

The SNAKES of TEXAS

BY GEORGE GETSCHOW

TEXAS

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THE
TRAVEL
MAGAZINE
OF TEXAS

Wild Things

CAPTURING
the STATE'S
UNTAMED
BEAUTY



MARCH 2020

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EDITOR'S
NOTE

Wild Beauty

I know winter has left the Hill Country when golden patches of flowers appear seemingly overnight in my Driftwood neighborhood, decorating yards and lining roadways, like nature's highlighter heralding the arrival of spring. The flowers are so ubiquitous they're called DYCs, or darn yellow composites, and last year's crop was particularly robust. My commute was filled with a lot more cheer than normal as I took in the increasing bounty of brilliant color each morning.

This month we're celebrating spring's arrival by exploring Texas' natural beauty in its impressive variety. Along with our perennial wildflower coverage, we go on safari in pursuit of the state's wildlife with stunning photographs by Contributing Editor E. Dan Klepper. In one of our cover features, Pulitzer Prize-finalist George Getschow examines his fraught relationship with the state's most feared native inhabitants—venomous snakes—and comes away with more than a begrudging respect for the maligned vipers.

Along with the 23 pages devoted to wildflowers in this issue, we'll toast to Texas' wild beauty all spring with weekly web-exclusive content. Sign up for our free email newsletter at texashighways.com/newsletter to receive all of our wildflower features. These include a step-by-step grower's guide, 12 scenic drives to feed your wildflower wanderlust in every corner

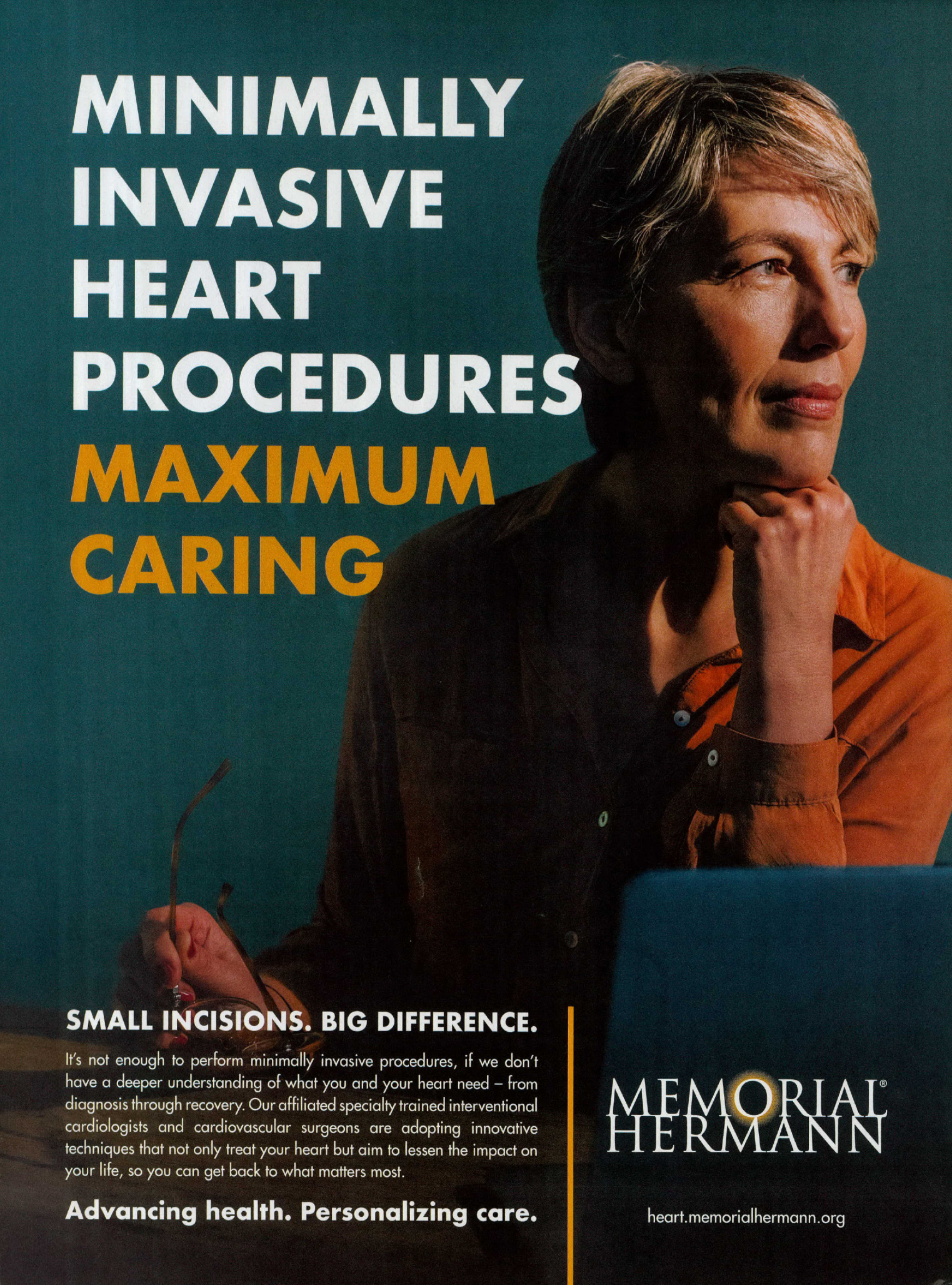


Purple Indian paintbrush, or *Castilleja purpurea*, decorate Tandy Hills Natural Area—a 160-acre indigenous remnant prairie in Fort Worth.

of the state, five lodgings where you can wake up with wildflowers, inventive prickly pear recipes, and more. We'll also update our reader-submitted wildflower photo gallery all season. Visit our website for details on how to send us shots of your favorite spring blooms.

Emily R Stone

EMILY ROBERTS STONE
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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MARCH

42

Natural Beauties

Wildflowers radiate romance and imbue spring's arrival with a sense of hope. Marvel at these stunning photographs of the state's most beautiful blooms.

56

The Great Historic Hotel Revival

Historic hotels are coming back to life after decades of dormancy. The statewide movement to revitalize these buildings aims to resurrect history, one refurbished foyer at a time.

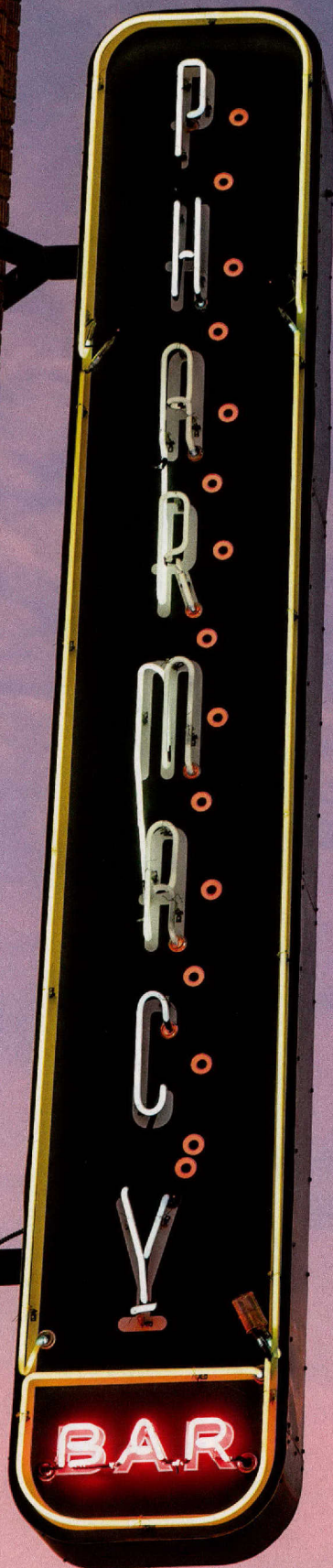
By Clayton Maxwell

64

The Wild Snakes of Texas

Snakes heed no boundaries: They make their homes in our cities, on our land, at our parks, and in our backyards. One option is to fear them. Another is to learn to live in harmony.

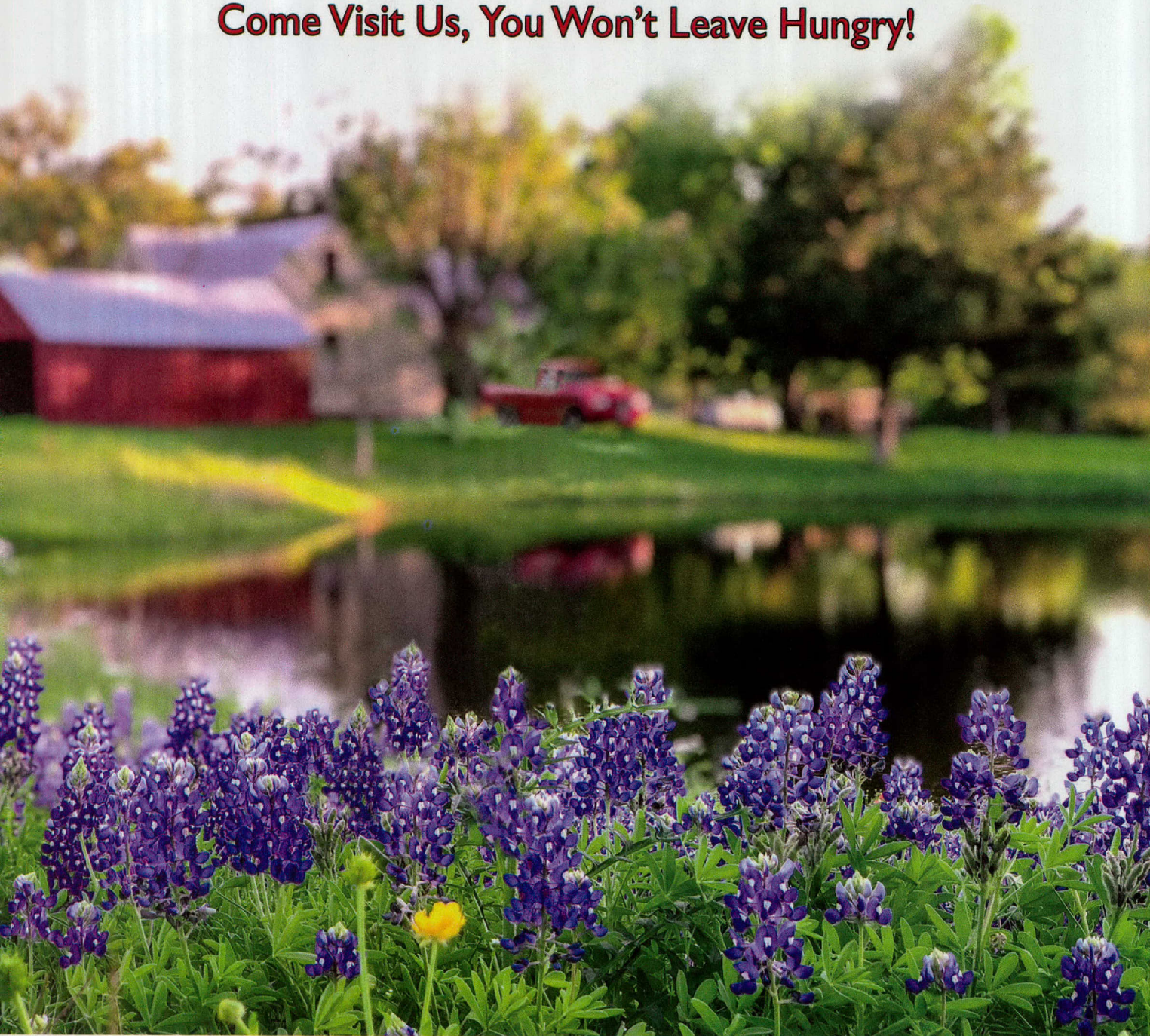
By George Getschow



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MARCH

9

Merge

10

Sightseer

12

My Hometown

Jenny Morgan turns the tables on Shamrock

14

Open Road

Memories surface in the quiet of a South Texas ranch

21

Drive/Wild

Take a safari to see animals in their natural habitats

28

Drive/Detour

A Carmine museum honors the history of Texas hoops

34

Drive/Ticket

One photography exhibit, two distinct Selenas

36

Drive/Atlas

Native wildflower seeds are making a comeback



ON THE COVER

Photo by Joel Salcido



73



80

38

Getaway

Kerrville indulges in the arts, Hill Country style

73

Plates

Intricate antiques adorn Tillie's in Dripping Springs; lavender cookies; the sweet life of a beekeeper

84

Texana

Barbed wire and the taming of the American West

91

Events

Celebrate Celtic heritage in Sherman

101

Daytripper

Chet Garner goes nuts for Seguin

103

Speaking of Texas

Texas State Poet Laureate Emmy Pérez on writing and the Rio

105

Vintage

The winner of our wildflower photo contest

Visit texashighways.com for more.

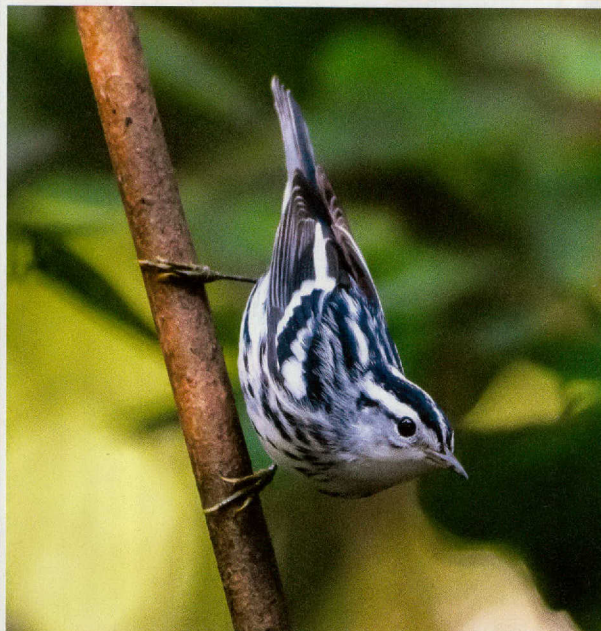
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Behind the Story



Writer George Getschow's attitude toward snakes before reporting the feature story "The Wild Snakes of Texas" (Page 64) was a bit sour. Over the span of 11 years, he, his wife, and his son all experienced life-threatening copperhead bites right outside their home. "There's that old Texas saying, 'The only good snake is a dead snake,'" he says. "That was my attitude too." His perspective shifted after he met with dedicated herpetologists and "snake relocators," who led him on a dozen or so excursions into snake-infested areas. "It was one of the most fascinating reporting adventures I'd ever been involved with," says Getschow, who was a 1984 Pulitzer Prize finalist as a reporter for *The Washington Post*. While he still doesn't feel fully comfortable around snakes, he advocates for letting the wild ones stay wild. "Before we built the big cities and the big freeways and developed Texas as rapidly as we did, this was their territory," he says. "We're trespassing on their territory; they're not trespassing on ours."

Featured Contributors



Theresa DiMenno

DiMenno, whose work appears in "Natural Beauties" (Page 42), as well as this month's Getaway about Kerrville, is a self-taught photographer and a storyteller at heart. Spring in Texas is her favorite shooting season.

"Wildflower season in Texas is a glorious occasion," she says. "Budding life is a symphony of rebirth, rejuvenation, openness, awareness, connection." Look for her "Spring in Texas" notecard collection in the Texas Highways Mercantile this spring.



Antonio Ruiz-Camacho

In his essay "In the Valley of Mirrors" (Page 14), Antonio Ruiz-Camacho traveled to his friend's remote ranch in South Texas. He dreaded run-ins with rattlers and scorpions. "I kept waiting for them to show up, but they never did," he says. "They probably know one of my dreams is to own my own Texas ranch one day." Ruiz-Camacho's debut short story collection, *Barefoot Dogs*, won the Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Salon*, and elsewhere.

Photo: (top) Larry Ditto

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ADVERTISING
AJR Media Group
800-383-7677
texashighways@ajrmediagroup.com
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PUBLISHER
Andrea Lin

ART
Creative Director
Mark Mahorsky

Art Director
Ashley Burch

Associate Art Director
Chris Linnen

Photo Editor
Brandon Jakobeit

Contributing Photographers
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Theresa DiMenno, John Dyer, Sean Fitzgerald,
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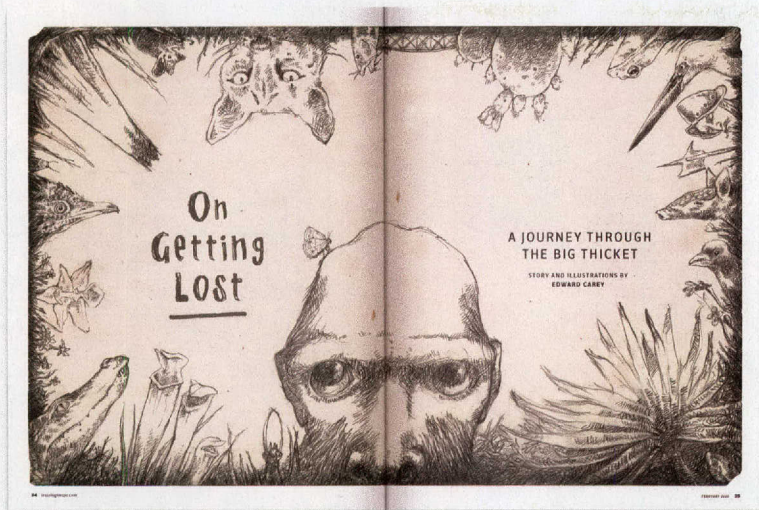
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MERGE



Thanks for your story on the Big Thicket. I have traveled the state and the U.S. many times, but nothing compares to this special and spooky place. It is in a world of its own; it draws you to it. If you're not careful, you too can get lost in the Big Thicket, but it's worth it.

Johnny Hancock, San Antonio

Big Thicket Revelations

When I read the bio on Edward Carey, I thought, "Now, that book sounds interesting." Then I started my journey through the pages and got to "On Getting Lost." After reading it I just had to stop and send this note. Thanks for the introduction to this fantastic artist and storyteller. Can't wait for the book.

Perry Roberts, Victoria

The Long View

I devoured the recent issue with rich and colorful pages revealing East Texas to your readers. Thanks for spending time in this neck of the woods. Next time you're this way, let me show off the new and ever-growing Longview Arboretum and Nature Center. And, if you get this way January-May, participate in one of the many culturally rich events designed to celebrate Longview's sesquicentennial.

Kimberly Fish, Longview

Just Missed Jasper

Don't know how you can dedicate an entire issue to East Texas and disregard Lake Sam Rayburn and adjacent communities such as Jasper. Lake Sam Rayburn hosts over 300 fishing tournaments a year and is considered the best bass lake in the nation. Plus, the adjacent city of Jasper has several historic buildings, a terrific courthouse, a museum, and some pretty darn good restaurants.

Lois Lamberty, Jasper

Ranch Reverie

The "Channing" article by Jason Boyett in the January 2020 edition, about Bob Cates' determination to preserve the original location of the XIT Ranch Office, made my Texas heart sing. My grandfather, Floyd E. Aten of Round Rock and Tyler, was a first cousin of Ira Aten. Ira's background in law enforcement made him the perfect candidate to become the manager of the

troublesome Escarbada Section of the XIT ranch for 10 years, beginning in 1895.

Ann C. Rogers, DFW

First Travel Writer

Clayton Maxwell's article on Cabeza de Vaca ["A Golden Journey," January] placed me on the journey with him. Her detail and intimacy of what he may've felt was a reading delight! I reviewed *La Relación* and look forward to hearing more about the early history of Texas. Thanks for a great article!

Justin Meyer, El Paso

Aspirational Aviator

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for including the bodaciously inspirational "The Fate of Flight 1380" in the January issue. I was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam and relate to the emergency situation. Tammie Jo Shults is a saintly role model for all of us!

Bill McCalister, San Antonio



TAKING THE TRAIN

We enjoyed our trip on the Texas Eagle from Dallas to Chicago ["I Hear the Train a Comin'," January]. We got the roomette. It was fantastic with top-notch service. It's a pricey endeavor but worth it to do at least once in your lifetime.

Traci Ratliff, Shreveport, Louisiana

PEACH SWEETS

Made me think of the peach cobblers my great-grandmother made with Weatherford peaches ["The Dough You Know," January]. They are the best.

Sheryl Liskow, Houston

CHRISTMAS COCOA

I got a SRSly bar in my Christmas stocking and was enjoying it as I came across this article ["Craft Cocoa," January], which gave me some great information about this interesting local business.

Diana Caldwell Saunders, Austin





Hoodoo Haven

Spring often arrives earlier in Big Bend National Park than in other parts of Texas. After winter rains, the canyons and arroyos of the Chihuahuan Desert fill with color such as these desert marigolds, which grew last March at the foot of hoodoos in Tornillo Creek. Though this past winter didn't see much rain, bluebonnets popping up along roadsides in late January suggest the possibility of a bountiful wildflower season. Springtime visitors to the park should keep an eye out for tall Big Bend bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush along with blooming yucca, ocotillo, and cacti.





A Panhandle Clover

In Shamrock, Jenny Morgan keeps her hometown spinning with her vinyl record shop

By Jason Boyett



MURALS LIKE THOSE decorating Jenny Morgan's record shop are a hit with Route 66 tourists.

Jenny Morgan has lived all over Texas, from her college days at Angelo State University in San Angelo to stints in Austin, DFW, and Amarillo. In 2007, a desire to raise her family in a small town brought Morgan back to Shamrock, the town of her birth. Along Interstate 40, just 15 miles west of Oklahoma, Shamrock is known for its Route 66 heritage, the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration, and—increasingly—for Morgan's record store. In 2017, she opened Spinning Jenny's House of Music, refurbishing a midcentury service station that had stood vacant for at least 20 years. The vinyl shop is just a block away from the U-Drop Inn, an art deco Route 66 landmark that now houses the town's visitor center. Morgan says tourists come through her shop every day. "I never knew how much this road is traveled," she says. "It's insane."

Musical Link

"They say every failed musician ends up opening a record store. When I was younger, I played the piano. I would play for hours. I was really into rock. I was big into Michael Jackson and Prince. I hate to admit this, living in Texas, but I was such a rebel here: Everyone liked country, but I just refused to listen to it. I like pretty much every genre now."

You Can Go Home

"People say there's always so much more that the big cities offer. I understand that, as far as entertainment and opportunities for kids. But I really like the fact that everyone here knows each other. They care for each other and watch out for each other's kids. If someone suffers an illness or a loss, the whole town comes together."

The Record Store Bug

"I've worked retail all my life and have always been involved in music and booking bands. All but one of my kids had graduated or were about to graduate, and I was wanting to do something. I had been following the vinyl resurgence, and one day I was doing laundry and thought: 'Oh my gosh, a record store.' My stomach just dropped because I knew that's what I had to do."

Tourists' Delight

"We're located just east of the U-Drop, Shamrock's crown jewel. That's what the tourists are here for. A lot of them come into Spinning Jenny's and ask, 'What is this doing here?' Well, it's because I live here. The coolest thing is

that everybody who comes in is always in such a great mood. They usually have a story about where they first listened to a record. Everyone remembers the first vinyl they got. Nobody remembers their first MP3."

Route 66 Mystique

"We've got a pin map so our visitors can pin where they came from. We've had people from Russia, China, Australia, off the coast of Africa. Route 66 is a big travel destination for Europeans. What I hear back from them is how nice the people here are. And they love the art around town. We've got lots of murals."

St. Patrick's Celebration

"We need to be thankful that our founding townspeople thought to do something like this. It's such a great tradition. It brings in thousands of people. We always like to have a show at Spinning Jenny's on the Saturday of St. Patrick's weekend. We call it The Big Dance Warm-Up Party, with a rib cookoff, live music, and an open bar before The Big Dance at the Shamrock Community Center."

Slowing Down

"It's definitely a slower pace than the big city. We have time for each other. When I lived in a big city, I didn't feel the sense of community that I do here. You didn't see people you know very often because everyone's so busy, or there's always a commute. I live out in the country, south of town. I live 9 miles away, but my commute is 12 minutes. People in a big city don't know what they're missing." 🐾



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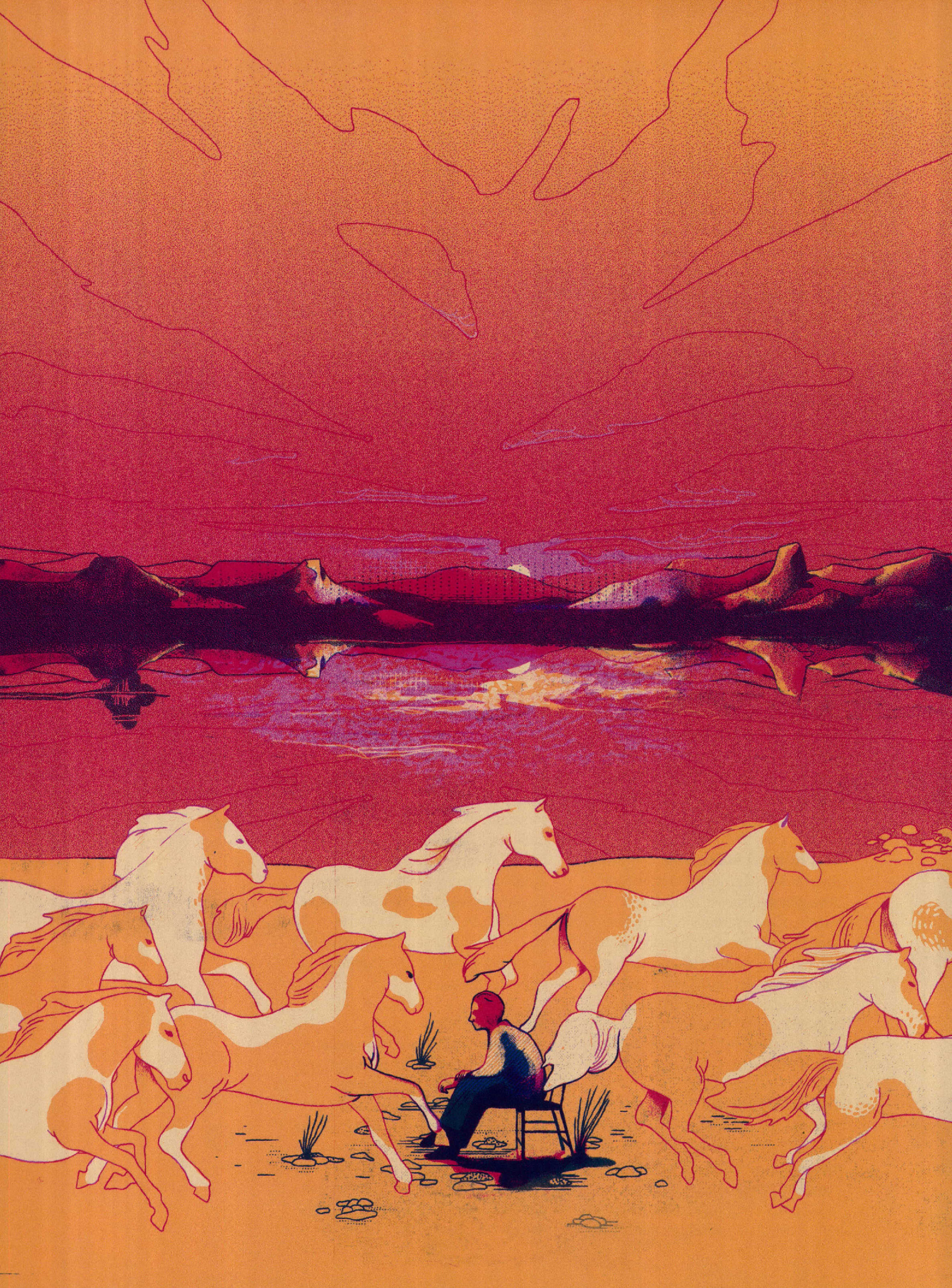
MARQUEE EVENTS:

Shamrock hosts the official St. Patrick's Day Celebration for the state of Texas, March 13-15. The event features a parade, beard contest, carnival, classic car show, and community dance. shamrocktexas.net



MAP IT:

Spinning Jenny's House of Music, 201 E. 12th St.



In the Valley of Mirrors

A son returns to the border and makes peace with the spirit of his father

By Antonio Ruiz-Camacho

M

Memory is the only pickup truck you can drive back to places that no longer exist. In the spring of 2019, a friend offered to let me spend the month of April at his ranch in a flat pocket of South Texas Brush Country between Cotulla, Laredo, and Eagle Pass known as the Golden Triangle (not to be confused with the Golden Triangle framing Beaumont, Orange, and Port Arthur). There, he explained, I would have the space and peace of mind required to finish the novel I'd spent the last seven years writing.

I'd be on my own at a small cabin away from the ranch's busy headquarters, tucked in the corner of an endless

maze of mesquite, hard-soil trails, barbed-wire fences, and man-made ponds locals call "tanks." It is an active ranch that raises horses and cattle, a place where vivacious chickens and feral cats roam around freely. But if you stay quiet in the vast expanse long enough, you might also spot *paisanos*, owls, deer, turtles, wild hogs, even mountain lions more than once—or, maybe, never. Few ecosystems are as deceptive as the brush land.

By the time my friend's invitation hit my inbox, the novel was howling with life, haunting me for an ending, demanding that I come closer. It would be the first time I'd spend time alone in the middle of a sprawling vastness a few miles away from the border with Mexico, the country I was born and raised in. I didn't give too much thought to the prospect of living so close to Mexico for the first time since I left in 2001; I was just intrigued by the ranch's idiosyncrasies. Whenever I'd go out for walks, I'd have to wear a vest—olive green with bright orange accents, like those worn by hunters—so I was easily identifiable as a legitimate guest.

There was a small town nearby: Catarina, population 118. But if I wanted to shop for groceries or eat out, I'd have to drive a bit farther away, in the opposite direction, to Carrizo Springs, which is about 45 times larger than Catarina and yet home to fewer than 6,000 people. Like so many small towns in Texas, both places rattled me with homesickness the moment I heard their Spanish names, as if I'd been to these towns before and had long neglected them. As if my absence marked my relationship with this corner of the state I had never been to before.

I accepted my friend's invitation because, after nearly a decade plagued by second starts and bewildering uncertainty, I was very close to putting an end to the book. I just had to spend time on my own, deep-diving into my recollections of my formative years in Mexico City in the '90s, a decade marked by social unrest, neoliberalism, and the inception of

I struggle to claim this land as my own, but my two countries were once one, and I wonder what that says about the state of my home: my home *longing* and my home *losing*.

NAFTA. These elements defined my history of the country. Being alone at a ranch, away from Austin and the tangible world, was a gift sent from a parallel dimension, where working a full-time job, waking up next to my wife every morning, and sending my kids off to college weren't nearly as important as writing the closing sentence of a story about the lost rage of youth, the invincibility of grief.

When I took my friend's offer, I was

simply looking forward to doing the thing writers yearn for the most and many other people dread—be on my own to inhabit an imaginary world of my own devising for as long as possible. I was not expecting to drive back to the country of my childhood and get sucked in.

The Golden Triangle reveals its rugged landscape as I drive farther south from San Antonio on Interstate 35. Road signs begin to announce otherworldly, unquestionably Texan names foreigners might be tempted to dismiss as fictional latitudes taken out of a Robert Rodriguez movie: Bigfoot, Natalia, Devine, San Francisco Perez. Around Moore, mesquites and prickly pears start to replace the live oaks of capricious shapes that clouded my vision for the last 30 or 40 miles, their trunks twisted so wickedly you could stop questioning your faith.

The earth flattens out and the surrounding greenery pales as though time were moving backward. The cellular connection grows spotty, and 18-wheelers from far-off peripheries like Lubbock or Minnesota dominate the suddenly lonesome interstate. State troopers stay busy issuing traffic tickets to mavericks who've failed to realize they've long left Central Texas and its bustle behind.

The sky and the land expand galactically as I approach the line that divides the country that used to be home from the country that is home now, and I can't wrap my head around the limits of this frontier. I struggle to claim this land as my own, but my two countries were once one, and I wonder what that says about the state of my home: my home *longing* and my home *losing*.

How many more unforthcoming residents of this space-in-between are



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echoing my pang right this minute? Why, even though I've lived in Austin since 2004, hasn't this question kept me up at night until now? You get old when the unanswerable questions slide to the center, when you begin to search for the cure for heartache in history books.

Once you get off I-35 around Dilley, 70 miles south of San Antonio, the change of topography is abrupt. Secondary roads become an endless blade that slits the earth along the brush land. They grow indistinguishable from one another save for the puzzling inconsistency of speed limits on these seemingly identical two-way roads. Why can you drive 75 mph on Texas 85 but only 55 on Ranch Road 2688 if both look the same?

Every now and then you drive past a solitary oil well spiking out of the sea of mesquite. Then there are the entrances to ranches that announce their names on

exquisitely rendered wrought-iron frames, names that remind me how hard it is to write fiction about places charged with multiple realities:

ROD RANCH
RANCHO ROJO
QUIEN SABE RANCH

"I am wondering what time you might arrive," my friend had emailed me while we were still working out the final details of my visit. My original plan was to get to the ranch on a Monday night. "Given you're driving at the end of the day from Austin, it will probably be after dark, which has its own challenges. Every fence and gate looks the same at night on the road, even for people who live here."

That convinces me to leave early Tuesday morning instead. Around noon on a glaring day, I pull by a convenience store in Big Wells and text my friend that I'll arrive in 20 minutes. It is early April, but

it feels like late May because of the heat. It is 2019 but it could be 2007—or 1999, or 1985 for all I know; it's as if time moved in circles around here. A dilapidated, seemingly abandoned gas station across the road still announces a gallon of unleaded at \$3.10, a sobering reminder that the past is not always worth longing for. The store, the station, the one-story houses nearby—everything sizzles with the melancholy Kodak colors of the Jimmy Carter years of my youth.

Sure enough, I drive up and down the road a couple of times before I find the gate to my friend's ranch. He is there to greet me in his pickup truck. As I follow him in, my SUV tumbling up and down the dusty path, the sight of his cowboy-hat profile outlined through the rear window hits me like a memory I had forgotten.

Three horses are hanging around, nibbling at the patches of grass that surround



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the cabin, when we pull up to the front porch. A few feet yonder, branchy trees with ebony trunks and parrot-colored leaves, trees as tall as NBA players, dominate the horizon. The towering greenery—a wild quilt made of mesquites and black brushes and *guajillos*—grabs me right away. These thorny, arboreal creatures are not fruited maize plants, the kind you'd find at a ranch where corn is grown, but that's not what my instinct says. That's not what my heart says. It is not, in fact, a cornfield I'm surrounded by, but my gut won't abide.

In the upcoming days and weeks, I won't be able to look at the endless stretches of brush land that shelter the cabin without thinking they look like the *milpas*, or maize fields, at my father's ranch back in Acambay, 87 miles northwest of Mexico City. It still makes no sense, I tell myself as I type this six months after

None of the fauna I'll meet in the next 30 days is to be seen. All I see is the milpas looking back at me. I spend 10, 20 minutes just gawking out the window, like an idiot, hoping to see my father show up.

my stay, while Googling pictures of "cornfields" and "brush land."

Is it the bluest open sky above or the imposing height of the vegetation that reminded me of that other place, my family's land, where I spent so many weekends of my childhood? I don't know, but if hard evidence is what I'm after, the way my stomach seizes when I compare the search results is all I need to understand the

stubborn workings of nostalgia.

My friend excuses himself after showing me around. He reminds me to wear the hunter's vest if I step outside and to always watch for rattlers. He's aware the purpose of my visit is to be left alone so I can write. Once on my own, I unpack my bag. I set the phone-book-thick manuscript I need to revise on the desk, but I can't focus on the novel.

I approach the window, pull the blinds open, and peek out. The horses are gone. None of the fauna I'll meet in the next 30 days is to be seen. All I see is the milpas looking back at me. I spend 10, 20 minutes just gawking out the window, like an idiot, hoping to see my father show up.

There is a picture I must have taken in 1993 or '94, when I was still in college and black-and-white photography became a passion of mine almost

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as compulsive as writing was. I think I took the photo on a Sunday afternoon as we prepared for lunch. There are blurry shapes in the background that could be the tips of the maize plants, but I can't remember what time of year the photograph was taken, if the corn crop had been harvested that season, or if the maize stalks were still rising. The shapes could also be the weeping willows that surrounded one of the man-made water ponds that rested nearby the ranch's headquarters, which my father and the locals called *bordos* because their perimeter made them look like bumps bulging 7, 8, 9 feet aboveground.

The shades of gray above the darker blurry shadows in the background of the image are not the sky but instead the nearby hills where the Pan-American Highway, a network of roads that connects Alaska with Argentina, passes by. If you drove along that highway up the

hills, you'd get a panoramic view of the valley where the ranch sat and the mirror-like effect created by the many *bordos* that peppered it. That's why locals call it *el valle de los espejos*.

Ever since I can remember, my family and I spent every other Sunday at the ranch, in from Mexico City. We'd arrive before noon and take long hikes around the milpas and the *bordos*. Then friends of my father would join us for lunch and grill carne asada or make tacos with *barbacoa de borrego* or *carnitas*. The grown-ups would drink Cuba Libres (rum with Coke) or *París de Noches* (cognac with Coke, dad's mix of choice) while my cousins and I would run delirious around the ranch, chasing sheep or hiding in the guts of giant broken-down combine harvesters, as careless and free as you can only be for so long, never once thinking about the end of things.

In the early '90s, I was a budding photographer with artistic aspirations and an unformed vision, obsessed with close-ups and low apertures. When I took this picture of my father, there must have been a crowd of relatives and friends around, but I focused on him alone, never an easy task. Dad was restless, incapable of staying still, always surrounded by people, probably uneasy whenever alone. It is a fleeting snapshot, a bit out of focus even. But I can't think of any other picture of my father that reflected my relationship with him better than this one.

In the portrait, from a safe distance, he's not just looking at the camera; he's looking at me. You could tell if only you could see the mix of tenderness, bewilderment, and worry in his eyes. When I took it, I had no idea I'd become an immigrant a decade later. I had no idea this would be the one picture of my father

continued on Page 102



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Hemlock & Heather

OLD PIECES OF WEATHERED WOOD find new life in wall hangings by Kris and Kelley Denby of La Grange. This husband-and-wife team founded Hemlock & Heather in 2012. They offer wall art in the shape of Texas, inset with strips of painted wood. Their handcrafted pieces are made entirely from reclaimed materials, effortlessly blending rustic with modern. The pair's use of repurposed wood and paint is deeply rooted in their brand's story. "When we first started, we had very limited funds and had to get creative. We would go around and pick up broken furniture, wooden toys, fencing, siding, and other miscellaneous items and break them down to use in our pieces," Kelley says.



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THE AMERICAN
alligator is one
of Texas' safari
stars.

Pronghorn and Turtles and Bears, Oh My

On safari to see the wild animals of Texas

By E. Dan Klepper



BLACK BEARS
have made a
remarkable
comeback in
Texas.

A number of years ago I worked as a park ranger at several places in the Hill Country. My favorite duty was the night count, driving dirt roads and spotlighting active mammals in order to get an idea of their average numbers per acre. In the darkness, the landscape and the animals looked alien, disguised in shadowy natural camouflage except for eyes flashing and blinking in the spotlight, transforming the task for me into a safari in a not-so-foreign land.

At one point during my tenure, I went on a real safari. By then, I had developed a pretty good eye for spotting Texas wildlife and my newly acquired skills translated surprisingly well to the East African landscape. Crossing the grasslands searching for lions, hyenas, and lilac-breasted rollers seemed a lot like looking for mountain lions, coyotes, and painted buntings back home. The Texas terrain was just as beautiful and mysterious as the Serengeti; only the animals had changed.

The state offers many places to view wildlife, including state and national parks, state wildlife management areas, national wildlife refuges, and Nature Conservancy lands. Since my ranger days, I've endeavored to visit every one and see all the native species they protect. Here are some of my safari stars and the best places to witness them.

American Alligator

Travel the alligator-filled bayous of East Texas today and you'd never suspect that more than 60 years ago the alligator was nearing extinction. Now alligators thrive, thanks to federal and state intervention. This cold-blooded reptile, relatively unchanged over several hundred million years of evolution, has managed to survive all manner of threats, including overhunting.

"Alligators have had an amazing ability to adapt," says Mark Merchant, a biochemistry professor and alligator researcher. Merchant has spent the last 20 years studying alligators, including the population inhabiting the bayous near

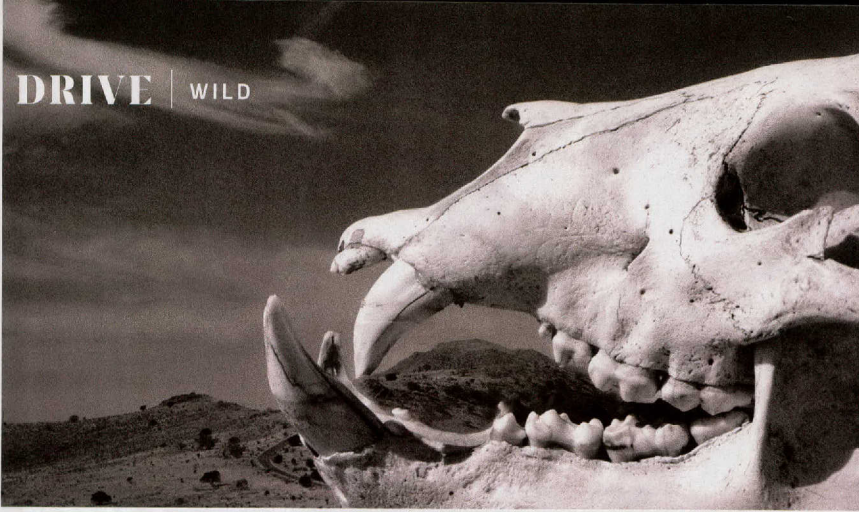
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“The return of the black bear is one of Big Bend National Park’s greatest success stories.”



Beaumont. Merchant catches alligators by hand and a snare pole and wrestles them onto a flat-bottomed airboat to collect blood samples for immunological studies before releasing them.

Brazos Bend State Park southwest of Houston provides the chance to view alligators from a much safer distance. Hiking trails circumnavigate bayous, sloughs, and small lakes, and feature observation towers for unobstructed panoramas of the park’s healthy alligator population. Alligators here lounge on logs, float in duckweed, and sun themselves on muddy shores.

Black Bears

Black bears could be found throughout the mountain ranges of West Texas up until the start of the 20th century, but hunting, trapping, and habitat loss reduced their numbers significantly and drove them back into the mountainous regions of northern Mexico. In the last few decades, though, they’ve made a reappearance in Big Bend National Park due to their protected status and an improved habitat. It’s a remarkable development that has surprised biologists.

“The return of the black bear is one of the park’s greatest success stories,” says Tom Vandenberg, Big Bend’s chief of interpretation. “The fact that bears have descended from high mountains in Mexico, traversed the desert, crossed the Rio Grande, and then made their way to Big

Bend speaks volumes about the park’s healthy habitat.”

Hikers occasionally spot black bears on trails like Pine Canyon and Lost Mine. If you see one, proceed with caution. Bear cub sightings start in the spring, and it can be a thrill to witness the rough-and-tumble play of the juveniles. Again, beware: The mother bear will also be close at hand, accompanied at times by other older female bears who won’t be afraid to scare you by grunting and rising up on hind legs to smell the air.

“If you see a bear, keep a safe distance,” Vandenberg warns. “Don’t approach the bear, and be prepared to scare it away by waving your arms, shouting, and throwing sticks if it begins walking in your direction.”



FROM TOP: The black bear’s enormous canines; bison descendants of Charles Goodnight’s original herd.



Sea Turtles

Take a trip to the beach to see the green sea turtle. The turtles are easy to locate, frequently swimming around coastal jetties. Try Mustang Island State Park, where the granite jetties are a favorite for turtles who like to munch the algae growing on the massive submerged blocks. Most of the turtles you'll see were born on beaches in Mexico and show up in Texas waters when they're a few years old. Jetties are some of the first places they're seen when they arrive.

"The green sea turtle was abundant during the 1800s, but by the 1890s their numbers were decimated from overharvest and severe freezes," says Donna Shaver, chief of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery at Padre Island National Seashore. "The good news is they're finally repopulating Texas waters."



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The pronghorn antelope is considered the fastest land animal on the continent.

The green turtle is just one of five sea turtle species that regularly visit the state's coastline. The loggerhead, the leatherback, the hawksbill, and Kemp's ridley also make the trip. The endangered Kemp's ridley, the world's smallest sea turtle, nests almost exclusively along the Gulf coasts of Texas and Mexico, where the Padre Island National Seashore's turtle research program closely monitors them. Each year, the national seashore and its conservation partners sponsor opportunities for the public to witness turtles hatch in coastal waters.

Prairie Dogs

The black-tailed prairie dog is perhaps our most entertaining safari star. Prairie dog populations once spread across most of West Texas, including a 25,000-square-mile town with over 400 million prairie dogs. Farms and ranches infringed on the animal's population and considerably reduced its numbers over the past 100 years, but a better understanding of its role in a healthy rangeland has helped to bring it back.

"Wildlife managers use reintroduction as a management tool to help prairie dogs establish new prairie dog colonies in areas where they historically existed," says Barbara Sugarman, graduate research assistant for the Borderlands

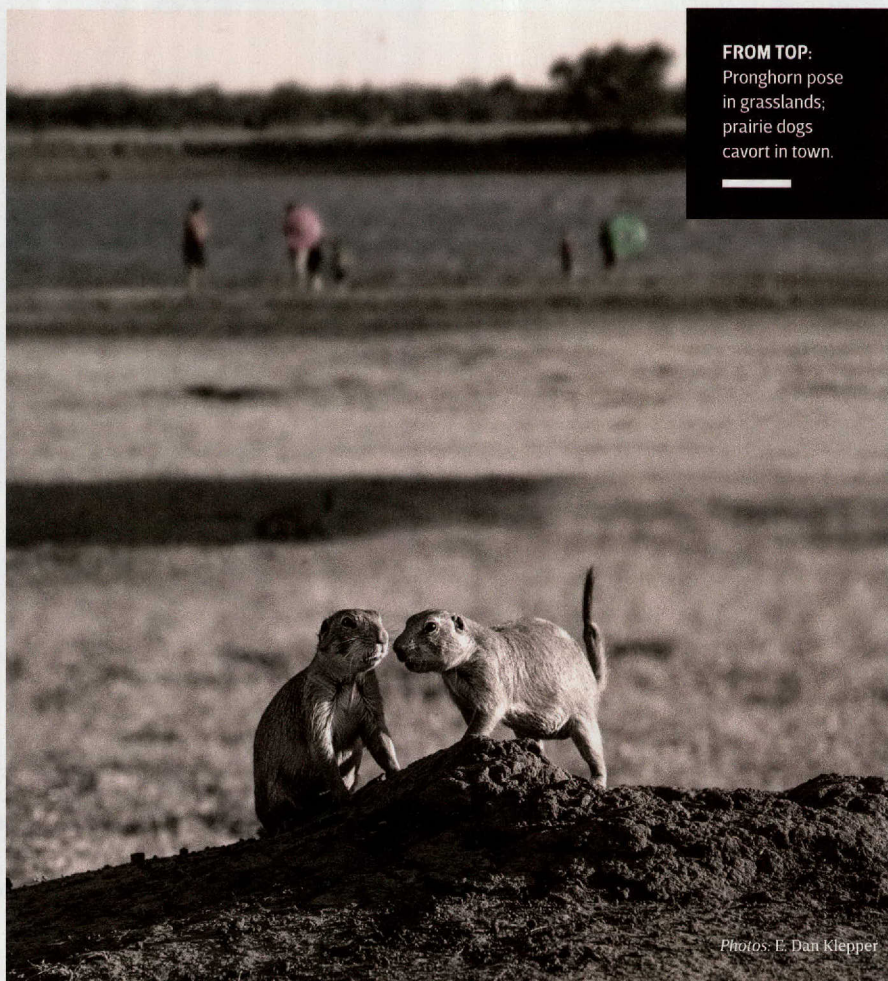
Research Institute at Sul Ross State University. "Reintroductions take surplus animals from a healthy prairie dog colony and move them to a new area with a suitable habitat."

The Panhandle's Caprock Canyons State Park & Trailway is among many locations across the state where prairie dog towns have been reintroduced. At Caprock, a sizable town of around 100 prairie dogs lies just beyond the Honey Flat campground. There, the prairie dogs' activities are in full view. These

social animals bark, groom, and forage all day. During spring and summer, juveniles engage in countless goofy antics.

Pronghorn Antelope

The pronghorn antelope, capable of reaching speeds in excess of 50 mph, is considered the fastest land animal on the continent. Once mistaken for a member of the goat family (the pronghorn is neither goat nor antelope), it is the only remaining species of the New World family *Antilocapridae*, a group of



FROM TOP:
Pronghorn pose in grasslands; prairie dogs cavort in town.



around a dozen similar species that once inhabited North America.

This graceful creature used to share the Great Plains with bison in equally historic numbers, reaching many millions, but populations dwindled to just over 10,000 by the 1900s. Around 2011, our state population numbered less than 3,000 pronghorn. Wildlife agencies including Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Borderlands Research Institute stepped up to save our pronghorn and, despite considerable obstacles, have managed to increase the population.

“Some years have been more successful than others for our restoration efforts,” says Thomas Janke, research associate with the Borderlands Research Institute. “Our greatest success has been collaborating with landowners and modifying fences to be more pronghorn friendly.”

West Texas is the likely place to see pronghorn, particularly along a stretch of US Highway 90 from the Mystery Lights Viewing Center between Alpine and Marfa to the art installation *Prada Marfa* just east of Valentine. Both the viewing center and art installation provide parking where you can safely stop and use your binoculars to scan the grasslands. Despite pronghorns’ speed, the animals will often remain motionless. Keep in mind, wildlife is unpredictable. Patience is key. 🐾

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For the Love of the Game

An antiques dealer realizes his hoop dreams with the Texas Basketball Museum

By Thomas Jones

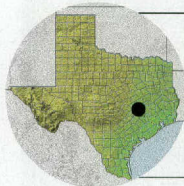
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Craig Ehlo's high school jersey; a ball signed by Temple Tucker; Shaq's shoe.

A tasty kolache at Weikel's Bakery. A porcelain flower vase at an antiques shop. Bluebonnets poking through the blackland soil after an early-spring rain. Oh, and a signed, size 23 Reebok basketball shoe once worn by NBA Hall of Famer Shaquille O'Neal.

Find all of these in Carmine (pronounced "Car-mean"), a town of about 250 that straddles the Fayette and Washington county lines along US 290. Patches of wildflowers, vintage finds, and Czech pastries have long drawn visitors seeking to stretch their legs midway on the drive between Houston and Austin. But the Texas Basketball Museum, opened in 2009, also offers travelers good reason to linger, especially as the NCAA tournament, or March Madness, commences March 17.

Bob Springer, former publisher of *Texas Basketball* magazine, founded the museum to trace the state's hoops history, from high school to the pros. Knickknacks and memorabilia are crammed inside the approximately 1,400-square-foot space. Many of the pieces in the collection have backstories Springer is eager to share. Take the giant sneaker donned by O'Neal, a military brat who landed in San Antonio in the 1980s and helped Cole High School win a state championship in 1989.

Springer once gave O'Neal some good publicity about one of his business ventures in *Texas Basketball* shortly after O'Neal began his NBA career in 1992. A few years later, at the Texas state basketball tournament, Springer approached O'Neal, a spectator at the tourney, about acquiring a shoe for the museum. Springer knew it would draw plenty of interest because O'Neal is beloved by fans. But the 7-foot-1 O'Neal, who is undoubtedly inundated with such requests, shrugged off the plea much



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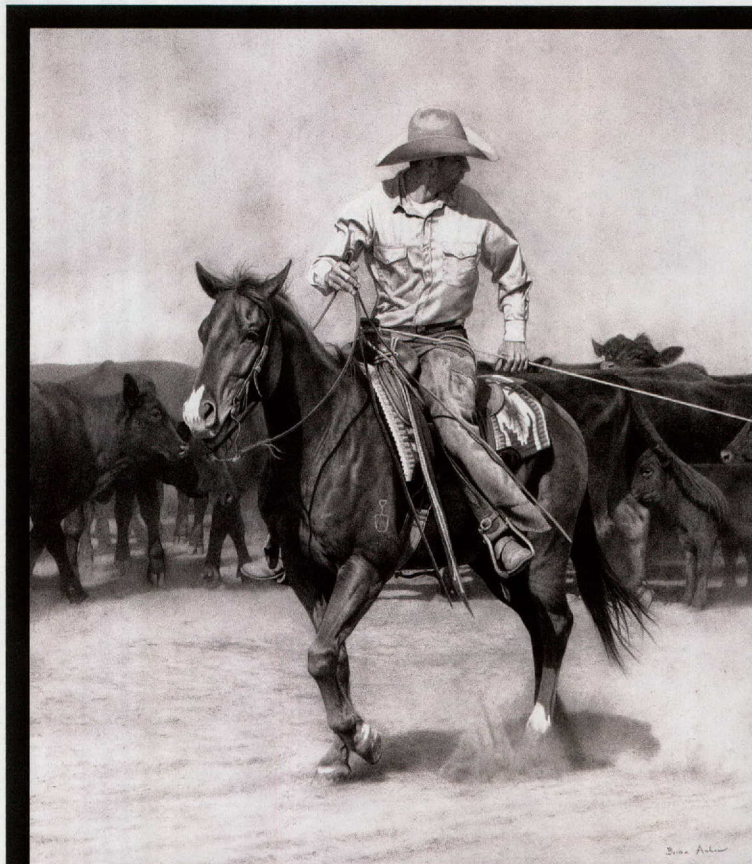
like he would an undersized defender.

"That was disappointing," Springer says. "I mean, he's one of the great basketball players to come out of Texas. And the kids that visit would love to see the size of that shoe."

But Springer, an intrepid scavenger who for three decades has owned Stoney Creek Antiques next door to his museum, doesn't give up easily. He finally scored one of O'Neal's shoes in a familiar way: browsing through an antiques mall while on a business trip to Austin.

"There it was, sitting on a shelf," he says, with a grin. "I knew I'd eventually get one."

That shoe is prominently displayed alongside a trophy commemorating Snook's 1966 undefeated season, in which the high school team from the Brazos Valley capped a streak of 90 consecutive wins—a state record. The room



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“The museum really exposed my players to the great history that our state has when it comes to basketball.”

is lined with photos of legendary Texas high school coaches such as Granbury’s Leta Andrews, who retired in 2014 after 52 years on the bench with 1,416 wins—more than any high school coach in U.S. history. There’s also a photo of Fort Worth Dunbar’s Robert Hughes, who retired after 47 years in 2005 as the all-time winningest high school boys basketball coach, with 1,333 wins.

Springer describes himself as “kind of

a shy kid” who spent more time in the school’s band than on a basketball court. But he grew to stand 6 feet, 8 inches, so basketball coaches flocked to him. He played at Howard Payne University in Brownwood before dabbling in professional basketball. Later, he spent three decades coaching high school hoops in the Houston area.

“Basketball has always been my livelihood and my love,” he says. “I just always liked holding on to things that seemed important or interesting, and it just seemed natural to hold on to all these items.”

He stops and motions to the jerseys, trophies, photos, and other collectibles filling the museum. “All this, this is my way of sharing that.”

There’s plenty to share from a state with a rich hoops legacy that is often overshadowed by football. High school



FROM LEFT: Bob Springer and his wife, Karen Springer, at the museum; a high school jersey.

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jerseys from former NBA stars Spud Webb and Rashard Lewis. A jersey from Sheryl Swoopes, a 4-time WNBA champion. Basketballs signed by Red Auerbach and other Hall of Fame coaches. Whistles. Charms. Basketball-related toys and games from before World War II. Leather knee pads. A brief history of the roughneck semi-pro teams sponsored by Texaco and Phillips 66.

The collection also highlights the state's impact on March Madness. Larry Johnson, a Dallas native, helped the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, win the NCAA championship in 1990. Clyde "The Glide" Drexler, from Houston, helped power the University of Houston to three consecutive NCAA Final Fours from 1982 to '84.

"It's a heck of a treasure trove for basketball people like myself," says Blake Brown, a Dimmitt native and longtime

"Call anytime. Day or night. I love to come here and show people around and talk basketball."

basketball coach in Texas who is working on a book chronicling the state's most historic basketball gyms. "The next opportunity I get, I'm going to take my players back there."

Brown has coached at Cedar Park High School outside of Austin for the past 16 years. He first stopped at the museum with his team en route to a playoff game in Houston in 2015. Incidentally, one of his star players on that squad, Trey Knight, is the nephew of former NBA player LaBradford Smith, who is

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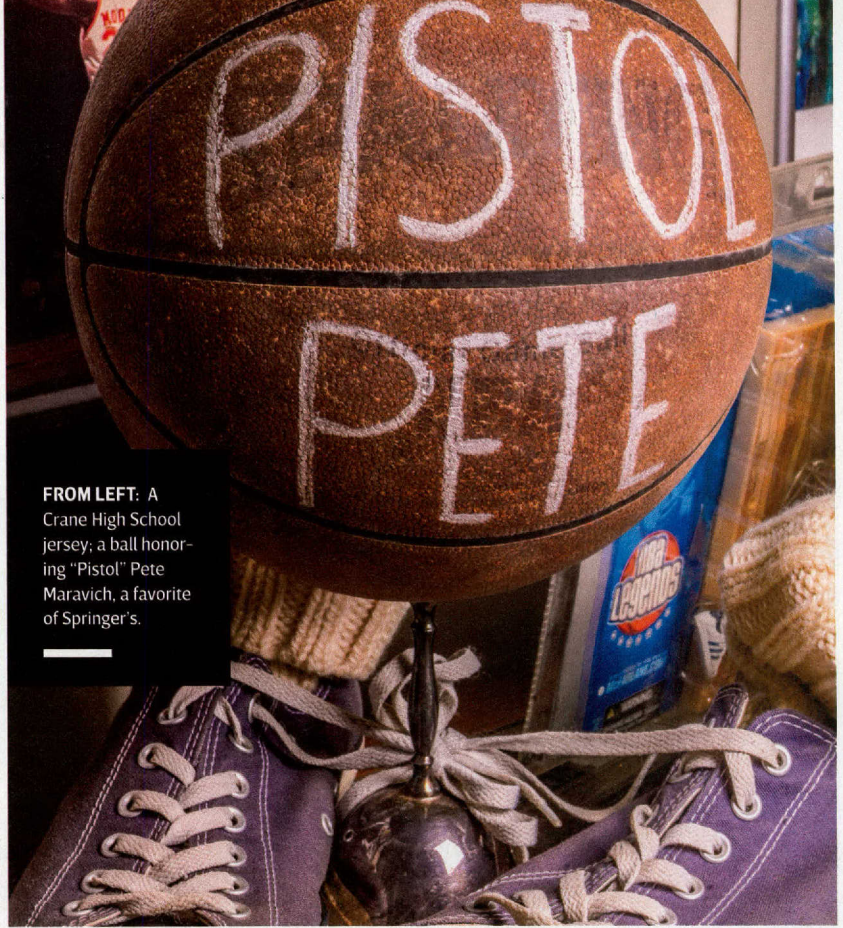
also a native Texan. Knight didn't fully understand the impact that his uncle had made on the game, and Brown said having Smith's jersey from Bay City High School on display put some family achievement in context.

"That was special," Brown says. "That visit really exposed my players to the great history that our state has when it comes to basketball."

Springer initially housed his collection in the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in Waco, but he decided to take his shot at a stand-alone museum when there was the opportunity to buy a former butane-distribution business next door to his antiques shop.

Springer says he gets about 350 visitors a year. He points to a sign on the door with his phone number and a note that says he lives three blocks away with Karen, his wife of 53 years. The sign reads: "Call anytime."

"Day or night," Springer says. "I love to come here and show people around and talk basketball. It's all about sharing what you have." 🐾



FROM LEFT: A Crane High School jersey; a ball honoring "Pistol" Pete Maravich, a favorite of Springer's.

An advertisement for Texas travel resources. The background is a scenic view of a river with green banks and a person swimming. Overlaid on the image is the text "Get lost with the TEXAS STATE TRAVEL GUIDE" in a large, white, serif font. Below the text are two travel guides: "TEXAS STATE TRAVEL GUIDE" and "2020 OFFICIAL TRAVEL MAP". Both guides feature a cover image of people kayaking on a river. A circular logo for "TEXAS HIGHWAYS" is also present, with the text "True TEXAS" and "THE OFFICIAL TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS".

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The Two Selenas

A photographic exhibit in San Antonio shows the Tejano singer before and after she hit the big time

By Joe Nick Patoski



SELENA

Quintanilla-Pérez in 1992, before she became widely famous.

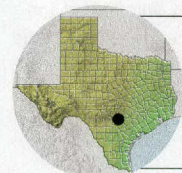
Más magazine contacted San Antonio commercial photographer John Dyer in 1992 to do a shoot with a rising young singer from Corpus Christi named Selena. Although she'd just turned 21, she was already winning Tejano Music Awards, packing dance halls, and selling hundreds of thousands of records. "She was just starting to get on people's radars," Dyer recalls. "She was very comfortable with herself, happy and full of energy, very unprepossessing."

Two years later, Dyer did a second photo shoot on assignment for *Texas Monthly*, for a profile I had written. I interviewed her on her tour bus before a show in Austin and was struck by her natural beauty before she put on her stage makeup. She came to the shoot that way: dressed casually and looking natural.

"I suggested photographing her like that," Dyer says. "I was trying to get her to tone it down, but she gave me this look. So did her father and mother. It was clear that the family had this image of how they wanted her to present herself. I realized it was a losing battle."

Dyer photographed a very different Selena at the second shoot. She was a 23-year-old star then, and everyone wanted a piece of her. She seemed worn out by the demands, Dyer remembers, so he went with the mood she was in, focusing on intimate close-ups.

Both Selenas are seen in the five portraits comprising the *Selena Forever/ Siempre Selena* exhibit at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, on display through July 5. Three large-format photographs, including this one, depict the young, upbeat woman of unlimited potential. The two smaller photographs are of a wizened talent at the top of her game, trying to keep up with the obligations of celebrity. Less than a year after that second session, Selena would be gone forever. 📸



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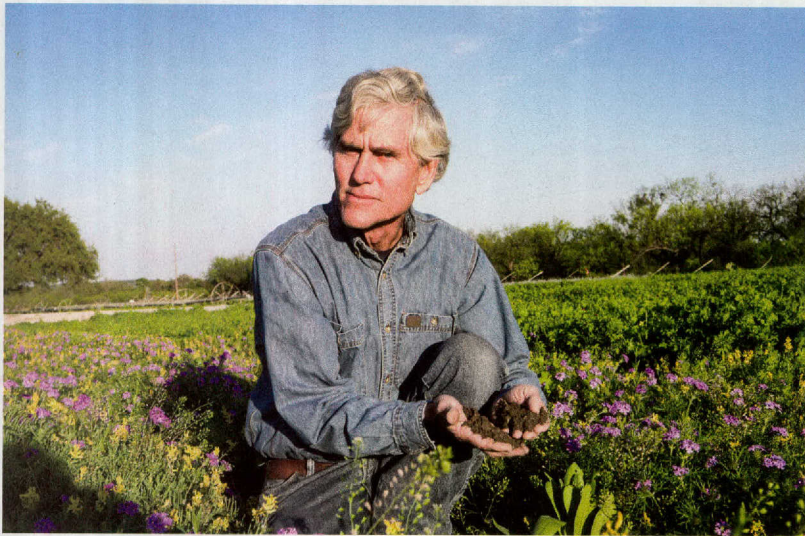
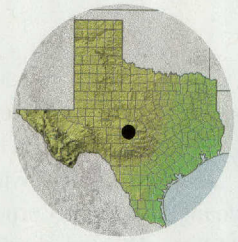
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Flower Power

Native wildflower seeds are restoring natural landscapes

By Joe Nick Patoski



Wild At Heart

We want our wildflowers the way we want a lot of things: to be made in Texas. That requires native seeds, which can be hard to find because they occur in areas without human intervention and are not widely sold at nurseries. But the push for native seeds has taken root as Texans are searching for drought-resistant landscaping.

Bill Neiman of Native American Seed, a cultivator of seeds for wildflowers and grasses, is the guru of this scene. Neiman use to own a nursery in Flower Mound, but the heat wave of 1980 crippled his nonnatives. This led him to an epiphany: Natives, which were blooming in the countryside near his nursery at that time, were the future.

In 1989, Neiman and his wife, Jan Neiman, founded Native American Seed in Argyle but moved to Junction in 1995 on a site that's both a production facility and a destination for flower lovers. Neiman has helped reintroduce a wealth of forgotten Texas natives by scouting and recouping seeds that have been swept away or reside on forgotten lands. "Our mission is to help people restore the earth," he said.



Lady Bird's Bouquet

Native American Seed has partnered with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to create "Lady Bird's Legacy," a seed packet comprised of nine species, including Indian blanket, black-eyed Susan, annual winecup, purple coneflower, and Texas bluebonnet. A percentage of sales benefits "Seed Grants" for K-12 schools in Texas working to spread wildflowers or use the seeds in other educational projects. Find more information at wildflower.org/seed-grants.

Home Grown

On 63 acres near the Llano River, Neiman has fostered more than 50 species of wildflowers and grasses, including some that no one else on Earth is growing. Book a group tour of the farm, or reserve

an overnight stay at one of two lodgings: the spacious hacienda (\$300-\$400 a night) or the two-bedroom cabin (\$200-\$280 a night). There's river access to the Llano for swimming and paddling. 866-41-RIVER.

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Pair seed and soil wisely; factor in seasonal timing. Plant spring-blooming annuals in the fall; perennials in the spring or fall.



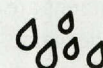
Make the Bed

Expose soil; remove weeds without disturbing dormant native seeds. The least amount of soil disturbance will yield the best results.



It's Sow Time

Spread seed generously by hand, like "feeding the chickens," or with a broadcast spreader. Firm soil-to-seed contact is important, but do not bury seeds.



Waterworks

Wait for rain or irrigate. Water lightly but frequently until established and let Mother Nature take her course.



Enjoy the View

Be careful not to mow dying wildflowers too early, and keep the weeds in check.

Consult Native American Seed's website, seedsources.com, for more growing tips.

3

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	Pink Evening Primrose												
	Engelmann's Daisy												
	Horsemint												
	Indian Blanket												
	Rock Rose												
	Antelope-Horns												
	Mexican Hat												
	Standing Cypress												

Special Springtime Events

Corsicana, Texas

March 21 & 22
9th Annual
Tour of Corsicana
Bicycle Race
THROUGH HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

March 26
"Tapestry,
The Carole King Songbook"
PALACE THEATRE

April 24 & 25
Annual
Derrick Days Festival
Celebrating the hometown
and history of Texas Oil.
Parade, Street Fair,
Chili Cookoff & Rodeo

May 9
22nd Annual
Corsicana AirSho
"The best little Airshow in Texas"
CORSCICANA MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

May 14-24
"Gypsy"
WAREHOUSE LIVING ARTS CENTER

May 15 & 16
Texas Veterans
Parade Weekend
Medal of Honor Dinner & Parade
COOK CENTER & DOWNTOWN

& Every Second Saturday
Mimosas at the Market
Sipping & Shopping
THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN

About an hour from Dallas & Waco
and worth the drive!

JOIN US IN
CORSICANA
TEXAS

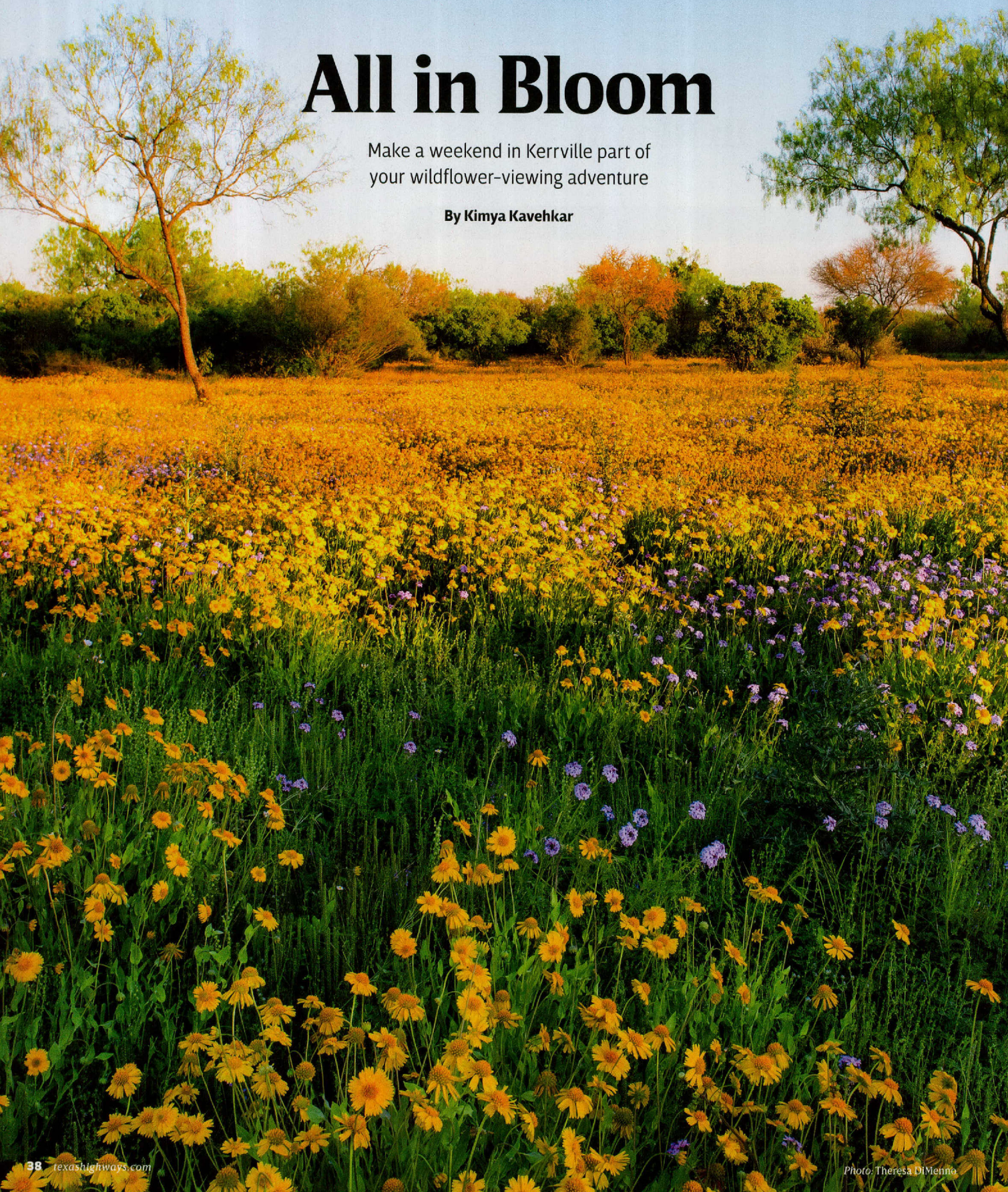
.....

Browse our event calendar
and book your stay at
visitcorsicana.com
903-654-4850

All in Bloom

Make a weekend in Kerrville part of
your wildflower-viewing adventure

By Kimya Kavehkar



San Antonio

1.5 hours

Austin

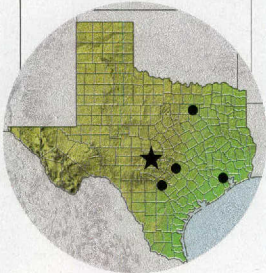
2 hours

Houston

4 hours

Dallas

4.5 hours



Spring crowds in search of the Hill Country's famous wildflowers often stop just short of Kerrville, located 30 minutes southwest of the tourist hub of Fredericksburg. But travelers who continue southwest on State Highway 16 for another 30 minutes are rewarded with an off-the-beaten path respite along the peaceful banks of the Guadalupe River. Farmer Justin Graham, who operates the Kerrville Farmers Market, likens his little city to "a flower that hasn't opened yet." There is a lot to discover in this budding town, from its active arts community and picturesque walking trails to its flourishing dining scene.



STAY



EAT & DRINK



SHOP



EXPLORE

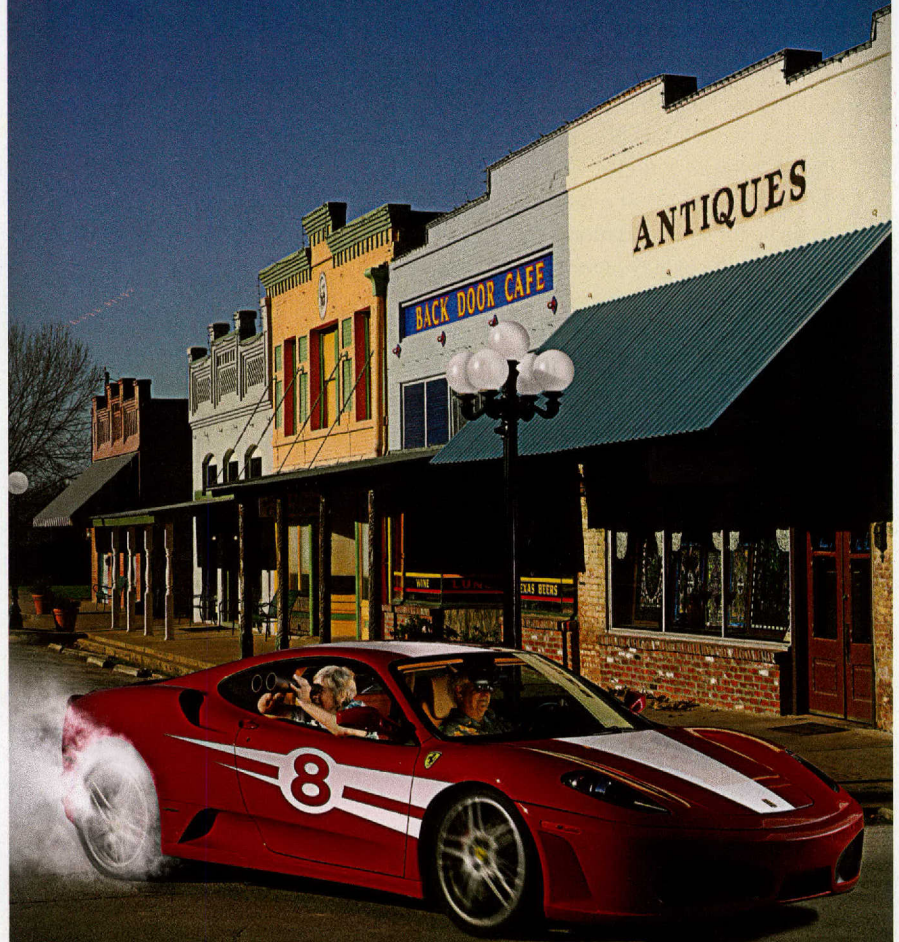
FIELD GUIDE *to* BASTROP COUNTY

ISSUE
No. 26



Historic Touring

BASTROP / ELGIN / SMITHVILLE



Whether it's touring our historic and cinematic locations or pit-stopping before the races at the Circuit of the Americas, there is always something to see or experience* in Bastrop County. Come stay a weekend with us and get away without having to go far away.

EXPLORE OUR FRIENDLY NATURE. EXPLOREBASTROPCOUNTY.COM

*Please don't burn rubber while driving down main street.

Friday

4 P.M.
To Market, to Market

Kerrville is home to several comfy options for overnight stays. Those who prefer traditional hotels might want to book a room at the Y.O. Ranch Hotel or Inn of the Hills. For something slightly out-of-the-box (or more accurately, inside of a box), River Trail Cottages offers vintage RVs and trailers, as well as cottages. The farmers market, an event most towns reserve for weekend mornings, is Kerrville's Friday night block party. Vendors sell traditional items like produce, soaps, and jams and jellies, yet the market also serves as a hangout where locals socialize over free beer from Pint & Plow Brewing Company. (Those in the know bring their own glasses, but you can also buy a cup at the entrance for \$5.) The festive atmosphere, set against the backdrop of the historic A.C. Schreiner House, attracts "farmers, producers, and 5 p.m. happy hour folks," says Graham, who also runs Zanzenberg Farm with his wife, Katye Graham.

6 P.M.
Cool and Casual

The farmers market crowd slowly drifts down the street to Pint & Plow to enjoy more brews and dine on pizza, sandwiches, and salads. While the roasted beet sandwich might sound like a basic vegetarian option, its crisp slices of bacon belie its name, and the addition of creamy local goat cheese adds incredible flavor.

Pint & Plow offers flights of its beers, which range from a lager to a brown porter, but the River Shandy—a beer cocktail comprised of Tchoupitoulas American IPA, lemonade, and mint—is the perfect closer to a spring evening.

Saturday

9 A.M.
Walk It Out

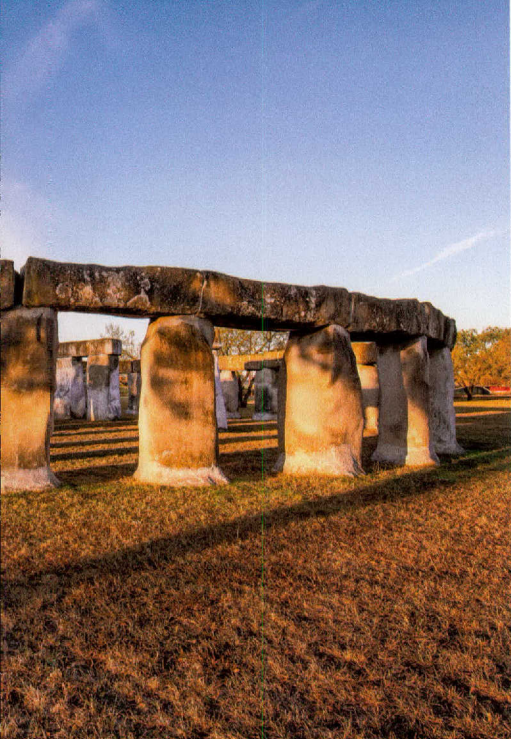
PAX Coffee & Goods gets you going for a day of exploring with a selection of espresso drinks, teas, and bagels. A few miles away, Riverside Nature Center provides a helpful primer on the native wildflowers you might find in the area. Its nature path is chock-full of information on more than 200 species of wildflowers, grasses, and ferns—plus it makes for peaceful wandering with a pollinator garden and quiet places to sit and reflect. The nature center is also one of the entry points to the River Trail, a hike-and-bike path that runs 5 miles along the Guadalupe River. The trail connects to a few other parks in the city like kid-friendly Louise Hays Park.

NOON
Garden-to-Table

Bridget Symm became interested in growing organic food when she learned about her son's severe food allergies. The interest grew into action—and now Bridget's Basket is not only a garden where you can pick your own fresh vegetables, but also a vineyard, event venue, and café. The restaurant serves simple, wholesome dishes like a harvest bowl of seasonal



OPENING SPREAD: Wildflowers surround Kerrville. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Stonehenge II in Ingram; the Guadalupe River runs through Kerrville; get your caffeine fix at PAX Coffee & Goods; a cheeky sign on Pint & Plow Brewing Company's patio; the Kerrville Farmers Market is popular with locals.



veggies, greens, and grains; silky soups; and chalkboard specials like pulled pork tacos. The market next door offers a selection of wine, eggs, lotions, candles, and other assorted goods.



2 P.M.

Legends of the Southwest



The Museum of Western Art is a shrine to all things cowboy culture. It honors the genre with 150 sculptures, 250 paintings, saddles, wagons, and a children's exhibition. The research library provides depth and context to what's on display. For jewelry-lovers, Kerrville is synonymous with James Avery. The pioneering jeweler who died in 2018 at age 96 built his business from the ground up in the Hill Country town starting in the 1950s. There are now more than 80 James Avery stores across the South, but Kerrville holds its headquarters and flagship location. In the back of the store, a mini-museum displays Avery's sketches and tools, photos, and information about designing and crafting jewelry.



6 P.M.

Wine About It

Grape Juice, located in downtown Kerrville, is sophisticated yet unfussy. The restaurant—as its name indicates—excels at wine. The menu divides its wine selections into “fun” and “familiar,” with options from all over the world, and its shop encourages guests to buy a bottle of their favorite to go. Fans laud Grape Juice for its Brussels sprout appetizer (it's featured prominently on some of the merch), a plate of roasted sprouts tossed with bacon, feta, and a

sweet soy drizzle. Game meats like venison, antelope, and quail appear in comfort-food dishes like chili, nachos, and sliders.

Sunday



9 A.M.

Blast From the Ancient Past

A replica of Stonehenge—the mysterious ancient rock formation in England—stands at the Hill Country Arts Foundation in Ingram, just outside Kerrville. Simply named Stonehenge II, the roadside attraction was built by Hunt locals Al Shepperd and Doug Hill at 90 percent of the height and 60 percent of the width of the original circle. Adding to the artistic eccentricity are two replica Easter Island statues. While you're there, catch a show at the foundation's Smith-Ritch Pointe Theatre—the 2020 lineup includes *Steel Magnolias* and *Matilda*. Kerrville has always been celebrated for its natural beauty and rural charm, but it continues to blossom with vibrant cultural offerings. **L**

PARK IT

Buckhorn Lake Resort offers RV sites and cottages for daily, weekly, and monthly rates. Amenities include swimming pools, catch-and-release fishing ponds, laundry facilities, and a tennis court. 2885 Goat Creek Road, Kerrville. 830-895-0007; buckhornlake.com

NATURAL BEAUTIES

WHAT IN WINTERTIME WAS A BARE HIGHWAY MEDIAN, ABANDONED RAILROAD TRACK, OR SPARSE PATCH OF GRASS IN A PARKING LOT IS NOW A WORK OF ART. THAT'S THE MIRACLE OF SPRING. WILDFLOWERS BURST FORTH FROM THE MOST UNEXPECTED, OVERLOOKED PARTS OF OUR LANDSCAPE AND DEMAND OUR ATTENTION. AS REFLECTED IN THE FOLLOWING IMAGES OF EIGHT OF TEXAS' MOST PREVALENT WILDFLOWERS, THEY SHAKE THE DOLDRUMS OFF AND WELCOME REBIRTH, REINVENTION, AND REINVIGORATION. THEY ARE AS STUNNING IN LARGE FIELDS, SWAYING TO GENTLE WINDS, AS THEY ARE STILL AND UP CLOSE. AS LADY BIRD JOHNSON ELOQUENTLY PUT IT IN 1965, "WHERE FLOWERS BLOOM, SO DOES HOPE."

Fig. 1 **PURPLE INDIAN PAINTBRUSH (CASTILLEJA PURPUREA)**

Shot at Tandy Hills Natural Area in Fort Worth





STIFF GREENTHREAD



Fig. 2 THELESPERMA FILIFOLIUM

STIFF GREENTHREADS ARE prevalent within the Edwards Plateau and in the northwest part of the state. They are found as far north as Wyoming and South Dakota. On the left, they blanket the Tandy Hills Natural Area in Fort Worth. Blooming from April through July, these flowers have several aliases, including Indian Tea, Hopi Tea, and Navajo Tea. The dried stems and leaves can be made into an herbal tea that is slightly smoky in taste with a little natural sweetness.

**BIG BEND
BLUEBONNET**

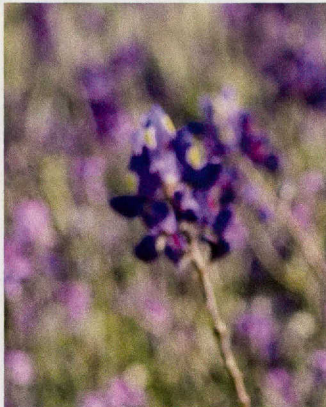



Fig. 3 **LUPINUS HAVARDII**



THE BLUEBONNET IS AN ICON of Texas' natural beauty. Texans of all stripes eagerly anticipate the year's first glimpse of the blue-and-white flowers that adorn landscapes across the state, but their lifespan is famously short. They usually appear only from March to May. Big Bend bluebonnets, pictured here against the backdrop of the Chisos Mountains in Big Bend National Park, bloom as early as January. "It's not only the state flower, but also a kind of floral trademark almost as well known to outsiders as cowboy boots and the Stetson hat," historian Jack Maguire once wrote. "The bluebonnet is to Texas what the shamrock is to Ireland, the cherry blossom to Japan, the lily to France, the rose to England, and the tulip to Holland." They're easiest to spot in the Blackland Prairie and Edwards Plateau, and rare pink bluebonnets have been spotted along roads just south of San Antonio, among other locales.

INDIAN BLANKET



INDIAN BLANKETS can range in color from red to yellow to brown, but the bicolor “firewheel” variety (pictured right in Ennis) is most recognizable to Texans. They thrive in the heat and bloom sporadically across the dry plains, open areas, and chalky prairies in the western two-thirds of the state. Alongside the bluebonnets, Indian blankets hold a venerable place in Texas lore. They’re the subject of Native American and Mexican legends and are especially beloved by the Kiowa people, who believe the flowers bring good luck.






WHITE PRICKLY POPPY



GROWING IN VARIOUS PARTS of the state, prickly poppies can also have yellow, pink, or lavender petals. The photo on the left was captured in Floresville, southeast of San Antonio. While they're certainly eye-catching, the sharp stems drive away livestock that would otherwise nibble on them. Prickly poppy was once used as a remedy for cataracts—*argema* means cataract of the eye in Greek. But don't try it today—all parts of the plant are known to be poisonous if ingested.

A photograph of a field of wildflowers. The foreground and middle ground are filled with numerous bright yellow Coreopsis flowers, also known as tickseed, which have multiple petals and a dark center. Interspersed among the yellow flowers are several tall, thin stems with clusters of small, light purple flowers. The background is a dense thicket of green grasses and other vegetation, creating a lush, natural setting. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

THIS YELLOW FLOWER is ubiquitous throughout the state all year long. It can be seen in the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge and in front of Presidio la Bahia in Goliad. In this photo, they're situated in East Texas along State Highway 155 between Avinger and Linden. The coreopsis seed resembles a tick, which is why it's commonly called tickseed. The seed is a tasty snack for many birds—bees and butterflies are also drawn to this sun-loving plant.

COREOPSIS

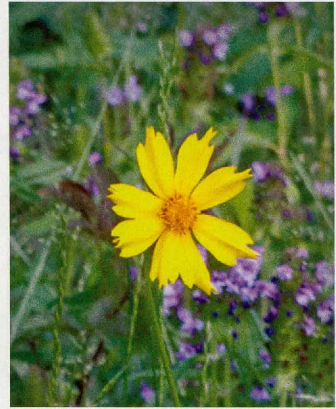


Fig. 6 **COREOPSIS SPP.**

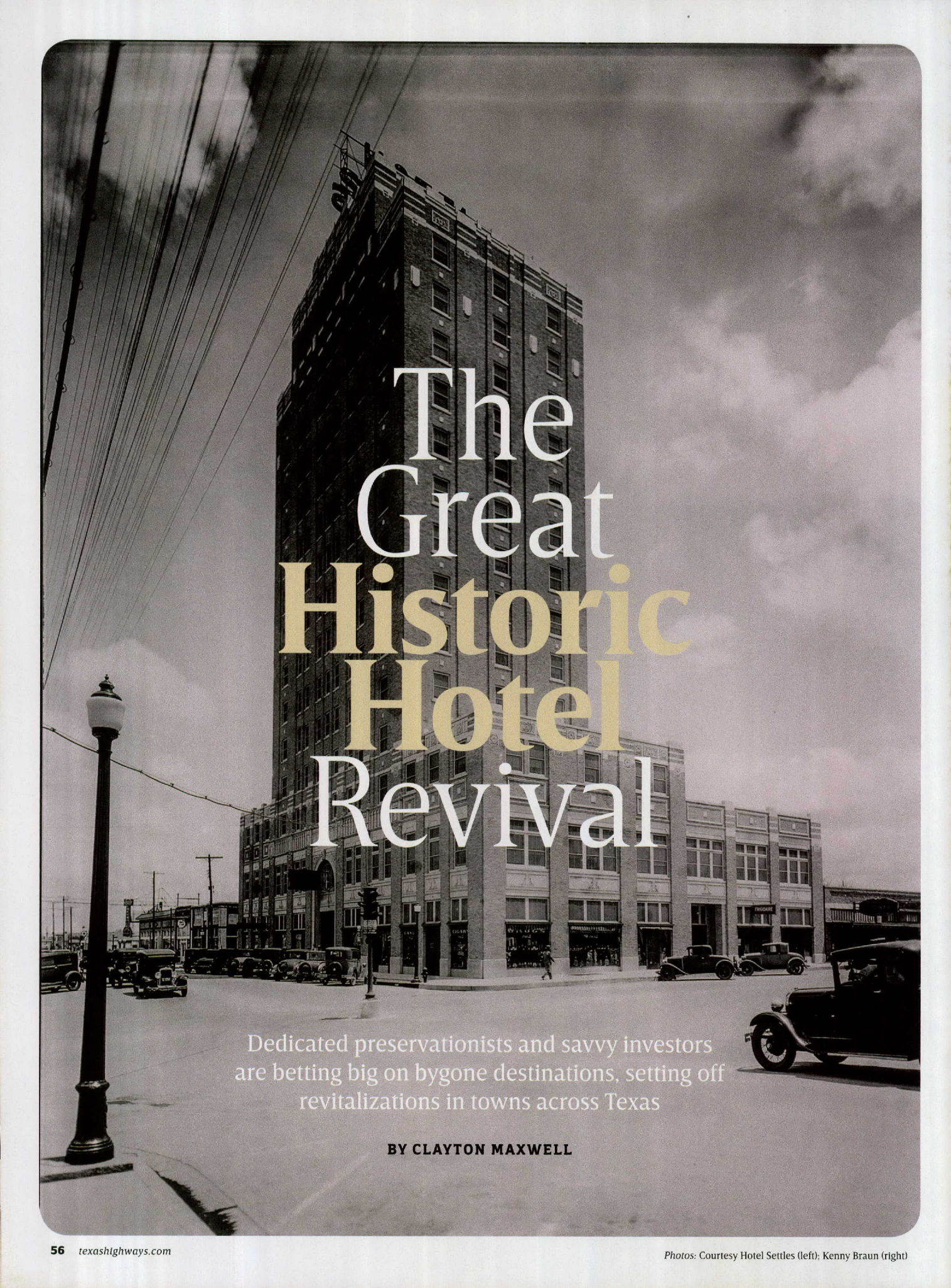




PRAIRIE VERBENA



THESE VIBRANT PURPLE wildflowers are among the most common in Texas. They can often be found on Ranch Road 470 west of Bandera and around the Highland Lakes in the Hill Country. The blooms are deer-resistant, making them ideal for backyard planting in suburban and rural areas. On the left, giant spiderwort decorates State Highway 50 near Atlanta in East Texas. *Tradescantia gigantea* is named after John Tradescant the Elder, the 17th-century gardener to Charles I of England. Their hue depends on the soil's pH—acidic soil creates bluer flowers while alkaline soil produces more pink- and purple-tinged petals. **L**



The Great Historic Hotel Revival

Dedicated preservationists and savvy investors are betting big on bygone destinations, setting off revitalizations in towns across Texas

BY CLAYTON MAXWELL



HOTEL
SETTLES

Settles

RESTROOM

3 FT 6 IN

The 15-story Hotel Settles,

opened in 1930 during the milk and honey days of Big Spring's oil industry, towers over this small West Texas town, population 28,000. For decades, the Settles was the only full-service hotel between Dallas and El Paso. Guests included Elvis Presley and Gregory Peck. But the hotel shuttered in May 1980 after the oil crash and the closing of the nearby Webb Air Force Base. The building's demise seemed to bring the whole town down.

"A lot of people said it would not be savable," says Tammy Schreengost, director of The Heritage Museum of Big Spring. "So many campaigned for it to be torn down because it had become an eyesore. It attracted the transients passing through on the train, and there were juveniles tearing it up. It was absolutely awful."

In 2006, G. Brint Ryan, a Dallas-based tax consultant and entrepreneur, came to the rescue. He purchased the Settles from the city for \$75,000, saving it from the wrecking ball. Nostalgia played a part. Ryan is a Big Spring native, who as a boy was a newspaper carrier for the *Big Spring Herald* and a bagger at the local Safeway. He saw promise in restoring the old structure to its halcyon days and invested \$30 million to bring his vision to fruition.

"It was a crazy project that absolutely nobody thought could succeed," Ryan says. "But I grew up in West Texas. I'm the offspring of a family of settlers that came out there in 1887. My grandfather was as stubborn as an old mule, and I'm the same way. So, when I make up my mind to do something, I do it."

The hotel reopened, splendid once again, in December 2012. This came after six years of battling piles of dead pigeons, caved-in ceilings, and apprehension from locals. The town still talks about watching each floor light up, one by one, and how cars honked and people cheered across Big Spring when the neon red sign spelling out "Hotel Settles" in capital letters atop the building lit up the night once again.

"It still gives me goosebumps," Schreengost says. "Mr. Ryan didn't just fix it up; he restored it to being the beacon of Big Spring."

Yes, there are still bail bonds companies, pawn shops, and vacant buildings from the downturn, but since the Settles reopened,

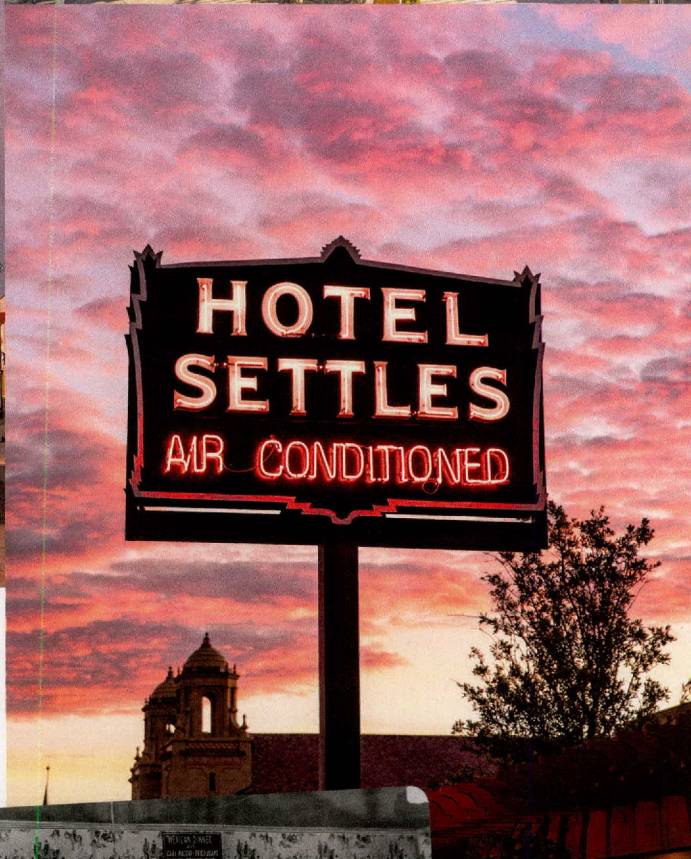


**OPENING SPREAD:
HOTEL SETTLES
CIRCA 1930
AND TODAY.
CLOCKWISE FROM
LEFT: THE BEACON
OF BIG SPRING;
A NEW POOL;
BREAKFAST AT
SETTLES GRILL;
THE ORIGINAL
SIGN.**

locals and travelers are once again converging on downtown. This summer, the deck of The Train Car, a new cigar bar, was packed with people puffing Cohibas from the Dominican Republic with their cold martinis. Lumbre Bar and Grill was so popular on a Monday night that folks lined up at the door. And the Pharmacy Bar & Parlor at the Settles is not just busy with oilmen and business travelers; it's the new gathering spot for the city.

"Since the Settles opened, we now have ladies strolling over from the hotel when they're here for a getaway weekend," says Jeannie Woodruff, owner of a glamorous Western wear shop named Queens of the Dude Ranch. "It's nice to have action downtown again."

Texas is riding a wave of historic hotel revivals. In addition to Hotel Settles, two



other stand-out projects—the Stagecoach Inn, built in 1861 in Salado; and The Baker Hotel and Spa, built in 1929 in Mineral Wells—are stirring up excitement among hotel enthusiasts. The former, reopened in September 2018, is the second oldest hotel in Texas and the heart of the artsy Central Texas town. The latter, set to reopen in late 2022, is a derelict marvel that was once a glamorous retreat for those who came to bathe in the North Texas town's reputedly healing waters.

Laying the Foundation

A passion for saving Texas history drives the developers who are at the helm of these hotel resurrections. They are motivated by current travel trends that favor the types of authentic hospitality experiences these projects afford. Over dinner at the Settles Grill, the hotel's hearty Western fare restaurant, I talked with a man in a company shirt named Michael Dronet, who was on a business trip from Louisiana, where he works



←
*The old
pharmacy at
Hotel Settles.*

*A stagecoach
representing the
Chisholm Trail era.*



for a firm that performs safety checks at oil refineries. We talked about why he chose to stay at the Settles rather than one of the chain hotels by the highway.

"Why stay in a run-of-the-mill, cookie-cutter, do-nothing hotel?" he says. "I am here to do some work, but I also want to know where I am. My friend asked me, 'Don't I want to get my hotel points?' I said, 'Why?' So, I can stay in another generic chain hotel that costs just as much if not more?"

I later saw Dronet sitting on the porch of The Train Car enjoying the cooler night temperatures and a cigar after a hot July day. He will no doubt go back to Louisiana with a sense of Big Spring, its stories and people. That's part of the package, explains Jeff Trigger of La Corsha Hospitality Group, an Austin management and consulting company retained for historic hotel restorations. The group's many projects include Marfa's Hotel Saint George and Dallas' Stoneleigh, along with the Settles, in partnership with Ryan.

"There's a macro trend happening now," Trigger says. "It's about experiential travel. The more unique and cool the experience, the more special of a time it is and the better memories you have."

Said transformations are seeing a heyday in part thanks to tax credits. These incentives make viable the costly, time-intensive resuscitation of buildings rich in detail that few craftsmen can replicate today. Developers' efforts can provide a significant economic boost to small communities through construction, new hospitality jobs, and tourism.

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, instituted in 1976, provides a 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of a historic building for an income-producing use. In 2013, Texas realized it could go bigger, and the 83rd Legislature passed the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, which gives a 25% tax credit for the rehabilitation of certified historic structures in Texas. The Texas Historical Commission has certified more than 200 projects across the state since that law went into effect in 2015, with more than \$1.5 billion in qualified expenses and more than \$2 billion in total construction costs.

Jane Hickie, a prominent attorney and former campaign advisor to Governor Ann Richards, calls the law the third best the state has ever passed—after Right on Red and Liquor by the Drink. The combined federal and state incentives make it worthwhile for



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: POOLSIDE AT THE STAGECOACH; A RANCH-STYLE GUEST ROOM; A SCI BURGER FROM THE STAGECOACH INN RESTAURANT; A WELCOMING SIGN.

investors to give these treasured Texas hotels a second chance. The Fredonia Hotel in Nacogdoches, The Driskill in Austin, and The St. Anthony in San Antonio were all restored with the help of some form of these federal and state tax breaks.

"Texas has the best overall program for restoring historic buildings," Ryan says. "So, you're seeing somewhat of a renaissance now in the state driven by all of these tax-credit resources that are available at the federal and state level."



Stagecoach Inn

Clark Lyda's mother often took him to dine at the Stagecoach Inn when he was growing up during the 1960s. More than 30 years later, Lyda—now an Austin-based developer—was still eating at the Stagecoach, but he was taking his mother instead. Eventually her health declined, and she could no longer make the trip.

"I have a real attachment to it, and to Salado," Lyda says. "To me it is one of the last pieces of old Texas that seems authentic and moves at a slower pace. I saw that it was going to die. I didn't want that."

Formerly a stagecoach stop on the Chisholm Trail, the hotel is known for its storied guest list including Jesse James and Sam Houston, and classic menu items like tomato aspic and strawberry kiss meringue. It had long brought people from the cities to shop in Salado's galleries and boutiques, but in 2000 there was an unpropitious turnover to new owners. Add to that five years of highway construction to widen Interstate 35, which runs mere yards from the back of the hotel, and the Stagecoach began to lag. Rooms were sorely in need of modernization, and occupancy rates trickled to almost nothing. Salado businesses felt the sting of the hotel's dwindling occupancy.

Then in 2015, Lyda and his partners, David Hays and Austin Pfister, bought the property. They brought in Trigger from La Corsha Hospitality Group to embark on an overhaul that will total approximately \$30 million once additional projects are completed in the fall of 2021, including an outdoor pavilion, conference center, mineral pool, and 60-room addition to the hotel. They started with the opening of the restaurant in 2017, with a new culinary direction. David Bull, co-owner of Second Bar + Kitchen in Austin and vice president of culinary operations at La Corsha, kept the signature meringue on his modernized menu, which also includes a swoon-worthy hibiscus margarita. In 2018, they reopened the hotel, having revamped its once musty 48 rooms, which start at \$129, into Saltillo-tiled ranch-style retreats inspired by the midcentury modern architect Cliff May.



The rebirth has paid dividends throughout Salado, population 2,300. Hotel tax revenues between October 2018 and July 2019 jumped 56%, plus the hotel employs 43 people—from waiters to front desk attendants to housekeepers—providing essential jobs to a small town. The artisan boutiques and galleries Salado is known for have also benefited since the hotel's reopening on Labor Day weekend 2018. Sales taxes from the second quarter of 2019 were 25% higher than that same period the previous year, just before the hotel opened, suggesting a resurgence for retail.

"I think of my mother every time I'm there," Lyda says. "I think she would be happy about this even though it's a little crazy. I know all of us who are involved are proud of it because it's not just a real estate investment. It's preserving a piece of Texas character that we all have enjoyed and we hope other people will get to enjoy, too."



The Baker Hotel and Spa

Perhaps no other project is stirring up more buzz statewide than The Baker Hotel and Spa in Mineral Wells, population 15,000. This glorious but crumbling 14-story Spanish Colonial Revival gem had been in a stalemate for 12 years as developers tried to piece together the complicated financing puzzle. A solution was finally reached in June 2019, when Baker Hotel Holdings, LP bought the property and embarked on a \$65 million restoration.

This group includes familiar names: Ryan and Trigger. There is also Randy Nix, a longtime Mineral Wells businessman. Nix is also restoring the town's Crazy Water Hotel and in 2018 opened a shopping emporium called The Market at 76067 in the historic downtown. He's played a pivotal role in localizing the effort.

"I go to Mineral Wells now and you can feel a groundswell," says Laird Fairchild, the project lead. "There are fun places for dinner and bands playing. Randy says that the rest of downtown can't thrive without The Baker Hotel, and The Baker Hotel can't thrive without the revitalization of downtown. The feeling we had that we were on the right track has transformed into knowing we're on the right track."

The project has even drawn the attention of Hollywood. Los Angeles-based production company Two Stone Media is filming a docuseries about the Baker's unthinkable comeback, which is being shopped to networks. *Resurrection, Texas* will follow the highs and lows of restoring the Baker and its impact, emotional and economic, on the local community. In the trailer, now viewable on The Baker's website, Trigger says, "You're going to see jaws drop."

He's talking about the outdoor mineral baths, an almost 10,000-square-foot spa, the vision of top-of-the-line architects Kurt and Beth Thiel, and more than 150 guest rooms starting at \$170. No hyperbole: This could be the biggest hotel resurrection in Texas so far.



Hotel Settles

Hotel Settles was humming when my 9-year-old son and I checked in last summer. Boot-clad, cowboy hat-wearing oilmen came and went. Country music filled the grand lobby, where a magnificent



LEFT TO RIGHT: A NEW DAY ON THE HORIZON FOR THE BAKER HOTEL; HOTEL PASO DEL NORTE OF YESTERYEAR.

double-sided staircase with intricate gold plaster flourishes evokes the hotel's past as a gathering spot for the well-to-do. A striking 10-foot oil painting of Ryan's mother reigns over the palatial staircase.

More than seven years have passed since the Settles opened its doors for a second act, with 65 guest rooms starting at \$341. As of July 2019, the hotel tax revenue in Big Spring has gone up 43%, while the sales tax revenue has increased by more than \$1.5 million. These numbers can't be solely attributed to the Settles, but many locals link recent growth in downtown Big Spring to the rebirth of the hotel.

"The hotel is probably the first thing in 50 years to redirect traffic from Midland

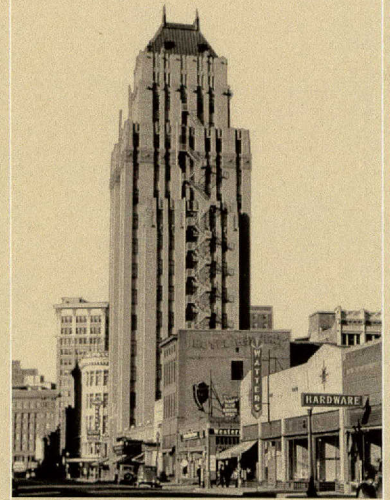


← *The Baker Hotel in its prime, before
Hollywood came calling.*

and Odessa,” Ryan says. “We’ve had strong positive cash flow since about six months after we opened. Last year was the most profitable year we’ve had with the business. So, the idea is to continue the development around the hotel, to make it a place where people want to come.”

When my son and I were scouting potential hiding places on the Settles’ mezzanine for a game of hide-and-seek, I overheard a man checking in at the front desk below. He’d just come back to Big Spring after many years away and peppered the concierge with questions. “Who owns this place? Who is that woman in the painting? How much of this staircase is original?”

Later, piano music filled the lobby as we were heading out to the Settles’ swanky new pool. That same inquisitive man had plopped himself down at the baby grand on the mezzanine and was playing gorgeous, complicated classical music that floated through the hotel, the same one that just a decade ago sagged beneath caved ceilings and dead pigeons. The beauty of it made us stand still and listen, transfixed. Preservationists set the stage for moments like these when they decide to bring a historic hotel back to life. In a world of chain hotels that mostly all look and feel alike, it’s magic that’s hard to come by. 📌



What’s Old Is New Again

In 1978, JP Bryan, a historical preservationist and entrepreneur, bought the **Gage Hotel** in Marathon, built in 1927 by celebrated Texas architect Henry Trost. Bryan has transformed the Gage into what may be the most beloved historic hotel in Texas and created a portal to West Texas. gagehotel.com

The Sinclair, a 1929 art deco office building in downtown Fort Worth, opened in November 2019 as a 15-story luxury hotel. The Sinclair seamlessly blends the most advanced in technology (Bluetooth speakers in the bathroom mirrors) with Gatsby-like decadence. thesinclairhotel.com

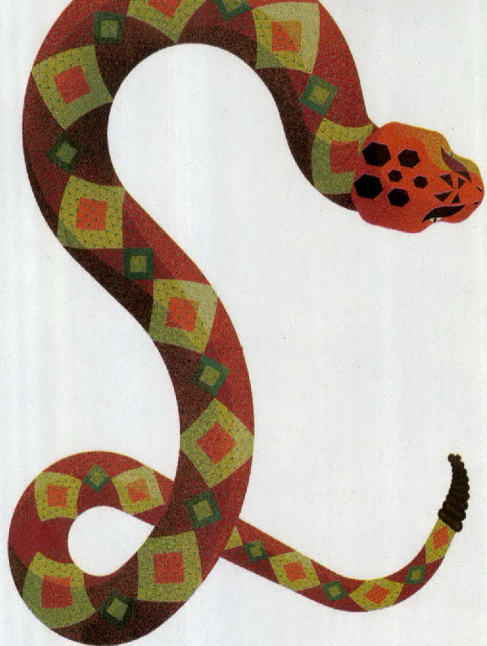
Hotel Paso del Norte, built in 1919, also by Trost, is the grande dame of El Paso hotels. The property is in the midst of a major overhaul and is set to reopen in May 2020, with new views overlooking Mexico from a deluxe rooftop bar and swimming pool. hotelpdn.com

CHARLES SWATSKÉ
releases a copperhead
snake at a natural area
in Flower Mound.



Midwe

7.875.6647



Look at her. So poised. So regal.

Watching her gracefully slither through my yard hunting for her next meal this sultry summer evening, I make sure to say hello before chopping her head off with my hoe. That's been my attitude toward the gorgeous, copper-toned serpents that surround my lakeside home in North Texas.

But Chuck Swatske is trying to convince me to retire my hoe. Swatske, certified a master naturalist by Texas Parks and Wildlife, wants to educate me about the ecological benefits of copperheads and other Texas snakes. They devour mice and rats, helping to curb the disease-carrying rodents from running rampant in urbanized areas, he notes. Wild snakes are also an important food source for birds of prey like owls, hawks, herons, and roadrunners. Not to mention, toxins drawn from venomous snakes have been developed to treat medical conditions such as heart disease and arthritis.

That's why I'm sheepishly "herping" with Swatske across a trail that winds alongside a dry chaparral-covered creek bed. We're out to capture a bunch of copperheads and other venomous serpents before they encroach on the well-manicured lawns bordering the Lantana Golf Club or the rows of pricey houses popping up inside wrought-iron fences lining Copper Canyon, about 30 miles north of Dallas-Fort Worth. It used to be "Copperhead Canyon," by the way, originally named by Texas pioneers who encountered swarms of snakes as they built their small settlement atop the area's rolling hills and rocky canyons.

Swatske knows if a homeowner encounters a copperhead in their yard, they'll likely chop its head off with a shovel, an ax, a hoe, or any other handy weapon. By rounding up the copperheads and relocating them away from urban neighborhoods, Swatske says, the serpents and the homeowners are better off. In the last 12 months, Swatske, a retired semiconductor salesman, has captured and relocated about 100 copperheads crawling around these parts.

Wearing a shirt proclaiming "SNAKE LIVES MATTER," Swatske sounds like an evangelical preacher talking about respecting and protecting snakes, even venomous ones, to anyone who will listen: Boy Scout groups, garden clubs, lo-

SNAKES 101

Be aware that venomous snakes can be close by even though you don't see them. Snakes are just about everywhere in Texas.

- 1 A harmless rat snake is often mistaken for a dangerous rattlesnake, especially when it feels threatened and starts beating its tail against some sticks to make you think it's a rattler. Similarly, several species of harmless water snakes are frequently mistaken for venomous water moccasins. One of the ways to tell the difference is to watch their behavior. Water snakes like to hang together around marinas, boat docks, and populated lakes, swimming with their heads above the surface and their bodies below it. Water moccasins typically swim alone and often below the surface of the water, hunting for fish to eat. If you encounter one, it will likely try to scare you away by coiling up, thrashing its tail like a rattler, and displaying its fangs. If the inside of its mouth looks like a ball of cotton, you'll know it's a water moccasin (aka cottonmouth). If in doubt about a snake, the best way to avoid getting bit is to leave it alone, even in your yard. Eventually it will slither back into the wild.
- 2 The harmless Mexican milk snake or the scarlet king snake are easy to spot in your yard with their brilliant bands of red, yellow, and black. To distinguish the milk snake and king snake from the coral snake, the classic rhyme holds true in most cases north of the border: "Red on yellow, kill a fellow; red on black, venom lack."
- 3 Mow your grass low to the ground and trim your bushes and flower gardens back so you can see what's underneath them.
- 4 If your 5-year-old kicks her soccer ball into the bushes, make sure she gets down on her hands and knees to check for snakes before she reaches for it.
- 5 As soon as your children are old enough to walk, take them into the yard, put a long stick in their hands, and teach them to poke underneath objects before they pick them up with their hands.
- 6 Wear flip-flops and sandals with caution. Sturdy hiking boots have saved many suburbanites from bites.
- 7 Visit the reptile exhibit at your local zoo to show your children what pit vipers and coral snakes look like.

If you need help handling snakes in your yard, call your local animal control office or a pest-removal company.



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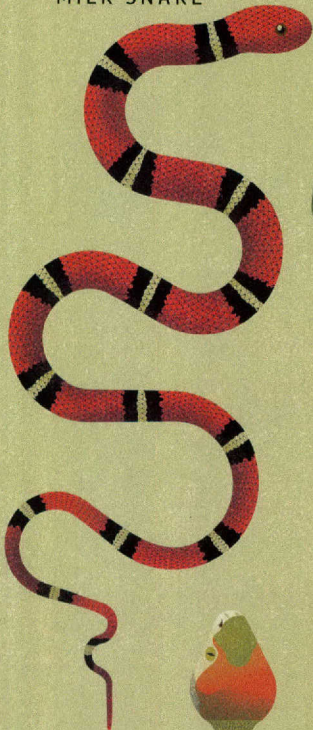
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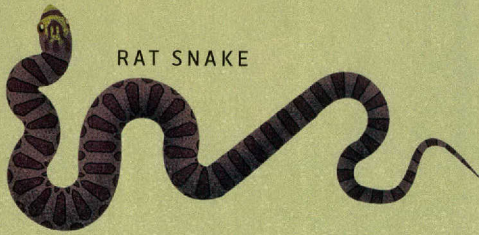
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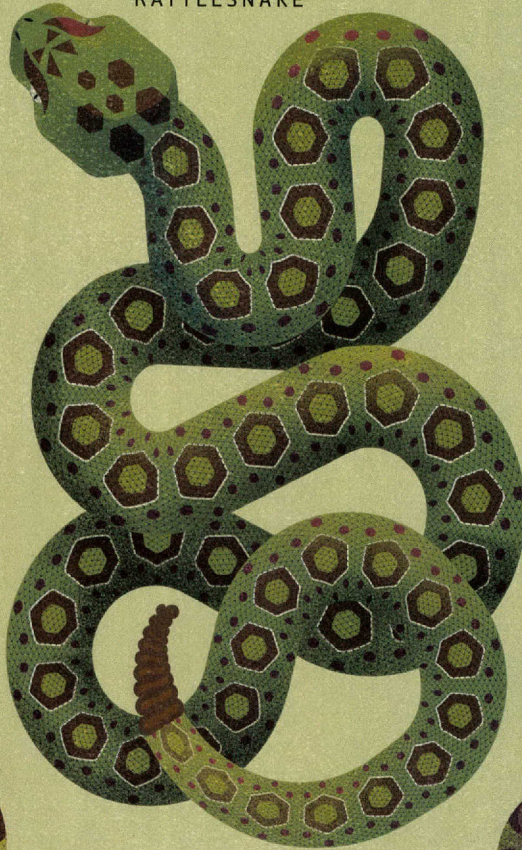
MILK SNAKE



RAT SNAKE



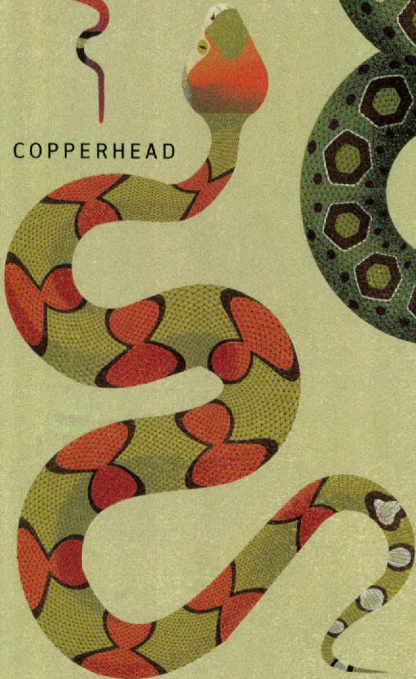
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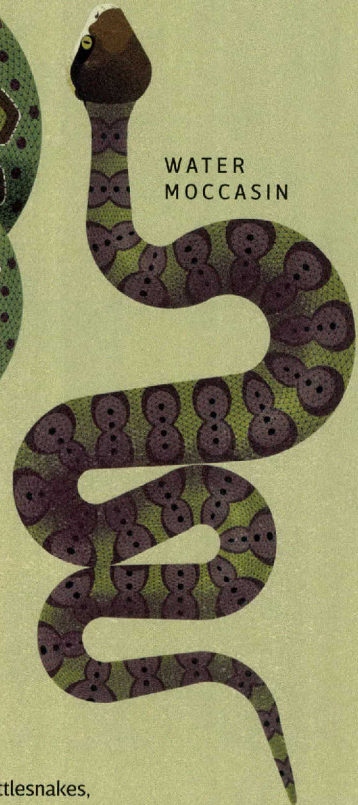
CORAL SNAKE



COPPERHEAD



WATER MOCCASIN



KNOW YOUR SNAKES

Texas is home to four venomous snakes: copperheads, rattlesnakes, water moccasins (aka cottonmouths), and coral snakes. Harmless milk snakes, sometimes mistaken for coral snakes, are easy to spot with their brilliant bands of red, black, and yellow. Non-venomous rat snakes are widespread in Texas, pose no threat, and are good rodent predators.



cal chapters of master naturalists, and neighborhood social media forums where panic-stricken homeowners dispense advice on how to drive away snakes. Remedies these days include mothballs, glue traps, pesticide sprays, ultrasonic sound machines, chickens, and feral cats. “None of them work,” Swatske says.

Swatske acknowledges that persuading Texans not to stamp out snakes, especially those with children and dogs, is a hard sell. Most Texans fear snakes and can't tell the difference between the dangerous and the harmless ones. “In their minds, the only good snake is a dead snake,” he says. “And I really can't blame them. Copperheads, cottonmouths, and other venomous snakes can be dangerous, even deadly.”

Swatske gets no argument from me. One particularly dreamy weekend at Lake Grapevine, my wife, Cindy, and I enjoyed sunbathing on our dock, water-skiing, and watching a Friday evening fireworks display. About 9:30 p.m., we hauled our boat out of the water and pulled it into our driveway to scrub off some smelly algae.

As I stepped across the hose to turn off the faucet, the copperhead struck. I had imagined what it might feel like ever since my 17-year-old son was bitten five years earlier in our backyard. But it wasn't until that evening—July 17, 2012—that I realized I had sugar-coated the memory to tolerate living among our thriving copperhead population. The bite burned as if the snake had held its mouth over red-hot coals and then driven the molten fangs into the top of my ankle. The memory of those teeth slicing through my skin will remain with me until the day I die.

Like other suburbanites who get bit in their lawns or flower gardens, I was certain I was going to die that night. “Most people who get bit by a copperhead think, ‘I don't have a chance of surviving this thing—I'm dead,’” says Jonathan Campbell, a herpetologist who recently retired from the University of Texas at Arlington. “Chances are you're not going to die. But you're probably going to suffer a lot.”

As houses, schools, and shopping centers spread across snakes' natural habitat, unsuspecting people like me increasingly



A copperhead snake

fall victim to venomous snakes. Surprisingly, travelers to some of the most remote regions of West Texas are less likely to get bit by a venomous snake than suburban dwellers. In Big Bend National Park, where 450,000 visitors flock each year, park officials report just two snakebites in the last eight years, neither of them fatal. In the rugged Guadalupe Mountains National Park, which draws 200,000 tourists a year, no one has been bitten by a snake since the park opened in 1972. “The mindset among hikers out here is they know they are in the wilderness and they know there's dangerous snakes, and so they carry sticks and flashlights and they're always on the lookout for them,” says Michael Haynie, a park ranger in the Guadalupe Mountains. “But when they get home they go into autopilot and don't pay attention to their surroundings. That's when they get bit by a snake nesting next to their pool.”



TEXAS HAS FOUR HIGHLY DANGEROUS snakes: copperheads, rattlesnakes, water moccasins (aka cottonmouths), and corals. Last year, 1,352 venomous bites were reported to poison centers in Texas, up 33% from five years earlier.

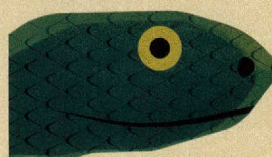
But many venomous snakebites aren't reported, meaning the number may be significantly higher. At Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Flower Mound, for example, Dr. Sean Fleming, medical director of Emergency Services, estimates he and his emergency room physicians call the

IS THAT SNAKE IN YOUR YARD DANGEROUS?

PIT VIPER



NOT A PIT VIPER



Rattlesnakes, copperheads, and water moccasins all belong to the same family of pit vipers. The best way to distinguish these deadly snakes from the many harmless varieties in Texas is to look at their eyes—from a safe distance. If they have elliptical eyes like cats, with small pits under their nostrils, they're pit vipers.

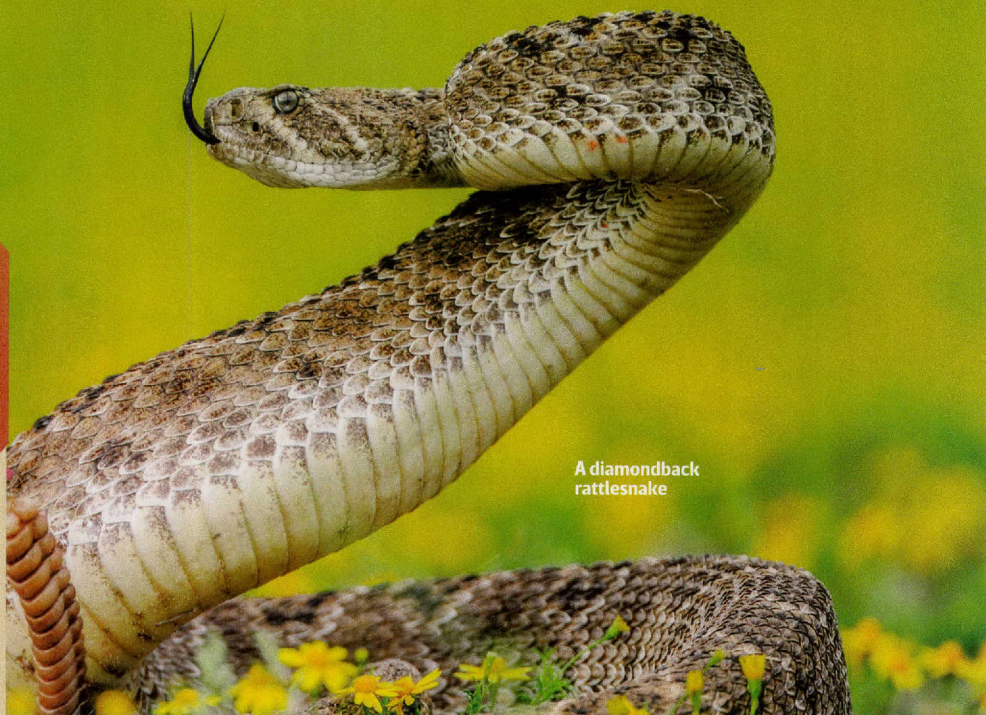


OUCH!

THAT SNAKE BIT ME.
WHAT DO I DO?

The recommended first aid and medical treatment for snakebites is still a confusing mishmash. "There's an awful lot of bad advice out there," says Dr. Spencer Greene, a Houston toxicologist who has treated more than 700 snakebite victims. If you get bit, Greene recommends the following steps:

- ◆ Remove constrictive clothing and jewelry.
- ◆ Don't cut and suck or use commercial suction devices. "They don't remove venom," Greene says. "They just suck."
- ◆ For copperhead and cottonmouth bites, place the bitten extremity above heart level. If it's a rattlesnake bite, keep it at heart level.
- ◆ Don't apply heat or cold.
- ◆ Don't apply a tourniquet.
- ◆ If it's a pit viper bite, don't use constrictive bandaging. But if it's a coral snake, pressure immobilization may help limit absorption of its neurotoxins into the bloodstream.
- ◆ Before driving to the closest hospital, call ahead to make sure it stocks antivenom and that the emergency room staff has experience in snakebite treatment. Most don't.
- ◆ Do not bring the snake—dead or alive—into the hospital. "Even a dead snake can still envenomate you," Greene says.



A diamondback rattlesnake

North Texas Poison Center in only one out of 10 snakebite cases—if, for example, the patient is having a severe allergic reaction to the antivenom, which is rare.

Copperheads, rattlesnakes, and water moccasins belong to a family of venomous serpents called "pit vipers" for their infrared sensing pit. The organ between the eye and nostril acts like a heat-seeking missile, enabling a pit viper to detect and strike its prey with uncanny speed and precision. Pit vipers have long, movable fangs in their upper jaw that fold back until they're ready to strike. As the snake opens its mouth, the fangs swing forward at a 90-degree angle and, in a stabbing motion, inject venom into its prey. The fangs of the coral snake, the only dangerously venomous snake in Texas that's not a pit viper, are short and immobile. But their venom is extremely toxic, sometimes causing respiratory paralysis and death.

People encounter snakes everywhere: in parking lots and playgrounds; coiled under car hoods and gas pumps; swimming in backyard pools; slung around barbecue smokers and wooden fences; and sunning on the front steps of restaurants and churches. Any of the thousands of visitors stopping along highways to snap scenic shots of bluebonnets blooming in the spring shouldn't be surprised to see a wild snake or two slinking through the flowers.

One of the main reasons wild snakes love urban environments is the abundant

supply of their favorite food: rodents. Cities produce lots of garbage. Garbage attracts lots of mice and rats. And mice and rats attract snakes. "Snakes are one of the most effective means of rodent control in urban areas," says Stan Mays, curator of herpetology at the Houston Zoo.

On Galveston Island, an hour's drive southeast of Houston, miles of sand dunes covered with drought-resistant vegetation offer ideal habitat for rabbits and rodents. Western diamondbacks nest among their prey and seldom venture outside—except during spring and summer. Just as college students arrive for spring break, the rattlers slink sensuously from the dunes to frolic along the sandy shores. A few scattered signs near wooden walkways crossing over the dunes warn visitors about the rattlesnakes. But high school and college kids don't always read signs.

That was the case with Austin Fleming, a 16-year-old from Galveston. During prom weekend in May 2018, he and some friends rented a house on Jamaica Beach. Around 11 p.m., the teens decided to stroll along the beach. As they crossed a wooden bridge over the dunes, Austin felt "something" bite him on his left ankle. He rolled up his black jeans, saw two bloody fang marks, and heard a rattle. Seeing a Western diamondback slither like a wave across the sand in front of him struck him as utterly surreal. "It never would have occurred to me that there were rattlesnakes

on the beach," he recalls.

Austin doesn't remember how he got to the hospital. But he'll never forget the ghastly sight of his swollen leg propped up on a pile of pillows. It was distended and discolored—purple, green, and every shade of gray. "It looked like a dead fish."

Despite early infusions of antivenom, Austin began having chest pains, trouble breathing, and decreased blood flow in his leg, building pressure in his muscle tissue to dangerous levels. His doctors considered performing a limb-saving series of incisions called a fasciotomy to relieve the pressure. "That alarmed me," says Yesenia Sandino, Austin's mother and a neonatal nurse at the same hospital.

A co-worker reached out to Dr. Spencer Greene, a renowned toxicologist in Houston who specializes in treating snakebites. Greene called Yesenia, urging her to push her son's physicians to resume Austin's antivenom treatments even though he suffered nausea and diarrhea from the initial infusions. Austin's doctors obliged his mother. During his 10 days in the hospital, they administered 18 vials of CroFab, an aggressive antivenom regimen that Yesenia believes saved her son's leg and his life.

Austin was one of 970 rattlesnake-bite victims in Texas—and 5,781 nationwide—reported to poison control centers between 2012 and 2018. Eleven of those people—none in Texas—died, some before they even made it to the hospital. When a rattler bites, its venom destroys muscle and organ tissue that can lead to internal hemorrhaging, shortness of breath, and in rare cases, heart failure and death. Small wonder then that in the minds of many Texans, rattlesnakes are vicious predators.



COPPERHEADS, UNLIKE RATTLESNAKES, have a reputation as a relatively benign pit viper. Many emergency room doctors still believe a copperhead's venom isn't very potent. Of the 2,671 copperhead bites reported in Texas between 2012 and 2018, none were fatal (although in that time frame, two victims died elsewhere in the U.S.). No deaths resulted from the 324 water moccasin bites in Texas during the same pe-

riod. Nevertheless, Greene, the Houston toxicologist, says emergency room physicians should take copperhead bites more seriously. "Copperhead bites have the potential to create serious morbidity and, on occasion, mortality issues," he says.

I can identify with Greene's frustration. Last October, my wife was walking near our mailbox when a tiny, yellow-tailed copperhead bit her. With ice covering her swelling ankle, I drove her to a Grapevine hospital. The emergency room physician immediately offered to give Cindy antivenom "if we wanted her to." But the physician warned us the antivenom could cost more than \$50,000, and she wasn't sure it would help. My wife wasn't treated with antivenom and still suffers muscle and nerve damage from the bite.

**SURPRISINGLY,
TRAVELERS TO
SOME OF THE MOST
REMOTE REGIONS OF
WEST TEXAS ARE LESS
LIKELY TO GET BIT BY
A VENOMOUS SNAKE
THAN SUBURBAN
DWELLERS.**

Like me, most people who move into the sprawling suburbs around Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, Lubbock, and other metropolitan areas are oblivious to the venomous snakes living in the region long before they arrived—until they encounter one.

Travis and Marcey Cantrell live in a beautiful brick house near a picturesque creek, about a mile away from my home. A few months ago, Travis was preparing to grill chicken as his children bounced on the backyard trampoline. When he reached for a twig, a copperhead coiled underneath the wooden fence struck its fangs deep into the tip of Travis' index finger. He screamed in pain and tumbled over backward.

Photos taken in a local hospital show Travis' index finger, bloody and mangled, sprouting a bulbous black blister. Six hours later, the pain had spread up his elbow to his shoulder, and his doctors decided Travis needed three infusions of antivenom. The serpent's fangs left a hole in his finger tip, but the injury did not require surgery.

The Cantrells now live in constant fear for their children's safety. When they moved into their home four years ago, the couple didn't think twice about walking barefoot to the pool or the trampoline. Now the kids don't walk outside alone, and certainly not barefoot. The Cantrells also have to worry about visitors. Recently, guests faced an unidentified snake slithering outside the Cantrells' front door as they were leaving. Travis grabbed a shovel and chased the serpent around the bushes, determined to kill it before it bit someone.

But the snake slipped away. A day later, Swatske, the snake relocater, was called in to catch the snake. I went with him. With headlamps mounted on our caps, tongs and buckets in hand, we prodded shrubbery with our tongs and walked along the fence until we spotted the serpent next to the trampoline—exactly where a copperhead had bit Travis six weeks earlier.

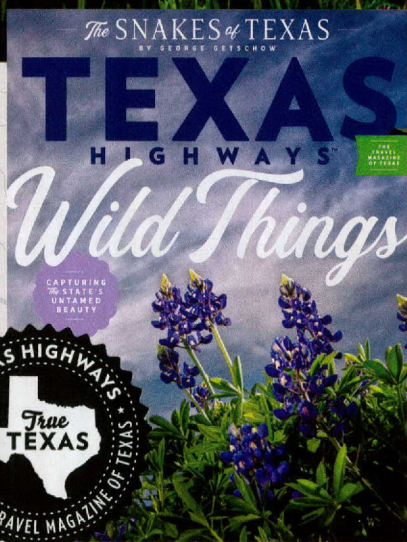
As Swatske moved in quickly with his tongs and slid the snake into his bucket, I realized this would be the first time I had shined my light on a copperhead not to kill it, but to save it.

The next day, we drove 15 miles from my home to a wilderness expanse on the west end of Lake Grapevine. No civilization was within sight. As two giant blue herons flapped overhead, I gently picked the copperhead out of Swatske's bucket and set it down on a dead tree limb straddling Denton Creek. Suddenly I felt my hatred toward the wild serpents that have terrorized my family for years evaporate. In giving the copperhead back to Mother Nature, I sensed the snake and Mother Nature were freeing me from the tyranny of fear and loathing I harbored for snakes. For the first time in 30 years of living among the snakes, I felt a sense of serenity—even joy—about doing my part to get along with my wild neighbors. **L**

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PLATES



PAN-SEARED chicken breast with butternut squash and shallot butter at Tillie's in Dripping Springs.

Precious Gem

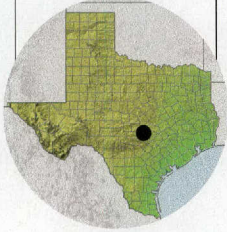
A keen sense of design makes Tillie's a jewel of Hill Country dining

By Paula Forbes



TILLIE'S WOODEN
framework was
once part of a town
hall in Vietnam.

TILLIE'S
 3509 Creek Road,
 Dripping Springs.
 512-894-2633;
 tilliesdripping
 springs.com



Among the live oaks, scrub brush, and rocky hillsides of Dripping Springs sits an unexpected architectural gem. At Tillie's, turquoise doors open to a colorful chapel-like space framed by soaring ironwood rafters that were originally part of a 19th-century town hall from the Ninh Binh region of Vietnam.

The intricately carved wood accents a wall of backlit saint statues and a dramatic chandelier. The visual impact is immediate when paired with the brightly tiled floor and luxe leather seats. The romantic and ethereal space alone is worth a visit to the restaurant, which is part of Camp Lucy, a resort and wedding venue. But the menu—upscale Texas Hill Country with unexpected global twists—implores passersby to stick around for a meal.

The once-sleepy town of Dripping Springs, the Napa to Austin's San Francisco, is known for its picturesque Hill Country setting. Over the past decade, the area has drawn an almost unbelievable number of wedding venues, breweries, wineries, and distilleries. It was only a matter of time before fine-dining destinations and boutique hotels followed. While Tillie's and Camp Lucy fit comfortably into those respective molds, they also offer a few surprises.

That's due to the influence of former antiques dealer Whit Hanks, who owns the resort with his wife, Kim Hanks. His acquisitions from France, Ecuador,

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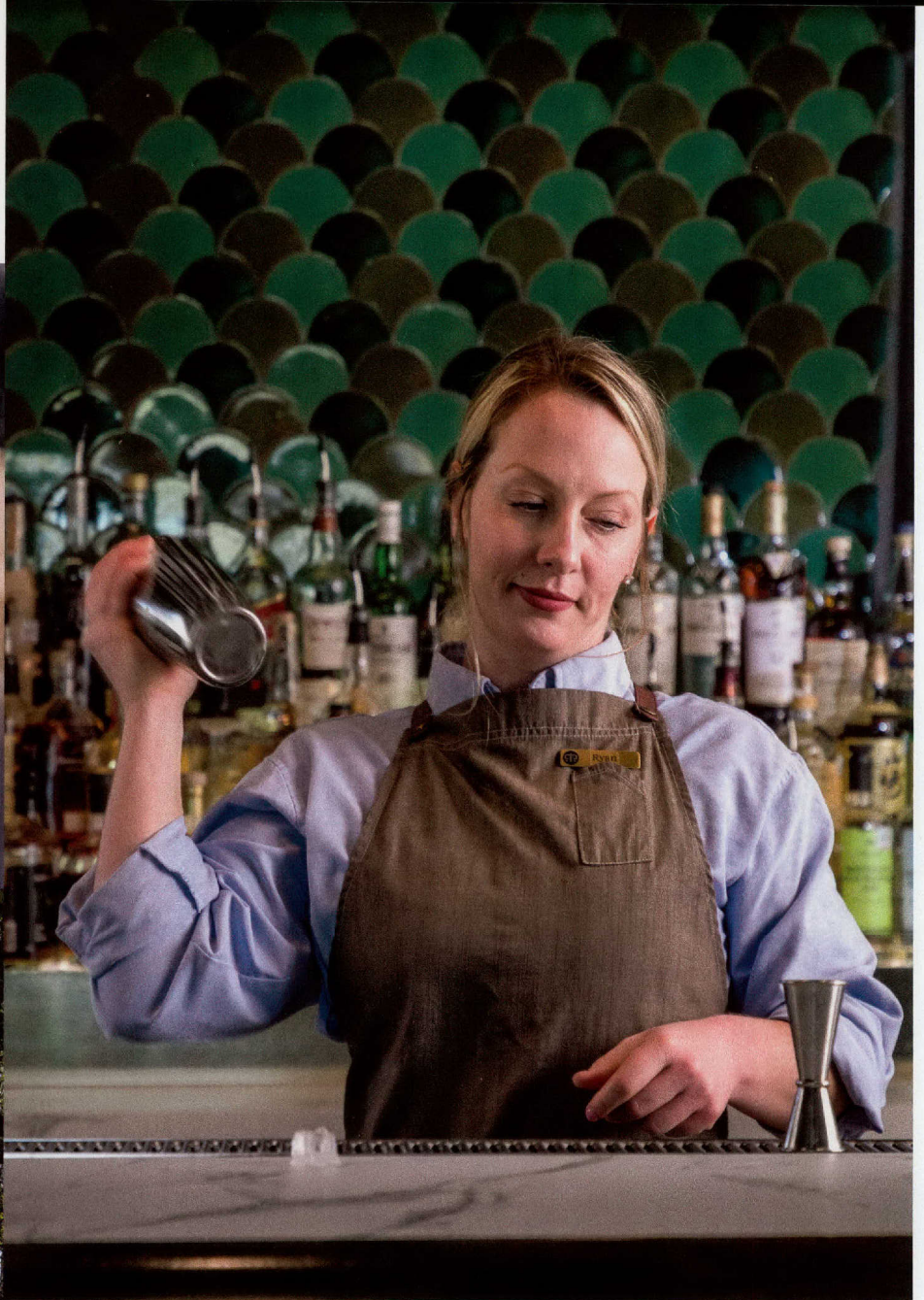
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Botanist cocktail; bartender Ryan Harlan; the exterior of Tillie's hints at the magic inside.

China, Vietnam, and elsewhere adorn the property, from the guest cabins—decorated with various carpets, art, and textiles—to Tillie's, which showcases one of his biggest finds.

The old town hall building that shapes Tillie's is one of several reconstructed Vietnamese buildings at Camp Lucy; the others are part of the wedding venues and the restaurant's private dining room. (There's also an antique Amish barn that serves as a reception hall.) Taken apart piece by piece and carefully bubble-wrapped in Vietnam, the town hall was shipped by boat to Houston and then delivered to Camp Lucy. The building was reconstructed on-site over the course of

three months. The beams still bear the chalk numbers used to keep track of which piece goes where: Horizontal posts are marked with numbers, and vertical posts are marked with letters.

Whit first encountered these buildings while visiting his son Roger, who was living in Hanoi. An antiquing excursion to look at statues of saints led to a dazzling find: the frames of 100-year-old Catholic chapels and village buildings, removed from their original settings. The antiques dealer had several of them reconstructed on his show lot. Their intricacy, presence, and history blew Whit away. "I just got hooked," Whit says. "You can't let

[these buildings] go to waste.” The procurements expanded the Hankses’ original plans for the resort. “This is such a personal project,” Whit says. “It’s evolved to be different elements of the family that I’m from.”

What is now known as Camp Lucy was once a summer home. The Hankses decided to start commercial use of the land in 2008 by building the first of three wedding venues. Ian’s Chapel, the first venue, is named for Whit’s late son, who died of a brain tumor at age 30. Camp Lucy, named after Whit’s mother, added lodging in 2014. The family planned to add a pool with a simple adjacent hamburger stand, but the discovery of the town hall made their restaurant plans much more ambitious. Tillie’s, opened in October 2018, is named for Whit’s great-grandmother, Attila Hancock, a prominent early Austinite whose husband, Lewis

“This is such a personal project,” says Whit Hanks, owner of Tillie’s. “It’s evolved to be different elements of the family that I’m from.”

Hancock, served as mayor and built the first public golf course in town.

The town hall greatly influenced the architecture of the restaurant, according to designers Paul Smith and Deborah Kirk. The towering 18th-century ironwood doors from Pakistan—a part of Whit’s private collection—are another wow-worthy element.

Chef Brandon Martin creates dishes as elegant as the surroundings—but they’re still plenty filling. Hailing from

Fort Stockton, Martin has worked in several notable Austin restaurants including Odd Duck, Lenoir, and Foreign & Domestic, as well as the Gage Hotel in Marathon. Martin describes Tillie’s menu as “a little bit familiar, but pushing some boundaries.” Dinner entrees vary with the seasons, and have recently included peach-soy glazed pork belly and grilled short ribs with shiitake mushrooms. Weekend brunch offerings feature carnitas Benedict, French toast with coffee-vanilla maple syrup, and fried chicken to share. Tillie’s also offers kid’s menus, daily lunch, and an all-day menu. Reservations are recommended, especially on weekends.

From the food on the table to the striking structure that rises above it, Tillie’s is built to impress. “We just figured if we make it beautiful enough, people are going to come from all over,” Kim says. “Tillie’s was just destined to happen.”

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The graphic features a scenic view of a road winding through a field of purple wildflowers. The text is overlaid on the image, with the title 'Texas Scenic Views' in a large, stylized font. Below the title is a white box with a scalloped edge containing promotional text and the Texas A&M Forest Service logo.

Best Buds

Lavender adds a heavenly aroma to baked goods and more

By Heather Brand

RECIPE

Lavender Pecan Crisps

Makes up to 36 cookies

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups sugar
- 4 sticks softened butter
- 3 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 6 teaspoons ground lavender
- 4 cups corn flakes
- 1 cup chopped pecans, toasted

DIRECTIONS

Cream sugar and butter. Mix in dry ingredients, then fold in corn flakes and pecans. Spoon onto cookie sheet and bake at 350 F for 20 minutes.



Visitors flock to Brenham, near Debbie and Jim McDowell's farm, to take in the breathtaking sight of a sea of bluebonnets every March. Then they come back May through September to see the pale purple spires that are the namesake of the McDowells' Chappell Hill Lavender Farm.

Lavender is not native to Texas, and the local climate provides a challenge to those hoping to grow it. Too much rain can quickly destroy these finicky flowers, which prefer full sun and dry conditions. Nevertheless, in 2003, the McDowells planted an initial crop on their 23-acre property. "When we moved here, we had all this land and needed something to do with it," Debbie says. "We read lavender can grow in the Hill Country, so we started by planting 600, then another 600, then 1,500."

The farm now cultivates two varieties on 3 acres. Sweet lavender can be cut in May and June, whereas the lighter-hued Provence variety is harvested from late July through September. During those times of the year, guests are invited to stroll through the fragrant fields and gather their own fresh bouquets. Two annual events mark the height of the seasons. Spring Fling takes place the Saturday before Mother's Day and features an art workshop using a flower-pounding technique; and the Lavender and Wine Fest, on the second Saturday in August, celebrates with craft activities and artisan vendors.

The farm's on-site store offers products like lotions and soaps, tea and spice blends, and edible treats, many of them made by Debbie. For cooking, she recommends using the Provence variety, like she does in her best-selling lavender pecan crisps. "It enhances the flavor without being overpowering," she says. "Don't be afraid to use it." 🍷

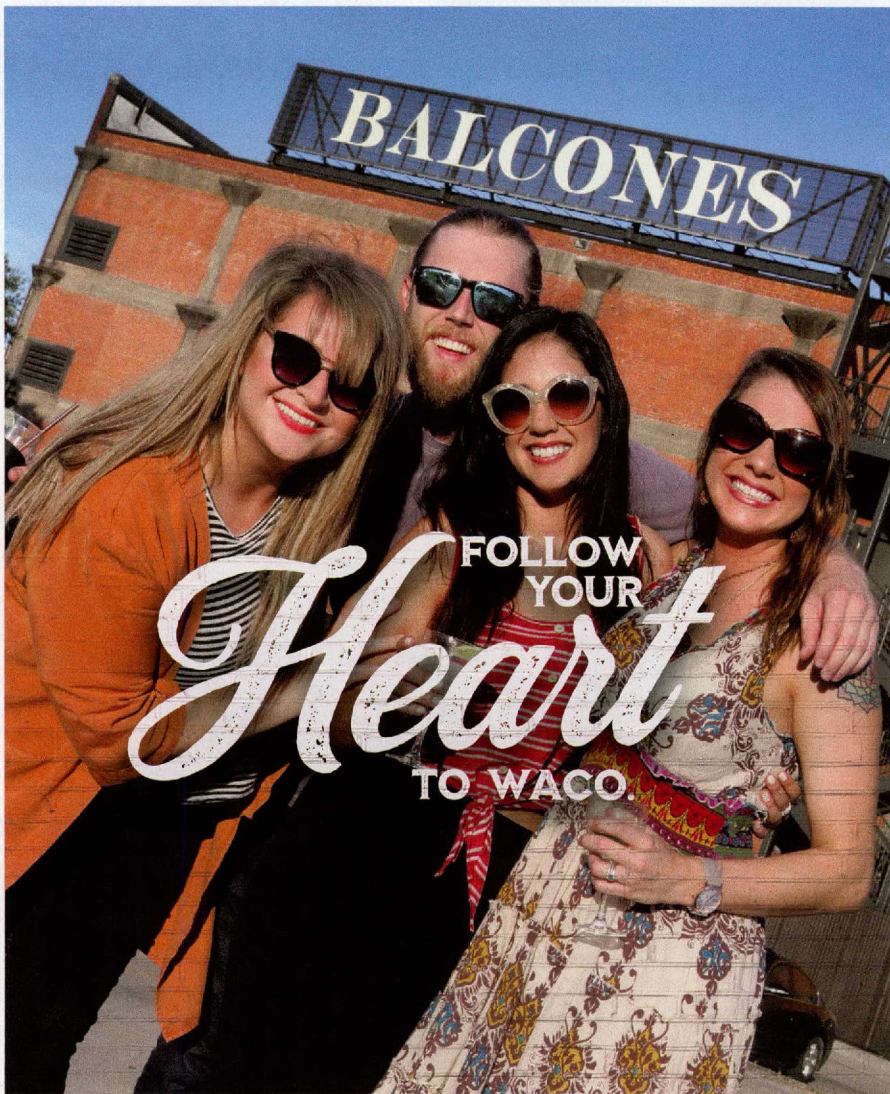
Chappell Hill Lavender Farm

2250 Dillard Road, Washington.

Open first weekend in March through November, Thu-Fri 10 a.m.-2 p.m.,

Sat 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

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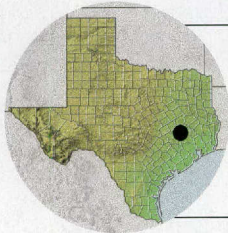


ROOSEVELT Roberson has been an integral part of BeeWeaver Honey Farm across three generations.

Hive Mind

Meet beekeeper Roosevelt Roberson, keeping Texas sweet since 1966

By Heather Brand



BEEWEAVER HONEY FARM
16481 County Road 319,
Navasota.
512-535-2219; beeweaver.com

Every work day, weather permitting, beekeeper Roosevelt Roberson tends the hives at BeeWeaver Honey Farm. He's worked at the operation, located just outside Navasota in the rural community of Lynn Grove, for more than 50 years. At 74 years old, though, he has no plans to retire.

Roberson got into beekeeping soon after graduating from high school in 1964. He initially helped his father on the family farm near Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. Two years later, he was looking to branch out on his own and approached Roy Stanley Weaver Sr. for a job tending his bees. "Do you think you can put your hand into a hive of bees?" Roy asked Roberson. "At 21 years old, us young men think we can do anything," Roberson recalls. "I said, 'By golly I can do it.' So I've been buzzing the bees, and they've been buzzing me, since 1966."


Across three generations, Roberson has played a major role in BeeWeaver's operations. Few beekeepers can match his expertise or longevity. Dan Weaver, the current co-owner of the farm, especially values Roberson's diligent reporting on the hives. "An accurate report on colony conditions and likely productivity is invaluable information that few other beekeepers can be entrusted to develop

and convey," Dan says. "Roosevelt can speak honey bee."

When Roberson first began working on the farm, he would transport bees across Texas to pollinate crops as far south as the Rio Grande Valley and as far north as the High Plains of Lubbock. Some farmers would benefit from the presence of the bees, and Roberson would reap the rewards in honey. Today, he sticks closer to home, overseeing the care of the colonies in the queen mating yards, and sometimes assisting two other beekeepers with other apiary activities.

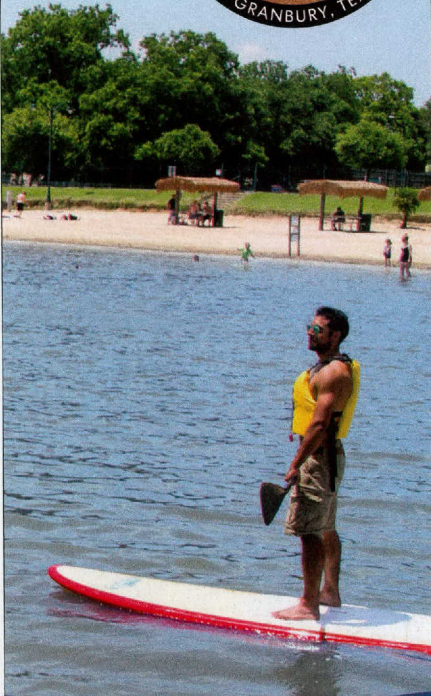

BeeWeaver owns roughly 3,500 hives scattered across Grimes County, the surrounding counties, and farther into Central Texas. The farm got its start with just 10 colonies in 1888, when Florence and Zachariah Weaver received them as a wedding present. Their son Roy decided to turn beekeeping into his primary occupation. He later passed the business along to his son, Binford, who in turn passed it to his son, Dan.

Dan has spearheaded new initiatives to select hardy, disease-resistant stock and utilize chemical-free approaches to warding off hive beetles and Varroa mites, which pose a threat to the colonies. Every year, BeeWeaver ships out thousands of its specially bred bees to customers around the country who are



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TEXAS



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Learn to Keep Bees

From mid-February to early November, Roosevelt Roberson leads private and small-group beekeeping lessons and hosts hands-on hive experiences at BeeWeaver Honey Farm. According to BeeWeaver co-owner Laura Weaver, “his fast smile, ability to tell a story, and vast knowledge easily make him one of the best resources in Texas for anyone who wants to learn beekeeping.” The beginner lesson (\$75 per person) teaches basic apiary skills and explains the equipment needed to start and maintain a colony. The in-hive experience (\$75 for one ticket, \$25 each for additional guest) allows visitors, under expert guidance, to experience the thrill of working a live hive.

looking to start colonies of their own as a hobby, to pollinate crops, or to save bees. “People hear that the bees are dwindling away, and they want to help,” Roberson says. This spike in interest led Roberson to start offering tours and beekeeping classes at the farm three years ago, earning him the moniker “King Bee.”

In recent years, Dan and his wife and BeeWeaver co-owner, Laura Weaver, have continued to expand the farm’s offerings. In 2016, they converted a 1930s honey-packing building into an emporium and gift shop. BeeGoods Mercantile stocks honey-related products, including instructional books, soaps, bee-themed kitchen wares, and, of course, a wide variety of honeys. In 2019, the farm welcomed WildFlyer Mead Company, a tasting room launched in collaboration with mead-makers Jeff and Chelsea Murray. Customers can sample seasonal flavors of mead, made with fermented local fruit and BeeWeaver honey.

Overall, the farm produces more than 50,000 pounds of honey each year, and that number is expected to grow to support the mead-making endeavor. The honey’s taste varies according to the kinds of nectar the bees consume. “Each

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BEEWEAVER
produces more than
50,000 pounds of
honey each year.

“People hear that the bees are dwindling away, and they want to help,” says Roosevelt Roberson, who’s earned the nickname “King Bee.”

plant, each flower, gives a different flavor,” Roberson explains. “I love the taste of clover honey. Years ago, we used to make lots of it around San Marcos. Now most of what we make in Texas is from wildflowers and yaupon. Horsemint is my favorite.”

Many types, both local and from around the world, can be sampled at the farm’s mercantile, along with infused and whipped varieties, some in unusual flavors like jalapeño and tiramisu. Although honey lends itself to a broad range of culinary possibilities, Roberson prefers to keep it simple, using pure honey to sweeten his oatmeal every morning. “Sometimes, I just spread it on toast,” he says. “Everything tastes better with honey on it.”

The Elisabet Ney Museum

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TEXANA



The Devil's Rope

A Panhandle museum explores the history and breadth of barbed wire, the fencing that settled the West

By Joe Nick Patoski

Pull into the Texas Panhandle town of McLean along old Route 66, walk past the two balls of rusty barbed wires, each 3 feet in diameter, and enter the Devil's Rope Museum: You just might learn a whole lot about how the American West was settled. Inside the cinder-block building, which once housed a brassiere factory, exhibits and vintage tools shed light on an oft-overlooked contribution to Texas history.

Invented in the 1870s, barbed wire was designed to prick and discourage. With the two-stranded metal wire lined by dagger-like barbs, ranchers controlled cattle herds and breeding, and farmers protected their fields against roaming stock. In the process, barbed-wire fences displaced the Longhorn breed, which was suited to open range; interrupted cattle drives across the Panhandle Plains; and obstructed the raiding trails of Plains tribes

such as the Comanche. In other words, this is the wire that tamed the West.

The Devil's Rope Museum and its plain-spoken founder, Delbert Trew, tell those stories and a whole lot more. Two museums actually share space inside the building. Most visitors stop for the Route 66 Museum, Trew says, in large part because the building is on the mythic Mother Road that links Chicago and Los Angeles—a route celebrated in song and film but bypassed decades ago by Interstate 40.

"You're driving on the interstate at 70 miles per hour and see a sign for a barbed-wire museum, and you don't exactly hit your brakes," Trew says. "But when you're driving that road and see a sign for Route 66 Museum... I'd estimate 75 to 80 percent come in for Route 66."

The Route 66 rooms feature vintage signage and artifacts like the original life-size fiberglass steer that stood sentinel in front of the Big Texan Steak Ranch in Amarillo. A 10-foot-long tin snake, poised to strike, long ago greeted motorists who couldn't resist the "RATTLESNAKES—EXIT NOW" sign directing them to the long-defunct Regal Reptile Ranch in nearby Alanreed. But those in the know come for the barbed wire.

In the early days of ranching, northern landowners relied on ditches and hedges to mark property lines and control stock, while in Texas, some stockmen employed wooden fences and others ranged cattle on open lands. Joseph Glidden of DeKalb, Illinois, introduced barbed wire to the world in 1874 with a design that could be mass-produced in a factory. One wire had evenly spaced barbs. A second, barbless

wire was wrapped around the first wire, which doubled the line's strength and durability. Traveling salesmen brought the product to Texas, where it eventually caught on.

"The name devil's rope came from religious groups," Trew says. "When barbed wire was introduced, it was very vicious and it caused lots of injuries to cattle, horses, and people. Religious groups called it the work of the devil, and they called it the devil's rope."

Most young people aren't much interested in barbed wire, its history, its tools, and its purpose, Trew acknowledges. City people, he says, have little appreciation for how barbed wire civilized the Great Plains and the western United States. But they might feel differently if they could walk among the barbed-wire covered exhibits at the museum.

"The whole significance of barbed wire is it's a barrier," Trew explains. "That's what we use to delineate our land, draw our lines; this is mine, this is yours."

The U.S. government has issued patents for more than 800 types of barbed wire over the years, and collectors have identi-

**BARBED WIRE
IS A COMMON
DENOMINATOR
OF
COMMON SENSE**

fied more than 2,000 types of barbed wire with barbs of various shapes and sizes, many of which are on display on the museum walls. It takes 4 miles of barbed wire to fence a section of land, or 1 square mile.

Trew says barbed wire evolved in three distinct phases. The first phase was "vicious," meaning the barbs did not give way. When manufacturers attempted to make a more humane product, "the



FROM FAR LEFT: Museum founder Delbert Trew; the controller of an early-model electric fence.

Barbed wire displaced Longhorn cattle, interrupted cattle drives, and obstructed raiding tribes. In other words, this is the wire that tamed the American West.



John Gates' Big Barbed-Wire Bet

"It's lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, and cheaper than dirt!" So crowed barbed-wire salesman John "Bet a Million" Gates to the crowd assembled for a demonstration on San Antonio's Military Plaza one night in 1877.

Gates' show culminated with cowboys chasing a herd of terrified Longhorns into a barbed-wire corral. The steers bashed into the fence and fell back, but the fence held.

Texas cattlemen had been reluctant to invest in barbed wire because of the cost, along with questions about its efficacy and the possibility of metal-barb injuries causing screwworm.

Historians credit Gates, the subject of the 1948 biography *Bet a Million! The Story of John Gates*, with turning the tide. After his flamboyant show, Gates went from being chased off cattle ranches to having trouble keeping up with orders.

barbed wire went from vicious to mild," Trew says. "The main thing they did was make the barb a little loose on the wire so it wouldn't cut like a knife," he says. "But it didn't do the job, so it became a little more vicious again."

The third phase is the modern era, which is all about "fast and cheap" manufacturing. Ranchers make up 80 percent of the barbed-wire market today, Trew says, noting, "The best barbed wire is made in the United States, by the old-time companies that know what they're doing." These include brands like Davis Wire and Red Brand Fence.

The Devil's Rope and Route 66 museums opened in 1991, more than 20 years after the bra factory closed. "I became involved because I live 11 miles from here," says Trew, a collector of barbed wire and tools.

Several hundred barbed-wire collectors wanted to establish a museum on a well-traveled highway in a location more temperate than LaCrosse, Kansas, "the Barbed Wire Capital of the World." LaCrosse is home to another barbed-wire museum and headquarters of the Antique Barbed Wire Society, but the town is 25 miles from the nearest interstate and doesn't get many visitors.

"A lot of the collectors were getting old, and they wanted a place to put their collections," Trew explains. With his trim white beard and mustache and a fine felt Western hat on his head, Trew projects the image of a grizzled old rancher because he is one—a little rough around the edges, which is the way you have to be to survive around these parts.

Trew runs the museum with his wife, Ruth Trew, the museum treasurer, and he serves as a tour guide and barbed-wire historian. Trew is known among barbed-wire collectors for his unrivaled library of barbed-wire publications, and he's even authored a book, *The Wire Cut Medicine Era: A Study of the Medicine Containers*, about bottled liniment cures for barbed-wire cuts and infections, which were common in the years when the fencing was first developed.

The Devil's Rope Museum also displays a collection of fence-making tools, including wire-stranding machines, wire stretchers, sledgehammers, wrenches, saws, mauls, staples, and post-hole diggers. "The Smithsonian was here, and they said we had more fence-makers than they did," Trew says. "We've got every fence component we could think of."

He breaks into a grin when he pauses

at an array of tools for digging holes, an essential part of fence-making. "This display is the one that gives the ol' cowboys chills—post-hole diggers," he says. "They come out of here shaking." Clearly, digging post holes was not a cowboy's preferred labor. "Here's one where they drilled into rock," he says, pointing out a heavy steel drill. "It'd take awhile."

Some of the neatest tools are hands-on, with cranks that twist metal strands into lines of fence. The most bizarre is a skip-row planter farming implement, which would roll down a fence line, dropping a seed each time a barb hit the seed bin, thereby distributing the seeds evenly.

The museum also displays a hodge-podge of other barbed wire and ranching items, such as patent models for gates and a historic ranch wagon from a nearby spread. "Over there is a barbed wire from overseas made with camel's hair and cactus stickers," nods Trew, who is also a sculptor. Stopping at his own waxwork assemblage of pipe in the shape of an old cowboy, he says, "None of my people are very pretty."

Leigh Ann Isbell, the museum curator, got involved because of her interest in history. Her fascination has grown as she's learned about "the different kinds, how they're twisted, the different barbs, how it was used for telephone wire, for planting seeds. Somebody said, 'Hey, if barbed wire can do this for cattle, think of what else it could do.'"

Ingenuity, technology, industry, and geography are all part of the barbed wire story, it turns out. "That's our deal," Trew says, puffing up with more than just a little bit of pride. 🐎

The Devil's Rope Museum,

100 Kingsley St., McLean. Hours: Mon-Sat 9 a.m.-4 p.m. March-October. Closed for winter. The museum's annual Reunion and Wildcat Swap Meet is April 3-4. 806-779-2225; barbwiremuseum.com



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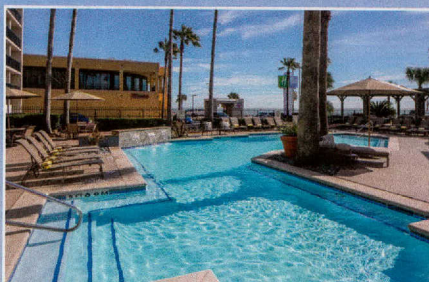




Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier

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so many restaurants on property, The San Luis Resort promises a dining experience for every whim. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at Blake's Bistro, indulge in authentic Italian cuisine at Grotto, or escape to the award-winning restaurant, The Steakhouse. In addition to sumptuous amenities, enjoy an endless variety of events and entertainment perfect for couples, families and groups! Experience the very best in style, elegance and comfort at The San Luis Resort.

SanLuisResort.com
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GalvestonNavalMuseum.com



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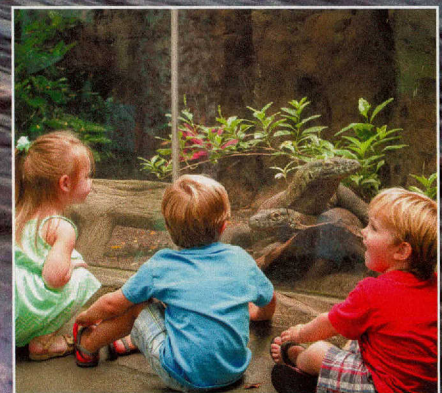
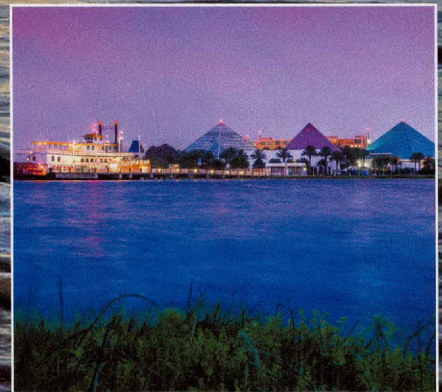
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Relax and cruise down to Moody Gardens and enjoy a fun-filled and memorable Spring Break for the entire family. No need to rush. Just take your time and make the most of your visit. You can easily spend a couple of days enjoying the Moody Gardens attractions at the new *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea Interactive Adventure*, *Aquaman 4D* or the new films *Expedition Chesapeake* or *Ancient Caves*. Unique experiences await as you encounter plants and animals from Asia, Africa and the Americas at the Rainforest Pyramid as well as the penguins, seals, sharks and other tropical fish at the Aquarium Pyramid. Enjoy the thrill

of the Zip Line and Ropes Course or relax and cruise aboard the Colonel Paddlewheel Boat with even more to explore as you venture out around Galveston Island.

Make the most of it with an overnight stay at the Moody Gardens Hotel that offers even more activities for the kids with casual dining and fine dining options. Be sure to set aside some special for mom and dad at the Moody Gardens Hotel Spa. You can also set your tee time at the Moody Gardens Golf Course, one of the top 10 public courses in Texas offering breathtaking island views and five tee sets creating diverse challenges for all levels of play.

moodygardens.org
409.744.4673



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GalvestonFeatherFest.com
832.459.5533

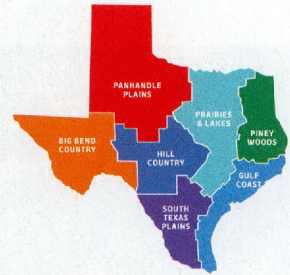


Galveston Railroad Museum

Located in the heart of downtown Galveston at 25th & Strand, The Galveston Railroad Museum has 5 acres of trains that you can explore and a 20,000 square foot restored 1932 Art Deco Depot that was once the home of the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad. The museum offers train rides most Saturdays, weather permitting.

GalvestonRRMuseum.org
409.765.5700

EVENTS



Celtic Courage

In Sherman, celebrate Irish and Scottish heritage

In March, thousands of people gather in Sherman for the Celtic Festival to hear pipe and drum music, taste Scottish and Irish food, and compete in strongman-type athletic competitions called the Highland Games. These originated as a way for military troops to stay in shape for combat. Today, men and women compete in strength competitions that include heaving stones, flipping tree trunks, throwing hammers, and using pitchforks to toss hefty burlap sacks filled with straw or rope.

Authentic Celtic music and food are big draws for the crowds. Bagpipers and drummers, both solo and in bands, perform and compete, while visitors sample delicious specialties such as Scotch eggs and meat pies. There's also fry bread, a reminder of the nearby Choctaw Nation's connection to the Irish—the tribe raised money to aid the people of Ireland suffering during the potato famine.

"Texas was heavily populated by Scottish and Irish immigrants," founding organizer Rob Ballew says. "Several fought and died at the Alamo. Legend has it that [one of the Scottish soldiers] and Davy Crockett had musical duels where one would play fiddle and the other the bagpipes to entertain the troops."

The festival lineup also includes a sheep-herding demonstration, a shortbread bake-off, whiskey tasting, dancing, a Viking village, and cultural exhibits. —*Pam LeBlanc*

Sherman Celtic Festival and Highland Games, March 21-22
2190 Fallon Drive, Sherman.
shermancelticfest.com

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE
Plein Air Painters of the Four Corners
Through March 22

Members of the Plein Air Painters of the Four Corners exhibit their images of Big Bend regional landscapes at Museum of the Big Bend, located on the Sul Ross State University campus. *Museum of the Big Bend*, 400 N. Harrison St. 432-837-8143; museumofthebigbend.com

ALPINE
Wild West Night
March 21

Enjoy dinner cooked on a chuckwagon, music by Craig Carter and Spur of the Moment Band, dancing, a silent auction, a dessert bakeoff, and other family-friendly fun at this street party. *Sunshine House*, 402 E. Holland Ave. 432-837-5402; sunshinehousealpine.com

ALPINE
Avenue Q: The Musical
March 27-29; April 3-5, 10-12
Sul Ross State University's Theatre Department presents the Tony-winning musical comedy featuring both puppets and human actors as characters who are facing the challenges of adulthood. *Sul Ross State University, Marshall Auditorium*, 400 N. Harrison St. sulross.edu/theatre

DEL RIO
Hungarian Heart Texan Soul
March 1
Some of the best folk musicians from Hungary are accompanied by the aspiring young dancers from the Del Rio community. *Paul Poag Theatre*, 746 S. Main St. 830-775-0888; huncongala.com

DEL RIO
Fiesta of Flight Air and Space Expo
March 14
As a "thank you" for the outstanding support from Del Rio and the surrounding community, Laughlin Air Force Base hosts an open

house and air show. Headlining the one-day event is the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds demonstration team. *Laughlin Air Force Base*, 1915 Veterans Blvd. 830-775-3551; drchamber.com

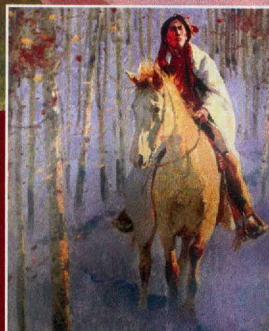
EL PASO
The Music of Selena
March 7
Celebrate the life and enduring legacy of trailblazing artist Selena Quintanilla. Sensational vocalist Isabel Marie Sanchez performs iconic hits like "Dreaming of You," "Como la Flor," and "Bidi Bidi Bom Bom," live with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. *Plaza Theatre*, 125 Pioneer Plaza. 915-231-1100; elpasolive.com

EL PASO
Seven Deadly Shorts
March 8
What could aliens, yoga, fortune telling, Cracker Jack, baggage, chess, and murder possibly have in common? Sin! From Mark Watts and Stephanie Karr, the team that opened the first Jewel Box Series in 2014, comes this series of seven 10-minute plays that take you down that dark path of the seven deadly sins. *Philanthropy Theatre*, 125 Pioneer Plaza. 915-231-1100; elpasolive.com

FORT DAVIS
Southwest 100 Endurance Run
March 28-29
Nestled in the historic Davis Mountains, this race starts on the legendary San Antonio-El Paso Road in the heart of Fort Davis National Historic Site. This remote outpost was set up by the U.S. Army in the 1800s as a refuge for travelers making the 600-mile journey by horse or wagon train through hostile Native American country. It was also home to the famous Buffalo Soldiers. *Fort Davis National Historic Site*, 101 Lt. Flipper Drive. 432-426-3015; ultraexpeditions.com/the-southwest-100

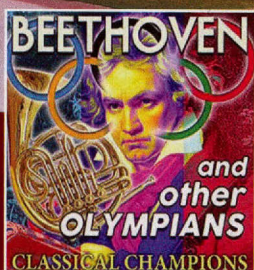
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GULF COAST

BRAZORIA

Brazoria Heritage Day

March 7

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CLUTE

Planetarium Show

March 3, 10, 17, 24, 27, 31

Come see the 30-foot dome equipped with a Spitz Star Ball projector that produces the night sky as it appears to the naked eye and a large variety of high-tech equipment that provide a close-up feel for cosmic wonders like comets, exploding stars, and black holes. *Brazosport Center for the Arts and Sciences, 400 College Blvd. 979-265-7661; brazosportcenter.com*

CORPUS CHRISTI

Raptor Rehab Talk with Guest Speaker Amanda Terry

March 14

Amanda Terry, outreach coordinator for Texas Sealife Center, discusses the challenges raptors face. Meet one of the center's animal ambassadors and learn about ways to keep these animals safe, or what to do if you find an injured bird. *South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples St. 361-852-2100; stxbot.org*

GALVESTON

Corvette Chevy Expo

March 14-15

View world-class Chevrolet show cars and shop major vendors with products like wheels and accessories, logo apparel and merchandise, and automotive accessories. *Galveston Island Convention Center, 5600 Seawall Blvd. 386-775-2512; corvettechevyexpo.com*

GALVESTON

Bon Temps Rouler Cajun Throwdown

March 27-28

This spicy island event features a crawfish cookoff with up to 60 teams, a variety of Cajun food, and live music. *Tin Cup's Caddy Shack, 9020 Stewart Road. 409-974-4929; btrcajunthrowdown.com*



Huntsville

HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

Huntsville offers visitors an array of discoveries – history, arts, antiques, culture, nature, entertainment and sporting events – all mixed with hometown hospitality. The small-town, historic flair of Huntsville brings new meaning to 'Texas Charm'. *There is truly something for everyone in Huntsville!*

SPRING EVENTS!

- Sam Houston's Birthday & Independence Day Celebration
March 2nd
- Rusty Chippy Show - March 14-15
- Walker County Fair & Rodeo and BBQ Cook Off - April 9-18
- Wine Down Shop Small - May 7
- General Sam Houston Folk Festival - May 15-17
- Downtown Farmers Market - May-July

Huntsville is the home of
Sam Houston.



For more information and overnight accommodations in Huntsville visit HuntsvilleTexas.com or call 800-289-0389



HARLINGEN

Harlingen Art Night

March 27
Walk the streets of historic downtown Harlingen every last Friday of the month for live music and open-air art galleries. Delicious food and adult beverages available. *Downtown Harlingen, 209 W. Commerce St. 956-216-4910; harlingenartnight.com*

HOUSTON

The Sleeping Beauty

Feb. 27-March 8
The Houston Ballet celebrates its 50th season with one of former artistic director Ben Stevenson's signature productions set to Tchaikovsky's beautiful score. *Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. 713-227-2787; houstonballet.org*

HOUSTON

Livestock Show and Rodeo

March 3-22
More than 2 million people attend Houston's annual livestock show and rodeo. The two-week event is packed with everything from carnival rides to nightly concerts to championship rodeo competitions. *NRG Center, 3 NRG Park. 832-667-1000; rodeohouston.com*

HOUSTON

Honky Tonk Laundry

March 6-April 19
The creator of *The Marvelous Wonderettes* brings a brand new boot-scootin' musical. After inheriting the Wishy Washy Washateria from her grandmother, Lana Mae hires Katie to help run the business, but the two soon join forces to convert their good ol' laundromat into the town's hottest honky-tonk. *Stages, 800 Rosine St. 713-527-0123; stagestheatre.com*

HOUSTON

Spring African Violet Show and Sale

March 7-8
The Spring Branch African Violet Club holds its annual plant show and sale with violets of all types such as standard, miniatures, semi-miniatures, and trailers. Gesneriads such as episcias and streps and supplies such as potting soil, pots, and fertilizers are also featured. *Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Drive. 281-748-8417; avsa.org*

HOUSTON

International Watermedia Exhibition

March 8-April 2
The 43rd International Watermedia Exhibition (IWE) is Houston's premier

watercolor- and watermedia-specific event. A once-a-year phenomenon, the IWE showcases the finest watermedia artists from around the world. *Watercolor Art Society, 1601 W. Alabama St. 713-942-9966; watercolorhouston.org/International-Exhibition*

HOUSTON

Tour de Houston

March 15
This annual event offers a unique way to view the city with bike routes winding through Houston's historic neighborhoods, scenic districts, and parks. With three routes of different lengths, the rides are designed for leisure riders or cycling enthusiasts. The event begins and ends at Hermann Square. *Hermann Square at City Hall, 901 Bagby St. houstontx.gov/tourdehouston*

HOUSTON

Pavel Haas Quartet in Concert

March 17
After winning its sixth Gramophone Award, the Pavel Haas Quartet, known for a blend of rich, elegant playing and Bohemian tradition, returns to the Houston stage. *Alice Pratt Brown Hall—Stude Concert Hall, 6100 Main St. 713-348-5400; chambermusicohouston.org/concerts/*

HOUSTON

Sensitive Guys

March 20-April 5
In a small liberal arts college, two student-led support groups work to help mitigate sexual assault on campus. But a shocking allegation divides both the Men's Peer Education group and The Women's Survivor Support group as they struggle to take effective action against the toxic culture of the school. For mature audiences. *Stages, 800 Rosine St. 713-527-0123; stagestheatre.com*

LAKE JACKSON

Blue Water Highway in Concert

March 6
Named after the roadway that links the band members' hometown of Lake Jackson to Galveston, Blue Water Highway comes from the kind of working class, coastal town background that has informed the work of so many of rock's greatest writers and artists. *The Clarion, 500 College Drive. 979-230-3658; brazosport.edu/clarion*

LAKE JACKSON

Nature Day

March 7
Celebrate nature with Sea Center Texas. Learn about the great outdoors and visit with local exhibitors and organizations. *Sea Center Texas, 302 Medical Drive. 979-292-0100; tpwd.texas.gov/seacenter*

LAKE JACKSON

Youth Fishing Day

March 7
Pack your sunscreen, hat, lawn chair, and fishing gear for a couple of hours of catch-and-release fishing at the marine fish hatchery and visitor education center. *Sea Center Texas, 302 Medical Drive. 979-292-0100; tpwd.texas.gov/seacenter*

LAKE JACKSON

Dash for Donuts 1K

March 14
This fun and silly event is perfect for families, weekend warriors, and the below-average athlete. Runners and walkers are encouraged to dress in costume for a chance to win a prize. *MacLean Park, 93 Lake Road. 979-297-4533; lakejackson-tx.gov*

LAKE JACKSON

Bird Banding

March 21
Watch volunteers collect baseline data on bird populations at the sanctuary. The banding station is an excellent opportunity to see birds up close and to learn all the bird species of the Brazosport area. *Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, 299 SH 332 W. 979-480-0999; gcbo.org*

LAKE JACKSON

Brew on the Bayou

March 21
Explore the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's torch-lit trails and enjoy a specialty brew tasting, live music, and food trucks. *Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, 299 SH 332 W. 979-480-0999; gcbo.org*

LAKE JACKSON

Doggy Dash 5K

March 21
The annual race starts at MacLean Park and awards overall male and female winners and the top finishers in the many age categories. Pet adoptions and a dog costume contest take place post-race. *MacLean Park, 93 Lake Road. 979-297-4533; ljdoggydash.com*

NEDERLAND

Nederland Heritage Festival

March 10-15
Join spring breakers along Boston Avenue for this community event featuring a carnival, costumed characters, music, and the famed Cuisine Walk. *Various locations, Boston Avenue. 409-724-2269; nederlandhf.org*

PALACIOS

Matagorda Bay Birdfest

March 27-29
The third annual festival is three fun-filled days of professional birding tours, kayak tours, speaker sessions, author book signings, vendors, art contest winners, children's events, a VIP dinner, and the Parade of Birds. *East Side Elementary Annex, 901 Second St. 956-285-3234; matagordabaybirdfest.org*

PORT ARANSAS

Port A Paella Competition

March 28
Join Paella Lovers United in Port Aransas for the inaugural Port A Paella Competition. Attendees get to sample the traditional Spanish dish prepared by top chefs while listening to live music during this family-friendly event. *Roberts Point Park. 361-749-5919; paellaloversunited.com*

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

Heatwave: Spring Break Car Jam

March 7-8
This custom truck and car show began in 1989 and was founded by two custom truck clubs in Austin. The Heat Wave is known for its large crowds of spectators and the growing number of quality show vehicles that attend from all over North America. *South Padre Island Convention Centre, 7355 Padre Blvd. 956-761-3000; heatwaveshow.com*

SUGAR LAND

Rodrigo Y Gabriela in Concert

March 12
The Mexican guitar duo's dynamic showmanship has been wowing audiences for 20 years. Their latest release, *Mettavolution*, pays tribute to the group's love of Pink Floyd, Buddhism, and the potential of humankind. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; smartfinancialcentre.net*

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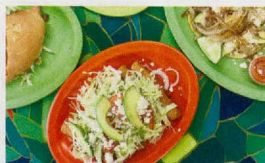
Birdwatchers Welcome

Beaumont is a natural address for over 320 species of birds and is an international renowned bird-watching destination.



Beautiful Murals & Art

Colorful murals and beautiful artwork are popping up all over Beaumont, even on the traffic boxes!



Foodies Delight

From fine dining to Tex-Mex, farm-to-fork and all in between, Beaumont's food scene is hot. See what's trending @eatbmt

SUGAR LAND

Sugar Land Heritage Hike

March 14

This historic walking tour takes you back to a time when Sugar Land was a company town with virtually all enterprises managed by the Imperial Sugar Company or its affiliate, Sugarland Industries. *Sugar Land Heritage Museum and Visitor Center*, 198 Kempner St. 281-275-2030; sheritage.org

SUGAR LAND

Disney's Moana Jr.

March 27-April 5

In the stage adaptation of the 2016 animated movie, Moana and her village of Motunui come to musical life right before your eyes. *Sugar Land Auditorium*, 226 Lakeview Drive. 713-302-5329; inspirationstage.com

SUGAR LAND

Sturgill Simpson in Concert

March 29

The Grammy-winning singer-songwriter is on tour with a special guest, up-and-coming country star Tyler Childers. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land*, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; smartfinancialcentre.net

SURFSIDE BEACH

St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 14

One of the longest-lasting traditions held at Surfside Beach, this annual event includes a parade where part of the route goes down the beach. There are plenty of free beads and candy thrown from the floats. In addition to the parade, there are costume contests, a social, fundraisers, and a reenactment of the Battle of Fort Velasco. *Surfside Beach City Hall*, 1304 Monument Drive. 979-233-1531; beachblarney.com

TEXAS CITY

Maritime Exhibition

March 21

Join along in a celebration of Texas City maritime history. There are visiting displays from several neighboring organizations such as Battleship Texas, the Ocean Star Drilling Rig and Museum, and the Houston Maritime Museum. *Texas City Museum*, 409 Sixth Street N. 409-229-1660; texascitytx.gov/page/rec.museum

VICTORIA

Woodworking Show

Through March 22

Local artists and craftsmen display their handmade wood creations. *The Nave Museum*, 306 W. Commercial St. 361-575-8228; navemuseum.com

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VICTORIA

Victoria Livestock Show

Feb. 27-March 2

A multiday annual event that features a barbecue cookoff, carnival, karaoke competition, livestock judging and auction, and a parade. *Victoria Community Center, 2905 E. North St. victorialivestockshow.com*

VICTORIA

Cinderella

March 7-8

Victoria Ballet Theatre presents the timeless fairy tale in an expansive and lighthearted three-act ballet. *Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts, 214 N. Main St. 361-575-2313; victoriaballet.org*

VICTORIA

Riverside Ride

March 21

This bicycle ride consists of four routes, including a challenging 100K through the rolling hills of northwest Victoria County. Arrive early to enjoy a pancake breakfast. *First United Methodist Church, 407 N. Bridge St. 361-550-4323; riversideride.com*

VICTORIA

Quilt Show

March 27-28

This year's quilt show theme is "Garden of Quilts" and features dozens of quilts on display and vendors selling a variety of quilting tools and fabrics. *Holy Family Catholic Church, 704 Mallette Drive. 281-794-0068; quiltguildvictoria.org*

VICTORIA

The Texas Mile

March 27-29

Drivers compete against themselves as they see how fast they can push their cars, trucks, and motorcycles to go in 1 mile—with no speed limit. *Victoria Regional Airport, 609 Foster Field Drive. 281-303-1844; texasmile.net*

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN

Gabriel García Márquez

Feb. 1-July 19

The Ransom Center digs into its collection for *The Making of a Global Writer*, an exhibition featuring items from the Nobel Prize-winning novelist's archives, including never-before-seen documents and correspondences with his friends and family. *Harry Ransom Center, 300 W. 21st St. 512-471-8944; hrc.utexas.edu*

AUSTIN

This Light of Ours

Feb. 15-May 31

The Bullock Museum presents *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement*, a visual story of the struggle against segregation, race-based disenfranchisement, and Jim Crow laws in the 1960s. *Bullock Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. 512-936-8746; thestoryoftexas.com*

AUSTIN

The Avant-Garde Networks of Amauta: Argentina, Mexico, and Peru in the 1920s

Feb. 16-May 17

Founded and directed by José Carlos Mariátegui, the Peruvian magazine *Amauta* was one of the most influential cultural and political periodicals of the early 20th century. *Blanton Museum of Art, 200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. 512-477-7324*

AUSTIN

It's My Park Day

March 7

Thousands of Austinites help improve and transform parks, trails, and greenbelts throughout the city. Volunteer projects include city-approved tree mulching, root collar clearing, habitat restoration, and trail maintenance, as well as park and creek cleanups. *Various locations. 512-477-1566; austinparks.org/impd*

AUSTIN

South by Southwest

March 13-22

Get your badge to partake in 10 days of concerts, screenings, panels, parties, and other events at the capital city's annual music, film, and tech festival and conference. Keynote speakers this year include Bumble founder Whitney Wolfe Herd, *CBS This Morning* co-host Gayle King, and director M. Night Shyamalan. *Various locations. sxsx.com*

AUSTIN

Rodeo Austin

March 14-28

Grab your boots and cowboy hat for Austin's largest annual rodeo, stock show, fair, and series of concerts featuring a mix of top country and popular music acts. *Travis County Exposition Center, 9100 Decker Lake Road. 512-919-3000; rodeoaustin.com*

AUSTIN

World Golf Championships-Dell Technologies Match Play

March 25-29

The world's top 64 professional golfers compete in this elite tournament that draws the likes of Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson to Central Texas. The setting of the course's back nine along Lake Austin allows spectators to watch the action by boat. *Austin Country Club, 4408 Long Champ Drive. pgtour.com*

BOERNE

Spartan Race 2020

March 14

Build a team of friends or family and head out for a muddy race with an obstacle course that you can journey through for time or for fun. *Joshua Springs Park and Preserve, 716 FM 289. visitboerne.org*

BOERNE

Thirst for Nature

March 19

Learn about the different plant and wildlife species of Boerne and its surrounding areas while sipping an adult beverage made to match the theme for the evening. Non-alcoholic drinks are also available. *Cibolo Nature Center, 140 City Park Road. 830-249-4616; cibolo.org*

BOERNE

Concert in the Cave

March 21

Step into the wonders of Cave Without A Name's Queen's Throne Room for a concert in the cave and hear the natural sound of the acoustics ringing through the centuries-old stalactites and stalagmites. *Cave Without A Name, 325 Kreuzberg Road. 830-537-4212; cavewithoutaname.com*

BRACKETTVILLE

Fort Clark Days

March 6-7

Fort Clark Days is a family friendly, annual event held the second weekend of March. Celebrating the Fort when it was an active military post from 1852 to 1946, this educational living history event features juried artisans with handmade products for sale and more than 100 living historians. *Fort Clark Springs, 300 US 90. 304-642-8649; fortclarkdays.org*

BULVERDE

Saturday Night Rodeo

March 7, 14, 21, 28

The family-friendly rodeo and live music series starts the first weekend in March and continues each Saturday through the last weekend in November. Following the rodeo, enjoy live music and dancing; beer, wine, cocktails, and soft drinks throughout the rodeo grounds; and



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Discover SAN ANGELO!



Discover Spring Events in San Angelo



San Angelo Revolution Film Festival
April 17 - April 18
Murphey Performance Hall and San Angelo Performing Arts Center

National Ceramic Competition
April 17 - June 28
San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts

Cowboy Way Jubilee
April 30 - May 3
Historic Fort Concho

DiscoverSanAngelo.com

delicious Texas barbecue, tacos, steak, and burgers. *Tejas Rodeo Company, 401 Obst Road. 830-980-2226; tejasrodeo.com*

FREDERICKSBURG Spring Break at the Pioneer Museum

March 9-14
The grounds at the Pioneer Museum are full of living history presenters including Texas Rangers, frontier campouts, handcrafts, cornhusk doll-making, chuckwagon cooking, Comanche historic interpretation, frontier songs, and games. *Pioneer Museum, 325 W. Main St. 830-990-8441; pioneermuseum.net*

FREDERICKSBURG Doña Rosita's Jalapeño Kitchen

March 13
Fredericksburg Theater Company presents Texas touring artist Ruby Nelda Perez in this one-person comedy about Doña Rosita, a restaurant owner who is thinking about closing down her restaurant to make way for a new shopping mall. *Steve W. Shepherd Theater, 1668 US 87 S. 888-669-7114; fredericksburgtheater.org*

FREDERICKSBURG Celebrate Texas 2020

March 14
Feel history come to life with The Old Chisholm Trail Show, the Traditional American Indian Society, Tales of the Texas Rangers, and more. *Texas Rangers Heritage Center, 1618 E. Main St. 830-990-1192; trhc.org*

FREDERICKSBURG Mud Dauber Festival and Chili Cookoff

March 21
Named in honor of the pesky insect, this open chili cookoff and live music festival shows off Luckenbach's chili expertise. *Luckenbach Texas, 412 Luckenbach Town Loop. 830-997-3224; luckenbachtexas.com*

FREDERICKSBURG Texas Children's Choir in Concert

March 21
Support these talented children as they prepare for the unique honor of performing with the United States Marine Corps Band at Pearl Harbor in June. *National Museum of the Pacific War Pacific Combat Zone, 340 E. Main St. 830-997-8600; pacificwarmuseum.org*

FREDERICKSBURG Texas Hill Country Wine and Wildflower Journey

March 27-April 12

Enjoy the wineries and natural beauty of the Hill Country on this self-guided tour that includes complimentary tastings and wine discounts at dozens of participating wineries. *Various locations. 872-216-9463; texaswinetrail.com*

FREDERICKSBURG

Hill Country Indian Artifact Show
March 28

Discover a wide variety of some of the finest Native American artifacts from Texas and the United States including arrowheads, pottery, beads, and books. *Pioneer Pavilion at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park, 432 Lady Bird Drive. 830-329-2636; hillcountryindianartifacts.com*

GEORGETOWN

Quilt Show

March 27-28
The quilt show features a silent auction, vendors, a raffle quilt, and tea room. *Community Center, 445 E. Morrow St. 512-658-6973; handcraftsunlimited.com*

HUTTO

Reds, Whites, and Brews

March 28
Taste Texas wines and brews as well as food from local restaurants. Each attendee receives a commemorative tasting glass and has his or her choice of 10 wine and/or beer samples, plus 10 food samples. There is a complimentary photo booth and live entertainment. Must be 21 and older. *Tegge-man House, 11900 N. FM 1660. 512-759-4003; facebook.com/downtownhutto*

INGRAM

HCAF Member's Exhibit:

New Works

March 3-7, 10-13
From paintings to pottery and glass, this show features the wide variety of work created by artists of the Hill Country Arts Foundation. *Hill Country Arts Foundation, 120 Point Theatre Road. 830-367-5121; hcaf.com*

KERRVILLE

Hill Country Cluster of Dogs Show

March 4-8
The annual all-breed dog show features approximately 1,000 dogs and more than 100 breeds. *Kerr County Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 SH 27. 210-364-4983; sanantonio Kennelclub.com*

KERRVILLE

Hill Country Chorale Classical Music Festival

March 7

Kerrville's community chorus presents a program of music by the chorale group and individual artists, both vocalists and instrumentalists. *First United Methodist Church, 321 Thompson Drive. 830-321-0303; hillcountrychorale.org*

KERRVILLE

Hill Country Youth Orchestra Special Fundraiser Concert

March 7
Support the Hill Country Youth Orchestra, the only tuition-free orchestra program in the country, at this special fundraiser that helps provide training and development of young musicians ages 6 to 18. *Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. 830-285-9781; hcyo.org*

KERRVILLE

Luck O' the Pup

Flyball Tournament
March 14-15
Flyball is run in teams of four dogs as a relay, with two teams racing each other. The lanes are 51 feet long with four jumps and a spring-loaded box with a ball. *Kerr County Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 SH 27. 713-205-7340; kerrvilletexascvb.com*

KERRVILLE

Texas Woodcarvers Guild Spring Round-Up Show

March 28-29
The Texas Woodcarvers Guild is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the art of woodcarving. This annual event includes a judged competition, sale, and seminars for all levels of woodcarvers. *Kerr County Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 SH 27. 210-669-3181; texaswoodcarversguild.com*

LLANO

Llano Earth Art Fest (LEAF)

March 13-16
More than 6,000 people come out each year to the banks of the Llano River for Llano Earth Art Fest—home of the World Rock Stacking Championships. Try your hand at stacking rocks sky high or in a thoughtful, balanced arrangement to create beautiful rock art in and along the Llano River. *Grenwelge Park, 199 E. Haynie St. 325-247-5354; llanoearthartfest.org*

LOMETA

Diamondback Jubilee and Rodeo

March 27-28
This annual celebration includes rattlesnake exhibits, arts and crafts, food vendors, a carnival, live entertainment, the Fort Hood

Calvary, a rodeo, team roping, the Rodeo Queen contest, a chili cook-off, and a street dance. *Lometa Regional Park, 15115 US-183. 512-556-5172; lometaclub.org*

MARBLE FALLS

Square Thru the Wildflowers Dance

March 6-7
Enjoy two days of square dancing, a fun activity that is good for the body and brain. There is free admission and donation fees for experienced square dancers. Lessons are offered for anyone interested. *Boys and Girls Club of the Highland Lakes, 1701 Broadway St. 830-613-9054; squaredancetx.com*

MASON

Mason Chamber Music Festival

March 26-29
The fifth season of the Mason Chamber Music Festival features some of the greatest works in classical chamber music from the vast string quartet and chamber music repertoire. This year, performances celebrate the 250th birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven with his chamber works in almost every concert. *Various locations, 122 Moody St. 325-218-2353; masonchambermusicfestival.org*

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE

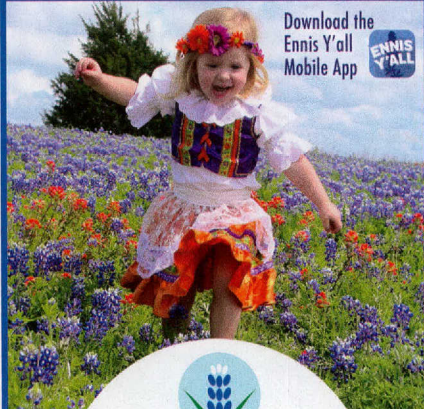
Outlaws and Legends Music Fest


March 20-21
The 10th annual Outlaws and Legends Music Fest, benefiting Ben Richey Boys Ranch, returns with the biggest lineup in the festival's history. Texas artists include Willie Nelson, Randy Houser, Kevin Fowler, Charley Crockett, The Great Divide, Cooder Graw, and Jerrod Medulla, all with host Mark Powell. *Back Porch of Texas, 3350 N. Clack St. 325-260-6054; outlawsandlegends.com/tickets*

ABILENE

Peter Rabbit Tales

March 22
Enchantment Theatre Company, in collaboration with Frederick Warne and Co. and Penguin Books UK, brings the authorized theatrical version of *Peter Rabbit Tales* to Abilene. Using fantastic masks, whimsical puppets, gorgeous scenery, and original music, the magical, marvelous world of Beatrix Potter comes alive on stage. *Historic Paramount Theatre, 352 Cypress St. 325-677-1161; cpasabilene.org*



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ENNIS TEXAS

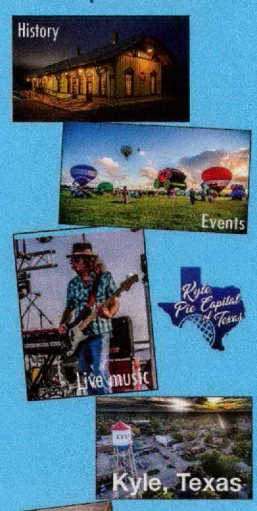
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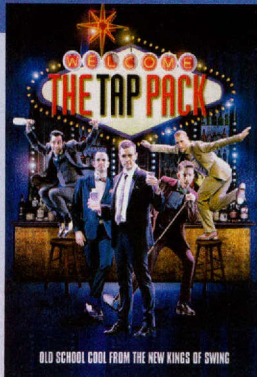
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SAN ANGELO

Highlights from the Permanent Collection: Masterpieces of Ceramics, Texas Art, Spanish-Colonial Art, and American Glass
Through April 5

The museum's collection currently has over 650 objects in the Permanent Collection. Through some recent generous gifts, the museum has acquired a significant number of works by Texas artists, especially works created since 1945. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

SAN ANGELO

Spring Break Camp at the Museum

March 9-11
The all-day art camp is for children ages 7-12 and requires pre-registration. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

SAN ANGELO

Family Day Hero!

March 14
Meet some of art's "superheroes." This day has performances and free activities for children and their families. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

PINEY WOODS

LIBERTY

Liberty Jubilee

March 27-28
Spend the afternoon at a small-town celebration with food, entertainment, arts and crafts, a carnival, a photo contest, kids' areas, and book and bake sales. *1829 Sam Houston St. 936-336-3684; cityofliberty.org*

LONGVIEW

Longview 150

Feb. 1-May 31
Longview turns 150 years old in 2020, and to celebrate the city has planned several months of events, including a banquet, homecoming, transportation show, parade, local history experiences, and many other fun activities. *Various locations, 300 W. Cotton St. 903-753-3281; longviewtexas.gov/150*

LONGVIEW

Zonta Club Antique Show and Sale

March 6-8
Antique vendors are present with various antiques and collectibles. The show and sale benefits local scholarships and nonprofit agencies. *Maude Cobb Convention and*

The journey...



is the destination

The memories, a lifetime!



PARISTEXAS.COM



Activity Center, 100 Grand Blvd. 903-753-3281; zontaantiqueshow.com

PALESTINE

Dogwood Trails Celebration

March 20–April 5
For more than 80 years, Palestine has celebrated the Dogwood Trails Festival. Enjoy the delicate beauty of the dogwood trees in Davey Dogwood Park the last two weeks in March and first week in April. *Palestine Visitor Center*, 825 W. Spring St. 903-723-3014; texasdogwoodtrails.com

PALESTINE

Fairy Garden Walk

March 20–June 14
Explore Davey Dogwood Park this spring. The 5.5 miles of driving trails make for some amazing views, or park the car and step onto the trails to see how many of the hidden fairy gardens you can find. *Davey Dogwood Park*, 4205 N. Link St. 903-723-3014; visitpalestine.com

PALESTINE

Dogwood Jamboree

March 21
Themed “Country From The Heart,” this Branson-style country music show is filled with family fun, laughter, classic country tunes from top-notch artists, and comedians providing comic relief. *Palestine High School Auditorium*, 1600 Loop 256 S. 903-723-6291; dogwoodjamboree.com

PALESTINE

Dogwood Days Train Ride

March 22–April 5
White and pink dogwood blooms light up the Piney Woods scenery that passes by your window while aboard the Texas State Railroad. *Texas State Railroad Palestine Depot*, 789 Park Road 70. 855-632-7729; texasstaterailroad.net

PALESTINE

Old-Time Music and Dulcimer Festival

March 26–28
At this 19th annual festival, find live performances, jam sessions, and some of the best dulcimer and old-time music artists from around the country serving as headliners and workshop leaders. *Museum of East Texas Culture*, 400 Micheaux Ave. 903-723-1914; oldpalmusic.com

TYLER

Tyler Quilt Show

March 27–28
There are judged quilts, a special exhibit of art quilts, a silent auction, more than 30 vendors,

and a country store. *Harvey Hall Convention Center*, 2000 W. Front St. 903-747-7072; qgetx.org

TYLER

Spirits of Oakwood

March 28
On this guided historical walking tour through Oakwood Cemetery, historians dressed in period clothing portray and tell the stories of notable early Tyler and Smith county citizens buried in the cemetery. The event is sponsored by the Oakwood Cemetery Restoration Committee. *Oakwood Cemetery*, 714 W. Oakwood St. 903-316-2201; oakwoodcemeterytyler.com

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

BONHAM

Spring Break Fun

March 10–11
Inspired by the history of the Sam Rayburn family’s early years at their Bonham residence, enjoy two days of crafts, stories, and activities. *Sam Rayburn House State Historic Site*, 890 SH 56 W. 903-583-5558; visitsamrayburnhouse.com

BRYAN

Waggles and Wine

March 22
Treat your furry friend to a day out at Messina Hof. The winery’s Vintage House chef is serving homemade puppy treats, while pet owners can enjoy wine slushies and appetizers in the Wine Bar. A portion of puppy treat sales goes toward the Bryan Animal Center. *Messina Hof Estate Winery*, 4545 Old Reliance Road. 979-778-9463; messinahof.com

BURTON

Texas Ranger Day

March 21
Discover Burton’s unique history at Texas Ranger Day, hosted by the Burton Heritage Society. *Burton Railroad Depot and Museum*, 507 N. Railroad St. 979-353-0050; burtontexas.org

COLLEGE STATION

She: A Choreoplay

March 26
The best way to describe *She* is *The Vagina Monologues* meets *For Colored Girls*. *She* is about sexual violence against women and girls and empowerment and healing. *She* is not just an artistic piece but also a community gathering. *Rudder Auditorium*, 401 Joe Routt Blvd. 979-862-5766; jinahparker.com

CORSICANA

Tour of Corsicana Bike Race

March 21–22
Texas’ premier, time-based stage race winds throughout Navarro County and historic downtown over original brick streets for fan viewing. 120 N. 12th St. 903-874-4731; tourofcorsicana.com

DALLAS

Dallas Blooms Festival

Feb. 29–April 12
The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden presents Dallas Blooms, the largest annual floral festival in the Southwest. Themed “The Sounds of Spring,” this festival showcases an explosion of color from more than 500,000 spring-blooming blossoms, thousands of azaleas, and hundreds of Japanese cherry trees. *The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden*, 8525 Garland Road. 214-515-6615; dallasarboretum.org

DALLAS

A Texas Tribute to Daffodils

March 13–14
Daffodils bloom in a gorgeous array of colors and sizes. Experience daffodils grown by world experts. The American Daffodil Show includes flower photography, design, and horticulture blooms. Dallas plays host to this exhibit of the most beautiful daffodils in the world. *Doubletree by Hilton Hotels—Campbell Centre*, 8250 N. Central Expressway. 214-762-5727; texasdaffodilsociety.org

DALLAS

The Women Who Compose For Broadway


March 19–April 5
Back for a fifth year, this show features the music of Nell Benjamin, Nancy Ford, Micki Grant, Mary Rodgers, Brenda Russell, Lucy Simon, Kay Swift, and Jeanine Tesori. Created by Marjorie Hayes, a director, actor, and University of North Texas professor, the show shines a light on these groundbreaking women who have made their mark on the Broadway stage. *Bishop Arts Theatre*, 215 S. Tyler St. 214-948-0716; bishoparts theatre.org/theatre-series

DENISON

Texoma Kids Fest

March 28
Children have a ball in downtown Denison with tons of family-friendly activities, games, and entertainment. *Downtown Denison*, 324 W. Main St. 903-464-4452; denisonlive.com

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Texas Storytelling Festival

March 12-15

Celebrate 35 Years of Texas Storytelling festivals featuring 35 Texas storytellers. Scary stories? Tall tales? Personal yarns? Come to Denton to celebrate 35 years of storytelling over three days that feed your mind, heart, and soul. *Denton Civic Center, 321 E. McKinney St. 940-380-9320; tejastorytelling.com*

DUBLIN

St. Patrick's Celebration

March 14

Make magical memories during the St. Patrick's Celebration in historic Dublin, the Irish Capital of Texas. Activities include the Shamrock Shuffle 5K, a parade, handmade/homegrown vendor items, fabulous festival food, Celtic entertainment, family-friendly contests, and unique shops and boutiques. *Various locations, 254-445-3422; dublintxchamber.com*

FRISCO

Texas Pinball Festival

March 27-29

The festival features 400-plus vintage and new pinball machines, as well as classic arcade games to be set on free play. *Embassy Suites Hotel and Frisco Convention Center, 7600 John Q Hammons Drive. 972-292-5266; texaspinball.com/tpf*

FRISCO

Arts in the Square

March 28-29

The 11th annual Arts in the Square returns with more than 120 of some of the best local and regional artists selling their handmade creations. Artists compete in the following categories: fine arts/graphics, pottery, textiles, glass, jewelry, leather, metal, photography, wood, and miscellaneous. *Frisco Square, 8843 Coleman Blvd. 972-292-5266; friscosquare.com/ait*s

FORT WORTH

Funky Finds Spring Fling

March 14-15

The 12th annual spring fling is a family- and pet-friendly market with two buildings packed with more than 200 area makers and pickers selling funky handmade, repurposed, upcycled, and vintage finds—from accessories and art to plants and pet goods. *Will Rogers Memorial Center, 3401 Burnett-Tandy Drive. 903-665-7954; funkyfinds.com/spring-fling*

GRANBURY

Bull Riding on the Beach

March 21-22

There's nothin' like a bull-buckin' rodeo right on Granbury's Beach Park. Stop on by after General Granbury's birthday festival. *Granbury City Beach Park, 505 E. Pearl St. 817-573-5548; visitgranbury.com/events/annual-events/general-granburys-birthday*

GRANBURY

General Granbury Birthday Bash and Cookoff

March 21-22

General Granbury would be 189 years old this year! Come out and celebrate the town's namesake with craft food and shopping vendors, live music, activities, and free cake and ice cream. Don't miss some big Texas artists hitting the stage and, of course, the hilarious outhouse race. *Historic Granbury Square, 100 E. Pearl St. 817-573-5548; visitgranbury.com/events/annual-events/general-granburys-birthday*

GRAND PRAIRIE

Dallas Blues Festival

March 7

The annual blues festival features one of the very best lineups in blues music, with performers including Pokey Bear, Tucka, Nellie Tiger Travis, and Lenny Williams. *The Theatre at Grand Prairie, 1001 Performance Place. 972-854-5050; theatregp.com*

GRAND PRAIRIE

Kids Fest

March 14

Enjoy family-friendly fun with live performances, activities like face painting, and educational experiences at this popular festival focused on children. *Traders Village, 2602 Mayfield Road. 972-647-2331; tradersvillage.com*

GRAND PRAIRIE

Big Mamou Cajun Festival

March 21-22

Add a pinch of Zydeco, a bit of swamp pop, and a whole lot of Cajun music, and you've got the ingredients for a hearty, Creole-style party. *Traders Village, 2602 Mayfield Road. 972-647-2331; tradersvillage.com*

IRVING

Texas Steel Guitar Jamboree

March 12-15

Hear steel guitarists from around the world play at the 36th annual jamboree. There are also educational seminars, plus vendors and manufacturers of steel guitars and musical products. *Sheraton DFW, 4440 W. John Carpenter Freeway, 817-558-3481; texassteelguitar.org*

LA GRANGE

The Best Little

Cowboy Gathering in Texas

March 12-14

Calling all cowboys and cowgirls—or anyone who enjoys all things Western: This event is for you. There is cowboy poetry, a singer-songwriter showcase, horse demonstrations, a barbecue cookoff, mutton bustin', Western arts and crafts, children's events, and musical performances. *Fayette County Fairgrounds, 400 W. Fair Grounds Road. 979-966-7846; bestlittlecowboygathering.org*

MADISONVILLE

Madison County Fair and Rodeo

March 19-28

This long-standing tradition in Madison County includes a 10-day county fair and a two-day rodeo. It's presented by the Madison County Fair Association, an organization that supports local youth through scholarships and other programs. *Madison County Fairgrounds, 712 Industrial Park Lane. 936-348-2234; mcfa.net*

MESQUITE

Devil's Bowl Speedway Racing Season

March 7, 14, 21, 28

Every Saturday of the month, rev up your engines and head to Devil's Bowl Speedway to see the cars prepare for another great season of adrenaline-pumping laps around the best dirt track in the Southwest. *1711 Lawson Road. 972-222-2421; devilsbowl.com*

MESQUITE

Hip-Hop Cowboys Spring Rodeo

March 21

Enjoy blues and hip-hop concerts as well as traditional rodeo events like bull riding, team roping, barrel racing, tie-down roping, bareback riding, steer wrestling, and relay racing. *Mesquite Arena, 1818 Rodeo Drive. 800-541-2355; visitmesquitetx.com*

NAVASOTA

Texas Birthday Bash

March 6-7

Navasota celebrates Texas Independence with all things Texas from music to food, and activities for the whole family. The Lone Star State was born in 1836, when the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed just 7 miles down the road in Washington-on-the-Brazos. Downtown Navasota, 200 McAlpine St. 936-825-6475; texasbirthdaybash.com

SEGUIN

Hot Shot's Fish Fry and Washers Tournament

March 20

Mark your calendars for the 10th annual fish fry, which includes fried cod, french fries, marinated green bean salad, coleslaw, hot dogs, and desserts. This year, there's also a washers tournament with some cool prizes. Starcke Park Pecan Bottom, 650 W. River Drive. 830-401-5000; facebook.com/events/2741401329268507

THE COLONY

Luck of the Irish Triathlon and Run-Bike-Run

March 15

Test your luck and strength competing in your choice of a traditional triathlon or a run-bike-run race. Alternatively, bring some friends along and compete in the relay option. Lewisville ISD Aquatic Center, 5729 Memorial Drive. 972-306-2000; playtri.com/all-races/luck-of-the-irish-triathlon-2020

TEMPLE

Paws on the Plaza

March 21

In celebration of National Puppy Day, bring your furry, four-legged friends to the plaza for demonstrations, a treat trail, and a variety of vendors. Santa Fe Plaza, 301 Santa Fe Way. 254-298-5690

WASHINGTON

Texas Independence Day Celebration

Feb. 29-March 1

This annual two-day celebration features live music, food, traditional crafts, and commemorative programs. Experience life in Texas in 1836 by visiting with reenactors; witnessing firing demonstrations in the Texas Army camps; observing cooking, weaving, and period craft demonstrations; and walking the same trail as Texas' forefathers and pioneer families. Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, 23400 Park Road 12. 936-878-2214; wheretexasbecametexas.org

WEST

West, Central Texas Ceramic Expo and Handcrafted Items

March 20-21

Learn a new hobby or stock up on all your ceramic supplies. Activities include Make N' Takes and door prizes. Find activities for the whole family. West Knights of Columbus Club, 2547 Jerry Mashek Drive. 254-716-5227; westceramicshow.com

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

EAGLE PASS

International Friendship Festival

March 20-28

The festival includes the Abrazo Ceremony, carnival, Noches Mexicanas, and downtown parade. Shelby Park, Rio Grande St. under Bridge No. 1. 830-773-3224

SAN ANTONIO

Fiesta of Gems

March 14-15

Shop for rocks, minerals, and fossils from 26 dealers. There is a silent auction, lucky wheel, and door prizes. Proceeds go to universities for earth science scholarships. San Antonio Event Center, 8111 Meadow Leaf Drive. 830-387-1766; swgms.org

SAN ANTONIO

S-Bit Block Party

March 28

Guests experience a unique pop culture event featuring vendors, artists, food vendors, professional cosplayers, gaming tournaments, and a live performance by Bit-Force. San Antonio Event Center, 8111 Meadow Leaf Drive. 210-219-4122; 8bitblockparty.com

WESLACO

Texas Onion Fest

March 28

Celebrate the creation of the world-famous Texas 1015 onion, which was developed in Weslaco. Festivities include live entertainment on two stages, the onion-eating contest, delicious food, commercial booths, kiddie rides, the 1015 market, a car show, and cooking demonstrations at the Culinary Center. Mayor Pablo G. Peña City Park, 300 N. Airport Drive. 956-968-2102; weslaco.com

THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5



Seguin

Going nuts for history

BY CHET GARNER

Just east of San Antonio sits one of Texas' oldest towns, named after one of the state's original heroes. Juan Seguin was a Tejano leader in the Texas Revolution who fought in the Battle of San Jacinto. Today, Seguin celebrates both its Lone Star heritage and its setting along the Guadalupe River, making for a "nutty" day trip.

World's Largest Pecans

It's a feat to have the "world's largest" anything, but Seguin proudly claims three of the world's largest pecans. The story begins in 1962 when a group of locals wanted to honor the town's pecan industry. They built a 5-foot-long concrete pecan that still sits in front of the Guadalupe County courthouse. Forty years later, local pecan farmer John Pape built an 11-foot pecan, only to find out that a town in Missouri had already built an even larger one. Seguin finally reclaimed the record in 2010 with a monstrous 16-foot-long pecan statue that sits outside the Texas Agricultural Education and Heritage Center. Now all trippers can proudly take a selfie with the first-, third-, and fourth-largest pecans in the world.

Powerplant Texas Grill

The Guadalupe River flows through the middle of Seguin, which harnessed the river to electrify the town with a stunning brick power plant. Decommissioned decades ago, the structure now houses a restaurant serving pasta, burgers, and fried pickles aplenty. There's nothing quite like diving into the Powerplant's huge chicken-fried steak smothered in queso while overlooking the dam below.

Son's Island

Follow the river upstream to Son's Island, an unexpected getaway on the Guadalupe. Trade in your boots for flip-flops and your car for a cabana as you spend the afternoon on "island time" in a hammock or kayak. I had to paddle around the entire island before I believed it was real. It may be nowhere near the ocean, but it's got all the sand, sun, and water a Texas tripper needs.

Guero's Backyard

In the backyard of this pink historic home, a local couple whips up some of the best fusion street tacos on the planet. Wrapped inside a thick, homemade tortilla, you'll find concoctions like the "Marissa" with seared ahi tuna, seaweed salad, and gorgonzola cheese, and the "Soul Train" with shredded beef short ribs and collard greens. Tacos will never be the same.

Haunted Magnolia Hotel

A town as old as Seguin is bound to have a few spooky skeletons still in its closet. For those who want an eerie encounter with history and maybe even a ghost, take a tour of this 1840 hotel that was built by one of the original Texas Rangers. Equipped with ghost-detecting gadgets and photos, the owners will take you on a hair-raising tour and share the stories of the 13 spirits who checked into the hotel, but never really checked out.

So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road.

Chet Garner is the host of The Daytripper® travel show on PBS. To view the Seguin episode visit thedaytripper.com. Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chetripper.



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April 18

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April 17 - 18

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OPEN ROAD | continued from Page 19

I'd bring with me when I left Mexico. I had no idea he would die only three or four years after I captured him in this photo.

"Everything here either stings, bites, or sticks," my friend jokes as he shows me, dizzy with pride, the makeshift South Texas botanical garden he's nurtured by the headquarters' porch. Creosotes, *juncus*, *tasajillos*, black brushes—fittingly known as *chaparro prieto*—all glow, gorgeous and resilient and thorn-ready, in the Armageddonian fall sun.

It is early October and I'm back at the ranch for a weekend. The novel's finished and my sciatica, which I attribute to the stress of parting with a book that occupied my life for so long and which prohibited me from running for the first half of the year, has resided. All I want to do is chat the day away with my friend and go out for a run around the brush land—things I couldn't do in April.

That month, every day at noon or at night, when my surroundings got so quiet my own breath startled me, the horses visited me. I'd hear them munch on grass or make their horsey nasal sounds. I couldn't help thinking, of all the animals that could keep me company, it had to be the one my father loved the most, the same one I've always had a complicated relationship with.

For years, he tried to make a *jinete*, or horseman, out of me, but I was never up to par. I lamented, yet again, that my father died before I could show him that I might have been no horseman, but *I could write*. Only once did I try to approach the horses outside the cabin and stroke them, but to no avail. No horse will trust you if you don't trust it first.

After lunch my friend asks if I'd like to hop on his dual-seat sport plane and fly south over the ranch. "We could get down to the river," he suggests. During my previous visit, I wanted to get there but the book kept me so busy I didn't have time to explore the ranch's confines.

In the afternoon, we pull by the ranch's gate, where the horses are grazing. After my friend feeds them snacks, we head to the hangar, where his gorgeous, bright

red-and-yellow Carbon Cub awaits. From above, the Golden Triangle is a blanket of dust splotched by the uneven cacophony of mesquites, equal parts lush and desert-like. Tanks of bizarre shapes like mammoth mirrors tossed down on earth from high above dot the landscape against the late afternoon sky, and a warm sense of déjà vu in my stomach humbles me.

After 15 minutes of flight, my friend points at what seems like yet another *bordo* in the distance, but he clarifies through the intercom system: It's the river. Before I know it, we're flying along the northern bank of the Rio Grande. There it is, beyond and all around us: home.

The land at both of the river's edges crumples and flourishes into cliffs and mounds saturated with vegetation. The river snakes, unimpeded, east and west in whimsical twists, and turns in ways that make it hard to tell which side is north and which side is south. The water in its current is so unstirred it reflects every detail of the clouds, every wrinkle and every puff. The valley becomes a mirror of spiritual proportions. I wish this serenity wouldn't remain so elusive at ground level.

The next morning, the horizon still alight, I go for a run. When I reach the gate, the horses are there. They look up from the grass upon hearing me, and I come by the barbed-wire fence that keeps us apart. Chilo, an old, majestic sorrel stallion, approaches me for the first time. I fight the urge to back away. He leans in and inspects me with his nose. I don't want to be rejected again or go back home empty-handed, and I don't. I reach out and Chilo lets me stroke the white spot on his long, portentous forehead at last.

I want to tell him the last time I felt this close to a horse my father was still alive. I want to tell him I was so young the questions that kept me up at night had an unequivocal answer, an answer that didn't hurt. I want to tell him home was somewhere else and my heart was yet to learn about the aches of belonging to two countries at once. But there's no need. You can tell in the way he keeps looking at me until I break away and it's time to get back. 🐾



Poetry of Place

Texas State Poet Laureate Emmy Pérez finds inspiration along the Rio Grande

By Lori Moffatt

Emmy Pérez, the Texas State Poet Laureate for 2020, creates evocative word-paintings of life along the Rio Grande by distilling impressions and memories to their essence. Throughout the 35 poems in her second book, *With the River on Our Face*, the McAllen resident delivers vivid imagery—oriole nests that “stretch like woven raindrops,” a Boca Chica Beach sand crab “collapsing into bullets bursting out of holes”—that whisks readers across themes as varied as identity, change, love, borders, and nature.

Always, there is nature. Pérez, a professor of creative writing at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and associate director for the university’s Center for Mexican American Studies, finds much of her inspiration outdoors, in her adopted state’s parks, natural areas, wildlife refuges, and gardens. Raised in Santa Ana, California, Pérez studied at Columbia University in New York City and eventually made her way to El Paso in 2000 in search of connection with her family roots. She moved to McAllen in 2006 for the teaching job.

“The benefit of travel is that our senses are in disarray, and we’re more open to new impressions. Travel helps me think.”

As poet laureate, Pérez balances her work with the activities that come along with the honorary legislative appointment. This spring, she’s being inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters, presenting at poetry conferences in San Antonio and Washington, D.C., working on her third volume (due out this fall from TCU Press), and advancing her efforts to spread the art of writing outside of the classroom. She recently served as keynote speaker at a conference of Catch the Next, a national organization that fosters college-readiness for underserved communities. “I love to share my writing,” she says. “But I really love teaching, especially to people who don’t always have access to the university.”

Q: How did your path from California to Texas coincide with your path to become a writer?

A: My mother is from El Paso, specifically the Ysleta area, and she is an amazing storyteller. When I was growing up, she would always tell me stories about her childhood. But while I always enjoyed writing as part

of my school activities, I never thought I'd be a writer. As an undergraduate, though, I took a poetry class and found I loved writing poetry. I moved to New York for graduate school, and I kept asking questions about my mom's experiences growing up. Then I moved to work in New Mexico, so I'd drive to El Paso to do research and some writing.

Eventually I was able to move into my mom's old neighborhood in El Paso, near the small adobe house my grandfather built, which still stands. I loved encountering burrowing owls, meeting neighbors, seeing scorpions in the house, and experiencing things you cannot know from only talking to someone else. Originally, I thought I'd write a novel, but the work arrived as poetry. My first collection, *Solstice*, has some poems about Ysleta, influenced by my mother's stories and my living there. In 2006, I had a job opportunity downriver, and I moved to McAllen. Though I don't have family history in the RGV, living there deepens what I learned in El Paso.

Q: *Your poems are full of vivid details that most people wouldn't think of documenting in poetry—leaf-cutting ants, "the ancient tortoise at Laguna Atascosa." What is your writing process like?*

A: I'm a very visual person, and I love exploring the natural spaces that remain because there aren't very many left. In writing my latest collection, *With the River on Our Face*, I wrote a lot outdoors. To name a few places, I went to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge often, and I went to Boca Chica Beach, where the Rio Grande ends and flows into the Gulf of Mexico. I spent time at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, and I visited La Sal del Rey [a naturally occurring salt lake], which is a beautiful place.

Q: *Do you take notes or photos to help you remember details?*

A: I take a lot of pictures and make a ton of videos, but sometimes I never look at them again. Just the act of recording them makes me study something closer. I also take notes. Being outside helps my

imagination process and helps me open up to whatever I'm feeling, emotionally or intellectually. I think of poetry as a different language, because it's a type of translation. We are translating and crafting images, emotions, thoughts into words—interacting with the world and ourselves through language.

Q: *How do you encourage your students to be better writers?*

A: First, I encourage them to write about what matters to them. If they are writing about or from their lives, I say, "Try to find out something about your life you don't know right now; what is your research question about your life?" That goes for both prose and poetry. And I believe in getting that first draft down, even if it's filled with clichés. Once you have a good draft, identify the clichés and then try to express those thoughts in ways that sound fresh. To me, that's what poetry is—something we haven't heard before quite like that.

Q: *What do you tell your students about conquering writer's block?*

A: Lately, I've been hearing people say there's no such thing as writer's block. Maybe that's true. But I agree with something I heard from Sandra Cisneros. When I encounter writer's block, it's usually because I'm afraid to write about what I need to write about. We all have little self-censors; maybe we're afraid of what our family or friends or community will think. So to get rid of that fear, I'm a big fan of initially making a mess, writing fast, not worrying if it sounds good, just getting it out. You can revise later; you've got to make peace with your revision. But for me, my biggest obstacle right now isn't writer's block, but rather time. I'm so busy. So I'm part of a writer's group. That keeps me accountable.


Q: *The Rio Grande figures in much of your work. You've traveled to Colorado to see the beginning of the river and to Boca Chica to see its end. What does the river symbolize for you?*

A: A friend once said that since I moved

Information about Emmy Pérez's work and upcoming conferences and festivals—including the Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, March 4-7 in San Antonio—is available at emmyperez.com.

from California, I've been following the river. It wasn't my original intent. I did intend to write about my family history before I lived in El Paso, but living there helped me deepen connections. My mother's childhood home in Ysleta was about 2 miles from the river, and they lived in poverty. There is still an irrigation canal right next to the house; it was a big part of her life. Her father grew vegetables in their yard, so the river helped my mom live and me to exist. The river connects many of us. We need to take care of it for generations to come, and collaborate with native people along the borderlands and farther upriver in doing so.

Q: *Your writing is tightly tied to place. How does travel impact your writing?*

A: I want to first emphasize that I am so privileged to have traveled in this way. And now that I don't have as much time, each time I go outside is a type of travel because there's something new—a different bird, butterfly, the unexpected. The benefit of travel is that our senses are in disarray, and we're more open to new impressions. Travel helps me think. I love Big Bend National Park and experiencing the river; each time is different. Or Hueco Tanks State Park and Seminole Canyon State Park, where you can see beautiful rock art and imagine what life was like for native people of the region thousands of years before the founding of this country. It's like the past, present, and future come together in these places for me. 

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VINTAGE

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Spangled Up in Blue

APRIL 1954

The annual wildflower photo is a Texas tradition. We all know the drill: Put on your fancy duds, pack a picnic, and cruise the backroads. That's what the Caldwell family of Thornton did in April 1954, when Truman Caldwell snapped this lovely shot in a field of bluebonnets near Marlin. Minetta Caldwell Smith, who was 7 at the time and now lives in Richardson, shared this 65-year-old photo of herself and her mother, Loretta Caldwell, in matching dresses. Most folks know the bluebonnet is the state flower. But many don't realize that when the Texas Legislature adopted it in 1901, there were other contenders, including the cotton boll and prickly pear. For a gallery of vintage wildflower photos, visit texashighways.com/wildflower-photos. 🐾

Know of any fascinating vintage Texas photographs? Send copies or ideas to tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com.



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