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TEXAS

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

The Hunt for Big Bass

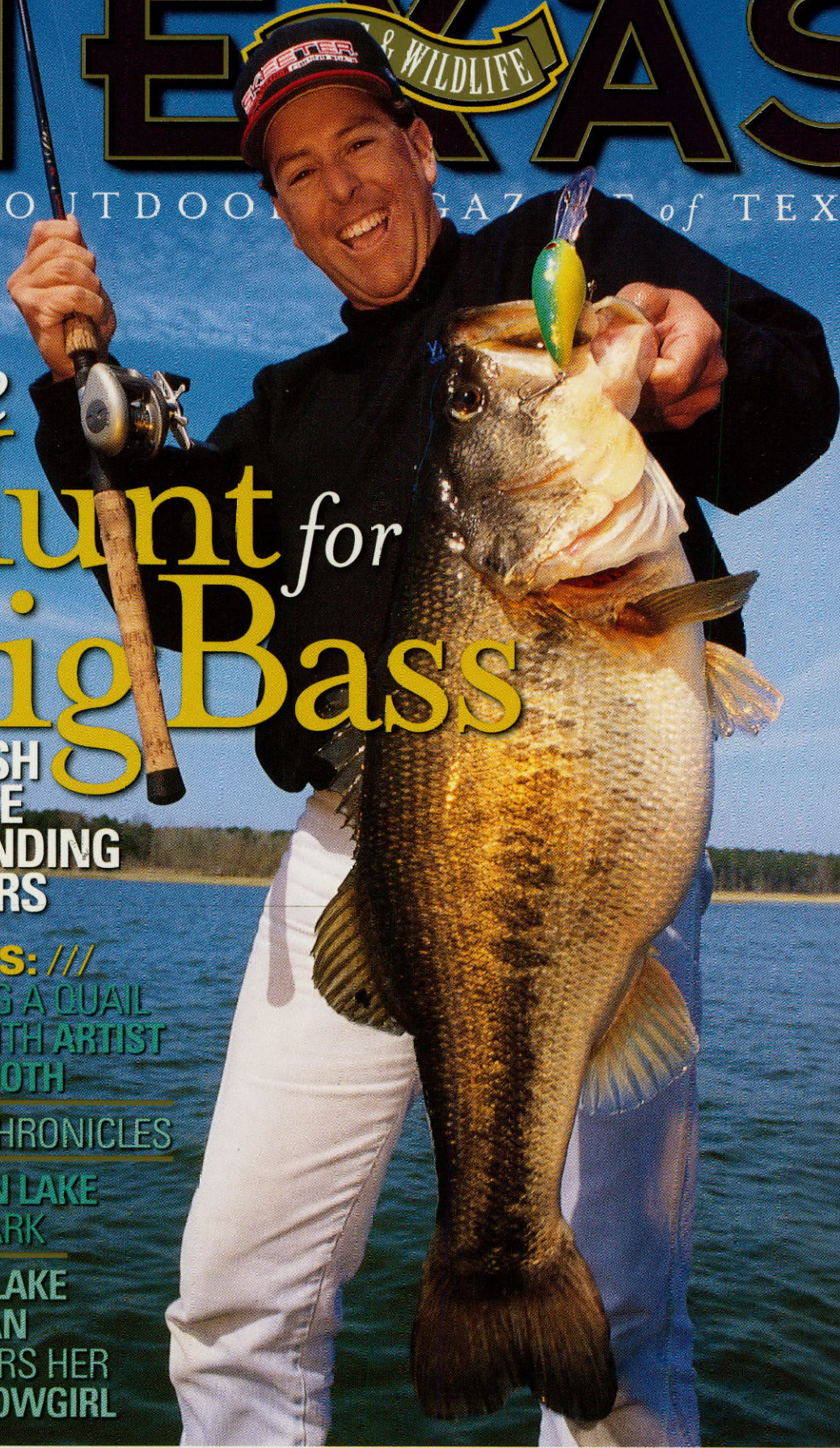
A CRASH COURSE ON LANDING LUNKERS

/// PLUS: ///
PAINTING A QUAIL HUNT WITH ARTIST HERB BOOTH

CADET CHRONICLES

SHELDON LAKE STATE PARK

CAROL FLAKE CHAPMAN DISCOVERS HER INNER COWGIRL



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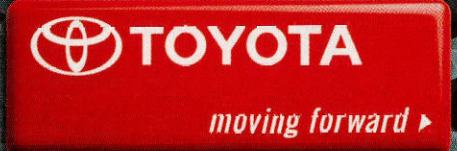
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A man in a red jacket and cap is shown in profile, sitting on a boat and fishing. He is holding a fishing rod and reel. The background is a clear blue sky. The man is wearing a red jacket with black accents on the sleeves and a black and white cap. He is sitting on a red boat seat. The fishing rod is long and thin, extending from the bottom left towards the top left. The reel is blue and silver. The man's hands are on the reel. The overall scene is a classic fishing scene on a boat.

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COVER STORY
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By Larry Hodge

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that helped him catch three 13-pounders.

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BACK: Mud, sweat and tears (well, not too many tears) at the TPWD Game Warden Academy. Page 36. Photo by Earl Nottingham.

This page: A well-trained dog can transform the hunting experience. Read about a memorable quail hunt on page 28. Photo © DavidJSams.com



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The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

FEBRUARY 2005, VOL. 63, NO. 2

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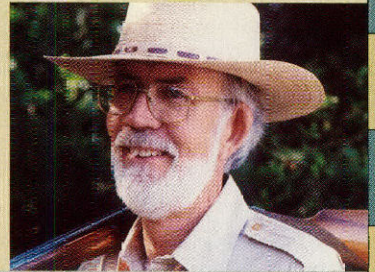
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In the Field

HERB BOOTH

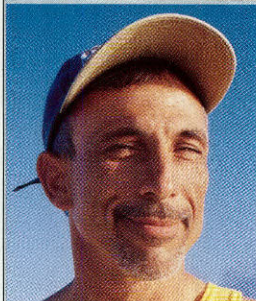
is a native of Colorado, but has enjoyed a 35-year career creating sporting and wildlife paintings from his studio in Rockport, Texas. He calculates that there are something like 2,000 of his paintings hanging in private collections around the country. And he's received tremendous acclaim for his work, gaining the title of "Artist of the Year" from the National Wild Turkey Federation and the same title three times from Texas Ducks Unlimited. Booth's work has appeared in regional and national publications, including *Ducks Unlimited*, *Quail Unlimited* and the *CCA*. He has designed 10 conservation stamp prints for Texas and several conservation organizations. See a selection of his quail hunting paintings starting on page 28.



PAUL A. CAÑADA

is an award-winning writer, photographer and illustrator who is passionate not only about fly fishing but also about photographing working ranch horses and the American cowboy. You'll see more of his longer articles in coming issues, but take a few minutes to look on page 16 for his Skillbuilder article on how to land a fish once you've got it on the hook. As all the "one-that-got-away" stories

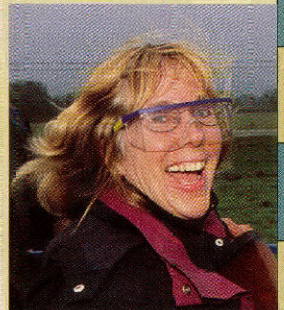
prove, catching a fish — particularly a lunker — is a far cry from just hooking it. In addition to *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, Cañada's work appears in the *Quarter Horse Journal* and *Western Horseman*, but you might have seen his byline in any one of two dozen national or regional publications, including *Dallas Morning News*, *Paint Horse Journal*, *Southern Sporting Journal* and *TIDE*.



CAROL FLAKE CHAPMAN

contributed two very different, but equally engaging, articles to this issue. First, she took part in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Becoming an Outdoors Woman program and writes enthusiastically about that experience in *Discovering My Inner Cowgirl* that starts on page 50. Then she put away her shotgun and fly rod to spend some time in her childhood stomping grounds around Lake Jackson and tells us about it in a *3 Days in the Field* letter from EracSPORT. Chapman's dad is a volunteer at Sea Center Texas,

so she got not just an insider's view, but the family perspective as well. That article starts on page 18. Chapman is a regular contributor to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* and her stories about world travel and outdoor adventure have appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and *The Boston Globe*, among others.



AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF ROBERT L. COOK

You already know that Texas has a great state park system operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; however, you may not realize that this isn't your typical "state park" system. To say that the 120 sites in TPWD's State Parks are "diverse" is a gross understatement. It is an incredibly diverse system in more ways than one.

The most obvious are the parks that we refer to as outdoor recreation parks such as Inks Lake, Cedar Hill, Ray Roberts, Galveston Island, Huntsville, Lake Brownwood, Caddo Lake, Dinosaur Valley, Sea Rim and Big Bend Ranch. However, did you know that there are several historic homes/inns such as Landmark Inn, Varner-Hogg Plantation, Magoffin Home and Fulton Mansion in our "parks" system?


In addition, our system includes incredibly beautiful and unique natural areas such as Enchanted Rock, Lost Maples, Hill Country and Honey Creek. We manage and interpret several historic forts, such as Fort Richardson, Fort Griffin and Fort McKavett. Cabins, group facilities, and picnic areas at more than 30 of our state parks were built out by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s including those at Bastrop, Daingerfield, Palo Duro Canyon and Garner.

Many of our state's most revered historic sites associated with our battle for independence also grace our park system, including San Jacinto, the Fannin Battleground, Monument Hill and Washington-on-the-Brazos. There are numerous outstanding archaeological sites within our park system including the remarkable pictographs found on sites like Seminole Canyon, Hueco Tanks and Devils River. An effort to demonstrate the diversity of sites found in the Texas state park system would not be complete without mentioning the Battleship Texas, the Texas State Railroad, Indian Lodge, the National Museum of the Pacific War and the Wyler Aerial Tramway.

Now, having said all that, this wonderful diversity of parks and sites creates some management and financial responsibilities for all Texans to consider and help deal with. Our state park system is blessed to have a small group of dedicated employees who must excel in a wide diversity of skills and knowledge. However, you don't find parts for a railroad steam engine, or for a battleship, at the local hardware store. An overhaul of one locomotive steam engine costs in excess of one million dollars. The Battleship must be "dry-docked" every 12-15 years at a cost of \$15-\$20 million. The replacement of the water/wastewater system at a typical large park comes in at about \$750,000.

Bottom line, the cost of operating and maintaining this wonderful and diverse system cannot be covered by park entrance fees. Texas' state parks need significant additional financial support from all Texans just to maintain, care for and operate what we have. We have requested additional general revenue in our legislative appropriations request to fund our repair and maintenance projects across the state, and we have requested additional general revenue for needed additional park staff and operating expenses. I am confident that the Texas Legislature will do everything that they can to help. Texas state parks appreciate your continued support and caring involvement; future generations will thank you.

*Texas' state parks
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and operate
what we have.*



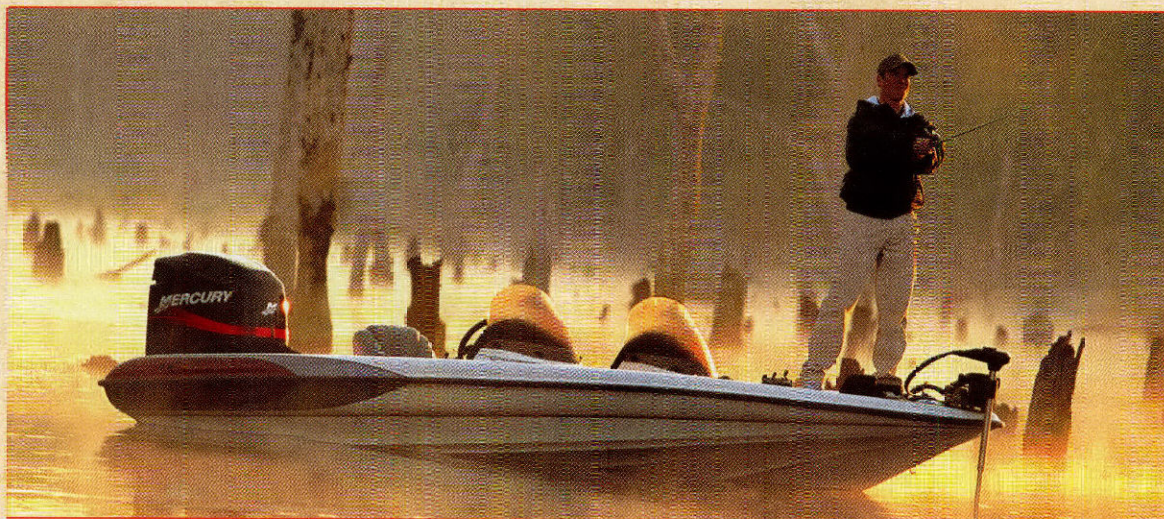
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To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

FOREWORD

The world of bass anglers can be broken down into three distinct groups: casual, tournament and trophy. Casual anglers generally are trying to catch the most fish possible in a day's time. Tournament anglers need to consistently catch a daily limit of bass and then try to cull the smaller fish to achieve the best results (heaviest weight) possible for the day. And then there is trophy fishing. If it takes several days of fishing — or even a whole year — all that matters to this rare and patient breed is catching giant bass. (They say musky fishing is a fish of a thousand casts ... well, catching a 13-pound bass is no different.)

Larry Hodge's article on page 22 explores what it takes to catch a giant bass. It is not easy, but it is very rewarding. One of the motivating factors for me to move to Texas was the opportunity to catch a real trophy bass. I consider myself to be a trophy-bass nut.

In the last 20 years I have fished for giant bass all over the U.S. One of my goals was to catch a world record bass, and if not a world record, then a state record. I lived in a state where it would have been impossible to catch a world record bass, so I pursued a state record smallmouth bass there and often traveled to other states where catching giant largemouth bass was more probable. I have been very close to a state record smallmouth many times, but always just fell a few ounces short. And, I have fished for giant bass on many of the famous California waters such as Casitas and Castaic. While I didn't catch a world record bass, I saw many huge fish (some more than 18 pounds) swimming around the boat as if to taunt me.

Now that I have been in Texas for several months, I wonder what took me so long to realize that this is where I should have been many years ago. I am looking forward to the next few months, as now is the time to hunt for giant bass. I am poring over the data on the ShareLunker and other TPWD Web pages, so I can plan which reservoirs I'll be fishing from now till May. I'll probably start now at Falcon and work my way north to spend as much time as possible at Lake Fork in March and April.

The secret to catching giant bass is to fish in waters that consistently produce the size of fish you're after, fish at the time of year when most big fish are caught and use the proven techniques and lures known to fool these lunkers. If you want to catch a giant bass this spring as much as I do, it's time to hit the water.

Randy Brudnicki

RANDY BRUDNICKI
PUBLISHER

LETTERS

ALL ABOUT ANSON

Just got through with the December 2004 issue. I am the county attorney in Jones County, and was given your magazine because of your article on

Anson Jones. I saw the cover about canvasbacks and loved it. I recalled my trip to the Smithsonian and the exhibit with the endangered canvasbacks in it and was glad to see the population growing.

My brother-in-law, an avid duck hunter, always talked about them. We don't see much of them in West Texas.

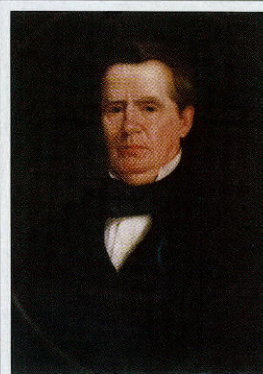
I am an avid deer hunter, and I loved the article about whitetails and the science of what I consider my #1 sport. My poor wife is a hunter-widow during November and December, and I love that she allows it. I wish I could get her to read your article.

Most of all, I loved the article on Anson Jones. I personally am reading his biography, *Anson Jones: The Last President of Texas* by Her-

bert Gambrell. You could say he was a man that fled his Eastern homeland to help turn that tide of misery to make it big in "lesser" country.

But maybe he embodied the spirit of all West Texans: grit, determination and the will to succeed in the face of adversity. We tough it out through drought, too much rain and OPEC's stranglehold on the oil and gas markets. Sounds like what Anson Jones would do. Yes, he was a man haunted by demons in the form of addiction, but he was a leader. Funny that our county was named for a man that never came here.

Funny story told by a former Jones



Maybe he embodied the spirit of all West Texans: grit, determination and the will to succeed in the face of adversity. We tough it out through drought, too much rain and OPEC's stranglehold on the oil and gas markets.

Chad Cowan
Jones County

MAIL CALL

County sheriff Woodrow about the unveiling of the statue of Anson Jones that sits in front of our courthouse. Some friends of his decided to place an empty liquor bottle on the book Jones' hand holds on the statue. When the statue was unveiled, there the bottle sat, to the dismay of the onlookers. It sounded fitting given Jones's history. I encourage all your readers to travel to Jones County and see our beautifully restored courthouse and maybe do some hunting.

CHAD COWAN
Jones County

TEACHING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

This is in response to your article on 4H WHEP in the December issue. The Texas Future Farmers Association also holds a similar wildlife management contest in conjunction with the local conservation districts. We have plant identification sections in which the students have to identify the plants and list if they are preferred foods for a specific species. They also have to complete a habitat evaluation to determine if there is enough food, water and cover for the

species given. They then are tested on their knowledge of Texas game laws and on safety scenarios. They also have to complete a compass and pacing course. Our contest includes high school students. Please mention this to your readers, particularly since one of your regular contributors, Russell Graves, is an ag sciences teacher.

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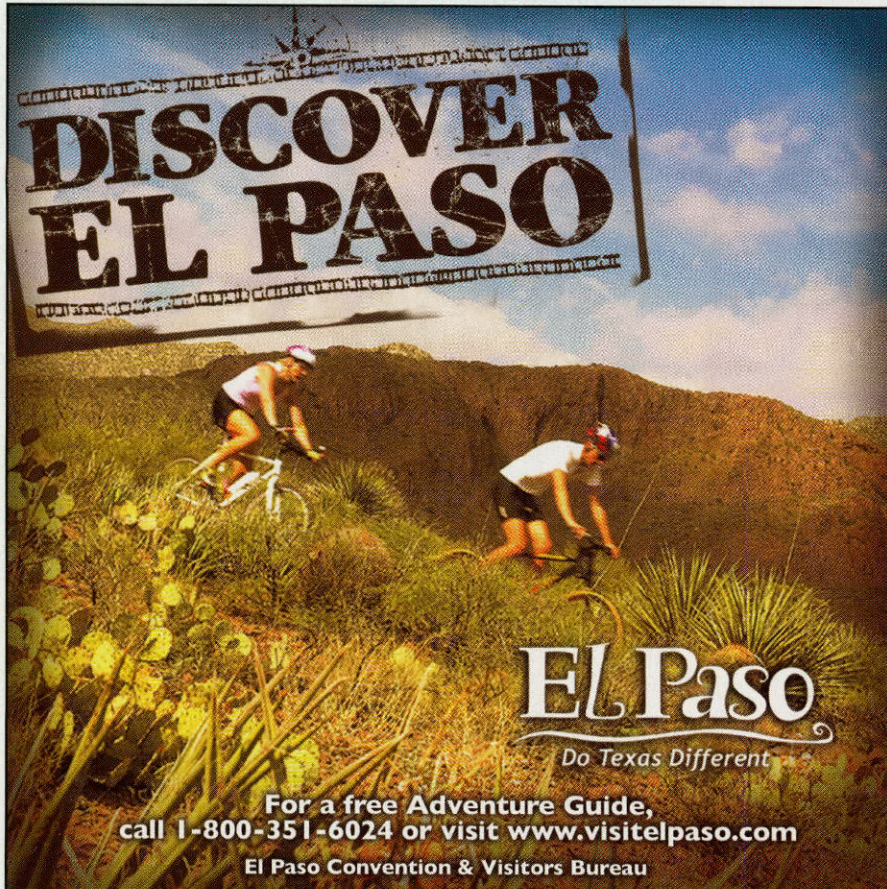
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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

ESCARGOT GONE WILD

Channeled applesnails threaten to gobble up the state's rice crops



Fire ants. Nutria. Feral pigs.

Now meet the channeled applesnail, another potentially invasive species that has federal and state agriculture officials worried. The South American gastropod can grow as large as a tennis ball, reproduce quickly, and consume tender vegetation, including rice seedlings.

Populations of *Pomacea canaliculata* have been found in 12 locations in Texas, including rice fields and irrigation canals near Houston, bayous adjacent to rice fields and in natural streams. A year-long survey — funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture — is underway to determine the snail's distribution and its potential impact on Galveston Bay wetlands and drainage areas.

The snail has already destroyed countless crops in Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam, China, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia and Hawaii.

Approximately 50 species of freshwater applesnails comprise the genus *Pomacea*. They naturally range from Florida and some Caribbean Islands to Central and South America. In the Everglades, endangered kites feed on the native Florida applesnail (*P. paludosa*). Aquarium enthusiasts often buy South American spiketop applesnails (*P. bridgesi*) because they feed on decaying matter.

Applesnails live and breathe underwater through gills, but they also have a lung-like organ that allows them to forage on land. They

But does it taste like chicken? After the channeled applesnail failed as an epicurean delight, it attacked rice crops.

lay bright pink egg masses on solid objects above water. After hatching, applesnails can be sexually mature within 60 days.

Initially, channeled applesnails were brought to Taiwan in the early 1980s by promoters who touted them as Asian escargot. Growers who raised them for the culinary market were guaranteed to get rich; hence, the snail's other common name, the golden applesnail.

Tastewise, the applesnail failed, and farmers lost interest. As a result, many snails escaped or were released. Surviving snails found their way to rice fields, where they continue to reproduce and destroy crops.

Similar devastation by the snails has occurred in Vietnam and Hawaii. Since 1992, the Vietnamese government has banned snail farming and funded expensive campaigns to control their spread and educate people about them. In 2003, Hawaii reported a 17 percent decrease in taro crops, largely due to snail infestations.

Near Houston, a few channeled applesnails, likely released from someone's aquarium, were found in 1989 and '90. No more surfaced until July 2000 when some were discovered in a rice canal between Houston and Galveston. Later, more populations were found at other sites.

In April 2001, Texas outlawed channeled applesnails as a harmful exotic species. The species is among 100 of the world's

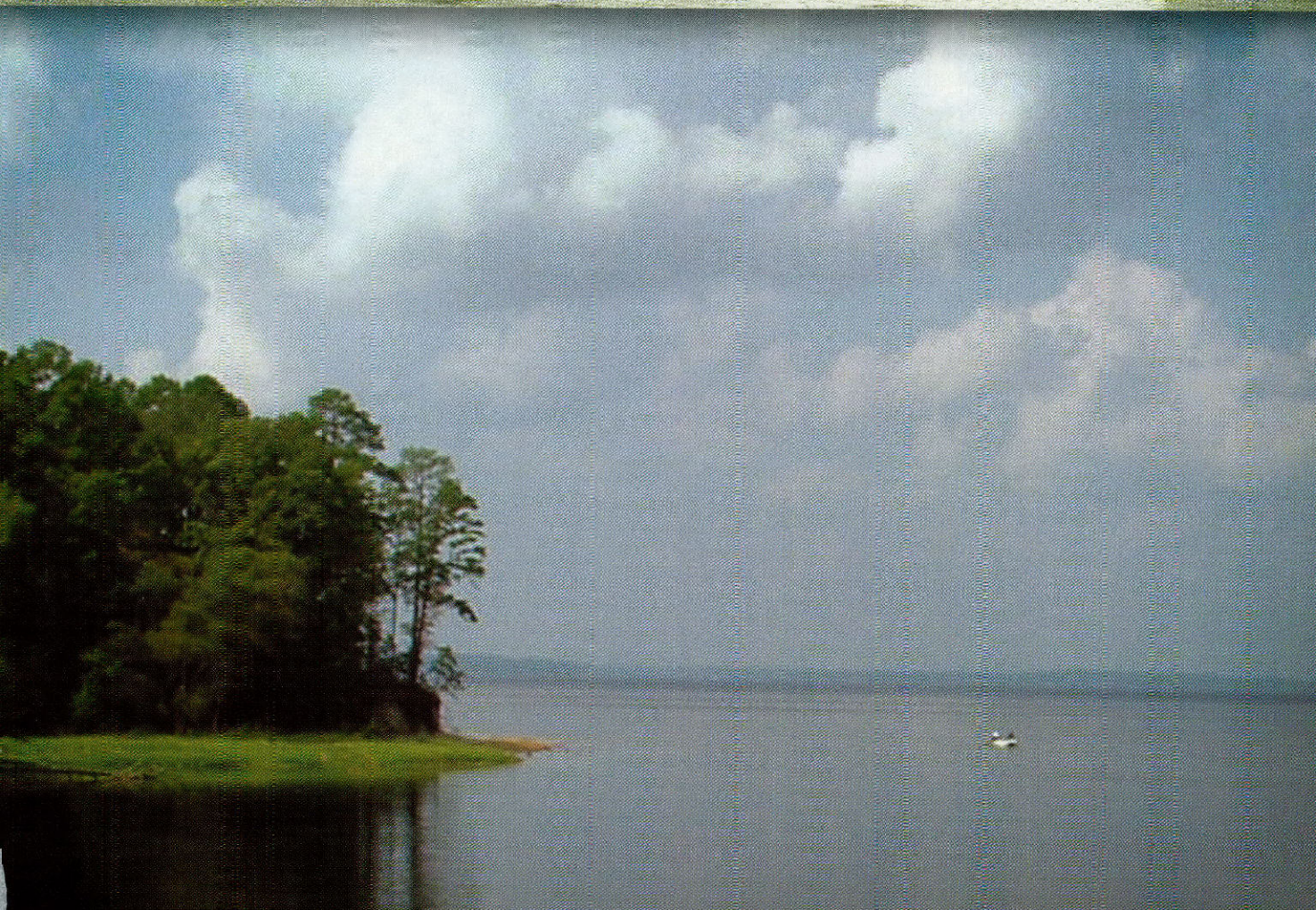
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worst invasive alien species, according to a list compiled by the Invasive Species Specialist Group in New Zealand.

As part of the survey, Dr. Lyubov Burlakova, an adjunct biology professor, and Dr. Alex Karatayev, associate professor at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, are surveying the distribution of snails in Harris, Galveston, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Waller, Chambers and Tarrant counties. Compiled data will be used to project the snail's potential distribution.

In addition, biologists will study the

snail's seasonal population dynamics, including changes in density, size, structure, growth and reproduction rates as well as possible food items. Snail samples will be sent to Dr. Robert Cowie at the University of Hawaii to determine if more than one applesnail species exists in Texas.

Dr. Robert McMahon at the University of Texas in Arlington will also analyze the snail's tolerance to water temperature, salinity, pH levels, and other factors that will help project areas most at risk for applesnail invasions.

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Hatching a New Hatchery

The new Jasper plant will produce 4 million fish annually.



Trying to produce 2 million fish a year at the Jasper State Fish Hatchery is like juggling greased bowling balls while fighting a brush fire with a water pistol. Built in 1932, expanded in 1947 and largely unchanged since, the Jasper hatchery produces nearly 30 percent of the largemouth bass stocked statewide despite a lengthy list of ailments.

The earthen, unlined ponds have silted in and become so shallow that aquatic vegetation is taking over. Less volume in the ponds means fewer fish can be produced. Water gravity-flows into the ponds from a nearby creek, and the difference in elevation is so slight some ponds can't be filled when the creek is low. The water itself is of

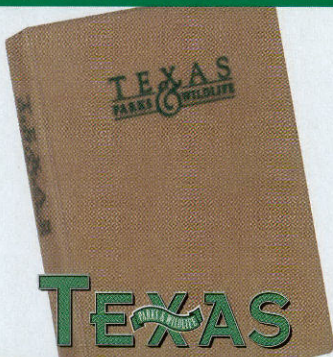
poor quality for fish culture.

The list goes on, but the key point is that production capability is declining at the same time that demand is increasing.

The good news is that the East Texas region supports the building of a new hatchery, because fish going into lakes means dollars flowing into the local economy. Freshwater anglers in Texas generated \$1.49 billion in retail sales in 2001, according to data collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Sam Rayburn Reservoir anglers spend almost \$8 million annually, creating 171 jobs. "We know that the location of this hatchery in East Texas will be a great benefit to the citizens of the entire region and

PHOTO BY LARRY D. HODGE

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to all the people of Texas," says Jasper County Judge Joe Folk.

The new hatchery will be located southeast of the Sam Rayburn Reservoir dam on 200 acres of land currently owned by Temple-Inland, Inc., which will deed the property to TPWD.

"We are currently seeking a professional design team to assist in the programming and design of the hatchery," says TPWD hatchery program chief Gary Saul. "Once we have a team on board, design will take from nine months to a year to complete, and construction should start a few months later."

The new hatchery will produce 4 million fish annually, double the production of the current Jasper plant. Production will consist of largemouth bass, channel catfish, blue catfish, sunfish, hybrid striped bass and possibly other species as the need arises.

"The new hatchery will approximate the size of the current hatchery but will incorporate state-of-the-art technology and dramatically exceed current production," Saul says. "It will provide flexibility to adapt to meeting new fisheries management needs that was not available in the old hatchery."

Building the new hatchery is just one part of an aggressive program to increase efficiency, meet environmental regulations and provide anglers with higher-quality fish. To meet these goals, improvements are also planned at the four other freshwater hatcheries and one research center operated by TPWD. Funding will come primarily from the new \$5 freshwater fishing stamp that was required beginning September 1, 2004. Sale of the stamp is expected to raise \$45 million over 10 years. Another \$5 million will come from communities and corporations interested in keeping their local economies strong.

In addition to providing financial support, communities and organizations may partner with TPWD by offering in-kind services.

"Local community support will leverage the value of our new stamp funds to produce the most cost-effective outcome. The bottom line is that fishing in Texas will be better," says Robert L. Cook, TPWD executive director.

For information on major sponsorship opportunities available in connection with the hatchery improvement program, contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation at (214) 720-1478.

— Larry D. Hodge

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Love's Labour's Lost

Will you be my (Victorian) valentine?

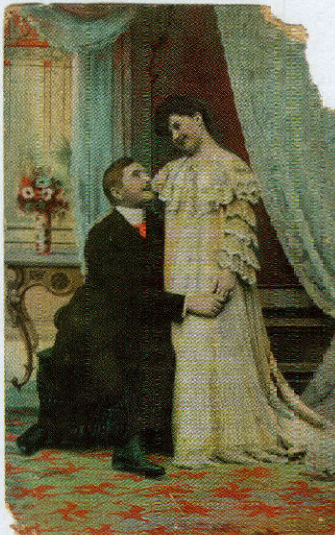
Stumped about how to express your affection to your sweetheart this Valentine's Day? Fear not: Help is on the way. "Love's Messenger: Courtship in the Victorian Age," a new exhibition at Sebastopol House State Historic Site, offers ideas for contemporary Cupids from a more subtle romantic era.

Back before we learned that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, men and women actually shared not only a common planet, but also a common language of courtship. Fans, calling cards, flowers and engraved coins all held specific meanings that both parties understood. Here's a sampling of the tips the exhibit has to offer:

Gentlemen:

• **Say it with flowers.** Red roses, of course, are an enduring and beautiful symbol of love. But to Victorians, the semaphore of flowers extended far beyond red roses. Lily of the valley stood for "a return to happiness," ivy meant "fidelity and friendship." Whatever you do, skip the yellow chrysanthemums. They symbolize "slighted love."

• **Slow down.** In the words of the Irish poet and playwright Oliver Goldsmith, "Love must be taken by stratagem, not by force." Take the huggy buggy, for instance. No, we're not talking about a Victorian diaper wagon. When a Victorian gentleman wanted to get close to a lady, he'd invite her for a ride in this coach. The seat was so narrow, he'd have to put his arm around the woman to drive the horses. Of course, it isn't easy to pull off this maneuver in an SUV or a pickup. But use your imagination, gentlemen. It's your most attractive asset.



Ladies:

• **Try a little subtlety.** A Victorian woman could express dozens of sentiments with the slightest flicker of a fan. If she held her fan in front of her face in her left hand, it meant: "I want to meet you." Moved ever so slightly down to her left ear, it said: "I wish to get rid of you." Of course, you may be eager to tell your date exactly what you think, but try to restrain yourself. A well-bred Victorian lady, in receiving a man's affections, was neither too eager nor too reserved.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEBASTOPOL HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

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PASSPORT TO TEXAS
TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

• **Leave him a note.** No, I don't mean stick a Post-It note on the fridge saying, "Supper's in the oven." Victorian men and women would write their beloved a note, seal it in a lovely envelope, and leave it in a stump or a hollow log while out on a walk. The object of their affections would come along later to retrieve the note from a prearranged spot. Now *that's* romantic.

What's the point of all the subterfuge, you may ask? "A blatant show of affection wasn't proper," says Georgia Davis, site manager at Sebastopol House and co-curator of the exhibit. "So you had to be more creative."

And who knows? One day your romantic efforts may be rewarded when your lady finally closes her fan and holds it to her heart. What in the world will it mean? "You have won my love."

"Love's Messenger" runs through the end of May at Sebastopol House, an 1856 restored Greek Revival House in Seguin. A reception for the exhibit will be held there on Valentine's Day starting at 5 p.m. For more information, call (830) 379-4833, e-mail: sebastopol.house@tpwd.state.tx.us, or go online to: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/sebastop.

— Elaine Robbins

TEXAS READER

Rio Grande

THE RIVER DOMINATES the landscape. In the middle distance, seven horsemen wade their mounts into the sepia-toned water made metallic by the mysterious sunlight reflecting on the water. It's the dust jacket photograph for *Rio Grande* (University of Texas Press, 337 pages, \$29.95 hardcover) and it is a perfect introductory image for this outstanding collection of fiction, journalism, history, geology, photography and even humor. The photograph captures the river's mystique, and this is important because, as editor (and contributor to the collection) Jan Reid writes in his prologue, the river's narrative is a "complex layering of many locales and traditions" and its mystique is "its best hope for salvation." And this book might be the general reader's best hope for gaining an insight into the importance of the great river. From its origins in the mountains of New Mexico to its *boca* in the Gulf, the river is masterfully portrayed by Tony Hillerman, Paul Horgan, John Nichols, Rolando Hinojosa and many others. There's strange humor in Molly Ivins' sketch of the misfortune that befalls the duly elected and much celebrated mayor of Lajitas, an alcoholic goat. The goat isn't pictured, but the well-chosen black-and-white photographs from Laura Gilpin, Ansel Adams, Russell Lee, James Evans and our own Earl Nottingham, are an evocative visual feast. Reid writes that "this story of the Rio Grande is meant to be impressionistic and accumulative, not definitive." Perhaps not definitive but definitely essential. *Rio Grande* is a treasured letter home from the borderlands.

— Charles J. Lohrmann

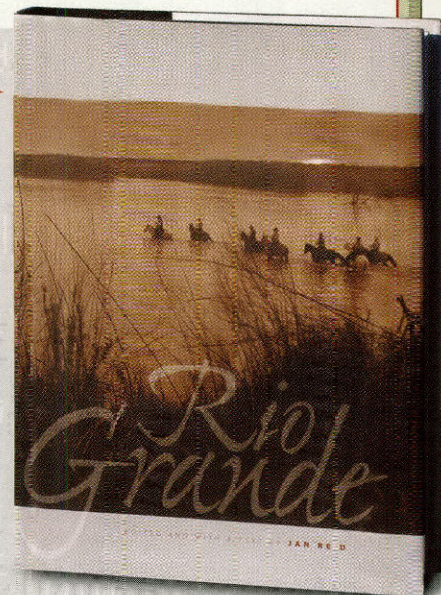


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A Do or Cry Situation

How to keep big bass once they're hooked.



You've got the big one on the hook. Now what do you do? By employing a combination of patience, skill and finesse, you'll be able to actually land the big bass and not just tell another story about the one that got away.

Big bass are rare. For many anglers, hooking up with a giant bass is often a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Understandably, few things hurt as much as hooking a big fish and then losing it. In order to reduce the chances of lost fish, practice the following advice and you're sure to reduce the odds of losing your next trophy fish.

Upon hook set, it's critical to immediately turn the bass upward when fishing in and around cover. In thick hydrilla or timber, it's important to get the fish heading toward the surface. The proper technique is to use both rod and reel, pumping the rod and cranking the reel.

If the fish has stopped coming up, maintain consistent pressure and go to the fish. Anglers shouldn't engage the bass in a tug-of-war when it's in thick cover. Doing so inevitably pulls the fish tightly against the cover and provides it with the leverage it needs to tear the hook free. Often, if you maintain light, consistent pressure, the bass will swim out of the cover on its own or grow tired.

After the fish has been worked away from the cover, use the electric trolling motor to move the boat and fish over deeper water. Understandably, this may be impossible to accomplish when fishing shallow areas with plentiful cover. Still, it's a good idea to learn how the boat's position may help or hinder efforts to land big fish.

Good boat positioning begins before the cast is ever made. Most bass instinctively seek deeper water, not cover, when threatened. Because of this, it's important to position the boat so that the fish has a clear path out and away from the cover. After moving the bass over deeper water and away from cover, allow the fish to tire itself before bringing it to the boat. Many anglers fail to adjust their reel's drag while fighting fish. Set a drag at the beginning of the fight, when the bass is a good distance from the boat. The drag will help wear the fish down, while the rod and line absorb the shock of a hard run. However, when the fish nears the boat and appears ready to land, reduce the drag setting.

While fighting the fish, use the rod to absorb headshakes, jumps, sounds and runs at the boat. Don't make the mistake of dropping the rod tip or placing the rod into the water in hopes of preventing the fish from coming up to the surface. By keeping the rod tip high, anglers are able to keep the line taut and prevent unwanted slack.

Big bass are often caught on big, heavy baits. When a fish jumps, slack in the line usually results in a thrown lure. It's critically important to allow the rod to do its job of absorbing pressure, collecting slack and fighting the fish.

At all costs, avoid constantly changing the angle of resistance. One of the biggest mistakes anglers make is continuously changing the angle of applied pressure in an effort to tire a fish. When sweeping a rod back and forth, the angler is working the hook back and forth, tearing the hole wider. A bigger hole typically results in a hook working free.

The thing to always remember is, bass often inhale a bait. Every time an angler sweeps their rod to lead the fish in a different direction, they risk raking the line across the bass' teeth. It's similar to rubbing the line against a coarse-grade sandpaper — eventually the line frays or breaks and the fish is lost.

Finally, there's nothing wrong with using a net to land a big fish, but many anglers try to "net" the fish — that is, they stab, swipe and fling the net at the bass. The fish needs to be gently led over to the waiting net. Never try to drag or lift the bass into the net. Out of the water, the bass' body weight can tear a hook free. ★

Sure Feet

Lightweight, high-traction shoes help you stay grounded.

Most day-to-day outdoors

activities call for comfortable non-slip footwear, but not necessarily heavy-duty boots designed for technical climbing or the extra support required for traveling with a fully loaded backpack. Now available are shoes designed for wet and dry situations that are light and flexible, offer good arch support and quality construction, and serve as both field and casual sportswear.

In constant use, modern athletic shoes have a rather short life because the internal synthetic materials break down quickly with compression and corrosive moisture. Only a few are built to last longer like the **New Balance Country Walker**. This shoe has durable waterproof uppers, shock absorbing heel and forefoot, plus mid-soles featuring extra flexibility and cushioning. The thick outsoles have a wide, stable platform and aggressive edge-cleats for excellent traction on dry surfaces. (\$79.95, Country Walker, Men's #964, Women's #746, Bass Pro Shops, (800) 227-7776, <www.basspro.com>)

Well-known for high-quality boating shoes, **Sperry** now offers the **Top-Sider Billfish**, a low-profile oxford featuring a molded rubber sole with razor siping (small slits that improve traction) and water channeling grooves for excellent non-marking slip resistance. Designed specifically for gripping wet deck and dock surfaces, they are built to withstand constant wetting/drying cycles and, in a short time, the supple leather tops become form-fitted to individual foot contours. This classic shoe is equally at home aboard ship, for casual dining, or on long walks down the beach and coastal trails. (\$89.95, 3-Eye Billfish #0799023, Sperry Top-Sider, (800) 617-2239, <www.sperrytopsider.com>)

Another multipurpose shoe is the **Irish Setter North Shore Navigators**. These are combination boat/trail shoes that offer good airflow through mesh-covered vents in the bottom of the foot-beds and along the sides that also allow water drainage. They use two-eyelet laces for a positive fit over the arch and can still be pulled on and off as needed. The Navigators are comfortable, well made and cushioned, but have only fair traction on wet

THE GEAR GUY'S STAR RATING:	
New Balance Country Walker	★★★★★
Sperry Top-Sider Billfish	★★★★★
Irish Setter North Shore Navigators	★★★★★
Teva Ricochet II	★★★★★
Justin Field Shoe	★★★★★
★POOR ★★POK ★★★GOOD ★★★★GREAT ★★★★★SUPER	



slick surfaces. (\$89.95, Navigator 2-Eye Oxford, # 2892, Irish Setter, (888) 738-8370. <www.irishsetterboots.com>)

In a combination water and trail shoe, the **Teva Ricochet II** is hard to equal as amphibious footwear. They feature the

advanced technology of Spider Rubber soles that tenaciously grip any surface wet or dry. Built of light yet durable materials, they are hardwearing, fast-drying, and have non-marking outsoles. The uppers are mesh fabric and have multiple adjustments for a snug fit to prevent loss in strong currents making these a great choice for paddlers and canyoneers adventuring in and out of swift waters and up extreme rock faces. (\$80, Ricochet II, style #6772, Teva Sport Sandals, (800) 433-2537, <www.teva.com>)

For a more traditional look and feel, the **Justin Field Shoe** of dark brown oiled cowhide is a low-cut moccasin with a roomy square toe-box, rough textured sole, and padded ankle support. It has classic Euro-styling, sturdy construction, and replaceable soft-foam inserts. Ideal for day treks, these can also be worn as distinctive casual shoes that in a short time will age into old favorites that fit just right. (\$99, Field Shoe, Style #980, Justin Boots, (800) 358-7846, <www.justinboots.com>)

One secret to comfort and longevity in outdoors shoes is the soft, form-fitting athletic inserts that now come standard in many brands. As the shoes age, these synthetic foot-beds compress, become soiled, and should be replaced as needed for renewed cushioning, odor absorption and support. One thing is certain, no two feet are identical, so try on several pairs of these easy walkers and then decide which will make you the most sure-footed in the field. ★

Top: New Balance Country Walker; second: Sperry Top-Sider Billfish; third: Irish Setter North Shore Navigators; fourth: Teva Ricochet II; bottom: Justin Field Shoe.

PHOTOS © GIBBS MILLIKEN

3 Days in the Field / By Carol Flake Chapman

DESTINATION: BRAZOSPORT

TRAVEL TIME FROM :

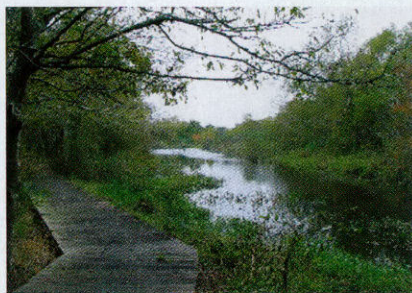
AUSTIN – 3.5 hours / BROWNSVILLE – 5.5 hours / DALLAS – 5 hours / EL PASO – 13.25 hours
HOUSTON – 1 hour / SAN ANTONIO – 4.25 hours / LUBBOCK – 10.5 hours

Muckers' Mecca

Coming home to the mid-Gulf Coast, where the ocean meets a primeval forest brimming with wildlife.

"Look at the size of that water oak," says Warren Pruess, spotting the dark trunk of an enormous forked tree through a tangle of vines. "It could be a champion." Pruess is one of the Brazoria County Muckers, a group of inquisitive naturalists who love to muddy their boots in the area's marshy wildlife preserves, making careful notes of nearly every living thing they encounter, from prodigious trees to reclusive birds and elusive butterflies. I've been hearing about the Muckers for years from my dad, who joined the group's weekly forays a few years ago. We're tramping through Hudson Woods, a recently opened section of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. Though much of the flora is in the process of restoration, it feels like the forest primeval, with its towering, moss-draped oaks and heavy-laden pecan trees. As we near a hidden oxbow lake, an owl flies by so quickly we can't get our binoculars up fast enough to identify it.

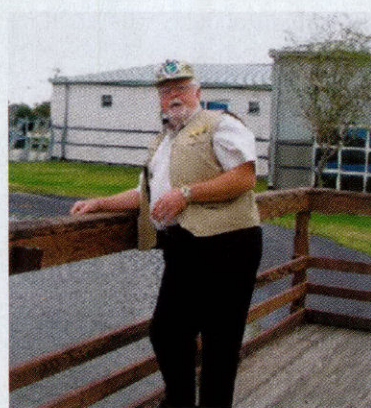
Although I grew up amid this maze of river bottomlands, lakes and marshes along the mid-Gulf Coast, I've been away from it since high school, and my three-day excursion here to my old stomping



grounds feels like a journey of rediscovery. There's so much to see and do, in fact, that I've had to carefully budget my time and map out my itinerary so that I can get to all the new places that have opened up to visitors in recent years.

The area known as Brazosport, which includes my hometown of Lake Jackson as well as the port of Freeport and the beach community of Surfside, is defined by water, from the Gulf of Mexico and its bays and inlets, to the mighty Brazos and the lazy San Bernard Rivers. I grew up along Oyster Creek, one of the many creeks, bayous and densely forested wetlands that punctuate this low-lying coastal prairie. Despite the chemical plants that line parts of the coast, Brazosport has become a haven for birders as well as anglers. Freeport regularly vies with Lake Jackson for top scores for the number of species spotted during the annual Christmas bird count. This is a place that can test your dexterity in switching back and forth from fishing rod to binoculars.

I've chosen Roses and the River, a charming bed-and-breakfast inn on the San Bernard, as my base, and I'm glad of its cozy warmth on this unusually blustery November weekend. My first stop, though, has one of the most controlled environments in the area — for fish, that is. Sea Center Texas is an unusual combination of fish hatchery and aquarium, with a fishing pond and wetland



Roy Morgan, volunteer at Sea Center Texas, above; towering, moss-draped oaks in the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, left; a boardwalk through the refuge, above left.

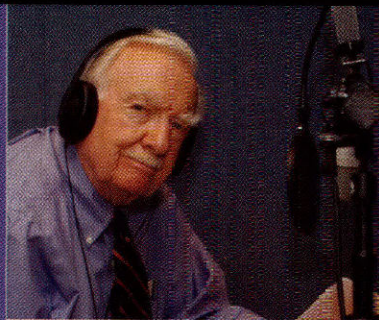
walkway added for good measure. The result of a partnership between Dow Chemical Company, the Gulf Coast Conservation Association and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Sea Center is known for its array of willing and knowledgeable volunteers, including my dad, who enjoys teaching kids how to fish. Today I join a tour with Roy Morgan, who explains how the aquarium exhibits demonstrate the varied marine ecosystems of the mid-Gulf Coast, from the salt



Finding a Balance

“Texas: The State of Water - Finding a Balance”

Narrated by Walter Cronkite Thursday, February 3, 2005 8 p.m.



“Texas: The State of Water – Finding a Balance” is an in-depth, hour-long documentary presented and produced by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The program explores how the steps we take – or do not take – will impact Texas and its people, wildlife and economic vitality for generations to come.

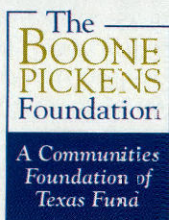
Tune in on Thursday, Feb. 3 at 8 p.m. on these local PBS stations:

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KUHT Houston, Galveston
KLRN San Antonio
KCOS El Paso (8 pm CMT)
KWBU Waco

KOCV Midland, Odessa
KNCT Killeen, Temple
KMBH Harlingen, McAllen,
Brownsville, Mission
KACV Amarillo

KTXT Lubbock
KEDT Corpus Christi
KAMU Bryan,
College Station
KLRU Austin

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For more information: www.texasstateofwater.org



Roses and River, a bed and breakfast inn on the San Bernard, left. Sea Center Texas, opposite above; an aerial view of the Sea Center, opposite below left; Sea Center resident, Gordon the grouper, opposite below right.

marshes and coastal bays to the jetties and deepwater beyond. I make the acquaintance of Sea Center's most famous resident, Gordon the Grouper, whose birth-

day is celebrated at the aquarium. Gordon appears to make eye contact with a group of school kids who are mesmerized by him, and he does an odd little dip, rubbing his fins in the sand, as though taking a bow.

I make my own unexpected eye contact with an enormous redfish, a broodfish looking out on the world from the window of her well-monitored tank inside Sea Center's life-support room. Her offspring, which are hatched in the center's incubation room, will be transported from the center's grow-out ponds to various points along protected bays, including Christmas Bay, where I plan to go fishing the next day.

I can't linger as long as I'd like at Sea Center because I want to make a stop before daylight fades at the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, located on the edge of Lake Jackson along Buffalo Camp Bayou, across from Wilderness Park. The observatory is clearly a work in progress, as director Cecelia Riley points out a wetlands area being created from a former baseball field where Dow Chemical employees once shagged for flies. Already, though, the observatory, which will co-host 2005's Great Texas Birding Classic, has become a stopover for migrating birds, including 12 species of hummingbirds, and a bobcat has been spotted making regular visits to the new pond.

The next morning, I head out to Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge for its annual family day and the grand opening of its new nature center. The pond alongside the wetlands boardwalk is fairly throbbing with activity as moorhens cluck and cackle in the rushes, and a common yellowthroat warbler darts in and out of view. Under the observant eye of volunteer Dennis James, who also happens to be a Mucker, a student dips a net into the water to examine the wiggling varieties of larvae and tiny shrimp that help keep the food chain moving in these still waters. I hurry to the nearby van that will take the next group of visitors along the refuge's paved drive, with stops along ponds and marshes to view the multitude of migrating ducks and geese and busy shorebirds stalking for food. We spot an avocet and a couple of speckle-bellied geese paddling alongside a large flock of snow geese.

That afternoon, the winds are still gusting strongly over Christmas Bay, whose waters look far choppy than usual. The bay, which lies between the marshes of the Brazoria refuge to the north and the sands of Folletts Island and the Gulf to the

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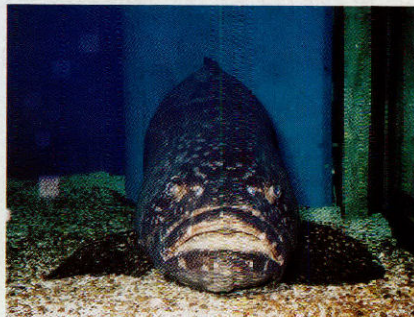
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scouth, has been designated a coastal preserve, and several routes through its sheltered waters have been marked with GPS coordinates on a TPWD paddling-trail map. Tom Betczynski, an expert fisherman who knows the bay intimately, and who keeps his friends' refrigerators full of fresh filets, has joined my dad and me. We put in my dad's bass boat at Ernie's Too, a bathhouse and café adjacent to the cut that also happens to be the first stop on the kayak trail.

We're soon drenched with spray as we make our way along Churchill Channel to the edge of Cold Pass, where Tom says he usually finds redfish. The wind and waves pick up, and we have to retreat to more sheltered waters, where I manage to hook a cattail and a huge oyster shell before finally hooking something more promising, which turns out to be a very lovely redfish. Unfortunately, it's an inch too short to be a keeper, and back it goes into the bay. I find myself wondering if it might even be the offspring of the big mama redfish I had met the day before.

We decide to call it a day for fishing, but my dad and I have one more stop here along the Gulf. We drive to Quintana Beach, further down the coast, where a tiny village lot, maintained by the Houston Audubon Society, has become a regular stopover for an assortment of migrating warblers. There are times, my dad says, when a Hercules Club tree on the lot looks like a Christmas tree, with the bright warblers as ornaments. With such high winds, though, we spot only a hawk too far away to identify and a white-winged dove.

Rain the next day cuts short my trip to the

main San Bernard Wildlife Refuge, where I drive along the partly paved Moccasin Fond road and make a quick foray by foot on the Boat Woods Trail, through palmetto-dotted woods and along quiet ponds and sloughs, where great blue herons and egrets complain loudly at our intrusion. I spot a comical-looking black and white duck, which I can't yet identify. Later, I take refuge indoors at the Lake Jackson Historical Museum, and I recognize a mounted specimen on the wall as the duck I had seen earlier. It turns out to be a bufflehead. The museum also features a good fossil collection, an exhibit of Native American pottery and arrowheads found in the area, and one of the finest shell collections in the country. Soon it will house the reassembled bones of Asiel, a mammoth whose remains were uncovered by a bulldozer near here, in the town of Clute.

The next morning, when I join the Muckers before heading home, I realize that all these woods and waters, which I found so magical as a child, are still as magical, though in a slightly different way I'll never again take them for granted, as I once did. I'm grateful that these wild places are still here for others to come along and rediscover, as I have, perhaps feeling at times that they are following in the footsteps of the Native Americans who once hunted and fished here and watched as the owls and herons took wing. ★

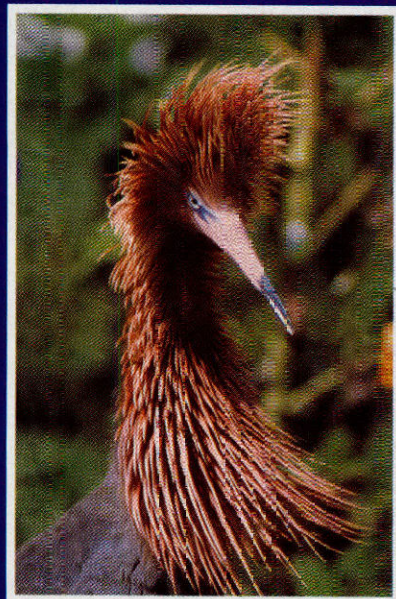
For more information, contact the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce at (979) 265-2505 or visit <www.brazosport.org>; for Sea Center Texas, call (979) 292-0100, or visit <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish> for the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, call (979) 480-0999 or go to <www.gcco.org>.

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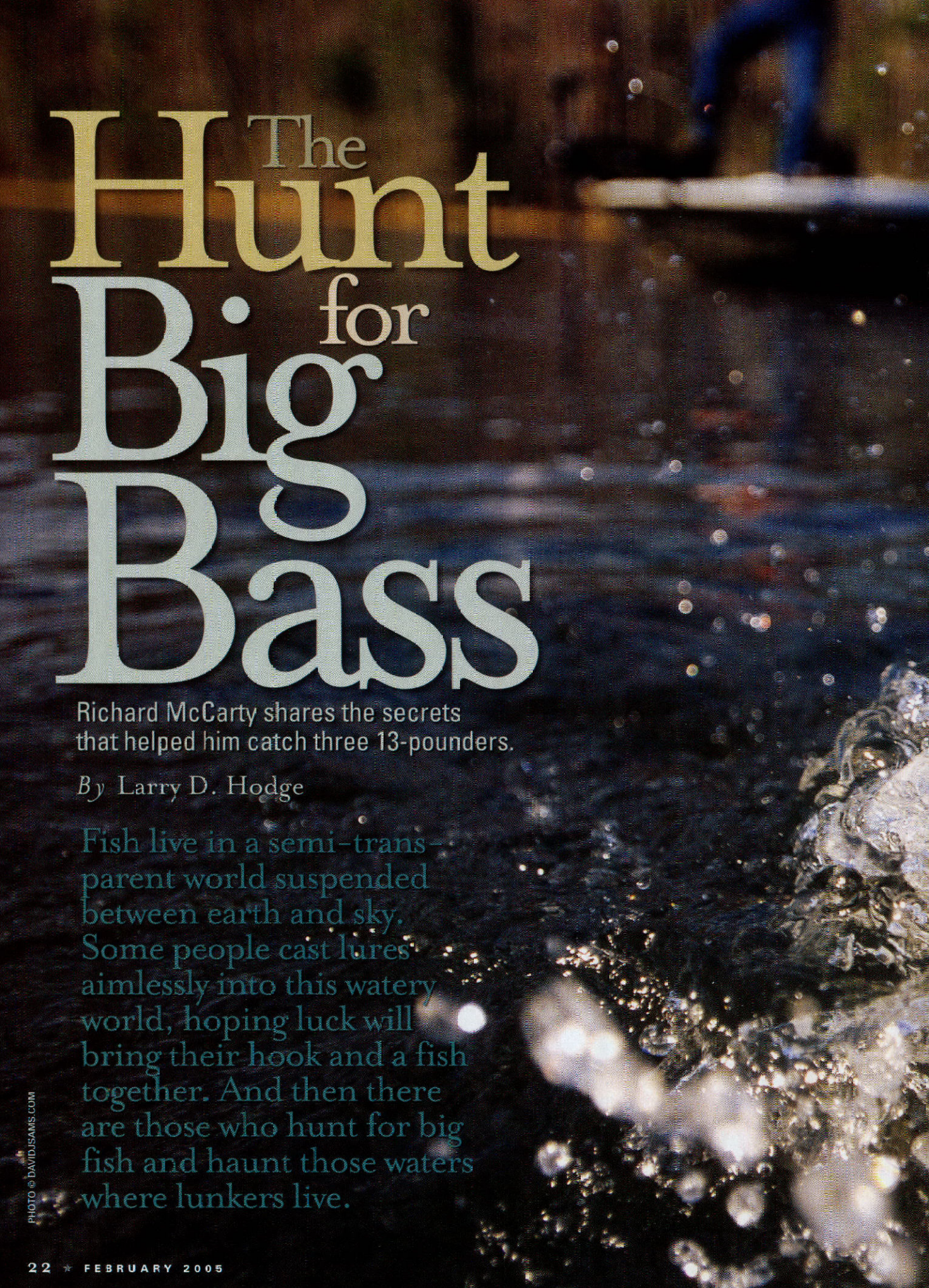


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The Hunt for Big Bass

Richard McCarty shares the secrets that helped him catch three 13-pounders.

By Larry D. Hodge

Fish live in a semi-transparent world suspended between earth and sky. Some people cast lures aimlessly into this watery world, hoping luck will bring their hook and a fish together. And then there are those who hunt for big fish and haunt those waters where lunkers live.



Richard McCarty is a big-fish hunter.

No one has entered more 13-pound-plus largemouth bass into the Budweiser ShareLunker program than McCarty.

And nowhere in Texas are more big bass caught than in Lake Fork. From March 2003 through May 2004, Lake Fork anglers reported catching 2,826 bass weighing 7 pounds or more. Of those, 414 tipped the scales at 10 pounds or better.

But only 18 fish broke the 13-pound barrier that admits largemouths into the ShareLunker program. True trophy bass are really rare, and catching them requires either sheer dumb luck or a special person using the right techniques.

McCarty eases his boat into a sheltered cove among numerous stumps and tree trunks, and smiles. "This place has some big ones," he says quietly. McCarty stares intently at Lake Fork's surface before casting a Pop-R topwater lure among the stumps. "There's a big fish there. I saw it."

We're in a cove along the main lakeshore. Red-winged blackbirds call for a mate from atop cattails along the bank;

he knows is there.

It's a big female on her spawning bed, and she just won't bite.

After half an hour he shakes his head, picks up the rod with the Pop-R and casts. "I'm amazed at how these things can be so stubborn on a day like today," he says. "They should be biting. If I could draw a day to catch a big bass, today would be the day. And I haven't had a single roll."

McCarty makes a third cast, and suddenly lightning strikes — fish lightning. The lure disappears in a boil of water, and the rod instantly horseshoes. "It's a big one," McCarty says. Moments later the scale proves he knows his fish: It weighs in at a fraction more than 9 pounds.

Most people would be thrilled to catch a 9-pound bass, but in McCarty's world,

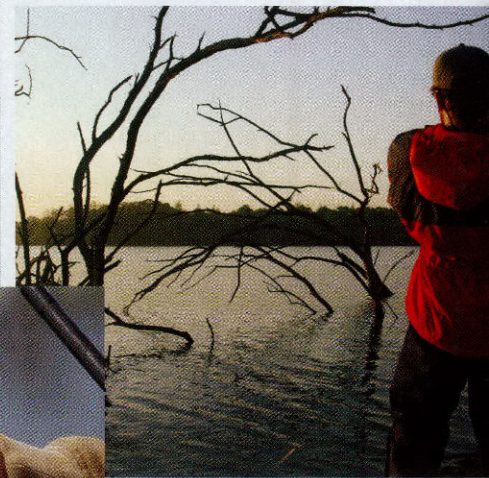
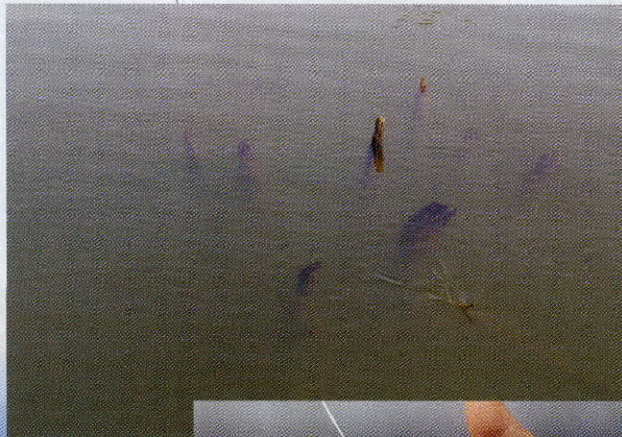
shallow water warms up, and the fish seek it out," McCarty continues. "They have to get into warm water so the eggs they are carrying will mature enough to spawn. As they migrate to the shallows, they get into a zone where we can catch them."

Sometimes, that is.

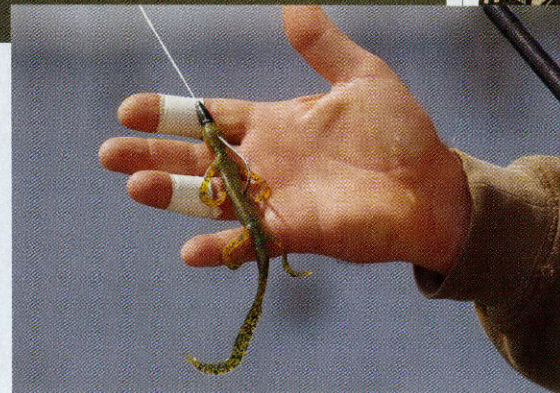
In 17 years of guiding on Lake Fork, McCarty has hooked four fish he is sure weighed 13 pounds or more — an average of one every four years. Catching one is like getting a college degree in bass fishing. Catching three is like getting a doctorate. Four? I'm studying bass fishing under the president of Bass U.

Class continues. "In early morning I throw a topwater bait," McCarty lectures. "I keep a rod rigged with a plastic lizard close at hand in case a big fish blows up on the topwater. Lots of times a bass will slam a moving bait out of anger and show itself, but it's not aggressive enough to eat it. I go right back in there with a lizard, and 30 to 40 percent of the time, I'll catch that fish."

McCarty switches to an orange jerkbait, a Bomber Long A, and continues to work



Angler's logic: Start with an overcast day, far left; select likely bass habitat, above left; choose the best bait, left; make the perfect cast, above; and reel in the lunger, right.



it's a dink. The Lake Fork fishing guide has entered three monster bass into the Budweiser ShareLunker program, and he wants very badly to be the first person to land four.

McCarty slips the bass gently back into the lake and takes a moment to explain what just happened, and why. "The water is about 4 feet deep here, and you can see the fish on occasion," McCarty says. "I saw a lot of these fish several days ago, so I know about where they are." The fish are where they are due to an ancient imperative: the urge to spawn. "In spring the

cattails near the bank. "Fish will bed in 3 to 4 feet of water commonly, and as deep as 6 feet, but it's rare a fish will come out of 6-foot water on this lake and bust a topwater," McCarty says. "I'm trying to get one to come out of that shallower water. There are a lot more fish in here than what I'm catching."

As if to prove his words, two 5-pound males take his lure off the same bed. The larger female follows the lure but won't bite. McCarty kicks it up a notch and ties on his best big bass bait, a Zoom Super Salt Plus 8-inch magnum lizard in water-



just beyond, golf carts purr toward a green on the point of land protecting the cove from south winds. Black-bellied whistling ducks and scissor-tailed flycatchers decorate tree trunks jutting from the water.

Far to the northwest, dark clouds ahead of a cold front emit occasional rumbles of thunder. We're hoping lightning keeps its distance, but the clouds and wind-rippled water are welcome. Fish bite better under those conditions, McCarty says.

McCarty switches to a green plastic lizard and begins fishing a spot the size of a bathtub. He bounces the lizard across the bottom by jiggling the rod tip, rapidly moving it up and down a couple of inches. Often fishing no more than 4 feet from the boat, he studies the water, trying to see the fish



melon candy color. He keeps dropping the bait in front of her nose for half an hour before he gives up. "If I get one bite every hour doing this, I'm more than satisfied, because I know the fish will be a big one," he explains.

Thunder rolls across the lake, and we head for the ramp, but the storm skirts around us. McCarty grins at me through a light rain and says, "It's your call. We can go in or keep fishing." I choose the latter, but the rest of the day brings no more big fish.

Two days later we're back on the lake. A three-quarter moon hangs low in a cloudless sky. "It's going to be a tough day," McCarty announces. "The good news is it will force me to fish places where if I do get a bite, it will probably be a big fish."

McCarty points the nose of the boat at the moon and spurs the herd of gasoline-drinking horses to stampede. As the boat leaps onto plane, his hair streams back and he laughs, "I still enjoy the ride."

Our route takes us up Little Caney Creek, past the spot where Barry St. Clair caught the current state record largemouth bass in 1992, an 18.18-pound brute he

fish places I know of," he says softly. "We need to be quiet in the boat."

McCarty admits he is a fanatic about noise in the boat. "You need to be real sneaky to catch big fish," he explains. "You have to avoid not only noise in the boat but also in lure presentation. If you are hanging up on stuff in the water, you're spooking fish. You have to mentally position fish on the cover and figure out how to get the lure in there without spooking it."

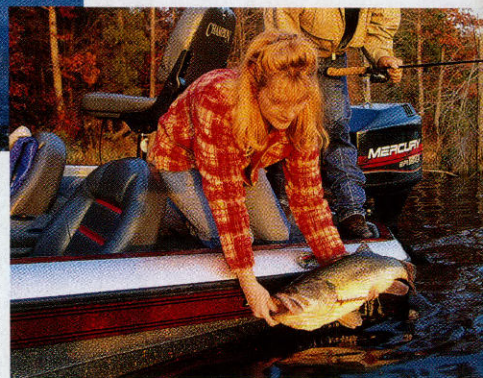
As he pitches a green lizard around tree trunks and stumps, McCarty uses the trolling motor to keep the boat moving. "I'm fishing an old fencerow," he says. "It runs from the creek channel over there up to the shallows. Trees grew all along the fencerow, and the area away from the fence is pretty much devoid of cover, so the fish migrate up and down the

"The fish we fished for on Tuesday are not going to bite. Don't ask me why, they just won't. So I've backed out into 8 to 15 feet of water trying to catch a different group of fish, ones that have not moved up to spawn or have spawned and moved back out of the shallows. A lot of times the fish in this heavier cover will suspend near the top, which makes them hard to catch, but sometimes they will bite if you drop the bait right on top of them."

A 3-pounder nails the lizard as it falls through a tree, and I wonder if McCarty is clairvoyant. "The lizard is a bulky bait," McCarty says, as if reading my mind. "It displaces lots of water, and the fish can find it easily. I get a few more bites on lizards than on jigs, and my success rate on boating fish is better on a lizard. A bass will eat anything it wants to eat, and if it comes down on top of him, he bites.

I think most of my bites in this kind of fishing are reflex bites."

When fishing in heavy cover, McCarty puts on a new plastic bait after every bite. "I don't want to risk a bait being torn and my hook being exposed and hanging up," McCarty reasons.



fencerow on their way to and from the shallows to spawn. I move and don't sit on one spot, because I think fish can sense our presence. I'll move and try to surprise a fish by sneaking up on it."

In contrast to the first day, when he anchored in one spot and threw a lure to the exact same spot 20 or 30 times, McCarty prospects around submerged timber, always on the move. "We had a cold front come through, and we have really high barometric pressure," he says.

He also uses 30-pound test line when fishing a lizard. "Big fish will get wrapped around stuff. I expect a big fish on a lizard and am already down in the cover with

called Marie, the middle name of both his wife and daughter. McCarty throttles down and levers the trolling motor into the water. "We're coming up on one of the best big

SHARELUNKER TRIVIA

- Total number of entries in the program: 364
- Number of public waters contributing fish: 52
- Number of private waters contributing fish: 13
- Year with most entries: 1995 (36)
- Year with fewest entries: 2001 (5)
- Most common first name of angler contributing fish: David (12, followed by 11 Jims, 10 Randys, nine Johns, nine Richards)
- Most common last name of angler contributing fish: Gore and Jones (five each, followed by Taylor, four)
- First woman to contribute a fish to the program: Bernice Rhodes, in 1988.
- Number of entries weighing more than 14 pounds: 124. More than 15 pounds, 20. More than 16 pounds, 11. More than 17 pounds, four. More than 18 pounds, one, Barry St. Clair's state record from 1992.
- Number of fish weighing less than 13 pounds: six. One of these fish was donated to the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center for display. Some were

accepted based on weighing 13 pounds on uncertified scales and were later found to weigh less.

- Smallest fish accepted into the program: 6.5 pounds. This was also the only male accepted into the program. "It was the biggest male largemouth I've ever seen," said David Campbell, "and we used it for spawning."
- Day of week most fish caught: Saturday (74)
- Day of week fewest fish caught: Tuesday (36)
- Number of fish entered into the program anonymously: one
- Length of longest fish entered: 28.5 inches
- Number of fish whose girth exceeded its length: One, and it was caught by Bob Zerr from a private lake in 1987. The 13.1-pound fish was 23.25 inches long and 23.75 inches around — a real "football."
- Youngest fish entered into the program: 6-7 years. This was caught by Troy Johnson Jan. 15, 1998, from Gibbons Creek. Male descendants of this fish are still used in TPWD's Operation World Record breeding program.

Sharing the Wealth

DAVID CAMPBELL, Budweiser Share-Lunker program coordinator wheels the aquatic equivalent of an emergency room crash cart up to the tailgate of a pickup truck carrying a 200-gallon insulated tank equipped with aerator and bottled oxygen. Inside this big bass ambulance swims a fish literally worth its 13 pounds in gold.

Four hours earlier, the fish was an anonymous resident of Lake Fork, hanging out under the Texas 154 Bridge across the lake, eating crappie. Now it's ShareLunker No. 1 of the 2004 season, caught by Frank Hardy of Mineola, a potato-chip route salesman fishing for crappie on his day off.

Fourteen other fish follow before the season closes April 30. Each is met at Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center's

tag can be scanned with a wand much like those used at the supermarket checkout and the fish identified. (Yes, some have been caught more than once.)

The Lunker Bunker (more formally known as the Intensive Care Unit) contains 22 fiberglass tanks, each of which can house one female ShareLunker through the spawning season, when a pure Florida largemouth bass male is put into the tank with her. The resulting eggs — laid on square mats resembling outdoor carpeting — are hatched and the fry stocked back into Texas waters. The ultimate goal is to produce a new world record largemouth bass, but the most immediate effect is to improve the quality of fishing. Texas leads the nation in the number of bass weighing in the teens.

The Edwin L. Cox, Jr., Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center was built around the ShareLunker program. The Athens community pledged \$4.1 million to win the bidding for the site, and the balance of the \$18 million cost came from federal Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration funds. No state money was used for con-

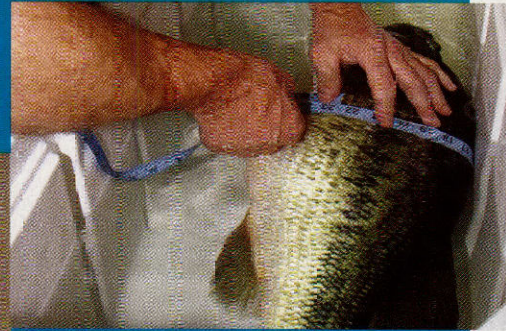
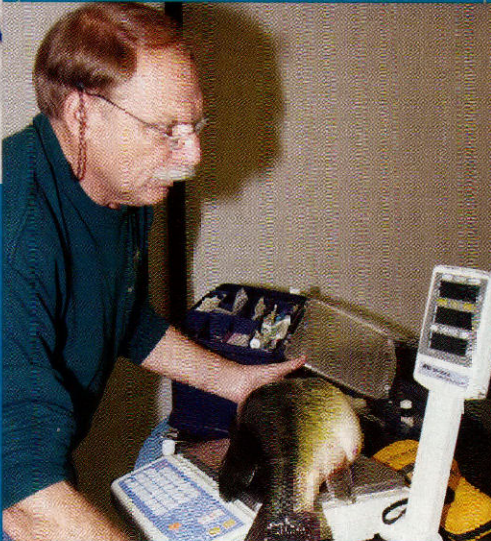
struction. Budweiser has supported the ShareLunker program for 10 years by providing operating funds, prizes for anglers who enter fish into the program and the specially equipped truck used to pick up and return lunkers. Many anglers elect to return their fish to the water after the spawning season.

Fifty-two lakes and 12 bodies of private water have produced ShareLunkers. "I tell people, if you come to Texas and fish in public waters, you have the chance of catching one of these big fish," Campbell says. "Through working with these big fish, we've learned how to manage our fisheries better. I don't believe there is a fishery anywhere else in the country that can match Texas."

It's the willingness of anglers to share their fish with the rest of Texas that impresses Campbell most. "The anglers have made this program," Campbell



Lunker Bunker by a team of biologists, sedated and given a quick checkup. Campbell removes three scales for aging the fish by counting the number of growth rings, one per year. He clips the corner of one fin for DNA analysis, which will determine if it is a Florida or northern largemouth bass. Each fish also gets an injection of antibiotic and has a passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag inserted. This



says. "One of the biggest things I've learned from this program is that people who fish want to help Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. I regard them as the best conservationists in Texas." ★

Information on the Budweiser ShareLunker program, including how to enter a fish and data on all entries to date, can be found at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish/hatchery/tffc/sharelunker.htm.

my lure."

We work the fencerow up one side and down the other, catching only small males. McCarty believes catching a lot of fish keeps many anglers from succeeding at catching really big fish. "If someone has bass patterned on a spinnerbait and is catching a fish out of a bush every third or fourth cast, they don't want to leave that. You may have to do something a little different to catch a big bass. So many people pass up the chance at a big bass to keep catching small ones. I've gone through areas and not seen anything but small bass, turned the boat around and kept quiet, and seen big bass cruise back to their beds."

The day ends with one more lesson in bassology. McCarty takes us into a shallow cove with numerous cleared circles of gravel in 3 feet of water. Each is a bass spawning bed and we are no longer fishing for bass, we are stalking them.

McCarty peets intently into the water as the trolling motor pulls us slowly among tree trunks. He pitches the lizard, reels it in, and says softly, "She's caught and doesn't even know it yet." On the next cast the rod bows, and a 4-pound bass tailwalks to the boat.

Mystified, I ask McCarty to explain what just happened. "I saw the fish and kept searching to find where its bed was," he replies. "Once I did and

pitched the lure on that spot, she turned on it real fast. When they do that, I know I'll catch them."

So what's the secret of catching big bass? "The difference between guys who catch big bass and guys who don't is in their proficiencies with individual lures and how many effective casts they make in a day as opposed to just flailing the water," McCarty says. "The guys who make the most proficient casts in a day will catch more fish."

Only three people — McCarty, Jim Gore and Bill Lozano — have entered three 13-pound-plus fish in the ShareLunker program. And the race is still on to see who will catch number four. ★

THIS PAGE PHOTOS BY LARRY HODGE



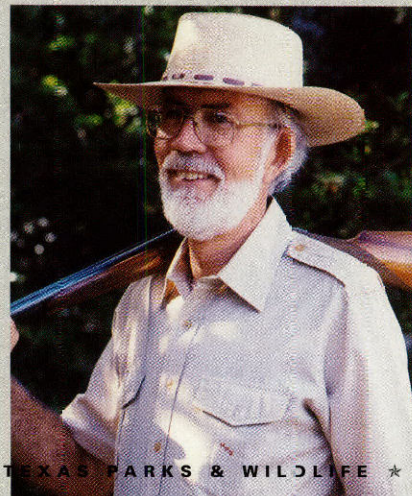
THE LAST BIRDS OF THE HUNT

Renowned wildlife artist
Herb Booth and friends
explore the fine art of
walking, talking and stalking.

By Michael Berryhill
Art by Herb Booth

MY SHOTGUN is already unloaded and in its case in the truck when I barely hear Herb Booth calling from about a hundred yards away: "Birds here! Come on! We've got birds!" By "we" he meant his two-year-old German shorthair pointer, Shirer. How could I be so slovenly as not to follow Booth and the dog through the field instead of heading back to the truck on the dirt road?

I do have excuses. Herb, one of the state's finest outdoor artists, had promised that we would do some walking on this hunt, and he has carried through on that one. For two and a half days we have been walking over the dusty red sands and bunch grass and prickly pear of his leases north of San Angelo, the exact location of which I have promised never to reveal. Many quail hunts are broken up with periods of rest to allow the dogs to recuperate, but on this



Herb Booth, a masterful artist and avid hunter.



Covey Roost

hunt we have 10 pointers. Every hour or so, we turn out a fresh pair. The dogs haven't been worn out, only the hunters — two good friends of Booth's and me.

Although it feels as though my legs have been beaten with a rolling pin, and there's a sharp pain in the top of my pelvis and my ankle is sore where my boot rubbed the wrong way, when we get among birds, my steps quicken. We have been finding birds, but it's been tough. Sometimes the

coveys flush way ahead of us, and the blues have been running and giving the coveys fits. Nevertheless, we have found 18 coveys the first day, another 15 or 16 the second day. A cold front has blown in and the temperature is hovering at a steady 22 degrees. If we weren't walking, we'd be about as inert as the ice in the water tank on the end of Booth's dog trailer.

Quickly I get out the 20-gauge semi-automatic and, with numb fingers, push shells into it. As I walk toward Booth and the dog, two birds flush to my right above the earthen edge of the stock tank, and, flustered, I shoot behind one of them. There go the birds, I think. But when I turn the corner Booth is standing there with a big grin on his face, and Shiner is holding a perfect point, staring intently at the wheat-colored grass. If there are birds there, Shiner has been holding them a long time.

We have all made our share of mistakes on this hunt, dogs and hunters alike. The shot I fired at outlying birds would make many a dog pounce, but not Shiner, not this young dog that may be Booth's great hope for the next 10 years. No, Shiner is holding, and for a charge, the birds are holding, too.

Can there be any kind of hunting where

Bracketed



more things can go wrong, and where when everything goes right, you feel such an intense sense of unity with land, birds, dogs and your hunting partners? It is possible, of course, to hunt quail alone, but it doesn't happen very often. It is a sociable sport. You walk and talk with your friends the way golfers do as they walk on the fairway. In the days we've been together a kind of intimacy has built.

There's Paul Bacon, Herb's friend since their grade-school years in the town of La Junta, in eastern Colorado. Both men belonged to one of the great Explorer Posts in America, Post 2230, home of the nationally known Koshare Indian Dancers. Its founder, James Francis "Buck" Burshears, devoted his life to the troop, from the 1930s until his death, in 1987. The troop does everything else that Boy Scout troops do, but its national distinction is to host the dancers, an elite group within the post that tours the country doing performances in native dance outfits. In 1960, Booth was head chief of the dancers, a position available only to a boy who had reached the highest rank in Scouting — Eagle.

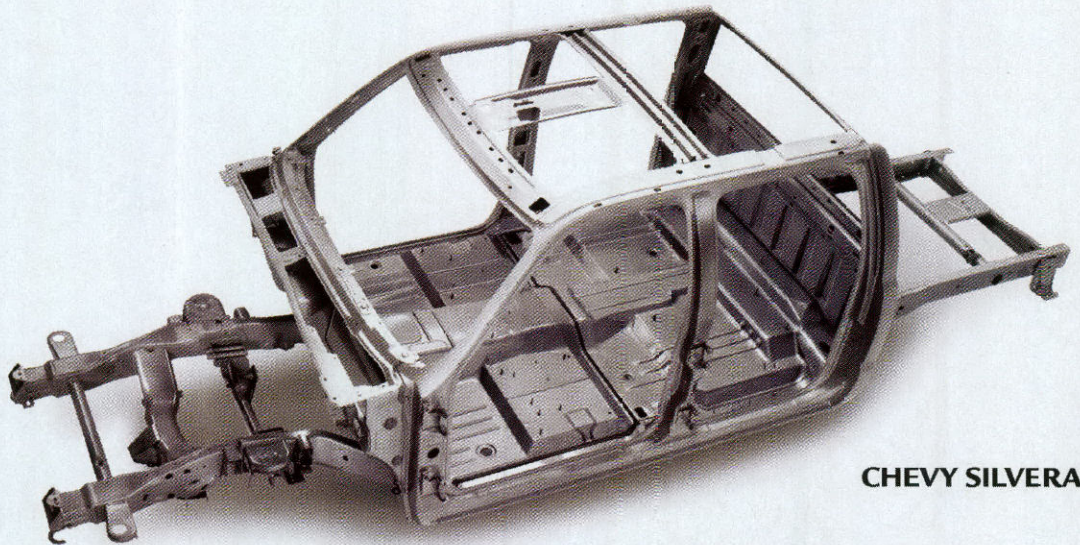
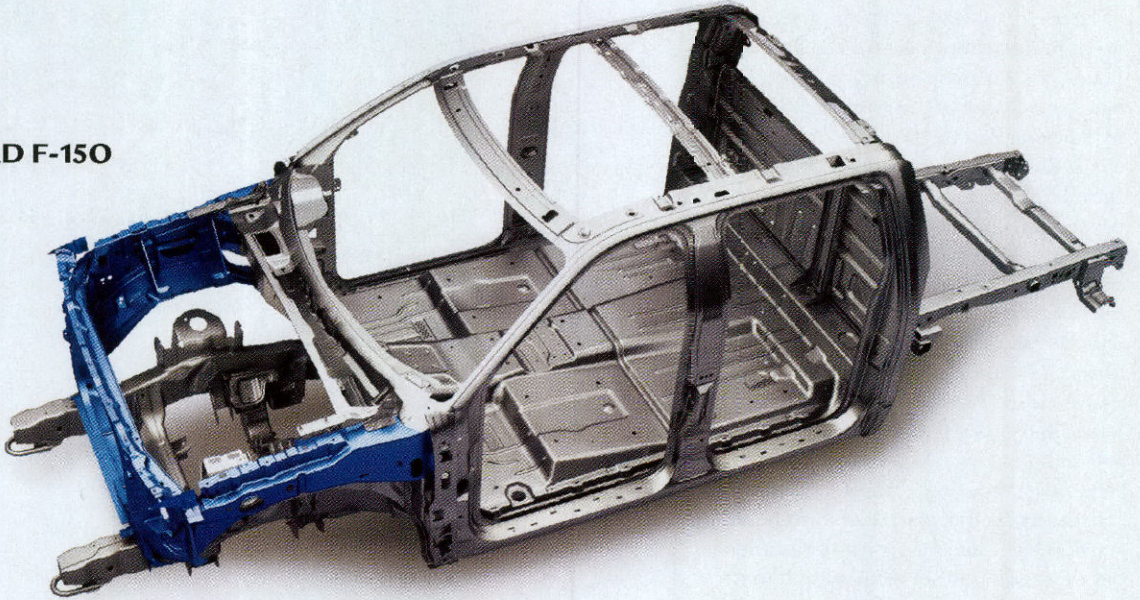
Scouting, of course, has long been an activity that leads boys into the outdoors, but there was another element to it that was formative for Booth. As Burshears took the



Blue Quail Hustle



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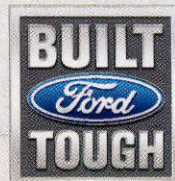
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Because Booth is an avid hunter himself, he always catches the mystery of the hunt, all the little details that might go unnoticed by the casual observer.

Koshare Dancers on tours to Washington and New York City and Santa Fe, he took them to museums and the studios of artists. Booth was disposed to art anyway, Paul Bacon recalls. But actually meeting artists who were making a living helped Booth on his way.

As one of the most respected hunting and wildlife artists in Texas, and in the nation, for that matter, Herb covers the territory from his studio in Rockport. He has been named artist of the year three times by Texas Ducks Unlimited and once by the National Wild Turkey Federation. He has a masterful way with watercolor, and because he is an avid hunter himself, he always catches the

mystery of the hunt, all the little details that might go unnoticed by the casual observer.

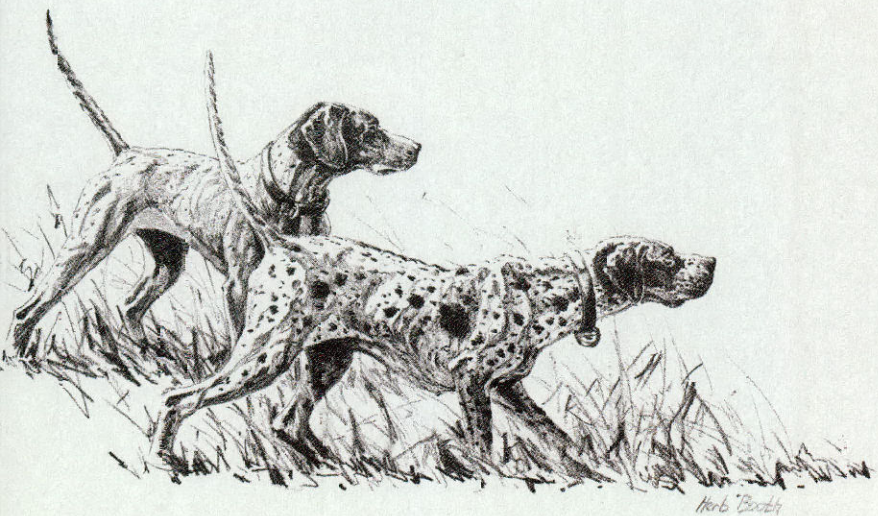
Our other hunting partner, Bill Simon, is a pediatrician from Enid, Oklahoma, site of the Grand National Quail Hunt. Simon first came across Booth when he saw one of his paintings of a quail hunt. It wasn't the standard subject of the men in the field, guns raised as birds thunder out of the brush. This was a scene of a man watering his dog at a South Texas stock tank. That was all it took to persuade Simon that Booth has real feeling for the hunt, which is full of quiet moments as well as the dramatic. Simon is a dog man, and he has brought five down in his dog trailer.

When Bacon and Booth were boys, about the only wing shooting they did was of doves. And although Booth does all sorts of hunting and fishing, quail hunting has become his greatest love. He and his grown son raise German shorthaired pointers, an expensive and time-consuming hobby, and a necessary one if you are serious about quail.

Like raising pointers, quail hunting can be expensive and time-consuming, too. It is not an activity for the uncommitted. But Herb Booth has that commitment. It's about far more than shooting a bird and roasting it slowly with herbs. This is a tribal activity, with Booth as its foremost artistic exponent in Texas.



Windmill Covey



We came back to a little rented farmhouse exhausted each night from trying to keep up with Booth's long-legged gait. If he was tired at all, he never admitted it. We were an older bunch of guys, all in our late 50s except Bill Simon, whose steady walk and sure shot makes it hard to believe that he's past 70.

Companionship is one of the great elements of hunting, maybe the most underrated element. I can recall no worse day in the field than one spent with a sour acquaintance who couldn't settle down to the ritual at hand. But these are good guys. I look at Herb and Paul, friends for something like 50 years. They have gone through losses and triumphs and they are still here together. In conditions of such intimacy, little needs to be said. At breakfast Bacon reminisced with me about what an obsessive artist Herb was, even in grade school. I was sitting at the table cutting a banana and absentmindedly dropping the slices into my cereal. Booth was doing the same, and when he stopped, for some reason we all looked at his bowl. My bowl was a random mess. Herb's bowl contained a perfect symmetrical composition. Booth just couldn't help himself. He's an artist to the bone.

And so we passed three days and got to know each other and came back with birds and, most of all, memories. Hunting still exists, I think, so we can tell stories about it, in words or in pictures.

I walk toward Shiner, who is staring as intently at the grass as a cop stares at a suspect, knowing he is guilty. This is the finest bit of dog work we've seen. I know I shouldn't be looking at the grass where the dog is staring. The birds are so well buried I won't be able to see them. I should look out away from the point, and get ready. No time to load another shell. Besides, I've still got two shots in the gun, all I can reasonably expect to shoot on a covey rise. In ten minutes I'll be driving out of here to go home. These are the last birds of the hunt.

As I walk towards Booth, the scene could be straight out of one of his paintings. Under a cold, gray sky with red rim rock in the background, a tall lanky hunter with a short, white beard watches in admiration as his pointer steadily holds birds in the tawny grass. A plume of breath floats in the air. It is one of those moments frozen in time: that moment before the birds flush. ★

Herb Booth's paintings, original graphics and limited edition prints are available through his studio in Rockport, Texas. (361) 729-3165; email: hbooth@the-1.net and <www.herbbooth.com>





THE **CADET** CHRONICLES

SIX MONTHS OF
MUD, SWEAT AND
TEARS AT THE
WARDEN ACADEMY



By Dan Morrison

THE 38 MEN AND TWO WOMEN gathered in the small classroom in a nondescript two-story building just off 51st Street in Austin now all have the same first name: Cadet. And if any of the new Texas Game Warden Academy recruits think the job is primarily going to be about saving cuddly furry animals, they are quickly disabused of that notion.



“This is a law-enforcement job,” Chief Randy Odom sternly tells the recruits. “This is not about protecting Bambi. We work with people. Your survival depends on knowing how to understand people. If there is one animal that is unpredictable, it is a person.”

This would be the last cadet class overseen by Colonel James Stinebaugh, who retired in January from his post as the director of law enforcement for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He is a compact man, fit and trim, friendly, but no-nonsense. An ex-marine, he keeps a framed image of Chesty Puller, the most famous and revered of all Marines, on his office wall. In 1969, Stinebaugh arrested the infamous Duke of Duval, George Parr, for hunting deer at night. Shortly thereafter, following a foiled attempt on his life, Stinebaugh was transferred (over his objection) for his own safety. He became a federal game warden and, in 1976 and 1977, he investigated the killing of bald eagles from helicopters in the Hill Country, ultimately charging a number of ranchers as well as several government officials. This case was described in detail in the 1991 book, *Incipient At Eagle Ranch*, by Donald C. Schueler. Though polite to a fault, Stinebaugh is a man you do not want to cross. The fact that someone was willing to kill him to prevent him from doing his job does not seem to faze him much at all.

Stinebaugh went through the Game Warden Academy 37 years ago, and he is the first to admit things are different than when he was a cadet. “I think the mission has significantly changed because of the world we live in today,” he says. The world has become a more dangerous place, and Texas game wardens have had to adjust accordingly, which is reflected in the train-

ing they receive. “Our people catch bank robbers, and are occasionally involved with narcotics cases,” Stinebaugh explains. “I would like to think that the public would feel better knowing that the game wardens are well trained, and not just somebody who is out there walking around checking a fishing license.” They still learn how to check fishing licenses at the academy, of course, but these days they learn a lot more also.

It is a dreary and overcast day when the recruits for the 50th class of the Texas Game

“I would like to think that the public would feel better knowing that the game wardens are well trained, and not just somebody who is out there walking around checking a fishing license,” says Col. James Stinebaugh.

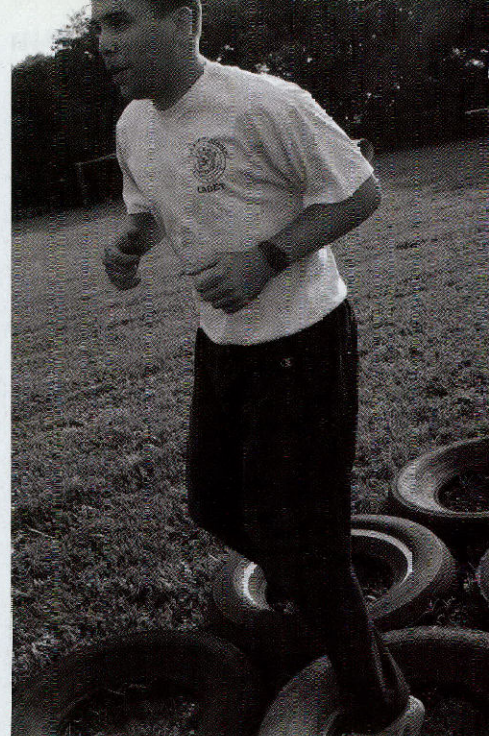
Warden Academy report in the first week of January. The academy barracks, the upper floor of the training building, will be home for the next six months for these cadets. Not surprisingly, many seem a bit confused as they listen carefully to instructions from Cadet Coordinator Lt. Gary Teeler and Health and Wellness Instructor Lt. Cirida Brooks on how to organize the gear handed out to them in

large black duffel bags. The recruits wear their new uniforms, black BDU trousers and T-shirts, with black leather boots.

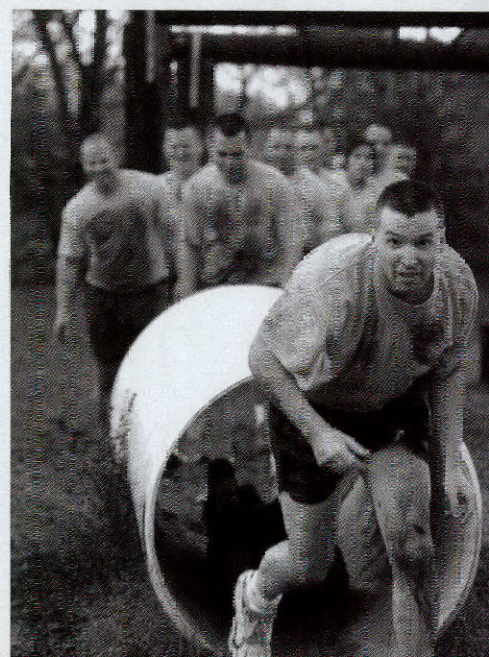
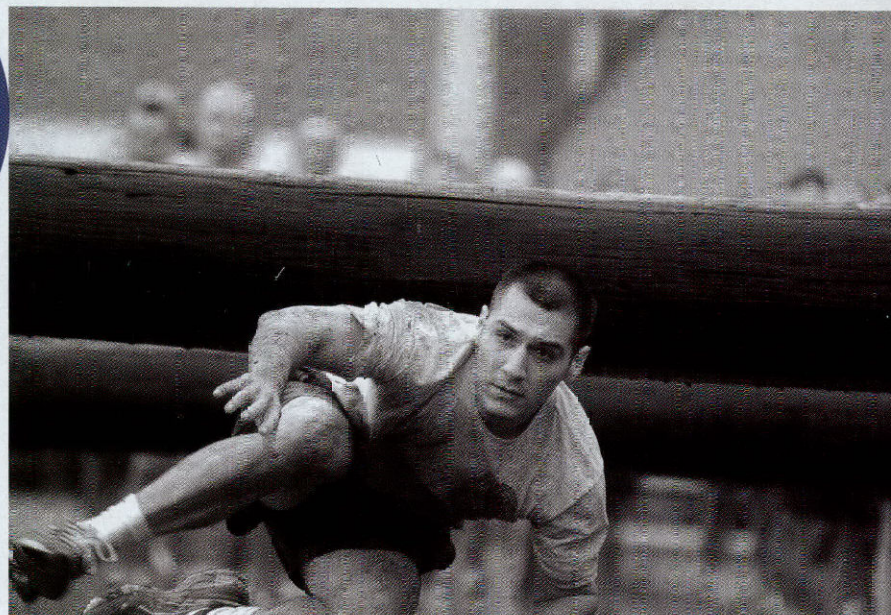
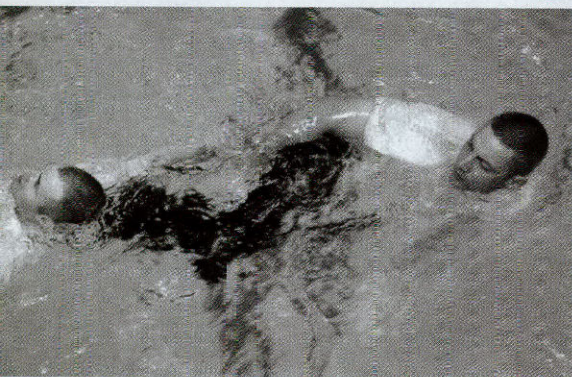
“Grab a bag and inventory everything in it,” Lt. Teeler instructs the cadets. “If you’re not sure about something on your list, just circle it and we’ll come by and clarify it for you.” Each recruit begins going through all the gear in his or her duffel bag and checks items off a list. Not everyone is sure what everything in the bag is for. One recruit holds up blousing bands, which are similar to large rubber bands and used to keep their trouser legs rolled up and tucked just above the top of their boots. “What are these?” he asks, to no one in particular.

The recruits seem relatively fit, with a couple of notable exceptions who don’t appear to have done any pushups or jogged any mileage in recent memory and almost all have had the foresight to get a regulation military high-and-tight haircut before reporting to the academy. The youngest recruit is 23 years old; the oldest is 50, with the average age just over 29. A few have served in the military, and some are former law-enforcement officers. All have a college degree, a prerequisite for the job. In addition to their uniforms and gear, the recruits receive several books: among them the *Wildlife Forensic Field Manual*; the *Texas Criminal Law Manual*; the *Motor Vehicle Handbook*; *Elements of a Crime*; the *Texas Saltwater Fish Identification Pocket Guide*; and the *Texas Freshwater Fish Identification Pocket Guide*. After they inventory all the items, the recruits move





At the academy, the recruits begin their initiation into the world of law enforcement, where they are no longer civilians yet not quite military personnel either. On the continuum, however, they are now definitely closer to the military end than the civilian end.



upstairs to their assigned living quarters, two cadets per room.

The next morning, they assemble in the classroom, speaking quietly to each other. Lt. Teeler enters and instructs them on the proper protocol for addressing the instructors and all visiting game warden officers. "You will respond with a 'Yes sir!' or a 'No sir!'" Lt. Teeler tells them. He then has them practice jumping to attention beside their desk, a move they will be required to make whenever an officer enters the room — like when Chief Randy Odom arrives to welcome the new class. As Chief Odom marches into the room, a recruit near the front yells, "Ten-hut!" and all 40 students jump upright, stand ramrod straight, with their arms held stiffly by their side. Some, veterans of the military, perform the maneuver crisply; others still need a little work. Chief Odom steps to the podium at the front of the class, looks over his new charges, and says with just a hint of a smile, "Good morning, class."

"Good morning, sir!" the recruits shout in unison. "Be seated," Odom replies.

In these first days at the academy, the recruits begin their initiation into the world of law enforcement, where they are no longer civilians yet not quite military per-

to deal with the media.

For the next 90 minutes, Chief Odom gives a speech that is part motivation, part welcome and part warning. "The academy demands compliance to rules," Chief Odom says sternly, "There will be no excuse for failure to comply with academy rules." The cadets will live in the barracks Monday through Friday, with weekends off to be with their families. Beds made up at all times to military regulations. Boots and shoes shined at all times. No alcohol in the building. No tobacco products inside the building. "This is not your house," Chief Odom tells the class. "There will be no noise from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. This is set aside as quiet time. No phone calls. No laundry. No showers. Quiet. Cadets must knock before entering a room. You have to knock and be invited in." That rule only applies to cadets. "Instructors may enter when they want," Chief Odom says. "Inspections will be made frequently and unannounced." The chief believes in strict discipline, but he is not a heartless man. "Family photos are permissible on your desk in your room," he tells the class.

There are a few cadets who are unprepared for the boot camp atmosphere of the academy. "We do get quite a few recruits who don't know what they're getting into," explains Lt.

try this. And I always thought it was an unobtainable goal." Todd was accepted into the academy on his first application.

Like Todd, Cadet Joann Garza, one of only two women in this class, also attended a police academy before applying to become a game warden. Garza, who has a master's degree from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, worked for the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission in Brownsville. "With the TABC, I went through a private police academy, with the Brownsville Police Department," she says. "I was going through their police academy so I could promote up in TABC to become an agent. And while I was there I was able to see all the other federal agencies, Customs, Immigration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife. And my initial interest was with U.S. Fish and Wildlife. And then I met a game warden and saw what they did." Like many cadets, Garza rode with a game warden before applying to the academy. Like Todd, she was accepted on her first try. And like many of the cadets, Garza expresses her love for the outdoor life. "Growing up, my dad owned some property near a river. So we would always go out there to go camping and fishing." She is not a hunter, but she doesn't believe that will be a disadvantage. "I've never been hunting," she admits. "I've never had an

"When people become interested in applying to the academy, we recommend that they work with their local game warden. We want people to know what they're in for, so we don't lose them along the way," says Lt. Gary Teeler.

sonnel either. On the continuum, however, they are now definitely closer to the military end than the civilian end. "Your first name is now officially 'Cadet,'" Odom tells them.

Over the course of their training, the cadets will spend a state-mandated 576 hours studying for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) test, learning how to fingerprint people, memorizing all the laws pertaining to the use of force, learning and practicing use-of-force techniques, attending classes on problem solving and critical thinking, learning the correct methods of arrest, search and seizure. They will practice strategies of defense that may well save their lives, they will be sprayed in the face with pepper spray just so they know what it feels like if they have to use it on a belligerent subject, they will spend countless hours at the firing range and they will study how to control an unruly crowd. They will study criminal investigation, professionalism and ethics, and how to conduct themselves in a courtroom setting. They will make split-second decisions in a truck traveling at high speeds, and will similarly operate watercraft at high speed while approaching and, if necessary, boarding other boats. They will learn how to make swift-water rescues. And they will learn how

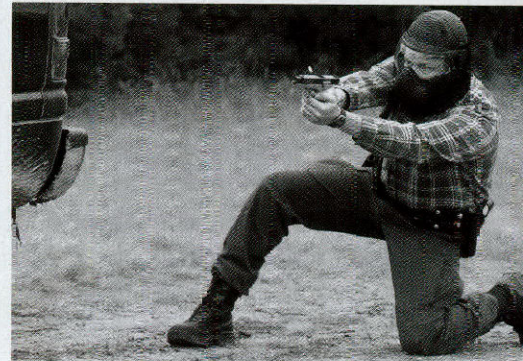
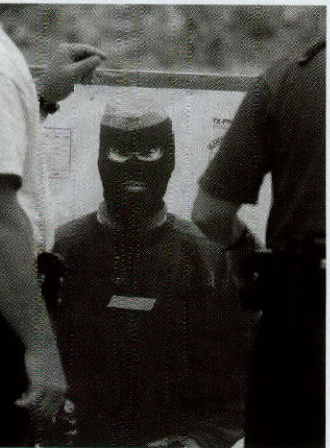
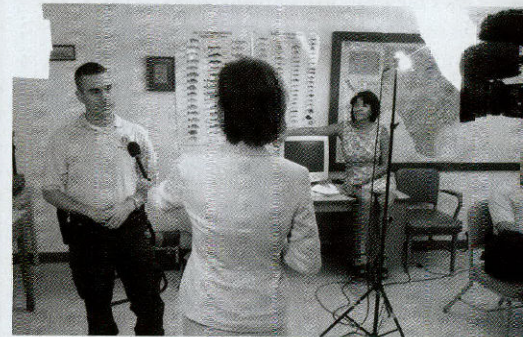
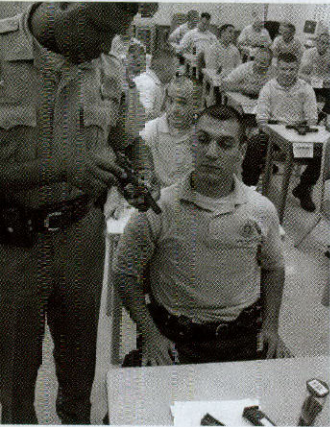
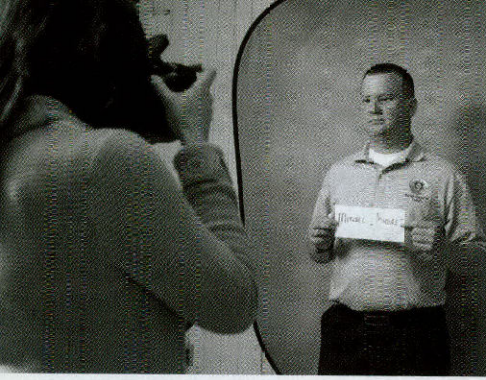
Teeler. "There are a lot of people who walk in here and interview with us and have no idea what we do." The instructors at the academy prefer to graduate all cadets who are accepted into the program, so it is not uncommon for cadets to submit multiple applications before being accepted. It is also not uncommon for cadets to have spent a fair amount of time with a game warden in the field prior to being accepted. "Generally when people become interested in applying to the academy, we recommend that they go work with their local game warden. We want people to know what they're in for, so we don't lose them along the way," Lt. Teeler says. Cadet Anthony Todd considered becoming a game warden at the insistence of a friend. The 42-year-old Todd is one of the more qualified cadets in this class. With a degree in psychology from Texas A & M at Kingsville, Todd served as a radioman for six years in the Navy. During his military service, he pulled duty in Beirut and Grenada. Todd also worked for a brief spell as a police officer in California after successfully completing the California Police Academy. "I was in the Navy reserves for a little while after I got out of active duty, and I had a friend who was a game warden," Todd explains. "He kept telling me that I should

interest in hunting. The thing about this job is that hunting doesn't have to interest you for you to be able to govern that sport."

Jeff Hill, one of the older cadets, was also accepted on his first application. Hill, 47, was a successful businessman, but grew tired of the long hours and hassles of running his own pest-control business. While pursuing his degree at Purdue, Hill studied forestry, and as a lifelong avid outdoorsman, the midlife career change seemed natural. "Biology, forestry and horticulture were things I was always interested in," he explains. "It was a good time for me to sell my business and go off on a second career." The job description of a game warden holds no surprises to Cadet Hill. "I knew that fishing activities and overseeing hunting activities were what game wardens did. I also knew that they did water safety. I had been checked several times when I was in my canoe on the lake. So I was aware of the diversity of the job."

Although working outdoors is clearly an integral part of being a game warden, the job, according to Chief Odom, is really about dealing with people. Game wardens are first and foremost law-enforcement officers. "Arrest, search and seizure is the cornerstone of a law-enforcement officer," he tells the class. "You must know it because you will be

TOP MIDDLE: TOP RIGHT AND MIDDLE LEFT PHOTOS © HEATHER HILLIARD; ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM



The world is more complex, and game warden training keeps pace, starting with the basics of criminal investigation, such as fingerprinting, top right, and more advanced training such as media relations, middle right; and "real-world" experience in when to use lethal force, bottom right.

restricting people's rights. You will be a Texas Peace Officer and will have that authority."

The normal day of a cadet begins early, at 5:45 a.m. Fifteen minutes later they all assemble outside to begin the daily regimen of physical exercise. Lt. Cinda Brooks leads the class each morning through their various exercises. A six-time World Police Biathlon Champion, Lt. Brooks soon has the cadets sweating and gasping for air. "We're going to offer you the opportunity to challenge yourself," she tells the class. Performance, she says, is driven by a positive mental attitude. "Don't think about what you can do by what you've done. Life is ten percent what happens to you — ninety percent your attitude. If you think you can do it, or you think you can't do it, you're probably right."

"The physical training is obviously difficult for a 42-year-old man," laughs Cadet Todd. "It was hard to keep up with these youngsters. It's one of those things that just takes

willpower to survive." Cadet Hill knew the physical demands of the academy would be difficult and he trained accordingly. "The running part was something I had never stressed in my own workout program. So I started training for that when I submitted my application last August." His preparation paid off. "It wasn't any problem because I was in training for three or four months prior to going into the academy. I even researched the different exercises that were necessary to tackle the obstacle course."

The obstacle course, laid out in a field behind the main office, is a tricky bit of business. First the cadets must crawl over and under three large log poles about 2 feet off the ground, then scale a 10-foot-high wood wall, hop over a wire fence, get from one end of a horizontal 50-foot rope to the other without touching the ground, crawl under a simulated house foundation, swing through a set of monkey bars, scur-

ry through a tunnel, maneuver down a set of parallel bars, walk the length of a thin timber several feet off the ground, do a football high-step through a dozen large tires on the ground, and finish off with a hand-over-hand rope climb to ring the cowbell at the top, 20 feet off the ground. The course record is 1 minute, 26 seconds. Cadet Garza has a bit of difficulty with the rope, but shows determination and grit. Cadet Hill turns in a respectable 3:15. And when everyone has completed the course, Lt. Brooks runs it in 2:27 to the cheers of the cadets. "Outstanding job," she tells them when she has dropped from the top of the rope, after ringing the bell attached to the crossbar. "Outstanding job."

Being in top physical condition is imperative in this career. Game wardens must be able to protect themselves during confrontations, which are unfortunately not uncommon. According to Lt. Brooks, game wardens are

eight times more likely to be assaulted or killed in the line of duty than police officers. Occasionally an assault is fatal. A memorial in front of the cadets' barracks reads, "In memory of those who gave their lives protecting and preserving the natural resources of the State of Texas." It lists the names of 15 game wardens.

To address the more dangerous aspects of the job, and as part of the training, Lt. Brooks gives a lecture on being a member of the warrior class, those who live by the code of duty, honor, and loyalty. And occasionally fear. Lt. Brooks explains to the cadets, "Fear is a God-given, life-preserving emotion. Listen to it, analyze it, think about it." Raised in Africa, Lt. Brooks calmly relates to the class how she once faced down a lion while out walking in the bush. She knows how to deal with fear.

Once they are game wardens, the cadets will have to confront belligerent hunters. "We're handling mostly armed people," Lt. Brooks lectures the class. "We're often dealing with people under the influence of alcohol or drugs, some of whom will be pig-kissing drunk." To be part of the warrior class, she says, is to accept danger. But self-preservation is rule number one. "You have failed in your mission if you are wounded or killed," Lt. Brooks continues. "You must survive. You must win. And you will

hyperventilating. I really had to work to maintain calm, to get myself through it."

In the worst-case scenarios, game wardens may have to resort to lethal force, and for that they pack a .40 caliber Glock Model 22 sidearm. They are drilled with the weapon on the firing range both during the day and at night. Part of the training at the firing range is weapon proficiency, but part of it is designed to mentally prepare the cadets for the possibility of having to resort to lethal force. "We always have a few in every class who really have to work hard on that," explains Lt. Teeler. "Getting over that hump, trying to think, 'You know, I may have to use a deadly weapon on someone.' And that can be a real mental dilemma for some people that they have to get through." While preparing himself for the academy, Cadet Hill bought a Glock and fired a few thousand rounds. "I was familiar with it," he says, "but not at the level of training they gave us, which was great. I had to throw away some old bad habits. My overall shooting score was above 90. Night firing was fun, because you're able to line your sights up and shoot a tighter pattern."

In addition to the Glock, the game wardens' standard mini-14 rifles will soon be replaced with M-16s. To those who might think pack-

is armed not only with a shotgun, but he also has a knife, and he is going to use it.

The exercise begins simply enough. Cadet Garza approaches the hunter — in her case trainer Lt. Howard, a powerfully built game warden who outweighs her by 60 or 70 pounds — and informs him he is illegally hunting on private property and must return with her to her truck. Lt. Howard replies that no, the land belongs to a friend of his and he has permission to be there. Garza keeps her distance and insists that Howard must leave his shotgun and come with her. She is insistent, and her force rises as Howard continues to challenge her. Eventually he becomes belligerent and begins yelling at Garza. From there the situation escalates quickly, and dangerously. Howard jumps up still yelling at Garza, when she retreats a few feet to maintain a safe distance, Howard seems to have a change of heart, and tells Garza he will cooperate. He sets his shotgun on the ground, but when he stands up, he suddenly lunges at Garza. Reacting quickly, she sprays his face with simulated pepper spray, a mixture of water and lemon juice. Howard falls to the ground and begins yelling as if in great pain. Now Garza must handcuff him, and as she approaches, Howard suddenly pulls his knife

"We're going to offer you the opportunity to challenge yourself," Lt. Cinda Brooks tells the class. Performance, she says, is driven by a positive mental attitude. "Don't think about what you can do by what you've done. Life is ten percent what happens to you; ninety percent your attitude."

win." To emphasize the seriousness of this lecture, Lt. Brooks tells the class, "Prepare your family in case you are killed."

While in the field, game wardens wear body armor and are armed with both lethal and non-lethal weapons. If a situation spins out of control, and if the warden is physically threatened, and if the warden's verbal warnings fail to produce the desired results, the next step is pepper spray. Not only do the cadets practice using the spray, but in order to know how powerful it is, they must endure being sprayed themselves in the face. It is the only day the media is barred from visiting the academy, not that anyone would really want to take photos of grown men and women gagging and vomiting with mucus running down their faces. "Getting sprayed in the face with pepper spray wasn't very much fun," says Cadet Hill in his normal understated way. "There's no way to get ready for that. It was horrible. It was bad." Cadet Todd is a bit more expressive on the subject. "That was the most excruciating pain I've ever experienced in my life. I did tear gas training in the Navy, and I did it again at the police academy, and I thought, well, I've done that, and I thought pepper spray wouldn't be much different. I was surprised at how bad that was. The thing about it, it makes you want to panic, from

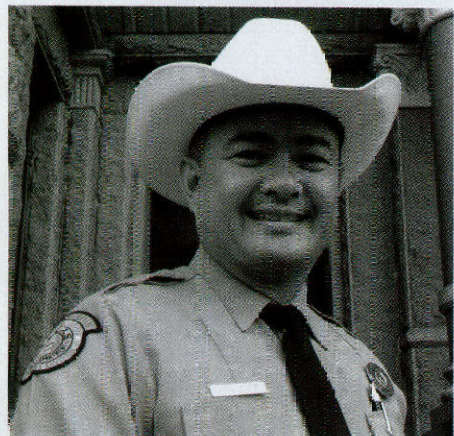
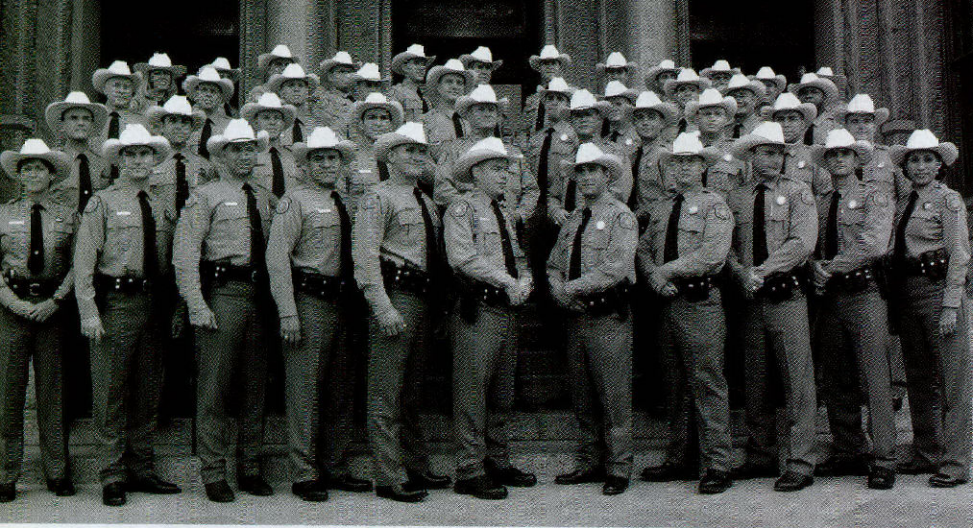
ing an assault rifle seems a bit too paramilitary, Col. Stinebaugh argues that it simply makes good sense. "I would imagine if you talked to any director of any park service, and if you asked him why he is armed with an M-16, pepper spray and so forth, he would tell you it is because his officers are coming into contact with people who are not the type of person one thinks you check in the out-of-doors, or whom game wardens traditionally worked with thirty years ago." Simply put, the world has become a more dangerous place, and game wardens have to deal with it.

The most likely situation in the field that may require a game warden to resort to the use of force is during a confrontation with a hunter who has had a drink or six. To prepare the cadets for this scenario, they are run through a training exercise called "Escalating Violence" in which one of the trainers plays the part of a stubborn hunter who is asked to accompany the game warden but refuses. The training is surprisingly physical. Protected from head to toe in thick padding, sitting on a bucket with a shotgun in their hand, the trainers play the part of the hunter, and the cadets must convince them to drop their shotgun and accompany the cadet back to the truck. But the exercise is rigged, the hunter isn't going anywhere with the warden, and he

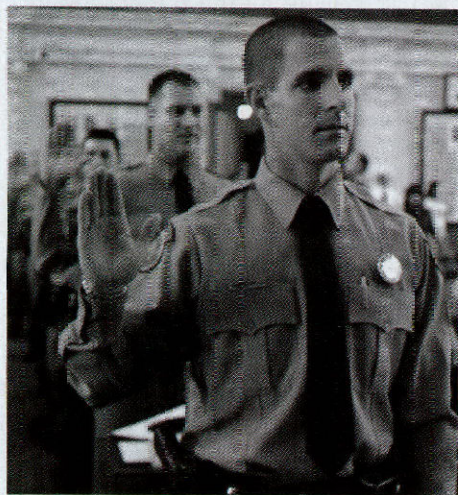
and lunges at her. She must shoot him with her Glock, which for this exercise is loaded with blanks. She fires a single shot. Howard drops and lies still. Garza handcuffs him.

It is a frightening exercise, especially when one considers that in reality Garza will almost undoubtedly be alone in the field if and when this kind of situation occurs. She handles the exercise well, but is cognizant of her physical disadvantage compared to a large man like Howard. "I have less upper body strength than the men," Garza says, "but you have to learn how to supplement that. You have to be faster than other people, because you don't want to be touched, you don't want to be taken down, you don't want someone to put their hands on your gun because they may be stronger than you, and you may have to resort to pulling your gun faster than someone else because you're going to be overwhelmed by their strength. I know a lot of times you can avoid physical confrontation just by using your voice, using it in a loud manner, in a bold manner. I try to use that, because just like anyone else, I would like to avoid physical confrontation. But if I get in that situation, I'm prepared to handle it."

When Cadet Hill takes his turn, it is a bit different. Lt. Davis plays the role of hunter for Hill, and the drill is the same. But Hill,



After six tough months, the cadets of the 50th Texas Game Warden Academy class are ready to graduate and move out to posts across Texas.



himself a rather burly individual, not only is a bit larger than Davis, but also has studied martial arts for nearly three decades and holds advanced black-belt degrees. When Davis lunges at Hill, Hill uses his martial arts training and a rather one-sided fight involving Davis's stomach and Hill's feet ensues. Even when Davis pulls his knife, Hill is reluctant to pull his Glock, although as Davis seems intent to continue his attack, Hill eventually shoots him. He will be docked a couple of points for his hesitation to use his weapon. "I just don't want to shoot someone if I can avoid it," he says later. But it goes with the territory of being a law-enforcement officer.

As law enforcement officers, game wardens may be required to participate in high-speed chases. The high-speed exercise is done in a large asphalt parking lot. As Hill explains, "You're driving straight and all of a sudden they signal you to either drive left or drive right or go straight right through the cones. So at the last moment they signal green, red or yellow. They said you're supposed to let off the gas and pick the lane you wanted, and every time I just stomped on the gas. They told me I wasn't supposed to do that, but it gave me better control of the vehicle."

The cadets also train to pursue boaters at

high speed. Cadet Hill spent much of his childhood on Lake Buchanan and Lake LBJ, so he is no stranger to boats. But pursuing and boarding another boat is not what you usually do on a lazy Saturday afternoon. "I had been skiing and docking boats for years," he says. "So when it came to performing those exercises, it was a little bit different, because you have to pull up alongside somebody, and make sure you don't damage their boat, and be able to make contact and communicate with them." According to Cadet Todd, when on open water and enforcing the Water Safety Act, game wardens do not need probable cause to inspect a boat to ensure it has all required safety equipment. During his water safety training, Todd got a little more realistic training than the other cadets. "We got to actually stop folks out on the water," he says. "I got to chase a couple of them down. One of the boats I had to pursue at full throttle for a pretty good ways."

After six months of training, the 50th Texas Game Warden Academy class is ready to graduate. Cadet Todd says the most difficult part of the entire experience, to his surprise, was the separation from his wife and three sons. "I knew I was going to be living away from my family for six months, and only get to see them on weekends, but the separation was a real hardship." Lt. Teeler says that is

often the case. "The separation from loved ones is really tough," Teeler admits. "We've had cadets whose spouses had babies while they were in this academy, and we always have people contemplating divorce while they're in here. It is stressful — it will eat your lunch."

Of the 40 original cadets, 36 have successfully completed the program, a failure rate that is a bit high. "Normally we only lose about one," says Lt. Teeler. Dressed in their new game warden uniforms, the former cadets assemble in the Texas House of Representatives chamber in the capitol building. Several have family members sitting in the balcony, many having driven for hours to witness the graduation ceremony. Colonel Stinebaugh gives a brief congratulatory speech, and then Robert Cook, executive director of TPWD, addresses the class. "This morning when you woke up you were a student," Cook tells them. "When you walk out of this chamber you will be a leader in your community, joining an elite and highly respected group. People will look to you and ask for guidance." The academy has ended, but not their education, according to Cook. "It is critical that you understand your learning has just begun. If you're worth your powder, you'll still be learning the day you retire. The most important measure of your success is how many people learn from you the value of conservation."

At the conclusion of Cook's speech, the students are called individually to the front to receive their official papers. They are now Texas game wardens.

A few weeks later Warden Garza, who drew Caldwell County as her first assignment, admits some people are surprised to learn their game warden is a woman. When people refer to her, she says, "I'm not the game warden. I'm the female game warden." She does not see this as a problem. "Even though people aren't expecting to meet a female game warden," Garza says, "they still have respect for the law and the law-enforcement community. They still have respect for the badge." As far as her latest and probably final career choice, "It's exactly what I expected so far," she says. "And I love it."

Warden Todd, who is now assigned to Presidio County, expresses similar feelings. "My county," he says, "is four times the size of Rhode Island. I've got the whole thing by myself. I'm looking at the Davis Mountains. And I can see the McDonald Observatory through my binoculars. I can see a herd of antelope right now. It's gorgeous." His assessment of his new career? "I love this job. I knew I was going to like it, and I had an idea about how good it was going to be, but I just can't believe how good it is. It's the greatest job in the world. ★"

For more information on the TPWD Game Warden Academy, go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/enforce/> or call (877) 229-2733.

PHOTOS © HEATHER HILLIARD



ON SHELDON'S PONDS >

By Bill Dawson / Photography by Earl Nottingham

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND RECREATION AROUND AT NEWLY REFURBISHED SHELDON LAKE STATE PARK — ONLY 13 MILES FROM DOWNTOWN HOUSTON.





First time out: Sheldon Lake State Park lets urban kids share the excitement of experiencing wildlife (whether it's holding a red-eared turtle, previous page top; studying a tadpole, previous page bottom; or catching that first fish, above and opposite) and enjoy the outdoors — often for the first time.

ABOUT 13 MILES northeast of downtown Houston's towering skyscrapers, Sheldon Lake State Park is located on a site that has undergone numerous transformations over the past six decades. Undeveloped land on the eve of World War II, it became a 1,200-acre reservoir feeding wartime industries, then a municipal water supply, then a state wildlife management area with waterfowl refuge and fish hatchery, and finally the wooded, marshy and pond-dotted park of today.

Although situated in a rapidly urbanizing part of Harris County near a number of industrial plants, the 2,800-acre park is a haven for wildlife such as alligators, deer, coyotes, bobcats and a profusion of bird species including ducks, geese, herons, egrets and sometimes bald eagles and osprey. It's an enclave of nature that seems much farther from the center of the state's largest city than it actually is.

The latest transformation at the property, which is still unfolding, involves a multimillion-dollar project that is significantly expanding and upgrading the Environmental Learning Center established at the park in 1998. It was launched to serve Houston-area students, particularly disadvantaged and inner-city children with little, if any, exposure to outdoors activities in such natural settings. Supporters of the center intend it to be a model for similar facilities serving other Texas cities.

"If we can do it here, I know we can do it in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the San Antonio area and in other parts of the state — acquainting and reacquainting kids with the outdoors," says A. Henry, a Houston resident who became the leading supporter of the Sheldon Lake center during his just-ending six-year tenure as a member of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Henry, the first African-American ever to serve on the commission, grew up in Houston's historic Fifth Ward, a neighborhood near downtown that was settled by freedmen in the 19th century. He recalled that when then-Gov. George W. Bush appointed him to the commission in 1999, "He asked me to use my background to make sure that all Texans benefit, and particularly to attend to the needs of urban youth who have so little contact with the outdoors."

His personal history had prepared Henry to take the admonition to heart. He grew up in an inner-city neighborhood, but participated in hunting, fishing and other nature-related activities during regular rural visits, which left him with an enduring appreciation for outdoor life. Beginning in the 1960s, however, and accelerating through the 1980s, he noticed that various social trends — rural relatives moving to cities, for instance — meant fewer and fewer inner-city young people got such opportunities.

"Kids today have very little familiarity with the outdoors, and this is particularly true of urban kids and especially inner city kids," he says. "They know little about the problems of air and water pollution, the land and natural resources, the cultural resources of Texas, of their own families or their own areas."

His observation chimed with recommendations in recent years by university researchers. A 1998 study at Texas A&M pointed to the crucial importance of expanding outdoor opportunities for urban youth and the state's expanding ethnic populations. In a 2001 study, "Texas Parks and Wildlife for the 21st Century," Texas Tech researchers likewise identified "the need to increase parks and green space in and around Texas' urban areas."

When Henry joined the commission, two former commissioners from Houston, Terry Hershey and John Kelsey, told him that Sheldon Lake's new Environmental Learning Center would be a great place for him to focus his attention as he sought to address these issues.

"I was not familiar with Sheldon Lake State Park," he says. "I had heard of it but had never been there. I went to visit, and I was not only impressed but was amazed that something that significant was so close to downtown Houston and so many people didn't know anything about it."

The site, which had been managed as a state wildlife management area since the 1950s, was reclassified as a state park in 1984. However, with no traditional park facilities for activities such as picnicking and camping, the park for several years mainly continued to serve its earlier public function as a popular fishing spot. Then members of the park staff hit upon the idea of trying to create a center for environmental education there.

"The staff here saw a need to provide an education resource," says Robert Comstock, superintendent of the park since its founding 20 years ago. "The educational community was hungry for a facility like this. Other nature centers in the area are booked solid in February."

One Houston educator, Angie Nobles, can attest to the need that was served by the center when it began operating in 1998, and to its popularity with students and teachers alike. Nobles is a counselor at Travis Elementary, an economically and ethnically diverse school located in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods. She brought children to the Sheldon Lake center when she was a third grade teacher at Travis. "It's a wonderful hands-on experience for kids," she says. "It's amazing how

many had never gone fishing before. They also went wading in the water with containers, taking pond samples for microscopic study. It ties into the state curriculum, and it's just 30 minutes from our school."

On one visit, Nobles' students released a baby alligator — "and of course the kids named it Travis," she says. Another time, even rainy weather failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the volunteer instructors. Under shelter, they engaged the students with impromptu activities including an examination of animal skeletons.

One key early backer of the park staff's concept for an Environmental Learning Center was Hershey, a longtime conservation leader and park advocate in Houston. She, in turn, interested Ann Hamilton, a grant officer at Houston Endowment, a leading philanthropy.

"The first time I saw (Sheldon Lake) I was absolutely captivated," Hamilton says. "It's so unique and incredibly beautiful, for being in what's practically a brown field, an area with industry all around it. To have something that could be turned into a learning opportunity, it just needed an infusion."

That infusion came in the form of an

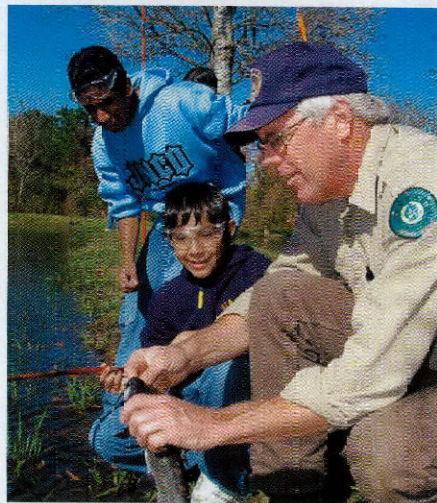
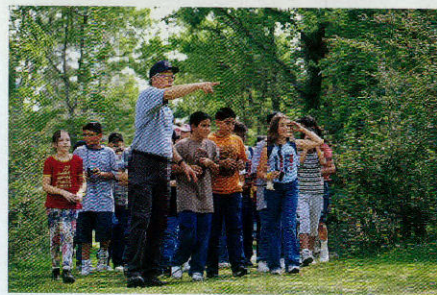
initial \$200,000 grant from Houston Endowment in 1994 to get the environmental education project going. Including three other grants since then, the philanthropy has now donated a total of \$1.9 million toward the project.

The biggest single boost came in 2001, when Texas voters approved Proposition 8, one of 19 constitutional amendments that authorized as much as \$850 million in bonds for 13 agencies including Texas Parks and Wildlife. Pending required legislative authorization, TPWD's total is expected to be \$101.5 million. Earmarked for construction and repair projects, that amount includes \$2.58 million that lawmakers approved for the project that has been ongoing in recent months at Sheldon Lake.

This construction is expected to be complete in time for use by school groups by early spring of 2005, allowing the Environmental Learning Center to accommodate more than double the 7,500 students that already have been visiting the facility annually. With a total budget of about \$5.8 million, it represents just the first phase of a two-step plan. A group of community leaders, including Henry and other current and former Parks and Wildlife commissioners, is seeking private

"If we can do it here, I know we can do it in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the San Antonio area and in other parts of the state — acquainting and reacquainting kids with the outdoors," says TPW Commissioner Al Henry.





After taking part in the activities at Sheldon Lake State Park, these kids (and their parents) are more likely to become informed stewards of Texas' hunting, fishing and outdoors heritage.

donations for additional improvements that would constitute a \$9.6 million Phase 2. This campaign is in collaboration with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, TPWD's designated non-profit funding partner.

The Phase 1 work, which will multiply and diversify opportunities for learning experiences at the park, is concentrated around the 28 old fishery ponds. The intention was to convert the modest facilities already in use into a giant outdoor classroom, complete with habitat enhance-

ment and restoration, as well as to use building materials and techniques that are point for a network of renovated trails that are being built to be accessible for individuals with disabilities.

The trails lead through the centerpiece of the first phase work, which is a cluster of four Pond Learning Stations. Here, students will engage in a variety of participatory activities focused on the park's pond ecosystem.

The first two Pond Stations are Aquatic Lab 1, a covered deck, and Aquatic Lab 2, an open deck, located in the middle of different ponds. These are the places where

environmentally friendly, have been woven into the planning, design and construction of the new facilities. The goal is to achieve the highest certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's prestigious rating system.

The sustainability-minded features being included at Sheldon Lake will serve both conservation and instructional purposes, park officials say. For instance, the Pond Center has been designed with natural lighting and recycled oilfield pipe. Its roof sheds rainwater into storage. This col-

An 80-foot wind turbine in an agricultural field which is being converted to native coastal prairie will produce one kilowatt. And water pumped from six geothermal wells will provide heat and substitute for air conditioning, through heat-exchange technology, at the Pond Center.

ments. Phase 2 would add an education and visitor center, "tree-top" cabins and other camping facilities, plus additional trails and habitat restoration.

Completion of Phase 1 means the first stop for visiting students will be the Pond Center, a 4,600-square-foot open-air pavilion. The center, a renovation of the former fish hatchery headquarters, will provide an initial orientation spot (as well as a larger rainy-day instruction setting) for up to 100 people at a time.

Another Phase 1 facility is the Pond Plaza, comprising 15,000 square feet of landscaped areas with a new observation deck big enough for an entire classroom. It's also the embarkation

students will collect water samples for microscopic study. The design allows ambulatory children to walk into water about six inches deep while they scoop up their samples. Children in wheelchairs will use a special ramp that allows them to park in water a couple of inches deep.

The third station is known as Pond Crossing — a connected boardwalk and outdoor classroom built across another pond. In a forested area at the western end of the ponds, the fourth station is called Pond Pavilion which includes a trailhead and observation deck.

Efforts to incorporate habitat enhance-

lected water — up to 15,000 gallons — will be used to irrigate native plants that are being gradually planted in place of invasive non-native species that are being removed around the center.

"We're demonstrating some of the things people can do," says Tom Olson, education director at the park.

In another example of the project's sustainability focus, the Pond Plaza has been constructed with recycled brick, pipe and concrete with a higher-than-normal content of fly ash — the powder left over from burning coal to produce electricity, which is often dumped in landfills. Hot water will be heated by sunlight, and Forest

Stewardship Council-certified lumber used in construction.

Likewise, wood products elsewhere were chosen to meet high environmental standards, such as the council-certified wood used along trails and lumber for the Aquatic Labs, which was sustainably grown and doesn't require chemical treatment.

Besides solar units to heat water in restrooms, the new facilities also include three other demonstrations of renewable energy technologies, all funded by a \$100,000 grant from the State Energy Conservation Office through West Texas A&M. Photovoltaic arrays will generate three kilowatts of power and have mechanisms for classroom monitoring. An 80-foot wind turbine in an agricultural field, which is being converted to native coastal prairie, will produce one kilowatt. And water pumped from six geothermal wells will provide heat and substitute for air conditioning, through heat-exchange technology, at the Pond Center.

"When we're not running the air conditioner, we're not taking electricity off the grid," Comstock explains.

In another important conservation-related action, the park's crucial inflow of water from its watershed is being safeguarded through agreements with upstream users including the city of Houston and private developers.

TPWD officials became concerned in the mid-1990s that development and drainage projects had reduced Sheldon Lake's watershed by about two-thirds in the previous decade and were starting to threaten its wildlife. In one publicized case, the agency argued that drainage work at a large new subdivision was diverting water from the park, and federal officials eventually cited the developer for violating

wetlands-protection rules.

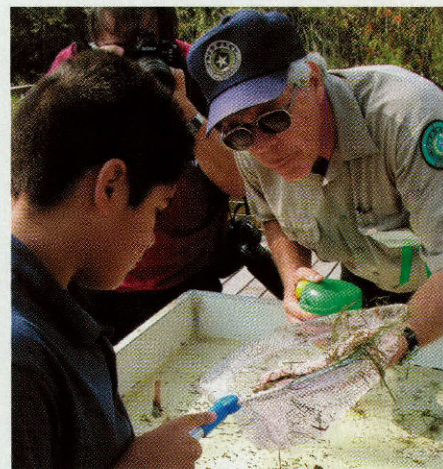
As a result of the subsequent agreements, TPWD will be able to stabilize water levels in Sheldon Lake, essentially mitigating any further reductions in the water flowing into the park, Comstock says. Officials don't expect the park will ever again receive its historic pre-development flow levels, however.

Ultimately, securing the environmental health of the park's lake and pond also secures the future viability of the Environmental Learning Center, which was launched there because of the ecosystem and wildlife that those water bodies support.

On a stroll through the new facilities, Olson noted some of the details that make the park such a good place for an Environmental Learning Center. A turkey buzzard soared overhead as he pointed out the two ponds where students can try their luck fishing during their visit.

"Most kids do it," he says. "There's almost always an alligator here, and wading birds."

Along this trail, on quarter-mile or half-mile "habitat hikes," students will be greeted by new signs with graphics and interpretive materials, learning about the differences between forest and pond ecosystems, and about disturbed and developed wildlife habitats. Other curricula, associated with other activities, cover subjects such as conservation and renewable energy, water quality and the food web in the Environmental Learning Center's ponds.



At one pond, resplendent with aquatic vegetation, Olson identified some of the different plants that carpeted the water — the fragrant water lily was putting out white flowers amid the taller stalks of American lotus, which blooms in yellow.

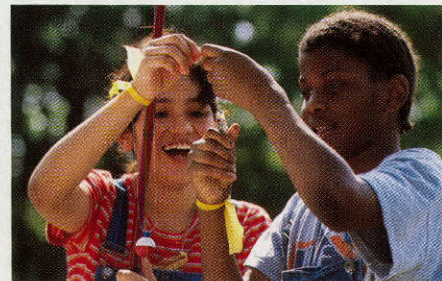
"The beauty of this place is that it's pretty lush, it's in a compact area — you can see it in a quarter-mile or half-mile hike — and it's close to town," he reflected. "Those are its three advantages."

The Environmental Learning Center's growth and its growing popularity have brought additional obligations for the people in charge of the program, but they're hardly an unwelcome task. One thing on the minds of park staff members as the Phase I work drew near completion, for instance, was the expanding need for more volunteers to instruct the thousands of additional students who would soon start arriving.

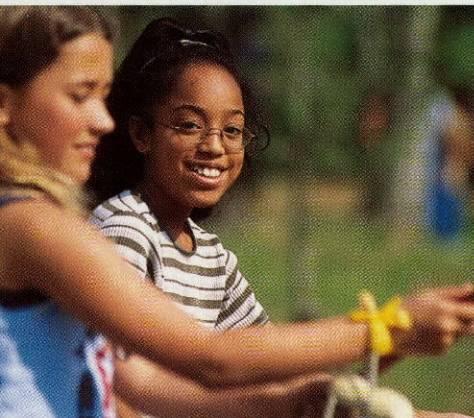
It's just part of the educational mission at Sheldon Lake, whose importance Henry sums up this way:

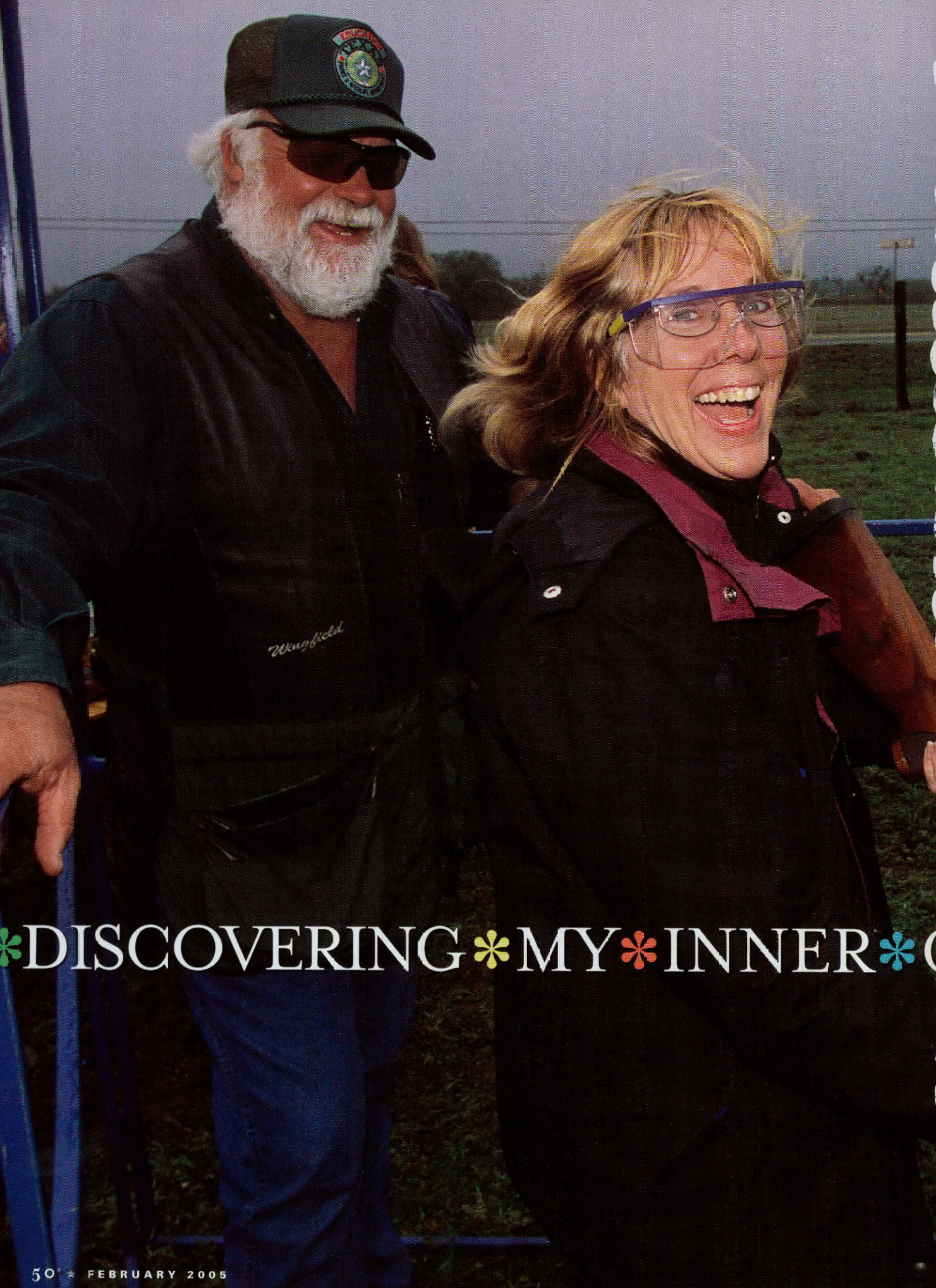
"Most of the population of this state and country lives, or will live, in urban areas. If we can't teach the kids in these areas to learn about the environment, how can we expect them to appreciate it and, to the extent possible, improve it?" ★

If you're interested in making a contribution to the Sheldon Lake project through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation visit www.tpwf.org.



Hands-on experience: Students will learn the difference between forest and pond ecosystems, and about disturbed and developed wildlife habitats.





DISCOVERING MY INNER

How I Learned to Shoot Straight and Whoop It Up at the BOW Program

By Carol Flake Chapman
Photography by Earl Nottingham

A

AS FAR AS I COULD REMEMBER, the last time I had even touched a gun was when I was about five years old and addicted to playing Annie Oakley. Predictably, I wore a fringed vest and considered myself lightning-fast on the draw with my double-holstered silver six-guns. Of course, in those days, I never missed my target, usually my cousin Danny in his outlaw duds, even while riding my stick horse at full trot. The pungent smoke from the spent caps was like the sweet smell of success. But here I was, decades later, cooing up, cheek to stock, with a 20-gauge shotgun, learning how hard it can be in late-blooming adulthood to aim a loaded Beretta at a flying clay target, especially when your hands are shaking as though you've just spotted the James Brothers and you've run out of ammo. What in the world had happened to all that early carefree bravado? And what on earth was I so afraid of?

It was thanks to the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program, sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, that I was standing here in a dewy field at beautiful Camp Buckner, all aquiver on this cool, early spring morning, taking aim at elusive targets and confronting unexpected fears. I had joined some IIO women from around the state who had come to this rustic retreat in the Hill Country to learn new outdoor recreation skills and hone rusty sporting talents — all in a supportive environment, which translates in realistic female terms as not surrounded by ever-so-helpful male companions. The BOW program, now in its 11th year in Texas and 13th year nationwide, is offered by TPWD in four workshop classes each year, in different locations around the state. It's a kind of souped-up summer camp for grown-up women who relish the thought of getting away from it all for a weekend and going back to it all with some serious outdoor skills that might surprise their husbands, boyfriends or kids.

As we arrived at camp on a misty Friday morning in our pickups, sedans and SUVs, we must have appeared a motley group, some participants wearing their husbands' roomy hunting camouflage, some looking like they'd just walked out of the L.L. Bean dressing room. Some women were carrying kayak paddles or other evidence of previous experience in the wild, but quite a few looked a little greenhornish, like they'd be more at home in the mall than in the woods. Many of us appeared to be, shall I say, women of a certain stage — that is, on the sunny side of forty. We brought a new meaning, I thought, to the phrase “babes in the woods.”

I couldn't help but wonder what my self-reliant Grandmother Goodwin and my fearless Aunt Muriel would have thought of us. Like so many Texas women, I come from hardy stock, and I sometimes find it hard to live up to their strong example. Aunt Muriel, for instance, who earned a master's degree and taught school on an Indian reservation, was also a rancher, barrel racer, crack shot and world class survivalist who once lay out on a lonely, remote pasture for more than a day with a broken leg after her horse stepped in a prairie-dog hole while going at full gallop. At Camp Buckner, I was just hoping to survive three days without making a fool of myself in front of a bunch of other women — and, of course, to have some fun.

Fortunately, the folks at TPWD have figured out some basic principles for ensuring that grownup women make the most of their wild weekend fling. For one thing, the program excludes females under the age of 18, in part because of liability issues, according to BOW program director Ashley Mathews. But more importantly, it means that mothers can focus on their own experience rather than on the doings of their daughters, as mothers are wont to do. If a mother brings along her young daughter, explains Mathews, “she becomes more the Mom than herself as an individual. What we want is for women to be able to be themselves and experience the unique social aspect of the program.” And then, of course, there are, to put it delicately, “body issues.” If you're a mature woman who hasn't been communing regularly with nature, you'd probably prefer not to be huffing and puffing self-consciously in your wobbling kayak alongside a slender, highly athletic 13-year-old who can not only skim through the water like a dolphin, but who also can eat a dozen doughnuts without having to worry about moving up to a new dress size.

Anyhow, we were feeling just a little like excited teenagers ourselves as we gathered

BOWGIRL

in Faith Hall, the main meeting room, for a welcome session. Ashley Mathews told us to look around the room because by the end of the weekend, we wouldn't be quite the same as when we first arrived. We'd probably been told as girls that we should avoid dirt and worms, she said. But this weekend we'd be learning ways to overcome those barriers. A quarter of the participants raised their hands when she asked if there were any women who'd attended a previous BOW program. They smiled knowingly at us newcomers. Later, as we sat down for lunch, I knew I was in the right place when I started chatting with Louisa Spoede of Waco, who is a BOW "repeat offender," she says. She's become a program regular, with a particular fondness for fishing. Her approach to angling, however, is a little unusual. When she catches fish, she said, "I kiss 'em and throw 'em back." Recently, with her birthday coming up, she warned her family about her gift preferences. "I don't want a knickknack," she told them. "I want a fishing lure."

Spoede said that the most challenging thing she'd done so far in the BOW program was the Wild Cave tour, which involves some squiggling and squirming through some very tight places in Longhorn Cavern. "Any fears you might have, it allows you to face them," she said. She had learned that she had some inner "macho," though it wasn't something she planned to flaunt. "There's also a kind of spiritual side to all of this, too," she said.

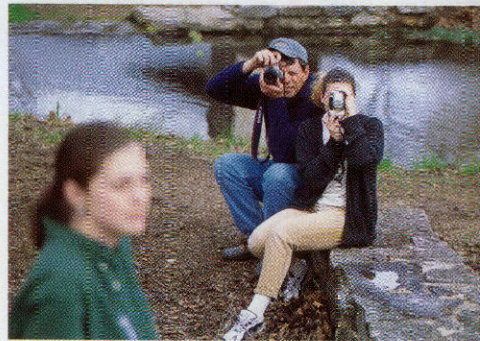
Two other women at the table had signed up for their first Wild Cave tour, and they were eager to give it a try. Dianne Richmond, 71, a retired registered nurse and master naturalist who hails from my hometown of Lake Jackson, said that she likes "outdoor stuff" and decided to go for the wildest item on the program. "I better do it now," she said, "because I'm not getting any younger." Also bucking up her courage for the cave was Lynda Terry, who is from Missouri City, near Houston. As the leader of a Girl Scout troop, said Lynda, she wanted to learn some skills for the benefits of her girls. She had planned to bring the scouts for a caving tour later in the year, but thought she should try it herself before she brought them along. "My girls think I can do anything," she said, "so I don't want to mess that up."

There were 44 different courses to choose from, ranging from birdwatching and backpacking to astronomy and wood-working. Much as I would have liked to try the caving, archery or outdoor survival courses, I had decided instead to focus on shotgunning, in honor of my Aunt Muriel. But first, as a novice, I was

required to take the general introduction to firearms course taught by a former BOW participant named Nanette Kline. Nanette had enjoyed her BOW classes so much that she had gone on to become a licensed instructor. "The program did so much for me," said Kline, that "I wanted to have something to do with other ladies having as great a time as I did." Also helping out with the class was Texas Parks and Wildlife veteran instructor Charlie Wilson, who would be teaching the shotgunning classes as well. With his beard and his wry, good-old-boy humor, Charlie reminded me a little of country music star Charlie Daniels. Declared Wilson, "Elmer Fudd doesn't hunt with me," and he imitated the cartoon character's awkward stalking.

To my surprise, hardly anyone in the class had signed up because they wanted to protect themselves. They were there, they said, either because they were curious about guns, because they were scared of them, or because they wanted to be able to go hunting or target-shooting with their husbands. There were quite a few women in the class who suffered from the gun-in-the-closet syndrome, meaning that their husbands had stored a gun in the closet, and it made them nervous. "I just move stuff around it," said a woman from San Antonio who had dreaded even touching the gun her husband had secured in the closet. By the end of the class, however, we were handling unloaded pistols, rifles and shotguns less like poisonous snakes and more like firearms. I began to look forward to my shotgunning experience.

That night, after dinner, we sat on our bunk beds and shared our life stories and, yes, home remedies for puffy eyes in the morning. And though I hesitate to reveal this surprising secret about women, I feel obliged to mention it with the hope that it makes us seem just a little more human. Despite Mathews' carefully worded warning in our information pack, I had left my earplugs in the car. I won't need them, I thought. For one thing, the rain pounding on the tin roof of our cabin was loud but soothing. But not long after the lights went out, the pitter-pat of raindrops on tin was drowned out by another sound: a soft but unmistakable sawing and snorting coming from around the room. Snoring. It was almost as bad as the time I was camping with a group of trekkers in the desert, our tents circled around the campfire. That night, I woke up with a start, terrified that we were being attacked by javelinas until I realized that the snorting was coming from my slumbering fellow trekkers. Ah, well, something else





What does it take to become an outdoor woman? A willingness to risk failure and accept new challenges with "old-fashioned cowgirl gusto." And a little practice.



women share with men, along with our yen for the outdoors.

The next morning, feeling slightly bereft of sleep, I was glad that my first workshop was fly-fishing, probably the quietest and most soothing of all the classes, except perhaps for basket weaving. Instructor Bill Harvey, then a resource conservation scientist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, has a quietly witty, low-key way of teaching that also happens to be quite effective. I was entranced by his descriptions of the remarkable biological adaptations of fish to their environments, allowing discerning anglers to predict their behavior. Bass and trout clearly have few secrets from Harvey. Later, as we practiced casting in the field, sometimes cracking our lines inadvertently like Lash Larue, we were startled by the whoops and hollers of the women from the horseback riding class, who were obviously having a great time and well into the changes in demeanor that Ashley Mathews had predicted for us over the weekend. Clearly, these women had already unleashed their inner cowgirlhood, and I was a little envious.

That evening, over dinner, you could tell which participants in the group had completed the Wild Cave tour because they appeared to glow like fireflies with their newfound bravado. "That's the most hard-core thing I've ever done," said Jessica Dunaway, a student at Sam Houston State, and one of the youngest participants. "It was awesome!"

After dinner, I joined Bill Harvey and a couple of other fishing enthusiasts at the lake for a follow-up on our lessons. When I finally caught a nice-sized sunfish, you'd have thought it was Moby Dick. I tried not to celebrate in unseemly fashion, but it appears that women manage to absorb male goal-line celebration habits without even knowing it. Suddenly, before you know it, your backfield is in motion and you're ready to spike the fish. Something else we have in common with men. I thought fleetingly about Louisa Spoeede's catch-and-release technique, but because I didn't expect Mr. Sunfish to turn into a prince, back he went into the lake, gently, without a kiss.

The next morning, still wearing my earplugs from the night before, I felt ready to face the sporting clays. Charlie Wilson had set up the target-hurling machines so that we'd have clays flying in three different directions. I was glad that Stephanie Noland from Dallas was

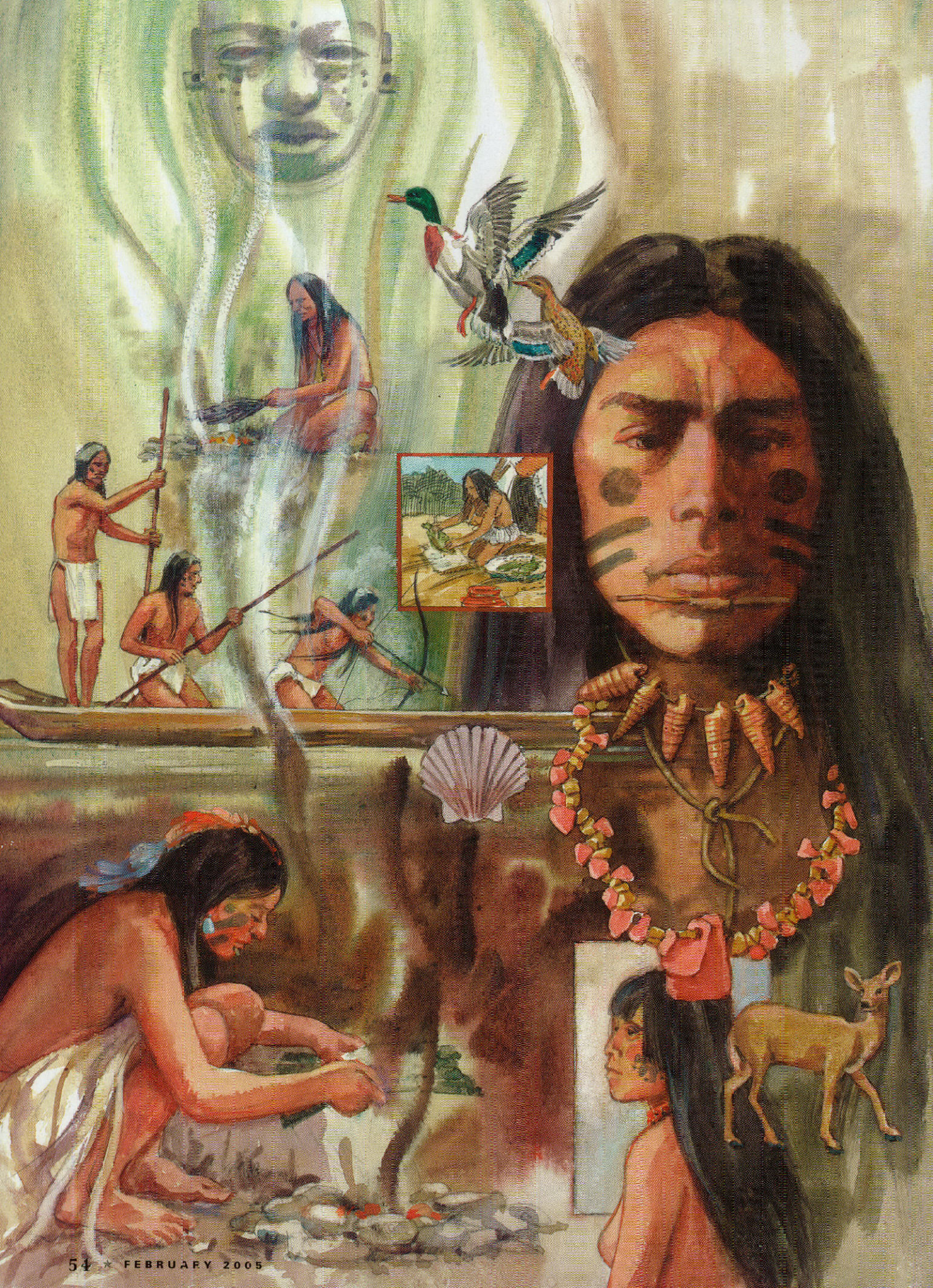
going first. Stephanie is a member of the Texas Divas, a women's shooting club, and she's already a good shot. She set a high standard for the rest of us, as did Gloria Wilcox, from the town of Eddy, who was taking the course, she said, to build her confidence. Her father had taken her hunting as a girl, and she cherished those memories.

When my turn came to step up to the shooting platform, I realized that I must have had too much coffee for breakfast. My hands were trembling, as I tried to nestle the shotgun against my cheek with all the finesse of Elmer Fudd. The 20-gauge Beretta seemed to weigh as much as a cannon. Wilson tried a sort of Zen technique to get me to breathe deeply and relax, but my hands didn't seem to be getting the message. Then he thought a moment and stepped back, waving his hands in dismissal. "Tell yourself it's okay to miss," he said. "Tell yourself that you're going to fail." And lo and behold, I hit the going-away target, blew it to smithereens. Wilson had me dead to rights. And here I was doing the victory dance again.

ONCE I REALIZED IT WAS OKAY TO BE LESS THAN PERFECT, I WAS ALREADY ON THE ROAD TO IMPROVEMENT. AND I KNEW I WAS GOING TO BE ONE OF THOSE "ADAPTERS."

I hadn't realized that Charlie Wilson is a shotgun whisperer. He reminded me of the intuitive horse handlers who have a magical calming touch with high-strung horses. Wilson had figured out, far more quickly and astutely than some armchair analyst, what I was so afraid of out in that field. It wasn't a dread of snakes. It wasn't an aversion to mud. It wasn't even a fear of a big recoil that might knock me back on my rear end. What I was really scared of was...failure. This was knowledge more precious than rubies, and I looked at Wilson with a new appreciation. Once I realized it was okay to be less than perfect, I was already on the road to improvement. And I knew I was going to be one of those "adapters," as Mathews called them, who continue to practice the sport they've been introduced to in the BOW program. Already, I was mentally shotgun shopping, comparing Brownings versus Berettas.

And so it was, just as Mathews had predicted, that I did go home feeling different than when I arrived at camp on Friday. I departed feeling a lot closer to Annie Oakley and my Aunt Muriel, as well as to the feisty, supportive women in the BOW program who, like me, will continue our journeys in the wild with more knowledge, more confidence, and more old-fashioned cowgirl gusto. ★



WRITTEN *IN* SMOKE

The mysterious Karankawa tribe wore facial tattoos, wrestled competitively and sent letters through the sky.

By E. DAN KLEPPER

Illustration by JOHN EDENS

SMOKE IS A WILY CHARACTER. It can rise above canyons in surprising white puffs, turn menace-black then suddenly vanish as if its fire collapsed under the weight of its own awakening. Smoke reads, but only in the sense that its relinquished clues reveal as much about what is unknown as what is true. Wind is its co-conspirator, revising the smoke message with each successive breath in the same way that ocean waves rearrange sand grains along a beach — rhythmic and incalculable. History too is wily and its record, like smoke, shifts with each revision or dissipates altogether when overwhelmed by a more compelling force.

The Karankawas, an extinct tribe of Indians thought to have inhabited the Texas Gulf Coast, understood smoke. They mastered its contrary nature and transformed it, like many early American

**THE COLUMN OF SMOKE WAS MADE TO ASCEND
IN MORE THAN TWENTY DIFFERENT WAYS, SOME-
TIMES DIVERGING OR CURLING IN SPIRALS,
SOMETIMES RISING UP IN PARALLEL LINES.**

tribes, into the substance that holds all of history in the balance — written language.

“On clear days, generally at noon, they signaled news by columns of smoke from their camp fires which were started from small pits in the ground, every Indian having a fire in front of his lodge,” recalled ethnographer Albert S. Gatschet in his published observations of the Karankawas during the 1800s. “The column of smoke was made to ascend in more than twenty different ways, sometimes diverging or curling in spirals, sometimes rising up in parallel lines. Some looked like the letters V and Y, others resembled spiral lines, or two parallel zigzag lines moving upward, or twin columns standing

close to each other.”

The smoke shapes were symbols, and from those symbols came telegraphy for the Karankawas who used it efficaciously, “...some signals calling them together,” explained Fray Gaspar Jose de Solis in his diary of life among the Karankawas in the mid-1700s, “others warning them to flee, others giving notice of anything new. The proper smoke for each being given, as soon as one gets the message he passes it to another; and he, in turn, gives it to those who follow; and, in a very short time, whatever news there is has been made known and forewarned in the province.”

Symbols to words and words into stories and once bound together they become a library, of sorts, for the ethnographer’s fossil record. The Karankawas and their smoke signals were first documented in 1528 by members of the Spanish expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez on a small island west of Galveston called, in a premonition of the tribe’s ultimate fate, the Isle of Misfortune. Three hundred years later the last of the Karankawas would be dead, slaughtered in the push for a new American dominance. But they left behind a catalogue of anthropological scatter buried within middens of cast-off, including hammers and adzes fashioned from the shells of lightning whelks, bird-bone beads, knives and arrowpoints flaked from sunray venus clamshell, and fragments of clay smoking pipes. Their diet, by today’s standards a gastronomic menu more French than Indian in its complexity and experimentation, included conch, scallops, oysters, red drum, croaker, gar, rabbit, duck, bobcat and venison. The menu was also a testament to the Karankawas’ verdant environment in which food supplies and seasons dictated their movements from barrier islands to coastal prairies and back. “... In fact, the most beautiful in the world,” claimed brothers Pierre and Jean-Baptist Talon in their testimony before French officials regarding their observations and experiences among the Karankawas in the late 1600s. The Talons, along with their sister and youngest brother, were both orphaned and adopted by the Karankawa and the neighboring Hasinai tribes after the massacre at La Salle’s Fort St. Louis. They remained with the Indians until Spaniards from Mexico arrived and freed them. “This whole territory is very temperate,” they recalled. “Hardly ever is it too hot or too cold and winter lasts but a short time. This mild climate accounts for the fact that the savages generally live to be very old and nearly always possess perfect health. They also have a marvelous knowledge of the different properties of the medicinal herbs that abound in the whole coun-

continued on page 60 >

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COMMERCE: KETR-FM 88.9 / 10:15 a.m.
CORPUS CHRISTI: KEDT-FM 90.3 / 5:33 p.m.; KFTX-FM 97.5 / between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m.; KVRT-FM 90.7 / 5:33 p.m.; KLUX-FM 89.5 / throughout the day
CROCKETT: KIVY-AM 1290 / 8:20 a.m., KIVY-FM 92.7 / 8:20 a.m.
DIMMITT: KDHN-AM 1470 / 10:30 a.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 / 2:36 p.m.
EL PASO: KTEP-FM 88.5 / 12:15 p.m. Thurs.
FAIRFIELD: KNES-FM 99.1 / Sat. a.m.
FLORESVILLE: KWCB-FM 89.7 / 1:30 p.m.
FORT STOCKTON: KFST-AM 860 / 7:10 a.m., KFST-FM 94.3 / 7:10 a.m.
GAINESVILLE: KGAF-AM 1580 / 10 a.m.
GRANBURY: KPIR-AM 1420 / 4:20 p.m.
GREENVILLE: KGVL-AM 1400 / 8:10 a.m.
HARLINGEN: KMBH-FM 88.9 / 4:58 p.m.; KHID-FM 88.1 / 4:58 p.m.
HEREFORD: KPAN-AM 860 / 2:50 p.m.; KPAN-FM 106.3 / 2:50 p.m.
HILLSBORO: KHBR-AM 1560 / 9:30 a.m.
HOUSTON: KILT-AM 610 / between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. Thur.-Sun.
HUNTSVILLE: KSHU-FM 90.5 / throughout the day
JACKSONVILLE: KEBE-AM 1400 / 7:15 a.m.
JUNCTION: KMBL-AM 1450 / 6:40 a.m., 3:30 p.m., KOOK-FM 93.5 / 10:20 a.m.
KERRVILLE: KRNH-FM 92.3 / 5:31 a.m., 12:57 p.m., 7:35 p.m.; KERV-AM 1230 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 a.m., 6:42 p.m.; KRVL-FM 94.3 / 7:54 a.m., 11:42 a.m., 6:42 p.m.
KILGORE: KZQX-FM 105.3 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 p.m.
LA GRANGE: KBUK-FM 104.9 / 12:30 p.m.; KVLG-AM 1300 / 12:30 p.m.
LAKE CHEROKEE: KZQX-FM 104.7 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 p.m.
LAMPASAS: KCYL-FM 101.9 / 8:25 a.m.; KCYA-AM 1450 / 8:25 a.m.
LAREDO: KHOY-FM 88.1 / throughout the day
LEVELLAND: KLVY-AM 1230 / 12:05 p.m.
LLANO: KITY-FM 102.9 / 5:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m.; 3:15 p.m.; 9:15 p.m.
LUBBOCK: KJTV-AM 950 / overnights
LUFKIN: KUEZ-FM 100.1 / 12:15 p.m.; KYBI-FM 101.9 / 12:15 p.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 / 6:25 a.m.; KMHT-AM 1450 / 6:25 a.m.

MESQUITE: KEOM-FM 88.5 / 8:15 a.m., 2:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m. Mon.-Thu.; 8:15 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 / 5:15 p.m.

MONAHANS: KLBO-AM 1330 / between 8-9 a.m. and 1-3 p.m.

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

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

ODESSA: KCRS-AM 550 / 6:15 a.m., 5:50 p.m., KOCV-FM 91.3 / 6:49 a.m.

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

PLAINVIEW: KVOP-AM 1090 / 9:50 a.m.

ROCKDALE: KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:04 a.m., 8:45 p.m.

SAN ANGELO: KGKL-AM 960 / 6:32 a.m.; 6:58 p.m.

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

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

SONORA: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 10:15 a.m.; KYXX-FM 94.3 / 10:15 a.m.

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

SWEETWATER: KXOX-FM 96.7 / 8:30 a.m.; KXOX-AM 1240 / 8:30 a.m.

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

TEXARKANA: KTXK-FM 91.5 / 2:04 p.m.

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

WACO: KBBW-AM 1010 / throughout the day

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

INTERNET RADIO: eTUNZ:
 <www.etunz.net> /:10 and :20 every hour.

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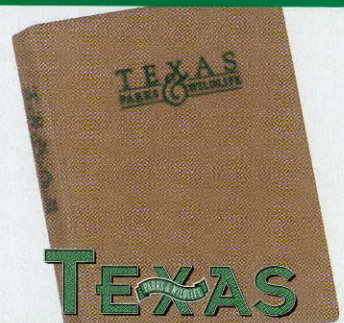
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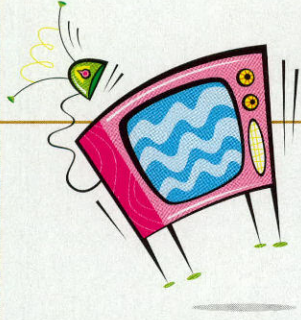
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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

THE FRONT LINE OF NEWS AND VIEWS



TELEVISION

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

Jan. 20 - Feb. 6:

Booming populations of snow geese; Colorado Bend State Park; jetty fishing; Buffalo Soldiers; Big Bend geology.

Feb. 6-13: Supplying water to Corpus Christi; San Angelo State Park; embracing bats; building trails at Enchanted Rock; photographing coyotes; Texas skies.

Feb. 13-20:

Bat caves of Texas; Fort Parker State Park; fishing safety tips; hidden springs of Big Bend; nesting bald eagles.

Feb. 20-27:

Preserving the pristine habitat of Government Canyon; Fort Richardson State Park; coming back from the brink of extinction; wildlife veterinarian; cool canoeing.

Feb. 27 - March 6:

Basic birding for beginners; Cooper Lake State Park; reserve a campsite by phone or computer; frontier history in today's schools.



Learn about the unprecedented partnerships that are helping to preserve Government Canyon near San Antonio. Watch the week of Feb. 20-27.

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AUSTIN: KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 9 a.m. / Mon. 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. 3:30 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. 3 p.m.

Also serving Temple

LUBBOCK: KTXT, Ch. 5 / Sun. 3:30 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.



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ATLANTA: KPYN-AM 900 / 7:30 a.m.

AUSTIN: KZNX-AM 1530 / 9:20 Sun.; KWNX-AM 1260 / 9:20 a.m. Sun.

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

BEAUMONT: KLVI-AM 560 / 5:20 a.m.

BEDFORD: K-Meadow, Meadow Creek Elementary (KMCE) / throughout the day

BIG SPRING: KBST-AM 1490 / 10:50 a.m.; KBST-FM 95.7/10:50 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.

BROWNWOOD: KSTA-AM 1000 / 10:45 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 / throughout the day; KGAS-FM 104.3 / throughout the day

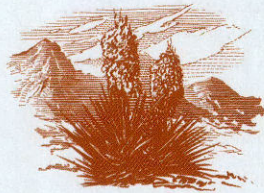
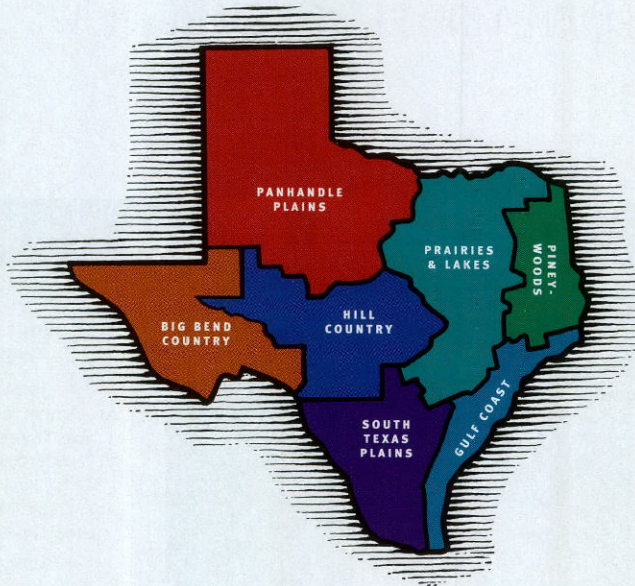
CENTER: KDET-AM 930 / 5:20 p.m., KOSI-FM 92.5 / 5:20 p.m.

CISCO: KCER-FM 105.9 / 12:00 p.m.

< cont'd on pg. 56

GETAWAYS

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



BIG BEND COUNTRY

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

FEBRUARY: Boulderling Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, every Wednesday through Sunday, by prior arrangement, reservations required, (915) 849-6684

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

FEBRUARY: Pictograph Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, every Wednesday through Sunday, reservations required, (915) 849-6684

FEBRUARY: Full Moon in the Dunes, Monahans Sandhills SP, Monahans, for more information, email info@texascamelcorps.com or call (866) 6CAMELS

FEBRUARY: Texas Camel Treks, Monahans Sandhills SP, Monahans, for more information, e-mail info@texascamelcorps.com

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

or call toll free (866) 6CAMELS

FEBRUARY: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock, every Wednesday through Sunday, tours are subject to cancellation, (432) 292-4464

FEBRUARY: White Shaman Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock, every Saturday, tours subject to cancellation, (432) 292-4464

FEBRUARY 6, 20: Big Bend Lecture Series, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (432) 424-3327

FEBRUARY 12: Solitario Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, reservations required, (432) 229-3416

FEBRUARY 18-20: Weekend at the Ranch, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, fee \$425 per person for three nights lodging and 2 1/2 days of meals, reservations required, (432) 229-3416

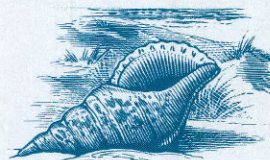
FEBRUARY 19: Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock, reserva-

tions required, (432) 292-4464

FEBRUARY 20: Birding Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, also available Wednesday through Sunday by advance request, subject to guide availability, reservations required, (915) 849-6684

FEBRUARY 20: Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, reservations required, tour subject to cancellation, (432) 292-4464

FEBRUARY 26: Madrid Falls Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, reservations required, (432) 229-3416



GULF COAST

FEBRUARY: Weekend Nature Programs, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, every Saturday

and Sunday, www.bbspvo.org, (979) 553-5101

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

FEBRUARY 4-5: Coastal Expo, Santa Ana NWF, Alamo, (512) 912-7037

FEBRUARY 5, 19, 25: Whooping Crane Bus/Van Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

FEBRUARY 5, 12, 18, 19, 26: Story Time, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100

FEBRUARY 6, 26: Beachcombing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

FEBRUARY 12-13: Remember the Maine, Battleship TEXAS SHS, LaPorte, a memorial service honoring Americans who have died in the country's service, (281) 479-2431

FEBRUARY 12, 26: Bay Walk, Galveston Island SP, Galveston, (409) 737-1222

FEBRUARY 12, 26: Exploring Sea Life, Galveston Island SP, Galveston, (409) 737-1222

FEBRUARY 18: Night Wildlife Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, overnight stay on the island and reservations required, (361) 983-2215

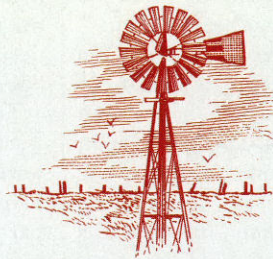
FEBRUARY 20: History Tour, Matagorda Island SP&WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations

required, (361) 983-2215

FEBRUARY 20, 27: Bird Walk, Galveston Island SP, Galveston, (409) 737-1222

FEBRUARY 26: Nature Day, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100

FEBRUARY 26: Barn Opening and Family Day, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHS, West Columbia, (979) 345-4656



PANHANDLE PLAINS

FEBRUARY: Interpretive Programs, Abilene SP, Tuscola, reservations required, (325) 572-3204

FEBRUARY 5: Prehistoric Permian Track Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (325) 949-4757

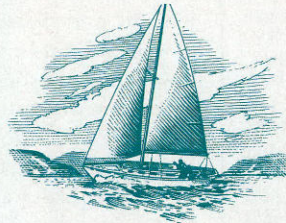
FEBRUARY 12: Stargazing Party, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (325) 949-4757

FEBRUARY 19: Campfire Stories, Fort Richardson SP&HS & Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway, Jacksboro, (940) 567-3506

FEBRUARY 19: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, reservations required, (409) 384-5231

FEBRUARY 26: Fireside Storytelling, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394

FEBRUARY 27: Photo Tour, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394



PRAIRIES & LAKES

FEBRUARY: Group History Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, available to groups of 10 or more by reservation only, (979) 968-5658

FEBRUARY: Kriesche Brewery Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, every Saturday and Sunday weather permitting, (979) 968-5658

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

FEBRUARY 5: Talala Trail Walk, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940

FEBRUARY 5-11: 58th Annual Society for Range Management Meeting, Fort Worth, Texas, <www.rangelands.org/texas2005>

FEBRUARY 6, 13: Kreische House Tour, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, (979) 968-5658

FEBRUARY 12: 9th Annual Bluebird House Day, Sam Bell Maxey House SHS, Paris, reservations required, (903) 785-5716

FEBRUARY 12-13: Eagle Fest, Emory, Texas, www.eagle-fest.org or call (800) 561-1182

FEBRUARY 19: Neatness of the Night Hike, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, reservations required, (972) 291-5940

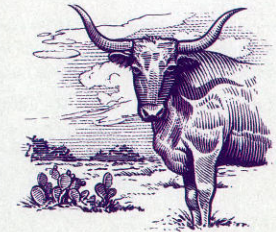
FEBRUARY 26: Penn Farm

Tour, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940

FEBRUARY 26: Bluebird Nestbox Building, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, (903) 395-3100

FEBRUARY 26: Bluebird Nestbox Building, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, (903) 395-3100

FEBRUARY 26: Cross Timbers Cowboy Campfire Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

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

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

FEBRUARY 5-6: Youth Javelina Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by special drawn permit only, (830) 676-3413

FEBRUARY 5, 19, 26: World Birding Center-Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, Discover Bird-Watching, reservations required, (956) 585-1107

FEBRUARY 11-13, 18-20, 25-27: Gun Javelina Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by special drawn permit only, (830) 676-3413

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



HILL COUNTRY

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

FEBRUARY: Walking Wild Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, every Saturday and Sunday weather permitting, reservations recommended, (325) 628-3240

FEBRUARY: Black History Month, Fort McKavett SHS, Fort McKavett, daily (325) 396-2358

FEBRUARY: Wild Cave Tour, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, every Saturday, reservations required, (877) 441-2283

FEBRUARY 5: Crawling Wild Cave Exploration, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, reservations required, (325) 628-3240

FEBRUARY 11-13: Romancing the Spouse, Landmark Inn SHS, Castroville, reservations and \$100 non-refundable deposit required, (830) 931-2133

FEBRUARY 12, 19, 26: Interpretive Walk, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, (830) 438-2656

FEBRUARY 19: Trail Project, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg, reservations recommended, email: project@friendsofenchantedrock.com, (325) 247-3903



PINEYWOODS

FEBRUARY: All About Alligators, Huntsville SP, Huntsville, every Saturday, (936) 295-5644

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

FEBRUARY: Saturday Evening Programs, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, every Saturday, 8-9 p.m., (409) 384-5231

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

FEBRUARY 12: Valentine's Dinner, Starr Family Home SHS, Marshall, reservations required, (903) 935-3044

FEBRUARY 13: Archeology Tour, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394

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try and can easily heal themselves of illnesses and wounds that befell them...”

The name “Karankawa” is actually a designation used to refer to a group of five tribes who are thought to have shared territories, languages, and cultures in south Texas. The bands, known as the Cocos, Carancaguases, Cujanes, Coapites and the Copanes, inhabited the region around five estuarine provinces of coastal Texas — the Galveston, Matagorda, San Antonio, Copano and Corpus Christi bays. However, the locations and delineation of tribal groups were subject to the topographic skills of whichever particular European happened to be marking the map or recording the observation. All, of course, is conjecture. It is thought that these tribes intermingled frequently and shared foraging techniques, including the use of fish traps and weirs, and hunted fish with bows and arrows. Their dwellings, simple structures made of pole frames and covered in matting or hides, were designed to assist in their nomadic movements. Transportation featured dugout canoes meant to negotiate shallow bays and lagoons rather than open water.

Perhaps most interesting of all was the impression that the Karankawa manner and appearance seemed to have made upon the Spanish and French who traveled across Karankawa territory. Gleaned from historical accounts by explorers, captives, missionaries, sailors and shipwreck survivors, the Karankawa identity has been subjected to as much mythologizing as anthropology. Often believed to be storybook cannibals, Karankawas actually practiced warfare ceremonies similar to those in evidence among many of the world’s aboriginal tribes, which involved consuming bits of the dead enemy’s flesh in retribution. The men were often described as tall, muscular, formidable and naked. Both men and women engaged in body adornment, tattooing their skin and piercing their nipples and lips with slivers of cane. The Talon children experienced this painful decoration first-hand, recounting how the Karankawa “...first tattooed them on the face, the hands, the arms, and in several other places on their bodies as they on themselves, with several bizarre black marks, which they make with charcoal of walnut wood, crushed and soaked in water. Then they insert this mixture between the flesh and the skin, making incisions with strong, sharp thorns, which cause them to suffer great pain. Thus, the dissolved carbon mixes with the blood and oozes from these incisions

and forms indelible marks and characters on the skin. These marks still show, despite a hundred remedies that the Spaniards applied to try to erase them.”

The Karankawa were said to enjoy the intoxicating effects of fermented yaupon, were considered powerful runners and swimmers, and were reported to have participated regularly in competitive games that involved weapon skills and wrestling. The Talons observed them “...going every morning at daybreak to throw themselves into the nearest river, almost never neglecting to do so, no matter what the season, even when the water is frozen. In this case, they often make a hole in the ice and dive into it. They run with all their might, going to the river and also returning, and then they stand in front of the large fire prepared for the purpose. And they stand shaking their arms, their thighs, and their legs for a while until they are thoroughly dry. Then they wrap themselves in buffalo hides rubbed soft like chamois leather, which they use as robes, after which they walk about for some time. They claim that this gives them strength and renders them supple and fleet of foot.”

The Karankawas had a language beyond smoke as well, a verbal language, yet none save a scant one hundred words of it have survived. But the greater loss suffered is the absence of the tongue’s sound, perhaps more than the loss of its words and their attendant ideas. Words spoken are like song, their voices more laden with meaning than their simple definitions and more compelling in their inspiration.

“...When the Indians conversed,” claimed one keen listener of the Karankawa language in Albert S. Gatschet’s published observations, “they carefully husbanded or somewhat repressed their breath, and, at the end of a sentence or isolated word, it escaped in a gentle sigh or ‘breathing’ — giving the speakers an air of ennui...”

The listener’s poetic observation, made in the mid-1800s, ultimately proved to be a signal as strong as smoke. The Karankawa voice would be heard for just a few more years before being silenced forever. After more than a decade of conflicts with settlements on both sides of the border, the last remaining band of Karankawas attempted to settle around Rio Grande City in 1850. Eight years later, they would all die in an attack led by Texan forces, thereby erasing the last traces of a people that had flourished in this region for thousands of years. ★

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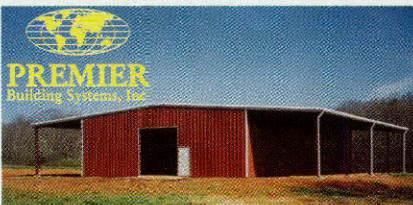
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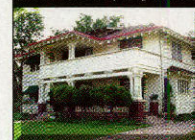
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PHOTO BY GEORGE HOSEK

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