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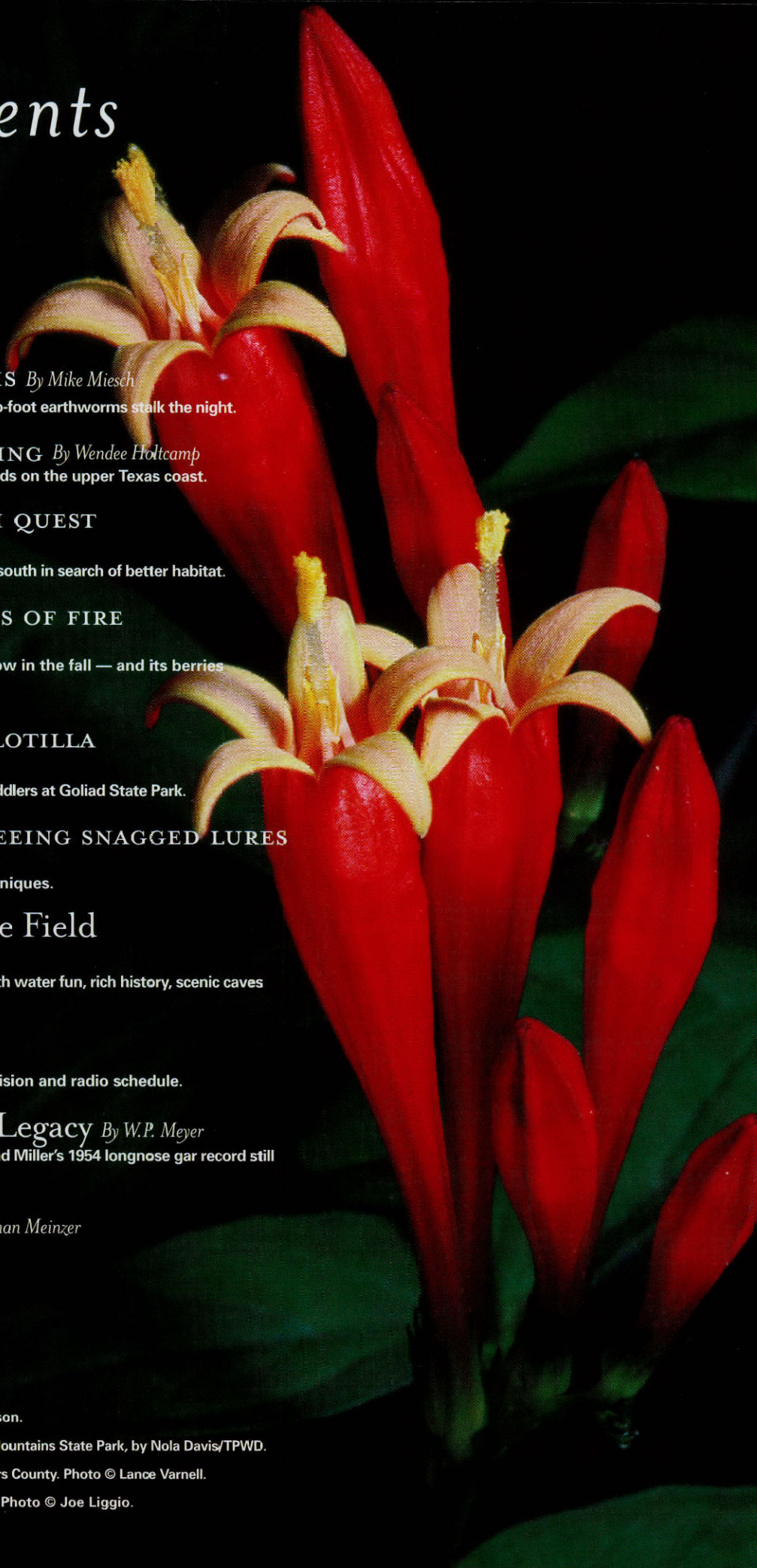
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FRONT: Red-tailed hawk. Photo © Kendal Larson.

BACK: Portion of mural at Indian Lodge, Davis Mountains State Park, by Nola Davis/TPWD.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Trinity River Basin in Chambers County. Photo © Lance Varnell.

THIS PAGE: Indian pink (*spigelia marilandica*). Photo © Joe Liggio.



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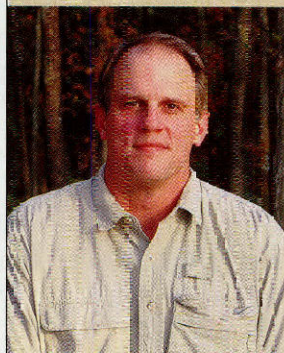
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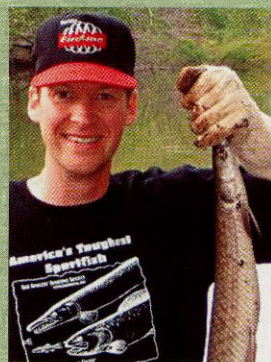
In the Field

HENRY CHAPPELL was drawn to the Trinity River Initiative because it addresses more than habitat loss and preservation. "I've long been interested in rural culture and community," he said. "The landowners and resource managers who are carrying out the initiative understand that the health of our watersheds is inseparable from the



health of our rural economies. Henry has written two novels, *Blood Kin* and *The Callings*, an essay collection, *At Home on the Range with a Texas Hunter*, and *6666: Portrait of a Texas Ranch*, a collaborative effort with photographer Wyman Meinzer. His work has appeared in *Orion*, *Field & Stream*, *Sports Afield*, *Texas Highways*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, and numerous other national and regional publications.

BILL MEYER first saw a gar in July 1994. It was a life-changing experience. Realizing armor-plated 15-pounders were lurking in the same northern Illinois waters that held 4-pound bass, he quickly became a former bass fisherman. After many bruising battles with the prehistoric predators, he founded the International Gar Anglers' Sporting Society (www.garfishing.com) to be a portal for the underserved gar fishing community. Since 1998, Bill has had access to the collected wisdom of hundreds of gar angling members. He currently holds the Illinois State Record for shortnose gar and is, at this moment, thinking about gar. Bill first encountered Townsend Miller as a revered name on a list of world-record gar anglers. After researching, with help from Townsend's son Kert, he recognized that Townsend was much more than a name on a list.



TOM REDINGTON is a fulltime trophy bass guide

on Lake Fork. In addition to guiding, Tom competes in regional bass tournaments around the country, currently fishing in the FLW Stren Series. Tom started fishing for bass as a child in the river on his parents' farm and his passion for the sport quickly grew. He first fished Lake Fork while on a spring break trip in college and immediately knew he wanted to establish his fishing career there. Lake Fork is legendary for its big bass living in heavily timbered waters. In pursuit of lunkers, anglers need to place lures tightly to cover. To quickly recover from casting mishaps, check out Tom's tricks on freeing snagged lures, on page 17.



AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF CARTER P. SMITH

November officially marks the end of hurricane season. Thank goodness.

As I pen this column, the passage of Hurricane Ike is less than a week old. No doubt, much has been, and will be, written about the impact of the storm on the people, communities and economies of the upper Texas coast. Ike's point of landfall, inland course and wake of destruction were particularly unsettling given that it emerged a mere three years after residents were finishing up the last touches of clean-up after Hurricane Rita.


As outdoor enthusiasts, you may be curious about the effects of Hurricane Ike on the upper coast's natural areas. Suffice to say, they were sobering. For all practical purposes, the infrastructure at Galveston Island and Sea Rim state parks were lost to the winds and tides. The same fate befell the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge and other coastal refuges and preserves. The J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area near Port Arthur was almost unrecognizable, its expansive marshes coated with a bright sheen of spilled oil and littered by a barrage of washed-up boats, barges, oil and gas equipment, and other miscellaneous piles of coastal debris. Levees and water control structures, the tools of wetland managers along the coast used to regulate water levels and tidal exchange in area marshes, were compromised by the protracted storm surge.

Beyond the infrastructure damages, however, were the natural impacts one would expect to see from a major storm event in this area — severe erosion and dune deterioration on the beaches of Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula, major saltwater intrusion into fresh and brackish water marshes, significant vegetation die-back from prolonged floodwater inundation, as well as localized areas of substantial tree fall in the Pineywoods.

All in all, however, the coastal marshes and barrier islands and peninsulas did what they were supposed to do in a storm such as Ike. They buffered the mainland from the high tides and heavy winds, thereby taking the brunt of the hurricane's force as it came to shore. These areas are our front lines of defense against storms that most assuredly will rise again from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

So, as we recover, reevaluate and rebuild from the aftermath of Ike and storms after it, we must not lose sight of the fact that healthy marshes and undeveloped barrier islands play a critically important role in protecting our coastal and inland communities, properties and livelihoods. Climate scientists predict a greater frequency and intensity of hurricanes in the coming years. One of the most responsible things we can do to prepare for them is to invest in enhancing our coastal marshes, protecting our dunes and keeping substantial open space undeveloped along our coastline. The return on those investments will reap benefits for people and nature for a long time to come.

Thanks for caring about Texas' wild things and wild places. We need them more than ever.



Carter Smith

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

FOREWORD

Hurricane Carla struck the Texas coast in 1961, two years before I was born. I remember hearing about it throughout my childhood. My parents and older siblings still talk about it today. Though I was raised in Houston, and spent several years there after college, I've never experienced a major hurricane first-hand.

Whenever a storm would rise up in the Gulf of Mexico, we'd be glued to the television. Sometimes, we'd even start to stock up on supplies and make other preparations for a direct hit. Yet, time and again, the hurricane would change course or weaken into a strong thunderstorm. For me, hurricanes have always been ghostly specters, issuing ominous threats but never striking with deadly force.

Hurricane Ike was no ghost. Though I was safely out of harm's way in Austin, I saw how my friends and family struggled with the decision to stay or go. Several family members had endured the nightmare of trying to evacuate for Hurricane Rita, spending 10 hours on the road and only making it as far as west Houston. Fortunately, the city of Houston had a better evacuation plan this time around. When my sister discovered that her zip code, in Clear Lake, was in a mandatory evacuation zone, she made plans to come to Austin. Yet, at the time, there was a chance that hurricane-force winds might make it all the way to Austin. With a constantly changing storm path, it was hard to know which way to go.

In the end, my sister went to my other sister's house in northwest Houston, where they still experienced a sleepless night with heavy wind and rain. My parents in southeast Houston were outside the evacuation zone and decided to "shelter in place," as recommended by city officials. They didn't receive any major damage but had to endure more than a week without electricity.

While my family decided to stay in Houston, some friends from Clear Lake chose to evacuate the day before the storm. As they arrived at my house mid-day, with two confused dogs in tow, it became obvious to me that leaving can be even more gut-wrenching than staying. They're a young couple who'd purchased their first house only a few years ago. They'd spent lots of money and hours and hours of sweat equity on fixing up the house and turning it into a home.

Their home was now in the path of a massive hurricane, and they had no way of knowing what was happening in their neighborhood. Their stress was palpable. After a restless night, they managed to reach a neighbor by phone. He walked out in the rain and inspected the exterior of their house. Fortunately, there was no major damage.

However, they were still worried about less obvious damage, such as a roof leak. After breakfast, they packed up the befuddled dogs again and got back on the road.

While my friends and family made it through the storm relatively unscathed, thousands of others weren't so lucky. But Texans are survivors, and I'm sure that Galveston and other devastated coastal communities will eventually come back stronger than ever.

Robert Macias
ROBERT MACIAS
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

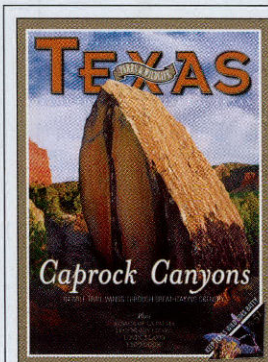
LETTERS

BARBECUE MAKES THE ANGELS SING

As an erstwhile Texan transplanted in Wisconsin, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine keeps me adequately connected and homesick all at the same time. Thank you for the wonderful article on Llano ("Lovin' Llano," October 2008). My parents recently moved there, and

my wife and children have enjoyed reacquainting ourselves with the beautiful Texas Hill Country when we're down to visit. When in Texas, there are three things that I must eat to keep me connected to my roots: Gulf seafood, Tex-Mex and barbecue. Of course, it's hard to go wrong when it comes to barbecue, especially if you go "native" — where the locals go. And while I realize that it would be difficult to sample them all in only three days in the field — though that's a challenge I'd bravely face — Inman's Kitchen, and most especially their jalapeño turkey sausage, are to my knowledge absolutely unique. Match it with a hunk of their homemade bread, wash it down with sweet tea, and I believe you'll hear angels sing.

MIKE PANCOAST
Rice Lake, Wisconsin



When in Texas, there are three things that I must eat to keep me connected to my roots: Gulf seafood, Tex-Mex and barbecue. Of course, it's hard to go wrong when it comes to barbecue, especially if you go "native" — where the locals go.

Mike Pancoast
Rice Lake, Wisconsin

ALSO KNOWN AS HORNY TOADS

In your October 2008 issue, I was thrilled to see Teresa S. Newton's use of "horny toad" ("Old Rip"). Each time I see them called horned frogs or horned toads, I think, "This author ain't from West Texas." I was raised on the 6666 Ranch in Guthrie. There were always horny toads, and they ate big red ants. Is that what a harvester ant is? Also, though the ant is its favorite food, what else do they eat? My mother had a horny toad mother and baby in her flower bed in Sweet-

MAIL CALL

water and we wondered what else we could do for food supply besides ants.

JANEY JORDAN
Everman

TPWD RESPONDS: TPWD herpetologist Andy Price says that those big red ants are harvester ants, which make up about 90 percent of horned lizard's diet. They also eat grasshoppers, beetles and other insects. But "horny toads" are lizards, not toads.

FINE PHOTO FOR OLD DESERT RATS

The centerfold in the September 2008 issue ("No Country for Wimps") whisks me back to where I came from, southern Nevada. As an old desert rat, I was excited to see such a fine photo. Maybe "fine" is an understatement; it is an outstanding photo. Keep up the good work. Though I don't know much about Texas, the magazine is good reading.

WALTER R. AVERETT
Grand Junction, Colorado

BURNING COTTON BURRS

I would like to comment on E. Dan Klepper's article in the October issue, "Doodlebug Way." Sometime in the late

1930s or early '40s, the cotton industry developed technology that changed the process used by cotton growers. That, in turn, changed the way cotton was harvested, from actually picking the cotton fiber to pulling the entire boll. After separating the lint and seeds from the bolls (now called burrs), only the burrs were left. Every cotton gin had a burr burner to incinerate cotton burrs, not grass burrs. As a native of Matador, Texas, I spent the first 18 years of my life in and around the areas described in this article and really enjoyed both the photos and the narrative.

RONNIE HOBBS
Millsap

ROUGH RIDE TO BLACK GAP

Dale Weisman's "No Country for Wimps" (September 2008) brought back fond memories of our family camping trip in the mid-'70s. We went into Black Gap driving two half-ton pickups pulling campers, a Mercury Marquis and a Buick Electra, all loaded to the gills with people and gear. The natural surface roads were even more natural 30 years ago. That

accounted for an exciting drive in and out. While we were out hiking, we met a college geology class on a field trip. The professor asked, "Who is that fool who drove that Buick in here?" My wife's aunt answered, "I'm the fool who drove it in and I'm the fool who will drive it out." We enjoyed fishing, swimming, dancing under the stars on the open patio, and the scary sounds of the night, but mostly we have enjoyed talking about being tough enough to survive our many experiences of the trip. Thank you for reminding us to pull out the old photo albums and relive this wonderful time.

DAVID IVIE
Elgin

Sound off for "Mail Call!"

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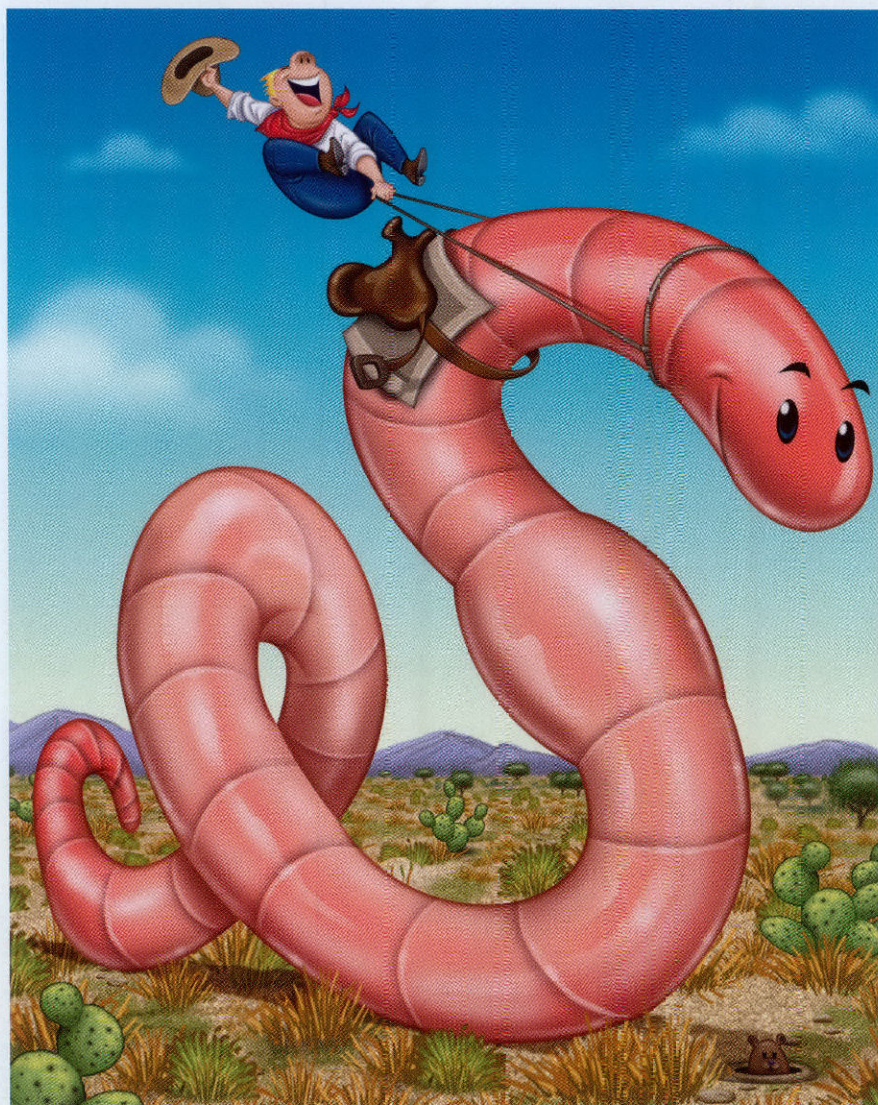
In parts of the Blackland Prairie region, two-foot earthworms stalk the night.

As a child growing up in Clarksville, near the Oklahoma border, I would go out at night with my siblings during the summer with flashlights and look for earthworms. These large earthworms would come out and build small mud chimneys over their holes. We would grab them by their heads and slowly pull them out of the ground. If you pulled slowly, the earthworms would emerge 2 to 3 feet long. If you pulled too fast, the earthworms would break.

While I was a graduate student at Purdue University, I studied with an entomology professor, Leland Chandler, who had written his undergraduate thesis on earthworms. I asked him what he knew about the 2- and 3-foot long earthworms from Texas. He had never heard of one that long, and everyone gave me a hard time because the record for North America was 12 inches.

Soon thereafter my mother and dad mailed a few long earthworms from Texas. There was a professor on campus who was an expert on earthworms and Chandler asked him what he knew about giant earthworms. He told Chandler that the "kid from Texas" must have glued two earthworms together. Chandler and I walked over to his office with the earthworm. He was stunned and speechless. A number of live earthworms were mailed to Chandler, including one that measured 31 inches. Subsequently, I measured one earthworm at 36 inches.

It was reported in the *Clarksville Times* on June 20, 1958, that one Clarksville resident claimed to have measured one earthworm at 48 inches.



These jumbo-sized earthworms are found in the uncultivated blackland prairies of north and northeast Texas. The species has been identified as *Diplocardia fusca*.

While they get really big in Texas, our worms still can't compete with those in Australia, which can grow up to 12 feet in length. ★

—Mike Miesch

Fixing the Plumbing

Chevron restores life to withering wetlands on the upper Texas coast.

On the southeastern edge of Texas, near the Louisiana border, Chevron has partnered with TPWD, restoring coastal wetlands in the Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area, reworking “plumbing” once damaged by decades of landscape changes, including sinking land and intruding saltwater. The ducks have already started to arrive.

Chevron acquired a Port Arthur refinery that had operated from 1902 to 1995, and had damaged the marshes and emitted toxins including oil, volatile organic compounds, lead and chromium. A 2005 Natural Resources Damages settlement ordered Chevron to clean up the toxics at the refinery site, which it has done, and to restore some of the area’s coastal wetlands.

“They had this big project, and we had this big need,” says Mike Rezsutek, TPWD wetlands and waterfowl specialist. “We own a site just outside of Bridge City that at one time was a complete stand of emergent marsh vegetation. Through the years all of that marsh started to die off and it became a self-feeding cycle. The more that died, the more that eventually opened into a shallow water flat with little productivity.”

Hurricanes Rita and Katrina brought the importance of coastal wetlands to national attention. Coastal marshes provide nursery grounds for shrimp, crab and some 90 percent of commercially harvested fish and shellfish. On the upper Texas coast, the combination of sea level rise and land subsidence due to oil and gas extraction results in intense erosion — a relative loss of 1.2 cm in elevation per year.

That may not sound like much, but on the upper Texas coast alone, it translates into 455 acres of brackish and saltwater coastal marsh lost every year. Combined with pollution and habitat conversion, coastal wetlands are in dire straits.

After consulting with TPWD, Chevron decided it would try to restore the Lower Neches WMA Old River Unit for its mitigation project. “If you look at old historical photos going back to the ’40s, you can see there was wetland across this whole area,” explains Jerry Hall, Chevron environmental scientist and project manager.

“Through the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s, saltwater began to move into the area. What was an intact marsh in ’43, in 2005 was open water.”

Chevron engineers hauled in 200,000 cubic yards of dredge material, piling it into circular mounds and long terraces. Next, they hand-planted marsh vegetation on the mounds and terraces. When they finished in summer 2008, they had restored 85 acres of estuarine emergent marsh and 30 acres of upland wet prairie. They also plugged up a canal on the Old Bailey Canal Road (aka Lake Street) that brought excess saltwater into the marsh. These hydrological fixes benefit several thousand acres of surrounding wetlands.

Chevron will monitor the wetland for three years, and then TPWD will manage the site in perpetuity. The site will be open to the public for birdwatching, waterfowl hunting, fishing and other activities.

Post-hurricane update: “We had some die-

off of the plants on the higher elevations from salt water, but the marsh plants are doing pretty well overall. Hurricane Ike caused some damage, but didn’t completely destroy the restoration, although the long-term impacts are yet to be seen,” says Rezsutek. ★

— *Wendee Holtcamp*



Restored wetlands in southeast Texas have already attracted waterfowl.

PHOTO © ANNA ARMITAGE

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Coati Quest

The elusive coati mundi may have headed south in search of better habitat.

Wanted: information on the whereabouts of white-nosed coatis (*Nasua narica*) in extreme South Texas northwest to the Big Bend.

“If we could confirm any sightings from landowners, then we could conduct a study on them,” says John Young, TPWD mammalogist. “A few years ago, we had three or four sightings near the Pecos River, but we couldn’t confirm those.”

Listed as a threatened species in Texas, white-nosed coatis — also called coati-mundis — belong to the family Procyonidae, a group of small carnivores that includes raccoons and ringtails. They occur largely in woodlands and canyons found in Mexico and Central America but have ranged northward as far as southern Texas.

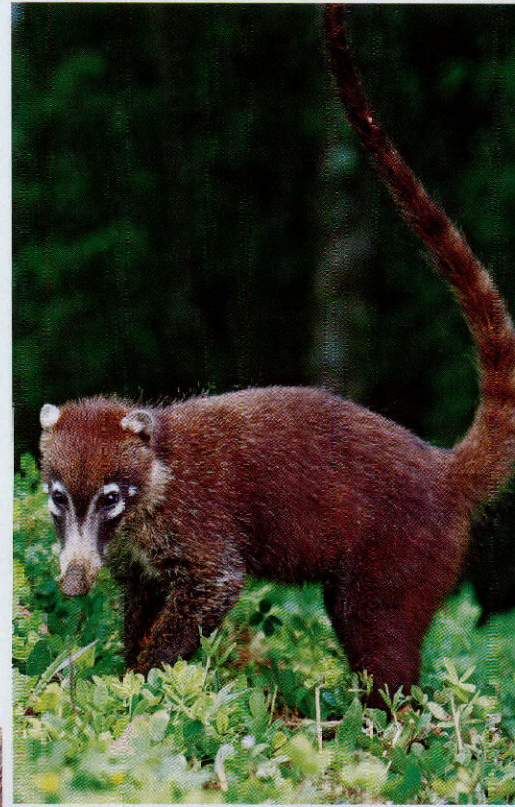
Like their relatives, coatis have long, banded tails. When walking around, they hold their tails up. In trees, they’re used

to maintain balance. Heavy foreclaws and a slender, upturned snout enable coatis to grub for insects and other arthropods. They also dine on lizards, rodents, nuts, fruits and prickly pear.

Diurnal by nature, coatis live cooperatively together in “troops” that consist of adult females and their young. Males are solitary. In the spring, a troop allows one male to join but only long enough to mate. Pregnant females leave to give birth, then later return to the troop with their litter of up to six young. By the age of 2, young males turn solitary.

Biologists speculate that development and lack of suitable habitat keep coatis south of the border. “Texas has always been on the very northern edge of their distribution, and numbers were likely never very high,” Young says. ★

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers



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Though usually found on the ground, the coati is an excellent climber and swimmer.


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Leaves of Fire

The Texas sumac puts on a dazzling show in the fall — and its berries make a tasty beverage.



↑ Texas sumacs boast heat and drought tolerance and vivid fall color.

ade, using a recipe found in *Edible and Useful Plants of Texas and the Southwest*.

“Sumac fruit has the same malic acid as apples, so the taste is familiar — tart yet sweet,” she says. “You can make it stronger or weaker depending on how many berries you use. And I definitely advise using a cheesecloth for straining, like author Delena Tull recommends, because it’s a pain to get all the seeds and twigs out of the liquid.”

Caution: The leaves and fruit of sumac — a relative of cashews, mangoes and poison ivy — can trigger an allergic reaction in some people. Also, steer clear of cream-colored berries produced by poison sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix*). ★

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Move over, maples. Texas sumacs (*Rhus lanceolata*) do a mighty fine job of producing spectacular fall foliage, too.

Also called prairie flameleaf sumac — one of seven Texas sumac species — it turns blazing red and orange with cooler temperatures or extreme drought. A common sight in Central Texas, they also inhabit the dry, rocky soils of Trans-Pecos mountain ranges, the Palo Duro Canyon, and areas north of the Balcones Escarpment. Fast growers and drought-tolerant, they spread by suckers and can reach up to 30 feet high.

In late summer, tiny cream-colored flowers bloom in large clusters (panicles) on branch tips. Their dark red-brown berries (drupes) attract quail, prairie-chicken, ring-necked pheasants and other birds. White-tailed deer and mule deer munch on the leaves, which contain tannic acid used for tanning leather.

Jean Nance, a master naturalist in Leander, likes to pop berries into her mouth and suck them. After giving fall nature walks at the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, she serves hikers with cups of tasty sumac-

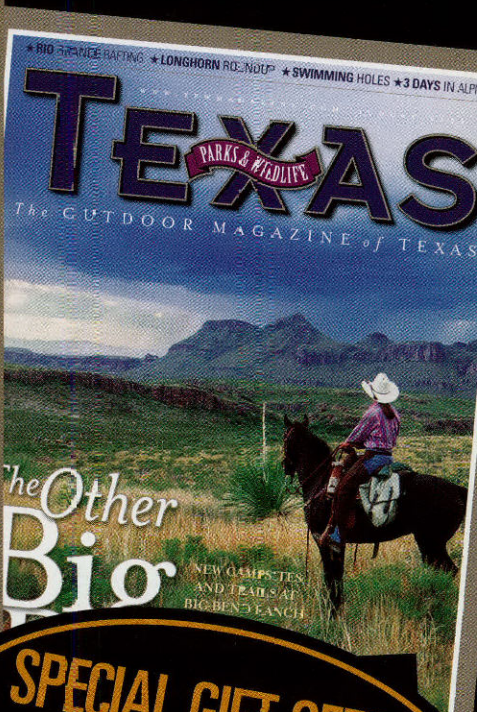
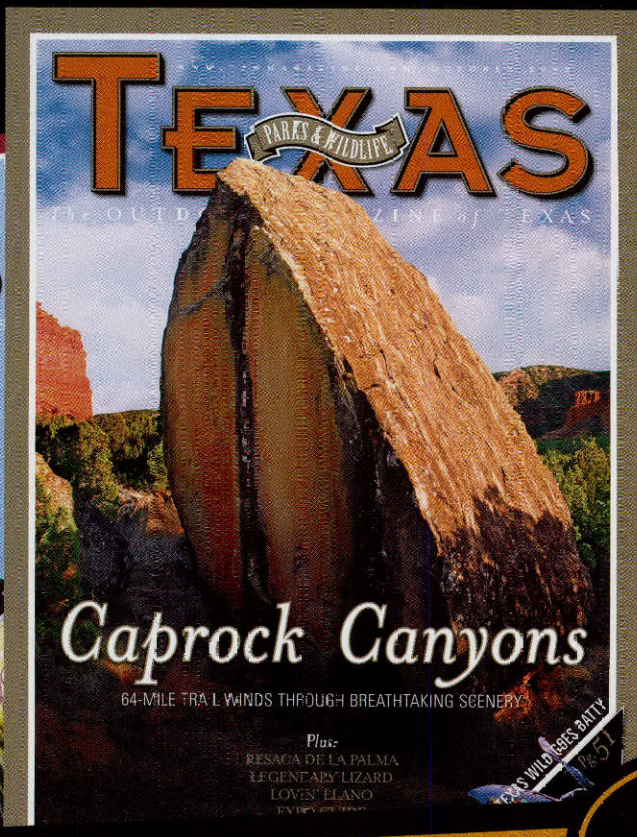
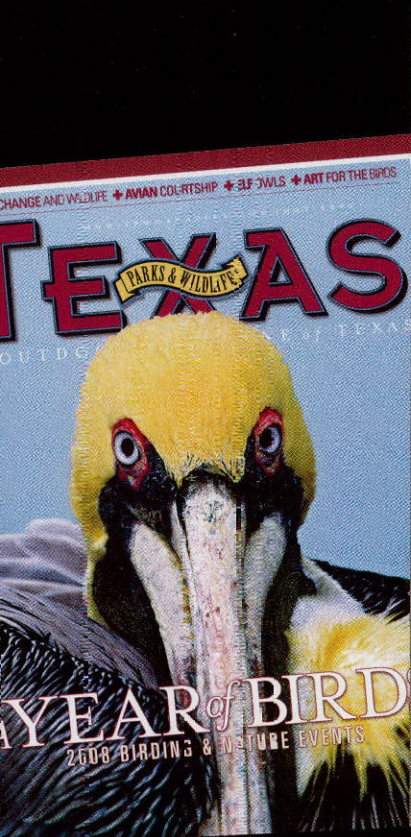
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Take a leisurely boat ride with 80 other paddlers at Goliad State Park.

West of Goliad, the San Antonio River runs slow and easy. Well, in most places, that is. "My two granddaughters and I were trying to get around a log jam in our canoe, and we dumped over," says Janie Von Dohlen, who paddled in last June's Summer Flotilla on the river.

Minor mishaps aside, the Von Dohlen's can't wait for the Fall Flotilla, slated to shove off this month. Organizers of the sixth annual event expect more than 80 paddlers will make the 6.6-mile trip down the Goliad Paddling Trail. Canoes, kayaks and jon boats will launch west of town at Highway 59, with take-out at Goliad State Park. Trips take from two to four hours.

Accessible year-round, the inland paddling trail — the first to connect to a state park — winds past steep riverbanks lush with vegetation and wildlife. Future plans call for a 58-mile paddling trail on the river with six public access points, complete with parking, toilets and other amenities.

For paddlers wanting to fully experience the outdoors, Goliad State Park offers primitive tent sites near the river. Two shaded campgrounds with utilities and screened shelters are also available. Off the water, paddlers and park visitors will enjoy a 1-mile hiking trail along the river and a short nature trail. The 2-mile, multi-use Angel of Goliad Trail links the park to downtown Goliad.

From Thanksgiving through December, grounds around the park's Mission Espiritu Santo glow with holiday lights. Exhibits at the reconstructed church and nearby Presidio La Bahía recall when Spanish missionaries settled the area in 1749 and established Texas' first cattle ranch. Other nearby historic sites include the Ignacio Zaragoza Birthplace, Mission Rosario, Fannin Battleground, and the Fannin Memorial Monument.

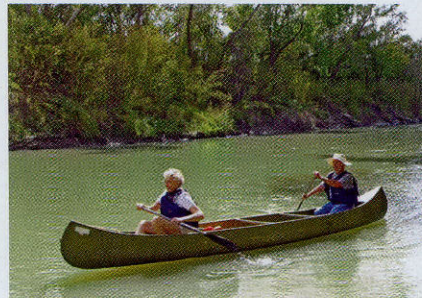
The Fall Flotilla runs 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, November 1. Paddlers must bring own watercraft and safety equip-

ment. Free shuttle service 9 to 11 a.m. Free lunch for pre-registered participants; contact the Goliad Chamber of Commerce, (361) 645-3563. Next year's Summer Flotilla is set for May 16. For more information, visit www.canoe-trailgoliad.com.

Later this month, "Spanish Tracks and Trails" will feature weavers, blacksmiths, leatherworkers, and other artisans demonstrating their frontier-style skills at the Mission Espiritu. The event will be held Saturday, November 8, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Goliad State Park is located just south of Goliad on U.S. 183 and 77A. For more information, call (361) 645-3405 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/goliad. ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers



Enjoy quiet pools and small riffles on the Goliad Paddling Trail.

TOP COURTESY SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY; BOTTOM © LANCE VARNELL

Freeing Snagged Lures

Before you start yanking, try these techniques.

Many of our favorite game fish in Texas reside around heavy cover — docks, laydowns, riprap, standing timber, brush piles and the like. While these places make great homes for our aquatic friends, working lures in these places is tricky and snags occur for even the most seasoned anglers. Instead of pulling as hard as you can and losing your lure or rushing in with your trolling motor and spooking all the fish around the snag, try these tricks to help you retrieve snagged lures.

The first and most important step is to resist the urge to set the hook or pull hard on the line when a snag first occurs.



Pulling hard frees a few snags in very weak cover; however, it normally only serves to bury the hooks even deeper, possibly making the snag irretrievable.

Often you can free your lure from a distance with a “bow and arrow” line-snapping technique, without ever going in to get your bait. With the rod and reel in your left hand in the 9 o’clock position, draw back about 2 feet of line in front of the reel with your right hand, making the line almost tight. Now, let go of the line in your right hand and simultaneously snap your rod from the 9 o’clock to the 12 o’clock position. This creates a I-2 punch down your line, and the shock releases the lure. This technique requires practice to get the timing down, but once perfected, lures often pop free on the first try.

Some snags are stubborn, so you’ll need

to move your boat in close, if possible. Frequently, simply moving to the back side of the snag is enough to make it come out. If the lure still won’t come free and it is hooked close to the surface, simply get directly over the top of the snag and reel your rod tip all the way down to the bait and push it back out. Be careful to push gently, as aggressive actions could damage or even break the rod or its guides. If the lure is just out of reach from the boat, a nifty trick is to shoot the entire rod at the lure. In this case, open the spool or bail of your reel and grab the line between the reel and the first guide on the rod. Pull the line from the guides towards the reel, and the entire rod slides down the line and knocks out the lure. Then, simply pull the lure and rod back with the line.

In deep-water situations and for the most persistent snags, a lure retriever will pay for itself after the first few uses. A very cheap yet effective lure retriever is a 4-ounce bank style sinker. Simply attach a large paper clip to the end of the sinker, and then slip the paper clip onto your line. Get directly over the snag and hold your line tight — the impact of the sinker sliding down to the lure frees most baits. Since impact alone won’t free baits that are tangled in fishing line, trotlines or similar obstructions, I prefer the lure retrievers that are available at most tackle stores. Most consist of a large weight connected to a strong rope, a wire loop to fasten on the line, and a series of mesh or chain on the end. If the impact of these heavy retrievers doesn’t free the bait, the wire loop or chains tangle with the lure’s hooks and you’ll be able to pull it free with the heavy rope. For hassle-free use, I fasten my lure retriever to the end of a retractable dog leash. The 30-foot rope on the leash allows me to reach my deepest snags, then quickly and neatly retracts for tangle-free storage. ☆



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Prince of a Town

New Braunfels brims with water fun, rich history, scenic caves and tasty German sausage.



John Travolta's dance scene in the movie *Michael* was filmed on the old dance floor at Gruene Hall.

There is nothing more attractive in Texas heat than cool water, especially if it comes in the form of fun as well as a cool drink. In New Braunfels, the Comal and Guadalupe rivers lure people with their blue-green waters and currents perfect for floating downstream. New Braunfels is a Hill Country mecca for tubers and rafters, and it's also home to Schlitterbahn, one of North America's top water parks.

But there's more to New Braunfels than water, because it's also a city that celebrates its German heritage proudly. In 1845 Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels chose land situated near the confluence of the Comal and Guadalupe rivers as a settlement for German immigrants to Texas. Those rivers served as a source of water, power and recreation for the early settlers of New

Braunfels — the city Prince Carl founded and named after his homeland.

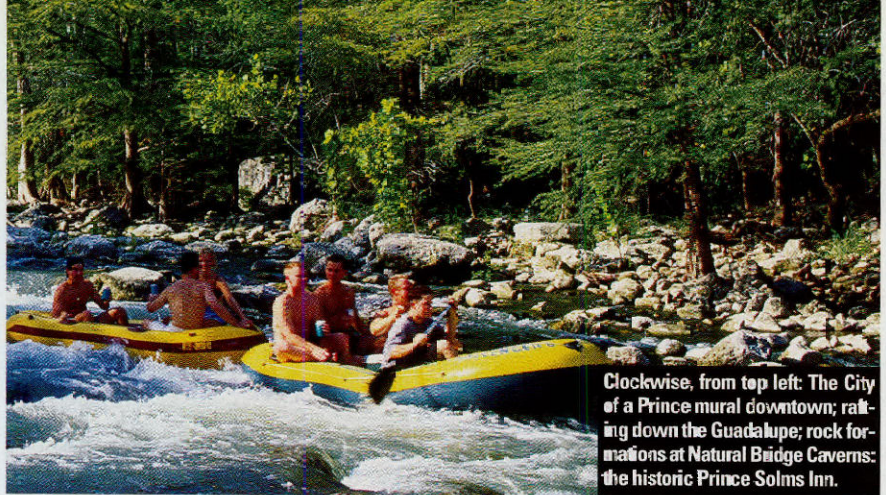
Although spending three days in the water was tempting, I decided to focus my tour of New Braunfels around its history and heritage, which run as deep as its rivers. My mother Joy and I begin our adventure at an underground spot — 180 feet underground, to be exact. In 1960 four university students discovered Natural Bridge Caverns, named for a stone bridge that crosses the sinkhole near the north cavern.

An attraction since the caverns opened to the public in 1964, the Natural Bridge Caverns complex is a family destination consisting of cave tours, a climbing wall and an exotic wildlife ranch. There's even a mining sluice where young prospectors can pan for gems and fossils in soil bought

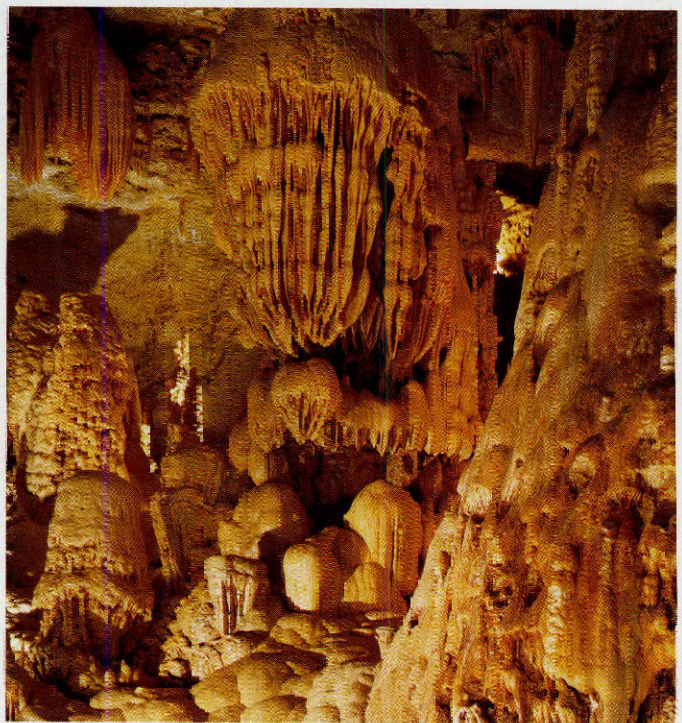
from the Natural Bridge Mining Company. (Tip: Pricier soil yields more treasures.)

Mom and I opt for a combination tour of the north and south caverns. Our first tour leads us deep into the south cavern, which has only been open for tours since 2002. The magic of the crystallized limestone formations in the south cabin is in their delicacy. In addition to stalagmites that reach up from the floor and stalactites that hang from the ceiling like giant carrots, we see a 14-foot-long soda straw — the second longest in North America.

A thin sheet of cave drapery clinging to the side of the wall catches my eye. Noticing the striations in color, I tell Mom, "That reminds me of pancetta." Our guide informs us that caverns refer to that kind of drapery as "cave bacon." Our tour of the



Clockwise, from top left: The City of a Prince mural downtown; rafting down the Guadalupe; rock formations at Natural Bridge Caverns; the historic Prince Solms Inn.



scouth cavern concludes with the lights out. The cave's velvety darkness and cool humid air swallow us completely — it is so dark, I can't even see my hand in front of my face.

Our second tour takes us into the north cavern, which contains five large rooms, including one the size of a football field. Awe-inspiring formations resemble thrones and mushroom clouds, and one 50-foot-tall column reaches from floor to ceiling. We also peer at blind cave crickets and evidence that bats once called the caverns home — ancient bat guano still litters some areas of the cave, and because of the moist air, it retains its original sliminess.

After nearly a full day in the caverns, we head to town in search of rest and something to eat. Home base for our trip is the historic Prince Solms Inn, built by Emilie Eggeling and Christian Henry in 1898. Located just north of New Braunfels' main plaza, the charming two-story inn was run by the Eggeling family for more than 50 years. The cheerful exterior gives way to high ceilings and ornate furnishings inside.

In addition to providing a rest stop for travelers from around the globe, in the past the inn has hosted murder mystery dinners. It's even rumored that the ghost of a jilted bride inhabits the 110-year-old building. Today cheerful innkeeper Al Buttross and his staff operate the inn as a bed and breakfast, serving a full country

breakfast every morning to hungry guests.

From our inn it's a quick stroll to New Braunfels' town center, which revolves around a turning circle. For a Friday afternoon, the streets are relatively quiet — I decide that most people are probably on the water. Our first stop downtown is the farmers' market at the First Protestant Church. The market is held Fridays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. from May 23 to December. Even though we arrive late, there is still plenty of produce and preserves to go around. We leave with plump purple eggplant, bright patty pan squash and a package of doughy cinnamon rolls.

Our appetites whetted by shopping, Mom and I decide on an early dinner at the Haisache Grill. The grill offers sandwiches, salads and entrees in a building dating from the 1920s. As we enter the restaurant, I notice the atmosphere buzzing with conversation and a youthful vibe that belie the sleepy streets outside. We order fried brie with raspberry chipotle sauce as an appetizer — who can resist fried cheese? The sweet and spicy sauce complements the crispy melted brie. For dinner we order twists on classic comfort food: I feast on

stuffed chicken breast with penne, while Mom has fried catfish with sweet potato fries. Stuffed and satisfied, we leave happy.

Day two begins as any good day should: with a great breakfast. As soon as we sit down in the main dining room downstairs, we receive a plate of fresh fruit, tasty sausage and the inn's "sunrise eggs," baked in a muffin cup with cheese and herbs. A kindly prints off the recipe for us (many of the inn's recipes are available on its Web site).

After breakfast Mom and I head over to the Sophienburg Museum to learn more about New Braunfels' history. The museum, which opened in 1932, sits on a hill on which Prince Carl intended to build his home. But it wouldn't be just any home — he wanted to build a castle and name it after his fiancée, the Lady Sophia. Sophienburg means "Sophie's castle" in German. As the story goes, once Sophia heard about the "primitive" living conditions in Texas, she refused to leave Germany. After only nine months in Texas, Prince Carl went back to

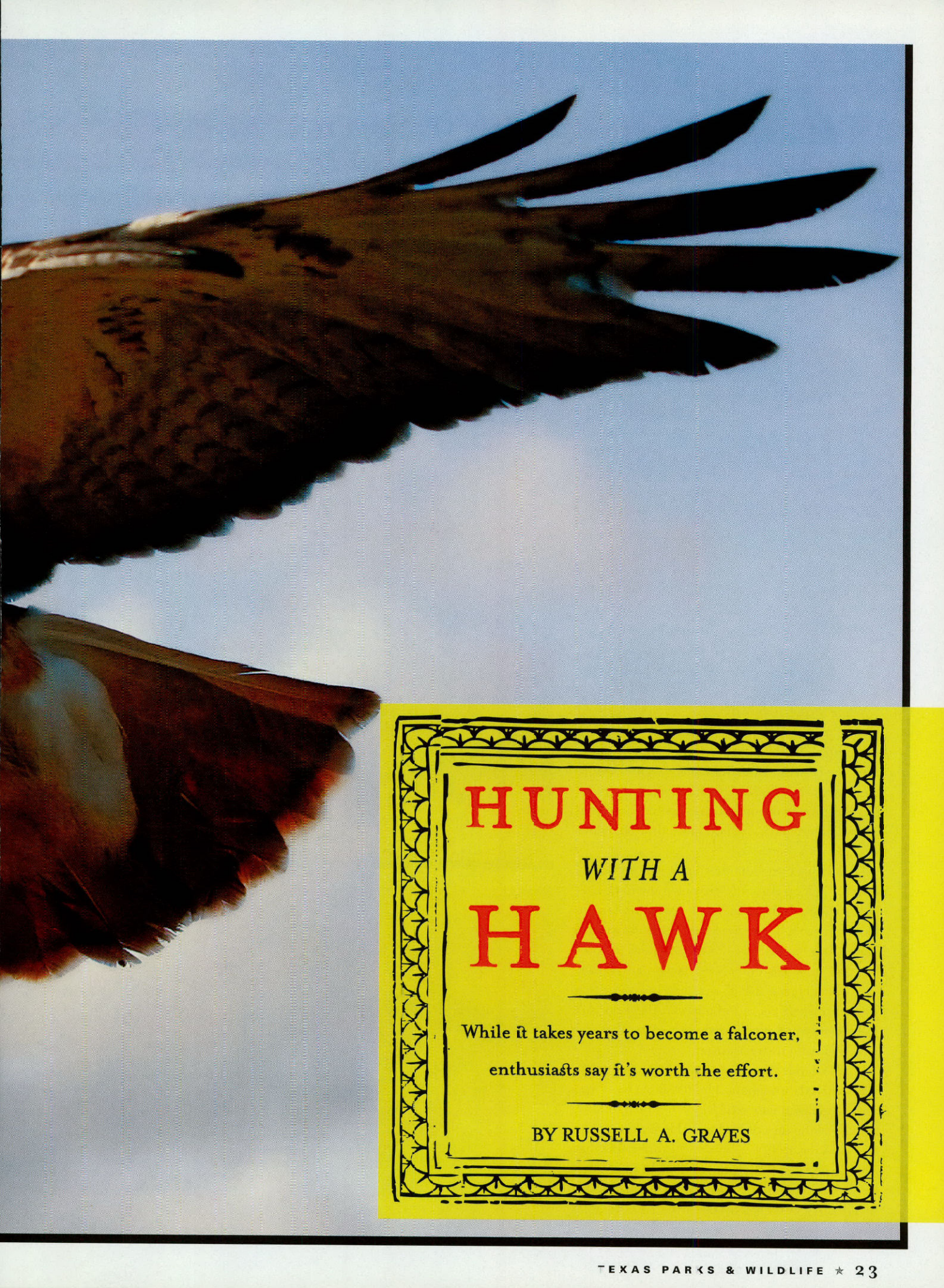
(continued on page 55)



RED-TAILED HAWK



PHOTO © KENDAL LARSON



HUNTING

WITH A

HAWK

While it takes years to become a falconer,
enthusiasts say it's worth the effort.

BY RUSSELL A. GRAVES



ading through this field of rocks and three-awn grass is a bit paradoxical. While the overgrown meadow has a distinctively rural feel to it, about 10 miles to the south I

can see the Fort Worth skyline jutting from the Trinity River banks. Hiding in the rocks and the dank pockets of twisted grasses, rodents abound. Twenty yards away Krys Langevin, Brandi Quick and Brannon Jackson serve as spotters and ease up to the rocks while Kurt Reineck closes in with his Cooper's hawk, Hercules, perched on a homemade pole. Krys sees what I can't so I stop to watch.

Within seconds, a fat eastern cottontail darts from the rocks and weaves in predictable back and forth fashion into a stiff southerly wind. I glance back at Hercules quick enough to see him lean from the pole and then make a quick dive into the grass. The wiliness of the rabbit and the strong southerly wind conspire against the hawk, and he makes a clean miss.

"Let's walk over this way," motions Krys to another rock pile. "There'll be more rabbits over there." Two or three more times, rabbits run and the hawk misses. Still, what impresses me is the synergy between the spotters, the trainer and the hawk as they demonstrate, time and again, the skillful way in which they harness the hawk's wild instincts.

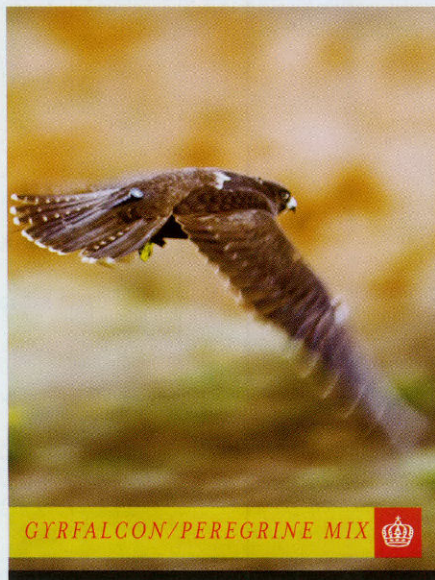
While I watch from a distance, it's clear that each person in the party understands his or her role in this hunt and executes it precisely. Langevin cherishes the privilege of being a falconer, and before the hunt, he invites me to his house, where he shows me his hawk houses (mews) and muses about each of his two birds and how much time he spends working with them.

I admit that bird identification isn't in my wheelhouse, so Krys patiently explains how to distinguish his male Harris's hawk from his female Cooper's hawk. Their given names are Dingus and Turbo Dog respectively, but Krys is quick to point out that while his birds have catchy names, they aren't pets. He says that it's a mistake to assume that you can make a pet out of a hawk. Affection isn't something you'll get out of these birds, as they still have their wild instincts intact.

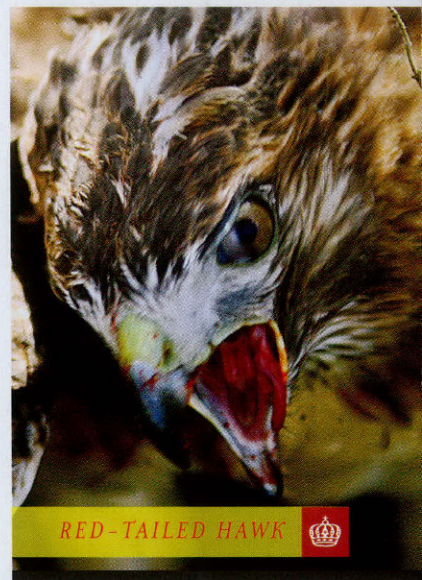
While we tour Krys' home, hawking memorabilia is scattered throughout. He talks about his training regime, and I am struck by how much time he spends taking care of his birds. He makes it clear that hawking and falconry are commitments that can't be taken lightly. By the time we head afield, I have no doubt how serious Krys is about the sport of falconry and that he takes his role of both ambassador and steward seriously.



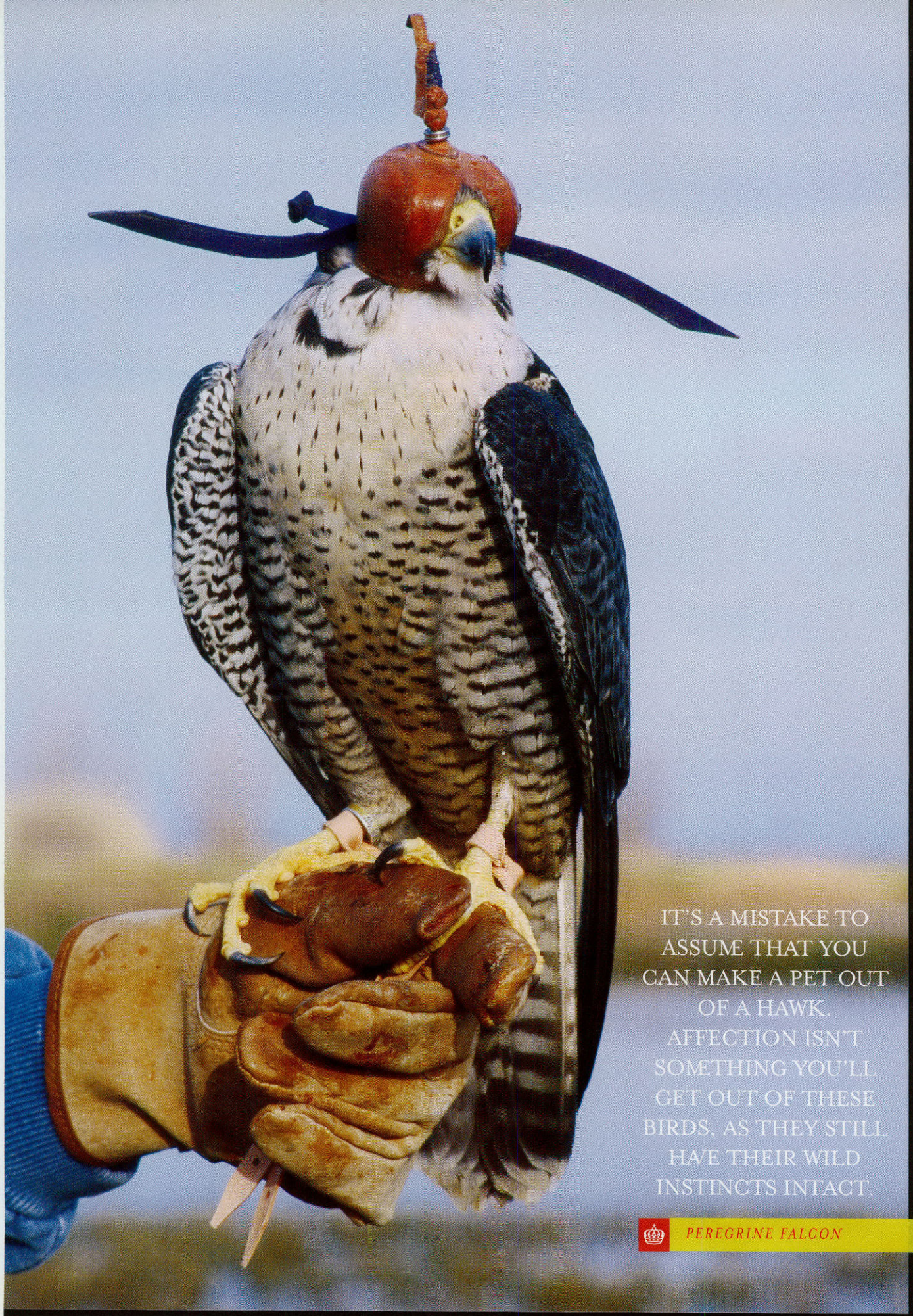
The long pole is used as a portable perch that the bird sits on when the falconers go into the field. Helmets are used to eliminate distractions and keep the bird calm in transit.



GYRFALCON/PEREGRINE MIX




RED-TAILED HAWK



IT'S A MISTAKE TO ASSUME THAT YOU CAN MAKE A PET OUT OF A HAWK. AFFECTION ISN'T SOMETHING YOU'LL GET OUT OF THESE BIRDS, AS THEY STILL HAVE THEIR WILD INSTINCTS INTACT.



PEREGRINE FALCON



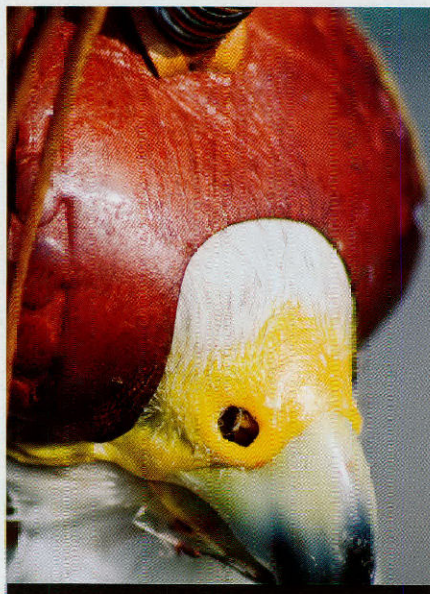
TRADITIONALLY,
FALCONRY HAS BEEN
A SPORT FOR
SOCIETY'S UPPER
CRUST. IN JAPANESE
SAMURAI CULTURE,
FOR EXAMPLE, STRICT
RESTRICTIONS WERE
IN PLACE AS TO WHO
COULD HUNT WITH
FALCONS.

GYRFALCON





 COOPER'S HAWK



BECOMING A FALCONER

By day, Kryz is a veterinary technician, but just about every weekend during the fall, he takes to the field with his own birds and hunts rabbits, rodents and “anything else that’s legal to hunt.” When he’s not hunting, he spends his free time training his hawks. For the past five years he’s been a licensed falconer but was involved with falconry even before that.

“I’ve always liked animals and have been interested especially in animals other than dogs or cats,” he says. “I had never even been a hunter before I got into falconry, but once I started I found that it was a really natural way to hunt. So about five years ago I started the process to become a licensed falconer.”

Becoming a falconer involves an apprenticeship program and licensing from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as well as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Predictably, a host of both federal and state regulations govern the trapping and possession of both wild and captive-bred raptors. However, the aim isn’t to squelch hawk and falcon possession. Instead the guidelines are meant to ensure that for the well-being of the birds, only the most committed and serious falconry enthusiasts can legally participate in the sport.

“The permitting process can be a drawn-out affair — something that helps weed out those that probably wouldn’t be that committed to their bird. It can take an individual three to six months to get their apprentice license — depending on how prepared they are — and longer if they don’t know their falconry regulations,” says Sheldon Nicolle, vice president of the Texas Hawking Association.

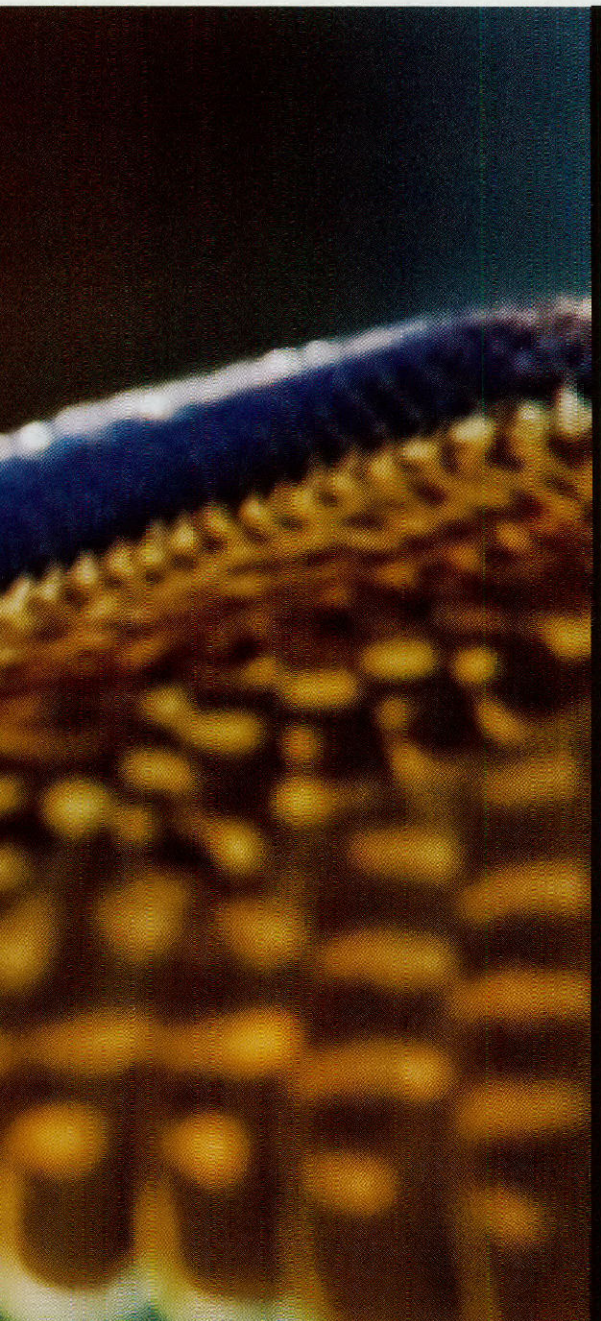
“It’s definitely not a short or easy process and it’s not an inexpensive hunting sport,” he adds. “However, when you consider the costs of a deer lease or guided hunt, after the initial investment falconry can be a very affordable and very rewarding way to experience and enjoy the outdoors.”

For licensing, apprentice falconers are tested on their basic knowledge of falconry and raptors and related regulations (with a minimum 80 percent correct classified as passing). They must have an inspection by a Texas game warden to ensure their facilities are adequate to keep and house raptors. Finally, a general or master class falconer must sponsor the apprentice for two years and, ultimately, approve of their advancement beyond the apprentice level.

TOP PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES; BELOW © KENDAL LARSON; OPPOSITE PAGE © KENDAL LARSON



PHOTO © LARRY DITTO; OTHERS © KENDAL LARSON



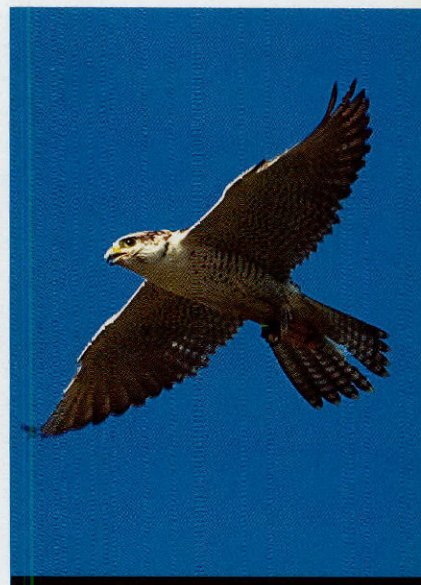
TAKING GAME IS SECONDARY TO THE EXPERIENCE. I REALLY ENJOY THE INTERACTION WITH MY BIRDS. SOME OF THE BEST FLIGHTS I'VE SEEN ENDED WITH THE QUARRY ESCAPING.



HARRIS'S HAWK



COOPER'S HAWK





SPORT BORN FROM NOBILITY

Historical records indicate that the practice of falconry started as far back as 722

B.C. in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) and the sport made its way to Europe's nobility in 400 A.D.

Traditionally, falconry has been a sport for society's upper crust. In Japanese samurai culture, for example, strict restrictions were in place as to who could hunt with falcons. As time passed, falconry lost its luster as a sport for society's upper class and became more accessible to those wanting to put the time and effort into it.

In the 1930s the first North American club was formed for falconry enthusiasts but folded during World War II. It wasn't until the 1960s that the North American Falconers Association was formed, and about 10 years later, its affiliate the Texas Hawking Association was organized. Now with 257 members, the THA is an active group with a deep interest in raptor conservation.

"The purpose of the Texas Hawking Association is to promote the sport of hawking and falconry and assure that participants practice the art both legally and ethically," says Nicolle. The association is also proud of its work with TPWD and touts its cooperation with the department. Its ultimate aim is to support the sport and to work positively with regulating agencies to ensure that rules are in place to protect captive and wild raptors.

According to Nicolle, one of the association's key missions is educating the public about the challenges and rewards of falconry through outreach programs and the Texas Hawking Association's annual meeting.



"We have members participate in everything from local school, Scout, and church assemblies to the Dallas Safari Club's Shooting Archery Field Excellency Trials for Youth extravaganza, which hosts over 250 youths from around the state twice a year. The event introduces outdoor field sports, including falconry, to young people that wouldn't otherwise have the chance to see the sport," Nicolle says. "We also have a booth at the annual Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo in Austin, where we try to educate the public about the importance of wise conservation and protecting the raptors we use in the wonderful sport of falconry."



Leg straps allow falconers to handle the bird without touching his talons. They also provide a way to recognize a captive bird in the wild, should it get away from the falconer.

EVERY TIME YOU CUT YOUR BIRD LOOSE THEY CAN CHOOSE NOT TO COME BACK TO YOU. SO IT'S REALLY A SPECIAL BOND YOU FORM WITH THE BIRD.



 *The North American kestrel is not traditionally used by falconers, as they are more difficult to maintain and can be fragile. They are sometimes used by apprentices* 



Each January, the Texas Hawking Association convenes in Abilene for its annual three-day meet. Open to the public, the event gives participants a chance to talk falconry and hear about the sport from some of the community's premier experts.

During the meet, members actively hunt their raptors and share their experience with others in attendance. "We're a community of hardworking people who love their birds and love sharing what we do with anyone who is interested."

Today, though, I am glad that Kryz and the others are willing to share their sport with me. In my first experience with falconry, I can see why they are so passion-

ate about the sport.

"I'll be honest with you," Kryz confides. "Taking game is secondary to the experience. I really enjoy the interaction with my birds. Some of the best flights I've seen ended with the quarry escaping." While we talk, his Cooper's hawk sits quietly on his arm and remains there even though no tethers keep the bird from flying away.

"Every time you cut your bird loose, they can choose not to come back to you. So it's really a special bond you form with the bird."

"Besides," he says, grinning. "It's an adrenaline rush every time you go out hunting with your bird." ★

PHOTOS © KENDAL LARSON

The Trinity River vividly demonstrates the inextricable links between urban and rural Texas.

R·E·V·I·V·I·N·G *the* T·R·I·N·I·T·Y

By Henry Chappell



PHOTO BY EARL WOTTINGHAM/TPWD



If the bottomland hardwood forest along the Trinity River, near Tennessee Colony, isn't quite as vast and ancient as The Big Woods of William Faulkner's novellas, it is, in places, old enough and grand enough to put me in mind of a passage from "Delta Autumn":

"At first they had come in wagons: the guns, the bedding, the dogs, the whiskey, the keen heart-lifting anticipation of the hunting; the young men who could drive all night and all the following day in the cold rain and pitch a camp in the rain and sleep in the wet blankets and rise at daylight the next morning and hunt. There had been bear then."

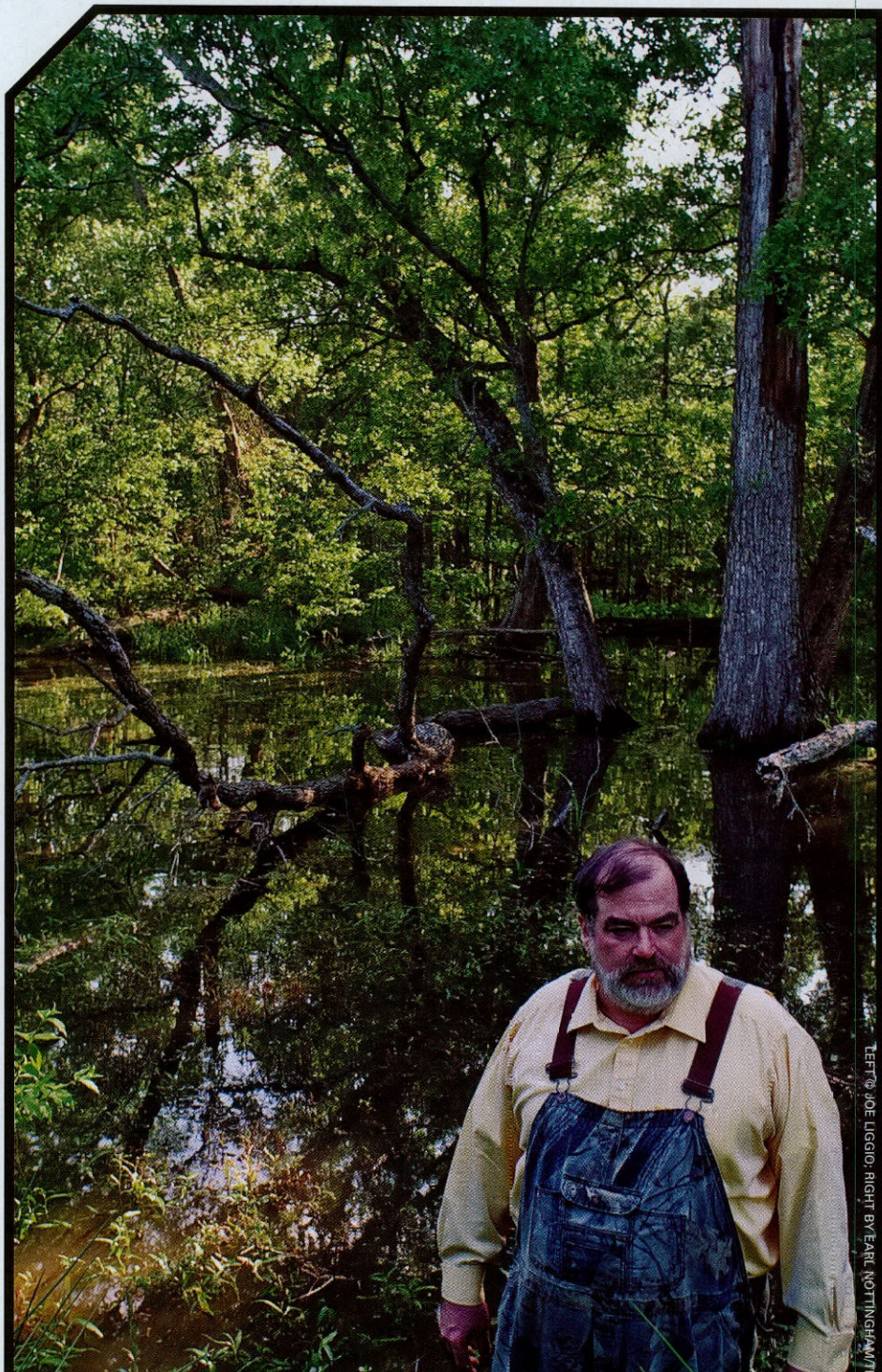
We came in an electric 4X4 buggy, and as far as I know, there are no bears — yet.

As we trundled along the bottom on a May afternoon, Dr. Robert McFarlane, Carl Frentress, Al Lightfoot and me, the talk ran as much toward Faulkner's Isaac McCaslin, Sam Fathers, the Compsons, Major de Spain, Boon Hogganbeck, a huge mongrel hunting dog, and a great bear with a trap-mangled foot as toward the ecology of the surrounding forested wetland, open marsh and upland hardwoods.

I'd been invited into the company of three friends who've talked about these subjects before. McFarlane — "Doc" to his friends — named his property, these 7,500 acres in Anderson County, after Faulkner's 1955 book *Big Woods*.

We rode across levees and around stands of giant post oak and Shumard oak. In the drier areas, blooming rough-leaf dogwoods colored the forest edges. Egrets, herons, anhingas, yellow-crowned night-herons and the occasional teal flushed from the marshes.

Near sundown, Doc steered his buggy into a patchwork of mature woods and clearings, former prison land he purchased a few years ago. He calls this area "the checkerboard." As a boy, he hunted it extensively for deer, turkeys, hogs and squirrels. "It looked a lot different then," he said. "A lot more mature woods."



Above: The Trinity River at Davis Hills Natural Area. Right: Doc McFarlane surveys his Trinity River bottomland.

LEFT: JOE LIGGIO. RIGHT: EARL NOTTINGHAM/TMPD.

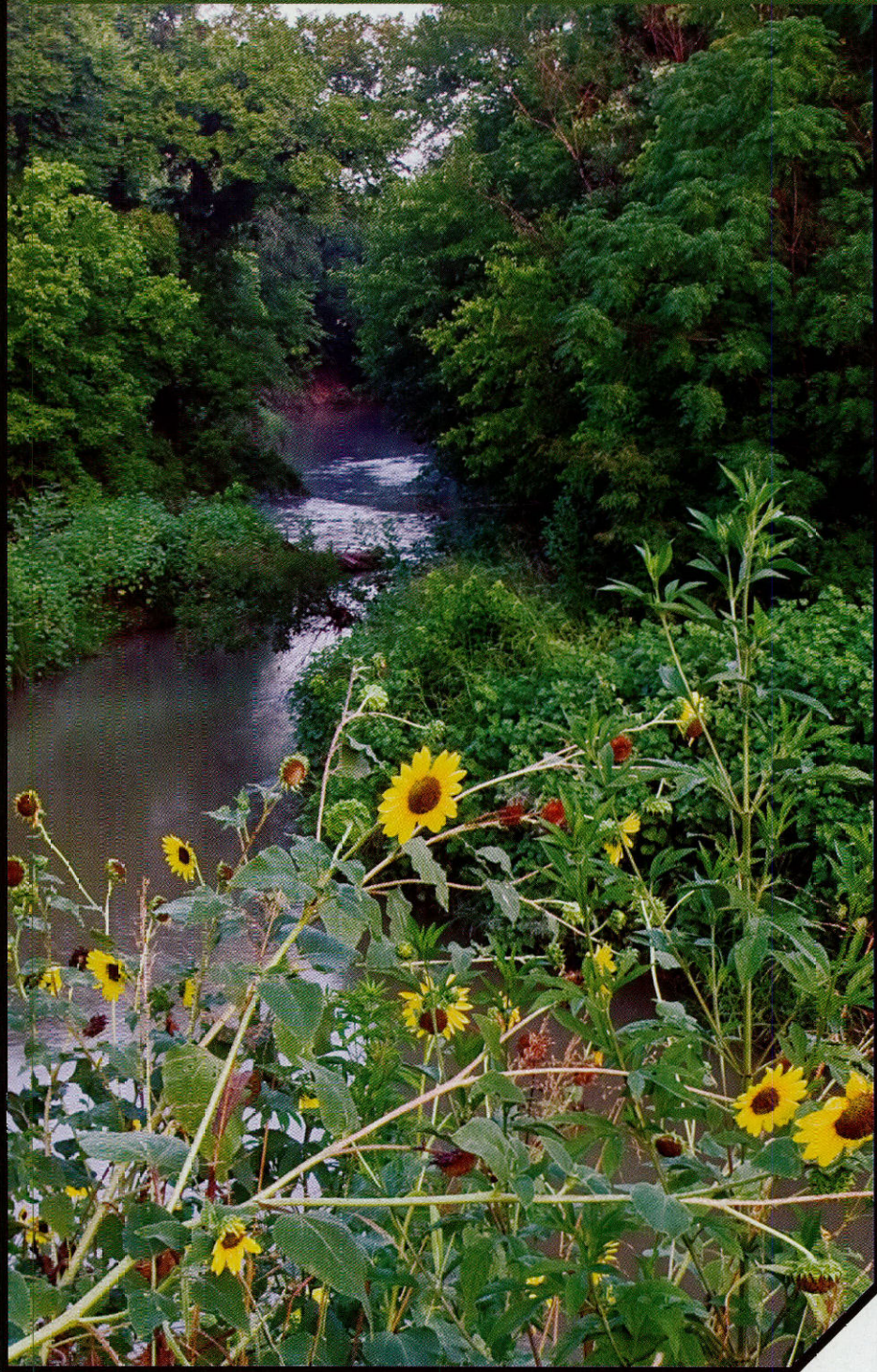


PHOTO COURTESY: FOSTER, RIGHT: © JOE LIGGIO

the Post Oak Savannah, Pinyons and Coastal Prairies.

Overall, the Trinity watershed encompasses some 18,000 square miles, or 7 percent of the total land area of Texas.

Half of the population of the state lives within the Trinity watershed, which serves as the primary water source for 5.5 million people.

As recently as the 1980s, the Trinity River was known as Dallas' sewer. Fish kills, dangerous levels of pollution and unnaturally severe flooding were generally regarded as justified costs of urban-industrial growth.

Though the Trinity runs cleaner today, many rural Texans and informed urban citizens continue to search for ways to meet the needs of a growing economy while improving the quality of life, water and wildlife habitat along the full length of the Trinity.

Those working hardest to protect and restore the river believe that enduring solutions will be local and that healthy rural economies are as crucial to Texas' future as urban growth. Our cities depend on the surrounding countryside for natural resources, including clean water. Outdoor recreational opportunities like birding, hunting, fishing, camping and hiking are a huge part of our overall quality of life.

By some estimates, the population of Texas will double by 2030, with most of the growth occurring in and around large cities. We can no longer afford out-of-sight-out-of-mind approaches to natural resource use.

Carl Fretress, a native East Texan and retired TPWD biologist, consults with landowners along the Middle Trinity. "All societies are linked inherently to the status of natural resources," he says. "Rural landowners sustain this principle. Deterioration of the sustainability and prosperity of landowners along the Trinity results in deterioration of other components of society."

In one of the grassy lanes, Carl plucked a length of greenbriar, a favorite deer food.

He said, "Here, taste."

I suspected a variation on the snipe hunt, a fine prank on the new guy, but I took a bite. Sure enough, it was sweet and crunchy, far superior to any salad bar sprouts I've tried.

Doc gestured toward a stand of 150-year-old oaks. "All of this bottomland forest and they never placed any value

on it. It was just land to be cleared."

The Trinity River rises in North Texas near the Oklahoma border in Archer, Clay and Montague counties and extends 512 miles to its terminus at Trinity Bay, in the upper reaches of the Galveston Bay system.

It courses through 38 Texas counties and five of Texas' 10 ecological regions — the Cross Timbers and Prairies near its headwaters, through the Blackland Prairie region in the Dallas area, southeast through

Initially, Doc McFarlane just wanted a place to hunt. He'd grown up in Palestine, with access to thousands of acres of prime river bottom habitat, and, as boys tend to do, he took it for granted. After graduating from Palestine High School in 1970, he went away to Harvard, where he completed his undergraduate studies in chemistry and went on to graduate from Harvard Medical School. When he returned to Palestine, where he now runs a busy cardiology practice, he found his beloved hardwood bottomland much diminished.

"Still, I was always a pretty lucky fellow," he says. "When I came back, some of my patients let me hunt on their places. Then in about 1992, the last place I had to hunt was so forested the guy sold it and the people were going to clear cut it. So I ended up buying some land myself."

He started with 1,000 acres, then purchased adjacent properties as they became available. In 1994, he began booking deer, hog and waterfowl hunts at The Big Woods. Nowadays, he accommodates hunters in his comfortable lodge and offers a number of hunt packages. Recently he added birding tours.

Even though Doc's Big Woods were good wildlife habitat when he purchased them, they'd declined under decades of nonexistent or indifferent management. In the mid-1990s, when a power company built a pipeline across his property, he began to learn about federal wetland rules and mitigation — land purchases or landowner compensation to set aside and improve habitat to offset losses due to development.

"At first, I planted some trees," he says. "But over the last 10 or 12 years I've learned a lot about restoration, federal wetland rules and available programs."

As he improved his land, Doc began to see the potential for restoring large areas of the middle Trinity River Corridor.

"It just seemed to me that the Trinity was the perfect river to try to restore," he says. "It affects over half the people in Texas, and there are currently no major reservoirs planned on the middle and lower stretches."

Early on, Doc and his neighbors formed cooperatives to more efficiently manage large, contiguous blocks of land for wildlife habitat. As co-op members worked together to improve their bottomland properties,

they soon realized that they could best take advantage of the funds and expertise offered by state and federal programs by becoming a legal entity.

In March 2006, they formed the Trinity Basin Conservation Foundation. Its mission statement: "To improve the quality of life, ecological sustainability and ecological integrity of areas associated with the Trinity River Basin through a coalition of local communities, non-government organizations and stewards of private and public lands."

TBCF is modeled on the very successful Blackfoot Challenge, the Montana nonprofit conservation organization formed to restore the Big Blackfoot, the river made famous by Norman Maclean's novella *A River Runs Through It*.

Altogether the group's members own some 250,000 acres. One of the largest and most successful TBCF co-ops created the Western Navarro Bobwhite Restoration Initiative. Currently, the Navarro County co-op has about 29,000 acres under intensive management for quail and other grassland birds. In 2007, the Sand County Foundation awarded members Gary and Sue Price, owners of the 77 Ranch, the Leopold Conservation

Award for land stewardship.

In September 2006, after consultation with TBCF leaders, Governor Rick Perry kicked off the Trinity River Basin Environmental Restoration Initiative with a \$500,000 pledge to help TBCF and its partners develop a comprehensive water plan, enhance and preserve wildlife and improve water quality. Project leaders hope to raise as much as \$30 million over the next few years.

The Trinity River Initiative brings together a diverse group of partners, including TBCF, TPWD, the Texas Wildlife Association, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Trinity River Authority, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Texas Water Development Board, the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and landowners.

But the project should reach far beyond the Trinity basin.

"The initiative is good for the entire state, because it will represent a model for other river basins," says TPWD Commissioner John Parker. "And the program will spread to the landowners along the creeks and streams that feed the Trinity."



HERON © ROSE NUSSEBAUMER; OTHERS © JOE RIGGIO

Fragrant water lillies, great blue herons and ferns can all be found along the Trinity River Basin.

TOP © LANCE VARNELL, BOTTOM © ROY NUISSE/IMFR



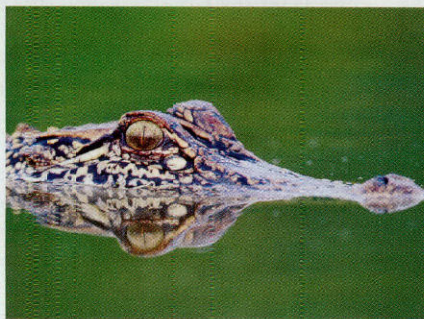
Just before dark, we turned back toward the lodge. The woods were in shadow. Alligators came to mind; there's no shortage of them in The Big Woods marshes. Carl mentioned a passage from Faulkner's *The Bear* about human puniness beside wilderness. We couldn't remember it exactly, so I looked it up as soon as I got home:

"For six years now he had heard the best of all talking. It was of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document — of white man fatuous enough to believe he had bought any fragment of it, of Indian ruthless enough to pretend that any fragment of it had been his to convey..."

Then Faulkner told of the beginning of the end of the big woods. Yet perhaps he was less interested in irony than in truth: that, taking a long view, our big woods — our watersheds and the other wild places that sustain us — are less ours to own or convey than to bequeath. ★

DETAILS

- Trinity Basin Conservation Foundation (www.trinityfix.org)
- The Big Woods (www.bigwoods.net)
- Trinity River Authority (www.trinityra.org)
- Trinity River Basin Environmental Restoration Initiative Site at Texas A&M (trinityriverbasin.tamu.edu)
- Trinity River Corridor Project (www.trinityrivercorridor.org)
- Houston Wilderness (www.houstonwilderness.org)
- Trinity River Information Management System (trims.tamu.edu/)



NARROWING THE URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE

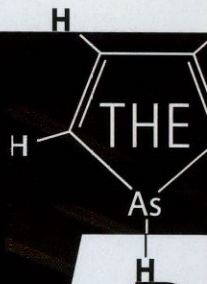
The L.A.N.D.S. Program — Learning Across New Dimensions in Science — a program developed by Trinity River initiative partners, including TPWD and the Texas Wildlife Association, helps close the urban-rural divide by giving students a first-hand look and feel of the river that sustains their communities.

In 2007, fourth graders from Blooming Grove Elementary in Navarro County measured flow, turbidity, temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen and nitrates, and panned for invertebrates in Trinity River tributaries flowing through the 77 Ranch, while students in Dallas made the same measurements in an urban stretch of the Trinity. Then, the groups swapped locations and repeated their tests. The program culminated with the students gathering at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens to compare their results and discuss the importance of working together to ensure clean water for all Texans.

"It was amazing to hear these kids explain the water cycle and the meaning of pH," says Tamara Trail, TWA's assistant vice president of programs and development. "It's so important for our kids to know that water conservation involves more than just turning the faucet off and complying with water restrictions. These are our future decision-makers."



TESTING WATER

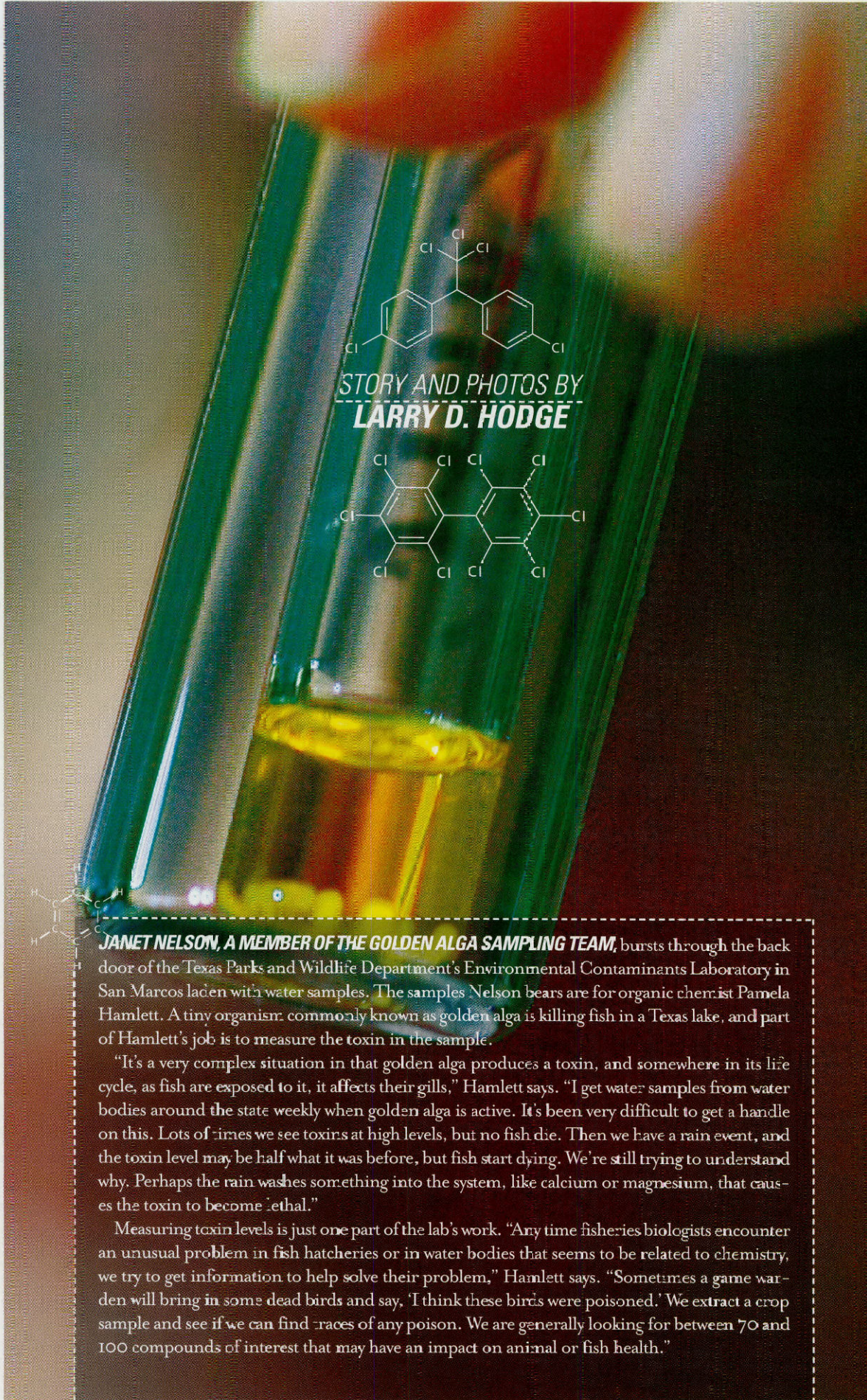


THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS LAB HELPS SOLVE TOXIC MYSTERIES.





TPWD staff samples fish using a backpack electro-shocker.

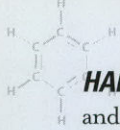


STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LARRY D. HODGE

JANET NELSON, A MEMBER OF THE GOLDEN ALGA SAMPLING TEAM, bursts through the back door of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Environmental Contaminants Laboratory in San Marcos laden with water samples. The samples Nelson bears are for organic chemist Pamela Hamlett. A tiny organism, commonly known as golden alga, is killing fish in a Texas lake, and part of Hamlett's job is to measure the toxin in the sample.

"It's a very complex situation in that golden alga produces a toxin, and somewhere in its life cycle, as fish are exposed to it, it affects their gills," Hamlett says. "I get water samples from water bodies around the state weekly when golden alga is active. It's been very difficult to get a handle on this. Lots of times we see toxins at high levels, but no fish die. Then we have a rain event, and the toxin level may be half what it was before, but fish start dying. We're still trying to understand why. Perhaps the rain washes something into the system, like calcium or magnesium, that causes the toxin to become lethal."

Measuring toxin levels is just one part of the lab's work. "Any time fisheries biologists encounter an unusual problem in fish hatcheries or in water bodies that seems to be related to chemistry, we try to get information to help solve their problem," Hamlett says. "Sometimes a game warden will bring in some dead birds and say, 'I think these birds were poisoned.' We extract a crop sample and see if we can find traces of any poison. We are generally looking for between 70 and 100 compounds of interest that may have an impact on animal or fish health."



HAMLETT USES A GAS chromatograph and a liquid chromatograph, both of which are attached to a mass spectrometer and controlled by a computer. "These are the same instruments used in forensic labs and pharmaceutical development labs," Hamlett explains. "As big fish eat little fish, compounds bioaccumulate and biomagnify. The bigger the fish, the bigger the chance the compound will be found, because there will be more of it."

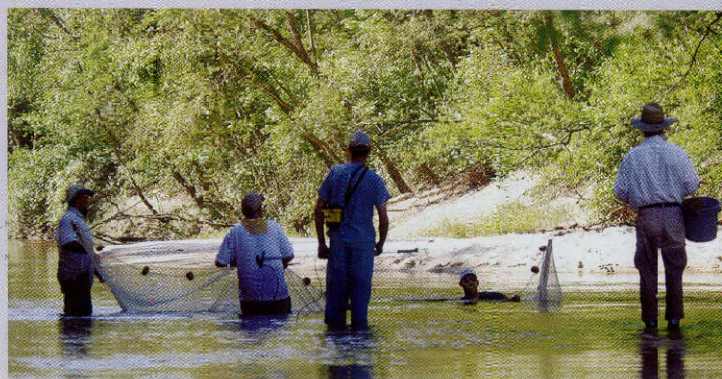
"More of it" is a relative term. Hamlett and inorganic chemist Gary Steinmetz work with miniscule amounts of material. They start with 2- to 20-gram samples — about the size of 2 to 20 raisins — from the same jar of fish tissue ground in an industrial-strength blender to the consistency of cat food. They reduce the sample through chemical wizardry to just 1 gram. This is still huge compared to the amounts of substances they are looking for, which are measured in parts per million and parts per billion. "A part per million is one gram in a metric ton, or one package of artificial sweetener in a ton," Steinmetz says. "A part per billion is one package of sweetener in 1,000 tons — 25 semi-trailer loads."

And yet the instruments they use must first separate the compounds into still smaller particles. Steinmetz uses graphite furnace atomic absorption — GFAA — or an inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometer, ICP-OES for short, to look for heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, arsenic or selenium. Mercury has its own dedicated instrument, a CVAFS (cold-vapor atomic fluorescence spectrometer). "Everything is based on fire and heat," Steinmetz says. "The ICP-OES uses a radio-frequency generator, like a microwave oven, to indirectly heat the sample to between 4,000 and 6,000 degrees centigrade. Everything in the sample is ripped down to the elements, which become excited. As they cool, they give off light characteristic of the element, and the intensity of the light tells the amount. That information is fed into a computer, which compares it to a known concentration and calculates the amount in the sample."

Hamlett's machines do a similar thing, breaking complex organic molecules into pieces to look for organic compounds like PCBs, DDT and other pesticides or herbicides. "We bombard the compounds so they fall apart, kind of like a car that goes off a cliff," Hamlett says. "Then we look at the pieces, and we can say 'This is a wheel,



Clockwise from above: TPWD staffers check their catch; Sierra Jarzem tastes a fish sample; stacks of samples; gas spectrometer; seining in Big Cow Creek



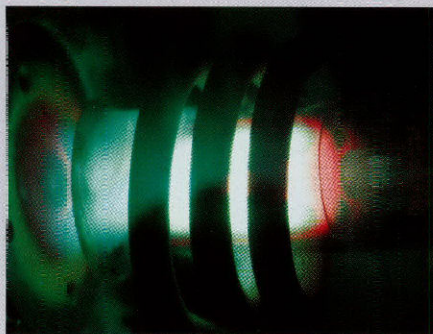
this is a bumper — put it all together, this was a Volkswagen Jetta.' The instrument is so sophisticated I can look at just one part, like a wheel, and separate it into lug nuts, wheel cover, tire, and so on. Out of all that, we learn if a particular compound was present in the sample."

Once the compounds in a sample are identified, the lab's job is basically over, though staff members may be called on to testify in court about what they found. TPWD has no regulatory authority over what can be discharged into water, nor does it set standards for water quality and safety. Those tasks fall to the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Yet TPWD's Environmental Contaminants Lab provides information those agencies can use to do their jobs.

"The lab is unusual in that it is set up to look for low levels of contaminants in fish tissues," lab manager Loraine Fries says. "We focus on the environment and fisheries, though our data may be used by DSHS or TCEQ to determine if additional samples are required to evaluate potential effects on human health."

Designing and conducting TPWD contaminant studies and interpreting the data from the lab's work for possible impacts to fish and wildlife resources falls to Roxie Mills and Mark Luedke, TPWD's Contaminants Assessment Team (CAT). In addition, Mills and Luedke share that information with other state and federal agencies through the Fish Sampling Advisory Subcommittee, part of the interagency Toxic Substances Coordinating Committee. "We have quarterly meetings in which there is an open sharing of data," Mills says. "TPWD's data are used by those agencies to decide if there is a problem and if they need to do something about it. We are a service organization. We provide data that no one else is gathering. TPWD has the ability to go out and do studies that give us good numbers that can be used to make a difference."

One example of making a difference Mills cites involved a factory in Bryan that had made arsenic-based cotton defoliants since the 1940s. After TPWD biologists found numerous deformed fish in a reservoir near the factory and other agencies found elevated arsenic levels in the sur-



face and groundwater downstream of the factory, the company closed the facility and began cleaning up the site.

"Most of the issues we deal with are brought to our attention by other agencies or other TPWD employees," Luedke says. "Because TPWD does not have regulatory authority over water quality, our goal is to say, 'There may be a problem that should be assessed.'"

Luedke cautions that focusing on the occasional problem obscures the big picture. "People are often overly concerned about contaminants, but by and large, things are fine," he says. "TPWD Inland Fisheries biologists are collecting fish for contaminant testing as part of a statewide project to sample Texas reservoirs, and so far the results show that contaminants are generally not a concern to the health of our fisheries," he says.

Mills cites concern over mercury in East Texas reservoirs as one example of a complex contaminants issue. "Mercury is the classic bioaccumulator — once in the water, anything that takes it up passes it on to whatever eats it. It's a biomagnifier, so the top predator gets the most,

and fish are the ultimate receptors. Contaminants like mercury and selenium bind in muscle tissue and tend to stay there. What we've found happening in East Texas threw people for a loop, because it's not what was expected."

Mills and Luedke selected 57 counties in East Texas where mercury bioaccumulation seemed likely and sampled 60 reservoirs over three years. "What we found didn't seem to make sense," Mills says. "We had reservoirs high and low in mercury bioaccumulation in close proximity. What seems to be driving this is not sources of mercury or how old the fish are, but very small differences in the watersheds. The good news is we are not finding mercury bioaccumulation everywhere we look. The bad news is we don't appear to have a source we can shut down and make it go away. While the mercury concentrations found indicate little, if any, adverse impacts to the fish communities, DSHS [Department of State Health Services] is doing human health risk assessments on about 20 percent of the reservoirs to determine what, if any steps need to be taken to protect those who con-

sume fish caught from those reservoirs."

In addition to its work with fresh waters, the Environmental Contaminants Laboratory works with the Environmental Protection Agency's National Coastal Assessment program. "We have a contract with TCEQ to survey Texas lakes and streams and another with EPA to do a survey of coastal sites," Steinmetz says. "We can give individual attention to samples that other labs can't because they have a heavy regulatory workload. They may have to analyze 5,000 samples every three months. Plus lots of labs analyze water and soil, but very few do fish well. We have the ability to use some of the best science out there to produce quality data on fish tissues."

"Few state labs, especially those run by resources agencies, have our capabilities in terms of equipment and staff, and our niche for tissue analysis is unique," Fries points out. "While we used to focus on persistent chemicals like DDT and PCBs, we know their concentrations will be decreasing, because they aren't being used anymore. Our new challenge will be to test for modern transient chemicals which break down quickly but are more toxic to fish than the persistent chemicals used in the past."

While TPWD's ECL lab and CAT focus on the health of the environment and the fish in it, their work contributes to the efforts of TCEQ and DSHS to protect human health. "If it's bad for fish, it may be bad for people, too," Fries says. "With agencies working together to bring different perspectives and expertise to the table, we get a much more complete picture than we ever could working alone."

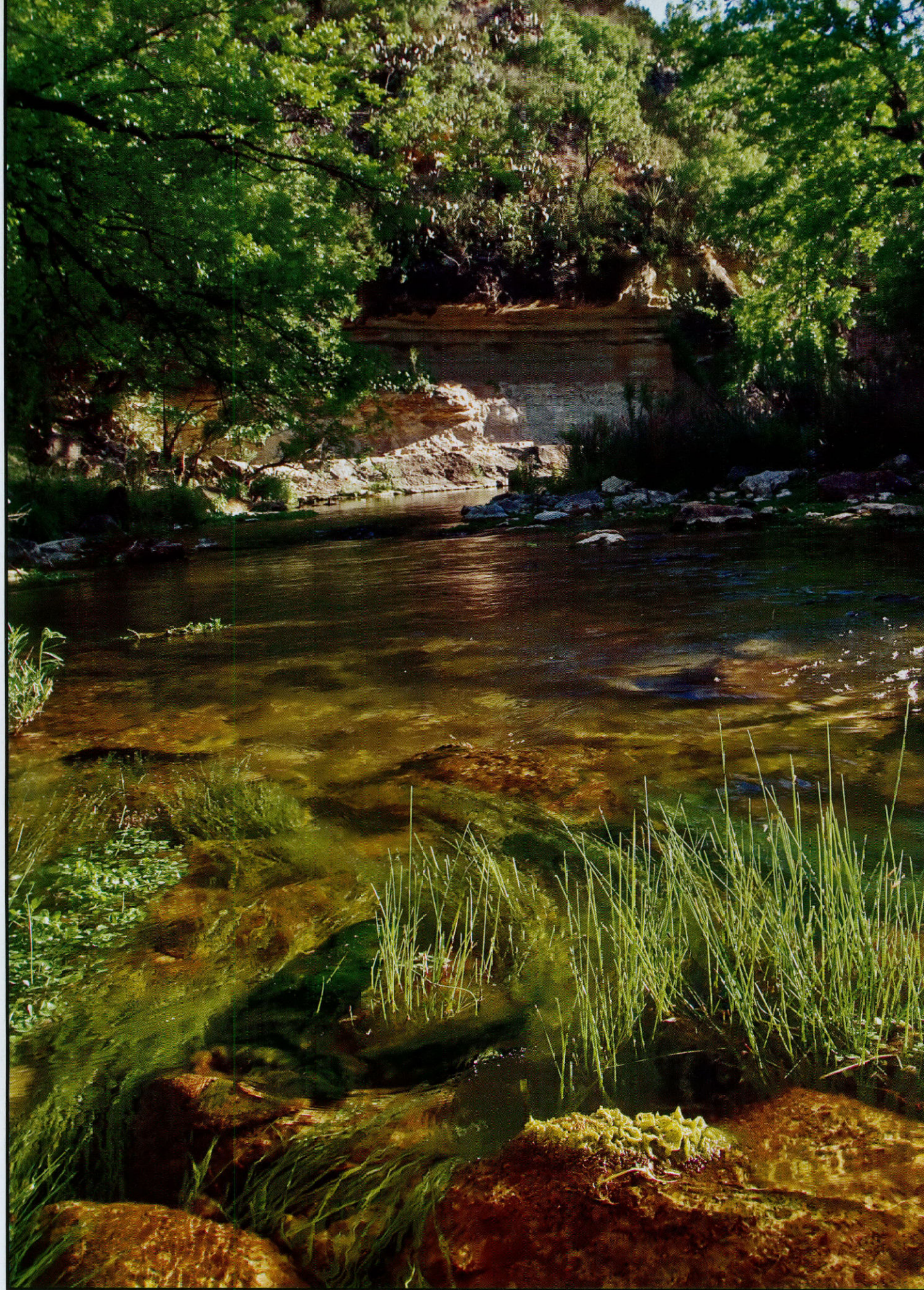
And that's better for everyone. ★

DETAILS

While the Environmental Contaminants Lab does not provide services for private parties, it does work closely with TPWD's Kills and Spills team, which responds to reports of fish or wildlife kills or soil and water pollution.

To report a kill or spill, call one of the department's 24-hour communication centers. In the Houston area, you can call (281) 842-8100. In the rest of the state, call (512) 389-4848. Contact information for biologists around the state is available at: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/killsandspills.

For information on fishing advisories and closures, visit the Texas Department of State Health Services Web site: www.tdh.state.tx.us/bfids/ssd/.



BY TOM HARVEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHASE A. FOUNTAIN

LONE STAR LAND STEWARD

2008

*LLANO SPRINGS RANCH WINS THE STATE'S TOP
CONSERVATION AWARD.*

DIG INTO THE STORY of any Lone Star Land Steward Award-winning property, and you usually find that family bonds form the conservation bedrock. You also see that land stewardship starts in childhood. That's certainly true with the Vandiviers, whose Llano Springs Ranch is this year's recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award for Texas from Sand County Foundation and TPWD.

When rancher Tom Vandivier was 8 years old, his dad would roust him early on the family's 70-acre farm in Indiana, where the family retreated each summer. The farm had no crops, but was rich with timber along a creek, and the Vandiviers preserved it as woodlands, managing the trees and allowing limited timbering from time to time.

"I would shinny up a tree with a saw and cut limbs too high for dad to reach," the Austin-

based attorney recalls. "When I'd finish, he'd push the trunk till it leaned over and I'd crawl to the next tree and we'd continue until I was too tired to keep going."

Those early natural experiences inspired Tom and formed attitudes that shaped his life through years in Houston, later helping run a family pecan farm near the Texas coast, and finally buying the ranch near Junction.

"I was always collecting turtles and snakes, wandering the woods with a BB gun," Vandivier said. "Once in the spring, I caught a snake and put it in my coat pocket and forgot about it. Something started to smell in our house all summer. In fall when I put the coat back on, the dead snake was still in my pocket and mother was most upset with me."

Fast-forward several decades, to a time when Tom is now the dad, and his daughter Laura is discovering the natural world.



It is a gross understatement to say that Laura Vandivier Sherrod loves critters. From an early age, she caught snakes, frogs and other living creatures that looked interesting and brought them home. This practice worried her mother, for maternal and practical reasons. Sometimes the snakes got loose. As Laura recalls, "I knew when Mom had found one by the big scream."

Laura knew how to identify and avoid the four venomous snakes of Texas — rattlesnake, copperhead, cottonmouth and coral snake. But she brought home a succession of garter snakes, coachwhips, hog-nosed snakes, all kinds of snakes. Today her passion for reptiles continues as a breeder of Australian carpet pythons, Brazilian rainbow boas and corn snakes. Her biggest is a 7-foot-long carpet python named Maya.

But it wasn't just snakes. Laura loved all animals, wild or domestic. She once dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. But after her family bought Llano Springs Ranch south of Junction in 1994, her passion began turning more and more to native wildlife, although any free-roaming critter could do in a pinch.

★ ★ ★
*I WOULD SHINNY
UP A TREE WITH A
SAW AND CUT
LIMBS TOO HIGH
FOR DAD TO REACH.
WHEN I'VE FINISH,
HE'D PUSH THE
TRUNK TILL IT
LEANED OVER AND
I'D CRAWL TO THE
NEXT TREE*

★ ★ ★

Take Barbado sheep, a domestic breed gone wild in parts of Texas. When the Vandiviers first got the ranch, Laura became captivated by its feral Barbados. She asked her dad if she could keep one if she could catch it. Tom assented, presuming there was no way on earth the child could corner one of the wild and woolly Barbados.

One day Laura spotted a baby Barbado and gave chase on horseback. The frightened lamb swam around an oxbow bend of the South Llano River to get away. Laura rode around to the far bank to intercept it. The lamb scrambled ashore and finally she drove it into a fence corner and caught it. She tied her horse and carried the small sheep in her arms up to the house, where she held it for an hour or two, waiting for dad.

"I showed him the baby Barbado and he looked stunned," Laura recalls. "You actually caught one!" Tom marveled. "You can't actually keep that," her dad finally explained. "We have no place for it. You need to let it go back to its momma."

"We named it Lucky," Laura said. "And I saw him later that day back with his mom, and they went down the river. I was probably in fifth grade at the

time, around 11 years old.”

Fast forward again, to April 2008, and Laura is a young woman with a B.A. in wildlife biology from Texas State University. She has married her college sweetheart, Greg Sherrod, and the two of them have worked for a private consultant surveying ranches for endangered songbirds.

On this April day, Linda Campbell of TPWD's Private Lands Program is conducting a final visit to three Texas ranches. All three sites are outstanding land stewards, but only one will be this year's top property. Also on hand are Tom Vandivier and his sister Ann, TPWD wildlife biologist and current ranch advisor Joyce Moore, and retired TPWD biologist Fielding Harwell, who has worked with the Vandiviers since shortly after their purchase of the ranch and continues to advise them today.

Was it chance, or fate, that led to a rare wildlife sighting on the ranch that day when awards judges just happened to be visiting? The Vandivier family was ultimately recognized for a cumulative variety of many stewardship and outreach practices, and the other two finalists were also homes to rare species, but the timing of this find was uncanny.

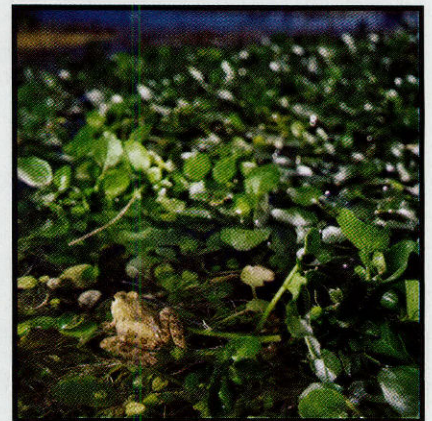
“We were walking around a slope and Greg Sherrod heard something, then Laura, and then I heard it,” recalls Campbell, who runs the land steward

★ ★ ★
WE ALL FOLLOWED
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GOLDEN-CHEEKED
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PRETTY AS YOU
PLEASE.
★ ★ ★

awards. “We all followed the sound and sure enough there was a golden-cheeked warbler perched on an oak tree, posing for us, pretty as you please. They had never seen one on the ranch before.” And now they can add one more species to their ever-growing ranch bird list.

“My husband and I had been doing golden-cheeked warbler surveys for his company, and he still had the bird's call on his mobile phone,” Laura said. “He actually had that set for our alarm clock because I hated the clock's beeping noise, and so the bird's call got ingrained in my head. When we were showing the biologists some thick cedar and hardwood groves by the river that day, we heard it. Greg and I recognized it instantly.”

The big old cedar trees on the ranch support the warbler, which make nests from the peeling bark of mature junipers. But the family has invested many years of work to selectively control the water-sucking, invasive, regrowth cedar and restore water-friendly native grasses. This benefits everything downriver, including thirsty cities like Austin. Land with restored grasses, instead of cedar and rocks, holds rainwater like a giant sponge, releasing it slowly and providing natural filtration. This helps aquifer recharge and prevents erosion, sending cleaner water downstream.



Left: Jessica Vandivier and Ann Brodnax examine a deer antler in restored native grasses. Above: Springs flow and wildlife abounds after restoration efforts at the Llano Springs Ranch.

The entire Vandivier family participates in ongoing ranch management. Minimal work is done by hired contractors, requiring each family member to participate. This hands-on style follows the land ethic begun by Dr. Tom G. Vandivier and his wife Laurie and carried out by daughter Ann Vandivier Brodnax and her husband, John W. Brodnax, as well as son Tom M. Vandivier and his wife, Sonja, and their families.

Following the example set by their elders, Vandivier grandchildren John T. Brodnax, Laura Vandivier Sherrod and Jessica Vandivier also help with day-to-day ranch activities and conservation outreach. As a teenager, Ann's son John Brodnax completed his Eagle Scout Project by creating a hiking trail at Pace Bend Park on Lake Travis.

The ranch's restoration work sustains public recreation that helps raise money for conservation. In the fall they host hunters, in the spring birding groups come, and in the summer paddlers and swimmers cool off in the clear-running South Llano. For reasonable fees, anglers can fly fish for trophy bass, birding tour groups can see endangered black-capped vireos, and paddlers can canoe, kayak, or float on an inner tube.

But it hasn't been an easy road.

"It was a big, scary thing to take on something of this caliber," Tom Vandivier said. "It was scary financially; it was a real stretch for us to buy it in the

★ ★ ★
*IT WAS SCARY
 FINANCIALLY. WE
 MADE A COMMITMENT
 FROM THE START THAT
 WE WOULD MAKE
 THIS RANCH SUPPORT
 ITSELF, AND WE'VE
 DONE THAT.*
 ★ ★ ★

first place. We made a commitment from the start that we would make this ranch support itself, and we've done that. It took years of hard work and some lean times, but now with the livestock, hunting operation and ecotourism, and help with governmental programs for cedar clearing, this place is viable financially and ecologically."

The Lone Star Land Steward Awards recognize and honor private landowners for their accomplishments in habitat management and wildlife conservation. TPWD's primary partner in the awards is Sand County Foundation, which bestows the Leopold Conservation Award honoring the legacy of Aldo Leopold (1887-1948), considered the father of wildlife management.

More information, including how to nominate property owners for awards, is online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landsteward. Nominations are accepted June 1 through November 30. ★

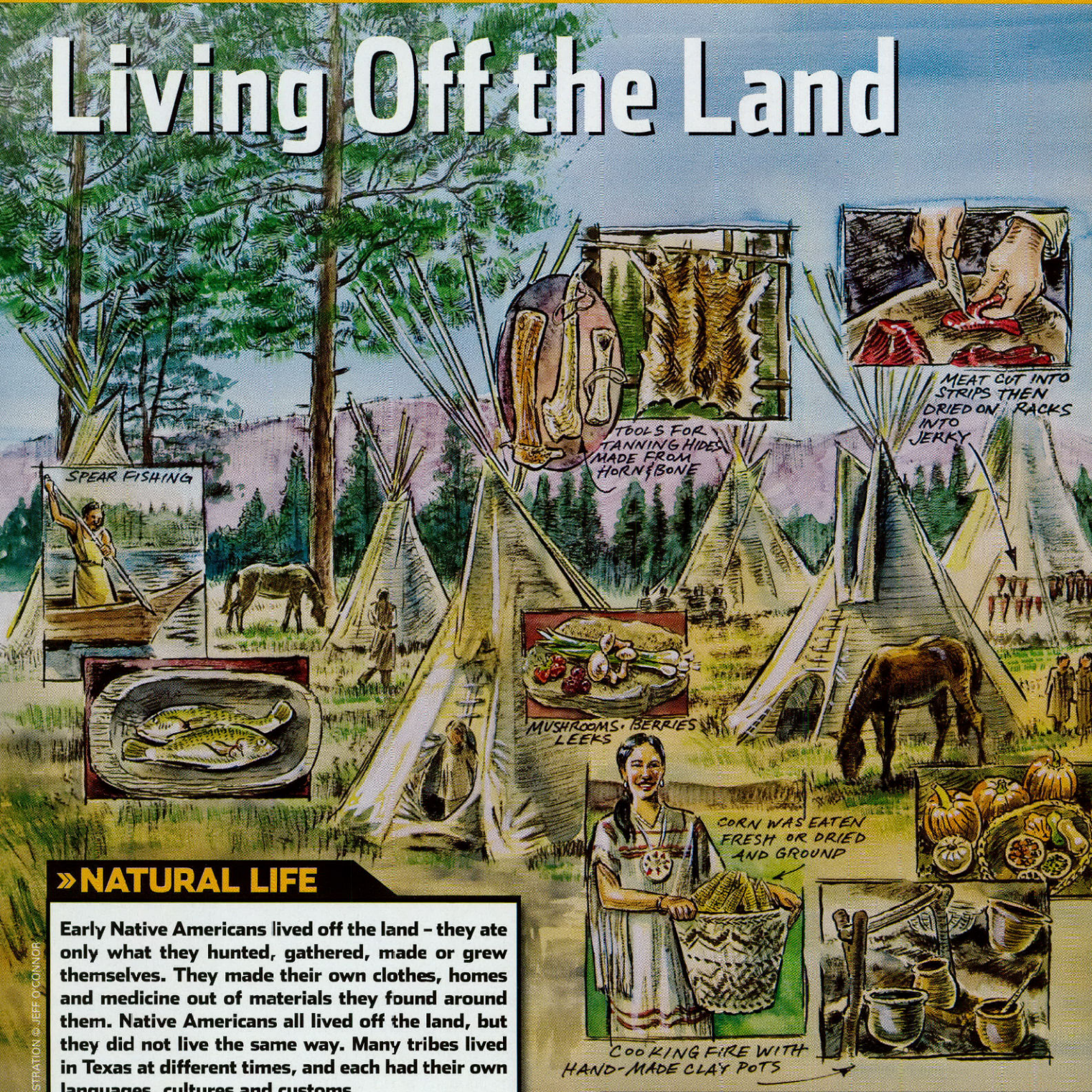


Clockwise from top left: Clearing cedar has increased the vigor of the ranch springs; the South Llano River; Dr. Tom Vandivier (front, fourth from left) and his family were honored at the Lone Star Land Steward Awards Banquet; the property's location, near Junction, is marked with a star in the center of this ranch sign.



Keep Texas Wild

Living Off the Land



>> NATURAL LIFE

Early Native Americans lived off the land - they ate only what they hunted, gathered, made or grew themselves. They made their own clothes, homes and medicine out of materials they found around them. Native Americans all lived off the land, but they did not live the same way. Many tribes lived in Texas at different times, and each had their own languages, cultures and customs.

ILLUSTRATION © JEFF O'CONNOR

» FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Tribes made their own baskets, clay and stone pots, weapons, houses and tools. For farming tribes, waterproof clay pots were needed to store food for the winter and to carry water. For traveling tribes, baskets were used to carry belongings and food. They might also contain items to trade with other tribes.



FAR LEFT COURTESY BOB BULLOCK MUSEUM; OTHERS LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS & PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION; EDWARD S. CURTIS COLLECTION

» BISON FOR SUPPER AGAIN!

Native Americans ate more than just bison. Many of the foods they gathered can still be found here today. Mustang grapes, Texas persimmons and Mexican plums are sweet, juicy wild fruits. Pecans grew along the rivers, then and now. Honey mesquite beans and acorns were ground up to make breads. Native plants, like sotol and prickly pear, hide delicious food under spikes and thorns. Hunters brought home rabbits, wild turkey, deer and fish. Tribes who farmed grew corn, pumpkins, sunflowers, squash, beans and tobacco.



NOTHING WENT TO WASTE «

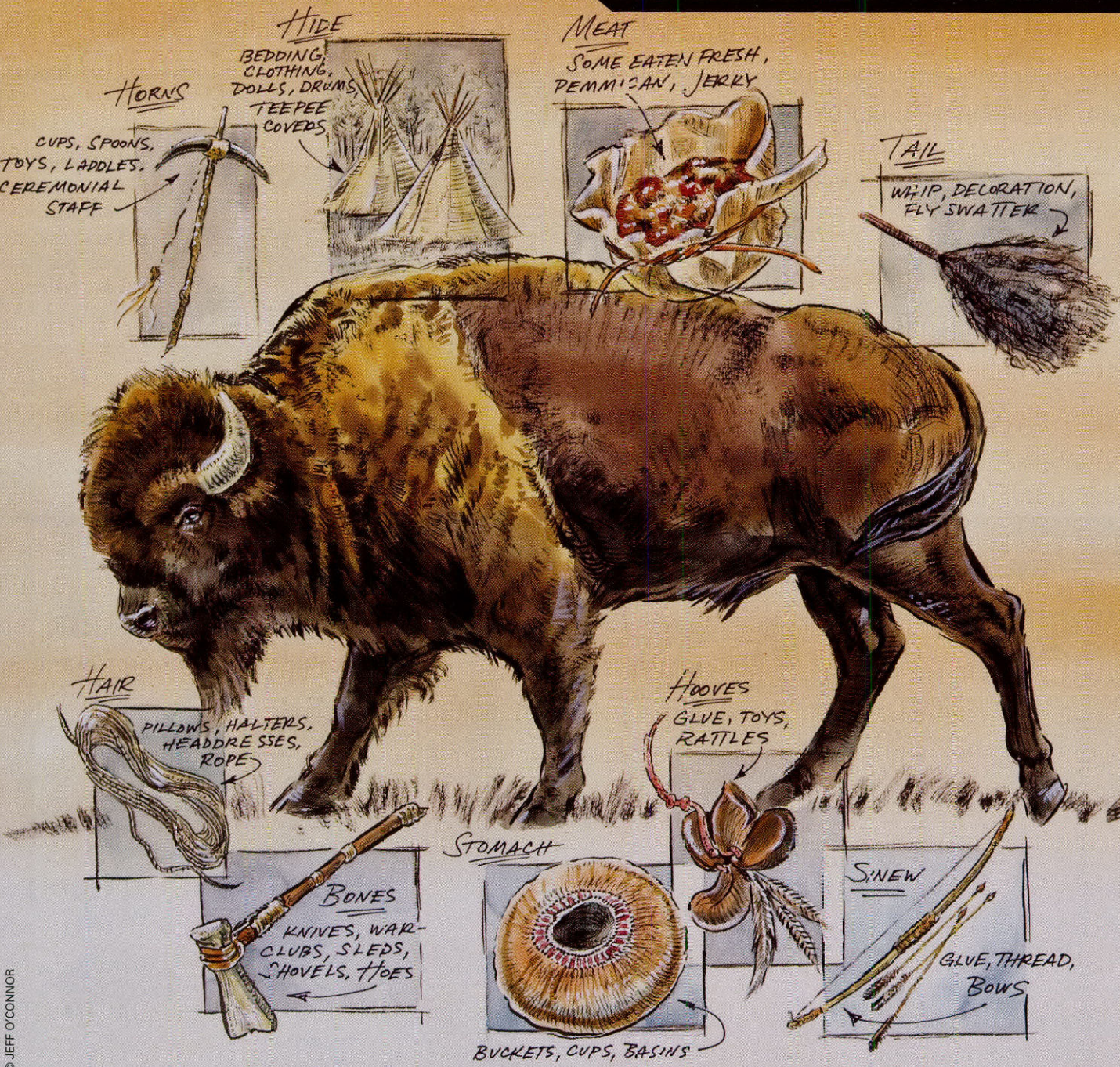
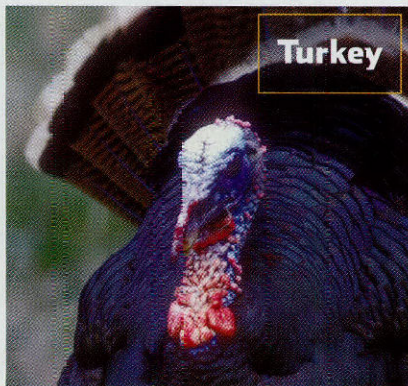


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Some Native Americans hunted the American bison, an animal often called a buffalo. There are still bison in Texas today. The bison lived wild on the plains. Hunters used tracking skills to find the bison, and made weapons to kill them. They used every part of the bison for their daily needs.



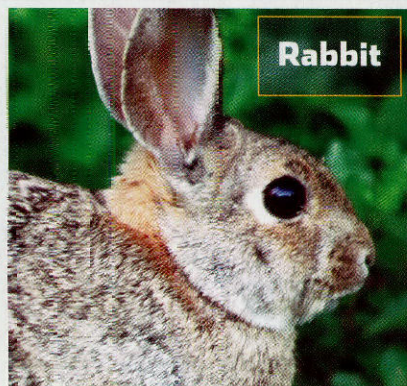
Mustang Grapes



Turkey



Prickly Pear



Rabbit

PHOTOS BY TPWD - ILLUSTRATION © FIAN ARROYO



Spike's Activity Page

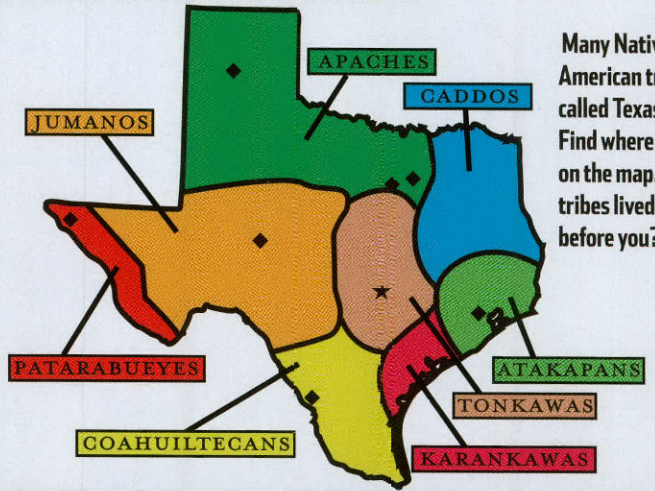


» KEEPING IT WILD



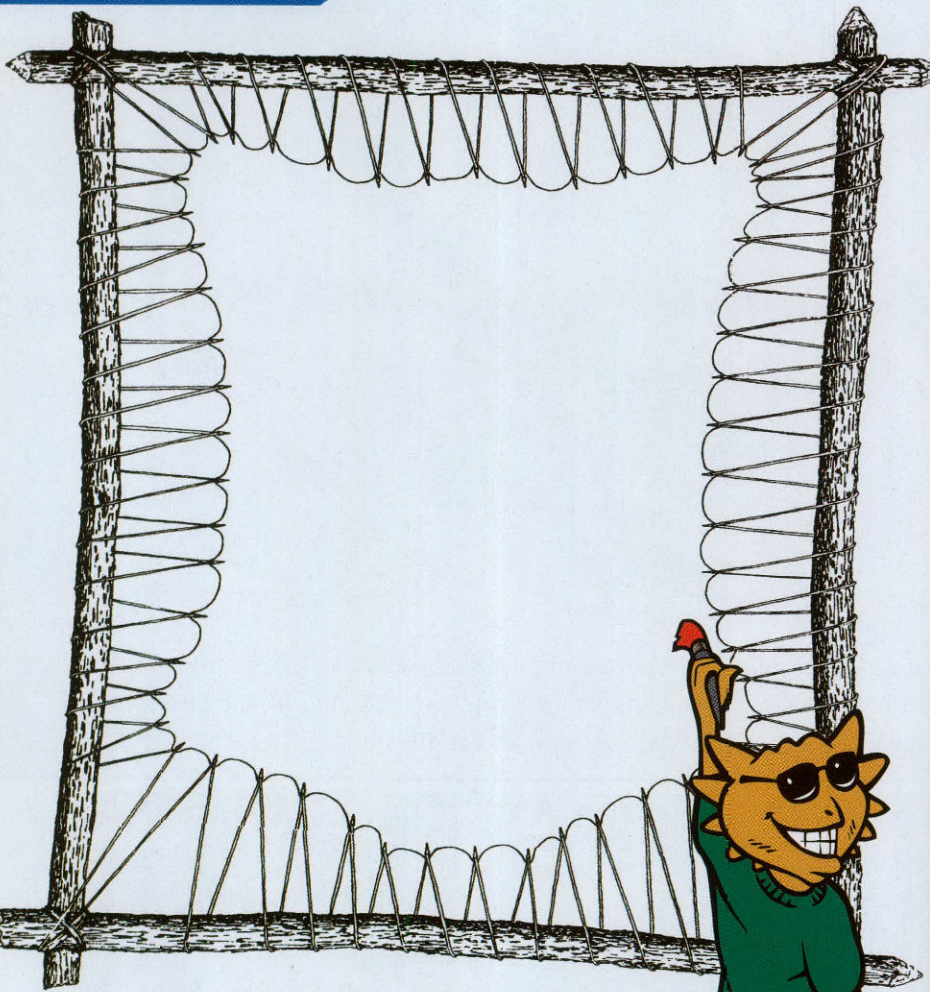
Native Americans made their own jewelry from items they found in nature. Shells, stones, bones, feathers, seeds and bones were strung in different combinations to make necklaces or decorate hair and clothes. We still use many of the same materials, like turquoise and sea shells, to make jewelry. Go outside and collect natural items like leaves, feathers and acorns. Ask an adult to help you poke holes in what you find. Using string or yarn, make your own necklace or bracelet.

» WILD GEOGRAPHY



Many Native American tribes called Texas home. Find where you live on the map. Which tribes lived there before you?

» WILD ART



Horse



Bear Track



Tepee



Crow



Man



Sun Rays



Sun



Mountains



Water



Hungry



Buffalo

Many Native Americans didn't have a written language as we know it. Instead they painted symbols called pictographs to tell stories. Pictographs were both art and communication. The paintings represented people, animals and other things they saw in nature. Using these as a guide, create your own symbols. Can you use them to tell a story about your family, friends or school?



NEXT MONTH:
Home for the Holidays



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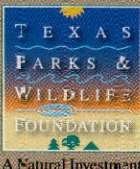
Texas landowners are our best hope.

The Lone Star Land Steward Awards recognize private landowners for outstanding habitat management and wildlife conservation. In Texas, more than 95 percent of land is privately owned or managed, making the work of landowners important to all of us. We salute all 14 of the Lone Star Land Steward Award winners.

Jessica Vandivier and Ann Vandivier Brodnax of Llano Springs Ranch, recipients of this year's top recognition, the Leopold Conservation Award



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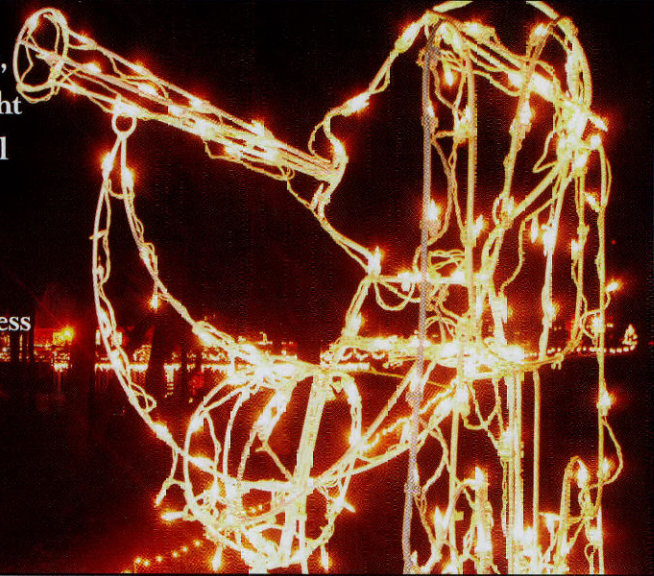
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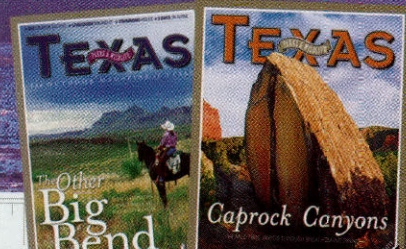
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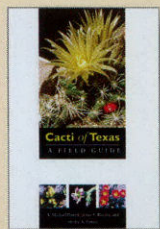
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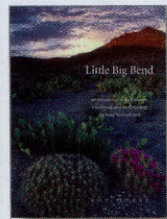
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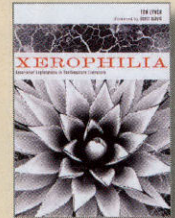
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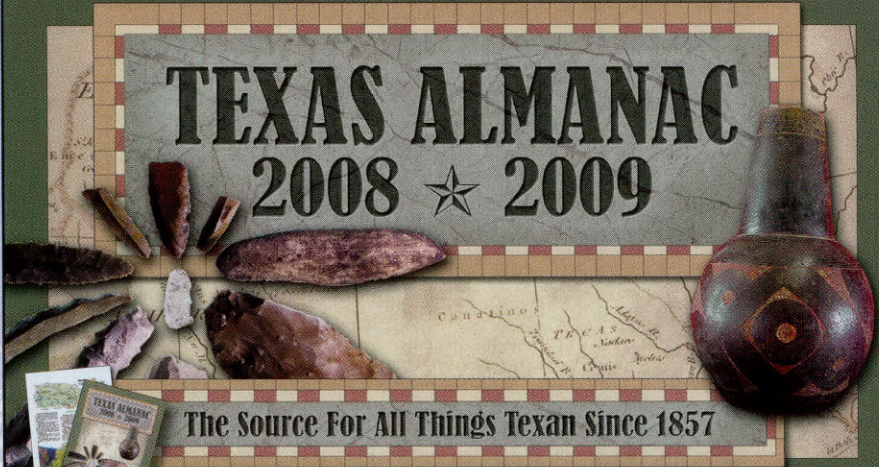
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(continued from page 21)

Germany to marry Sophia and never returned to his city in the New World.

Before viewing the exhibits, we watch a museum video about the history of New Braunfels. Prince Carl was the first commissioner general of the *Adelsverein*, a group of German noblemen who aimed to establish a new Germany on Texas soil by means of mass emigration. From 1844 to 1847, more than 7,000 immigrants came from Germany to Texas. Why were so many Germans willing to leave their home for a faraway land? Plagued by overcrowding, class differences, heavy taxation and adverse economic conditions in their homeland, German immigrants looked to Texas for a fresh start and a future for their children.

After the video, we head into the exhibit hall, a treasure trove of 19th- and early 20th-century artifacts. As we enter, we see a model of the interior of a ship that carried immigrants to Texas. The rest of the exhibits are organized like a town, with recreations of a home, pharmacy, schoolhouse and more. I enjoy seeing a Studebaker carriage from 1875, and I imagine myself wearing the garb of a woman in the late 1800s: boots, a corset, knickers and a delicate full-cover cotton dress. Looking down at my flip-flops, jean skirt and T-shirt, I give thanks for today's less modest clothing standards. All of the artifacts in the museum's collection were either brought over from Germany or made in New Braunfels by the settlers. Descendants of those original founding families have donated items to the museum since it opened.

In addition to the exhibits, the Sophienburg also has archives focusing on German-Texan genealogy. The archives contain more than a million photographs, newspapers, original written records and government and church records. Instead of perusing these, Mom and I decide to wrap up our visit at Sophie's Shop, a year-round *Weihnachtsmarkt* (Christmas market) full of dainty glass ornaments. I leave with a pickle ornament, which in German tradition is the last ornament to go on the tree.

From the Sophienburg, we drive over to Gruene (pronounced "green"), known as the home of Gruene Hall, Texas' oldest dance hall. The area was settled by German farmers in the 1850s, and in 1872 the Gruene family purchased 6,000 acres in the area. In 1878 Henry D. Gruene built a general store, a cotton gin and a dance hall to serve the families sharecropping his family's land. Although now contained in the city limits, Gruene retains an independent spirit that's

reflected in the town slogan: "Gently resisting change since 1872."

But Gruene does more than resist change, as nearly all the town's attractions revolve around history. Mom and I wander into the Gruene General Store, with a soda fountain, homemade fudge and souvenirs. From there we browse the many antique shops. My favorites are The Gruene Antique Company, with more than 8,000 square feet of antiques and collectibles, and Fickle Pickles, a tiny shop with antiques ... and pickles. Mom tries one and pronounces it sweet, tart and crunchy: a perfect pickle.

After refreshing Italian sodas at the Gruene Coffee Haus, Mom and I take a late lunch at the Gristmill. The restaurant is located on the site of Gruene's original cotton mill, and it serves up casual classics in Texas-size portions. As we wait for our food, I enjoy the breeze in the open-air, wooden interior and come to a realization: Gruene has got that upscale-rustic thing down. Of the many menu selections, neither Mom nor I can resist the Gristburger, an enormous beef patty smothered in queso. Indulgent? Absolutely. But before I know it, I've eaten my entire burger, along with the crispy onion rings and delectable "gruene beans" we ordered on the side.

After lunch we waddle next door to Gruene Hall. The hall has earned fame for its age and for helping to launch the careers of music greats like George Strait. Even in the late afternoon the place is buzzing, as the Lost Immigrants play 1970s rock tunes to a sizable crowd. Gruene Hall has live music seven nights a week during the summer, and three to four days a week the rest of the year. While most night shows require advance tickets or a cover, Mom and I enjoy the afternoon concert for free.

From Gruene Hall we walk down to the Guadalupe River, where Mom and I dip our toes into the water and watch tubers shoot over rapids and drift downstream. Two tube rental companies service this part of the river, Rockin' R and the Gruene River Company. Families and groups of young people pass us by, looking happy and cool. Relaxing by the river is a nice way to wind down after a long day.

Despite beginning day three with another hearty inn breakfast, Mom and I can't resist stopping at Naegelin's Bakery, which was founded by Edouard Naegelin in 1868. The historical marker on the front of the building proclaims it is the oldest bakery in Texas. I can't help but notice a trend — is it fair for one city to have so much history? The bakery's offerings don't disappoint, and we leave with

sweet German pretzels, spiced cookies and scrumptious chocolate cookies.

From the bakery we head to Landa Park, a scenic 196-acre park and golf course near downtown. The Comal River flows gently through the park, which also has an arboretum, miniature golf, a spring-fed pool, paddleboat rental and a miniature train. I relive my childhood a little by hopping on the miniature train with Mom, from which I see kids playing and families fishing and having picnics. Landa Park is also adjacent to grounds where Wurstfest is held every fall. Wurstfest, New Braunfels' "10-day salute to sausage," is a German heritage extravaganza complete with oompah bands, lederhosen and lots and lots of sausage.

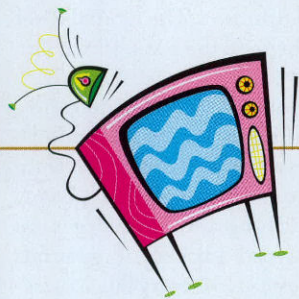
Inspired by seeing the Wurstfest grounds, Mom and I decide our last stop in New Braunfels should be a German lunch at the Friesenhaus. The restaurant is run by the Dirks family, who immigrated to New Braunfels from Germany relatively recently, in 2005. A German bakery is located up front, and in the dining area dirndl-clad waitresses serve up traditional German food and beer. Our selections, pea soup and the sausage sampler plate, arrive quickly. The pea soup is tasty and hearty, while the sausage sampler comes with potatoes, warm sauerkraut and three different kinds of wurst. My favorite wurst, the delicate Bavarian weisswurst, brings me back to the *biertagens* of Germany, where I recently honeymooned.

With full stomachs we return to our car and I leave with the sense that New Braunfels is a place that embraces Texan culture while honoring the land of its origin. Whether it's the rivers or the wurst that brings me back, I know I'll return. But for now, it's *auf Wiedersehen*, New Braunfels. ★

DETAILS

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- **Prince Solms Inn** (www.princesolmsinn.com, 800-625-9169)
- **Natural Bridge Caverns** (www.naturalbridgecaverns.com, 210-651-6101)
- **Huisache Grill** (www.huisache.com, 830-620-9001)
- **Sophienburg Museum and Archives** (www.sophienburg.org, 830-629-1572)
- **Gruene** (www.gruenetexas.com, 830-629-5077)
- **Gristmill** (www.gristmillrestaurant.com, 830-625-0684)
- **Gruene Hall** (www.gruenehall.com, 830-606-1281)
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Nov. 2–9:

Invasive plant problems at Caddo Lake; golf is the draw at Lockhart State Park; transporting a shotgun safely; geology and ecology of a barrier island; Daingerfield Lake.

Nov. 9–16:

Nature photographers discover central Texas; exploring Purtilis Creek by canoe; Houston's urban parks make a great escape; restoration on the Llano Springs Ranch; Texas coastal marshes.

Nov. 16–23:

The last herd of wild buffalo in Texas; catfishing at Choke Canyon State Park; restoring tall grass prairie in Bell County; the joys of jellyfish.

Nov. 23–30:

Black bear research in West Texas; angler educator Charlie Pack; Copper Breaks State Park; devoting a ranch to native wildlife; outdoor learning at Lockhart.

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

EL CAMPO: KULP-AM 1390 / 2:35 p.m.

EL PASO: KTEP-FM 88.5 / 12:15 p.m. Thurs.

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

FLORESVILLE: KWCB-FM 89.7 / 1:30 p.m.

FORT STOCKTON: KFST-AM 860 / 7:10 a.m.; KFST-FM 94.3 / 7:10 a.m.

FREDERICKSBURG: KITY-FM 101.3 / 5:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m., 3:15 p.m., 9:15 p.m.

GAINESVILLE: KGAF-AM 1580 / 8:45 a.m.

GRANBURY: KPIR-AM 1420 / 3:30 p.m.

GREENVILLE: KGVF-AM 1400 / 8:50 a.m.

HARLINGEN: KMBH-FM 88.9 / 4:58 p.m.; KHID-FM 88.1 / 4:58 p.m.

HEREFORD: KPAN-AM 860 / 2:50 p.m.; KPAN-FM 106.3 / 2:50 p.m.

HILLSBORO: KHBR-AM 1560 / 9:30 a.m.

HOUSTON: KILT-AM 610 / between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. Thur.-Sun.

HUNTSVILLE: KSHU-FM 90.5 / throughout the day

JACKSONVILLE: KEBE-AM 1400 / 7:15 a.m.

JUNCTION: KMBL-AM 1450 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 a.m., 6:42 p.m.; KOOK-FM 93.5 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 a.m.; 6:42 p.m.

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

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

LA GRANGE: KBUK-FM 104.9 / 12:30 p.m.; KVLG-AM 1570 / 12:30 p.m.

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

LAMPASAS: KACQ-FM 101.9 / 8:30 a.m.

LAREDO: KHOY-FM 88.1 / 7:18 a.m.

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LUFKIN: KYBI-FM 101.9 / 7 a.m. Sat.

MADISONVILLE: KMVL-AM 1220 / 7:45 a.m.; KMVL-FM 100.5 / 7:45 a.m.

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MASON: KOTY-FM 95.7 / 5:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m., 3:15 p.m., 9:15 p.m.

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MINEOLA: KMOO-FM 99.9 / 5:15 p.m.

MONAHANS: KCKM-AM 1330 / to be determined

MINERAL WELLS: KVMW-AM 1670 / 6:30 a.m.

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

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

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

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

PECOS: KIUN-AM 1400 / 10:30 a.m.

ROCKDALE: KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:04 a.m., 6:04 a.m.

SAN ANGELO: KGKL-AM 960 / 6:32 a.m., 5:40 p.m.

SAN ANTONIO: KSTX-FM 89.1 / 2:04 p.m. Tues.

SEGUIN: KWED-AM 1580 / 7:55 a.m.

SONORA: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 a.m., 6:42 p.m.

SULPHUR SPRINGS: KSST-AM 1230 / 11:15 a.m.

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TEXARKANA: KTXK-FM 91.5 / 2:02 p.m.

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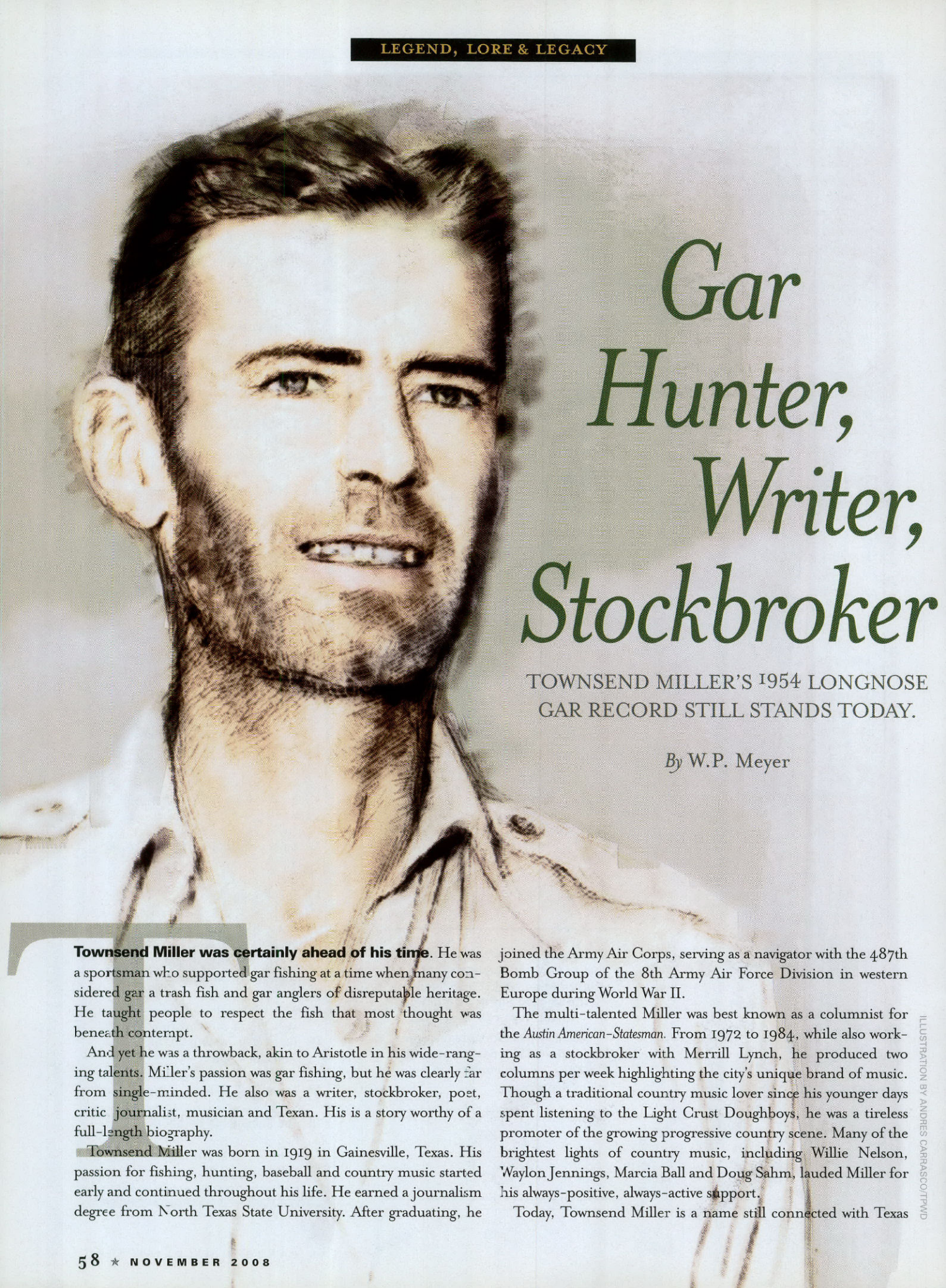
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Gar Hunter, Writer, Stockbroker

TOWNSEND MILLER'S 1954 LONGNOSE
GAR RECORD STILL STANDS TODAY.

By W.P. Meyer

Townsend Miller was certainly ahead of his time. He was a sportsman who supported gar fishing at a time when many considered gar a trash fish and gar anglers of disreputable heritage. He taught people to respect the fish that most thought was beneath contempt.

And yet he was a throwback, akin to Aristotle in his wide-ranging talents. Miller's passion was gar fishing, but he was clearly far from single-minded. He also was a writer, stockbroker, poet, critic, journalist, musician and Texan. His is a story worthy of a full-length biography.

Townsend Miller was born in 1919 in Gainesville, Texas. His passion for fishing, hunting, baseball and country music started early and continued throughout his life. He earned a journalism degree from North Texas State University. After graduating, he

joined the Army Air Corps, serving as a navigator with the 487th Bomb Group of the 8th Army Air Force Division in western Europe during World War II.

The multi-talented Miller was best known as a columnist for the *Austin American-Statesman*. From 1972 to 1984, while also working as a stockbroker with Merrill Lynch, he produced two columns per week highlighting the city's unique brand of music. Though a traditional country music lover since his younger days spent listening to the Light Crust Doughboys, he was a tireless promoter of the growing progressive country scene. Many of the brightest lights of country music, including Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Marcia Ball and Doug Sahm, lauded Miller for his always-positive, always-active support.

Today, Townsend Miller is a name still connected with Texas

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDRES CARRASCO/TPMVD



Townsend Miller (with friend Jeff Krenok, right) in historical photos with all gator and longnose gars he caught.

country music. After his untimely death at age 69 in April of 1989, Miller was inducted into the Western Swing Hall of Fame. The Townsend Miller Collection of 8,000 recordings, files and photographs of country music artists is a "significant holding" of the University of Texas Library. The Townsend Miller Memorial Fund, through the Kerrville Music Foundation, provides scholarships and awards to talented performers. Likewise, the Austin Community College Commercial Music Management Program offers a Townsend Miller scholarship.

However, when he set the longnose gar world record in July of 1954, Miller was serving as the editor of *Texas Game and Fish*, a precursor to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. By then known as a master gar angler, he was even featured in the second issue of *Sports Illustrated* dated August 23, 1954.

Townsend Miller was first prodded into gar fishing by a gar itself. As a small boy he was fishing one day, standing in water waist-deep, when a gar took his bait. He hauled back and backed up, too slowly it turns out, and the gar flew into Miller's belly. Big mistake for the gar, who is now akin to the bison that turned William Cody into Buffalo Bill. From that time on, Miller was captivated by gar fishing and landed hundreds of longnose and alligator gar. He called them "inland tarpon" as both gar and tarpon are bony-mouthed, armor-plated missiles prone to go airborne during a fight. Both are tough to hook; Miller only expected about half of those that bite to be hooked and a third of those hooked to be landed.

For years he fished the holes in the Trinity River between Crapeland and Crockett or Eln Fork of the Trinity near Gainesville. But he was not averse to going afield for gar, traveling to the White River in Arkansas to tangle with their 150-pounders. With longtime friend Jeff Krenok of Crockett, Miller main-

ly targeted monstrous alligator gar. He once caught a 7-foot 6-inch, 165-pound alligator gar.

Miller's world record, however, was an incredible longnose gar. This longnose gar, the biggest he had ever seen, stretched a staggering 6 feet 1/2 inch. Imagine the electricity of being ahold of over 72 inches of razor-wired fury. For many longnose gar anglers, a 50-inch fish is a once-in-a-lifetime trophy. Miller's world record bested that by almost two feet. Miller's catch, a 50-pound 5-ounce longnose, is a record that still stands today.

Taken in late July of 1954, the record longnose gar was caught while Miller was still fishing in 20 feet of water. Miller typically used a heavy saltwater rod and reel, a 5/0 treble, a 6-foot steel leader, 70-pound test main line, and a heavy swivel. He cruised the river, watching for gar to surface, gulping air. Spotting active fish, he anchored, then fished on the bottom with a 1-pound chunk of drum stuck on one barb of the treble, leaving the other two points free. On the free points, he crimped down the barb for better penetration of the gar's bony snout. Even using this rugged gear made for the bigger alligator gar, the record longnose took more than 15 minutes to land.

Gar fishing for the ever-active Miller was not always for sport. In September 1958 he headed a safari of sorts to South Texas to bag and bring back alive an alligator gar for display at the Fort Worth Zoo. Miller fished the Trinity aided by an intrepid team that included his 6-year-old son, Kent, friend Jeff Krenok, and zoo curator Lawrence Curtis. They eventually landed a "small" alligator gar of 148 pounds, stretching just shy of 7 feet long. Curtis, recognizing an audience-pleasing specimen, backed up the tank truck and the hefty gar was loaded in. Unfortunately the gar, stressed by the transport, only survived long enough to arrive at the zoo.

When the funds allow a Gar Anglers' Hall of Fame, Townsend Miller, gar fishing champion and champion of gar fishing, will be its first inductee. ★



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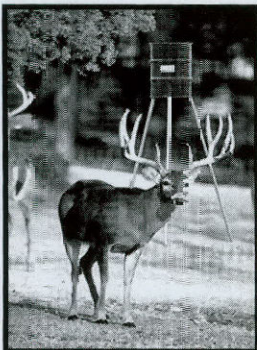
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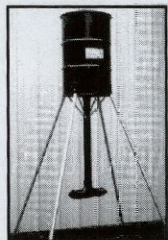
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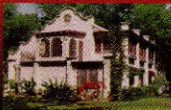
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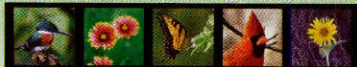
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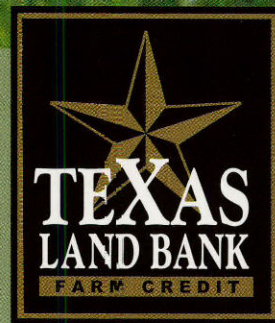
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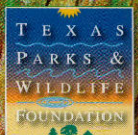
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