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TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

MAY 1998

8 GREAT STATE PARK HIKES

MODERN BUFFALO RIDERS

Relocating the State Bison Herd

CYCLISTS OF THE LOST PINES

Bastrop to Buescher by Bicycle

CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF TEXAS STATE PARKS

MAY 07 1998

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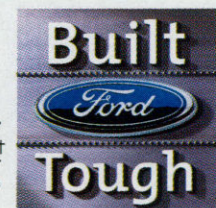
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We stood alongside a fence similar to the ones in the movie "Jurassic Park" near the maintenance barns at Caprock Canyons State Park. As we huddled together in the clear, cold, Panhandle morning air, the last load of buffalo arrived from the JA Ranch, 35 to 40 miles to the north, and thundered into the huge pens made especially to facilitate their survival as a species. In a remarkable trap-and-transport operation executed by a team from the department's Wildlife Division staff, led by biologist Roy Welch, the last of the pure southern bison known to exist now are in residence at Caprock Canyons. They form the basis of a restoration project one day destined to return bison to the Texas landscape.

Some say the wife of legendary Texas cowman Charles Goodnight prevailed upon him to save some animals from the immense slaughter, which eliminated more than six million bison from the South Plains. Others believe that Goodnight, a visionary, foresaw that crossing buffalo with cattle could have economic possibilities. Whatever his reasons, more than 100 years later the heirs of his partners made the descendants of those buffalo available to Texas Parks and Wildlife and entrusted them to future generations of Texans. Ranchers Monte Richie and Nina Bivens, owners of the JA, once run by Goodnight himself, have ensured, through their generosity, that the last remnants of what once was the largest concentration of big game animals in the world will survive.

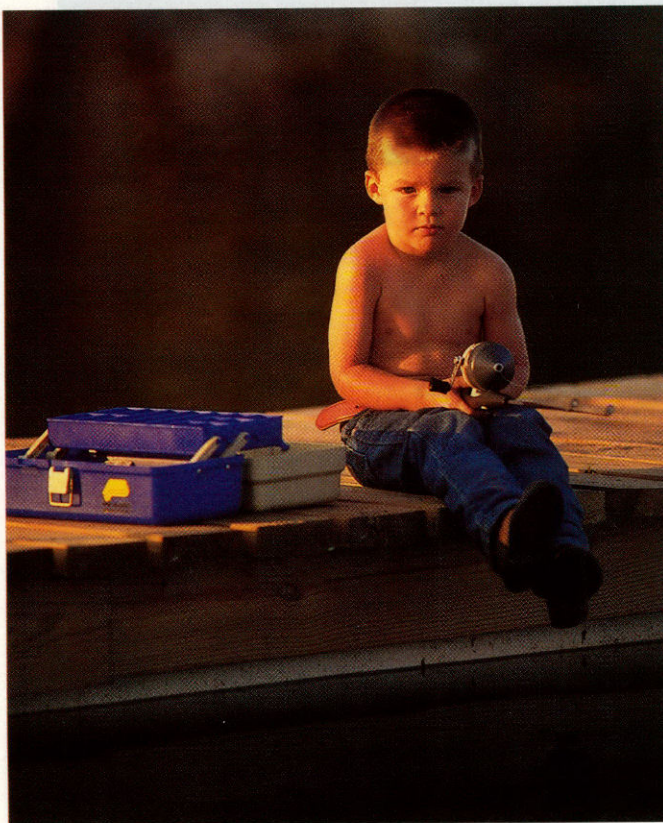
Trapping them was a dangerous and complex task undertaken in near-zero degree High Plains weather. Faced with a limited budget, Welch and his team were aided by a host of individuals, organizations and corporations determined to help give the buffalo a chance. First among these was the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, whose inmates from the Tulia unit built the fences and pens.

Now, Chevrolet Truck Division has donated \$50,000 to the Texas bison restoration project that will be matched by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Thanks to Chevy and the townspeople of Quitaque, Caprock Manager Jeff Hultz Welch and the rest of the Parks and Wildlife Buffalo Restoration team have a running start on a wildlife conservation project of great significance to both the ecology and the psyche of Texas.

In the months and years ahead, Caprock Canyons will become the site of one of the more noble efforts in Texas conservation history, the return of pure southern bison to the Texas High Plains. From this project, our children one day will experience native bison in a sea of grass and the legacy of Charles Goodnight will have been fulfilled: a legacy that helps define our sense of peace, preserves our natural history and expresses our humanity.

ANDREW SANSOM, *Executive Director*

C O M I N G N E X T M O N T H



COME WET A LINE

Texas waters brim with bass, catfish, crappie and other gamefish irresistible to freshwater anglers. Join Larry D. Hodge as he divulges the state parks' best fishing holes.

EMERGENCE OF A LEGACY

Barbara Kana, manager of West Kerr Ranch, reclaims the health of her family's homestead through sound wildlife management. By restoring the vigor of this once-listless land, she has ensured the future for both her children and her land.

SKEETER-EATERS

Members of the nightjar family have been maligned with nicknames such as goatsucker and bullbat, but these voracious eaters can consume more mosquitos in one night that a purple martin will consume in a season.

LET'S GO TO THE FISH CAMP!

Thad Sitton rolls back the clock to pre-World War II farm life, when a meal of fresh had to wait til the crops were established and the family could light out for the river.

Calling all fishermen! The June issue will tell you all about fishing in state parks, whether you use a boat, fish from the bank or just enjoy relaxing on the pier.

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

May 1998

★ GROUNDS FOR CELEBRATION ★

- ★ **16 Walks Across Texas** From the snow-capped peaks of Franklin Mountains State Park to the backwoods trails of Village Creek in deep East Texas, Texas State Parks beckon wilderness hikers. *by Laurence Parent and Patricia Caperton Parent*
- ★ **26 Sand and Solitude** Rich in natural and cultural history, Matagorda Island State Park is a scenic sanctuary far from the big city bustle. *by Casey Kelly Barton*
- ★ **30 Pulse of the Pines** The seat of a bicycle is an ideal vantage point from which to experience the rolling terrain of the Lost Pines between Bastrop and Buescher State Parks. *by Thad Sitton*



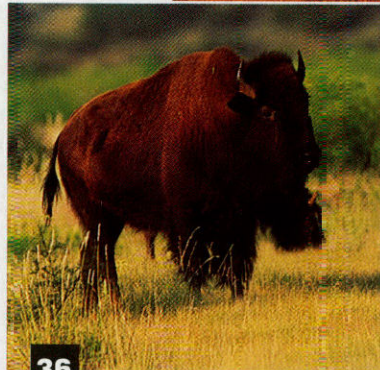
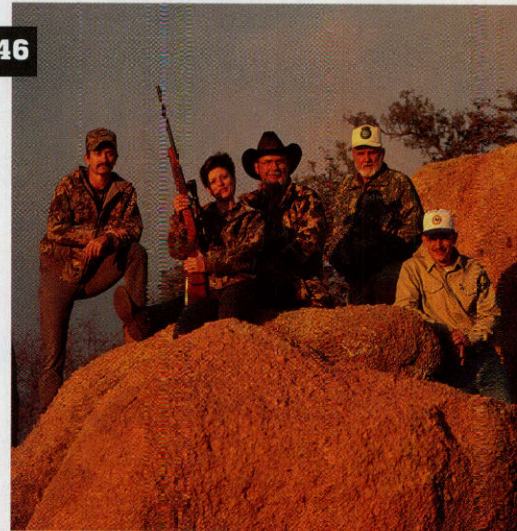
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© LAURENCE PARENT

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- 36 Modern Riders of the Buffalo Range** The dramatic return of a historic bison herd to the Texas caprock country is brought to life. *by Wyman Meinzer*
- 42 The Lore of the Lure** Antique plugs and “bombers” have become collectors’ items among a growing number of anglers who place a premium on nostalgia. *by Leslie Busler*
- 46 A Mason Grace** Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area offers everything from hunts for exotic wildlife and unique resource management opportunities to an outdoors “classroom” for troubled youth. *by Larry D. Hodge*

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© WYMAN MEINZER

© LARRY D. HODGE

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COVER

Front: A biker gazes north along the Rio Grande from the Big Hill Overlook in Big Bend Ranch State Park. For more wilderness biking opportunities in state parks, see the story beginning on page 16. Photo © George Hosek. Canon F-1 camera, Canon 20mm 2.8 lens, 1/30 second at f/16, Fuji Velvia film.

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



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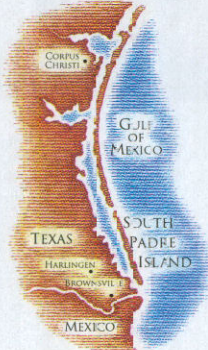
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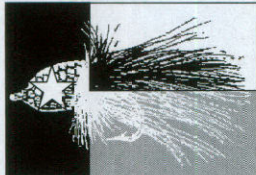
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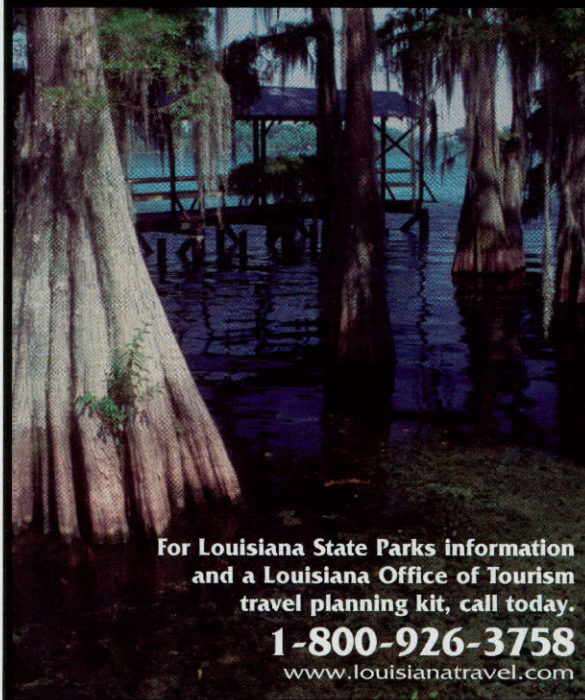
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TAKE A HIKE!

If you're like me, you'll be hankering to bust right out of your chair after reading Laurence and Patricia Caperton Parents' "Walks Across Texas." Few activities outdoors can offer the possibilities that hiking does. You can enjoy it alone or with family or friends; you can make it strenuous or mild; and you can strike out any time of the year.

Spring, in particular, tugs hard to pull us out-of-doors, and I confess I've caved in to that first heady call and jumped out on the trails without preparing my body as well as I have my gear. (Any correlation between the passing of my fortieth summer and these pains and strains is, of course, pure coincidence!)

One of the best guides I've come across recently is *Backpacker's* "From Desk Jockey to Super Hiker in Four Weeks," from their October 1997 issue. We have arranged for a limited number of reprints of that article so, if you would like one, just drop me a line with a self-addressed stamped envelope included. Mail it to: *Super Hiker*, c/o *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, Suite 120, 3000 IH35 South, Austin TX 78704.

Sure wouldn't want you to be caught in a tub of Epsom salts when your friends drop by to hear about your great hiking weekend!

Enjoy the issue!

Susan L. Ebert
Susan L. Ebert
Publisher & Editor

THE COMPLEAT MESQUITE

Congratulations on the 75th anniversary of Texas State Parks, without a doubt one of the best and the largest in the United States.

In Ro Wauer's article "Spring Ho!" (March), he quotes C.C. Wiedenfeld as saying that in West Texas mesquite trees *never* put out leaves until after the last

killing frost. And he quotes Paul Palmer: "Once the mesquite trees begin to leaf out all danger of freezing weather is gone." And, "Old-timers in both North and South Texas vow that the mesquite trees never get fooled."

I have mesquites here on my property and there also are some on my neighbors' lands. About six or seven years ago, we had a fairly lengthy warm spell in March and early April, enough to cause the mesquites to put out new leaves in this area and other spots in the country. In mid-April we got a cold snap that lasted three days and the mesquite leaves all turned black, same as the walnuts and willows. The mesquites did not put out new leaves then until much later than usual; some not at all.

The following year a similar thing occurred and several of the mesquites were flat-out killed. It took two more years for those trees to recover enough to finally send up new shoots from the root stock, and they did not bloom until the following year.

So, my saying is, "Never say never."
Ralph A. Fisher, Jr.
Silver City, New Mexico

HOW LONG CAN HOSTS STAY?

I would like to know more about how the State Park Host Program works. The program originally was set up to let hosts stay at a park a maximum number of months, but there are some hosts who actually live at the park. (State Park Hosts are couples or individuals who volunteer their time working in the state parks in return for a free stay.)

I know of one park where the host has been there more than a year, and he plans on being there for another year. My parents have been hosting since they have been retired, about four years, and they never have had a problem becoming hosts until recently. Are managers allowing hosts to just live at the parks?

I realize the managers appreciate the hard-working hosts, but how do they know other hosts they have turned down, such as my parents, would not have been just as good?

Isn't there a maximum length of time

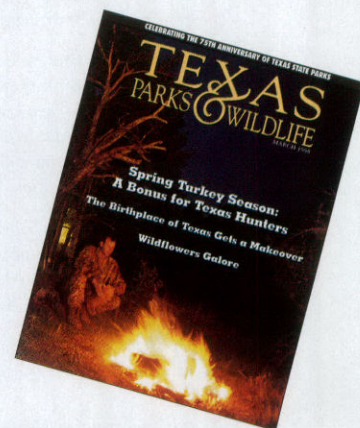
hosts may stay in a park so others can do their part?

Lori M. Patterson
Danbury

Kevin Good, State Parks Division replies: "The writer is correct, normally hosts do not stay at a park for more than three months. A host's stay may be extended on a month-to-month basis when a replacement is not available, however. I hope that her parents expressed their interest in a position to the manager. It may be that the park manager would have welcomed a replacement.

"A host may return to the same park each year, so it is possible that you would see the same hosts each December, for instance, without their being there year around.

"I appreciate the writer's comments and will make sure our managers are aware of this issue. The Park Host program has been a great help to our parks, with hosts contributing nearly 150,000 hours of labor statewide last year. We want to ensure that this success continues for the benefit of the parks and their users, and for the enjoyment of the hosts."



SO THAT'S PROGRESS?

Love the cover of the March issue with the hunter crouching in front of a blazing fire. Reminds me of a story attributed to our Native Americans:

- Indian build small fire.*
- Sit close. Keep warm.*
- White man build big fire.*
- Keep warm chopping wood.*

V. Rock Grundman
Mount Vernon

CONCERNING TURKEY HUNTING

I am concerned about our practice of hunting the eastern wild turkey in the 17 counties that have a spring season for

them. We are buying out-of-state, trapped turkeys from Iowa and other states at an average cost of \$550 per bird!

I am a biologist by formal education as well as a self-taught economist. Armed with this knowledge, I am not straining my brain too much to see the folly in our practice. Let us trap the overpopulation, if there is one, in the isolated pockets that these animals prefer and transfer them to areas where they will prosper.

If there is not an overpopulation, *stop* the hunting of these very valuable "seed" birds! We are not at the point, yet, where the purist turkey hunter is clamoring for a go at this majestic and historic animal. I would love to hunt one too, right here in beautiful deep East Texas, but not until there is a huntable population in all of the bird's former range.

Tom Sterling
Shelby County

■ *Jerry L. Cooke, Program Director of Upland Wildlife Ecology replies: "We appreciate your comments. Since the 1940s, we have tried every kind of approach to bring this bird back to Texas. Interestingly, this Eastern Wild Turkey Restoration Program has proved to be the most successful program in Texas history.*

"We normally do not have trouble getting animals from other states when we have something that they in turn need. With the eastern states, we do not have species that are in short supply in their states. The \$525/bird that we pay these states is to cover the cost of trapping and transporting the birds to Texas; this year marks the last major push to bring in out-of-state birds for release.

"The hunts that we have had in the Pineywoods are the most conservative kind of season you can have, spring season, when the turkeys are the most scattered, and set for post-breeding when hens are on the nest and relatively safe from hunters. The hunts are for gobblers only, with shotguns only and only one per season per hunter is allowed. No baiting is allowed.

"We have yet to kill a banded bird (one that was released by us) and have taken gobblers up to three years of age. That describes a growing population that is becoming well-established and healthy. This allows Texas hunters (who are paying every dime of this program's costs) to enjoy another Texas resource. Poulth/hen ratios suggest reproduction in Texas is comparable to

nesting success elsewhere in their U.S. range."

A WELL-ROOTED TRANSPLANT

Several years ago, my son gave me — a transplant from the hills of Illinois — a subscription to your magazine, which I enjoy. It is a breath of fresh air to a country girl surrounded by concrete. After enjoying the issue, I pass it along to whomever I think may enjoy it, from home-schooled children to older citizens who no longer can hunt or fish. They enjoy it, too!

Now I am giving a year of enjoyment to my son, and I know he will profit from the knowledge he gains from your magazine. I even enjoy your ads!

The story you had last year about game warden encounters (October 1997) was a jewel. Having had a rather amusing encounter with a game warden years ago, I could appreciate the lame excuses they hear in the line of duty. By the way, all in our party were licensed, and the courtesy and humor of the warden was refreshing.

Betty Gene Smith
Houston

■ *Editor's note: We think you're a jewel, too, Betty, for giving your son a gift subscription. Also, thanks for your comment on the advertisers. Their contribution helps defray the expense of producing the magazine, so we can keep your subscription prices reasonable.*

THANKS, MARGARET!

Margaret Virginia Lowery of Victoria wrote in to alert us that Mrs. James Welder's name was misspelled in the caption on page 15 of the March issue. Mrs. Welder was a member of the original State Parks Board in 1924.

Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Our address is 3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, Texas 78704. Our fax number is 512-707-1913.

✂ Letters preceded by this symbol came to us via e-mail. Our e-mail address is: magazine@tpwd.state.tx.us

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

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Trail Mix

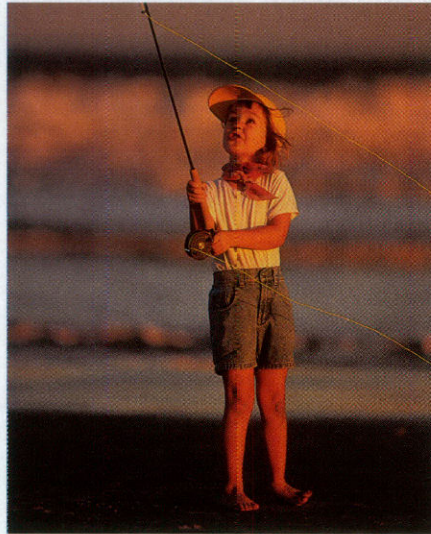
Edited by Mary-Love Bigony

Redfish Schools

TEXAS SCHOOLCHILDREN HAVE the opportunity to play a hands-on role in helping to save the redfish.

With assistance from Coastal Conservation Association Texas (CCA Texas) and the John Wilson Marine Fish Hatchery, the redfish curriculum lets students raise redfish fingerlings and later release them into Texas Gulf Coast waters.

"This is a valuable program for teachers as well as students," said Kevin Daniels, executive director of CCA Texas. "Science really comes alive for these students."



© DAVID J. SAMS

Program participants take part in two field trips, one to a hatchery to collect the materials they will need to complete the project and a second to release the fingerlings they raise into a bay.

The redfish curriculum deals with environmental issues and is easily adapted in a science class. It also can be integrated into math, language arts and social studies classes.

The program is available to all Texas schools. Teachers or administrators who are interested may contact Christine Marroquin at Travis Elementary in Corpus Christi, 512-886-9348.

Catfish Masquerades as Cow

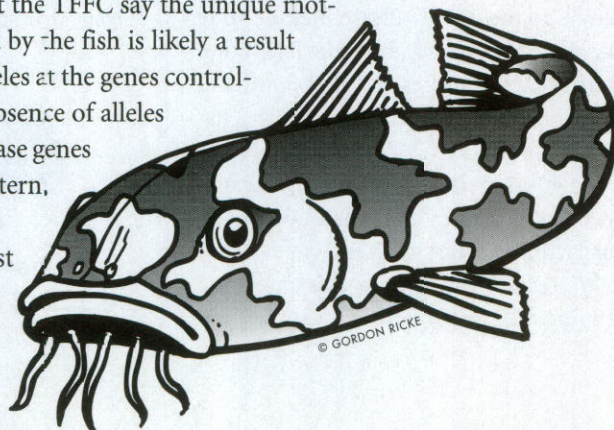
WHEN IT COMES TO WEIRD CRITTERS BEING PULLED FROM LAKES and creeks in the Pineywoods, there's not much Paul Seidensticker hasn't seen. Even when an angler brought in a blue catfish recently from B.A. Steinhagen that looked more like a Holstein cow than a fish, Seidensticker was only mildly impressed.

With a white background and dark saddle marks, the unique fish appears to be masquerading as a dairy cow.

"Yeah, a guy caught one just like it about two years ago out of the Neches River below Steinhagen," said Seidensticker, a Jasper-based TPWD fisheries biologist. The only difference this time is that the fish was still swimming and is on display at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) in Athens.

The fact that evidence exists of at least one other blue catfish from Steinhagan with similar markings doesn't suggest a "new strain" might have evolved as a result of dairy farm runoff. Biologists at the TFFC say the unique mottled coloration displayed by the fish is likely a result of a recessive allele or alleles at the genes controlling color. Presence or absence of alleles at specific genes, in this case genes associated with color pattern, result in particular traits.

Now if they could just find a way to get milk from a Holstein catfish!



© GORDON RICKE



The Warden Chronicles

Playing your favorite bits, plus offers to sell protected species.

GAME WARDEN HENRY LEAL OF Webb County heard a radio ad offering cardinals for sale. He called the number and said he'd meet them, driving a gray pickup. When he arrived in a marked unit, the suspect was shocked. Leal confiscated 21 quail, five cardinals and two white-winged doves. He filed two citations and released the birds into the wild.

Trail Mix

Texas Nets \$21 Million For Wildlife/Sport Fish Restoration

IN WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE ever of the “user pay, user benefit” philosophy, Texas anglers and hunters were responsible for bringing in nearly \$21 million to fund Texas Parks and Wildlife Department projects through this year’s Federal Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration program.

According to a final apportionment report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released recently, the \$20,788,879 represents Texas’s share of nearly \$400 million in excise taxes paid by sportsmen on hunting and fishing equipment. Apportionments are based on number of anglers/hunters and the size of the state. Texas receives the maximum five percent allowable under the program.

State fish and wildlife agencies use the money for fish and wildlife conservation through land acquisition, habitat improvement, research, education and other programs.

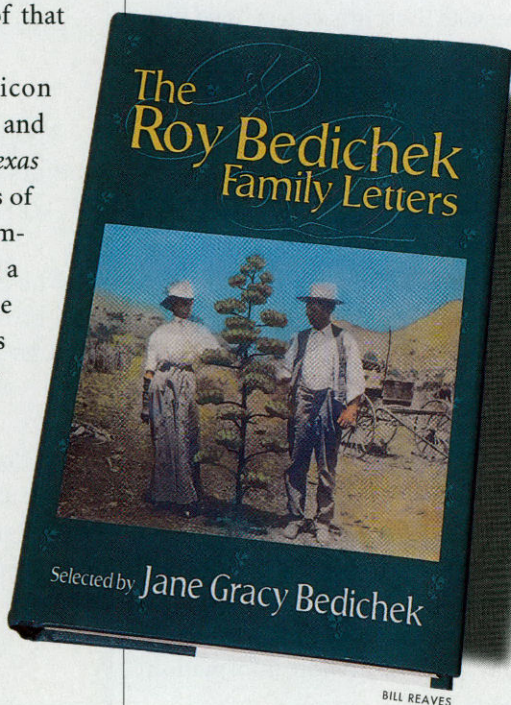
Bedichek Family Letters

YOUR LETTER OF THE 25TH WAS one of the pleasant surprises I found waiting when I returned to my diggings from a camping-trip at about the 6,000-foot level in the Davis Mts.,” Roy Bedichek wrote to his son Bachman on September 5, 1946. “It was glorious. I tramped every day climbing mountains, not with the gusto of twenty-five years ago, but enjoying it nonetheless.... I found two new birds: but of that later.”

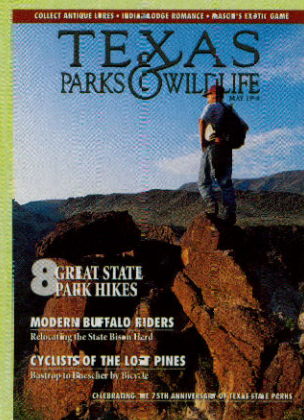
This letter from Texas icon Bedichek, writer, folklorist and author of *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*, along with dozens of other letters from Bedichek family members, are compiled in a new book published by the University of North Texas Press, *The Roy Bedichek Family Letters*. The collection begins with a 1908 letter from Bedichek to future wife Lillian, and continues through four decades. “What a family of writers!” writes Francis Edward Abernathy in the foreword. “Everybody in that

circle was an educated and sophisticated writer, who had much to say about everything going on about him or her.”

Jane Gracy Bedichek, who married Roy and Lillian’s son Bachman in 1946, compiled the letters for this volume. They provide an intimate and thought-provoking look at the family and the world that surrounded them in the first half of the 20th century.



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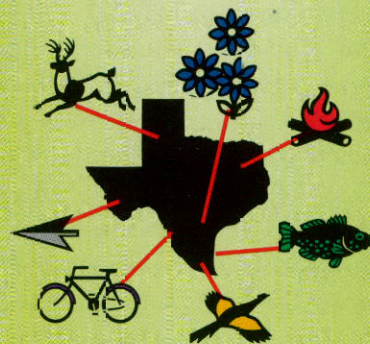
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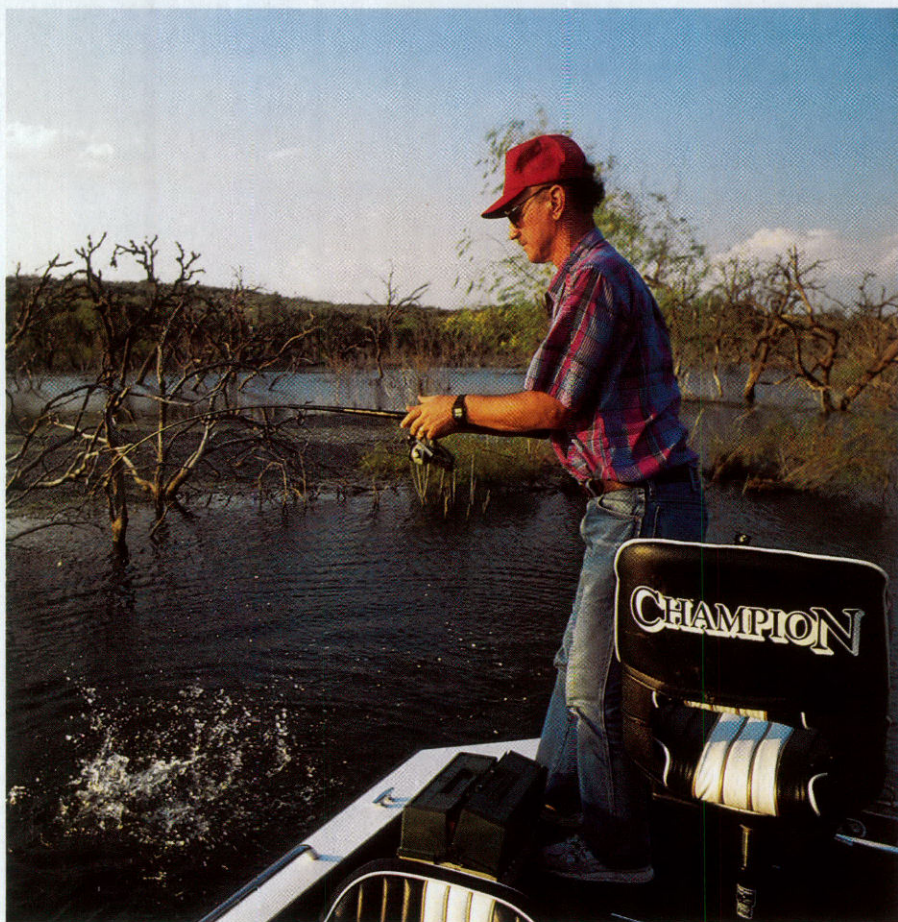
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BILL REAVES

Bass Tournament Honors Former Magazine Staffer

THE LATE JIM COX, FORMER senior editor of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, will be remembered at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens on May 27.

The Jim Cox Memorial Bass Tournament will pair up Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employees with members of the outdoor press for a morning of fishing on Lake Athens. Developing a relationship with department biologists will allow outdoor writers across the state to keep their readers up-to-date on developments in the freshwater fishing industry.

The tournament will follow a ceremony at TFFC during which inductees into the Fishing Hall of Fame will be honored and ShareLunker awards announced. "This is a good opportunity for us to get

together with the sportswriters," said Phil Durocher, director of TPWD's Inland Fisheries Division. "It gives us an opportunity for our people to form a relationship with these writers. We thought it would be appropriate to name it after Jim, because he loved our business."

Cox, who died on July 7, 1997, earned the nickname of "fishing editor" among his colleagues. "Jim had a lot of friends in fishing and in the outdoor media," said Durocher. "I know that naming the tournament after him will get everyone out there; they'll come to honor Jim."

National Fishing Week celebrations will take place at TFFC the week following the bass tournament, June 1-6. Activities include "Take a Kid Fishing Day" on Saturday, June 6. For more information call 903-676-2277.

Did You Know?



The longest north-south distance in Texas is 801 miles, from the northwest corner of the Panhandle to the southern tip of the state; the greatest east-west distance is 773 miles, from the Rio Grande just above El Paso to the easternmost bend of the Sabine River.

A bald eagle's massive nest can weigh up to a ton.

Sideoats grama, the state grass, occurs on more different soils in Texas than any other native grass.

Mayflies live only one day as adults. They molt, mate and lay eggs, but they do not feed.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 banned the use of shotguns larger than 10 gauge for waterfowl hunting.

If deer are snacking on your ornamental plants, remember that less fertilizer will slow the plants' growth, but will make them less nutritious and less appealing to deer.

Trail Mix

Ticked Off

AS WARM SPRING WEATHER begins luring Texans outdoors, don't let a tick make you sick.

Lyme disease, a tick-borne illness first found to be present in Texas in 1984, is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected tick or flea. Early symptoms include flu-like symptoms and skin lesions; left untreated, Lyme disease can cause damage to the nervous system, heart and joints.

The Texas Department of Health recommends the following protective measures: Wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be seen easily; tuck pants legs into boots or socks; use an approved insect repellent; inspect yourself frequently, since prompt removal of attached ticks may prevent disease transmission.

If you find a tick attached to your body, use tweezers to grasp the tick at the surface of the skin. If tweezers aren't available, use a tissue to protect your fingers. With a steady motion, pull the tick straight out.

Two new books deal with outdoor-related diseases. *Rabies, Lyme Disease, Hanta Virus*, published by Fisher Books, is a comprehensive guide to outdoor diseases and the animals that can carry them. It sells for \$14.95. *Mad Dogs, The New Rabies Plague*, offers an inside view of how this deadly but little-known disease can spread and how politics and science interact when public health crises arise. It is published by Texas A&M University Press and sells for \$22.95 clothbound, \$14.95 paperback.

Tie One On in Kerrville

FLYFISHING ENTHUSIASTS WILL GATHER ON THE BANKS OF THE Guadalupe River in Kerrville May 15-17 for the Texas Flyfishing and Outdoor Show. More than 30 exhibitors and 40 different classes, lectures and demonstrations await this year's participants.

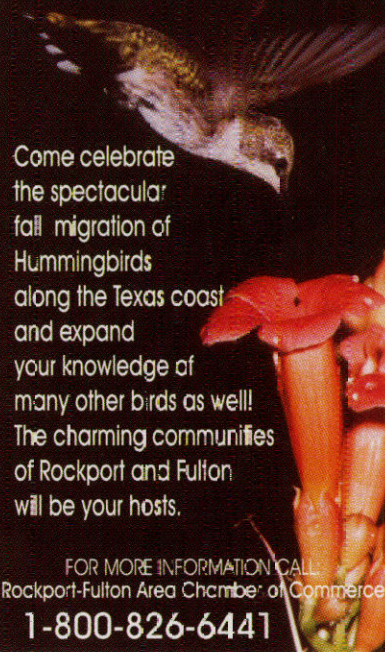
Bob Miller of Pico Outdoor Company (see page 44) led the way in establishing the event, the first of which was held in 1996. This year's show will offer increased emphasis on intermediate and advanced fly tying as well as classes in outdoor photography, Dutch oven cooking, rod building, stream entomology and birding.

For more information call 830-895-4348 or email pico@ktc.com.



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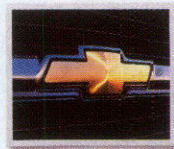
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LIKE A ROCK

STATE PARK Scrapbook

MANAGING INDIAN LODGE

BY ARLINDA ABBOTT

It was a Saturday night in the spring of 1939, in Fort Davis, Texas, when 21-year-old Lucille Patton and her 12 girlfriends — the Thirteen Club — went to Indian Lodge for their monthly get-together of camaraderie and fun. They had heard the newly built lodge in Davis Mountains State Park had a large lobby with pine floors where they could waltz and two-step to nickelodeon music and play shuffleboard. Lucille had an ulterior motive. She had seen the new manager, handsome young Otis McPhaul, when he came into town and hoped to get to know him better. All the girls asked Otis to dance that night, but he was enamored with Lucille. After a whirlwind courtship, they

married four months later on July 4, 1939.

Otis McPhaul already had the makings of a first-rate businessman when he was appointed manager of Indian Lodge. He joined Civilian Conservation Company 1805 in 1933, and “blazed the trails,” marking and cutting timbers at Bastrop State Park. Then he went to Big Bend National Park to do carpentry work. He achieved the CCC army title of supply sergeant and earned \$45 a month, \$15 more than he was making at Bastrop. Always a risk-taker and somewhat of an entrepreneur, Otis loaned money to scattergood CCC boys for “double return.”

Otis arrived at Davis Mountains State Park in 1939. “That first winter was

rough,” he recalls. “There was no money for advertising and many rooms were not let.” So from September until May, the lodge and dining room were closed and the electricity cutoff. Lucille cooked on an oil stove, used kerosene lamps and heated water in the fireplace in their two-room quarters. The McPhauls’ first son, Jack, was born in Room 12 of the lodge on April 13, 1940.

Hardworking and resourceful, Otis and Lucille quickly turned Indian Lodge from a fledgling 16-room hotel into “a going concern.” Otis drummed up business from nearby Sul Ross University, providing party space and serving dinner to as many as 300 students and faculty members.



Otis and Lucille McPhaul together managed Indian Lodge from 1939-1941 and during the early to mid-1950s.

BILL REAVES

Otis, Lucille, and baby Jack McPhaul at Indian Lodge, 1940.



COURTESY OF THE MCPHAULS



COURTESY OF THE MCPHAULS

Otis McPhaul, center, and cook, Harry Buck, second from left, with guests at Indian Lodge, 1940.



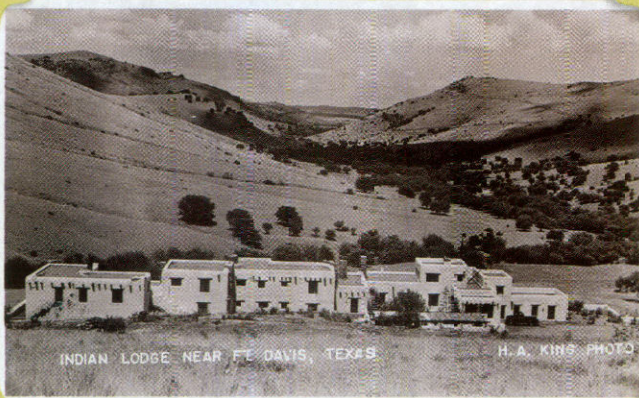
COURTESY OF THE MCPHAULS

Otis and Lucille McPhaul waxing Saltillo tiles, 1940.



COURTESY JULIANN POOLE

The elegantly dressed dining room, "The Pine Room," was located on the lower story of the lodge. The tables were handmade in Bastrop by the CCC and National Youth Association boys; a maguay tree was pressed into service as a hat rack, and the curtain rods were river cane poles.



INDIAN LODGE NEAR FT. DAVIS, TEXAS H. A. KIRS PHOTO

COURTESY JULIANN POOLE

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company 879 built Indian Lodge in 1933; architect Bill Caldwell based the design of the 16-room adobe structure on the meandering pueblos of New Mexico.



Lobby - Indian Lodge - Davis Mountains State Park - Fort Davis, Texas 6-P-510

COURTESY JULIANN POOLE

An early view of the lobby shows the massive hand-carved cedar furniture decorated with unique and rustic Indian designs, pine floors and heavy tree-trunk columns supporting a beamed ceiling.

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

Brochures and other advertising media soon touted the picturesque lodge as being “as comfortable and peaceful as any in America.” Summer tourists, seeking relief from the heat, came to rent a room in the “mile-high pueblo” for as little as \$2 a day. They could get a special club breakfast — orange juice, one egg, ham or bacon, toast, jelly, coffee or milk — for 35 cents. Hikers, horseback enthusiasts and students of nature and art visited to enjoy the natural beauty of the Davis Mountains and ranchland valleys.

Otis remembers his state salary was only \$50 a month, but as an added incentive he could keep 20 percent of the profit. One month he received a check for \$600, a lot of money in those days. However, he and Lucille worked hard for it. The nights were cool in the mountains, so Otis kept the fireplaces filled with wood. He cut the firewood at the U-up and U-down Ranch (land now across from the Prude Ranch) and loaded it into the flat bed of the lodge’s 1936 Ford station wagon. To wax the floors, Otis made a padded board with handles. Lucille would ride on it while Otis pushed it up and down the floors until they had a “spit and polish” finish.

In the small town of Ft. Davis, help was hard to find and keep. Otis often hired waitresses from as far away as El Paso. Harry Buck was the cook. Harry, a popular figure at the lodge, was the brother of Frank “Bring ’Em Back Alive” Buck, the famous wild animal hunter. Edgar Fisher helped with maintenance. Fisher later became a barber and practiced in Ft. Davis from 1956 to 1997.

Otis and Lucille McPhaul managed Indian Lodge from 1939 until October 1941, when Otis resigned to support the war effort. After World War II, Otis returned to Ft. Davis and again served as Indian Lodge manager during the early to mid-1950s.

The McPhauls currently live in Smithville and celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary this year. They still love to wax nostalgic about Ft. Davis and managing Indian Lodge.

MAY

PANHANDLE-PLAINS

- May 1-3:** Civil War Weekend, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, 915-263-4931
- May 9:** 75th Birthday Celebration, Lake Brownwood SP, Brownwood, 915-784-5223
- May 13-14:** Living History Celebration, Lake Arrowhead SP, Wichita Falls, 940-528-2211
- May 16:** Living History Celebration, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

- May 23:** MADD Bike Rally, Ray Roberts Lake SP/Isle du Bois Unit, Pilot Point, 940-686-2148

PINEWOODS

- May 2:** Caddo House Dedication, Caddoan Mounds SHP, Alto, 409-858-3218
- May 23:** Living History Day, Jim Hogg SP, Rusk, 903-683-4850

HILL COUNTRY

- May 1:** Earth Day, South Llano River SP, Junction, 915-446-3994
- May 2-3:** Spring Walkfest, Lost Maples SNA, Vanderpool, 830-966-3413
- May 9:** Caswell Nature Trail Opening, Blanco SP, Blanco, 830-833-4333

BIG BEND COUNTRY

- May 2-3:** Davis Mountains Complex Celebration, Davis Mountains SP/Indian Lodge, Fort Davis, 915-426-3337

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

- May 5:** Cinco de Mayo, Goliad SHP, Goliad, 512-645-3405

JUNE

PANHANDLE-PLAINS

- June 6:** National Trails Day, Caprock Canyons SP, Quitaque, 806-455-1492
- June 6:** National Trails Day, Fort Richardson SHP, Jacksboro, 940-567-3506
- June 6:** Pioneer Day, Abilene SP, Tuscola, 915-572-3204

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

- June 6:** 75th Anniversary Celebration, Lake Somerville SP/Birch Creek Unit, Somerville, 409-535-7763
- June 6:** Free Fishing Day, Bonham SP, Bonham, 903-583-5022
- June 6:** Kids’ Fish and Play Day, Purtis Creek SP, Eustace, 903/425-2332
- June 6:** Grand Opening of Trailway, Lake Mineral Wells SP, Mineral Wells, 940-328-1171
- June 6-7:** Living History Days, Confederate Reunion Grounds SHP, Mexia, 254-562-5751
- June 6:** 75th Anniversary Celebration, Lake Somerville SP/Nails Creek Unit, Ledbetter, 409-289-2392
- June 6:** Youth Fishing Tournament, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793
- June 6:** Free Fishing Day, Eisenhower SP, Denison, 903-465-1956

PINEWOODS

- June 6:** Free Sportfishing Day, Lake Livingston SP, Livingston, 409-365-2201
- June 6:** 8th Annual Kids’ Fish Flop Tournament, Martin Dies Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231
- June 6:** Saturday in the Park, Lake Bob Sandlin SP, Pittsburg, 903-572-5531
- June 13:** Pre-Juneteenth Celebration, Martin Creek Lake SP, Tatum, 903-836-4336

GULF COAST

- June 6:** Pathway to Fishing, Goose Island SP, Rockport, 512-729-2858
- June 6:** Children’s Fishing Tournament, Sheldon Lake SP, Houston, 281-456-9350

BIG BEND COUNTRY

- June 13:** 75th Anniversary Open House, Magoffin Home SHP, El Paso, 915-533-5147
- June 20:** Fate Bell and Panther Cave Tours, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

- June 11:** Grand Opening of Park Headquarters, Falcon SP, Falcon Heights, 956-848-5327

Dates are subject to change. Call 1-800-792-1112 for more information or check our website (www.tpwd.state.tx.us) for updates.

TRAIL TIPS

Laurence and Patricia pass along some pointers. No excuses, now — get out there and enjoy!

HEAT

Yes, it gets hot in Texas in summer — and sometimes much of the rest of the year. Hike early or late in the day, wear light-colored clothes and carry plenty of water. Fall through spring usually are the most pleasant times of year for hiking.

SUNSCREEN

Use it. Yup, it's messy, but it will save your hide from a bad burn. Why look like Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer when you go back to work on Monday?

INSECT REPELLENT

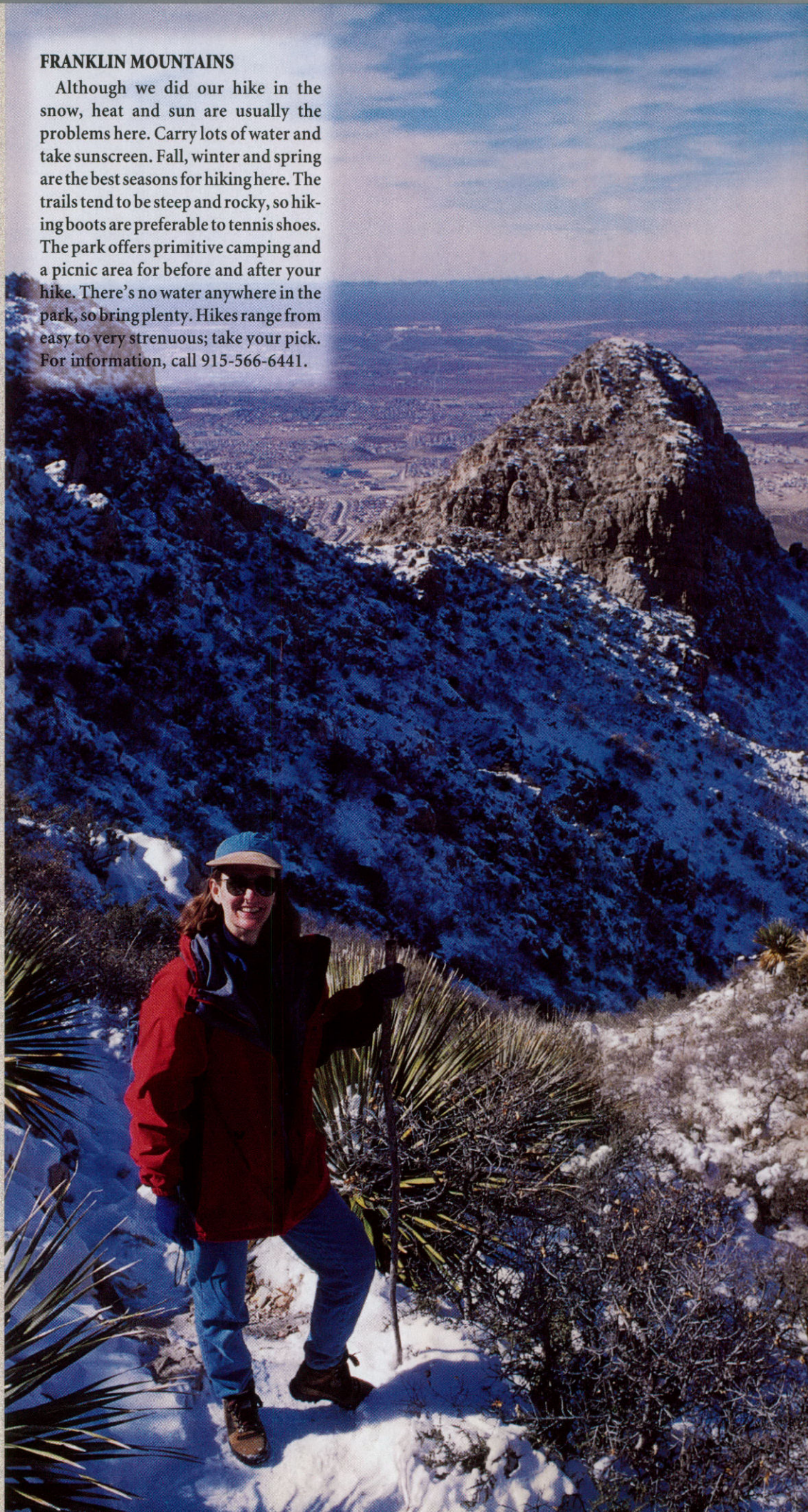
We dislike the oily, smelly stuff even more than sunscreen, but who wants to be ground zero for every mosquito in the neighborhood? It's a necessity for coastal and East Texas parks during the warm months. It also discourages some of our other favorite creatures, ticks and chiggers.

TICKS

These nasty little rascals occasionally leave behind disease after they feast on you. Ever since Laurence spent a few days flat on his back with Lyme disease, we check ourselves carefully for ticks. Insect repellent and light-colored clothes (because they make ticks easily visible) keep us ahead of them. Check yourself in

FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS

Although we did our hike in the snow, heat and sun are usually the problems here. Carry lots of water and take sunscreen. Fall, winter and spring are the best seasons for hiking here. The trails tend to be steep and rocky, so hiking boots are preferable to tennis shoes. The park offers primitive camping and a picnic area for before and after your hike. There's no water anywhere in the park, so bring plenty. Hikes range from easy to very strenuous; take your pick. For information, call 915-566-6441.





WALKS ACROSS TEXAS

A STATE PARK TRAILS SCOUTING REPORT FROM
LAURENCE PARENT AND PATRICIA CAPERTON PARENT

The snow-cloaked slopes above us looked intimidating in the early morning light.

An uncommonly heavy snowstorm had dumped six inches of snow on Franklin Mountains State Park and El Paso. We tightened our bootlaces and zipped up our jackets. The north-facing slope of South Franklin Peak glistened in the sunlight, its snowy blanket thickening with increasing elevation. With luck, we'd end up with nothing more than cold, wet feet. But if we weren't careful, one of us might slide down the mountainside, ending the hike in a less-than-recommended manner.

A deep blue sky, bright sunshine, and the prospect of a bit of solitude drew us to the trail despite the wintry conditions and soon the snow was crunching under our boots. Walking sticks helped with footing on steep, icy sections. The sound of cars whizzing by on the Trans-Mountain Highway quickly faded, replaced by a welcome quiet punctuated only by a few thick-blooded birds flitting about in the Chihuahuan Desert scrub. From the trailhead at the bottom of the canyon, the top of the peak looked very far away.

Franklin Mountains State Park

Despite its location in the middle of bustling El Paso, 24,000-acre Franklin Mountains State Park affords a variety of rugged wilderness hiking experiences. The mountains rise 3,500 feet above the Rio Grande Valley, offering spectacular views from the North and South Franklin Peak trails. Some canyon hikes, such as the West Cottonwood Springs trail, lead to delicate springs that nourish surprisingly lush vegetation, including cottonwood, ash and hackberry trees. Some of the trails are long and require big elevation gains, making it surprisingly easy to find solitude in the middle of Texas' fourth-largest city.

When we reached the snowy ridge crest high above the canyon, we were treated with a stunning view of the distant Organ, Florida and Sacramento mountains of New Mexico. About

the shower after a hike and remove any immediately.

BOOTS

Get a pair that fits well and break them in on short, easy hikes. Except when you are carrying a heavy backpack or hiking rugged off-trail routes, pass on the heavy-weight leather boots. They may impress your friends, but your feet will feel like cinder blocks ten miles down the trail. Go for the light-weight leather and nylon fabric styles, unless you're bound for a rocky trail.

BLISTERS

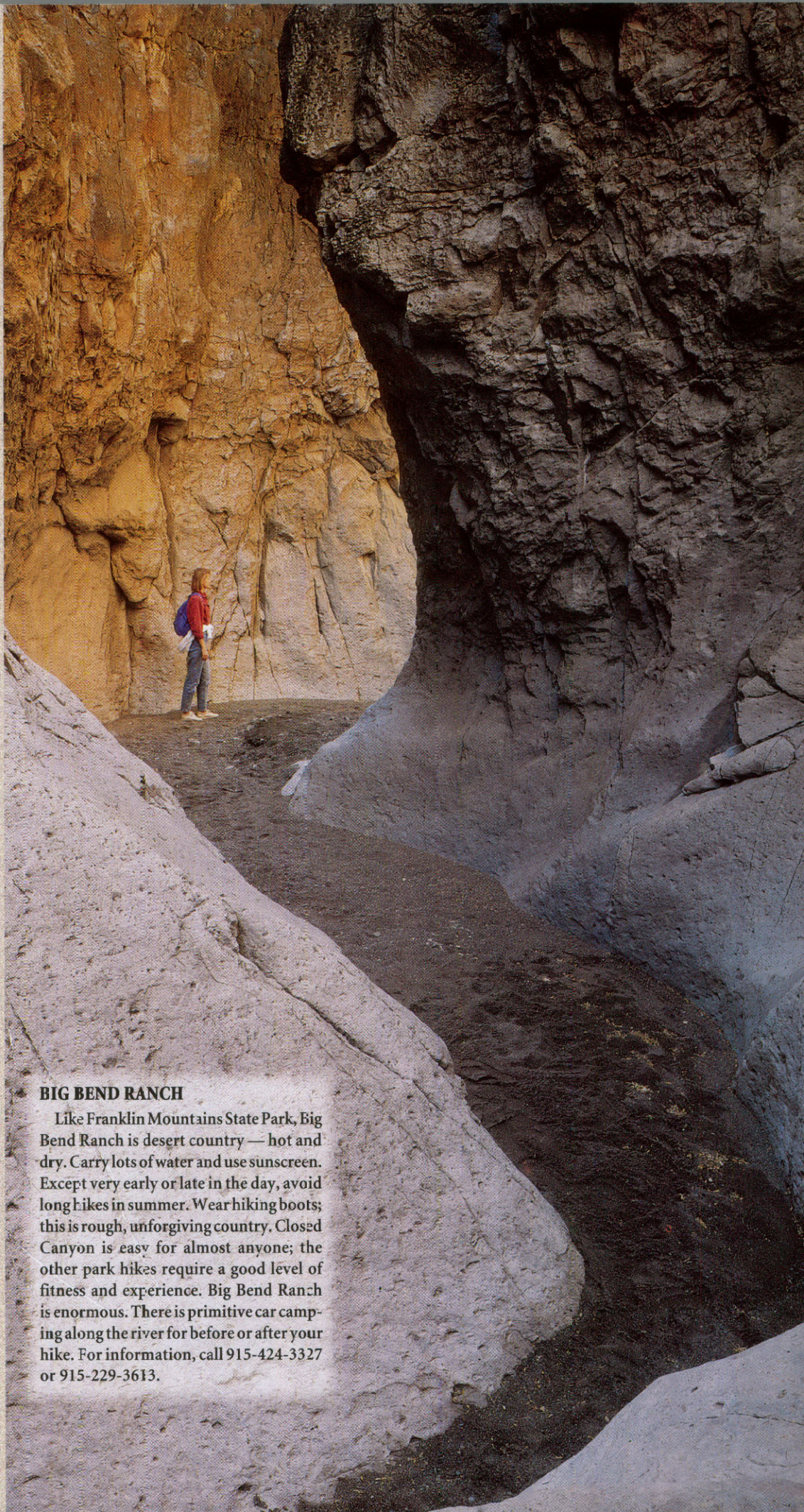
Lightweight boots are less likely to make you blister-prone, so opt for them when you can. Break in new boots walking around a city park, not on the 19-mile Rancherías Loop Trail at Big Bend Ranch. Wear thick, comfortable socks that fit well and don't bunch up. And, just in case, carry some mole skin in your pack.

WATER

Carry more than you think you'll need. It's better to carry a few extra pounds than run dry 10 miles from the nearest trailhead. On hot, all-day desert hikes take a gallon per day. You sometimes can find water on hiking trails, but always purify it before use. Boil it, filter it or chemically treat it. You don't want to end a great trip with a case of giardia.

WEATHER

As they say, if you don't like



BIG BEND RANCH

Like Franklin Mountains State Park, Big Bend Ranch is desert country — hot and dry. Carry lots of water and use sunscreen. Except very early or late in the day, avoid long hikes in summer. Wear hiking boots; this is rough, unforgiving country. Closed Canyon is easy for almost anyone; the other park hikes require a good level of fitness and experience. Big Bend Ranch is enormous. There is primitive car camping along the river for before or after your hike. For information, call 915-424-3327 or 915-229-3613.

CAPROCK CANYONS

Summers aren't quite as hot here as in the Trans-Pecos, but it still gets quite toasty. Carry plenty of water and use sunscreen. The trails within the state park are steep and rocky in places, so lightweight hiking boots are recommended. The Caprock Canyons Trailway has a gentle grade and smoother surface more conducive to tennis shoes, although we still prefer lightweight boots. You may share the trailway with horses and mountain bikes, so use good trail manners. The park offers many other facilities to enjoy, including campgrounds and picnic areas. For information, call 806-455-1492.

© LAURENCE PARENT



2,000 feet below, upscale subdivisions butted up against the park boundary. Despite their proximity, at this height we felt far removed, part of a wilder, more elemental world.

As the snow-encrusted trail continued upward, it grew steeper, slicker and more difficult, but the views became ever more spectacular. Below a rock formation called the Gunsight, near the top of the peak, the trail became especially treacherous. We moved slowly across the icy surface, tightly gripping our walking sticks for balance as we struggled up the last stretch.

At the top we sat down and relaxed, listening to the wind whistle around the radio towers perched on the summit. El Paso and Juarez stretched for miles below, separated by the Rio Grande. To the northeast, Sierra Blanca Peak in New Mexico thrust its white-capped summit high into the sky. Snow covered the mountain ranges far to the south in Mexico, a rare sight. On this very clear day, we even could see the Guadalupe Mountains

100 miles to the east. Way down the slopes below, a few other intrepid hikers struggled upward through the snow, leaving us to enjoy the mountaintop alone for the time being.

When we finally made it safely down to the canyon floor near the trailhead, we began talking about our next state parks wilderness hike.

All too soon, the time came to go down. Usually the descent was easy, but the snow and ice made this trip treacherous. Slipping and sliding, we finally made it safely down to the canyon floor near the trailhead. Unfazed, we began talking about our next wilderness hike. Fortunately for us, state parks throughout Texas provide plenty of places to go.

Big Bend Ranch State Park

Another West Texas jewel for wilderness hiking is Big Bend Ranch State Park. It contains 288,000 acres of Chihuahuan Desert habitat, a rugged mix of grasslands, canyons and mountains. The Rancherías Loop, one of the

LOST MAPLES STATE PARK

Like most of Texas, Lost Maples gets hot in summer. Unlike West Texas and the Panhandle, however, there is plenty of shade at Lost Maples. As always, carry water and sunscreen. Trails here are steep and rocky in places, so we prefer lightweight hiking boots to sneakers. Fall is busy, so try to go during other seasons. There is a pleasant car campground here; on weekends reserve a site well ahead of time. For information, call 830-966-3413.



wildest, most challenging backcountry hikes in the state, crosses part of the interior of Big Bend Ranch. The strenuous 19-mile loop traverses two desert canyons and numerous ridges and mesas, and passes two usually reliable springs. Those willing, fit, and skilled

We climbed up a peaceful box canyon through scattered stands of cottonwood and willow to Rancherías Spring, one of the highest waterfalls in the state.

enough to undertake the trip will be rewarded with wilderness solitude and spectacular desert country. You should allow three days and two nights for a leisurely trip.

Besides the Rancherías Loop, two other

excellent trails cross this largely undeveloped park. For hikers desiring a less strenuous hike, the 4.5-mile Rancherías Canyon trail provides a more moderate alternative. On one hot day we climbed up a peaceful box canyon through scattered stands of cottonwood and willow to Rancherías Spring. The sparkling water was a welcome sight in the dry desert country. With an 80-foot drop, Rancherías Spring is one of the highest waterfalls in the state. Water flow varies depending on rainfall.

If these two routes seem too difficult, try the easy Closed Canyon trail. We crunched our way downstream through the dry gravel bottom of a deep, narrow defile reminis-



© LAURENCE PARENT

cent of the slot canyons of southern Utah. The 0.7-mile trail followed the creek bed past sculpted, curving walls. At times the canyon was so narrow that we could almost span the walls with both arms extended. We enjoyed the canyon even on a hot summer day because sunlight reached the bottom only at high noon.

Our hike ended abruptly at a series of high, vertical pour-offs. The sound of the rushing waters of the Rio Grande echoed from around the corner, but we couldn't see the river. We looked down and realized that we might be able to get down, but climbing back up the smoothly polished, vertical rock would be dif-

ficult. We turned around and hiked back upstream, glad that no bad weather threatened. The deep, narrow canyon would be a death trap in a flash flood, we decided.

Caprock Canyons State Park

Caprock Canyons State Park features brightly colored relief from the table-top-flat monotony of the region. Within the 15,000-acre park, the high plains of the Llano Estacado yield to the lower Rolling Plains, creating a long, red-rock escarpment 1,000 feet high in places. Dry weather, shady canyons and cool summer nights make this park a backpacker's haven.

By combining trails at Caprock Canyons, hikers can create challenging loop treks through canyons and over ridges. Scrubby one-seed juniper, redberry juniper and mesquite dot the canyon slopes and flats. Cottonwoods, Rocky Mountain junipers and occasional oaks line the cooler, wetter canyon bottoms.

Backpackers can use two backcountry campsites; however, both are relatively close to the main trailhead. We particularly enjoyed the views from the Haynes Ridge Trail. Below us, the multicolored walls of the North and South prongs of the Little Red River flanked the ridge; far to the east stretched the Rolling Plains.

For a truly long hike, take advantage of the 64-mile Caprock Canyons State Park Trailway that brushes by the park. Converted from an abandoned railroad line, it provides a great hiking, biking, and equestrian trail. We chose to hike the section that descends from the High Plains through a rugged, red-rock canyon to the Rolling Plains. Along the way we plunged into the darkness of a long railroad tunnel and crossed several high, vertigo-inducing trestles over dry washes. At times, the park runs shuttles to the upper end of this section of trail, allowing a long hike that runs downhill for almost the entire first 20 miles.

Lost Maples State Natural Area

Moving southeast across the state, Hill Country parks are particularly rich in hiking opportunities. One of our favorites, Lost Maples State Natural Area, is best known for its brilliant fall color when bigtooth maples and black cherries display their brilliant foliage. A better kept secret is Lost Maples' extensive trail system, particularly enjoyable

the weather in Texas, wait a few minutes and it will change. Mix it with Murphy's Law and who knows what can happen? It's best to be prepared for the worst. For much of the year, heat is generally more of a problem than cold. However, a rainstorm or norther can drop temperatures in a hurry, creating the potential for hypothermia. Check weather forecasts and carry rain gear and warm clothes when called for, especially on long hikes.

ITINERARY

Tell friends or family where you are going and when you will return. Leave yourself plenty of time for your hike. And when you do get back, be sure to call them. Rescuers get irritated when they find out they spent all night stumbling around out in the wilderness looking for you while you were hanging out with your pals after a nice hike.

LIGHTNING

Get off mountain peaks and ridge tops and avoid big open fields, large trees, and water when thunderstorms threaten. Seek lower ground or shelter. Lightning can strike miles from the center of a storm.

NOISE

Keep it quiet out in the boondocks. People are out there viewing wildlife and enjoying a little peace. If they wanted a racket, they'd go to the mall.

during other times of the year. The park is very busy from mid-October to mid-November, but the rest of the year visitation is much lighter. It lies in a rugged section of the Hill Country near the small communities of Leakey and Vanderpool.

Lost Maples is a haven for backpackers, with several backcountry primitive campsites. On our last visit, even though it was a prime fall-color weekend, we left most of the crowds behind once we got a mile or so beyond the parking lot. Our trail wound up the rocky canyon of the Sabinal River, along a small gurgling stream with clear pools of water. Gold and scarlet maples flourish here, protected from winds and the sun by steep canyon walls.

After Hale Hollow, the trail climbed out of the canyon bottom. The short, steep ascent was strenuous and thinned out most of the remaining crowds. The terrain was drier and more open on the ridge top. From overlooks we peered down into deep canyons below, their protected walls splashed with colorful maples and cherries. We descended to Can Creek, where the crowds picked up again. At the bottom, we followed Can Creek upstream, farther and farther away from the trailhead. Finally, above Mystic Canyon, we found a quiet campsite to spend the night.

Dinosaur Valley State Park

Although people don't associate North Texas with wilderness hiking trails, the state parks there do offer a number of opportunities. Most people go to Dinosaur Valley State Park to see dinosaur tracks, but hiking and primitive camping attract a few knowledgeable folks. A network of trails winds through upland terrain wooded with Ashe juniper, live oak and Texas red oak. Other trees, such as green ash, pecan, and cedar elm line the creek bottoms.

Before setting out on one of the longer upland hiking trails, we walked and waded along the Paluxy River to see the many dinosaur tracks. About 105 million years ago, dinosaurs walked the mudflats at the edge of a shallow sea that once was here. Over time, their tracks were buried and hardened into rock. The giant reptiles are long gone, but their large fossilized footprints remain.

We discovered how slippery the wet rocks

along the river can be when one of us fell, soaking an expensive camera and suffering a loss of dignity. After drying off, we followed a path leading up from the river onto the wooded bluffs above. We did the longest of sever-

Most people go to Dinosaur Valley State Park to see dinosaur tracks, but hiking and primitive camping attract a few knowledgeable folks.

al possible loops, about four miles. From the loop, we took a side trail to a viewpoint overlooking most of the park. To us, the terrain and vegetation looked similar to that of the Hill Country. Although we day-hiked, several primitive campsites on the trails appeal to backpackers.

Matagorda Island State Park

The Texas coast doesn't have many wilderness hiking opportunities, but Matagorda Island State Park is a major exception. Because Matagorda is not connected to the mainland by a bridge, you need a boat to get to the 38-mile-long island. Consequently, little development exists other than a few buildings that once were part of a U.S. Air Force base.

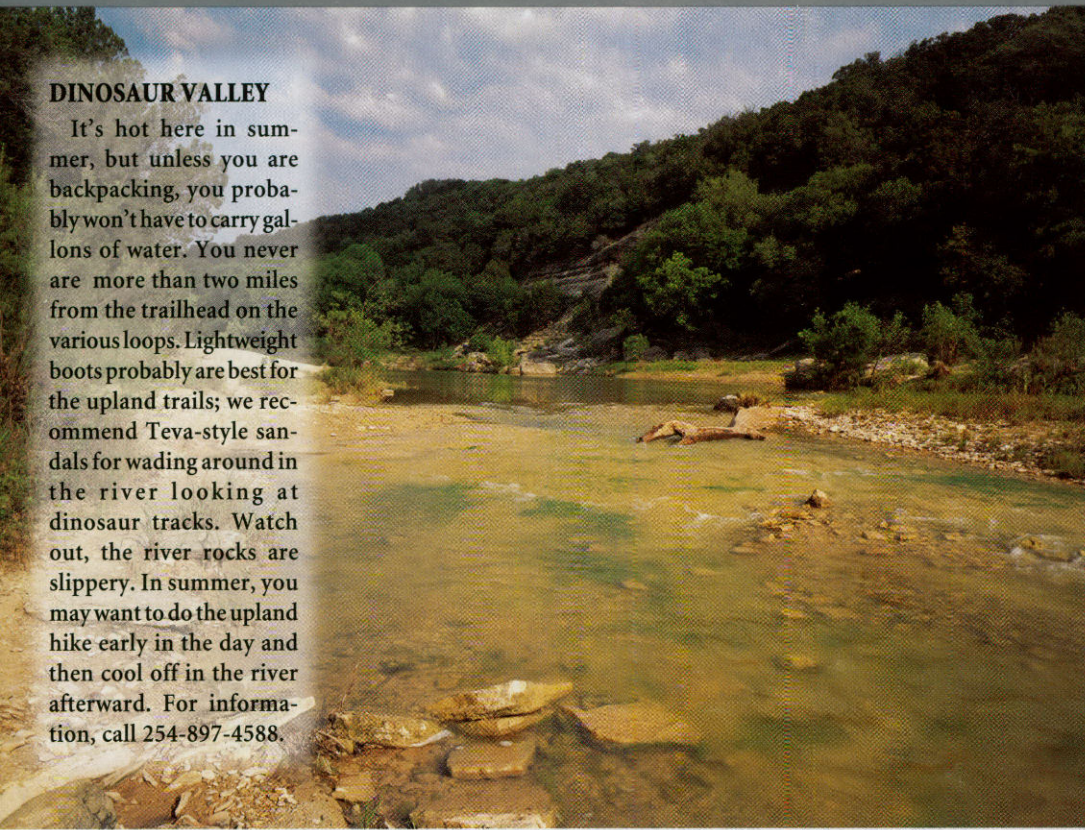
On our visit to Matagorda Island, we found many miles of hikes on one of the most isolated parts of the Texas Coast. After riding the park ferry over to the island, the staff shuttled us over to the Gulf side of the island from the docks and left us to our own devices for the day. We walked for miles on the endless, empty beach. Since no vehicles are allowed on the island, we found thousands of uncrushed seashells dotting the sandy shore. White-tailed deer, coyote and feral hog tracks mingled with the shells. Shallow waters, shifting sands and fierce storms have caused many shipwrecks here. We found abandoned boats on the beach and rusty masts sticking up out of the surf, evidence of lost lives and shattered dreams.

Inland from the beach, a system of dirt roads cuts through grasslands and marshes. We walked to an 1852-vintage lighthouse. Moved in 1867 and rebuilt in 1873 due to Civil War and erosion damage, the cast-iron lighthouse today sits far from the beach. Recently taken out of service by the Coast Guard and in need of repair, the 90-foot tower rises abruptly out of the empty marshes. We



DINOSAUR VALLEY

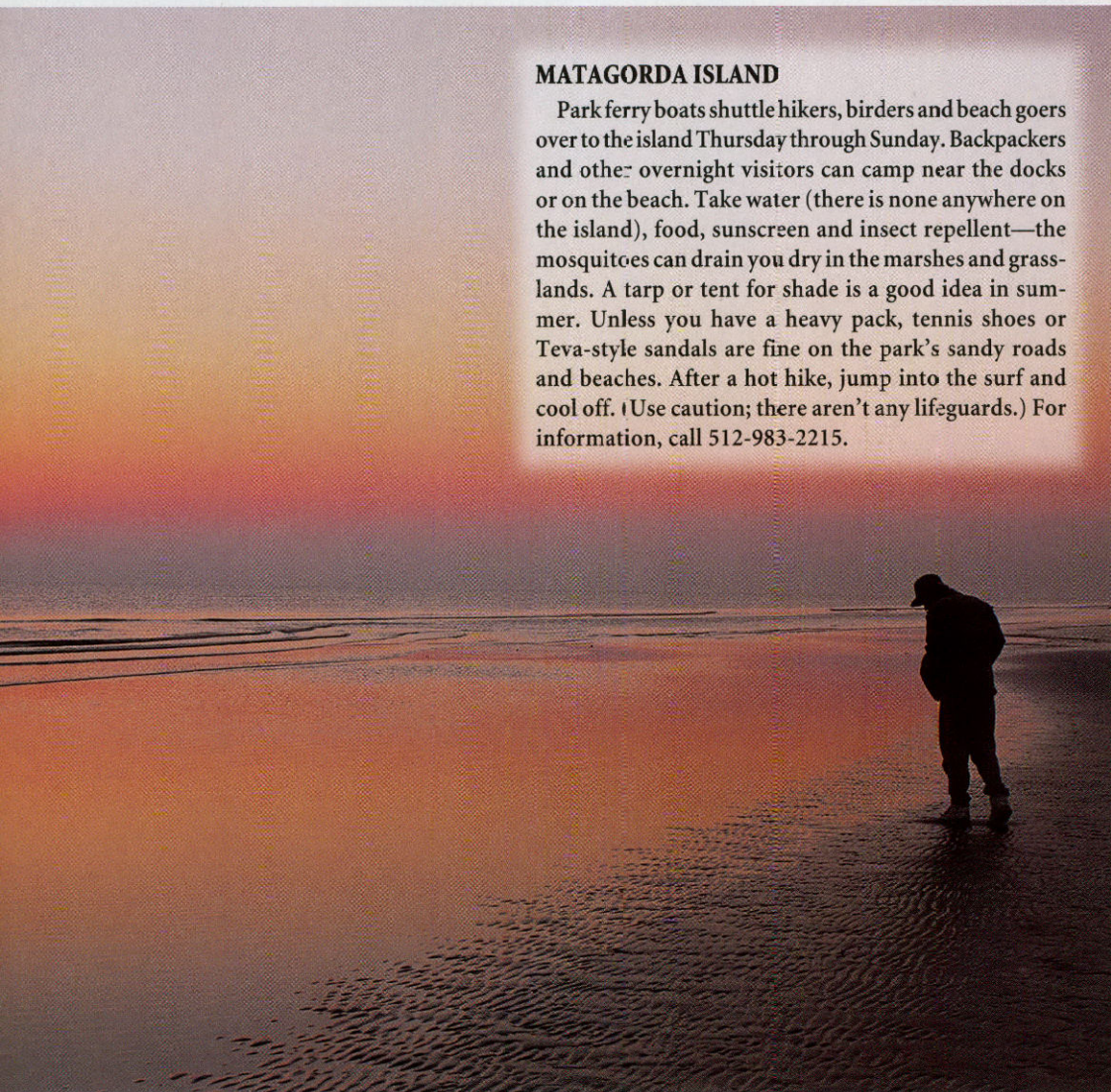
It's hot here in summer, but unless you are backpacking, you probably won't have to carry gallons of water. You never are more than two miles from the trailhead on the various loops. Lightweight boots probably are best for the upland trails; we recommend Teva-style sandals for wading around in the river looking at dinosaur tracks. Watch out, the river rocks are slippery. In summer, you may want to do the upland hike early in the day and then cool off in the river afterward. For information, call 254-897-4588.



© LAURENCE PARENT

MATAGORDA ISLAND

Park ferry boats shuttle hikers, birders and beach goers over to the island Thursday through Sunday. Backpackers and other overnight visitors can camp near the docks or on the beach. Take water (there is none anywhere on the island), food, sunscreen and insect repellent—the mosquitoes can drain you dry in the marshes and grasslands. A tarp or tent for shade is a good idea in summer. Unless you have a heavy pack, tennis shoes or Teva-style sandals are fine on the park's sandy roads and beaches. After a hot hike, jump into the surf and cool off. (Use caution; there aren't any lifeguards.) For information, call 512-983-2215.



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HATS

A hat not only inhibits those nasty skin cancer cells, it helps prevent those pesky crows-feet that come from squinting too much (unless you *plan* to look like Clint Eastwood, of course). Gimme caps help some, but a wide-brim hat is better. Laurence has a cap with a Velcro-attached cape that covers his ears and neck—sort of a Foreign Legion get-up. It embarrasses his wife (me!), but it sure keeps the sun off him.

FIRE

Use every precaution with campfires on the trail. Many Central and West Texas parks lie in dry country.

GETTING LOST

Don't. Unless you are very experienced, stay on established, marked trails. Carry maps and a compass. If you do get lost, try to backtrack to familiar terrain and reorient yourself. If you can't do that, stay put.

Assuming that you told people where you are going (see *Itinerary* above), you don't want to wander miles away from where rescuers will be looking. Whatever you do, don't panic. Most state parks are relatively small (Big Bend Ranch is a notable exception), and there's a limit to how lost you can get.

SHORTCUTS

Stay on the trails. While switchbacks can ease the grade on steep terrain, they're usually steep, rocky,

and more tiring. And they can cause rock slides and ugly erosion, especially in fragile areas such as Enchanted Rock.

SNAKES

They're out there—kind of like the truth in the X Files. Odds are you won't see any, though. They like people even less than most people like them. And if you do see one, most likely it's a nonpoisonous snake. Always watch where you walk, especially on warm summer evenings. Snakes rarely bite unless you step on or tease them. After all, if somebody stepped on you or poked you with a stick, you might get a little irritated.

POISON IVY

Learn to recognize its distinctive three leaves, or stay on the trails and avoid touching unknown plants. It's common in Central and East Texas and causes a nasty rash that can blister and last for two or three weeks. If you have gotten into it, rinse off immediately at a stream, lake or tap. The obnoxious plant oil that causes the problem takes an hour or so to bind to your skin

PREPARATION

Go prepared and you'll have a great time. After all, where would you rather be on the weekend, hiking in the beautiful Texas outdoors or stuck in traffic on the way to the mall?

—*Laurence and Patricia*

VILLAGE CREEK

East Texas can be hot and humid in summer. The dense forest at Village Creek offers plenty of shade. However, carry at least some water, although you are never more than about two miles from the trailhead. As at Matagorda Island, insect repellent is a necessity during the warm months. The trails generally are flat and easy for boots or tennis shoes. Watch out for tree roots; they're waiting to trip you up. Because of the low-lying terrain and heavy rainfall received by the park, parts of the trails occasionally flood and are temporarily closed. Be sure to check on conditions with park officials. Like most of the other state parks, Village Creek offers campgrounds, picnic areas and other facilities. For information, call 409-755-7322.





enjoyed watching roosting vultures land on the rusting structure as the sun set over the island. Fortunately for us, mosquitoes were sparse during our winter visit.

Village Creek State Park

East Texas parks don't fall short in the trail department. Village Creek State Park offers a hiking experience more reminiscent of the Deep South than Texas. Located north of Beaumont, the park lies in the Big Thicket. Village Creek, a large stream that meanders through dense forests of beech, magnolia and

As our route wound past primeval-looking cypress swamps where frogs and turtles splashed, we saw a few canoeists gliding through the tea-colored water.

loblolly pine, runs through the park.

We enjoyed part of the eight miles of path that wind through lush floodplain forest adjoining Village Creek. Some are standard hiking trails; others are old roads. Our route wound past primeval-looking cypress swamps where frogs and turtles splashed into the water at our approach. One trail we particularly liked paralleled Village Creek to a large sandbar, site of the park's primitive campsites and a swimming area. A few canoeists glided through Village Creek's tea-colored water.

If these selected hikes aren't enough for you, don't worry. Plenty of other state parks also offer hiking trails. Somewhere in the state's many parks lies the perfect hike for almost everybody. ★

LAURENCE PARENT *and* PATRICIA CAPERTON
 PARENT *merely hang their hats in Manchaca.*

DEVILS RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA

Accessible by reservation only, this park offers excellent hiking and seven primitive campsites. For more information about Texas State Parks call 1-800-792-1112.



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Sand & Solitude

Eleven miles from the mainland, Matagorda Island can be reached only by boat, making it the ideal place for fishing, birding and beachcombing away from the crowds. *by Casey Kelly Barton*

Folks don't just drop by Matagorda Island State Park on their way somewhere else. A haven for 19 species of endangered or threatened animals, the park is isolated by design (it is a wildlife management area) and by geography — an 11-mile boat ride from Port O'Connor, the nearest town. But it is just this isolation that makes Matagorda such an intriguing place to visit.

The island, one of the many barrier islands along the coast, has been around only about 5,000 years, but they've been eventful ones. Long before Europeans arrived, Matagorda was occupied by the Native American Karankawas, who gathered oysters and fish. When would-be settlers arrived, the Karankawas defended their land vigorously, but ultimately were driven out. Anglo-American settlers moved there in the 1830s and raised cattle and other livestock until the government took over in 1940. Property owners' land rights were condemned in the interest of national defense, and the U.S. Air Force used the island as a bombing and gunnery range. With such a history, Park Superintendent Ronny Gallagher said, "The place is not pristine," but it is making a comeback. A wildlife refuge was founded in 1971, and the park currently is co-managed by Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Texas General Land Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A trip to Matagorda starts, one way or another, with a boat ride. Private boats can go to the island, or visitors can take the Parks and Wildlife ferry boat, which makes regular runs from Port O'Connor, where passengers can buy tickets at the park's office. Passengers travel 45 minutes to an hour through the place where settlement gives way to nature. On the mainland side of the Intracoastal Canal, there are marinas, docks and beautiful beach homes flying Texas flags, along with a U.S. Coast Guard station and, farther down, some industrial storage tanks. On the other side cattle graze amid the grass and scrub brush, and birds coast overhead.

Before the ferry reaches the island's shore, it stops so crew

members can reel in a net they've been dragging. This is something they do just about every trip, according to Gallagher, to show visitors what's swimming in the waters around them.

"We get a lot of brown and white shrimp, croakers, hard-head catfish, crabs, young flounder and sometimes a stingray," he said.

A crew member gingerly removes small fish and crabs from the net and places them in a bucket of sea water. Children and adults alike move in to touch the fish and ogle the crabs. When everyone's curiosity is satisfied, the animals are returned to the Gulf.

Matagorda's appearance is deceptively sparse. The tallest point is a 23-foot-tall dune. Vegetation generally consists of giant cord grass, sawtooth cord grass, black rush, gaillardia, sunflowers, mesquite and salt cedar.

A maximum of 150 people per day can ride over on the ferry. Visitors scatter quickly for a little solitude on the beach. Because of the isolation and lack of amenities, visitors are advised to bring water, a hat, sunscreen and mosquito repellent.

A truck and a bus shuttle visitors to the Gulf-side beach. The visitor center near the dock has restrooms and showers, and here and there on both the bay shore and the Gulf beach there are shade sheds — some with picnic tables — to offer a respite from the sun. Near the visitor center

is a rustic bunkhouse, where visitors can stay the night if they don't feel like camping on the beach.

The beach itself is not raked or maintained in any way except for twice-yearly beach cleanups. Visitors are responsible for carting out their own trash, and the beach looks pretty clear except for scattered clumps of bottles, wood and the occasional lawn chairs that wash up from the Gulf of Mexico. Gallagher said the trash can be from as far away as Mexico, Galveston or cities along the Colorado River.

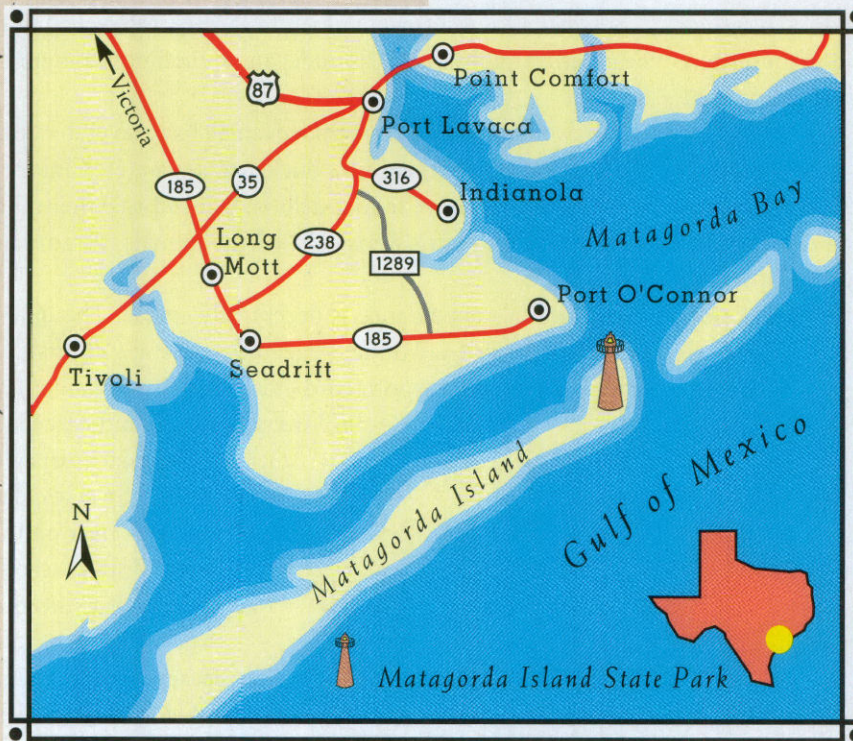
"It's an education problem," he said, pointing to a cluster of bottles. "We have to teach our children that anything that goes on the ground will end up in the water." Among the shells and beach debris, sharp-eyed beachcombers can spot divots in the sand where feral (wild) hogs dig for sand crabs.



Above: A mountain biker traverses the sand with his tackle.
Opposite: A solitary angler enjoys Matagorda's isolated beach.

© LAURENCE PARENT

Getting There



Matagorda Island State Park is open year around, with the TPWD ferry running Thursday through Sunday and holidays. (Check with the park for current schedule.) There is no park admission charge for day use. The fee for the ferry is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 12, and reservations are recommended. Private charter services also are available in the Port O'Connor area; contact the park office for a current list. Shuttle service from the dock to the Gulf beach is \$2 per adults and \$1 for children under 12.

Primitive campsites are available for \$4 per night (for up to four people), and the bunkhouse costs \$12 per person per night. The park office is on the Intracoastal Canal at S. 16th and Maple Streets in Port O'Connor. School field trips and group tours are available by arrangement. For more information or to make ferry reservations, call 512-983-2215. To reserve the bunkhouse, call 512-389-8900.

The island holds a special allure for birders. There are brown pelicans, great blue herons, whooping cranes and many other species that live here year around or visit, including the endangered peregrine falcon, during migrations. Least terns use the abandoned Air Force runways as nesting sites, building right on the tarmac. Gallagher said a birdwatching group counted 89 species near the visitor center last spring. Park staff offer birding tours at different times of the year, which are increasingly popular.

For those more interested in the water, fishing can yield such catches as bonnethead sharks, black drum, red drum, spotted sea trout, flounder and the occasional tarpon, which must be released. The park also offers tours focusing on beachcombing and sea life. The Kemp's Ridley sea turtle sometimes appears in the surf, but Gallagher noted no nests have been found on the island so far.

Many other reptiles call Matagorda home, too. Apart from the American alligator, which frequents deep freshwater ponds and tall grass stands, there are several types of snakes (including rattlesnakes)

and the threatened horned lizard. While the prospect of 'gators and rattlers might be alarming to some, Gallagher reminds us this is a wild place. Rather than do battle with the dangerous creatures, park staff give them a wide berth.

"I know there are snakes out there," he said, gesturing to a field of high grass and salt cedar, "and I don't want to find them." So far, the common-sense approach—recommending that visitors stay out of the island's tall-grass areas—is working. Gallagher said there have been no alligator attacks or snake bites at the park. (The hands-off policy extends to roadway courtesy. Horned lizards like to bask in clearings and often are found on the service roads. Staff and visiting workers know to yield the right-of-way to these prehistoric-looking critters.)

Warning signs caution people not to feed the alligators, intriguing but potentially dangerous carnivores. "What people don't understand," Gallagher explained, "is when people throw food to the 'gators, their scent is on that food, and the 'gators could learn to equate the scent of humans with food."

Away from the beaches, people can trek down the main road that traverses 23 miles of the island before it dead-ends. While the trail appeals to some bicyclists, many prefer riding along the beach where it is cooler.

From the dock, the lighthouse is about a 3½-mile walk down the road (a shuttle also is available). Made of black cast iron plates carted down the island by mules and bolted together at the site in 1878, the lighthouse was designed to be hurricane-proof. Decommissioned at the beginning of the decade, the aging structure is owned by the Coast Guard. It is locked for safety reasons, but Gallagher hopes it can be open to visitors in the future. Nearby, nearly hidden by clumps of sunflowers, are the foundations of the old lightkeepers' homes and family members' graves.

The small graveyard is one of five known burial sites on the island. Kept clean and neat by park staffers, it is surrounded by barbed wire to keep out the

feral hogs that root up dirt and vegetation all over the island.

Visitors are not likely to spot one of the feral hogs, because the animals spend their days lounging under salt cedars around ponds, waiting until nightfall when they come out and forage. Gallagher said visitors are most likely to encounter mammals such as white-tailed deer, raccoons and the occasional coyote, although they are shy of humans, too.

For the most part, park staffers have little contact with the animals. Apart

from counting and tracking the whooping cranes and peregrine falcons that come to Matagorda, park staff don't manage, tag or monitor the island's other endangered animals. Gallagher and his staff operate under the philosophy that the wildlife will do best with minimal human interference.

The exception is hunting season each winter, to manage wildlife populations on the island. Deer are hunted for three weekends in December. The number of deer allowed to be taken is determined

by biologists, who fly over the island each October to do a count. Duck hunting is permitted on weekends throughout the season, and the park's destructive feral hogs are hunted in January.

Gallagher has been at Matagorda Island State Park for 10 years and loves the solitude. "The best part about coming to Matagorda is being able to hang out on the beach without 100,000 cars driving by," he said. ★

CASEY KELLY BARTON is a freelance writer living in Round Rock.



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Above Left: Bring everything you're going to need for a day at Matagorda—there are no concession stands or other amenities on the island.

Above: The lighthouse has been in place since 1878.



The **P**ulse of the **P**ines

The 13-mile park road between Bastrop and Buescher State Parks tests cyclists' mettle through the legendary Lost Pines.

*Article by Thad Sitton
Photos by Earl Nottingham*

The best Pineywoods bicycle ride may well be outside East Texas. Park Road 1-C, the hill-and-dale, 13-mile route between Bastrop and Buescher state parks in Bastrop County, rates in my book as one of the lesser-known recreational gems of the Texas parks system. The wild pine hills of Bastrop County have an edge to them, but only on a bicycle—or on foot—can a traveler feel the pulse of the landscape.

That pulse is complex; the Lost Pines of Central Texas have a fascinating natural and human history. Located on favorable soils created from underlying sandstones, this remnant loblolly forest was left behind as the great Southern pine forest shrank eastward during drier and warmer times at the end of the Ice Age. Shorter, more tapered, and with smaller cones than loblollies farther east, the drought-adapted Bastrop pines show the strain of life in a marginal environment.



Left: Park Road 1-C dips and winds through the Lost Pines between Bastrop and Buescher state parks.
Above: Riders gather at Bastrop's courthouse before the ride.



CCC crews of the 1930s built Park Road 1-C to connect the two state parks. Loblolly pines grow thick along the route, providing a canopy of shade for cyclists at several points.

Voices of the Land

Tonkawa Indians lived here at the time that Stephen F. Austin expanded his colony northward to include the pine hills of what would become Bastrop County. The people whom the white settlers called “Tonks” hunted deer, bears and turkeys in the winter woods, then moved westward in spring and summer in search of buffalo. Tonkawas and settlers shared a mutual enemy lurking to the north and west, the formidable Comanches.

Austin’s colonists founded the riverside settlement of “Mina,” later renamed Bastrop, in 1829. Although most early settlers came from the Pineywoods South, they generally avoided the stretch of sandyland pine hills that begin two miles east of the river. Austin’s colonists farmed cotton, first and foremost, so they usually chose flatter lands and richer soils south and west of the pines.

The municipality of Bastrop retained ownership of most of the Lost Pines, but within a decade the city began leasing

its timberlands to some of the state’s earliest sawmills. The Bastrop Steam Mill Company and the Higgins and Cook Timber Company began nibbling away at the forest with their primitive, dangerous sawmills. For 30 years, until the last virgin pines were felled sometime in the decade after the Civil War, daily lumber wagons rolled out to supply Austin, San Antonio and other growing towns farther west.

From Clear-Cut to Regeneration

For two-thirds of a century, the Lost Pines were left alone to regenerate. Then, beginning in 1928, the city once again leased its pine lands to a new generation of lumbermen. The Edwards Brothers Lumber Company established a typical Southern sawmill town just north of the pines near the present community of Paige and began clear-cutting the old-growth forest. The company’s Paige mill cut at only 25,000 board feet a day—a small sawmill by the standards set far-

ther east—but the Edwardses built the usual company town of employee housing, commissary store, offices and other buildings.

By 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, the Lost Pines lumber operations approached “cut out” once again, but even as the last crews of company “flatheads” felled the last big loblolly pines, hauled them away by company railroad and sawed them in the Paige mill, new workers labored in the shattered woods. Two 200-man companies of Civilian Conservation Corps youths cleared tangled debris left behind by the logging operations, planted new pines, and began building roads and buildings for one of Texas’ first generations of state parks. Valuing their cut-over acres very little, the municipalities of Bastrop and Smithville had donated these lands to the state.

A “Paved Jewel” Beckons

In the shattered forest lands that would become Bastrop and Buescher state

parks, the two CCC companies built cabins, concessions, picnic shelters and other park buildings, all in the style now known as “National Park Service rustic.” The hallmarks of CCC work were careful masonry, hand-made hinges and other building details, artful murals, and buildings that looked as if they had “grown out of the ground.”

Roads, too, cropped up where no sensible roads would have gone! Park Road 1-C is one of those paved jewels. The CCC boys built it to connect the two state parks in the Lost Pines. Nineteenth-century settlers’ roads followed practical routes along the edge of the Colorado River valley to the south, where ox and mule teams could still “pull the hills.” But animals couldn’t pull loaded wagons up these 1-C hills, which beckon cyclists to the pines, and seem to get higher and steeper the longer one cycles in them.

Roller Coaster in the Pines

Road cyclists from all around Austin, San Antonio and Houston long have known about 1-C, the “roller coaster in the Lost Pines.” Swooping and twisting its way through an up-and-down landscape covered with old-growth loblolly pines, Park Road 1-C challenges the thigh muscles and lungs of any cyclist, but greatly rewards the effort.

It is a rare weekend that doesn’t see several groups ride the park-to-park circuit. Not long ago, I met other Austin

Cycling Association members at the club’s customary gathering point on the courthouse square in Bastrop. We rode down the quiet streets of the historic old town (once capital of Stephen F. Austin’s “Little Colony”), passed the giant flywheel of the Bastrop Gin’s restored steam engine at the railroad tracks, and toiled up the long hill leading eastward to the entrance of Bastrop State Park. Looking back from the top of the hill, you see the wide Colorado River valley opening to the west, and it is easy to imagine the mighty river of Pleistocene times flowing through it — an Ice-Age torrent rivaling the present Mississippi.

Cloaked in the Loblollies

Immediately inside the park’s gate we enter the Lost Pines, an island of loblolly forest left behind from the cooler, wetter days of the Pleistocene. Thirteen miles across, covering about 70 square miles, the Lost Pines lie 80 miles from the westernmost edge of the great Southern pine forest, which stretches from East Texas to South Carolina.

We’re well warmed up after the long climb out of the Colorado valley, and it’s a good thing. Immediately we launch into a green tunnel of narrow, two-lane highway under the pines, circle through Bastrop State Park, then head cross country toward Buescher State Park, 13 miles to the east. The smooth-surfaced road curves and swoops across an up-and-down landscape cloaked in loblol-

Tips on Cycling in the Lost Pines

Traffic on Park Road 1-C is extremely light and travels at very low speeds. Cyclists should be courteous to the motorists, but have as much right to the road as the motorists do, as long as they ride no more than two abreast. Although the road surface is smooth, Park Road 1-C has many ups, downs, twists, turns and surprises, and is best ridden at a cautious rate of speed until you learn the route. (And on long downhills, cyclists should remember that speed limits apply to them as much as they do to motorcars.)

Several common-sense “beware’s” are appropriate when riding the Lost Pines:

1. Beware of “overachieving” in the hills, which are best ridden in the lowest gears you have, carefully and with respect. And if you need to walk a hill or two (and you may), so what? Get off and walk and admire the view.

2. Beware of too-swift descents from such hills — at least until you learn which way the road turns at the bottom! Brakes are for braking, so use them. (And make sure your brakes are in proper working order before departing on this ride.)

3. Beware of becoming dehydrated, especially in the hot summer months. Drinking water is available at the parks at either end of the route.

4. Finally, and most emphatically, beware of the gaps at the centers of the several cattle guards that you will cross in the stretch of road between the two parks. These gaps in line with the road are narrow but just wide enough to trap the wheel of a skinny-tired road bike. Stay in your lane to the left and right of road center at the cattle guards and you won’t have any trouble.

An additional word of caution: cycling on either parks’ hiking trails is strictly forbidden due to trail erosion in the sandy soils of the Lost Pines area.

A cyclist gives her tires a final check before taking off on the 13-mile road between the two state parks.



Visiting Bastrop and Buescher State Parks

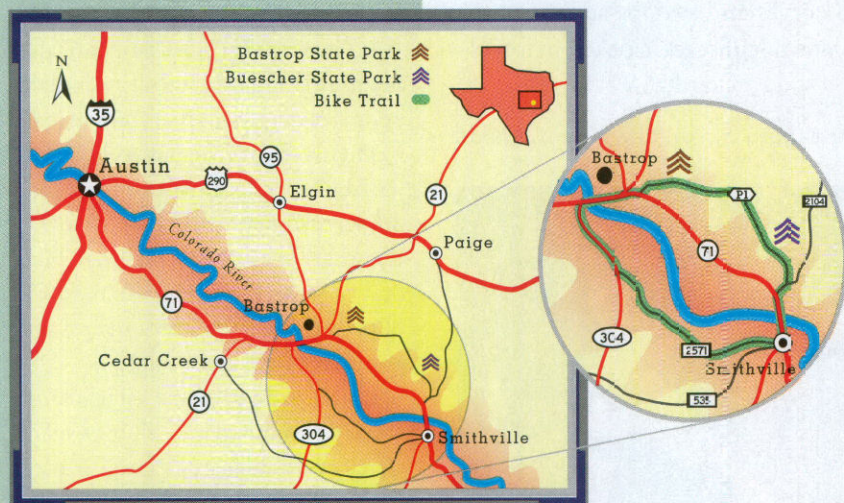
Bastrop S.P.: 3,504 acres. Open all year. Moderate number of developed campsites with partial hookups and showers, in two areas. Primitive camping for backpackers. Cabins are available, but reserve well ahead. Groups may rent barracks buildings and dining hall. Swimming pool, picnicking, hiking trail, cycling, scenic drive. Golf course (expanding from 9 to 18 holes) open all year. Park concession store in season. Full visitor services available in Bastrop. For information: Bastrop State Park, P.O. Box 518, Bastrop, 78602, 512-321-2101.

Buescher S.P.: 1,017 acres. Open all year. Moderate number of developed campsites with partial hookups and showers. Screened shelters. Picnicking, cycling, hiking, fishing, swimming, boating (small boats and canoes only) in Buescher Lake. Trout fishing in winter and early spring — requires a trout stamp in addition to regular state license. Limited visitor services available in Smithville; full services in Bastrop. For information: Buescher State Park, P.O. Box 75, Smithville, 78957, 512-237-2241.

To reserve overnight facilities in either park, call the Central Reservation Center at 512-389-8900.



Above: The narrow, two-lane road is smooth-surfaced, providing a comfortable ride in scenic surroundings. **Inset:** The author demonstrates a smooth cattle guard crossing.





Cyclists sometimes ride one-way from Bastrop to Buescher, then return to Bastrop along state highways. While this route is somewhat flatter than the park road, there is more traffic, wind and direct sunlight.

ly pines. Hills are short but steep, and toils upward are immediately rewarded with exciting downhill rolls that often carry us halfway up the next hill. Again and again, we shift into our lowest “granny gears,” spin our way upward at four miles an hour, then — topping out on some pine hilltop — begin a 30-m.p.h. roll to the foot of the next climb, hidden somewhere down the twisting road in the dense forest.

Finally, the long, more gradual descent into Buescher State Park begins — too soon for most of the riders but just in time for those of us who have been allowing our metal steeds to gather dust in garages.

Point-to-Point, Out-and-Back or Roundabout

At Buescher we stop for a while at the park headquarters near the front entrance, stretch our legs and avail ourselves of water fountain, soft-drink machines and various food snacks. The Bastrop County hills are no place to run

out of caloric energy, especially if you plan for the ride to go on. Some riders, a few, choose to be picked up at this point. Park Road 1-C can be ridden as a 13-mile point-to-point route, from one park to the other, if you don’t want to take the 26-mile out-and-back route. True, it’s only 26 miles, but it’s a challenging 25 miles!

Finally, rehydrated and refueled, most of us circle around Buescher’s park road and begin the ride back to Bastrop, climbing the back side of the hills we previously had rolled down at such high speed. Viewed slowly and in reverse, the Lost Pines hills again look fresh and unfamiliar (since you do little gazing about at the scenery on 30 m.p.h. descents). Arguments break out about whether the hills are steeper going this way or going east, but soon we choose to save our breath. Finally in the early afternoon, we emerge blinking in the sunlight from our roller coaster ride through the pine tunnel of Park Road 1-C. Breathing silent thanks for the gravity assist, we roll

down the last long hill back into Bastrop.

Another longer route often ridden by the cycling clubs goes one-way east down 1-C through the pines to Buescher. State Park, turns south into Smithville and returns west to Bastrop through a very different (and much flatter) countryside to the south (see map). This is an excellent ride, though you should expect to encounter more traffic, wind and direct sunshine. For a total ride of 37 miles, follow these directions: From the front entrance of Buescher State Park turn right on Hwy. 153 and go 0.6 miles to the underpass at Hwy. 71. Pass under the highway and go straight, now on Hwy. 95, 1.9 miles into Smithville (crossing the Colorado River Bridge). Soon after crossing into town, turn right on Hwy. 2571 and go 9.8 miles until arriving at Hwy. 304. Turn right on Hwy. 304 and go 7.3 miles into Bastrop. ★

THAD SITTON enjoys history “up close” as he cycles, hikes and canoes his way across Texas.

MODERN RIDERS OF THE BUFFALO RANGE

Ride along with these Texas Parks and Wildlife employees as they relocate a vestigial herd of Southern Plains bison. Text and photography by Wyman Meinzer

My muscles hardened. . . As far as the eye could reach, south, east and west of me there was a solid mass of buffalo — thousands upon thousands of them — slowly moving toward the north. Billy Dixon on the Texas plains in 1874.

Few people today can fathom the sight beheld by this buffalo hunter on that spring day in the mid-19th century, only a few miles from the present town of Pampa, Texas. Dixon and a handful of others were spearheading the initial thrust of northern buffalo hunters into the Comanche hunting grounds on the Texas plains. In just two years they had decimated the big herd in Kansas. Now, with nothing between them and the great Texas herd but the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers, they began one of the greatest bison slaughters in history.

Fueled by the European demand for robes and industrial leather, the slaughter of the Texas bison herd began in earnest in the spring of 1874. By late 1878, buffalo hunters had killed more than 3.5 million of these animals across the Texas plains. When the big Sharps rifles finally fell silent, only a few hundred animals remained.

As the buffalo herds gave way to the hunters, ranchers moved their cattle herds onto the now-vacant range. Charles Goodnight, former Texas Ranger and buffalo hunter, established the JA Ranch in 1877 along the Mulberry and Palo Duro canyons in the Panhandle. Encompassing more than 100,000 acres of land and supporting thousands of cattle over the next decade, Goodnight's JA Ranch was destined to become one of the most renowned ranches in Texas history. A shrewd businessman who realized that the bison and Comanche must

give way to the tide of civilization, Goodnight also appreciated the buffalo and the other wildlife native to the plains.

Foreseeing that the end was near for the Southern Plains buffalo, Goodnight secured more than 200 wild bison in a pasture designated solely for their safekeeping. Here, for more than a century, this last remnant herd of buffalo has roamed free over the JA and surrounding ranches of the Texas plains.

More than a century after Goodnight secured the herd, the significance of these animals to the state and the people of Texas sparked an interest by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This led to an agreement between the JA Ranch and TPWD for the capture and relocation of this unique herd to Caprock Canyons State Park in Quitique, Texas. On a crisp fall morning in 1997, two dozen TPWD employees began capturing the mighty animals. Despite the vagaries of the Panhandle weather, these free-ranging Southern Plains bison — perhaps the last in the world — were captured and transported to the facilities at Caprock Canyons. Now, some two dozen Southern Plains buffalo again will roam their native range to inspire all who appreciate the wild heritage of Texas.

*It comes to me often in silence,
When the firelight glimmers low,
And the black, uncertain shadows
Seem wraiths of long ago.
Always with a throb of heart-ache,
That thrills each pulsive vein,
Comes that old, unquiet longing,
For the "Buffalo Range" again.*

Bill Kress's yearning for the Buffalo Range.
From *The Border and the Buffalo*, by John R. Cook. 1844-1917.



PHOTOS © WYMAN MEINZER

Above: On the first day of the bison capture, the TPWD crew gathers on the front porch of the JA Ranch bunkhouse. Right: A bison skull hangs on the wall inside the bunkhouse. Standing below it are members of the capture team, Gonzalo Ibarra and Rodney Wenzel.





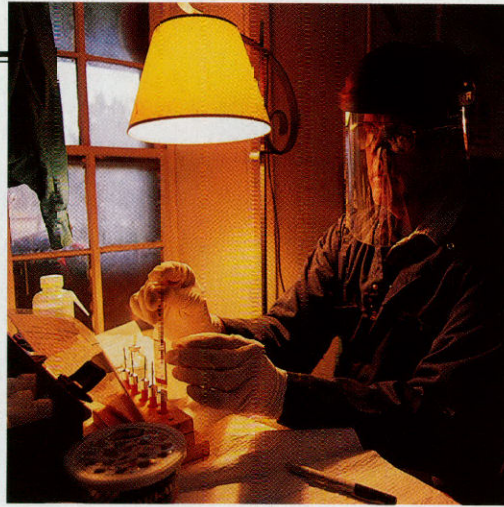
1

Some three dozen Southern Plains buffalo survived into the late 20th century, a mere fraction of the millions that roamed the plains more than a century ago.

2

William Cody and Doug Humphrey glass the windswept range of the JA Ranch for evidence of bison.





3

Chemicals for sedating the huge animals included carfentonal, a drug 10,000 times more powerful than morphine. Doug Humphrey wears gloves and a mask while handling the drug to minimize the chance of accidental exposure.

4

Humphrey fires a carfentonal-filled dart into a bison as another in the foreground succumbs to the sedative. The drug-filled darts usually take effect within six to eight minutes.



5

Crew members pull a sedated buffalo onto a skid. Hay bales were used to hold the animal upright to minimize the chance of accidental death from aspiration.



6

Specially constructed pens held the animals following capture. Each of the cells held one buffalo.



7

Shadows of 20th century humans loom beneath the hooves of a Southern Plains bison, whose lineage stretches back to unrecorded history.





8

Once the bison were inside the capture facilities, crew members branded them and drew blood to test for brucellosis and tuberculosis. All buffalo were found to be free of disease.



9

Texas Department of Criminal Justice inmates built an enclosure at the buffalos' new home, Caprock Canyons State Park. More than eight miles of metal pipe and 74 miles of steel cable were donated and used.



10

The relocated buffalo soon will be available for public observation in a 320-acre enclosure at Caprock Canyons.



The LORE of the LURE

TEXANS ARE GETTING HOOKED ON
COLLECTING ANTIQUE FISHING LURES.

Article by Leslie Busler, Photos by David J. Sams

Whether it's a turn-of-the-century bamboo fly rod or a 1926 Texas Mouse Bait, old rods, reels and lures are coveted by a considerable number of collectors in Texas and across the nation. Most will specialize in various kinds of tackle, but old lures seem to hold the most...ahh...allure.

With the thousands of different sizes, shapes and colors, it's no wonder so many people get hooked. Ironically, the multifarious lures seem to be designed as much — if not more — to catch anglers as they are to catch fish. The selection is almost endless and, much like a love for fishing, a passion for collecting is contagious and tends to spread rampantly when word gets out that an old lure has sold for thousands of dollars. People who normally shop for flashy lures that might catch a big bass find themselves digging through musty boxes in attics and hunting in junk stores for the old pearls of the fishing industry. But high values are rare. Most antique lures are worth no more than \$20, yet once people get start-

ed collecting they often realize a value that outweighs dollars and cents — pure pleasure.

Colby Sorrells of Boerne, former vice president for the Southwest region of the National Fishing Lure Collectors Club (NFLCC), believes that is the spirit of true collectors. "It's not about money," he said. "It's the hunt; it's the fun of the other people in the club, the trading and the swapping."

Fishing is one of the most ancient of sports, and people get caught up in the lore of the lure. Manmade lures, most of which were only hooks made out of wood, bone, or the beaks and claws of birds of prey, are believed to have been used as early as the Stone Age. Centuries of fishing experience brought the evolution of metal, wood and plastic lures.

Artificial lures first became popular in the 19th century, and by the mid-1800s American manufacturers were active, mainly in northern Indiana, northern Illinois and southern Michigan — an area known as plug alley. The five prime com-

panies — Heddon, Creek Chub Bait Company, Pflueger Fishing Tackle Company, Shakespeare Tackle Company and South Bend Bait Company — were in that area, and their lures are among the most prized by collectors. Perhaps the most famous of those early lures is Heddon's Wooden Plug. According to legend, James Heddon was passing time whittling near a pond. When he dropped a piece of the whittled wood into the water a bass instantly attacked it. He added a hook and started manufacturing the plug as a commercial lure.

Although these companies led the market nationally, there were numerous smaller lure companies — several of which were in Texas. As one of maybe a dozen collectors who specialize in Texas lures, Sorrells is an expert on them. According to him, the Texas Mouse Bait, made in Fort Worth in 1926, is probably the oldest Texas lure. Other well-known Texas lure companies in business during the early 1900s were the Layfield Lure Co. of the East Texas town of

Treasures such as the Heddon Basser, below, and Rinehart Jinx, top, can lurk in musty attics and long-forgotten tackle boxes.





~baits that catch fish



"KORÖDLESS
STAINLESS STEEL WIRE
SPECIALLY PROCESSED & STRAIGHTENED
FISHING LEADERS

D. G. B. CO. LURE
The Creek Chub Bait Co.
GARRETT, INDIANA



Oldest Surviving Texas Lure Company

Out of the numerous Texas lure manufacturers of the early 1900s, the Pico Lure Co., originally known as the Nichols Lure Co., is the only one still in existence today. Fred Nichols, an ardent coastal fisherman from Corpus Christi, founded the company around 1933 after years of making his own lures for fishing. He would carve the baits out of cedar, paint them by hand and try them out with his own rod and reel. Nichols' attention to detail probably caught more fishermen than fish, his Piggy Perch and Wooden Shrimp being among his most popular. The Piggy Perch resembled a baitfish found in Texas bays, with a tail, and top and bottom fins. In the early 1940s, Nichols' son Harold made an innovative move by modifying one of his father's lures and inventing the first vibrating lure—the Pico Perch. They soon learned that the lure worked well in fresh water, therefore opening another market for the company.

In the mid-1930s, the Padre Island Co. was formed from the original company, but Nichols stayed involved in the company until the mid-1940s. In 1963, the company was sold to the late Ed Henkel and moved to San Antonio, where it was ranked among the top three small lure companies in the United States for a time. Today, the Pico Lure Co. is located in Kerrville and owned by Bob Miller and several local investors. Although the material of choice has changed from wood to plastic, the company still uses the same old molds that were made for the lures in the early 1940s and 1950s. The company has increased its market by personalizing them with corporate and college logos. In an era when most lure manufacturing has moved overseas, every Pico lure is still hand-made right here in Texas.

Contact Pico Lures at 1600 Harper Road, P. O. Box 2192, Kerrville, Texas 78029, 800-256-5873. Their e-mail address is pico@kts.com and you can visit them on the Internet at www.pico-outdoor.com/



Clockwise from top: Heddon Basser, Pflueger Globe, Creek Club Bait Co. Darter, Pawpaw Jointed Pikie, Creek Chub Pikie, Bomber. Center: Clothes pin lure.

Kerens, the Mack's Tackle Shop of San Antonio, the Big State Bait Co. of Beaumont and the Nichols Lure Co. of Corpus Christi. The Nichols Co., which is well-known for inventing the first vibrating lure, eventually became the Pico Co. (Padre Island Company) of Kerrville and is the only Texas lure company of that era still in existence today.

A Texas lure company that emerged in the postwar era, Bomber Bait Company, eventually sold its lures nationwide. Founded in 1942 by C.S. "Turby" Turbeville and Ike Walker in the North Texas town of Gainesville, the company produced a deep-diving crankbait that still has a following among bass anglers today.

Turbeville and Walker, who fished in northern Texas and southern Oklahoma, often used a shallow-running crankbait called the Creek Chub Crawdad. They felt the Creek Chub couldn't dive deeply enough to catch bigger bass, so they designed a torpedo-shaped wooden lure with a rather long metal lip that imparted an exaggerated wobbling action. The lip also enabled the lure to dive deeper than other crankbaits of the day.

The original bombers were dipped in a flat black paint, but eventually the partners painted them to resemble shad, craw-

fish or other bass food items.

In the mid-1980s, Bomber was acquired by Pradco, Inc., of Fort Smith, Arkansas. The original diving Bomber lure now is marketed under the name Mud Bug, a colloquial name for crawfish.

These companies may not have the name recognition of the big five, but they are just as prized by collectors who specialize in lures made in their home state, as Sorrells does. People specialize in various ways because there are just too many lures to collect. Sorrells collects only Texas lures, while others may collect lures made by a certain manufacturer, or all the color variations of a particular lure. Despite the many ways people can specialize, there are four factors in determining the value of lures: condition, age, rarity and identity.

As in most collecting arenas, the better the condition of the tackle, the more valuable. A mint condition lure found in its original package is premium, whereas the same model with chipped paint and missing eyes is far less valuable. And, of course, older lures typically are high in value, but discerning their age can be difficult. As a collector for 10 years, Sorrells looks for several things to determine the age of a lure, and he believes it helps

to know a little lure history.

There were three basic booms of lure production. The first began with Julio T. Buel's metal minnow in the mid-1800s. The second wave began around the turn of the century when the companies in plug alley began producing wooden lures. The third took place after World War II when the GIs returned to a shortage of jobs and many began making lures, mainly in Oklahoma and Texas. The material of choice was a revolutionary material perfected during the war — plastic. Many collectors agree that pre-war lures are the most collectible, and those with the wooden bodies are the most revered.

In addition to the body types, collectors consider the various types of hook attachments and eyes. There was quite an evolution of hook hardware during this time, and collectors can decipher age by identifying the hook attachments and linking them to the appropriate period. As for the eyes, most had either glass eyes, ones that were painted on, decal eyes or tack eyes. And, like hook attachments, various types of eyes can be linked to different periods of lure production.

The NFLCC uses a rating scale to rank the rarity of old lures. Those that are difficult to collect are referred to as either tough or heavy, the latter meaning the most difficult. Collectors interested in these want only the rarest, most valuable lures. Considering the scarcity of such lures, people might be told by fellow collectors to "keep pluggin'," which means "keep on searching."

Identifying old lures can be difficult, and although collectors sometimes are fortunate enough to find the manufacturer's name stamped on the lure, it's not always that easy. Famed collector Karl White suggests beginners get familiar with the basic lure configurations of the big five companies to help identify a lure and its age. Also, books such as Carl Lucky's *Identification and Value Guide of Old Fishing Lures and Tackle* and Dick Streater's *Streater's Reference Guide to Old Fishing Lures* are helpful in identifying old lures.

Antique fishing tackle collecting is

contagious, and once someone catches the bug, there may be no recovery. Ben Kocian, publisher of *Tide* magazine and a collector from Houston, warns about the fever. "You may start out thinking 'Oh, it's just gonna be a light little hobby,'" Kocian said, "but if you're a true collector it can really develop into quite a passion."

People don't typically specialize when they first start collecting, Sorrells said. Beginners usually pick up anything they can find at flea markets, garage sales and antique stores, and absorb as much as possible about collecting. "When you first start off, you're like a vacuum cleaner — you just get everything you can get," Sorrells said. Eventually, both for pleasure and affordability, people realize they can't collect it all and decide to specialize.

Kocian believes collectors should be prepared to spend a great deal of time and money. "It's not as easy as it used to be. You used to be able to go to a garage sale and pick up one for a dollar or two."

National Fishing Lure Collectors Club

NFLCC was founded in 1976 to foster lure collecting as a hobby and to assist its members in locating, identifying and trading collectible fishing lures. Membership benefits include a subscription to two publications, *The NFLCC Gazette* and *The NFLCC Magazine*. Articles on tackle, want and sale ads from fellow members, a calendar of events and upcoming shows and special feature stories are part of each issue.

For membership information, including dues, contact the NFLCC secretary-treasurer at H.C. #33, Box 4012, Reeds Springs, Missouri 65737.

For information about a collectors' show scheduled in Houston on May 8-9, call 713-666-1966.



PHOTOS © DAVID J. SAMS

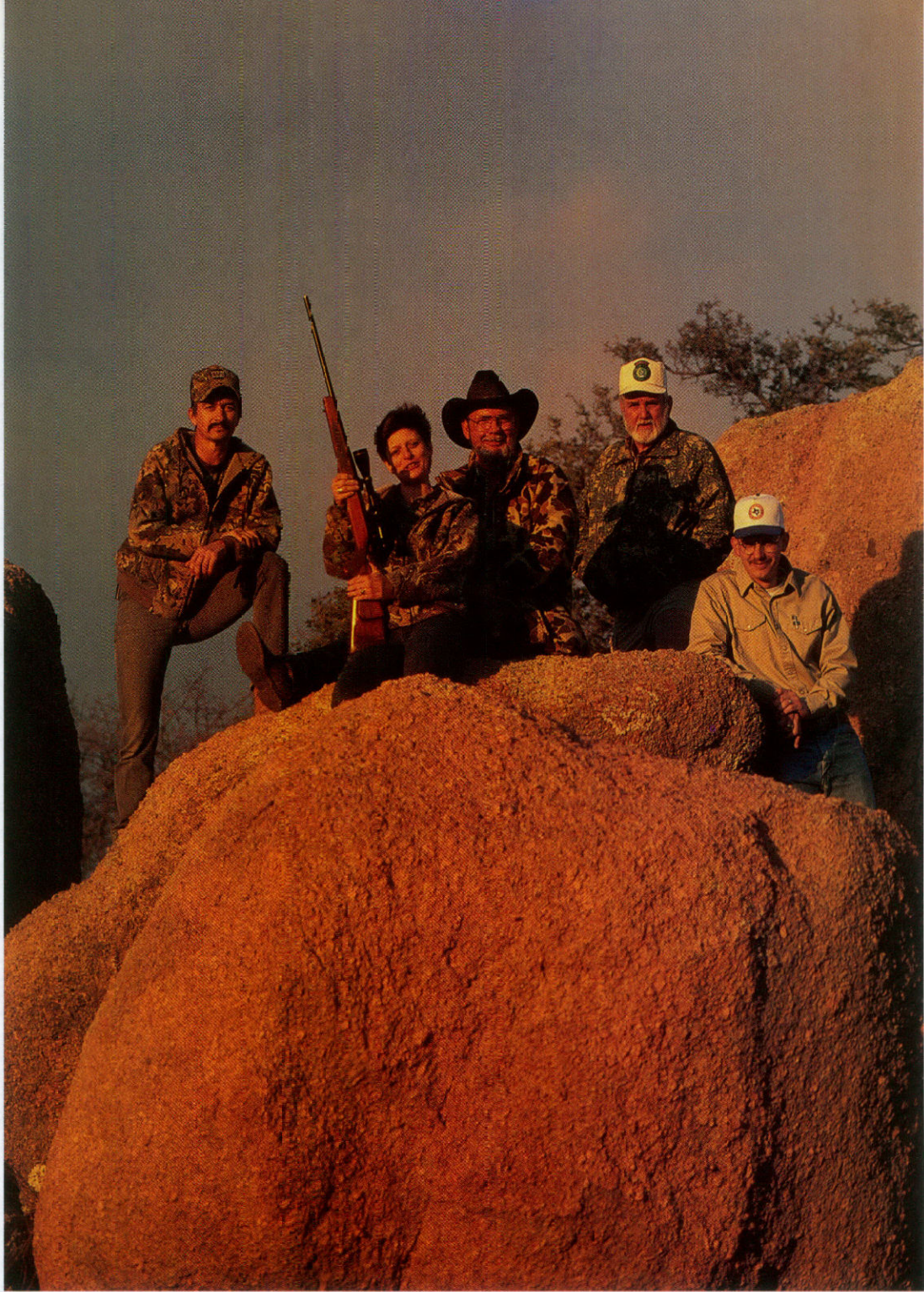
The Heddon Basser, made by one of the first American lure manufacturers, is prized by collectors.

Now, the search is much harder. Kocian said the best way to get desired lures is to build a network of fellow collectors. Joining the NFLCC is an ideal way to do this. More than 1,000 people attend the annual national convention in early July; and region eight, which includes Texas, has swap meets four times a year.

According to Sorrells, these meets are very similar to meetings of other collectors. "It's just like buying and swapping anything—knives, clocks, antique glassware—anything else," Sorrells said. "I find some things I don't want at a garage sale or flea market. I take 'em to our swap meet, and I swap 'em, trade 'em, sell 'em and get the things I do want." Many times, Sorrells will pick up a lure that a friend collects and put it in the mail. A few months later, he'll receive a lure he collects back from his friend.

"Lures are almost like an art piece," Sorrells said. Many people find the same is true about other fishing tackle like rods, reels and wooden floats. Whatever kind of fishing tackle it is, there is a collector's market for it. Rummage through Grandpa's old tackle box to see if it contains any hidden treasures, and you just might find yourself hooked. ★

As a young girl, LESLIE BUSLER caught the fishing bug on Colorado streams with her dad. Colby Sorrells has helped her start a lure collection by donating a few plugs to her slowly growing collection.



© LARRY D. HODGE

A Mason Grace



An innovative multi-use philosophy not only may save Mason WMA but lead to saving other wildlife management areas as well.

by Larry D. Hodge



EARL NOTTINGHAM

LEFT: T. Wayne Schwertner, at right oversees the largest special permit public hunting program in the state at Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area. **ABOVE:** Mason Mountain WMA's scenic beauty makes it ideally suited for ecotourism as well as hunting



T Wayne Schwertner and I.G. Willmann at times feel as if they have a tiger by the tail. The two Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists oversee the Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area in the Hill Country. In addition to running the largest special permit public hunting program in the state, they are responsible for greater kudu, waterbuck, lechwe, sable antelope, impala, gemsbok and other exotic wildlife on the area. But their biggest concern is a directive from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to make the area pay its own way or padlock the gates. Moving the Mason Mountain WMA from money pit to self-sufficiency won't be easy, but the resources, the talent and the plan to make it happen are in place; or, to be more accurate, are evolving as opportunities arise and lessons are learned.

A Texan who prefers to remain anonymous — see “Crusty Benefactor” — donated the 5,301-acre Hill Country ranch four miles outside Mason in two parcels in 1995 and 1997. With them came special opportunities as well as special problems. Eight-foot fences completely encircle the ranch and subdivide it into six main pastures ranging from 600 to 1,700 acres. About 700 exotic ungulates of 11 different species (in addition to native species) roam the area. “The fences do not just serve to limit the movement of large animals between pastures,” said Schwertner. “They are valuable scientific tools that are important to our research program. Our ability to break the area into multiple experimental units makes Mason Mountain WMA far and away the best-suited WMA in the state for wildlife management research.”

Structures present on the area include

three modern dwellings (one of which now serves as office space), a hunting lodge, an older dwelling, shop, various outbuildings, catch pens and shipping and holding pens.

Several large ponds and a spring-fed creek furnish abundant water. Mason Mountain WMA's location also makes it unique among Texas WMAs, said regional wildlife director Roy Welch. “It's in the Central Mineral Region, and 70 percent of the area has a granite soil structure, which produces a wide variety of plant and animal species,” said Welch. “It also has typical Edwards Plateau calcareous species. It gives us something we don't have in any other management area.”

Mason Mountain, the limestone ridge that gives the area its name, curves around the northern third of the ranch. Live oaks and Texas oaks dominate here; leaves of the latter species blaze gold, red

Number One in Hunting

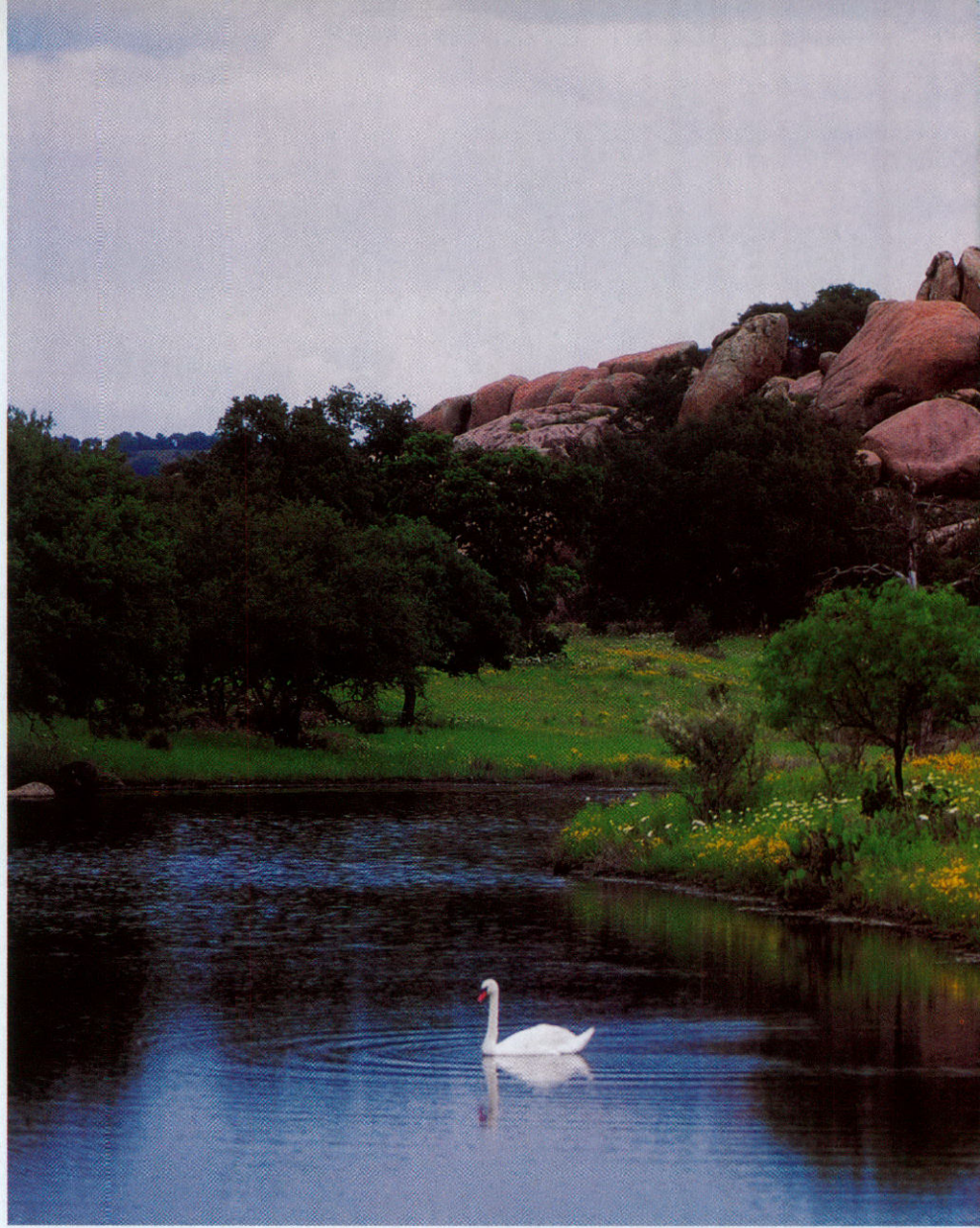
Public hunting on Mason Mountain WMA got underway in September 1997 when more than 5,000 people applied through a manual drawing held on the Mason County Courthouse steps in mid-July. While Mason Mountain contains only 1.5 percent of the land area in state-owned WMAs, its abundant game allowed it to furnish nearly 23 percent of the special permit hunts held.

While I failed to draw one of the September hunts for antlerless axis deer, feral goats and feral hogs, I was able to get a stand-by position. During an orientation session prior to the hunt, area manager T. Wayne Schwertner showed us slides of the various exotic species in the pasture, stressing which were legal and which were not. "Mistakes will be made, and mistakes will be paid for," he warned. With some of the animals in the pasture valued at up to \$5,000, nobody wanted to make a mistake. We studied the slides carefully.

Hunting on Mason Mountain WMA is by no means a sure thing. I found all the animals to be nearly as wary as whitetails. In fact, the first axis deer I took stampeded past my blind on the heels of several whitetails when other hunters headed for their stands. I'd gone out early in anticipation of this happening, and the strategy paid off.

With up to 10 hunters armed with centerfire rifles in an 1,100-acre pasture, safety took top priority. Regulations required hunter orange vests and headgear.

Until about the year 2012, three lucky hunters each year will draw the hunt of a lifetime. The Texas Exotic Safari gives hunters the chance to hunt super exotics such as greater kudu, sable, gemsbok, scimitar-horned oryx, waterbuck, lechwe, impala, axis deer or blackbuck antelope. Ten dollars enters you in a drawing to hunt using one of three weapons—bow, black-powder firearm or modern rifle. The winner of each drawing will get a four-day guided hunt with lodging, food and up to \$1,800 in taxidermy fees included. You can enter wherever hunting licenses are sold or by calling 800-895-4248.



and orange in autumn. The mountain overlooks rolling pink granite hills studded with large boulders and flats stubbled with blackjack oaks, post oaks and mesquite. An absence of Ashe juniper distinguishes the area from most other Hill Country locations. From several places on the ranch, one can see clearly the city of Mason to the south.

The scenic beauty and diverse wildlife on the area suit it ideally for hunting, ecotourism and other compatible uses. But then there's the question of what to do with the exotics, some species of which out-compete native wildlife for food. "As a biologist and a Texan, I don't care for

exotics," said Schwertner. "But I also look at it like this: To date, sale of exotics has been our biggest money generator. We grossed a little over \$100,000 on all our programs during our first six months, and about 75 to 80 percent of that was from exotic sales. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area have a mission, and that is to manage the native Texas ecosystems for research, conservation and demonstration. In the short term, having these exotics may seem contradictory to that mission, but [sales of] these exotics will provide the funds that enable us to carry out that mission.

A Crusty Benefactor

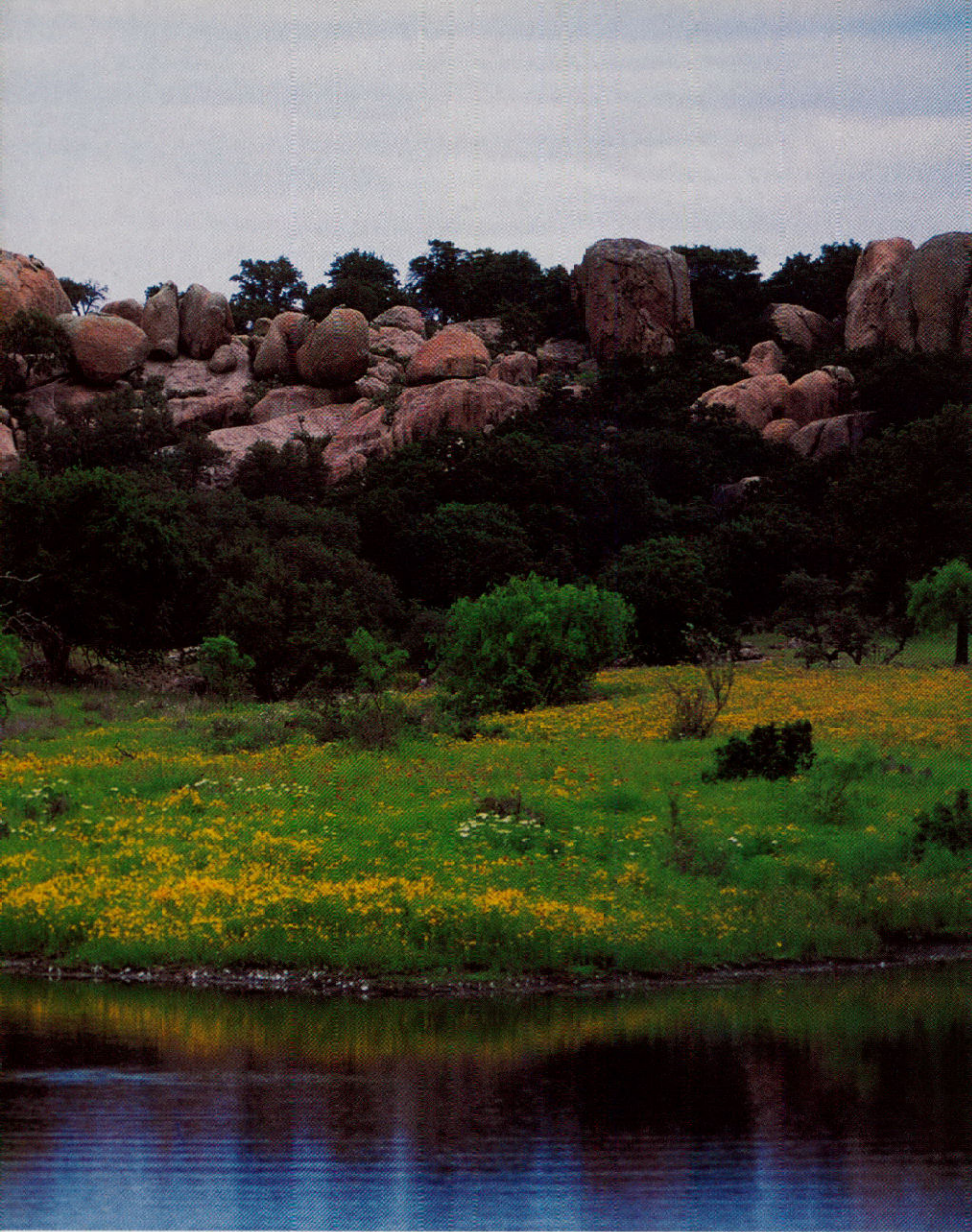
While the man who donated both Mason Mountain WMA and Elephant Mountain WMA to TPWD did not want his name or city of residence publicized (“All kinds of people would be asking me for money,” he growled), he did consent to speak with me about his motivation for the gifts. What he revealed during our conversation was love for Texas, respect for the work of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and frustration with the Texas system of property taxation.

“In the case of Elephant Mountain, I wanted to reintroduce desert bighorn sheep, which were native to the area, but I found that only state or federal government agencies were allowed to buy or possess them,” he said. “I donated the ranch [23,147 acres in Brewster County] so the state could propagate them. After a few years, Mason Mountain got to be too far from home—a 600-mile round trip just to go to the ranch—and I’d had such good luck with Texas Parks and Wildlife with Elephant Mountain, I figured they could make better use of the ranch than if I sold it to someone.”

He stocked the Mason Mountain ranch with exotics for a very pragmatic reason. “I was originally in the cattle business, but I got tired of losing \$50 every time a calf was born,” he said. “I knew you could make money on exotics, especially the African species.” He laid the blame for losses in agriculture at the feet of taxing agencies, saying farmers and ranchers can’t make a living because of property taxes.

“I rent out farmland I own in the Lower Rio Grande Valley,” he said, “and the local taxing authorities take a third of the rent. What’s left isn’t enough to make it worth the trouble of owning the land.”

His lack of desire for publicity stems from a strong sense of individualism as much as from a wish for privacy. When I asked how he wished to be remembered, he said, “I don’t want people to think of Elephant Mountain and Mason Mountain as monuments to me. I don’t care what anybody else thinks, developing them was my satisfaction.”



EARL NOTTINGHAM

ABOVE: Several large ponds as well as a spring-fed creek furnish abundant water for Mason Mountain’s wildlife.

BELOW: WMA workers capture a Thompson’s gazelle, one of several exotic species on the area.



EARL NOTTINGHAM

The Most Unusual Exotics of All

They move through the brush slowly, single file, a dozen individuals. Two adults lead the way, followed by eight young and two more adults. The group stops often, adults showing youngsters the best plants to eat or huddling the group around a set of tracks in the sand, examining the prints carefully. All move furtively, hoping to escape the gaze of whatever might be watching. In late evening they seek out a sheltered spot and prepare for the coming night. The group is one of two such on Mason Mountain WMA. They are the most exotic creatures inhabiting the area: all belong to the species *Homo sapiens*.

In one of the most innovative uses of a wildlife management area yet devised, the Brown Schools of Central Texas brings groups of at-risk teen-agers to the Mason Mountain WMA to live in the woods for 28 days, paying a fee for use of the area. The early intervention program tries to turn around kids on the cusp of getting into trouble, while generating funds for the WMA.

"Part of the intent is to shock the kids by taking them out of their regular world and putting them into a different environment," said Scott Schill, program director for the Brown Schools. Students live in tents, cook over backpacking stoves or open campfires, and move camp every day, winter and summer, rain or shine. "It sure makes them appreciate running water or being able to open the refrigerator and get a cold glass of milk," Schill added.

The daily routine includes a required hour of reading, two to three hours of schoolwork accredited by the Mason Independent School District and work on service projects to benefit the wildlife management area. Manager T. Wayne Schwertner has a long "honey-do" list. "Having them here fulfills one of our directives, which is outreach education," he said. "We can educate the kids about the outdoors, hunting and wildlife management. They will do projects that will be a learning experience for them and a service to us — vegetation and wildlife surveys, as well as repairing fences, painting buildings and digging fire lines for con-

trolled burns. The Brown Schools staff and I agree that learning discipline and work are an important part of their curriculum. We intend to give them the opportunity to get their hands dirty." Twice-daily foot inspections for blisters indicate the serious nature of the training.

Schwertner is well aware of the fact that roving bands of urban teenagers and hunters with rifles could be a dangerous combination. "Safety of the kids will always be foremost," he said. "There will always be one pasture free of hunters, and that's where those folks will be."

Once a week the group returns to a centrally located teepee to write letters home, do laundry using washtubs and rubboards, and take time for introspection. "The only time they will come in out of the woods during the 28 days is when they have a medical situation that requires attention," Schill said.

"While the students are at Mason Mountain, they are under adult supervision 24 hours a day. The three or four staff members with each group will work eight days and be off six. "It takes very special people to do this," said Schill, who has a decade's experience with youth. "It's one thing to deal with the kids, but it's something else to deal with the kids when it's raining."

Staff members assess each student's treatment needs and develop a master action plan to be implemented after the student returns to a mainstream school setting. By the time they do, Schill hopes students will have learned to break the cycle leading them toward trouble. Schwertner wants the students to take home something more, too. "I hope their being here will spark an interest in the environment and in ecosystem management," he said. "We'll have an opportunity to teach kids about rural life and ranching and get messages across they might not get elsewhere. They will see cows on the side of a hill and realize for the first time in their lives where hamburgers come from."

And, for the first time in their lives these troubled youths may realize where they should be going.

It is ironic, but it would be irresponsible to discard that valuable resource without making use of it."

Indeed, exotics are the key to fulfilling the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission's charge to make the area self-sufficient, agrees Welch. "Our two major income bases right now are the Texas Exotic Safari hunts (see **"Number One in Hunting"**) and the sale of exotic brood stock. We will eliminate two or three species from the area over the next two to three years. At the end of 10 years, we will have removed all female exotics from the area, but we will have enough exotic males left to sustain the Texas Exotic Safari hunts for another five years. Our goal is to build up a \$5 million to \$6 million endowment, which will provide enough interest income to support permanent staff on the area. For now, Wildlife Division staff will work



EARL NOTTINGHAM

The sable antelope is one of about 700 exotic ungulates of 11 different species found on Mason Mountain WMA.



the area when they have time.”

Fortunately, there’s no deadline for making the area self-sufficient. “We don’t have an ultimatum that says we have to be staffed in x number of years,” Schwertner pointed out. “We do have an ultimatum that says we have to have money in the bank to generate enough interest for us to operate at whatever level we want to. How much we will need will keep growing as we change operations. We’ll need a budget of about \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year to operate with a full-time staff. For now, we’re operating with two part-time people, and we make extensive use of volunteers.”

“Our long-term goal is similar to that of other wildlife management areas — research and development with native species,” Welch explained. “Also, for the next 10 years, we have the opportunity to do some research on how to balance

exotics and native species. We may be able to help ranchers understand which exotics are less competitive with native wildlife.

“At some point, we’re going to get into ecotourism on the area,” he continued. “We’re looking at having birdwatching and botany tour groups utilize the main house and the lodge. One of the key points is that we want to put together uses for the area that are good not only for Texas Parks and Wildlife, but also the local community. We have a 14-member advisory committee made up of local business and community leaders from Mason, and they’re really excited about what’s going on out there. In summer 1998, we’ll hold an ecosystem teacher workshop on the area that will deal with land use and management techniques in the Hill Country.”

The multi-use philosophy driving the operation of Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area may do more than

keep the gates open. It may show the way to sustainability for other Texas WMAs as well by pioneering programs they, too, can adopt as nonconsumptive users assume a larger share of the burden of supporting Texas’s wild places. “We have to look at the big conservation picture,” Schwertner pointed out. “Hunters are a vital player in that big picture, but we also have to conserve and manage our native ecosystems for nonconsumptive users, too. I can’t manage this area as a hunting area. I manage it as a habitat and wildlife area. I think the ecosystem will be the better for it.”

And so will we all, for that ecosystem is where we, too, must live. ★

Freelancer LARRY D. HODGE of Mason says he lives five miles from the gates of heaven — the entrance to Mason Mountain WMA.

THE FOLKS AT THREE CORNERS

**A MAN STANDS TALLEST
WHEN HE LEANS DOWN
TO A BOY.**

BY EZRA WARD

Aaron Ammerman followed his dad, Boyd, as he slipped through the barbed wire fence by the farm-to-market road and strode across a meadow that led to the bank of Turkey Creek. It was a fine May morning and the wildflowers were still in bloom. He saw a few late blue-bonnets and Indian paintbrushes and larger groups of Mexican hats and primroses. They brushed against the leg of Aaron's blue jeans and he tried to isolate their scent from all the others in the warm, rich spring breeze.

"Where are we going, Dad?" He asked yet again.

"You'll see," Boyd said again. "It's a surprise."

They both carried fishing poles, but no more fishing tackle than they could stick in their pockets. Boyd told Aaron to pack lightly, because they had a long walk ahead of them. From where they had parked Boyd's truck, they walked steadily along Turkey Creek for some 45 minutes, trying to stay in the open where possible, but struggling through occasional juniper thickets that lay in their path. They moved quietly and so were rewarded with many wildlife sightings — deer, rabbits, armadillos and a covey of quail that stayed on the ground and

ran from them.

Unlike some of the scalawags in Three Corners, Boyd had the landowner's permission. No rancher in the Three Corners area would ever deny a request from Boyd Ammerman to be on his property, because he was keenly observant and they valued his information about game populations and the location of stray livestock in remote places. Moreover, despite his reputation as the best hunter and fisherman in Three Corners, he took little fish and game, and shared what he did take.

At last Boyd stopped and signaled, with finger to lips, for silence. He and Aaron crouched down so they could slip between the tree branches until they came to the edge of a deep, sunlit pool in Turkey Creek. When he followed his father's instructions to peer around a tree at the pool, Aaron almost gasped out loud. There in the middle of the pool were eight big black bass. They barely moved and, in the crystal-clear water, looked like a small naval armada. They all appeared to Aaron to be around three or four pounds.

Boyd cupped his hands and spoke with the faintest whisper into Aaron's ear. "I spotted 'em three days ago. I knew they'd still be here. They can't go anywhere. They must've come up from the lake in that big rain two weeks ago, then got trapped in this pool. Go ahead and pitch your lure out, but don't let 'em see you."

The boy eased his pole to the side of the tree and softly flipped his lure, a yellow jig with a propeller in front, to the far side of the pool. Aaron was fascinated with this new fishing experience, because he could plainly see his lure and the fish. As his jig drew near the "armada," one fish suddenly darted and struck at it. Aaron had the big bass hooked and jumped to his feet in excitement. The other fish immediately disappeared.

"Where'd they go?" he asked aloud as he lifted his catch out of the pool.

Boyd spoke openly, too, now that the fish had been spooked. "You got to

remember that they kin see you jist as easy as you kin see them," he said. "And hear you, too. They're up under the bank, but they'll come back out after awhile."

They walked a short way down below the pool, put Aaron's fish in the creek on a stringer, and gave the bass some time to calm down.

"That little toss with your jig was perfect," Boyd said, putting a plug of tobacco inside his cheek.

"I did it just like you showed me when I had to cast soft up under limbs," Aaron said.

"I never knew another boy your age who could fish and hunt as good as you," Boyd said. He spat on the ground. "Shoot," he said "I can't think of more than two or three grown men you don't already top at 10 years of age. Well, shoot, nearly 11."

Aaron grinned and basked in the praise. He had his pocket knife out and was whittling a sharp end on a stick to hold his stringer.

"I learned it all from you, Dad," he said. "There's not a better teacher anywhere."

Boyd said nothing to this, though it pleased him greatly. He just chewed his tobacco and watched his son work the sharp blade of the knife.

Aaron knelt down by the creek and shoved the stick into the ground until it was solid, then tied his stringer to it.

"Dad?" he asked without turning, still bent to his work.

"Yeah?"

"Are you going to Mom and Terry's wedding?"

The question hung there between them, a palpable presence. Kitty and Boyd Ammerman had divorced four years earlier. For more than three years now, she and Terry Preston had been dating. They were to be married in Three Corners in June, and it was the talk of the town.

Boyd, who was sitting on a rock, scuffed his boots in the dirt uncomfortably. "I know I'm invited, but I guess I hadn't planned to, Aaron," he said at last. "Why?"

Aaron didn't answer right away. He had another stick and lopped off the ends with his knife and started to fashion a whistle. "You're right good with that blade," Boyd said, hoping to steer the conversation to safer ground. But it wasn't to be.

"Mom would sure like it if you'd come," the boy said. That was true. Things hadn't worked out between Kitty and Boyd, other than having a fine son, but there were no hard feelings. Kitty wanted everyone important to her and Terry and Aaron to stand in support of and bear witness to the nuptials, and Boyd was certainly important. "She's said it lots of times, but she doesn't want to put pressure on you."

"Wal," said Boyd, not knowing what else to say.

It was quiet for a few moments, save for the noise of the boy's knife chipping at the wood. "Terry would like it, too," he said then.

"Wal," said Boyd again, "I don't know about that."

"It's true, Dad," Aaron said quickly. "You just don't know him. He thinks the world of you. You should hear him talk about you! And he just loves Mom so much!" He caught himself then and flushed, thinking perhaps he had said too much.

"Wal," repeated Boyd, who had never been known to be quick with words. "I guess you really like this Terry."

"I love him, Dad," Aaron said, surprising even himself. He had not really thought through his feelings about Terry. "I mean, you're my Dad and I love you and always will, but Terry's a real special person and I have fun with him and he's taught me a lot about caring for people and animals and I just cain't wait until he's my stepdad."

Boyd stood up and looked away. He wasn't accustomed to getting in touch with his feelings and now they were all jumbled up. Suddenly, Aaron's arms were around him, squeezing tightly.

"Please come to the wedding, Dad, please! I love you so much and it would

mean so much to me if you were there!"

Boyd stood stiffly at first, then softened and put his own arm around his son. "Shore I'll come, Aaron," he said. "You've helped me see it's the right thing to do." Then, after a pause, Boyd added, "I shore am proud of you. I maybe showed you somethin' new about fishin', but you taught your Daddy today, too."

They stood there like that for a moment.

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Is it okay for guys to hug?"

Boyd laughed. Until that moment, he probably would have said no.

"It's got to be," he answered. "It jist feels so right."

Boyd patted Aaron's back then and eased free, walking over to make a show of checking the stick holding the stringer.

It was a cover so he could wipe the tears from his cheeks without his son seeing them. It was going to take more than one day to change a lifetime habit for Boyd Ammerman.

"Let's go get the rest of those bass!" Boyd said.

"All right!" Aaron whooped.

And so they did.

If you have an outdoor story you'd like to share with Ezra Ward, jot it down and send it to his attention at Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine, 3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, Texas 78704.

But don't be surprised if it looks somewhat different if Ezra decides to use it and you see it in print through the lives and adventures of his characters. Ezra and the folks in Three Corners, after all, have their own way of looking at things.



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| Amarillo KACV, Ch. 2 | Sun. 4:00 |
| Austin KLRU, Ch. 18 | Mon. 12:00 |
| College Station KAMU, Ch. 15 | Thurs. 7:00 Fr.. 11a.m. |
| Corpus Christi KEDT, Ch. 16 | Fr.. 11:30 |
| El Paso KCOS, Ch. 13 | Sun. 6:00 |
| Harlingen: KMBH, Ch. 60 <i>Also serving McAllen, Mission</i> | Sun. 12:30 |
| Houston: KUHT, Ch. 8 <i>Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria</i> | Mon. 7:30 |
| Killeen KNCT, Ch. 46 <i>Also serving Temple</i> | Sun. 4:00 |
| Lubbock KTXN, Ch. 5 | Sat. 7:00 |
| Odessa KOCV, Ch. 36 <i>Also serving Midland</i> | Sat. 7:30 |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| San Antonio KLRN, Ch. 9 <i>Also serving Laredo</i> | Thurs. 12:00 |
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Waco
KCTF, Ch. 34 Sat 3:00
Programming schedules are subject to change, so check your local listings.

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

April 26-May 3: Rock art providing a window to the past; turkeys at South Llano River State Park; artificial reefs.

May 3-10: Working dogs; a guide to wildlife viewing sites in Texas; a veterinarian who treats exotic wildlife.

May 10-17: Creating wildlife habitat in your yard; the Texas State Railroad in movies; quail hunting.

May 17-24: Finding a balance on the Katy prairie; women sporting clays enthusiasts; a canoe race from San Marcos to the Gulf of Mexico.

May 24-31: An aquatic ecosystem in the Chihuahuan Desert; a trip down the Coasta' Eiraing Trail; help for the Houston Ship Channel.

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

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Lubbock: KFYO-AM 790 / Between 8-8:30 a.m.
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Nacogdoches: KSAU-FM 9C.1 / 3:00 p.m.
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Pecos: KIUN-AM 1400 / 10:30 a.m.
Pleasanton: KBOP-AM 1380 / TBA
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San Angelo: KUTX-FM 90.1 / 1:58, 12:58 p.m. (F)
San Antonio: KXPZ-FM 91.3 / 2:50 p.m.
Sonora: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 12:09 p.m.
Sulphur Springs: KSST-AM 1230 / 11:15 a.m.
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Uvalde: KVOU-AM 1400 / 5:33 a.m., KYUF-FM 105 / 5:33 a.m.
Victoria: KVRT-FM 90.7 / 5:34 p.m.
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Weatherford: KZEE-AM 1220 / 6:30, 8:10 a.m. & 5:15 p.m.
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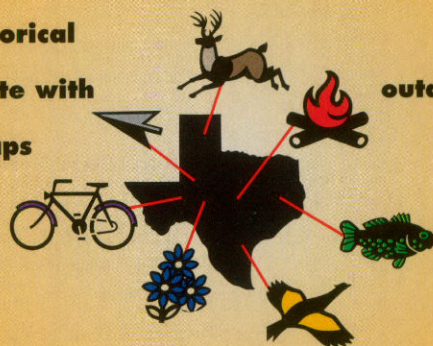
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Buffalo Soldiers played an integral role in the settling of the Texas frontier. On May 15 and 16, visitors to **Copper Breaks State Park** will have an opportunity to see how these men lived more than a century ago.



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MAY

PANHANDLE-PLAINS

- MAY 1, 2, 3: **Big Spring Civil War Weekend**, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, 1-800-734-7641.
- MAY 1: **75th Anniversary Open House**, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, 1-800-734-7641.
- MAY 2 & 3: **Civil War Weekend**, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, 1-800-734-7641.
- MAY 9: **75th Birthday Celebration**, Lake Brownwood SP, Brownwood, 915-784-5223.
- MAY 9: **Free Day**, Lake Brownwood SP, Brownwood, 915-784-5223.
- MAY 9: **Dinosaur Walk**, San Angelo SP, San Angelo. 915-949-4757.
- MAY 13: **Living History Celebration**, Lake Arrowhead SP, Wichita Falls, 940-528-2211.

- MAY 13-14: **Buffalo Soldiers**, Lake Arrowhead SP, Wichita Falls, 940-528-2211.
- MAY 15, 16: **Buffalo Soldiers Living History Encampment**, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah. 940-839-4331.
- MAY 16: **Petroglyph Tour**, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.
- MAY 23: **Cowboy Campfire Breakfast**, Fort Griffin SHP, Albany, 915-762-3592.
- MAY 25: **Copper Breaks Appreciation Day**, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah. 940-839-4331.

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

- MAY: **Traditional Cowboy Music**, call for dates and times, Concert Cleburne SP, Cleburne. 817-645-4215.
- MAY: **Historical Tour**, every Saturday and Sunday, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 409-885-3613.

- MAY 2: **Basket Weaving Workshop**, Sam Bell Maxey House SHP, Paris, 903-785-5716.
- MAY 2, 9, 16: **Wildflower/Nature Hikes**, Lake Somerville SP/Birch Creek Unit, Somerville, 409-535-7763.
- MAY 3: **Wildflower Tour**, Cleburne SF, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.
- MAY 5: **Stagecoach Day**, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.
- MAY 9 **Bird Fly-In**, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793.
- MAY 13 **Open House**, Mother Neff SP, Moody, 254-853-2389.
- MAY 16: **Endangered and Threatened Species**, Sam Bell Maxey House SHP, Paris. 903-785-5716.
- MAY 19: **Kids' Wilderness Survival**, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.
- MAY 23: **"MADder N Hell" Bicycle Rally**, Ray Roberts Lake

- SP/Isle de Bois Unit, Pilot Point, 940-686-2148.
- MAY 30: **Cowboy Campfire Poetry and Stories**, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

PINEYWOODS

- MAY: **Canoeing the Parks**, the third Saturday of May, Martin Dies, Jr. SP/Angelina Neches/Dam B Unit, Jasper, 409-384-5231.
- MAY 1, 7, 8, 14, 15: **School Steam Train Excursions**, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 1-800-442-3951.
- MAY 1, 7, 8, 14, 15: **Great Texas Train Race**, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 1-800-442-8951.
- MAY 2: **Caddo House Dedication**, Caddoan Mounds SHP, Alt. 409-858-3218.
- MAY 2: **Birding Tour** Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.
- MAY 2: **The Things That Matter**,

Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

MAY 9: **Third Annual Southeast Texas Spring Migration**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP/Angelina Neches/Dam B Unit, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

MAY 9: **This is Your Land**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

MAY 9, 23: **Caddo Lake Ecotour**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

MAY 16: **Get Back to Nature**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

May 16, 30: **Guided Nature Trail Hike**, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

MAY 17: **Jet Boat and High Performance Outboard Races**, Atlanta SP, Atlanta, 903-796-6476.

MAY 23: **Hunters of the Night**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

MAY 23: **Composting and Recycling Class** Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

MAY 24: **Wildlife in Your World**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

MAY 30: **Predators**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

GULF COAST

MAY: **Guided Bird Walks**, daily, Goose Island SP, Rockport, 512-729-2858.

MAY: **Plantation House, Barn and Grounds Tours**, Wednesdays through Sundays, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 409-345-4656.

MAY 3: **History Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

MAY 3: **8th Annual Monumental "Bug Bash,"** Battleship Texas SHP, La Porte, 281-479-2431.

MAY 23: **Mayfest**, Fulton Mansion SHP, Rockport, 512-729-0386.

MAY 23: **Beachcombing Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

HILL COUNTRY

MAY: **Honey Creek Canyon Walk**, every Saturday, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch. 830-438-

2656.

MAY: **Painted Bunting Walk**, every Saturday, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643.

MAY: **Black-capped Vireo Seminar and Field Tour**, every second Tuesday, Kerr WMA, 915-247-1072.

MAY 1, 2, 15, 16, 29: **Green Cave Bat Flight Observation**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

MAY 1, 2, 15, 16, 29: **Primitive Cave Tour**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

MAY 2, 3: **Spring Walkfest**, Lost Maples SNA, Vanderpool, 830-966-3413.

MAY 9: **64th Anniversary of the Ira Caswell Nature Trail**, Blanco SP, Blanco, 830-833-4333.

MAY 14, 28: **Devils Waterhole Canoe Tour**, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

MAY 22-25: **Memorial Day Weekend Celebration**, X Bar Ranch, off I-10 near Sonora, 915-853-2688.

MAY 30: **Devil's Sinkhole Observation and Batflight**, Devil's Sinkhole SNA, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

BIG BEND COUNTRY

MAY: **Bird Banding**, call for dates, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, 915-426-3337.

MAY: **Birding Tour of San Solomon Cienega and Phantom Cave Springs**, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Toyahvale. 915-375-2370.

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

MAY 2 & 3: **Davis Mountains Complex Celebration**, Davis Mountains Complex, Fort Davis, 915-426-3099.

MAY 2: **Bus Tour**, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

MAY 2: **Spring Walking Bird Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

MAY 16: **Bus Tour**, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

MAY 23, 24, 25, **Desert Survival**

Workshop, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

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

MAY 2, 16, 30: **Lomita Ranch Tour**, Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-585-1107.

MAY 2, 23: **Wildflowers and Brush Identification Tour**, Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit, Calliham, 512-786-3868.

MAY 6, 20: **Nature Tours**, Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-585-1107.

MAY 9: **All About Alligators**, Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit, Calliham, 512-786-3868.

JUNE

PANHANDLE-PLAINS

JUNE 1: **Youth Fishing Contest** Lake Arrowhead SP, Wichita Falls, 940-528-2211.

JUNE 6: **Dinosaur Walk** San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

JUNE 6: **National Trails Day** Fort Richardson SHP, Jacksboro, 940-567-3506.

JUNE 6, 13, 20, 27: **Nature Walks and Sunset Tales** Big Spring SP, Big Spring 1-800-734-7641.

JUNE 6: **Rough Fish Contest** Lake Arrowhead SP, Wichita Falls, 940-528-2211.

JUNE 6: **Annual Pioneer Day** Abilene SP, Tuscola, 915-572-3204.

JUNE 6: **National Trails Day Celebration** Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, 806-455-1492.

JUNE 13: **Petroglyph Tour** San Angelo SP, Quitaque, 915-949-4757.

JUNE 20: **Stargazing Party** San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

JUNE 27: **Flintknapping** Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

JUNE: **Traditional Cowboy Music**

Concert, call for dates and times, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

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

JUNE 1-4: **Wild Outdoor Ecology Program** Palmetto SP, Gonzales, 830-672-3266.

JUNE 6: **Fish and Play Day** Puritis Creek SP, Eustace. 903-425-2332.

JUNE 6, 7: **Living History Days** Confederate Reunion Grounds SHP, Mexia, 254-562-5751.

JUNE 6: **75th Anniversary and Open House** Lake Somerville SP/Nails Creek Unit, Ledbetter, 409-289-2392.

JUNE 6: **Youth Fishing Tournament** Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793.

JUNE 6: **Free Fishing/Angler Education/Open House** Eisenhower SP, Denison, 903-465-1956.

JUNE 6: **Grand Opening of State Railway** Lake Mineral Wells SP, Mineral Wells, 940-328-1171.

JUNE 6: **Free Fishing Day** Bonham SP, Bonham, 903-583-5022.

JUNE 6: **Night Hike** Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

JUNE 6-7: **Living History Days**, Fort Parker SHP, Mexia, 817-562-5751.

JUNE 10, 11, 12, 24, 25, 26: **Junior Ranger Programs** Sam Bell Maxey House SHP, Paris, 903-785-5716.

JUNE 12: **Open House** Lockhart SP, Lockhart, 512-398-3479.

JUNE 13: **Annual Texas Water Safari** Palmetto SP, Gonzales, 830-672-3266.

JUNE 13: **Stagecoach Rides** Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

JUNE 23: **Kids' Wilderness Survival** Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

JUNE 27: **Night Sounds** Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

PINEYWOODS

JUNE 1-6: **National Fishing Week Celebration**, Texas Freshwater

Fisheries Center, Athens, 903-676-2277

JUNE 6: **Take a Kid Fishing Day**, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, 903-676-2277

JUNE: **Canoeing the Forks**, third Sunday of each month, Martin Dies, Jr. SP/Angelina Neches/Dam B Unit, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

JUNE 6: **Get Back to Nature** Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

JUNE 6, 20, 27: **Guided Nature Trail Hike** Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

JUNE 6: **Free Sport Fishing Day** Lake Livingston SP, Livingston, 409-365-2201.

JUNE 6: **Open House** Lake Bob Sandlin SP, Pittsburg, 903-572-5531.

JUNE 6: **10th Anniversary of Park, Car Show** Lake Bob Sandlin SP, Pittsburg, 903-572-5531.

JUNE 6: **Diamond Jubilee** Martin Dies, Jr. SP/Angelina Neches/Dam B Unit, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

JUNE 6: **Open House** Lake Livingston SP, Livingston, 409-365-2201.

JUNE 6: **Eighth Annual Kids' Fish Flop Tournament** Martin Dies, Jr. SP/Angelina Neches/Dam B Unit, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

JUNE 13: **Pre-Juneteenth Celebration** Martin Creek Lake SP, Tatum, 903-836-4336.

JUNE 13: **Water, We Can't Live Without It** Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

JUNE 13: **Boater Education Class** Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

JUNE 13, 27: **Caddo Lake Ecotour** Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

JUNE 20, 22: **Herbal Care for You and Your Pet** Martin Dies, Jr. SP/Angelina Neches/Dam B Unit, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

JUNE 20: **Clear the Air** Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

JUNE 21: **Jet Boat and High Performance Outboard Races** Atlanta SP, Atlanta, 903-796-6476.

JUNE 27: **Steam Train**

Restoration Tour Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 1-800-442-8951.

JUNE 27: **Hunters of the Night** Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3351.

GULF COAST

JUNE: **Plantation House, Barn and Grounds Tours**, Wednesdays through Sundays, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 409-345-4656.

JUNE 6: **Pathway to Fishing** Goose Island SP, Rockport, 512-729-2858.

JUNE 6: **Open House and Children's Fishing Tournament** Sheldon Lake SP, Houston, 281-456-9350.

JUNE 6: **National Fishing Day** Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

JUNE 7: **Marine Ecosystems Tour** Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

JUNE 12: **Beachcombing Tour** Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

JUNE 13: **Lighthouse History Tour** Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

HILL COUNTRY

JUNE: **Black-capped Vireo Seminar and Field Tour**, every second Tuesday, Kerr WMA, Hunt, 915-247-1072.

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

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

JUNE 4, 11, 18, 25: **Devils Waterhole Canoe Tour** Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

JUNE 4, 11, 18, 25: **Sunset Bat Watch** Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

JUNE 5, 12: **Green Cave Bat Flight Observation** Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342

JUNE 5, 12: **Primitive Cave Tour**

Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

JUNE 6: **Fishing Clinic** Lyndon B. Johnson SHP, Stonewall, 830-644-2252.

JUNE 6, 13: **Devil's Sinkhole Observation and Batflight** Devil's Sinkhole SNA, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

JUNE 19: **Father's Day Family Weekend X Bar Ranch**, off I-10 near Sonora, 915-853-2688.

JUNE 27: **Dutch Oven Cooking** Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, 830-438-2656.

BIG BEND COUNTRY

JUNE: **Bird Banding**, call for dates and times, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, 915-426-3337.

JUNE: **Birding Tour of San Solomon Cienega and Phantom Cave Springs**, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Toyahvale, 915-375-2370.

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

JUNE 6, 20: **Bus Tour** Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

JUNE 13: **75th Anniversary and Open House** Magoffin Home

SHP, El Paso. 915-533-5147.

JUNE 20: **Seminole Tours** Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

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

JUNE 6: **Adobe Days** Casa Navarro SHP, San Antonio, 210-226-4801.

JUNE 11: **Grand Opening of Park Headquarters and Open House**, Falcon SP, Falcon Heights, 956-848-5327.

JUNE 13, 27: **Lomita Ranch Tour** Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-585-1107.

JUNE 13: **Wildflowers and Brush Identification Tour** Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit, Calliham, 512-786-3868.

JUNE 20, 27: **All About Alligators** Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit, Calliham, 512-786-3868.

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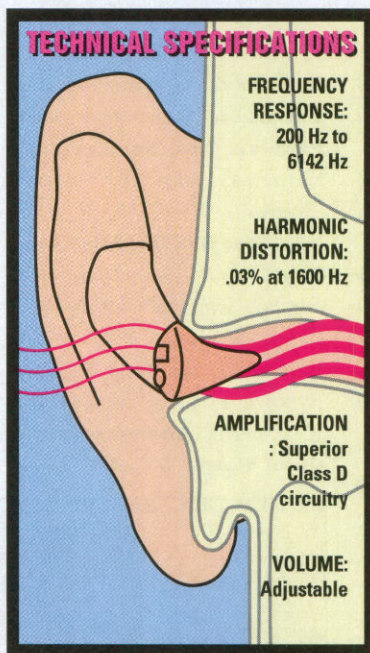
by Harold Sturman

One day a friend asked my wife Jill if I had a hearing aid. "He certainly does," replied Jill, "Me!" After hearing about a remarkable new product, Jill finally got up the nerve to ask me if I'd ever thought about getting a hearing aid. "No way," I said. "It would make me look 20 years older and cost a fortune." "No, no," she replied. "This is entirely different. It's not a hearing aid...it's Crystal Ear!"

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most cases it goes completely untreated. For many millions of people, hearing devices are way too expensive, and the retail middlemen want to keep it that way. What's more, treating hearing loss the old retail way can involve numerous office visits, expensive testing and adjustments to fit your ear. Thanks to Crystal Ear, the "sound solution" is now affordable and convenient. Almost 90% of people with mild hearing loss, and millions more with just a little hearing dropoff, can be dramatically helped with Crystal Ear. Plus, its superior design is energy-efficient, so batteries can last months, not just weeks.

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pass on to you. The conventional companies, domestic and foreign, don't like that!

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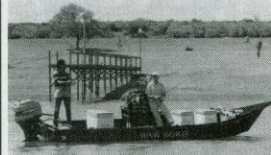
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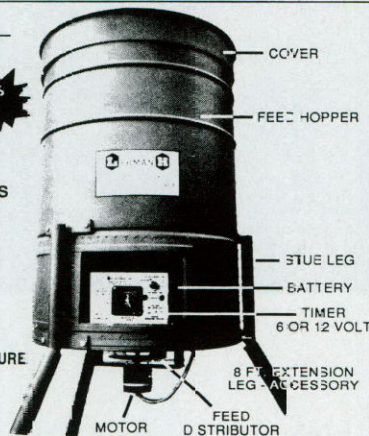
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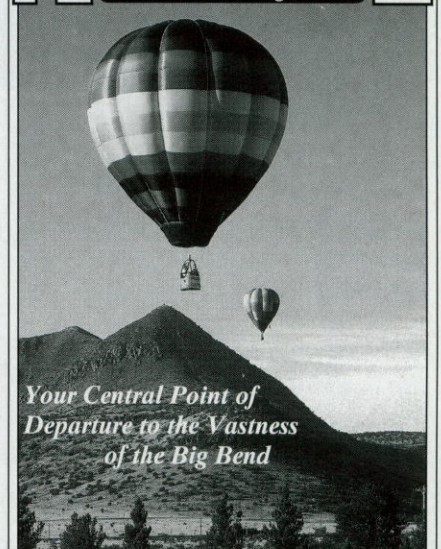
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SLEIGHT OF LENS

This springtime wildflower tapestry seems to almost pop from the page like a hologram in this crystal-clear photograph taken in Llano County by Rusty Yates, who captured this one windless image shot using a 75-second exposure, though the in-camera meter only allowed for a 15-second exposure. Rusty achieved his desired longer exposure by calculating that he needed to use an $f/22$ setting to get this shot captured on Fuji Velvia film. He also employed a tripod and shutter release cable to prevent movement of his Pentax 645 camera, equipped with a 75mm $f/2.8$ lens.



A wide stance does more than just make Dakota look athletic. It increases stability.



We code many of Dakota's plastic parts for the day they can be recycled. Because, like you, we think the world of the environment.



You'll find all sorts of happy little surprises in this roomiest-in-class interior. For example, hidden beneath the Club Cab rear seat are storage bins.

We gave Dakota quick-ratio, variable-assist power steering, for speedy response and a solid feel.

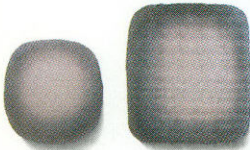


The front shoulder belts feature five different height adjustments. It's a little convenience that turns into a very big convenience on long trips.

You can opt for a premium Infinity® stereo system with cassette and CD player in Dodge Dakota. Eight speakers in six locations kick out some real concert-quality sound.



The recline of civilization.



Dakota was the first truck in its class with standard dual airbags.* No surprise there.

A dedication to safety is something you've come to expect from Dodge.



CDs, cell phones and other everyday necessities can be conveniently stowed away in Dakota's optional mini business console.

We cater to your individual needs... by offering a seat that does, too. For instance, adjustable lumbar support is available.



Dakota Club Cab's front seats can be reclined 27°. So kick back.



You get a genuine forward-facing rear seat in Dakota Club Cab, with enough hip room to seat three across. Your passengers will be beside themselves with comfort.

Surprise. Dodge Dakota just received the J.D. Power and Associates award for "Most Appealing Compact Pickup" in the first year since its redesign.**

*Always use seat belts. Remember a backseat is the safest place for children. Rearward-facing child seats can be used in the front seat only with the passenger airbag turned off. **J.D. Power and Associates 1997 APEAL Study. Automotive Performance, Execution, and Layout Study™. Study based on a total 29,187 consumer responses.



Club Cab Sport 4x4

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