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# TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS



# THE ULTIMATE BOAT BUYERS GUIDE

FISHING GUIDES REVEAL HOW TO FLOAT THE RIGHT BOAT

/// **PLUS:** ///

Best State Parks for Boating /// CSI: Texas  
Texas Snow Geese /// The Second Hunt



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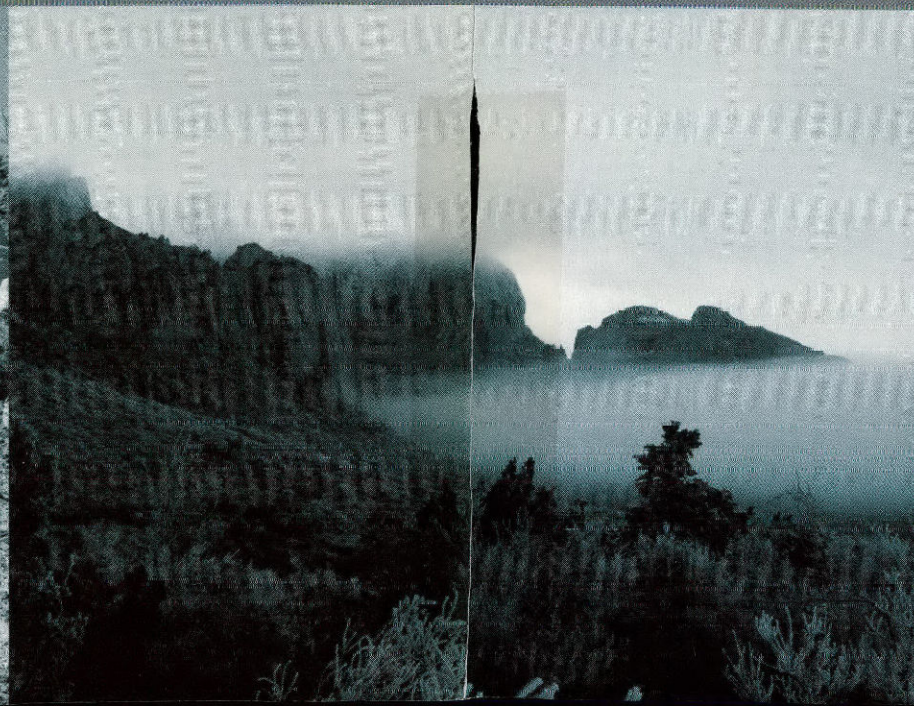
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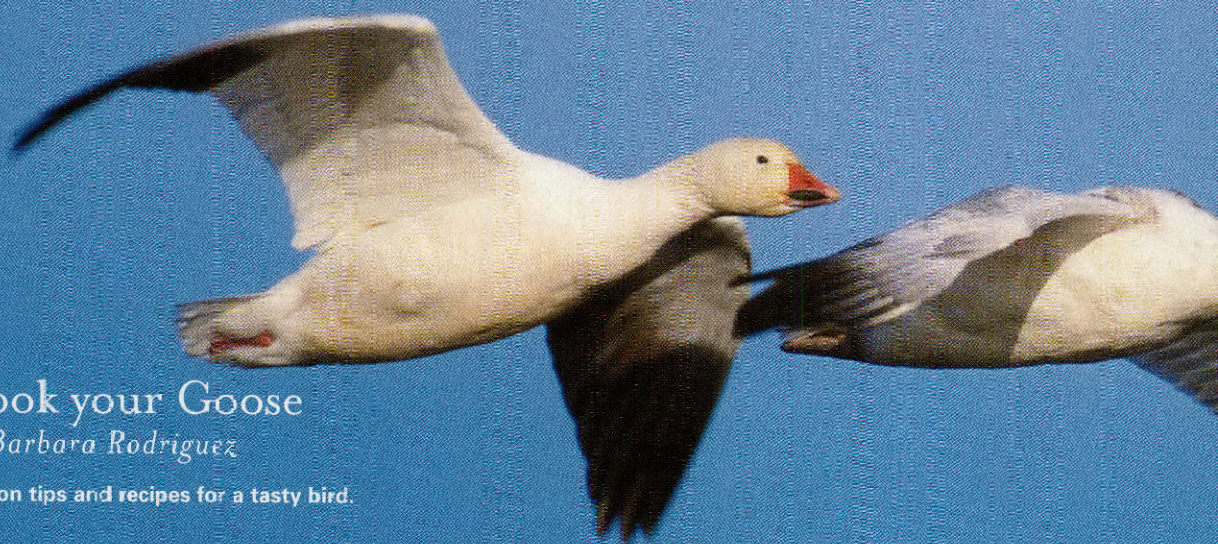
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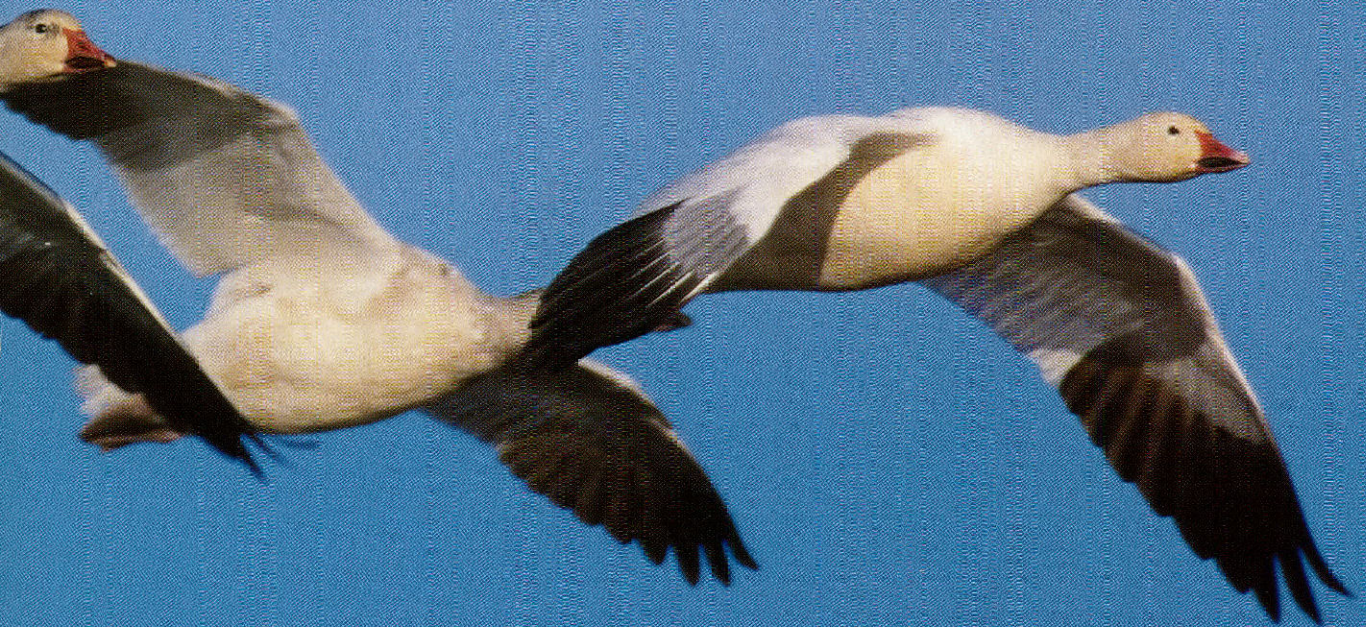
By Larry Bozka

To avoid a whopping case of buyer's remorse, there's no better place to turn for advice than the ranks of fishing pros.



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This page: The reward of the chase: reeling in a striped bass. Photo © Grady Allen

# TEXAS

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

JANUARY 2005, VOL. 63, NO. 1

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## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Larry Bozka, Saltwater; Henry Chappell, Hunting; Larry D. Hodge, Freshwater

## CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Grady Allen, Wyman Meinzer, Earl Nottingham and David J. Sams

## EDITORIAL OFFICES:

3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, Texas 78704  
Phone: (512) 912-7000 Fax: (512) 707-1913  
E-mail: magazine@tpwd.state.tx.us

## ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES:

STONEWALLACE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.:  
3000 S. IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, Texas 78704  
Fax: (512) 707-1913

**Jim Stone**, Advertising Director (512) 912-7007,  
E-mail: jim.stone@tpwd.state.tx.us;

**Leigh Anne Way**, Outdoor Marketplace Manager, (512) 912-7003,  
E-mail: leighanne.way@tpwd.state.tx.us

## THE NOYD GROUP:

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Fax: (248) 637-6452

**Ron Noyd**, Automotive Category (248) 643-7240;  
E-mail: rnoyd@attglobal.net

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# In the Field

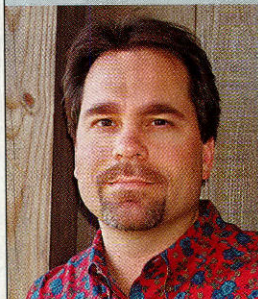
## DYANNE CORTEZ AND KEN KURZAWSKI

teamed up to write this month's article that describes the best Texas state parks for boating. Cortez, a lifelong Texan, has written about Texas culture, landscapes and quirky characters for a range of publications. Her most recent book, *Tipi—A Modern How-To Guide*, was published in 2003. She works at TPWD headquarters, posting fishing information on the TPWD Web site. Kurzawski, a fisheries biologist, works with freshwater fishing regulations and programs in the TPWD Inland Fisheries Division and is a regular contributor to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. He and his wife and their two sons enjoy fishing and camping around the state.



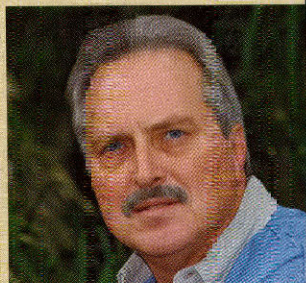
## BEN REHDER

has published three mystery novels (the latest is *Flat Crazy*) with St. Martin's Press, all of them revolving around his fictional Blanco County Game Warden John Marlin. He gathered his first background for this issue's article on the TPWD forensics lab as he researched his novels. "I've hunted since I was a teenager and I own some property in Erano County, which is how I chose both my protagonist and the setting—it just seemed natural to write about a game warden in Central Texas. In doing research, I've gotten to know a lot of game wardens, and riding with them is how I first heard about the forensics lab. As I learned more, I tucked it away in my head as a great topic for an article some day."



## LARRY BOZKA

has spent a lifetime fishing throughout the state, searching for Texas' premier hotspots and figuring out the best ways to get to them. "Every inch of the coastline, and every lake, has its own unique appeal," he explains. And every fishing hotspot poses a unique challenge in getting there. For this issue, Bozka interviews professional fishing guides to find out their boat-buying secrets. Turn to page 22 to see what he found out. And look forward to Bozka's upcoming article on fishing the jetties along the coast. Bozka continues to build on nearly 30 years' experience as an award-winning writer, photographer, Web consultant and broadcaster. Among his accomplishments is a role in preserving the Texas redfish and speckled trout when he was the editor of the Coastal Conservation Association *TIDE* magazine.



# AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF ROBERT L. COOK

**January 2005.** I have to get used to writing that year: 2005. It'll take me a couple of months, but I'll get there. Then, when I'm getting ready to write one of these articles I always ask myself, "OK. What is 'At Issue'? What are folks concerned about?" This time it involves me being "flabbergasted." I'm not even sure that "flabbergasted" is a real word, but we all know what it means.

I heard the man on TV the other day warning people in the cities of Texas to be on the alert for coyotes! He said that coyotes were coming into cities more and more these days and that folks needed to watch out for them and be careful around them. Then he said that coyotes were a serious threat to human safety, especially children. I was "flabbergasted."

It is a fact that there are more coyotes in Texas today than probably in the last 125 years. It is a fact that there have been a handful of incidents in which a coyote became aggressive and bit a person, and, in one case, a 3-year-old child in California was tragically killed by a coyote. However, such "attacks" are incredibly rare. The last data that I recall seeing stated that a person is 300 times more likely to be attacked and bitten by somebody's pet dog than by a coyote.

Why would a coyote (or almost any other wild critter in Texas) lose its natural fear of humans and become aggressive toward people? The answer is frequently pretty simple. It is because we feed them. Not only do we feed them...we feed them right on our back porch! We provide them a steady supply of easy-to-get food. We feed our pet cats and dogs outside and we leave the pet bowl half full of smelly, high-protein food. We do not place our food scraps and other edible garbage in lock-tight garbage containers; you see them turned over and garbage scattered on the street or driveway on almost every garbage pickup day. We throw food scraps across the back fence into the vacant lot or into the compost pile. Restaurants and grocery stores that throw food and food scraps into open dumpsters are part of the problem. Guess what...Mr. Wiley Coyote (or the "cute" raccoon, or the "harmless" ole 'possum) figured all that out decades ago. They are fat and happy. They are accustomed to humans providing their evening meal. They have lost their fear of humans and, in fact, associate humans with their food supply.

A couple of days later I read in the paper that one of the cities was planning to capture the guilty coyotes and "re-locate" them out of town. Again ... "Flabbergasted!" We urban-dwelling humans have created a problem. Because we were not aware or because of our carelessness, we have trained wild animals to expect to get their food from humans; they no longer fear humans, and they want to be fed. So, where are we going to release this wild animal that has no fear of humans, who associates his food supply with humans, and who may not even know how to get food naturally? Believe me when I say that none of our "rural" neighbors — folks who live in the country — want the problem that we have created. We urban folks need to stop providing a food source for these wild animals.

How's that for a New Year's Resolution? Plus, it keeps me from getting "flabbergasted."

*Why would a coyote lose its natural fear of humans and become aggressive toward people? The answer is frequently simple. Because we feed them.*



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## *Texas Parks and Wildlife Department mission statement:*

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# MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

## FOREWORD

**Fishermen are passionate** about their boats. I'm no exception. In the last 20 years, I've owned 10 different boats — and I sold boats for a living for the first half of those 20 years.

I'm partial to tournament bass boats, but I've had others too. When a group of anglers gathers around the dock, the small talk often focuses on boats. Tournament bass anglers are especially fond of their boats and talk about them, well, sometimes a little too much.

Recently, I fished a bass club tournament and drove to the reservoir with one of the club members, Mike. He and I talked about a lot of different things, but we mostly talked about boats for the two-and-a-half hour drive to the lake and then again on the return trip. We talked about the different brands of bass boats, what is the best-sized boat for various reservoirs around Texas, how well the boats fish — and most importantly, how well they handle rough water.

As entertaining as all of this talking with like-minded anglers can be, the information, like any fish story, is occasionally lacking in objectivity. Most people are too proud to admit they've made a \$40,000 mistake. In the "Ultimate Boat Buyer's Guide" (page 22), Larry Bozka went straight to those whose very livelihood depends on flawless boat-buying decisions: fishing guides.

This article couldn't come at a better time for me because I happen to be in the market for a boat again. I'm trying to decide what size to get and what to power it with. I'm leaning toward a 21-foot bass boat with a 250 horsepower engine. But do I need all the speed?

Ten years ago, I would have said, "Definitely!" because I was used to having one of the fastest boats in the bass circuits I fished. But now I'm looking for comfort more than speed. Hence, the 21-foot boat. Plus, I like the extra room for my tall sons to fish with me. The down side is the bigger boat doesn't easily maneuver in the backs of creek channels or in the timber. Resale is also important because I don't usually keep a boat very long. I have found that underpowered boats are harder to sell on the resale market.

With so many coastal and freshwater fishing options in Texas, it would really be nice to have two boats to cover all the bases. (If I had extra money, I would have the 21-foot boat for big waters and an 18-foot boat for small reservoirs. I did that several years ago and I loved it, but my wife barely tolerates one boat, let alone two.) Because you can only have one boat at a time (usually), it is important to take your time and make the right decision. Good luck in choosing your boat, and I'll see you on the water.

*Randy Brudnicki*

RANDY BRUDNICKI  
PUBLISHER

## LETTERS

### ARMADILLO ATTITUDE

On page 14 of the December 2004 issue, Charles J. Lohrmann wrote a very nice review of the book *Texas Wildlife Portfolio* recently published by KAC Pro-

ductions. Mr. Lohrmann apparently enjoyed the title page photo of the armadillo and speculated as to the circumstances in which the image was taken. As the photographer, I thought I'd pass on a few details about that shot.

I was in a photo blind on a private Starr County ranch with my friend Steve Bentsen. It was a very hot afternoon, and we photographed birds coming in to drink at a water hole.

Late in the afternoon, an armadillo approached the water hole from the mesquite and brush. The animal wandered to the water and began to drink. Since we were set up to photograph small birds, our telephoto lenses would only allow us head shots of the armadillo. The 'dillo drank his fill, seemingly

aware of, but unconcerned by, our presence. Then it did something I had never seen before: It lay down in the water and rolled its head back and forth, seemingly in great ecstasy. He even blew some bubbles, and managed to get most of his body wet in the cool water. Finally, finished with its bath, he stood up, gave us another wary glance, then wandered back into the brush. I felt privileged to be able to photographically capture some of the private moments of this intriguing species.

GREG W. LASLEY  
Austin



**The 'dillo drank his fill, seemingly aware but unconcerned by our presence. Then it did something I had never seen before; it lay down in the water, rolling its head back and forth seemingly in great ecstasy. He even blew some bubbles.**

*Greg W. Lasley*  
Austin

# MAIL CALL

## FRIO MEMORIES

The article on fishing the Frio River brought back some very fond memories. My uncle grew up in Leakey and knew the stretch of the Frio River from Garner State Park to north of Leakey like the back of his hand. We would go to the river at dawn and wade up stream to be picked up at dark at a pre-determined location. We would fish like this for the entire weekend. Of course, this was in the late 1930s and early 1940s when ranchers would still allow strangers on their land. We knew this was a privilege — not a right — and my dad and uncle always treated the land as if it were theirs. We always left an area like we found it, with no trash of any kind, not even a single gum wrapper.

My dad would fly fish while my uncle and I would cast, catching slab-sided perch, bass and once in awhile, a channel cat. My uncle also taught me how to swim to the bottom of the deep holes to check under rocks for catfish.

Thanks for the memories.

ERVIN NEATHERLIN  
*La Vernia*

## ANOTHER GREAT ISSUE

Thank you for an absolutely great November issue of my favorite magazine. As a hunter, a fisherman, a camper and a lover of the land, this issue was chock-full of articles in my particular fields of interest.

As a hunter, "Tracking In the Time of Bounty" and "You Be the Judge" were both very informative, and the photography in the latter was simply outstanding (I will purchase the book).

I'm a bit embarrassed to admit that, as

a life-long camper, in years past, I have occasionally viewed the novice camper with a touch of condescension. However, as I read Barbara Rodriguez's entertaining article, "The Incident at Fort Richardson State Park," I was thrilled to see that good people like her are introducing new folks, particularly kids, to the wonderful world of camping. The family experiences she described reminded me of similar experiences my family and I shared when we first began our camping adventures many years ago.

And finally, I very much enjoyed the article, "Making the Case for Stewardship." It is both reassuring, and comforting to know that there are Texas landowners such as Mr. Rene Barrientos, who, with the support of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and other agencies, is working hard to restore and preserve the land.

Many thanks, and keep up the good work.

ART FARIAS  
*Lampasas*

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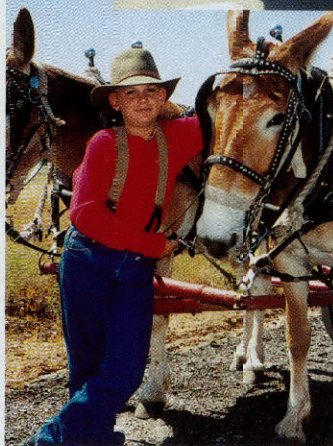
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# SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

## WILLIAM P. WHO?

*By retracing the footsteps of an unsung pioneer, students learn about everyday life in the 1840s.*



300,000-word diary — which provides a detailed daily account of his trip — was passed down to his great-great grandson, David Ewing Stewart of Van Vleck, who is also participating in the project. Each morning, students will read passages from Huff's diary that relate to that day's portion of the trip.

"[Huff] was inquisitive and open to views that did not mesh well with the ethos of the 19th

century," explains Bill Coate, a California school teacher who is leading the project. "Modern historiography has tended for some time to focus on the 'ordinary' characters from the past. Any diary written in 1849 is significant, but when it is composed by a person with Huff's probing insights, we gain a fresh look at the past."

Here's a brief excerpt from the diary: "We reached Wild China water hole to day at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. In this water hole there was a little mud as if to tantalize and increase our thirst from imaginary association of the fact that here had been water, but now naught but filthy mud. Our animals were suffering, and although we turned them out to graze, their thirst was such that they would not eat."

As a joint venture between Madera Unified School District, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Historical Commission, various county historical societies, schools and private ranchers, the wagon train will encompass many of the same sites detailed in Huff's diary.

With the help of the TPWD, students will visit numerous state parks, and several private ranches have also opened their gates to the wagon train project.

"We are providing the logistical, on-the-ground support to help organize and oversee the project," says Tom Harvey, chief of the News and Information Branch at TPWD.

After the trip, the students plan to turn their notes into a book titled "Following the Steps of William P. Huff."

This project is allowing students to do history — not just

Sometimes you can relive history. This wagon train adventure for kids is based on a Texas pioneer's 150-year-old diary.

If you think that the 730-mile drive from El Paso to Houston is rough, you have nothing on a group of 14 ambitious 6th graders. On Jan. 4, students from California will embark on a three-week trek that will take them from El Paso to Houston in horse-drawn wagons. Collaborating with other students from schools around Texas throughout the trip, the young historians will retrace the route of William P. Huff, a Texas pioneer who made the trek from Houston to California in 1849 in search of gold. Huff's

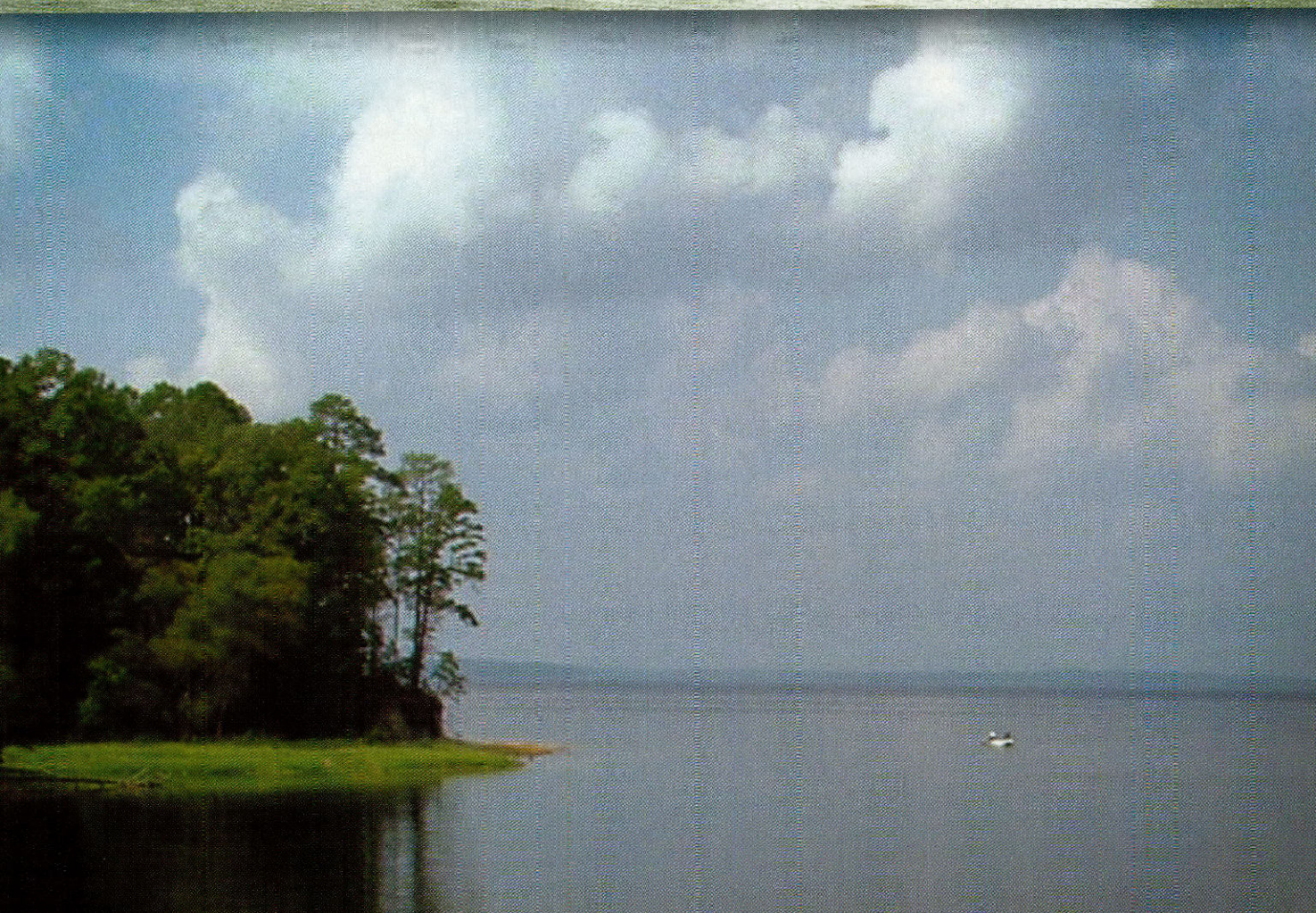
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study about it, says Coate. "They are permitted to examine the original record — the primary sources — and draw historical conclusions for themselves. They are coming to grips with the real thing, apart from someone else's regurgitated version of it."

The Huff Diary Wagon Train project will begin on Jan. 4 at the Spanish colonial Socorro Mission in El Paso. It is here that the 6th graders from the San Joaquin Valley in California will begin to retrace the return trail of Huff back toward his trip's origin and his grave site in Houston. Nearly three

weeks later, they will leave the wagons and horses behind as they present copies of the Huff diary to government officials in a ceremony on Jan. 25. The project will culminate at Huff's grave in Houston on Jan. 27, when the diary will be returned to Stewart as part of a memorial service.

Coate concludes, "I expect that once they get a good dose of 'seat knowledge' to go with that 'head knowledge,' they will never read another book about pioneer life in quite the same way as they did before this project."

—Jennifer McCutchen



## Free Family Trout Fishing

Coming soon to a lake or pond near you: rainbow trout.

Texas state parks' "Family Fishing Celebration" and TPWD's popular winter rainbow trout stocking program have joined forces for the second year to make a great fishing opportunity even better. Beginning in December and lasting through February, 15 state parks will be stocked with 30,000 trout. What improves this fishing story is the TPWD program — the Family Fishing Celebration — that exempts park visitors from license requirements while they're fishing within the boundaries of a state park.

The Family Fishing Celebration encourages adults and youths to discover the excitement and joys of fishing while enjoying one of the many state parks that feature fishing. Anglers are required to pay any park entrance fees and follow all applicable fishing regulations. Rainbow trout anglers can keep five trout per day. There is no minimum length limit.

The winter rainbow trout fishing pro-

gram was designed to provide easy, inexpensive fishing opportunities for those who live in and around Texas' urban areas and especially for new or novice anglers. Over the last two decades, Texas anglers have responded enthusiastically to the

The combination of newly stocked trout and free fishing in Texas state parks draws enthusiastic anglers of all ages.



PHOTOS © GRADY ALLEN

opportunity to catch a fish usually associated with a costly out-of-state trip.

In addition to state parks, 84 sites in city, county and other public parks will be stocked this winter. Most of the stocking sites are small ponds or impounded sections of rivers that were selected to give anglers plenty of shoreline access for fishing. All you need is a chair and your fishing pole.

"The most important thing to remember is the stocking dates are tentative and do often change," says Hatchery Program Director Todd Engeling, who oversees the distribution of trout for TPWD. "Be sure to check the TPWD Web site for the latest information before going out."

Trout will bite almost immediately after stockings, so get there early to get in on the best fishing. Anglers use a variety of baits from corn or soft baits to flies and even small spinnerbaits. My favorite bait came from some anglers at Blanco State Park. They were using soft yellow cheese balls flavored with garlic. On that day, the trout couldn't resist them! As a bonus, the "bait" isn't bad on crackers if the fishing is slow.

Raising trout to the size stocked in Texas (around 10 inches with a few "bonus" larger fish) requires year-round cold water. Since that's lacking in Texas, TPWD purchases trout from a private fish hatchery in Missouri. Until this year, funds to purchase trout came from the sale of the freshwater trout stamp. The trout stamp was eliminated on September 1, 2004, when a freshwater fishing stamp was created. Now a portion of the funds collected from the freshwater fishing stamp go to purchase trout. Other freshwater fishing stamp monies will be used to renovate and replace freshwater fish hatcheries.

For more information about rainbow trout stockings and Texas state parks, check the TPWD Web site <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)> or call TPWD at (800) 792-1112 and follow the menu options.

— Ken Kurzawski

#### TROUT STOCKING SCHEDULE:

Abilene State Park Buffalo Wallow Pond: Jan. 11  
Blanco State Park: Jan. 1; Jan.20; Feb. 17  
Bob Sandlin State Park: Dec.27; Jan. 30  
Buescher State Park: Dec. 16  
Copper Breaks State Park: Feb. 8  
Fort Boggy State Park: Jan. 30  
Fort Parker State Park: Jan. 22  
Fort Richardson State Park: Jan. 13  
Lake Tawakoni State Park—Pair-a-trees Pond: Feb.19  
Landmark Inn State Park: Jan.16  
Meridian State Park: Jan. 9  
Palmetto State Park: Jan. 30  
Rusk State Park: Dec. 16  
South Llano River State Park: Dec. 18; Feb. 3  
Tyler State Park: Dec. 3; Jan. 7

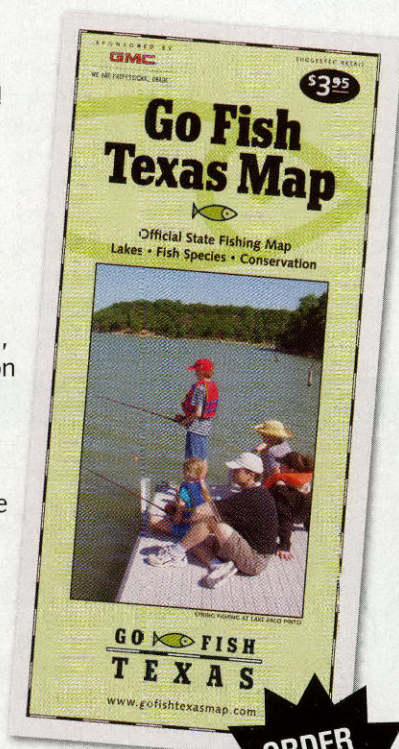
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# Where the Birds Are

State parks along the coast teem with winter birding opportunities.

When most of the rest of the nation is bleak, shivering and cloaked in winter drab, our state provides untold numbers of wintering waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, hawks and boreal nesting songbirds a safe harbor of mild weather and continuous winter food supplies. In fact, winter is the time when "snowbirds," both avian and human, flock in droves to Texas. For Texas is not only a birders' Shangri-La, a Mecca for "listers," it is most importantly a winter haven for avian diversity. And Texas state parks along the Gulf Coast provide some of the best winter viewing opportunities available.

Birds seem to be constantly in motion, migrating north and south, flying from breeding to wintering grounds, stopping here and there along the way, searching for food, searching for mates, building nests, caring for young, chasing competitors and dodging predators — do they ever take time off to relax or go on vacation? They do. And winter is that time, a seasonal pause for rest and restoration. Birds and birders alike



"Snowbirds" — both avian and human — take advantage of temperate winter weather to seek diversion on the Texas Coast.

go with the flow, follow the flock, and hit the beach, specifically the temperate winter shores of the Texas Gulf Coast.

At first glance, the beaches and surrounding estuaries may look desolate, an unlikely place for productive birding. The food is mostly hidden from sight — beneath the waves or the sand or the mud, and there is no apparent shelter. Waders, however, are beautifully adapted to this seemingly barren land. Their bills are shaped and sized to reach their favorite prey at its nor-

mal depth beneath the surface. Their small size and protective coloration blends into the background, allowing them to hide in plain view. You will discover just how effective this camouflage can be the next time you scan the sandy flats looking for a Snowy Plover. No special shelter is needed as the little birds hunker down into like-colored spindrift or beach debris.

The restlessness of shorebirds as they forage and fly about, their kinship with the distance and swift seasons, the wistful signal

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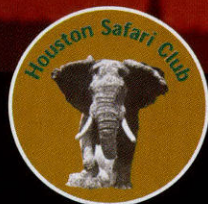
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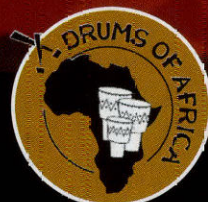
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## Prairie Ghost

BY MANY ACCOUNTS, THE PRONGHORN HAS RARELY been thought of as more than a fast-moving goat. Now, *Prairie Ghost: Pronghorn and Human Interaction in Early America* (A Wildlife Management Institute Book published by the University Press of Colorado, 175 pages, \$29.95 hardcover) elevates the creature's identity to near-mythic stature. The timespan of the book is about 10,000 years — from prehistory to the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 — closing with the "genesis of conservation," which is defined by the efforts of George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt. In between, you'll find amazing accounts of ceremonial hunts, pronghorn legend and wilderness adventure.

This volume itself bears out the title's provocative notion of human/animal interaction by creating a compelling history for the pronghorn — and explaining the motivations of those who hunted the animal. The book brings the pronghorn to life through intricate documentation and an all-star lineup of illustrations (including paintings by Audubon, Bierstadt, Bodmer, Catlin, Leigh, Miller and Russell). Even the most well-versed reader will gain new knowledge and perspective by plunging into the amazing depth of the appendices and tables (one table lists details of 57 observations of pronghorn by Lewis and Clark, while another lists two dozen reports concerning the use of masks by Native American hunters to stalk pronghorn). Without reading (and rereading) this book, no conservationist can claim complete knowledge of the pronghorn. Readers owe a significant debt to the University Press of Colorado, publisher of this book from the Wildlife Management Institute.

—Charles J. Lohrmann

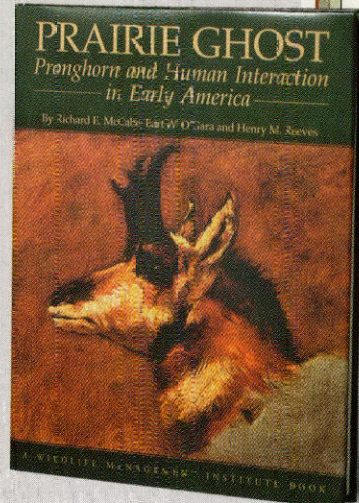


PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

of their voices never cease to fascinate and entertain. Note the quick stabs of a Dunlin checking the mud for small crustaceans, the deeper probes of an oystercatcher after mollusks and the slow groping of an ibis up to its eyeballs in mud looking for succulent blue crabs. Watch Roseate Spoonbills swing their wide spatulate bills back and forth straining invertebrates from the shallows or Snowy Egrets stir the waters with their golden-slipped feet, stabbing any curious fish that comes to investigate. Marvel at Reddish Egrets as they stagger about like drunken sailors with wings half spread, practicing the fine art of canopy feeding.

Some of the best Texas state parks for winter birding include Sea Rim State Park, Galveston Island State Park, Goose Island State Park and Matagorda Island State Park. These wonderful winter birding parks are within a stone's throw of several national wildlife refuges or opportunities to take pelagic (offshore) birding trips or catch the whooping crane boat tour to the back side of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Successful birding is always a matter of timing, and the best time to spot amazing birds along the Texas coast is right now. For more information on winter birding and the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, visit <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding)>.

—Noreen Damude

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to find the show schedule for the PBS station in your area.



This series made possible in part by a grant from the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program.



# Welcoming Wild Things

*To attract birds and other critters to your yard, start with the basics: food, water and shelter.*

**Once humans started transforming** thriving wildlife habitat into similarly thriving suburban neighborhoods and retail centers, indigenous species began to have difficulty locating appropriate sources of food, water and shelter. They had to either adapt to the new conditions or move on. Fortunately, homeowners have started to embrace the concept of wildscaping, which makes it possible for wildlife to coexist with the likes of us; and our lives are richer for it.

Wildscaping is gardening with wildlife in mind. This doesn't mean allowing the grass and weeds to grow so high the neighborhood association gets involved. What it does mean is creating areas in your yard that supply the basics of food, water and shelter so wildlife will come for a visit or come for good.

says Bender, "you can say, 'I want hummingbirds here and butterflies there.' Function comes before plant selection." Once you have your plan and diagram, remember to start small. By starting small and gradually replacing exotics with low water-use native plants that provide flowers, fruits, seeds and leaves for the benefit of wildlife, you give yourself time to adjust to the new landscape.

Although birdbaths are a terrific way to provide water to some visiting wildlife, if you want to attract a greater diversity of animal life to your yard, Bender says variety is the key. "Vary the depth of water. Have it shallow in some areas, deeper in others and even with a gentle slope. Different animals have different needs."



Native plants, along with appropriate water supplies, will attract all kinds of wildlife into your landscape. Start with a plan for the types of birds and animals you want to attract, and then transition from exotic to native species.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Urban Biologist Kelly Bender, co-author of *Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife*, says the first step toward creating a wildscape is to establish wildlife goals. "If you want to watch hummingbirds during migration, for example, start planting things that bloom in fall and spring, especially those things that are adapted for the birds, like coral honeysuckle and some of the salvias."

The next step is to create a plan. This will be your best friend as you transition from exotic plants to native species. Include an assessment of what you already have in your yard. Keep native plants that serve you and wildlife, and dispatch the others. "Just because something is growing in your yard that you didn't plant doesn't make it a native," says Bender.

The key to wildscaping success is variety and layering. Canopy, understory and groundcover is vital as many species require specific habitat. Bender says the low tangle of vegetation homeowners usually clear out is also valuable.

Sketch out a diagram of the entire yard, blocking out the areas where you want the wildlife to frequent. "For example,"

The difference between wildlife visitors and wildlife residents involves the availability of suitable shelter. Bender says something sorely lacking in our suburban backyards are cavities — little holes in trees. "Standing dead trees are called snags," says Bender, "and if a homeowner has a snag in their yard that's not endangering life or property, they should keep it. Standing dead trees are not only important sources of shelter, but also valuable sources of food for songbirds. The soft wood harbors insects, so it's a substrate for those. Standing dead trees can be more important to wildlife than live ones since they are such a limited resource."

To learn more about getting started with your wildscaping project, visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wildscapes](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wildscapes), where you will find plant lists as well as contact information for urban biologists in your area. They hold classes that cover the basics of creating a welcoming environment for wildlife. ★

# Foul-Weather Gear

*A multi-layered approach to surviving Texas weather*

**In Texas, the weather is so variable** that the best solution for comfort outdoors in the winter is a waterproof, windproof outer shell combined with multiple layers inside. Proper layering is started with undergarments of light silk or wick-away synthetics. Then, depending on the conditions, add mid-layers of goose down or synthetic fleece for insulation, and top it off with loose-fitting jacket and pants.

Gore-Tex is still the standard in outerwear for windy, cold, wet weather protection. An improved version of this material is used in the new **Simms G3 Guide Jacket**. All the components of this lightweight shell are designed for extreme conditions. The highly breathable, 3-layer XCR fabric is combined with a self-sealing RiRi center front zipper, making it tops in quality construction. The cut is generous and unrestrictive for active sports, plus stretch cuffs keep water out under most conditions and large hand-warmer pockets are soft-lined for comfort. Combine this with the durable **Hodgman Storm Bib**, and you are completely weather-proofed from head to toe. This suspender-type over-suit is light nylon with zippers, velcro and snaps at the front and lower legs that allow easy on/off maneuvers over boots and layered clothing. This is an expensive outfit, but, if amortized over the years of expected service, this jacket and bib are an investment in durable protection. (\$399, G-3 Guide Jacket, Simms Fishing Products, (406) 585-3557, <www.simmsfishing.com>) (\$79.95, Hodgman Storm Bib, #4016, Hodgman, (800) 323-5965, <www.hodgman.com>).

A good choice in inexpensive foul weather gear is **Frogg Toggs**. These consist of a hooded jacket and either pants or bib overalls with built-in suspenders. Used as an uninsulated outer layer, they are made entirely of synthetic fabric that is ultra-light, windproof, waterproof and breathable. Sets are available in various colors and styles in both men's and women's sizes. They pack into a small pouch and can be easily stowed in a car, boat or backpack. Best of all they are serviceable for year-round protection. (\$99.95 **Pro Angler**

## THE GEAR GUY'S STAR RATING:

Simms G3 Guide Jacket with Hodgman Storm Bib	★★★★★
Frogg Toggs Pro Angler Camo Jacket and Bib	★★★★★
Kakadu Traders High Country Jacket	★★★★★
Browning Down Vest	★★★★★
★POOR ★★OK ★★★GOOD ★★★★GREAT ★★★★★SUPER	

**Camo Jacket and Bib**, #PA109, Frogg Toggs, (800) 349-1835, <www.froggtoggs.com>)

For traditionalists, the **High Country Jacket** is a "drover" design with a rain-cape, leather collar and patches at wear points. The waterproofing is a special microwax that makes the 12-ounce all-cotton fabric shed rain and block the wind. This style ages nicely, has some breathability and, in time, will require a reapplication of microwax. (\$155, High Country Jacket, color: Tan, #3J05, Kakadu Traders USA, (800) 852-5288, <www.kakaduaustralia.com>).

Mid-layer garments are designed to help retain body heat. For this purpose, the **Browning Down Vest** is hard to beat for soft, pure comfort. The insulation and high-loft of real goose down housed in quilted nylon makes it an excellent wind blocker. The vest allows freedom of arm movement for active sports and the chest is kept warm and well protected with or without an outer shell. (\$68, Goose Down Vest #3057544204, color: Olive, Browning, (800) 333-3504, and <www.browning.com>).

Synthetic stretch fleece like the Columbia Omni-Therm pullover shirt and long underpants provide another type of mid-layer insulation. They are less bulky than down, easily washed when soiled, and stretch four ways for comfort. (\$70, Omni-Therm Stretch Fleece, Zip-neck Pullover, #SM6382, \$55, Omni-Therm Stretch Fleece Bottom, #SM8002, Columbia Sportswear, (800) 547-8066, <www.columbia.com>).

It's always a good idea to carry a small rucksack with a few field essentials and stowed garments at the ready. Texas weather can be bitter cold in the morning, raining by noon, and warm sunshine the rest of the day. And don't forget the standard necessities for foul-weather protection — your favorite boots, hat and gloves. ★

Left: Simms G3 Guide Jacket with Hodgman Storm Bib; second from left: Frogg Toggs Pro Angler Camo Jacket and Bib; third from left: Kakadu Traders High Country Jacket; right: Browning Down Vest.



# 3 Days in the Field / By Carol Flake Chapman

**DESTINATION:** PORT ISABEL

**TRAVEL TIME FROM :**

AUSTIN – 6 hours / BROWNSVILLE – 0.75 hours / DALLAS – 8.75 hours / EL PASO – 13.5 hours  
HOUSTON – 6 hours / SAN ANTONIO – 4.75 hours / LUBBOCK – 11.25 hours

## Texas Tropics

For everything from sport fishing to first-class birdwatching, head to the southern tip of Texas.

**As my dad and I drive south** toward Port Isabel, with our fishing gear stashed in the trunk of my car, it feels like old times, when I was a kid and my dad and I were always on our way to some new adventure in the wild, whether a walk in the woods or fishing from a bank or a boat with bait my dad had rounded up. Neither of us, though, has ever been to Port Isabel, and I have tropical visions of palm trees, colorful birds, and plentiful fish. I haven't done any serious fishing since I was a kid, and I've been realizing lately how much I miss it. I'm also hoping to hone my beginning skills as a birder. My dad, a master naturalist who volunteers for Sea Center Texas, knows just about everything that flies, crawls,

slithers or grows in Texas, but he has brought along his birding binoculars and a portable library of reference books in case he spots something he hasn't seen before.

As we head toward the Gulf, the vast ranches of the southern inland prairie give way to the lush farmlands of the Rio Grande Valley. In our enthusiasm to enjoy the landscape, we nearly miss the turn for Los Ebanos, a privately owned preserve now open to the public. We swing off busy Highway 100 onto a quiet, shaded drive, and I can understand why so many birds stop here, too, on their seasonal journeys south or north. Named for the native Texas ebonies, the thorny blossoming evergreens that dot the grounds, Los Ebanos is a haven for native plants, birds and butterflies. Martha Russell, who inherited the place from her parents, has been working with her husband Taylor Blanton to return the 82 acres surrounding the lovely Casa Ebanos to their original semitropical state, the way most of this part of the world used to look. Taylor Blanton points out the difference between the fronds of the native Texas sabal and the Chinese fan palm that has largely displaced the native palms in the local landscape. I learn the difference too, between the lone migrating Monarch we spot fluttering around the butterfly garden and the local Queen butterfly, whose bright orange markings are often mistaken for the Monarch.

We resume the journey eastward toward the unmistakable white spire of the Port Isabel Lighthouse. Renovated four years ago, it gleams so brightly now it's like a beacon in daytime as well as at night. The afternoon is waning, and we're just in time to get tickets to climb the stairs of this antebellum landmark that has stood for more than 150 years through wars, hurricanes and modernization. Overlooking the Brazos Santiago Pass, which lies between South Bay and the huge Laguna Madre, we can see South Padre Island to our east, across the Queen Isabella Causeway.

After our long drive, we're eager to get to the Brown Pelican, the inn on South Padre that caters to birdwatchers. As though on cue, we're greeted by a little blue heron perching on the rail, standing so still I mistake it at first for part of the décor. But before we get too settled in among the comfortable antiques, soaking in the delightful sunset view of the Laguna Madre from the veranda, we have one more stop before calling it a day. Dusk, I'm learning, is a great time for birding, and so we head north for just a mile or so to the boardwalk adjacent to the South Padre Convention and Visitors Center, where bird-



The Port Isabel Lighthouse has stood sentry for more than 150 years, overlooking Brazos Santiago Pass between South Bay and Laguna Madre.

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Dolphin-watching on the Laguna Madre, left; sunflowers and a picket fence add to the charm of the Los Ebanos preserve, below.



TOP PHOTO © SCARLET COLLEY, FIN2FEATHER.COM; OTHER THREE PHOTOS © LARRY DITTO

ers can get a quick introduction to the local feathered life in the marshes and to migratory species just passing through.

We meet Scarlet Colley, of Colley's Fin to Feathers Tours, who is leading a group of students who are budding birders. The winds are too high, she observes, for the migrating warblers who often settle into a stand of trees and bushes planted for their benefit. But along the boardwalk, Scarlet claps her hands, and all sorts of things answer the call. First, there's Alli the alligator, who comes scooting around the corner, emerging from a small channel under the boardwalk, as though dinner were served. The marsh hens that have been placidly swimming nearby sound a squawking alarm and disappear. Heading back,

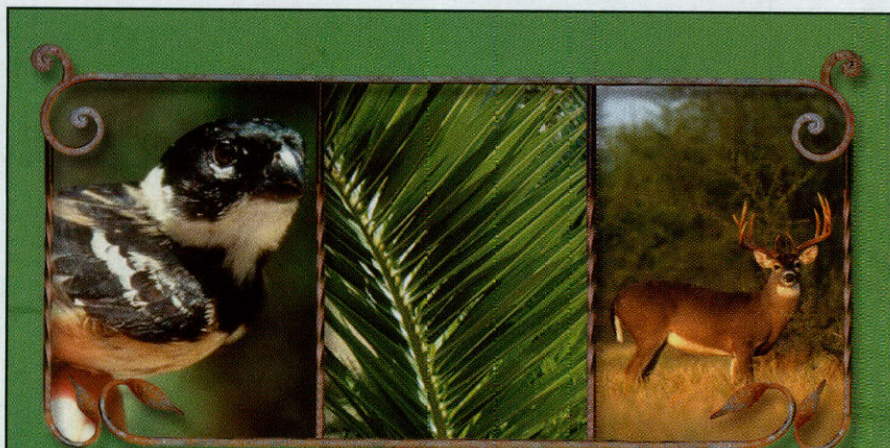
we hear a rustling and then spy a clapper rail scooting around the shallows. It's a first for both my dad and me.

The next morning, I continue my birding education at a vacant lot in a res-

idential neighborhood on South Padre that has been transformed into a small sanctuary by the Valley Land Fund. The bushes are rustling with tiny birds, which turn out to be an assortment of warblers and vireos, including a white-eyed vireo, a Philadelphina vireo, and a black-throated blue warbler who darts about so close to us I don't need binoculars to appreciate its jewel-like beauty.

We make a quick stop at the South Padre Island Dolphin Research & Sealife Nature Center, run by Scarlet Colley and her husband George, a former fisherman whose father once operated a ferry between South Padre and the mainland. Now the Colleys run the small research center and operate tours for birders and dolphin watchers. Before we head for our tour, Scarlet feeds a wounded cuckoo that she is rehabilitating. Meanwhile, I can't resist the touch tanks full of small sea life, particularly a baby stingray with surprisingly expressive eyes.

The weather looks perfect for our tour of the Laguna Madre, and we are joined on the pontooned Laguna Skimmer by Scarlet and George's dogs, Ceta and Angel, who perch on a bench at the back of the boat to scout for dolphins. It's not long before they bark excitedly, and dolphins surround us. For Scarlet, many of the bottle-nosed dolphins of the Laguna Madre are like an extended family, and she quickly identifies an



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Birders in far South Texas might get the chance to spot a pair of caracara, aka the Mexican eagle, left; the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge above, is home to the ocelot.

spend the morning before heading back home. Still, we can't pass up an opportunity to see a place where ocelots still roam. Cats don't like water, my dad reminds me, and so our odds of seeing an ocelot in the rain are pretty low. But almost as high on my list of wanna-sees are the Texas tortoise and the caracara, also known as the Mexican eagle. And as the drizzle gives way to dazzling sun, sure enough, there's a big caracara standing right in the road, ruffling its black and white feathers as we drive slowly on the refuge's Bayside Drive alongside the Laguna Madre. Already we've seen so many ospreys near the water we dub the road Osprey Way. And around the bend, to round off a perfect trip, is a small female Texas Tortoise heading bayward across the road. A few hundred yards later, crossing the road in the opposite direction, is a large male, with the elongated gular scute it uses to overturn competing males. Alas, the two may never meet. But we're lucky they've crossed our path, and I feel as though I'm leaving Port Isabel and the Laguna Madre with a treasure trunk of memories to take back home. ✧

adult female as Nipper, who appears to be shepherding two young dolphins, Nipette almost grown, and little Nibbles, the first baby dolphin I've seen swimming in the wild. They seem quite comfortable with our presence. Even the roseate spoonbills we spot along the edge of South Bay seem to be part of the Colleys' extended family.

To end the day, we head for the jetties located in the public park at the bottom of the island. The waves are crashing as I grab a trawed mullet from the bait bucket and secure it on the hook, following my dad's instructions. My first cast goes out high, then fizzles, like a kid's first softball throw. But a couple of more tries, and there's something really fighting on the end of the line. I pull up a glimmering silver fish with a gold stripe and aggressive underslung jaw. It's a three-pound brook, says my dad, wonderingly. I've pulled in a prize sporting fish, and perhaps I can be excused for thinking this is the handsomest fish I've ever seen. For the brief second or two before I let it glide back into the surf, I feel as though I've found South Padre's long-lost buried treasure. "Look," my dad says, and I glance up at the last rays of the sun pouring through a round opening in the clouds, like the visions of heaven we've seen on painted domes in Italy.

The next morning, we learn that a storm is heading our way, and the clouds loom menacingly over the Laguna Madre, extending east toward the Laguna Atascosa, where we're hoping to

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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<[www.losebanospreserve.com](http://www.losebanospreserve.com)>

BROWN PELICAN INN: (956)761-2722;

<[www.BrownPelican.com](http://www.BrownPelican.com)>

COLLEY'S FIN TO FEATHER TOURS: (956)761-

7178; <[www.fin2feather.com](http://www.fin2feather.com)>

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# THE ULTIMATE BOAT-BUYER'S

# GUIDE

To avoid a whopping case of buyer's remorse, there's no better place to turn for advice than the ranks of fishing pros.

BY LARRY BOZKA

There are, unfortunately, a lot of \$35,000 mistakes floating about on Texas bays and lakes.

No one can afford that kind of error. Yet it happens all too often, usually to awestruck consumers who allow their impulses to outweigh their sense of judgment.

The first step an angler might take when seriously considering a boat purchase is to chill out, let the information rest for a day or two and then honestly assess the advantages and drawbacks of the fishing rig at hand.

While he's at it, he might also do well to seek sound advice from the people who arguably have more at stake than anyone else when they finally drop the cash on a brand-new rig.

He might, for the safest of assurances, consult his local fishing guide.

Professional guides fish for a living because they love to fish. If any of them have become fabulously wealthy while running a guide service, or even modestly so, they're being mighty tight-lipped about it.

Guiding is not a profession for those averse to risk. There are far too many variables — everything from fickle seasonal weather to yo-yoing fuel prices to constantly changing regulations — to assure even the best of anglers that fishing for hire is a safe and secure profession. Almost everything a guide encounters during a day on the water is prone to change, be it the clarity of the water, the level of the tide, the velocity of the wind or even the type and experience of the fisherman he's hosting.

Perhaps the only thing a professional fisherman can truly

control is the choice of fishing boat. No wonder, then, those professional guides dedicate a tremendous amount of research and soul-searching to the critical process of selecting a boat.

No cowboy on the range ever gave more thought to choosing his horse. Because, in the end, it all comes down to leaving a protected place, striking out in the open and making it back — be it to the corral or the boat dock — safe and sound.

A guide's boat matches the waters at hand, the fish that reside in those waters, the people who pay for the trips, and as much as anything, the professional who provides them.

When your livelihood depends on it, you tend to make wise choices.

It's tough enough attempting to make a living as a fishing guide. From the wrong boat, it's virtually impossible.

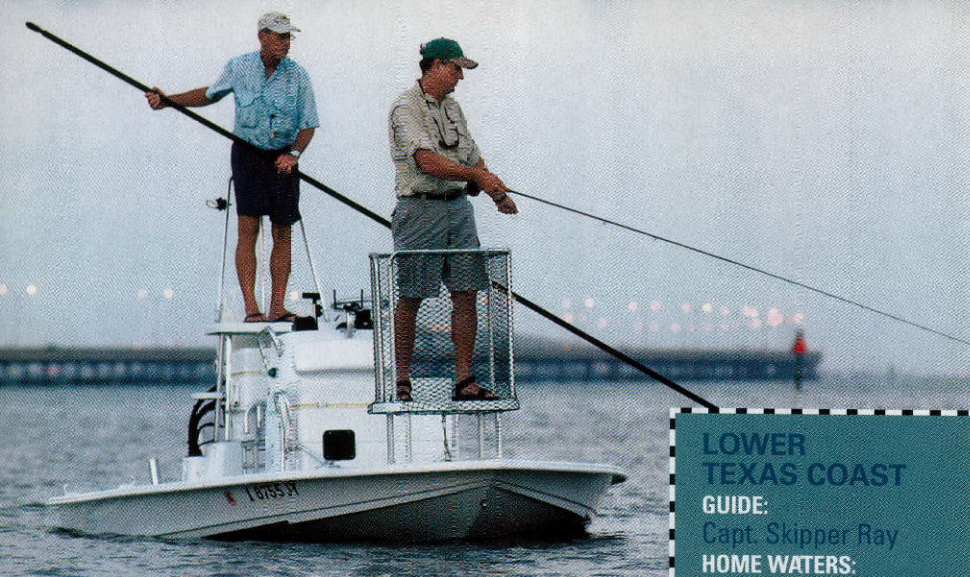
So, in the pages that follow, we've asked a cross-section of Texas fishing

guides to profile their rigs and the various reasons they chose them. It's important to remember, however, that literally hundreds of fishing guides run just as many fishing boats in Texas waters. For every guide we cover here, there are a great many others who have chosen just as well.

There is, unfortunately, no fast and simple way to determine the "best" boat for a given buyer. Still, considering that the average fishing guide puts more running time on a boat in a year than the typical fisherman does in a decade, it's not a bad idea to hear what these pros and others have to say about the most important decision most anglers will ever make.

IN A DAY AND AGE WHEN A FULLY RIGGED FISHING BOAT CAN EASILY COST AS MUCH AS A LUXURY SPORTS CAR, IT'S NO WONDER THAT WOULD-BE BOAT BUYERS TEND TO BE ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR PURCHASING DECISIONS.





**LOWER TEXAS COAST**  
**GUIDE:** Capt. Skipper Ray  
**HOME WATERS:** Lower Laguna Madre  
**BOAT:** 17-foot-8-inch New Water Boat Works Curlew

**ON THE LOWER LAGUNA MADRE** an angler typically encounters two types of water: shallow, and very shallow. The hull of Capt. Skipper Ray's Curlew weighs a mere 695 pounds and drafts a scant 5 inches of water.

"It runs as shallow as the fish," says the South Padre Island-based pro, "and it's light enough to 'pole' with minimal effort. Plus," he adds, "I usually cover a great deal of water in a single day of fishing."

With that in mind he runs a 90-horsepower Evinrude E-Tek outboard that, at 4,200 rpm and 29 mph, grants him a generous five miles per gallon.

"When you run long distances, you also have to consider the ride," he says. "My Curlew has a semi-vee bottom, and it really helps counter the chop."

Above-board, from stern to bow, this boat is a flat and continuous deck. "The under-deck rod storage makes for a clear fishing platform," Ray explains, "and it allows you to not only keep your gear stowed but also walk a full circle around the console while fighting a fish, without missing a step."

"Poling" is a technique born on the Florida flats, endemic to low-profile, lightweight hulls that minimize wind drift as much as possible. It's also an essential drill for serious flats fishers. The elevated poling platform on the stern of Ray's Curlew grants the guide both elevation and leverage when the time comes to break out the push pole.

On deep-water venues and deep-draft hulls, a poling platform amounts to little more than show biz. On shallow lagoons, however, it often means the difference between fish and frustration.

**BASS FISHING**

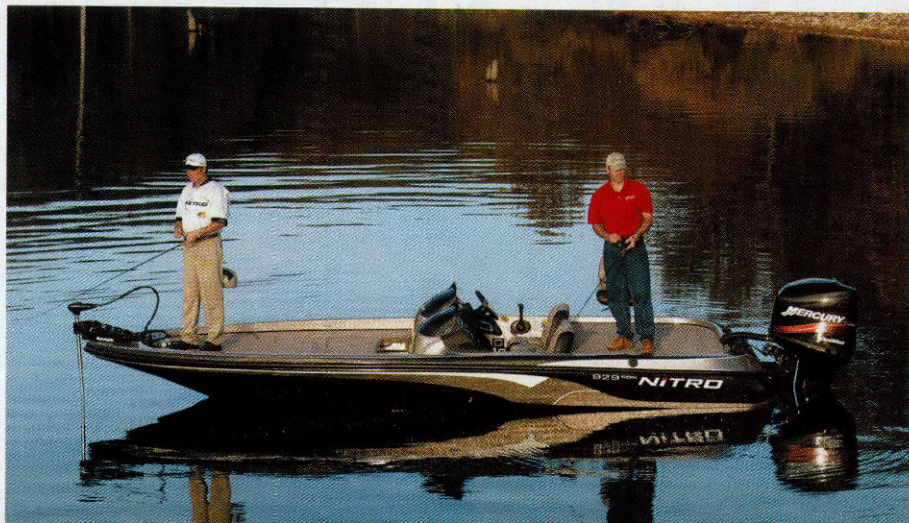
**GUIDE:** Joe Lancaster  
**HOME WATERS:** Coletto Creek Reservoir  
**BOAT:** 21-foot Tracker Marine Nitro 929 CDX

**AT 3,100 ACRES,** Coletto Creek Reservoir near Victoria is by no means a "big" lake when compared to the average Texas impoundment. It is, nonetheless, home to veteran bass guide Joe Lancaster where he's not chasing the tournament trail on the sprawling waters of much larger reservoirs like Sam Rayburn, Toledo Bend and Amistad.

"Either way," Lancaster says, "I want the size, safety and comfort of a large fishing boat. So I run a Nitro 929 CDX bass boat with a Mercury Verado 225-horsepower

outboard. At just under 21 feet and with a 96-inch beam," he adds, "it's the biggest model built by Tracker Marine."

Lancaster was drawn to the Nitro's oversized casting deck, abundant storage space and performance in general. "I spend long, long hours in that boat," he



explains, "so a smooth, dry ride is critical. Even on a small body of water like Coletto Creek, whether you're fishing a tournament or guiding a party of fishermen, you're still out on the water all day long."

"Little things like a power pedestal seat, a trolling motor pedal recess, illuminated and organized rod lockers and anti-slosh live wells with pump-out features really make a difference when you're working inside a boat from sunrise to sunset.

"It's a big rig," he acknowledges, "and it takes a powerful truck to pull it. But for my purposes, every bit of size, storage, power and speed plays a significant role — not just in my tournament success, but in my day-to-day existence as a guide and avid bass fisherman."



**CRAPPIE FISHING**  
**GUIDE:** Jim Morris,  
**HOME WATERS:** Cypress Creek Marina  
**BOAT:** 24-foot Starcraft Pontoon Boat

**PONTOON BOATS** will never win acclaim for their snazzy appearance or blazing speed. Then again, neither really counts when it's time for veteran Toledo Bend Reservoir fishing guide Jim Morris to put his parties on limits of crappie.

Morris owns and operates Cypress Creek Marina near Mill Creek. He reg-

cont'd on pg. 27 >

**FROM SAN LUIS PASS** all the way up to the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, the Galveston Bay Complex comprises a huge and potentially volatile fishing frontier. Capt. James "Frenchie" French has navigated the bay in the best and worst of conditions, but it's the latter that drove him to choose his 22-foot Skeeter bay rig.

"I never underestimate this bay system," French says. "That's one reason I chose the 22-foot hull. Aside from that, I can't stand a cluttered deck. I commonly carry three fishermen, all their tackle and all their gear," he says, "so the amount of storage racks right up there with the rice."

Over 50 years ago, Kilgore-based Skeeter pioneered the design of freshwater bass boats. The company's saltwater hulls are a distinct reflection of that technology. The payoff is more than apparent in the live well design.

"My live well has automatic settings with time relays that operate the wells for five minutes on and five minutes off," French explains. "I can buy live bait one day and keep it alive for the next, and that's critical to my guide business."

As for motors, French rigged the sleek vee-hull with a 225-horsepower Yamaha HPDI (high pressure direct injection) V-Max. "It's a lot of engine," he admits, "but with the loads I tend to carry I really need it. Plus," he says, "it's surprisingly fuel efficient. With direct injection I get a 40 percent savings in fuel and oil over what I got from my previous carbureted engine of the same horsepower."

### MIDDLE TEXAS COAST

**GUIDE:** Capt. James "Frenchie" French

**HOME WATERS:** Trinity Bay, East Galveston Bay, West Galveston Bay

**BOAT:** 22-foot Skeeter ZX22Bay



**IN TERMS OF DIVERSITY**, no place in (and, in this case, almost nowhere outside of) Texas compares with the uppermost reaches of the coastline on the Louisiana border. Capt. Bill Watkins faced a daunting task when selecting an all-around rig for the radically different environs of the Sabine Lake area.

He ultimately chose a 21-foot Maverick Master Angler with a 200-horsepower HPDI Yamaha outboard.

"It's the closest I could find to a boat that will do it all," Watkins says. "In the morning I might be in a foot-and-a-half of water in the Bessie Heights Marsh, fly-casting to tailing redfish. From there I'll go out onto Sabine Lake, where I might have to run on rough and open water. And from there," he continues, "I sometimes make the run to the Sabine Jetties, or even farther out to the 'short rigs.' I'm talking barely getting under a low-water bridge in the morning and then navigating Gulf of Mexico swells that afternoon. It's an unbelievable variety of options, and one that really challenges a boat."

Rough water poses a constant threat on the saltwater "lake" and, of course, the nearshore Gulf of Mexico. For greater on-plane control, especially with varying loads, and to maximize fuel efficiency for such long trips, Watkins relies heavily on both trim tabs and a hydraulic jack plate.

His Maverick sports a "walk-around" deck design that, although recessed inside, allows anglers to maneuver fore and aft around the console without stepping down. That maneuverability is essential, especially when battling large game fish in crowded quarters.

Twenty miles offshore, with a 50-pound cobia coming to

## UPPER TEXAS COAST

### GUIDE:

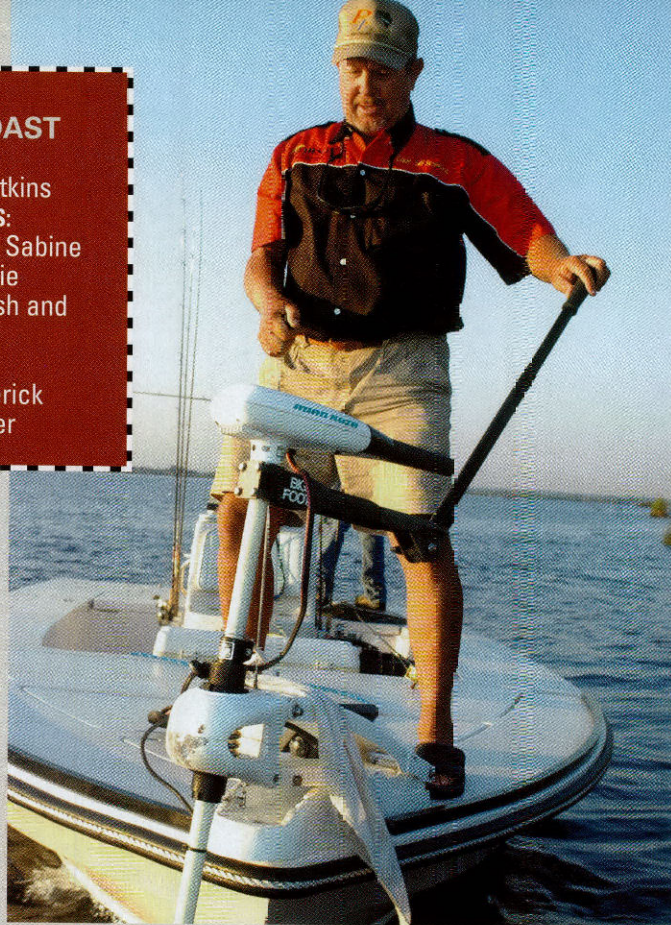
Capt. Bill Watkins

### HOME WATERS:

Sabine Lake, Sabine Jetties, Bessie Heights Marsh and Keith Lake

### BOAT:

21-foot Maverick Master Angler



gaff, that's an understatement at best. It's by no means a purebred "offshore" hull, but the mere fact that Watkins and parties regularly venture out into the Gulf speaks volumes for the durability and versatility of modern fishing hulls like his 21-foot Maverick.

## ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

Whether on a lagoon or lake, boating accessories are essential to fishing success. Electronics rank foremost, specifically depth finders and trolling motors.

Interestingly, the two are often combined.

"It's another case of bass fishing technology meeting the coast," says Capt. Bill Watkins. "I have a 36-volt trolling motor, and I'd buy a 48-volt unit if one existed. I absolutely have to be able to hold and position my boat in the current."

Watkins also relies on a bow-mounted Lowrance X-71 LCR fish finder. "It's there for a specific purpose," he explains. "The transducer is rigged on the cone of the trolling motor, and it gives me an exact reading on the water directly below the bow. I can follow breaklines, and any fish-attracting structure down there."

Combination depth finder/GPS units have grown immensely popular in recent years. Fishermen can pinpoint productive spots with the push of a button and return, precisely, to those same spots time and again.

Modern consoles sport a collection of useful gauges that range far beyond the customary fuel and speed indicators. Some manufacturers offer fuel efficiency gauges that, in amazingly precise fashion, calculate

fuel usage and travel range. Surface water temperature gauges, once the exclusive domain of largemouth bass specialists are now also common on bay fishing rigs.

Accessories abound for modern fishing craft. For every style of angling there is a host of helpful add-ons that greatly enhance the sport. A boat show tour will reveal it all, from hydraulic jack plates that lift and lower outboard engines to glued-on keel protectors that shield a boat's hull from the ravages of concrete boat ramps and shallow-water obstructions.

Despite ready access to cell phones, safety-conscious fishermen own VHF radios for on-the-water communications and weather reports. Cell phone zones vary, and batteries may lose power, but a waterproof VHF is a constant and reliable open-water companion.

Every fishing scenario presents its own unique set of challenges. Scan the pages of

marine catalogs, or stroll the aisles of the aforementioned shows, and you'll discover an engineered solution to virtually every potential problem.

Like the boats they are designed to augment, there are enough accessory choices on the market to intimidate even the most knowledgeable of boat buyers. It's yet another reason why those looking for guidance in making educated buys might first turn to a guide for educated advice.



ularly fishes the waters from the dam north to Haxser Bay, near Indian Mounds and Six-Mile Bay. And when the lake's resident 'white perch' congregate en masse during the winter, near the legendary channel drop-offs of the "Chicken Coop" north of Pencleton, he further extends his reach by putting the large but lightweight boat on a trailer

boat is rigged with a 50-horsepower Mercury outboard, and that's all the power I need. I burn no more than 10 gallons of gas in a full-day trip, so it's very cost-efficient.

"No," he admits, "it's not nearly as fast as a bass boat. But I've never seen a fish that will hit a bait at 40 mph."



and towing it to the action.

"Crappie fishing is a family sport," Morris says. "People come from all over the country to enjoy it, and they really like the fact I can accommodate up to eight people on a single trip. The fellowship is awesome."

So, he adds, are the fishing applications of his boat.

"Pontoon boats are as practical as it gets for this kind of fishing," Morris explains. "Everyone has his own seat, and it's comfortable. And," he adds, "you have room to move around. The high sides protect the kids, and there's plenty of storage space."

"I looked at most every pontoon boat around, and really liked the aluminum framing of the Starcraft," he notes. "It sits high in the water, and even with an extra-heavy load, remains extremely stable ... another aspect families really appreciate. It also handles rough water surprisingly well."

"This is a huge lake," Morris cautions, "and it can get extremely rough. But my

**STRIPED BASS FISHING**  
GUIDE: Ken Milam  
HOME WATERS: Lake Buchanan  
BOAT: 21-foot Kenner 230V

**STRIPED BASS ARE BIG**, strong fish that roam for miles at a time while hunting down their quarry. It only makes sense that longtime Hill Country striped bass specialists like guide Ken Milam are prone to use boats that fit the same basic description.

Milam is a specialist who has made an art form out of live-baiting the powerful saltwater transplants. In order to handle up to five fishermen and twice as many baited rods on the expansive and unpredictable waters of scenic Lake Buchanan, Milam chose a spacious, 23-foot Kenner 230V. For his unique purposes, the sizable saltwater-style vee-hull is literally made-to-order.

"Like every other guide, I need all the room I can get," Milam says. "You

have options when ordering, so I had Tracker Marine change out the standard 230V console and put in the smaller center console from their 18V. I'm not worried about the size of the console," he explains. "It's all about the room."

"I don't want people standing on a high deck in rough water," Milam adds, "so I also had the front deck dropped about a foot lower. Believe me; we get plenty of rough water."

Milam's boat is powered by a 250-horsepower EFI Mercury outboard. "It gets me off the water fast if I get into trouble with the weather; that's the bottom line. Plus," he says, "as much weight as I tend to carry, I need the extra power."

At some 8-1/2 pounds per gallon, much of that weight comes from the water in Milam's oxygenated 50-gallon leaning-post-style live well system. "I fish with live bait year-round," he says, "so it's imperative that I keep my bait in excellent condition. I stopped trolling with downriggers almost 20 years ago, when I found out how much easier it is to feed 'em than fool 'em."

### Most Often, Bigger Really Is Better

If there is a common contention here, it's that all of the aforementioned pros bought the largest boats possible. It's generally false economy to buy less boat than you want, even if it means waiting a while to get it.

Almost invariably you'll end up selling the smaller rig and upgrading to the larger hull you initially wanted. Consider the substantial depreciation of a new boat as soon as it leaves the dealership, and the overall cost difference between the two rigs may not turn out to be as insurmountable as it seems.

Certainly it's no fun to wait. Buyers who are in a hurry typically go straight to the option of a longer financing period. Be forewarned: A few minutes with a pocket calculator can quickly dispel the notion of "economy" on a long-term note.

Suffice it to say that it's nigh impossible to find a boater who regrets having avoided an impulse buy. So, if cash is burning a hole in the proverbial pocket, use it instead to book a day on the water with a reputable guide who fishes where you do, the way you do — and, with the boat-motor combination you think you want.

For the cost of an average boat payment, you'll quite possibly avoid a mistake that could cost you a great deal more for many years to come. ★

# BEST PARKS

BY KEN KURZAWSKI AND  
DYANNE FRY CORTEZ

Whether you're planning to sail, ski or fish,  
we've got the state park that's right for you.

# FOR BOATERS

WHEN TEXAS TRAVELERS PLAN A DAY AT THE PARK, water is often part of the picture. More than 40 state parks have boat ramps or launch areas that provide access to lazy bays, rushing rivers, sparkling blue lakes, quiet coves, salt marshes and bays. Many have marinas that sell fuel and supplies. Some even rent boats to guests who can't bring their own. If you're itching to be afloat, here's a sampling of what state parks have to offer.

## SKIMMING THE SURFACE LAKE WHITNEY STATE PARK

Skiers like long stretches of open water and not much wind chop. If it's deep water, untroubled by subsurface humps or debris that might interfere with an expensive propeller, even better. Lake Whitney fits the bill.

Built for flood control in 1951, this lake on the Brazos River has a long, winding shoreline that varies from gently sloping, wooded banks to rock points to tall limestone bluffs. On a windy day when the lake gets choppy, a skier can always find smooth water on the lee side of a bluff.

The state park is on a point of the east shore, just where the lake starts to widen behind the dam. Manager Jeffrey Towers sees plenty of ski boats at the double-lane ramp, which is flanked by an ADA-accessible courtesy dock. There's no boat fees in the park, but marinas elsewhere on the lake sell gas.

This park is also popular with swimmers, scuba divers, jet skiers and anglers in search of striped bass. It's an easy drive from Waco or Fort Worth, but according to one long-time visitor, Lake Whitney is usually less crowded than waters that are closer to the cities. With 23,000 acres of water to play in, people of differing interests can share the lake in peace.



## SETTING SAIL

### EISENHOWER STATE PARK

It's not hard to see why sailboaters love Lake Texoma. Fans of the lake agree: It's big, it's deep, and the wind nearly always blows.

The Texoma Sailing Club has more than 100 member families, mostly from the local area and Dallas-Fort Worth. The LakeFest Regatta, an annual charity event sponsored by the Denison Chamber of Commerce, attracts boats and sailors from all over the United States. Chamber president Anna McKinney says some of those people have sailed for America's Cup. She adds, however, that this 89,000-acre lake isn't just for experts. "It's such a large lake, with so many coves, that it's always good for all types of boating and sailing. You can go from the Texas side to the Oklahoma side and find some place that's just right."

Eisenhower State Park is situated at the lower end of the lake, less than a mile above Denison Dam and downstream of the point where Oklahoma's Washita River meets the Red River coming in from the west. "No matter which way the wind blows, there's some place you can go," says Eisenhower Complex manager Paul Kisel. The double-lane ramp runs deep into a sheltered cove. "When the lake goes low, we don't ever run out of ramp," Kisel says, but a sailboat may need a kicker motor to push it into the main lake.

Eisenhower Yacht Club, a full-service marina located in the park, has a floating store that sells picnic supplies, fishing bait and tackle, souvenirs and gas. The marina also rents boat slips, mostly to power boats, but there are two sailboat slips available for people who are camping in the park and don't want to pull the boat out of the water. Those spots rent for \$10 per night.



PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT



### BEST OF THE WEST LAKE COLORADO CITY STATE PARK

For boaters who live in the arid regions of the state, Lake Colorado City can be an oasis. Like most West Texas impoundments, this 1,600-acre power-plant cooling lake is subject to changing water levels, but the four-lane boat ramp at the north end of Lake Colorado City State Park has never gone high and dry. The park is at the lower, wider end of the lake, six miles south of Interstate 20. Navigation is fine when the lake is full. When the level drops, there's still room to ski, provided drivers avoid the shallow areas. Boat fuel is not available in the park, but can be purchased upstream at Cooper's Cove or Lakeview Camp.

surface and flower in spring and summer.

The river channel averages 20 feet in depth, but most of the lake is five feet deep or less. Canoes can navigate the shallows, but bass boats tend to stick to the "boat roads," indicated by numbered markers on the lake and on a map sold at the park's canoe rental concession. "The Texas side has about five main channels and 23 auxiliary channels that take you from one main channel to another. You can travel for days on this lake and not see the same place twice," says concessionaire Dave Lomax. For first-time visitors, Dickinson adds that a Global Positioning System or GPS isn't a bad idea.

This heavily vegetated lake is prime fish habitat. TPWD introduced Florida-strain largemouth bass in the early 1980s. Caddo Lake has contributed five entries to the Budweiser ShareLunker Program, which accepts largemouth bass weighing 13 pounds or more. The lake record is 16.01 pounds. Nobody has beaten that since 1992, "but we get plenty of fish 8 pounds and over that are caught every year," says district biologist Mike Ryan. A 14-to-18-inch slot limit established in 1993 is still in effect, but Ryan and



### LAREDO LUNKERS LAKE CASA BLANCA INTERNATIONAL STATE PARK

Lake Casa Blanca, just east of Laredo, proved itself a serious bass lake last winter when 19-year-old Richard Mims caught two ShareLunker entries in one weekend. The first catch on Jan. 29 shattered the previous lake record for largemouth bass. Two days later, Mims broke his own record with a 14.64-pound lunker. The state park provides the only public access to this 1,650-acre lake. Fishing is good year round, with a small, mid-lake island providing extra shoreline habitat. To ensure good fishing into the future, this lake has a special 18-inch minimum length for largemouth bass.

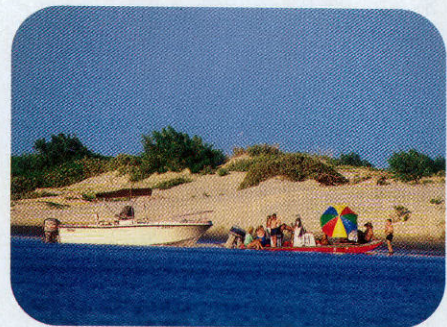


### TROLLING FOR TROPHIES CADDO LAKE STATE PARK

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Web site describes Caddo Lake as "a sprawling maze of bayous and sloughs covering 26,810 acres of cypress swamp." The state park is at the far west end on the main channel of Big Cypress Bayou. Moving on through the lake, the bayou retains the feel of a river lined with bald cypress trees, but there are shallow backwaters where "the trees go all the way across the water," says park manager Todd Dickinson. Spatterdock, waterlily and American lotus spread their leaves on the

Dickinson say most bass anglers practice catch-and-release. The Texas Department of Health recommends limited consumption of bass in Caddo and several other East Texas lakes due to mercury contamination. (The health advisory does not apply to crappie, catfish and sunfish, which are also abundant in Caddo Lake.)

The park has two boat ramps, one at standard pitch and one slightly steeper, with a courtesy dock in between. Low water levels are seldom a problem at the boat launch, but heavy rains may put the approach and parking areas under water.



### FISHING THE BAY GOOSE ISLAND STATE PARK

Tiny Goose Island, just over a mile long, lies in Aransas County at the confluence of St. Charles, Copano and Aransas bays. Park Road 13 connects two sections of the park, one on the island itself, the other on Lamar Peninsula. The two-lane boat ramp is at the mainland end of the bridge, providing easy access to all three bays.

Shallow-draft flats boats are the ticket here; the channel isn't deep enough to launch a boat with a keel. Guide services from Rockport make frequent use of the ramp. The area is also popular with fly anglers who navigate the bays in canoes and sea kayaks. People fish year round for spotted sea trout, drum and flounder. Red and black drum are especially good during the spring and fall migrations. Occasionally, a small shark will appear at the end of a line.

For boaters who don't know the area, good bay maps are essential for navigating

around the shoals and oyster reefs. Maps are available at the park store and at area marinas and tackle shops.

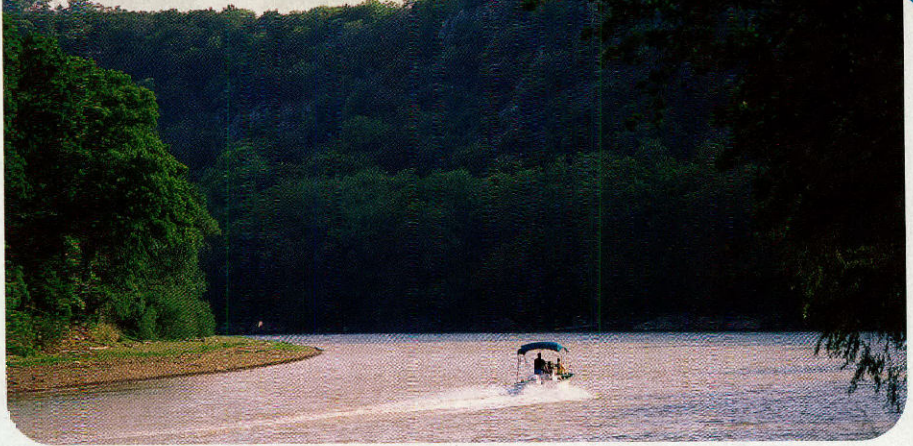
Goose Island is the oldest state park on the Gulf Coast, open since the 1930s. The original headquarters building, now a recreation hall, was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. In addition to the boat ramp, the park has a 1,620-foot fishing pier at the east end of the island. "It's one of the few places in Texas where you can walk out from a pier and collect oysters during oyster season," says office manager Jan Cartwright.



### A VIEW FROM THE WATER POSSUM KINGDOM STATE PARK

In Palo Pinto County, the Brazos River has cut a winding canyon through beds of shale and limestone that were laid 290 million years ago. The Brazos River Authority flooded part of that canyon in 1941 to create Possum Kingdom Lake.

The state park is located west of the main river channel on the Cedar Creek tributary in a landscape marked by rugged hills. Post oaks and blackjack oaks cling to the slopes while live oaks and prairie grasses grow on the plateaus. Heading downstream toward the dam, the banks rise to



form spectacular cliffs. "There's an area called Hell's Gate. The lake goes through maybe a 100-yard opening, and you're locking straight up on both sides," says park manager Mark Fambro. With the lake at conservation pool level, it's 110 feet to the top of the highest cliff. Underwater sightseeing is good, too. The water is "exceptionally clear," Fambro says. "A lot of people scuba dive in the lake."

The two-lane boat ramp is well protected from the wind and has an ADA-approved courtesy dock. A privately operated marina in the park sells boat gas and other supplies. The marina also rents motorboats, pontoon boats, canoes and kayaks.

It's 14 river miles from the park to the dam. The lake extends another 40 to 50 miles upstream, so there's plenty of exploring to be done. With the many loops and bends, keeping to the main channel can be tricky. Good navigational maps can be purchased at the park store and the marina. The Brazos River Authority (940) 779-2321 offers a free but less detailed map of the lake.

### HIDDEN GEM COLORADO BEND STATE PARK

This park on the Colorado River isn't easy to get to, but those who negotiate the unpaved road to the park headquarters will find a peaceful stretch of river between high rock walls. The single-lane boat ramp is at the south end of the riverside campground. Nine miles downstream from the park, the canyon opens into the remote upper end of Lake Buchanan. Bald eagles nest in this area from November through March and may be spotted soaring overhead.

When the lake is near conservation pool level, boaters can navigate all the way to the spot where Fall Creek plunges over a cliff to the lake's surface. Along the way there's a breathtaking view of Post Oak Falls, descending over 100 feet in a series of cascades. Its travertine formations offer a daylight glimpse of the forces that are still at work in the caves of Colorado Bend. There's no gas in the park or anywhere in the immediate area: fuel up before leaving San Saba, Lampasas or Cherckee. ★

### GETTING YOUR BOAT IN THE WATER

Because Texas weather is unpredictable, water levels and ease of boating access can change quickly. Also, some parks will be closed for public hunts on certain weekdays in December and January.

For more information on boating and water-related activities in state parks, visit <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park)> or pick up a copy of the Texas State Park Guide.

**EISENHOWER STATE PARK**, Denison, (903) 465-1956; Eisenhower Yacht Club (903) 463-3999

LakeFest Regatta, April 15-17, 2005, Denison Chamber of Commerce, (903) 465-1551

From U.S. Highway 75 north of Dallas; take Exit 72 to State Highway

91 North to Denison Dam, and on to FM 1310 West; travel 1.8 miles to Park Road 20 entrance.

**LAKE WHITNEY STATE PARK**, Whitney, (254) 694-3793

3 miles west of Whitney on FM 1244. From Interstate 35, take the Hillsboro exit. In Hillsboro take State Highway 22 west to Whitney, then follow the signs to state park.

**LAKE COLORADO CITY STATE PARK**, Colorado City, (325) 728-3931

11 miles southwest of Colorado City off Interstate 20 on FM 2836.

**CADDO LAKE STATE PARK**, Karnack, (903) 679-3351

From Marshall, take State Highway 43 north, go 1 mile east Karnack to FM 2198. Turn east and go 1/2 mile to Park Road 2.

**LAKE CASA BLANCA INTERNATIONAL STATE PARK**, Laredo, (956) 725-3E26; From U.S. Highway 59 east of Laredo, take Bob Bullock Blvd. (Loop 20) and turn on State Senator Judith Zaffirini Road.

**GOOSE ISLAND STATE PARK**, Rockport, (361) 729-2858; Take State Highway 35 to Park Road 13, then 2 miles east to park entrance.

**POSSUM KINGDOM STATE PARK**, Caddo, (940) 549-1E03; Marina (940) 549-5612 West of Mineral Wells in Palo Pinto County. Take US Highway 180 to Caddo, go 17 miles north on Park Road 33.

**COLORADO BEND STATE PARK**, Bend, (325) 628-3240 West of Lampasas southeast of

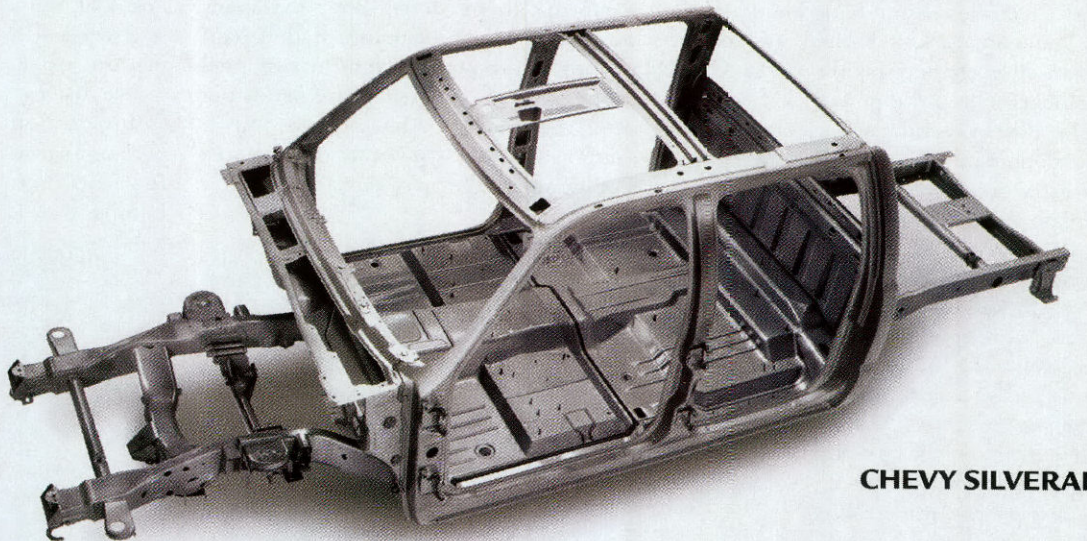
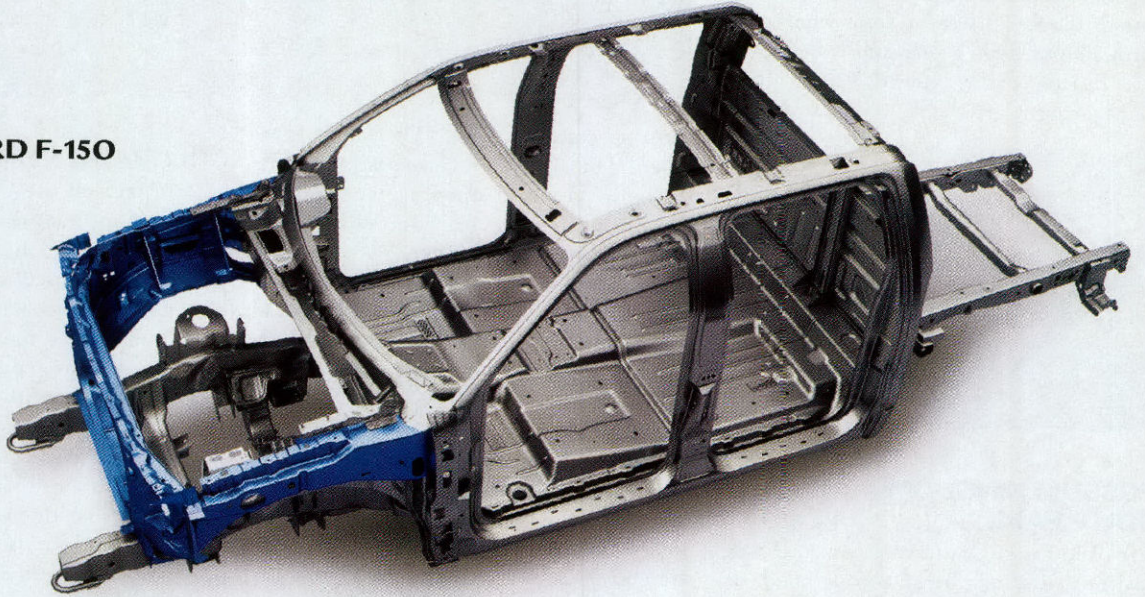
San Saba. From the intersection of US highways 281 and 183 in Lampasas, take FM 580 west 24 miles to Bend. From San Saba, take US 190 about 4 miles to FM 580 and follow the signs 13 miles to Bend. Follow signs 4 miles to park entrance. The headquarters, main camping area and boat ramp are 6 miles past the entrance on the dirt road (unmarked County Road 442).

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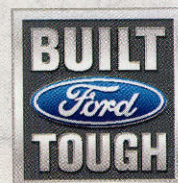
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**2005 F-150**



# TEXAS

A large flock of birds, likely shorebirds, is captured in flight against a clear blue sky. The birds are scattered across the upper half of the frame, creating a sense of movement and activity. Below the sky, a landscape of golden-brown grasses and a blue body of water, possibly a bayou or marsh, is visible. The foreground shows more of the golden grasses, slightly out of focus, framing the water. The overall scene is a vibrant depiction of a natural wetland environment.

How habitat destruction can sometimes lead to overpopulation.

*By Michael Furtman*

# SNOWS

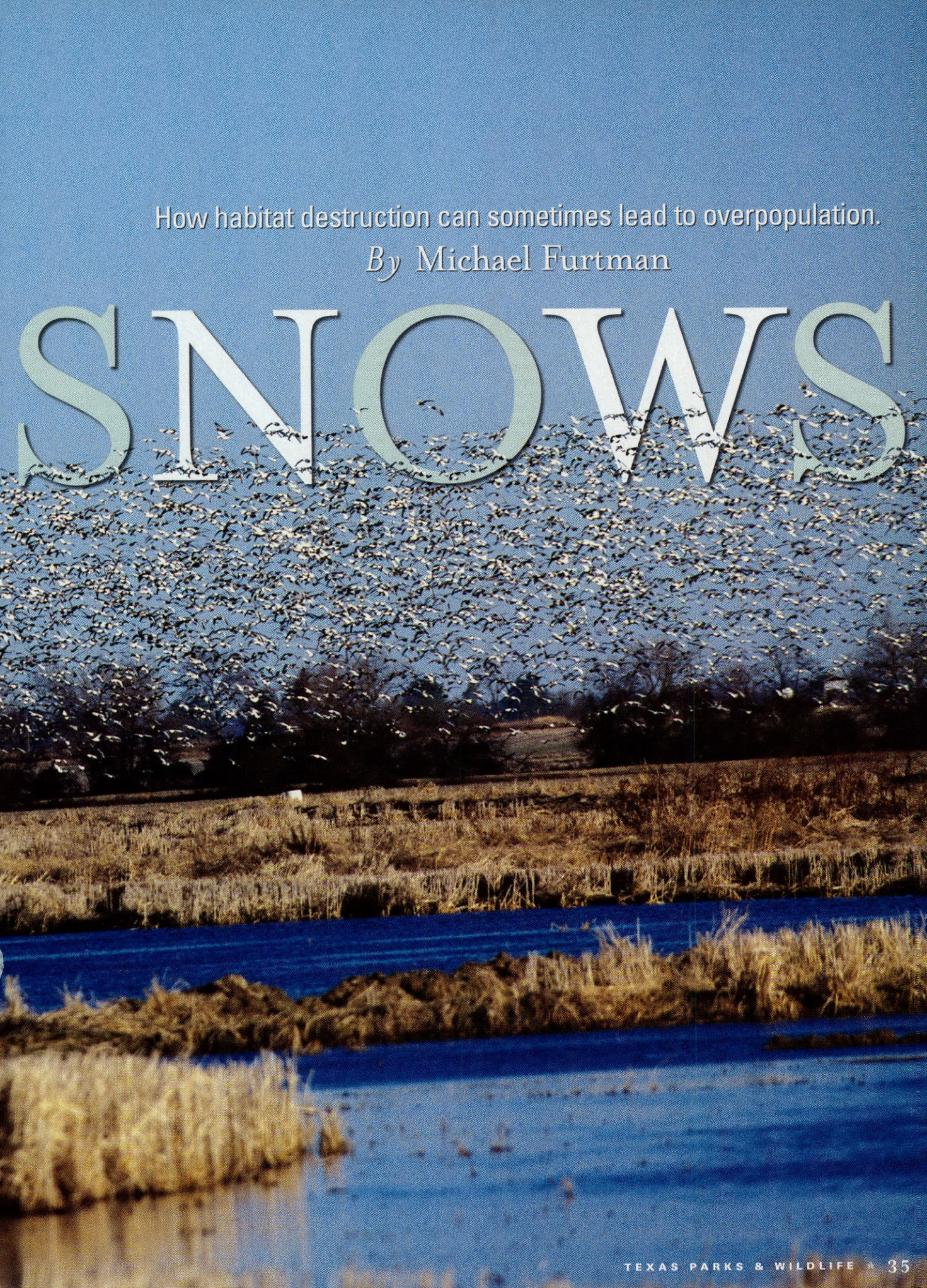
A large flock of birds, likely shorebirds, is captured in flight across a vast, open landscape. The birds are scattered throughout the upper two-thirds of the image, appearing as a dense, textured layer of white and grey against a clear, bright blue sky. Below the birds, the terrain consists of rolling hills and a wide, shallow body of water. The water is a deep, vibrant blue, reflecting the sky. The banks of the water are lined with tall, golden-brown reeds and grasses, which appear to be in a dormant or late autumn state. The overall scene conveys a sense of natural abundance and movement.

PHOTO © DALE SPARTUS. OPPOSITE: ABOVE LEFT AND ABOVE RIGHT PHOTOS © DAVIDSAMS.COM; LOWER LEFT PHOTO © GARYKRAMER.NET; LOWER RIGHT PHOTO © DALE SPARTUS



THERE ONCE WAS A GOOSE THAT SEEMED TO IGNORE THE WAYS OF MAN. While the various subspecies of Canada geese adapted quickly to our taming of the land, and turned to feeding on waste grains in farm fields, light geese — Lesser Snow and Ross's geese — continued their ancient ways of feeding in coastal marshes. Why, for nearly a hundred years, they ignored the feast that agriculture set for them is a mystery.

About two decades ago, though, that began to change. Light geese seemingly discovered the bounty that Canada geese had for so long enjoyed, and when they did, their life history changed forever.

It has become apparent that the limiting factor in snow goose populations had been the availability of foods in winter. After all, there's but so much coastal marsh, and that amount of marsh has been in long decline across Texas and Louisiana. That would have spelled bad news for snow geese, except for their recent change in wintering habits and habitats.



The coastal marshes of Texas and Louisiana have historically hosted the majority of snow geese during the winter, with the white phase to the west and the blues to the east. Two things have changed dramatically in the last couple of decades. First, the color phases seem to mingle much more freely now than in the past, until the distribution is fairly uniform. Second, fewer and fewer geese are utilizing the coastal marshes, choosing instead to winter on the rice fields of Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Some groups can be found during December as far north as Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Oklahoma. The food available in the agricultural fields certainly is an attraction. In addition, saltwater intrusion into many coastal marshes — largely due to oil exploration and man-made canals — has seriously diminished these once-vital marshes in size and quality. That may be enough to explain the shifting migration trends.

Switching to feeding on agricultural grains opened up a whole



new high-energy food source, and with it came a change in breeding success. Because the land in the south could now support more geese, and more and healthier geese were heading back north to reproduce, snow goose populations exploded, to the point where they began to seriously impact their nesting grounds, causing damage to fragile environments that might take several decades (or longer) to recover. Snow geese use their short, powerful bills to dig out roots of plants. This grubbing in the fragile arctic tundra was not a problem until the recent population boom in snow geese. Now, they convert once-lush coastal flats into barren wastes of mud, and because the plants that once grew there helped keep soil salinity low, their absence resulted in dramatic increases in salinity, making rehabilitation nearly impossible.

Something needed to be done to reduce the population. Sure, eventually nature would take its course, and once the snow geese had destroyed their own nesting grounds, a collapse would occur.



Confidence decoys, like this cow, allow hunters to maneuver within shotgun range of snow geese, upper left; electronic calls are legal during extended seasons, above right; a snow goose in shallow water, below left; and on the wing, below right.

But waiting until then would mean the arctic landscape would be forever changed, and habitat needed by myriad other birds and animals would be ruined.

The solution, it turns out after much study, was to increase the harvest of snow geese through liberalized hunting.

"You've seen changes in agricultural processes that have put

more food supplies on the ground on the wintering areas,” says Dave Morrison, waterfowl program leader at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

“These birds typically existed in the coastal marshes, and what you have now is that they’ve expanded their range into agricultural areas where there’s a much more stable food supply through the crops that we’re planting. As a result, those birds were in better condition. They went back north in better condition to breed, produced more little ones. More young birds headed south... and this has been a compounding problem through time. Somehow or another we have to turn the numbers around and get them back more in line to where they should be.”

## A Little Biology

The lesser snow goose, which the American Ornithologists’ Union classifies as *Chen caerulescens caerulescens*, was formerly classified as *Chen hyperborea*, which translates to the wonderfully romantic, “goose from beyond the north wind,” a great name that not only is descriptive, but also a shame to lose. But for many decades it was thought that the lesser snow goose and the blue goose were separate species. The blue goose was accurately described by the term “dark-blue goose,” or *Chen caerulescens*.

In the Northwest Territories, on the shores of Foxe Basin to the west of Baffin Island, the nesting grounds of the blue goose were discovered in 1929 after a six-year search by Canadian ornithologist Dewey Soper. This seemed to be conclusive proof of the separate species theory. As other colonies were discovered over the decades, researchers noted that many “snow geese” were nesting right next to “blue geese” and that even mixed mated pairs occurred. For decades it was assumed that these were closely related geese, capable of interbreeding, but still distinct. But in 1961 it was proven by Dr. Graham Cooch that the blue goose was a color morph of the lesser snow and that they were indeed the same bird. Both are now classified as the same species.

Both the white- and blue-phase snow geese have pink bills and rose-red legs when mature. Both have gray legs and bills when immature. In both color phases the sexes are nearly identical in plumage; the white phase is brilliant white with glossy black wing tips, while the immature snow tends toward sooty gray. A mature blue-phase snow goose can be strikingly beautiful with a slate gray body and a white head and upper neck. Such specimens are often referred to by hunters as “eagle heads,” a reference, no doubt, to the white head of the mature bald eagle. The immature blue, as noted earlier, looks



### NESTING SEASON A BUST THIS YEAR

One of the keys to snow goose hunting success is the ratio of young birds to old in the flock. Old birds (some live to 20 or more years) are often wise to the hunter's ways, and are very difficult to bag. Young birds tend to make the kind of mistakes that land them on someone's dinner table.

The report from the arctic nesting grounds this year is good news for the habitat, but potentially bad news for hunters. Snow geese had a dismal year for reproduction, due to a very cold nesting season.

That means that there will be fewer young birds in the population, which is a good thing as far as the goal of reducing the total population. But the bad news is, flocks of wise older birds will be visiting Texas this winter, and that means tougher hunting.

The same poor nesting conditions in the north reduced the breeding success of several subspecies of Canada geese, as well as white-fronted geese. Hunters can expect to see fewer young birds in flocks of these species as well.

much like an immature white-fronted goose — almost entirely brown-gray with a lighter underside.

Snow geese are not overly large geese, with most specimens weighing between five and six pounds. Despite that, they are powerful fliers; I have witnessed them plow steadily through a ferocious 40-mile headwind on their way to stubble fields to feed. Magnificent when traveling in huge flocks of a thousand or more, they fly in constantly changing waves, hence their common name of wavie. On 28-inch wings, they move very rapidly, quicker than Canada geese, and the wingbeat is nearly as rapid as that of some large ducks.

In flight they chatter constantly, more so than any other waterfowl. Theirs is a short barking sound, a high pitched yelp; they sound much like the war whoops heard in old western movies.

The majority of lesser snows nest in the Canadian arctic, with only a few spreading west into Alaska. The largest colonies nest in the eastern Canadian arctic, mostly in two huge conglomerations, one on Baffin Island and another on the west coast of Hudson's Bay, on and near the McConnell River delta. By mid to late February the snows head for the nesting grounds, the male leading the female, halted only by inclement weather and lack of bare earth and ice-free lakes. Their impatience seems to cost them, for they make the flight south in a shorter time, the northerly migration a hop-scotch affair with the receding winter. Depending on which arctic nesting ground they call home, the lesser snow goose arrives anywhere from mid-May to early June. Even then, they find most of the ground still snow covered and they wait impatiently for the snow to melt. Since the arctic summer is short, their impatience seems justified; there is a very brief period of time to raise a family and prepare for yet another journey south.

A colony nester, the lesser snow will tolerate other nesting pairs as near as 15 feet away. Pairs bond at two years old, but it is birds three years and older that usually do the breeding. Mating takes place on the flight north. When they arrive, the mated pairs stake

management can impact the snow goose population.

In a snow flurry of controversy, including lawsuits by animal-rights groups, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed liberalized hunting for snow geese as a means of reducing their population. Since 1999, this has meant longer seasons, including hunts in northern states in the spring, allowing the use of "unplugged" shotguns (waterfowling shotguns are normally restricted to a carrying capacity of three shells, with the remaining space in the magazine "plugged"), no possession limits and the use of electronic game calls, which are illegal in all other forms of waterfowling.

TPWD enthusiastically supported the proposal.

After five years of liberalized hunting, the question is, Has it done anything to reduce the population?

"Our 1998 midwinter population survey along the Gulf Coast put the number of light geese at 3.1 million," says Jim Kelley, the lead biologist for the FWS on snow geese. "Last winter, it was about 2.3 million. The target is 1.65 million birds. We've been doing a pretty good job of reducing populations and have increased harvest to nearly 1.5 million geese in the Mississippi Flyway last year, and almost a million in the Central."

The liberalized seasons were created through a process called a conservation order. Because of the lawsuits, Kelley is preparing an environmental impact statement.

"Until the EIS is published, there can be no more lawsuits," says Kelley. "And until the EIS and its rules are released, there will be no change in our management strategy. The conservation order (liberal seasons) will remain."

That means that for the upcoming winter season, light goose rules will remain relaxed, and are they are likely to stay relatively unchanged for the foreseeable future. That's because even once the population is reduced to a sustainable level, it will need to be kept there. Backing off too soon would only allow the problem to repeat.

In the meantime, Texans are enjoying an increase in hunting opportunity, thanks to the longer seasons and generous

## TEXANS ARE ENJOYING AN INCREASE IN HUNTING OPPORTUNITY, THANKS TO THE LONGER SEASONS AND GENEROUS LIMITS.

out their territory and vigorously defend it while the yearlings seek water nearby to wait out the summer.

Nest sites are near shallow lakes or rivers, on flat tundra plains, usually within a few miles of the ocean. Nests are used year after year, comprised of gravel, moss, grass, willows and down from the goose's breast. In this she lays an egg a day for four days, although some nests can contain up to 10 eggs. Most lesser snow geese populations complete egg laying by the second week in June. Females rarely leave the nest during incubation and can lose a quarter of their weight. Some have been known to starve to death when performing their duties during periods of inclement weather. During this time the male stands guard against predators. In just over three weeks the eggs hatch.

Summers are lush but short in the far north. Able to swim and feed themselves within 24 hours of hatching, the goslings feed almost incessantly in the light of arctic days, when the sun almost never sets. They must grow quickly for the long flight south, and, within 40 days, in the company of their parents, they are winging their way to Texas.

### Solving The Problem

Although the problem of habitat destruction is in the far north, the only real cure for it is in the south. Nothing can stop snow geese from breeding, but once they migrate to Texas and other southern states, hunters and the agencies in charge of wildlife

limits. That doesn't mean, though, that snow goose hunting is easy. Because they tend to be in flocks of thousands — even tens of thousands — getting them within shotgun range isn't a simple thing. These large flocks tend to ignore all but the most massive of decoy spreads.

Not only that, but the geese seem to be changing their locations in Texas. Last year, for instance, the coastal prairies held less than half the snow geese they attracted just a decade ago, when wintering numbers approached 1.5 million. In 2003, only a third of that spent the winter in places like the El Campo area.

The reason is pretty simple. The geese that once thrived in Texas coastal marshes left those places as the marshlands deteriorated, and moved slightly inland to feed in rice fields. But rice farming isn't what it used to be — the amount of land devoted to rice farming has declined 60 percent in the last decade. As a result, the distribution of birds has changed.

Despite the apparent relocation of many snow geese, Texas remains one of the premier goose hunting destinations in the nation. As long as the state maintains its habitat — whether man-made, such as rice fields, or natural coastal marshlands — we will enjoy seeing the majestic spectacle of tens of thousands of light geese winging their way through our skies.

The "goose from beyond the north wind" is here to stay. And that's a very good thing, whether you like to watch them, hear them, or hunt them. ★





PHOTO © DAVIDJISAMS.COM

WHETHER IT'S  
ROAST, STIR-FRY,  
BROIL OR BAKE,  
WE'VE GOT  
A FEW SECRETS  
FOR THE PERFECT BIRD



# COOK YOUR GOOSE

By Barbara Rodriguez ~ Illustrations by Narda Lebo

**H**ERE'S THE THING ABOUT COOKING YOUR GOOSE: It's easier than you think. And if you don't feel like taking a whole goose to table, you can sauté the breast now and freeze the legs for later. But don't save the liver for later. Sautéed in butter or with bacon, it's a real treat and a great appetizer — you can even add it to venison liver, sauté and puree with a little bread, for a wild pate. Goose can be prepared like any game bird or diced along with dove, duck, pheasant and quail for an amazing mixed stir-fry. Many folks swear by smoking — a tried-and-true method that guarantees the most flavor and the best texture. But whether you roast, stir-fry, stew, broil or bake, the key is not to overcook; as with duck, a dry goose loses flavor and texture. Quick cooking serves game birds well and wrapping in bacon or pancetta (unsmoked bacon) makes for flavorful crisp and brown outsides and moist and pink insides. Medium rare is your best bet; although a few aficionados go for rare birds, it's not for the faint of heart.

For hunters, however, the culinary arts really begin in the field, not in the kitchen.

HERE ARE SOME PRE-COOKING TIPS:

~ A large goose is great for the bag, but not so great on the plate. Geese can live up to 25 years and an old bird is a tough bird. Forget Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*; smaller, younger geese make better table trophies.

~ Field dressing is key to getting the body heat down quickly — the innards are a hot pocket, and the feathers hold the heat in. Draw the bird as soon as possible. And if you plan on eating the heart, gizzard and liver (a real treat) get them on ice as soon as possible. Keeping an undrawn bird in your jacket pocket isn't good for the goose or out on a date, either. Draw promptly or ice promptly — or better yet, do both.

~ I don't think anyone enjoys plucking geese, but it's easier when the bird is warm. (Easier said than done in the heat of the hunt, I know.) If you are going to hang or refrigerator-age your goose for a few days, leave plucking for after. There are as many plucking methods as there are hunters, but the way I was taught is as simple and classic as it is tedious: finger pluck in the direction the feathers grow. Pinfeathers are forever a pain. You can save them for after the hunt, but tweezing is preferable to torching, which often leaves stubble or singes the meat.

~ Many bird hunters only keep breast meat, but geese have meaty, tasty legs (skin them if you're going to stew or bake them).

~ Shot is never a tasty side dish. Look for shot holes when you are plucking your goose, and use tweezers or a small knife to dig out the shot.

~ If you want to skin your goose (I like the gamey flavor the skin and fat contribute in the cooking, but many don't), wrap it in freezer wrap as soon as you can, and know that you will need to add some fat back in (bacon wraps work wonders) if you plan on grilling or sautéing the meat.

~ There is no rule of thumb for hanging game birds. It's really a matter of taste — and what the neighbors (or your spouse) will tolerate. In Europe they still hang the birds, unplucked and undrawn, by the neck, outside, till they fall. This is a bit extreme for Texas — or anyone who doesn't live with a court jester. I prefer to age a drawn, unplucked bird for about five days in the refrigerator (bottom rack, way back). If the weather is cool, two days of hanging a drawn, unplucked bird outside (45-50 degrees is optimal) is about right. If it's too cold outside, use the fridge — freezing and thawing is a no-go. A few days in the fridge or ice chest definitely improves flavor. I prefer to pluck a bird immediately, but when I get lazy I'm happy to know it's okay to freeze a bird whole, undrawn and unplucked for up to a year — again, preferably someplace out of sight. If you field dress the bird (pluck and draw), the simplest way to freeze it is to place the meat in a freezer container or large freezer bag, fill with water, seal and store. But don't put the meat in water till you have access to a freezer. And unless you have a memory like a steel trap, do label it with the date and contents.

~ A little-known fact: goose loves cheese. It's oh-so *bon appetite*, I know, but an antique Gruyère or aged parmesan is a delicious flavor complement to goose in a casserole or even melted atop a goose breast (which, if you can take the razzing you're sure to get, can be diced and added to a Caesar salad).

## (RECIPES)

### Goose Steaks

You can prepare these over a campfire, on a grill, or in a sauté pan at home. Serve with baked or sautéed yams and a side salad of field greens or spinach with pine nuts and dried cranberry for an elegant holiday meal.

Apple cider vinegar to cover (marinade)

1 tablespoon butter

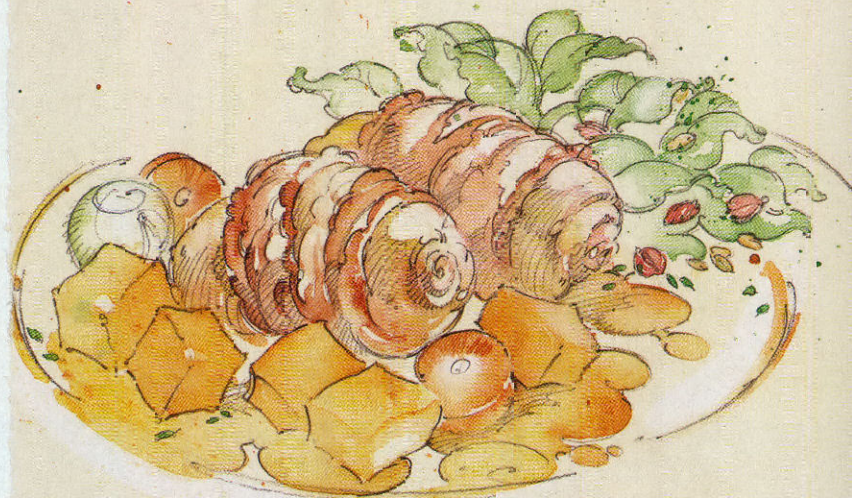
1-2 tablespoons olive oil

1 goose breast

6-8 slices of fatty bacon

3 cloves garlic (optional)

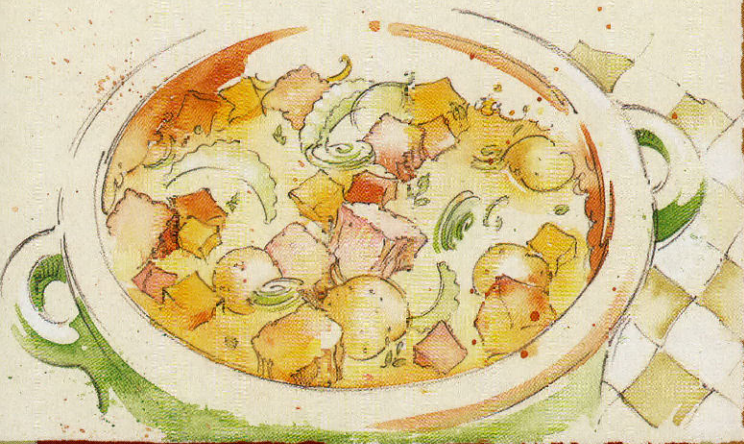
Splash of dry white wine (optional)



Pound or butterfly goose breast into thick slices/steaks (about 1/4 inch thick). Marinating the meat in a good quality apple cider vinegar for 2-3 hours (refrigerated) adds a lot to the flavor and tenderness.

Wrap the goose steaks with bacon strips and skewer. Place slivers of garlic between the bacon and the goose steak if you like extra zip.

Melt 1 tablespoon butter and 1-2 tablespoons olive oil in a hot skillet and add goose steaks. Fry quickly, turning frequently, until bacon is beginning to crisp and goose is browned. Meat should be rare to medium rare at this point. If you like it medium or well done, add a splash of white wine and cover to finish off stovetop or wrap in foil and bake at 350 about 3-5 minutes (or wrap in foil and hold in skillet on top of campfire) until it's done to your taste.



## Goose Stew

- 2 tablespoons virgin olive oil
- 2 large goose breasts or a mix of breast and thigh meat, cubed
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tablespoon pancetta, chopped fine
- 3-4 large Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 5 carrots, diced
- 1 parsnip or turnip, topped, peeled and cubed
- 6 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 leek, white portion only, sliced into thin rings
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 5-6 cups beef broth
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

This is a great campfire stew. Prepare and seal the veggies, except for potatoes, in two large zipper-lock bags at home (garlic, onion, leek and half the celery in one; carrots, turnip/parsnip, and the other half of celery in the other). Put the olive oil and pancetta in a small jar or plastic container. Mix the sugar, salt, pepper and dried spices in a separate baggie. Take along 3-4 cans of broth. For best results, peel and cube your potatoes at camp. Refrigerated, prepped veggies will only hold a day or two; so if you're not feeling optimistic about your first night's feast, pack along some stew meat for this recipe. You can substitute vegetables of your choice and if you're feeling adventurous, add a dash of chile flakes.

In a large stew pot, heat the oil. Sauté the pancetta, garlic, onion, leek and chopped celery until the onion is translucent — do not brown.

Stir in the cubed goose and cook over medium low heat until the meat is browned on all sides. Stir often.

Add the marjoram, cumin, broth and sugar and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 1 hour, adding broth as needed to keep vegetables covered.

Add the potatoes, carrots, parsnip and celery. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Return to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 40 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

## Goose in Mushroom Sauce

- 5-pound goose
- 1-2 stalks celery, minced
- 1 medium Vidalia or sweet onion, chopped
- 1 large carrot, sliced into thin wheels
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 cup of white mushroom caps, cleaned and sliced or 1 large Portobello cap, cleaned and sliced or a mixture of both
- 1 cup sour cream
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1-2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons herbs d'provençe or 1 teaspoon each: dried rosemary, lavender, marjoram
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1-2 tablespoons pancetta or olive oil for browning
- Olive oil, salt and pepper to season to taste

Wash the goose inside and out and pat dry. Remove and reserve neck and wings. Rub the inside and outside of goose with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

Place the goose on a rack in a shallow baking pan and bake uncovered at 325 degrees for 45 minutes or until browned.

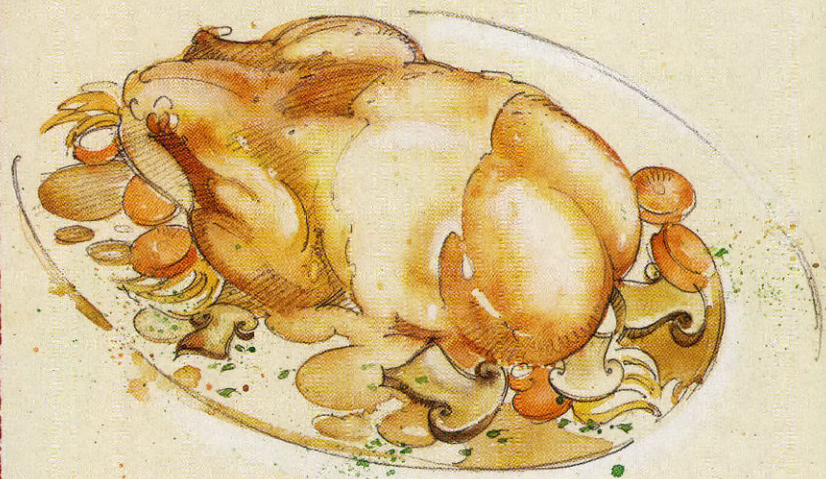
While the goose is in the oven, simmer the giblets, neck and wings with 1 clove crushed garlic in enough water to cover.

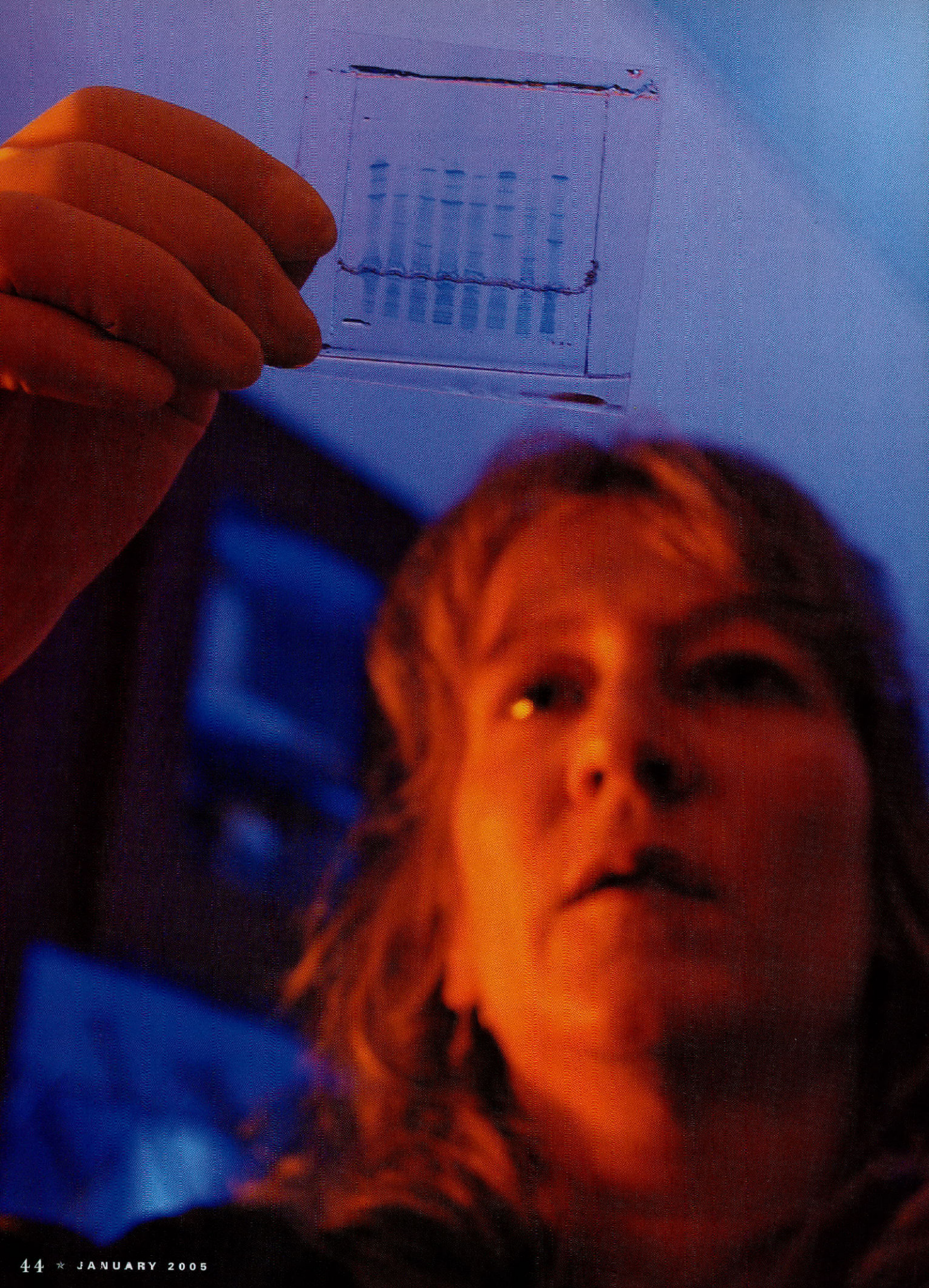
Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a skillet, then stir the vegetables into the hot oil until they just begin to brown, then stir in the mushrooms and cook for 45 seconds.

Next, stir 2 tablespoons flour into strained liquid from giblets (or 1 cup chicken stock). Add herbs and salt. Stir reserved 2 tablespoons flour into sour cream and blend into the stock mixture. Pour over vegetable mixture and blend gently.

Remove the goose from the shallow pan and place into a roasting pan. Pour mushroom sauce over goose, cover and roast 2 hours, basting once or twice, or until tender.

If you're mad for mushrooms, make a second batch sautéed in butter and white wine with a few ribbons of fresh tarragon and serve at table. ★





**TEXAS GAME WARDENS ARE USING A SECRET WEAPON**

**IN THEIR BATTLE AGAINST LAWBREAKERS. SCIENCE.**

# CSI: TEXAS

**BY BEN REHDER**

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY EARL NOTTINGHAM**

## GAME WARDEN SCOTT DAVIS HAD A PROBLEM ON HIS HANDS: A WASTE-OF-GAME CASE, IN WHICH SEVEN DEER CARCASSES WERE LEFT STREWN ALONG A QUIET COUNTY ROAD. THE EVIDENCE WAS SCANT — JUST A LONE WITNESS WHO HAD REPORTED SEEING A TRUCK, TOWING A STOCK TRAILER, IN THE GENERAL VICINITY. FORTUNATELY, THE WITNESS HAD WRITTEN DOWN THE LICENSE PLATE NUMBER, SO DAVIS WENT TO QUESTION THE TRUCK'S OWNER AND A PASSENGER.

"They had a little bit of an arrogant type of attitude at first," says Davis, a 20-year veteran in Midland County. "They were uncooperative, like, 'What are you doing out here messing with me?'"

Perhaps, in the minds of those two young men, that cockiness was justifiable. After all, at the time, they were the only people who knew they were guilty. Davis had no eyewitnesses to the actual shooting, and nobody had seen the men dump the deer on the roadside. It was nothing Davis could build a case on — but the strength of the evidence would soon change.

"When we talked to the suspects," Davis says, "they said they knew nothing about any deer. They said they had been at the scene, but they did not dump the deer on the roadway. We found the trailer, and when we looked in there and saw blood, they claimed it to be goat and cow blood."

That's when Davis saw his opening. He and fellow game wardens Terry Lloyd and Wayne Armstrong were about to gather a type of evidence so undeniable, the results are rarely challenged in court.

"When we started taking blood samples from the trailer, we told them exactly what our intentions were," Davis says with a laugh. "You could see that they were getting a little nervous then. It was like nailing their coffin shut when we got the results back and it was not goat or cow blood — it was a definite match to the samples from the deer on the roadside. This case wouldn't have been made without the lab's help. That's what sealed it for us."

The lab Davis is referring to is located at the A.E. Wood Fish Hatchery in San Marcos, and, as those poachers learned the hard way, the forensic tests conducted there have been helping game wardens prove their charges for nearly two decades.

But don't let your mind conjure up images of the flashy forensic technicians you see on wildly unrealistic prime-time dramas. If you do, you'll be disappointed, according to Beverly Villarreal, a soft-spoken woman who is the lab's only employee dedicated to law enforcement. "What I do is pretty routine," she says, "not the glitz and glamour you see on TV. I don't go out and do crime-scene investigation; my job is here in the lab doing analysis."

Nonetheless, as a visitor to the lab, you're likely to hear some rather impressive phrases being tossed around. *Isoelectric focusing*. *Dinucleotide microsatellites*. *Short tandem repeat*. And — more commonly used — *DNA fingerprinting*.

Broken down into layman's terms, those buzzwords simply mean good news for game wardens. For instance, if a hunter says the blood in the bed of his truck is from a hog, not a deer, Villarreal can help determine whether he is being truthful. If it turns out to be deer blood, she can tell whether it was from a buck or a doe. Five years ago, the lab gained the equipment necessary to match a blood or tissue sample to an individual mammal. Now, rather than saying a blood sample came from a deer in general, a game warden can prove it came from a specific deer in a poacher's vehicle.

That's what happened in the Midland case, and the situation repeated itself — with a twist — in a Comal County case involving Game Warden Kathleen Stuman.

In a quiet subdivision, word was going around that one of the residents was taking advantage of the semi-tame deer in the area, shooting them with a bow and arrow. Stuman had been stationed in the county for just a short while when she caught wind of the situation — but that didn't mean it would be an easy case to crack.

"We worked on this for a couple of months before we got our final break. The older people by the lake watched these deer every day, so they knew when one was missing. We'd get calls to different places and come up with the same type of arrow shaft every time. It was frustrating, because we knew it was the same guy doing it all."

Again, the lab was soon to play a part. Responding to a call, Stuman and Chief of Fisheries Enforcement Bill Robinson found the suspect cleaning an eleven-point buck late at night.

"He claimed he shot it at six o'clock, but he wouldn't say where he'd been hunting," Stuman says. "So we went back to his place, where it was illegal to hunt, and found blood on the ground."

Stuman and Robinson collected a blood sample from that location, as well as a tissue sample from the eleven-point, and sent them to the San Marcos lab. The result was what they were hoping for: a match. But this case had a surprise ending: The game wardens discovered that the entire violation had been caught on videotape.

"We were clearing his vehicle for weapons," Stuman says, "and we found a tape. He'd actually filmed himself shooting the deer from his balcony at night under a light. Everything the guy had been telling us was a lie, and we were able to prove that with Beverly's support."

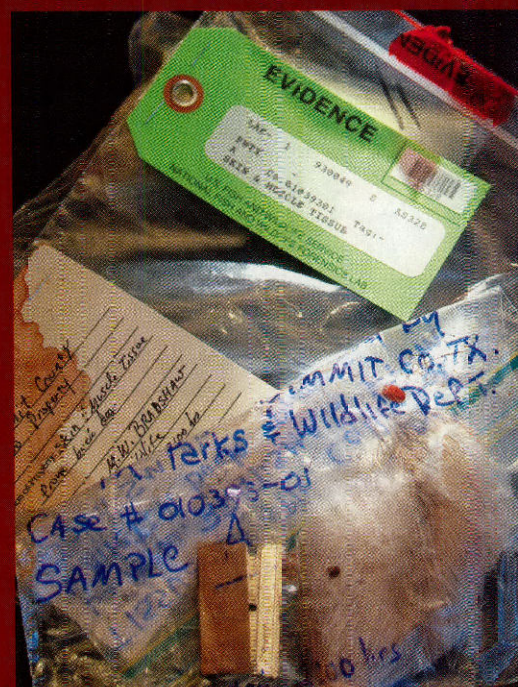
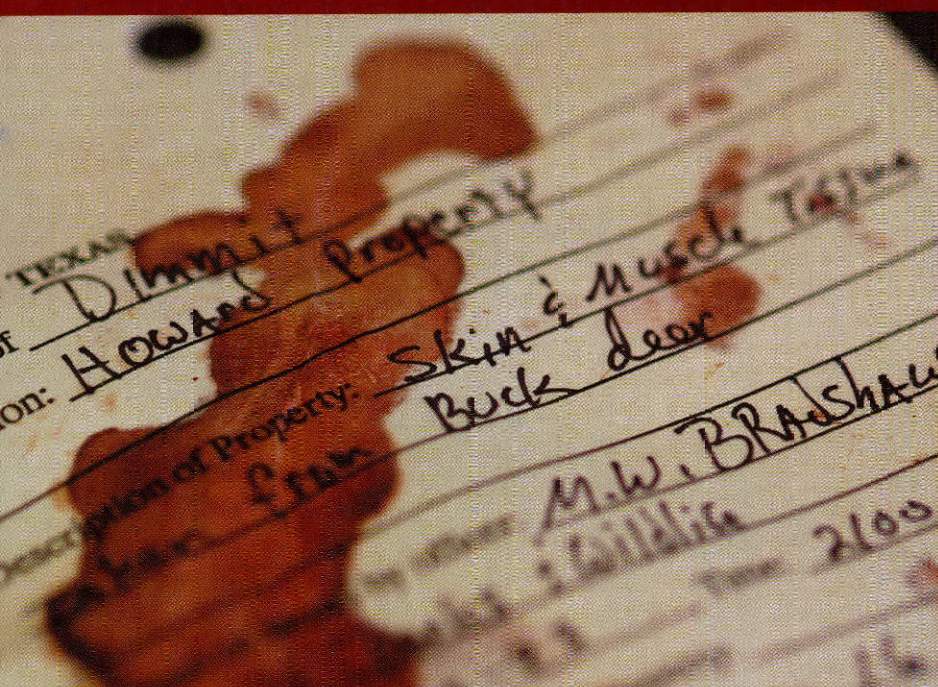
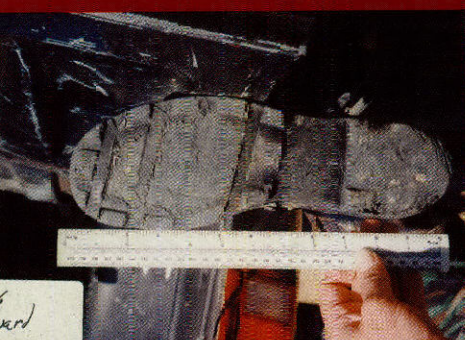
Villarreal has been with the lab for 15 years, in which time she has handled more than 600 cases. She began as a part-time forensic specialist while earning a master's degree in biology; in fact, her work at the lab had an impact on the subject she selected for her thesis.

At the time, a new law made it illegal to sell wild redfish, so game wardens needed a way to tell which fish were wild and which were farm-raised. They learned that the National Marine Fisheries Service was exploring a technique known as fatty-acid profiling to distinguish wild striped bass and hybrid striped bass from their farm-raised counterparts.

The wardens approached Loraine Fries — who was the hatchery lab manager and one of the originators of the forensic program — about using the technique. Fries passed the information on to Villarreal, who designed a thesis project proving the efficacy of the method for profiling redfish.

"Fish are what they eat," Villarreal says. "Farm-raised fish are fed a commercial diet made of terrestrial grain sources, which contain fats that ultimately distinguish them from wild fish. Their fatty-acid profiles are different."

The technique has apparently deterred many poachers over the years. "Once it became known that this type of test existed, there has been a noticeable drop-off of these types of cases," says Villarreal.



**CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION:** When game wardens come on a scene like the ones in the top two photos, they go to work looking for the clues that will lead them to the perpetrator. Footprints, above left, are a good start, but traces of blood, below, are even better because blood can be analyzed. Solving these wildlife crimes demands the patience to methodically keep records, above, and gather even traces of evidence, above right. When culprits are caught "in the act," the evidence is ready at hand, right. Previous spread: Beverly Villarreal in the lab.







Game Warden Jim Lindeman in Lampasas County ran across a fish poacher in a rather unusual place — Lindeman's wife's family reunion. The man in question, a commercial fisherman, sold a bag of redbfish fillets to a relative. Lindeman, in street clothes, then approached the man and posed as a potential customer.

"I said, 'You're sure these are redbfish, not black drum?' He said he guaranteed they were redbfish. I asked him how he avoided getting caught. He said the game wardens were stupid and never checked the bottom of the tubs."

When the man returned with a five-pound bag of fillets, Lindeman thanked him and then sent samples to the lab the next day. The result: Five of the seven fillets in the bag were redbfish. The man, of course, received a citation.

Not every case that crosses Villarreal's desk involves poaching. In East Texas, a Tyler man in his mid-fifties went out for an afternoon hunt and never returned home. Unfortunately, he hadn't told anyone exactly where he had planned to hunt.

Two days later, a landowner checking his property found the man, deceased, beside his truck, with a wound to his lower leg. The investigating officers, Captain Larry Hand and Game Warden Paul Gluck, were initially stumped. There was neither ammunition in the man's rifle, nor any spent or live cartridges anywhere to be found. No downed animals were located. There was, however, a trail of blood — much like that left by a wounded deer — leading from one clump of brush to another, then through some briars to the man's truck.

"In that second clump of brush, there was obviously some thrashing where a struggle had occurred," says Hand, who is now

stationed in Smith County. "It wasn't apparent what type of wound the gentleman had. It didn't appear to be a gunshot, but we weren't ruling anything out."

Later, a knife was found in the man's pocket, and the blade had blood on it. Speculation ran rampant in the community, and the fastest-moving rumor held that a feral hog had attacked the hunter.

The game wardens decided they needed to know exactly what they were dealing with, so they collected three blood samples — one from a grassy area between the two clumps of brush, one from the site of the struggle, and one from the victim.

"I drove directly from the Rusk office to the lab in San Marcos," says Hand. There he remained until late that evening, when the results were available. Two of the samples were from the victim. The third was from a white-tailed deer.

"We believe he shot a deer and it went down, but it wasn't fatally wounded. The gentleman had expended his shells, so he was going to use his knife to complete the kill. There was a scuffle that took place, and the man was wounded by his own hand in the lower leg."

It was a tragic incident, but Hand and Gluck were glad they were able to make some sense of what happened.

"The lab was instrumental in helping put the pieces of that case together," Hand says, "It's something that the game wardens don't necessarily need on a regular basis, but when we do, it's usually a very important case."

Villarreal has heard that sentiment before.

"One game warden told me I was like the Maytag repairman," she says with a smile. "He said I'm not needed very often, but when I am needed, they're glad I'm here." ★

**"WHEN WE STARTED TAKING BLOOD SAMPLES FROM THE TRAILER, WE TOLD THEM EXACTLY WHAT OUR INTENTIONS WERE," DAVIS SAYS WITH A LAUGH. "YOU COULD SEE THAT THEY WERE GETTING A LITTLE NERVOUS THEN. IT WAS LIKE NAILING THEIR COFFIN SHUT WHEN WE GOT THE RESULTS BACK AND IT WAS NOT GOAT OR COW BLOOD — IT WAS A DEFINITE MATCH TO THE SAMPLE FROM THE DEER ON THE ROADSIDE."**

## FIELD WORK

Not all forensic procedures take place in a lab. Sometimes the scene of the crime tells the tale: a spot of blood on the wrong side of a cactus, for example, or a deer carcass showing signs of advanced rigor mortis just 30 minutes after sunrise.

In some cases, bloodstain-pattern analysis can offer up enough evidence for a game warden to determine exactly what took place. Game Warden Mike Bradshaw (pictured left) — who acts as an instructor in forensic science at the National Hunting Incident Investigation Academy — tells the story of a trophy-hunting poacher who tried to outsmart his pursuers.

"The guy had gone into a pasture, shot a deer, and then cut its head off. He was wanting to leave, and he figured out that if he would walk backwards, he'd probably throw off anybody who found the deer."

Clever — but not clever enough.

"The tracks were going one way, yet the blood droplets showed the direction of travel was just the opposite." It didn't take long for Bradshaw to discover the ruse and lock on to the poacher's escape route.

In another case, state troopers pulled two men over on a traffic violation in Medina County. When

the troopers found a deer in the back of the truck, they notified the local game warden. After inspecting the truck, the warden asked the suspects where the other deer was.

"They finally fessed up that they already had it at home," says Bradshaw. "The patrolmen were just amazed. What had happened is, one deer was loaded over the tailgate, and the other one was loaded over the side of the pickup." The blood evidence — and the game warden's sharp eyes — revealed a different story than the suspects were telling.

Determining a deer's time of death can also aid game wardens greatly in an investigation. For that purpose, many wardens carry a special kit containing all the equipment necessary to conduct a series of time-of-death tests.

Bradshaw is understandably reluctant to provide many details for fear that poachers will attempt to use the knowledge as a tip sheet to help them avoid prosecution.

"I don't want this to be a training manual to show outlaws how to get around this. I'll say that we gather temperature information, evaluate the eyeshine and pupil diameter, and apply an electrical charge to assess the deer's muscle reactions."

Bradshaw and fellow game wardens Tracy Large,

Shane Teeters and Larry Griffin (now retired) combined time-of-death testing with bloodstain-pattern analysis to nab a Webb County poacher. Bradshaw was in one of his favorite hiding places when a man in a truck fired from a public roadway and immediately drove away.

"Trees obscured my view and I hadn't seen who fired," Bradshaw says. "Of course, when I stopped the truck and saw a rifle inside, the suspect denied shooting."

But when the game wardens later found the buck, high-velocity bloodstain patterns on a prickly pear bush indicated where the deer had been standing when the bullet struck. That information, in turn, helped the wardens ascertain which direction the round had come from.

Lest the poacher claim that someone else had shot the deer earlier, the wardens also conducted time-of-death tests. "We determined that the deer expired about the same time the man fired."

The result? The poacher was charged with waste of game, hunting from a public roadway, and taking a deer without landowner consent.

"It's just another tool in the toolbox," Bradshaw says of time-of-death testing.

From an outdoorsman's perspective, it's another weapon in the war against poaching.

# OLD SHOTGUNS AND GOOD DOGS

*A Tribute to J.R. Jefferson,  
1868 - 1939*

By JOHN JEFFERSON

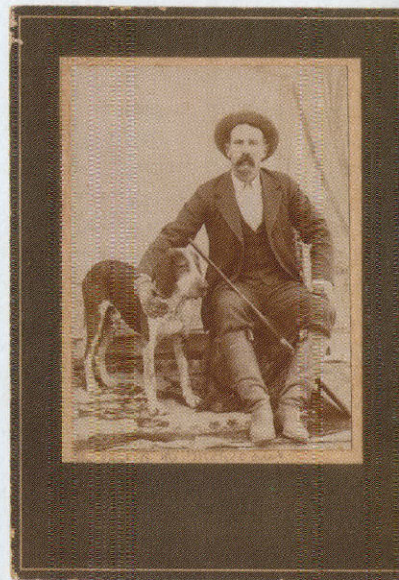
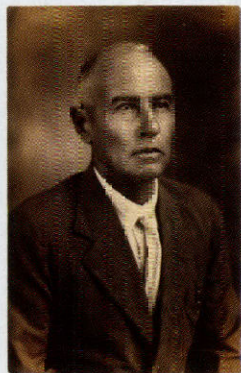
**Opening day of the 2004** dove season was a fine day, whether the birds were flying or not. It was the coolest, driest opener in my memory, and it just felt good being afield, hunting with my dog.

I glanced down at the old Model 12 Winchester 16-gauge laying across my knees. The original finish was worn in many places, and the vintage shotgun was as shiny as the seat of an old pair of hard-worn pants. The oil-rubbed stock and ribbed forend of the slide, however, had beautiful grain, reflecting the quality used in guns made early in the last century.

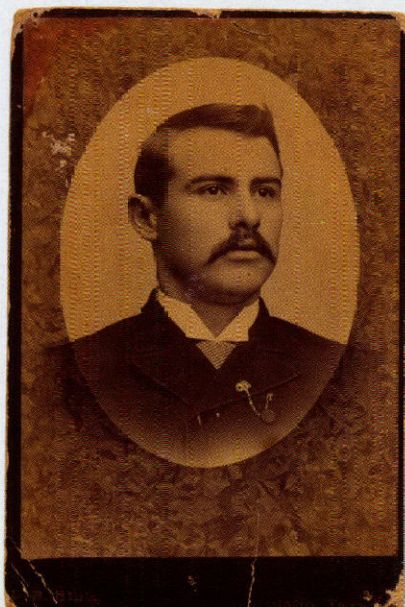
The gun is identical to the first shotgun I ever fired. "Uncle Josh" Munro let me shoot his 16-gauge when I was nine, and I still remember the bruise to my shoulder. It left a far deeper mark, though. By kerosene lantern light in a small cabin on Beach Creek, he told me how he and my grandfather, his best friend, bought matching shotguns at the same time. I later inherited my grandfather's Model 12, and cherished it for years. I miss it.

Determined to keep alive the memory of a gun I wish I still had and the recollection of a grandfather I wish I had known better, I bought an old Model 12, a 16-gauge, in a pawn shop in Corpus a few years ago. It was well used, and the stock showed years of neglect. But it was of the same vintage as the gun I grew up with, and cleaned up quite well. I think of my grandfather every time I pick it up.

He and I would have been close. Our lives had parallels. We both played baseball: He caught for the Longhorns; I got cut by A&M. We both spent more time hunting and fishing and



*John Jefferson Jr.  
Jack + Jardine*



J.R. Jefferson, in his last portrait, top left; With Old Rock, a favorite of many dogs, top right; with his two children, above; as a college student, left; ranching in Tom Green county (he's the one on the left), opposite. He drove cattle up the Chisholm trail and made friends with John Wesley Hardin.

talking about it than most people thought prudent, and we both worked for the Game Department. We each once gave our wife a shotgun as a present. Mine thought it was cool; I've heard his didn't. Guns and dogs were important parts of our lives. And we each, so I'm told, spent some time howling at the moon, ourselves, before walking away from that side of life. I understand that if you look closely along the winding road leading from his house overlooking the Guadalupe River to the Elm Grove Campground he founded at the west end of his acreage, you can still see the dim outline of what may have been scars from the bumper of a Model T Ford.

Most family members learned trot lining from him in that river, and some learned to swim there. He generously extended the campground and its cabins to relatives for family vacations, about which some still speak fondly. Our 2005 reunion will memorialize the early days at Elm Grove, and let the younger members know what they missed in those simpler times.

An old cousin once told me my grandfather knew more about wildlife than anybody he had ever met. I wish I knew half as much. He became Chief Deputy of the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission in early 1919, and was named Commissioner later that year. That office was equivalent to a modern-day TPW Commissioner, except he was it — the only commissioner.

His term was marked by several significant events: he appointed the first

**My grandmother told me many things about him, and I listened with a child's imagination, dreaming about his ranching in Tom Green County.**

six official state game wardens, marking the beginning of conservation game law enforcement in Texas, and he proposed what was then considered foolish folly — the idea of importing pheasants into Texas for hunting. He left office not knowing what success wildlife restocking would have in later years.

Ironically enough, when pheasants became established in Southeast Texas and the season was initially opened in the '70s, one of the first places where hunting was permitted was the Boyt Ranch in Liberty County, owned by Pat Boyt, to whom Commissioner Jefferson's granddaughter, Betsy, is married.

In his annual report to Governor W.H. Hobby in 1920, he urged that all department revenues be deposited into one fund for operation of the agency. In 1923, the legislature authorized just that, marking the beginning of what is now TPW Fund 9.

His report acknowledged that wildlife belongs to the people of Texas, but he ratified the rights of landowners to control their property. To provide hunting opportunities for those without access, he proposed purchase or lease of public hunting grounds, thus initiating the public hunting program.

He died in 1939, when I was just three. My grandmother told me many things about him, and I listened with a child's imagination, dreaming about his ranching in Tom Green County near Lipan Springs, being elected County Clerk of Jefferson

County, establishing Elm Grove Camp on the Guadalupe near Seguin as a fishing camp, enduring the constant floods on the river, catching 98-pound catfish, and loving her cooking. Maybe that's why cooks have always been special people to me. I can still taste her bread pudding.

As a little boy in the '40s, growing up at the southern edge of the Big Thicket during the big war, I knew little about the rest of Texas. My grandmother gave me a subscription to a new magazine being published by the agency her late husband had directed. It was called *Texas Game & Fish Magazine*. From it, I saw the vast blessing of the Texas outdoors. I had never seen water that wasn't dark and mysterious and home to 'gators and water moccasins. Through this magazine, I learned there were other parts of Texas, some that had clear, running water. One place was intriguingly called Marble Falls, and people caught channel catfish there in the current of the Colorado River. It made me want to go there. Still does.

I would sit in my room and gaze at the magazine's covers, all of which were Orville Rice paintings in those days, and dream of being able to walk the woods on misty mornings with a pump



shotgun like the one the hunter was carrying as he stalked a cat squirrel in a pecan tree in one of the covers. I imagine the number of other little kids that have been equally inspired by what is now *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine far exceeds the number of squirrels in all of Texas.

The legislature merged the State Parks Board with the Game and Fish Commission in 1963 to form a new agency called Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. The magazine's name was changed to *Texas Parks and Wildlife* in 1965.

Texans owe a debt to all the people who have had a hand in bringing this superb, mind-broadening magazine to Texans of all ages. And I certainly owe a debt of gratitude to a grandmother who gave me a subscription to the first issue. . . and to a grandfather who helped shape the agency that sponsored it.

He also taught countless Texans an appreciation for hunting and fishing and being in the woods.

And he gave me an appreciation for old shotguns and good dogs.★

A LONG  
WINTER'S DAY  
OF LOSS, DISCOVERY  
AND RENEWAL

By Rick Bass

Illustration by John Picacio

ORDINARILY I AM ABLE TO PARTICIPATE in only one deer hunt per year back in the Hill Country: the traditional week-long November hunt, with my grandfather, back when he was still living, and my father, uncle, brothers and cousins. One year, however, having returned to Texas for the Christmas season, I went back up to the deer pasture for what had once been a more common event, if not quite a tradition in our family, which we called "the second hunt."

It was the same year that I had brought my amazing bird dog down to Texas with me: Colter, a liver-colored German shorthair pointer, a great ground-covering, big-headed, sweet long-legged bomber of a hound with nitroglycerine running through his veins. I would hunt deer in the late afternoons and foggy, icy early mornings, then come back to camp mid-day for a warming meal and a fire, and then would take Colter out into the russet tall grass to look for quail. It was dove season, too, and if I was lucky, I might have a chance to gather a few doves for dinner that evening. Then I would return Colter to his kennel, put my shotgun up and head back into the hills with my rifle, to sit on a rock ledge in the waning of the day to watch for deer.

It was the year that my mother had died young after a long illness, and I have no doubt that in addition to my youthfulness, it was my relationship to the natural world — which was to say at that time chiefly as a hunter — that I turned to for grounding and support in this newer, lonelier, turned-upside-down world. It was painful, hiking those beautiful red granite canyons, and sitting on those whale-gray ancient ledges of Cambrian sandstone, looking out at the same sights she had known and loved, though it was tonic, too,

## ( THE SECOND HUNT )

knowing that in the witnessing and the experiencing, these things were still shared between us, and always would be.

That night (no fireworks, only a contented fire-gazing), an ice shield fell over the world, so that when I awakened on the first of January, the curve of the hills and the fields and woods were all encased in starlit ice, the land's dark reflection burning as if from some interior fire.

I dressed and fixed a cup of coffee, acutely conscious of the almost mechanical advancement of time — or rather, my perception of it as thus, on this one day — and certainly, if I could have hesitated, or even gone back in time, if I could have done anything to keep from going into the new year without my mother, I would have turned back, would have lingered, would have sought whatever quiet eddy there might have been where things could continue being as they had.

During the November hunt, in a shady tangle of oak and juniper growing on a sandy flat at the juncture of a steep tributary, a narrow slot canyon down which immense granite boulders had tumbled, I had spied a torn-up sapling, so freshly scraped that the sap was still oozing from it, and the slivers and tendrils of bark that had fallen to the ground were still so bright and unoxidized as to seem still living; as if, were one to place them back upon the abraded bark of the sapling, they might yet graft and grow. My plan was to nestle into the boulders of that slot canyon and to watch the sandy trail that wound through those trees along the creek, and to see if the buck that had rubbed that tree with his antlers in November, marking his territory, might wander by. I had brought a set of antlers with which to rattle, to simulate the sound of two other bucks sparring in his territory — in the heart of his territory! — and a grunt tube, with which to make the deep low calls of another deer.

I had never navigated my way across this landscape, or any other that I could remember,



with the world so perfectly encased in ice. Every branch, every limb, every blade of winter-dead grass was encased in a thick chrysalis of ice, which slid heavy and slippery away from me as I passed through the brush, and which bobbed, clacking, in my wake. The world underfoot was likewise coated with a shell of illuminated ice, and even if I had believed that this was the newer and more frightening world-to-come — that from here on out, all would be ice — I think that I still would have found it beautiful.

In the pre-dawn darkness I found a hiding place beneath a juniper that was growing between the symmetrical halves of a frost-split granite boulder, and I settled in to wait for daylight, and to watch the canyon, and the little grove of oak and juniper below. I thought about nothing, merely waited.

An hour, two hours, melted as if but a second, though not the ice. I didn't move. It felt good to remain so still, so motionless, lulled by the cold blue wind from the north, and by the sound of the water, the quick flood.

I sat entranced, almost as if not daring, or as if forgetting, to breathe, until finally I felt a faint stirring of warmth on my face; the winter sun was finally beginning to catch, and the dazzle began to loosen from the hills, the prismatic colors sliding and slipping away from all that was cloaked with the once-shining ice. The sparkle vanished, yet in its place, the vibrant colors of the native landscape, and native vegetation, were revealed as if born again, fresh-scrubbed and bright.

Still I waited, almost perfectly motionless, and was content to do so: listening, watching, waiting. Every half-hour I blew quietly on the grunt tube, or clicked the dry bone antlers together lightly, rattling their tines against one another. Those sounds would be lost beneath the blue sky, falling away into nothingness, but I did not despair, I had all day, and I rested between the cleaved rocks and watched the canyon before me and continued to reside in that space where hours were confused with moments.

WHEN THE BUCK CAME INTO HIS GROVE, he was moving quickly, almost at a trot. His body, light brown, was pale and clean, as if washed by the rain and ice. He was a large deer with large antlers that were surprisingly pale — almost sun-bleached, it seemed — and as he hurried down the canyon, passing me on my right side, only 20 yards away, I saw that his black hooves were shiny, as if newly polished, and the late morning sun caught his wet eyes so that they gleamed. I lifted the rifle quickly but carefully — he paused, detecting that movement between him and the sun — and finding the seam behind his shoulder at the top of the heart, I fired.

He leapt hump-backed, stumbled, and then galloped down the trail he'd been on, as if merely in more of a hurry now to reach that grove of trees, and though I felt confident he was mortally wounded, that he would run but a few more bounds and then collapse, heart-shot, I knew better than to jump up and follow, which might cause him to draft one final surge of adrenaline, giving him the strength to carry him far beyond my ken or reach.

I continued waiting, and only now to think about the conscious world, the real world of the present: of the fact that it was New Year's Day, and that I had just hunted and shot, and was about to gather, a fine deer. I listened to the rush of the briefly-wide creek below, admired the sun-painted cliffs and rocks on the other side of the canyon a little longer, and then rose, stretching my stiff legs, and walked over to where the deer had been standing when I'd shot, where I found, as I'd known I would, a scatter of hair and some drops of bright red blood, still shining wet upon the granite, and in the pinkened gravel of the game trail.

For how many tens of thousands of years have hunters known such a mix of feelings — the satisfaction of success mixed with the fuller evidence of the responsibility inherent in the taking of any food

from the earth, whether planted crop or harvested wild?

I followed the drops of blood straight down the trail, walking carefully, and I remained confident that the body of the deer would be just a little farther on, around the next bend — in the cool of that little grove, perhaps, pitched down into the sand.

In the grove, there was less blood, but the trail was still evident. The deer was taking longer leaps, the leaves were stirred up from each track, and now and again I found another loosened hair, another Rorschach of bright red blood cradled in the brown grasp of an upturned leaf.

I bent and studied the blood sign. The drops led straight to the creek. I looked across the creek to the other side — too far for me to leap, but not for a deer — and saw the stippling of tracks from where deer regularly leapt this crossing. I did not see the brown body of the deer lying down, pitched over onto its side. I did not see the great nest of antlers cradled in the grass just a short distance ahead, visible above even the winter-dead remains of grass and brush.

Walking carefully, and starting to feel the first inklings of concern and doubt, I went upstream to the crossing-place and made my way carefully across the flat rock ledge, the broad roiling sheet of water shuddering against my ankles, the water so silt-clouded from the flood that I could not see the stone beneath me.

I reached the other side and hurried over to the spot where the deer's leap would have carried him — the spot where all those other tracks were stippled, and, being careful not to disturb any, I set my rifle against a tree and got down on my hands and knees in the storm-wet grass and began parsing among them, hoping for the

**IN THE PRE-DAWN DARKNESS I  
FOUND A HIDING PLACE  
BENEATH A JUNIPER THAT WAS  
GROWING BETWEEN THE  
SYMMETRICAL HALVES OF A  
FROST-SPLIT GRANITE BOULDER**

surest indicator, the brilliance of blood, and, failing that, another piece of hair — possibly this deer's, possibly not — and, failing that, a divot of earth so freshly torn that the individual sand grains were still glistening: a line, then,

a cast of direction to set off into, in my blindness.

I didn't see how the shot could be anything other than precise, at that distance, but if it had somehow floated a few inches high, penetrating the lungs but not touching the heart, then the deer — particularly a big muscular deer like this one — could in theory run for hours, on-again and off-again, before bedding down somewhere miles away beneath a tree, or in a nest of brush, remaining vigilant, even if incapacitated, for days.

I did not think this deer was hit in the lungs, though, nor in any other lesser place. I felt certain this deer had been struck in the heart, and even as I continued searching on my hands and knees for the most microscopic of clues, I kept glancing up into the meadow, believing that I was simply overlooking the body, as often happens: the 150 pounds of deer somehow suddenly innocuous, lying down instead of standing, and lifeless rather than alive.

I spent the rest of the day tracking, often on my hands and knees, or in a bent stoop, moving slowly: following one unraveling radius of tracks after another, as far into the forest as I could, before that skein vanished, or became entangled with another. I panicked that I would lose this deer — that I had lost it — and then I despaired. To lose any deer, or any animal, but especially a great one, is one of the most sour feelings a hunter can know, rearranging and nearly invalidating what is already a complex and highly evolved moral negotiation in the short realm between life and death. Often the hunter feels like weeping, or is paralyzed with grief when such a misfortune occurs, and may quit hunting for a year, or other times altogether.

I had no way of knowing if the tracks and trails I followed were

those that my deer had taken, or those of hundreds of others. Over on the back side of the deer pasture, up and over the top of Buck Hill, nearly a mile from where I had shot, I found a drop of fresh blood on a rock, and, believing it to be from my deer — for no one else had fired a shot — I worked that area hard, hoping to find the deer bedded down under a tree, waiting to die, or dead; but there were no other clues that I could find, out on the rocks like that, to indicate in which direction the animal had been traveling, nor the nature of the wound, nor even if the blood was that of a deer.

I searched until almost dark, casting in wider and wider circles around that one mysterious drop of blood, with each deerless hour that passed reducing proportionately the already faint hope that I would find this deer.

I had examined and re-examined every square inch of the Back Side: I was convinced there was no dead deer back there. It occurred to me, with the slimmest of hopes, that this blood-drop had nothing to do with my deer, and that perhaps I had simply overlooked my deer, there at the creek. I hiked back to where I had shot and played it all over again: followed the initial heavy blood sign right down to the creek, then crossed on that ledge, and examined the other side, where still I could find nothing.

THERE WAS STILL A LITTLE BIT OF LIGHT left in the day. I decided to go back to camp and bring Colter along on a leash, to see if he, with his incredible bird-finding nose, might be inspired to investigate the area in such a way as to possibly give me a hint whether the deer had turned and run along the creek bank upstream or downstream. Indeed, it was my hope that if the deer was piled up somewhere nearby, dead under a juniper bush, Colter might point this out to me; that he might pull me over in that direction, tugging on his leash, urging me to investigate an area I might have bypassed.

I took Colter directly to the canyon, where the blood had dried from red to brown. Already it looked like something ancient, even geologic, rather than the legacy of anything that had happened mere hours ago.

Colter dropped his nose to the spot anyway, suddenly electric with interest, and holding his leash, I puzzled over how sage he seemed, in that moment: as if, in that single scent, he was able to delve into and discern that which had happened in the past, as well as casting ahead to the future, and the knowledge not only of where that deer had been, but of where it might yet be.

Stub tail twitching, he followed the trail quickly down to the creek, then snuffled hurriedly left and right; and whether he was nosing out my earlier scent from where I had tracked up and down the creek, or was still parsing out the deer's scent, I had no real way of knowing, although I was grateful for his enthusiasm. As I had done, he hurried across the creek on the rock ledge — the water had already dropped several inches, so that the stone was dimly visible, though the water was still fast and turbulent and crawfish-colored — and hot on the trail now, with me hurrying along behind, still gripping the leash, he ran a few more steps, heading toward the tracked-up sandpit, where I had anticipated the deer to land, but then he stopped, slamming on the brakes so hard that I nearly tripped over him.

So suddenly did he halt, and so confused did he seem, that I thought he might have gotten wind of a sluggish January water moccasin. And like a snake charmer himself, he lifted his broad head and stared back upwind, across to the other side of the creek, across the plunge-pool that sat relatively serene below the little waterfall.

With his muscles beginning to quiver and tense, he lifted one paw, cautious at first — as if he were receiving a contradiction of the senses; as if he could not quite believe that which the natural world was telling him — but then, increasingly confident, he

tucked that left paw all the way tight against his chest and crouched, striking the sudden and sometimes ludicrous-seeming-yet-beautiful pose of a dog on point.

I stood there puzzled for several seconds, wondering if he was only just now picking up the blood-scent that I thought I had already shown him. This wasn't what I wanted at all, and carefully, I tugged on his leash, hoping to entice him into walking farther downstream, hoping that he might stop and sniff at some tiny drop of blood that I had bypassed, some tiny clue that would be able to set me off tracking again in the right direction.

He was staunch, however, and would not release to my tug. His green eyes bulged and burned with an odd mix of confusion and certainty, and I knelt down to pat him on his chest, and to thank him for his intensity, if not his accuracy, and to urge him along. There was so little time left in the day now.

It was only then, down at eye level with him, that I saw the world from his perspective, and saw the deer's antlers sticking up from the center of the mud-water pond below the falls, with only the very can-delabra tips sticking up: five or six of the very tip-tops of the longer tines, with only an inch or two above water, so that at first glance, or no glance, they would have appeared like the tips of a big tree limb that had been washed downstream.

Colter eased his nose forward. The antler-branches were almost close enough to reach out and touch. And though I was looking right at them, and recognized them now as the top inch-tips of antlers, I could not yet reconcile the transition, in my mind, of how the entire body of a huge deer could be reduced now to but an inch, or two inches, of bone. The antlers themselves were almost the same color as the medium in which they now resided.

Still gripping Colter's leash, I eased forward, squinting, and now — as much by faith or hope at first, as by true visual acuity — I could see dimly the outline of the submerged deer, with his underwater silhouette still almost as much a function of imagination as reality.

I thanked Colter and gave general thanks to the deer and to the world, too — I had definitely not found this deer; it had found me, had been delivered to me — and I reached out and gripped the underwater antlers and pulled the deer to shore, dragged it up onto the grass on the other side of the creek, not 30 yards from where I had shot.

It was a huge deer, as large a deer as I had ever killed on the deer pasture, and Colter released himself from his point and began sniffing at the deer, checking it out, running all around it and nosing it, as if surprised and agitated at this strange revelation which he, even with all his millennial innate wisdom, had never previously understood — that creatures like deer and — who knew now? — perhaps even quail and doves and pheasants might be found beneath us, in some other, lower world's layer. I petted him, congratulated him, and sat there in the dusk with our discovery, our little miracle, there in the bluing of twilight, on that cold clear first day of January.

It was a marvel and an amazement to me that a thing I had so desired could be given to me, returned to me, in such dramatic and miraculous fashion, even as the heavier and colder knowledge returned to me all over again that there were other things, much more desired, that would never be forthcoming: that I would have to be forever-after content with memories, thoughts and recollections, and those strange quiet moments of communion when the two worlds, the departed and the still-here, yet occasionally intersect and transact.

I still felt alone, there above the surface, though it was a beautiful surface, the one my mother had brought me out into — and, grateful for that and despite my sorrow, I hauled the deer into the woods and cleaned it, as the men in our family had always done back when she had still been living, and then I started back to camp in darkness, with Colter trotting alongside me, and my rifle in one hand, and with the other, dragging the heavy deer behind. ☆



cont'd from pg. 57 >

**CROCKETT:** KIVY-AM 1290 / 8:15 a.m., KIVY-FM 92.7 / 8:15 a.m.

**DENTON:** KNTU-FM 88.1 / 10:58 a.m., 3:58 p.m., 11:59 p.m.

**DIMMITT:** KDHN-AM 1470 / 12:29 p.m.

**EAGLE PASS:** KINL-FM 92.7 / 3:30 p.m.

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

**EDNA:** KGUL-FM 96.1 / 7:10 a.m.

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

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

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

**FLORESVILLE:** KULB-FM 89.7 / 1:30 p.m.

**FORT STOCKTON:** KFST-AM 860 / 12:55 p.m., KFST-FM 94.3 / 12:55 p.m.

**GAINESVILLE:** KGAF-AM 1580 / 10 a.m.

**GRANBURY:** KPIR-AM 1420 / 4:20 p.m.

**GREENVILLE:** KGV-L-AM 1400 / 8:10 a.m.

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

**HENDERSON:** KZQX-FM 104.7 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 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 7 a.m. Thur.-Sun.

**HUNTSVILLE:** KSHU-FM 90.5 / 12:05 p.m., 5:05 p.m.

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

**JUNCTION:** KMBL-AM 1450 / 6:40 a.m., 3:30 p.m., KOOK-FM 93.5 / 6:40 a.m., 3:30 p.m.

**KERRVILLE:** KRNH-FM 92.3 / 5:31 a.m., 12:57 p.m., 7:35 p.m.; KMBL-AM 1450 / 5:49 a.m., 12:49 p.m., 5:49 p.m.; KERV-AM 1230 / 5:49 a.m., 12:49 p.m., 5:49 p.m.; KRVL-FM 94.3 / 5:49 a.m., 12:49 p.m., 5:49 p.m.

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

**LAMPASAS:** KCYL-FM 102 / 7:10 a.m.; KCY-AM 1450 / 7:10 a.m.

**LAREDO:** KHOY-FM 88.1 / 2 p.m.

**LEVELLAND:** KLVT-AM 1230 / 12:05 p.m.

**LLANO:** KITY-FM 102.9 / throughout the day

**LUBBOCK:** KJTV-AM 950 / 6:45 a.m.

**LUFKIN:** KUEZ-FM 100.1 / 10:40 a.m.; KYBI-FM 101.9 / 10:30 a.m.

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

**MARSHALL:** KCUL-FM 92.3 / 6:12 a.m.; KMHT-FM 103.9 / 6:35 a.m.; KMHT-AM 1450 / 6:35 a.m.

**MESQUITE:** KEOM-FM 88.5 / 5:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m. Mon.-Thu.; 5:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. Fri.)

**MEXIA:** KROX-AM 1590 / 3:15 p.m.; KYCX-FM 104.9 / 3:15 p.m.

**MINEOLA:** KMOO-FM 99.9 / 5:10 p.m.

**MONAHANS:** KLBO-AM 1330 / 6 a.m., noon, 3 p.m.

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

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** KGNB-AM 1420 / 6:52 a.m.

**ODESSA:** KCRS-AM 550 / 6:05 a.m., 5:50 p.m., KOCV-FM 91.3 / 7:37 a.m.

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

**PLAINVIEW:** KVOP-AM 1090 / 7:49 a.m.

**PLEASANTON:** KBUC-FM 95.7 / noon Sat.

**ROCKDALE:** KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:05 a.m., 5:50 a.m., 8:50 p.m.

**SAN ANGELO:** KGKL-AM 960 / throughout the day

**SAN ANTONIO:** KSTX-FM 89.1 / 9:04 p.m.

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

**SONORA:** KHOS-FM 92.1 / 10:13 a.m.; KYXX-FM 94.3 / 2:15 p.m.

**STEPHENVILLE:** KSTV-FM 93.1 / between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m.

**SULPHUR SPRINGS:** KSST-AM 1230 / 2:50 a.m., 11:50 a.m.

**SWEETWATER:** KXOX-FM 96.7 / 7:20 a.m.; KXOX-AM 1240 / 7:20 a.m.

**TEMPLE:** KTEM-AM 1400 / 10:20 a.m.

**TEXARKANA:** KTXK-FM 91.5 / 8 p.m.

**VICTORIA:** KTXN-FM 98.7 / 6:50 a.m.; KZAM-FM 104.7 / 7:10 a.m.

**WICHITA FALLS:** KWFS-AM 1290 / 6:15 a.m., 7:45 a.m.

**WACO:** KBBW-AM 1010 / 5-7 a.m., 1-3 p.m., 5-7 p.m.

**AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN'S INSIDE LINE:** (512) 416-5700 category 6287 (NATR)

**BEDFORD:** K-Meadow, Meadow Creek Elementary / noon

**VIRTUAL RADIO eTUNZ:** <www.etunz.net> / :20 every hour.

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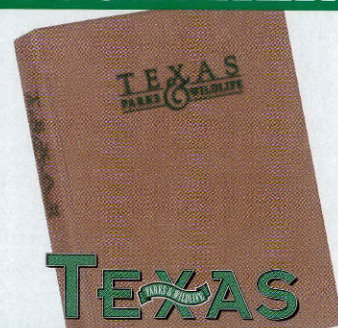
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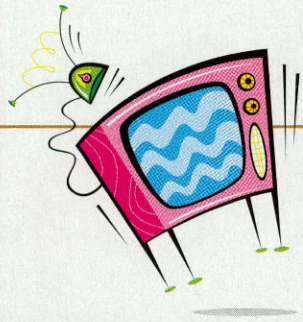
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# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



THE FRONT LINE OF NEWS AND VIEWS

## T E L E V I S I O N

### LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

#### Dec. 26 - Jan. 2, 2005:

Cross-country hand-cycle trek; Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site; animal defense; trout fishing in Texas; cactus flowers

**Jan. 2-9:** The science of striped bass; mythology of snakes; Cooling off at Lake Somerville State Park; navigating by compass; Colorado Bend State Park

**Jan. 9-16:** Shorty Powers; spend the night at Landmark Inn; wild symbols of the state; marine education, from ocean to classroom; airboat ride

**Jan. 16-23:** Archeology of San Jacinto Battleground; alligators rule at Brazos Bend State Park, how to prepare game in the field; growth of shooting sports; under water in the Pedernales

**Jan. 23 - 30:** Exotic animals in the Austin Zoo; Lake Possum Kingdom State Park; fish on the line; animal communication; Barton Warnock Education Center

See how archeology helps interpret the history of the San Jacinto Battleground. Watch the week of Jan. 16-23.



### "TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE"

Winner of 12 Emmy Awards, our television series is broadcast throughout Texas on local PBS affiliates. In stereo with closed captions.

<<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv>>

- AMARILLO:** KACV, Ch. 2 / Sun. noon  
**AUSTIN:** KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 9 a.m.; Mtn. 12:30 p.m. KLRU2, Cable Ch. 20 / Tues. 11 p.m.  
**BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION:** KAMU, Ch. 15 / Thurs. 7 p.m. / Sun. 5 p.m., 10:30 p.m.  
**CORPUS CHRISTI:** KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m. / Fri. 11:30 p.m.  
**DALLAS-FORT WORTH:** KERA, Ch. 13 / Sat. 8 a.m.  
 Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman  
**EL PASO:** KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 3:00 p.m.  
 (rotates with other programs; check listings)  
**HARLINGEN:** KMBH, Ch. 60 / Sun. 5 p.m.  
 Also serving McAllen, Mission, Brownsville  
**HOUSTON:** KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sat. 3 p.m. / Fri. 1 p.m.  
 Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria  
**KILLEEN:** KNCT, Ch. 46 / Sun. 5 p.m.  
 Also serving Temple  
**LUBBOCK:** KTXT, Ch. 5 / Sun. 5:30 p.m.  
**ODESSA-MIDLAND:** KOCV, Ch. 36 / Sat. 5 p.m.  
**SAN ANTONIO & LAREDO:** KLRN, Ch. 9 / Friday noon, Sunday 1:30 p.m.  
**WACO:** KWBU, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3 p.m.

Check local listings. Times and dates are subject to change, especially during PBS membership drives.



## R A D I O

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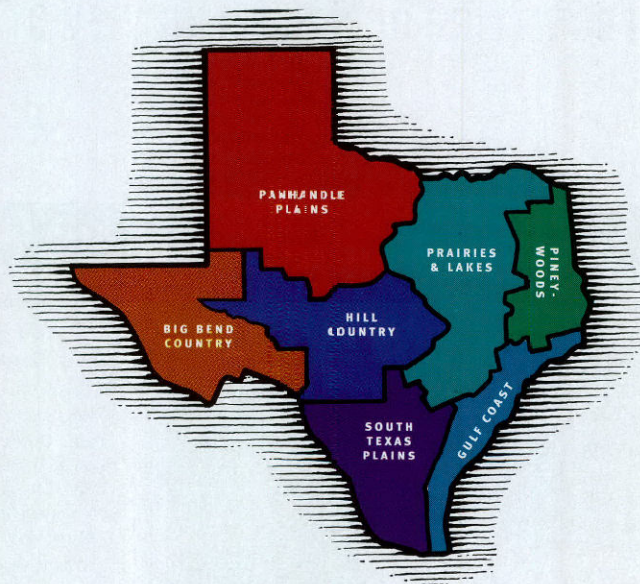
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- ABILENE:** KACU-FM 89.7 / 7:04 a.m., 1:43 p.m., 6 p.m.; KWKC-AM 1340 / 6:30 a.m.  
**ALPINE:** KSRU-AM 1670 / 9 p.m.  
**AMARILLO:** KACV-FM 89.9 / 3:50 p.m.  
**ATLANTA:** KPYN-AM 900 / 7:30 a.m.  
**AUSTIN:** KVET-AM 1300 / between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. Sat.; ESPN Radio KWNX-AM 1260 and KQQA-AM 1530 9:20 a.m. Sun.  
**BEAUMONT:** KLVI-AM 560 / 5:20 a.m.  
**BIG SPRING:** KBST-AM 1490 / 10:55 a.m.  
**BONHAM:** KFYN-AM 1420 / 10:10 a.m. KFYZ-FM 98.3 / 10:10 a.m.  
**BRADY:** KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:20 a.m.; KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:20 a.m.  
**BRIDGEPORT:** KBOC-FM 98.3 / 11:45 a.m.  
**BRYAN:** KZNE-AM 1150 / 5:40 p.m.  
**CANTON:** KVCI-AM 1510 / 8:20 a.m.  
**CANYON:** KWTS-FM 91.1 / noon, 4 p.m., 7 p.m.  
**CARTHAGE:** KGAS-AM 1590 / 6:40 a.m.; KGAS-FM 104.3 / 6:30 a.m.  
**CENTER:** KDET-AM 930 / 5:20 p.m.; KQSI-FM 92.5 / 5:20 p.m.  
**CISCO:** KCER-FM 105.9 / 12:05 p.m.  
**COLUMBUS:** KULM-FM 98.3 / 5:20 a.m.  
**COMANCHE:** KCOM-AM 1550 / 6:30 a.m.  
**COMMERCE:** KETR-FM 88.9 / 10:15 a.m.  
**CORPUS CHRISTI:** KEDT-FM 90.3 / 5:33 p.m.; KFTX-FM 97.5 / 5:30 a.m.; KVRT-FM 90.7 / 5:33 p.m.; KLUX-FM 89.5 / throughout the day

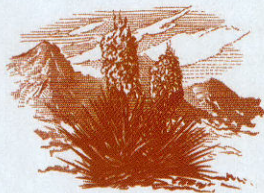
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# GETAWAYS

FROM BIG BEND TO THE BIG THICKET AND THE RED TO THE RIO GRANDE



For more detailed information on outdoor events across the state, visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us) and click on "TPWD Events" in the blue area labeled "In the Parks."



## BIG BEND COUNTRY

**JANUARY:** Desert Garden Tour, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, available by reservation only to groups of six or more, (432) 424-3327

**JANUARY:** Bouldering Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, every Wednesday through Sunday, by prior arrangement, reservations required, (915) 849-6684.

**JANUARY:** Hiking Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, Every Wednesday through Sunday, by prior arrangement, reservations required, (915) 849-6684

**JANUARY:** Pictograph Tours,

Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, Every Wednesday through Sunday, by prior arrangement, reservations required, (915) 849-6684.

**JANUARY:** Full Moon in the Dunes, Monahans Sandhills SP, Monahans, overnight treks offered during full moons, for required reservations and information, e-mail [info@texascamelcorps.com](mailto:info@texascamelcorps.com) or call (866) 6CAMELS, (432) 943-2092

**JANUARY:** Texas Camel Treks, Monahans Sandhills SP, Monahans. For dates, times, fees, reservations and more information, e-mail [info@texascamelcorps.com](mailto:info@texascamelcorps.com) or call toll free (866) 6CAMELS, (432) 943-2092

**JANUARY:** Fate Bell Cave Dwelling, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock, every Wednesday through Sunday, 10-11:30 a.m. and 3-4:30 p.m., tours are subject to cancellation (432) 292-4464

**JANUARY:** White Shaman Tour, Seminole Canyon

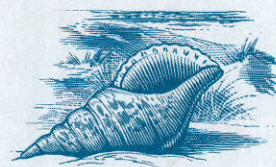
SP&HS, Comstock, every Saturday. Tours subject to cancellation. 12:30-2:30 p.m., (888) 525-9907.

**JANUARY 16:** Birding Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, Also Available Wednesday through Sunday by advance request, subject to guide availability, reservations required, (915) 849-6684.

**JANUARY 22:** Solitario Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., reservations required, (432) 229-3416

**JANUARY 29:** Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., reservations required and will not be taken more than 30 days in advance, tour subject to cancellation, (432) 292-4464

**JANUARY 30:** Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock, reservations required and will not be taken more than 30 days in advance, tour subject to cancellation, (432) 292-4464



## GULF COAST

**JANUARY:** Weekend Nature Programs, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, every Saturday and Sunday, For details check [www.bbspvo.org](http://www.bbspvo.org) or call (979) 553-5101

**JANUARY:** Aquarium and Hatchery Tours, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, every Tuesday through Sunday, hatchery tours by reservation only, free admission and tours, (979) 292-0100

**JANUARY 1:** Site Closure, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, Sea Center Texas will be closed for the New Year's Day holiday, regular hours on Sunday, Jan. 2, (979) 292-0100

**JANUARY 1, 8, 15, 21, 22, 29:** Story Time, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100

**JANUARY 7, 22:** Whooping Crane Bus/Van Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

**JANUARY 8:** Candle Making Demonstration, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHS, West Columbia, (979) 345-4656

**JANUARY 8, 22:** Exploring Sea Life, Galveston Island SP, Galveston, (409) 737-1222

**JANUARY 8, 23:** Beachcombing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

**JANUARY 9:** Birdwatching Hikes, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, 8-10 a.m., for additional park information check out <www.bbspvo.org> or call (979) 553-5101

**JANUARY 9:** History Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

**JANUARY 14:** Friday Morning Birdwatching Hikes, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, for information visit <www.bbspvo.org> or call (979) 553-5101

**JANUARY:** Hard Hat Tour Aboard the Battleship Texas, Battleship Texas SHS, LaPorte, (281) 479-2431 Ext.234

**JANUARY 15:** Bay Walk, Galveston Island SP, Galveston, (409) 737-1222

**JANUARY 21:** Nighttime Wildlife Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215



## HILL COUNTRY

**JANUARY 1:** Crawling Wild

Cave Exploration, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, every Saturday and Sunday, reservations required, (325) 628-3240

**JANUARY:** Gorman Falls Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, every Saturday and Sunday weather permitting, (325) 628-3240

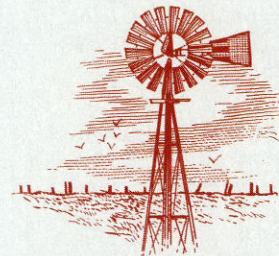
**JANUARY:** Walking Wild Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, reservations recommended, (325) 628-3240

**JANUARY:** Wild Cave Tour, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, reservations required, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680

**JANUARY 15:** Trail Project, Enchanted Rock SNA, every Saturday and Sunday, Fredericksburg, reservations recommended for large groups at <project@friendsofenchantedrock.com> (325) 247-3903

**JANUARY 15:** 12th Annual Kid Fish, Landmark Inn SHS, Castroville, Call for date, no license required but catch limits enforced, (830) 931-2133

**JANUARY 22:** Interpretive Walk, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, (830) 438-2656



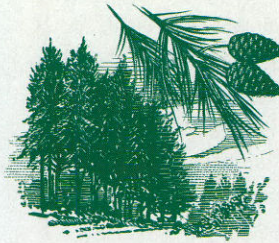
## PANHANDLE PLAINS

**JANUARY:** Interpretive Programs, Abilene SP, Tuscola, reservations required, for information call Paul Seals (325) 572-3204

**JANUARY 8:** Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (325) 949-4757

**JANUARY 15:** Family Fishing Day, Fort Richardson SP&HS & Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway, Jacksboro, (940) 567-3506

**JANUARY 22-23:** Hunter Safety Course, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, registration required, (940) 839-4331



## PINEYWOODS

**JANUARY:** All About Alligators presentation, Huntsville SP, Huntsville. Every Saturday, (936) 295-5644

**JANUARY:** Guided Nature Hikes, Huntsville SP, Huntsville, every Saturday, (936) 295-5644

**JANUARY:** Saturday Evening Programs, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, every Saturday, (409) 384-5231

**JANUARY:** Walk on the Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, every Saturday, (409) 384-5231

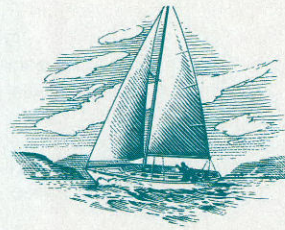
**JANUARY 1:** Fireside Storytelling, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394

**JANUARY 2:** Archeology Tour, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394

**JANUARY 15:** Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, reservations required, (409) 384-5231

**JANUARY 15:** Astronomy, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, weather permitting, (936) 687-2394

**JANUARY 16:** Photo Tour, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394



## PRAIRIES & LAKES

**JANUARY:** Group History Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, by reservation only to groups of 10 or more,

(979) 968-5658

**JANUARY:** Kriesche Brewery Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, also available to groups of 10 or more by reservation, (979) 968-5658

**JANUARY:** Exhibit: Love's Messenger: Courtship in the Victorian Age, Sebastopol House SHS, Seguin, every Friday through Sunday, (830) 379-4833

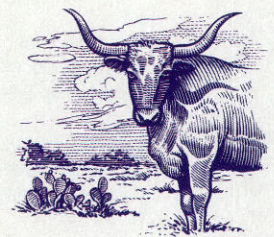
**JANUARY 2, 9:** Kreische House Tour, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, also available to groups of 10 or more by reservation on other dates (979) 968-5658

**JANUARY 8:** Get to Know the Trees, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, call to confirm program, (972) 291-5940. (972) 291-3900

**JANUARY 15:** Cross Timbers Cowboy Campfire Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171

**JANUARY 22:** Traveling the Trails, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, not recommended for children 12 and under, call to confirm program, (972) 291-5940. (972) 291-3900

**JANUARY 29:** Penn Farm Tour, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, call to confirm program, (972) 291-5940, (972) 291-3900



## SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

**JANUARY:** World Birding Center Bird Walk, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, reservations required, every Wednesday and Sunday, (956) 585-1107

**JANUARY:** World Birding Center Interpretive Tram Tours, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, reservations required, (956) 585-1107

**JANUARY 3-7, 10-14:** Gun Deer Either Sex Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, By special drawn permit only, (830) 676-3413

**JANUARY 15-16, 22-23:** Quail Only Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by regular permit or annual public hunting

permit, For more information, call (830) 676-3413

**JANUARY 15, 22, 29:** World Birding Center, Discover Birdwatching, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, reservations required, (956) 585-1107

**JANUARY 29-30:** Youth Javelina Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by special drawn permit only, youth must be accompanied by adult, however only youth may hunt. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., (830) 676-3413

**SP** State Park  
**SHS** State Historical Site  
**SNA** State Natural Area  
**WMA** Wildlife Management Area  
**SFH** State Fish Hatchery

## Restricted Access to State Parks During Hunting Season

A NUMBER OF STATE PARKS WILL OFFER SPECIAL PERMIT HUNTING THIS WINTER. As in the past, the specially controlled public hunts are scheduled for Monday through Friday, a slow time at most parks during winter. Most parks will be open on Saturdays and Sundays for camping, fishing, picnicking and similar activities.

The following schedule lists the times and dates when public access is restricted. Call the park of your choice directly to make sure it will be open on the day you want to visit. Or call Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's information line, (800) 792-1112 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday - Friday.

JAN. 2-7, 9-14:  
 Enchanted Rock SNA  
 (325) 247-3903

JAN. 2-7 :  
 Fairfield Lake SP  
 (903) 389-4514

JAN. 2-7, 9-14:  
 Guadalupe River SP  
 (830) 438-2656

JAN. 2-7, 9-14:  
 South Llano River SP  
 (325) 446-3994

JAN. 2-16:  
 Honey Creek SNA  
 (830) 438-2656

\*JAN. 3-5, 10-12:  
 Lake Houston SP  
 (281) 354-6881

JAN. 3-6, 10-13:  
 Lake Brownwood SP  
 (325) 784-5223

JAN. 3-7, 12-14:  
 Huntsville SP  
 (936) 295-5644

JAN. 3-7, 10-14:  
 Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit  
 (361) 786-3868

JAN. 4-7, 11-14:  
 Colorado Bend SP  
 (325) 628-3240

JAN. 4-7, 11-14:  
 Lost Maples SNA  
 (830) 966-3413

JAN. 5-7, 19-21.:  
 Caprock Canyons SP  
 & Trailway  
 (806) 455-1492

\*JAN. 5-7, 12-14:  
 Inks Lake SP  
 (512) 793-2223

\*JAN. 5-7, 12-14:  
 Longhorn Cavern SP  
 (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

JAN. 9-14, 16-21:  
 Davis Mountains SP  
 (432) 426-3337

JAN. 9-14:  
 Devil's River SNA  
 (830) 395-2133

JAN. 9-14:  
 Lake Whitney SP  
 (254) 694-3793

JAN. 10-13, 24-27:  
 Hill Country SNA  
 (830) 796-4413

JAN. 10-14, 24-28:  
 Pedernales Falls SP  
 (830) 868-7304

\*JAN. 14-16, 28-31:  
 Matagorda Island SP & WMA  
 (361) 983-2215

\*JAN. 15-17, 19-21:  
 Big Bend Ranch SP  
 (432) 229-3416

JAN. 17-20:  
 Lake Brownwood SP  
 (325) 784-5223

JAN. 17-21:  
 Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit  
 (361) 786-3868

JAN. 18-21:  
 Colorado Bend SP  
 (325) 628-3240

JAN. 13-21.:  
 Lost Maples SNA  
 (830) 966-3413

\*JAN. 19-21:  
 Longhorn Cavern SP  
 (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680

\*JAN. 19-21:  
 Inks Lake SP  
 (512) 793-2223

JAN. 24-27:  
 Lake Brownwood SP  
 (325) 784-5223

JAN. 30-FEB. 4:  
 Honey Creek SNA  
 (830) 438-2656

JAN. 31-FEB. 4:  
 Guadalupe River SP  
 (830) 438-2656

\* Partial Restriction, Call for details

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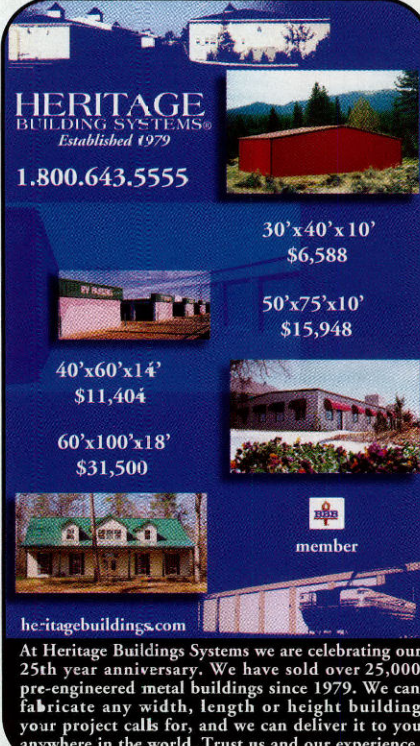
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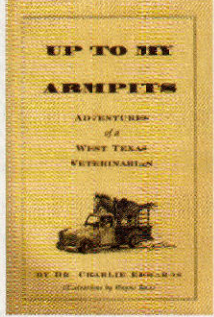
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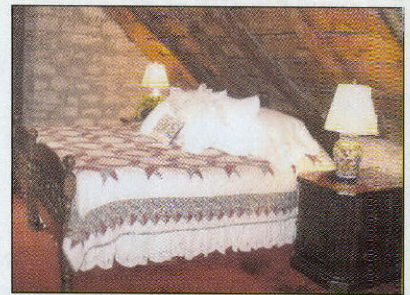
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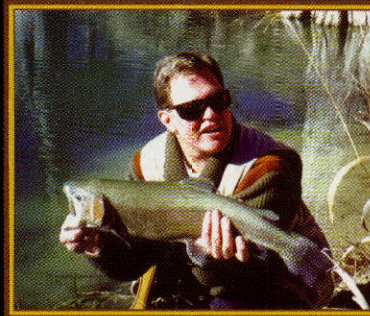
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MK-1 Control Unit (shown)

MK-2 Control Unit (not shown)





# PARTING SHOT

At Lake Fork, fishing guide Dennis States reels in a catch at sunset. Photographer Grady Allen offers this tip for snapping sunsets: Point your spot meter close to the sun but not at the orb itself. "Don't meter the sun," he says. Clouds and dust play an important role in sunset photos. The interplay of light and airborne particles creates unexpected colors and sometimes even golden tones. Some of the best sunset shots occur near volcanoes because of all the dust spewed into the air. While you're unlikely to find a volcano in Texas, we've got plenty of dust — so keep your camera handy as the sun goes down tonight.



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