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TEXAS

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The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS



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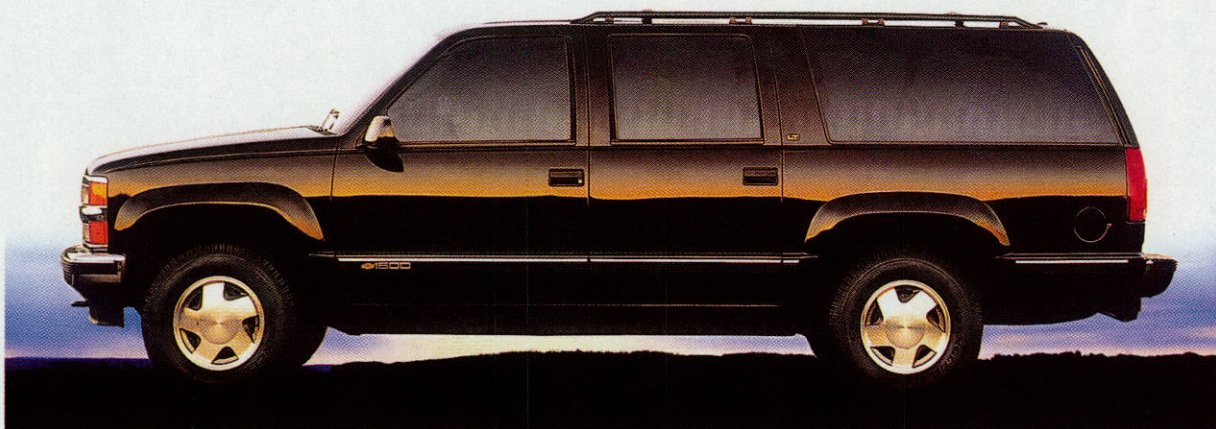
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SEPTEMBER 1999

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Front: Handmade wooden decoys add appeal to the duck hunting experience. For information about the decoy makers, read "Winterfowl," beginning on page 32. Photo © David J. Sams. Nikon F5 camera, 300mm 2.8 lens, 1/500 second at f/4, Fuji Sensia file.

Back: Lake Fork in East Texas is a honeymoon destination for many Japanese newlyweds. See story beginning on page 60. Photo © David J. Sams. Nikon F5 camera, 300mm 2.8 lens, 1/500 second at f/5.6, Fuji Sensia file.

For the latest and greatest parks and wildlife information, check out our Web site <<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us>>.

AT ISSUE

From the Pen of Andrew Sansom

I always look forward to September. I'm sure it's a combination of things: the promise of fall and eventually cooler weather, and the coming of Texas Wildlife Expo. But as much as anything else, September is the time of the teal.

I love to be out in the marsh with good dogs and good friends when the teal come in. They fly and even sound like little jet planes as they swoop in and around the blind, and pursuing them is the first and most sporting of the rituals of waterfowl hunting, which in Texas continues all the way into March.



The waterfowl spectacle in the Texas wetlands and skies is unequalled in its ability to astound, inspire and provide transcendent satisfaction to hunters and birders alike. And it's getting better all the time.



In fact, the waterfowl spectacle in the Texas wetlands and skies is unequalled in its ability to astound, inspire and provide transcendent satisfaction to hunters and birders alike. And it's getting better all the time. All but two species of ducks have shown significant increases in the past years and, thanks to good management and the superb efforts of Ducks Unlimited, goose populations continue to grow as well.

Ironically, and tragically, the successes of waterfowl management during the past decade or so have set the stage for one of the most serious environmental catastrophes of our generation. This year, more than 3 million snow geese will wing their way to the Gulf Coast ahead of the advancing winter. While an abundance of water and food supplies is available to sustain the birds on the southern end of the journey, the enormous population of snows is now two to three times the number that can be supported by available food supplies and habitat in the breeding grounds of northern Manitoba. The best data we have indicate that more than 135,000 acres of irreplaceable Arctic habitat have been damaged and as much as 66 percent of that may well be destroyed.

Although biologists has been advising public wildlife institutions to address this issue since it was first publicized in *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine's predecessor, *Texas Game & Fish*, in February 1957, it was not until 1994 that federal, state and private organizations and agencies seriously began to do so. That delay was unconscionable, and loss of critical habitat continues to this day.

Now, in September, the birds begin to arrive, and strategies to bring their numbers in to a level more commensurate with the carrying capacity of the habitat are once again mired in bureaucracy. This magnificent wildlife resource is one of our most precious treasures and it, along with the landscape upon which it depends, will soon suffer a true ecological disaster unless we quickly begin taking deliberate steps to prevent it.

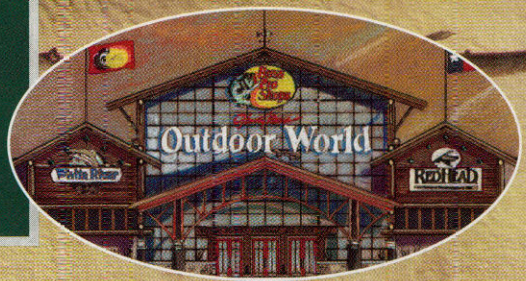
Andrew Sansom

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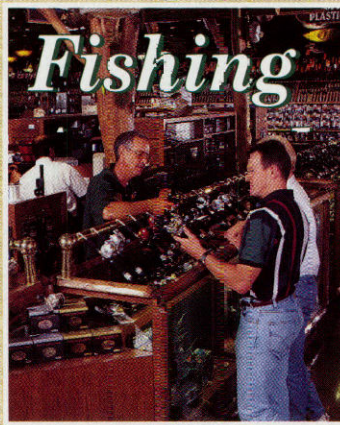
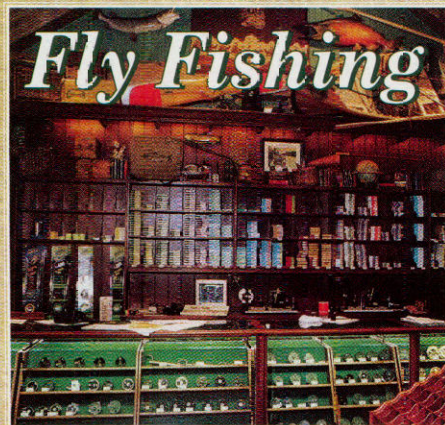
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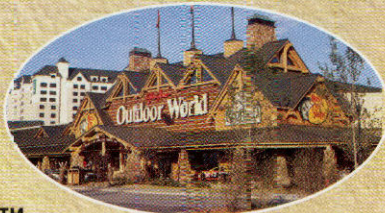


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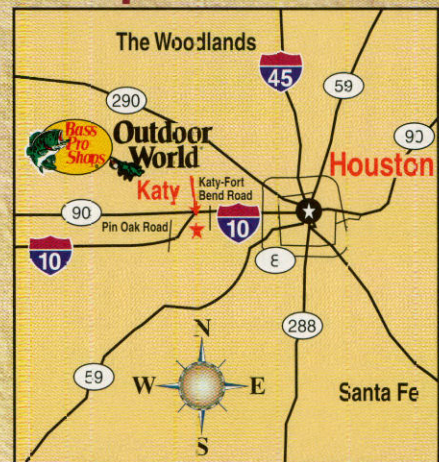
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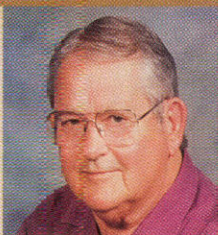
Kay Charter, born in 1939, in 1977 earned a degree in history from the University of California at San Diego. Ten years ago, she and her husband built a homestay inn on Grand Traverse Bay in northern Michigan. Concern over declining songbird populations led the couple to sell the property in 1992, and to build a new home on 47 acres of mixed habitat, which they now manage as a sanctuary for breeding and migratory birds. Today they spend time every winter in Rockport, a venue on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.



Steven R. LaMascus, 48, is a border patrolman who lives in Brackettville. A hunter and angler since his childhood on the Rolling Plains, he began writing professionally in 1993. Since then, his articles and photos have been published in *Wing & Shot*, *Gun Dog*, *Fur-Fish-Game*, and the *Varmint Hunter*. LaMascus also writes an outdoors column and an opinion column for the weekly *Brackett News*.



Edwin H. Cooper, 69, who writes this month's "Legend, Lore and Legacy" column about pioneering Texas mammalogist William B. Davis, is a native of San Marcos and the holder of a BS in wildlife management. In 1992, Cooper retired after 37 years as an administrator at his alma mater, Texas A&M, where, he says, as dean of admissions and records between 1972 and 1987, he signed the diplomas of 90,121 students. Today he writes for newspapers in Hearne, Franklin and Llano, from his home in Robertson County.



TEXAS

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

SEPTEMBER 1999, VOL. 57, NO. 9

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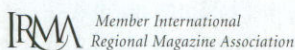
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MAIL CALL

Picks, Pans and Probes from Previous Issues

FORWARD

By now, nearly everyone on our staff has had a bit of summer R&R, and returning, refreshed, we've been polishing the upcoming editorial calendar.

Thankfully, you readers are quite a vocal bunch, and we receive dozens of letters each month letting us know what you like — and just as important, what you don't. We use these letters as guideposts to steer our course as we continue to seek common ground among hunters and non-hunters alike. Recently, with the emphasis on hunting in the August issue (and this one as well), we are hearing more frequently from those of you who are non-hunters. In the spring months, when our editorial coverage leans more toward birding, hiking and camping, we'll hear from hunters that the magazine is straying too far from its mission.

But we're not, I think; our mission is central to both camps. This magazine has always done an eloquent job of explaining hunting ethics and hunting's role in conservation to non-hunters, and it is crucial to the conservation of Texas' rapidly vanishing habitat that we continue to do so. Just as important, this magazine has also held up a matchless mirror to Texas' natural beauty — so greatly treasured by naturalists, and often to their surprise, by a great number of hunters as well. More than 80 percent of this magazine's operating revenues are derived from your subscription payments and, without consistently pleasing you, we would have simply ceased to exist.

So what do we have in store for you in upcoming issues? More paddlesports, launching with a feature on specialty rafting excursions next month. Paddling is the fastest-growing outdoor sport in Texas today, and in future issues we'll explore both birding and fishing the bays from sea kayaks, as well as "river ratting" in kayaks, canoes and rafts. Look for more cycling, both road biking and mountain biking, for recreational riders and hard core enthusiasts alike. John Ostidick will update us on Dallas water rights in November, and John Graves delivers his next installment of Texas Rivers, the Pecos, for the December issue (he's working on the Llano next). Because of numerous requests, we will be planning more photo essays in the upcoming months, as well. There'll be camp cooking, rod building, weather reading and dog training: a little something for everyone. Birding will continue to be a focus, as will hunting, fishing and, of course, our state parks.

Stay tuned!



Sittin' On the Dock of the Bay

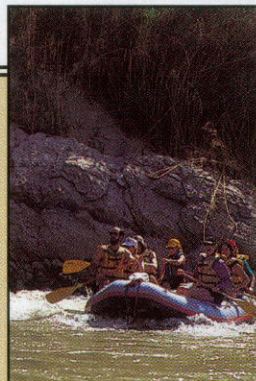
Thanks for the cover story on Galveston's scenic piers. What a joy to finally know about them. I'm looking forward to trying them soon.

Are there any TPW fishing piers on the Gulf Coast or Texas Lakes? It would be great to have a list of them. I do not own a boat, and am not too happy with shoreline fishing. So, a pier is my preferred place to fish.

By the way, the June '99 issue was great. I'm going to try both fresh and saltwater fly fishing. It's nice to know that you can do it all right here in Texas!

In closing, I've always said that if it's not in the great State of Texas it's probably not worth seeing or doing. Your magazine bears testimony to that every month.

✦ G. Woodson Hebert, I



Upcoming features? Many are activities you can sample at this year's Texas Wildlife Expo, October 2-3, at TPW headquarters. Please plan to attend, and be sure to stop by the magazine booth and say "hey!"

SUSAN L. EBERT replies: *Unfortunately, there is no official list of fishing piers on the Texas coast, although it would indeed be nice to have such a list! If you or a friend have internet access, try searching <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/parklist.htm> for "fishing piers." TPW field staff, in the area you plan to fish, are also a good source to locate fishing piers and/or jetties. Nice to hear you're taking up fly fishing, and be on the lookout for a feature on fishing the jetties coming up in the next year!*

LETTERS



MAIL CALL

Making His Views Public

I am compelled to comment on the article "Once in a Lifetime," (July 1999). I challenge the notion that the hunting program at Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area is public. The condition of guided hunts with full accommodation service by a "staff" has no place in public hunting unless the hunter chooses such alternatives.

Although the need to restrict hunter numbers is clear, I think that hunting on state lands in Texas should be permitted on an individual (do-it-yourself) or guided basis as the hunter chooses. The precious few state lands we have access to should be managed for the benefit and enjoyment of all Texas citizens.

⚡ *Doug Miller
Pinehurst*

Your Own Forts Trail Tour Guide

Please remind your readers that the Texas Forts Trail experience is showcased in a free brochure, as described in "Guardian of the Western Frontier," (September 1998) and provided by the Texas Historical Commission (THC).

In addition to these eight 19th century forts showcased in "Frontier Forts," (July 1999), the Texas Forts Trail region includes Albany's Old Jail Art Center, Eldorado's Woolen Mill and Graham's spectacular state park, Possum Kingdom.

The Texas Forts Trail is the pilot project of the THC's Texas Travel Trails Program, a regional heritage tourism initiative. During the next few years, the THC plans to introduce other travel trails around the state, each offering a new perspective to touring Texas.

To receive a free brochure, call the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-727-7704 or the San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-375-1206. You also can order via the internet at <www.thc.state.tx.us> or by writing to the Texas Historical Commission at P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276.

*Monique Moffitt
Texas Historical Commission*

We enjoyed your special on Texas forts in the July 1999 issue. We are reenactors and have traveled the Forts Trails to visit most of the forts in Texas. When I got to page 33 ("Fort Griffin") I thought the unidentified Civil War group looked familiar and after a closer look realized it was my son and the Texas Volunteer Militia Reenactment Group. This picture was taken about five years ago; we are not sure of the date.

I would like to give you the information on them for your files, as they put a lot of hard work and money into these reenactments so that the public may know how it was done in the Civil War days. It's like walking through a history book instead of reading it.

Shown in your article are the Texas Voluntary Militia Reenactment Group from Killeen, Texas, portraying the 6th U.S. Dismounted Cavalry. The men in the column here are:

Lt. Danny Barfield, Killeen
D. J. Williams, Killeen,
(flag carrier)
Tim Wilson, Salado
Bruce Cowan, Temple
(and his son)
Sam Cowan, Temple
Kevin Stockley, Temple
Tim Cody, Harker Heights
Jerry Taylor, Salado
Gary Breniger, Belton
Charlie VanBibber, Killeen
(and his brother)
Tim VanBibber of Killeen

Thank you for such a nice magazine; we always enjoy it.

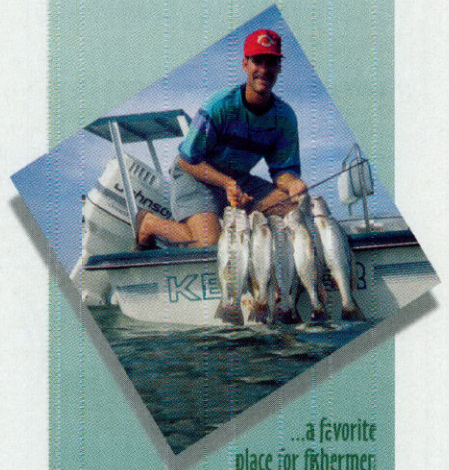
⚡ *Georgia L. Barfield*

In Deep Water Between a Rock and a Hard Place

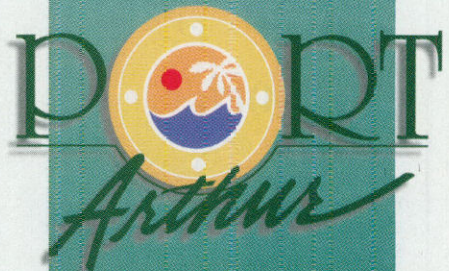
As a longtime reader and avid outdoorsman, I very much enjoyed the article on fly fishing the Texas rivers by Ray Chapa in your June 1999 issue. Having fished from as far north as Alaska to as far south as Peru, I was eager to try my hand at one of the many Hill Country rivers. The article came in just in time, as my family and I were planning a trip to the Hill Country for the Memorial Day weekend. We



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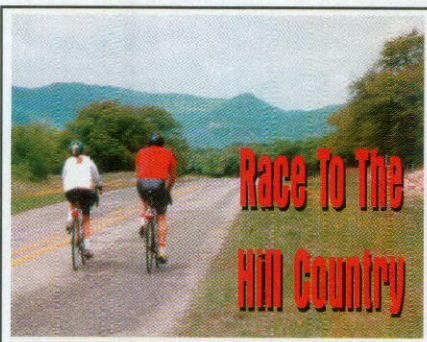
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MAIL CALL

chose Utopia on the Sabinal River where we spent three days staying at a place called the Gingerbread House run by the Hillis.

Taking the advice from the article on how to access the river, we drove upriver from Utopia and entered the river at the first low-water crossing some four miles north of town. We parked on the road's edge and put in below the bridge. As we went along we encountered numerous obstacles, natural and man-made dams, bridges, shallow water, brush piles, fallen trees and wire fences, all of which had to be walked over, around or through. Many times we had to walk in the river. On one occasion an irate landowner informed us we were trespassing. She told us her property line ran to the middle of the river and we were trespassing on her property the minute we set foot on the river floor. I asked if we were not on the Sabinal River, and she said yes. I then told her we had not stepped foot on shore. She said we were still trespassing. I told her we would stay on the opposite side of the river and we floated away. Needless to say the rest of the trip down river was less than 100 percent enjoyable. Had it not been for beauty and tranquility, the trip would have been a waste.

Maybe you could enlighten your readers in more detail on what exactly is trespassing from a public river. Was the landowner right? In the future how do we address such obstacles along the rivers? Are wire fences through public rivers legal? And finally, are landowners liable for injuries that may occur going over obstacles that they place on public land or rivers?

⚡ *Dario Gutierrez, Jr.*

MELISSA PARKER, Resource Protection, replies: *Thank you for your comments. Unfortunately, your unpleasant experiences have been encountered by many people and are the result of conflicting laws that date as far back as the original Spanish land grants through the Republic of Texas to modern times. Because the answers to the questions you addressed are very convoluted and complex, they*

cannot be answered properly in a general format such as a response letter from the editor. In order to get a detailed breakdown of river laws and established legal precedents, please refer to a paper entitled "Overview of Laws Regarding the Navigation of Texas Streams, with Selected References to Statutes, Cases, and Other Materials," which is located at <world.std.com/~reichertjr_title.htm> Hopefully, this paper will help facilitate a better understanding of river issues, and your next trip will be much more enjoyable.

One Potato, Two Potato, Three?

I have a question about the chowder recipe in "Soupfish," (July 1999). One of the items in the soup is three potatoes, but in the making of the soup it does not tell you what to do with the potatoes.

What I did was dice them, parboil them and add them with the fish. It was good. I'm sure somebody has told you about this by now.

*Chris Williams
 Roanoke*

ROBB WALSH replies: *Oops! You're right. The potatoes should be diced and added along with the herbs and reserved fish.*

Sound off for "Mail Call!"
Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine welcomes letters from our readers. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

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⚡ *Letters designated by this symbol were delivered to us via e-mail. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity.*



SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

NO REGRETS *in* DECATUR

Rick Stevens, an insurance agent in Decatur, frequently finds dead birds and bird droppings on his Main Street lawn, and more than once, his air-conditioning units have been clogged by feathers. Stevens lives across the street from three acres of woodlands that are now occupied by a cattle egret rookery. The stench of more than 40,000 birds, he and his neighbors say, is overpowering.

Stevens and his wife, Linda, an administrative and financial secretary for the First Baptist Church of Decatur, are living a homeowner's nightmare, waiting for the time to pass. "I have no desire to destroy the birds," Stevens says, "I just want to move them because, quite frankly, it is a life-threatening problem; my wife's asthma is aggravated by the presence of the birds."

For the past three years, Decatur has dealt with egret rookeries by using air-cannon noisemakers to scare the birds away before they started nesting. Their first use produced mixed results. Last year, the noisemakers kept the birds from settling in. When they returned in April of this year, they moved a few blocks from their earlier locations and set up a rookery across from the Stevens' house.

"The problem with these birds,"

city administrator Brett Shannon says, "is that once they find a place to establish a rookery, the only way to keep them from coming back to the same spot the next season is to clear the brush out and alter the habitat."

Monty Fitzgerald, Decatur's animal control officer, points out that under federal guidelines to protect migratory species, nothing can now be done about the rookery until the nesting season is over. "All of the hatchlings will leave the nests by mid-September, probably, and the birds will leave the rookery by the first cold spell, usually in early October," Fitzgerald says. After the hatchlings leave, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department can issue a permit to bulldoze the rookery site.

Rick and Linda Stevens hope the city will remove trees from a cattle egret rookery near their home when the birds leave.

"We want to avoid what happened in Carrollton last year," Shannon says. Under similar circumstances, but without a permit, Carrollton destroyed an egret rookery last fall; it was fined \$70,000 and ordered to pay \$126,000 for the rehabilitation of injured birds. "In the beginning, when we had the problem three

years ago, we made the right decision by contacting the federal people," Fitzgerald says. "We didn't jump in and make a rash decision. We are still trying to get this problem solved the right way here."

Tyrell Albin



FIELD NOTES

October 7 begins
The Lost Maples Leaf Color
Change Report For 1999.

A recorded message will be updated each Thursday through Thanksgiving at 5-2-389-4449 or 1-800-792-1112; select option 3, then 1. Information also is updated weekly on the TPW Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lostmap/fclilage.htm.

The Lost Maples State Natural Area color display usually begins in late October and sometimes lasts through Thanksgiving, depending on the weather. Cool, dry weather produces the best color. Campsites for weekends go quickly; to reserve a campsite, call the Central Reservation Center at 5-2-389-8900. Parking space allows only 250 vehicles, so plan your visit during the week if possible.

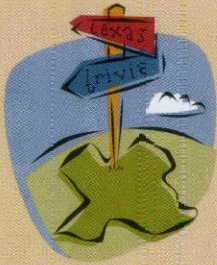
The park is located 86 miles northwest of Saratonic and five miles north of Vanderpool off Ranch Road 187. For further information, call the park at 830-936-3413.

BACK PHOTO BY TPW; FRONT PHOTO © MITCH WOOD • SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY: KYLE DRIER



SCOUT

TEXAS TRIVIA

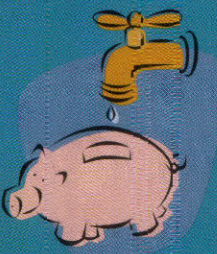


The swift o' kit fox is the smallest American fox at just 2½ feet long and weighing two to 6½ pounds.

Floods are the leading cause of weather-related deaths in Texas.

A 1990 survey by *Fortune* magazine showed that twice as many vacationers preferred watching birds over playing golf.

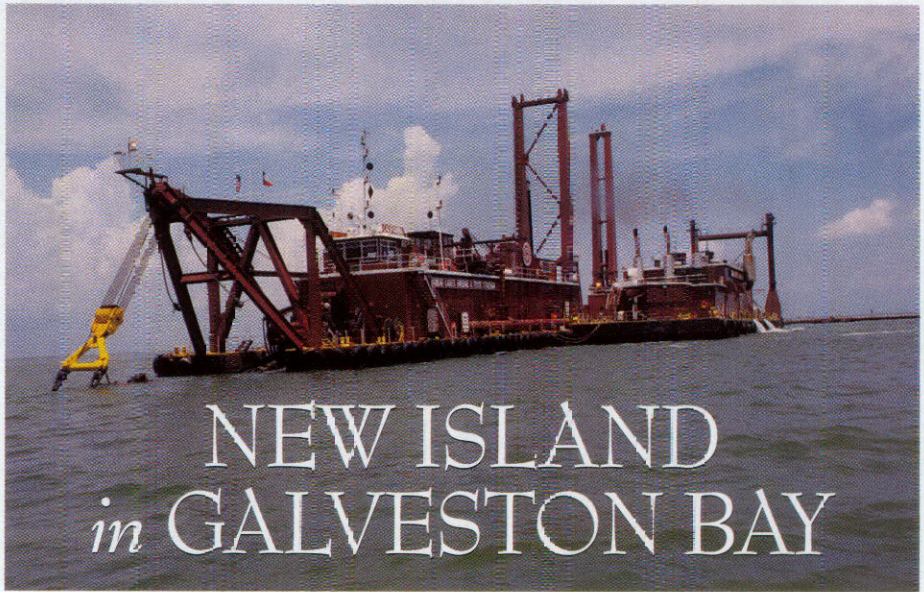
WATER-SAVING TIPS



Kitchen sink disposals require a lot of water to operate properly. Consider starting a compost pile as an alternate way to dispose of food wastes.

Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster and avoid wasting water while it heats up.

Take a shower instead of filling the tub to take a bath.



There is a virgin island rising from one of Galveston Bay's most productive flounder fishing spots. It's a 1,200-acre sand and mud land mass whose levees stand approximately eight feet above the water line. It is free of buildings and free of plants. It has no name and there are no signs. Boaters who encounter it are searching their maps and scratching their heads in puzzlement.

Unlike islands formed naturally by volcanic eruption, this island is man-made. It's one of the three salt marshes that will be created over the next five years by BUG, the Beneficial Uses Group, a subcommittee of an Interagency Coordination Team brought together to develop a plan to dispose of the 130 million cubic yards of dredge material from the deepening and widening of the Houston Ship Channel.

Its purpose is to undo some of the damage done to Galveston Bay during the past 40 years. Houston and its surrounding communities have pumped millions of gallons of ground water out of the land, causing the land to sink. Additionally, a wealth of development took full advantage of bayfront views and convenient boat slips. The result was a loss of 30,000 acres of valuable wetlands.

The project calls for the replacement of 118 acres of oyster reef and the building of three marsh areas that require a total of 4,500 acres of dirt. Each marsh area is 1,200 acres — about two square miles. The islands will be stabilized by surrounding them with levees, eight-foot clay walls and geotubes,

giant sand-filled fabric sausages 10 feet in diameter. Although a marsh project of this scale never has been attempted, there already is a demonstration marsh in the bay.

"We've built a 220-acre demonstration marsh at Atkinson Island between Bayport and Barbours Cut that is acting as our laboratory," says Dick Gorini, who acts as project coordinator.

The project is expensive. The estimated cost to the federal government for the oyster reef replacement is approximately \$19 million.

The BUG project is the result of 10 years of monthly meetings involving more than 40 agencies. Despite this effort, there still are some disturbing questions about the possible side effects of undoing damage to the ecosystem.

For example, the placement of the 118 acres of oyster reef is critical. According to Sammy Ray, professor emeritus at Texas A&M University in Galveston, the oyster population may be at risk.

Oysters are primary to a healthy Galveston Bay. "They are the base of its food chain. They are what holds the bay together," says Andy Sipocz, lead TPW biologist for the project. "The construction of the marshes during the enlargement and subsequent channel maintenance will bring to an end the current practice of unconfined dumping of dredged material in Galveston Bay. This and the creation of over 4,200 acres of habitat for shrimp, fish and birds will greatly benefit the bay."

Marsha Wilson

PHOTO BY ANDY SPOCZ, TPW





NOW WE KNOW:

Texas Migratory Bird Hunters are HIP

National estimates have suggested that Texas is home to approximately 500,000 migratory bird hunters — 17 percent of all the migratory bird hunters in the country. This past hunting season, TPW certified 650,000 Texas migratory bird hunters through the implementation of the Harvest Information Program (HIP). Though the HIP figure is probably a little on the high side, it is testimony to the success that migratory bird hunting enjoys in Texas.

HIP is designed to help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife management agencies estimate migratory bird harvest. This will enable wildlife managers to set hunting regulations with better information. Each year, HIP-certified hunters are randomly selected for national surveys to estimate dove, waterfowl and other migratory bird harvests.

TPW staff have been analyzing Texas' first year's worth of HIP data and the results are encouraging. For example, we may have around 70,000 youth migratory bird hunters in Texas. Although hunting and fishing activities typically involve more men than women, a conservative estimate indicates that women constitute about six percent of Texas migratory bird hunters and that number is rising.

If you plan to hunt migratory birds, your license clerk will ask some brief questions about your activity last season. Upon answering the questions, you will be HIP-certified. The letters "HIP" must appear in the appropriate location on your license. Hunters must be HIP-certified to hunt dove, ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, coots, snipe, rails, woodcock or gallinules.

For more information about HIP, call 512-389-4766.

Allison Arnold

ANIMALS THROUGH *our* EYES

Through *Animals' Eyes* is a collection of 30 vignettes written by Lynn Cuny, executive director of Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation, Inc. Published by the University of North Texas Press, this 149-page book chronicles adventures in animal rescues, with numerous black-and-white photos of the principals featured in her stories.

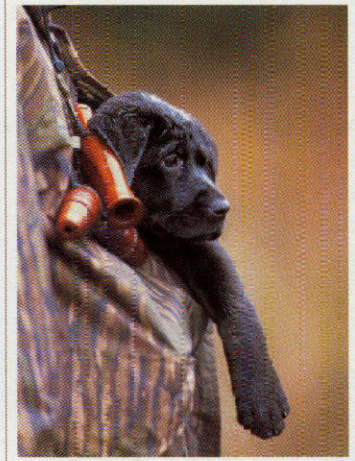
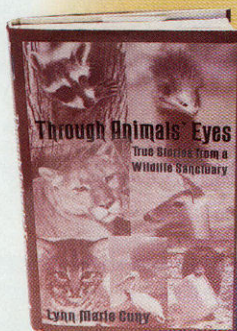
The tales are related simply and directly, without any overt attempt at embellishment. In her efforts to explain animal behavior, Cuny is prone to anthropomorphism. For example, she promotes the idea that animals form the same bonds with one another that humans form with their families, and that they share many of the

same motivations. This viewpoint is difficult to support and also difficult to disprove, so the reader is left to decide.

Cuny's moving stories are reminiscent of the popular Sunday evening Disney programs aired in the seventies, where viewers were invited to follow the exploits of a particular animal as he or she explored the world. The tone is sentimental and the style moralistic, but for the world-weary reader, this collection of rescue and rehabilitation triumphs may be just what the doctor ordered.

Retail price is \$19.95. The book can be purchased through WRR, with a portion of each sale benefiting the sanctuary, for \$24.99, which includes shipping, handling and tax. For more information call 210-698-1709.

Rosie Roegner



DAVID J. SAMS

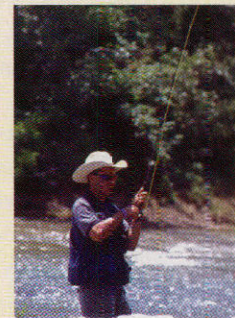
"PEG'S HUNT"

Six-week-old Peg peers out of her owner's hunting coat to greet world-renowned photographer David J. Sams. This image first appeared on the cover of *Ducks Unlimited*, and is among their most popular covers.

This fine art poster print is 18" x 24" and is available for only \$25 plus \$4 shipping & handling. Texas residents, please add 8 1/4% sales tax. Send check or money order to

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SCOUT

BY GIBBS MILLIKEN

WILDLIFE GROUND

BLINDS

FIELD TEST

In today's harried and hurried world, even the primitive concept of concealment is represented by ready-made products. Enclosed, portable blinds are useful for observing even the most wary forms of wildlife, and are a must for serious hunters, birders, photographers, artists and field biologists, in part because of their importance in helping to contain human scent signatures. Their small size and weight allow placement in areas that have older trophy animals, migratory waterfowl and furtive birds like the wild turkey. Well-made, free-standing units also can be pressed into service as overnight bivouacs, fishing lean-tos, dressing cabins, shower stalls or even camp privies.

Currently available ground blinds take three general forms: the tall cylinder, the A-frame, and the cube. Sizes range from a small, one-person camera or gun blind to the roomy two-person guide or archery models. Some recent designs are shaped like hay rolls or elongated to fit over anchored jon boats and kayaks.

BBK Enterprises of San Antonio offers two sizes of ground blind kits. The smallest is a three-foot, four-inch diameter, single-person cylindrical model, standing six feet, eight inches high. It is intended for wildlife observation, photography and firearm hunting. The firm's other model stands seven feet tall, and is 50 inches in diameter, for two people or one bow hunter. Each kit assembles in less than five minutes, has coverings of airtight, waterproof nylon with a

removable roof, a wide-roof shooting port and four long, vertical zippered side windows. All this equipment folds down into a compact six-inch by 26-inch x 19-inch package that weighs only 13 pounds, and goes into a compartment backpack. BBK makes these units in Advantage Camouflage®, Advantage Wetlands Camo® or Realtree X-tra® Snow patterns. Prices run from \$149 to \$179.

ICE Blinds (Instant Concealment Equipment), made by Double Bull Archery LLC of Monticello, Minnesota, are intended for wildlife enthusiasts who are looking for the ultimate in comfort and durability. These products, available in Skyline Apparition™, Realtree Xtra® Brown, Skyline Fall Flight™ and regional patterns, range in price from \$310 to

\$425, and in size from the standard GH500 (five feet, six inches high by seven feet diameter) at 16 pounds, to the largest, GHR500 (six feet two inches high by seven feet diameter), at 18 pounds, with optional roof overhead viewing/shooting window. Joel McMurtrey of Absolute Systems in Austin, an experienced bow hunter, characterizes these as the "Lamborghini" of ground blinds.

A third one-archer/two firearm model, the PT 200 (five feet, four inches high, five feet wide, six feet, six inches long), at 10 pounds, is an A-shape with a unique "pass through" camo netting over a large bay window. The archer can use a compound or crossbow from a kneeling or seated position and have the flight of a conventional broadhead unaffected by the mesh barrier. ICE Blinds also have silent windows and a fiberglass rapid pop-up/down pole system. All the blinds come with reinforced stake loops around the base, tie-down connections on the sides and a matching carry bag. Larger models from both BBK and ICE are handicapped accessible.



Currently available ground blinds take three general forms, left to right: the cube, the tall cylinder and the A-frame. All have a camouflage fabric to match the habitat.

SCOUT

BY DAN MORRISON • ILLUSTRATIONS BY NARDA LEBO

KNIFE

SHARPENING

In the wilderness, when survival may be a real concern, a knife is your most important piece of equipment. A sharp knife is the only good knife. Not only is it more difficult to cut anything with a dull blade, it's also more dangerous. The more pressure you have to apply to a knife blade, the greater the chance the knife might slip and cut something, such as your leg or hand.

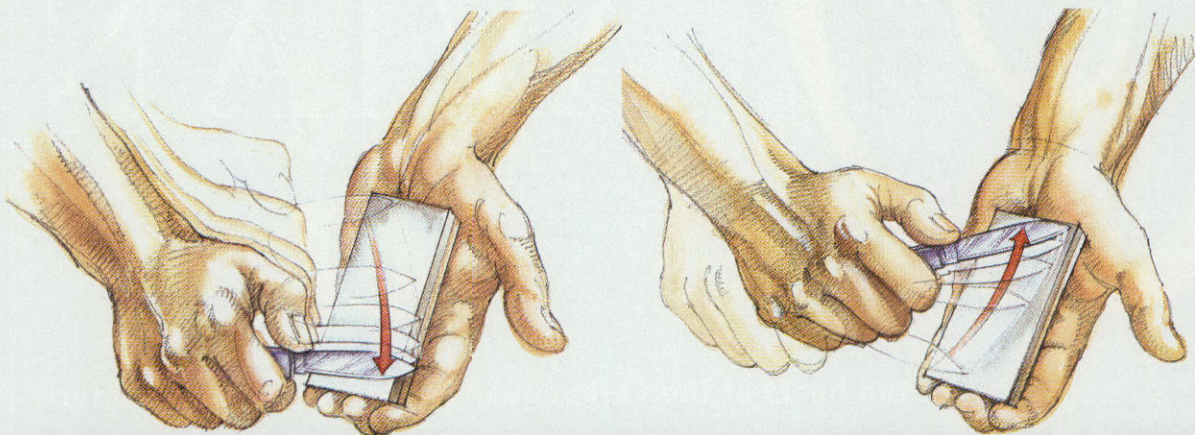
For an extended backpacking trip you'll need a good whetstone (not

on which direction to move the knife blade when sharpening it against the whetstone. One holds that you should move the blade away from its edge. This works and is relatively safe, but takes a long time. The other school holds it is better to move the blade against the edge, which is quicker, although it increases your chances of inadvertently removing the tips of your fingers. To put the final edge on the knife blade, strop the blade up and down on a leather belt, away from the edge.

edge well.

The intended use of your knife will determine how you will sharpen its blade. If the knife will be used primarily for chopping, professional knife sharpeners recommend an edge angle of 40 degrees. For a fine slicing edge, the angle should be about 17 degrees. Unlike the best cutlery in your kitchen, the knife you take on camping outings often will serve multiple purposes; seasoned campers prefer to carry two or more knives with them, usually one with a folding blade and another one with a fixed blade.

If you're into making your own wilderness tools, a terrific all-purpose knife can be fashioned from a hacksaw blade. Break off the tip so that the blade is about six inches long, wrap leather around one end,



Moving the knife blade away from the edge of the whetstone, left, works fine, but takes a long time. Moving the blade against the edge, right, is quicker but increases the chance of injury.

wetstone, "whet" means to sharpen by rubbing against something). Moisten the stone with oil (inconvenient on an extended camping trip), or water (and hence the confusion between "whet" and "wet"), or saliva, which is convenient and it works just fine. The size of your whetstone should be about two-thirds the length of your knife blade.

There are two schools of thought

Most of the newer knife blades, and certainly those of better quality, are made of tough stainless steel that is resistant to sharpening. For these, you should consider using a stone impregnated with millions of tiny diamond crystals. A carbon steel blade tends to rust, which dramatically dulls the blade's edge; a knife with a stainless steel blade is difficult to sharpen, but it holds an

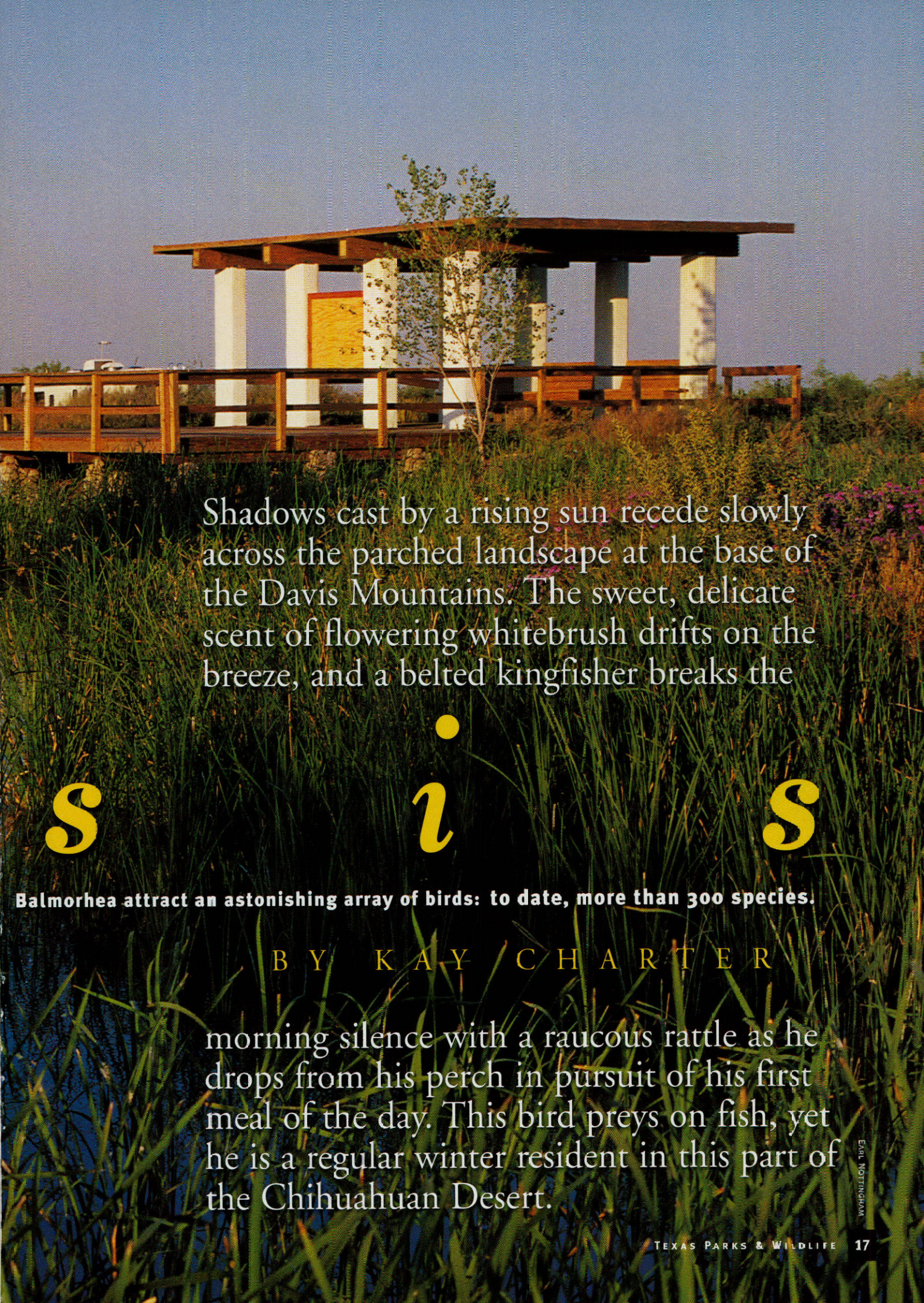
and sharpen the non-saw side. Hacksaw blades are carbon steel, so they take a fine edge.

Although a knife is your most important piece of gear when you venture into the wilderness, it is also arguably the source of most injuries while on camping trips. Treat it with respect and care. Your momma was right: you can put someone's eye out with it.



O An AVIAN a

In the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert, the abundant springs around



Shadows cast by a rising sun recede slowly across the parched landscape at the base of the Davis Mountains. The sweet, delicate scent of flowering whitebrush drifts on the breeze, and a belted kingfisher breaks the

S i S

Balmorhea attract an astonishing array of birds: to date, more than 300 species.

BY KAY CHARTER

morning silence with a raucous rattle as he drops from his perch in pursuit of his first meal of the day. This bird preys on fish, yet he is a regular winter resident in this part of the Chihuahuan Desert.

EARL NOTTINGHAM



THE KINGFISHER is not the only apparent avian oddity here. There are loons and pelicans, ducks and geese, herons and egrets, grebes, cormorants and shorebirds. The area in and around Balmorhea hosts an astonishing variety of birds: more than 300 species have been documented. Most pause to rest and refuel during migration, some stop to nest and raise young, many spend the winter and a number of them are permanent residents.

It is the presence of water that draws so many birds to this spot in the desert. The Balmorhea area is blessed with a number of springs. Four miles southwest of town, the largest, San Solomon Springs, pumps more than 20 million gallons of ground water a day. Historically, water from San Solomon and smaller local springs created a vast network of wetlands with open ponds and connecting streams. These desert wetlands, called cienegas, provided a unique habitat for many kinds of birds, fishes and plants. Kelly Bryan, an ornithologist, is a natural resource manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife. He believes that the Toyah Valley once was blanketed by an extended patchwork of cienegas, and that those cienegas supported massive populations of avian migrants and residents.

It was the presence of this same water that drew settlers to

the area. Farmers began diverting the water for agriculture in the middle of the last century. That practice not only remains, it will necessarily continue. In the late 1930s, water from San Solomon Springs was harnessed in irrigation canals and ultimately collected in a reservoir two miles east of town. This reservoir, known as Lake Balmorhea, stores impounded water to irrigate farm fields in the spring — a season during which the Trans-Pecos typically receives little rainfall.

Lake Balmorhea also provides habitat for an abundance of wintering waterfowl and waders as well as a profusion of migrating shorebirds. In early spring, tundra-nesting Baird's sandpipers arrive from wintering grounds in South America to feed along the water's edge. They are joined by many other shorebirds, including Wilson's phalarope, a species given to the curious habit of spinning on the water to stir up aquatic insects on which it feeds.

When shorebirds returning to Lake Balmorhea join the variety of overwintering species, the result is a rich and complex avian mosaic. To date, more than 100 species have been documented on the lake and along its shoreline. Bryan believes that number will rise with constant observation.

"Lake Balmorhea is far more important as a stopover site than anyone realizes," he says. "Every day there is a turnover in species and in abundance. Unless an observer is on site at all times, we have no way of knowing accurately how



dynamic migration actually is.”

During the summer, the lake is important to a number of breeding birds, including delicate black-necked stilts that nest on open ground near the water. In recent years, hard-to-find American bitterns have been seen in dense wetland vegetation at the west end of the lake; king rails may be nesting there as well.

Discovery of the rails came as a



Balmorhea takes its birds seriously, as this sign at the city limit illustrates. Among the birds attracted to this desert wetland are the pied-billed grebe, above, and the green heron, below.

one end of the lake. He believes that the plovers will nest on these islands and hopes that they ultimately will recognize them as safer locations in which to raise their young — where they are protected from land predators. Although he is confident the plovers will use the islands, he remains cautious about long-term results.

“We will have to wait and see how the islands stand up to wave action on the lake,” he says. “But the biggest problem will be the salt cedars; we’ll have to work very hard to prevent them from taking over the islands. For optimum utilization by the targeted species, these islands must stay free of surface vegetation.”

Salt cedar, a highly invasive exotic tree, is the bane of desert wetlands and riparian corridors. With its voracious



surprise to the experts, not only because the birds are exceedingly rare

in the region, but because they are declining in places where they regularly occur. Even so, the king rail is not the lake’s most important wetland species; that distinction belongs to the snowy plover. This pale, winsome little ball of a bird is a delight to watch as it scurries in spurts across sandy beaches along the Gulf Coast where it winters, or on open mudflats where it often nests.

Snowy plovers place their eggs in shallow “scrapes,” or depressions in the sand. They have lost many of their breeding areas because they nest in habitat that is highly valued by humans for building sites and recreational uses. As a consequence, this species has declined to dangerously low numbers.

Compounding the problem is an increase in the number of predators that take eggs and nestlings. Plovers are precocial, which means that the young leave the nest soon after hatching to search for their own food. But the chicks are unable to fly until they are three to four weeks old, which provides predators with opportunities to snag them. Moreover, at least one predator, the raccoon, currently is experiencing a population explosion across the country. The growing numbers of raccoons increases predation pressure on all ground-nesting birds and their foraging chicks. Free-ranging pets and feral cats add to that pressure.

Last year, at Bryan’s suggestion, two islands were built at



TOP PHOTO AND BOTTOM PHOTO © GRAY ALLEN; MIDDLE PHOTO © KAY CHARTER



is a magnet for many migrating neotropical passerines — songbirds that winter in the tropics and breed in North America. These birds are abundant in the area from late April through about the middle of May, as they pass through en route to their northern nesting grounds.

Balmorheans are proud of a road sign that cautions motorists to be alert for crossing turkeys. A flock of wild turkeys regularly roosts in the yard of a local couple. At dawn, the birds drop from their perches to feed on seed that has been put out for them by the homeowners. Then they

appetite for water, it not only spreads like a prairie fire in a drought, it is almost impossible to eliminate.

Zyan believes it also is possible that least terns will elect to nest on these islands. This bird, our smallest tern, winters as far south as Brazil and breeds on river and lake shores in the central section of the country, as well as along both coasts. They nest in habitat similar to that used by snowy plovers.

While these tiny terns currently do not nest around Lake Balmorhea, they do nest about 60 miles away at the Imperial Reservoir, north of Fort Stockton. However, every year a few least terns appear at Balmorhea during migration. The hope is that some of these migrants will elect to stay and nest on the new island habitat.

Not just the lake, but the town of Balmorhea provides a haven for birds. The town itself, with its large old trees,



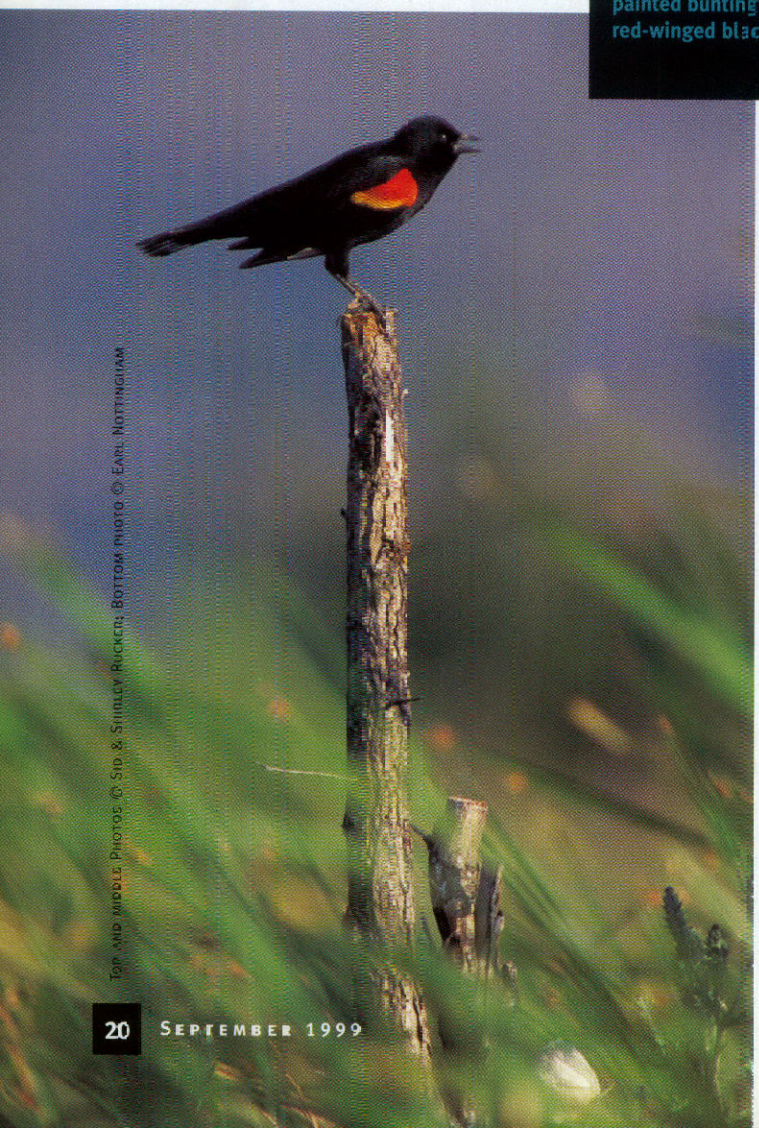
The birds of Balmorhea, top to bottom: field sparrow and painted bunting; white pelican; red-winged blackbird.

trot through town toward the lake, grumbling and gobbling all the way at every passing car and barking dog.

Many upland species can be found in the pastures and fields outside of town, including eastern and western meadowlarks and scaled quail. Over the past several winters, a golden eagle has hunted from a utility pole along a county road north of Balmorhea, and prairie falcons and merlins often are seen in similar settings. When farm fields are flooded, wet meadow species such as white-faced ibis or sandhill cranes suddenly appear, and at times hundreds or even thousands of pipits, sparrows and longspurs utilize these same fields.

Four miles southwest of town, Balmorhea State Park provides several significant habitats. The park, developed around San Solomon Springs, has mature cottonwood trees, netleaf hackberry and Arizona ash. Components of the historical landscape, planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, also include fruiting mulberry, plateau liveoak and ornamental juniper, which provide additional shelter and feeding habitat for birds. The trees fill during migration with brightly colored Orioles, vireos and buntings. Near the entrance, a lone orange tree is covered with warblers in early May.

At least two pairs of the most brilliant songbirds on the continent, painted buntings, regularly nest in the park. Blue grosbeaks also nest here. Summer may find several dozen of these richly hued finches feeding in a patch of buffalo grass growing along the park's boundary. Other



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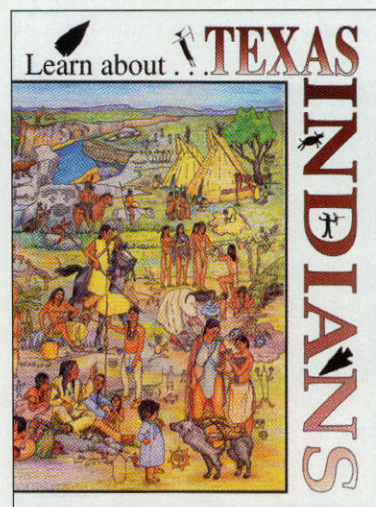
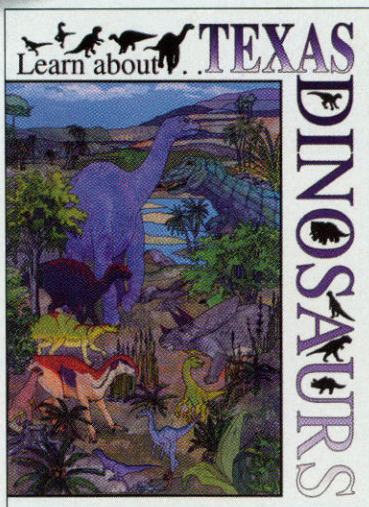
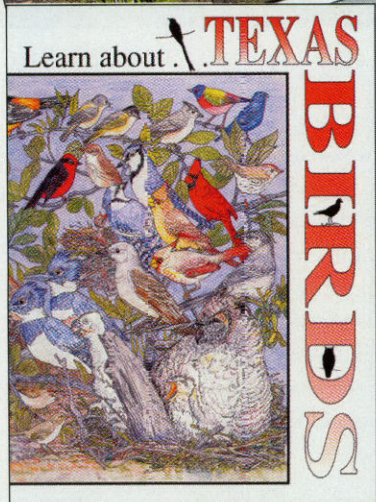
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nesting species include both Bullock's and orchard orioles and that delightful denizen of desert scrub, the bold and curious cactus wren. Native plants like catclaw mimosa, mesquite, creosotebush and whitebrush provide home for resident verdin and black-throated sparrows.

The most exciting habitat in the park is the recently recreated San Solomon Cienega, which was funded by a partnership that included a number of state and federal agencies, local agriculturalists and town leaders. This restoration was undertaken to provide habitat for two rare fish, the Pecos gambusia and the Comanche Springs pupfish, as well as other wildlife that once thrived in the area. Today, densely packed cattails growing in the shallows offer cover and habitat for species that had all but disappeared from the area. Last summer witnessed the first documented nesting of pied-billed grebe in 66 years, and two years ago a Virginia rail was found among the cattails.

Manager Tom Johnson, an avid and able birder, has added many birds to the park's list, including four hummingbird species not previously known to occur in the area. It was Johnson who discovered and monitored the nesting buntings. Not long after he arrived at the park, he located a pair of great horned owls incubating eggs high in the hollow trunk of a broken tree near the springs. The owls have nested successfully for seven of the last eight years. These birds now are

More Balmorhea birds: a female black-chinned hummingbird, left, and a young great horned owl, below.



TOP PHOTO © G. ELAINE ACKER; MIDDLE PHOTO © KAY CHARTER; BOTTOM PHOTO © SID & SHIRLEY DICKER

so accustomed to people coming to photograph, videotape or simply watch that they barely raise an eyelid when yet another visitor happens along. After fledging, the young often can be seen roosting in trees next to the park office.

Johnson has a passion for birds, and takes pleasure in sharing his knowledge with others. Virtually every Saturday of the year, he leads a birding tour of the park and nearby Phantom Cave Springs. He hopes to be able to expand that tour to include the lake and two other local springs.

"If you spend time birding at the park and out at the lake during spring migration, you should be able to see up to 150 species ... but winter might provide almost that many,"



he says. "The truth is, birding is good here all year long."

Birdwatchers, once thought of as an odd lot primarily populated by little old ladies in tweed skirts and sensible shoes, now are represented by people of both sexes and all ages who yearn for a renewed connection with the natural world. The popularity of this pastime is growing across the continent. As the ranks of birders swell, Balmorhea residents will find themselves hosting an increasing number of visitors seeking to discover the wealth of avian offerings thriving in their desert community. ★

KAY CHARTER and her husband, Fin, live on 47 acres in northern Michigan, which they manage as a sanctuary for migrating and nesting songbirds. They spend their winters birding in Texas.

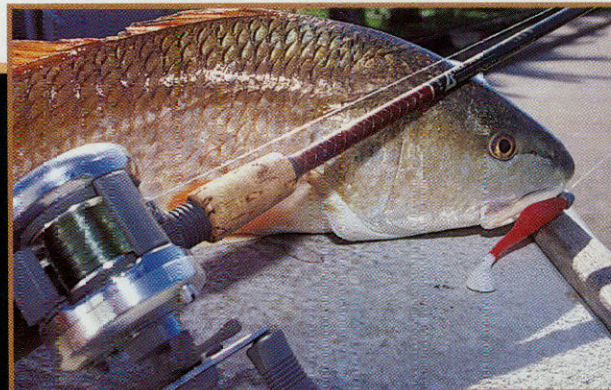


LOVE FOR THE OUTDOORS

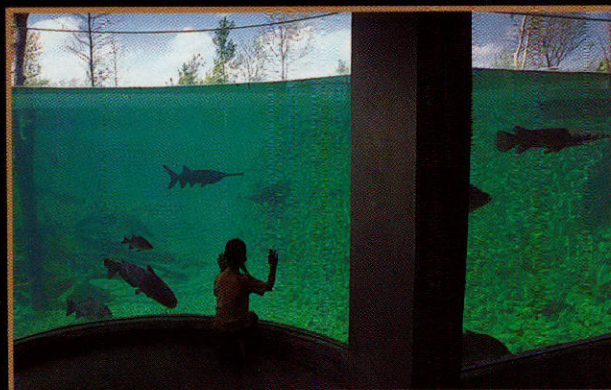
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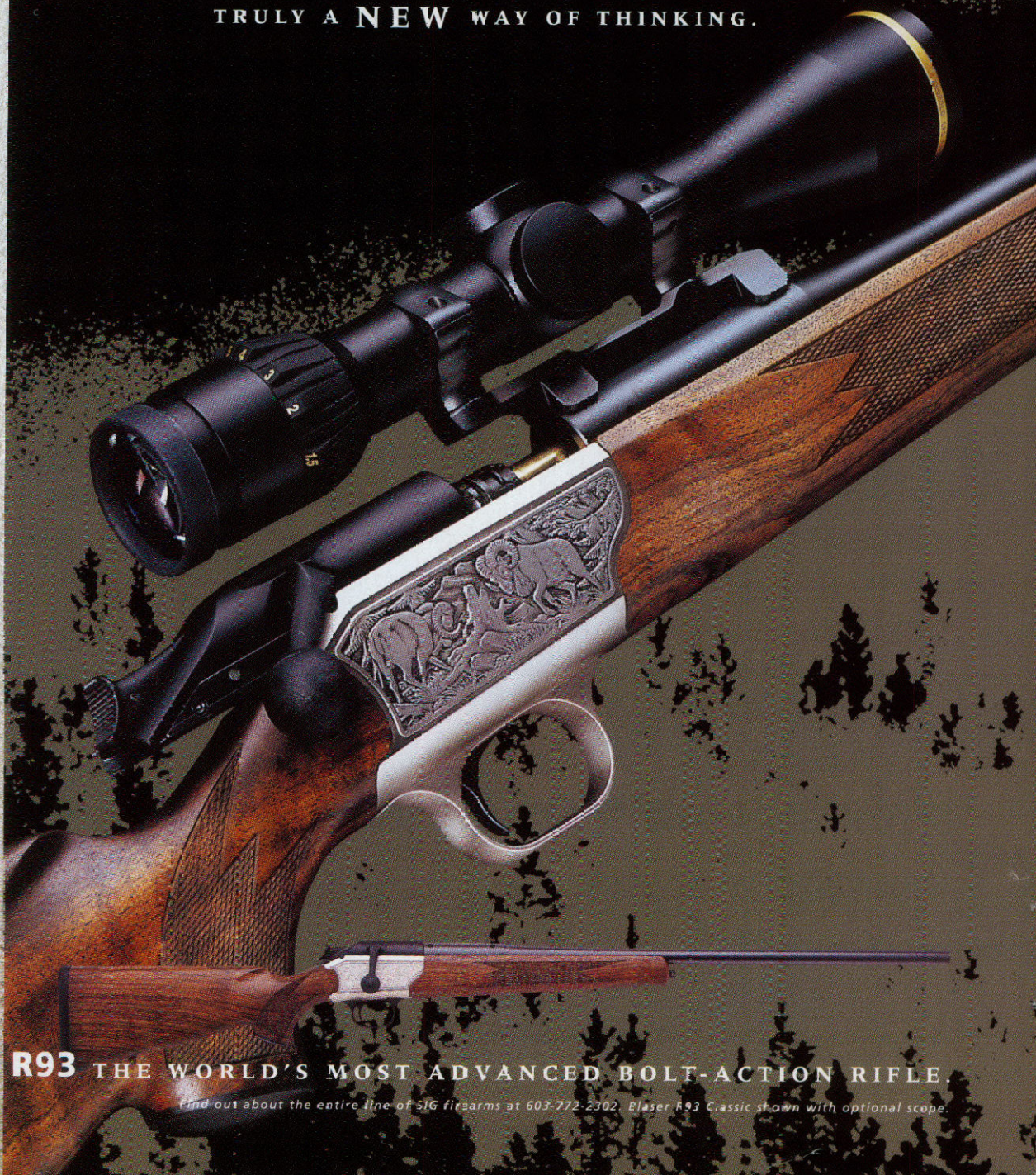
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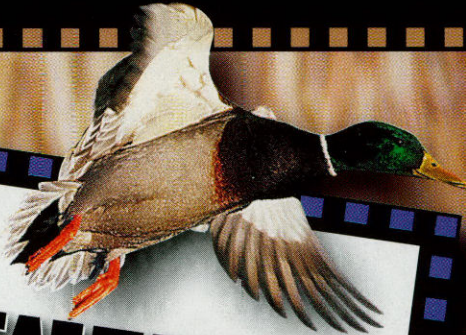
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WATERFOWL HUNTING EDITION 1999



Creating a CO

PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS

To date, the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project, an innovative partnership among government agencies, a private organization and Texas landowners, has helped 149 landowners from Orange to Brownsville establish 16,508 acres of wetlands as winter habitat for waterfowl.

Decades ago, flights of ducks darkened winter skies on the Texas coastal prairie. The sun rose and set to a symphony of babbling, gabbling, squealing and whistling mallards, teal, pintails, widgeons, canvasbacks and redheads feeding in wetlands scattered everywhere.

But during the 1980s and early 1990s, duck populations in North America plummeted from their historic highs of just a few years earlier. Prolonged drought on the breeding grounds, combined with urbanization, agricultural production and industrialization, all have contributed to the population decline by reducing available wetlands throughout the flyway.

In response, the governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico developed the North

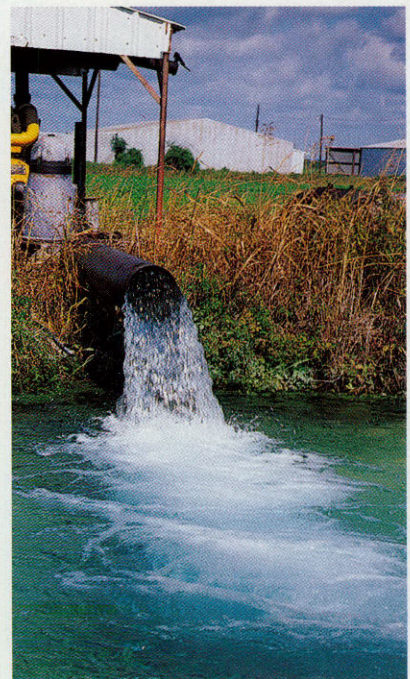
American Waterfowl Management Plan. Its goal is to restore duck numbers to the levels of the 1970s. The Gulf Coast Joint Venture, a coalition of citizens, government agencies and organizations, was formed to put a plan into action along the Gulf Coast from Alabama to Texas.

In Texas, where some 97 percent of the land is privately owned and where the bulk of ducks in the Central Flyway overwinter, success or failure of the program depends on the involvement of private landowners. The Texas Prairie Wetlands Project

Following the harvest, below, winter flooding of croplands makes waste grains such as rice available to ducks.

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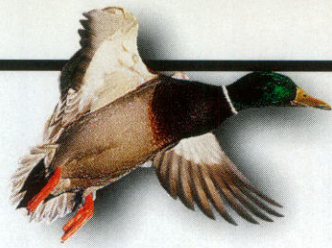


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was created to support the Gulf Coast Joint Venture by helping private landowners protect, restore, enhance or create wetlands through technical advice and financial assistance.

The Texas Prairie Wetlands Project is sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ed Ritter, regional biologist for Ducks

Canada," says Ritter.

The program offers landowners several options for ways to provide duck habitat. Winter flooding of harvested croplands makes waste grains such as rice, corn, soybeans or milo available to ducks. Many unfarmed fields, when flooded for part of the year, will grow high-quality natural food for ducks. Water management can improve the productivity of natural wetlands or restore altered ones. Sanctuaries where no hunting is allowed provide important refuges where ducks can rest.

Landowners who take part in the program receive free project design

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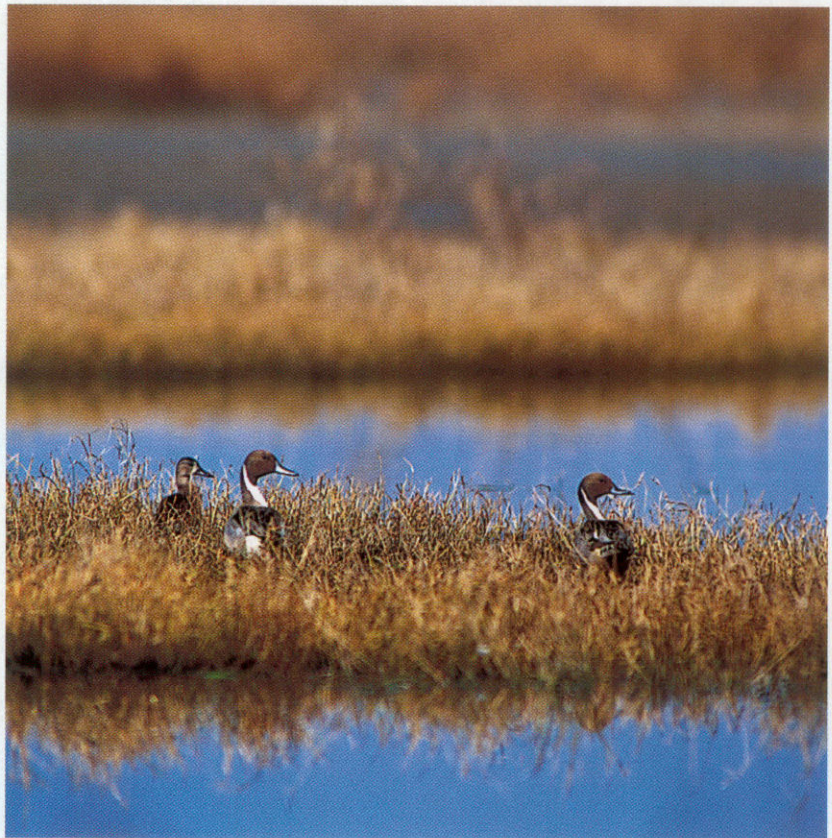


PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN

Unlimited, coordinates the work of the partners. Projects are designed to provide food, cover, water or sanctuary for ducks, with the aim of sending them back north to their nesting grounds in the best possible physical condition for reproduction. "The wintering habitat on the Gulf Coast is just as important as the nesting habitat in the northern United States and

Pintails and other wintering ducks will benefit from improved habitat created by the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project.

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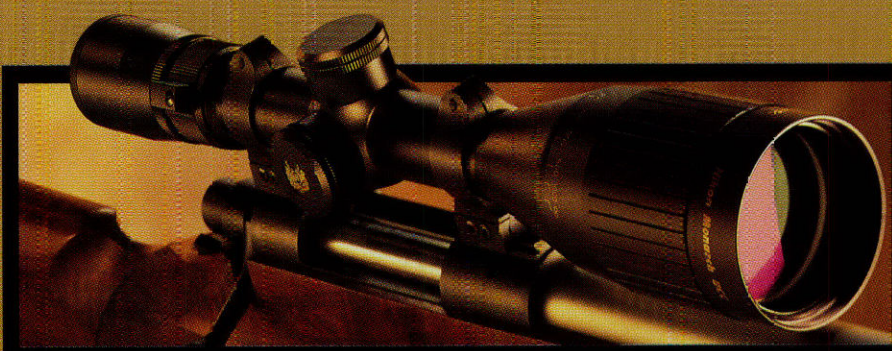
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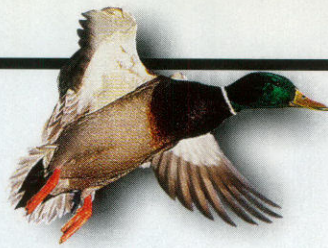
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and management advice and can be reimbursed up to 75 percent of construction costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 during any one calendar year. Projects are required to remain functional for at least 10 years.

Landowners who agree to maintain projects for longer periods of time can receive higher reimbursements; those who guarantee to provide water at an acceptable depth and during specified times throughout the length of the agreement may be reimbursed for 100 percent of construction costs.

Started in 1991, the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project took time to win acceptance. "A lot of landowners were suspect of the program at first," says Ritter. "'Wetland' had become a bad word to many landowners. Especially in rice country, where prairie potholes had been converted to rice farms, they were concerned that the government would come in and classify their seasonal wetland as a jurisdictional wetland and they would no longer be able to farm it. Through this project, landowners are protected from that. For up to 10 years after expiration of the project, they can convert the land back to its prior use."

Having Ducks Unlimited as the contracting partner for projects also smoothed a lot of ruffled feathers. "There is no direct link with government agencies — the actual contract the landowner signs is with a private organization, Ducks Unlimited," Ritter stresses. "After a few projects were started, neighbors saw there were no strings attached, and the program took off." As of May 1999 the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project involved 149 landowners from Orange to Brownsville, with 16,508 acres committed in 292 wetland units.

Many more landowners prefer to take part in the program without signing a contract or accepting money. The project provides technical assistance to owners of more than 280,000 additional acres. "Not all areas are in need of enhancement, but the landowner needs management advice," Ritter explains. "Some don't need financial help. Others don't want to be tied up in an agreement for 10 years."

Benefits to landowners extend beyond the obvious one of having more waterfowl on their lands for viewing or hunting. "Being involved in the program and receiving technical and management assistance is a great way to enhance the value of their property," Ritter points out. "In some cases, water delivery and

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Getting Your Feet Wet in Wetlands

To get involved in the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project, contact Ed Ritter, 2205 Ave. I, #114, Rosenberg, TX 77471, 281-341-7968; or David Curtis, 312 S. Main, Rm. 310, Victoria, TX 77901, 512-576-0230.

Key points to consider are:

- Projects must consist of a minimum of five

surface acres of water or a combination of sites totalling 25 acres.

- During average years, shallow surface water should be present for at least four months between September and April.
- Disturbances around project sites should be kept to a minimum. It is recommended that hunting be restricted to no more than three

mornings a week.

- Agreements are for a minimum of 10 years, but contracts include a clause for landowner buy-out.
- Landowners are responsible for routine operation and maintenance.
- Landowners are required to allow access to their property for monitoring and inspection of the project site.

drainage are improved. Flooding the land for part of the year can reduce invasion of Chinese tallow and other undesirable woody plants. In an agricultural situation, wetlands improve water quality, reduce sediment loss and control red rice" (a variety of rice that never caught on with consumers, who thought rice should be white or brown).

Bill Jenkins of El Campo farms rice on about 1,100 acres, more than 200 of which are dedicated to six wetlands projects. Like many farmers, he was a little leery of the program at its inception. Now he is a strong believer. "There was a tendency when this started to blame ducks and geese for everything," he recalls. "Farmers thought they were responsible for red rice and a lot of other problems. We now believe the flooded roosts have been beneficial in keeping the grass down, and ducks eat the red rice completely. Red rice is a difficult thing to get rid of, but in our case they cleaned it right up. This is one of the few times I've seen federal and state government and private organizations work together and let each group do what they do best so that everybody benefits."

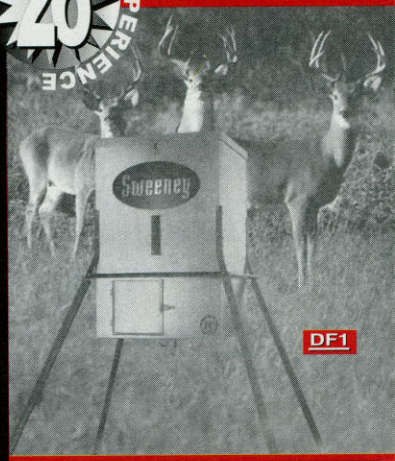
Jenkins and his family enjoy having ducks on their property for other reasons as well. "My sons and their families and I enjoy hunting on the place, but even if you don't care about hunting, it is very enjoyable to see huge, huge flights of ducks and geese."

"This program is designed to replace the small, shallow wetlands that once were common in the coastal prairie. Most of these wetlands were lost when the area was leveled for rice farming," says Bill Johnson, TPW waterfowl and wetlands biologist from Port Arthur.

One thing about the program is certain, however. If we build it, ducks will come. Once again, they will darken the Texas sky — and, in so doing, brighten all our lives. ★

Freelance writer LARRY D. HODGE enjoys duck watching as well as duck hunting.

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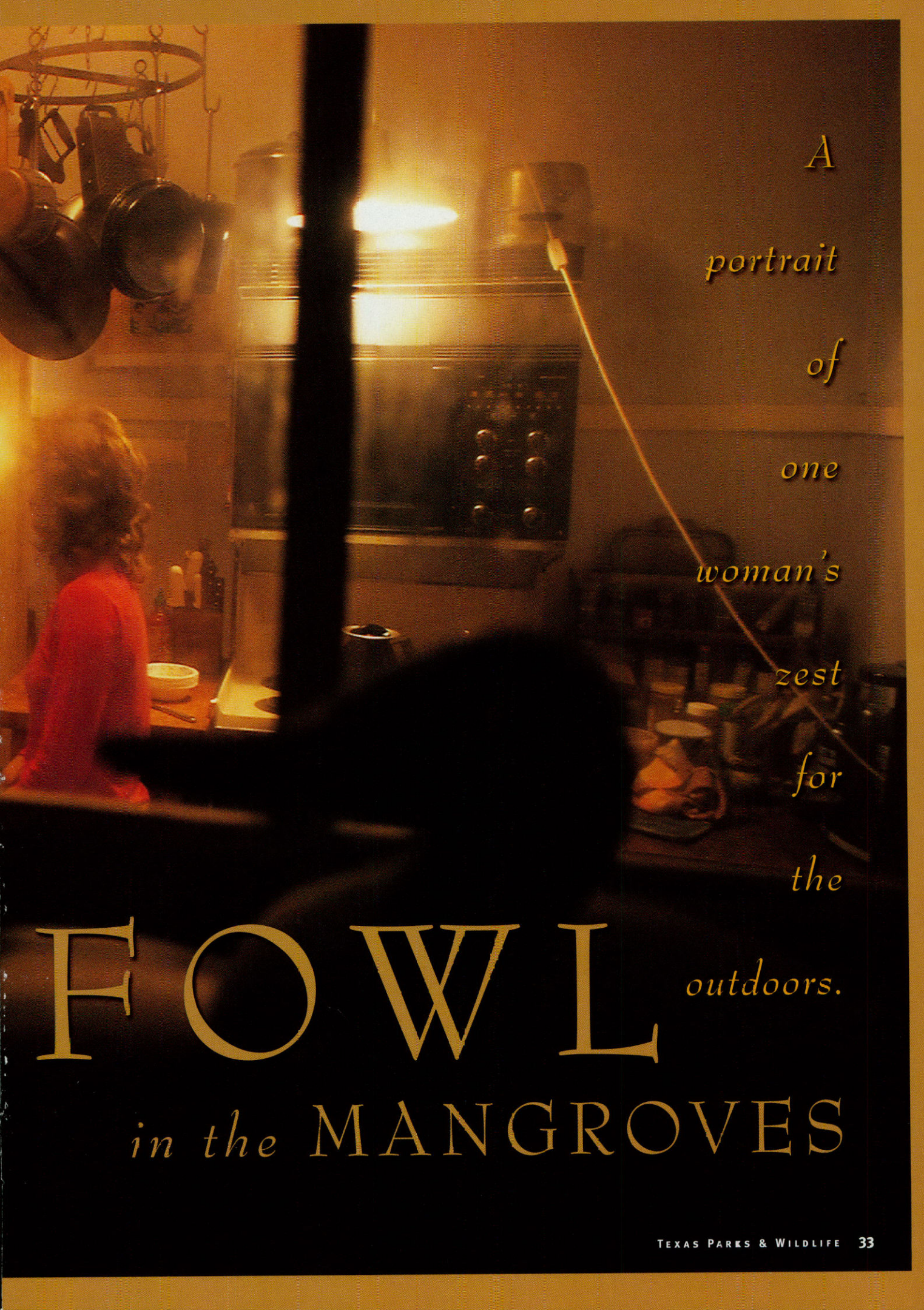
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WATERFOWL HUNTING EDITION 1999

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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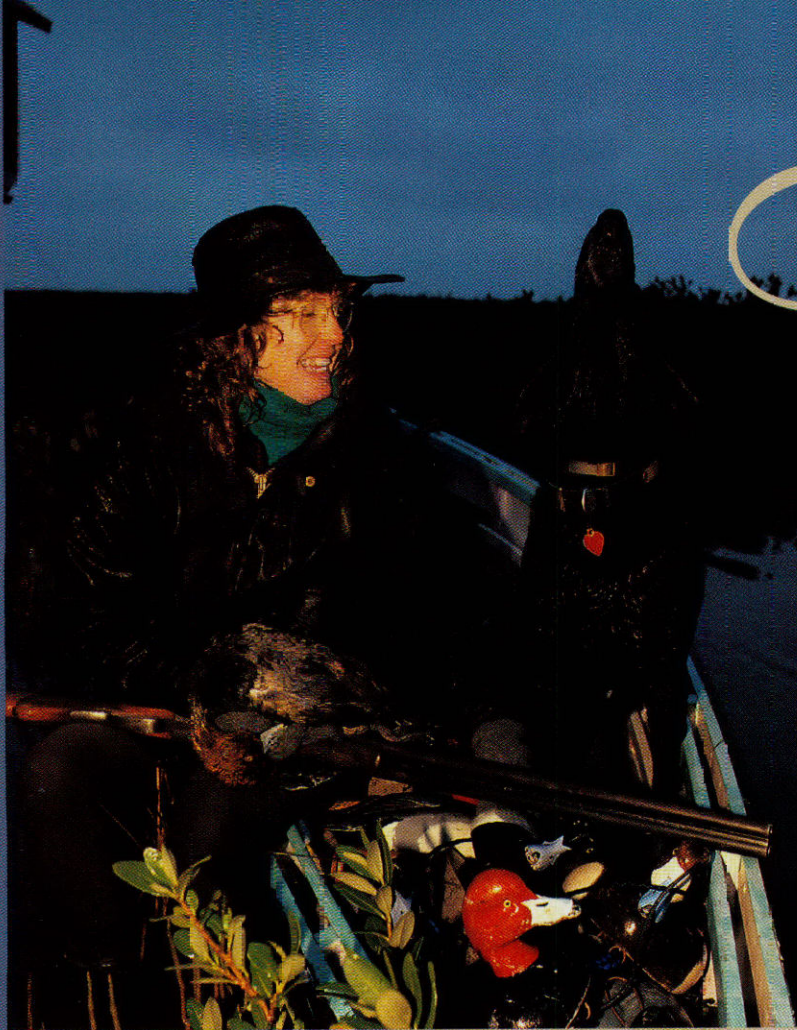


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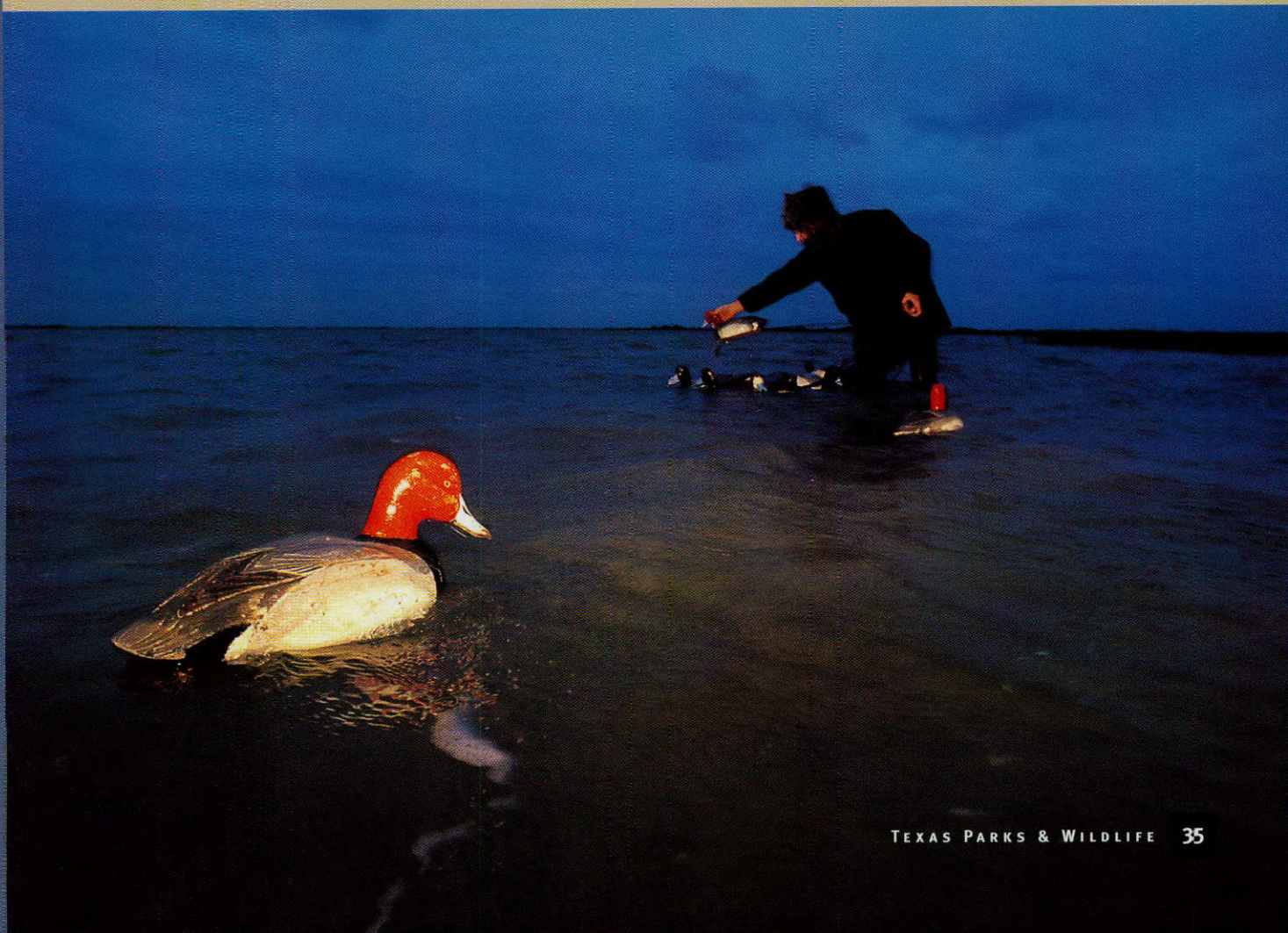


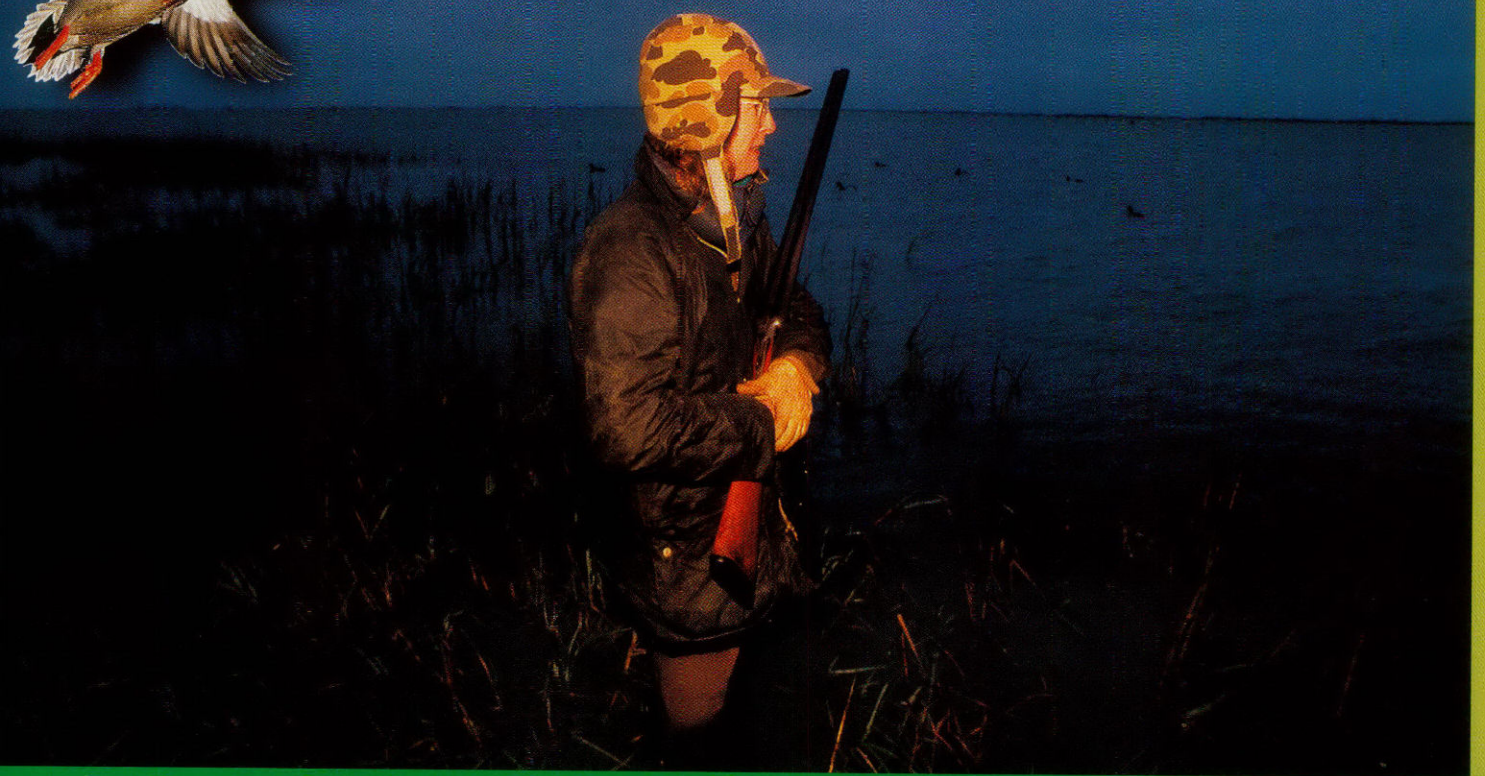
S

ix winters ago, Cameron Pratt, then 38 and an experienced upland hunter, spent the break between Christmas

and New Year's Day creeping up on ducks in the salt marshes around Port Aransas. Her husband, who was away on family business, was a duck hunter, and she had tried once, some 10 years before, but by any fair measure was still a waterfowl novice. "I got pretty good at sneaking up, crawling up behind mangroves, and one day I actu-

Her cypress pirogue loaded with handmade wooden decoys, Cameron Pratt and Blondie head out for a hunt.





Pratt waits in the cold water of a mangrove marsh north of Port Aransas. A variety of ducks fill Aransas Bay's marshes in the winter.

ally shot a duck, a redhead. I was ecstatic," she recalls.

Pratt, a fisheries biologist at UT-Austin's Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, has been hunting ducks every season since. Usually, she makes her outings with her husband or friends, but sometimes she goes alone in the couple's cypress pirogue, made by her husband, Rick, a former boat-builder who is now the keeper of a privately owned lighthouse. These days, she usually takes along hand-made, wooden decoys produced by

cabinetmaker George Garcia and retirees C. Hunter "Red" Meitzen and J.L. Finley, all of Richmond. The trio of hobbyists, Meitzen says, "get together and carve birds and trade them off for good things" — usually, shotguns.

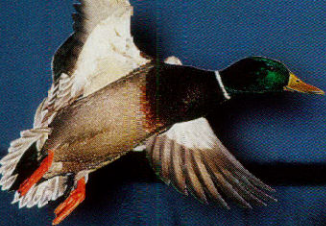
In part because shoal grass beds attract them, a half-dozen species of ducks — redheads, bluebills, pintail, teal, widgeon among them — fill Aransas Bay's marshes from late October to late February. Some, especially redheads and bluebill, overwinter there, while others move farther



south, or seek fresh water. Pratt says that she often lets mergansers and buffleheads pass. She doesn't eat them, and "filling the bag limit isn't important to me," she says. "The reason that I'm out on the water is just to be a part of nature."

Two winters ago photographer David Sams of Dallas accompanied Pratt to a mangrove marsh north of Port Aransas, on what she describes as "the coldest





WATERFOWL HUNTING EDITION 1999



Blondie brings in a duck in what was to be one of the 14-year-old Labrador retriever's last hunts.



day of the season." Pratt took with her not only the decoys from Richmond, but also Blondie, a black Labrador, then 14 years old. The following September, shortly after smelling the season's first rail, an aged and ailing Blondie died. This year Pratt will hunt with Sylkie, a three-year-old Lab.





Confessions

Call me old-fashioned if you must, but hunting ducks

of a

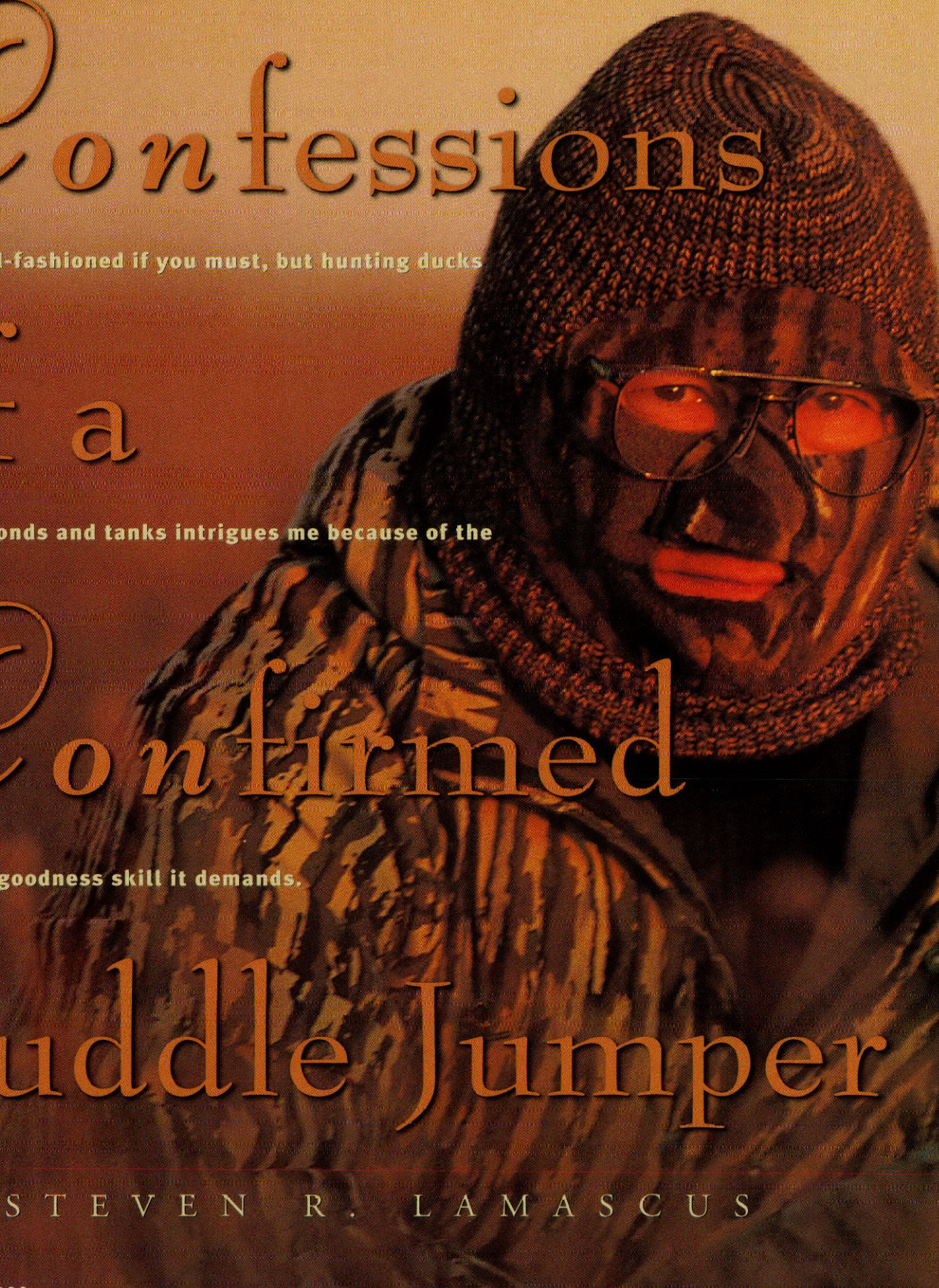
on small ponds and tanks intrigues me because of the

Confirmed

honest-to-goodness skill it demands.

Puddle Jumper

BY STEVEN R. LAMASCUS



I SPOTTED THE DUCKS, A RAFT OF PINTAILS, from several hundred yards away. It was easy to see them. They were sitting in shallow water at the end of a long, thin tongue of sandy beach with nothing between them and me but a few dead broomweeds. They didn't appear nervous; but why should they? There was no way any predator could approach them without being seen. I considered leaving them for another day. It was cold, with a thin fringe of rotten ice reaching a few feet out from the water's edge. I had been out since well before daylight and was tired and hungry. I had taken a nice mallard drake from the last pond and really didn't feel the need to fill the rest of my limit, but I have always been a sucker for a challenge.

Moving slowly through the mesquite brush surrounding the small lake to the wide end of the sandy peninsula was easy, and brought me within 200 yards of the ducks, and also to the last cover that was over a foot tall. Now the real hunt began. I checked the




Hunting mallards and other ducks is a challenge on small stock tanks, where the use of blinds and decoys is impractical.

loads in the battle-scarred 12-gauge Remington Wingmaster, made sure it was on safety, and started crawling.

It really wasn't so bad. The cold weather was conducive to exercise and the soft sand was easy on my knees and elbows. The only real discomforts came from the occasional grass burr that found its way into my sleeves and the chaff from the dead weeds that found its way down my collar. I crawled slowly and quietly along with the shotgun cradled across my forearms, stopping occasionally to raise my eyes above the weeds and make sure the ducks hadn't received any signals of my intent and taken wing.

**Some small waters have
resident mallards and pintails,
while others serve as stopping
places for traveling ducks.**



Finally, I was as close as I could get. At 30 yards the weeds met the high-water mark and stopped. I stopped, also, slowly pulled my knees under me and took the shotgun in both hands. Then as suddenly and quickly as I could, I rose to my feet, hit the safety with my forefinger, snapped the gun to my shoulder and desperately tried to pick a single duck from the now scrambling, squawking, airborne confusion of feathers and wings. One pintail was a little slower on takeoff than the others and was a little below the main flock. I swung past him and slapped the trigger, with the gun moving faster than the duck. Suddenly, almost too quickly, he was floating gently on the calm water at the edge of the ice.

I broke the ice and waded in to retrieve my trophy. The water was



painfully cold but only knee deep, and in a few moments I was holding the duck in my hand, admiring the muted beauty of his feathers, surprisingly warm and soft to the touch after being in the frigid waters. And with that my hunt was over. It was time to return home for something warm to drink and something dry to wear. The rest of the ducks I would leave for another day.

On the Rolling Plains of Northwest Texas, where I grew up, there was very little open water. What there was came in the form of stock tanks ranging in size from a few feet across to exceptionally large specimens of several acres. These small bodies of water preclude, for the most part, the usual duck hunting tactics of blinds and extensive sets of decoys. That was just fine with me. I find that being cold is bearable, even wet and cold isn't too bad, but I do hate to be cold, wet, and bored; and, truth-

fully, unless the shooting is truly fantastic, sitting motionless in a cold, cramped, wet duck blind bores me to tears. I need to be moving. I prefer to put my skill against the natural wariness



and danger-noned senses of the game on a more personal and unfettered basis. Thus, combined with my natural aversion to sitting still, makes hunting small

ponds a natural choice.

Many of my fondest childhood memories are of hunting ducks on these prairie potholes with my brother David. I also remember, as if it were yesterday, the cold winter day when I took three mallards with one shot from my grandfather's Stevens Long Tom 12-gauge. Sometimes I still can smell the clean, pungent aroma of a crisp fall day and hear the omnipresent prairie wind in the tall, frost-cured grass. Is it any wonder I still love to jump-shoot ducks on stock ponds?

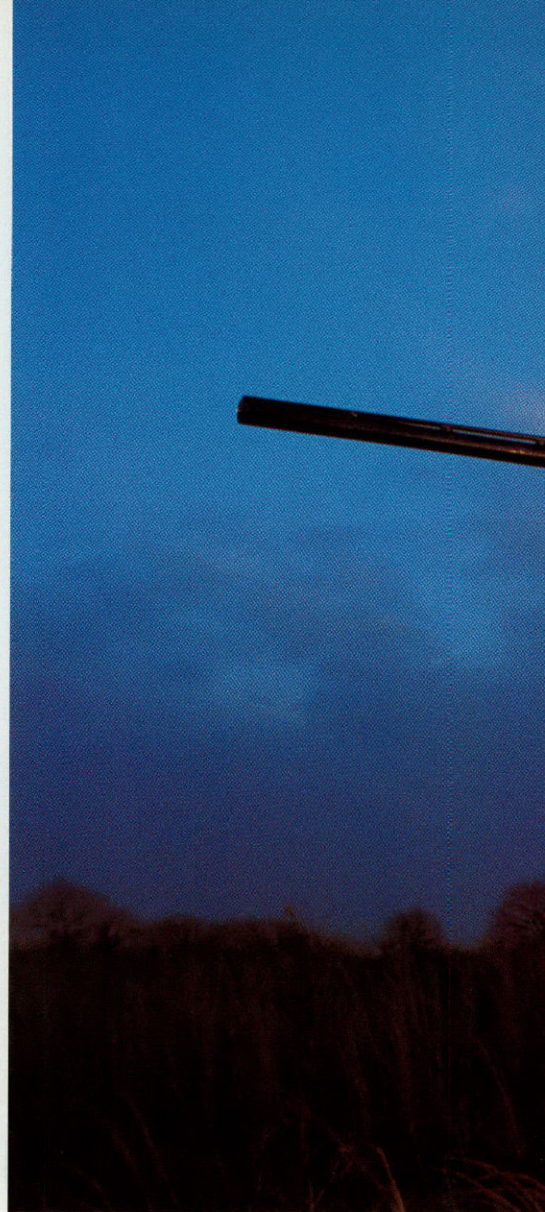
Last fall, south of San Antonio, I found an abandoned gravel pit full of water that was the resting place of a huge flock of blue-winged teal. I was dove hunting at the time and had no steel shot with me, but at the earliest opportunity I returned with the appropriate legal ordinance. A stalk through the surrounding blackbrush thicket

PHOTOS BY TRAVIS J. SAMP

**Duck hunting on small bodies
of water — called jump shooting
or puddle jumping — requires
stealth and patience. Instead
of sitting in a blind, the hunter
must use stalking skills.**

brought me to the edge of the pit, within 25 yards of the teal. As I stood to shoot, my heart pounding out a primordial rhythm in my chest and ears, the teal erupted from the water in a bedlam of whirring wings, leaving tiny rainbows dancing across the faint mist they left behind. There must have been nearly 100 ducks in the flock. I quickly picked two birds on the edge of the flock and dropped them cleanly back into the clear water of the pit. For a few seconds I was 16 again. What a rush!

Hunting ducks by jump-shooting small ponds, or puddle jumping as it is sometimes called, requires stealth and



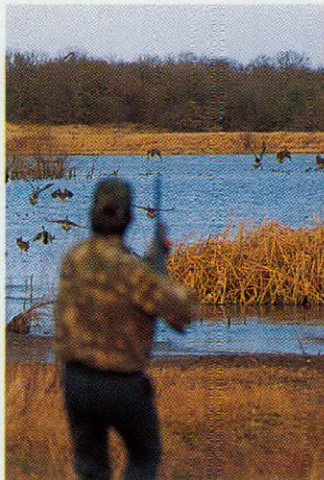
patience. Most, but not all of these small waters will have a few ducks present during the season. They may have a resident flock or may be just rest stops for itinerant travelers. The larger ponds will be more likely to have a resident population. The secret to success here is scouting and access. You must have access to several of the ponds, and you must scout frequently to find which is going to be productive.

Ducks do not like sterile ponds. I have seen stock tanks that were totally devoid of vegetation; even moss was missing. These ponds seldom have ducks in residence. Instead, look for a pond that has a little vegetation, some weeds along the edges, maybe a dead tree or two in the shallows, and a place where the ducks can find shelter from high winds. Clean water is best. Ducks don't like nasty mud holes any better



than you would.

I have gained access to many places over the years by knocking on doors. There are things that you should not do when trying to get permission to hunt a person's land. Do not, for instance, go to the door to introduce yourself while wearing a filthy set of war surplus camouflage fatigues and a ball cap that says "If it flies, it dies!" Instead dress neatly, speak respectfully, share your hunting philosophy, and make sure that the landowner knows, really knows, that he can trust you to treat his land and property with the respect and care it deserves. It will surprise you how many

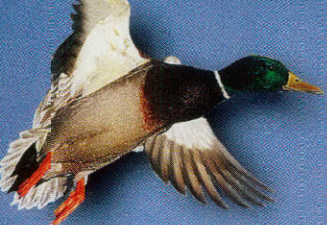


affirmative answers you will get. And after you get that permission, make doubly positive that you do nothing to betray the trust that person placed in you. If you get a chance, you also might help him: fix a fence or do a few chores.

Hunting of ducks on smaller bodies of water intrigues me because of the honest, old-fashioned skill required to stalk them. You are not hidden in any manmade contrivance with traps, or bench seats, or catalytic heaters. Neither are you depending on the duck's own gregarious nature to seduce him into a flock of decoys. Instead, it is you and your innate ability against the duck and his wings. Seems like a pretty even match to me. ★

STEVEN R. LAMASCUS is a border patrolman who lives in Brackettville.

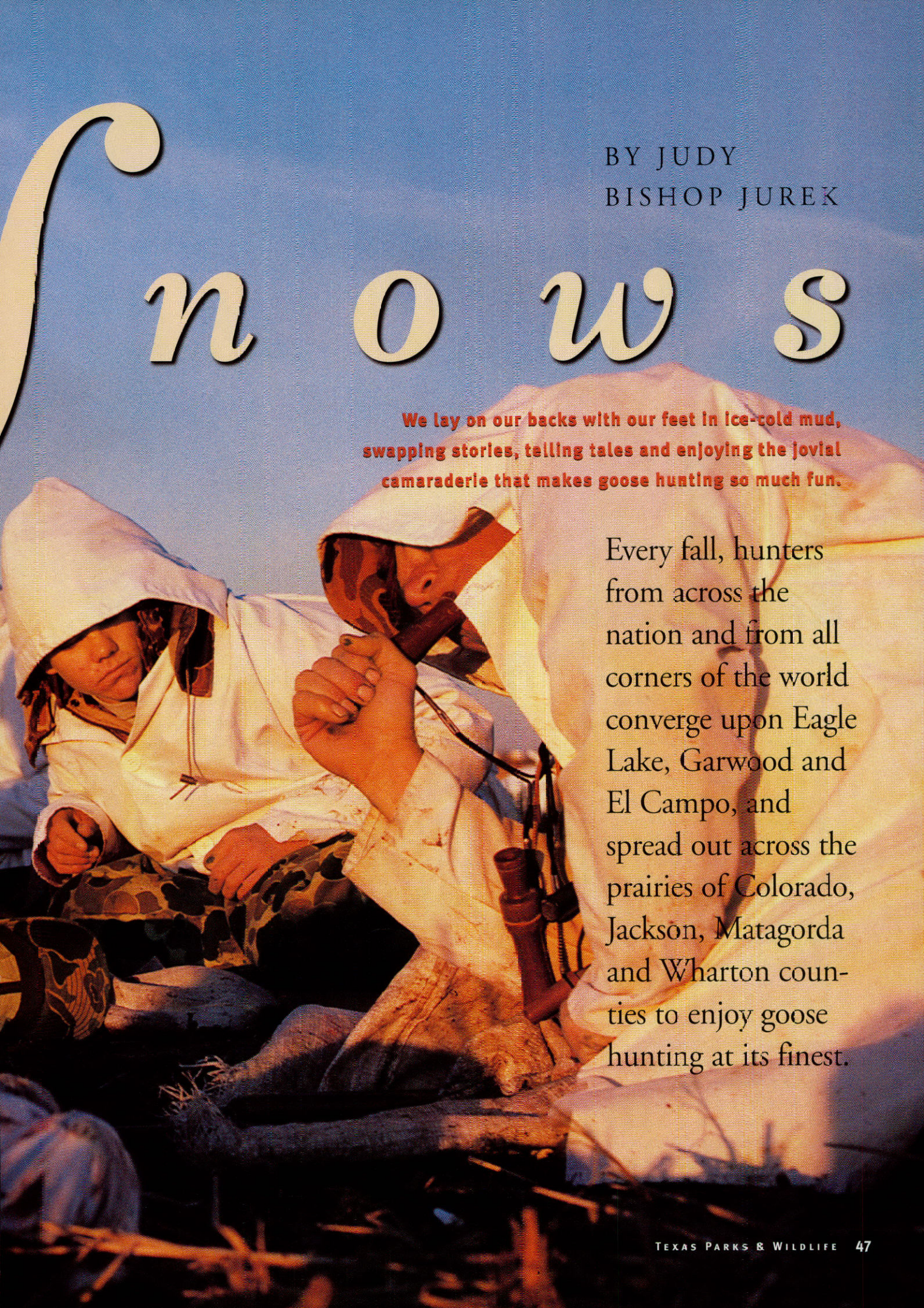
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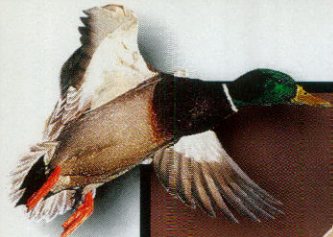


BY JUDY
BISHOP JUREK

sn ows

We lay on our backs with our feet in ice-cold mud, swapping stories, telling tales and enjoying the jovial camaraderie that makes goose hunting so much fun.

Every fall, hunters from across the nation and from all corners of the world converge upon Eagle Lake, Garwood and El Campo, and spread out across the prairies of Colorado, Jackson, Matagorda and Wharton counties to enjoy goose hunting at its finest.



Snow Goose Surfeit

The rice and grain fields of the triangular region between Houston and Lavaca Bay, the Gulf and Interstate 10, draw geese in unusual, now record-breaking numbers. According to David Lobpries, Texas Parks and Wildlife waterfowl biologist for the mid-coast region, counts in January put the total number of snow geese in the mid-coast area at 920,000 birds. Waste grain in fields from southern Canada and the Dakotas to the Gulf Coast provide food for geese traveling from their breeding grounds along the shoreline of the West Hudson Bay and the Northwest Territories of Canada to their southern wintering spots in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Back up north by late spring, in peak condition to breed, snow goose populations have exploded. The rate of growth for breeding mid-continent snow geese has been at least five percent per year for the past 15 years or more. Biologists consider this rate to be very high, especially since some recent estimates place the breeding population at near five million birds. The fall flight of mid-continent snow geese may

The Texan fascination with snow goose hunting practically dates to the time when

restaurant owner Marvin Tyler inaugurated goose hunting near Eagle Lake, which now boasts that it is the "Goose Hunting Capital of the World." Tyler, whose restaurant in Altair was called the Blue Goose, worked as a duck hunting guide on the side. Geese had moved into a duck hunting area, and one day in 1951 his hunting group asked if there were a way to hunt them. Marvin said that he knew how. Whipping the white cloths off the dining tables, Marvin laid them in a rice field. He and the hunters wrapped themselves in white bed sheets. The combination of the two created what became known as "a rag spread." The rest, as they say, is history.

I went on my very first goose hunt in December with Clifton

Tyler of Columbus — Marvin's son — and guide Mike Mangum. Anticipation and excitement had kept me semi-conscious all night, so waking at 3:30 a.m. was no problem. Consuming a hearty breakfast at 4:15 was not a chore, since I can eat any time. Five other hunters and I then followed the guides' vehicles through the dark countryside to our destination. It was 52 degrees with a stiff north wind blowing and heavy clouds.

Upon arrival, I put on insulated coveralls, then stuffed myself into chest waders. Moving, turning and bending required effort. Would I even be able to shoot? Slowly trudging through tall grass and mud, I almost fell face first into the frigid water of a rice canal, having stepped in an unseen hole. Lucky for me, a large, strong hand caught my upper arm, saving me from a drenching.

We hunters helped Mangum put out 700 "rags," white plastic bags on wooden slats that wave from

side to side in the wind. Donning white smocks, we lay down with our heads against a rice levee and our feet in ice-cold mud, to await the geese. It was beginning to get light.

You could hear them: hundreds, thousands, of calling, honking, squawking, gag-gling geese. After her first goose hunt, my sister, Lynn Bahm of Houston, said that she wanted to be reincarnated as a goose because they all talk at once and no one tells them to be quiet. These geese were definitely all “talking” at once.

“There is nothing to compare to having a tornado of geese circling

above you, working to your calling and spread,” says Nina Byrd, a guide with Texas Waterfowl Outfitters of Katy. As geese began to leave their roost to head for feeding grounds, their formation did resemble a wide-topped tornado.

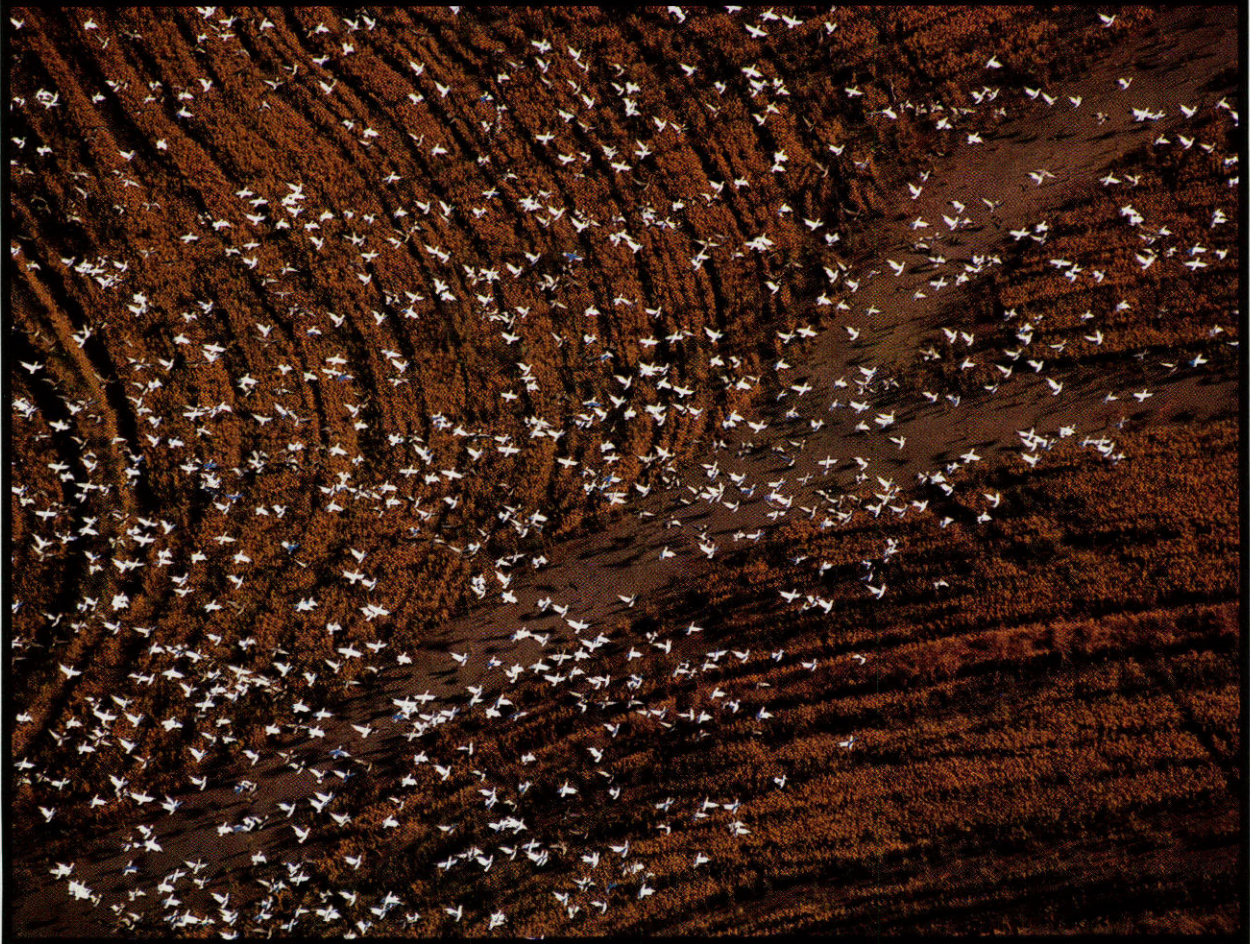
Many times the birds flew just out of shotgun range, heedless to our spread. I found it fascinating to see them moving their heads from side to side, looking down this way and that, checking out what was below them. Calling to each other, saying who knows what, I could see their beaks open and their tongues wave as they nosed in the wind.

THE NUMBER OF SNOW GEESE WINTERING IN THE HIGH PLAINS OF TEXAS, THE STATE'S SECOND MOST POPULAR GOOSE HUNTING REGION, HAS TRIPLED IN RECENT YEARS.

be as high as twice the breeding population.

The number of snow geese wintering in the High Plains of Texas, the state's second most popular goose hunting region, has tripled in recent years. “The overall snow goose population has grown over the past 20 or so years to a point that they are destroying their breeding habitat,” says Vernon Bevell, program director of migratory wildlife for Texas Parks and Wildlife. “Survival of young geese has declined in a number of colonies due to habitat destruction on traditional breeding grounds. The snow geese now are venturing into new areas and establishing new breeding colonies, and that has allowed them to sustain their population growth rate. On old breeding areas the population has significantly declined already and brood survival is very poor. In fact, the growth rate of some goslings is such that average weight of young geese is declining.

A record number of snow geese winter in the rice and grain fields of the middle Texas coast. Although hunter numbers have been consistent, traditional hunting methods no longer keep snow goose populations under control. Liberalized regulations were passed near the end of the 1998-99 season.



© GRADY ALLEN



The goose population has grown to the point that the birds are destroying their breeding habitat. They now are venturing into new areas and establishing new breeding colonies, and that has allowed them to sustain their population growth rate.

It was fun to listen to our guides call to the geese. I could tell they were making different calls and the geese, sometimes depending on which way they were heading, would react. The birds would begin to slow, circle and come down. Lying in the rice field, we waited until our guides commanded "Take 'em!" and then drew on the birds overhead.

In the early morning, the shooting often was fast and furious. With every hunter shooting at the same flock, several times two of us would zero-in on the same geese. When that round of shooting

ended, a good-natured debate would commence over whose shot actually downed the goose. However, one time Tyler

AFTER HER FIRST GOOSE HUNT, MY SISTER, LYNN BAHM OF HOUSTON, SAID THAT SHE WANTED TO BE REINCARNATED AS A GOOSE BECAUSE THEY ALL TALK AT ONCE AND NO ONE TELLS THEM TO BE QUIET.

announced that I would get the first shot on the next flock. A low-flying goose came in, and he called my name. As my shotgun blasted, the goose folded, landing almost on my toes. That one was mine for sure. It was a very satisfying experience that gave me some bragging rights.

Although we lay on our backs, we shot from every direction. Safety was foremost always. There were straight overhead shots, both

"Fifteen or 20 years ago an old snow goose would be about eight years old," Bevell continues. "Today, it is not uncommon to harvest a banded bird that turns out to be more than 15 years old. Some band recoveries indicate that snow geese longevity can exceed 20 years. Such old ages were unheard of until the geese made their shift to using more agricultural crops to supplement their diet during their long migration."

Each year the goose survives, it becomes more educated to the ways of hunting, with the older geese teaching the younger ones survival techniques. Should a young bird venture out of a formation to head for a spread, an older goose may fly out and steer the youth back to the flock. The gosling or juvenile also can be coaxed back by continuous calling from the older geese.

Although hunter numbers for geese have been fairly consistent, traditional hunting

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left and right passing shots, shots while sitting up or lying back, shots fired while slightly rolled on one's side and even a couple of complete rollovers, shooting prone against the levee. When there was a lull in activity, hunters and guides would swap stories and tell tales. It's all a part of goose hunting camaraderie that makes the sport so much fun to share with others.

Billy, a four-year-old yellow Labrador, was in goose heaven

when we connected. He especially seemed to relish jumping over me on his way to collect a goose, spraying me with mud and water. I didn't mind; I was enjoying every minute of the hunt.

Several times high-flying, fast-moving geese dropped down to land. Dipping their wing tips, wobbling quickly from side to side, the geese would come in swiftly. Clifton Tyler called this "wif-fling." The command would be shouted and the shooting would commence.

The late morning began to clear and warm as the wind died down. The mass movements were

IN THE EARLY MORNING, THE SHOOTING OFTEN WAS FAST AND FURIOUS. WITH EVERY HUNTER SHOOTING AT THE SAME FLOCK, SEVERAL TIMES TWO OF US WOULD ZERO-IN ON THE SAME GOOSE.

methods for snows are not as effective on the adult birds. Mortality among first-year geese is about 60 percent. For geese flying south during their second year and subsequent years, the rate drops to only 14 percent. Only eight percent of goose mortality comes from hunter harvest.

Near the end of the 1998-99 goose season, regulations were liberalized to permit the use of electronic callers and unplugged shotguns, and bag and possession limits were shelved. Shooting hours were extended to 30 minutes after sunset. "The new hunting rules were a big boost, but they just came too late in the season this past year and many snow geese already had begun their migration northward," Beville says. "Even so, we had reports of excellent hunts along the coast and in the Panhandle."

Last year's liberalized regulations were adopted as a means to save an Arctic ecosystem from being destroyed by too

A hunter peers out from a rag spread at the Blue Goose Hunting Club in Altair. The idea of using a rag spread to attract geese may date to 1951, when restaurant owner Marvin Tyler spread white tablecloths over a rice field and had hunters wrap themselves in sheets.



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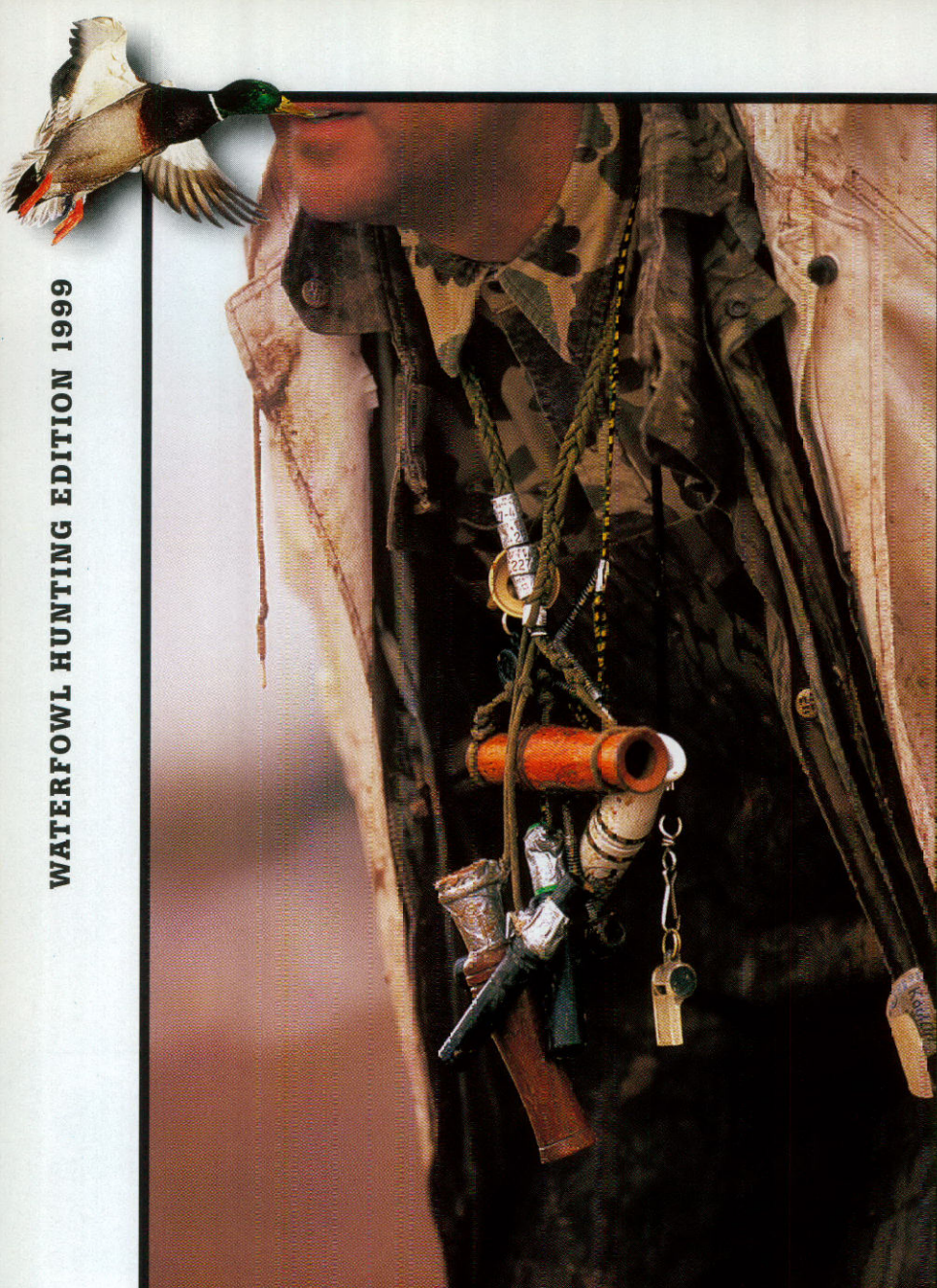
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Tools of the trade: goose hunters use a variety of calls to lure the birds into range. The use of electronic callers was approved late in the 1998-99 season as part of an effort to increase snow goose harvest.

over. Small groups of geese came now and then. We decided to call it a day with 26 geese for six hunters.

Then there were the bald eagles, three to be exact. Eagles prey on wounded, cying or dead birds. They excited the geese by their very presence. A chase ensued straight in our direction. One scared snow goose was flapping for all it was worth, an eagle closing in fast behind it. We all watched, mesmer-

ized. Perhaps the eagle spotted us or simply changed its mind, but whatever the reason, the bird of prey turned just as it seemed about to grab the snow in mid-air. The goose flew on. Seeing this natural exchange, a hunt in the air, was the highlight of our day. ★

JUDY JUREK writes and hunts in the Matagorda/Wharton County area.

many snow geese. Decisions about regulations for the upcoming season will be made after snow goose studies and counts are made on the breeding grounds, Bevill says.

Finding a Goose Hunt

Hunting shows are excellent places to find goose hunting services for the Texas Gulf Coast and other areas of the state. You can meet outfitters and guides in person, view photos and videos of hunts and pick up literature to be studied at your leisure. The outdoor section of newspapers (especially the weekend editions) as well as articles and advertisements in hunting and/or fishing magazines also will help you find a goose hunting service in an area that you wish to visit.

Following are just a few of the many outfitter and guide services providing goose hunting. All have lodging available. Guides and dogs are furnished. Bird processing is also available for a small fee.

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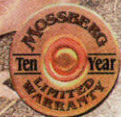
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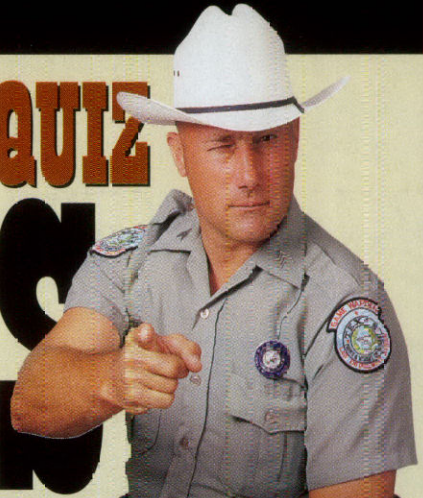


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THE TEXAS GAME SHOW QUIZ

ANSWERS



1 You are required to tag the deer. However, if you examine the deer and discover that it is not fit for human consumption, you may leave it in the field. Bear in mind that no law exists that allows a hunter to euthanize an injured white-tailed deer.

2 No, you are not hunting legally. It is unlawful to hunt with a broadhead hunting point while in possession of a firearm during the archery-only season. However, you can keep a firearm in a separate location — in camp or in your vehicle — for hunting exotics, feral hogs or other species that can be taken legally with a firearm when you are not using your archery equipment.

3 As you might expect, you must use a buck tag. A “buck deer” is defined as any deer (male or female) with a hardened antler protruding through the skin.

4 There are no laws dealing with this issue. Hunters must work it out themselves. Whoever ends up with the deer should immediately tag it.

5 Using your headlights or a spotlight — even during legal hunting hours — is unlawful when hunting whitetails or other game animals or birds. You’ll have to pass on this one or wait until you can see it without artificial illumination. See the Parks and Wildlife Code for a complete definition of “hunting with a light.”

6 You cannot cross the fence legally without consent or other legal authority; it would be trespassing. On

the other hand, failure to make a reasonable effort to retrieve a white-tailed deer or mule deer is a Class A Parks and Wildlife misdemeanor. In addition, a person is subject to revocation or suspension of his or her license. That’s why it’s important to know the names and phone numbers of nearby landowners and discuss this possible scenario before you begin your hunt.

7 You’ve already broken one law — failure to immediately tag a deer. And, depending on what you do next, such as wasting game, you may break a lot more. So you should immediately retrieve the deer to keep it in an edible condition. Transport the deer to your home and immediately tag it. Remember, if a game warden checks you prior to the deer being tagged, you are subject to being issued a citation. Each incident is handled on a case-by-case basis. To prevent yourself from ending up in this situation, check that you have your hunting license before leaving home; check again just prior to hunting; if away from home and hunting more than one day, check your license daily.

8 Leave one of the dogs at home and you’re legal. It is lawful in most Texas counties to use dogs to track a wounded deer, but you can use only up to two dogs. Keep in mind that there are 34 counties in East Texas where you cannot use dogs to track a wounded deer. Those counties are listed in the *Statewide Hunting and Fishing Proclamation*, in the *Outdoor Annual*, and on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Web site.

9 No, a person may not sell, offer for sale, purchase, offer to purchase or possess after purchase an edible part of a white-tailed deer or mule deer. Inedible parts — including antlers, hide, bones, hooves or sinew of deer — may be sold.

10 No, you may only tag a deer that you have hunted and killed yourself. Do your best to contact the neighbor and, if that fails, contact the local game warden.

11 The date the deer was shot.

12 If your camp doesn’t have a cold storage or processing facility, the deer may only be quartered. For the record, “quartering” means processing a deer into not more than two hindquarters, each having the leg bone attached to the hock, and two forequarters, each having the leg portion to the knee attached to the shoulder blade. The term also includes the removal of two back straps and trimmings from the neck and rib cage. If a cold storage or processing facility is located on the property where you are hunting, then the deer, once entered into a cold storage record book, may be processed beyond quarters.

Texas Parks and Wildlife reminds readers that the answers to these questions are based on the scenarios presented. If a scenario changes, the answer may change. The provisions of the law governing wildlife are subject to changes by the Texas Legislature and the Parks and Wildlife Commission, therefore, answers to these questions are subject to change.

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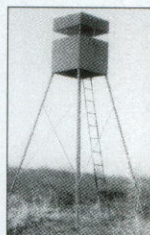


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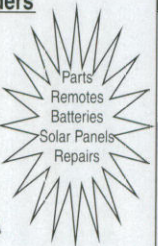
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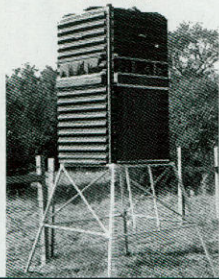
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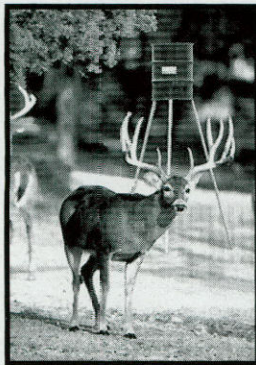
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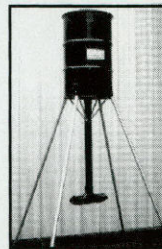
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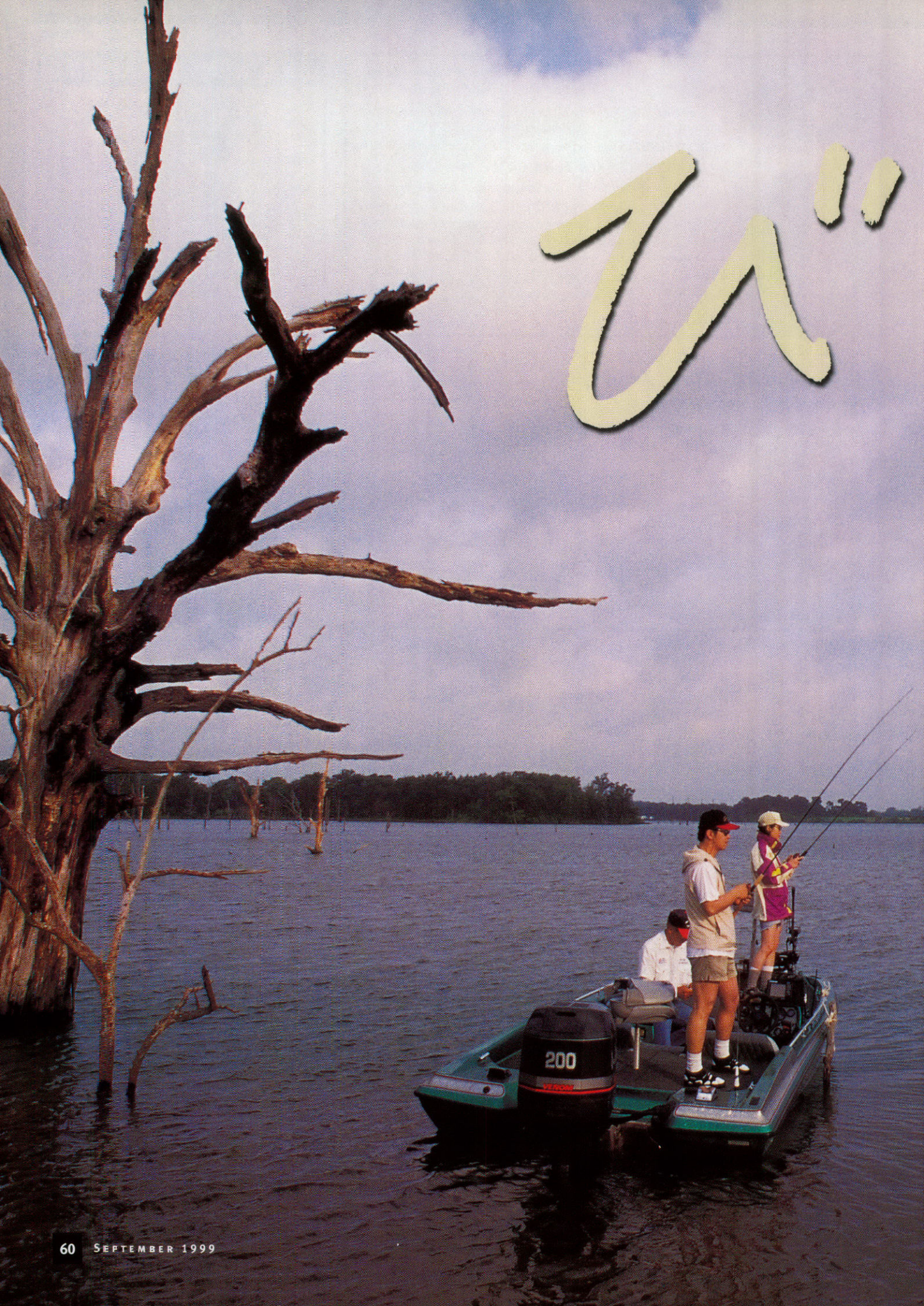
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BY DICK J. REAVIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID J. SAMS

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(Japan's Best Bass Lake)

On the evening of Memorial Day, Don Ratliff, 44, was chauffeuring two guests from the DFW airport to the east, out of Dallas. As he drove by an Irving landmark, he pointed and boomed.

"Look over there," Ratliff said, gesturing at the place. "That's Texas Stadium!"

His guests turned their faces toward the oval structure, and then toward him.

Their expressions were blank.

"You know, the Dallas Cowboys," Ratliff insisted, pointing again.

No sign of recognition registered on their faces.

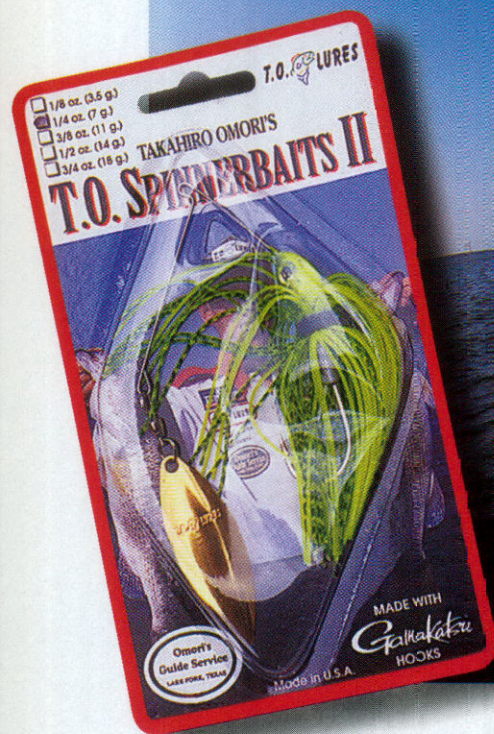
"Football, the Cowboys!" Ratliff exclaimed, waving yet more wildly.

"Ahh, football," muttered one of the guests, a broad-faced young woman. "Football," she mumbled to her mate, a trim young man with a military haircut. Neither smiled with satisfaction. The truth is, the two

passengers didn't know who — or what — the Cowboys were. They didn't much care, either.

They were newlyweds. Masaaki Hishiya, an infantryman, 30, and Asano Satoh, 22, formerly a university student — she now proudly calls herself a housewife — had spoken their vows less than 24 hours earlier in Aomori, a suburb of Tokyo.

Japanese bass anglers may plan for years to fulfill a dream trip to Lake Fork, "Japan's Best Bass Lake." Recently, we joined a couple who had even worked it into their honeymoon plans.



OMORI LURES JAPANESE MEDIA AND ANGLERS TO LAKE

They had flown to Texas to see, not Troy Aikman, or Emmitt Smith or Michael Irvin, but another star, one whose name is but a chain of meaningless vowels in Texas: Takahiro Omori. They also had come to visit a place that's well-known in Japan, if only to anglers: Lake Fork. Every year now, a hundred Japanese fly to DFW with the same idea in mind.

Takahiro Omori, whom the couple was eager to meet, is a thin, quiet-spoken, determined fisherman, of the kind who takes Scouting's motto — "Be Prepared" — deeply to heart. He's not pleased, for example, with the trolling motors that he's used. They're not sturdy, he says — so he carries three of them. "I keep one on the boat, one in the boat, and one in my van," he explains. "I take parts with

me, too. If a trolling motor breaks and I can't fix it, I've still got to keep fishing."

Seven years ago, Omori — known to some of his American friends as simply "T.O." — arrived in Texas to participate in a fishing tournament at Lake Rayburn. He didn't have a boat, he didn't

the American scene for *Bass*, a weighty, 300-page, four-color Japanese fishing magazine, and he's frequently quoted in Japan's sporting press. His status as the only Japanese professional living in America has won him, among other things, nine sponsoring manufacturers. Ranger boats, Yamaha motors and Daiwa gear keep him on the circuit, and his articles and wires give those brands a cachet among Japanese anglers. Lures that Omori designs are produced in Gilmer for Japanese sale, and last year, Omori says, his countrymen bought some 50,000 of them.

When he's not trolling, the young Japanese angler lives in a travel trailer at a lodge called Axton's Bass City, near Emory on Lake Fork. Omori is not the only Nipponese who lives there. Yasutaka Ogasawara, 34, a photographer — who spends much of his time filming Omori's exploits for the Japanese press — also keeps a trailer

大森貴洋

(T a k a h i r o O m o r i)

didn't speak English, he was only 22, and he didn't win any money. But he hung on. Nearly a year later, he "made a check" in an Alabama contest, and today he competes in more than 20 American bass tournaments a year, scoring in the money about a third of the time. Each month he pens an article on

there — and also has his sponsors.

Their connection to Lake Fork is no coincidence. Bass City — a combination motel, convenience store, cafe, tackle shop, trailer park and marina — is owned by a former Marine sergeant, Joe Axton, 65, who was stationed in Japan. One morning 40 years ago, Axton went to inquire about buying a Honda motorcycle, and the transaction led him to Toshiko Matura, a young woman whose father owned a dealership. Toshiko and Axton married, then settled in Dallas, where Joe became a distributor for an office furniture supplier. In 1987, he retired — to fish, he thought. But 18 months later, he and his wife opened a tackle shop in Mesquite.

“One day,” he recalls, “a Japanese man called the store, just from a listing in the Yellow Pages. He had just gotten to the United States, and was trying to

find somebody who could tell him how to get to Lake Fork. He didn't speak much English, so after a few words, I handed the phone to Toshiko.”

The Axtons' tackle shop shortly became Japan's gateway to Lake Fork, and after the couple moved their shop

who are nearly wild about bass fishing, are the most numerous among his foreign clientele. Joe lines them up with guides, and Toshiko, among other things, tries to deobfuscate Texas liquor laws. Many of the guests want to order beer with their meals, and most never

have heard that dry counties exist; some of them hardly believe it, despite her explanations, she says.

The Axtons receive most of their Japanese visitors through a Tokyo travel agency that sells a package that includes everything — plane fare, lodging, guide service, airport

transportation — except meals, which the Axtons provide from their cafe.

In addition, Axton notes, “Tackle is much cheaper here than it is in Japan, so before they go back home, most of them buy a bunch of it.” The Japanese who come to Lake Fork, Joe Axton points out, are not moneyed folk: they

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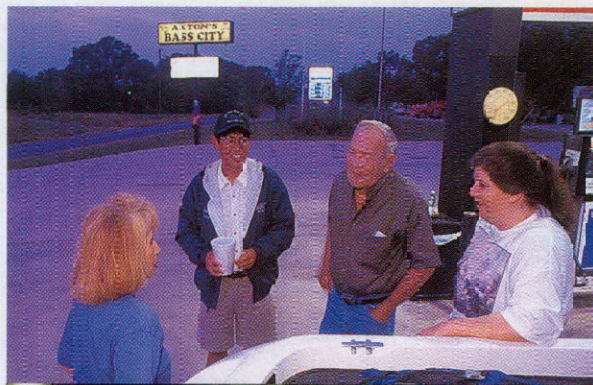
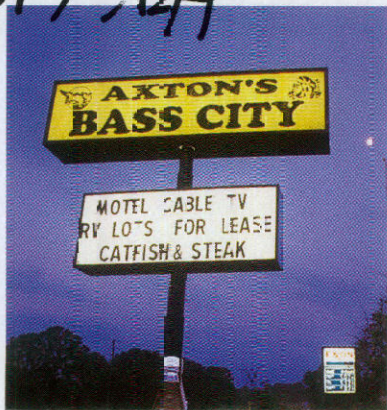
(L a k e F o r k)

there, the balance of Japanese tourism to American bass fishing locales shifted from Florida to Texas. The lodge has received guests from all of the American states except Oregon and Maine, Axton says, and visitors have come from as far away as England, France, South Africa and Australia as well, but the Japanese,

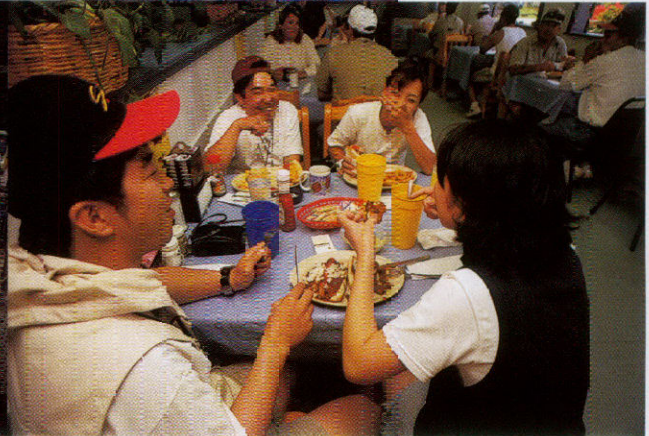
FORK. HE ALSO EXPORTS TACKLE FROM GILMER TO JAPAN.

Tournament angler Takahiro Omori, left, — Japan's only professional angler in the U.S. — makes Lake Fork his off-season home. He chose the lake, he says, because it lives up to its reputation for trophy bass. Soldier Masaaki Hishiya and his bride, Asano Satoh, right, spent Memorial Day at Lake Fork as part of their honeymoon. Guide Lee Rippey accompanied them in their quest for double-digit bass.





Husband-and-wife owners Toshiko "Susie" Matsura, far left, and Joe Axton, second from right, have made Axton's Bass City — a combination tackle shop, service station, café and motel — headquarters for Japanese visitors to Lake Fork.



THE CHIEF PROBLEM IN HOSTING JAPANESE GUESTS, BUT AT LAKE FORK, EVERYONE LEARNS

come from all walks of life. About a fourth of them are honeymooners.

When Don Ratliff, who usually is a cook at Axton's, delivers Masaaki and Asano to Bass City, they meet another honeymooning couple who arrived two days earlier, Shotaro Fukushima, 31, and his wife, Kumi Tadokoro, 29. In Japan, Shotaro plans and supervises work on home interiors. Kumi is a bookkeeper whose personality matches the trade's passion for detail: taped in the back of her Japanese-English pocket dictionary is a small card with a handwritten date, Sept. 6, 1989. That's the day that she bought the book.

The chief problem in hosting Japanese guests, everyone agrees, is communication. Though Toshiko and Omori are bilingual, and Axton is passably so, none of Lake Fork's guides know Japanese. The language barrier is a little lower on the Japanese side, because that country's schools teach English from elementary grades to graduation. Many Japanese can read

English, but because their teachers are usually not native speakers, few can converse with fluency. Shotaro, with a wave of his hand and some words about being an inattentive student, says that he knows no English at all. Masaaki doesn't advertise what he doesn't know, but he seems familiar with bass fishing terms, and nothing else. Asano, his wife, can catch a word or two of spoken English, and writes the language quite well. But only bookkeeper Kumi, who spent a month in a Seattle study program, can be said to speak English. Fortunately, while at Lake Fork, everyone picks up a word or two from one's companions. It does not take long, watching people talk, for example, to discern that the Japanese word for "yes" sounds like "hai."

What draws the Japanese to Lake Fork, Joe Axton says, is trophy bass. Though the Florida strain was introduced into some of Japan's lakes a decade ago, the fish do not grow to impressive sizes there. "Most of the bass

that we catch for Japanese tournaments are from one to three pounds," Omori says. "The biggest bass that I ever caught in Japan weighed just over four pounds."

"The Japanese come," Joe Axton admits with a shrug, "looking for the double-digit bass." But 10-pounders are not easy to come by, even at fabled Lake Fork. The practical resolution to the Japanese anglers' goal, Axton says, is that "if they can catch one that weighs six pounds or more, they're happy, because there are hardly any fish that big in Japan." With adept guides and a little luck, most Japanese visitors can bag six-, seven- or eight-pound catches in a day or two.

A lot of the Japanese go to Hawaii, or Las Vegas, or Disney World, especially the people on honeymoon. But at the beginning or end of their trips, they'll come here for four or five days, and that's usually enough for them to catch a big fish. And a lot of them are so pleased by the experience that they take

pictures of everything, and they cry — the men cry, too — when Don sees them off at the airport.”

Masaaki, who says that he keeps a bass boat in Japan — an expensive proposition, since import taxes nearly double boat prices — brought rods and reels with his baggage. Shotaro, who came without gear, gets by at home with only a trolling motor. Given the relatively small size of most Japanese lakes, trolling motors are usually all that one needs, and boats can be rented, Joe Axton says. Though most of Lake Fork's Japanese brides fish in Japan, few are as seasoned or sanguine as their husbands. But at Lake Fork it rarely shows.

“Usually, with the honeymoon couples, the women catch more fish than the men,” claims Omori. “I think this happens because the men think that they are experts, and they're always changing baits and trying out different techniques. The women do just what the

guides tell them. They stick to their advice, and it works.”

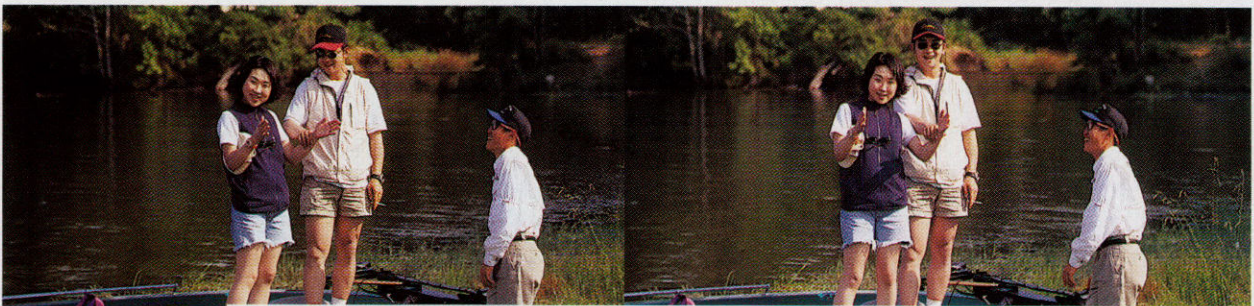
Shortly after daybreak on Tuesday morning, the two couples, wearing cloth caps with Texas logos — their first souvenir purchases — go onto the water with their guides, Lee Rippy and Jim Purdy. It's an overcast day, following a big rain, and the guides are frankly pessimistic. “We've got 12 or 13 inches of new water and the gates of the dam are open,” Rippy bemoans. “Lake Fork,” he says, “is one of the few lakes in Texas that isn't fed by a river or stream, and the fish here aren't used to moving water. When the gates to the dam open, the bass get up behind a tree so that the current won't bother them — and they don't bite until the water stops flowing.”

Fishing with Carolina rigs baited with soft plastic worms, the four Japanese newlyweds cast and reel, cast and reel. The guides move their boats from spot to spot at the bottom of the V that is

Lake Fork, but no spot seems better than the last. The Japanese are meticulous anglers, and they show it in a dozen ways. Both Masaaki and Shotaro are smokers. Both wear water-tight ashtrays, hung around their necks — the better to put butts in. Both men wear oversize angler's watches that give barometric and altitude readings, as well as the time. Shotaro and Kumi carry a packet of moistened towels. Whenever they bring in a fish, they wipe their hands after returning it to water. Nobody loaf on the boats, and there is no teasing or chit-chat, either. Despite their newlywed status, the couples hardly speak, let alone embrace. Brides and grooms alike stare at their lines, taking their eyes off the water only to glance at the tips of their rods.

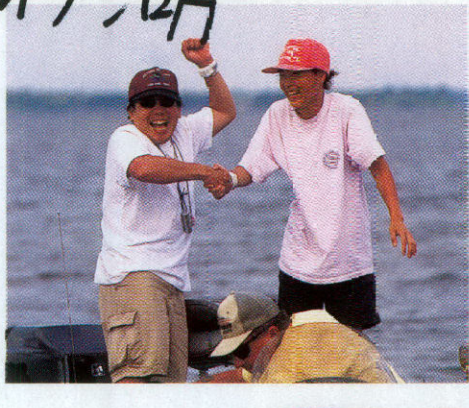
At lunch, the two parties gather at Axton's for chicken-fried steak and chili dogs, then return without a break. The four have spent months dreaming of

EVERYONE AGREES, IS COMMUNICATION. THAT THE JAPANESE WORD FOR “YES” SOUNDS LIKE “HAI.”



Newlyweds Masaaki and Asano tell Japanese bass fishing star Omori about the big one that got away.





"Yes! Yes!" shouts Shotaro Fukushima as he lands the 8.37-pound largemouth that was his reward for a honeymoon trip with his bride, Kumi Tadokoro.



"THE JAPANESE COME," JOE AXTON SAYS, "LOOKING FOR

American trophy bass, and the Lake Fork outing cost them \$2,500 each. This is supposed to be the fishing trip of a lifetime, and it is important that it measure up.

At the end of the day, infant-zyman Masaaki has landed only four unremarkable bass. Asano bests him, with seven catches — and it is only the second day of their marriage. Because it was the first day of their trip, their mood is lighter at sundown than Shotaro's and Kumi's, for whom a bass of barely seven pounds has been the biggest catch of three days. If they don't catch The Big One on Wednesday, their frowns say, they will go home with much-dimmed honeymoon dreams.

Wednesday morning the two couples and their guides leave early, hoping for topwater action — which doesn't materialize. The day was sunnier but, as they knew, that's no benefit: bass go toward the bottom when bait fish die, and bait fish dive when the temperatures climb.

It is a droll morning until, angling near the lily pads that surround the Lake's Bird Island, Kumi hooks a big fish and, with Parry's help, fights and follows it around the boat, until it is in. The bass, which weighed-in at 7.79 pounds, goes into the live well, a partial payment on a lifetime dream. Kumi takes a sheet of

バス

(B a s s)

paper and writes, "8:37 a.m., 26 degrees" — the Celsius air temperature — and "stud fry," the bait. "I keep a diary," she says, "and I like for it to be accurate." The catch puts her ahead of her husband for the total number of fish bagged — 12 versus nine — and even if a seven-pounder isn't as big as her hopes, she is content now.

A few minutes later, Shotaro's rod bends and twitches. The short Japanese waddles around to the back of the boat, pulling, pulling, trying to bring the big fish in. Kumi reaches for her record sheet; it is 9:10 a.m. when the fish breaks water; the bait was a ring fry. It is obvious at a glance that Shotaro's catch is the biggest yet; it will weigh in at 8.37 pounds. As he lifts the trophy into Parry's net, the young decorator begins to yell, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" Not "Hai! Hai! Hai!" but "Yes! Yes!" Shotaro doesn't voice another word, and maybe there's no need. Yes, this catch was the reason that he'd flown to Lake Fork. Yes, this was what he was hoping for. Yes — he was very glad that he'd come.

When Shotaro and Kumi reach Axton's at noon, their morning catches — both above the 22-inch upper slot limit for Lake Fork — are handed over to a taxidermist. Two Texas trophy bass are headed for Japan and two newly-weds are ready to go home. ★

THE DOUBLE-DIGIT BASS."

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WILLIAM B. "Doc" DAVIS

Dr. W.B. Davis takes the head measurements of a spotted skunk at the Wildlife Sciences Laboratory at Texas A&M. The photo was taken in 1960 when Davis was 58.

William B. "Doc" Davis, a pioneering Texas mammalogist and long-time figure at Texas A&M University, was born far outside the state's borders, in the little town of Rexburg, Idaho, in 1902. His interest in nature developed at a young age.

"When I was 14," he recalled in his autobiography, "I became an ardent birdwatcher and spent weekends roaming the countryside taking inventory of bird populations and taking notes used later in my earliest publications. I also profited from a correspondence course in taxidermy."

Davis graduated from Caico

(California) State College and for 12 years worked as a teacher and principal in elementary and high schools in Idaho, Washington and California. In 1937 he earned a Master of Science degree and Ph.D. in zoology from the University of California at Berkeley. As a graduate student, he studied and worked with two notable vertebrate

■ BY EDWIN H. COOPER ■

zoologists, Dr. Joseph Grinnell and Dr. E. Raymond Hall, author of a monumental work on the mammals of Nevada. On summer field trips, Davis reported that he “served as camp cook for one dollar per day, learned where and how to run traplines and how to prepare museum study specimens of whatever we captured.”

In 1937, the Texas Legislature approved the addition of a curriculum in wildlife conservation and management to the offerings of Texas A&M and appropriated funds for one full-time instructor. The Department of Wild Game was established on September 1, 1937, and Dr. W. B. Davis was employed as its professor that year, moving to College Station from Berkeley. He was charged with responsibility for developing the teaching program of the department, one of the first wildlife science departments in the Southwest. He continued to head it until 1965, when he returned to full-time research and graduate teaching in what now is the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. The department, the largest undergraduate department of its kind in the United States, now offers 36 undergraduate and 25 graduate courses.

During his 30-year career at A&M, Doc Davis developed all of the departmental academic courses and taught most of them, while vigorously pursuing his own research in Texas, Mexico, Central and South America. Meanwhile, he contributed to the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection, the largest reference, teaching and research collection of vertebrate animals in the Southwest, with some 180,000 specimens.

To expand his field beyond that of relatively well-known larger animals, W. B. Davis led his students and colleagues on field trips into the inky depths of caves, delving into the little-known haunts of burrowing animals,

across forbidding rocky desert ledges and into the heart of tropical jungles. In a lifetime of scientific work, Davis described and named 12 new species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, and 23 subspecies, including the fruit-eating bat, whip-tailed lizard, sheep toad, four-toed anteater and pocket gopher. In the scientific community, his research earned him the nickname, “Gopher Bill Davis.”

Davis demanded much from his students. Classroom instruction and examinations were supplemented by summer field trips both in the U. S. and Mexico. His purpose was to expose students to the rigors of field conditions. “My main purpose was to observe how individual students perform and react under stress — hard, tedious work under gasoline lanterns,

THE MORE THAN
3,500 GRADUATES FROM THE
DEPARTMENT THAT DAVIS FOUNDED
INCLUDE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF
THE STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE
AGENCIES IN TEXAS, LOUISIANA,
FLORIDA AND ARIZONA

long hours, leaky tents, no entertainment and little food. I got to know them very well,” he noted.

Doc Davis confided to friends that he learned early that the teaching profession was not a “get rich quick” proposition. In order to live comfortably, educate his children and pursue his beloved career, he became a self-taught expert in stock market investments. His success as an investor enabled him to attend scholarly meetings for which inadequate travel funds were available and allowed him the luxury of driving an ever-present white Cadillac, his major lifetime extravagance. At departmental coffee breaks, Doc Davis discouraged the usual small

talk and had faculty, staff and graduate students prepare reports on selected stocks. Each staff member was encouraged to invest monthly in a collective portfolio — known as the Caffeine Investment Group.

The more than 3,500 graduates from the department that Davis founded include executive directors of the state fish and wildlife agencies in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Arizona. Hundreds more have served on the staffs of Texas Parks and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The National Park Service and wildlife agencies around the globe.

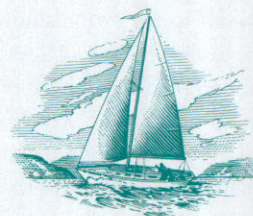
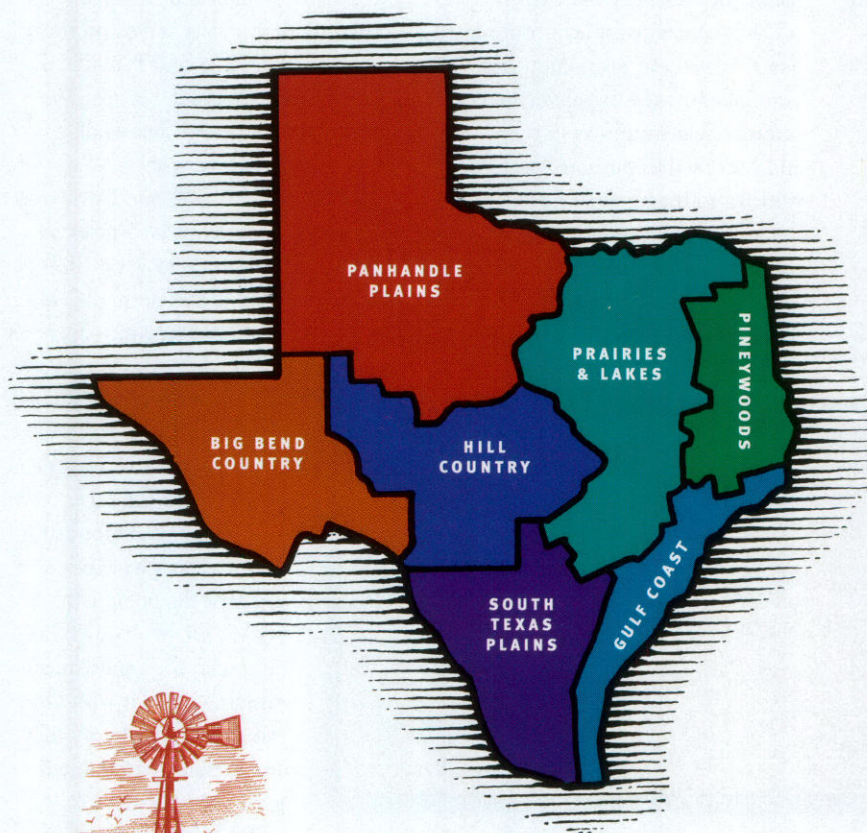
From 1945 to 1962, Dr. Davis contributed some two dozen articles on Texas wildlife species to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine and during his life penned nearly 200 academic papers on mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. In 1994, though nearly blind and 92, Doc Davis concluded a lifetime of writing by revising *The Mammals of Texas* for its fifth edition. Davis had co-authored the book with A&M’s Dr. W. P. Taylor in 1947 and, for a subsequent edition, revised it with Dr. David J. Schmidly, another internationally recognized authority on mammals.

In 1965, Dr. Davis was honored as “Conservation Educator of the Year” by the Sportsmen’s Clubs of Texas, the National Wildlife Federation and the Sears-Roebuck Foundation. The American Society of Mammalogists paid tribute to his achievements by electing him president, 1955-58, and as chairman of its Board of Trustees in 1961. Dr. Schmidly noted in *The Mammals of Texas* that W. B. Davis “rightly deserves acclaim as the ‘father’ of mammalogy in the state.” He died at home in 1995 in Bryan, Texas, at age 93. ★

EDWIN H. COOPER is a freelance writer who lives in Franklin.

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PRAIRIES AND LAKES

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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Sept.: Guided Tours, every weekend, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, La Grange, 409-968-5658.

Sept.: Historical Tour, Saturday and Sunday, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 409-885-3613.

Sept. 1: Mourning dove season opens in the North Zone and Central Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 11: Stagecoach Rides, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

Sept. 11: Great Texas Peanut Festival, Gorman, 254-734-3411.

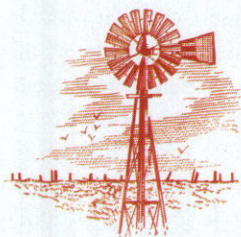
Sept. 12: Dallas Trekkers 11K Walk, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-723-6536.

Sept. 18: Equestrian Trail Ride, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-6505.

Sept. 21-23: Deer Management 101: From the Ground Up, College Station, 903-834-6191.

Sept. 25: Texian Days, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

Sept. 25-26: Youth squirrel season in some East Texas counties, 512-389-4505.



PANHANDLE-PLAINS

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept. 1: Mourning dove season opens in the North Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 4: Hunter Safety/Survival Demonstration, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

Sept. 11: Grassland Tour and Plant Identification, Lake Rita Blanca SP & Trailway, Canyon, 806-488-2227.

Sept. 25: Campfire Program, Abilene SP, Abilene, 915-572-3204.

Sept. 25, 26: Hunter

Safety Course, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct. 1: Javelina season opens in some counties.

Oct. 2: Bats, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

Oct. 2-10: Pronghorn hunting by permit, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2-31: Mule deer and white-tailed deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31: Open House, Lubbock Lake Landmark SHP, Lubbock, 806-765-0737.

Oct. 7-14: 9th Annual

Celebration Week, Lubbock Lake Landmark SHP, Lubbock, 806-765-0737.

Oct. 9: Starwalk, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

Oct. 9: Harvest Saturday, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, 800-734-7641.

Oct. 13-15: North Texas Quail Symposium, Abilene, 915-672-6048.

Oct. 23: Palo Duro Trail Run, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227.

Oct. 30: The Haunted Canyon, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227.

Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 26: Kids' Wilderness Survival, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct.: Historical Tour, every Saturday and Sunday, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 409-885-3613.

Oct. 2: Landscaping with Wildflowers and Other Native Plants, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP, Washington, 409-878-2214.

Oct. 2-31: White-tailed deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2-31: Rio Grande turkey archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 9: Stagecoach Rides, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

Oct. 9: Third Annual North Texas Amateur Astronomers' Star Party, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

Oct. 16: Equestrian Trail Ride, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-6505.

Oct. 23: General Sam Bell Maxey's Funeral Reenactment, Sam Bell Maxey House SHP, Paris, 903-785-5716.

Oct. 23: Cowboy Music, Poetry and Stories, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

Oct. 29-31: Fossilmania XVII, Glen Rose, 210-492-9163.

Oct. 30: The Pumpkin Patch, Sebastopol SHP, Seguin, 830-379-4833.

Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 30-31: Special youth season, white-tailed deer, 512-389-4505.



PINEWOODS

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept 1: Mourning dove sea-

son opens in the Central Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 4: Cowboy Campfire Songs, Poetry and Stories Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Sept. 5, 12, 26: Walk on the Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Sept. 5: Project WILD Activities, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Sept. 11: Alligator Etiquette, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Sept. 18: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Sept. 18: Steam Train Restoration Shop Tours, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 800-442-8951.

Sept. 18: City-wide Quilt Show, Governor James Hogg SHP, Quitman, 903-763-2701.

Sept. 18: Texas Big Game Awards, Pineywoods, Nacogdoches, 800-849-9453.

Sept. 21, 22, 23: Hunter Education Course, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Sept. 25-26: Youth squirrel season in some East Texas counties, 512-389-4505.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct. 2-31: White-tailed deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 3, 10, 24, 31: Walk on the Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Oct. 8-9: 11th Annual Southwestern Canoe Rendezvous, Huntsville State Park, Huntsville, 713-467-8857.

Oct. 9: Big Thicket Tales and Ghost Stories, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Oct. 16: Murder on the Dis-Oriented Express, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 1-800-442-8951.

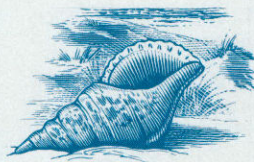
Oct. 16: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Oct. 16: Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

Oct. 30: 7th Annual Haunted Halloween Hike, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 30-31: Special youth season, white-tailed deer, 512-389-4505.



GULF COAST

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Weekend Nature Programs, every weekend, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, 409-553-5101.

Sept.: The Showing of the Quilts, daily, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 409-345-4656.

Sept.: Wednesdays through Sundays: Plantation house, barn and grounds tours, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 409-345-4656.

Sept. 1: Mourning dove season opens in the Central Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 4, 5: 25th Annual Ruff Rider Regatta, 956-761-3005.

Sept. 4: Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, 361-529-6600.

Sept. 4, 5: Dick Dowling Days, Sabine Pass Battleground SHP, Sabine Pass, 409-971-2559.

Sept 5: Labor Day Fireworks Over the Bay, South Padre Island, 956-761-3000.

Sept. 10-30: Alligator hunting by permit, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 11: Fall Family Festival, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, Houston, 713-681-8433.

Sept. 11, 18: Hummingbird Tours, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600.

Sept. 16-19: 11th Annual Hummer/Bird Celebration, Rockport, 800-826-6441.

Sept. 18: Texas Adopt-A-Beach cleanup, 800-85-BEACH.

Sept. 24: Mourning dove season opens in the South Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 25, 26: Battle Stations 1944, Battleship Texas SHP, La Porte, 281-479-2431.

Sept. 25: Fall Hawk Watches, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600.

Sept. 30-Oct. 1: Bulb and Plant Mart, The Garden Club of Houston, Houston, 713-681-8433.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct.: The Showing of the Quilts, a daily event through October, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 409-345-4656.

Oct.: Weekend Programs, every Saturday and Sunday, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, 409-553-5101.

Oct.: Wednesdays through Sundays: Plantation house, barn and grounds tours, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 409-345-4656.

Oct. 2-31: Rio Grande turkey archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30: Calypso Duck Mission River Tours, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600.

Oct. 2: Fall Hawk Watches, Fennessey Ranch, Fennessey Ranch Refugio, 361-529-6600.

Oct. 2-31: White-tailed deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 16, 30: Fennessey Ranch Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600.

Oct. 16: Texas Gulf Coast Roundup, Boyd's One-Stop, Texas City, 281-474-2811 or 800-792-1112, (press 4).

Oct. 16-17: 12th Annual Sand Castle Days, South Padre Island, 956-761-6222.

Oct. 30: Mansion Madness, Fulton Mansion SHP, Fulton, 361-729-0386.

Oct. 30: Tales From the Campfire, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, 409-553-5101.



Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 30: Pheasant: season opens, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 30-31: Special youth season, white-tailed deer, 512-389-4505.



HILL COUNTRY

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Honey Creek Canyon Walk, every Saturday, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, 830-438-2656.

Sept.: Old Tunnel Bat Emergence Tour, every Thursday, Old Tunnel WMA, Fredericksburg, 830-644-2478.

Sept. 1: Mourning dove season opens in the North Zone and Central Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 4: Texas Big Game Awards, Edwards Plateau, Fredericksburg, 800-849-9453.

Sept. 7: Sky Watch Primer, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 11, 19: Wild Basin Walk, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 12: Snakes Alive! Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 12: Crescent Moon Stargazing, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 13, 20: Tiny Footprints Training for preschool students, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 18: 150th Anniversary of Landmark Inn, Landmark Inn SHP, Castroville, 830-931-2133.

Sept. 18: The X Ear Shoot Out, X Bar Ranch, off IH-10 near Sonora, 888-853-2688.

Sept. 18: Wildlife Use Appraisal Workshop, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, 512-292-4200.

Sept. 18: Night of the Wildflowers Benefit, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, 512-292-4200.

Sept. 18: Aquifer Walk, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 20: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, 512-918-1832.

Sept. 22: Butterfly Gardens, brown bag lunch series, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 23: Memory-making Magic parent and preschooler walk, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 25: Fall Field Day, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, 512-292-4200.

Sept. 25: Harvest Moon Science Night, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 26: Knowing Native Plants, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Austin, 512-327-7622.

Sept. 30: Range and Wildlife Management Seminar, Kerr WMA, Hunt, 830-238-4483.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct.: Old Tunnel Bat Emergence Tour, every Thursday and Saturday, Old Tunnel WMA, Fredericksburg, 830-644-2478.

Oct.: Wild Cave Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Oct.: Gorman Falls Hike, every Saturday and Sunday, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Oct. 1: Javelina season opens in some counties.

Oct. 2-31: Rio Grande turkey archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2-3: Texas Wildlife Expo, TPW Headquarters, Austin, 800-792-1112.

Oct. 2-31: White-tailed deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 8: Range and Wildlife Seminar, Kerr WMA, Hunt, 830-238-4483.

Oct. 9, 16: Spotlight Deer Census, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Oct. 16: Texas Hill Country River Region Classic Challenge Bike Tour, Garner SP, Concan, 830-232-6132.

Oct. 18: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, 512-918-1832.

Oct. 22-24: Managing Roadsides Naturally: The Ecological, Economic and Aesthetic Benefits of Wildflowers and Native Plants, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, 512-292-4200.

Oct. 30: Children Bloom Best in Families Festival, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, 512-292-4200.

Oct. 30-31: Special youth season, white-tailed deer, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.



BIG BEND COUNTRY

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Rock Art Tour, every Saturday and Sunday, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

Sept.: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling Tour, Wednesday through Sunday, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Sept. 1: Mourning dove season opens in the North Zone and Central Zone, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 4, 18: Bus Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 512-389-8900.

Sept. 10-12: Desert Survival Workshop, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Sept. 10-12: Trail Ride, Big Bend Ranch State Park, 281-486-8070.

Sept. 18-19, 25-26: On the Trail of Echols - Big Bend Camel Treks, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Sept. 19: Bird Identification Tour, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct.: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling Tour, every Wednesday thru Sunday, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Oct.: Rock Art Tour, every weekend, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

Oct. 1: Javelina season opens in some counties.

Oct. 2-10: Pronghorn hunting by permit, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2-31: Mule deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2, 3, 16, 17: Guided Weekend Hikes, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso, 915-566-6441.

Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30: White Shaman Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Oct. 8-10: Longhorn Cattle Drive, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Oct. 9, 23: Sustainable Living Series, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-424-3327.

Oct. 15, 16: Living History Event, Fort Lancaster SHP, Sheffield, 915-836-4391.

Oct. 16: Desert Gardening, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-424-3327.

Oct. 17: Bird Identification Tour, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

Oct. 21: Adobe Architectural Styles, Fort Leaton SHP, Presidio, 915-229-3613.

Oct. 24: Panther Cave Boat Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Oct. 24: Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Oct. 27: Edible and Useful Plants: A Texas Trinity, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-424-3327.

Oct. 29-31: Trail Ride, Big Bend Ranch State Park, 281-486-8070.

Oct. 30, 31: 5th Annual Interpretive Fair, Hueco Tanks





SHP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

Oct. 30: Casting Tracks of the Big Bend, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-424-3327.

Oct. 30: Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 31: Trick or Treat, Fort Leaton SHP, Presidio, 915-229-3613.



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Kiskadee Bus Tour,

every Tuesday and Friday, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, 956-519-6448.

Sept. 4, 5, 11, 12: White-winged dove season in the Special White-Winged Dove Area, 512-389-4505.

Sept. 11: Texas Big Game Awards, South Texas, Carrizo Springs, 800-849-9453.

Sept. 23: Wildlife Management Symposium, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, 830-676-3413.

Sept. 24: Mourning dove season opens in the South Zone, 512-389-3405.

Sept. 24-25: Lonesome Dove Fest, Karnes County, 830-780-2471 or 830-780-2670.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct.: Kiskadee Bus Tour, every Tuesday and Friday, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, 956-585-1107.

Oct.: El Canelo Ranch Bus Tour, every other Wednesday, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP,

Mission, 956-585-1107.

Oct. 1: Javelina season opens in some counties.

Oct. 2-31: White-tailed deer archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 2-31: Rio Grande turkey archery season, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 16: Bird Identification Tour, Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit, Calliham, 361-786-3868.

Oct. 19-21: Youth Shooting Sports Event, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, 830-676-3413.

Oct. 22-24: Legacy Bass Fishing Tournament, Falcon SP, Falcon Heights, 956-848-5327.

Oct. 22-23: "Goliad — A Celebration of 250 Years of Texas Ranching," 361-645-3540.

Oct 22-24: 4th Annual Texas Butterfly Festival, Mission, 800-580-2700.

Oct. 23: "Celebrating 250 Years of Tejano Heritage" symposium, Goliad, 361-645-3563.

Oct. 30-31: Special youth

season, white-tailed deer, 512-389-4505.

Oct. 30: Quail season opens, 512-389-4505.

SP STATE PARK

SHP STATE HISTORICAL PARK

SNA STATE NATURAL AREA

WMA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

PUBLIC HUNTING DATES

Sept. 4-5, 11-12, 18-19, 25-26: Honey Creek SNA, 210-438-2656.

Sept. 27-Oct. 1: South Llano River SP, 915-446-3994.

Oct. 14-17, 21-24: Fort Boggy SP, 817-562-5533.

Oct. 23-28: Devils River SNA, 210-395-2133.

Oct. 31-Nov. 3: Hill Country SNA, 210-796-4413.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Scientist invents easy solution for hard water problems

ClearWave is a revolutionary new product that solves your home's hard water problems without salt, chemicals or plumbing.

I recently moved into a new home, and I was disappointed to find that the water pressure was not as high as at my previous house. One of my neighbors told me the problem was hard water—that our water supply contains lots of minerals, like calcium and magnesium. This causes scales to build up in pipes, appliances, fixtures and even the water heater. I had heard that hard water solutions were costly and inconvenient, so I asked him what he'd done about the problem. That's when he told me about ClearWave, a remarkable water conditioner that helps reduce scale buildup and helps prevent new scales from forming.

An innovative solution. ClearWave uses the latest microprocessor technology to electronically generate inaudible waveforms. They help keep calcium carbonate particles, or scale, dissolved in the water. The water treated by ClearWave continues to dissolve the scale as it flows through the pipes. Over time, it helps solve hard water problems in the entire system, from the water heater and pipes to appliances and shower heads. This will result in a variety of benefits for you and your home. You'll find yourself using less soap and detergent, and your appliances will operate more efficiently.

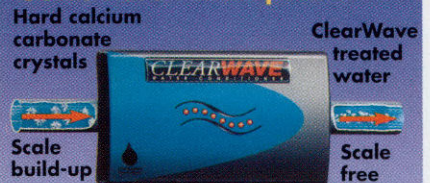
ClearWave works with all types of pipe and installs easily with ordinary household tools.

What will happen. As soon as it's installed, ClearWave immediately starts to loosen existing scale in both the hot and cold water systems. One immediate result you'll notice is that soap will lather more easily. After five days, the scale will begin to break down and come off water heater elements and tanks.

After 10 days, it should be noticeably easier to wipe clean ceramic, plastic, glass and metal surfaces. By now, the quantity of bath soap, dish soap, laundry detergent and laundry softening agents can be reduced. Scale should have loosened on showerheads and frequently used appliances that boil water, like coffeemakers. After 16 days, the scale in the water heater will have reduced to the point that water should heat up more quickly—with less energy needed to achieve the desired temperature.

After one to two months, you should notice a significant reduction in scaly crust and stains in toilets or under faucets, and no new crust should form. Mold that attaches to scale on shower curtains will disappear for good. Depending on the water hardness in the area, the full effects can take up 12 weeks.

Solve hard water problems



- No salt or chemicals required
- No plumbing or maintenance
- Use less soap and detergent
- Appliances operate more efficiently without scale build-up
- Works with all types of pipe
- Easy to install

Try it risk-free. Why put up with the mess and hassle of hard water deposits when there's a simple, affordable solution. ClearWave comes with a three-year manufacturer's limited warranty and Comtrad's exclusive risk-free home trial. If you are not satisfied for any reason, simply return it within 90 days for a full "No Questions Asked" refund.

ClearWave Water Conditioner

..... \$199.95 \$12 S&H

Please mention promotional code 5221-16532.

For fastest service, call toll-free 24 hours a day

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comtradindustries

2820 Waterford Lake Drive, Suite 102 Midlothian, VA 23112

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



The Front Line of News and Views

Television

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

Aug. 29 – Sept. 5:

Descendants of bison rounded up a century ago now roaming the Texas plains; transforming your backyard into wildlife habitat; outdoor enthusiasts determined to have a good time.

Sept. 5 – 12:

Game wardens keeping water recreationists safe; how moviemakers have discovered a truly Texas resource; in search of mountain lions.

Sept. 12 – 19:

Inner city kids experiencing the outdoors; teaching old crafts to a new audience; trout fishing in Texas.

Sept. 19 – 26:

Training for swift water rescues; horned lizards; the Bobwhite Brigade.

Sept. 26 – Oct. 3:

How Corpus Christi is meeting water needs; why so many migratory birds pass through Texas; tracking wildlife.

"TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE"

Watch our Emmy Award-winning companion television series on your local PBS affiliate. All times p.m. unless otherwise noted. In stereo where available.



Bison once again roam the Texas plains. Watch the week of Aug. 29 – Sept. 5.

Amarillo: KACV, Ch. 2 / Sun. 4:00

Austin: KLRU, Ch. 18 / Mon. 12:00 / Sat. 8:00

College Station: KAMU, Ch. 15 / Thurs. 7:00

Corpus Christi: KEDT, Ch. 16 / Thurs. 7:30 / Fri. 11:30

Dallas/Fort Worth: KERA, Ch. 13 / Fri. 11:00
Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman

El Paso: KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sun. 6:00

Harlingen: KMBH, Ch. 60 / Sun. 12:30
Also serving McAllen, Mission

Houston: KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sun. 5:00
Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria

Killeen: KNCT, Ch. 46 / Sun. 4:00
Also serving Temple

Lubbock: KTXT, Ch. 5 / Sat. 6:30

Odessa: KOCV, Ch. 36 / Fri. 1:30 / Sat. 5:00
Also serving Midland

San Antonio: KLRN, Ch. 9 / Thur. 12:00
Also serving Laredo

Waco: KCTF, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3:00

Schedules are subject to change, so check local listings.

Radio

"PASSPORT TO TEXAS"

Your Radio Guide to the Great Texas Outdoors

Join Joel Block weekdays for a 90-second Journey into the Texas Outdoors. Producer Kathleen Jenkins. Check this listing for a station near you or visit our Web site:

www.passporttotexas.com

Abilene: KACU-FM 89.7 / 7:06 a.m. & 1:44, 6:01 p.m.

Amarillo: KACV-FM 89.9 / 9:20 a.m.

Atlanta: KPYN-FM 100.1 / 4:30 p.m.

Austin: KUT-FM 90.5 / 1:58 p.m., (12:58 p.m. Fr.), KVET-AM 1300 / 6:00 a.m. • *Austin American-Statesman's* Inside Line 512-416-5700 category 6287 (NATR)

Beaumont: KLVI-AM 560 / 5:40 a.m.

Brady: KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:20 a.m. & 8:50 p.m., KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:20 a.m. & 8:50 p.m.

Brenham: KWHI-AM 1280 / 6:50 a.m.

Bryan: WTAW-AM 1150 / 5:45 p.m.

Canyon: KWTS-FM 91.1 / 7:10 a.m.

Carthage: KGAS-AM 1590 / 6:46 a.m., KGAS-FM 104.3 / 6:46 a.m.

Center: KDET-AM 930 / 5:15 p.m.

Coleman: KSTA-AM 1000 / 7:45 a.m. & 5:15 p.m.

Columbus: KULM-FM 98.3 / 7:20 a.m.

Comanche: KCOM-AM 1550 / 6:30 a.m.



SIGHTS & SOUNDS

Commerce: KETR-FM 88.9 / 10:15 a.m.

Corpus Christi: KEDT-FM 90.3 / 5:34 p.m., KFTX-FM 97.5 / 5:35 a.m.

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

Dimmitt: KDHN-AM 1470 / 12:31 p.m.

Dumas: KMRE-FM 95.3 / 10:30 a.m., KDDD-AM 800 / 10:30 a.m.

Eagle Pass: KINL-FM 92.7 / 7:15 a.m.

Eastland: KEAS-AM 1590 / 8:30 a.m., KEAS-FM 97.7 / 8:30 a.m.

Edna: KGUL-FM 96.1 / 8:15 a.m.

El Campo: KULP-AM 1390 / 2:00 p.m.

Fairfield: KNES-FM 99.1 / 6:49 a.m.

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

Floydada: KFLP-AM 900 / 10:15 a.m. & 4:15 p.m.

Ft. Stockton: KFST-AM 860 / 12:50 p.m., KFTS-FM 94.3 / 12:50 p.m.

Freeport: KBRZ-AM 1460 / 10:15 a.m. & 7:45 p.m.

Gainesville: KGAF-AM 1580 / 7:00 a.m.

Galveston: KGBC-AM 1540 / 1:45 p.m.

Gatesville: KRYL-FM 98.3 / 7:09 a.m.

Graham: KSWA-AM 1330 / 8:40 a.m., 5:20 p.m.

Hallettsville: KHLT-AM 1520 / 8:15 a.m., KTXM-FM 99.9 / 8:15 a.m.

Harlingen: KMBH-FM 88.9 / 4:58 p.m.

Hereford: KPAN-AM 860 / 2:50 p.m., KPAN-FM 106.3 / 2:50 p.m.

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

Houston: KTRH-AM 740 / 11:40 a.m.

Huntsville: KSHU-FM 90.5 / 11:55 a.m. & 5:55 p.m.

Jacksonville: KEBE-AM 1400 / 7:25 a.m.

Junction: KMBL-AM 1450 / 6:46 a.m. & 3:46 p.m., KOOK-FM 93.5 / 6:46 a.m. & 3:46 p.m.

Kerrville: KRNH-FM 95.1 / 5:31 a.m. & 12:57, 9:57 p.m.

Lampasas: KCYL-AM 1450 / 7:10 a.m., KACQ-FM 101.9 / 7:10 a.m.

Malakoff: KLVQ-AM 1410 / 7:20 a.m.

Marshall: KCUL-AM 1410 / 7:15 a.m., KCUL-FM 92.3 / 7:15 a.m.

McAllen: KHID-FM 88.1 / 4:58 p.m.

Mesquite: KEOM-FM 88.5 / 5:30 a.m., 2:30, 8:30 p.m. M-Th, (5:30 a.m. &

4:45 p.m. Fr)

Midland: KCRS-AM 550 / 6:43 a.m. & 1:43, 6:43 p.m.

Mineola: KMOO-FM 99.9 / 5:10 p.m.

Nacogdoches: KSAU-FM 90.1 / 3:00 p.m.

Ozona: KYXX-FM 94.3 / 12:09 p.m.

Palestine: KLIS-FM 96.7 / 7:15 a.m.

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

Pleasanton: KBUC-FM 103.7, KBUC-FM 98.3 / variable

Rockdale: KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:04, 6:50 a.m.

San Angelo: KUTX-FM 90.1 / 1:58 (12:58 p.m. Fr.)

Seguin: KWED-AM 1580 / 7:20 a.m.

Sonora: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 12:09 p.m.

Sulphur Springs: KSST-AM 1230 / 4:45 p.m.

Texarkana: KCMC-AM 740 / 8:30 a.m. or 12:15 p.m.

Uvalde: KVOU-AM 1400 / 5:33, 8:30 a.m. KVOU-FM 105 / 5:33, 8:30 a.m.

Victoria: KVRT-FM 90.7 / 5:34 p.m.

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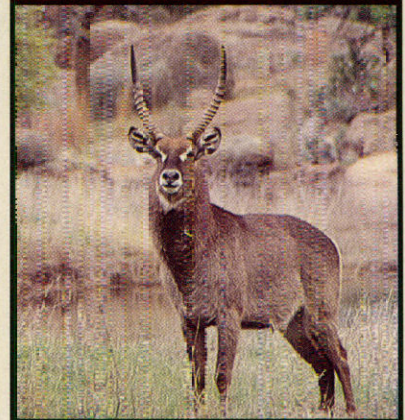
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Wildlife photographer John Ford, 38, caught this picture while hunting with a group of friends last January in flooded rice fields near Eagle Lake. "I had already bagged my limit," he explains. The photo was made using a Canon 600 F-4 with Fuji Velvia 50 film at an exposure of 1/500 second at f/5.6. The Wisconsin photographer works in Northern and Eastern states during warm months, but heads west and south when fall chill comes. His photo credits include publication in *National Geographic*, *Field & Stream*, *Outdoor Life* and *Gray's Sporting Journal*.

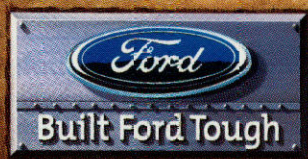


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