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Features

28 Facing Ike
By Earl Nottingham and Aaron Reed
The fury and aftermath of a monster storm

36 Houston's Prairie Patch
By Karen Hastings
Volunteers and nonprofit groups work to save the last bits of the Katy Prairie.

41 Keep Texas Wild
Weird, Wacky and Wild
There's no end to the amazing diversity of Texas animals.

COVER STORY

20

Primo Picnic Spots

By Mary O. Parker
Scenic sites for every month of the year.

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CONTENTS

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 0 9



PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER

Departments

6 At Issue

By Carter P. Smith

8 Outdoor Notes

By Governor Rick Perry

9 Mail Call

Our readers share their ideas.

10 WHITMIRE WETLANDS

By Todd Votteler

New freshwater delivery system enhances habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.

11 NOISE IN NATURE

By Melissa Gaskill

Human-produced sounds can interfere with animals' normal mating, feeding and hunting behavior.

12 FLORA FACT: LICHEN LORE

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Lichens have been used since ancient times for dyes and medicinal teas.

13 WILD THING: PURPLE PEOPLE LOVERS

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Living in gourds and manmade houses, the purple martin enjoys the company of humans.

14 PARK PICK: CAMPFIRE GORNBREAD

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Learn how to cook almost anything in a Dutch oven this month at Mission Tejas.

16 SKILL BUILDER: TROLLING ESSENTIALS

By Larry Bozka

If you want to catch fish, you can't take a passive approach to trolling.

18 Three Days in the Field

By Rob McCorkle

Boerne Journey: This Hill Country jewel also boasts an Old West town and the Cave Without A Name.

46 Legend, Lore & Legacy

By Penelope Warren

Juan Cortina's War: Considered a bandit by the U.S. government, Cortina was a champion of justice to Tejanos living along the border.

56 Parting Shot

By Rolf Nussbaumer

Covers

FRONT: Davis Mountains State Park.
Photo © Laurence Parent.

BACK: Ruby-throated hummingbird on blue
salvia. Photo © Rolf Nussbaumer.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: American alligator. Photo
© Rolf Nussbaumer.

THIS PAGE: Gorman Falls at Colorado Bend
State Park. Photo © Lance Varnell.

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FEBRUARY 2009, VOL. 67, NO. 2

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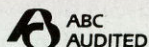
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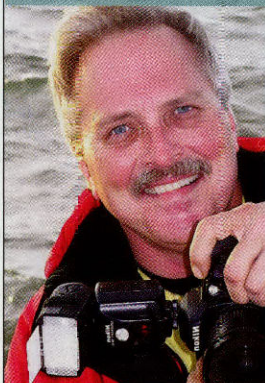
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In the Field

LARRY BOZKA

has seen the Gulf of Mexico at its best and worst. "For us, the worst occurred on September 12, when Hurricane Ike pushed 3-1/2 feet of water into our home," Larry says. "We lost our house and around 80 percent of our belongings, and it'll take us a few years to recover. But despite what happened, I'm still in Seabrook and I still love the gulf. And I'll be out on it this year as much as



ever." Larry was presented the L.A. Wilke Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008 by the Texas Outdoor Writers Association, a group through which he has claimed over 130 Excellence in Craft awards since 1979. Larry lives in Seabrook with his wife, Liz, a marketing education coordinator for Pasadena High School. He covers the essentials of offshore trolling in this issue.

PENELOPE WARREN

says history was a living thing in her childhood home, where both parents were history buffs. "I took early to reading history and to visiting Laredo's historical sites, growing up in a neighborhood full of hundred-year-old churches and homes, with a Civil War fort down the street. If you dug around in our family doctor's yard, you could find bullets that had strayed across the river during the Mexican Revolution." Much of Penelope's writing has centered on the history of the border, as well as on the wildlife of the Tamaulipan thornscrub. Penelope says the same themes carry over into her photography, which is one way of preserving a past that remains all too vulnerable to loss.



TODD VOTTELER

played a leading role in the Endangered Species Act litigation over the Edwards Aquifer. Currently, Todd is an executive with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and also serves as the executive director of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (www.gbrtrust.org). He has written articles on a range of Texas water issues. Todd and his wife, Sharon, have two young daughters. He has time to hunt occasionally, as you can see in this photo of him freezing on the Red River. Hunting led him to an interest in wetlands and projects such as the one at the Whitmire Unit.



AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF CARTER P. SMITH

I fell in love with the Katy Prairie the moment I saw it. There were raucous processions of geese and sandhill cranes passing overhead, ready to light in the seemingly never-ending fields of crop stubble. Rafts of puddle ducks covered the potholes and submerged rice fields. Shorebirds and wading birds of all kinds sifted through the shallow wetland depressions. Northern harriers by the dozens drifted over the prairies and pastures looking to make a meal out of careless fur or fowl. Short of Botswana's Okavango Delta, the largest inland delta in the world, I thought it was one of the most magical wildlife spectacles I had ever seen.

For two years, I had the good fortune to call the Katy Prairie home. I served as the Katy Prairie Conservancy's (KPC) first executive director, working to ensure some of the area's unique lands and waters did not get entirely gobbled up by Houston's inexorable western growth. At the time, developer and environmental interests were embroiled in numerous complex and contentious battles over the area's wetlands and waterfowl habitat. Common ground was in short supply.

The organization's board, a mix of landowner, hunter, business, scientific and environmental interests, took a chance on me. They had a vision for finding the proverbial balance between growth and conservation. I was young, inexperienced and optimistic to a fault. I was also irrepressibly passionate about the future of that special place. I still am.

What has happened on the Katy Prairie is a symbol for what is happening to more than a fair bit of Texas. A former rural area once predominated by working rice farms and cattle ranches, the region is now a bustling suburb of Houston. Where wetlands and native prairie once stood, malls and subdivisions now loom large. It has changed. Some say for the better. Some say not.

Fortunately, a little bit of that wildness remains. Thanks to a KPC-led coalition, including rice farmers, developers, flood control interests, hunters, birders and conservationists, nearly 20,000 acres of that area's rice fields, wetlands, creeks, woods and pastures are conserved for future generations to enjoy and appreciate. Rest assured, the value of that accomplishment and investment will only appreciate with the passage of time.

Texans from all corners, including the Katy Prairie, are united by their commitment to a sense of place. Your lands, waters, fish, wildlife and parks help make those places special. Thanks for taking care of them.



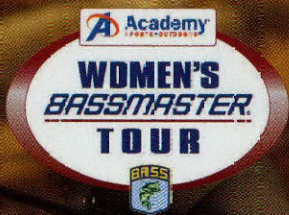
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carter Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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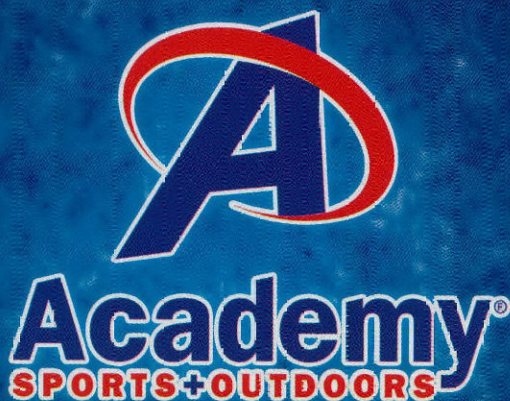
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To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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OUTDOOR NOTES

FROM TEXAS GOVERNOR RICK PERRY

In the last century, Texas has grown from a rural state of farms and ranches to one housing five of the nation's 20 largest cities. Combined with our state's low taxes, sensible regulatory environment and fair legal system, this growth has placed Texas on solid footing in these tough economic times.

As urban areas have grown, rural regions have remained an important part of our economy, and our way of life. Sadly, as more Texans flock to our bustling cities and immerse themselves in the stresses of fast-paced urban life, they are losing touch with the restorative impact of the great outdoors.

Fortunately, Texas is dotted with state parks that make outdoor experiences affordable and easy to reach. These natural surroundings hone our respect for the environment and enhance our enjoyment of an active lifestyle.

I look back with great fondness on the outdoor experiences I enjoyed growing up on a farm and taking part in Boy Scouts. They opened my eyes to our state's diverse landscapes and resources, and instilled a deep appreciation for Texas terrain. I believe today's children should have the same opportunity.

I'm not the only one who feels this way. A growing chorus of experts is concerned that urban families and children are losing touch with the real world of nature and the outdoors. In his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv reviews a growing body of research that links a nature-deficit problem to difficulties like childhood obesity and educational and developmental challenges.

One recent study by the American Institutes for Research shows how nature-smart kids receive higher test scores. Other researchers have found that schools with outdoor play areas foster achievement and responsibility and that time spent in parks brings significant social, economic and health benefits.

No parent I know would be surprised by a recent study from researchers with Stanford University and the Kaiser Family Foundation, which shows children spend a considerable amount of time using electronic media and have a better understanding of the workings of video games and basic technology than common plant and animal life around them.

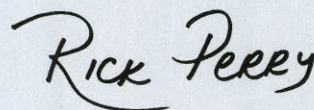
I'll be the first to say that our children need to learn the ways of technology to compete in the global economy when they get older, but the lessons of nature are an essential part of character development.

I am proud of what Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is doing to address this issue. Their Texas Outdoor Family Program is drawing families to our parks and teaching them basic skills to increase their confidence and subsequently improve the odds they'll get outdoors and enjoy the benefits.

Texas Outdoor Family overnight weekend workshops introduce Texans to our state parks for a small fee of \$55 for up to six people. Workshops cover how to pitch tents and cook outdoors, guided tours with park rangers, and introductions to fishing, kayaking and trail adventures. And there's no equipment or experience required to participate.

I encourage you to take advantage of all that the Texas Outdoor Family Program and our state's abundant and beautiful parks and resources have to offer. Our children's health, happiness and appreciation of the natural world depend on it.

Texas Outdoor Family Program workshop dates and locations are online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/outdoorfamily.



RICK PERRY
TEXAS GOVERNOR

A growing chorus of experts is concerned that urban families and children are losing touch with the real world of nature and the outdoors.

Texas Governor Rick Perry writes about outdoor issues four times a year for Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine.

MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

LETTERS

LIVING WITH COYOTES & BOBCATS

Thanks for the great December issue. Your bobcats in suburbia article, "Cat of All Trades" by Wendee Holtcamp, caught the interest of our church staff. Our Mountain Creek Church facility in Dallas' Mountain Creek neighborhood is situated on 95 acres atop the White Rock Escarpment. It is a perfect environment for bobcats. Our 755-foot hilltop overlooks a city greenbelt, Cedar Hill State Park and Joe Pool Lake. Naturally, we have lots of cats, even some very big ones that people swear are cougars.

The big surprise this spring was a litter of four beautiful bobcat kittens. Occasionally they come down from their rocky cliff home to play on Prayer Mountain Lane, our main driveway up the hilltop. Bobcats (as well as coyotes) are frequently seen by hikers on our two-mile trail along the escarpment rim. City folk are always excited to see the semi-shy bobcats and the suspicious coyotes right here in Dallas. Thanks again for the beautiful photos and story.

ROBERT SUMMERS
Dallas

LOST HUNTING TRADITIONS

I greatly enjoyed "The Lost Art of Hunting" by Wyman Meinzer in your December 2008 edition. It brought back many memories of the lessons on hunting and fishing that I was taught as a youngster by my dad and uncles.

As Meinzer pointed out, it's a shame that more of today's Texas hunters, both young and not-so-young, never had the opportunities that I had to learn many of the basic skills that I still enjoy today. As noted, with all of the modern conveniences and devices, there is not much "hunting" done these days for whitetail deer. Deer

hunting used to involve studying habitat, deer trails, scrapes, rubs and food sources. It also used to involve moving your stand often to fit the conditions. Some deer hunters still do this, but they are in the minority.

True hunting also involves skills such as crawling through mud on your belly to jump wood ducks off the creek, inching along slowly and silently through waist-deep water to get within range of feeding mallards, and slipping quietly through deep, crunchy leaves to get a shot at a wary fox squirrel. Many times the quarry would get away cleanly, but it was well worth the effort. Like in sports, you always knew what went wrong, and made adjustments the

next time. Hunting is still about the outdoors and the experience. The more you learn, the more enjoyable it can be.

GARY GARRARD
Round Rock

Sound off for "Mail Call!"

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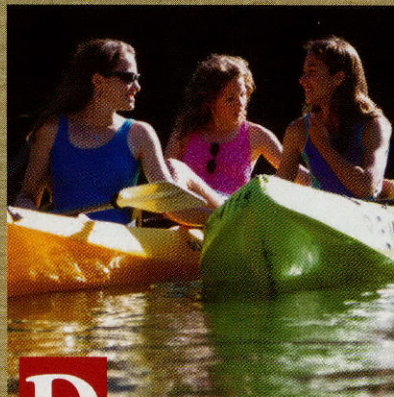
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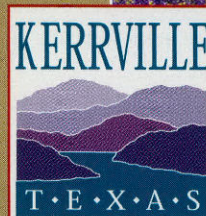
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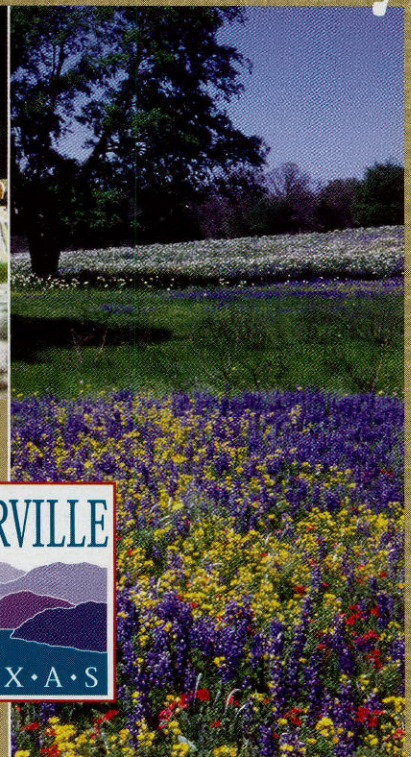
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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

WHITMIRE WETLANDS

New freshwater delivery system enhances habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.

Indianola, once an important point of entry for European travelers in the 19th century, was destroyed by devastating hurricanes in 1875 and 1886. Today, the nearby Myrtle Foester Whitmire Unit (Whitmire Unit), a satellite component of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, serves as an important port for feathered travelers, in some years providing food, freshwater and shelter for up to 18 percent of the Central Flyway waterfowl that annually migrate to the Texas Gulf Coast. However, the wetlands habitat of the Whitmire Unit has waxed and waned from year to year with hit or miss rainfall.

The 3,440-acre Whitmire Unit was acquired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1993. It is located at the end of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's (GBRA) canal system in Calhoun County. In 2004, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust, GBRA and the refuge began an effort to make the Whitmire Unit an unmatched habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds year in and year out. The partnership is accomplishing its goal by establishing a reliable freshwater delivery system for the Whitmire Unit through a new canal that is 2.65 miles in length, benefiting 750 acres of impoundments. Construction of the canal overcame a number of obstacles, such as 20 inches of rain in July 2007. The partnership is also improving the efficiency of water delivery within the Whitmire Unit and controlling invasive aquatic plants such as water hyacinth that have clogged the canals.

The Whitmire Unit is a major wintering area for northern pintails and a significant breeding area for mottled ducks; both species have declined significantly in recent years. It has been identified in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan as one of the most important wetland habitats on the Texas Gulf Coast. Nearly every waterfowl species using the Central Flyway benefits from this high-value wintering habitat at the Whitmire

Unit, as do current and former threatened and endangered species such as the whooping crane, peregrine falcon, aplomado falcon, wood stork and brown pelican. Because coastal marsh habitat often becomes too deep for optimal dabbling duck forage, this type of habitat is not always available during critical times.

The old water supply canal, built in the early 1950s, stretched over 18,000 feet on flat pastureland. Maintenance and repair of the levees was difficult and expensive due to extensive levee damage from livestock and limited access to the canal. To further complicate matters, rice farming has declined significantly in this area, resulting in reduced water usage within the canal system that allowed increased silting in the canal and invasive aquatic plants to proliferate. The old canal was often unable to flood the Whitmire impoundments in a timely manner, reducing the quantity and quality of migratory bird habitat.

A number of entities provided financial and in-kind support for the project, including the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, Formosa Plastics, Alcoa Tetra-Tech, and Friends of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The majority of funding was provided through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, ConocoPhillips and the Coastal Coordination Council which awarded the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust grants totaling over \$400,000.

The trust and its lead partners, USFWS and GBRA, are now pursuing a project to install water control structures at strategic locations within the Whitmire Unit to optimize water distribution to the existing impoundments as well as another 100 acres of impoundments that will be added to benefit hundreds of thousands of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. ★

—Todd Voteler



Efforts are underway to make the Whitmire Unit an unmatched habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.

Noise in Nature

Human-produced sounds can interfere with animals' normal mating, feeding and hunting behavior.



Bio-acoustician Bernie Krause has been recording sound in natural places around the world for 40 years. In nearly half of those locations, he says, human-generated noise has infiltrated the pristine acoustics of nature.

According to the National Park Service, 72 percent of visitors consider the opportunity to experience natural peace and the sounds of nature as one of the most important reasons to preserve our parks. But while unnatural noise may mar our enjoyment of the outdoors, it poses even bigger problems for wildlife.

"Noise interferes with all of the syntax a mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird or insect would articulate. Human noise crosses all the communication lines and covers all the frequencies," Krause says. In 2001, a study measured stress enzymes in the feces of elk and wolves in Yellowstone National Park. "Whenever there were snowmobiles around," Krause says, "elk and wolves showed incredible amounts of stress."

Noise can mean life or death for some animals. Frogs, for example, sing in chorus to prevent predators from singling out any one individual. Airplane noise disrupts this synchronicity, allowing predators to easily pick off a frog or two. "Frogs are diminishing everywhere," including in Texas, Krause says, "and one reason is human noise."

Much animal vocalization is done

either to defend territory or attract mates, and human noise can interfere with both. Studies show that in urban areas where traffic noise occupies low frequencies in the sound spectrum, birds are singing in increasingly higher frequencies, says Elizabeth Derryberry, a post-doctoral researcher at Louisiana State University's Museum of Natural Science. Research also suggests that different birds use different acoustic space; singing in slightly different frequencies keeps them from drowning each other out. But city birds are essentially forced to compete for a smaller piece of the acoustic pie. In addition, birds in noisy environments are forced to sing louder, reports the National Park Service, which means that attracting a mate or warning of predators uses more of their precious energy. Urban birds also are likely to spend more time being disturbed by noises and, therefore, less time feeding, says Richard Heilbrun, Texas Parks and Wildlife urban wildlife biologist in San Antonio, making it more difficult for them to replace that energy.

In some settings, noise flushes nesting birds off incubating eggs. Military aircraft had affected nesting success of peregrines, says Raymond Skiles, acting chief of resource management at Big Bend National Park until resource protection areas were designated on aeronautical charts. Boats can flush nesting shore-

birds, leaving eggs and chicks vulnerable to predators. The National Parks Conservation Association is working on a national boater education program in hopes of reducing this impact.

Because most cat species rely on hearing to hunt, Heilbrun adds, their hunting success decreases as noise increases. "Mountain lions and ocelots will specifically avoid roads, and noise is one of the factors," he says. Certain wildlife simply won't use noisy areas, says former park ranger Bryan Faehner, legislative representative for NPCA, so noise effectively limits the populations of these species.

It is worth noting that noise affects human health as well. Says Krause, "The physical effect of noise on us is incredible amounts of stress." Fortunately, this is one problem easily solved. All we have to do is pipe down. ★

—Melissa Gaskill

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April 26-30

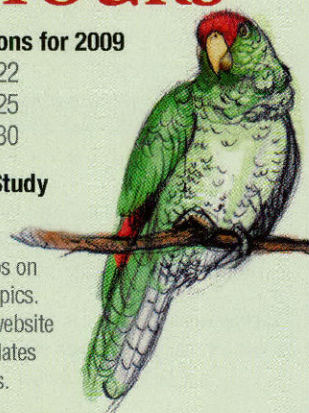
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Feb. 1 – 8:

Remembering the Buffalo Soldiers; Blanco State Park; the art of the wooden boat; timber and wildlife management together; Smith Oaks rookery.

Feb. 8 – 15:

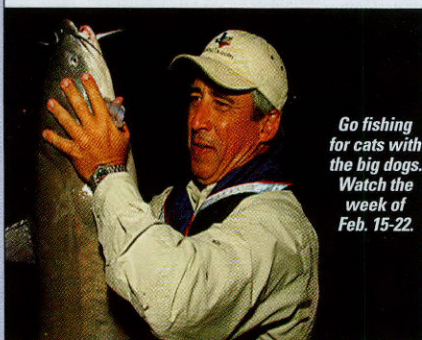
Island restoration in Galveston Bay; chasing elusive South Texas gobblers; Lake Colorado City State Park; Baker Ranch habitat improvements; East Texas woods.

Feb. 15 – 22:

Catfishing across Texas; Cedar Hill State Park; mesquite trees; seeing stars from the top of the Davis Mountains; puffy clouds.

Feb. 22 – March 1:

Explore the Guadalupe River; the challenge of rock climbing; wildlife and cattle on the King Ranch; biking Buescher State Park; Ray Roberts Lake fog.



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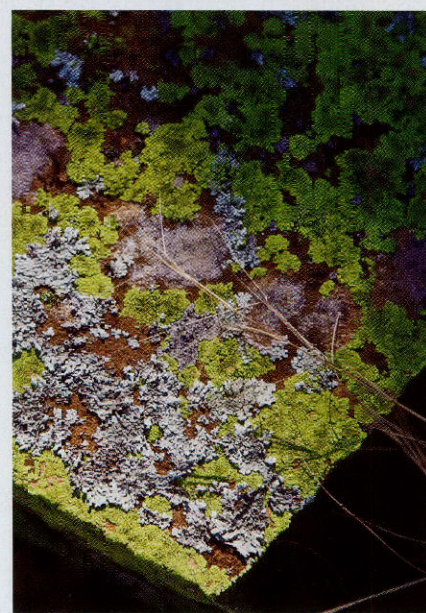
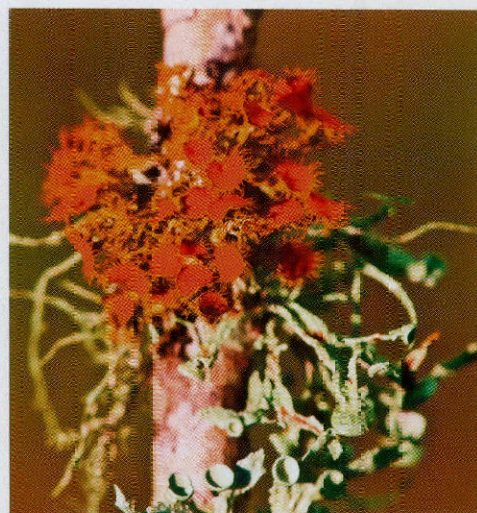
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So when's the last time you stopped to admire a lichen? Not lately, eh? Don't feel bad. Most folks haven't either. Meet an exception: Taylor Quedensley, a plant biology graduate student who's accumulated more than 8,000 specimens.

"I find lichens fascinating," he says. "In the tropics, up to 40 species of lichen may occur on one small leaf." In his free time, the Austin resident frequents the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, where he searches for lichens on tree bark, rocks, limestone cliffs and soil.

Simply put, two organisms — a fungus and an algae — form a lichen. As a team, the fungus supplies the dominant structure (called a thallus) while the algae produces food via photosynthesis. That said, lichens are generally classified by shape: fruticose (strubby or hair-like), foliose (leafy or ruffled) and crustose (crust-like). Colors range from dull creams, greens and grays to mustard yellow, blood red, burnt orange and even cobalt blue.

Mostly slow growing, some lichens reproduce by releasing spores. Others spread by broken fragments that attach to a new substrate. What's their purpose in nature? "They function like leaves by producing oxygen," Que-

↑ Clockwise from top left: Examples of foliose lichen, fruticose lichen and crustose lichen.

densley says. "They also break down rocks to create soil."

Both humans and animals use lichens. For instance, people have boiled and fermented lichens since ancient times to create dyes, drugs and medicinal teas. Caribou and reindeer rely on lichens for their winter diet. Factoid: Beatrix Potter — before she penned her many famous children's books — studied fungi and lichens. ★

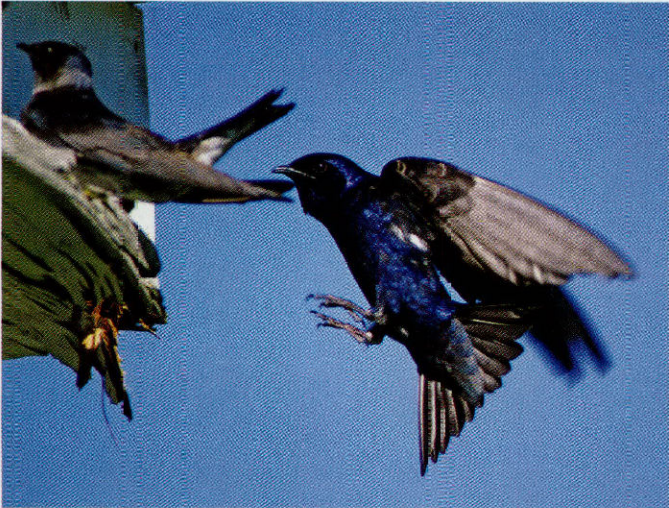
— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

BOTTOM RIGHT BY BRANDON JAKOBETT/TPWD; OTHERS © CLIVE VARLACK



Purple People Lovers

Living in gourds and manmade houses, the purple martin enjoys the company of humans.



↑ Purple martins depend on human "landlords" to put up gourds and houses for them.

Come February, Gisela Fregoe's out the door, anxiously scanning the skies for scouts. "I always hear our purple martins before I see them," says the Grand Prairie birdwatcher.

Contrary to popular belief, those aren't true "scouts" but simply the first martins to migrate north from their winter home in Brazil. Over the next two to six weeks, the rest arrive, find a mate, and choose a nesting cavity. Then nest building begins.

East of the Rocky Mountains, purple martins (*Progne subis*) — the largest member of the swallow family — depend on houses and gourds (natural and artificial) put up by devoted "landlords" like Fregoe. The practice dates back to Native Americans, who hung hollow gourds around their campsites, likely because martins scared away critters that went after the tribe's crops and meats. Likewise, the presence of humans discouraged predators from raiding martin nests. To this day, martins still prefer to live near people.

Martins — who yearly return to the same site — build nests of mud, twigs, straw and other materials, then top it with a layer of green leaves. When little ones fledge, martins from the area turn out for the big event, creating quite a ruckus. Typically, everyone gathers in huge communal roosts in July before returning to Brazil.

Though voracious insectivores, martins don't eat as many mosquitoes as once thought. They prefer larger prey — including butterflies, wasps, dragonflies, moths and beetles — caught on the wing way up in the air (mosquitoes stick

close to the ground). If you'd like more information on purple martins and how to become a "landlord," check out the Purple Martin Conservation Association at www.purplemartin.org. ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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Campfire Cornbread

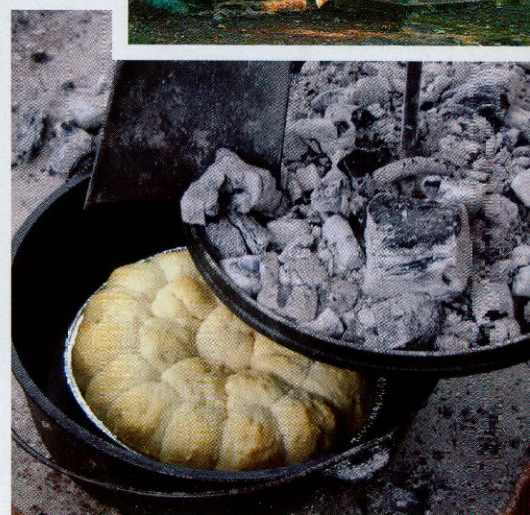
Learn how to cook almost anything in a Dutch oven this month at Mission Tejas.

One black pot and a dozen or so charcoal briquettes — that's all Charles McMath needs to cook up some spicy chili, crusty cornbread or moist apple-strawberry cobbler. "You can cook anything in a Dutch oven," says the Houston County resident. "Casseroles, yeast breads, baked beans, pies, you name it!"

Skeptical? Then head over to Mission Tejas State Park this month, and McMath — who belongs to the Lone Star Dutch Oven Society — will show you how. Every first Saturday, club members gather near the park's pavilion and tend black pots all morning. "We cook whatever's on our mind," McMath says. "We get the pots on the table by noon, and visitors are welcome to sample dishes."

Use of cast-iron Dutch ovens — Texas' official cooking implement — dates back to the days of Spanish explorers, early pioneers and chuckwagon cooks. The name typically refers to a heavy iron kettle outfitted with three short legs and a rimmed flat lid. "You control heat by the number of briquettes you put under the pot and on top," McMath explains. "To save space, some people stack another oven on top of the first one with coals in between. We've seen as many as three pots stacked."

After lunch, enjoy a stroll through the pines and visit the park's namesake: a commemorative representation of Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, the first Spanish mission in Texas. Built in 1690, the original mission stood for three years



before the Spanish destroyed the site, which is probably located on private property. In 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed Mission Tejas, a one-story log building.

Near the park's entrance stands the Rice Family log home, built between 1828 and 1838. Many travelers venturing across early Texas stopped and rested at the home, which was restored in 1974 and moved to the park.

Everything tastes better cooked outside, especially biscuits in a Dutch oven.

More than three miles of hiking trails wind past a pond, where anglers have snagged catfish as long as 22 inches. The park also offers picnic tables, wooded campsites and group facilities. In late March, native dogwoods burst into beautiful white blooms.

Dutch oven cooking events run from 10 a.m. to noon the first Saturday each month. Regular park entrance fees apply. Bring your own Dutch oven and join the fun, or just watch and learn.

Mission Tejas State Park is located in Weches, 21 miles northeast of Crockett on State Highway 21. For more information, call 936-687-2394 or visit <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/missiontejas>. ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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Trolling Essentials

If you want to catch fish, you can't take a passive approach to trolling.

Some offshore anglers believe that trolling is almost as exciting as taking a nap. Others are less enthusiastic.

Unfortunately, these are the same fishermen who reduce the age-old technique to slipping a pair of rigged-up rods into opposite holders, kicking the outboard in gear and then slowly dragging a pair of lures for hours on end. Sometimes they connect; sometimes they don't. It needn't be so randomly unpredictable.

"Flatlines" are only the starting point. Out on open gulf waters, where indistinct but productive fish-attracting structure can literally appear out of the blue, opportunistic trollers who use the right accessories can cover the water column from top to bottom. Ultimately, with patience and focused attention, they pinpoint the coveted "strike zone."

From there it's a matter of repeating what worked. Transom-dragged flatlines stretched straight off the stern can cover only two different water depths. The standard drill is to rig one line with a feather jig or high-running "Jet Head" soft plastic lure and the other with a diving plug. Often, fishermen combine dead or even live baitfish with lead-headed jigs that will track upright and true when coupled. Heavy-duty barrel swivels are a must, as they reduce a lure's natural propensity to twist and wander under pressure.

Distance counts, too. Experienced trollers usually stop one lure just beyond the propwash and free-spool the other bait well beyond. To both broaden and double the presentation, modern-day trolling enthusiasts also use far-reaching extensions like the "SideRigger" to run two additional baits outside of the flatlines. Much larger "outriggers" are standard equipment on large billfish boats, but they are generally too unwieldy for anglers who own hulls in the typical 25-foot "mosquito fleet" class.

Downriggers were birthed on the Great Lakes. They're now popular on the gulf, particularly for king mackerel fishing. Serious trollers usually have at least one downrigger affixed to one side of the transom.

Designed with a keel to stabilize below-the-boat tracking, a heavy lead weight is lowered to a precisely calculated depth via a downrigger's steel cable. A calibrated meter displays the footage. The fishing line or leader is affixed to a quick-release clip on the weight. When a fish strikes the lure, the line pulls free and the fisherman enjoys an unrestricted fight.

Trolling speed is dictated by the choice of lures and baits and the preferences of the species. Soft plastic "jetheads" can be pulled much faster than plugs or most bait/lure tandem rigs. Boat speedometers are especially unreliable at slow speed, so most boaters rely on the tachometer to determine and record the most productive trolling speed.

"Bump-trolling," slipping the gearbox into neutral and allowing baits to fall, is a true essential. Sportfish are more prone to hit a lure that is falling as opposed to one that's on



For those who utilize available options, offshore trolling is hardly monotonous.

its way back up. Bump trolling is a can't-miss strategy that increases the efficacy of most styles of trolling lures.

It's critical to closely monitor the bait's tracking and behavior. A lure has to be unencumbered. A single strand of sargassum weed snagged onto the shank of a feather jig's hook will render the lure useless if not promptly removed.

Despite opinions to the contrary, broad-spectrum trolling requires focused patience. You can only repeat a winning combination of lure, depth and speed if you paid close attention to the specifics of the combined presentation that drew the attention of fish.

"Snooze and you lose" is a worn-out cliché. Still, it remains an extremely appropriate adage in regard to offshore trolling. The continuous sound of droning engines will indeed put you to sleep, if that is all you hear for the vast percentage of a day spent on the water. On the other hand, there's not a wake-up call in the world like the high-pitched squall of a singing reel drag.

With due diligence, maintenance and observation, the last thing on the mind of an enterprising offshore lure dragger is the notion of taking a nap. ★

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Boerne Journey

This Hill Country jewel boasts an Old West town and the Cave Without A Name.

At the turn of the 20th century, Boerne reveled in its reputation as an idyllic health resort. The coming of the railroad from San Antonio to the small Hill Country community in the late 1880s had provided greater access for ailing Texans to visit “the most natural sanitarium in the world.”

I stumbled upon this interesting historical tidbit at a wayside exhibit during my second afternoon in town while walking the Old No. 9 Greenway Trail that slices through the heart of the city. City fathers, responding to the wishes of the citizens for more trails and open space, converted the former rail bed into a paved, 1.4-mile hike-and-bike trail.

The exhibit panel notes how the railway

company promoted excursions on the railroad’s Kerrville branch that passed through Boerne (pronounced *BURN-ee*) as a “beautiful side trip to the mountain resort.” The marketing worked, at least until the Great Depression hit.

By the early 1900s, Boerne’s population of about 1,000 consisted of more ailing patients than healthy citizens. Thirteen hotels and sanitariums catered to health-seekers and weary travelers looking for fresh country air and “mountain” scenery.

One of those establishments was The Boerne Hotel, which began in 1859 as a boarding house. After two wings were added, the hotel functioned as an authentic stagecoach inn in the 1880s and 1890s.

It was this national landmark (now called Ye Kendall Inn) that served as my base of operation during my stay in Boerne. Today, the bedroom community, 30 miles from San Antonio, boasts a population pushing 7,000.

The wood-frame Blanco House where wife Judy and I stayed is one of a number of historic structures moved onto the hotel’s 6-acre grounds. With its wood floors, high ceilings and a covered porch perfect for sipping morning coffee, the cottage looks like a scene from a Norman Rockwell painting. Its central location just off the Main Plaza proved ideal for accessing the Hauptstrasse, or Main Street, the town’s retail center.

Our first stop — Enchanted Springs Ranch — sits a few miles south of Boerne off Texas 46. We find the parking lot of the 86-acre working ranch and authentic-looking Old West town almost full. Co-owner Steve Schmidt, attired in Western duds, and Woodrow, a Texas longhorn, are greeting visitors who’ve come from as far away as New Mexico to experience a slice of the late 1800s. On occasion, we’re told, movies and television documentaries are filmed at Enchanted Springs.

“We tell the story of the real cowboy, the cattle drive cowboy where the legend came from,” Schmidt says. “By definition, they were teenagers after the Civil War who worked hard to help their families. Not rodeo cowboys, but young men who weren’t afraid to work.”

After leaving Enchanted Springs, we make the short drive to Boerne to check in at Ye Kendall Inn. We spy a banner across the street advertising Boerne Market Days, an arts and crafts bazaar held the second weekend each month on the Main Plaza, but that was forced to relocate this weekend

The Cibolo Nature Center serves as an outdoor classroom for field researchers and schoolchildren.



because of a large hot rod rally. Boerne, we discover, is big on festivals and events of all kinds throughout the year.

Spring brings the annual Chuck Wagon Cook-Off and Heritage Gathering (March 7, 2009), the Cibolo Wilderness Native Plant Sale, performances by the Boerne Concert Band and several art events. On 2nd Saturday, art aficionados can take a trolley tour of the galleries.

After perusing the market, we sit down to enjoy a gordita and listen to a local band playing on the old courthouse steps. But the shops on Main Street are calling and will be closing soon.

Hitting the Main Street shops has whetted our appetite. We're off to the Dodging Duck Brewhaus, a local brewpub and restaurant across from Cibolo Creek, where white ducks rule. Judy opts for fried shrimp, while I order a salmon sandwich. Sated, it's time to turn in.

The next day dawns humid and drizzly. It seems a perfect morning to head to Main Street to the Daily Grind, the Boerne Grill's in-house coffee shop, where tourists and locals gather to drink a cup of joe.

Employee Vernon Newhouse brings a delicious kolache and cinnamon roll to go with our coffees. Vernon explains that the photos and cutouts of the English bulldog overlooking the place are of the owner's dog, Otis. Most mornings, Otis can be spotted out back lounging in the owner's truck, but no such luck today.

Judy's visit is being cut short, so it's time to grab lunch before she hits the road. We make our way through the parking lot of pickup trucks to the unassuming interior of Taqueria Guadalajara. I order the green enchiladas, the dish by which I judge all Tex-Mex establishments, and Judy settles on the No. 1: a chalupa, gordita and taco. We leave stuffed to the gills.

On my own now, I decide the drizzling day is perfect for touring the Cave Without A Name, just a short drive from Boerne. In 1940, a year after it opened to the public, a boy won the cave-naming contest that gave the cavern the moniker it still carries, saying it was too pretty to name. Turns out the kid was right.

I join a mother and her son from Austin for a tour of the cave led by Mike Burrell, an accomplished spelunker. He tells us about the cave's history as a surreptitious location for locals to operate a still during Prohibition years. He points out the soot-stained black ceiling not far from the entrance to

the cave that today draws more than 10,000 people a year.

The cave was formed by an underground sea that carved out the limestone 100 to 400 million years ago. During periods of heavy rainfall, much of the cave is flooded with several feet of water. As a result, rimstone dams have formed to trap pools of water in parts of the cave.

Running water and water seeping from above ground through crevices and pores into the cavern has created some geological magic. Icicle-shaped stalactites and stalagmites protrude from the cave ceiling and floor, and columns the size of a tree trunk dot the cave where the two calcium carbonate formations have grown together.

Mike uses his flashlight to illuminate odd geological features called draperies and helectites, which are gravity-defying, corkscrew, pencil-thin formations that sprout from the ceilings and walls. He rattles off the names given various, peculiar cave formations that resemble bacon, popcorn, a fried egg, a carrot, white grapes and a four-scoop ice cream cone. Another cave landmark depicts a scene from the Bible, complete with a lamb, three wise men and a Christmas tree. My favorite part of the 70-minute tour, however, turns out to be the Throne Room, with a queen's throne surrounded by her court that includes a wizard, an owl and even Jabba the Hutt from *Star Wars*. Amazing.

Back in town, I pass by the Old No. 9 trail referenced earlier. According to Chris Turk, the city's director of planning, the asphalt trail is only one of several trails in the works catering to the citizenry's keen interest in having more greenbelts, open space and trails. Chris says new guidelines for developers have been passed, too, requiring them to focus on natural and cultural resources and leave at least 20 percent of the development as open space.

That pro-environment stance is also reflected in Kendall County voters' passage



Pistol Packin' Paula shows off her skills daily at Enchanted Springs Ranch. Relaxing on the front porch of the Waco Cabin at the historic Ye Kendall Inn.



of a \$5 million bond issue designed to promote preservation of the county's natural heritage through purchase of public parkland. More than 400 acres already have been purchased for two county parks.

Having worked up a thirst by the day's end, I decide another visit to the Dodging Duck is in order. I enjoy an informative conversation with a local cycling enthusiast, who regales me with stories about the town's vibrant arts scene, its penchant for throwing festivals and the resurrection of vintage baseball played by 1800s rules. Did you know Boerne had a team called the White Sox back in 1860? I sure didn't.

Dining in at Ye Kendall Inn seems like the thing to do at the end of a busy day. It proves a prescient choice. The tomato eggplant soup accompanied by herb focaccia bread gets the meal off to a good start. For an entrée, I choose the prime bites, pieces of prime beef dipped in sherry au jus, surrounding a mound of mashers. Meats and potatoes never fail to satisfy this traveler, and the perfectly prepared offering proves a home run.

(continued on page 55)

By Mary O. Parker

Primo Picnic Spots

Scenic sites for every month of the year.

JANUARY

Estero LLano Grande, Wetlands Life

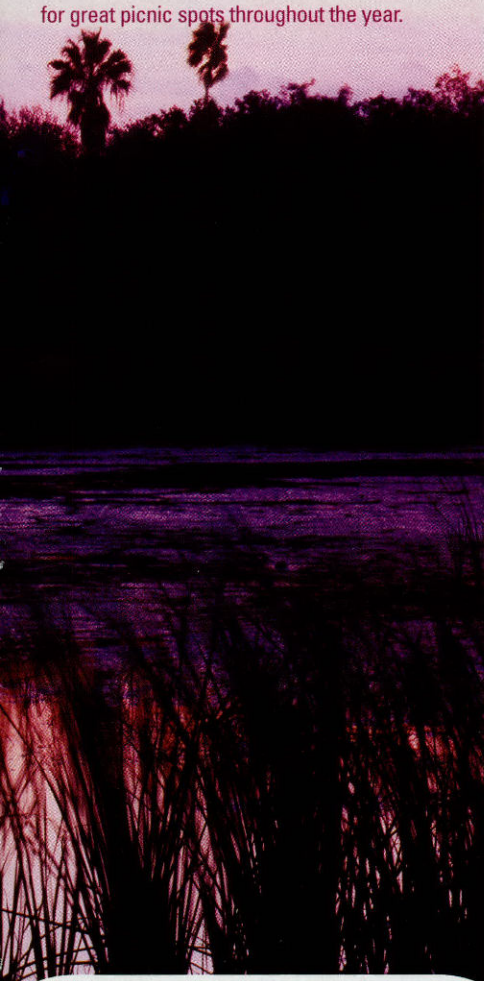
WHILE MUCH OF THE WORLD IS INDOORS HIBERNATING, the wetlands of Estero Llano Grande are teeming with treasures. The Lower Rio Grande Valley is one of the few places where the words "picnic" and "January" go perfectly together. Grab your grub and head toward Alligator Lake. After a short walk you'll find yourself at a pavilion with tables underneath an uncommon South Texas canopy of trees. Arrange yourself so that you're looking out across the waters toward a heron and egret rookery. Even though the park closes before dusk, you'll still get to see lots of action as the wading birds con-

tinue coming and going throughout the day. As you munch, marvel also at the vibrancy of dragonflies, butterflies and a family of American alligators. Not long ago, the alligator family consisted only of two adults, but last year two babies were born. Park staff is quite proud of this fact, since this was a restoration project: the area was turned back into wetlands and the alligators chose to come on their own. Tip: Stop at one of the fruit stands just outside the park entrance and pick up some Valley-grown citrus for your feast. (956-565-3919, www.worldbirdingcenter.org/sites/weslaco/)

WHEN YOU LIVE IN TEXAS, it's easy to take Henry David Thoreau's advice to "live each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influences of each." And in a state with such prodigious diversity, there's a seasonal nuance for every taste and a taste to every season.

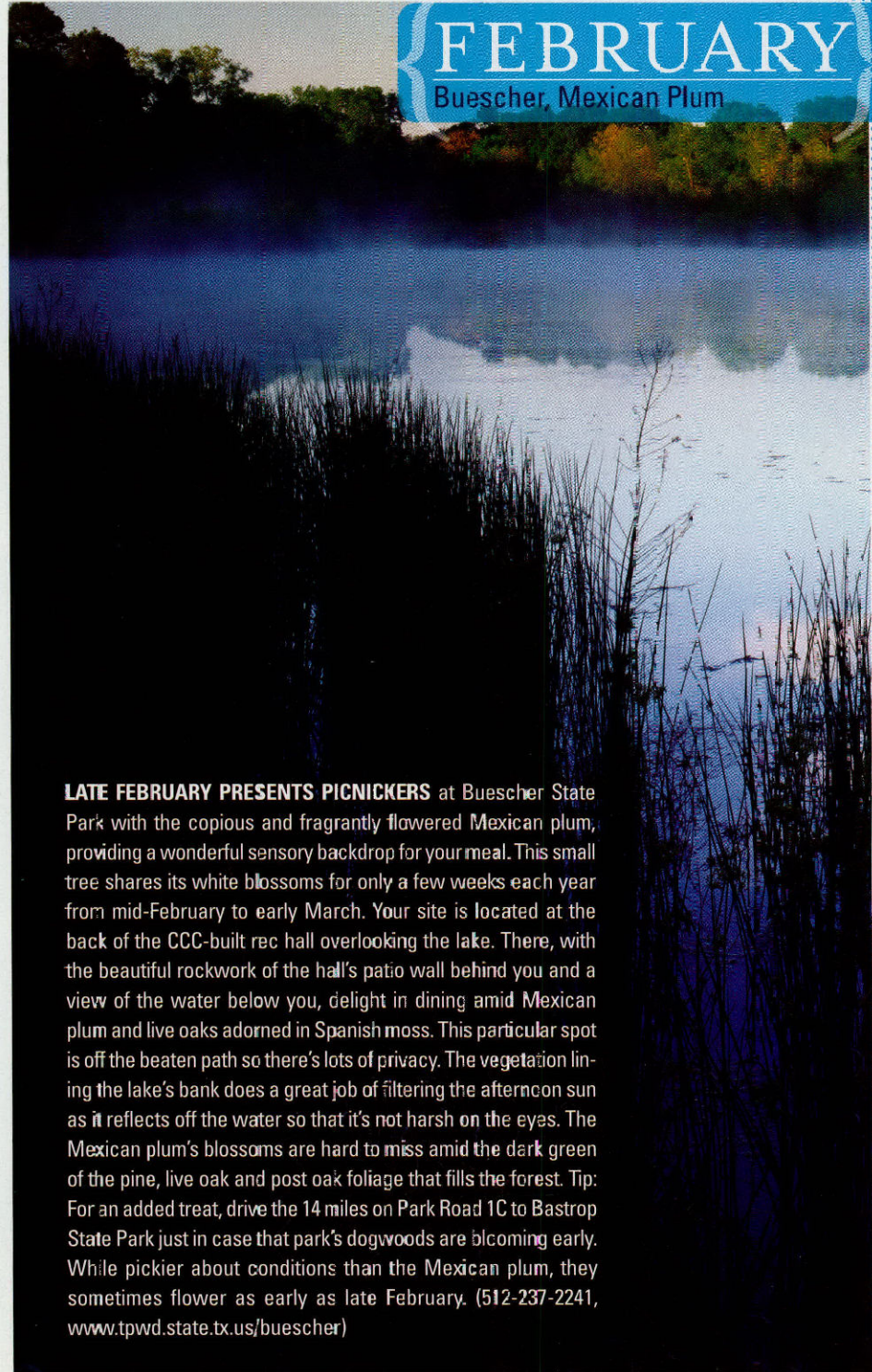
What better way to sample the delicacies of Texas' seasons than an old-fashioned picnic? Spread the blanket and sit still long enough to relish details you've never before noticed. Find yourself falling in love with the subtlety of the flora and fauna that surround you. Yes, as a non-harried outdoor diner, you'll take in the small wonders that unfold in our state's parks like you never have before.

Here are our seasonally adjusted suggestions for great picnic spots throughout the year.



FEBRUARY

Buescher, Mexican Plum



LATE FEBRUARY PRESENTS PICNICKERS at Buescher State Park with the copious and fragrantly flowered Mexican plum, providing a wonderful sensory backdrop for your meal. This small tree shares its white blossoms for only a few weeks each year from mid-February to early March. Your site is located at the back of the CCC-built rec hall overlooking the lake. There, with the beautiful rockwork of the hall's patio wall behind you and a view of the water below you, delight in dining amid Mexican plum and live oaks adorned in Spanish moss. This particular spot is off the beaten path so there's lots of privacy. The vegetation lining the lake's bank does a great job of filtering the afternoon sun as it reflects off the water so that it's not harsh on the eyes. The Mexican plum's blossoms are hard to miss amid the dark green of the pine, live oak and post oak foliage that fills the forest. Tip: For an added treat, drive the 14 miles on Park Road 1C to Bastrop State Park just in case that park's dogwoods are blooming early. While pickier about conditions than the Mexican plum, they sometimes flower as early as late February. (512-237-2241, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/buescher)

American alligator

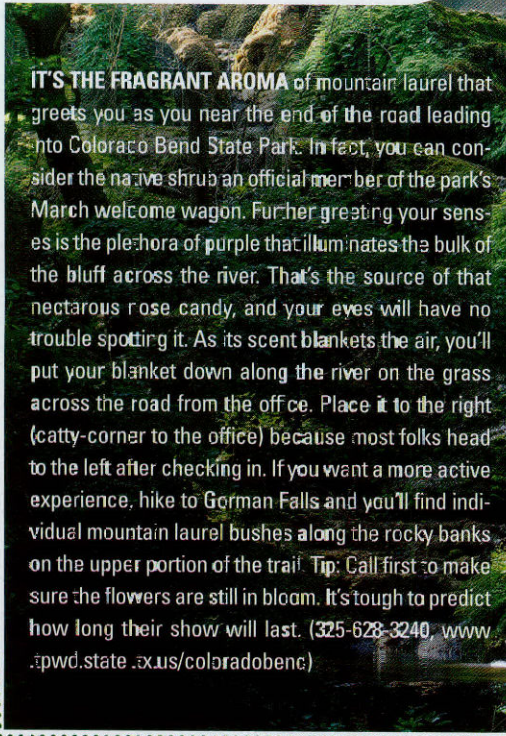


ESTERO LLANO & BUESCHER © LAURENCE PARENT; ALLIGATOR © ROLF NUSSEBAUMER; MEXICAN PLUMS COURTESY LADYBIRD; JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER



MARCH

Colorado Bend, Mountain Laurel



IT'S THE FRAGRANT AROMA of mountain laurel that greets you as you near the end of the road leading into Colorado Bend State Park. In fact, you can consider the native shrub an official member of the park's March welcome wagon. Further greeting your senses is the plethora of purple that illuminates the bulk of the bluff across the river. That's the source of that nectarous rose candy, and your eyes will have no trouble spotting it. As its scent blankets the air, you'll put your blanket down along the river on the grass across the road from the office. Place it to the right (catty-corner to the office) because most folks head to the left after checking in. If you want a more active experience, hike to Gorman Falls and you'll find individual mountain laurel bushes along the rocky banks on the upper portion of the trail. **Tip:** Call first to make sure the flowers are still in bloom. It's tough to predict how long their show will last. (325-628-3240, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/coloradobend)

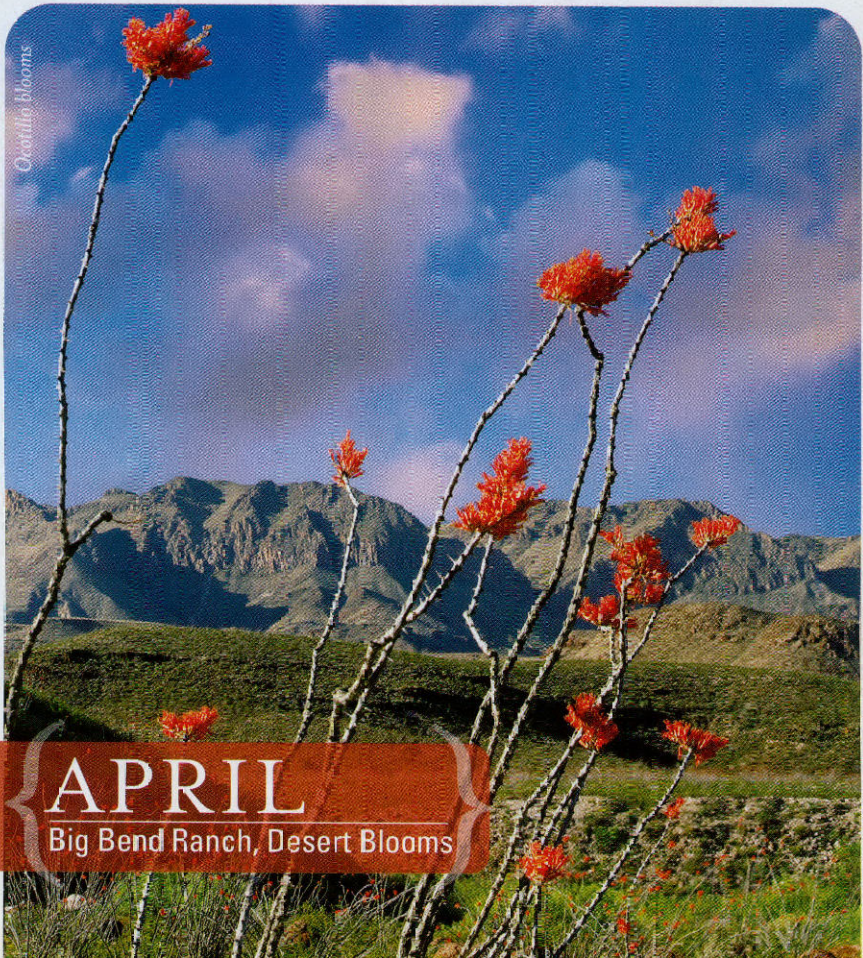


MOUNTAIN LAUREL BY TPWD; COLORADO BEND © LAURENCE PARENT; OCOTILLO © TIM FITZHARRIS

MAY
Caddo Lake, Spatterdock



APRIL IN THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT conjures up Alexander Pope's statement, "Hope springs eternal in the human heart." The presentation that arrives each April on the desert floor reminds us that such hope is rewarded and Big Bend Ranch State Park certainly has its share of rewards. Bright life is vibrantly present in all directions this time of year as the cacti strut their stuff. The claret cup cactus is the first to share its seasonal surprise, and its brilliant red flowers are a dazzling sight well worth seeing. Picnic near the Papalote Llano Nuevo campsite, where you'll spread your blanket in a slight depression surrounded by east-west running ridges. You'll see a myriad assortment of cactus blooms, but which ones will depend on when you visit and how much rain there's been. If it's the Spanish cagger blossoms you're most interested in seeing and smelling, come near the end of the month, when the succulent is taking its turn on stage. **Tip:** Bring the binoculars, as April is also the time when several species of migrating neotropical birds pass through the park. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/BigBendRanch, 432-358-4444)



OCOTILLO BLOOMS

APRIL

Big Bend Ranch, Desert Blooms

CADDO © GRADY ALLEN; CAPROCK © TIM FITZHARRIS; BATS © LARRY DITTO; CAVE BY TPWD



YOU MAY HAVE NEVER THOUGHT of having a picnic at breakfast time, but the fishing dock overlooking Saw Mill Pond and Big Cypress Bayou at Caddo Lake State Park begs for one. The drama of the morning light as it unfolds over the bayou makes sitting on a blanket with a morning meal the perfect way to start the day. From your place above the water, gaze across a yellow sea of newly arrived spatterdock flowers. While the spatterdock will continue to produce teacup-sized blossoms for nearly six months, May is the first time Saw Mill Pond will have seen them since they exited in mid-fall. Be on the lookout for leopard frogs jumping from backlit cypress knees, herons feeding knee-deep at water's edge and fish splashing. Between bites, hang your head over the dock and watch turtles gliding below the surface. Tip: Picnic on the arm of the "T" to the right, as morning anglers tend to prefer the side to the left. (903-679-3351, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/caddolake)

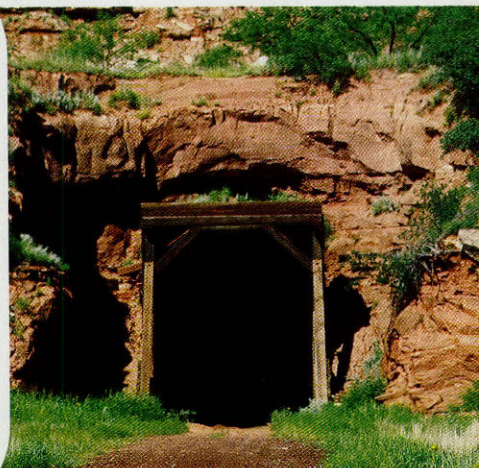
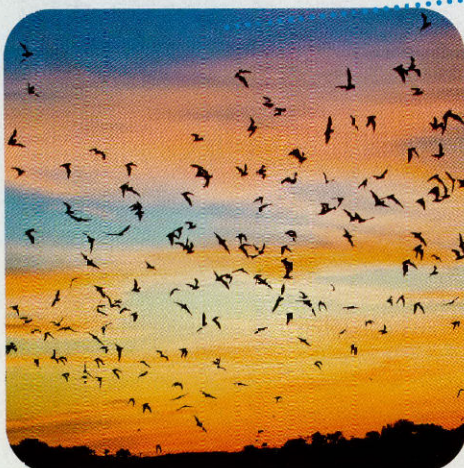


PLAN ON THIS BEING A PICNIC DINNER and make sure to get to your venue before dusk. Hike the trail to Clarity Tunnel (about 5 miles, but completely worth it!) and set up your blanket at the southwest side of the tunnel. There you'll see a wide and flat grassy area just outside the tunnel's entrance. Get your menu readied for munching so that when the sun begins to set you're ready to experience how its light animates the red rocks above you. As the light

wanes, you won't want to miss a minute of the action as nearly half a million Mexican free-tailed bats begin venturing out in search of their own evening edibles. Each spring, this colony of bats returns to the tunnel to have their babies. By June the babies will also be emerging nightly from the tunnel. However, they fly so quickly that you'll have a tough time discerning them from the adults. Tip: Since we humans can't rely on sonar to find our way, be sure to bring a flashlight for the hike back to your vehicle. Pack some red cellophane and cover your flashlight with it so that your night vision stays keener for critter watching. (806-455-1492, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/caprockcanyons)

JUNE

Caprock Canyons, Mexican Free-tailed Bats



JULY

Mustang Island, Morning Glory



WHEN MOST OF TEXAS IS DRUGGED into sluggishness by the July heat, nature's vim in the dunes at Mustang Island is full of vigor. On this barrier island you'll find the ingredients that make for a unique ecosystem that includes the entertaining spotted ground squirrel, lively shorebirds, sea oats and ghost crabs. The latter are so named because the elusive crustaceans are often barely seen from the corner of your eye, causing you to wonder, "Did I or didn't I see one?" But the real star of the July show is a special type of salt-resistant morning glory that crawls with its purple and white blooms all along the face of

the dunes. Unlike other types of morning glory, this one blooms throughout the day. Your space in the sand starts along the beach to the south, and the further south you go the less crowded it will be. And the earlier in the day you go, the cooler it will be. Be sure to bring a beach umbrella because the ocean's spray stunts trees and shrubbery, leaving the dune side without shade. Tip: On days when the wind makes the water rough and choppy, look for sea turtles coming ashore to nest. (www.pwd.state.tx.us/mustangisland, 361-749-5246)

MUSTANG ISLAND © LANCE VARNELL; MORNING GLORIES © GRADY ALLEN

EGRET © JORGE RUIZ/AKM IMAGES; SPIDER © LANCE VARNELL

AUGUST

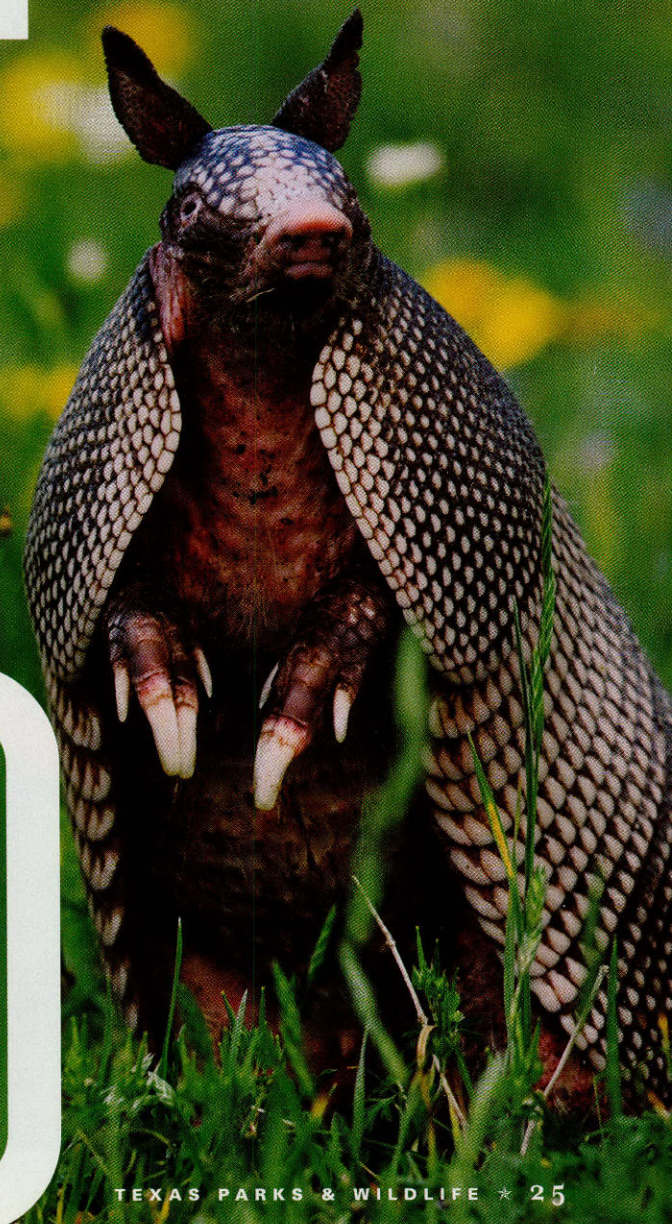
Davis Mountains, Hummingbirds



Black-chinned hummingbird

FOR THIS VERY SPECIAL PICNIC you'll be packing a little something extra: a hummingbird feeder and some hummingbird food. Park superintendent David Bischofhausen says it's perfectly okay to do so as long as deer or other mammals can't get to it and you're sure to take it with you when you go. Head toward one of the CCC-built picnic sites just off the trail going to Fort Davis National Historic Site. You'll know it's the right one when you find stone steps sneaking down to it as they wind around a large rock. This site has a huge picnic table and one of the most incredible views in the entire state. Let your eyes feast upon the sight of Limpia Canyon and its rare West Texas collection of green. After spending a bit of time gazing and grazing, chances are the hummingbirds will have found the feeder you've hung nearby. You'll likely find yourself so mesmerized by their antics that you may forget to chew. Tip: To add some extra fun, wear something red and discover that not only are you watching the hummingbirds, but they're checking you out as well! (432-426-3337, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/davismountains)

Nine-banded armadillo



SEPTEMBER

Brazos Bend, Golden Silk Orbweavers

WHILE YOU SIT AND RELAX during your Brazos Bend picnic, the colorful golden silk orbweaver spiders will be busy working. Everywhere you look up, especially amid the live oaks garnished with Spanish moss, you'll spot one of these arachnid beauties. Their fantastic handiwork can be seen in abundance here until the end of September. Obvious to your presence, the eight-legged critters will go about their business while you begin the business of picnicking along the spillway trail between Elm and 40-Acre Lake. The exact spot you're looking for is a bench about halfway down the trail on the north side (one clue is the interpretive sign about alligator nesting that's nearby). Here, you'll get a comfortable view of the spiders in addition to the plethora of life in the wetlands around you. Gallinules with babies, alligators, dragonflies, cottontails, wading birds, armadillos and raccoons are all frequent visitors here. Tip: The sun plays beautifully on the water at this locale, but it can also be really bright. Bring sunglasses! (979-553-5102, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/brazosbend)



Great egret



Golden silk orbweaver



White peacock



Monarch

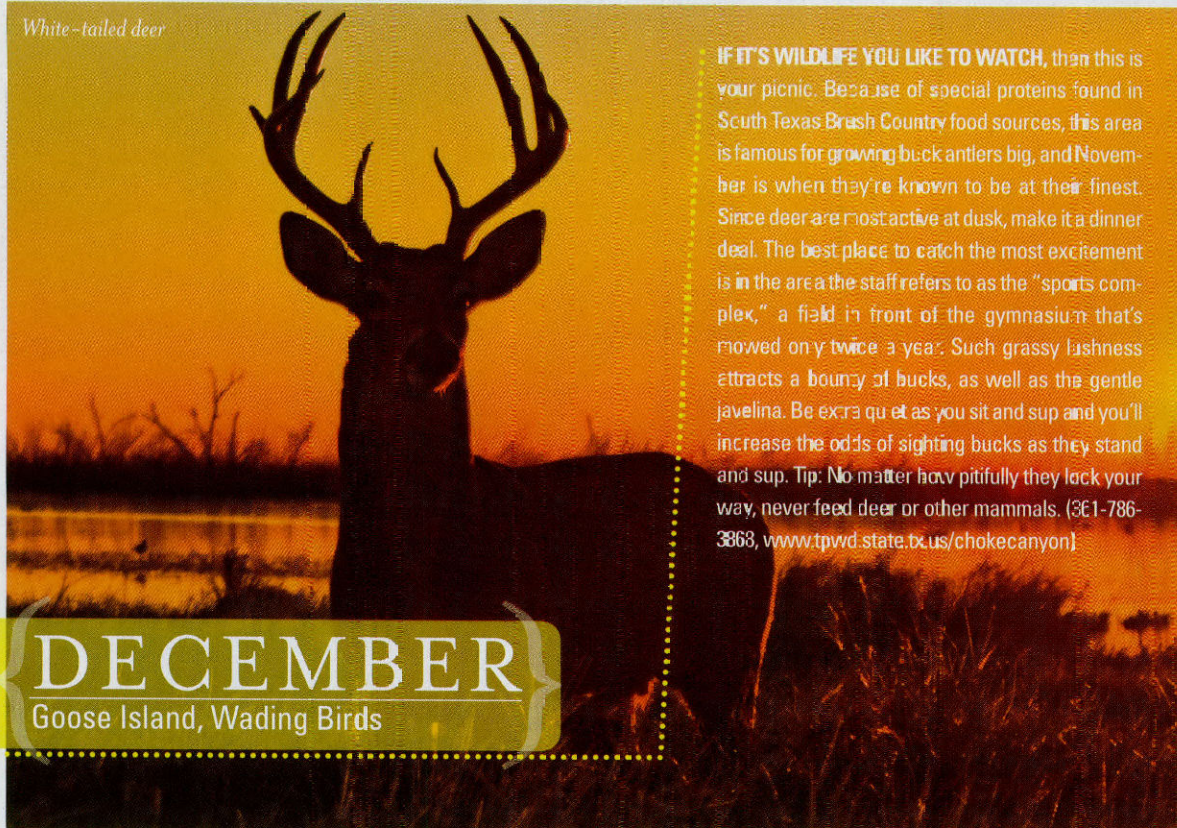
IN OCTOBER, FALCON STATE PARK is thick with the beauty of butterflies, and there's no better way to enjoy them than sitting and dining outdoors in their tranquil company. Park at the day-use area and walk the 1/4 mile to the covered picnic tables. But don't stop just yet! There's a blanket-worthy spot perfect for quiet appreciation a few minutes past the official picnic area. There, you'll find yourself able to experience the pleasant peace of a perfect October afternoon while you watch the butterflies dance through the air around you. Tip: Make up some homemade butterfly bait to bring along. You can find the recipe online. But, be warned, it can be rather stinky, so you won't want to pack it with your own meal. (956-848-5327, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/falcon)

Falcon, Butterflies

OCTOBER



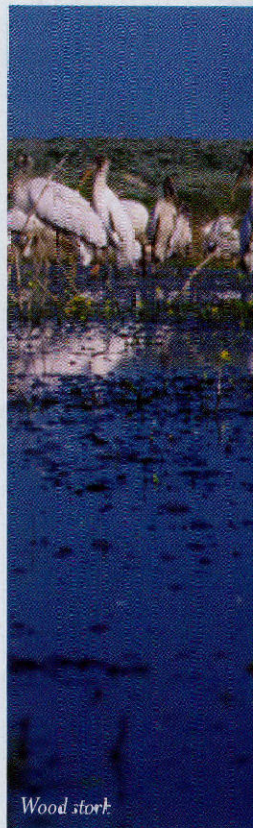
White-tailed deer



IF IT'S WILDLIFE YOU LIKE TO WATCH, then this is your picnic. Because of special proteins found in South Texas Brush Country food sources, this area is famous for growing buck antlers big, and November is when they're known to be at their finest. Since deer are most active at dusk, make it a dinner deal. The best place to catch the most excitement is in the area the staff refers to as the "sports complex," a field in front of the gymnasium that's mowed only twice a year. Such grassy lushness attracts a bounty of bucks, as well as the gentle javelina. Be extra quiet as you sit and sup and you'll increase the odds of sighting bucks as they stand and sup. Tip: No matter how pitifully they look your way, never feed deer or other mammals. (361-786-3868, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/chokecanyon/)

DECEMBER

Goose Island, Wading Birds



Wood stork



Pipitina swallowtail

GOOSE ISLAND IS KNOWN FOR THE "BIG TREE," but with its pleasant winter climate it's also a great pick for a December picnic. This time of year the park is a haven for great blue herons, great egrets, white ibis, snowy egrets, and white and brown pelicans. One of their favorite feeding spots is in the marsh grasses near the day-use area. Your feeding spot is at the day-use area on a blanket next to the picnic tables. Why use a blanket instead of a table? Not only is the soft ground more comfy (especially if you bring two or three blankets and some pillows) but your view of

the birds at work is better when you're at ground level. From here, not only will you have a bird's-eye view of the birds, but you'll also have a great view of Aransas Bay, with Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in the distance. Since the refuge is home to about 240 endangered whooping cranes from mid-October through March, there's a slim chance you might see one. On rare occasions they feed in the bay by the park. Tip: This picnic site has a barbecue grill, so plan your cuisine accordingly. (361-729-2858, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gooseisland)

DECEMBER

Goose Island, Wading Birds



Brown pelican



Roseate spoonbill

PEACOCK, MONARCH, STORK, ROSEATE © HOLF NUSSBAUMER; SWALLOWTAIL © KATHY REEVES/JAMI IMAGES; DEER & PELICAN © LARRY DITTO

Facing Ike

The fury and aftermath of a monster storm

Photos by Earl Nottingham

Text by Earl Nottingham and Aaron Reed

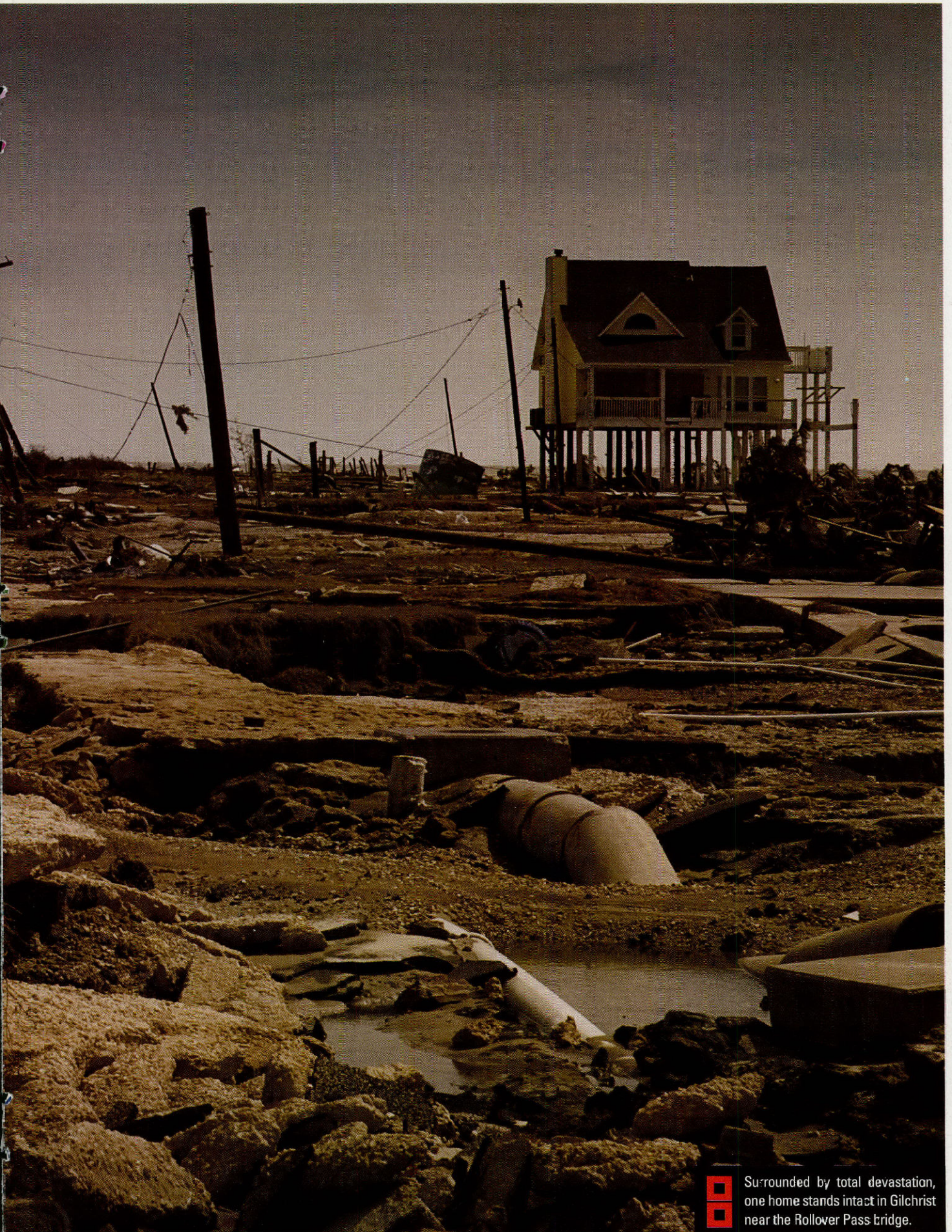
IN THE LATE HOURS OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2008, I performed a nearly flawless Gerardo Rivera impression, leaning my body into the 100-mile-per-hour winds and stinging horizontal rain of Hurricane Ike's eyewall as it hit the upper Texas coast. The performance ended abruptly, however, as a piece of corrugated tin flew in my direction, signaling that I might live longer inside.


Earlier that day, TPWD colleague Aaron Reed and I had traveled to the Trinity Bay area in advance of Ike to cover the inevitable search and rescue efforts of state game wardens and to document the ecological impact of the storm. Our base for several days was to be the Chambers County Law Enforcement Center in Anahuac where, comforted with the knowledge that the building was supposedly "hurricane proof," we set up cots in the office of the local justice of the peace.

After drying off from my outside adventure, I retreated to the security of my warm sleeping bag and tried to sleep as the storm churned outside. And somewhere just down the road, the wind and a massive tidal surge had joined together to create a tempest that would be at work throughout the night erasing life, property and part of the Texas coast.

As dawn broke, the light revealed only a hint of what we were to witness over the next few days. Across the street, ancient oaks which had surrounded the historic courthouse were now in torn and twisted shreds and downed utility poles with snapped power lines crisscrossed the streets. With winds still at tropical-storm strength we ventured out, at first helping to clear roadways of fallen trees and assisting where needed. With no phone connections, first-responders were blind to who was in trouble, or how to get to them. Gradually, messages did start getting through: "Bolivar gone," "Oak Island gone," "High Island stranded," and on and on.

We were going to be very busy for a while. ★ — Earl Nottingham

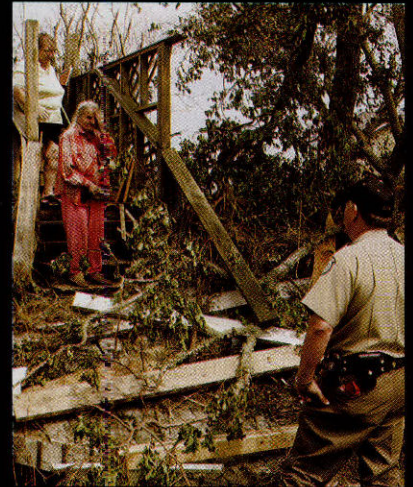


 Surrounded by total devastation, one home stands intact in Gilchrist near the Rollover Pass bridge.





■ (Opposite page and left) Galveston Island State Park, consistently among the 10 most visited in the state, was destroyed. Shade shelters that once lined the beach were broken, buried or washed away after Ike passed over the island. The visitors' center was gutted, and other park facilities were broken and inundated by crashing surf.



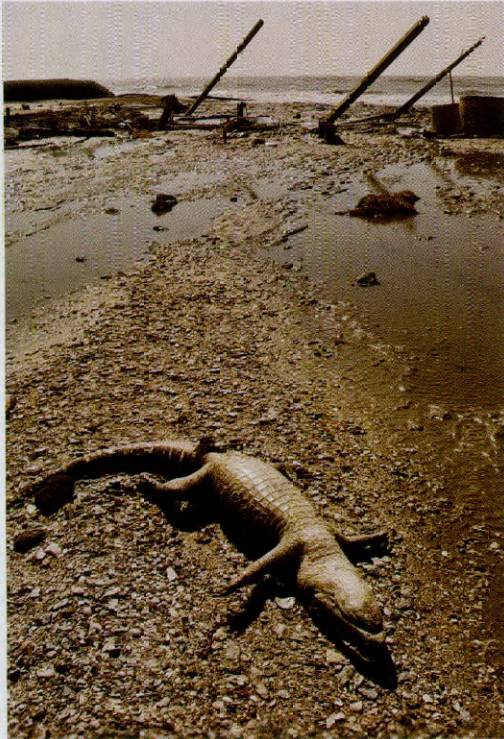
■ (Top right) Game Warden Captain Rod Ousley persuades Angeline Tomkins to leave her Crystal Beach home the morning following the hurricane. (Above) Damage to the Rollover Pass Bridge in Gilchrist. (Right) What wasn't swept away by the tidal surge and subsequent outflow becomes buried.





■ (Above) Cattle are rounded up to move them to fresh water and pasture after Ike's surge of salt water overtakes grazing lands.


■ (Below) Dianne Harp pieces together the remains of her grandmother's china in the Oak Island community. (Bottom) Game Warden John Feist returns to his home near Anahuac to learn that his pets are safe and his property has weathered the storm with only minor damage.



■ The most obvious ecological impact was salt water in places where salt water had never been. (Above) While able to survive in the brackish water along the Texas coast, this alligator succumbs to the tidal surge's salinity. Wildlife that requires fresh water — animals such as muskrats and raccoons and alligators and deer — suffered greatly after the storm. Other wildlife, including songbirds, shorebirds and migratory waterfowl, were displaced by the storm.





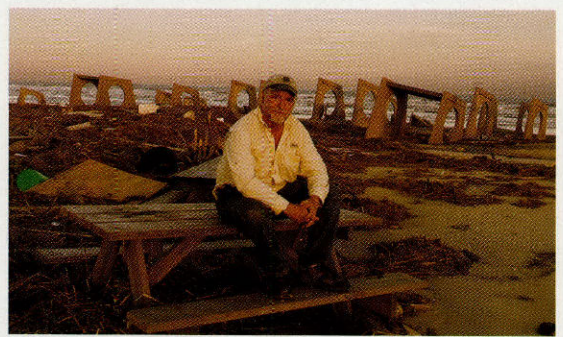
 (Above) Hours after the passage of the hurricane, still-angry waters wash a shrimp boat ashore along Trinity Bay. Hurricane Ike changed the topography of Galveston Bay and other area water bodies. Many oyster reefs were silted over, and familiar landmarks and channels may not be where boaters remember them. Hundreds of oil spills from ruptured storage tanks and sunken vessels were quickly contained and cleaned up, but storm debris in area bays still poses some risk to boaters.



■ (Above left) Justin Richards displays one of numerous water moccasins that washed up in his backyard along Trinity Bay. (Above right) With roads washed out, game wardens use airboats to rescue those who chose to ride out the storm.



■ (Top left) Aerial photo of Crystal Beach on Bolivar Peninsula.
■ (Top right) Only a handful of newer homes with stronger construction remain in Gilchrist. Along the coast, 23 state parks, 13 wildlife management areas, three TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division facilities and one Inland Fisheries Division site were damaged by the hurricane.



■ (Left) Massive debris fields are all that remain of homes from the Bolivar Peninsula – 10 miles across Galveston Bay. (Above) TPWD Chief Photographer Earl Nottingham sits amid the ruins of Galveston Island State Park. Hurricane Ike's 110-mph winds and 12- to 16-foot storm surge proved devastating for two Texas state parks. On the upper coast, Sea Rim State Park was on the verge of reopening after Hurricane Rita damage had been repaired there. Sea Rim, like Galveston Island State Park, sustained catastrophic damage during Hurricane Ike.

By Karen Hastings

H O U S T O N ' S P R A I R I E P A T C H

VOLUNTEERS AND
NONPROFIT GROUPS
WORK TO SAVE THE
LAST BITS OF THE
KATY PRAIRIE.

If you stood just so last fall on what people were calling the Saums Road Prairie, you could imagine west Harris County the way early settlers found it: gentle mounds of waving bluestem, topped by spiky purple flowers and pink poufs of Gulf Coast muhly, rolling off as far as the eye can see. Dainty white bee blossom, swamp sunflower and prickly rattlesnake master, or closer inspection, rivaling any spring wildflower garden. Iridescent orange dragonflies darting about, while overhead, a Swainson's hawk patrols its territory. Oaks and fast-growing pines frame the scene and sustain an away-from-it-all tranquility.

It is all, however, a bittersweet illusion.



PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM/TPWD



Jaime Gonzalez, community education manager for the Katy Prairie Conservancy, stands in a patch of switch grass, an important component of prairie vegetation.

First you notice the spade-sized pockmarks that make strolling an ankle-turning adventure.

Off to the south, at the end of faint tire tracks, there are larger muddy scars against the green. Behind you, sounds of traffic intrude, as the convenience store at the corner of Saums and Greenhouse floats commuters off on a sea of gasoline and hot coffee. Just out of sight behind those trees are suburban homes, apartment blocks and the I-10 freeway into downtown Houston.

This is, by expert account, one of the finest patches of pristine prairie left in West Harris County, part of the greater Katy Prairie that once rippled across a thousand square miles between the Brazos River and Houston. More than the sum of its parts, Saums Road is a rare whole package: a mature bit of what once was the region's characteristic landscape, now part of a suburban development hotspot. Over the next few months, as Greenhouse Road is extended to the interstate, this remnant patch is scheduled to be bulldozed, and the prairie-that-time-forgot will catch up with the booming subdivisions all around.

Last summer and fall, the Katy Prairie Conservancy, along with other environmental groups and governmental agencies, raced to save what they could of the Saums Road Prairie. Alongside tree-spades and sod-digging equipment, platoons of eager volunteers gathered before daylight on several weekends, armed with narrow shovels, rubber boots and bug spray. By the bucketful, they hauled off clumps of gay feather, milkweed and other prairie species, for replanting at pocket prairies and larger restoration efforts across the region.

These days, the Saums Road rescue says a lot about the dwindling Katy Prairie, and the need to rally support for what's left: less than 2 percent of the original prairie remains. Populations of species like meadowlark and bobwhite quail are in serious decline, and the migratory snow geese and other waterfowl that once feasted on the region's rice fields are also losing ground. More than a quaint relic of bygone days, the Katy Prairie is an essential ecosystem upon which hundreds of bird, mammal, insect and plant species depend.

But while Saums Road represents loss, friends of the Katy Prairie saw its opportunities as well — including the chance to educate the public about the conservancy and what its new community education manager calls “Houston's hidden hurting habitat.”

“We can't afford to lose any more patches like Saums,” says Community Education Director Jaime Gonzalez, who sees the rescue as a possible turning point in public awareness about the Katy Prairie. “What we've done is save the genetic imprint of that prairie remnant. That prairie is going to survive in small chunks all around Houston. This is a little ark that is going to help us reconstruct what was there.”

Created in 1992, the Katy Prairie Conservancy owns or protects nearly 18,000 acres west of Houston, on what once was a vast expanse of coastal tallgrass prairie. The conservancy's holdings, alongside other protected lands, now include a patchwork of prairie, woodlands, wetlands and working farms and ranches that together represent the region's environmental, agricultural and wildlife history. The group's goal is to eventually protect — and when possible, restore — 50,000 acres where hundreds of thousands of wintering geese, ducks, hawks and other birds — from bald eagles and barn owls to

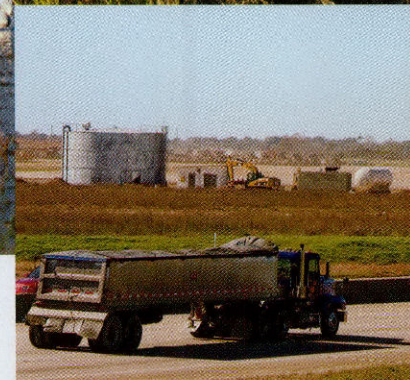
diminutive sandpipers — can find refuge.

The 1990s were a time of quiet growth for the conservancy, with large acquisitions topped by its 2004 “crown jewel,” a controlling interest in the 6,400-acre Warren Ranch south of Hockley. The new millennium has brought increased development pressure, however, as the area's historic rice farms and cattle ranches fall, one by one, under a tide of rooftops rippling out from Houston. Just east of the KPC's largest holdings, the 12,000-acre Bridgeland development plans 17,000 homes on what were the Josey and Longenbaugh ranches. The Grand Parkway, SH 99, part of a proposed fourth loop around Houston, is set to be extended north of I-10 through some of the same real estate. Acres previously selling for under \$1,000 now fetch 20 times that amount. There was even talk at one time that the route of a new Interstate 69, the Trans-Texas Corridor, would plow right through the Warren Ranch.

With a new sense of urgency, the Katy Prairie Conservancy is using “every tool in its toolbox” to protect land, says executive director Mary Anne Piacentini. A new conservation buyer program, for example,



~ BIG BLUESTEM GRASS ~



Jaime Gonzalez stands in treadmarks where tall prairie grasses once stood and looks over the last remnants of the Saums Road Prairie as bulldozers make way for new development.



TREADS & BACKHOE BY EARL NOTTINGHAM/TPWD; HAWK & TRUCKS © TODD STEELE; OTHERS BY JAIME GONZALES

allows willing buyers to purchase land — a deer lease, for example — under easement agreements with the conservancy that ensures it will be managed and permanently protected against development.

“Species that use the Katy Prairie need big swaths of habitat that are contiguous,” says KPC board president Mary Van Kerrebroek. “They don’t care whether the land is owned outright by the conservancy or protected by a conservation easement.”

The conservancy also has begun focusing on another important area: introducing the public to the subtle and sometimes exuberant beauty of prairie life. Last summer, for the first time, the conservancy launched weekly Open Trails days, giving visitors a chance to roam at will on selected properties — accompanied by a podcast of prairie information and lore. At last October’s “Family Day on the Prairie” event, kids planted seedlings for prairie restoration, scooped up indigenous creepy-crawlies with butterfly nets, and took a hayride around a working farm.

The hope is these visitors will leave with a new appreciation for prairie life, and a willingness to help preserve it.

“The Katy Prairie is kind of a big secret. Nobody really knows about it,” says Piacentini, who believes such events are somewhat overdue. “Even if you don’t know a darn thing about the birds and bugs, you might just want to get outside once in a while. If people get out there, every single one is going to find something they’ll like.”

When environmental groups noticed the “for sale” sign on the 90-acre Saums Road tract in 2008, it was already too late to save it “as it is — where it is.” The land was destined to become an extension of Greenhouse Road, a drainage detention pond and, eventually, more suburban housing and retail. Groups like the Houston Audubon

Society and the KPC rallied governmental representatives and secured landowner permission to salvage some of the plant materials before they were destroyed.

The situation became a public education bonus, as the story made the local papers and volunteers were invited to join in the “rescue” — shovel by shovel and bucket by bucket.

Volunteer Sheryl Marquez, in wide straw hat and rubber boots, was out during one of those rescue weekends last summer. “It’s just gorgeous. Look at it,” she said, gesturing across the ephemeral Saums Road landscape. “There’s a sense of satisfaction in helping the people at the Katy Prairie Conservancy save a little bit of what was originally here before all the concrete.”

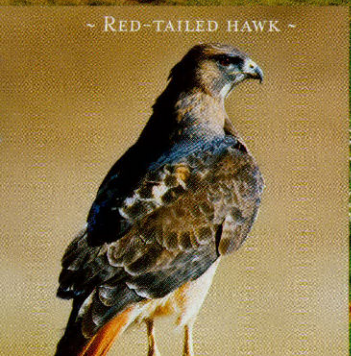
Dirt-stained commercial loan underwriter Iris Poteet had a theory about what people would get from helping save the Katy Prairie. “I’m in an office all week at a computer, doing all this brain work. So I love coming out and getting my hands dirty . . . watching things grow. Helping them along.”

Wrestling a root ball of bluestem from the rock-hard ground, environmental consultant Steve Ramsey offered another reason. “I think it’s the spiritual connection that people have when they come out in nature,” he said. “You can read about the creation, or get out in it.”

Some of the rescued plants will be distributed to pocket and larger prairies springing up around the Houston area — in Brays Bayou, Armand Bayou Nature Park in Pasadena, Missouri City’s Buffalo Run Park, and at the Fort Bend County Extension Office in Rosenberg.

The Katy Prairie Conservancy had ambitious plans for its rescued

More than the sum of its parts, Saums Road is a rare whole package — a mature bit of what once was the region’s characteristic landscape, now part of a suburban development hotspot.



bounty: The prairie clumps were used to jump-start a demonstration garden at the field office in Waller County. Plans are to showcase 13 of the prairie’s signature plants — like yellow Indiangrass and white prairie clover. They also have started a seed bank for future restoration work.

“Unless people have gone out to a place like this, they really haven’t seen it,” Gonzalez says about popular prairie misconceptions. “Sometimes it’s just glorious — as beautiful as any landscape you can imagine. We need to put more effort into restoration, into saving areas so they can become prairies again. We need to show people that all prairie beauty is not subtle.”

A local businessman gave the project an added boost with a good deal on prairie sod: Crews were out last fall, scraping up 3-foot-wide, 8-inch-deep strips and loading them on a flat-bed truck. KPC also engaged the services of a giant tree-spade, moving about two dozen four-foot plugs to its Nelson Farms property on Cypress Creek.

Harris County Precinct 3 workers had their own tree-spade going, transplanting hundreds of prairie plugs from Saums Road to the Paul D. Rushing Park north of Katy. Still more sod went to a 100-acre prairie restoration plot on Katy-Hockley Road, created by the Harris County Flood Control District.

As sod-cutting crews got to work last August, Gonzalez was on hand to record the event, and to point out a few classic prairie species in plots defined by orange plastic tags.

"Rattlesnake master, that's one," he says, singling out a plant with distinctive prickly flower heads. He demonstrates the fibers of sticky sap that give spiderwort its name and offers a section of fragrant goldenrod, with its licorice perfume.

"And this is very, very rare," adds Gonzalez, his hands framing leafy shoots of eastern gama grass. "From several centuries of cattle ranching, they've pretty much eaten most stands of it. So whenever we see it, we go for that."

By the next month, some of that rescued material was thriving in a field at 1,700-acre Nelson Farms, the conservancy's very first acquisition in 1997, purchased from a longtime rice farmer who still works the land under lease. Wetlands, grasslands, beaver ponds and a patch known as Barn Owl Woods make up this property, along with all the typical equipment and outbuildings of a working ag operation.

On a cool, sunny morning in October, second-graders Nikita Munsif and Madison Morton were on their knees beside a big blue bucket, squishing seeds, compost and clay into ping-pong-sized balls. It was "Family Day" on the Katy Prairie, and KPC volunteers

cultural and natural heritage, and see the wealth of wildlife out there, then we will succeed in saving a sustainable part of the prairie within the narrow window of opportunity that remains."

So far, says Van Kerrebroek, throwing out the welcome mat has been successful.

"It's just a delight to see the faces of children out on the prairie for the first time and adults too. We have this incredible treasure in our backyards and when people experience it, they tend to fall in love with it. It's great to think that someday, if we're careful and the local community engages now, that we'll have this ecological treasure to pass down to future generations."

In his cluttered office on the Warren Ranch, James Warren is living the story of the Katy Prairie. His great-grandfather came to this country as an English immigrant in 1853, started a boarding house when the railroad reached Hockley in 1857, and later bought land.

A big man with a big mustache, Warren's grandfather raised cattle on that land, as did his father. His uncle, Bill Warren, helped found the American Quarterhorse Association.

From left: The Saums Road Prairie; Jaime Gonzalez; volunteers transplant clumps of prairie grasses into one of several restoration plots near Katy.



"Sometimes it's just glorious — as beautiful as any landscape you can imagine."

— Jaime Gonzalez, community education manager for the Katy Prairie Conservancy

had assembled a small carnival of booths, designed to introduce visitors to the importance of the prairie habitat.

Volunteer Grace Liggett helped the children pour water into the bucket and mix it with their bare hands. Later, the seed balls — including some from Saums Road Prairie — would be tossed into a prepared field, to germinate with the rain. "The clay protects the seeds," she explained to her young audience. "There's a much better chance they're going to grow and make our prairie pretty."

"A little bit of clay in your hands and roly, roly, roly," sang Nikita, just happy to be outside. "We love playing in the mud."

Van Kerrebroek, the KPC board chairman, has been devoted to the prairie since joining the fight to stop a westside Harris County airport in the 1980s. She was part of the initial group that organized the Katy Prairie Conservancy in the early 1990s — the first local land trust in the Houston area.

"The conservancy is maturing and we want to do more to deepen our ties to the local community, to engage more Houstonians in the wonderful experience of being out on the prairie," says Van Kerrebroek. "We know that if people will come out and look at places like the Warren Ranch and Nelson Farms, and get engaged in our agri-

In his time, James Warren also became ranch manager, determined to hold the ranch together even as other working ranches were disappearing from the Katy Prairie. "I've been hearing it since I was a child," he says. "Houston is coming."

In 2004, against years of development pressure and other opposition, Warren supported the Katy Prairie Conservancy in what would become a strategic acquisition: A 70 percent interest in the fields, pastures, woodlands, creeks and lakes that make up this historic property. The conservancy now owns about 700 acres outright and holds a mortgage on the rest.

"I'm trying to preserve this ranch. This is where my roots are," says Warren, who continues to manage the property as his family has for more than 100 years. Bouncing across the landscape in his dented Chevy truck, Warren points out the strips of wild vegetation he leaves for the benefit of quail and other wildlife, and the pine-covered hilltop from which rooftops are just visible to the north.

"There are places you can go on this ranch where you don't see a house or hear any road noise. There are still places to get away from all that. I'm talking about 100 years of history here. I'm trying to save that." ★

Keep Texas Wild



WEIRD, WACKY AND WILD

There's no end to the amazing adaptations of Texas animals.



» MINIATURE HELICOPTERS

Whether to find food, survive the cold, protect themselves or migrate, Texas animals have amazing characteristics that help them adapt and survive. Hummingbirds are one example. They are the only birds that can fly like helicopters (backwards, forwards, straight up and down). Hummingbirds can detect how much sugar is in each flower's nectar. They take 500 breaths per minute because they need more oxygen than other animals (you breathe about 15 times per minute).

Ruby-throated hummingbird

WWW.TPWMAGAZINE.COM

» ASTONISHING ANIMALS



» Look, but don't touch!

WITH prickly spines like a pincushion, the peaceful porcupine can protect itself from any predator. These 30,000 quills cover most of the body. The porcupine cannot "throw" the quills, but rather turns around to defend itself from the rear against enemies.

» Turn up the volume

EVER heard an insect symphony in your yard on a summer evening? The loudest member of the choir is the cicada, who squeezes noisemakers, called tymbals, at the base of its abdomen. Each species plays its own tune!



» Ultimate tongue twisters

SPHINX moths have the longest tongues (or proboscs) of any insect in Texas. This amazing hollow device allows them to reach deep into flowers for nectar.

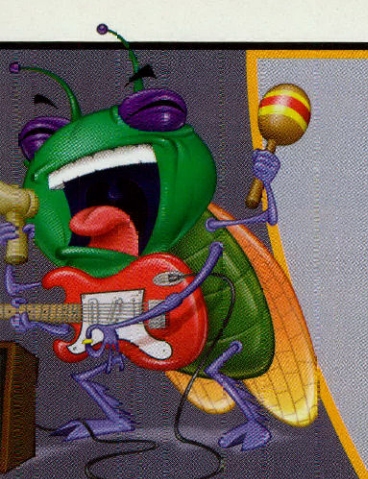


» Water babies

Did you know that dragonflies live under water for up to two years as nymphs before climbing out and turning into adults?

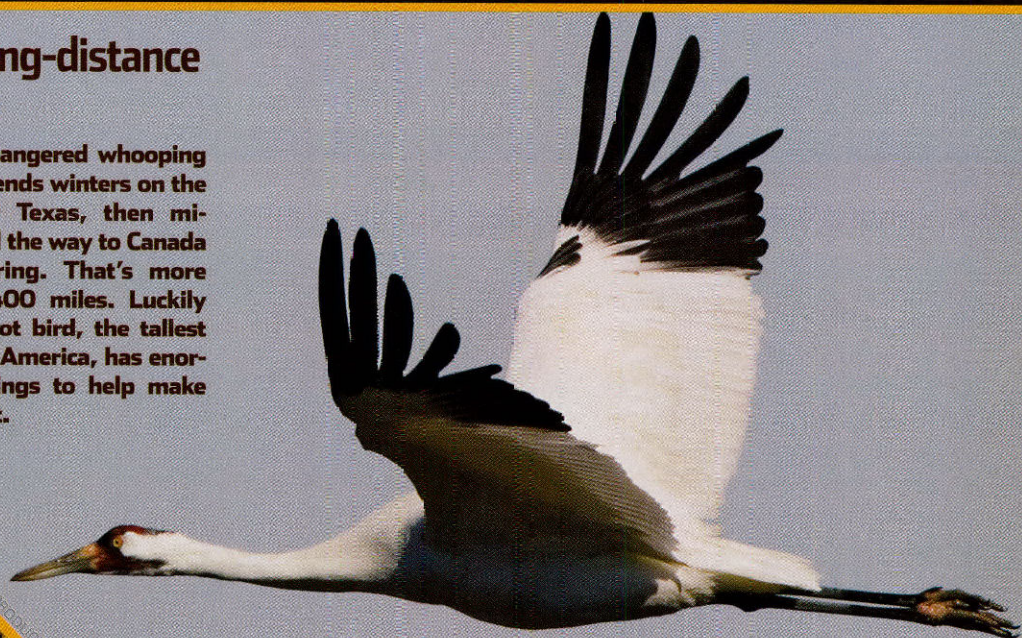
These lacy-winged beauties only live a few months after that. Watch this nymph transform into a red-tailed pennant dragonfly before your very eyes!





» Long-distance flyers

THE endangered whooping crane spends winters on the coast of Texas, then migrates all the way to Canada each spring. That's more than 2,400 miles. Luckily this 5-foot bird, the tallest in North America, has enormous wings to help make the flight.



» Better than a sting

UNLIKE more common scorpions around Texas, the whipscorpion can't sting. Instead, it sprays a mist almost identical to vinegar from the base of its tail. That's why they are also called vinegaroons.



» No bigger than your finger

THE Calliope hummingbird is the smallest bird in the state.



Actual size shown here

» What's that smell?

THE striped skunk defends itself by spraying intruders with musk, which might smell like perfume to them but definitely smells awful to us. Just before they spray, skunks rise up on their back legs, lurch forward, stamp their front feet and click their teeth. They can also growl and purr.



Believe it or not!

- A RAT CAN LAST LONGER WITHOUT WATER THAN A CAMEL CAN.
- DOLPHINS SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN.
- A JELLYFISH IS 95 PERCENT WATER.
- A WOODPECKER CAN PECK 20 TIMES PER SECOND.
- SHARKS APPARENTLY ARE THE ONLY ANIMALS THAT RARELY GET SICK.
- ARMADILLOS AND OPOSSUMS SPEND ABOUT 80% OF THEIR LIVES SLEEPING.

ILLUSTRATIONS © FIAN ARROYO



PHOTOS © GREG LASLEY



Spike's Activity Page



WILD SCIENCE

The human body might seem limited compared to animals' cool adaptations, but we've invented things to help us survive in extreme conditions. What are some of the inventions that help humans to live in the desert or in very cold conditions? Travel under water? Travel in space? Pick an extreme habitat and design your own invention to help you survive.



WILD MATH

Animals adapt to survive in extreme environments. Texas has many different geographic regions with extreme temperatures. The lowest temperature ever recorded in Texas was 23 degrees below zero (Fahrenheit), and the hottest temperature was 120 degrees. What is the difference between those extreme temperatures? What is the temperature at your home or school right now? What is the hottest and coldest it has ever been in your town?



NEXT MONTH: Wildlife Babies



PHOTO BY TIM FITZHARRIS

KEEPING IT WILD



Make a list of all the animals in your neighborhood or area. Don't forget birds, insects, fish and reptiles. Now look at your list and figure out which is the largest, smallest, fastest, slowest, furiest or slimiest. You can make up your own categories: best at hiding, biggest eater, friendliest or most funny-looking. Use the encyclopedia or Internet to help you. Share your list with friends and classmates.

TEACHER RESOURCE

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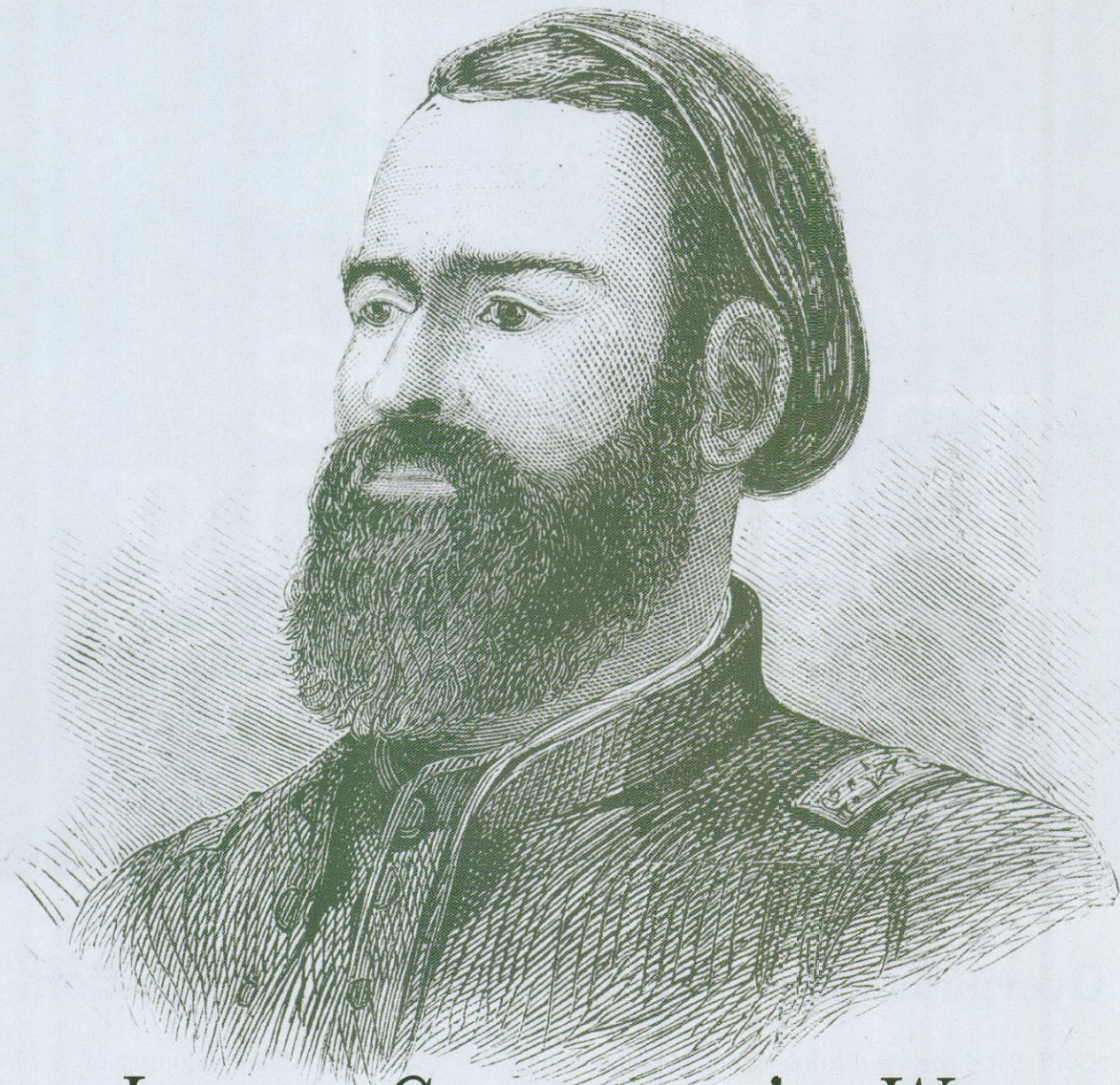
For a preview of the show and station listings, visit www.texasstateofwater.org

Tune in on Thursday, February 12, at 8 p.m. on select PBS stations.



This documentary was produced by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department with generous support from the following organizations.





Juan Cortina's War

Considered a bandit by the U.S. government, Cortina was a champion of justice to Tejanos living along the border.

BY PENELOPE WARREN

Juan Nepomuceno Cortina holds an unrivaled claim as the most romantic figure in the history of the Texas-Mexico border. Long before Disney made Davy Crockett King of the Wild Frontier, Cortina held the title, with a difference — King of the Whole Frontier. From El Paso to Port Isabel, he did more than one man's fair share of hell-raising. To Anglo Texans and the United States Government, Cortina was a bandit, a rustler, a murderer. To Mexican Texans he was a champion of justice who fought to defend "the Mexican name in Texas." During the civil wars that beset both the United States and Mexico in the 1860s, he managed to support the Union and the Confederacy, Juarez's liberals and Maximilian's

Imperialists. For most of his life, at least one government — frequently more — urgently wanted to hang him.

Cortina was born into blood and smoke. Apaches and Comanches raided the Mexican settlements of the Río Grande in the 1820s and '30s, driving off cattle and leaving the bodies of the defenders to burn with their ranchos. When he was 24, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican War, pushing the Texas border south from the Nueces to the Río Grande. Under American law, unscrupulous Anglos cheated many Mexican property owners out of their lands and homes. Poor Mexican Texans fared even worse. Vilified as lazy, brutish and dishonest, these *pelados* could be robbed or killed with impunity

by anyone with a white skin.

The incident that sparked the Cortina War grew out of that freedom of the privileged to abuse the oppressed. On July 13, 1859, Juan Cortina rode into Brownsville for a meal with friends at Castel's saloon. He came armed, under indictment in Cameron County for rustling and murder. He shrugged off such inconveniences, shared by many of the area's prominent citizens, including his accusers. The few minutes after he arrived at Castel's, though, changed Cortina's life and set a wildfire that blazed for years along the border.

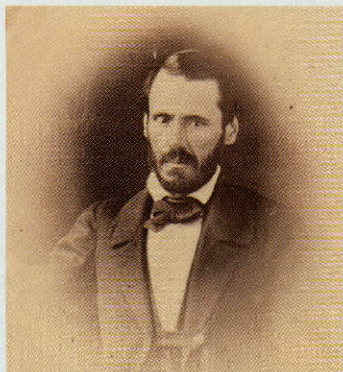
It was a curiously Biblical scene. Alerted by sounds of fighting, Cortina emerged from the saloon to find Brownsville marshal Robert Shears beating a 60-year-old Mexican vaquero who had worked at his mother's Rancho del Carmen. Cortina claimed later that he first attempted to intervene peaceably. Whatever the case, "insolent" words followed, and Cortina ended the argument by putting a bullet through the marshal's shoulder. He swung the elderly vaquero up behind him and galloped off, leaving the man he called "the squinting sheriff" bleeding into the dusty street. Like Moses, Prince of Egypt, Cortina had abruptly transformed himself into the champion of an oppressed people.

Cortina fled across the river to Matamoros, where the people received him as a hero and celebrated his exploits with corridos. Unlike Moses' Egyptian overseer, Shears survived, and Cortina offered cash in an attempt to squeeze out of yet another indictment. Unsuccessful, he moved his family and belongings into Mexico. He also received a commission as a captain in the federal army and orders to raise 100 men and report to Tampico following the annual Diez y Seis de Septiembre celebration of Mexico's independence from Spain.

Raising a company proved no difficulty. His men proudly called themselves Cortinistas, and their presence in and around Matamoros made American authorities increasingly nervous. To the respectable folk of Brownsville, the Cortinistas looked less like an army unit than the following of a warlord. They were right.

Two hours before dawn on September 28, Cortina and 70 followers forded the river and blocked the roads leading north. The Cortinistas stormed into Brownsville, firing their guns and bellowing "¡Viva Cheno Cortina!" "¡Viva México!" and "Death to the gringos!" But terrorizing the entire city wasn't on Cortina's agenda. He had come for a list of men against whom he held specific grievances. Among them were Adolphus Glavecke, a cattle-rustling colleague turned informer, men who had murdered Mexicans, members of the posse that pursued Cortina on the wild ride out of town the afternoon he shot Robert Shears, and the "squinting sheriff" himself.

Many of the intended victims escaped. Glavecke and several others successfully barricaded themselves in Samuel Belden's store. Robert Johnson, Brownsville's jailer, also fled to a friend's business. Both he and Viviano Garcia, though, died in a gunfight with the Cortinista brothers and accused horse thieves Juan and Alejo



Folklorist J. Frank Dobie considered Juan Cortina an even more daring bandit than Pancho Villa.

Vela. William Peter Neale, son of a former Brownsville mayor, took a bullet when he woke suddenly to the sound of gunfire and sat bolt upright in his bed. Blacksmith George Morris hid beneath his house, but Cortinistas spotted him, and he was cut down as he fled across the parade ground. Cortina himself descended on Alexander Werbiski's pawnshop. When Werbiski's terrified Hispanic wife answered the door, Cortina reassured her that he meant her husband no harm. It was, he said, "no night for Mexican tears." Alexander eventually emerged, and Cortina appropriated all his guns and ammunition. Then he calmly paid for them. The incident illustrates two recurring themes of the Cortina saga. Like other legendary social bandits, Cortina had a chivalrous soft spot for women, sparing more than one enemy for the sake of the man's weeping wife. The other is a strong, if selective, sense of honor. Because he was not Cortina's personal enemy, Werbiski suffered no more than a fright and a harrowing business deal. Of those who encountered Cortina that night, the pawnbroker perhaps came off best.

At dawn, General José Carvajal, commanding the Mexican army in Matamoros, led a group of his officers across the river. He summoned Cortina and informed him that he would receive no support from the Mexican government. Indeed, he might be prosecuted. Cortina expressed regret over the shooting of Viviano Garcia, a good man who had died attempting to protect a friend, but none for the deaths of his enemies. In the early light of a fall morning, he and his band of raiders, joined now by a contingent of Brownsville's outcast pelados, made their way out of town, upriver to Rancho del Carmen.

At his mother's ranch, Cortina gathered a force of over 200 men from both sides of the river. He also issued the first of his *pronunciamientos*, defiantly justifying his raid on Brownsville. The people of Cameron County, he said, should not fear him. He would, nevertheless, continue to pursue those who had offended him, including a "multitude of lawyers ... despoiling the Mexicans of their lands." The worst of them, he proclaimed, was Glavecke, who "spread terror among the unwary, making them believe that

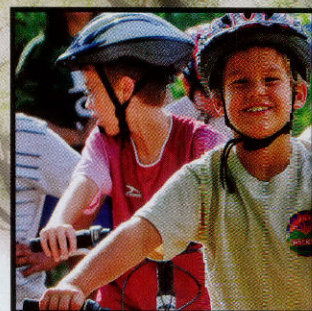
he will hang the Mexicans and burn their ranchos." "Our personal enemies," he thundered, "shall not possess our lands until they have fattened it with their own gore."

TO ANGLO TEXANS AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, CORTINA WAS A BANDIT, A RUSTLER, A MURDERER. TO MEXICAN TEXANS, HE WAS A CHAMPION OF JUSTICE WHO FOUGHT TO DEFEND "THE MEXICAN NAME IN TEXAS."

In the course of a private vendetta, Cortina had made himself an improbable champion against the racism and injustice that pervaded relations between Anglo and Mexican Texans.

Brownsville went into siege mode. Carvajal sent a company of Mexican soldiers to help protect the city. Some days later, a posse led by the ubiquitous Glavecke arrested Tomás Cabrera, Cortina's chief lieutenant during the Diez y Seis raid. A militia company, the bombastic Brownsville Tigers, rode out into the brush to confront Cortina in camp. Almost comically inept, they returned home with useless guns and wet powder. Cortina demanded Cabrera's release and threatened to put Brownsville to the torch.

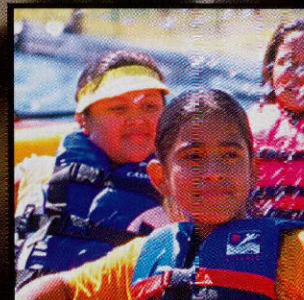
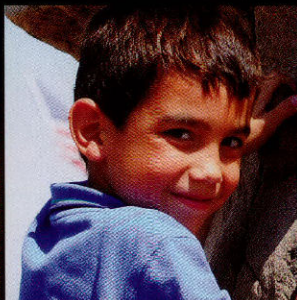
(continued on page 55)



S U M M E R CAMP GUIDE

THE APPROACH OF SPRING MEANS ONE THING TO KIDS: It's almost time for summer vacation. For parents, this means now's the time to enroll kids in a summer camp that will transform boredom into learning and adventure. Not sure where to begin? Our guide contains listings of different summer camps around Texas that will help your kids explore and enjoy the outdoors. Whether you're looking for day camps for youngsters or an eight-week excursion for older kids and teens, you'll be sure to find camps that suit your children's interests. The guide includes camps that offer traditional activities like canoeing, swimming and archery, along with more specialized camps that focus on biology studies, fishing and hunting skills, or adventure activities like rock climbing and caving. One camp serves children with special needs.

Our guide gives only a sample of what each camp has to offer. For more details and pictures, visit the Web sites of the camps that spark the curiosity of you and your children. But act quickly – many camps have spring application deadlines and fill up fast. We hope you and your kids are happy campers when summer arrives!





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Who: Boys/girls, ages 7-16

What: Overnight camp, 5- to 21-day sessions. Day camp, five-day sessions

When: June-July

Cost: \$125-\$1,500 (financial assistance available)

Contact: (866) 391-7343,
(940) 779-3411

www.campgradyspruce.org

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Who: Boys/girls, ages 4-14

What: Day camp (Some overnights available)

When: One-week sessions;
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Cost: \$110-\$275

Contact: (361) 881-1204

www.texasstateaquarium.org

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Who: Boys/Girls 5-18

What: Day Camp (overnight opportunities available) Attend weekly or daily

When: One week sessions;
June-August

Cost: \$295

Contact: (361) 749-6956

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Who: Boys/girls, ages 7-16

What: Overnight camp

When: One- and two-week sessions, June-July

Cost: \$650-\$1,500

Contact: (300) 453-6232;

(432) 426-4406;

www.prude-ranch.com

CENTRAL

HUNT

★ Camp Arrowhead

Campers canoe and swim in the Guadalupe River. Other activities include archery, riflery, music, horseback riding, tennis, crafts, sports, ropes course and cheerleading.

Who: Girls, ages 6-17

What: Overnight camp

When: One-, two-, four-week sessions; June-August

Cost: \$950-\$3,190

Contact: (830) 238-3793;

www.camparrowhead.com

HUNT

★ YMCA Camp Flaming Arrow

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Who: Boys/girls, ages 6-17

What: Overnight camp

When: One-, two-week sessions; three-day starter sessions; June-August, Family Camp

Cost: \$200-\$656 (financial assistance)

Contact: (800) 765-9622; (830) 238-4631;

www.ymcacampflamingarrow.org

INGRAM

★ Camp Rio Vista for Boys

Exciting outdoor programs in the Texas Hill Country on the Guadalupe River. Activities include riflery, archery, hunter safety, fishing, horseback, canoeing, ropes, tennis and more!

Who: Boys, ages 6-16

What: Overnight camp

When: One-, two-, four-week terms; June-August

Cost: \$1,050-\$3,400

Contact: (800) 545-3233; (830) 367-5353;

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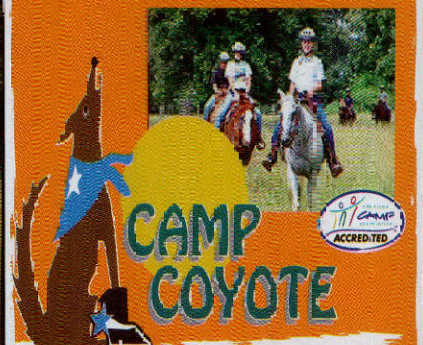
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INGRAM

★ Camp Sierra Vista for Girls

Exciting outdoor programs in the Hill Country on the Guadalupe River. Activities include canoeing, sailing, fishing, riflery, archery, campcraft, tennis, ropes, crafts and more!

Who: Girls; ages 6-16

What: Overnight camp

When: One-, two-, four-week terms;

June-August

Cost: \$1,050-\$3,400

Contact: (800) 545-3233; (830) 367-5353;

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★ Kickapoo Kamp

Enrollments are limited to ensure individual attention. Campers can select five activities per day — archery, fishing, canoeing, horseback riding, crafts, dancing, skiing, riflery, swimming and more.

Who: Girls; ages 7-17

What: Overnight camp

When: One-, two-, three-week sessions; June-July

Cost: \$1,100-\$2,400

Contact: (830) 895-5731;

www.kickapookamp.com

KERRVILLE

★ Texas Lions Camp

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Who: Boys/girls; ages 8-15 for diabetes

Boys/girls; ages 7-16 for physical disabilities & cancer

What: Overnight camp and day camp (one session, July 15-17, 2005)

When: One-week sessions; June-August

Cost: none if qualified

Contact: (830) 896-8503;

www.lionscamp.com

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★ Outback Adventure Camp

Team-building activities include canoeing, tubing, rock climbing, rappelling, snorkeling and caving. There's even a one-night campout at Enchanted Rock.

Who: Boys/girls; ages 10-16

What: Overnight camp

When: One-week sessions; June-July

Cost: \$725

Contact: (800) 444-6204;

www.newdenis.com/outback_adventurecamp.html

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★ Aquatic Sciences Adventure Camp

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Who: Boys/girls; ages 9-15

What: Overnight and day camps

When: Two-day, one-week sessions; June-August

Cost: \$130-\$680

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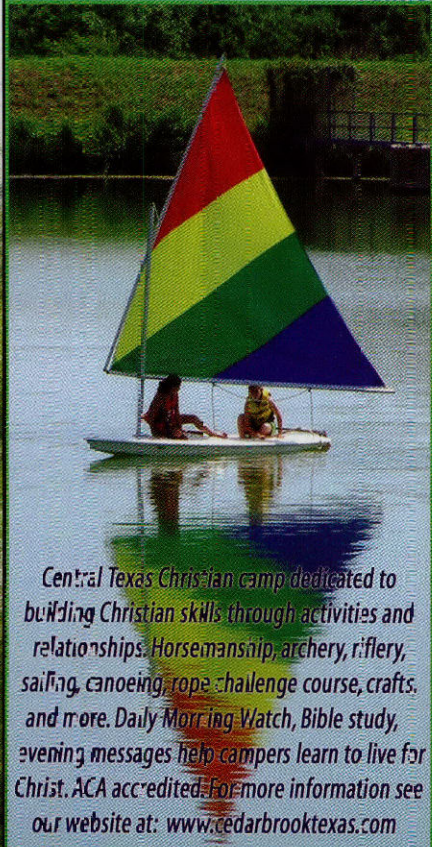
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Cost: \$150-\$600

Contact: (830) 935-4568

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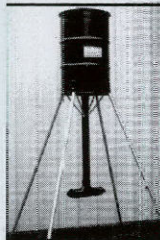


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(continued from page 19)

My last morning in Boerne calls for a quick meal on the front porch and a visit to the highly acclaimed Cibolo Nature Center.

The Cibolo Nature Center stands as one of the Texas Hill Country's greatest conservation success stories. The center preserves 100 acres of the Cibolo Creek corridor that includes a mile of wildlife-rich creek frontage, a 30-acre restored native prairie, extensive woodlands and restored native marsh, all interconnected by trails. It serves not only as a nature refuge, but also as an outdoor classroom for field researchers and schoolchildren.

I'm lucky during my visit to find the driving force behind the center, Carolyn Chipman Evans, on-site and still wrapping up from the center's 20th anniversary celebration. She's still on a high from a successful event and the nonprofit Friends of Cibolo Wilderness' recent purchase of her great-great-grandfather Dr. Ferdinand Herff's original 1850s homestead across the creek.

"It's only 56 acres," Carolyn explains, "but it adds a critical buffer to the nature center. There's a phenomenal historic home where Ferdinand Herff lived, and it will allow us to expand programming, do farm demonstrations and connect to city trails."

She points out that the nature center's neighbor has opted to set aside 500 acres, which includes two miles of creek frontage, for preservation. That brings to about 700 acres the amount of Cibolo Creek watershed acreage now under protection.

Carolyn leads me on a short hike past the restored prairie to the banks of the creek, where sparkling waters riffle over stones beneath ancient cypress trees. Inner-city children from San Antonio's Douglass Academy cavort on the creek banks.

While Carolyn takes her leave to head back to the office, I contin-

ue on past the Lende Learning Center and the adjacent Visitor Center on the Marsh Trail to a boardwalk overlooking the rain-starved pond. Screams of elementary school-age children fill the air as they scamper about looking for critters and plants to chronicle in their nature journals.

My three-day tour wrapping up, I figure there's just enough time for this LSU alum to grab some lunch at one of my favorite eateries, the Louisiana-inspired Cypress Grille. Chef Tom Stevens' dishes never fail to satisfy. The inviting ambiance—the airy, sunlit dining-room side of the restaurant and a second room with a handsome bar—adds to the dining experience.

While I rarely eat gazpacho, I make an exception and am not disappointed with the chilled, slightly pungent ambrosia. I order the daily special, fried catfish. While the catfish is a bit thin, the side of crawfish-and-sausage jambalaya smacks of the best in bayou country cuisine. A caramel-infused crême brulee proves the culinary coup de grace as I slump toward the exit. Finishing on such a high note, Boerne in my rearview mirror is a true bummer. ★

DETAILS

- Boerne Visitors Bureau (www.visitboerne.org, 888-842-8080)
- Ye Kendall Inn (www.yekendallinn.com, 800-364-2138)
- Cibolo Nature Center (www.cibolo.org, 830-249-4616)
- Cave Without A Name (www.cavewithoutaname.com, 830-537-4212)
- The Dodging Duck Brewhaus (www.dodgingduck.com, 830-248-DUCK)
- Enchanted Springs Ranch (www.enchantedspringsranch.com, 800-640-5917)
- Cypress Grille (www.cypressgrilleboerne.com, 830-248-1353)

(continued from page 47)

Then the city called in the Texas Rangers. The Rangers lynched Cabrera, and the Cortina War took fire in earnest.

Since the siege of Brownsville, Cortina's men had raided the lower Valley, burning the *ranchos* of their leader's enemies and rustling enthusiastically. Later claims are certainly exaggerated, but several thousand head of cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs and other animals certainly went to feed the insurgents or to market in Mexico. One of the first to be hit was the "squinting sheriff," who, besides his hoofstock, claimed the loss of 17 ducks and 48 "grown chickens." Fierce retaliation by the Rangers—*los rinches*—followed. Under Captain William Tobin, they burned out Tejanos suspected of sympathy toward Cortina and drove off their livestock. Panicked editorials in Texas and Louisiana newspapers trumpeted a virulent race war along the Río Grande. A San Antonio paper claimed that "We are being warred upon by atrocious savages who would as soon beat out the brains of an infant as shoot an undoubted spy. It is a war upon the American race."

It could not go on. In December, Cortina suffered a decisive defeat at the

hands of Texas Rangers under John Ford and a company of Army regulars. Alarmed, Washington dispatched Colonel Robert E. Lee to pacify the area and pursue Cortina into Mexico if necessary. Lee set up his headquarters at Fort Ringgold in Río Grande City but withdrew to take command of the Confederate Army.

Cortina emerged from his fastness in the Burgos Mountains to invade Texas again in 1861, attacking the Zapata County seat of Carrizo. When Mexican conservatives rebelled against President Benito Juárez and proclaimed an Empire under Maximilian Hapsburg, though, Cortina turned his attention to the second struggle for Mexican independence. He made himself military governor of Tamaulipas, fought with Juárez's forces at the decisive battle of Querétaro and was present at Maximilian's court-martial and execution. It fell to President Porfirio Díaz to bring Cortina to heel, imprisoning him for a time, then sending him into internal exile at a villa outside Mexico City. There the old lion of the border died quietly in 1894, still ferociously independent and still longing for the wild lands along the Río Grande. ★

PLACES TO VISIT

BROWNSVILLE

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site
Site of first battle of Mexican War in 1846.
(www.nps.gov/paal/)

FORT BROWN

On University of Texas at Brownsville campus. Includes remains of original earthen star fort. Abandoned due to Cortina's raids, later housed Union and Confederate troops.
(www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM3B8X)

NEALE HOUSE

Oldest frame house in Brownsville, now incorporated into Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts. William Neale shot through window in Cortina's raid, reportedly still haunts the house.

(www.brownsvillemfa.org/about.htm)

BROWNSVILLE HERITAGE COMPLEX

Special collection includes several Cortina-related items, notably a sword and scabbard, newspaper articles and scholarly material.

(www.brownsvillehistory.org/)

RIO GRANDE CITY

Ringgold Barracks and Robert E. Lee House
Site of Cortina raid and residence of Lee while stationed on the border during the Cortina War.

School grounds

1/4 mile SE of junction of US 83 and TX 755

PARTINGSHOT



A sphinx moth unfurls its long, hollow tongue as it prepares to drink the nectar of a night-blooming cereus cactus (*Peniocereus greggii*) in the Rio Grande Valley.

IMAGE SPECS:

Nikon F5, 200 mm lens, f/4 aperture, f/16 f/stop, on Fujichrome Sensia 100. Shot with automatic infrared trigger and two flashes.

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