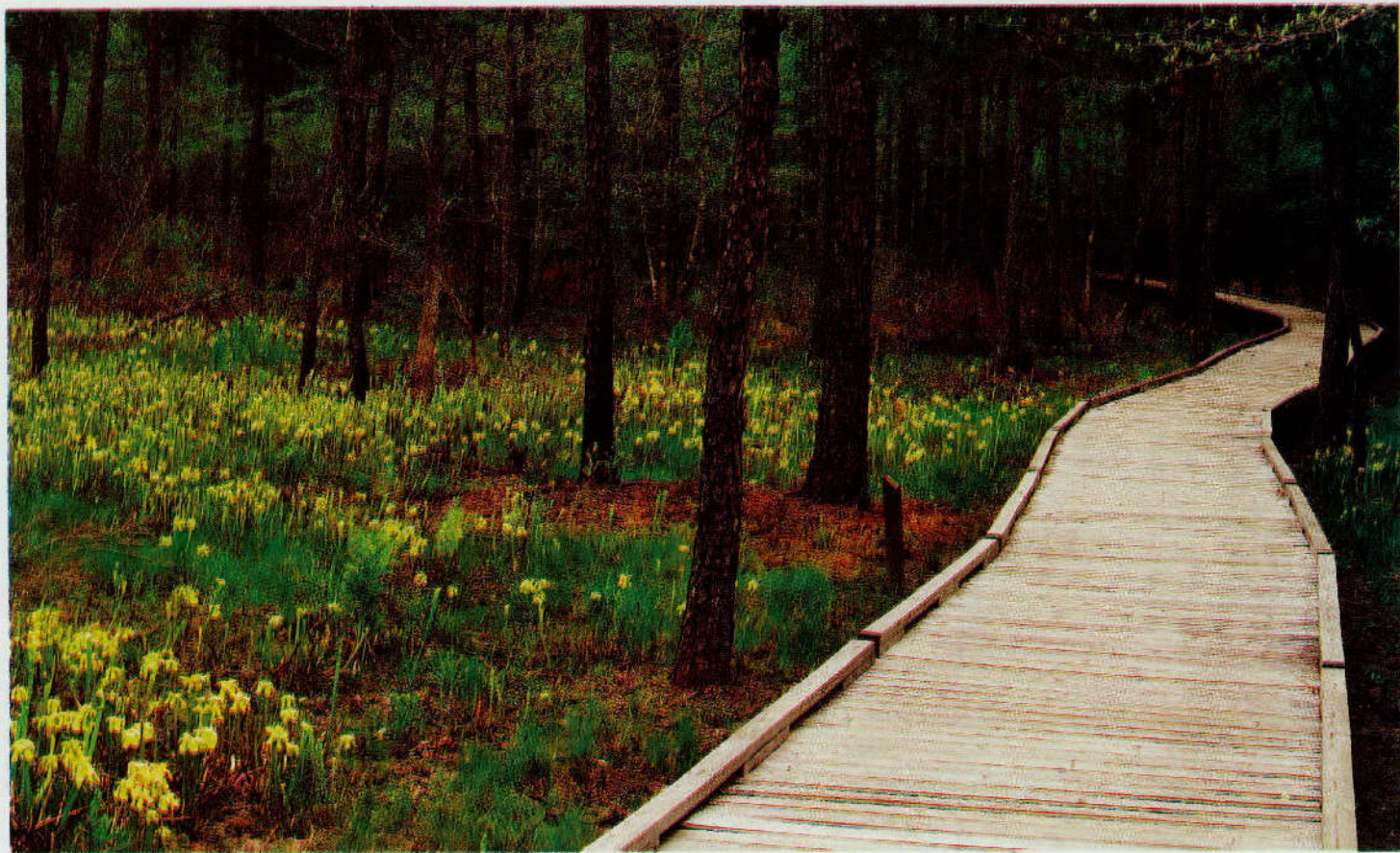


DEEP IN THE BIG



THICKET





PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

TEXAS
WONDERS

BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE CONSISTS of nine land units and six water corridors that represent some 100,000 acres—a surviving remnant of a once-vast biological crossroads. The Big Thicket is composed of upland hardwood and pine forests, savannahs, flatland palmetto hardwoods, floodplain forests, and blackwater swamps. Designated an International Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations in 1981, Big Thicket National Preserve represents the only protected piece of what once was an ecoregion of 3.5 million acres.

The preserve embraces a variety of habitats, including baygalls and acid bogs. A baygall, an endangered environment, is created when seep-fed creeks flood into forests. The wet, decaying vegetation changes the soil chemistry, allowing ferns, orchids, and epiphytes to thrive. An acid bog is a water seep lined with clay where soils become acidic. Acid bogs support grasses, sedges, ferns, mosses, and carnivorous plants. In fact, the bug-consuming pitcher plant is one of several botanical stars of the preserve; thousands of them can be seen along the preserve's Pitcher Plant Trail. The trail is ADA accessible and follows a short, raised boardwalk across a landscape dense with pitcher plants, bluestem grasses, and other bog-loving species, with an overstory of longleaf pines.

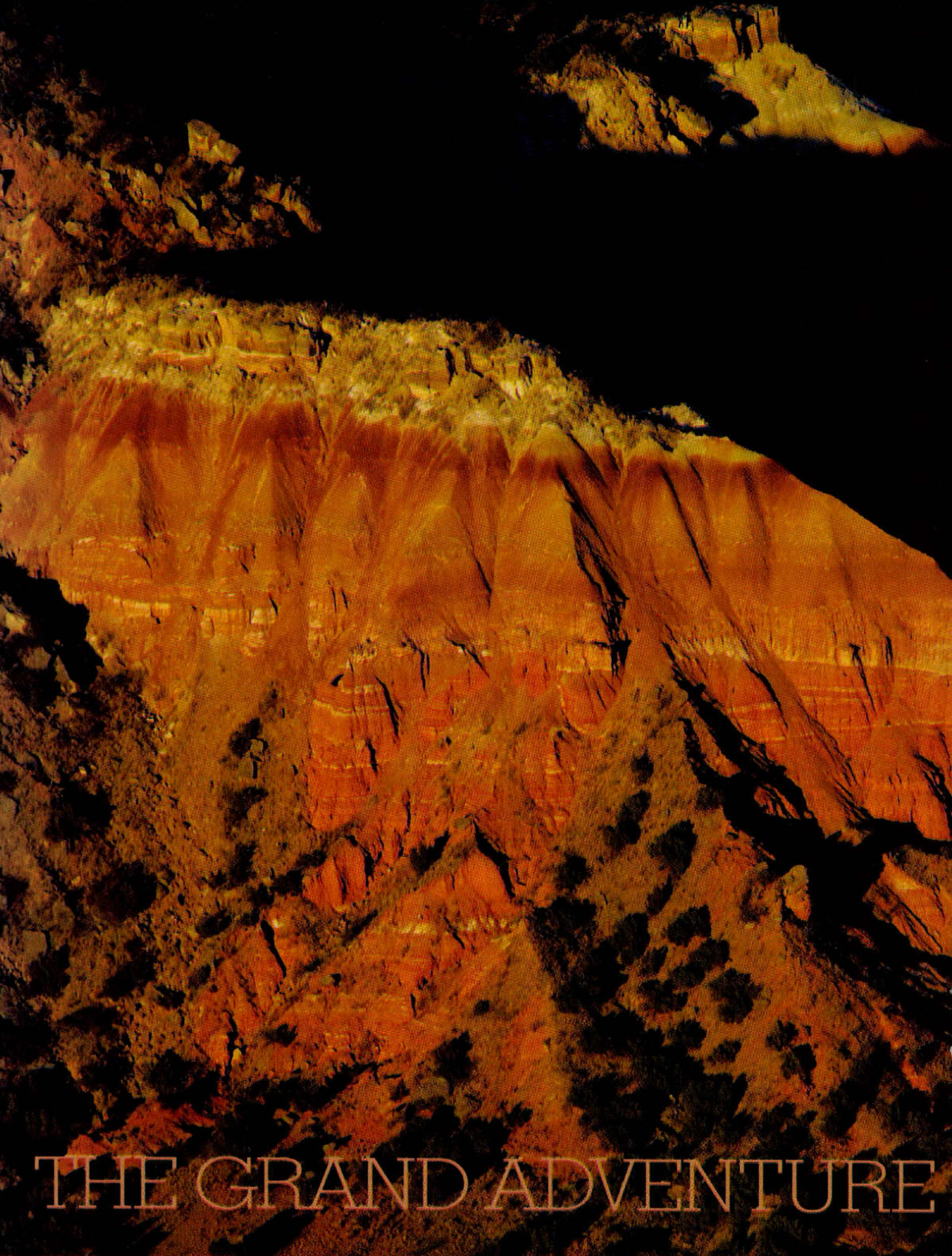
Since **Big Thicket National Preserve** is composed of 9 land units and 6 water corridors, the best place to start is the Big Thicket Visitor Center, eight miles north of Kountze. Call 409/951-6701; www.nps.gov/bith/.



**Big Thicket
National Preserve**
REPRESENTS THE ONLY
PROTECTED PIECE OF WHAT
ONCE WAS AN ECOREGION
OF 3.5 MILLION ACRES.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: The Big Thicket boasts some of the richest biological diversity in North America. **ABOVE:** Eight walking trails, some with raised boardwalks, make it easy to explore the Big Thicket's ecosystems. **FACING PAGE:** Carnivorous pitcher plants trap insects in their tube-shaped leaves.

■ To order a print of the previous spread photo, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



THE GRAND ADVENTURE



PALO DURO CANYON





PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

TEXAS
WONDERS

CALLED THE "GRAND CANYON OF TEXAS," PALO DURO Canyon is a mighty geological wonder rich in beauty and history. At more than 100 miles long and 1,000-foot deep in places, it is the second largest canyon in the country. It's young, as canyons go: It was formed less than a million years ago by erosion. The Prairie

Dog Town Fork of the Red River cut through layers of sand, mud, and clay that had compacted together over 250 million years, creating exposed rock layers and pillars of red claystone, yellow and purple mudstone, and white gypsum. On top sits a caprock composed of gravel, sand, and pond deposits stuck together with caliche. Artists have found inspiration in the landscape here for at least 100 years; most famously, Georgia O'Keeffe spent time capturing the beauty of Palo Duro country in the early 1900s—work that would influence generations of artists to come.

A great way to see the canyon is to hike the six-mile round-trip Lighthouse Trail. The trail leads to the odd but beautiful lighthouse formation, an eroded pinnacle, or "hoodoo," formed by wind and water erosion. The popular trail is moderately difficult to negotiate and crosses several arroyos where, after a wet season, water may be flowing. The short but steep final ascent follows eroded steps up an incline to a small bench where you can rest and ponder the Lighthouse's interesting natural architecture.

A good portion of Palo Duro Canyon lies within Palo Duro Canyon State Park, 12 miles east of Canyon. There are more than 30 miles of trails for novice and hard-core hikers. Call 806/488-2227; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/palodurocanyon.



Artists, most
famously
Georgia O'Keeffe,
HAVE LONG FOUND
INSPIRATION IN
THE LANDSCAPE HERE.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: More than 250 million years of erosion exposed magnificent, colored striation in the rock at Palo Duro Canyon. ABOVE: On a clear day, you can see for miles from the rim, where the elevation is 3,500 feet above sea level. FACING PAGE: The Lighthouse, one of Palo Duro Canyon's signature formations, resembles a gigantic stalagmite, its layers of rock revealed by erosion.



SERENITY NOW PADRE ISL



AND NATIONAL SEASHORE

The island harbors MORE THAN 25 THREATENED AND



ENDANGERED SPECIES.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE is considered the longest undeveloped barrier island in the world. Its vast acreage, 130,434 in all, lies entirely within Texas. Visitors can drive to their favorite spot for fishing or beachcombing at almost any place along this 60-mile ocean stretch if they have a four-wheel drive vehicle. But if you wish to avoid vehicular traffic, your best option on the national seashore is beautiful Malaquite Beach, near the northern end of the island.

With the exception of oil and gas operations, most of the barrier island's wilderness has been disturbed only by sporadic storms. Kangaroo rats, diamondback rattlesnakes, and coyotes occupy the dunes and grasslands; the island harbors more than 25 threatened and endangered species. This list includes five

Padre Island National Seashore can be reached from Corpus Christi



by taking Texas 358 over the JFK Causeway onto Padre Island and continuing south 10 miles on Park Road 22 to the headquarters. Call 361/949-8068; www.nps.gov/pais. The Malaquite Beach Visitor Center is located north of beach milepost 0 and south of the national park's main headquarters.

different species of sea turtles that show up along the beaches, including—quite recently—the first leatherback sea turtle seen on Padre in more than 70 years.

Padre Nicolas Balli, a Spanish priest, also beached himself along the remote regions of Padre Island. He is believed to have established the first non-native settlement on the island around 1804. Earlier, in 1554, three Spanish vessels, including the *Espíritu Santo*, were shipwrecked upon the Padre sands. The discovery of the *Santo* 400 years later produced some of the most important artifacts ever recovered from American shores, including a gold crucifix, silver discs, and cannons.

Today's visitors to Padre Island will discover nature's treasures rather than shipwreck booty, including plenty of fresh Gulf air and sand dollars along the storm-swept beaches.

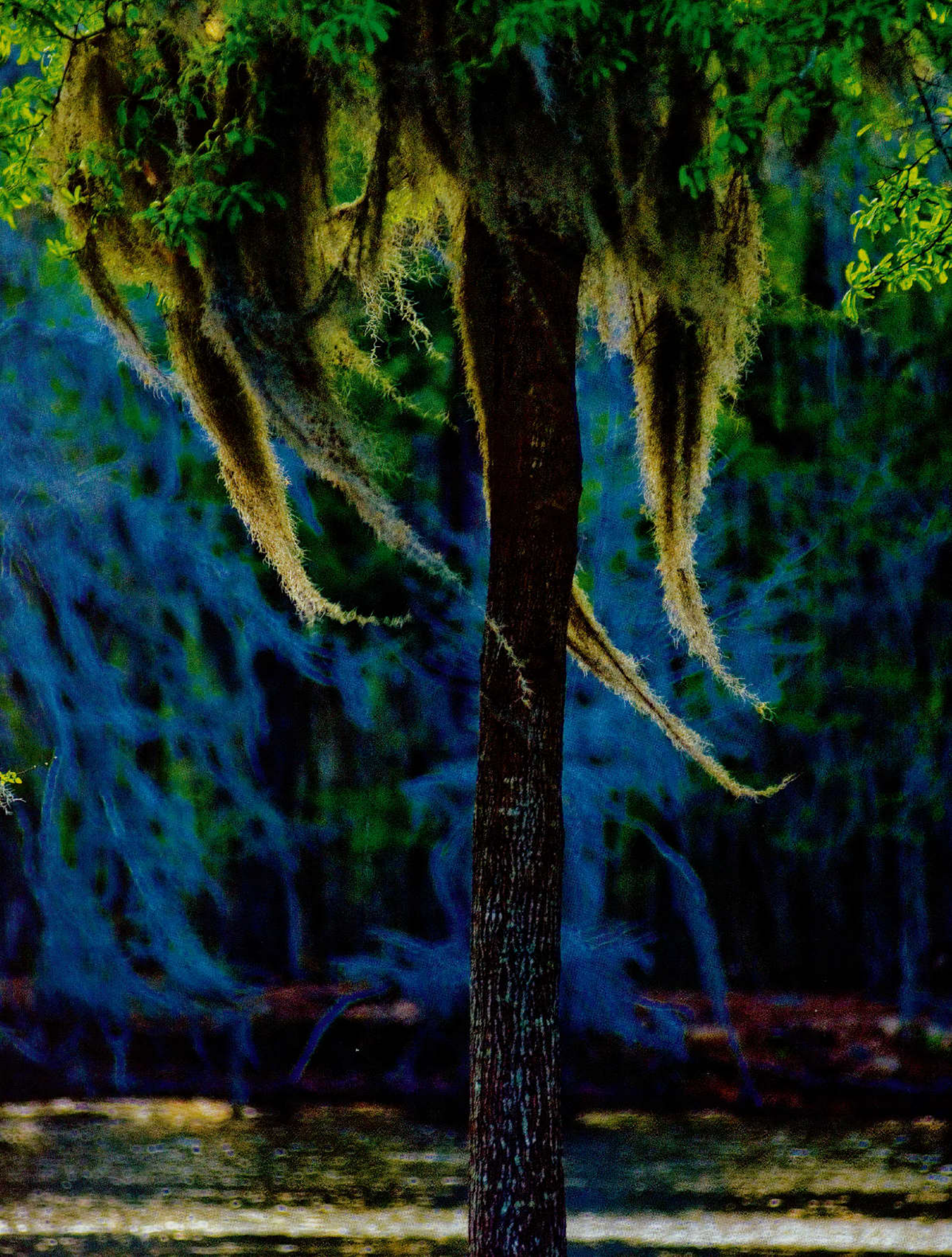
PREVIOUS SPREAD: Swirling waves and pounding surf create an intoxicating combo at Padre Island National Seashore. LEFT: Windswept dunes help control erosion and provide habitat for all manner of island creatures.

THE CALL OF CADDO LA



KE







PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

TEXAS
WONDERS

CADDO LAKE, WITH ITS NETWORK OF BAYOUS AND sloughs covering more than 26,000 acres, is the Swamp Thing's idea of home-sweet-home. The lake's depth, around eight feet in the shallows and up to 20 feet in the bayous, sports 70-plus species of fish. A natural logjam called the Great

Raft may have formed the bulk of Caddo Lake in the early 1800s, but some version of the lake has probably existed for much longer. Today, dams and reservoirs determine the lake's water levels.

A visit to the lake often begins at Caddo Lake State Park. Here, Big Cypress Bayou, a major watershed for the lake, is populated with Bald Cypress trees, whose knobby "knees" protrude from the swamp mud. Bald Cypresses can reach up to 150 feet tall and live for more than 500 years. The knees are root protrusions growing above typical water levels, extending from the underground root system to the surface, then bending over and growing back down into the mud. The knees' purpose is a mystery, although they probably lend structural support in the shallow swamp soil.

Just above the swamps are hardwood bottomlands that slowly ascend to piney woods. Christmas ferns grow alongside water hickory, sweetgum, redbud, and loblolly pines. The vegetation creates a damp, shady habitat perfect for a variety of birds and other wildlife.

Both Texas and Louisiana share the Caddo Lake shoreline, where fishing guides, boat rentals, camping, lodging, and restaurants abound.

Caddo Lake State Park is just north of Karnack. Call 903/679-3351; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/caddolake.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: Cypress trees draped in heavy beards of Spanish moss set an otherworldly tone for East Texas' one-of-a-kind Caddo Lake. **ABOVE:** Herons and other birds hunt in the shallow sloughs and swamps. **FACING PAGE:** Spanish moss provides nest-building material for songbirds, as well as shelter for many species of reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

■ To order a print of the heron photo, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

Marathon dweller E. DAN KLEPPER says, "Visiting the state's natural wonders really brings home the importance of protecting these great places for future Texans."

Pulitzer Prize-winner JAY DICKMAN ranks West Texas among his favorite photographic subjects. *TH* Photography Editor KEVIN VANDIVIER enjoyed teaming up with Jay for this story, and says, "Jay was my mentor decades ago when I was a new photographer, right out of college."

Take a Hike!

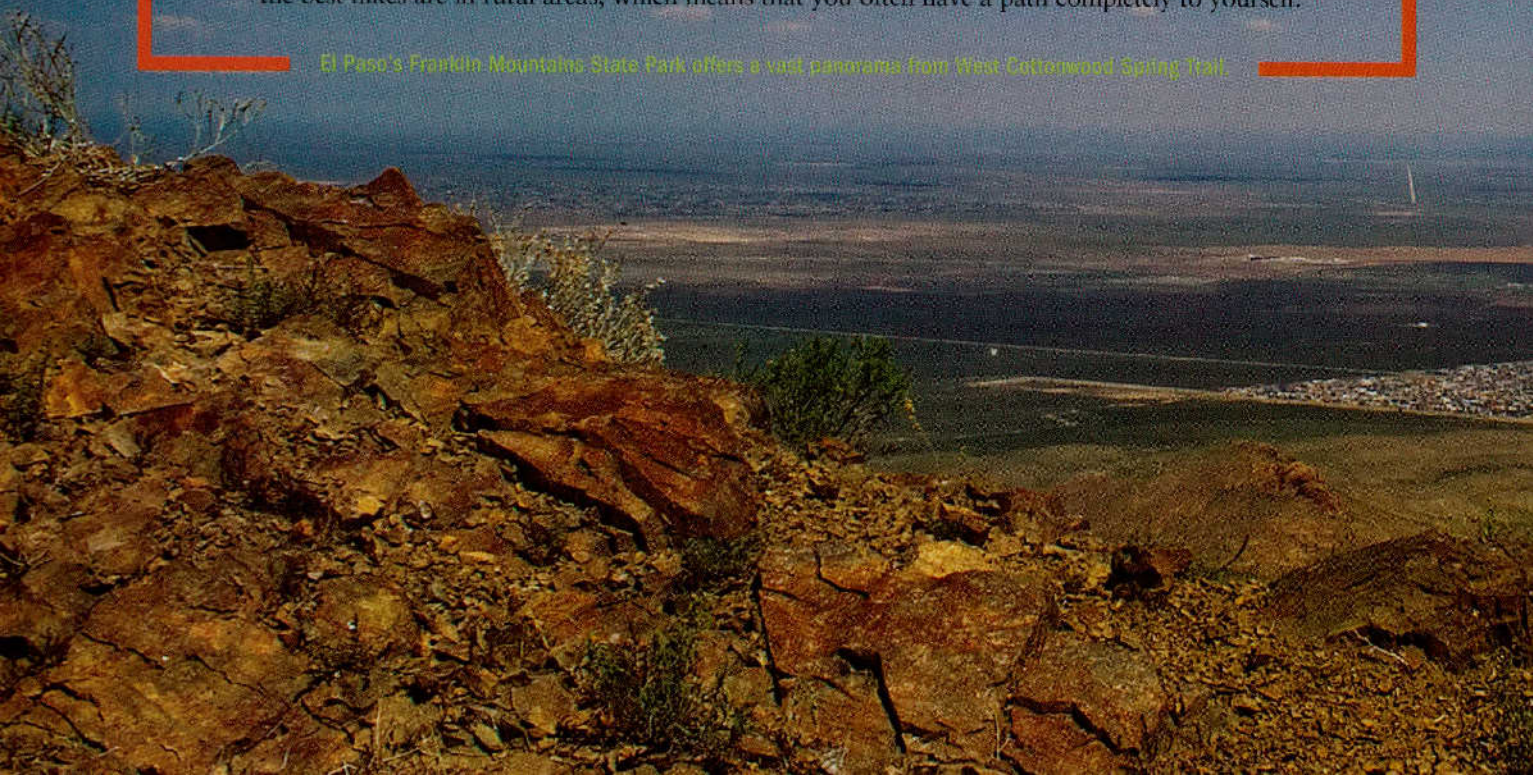
“Wolfman” Klepper goes wild on Texas trails.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY E. DAN KLEPPER

There’s a lot of ground to cover in Texas, a state that’s often considered a country unto itself for both its unique culture and immense size. Texas is larger than all of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois combined, extending 801 miles north to south and 773 miles east to west. It harbors a remarkable variety of habitats and wildlife, including more than 600 bird species and more than 5,000 species of native and naturalized plants (425 of which are found only in Texas).

Many marvelous opportunities for great hiking await within our boundaries. The following excerpt from my upcoming *100 Classic Hikes in Texas* (The Mountaineers Books, 2009), offers a good place to start. The trails will take you from rolling plains to high desert mountains and from blackland prairies to the subtropics. The Lone Star State is a vast ecological wonderland, much of which can be accessed via trails in state and national parks, wildlife refuges, and national forests. The temperate climate allows hikers to enjoy year-round activity, and typically select warmer regions for winter and cooler regions for summer. In fact, you may choose to spend an hour, a day, or a week on the trail, depending upon the specific location and route you choose. Lastly, many of the best hikes are in rural areas, which means that you often have a path completely to yourself.

El Paso’s Franklin Mountains State Park offers a vast panorama from Great Cottonwood Spring Trail.





Franklin Mountains State Park

WEST COTTONWOOD SPRING TO MUNDY'S GAP TRAIL

Franklin Mountains State Park is a momentary respite from the binational sprawl that constitutes the El Paso/Juárez/Las Cruces corridor, which seems to disappear for a few hours once hikers tackle the state park's extensive trail system. West Cottonwood Spring is a good start, offering peaceful views and a solid rock shield—composed of an entire mountain range—against civilization. At more than 24,000 acres, Franklin Mountains State Park is the largest urban wilderness park in the country.

Hikers will find the West Cottonwood Spring trailhead at the Tom Mays Unit of the park. The trail begins to climb almost immediately before dropping briefly into a north/south arroyo. Steps are cut into the far side of the arroyo. The trail passes the ruins of a metal stock tank, an indicator of the region's extensive ranching heritage. Evidence of human activity in the Franklin Mountains dates back 12,000 years and follows the migration of indigenous tribes, conquerors, and pioneers who followed the route northward across Paso del Norte, the northern step, from Mexico.

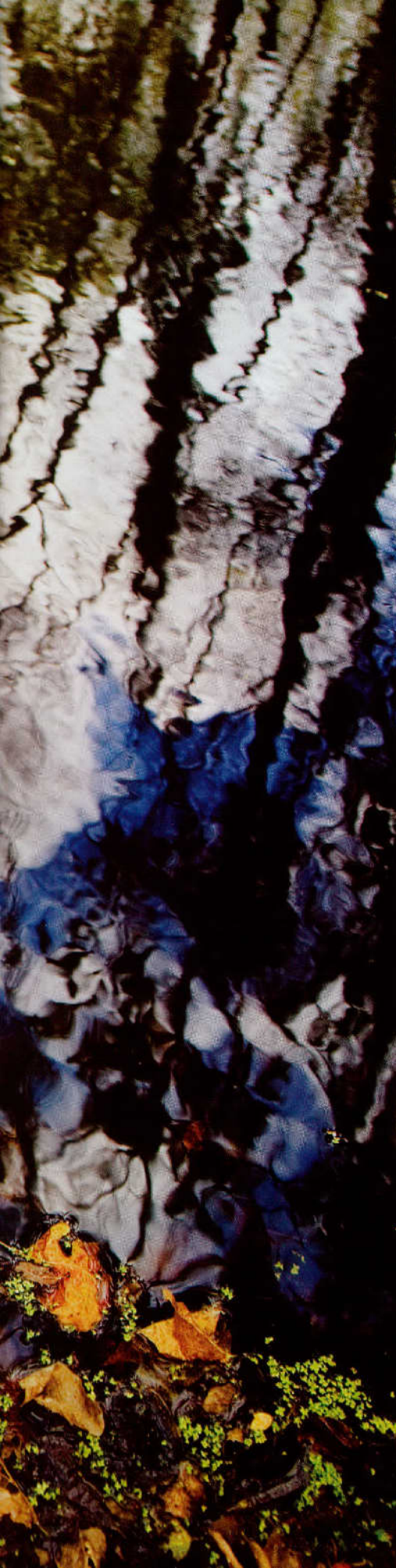
Once reaching the shade of the spring's cottonwoods, you may rest along a bench, enjoy the view, and return the same way you came, or continue above the cottonwoods to a footpath, usually marked with a small cairn, which will take you to the rim. Here you'll find endless views eastward and a cool breeze. You can follow the edge left (northwest) for a short way before dropping onto Mundy's Gap Trail, a well-defined Jeep road. Following Mundy's Gap as it switchbacks along the mountainside will take you back down to the trailhead.

Franklin Mountains State Park, Tom Mays Unit, El Paso; 915/566-6441; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/franklin.



Autumn leaves color tannin-stained waters along 40-Acre Lake Trail in Brazos Bend State Park.





Brazos Bend State Park

40-ACRE LAKE TRAIL

Brazos Bend State Park provides hikers with an opportunity to travel through lake, marshland, and forest environments via ecotones, regions where habitats overlap. This blending of ecosystems that includes prairie to woodland, woodland to marsh, and marshland to lake widens the variety of plants and animals that can thrive here. The allure of this lush convergence of wild land lies as much in the broad stroke as in the details. In the wetlands, insects proliferate, including dragonflies, damselflies, butterflies, and moths. Duckweed, the smallest known flower-

Big Bend Ranch State Park

OJITO ADENTRO TRAIL

The trailhead to Ojito Adentro (“the little spring within”) not only distinguishes the trail, but provides hikers with a view of the spring above. The arroyo that travels northeast from the trailhead ends in a cleft populated with a dense cluster of vegetation, interrupting an otherwise earthy colorscape with a sweep of bright green. Such is the nature of spring areas in the Chihuahuan Desert, where long, uninterrupted vistas often offer trekkers views of distant but welcome water sources.

The spring supports a shady woodland of mesquites, willows, hackberries, and

The allure of this lush convergence of wild land lies as much in the broad stroke as in the details.

ing plant, floats on the surface of the park’s numerous lakes and sloughs, as do platter-size water-lotus pads. Their soft, yellow flowers and odd, wedge-shaped seedpods extend far above the waterline. Spanish moss hangs from 200-year-old live oak trees, and golden silk spiders often construct webs across this walkway of diverse elements.

The 40-Acre Lake Trail, a 1.2-mile path around one of the park’s several lakes, straddles both lake and marsh habitats. Halfway around, you can climb an observation tower and gain a hawk’s-eye view of the nearby prairies. The trail continues along a raised levee that divides lake waters from tannin-stained marsh water and carries hikers through prime alligator habitat. The American Alligator is, in fact, the largest predator here, with females topping out at 9 feet and males at a whopping 14 feet. Park officials estimate that the alligator population is between 250 to 350 reptiles.

Brazos Bend State Park, Richmond; 979/553-5101; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/brazosbend.



cottonwoods. Birds love it here, particularly migrant owls, hummingbirds, swallows, buntings, tanagers, and orioles.

The trail requires some negotiating while following the water flow on its way to the source. Boulders force a tight squeeze and a bit of scrambling that may discourage hikers with weak knees. But the resulting view is a stunner. The trail terminates at a fern-covered grotto that features a small waterfall and a delicate pool. Stalagmites have formed beneath the grotto shelter, where the constant dripping of water has slowly built a silhouette of spires. Soft, dense moss and ferns landscape the magical tableaux.

Sauceda Ranger Station, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Presidio; 432/358-4444; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/bigbendbranch.



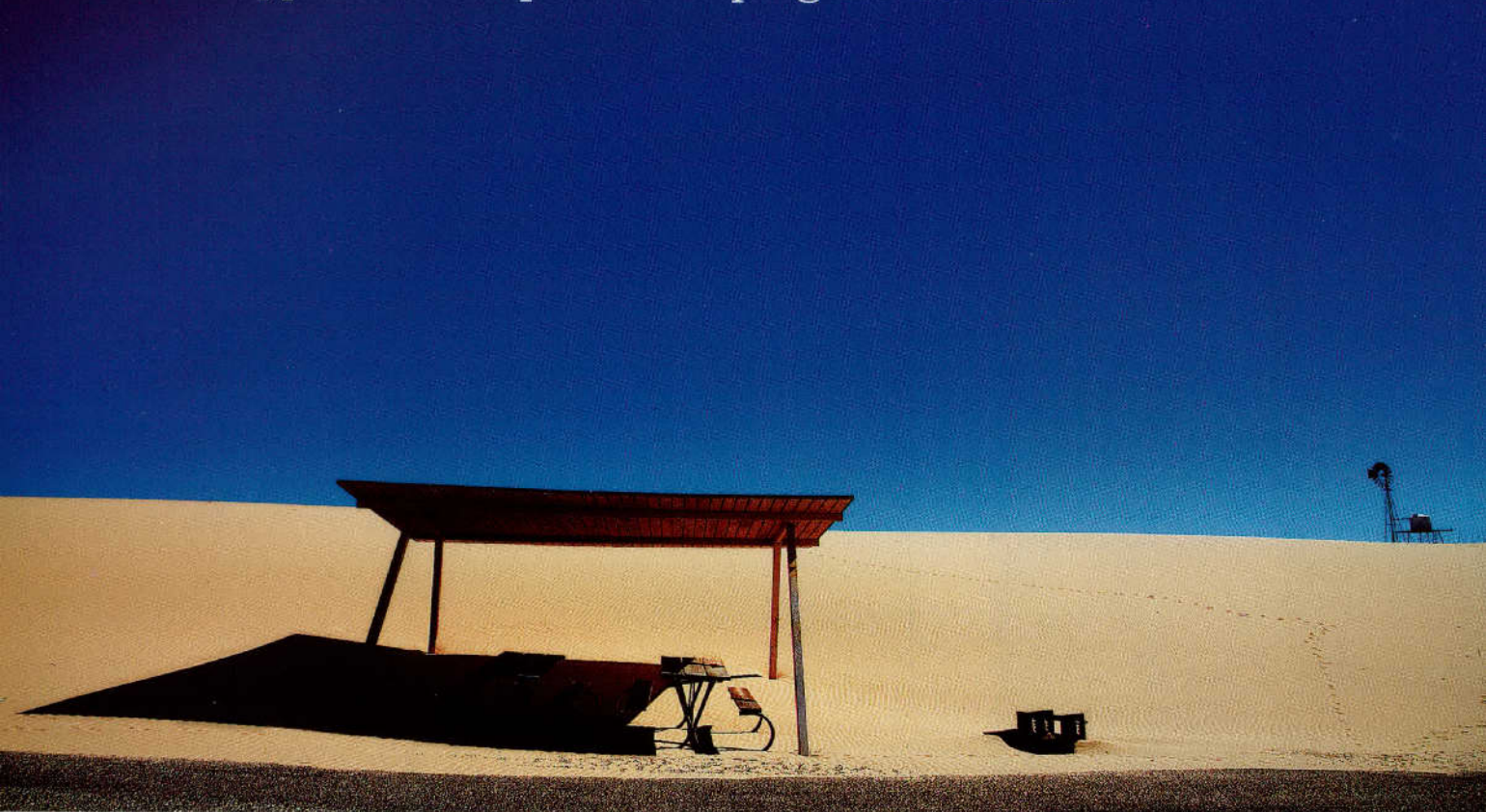
Monahans Sandhills State Park

DUNE HIKE

The Monahans Sandhills represent a small portion of a vast dune-field extending 200 miles from Monahans northwest into New Mexico. While much of this terrain is covered in vegetation, the area around Monahans

Curtains of sand rise up like windblown veils

and, when backlit by the setting sun, transform the landscape into an apparition of spirits sweeping the horizon.



A picnic shelter provides some shady respite in Monahans Sandhills State Park.

Sandhills State Park features barren, but active dunes. With some as high as 70 feet, these dunes are influenced by the prevailing winds, changing shape and size throughout the year according to season and wind currents. On especially windy afternoons, the dunes appear alive as sand ripples in waves across the sandhill ridges. Curtains of sand rise up like windblown veils and, when backlit by the setting sun, transform the landscape into an apparition of spirits sweeping the horizon.

Hiking in the park consists of simply setting out across the dunes and exploring at will. With a total of 3,840 acres, you'll find plenty of unusual sights among the dunes. Wildlife tracks here, in particular, are remarkable for their clarity and diversity. Coyotes, gray foxes, opossums, ground squirrels, lizards, snakes, beetles, and black-tailed jackrabbits all inhabit the dunes and leave easily identifiable tracks in the sand.

You'll invariably find yourself traveling from the sandhill crest down to the dune trough where you can examine what is called "dune blowout." The bowls in the troughs of active dunes are often covered in hardpan, a layer of sand and hardened calcareous earth. These troughs often harbor pools of water that may remain over an entire season, feeding wildlife and sustaining plants such as honey mesquite, plains yucca, and sand sagebrush.

Monahans Sandhills State Park,
Monahans; 432/943-2092; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/monahanssandhills.



Dinosaur Valley State Park

NATURE TRAIL

Dinosaur Valley State Park has an excellent trail system that can be enjoyed by both hikers and mountain bikers. The authentic dinosaur tracks located in the park are of great interest, but the 45-foot *Tyrannosaurus* and

70-foot *Apatosaurus* fiberglass models on site, originally manufactured for the Sinclair Oil Company's dinosaur exhibit at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair, are pure entertainment.

The Nature Trail provides hikers with an opportunity to travel above some of the clear-running Paluxy River, through densely forested Ashe juniper/live oak woodlands, and around a small open prairie. This tributary of the Brazos River is responsible for carving through layers of mudstone, sandstone, and limestone, exposing some of the most clearly defined dinosaur tracks in the state. Best of all, the trail deposits hikers at several dinosaur-track sites where giant sauropods did some trekking of their own. The thriller, in particular, is Track Site #2. Here, after a short balancing act while traversing the shallow Paluxy, hikers can see evidence of a classic predator/prey scenario that took place millions of years ago. Three-toed, bird-like carnosaurs (meat-eating predators) called

Acrocanthosaurus, believed to have been between 20 to 30 feet long, left tracks suggesting pursuit of a plant-eating sauropod, specifically the giant, brontosaurus-like *Pleurocoelus*. After studying the tracks, scientists have deduced that the carnosaurs accomplished a steady clip of 5 miles per hour while the sauropod was capable of traveling only 2.7 miles per hour at top speed. One can only imagine the outcome.

Dinosaur Valley State Park, Glen Rose; 254/897-4588; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/dinosaurvalley.



Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge NATURE TRAIL AND UPPER WHITE LAKE OVERLOOK

The allure of Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge for hikers and outdoors enthusiasts is twofold. It's the oldest national wildlife refuge in Texas, established in 1935 as a link in a chain of migratory flyways. This particular refuge is the wintering grounds for thousands of sandhill cranes. The sandhill crane is one of the largest of waterfowl species in North America; the sheer number of birds at the refuge, both in flight and at rest, is a remarkable sight. Whether it's the explosion of wings—a thunderous clap that rivals a sonic boom—or the cacophony of honking as the cranes land across the salt flats like cartwheeling skiers tumbling into snow, the sound can be deafening.

Visitors may get a chance to view the cranes by following a nature trail that departs from the primitive camping area and follows an arroyo that loops around a small dry pond, behind the refuge's maintenance building. Once you arrive here, you can join the main road for a short distance before following a maintained firebreak from park headquarters. The firebreak parallels the western shore of Upper White Lake, a refuge landmark and one of the cranes' preferred spots, depending upon water depth.

Sandhill cranes often return to the sinks well before sundown if food is plentiful nearby, providing a terrific view of their numbers. However, they are extremely skittish. Once one flies, they all fly, and

the opportunity to view them in daylight will have passed. Avoid the ire of any avid birdwatchers by keeping out of the cranes' line of sight.

Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, Muleshoe; 806/946-3341; www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges.



Daingerfield State Park RUSTLING LEAVES NATURE TRAIL

This forest of pine, red oak, maple, walnut, sassafras, and dogwood trees surrounds a spring-fed, 80-acre lake, and feels more like something out of Michigan's Upper Peninsula than Texas. But thanks to the park's Rustling Leaves Nature Trail, you don't have to travel all the way to the U.P. and mingle with the "Yoopers" to enjoy a little hike in the woods.

Daingerfield State Park enjoys the benefits of both north woods atmosphere and southern climate. Several of the buildings in the park were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps from local stone and timber; the entire 501-acre park has a timeless beauty that many CCC parks throughout Texas share.

The Rustling Leaves Nature Trail circles the entire lake, leading you through a forest of hardwoods that can be particularly colorful in the spring. Most entertaining perhaps are the sassafras, with their shiny blue fruit on lipstick-red pedicels. The brilliant green twigs can be chewed for a pleasant taste, and if you're ambitious, you can make tea or soap with the oil from the roots and bark. In fact, early colonists believed the oil extracted from the root could cure just about anything.

The Rustling Leaves Trail detours at a small peninsula that extends into the lake, providing an ideal place to rest and enjoy the birdlife. The trail continues to the Dogwood Camping Area, where you may follow the park road for a short distance, then pick up the trail again lakeside, below the Big Pine Camping Area, ending up conveniently at the swim beach. A swim platform is anchored just off the beach in deeper water.

Daingerfield State Park, Daingerfield; 903/645-2921; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/daingerfield.



(continued on page 66)

essentials HIKING 101

FOR THE MOST ENJOYABLE OUTDOORS EXPERIENCE, you might want to bring all of the items listed below, but leave your expectations at home. You'll feel secure in knowing one thing with certainty—a day on the trail will be a day full of joy, discoveries, and maybe even a few surprises.

In preparing for a hike, consider the following:

- **Carry plenty of water.** One gallon per hiker per day is a general rule.
- **Wear appropriate footwear.** Cowboy boots and flip-flops are both terrible footwear for hiking, no matter what condition the trail might be in, so save them for the dance hall and the beach.
- **Protect yourself from the sun** by wearing a hat, bandanna (for the neck), a long-sleeve lightweight shirt, and pants. Use sunblock, and apply it frequently throughout the day.
- **Carry a map and a compass**, and know how to use them.
- **Always carry an extra shirt or raingear.** Cool temperatures can come on suddenly in Texas, particularly during the monsoons of late summer and early spring.
- **Pack a flashlight or headlamp**, even if you are only planning to be on the trail for an afternoon.
- **Don't forget to take a few first-aid supplies** like moleskin, saline solution, and a bit of duct tape.
- **Carry either a firestarter or matches** or both. A small butane lighter is also an option.
- **Always have a knife or multi-use tool** handy.
- **Throw some extra snacks in the pack.** Your hiking partners will thank you.
- **Take along an emergency shelter**, such as a light-weight, foil "space" blanket. It's compact, easy to carry, and does a remarkable job of providing cover and warmth in inclement weather.

Falling

for

Homegrown Festivals

By Nola McKey

Texas Highways readers love small towns, and we think one of the best ways to enjoy them is by dropping in on their annual festivals. Most towns have at least one, and these events are a great opportunity to get to know the place, the people, and the culture, while having some uncomplicated, unabashed fun.

Festivals are usually family-friendly and provide plenty of bang for your travel bucks. Small-town festivals offer special rewards. They're homegrown and often involve generations of dedicated volunteers, resulting in events that truly reflect the citizenry. There's a feeling of community pride—almost *devotion*—that runs throughout the activities.

These grassroots gatherings run the gamut from the history-oriented Come and Take It Festival in Gonzales to the zany FireAnt Festival in Marshall. Some revolve around food, music, art, or nature; others, like New Braunfels' Wurstfest and the Salado Scottish Gathering of the Clans & Highland Games, celebrate heritage. All of them are about having fun.



At left, a young dancer performs a Highland fling at the Salado Scottish Clan Gathering & Highland Games. An exuberant gathering in the 32,000-square-foot Wursthalle (above) celebrates German culture with a favorite Wurstfest activity: dancing. The 10-day New Braunfels event draws more than 120,000 people each November.



BOTH PHOTOS © JOE VIESTI

Just ask Candy Spaulding and Charlotte Powell of Victoria, festival regulars who always look forward to the Sts. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church Fall Picnic in Shiner. “Don’t let the name throw you,” says Spaulding. “The Catholic Church puts it on, but the whole community supports it. That’s the way it works in small towns; everyone goes to everyone else’s church picnic. There’s a fabulous meal—fried chicken, sausage, stew, and all the trimmings—and everything from carnival-style games to polka dancing.

People are so friendly that you get pulled into the fun. I’m Irish, but when I go to the Shiner Picnic, I’m Czech for a day!”

“When you go to a festival in one of these little towns, you see what’s important to the people who live there,” chimes in Powell. “This is how they celebrate who they are, and you get to be a part of it.”

She adds that festivals “give you the opportunity to do something different.” That’s one of the reasons she particularly likes the Texas Renaissance Festival in Plantersville. “A lot of people are dressed

in 16th-Century costumes, so it’s like going back in time,” she says. “Where else can you see knights on horseback jousting or hear jesters bantering in Old English? It’s novel, live entertainment, and it only happens once a year. You also see some really good artisans at work—the glassblowers are my favorites. And you can find some top-quality items for sale, like handblown glass bowls, metal wind chimes, and wooden chalices.”

Austinite Julie Stratton says she and her husband, Jim, have never been to a festival



Flatonia's annual Czhlispiel offers homespun fun, from a jalapeño-eating contest to a potato-sack race, as well as chili and barbecue cookoffs and live entertainment. Above, women from a nearby Amish community wait on North Main Street for the grand parade to begin.

they didn't like. One November they took in two in one weekend. "We usually go to either Wurstfest in New Braunfels or the Scottish Clan Gathering & Highland Games in Salado," says Stratton, "but a couple of years ago, we hit Wurstfest on the last Saturday—it's a 10-day event—and then went on to Salado on Sunday. We had a blast—we ate brats and listened to an oompah band at Wurstfest and ate Scotch eggs and heard bagpipe music at the Highland Games. In other years, we've done the chicken dance at Wurstfest and joined in the tug-of-war at the

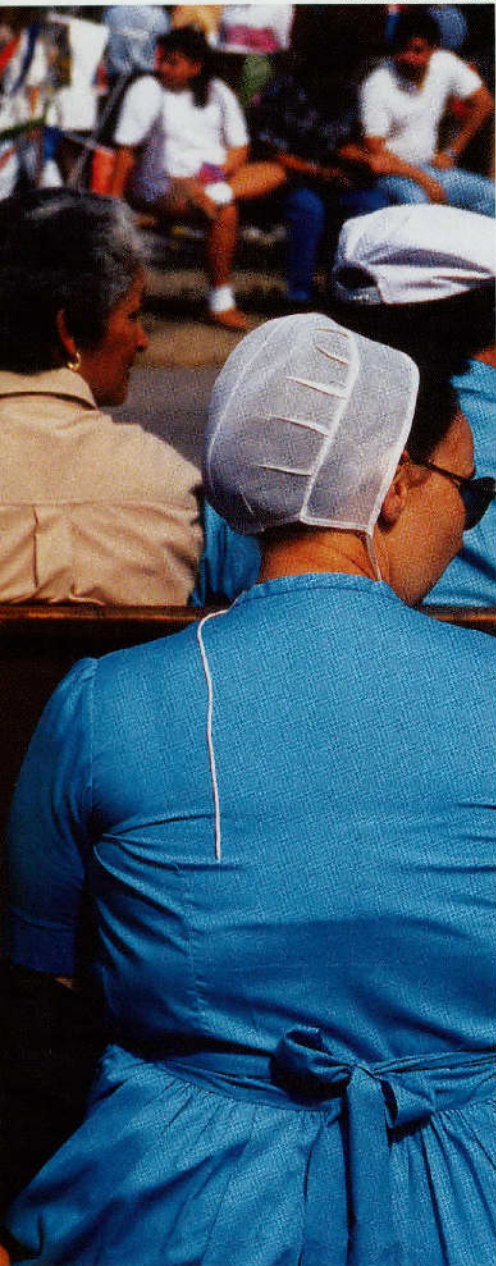
Salado event. Jim has even competed in the Bonniest Knees Contest."

Stratton says joining in is part of the fun when you go to any festival. In fact, she recommends looking for opportunities to participate. "Try to be open to new experiences," she advises, "from trying a new dance to tasting a new food, like fried pickles! At festivals, you can sample things you'd never get to try otherwise."

Festivals represent something entirely different to a town's residents: They're a familiar tradition. Flatonia residents

James and Judy Kubecka met through mutual friends at the town's Czhlispiel more than 20 years ago (Jim is a native) and have been waltzing together in what's billed as "The World's Largest Tented Biergarten" ever since. "The biggest draw at this event is the chili cookoff," says Judy. "It's the second-largest in Texas, but there's also a barbecue cookoff and lots of other activities. What I like best is that you get to see some old friends you don't see very often. It's like a homecoming."

Doug Batista of Weatherford says the Kolache Festival in his native Caldwell is



A Harvest of Fall Festivals

Harvest time has always been associated with celebration, and fall festivals abound in small Texas towns from Marathon to Marshall. We present a sampling below. (*TH Traveler*, which starts on page 67, lists some additional September festivals.) For a comprehensive list, visit www.traveltext.com, click on "Events," and search for "Festivals."

Always call to confirm dates before making a drive. Admission fees vary (some events are free). Local lodging can fill up quickly on festival weekends. Contact the local chamber of commerce or CVB about accommodations; if local options are booked, ask about alternatives in nearby towns.



J. GRIFFIS SMITH

South Padre Island's Sand Castle Days focuses on beach fun, including sand-sculpture competitions. The sculpture above, *A Page Torn from History*, was created by a master sand-sculptor, but amateurs compete, too.

Sts. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church Fall Picnic, Shiner, Aug. 31 (always the Sun. before Labor Day; the Spring Picnic is the Sun. before Memorial Day). This event draws many non-Catholics who don't want to miss out on the fun, which includes polka, dancing, bingo, carnival-style games, a country store, and a live auction (quilts to cattle). The "picnic" meal includes fried chicken, sausage, stew, and more. Call 361/594-3836; www.shinercatholicchurch.org.



Kolache Festival, Caldwell, Sep. 13, 2008 (always the 2nd weekend of Sep.). This salute to Czech culture includes a parade, a kolache bake show, a kolache-eating contest, craft demonstrations, Czech musicians, a car show, a softball tournament, a 5-K run/walk, a street dance, and special exhibits at the Burleson County Czech Heritage Museum. Call 979/567-0000; www.burlesoncountytx.com.



Diez y Seis de Septiembre Festival, Pecos, Sep. 12-14, 2008. Area residents celebrate Mexican Independence Day (Sep. 16) with a parade and queen's coronation; Tejano, Norteño, and Western music; *folklórico* and *matachines* dancers; carnival games; bingo; a cake walk; and a dance. Festival food ranges from taquitos to *camarones de cóctel* (shrimp cocktail). Call 432/445-2309; www.pecostx.com.



West Fest & Cabrito Cook-off, Marathon, Sep. 19-20, 2008. An outdoor cookoff has categories for cabrito, brisket, beans, and dessert; spectators can sample entries after they're judged. Cooks compete in showmanship and dress in costume, with camp themes ranging from a *Gunsmoke* scene to a '50s drug store. Other activities include canoe races and a dance. Call 432/386-4516; www.marathon-texas.net.



(continued on page 59)

“When you go to a festival in one of these little towns, you see what’s important to the people who live there. This is how they celebrate who they are.”

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exactly like that for him. "My wife, Beth, and I try to go every year," he says. "It's a chance to visit with family and friends and enjoy a slice of nostalgia—you see people you grew up with and check out things in town that have changed, and some that are still the same. We always have a hamburger at the Knights of Columbus booth, and then sometime during the day, of course, we have to eat kolaches. When my dad was alive, he'd walk down to the festival early—while people were still setting up—to buy poppyseed kolaches made by a certain lady before they were sold out. It's still that way today; people have their favorite kolache-makers."

Ranchers Steve and Gail Scott of Eden represent the ultimate festival insiders—the locals who put in the long hours to make these civic extravaganzas work. "We've been involved with the Eden Fall Fest since our sons were in elementary school, and they're grown now," says Gail. "It's a lot like a county fair, with a parade, washer-pitching, cow-patty bingo, and a Western dance, all downtown, plus something you don't see at most festivals—a world-class bull ride. It takes place at a nearby arena, and it's similar to the bull-riding you see at a rodeo, but with a whole lot more bulls. Bull riders from across the state come here to compete. Steve works with the bulls in the back, and I take admission at the front gate."

"The day of the festival, we start out at 7 a.m. and usually finish around midnight, so it's a long day," adds Scott, "but we love it. It's a chance to get together with friends and neighbors, show off our community, and say, 'Hey, we have a neat town out here in West Texas.'" From Scott's point of view, the volunteers at small-town festivals may have the best time of all.

WHETHER you're a tourist in search of novel entertainment, a traveler anticipating a homecoming, or a small-town resident who works hard and plays hard at one of these annual celebrations, make it a festive fall. ★

Senior Editor NOLA McKEY admires the dedication of all the longtime volunteers who are responsible for the success of small-town festivals across Texas.

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J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Held each September, Caldwell's Kolache Festival showcases Czech traditions, including tender kolaches and spirited oompah music. Activities range from a kolache-eating contest and craft demonstrations to a softball tournament and a street dance.

Eden Fall Fest, Eden, Sep. 27 (always the 4th weekend of Sep.). This West Texas celebration includes the usual line-up—a parade, arts and crafts, food vendors, carnival-style games, live entertainment, a dinner, and a dance—but there's a world-class bull ride for added excitement. Call 325/869-2211; www.edentexas.com.



Come and Take It Festival, Gonzales, Oct. 3-5, 2008 (always the 1st full weekend of Oct.). This event celebrates the first shot of the Texas Revolution with a cannon-firing ceremony and battle reenactment, as well as a parade, a bike ride, a 5-K run/walk, bingo, a canoe race, softball, volleyball, square dancers, a carnival, and an art show. Chili, T-bone, and beans cookoffs also take place. Call 830/672-6532; www.gonzalestexas.com.



Texas Renaissance Festival, Plantersville, each Sat. and Sun. (and Thanksgiving Fri.) from Oct. 11-Nov. 30, 2008. Stages throughout the 53-acre theme park boast period music and performers who enact Renaissance themes, and many visitors also sport 16th-Century costumes (which can be rented on site). Other activities include human-powered rides, Renaissance games of skill, and artisan demonstrations including glassblowing and broom-making. Some 350 vendors offer a wealth of shopping and feasting options. Call 800/458-3435; www.texrenfest.com.



FireAnt Festival, Marshall, Oct. 11, 2008 (always the 2nd weekend of Oct.). Held on Marshall's downtown square, this event features cute fire ant characters (think photo-ops), a parade, a 5-K run, arts and crafts, food vendors, a fire ant-calling contest, rubber-chicken chunking, a domino tournament, and live entertainment. Call 903/935-7868 or 800/953-7868; www.marshall-chamber.com.



Sand Castle Days, South Padre Island, Oct. 16-19, 2008 (always the 3rd weekend of Oct.). The action revolves around the works-in-progress of 12 international sand-sculpture masters, who create elaborate depictions of people, animals, fantasy creatures, and more, but amateurs can also compete for cash prizes. Other activities include sand-sculpting lessons, kite-flying demonstrations, arts-and-crafts booths, kids' games, and a tent where visitors can learn about endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtles. Call 800/767-2373; www.sandcastledays.com.



Fall Foliage Festival, Canadian, Oct. 18-19, 2008 (always the 3rd weekend of Oct.). Foliage-viewing at Lake Marvin, 12 miles east of town, takes center stage. Other activities include hiking, biking, nature activities, horse-drawn wagon rides, a cookout, cowboy songs and storytelling around a campfire, and a (continued on page 60)



HOTELS OF TEXAS

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Abilene (2) | Johnson City |
| Alice | Junction |
| Alpine | Kaufman |
| Alvin | Kerrville |
| Amarillo (2) | Kilgore |
| Angleton | Killeen |
| Anthony | Kingsville |
| Arlington | La Porte |
| Atlanta | LaGrange |
| Austin (2) | Lake Dallas |
| Austin Area (Round Rock) | Laredo |
| Bay City | Lovelland |
| Baytown | Lewisville |
| Beaumont | Lindale |
| Beville | Littlefield |
| Benbrook | Llano |
| Boerne | Lockhart |
| (San Antonio Area) | Longview |
| Borger | Lubbock (2) |
| Brady | Lufkin |
| Brenham | Lufkin Area (Diboll) |
| Bridgeport | Madisonville |
| Brownfield | Mansfield |
| Brownsville | Marble Falls |
| Buda (Austin Area South) | Marshall |
| Buffalo | McAllen |
| Burleson | McKinney |
| Burnet | Mexia |
| Canton | Midlothian |
| Canyon | Mineola |
| Carthage | Mineral Wells |
| Center Park | Mission |
| Center | Montahans |
| Childress | Montgomery |
| Clarendon | Mount Pleasant |
| Cleburne | Nacogdoches (2) |
| Cleveland | Navasota |
| Clifton | New Boston |
| Clute | New Braunfels |
| Coleman | North Richland Hills |
| Comanche | Odessa (Midland Area) |
| Conroe Area (Willis) | Orange |
| Copperas Cove | Ozona |
| Corpus Christi (5) | Palestine |
| Corsicana | Pampa |
| Dalhart | Paris |
| Dallas (4) | Pearland |
| Dallas Airport Area | Pearsall |
| (Irving) | Pecos |
| Dallas Area (Addison) | Perryton |
| Dallas Area (Garland) | Plainview |
| Dallas Area (Plano) | Port Aransas |
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| Denton | Raymondville |
| Dumas | Refugio |
| Duncanville | Rio Grande City |
| Eagle Pass | Roanoke |
| Edinburg | Robstown |
| El Campo | Rockdale |
| El Paso (2) | Rockport Area (Fulton) |
| Falfurrias | San Angelo |
| Floresville | San Antonio (10) |
| (San Antonio Area) | San Benito |
| Fort Stockton | San Marcos |
| Fort Worth (3) | Schulenburg |
| Fort Worth Area | Seagrville |
| (Lake Worth) | Sealy |
| Franklin | Seguin |
| Fredericksburg | (San Antonio Area) |
| Freer | Shamrock |
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| Gatesville | Snyder |
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| Harlingen | Terrell |
| Hebbronville | Texas City |
| Henderson | The Woodlands |
| Henrietta | Three Rivers |
| Hereford | Tyler |
| Hillburo | Uvalde |
| Houston (11) | Vega |
| Houston Area | Vernon |
| (Deer Park) | Victoria |
| Houston Area (Humble) | Waco |
| Houston Area (Stafford) | Waxahachie |
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nighttime creature-spotting tour. Call 806/323-6234; www.canadianx.com.

Czhlispiel, Flatonia, Oct. 24-26, 2008 (always the 4th full weekend of Oct.). The lineup features both chili and barbecue cookoffs. Other activities include a pie auction, golf and domino tournaments, jalapeño-eating and pie-baking contests, a 5-K run, a rock-climbing wall, a mechanical bull, a petting zoo, a parade, tricycle and potato-sack races, and a Halloween-costume contest. Live entertainment features musicians, magicians, and comedians. Call 361/865-3920; www.czhlispielfestival.com.

Fredericksburg Food & Wine Fest, Fredericksburg, Oct. 25, 2008 (always the 4th weekend of Oct.). Held on the Marketplatz downtown, this event includes live music, cooking classes, a food court, booths offering samples of Texas wine and specialty foods, and an auction (art, wine, winery tours, jewelry, and gift baskets). Call 830/997-8515 or 866/839-3378; www.fbfoodandwinefest.com.

Wurstfest, New Braunfels, Oct. 31-Nov. 9, 2008 (always starts the Fri. before the 1st Mon. in Nov.). This event features traditional German foods (especially bratwurst and beer) and music. The massive Wursthalle and two large entertainment tents offer bands and other entertainers. Other activities include craft exhibits, a bicycle race, a 5-mile run, a Volkssport walk, a regatta on Canyon Lake, a theater production, and van tours of historic New Braunfels and Gruene. Call 830/625-9167 or 800/221-4369; www.wurstfest.com.

Salado Scottish Gathering of the Clans & Highland Games, Salado, Nov. 7-9, 2008 (always the 2nd weekend of Nov.). Activities include competitions in bagpipe-playing and Highland dancing, performances by Scottish musicians, a genealogy workshop, and Highland games (traditional Scottish athletic events). Clan tents provide a great place to explore your Scottish ancestry; Scottish food and curio vendors are also on hand. Call 254/947-5232; www.ctam-salado.org.

—NOLA McKEY

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1. Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 6
2. Alpine Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 4
3. Amarillo Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 14
4. The Arts Alliance Center at Clear Lake, pg. 65
5. City of Bastrop, pg. 58
6. Beaumont CVB, pg. 71
7. Best Western Texas, inside front cover and pg. 59
8. Boerne Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 11
9. Brenham/Washington County, pg. 3
10. Bryan-College Station Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 68
11. Del Rio Chamber of Commerce, pg. 9
12. Fall Art Festivals San Antonio, pg. 66
13. Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce, pg. 72
14. Fort Stockton Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 9
15. Fredericksburg Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 10
16. Glen Rose Visitor Center, pg. 70
17. Graham Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 66
18. Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 8
19. Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 68
20. Horseshoe Bay Resort, Horseshoe Bay, pg. 13
21. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, pg. 17
22. Kerr Arts and Cultural Center, pg. 72
23. Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 6
24. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, pg. 60
25. Lake Conroe Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 70
26. Lancaster Visitors & Tourism, pg. 65
27. Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 12
28. LBJ Library and Museum, pg. 14
29. McAllen Chamber of Commerce, pg. 67
30. McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 16
31. Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce, pg. 11
32. Odessa Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 9
33. Plano, Texas, pg. 69
34. San Antonio Botanical Society, pg. 67
35. City of San Marcos, pg. 5
36. Sierra la Rana—Alpine, TX, pg. 64
37. Texas Hill Country River Region, pg. 12
38. Texas Historical Commission, pg. 7
39. Tyler, Texas, pg. 17
40. Village of Salado, pg. 69
41. Visit Big Bend Tourism Council, pg. 9
42. Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 58
43. The Williamson Museum, pg. 71
44. Wurstfest, pg. 64

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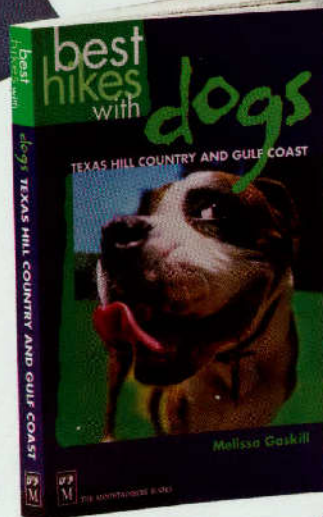
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Just PASSING Through

BY CHARLES LOHRMANN
PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

Zip Trips

"FLYING" was not exactly what I had in mind when I embarked on an afternoon ziplining excursion, but when Mike Robinson, partner in Wimberley Zipline Adventures, said "Let's go flying" to me and *TH* Photography Editor Kevin Vandivier, there was no reason to argue.

In fact, with the record-setting heat of a 2008 June day just starting to fade, I welcomed the prospect of flying over the treetops of the rugged Hill Country landscape. So, along with Robinson and



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Take a Hike!

(continued from page 53)

Galveston Island State Park

CLAPPER RAIL TRAIL AND SPUR

In his 1857 publication *Braman's Information about Texas*, Matagorda County judge Don Egbert Erastus Braman wrote "...Galveston Island is but a waif of the ocean, liable at any moment of being engulfed and submerged by the self-same power that gave it form." A hike down the Clapper Rail Trail—navigating over land that seems to have just appeared from beneath the sea hours earlier—illustrates what Braman meant. Unlike the island's ocean side, the subtle changes that occur along the bays and bayous of Galveston Island are written in the tidal flats that appear and vanish with the seasons. This is the transitional zone where much of marine life begins and terra firma gives way to the ocean. Cordgrass rims the shallows, providing refuge for shrimp, blue crab, drum, and flounder, as well as the herons, spoonbills, and egrets that feed

upon them. Here, too, are the remnant prairies that once dominated the island between the dunes and the bays. You can see a patchwork of a conserved prairie, as well as a remarkable wetlands restoration effort using marsh terracing from the trail's observation deck. The deck provides both a start and finish to the Clapper Trail and its spur, and is an ideal place to watch Harrier hawks strafe the grass tussocks or an osprey feed on its prey. Then, return to the nearby interpretive center for a closer examination of the area's marine life. Afterward, spend the rest of the day at the beach, where shaded picnic tables and soothing surf never fail to inspire a brisk swim, a leisurely walk, a hearty meal, or a long nap on the sand.

Galveston Island State Park, Galveston; 409/737-1222; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/galveston. ★



FROM THE UPCOMING BOOK: *100 CLASSIC HIKES IN TEXAS* BY E. DAN KLEPPER (THE MOUNTAINEERS BOOKS, FEBRUARY 2009).

Writer, photographer, artist, and outdoors enthusiast E. DAN KLEPPER lives in Marathon, where he exhibits art and photography at Klepper Gallery.

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Events

J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Praising Pecans

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FORT DAVIS: Cyclefest Tour September 20-21. www.peytonsbikes.com

MARATHON: West Fest & Cabrito Cookoff September 19-20. www.visitbigbend.com/events_marathon.html

MIDLAND: SeptemberFest September 5-7. Museum of the Southwest, 1705 W. Missouri Ave. www.museumsw.org 432/683-2882

MIDLAND: CAF Airsho 2008 September 20-21. CAF Headquarters, Midland International Airport, 9600 Wright Dr. www.airsho.org 432/563-1000

ODESSA: Permian Basin Fair & Exposition September 5-13. Ector County Coliseum, 4201 Andrews Highway. www.permianbasinfair.com 432/550-3232

ODESSA: Permian Basin Intertribal Powwow September 27-28. Odessa College Sports Center, 201 W. University Ave. 432/889-2693 or 432/290-3678

PECOS: Texas Ranger Event September 5-6. West of the Pecos Museum. www.westofthepecosmuseum.com 432/445-5076

VAN HORN: 150th Anniversary of the Butterfield Overland Mail September 27-28. Celebrate the first

meeting of the eastbound and westbound stages 150 years ago with stagecoach rides, a chuck-wagon barbecue, interpretive hikes along the Butterfield route, period music, a mule-shoeing demonstration, commemorative Butterfield Overland postage cancellation at historic Frijole Ranch post office, and more. Guadalupe Mountains National Park. 915/828-3251

GULF COAST

BAYTOWN: Grito Fest September 13. Celebration of Mexican Independence Day with live entertainment, mariachis, a salsa contest, games, food, crafts, and more. Bicentennial Park, 1001 Market St. www.baytown.org 281/420-6597

BEAUMONT: Dick Dowling Day September 6. Honors noted Irish immigrant, Houston saloonkeeper, and Civil War hero. Spindletop/Gladys City Museum. 409/866-1655

BEAUMONT: Big Thicket Bicycle Ride September 27. Routes from 25 to 70 miles start on the western edge of Beaumont and include the neighboring towns of Lumberton, Silsbee, Kountze, and Sour Lake—all on the edge of the Big Thicket National Preserve. www.funtrails.org 409/866-5138

CLEAR LAKE AREA: Film & Video Festival September 19-21. Multiple venues in Houston, Nassau Bay, Pasadena, and Seabrook. www.gulfcoastfilmfest.com 281/333-5804 or 281/474-2425

CORPUS CHRISTI: Bayfest September 26-28. www.bayfesttexas.com 361/887-0868

CORPUS CHRISTI: Conquer the Coast Bicycle

Tour September 27-28. Start at Whataburger Field; go over the harbor/ship channel bridge; take the ferry to Port Aransas; compete in a Padre Island time trial; go back across the JFK Causeway; and continue on to scenic Ocean Drive and the starting point—65 miles in all. There's a shorter, alternative 25-mile cruise route along Ocean Drive. Come for the ride. Stay for the party. www.conquerthecoast.org 361/881-1800

CYPRESS: Bridgeland Nature Fest September 27-28. Grand opening of Cypress Creek Nature Trail along historic Cypress Creek Corridor. Live music at Oak Meadow Park. Arts & crafts. Ladybug release. Birds of prey program with live hawks and owls. Fishing clinic. ZooMobile. Food vendors. Ecology and conservation exhibitors and programs. www.bridgeland.com 281/304-5588

DACOSTA: German Fest September 7. Sons of Hermann Hall. 361/578-6658

HOUSTON: Houston Symphony September 6, 12-14, 18, 20-21, 26-28. Jones Hall. www.houstonsymphony.org 713/224-7575.

KEMAH: 11th Annual Jazz Festival September 26-28. Kemah Boardwalk. www.kemahboardwalk.com 877/285-3624

LEAGUE CITY: Oak Tree Festival September 27-28. League Park. www.oaktreefestival.com 281/554-1184

ORANGE: Tuna Does Vegas September 19-21. Joe Sears and Jaston Williams star in their latest inventive, comedy stage production based on the eccentric characters of Tuna, Texas. Lutch Theater. www.lutch.org 409/745-5535

RICHMOND: Fiestas Patrias Heritage Festival September 20. Fort Bend Museum, 500 Houston St. www.fortbendmuseum.org 281/342-6478

ROCKPORT: 20th Annual Hummer/Bird Celebration September 11-14. Rockport-Fulton High School. www.rockporthummingbird.com 361/729-6445

VICTORIA: Czech Heritage Festival September 28. Inez Community Center. <http://vcchs.homestead.com> 361/573-4383

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Old Pecan Street Festival September 20-21. Live music, arts & crafts, food vendors, and fun. Downtown on Sixth. www.oldpecanstreetfestival.com 512/443-6179

AUSTIN: Austin City Limits Music Festival September 26-28. This is a big one. 3 days, 130 bands, and 8 stages at Zilker Park. www.acfestival.com 888/512-SHOW

CONCAN: Fall Nature Quest September 19-21. www.thcrr.com 830/591-1074 or 800/210-0380

FLORENCE: Tour de Florence September 13. Bicycle tour with routes of 15, 35, 45, and 62 miles. Start at The Vineyard at Florence, four miles east of town on FM 487. www.tourdeflorence.com 254/793-3363

FREDERICKSBURG: Roots Music in the Texas Hill Country Concert Series September 27. Pioneer Museum, 309 W. Main St. www.pioneermuseum.com 830/997-2835

LAKEHILLS: 28th Annual Cajun Festival & Great Gumbo Cookoff September 27. Enjoy authentic Cajun food, top Louisiana bands on two stages, dance lessons and contest, arts & crafts, and a gumbo cookoff. Lakehills Civic Center. www.cajunfestival-medinalake.com 830/751-3130 or 800/364-3833

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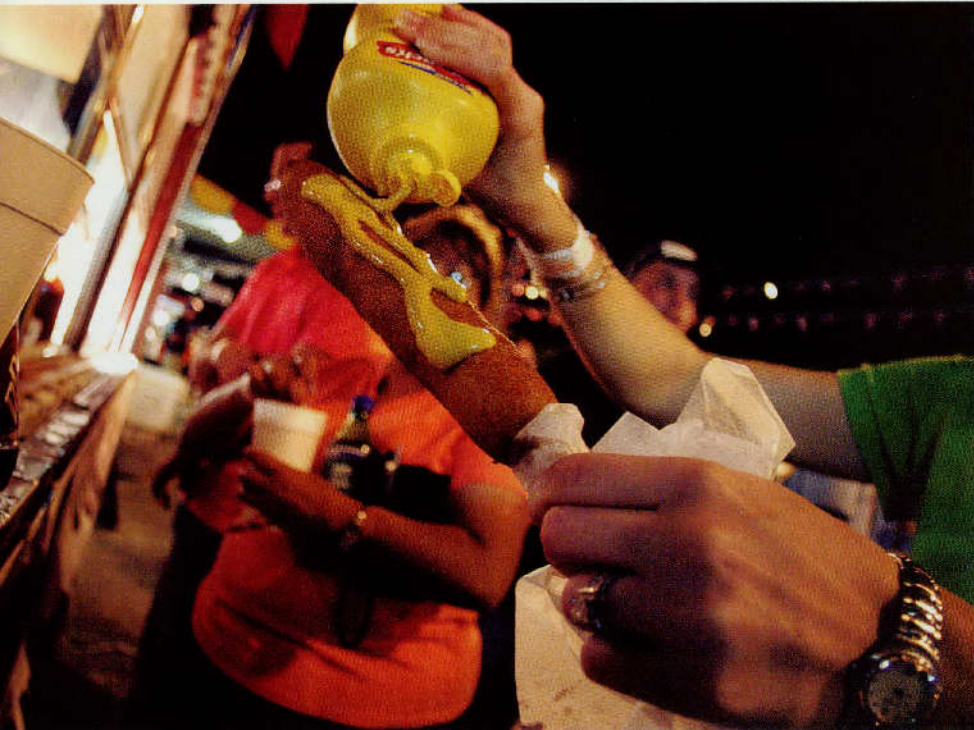
The Museum at the George Bush Presidential Library • Fine Dining
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Fair Thee Well THE CORN DOG IS KING AT AMARILLO'S TRI-STATE FAIR & Rodeo, which celebrates 85 years of food, fun, and family entertainment on the Panhandle Plains with nine days of popular programming, **September 12-20**. Among the scheduled activities are the Polk Street parade; live country music concerts; a PRCA rodeo; FFA and 4-H competitions; photography, art, ceramics, textiles, and gardening exhibits; a variety of cooking contests; and a classic carnival midway. For more information, see www.tristatefair.com, or call 806/376-7767.

LUCKENBACH: Mike Blakely's Tex Americana

Fandango September 12-14. www.luckenbachtexas.com 830/997-3224 or 888/311-8990

MASON: Historic Bed & Breakfast Tour September 13. www.masontxcoc.com 325/347-5758

MASON: Sesquicentennial Mason County Fair September 27. City Park Community Center. www.masontxcoc.com 325/347-5758

MENARD: Jim Bowie Day September 20. River Bridge Park. www.menardchamber.com 325/396-2365

NEW BRAUNFELS: Comal County Fair & Rodeo September 24-28. www.comalcountyfair.org 830/625-1505 or 830/609-2860

WIMBERLEY: Artists' Studio Tour September 19-20. www.visitwimberley.com/artleague 512/847-2201

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: West Texas Fair & Rodeo September 4-13. Taylor County Expo Center. 325/677-4376

ABILENE: West Texas Book & Music Festival September 22-27. Events throughout the week at the Abilene Public Library, the Abilene Country Club, the Paramount Theatre, and the Abilene Civic Center. www.abilenetx.com/apl 325/676-6017

BIG SPRING: Comanche Warrior Triathlon September 6. Comanche Trail Park. www.bigspring-cvb.com 432/264-7233

BIG SPRING: Howard County Fair September 24-27. Howard County Fairgrounds. www.howardcountyfairof.texas.com 432/268-9335

BRONTE: Fort Chadbourne Celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the Butterfield Stage September 20. Fort Chadbourne. www.fortchadbourne.org 325/743-2555

CANYON: Grand Opening of Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum's 75th Anniversary Exhibit September 27. Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. www.panhandleplains.org 806/651-2244

EDEN: Fall Fest Celebration September 27. www.edentexas.com 325/869-2211

GRAHAM: Knights of Columbus Ranch Rodeo September 25-27. Young County Arena. www.graham.txcchamber.com 940/549-3355

LEVELLAND: Texas' Last Frontier Ranch Heritage Tour September 27. www.ci.levelland.tx.us 806/229-2741 or 806/894-4062

LUBBOCK: 20th Annual National Cowboy Symposium & Celebration September 4-7. Lubbock Memorial Civic Center. www.cowboy.org 806/798-7825

LUBBOCK: Flatland Film Festival September 26-27. Firehouse Theatre, Underwood Center for the Arts. www.flatlandfilmfestival.com 806/762-8606

QUANAH: 25th Annual Fall Festival September 13. Hardeman County Courthouse Square. www.quanahnet.com 940/663-2222



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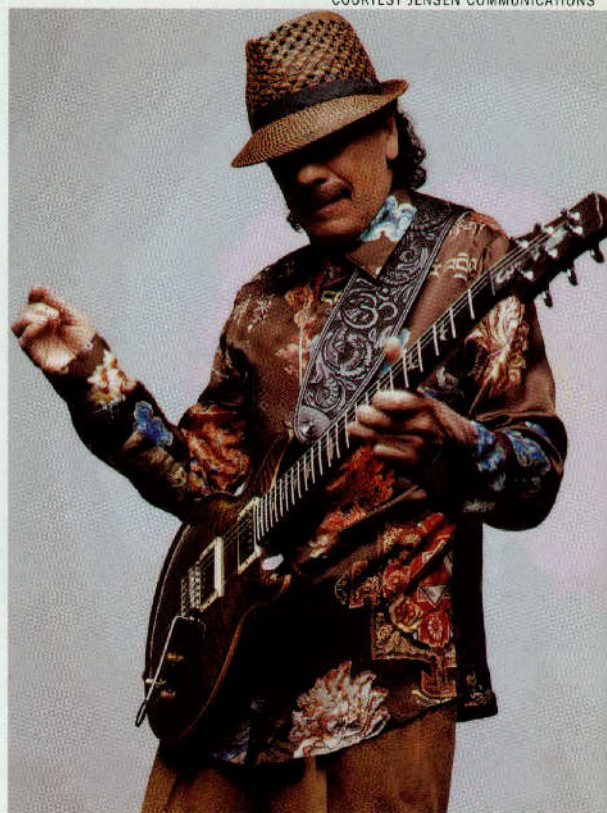
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TH TRAVELER | September

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CARLOS SANTANA BRINGS HIS 2008 tour to Texas for multiple dates—**September 17** at the Superpages.com Center in Fair Park, **Dallas**; **September 19** at the Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, **Selma** (San Antonio); **September 20** at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, **The Woodlands**; **September 21** at the American Bank Center, **Corpus Christi**; **September 23** at the Rio Grande Valley's Dodge Arena in **Hidalgo**; and **September 26** at UTEP's Don Haskins Center, **El Paso**. Allow this international Grammy-award-winning star's rock/blues/jazz/Latin/world music to completely wash over your mind, body, and soul. *Baila mi hermana*.



RALLS: Cotton Boll Fest September 13. www.cityofralls.org 806/253-2342

STAMFORD: MacKenzie Trail Festival September 20. www.stamfordcoc.org 325/773-2411

WICHITA FALLS: Texas-Oklahoma Fair September 16-20. On the grounds of the MPEC. www.joetomwhite.com 940/720-2999

WICHITA FALLS: Falls Fest September 26-27. Lucy Park. www.fallsfest.org 940/692-9797

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: 21st Annual Oktoberfest September 18-21. Addison Circle Park. www.addisontexas.net 800/233-4766

ATHENS: Heritage Festival & Uncle Fletch Hamburger Cookoff September 13. Downtown Athens' Town Square. 888/294-2847

BASTROP: NatureFest, TP&W Paddle Trail Launch, & U.S. Canoe Championships September 27. Fisherman's Park. www.visitbastrop.org 512/303-0904

BRENHAM: Washington County Fair September 13-20. Established in 1868, this is Texas' oldest county fair. Rodeo events, carnival midway, crafts, food, livestock and poultry auctions, commercial exhibits, and live music by Kevin Fowler, the Bellamy Brothers, and .38 Special. Washington County Fairgrounds. www.washingtoncofair.com 979/836-4112

BUFFALO: Stampede September 20. Harriman Park. www.buffalotex.com 903/322-5810

COLUMBUS: Colorado County Fair September 11-14. Colorado County Fairgrounds. www.coloradocountyfair.org 979/732-8385

COMANCHE: Ranch Rodeo September 27. Rodeo Arena. 325/356-5976

COMANCHE: Comanche County Powwow September 27-28. City Park. www.comanchechamber.org 325/356-3233

COMMERCE: Bois d'Arc Bash September 26-28. Downtown. www.commerce-chamber.com 903/886-3950

CORINTH: International Food & Arts Festival September 27. www.corinthfestival.com 940/498-1386

DALLAS: Dallas Symphony Orchestra September 11-14, 18-21, 25-27. Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. www.dallasymphony.com 214/692-0203

DALLAS: Eagles September 13. Take it to the limit, one more time. Widely influential country rock band, starring native Texan Don Henley, brings their *Long Road Out of Eden* tour to the American Airlines Center. www.americanairlinescenter.com 214/373-8000

DALLAS: State Fair of Texas September 26-Oct. 19. A family-oriented Texas tradition since 1886, and the largest state fair in the nation, offers a classic midway featuring the Texas Star Ferris wheel, the Southwest's biggest new auto show, great food, a wide range of exhibits, a long list of live entertainment, the Texas/Oklahoma college football game at the Cotton Bowl, and much more. Fair Park. www.bigtex.com 214/565-9931

DENISON: Butterfield Stagecoach Day September 20. Celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the first Butterfield Stagecoach crossing the Red River into Texas at nearby Colbert's Ferry. See a replica Concord stagecoach and hear storytelling about the Butterfield mail route in North Texas. Eisenhower State Park. 903/465-1956

ELGIN: Chilepepper Fiesta September 12-13. Get your pepper on at Veterans Memorial Park. www.elgintx.com 512/281-3088

ENNIS: NHRA O'Reilly Fall Nationals September 18-21. Topflight drag racing competition at Texas Motorplex. www.visitennis.org or www.texasmotorplex.com 972/878-4748 or 800/MOTORPLEX

FARMERSVILLE: Farmersville Chautauqua Art Festival September 6. www.farmersvilletx.com 972/784-6846

FORT WORTH: Del McCoury Band September 4. Popular bluegrass act brings their critically acclaimed high lonesome sound to Bass Hall. www.basshall.com 817/212-4280 or 877/212-4280

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra September 19-21. Bass Performance Hall, Sundance Square. www.fwsymphony.org 817/665-6000 or 817/212-4280

GRAND PRAIRIE: 46th Annual National Championship Powwow September 5-7. Traders Village, 2602 Mayfield Road. www.tradersvillage.com 972/647-2331

GRAPEVINE: GrapeFest September 11-14. Historic Main Street. www.grapevinetexasusa.com 817/410-3185 or 800/457-6338

HALLETTSVILLE: Kolache Fest September 27. Knights of Columbus Hall. www.hallettsville.com 361/798-2662 or 361/798-2311

HILLSBORO: Go Texan Days/Cotton Pickin' Fair September 13. Historic Hill County Courthouse Square. www.hillsborochamber.org 254/582-2481

LEWISVILLE: Western Day Festival September 27. Old Town Lewisville. www.cityoflewisville.com 972/219-3401

MOODY: Cotton Harvest Festival September 27. www.moodycottonharvestfestival.org 254/853-2115 or 254/853-9476

MORGAN MILL: Arts & Crafts Fair September 13. 254/968-4983

SEGUIN: Fiestas Patrias/Diez y Seis Celebration September 12-13. Seguin Coliseum. www.visitseguin.com 800/580-7322

SERBIN: 20th Annual Wendish Fest September 28. 979/366-2441

SPRINGTOWN: 24th Annual Wild West Festival September 20. Springtown Square. www.wildwestfestival.org 817/220-7828

SULPHUR SPRINGS: Hopkins County Fall Festival September 13-20. Hopkins County Regional Civic Center. www.civiccenteronline.com 903/885-8071

WACO: Waco Wild West Century Bicycle Tour September 27. www.wacowildwest.com 254/772-BIKE

PINEY WOODS

LONGVIEW: Gregg County Fair September 9-13. www.greggcountyfair.com 903/753-4478

LUFKIN: Texas State Forest Festival September 24-28. Expo Center. www.visitlufkin.com 936/634-6305

MOUNT PLEASANT: Titus County Fair September 24-27. This old-fashioned fair is a northeast Texas favorite. Mount Pleasant Civic Center and Titus County Fairgrounds. www.tituscountyfair.com 903/577-8117

TEXARKANA: 64th Annual Four States Fair & Rodeo September 12-20. www.fourstatesfair.com 870/773-2941

THE WOODLANDS: Houston Symphony: Music of Mozart September 19. Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. www.woodlandscenter.org 713/629-3700 or 281/363-3300

TYLER: 21st Annual Festival on the Square September 13. Downtown Square. www.festivalonthesquare.com 903/593-6905

TYLER: Martin Short September 13. Enjoy a comedic stage performance from this star of TV, movies, and Broadway. The former SCTV and *Saturday Night Live* cast member is not only a master mimic/impersonator, but has created a long list of original comic characters of his own, from Ed Grimley to Jiminy Glick. UT Tyler's Cowan Center. www.cowancenter.org 903/566-7424

TYLER: East Texas State Fair September 18-27. For 93 years, this event has provided East Texas a world of thrills and excitement—all with a quintessential country fair atmosphere. East Texas State Fairgrounds. www.etstatefair.com 903/597-2501

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

ALICE: Hispanic Heritage Festival September 5-6. Downtown. www.alicetx.org 361/664-3454

EAGLE PASS: Diez y Seis de Septiembre Celebration September 15. Plaza San Juan. 830/773-9255 or 888/355-3224

KARNES CITY: Lonesome Dove Fest September 19-20. www.lonesomedovefest.com 210/315-0200

LAREDO: Mexico Independence Day Celebration September 15. Historic San Agustin Plaza. www.visitlaredo.com 956/723-0990

LA VERNIA: Wild West HammerFest Bike Ride & Festival September 13. City Park. www.laverniawildwesthammerfest.com 830/779-2461

SAN ANTONIO: Pachanga del Rio September 11. www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com 210/227-4262

SAN ANTONIO: Fiestas Patrias September 13-16. Market Square. www.marketsquaresa.com 210/260-1621 or 210/207-8600

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at www.texashighways.com.

FOR A FREE PRINTED COPY of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

FOR TEXAS TRAVEL QUESTIONS, call 800/452-9292 to reach a TxDOT Travel Information Center, where a professional travel counselor will provide routing assistance, advise you of any emergency road conditions, and send brochures (including the official *Texas State Travel Guide* and map, accommodations guide, and quarterly *Texas Events Calendar*).

SEND FUTURE EVENT INFORMATION TO: *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax: 512/486-5879; e-mail: tv-tec@dot.state.tx.us. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar, Apr, May) Dec 1; Summer (Jun, Jul, Aug) Mar 1; Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov) Jun 1; Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) Sep 1.



BEAUMONT FAITH TRAIL

Plan your pilgrimage to Beaumont this Fall and be inspired by the breathtaking St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica as well as our many historic churches, museums and attractions. Follow the Golden Triangle Faith Trail and explore the divine beauty of Beaumont, Texas.

Call for your Free Visitor Guide
1-866-822-0245
www.beaumontcvb.com

Up the Chisholm Trail Cattle Drive and Chuckwagon Cook-off

September 26 & 27

San Gabriel Park Georgetown, Texas

Free Admission

The Williamson Museum
512-943-1670
www.upthechisholmtrail.org

visitgeorgetown.com

Readers RECOMMEND...

TIPS FROM OUR READERS

ON A recent trip back from the coast, we stopped for lunch in Goliad at Blue Quail Deli, just off the courthouse square. The Southwest grilled-chicken sandwich was delicious, fresh and served on cracked wheat that is baked on site. My husband had potato soup that had large pieces of potato—it was the best he'd had! The server was friendly and the service efficient. It was a great place to stop, and we'll plan to lunch there again.

LES AND WINNIE GAGE, *Austin*

Blue Quail Deli is at 224 S. Commercial; 361/645-1600; www.bluequaildeli.com

THE STAR Drug Store in Galveston is back in business as a restaurant. They have Sunday brunch with live music, a real old-fashioned soda fountain with all the goodies, and the burgers are good, too.

KAREN PETERSON, *Texas City*

Star Drug Store is at 510 23rd St.; 409/766-7719; www.galvestonstardrug.com.

MY GIRLFRIENDS and I just wanted to get away from our daily routines for a while. I chose Creekhaven Inn in Wimberley. I don't think I've enjoyed a weekend more! Guests drive down a winding road to arrive upon the fairytale-like "cottage." Beautiful



Creekhaven Inn Bed and Breakfast lies just two blocks from downtown Wimberley on scenic Cypress Creek. Ask about special pampering packages.

cypress trees and greenery are all around. There's even a babbling creek. Bill and Pat Appleman are gracious and good-humored hosts. Pat baked her own breakfast pastries each morning. We did not want to leave.

L.D. MILLER, *Austin*

Creekhaven Inn is at 400 Mill Race Ln.; 512/847-9344; www.creekhaveninn.com.

IN A CITY where there are many fine Mexican restaurants (San Antonio), Del Sol is perhaps the best. The food is excellent, the dining room

is light and airy (well-shaded patio dining is also available), the wait staff is friendly and expert, and the prices are astonishingly reasonable. The chipotle enchiladas are great, but the fajitas will knock your socks off!

MARGUERITE KOWNSLAR, *San Antonio*
Del Sol is at 2267 NW Military Hwy.; 210/525-8150.

THERE is a little deli/coffee shop in Odessa called 2 Ole Biddys with big portions of home cooking, reasonable prices, and a quaint atmosphere.

L. V. HUNT, *Stinnett*

2 Ole Biddys Cafe is at 3952 E. 42nd St., Ste. N; 432/362-0422.

IF YOU KNOW OF A NOTEWORTHY LONE STAR ATTRACTION, RESTAURANT, EVENT, OR PRODUCT, WRITE OR E-MAIL: Readers Recommend, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. E-mail: letters05@texashighways.com. Space constraints prevent us from publishing every suggestion we receive. We reserve the right to edit items. Because we're unable to check out every item, and because hours vary and details can change, please call ahead for more information.

Next month... We'll find small-town surprises along the upper reaches of the Colorado River, delight wildlife-watchers, rock-climbers, and mountain-bikers alike at Reimers Ranch Park on the Pedernales, and uncover some good ghost stories from historical (and haunted) Jefferson. Stay tuned!

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includes a
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private cook-
ing demonstra-
tion from the Executive Chef

Meals at **Water Street Oyster
Bar, Republic of Texas Bar
& Grill**, a fine restaurant in
Port Aransas, and **Paradise
Key** (Rockport)

Sunset Dinner Cruise (courtesy
of the **Sailing School of
Corpus Christi**)

The ticket package includes:

**USS LEXINGTON Museum
on the Bay**; includes a ride
in the virtual reality flight
simulator, featuring a flight
on an F/A-18 Hornet

Texas State Aquarium and a
Deckside Dolphin Encounter
South Texas Botanical Gardens
Private wildlife excursion/tour
of **Fennessey Ranch**

play!

**Corpus
Christi
Hooks**

baseball game, and behind-
the-scenes ballpark tour of
Whataburger Field

Corpus Christi Sharks
arena-football game

Harbor Playhouse
community theater

Corpus Christi Bay cruise
on **Captain Clark's Flagship**

Dolphin Watch Excursion
at **Woody's Sports Center**
(Port Aransas)

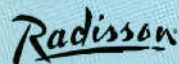
Eight-hour fishing trip
from **Fisherman's Wharf**
(Port Aransas)

Texas Maritime Museum
(Rockport)

CONTEST RULES

(no purchase necessary)

1. Only one entry per person. Entries must be on postcards. To be eligible for the drawing, each entrant must include on the postcard the correct answer (judges' decisions are final), as well as his/her name, mailing address, and daytime phone number.
2. Entrants must be 18 years of age or older. Current employees of the Texas Department of Transportation and their immediate families are not eligible.
3. Send entries to: *Texas Highways* Contest, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. All entries must be postmarked by September 30, 2008. *Texas Highways* is not responsible for late, lost, or misdirected entries.
4. The winning card will be drawn on October 7, 2008. We will attempt to notify the winner the same day. If we cannot contact the winner directly by 5 p.m. on October 10, 2008, another card will be drawn.
5. Prizes not transferable and may have an expiration date. Some additional expenses, such as taxes and tips, are not included in the package. Lodging and transportation certificates are subject to availability, and not valid during high-capacity or holiday weekends. Reservations required.
6. Meals, unless specifically noted here, are not included.
7. Reservations for all activities must be made at least two weeks prior to arrival.
8. The winner is solely responsible for any income taxes incurred.
9. By entering the contest, contestants agree to the above rules and regulations.



OUR THANKS to the **Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau** and **Southwest Airlines** for putting together this choice prize package. *Texas Highways* readers love Corpus Christi!

For Corpus Christi travel information year round, contact the **Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau** at 800/766-BEACH; www.corpuschristicvb.com

win

A COASTAL GETAWAY FROM

TEXAS
HIGHWAYS

To order a print of this photograph by J. Griffin Smith, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.magazineprints.com.

