

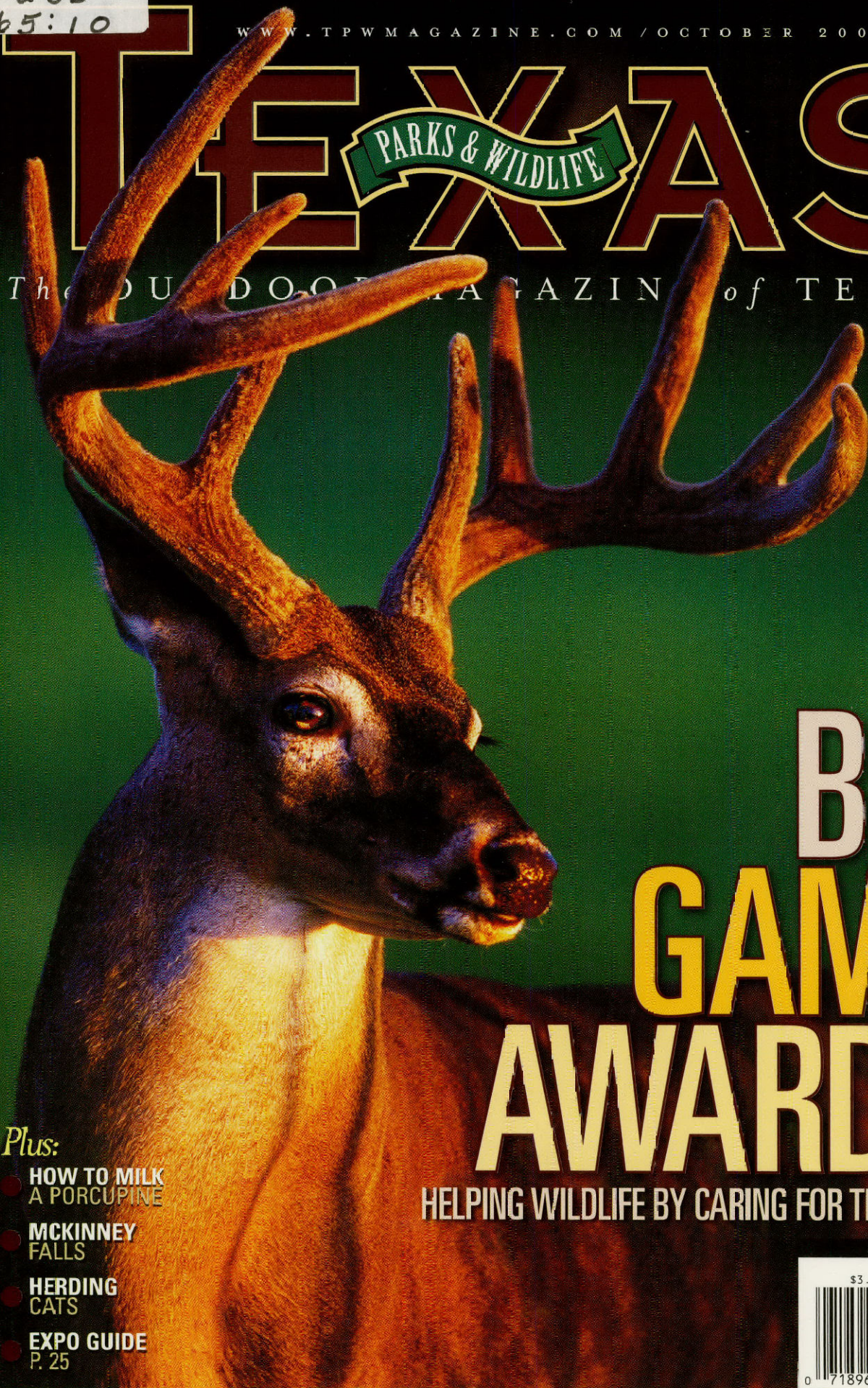
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THIS PAGE: Palo Duro Canyon. Photo © Lance Varnell.

Celebrating 65 Years

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THE OUTDOOR MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

OCTOBER 2007, VOL. 65, NO. 10

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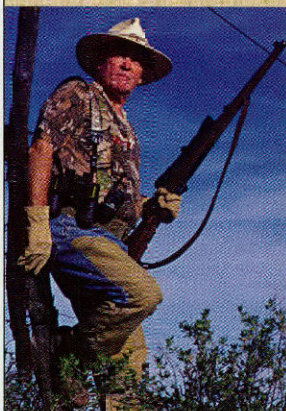
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In the Field

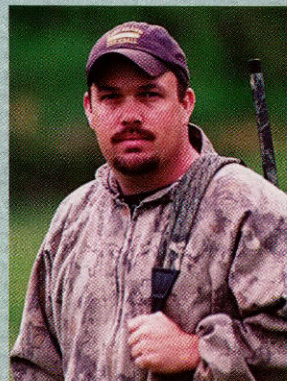
JOHN JEFFERSON has hunted, fished, camped and photographed in every region of Texas. He served as a state prosecutor, TPWD hunting regulations coordinator and information director before becoming executive director of the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society. John is author of *Hunters Guide to Texas* and co-author of *Texas Wildlife*, and has been



a freelance contributor to many regional hunting and fishing magazines. He currently edits the *Texas Parks & Wildlife Outdoor Annual*. He has served on the TPWD Hunting Advisory Committee and is past-president of the Texas Outdoor Writers' Association. When the Big Game Awards originated 16 years ago, John was asked to photograph the event, and he has been involved in the program ever since.

RUSSELL A. GRAVES says some of his earliest hunting recollections are from the times he was crouched around the edge of a field waiting for doves to pass. Since

he was 10 years old, he hasn't missed a dove season. Now 37, Russell spends his time taking his children afield and passing on the hunting heritage. Russell is a native of Decid City, but for the past 14 years has shared a Childress home with his wife, Kristy, and children Bailee (6) and Ryan (3). When he is not afield, Russell is an agricultural science teacher at Childress High School.



SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS, who writes the Scout features "Flora Fact," "Wild Thing" and "Park Pick," especially enjoyed learning about cochineal for this month's issue. She says she was amazed that the tiny insect has such an interesting history and heritage, which is

recounted in *A Perfect Red*. "I was so intrigued that I bought my own copy," says Sheryl, who lives in Blanco with her family. In her spare time, she and her husband, James Hearn, tend their yard, which was recently certified as a Texas Wildscape. Among their blue mist flowers, Sheryl battled a fuzzy pest that's a cousin to cochineal. "Mealybugs," she advises, "don't turn red when you squish 'em."



MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

FOREWORD

In case you haven't noticed, for the past couple of months we've been introducing some new elements in the Scout section. First, we started a series celebrating the magazine's 65th anniversary. We've struggled with how to mark this milestone. While it's certainly significant, the 65th just doesn't bring the same kind of giddy excitement as the 50th or 75th. Our society's celebratory impulses seem to have an uncanny connection to 25-year increments.

As a result, we decided to mark the 65th in a low-key way, with excerpts from the magazine's early years, when it was called *Texas Game and Fish*. It's interesting to see how many of the issues they were grappling with 50 or 60 years ago are still relevant today. This month, we look back at the threatened status of the white-winged dove in the 1940s.

We've also added Flora Fact and Wild Thing in the Scout section. This is partially in response to last year's reader's survey, which indicated that people wanted to learn more about native plants and wildlife. It's also due to the fact that I can't get enough of this type of article. I first learned of the cochineal bugs that live on prickly pear cactus a few months ago during a guided hike at Bright Leaf Park in Austin. The guide squished one of the little bugs to reveal the stuff used for red dye. Amazing.

I feel that one of the key roles of this magazine is to add meaning to everyday outdoor experiences, to give you a reason to look at a mockingbird or a prickly pear cactus in a new and different way. In addition, we're trying to time the articles in such a way that they will enhance your outdoor experiences *this month*. We'll feature plants when they're blooming or producing fruit, animals when they're migrating or courting mates or doing something else that might make them more visible at a particular time.

Finally, we're adding a monthly Park Pick to the Scout section. Instead of simply listing a park's amenities, we'll focus on reasons to visit a given park this month. It might be a class, a seminar, a guided hike or something seasonal, such as a bird influx or fall color.

We are acutely aware of the fact that you have many other sources available to meet your outdoor information needs. With the explosion of the Web, cable TV and — gasp — other outdoor magazines, we know we have to compete for your attention. I hope you like the changes. As always, feel free to contact me directly (robert.macias@tpwd.state.tx.us) if you have any suggestions for ways to make the magazine more entertaining, informative, inspiring or just plain useful.

Robert Macias

ROBERT MACIAS
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

LETTERS

KUDOS TO RETIRING BOB COOK

Congratulations and kudos to Bob Cook for a job well done! As the executive director of TPWD, he faced some daunting tasks with severely curtailed budgets and resources. His heart

has first and foremost been in helping all the people of Texas to better enjoy the wonderful natural bounty of this great state. His positions were not always popular with all the elected officials in Austin, but he was ready to stand up for what he felt was right, and for that I commend him.

I'm going to miss his At Issue column. There are many nuggets of wisdom sprinkled throughout his writing. Those nuggets always managed to get me thinking about things. His writings always reminded me of how fortunate we are to have access to all that we have in Texas, and

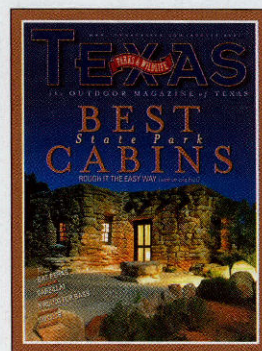
how important it is that we work to conserve and protect what nature has given us. So, after 42 years on the job serving hunters, fishermen, campers, birders, conservationists and environmentalists alike, I wish Bob Cook many more years of enjoyment in the outdoors he has worked so hard to protect.

DALE WILLARD

Katy

EDITOR'S NOTE: With Executive Director Bob Cook's retirement in August, the At Issue column usually found on this page is temporarily on hiatus. It will resume after a new executive director is selected.

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[Bob Cook's] heart has first and foremost been in helping all the people of Texas to better enjoy the wonderful natural bounty of this great state. ... I'm going to miss his At Issue column.

Dale Willard
Katy

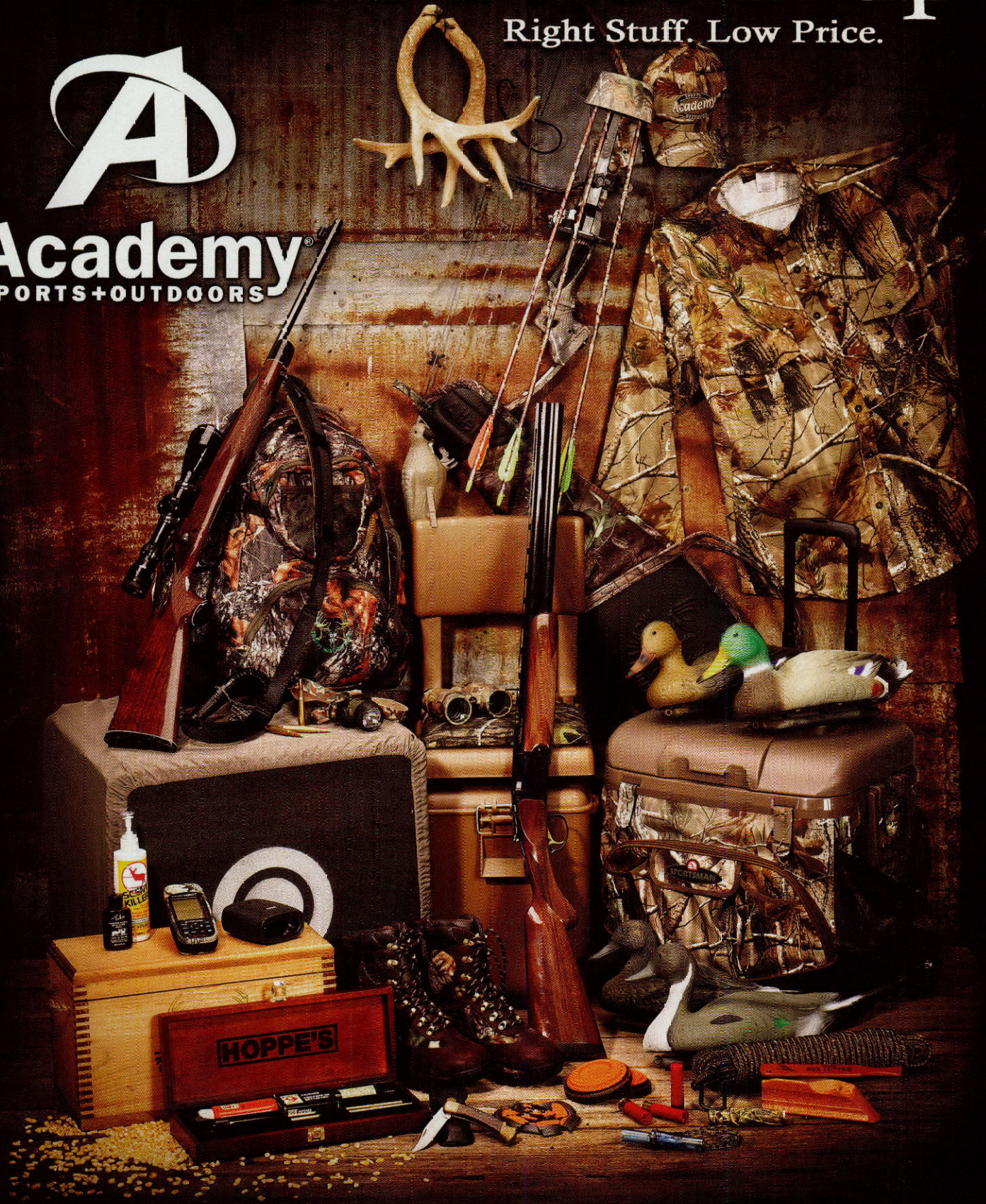
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MAIL CALL

continued from page 6

DID YOU CATCH ANYTHING?

When I first saw your article about removing fish hooks ("Troubles with Trebles," September 2007), I started to laugh. A few years back, probably 40, my two boys and I were fishing a small lake in Wisconsin where we had a summer place. We were fishing the shoreline for bass and blue gills in an 18-foot canoe, with me in the back. I was casting into the back end of holes in pond lily beds, swimming the line across the hole. When the line was about to get hung up, I would raise the rod and lift it out over the lillies. It would sail at us and land in the water on the other side of the canoe.

One time, the lure started at us and did not go over. It hit me in the left elbow and embedded one barb in my elbow. My son (reluctantly) came back, pressed on both sides of the barb, and the hook came through. We cut it off with side cutters and kept on fishing.

Driving back to the cabin, we stopped at a gas station and the proprietor asked us if we had caught anything. My son, who should be a stand-up comedian instead of a hotshot store display designer said, "Yeah, we caught three bass, some blue gills and a 145-pound loudmouth!"

Very nice magazine!

JACOB E. WAY
San Angelo

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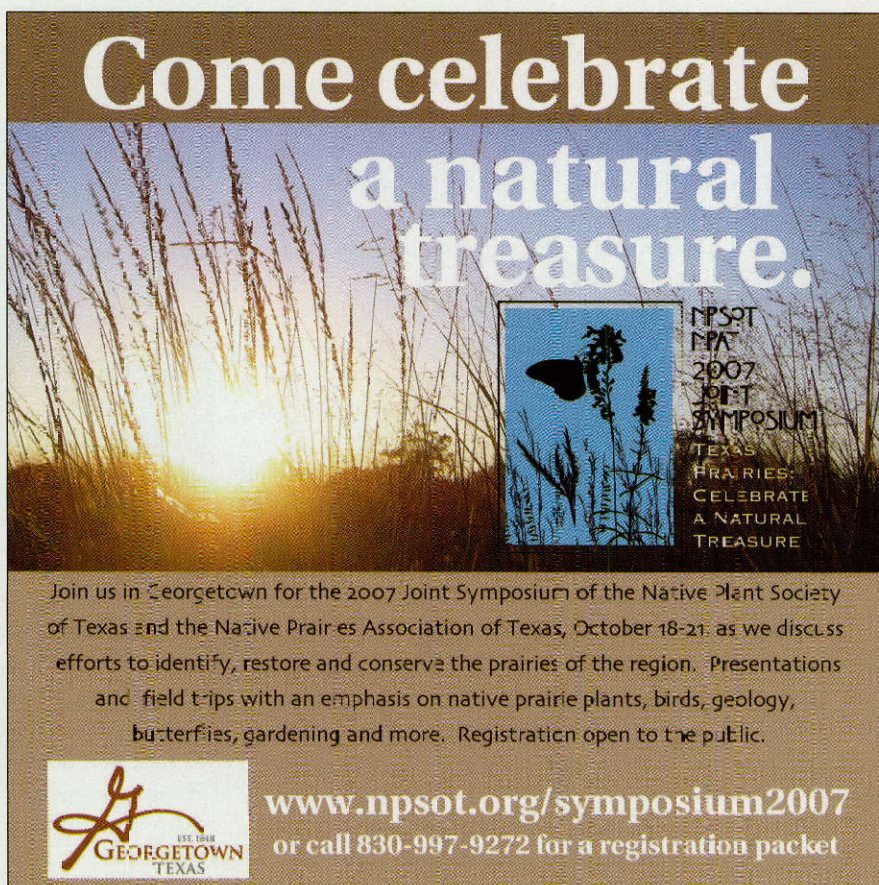
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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

HUNTERS FOR THE HUNGRY

Instead of letting venison sit in the freezer, donate the meat to someone who really needs it.

Sharing the bounty from a successful hunt is an integral part of the hunting experience. In Texas, where white-tailed deer populations in some areas exceed the capacity of the land to support them, there is plenty of bounty to pass around.

In those instances when the larder is packed full of venison, hunters are donating their excess meat to help feed the hungry through a program called Hunters for the Hungry. Initiated in 1990 through a collaborative effort among hunger-relief agencies, avid hunters and state government agencies, Hunters for the Hungry offers a convenient way to donate extra venison to help feed people in need.

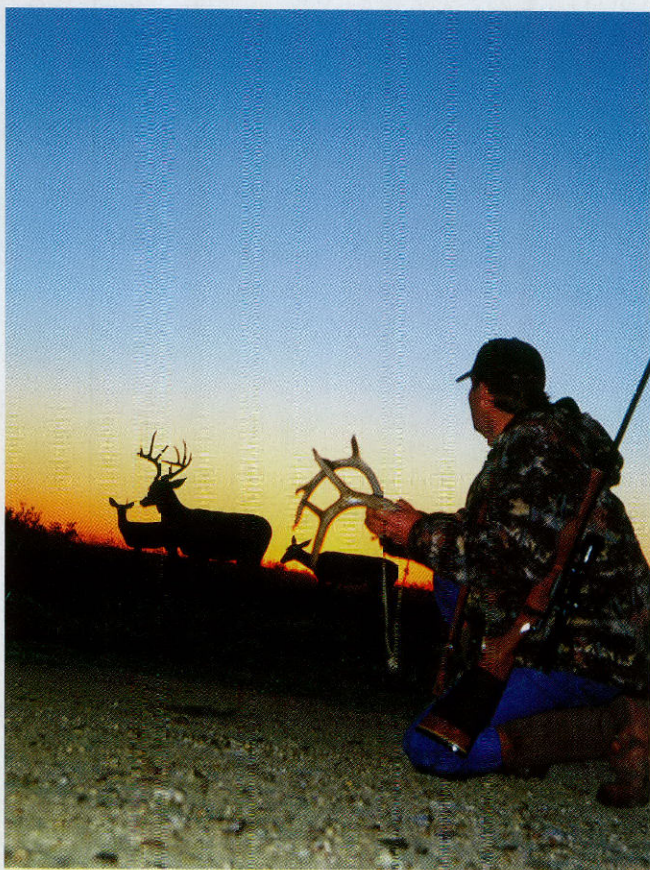
Most families in Texas have an abundance of food available, but for one in six Texas households, food is not plentiful. More than 60 percent of surveyed food assistance agencies have reported an increase in the number of people seeking food and the most needed food group is protein. Venison is a very good source of protein and has roughly one-half the fat (by weight) of beef.

Hunters for the Hungry bridges the gap between the field and the table. Hunters take their legally harvested deer to a participating meat processor, who then will process and package the meat for a nominal fee to cover basic costs. Meat processors make arrangements with local food assistance agencies to distribute the meat to people in the community who need food.

Last season, hunters donated about 176,000 pounds of lean, high-protein venison to the program through 90 participating meat processors in 65 counties. Since the program's inception, more than 1.5 million pounds of processed venison have been donated by Texas hunters.

"Hunters for the Hungry provides a valuable service for hunters and landowners who have too much of a good thing," said Clayton Wolf, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department big game program director. "Because it is illegal for a hunter to waste harvested venison, this program provides an appropriate option to make use of the meat. We encourage landowners we work with to participate in this program."

This year, besides donations of game, Hunters for the Hun-



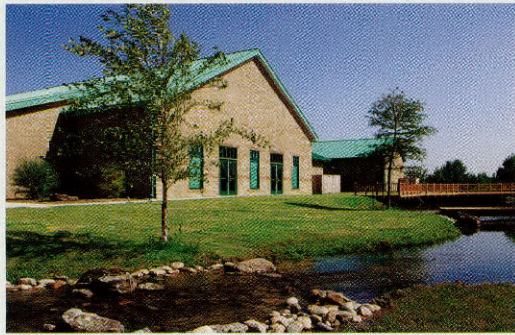
↑ About 162,000 pounds of lean, high-protein venison was donated to Hunters for the Hungry last hunting season.

gry also needs financial contributions. The Texas Association of Community Action Agencies has administered Hunters for the Hungry in Texas with federal Community Food and Nutrition Program funds for years. Congress zeroed out this funding stream, so Hunters for the Hungry must now raise money to continue the program. To donate to the Hunters for the Hungry program, visit www.taca.org/hunters.htm or call (800) 992-9767, extension 506. ★

—Steve Lightfoot

New Conservation Center

Outdoor education gets a big boost with a 14,000-square-foot facility in Athens.



About 250 people gathered at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens April 12 for the official opening of the Richard M. Hart and Johnny Morris Conservation Center, which houses classroom space, offices, a conference center and a game warden museum.

Funding for the \$2.1 million facility came from private sources. Leading the fundraising effort was Richard M. "Dick" Hart of Dallas, who organized Schooling for Bass as a unit of the Friends of TFFC. "In Texas, the volunteer program really works. You ask

for people's help, and they respond," Hart said. "A 14,000-square-foot building anywhere wouldn't raise an eyebrow, but a 14,000-square-foot building for outdoor education should raise two eyebrows. To my knowledge, there is nothing else like it in the United States."

Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris provided \$650,000 for construction in the form of a challenge grant. The 1986 state record largemouth bass was given to Bass Pro Shops for display in its store in Springfield, Missouri.

"That fish was one of our biggest motivations for support for this building," Morris noted. "She was the best thing that ever happened to Bass Pro Shops, as far as getting people in there. She was an awesome tribute to the efforts here and an unbelievable inspiration to a lot of folks."

Morris also praised TPWD for its

management of natural resources.

"When it comes to managing fish and wildlife, TPWD does an incredible job, and it goes beyond Texas," he said. "What happens in Athens at this facility has a huge impact on the outdoors, on fishing and especially on bass fishing. Our support for this was not inspired by the opportunity to make a speech or have our name on a plaque. It comes with high hopes for the future that you will keep on inspiring everybody, especially the next generation, to enjoy the outdoors and to have respect for fish and wildlife."

"The center is the next step, our next big challenge. Having this building will give us the opportunity to do a much better job of education," said Allen Foshaige, director of the center.

For more information, visit <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tffc> or call (903) 676-2277. ★

—Larry D. Hodge

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61 Years Ago in Texas Game and Fish

The now-abundant white-winged dove was on the verge of being wiped out in the 1940s.

White-winged doves have long been a favorite game bird for Texas hunters, but in the early 1940s, concerns focused more on how to keep the birds alive than on how to kill or cook them. In response to a severe population decline, the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission (predecessor of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) launched several initiatives — including shortened seasons and habitat restoration — that eventually led to the whitewing flourishing once again.

From the September 1946 issue of *Texas Game and Fish*:

Billions of White-winged Doves

The story of the white-winged dove is getting to be an old story to so many Texans. Even so, it is not being told enough. We are still fighting a losing battle in their conservation and too many people have not yet heard. If history repeats itself, the last whitewing could fall before a shotgun amid the clamoring voices of the too many hunters who will still be demanding a bigger bag limit and a longer season.

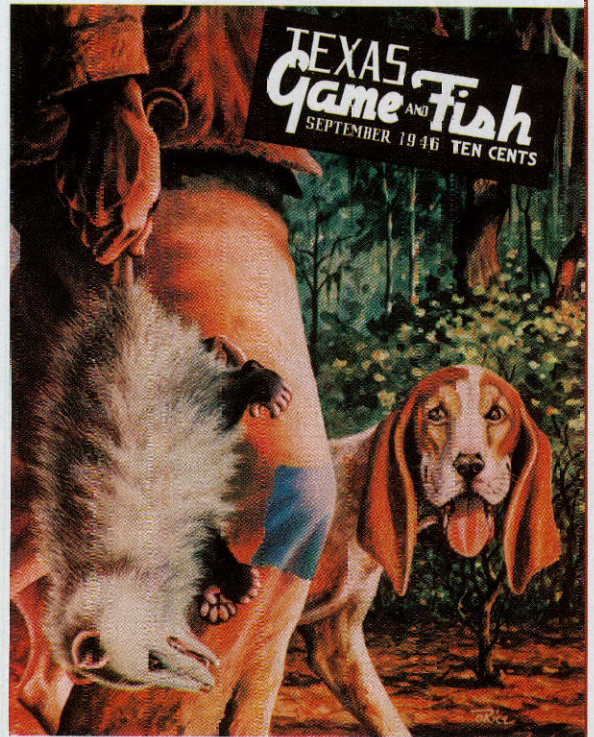
When your State Game Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated an extensive study of the whitewing's status in 1939, we were set on discovering the factors that had caused a great reduction of the population in Texas. Substantial reports indicated that there had been a minimum of 5,000,000 birds about 1920 to compare with only a

half million in the late 1930s. We have a reasonably complete picture now.

During the period involved, approximately 90 percent of the brushland used for nesting in the Rio Grande Valley was cleared for vegetable and fruit farming. Consequently, many thousands of birds found themselves without adequate breeding range.

The remaining nesting areas became highly congested. Concentrations of white-on wings ran as high as 500 pairs of birds per acre! Predators and disease found happy hunting in such an overcrowded population. Records on several thousand nests revealed that each pair of birds had to lay an average of five eggs before one squab could be raised to 15 days of age, at which time the young birds are barely old enough to leave the nest.

Hunting has increased annually as the population decreased and the popularity of the whitewing spread. From an unlimited season and an insignificant kill in early South Texas, we had an open season of only five half-days in 1945 and a kill of half of our birds in Texas! A cattleman with only 60 percent calf crop would not



Cover art from the September 1946 issue of *Texas Game and Fish* magazine.

stay in business long if he sold 50 percent of his herd each year without respect to sex. It is the same story with whitewings.

We killed too many birds last year, about twice as many as we should if we now intend to regain some of our lost breeding stock. Do not forget, either, that nesting grounds are still being destroyed and that there is no practical way to stop it. Nor, as our experiments have shown, is it a simple matter to maintain effective control of the production of young, for our best efforts against nature in this ill-balanced respect give only minor returns. Winning in the fight to save the whitewings in the face of such odds will take more aid than we personally can give but there is no question but that we can give more than in the past.

—Jon Lucksinger

Editor's note: This is the fourth installment in an eight-part series commemorating the 65th anniversary of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine (formerly *Texas Game and Fish*). ★

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Fall Flyers

Head south for butterfly season at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley.

Park naturalist Jim Booker chuckles when he recalls where butterfly enthusiasts observed an unusual species last spring at the World Birding Center headquarters at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park.



Join birdwatchers at the Bentsen Big Sit on October 14, counting species for 18 hours as part of a nationwide event.

"They found it roosting outside on one of our men's bathrooms," he says.

Discovery of the Fritzgaertner's flat (*Celaenorrhinus fritzgaertneri*) was a rare find for Bentsen's lush gardens, planted with mistflower, Turk's cap, lantana and other butterfly favorites. The park — which is home to hundreds of butterfly species — also boasts first U.S. sightings of a beautiful beamer (*Phocides belus*), thick-tipped Greta (*Greta morgane*) and painted white (*Pierballia viardi*).

Could more records be set this fall? Stay tuned as butterflies from across the nation gather in Mission for the 12th annual Texas Butterfly Festival. The four-day extravaganza will feature guest speakers, seminars, children's activities, a butterfly expo and a parade.

Daily field trips will escort folks to

nearby butterfly hotspots, including Bentsen, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and the North American Butterfly Association's International Butterfly Park. Several residential gardens in Mission will be showcased, too.

Throughout the year, butterflies along with birders and nature enthusiasts flock to 760-acre Bentsen, which draws approximately 370 bird species. More than six miles of trails — dotted with bird feeding and water stations — wind through the park's resaca woodlands and thorny brushlands. Bentsen also offers a two-story observation tower, observation decks, enclosed bird blinds and a birding wall.

If you'd rather not walk, take the free, open-air tram along a 2.5-mile route. Afterward, tour the headquarters' exhibit hall and gift shop. A coffee bar offers drinks and snacks. Primitive campsites are available by reservation only.

Can't make the butterfly festival? Bentsen's monthly nature outings this fall include butterfly walks each Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Bring binoculars, a field guide, sunscreen and water. Other weekly programs focus on the park's resident birds, dragonflies and damselflies, hawks, flora and fauna, and nocturnal wildlife. Call ahead for reservations.

Join the Bentsen Big Sit, when the park's team hunkers down for 18 hours in one spot and counts bird species. The nationwide noncompetitive birding event — coordinated by *Bird Watcher's Digest* — starts at 4 a.m. Sunday, October 14.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park is located five miles southwest of Mission on Bentsen Palm Drive (FM 2062). For more information, call (956) 585-1107 or visit <www.worldbirdingcenter.org/sites/mission>.

The Texas Butterfly Festival runs October 18-21. For more information, call the Greater Mission Chamber of Commerce at (800) 580-2700 or visit <www.texasbutterfly.com>. ★

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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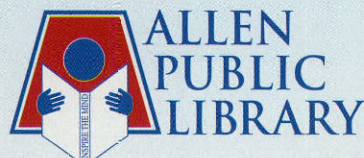
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Bug in Your Punch

An insect called the cochineal, once prized by the Aztecs, is now the source of red dye used in foods, beverages and even makeup.

What does our state plant — the prickly pear cactus — share in common with selected brands of strawberry yogurt, fruit punch and powdered blush?

You might be surprised to know that it's a bug.

The next time you're out hiking, get up

close to a prickly pear pad and look for white cottony splotches. They conceal female cochineal (*Dactylopius coccus*), a scale insect that resembles a mealybug. When squashed, these peppercorn-sized parasites ooze carminic acid, a bright crimson liquid that's dried and used to produce a red dye.



↑ These peppercorn-sized parasites secrete carminic acid, used to make red dye.

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Female cochineal live 90 to 120 days; winged males mature, mate prolifically and die within a week.

Ancient Aztecs farmed cochineal to color fabrics and pottery. As emperor, Montezuma claimed the most brilliant shades of red for his robes and even imposed a cochineal tax. In 1519, Spanish conquistadors shipped bags of dried cochineal from Mexico to Spain, which then monopolized supplies. Other countries wanted the pigment, too, but the Spanish went to great lengths to conceal the source of the dye from the rest of the world. For centuries, most people didn't even know whether the red powder was derived from a plant or an animal. The ensuing period of international espionage is recounted in *A Perfect Red: Empire, Espionage, and the Quest for the Color of Desire* (published by Harper Perennial), an intriguing read by Amy Butler Greenfield.

Today, Peru produces more than 1,200 tons of cochineal annually, 85 percent share of the world's demand. Roughly 70,000 dried insects yield one pound of powdered carminic acid, the agent used to color foods, cosmetics, medicines and textiles. On product labels, it's listed as "carmine" and "cochineal extract." ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

PHOTO © J.C. ABBOTT



Catclaw's Many Lives

The prickly plant's pollen is used to make light honey, and a coarse meal made from its seeds was once a staple in Native American foods.

Brush against a catclaw acacia (*Acacia greggii*), and — ow! — you'll find out why this native shrub deserves its name. Along its slender branches are backward-curving spines that look — and snag — just like a cat's claws. As you're untangling yourself from its clutches, you may even holler another of the plant's common names: "Wait-a-minute!"

Often found on dry mesas, along canyons and in gullies, catclaw grows in dense thickets that provide safe habitat and nesting sites for wildlife and birds. Scaled quail eat the seeds while jackrabbits and cattle dine on young catclaw leaves when other food is scarce.

Humans know how to put catclaw to epicurean use, too. Native Americans once ground the legumes into coarse meal called *pinole*, from which they

made mush and cakes. Catclaw flowers — which bloom April through May in fragrant, creamy-yellow clusters — attract bees and other insects. Beekeepers in Uvalde County produce light-colored honey from catclaw and other acacia species.

A scale insect known as a lac

(*Tachardia lacca*) feeds on catclaw sap and secretes a sticky substance that's used to make shellac. In Texas, lac bug numbers aren't abundant enough to make lacquer production viable. Besides, who wants to get clawed in the process of harvesting branches? ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers



Native Americans ate the catclaw's legumes; its creamy pale yellow flowers (inset) attract bees.

Goodbye, weeds.



Hello, trophy.



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Six Tips for More Doves

Scouting, practice and sensible shots make all the difference.

September 1 may be the most popular day in all of Texas outdoors. Friends and family from all walks of life take to the dove fields across Texas in pursuit of the winged rockets. Even with all those hunters afield, the stakes are still tilted in the dove's favor. Their penchant for fast, zig-zagging flight makes them a formidable game animal. Most shots people take at doves never connect. Some people may never get very many shots because they're hunting in all the wrong spots.

Don't fret. Success in the dove field doesn't always happen by chance. Like any other style of hunting, a little bit of preparation goes a long way.

Scout faithfully

My dove season starts a couple of weeks before September 1 as I head afield looking for doves. I search for possible roosting and feeding areas. Doves love to rest on barbed-wire fences and high-line wires, so if you can find them congregating in any appreciable numbers, there's a good bet that food or roost trees are near.

During dry years, doves are bound to be close by anywhere you can find water, as they fly to and from troughs and stock ponds to drink.

Find the food

Doves need lots of energy to survive, so they are constantly feeding during the day. Since they dine on small seeds, likely spots to find birds are in sunflower patches, harvested hay patches or har-

vested milo fields. The simple rule is: If you find the food, you can find doves.

Practice

A bit of practice can add a great social element to your dove season. A few friends and a box of clay targets is all it takes to hone your skills before opening day. For less than \$20, you can buy a box of clay targets, an inexpensive thrower and a box of shells.

Practice all sorts of scenarios. Have the birds launched towards you and across from each side. By varying the flight paths, you can learn some valuable skills in making a variety of field shots.

Wear camouflage

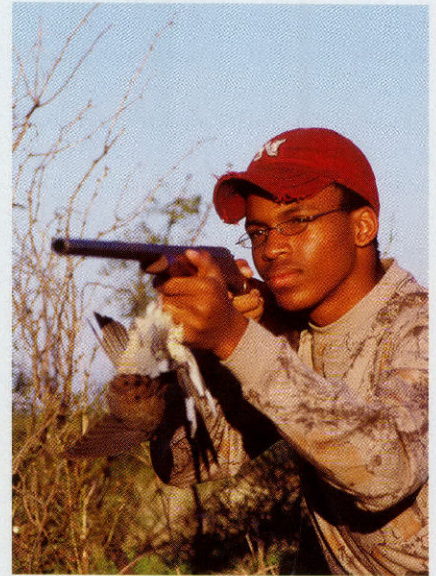
Doves have great eyesight. In fact, if you sit out in the open in a dove field, you'll see dove flare away from you if you are wearing everyday clothing. Therefore, wear camouflage.

Although some dress from head to toe in camouflage, that isn't always necessary. Usually, jeans paired with a long sleeve camouflage T-shirt and cap suffices. The trick for effective camouflage is to situate yourself in the shade of a tree or behind some other cover to help break up your outline.

Use decoys

Doves are somewhat social game birds. They congregate in flocks as they feed, roost and fly.

Take advantage of that innate behavior and use decoys. Dove decoys are cheap. Just about any sporting goods store car-



Practice before hunting to help make a variety of field shots.

ries them right before the opening day of dove season, and they usually run just a few dollars apiece. The best decoys are ones manufactured with clothespin-type clips on the bottom. These clips make it easy to put the decoys on barbed-wire fences, in dead mesquite trees or anywhere doves like to congregate.

Make high-percentage shots

I read a statistic once that the average dove hunter fires 10 shells for every bird he hits. That's only a 10 percent success rate! Granted, doves fly erratically and are hard to hit, but you can improve your odds by taking high-percentage shots.

Generally, high-percentage shots are when a bird is either crossing in front of you or flying towards your position, and when it is close. I always find that birds quartering are a bit harder, as are birds coming from behind me.

Keep in mind the altitude of the bird as well. Don't waste shells on high-flying birds, as they are more difficult to hit. The greater the distance between you and a dove, the more you will have to lead it to take a shot. Naturally, the more you have to lead a bird, the harder it is to hit. So, as a bird is flying toward you, wait a second or two longer before taking the shot. ★

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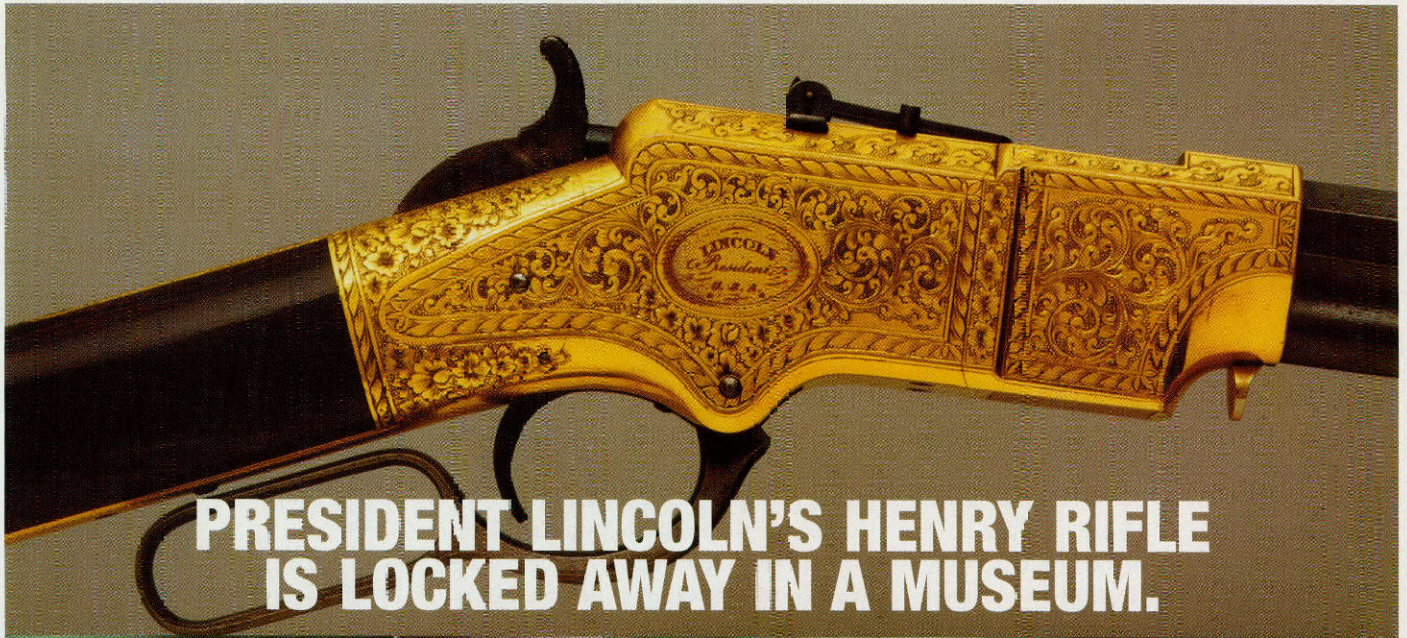




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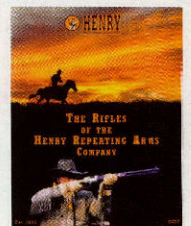


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Field jackets include the traditional tropical safari style, the tactical military type and the cold weather parka. This functional outerwear has been evolving for more than a century. First came jackets of light khaki-dyed cotton, then waterproof wax-impregnated poplin, and finally high-tech breathable synthetic fabrics. Many of the newest jackets are lighter weight, better insulated and convertible for variations in weather and climate.

Designed by the famous U.S. Naval Air Commander Burt Avedon, the **Beretta Kalahari Safari Jacket** has a traditional belted style for the tropics, with many features for hunters, naturalists, photographers and adventurers. This durable cotton twill jacket, treated with Teflon fabric protector, resists stains on the light-colored khaki. It has reinforced bellows pockets to carry extra ammunition, camera lenses and field guides. Pivot-cut sleeves and gussets allow free movement; functional epaulets on the shoulders secure the straps of binoculars and cameras during field activities. (\$120, Kalahari Jacket, field tan, Beretta, 301-283-2191, www.berettausa.com)

The **Cabela's Women's Travel Parka** is a fine-quality modern version of the bush jacket. The peach-finished soft microfiber fabric is light and packs into a small stuff-bag with a carry strap. The Teflon-coated shell sheds rain and also features a two-way zippered front with snap closure, removable hood, inside security pocket, side-entry hand-warmer pockets and a belted waist tie. (\$79.95, Women's Travel Parka, herb green, Cabela's, 800-237-4444, www.cabelas.com)

Warm, but without weight, the **North Face Denali Parka** is a sporty winter coat for women that can be worn as a shell or layered for bitter cold. It is perfect for daily wear, outdoor sports and travel. Made of synthetic Polartec 300 fabric, this highly breathable jacket has abrasion-reinforced shoulders and elbows, a vertical chest pocket, two hand pockets, elastic-bound cuffs and hem cinch cord. (\$165, Women's Denali Parka, oasis blue/seal gray, North Face, (866-715-3223, www.thenorthface.com)

Unmatched for features, the **Bass Pro 100**

MPH Rain Parka is a rugged Gore-Tex windproof/waterproof jacket that will handle the most hostile elements. It has a tuck-away or zip-off visored hood with Velcro chin cover and elastic drawcords. Special locking pulls cinch the parka around your seat, blocking out wind and rain. Also featured are a 5-inch fleece collar and full-length Velcro front storm flap sealing the exterior and interior zippers. It has two Velcro closing storm-flap bellows pockets with side-entry fleece hand-warmer pockets plus D-rings for accessories, internal zippered security pocket, contrasting reinforced elbow pads and nylon lining. Sleeves have an inner neoprene cuff with Velcro closure for dry dipping into the bait well or cold water to land a fish or downed waterfowl. (\$229.95, 100 MPH Parka, red, Bass Pro Shops, 800-277-7776, www.basspro.com)

The **Cabela's Space Rain Ultra Pack Full-Zip Jacket** is light, packs small and serves as an excellent breathable camo shell for wet weather hunting protection, with room for layering in a changing climate. (\$64.95, Space Rain Ultra Pack Jacket, Model: #71S-960048, Max I Open Terrain HD camo, Cabela's)

When the cold wind's whistling, nothing's quite as warm as real goose down. **Beretta's Down Shooting Jacket** features double-bagged 80/20 filling with a non-reflective nylon finish. Shoulders have leather-padded gun patches for the right- or left-handed shooter. Two large, easy-access bottom pockets with elastic loops keep your shells organized, while your hands find warmth in a pair of leather-trimmed chest pockets. Inside security pockets keep your valuables safe. The cuffs adjust to your arm length; the rear utility pouch has a convenient Velcro closure. When afternoons get warm, use the removable interior Beretta braces to carry your jacket hanging free. (\$145, Beretta Down Shooting Jacket, earth green, McBride's, 512-472-3532, www.mcbridesguns.com)

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B. Cabela's Women's Travel Parka
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3 Days in the Field / By Eileen Mattei

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Scooping History

A group of retirees learns that if you really want to dig into Fort Chadbourne's past, you have to get your hands dirty.

RVs face west in a rough semicircle around Fort Chadbourne's parade grounds and restored barracks as my husband and I pull up next to five military service flags flapping in the damp breeze. We are joining a group of military retirees who are spending two weeks at this 1852 frontier fort, located between San Angelo and Abilene, participating in a dig under the direction of the Concho Valley Archeological Society.

The Army established Fort Chadbourne to protect settlers from Indian raids, sending companies out to patrol and guard wagon trains. The frontier's westward shift and the fort's unreliable water supply led to its abandonment by 1873. The fort became part of the O-D Ranch when Thomas Odum and his son Garland moved 30,000 head of cattle here in 1876. The family's presence — particularly a third generation notorious for running off trespassers with a Colt .45 — kept Fort Chadbourne from being scavenged.

The barracks, warmed by a fireplace burning fragrant cedar, has been authentically restored, down to the old window glass and the square-head nails in the floor planks. Fourteen couples, who belong to the Special Military Active Retired Traveler Club, introduce themselves and invite us to a potluck dinner. Roger Meyer, his long white beard part of his Shriners' Santa Claus persona, fills us in on the first week's progress in excavating the ruins known as the Double Officers' Quarters. The red sandstone, dogtrot-style building had also been the O-D Ranch headquarters until it burned down in 1920. "We've learned where the kitchen was and where the kids played. It blows my mind that you can scratch the dirt and write the history of that old building." Meyer says that over 30,000 artifacts, including nails and glass fragments, have been uncovered and logged in.

Garland Richards, the great-great-grandson of Garland Odum, recalls when the ranch stored oats and saddles in this barracks, which is next to the ruins of the Butterfield Stage Depot. In 1999 Garland and his wife, Lana, decided to preserve and protect the fort by establishing the Fort Chadbourne Foundation, which began stabilizing the remaining structures. Half the money donated to the foundation has gone to research archives, although research has yet to turn up a definitive fort layout, according to Larry Riemenschneider, the dig's project director and archaeological steward, who is a farmer in nearby Miles. "You'd think the military would have kept better records."

Garland and Lana allow my husband and me to stay in the fort's recently restored, two-room Fountain House. Thick, bullet-pocked walls scratched with 125-year-old graffiti dominate the high-ceilinged main room, while the small bedroom includes a tin bathtub and a distinct frontier ambiance.

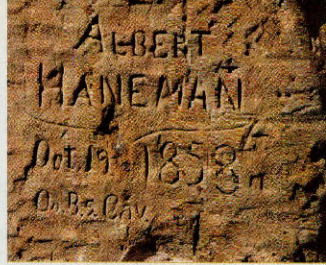
In the morning, Riemenschneider explains that the excavation is revealing where the windows, walls and doors stood, as well as unearthing the debris of ranch and fort life: shell casings, crockery, coins. Because last night's storm soaked the dig site, after breakfast the group sits at plastic-covered tables for lab work: sorting through bags of artifacts, carefully identified by the 4-inch layer of the grid where they were found, and labeling fragments of crockery.

While everyone is busy cleaning shards and painting on identifying numbers, I slip out under scudding clouds to walk the ruins beckoning me from the Fort's highest points. In its day (1852-1861 and 1868-1873), the whitewashed walls of the fort were visible for up to 20 miles across the nearly treeless plains. Today, the rubble of the post hospital perches on a rise, and the commanding officer's home sits even higher up, topped by cactus, rimmed by butterweed.

Raised on *Rin Tin Tin* and *F-Troop*, I assumed all frontier forts had protective walls. Not in Texas — other than Fort Parker. Garland describes Fort Chadbourne as a trading post and a buffer zone, protecting Indians from settlers and vice versa. At its peak, 400



The ruins of the main structure at Fort Chadbourne, established in 1852 and now the focus of restoration efforts.



Clockwise from top left: the Fort Chadbourne archaeological site; cavalry soldiers passed the time by carving their names in the fort's sandstone rocks; Garland Richards holds a piece of pottery hand-signed by his great-grandmother, Edna Odom; dirt sifted through screens reveals glass bottles, a crockery shard, a metal handle and a square nail.

soldiers were stationed here, while roughly 6,000 soldiers rotated through the fort. Their buttons and broken cups fell through the gaps between the floor planks to become artifacts for later generations.

The Fort Chadbourne Foundation aims to balance common sense and historical authenticity, Garland says. "I'm a West Texas rancher trying to take a project that is historically significant and give it back to the U.S., to Texas. I've been taught all my life to patch it up and make it last one more year. What we did was patch up Fort Chadbourne to make it last 100 more years," despite the historical architect who told the rancher it was impossible to straighten the Fountain House and barracks walls. Garland, who refused to remove stones laid by soldiers 150 years ago and even travelers' graffiti, applied ranch ingenuity and got the walls straightened. Now visitors take free, self-guided tours.

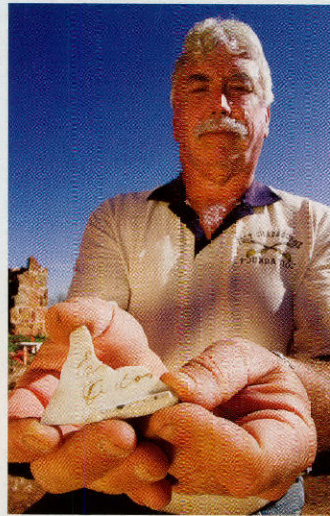


By lunchtime, we're itching to dig, even if it means kneeling in damp dirt and then hauling small color-coded buckets of wet earth to the matching color-coded screeners. Riemenschneider assigns us to one-meter-square sections, and thanks to a laser level, we see exactly how far each team is supposed to scrape down with small garden trowels. The Concho Valley Archeological Society shares its supply of knee pads, gloves and buckets, while the Richardses keep us supplied with water and shade. "Almost everyone has bad knees. We pray too much," jokes Bob Lederer, retired from the Army and lawyering.

Like a regiment of gardeners in straw hats and baseball caps, the group works the earth carefully, sometimes spotting a pocket knife handle or harmonica parts or a sardine can used for target practice. But the real finds show up when a bucket of dirt is dumped onto the elevated screen and shaken. I help finger through the rocks and clods, snatching up dirt-coated metal buttons and crockery shards. Fred and Lorey Meister man a sifting table, shaking and troweling the dirt through the screen. "Here's a piece to match that other one," Lorey says, pinching out a blue pottery shard. A magnet on a stick sucks up the nails, coins and metal fragments we'd otherwise miss. Each digging and screening team is assigned a record keeper, who tracks the yield: bottles, buttons, glass, crockery, toy parts and lots of nails and metal fragments.

"When the officers' quarters burned it created a mini-time capsule, kind of a dream archaeologically," says Riemenschneider. "Each time we do an excavation we get answers, and it opens a bunch of other questions."

A heavy drone pulls military eyes skyward to spot and quickly



identify C-130 cargo planes heading southwest, then the steady work pace resumes. "This group never ceases to amaze me," Riemenschneider says, noting that the military retirees and their spouses range from 62 to 78 years old. "They don't believe in taking a break. They do what needs to be done. It's quality excavation work. Artifacts are the icing on the cake."

We head into Bronte (although named after writer Charlotte, it's pronounced "bruh") for dinner at our choice of three Mexican cafes. No one stays up late after a day moving dirt.

On the second day, the diggers are taking the west side of the dogtrot down to sterile ground. "It's like being a part of history," observes Peggy Wilson. She hesitantly admits to a spooky encounter while sewing alone one evening in the old barracks. Footsteps crossed the room behind her several times, but when she eventually looked up, no one was there. Then came the sound of someone sitting on a creaky cot in the next room and a boot hitting the floor. "I didn't feel threatened, but it was time for me to leave."

The routine of troweling the earth in shallow layers, sifting and recording goes on with military precision, camaraderie and the pleasure of discovery: coins, colored ceramic shards, a glass bottle stopper. "There's a lot of little steps in getting to the point of seeing what we have," says Lillian Gillis of San Antonio.

Jim Mims, a one-time Marine bugler who plays reveille, chow call, even pay call, for us, mentions showing Garland a scrap of wire he'd found near the Butterfield Stage ruins. "He told me it could have been a carpetbag frame. I'd never have known," Jim says.

"It's all a big puzzle," Garland explains. "We're adding enough pieces that one of these days you'll be able to see the whole puzzle."

In Bronte for dinner, we dig into Mexican flag enchiladas and *chile rellenos* at Hidalgo's Restaurant, with the group discussing their plans to spend two weeks in 2003 excavating the fort's Butterfield Stage Stop. Until then, Concho Valley Archeological Society members will be busy on occasional weekend digs and labs.

Back at the fort, we stand under quiet, starry skies at 9 p.m. as Jim Mims pulls out his trumpet, faces west and plays "Taps." The chords bounce off the barracks and echo up to us at the Fountain House and out to Orion overhead.

Day is done. Safely rest. ★

Details

For more information, visit www.fortchadbourne.org. Lodging is available at Oak Creek Village in Blackwell: (325) 282-2104.

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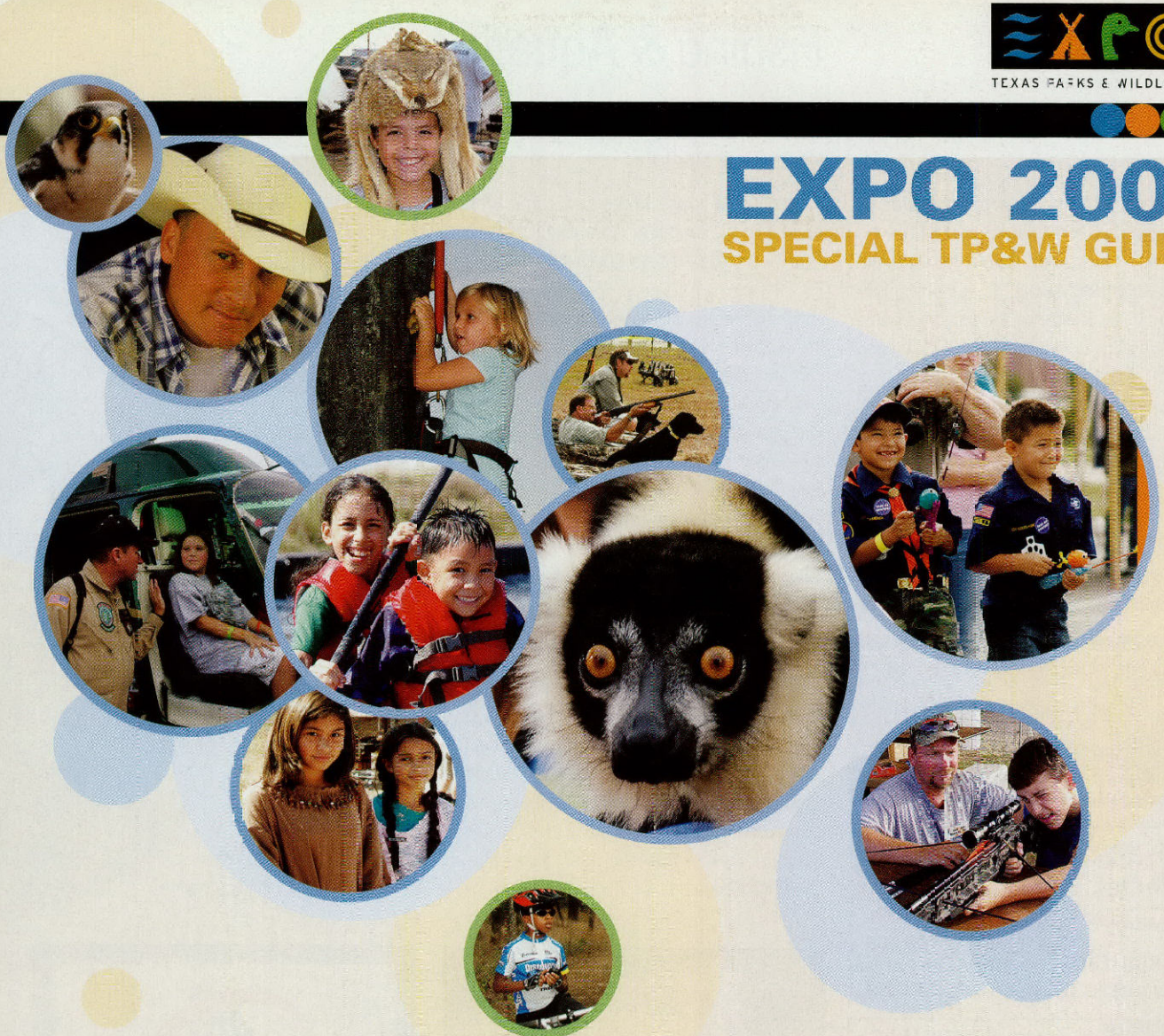
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EXPO 2007

SPECIAL TP&W GUIDE



It hardly seems possible that we celebrate the 16th annual Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo this month. Who could have envisioned at that first Expo in 1992 that over a half-million visitors would come to know and enjoy the outdoors after passing through the entrance of this unique celebration. Not long ago, someone referred to Expo as a "festival"; that it certainly is. The spirit that led those first Expo organizers in the early years is still alive and well at Expo today. "Let me show you how to do that!" "Did you know ...?" "Have you ever tried to ...?" Expo continues to be about sharing the joys of the outdoors with those who have not experienced them, and to help those who do fish, hunt or camp to do so better.

In this special section we'll take a closer look at the presentations and activities that take place at Expo. For the sheer variety of activities, Expo is unparalleled. Where else can you shoot, fish, kayak, rock climb, and see amazing animals ... for free!

Expo is presented by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to the people of Texas

with three goals in mind: to introduce newcomers to outdoor recreation, giving them a hands-on taste of a wide range of sports and pastimes; to provide additional learning opportunities, information and access to those visitors who already recreate in the outdoors; and to frame these activities in a safe and responsible manner so that visi-

tors understand that the health of our Texas outdoors is ultimately their responsibility.

When visitors leave Expo, they leave understanding that without a doubt, "Life's Better Outside."



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Fishing & Aquatic

Texas is blessed with freshwater fishing in its streams and lakes and some of the best saltwater fishing to be had. It's the best of both worlds! Find out where to go, what to do and how to do it from the experts. Plus, there are marine and freshwater fish displays to interest all ages.

Presented by Bass Pro Shops, the Fishing and Aquatic area at Expo is an angler's paradise. For kids, it may be their first opportunity to catch a fish in the catfish or trout ponds. If they do, they'll leave with a First Fish Certificate complete with photo to celebrate their achievement. For seasoned anglers, there's no better place to learn from the experts about how to improve their catch. In the Saltwater Seminar Tent, for example, avid saltwater anglers can sit in on regularly scheduled

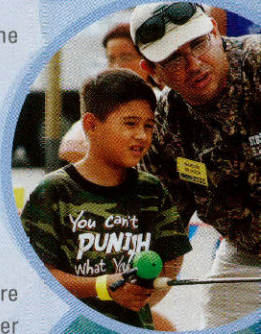
seminars about fishing techniques, skills and the secrets of fishing several Texas bays.

More interested in observing sea life than in catching it? There are any number of exhibits that provide up-close opportunities for seeing and even touching marine life. Jellyfish, stingrays, crabs and other critters are there in the Coastal Tent for observation. And check out the State Record Saltwater Fish Replicas. Several years ago, one grandfather wrote to request that they not be displayed, since "my grandson said they make the fish I catch seem so small!"

Introduced for the first time last year is the exciting Casting Kids competition, presented by Texas BASS Federation Nation. Boys and girls, ages 7-14, are invited to test their flipping, pitching and casting skills, learn about fishing, conservation and protection of our great outdoors, and win prizes. Kids also have a chance to compete for a quarter of a million

dollars in scholarships and prizes to be given away nationwide. If kids need to warm up first, there's the ever-popular Learn to Cast activity located just a cast away.

In Texas, one thing is for certain: Water is on everyone's mind. At Texas Parks and Wildlife, our concern is to make sure that there is enough water for wildlife and fish populations. At the Texas Water Ways: Ranches to Reefs tent, you can learn about the importance of water in our lives and the lives of Texas' fish and wildlife. Begin the journey at a model of a watershed, then visit stations that tell the story of



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Texas waterways. Learn about the value of Texas' seagrasses in an expanded display. Finally, see examples of a variety of invasive aquatic plants and animals and learn about the many problems they can cause to our waterways.

When you're done, drop by the Virtual Dive tent and explore the underwater world of the Gulf of Mexico.

Take a "virtual" diving expedition into the ocean and observe the coral reefs of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

Two of Texas Parks and Wildlife's most important resources for fishing and aquatic study, as well as visitor favorites, are our two major hatcheries and study centers, the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens and Sea Center Texas in Lake Jackson. The TFFC is the premier place to learn about freshwater fish and fishing in Texas. Keep an eye out for the

TFFC ShareLunker trailer. It's a great place to get information about how to plan a visit to the center. The trailer also houses replicas of some of the largest bass caught in Texas and gives the details of how to get involved in the Budweiser-sponsored ShareLunker program.

Presented by The Dow Chemical Company, the Sea Center Texas booth in the Coastal Fisheries tent is the place to learn about Texas Parks and Wildlife's premier coastal hatchery and education center. A world-class hatchery model, Sea Center is one of the most interesting and informative sites in Texas. The aquaria hold amazing saltwater species and the adjoining wetlands offer unique tours.

If fly fishing is your passion or you'd like to try your hand at fly tying, the Fly Fishing Tent offers both fly casting opportunities and fly tying stations. The state's many fly fishing clubs staff this area and will be glad to tell you how you can become involved in their activities. Last, but not least, the Fishing Arena is where anglers of all ability levels can watch pros demonstrate fishing techniques throughout the day. The giant aquaria and large fish always draw a crowd!



DIDN'T YOUR MAMA EVER TELL YOU TO GO PLAY OUTSIDE?

Come see the truck that's changing it all, the 2007 Tundra, at the Toyota Tundra Outdoor Experience. While you're here, kids can test out the Kid Fish Pond while parents get tips and tricks from Professional Bass Anglers Terry "Big Show" Scroggins (2007 Toyota Texas Bass Classic Champion) and Texas' own Kelly Jorcon. All in all, it's a great way to spend the day enjoying the great outdoors. See, Mama always did know best.



Oct. 6-7, 2007





Law Enforcement

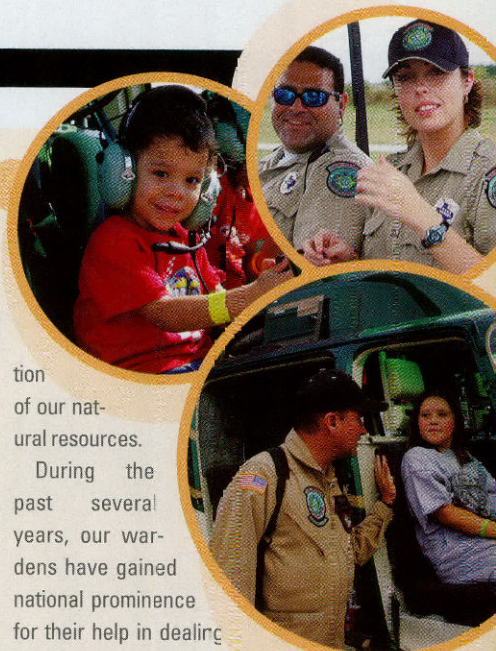
Texas Game Wardens, an icon of this great state, are those officers who enforce the fish, game and water safety laws of the state and who have historically provided life- and property-saving assistance in times of natural disaster. Visitors to the Law Enforcement area, sponsored by the Houston Safari Club, will have an opportunity to meet game wardens, learn about their roles in conservation, and even taste a bit of wild game!

In addition to their enforcement duties, game wardens, through the Texas Game Warden Association cooking team, have developed a reputation as some of the best outdoor cooks around. Each year as part of Expo, game wardens prepare and serve a variety of delicious wild game samples, including mule deer, white-tailed deer, bison, nilgai, wild hog, duck, dove and quail. You'll also learn more about the association's support of youth outdoor sports and education programs.

Ever considered becoming a game warden? Satisfy your desire for knowledge concerning a career in law enforcement by visiting us in the Law Enforcement tent. There, you will be provided with information detailing the requirement for becoming a Texas game warden. You will also see video and slide information about cadet and field officer training, as well as law enforcement field operations. You will further learn about our new Texas Game Warden Training Center, which is located in

Hamilton County. Construction on this new facility is scheduled to begin in the near future, with completion within the next three years. Once complete, the Texas Game Warden Training Center will be the premier law enforcement training facilities of its type in the country. At Expo, you will learn how you can support this important project.

The job of a game warden is a 24/7 endeavor. Whether involved in water safety or wildlife and fisheries enforcement, game wardens employ a variety of tools in order to accomplish their jobs. The Law Enforcement area gives you an opportunity to inspect the air boats, jet skis, boats and high-tech equipment that wardens depend on to do their jobs. One favorite is the Bell 206 A-1 Jet Ranger helicopter used for game counts, population studies, Gulf Shrimp Patrol, surveillance, environmental crime detection and assistance in emergency response. TPWD's pilots are on hand to explain the role of air support in the conservation and protec-



tion of our natural resources.

During the past several years, our wardens have gained national prominence for their help in dealing with the aftermath of natural disasters in Texas and neighboring states. Dubbed the "Texas Navy," game wardens distinguished themselves in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina devastated much of that state. Shortly thereafter, they were called upon again to help out in East Texas after Hurricane Rita passed over that area. In fact, wardens were largely absent from the 2005 Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo due to their duties following Hurricane Rita



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Whether you shoot, want to improve or want to learn, you'll have a great time in the shooting sports area at Expo. Be sure to take your safety orientation first.

Folks who are not avid outdoorsmen are frequently surprised to learn that there are a variety of shooting sports available to visitors at Expo. Presented by Cabela's, this is where the novice can try his hand and the experienced shooter can hone his skills. Equipment is provided; all you have to do is show up! All participants in the shooting sports are required to first take a brief safety orientation.

The gateway to most of the shooting sports is the air gun. This Olympic sport is a great way to orient the beginner to the basics of shooting: firearm safety, muzzle control and sight alignment associated with rifles. For the novice, air gun is a great way to gain confidence while having fun and mastering the fundamentals. The Air Gun Challenge is a timed event where one shoots at five round metal silhouettes. Once all five metal targets fall, the clock stops. An excellent time is a little over one second. The world record is under one second! How fast can you shoot?

Located near the air gun ranges is one of the most interesting shooting sports, one that harkens back to the early days of our forefathers: muzzle-loading firearms. Before today's modern rimfire firearms, powder and projectile were hand loaded into firearms to be set off by flint and steel. At Expo, you can experience this same thrill with a modern version of the muzzleloaded firearm.

On the high-tech end of the spectrum you can test your skill at Laser Shot. You'll be shooting laser-equipped rifles and shotguns at game, trap and skeet targets. Developed as a hunter-education tool, Laser Shot has quickly become a favorite of Expo visitors. You'll find the Laser Shot booth in the Outdoor Marketplace.

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For many, the sporting clays at Expo offer the most excitement. The challenge of hitting the fast-flying clay bird keeps visitors coming back to try their hand. There are shooting opportunities for youth and smaller-sized shooters as well. Certified hunter education instructors are on hand to help improve your aim and reliability. How adept can one become with a shotgun? Be sure to check out one of Expo's highlights: Tom Knapp, "The Shooting Star." In a word, what Tom Knapp does with a shotgun is incredible!

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For those interested in other shooting sports, archery and crossbow opportunities are offered. Bull's-eye and three-dimensional animal targets bring realism to the activity. For archery enthusiasts, it's an opportunity to hone their skills with seasoned mentors. Ever pull back on a crossbow and load a "bolt"? Your ancestors might have; try it yourself!

What do you get when you combine archery with a rod-and-reel? Bowfishing, of course! This new sport is sweeping the country and the bowfishing in Texas is great. It's not like anything you've ever tried. Stand on the bow of an air boat and see if you can hit one of the targets that simulate a fish in the water. It's not so easy until you get the hang of it, but it's a load of fun!



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While almost all of what goes on at Expo is continuous, there are special shows and presentations that only happen at specific times during the day. For many, these "special attractions" are the high light of their Expo visit.

SeaWorld's Chris Bellows, sponsored by Anheuser-Busch, returns to the Expo Main Stage with his Amazing Animals show, an Expo favorite. Fast-paced, entertaining and educational, the presentation focuses on the adaptability of animal species.

Bellows is Curator of Birds and Director of Animal Programs for SeaWorld San Antonio. His daily responsibilities include overseeing the park's bird collection, as well as the Beluga and Sea Lion Interaction Programs. He also manages animal training staff and the health, maintenance and conditioning of the park's collection of animals for the Animal Encounters Team.

Chris Bellows has two shows daily, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., on stage in the Main Tent.

Master Falconer John Karger, founder and director of Last Chance Forever, the Bird of Prey Conservancy, is a perennial favorite at Expo. Since the first Expo in 1992, John has exhibited raptors and presents two flight demonstrations daily to educate visitors about birds of prey. These raptors include hawks, owls, falcons, vultures and eagles.

Last Chance Forever (LCF) is dedicated to helping sick, injured and orphaned birds of prey so that they may return to their natural habitat. Since its founding in 1978, each year LCF receives between 150 and 300 birds into its care. Between 65 and 80 percent of these injured birds are successfully returned to nature. Birds that are deemed non-releasable and are not suffering physical pain are utilized as educational ambassadors and provided permanent sanctuary at the LCF complex in San Antonio.

John Karger's Birds of Prey Show is at noon and 3 a.m. in the Birds of Prey Arena.

"The Shooting Star," Tom Knapp, has graced Expo's grounds for the last several years and continues to amaze with his incredible talent with a shotgun. Recognized as one of today's greatest exhibition shooters, Tom travels the globe thrilling countless shooters with his seemingly impossible feats with shotguns.

Tom has appeared on numerous national and local TV networks since 1987 and is currently appearing on two major national networks. Tom

continued on page 34



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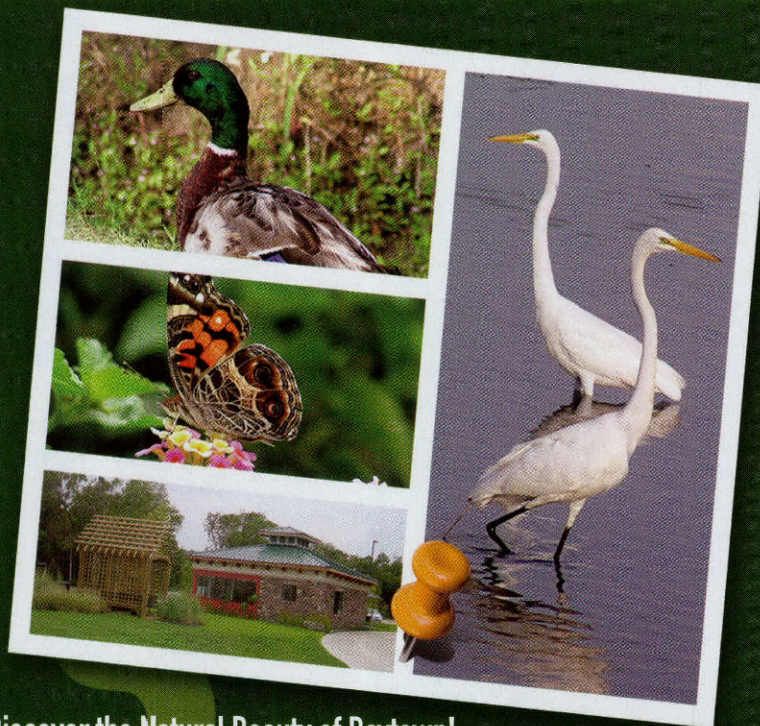
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However you enjoy the outdoors, you're going to need gear.

The Outdoor Marketplace is your one-stop shopping opportunity at Expo. Whether it's a hat, binoculars, a firearm or rod and reel, you'll find it here. And don't forget those keepsakes to remind you of the special times you've spent in the Texas Outdoors: art, photographs, even jewelry can all be found in the Outdoor Marketplace. Here is a partial list of this year's exhibitors.

EXHIBITORS

1379 - Athletic Wear for Active Kids	401C
ACM Tractor Sales	118
Ag Workers Mutual Auto Insurance	325B
Alicias Accessories	104
American Diving	341B
American Rodsmiths	439C, 441C
AMSOIL "The First in Synthetics"	236A
Anheuser-Busch	402C
Aransas Pass Chamber of Commerce	515D
Arrowdynamic Solutions	418C
Audiology Diagnostic Clinic	403C
Austin Canoe & Kayak	108, 110
Austin Cotton Company	122
Baytown Nature Center / Wetlands Education Center	430C
Beaumont/Port Arthur CVBs	404C
Becoming an Outdoors Woman	507D
Benelli USA	229A
Big Fish Bowfishing Texas	202A
Boy Scouts of America - Capitol Area Council	329B
Bug Zap Fun	342B
Camp Stewart for Boys & Heart of the Hills for Girls	427C
Camper Clinic Rentals, Inc.	324B
Careco Multimedia, Inc.	238A
Challenged Sportsmen of America	543D
City of Texas City	440C, 442C
Clifton Chamber of Commerce	327B
Coastal Conservation Association Texas (CCA)	443C
Concho Underground	302B, 304B
Convention Decorating Service	525D
Cross Bar Land Company	216A
Drive Clean Across Texas	413C
Eclipse Solar Gear	437C
Environment Texas	435C
EZ Dock of Texas	120
Flying L Guest Ranch	317B
Fossil Rim Wildlife Center	425C
G and S Fish Market	241A, 243A
Georgetown Farm Supply	102, 205A
German Roasted Nuts	343B
Girl Scouts of Central Texas	311B
Goga Heat	506D
Goliad Chamber of Commerce	517D
Goodman's Truck and Ranch Supply	502D
Haydel's Game Calls Inc.	227A
H-E-B	306B
Highland Lakes Group	429C
Hill Country of Texas	426C
HOLT CAT	100
Homemade Gourmet	438C
Housley Outdoors, Inc.	234A
Jay Group Sunglasses	217A
Jerky Hut of Texas	123
Jet Dock Systems Inc.	225A
Keep Austin Beautiful	512D
King Bros. UTV Ranch	106
KM Outdoors	114
Kolobe Safaris	231A
Lake Buchanan Conservation Corporation	428C
Lakeline Watersports	116
Lanford Equipment Co., Inc.	112
Leisure Resort	405C
Lelands Log Cabins	117, 119, 121
Leon County Economic Development Assn.	332B
Leupold	200A



Discover the Natural Beauty of Baytown!

BAYTOWN NATURE CENTER

6213 Bayway Drive

The Baytown Nature Center is a 450-acre peninsula surrounded by Burnet Bay, Crystal Bay and Scott Bay. Operated by the City of Baytown, the nature center is a site on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, and is home to more than 300 species of birds who depend on this area for migration, feeding or nesting. But this recreated wetland is not just for the birds. Numerous animals also call the nature center home. In addition, it's an important nursery area for a variety of aquatic species, including fish, shrimp and crabs.

This former residential subdivision now offers picnic shelters, fishing piers, two pavilions, an education stage, two wildlife overlooks and birding blinds. There's also a butterfly garden, walking and biking trails and a children's nature discovery area.

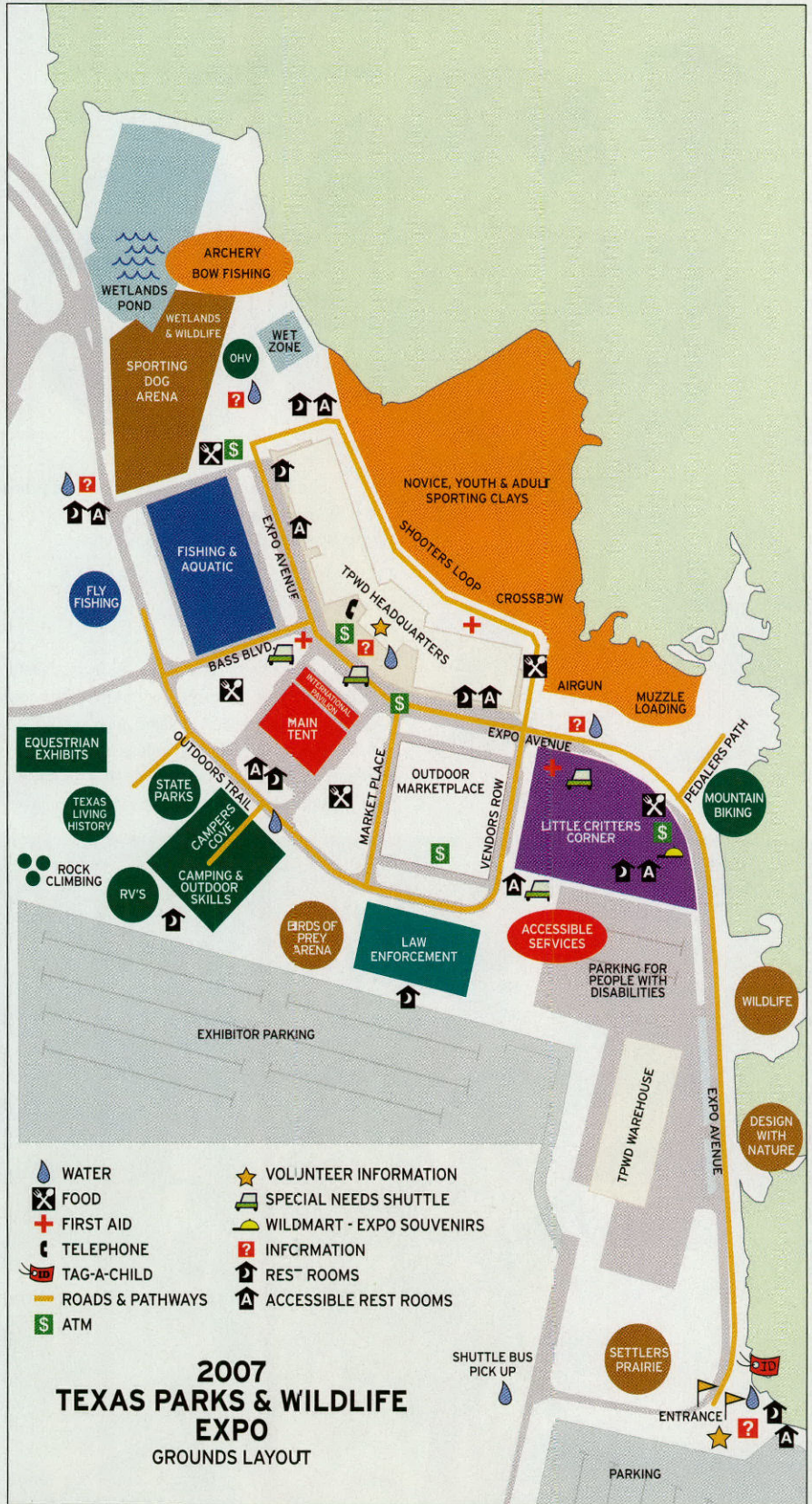
The Baytown Nature Center is open to the public daily year round, except for Christmas Day and during extreme inclement weather. Gates open 30 minutes before sunset and close 30 minutes after sunset. Daily and annual passes are available for individuals and families. For more information contact us at (281) 420-5360.

WWW.BAYTOWN.ORG

Grounds Layout

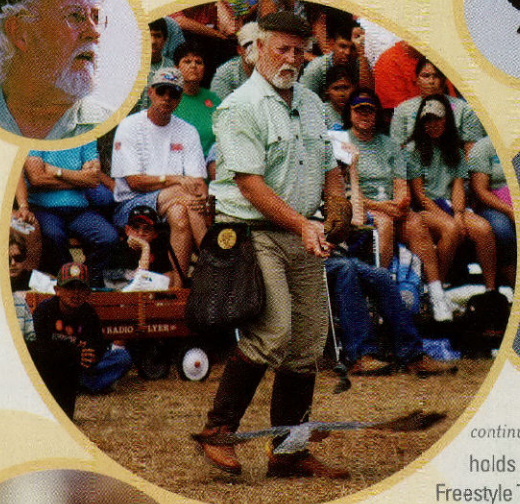


Lone Star Bowhunters Association	211A
Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)	540D, 542D
Lucy Hammett Games	309B
Makit N Metal	333B
Malibu Kayaks	LLC 101
McBride's	224A, 226A
National Rifle Association	212A
National Wildlife Federation	301B, 303B
Nikon Sport Optics	228A
Operation Orphans	432C
Outdoor Family	509D
Painted Adventures	103
Paralyzed Veterans of America - Lone Star Chapter	500D
PBS&J	203A
Pentax Imaging	501D
Pesky Bird Iron Works	308B
Porta-bote International	201A
Pricky Pear Galleries	237A, 239A
Princess Craft Campers	316B
Purple Martin Propagators	300B
REI - Recreational Equipment, Inc.	115
Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce	538D
Sea Academy	326B
Sea Camp - Texas A&M University at Galveston	407C
SeaWorld	400C, 402C
Sew Texas	218A
Sharper Cut	319B
South Padre Island CVB	339B
Sul Ross State Univ. Natural Resource Mgmt.	433C
Surfrider Foundation - Central Texas Chapter	335B
TACAA - Hunters for the Hungry	414C
Tarleton State University - Coll of Ag & HS	314B
Texas Bighorn Society	419C
Texas Boat World	105, 107
Texas Cooperative Extension - Wildlife Services	331C
Texas Deer Association	240A, 242A
Texas Farm Bureau	337B
Texas Hill Country River Region	524D
Texas Hunter Education Instructors Assn.	412C
Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network	312B
Texas Outdoors Woman Network	505D
Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine	417C
Texas Section Society for Range Management	406C
Texas Solar Power Company	424C
Texas State Rifle Association	235A
Texas State University - Wildlife Society	536D
Texas Trappers & Fur Hunters Assn.	514D, 516D, 518D
Texas Trophy Hunters Association	208A
Texas Volkssport Association	528D
TexasHuntFish.com	340B
The Rust Game Place	219A
Top Gunn Guide Service & Lodging	204A
TPWD - Human Resources	334B, 336B
TPWD - Hunter Education	508D, 510D, 408C, 410C
Tula Hats	318B
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	111, 109
USDA - APHIS-PPQ	539D
USDA Forest Service	541D
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	503D
Victoria Visitor Center	519D
Visit Big Bend	415C
Weslaco Area Chamber of Commerce	530D
Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation, Inc.	338B
Your Eyes/Fish Eyes	305B



Si desea información en español:

- Visite la carpa llamada "International Pavilion."
- Comuníquese con el personal que porta el boton "Hablo Español."



continued from page 31

holds three distinctive world records in Freestyle Target Shooting or Exhibition Shooting, making history in the shooting industry!

Tom Knapp performs daily at 1 p.m. in the Sporting Clays Arena.



Texas' water safety campaign, "Nobody's Waterproof," has a new spokesperson: country music star Kevin Fowler! In addition to being an avid outdoorsman, Kevin understands that safety on the water is important for everyone. Be sure to stop by the Wet Zone, meet Kevin and grab an autographed poster.

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Camping in the outdoors is basic to just about every outdoor experience. Learn the skills that will make your outdoor experience more enjoyable, visit with representatives of our 110 state parks to find out where to go, and learn how to be responsible for the outdoors you enjoy. Activities include outdoor skills, rock climbing, mountain biking, living history and equestrian exhibits.

What is more basic to the outdoors than camping? Whether it's overnight in the backyard or backcountry hiking, camping offers everyone an opportunity to truly spend time with Mother Nature. Presented by Academy Sports and Outdoors, the Camping and Outdoor Skills area is a one-stop shop for everything you'll need to begin or further enjoy your time in the Texas outdoors.

Ever wonder what the difference is between a \$40 tent and one that costs \$400? Here's your chance to find out. You will also be able to check out the latest in gear to make your time in the outdoors even more enjoyable. New products will be on display, along with folks to answer your question about them. Technology has come a long way in recent years in making the camping experience even easier.

This year there is a special family camping area devoted to making that first—or hun-

dredth—family camping experience the best time you and your family can have together. Be sure to stop by and learn more about the opportunities for family camping in our state parks. And if you RV, check in at the RV Information booth to find out which parks have the best RV sites and amenities.

As you head into the deep woods of East Texas or the high plains of West Texas one critical thing to know is where you are! With the advent of portable GIS technology, it's pretty simple, but, as with many things, the tried and true methods may be best. Learn from experienced outdoorsmen how to use a map and compass to find your way in this fun and educational activity in the Map and Compass Area.

You'll be sure to want to stop by the State Parks tents to learn more about your next destination. Park staff from all over Texas will be able to answer questions and introduce you to the wonders of their particular park. There will



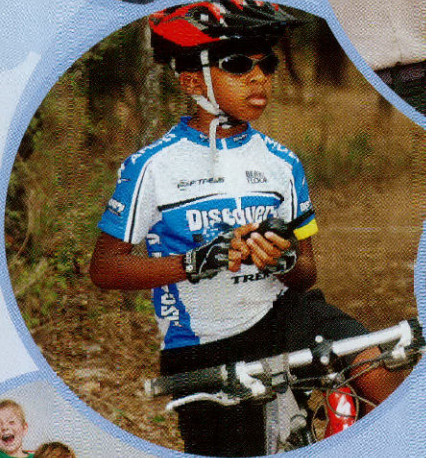
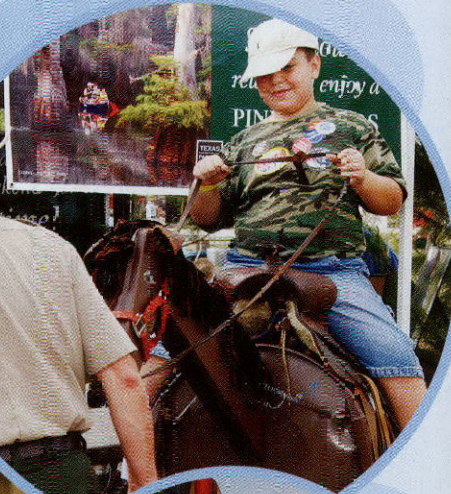

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What's that long line for? It's for rock climbing! Try your hand at this exciting sport and climb one of the portable climbing walls brought in just for Expo. Through the miracle of modern technology, it's about the safest activity at Expo.

Texas Parks and Wildlife is charged with the management and conservation of the natural and cultural resources of Texas, and to that end, has an extensive archaeological division set up to preserve cultural resources. See historical artifacts uncovered in State Parks and other public lands, and learn about Texas' past and how you can help preserve them for the future. Try your hand at making a flint arrowhead as well!

In keeping with the historic aspect of many of our State Parks, you can stop by and visit with characters from the past in the Living History Area, where re-enactors portray frontiersmen, military units, and everyday figures from Texas history. Buffalo Soldiers and other interesting

historic characters provide a first-hand look at Texas' heritage. And if you get there early enough, you might even be invited to have a Dutch Oven biscuit or two!

Many of our state parks are blessed with great trails for mountain biking and horseback trail riding. Youth 8 to 16 can stop by the Mountain Biking tent for instruction and a guided mountain bike ride through adjacent McKinney Falls State Park. For those equine enthusiasts, learn more about horseback trails at the Equestrian tent. Little ones can try their hand at roping a friendly metal cow.



Free LCRA Parks Guide

This colorful guide has information on 40 public parks along the Highland Lakes and lower Colorado River.

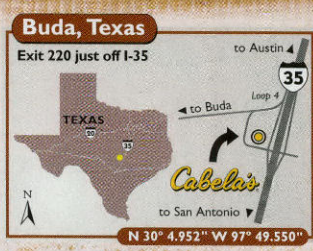
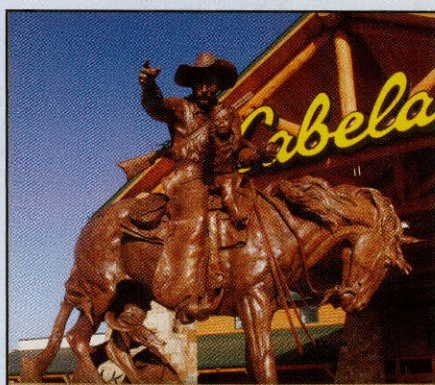
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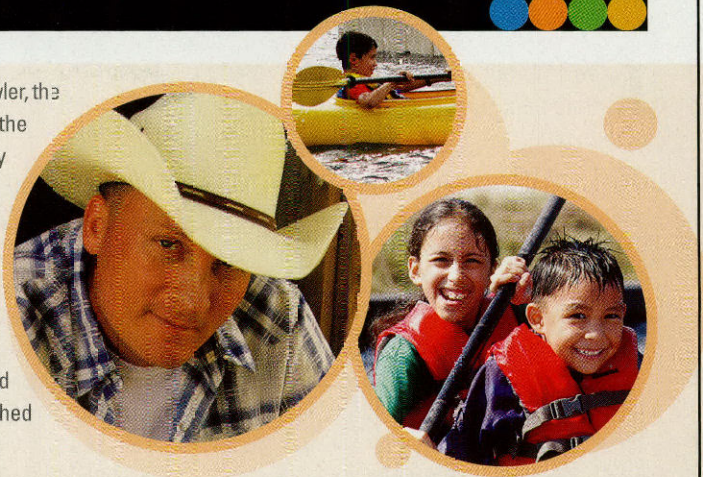
The Wet Zone: Kayaking

The name says it all. Get wet (and you will!) while you kayak in the 100,000-gallon kayaking tank.

The Wet Zone provides an opportunity for people of all ages to use a kayak. After a short safety briefing and instruction on the use of life jackets and kayaks, participants hop in and paddle in our 8,100 square foot tank that holds over 100,000 gallons of water. And don't worry about safety; at a depth of 22 inches, if you fall in all you have to do is sit up straight!

New this year is an interesting and fun device that tests your skill on a personal watercraft, the Personal Watercraft Simulator. Strap on your life jacket, climb on, rev 'er up and you're on your way, threading obstacles as you zip along the coastline. It's fun, challenging, and you'll learn a thing or two about PWC rules and water safety.

Country rocker Kevin Fowler, the new spokesperson for the Nobody's Waterproof safety campaign, will add his star power to the Wet Zone this year. An avid hunter, angler and outdoorsman, Fowler is encouraging his fans to come home safe from a day on the water, and to pick up an autographed poster from him at Expo!



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Learn about the many facets of wildlife in Texas, from where they live to how they live. Great exhibits and presentations include live animals, sporting dog demonstrations, birds of prey and much more!

When Expo began in 1992, it was envisioned as a way to pay homage to the hunters who fund much of the wildlife conservation efforts in the United States. Too often, the role of these conservationists is overlooked or misunderstood. Federal dollars from the sale of firearms, ammunition and other products are disbursed to every state to support their conservation efforts. Today, Expo continues to pay tribute to these men and women and the role they play conserv-

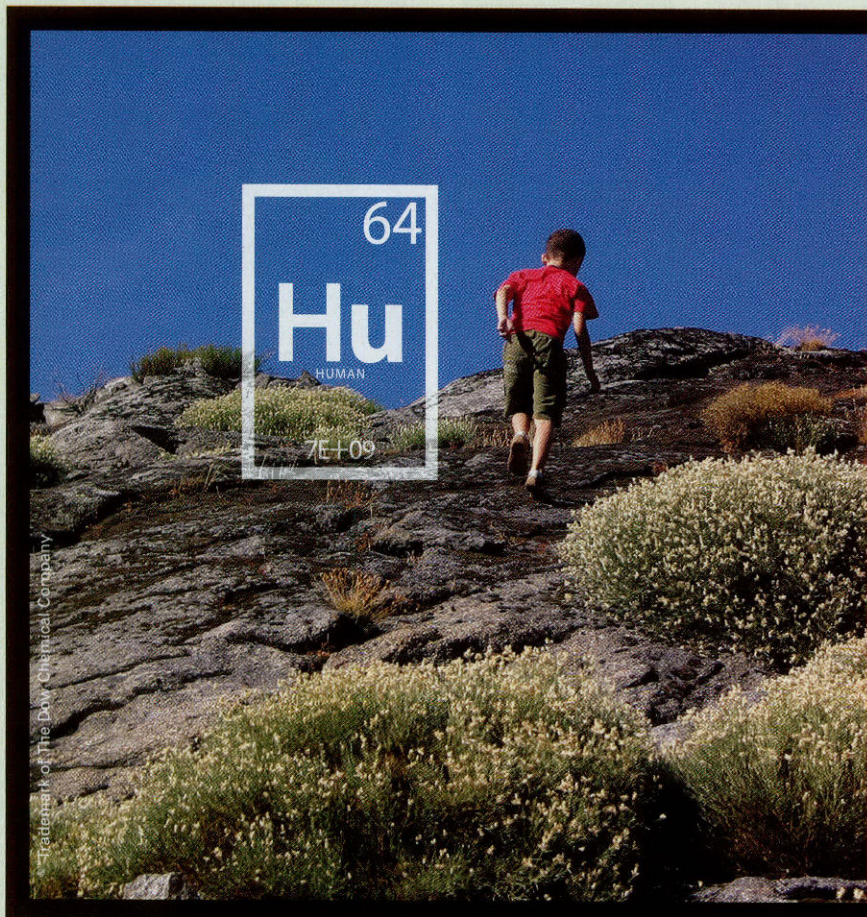
ing our wildlife while introducing hundreds of families to new and exciting ways to enjoy the outdoors.

The Wildlife Management and Hunting tent showcases a variety of management techniques important to sustaining our wildlife in Texas. Foremost among them are the ways habitat is managed to ensure the stability of various species populations. Learn more about this, public hunting opportunities, and technical assistance programs available for private land owners in this informative area.

Hey, birders! Check out the Watching Wildlife tent for the latest in birding information and other wildlife viewing opportunities in Texas with booklets, maps, posters and more on birds, nongame fish and wildlife trails. Learn more about the Texas horned lizard at the Texas Horned Lizard Conservation Society display. Travis Audubon will be on hand to give out information on birds and habitat conservation statewide. Bat Conservation International will share informa-

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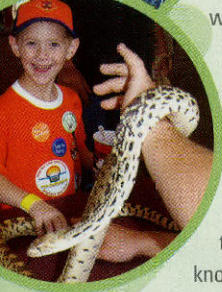
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tion on bats and have fun activities for the whole family.

At the Texas Native Species tent you can learn about Texas' native plants and animals, including some that are endangered. Learn how you can help monitor rare species at home as part of the Nature Trackers network. See carnivorous plants chow down and make your own replica of one.

Located in the center of the grounds you find the International Pavilion, a tribute to the efforts of Texas and its neighbors in conserving our wildlife and fish species. Learn about nature preserves in Mexico as well as hunting and nature tourism opportunities. Meet our conservation counterparts from south of the border and find out how they contribute to conservation. Wildlife knows no political boundaries.



What can you do to contribute to conservation in Texas? Are there things you can do in your own back yard to foster a sustainable environment? The answers are yes and yes! Stop by the Design with Nature – Sustainable Design Area presented by Texas Gas Service to see conservation techniques in action. Solar and wind power, rain catchment, and wildscaping displays along with experts to answer your questions will be on hand. Kids will enjoy a stroll through the butterfly tent!

Just before you enter the Expo grounds, you'll notice an area called Settlers' Prairie. Here, elementary school children from Smith School talk about and demonstrate the importance of the original Texas prairie to the people who settled Texas and why prairies are just as important today. Stop by and visit with one of the Little Prairie People.

All during Expo there are presentations and shows, from sporting dogs in the Sporting Dog Arena, raptor displays from On the Wing Again, live snakes and lizards on display with the Heard Museum, live alligators and the popular Texas Zoo. All this and more awaits you! ★

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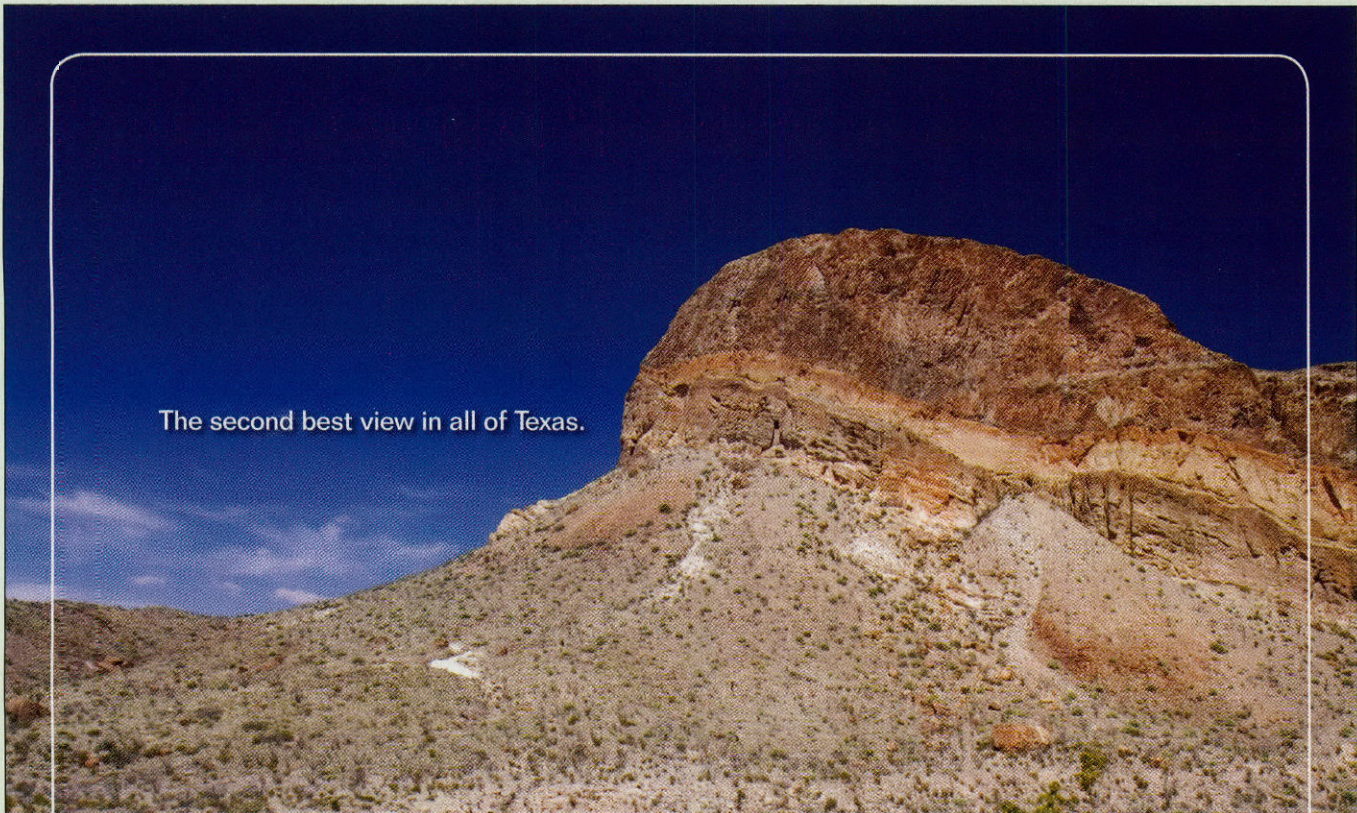
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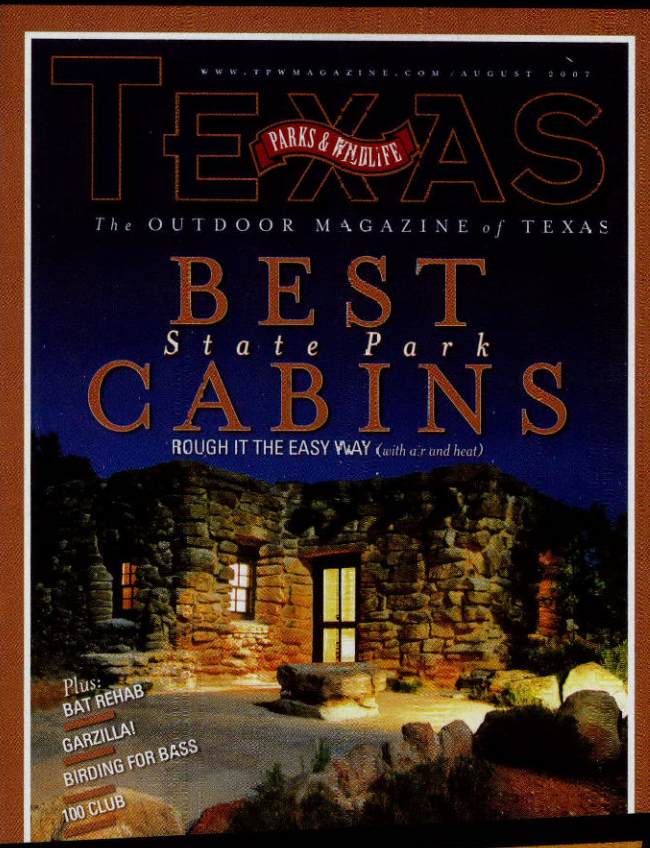
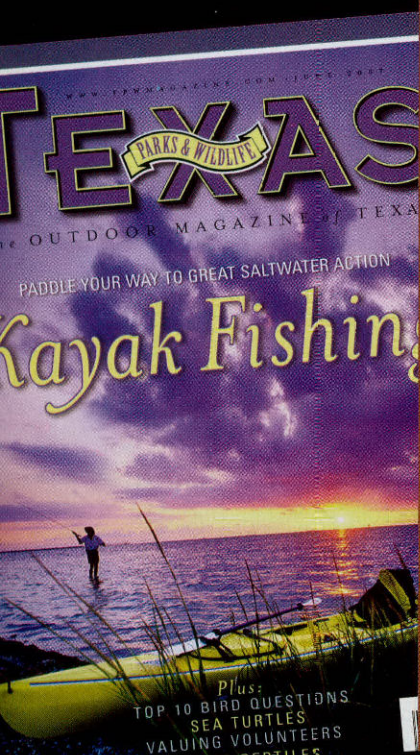


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Big Game, Better Habitat

BY
JOHN
JEFFERSON

MORE THAN A CONTEST, THE TEXAS BIG GAME AWARDS PROGRAM ENCOURAGES RESPONSIBLE LAND MANAGEMENT.

FOR YEARS, MANY HUNTERS BELIEVED most big-antlered white-tailed deer lived in the South Texas Brush Country. But in 1991, the deer world was turned upside-down when Stephen Wayne O'Carroll harvested a deer in Shackelford County that scored 190-2/8 net Boone and Crockett points. After that, when deer hunters met, one invariably asked, "Did you hear about that

big ol' deer a guy shot somewhere up near the Panhandle?" The greeting had a question mark at the end, but it was more of an exclamation.

Most Texans live east of I-35, and few could find Shackelford County on a map. Arguably, it's not even in the Panhandle. But a lot of them knew that a massive-antlered buck had been killed there — instead of in South Texas. That was news.

PHOTO © MIKE SEARLES

M

Many discounted the North Texas deer as an anomaly, maybe a freak. But more big deer began showing up in other parts of the state. Texas deer hunters were learning a little geography, along with a heavy dose of reality.

Texas as a result of the changing management strategies," Synatzske said, "but also as a record-keeping system for us to monitor the progress within the state — a way for us to collect data. Gore helped get it to the forefront."

In Austin, the hunter/landowner recognition proposal ran aground as some doubted its value and others questioned the merits of the state "running a deer contest." Fortunately, Chuck Nash, the popular and able chairman of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, believed in the program. His support helped it get to bat.

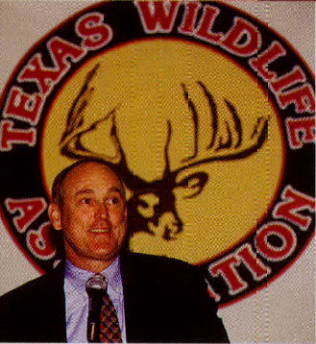
The first proposal, called the "Texas Mas Grande Awards," was designed to recognize the best white-tailed deer, mule deer and pronghorn antelope taken in each region. The proposal stated that in the preceding five years, only seven mounts from Texas qualified for inclusion in the B&C record book. This past season alone, 15 Texas bucks scored above the minimum for Boone and Crockett recognition. (Their scores qualified, but Boone and Crockett does not accept deer from high-fenced ranches, so some were not entered in B&C.)

The proposal for the Texas awards divided the state into four regions. To be entered into the program, whitetails in most of the state would be required to score 135 B&C net points for typical and 155 for non-typical. South Texas minimums would be 150 typical and 165 non-typical. Mule deer would be 160 typical and 180 non-typical. Pronghorns would require 76 points.

That's when the head banging began. Discussions were so spirited that one gentleman's gestures caught his thumb on a truck door and nearly ripped it off. When the smoke cleared and the swelling subsided, lower minimums were established. They have remained intact for all 16 years, except in one instance (Trans-Pecos whitetail minimums lowered in 1992). In order to make consistent comparisons in the future, it is unlikely they will change. Javelina, however, has been added recently as a big game animal for the Youth Division and First Harvest award.

Eight regions were established, coin-

"The Texas Big Game Awards is showing us where a lot of big deer were that we didn't know about, and what it takes to grow them," Bob Cook told me in 1995. Cook was chief of the Wildlife Branch then, but ultimately became executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He retired on August 31, 2007, after 31 years with the department.



Clockwise from top: A wall of heads at a South Texas regional awards banquet; Adan Alvarez of the King Ranch (with other ranch personnel) holds the number-two all-time non-typical whitetail; former TPWD Big Game Program Leader Horace Gore hosts an antler scoring seminar; King Ranch's Butch Thompson congratulates young First Harvest winner William Weeks; Nolan Ryan presents the Big Game awards in 1998.

The awards program is a partnership between the Texas Wildlife Association and TPWD. Although barely old enough to drive at 16 years of age, it has compiled some of the most significant records in Texas deer hunting history.

It began around the turn of the last decade with a memo from David Synatzske, manager of the Chaparral Wildlife Management Area, to Horace Gore, big game program leader for TPWD.

"We needed something in the way of a statewide program to not only recognize the quality of animals being produced in



White-tailed deer

Clockwise from below left: Spectacular non-typical white-tailed deer antlers taken during the 2001-02 season by David Krajca of Ennis; mule deer; a LaSalle County white-tailed buck, whose shed antlers were found and scored at 195 B&C; pronghorn antelope.



ciding closely with the wildlife districts at TPWD. The regions and their minimum entry requirements are as follows:

White-Tailed Deer Minimum Score

(See map for regional boundaries.)

Region	Typical	Non-Typical
1. Trans-Pecos	125	140
2. Panhandle	130	145
3. Cross Timbers	130	145
4. Edwards Plateau	130	145
5. Post Oak Savannah	125	140
6. Pineywoods	125	140
7. Coastal Prairies	125	140
8. South Texas	140	155

Mule deer minimum scores are 145 for typical and 160 for non-typical. Pronghorn antelope require a minimum score of 70. Eligibility rules are set out at <www.texasbiggameawards.com/Eligibility.htm>. (Strict adherence to the rules is



required. A valid hunting license is required before hunting.)

It was also decided that the landowner or land manager upon whose land the game animal was produced would be honored and, if agreeable, the ranch would be listed in the annual records.

“What we’re trying to do,” David Synatzske told me, “is convey the message that we’re trying to encourage proper habitat management. Recognizing quality big game is the way of measuring the results of management.

You don’t manage by regulation, but by cooperation.”

Scoring for the contest is by B&C guidelines, utilizing the net, green score, and must be done by a TBGA certified scorer. Awards are presented at eight regional banquets, and the top three trophies in the state in each category are recognized again at the TWA Banquet, the last weekend of June each year at the Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa, west of San Antonio. The top three typical and non-typical whitetails and mule deer and the top three pronghorns are re-scored prior to the banquet.

The banquets combine hunter and landowner recognition with educational seminars and a lot of socializing. They have become an annual rendezvous for the hunting community. The first regional banquet was in Alpine, according to David K. Langford, executive vice president of TWA through the formative years of the TBGA.

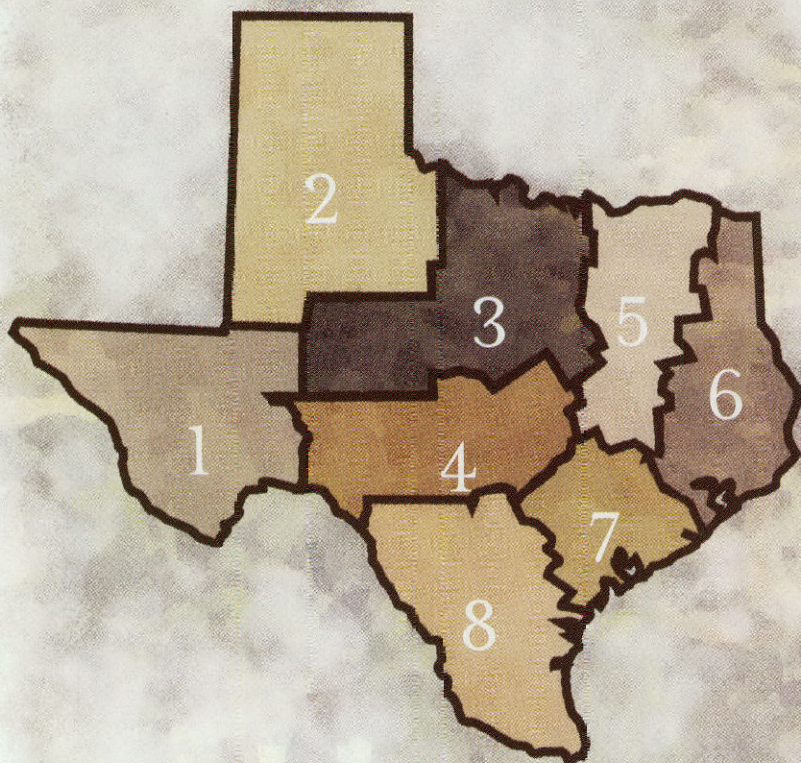
“We didn’t think anyone would come, but they did, including eight people all the way from Beaumont,” Langford remembered. Two subsequent Trans-Pecos banquets were in Van Horn.

“The high school and junior high kids there in the Culberson County 4-H Club put them on,” Langford said. “They did all the work, served the food and made the presentations. It was cool!” That set a pattern, and regional banquets have since been run by student chapters of The Wildlife Society from Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M – Kingsville, Sul Ross University and Stephen F. Austin University. David Brimager joined TWA in San Antonio for the 1989-99 season and now directs TBGA, the data collection and all the banquets.

Prior to Brimager’s arrival, the records were kept by TPWD wildlife biologist Bryan Richards, now with the National Wildlife Health Center in Wisconsin. Through Richards’ efforts, the Youth Division was created for the 1997-98 season, with no minimum score required for entry. Hunters who harvested their first big game animal — also regardless of score — had been recognized from the start. Kirby Brown,

TOP LEFT & BOTTOM RIGHT © JOHN JEFFERSON; TOP RIGHT © GARY KRAMER; NET; BOTTOM LEFT © GRADY ALLEN

BIG GAME AWARD REGIONS



- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Trans-Pecos | 5. Post Oak Savannah |
| 2. Panhandle | 6. Pineywoods |
| 3. Cross Timbers | 7. Coastal Prairies |
| 4. Edwards Plateau | 8. South Texas |

current TWA executive vice president, remembers one in particular.

"We recognized a 79-year-old gentleman who had just taken his first big game animal," Brown said, "and he was as happy as any of the kids out there!" My wife was not quite that elated when introduced as "the oldest First Harvest participant in this year's awards."

"I think one of the best things to come out of the Big Game Awards," Richards said, "is the fact we taught people that a deer's age is important in growing large antlers."

"Look at what we have accomplished with the (recent) antler restrictions," Synatzske said. "Those restrictions would have been impossible 17 years ago

without a program like the TBGA laying the groundwork for them."

Synatzske also feels that the TPWD Lone Star Land Steward Awards and the Texas Youth Hunting Program were spawned from the success of the TBGA partnership between TPWD and TWA.

TBGA now awards thirty \$500 college scholarships to qualified applicants, sponsored by Carter's Country Outdoor Stores, and awards a lifetime hunting and fishing license to a hunter selected from those who enter the TBGA by January 31 of each year. The license is sponsored by Smith's Abrasives and Hunter's Specialties.

The first year of the program, 1991, got off to a slow start. Only 668 entries

were scored: 550 whitetails, 93 mule deer and 25 pronghorns. Another 165 were awarded certificates for their first harvest. The second year, it went through the roof. A total of 1,113 entries were scored: 918 whitetails, 74 mule deer and 66 antelope. Good whitetail fawn crops in '85 and '86 grew up big and heavy-horned after the rains in 1991 and '92, and produced a record number of entries. Practically every year since then has shown an increase in whitetail entries, except during drought years. Even in the rain-deprived 2006 and 2007 seasons, there were 1,600 entries each year.

The prolonged drought in West Texas kept mule deer and antelope numbers down, however. Healthy habitat in West Texas the past few years has even brought those up considerably. Mule deer entries totaled 158 in 2005, the highest in the 16-year history. Antelope numbers were also the highest ever in 2005, but topped they that again in 2007.

Everybody expected South Texas to dominate the whitetail records, and, to be sure, the Brush Country has had more qualified entries than any other region. The Cross Timbers region was the next-highest. Drawing particular interest were the number-one typical deer in the state in 1991 (Shackelford County), 1993 (Archer County), 1994 (Donley County), 1995 (Eastland County), and the number-one non-typicals in 1995 (Young County) and 1996 (Bosque County). The Big Game Awards program has opened some eyes.

"TBGA is unique because it acknowledges that a quality big game animal is more than what's hanging on the wall," Brimager said. "It begins with a land manager's decision to do the right thing for the habitat and ends with a hunter's well-placed shot."

Most ranchers understand the economics of creating habitat conducive to growing big racks and are managing for it. And improving habitat for white-tailed deer means improving habitat for all species of wildlife.

That's what the Big Game Awards program is all about. ★



how to milk a porcupine

THE TREE-CLIMBING, BARB-DODGING ADVENTURES OF A ONE-TIME RESEARCH ASSISTANT.

By E. Dan Klepper

Everything I know about porcupines I learned from Woman-Who-Walks-With-Porcupines. Actually, allow me to be a little more specific. Everything I know about porcupines I learned by climbing a 15-foot papershell pinyon pine with a restraining noose in one hand and a pole-mounted hypodermic syringe full of narcotics in the other in order to capture a porcupine for Woman-Who-Walks-With-Porcupines. Not that she didn't do plenty of her own climbing, noosing and narcotizing herself when she found it necessary. But, being a wise woman, she recognized that I was just gullible enough to believe her when she told me that climbing pine trees and capturing porcupines were fun activities. I discovered shortly thereafter that she was correct about both — the fun part as well as the, uh, gullible thing.

The North American porcupine is essentially a large rodent covered in barbed quills. Its Latin name, *Erethizon dorsatum*, means something like “irritable back,” in case you are a fan of the *Necro lingua* (which means, loosely, “dead tongue”). But enough of this boring, science-y stuff. Porcupines are also really, really, really cute. I’m sure you would agree if you found yourself face to face with one, as I did many times over the course of my gig as a porcupine research assistant. However, finding yourself face to backside with one can be a blinding, painful horror. Literally. Avoid at all costs, as I managed to do. I may be gullible, but I’m not stupid.

“How did you find yourself face to face with an adorable porcupine and, in reference to the title of your story, how do you milk one?” you might ask.

First, make sure the porcupine has been rendered immobile with a non-lethal dose of tiletamine and zolazepam hydrochloride. Then, retrieve the porcupine by hand from the end of the branch using a retractable noose secured around its tail and hind leg or nudge it into a fishing net once the narcotic takes effect. Slowly lower the porcupine to the ground. At this point you must work quickly but carefully as the drug’s effects don’t last very long. Weigh the porcupine by suspending the animal from a small scale that you have attached to its hind leg. Lay the porcupine on its back and arrange a bandana casually across its face and eyes. Remember, the porcupine is not asleep so it can still see you. It’s just unable to move, allowing you a window of opportunity to poke at it and then write stuff down. Check for parasites such as fleas and ticks or any other unusual pest so you will know exactly what is going to be crawling on you later. Do so by gingerly parting the quills and hair. Use a magnifying lens for this procedure and then return it to your pocket. It will come in handy later as you prepare for a shower. Decide whether the porcupine is a male or female (don’t ask). If female, then determine if she is pregnant or has already given birth by observing “evidence of lactation as indicated by the manual expression of milk.” You milk a porcupine as you would a cow, only gently and by using the tip of the thumb and forefinger. Oh, and wear proper eye protection.

Finally, once you’ve dispensed with all the scientific diddle-doodling, slip both hands under the porcupine’s armpits and gingerly lift the critter up to your face until you are nose-to-nose. Heavy leather gloves are a must. Then repeat the following over and over again with as much saccharine and sing-song in your voice as possible: “Aren’t you just the cutest little thing! Aren’t you just the cutest thing alive? You are just adorable!” To conclude, put the creature down immediately before it completely recovers from the narcotic then squirms around and tail-slaps the grin off your mug.

Woman-Who-Walks-With-Porcupines is better known as Linda M. Ilse, a wildlife biologist who is often noted for her work on interactions between feral hogs and javelinas as well as her research with the porcupines of the pinyon-juniper woodlands of the Edwards Plateau. From 1997 to 1999, Ilse conducted a study that addressed the “multitrophic interactions” involving North American porcupines, the papershell pinyon pines they forage on and the pine engraver beetles that bore into the pinyon bark. “Multitrophic” is just a smarty-pants way of saying “many foods.” A trophic level simply defines the position an organism occupies in the food chain. For example, multitrophic interactions look something like this: Porcupine eats pinyon pine bark, engraver beetle bores into porcupine-eaten pinyon pine, Cousin Goober eats porcupine, engraver beetle bores into bark around Cousin Goober’s tiny brain, and so on. (Although my cousin wasn’t a participant in this particular study.)

In order to understand the porcupine/pinyon pine/engraver beetle multitrophic interaction, Ilse utilized Kickapoo Cavern State Park as her laboratory. She captured, radio-collared and monitored 37 porcupines and analyzed 183 pairs of trees along 20 different cross-sections of the



Woman-Who-Walks-With-Porcupines, aka Linda Ilse, has an up-close look at a sedated porcupine. Heavy leather gloves protect her hands from the quills.

park’s 7,000 acres. Porcupines have expanded their range into Kickapoo’s slice of the western Edwards Plateau within the last 30 years but were rarely sighted until about 20 years ago. The papershell pinyon pines (*Pinus remota*) of Kickapoo, however, comprise a relict population from the Pleistocene, an epoch that began over a million years ago and ended just about 12,000 years ago, thus lasting almost as long as my marriage seemed. At one time a prolific species across the region, the papershell pinyon pine declined significantly due to increasingly warmer and dryer conditions. The species is now restricted to isolated populations in north-eastern Mexico, Big Bend National Park and the Balcones Escarpment of the

Edwards Plateau including Kickapoo. Its bark also happens to be one of the porcupine’s favorite winter foods. As a result, the pines may be more susceptible to engraver beetles due to stress produced by the porcupine activity.

“Yeah, whatever,” you might say. Funny, that’s exactly what I said. “Just get to the good stuff about porcupines,” you might add. Well, here it goes. The porcupine is the only North American mammal with quills. Its quills are actually modified hairs. In fact, porcupines are covered with an assortment of modified hairs. Some are used to sense information, the underfur functions as insulation, tail bristles assist the animal in climbing, and waterproof hairs shed rain. The quill, for those of you who have never suffered the consequences of dog ownership combined with quill removal duty, consists of a follicle, a slim “neck” followed by a broad, sponge-filled middle and a barb-tipped end.

You milk a porcupine as you would a cow, only gently and by using the tip of the thumb and forefinger.



Despite what your dog may tell you between sobs of pain and humiliation, the porcupine has no interest in attacking anything. They are not aggressive animals. In fact, they can't even run very fast. Nor can they "throw" their quills. Quills are delivered in one of two ways; either by a collision with the porcupine or by a tail-slap. Porcupines have a clever "quill-release mechanism" and, if using a tail-slap to deliver quills, they have a system of connective tissue that usually prevents the quill from being driven back into their own skin.

Porcupine quills serve a number of functions beyond defense. They assist in tree-climbing and, due to their sponge-filled section, provide flotation for leisurely swims to snag tasty food items available only in aquatic habitats. The quill is also coated with its own antibiotic layer that prevents infection whenever the porcupine accidentally quills itself, a phenomenon that can occur when a porcupine tumbles from a tree limb.

In certain circumstances, released porcupine quills will continue to lead lives independent of their owner. The barbed tip allows the quill to work its way forward once it has penetrated into the skin. The quill can then disappear beneath the skin altogether. The quilled victim can only wait until the quill exits the opposite side of whatever appendage it entered and hope that it doesn't lay any porcupine eggs along the way. OK, the egg-laying part is just an urban myth, but don't try to convince Cousin Goober of its fiction. He thinks everything in "them biological lernin' books" are lies perpetrated by aliens.

The porcupine's quills also hold a special place in the history of American crafts. Quillwork is possibly the oldest form of Native American embroidery and has been used throughout the ages to embellish knife sheaths, baskets, tool handles, bags and clothes by tribes who shared the porcupine's range.

Quills also appear in the lexicon of Native American mythology. One such story tells of an old woman who sits upon a mesa stitching porcupine quills into a buffalo robe. Alongside her rests a big black dog named Shunka Sapa. The woman keeps a fire burning nearby, one she first lit over a thousand years ago. The woman also has kept a sweet, red berry soup called wojapi cooking for an equal millennium. It simmers in an earthen pot hanging above the fire. Periodically the old woman must get up from her quillwork and stir the soup at which point Shunka Sapa begins to pull the porcupine quills out of the robe. As a consequence, the old woman never makes much progress in her quillwork. It is, however, fortunate for the rest of us that her work remains unfinished. According to the story, once she



Porcupine quills serve a number of functions beyond defense. They assist in tree-climbing and, due to their sponge-filled section, provide flotation for leisurely swims to snag tasty food items available only in aquatic habitats.

stitches the final porcupine quill onto the buffalo robe the world will come to an end.

Contemporary myths about porcupines have also been perpetrated throughout the country. However, all are about as trustworthy as the salvation said to be found in Shunka Sapa's bad behavior. For instance, porcupines don't compete for livestock forage nor do they band together and destroy crops. They are neither "varmint" nor "vermin." There is no reason to trap, shoot or kill them, nor is it necessary to control their population with poison. Porcupines do have a very high salt drive. They will often chew through salt-saturated wood and wiring in regions where salt is used on roads during icy conditions. Porcupines also feed on bark, but their feeding activities rarely kill trees. However, the amount of damage they can cause depends on the species of tree and its limb struc-

ture. Porcupines are energy conservers, and if it is easiest simply to circle the tree via its branch formation while feeding, then a porcupine's foraging activities can girdle the tree and kill it. Porcupines also love apples, so, in exceptional cases, they can impose significant damage to orchards. In forests, however, foraging usually causes some structural damage on individual trees but so do many other natural causes. Beetles may take advantage

of porcupine-scarred trees but no more or less than those trees damaged by drought, lightning, pollution or any other environmental impact. Most claims of economic loss resulting from porcupines are typically exaggerated, anecdotal and lack any sort of reliable documentation. In fact, measurable economic impact caused by fire and human-related deforestation render the porcupine effect on trees inconsequential.

Woman-Who-Walks-With-Porcupines taught me many of these lessons while I was under her tutelage. Some of my other lessons required that I repeat the same mistake a number of times before I learned them. For example, if I found myself walking in circles for the third straight afternoon in a row with my radio telemetry signal beeping loudly but with no porcupine in sight, then it was likely that my collared porcupine was hiding from me — in a cave, directly under my feet. And once I found the cave opening nearby, I needed to be sure and check the entrance before climbing through the jumble of breakdown, squeezing through the small opening and crawling on my belly into the twilight. One never knows when one might find, say, a nest of young turkey vultures who may attempt to rectally evacuate a viscid shot of putrescence in one's general direction to discourage one from crawling any farther. Lesson finally learned? It's probably a good idea to come back during a different time of the day, when the porcupine has likely exited the cave and is hanging out in the daylight.

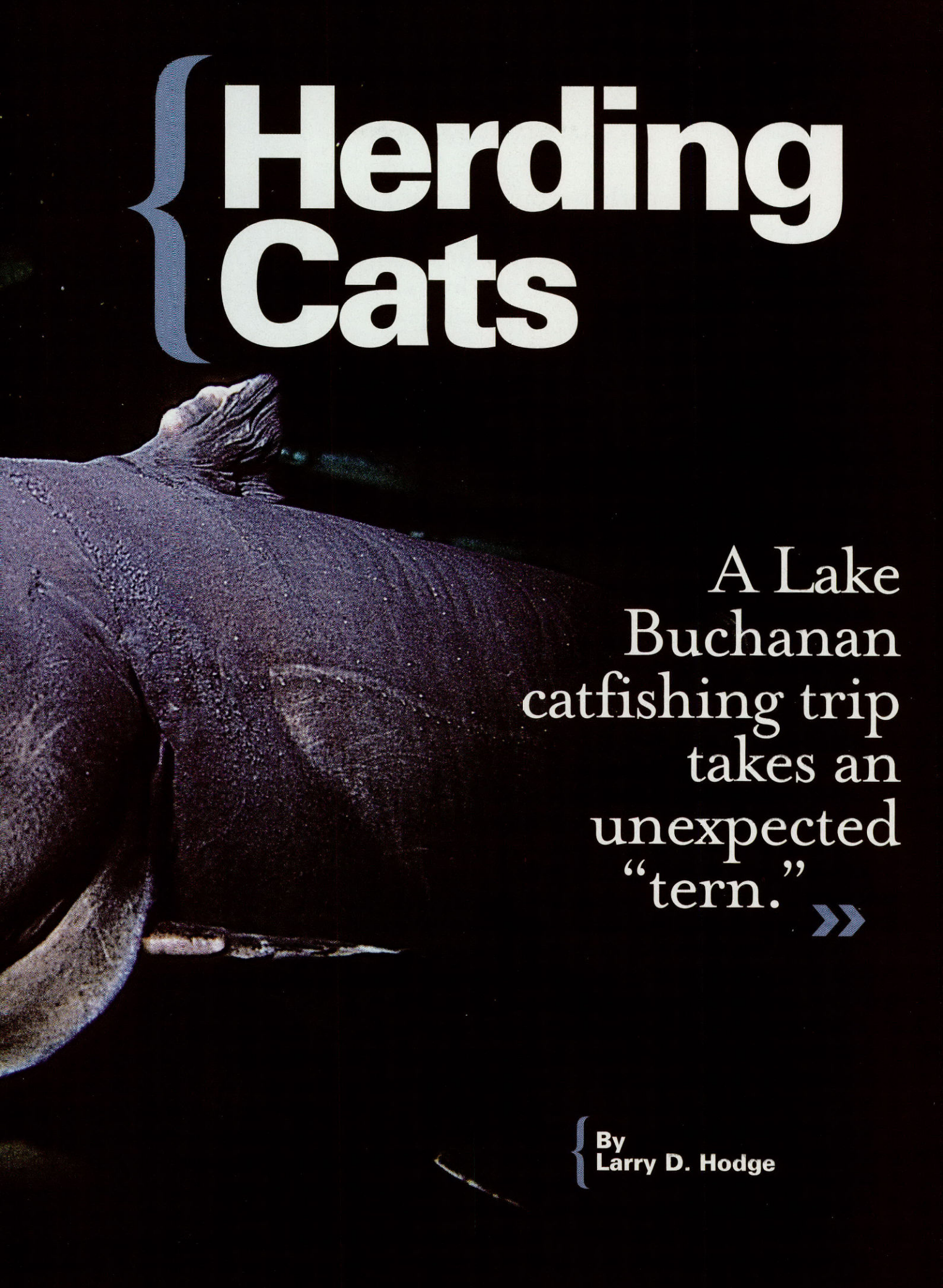
Clockwise from opposite: sponge-filled quills for flotation; a face only a mother could love; the author tries out his new skills; lounging in a tree.



But I believe the most important lesson I learned was that science, even hard ground-breaking science, requires a bit of compassion. Ilse's porcupines were not just subjects in a study to her. In order to understand more about them, we didn't need to shoot them, dissect them or stuff them. Instead, we could capture them, examine them, watch them closely, learn something new from them and then set them free. Ilse's methods helped me understand that porcupines, like many other creatures we know very little about, are sentient beings that are often misunderstood. Porcupines are no less an intrinsic part of this big, breathing organism called Earth than any other. By striving to understand the role that each part plays in nature, perhaps we will improve on our own role as stewards of the natural world. ★



PHOTO © ERIC ENGBRETSON



Herding Cats

A Lake
Buchanan
catfishing trip
takes an
unexpected
“tern.” »»

By
Larry D. Hodge

Of all the freshwater fish in Texas, blue catfish provide perhaps the most exciting action on rod and reel. No other fish in a lake can make a reel sing louder or an angler's heart pound harder than a big blue making for parts unknown with a hunk of cut bait in its jaws.

That adrenaline rush is what blue cat anglers seek, says Clancy Terrill, who has guided for blue catfish on Lake Buchanan for more than 20 years and has landed and released a 65-pounder. He knows there are bigger ones out there. "I've had fish just walk off and leave with my line," he says. "There was no turning them. I think we have fish in this lake as big as that 121.5-pound former world record from Lake Texoma." [See "One Big Case of the Blues," page 56.]

And so it is that Zoe Ann Stinchcomb and I head out with Terrill late one afternoon in search of Buchanan blue cats. "If it happens, the action will come from about an hour and a half before sunset to about an hour and a half after," he explains. "I always look for a cove or a creek channel with rocks on one side and a ledge or trees or soft sand on the other. The catfish move up there following shad that move into the coves in the evening and come out in the morning."

Terrill eases the boat into an unremarkable looking cove and sets anchors fore and aft to hold the boat in position. "I've fished hundreds of places on this lake," Terrill says, "and this spot has been the most consistent." If there is a catfish honeyhole in the lake, we're on it. The cove has a name, as does the brush-covered hill in the distance, but I promise not to reveal either.

"Right now we are in 25 feet of water," Terrill says, glancing at the fish finder. Then he turns the electronics off. I look at him and raise an eyebrow, since watching what's not taking your bait is one way to pass the time when catfishing. "I think they can hear the noise the unit makes," he says. "I tell people they can talk and have a good

time, but not to stomp around or make loud noises. Fish can hear that."

It's time to bait up, and Terrill starts to reveal his secrets for catching trophy blues. The first is not the quarter-pound chunks of gizzard shad that go on the Kahle hooks, it's how the bait is attached to the hooks. Rather than bury the hook in the slab of meat, Terrill gingerly inserts the hook just under the skin on one corner of the bait, leaving almost the entire hook exposed. The shad slice dangles from the hook, looking like it will fly off and land somewhere in the vicinity of Llano when Terrill casts, but shad skin is tough, and the bait lands in the water with a solid plop. He pushes the free-spool button on the reel, sets the clicker, puts the rod in a holder and strips out a couple of feet of line.

"It's very important to just barely hook one tiny bit of skin on a corner of a big hunk of cut shad," Terrill explains as he continues baiting rods. "This makes it easier to set the hook when a fish takes it, because you don't have

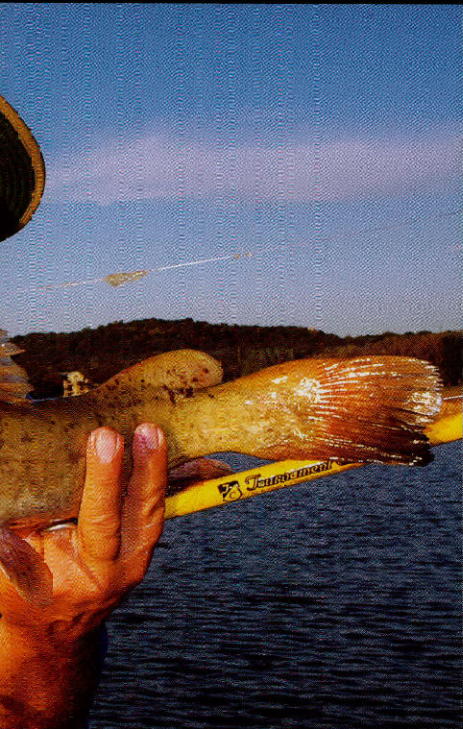
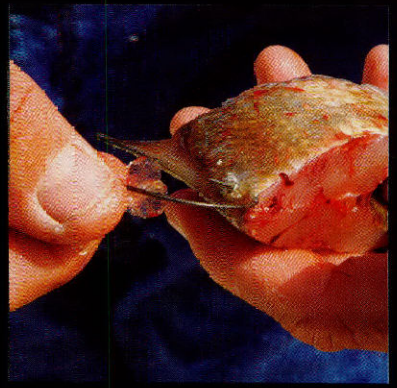
It's very important to just barely hook one tiny bit of skin on a corner of a big hunk of cut shad.

to drive the hook through a lot of meat to hook the fish. That works because when the fish picks up the bait and swims off with it, the slack in the line and the free-spooling reel

let it swallow the bait. The Kahle hook tears out of the bait when you set the hook, travels up to the fish's mouth and hooks it."

Lake Buchanan is better known for striped bass than for catfish, and to keep things interesting, Terrill baits one rod on each side of the boat with live threadfin





Lake Buchanan has healthy populations of blue catfish, flathead catfish, striped bass and white bass, so you never know what will take your bait. Cut bait like big chunks of gizzard shad works best for blues and flatheads, and live threadfin shad tempt stripers and white bass. All can be fished for with rods in holders and all provide exciting action.

shad. When he's done we look like a floating porcupine with six giant quills.

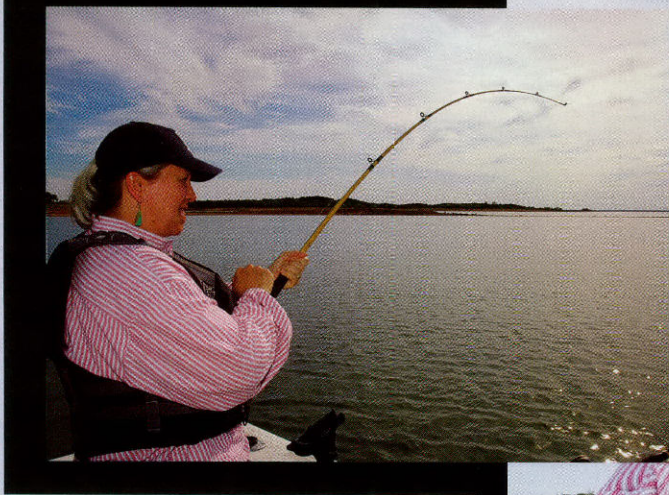
Terrill advises against baiting or chumming a hole when fishing for big blues, because you will attract small fish that will steal your bait.

Everything Terrill does is geared toward catching big catfish and was learned through experience. "A tight line is okay if you are fishing for small fish, but as soon as a big fish feels tension on the line, it will drop the bait," he says, pulling out a couple more feet of line from one reel. "I put the loose

line on the side of the rod opposite the reel crank so it won't get tangled when a fish takes the bait. Watch the line. If it moves, pick up the rod and point the tip down at the water. When a blue cat hits it takes off. Flatheads almost always just drag the bait a ways and quit. When you set the hook, really lay into it to tear the hook out of the bait, start reeling and keep the rod tip up. Sometimes a big blue will run right at you, so if the line goes limp after you set the hook, reel like crazy."

A clicker starts ticking, then the reel begins to sing. It's one of the rods baited with a live shad, and shortly Zoe Ann reels in the first of what will be several stripers. The catfish rods are silent. A loop of silk from a balloon spider appears on one line as if to taunt us about the catfish not biting. It's 4:30. We wait.

Without warning, the loops of line on



one of the rods slither through the guides. The line tightens, then goes slack. Moves sideways. Tightens. Goes limp. "It's probably a gar," Terrill guesses. Zoe Ann takes the rod out of the holder, points the tip at the water, turns the crank just enough to engage the reel and waits. The line tightens again, and she sweeps the rod skyward.

What splashes into the net minutes later is not a gar and not the blue catfish we expect — it's a flathead catfish of about four pounds. Over the next three hours Zoe Ann and I take turns reeling in one flathead after another, all looking like clones of the first. A couple of blues take baits, too, but not the 20- or 30-pounders we're after.

Between bites Terrill gives us a run-down on Lake Buchanan catfishing by season. "The good catfishing starts in

late November and early December when it starts getting cold," he reveals. "Early in morning and late in evening they will move to 20 to 25 feet of water, always in a cove with a rock shelf or point or with a

For big blues in the summer, Terrill advises fishing near a rock shelf in 40 to 50 feet of water.



PHOTOS BY LARRY HODGE/TPWD

creek running into it, and always with deep water nearby. After 9 or 10 a.m. they move out to 40 to 50 feet of water, but with the same kind of structure.

"In February and March, they move up into 10 to 20 feet of water in the same area," he continues. "The prime catfishing can be in two to three feet of water if a lot of water is coming in from creeks and washing worms and bugs into the water. No matter how dirty the water is or what time of day,

they will sense that moving water and move up into the creeks."

For big blues in the summer, Terrill advises fishing near a rock shelf in 40 to 50 feet of water. "After baitfish hatch in May, you can find clouds of bait anywhere in the lake, and the cats don't have to move up into shallow water to find food," he explains. "I think the big blues — not flatheads — stay out in deeper water around rocks in hot weather."

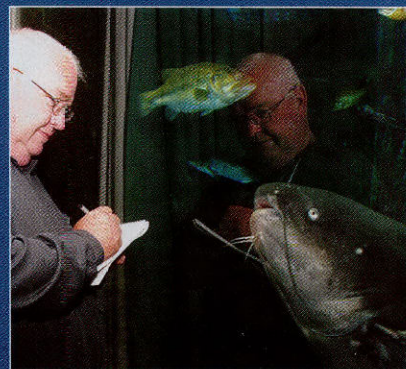
ONE BIG CASE OF THE BLUES

The Texas state record blue catfish (and former world record) was caught from Lake Texoma in January 2004 and taken to the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. Named Splash by Cody Mullennix, the angler who caught her, the 121.5-pound fish was the star attraction at TFFC until her death in December 2005 from an infection that probably resulted from being hooked. (At right, Splash is "interviewed" by local media.)

Splash's skeleton is being prepared for display at TFFC. The people who work there miss her every day, and visitors still ask about her. Big blue catfish have a special hold on people.

"I have caught blues up to 65 pounds from Lake Buchanan," Clancy Terrill says. "I take their picture and turn them loose, and I encourage all my customers to do the same."

To pursue your trophy blue catfish with Terrill, call (512) 756-4764 or visit www.centraltexasfishing.com/.





Flathead catfish are often called yellow cats because of their distinctive color, and blue cats live up to their name, too. Their scientific name, *Ictalurus furcatus*, means "forktailed fish cat." Channel catfish are also bluish and have a forked tail; to tell the two apart, look at the anal fin (the one underneath the body just in front of the tail). The bottom edge of a blue cat's anal fin is straight, like the one at left, while a channel cat's is rounded.

er. In summer you'll catch a lot of good eating-size blues and channels, and some flatheads."

It's not summer, but for some reason we are overrun with four- to five-pound flatheads. Zoe Ann and I are quite happy catching and releasing them, and after seeing how hard they pull, I'm secretly glad I don't tie into a 30- or 40-pound fish. Fishing is supposed to be fun, not work.

Besides the plethora of flatheads, one more surprise awaits us. We're on a plane heading back for the boat ramp when suddenly a white cloud envelops us. Unidentified ghostly shapes streak by on both sides of the boat, and before I have time to realize what they are, Terrill kills the motor. Zoe Ann is laughing: She's taken a tern in the chest, and another dazed bird is walking around the boat behind me. Though as confused as we are by the sudden turn of events, the birds appear unhurt and take their leave.

She's taken a tern in the chest, and another dazed bird is walking around the boat behind me.

And all this time you thought there was a misspelled word at the beginning of this article. So did the editors. They had to go back and undo their change.

But there's nothing I'd change about the catfishing on Lake Buchanan. The blues may not appear on cue, but with stripers and flatheads abounding, there's plenty of fun to be had. ★





PHOTO © LANCE VARNELL; OPPOSITE BY TPWD

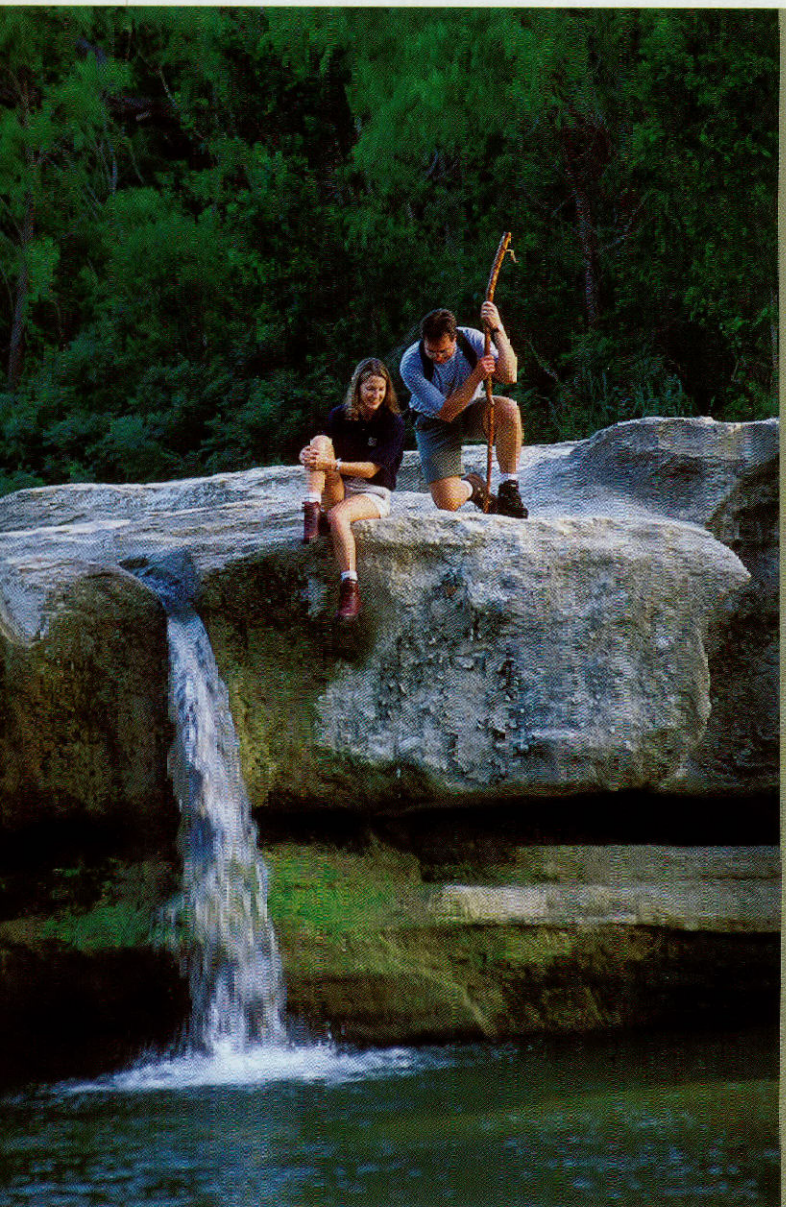
CAMP OUT, CLOSE IN



AT MCKINNEY FALLS, YOU CAN EXPERIENCE A LUSH
HIDEAWAY ONLY 10 MILES FROM THE STATE CAPITOL.

By Bernadette Noll

NEARLY 25 YEARS AGO, WHEN I FIRST MOVED TO AUSTIN, a bunch of urbanite friends and I decided to embark on a group car-pout. It was late afternoon when we finally departed Austin, but McKinney Falls State Park was just a stone's throw away, which made it feel accessible despite our lack of planning. We loaded up a cooler, packed the car with sleeping bags and blankets, threw in a couple of borrowed tents and drove the 15 minutes out of town to McKinney Falls. We were novice campers without a doubt and showed this by sending out for tacos in the morning from a nearby taco stand. Though we weren't exactly roughing it, we all appreciated the ability to access the great outdoors in such close proximity to our inner-city dwellings. Despite the fact that Austin has sprawled in several directions since then, McKinney Falls still feels like a great outdoor escape just 10 miles from the Texas Capitol.



Since then, I have had many escapades at McKinney Falls, and each time I have been astounded that this gem of a park, so fertile and so wild, exists just minutes from downtown Austin. Since that first discovery it has become our family go-to place for last-minute day trips. It is the place we take out-of-town visitors to show them the other wild side of Austin. It is a place I go alone, with my partner, with my four children, with friends and family or with a class trip of second graders. Each time I go I am revitalized and grateful that this green space has been preserved and kept open for public use. Having been there countless times now, McKinney Falls feels so completely familiar to me, yet each time I go I am shown something new, because of the season, the company or the paths I take.

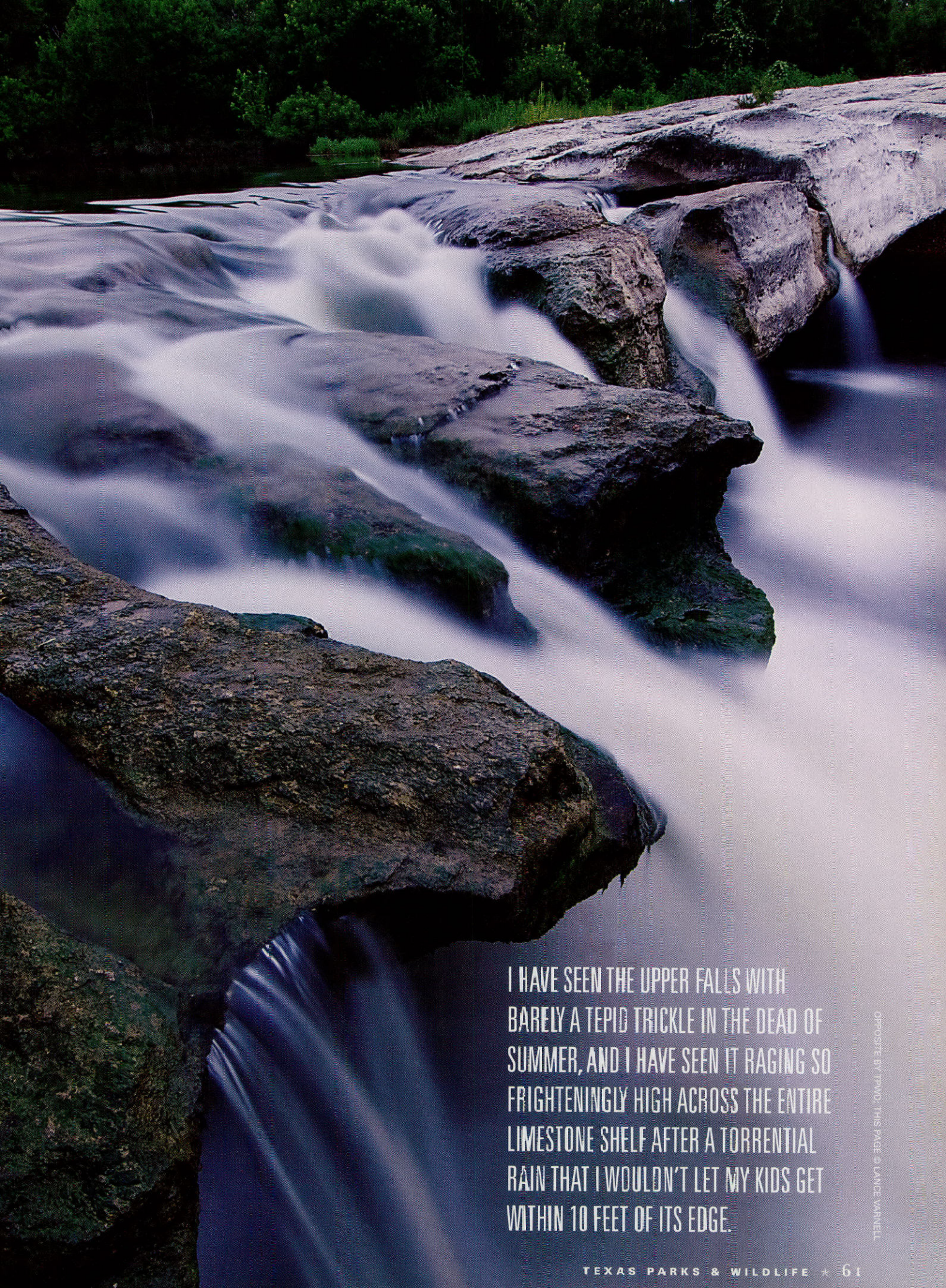
The land that is now McKinney Falls State Park was originally settled by Thomas Freeman McKinney, who came to Texas in the 1820s as one of Stephen F. Austin's first 300 colonists. After statehood, McKinney served in the Texas House of Representatives.

McKinney settled along Onion Creek in Travis County around 1850 and there built his home, stables, a horse track and a gristmill. He lived on the land grinding flour, ranching and raising and racing thoroughbred horses until his death in 1873. McKinney's wife sold off small bits of land and sold a large portion of it to James Smith in 1875. Though floods destroyed the mill in the late 1800s and the house was taken by fire in the 1940s, the ruins of McKinney's stone house and his horse trainer's cabin are there still. It was Smith's grandson, J.E. "Pete" Smith, who donated the land to the State of Texas in 1970. The land was appraised then at nearly \$750,000, and the state received a matching federal grant to develop the park. The park was opened to the public on April 15, 1976.

The name McKinney Falls is for the two falls that are part of Onion Creek, which winds around the western edge of the park, flowing north. For years I knew only of the Upper McKinney Falls, though the name of course implies the existence of a Lower Falls. I have seen the Upper Falls with barely a tepid trickle in the dead of summer, and I have seen it raging so frighteningly high across the entire limestone shelf after a torrential rain that I wouldn't let my kids get within 10 feet of its edge. Each time a new atmosphere is created.

The Upper Falls empty into an incredibly clear, deep limestone pool lined with mammoth cypress trees on one side, time-worn limestone on another and a small sandy beach along the far edge. There are even a few island-like rocks in the middle, which serve as a perfect landing point for a tired swimmer. I have spent whole days at the Upper McKinney Falls, exploring the life in the tiny limestone pools with kids, swimming off the sandy shore and lounging on the water-smoothed and sun-baked limestone cliffs.

From the Upper Falls you can head in several directions. If you head south, you will be on the Onion Creek hike and bike trail, which is a 3-mile asphalt loop. This trail follows the creek for a while through the cedar elm-filled picnic area, past the eight walk-in campsites, the amphitheater and the group dining hall. It then loops away from the water and comes back around the edge of the 84 drive-in campsites, nears the main entrance and heads back to the Upper Falls. At different times throughout the year there are several good birding spots along the way, and many migrating species stop in this green oasis for a chance to rest before continuing on their long journey. Among many others, kingfishers and great blue herons can be spotted flying along the water's edge or perched in a tree; red-tailed hawks can be seen catching thermals overhead, and, in the winter, copious numbers of American robins call this area home. During one winter walk we found three owl pellets right in the middle of the walkway, which we immediately dissected with a couple of sturdy sticks.



I HAVE SEEN THE UPPER FALLS WITH BARELY A TEPID TRICKLE IN THE DEAD OF SUMMER, AND I HAVE SEEN IT RAGING SO FRIGHTENINGLY HIGH ACROSS THE ENTIRE LIMESTONE SHELF AFTER A TORRENTIAL RAIN THAT I WOULDN'T LET MY KIDS GET WITHIN 10 FEET OF ITS EDGE.

OPPOSITE BY TRAVIS; THIS PAGE & LANCE VANHELL



WITH EVERY STEP,
BUTTERFLIES ROSE FROM
THE FLOWERS AND THE
GRASS, AND I WAS
AMAZED THAT ALL OF
THIS EXISTED JUST A FEW
MILES FROM THE AIR-
PORT AND DOWNTOWN.

Near the parking lot for the Upper Falls is the Smith Visitor Center. The visitor center has information on Thomas F. McKinney, the history of the park's land use and other information about the park. Interpretive nature tours and discussions are held in the center on many weekends throughout the year.

Behind the Smith Visitor Center heading downstream is the trailhead for the nearly one-mile long Rock Shelter Trail. The trail name is for the Indian Rock Shelter which is a natural limestone overhang and was used as a shelter by Native Americans from as early as 500 until the 1700s. The last known occupants of this shelter were believed to be related to the Tonkawa Indians. The shelter, also known as the Smith Rock Shelter, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Along this trail one spring afternoon we stopped for lunch and dipped our first-of-season shoeless feet in the cool clear water of a tiny subsidiary creek, which flowed under a small footbridge.

Approaching the Lower McKinney Falls is like walking across a stark moonscape as the extensive span of flat

yet erratically pocked limestone stretches down to the water. Grasses and flowers randomly poke up through the cracks, and tiny puddles serve as home for all manner of minuscule life. Once at the falls a welcoming pool of water waits below and explorations galore can take place all around the water's edge. Though sometimes high water prohibits access, the Homestead Hike and Bike Trail goes through the woods, up to the McKinney homestead ruins, and loops back down through a gloriously green and wild trail thick with all manner of flora and fauna.

In spring of this year I revisited McKinney Falls on a weekday afternoon. Every bit of meadow was filled with wildflowers and butterflies of every size, shape and hue. The water was flowing pleasingly over the falls and a few migrating warblers could be spotted in the canopy of the cedar elms. Near the outdoor amphitheater I startled a painted bunting, which had been perched on the stone wall. With every step, butterflies rose from the flowers and the grass, and I was amazed that all of this existed just a few miles from the airport and downtown. Whether you go for a lunch break, a day trip or an overnight excursion, you will be amazed at all this urban park has to offer, and hopefully you, too, will return time and time again. ★

Details

For information about hikes and water levels at McKinney Falls, call the park at (512) 243-1643 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/mckinneyfalls



Trail winds past the McKinney homestead ruins (opposite, top left) and through the Indian Rock Shelter (opposite, bottom left). Wildlife abounds, including this snapping turtle (opposite, right).

Tips for Last-Minute Camping Trips

Long ago, when my husband was a student in downtown Chicago, he and his arty classmates embarked on a weekend campout. No matter that he had no camping experience or equipment to speak of, with gusto he hit the woods with a willingness to wing it. He constructed a tent out of abandoned artists' canvases, found sticks for poles and created, if not the most wildlife-proof, at least the most colorful tent in the forest, and somewhat waterproof too.

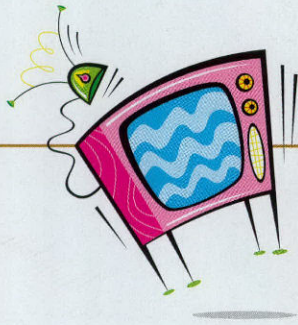
But you need not create an installation piece on your next campout. Even last-minute can be easy if you know what you need. After our first few camping trips we finally made a master list, which allows us to pack up on a moment's notice. There are only a few things that are absolutely essential. Stay dry. Stay warm. Stay fed. Stay quenched. Everything else is optional.

What's on our list?

- **Sleeping bag:** Or a homemade bedroll will suffice.
- **Sleeping pad:** If you don't bring it the first time, I almost guarantee you will the next.
- **Tent:** Tents can be begged, bought or rented cheap. Online classifieds are a great source for buying inexpensive used tents — often used just once or twice. Many camping stores will even rent tents for a day or week rate. Before embarking on your adventure, however, make sure you practice setting up your tent before you hit the forest at dusk. Tents are simple in the daylight and even in the dark if you've done it a dozen times, but there's nothing straightforward about a unfamiliar tent in the woods after dark.
- **Fluids:** Most parks will have drinkable water, but it is a good idea to bring water in with you too. A frozen gallon jug or two will provide cold drinking water and keep your cooler cold for a few days in the field. Freeze some smaller bottles, too, for day hikes. Any other drinks are pure luxury, which is not to say luxury is a bad thing.
- **Food:** To cook or not to cook, that is the question, but also half the fun of camping. Tortillas are handy and can even work in lieu of plates.
- **Bacon** is yummy and greases up your pan, serving as a vehicle for anything else you might cook. Eggs are good and you can hard-boil a few in advance for an easy handheld meal. Nuts are handy too — easy and quick for a hike. Hotdogs or sausages are undemanding and require only a stick for cooking. Some sturdy fruit like apples or oranges are easy to throw in a cooler. A can of beans or a foil-wrapped potato stuck right in the fire are easy side dishes.
- **Utensils:** Pocket knife, cutting board, can opener, cast-iron skillet, spatula, metal plates or pie tins for each person, forks, metal cups for all beverages. We keep all this stuff ready to go in a mesh bag. And of course you'll need a cooler. One with a strong latch is best to ward off any hungry raccoons.
- **Fire:** Matches, newspaper rolls.
- **Light:** Flashlight for each person and/or a lantern.
- **Cleanup:** Multipurpose soap and a towel.

So look at a map and see which parks are near your house. A road trip could turn out to be just a 15-minute drive out of town.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



THE FRONT LINE OF NEWS AND VIEWS



TELEVISION

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Search for an extinct woodpecker; McKinney Falls State Park; flying the Devil's River; working vacation in a state park.

Oct. 14–21:

Night fishing; Big Bend Ranch State Park; native prairie of the 77 Ranch; observing kingfishers; windy Panhandle.

Oct. 21–28:

Tracking Texas springs; stopping invasive aquatics; Abilene State Park; tarpon recovery; artistic game wardens; mountain biking.

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O'KEEFFE'S CANYON

Artist Georgia O'Keeffe spent her formative years exploring and drawing inspiration from Palo Duro Canyon.

By Dan Oko

Red Landscape, 1918

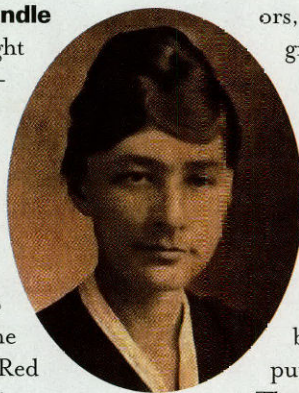
Cross the plains of the West Texas Panhandle

south of Amarillo without a map and you might never discover majestic Palo Duro Canyon, a massive rift in the earth's crust 120 miles long and as many as 20 miles wide in places. More than 16,000 acres of the canyon were deeded to the state of Texas in 1933, although humans have frequented the area from the time of the Clovis peoples over 11,000 years ago. Popularly known as the Grand Canyon of Texas, the Palo Duro landscape is superlative — whether viewed from the rim high above the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River or seen after descending 800 feet into this great fissure in the Eastern Caprock escarpment.

Since I visited the park last year, though, it has not been ancient occupiers who come to mind when I think about Palo Duro. Rather, I recall a more recent visitor, one whose relationship to the canyon is nearly as hidden from Texans as the canyon is hidden from most travelers: Georgia O'Keeffe. O'Keeffe, who died in 1986, was arguably the nation's preeminent modern artist, and despite the fact that she settled in New Mexico after setting the 20th-century art world on fire for four decades, there is no arguing that O'Keeffe's revolutionary style owes a great deal to the big sky, bright lights and surreal scenery found in and around Palo Duro, a place she visited frequently when she lived in Texas.

"She spent a critical phase of her career in the Panhandle," says William Chiego, director of the Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum in San Antonio. "The work that she did during that time would establish themes that would be with her the rest of her career."

Born in 1887 in Wisconsin, O'Keeffe first ventured west at the age of 24, when she arrived in Amarillo to teach art, though initially she stayed in Texas less than two years. At the time, O'Keeffe already knew that she wanted to be an artist; she had studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, where she won top hon-



ors, and went on to win a scholarship from the prestigious Art Student League of New York. Having endured the tight green spaces of the upper Midwest and East Coast woodlands, O'Keeffe found the "bigness" of the Panhandle inspirational; the endless sky and uninterrupted horizons were a salve to the young artist's vision. "I have things in my head that are not like what anyone has taught me," O'Keeffe said. "Shapes and ideas so near to me, so natural to my way of being and thinking, that it hasn't occurred to me to put them down."

That impulse to put things down shifted dramatically when O'Keeffe returned to Texas for another two-year stint as an art teacher, this time at the West Texas State Normal College in Canyon, a dozen miles from where Palo Duro Canyon State Park would soon be established. From 1916 to 1918, O'Keeffe spent her free time exploring the main canyon and side canyons such as Sunday and Thule, carved by the headwaters of the Red River, where she mostly used charcoal and watercolors to depict the rough scenery. Her so-called Canyon Suite paintings reflect the earliest glimmers of the more abstract use of light and color that would come to characterize O'Keeffe's later work, especially her famous images of flowers and popular scenes of New York skyscrapers. Her watercolor *Canyon with Crows* depicts a deep purple arroyo that lightens higher to yellows and orange while impressionistic black crows hover in a pale blue sky.

"There is something wonderful about the bigness, the loneliness and windiness of it all," O'Keeffe observed of her time on the Texas plains. Indeed, even today with development expanding rapidly around Amarillo and Canyon, there is both a remarkable emptiness and complexity to the landscape. I spent two nights in the park camped quietly beneath the stars with only a few other visitors. A pair of Spanish tourists stayed in a nearby tent site while down the park road older travelers in their RVs seemed to enjoy the solitude as well. This was during the fall, and overhead each morning flocks of sandhill cranes made their way to the grain fields and silver-dollar playa lakes dotting the roadsides, where the birds gathered and danced their awkward West Texas waltz. Trying with limited success to photograph the multihued canyon and vegetation such as river-bank cottonwoods, as well as juniper and plentiful mesquite, I found myself confounded by these forms.

"I guess she could see it a little better than most of us can," TPWD Park Ranger Mark Hassell told me. "On the whole, she does a good job of capturing the canyon and what it's like to be here." Trained as a geologist at West Texas State, Hassell went on to explain about the 250 million years of history that can be observed through the striations that define the ravines. The park, he says, is located near the head of the canyon, which was formed by playa lakes that slowly eroded, forming streams that cut the sedimentary rock below. Found at the chasm bottom is the oldest rock, which Hassell labeled the "Permian Red Beds" dating from the Jurassic Era; the middle section of the canyon dates between 210 and 180 million years old, including a distinct layer of pink and purple silt stones and the Trujillo cliffs; dating back

(continued on page 71)



THERE IS NO ARGUING THAT O'KEEFFE'S REVOLUTIONARY STYLE OWES A GREAT DEAL TO THE BIG SKY, BRIGHT LIGHTS AND SURREAL SCENERY FOUND IN AND AROUND PALO DURO, A PLACE SHE VISITED FREQUENTLY WHEN SHE LIVED IN TEXAS.

OPPOSITE AND TOP COURTESY OF PANHANDLE PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM; BOTTOM © WYMAN MEINZER

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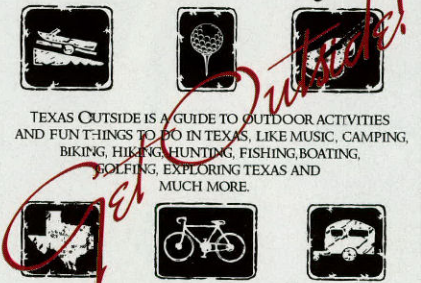
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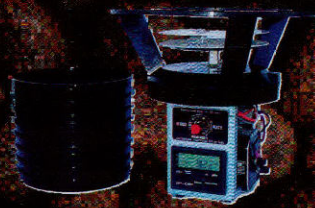
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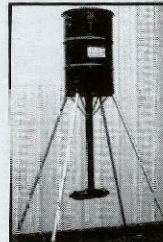
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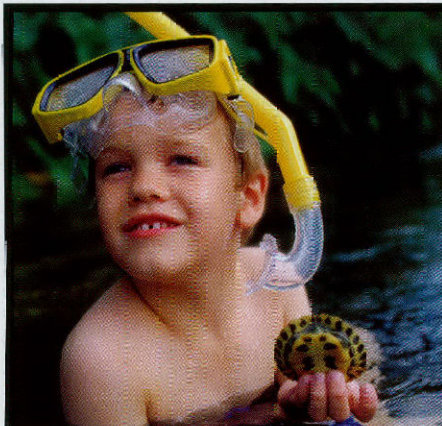
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(Continued from page 67)

a mere 12 million years is the Ogallala Formation, which consists of pinkish-tan sandstone spanning the caprock.

For as much inspiration as O’Keeffe found in the undulating scenery, according to Michael R. Grauer, curator of art at the first-rate Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum on the West Texas A&M University campus (formerly Normal College), many lesser artists tended to shy away from the challenge of trying to capture the canyon in paint. “It was not an easy place for beginners,” says Grauer, who organized a 2006 exhibition of prints, photos and paintings titled “Picturing Palo Duro.” He traces the history of Palo Duro artists back to army expeditions who mapped the area in the 1870s, more than a decade before O’Keeffe was born, looking for where the Red River got its start. Probably the most famous Texan to paint Palo Duro was Dallas artist Frank Reaugh (pronounced “ray,” 1860-1945), who brought art students to the nearby Goodnight Ranch to work *al fresco*.

“Many of the pictures of the canyon looked downright garish,” says Grauer. “A constant criticism was that the colors and landforms in the West could not exist. The critics were used to misty light and this kind of thing. Even Reaugh thought it could be too intense.”

The Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum collection includes one of O’Keeffe’s rare oil paintings, *Red Landscape*, which was completed in 1918 during her stay in Canyon. The picture is one of only four oil paintings attributed to the artist. It’s a striking composition that uses a skyward perspective, looking out from an undetermined arroyo past bright red cliffs to a hazy yellow sun beneath a darkening sky — and unless you have stood in Palo

Duro, it’s easy to see why somebody in New York might have thought O’Keeffe was pulling some sort of stunt. There’s more going on than meets the untrained eye, offers Sharyn Udall, an art historian who curated a 1998 show, “O’Keeffe and Texas,” at the McNay Museum in San Antonio. “This was a foreign landscape to her eyes,” says Udall. “What she seems to be doing is that she is dealing with it in an expressionist manner.”

Shortly after O’Keeffe finished *Red Landscape*, she left Texas and moved to New York City, where she would marry gallery owner and photographer Alfred Steiglitz, who had hosted O’Keeffe’s first solo show, in 1917. The artist would never live in Texas again, yet for the rest of her career, she continued to pursue a vision born of her Lone Star experience, representing much of the natural world — including myriad flowers, cow skulls and even clouds seen from an airliner — as abstract monuments. “She loved the sky, the light, the hills, the color of the dust, and of course she loved the canyon,” says Udall. “It struck her from the very beginning, and she was forever changed by her experience.”

After Steiglitz died in 1946, O’Keeffe would return to the West — this time settling in New Mexico. But if you have a real desire to understand this groundbreaking artist, whose images today decorate coffee cups, postcards and T-shirts, the thing to do is find where the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River parts the Panhandle and spend some time watching the light dance amid the rippling Spanish-skirt cliff formations that decorate Texas’ grand canyon. When O’Keeffe hiked there as a young woman, they say she let the red dust of the Panhandle stain her clothes. It clearly colored her vision, too. ★



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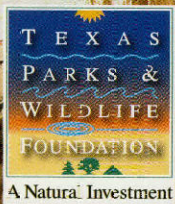
Some dogs have to learn the hard way that they shouldn't get too close to a porcupine. Contrary to popular belief, porcupines do not throw their quills, but a swift tail slap delivers similarly painful consequences.

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Nikon N90S camera with
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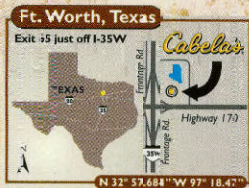
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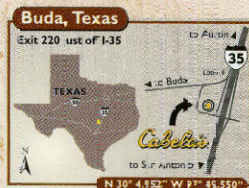


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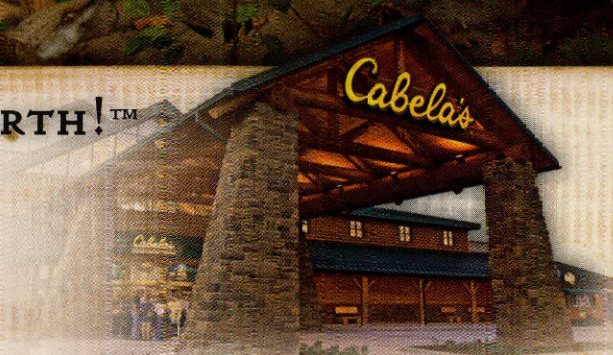
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