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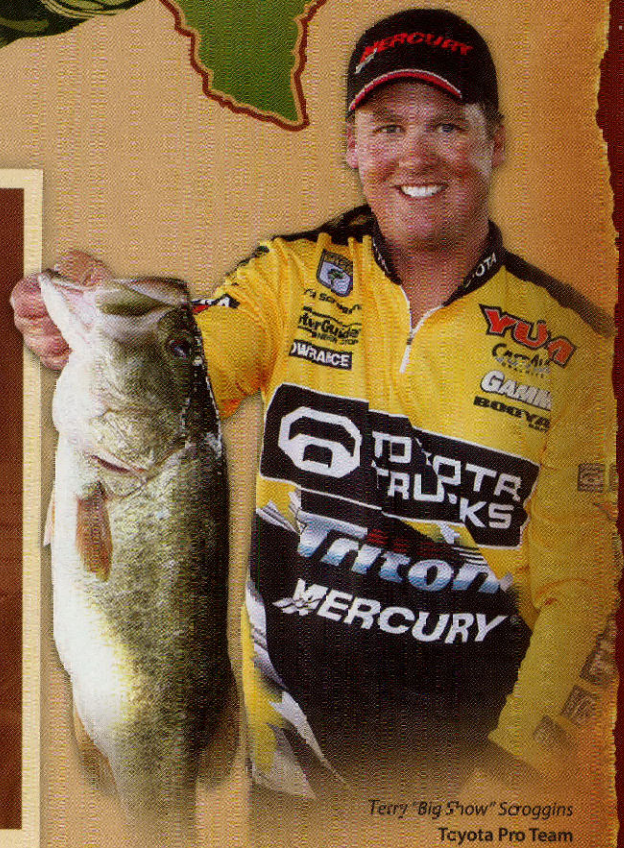
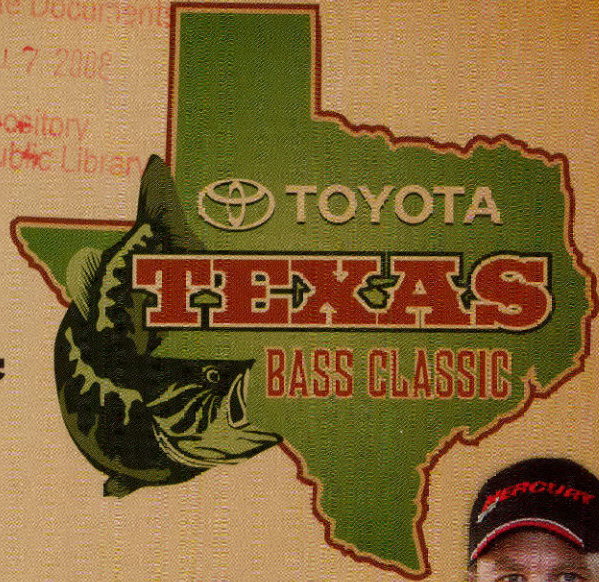
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Feel the wind on your face,
plant a garden, jump in a pile
of leaves — just get outside!

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PREVIOUS SPREAD: Black-chinned hummingbird. Photo © Rolf Nussbaumer.

THIS PAGE: Bluebonnet in the snow near Temple, Easter morning 2007. Photo by Earl Nottingham/TPWD.



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In the Field

DYANNE FRY CORTEZ

grew up in Burnet, Texas, where she kept caterpillars in jars, rode her bike across town and spent countless hours exploring the woods across the street from her home. "I can't imagine childhood without those memories," she says, "and I don't think I was an unusually active kid. I had



friends who thought I spent way too much time with my nose in a book." Cortez maintains the freshwater fishing section of the TPWD Web site and participates with other agency representatives in the Texas Children in Nature network. She has written about the environment, culture and characters of our state for *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, *Hill Country Magazine*, *American Profile* and other publications.

BERNADETTE NOLL

is a freelance writer and mother of four children under the age of 10. She can often be heard shouting to, or rather kindly advising, her children to "get outside and play!" Once outside, Bernadette says they stay for hours on end, riding bikes, sliding on the old school steel slide, building fairy houses and many other activities, all while soaking up the sun's vitamin D. Bernadette is grateful for her family's big yard filled with pecan and fig trees and for her children's ability to scramble up these trees like little monkeys. She is an advocate for more unstructured playtime in children's lives. If an anti-homework revolution were started, Bernadette says she'd be the first one leading the parade.



MELISSA GASKILL

has been taking her three children all over Texas since the now-teenagers were babies. After blowing through Junction on many a westward sojourn, she decided to stop some years back and discovered that the town offered many of the family's favorite things — camping, hiking, fishing, stargazing and, one of their more recent passions, kayaking.

"Junction is an easy drive, and it has the Llano River," she says. "My grandparents lived near the Llano, and I spent many summer days there as a kid. It's nice to pass on my love of this part of the state." The Austin-based writer frequently covers nature and the outdoors for a variety of publications and wrote a weekly parenting column, "The Children's Connection," for six years in the *Austin American-Statesman*.



MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

FOREWORD

It's funny how people can change over time without ever making a conscious decision to do so. As a child, I was a tree-climbing maniac. Partly due to the fact that I was as skinny as a rail, I could climb into the highest branches, where limbs turned into twigs, and look out across the flat expanse of Houston. One tree in a neighbor's backyard offered the best view of the San Jacinto Monument, another offered the best angle on downtown.

Not only was I adept at climbing up, I occasionally climbed *out*. Once, during a marathon game of chase, a friend thought he had me trapped at the top of a tree. As he climbed up after me, I went horizontal. As the limbs got smaller and smaller, gravity took over, and the limbs bent just enough to lower me, orangutan-like, down to the ground for a quick escape.

Fast-forward to a few months ago. I was hanging out with some friends who have a 10-year-old daughter and an 8-year-old son. The kids were determined to show me their new trick, so I obliged. The girl leapt nimbly onto a long, horizontal limb about 5 feet off the ground. She moved out to the end of the limb and then suspended herself upside down, hanging on only with her bent legs. Then, to add a little drama, the boy started tugging on the end of the limb, causing the limb and the girl to bounce up and down. Giggling ensued.

However, I wasn't laughing. My nervousness must have been visible because their mother piped up, "It's okay. They do this all the time."

Later on, I couldn't help wondering, "When did I get so cautious? Whatever happened to devil-may-care monkey boy?" I suppose part of it is that whole becoming an adult thing. Some fears are rational and help keep us out of harm's way. But many of them, probably most of them, are not rational.

This month's cover story offers tips for how to encourage kids to have fun outdoors. With the exception of my friend's adventurous little ones, all too many children these days see the outdoors as a foreboding, mysterious, even dangerous place. In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, author Richard Louv makes the case that interacting with nature can enhance a child's physical and mental health. We're hoping our article will help you and your kids loosen up a little and rediscover the fun of exploring the wonders of nature. We're not exactly throwing caution to the wind, but you might say we're throwing excessive, unwarranted caution to the wind. Get out there and have fun.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have an appointment with a tree.

Robert Macias

ROBERT MACIAS
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

LETTERS

MINING FOR TIN IN CALIFORNIA

I read with some interest the article about the Franklin Mountains and the West Cottonwood Mine Shaft ("El Paso's Little Secret") in the January edition. The author stated that it was the only tin mine in the United States. (It was unclear whether the

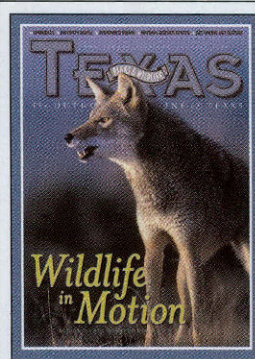
author was referring to one period of time or if it was an absolute statement.)

The Hogan tin mine operated on Tejon Ranch in southern Kern County, California, in the early 1900s. It was located just east of what is now Interstate 5, near a limestone quarry that today supplies a large Portland cement plant in the same area. I worked at Tejon for 15 years and often heard stories about the tin mine from the old-timers.

I believe other tin mines were also established in California around this same time period, although it is my impression that none produced a great deal of tin and almost all were unprofitable.

In any event, I thoroughly enjoyed your magazine.

JACK HUNT
King Ranch



Other tin mines were also established in California around this same time period, although it is my impression that none produced a great deal of tin and almost all were unprofitable.

Jack Hunt
King Ranch

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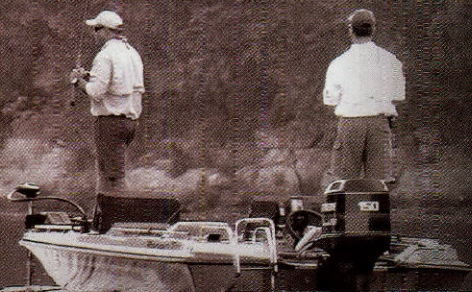
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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

SAVING THE SNOWBELL

Rancher leads efforts to restore the endangered bell-shaped flower.



Now making a comeback in Central Texas, the once-endangered Texas snowbell produces five-petaled white bells that open in April and May.

When the Texas snowbell (*Styrax platanifolius texanus*) went on the endangered species list in 1984, biologists counted only 39 plants in seven scattered populations, all but two on private land. Twenty years later, combined survey efforts by TPWD, The Nature Conservancy of Texas and private landowners have brought the number of wild plants to over 500. Now an additional 600 of these small understory trees with signature white, bell-shaped flowers have been reintroduced in about 20 sites, thanks almost entirely to one man.

While transforming his Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve outside Johnson City from rocky scrub into acres of knee-deep grass and newly flowing springs, J. David Bamberger fell in love with the snowbell and decided it should be saved. Since some Texas ranchers are inclined to view the Endangered Species Act as a backhanded way to introduce government control on their land, he had to personally convince some owners to allow collection of snowbell seeds. After successfully propagating those seeds, Bamberger talked those owners into letting him return plants to their property. He spent hours of his own time and thousands of his own dollars, aided by volunteers and grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Texas Parks and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program.

TPWD botanist Jackie Poole has worked with the snowbell for decades and blames its endangered status on

feral goats, locally over-abundant white-tailed deer and a thriving introduced exotic population, all of which apparently find the plant tasty. So Bamberger surrounds each new plant with a sturdy corral. Fencing materials and plants must be carried long distances over the remote and difficult terrain of the Nueces and Devils River watersheds, the snowbell's historic range. In 2003, the first year propagated trees were planted, survival rate was an impressive 71 percent; by 2006 it was 88 percent.

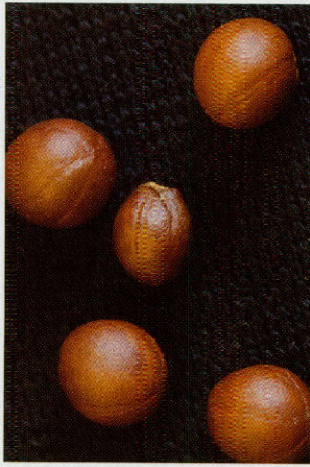
When the project's original goal of 500 plants was met one year ahead of schedule, in December 2006, Bamberger set a goal of 150 more plants by the end of 2007, says Steven Fulton, biologist for the ranch preserve. However, a draft snowbell recovery plan Poole wrote for the USFWS calls for 10 locations containing five or more populations, at least one numbering 1,000 plants — a bare minimum of 10,000 snowbells, based on the plant's life history and the threats to its survival. In that context, 650 trees are a drop in the bucket, Bamberger readily admits. But the project is establishing protected centers where the plants can grow, and landowners are becoming increasingly recreation- and conservation-oriented, an environment that gives the plant a better chance.

The project also has shown that it's possible to have snowbells and still use land for income-producing endeavors. That's critical, Bamberger says, as private landowners may be the only hope for many endangered species.

"I don't think conservation and preservation will ever be done by the government," he says. "Government can lead, but private landowners have to do it. My idea is to use incentives rather than regulation and legislation. Say that if you'll develop X number of snowbells, there's a reward."

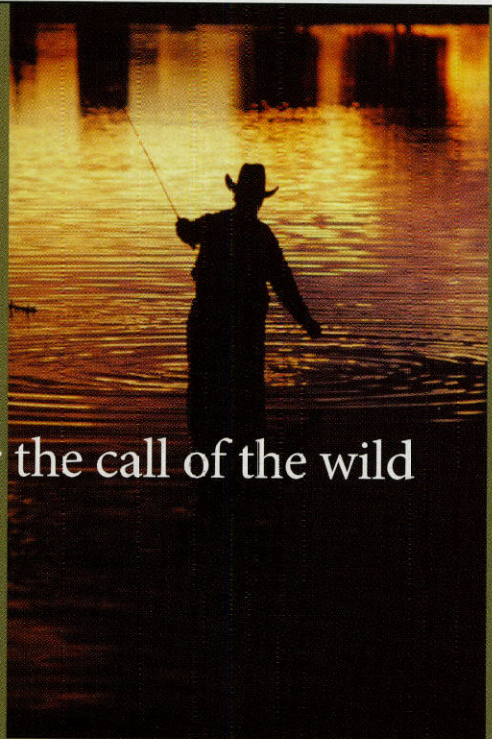
Bamberger is living proof that one person can make a difference, says Colleen Gardner, assistant executive director of the ranch. "The greatest threat to conservation, to any social change, is apathy. People say, 'I'm just one person and can't make a difference.' Now people can say, 'I can do something.'" ★

— Melissa Gaskill



Deer, feral goats and sheep eat Texas snowbell seeds, as well as the shrub itself.

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Toast to Texas

Celebrate Texas independence — and learn about limecrete — at Sebastopol.

Texas history ranks high at Navarro Intermediate School in Geronimo. “We build a replica of the Alamo, we talk about the Alamo, and we reenact the Battle of the Alamo,” says music teacher Marjorie Peters. “Plus, our campus is named for José Antonio Navarro, who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence.”

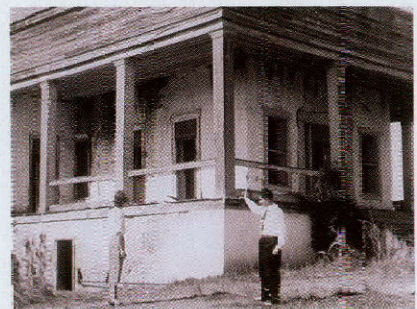
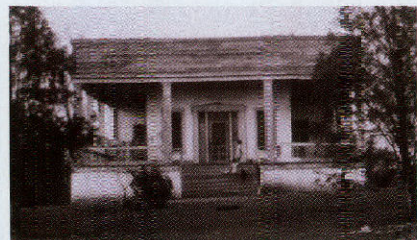
It’s quite appropriate, then, that the school’s fourth-grade choir will sing and sign Texas songs as part of the annual “Toast to Texas” celebration, set for March 2 — the day Texas declared its independence from Mexico in 1836 — at Sebastopol House State Historic Site in Seguin.

Members of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, together with state and city officials, host the Lone Star event, which starts at 1:30 p.m. on Sebastopol’s lawn — rain or shine. “We sometimes get rained on but never rained out,” says Park Superintendent Georgia Davis. “We have ‘Toast to Texas’ no matter what.”

Local dignitaries will read the names of 58 delegates who signed the declaration and also a plea for aid written by Alamo commander William B. Travis. At 2 p.m., the city’s church bells will ring, then everyone will raise their bottles of Texas spring water for a “Toast to Texas,” penned by the late Joe B. Frantz.

The stately Sebastopol House — completed 20 years after Texas won its independence — remains as one of about 20 surviving limecrete structures in Seguin. In the late 1840s, Dr. John Park, a physician and chemist, moved from Georgia to the Central Texas town. He patented a construction process that used water, gravel and lime to form limecrete bricks, an early form of concrete.

Before Park’s death in 1872, nearly 90 limecrete structures stood in Seguin, then called “the Mother of Concrete Cities.” Sebastopol — split level and Greek Revival in style — was abandoned in the 1960s and nearly demolished.



Sebastopol House, nearly demolished in the 1960s, is now restored to its original glory.

The Seguin Conservation Society bought and restored the home to its 1880 appearance. In 1983, Sebastopol opened as a state historic site.

Exhibits include family furnishings, archaeological artifacts from the site, and information on limecrete. This month’s featured display will include antique woodworking tools similar to what would have been used to build Sebastopol.

Sebastopol is located at 704 Zorn St. off Alternate Route 90 (Court Street) in Seguin. Day-use only. Free. Tour hours: Friday-Sunday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Tuesday-Thursday, by appointment only. For more information, call (830) 379-4833, or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/sebastopol. ★

—Steryl Smith-Rodgers

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Sweet Mesquite

Love it or hate it, mesquite is useful for everything from honey to barbecue.

Folklorist J. Frank Dobie once eloquently likened a mesquite's feathery branches to a lovely poem. So deep was his affection for the scrubby legume that he asked to have one planted at his grave.

Texas ranchers, on the other hand, have long despised the "noxious weed" that claims more than 52 million acres statewide. Bristled with thorns, mesquite trees — drought-tolerant and nearly impossible to eradicate — invade precious rangelands and drive out other vegetation.

Despite its rotten reputation, there's more to love than hate about honey mesquites (*Prosopis glandulosa*), found nearly everywhere in Texas but the pineywoods. Native Americans used all parts of the tree to make shelters, weapons, tools, medicines, foods, drinks and even clothes. In severe droughts, the mesquite's sweet beans sustained cattle as well as wildlife (the

seeds can be spread via cow patties and other animals' droppings).

In the 1870s, entrepreneurs gathered and sold mesquite gum to eastern confectioners who made gumdrops. Today, beekeepers prize the nectar from fragrant mesquite blossoms, which produces a delicate honey. And who can resist a plate of mesquite-smoked barbecue?

Blocks of mesquite wood — chosen for its durability and stability — once paved downtown streets in San Antonio. Modern artisans craft furniture, flooring and other fine pieces from mesquite hardwood. (The Texas Mesquite Association hosts two annual art festivals.)

Looking ahead, mesquite could fuel vehicles. Researchers with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in Vernon are currently working to develop a mesquite-to-biofuel industry in North Texas. ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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While it remains a thorny nemesis for Texas ranchers, mesquite may be the next source of biofuel for vehicles.

BEANS © SHELLY HOLLEN; INSET BY TPWD



Big Buzzer

Bumble bees may look menacing, but they're gentle giants.



Even the slightest sound of a bzzzzzt! sends most folks running for cover.

Heaven forbid they stop for a closer look at what's making the racket: a fat, fuzzy bumble bee (*Bombus* sp.) banded with black and yellow stripes.

A bumble bee's life cycle begins with a fertilized queen, who overwinters underground. In early spring, she emerges and searches for a suitable nest, typically an abandoned mouse nest, hollow log or clump of grass. Eggs are laid and the resulting larvae feed within a "brood clump," a mass of pollen and nectar surrounded by wax. The young mature into female worker bees that tend the brood and forage for nectar and pollen.

In late summer, the colony produces new queens and drones (male bees tasked only with mating). After mating, the young queens leave the nest and find places to overwinter, leaving

Bumble bees, like these on a blazing star, are important pollinators.

the old queen and workers to die.

People sometimes confuse bumble bees with carpenter bees, some of which have metallic blue or green abdomens and tunnel into wood to build their nests. Female carpenter bees are docile by nature but can sting. Likewise, female bumble bees pose little threat when flitting flower to flower but can turn aggressive when defending a nest (males cannot sting). Unlike honey bees (which lose their barbed stingers after one attack and die), bumble bees can sting repeatedly and survive.

Those mean stings coupled with an angry bzzzt! may scare humans but not skunks. They consider bumble bees to be a tasty delicacy. ★

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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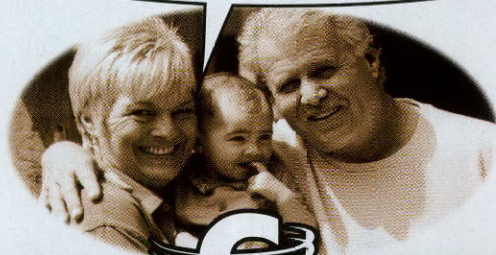
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TEXAS READER

Remembering Bullock

A new book explores the larger-than-life legacy of a former Lt. Governor.

To say that former Lt. Governor Bob Bullock was a colorful character is to vastly understate his persona.

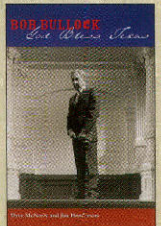
He was brash, profane and mercurial, but above all, he was a man who loved Texas and spent his entire political career trying to make Texas better. He died in 1999, but stories still abound about the way he got things done. For the uninitiated, many of these stories seem too outrageous to be true, probably exaggerated with each telling, all painting a portrait of an oversized and truly Texas character.

Political reporter and columnist Dave McNeely covered Bullock for more than 20 years and joined forces with former reporter Jim Henderson to write a meticulously researched book, *Bob Bullock — God Bless Texas*, published by the University of Texas Press. It chronicles Bullock's rise through Texas government and the unorthodox manner in which he wielded the power of his position as state comptroller and then lieutenant governor.

Those familiar with Texas politics will enjoy anecdotes that are jaw-dropping in their audacity, and others that are laugh-out-loud funny. One such tale describes a smooch then-Governor George W. Bush bestowed on a surprised Bullock at breakfast as the two discussed political strategy. Tales of Bullock's temper include the countless state officials he threw out of his office (including a former TPWD executive director), which became a peculiar badge of honor for those involved. The tales of these encounters are sometimes crude and outlandish, but they provide colorful detail to make Bullock come alive through the pages of the book.

In an era of political correctness, scripted sound bites and homogenous candidates, the recounting of Bullock's rich and storied legacy is an engrossing and entertaining tale about a legendary political leader who was truly bigger than life and left a lasting mark on Texas. ★

—Lydia Saldar



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Bikes for Tykes

What you need to know before buying a child-size bike.

When it comes to children's bikes, even serious cyclists with quads the size of oak trees can find themselves in unfamiliar territory. And for parents with no notion of ever riding in the next Tour de Anything, the whole notion of buying a bike for little Bobby or Betty Sue can provoke paroxysms of doubt. But there are plenty of good reasons to start your kids pedaling as soon as they show an interest in cycling: Riding a bike is flat out fun, a healthful mode of transportation and a wonderful way to explore the outdoors.

So, if you are a consumer about to enter this thicket — with a young one's birthday or holiday cheer on the line — the best thing to do is look to the experts. For most of us that means taking a trip to the nearest professional bike shop, where the salespeople can help with proper sizing, and the bikes have been manufactured according to higher standards. Plus most pros offer free maintenance and are happy to offer ongoing

advice, which can be hard to come by in the so-called big box stores. Since 1983, Buck's Bikes in Austin has been outfitting cyclists, selling about 4,000 bikes a year with as many as 40 percent going to the short set, making owner Pete Buck something of an expert in these matters.

The best bet for finding the right size bike — and a paint job your child will prefer — is to shop together. "We really like to see the child," Buck says, noting that many parents tend to be a little haphazard when it comes to bike sizes — either buying bikes too large for their tykes, or choosing bikes that are too small or likely to be outgrown within just a few months. As opposed to adult bikes, which are measured by frame size, children's bikes are measured according to wheel diameter, which starts at 10 or 12 inches, increasing in four-inch increments, until they reach 24 inches on BMX-style dirt bikes. After that, wheels come in diameters of 26 or 29 inches (700 cm), and you're



Children's bikes are measured according to wheel diameter, not frame size.

Looking at full, adult-size frames. Smaller kids' bikes cost less than \$150. If you hope to make the bike a surprise gift, you'll need to measure the length of the child's inseam, Buck says. Any first-time rider should be able to rest the balls of both feet on the ground while seated on the bike.

Keep in mind that bikes are more than toys. They are complex machines. As they go up in size (and price) the mechanics get more complicated, raising safety concerns. For more than two decades, Dave Mozer has led the International Bicycle Fund, an advocacy group in Seattle. Mozer has a 12-year-old daughter and says the safest brakes for pre-teens to learn how to use are "coaster" brakes, which are integrated into the rear wheel and require a back-pedal motion for stopping. Not every beginning cyclist is going to be a toddler, of course. Knowing the development level of the rider, he adds, and where the bike will primarily be ridden — whether around the neighborhood, for instance, or on longer family outings, such as a trip to the 64-mile rail-to-trail path at Caprock Canyons State Park — can help determine whether to spend more money on suspension and gears.

"There's a ton of physics to be learned" adds Mozer. It takes practice not only to balance on a bike, but also to learn braking and handling skills on steep hills. "It's important to remember that the level of supervision must be correlated to the child's age," he says.

With safety in mind, Pete Buck also suggests that anybody who buys a bike, whether young, old or in between, also purchase a helmet, a pair of gloves and a water bottle or hydration pack. "Dehydration can be a real problem," he says, "especially in Texas." ★

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SPORTS TECH NEWS

Patented lure out-fishes live bait 3 to 1; could be banned.

Automatically simulates movement of a live worm

Effectiveness may spur regulation against it.

VERO BEACH, FL—In a bass competition near this Florida coast town, a veteran fishing guide used an imitation lure and humbled another veteran guide who used live bait. Both guides fished from the same boat. The imitation lure caught three times more bass than the live bait.



By Charlie Allen

The winner now relies on the lure to insure his clients catch fish. To prove its effectiveness, he challenged the President of a large BassMasters Club in Florida to a goal of 100 bass in one fishing day, using the lure exclusively. They caught the 100 by 2:30 P.M.

The lure is great news for anyone who loves fresh-water fishing, but because bass tournaments are getting richer and richer, a new issue arises. Should such a lure be allowed in competition where prizes can reach several thousand dollars? Most tournaments already prohibit live bait, and this lure out-fished live bait three to one.

I asked a spokesman for the company who makes the lure why it was so effective, and how it might fare if it were banned from tournaments.

The key to winning—constant movement

“Well, we would sure miss a lot of free publicity if it were banned. We have heard of some incidents, but so far it hasn’t happened on a large scale. Let me explain how it works.

“First, fish love worms more than any other food. (The lure is a plastic worm.) Worms are scale-less and easier to digest than other live bait. But it must be a live worm, and that means it must constantly move. If it stops moving for a moment, as regular plastic worms do, fish smell a rat. They know it’s either dead or a fake. Even if the prey resumes moving when a fisherman reels it in, it’s too late. Their mind’s made up.

“Ichthyologist— a fancy word for a fish expert -- say that constant movement excites a predatory response in a fish.



Patented lure constantly curls like a live worm. Some say it should be banned from tournaments.

Constant movement is so overwhelming a temptation it triggers larger, less aggressive fish to strike, even fish that have just fed. They can’t help it. Nature programmed them to eat live things.

“The Walking Worm®’s genius (the lure’s name) is a patented, multi-flex construction that traps air between several tail segments, causing the lure to constantly curl, as if it were strolling across the bottom, or through middle or top water. To a bass or other predatory



John Fox, Ten Time National and World Bass Fishing Champ, holds a 19 1/2 and 15-pound bass he caught with the Walking Worm®. He relies on the lure to catch fish.

fish, this constant curling is ice cream. They go berserk

“I was down in Alabama where I saw three imitation lures-- a crank bait, a plastic

apparently convinced the fish it was dead. The Walking Worm® was a juicy live worm, and the bass went for it hook, line and sinker, literally.

“Yes, I suppose the Walking Worm® could cause some regulation. The money is big now. A young man we know who is just starting as a pro, used it in a 2005 Classic, his first large competition, and caught his limit in 15 minutes. But he better move fast. Anyone fishing for dollars would be foolish not to use it.”

The Walking Worm® can be Texas or Carolina rigged. It comes in six colors: June bug, red shad/green fleck, pumpkin seed, motor oil, chartreuse, green/pumpkinseed. There are 30 worms of one color in a box. One box costs \$19.95, two to five cost only \$18.00 each. A Super-Pack of all six colors cost only \$79.95, about a \$40.00 savings. Shipping is only \$7.00 no matter how many boxes you order.

To order the Walking Worm®, call the distributor direct at **1-800-873-4415** (Ask for item # ww), or click www.ngcsports.com anytime or day and have your credit card ready. Or mail your name, address, check or M. O. (or your cc number and exp. date) to NGC Sports (Dept. W-407), 60 Church St., Yalesville, CT 06492. Specify the color(s) you want. CT add 6% sales tax. There’s a money-back guarantee, if you return your purchase within 30 days.

worm and the Walking Worm®-- dropped in a huge fish tank with bass in it. They swam right by the other two, then darted for the Walking Worm®. Why? Well, the crank bait was moving, but it wasn’t a worm. The other plastic worm looked tasty, but it stopped moving for awhile when it hit bottom and

3 Days in the Field / By Melissa Gaskill

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Forks of the Llano

Junction boasts first-class fishing, plus all the meat and pie you can eat.

I expected the fresh air and open sky.

After all, Junction is located on the rim of West Texas, elevation ranging around 2,000 feet. The abundance of outdoor activities was no surprise, either; the town is named for the junction of the north and south forks of the Llano River, ideal for fishing, tubing and related activities, and there are scores of low-traffic roads

for biking and a sprawling state park and wildlife management area checkered with hiking and biking trails.

What I hadn't planned on was so many places to eat, and eat heartily. Junction is a great place to work up an appetite, and, it turns out, to satisfy it, too.

We arrived mid-day on Saturday of a three-day weekend and promptly headed to Cooper's Barbecue for the pork chops, ribs, turkey, chicken, brisket, sides, homemade sauces and cobbler. The Cooper family opened its original barbecue joint in Mason in the early 1950s, and Cooper sons later took the tradition to Llano — a location eventually sold outside the family — and here. Roy and Sheila Cooper, their son Mark and daughter-in-law Kim and their children all

work at the restaurant, which has been in its current location for nine years.

"Brisket is one of our specialties, and our pork chops are really thick," Sheila says. "All our meats are prepared fresh daily."

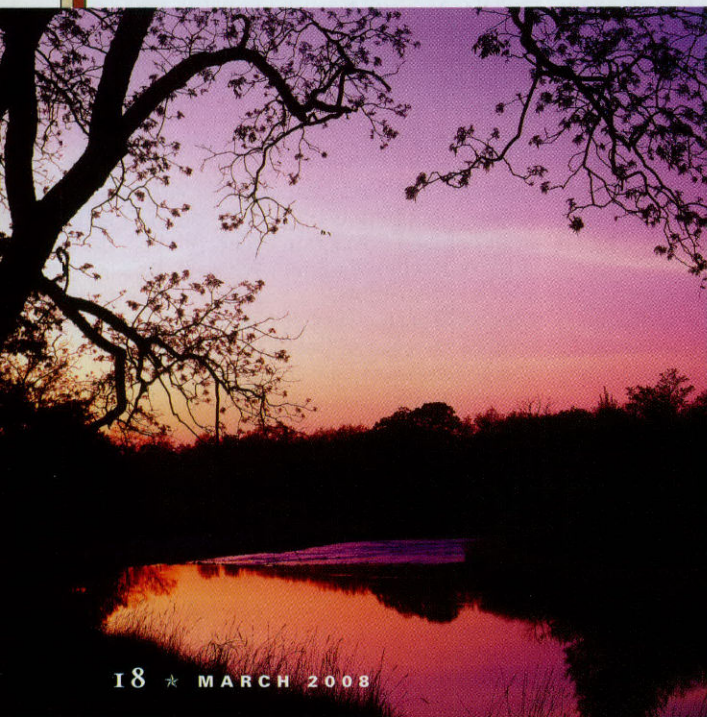
That explains the giant barbecue pits outside and the stacks of firewood piled higher than a man's head like fortress walls across the back. On pleasant days, the picnic tables under the spread of an enormous oak are perfect.


South Llano River State Park seemed a good place to work off such a hearty meal. The 524-acre park and adjacent 2,155-acre wildlife management area were donated to the state by cattle rancher Walter Buck Jr. Two miles of park front the river, but most folks congregate around the bridge near the entrance. (October through March, much of the river bottom is closed to protect roosting turkeys, and the bridge area is the only river access. The WMA is occasionally closed for TPWD activities.)

There are more than 20 miles of hiking trails available, 15 of them prime for mountain biking, too. My husband and son spent the afternoon on bikes while my youngest daughter and I hiked, then rested in one of the park's top-notch bird



Aptly named, Junction lies at the junction of the north and south forks of the Llano River.





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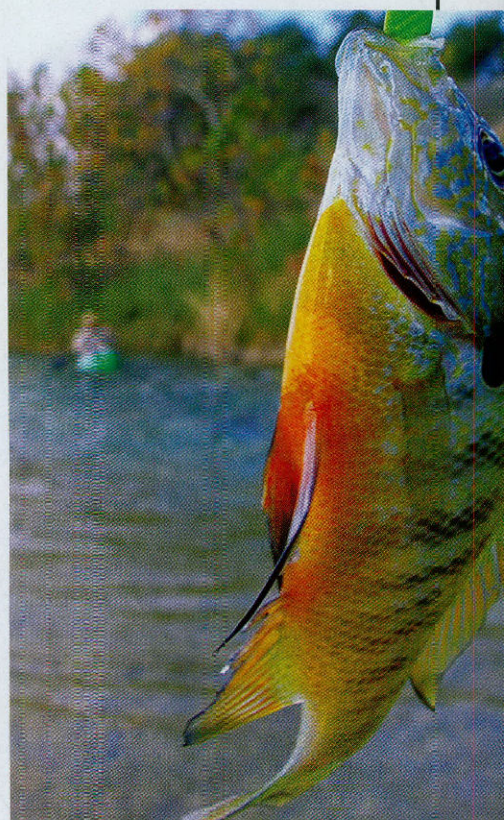
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Above: The crystal-clear, spring-fed waters of the Llano River. Right: Bluegill caught in the San Saba River.



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www.houstonfishingshow.com

blinds. These comfy shelters overlook water and feeding stations frequented by birds pretty much all day, although morning and evening are prime times. Common sightings are flycatchers, swallows, wrens, warblers, hawks and hummingbirds; laminated photos and guide books in the blind came in handy for us novices.

The family met up at the bridge for a cooling dip before heading to our home for the weekend, the three-bedroom Sugar Shack at CAVU Canyon Ranch. CAVU, from the aviation term for skies that are clear and visibility unlimited, aptly describes conditions here.

The cabin's back deck overlooks a flowing creek and a high cliff that effectively separate you from signs of civilization. This former angora ranch has two other adjacent cabins, a large fire pit, several photo blinds and stately Watusi cattle. A variety of birds, deer and other wildlife are easy to spot and there are also ranch cats to keep guests company. Our active day, plus the ranch's peace and quiet and fresh air, made for a great night's sleep.

On Sunday, my teenage son had steak in some form at every meal. At the Segovia Truck Stop not far from our cabin, he ordered steak and eggs to properly fuel up for several hours in a kayak. Then it

was on to Menard to meet Brent Frazier, our guide for the outing on the San Saba River. Frazier provides kayaks and equipment, a ride to put-in and from take-out, and guide service if you like.

It's possible to kayak, canoe, tube or otherwise propel oneself down the Llano River as well, but according to local son Frazier, the fishing on the San Saba is much better. Fewer people and thus less fishing pressure on the San Saba meant we spent the better part of four hours easily catching panfish, black bass and Guadalupe bass. We also saw, through the clear, sunlit water, catfish, gar and carp.

Our mode of operation was paddle, shoot through some picturesque rapids, coast to a shady pool, cast, reel in a fish. The first to toss a lure into a particular spot was darn near guaranteed a hit. We took lots of photos and tossed the fish back to be caught another day. Depending on how much fishing a body wants to do, this trip can take as little as two hours or as much as six.

For non-fishing types, there's scenery — towering oaks and pecans, hillsides of wildflowers, rocky cliffs, waterfalls and deep pools. Frazier pulled us over in some shallows to swim in a deep pool just below, and we might never have left except that big breakfast was wearing off and we needed to eat again.

LEFT © WYMAN MEINZER; RIGHT © KENDAL LARSON

For lunch, we stopped at Side Oats Café and Bakery on the main road back in Menard. The daily special was cattleman's pie — like shepherd's but with beef — and the menu also included soups, salads, sandwiches and other entrees. The son ordered chicken-fried steak and answered in the affirmative when the waitress inquired "Large?" Large it was, and delicious. Even so, the dessert display was irresistible, and we circulated around the table tuxedo cake, apple pie, bourbon chess pie, chocolate silk pie and coconut cream pie. (Yes, that's more desserts than people — fishing is hard work.)

Next stop, Fort McKavett State Historic Site, one of the best preserved of a chain of military posts built in 1852 to protect settlers and travelers on the road between San Antonio and El Paso. Thanks to near-continuous use of the complex after the military withdrew in 1883, many structures on the wind-swept, limestone hill were mostly intact when it became a historic site. There is a comprehensive display on the fort's history in the visitor center, and don't miss the "dead house" (aka morgue) and exhibit on cleaning the bathrooms around back.

Then, a self-guided walking tour of restored buildings and ruins surrounding spacious parade grounds helped walk off the pie, as did a short hike down to a wooded valley where springs feed the headwaters of the San Saba. Ruins of a lime kiln used to build the fort are also on this trail.

After a stop at our cabin to shower and rest a bit on the deck, we drove into town for dinner at La Familia restaurant, a local hangout judging by the crowd. The third steak of the day was Mexicana style, smothered in peppers and onions. This time we all passed on dessert.

Back at the cabin, our hosts, Lynn and Bob Foreman, had a fire blazing in the pit, so we made ourselves comfortable and gazed at the stars. The Milky Way is clearly visible out here, a real treat after the over-lit skies back in Austin.

Next morning we lingered over coffee on the deck one last time before heading to Isaack's Restaurant, serving Junction since 1950. The place is easy to find by its vintage neon sign on Main Street, just past the Christmas-style tree made entirely of antlers (incon-

gruously called the Deer Horn Tree). Breakfast is available all day at Isaack's, along with seafood, chicken-fried steak, catfish and steaks cooked to order. For the record, our son had pancakes (too bad we missed the Saturday night special, sirloin steak and all the trimmings for \$8.95).

Of course, a three-day outing isn't complete without a little shopping. Most of Junction's shops, as well as many of its restaurants and a few hotels, are on the half-moon-shaped main street that connects back to I-10 at either end.

West Bear Creek General Store is stuffed with western wear, jewelry, boots, local novelties and more, and the friendly proprietors will be happy to help you find what you need. Sutton Pecan Company sells in-shell, cracked and shelled pecans — something good to remember the area's beautiful trees by — as well as seasoned pecans, peanuts and candies. Conchos and Crosses has women's apparel, accessories and gifts, and a door directly into the Let'er Buck Coffeehouse, which serves gourmet coffee drinks, pastries and sandwiches.

But we picked the Sunshine Café and Bakery for our final meal before heading home and probably starting diets. Run by David Lawrence, a former caterer at the Ohio State Fair, and his sister Becky Long, this is another one of those places where the desserts are worth hurting yourself for, especially the meringue pies. It's safe to say no one goes hungry in Junction. ☆

DETAILS

CAVU Canyon Ranch (325-446-9135, cavucanyonranch.com)

South Llano River State Park (325-446-3994, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/southllanoriver)

Cooper's Barbecue (325-446-8664)

San Saba River Adventures (325-396-4364, sanasabariveradventures.com)

Side Oats Café & Bakery (325-396-2069, sideoatscafe.com)

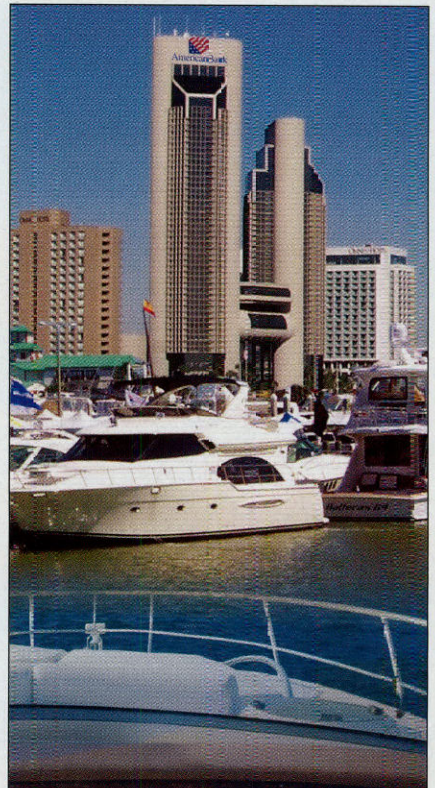
Fort McKavett State Historic Site (325-396-2358, www.thc.state.tx.us/sites/hs_fort_mckavett.shtml)

La Familia Restaurant (325-446-2688)

Isaack's Restaurant (325-446-2629, www.isaacksrestaurant.com)

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50 WAYS TO GET KIDS HOOKED ON THE OUTDOORS

By Dyanne Fry Cortez, Wendee Holtcamp and Bernadette Noll



"One of the happiest things that can befall us is to love the land we live in."—Lady Bird Johnson, 1912–2007

*Feel the wind on your face, plant a garden,
jump in a pile of leaves - just get outside!*

Kids don't develop a relationship with nature by watching it on the Discovery Channel. They need to feel the wind, smell leaves and wildflowers, run their fingers over rocks and make personal contact with other living things. Pristine wilderness is not required: Ask any of today's dedicated outdoorsmen, and you may find that his favorite childhood memory involves a backyard tree house or fishing in an irrigation canal. Encourage children to get outside wherever they can, as often as possible, and start building their own memories. Here are 50 ideas to help kids reconnect with the outdoors. — *Dyanne Fry Cortez*


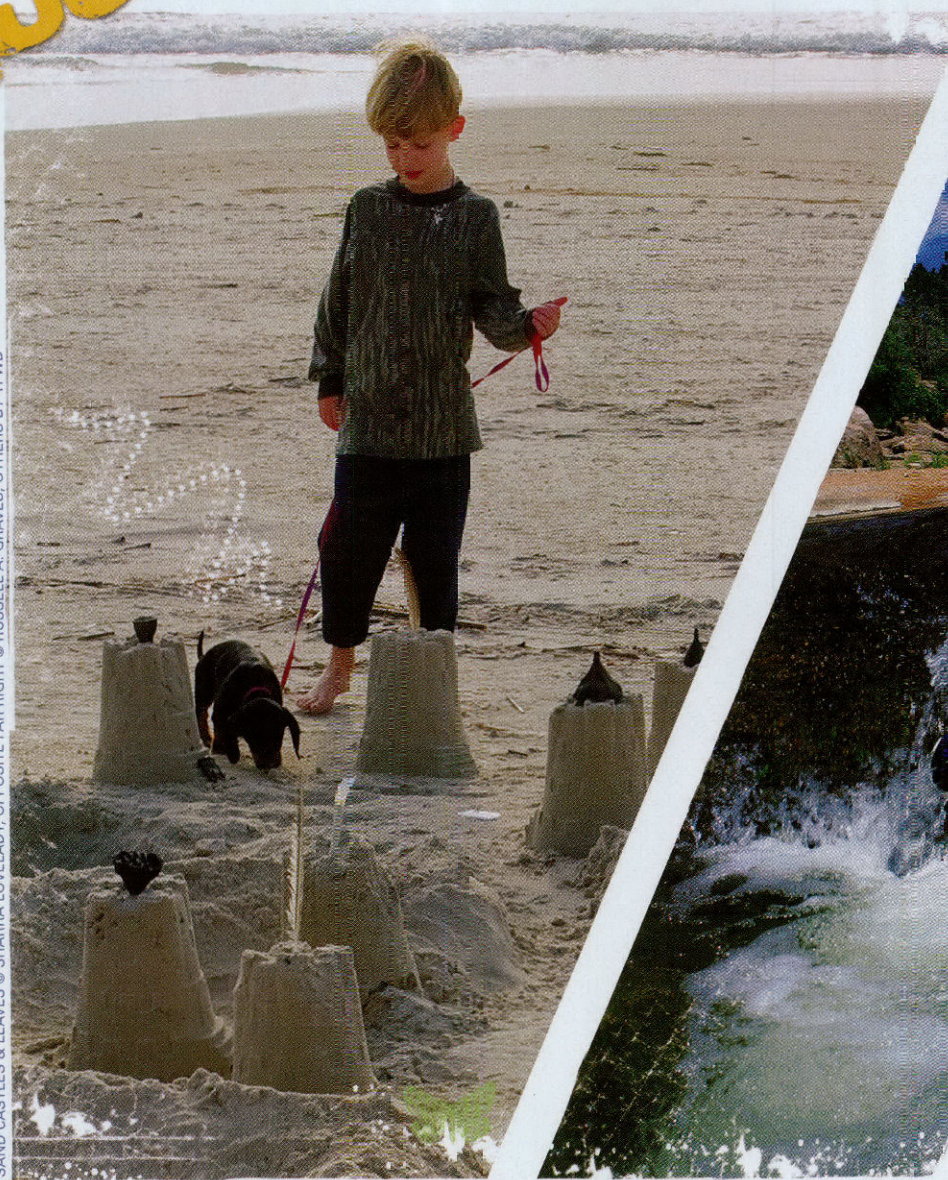


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Build a sand castle

You need fine, wet sand for building. Ingredients are available most places on the Texas coast. Sand sculpting can be a family project, with tasks appropriate to every age level. Bring shovels for digging and buckets for mixing sand and water. Paint scrapers and plastic forks and knives make good carving tools. — DFC

Walk in the rain

Everyone should try this at least once. Smell the fresh scent of rain-washed air. Listen to drops falling on grass and tree canopies. Watch them

gather into streams; have stick boat races. Jump in a puddle! Wear boots or just decide to get wet. (This works best in a gentle, steady rain. If you hear thunder, get inside or under cover.) — DFC

Make mud pies

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

Jump in a pile of leaves

Rake fallen leaves into a neat pile and kids will dive in, delighting in the earthy smell and the squishy, crunchy feel of leaves giving way under them. They'll get leaf bits in their hair and clothes. They'll scatter leaves across the lawn, and someone will have to rake them up again. But who cares? — DFC



Look for shapes in clouds

They may be just blobs of water vapor in the sky, but with a little imagination, a cloud can become an animal, a spaceship or a favorite cartoon character. Cloud gazing is free and fun for all ages. Chances are that everyone will see something different, but arguing about it is half the fun. —DFC

Open windows

Just opening a window allows a little of the outdoors to come inside. You'll be more aware of the wind, its speed and direction. You'll smell what's blooming in your neighbor's yard. You may hear birds singing, crickets chirping, small animals moving through the grass and the call of a screech owl after dark. —DFC

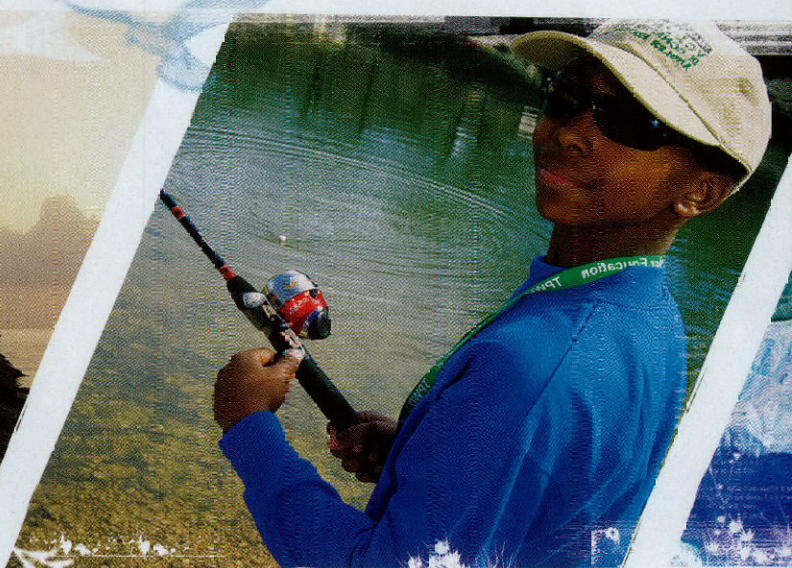
Go barefoot

Walking barefoot puts a person in touch with nature. Try green lawns and interesting rock surfaces, or let sand or mud squish between the toes! You have to pay attention: after all, Texas is dotted with currs and thorns. There are places where barefooting won't work, but plenty of places where it will. For small children, going shoeless is recommended for healthy foot development. (See "My Barefoot Years" on pages 34–35.) —DFC

Watch fireflies

"Lightning bugs" winking on and off in the soft air of a summer night have fascinated kids for

generations. Catch a few in a jar and you'll see that each bug is really a small beetle. Be sure to poke air holes in the jar lid, and let the fireflies go when you're done. —DFC



TOP LEFT © JIM OLIVE; TOP CENTER © LAURENCE PARENT; OTHERS BY TPWD

Go fishing

Try a cane pole or a rod with a spincast reel. Corn, worms or pieces of hot dog make good bait. There's nothing like the feel of a fish on the line. With luck, kids may catch something they can cook and eat. You can fish without a license in Texas state parks, and some have tackle loaner programs for beginning anglers. — *DFC*

Have a picnic

Pack a lunch. Let the kids help. It needn't be anything fancy: sandwiches, fruit, a bag of chips or carrot sticks, a jug of lemonade or a small ice chest with canned drinks. Eat at your neighborhood park, the nearest state park or a roadside picnic table. If ants or wasps threaten, "bait" them with a slice of apple at a safe distance. — *DFC*

Explore a mini-landscape

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

Harvest fruit or nuts

Mustang grapes, dewberries, cactus tunas and other edible fruits grow wild in Texas. Pick them by the roadside or on private land with the owner's permission. Gather

pecans on a river bank or visit a pick-your-own peach or apple orchard. Involve the whole family in making jelly, pie or ice-cream topping. (Note: Children should never pick and eat anything without adult supervision. Some wild things are poisonous.) — *DFC*



Richard Louv's Book Raises Tough Questions

I may have been the last child in the woods.

Growing up in the hills of central Texas, my summers were filled with riotous games with neighborhood kids, cavorting through the oak- and cedar-studded forest. On days when no one was around, I would curl up under a shade tree with a book, reveling in the chaotic peace of fresh breezes and chattering wildlife. Even now, I find comfort and calm in the woods, maybe from a lingering nostalgia. Perhaps there's just something inherently therapeutic about immersing yourself in nature.

The contrast between my youth and my younger sister's is marked. Where I ran wild through the trees, she spent hours watching DVDs and playing computer games. She had the same access to nature

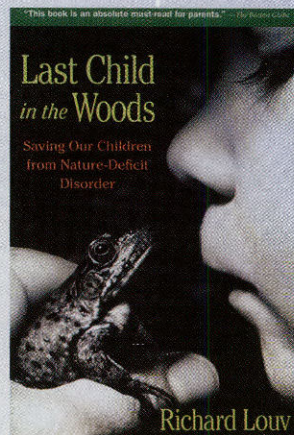
that I did, but something subtle changed in the seven years that separate us.

In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv explores these differences. With a straightforward, engaging writing style, he explores possible reasons why children today are less connected to nature and the consequences of this disconnection.

Technology is a handy scapegoat for our disconnection from nature, but Louv explores less obvious reasons, too. He interviewed children and adults, and their experiences will hit close to home for many readers. Some kids say their parents are too worried about possible dangers to let them play in nature, while others men-

tion favorite spots outside that have been overtaken by development. Louv also discusses the legal and safety concerns now associated with what used to be normal childhood pastimes — building a treehouse, for example.

What are the consequences of this disconnect? The rise of childhood obesity has long been a controversial topic, but what about mental and emotional health? One college student recounts her experiences after her father's death when she was nine, and the critical role that nature played in her grieving process: "When you are in [nature], it makes you realize that there are far larger things at work than yourself. ... Being in nature can be a way to escape without fully leaving the world."



Louv examines the problems of today's children (the rise of antidepressant use, for example), which he connects to their lack of experience in nature. His findings are at times startling and discouraging, but the book is not all doom and gloom. Many of the children Louv interviews retain a love of the outdoors that is encouraging, and he offers creative ideas on how to bring children and nature back together.

Louv's look at nature, and our connection to it throughout our lives, is profound and compelling. *Last Child in the Woods* is a worthwhile read for anyone, young or old, who has ever felt a connection (or wished that they had) to the natural world around them.

— Sarah Bond



inations will run wild outdoors. —DFC

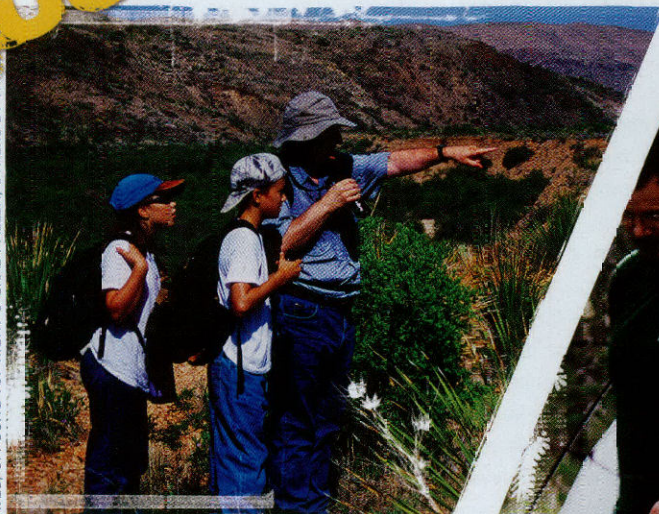
Go swimming

Kids are drawn to water like bumblebees to partridge peas. Everyone should learn to swim and become familiar with basic lifesaving techniques. Besides, a dip in a lake, river or neighborhood pool is great exercise and a fun way to cool off on a sizzling summer day. —DFC

Play old-fashioned games

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

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Fly a kite

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



Find art in nature

The outdoor world offers endless possibilities, from sketching what you see to using natural materials in creative projects. Try making leaf prints or taking rubbings of rock or different tree barks. Weave flower wreaths to wear in your hair or squish flowers onto paper to see what color dye they'll make. Make a plant press with old newspaper

Go camping

Spending a whole night outdoors — or a weekend — will eventually get children's minds off their video games. Texas has hundreds of campgrounds: primitive, civilized and everything in between. If your family has little camping experience, start with small steps. Pitch a tent in the backyard. When kids make it through the night, they'll gain a sense of independence. —DFC

and dry wildflowers for special note cards. Mix paints with water from a puddle or stream. —DFC



Have a campfire

Dancing flames at the edge of a dark night, scary stories, group singalongs,

roasting marshmallows and s'mores, and the warmth of companionship: the campfire is an ancient tradition and still a great way to create lasting memories. Practice good safety habits and be sure to build fires only in designated areas. —DFC



Dig a hole to China

Whether at the beach or in your own backyard, get out the shovels and see how deep you can dig. Small metal spades are perfect for kids, and having their own tools makes it especially enticing. In our yard, we have discovered many hidden treasures such as old medicine bottles and even an old metal toy. Examine the different layers of growth, soil and animal life. How low can you go? —BN

Build a dam

Humans seem to inherently love dam building, and creek beds and rivers are full of ample dam building materials such as rocks, logs, sticks and mud. Pile the rocks high

in a pyramid structure or lay them out flat in a row. Pack in the mud and sticks all around. What does the structure do to the water's flow? Where does the water go when its natural course is changed? Make a small pool and see what gathers in it. —BN

Attend an outdoor performance

Mix culture with nature by taking kids to a concert in the park or a summer theater production. Outdoor shows have their perks. You can pack your own drinks and snacks. If kids get bored with what's onstage, they can look at the sky or search for bugs in the grass. —DFC

Relax in a hammock

If it's a couch-potato kind of day, encourage kids to relax outdoors. A hammock on the porch, or in a shady area of the yard, is a great place to relax, read a book or watch birds and insects go about their business. Some hammocks are roomy enough for two kids and a family pet. —DFC



LEFT © LARRY DITTO; TOP RIGHT © LANCE VARNELL; OTHERS BY TPWD

Make a boat

A pond, creek or slow-moving river is the perfect spot for setting sail a small boat. Whether you make it ahead of time out of wood or a milk carton or create it on the spot, the fun is in the process. Find a piece of bark, set a twig post in it and weave on a large leaf for a sail. Have races, try to sink it with pebbles, or simply let the boat (if made of natural materials) float on downstream. — BN

Litter scavenger hunt

Next time you're in a public park, make litter pickup into a game. Make a list of some commonly found trash items: bottle cap, plastic bot-

tle, chip bag, plastic grocery bag, etc. Give each kid a bag, a glove and a list. You can mix up the lists so everyone isn't competing for the same items. Set a timer and see how many items on the list

each one can find in the time allotted. — BN

Sensory walk

In a field or in the woods, take a walk with your kids. Discuss the five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. Pause every few minutes and ask the kids what they sense in that spot. Are there birds singing? A flower blooming? What colors and textures are all around? Try

it blindfolded or with earplugs. What senses work overtime when others are ineffective? — BN

Use your inside games

Common table games are somehow more fun outside. Tic-tac-toe can be scratched in the dirt and is way more enticing than on paper. Hangman, too. Sketch a checker board on the sidewalk and fabricate

Find More Ideas in Books and on Web Sites

BOOKS

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv, Algonquin Books, 2005. (A new edition due out in spring 2008 will include a user's guide for parents and grandparents.)

The Dangerous Book for Boys by Conn Iggulden and Hal Iggulden, HarperCollins Publishers, 2007.

The Daring Book for Girls by Andrea J. Buchanan and Miriam Peskowitz, HarperCollins Publishers, 2007.

The American Boys Handy Book by Daniel Carter Beard, Dover Publications. (This book is over a hundred years old and is still going strong.)

The Field and Forest Handy Book by Daniel Carter Beard, Dover Publications.

The American Girls Handy Book by Lina Beard, The Derrydale Press.

WEB SITES

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Outdoor Kids: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/kids/

Outdoor Family: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/bof/

LEARN TO FISH:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/angler_education/learnfish.phtml

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Children & Nature Network: www.cnaturenet.org

Green Hour, hosted by the National Wildlife Federation:
www.greenhour.org

Texas Youth Hunting Program: www.tyhp.org



markers out of stones and acorns. Or just spread a blanket on the grass for Monopoly or Candyland played in a whole new and naturally lit venue. —BN

Plant a little garden

A garden need not be an overwhelming endeavor of time or space. A small garden made in moveable pots can be lots of fun and easily maintained by even the

busiest of families. Or build a square-foot garden from simple plant boxes from scrap lumber. Give each person his/her own box. Have each person plant something for a salad and come together at harvest time for the ultimate family dinner. —BN

Go orienteering or geocaching

Orienteering is a competitive form of land navigation. It is for all ages and skill lev-

Cook outside

A meal prepared on an open fire is way more fun, and you don't have to wait for a camping trip to do it. Make a small wood fire in a fire pit or grill. Corn on the cob, in the husk and placed in the coals for 10 minutes, is delicious. Or stick a potato directly in the coals. Mix up some ground beef, water, chopped potatoes, onions and seasoning. Double wrap it in foil and stick it in the coals — seam side up. Make your own recipes or find oodles of ideas online. —BN

els and can feel like a suspense-filled treasure hunt. The object of orienteering is to locate control points by using a map and a compass to navigate through the woods. Geocaching uses global positioning system (GPS) coordinates to locate

hidden objects in a treasure hunt. You can set up your own orienteering course or geocache on any nature trail or in any woods near you. Get your brood started in this action-packed and fun sport by searching out tips online. —BN



TUBER: JIM OLIVE; ARCHERY & BEACH © SHARRA LOVELADY; OTHERS BY TPWD

Bike course

The joy of bike riding is ageless. Plan a day's bike outing in the neighborhood or on a hike-and-bike trail nearby. Go to an empty lot or field and make a family bike obstacle course using sticks and rocks as markers. Time each other. Make bike relay teams. Feel the wind in your face and enjoy the sights and sounds that are not heard when riding in a car. — *BN*

taken lightly — bestowing the proper amount of respect for the blade is crucial and a lifelong gift. — *BN*

Target practice

Recently we found several dozen plastic pots in a neighbor's trash, and my son dragged them home for

target practice. He stacked them into a pyramid and knocked them down with a rock or a ball or a good, swift kick. A target can be painted, stacked or drawn on just about any available surface; the weapon of choice can be as varied. Find a small archery set in a local sports or secondhand store. Make a

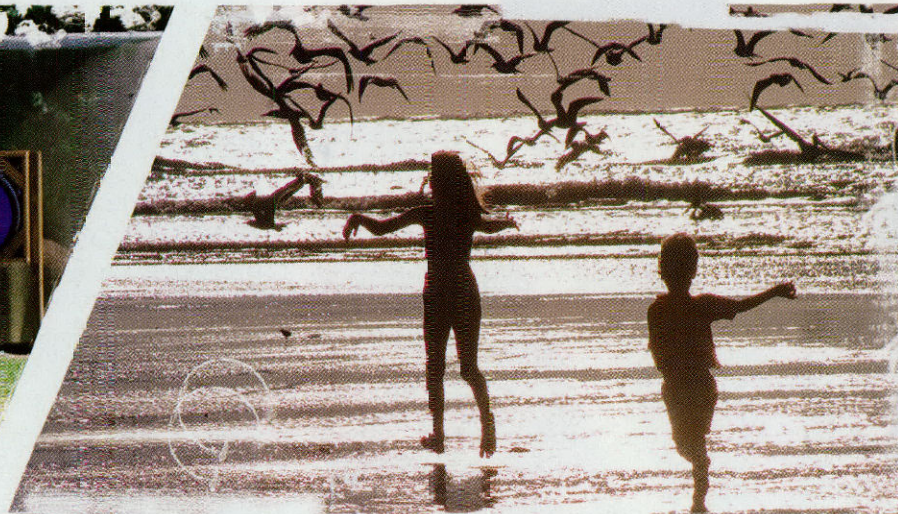
slingshot from a stick and surgical tubing. Remember, though, that with the weapon must come instructions for wielding it safely. — *EN*

Sidewalk games

Not so very long ago, a sidewalk or alley served as a playground for kids of all ages. Bring that feeling back for your kids by getting out the jump rope, pogo stick, skateboard or roller skates. Tie the rope to a fence and turn it for

Use a pocketknife

Kids are thrilled when they see a pocketknife with all its blades and gadgets. When to give a kid his own can only be determined by a responsible adult. The lesson should include using the knife as a tool, not a weapon. Also, children should be told where and when they are permitted to carry such a tool. The thrill of a first knife is an honorable gift, and one which should not be



them chanting whatever jumping jingles you can remember. Have pogo stick contests seeing who can stay on the longest. Try some skateboard tricks or just go around the block on skates. Show them the simple fun that is in their own front yard. —BN

Make a whistle from a blade of grass

This little trick never ceases to first surprise and

Wade in a running stream

Wiggle your toes in a cool running stream. Walk out a bit, wading to your calves, letting the water flow past. Make sure the water is not too deep or swift and that everyone wears a life jacket. In clear spring-fed springs, look for fish, crawfish and tadpoles in the water. Pick up rocks and look for caddisfly and mayfly larvae or other critters. —WH

then engage a group of kids. Find a blade of grass that is somewhat wide and flat. Position the blade flat between your two upward pointed thumbs. Through the small hole that is made just below the top knuckle, blow to vibrate the blade of grass. It takes practice but when you get it, wow, it can be a loud and crazy sound.

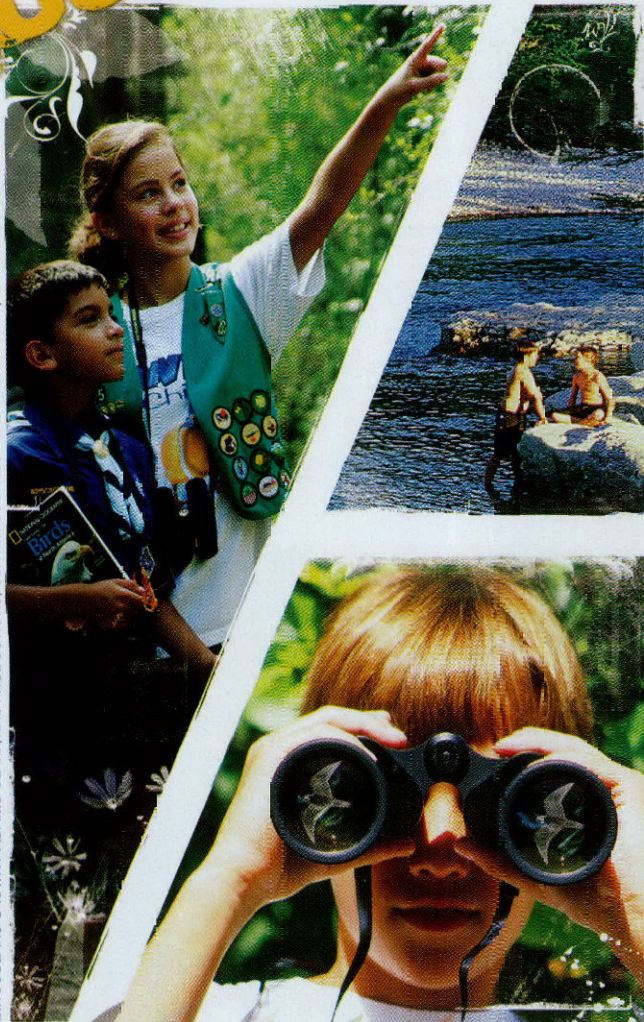
Lying in the grass on your back is the best position for this endeavor. —BN

Build a fort or treehouse

Though building a treehouse requires a big tree and a small amount of building materials and skills, building a fort can

be done anywhere by anyone. If you've got the space and tools, go for the treehouse. If not, build a fort on the ground, in a bush or even in a pile of brush. Find a desolate part of the yard and start constructing with twigs, rocks, branches or bamboo. Arrange them as you wish — weaving and stacking as you see fit. If you have a big fluffy bush, simply clear out a hole in the center where kids can hide away for hours. —BN

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Get an early start on birdwatching

A lifetime love of birdwatching can start as a child. Set up a birdfeeder with various types of seed, suet or sugar water for hummingbirds. Keep a record of what birds visit during different seasons. Take your child out with a pair of binoculars in the fall or spring to watch the great variety of migrating hawks, songbirds and shorebirds. — WH

Start a collection

Kids love to collect things. Rocks and shells are always favorites. Gather various colors, shapes and sizes, and then use a field guide to identify them. Egg cartons work well for storing small rocks and shells. Preserve flowers with an inexpensive plant press — or make one. Make sure not to collect rocks, shells or plants from state parks, where rules prohibit collection so that future

My Barefoot Years

When I was growing up in East Texas during the 1930s and '40s, going barefoot during the warm months was the norm. Many people still believe that this custom came about because of rural poverty during the Depression. 'Tain't so. I was an avid barefooter, and I can tell you that all the boys I knew went barefooted by choice, not because they did not have shoes.

You must remember that this was long before television, iPods and computer games, and southern boys spent most of their time outdoors, climbing trees, playing cow-pasture baseball, swimming or playing cowboys and Indians with homemade rubber guns. And going barefoot was not just a rural phenomenon. I was a town kid and all of the pre-teen boys I knew doffed their brogans in mid-April and did not put them back on until the first cold snap in late fall. This custom was almost universal in East Texas and most of the Deep South states.

Going barefooted was fun, but it did have its hazards. While wading in the creeks you had to watch out for snakes, crawfish and broken bottles. In the fields you avoided prickly pear cacti, stinging nettles and fresh cow patties. In town the biggest hazard was discarded (but still lit) cigarette butts.

My father, Cecil Murphy, and his brother Marvin were avid fishermen and made frequent weekend camping trips to indulge their hobby of trot-line fishing for channel cats down on the Angelina River, and they usually took me along to do the grunt work.

An overnight trip like this required a considerable amount of live bait, which was obtained by seining the various small ponds and bar ditches in our area. Since, at 12, I was already an experienced barefoot wader. I



Butterfly garden

Attract butterflies to your garden with nectar-producing flowers like eupatorium, lantana, butterfly weed, sage, Mexican mint marigold, black-eyed Susans or purple cone-flower. Most butterflies visit between spring and fall, but migrating species will need flowering plants even through November. Monarchs lay their eggs only on butterfly weed (aka milkweed), but adults will sip nectar from other flowers. Learn to identify species with a field guide. — WH

generations can enjoy these special places intact. — WH

Nature treasure hunt

Scavenger hunts can make fantastic birthday party games. For young kids, create a list of items with a "key," such as a photocopy of leaf shapes for kids to find or items starting

with letters of the alphabet.

For older kids, hunts can get trickier and more creative.

Have teams look for unusual natural items, such as an amphibian or reptile, a fungus, something a bird could eat, different-sized rocks or seeds, or something red. Kids can use digital or cell phone cameras to document their finds. — WH

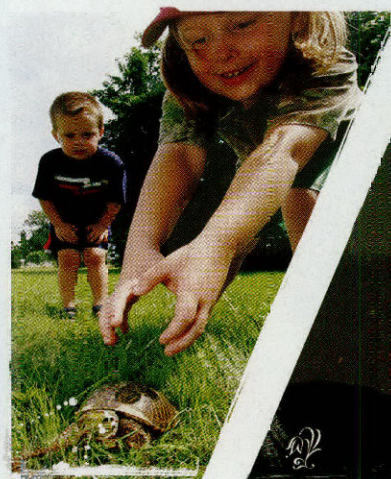
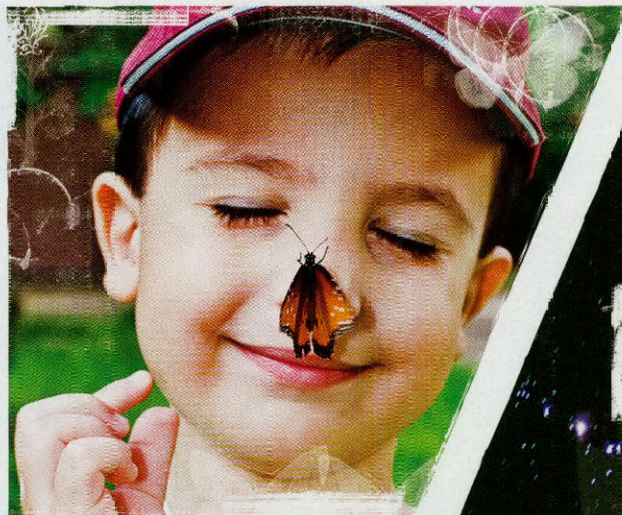


was chosen to be the deep man on the minnow seine. While my dad or uncle stood on the bank and anchored that end, I was required to make a sweep around the deep water with the other end of the seine, hoping that I wouldn't step on a rusty can, broken bottle or other underwater hazard or, even worse, disturb a nest of moccasins near the grassy bank.

At our Angelina campsite near the "Old Iron Bridge," I became the designated trotline baiter. I did not mind hooking up the minnows or night-crawlers, but unfortunately my uncle always insisted that some of the hooks be baited with blood bait. In case you have forgotten, pilgrim, blood bait, made from the blood from slaughterhouses, was undoubtedly the vilest smelling substance ever concocted by man, and the memory of having to dig that noisome stuff out of the can, mold it into little balls and bait the hooks with it still turns my stomach. Indeed, I think it was my experience as Trotline Baitboy and Deep Man on the Minnow Seine that turned me against trotline fishing and going barefoot.

Now you never see a barefoot boy. And I guess it's a good thing. During the 1930s and '40s, the U.S. Department of Health conducted a survey and found that hookworm disease (ancylostomiasis) was rampant in East Texas and the southern states. Since it was also known that the parasite entered the body mainly through the soles of the feet, doctors strongly recommended that children not be allowed to spend time outdoors without their shoes. So this effectively ended the custom.

Today Texas boys who might have once romped shoeless in the summer sport \$200 Nikes or Reeboks. These lads, alas, will never know the joy of running barefoot through cool clover or squishing unshod in warm mud. But, of course, they have the boob tube and those fascinating computer games — so who needs the outdoors? — *Richard Murphy*



TOP LEFT © LARRY DITTO; BOTTOM LEFT © RUSSELL A. GRAVES; RIGHT © KENDAL LARSON

Learn how to hunt and fish!

Many places throughout Texas offer hunting camps or fishing classes for kids. Learn fishing basics as a family at a state park Family Fishing event. (See the online calendar of events at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/calendar, or check with your local scouts or 4H chapter.) Anyone under 17 can fish for free in Texas, with no need to buy a license. TPWD offers basic and advanced junior angler classes for basic casting and fly-fishing. The Texas Wildlife Association and TPWD also offer a Texas Youth Hunting Program for kids ages 9 through 17. — *WH*

Take a hike

For a young child's first hike, take them somewhere with exceptional scenic beauty, wildlife or diversions such as interesting rocks and flowers, a boardwalk or a pond. Keep it short, or bring a sack lunch and give kids several breaks to let

them explore their surroundings. For older kids, try a longer trek, exploring one of Texas' 100-plus state parks or our three national parks or preserves. — *WH*

Stargaze

Captivate your senses on a moonless night by staring

at the vastness of the sky in all its starlit beauty. Head to a grassy knoll with a blanket, a star chart and a laser pointer to identify constellations. Better yet, head outside during one of the year's meteor showers to witness dozens of shooting stars. The Perseid shower peaks August 12 every year, and other showers occur throughout the year. Visibility depends on the phase of the moon, among other factors. — *WH*

Engine-free travel

Try a more close-to-the-earth mode of transportation. Ride horseback through a wooded trail, tube or raft down the Comal or Guadalupe River, canoe or kayak down a lazy stream, or take your kids sailing on one of Texas' gorgeous bays. Point out to kids their beginning and ending points on a map so they get a sense of where they're headed, and how far they will go. Map reading is a great life skill! — *WH*

LEFT © SHARRA LOVELADY; BUG © SHELLY HOLLEN; BIRD © LARRY DITTO; OTHERS © KATHY ADAMS CLARK/KAC PRODUCTIONS



Skip stones

With a flick of the wrist, see how many times a flattened stone can skim the water's surface. The magic angle to toss a stone for optimal skipping? According to a team of French physicists, 20 degrees. Greater than 45 degrees, and it will sink. The best size and shape? Rounded, flattened and three to four inches across. The longstanding *Guinness Book of World Records* title for stone skips was on Central Texas' Blanco River — a respectable 38 skips. But that was surpassed in 2002 by 40 skips, and just in October 2007 by a whopping 51. — *WH*

Climb a tree

Trees seem to have an almost magnetic force that draws kids into their branches. Find some good old gnarled multi-branched oaks with sturdy limbs and climb up and around. Hang upside-down from a side-

ways-growing limb. Wedged in the crook of sturdy tree limbs, kids can read a book or watch the sun go down. — *WH*

Volunteer

What better way to raise and inspire socially and environmentally conscious future cit-

izens than to volunteer alongside them in an effort that helps improve your community? Help with a roadside or beach cleanup, plant trees, revegetate a marsh, work in a community garden, or volunteer at a wildlife rehabilitation center or local park. — *WH*

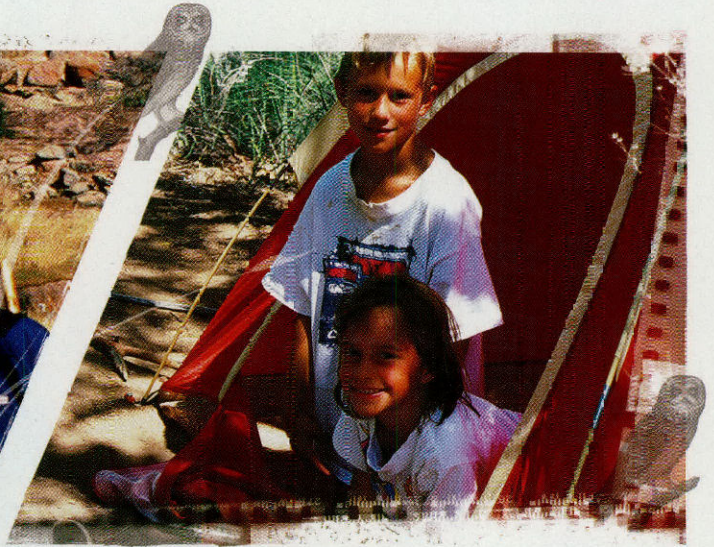
Contests!

Parents can keep kids entertained for hours by creating nature-inspired contests. Who can find the weirdest insect? Who can locate the most plant varieties, or flow-

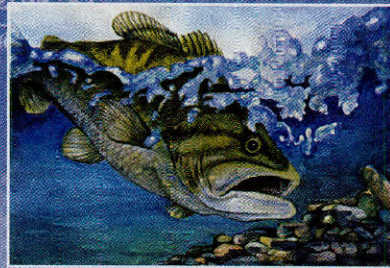
ers? Have kids see who can gather the most sticks — great when you're trying to build a campfire! Have a field guide handy so kids can identify their finds. Or see if they can find something starting with every letter of the alphabet, or objects that resemble every letter of the alphabet. — *WH*

Walking stick

Choosing and carving your own personal walking stick can be a rewarding experience. Kids love to use their own creations



Paint a Fish, Win a Prize



Sponsored by Wildlife Forever and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas State Fish Art Contest is open to any Texas student in grades 4 through 12. Contestants must create an illustration of

an officially recognized state fish and write a one-page composition about its behavior, habitat and conservation. One Texas winner is selected from each of three grade levels: 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. Those winners then compete at the national level for "best of show" and "art of conservation stamp" honors. Deadline for entries is March 31.

"Wildlife Forever strongly believes conservation education will ultimately determine the future of our fish and wildlife heritage," says Wildlife Forever president and CEO Douglas H. Grann. "The State Fish Art Contest is a fun and innovative way to introduce America's youth to the wonders of our natural world."

The 2007 art of conservation stamp award went to Clayton Bowen of Eagle Lake. Bowen's drawing of a Guadalupe bass was reproduced as a conservation stamp; proceeds from sales of the stamp go to support conservation projects nationwide.

Because 580 Texas students entered the contest last year, many outstanding pieces of artwork went unrecognized. The Toyota Texas Bass Classic and the Texas Bass Classic Foundation accepted the challenge and will be providing scholarships of \$1,000, \$750 and \$500 for the first-, second- and third-place winners in the grades 10 through 12 category, and savings bonds of \$100, \$75 and \$50 for winners in the lower grades, as well as round-trip airfare to the awards ceremony in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the three first-place winners. Each Texas entrant will also receive a fishing lure from Strike King Lure Company.

Texas entries are judged at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. For details on the contest and how to enter, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishart. — Larry D. Hodge ★

for a utilitarian purpose! For hiking, select a stick that reaches shoulder length. The stick need not stand straight; some prefer the look of a twist. Heavier sticks become more difficult to carry on long hikes, but sticks should be sturdy enough to lean on. Saw knots and branches off the main limb, then sand with 100-grit sandpaper until smooth. Repeat with 200-grit, then again with 400-grit for a super-soft finish. — WH



Today's kids love technology, whether games, the Internet or video-recording technology. Combine 21st-century kids' insatiable appetite for all things electronic with the outdoors by challenging them to come up with a creative or humorous outdoor video using a camcorder or even a cell phone video camera. Let them try to create something for YouTube or their MySpace page. — WH



PHOTO © JOHAN SCHIMMACHER, OPPOSITE © BILL BEATTY



By Mark Klym

On the

Bluebird

Trail



Give these little blue gems a good place to nest, and they'll entertain you for years to come.



Eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)



Western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*)



Mountain bluebird (*Sialia curruoides*)

M any

urban Texans, and even much of our rural population, have never experienced the thrill of seeing the beautiful bluebird in its natural setting. The introduction of the house sparrow and European starling, the industrial revolution with the resulting migration of our human population into larger cities, and the shift from wood rail fencing to chain-link fencing combined to reduce bluebird numbers significantly in most states. Texas also experienced a decline, though the bird, thankfully, never really disappeared.

Bluebirds can be seen all over Texas, but in some regions they are more common than in others. Three species of bluebird occur in the state. The eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), which is the common bluebird in most of North America, is also the common bluebird here, being found in good numbers almost everywhere. The western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), which is seen more commonly in the mountains of the Trans-Pecos, also experienced declines across most of its range. The mountain bluebird (*Sialia curruoides*), a species that does not nest in Texas, winters in West Texas but can be found in Central Texas some years.

By the early 1920s, conservation-minded individuals realized the bird was in trouble and began looking for a way to improve the outlook for the bluebird. Since nest cavities seemed to be the primary, though not the exclusive, cause of the decline, some landowners began using artificial cavities in the form of nest boxes or birdhouses to provide the birds with a place to nest. Thomas E. Musselman and William G. Dunlap are credited with developing the concept of the bluebird trail, or a series of nest boxes strategically located to attract bluebirds but easily monitored to reduce predation. Bluebird trails are an increasingly popular

way to attract and maintain bluebirds not only in rural settings, but also in some urban locations.

"The bluebirds were there, but we did not know it," says Dan Hanan, a bluebird enthusiast who created a bluebird trail on his blackland prairie property near Bastrop. "We became aware of the bluebirds when they promptly built two nests in our original 10 nest boxes."

In 2000, he received a wildlife tax valuation on his property in Bastrop County and managed for Neotropical songbirds as one of his targeted sets of species. He installed 10 nest boxes for bluebirds and began keeping a paper record of the birds' activities. The first year, eight nestlings fledged from those 10 boxes. Five years later, in 2006, 104 nestling songbirds fledged from his growing trail.

Pauline Tom, a bluebird trail monitor in Mountain City (southwest of Austin) and founder and president of the Texas Bluebird Society, says, "I started talking about bluebirds to my family and friends after I read (and reread) Dr. Lawrence Zelevny's article in *National Geographic* in 1977. For many years I thought eastern bluebirds only nested in the east. I knew of no one in



Female and male eastern bluebirds



Texas with bluebirds. I managed for bluebirds for years before I saw a bluebird on my property.” She installed a small bluebird trail in Mountain City—including neighboring gardens, church parking lots and other sites that seemed bluebird-friendly. When she started the project, the only bluebirds she had seen were a pair 45 miles away and one lone bird 5 miles away.

At Bluebird Hill Bed and Breakfast near Utopia, LeAnn Sharp says she inherited her affection for bluebirds from her parents. “Since bluebirds had been such a big part of the ranch and my parents’ lives, I wanted the trail to continue. If the bluebird trail was going to survive, we would have to take over,” she says. Having a history of bluebirds on the property, Sharp was looking only for advice on how to manage the trail when she became involved with the Texas Bluebird Society. “What luck, to find an organization to help us make nest boxes better suited to our climate.”

And the climate is a big factor when it comes to bluebird nests. A 6-inch square, 14-inch deep box sitting in the hot Texas sun can quickly overheat, devastating a clutch of precious blue eggs. When she took over her father’s trail, Sharp replaced the old boxes with new cedar boxes with a 4-inch

overhang around the roof—creating shade for the birds. All successful Texas bluebird trails use boxes that help dissipate the scorching heat. David Shield, who lives in the Dallas area, has made a name for himself with his “heat shield” boxes—essentially a box in a box, which allows for a layer of air insulation around the birds.

“Contrary to pictures on greeting cards, bluebirds do not build nests on a tree branch. Rather, they need a hole,” says Tom. But selecting the right setting is critical. Hanan says, “Make sure that the bluebirds have access to open grassy areas that have not been sprayed for insects since that is where they will hunt for food.” Bluebird boxes are best set around the edge of large openings over short grass.

To facilitate this, Hanan began a pattern of controlled burning as part of his songbird habitat restoration. “I am sure the combination of nest boxes and brush management has had a significant impact on the number of songbirds on the property,” says Len Polasek. At the time, Polasek was the regulatory biologist for Bastrop County, and he says, “The numbers speak for themselves. Fledging 104 young on the property last year has got to have an impact.”





Opposite: You can use a mirror to check for the first signs of nestlings. Dan Dahan opens the nest box for a closer look. **Above:** An eastern bluebird feasts on grubworms. **Right:** Dahan cleans the nest box, using a mask to avoid dust inhalation.



Easy access to water is another critical factor. In an environment where the temperature hovers above 90 degrees for months, a place to cool off and refresh is particularly significant. Running water from a fountain, dripper or stream is best for bluebirds since it is fresh and the sound of the water tends to attract them.

The third basic element of any wildlife habitat, after shelter and water, is food. Locating the nest boxes near a large open field of short to medium height grasses allows the bluebirds to hunt their favored food, flying insects, with ease. In the winter, though, insect numbers are low at a time when our bluebird numbers are increasing due to an influx of migrants. Some birds are mistakenly lumped into categories such as insect eaters, fruit eaters or nectar specialists, but seldom is the diet of these animals that specialized — and bluebirds are no exception.

During the winter months, and at other times of low insect numbers, bluebirds will switch to convenient fruit for nourishment. Berry-producing shrubs like yaupon, American beautyberry and pigeonberry help create an environment that will support the birds through the lean times. These sunlight-dependent shrubs normally occupy a transition zone between a clearing and a forested area. They will be

most effective if placed on the edge of large, grassy areas.

Creating the habitat is an important part of effective management for bluebirds. Effective record keeping is another. Most successful bluebird trail managers follow a similar pattern of record keeping that allows them to observe and manage changes with the habitat. Once a nest box is occupied, they begin monitoring it twice weekly, opening the box to observe any updated events (beginning of nesting, eggs, young, fledging, etc.). Such updates are noted and the records are kept both for their own use and to share with others through organizations like the Texas Bluebird Society. Monitoring the boxes also allows for control of the non-native and aggressive house sparrow.

While it may sound like a lot of work, enthusiasts say they reap the rewards every time they see a flash of blue and hear the bluebird's cheerful song. ★

DETAILS

Find plans for a Texas-friendly bluebird nest box at: www.texasbluebird.org/index.php?page=building.

North American Bluebird Society, www.nabbluebirdsociety.org

Texas Bluebird Society, texasbluebirdsociety.org

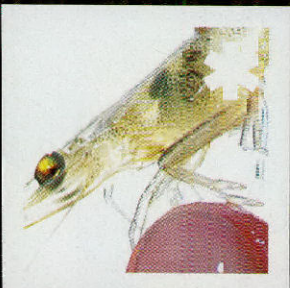
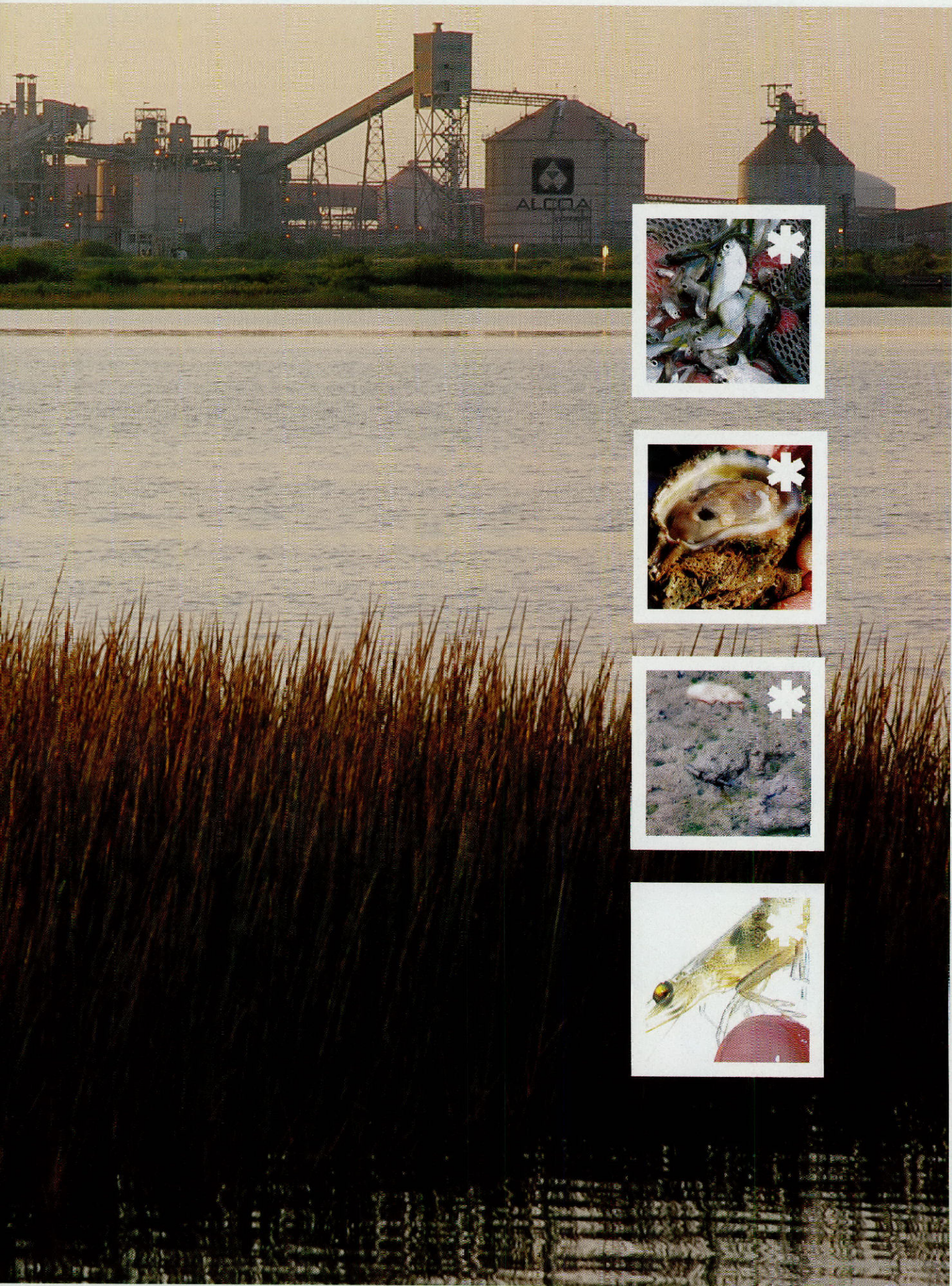
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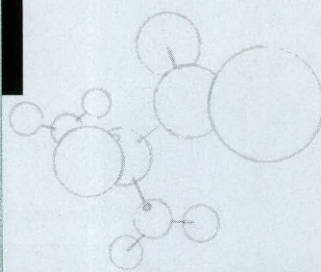
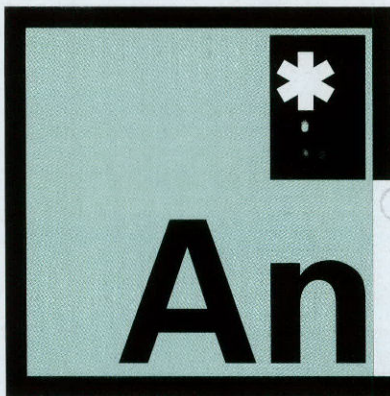
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TO SAVE A BAY

**Once hobbled by mercury pollution,
Lavaca Bay is now brimming with life.**

Story and photos by Larry D. Hodge





OYSTER IS PRETTY UGLY, BUT RAENELL

Silcox seems to think the one she's holding is a potential beauty pageant contestant. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and if not for the efforts of Silcox and a host of others, this oyster would not exist.

Silcox — a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department attorney — is on a boat in Lavaca Bay with other people involved in a project that has brought the bay back to health — following primarily mercury pollution from the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) plant on the bay's east shore. They're here to check on the project's progress, and the oyster is one of the first plucked from a constructed oyster reef built as part of that project. (See "From Polluter to Partner" on page 52.)

To Silcox and the others, it's more than just a homely mollusk — it's tangible evidence that more than a decade of work by a team of natural resource scientists, construction workers, lawyers and Alcoa employees has paid off.

Lavaca Bay is back.

If you've ever owned a car, wrapped a sandwich, washed a load of laundry or sanded a board, you've probably used a product that can be traced to the Alcoa plant at Point Comfort. The plant began operating in 1948, and three to four ships still arrive monthly carrying bauxite (aluminum ore) from West Africa. The ore is processed into alumina, a compound that can then be refined into the bright, lightweight metal that touches each of our lives every day.

But there's a dark side to the historical aluminum production at this particular plant: Prior to changes made to the process in 1979, one of the by-products was mercury, a heavy, highly toxic liquid metal with the ability to work its way into water and soil and eventually into the animals that live therein. Once it enters the food

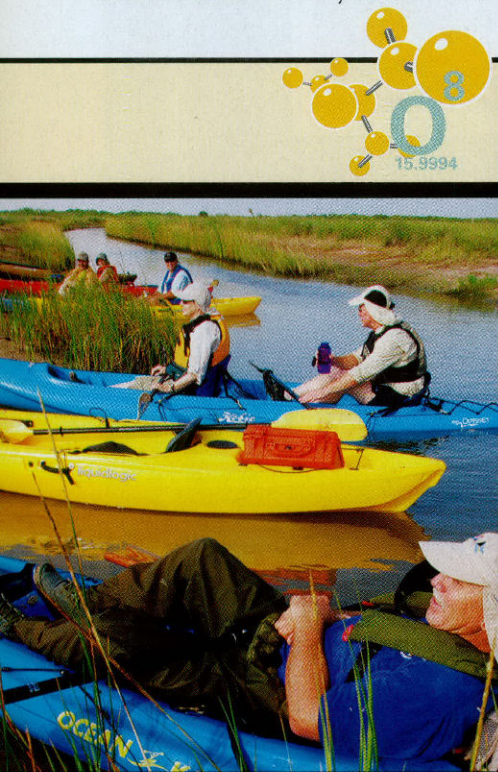
chain, mercury builds up in a process known as biomagnification. Mercury accumulates in small amounts in little fish. But bigger fish higher up in the food chain must eat lots of little fish to survive — and they take in much more of the poison as a result.

And people eat those fish — or did until April 1988, when rising levels of mercury in fish prompted the Texas Department of Health (now known as the Texas Department of State Health Services) to ban the taking of finfish and crabs from a large part of Lavaca Bay.

Recreational fishing crashed, and people stopped ordering seafood at local restaurants. The town of Port Lavaca, across the bay from Alcoa, found itself on the edge of a Superfund site.

That might have been the start of a long, contentious legal battle between Alcoa and the Environmental Protection Agency and other state and federal resource protection agencies, but a funny thing happened on the way to the courtroom: Everyone involved agreed that the best approach was to work together to address the problem rather than punish Alcoa through fines and penalties.

"Alcoa made the decision in the early 1990s that affected how we view remediation projects around the country," says Ronald Weddell, proj-



Left: TPWD Trustee Program Director Don Pitts (far left) and group check on the health of the 70-acre intertidal marsh. Above: Raenell Silcox admires a healthy oyster. Right: Biologists seine for a sample of living organisms in the marsh.

ect manager for the company. “Alcoa has a lot of pre-environmental law legacies that we have to deal with, and we made the decision to set aside a reserve to fund those liabilities and fix this problem as quickly as we could. We tried to share a common trust and get to an answer instead of getting into a dogfight with the government agencies. Even if you don’t agree, if you respect other people and their positions and let science drive the project, you can get the job done.”

Sitting in on a meeting between Alcoa and representatives of TPWD, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas General Land Office, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), it’s obvious that the people in the room not only respect each other, they are friendly. “Weddell came up with this plan called ‘throwing the snake on the table,’ says Ron Gouguet, the NOAA representative. “Basically we acknowledged that we didn’t trust each other, but that we wanted to work together to solve the problem. We had some intensive communication and began to trust each other, even though we were representing interests in an adversarial issue.”

Despite disagreements and often heated discussions, the representatives of state and federal resource protection

agencies and Alcoa were able to work through the issues to successfully implement a jointly developed restoration plan. “This was a team approach, and it happened that way because of the people involved,” says Don Pitts, TPWD’s Trustee Program director. (See “What is a Natural Resource Trustee?” on page 53.)

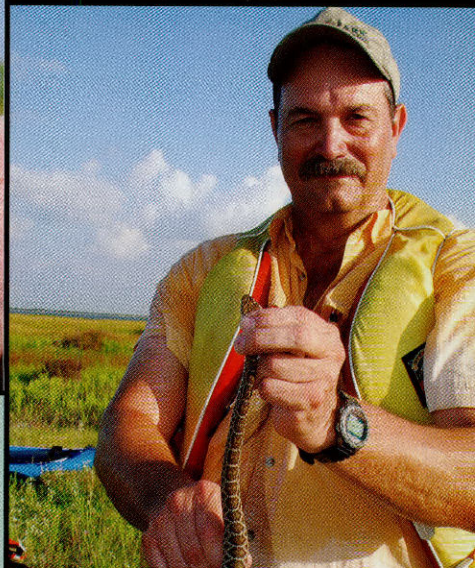
“Texas has always tried to work cooperatively to resolve these issues. We pursue habitat restoration, because that is our mission — not to put money from fines into a bank account. Our charge is to replace injured resources and services with similar resources to compensate the public for their loss.”

Losses occurred not only from the pollution itself but also from clean-up actions — Alcoa moved nearly a million cubic yards of soil and sediments containing 2,300 pounds of mercury to a sealed disposal site. The first step was to discover what had been lost. “We formed a team and started looking at resource impacts and injuries,” Pitts says. “We looked at upland areas, effects on wildlife and birds. The biggest loss was the fishing closure, because people could not keep fish.”

“The fish were still there, but people could not take them, so our compensation was to provide access in areas where there was not a pollution problem,” says Gouguet.

One of the most popular results of the project was a new lighted fishing pier on the Port Lavaca bayfront. “The pier was not in the original plan,” Weddell points out. “But we listened to the community, and the pier was something they said they needed and wanted.”

“If you respect other people and their positions and let science drive the project, you can get the job done.”
 — Ronald Weddell, Alcoa project manager



Left: Richard Seiler of TCEQ examines the catch in the seine. Above: Don Pitts with a shrimp caught in the seine. Marshes are the nurseries where shrimp and many ocean fish are spawned or spend part of their infancy. Right: William Quast holds a rattlesnake found while debarking from kayaks at the marsh.

"Alcoa was flexible enough to come in at additional expense and add the fishing pier," Pitts says. "Plus they provided money to make sure the projects are maintained for 15 years."

Building the fishing piers and other land-based improvements was simple compared to constructing two other elements of the project, a 70-acre intertidal marsh and an 11-acre oyster reef, says William Quast, president of Benchmark Ecological Services, one of the firms hired to design and oversee construction.

"We collected tidal range data over a period of several years and studied natural marshes in the area," Quast says. "What we found was that the normal range between high tide and low tide was less than a foot. Keeping everything at the right elevation is absolutely necessary, because we wanted to be sure our planting surface fell right in the middle between high and low tides, so we could take advantage of the best growing conditions. We set permanent elevation benchmarks and used them to survey all the channel and pond bottoms and planting surfaces in the marsh. All the bulldozers used to construct the marsh had devices on their blades to receive a laser beam that was set at the benchmark elevation and broadcast throughout the construction site, so the operators could see exactly where their blades were in relation to the depth they were seeking. After they finished, surveyors checked to be sure the planting surface fell within a tolerance of two-tenths of a foot."

A similar amount of planning went into the design of the 11-acre oyster reef located at the mouth of Keller Bay, southeast of the Alcoa plant. "We searched all over Lavaca Bay for a suitable site," says Quast. "We found there had been big oyster reefs at the mouth of Keller Bay in the past that had been mined by companies making concrete. A big clay shelf sticks out from the mouth of the bay at a depth of four to six feet—a perfect, firm bottom. There is also a significant flow of water out of Keller Bay during tidal exchange, and oysters need moving water to bring food to them. The site had everything we needed."

Building the reef required bringing limestone from Missouri by barge, then placing the rock into the water in strips 50-foot-wide, separated by 50 feet. "The barges used to carry the stone are 40 feet wide, so they could anchor between two strips and offload from both sides," Quast explains.

A funny thing happened on the way to the courtroom: Everyone involved agreed that the best approach was to work together.

FROM POLLUTER TO PARTNER

Alcoa has spent about \$110 million on projects to offset injuries to fish and wildlife and to compensate for losses of recreational fishing in Lavaca Bay. In addition to clean-up activities, Alcoa has:

- constructed a 70-acre marsh within and adjacent to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
- purchased 729 acres of coastal habitat that will be transferred to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
- created an 11-acre oyster reef that will grow to a future 22 acres and is available for harvest

- built three new fishing piers and two docks and made other improvements to public access facilities around the bay
- provided funds to maintain the facilities for 15 years

"One of the biggest benefits is the transfer of property to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge," says Alcoa's Ron Weddell. Kenneth Rice of the USFWS agrees. "This will benefit the entire refuge," he says. "At times the refuge holds as much as 20 percent of the waterfowl on the entire Texas coast. The additional 729 acres is in an area that is valuable habitat for whooping cranes, and that makes it a real gem for all the people of the United States."

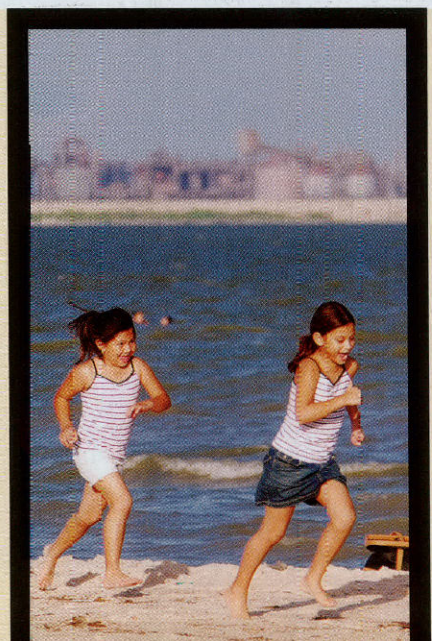


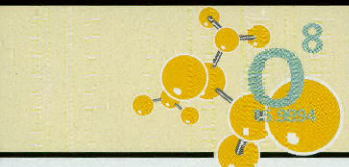
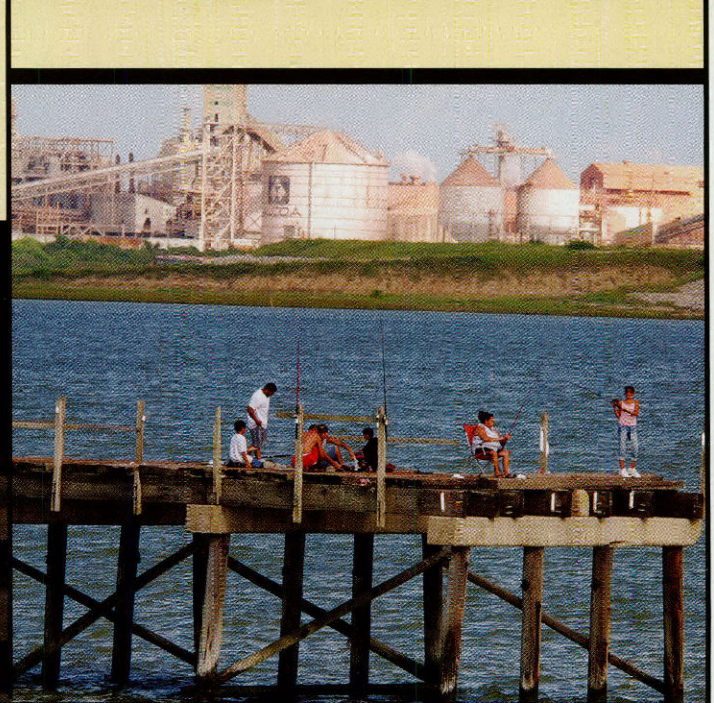
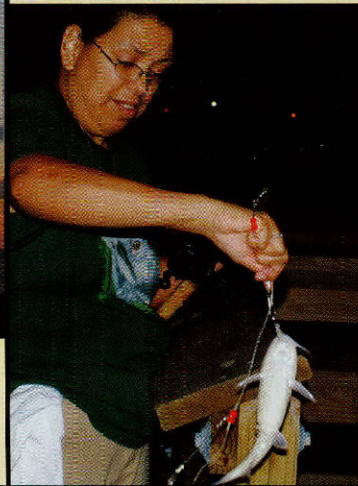
Above: A fishing pier built by Alcoa as part of the mitigation project. Right: An angler on the bayfront fishing pier. Far right: Anglers fish from a pier in Lavaca Bay, with the Alcoa plant visible in the background.

Almost as soon as the stone was in place, nature took over. "We told the contractor to be finished by May 31, because oysters spawn in spring, and we wanted the stone to be covered with oyster larvae rather than other larvae that might be more abundant at other times of the year, like barnacles in summer," Quast says.

"From an ecological standpoint, the timing was perfect," Pitts says. "Within a matter of weeks, oysters were starting to colonize the reef."

"I was truly astounded by the phenomenal degree of success that we've achieved out there in such a short time," Silcox says. "Probably the thing that made me happiest was the attitude of the Alcoa employees and the consultants. They seemed more excited about creating the best marsh and oyster reef





that they possibly could than with just meeting the artificial criteria in a consent decree. This project would have taken a much longer time or perhaps not have happened at all if there had not been a great deal of respect and admiration between the trustee representatives and the Alcoa representatives. It was a very civil process, even among the lawyers."

Key to the entire project was Alcoa's attitude. "We wanted to compensate the people who live here rather than feed a bank account in Austin," Weddel says.

The diver who brought up the oysters for us to look at said that when he splashed into the water, he could hear clicking sounds all across the reef as oysters snapped their shells closed.

They were just defending themselves from an intruder but I like to think they were applauding. ★



WHAT IS A NATURAL RESOURCE TRUSTEE?

Natural Resource Trustees are state and federal agencies authorized by law to act on behalf of the public as trustees of natural resources — to assess injuries to resources and to obtain compensation from responsible parties. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, along with other state and federal agencies, has signed a Memorandum of Agreement that describes how the multi-agency team will carry out those duties.

"The process developed in Texas by the state and federal trustees has been presented as a national example of how the laws should be implemented by both industry and agencies," says TPWD's Don Pitts. "Prior to this process, it

was unusual for injuries from pollution events to be restored, and the public lost their value and use until they recovered through natural processes. The process in Texas results in the restoration of injured natural resources without prolonged court battles. Cases are settled with the responsible party either undertaking restoration projects or providing funding to allow the trustees to implement restoration projects.

"This program has been very beneficial to the state," adds Pitts. "This is one of the few pollution laws with a required goal to actually restore the natural resources that are injured."

Since 1992, Texas has obtained settlements restoring 4,252 acres of habitat valued at more than \$31 million.



Requiem for a Wayfaring Professor

By John Jefferson

GIBBS MILLIKEN: 1935-2007



Gibbs Milliken, this magazine's gear and gadget guru, contributing editor of the Field Test column since January 2000, and author/photographer of the annual Christmas gift guide, passed away on November 20, 2007.

Many knew him through his columns. That was a start. But a lot about him didn't come across in print. He was a quintessential journalist whose professionalism prevented him from injecting his own story into his work; seldom did he use I, me, my or mine. Those who knew him, however, could see his years in the outdoors behind the words he penned. His mission here was to honestly inform readers of products and their usefulness. He did it well, even working on columns and the December 2007 issue gift guide from his hospital room. His work — and spirit — will be missed.

Unless someone told you, you might have trouble realizing he was a college professor of fine art and Latin American studies, an authority on indigenous cultures, possessed a limitless background and interests in all things natural, an Amazon rainforest adventurer who led expeditions into South America and Mexico and traveled the Caribbean islands and Alaska. Sound familiar?

Introducing him once as a

luncheon speaker a few years ago, I said that I suspected he might have been the inspiration behind the Indiana Jones character in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Think about it: a learned college professor, an authority on South American native cultures, a khaki-clad outdoorsman ever-ready for the next adventure and as anxious to learn more about the natural world as any of his students. Indie's fedora would have fit him well.

The main difference between Professor Milliken and Professor Jones was that Harrison Ford always looked concerned and foreboding; Milliken, however, lapped up life and the people in it. His countenance bore deep laugh wrinkles to prove it. At the Hula Hut restaurant on Lake Austin one evening, I watched as his entourage stopped by — a mixed bag of young people all delighting in the sophisticated wit and boundless wisdom of a man three times their age who was forever young. David Farmer, to whom I am grateful for supplying information on Gibbs, delivered the eulogy at Milliken's memorial service. Farmer referred to him as "a Pied Piper who gathered people around him with his enjoyment of life and his wonderful stories."

It is said that people are often made to appear larger in death than they were in life. In Milliken's case, that's impossible. He was the real deal.

He grew up around Kerrville and learned early about the Hill Country and the Guadalupe River. He and a cousin, Lee Dewey, even had a secret hiding place behind Heart of the Hills Inn where they kept their secret treasures — probably the start of his collections. Milliken graduated from Schreiner Institute and attended the University of Colorado. He received his bachelor of science degree from Trinity University.

One of his first jobs was with Texas Game and Fish Commission, forerunner of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He worked for legendary wildlife biologist Bob Ramsey, assisting with deer surveys one summer during the mid-'50s. Doe deer were just becoming legal game, and Milliken helped lay out and walk the original deer census lines in Kerr, Mason and Gillespie counties.

"We had 300 miles of census lines to walk before deer season," Ramsey said, "and Gibbs helped walk all of it. He was fresh, young and didn't

know a lot, but he was quick to learn."

"One day, we were camped near a big cave and he called me over to look at a 'real pretty snake.' It turned out to be a colorful copperhead." Ramsey, a walking textbook on wildlife, no doubt greatly influenced young Milliken. "He fell in love with wildlife and the department that summer," Ramsey added. Gibbs had planned to visit Ramsey recently. They had worked together more than 50 years ago, but their friendship transcended the years.

Milliken's interest in art, photography and nature led to a position as curator of natural science and exhibitions at the prestigious Witte Museum in San Antonio. He painted in the evenings after the museum closed, and collectors were beginning to notice his work. One museum visitor, an attractive school teacher named Marie Splittgerber, particularly appreciated his paintings. Little did she

know at the time that within a year she would be married to a man who would take her on adventures about which most people can only dream.

At their wedding, Gibbs topped their cake with two large blue Morpho butterflies he had previously collected. That should have been a hint of things to come. Their home would soon become repository for other collections that included fossils, plants, animal specimens, seashells, butterflies, ceremonial masks, blow guns and countless other artifacts, as well as extensive photographic files, paints, easels, canvases and enough hunting and fishing gear to stock a store.

Pursuing his talent and interest in art, Gibbs completed a master of arts degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. That opened the



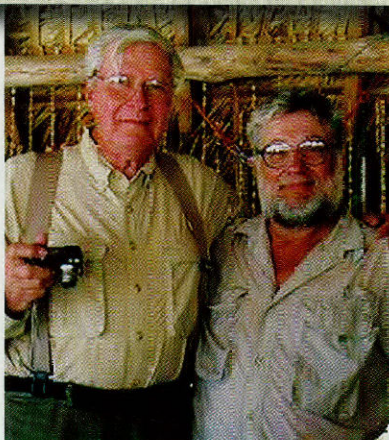
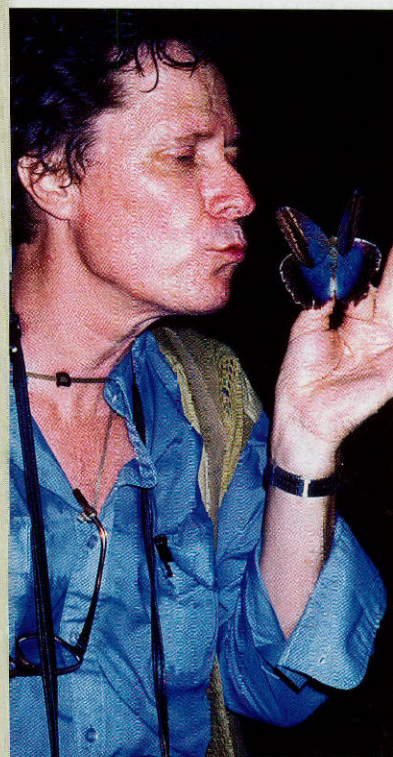
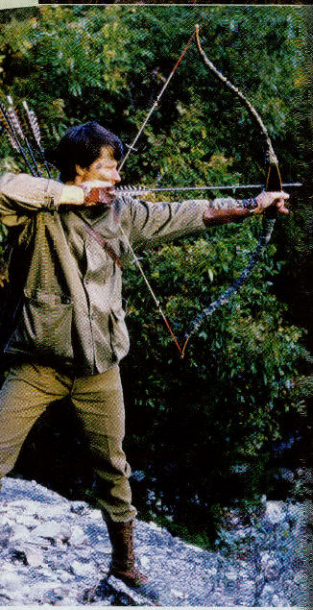
Top row: Gibbs' zest for life was evident even at age 12 on the steps of his Kerrville home in 1948; Gibbs and Marie at Port Aransas in 1962; Gibbs at the easel in 1960.

Middle row: On a hunt on the F5 Ranch in Junction in 1962; Gibbs exploring ruins in Belize in 1974; Gibbs takes an up-close look at a butterfly.

Bottom row: Gibbs working on a 16mm film, *Northwest Sketchbook*, in Alaska in 1962; Gibbs with friends on various treks to Venezuela and Mexico in the 1990s.



IT IS SAID THAT PEOPLE ARE OFTEN MADE TO APPEAR LARGER IN DEATH THAN THEY WERE IN LIFE. IN MILLIKEN'S CASE, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. HE WAS THE REAL DEAL.





door to a 41-year teaching career at the University of Texas at Austin, and that in turn enabled his extensive travels in Latin America.

As a professor in the Fine Arts Department at UT, he taught painting, drawing, design and photography. He was also a thesis supervisor for graduate students. One of his students, Chris Scroger, summed up Milliken's academic uniqueness as an avid outdoorsman who doubled as an arts educator: "No stodgy, tweed-covered old poct was he, but dapperly attired in the most khaki he could don, Gibbs veritabily twinkled as he stood before bemused classes and regaled them with his most recent field exploits."

It might seem a stretch from the fine arts department to leading expeditions into the Amazon. Professor Milliken didn't see a problem. At UT's Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, Virginia Hagerty said they didn't either. Their entire faculty, in fact, comes from other departments. Milliken provided countless photographs for the institute and became a research fellow, director of the Organization for Tropical Research and curator of their ethnographic collection (items that represent the folk culture of a community). They, too, called him Indiana Jones. For 12 years, Gibbs led two or more trips a year to South America, primarily to Venezuela. According to Marie, who accompanied him occasionally, these trips

DAPPERLY ATTIRED IN THE MOST KHAKI HE COULD DON, GIBBS VERITABLY TWINKLED AS HE STOOD BEFORE BEMUSED GLASSES AND REGALED THEM WITH HIS MOST RECENT FIELD EXPLOITS.

altered lives and careers. It no doubt impacted hers and the lives of daughters Tamara and Adana, who made the Mexico and U.S. trips.

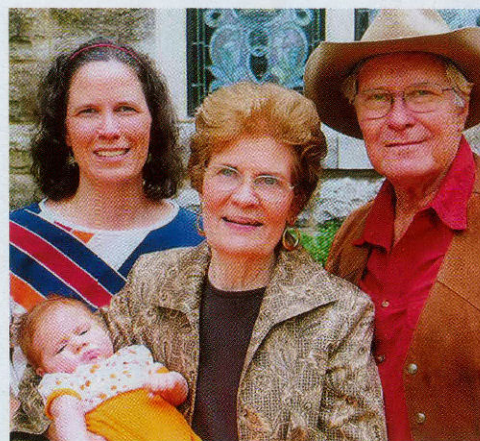
Doug Galbi, brother of Gibbs' son-in-law, Dwight, joined one of the treks. Galbi asked what to bring. Famous for providing extensive packing lists, Gibbs told Galbi one of the most important items was a yellow rubber ducky. Why? Because it would keep the crocodiles away, he replied. Galbi took his ducky, bathed in the river with it by his side and came back with all his limbs. And the professor added another story.

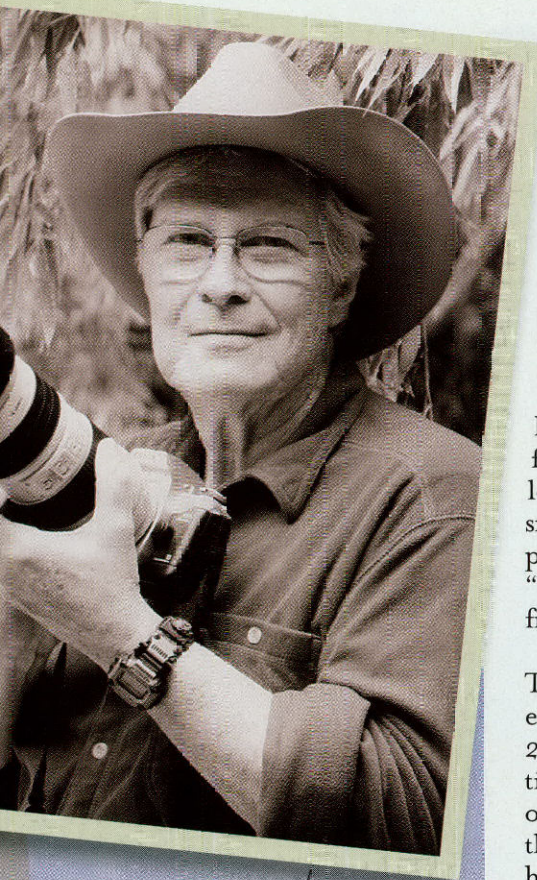
Tom Vinson, an Austin attorney, went on a South America trip, too. He spoke of Gibbs taking medical supplies to the Indians. The professor was a good Boy Scout, known to pack along everything he might need. Vinson said they were in the jungle looking for a jaguar cave when one of the girls fell, severely cutting her leg. A hundred miles from medical help, the resourceful Milliken treated the wound himself until they could get to a village clinic.

Vinson had met Milliken on Lake Austin. Dressed in safari clothes, Gibbs was fly-fishing for carp, using French fries for bait. It worked. He landed several. The professor held the state record for common carp for a while and still holds five water body records, including a 33-pound common carp and a 59-pound smallmouth buffalo both from Lady Bird Lake. All were



Top row: Gibbs' favorite hat; fishing in San Agustinillo, Mexico, in the fall of 2005; in a recent black-and-white portrait. Below: Gibbs made frequent trips to Port Aransas to fish for 45 years, and taught his grandson David to fish there in 2002 with daughter Adana. At far right, Gibbs takes out his beautiful, beloved wooden canoe. Below left, Gibbs and Marie with daughter Tamara and grandson Paul in 2006.





caught on a fly rod!

He observed carp congregating around waterfront restaurants, feeding on handouts, and decided they would also bite an artificial french fry. He fabricated one out of a strip of yellowed foam rubber, and it worked, too. The last time we were on the lake together, he told me he was planning to catch the state record near the Hula Hut.

That day, he was testing a long-handled dip net. As we carried his fine wooden canoe to the water, the long handle caught on a rock and snapped in two. Gibbs looked disappointed. Then he shrugged, and said, "Well, that's something I needed to find out before I wrote about it!"

Carp are not popular with most Texas fishermen, as Gibbs acknowledged in an article he wrote for the 2006 *TPW Outdoor Annual*. He questioned whether they were trash fish or trophies. So why did he fish for them? That was the sportsman in him. It was a challenge to hook one and land it. He approached hunting the same way; he didn't want it too easy, often hunting with a bow.

Marie said it well in describing what made him who he was: "The never-ending thirst for knowledge and the quest for the unique, the obscure, the unexplored, the overlooked — significant discoveries that may lay hidden in the paths less traveled."

You could see it in his art: finely detailed paintings of natural subjects — ants crawling across the canvas, a fly, sand and grass. He had even

painted moon surface pictures for NASA's Apollo Project. He was still painting at age 71 and had recently hired Austin architect Gus Voelzel to remodel his studio near the Pedernales River.

As well-traveled as he was, Marie says that 45 years of fishing trips to Port Aransas were probably their fondest memories. Tamara and Adana spoke of Port Aransas, trips to the Four Corners area and beyond, often with no defined destination and a slow driver who stopped to read every historical marker, so engrossed in his photography that he would forget to eat. Or find a place to spend the night. Once, the hotels were full when he got around to looking for lodging and the four slept in the Suburban with all Gibbs' gear.

In notes for an autobiography, he wrote, "Travel should be to expect the unexpected. Just be ready to adapt."

His brother-in-law, John Squires, fished with him at Port Aransas. They hadn't caught much and were down to two shrimp. Gibbs, like Babe Ruth, called his shot by saying, "John, watch this!" as he cast out and nailed a 24-inch trout. With the last shrimp, he yelled, "Now, watch this!" and landed a 26-inch redfish!

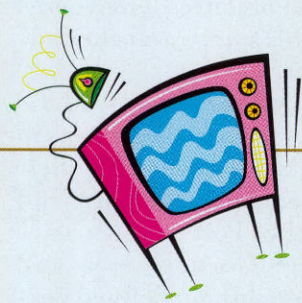
Squires says, "I knew at that point that Gibbs had a special place with the Almighty!"

If he isn't in Heaven, it's probably because he's still standing at the gate getting to know Saint Peter, maybe talking fishing.

And neither wants to quit. ☆



SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



THE FRONT LINE OF NEWS AND VIEWS



T E L E V I S I O N

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

Feb. 24-March 2:

Pro bass fishing on Lake Fork; the benefits of managed fire; migrating to Falcon State Park; sea grass; Texas reef fish.

March 2-9:

Stopping the invasion of exotic aquatics; driving the course at Lockhart State Park; habitat diversity on the Catto-Gage Ranch; returning black bear to its native range; Goose Island.

March 9-16:

Texas game wardens policing pollution; Purris Creek State Park canoeing; Cherry Springs WMA, working together; discovering nature in downtown Houston; the South Llano River.

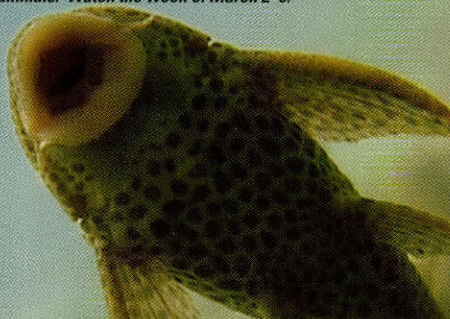
March 16-23:

Aransas whooping cranes; underwater educators; chilling at Lake Casa Blanca; LCRA's educational outreach; Davis Mountains views.

March 23-30:

Challenges facing the Rio Grande; Ray Roberts Lake State Park; conservation development in Rains County; enjoying the environment is elementary; shady waters of Flat Creek.

Learn about the growing threat of exotic aquatic plants and animals. Watch the week of March 2-9.



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ODESSA-MIDLAND: KPBT-TV, Ch. 36 / Sat. 4:30 p.m.

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AMARILLO: KACV-FM 89.9 / 12:23 p.m.

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CANTON: KRDH-AM 1510 / 9:20 a.m.

CARTHAGE: KGAS-AM 1590 / 12:30 p.m.; KGAS-FM 104.3 / 12:30 p.m.

CENTER: KDET-AM 930 / 5:27 p.m.; KOSI-FM 92.5 / 5:27 p.m.

CHALK HILL: KZQX-FM 104.7 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 p.m.

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DALLAS: KHYI-FM 95.3 / 6 a.m. Sat.; KXEZ-FM 92.1 / 7 a.m., 5 p.m.

DENTON: Apostle Internet Radio, www.apostleradio.org / 2:10 p.m.; AIR-tunZ.com, www.airtunz.com / 2:10 p.m.

DIMMITT: KDHN-AM 1470 / 10:30 a.m.

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EASTLAND: KEAS-AM 1590 / 6:50 a.m., 5:15 p.m.; KATX-FM 97.7 / 6:50 a.m., 5:15 p.m.

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FAIRFIELD: KNES-FM 99.1 / 6:47 a.m. Sat.

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KERRVILLE: KRNH-FM 92.3 / 5:31 a.m., 12:57 p.m., 7:35 p.m.; KERV-AM 1230 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 p.m., 6:42 p.m.; KRVL-FM 94.3 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 p.m., 6:42 p.m.

KILGORE: KZQX-FM 105.3 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 p.m.

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LAKE TRAVIS: KITY-FM 106.3 / 5:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m., 3:15 p.m., 9:15 p.m.

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MONAHANS: KCKM-AM 1330 / to be determined

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NACOGDOCHES: KSAU-FM 90.1 / 2:45 p.m.

NEW BRAUNFELS: KGNB-AM 1420 / 5:55 a.m.

ODESSA: KCRS-AM 550 / 5:50 p.m.; KOCV-FM 91.3 / 7:35 a.m.

OZONA: KYXX-FM 94.3 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 a.m., 6:42 p.m.

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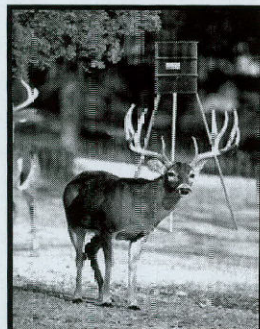
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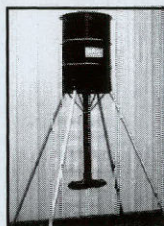
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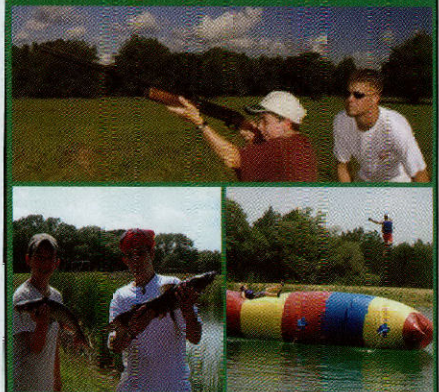
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HUNT

YMCA CAMP FLAMMINGARROW

A camp centered on core values with traditional activities on the Guadalupe river (fishing, hiking, nature studies, archery and canoeing) plus trail rides and weekly themes, such as "safari" and "super heroes."

WHO: Boys/girls; ages 6-17

WHAT: overnight camp

WHEN: one-, two-week sessions;

three-day starter sessions; June-

August

COST: \$200-\$1,005 (financial assistance)

CONTACT: (800) 765-9622,

(830) 238-4631

www.ymcacampflamingarrow.org

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: \$850-\$2,900

CONTACT: (830) 238-3753;

www.camparrowhead.com

HEART O' THE HILLS CAMP

Campers may choose nine activities from a list of more than 50, including canoeing, horseback riding and swimming in the Guadalupe River.

WHO: Girls; ages 6-16

WHAT: Overnight camp

WHEN: Nine-day, four-,

five-, eight-week

sessions; June-August

COST: \$1,450-\$7,175

CONTACT: (800) 724-7325,

(830) 238-4650;

www.hohcamp.com

CAMP STEWART

Riflery, Red Cross swimming, archery, horseback riding, tennis and nature study top the variety of activities at this camp on the Guadalupe River.

WHO: Boys; ages 6-16

WHAT: Overnight camp

WHEN: Two-, four-, eight-week sessions;

June-August

COST: \$1,450-\$7,175

CONTACT: (800) 724-7325,

(830) 238-4670;

www.campstewart.com

INGRAM

CAMP RIO VISTA

Campers can choose from more than 35 exciting activities — canoeing, kayaking, sailing, skiing, swimming, golf, land sports, horseback riding, and more!

Sister camp is Sierra Vista.

WHO: Boys; ages 6-16

WHAT: Overnight camp

WHEN: Two-, three- & four-week

sessions; June-August

COST: \$2,000-\$3,200

CONTACT: (800) 545-3233,

(830) 367-5353

www.vistacamps.com

CAMP SIERRA VISTA

Campers can choose from more than 35 exciting activities — canoeing, kayaking, sailing, skiing, swimming, dance & cheer, golf, land sports, horseback riding, and more!

Brother camp is Rio Vista.

WHO: Girls; ages 6-16

WHAT: Overnight camp

WHEN: Two-, three- & four-week

sessions; June-August

COST: \$2,000 - \$3,200

CONTACT: (800) 545-3233,

(830) 367-5353

www.vistacamps.com

KERRVILLE

KICKAPOO KAMP

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

WHO: Girls; ages 7-15

WHAT: Overnight camp

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

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

CONTACT: (830) 895-5731

www.kickapookamp.com

MEDINA

ECHO HILL RANCH

Horseback riding and swimming in spring-fed waters highlight activities here. There are also sports, nature study, backpacking and creative arts.

WHO: Boys/girls; ages 6-16

WHAT: Overnight camp

WHEN: One-week, three-week and four-week sessions; June-July

COST: \$1,025-\$3,200

CONTACT: (830) 589-7739,

(830) 589-2520

www.echohill.org

NEW BRAUNFELS

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.newkennis.com/outback_adventurecamp.html

SAN MARCOS

AQUATIC SCIENCES ADVENTURE CAMP

Curriculum immerses campers in aquatic biology and water chemistry activities, all led by research staff of Texas State University. Other activities include tubing, glass-bottom boat rides, scuba diving, snorkeling, rafting and swimming.

WHO: Boys/girls; ages 9-15

WHAT: Overnight & day camp

WHEN: Two-day, one-week

sessions; June-August

COST: \$120-\$595

CONTACT: (512) 245-2329

www.eardc.txstate.edu/camp.html

SPRING

CAMP PINE TREE (YMCA)

This camp hosts "mini" two-night sessions for first-time campers. Activities include horseback riding, canoeing, fishing, archery, crafts, swimming and hiking.

WHO: Boys/girls; ages 5-11

WHAT: Overnight camp, Mini (two night) sessions, and one-week sessions

WHEN: June-August

COST: \$284-\$411

CONTACT: (281) 353-6229;

www.ymacampinnetree.org

WIMBERLEY

HUNTERS CHASE FARMS

We have been teaching kids to love the horse and all the fun that goes along with it since 1988. They ride, care for the horse and swim daily.

The overnight campers become part

of the family and learn how our horse farm works from day to day.

We also do some arts and crafts, enjoy the country, good cooking and make life long friends. We have campers who come from all over the world. We love what we do and we know you will, too!!

WHO: Boys/girls; ages 6-17

WHAT: Overnight & day camp

WHEN: One-week sessions, see website for sessions

COST: \$250 & up

CONTACT: (512) 842-2246;

www.hunterschasefarms.com

ROCKY RIVER RANCH

Campers can swim in the Blanco River, ride horses, shoot rifles and rappel. Other activities include nature study, photography, crafts, kayaking & fishing.

WHO: Girls; ages 6-15

WHAT: Overnight camp

WHEN: One-, two-week sessions; June-August

COST: \$695-\$1,390

CONTACT: (800) 863-2267,

(512) 847-2513;

www.rockyriverranch.com

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Marketplace.

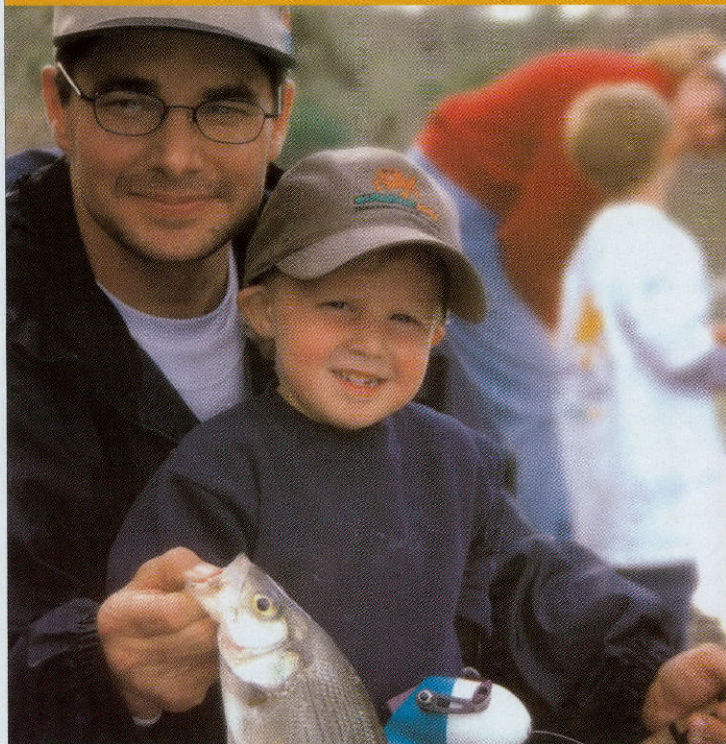
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Contact Jim Stone

(512) 912-7007

jim.stone@tpwd.state.tx.us

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www.tpwd.state.tx.us/freefishing
or call (512) 389-8040



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PARTING SHOT

This menacing creature is an adult antlion, photographed through the window pane of a door. Photographer Rolf Nussbaumer says he frequently finds interesting insects early in the morning near lights that have been left on all night.

IMAGE SPECS:

Nikon D2X (digital) with 200mm macro lens, f/4 aperture, f/stop 22, 1/8-second exposure.

HOME • FARM • RANCH

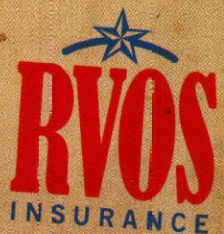
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