

TEXAS
**parks &
wildlife**

THE OUTDOOR MAGAZINE OF TEXAS • MAY 2020

CAMPING WITH MYSELF

How to camp alone and
have fun doing it

WILD WOMEN

Meet the Texas protectors
of bison and black bears

COFFEE TABLE TRAVEL

Explore the wilds of Texas
with beautiful photo books

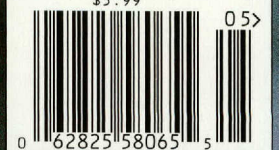
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MAY 2020

VOLUME 78 • NUMBER 4

FOR CURRENT PARK CLOSURE STATUS VISIT
TPWD.TEXAS.GOV/STATE-PARKS/PARKS-MAP



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13 Ways to Have Fun with Kids at Home

It's a perfect time to set your kids up for some interactive fun.

Compiled by Louie Bond

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My Amazing Backyard

How planting natives and paying attention opened my eyes to the universe that lives in my yard.

by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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Me, Myself & I

Go solo camping with your best friend: yourself.

by Pam LeBlanc



Live oaks and coastal grasses at Goose Island State Park provide a serene environment for solo camping.

EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

ON THE COVER: A yellow garden spider (*Argiope aurantia*) inhabits a backyard in Blanco. 📷 Sheryl Smith-Rodgers. Web headline styling by Nathan Adams.

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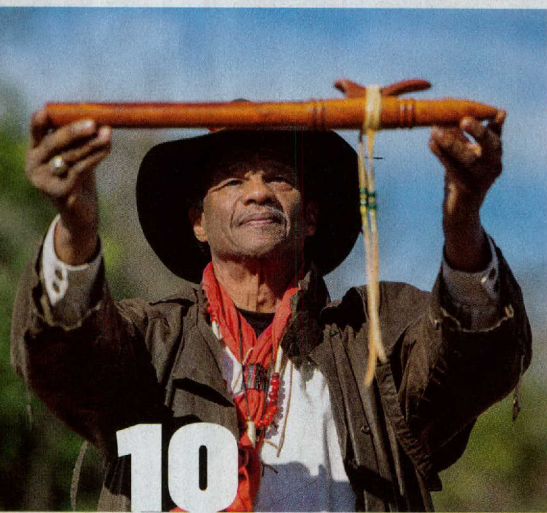
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CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

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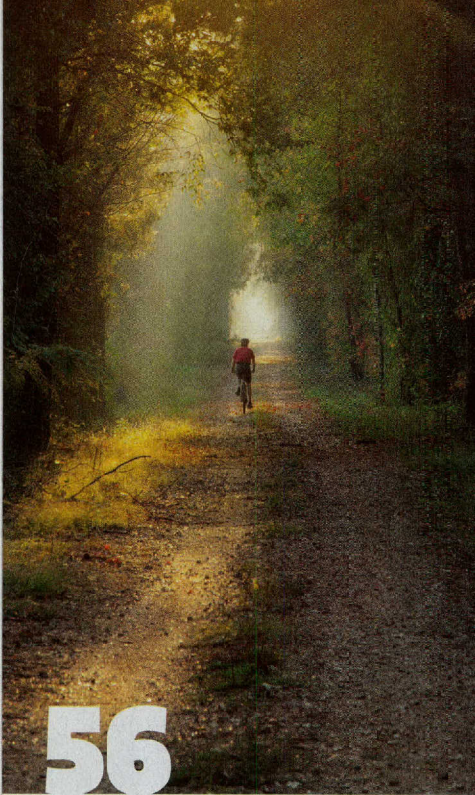
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GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
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FROM THE EDITOR

WE'LL LIKELY NEVER FORGET putting together this May 2020 issue. COVID-19 interrupted our lives, just like yours, during the second week of March. After the plea to work from home if possible, the team gathered to discuss telecommuting plans. On Monday, March 16, from our kitchen tables and home studies, we kicked into high gear for the last few weeks of production.

That momentary satisfaction with ourselves — we can do this! — faded when we realized that most of the content we'd been preparing for months was now utterly inappropriate. As people began to retreat to their homes, our articles would be encouraging them to travel around the state. Too late for the April issue, already out, but we had a chance to do something different in May. Challenge accepted.

Long story short, we made the most of every remaining second to bring you inspiration in your isolation. Sheryl Smith-Rodgers came to our rescue with "My Amazing Backyard" (Page 34), complete with gorgeous photos of her 900+ species. How many are in your yard? You'd be amazed at what's there and what else you'll invite by planting natives and paying attention.

Pam LeBlanc's "solo camping" story (Page 40) is so appropriate for social distancing. Our "13 Ways to Have Fun with Kids at Home" (Page 28) offers some of the best ideas from past magazine articles on getting kids and families outdoors. The May Wanderlist, "Coffee Table Travel" (Page 56), can help inspire your next adventure, even if you have to wait a bit for departure. Try backyard camping, for now (Page 10).

The best cures for loneliness or worry are easy and free. They nearly all start with opening the door and going outside. Once you do that, everything feels better. Let nature do what it does best: put a smile on your face.

Have you streamed our new Wanderlist episodes on the *Under the Texas Sky* podcast? Those destination lists you love are now expanded conversations. Plus, check out timely tips on our blog at www.tpwmag.com, or share some fun on our social media pages.

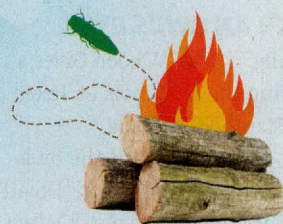
Don't forget, you can always find ways to make life better just by being outside.

Louie Bond
Louie Bond, Editor

FIREWOOD ALERT!

You have the power to protect the forests and trees of Texas!

BUY IT WHERE YOU BURN IT.



Pests like the invasive emerald ash borer can hitchhike in your firewood. Help us prevent forest pests from reaching Texas' trees.

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- ▶ Use firewood from your property on site – don't take it with you when you travel around Texas.
- ▶ Buy local, or gather on site when allowable.

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FIREWOOD.org

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We reserve the right to edit letters
for length and clarity.

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A MAGAZINE FOR ALL

We subscribe to your magazine! I
have been encouraged to submit
this photo to you to perhaps have it
featured in your magazine.

This is a painting I did of my husband
and great-grandson looking at *Texas Parks
& Wildlife*. This painting is included in the
March/April 2020 issue of *Southwest Art*
magazine featuring 10 Texas artists.

JOYCE HOOPER
Cushing



JOYCE HOOPER

INTRIGUE IN AN OWL'S EYES

I enjoyed the article "Whoop Gives a
Hoot?" covering the 17 species of Texas
owls in the March 2020 issue.

So I've got ask, Why do all the owls
pictured have yellow gold irises? Do all
owls have those beautiful irises? What
purpose do they serve besides beauty
and intrigue?

Keep the TPWD magazine chugging for
my granddaughters!

GEORGE MURPHY
Georgetown

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
ornithologist Cliff Shackelford responds:**
*Actually, not all of the owls we featured
have yellow in the eyes. The flammulated
owl plus the other two species on that same
page (Page 44) have all-dark eyes. The barn
owl also has all-dark eyes. This means that*

*nearly one-quarter of our state's owls have
all-dark eyes!*

*I looked in two different books I own
devoted to owls where eyes and vision are
discussed, but there is no mention of eye
color. (In birds and mammals, the preferred
plural for iris is irides. The plant by that
name when pluralized is irises.)*

ABC'S OF BEES

I really enjoyed your feature on how to
identify bees, wasps and hornets ("Wasp,
Bee or Hornet?" March 2020). If I could
make a suggestion, it would be great to see
a similar feature on the different kinds
of bees native to Texas. As a beekeeper I
love honeybees, but am infinitely more
fascinated by our plethora of native species.

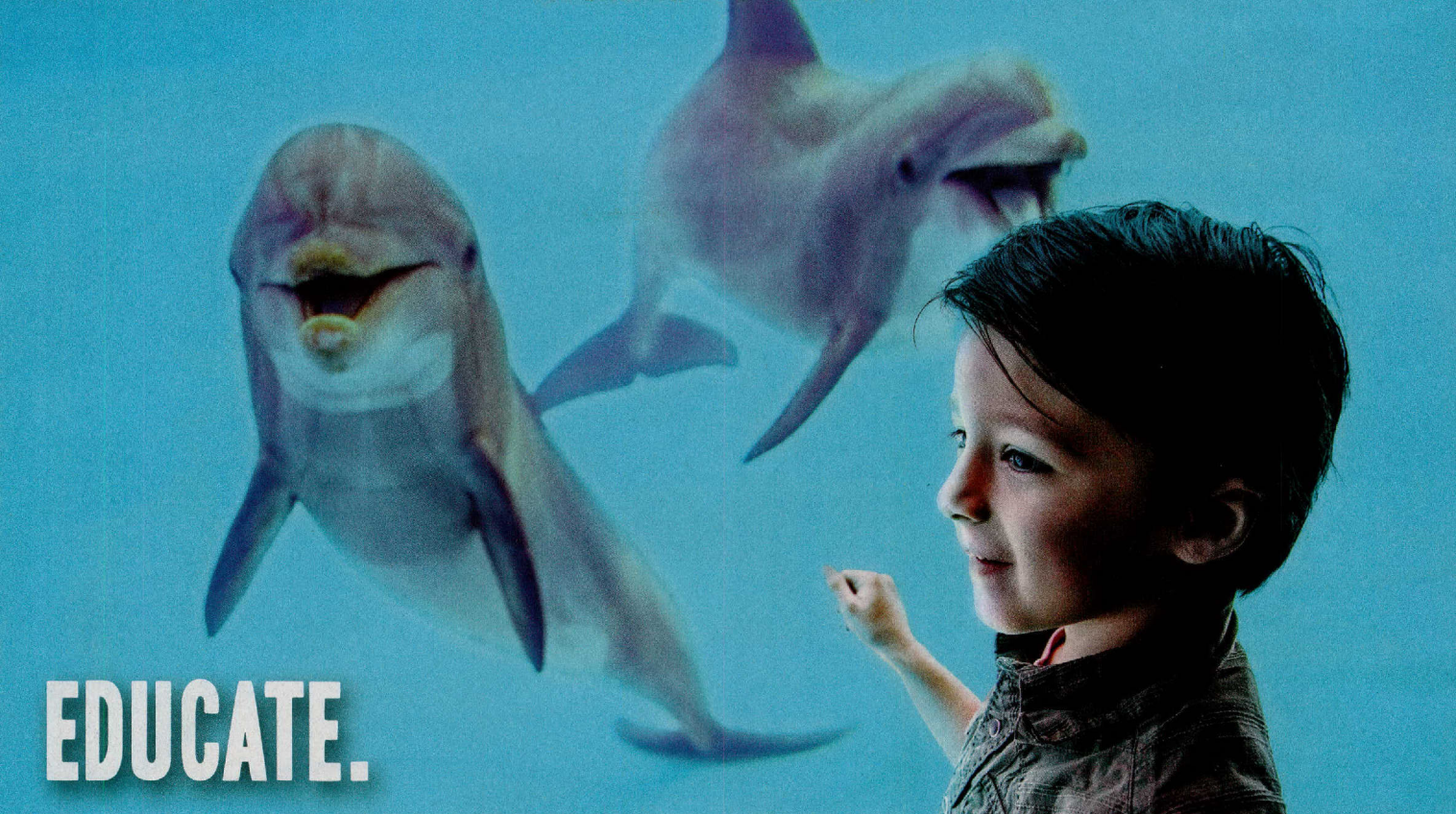
Thanks, and keep up the good work!

PETER KEILTY
BeesForAll.com

WHERE IN TEXAS?



Reader Kent Pruett of Belmont did a
little detective work to figure out April's
Where in Texas? location. "Putting 2
and 2 together (West Texas hills, has
a college, adjacent to the highway)
led me to Sul Ross," he says. "I got on
Google maps and scanned the area for
what I could see in the background on
the photo. Then ... I found it! It's the Sul
Ross Desk in Alpine." You are correct,
sir. The desk resides on top of Hancock
Hill near campus. Find this month's
Where in Texas? on Page 58.



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YEARS

The Texas State Aquarium transports you to the fascinating habitats of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. You'll explore coral reefs, coastal lagoons, lush jungles, and the open sea and get up-close and personal with sharks, dolphins, sea turtles, flamingos, and hundreds of other species. Wonder at jumping dolphins and soaring birds during daily presentations and get a hands-on encounter with a live shark or stingray. Best of all, your visit isn't just full of inspiration and imagination, it's helping with wildlife conservation. That's because your visit helps support wildliferescue and conservation, including our Wildlife Rescue, which rehabilitates and releases hundreds of birds and sea turtles every year in the Coastal Bend.

At the Texas State Aquarium, you'll save more than memories.

#SaveMoreThanMemories / Corpus Christi, Texas / texasstateaquarium.org



GET OUT

Camping in Your Own Backyard

Spring fever beckons us outdoors with butterflies and wildflowers and sunshine. The fun doesn't have to stop when the sun goes down, or even when we're stuck at home. Consider the best of all staycations: camping in your own backyard.

There are so many benefits: no travel, little cost, available electricity and bathrooms, a kitchen full of food, a nearby bed if you decide to bail and so much more. It's a great opportunity to practice for a future trip or just check out your gear.



For more ideas, visit our website, blog and social media pages



ELECTRICITY Sure, we go camping to escape from stuff that needs electricity and batteries, but they can add a bit of magic to your backyard campout. Dust off the Christmas lights and decorate the yard or hang them inside the tent. If you can't have a campfire, get creative with an illuminated centerpiece for your nighttime gathering.



TENTS If you've got a tent, you're good to go. Just find a level spot without rocks. Got an extra? It's perfect for an outdoor playroom if filled with toys. For us big kids, a folding table and chairs can create a great spot for puzzles and board/card games. No tent? No worries! Using your imagination, some old sheets and blankets can be transformed into your own tepee.



FOOD Roasting hot dogs and marshmallows is the classic favorite, but with the kitchen so close, you can get creative. Whether it's a cast-iron peach cobbler or a peanut butter sandwich, everything tastes better outdoors. Check out some tantalizing variations on s'mores in our April 2017 camping guide.



MUSIC Can't sing? No problem — only the cicadas can hear you. Gather around the campfire and belt out classics like *Row Your Boat* or (clap, clap, clap, clap) *Deep in the Heart of Texas* or even the latest hit. Make your own rhythm instruments from empty containers with a few pebbles or beans.



CRAFTS Break out the paint for a "plein-air" session or use twigs and pebbles and flower petals to create nature collages. Build a birdhouse or "butter" a piece of wood with homemade butterfly food. Lie on your belly with camera in hand to zoom in on the micro-world or climb a tree to take some aerial shots. Make prints from leaves or create miniature fairy gardens.



GAMES If it's rainy, use that extra tent for a dominoes tournament or to play hangman, charades, tic-tac-toe, checkers or any simple games. You've got all the time in the world for a jigsaw puzzle, Monopoly, Risk and other multi-hour marathon games. Of course, if the weather's fine, set up a volleyball net or croquet set, but for a fresh twist, add a few zany "home" rules. If it's hot, fill up the kiddie pool for your own "lake" or have a water-balloon fight. Remember hide-and-seek, hopscotch and scavenger hunts?



NATURE Open your eyes to the amazing natural world in your yard. Get out a magnifying glass and examine the micro-world at your feet. Check out an online guide to identify the native plants and creatures you see. Enter them into iNaturalist and, voila, you're an official citizen scientist. Don't forget the simple joys of making mud pies and whistling through a blade of grass.



DREAM Use this quiet opportunity for deep talks and dreaming about the future. Plan a real camping trip, share your feelings and just spend quiet time watching the clouds roll by or the stars twinkling above.



On TV

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

MAY 3-9

Ethel the big bass; gargantuan gar; Rolling Plains quail research.

MAY 10-16

Woodpecker search; red-crowned parrots; state park interpreters.



MAY 17-23

Native prairie restoration; shrimp science; Big Bend blooms.

MAY 24-30

Birding legend; crazy ants; Lake Brownwood State Park.

MAY 31-JUNE 6

Office in the ocean; Texas' bird man; volunteer family.

On the Podcast



In May's segments, we learn about rainwater collection and meet a female game warden. Check out fresh magazine Wanderlist episodes on new state parks and accessible state parks. Download at underthetexas.sky or major podcast platforms.

On the Blog

Want frequent content updates from *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine? Join us for tips to enhance your outdoor experiences! Check out our new blog at tpwmag.com as we help Texans find joy in the outdoors.



TAKE A HIKE

Spicewood Springs Trail

Colorado Bend State Park

DISTANCE
3.7 miles round-trip

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
★★★★☆

APPROXIMATE TIME
3 hours

Colorado Bend sits tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the popular chain of lakes known as the Highland Lakes. It's upstream along a bend in the Colorado River, offering a more unspoiled nature experience.

Gorman Falls gets a lot of the attention here, and for good reason. Across the park, though, an inviting area of pools and waterfalls known as Spicewood Springs offers an enchanting array of scenic riches. The Spicewood Springs Trail follows the spring-fed Spicewood Springs Creek as it cascades down a

canyon and creates a series of waterfalls and inviting pools.

From the campground, the trail follows the Colorado River for a while before reaching the Spicewood Springs canyon. Spicewood Springs Creek forms a swimming hole near the point where it empties into the river. Up the canyon, hikers will encounter multiple waterfalls as the creek tumbles down limestone formations. It's an adventure, with the trail crossing the creek several times and rocky slopes to scramble up.

After a mile or so of creekside hiking, the trail leaves the creek,

enters the forest and connects with the Spicewood Canyon Trail. This trail follows the ridge overlooking Spicewood Springs Creek, offering spectacular overlooks of the canyon and taking hikers back to the point where the creek meets the river.

GOOD TO KNOW: The trail markers can be hard to follow, making route-finding challenging. The trail crosses the creek several times (requiring rock-hopping), and hikers may get their shoes wet. At times, the trail skirts by cliffs and scrambles over rocks.



WHO NEEDS WILD THINGS & WILD PLACES IN TEXAS?

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Big Bend Ranch State Park
Photographer: Earl Nottingham





LAW ENFORCEMENT

FlatsWorthy Partnership Outfits Texas Game Wardens with Patrol Skiff

DAVID SIKES

Texas game wardens working in coastal waters near Rockport now have access to a custom-made shallow-water skiff that will allow them to better patrol hard-to-reach marshes and bays. The boat was funded through a partnership between FlatsWorthy and Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation's Gear Up for Game Wardens program that raised more than \$60,000.

FlatsWorthy is a nonprofit that promotes boating courtesy among all who enjoy Texas' shallow bays. The core founders and followers are guides, paddlers, airboaters, fly-fishermen, wade anglers and those who drift-fish or enjoy poling the flats.

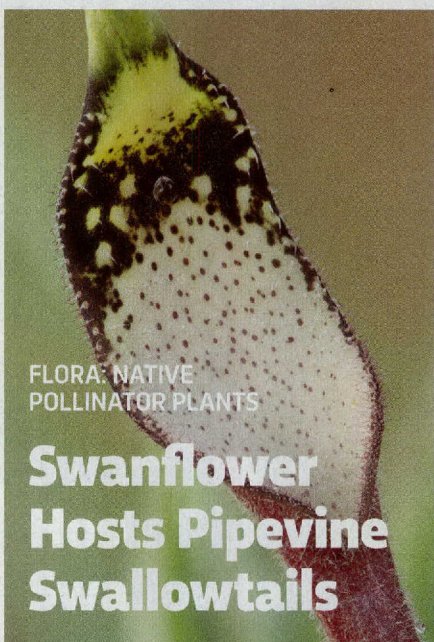
"We are thrilled at the success of the fundraising partnership that will provide this tool for our game wardens," says veteran

fly-fishing guide Chuck Naiser, who led the effort to create FlatsWorthy. "It's a sign that the public is ready to move forward in a positive way to change the culture on the water, that users and regulators can come together in agreement and accomplish something that will benefit us all. It is validation for FlatsWorthy and validation for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. We can accomplish good things by

working together."

The shallow-water skiff, called a curlew, maneuvers in areas that conventional boats cannot reach. The boat is designed to have minimal environmental impact on the shallow waters it will traverse. Having a better patrol presence in areas where there have been user conflicts will benefit all who use and enjoy the coastal flats.

Learn more at flatsworthy.com.



FLORA: NATIVE POLLINATOR PLANTS

Swanflower Hosts Pipevine Swallowtails

BRUCE W. LEANDER

The poetically named swanflower is difficult to distinguish from other wild green foliage on most days. Sometimes, though, this diminutive host plant for the pipevine swallowtail stands out from the others when a horde of knobby orange caterpillars emerges from eggs to feast on it.

Pipevine swallowtails are medium-sized butterflies that look black from a distance. On closer examination, the hind wings are iridescent blue on top and blue speckled with orange on the flipside. They have retractable horn-like organs on their heads.

Unlike the colorful, showy flowers of other plants that attract pollinators, the swanflower (*Aristolochia erecta*) starts as a twisted spear of a bud, then opens up an otherworldly, orchid-like, burgundy bloom with white spots. It looks like family to East Texas carnivorous plants, and it is.

This Texas native's bloom sits upright ("erecta") and curved like a swan's neck, displaying these flowers from April through October. The swanflower seedpod, or capsule, is about three-quarters of an inch long and contains flat black seeds.

The *Aristolochia* family is also known as birthwort, due to the unusual shape (like reproductive organs) and historical use to aid in childbirth. Some contain a toxin that butterflies can tolerate but makes them taste bad to predators.

One species from the *Aristolochia* family is actually deadly to the pipevine swallowtail. Pelican or calico flower (*A. gigantea*), also known as giant Dutchman's pipe, features a huge, unusual bloom. It's originally from South America, where there are no pipevines. When cultivated in gardens here, the plant proves toxic to the pipevine larvae, which die a few days after feeding on it.

Swanflower seeds can sometimes be found at native plant nurseries; the long, tubular root makes it difficult to successfully transplant from the wild.

WILDLIFE

Texas' Bighorn Sheep on the Rebound

One of the most remarkable wildlife sights in the Big Bend region is desert bighorn sheep. Once plentiful, the species disappeared completely from Texas in the 1960s. Through Texas Parks and Wildlife Department conservation and restocking efforts, Texas now has 11 herds of free-ranging desert bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep numbers are now back to the levels seen in their Texas glory days: 1,500 animals. Let's learn a little more about this majestic mountain climber.



Rams **CHARGE AT EACH OTHER** at up to 20 miles per hour



CURLED HORNS can weigh up to 30 pounds



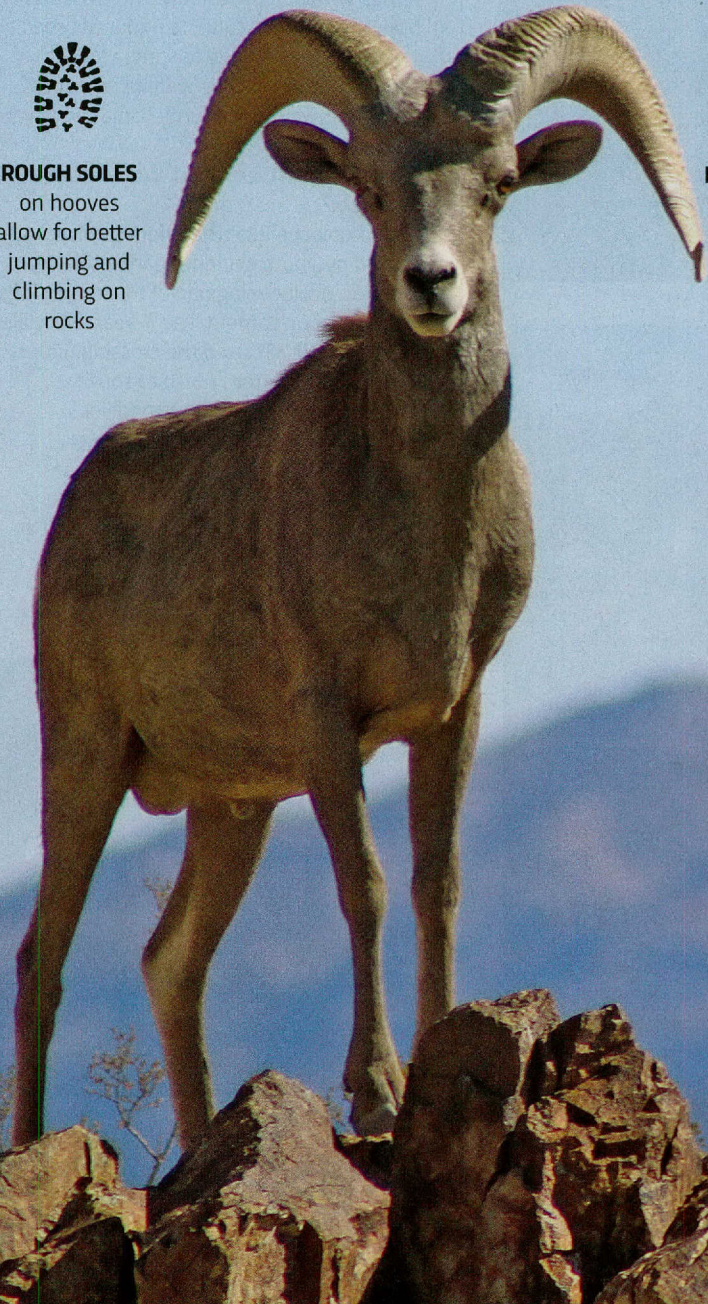
KEEN EYESIGHT and wide vision enable them to navigate mountains



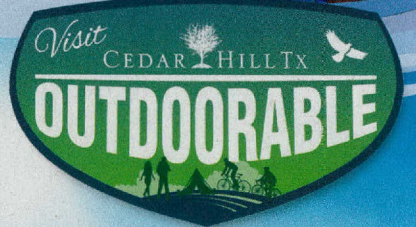
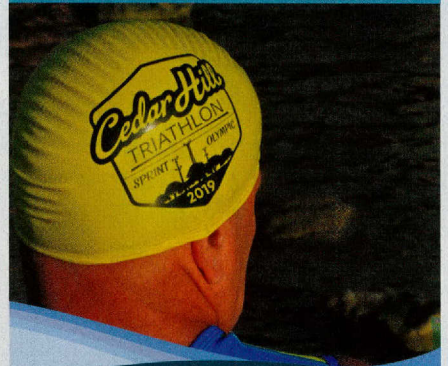
ROUGH SOLES on hooves allow for better jumping and climbing on rocks



RAM COMBAT can last up to 24 hours



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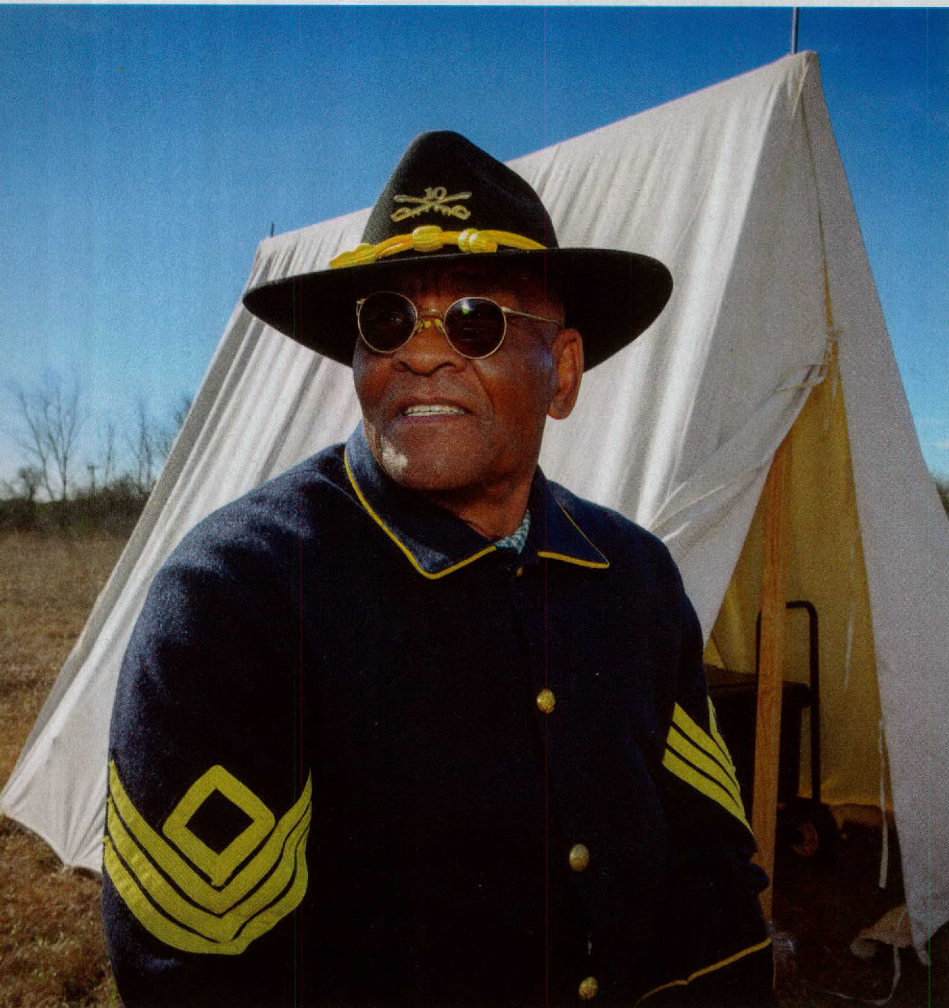
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WILDLIFE

Ocelots Using Wildlife Crossing

You may recall our October 2018 article (“How Did the Wildlife Cross the Road?”) on wildlife crossings, which featured the plight of ocelots in South Texas. In a 10-month span, seven ocelots were killed by cars there, a significant statistic because there are only 80-100 ocelots left in Texas.

In response, the Texas Department of Transportation built 15 wildlife underpasses around Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in South Texas. The crossings on Texas Highway 100 were completed in 2017; construction on several others around the refuge wrapped up last July. The crossings are basically concrete culverts under the road.

TxDOT also installed fencing, a key component of effective wildlife crossings, along Highway 100 to funnel animals toward the crossings.

The question remained: Would ocelots use them?

And now we hear that there's success, as proved by photo evidence earlier this year, when an ocelot using one of those crossings was caught on camera. The 5-year-old male, known as OM 331, used the crossing under FM 106 to cross from north to south.

Other animals, such as armadillos, javelinas, bobcats, long-tailed weasels, alligators and tortoises have used the underpasses, but officials say this is the first documented use of an ocelot using an underpass crossing in the United States.

HISTORY

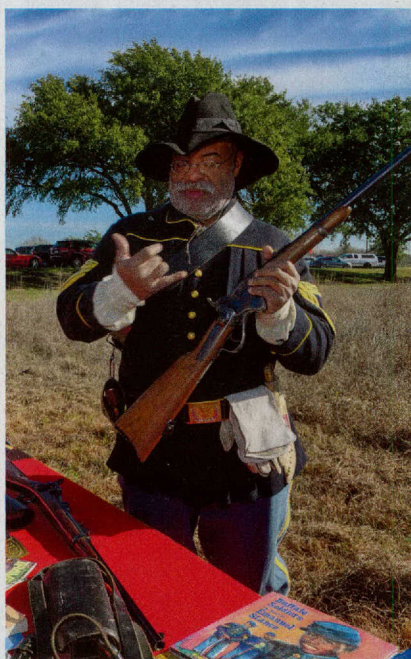
Buffalo Soldiers Program Celebrates Quarter-Century

A new plaque and exhibit at TPWD headquarters in Austin celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Buffalo Soldiers program.

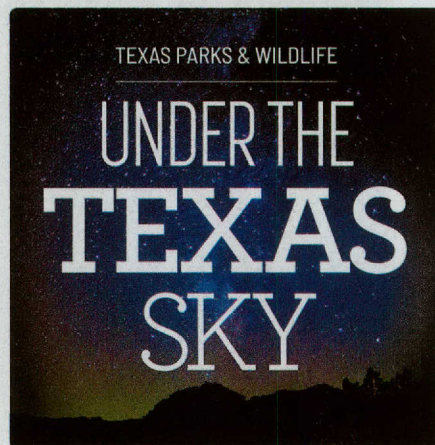
“Texas heritage includes all of us,” says Rodney Franklin, Texas state parks director. “Sharing the story of African-American heroes and heritage through a rich military history is a source of pride for all Texans.”

The exhibit features items used during outreach events at schools and in communities and will move to its permanent home at the Buffalo Soldier Museum in Houston next year.

The Buffalo Soldiers were the first free unit of professional African-American



soldiers in the U.S. military who served on the western frontier from 1866 to 1948 building roads, telegraphs and forts. Today, the TPWD Buffalo Soldiers program educates school students and park visitors about the original soldiers and encourages outdoor skills and recreation.





LARRY DITTO

NEWS

Stream Our New 'Wanderlist' Podcast

It's a time for spring daydreams to bloom, so we've made it easy to find inspiration for your next Texas nature getaway. We're happy to introduce you to our new, twice-monthly audio version of our popular "Wanderlists," featured on TPWD's *Under the Texas Sky* podcast.

Under the Texas Sky debuted in 2019 with monthly episodes. After a hiatus, it rebooted

in April for its second season, now with weekly offerings. Host Cecilia Nasti saw an opportunity to create some nature travel ear candy.

"I want *Under the Texas Sky* to collaborate with the magazine somehow, and Wanderlist seems like the perfect choice," she says. "Wanderlist has been my personal go-to when planning outdoor getaways. Taking it from print to podcast seems like a winner."

In each episode, Nasti (or associate producer Randall Maxwell) and magazine editor Louie Bond have a conversation about a previously published Wanderlist, with occasional expert interviews and interesting "rabbit trail" wanderings.

The first episode features native flower gardens, with answers to wildflower

questions from the public. The second April episode highlights places to watch raptors in Texas and a fascinating discussion about the caracara (the "Mexican eagle") with our state ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford.

Bond says readers and listeners can engage with the magazine in a brand-new way, by participating in future podcasts that feature Wanderlists.

"Once a month, look for our social media post about an upcoming episode," Bond says. "We invite you to ask questions about our topic, and we'll answer them in next week's podcast. If you record your question, you may even hear yourself on our show."

Stream or download *Under the Texas Sky* at underthetexas.org or find it on major podcast platforms.

NICE CATCH

'May' You Catch Your Limit

May's the time for coastal seatrout and lesser-known bass lakes.

By Lynn D. Wright, Carey Gelpi and Randy Brudnicki

OAK CREEK RESERVOIR (2,375 acres), about 30 miles south of Sweetwater in the semiarid Edwards Plateau region of West Texas, is best known for its bass fishing.

Oak Creek has produced many catches over 8 pounds the past few years, including a new lake record (13.68 pounds) caught in spring 2019. Good numbers of Florida-strain largemouth bass have been stocked over the past four years to enhance trophy potential.

Anglers will find many different types of

habitat to target bass. The backs of creek arms contain shallow flats and a mix of flooded timber and submerged vegetation. The main lake areas contain rocks and boulders with points and steep drop-offs into deep water.

Anglers targeting white bass have done well at Oak Creek. Last year's sampling revealed the highest abundance of white bass in more than 20 years, with many legal-size fish in the population. Anglers who troll main lake areas have seen the most success. **LDW**

TPWD

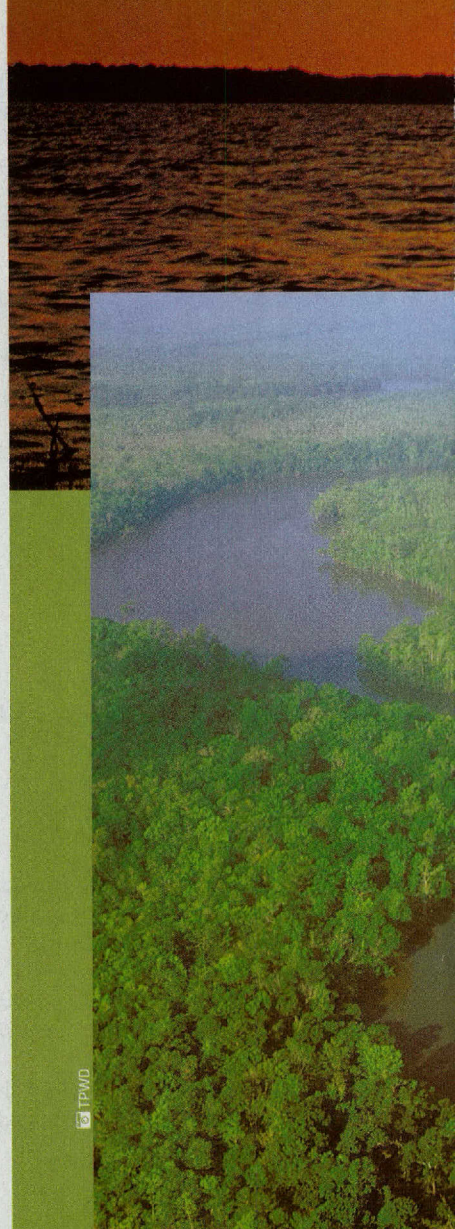
LAKE SOMERVILLE BASS, WHITE BASS AND CRAPPIE

Your odds range from good to excellent on this 11,450-acre reservoir in Washington County. The fishing began to pick up in late March and should continue well into summer.


Lake Somerville does have some quality bass waiting to be caught. In 2018 and 2019, high water and flooding limited access in the state park units at peak catching times. The result is a good population of fish that have not been highly pressured. Largemouth bass can be found in aquatic vegetation and woody



DUSTIN DOSKOCIL



TPWD



areas or sometimes on rocky or gravel banks.

Crappie like to hang around the artificial fish attractors that have been placed around the lake. Before summer hits, bank anglers find that crappie are sometimes accessible.

Somerville is also a great white bass destination — plus, some large hybrids are often caught. As summer approaches, both white bass and hybrid species will follow schools of shad. At times the shad schools approach the bank, especially in the Birch Creek Unit of the state park, where there is plenty of bank

access. The shad spawn a little later in the spring, so it opens up opportunities to anglers chasing sport species when the shad are in shallow water.

Lake Somerville, about 30 miles from Bryan/College Station, is not highly publicized although it is within reasonable driving distance of the Houston and Austin areas.

There are two state park facilities on the lake. The Nails Creek Unit is on the southern shore of the lake, while the Birch Creek Unit is on the northern shore. Both offer camping and boat-launching ramps. **RB**



SABINE LAKE SPOTTED SEATROUT

Spotted seatrout on the Texas northern Gulf Coast are highly prized. Luckily, the population is thriving.


The marsh surrounding Sabine Lake — and its smaller nooks such as Keith, Salt and Shell lakes — are areas where you can find an ample supply of “specks,” something to consider on those less-than-perfect days or days when you want to explore areas away from the open water of Sabine Lake.

Some of the best locations include short rigs just offshore, Lighthouse Cove, the south side of the Keith Lake Cut — basically the northeast area of Keith Lake, where shell hash was laid a number of years ago and now provides

substrate that spotted seatrout seem to favor.

Action picks up in mid-spring, peaks in the summer and remains steady through November. The most aggressive bite seems to change from Sabine Lake to the channel leading to Sabine Pass as the seasons change from spring to summer. Artificial baits such as the shallow-diving swimming image (Heddon) or Gulp (Berkley) plastics are the best lures in the earlier months of the year (until June); live bait such as croaker and shrimp work later in the year.

Anglers fishing in the Sabine Lake system should be aware that the Sabine River, Sabine Lake and Sabine Pass Channel follow the Texas/Louisiana boundary. Anglers should be familiar with both state’s regulations. **CG**



Whether you call them fireflies or lightning bugs, these flying beetles are evening enchanters.

WILD THING

Flashes in the Dark

By Mary Schmidt

The approaching darkness is illuminated by faint, intermittent glimmers, like landing lights for tiny airplanes. With a glass jar in hand, you stumble through the gloom toward the firefly's last blink, hoping to capture one. Another gleam, it's over there!

Every flash of light reveals more details — a hard exoskeleton, six jointed legs, two antennae, compound eyes and a body.

Just a flying beetle, but this one's got a taillight flashing.

Interestingly, people call them fireflies in the West, where there are many wildfires, and lightning bugs in the South and Midwest, where the most lightning strikes are recorded. Everywhere else, usage is pretty evenly split.

Fireflies are members of the Lampyridae family. The name comes from the Greek *lampein*, which means "to shine." The United States is home to approximately 175 firefly species; 36 of those species are found in Texas. While there are about 2,000 species of fireflies across the world, only some have the ability to glow.

As air rushes into a firefly's abdomen (in an area called the lantern), it mixes with a chemical called luciferin and creates a spectacular bioluminescence. The firefly can control the air intake, pulsing the light on and off.

The firefly chemical reaction is so unique that medical scientists use this glow-producing chemical reaction to reveal bacterial and viral infections, search for life in outer space and destroy cancer cells.

Firefly light is usually intermittent, and flashes occur in patterns unique to each species to signal mates. The male will send a flash pattern to the female, then she will respond with her own flash pattern. Some species will even synchronize their flashes, creating a beautiful light show. But beware, some female fireflies lure males of smaller species and eat them.

Fireflies also flash to deter predators. A firefly's blood contains lucibufagins, toxic defensive steroids that taste bad. After one nasty bite, the bad taste is associated with the firefly's light and predators learn not to eat them.

Fireflies are in decline, and scientists want to know if you see them. See fireflies' glimmering starting as early as late May, especially on warm, humid evenings. If you catch one, make sure to release it soon. Share your photos on your favorite citizen science platform.



Be Water Safe!

- ✓ Wear a life jacket
- ✓ Supervise children closely at all times
- ✓ Learn to swim
- ✓ Take a boater education class

Every year, children and adults drown unnecessarily. Keep your day on the water fun by being water safe.

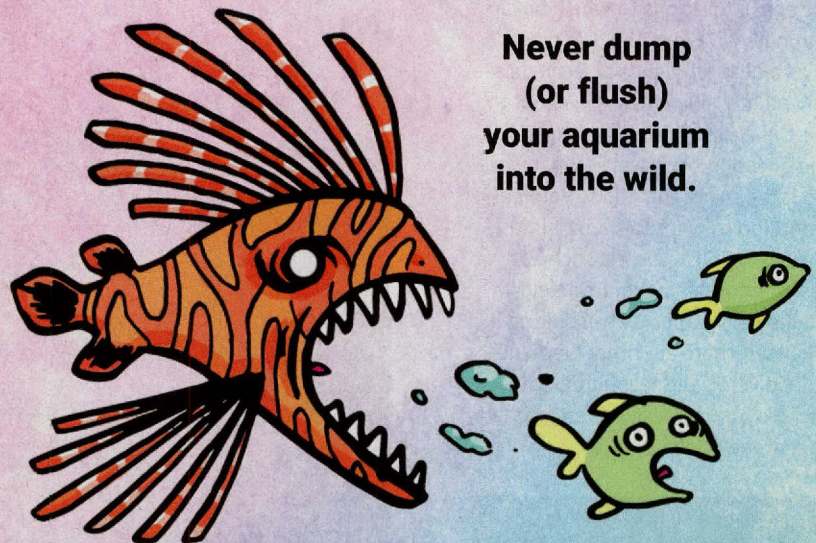


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DON'T LET YOUR PETS BECOME PESTS.



Never dump (or flush) your aquarium into the wild.

Aquarium life dumped into the wild can introduce disease or become invasive predators.

www.TexasInvasives.org/neverdumptyourtank



PICTURE THIS

Packed with Emotion

How to capture feeling in a photograph.

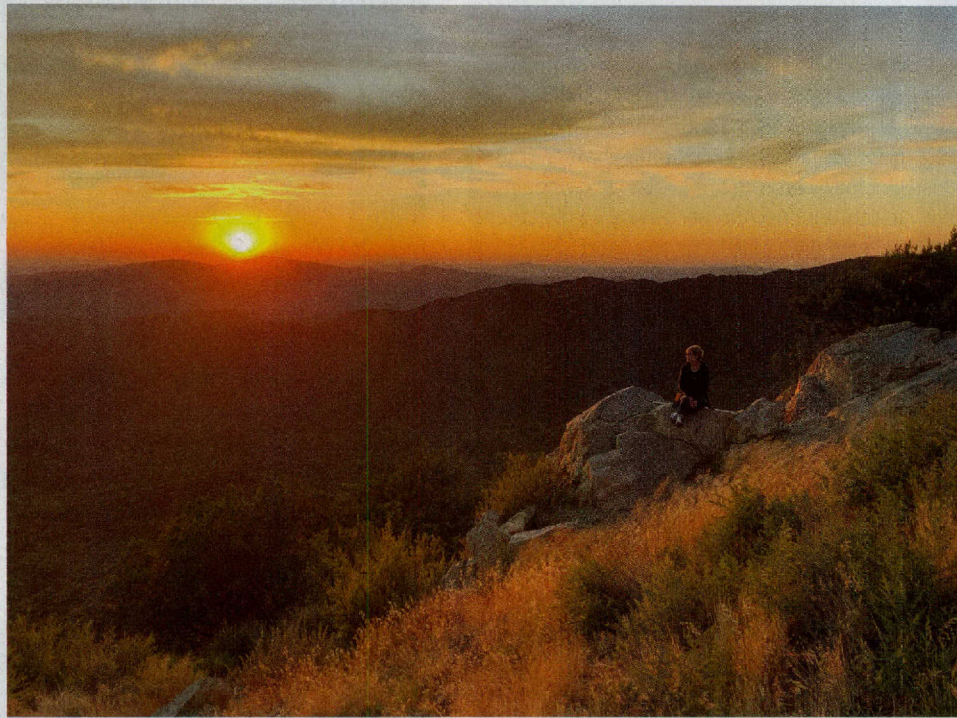
by Earl Nottingham

One mark of a truly effective photograph is that it contains some type of emotional impact that resonates with the viewer on a visceral level and draws from the gamut of human emotions, including awe, peacefulness, joy, anger, calmness, sadness and inspiration. It instills a sense of presence and place. Two people may see the same photograph yet feel a totally different emotional connection, absorbing the image through their own filters of life experience. This is the type of photograph that stays in a viewer's mind long after being seen. Is there such a thing as a formula — or a recipe — for making such a photograph?

Most emotion-evoking images are taken without the photographer consciously thinking about it. That's because we tend to take photos in situations or locations to which we are emotionally drawn in the first place, such as a beautiful landscape. Chances are, if you feel awe when you shoot the scene, the viewer will react similarly.

The question becomes — what was it about the scene that made you feel the emotion to want to shoot it in the first place? While a subject such as a majestic mountain or colorful field of wildflowers can be awe-inspiring within itself, there are other elements we can look for, and techniques we can employ, to increase the emotional impact of the photo.

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

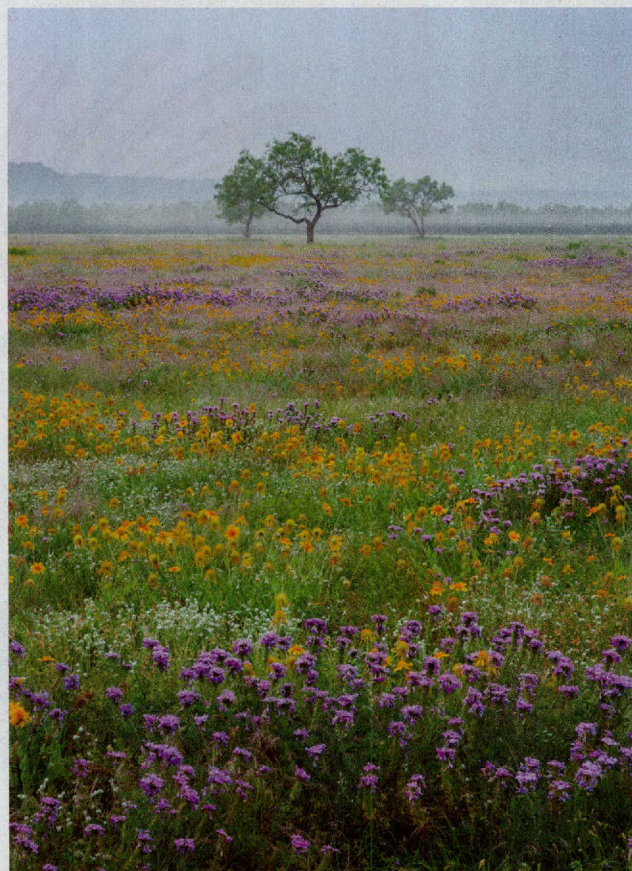


DRAW THE VIEWER IN WITH

COMPOSITION. A sense of presence can be created by including foreground, middle ground and background objects in an image, especially landscapes. This helps create a sense of three-dimensional depth. Using a wide-angle lens often helps with dramatic composition.

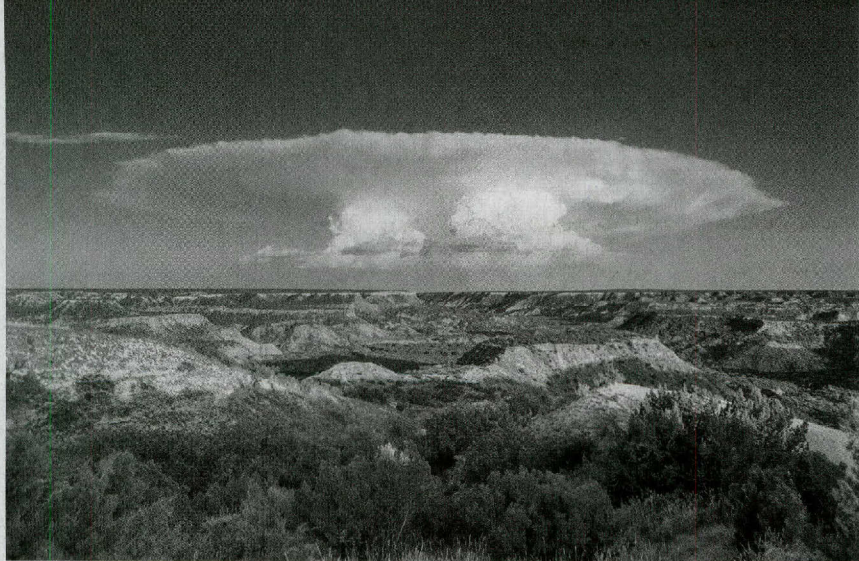
BEAUTIFUL LIGHT HEIGHTENS THE EMOTION

OF THE SHOT. Bright light, whether by time of day or minor changes in camera exposure, can evoke a sense of airiness, happiness or optimism. Dark skies can make a photo feel mysterious, powerful, ominous or foreboding.



BE MINDFUL OF COLORS.

Bright, primary colors will always have a “wow” factor. Cool tones such as greens and blues feel peaceful while warm tones, especially red, invite intensity. Pastels are restful. Most digital cameras will have picture profile settings that allow you to pick a color palette based on your preference.



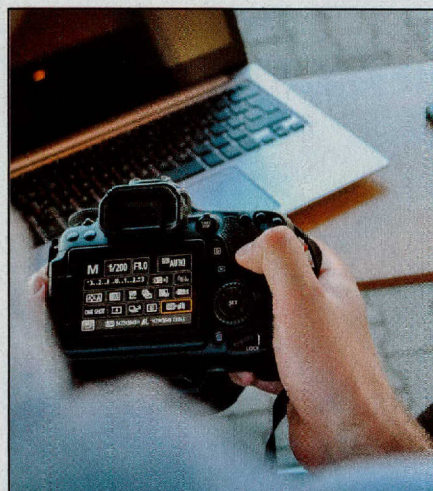
CONSIDER CONTRAST. We often overlook the way contrast affects the emotion in our scenes, such as the higher contrast of a bright sunlit day versus the lower contrast of soft evening light. We can lower or raise contrast in-camera or afterward with image-processing software. High-contrast images tend to have a more dramatic, “punchy” feel, while lower contrast suggests a more muted, subdued and gentle feel. For almost any subject, the subtle nature of a lower contrast often produces a more inviting and introspective image. The impact of both high and low contrast is especially pronounced in black-and-white photography.



ALL © EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

ATMOSPHERICS CAN ADD EMOTION TO ANY SCENE. Fog or a delicate rain can give a peaceful and ethereal feeling. The warm colors of sunrise and sunset evoke their own emotions, as do the bluer, cooler colors of evening and night.

Of all the pictures we take, we probably feel the most emotion from portraits of people, especially family. Trying to capture their true personality can be a daunting task, and, unfortunately, it is all too common these days to feel that we must pose for a photo, usually resulting in a silly face or fake smile. However, the portraits we are drawn to and treasure through the years tend to be the unposed, candid ones where the person is just “being” and not necessarily looking into the camera. Photographing people as they go through their daily lives and routines will result in natural smiles and true personality. You are, in effect, a guest into their world for a split second. No two images will ever be the same.



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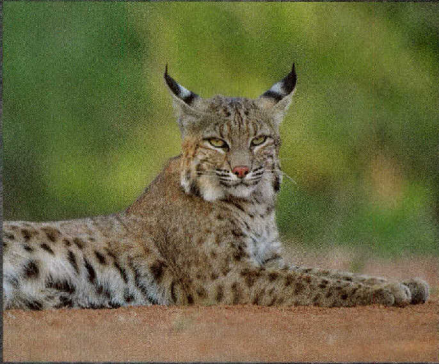
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**“WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY
OPENS PEOPLE’S EYES
TO WHAT WE NEED TO
PROTECT. THAT LEADS
TO CONSERVATION AND
PRESERVING THE HABITAT
THESE WILD CREATURES
NEED TO SURVIVE.”**



Texans are some of the wildest, most rugged, independent, and freedom-loving people on Earth. So is our land and the life on it. Find out how you can join Hector and others who are standing together for the land that has given us so much.



WeWillNotBeTamed.org

TEXAS IS BLESSED WITH A DIVERSITY OF WILDLIFE, WATERS AND ICONIC LANDSCAPES THAT ARE THE HEART AND SOUL OF OUR NATURAL HERITAGE. WILD THINGS AND WILD PLACES DEFINE WHO WE ARE AS TEXANS.

HECTOR ASTORGA'S career arc has been an interesting one. He once owned a window blind company. Now he makes a living as a wildlife photographer, working out of photography blinds all over the world.

His path to photography started during his childhood in Honduras. His father was into photography, so Hector's interest was kindled early, though it wouldn't fully ignite for decades. His passion for the outdoors has been a constant.

“When my family moved to South Texas, it was the perfect environment for me,” said Hector. “I fell in love with hunting, fishing, hiking and camping.”

After college, Hector worked in the dairy industry, went on to own an internet service company, and then a window blind company. His company was awarded the contract to install blinds at the World Birding Center, where Hector was inspired by a Valley Land Fund wildlife photography display. He picked up a camera again in 2007 and was immediately hooked. He entered the Valley Land Fund competition in 2008 and won first place. Since then, he's won dozens of awards for his work.

He started photo guiding in 2009 and is the ranch manager for the Santa Clara Ranch, a nature tourism operation that focuses on photography. In 2010, he ventured to New Mexico for his first out-of-state photo workshop. Now he leads 17 workshops every year, all over the world.

Hector's work is characterized by his unique perspective on his subject, whether it's getting eye-level with an armadillo or in the water with an alligator.


“I love the challenge of getting that perfect shot,” he said. “Sometimes it might take weeks or months, and the shot is always the final reward.”

Now that he's found his calling, he hopes his work will inspire others.

“Wildlife photography opens people's eyes to what we need to protect,” he said. “That leads to conservation and preserving the habitat these wild creatures need to survive.”

BECOME A TPWF MEMBER

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WORKSHOP ON SANTA CLARA RANCH
WITH AMBASSADOR HECTOR ASTORGA!**

 *We
will not
be
Tamed*



WILD WOMEN

BISON AND BEARS: MOLLY GOODNIGHT AND BONNIE MCKINNEY

By Louie Bond

"On the day-long follows that I used to do with mothers and their offspring — these chimp families that I knew so well — there was hardly a day when I didn't learn something new about them." — Jane Goodall

THE MOTHER OF THE PANHANDLE

When you hear the name Goodnight, you might think of Charles Goodnight of Goodnight-Loving Trail fame and perhaps the *Lonesome Dove* character of Woodrow McCall, purportedly based on the Panhandle cattleman.

Standing beside that legendary Texan is his wife, Molly, who casts a long shadow herself. "The Mother of the Panhandle" was known for a lifetime of service, but more importantly, as an early Texas conservationist for saving the Southern Plains buffalo from extinction.

Though born into a prominent Tennessee family, Molly (then Mary Ann Dyer) experienced hardship early in life. The

large family moved to northeast Texas in 1854, and Molly's life changed dramatically when her mother died 10 years later. Barely 25, she raised her three younger brothers (8 to 15), going it completely alone when her father died two years later.

Molly worked as a teacher in Weatherford, though she had never attended school of any kind.

"There were no colleges in Texas nor public schools either when I was a girl," she told her niece later in life. "My only teachers were my father and mother, both of whom were well educated for their times. Then, too, I learned a lot from nature."

A smitten Charles courted her but had nothing to offer, so he took off to pursue his fortune, returning five years later to marry his "Mary" — as only he called her — and make a family with her and the boys. Their early years were spent on a ranch near Pueblo, Colorado, later settling in the Texas Panhandle where Charles partnered with Irish financier John Adair in the fabled JA Ranch.

The red walls of Palo Duro Canyon blocked the cruel wind and contained the cattle naturally (though Charles was also an early user of barbed wire). Molly was the only woman for 75 miles in that remote land, and she busied herself "mothering" the ranch hands: mending clothes, teaching, bringing them food and her own brand of wilderness medicine: "coal-oil for lice, prickly pear for wounds, salt and buffalo tallow for piles, mud for inflammation and fevers, and buffalo meat broth for a general tonic."

Molly immersed herself in the native flora and fauna of her new home, calling that time "the best days of my life."

In appreciation, the hands pooled their money to buy "Aunt"

Molly Goodnight was instrumental in saving the Southern Plains bison by creating the Goodnight bison herd in Texas.

Molly a silver tea service. Her favorite gift was far simpler: three pet chickens.

"No one can ever know how much pleasure and company they were to me," she recalled later. "They would follow me everywhere I went. They tried to talk to me in their language."

The crack of rifles and the wails of



COURTESY SARDAY FOUNDATION

baby bison shattered her peace. Bison were vanishing because of overhunting, but 10,000 head lived deep in the canyon. Buffalo hunters wouldn't kill the babies, and Molly decided to hand-raise the orphans. Charles roped two calves for her, a neighbor brought her two adult bison, her brother gave her three more calves, and the Goodnight herd was created.

In 1887, the Goodnights moved to a smaller ranch near the present-day town that bears their name, bringing along Molly's bison herd, now at 250 head.

Nearly 50, Molly now enjoyed town life. She and Charles founded the Goodnight College; Molly let some students pay their tuition with beef and hides or by working in the school garden and dairy.

Molly Goodnight died in 1926, Charles three years later. Visitors tie bandanas on the cemetery chain-link fence by their graves as a cowboy tribute.

The bison live on. Animals from the herd were donated to American and European zoos and Yellowstone National Park.

The Charles Goodnight bison herd (credited incorrectly to her husband) was donated to TPWD and moved to Caprock Canyons State Park in 1997. Scientists studied their DNA, finding genetics not shared by any other bison in North America. Caprock's official Texas State Bison Herd represents the last remaining examples of the Southern Plains bison.

THE PATRON SAINT OF BLACK BEARS

A modern-day Molly Goodnight, Bonnie McKinney roams the remote wilderness of a different Texas borderland to the southwest, fascinated by each living thing, inspired to preserve and protect. Like Molly, Bonnie works in total syncopation with her wildlife manager husband, Billy Pat, but is equally comfortable managing her own projects. Like Molly and her bison, Bonnie's passion about one particular animal rises above all others.

Bears. Black bears. Bears that have — without any assistance from us — made their way back into the lower Big Bend region.

"Black bears, hands down, are the smartest mammal I have ever worked with," she says. An array of photos of Bonnie with bears shows her affection for the once-extirpated species.

For four decades — first with TPWD on the Texas side of the border, then as wildlife coordinator for Mexican cement company Cemex in the Sierra del Carmen Mountains of northern Mexico, and now back in West Texas as wildlife coordinator for Cemex USA — Bonnie has led conservation efforts for all kinds of wild things in the borderlands. She's conducted various wildlife research projects on peregrine falcons, bighorn sheep, elf owls and many other species of flora and fauna.

But, for Bonnie, it always comes back to bears. During a five-year project in Mexico, she trapped more than 200 bears and radio-collared 71 of them, providing valuable DNA research and information on the bears' travels between Mexico and Texas.

Bonnie's award-winning *In the Shadow of The Carmens: Afield with a Naturalist in the Northern Mexican Mountains* and a children's book about one rowdy rescued bear that became a celebrity (*The Legend of El Patron* by Virginia Parker Staat) chronicle her work.

As it does with many, the biology bug bit early for Bonnie. Growing up in the Blue Ridge Mountains near the Appalachian Trail with a family full of naturalists meant days of hunting



COURTESY BONNIE MCKINNEY

and fishing and gathering collections of specimens (her mother never knew what she'd find under Bonnie's bed).

Like Molly Goodnight, Bonnie learned by doing, not by sitting in a classroom.

"My dad taught me so much about wildlife conservation," she says. "Not only how to hunt and fish — he taught me how to take care of the wildlife."

Bonnie's dad showed her clearcutting of forests and talked to her about the impact.

"You know, these will never be like they were," she recalls him saying. "You'd better look at them now because they will be gone." And they are gone today.

"There's an old saying I think about: 'The hand of mar. taketh away, but he can also give back,'" Bonnie told David Todd of the *Texas Legacy Project* in 2001. "I think that today wildlife managers have to be able to compromise. We have to see problems before they happen, see the conflicts before they happen, and try to be able to have some sort of working solution that's going to benefit everybody. The wildlife, the people ... everybody's going to have to work together."

Bonnie doesn't see herself retiring anytime soon, though she is a grandmother now. She's the product of a lifetime of getting up every day hungry to learn more and working to protect the flora and fauna she loves.

"If your goals fit the lifestyle you've chosen, then you're already ahead of the game," she says.

Bonnie lives by her mom's good advice: "Paddle your own canoe. Nobody's going to do it for you."

Bonnie McKinney's career-long protection of wildlife in the borderlands of West Texas and Mexico includes trapping more than 200 black bears.

In honor of the ratification of the 19th amendment 100 years ago, we'll spotlight 20 Wild Women of Texas Conservation during 2020.

13 WAYS TO HAVE FUN WITH KIDS AT HOME

Have you become the entertainment coordinator for housebound children? They can't, and shouldn't, watch screens all day long, so it's a good time to set them up for some interactive fun. Luckily, we've been sharing new ways to live better outside for decades, and it's a perfect time to dive back into those lists. From mud pies to citizen science, we've got a baker's dozen of engrossing outdoor activities for all ages.

Compiled by Louie Bond



FLY A KITE

It's sheer joy to be out on a windy spring day holding the string of a soaring kite. Inexpensive store-bought kites give plenty of thrills, but it's even more fun to make your own. Use paper plates, paper sacks, gift wrapping, drinking straws and string. How many aeronautical engineers started out by flying kites when they were kids?

USE TECHNOLOGY TO EXPLORE

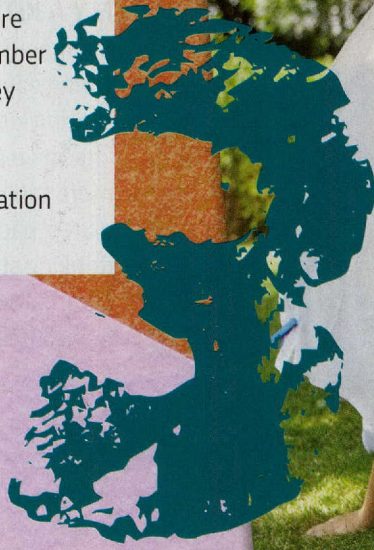
Unplugging from the distractions of technology is great, but it's not always an option. There are so many apps now that can help kids explore with confidence and understand the natural world they are encountering. There are apps to identify birds, locate geocaches, create maps, identify trees or name the constellations at night. One of our favorites is Seek from iNaturalist.

DMITRIEVA | DREAMSTIME.COM

BACKGROUND | 2FOTOSTOCK | DREAMSTIME.COM

BUILD A FORT

Older children can make a lean-to with sticks and branches, string a tarp between trees or build a more elaborate hangout with scrap lumber and nails. Whichever method they choose, the important thing to remember is to let kids use their imagination and sense of cooperation to build their special place.



PHOTOGRAPHERLONDON | DREAMSTIME.COM

MAKE A MUD PIE

Messy and creative, mud pie preparation can happen anywhere and requires little supervision. Spoons, sticks, cookie cutters and aluminum pie plates make useful tools. Seeds, pebbles, leaves and nuts from a nearby tree add interest. As they work, kids learn about the texture, absorption and drying characteristics of different soils.



PLAY OLD-FASHIONED GAMES

Grandparents knew how to have fun without a lot of fancy equipment. Teach kids to pitch washers or horseshoes. Organize a sack race or a tug-of-war. Try jump rope, I Spy, marbles or jacks. These games date back hundreds of years, and once they've learned the basics, kids will invent their own variations.

CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD



HAVE A SCAVENGER HUNT

You can create a scavenger hunt just about anywhere. Take a walk in your neighborhood or set up your backyard with items you want kids to discover. Make up a list of clues. You can have them check things off a list or record their discoveries by taking a photo of their finds. (Consider ages when writing up the clues.)

MASHIKI | DREAMSTIME.COM



SHOOT A VIDEO

Videos can be a fun way to capture and share an outdoor adventure. Be spontaneous and edit together what happened that day. Or go bigger by writing a script, drawing storyboards and using nature as the backdrop for the story. Let your imagination run free. Editing is easy on your smartphone.

TAKE A NATURE WALK

Walking in nature doesn't have to be a long, strenuous journey. For kids, a short walk with active conversation about the natural world around them is enough to grab their attention. Any neighborhood walk can be turned into a nature walk when you stop to think about what you smell, hear, see or feel. Having intentional stops every 10 minutes is a great way to turn exercise time into exploration time.



NIKITA VISHNEVECKY | DREAMSTIME.COM



ROMRODINKA | DREAMSTIME.COM



CAMP IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Got a tent? Set it up outside, and throw in sleeping bags and pillows. If allowed, build a campfire and toast marshmallows while you tell ghost stories and listen to night sounds. No backyard? Push back the furniture and camp in the living room. (See Page 10 for lots of great tips.)

EXPLORE A MINI-LANDSCAPE

Using a hula hoop or length of rope, mark off a circle on the ground — or try making two circles, one in a sunny area and one in shade. Challenge kids to list or describe each type of plant and animal found within the circle. Pencil, paper and a magnifying glass will come in handy.



DANIAPHOTO | DREAMSTIME.COM



CREATE ART FROM NATURE

From Walt Disney to Monet, artists near and far have looked to nature to inspire them. Art can be a watercolor painting or a simple arrangement of rocks, sticks and leaves. Another creative art project is to let kids photograph what they see in nature — make a collage from the images or put them into a journal. You can also create something useful like a birdhouse and give it an artful flair by letting kids paint it and apply sticks, feathers, string or other decorations for a one-of-a-kind project.

12

CREATE OBSTACLE COURSES

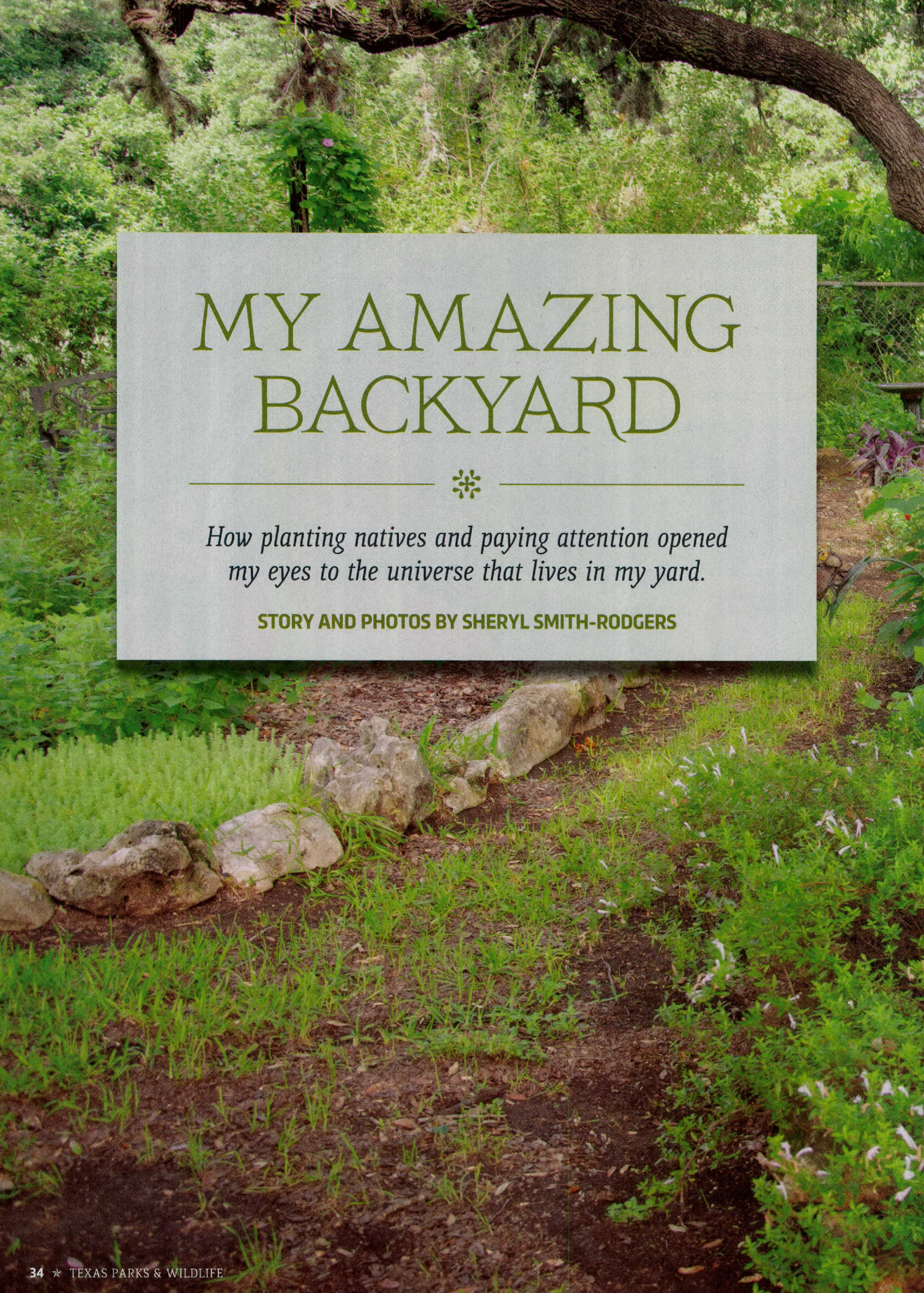
Let kids create their own obstacle course using things around the house and yard. Try hula hoops, small logs, different things to jump or climb over. Even the dog can get into the act. Find that old croquet set and transform the stodgy playing field into a crazier one with new twists and turns like your favorite putt-putt course.



SERRNOVIK | DREAMSTIME.COM

HOLD CONTESTS

Create nature-inspired contests. Who can find the weirdest insect? Who can locate the most plant varieties, or flowers? Have kids see who can gather the most sticks — great when you're trying to build a campfire. Have a field guide handy so kids can identify their finds. See if they can find something starting with every letter of the alphabet, or objects that resemble every letter of the alphabet.



MY AMAZING BACKYARD



*How planting natives and paying attention opened
my eyes to the universe that lives in my yard.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS





Melissodes bees

B

lack-crested titmice chattered in the live oaks as I pruned dead stems from our salvias that late July evening. Just as I paused to survey my work, something odd caught my eye. I froze and focused on the spot.

Inching closer, I spied three fuzzy insects with striped abdomens attached upside-down to a dead salvia stem. They appeared to be hanging on by their jaws. Mesmerized, I set down my shears and pulled out my smartphone.

What had I found in this yard that continually amazes me? Forget gardening. I had photographs to take and insects to identify.

This happens *a lot* in our yard. No matter what I stumble upon, I stop to get a better look. Because who knows?

Maybe I'll find a new species, like yellow passionflower or pearl milkweed vine. Or watch a mini drama unfold, like an iridescent cockroach-hunter wasp attacking a Boll's sandroach. Or laugh when a Bewick's wren kamikazes a northern cardinal on a birdhouse. Or solve mysteries, like where do pipevine caterpillars go after they leave their host plants? (Alas, hours of trailing several yielded no clues.)

Every day's an adventure in our mostly native gardens, located two minutes from downtown Blanco in the Hill Country.

Outdoors at our house wasn't always that much fun, though. "Well-kept but ho-hum" better described the property 18 years ago. That's because few beneficial plants grew in our yard, which stretches across two city lots. In the front yard, the previous owners planted two rose bushes, bearded irises and a crape myrtle beneath the towering live oaks.

One afternoon, I yanked out Japanese honeysuckle, snailseed and greenbriar vines from a rocked-in bed along the street. Then I sowed zinnia seeds. Boy, did I feel proud when they bloomed.

In the backyard, more majestic oaks shaded the huge lawn, blanketed with carpetgrass, horseherb and assorted weeds. Under one big oak, I hung up a bird feeder and set out a birdbath. Sometimes I borrowed a push mower and trimmed the front and back yards. Or I hired someone to do the three-hour job. I kept the yards manicured as best I could.

In May 2006, James Hearn and I got married — where else? — in the backyard. Two weeks later, we bought a riding lawn mower. Now and then, we

jotted notes in a spiral journal. But not for long. In its place, I started a blog in May 2008. “Window on a Texas Wildscape” has allowed me to keep gardening notes, share what I see and learn and maintain a searchable database.

Fast-forward to the present. Nowadays, the riding lawn mower gets used only twice a year to trim the adjoining lot. We bought that property in 2008. Later we erected a wooden sign that reads “The Meadow,” to let passersby know that someone tends the land.

Beneath a live oak motte grow native residents, such as blue-eyed grass, a redbud, mountain laurel and twistleaf yuccas. An open area supports bluebonnets and other wildflowers



Baby chickadee



Red columbine with solitary bee

bought plants at nurseries or big box stores, but ornamentals didn't grow well or survive our hot summers.

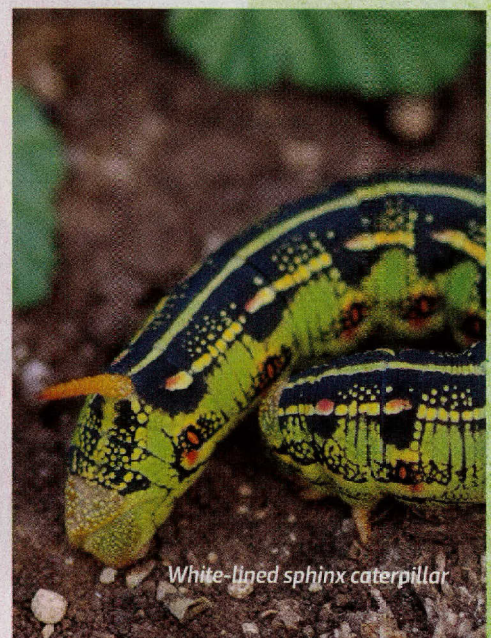
So, we turned to Texas natives, like lantana, salvia, Turk's cap, Texas betony, rock rose and flame acanthus. Our gardening successes improved. Better yet, the natives provided flowers, nectar, fruits, leaves and nuts for wildlife.

A year later, I learned about Texas Wildscapes, a wildlife habitat program sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Surely our yard met the basic criteria of providing native plants, food and shelter for wildlife. Why not apply? So, I mailed off an application and got our yard certified.

As our gardening work progressed, I

Texas Wildscapes

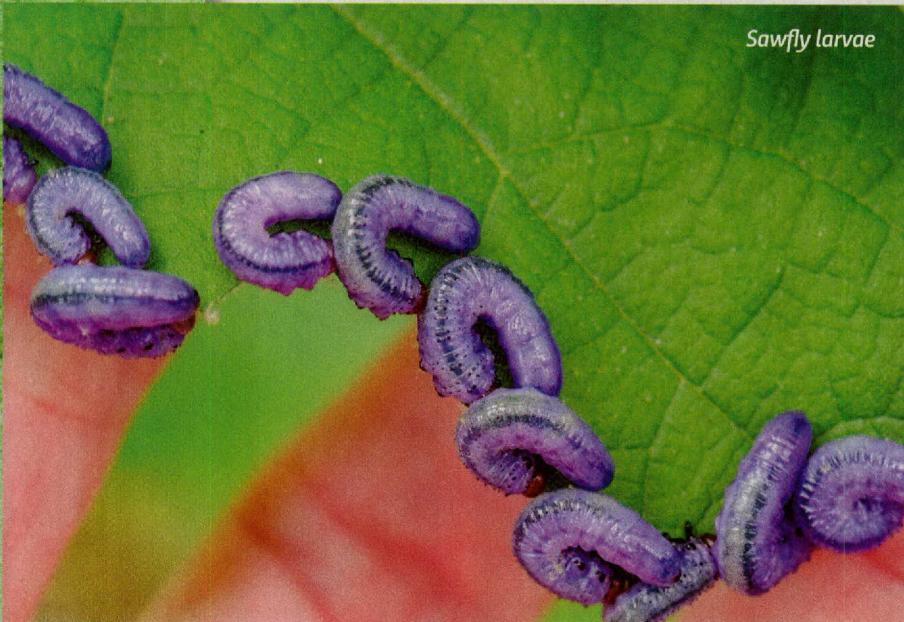
You don't need a big yard to provide wildlife habitat. Small pockets will also benefit birds, small mammals and other wildlife. The basic elements of a Texas Wildscape call for a landscape or property to have at least 50 percent native plants, provide year-around food and water, and offer shelter for wildlife. For more information, visit tpwd.texas.gov/wildscapes or check out *Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife*, Kelly Conrad Bender, Texas A&M Press, 2009.



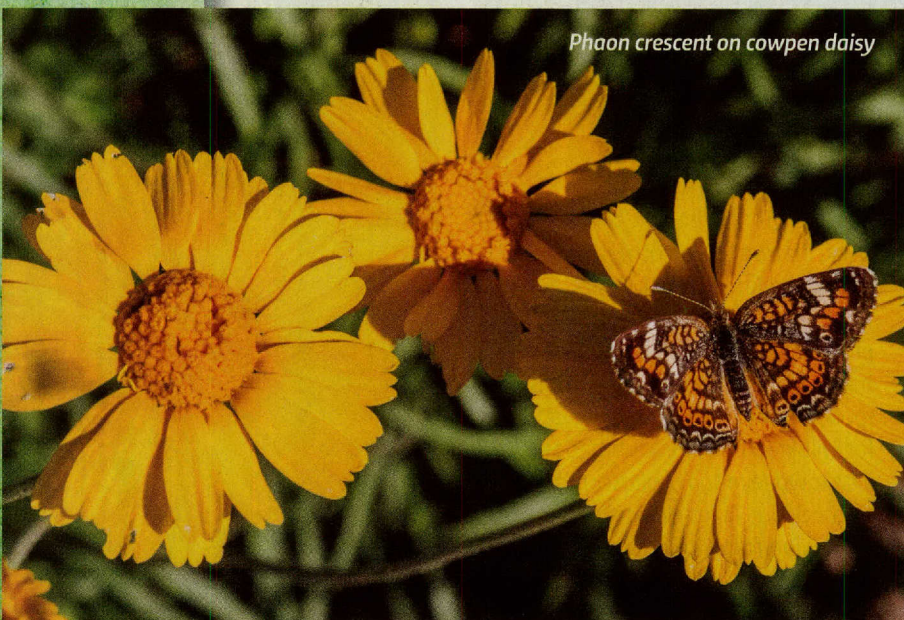
White-lined sphinx caterpillar



Texas milkweed



Sawfly larvae



Phaon crescent on cowpen daisy

along with more neighborhood natives, including agarita, Texas lantana, ashe juniper, gum bumelia, velvet bundleflower, silverleaf nightshade, scarlet pea, sensitive briar and antelope-horns.

As for our front and back yards, they no longer host just groundcovers. Now footpaths wind between rocked-in beds planted with hundreds of natives that we've bought through the years. Most came from native plant sales and native plant nurseries. Some were gifted. They include American beautyberry, mistflowers, chile pequin, coral honeysuckle, crossvine, passionflowers, red columbine, scarlet clematis, Texas milkweed, sawtooth sunflower, prairie flax and standing winecup. Some are neighborhood natives that I've transplanted — Texas bush-clover, velvet bundleflower, yellow passionflower, scarlet pea, sensitive briar and pearl milkweed vine.

Along the way, we've also planted native trees, including a Blanco crabapple, Texas madrone, Mexican buckeye, Texas buckeye, rusty blackhaw viburnum, escarpment black cherry, roughleaf dogwood, possumhaw, persimmon and Mexican plum. Flowers on our Texas kidneywood attract cool pollinators, such as green soldier flies and great golden digger wasps. On our wafer ash, I saw two-tailed swallowtails deposit eggs on leaves. Then I returned to get photos of the larvae as they changed from bird-poop mimics to bright green caterpillars with black eyespots.

As the diversity of our flora has increased, so has the fauna in our yard. Using the iNaturalist app, I've so far documented more than 910 species of organisms! These include 174 plant species (these exclude species we've planted) along with 81 beetle species, 65 spider species and 207 butterfly and moth species.

Among 46 true bug species I've found, jagged ambush bugs rank as a favorite. As their name implies, these tiny predators with ridged, fiddle-shaped bodies lurk on coreopsis and other flowers. Then — like a praying mantid — they grab a bee or other insect with their thick front legs and enjoy a meal.

Very little escapes my eagle eyes. One June evening, something on our water fountain stuck out. I stopped for a closer look. A black critter with white-and-gold patterns clung to the concrete tier as water splashed over it. I turned off the

water, then watched the insect skitter around and groom itself. I'd found a tumbling flower beetle. These beetles are named for their ability to bounce erratically when fleeing predators. Adults feed on flower pollen.

Robber flies are also aptly named. Long-bodied and big-eyed, they perch atop stems or other high points and scan for flying insects to nab in mid-air. The six species of robber flies in our yard have included the hefty Beelzebub bee-killer, a fuzzy bumblebee mimic that I've seen eat green June beetles. They've been reported to attack hummingbirds (but not in our yard) and are one of North America's largest robber flies. In contrast, the tiny *Hadrokolos texanus* — a robber fly no bigger than my pinky fingernail — barely caught my eye when I passed one, poised on a dead salvia tip that I'd failed to clip.

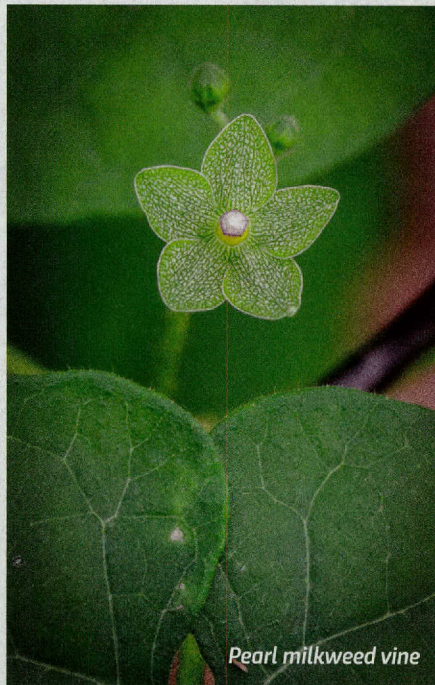
Lesson learned: Perfection should never apply to wildlife gardens.

Even poop can be useful.

One time I found a little dung beetle making a pea-sized ball in a smelly pile. I didn't crouch down too long to watch. I knew what would happen next. Soon the metallic green beetle with fan-like antennae would roll the ball away. Then she'd bury it for her future grubs to eat. Yum!

Thank goodness our neighbors "get" me. I often stand in our yard with my arms outstretched. My crazy stance has enticed numerous red admirals (my favorite butterfly since childhood) to land on me. Once an eastern pondhawk — one of 16 dragonfly and damselfly species recorded in our yard — landed on my hand.

But the coolest insect to visit on me was a longhorn cactus fly (*Odontoloxozus longicornis*). Mosquito sized, the googly-eyed fly landed on me several times. Then it showed up the next day in our kitchen. I carried it outside. It landed on me several times before disappearing for good. According to Bugguide.net, the species inhabits deserts and lays eggs in decaying cacti. Don't ask me how it found our yard.



Pearl milkweed vine

Our nature stories are endless. Once a juvenile green heron tried to fish in a shallow birdbath. That didn't go well. One summer, a wild turkey patrolled our backyard for several weeks until she vanished.

I've observed Texas spiny lizards dig nests in the dirt and deposit their eggs. Found the bright purple larva of a sawfly (*Neoptilia tora*) on our velvetleaf mallow. Removed some drowned Texas ironclad beetles from a bucket, only to discover days later that they were still alive. Watched a checkered gartersnake gulp down an earthworm. Made friends with the thread-legged bugs that hang out on our screened porch door. Discovered a resin bee building her tubular nest of itty-bitty pebbles.

Our Texas Wildscape at a glance

What # species per iNaturalist

Ants, bees, wasps, sawflies	65
Beetles	81
Birds	47
Butterflies & moths	207
Dragonflies & damselflies	16
Flies	73
Frogs & toads	3
Fungi, mushrooms, lichens	22
Lizards, snakes & turtles	13
Mammals	8
Snails	9
Spiders & other arachnids	72
True bugs	46
Vascular plants	174

We've even hosted a family of eastern screech-owls in a nest box.

Since spiders intrigue me, I'm not afraid to handle them. But one encounter ended badly. I'd cupped a female sac spider in my left palm for photos. To my surprise, a small black wasp landed on my hand and attacked the spider. I kept snapping photos while the wasp paralyzed the spider with a sting and then lifted her away. I stared down at the two spider legs left on my palm. It had all happened within seconds right in my hand. Poor spider! Soon she'd be live food for the wasp's larvae.

Back to those fuzzy insects attached upside-down on a salvia stem. It turned out that they were a guy group of long-horned bees, bedded up together for the night. Several species of wasps and bees exhibit this sleeping behavior called roosting. Years ago, I found a male digger bee snoozing upside-down, jaws clamped tightly around a narrowleaf globemallow.

But, wait a minute. Did you hear that? Some blue jays, Carolina chickadees and northern cardinals are screaming in the live oaks out in the Meadow. Could they be mobbing a rat snake? An eastern screech-owl? Our local Cooper's hawk?

Please excuse me while I go investigate. Because you just never know what's going to happen next in our mostly native gardens.

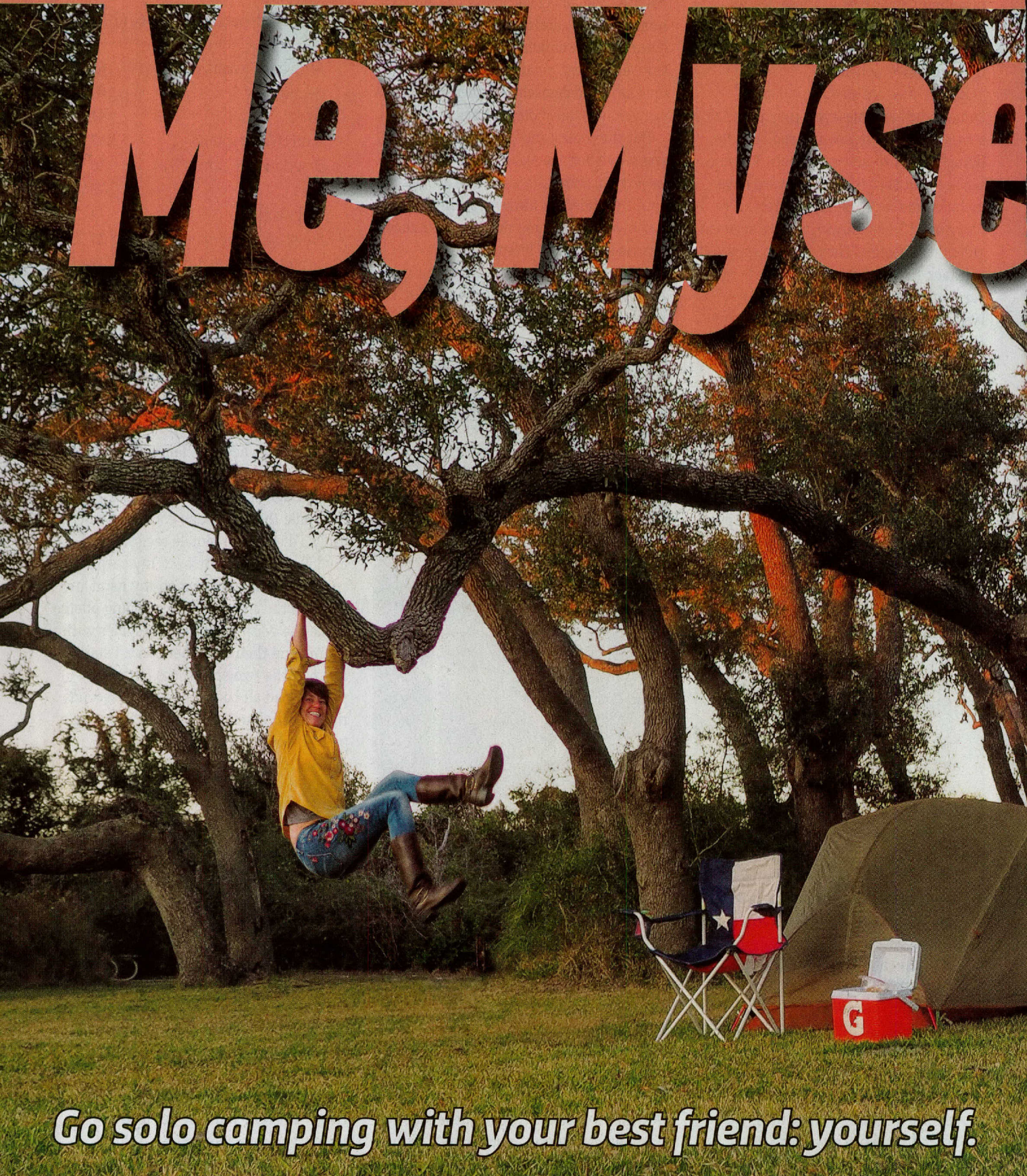
Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a freelance writer and photographer in Blanco.

iNaturalist

This online network of naturalists and biologists records and maps findings of biodiversity worldwide. Observations are entered as photographs and locations via the website or from the iNaturalist mobile app. A single observation may include one or more photos. Fellow users review observations and suggest identifications. They may also comment on observations and confirm IDs of genus and/or species.

Some people upload observations from wherever they are. I take photos only in my yard, which keeps my species list narrowed down to one place. I also do not observe plants that we added to the yard. My end goal? Reach 1,000 species on iNaturalist by year's end!

Me, Myself



Go solo camping with your best friend: yourself.



by Pam LeBlanc

 PAM LEBLANC

No one knows what I'm doing at the moment, out here in the darkness at Goose Island State Park, and they'd probably roll their eyes if they did.

That's because I just spent 30 minutes figuring out how to hoist my lanky body up the bowing trunk of a windswept oak, wrap my knees over a branch the thickness of a python, and dangle upside-down for five seconds. Then, after I climbed down, I ditched plans to cook something healthy over a portable camp stove and made a meal out of cheddar cheese slices, crackers and a few chocolate chip cookies instead.

That's the beauty of striking out into the wilderness — or even a state park — on your own. You can stay up all night watching the stars pop out against a black velvet backdrop, eat s'mores for breakfast or spend an entire day taking pictures of birds without worry that you'll cramp someone else's plans.

Camping solo sets me free.

It's not that I don't appreciate sharing a tent with my husband or gathering up a gang of friends and hitting the backpacking trail for a few nights of communal nature appreciation. But popping up a tent by myself somewhere beautiful and contemplating life slows my pulse. It makes me feel self-sufficient and capable and reminds me that humans actually can survive without computers, air conditioning, television sets or microwave ovens.

I didn't get to this point overnight. I've snoozed on a sand beach at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, peeked out tent flaps at tongues of ice at Glacier National Park and made camp beneath a canopy of pines on California's John Muir Trail. Those first four decades of hammering in tent stakes and snuggling inside sleeping

bags, though, were always spent within screaming distance of family or friends. After all, I reasoned, you never knew when a bear might tear through camp or a tent pole would snap.

I'm lucky. I grew up in a family that liked to car camp. We'd ramble to state parks from Michigan to Texas, setting up an enormous blue canvas tent and unfurling sleeping bags on our top-of-the-line bunk-bed cots. I fondly remember drinking Tang for breakfast and defying the label warnings not to swirl a pan of Jiffy Pop over a campfire.

Since those early days, I've camped my way across the High Sierra Trail, lit a headlamp in the New Mexico mountains and nearly crushed a palm-sized tarantula strolling just outside my tent in West Texas. I've also learned that ravenous bears or knife-wielding wackos

aren't the biggest danger — it's my hyperactive imagination.

Once, during a backpacking trip into the backcountry of Yellowstone National Park, I lay in a tent and listened to an animal — "Bear?!" my mind screamed — sigh loudly, chomp on something and shuffle around just outside the tent I was sharing with my husband. I stiffened in terror, unable to bolster the nerve to peek out the tent flaps, as my husband sawed logs. In the morning, when I dragged myself into consciousness, I discovered hoofprints, apparently left by a foraging deer, around our camp.

Some nights, every snapping twig or yipping coyote makes me feel very, very alone in the wild.

Realistically, though, it's the mundane stuff you really should worry about. Don't pitch your tent next to a "widow-maker," a dead tree that could crush your tent if it comes down while you're sleeping. Make camp safely back from cliffs or ledges, lest you wander off one during a groggy midnight pee break. Don't plant your tent in an exposed area during a thunderstorm; you don't want to risk a lightning strike.

Here at Goose Island, it takes me about three minutes to pop up my two-person tent on the Live Oak Circle section of the campground, where the sites are spaced out on a cushy expanse of grass, and a grove of twisting trees tempts some people (me!) into their branches. I honed my tent-erecting skills a few years back, on a 15-day trip on the John Muir Trail in California with my husband. We split duties: He cooked, and I put up the tent and broke it down each day. Now, it's second nature.

With that done, I explore the park, which is recovering from damage delivered by Hurricane Harvey in August 2017. Park officials say all repairs should be finished sometime this year. (The bayfront campsites are closed as of this writing, as is the fishing pier. The recreation hall, the only remaining structure at the park built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, is being renovated, too.)

"We were pretty much in the eye of the hurricane," says Sarah Nordlof, acting assistant superintendent, park interpreter and volunteer coordinator. "We lost a lot of trees, and unfortunately that will be







what takes the longest to recover from the hurricane. Live oak trees are slow-growing, and it's definitely changed the landscape here."

Thankfully, the Big Tree, a gnarled, centuries-old live oak located on park property a mile or so from the campground, survived the storm. It's a highlight that will leave you contemplating the changes that have taken place on our planet since the tree first sprouted from an acorn.

Wildlife watchers can hike a short nature trail or join one of the organized bird walks offered four days a week between January and April. The park offers excellent fishing, especially for red drum, black drum, speckled trout and flounder, and it's also popular with kayakers.

Lucky visitors might catch a glimpse of an endangered whooping crane. The bright white birds — which emit a sort of gargley yodel and stand about 4 feet tall when grown — winter at nearby Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. As their population has rebounded, their range has expanded, and occasionally one

shows up within park boundaries.

Keep an eye out, because occasionally an alligator shows up, too, usually in St. Charles Bay or near the Big Tree, although officials say they're not a big concern in the main area of the park.

Swimming is allowed but not recommended here because the shoreline is covered with sharp oyster shells that could bite into delicate feet. Park officials recommend driving to a soft sand beach in nearby Rockport if you want to take a dip. (Those oyster shells, by the way, are an ingredient in the "shell-crete" used to build the recreation hall.)

I finally tuck myself into my tent for the night, burrowing into the fluff of my sleeping bag. The only sounds I hear are hooting owls and the clatter of some passing white-tailed deer.

Before I know it, it's morning, or, more precisely, time for the duck hunters to get up and at 'em. It takes me a moment to realize I'm hearing the roar of airboats and not a chainsaw cutting through the air as they head out for the morning hunt before the sun rises.

No matter, I appreciated the wake-up call. I boil some water for tea, then walk down to the water to watch the pelicans dip and dive as the skies brighten. I've got no apprehensions about being alone, not even a pang of loneliness as I ease into the new day at Goose Island.

"I think we are a really good starter park," Nordlof tells me. "There's a ton of activities. For someone newer to camping or apprehensive about camping alone, we're fairly close to a city, so if you forget something or something comes up, the comforts of home are pretty close."

If you're thinking of camping alone, I suggest easing into it — leave the cougar wrestling and javelina jousting for another time. Camp with friends or family members who are experienced campers first. Let them show you the finer points of selecting a good campsite, putting up a tent, lighting a camp stove, cooking a meal and building a campfire.

Then, when you feel comfortable with all that you've learned so far, plan your first solo camping trip to a public campground, where you can camp



ALL EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

alongside other groups. Campers are generally a good lot, eager to help if you're having trouble with equipment.

If you need more assistance, consider signing up for a camping class. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department offers workshops at parks all over the state through its Texas Outdoor Family Program. The sessions cover the basics of camping, from putting up a tent to preparing dinner, and organizers provide all the equipment you need (tpwd.texas.gov/tof).

As you grow more confident and proficient, consider a tougher challenge, like heading into the backcountry. If you do, remember to pack light, since you can't share the load with anybody else. If you're going someplace remote, you might want to bring a satellite tracker, too. (I used one when I backpacked the John Muir Trail.)

Finally, make sure you bring the 10 essentials outlined in *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills* by the Mountaineers, a Seattle-based outdoors group who brainstormed the list nearly a century ago: navigation equipment (map and compass), sun protection, insulation

(extra clothing), illumination (headlamp or flashlight), first-aid supplies, fire (waterproof matches/lighter/candles), repair kit and tools, nutrition (extra food), hydration (extra water) and emergency shelter.

Before you step away from civilization, pause for a moment and think about what gives you goosebumps. If you're nervous about bears (not much of a problem anywhere in Texas except Big Bend National Park), carry a bear vault to store your food and stash it 100 feet from your camp at night, or tie scented items in a tree. If it's a knife-wielding madman you fear, carry mace.

It's essential that someone knows where you're going and when to expect your return. And make sure you're healthy — both physically and mentally.

The solitude might do you some good. I recommend it and can't wait to do it again — back off, marauding raccoons and giant hairy spiders! — without the safety net of other campers nearby.

Pam LeBlanc is a travel writer/photographer.

IF YOU GO: Check the Goose Island State Park webpage (tpwd.texas.gov/gooseisland) or call (361) 729-2858 before you visit due to recent closures. Goose Island State Park is located at 202 S. Palmetto St. near Rockport. The park has a total of 126 campsites, including 44 on the bayfront when the park is fully operational.

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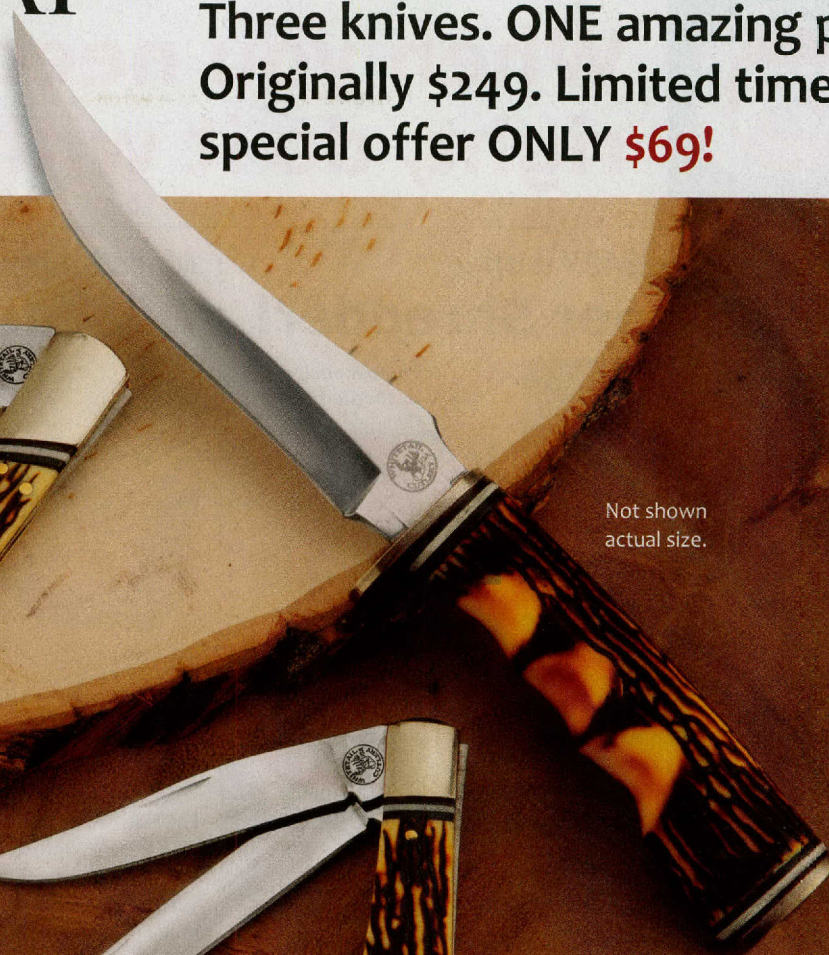
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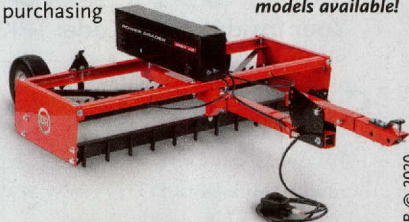


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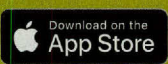
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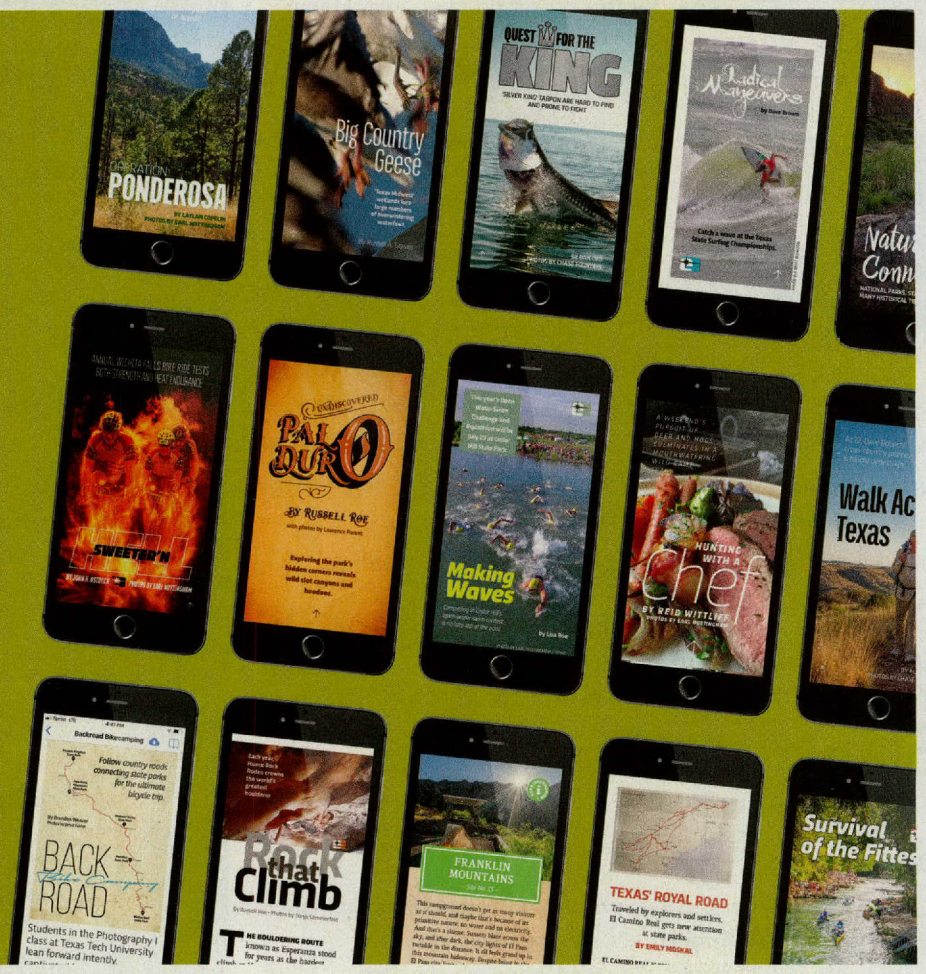
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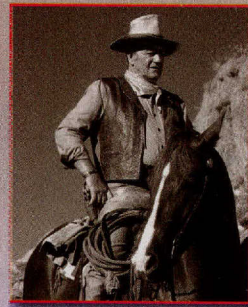
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A Legend at 'Steak': A Billy the Kid twist-up and the state's best steak make Hico more than a hiccup.

by **John H. Ostdick**
photos by **Earl Nottingham**

Most weekdays and many Saturdays, a smattering of cars dot the parking spots in downtown Hico, their passengers strolling its quiet sidewalks.

I'd always thought of the Central Texas town (population 1,341), known mostly for its contested connection to Billy the Kid and pies from a local cafe, as a hiccup for the traffic flowing into Hamilton County and south on U.S. 281 toward the Hill Country. Pass through on a particular spring weekend and you'll

find that Hico's more than a hiccup.

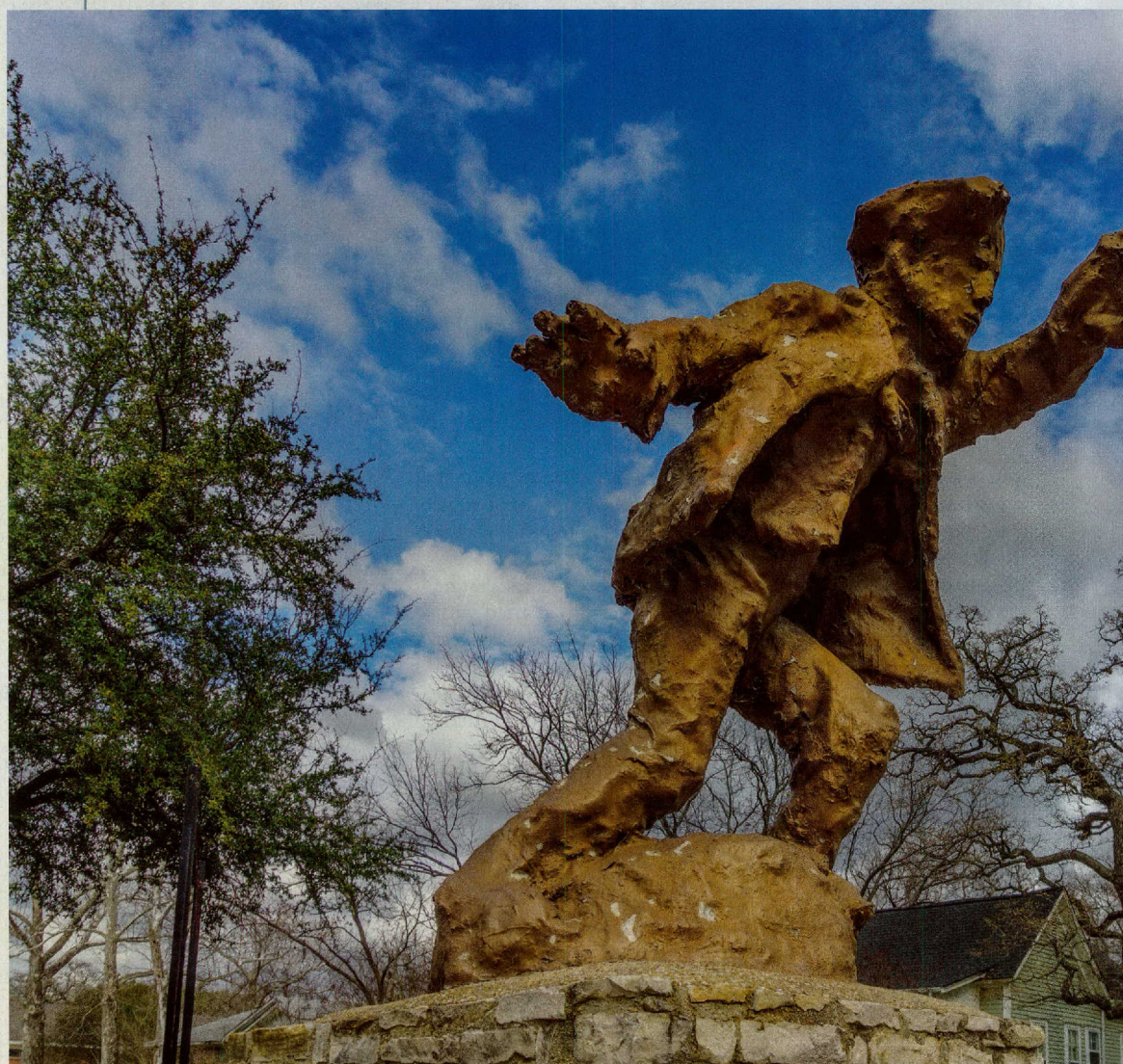
On the third Saturday of May each year (but not 2020), Hico teems with several thousand visitors and more than 100 Texas Steak Cookoff competitors (canceled for this year). Amateur backyard chefs from throughout the Southwest (102 of them for the 16th annual event

in 2019) compete for cash prizes and bragging rights for cooking the state's best steak.

At midday on cookoff Saturday, Hico's stone-building downtown proffers a friendly mix of aromatic cooker smoke on the wind. There's a tempting array of appetizers from street-lined shade canopies, musical groups of various ilk (including polka and wandering mariachis), artisan vendors, local shopping, craft beer and Texas wine tasting.

The town of Carlton (population 70) lies 10 miles to the southwest, and their volunteer fire department

HICO



serves nearby Hamilton, Erath and Comanche counties. Today, those volunteers are stoking fires as they man a food station.

A stream of visitors (\$10 a shot for a feeding-frenzy-rights bracelet) snatches up delicate, halved egg rolls, one filled with cream cheese and jalapeños and another with caramelized onions that taste like baked apples.

A boisterous Danny Kennedy engages visitors popping the appetizers into their mouths as he bounds forward from the deep fryers in the rear of the booth to hawk his pork skins.



“Make sure you come back soon,” he entreats us. “I’m just about to start my swine hides. You don’t want to miss them!”

Navigating the downtown streets is akin to a lazy-river ride sans inner tube, floating along from one savory stop to another. Everything vies for attention, in bite-size nirvana or served in small boats. Jalapeño poppers. Smoked sausage. Petite pulled-pork sandwiches. Bacon-wrapped cheesy potato bites (Team Poncho & Lefty \$1,000 category winner in 2019). Peanut butter and jalapeño on a cracker. Mudbugs boiled with corn, potatoes and sausage. Belts were loosened to make room for more.

The weekend festivities climax with a contestants-prepared evening steak dinner (for \$25 more) and the announcement of the cookoff winners. (Temple-based J&J Cookers earns the top steak award and \$3,500 prize money. The Kerr Cattle team nabs the “People’s Choice” award, serving an impressive 317 steaks in two hours.)

Finding cookoff lodging for the weekend, which includes a “taste of Hico” and street dance Friday evening, requires planning because of the town’s limited options (the nearby towns of Hamilton and Glen Rose may provide alternatives). Other weekends, opportunities to stay overnight in Hico will likely prove simpler.

The town, rebuilt in mandated stone at the turn of the century after a fire consumed most of its downtown, represents an intriguing blend of the old and reinvented.



The Old Rock House, located just a few blocks from downtown, is a restored 1874 abode nestled in a 100-year-old live oak grove. Guests have free rein of its three well-appointed bedrooms and two baths. During my stay, guest perks include breakfast coupons at the pie-centric Koffee Kup Family Restaurant (it bakes as many as 100 a day).

Early on a Friday afternoon, a here-again, gone-again breeze lightens a stroll through Hico City Park, about 50 acres that include playgrounds, a horseshoe pit and disc golf course.

The smell of freshly cut fields lingers in the air. High upon the front wall of converted grain silos, a sign

The Billy the Kid Museum (above) explores Hico's claim to the Western outlaw legend, whose statue stands in town (opposite).



hawks “Poultry & Eggs,” a vestige of days gone by. The Texas Central Line (part of the Katy Railroad) used to run through here when Hico was the Hamilton County rail shipping center.

Dave Bradley is out front working amid the thick aroma of wood putty he is applying to some restored window frames. Bradley and his wife, Kathy, opened the Siloville Climbing Gym in 2015. (“Even a bad day of climbing is better than the best day at work.”) They restored four abandoned grain silos — which haven’t been used to store wheat, rye or oats since the 1970s — drilling hundreds of holes in the

walls and then building the climbing anchor holds.

Climbing is available inside (the interior space is 16 feet by 66 feet) and out. The cash-only access is by appointment, or during open climbing on Saturdays. Kathy does a kids climbing course on Thursdays, and has offered women-only nights. The site has obstacle, ninja and zipline courses as well.

“While many people might think that they need tremendous strength to climb a silo, climbing is foremost a thinking sport,” Dave says. “You need to process, ‘How do I want to move?’”

A typical warm Hico afternoon is a tad somnolent,

Clockwise from upper left: The Old Rock House is a vintage 1874 guest house; chocolates await shoppers at Wiseman House Chocolates; visitors can put the “I” in Hico; lunch at Two Clay Birds Garden Market includes tomato basil soup, squash casserole and hand pies.

Opposite: Grain silos see new life as climbing walls at Siloville Climbing Gym.

yet some earnest, industrious folks thrive.

Kevin and Holly Stahnke are such folk. Originally from Stephenville, they spent several years fighting Austin traffic before bringing their family here in 2016 to help “make the town funky,” Kevin says at the counter of their Two Clay Birds Garden Market.

The Stahnke crew (Holly is chief renovator) converted a 100-year-old structure that formerly housed an auto parts store into what they envision as an ag-tourism destination. The market is frequented by locals, farmers from surrounding counties and DFW-area folks who have become fans. All are

encouraged “to sit a spell,” and share old family recipes if they like.

On one such day, local renowned chocolatier Kevin Wenzel and his daughter Olivia drop in for a tomato pie and some bread for the family lunch.

Olivia is along to make sure their food haul includes Stahnke’s delectable cinnamon rolls. Banter ensues between the two Kevins.

Wenzel, who grew up working at his family’s The Dutchman Hidden Valley Country Store in Hamilton (the elk and beef jerky are outstanding), is a small-town success story. Since 1996, travelers have devoured the artist/chocolatier’s world-class chocolate treats (Wiseman House Chocolates) in photographer Rufus Frank Wiseman’s historical house here. Wenzel also does chocolate classes in his downtown production studio.

The Stahnkes raise chickens and harvest what they grow organically from non-GMO seed on their nearby farm. Today, lunch is pork posole with corn muffins or tomato pie, and baby arugula salad. Fresh-from-the-oven bacon-filled sourdough and pecan-crust cinnamon rolls are display-case temptresses.

“From the 1950s to 1980s, we as a society lost a generation of cooks to conveniences offered through mixes and processed foods,” Kevin says. He and Holly wanted a more connected, more organic way of living for themselves and five children.

“I’m a big fan of the slow-food movement because it gives me an excuse to be

slow,” he says, chuckling. “My theory is to prepare Southern comfort food with a little more quality ingredients and care. And then, I get out of the way.”

Hico perhaps remains best known for its contested claim on Billy the Kid.

While Fort Sumner, New Mexico, has long held that lawman Pat Garrett killed the young outlaw there in 1881, Hico cast its lot with a longtime local, best known as Brushy Bill Roberts.

Late in his life, Roberts maintained that he was Billy and had escaped the Garrett shooting into Mexico. He later ended up in Texas as Roberts, dying in the streets of Hico not from a rain of bullets but rather a heart attack in his 90s.

The alternative saga has provided fodder for various

books and publications, movies and the television show *Unsolved Mysteries*. There is no doubt, however, within the walls of the Billy the Kid Museum.

“Billy the Kid is Hico’s number one attraction,” says museum director Sue Land, with 9,000 visitors annually.

Land recites a litany of reasons why Roberts was the Kid, fortified by a stack of Pennsylvania writer Daniel A. Edwards’ 2014 *Billy the Kid: An Autobiography*. Edwards conducted extensive research before concluding that the man who died in Hico in 1950 was indeed Billy.

In 2015, Edwards walked through the door of the Hico museum.

“We had never laid eyes on him before,” Land says. “He introduced himself and gave us a copy of his book.”

MORE INFO HEADER:

TEXAS STEAK COOKOFF

texassteakcookoff.com

☞ The 2020 Texas Steak Cookoff has been canceled. Organizers promise to return in 2021.

THE OLD ROCK HOUSE

oldrockhousehico.com

SILOVILLE CLIMBING GYM

siloville.com

TWO CLAY BIRDS GARDEN MARKET

twoclaybirds.com

WISEMAN HOUSE

wisemanhousechocolates.com

BILLY THE KID MUSEUM

billythekidmuseum.com



COFFEE TABLE TRAVEL

Spending a lot more time at home, but dreaming of adventures to come? Us, too. Let your imagination fly across Texas as you lose yourself in the incredible work of some of our favorite photographers. Coffee table books offer the opportunity to experience the full drama and detail of this inspiring art. All are easy to find online or at your favorite bookstore.

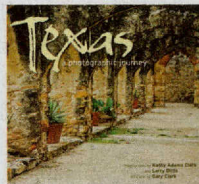
by Louie Bond



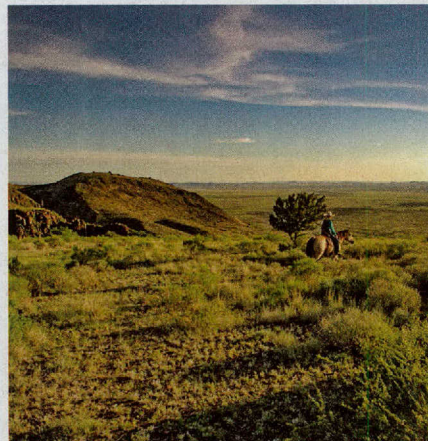
LARRY DITTO / KAC PRODUCTIONS

TEXAS: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY

BY KATHY ADAMS CLARK, LARRY DITTO AND GARY CLARK



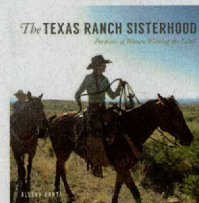
These three names are familiar to our readers as wildlife photographers and writers. Mention Larry Ditto's name to any birder or bird photographer and they're immediately reverent. In this visual feast of Texas' treasures, the photographers expand our horizons to the edges of their portfolios and the borders of the state.



ALYSSA BANTA

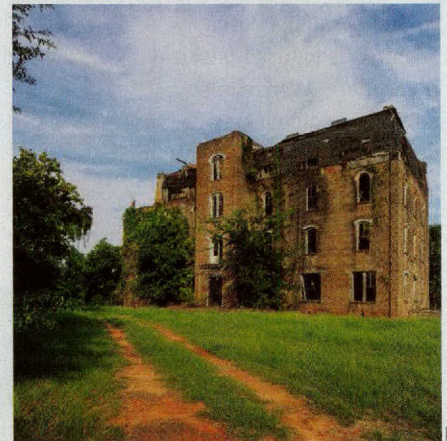
TEXAS RANCH SISTERHOOD: PORTRAITS OF WOMEN WORKING THE LAND

BY ALYSSA BANTA



In a fresh and timely take on Texas ranching, photojournalist and writer Alyssa Banta brings us an intimate portrait of

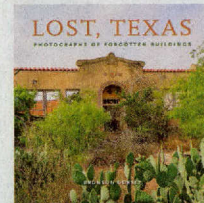
the ranch women who helped build this state. Banta spent a year following a dozen modern women ranchers through their grueling daily routines, the sweat and blood and dirt and grit providing a contrast to the grandeur of the landscape.



BRONSON DORSEY

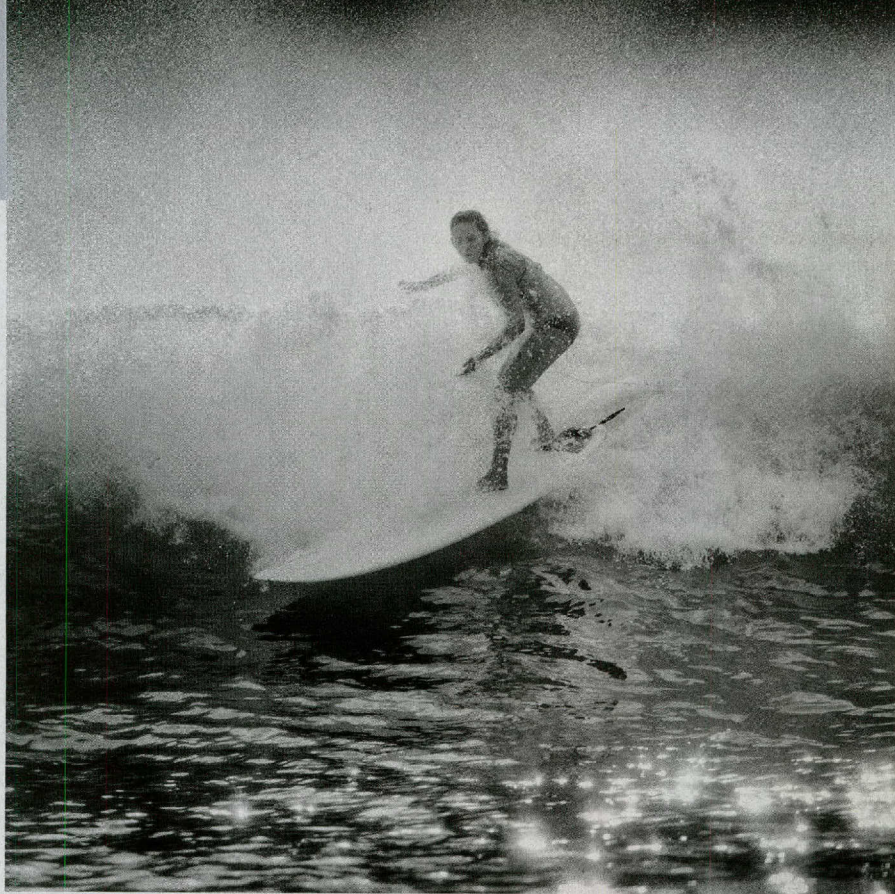
LOST, TEXAS: PHOTOGRAPHS OF FORGOTTEN BUILDINGS

BY BRONSON DORSEY

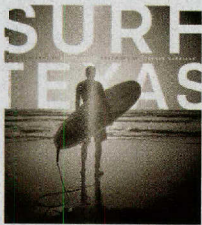


Can you see the beauty in an old, dilapidated barn along the highway, daring gravity by trying to stand upright one more

day? If so, *Lost, Texas*, with its array of haunting images of abandoned buildings, will appeal to you. Whether it's one of the lucky few to be rejuvenated or one that's falling down in graceful decomposition, these structures have stories to tell.

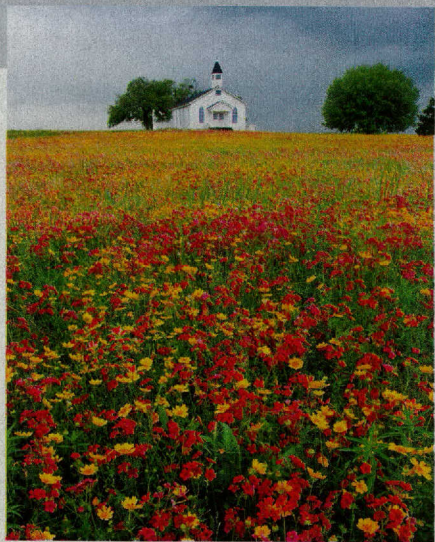


KENNY BRAUN



SURF TEXAS
BY KENNY BRAUN

Surfing's a sporting passion as classic as a Beach Boys harmony or the driving guitar leads of The Ventures. Whether you like to ride the waves or watch from the beach, longtime Texas surfer and fine art photographer Kenny Braun is the perfect guide to present this photo essay of surfing and the surf culture of our Gulf Coast.



LAURENCE PARENT

TEXAS: PORTRAIT OF A STATE
BY LAURENCE PARENT



Open just about any Texas (or Arizona) magazine and turn to a page with a breathtaking landscape. Chances are the credit reads

Laurence Parent. He's certainly filled our pages for decades, providing many covers as well. In this book, Parent shows us the "Five States of Texas," reflecting the wide variety of geography here.



LARRY D. MOORE



THE TEXAS POST OFFICE MURALS: ART FOR THE PEOPLE
BY PHILIP PARISI

Five dozen murals adorn post offices and federal buildings across Texas. Have you seen one? In much the way *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine was created during World War II to inspire people, this New Deal program employed the best-known artists to paint everyday people, Texas history and wildlife for display in public places. The art inspired and comforted those worn down by the Great Depression.

This lighthouse, which opened in 1857, was one of the original Texas stations of the U.S. Lighthouse Service built to guide ships along the Texas coast. It survived wars and hurricanes before being decommissioned in the 1950s. Texas' first paddling trail was established in 1999 in the surrounding estuary, sloughs and back lakes.

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

Photo by Brandon Jakobeit

TOOLS: Canon EOS 5D with 24-105mm f/2.8L II USM lens, f/4.0 @ 1/50 second, ISO 3200.

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