

P400.6  
P235  
64:04

WWW.TPWMAGAZINE.COM / APRIL 2006

# TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

# HIKING *through* TIME

THE STUNNING VISTAS AND RICH HISTORY OF  
BIG BEND RANCH

*Plus:*  
HATCHING A REVOLUTION  
ROSEATE SPOONBILLS  
FLOUNDER GIGGING  
RED RIVER FLY FISHING

\$3.95







Proud Sponsor and Official  
Vehicle of Texas Parks and  
Wildlife Foundation



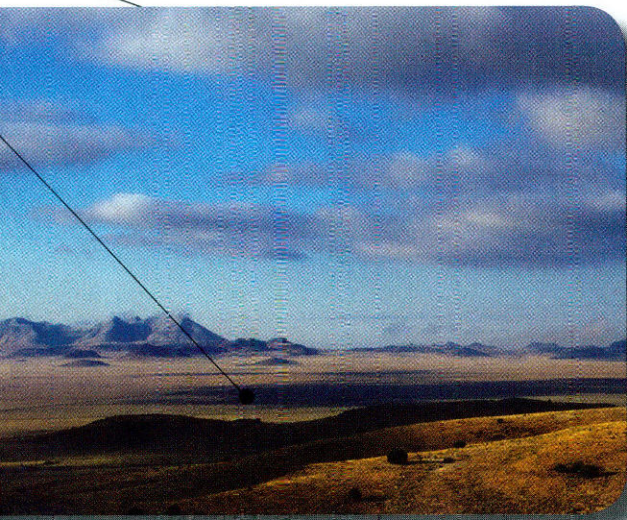
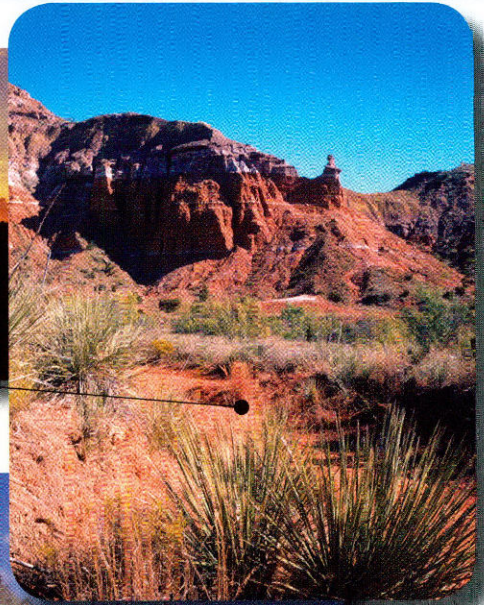
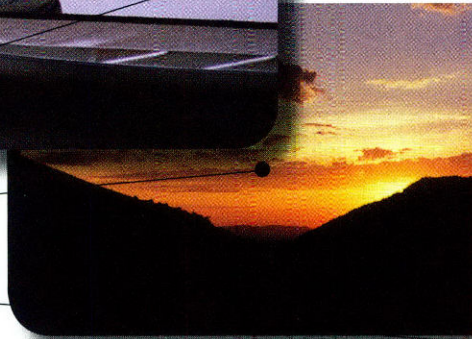
Tundra  
Double Cab

Government  
Texas  
Dallas

# Point A...

---





Government Publications  
Texas State Documents

JUL 17 2006

Depository  
Texas Public Library

# to Point B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J,



So where are you headed? Garner State Park? Pedernales? Cap Rock Canyon? All of the above? In Texas, there's a lot to see. Get there in a Tundra Double Cab. It's longer and wider than Ford F-150, and it comes equipped with everything you need for life on the road. Or off the road. The go-anywhere, do-anything Toyota Tundra Double Cab. Get the point? **TOYOTA** | *moving forward* ▶



# Features

## 32 Pretty in Pink *By Betsy Simmacher*

If you're in Texas and something pink flies by, that's no flamingo  
— it's a roseate spoonbill.

## 38 Hatching a Revolution *By Larry D. Hodge*

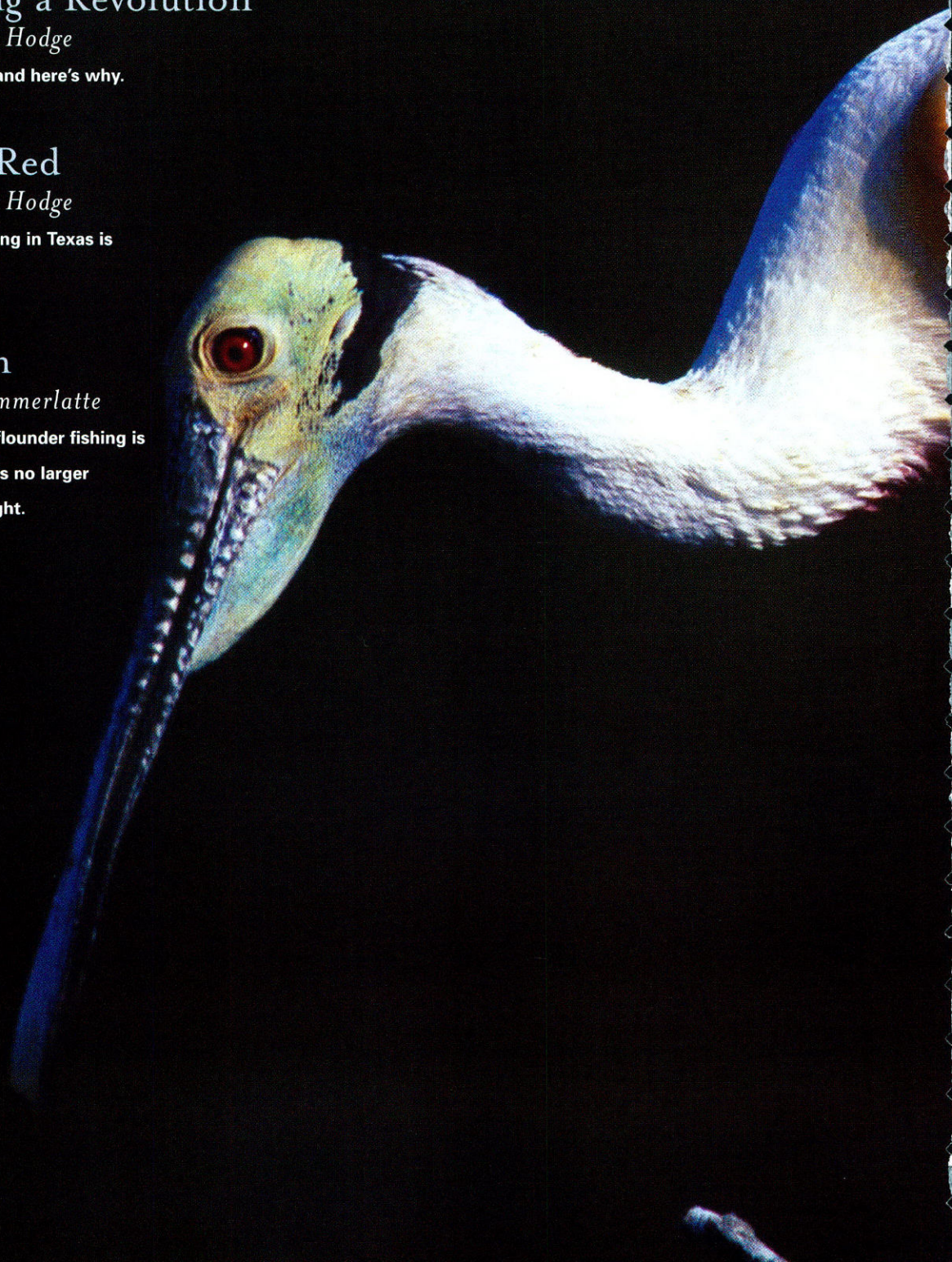
Fishing's great in Texas, and here's why.

## 44 Seeing Red *By Larry D. Hodge*

Some of the best fly fishing in Texas is  
in Oklahoma.

## 48 Gig 'Em *By Scott Sommerlatte*

On the bay at night, the flounder fishing is  
easy and the world seems no larger  
than a circle of lantern light.





# CONTENTS

A P R I L 2 0 0 6



# 22

COVER STORY

## One Land, Many Spirits

*By E. Dan Klepper*

The Rancherías Trail meanders through dramatic desert scenery and thousands of years of history.

It's definitely time to see for yourself: Life's better outside!

For the latest information on Texas' parks and wildlife, visit the department's Web site: <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)>



# Departments

6 At Issue *By Robert L. Cook*

8 Mail Call

Our readers share their ideas.

10 Scout

The latest conservation news and events.

10 PADDLE PATH *By Aaron Reed*

Luling paddling trail offers kayakers and canoeists an easy way to enjoy the San Marcos River.

12 PICTURE THIS *By Earl Nottingham*

Tricks for capturing tiny treasures such as butterflies and flower petals.

13 PROTECTING SEAGRASS *By Aaron Reed*

New regulation prohibits seagrass destruction in 50-square-mile area.

14 PENGUINS, ROMANTICS AT HEART

*By Wendee Holtcamp*

While Rita roared just offshore, two Moody Garden penguins decided to start a family.

15 SHOOTING FOR KNOWLEDGE

Teenagers learn about wildlife management, firearm safety and more.

16 SKILL BUILDER *By Scott Sommerlatte*

The basics of building a ground blind from natural materials.

18 FIELD TEST *By Gibbs Milliken*

Large-profile flies made of materials such as deer hair or rabbit fur can drive big bass into a frenzy.

20 Three Days in the Field

*By Robert Macias*

In Fredericksburg — the B&B capital of Texas — you'll find lazy mornings, fine wine, good fishing and one confused rooster.

52 Legend, Lore & Legacy

*By Jennifer Logan*

Faced with the toughest assignments in the most remote locales, the Buffalo Soldiers knew how to get the job done.

57 Sights & Sounds

Check out Texas Parks and Wildlife's television and radio schedule.

58 Park Picks

Recommended stops along the road less traveled.

64 Parting Shot *By Larry Ditto*

## Covers

**FRONT:** The Rancherías Loop Trail is the perfect way to experience the rugged landscape of Big Bend Ranch State Park. Photo © Lance Varnell.

**BACK:** The Buffalo Soldiers achieved military recognition for outstanding performance in difficult circumstances. Photo by TPWD.

**Previous spread:** With a splash of crimson on its wing and a touch of the rainbow on its tail, the roseate spoonbill patrols coastal wetlands in search of sustenance. Photo © Larry Ditto.

**This page:** A Coleman lantern lights up Matagorda Bay at night, illuminating the quest for flounder. Photo © Scott Sommerlatte.



# TEXAS

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

APRIL 2006, VOL. 64, NO. 4

## GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

Rick Perry

## COMMISSION

Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons, Chairman **San Antonio**  
Donato D. Ramos, Vice-Chairman **Laredo**  
J. Robert Brown **El Paso** Ned S. Holmes **Houston**  
Peter M. Holt **San Antonio** Philip Montgomery **Dallas**  
John D. Parker **Lufkin**  
T. Dan Friedkin **Houston** Mark E. Bivins **Amarillo**  
Lee M. Bass, Chairman Emeritus **Fort Worth**

**Executive Director** Robert L. Cook  
**Communications Director** Lydia Saldaña

## MAGAZINE STAFF:

**Randy Brudnicki** Publisher  
**Robert Macias** Editorial Director  
**Charles J. Lohrmann** Managing Editor  
**Mark Mahorsky** Art Director  
**Earl Nottingham** Chief Photographer  
**Andres Carrasco** Photography Editor  
**Susanne Harm** Circulation Director  
**Mike Kelley** Assistant Circulation Director  
**Ana Kirk** Business Manager  
**Jennifer King; Jon Lucksinger** Editorial Interns

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

**Larry Bozka**, Saltwater; **Henry Chappell**, Hunting; **Larry D. Hodge**, Freshwater;  
**Gibbs Milliken**, Products

## CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

**Grady Allen**, **Wyman Meinzer**, **David J. Sams**

## EDITORIAL OFFICES:

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

## ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES:

**STONEWALLACE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.:**  
3000 S. IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, Texas 78704  
Fax: (512) 707-1913  
**Jim Stone**, Advertising Director (512) 799-1045.  
E-mail: jim.stone@tpwd.state.tx.us;  
**Don Weidemann**, Outdoor Marketplace Manager, (512) 799-8576.  
E-mail: don.weidemann@tpwd.state.tx.us

*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine (ISSN 0040-4586) is published monthly by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. The inclusion of advertising is considered a service to subscribers and is not an endorsement of products nor concurrence with advertising claims. Copyright © 2006 by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. No part of the contents of this magazine may be reproduced by any means without the permission of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. The magazine is not responsible for the return of unsolicited materials provided for editorial consideration.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$19.95/year; foreign subscription rate: \$27.95/year. POSTMASTER: If undeliverable, please send notices by form 3579 to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, P. O. Box 5504, Harlan, IA 51593. Periodicals Postage Paid at Austin, Texas with additional mailing offices.

*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine is edited to inform readers, and to stimulate their enjoyment of the Texas outdoors. It reflects the many viewpoints of contributing readers, writers, photographers and illustrators. Only articles written by agency employees will always represent policies of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

## SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES ONLY, PLEASE.

PHONE: (800) 937-9393

7 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. weekends

IRMA Member International  
Regional Magazine Association

ABC  
AUDITED

# In the Field

## BETSY SIMNACHER

spent her early years in Houston and first learned to love roseate spoonbills and other Texas Gulf Coast bird life on family trips to Galveston's West Bay. "I knew the birds that were easy to identify: blue jays, cardinals and roseate spoonbills." Even though those early trips to the beach created vivid memories, it wasn't until much later that she learned more about the true habits and habitat of the roseate spoonbill. As an adult, she "learned to appreciate their singular beauty." Even so, many Texans — and other visitors to the Texas Gulf Coast still think all pink birds wading in coastal wetlands are flamingos. Her article in this issue, "Pretty in Pink," begins on page 32. Simnacher now makes her home in Dallas where she teaches journalism at North Lake College in Irving.



## MELISSA GASKILL

started visiting state parks in Texas before she could walk, and has the home movies to prove it. She and her husband have introduced their three children to as many parks and as much outdoor recreation as possible. A freelance writer with degrees in both zoology and journalism, she particularly enjoys writing about the natural world, ways to enjoy it, and the issues that affect it. She has published articles in many regional and national magazines, and recently wrote a guide book on hiking with dogs. "Star gazing is one of my favorite things to do, something I remember from childhood camping trips. These days, you have to work to find a place where you can see the stars, which makes parks like Brazos Bend a real treasure." Her first articles for *Texas Parks & Wildlife* on Texas' sea turtles and Johnson City appeared last month.



## AARON REED

is an Austin-based news and information writer for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. An avid, lifelong outdoorsman, Reed has seen his work published in *Texas Fish & Game* magazine, *Gulf Coast Connections*, *Lone Star Outdoor News*, *Good Old Boat* magazine and many other local and regional publications. Before joining TPWD, Reed reported the news for a daily newspaper and worked for the U.S. Army as a public affairs specialist. In this issue of *TP&W* magazine, he writes about seagrass conservation in Redfish Bay State Scientific Area, near his hometown of Rockport (see the Scout section on page 10), and describes the state's first inland paddling trail on the San Marcos River near Luling. Reed hopes this paddling trail will become a template for other trails on Texas' waterways.





# AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF ROBERT L. COOK

**The decision to build a new large reservoir** in Texas these days is difficult, complex and controversial. New reservoirs to supply fresh water for our growing metropolitan areas are always going to cover land; land that in some cases has been in the family for many generations; land that real people live on, and land that their ancestors settled on, fought for, and are buried in. The land that will be covered by the new reservoir frequently includes "wetlands" and richly diverse bottomland hardwoods. New reservoirs are expensive; they may cost billions of dollars to construct. However, people must have water, right? Nobody will argue that one.

Some might wonder, what difference does it make to Parks and Wildlife? What is TPWD's role and responsibility in this process?

First, any time that federal funds are to be used to help construct a new reservoir, lots of folks and lots of agencies get involved very quickly. Usually, it is a river authority or a city that must plan decades ahead to provide water for their constituents that initiates the process of building new reservoirs. Permits to build federally funded reservoirs along the waterways of Texas must be approved and issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Water permits must be approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Approval and funding from the Texas Water Development Board must be obtained. Wildlife conservation organizations are involved and included in the process from start to finish. Wetlands and unique habitats to be covered by the new reservoir must be mitigated elsewhere. Somewhere along the way, agencies like the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department are "asked to comment" on the impacts of the proposed reservoir. TPWD is charged by law to protect and manage the fish and wildlife resources of Texas. There is no question that the bottomland hardwood habitat and the land which will be covered by the new lake will be lost, gone forever; and there is no question that that is a negative impact on the wildlife resources of Texas. On the other hand, freshwater fishermen and recreational boaters in Texas see tremendous potential and recreational opportunity with each new lake. Bass fishing and boating are very popular, multibillion dollar businesses in Texas. TPWD does not "oppose or support" the construction of proposed new reservoirs; that is not in our responsibility or our authority. It is our responsibility to comment on the impacts of proposed reservoir projects to the wildlife resources of the state based on science and resource data, and to be sure that those wildlife resources are carefully considered in the process.

Bottomland hardwoods and the wetlands associated with creeks and stream beds are possibly the most productive and unique wildlife habitats in Texas today. Unfortunately, Texas has already lost as much as half of our bottomland hardwoods to agriculture, reservoirs, timber harvest and urban development. These are truly unique areas, our "old-growth rain forests," and there are fewer and fewer relatively old-aged bottomland hardwoods in Texas every day. These rich, wet habitats produce and protect wildlife, waterfowl, and a vast array of resident and migratory birds. Bottomland habitats also benefit water quality, watershed and ecosystem functions, and aid in the recovery of listed species. These lands provide hunting, camping, birdwatching, and other outdoor recreational opportunities for the public. We think these are important areas; we think they are worth preserving in a natural condition to the best of our ability.

So? What are you going to do? Many believe our least expensive and most viable option is water conservation. Don't use as much fresh water. Don't waste any fresh water.

As you have heard before, the three most important conservation issues in Texas today are: Water ... Water ... and ... Water. Get involved.

*Bottomland hardwoods  
and the wetlands associated  
with creeks and streambeds  
are possibly the most  
productive and unique  
wildlife habitats  
in Texas today.*



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

**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.**





A Texas Company.

*we know Texas fishing*



**Academy**<sup>®</sup>  
**SPORTS+OUTDOORS**

**RIGHT STUFF. LOW PRICE.**

Visit any one  
of our 56  
Texas stores.

[academy.com](http://academy.com)



# MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

## FOREWORD

**I can't believe spring is already here** — although this year it seems like spring came in January (and left for a while and then came back). Regardless of the weather, I don't think that the fishing "season" really starts until the calendar says its spring. Now that the trees are budding and the grass is turning green, it's time to hit the lake or river.

Even as I look forward to spending more time on the water, I find myself thinking about the past more and more. I suppose an increased affection for history is a sure sign of middle age. We owe so much to the people who in the past put their jobs and reputations on the line to make fishing, hunting and other outdoor adventures better for all of us. Larry Hodge's article on the history of Inland Fisheries tells the story of a few of those early heroes and their work (see page 38).

I hear so many people say, "It's not like the good old days," and they are right. It's better. More than 100 years ago, fish and game populations plummeted. Many species were almost wiped out (I can hardly blame the people living at that time because it was sometimes a matter of survival) and, while some species were extirpated, forward-thinking sportsmen put their money into establishing conservation initiatives. Today we know so much more about conservation and we know that keeping in touch with nature also has the power to enhance the quality of human lives.

I volunteer with youth groups and see so many teenagers struggling. In my opinion, the biggest hurdle they face is a lack of self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. Nevertheless, when we take them hiking, camping or fishing, their attitudes change. They become engaged in life and I can tell they feel better about themselves.

As we drive to our outdoor adventures, the teens are often so immersed in their portable video games, it's hard to get their attention. However, when we are on the boat, the crazy horseplay ends and they listen to the fishing instructions. They really get into it. Even when the conversations drift to life's lessons, they begin to get it. I don't know what it is about being outdoors that makes it easier to talk to kids about life, but it sure works.

While fishing is my favorite activity, many other outdoor activities peak this time of year. There is something for everyone, from birding, to hiking, to just relaxing in a state park. Beyond the outdoor activities of hiking, fishing and hunting, we are incorporating more wildlife in the magazine. In this issue, the article about roseate spoonbills (see page 32) provides tips for locating and enjoying this pink gem of the Texas coast.

Finally, as you read *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, remember to share your copy with a young reader. Better yet, go outdoors, do something fun ... and take a kid with you.

*Randy Brudnicki*

RANDY BRUDNICKI  
PUBLISHER

## LETTERS

### MARCH IS MAGIC

**A**fter reading through the March issue of *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, I must say this is the best issue I have seen yet. I have enjoyed your magazine every single month, but this one is just amazing. The story covering

the top 50 ways to get outdoors in Texas turned me on to a great excursion right around the corner from me — kayaking Armand Bayou Nature Center.

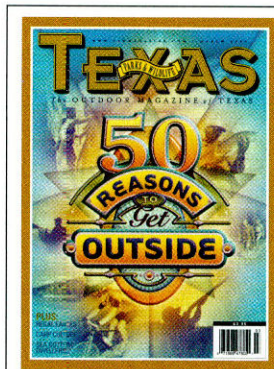
As an increasingly avid photographer, I always enjoy your articles that give tips and hints to maximize the overall appearance of pictures. And to top it off, an article about one of my favorite creatures, the bald eagle. Right on time, too, since I have recently read that they may soon be coming off of the endangered species list. Also, the

photos that accompany that article are great. These three reasons, along with the usual items, such as focusing on different state parks, have made this the single greatest issue of your magazine I have seen. Keep up the great work and I look forward to enjoying each month's issue.

KEVIN MUELLER  
*Seabrook*

### TREASURING THE MARCH ISSUE

**T**he March issue is a keeper, not to be loaned or thrown away. However, I will share it with my grandson and his wife with the hope that, when their two boys are old enough, they will visit many of the 50 places listed. Even if they are not hunters or fisherman there is so



The story covering the top 50 ways to get outdoors in Texas turned me on to a great excursion right around the corner from me — kayaking Armand Bayou Nature Center.

Kevin Mueller  
*Seabrook*



# MAIL CALL

much to enjoy in the parks system in our state. Your list proves that Texas is indeed a world in itself. And it would take most of a lifetime to see it all. Keep the great articles and photos coming!

WM. RAY GREEN  
*Gainesville*

## APPRECIATION FOR WILDLIFE

You publish a magazine with beautiful photographs and well-written articles. However, I am consistently disappointed that the wildlife aspect of your magazine focuses primarily on hunting and fishing.

While I understand the occasional benefits of wild animal population control, I think of parks as places to conserve wildlife, not venues for killing animals for so-called sport. I strongly encourage you to consider changing your outlook on wildlife "appreciation."

BENJAMIN LEDERER  
*San Antonio*

## FUNDING FOR PARKS

In the February and the March issues there were comments about the Texas park system needing more money. Why shouldn't the park system support itself? Let those that use the parks pay for them. Charge whatever it takes to operate the parks. Why should someone that never uses the parks pay for someone else's usage? We don't pay for someone to go to the movies do we?

CLIFF WILSON  
*Blanco*

## Sound off for "Mail Call!"

### Let us hear from you!

*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine welcomes letters from our readers. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

### Write to us at

*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine,  
3000 South I-35, Suite 120,  
Austin, TX 78704.  
Or, fax us at 512-707-1913.

### E-mail us at

<magazine@tpwd.state.tx.us>

**Subscribe** at <tpwmagazine.com>.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

WE'RE ALWAYS  
**QUICK**  
TO RESPOND



**NO SPURRING NECESSARY**

We hit the ground running when our members need us most. So in your time of need, you can count on us to do more than stand behind you. We'll be right there with you. In fact, our ability to react quickly has been giving Texas homeowners, farmers and ranchers peace of mind for over 100 years. To learn more about RVOS and the insurance products we offer, give us a call or visit us online.

800-381-0787



rvos.com/parks



# SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

## PADDLE PATH

*Luling paddling trail offers kayakers and canoeists an easy way to enjoy the San Marcos River.*



The San Marcos River has long been a destination for paddlers from around the Texas Hill Country, and Luling's new paddling trail — possibly the first of many inland paddling trails for Texans — offers easy access to the river.

In Luling, the state's first inland paddling trail will be unveiled this month. Already established on the Texas coast at places like Lighthouse Lakes near Aransas Pass and Armand Bayou in Houston, paddling trails offer well-mapped water with safe and convenient put-ins and take-outs. The Luling paddling trail covers six river miles and can be traversed easily in 2-4 hours, depending on water levels.

"The impetus behind this was a growing interest in canoeing and kayaking," says Melissa Parker, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's river conservation coordinator. "People wanted to know: 'Where can we go? Where can we take the family?'"

"One of our goals is to educate people about the river, and what better way to educate them than to get them on the river," says Randy Worden, executive manager of business development and resource management for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority.

A new 20-acre park at the paddling trail put-in on U.S.

Highway 90 is also in the works. Plans for Zedler's Mill park include the addition of a museum and restaurant, a bed-and-breakfast, and a special events pavilion. The new facilities will complement the existing nine-hole golf course, clubhouse and public pool located at a city park within walking distance of the mill.

"We organized a town meeting inviting anybody who wanted to know what was happening at the mill, or wanted to be part of it, to come out," says Randy Engelke, City of Luling parks and recreation director. "We had nearly 100 people at the meeting, and we asked them what they wanted to see at the mill."

Top vote-getters for the historic structure (it's on the National Register of Historic Places and once played a key role in Luling's daily life, providing everything from flour to lumber) included a museum and restaurant, followed by an amphitheater and the open-air pavilion.

"We're planning on building a stage and boat dock right on the river," Engelke says. "The boat dock can be used for portage around the mill, or to stop and eat at the mill."

"It's been one of our dreams to establish a series of paddling trails along both the Guadalupe and San Marcos rivers for some time," the GBRA's Worden says. "This project opened the door, and with TPWD's desire to have some inland trails, it's just an opportune time."

Parker says the Luling paddling trail could be the first of many on Texas' extensive inland waterways. "We hope this will be a template for other communities," she says.

The trail's first major event — the second annual Zedler's Mill Classic river race — is scheduled for April 22. Last year's event, sans paddling trail, drew more than 60 participants of all levels. ★

For more information, call the City of Luling Parks and Recreation Department at (830) 875-2713.

— Aaron Reed



GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



ALL-NEW 2006  
DODGE RAM MEGA CAB™

# FINALLY. A TRUCK BIG ENOUGH FOR TEXAS.

**RAM MEGA CAB.** The biggest, roomiest, most comfortable cab ever. With the most rear-seat leg room, greatest total interior volume, largest load floor area, even reclining rear seats. It's a truck that's, well...Texas-sized. For more information, visit [dodge.com/mega\\_cab](http://dodge.com/mega_cab) or call 800-4ADODGE.

Chrysler Financial



BUCKLE UP



# PICTURE THIS

Our chief photographer shares his insights.

## Macro Photography

Tricks for capturing tiny treasures such as butterflies and flower petals.

**Looking at nature close-up** gives us an opportunity to ponder its delicate details—little masterpieces of symmetry and beauty that are often overlooked by photographers in search of the grander landscape. Macro photography lets us see a whole new world of tiny creations, each an artistic composition in its own way. With a little patience and some of the great camera optics available on today's point-and-shoot and SLR cameras, getting great macro images has never been easier.

Sometimes called close-up photography, macro photography simply means that an object is the same size (or larger) on a piece of film as it is in real life. Thus, if a bug is one-inch long, it will reproduce as one-inch on film. There are several ways to magnify objects to a 1:1, or greater, reproduction. Most often, magnification is increased by simply moving the lens further away from the film plane. Most macro lenses have longer barrels that allow additional travel space for the lens. This is referred to as "bellows-extension" and can also be achieved by using extension tubes stacked between any normal lens and the camera body. Also available are close-up filters that attach to the front of a lens. These filters are available in several magnifications (diopters) and can be stacked for maximum strength. However, they are generally not recommended because of their potential for increased lens flare and degraded image quality.

Here are some tips for better macro photos:

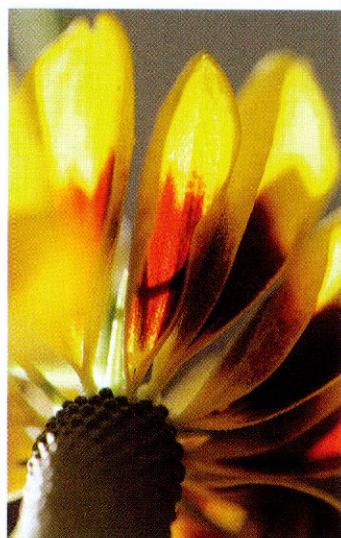
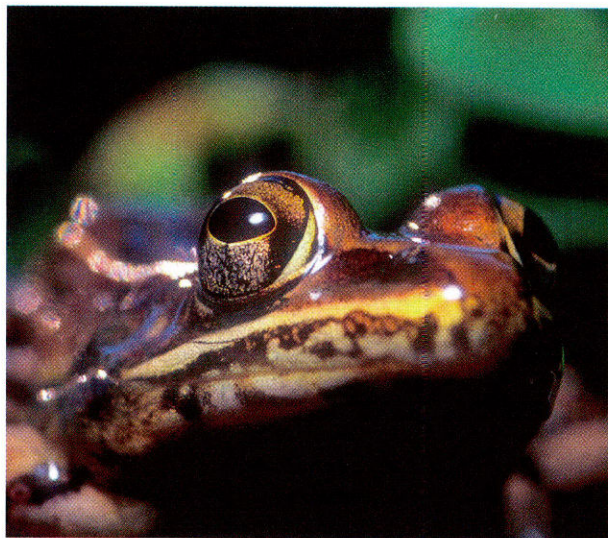
**Aim for sharpness**—The number-one problem that seems to pop up with macro photography is an un-sharp image. I'm always amused at the sight of a photographer kneeling excruciatingly, swaying back and forth and trying to maintain focus on a wind-blown flower. A hand-held macro photo is an invitation to disappointment because of the limited depth-of-field and inherent slower shutter speeds. Try instead

to stabilize the camera by resting it on the ground, a camera bag, or by any number of tripods and mini-tripods made for that purpose. Also, if your camera allows, use a cable release to minimize vibration. If photographing critters, always focus on the nearest eye. Sharp eyes give a subject a sense of reality and presence.

Get down and dirty—Macro photography is usually a ground-level experience. Try to photograph subjects at eye-level (or petal-level) whenever possible, avoiding the urge to point the camera down. This may involve some contortions on your part

minute changes to the camera angle. Also, a longer focal length lens will narrow the angle of coverage, eliminating much of the clutter as well as letting you shoot at a further distance from the subject. My favorite macro lens is a 100mm that allows me to shoot at a distance comfortable for both me and subjects that like to jump.

**Lighting**—Proper lighting on any subject, large or small, is what creates the impression of shape and texture. By using light to our advantage we can bring out important details unique to the subject. For instance, delicate flower petals gener-



Macro photography typically presents a small subject at the same size—or even larger—than it appears in real life. Today's photographic equipment offers several ways to achieve stunning images of the details in nature, like the metallic sheen of the frog's eye or delicate flower's folds.

but will pay off with that "up close and personal" look. Serious macro buffs will invest in a right-angle finder that allows the camera to be set directly on the ground or support while the photographer looks down into the viewfinder.

**Simplify the background**—Macro subjects invariably seem to get lost in busy backgrounds such as stems, twigs, leaves, etc. In addition to physically moving in closer and filling the frame with the subject, try "manicuring" the scene by removing distracting objects or by making

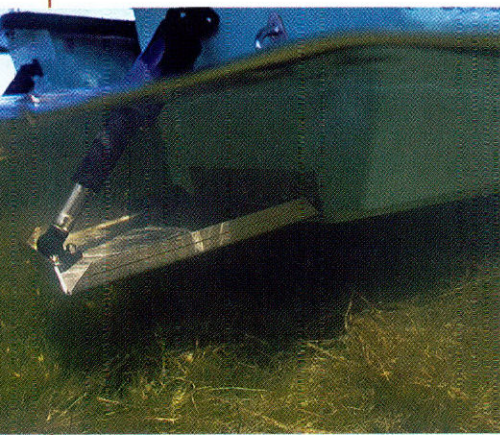
ally look better when the light is coming from behind them (backlighting) and making them appear to glow with color. If texture is what you want to show, then have your main lighting at about a 90-degree angle to the camera. When backlighting or sidelighting your subject in strong daylight, you may also want to try reflecting a little light into the shadows with nothing more than a small piece of white paper held just out of the frame. ☆

—Earl Nottingham



# Protecting Seagrass

*New regulation prohibits seagrass destruction in 50-square-mile area.*



New regulations will preserve seagrass by controlling the use of propellers in the waters of Redfish Bay.

**Starting May 1**, the TPWD will be asking boaters to take a different, more conservation-minded tack when running the shallow, productive grass flats near Rockport and Aransas Pass.

On that date, a new regulation prohibiting the destruction or uprooting of seagrasses will go into effect in the 32,000-acre Redfish Bay State Scientific Area. The 50-square-mile area is bounded by the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway to the west, the Corpus Christi Ship Channel to the south and the Lydia Ann Channel and Aransas Bay to the east.

The more than 10,000 acres of seagrass meadows in the area — primarily turtle grass and shoal grass — comprise the northernmost extensive stand of submerged marine grasses in Texas. The same area consistently provides the highest catch rate of red drum on the entire Texas coast in Coastal Fisheries gill net samples.

"Is that related to seagrass? Absolutely," says Dennis Pridgen, a TPWD coastal fisheries biologist.

"A seagrass meadow supplies everything that many marine organisms need. It provides food for grazing animals at the base of the food chain, surfaces to cling on for small crawling critters, shelter and hiding places for small invertebrates and fish, and ambush points for the larger predators and game fish," he says. "For them it's the nursery, the roof over their heads and the grocery store all rolled into one."

Seagrass meadows are dynamic places that change in size and composition for a

number of reasons. Some of those are naturally occurring. For instance, late summer drift algae mats can shade an area and kill off patches of grass, revealing bare sand or mud — locally called "potholes."

One change that is not natural, and that the new seagrass regulation is aimed at reducing, is propeller scarring.

"The nature of the boats that are being used on the coast now — high-performance, tunnel-drive, shallow-draft boats — allow people to operate in shallow areas where in the past they were not able to run a boat," Pridgen says. "A high-horsepower motor produces enough torque that even when the prop is digging into the bottom, the engine can still propel the craft at planing speeds. That creates what we call a prop scar."

There is clear evidence that prop scars can reduce the productivity of the ecosystem. When propellers cut through the bottom, they destroy the roots of the seagrasses, and it can take years for the scars to heal, particularly in turtle grass beds.

Some prop scars channel currents and can become many times wider and deeper than they initially were.

Thousands of prop scars can be found in the area. A recent TPWD study found that, in Redfish Bay, over half of the seagrass sites examined had prop scars. The northern half of Redfish Bay — the popular Terminal Flats and Middle Grounds, along with Estes Flats — appeared to be most heavily impacted, Pridgen says.

The new regulation makes it a Class C misdemeanor to destroy or uproot seagrasses and replaces a voluntary "no prop" zone in part of the area. The approach was chosen by the TPW Commission in November 2005 as an alternative to mandatory no-propeller zones.

Lt. Alan Teague, a game warden in the Corpus Christi regional office, says the area's 30 game wardens will phase in enforcement of the regulation.

"It's going to be heavy on the education part," Teague says. "Obviously, if there is a blatant violation, it will be addressed

## SOUTHWEST TEXAS ACA

Financing Today's Texans



**A piece of paradise. Peace of mind. TEXAS.**

Land purchase, property improvements, home construction, livestock, equipment, and operating needs... whatever you need, we put 85 years of lending experience to work for you.

Southwest Texas ACA provides reliable, value priced credit and other financial products to the rural community. We have offices in Devine, Edinburg, Hondo, Laredo, Marfa, Pleasanton, San Antonio, Sonora, and Uvalde.

**800.663.2846 • [www.swtaca.com](http://www.swtaca.com)**





appropriately. But like any other law, we want people to be aware of it. A violation that occurs as a lack of knowledge isn't the same as something that is done out of wanton disregard."

By the time the regulation goes into effect May 1, TPWD employees hope to have signs up at area boat ramps and a substantial number of boundary markers in place around Redfish Bay, particularly at popular entrances to the flats such as Yucca Cut and Corpus Christi Bayou. A later phase of the project will include marked "run" lanes.

Boaters and anglers will have brochures, maps and other materials to help them learn how to avoid damaging seagrasses.

"Of the management options available to us, this one has the least amount of restriction for all recreational users. There are no closed areas," Pridgen says. "It does put the responsibility on the user to be aware of water depths and avoid running in areas that are too shallow. When boaters create prop scars, they are damaging valuable habitat that belongs to all Texans. Ultimately that damages the health of the ecosystem and potentially our game fish populations, which is one of the primary reasons we go to the flats to begin with." ★

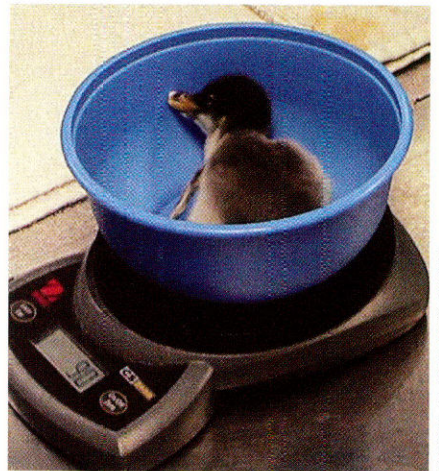
— Aaron Reed

# Penguins, Romantic at Heart

*While Rita roared just offshore, two Moody Gardens penguins decided to start a family.*

**As Hurricane Rita barreled toward the Gulf Coast**, curators and biologists at Moody Gardens Aquarium were frantically trying to feed all the animals and secure the fort for the pending storm when something caught assistant curator Diane Olsen's eye in the penguin exhibit—a couple of gentoos were getting friendly. "We were running around like crazy people trying to feed all the animals and it stopped us in our tracks," says Olsen. The happy penguin couple has since hatched two fuzzy gray and white chicks that have become all the rage with aquarium visitors.

"It's interesting and exciting because we haven't had gentoos breed, we've mostly had kings breed," Olsen explains. Although gentoo penguins can mate at two



A baby gentoo penguin is weighed to verify that it is growing at the proper rate.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOODY GARDENS

## Tune in before you step out.

Tune in each week to the award-winning *Texas Parks & Wildlife* television show. Learn where to fish, hunt, hike, camp or just enjoy the nature and history of Texas. Visit

[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv)

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



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



years old, no gentoos at Moody Gardens had gotten amorous. The two that mated were three and five years old (male and female, respectively).

Gentoos are medium-sized penguins with reddish-orange bills, a broad white stripe across the top of their heads, and a sprinkling of white polka dot freckles around their face on otherwise black bodies. The penguins are native to Antarctica and the Sub-Antarctic Islands, such as the Falklands and South Georgia Island, but these particular gentoos hail from penguins raised in captivity for several generations. About 300,000 gentoos exist in the wild. In their native habitat, they create nests from rocks, leaves or other vegetation, and in the aquarium they created a cozy nest on river rocks available in the exhibit. They lay two eggs three days apart, but both eggs usually hatch at the same time, after around 34 days of incubation. This ensures there is not unequal competition between the chicks.

The penguin chicks hatched at Moody Gardens before now — mostly kings — have been hand-reared, but the curators decided for the first time to let the penguin parents raise their chicks. “Sometimes we’re too eager to step in, so we decided to see what happens,” explains Olsen. “We just wanted to see if the parents

could do it and let nature take its course.” Aquarium personnel nonetheless weighed the chicks every day for the first five days to ensure they were gaining weight — and they certainly were. A second gentoo couple also paired up after Hurricane Rita.

One of the most exciting aspects of the penguin exhibit is that Moody Gardens participated in an egg-collecting expedition for king penguins in 1998. Most captive penguins come from stock collected many years ago, and the king penguin stock was in need of a genetic boost. Zoo and museum curators maintain an international studbook that details the parentage history of each individual back to the original founding stock. This ensures that no inbreeding occurs, which could cause health and other problems. Several king penguins have paired up and successfully reared young in the exhibit. In addition to 12 gentoos and 31 king penguins, Moody Gardens Aquarium, which opened in 1999, has six rockhoppers, and 39 chinstraps.

As you leave the penguin exhibit, the wall reveals a reflective message from Senegalese Conservationist Baba Dioum, “For in the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.” ☆

—Wendee Holtcamp

## Shooting for Knowledge

*Teenagers learn about everything from wildlife management to firearm safety at Youth Shooting Sports Events.*



TPWD sponsors “Youth Shooting Sports Events” to teach teenagers about the outdoors and conservation.

**A wiry teenager steps up to the shooting station,** loads the shotgun, confidently hollers, “Pull!” and swings on the target. The clay shatters into smoke, and the other youths, who were whispering and giggling, suddenly stop, their mouths agape. She says, “My daddy taught me to shoot when I was 10.” She exits the shooting cage and walks back to the group of boys with a smug look on her face.

Most of the participants at “Youth

Shooting Sports Events” hosted by the Chaparral, M. O. Neasloney, Matador and other Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Wildlife Management Areas are a little less experienced. In fact, many of them have never fired a gun.

Begun in 1994, the events introduce high school students from nearby towns and cities to the outdoors and to conservation. Area staff, game wardens, biologists, local law enforcement officers and volunteer hunter education instructors conduct the activities. The department’s regional hunter education staff and Texas Cooperative Extension specialists also assist with many of the events.

David Synatzske, area manager of James

Rekindle Your Sense of Wonder 🐾 Nature Quest April 25-30, 2006

Join us for the 7th annual Nature Quest festival.

Special guest Bobby Harrison shares his re-discovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Learn about birds, bats, wildflowers, trees, stars, butterflies, and more!



Texas Hill Country River Region

A Vacation Reason for Every Season

Concan • Garner State Park • Reagan Wells  
Sabinal • Utopia • Uvalde

Photo by  
Larry Ditto

Visit our website today at [www.thcrr.com](http://www.thcrr.com) or call (800) 210-0380



Daughtrey and Chaparral Wildlife Management Areas says, “We started the program to introduce youngsters to the outdoors and to help them understand the important role hunters and shooters play in conservation. Once we get them to our areas, we stress firearm safety and the positive side of the shooting sports. We give kids a chance to see what we do here at Texas Parks and Wildlife, such as wildlife research and habitat management practices.”

The true passion in Synatzske’s voice as he describes his many years of working with kids is unmistakable. “In the first year we held the program, we found that nearly half of the students had never fired a sporting arm — and this from a region of the state where hunting plays a primary role in the economics of local communities and in the management of wildlife.” Synatzske sends pre- and post questionnaires to the teachers to learn all he can about the students, and, more importantly, what they can gain from the experience.

At Youth Shooting Sports Events, teenagers learn how to shoot shotgun under the watchful eye of Charlie Wilson, hunter education specialist for the department. Known as the “Pied Piper of Shooting Sports” in Texas, Wilson introduces thousands of new enthusiasts each year to the thrill of busting sporting clays — targets that simulate rabbit and a variety of birds while hunting. Wilson travels statewide with a mobile hunter education trailer and sets up a sporting clays range at events such as 4-H Shooting Sports, Becoming An Outdoors-Woman and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo. In ten years, Wilson has introduced more than 100,000 people to shooting on behalf of the department’s hunter education and youth hunting programs.

Wilson echoes Synatzske’s remarks, “Many kids, whether they grow up in a rural or urban environment, don’t get the chance to get outdoors and experience what I grew up with. I see their faces after they shoot a bull’s-eye or break a clay bird. It’s a priceless expression, and it is why I do what I do.” He adds, “Particularly, when I work with special needs students, it is extremely satisfying to look into their eyes after they shoot a shotgun for the first time — they glow with pride and accomplishment, whether they hit the target or not.”

Last October, the Chaparral WMA held its 22nd Youth Shooting Sports Event, which it hosts every fall and spring school semester. Approximately 250 students per year participate in the activities. High school agriculture science teachers from Laredo, Carrizo Springs, Cotulla and other small South Texas towns bring their students to the event to satisfy part of the curriculum requirements, specifically the Agriculture Science 381 course entitled, “Wildlife and Recreation Management.” As a result of the course, students receive their hunter education certifications by learning firearm, hunting and outdoors safety, wildlife management and hunting and outdoor responsibilities.

During a typical event, students complete their live firing and wildlife management requirements by safely handling and shooting bows and arrows, air guns, small bore and large bore rifles, muzzleloaders, handguns and shotguns. Biologists and other experts also introduce them to habitat management practices, research techniques, plant and wildlife identification and wildlife habits and behaviors. ★

— Steve Hall

## SKILL BUILDER

BY SCOTT SOMMERLATTE

# Tricking Toms

*The basics of building a ground blind from natural materials.*

**Veteran turkey hunters agree** that the most important part of the game is how and where you hide. Turkeys have incredible eyesight, great hearing, and an intelligence level that borders on the supernatural. Patience and attention to detail are key components of successful turkey hunting. After locating a tom, study its movements and find a hiding spot along a path that leads to or from the bird’s roost. If several birds are roosting in the same area, it is wise to set up a considerable distance away so that you do not disturb the other birds.

Once you find a place to hide, it is time to choose the best way to stay out of sight. While some hunters choose to deck themselves out in camo and face paint, I prefer a ground blind. To me, total concealment is the name of the game. The blind must look natural and be dense enough so that the birds cannot see through it. This can be accomplished by using the natural vegetation found in the area.

One of the best methods is to cut fresh cedar branches or other densely leaved vegetation and build a teepee-like structure. (Of course, make certain beforehand that cutting fresh vegetation is allowed on the property.) The blind should be built up against a tree, which will serve as a back rest and prevent birds from seeing into the blind. If a suitable tree is not available, a small seat with a backrest that can sit flat on the ground will also work.

First, cut branches (each about 4 feet long) that have plenty of leaves or needles, then stand the branches with the cut end up, leaning them inward so that they support each other. When the blind is complete, the cut ends of the branches at the top of the blind should be lashed together. For this I like to carry some long tie-wraps. Also, don’t forget to leave a small opening to shoot from (the smaller the better) and another to get in and out of the blind, and make sure you have sufficient vegetation to cover the opening once inside.

Using fresh vegetation has a few advantages. It offers more cover with less work and because the material is still green, it will be on the quiet side. However, in the event that suitable fresh vegetation is not available to make a blind, you can also use old logs and downed tree limbs. A blind of this type will require much more work because of the lack of leaves to fill in the gaps. When building a blind out of logs and limbs that have no leaves, line the inside of the blind with camouflaged netting or material. The netting will help conceal you, and it will also prevent you from rubbing up against and breaking the dry, brittle twigs and sticks, which would make noise and spook the turkeys.

As you can see, building a ground blind is not difficult. Just remember: make it look as natural as possible and you should have no problems calling a big ’ol tom into range. ★





# New lure's catch rate may be too high for some tournaments.

**Out-fishes other bait 19 to 4 in one contest.**

**Uses aerospace technology to mimic a real fish.**

ORLANDO, FL— A small company in Connecticut has developed a new lure that mimics the motion of a real fish so realistically eight professionals couldn't tell the difference between it and a live shad when it "swam" toward them on retrieval. The design eliminates wobbling, angled swimming and other unnatural motions that problem other hard bait lures. It swims upright and appears to propel itself with its tail.



by Charlie Allen

Curiously, the company may have designed it too well. Tournament fishermen who have used it said it's possible officials will not allow it in contests where live bait is prohibited. They claim it swims more realistically than anything they have ever seen. If so, that would hurt the company's promotional efforts. Winning tournaments is an important part of marketing a new lure.

Fish would probably prefer to see it restricted. I watched eight veteran fishermen test the new lure (called The KickTail®) on a lake outside Orlando FL for about four hours. Four used the

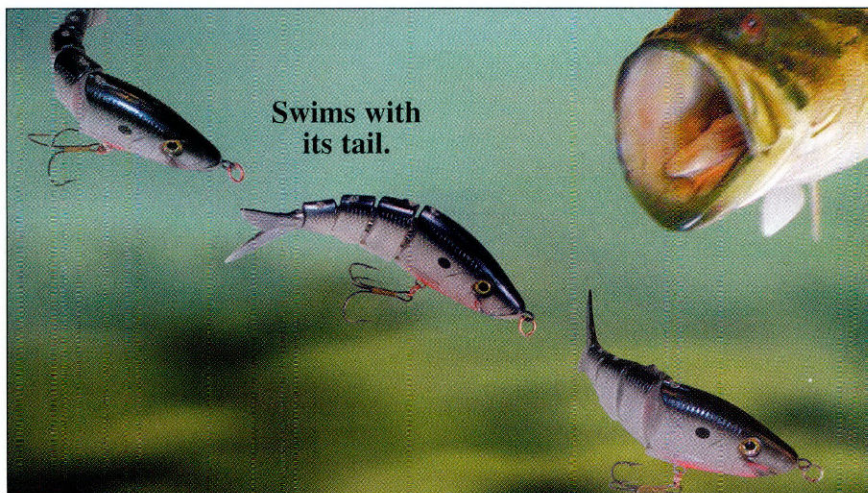


**Inventor Scott Wilson lands a 10-pounder.**

KickTail and four used a combination of their favorite lures and shiners (live bait). The four using the KickTail caught 41 fish versus 14 for the other four. In one boat the KickTail won 19 to 4. The KickTail also caught bigger fish, which suggests it triggers larger, less aggressive fish to strike. You can see why the company

needs to get it into tournaments. An almost 3 to 1 advantage can mean thousands of dollars to a fisherman, and hundreds of thousands in sales to the company.

The KickTail's magic comes from a patented technology that breaks the tail into five segments. As water rushes by on



**Swims with its tail.**

**New lure swims like a real fish--nearly triples catch in Florida contest.**

retrieval, a little-known principle called aeronautical flutter causes the tail to wag left and right, as if the lure were propelling itself with its tail. Unlike other hard baits, the head remains stationary—only the tail wags. A company spokesman told me this.

"Fish attack live things, and they determine if something is alive by watching its movements. Marine biologists will tell you that the more a lure swims like a real fish, the more fish it will catch. Well, the only live thing the KickTail doesn't do is breathe. It's better than live bait! It lasts longer and it never hangs half-dead from a hook. It's always swimming wild and free. Fish can't stand it. We've seen fish that have just eaten go for the KickTail. It's like having another potato chip.

## **Increases catch almost 3 to 1.**

"To make the KickTail even more lifelike, we gave it a natural shad color and shaped it like the most prevalent bait fish of all, the threadfin. Game fish gobble up more threadfin shad than any other baitfish.

"We knew the KickTail would out-fish other lures. It had to. Other lures wobble their heads and swim on an angle. But 41 fish to 14? That's huge! I tell you, in ten seconds anyone who has fished a day in his life knows this little swimmer's a home run. Fishermen reserved thousands of KickTails before we produced it! Here, reel it in and watch it swim toward you. Can you tell the difference between it and a live fish? (I said no.) Neither can the fish.

"The flutter technology also allows the KickTail to swim at the water's surface. Other top water lures must be worked to have any live action, or have a bill that makes them dive on retrieval. Our diver version is the only deep crank bait that let's you do tricks like 'walk the dog.' Twitch it at deep levels and it gives an irresistible, lifelike action. Other lures 'dig.' And there's no need for rattles. The five tail segments click together as you pull it through the water, calling fish from a distance."

Whether you fish for fun or profit, if you want a near 3 to 1 advantage, I would order now before the KickTail becomes known. The company even guarantees a refund, if you don't catch more fish and return the lures within 30 days. There are three versions: a floater for top water, a diver and a "dying shad" with a weed guard for fishing lily pads and other feeding spots. The company says it's the only hard bait of its kind in existence. Each lure costs \$9.95 and you must order at least two. There is also a "Super 10-Pack" with additional colors for only \$79.95, a savings of almost \$20.00. S/h is only \$6.00 no matter how many you order.

To order call 1-800-873-4415 or click [www.ngcsports.com](http://www.ngcsports.com) anytime or day or send a check or M.O. (or cc number and exp. date) to NGC Sports (Dept. KT-1005), 60 Church Street, Yalesville, CT 06492. CT add sales tax. The KickTail is four inches long and works in salt and fresh water.

KT5-5 © NGC Worldwide, Inc. 2006 Dept. KT-1005



# Big Flies for Trophy Bass

*Large-profile flies made of materials such as deer hair or rabbit fur can drive big bass into a frenzy.*

**Ambush predators like black bass** are attracted to artificial flies that have big profiles and enticing actions. These lures, made of bulky materials such as deer hair, rabbit fur and marabou, can drive large bass crazy. Synthetics also offer fly fishers a wealth of new colors, textures and flashing holographic strips that are strong attractants.

Fly tiers are coming up with some interesting innovations and fishing them in different presentations. One effective method is to use a fast sinking line and work the flies over structures in deeper waters of lakes and rivers. Many bass anglers are concentrating on the shorelines and backwaters, so there is less pressure on the deeper dwelling bass suspended in open waters.

Professional guide Rob Woodruff of Quitman specializes in this type of fishing and gets some strange looks as he heads for the middle of Lake Fork equipped only with fly rods. He finds one of his best patterns is the **IC Fly** that is tied on a 3/0 weed-guarded hook using a thick body of ice chenille skirted in purple and chartreuse resembling a tubeworm. (Woodruff Guide Service, 903-967-2665, [www.flyfishingfork.com](http://www.flyfishingfork.com))

Another ardent fisherman and large-fly advocate, Derrick Rothermel in Kamloops, Canada, builds big-profile designs using marabou and strips of holographic flash material to catch huge northern pike. These have recently been modified into his new series of **Bassabou Flies** that are very effective on Texas bass and can be weighted with soft tungsten putty to reach deeper levels. When slowly stripped and paused, the wet marabou produces a subtle pulsing and flowing action not found in soft plastics or hard lures. (\$4.95 each, Derrick Rothermel Flies, 250-376-1921, [www.members.shaw.ca/mrpik](http://www.members.shaw.ca/mrpik))

In Central Texas, fly-fishing guide Keith Barnes often uses a **Big-Eyed Baitfish** that closely imitates a shad to take both striped bass and black bass on our Highland Lakes. Another of his favorite patterns is the **Dahlberg Diver** developed by the well-known adventure fisherman Larry Dahlberg of Minnesota.

This fly has a tightly packed deer-hair head with a collar ruff that causes it to dive and dodge like an injured or escaping prey. (\$5.50, Big-Eyed Baitfish, \$3.95, Dahlberg Diver, Sportsman's Finest, 512-263-1888, [www.sportsmansfinest.com](http://www.sportsmansfinest.com)) (Keith Barnes, 325-247-8087, [keith@highlandlakesflyfishing.com](mailto:keith@highlandlakesflyfishing.com))

A supple 6-inch bleeding lizard pattern like the **Red-Headed Black Bunny** produces lots of strikes with its fluid swimming action. It has a thick black rabbit-fur body, long zonker tail, red collar and bright holographic eyes. This fly is a personal favorite when fished at night, dawn or dusk near structure or worked slowly along thick mats of weeds. Most flies of this type are equipped with weed guards so they will not snag or pick up debris on every cast. (\$4.95, Derrick Rothermel Flies, Kamloops, B.C., Canada)

For even greater movement in open waters, add a **Wiggle Fin Action Disc** in front of any bass fly to push water and create a natural side-to-side motion. Foraging fish readily detect this pulse and instinctively strike at the disturbance. (\$3.50 per dozen, Series I comes in clear or various colors, WiggleFin, Inc., 208-388-8539, [www.wigglefin.com](http://www.wigglefin.com))

Unique among large floating flies is the **Tsunami or Snake Fly**, an attractor pattern by Rainy Riding, Logan, Utah, that imitates the profile and motions of a juvenile snake struggling to escape over the water's surface. If seen out of the corner of any lunker's eye, this fly will most certainly get hammered! (\$4.95, Sportsman's Finest)

When fishing unfamiliar waters, it is usually best to book a guided trip with a fly fishing specialist who can greatly increase your chances for a trophy bass. You may not remember all the fish caught on conventional tackle, but a real trophy-size bass taken with a fly rod will live in your memory for a lifetime. ★

FROM TOP: Big-Eyed Baitfish; Dahlberg Diver; Rainy Snake Fly with WiggleFin Action Disc; Red-headed Bunny; Rothermel Bassabou Fly; Woodruff IC Fly.





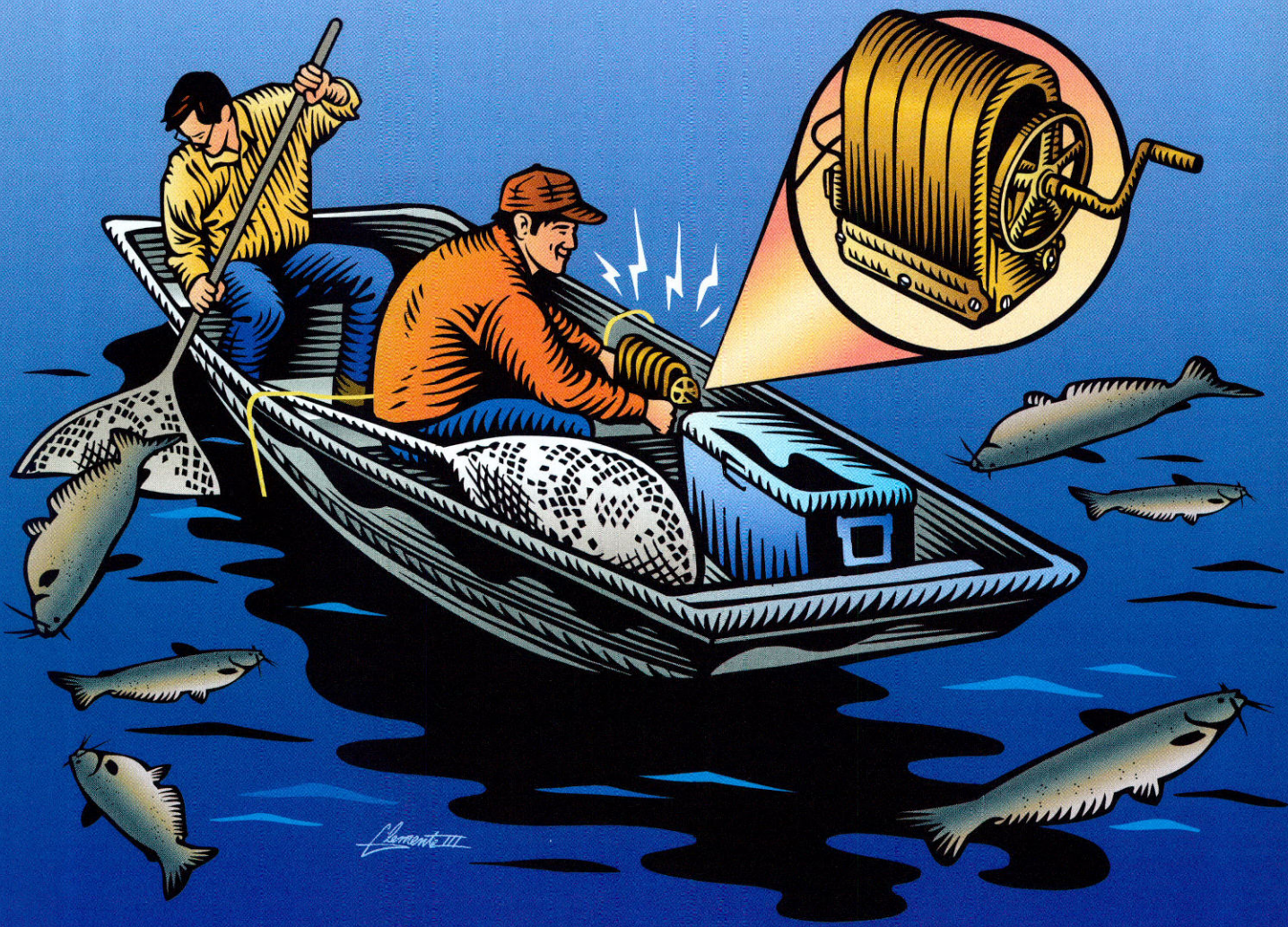
# SHOCK

## POACHERS INTO REALITY

with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
Crime Stoppers program.

You can help make a difference when you're out fishing this spring. Whenever you see any illegal fishing activities from shocking fish or under-sized fish being kept, to people exceeding the bag limit, give our reward hotline a call at 800-792-GAME.

And put a stop to poaching in Texas.



Reward Hotline

**800-792-GAME**

Help make a difference

TEXAS  
PARKS &  
WILDLIFE



Operation  
Game Thief



# 3 Days in the Field / By Robert Macias

**DESTINATION:** FREDERICKSBURG

**TRAVEL TIME FROM:**

AUSTIN – 1.5 hours / BROWNSVILLE – 6.25 hours / DALLAS – 4.25 hours / EL PASO – 7.5 hours  
HOUSTON – 5 hours / SAN ANTONIO – 1.25 hours / LUBBOCK – 7 hours

## Little Germany

*In the B&B capital of Texas, you'll find lazy mornings, fine wine, good fishing and one confused rooster.*

**As I stared at a statue on Fredericksburg's main square** that depicts a German settler receiving a peace pipe from a Comanche chief, it occurred to me that both men must have felt somewhat lost. The Native Americans and the Germans had seen their worlds turned upside down. Many of Fredericksburg's first residents were sons of aristocrats, well-educated but largely lacking the skills needed to survive on the frontier. In keeping with European tradition, the first son normally received the father's entire inheritance. The second and third sons, well, they moved to Texas.

The first band of Germans arrived in 1846 under the leadership of John O. Meusebach, who worked for the Adelsverein, a controversial group of German noblemen who sought to encourage mass emigration of Germans to Texas. While the group maintained that the effort was largely philanthropic — a bold attempt to open up a new land of opportunity for Germans — critics asserted they were mostly interested in creating new markets for German goods. Also known as the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, the Adelsverein never realized its grand vision of a new Germany in Texas, but it was instrumental in the establishment of New Braunfels and Fredericksburg (which was named for Prince Frederick of Prussia, an influential member of the Adelsverein).

One key to the German immigrants' survival was their ability to forge peaceful relations with the Comanche tribe. Local historians say that the Meusebach-Comanche Treaty may well be the only treaty between white men and Native Americans that has never been broken. The early immigrants also benefited from the arrival of a splinter group of Mormons who settled in the community of Zodiac, four miles east of Fredericksburg. Many of the Mormons were skilled carpenters, building one of Austin's first city jails and numerous saw and grist mills throughout Central Texas, according to *The Handbook of Texas*.

Each new arrival in Fredericksburg received two plots of land, one in the city and one in the country. It was customary at the time for European farmers to live in the city and travel each day to their fields. Instead, the city's early settlers built their primary residences on the farm and constructed second, smaller "Sunday houses" in town. They would work all week on the farm and spend the weekends in town, where

they'd run errands, socialize and go to church.

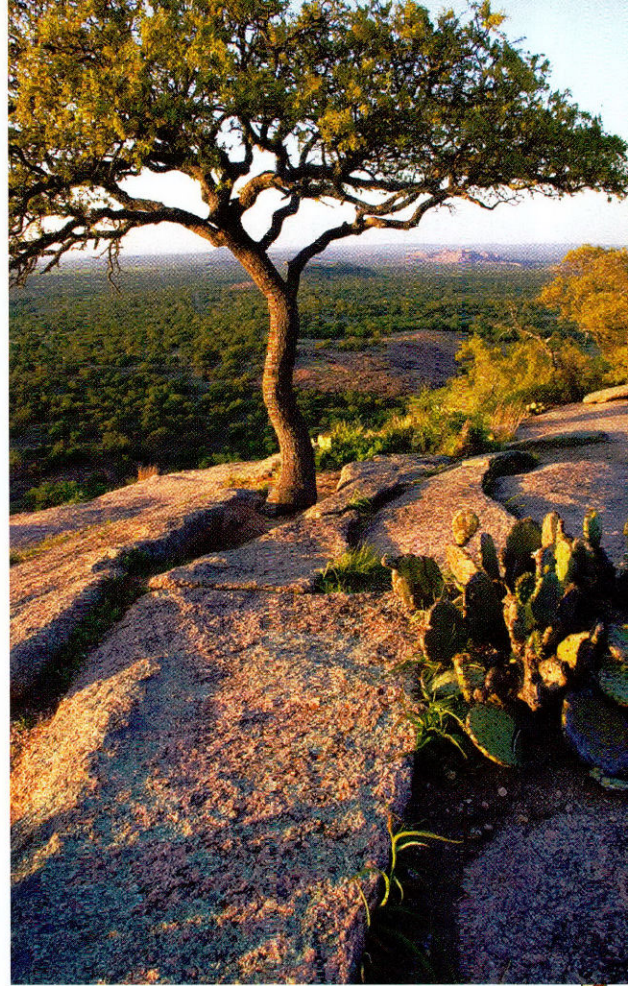
Many of the former Sunday houses are now charming bed-and-breakfast inns. In fact, virtually every square inch of spare living space has been converted into a bed and breakfast. Some are in former garages, backyard cabins, extra bedrooms or one half of a duplex — you can't walk 50 feet in this town without someone offering you a hot cup of coffee and a fresh muffin.

I stayed in high style in the Hemingway room at the A.L. Patton Suites on Main. Basically a huge one-bedroom apartment, it's in the top floor of a historic building above the Cottage Café. It's perfect for anyone seeking total privacy. I never saw the proprietors. I picked up the keys at First Class Bed & Breakfast,



**There's nothing bland about the specialties of the house at Der Lindenbaum, one of Fredericksburg's authentic restaurants.**





ABOVE LEFT: A fly-fishing excursion on the Llano River is just a short drive from Fredericksburg. Check with Castell Guide Service for details. ABOVE: An exhilarating hike up nearby Enchanted Rock will give you splendid Hill Country views from the top. LEFT: Indulge your passion for complex chocolate concoctions at Chocolat, one of the many sensory experiences on Fredericksburg's Main Street.

and it was my own little hideaway for the next few days. Of course, that also means that the second "B" was a little lacking; breakfast consisted of coupons that could be redeemed at local eateries. Because of its central location, however, several restaurants, breakfast joints and shops of all kinds are a short walk down the road.

At one of those shops, Chocolat, I discovered one more reason why the Atkins diet is fading into oblivion. Owner and founder Lecia Duke has dubbed them "liquid center chocolates," but frankly, I think she could use a little marketing advice. That name just doesn't do them justice. There's a chocolate outer coating, a small crunch, and then your entire mouth explodes with the taste of the liquid contents. Flavors range from cognac to espresso to peach nectar. They should be called Choc-Splosion or maybe Choc-O-Mite. Upstairs in the historic home that doubles as a candy factory, Duke showed us the top-secret (no photos allowed) technique she invented to produce these little chocolate grenades. Let's just say it's incredibly labor-intensive. You can bet Duke and her minuscule staff put in mighty long hours.

After leaving Chocolat and wandering around the main drag for a couple of hours, I realized I'd caught a bad case of knick-knack neurosis. It's a close cousin of highway hypnosis, and it appears to be brought on by gazing at too many neatly arranged

shelves lined with small gift items and endless varieties of jam. It seems to disproportionately affect the male of the species. I could see fellow sufferers scattered around town, sitting on park benches and at sidewalk cafes, staring languidly into their coffee cups. In addition to a general sense of malaise, its symptoms include the irresistible urge to escape from any building where the primary activity is shopping.

Fortunately, I would soon find the cure a few miles away. Guide Dan Cone had agreed to give me a fly-fishing lesson on the Llano River.

Along the way, however, we briefly stopped at the Castell General Store, and the owner insisted on showing me his trained rooster. On cue, the rooster savagely pecked at a singing Billy Bass toy as it writhed on the floor. Oh sure, it was funny, but then it got weird. I'll spare you the details, but as it turned out, the pecking was only, uh, foreplay.

I left this disturbing memory behind as I waded into the cool, gently flowing water of the Llano River. Cone soon discovered that I was to be a challenging student. You see, in my younger days, I knew only cane poles, push-button Zebcos and — serious anglers, please skip the rest of this sentence — I was once the proud owner of a Pocket Fisherman. The very idea of fly-fishing had never really penetrated my consciousness until the movie *A River Runs Through It* plunged fly-fishing into the main-

(Continued on page 63)

TOP LEFT PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN. TOP RIGHT PHOTO © LARRY DITTO. ABOVE LEFT PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM






*One Land, Many Spirits*

PHOTO © LANCE VARNELL





THE RANCHERÍAS LOOP TRAIL MEANDERS THROUGH DRAMATIC  
DESERT SCENERY AND THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF HISTORY.

*By* E. Dan Klepper

Ocotillo at sunset from the Rancho Viejo primitive camp.





LEFT: The Rancherías Loop Trail traverses a mountainous desert landscape that dwarfs the individual hiker. BELOW: Taking a breather near the spring that gives the trail its name — an oasis in the arid country. RIGHT: The trail is marked by rock cairns that stand as silent sentinels to the passage of the seasons.

## Something remedial happens to a desert land

once human exploitation ceases and its resources are left to their own devices. The desert ecology, like the surface of damaged skin, slowly knits itself back together, rouging over scars and coaxing precious moisture up from its retreat. Grasslands begin to return, man-made barriers collapse as if old scores are being settled and predators find their way back to a new, burgeoning array of prey. At the same time, all that remains of a desert's human past, from the lithic scatter of nomadic tribes to the dross of civilized occupation, erodes away one grain at a time until all that is left is the present.

Yet the spirit of its human history survives; a specter as palpable and real as the sensation of static before a lightning strike. The chants of the Comanche, the clatter of Spanish soldiers on horseback, the braying of cattle, the bawling of sheep and the cowboy's whoop and holler all echo against the forward movement of wilderness in resurrection, good land reborn — at once ancient and new.

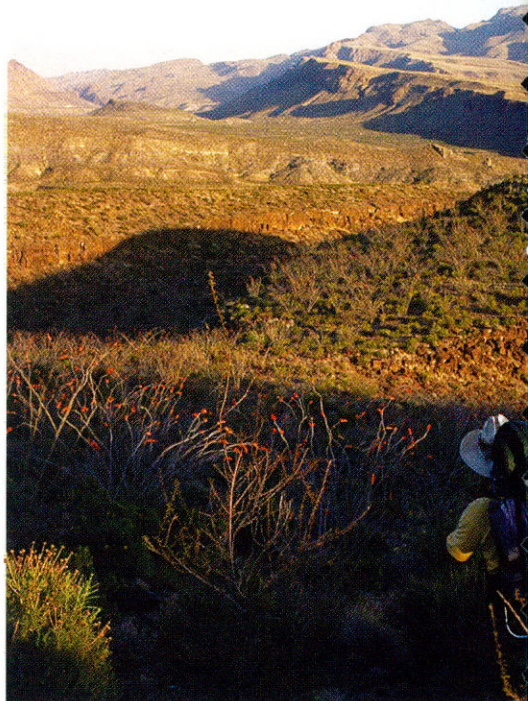
Texas has its share of wild and historic places, but none portrays the arc of nature and human intervention more remarkably than Big Bend Ranch State Park. And nothing brings more clarity to the echoes of its past or the profound beauty of its present than a long walk across its mesas and canyons. By donning a backpack, a water supply and a good pair of hiking boots, Texans can do just that on the park's 19-mile Rancherías Loop Trail.

The Rancherías Loop Trail is comprised of waypoints once utilized by prehistoric and historic Native Americans, historic wagon trails created by Mexican and European settlers, and the vestiges of mule paths, ranch roads and jeep tracks.

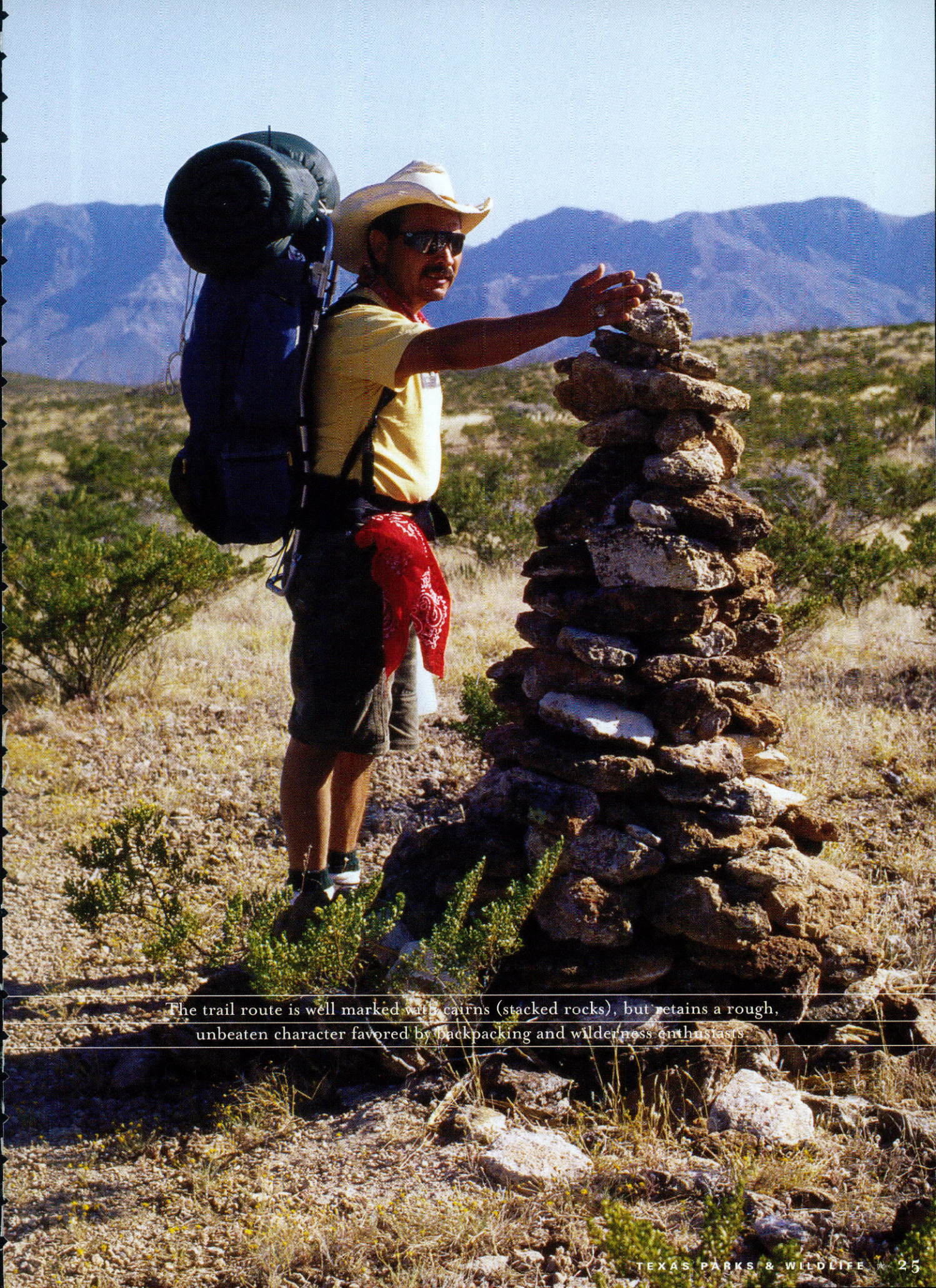
It meanders through rugged canyons, climbs over saddle passes and descends rough, spalling ridges along some of West Texas' most dramatic desert sierras — the Bofecillos Mountains. Along the way are seep springs, *tinajas*, abandoned *bebederos* (livestock troughs) and *pilas* (water storage tanks), rock windrows, crumbling stone dams, collapsed corrals, adobe ruins and the rusty remnants of more than 250 miles of fence line.

But most striking of all is the presence of an astounding variety of flora and fauna. Thanks to approximately 120 springs scattered across the 301,000-acre Big Bend Ranch State Park, thousands of plants, birds, mammals and insects thrive in this water-blessed desert.

The park's Rancherías Loop Trail heads and tails within a mile or so of itself and both trailheads lie conveniently off FM 170, the famed "River Road" of the Big Bend region that follows the lazy ramble of the Rio Grande. The trail route is well marked with cairns (stacked rocks) but retains a rough, unbeaten character favored by backpacking and wilderness







The trail route is well marked with cairns (stacked rocks), but retains a rough, unbeaten character favored by backpacking and wilderness enthusiasts.





The country appears endless here, illuminating a geography, its culture and an ecology that defies borders. It is big, wild, ancient country, and in terms of geologic time, humans have only spent a few moments passing through it over the course of eons.









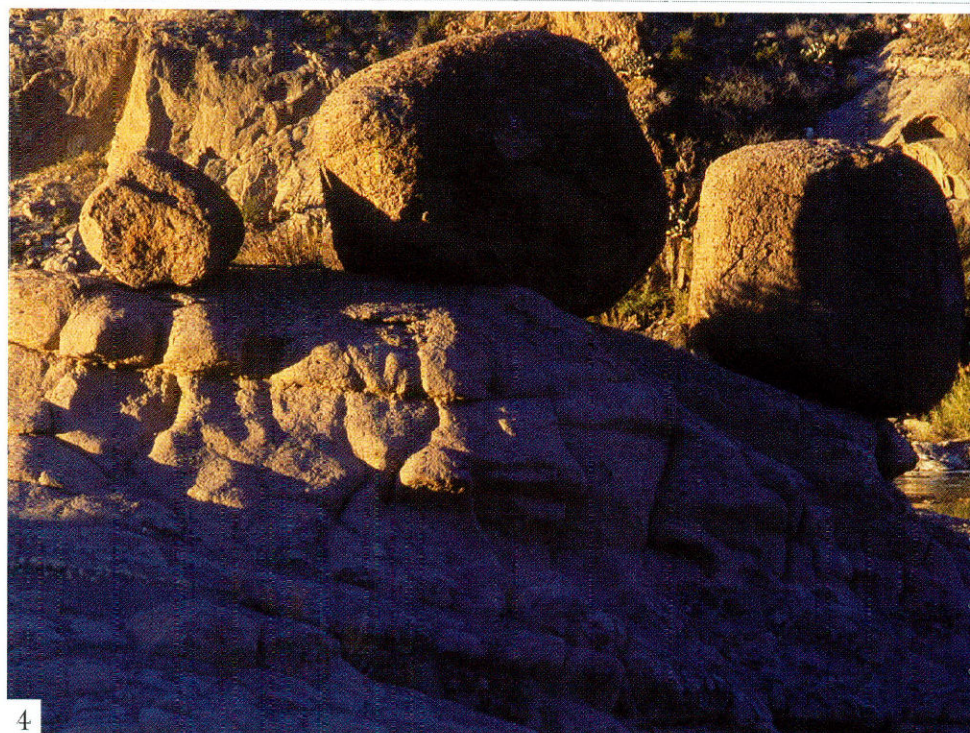
1



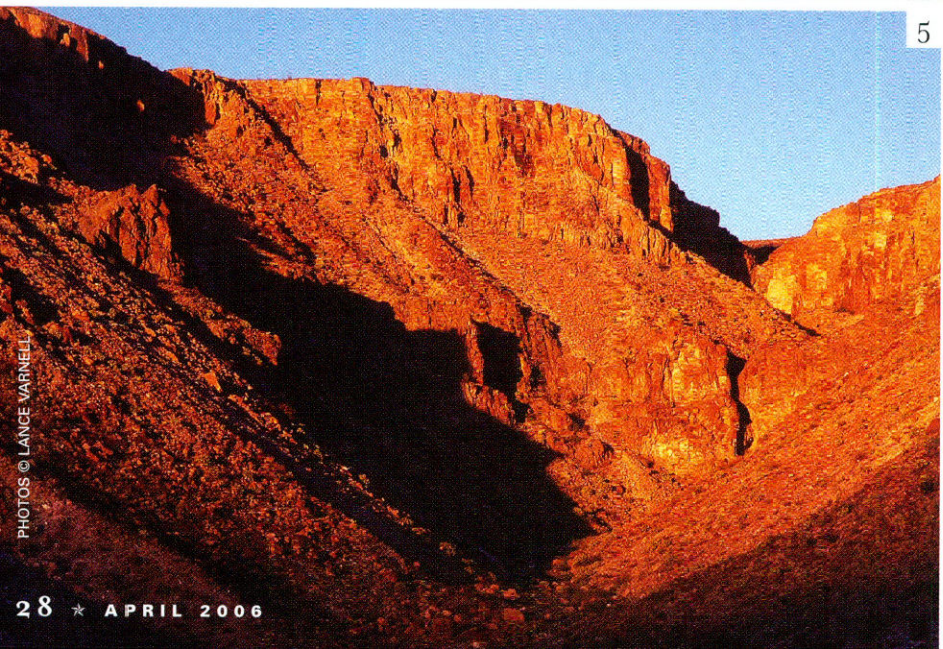
2



3



4



5



6

PHOTOS © LANCE VARNELL



enthusiasts. The east trailhead is the suggested starting point for a recommended two-night, three-day hike as it cuts the net elevation gain significantly, and allows hikers to descend for most of the trip after an initial 1,500-foot ascent. Springs are marked on USGS topographic maps as well as the park's trail guide map, but nature isn't always reliable, so hikers are encouraged to carry plenty of water.

Rancherías provides backpackers with a sense of wilderness at its best, and every day spent on the trail offers challenges and enlightenment. Hikers starting from the east Rancherías trailhead will enter a dry little arroyo and follow it to the mouth of a box canyon. The trail exits the arroyo here and passes through a gap in a hand-built rock fence — the first indication of the hard-scrabble ranching spirit that at one time prevailed across this entire desert region. Ranch hands once gathered and set stones for the short-walled fence all the way up to the rimrock, using the remnants of a natural rock slide as a base. On the far side of the fence gap, the trail continues along the side of a dry wash and, after crossing a broad saddle of two more drainages, it descends into Acebuches Canyon.

Acebuches Canyon is named for the wild olive (*Forestiera angustifolia*) that grows in the region. The canyon was once used routinely to move livestock to and from the Rio Grande. Now, free from the animals' trampling and grazing, desert species have rebounded, especially during the monsoon rains and throughout the migration periods. It is a slow canyon to move through only because of its abundance of birds and beetles to be spotted, particularly around the willow shade of the canyon's seep spring. The canyon also represents a certain kind of unity inherent in this Chihuahuan Desert country. Acebuches Canyon is a designated fault and contact zone between two early and catastrophic events — the volcanic eruptions of the Bofecillos in Texas and the eruptions of Mexico's Sierra Rica. It is a clear-cut connection between the geography underfoot and that which appears across

the Rio Grande, countering maps and mindsets that often end at the river.

The trail eventually switchbacks out of Acebuches, then parallels its rim to its head. Once at the canyon's head, hikers cross a high saddle that divides Acebuches from Panther Canyon. This saddle and its bit of flat ground make a terrific place to camp for the night and enjoy the top-of-the-world views, the sunset colors and the blaze of stars that follow.

Continuing along the trail as it drops into Panther Canyon requires sturdy knees and strong ankles, especially with a pack of 30 pounds or more. But the descent's rewards include flowing spring waters and the remains of the Reza homestead, a small historic site that includes an adobe ruin and its attendant jetsam. The Reza family occupied this spot above the canyon floor and its spring almost a hundred years ago. The Rezas spent their days tending an orchard, some vegetable plots and a herd of goats. They produced *asaderos*, or cheese, from the goats' milk and sold it, along with the fruits, just a rough burro ride away in the small river settlements of El Polvo (now Redford) and Lajitas. Not much remains of the Reza

est residents beyond stone tools and projectile points, but as survival became more sophisticated, so did its remains. Rock art and burial sites, villages and remnants of agricultural and food preparation sites are scattered throughout the park, evidence that the desert was a busy place. The Spanish military and clergy began arriving a little more than 400 years ago, and clashes with Apache and Comanche tribes provoked Mexican military intervention. Trade routes were slowly established and, by the late 1800s, mining and ranching had moved into the region. The early 1900s saw an increase in the stocking of sheep and mohair goats, but by the 1950s, the Depression, widespread drought and overgrazing put an end to successful ranching in the Big Bend's desert region. In 1988, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department purchased the land, an area half the size of Rhode Island, and proceeded to establish the largest and grandest park in the state's park system.

Once the Rancherías trail leaves Panther Canyon behind, it junctions with an old jeep track that takes hikers out of the Panther watershed and directs them west

## The diverse country that can be enjoyed along the Rancherías Loop Trail may shelter many spirits, but it harbors one heart — Rancherías Spring.

occupation other than the unstable adobe ruin. But it's a great place to stop and have a stretch and appreciate the Rezas' choice of locations. Well above the path of canyon flash floods, the house and kitchen anchor a relatively level patch of ground and offer an intimate view of the spring's treetop canopy. Dawn and dusk would have been pleasing moments for the Reza family, and the spring's cottonwood shade would have offered welcome respite against an intense summer heat. Lean years and fat, the Rezas' lifestyle must have been absent of the troubling complexities that lie beyond the basics, subject only to the routine plagues of sustenance living. And each of the desert's gifts, from afternoon squalls to cooling sierra northers, must have made life's struggle toward contentedness a simple and straightforward road.

The trail continues north along the Panther drainage, following a pack route used by the Reza family, where it passes a rock shelter once occupied by archaic hunters and gatherers. Evidence indicates that humans occupied the Big Bend Ranch State Park region for more than 10,000 years. Not much has lasted from the earli-

est across a wide desert valley considered part of the Rancherías Canyon drainage. A view of distinctive peaks, including Cerro Rancherías, Aguja de la Colmena and the Bofecillos' tallest — Oso Peak, at 5,135 feet — dominates the horizon. The placid mesquite and white-thorn acacia blanketing the desert here mask the basin's violent 30-million-year history as an eroding dome created by once-molten rock. The trail continues west across a spread of upthrusting limestone and dry, wiggly washes, ultimately leading to Rancherías Spring.

The diverse country that can be enjoyed along the Rancherías Loop Trail may shelter many spirits, but it harbors one heart — Rancherías Spring. The spring is a surprising wedge of relief after a long hike across remnants of the desert's former volcanic remains, the heat of which can still be felt in the beating of the sun. And while the spring may have shared its resources with human occupation for thousands of years, it has remained, above all, nature's domain. It is, in essence, a long artery of green that shades a network of descending springs, driving water over a deep elevation drop all the way to the Rio Grande. Wildlife, including mule

1. The land in and around Big Bend Ranch State Park includes some of West Texas' most dramatic desert landscapes. 2. You'll pass by the ruins of stone buildings that remind us of the area's ranching heritage. This stone house is just off FM 170. 3. Rock formations like this tufa formation near FM 170 testify to the power of wind, rain and time. 4. Unusual boulders invite speculation about the area's geology. 5. Tapado Canyon, from River Road. 6. Rancherías Spring, for which the trail is named, offers a welcome oasis in the tough and unforgiving country.





Although much of the area was once covered by grasses, overgrazing made way for the hardy desert flora.





deer, mountain lions, tree frogs, foxes, bobcats, horned lizards, the ubiquitous javelina, geckos, coyotes and more than 390 species of resident and migratory birds, partake of the spring's offerings. Without livestock to trample the delicate vegetation or to sour the trickle of surface water that dutifully graces the rocks and streambed gravel, the area has had an opportunity to recapture its primordial state. Camping above its slice of restorative pallor provides hikers with a view of its verdant canopy that, during an early morning sunrise, sweetens the coral dawn with tanager song. But the most delivering moments are those spent

## Rancherías provides backpackers with a sense of wilderness at its best, and every day spent on the trail offers challenges and enlightenment.

lying within its deep, cool shadows, spellbound by the dizzy flutter of cottonwood leaves. The mind disburdens, the body surrenders and only the deliverance of nature's embrace remains.

Leaving Rancherías Spring, the trail continues west and south, and enters Lower Mesa de Guale. The mesa, once dense grassland, has been rendered a broad expanse of ocotillo and desert brush by the overgrazing of thousands of sheep. The livestock are gone, but the remarkable forests of ocotillos that have replaced them create a desert woodland of sorts, their reedy branches shadowing the pathway. The trail follows an old wagon route that troughs and crests across the hummocking

mesa, where its high points are occasionally crowned by cairn sentinels. The stacks of rock are head-high, offering a ghostly illusion of figures stranded in the distance. The unique profile of Sierra de la Guitarra appears to the east and south in a slow reveal, its broadside replicating the shape of a guitar. To the west, the edge of Tapado Canyon drops a thousand feet and stretches almost 2 miles from rim to rim.

Upon reaching the southern edge of Guale Mesa, the trail begins a sharp and steady descent that leads ultimately to the west trailhead. The long descent also pro-

vides spectacular views in an around-the-world sweep of the Chihuahuan Desert's Texas and Mexican sierras. The country appears endless here, illuminating a geography, its culture and an ecology that defies borders. It is big, wild, ancient country, and in terms of geologic time, humans have only spent a few moments passing through it over the course of eons. Fortunately, Texans now have the opportunity to take a turn of their own.

And if luck is with them, the mesas and canyons will run crimson with the blooming spikes of a million ocotillo, as if all the blood and sweat of human effort had spilled across the Chihuahuan crust and arisen one last time, if only to tint the desert's humble bloom. ☆

## IN THE DESERT, BE READY FOR EXTREMES

DESPITE DRY CONDITIONS, deserts are subject to sudden and intense storms that often generate deadly lightning and hail. Avoid high points during a storm and make an effort to locate shelter well before a storm arrives. Be aware that canyons and arroyos can flash flood even if the rain is not falling in your location.

The human skin requires protection from the desert sun in all seasons. Wear a hat, sunscreen and a large shirt with long sleeves of lightweight cotton or other breathable material. Long sleeves may sound like an anathema in the desert but creating space between your skin and your shirt allows air and perspiration to cool your body. Despite the pleasure that wearing shorts provides during long, hot hikes, long pants are recommended for hiking desert trails. A damp bandanna around the neck also adds a remarkable degree of comfort to desert hiking.

Avoid camping in critical management zones around springs. Camp at least 300 feet or more from springs and natural water sources. Do not rinse clothes, dishes or your body in springs or *tinajas*.

Any water sources utilized along the trail should be filtered and purified before drinking.

Do not disturb any relics or artifacts that you may come across. The remains of human occupation tell an important story about the history of a place. Removing them destroys their link to the past. It also breaks the law. However, your trash and any previous hiker's recently discarded litter you might come upon should be carried out of the park and disposed of properly.

Be aware of desert plants and wildlife that may be less than friendly. Remember that everything in the park is protected, including potentially unpleasant cactus such as cane cholla and critters like scorpions and the tarantula wasp. Desert life usually exists in reasonable harmony unless someone comes along and accidentally rolls over it. Getting stuck or stung as a consequence is not a valid reason to stomp the life out of the perpetrator. Watch where you sit down to rest or spread your bedroll or tent, wear proper hiking gear and avoid reaching beneath rocks and overhangs.

Carry a compass, topo maps and the park's trail guide and trail map with you and know how to use them. Understand basic first aid and rudimentary survival techniques. Be aware that emergency wilderness rescue is extremely limited.

Remember, backpacks get heavy when hikers try to cover all contingencies. Get together with your hiking partners and pare down duplicate items. A lighter backpack makes hiking all the more pleasant. A good rule of thumb for loading your pack — reduce the ounces and the pounds will take care of themselves.

—EDK

PHOTOS © LANCE VARNELL





PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER



IF YOU'RE  
IN TEXAS  
AND SOMETHING  
PINK FLIES BY,  
THAT'S NO

# PRETTY *in* PINK

FLAMINGO —  
IT'S A ROSEATE  
SPOONBILL.

*By Betsy Simnacher*



As a child, I knew the birds that were easy to identify: blue jays, cardinals and roseate spoonbills. In a crowd of egrets, herons and ibis, the roseate spoonbill, magnificently obvious in its pink plumage and spoon-shaped bill, stands out.

I was a lucky child in many ways, and I didn't know it. I could dig in the sand that neighbors used to fill the wetlands before saving the wetlands became the right thing to do, and the roseate spoonbills soared overhead. Moving between Galveston Bay and the wetlands beyond the sand, they put on a daily matinee.

I got so used to the spoonbills that their presence was just another bay miracle, like the sand crabs and the corroded tin cans you could crush with a light touch of your foot. It was only as an adult that I learned to appreciate their singular beauty.

Not so long ago, I stood nearby as a group of some 50 birds fed in a wetlands pond. The air was sticky, and the birds were making seemingly random cawing noises as they hunted for food.

I was swatting mosquitoes with gusto. Suddenly, the flapping of great pink wings announced the presence of a spoonbill. Touching down, the bird began searching for food, swishing its immersed bill from side to side in a semicircle. Its head appeared to be nodding an emphatic "no." Every once in a while, it lifted its head to the sky and took an obvious gulp.

This scene happened within the Galveston city limits, not in a zoo or some tropical country. This exotic pink bird is part of the scenery on the Texas coast. In the springtime nesting season, they are easy to see. During other times of the year, you can spot spoonbills too — if you know where to look.

Technically, when you look at a spoonbill, you are viewing *Platalea ajaja*, according to official American Ornithologists' Union nomenclature. Another scientific name for the spoonbill, which is also commonly used, is *Ajaia ajaja*. *Ajaia* is a South American natives' word for the spoonbill, and it is translated into the Latin as *ajaja*. *Platalea* is the Latin word for spoonbill. When you see them feeding with ibis, this is no accident. Spoonbills and ibis are in the same family and have similar feeding habits.


These wading birds typically feed in groups. It's thought that they do so because each stirs up food in the water for the other birds. The spoonbill uses its distinctive bill to sweep shallow water from side to side. Sensitive nerve endings inside its beak tell the bird when to clamp down on a mouthful. The menu includes small fish and crustaceans. "It's a form of grazing, but they're grazing mostly on animals," says Susan Knock, senior lecturer in ornithology at Texas A&M University at Galveston.

It is this diet that gives spoonbills their characteristic pink color. They use an enzyme to incorporate the coloring into their body. In zoos, keepers have learned to approximate the spoonbill diet with a similar kibble, says Chris Brown, curator of birds at the Dallas Zoo. If they don't, "they bleach out," according to Knock.

The roseate spoonbill's pink color can confuse amateurs. Gene Blacklock, who co-wrote *Birds of Texas*, used to answer the phones for Coastal Bend Audubon and frequently received reports of flamingoes in the Corpus Christi area. They meant spoonbills, of course, but Blacklock had trouble





A photograph of two roseate spoonbills standing on a nest made of twigs. The birds have long, dark bills and are covered in soft, pinkish feathers with yellow and red accents. The background is a dark, out-of-focus green.

“It’s three years before they turn the dark pink that the adults possess, and then they have the rainbow colors in their tails and scarlet in their wings.”

PHOTO © LARRY DITTO



convincing them of that. "They didn't look at the beaks very well," he says. "Obviously, they think the only pink bird in the world is a flamingo."

It's hard to miss the pink when a spoonbill is in flight: Its typical wingspan is 50 inches. They fly with their necks straight out, and "they'll capitalize on thermals," or fly like a hang glider, says Blacklock. Often, they fly in formation, sometimes in a straight line. "They flap and sail, flap and sail," he says. Spoonbills fly moderately long distances, and, as is typical with moderate fliers, they don't weigh much. A typical spoonbill might weigh 3.3 pounds and measure 32 inches from the top of the beak to the tail.

Typically, spoonbills are at their most glorious shade of pink in the springtime. "A lot of [the coloring] depends on where

they're mating, what's hatching, whether or not they're getting access to food," says Knock. In the winter, they can be relatively drab. "I've been with birders who originally mistake a spoonbill for an ibis or a heron because they look so white (from behind)," she says.

It's in the spring, though, that spoonbills mate and lay their eggs. They have a mating ritual that includes trading sticks. "In courtship," writes Kenn Kaufman in *Lives of the American Birds*, "male and female first interact aggressively, later perch close together, present sticks to each other, cross and clasp bills." Knock adds, "They can be seen sitting next to each other on roosts, just touching."

Spoonbills are monogamous for each mating season. The adults build a nest with sticks. A spoonbill nest is substan-

tial; after all, it must hold up to four juvenile birds. Each of the young birds can be up to 2 to 3 feet across. Spoonbills can build their nests on the ground, but prefer to nest in higher places on the Texas coast. Even in wetlands where the tallest objects are shrubs 3 feet off the ground, spoonbills build their nests at the top of the shrubs, says Knock. They usually nest near water, and shallow water is best.

The ideal spoonbill nesting spot is a place they feel safe, because they are relatively defenseless. When a spoonbill is threatened, it simply flies away. "If you look at a spoonbill's beak, you'll see that there isn't much there to defend himself," says Mort Voller, chairman of the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council.

A couple of ideal nesting spots exist on the upper Texas coast. One is the Audubon sanctuary at North Deer Island in Galveston's West Bay, which is far enough from the mainland to protect the birds. The principal natural enemies of birds at Deer Island are fire ants and rattlesnakes.

Another roosting place is High Island, just off Highway 124, north of Texas Highway 87 and west of Galveston. High Island, a small community with a sanctuary named Smith Oaks that is owned and managed by the Houston Audubon Society, is open to the public daily, and offers an observation platform that overlooks its heronry. You can reach High Island from Galveston via the Port Bolivar ferry. Alternatively, from Houston, starting on Interstate 10, take the exit at Winnie, and go south on Highway 124. At the Smith Oaks heronry, the alligators keep raccoons and other predators at bay.



Bird counters know that, in the wild, spoonbills are slowly declining in number.





“Adult birds standing next to the shore get taken, and young, too, fall off the nest and get taken, but I think that a family of raccoons would do a whole lot more damage than the few birds that are taken by the alligators,” says Knock.

Spoonbills lay whitish eggs with brown speckles. They usually lay two to three eggs. Incubation takes 22 to 23 days, and the young can fly in another 35 to 42 days. The adults fly off to feed themselves and bring food back to the babies. They regurgitate for the young, or the babies reach in and grab the food from the parents’ beaks.

Right after breeding, there’s usually something called post-breeding dispersal. The young wander inland, and adult birds can travel even farther. “They wander inland because they can feed in fresh water, and they don’t have the tight habitat requirements for breeding,” says Knock. After breeding, they move up and down the coast.

The first year after spoonbills leave the nest, they’re a pale pink, says Blacklock. In the second year, they’re pinker. “It’s three years before they turn the real dark pink that the adults possess, and then they have the rainbow colors in their tails [including a terra cotta-colored tail] and scarlet in their wings,” he says.

It’s unclear how long roseate spoonbills live in the wild. We do know that the most life-threatening time for them is from the time the baby bird leaves the nest until it is one year old. “Once they become adults, I suspect spoonbills could live anywhere

from five to 12 years,” says Blacklock. In captivity, spoonbills can live much longer — up to 30 to 32 years, according to Laurie McGivern, who supervises the Dallas Zoo’s Zoo North bird area, and, as studbook keeper, is responsible for counting the spoonbills in area zoos.

In the wild, roseate spoonbills overcame a major threat at the turn of the 20th century, when they were hunted almost to extinction. Their feathers were much in demand for the ladies’ hats that were the fashion at the time. By the 1930s, their population was up again. In 1934, *The New York Times* published an account of the roseate spoonbill’s resurgence: “A recent report of the Audubon association, however, gives the encouraging news that these birds are returning in goodly numbers.” The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 protected the birds, and apparently was responsible for the recovery of the spoonbill population. In the 1950s and 1960s, they survived the use of DDT.

Bird counters know that, in the wild, roseate spoonbills are slowly declining in number, though not as much as some other birds. Since they feed in the wetlands, they are an indicator species that tell us the quality and quantity of wetland life. “Spoonbills are big, they’re obvious, they’re easy to count, and you can keep track of their populations fairly easily,” says Knock. Counting them is “a reasonably simple way to monitor habitat health without going out and collecting fish,” she says. If spoonbills can’t get enough to eat, then we aren’t

producing enough shrimp and fish, she points out — so spoonbills tell us something about the health of the fishery business in Texas.

The spoonbill population naturally decreases in Texas during the winter because some of the birds migrate from the Texas coast toward Mexico. Roseate spoonbills can be found throughout much of eastern South America as well. “I think mostly they are following the food source,” says Knock. The water gets colder in Texas, some invertebrates die while insects and crustaceans either become more dormant or enter another life cycle unavailable as bird food, encouraging some spoonbills to move to warmer territory.

That’s not to say that spoonbills can’t be seen in Texas all over the coastline, at all times of the year. You have to know where to look, and you have to think like a spoonbill. “You don’t just find them everywhere [in the winter],” says Blacklock. “They need the right kind of tides, the right kind of water depths.” It’s unlikely that you’d see them in the middle of the bay, unless they were flying from one point to another, he says. Sometimes in the spring, on the barrier islands off the coast, you can catch them migrating, perhaps with herons, moving north to their nesting spots.

Watching them fly, or on their nests, or simply feeding in the wetlands is a memorable sight. They are unparalleled as “eye candy,” says Knock. In fact, she says, “Watching spoonbills is probably as effective — and cheaper — than a therapist.” ★

## WHERE TO SEE ROSEATE SPOONBILLS

Birders know there are choice spots to see spoonbills; otherwise a spoonbill may be a serendipitous find. And they can be found in surprising places. Last summer, they were spotted in San Antonio, at Bird Pond at the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Here are some of the best places along the coast.

### **GALVESTON ISLAND**

In Galveston Island State Park, spoonbills usually stay on the bay, or south side. They may be on Como Lake, to the west of Oak Bayou, and in a pond to the north of Jenkins Bayou. Nature trails running parallel to Oak and Jenkins bayous are also prime places for spoonbill watching, park rangers say.

The Galveston Featherfest and other bird festivals are recommended as a way for birdwatchers to learn about and see all kinds of birds. This year’s Galveston Featherfest will be March 30 through April 2.

### **ANAHUAC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Observation decks and driving tours offer opportunities to view spoonbills, sometimes up close. But sightings are unpredictable, says Andy Loranger, who manages Anahuac. For the best views, try Shoveler Pond and the Oyster Bayou Moist Soil Unit. (Maps are available at the visitor information station at the entrance.) Anahuac is west of High Island. First-timers should look up directions on the Web at <[southwest.fws.gov/refuges/texas/Anahuac](http://southwest.fws.gov/refuges/texas/Anahuac)> or call (409) 267-3337.

### **ROCKPORT**

Spoonbills feed in the ditches on the sides of Texas Business Highway 35

South, says Carolyn Tinney at the Rockport Visitor Center. They have been spotted at Cove Harbor Marina near Rockport as well.

### **CORPUS CHRISTI**

Try Nueces Bay Causeway, Indian Point, Hans Suter Park and Tuley Lake (off River Road). “There are some that nest on the little island right by the causeway,” Blacklock says. Indian Point is a good location for spoonbill-watching in winter, as is Hans Suter Park, where there is a boardwalk.

### **PORT ARANSAS**

Go to the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center (formerly the Port Aransas Birding Center), and climb the observation deck. “Look way out, beyond the cattails,” says Leonabelle Turnbull. “Sometimes, early morning, they’ll fly over up there.”

### **SOUTH PADRE ISLAND**

Take Highway 100 to the South Padre Island Convention Center. There is a nature trail that leads to an excellent birding area.

### **LAGUNA ATASCOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Hike the trails, or a 15-mile auto tour will lead you to the bay, where you might spot some roseate spoonbills.

### **BAHIA GRANDE**

South of Port Isabel off Texas Highway 48, Bahia Grande is a major wetlands restoration site. You can see all kinds of shorebirds there, including roseate spoonbills, says Leo Gustafson, Laguna Atascosa wildlife biologist.





THIS PAGE: Sharelunker Program Director David Campbell adds a fish to the tank of fish caught for a research project on one of TPWD's contract lakes. Lake owner Ron Gard waits in the boat with Allen Forshage, director of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, on the right. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Sharelunker fry at the TFFC; BOTTOM: striped bass eggs in a hatching jar at the Dundee Fish Hatchery.





FISHING'S GREAT IN TEXAS, AND HERE'S WHY.

# Hatching a Revolution



*Text and photography by Larry D. Hodge*





The last four decades of the 20th century were an exciting time to be a fisheries biologist in Texas. Sweeping societal, environmental and technological changes presented fisheries managers with challenges that, unmet, might have destroyed sportfishing in Texas.

Fortunately, revolutionary times not only spark change; they also forge leaders. Texas fisheries managers rose to the occasion; and Texas anglers today enjoy some of the best freshwater fishing in the nation. This is the story of the visionary, dedicated and courageous people who made that happen.

Ironically, the drought of the 1950s led to huge increases in the number of fish in Texas. In 1950 Texas had about half a million acres of public reservoirs. A flood of dam-building in response to the drought tripled the amount of water by 1970. Fertile and highly productive, the new reservoirs produced so many fish that biologists believed it was impossible to overfish them. Regulations reflected this belief: The minimum length for black bass was seven inches, and anglers were allowed to keep 15 fish daily, of which no more than 10 could be longer than 11 inches. This regulation failed to protect fish until they matured and spawned, and the effect became evident by the mid-1970s. Catch rates went down, and biologists realized something was amiss.

A revolution was occurring in freshwater fishing. Reservoir construction tapered off in the 1970s, but the boom in freshwater fishing spurred by the new lakes continued. Americans had moved from the farms to the cities en masse during and after World War II, and the new city dwellers had leisure time and money to amuse themselves. Interest in bass fishing exploded as bass boats, electronic fish finders and plastic artificial baits came on the market. Skeeter built the first bass boat in Marshall, Texas, in 1948. About that same time, Texan R. D. Hull engaged the Zero Hour Bomb Co. of Tulsa, Oklahoma, maker of explosive devices for fracturing oil wells, to manufacture his invention, a closed-face spinning reel anyone could cast easily. (Some manipulation of letters from the company's name resulted in one of the most famous names in fishing, ZEBCO.) Nick Crème set up a factory to make his new plastic worms in Tyler in 1951. In 1957, Carl Lowrance of Joplin, Missouri, introduced a low-cost sonar

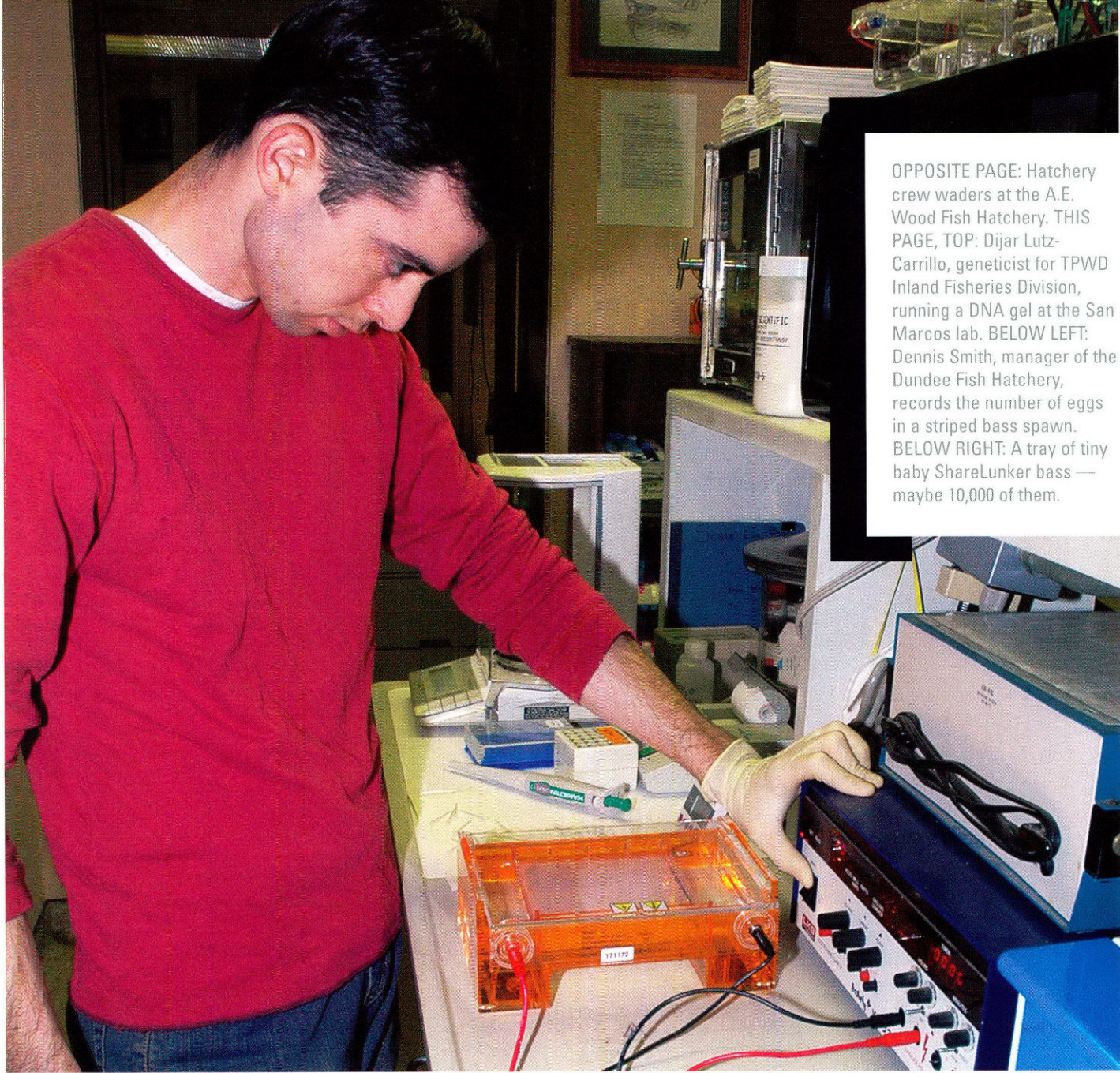
unit, a "little green box" that enabled anglers to find fish anywhere in a reservoir's depths.

The new technology made anglers more efficient, and they were able to catch more fish in less time. Advances in technology had yet to arrive to aid biologists. "When I came to work in 1966, we didn't have handheld calculators, much less computers," says Roger McCabe, who retired as an Inland Fisheries regional director in 2005. "We worked with old Frieden rotary calculators, which reminded me of an abacus. That and the typewriter were the technology of the time. We had no electrofishing equipment; sampling was done with gill nets and seines. Our water testing kits were homemade. The biggest boat we had was a 16-foot aluminum boat with a 35 horsepower motor."

Management techniques were as primitive as the equipment, and many biologists held degrees in agriculture or biology rather than fisheries management. "When I came to work for TPWD in 1968, there was almost no fisheries management on public waters," recalls Bill Provine, management and research chief for Inland Fisheries. "In fact, management wasn't really needed. We had new reservoirs coming on all the time, fishing was good, limits were liberal and nobody thought you could hurt bass populations." Individual biologists sampled fish populations using different kinds of gear and different methods, and there was little sharing of information. "There was a tendency for everyone to go their own way," says Nick Carter, federal aid coordinator for TPWD.

But change was in the wind, due in no small part to the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, passed by Congress in 1950. This law authorized federal funds for state programs to restore and manage fish populations. To receive funding, states had to develop a comprehensive fish and wildlife resource management plan. Developing such plans required research into the status of fisheries, methods to improve them and the keeping of records.





OPPOSITE PAGE: Hatchery crew waders at the A.E. Wood Fish Hatchery. THIS PAGE, TOP: Dijar Lutz-Carrillo, geneticist for TPWD Inland Fisheries Division, running a DNA gel at the San Marcos lab. BELOW LEFT: Dennis Smith, manager of the Dundee Fish Hatchery, records the number of eggs in a striped bass spawn. BELOW RIGHT: A tray of tiny baby ShareLunker bass — maybe 10,000 of them.





This proved to be a key element in the evolution of fisheries management.

Nick Carter, a Southwest Texas State University professor whose specialty was statistics applied to biological problems, was recruited to bring TPWD's reporting up to snuff. "I was hired to teach the biologists research techniques, statistics and how to write scientific articles, and we standardized data collection methods," Carter says. "All this evolved to where we started getting good information throughout the state." At the same time, TPWD decided to establish a separate research section, head-



TPWD District Biologist Charles Munger stocking approximately 10,000 Budweiser ShareLunker fingerlings into Lake Alan Henry, from whence their mother was caught.

quartered at Heart of the Hills Fisheries Science Center near Kerrville. "The idea was that research provides the ammunition to say what we're doing is what we should be doing," says Dick Luebke, the center's director.

"We started learning that we could compare lakes," adds Provine. "We saw that some lakes were better than others, and we could identify what was going on in reservoirs. The most important thing was being able to identify the problems. We went from haphazard surveying of lakes and never seeing trends to being

able to identify and address problems. That's when we started looking at more restrictive length limits." The result was a statewide 10-inch minimum length, 10-fish daily bag limit for black bass established in 1975.

Armed with new equipment and techniques, Texas fisheries biologists had the good fortune to be led by one of the giants of fisheries management, Robert J. "Bob" Kemp, Jr. "Bob Kemp told us the secret to success is to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you, and Texas had some of the best talent in the country," says McCabe. "I think the most important factor in our success was having good people, and that was no accident."

"Bob Kemp had a vision," says Phil Durocher, the current Inland Fisheries Division director. "He may not always have been as scientific as some people, but he always wanted to make fishing better in Texas."

Kemp's biggest legacy was the large-scale introduction of Florida bass into Texas. "Florida bass were brought into the state not just because they grew larger, but also because they had evolved in more open systems, and it was believed they would be better suited for the reservoir environment than the native northern largemouths," Durocher says.

The saga of the Florida bass began in the 1960s, when research convinced Kemp the fish would do well in Texas reservoirs. Unable to persuade the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to spend money to bring in fish to experiment with, Kemp accomplished the task himself in 1971. "Bob Kemp had two insulated boxes of Florida bass fingerlings in oxygenated bags flown in from Florida," recalls David Campbell, who worked at the Tyler fish hatchery at the time and is now in charge of TPWD's trophy bass program, Budweiser ShareLunker. "We stocked the fingerlings into a pond and reared them to three or four inches, then we took them to Staway Ranch, a commercial fishing operation between Tyler and Athens that was one of Bob Kemp's favorite fishing holes. We didn't have enough pond space at the hatchery to keep them there. After a year, we harvested those Florida bass and took them back to the Tyler fish hatchery." Those fish were used to produce future broodfish; their descendants now thrill anglers in lakes all over Texas. The severe winter of 1983 froze the hatchery ponds and killed all the remaining Florida fish from the original importation.

With the help of a colorful angler from the Texas Panhandle, Joe Bob Wells, bass from Lake Hanabanilla, Cuba, were also brought to the Tyler fish hatchery, as were descendants of Florida bass that had been taken to California in 1959. Tyler district fisheries biologist Charlie Inman proved the growth potential of Florida bass in a three-year study, giving the green light to stocking of Florida bass in reservoirs across the state. "There was also some stocking of Florida bass by individuals," says Campbell. How early that happened is not known, but an interesting clue turned up at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens in the 1990s. "Lucy Dueck, who did DNA testing in our lab, obtained some scales from the 13.5-pound state record fish caught in 1943 from Lake Medina," Campbell says. "She found Florida influence in that fish's DNA. Someone had put Florida bass into Lake Medina."

The 1943 record was not broken until 1980, and during the

#### THE PAST IS PRESENT

AS IS TRUE OF ALL HISTORIES, this one is incomplete. The contributions of many people had to be omitted or glossed over because of space limitations. A partial list of individuals whose names were mentioned in the course of my research for this article includes Lonnie Peters, David Pritchard, Richard L. White, Bob Bounds, Bob Chew, Larry Campbell, Lou Guerra, Ed Bonn, Ernest Simmons, Bill Rutledge, Barry Lyons, Paul Seidensticker and Billy White.

If those individuals or anyone reading this has information on the history of the Inland Fisheries Division they would like to see preserved, they can send it to my attention at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, 5550 F.M. 2495, Athens, Texas 75752. I'll see that the material gets added to the TPWD archives in Austin.

—LDH



next 12 years the record fell again and again, reaching the present 18.18 pounds in 1992. Most of those record fish came from one body of water, Lake Fork, and therein lies another tale.

Lake Fork represents the pinnacle of fisheries management in Texas. Allen Forshage, now director of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, was the Inland Fisheries regional director for East Texas and headed the Florida bass program in the 1970s. "Lake Fork came at the tail end of reservoir construction in Texas," he says. "Steve Smith, the biologist in charge of Lake Fork, drew the shoreline of the lake on topographical maps. 'Look at that map,' he told me. 'If we don't do anything at all to this lake, it will be a good bass lake. We need to do everything possible to make it a great lake.' That was my introduction to Lake Fork. Then, as luck would have it, the person in charge of the project for the Sabine River Authority was a guy I went to college with, David Parsons, and he was eager to implement the experimental programs we wanted to try out on Lake Fork."

TPWD biologists went into the area to be inundated and used rotenone to kill out fish in existing farm ponds, then stocked Florida bass fingerlings and some adult bass two to three years prior to impoundment. "We also asked the SRA to leave as much timber as they could," Forshage says. "When the lake first filled, there were some areas you could not get a boat into." Those areas served as refuges where fish could spawn and grow. The watershed itself was a key factor. Ample rains fall over the area, and there were many dairy farms in the upper watershed. "Nutrients continually washed into the reservoir and grew forage," Forshage says. "Another key was that our hatchery system had the capability to raise all the fingerlings we needed to put into a 27,000-acre reservoir. Everything came together."

Only one piece of the puzzle was missing that would make Lake Fork the trophy bass lake of the nation. "The philosophy of the time was to let anglers take all the fish they wanted," Forshage says. "Part of Steve's plan was to open the reservoir with what we considered a restrictive limit, a 14-inch minimum, five-fish daily bag."

A week after he sent the recommendation to headquarters in Austin, Forshage got it back with no explanation, just a big red "No" on it.

The next day he was in Austin asking why.

One person after another said it was not his decision and referred Forshage to the next higher supervisor, until he found himself talking to Bob Kemp. "I went into his office and shut the door," Forshage says. "I was upset, because the regulation was the one thing TPWD had control over, and he had said we couldn't do it. I told him why we wanted the restrictive regulation and that

research papers were beginning to show that you could overharvest a reservoir. Bob listened to me and kept quiet the whole time. When I finished he looked me in the eye and said, 'I don't agree with you, but I'm going to let you do it.' Then he pointed a finger at me and said, 'Don't you ever come into my office mad again.'"

Lake Fork opened to fishing in 1980 with a 14-inch minimum length limit and a five-fish daily bag.

Current Inland Fisheries Division Director Phil Durocher was a data analyst at the time. He and other TPWD biologists had seen a trend toward smaller, fewer fish in many Texas lakes beginning in the early 1970s. "I took the numbers to Bob Kemp and told him there was something going on that had to do with harvest, and we had to do something," he recalls. "I told him we needed to change the statewide bass regulation to the same 14-inch minimum, five-fish limit we'd put in place on Lake Fork."

The 14-inch minimum length, five-fish daily bag for bass became the statewide regulation governing most lakes in 1986 and continues to the present. "What that regulation basically did was make bass a sport fish instead of a meat fish," Durocher says. "When we put that limit on, it forced people to release fish, and they soon realized it wasn't so bad to turn a fish loose."

Fishing for sport rather than for food was an idea whose time had come. Bass fishing tournaments, born in Texas in 1955, were gaining in popularity every year and helped popularize catch-and-release fishing. (See "Bassin' for Bucks" in the December 2005 issue.)

Having a sound scientific basis for decision-making and the courage to make those decisions matter little if power to implement those decisions is lacking. Until passage of the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1983, individual county commissioners' courts could elect not to go along with TPWD regulations affecting fish and wildlife. "This law was the handiwork of TPWD commission chairman Edwin L. Cox, Jr.," Durocher says. "It took control of regulations out of county commissioners' courts and put it in the hands of TPWD. That's when fish and wildlife management became science-based. Mr. Cox had some private lakes and saw what could be done with proper management. He knew it was the proper thing to do, and he did it."

"Inland Fisheries has always tried to recruit the most talented and dedicated people who contribute new ideas and approaches through teamwork," says Mike Ryan, who retired as an East Texas district biologist in 2005. "Field staffs have been given the freedom to be creative in developing management strategies, always with the goal of making fishing better."

That quest continues. ☆

## THE CARP FIASCO: HOW NOT TO MANAGE A FISHERY

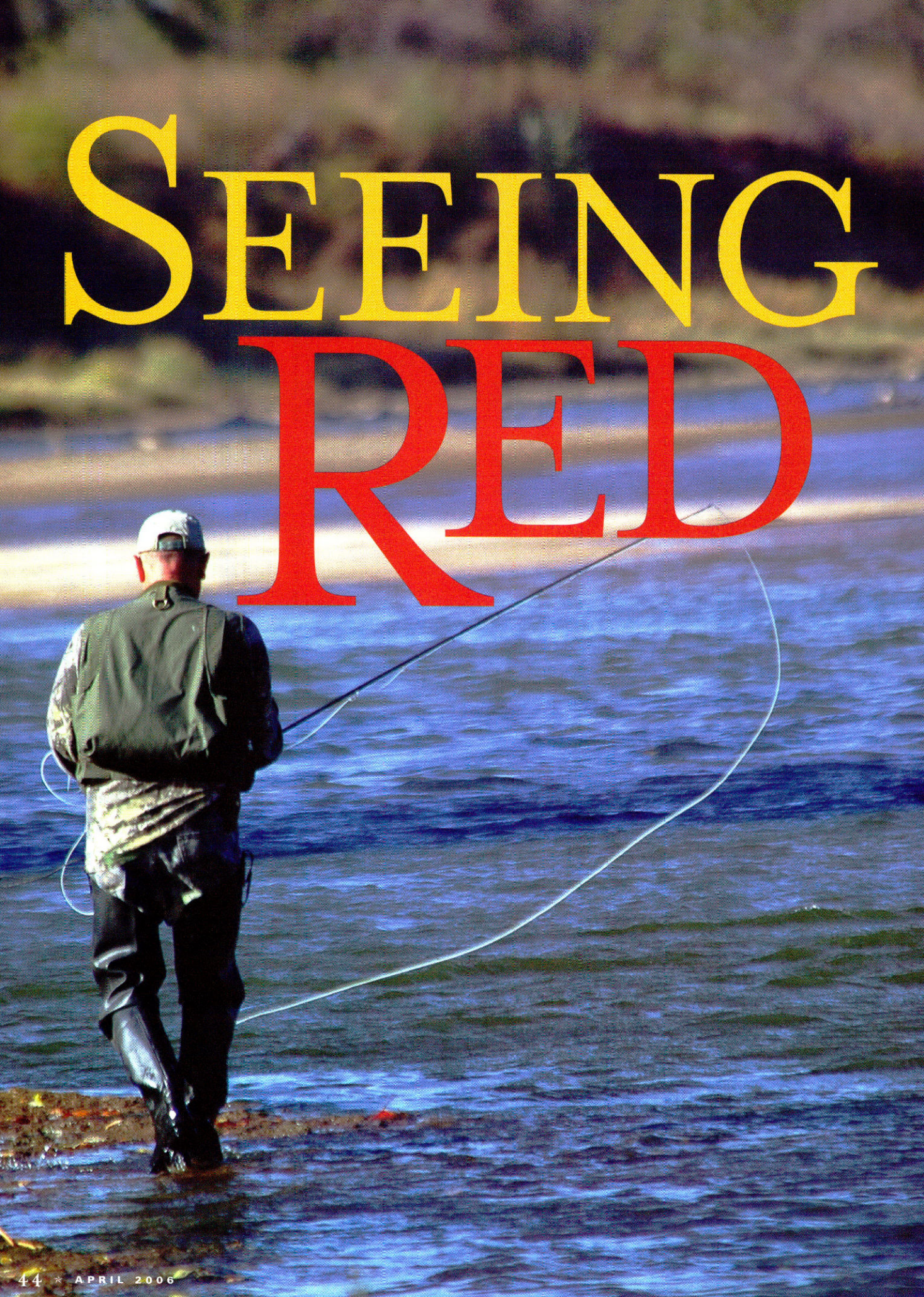
The myth of wildlife as a free and inexhaustible resource died with the buffalo, the beaver, the passenger pigeon and a host of other species, but management and conservation of wildlife were slow to develop. By the late 1880s in Texas, fish found themselves on the road to oblivion as well, and an awakening realization of what was happening led to Texas' first efforts to conserve fish. A law governing seining was enacted in 1874; an 1879 law "for the preservation of fish and to build fish ladders" required owners of mill dams to provide fish ladders but provided no funds for construction or oversight.

Early management efforts tried to replace vanishing species rather than protect them. The federal government actively stocked fish into Texas streams, and by 1882 had stocked 3 million marine shad, nearly 200,000 salmon and a few thousand rainbow trout. Texas established its first fish hatchery in 1881 at Barton Springs in Austin to raise what many people felt would become the most popular sportfish in Texas, as it was in Europe: the German carp. Carp never caught on in Texas, however. (For an alternate point of view, see "The World According to Carp" in the March 2006 issue.) A newspaper editorial of 1885 summed up the prevailing attitude and came near putting a finger on the real problem: "The carp is a humbug, but if the legislature will pass a law prohibiting seining and blasting for fish, Texas waters will soon have a good supply of native fish which are far superior to the German carp." The carp fiasco led the legislature to abolish the fish commission and shut down the hatchery in 1885.

These early failures foreshadowed later successes, for they showed rising public concern for the conservation of natural resources. However, scientific natural resource management and regulation by government had yet to develop. For the first several decades of the 20th century, fish continued to be exploited as a cheap food source by anglers and commercial fishers alike. State and federal fish hatcheries poured millions of fish into the state's streams, but the emphasis remained on production and consumption rather than management and conservation.—LDH



# SEEING RED

A fly fisherman is seen from behind, standing on a rocky shore and casting a fly into the water. He is wearing a white cap, a dark vest over a patterned shirt, and dark waders. The water is blue and rippling, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The title 'SEEING RED' is overlaid on the image, with 'SEEING' in yellow and 'RED' in red.





## SOME OF THE BEST FLY FISHING IN TEXAS IS IN OKLAHOMA.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY D. HODGE

LEFT: TPWD  
Inland Fisheries  
Biologist Bruce  
Hysmith casting  
on the Red River.  
RIGHT: Bruce  
Hysmith's son,  
Larry.

ICK FREEMAN IS A STUDY IN CONCENTRATION. Strip, strip, strip, pause. Strip, strip, strip, pause. Just as he begins another series of lightning-fast strips, the surface of the Red River boils and his fly rod rainbows. Minutes later he cradles a two-pound striped bass.

Texas fly fishers often head to Colorado, New Mexico or Arkansas to wet their lines, but Oklahoma offers quality fly fishing much closer to home — so close to home, in fact, that you don't even have to leave Texas.

Due to an oddity of history (see sidebar), the entire width of the Red River between Texas and Oklahoma lies wholly within the latter state. Anglers standing on the Texas side need an Oklahoma fishing license, except when fishing from the bank between the base of Denison Dam and the mouth of Shawnee Creek a short distance downstream. Along that few hundred yards of river, as long as you do not enter the water, a Texas license is valid. Fish anywhere else, or wade out into the river, and an Oklahoma license is required. (A similar situation exists in far northeast Texas, where the Red forms the boundary between Texas and Arkansas. Oklahoma and Arkansas size and bag limits apply. See <[www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing.htm](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing.htm)> or <[www.agfc.state.ar.us/](http://www.agfc.state.ar.us/)> for specifics.)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Inland Fisheries biologist Bruce Hysmith, his son, Larry, and I meet for an afternoon of fly fishing on the Red River at Carpenter's Bluff, a few miles east of Denison.

Once the site of a ferry across the Red River and infested by an assortment of unsavory characters who caused it to be known as Thiefneck, Carpenter's Bluff now drowns along the south bank of the Red, its tranquility disturbed only by an occasional vehicle crossing the 1910 iron bridge spanning the river. Just past the bridge, J.W. Collins operates a private boat ramp (\$5 launch fee. Deposit money in the honor box at the bottom of the hill. For information call 903-465-5771).

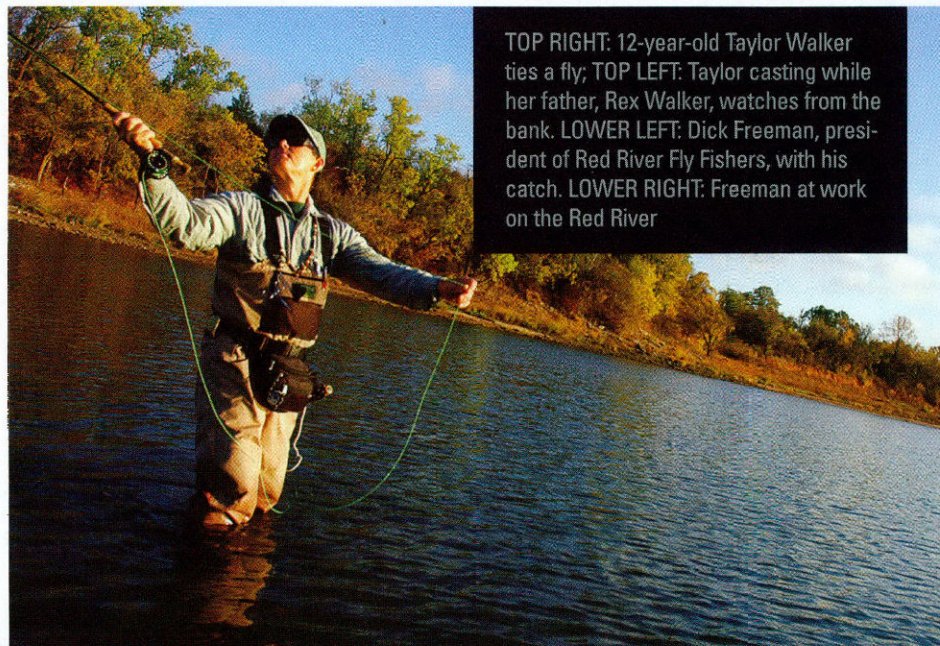
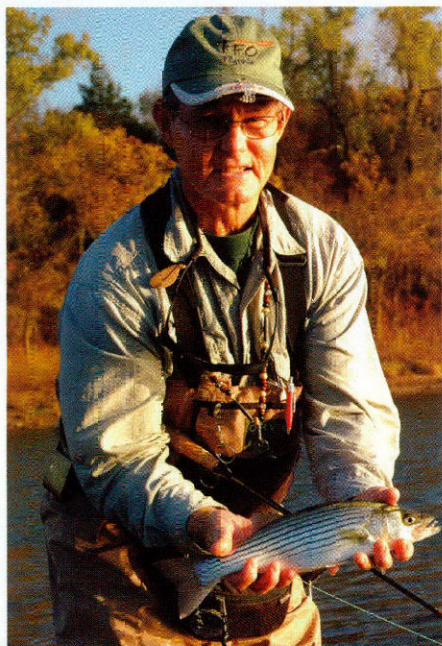
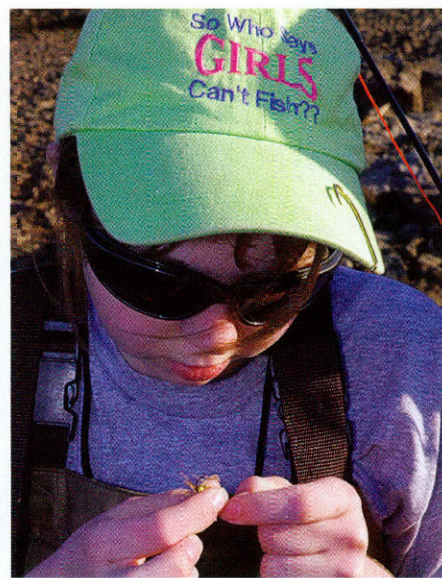
As Bruce and Larry fuss with rods and reels and flies, I head down to the river for a look. It's early November, and trees along the bank wear their fall wardrobe. "I've fished a lot in Colorado, where the aspens turn gold in the fall, and this looks very much the same," Larry observes. Lined with trees and sandstone, the river

presents a panorama pleasing to the eye, and it's easy to imagine we are standing beside a stream in the Rockies or Ozarks, especially when a sudden gust of wind rains golden leaves around us. I'm reminded of what someone once told me about the appeal of shooting sporting clays: "It's the places you go, the people you meet and the fun that you have." The same is very much true of fishing the Red River.

The stretch of river from Denison Dam to Carpenter's Bluff seems made for fly fishing. Long curving loops of river furnish both shallow and deep water, rippling riffles and placid pools. Sandbars provide places to stand or to beach a canoe, kayak or airboat. Broad expanses of open beach with no trees or brush welcome loops of back cast. And despite its name, the river, at least today, purls a ribbon of blue across the red sand. It's a gorgeous place to fish, swim or just bask on a rock, pretending to be a turtle.

For all its natural beauty, the Red is a river with a split personality. The morn-





TOP RIGHT: 12-year-old Taylor Walker ties a fly; TOP LEFT: Taylor casting while her father, Rex Walker, watches from the bank. LOWER LEFT: Dick Freeman, president of Red River Fly Fishers, with his catch. LOWER RIGHT: Freeman at work on the Red River

BROAD EXPANSSES OF OPEN BEACH WITH NO TREES OR BRUSH WELCOME LOOPS OF BACK CAST. AND DESPITE ITS NAME, THE RIVER, AT LEAST TODAY, PURLS A RIBBON OF BLUE ACROSS THE RED SAND.

ing after fishing with the Hysmiths, I meet members of the Red River Fly Fishers at the foot of Denison Dam to sample the fishing there. A hydroelectric power plant below Denison Dam generates electricity mainly during times of peak demand. Water released to power the turbines raises the level of the river several feet and creates a strong current. At other times, there's little current, and rocks and snags rear out of the water.

Prime time for conventional rod-and-reel fishers is during power generation. "Flowing water attracts baitfish, and baitfish attract predator fish," Bruce points out. Predator fish attract anglers, and the area immediately below the dam can

resemble a fishing derby, as dozens of fishers compete for the choice spots. Serious anglers use heavy surf rods with 30-pound braided line; casting a buck-tailed jig under a weighted cork into the boiling cauldron often produces vicious strikes from stripers ranging up to 15 pounds.

Fly fishers prefer to wait until an hour or so after the generators shut down. (A recorded message at 903-465-1491 gives the generating schedule.) Shad and stripers remain in the deeper holes; one of the best is between the last rock outcrop and the row of wooden pilings across the river. "Usually the best fly to use is a Clouser type — anything that resembles a

shad," says Dick Freeman, president of the Red River Fly Fishers ([www.rrff.org](http://www.rrff.org), 903-868-0335).

I ask if there's a particular color that works best, and Freeman and members of his group look at each other and smile. "Don't give away any secrets," I protest, and they all burst out laughing. "The best is what we call 'the white fly,'" Freeman explains. "The wife of a guy who came to speak to the club passed some out, and nobody thought they looked like much. Then my wife, Janet, started using them, and she outfished everybody. So we all started using them, too. They're easy to tie, and they really catch fish. I use a red hook on mine; I think it catches more



fish." It's easy to see why the fly is effective as the red hook makes it look like a wounded shad.

From April to June stripers furnish explosive topwater action. "Use a little white popper or something with silver or blue on it," Freeman suggests. Bruce Hysmith concurs. "You can catch stripers in that pool just above the pilings using white or chartreuse Clousers, either solid colors or a mixture," he says. Hysmith also advises fishing around bridge pilings, especially the remains of an old toll bridge upstream from Carpenter's Bluff. "The river washes out holes around the pilings, and stripers hang out in those holes," he explains.

While the river holds smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, spotted bass and a host of sunfish species, keep in mind that most bends in your rod will be caused by hard-fighting striped bass or hybrid striped bass. "You can catch 10- to 15-pound stripers, and 4- and 5-pounders are not uncommon, so you need a heavy rod, like a 6- to 8-weight," Freeman says.

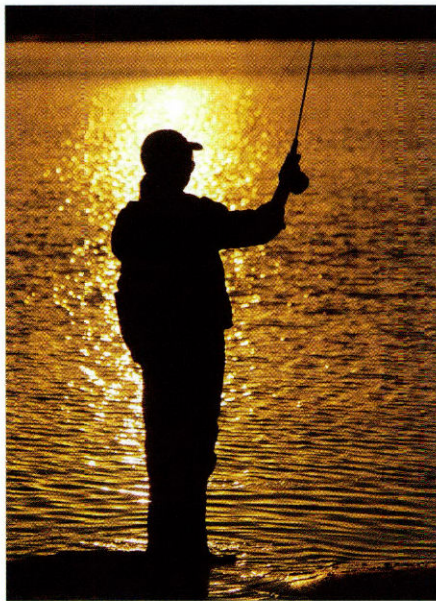
Larry Hysmith prefers at least an 8-weight and perhaps even a 10. "Lighter rods are harder to cast in windy conditions down in the river channel, so it's better to have a heavier rod, like one you would use on the coast," he explains. "Plus you can use larger flies. If you see fish surfacing, a big popper will work well."

Line should be matched to the rod. Larry uses 10-pound floating line with about a 7 1/2-foot leader, which should

be lighter than the line: The river hides lots of rocks and snags, so you will break off at times.

Freeman also uses floating, weight-forward line. "I prefer a sinking tip line, because often fish will be holding near the bottom," he says.

Using the rod tip to set the hook can



result in a broken rod if you hang a big striper, Freeman adds. "Use a strip set. Instead of raising the rod to set the hook, strip line, then raise the rod tip."

"When you strip set, you use the power in the butt of the rod instead of the tip," says Steve Hollensed, a certified fly-casting instructor and guide. "You put more

power to the fish." He offers another piece of advice: "Use a wading staff; even the rocks that are out of the water are slippery. And watch out for holes." Wear hip waders at minimum; chest waders are even better. You'll definitely want to wade fish when there's no generation, as the river is so wide you can't cast across it. However, keep out of the water when the current and level are high, as footing is treacherous.

Fishing with Freeman and Hollensed are Frank Lawrence, Rex Walker and Walker's 12-year-old daughter, Taylor. Taylor learned to cast at Fly Fish Texas, which is held each March at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. She blanks on fish today, but she hooks a couple of trophy rocks. Rex brings in a couple of stripers and a largemouth bass.

"Fly fishing is a challenge. It takes a while to learn it," Taylor says. She especially enjoys catching sunfish on her fly rod. "It's so much fun because they are so aggressive. They think they're big, but they're not," she laughs.

Somewhat the opposite might be said of the Red River, which is dwarfed by huge Lake Texoma. Largely overlooked by hordes of anglers swarming the lake and the tailrace, the Red below the dam offers a great deal more fun than most people imagine. It's bigger than you think it is. And it offers the unusual opportunity to fish in two other states without ever leaving the good old Lone Star State. How cool is that? ☆

## RIVER OF CONTROVERSY

PART OF THE NOVELTY OF FISHING THE RED RIVER is the fact that even though you may be standing in Texas, you will be fishing in Oklahoma (or in Arkansas, should you fish the far northeast corner of Texas).

Had the Red River been located farther south, its history would have been far less complicated. But because it lay on the frontier between Spanish (and later French) territory and the expanding United States, the river became a diplomatic football. The United States and foreign countries, and later Texas and Oklahoma, disagreed over whether the boundary between them followed the middle of the river or one of its banks. A map drawn in 1818 that misplaced the 100th meridian and failed to show that the river forked in what is now southwestern Oklahoma complicated matters when the Red River as shown on that map was made the official boundary in treaties.

Texas, of course, claimed the boundary that gave it the most territory. Not until 1896 did a U.S. Supreme Court decision declare that the 1.5 million acres of disputed territory were part of Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. A 1919 discovery of oil in the bed of the river near Burkburnett inflamed the argument again, with Texas claiming title to the southern half of the riverbed. In a Solomon-like decision, the Supreme Court awarded Oklahoma the north half of the bed and political control of the entire bed and gave Texas control of the oil wells in the floodplain.

In 1931, a dispute erupted over a free bridge, built jointly by Texas and Oklahoma that siphoned business from a nearby toll bridge. The toll bridge company claimed that the Texas Highway Commission had reneged on a promise to purchase the toll bridge and obtained an injunction against the commission open-

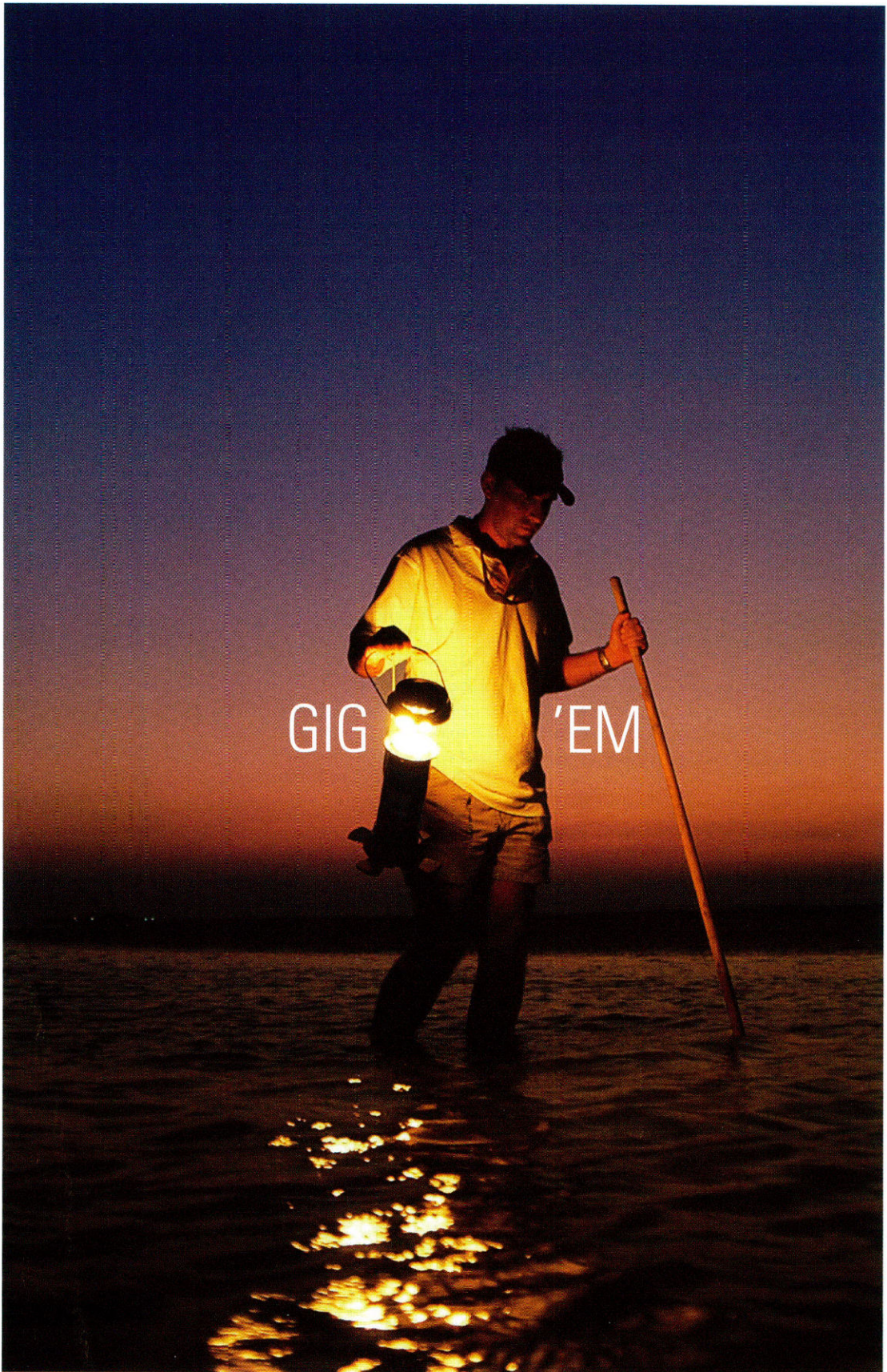
ing the new bridge. Texas Governor Ross Sterling had barricades placed on the Texas side. Enter William Murray, Governor of Oklahoma, who claimed that Oklahoma's half of the bridge ran lengthwise and sent Oklahoma highway crews across the bridge to demolish the barricades. This was messing with Texas big-time, and Sterling sent Texas Rangers to rebuild the barricades.

Murray countered by having highway crews destroy the northern approaches to the toll bridge, rendering it unusable. Now nobody could cross the river on either bridge, the resulting public outcry forced the Texas Legislature, which was then in special session, to grant the toll bridge company permission to sue the state and collect the money for the bridge. Two days later the injunction was dissolved and the free bridge opened to traffic, but the trouble wasn't over.

On the day before the bridge opened, a federal district court in Oklahoma enjoined Murray from blocking the northern approaches to the toll bridge. Getting wind of what was afoot and acting before the injunction was issued, the governor declared martial law in a narrow strip of land along the northern approaches to both bridges and sent an Oklahoma National Guard unit to the toll bridge, leading them himself, brandishing an antique pistol. Saying he had heard of a plan to close the free bridge permanently, Murray sent Oklahoma guardsmen to secure both ends of that bridge, sparking newspaper charges that Texas had been invaded. Soon thereafter the legal challenge was dissolved and everyone went on to more important matters.

After all the fuss, the bridge was dynamited in 1995 to make room for the present U.S. 75 bridge across the Red River.







A man wearing a dark cap and a dark, short-sleeved button-down shirt is looking down at a glowing lantern he is holding. The lantern is a classic kerosene-style lantern with a wire cage and a glass globe, emitting a warm yellow light. The background is dark, suggesting it is nighttime. The overall mood is quiet and focused.

FLOUNDER GIGGING OFFERS A FUN AND EASY

WAY TO ENJOY THE OUTDOORS AFTER DARK.

*Text and photography by Scott Sommerlatte*



With a hiss of gas and the strike of a match, a Coleman lantern came to life. The contained explosion lit up the bow of the boat as the sun's light faded. Moments later, my friend Craig Kershaw and I climbed out of the boat and slowly waded toward the leeward shoreline of East Matagorda Bay in search of flounder.

Moving slowly and intently along the shoreline, we carefully scanned the illuminated bottom and watched all of the marine life scurrying around. As hundreds of small crabs, shrimp and finfish darted from the spartina grass shoreline, I could not help but be amazed by how much different the bay seemed from inside the glowing bubble created by the kerosene lantern on a dark night.

To me, nothing compares to being out in a Texas bay at night. There is so much happening during this time that usually goes unnoticed because we are sitting in the recliner watching television or tucked in tight in our beds. The sounds of the night are enhanced by the calm winds and lack of boat noise. There is also a lot to be said for not being able to see any farther than the glow of the lantern will allow. It causes you to focus your attention on what is happening right there in front of you, which is an important part of flounder gigging.

It was not long before the first flounder appeared in the light of my lantern. The

glimmering eyes and distinctive outline were apparent in mere inches of water. With careful aim and a sharp jab, I pinned the fish's head to the sandy bottom and immediately placed my foot on top of it to prevent myself from getting any wetter as the flatfish tried to free itself. Moments later, the flounder was strung, and we resumed our search.

After some time had passed, Kershaw and I split up so that we could cover the water more effectively. I chose to stay closer to the shore, while he ventured to the edge of a reef that paralleled the shoreline in slightly deeper water. I had just strung another fish when Kershaw got my attention.

"Sommerlatte, you have to see this," he shouted. When I approached, he was staring at the edge of the reef. "Check it out!"

Sitting on the edge of the exposed shell, there were two flounder, one on top of the other. The mouths and gills were barely covered by the water and the rest of their bodies were completely out of the water. Apparently they had found a feeding station they liked and the outgoing tide had left them exposed. A few minutes passed while we stared in awe, and then all of a sudden both of the fish began to flop in a violent attempt to reach deeper water, which they eventually did.

Our search for the bottom dwellers resumed, and before long we decided to double-check our count, knowing we were nearing our limits. We had one to go before our night was over. A short distance down the shoreline, Kershaw spotted our last fish. With a decisive stab, his gig found its mark. When it did, the fish arched its spine, and when the silt cleared, a beautiful, mottled fish was revealed.

Flounder, by design, are the ultimate ambush feeders. They lie on the bay bottom, camouflaged, awaiting any tasty critter that may swim by. They accomplish this by first changing colors to match their surroundings and then wriggling into the sand or mud until the silt covers their body. This process leaves only their eyes, which both happen to be on the same side of their body, protruding above the bay bottom. When a critter such as a shrimp, mullet or mud minnow (Gulf killfish) swims over the fish's eyes — the trap is sprung. This behavior explains why anglers have such great success in gigging flounder. And, because the flounder is so confident in its ability to hide, it does not spook easily. This allows anyone carrying a gig and lantern to quietly walk up on the fish.

As a rule, you rarely see flounder during the daylight hours. It is not because the fish are not there. It's simply more difficult to focus your gaze on one small area when everything is illuminated. This all changes at night, when viewing the bay bottom within the limited range of a lantern — you are





forced to look no more than a couple of feet.

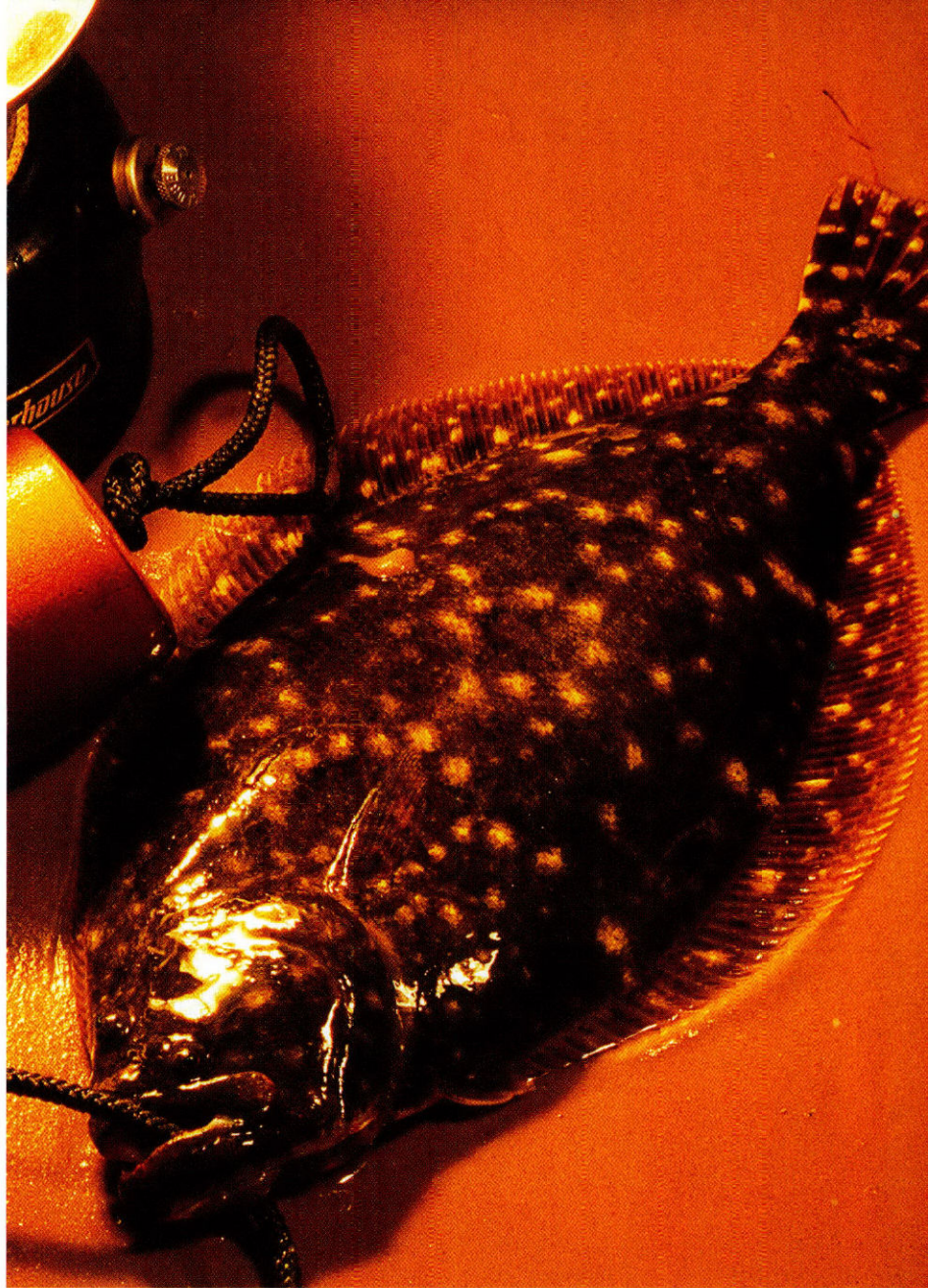
Also, a lantern held close to the water emits a side-light of sorts, which creates shadows and hard edges. These shadows and hard edges are helpful when trying to spot the outline of a flounder that has covered itself in the sand or mud.

## FINDING FLATFISH

Flounder can be found just about anywhere in our coastal waters, including a bay shoreline, the ICW (Intracoastal Waterway), a marsh bayou, a river or a Gulf pass. However, for the gigger, learning to identify the points from which a flounder might choose to ambush its prey in these waters is the key to success.

Flounder typically choose to lie in areas where baitfish are funneled to them, which makes them easy targets for the gig. The most obvious spots to find flounder in our Texas bays are where there are small marsh drains or ditches between the bay and a backcountry lake. Some drains are as long as a football field and others are no more than a cut through a narrow strip of land.

On an outgoing tide, start your search at the point where the water dumps into the bay and then move into the cut, working into the current. This allows the current to carry the dirty water caused by walking away from your field of view. Try to cover every inch of the width of a drain, from the shallow edges to the deepest part of the channel (assuming you can see the bottom) because, as the tide falls, the fish will gradually descend from the shallow banks into the depths of the channel. As for the incoming tide, just reverse the process, working toward the bay.



**FLOUNDER, BY DESIGN, ARE THE ULTIMATE AMBUSH FEEDERS. THEY LIE ON THE BAY BOTTOM, CAMOUFLAGED, AWAITING ANY TASTY CRITTER THAT MAY SWIM BY.**

When fishing bigger water such as a river, the ICW or a Gulf pass, flounder are usually found laid up on the shallow edges and drop-offs facing into the current waiting for a meal.

## GETTING STARTED

For those who have never experienced walking a bay shoreline with a lantern in hand, I highly recommend giving it a try.

It goes without saying that flounder gigging is one of the easiest, least expensive and most exciting ways to put fish on the table. All that is required is a lantern, a gig, a stringer and a fishing license with a salt-water stamp. There are several areas up and

down the Texas coast where a person interested in gigging a flounder can access the water without a boat. However, a boat does allow fishermen to follow tidal movement and search out more productive waters when things are slow.

When walking a shoreline, search for the outline of the fish. Once one is spotted it is time to decide whether or not the fish is of legal size. This is important because there is no catch-and-release in flounder gigging. Once you're certain that the fish is big enough, move the gig into position a few inches above the fish's head and make a sharp, deliberate strike. When the flounder is pinned to the bottom, place your foot on the fish to keep it from thrashing. Then, holding the gig and lantern in the same hand, run a

stringer through the fish's mouth.

Be aware that certain inherent dangers go along with flounder gigging. First and foremost is the safe navigation of a boat at night. Make sure you're familiar with the area before heading out at night. Also, when out gigging, it is very important to be sure that you are about to stick a flounder, and not a stingray. It is not a very common mistake, but it does happen. Lastly, because there are only a handful of boats on the water at night to lend assistance if something goes wrong, it's wise to let a friend or loved one know where you will be fishing.

To some, gigging is a primitive and archaic way to pursue flounder. For others, such as me, it is one of many ways to enjoy the outdoors amid the solitude of night. ★





PHOTOS ON THIS SPREAD BY TPWD



# We Can, We Will

*Faced with the toughest assignments in the most remote locales,  
the Buffalo Soldiers knew how to get the job done.*

By Jennifer Logan

**The year was 1891.** A young private shivered in the bitter cold of his tent, thankful for the warmth of his buffalo robe and the meager shelter the canvas provided against the blizzard-force winds and the snow piling up outside. He and soldiers from four other units of the 9th Cavalry had been stationed in the South Dakota Badlands since November to guard the Sioux reservations after the incident at Wounded Knee served a disastrous end to the Ghost Dance phenomenon (a short-lived religious movement that promised a new beginning free from suffering for all its Native American followers). One of his fellow troopers, Private W.H. Prather, had written a poem about the battle that had become quite popular among all the soldiers. Prather recited some lines to a new poem he was composing about their current assignment. "The rest have gone home, To meet the blizzard's wintry blast. The Ninth, the willing Ninth, Is camped here till the last," he wrote. "We were the first to come, Will be the last to leave. Why are we compelled to stay, Why this reward receive? In warm barracks, Our recent comrades take their ease, While we poor devils, And the Sioux, are left to freeze."

Prather belonged to a remarkable

ness, creating infrastructure for commerce and keeping law and order on the frontier. They built forts, laid roads and telegraph lines, explored arid landscapes to map precious water sources, and protected travelers and

Army. Today, we know them as the "Buffalo Soldiers," the name bestowed upon them as early as 1872, if not before, by Plains Indians, presumably in tribute to their tenacity and courage in battle. Men came from throughout



**WITH THEIR FREEDOM RECOGNIZED AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, FORMER SLAVES SOUGHT TO MAKE BETTER LIVES BY JOINING THE ARMY TO FIGHT THE INDIAN WARS.**

group of men who lived on the outer limits of the western frontier almost a century and a half ago. Their courage, resilience and integrity are now the stuff of legend. Over time, they crossed hundreds of miles of rugged wilder-

settlements from outlaws' thievery and the fury of displaced Native Americans.

Back then, these men were officially known as the 9th and 10th Regiments of Cavalry and 24th and 25th Regiments of Infantry, United States

the southern and Midwestern United States to enlist and served from Texas north to the Dakotas, and from the Indian Territory of Oklahoma west to Idaho and all states in between. So pervasive was their presence throughout the western United States that no story about the Wild West would be complete without acknowledging their singular legacy.

Black soldiers were not unheard of by  
(Continued on page 63)



any means when the Army was reorganized in 1866 to authorize six regiments (later consolidated into four) of black enlisted men. Thousands of African-Americans had fought in all major American conflicts, from the Revolutionary War onward. Before 1866, most African-Americans who fought for freedom alongside their white counterparts remained enslaved after war's end. With their freedom and their service officially recognized after the Civil War, former slaves sought to make better lives for themselves by joining the Army to fight the Indian Wars. The men who became known as the Buffalo Soldiers recognized that they were not merely soldiers. Rather, they were vanguards of a new order and, as revealed in military records from the earliest days of the Indian Wars period until desegregation of the armed forces became final in the early 1950s, were highly motivated to succeed. Their exemplary conduct in service is a matter of record. Twenty-three African-Americans received the Medal of Honor for service in the Indian Wars and Spanish-American War — more than any other unit in the Army at that time.

For the most part, the public, and many military personnel, reacted to Congress' decision to officially include blacks in the military with either amused disdain or outright hostility. In spite of the Civil War legacy of African-Americans as literally die-hard soldiers (southern blacks conscripted to fight in the war died by the thousands fighting for the men who enslaved them and thousands of northern freedmen died fighting to abolish the institution of slavery), many people at the time thought that black men did not have the spirit or the intellect to make good soldiers.

Those who fought with the black cavalry and infantry units realized those misgivings were baseless. The daring exploits of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry fire the imagination. The regiments were involved in all the decisive engagements of the Indian Wars period, like the campaign against Apache leader Victorio along the Texas border, and the Ghost Dance Campaign in South Dakota. Pictures of daring, fortitude and skill are painted in the private letters and official reports of those most closely associated with them. In 1873, Francis M.A. Roe, an officer's wife living at Camp Supply, Indian Territory,

provides the earliest documented use of the term "Buffalo Soldier," saying, "These 'Buffalo Soldiers' are active, intelligent, and resolute men; are perfectly willing to fight the Indians, whenever they may be called upon to do so, and appear to me to be rather superior to the average of white men recruited in time of peace." Lt. Powhattan H. Clarke, who served with the 10th Cavalry in Arizona, swore that, "There is not a troop in the U.S. Army that I would trust my life to as quickly as this K troop of ours." When he was ambushed en route to his destination in 1889, a U.S. Army paymaster later remarked, "I never witnessed better courage or better fighting than shown by these colored soldiers."

Battle, nevertheless, was a rare event in the life of a Buffalo Soldier. All regiments spent a great deal of their time in border patrol and scouting, and escorting mail and stagecoaches along roads such as the well-traveled San Antonio-El Paso route that weaved its way through the perilous deserts and mountains of west Texas most favored by outlaws and warring Native Americans. They constructed buildings at various forts. Mazique Sanco, who was stationed in Texas with the 10th Cavalry at Fort Concho in the 1880s, recalled hauling lumber all the way from San Antonio to help finish the buildings at the fort. William Davis, with Company G of the 24th Infantry sent to Fort Stockton, Texas remembered that, "all we did was build adobe houses." One of the greatest achievements of the Buffalo Soldiers in Texas was 92 miles of telegraph line erected by the 25th Infantry while stationed at Fort Davis. The line connected the fort to Eagle Springs, near present-day Sierra Blanca, Texas, and was a vital communication link during the Victorio Campaign.

Assigned to the most remote posts on the frontier to minimize the potential racial tension that might arise from close proximity to white and Hispanic-dominated settlements, the Buffalo Soldiers were faced with far more arduous and thankless orders than white regiments. Their officers recognized the extra burden the African-American units had to bear, and sympathized. Colonel George Andrews, officer for the 25th Infantry stationed in Texas at Forts Davis, Stockton, Quitman and Bliss, described their situation to his superiors in an attempt to win them reassignment to a more favorable

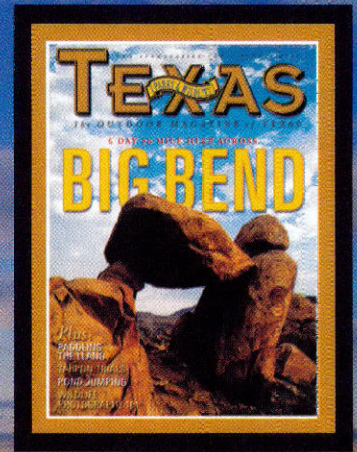
locale. "I do not hesitate to state that the duties devolved upon the Regiment, during this long stay in one locality, have been onerous in the extreme, more so than that of any other Infantry regiment serving in this Department," he wrote in 1880. "The amount of labor performed by the companies of the Regiment, during the past year in building roads, is well-known to the Department Commander to have been Herculean ... I have good reasons for believing that both officers and men are becoming discouraged and disheartened ... In a word, the regiment as a whole feels that it is no longer a body of soldiers, but 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' ostracized and ignored by all."

Most officers desired official recognition for the troops in appreciation for the circumstances they faced in the field. In 1872, General Augur remarked, "The labor and privations of troops in this Department are both severe. The cavalry particularly are constantly at work, and it is a kind of work too that disheartens, as there is very little to show for it. Yet their zeal is untiring, and if they do not always achieve success they always deserve it." General Ord summarized a report on the activities of the 10th Cavalry by saying, "I trust that the services of the troops engaged will meet with that recognition which such earnest and zealous efforts in the line of duty deserve. They are entitled to more than commendation ... I beg to invite attention to the long and severe services of the 10th Cavalry, in the field and at remote frontier stations, in this department."

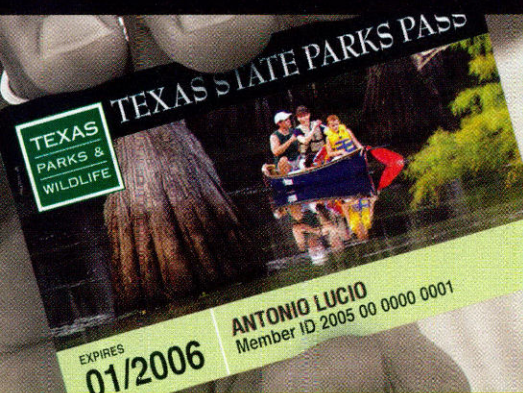
In addition to undesirable assignments and demanding field labor, African-American regiments were also the most poorly equipped in the Army. In fact, the outlaws and Native American fighters they were pitted against were always better armed and mounted than the Buffalo Soldiers. Former Buffalo Soldier William Branch commented on this disparity as he described the circumstances of a battle against the Cheyenne at Fort Sill, "We started the attack. The Cheyenne had Winchesters and rifles and repeaters from the government ... We had the old-fashioned muzzleloaders." After a vicious fight, "we disarmed the Cheyennes we captured, and turned their guns in to the regiment." Madison Bruin, who was part of the 10th Cavalry stationed in Texas



Would you like a  
Free Subscription?



Buy a Texas State Parks Pass and you can get the magazine you're holding right now for free!



With the Texas State Parks Pass you and your family will get unlimited entry to more than 120 state parks and historic sites for an entire year. You also receive exciting "member only" discounts on camping, lodging,

park merchandise and more. Plus each month the official Outdoor Magazine of Texas will be delivered to your door at no additional charge.

Texas State  
Parks Pass,  
still only

**\$60**

Buy your parks pass today  
at any Texas state park or call (512) 389-8900.  
More info: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/parkpass](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/parkpass)

Offer ends June 30, 2006



(continued from page 57)

- 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 / 8:15 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. mornings

**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:** KGVF-AM 1400 / 8:10 a.m.

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

**HENDERSON:** KZOX-FM 104.7 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 p.m.

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

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

**HOUSTON:** KILT-AM 610 / between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. Thur.-Sun.

**HUNTSVILLE:** KSHU-FM 90.5 / 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., 3:30 p.m.

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

**KILGORE:** KZOX-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:** KZOX-FM 104.7 / 10:20 a.m., 4:20 p.m.

**LAMPASAS:** KACQ-FM 101.9 / 8:25 a.m.; KCYL-AM 1450 / 8:25 a.m.

**LAREDO:** KHOY-FM 88.1 / throughout the day

**LEVELLAND:** KIVT-AM 1230 / 12:30 p.m.

**LLANO:** KITY-FM 102.9 / 5:15 a.m.; 1:15 p.m.; 3:15 p.m.; 9:15 p.m.

**LONGVIEW:** KZQZ-FM 101.9 / 10:20 a.m.; 4:20 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.

**MASON:** KOTY-FM 95.7 / throughout the day

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

**WACO:** KBBW-AM 1010 / throughout the day

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

**WOODVILLE:** KWUD-AM 1490 / throughout the day

**THE TEXAS NEWS CENTER.COM**  
<[www.texasnewscenter.com](http://www.texasnewscenter.com)>

"Passport to Texas" is available at no cost to stations across the state. For information fax (512) 389-4450 or write to 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744, e-mail <[info@passporttotexas.org](mailto:info@passporttotexas.org)>. This series is made possible by:



ANHEUSER  BUSCH

and a grant from:



# TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

**FREE Information!**  
Circle the numbers on the card that correspond to advertisers that interest you. Then mail the postage-paid card.

- 1. NGC Sports.com, pg. 17**  
800-873-4415  
[www.ngcsports.com](http://www.ngcsports.com)
- 2. RVOS Insurance, pg. 9**  
800-381-0787  
[www.rvos.com/parks](http://www.rvos.com/parks)
- 3. Southwest Texas ACA, pg.13**  
800-663-2846  
[www.swtaca.com](http://www.swtaca.com)
- 4. Spincast Wildlife Feeders, pg. 60**  
800-950-7087  
[www.spincastfeeders.com](http://www.spincastfeeders.com)
- 5. Texas Hill Country River Region, pg.15**  
800-210-0380  
[www.thcrr.com](http://www.thcrr.com)
- 6. Tilson Homes, Inside Back Cover**  
866-784-5766  
[www.tilson-homes.com](http://www.tilson-homes.com)

LUNKER



JUNKER



Litter poses a threat to the health and safety of wildlife, natural areas, people, and communities.

Want to help improve the waterways in your community? The Lake and River Cleanup Program provides Texans with FREE materials needed for cleanup events.



WHO KEEPS TEXAS BEAUTIFUL? YOU DO.



KEEP TEXAS BEAUTIFUL  
[www.KTB.org](http://www.KTB.org) 1-800-CLEAN-TX

Thanks to The Dow Chemical Company for its media sponsorship. The freshwater fish illustration was provided by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.



# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

THE FRONT LINE OF NEWS AND VIEWS



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

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

#### March 26 – April 2:

Game wardens policing pollution; hiking boot help; Buffalo Soldiers at Fort McKavett; jellyfish on display; Franklin Mountains State Park.

#### April 2 – 9:

Going batty in Austin; habitat help for the bobwhite quail; ancient tracks at Dinosaur Valley; bird's-eye view of the Nueces; Jack County conservation.

#### April 9 – 16:

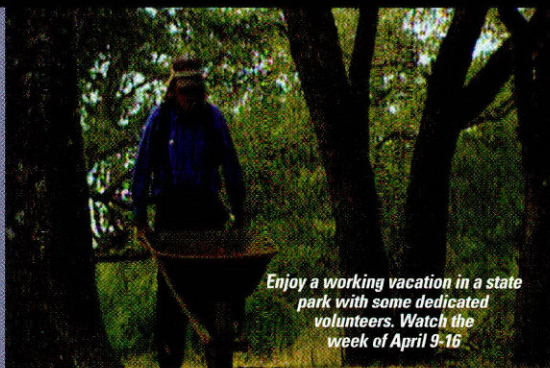
Vacationing volunteers; from puppy to retriever; Fort Griffin's legends and longhorns; ducks on the water; wildlife feeding concerns in state parks.

#### April 16 – 23:

Shooters eye and ear protection; extreme rescue training; people and wildlife sharing water; rabbits; Lake Somerville State Park.

#### April 23 – 30:

Students experience the Rio Grande; finding a place to hunt; San Angelo State Park; Blackland Prairie wildlife diversity; African animals at Fossil Rim.



*Enjoy a working vacation in a state park with some dedicated volunteers. Watch the week of April 9-16*

### "TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE"

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

[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv)

**AMARILLO:** KACV, Ch. 2 / Wed. 12:30 p.m.

**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. 12 p.m. / Fri. 2:00 p.m.

**DALLAS-FORT WORTH:** KERA, Ch. 13 / Sun. 12:30 p.m. (airs October – March)

Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman

**EL PASO:** KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 3 p.m.

(rotates with other programs; check listings)

**HARLINGEN:** KMBH, Ch. 60 / Sun. 5 p.m.

Also serving McAllen, Mission, Brownsville

**HOUSTON:** KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sat. 3 p.m. / Fri. 1 p.m.

Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria

**KILLEEN:** KNCT, Ch. 46 / Sun. 5 p.m.

Also serving Temple

**LUBBOCK:** KTXT, Ch. 5 / Sat. 10 a.m.

**ODESSA-MIDLAND:** KOCV, Ch. 36 / Sat. 5 p.m.

**SAN ANTONIO & LAREDO:** KLRN, Ch.9 / Sunday 1 p.m.

**WACO:** KWBU, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3 p.m.

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



## R A D I O

### "PASSPORT TO TEXAS"

#### Your Radio Guide to the Great Texas Outdoors

Join host Cecilia Nasti weekdays for a 90-second journey into the Texas Outdoors.

Producer and host: Cecilia Nasti, (512) 389-4667. Check the following listing for a station near you. Listen Monday-Friday unless indicated otherwise. Or listen on the Web any time:

[www.passporttotexas.org](http://www.passporttotexas.org)

**ABILENE:** KACU-FM 89.7 / 7 a.m., 1:43 p.m., 6 p.m.; KWKC-AM 1340 / 6:30 a.m.

**ALPINE:** KSRU-AM 1670 / 2 p.m MWF; KVLF-AM 1240 / 6:30 a.m.; KALP-FM 92.7 / 6:30 a.m.

**AMARILLO:** KACV-FM 89.9 / 9:20 a.m.

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

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

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

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

**BEDFORD:** KMCE, K-Meadow, Meadow Creek Elementary / 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.

**BRYAN:** KZNE-AM 1150 / 5:40 p.m.

**CANTON:** KVCI-AM 1510 / 8:20 a.m.

**CANYON:** KWTS-FM 91.1 / throughout the day

**CARTHAGE:** KGAS-AM 1590 / throughout the day; KGAS-FM 104.3 / throughout the day

**CENTER:** KDET-AM 930 / 5:20 p.m.; KQSI-FM 92.5 / 5:20 p.m.

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

**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

(continued on page 56)



# PARK PICKS

RECOMMENDED STOPS ALONG THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED



## Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area

Escape to the hidden trails of the Longoria Tract.

**WE OFTEN YEARN FOR RESPITE FROM THE CHAOS OF MODERN LIFE** — a chance to suspend schedules and appointments and indulge in moments of leisure. For some this means a crowded gathering, while others seek solitude and quiet introspection. Lamentably, the latter seems harder to find in a world devoured by sprawl and commerce, though places still exist not far from most cities where one can locate hushed trails and time slows as life renews.

In the Rio Grande Valley, FM 506 connects the town of Sebastian in Willacy County with Santa Rosa in Cameron County. The land is a table-top plain of agricultural fields, with scant trees rimming homesteads, minute wetlands and manmade canals. Suddenly, however, the road reaches a tunnel of sorts, a section of highway enveloped by dense woodland. Shadows blanket asphalt and the ultragreen of varied trees and shrubs amasses so thickly against the road that one can see only a few feet into them. This secluded thicket owns the appellation, the Longoria Tract, though officially it is designated Unit 741 of Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area. These 373 acres were acquired by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department from a local family (not related to me, unfortunately, though we share the same surname) who hoped to keep a parcel of unmolested land preserved in perpetuity. To that end, TPWD has left the ground virtually intact, save for two parking spots, a walking trail, a windmill and pond and a sheet-metal barn where maintenance equipment is stored.

The Longoria Tract is a place to lose oneself in whatever endeavor

the spirit bequeaths, be it woods roaming, birdwatching or, during the season, dove and chachalaca hunting. Bring your hat and canteen and, if it suits you, a pair of binoculars, and take the trail that sets off towards the rising sun on the eastern half of the refuge. You'll hike a few yards along a paved walkway, but soon you'll wander upon a sandy path leading into a *monte*, or scrubland forest, where javelina, bobcats, raccoons and coyotes traverse, and the trees harbor myriad birds both resident and migratory. Raucous green jays and manic chachalacas live in these woods, but you'll probably hear them long before you see them.

Your trek is not a march or marathon, but instead a contemplative act. And thus you'll discover as much within as you will in the beauty surrounding you. The trail meanders with subtle turns while taking you farther eastward until it reaches an old fence line that heralds the border with the outside world. Look north and peer down a tube-like passage fringed with mesquites, ebony, huisache, brasil and clusters of chile del monte and purple sage. You might glimpse thunderheads amassing along the nearby Gulf Coast as an untiring southeasterly breeze sways the branches above like cradles rocking gently back and forth. As you step forward, you'll likewise step back — into a time that seems forgotten, but in hidden places still remains. And whenever the soul needs nourishment and the body hungers for space, you'll know a quiet place to find it. ☆

— Arturo Longoria

For directions to the Longoria Tract, call (956) 447-2704.

## Brazos Bend State Park

Travel thousands of light years in the comfort of the George Observatory.

**THE M15 STAR CLUSTER IS 33,000 LIGHT YEARS FROM EARTH**, but you can see it by traveling a somewhat shorter distance to George Observatory in Brazos Bend State Park. A satellite facility of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the observatory features three





domed telescopes and a location on high ground surrounded by wetlands and woodlands that helps preserve a dark viewing sky (as does a model low-light ordinance for Fort Bend County). The short walk to the facility, through woodlands and over Creekfield Lake, is lined with low fixtures that light the way and also provide a graphic illustration of the immense distances in space; markers for the planets in our solar system are placed on the lights on a distance scale of 1 foot to 4.43 million miles. From the sun on the observatory building, it is roughly four-tenths of a mile to the marker near the parking lot for the last planet, Pluto. (Using this scale, you'd find the next closest star somewhere near Denver, Colorado.)

The observatory is open to the public every Saturday. Tickets costing \$5 include viewing in two small domes at your leisure, and specific viewing times in the large dome, scheduled by group number every 15 minutes from dusk to 10:00 p.m., and 11 p.m. in the summer. Start with the orientation lecture that includes tips on how to make the most of your evening — important when you're walking around in the dark and a few minutes might mean missing your viewing time. The large dome houses the 36-inch Gueymard Research Telescope, one of the largest regularly open to public viewing, and a high-quality, 11-inch F/15 refracting telescope. Hydraulics raise the floor of the dome up to the viewing station, then lower it when everyone has had a chance to peer in at star clusters, the Milky Way, Saturn's rings, cloud belts on Jupiter or whatever stellar phenomenon is on the evening's agenda. On the outdoor observation deck, amateur astronomers often set up their equipment and are happy to show you these and other sights free of charge. While the park closes at 10 p.m., telescope viewing continues until 11 for those who are camping in the park. A perk for campers: the 10:30 telescope time is just for them.

The ground floor exhibit room opens at 3 p.m. and houses fragments of several meteorites, a display on how to tell a meteorite from a mere rock, interactive computer panels that answer questions like "Why do stars twinkle?" (the proper term is scintillate) and more.

This 5,000-acre state park on the Brazos River also has camping, screened shelters, picnic areas, fishing and 21.6 miles of trails around its lakes and swamps, with observation decks and towers that make it easy to spot some of the many alligators and birds that live there. Stargazing around the campfire is encouraged as well. ★

—Melissa Gaskill

Park entrance fee \$3 per person age 13 and older. *George Observatory*, (281) 242-3055 or (979) 553-3400, <[www.hmns.org/see\\_do/george\\_observatory.asp](http://www.hmns.org/see_do/george_observatory.asp)>. *Brazos Bend State Park* is on FM 762 about one hour south of Houston; (979) 553-5501, <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/brazos\\_bend/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/brazos_bend/)>.

## Ray Roberts Lake State Park

Local college students log on to the Internet while enjoying a lake view.

**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY ESCAPING** the vortex of a fast-paced life in the big city, there is one less excuse for not getting away for some R&R. Ray Roberts Lake State Park sits approximately an hour from the Metroplex near Sanger, just off I-35. The park, which lies within the Cross Timbers region of the state, just to the edge of the Blackland Prairie, beckons with a fantastic array of amenities and activities. Two main units, the Johnson Branch and the Isle du Bois, and six satellite parks (Jordan Unit, Pecan Creek, Buck Creek, Pond Creek, Sanger and Elm Fork) along with a greenbelt corridor comprise this 6,600-acre escape.

As one of five parks in a pilot program to provide wireless Internet (aka wi-fi) access to visitors, you can still maintain that vital link to the civilized world, or perhaps work, while visiting. The technology has proven especially attractive to college students from Texas



Woman's University and University of North Texas in nearby Denton who come to look for a creative venue in which to study. The wi-fi access is available only at the Isle du Bois unit. The "hot" area is located in a 300-foot radius near the park store, extending all the way to the water at the swimming beach. Park manager Mark Stewart reports many requests for access in the campgrounds as well and hopes to expand to that area in the future if the pilot program is successful. Users with wireless-ready PCs can sign up on the spot once their laptop picks up the signal. Daily (\$3.99), weekly (\$14.95) or monthly (\$24.95) rates are available for the service provided by Tengo Internet Services.

The units contain more than 65 miles of diverse trail ready for bikers, hikers and horseback riders. These trails are complemented by the Greenbelt Corridor, which contains another 10-mile meandering trail along the Elm Fork of the Trinity River, which connects the park to the headwaters of Lake Lewisville.

Ten boat lanes provide access to 30,000-acre Lake Ray Roberts, which boasts a respectable 14.06-pound record for largemouth bass. There is also a lighted fishing pier near the park store at Isle du Bois. Other frequently caught species include bluegill, white bass, catfish and crappie. The marina, located at the Sanger Unit, sells everything from deli-type snacks to fuel to fishing licenses. Boat sales and repair are also available. Huck's Catfish Restaurant is located adjacent to the marina, for a good dining option.

For overnighters, drive-up campsites are available along with RV hook-ups. "My favorite sites are the ones down by the lake, right on the water," says Paula Couch, a Sanger resident and park regular. There are fewer of these, so be sure to ask at check-in for availability. Showers are available near the park store. With a variety of ways to unwind and multiple levels of comfort, Ray Roberts Lake State Park makes it difficult to find a good excuse to stay home on the weekend. ★

—John Meyer

For more information, call (940) 686-2148 or visit <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/ray\\_roberts\\_lake/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/ray_roberts_lake/)>

For information about upcoming events in all your state parks, visit <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar)>.



# OUTDOOR

M A R K E T P L A C E

CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION & MECHANICAL SPECIFICATIONS: (512) 912-7003

## HUNTING

### The latest poop on Spin-Cast Wildlife Feeders of Texas...

Now Available - 6V/12V Remote Control A Custom Designed Spin-Cast Exclusive is designed to have minimum battery drain and is effective at approximately 100 to 150 yards. Distance will vary depending upon type of barrel you use and terrain in the area. Receiver easily mounts on metal frame and plugs into the Spin-Cast Control Unit. (FCC approved)

**\$ 149<sup>95</sup>**

MK-1/MK-2 Control Unit has 6 feeding times available. The rate of feed is fully adjustable for each feeding. The MK-1 Control Unit is furnished with a 6 volt 5 ampere rechargeable battery and a 6 volt solar panel. The MK-2 Control Unit is furnished with a 6 volt 23 ampere alkaline Energizer battery.

MK-6 and MK-6Solar Control Unit. Feeds up to 4 times a day for 3, 6 or 9 seconds. The MK-6 Control Unit (shown) is furnished with a 6 volt 23 ampere alkaline Energizer battery. The MK-6Solar Control Unit (not shown) is furnished with a 6 volt 5 ampere rechargeable battery and a 6 volt solar panel.

#### Spin-Cast Wildlife Feeders of Texas

2946 NE Loop 410

San Antonio TX 78218

Phone: 210-653-7514 {Info}

210-653-3641 {Fax}

1-800-950-7087 or 8087

{Toll free for orders}

[www.spincafeeders.com](http://www.spincafeeders.com)

[spincafeed@spincafeeders.com](mailto:spincafeed@spincafeeders.com)

Free Catalog Available



**\$ 189<sup>95</sup>**

MK-1 Control Unit (shown)

**\$ 149<sup>95</sup>**

MK-2 Control Unit (not shown)



**\$ 119<sup>95</sup>**

MK-6 Control Unit (shown)

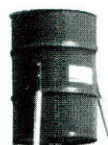
**\$ 159<sup>95</sup>**

MK-6Solar Control Unit (not shown)



© 2005, Spin-Cast Inc

### AUTOMATIC GAME FEEDERS



- 24-Hr. Quartz Timers
- Digital Timers
- PhotoCell Timers
- Batteries
- Solar Chargers
- Many Accessories
- Repairs (All Brands)
- Dealer Inquiries Invited

**MAGNUM HUNTING PRODUCTS**  
MORE FOR YOUR BUCK

219 Brand Lane, Stafford, TX 77477  
(281) 261-0803

FREE BROCHURE

[www.magnumhunting.com](http://www.magnumhunting.com)

3-YEAR WARRANTY

**Cabela's Inc.** We are looking to buy high-quality horns, skins and mounts of all wild game including African and North American big-game animals, for display in our retail stores.

Also looking for old hunting and fishing photos, rods, reels, lures, wooden ammo boxes, sporting signs, decoys, antique traps, snowshoes — almost anything old and outdoor-related.

Please send photos and prices to: Mark Dowse, One Cabela Dr. Sidney, NE 69160

### FISHING & BOATING



**The New Go-Anywhere Marsh/Duck Boat**

[www.marshrider.com](http://www.marshrider.com) OR (903) 898-2462

#### Boat Inspections / Appraisals

by accredited and certified marine surveyor/inspector and appraiser Donald Patterson.

Corpus Christi

(361) 884-1033

### PRODUCT AND SERVICES

**Native Planting Seeds**  
for Wildlife Habitat

**DIRECT from our farm TO YOU**



Perennial Grasses & Legumes  
Food Plots • Nesting Cover  
Drought Resistant

**BAMERT**  
TRUSTWORTHY

**BAMERT SEED COMPANY**

1-800-262-9892 Muleshoe, TX

[www.bamertseed.com](http://www.bamertseed.com)

email: [natives@bamertseed.com](mailto:natives@bamertseed.com)

### KNOLLE FARM AND RANCH Exclusive South Texas Hunting

Dove, Waterfowl, Deer, Hog & Quail. Enjoy fully guided hunts & relax in the comfort of a fine country inn. Packages available.

(361) 547-2546 • [www.knolle.com](http://www.knolle.com)



★ **The Great Stays of Texas (HAT)** includes the state's finest bed & breakfast inns, country inns, guesthouses and distinctive hotels. The HAT seal of approval means that the property is not only beautiful but unique, sparkling clean and also is full of Texas charm. For a full listing of HAT accommodations, visit us at [www.hat.org](http://www.hat.org) or call (800) HAT-0368.



THIS MONTH'S **INNSIDER CHOICE** is **Settlers Crossing Bed and Breakfast**. Settlers Crossing features seven historic guest houses spread over 35 park-like acres just 5 minutes from downtown Fredericksburg. The cottages feature such items as woodburning fireplaces, country antiques and jacuzzi tubs.

**SETTLERS CROSSING BED & BREAKFAST**  
1-800-874-1020  
[www.settlerscrossing.com](http://www.settlerscrossing.com)



**SETTLERS CROSSING BED & BREAKFAST**  
FREDERICKSBURG, TX.

**PRODUCT AND SERVICES**

**The Butterfly Haus WILDSEED FARMS**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**  
1-800-848-0078 [www.wildseedfarms.com](http://www.wildseedfarms.com)

**Crawford & Company**

Hand-Crafted, Personalized Boot Jacks and Coaster Sets.  
P.O. Box 126, Uvalde, TX 78802  
Visa/Mastercard. Call to order a Free Brochure  
Toll Free (888) 301-1967 — [www.crawfords.com](http://www.crawfords.com)

**FUTURE STEEL BUILDINGS**  
Do-It-Yourself Steel Buildings

**Ideal For:**

- Recreational Use
- Boat Storage
- Bunkie
- Equipment Storage
- Garage/Shop
- PWC/Snowmobile

• 30-year perforation warranty  
• Full Technical Engineering support from start to finish  
• Fully customized to meet your needs  
• Factory-direct savings

Our building consultants are ready to take your call  
Call Toll Free Today for a **FREE!** **1-800-668-5111** Ask for ext. 83  
INFORMATION PACKAGE

Happy Anywhere Designs™  
**WESTERNGENERALSTORE.COM**

★ Texas Gifts ★ Western Decor  
★ Cow Hide Rugs  
866-48-HAPPY

"As Texas As It Gets" "More Texas Tales"  
**The Hill Country & Times Of Bob Ramsey**  
Intro By Elmer Kelton  
**\$20 Each** (Shipping Included)  
Bob Ramsey  
17802 North Highway 83 Hunt, Texas 78024  
Phone: 830-640-3304

**JOHN COWAN - JOHN DEARMAN ART PRINTS**  
**WWW.CHARLIEGALLERY.COM**  
PHONE 281-370-6945

**THE GREAT STAYS OF TEXAS (HAT)**

**BIG BEND - MEXICO GETAWAY**

**The Gage Hotel**  
Marathon, Texas  
(800) 884-GAGE  
[www.gagehotel.com](http://www.gagehotel.com)

**Villa Del Rio**  
Del Rio, Texas  
(800) 995-1887  
[www.willadelrio.com](http://www.willadelrio.com)

**BELLVILLE**

★ **Texas Ranch Life.** Restored historic Texas homes on 1,400-acre ranch between Bellville & Chappell Hill. Weekend rental includes bass fishing, trail and chuckwagon rides, cutting, bird/coyote/raccoon hunting and cow works available.

[www.texasranchlife.com](http://www.texasranchlife.com) (866) TEXASRL

**BRENHAM**

★ **Mariposa Ranch.** Cabins, fireplaces, Jacuzzis for two, dinners, carriage rides, "Enchanted Evening" packages. — *Southern Living*

[www.mariposaranch.com](http://www.mariposaranch.com) (877) 647-4774

**COMFORT**

★ **Meyer B&B.** On Cypress Creek, Hill Country, mid-1800s stage stop, Texas landmark. Pool, hot tub, fireplaces, golf.

[www.meyerbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.meyerbedandbreakfast.com) (888) 995-6100

**FREDERICKSBURG**

★ **The Full Moon Inn.** Quiet, peaceful, fireplaces, whirlpool tubs, full breakfast, weddings & reunions.

[www.fullmooninn.com](http://www.fullmooninn.com) (800) 997-1124  
[www.texas-wedding.com](http://www.texas-wedding.com)

★ **Palo Alto Creek Farm.** Landmark historic German-Texas farmstead on the creek. Ancient oaks, abundant wildlife, Hill Country tranquility. Beautifully renovated log cabin, barn, farmhouse all with private spa therapy rooms.

[www.paloaltocreekfarm.com](http://www.paloaltocreekfarm.com) (800) 997-0089

★ **Settler's Crossing Bed and Breakfast.** Private historic log cabins and cottages spread over 35 park-like acres, just minutes from town.

[www.settlerscrossing.com](http://www.settlerscrossing.com) (800) 874-1020

**Camp David B&B**

Five romantic cottages and main house. King-sized beds, fireplaces, cable tv/DVD, internet access, kitchens and whirlpool tubs. Gourmet Breakfast served.

[www.campdavidbb.com](http://www.campdavidbb.com) (830) 997-7797

**FREDERICKSBURG**

★ **Town Creek B&B.** 6 romantic rooms with private bath/entry. 3 blocks to town center. Gourmet breakfast

[www.fredericksburg-fun.com](http://www.fredericksburg-fun.com) (877) 777-6848

**GRUENE**

★ **Gruene Mansion Inn.** Premier romantic B&B, next door to Gruene Hall and overlooking the Guadalupe River... a little Texas Magic.

[www.GrueneMansionInn.com](http://www.GrueneMansionInn.com) (830) 629-2641

**HUNTSVILLE**

★ **The Whistler B&B.** 1859 Victorian home, lovingly restored. Original antiques. Peaceful atmosphere on 3 wooded acres. Gourmet breakfast.

[www.thewhistlerbnb.com](http://www.thewhistlerbnb.com) (800) 404-2834

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

★ **Historic Kuebler-Waldrup Haus & Danville Schoolhouse.** 4.3-acre deer haven near Gruene, rivers. Getaways, reunions, weddings, corporate retreats. 10 luxurious rooms, Jacuzzis. Delicious breakfasts.

[www.kueblerwaldrup.com](http://www.kueblerwaldrup.com) (800) 299-8372

**ROCKPORT**

**HOOPES' HOUSE**  
ROCKPORT, TEXAS  
(800) 924-1008  
[WWW.HOOPESHOUSE.COM](http://WWW.HOOPESHOUSE.COM)

NATIONALLY HISTORIC VICTORIAN HOME. EIGHT ROOMS EACH WITH PRIVATE BATH. FULL BREAKFAST INCLUDED. CALL FOR BROCHURE.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

**Fredericksburg — Sunday House Inn & Suites.**  
[www.SundayHouseInn.com](http://www.SundayHouseInn.com) (888) 900-0058

**Kerrville — Best Western Sunday House Inn.**  
[www.BestWesternKerrville.com](http://www.BestWesternKerrville.com) (888) 900-8914

**Kerrville — Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites.**  
[www.kerrvillemotel.com](http://www.kerrvillemotel.com) (800) 404-4125

**Lake Whitney-Rocky Creek Lodge.** Clean cabins, 24-hr. fishing, largest covered fishing & boat docks.

[www.rockycreeklodge.com](http://www.rockycreeklodge.com) (254) 622-3383

**Frio River Cabins.** Overlooking the FRIO RIVER with 175 acres of Texas Hill Country. Off-Season Discounts.

[www.friorivercabins.com](http://www.friorivercabins.com) (830) 232-5996

**Vieh's B&B.** Centrally located in the Rio Grande Valley, specializing in southern hospitality.

[www.vieh.com](http://www.vieh.com) (956) 425-4651



**BIRDING**

**West Texas Oasis.** Texas' largest concentration of breeding Black-chinned hummingbirds. Viewing room and 3 cottages are available year round. Dan Brown, Box 555, Christoval, TX 76935  
[www.hummerhouse.com](http://www.hummerhouse.com) (877) 255-2254

**"Red, White, & Bluebirds".  
Coming to San Antonio in April!**

Texas Bluebird Society will host the North American Bluebird Society Convention in San Antonio. Hill Country field trips, presentations, workshops, and special events. Speakers include David Luneau, Gary McCracken, June Osborne and Keith Kridler. Need: Donated items for the silent auction and corporate sponsorships.

[www.NABS2006.com](http://www.NABS2006.com) San Antonio Hilton  
 April 26-30, 2006. During San Antonio's Anual Fiesta!

**ARCHEOLOGY**

**Did you ever want to be an archeologist?** It's not too late, join the Texas Archeological Society.

[www.txarch.org](http://www.txarch.org) (800) 377-7240

**FOR OUTDOOR  
ADVERTISING  
INFORMATION**

CONTACT

DON WEIDEMANN

AT

(512) 799-8576

OR

[don.weidemann@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:don.weidemann@tpwd.state.tx.us)

**TOURISM**

**Family Adventures  
Port Aransas!**

Discover nature and history in a tropical paradise with family activities nearby. World-class learning experiences, cool gulf breezes, two swimming pools, tennis courts and fully-furnished studios, one, two and three bedroom condos **right on the beach!**



PORT ARANSAS, TEXAS  
 1-800-221-4981  
[www.coralcay.com](http://www.coralcay.com)

"Experience Nature"  
**Hill Country Nature Center  
& Adventure Tours**

Bluebird Trail, Birding, Sunset Bat Flight, Champion Big Trees, Natural History, Nature by Kayak, & Campfire Storytelling

**Rio Frio Lodging & Nature Tours**  
 Call for Reservations 830-966-2320


[www.RioLodging.com](http://www.RioLodging.com) [www.HillCountryAdventures.com](http://www.HillCountryAdventures.com)  
 Office Located on FM 1050 between Garner State Park & Utopia TX

**Lake Livingston - Bethy Creek Resort.**  
Riverside, TX

Beautiful scenic East Texas waterfront lodging with a view of nature. Daily and weekend specials on suites w/kitchens, RV sites, pontoon boats, fishing, canoe and pedal boats. Fishing guide. Swimming pavilion available for family reunions and gatherings. Family friendly. 80 miles from Houston

[www.bethycreek.com](http://www.bethycreek.com) (800) 537-6251

**Cool down** ...in Boerne. The cool waters of the Rio Cibolo are just the beginning of this great Hill Country adventure.



A whole world awaits you. See the Nature Center, Guadalupe River, historic district, shops, restaurants and more.

Boerne CVB  
 126 Rosewood  
[www.visitboerne.org](http://www.visitboerne.org)  
 888 842 8080

**The Trailhead for Your Weekend Getaway.** A Web site with Texas events and attractions information.

[www.TheTexasTrails.com](http://www.TheTexasTrails.com)

**SUMMER CAMPS**

[www.campcoyote.com](http://www.campcoyote.com)  
**800-677-CAMP**  
 Huntsville, TX "A Texas Tradition"

An exciting Summer Camp 1, 2, & 3 week, Co-ed. All traditional Camp activities with extras such as challenge course, water skiing & horses galore. Air conditioned cabins & home cooked meals.



**CAMP COYOTE**  
 A Summer Camp - Ages 7 to 17

**For the things that really matter...**

INDEPENDENCE PERSEVERANCE  
 KINDNESS FRIENDSHIP

**Camp Stewart**  
 83 SUMMERS OF FUN FOR BOYS For brochures only: 1-800-RAGSDAL  
 54 SUMMERS OF FUN FOR GIRLS

Heart of the Hills  
 ACA

For detailed information: (830) 238-4670 Accredited  
 612 FM 1340 • Hunt, Texas 78024 • Ragsdale Family, owners

**Texas State University Aquatic Sciences Adventure Camp.**

Coed, ages 9-15. Aquatic biology, water chemistry, river rafting, tubing, scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming, fishing. Sea World, Aquarena Center and more. Contact: Edwards Aquifer Research and Data Center, San Marcos, TX 78666.

[www.eardc.txstate.edu/camp.html](http://www.eardc.txstate.edu/camp.html) (512) 245-2329

**Camps Rio Vista and Sierra Vista.**

Traditional, private hill country camps for boys and girls near Kerrville. 1,2 or 4 week terms. Ages 6-16. Beautiful facilities, outstanding and dedicated staff, good food, exciting activities and programs, and lifelong friends and memories. A summer tradition since 1921!

[www.vistacamps.com](http://www.vistacamps.com) (890) 545-3233

**Texas Brigades Wildlife Leadership Camps.**

Hands-on, in the field, wildlife management and leadership development. 6 camps from which to choose. Coed, ages 13-17.

[www.texasbrigades.org](http://www.texasbrigades.org) 1.800.TEX-WILD

**OUTDOOR TEXAS CAMP**

"Best Hunting, Fishing, Outdoor Skills Summer Youth Camp"

All camp activities will be taught by experienced Texas professionals.

*Base Fishing :: Deer Hunting :: Fly Fishing/Fly Tying  
 Shotguning :: Archery :: Saltwater Fishing  
 Outdoor Photography :: Kayaking and Boating  
 Camping and Survival :: Dog Training*

**One or Two Week Sessions**

June - 2 week session - One week fishing, One week hunting.  
 July - 2 week session - One week fishing, One week hunting.



**www.OutdoorTexasCamp.com**  
**(512) 217-1587 or (512) 589-7595**



stream, as it were. The movie made it look like a manly form of water ballet, the graceful whip of the rod, the gentle curl of the line, the fly landing silently on the water's surface. It looked so easy.

As I stood in thigh-deep water, I could see fish all around me — we were surrounded by fish, including sizeable carp, gar and bass. When Cone told me to cast to a certain area, I would inevitably hit a spot about 10 feet to the right. After several sighs, Cone decided to move on and try to teach me how to “roll cast” and “false cast.”

Roll casting was the technique I remembered from the movie. You sort of whip the line in a rolling motion and the fly is supposed to land quietly at the selected location. At least this one I could do, although I still had trouble with accuracy. False casting is a showy method used to reach a mundane goal: eliminating slack in the line. You cast forward and backward in mid-air, slowly releasing the slack until it's all gone. I was a little fuzzy on the mid-air part and kept slapping the water in front of and behind me.

Through it all, I somehow managed to catch two small sunfish. However, they seemed a little sluggish — I'd probably already smacked them on the head a few times during my spastic false casting.

I met up with the rest of the tour group back in Fredericksburg for lunch at Hondo's, which is named after Hondo Crouch, longtime local character and self-proclaimed mayor of nearby Luckenbach. His daughter, Cris Crouch Graham, owns the restaurant, which also hosts first-rate live music from Thursday to Sunday. I opted for Hondo's donut burger and onion strings. It was a ton of tasty food, and I was happy to keep my mouth full, because I didn't really feel like talking about my embarrassing fishing misadventure.

Another site for great live music is a little further off the beaten path: Torre di Pietra Winery, east of Fredericksburg on 290, features local and regional acts on its expansive outdoor patio that overlooks a vineyard. And the wine's not bad, either. One of their biggest sellers is the provocatively named Red Flirt, which was a little sweet for my taste. I preferred the Texas Merlot.

Continuing the wine theme, we topped off one evening at Cuvee, a downtown wine bar and restaurant. The slick interior at first seemed a little out of place, but the staff's friendly, easygoing manner soon reminded us that we were still in small-town Texas. Owner Len

White, a self-described wine geek, teaches wine classes at the restaurant as part of his mission to demystify wine. The upstairs attic lounge, with its overstuffed leather chairs, is an excellent place to wind down after a day of lamely attempting to learn how to fly-fish.

The next day, I felt completely within my element. After all, hiking to the top of Enchanted Rock is little more than a slightly strenuous walk, right? Well, it had rained the night before so the rock was perilously slick in places. But I quickly learned the trick of walking on a diagonal to maintain good traction. As we zigzagged up the enormous hunk of granite, I was amazed at how much greenery was growing in little cracks throughout the rock face. On top, there were even a few small oak trees, along with swatches of bluestem grass. It's an oddly magical place, and it's easy to see how people from ancient times to the present have become convinced that the massive dome has some sort of mystical power and is, indeed, enchanted.

For my last night in Fredericksburg, I felt obligated to have at least one German meal. I was not altogether enthusiastic about it, however, since I normally associate German food with bland sauerkraut and pallid sausage. At Der Lindenbaum, I ordered the *königsberger klopse*, beef and pork meatballs in caper sauce. It was delicious, and my dining companions raved about the *jagerschnitzel*. After coffee and a giant piece of black forest cake, my anti-German-food bias was, once and for all, successfully vanquished.

From the city's excellent restaurants to its rich history to its proximity to fish-filled rivers, Fredericksburg is a town that reveals new surprises every time you visit. ★

#### DETAILS

**First Class Bed & Breakfast Reservation Service**  
(888) 991-6749, <[www.fredericksburg-lodging.com](http://www.fredericksburg-lodging.com)>

**Hondo's on Main**  
(830) 997-1633, <[www.hondosonmain.com](http://www.hondosonmain.com)>

**Torre di Pietra Winery**  
(830) 990-9755, <[www.texashillcountrywine.com](http://www.texashillcountrywine.com)>

**Der Lindenbaum**  
(830) 997-9126 <[www.derlindenbaum.com](http://www.derlindenbaum.com)>

**Chocolat**  
(800) 842-3382 <[www.chocolat-tx.us](http://www.chocolat-tx.us)>

**Castell Guide Service**  
(325) 423-0045, <[www.llanoriverflyfishing.com](http://www.llanoriverflyfishing.com)>

**Enchanted Rock State Natural Area**  
(325) 247-3903 <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/enchanted\\_rock](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/enchanted_rock)>

in the 1870s, recalled “I had three horses in the cavalry. The first one played out, the next one was shot down on campaign and one was condemned.”

Yet in spite of these challenges, African-American regiments boasted the fewest desertions and disciplinary measures in the entire Army. What Major A.P. Morrow said of the 9th Cavalry in 1870 was echoed by many other officers in the following decades: “I cannot speak too highly of the conduct of the officers and men under my command, always cheerful and ready, braving the severest hardships ... without a murmur. The Negro troops ... [know] no fear and [are] capable of great endurance.” Chaplains, officers and others connected with military life recognized that what drove the African-American soldiers to prove themselves to such epic proportions was their desire not only to overcome the negative stereotypes and racial discrimination that faced them everywhere, but to help lift up all blacks by their example. Perhaps none appreciated their drive better than the chaplains who provided moral support and basic education to the black troopers, most of whom entered service illiterate. Chaplain George C. Mullins, stationed with the 25th Infantry at Fort Davis, in 1877, understood why African-American soldiers, above all others, strove for excellence at every opportunity. “The ambition to be all that soldiers should be is not confined to a few of these sons of an unfortunate race,” he stated poignantly. “They are possessed of the notion that the colored people of the whole country are affected by their conduct in the Army.”

Behind the extraordinary record of the Buffalo Soldiers was a collective will, a strong drive to achieve the higher purpose of equal opportunity for all African-Americans. Although seldom rewarded for their efforts during their time, the powerful legacy they created gives strength to our national mythology and is memorialized in books, movies, music, art, and countless living history organizations throughout the nation. Their story is both instructional and inspirational. Perhaps the theme of the Buffalo Soldiers' moving story is best summarized by the humble and resolute motto of the 9th Cavalry: “We Can, We Will.” ★

For more information about the Buffalo Soldiers and the upcoming Heritage Trail kick-off, visit: <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/community\\_outreach\\_programs/buffalo\\_soldiers/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/community_outreach_programs/buffalo_soldiers/)>.



# PARTING SHOT

At Audubon's Green Island Sanctuary in the Laguna Madre, an adult spoonbill "bills" her offspring, a common behavior associated with feeding. A young spoonbill will often peck at the adult's bill to elicit regurgitation of food. The mother may be showing the young spoonbill that the "well is dry" as a way of encouraging it to start searching for its own food.

## IMAGE SPECS:

Canon EOS-1D Mark II digital with 500mm Canon lens and 2X teleconverter, Gitzo carbon-fiber tripod and Wimberly head, at ISO 400, 1/1000 sec, f/8





# If these are your neighbors, Tilson should be your homebuilder.



If you own a special piece of land, away from the ordinary, and you want a special home built on it, Tilson is the company you should call.

Tilson has been a family owned Built On Your Lot builder in Texas for over 70 years. Built On Your Lot means you choose your lot,

and Tilson builds one of over 100 beautiful home designs on it. With Tilson, you'll have many opportunities to personalize your home. You can pick different tile, move a wall and more. Tilson will make it all very easy.

Another thing Tilson can make easy is the financing. Chances

are, you'll qualify for Tilson's EasyBuy<sup>SM</sup> program, meaning you won't need any interim financing while your home is being built.

Ask anyone who's built with Tilson and you'll hear why we've become the Built On Your Lot builder more Texans know they can trust. No matter where you choose to build.

To learn more, call **1-888-540-6702** or **www.TilsonBuiltHomes.com**  
or stop by to tour an open house at any Tilson Model Home Center.

**NORTH TEXAS:**  
McKinney  
Weatherford

**CENTRAL TEXAS:**  
Boerne  
San Marcos  
Georgetown

**GULF COAST:**  
Angleton | Spring  
Houston | Bryan  
Katy



Tilson proudly supports the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) of Texas and the 2006 State of Texas Angler's Rodeo (STAR) tournament.



**TILSON**  
**HOME CORPORATION**  
Family Owned Since 1932



