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# TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

AUGUST 1998

## PRIME TIME

Where to Hunt, What  
to Hunt & Where to Stay

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On State Park Grounds

### **SALTWATER FEVER**

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# TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

August 1998

## ★ GROUNDS FOR CELEBRATION ★

- ★ **14** **Show Me the Fish!** Nine coastal state parks provide prime access to the big three of Texas saltwater fishing: red-fish, speckled trout and flounder. *by Turk Pipkin*
- ★ **41** **Where the Stars at Night are Big and Bright** The dark skies over Texas state parks are perfect places for stargazing, and several parks offer special activities and programs for amateur astronomers. *by Ann P. White*

## FEATURES

- A3** **Build a Game Plan for Game** Here's a look at what Texas Parks and Wildlife experts predict for the fall hunting seasons. *by Larry D. Hodge*
- A9** **Tracking Down a Hunt** Hunting opportunities abound, including all-season leases, weekend guided hunts and state land opportunities. Here are some tips for getting started on your quest for the perfect hunting lease. *by G. Elaine Acker*
- A14** **A Primer for Wing Shooting** Before heading out for the opening of dove season next month, try patterning targets at measured distances to make sure your shotgun is ready for the big day. *by Russell Tinsley*
- 48** **Rewarding Reclamation** The innovative Landowner Incentive Program awards grants to assist landowners in protecting rare species. *by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers*

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## COVERS

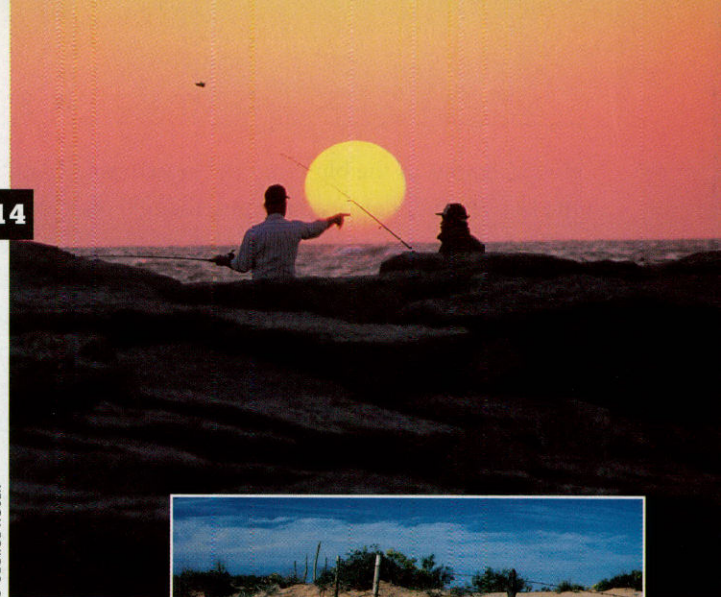
**Front:** What are your chances of seeing a handsome buck such as this one during the upcoming season? See the hunting forecast on page A3. This South Texas buck had a gross Boone and Crockett score of 215 $\frac{1}{8}$ . Photo © Mike Searles. Nikon N90S camera, 300mm 2.8 Nikkor lens, Fuji Velvia film.

**Inside Back:** For a real thrill on the Texas coast this summer, try windsurfing. Photo © Erich Schlegel. Nikon F3 camera, 300mm 2.8 Nikkor lens, 1/500 second at f/5.6, Fuji 100 film.

**Back:** Sandbill cranes provide late-season action for hunters in the western two-thirds of Texas. Photo © John R. Ford. Canon EOS 1N camera, Canon 400 2.8 lens, Fuji Velvia film.

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

14



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48



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A3



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We pulled out of the big ramp at Goose Island State Park in the hot summer dawn, and before the rich pink lining left the clouds we were catching speckled trout. My son and I, along with our friend Brad Smythe, experienced one of those magical mornings together on a shallow reef in San Antonio Bay when it seemed like the more beautiful the sunrise became, the more fish we caught — so many, in fact, that we stopped well short of our limits and, with plenty of trout for the table, left to try the great redfish in the full light of day.

Throughout the beaches and bays of Texas, as Turk Pipkin writes in this issue, state parks such as Goose Island are the venue for the finest coastal fishing in America. For managers like my colleagues Stormy Reeves at Goose Island and Ronny Gallagher at Matagorda, providing this spectacular experience to you is an immense source of pride, albeit an increasingly difficult challenge as the escalating demands on them can sometimes be overwhelming.

Now these and many other such treasured Texas places become magnets for the arrival of millions of winged migrants

from throughout the hemisphere, constantly in our skies from September to May. The coming of the birds is also the beginning of the license year for all of us and this month outdoors people will be packing in to sporting goods stores and thousands of other locations across the state.

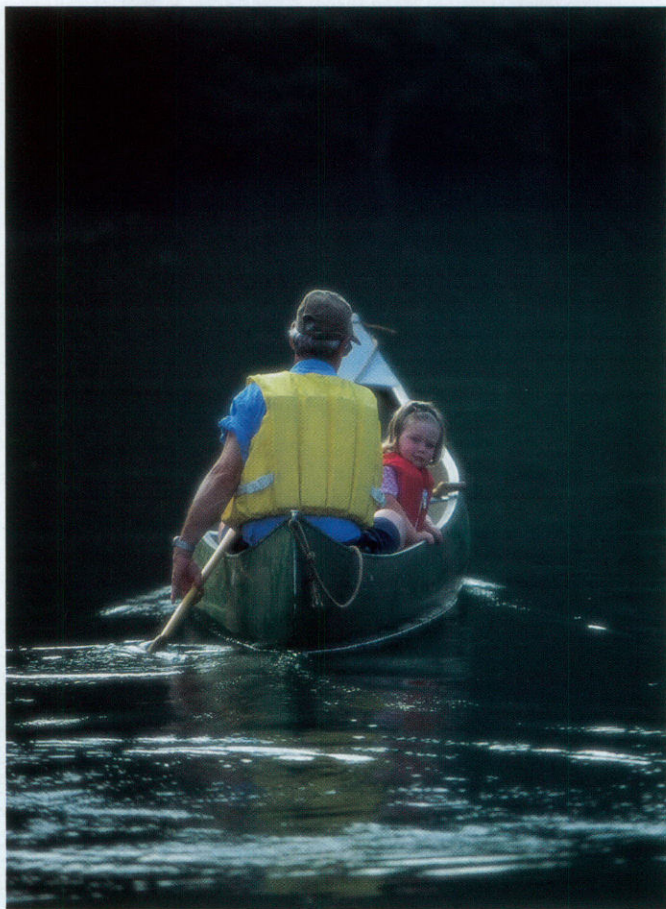
We've got a surprise for you.

In response to feedback from hunters, anglers and merchants throughout the state, this year's license will be smaller, created from a single piece of water-resistant plastic material, and far less complicated. These changes are a direct result of comments received from our customers who use the outdoors, and we are very excited about the new format and hope you are as well.

After all, it's more than a license; it's your membership card in the greatest outdoor program in the world and as you sit on a tank at twilight in September and watch the birds come in, you can be proud that your dollars helped make it happen.

ANDREW SANSOM, *Executive Director*

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



© DAVID J. SAMS

*Floating along a Texas waterway can be a great family outing, and many state parks provide excellent rivers and streams for just such outings. We'll tell you about them next month.*

PADDLING THE PARKS

Join G. Elaine Acker as she paddles down some of the cool and refreshing waterways in state parks.

FISH AND LOAVES

Seedballs and seining are parts of an educational program conducted at South Llano River State Park for students at Junction Middle School.

CANOEING THE BIG THICKET

Thad Sitton explores the waters, foliage and history of the Big Thicket National Preserve, finding Hairy Green Eyes and Stinking Fleabane — and reporting that many of the region's old-time river-loggers didn't know how to swim. A map of canoeing routes accompanies the story.

THE HEART OF A BOWHUNTER

Larry D. Hodge explains that harvesting a deer is not his most important goal in this time-honored sport.

THE DEVIL'S CIGAR

Found only in Texas and Japan, one of the world's rarest and loveliest fungi will make its annual appearance next month in crannies of Central and North-Central Texas.



# TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

AUGUST 1998, Vol. 56, No. 8

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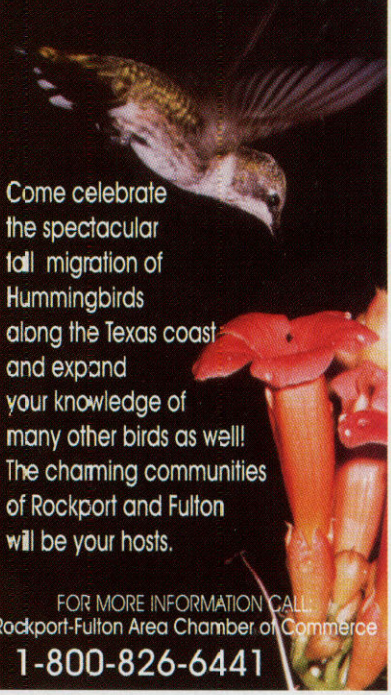
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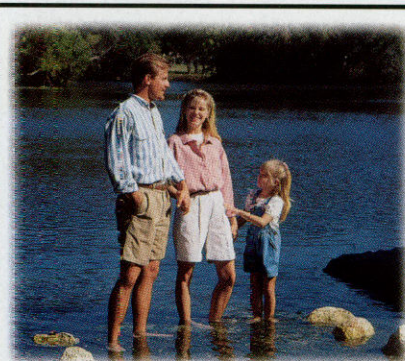
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**NURTURING WILDLIFE**

My son and I were returning home from errands last weekend when we came upon a truck parked on the shoulder of the road. As I slowed down, we saw that in front of the truck, a woman was kneeling over the body of a dead deer.

Thinking she had struck the deer, I circled back to offer assistance. I was surprised when I walked around the hood of the truck and saw that the kneeling woman was milking an eviscerated doe, and expressing the milk into a plastic bottle.

Turns out the woman was Debra Hendricks of Wildlife Rescue. "She's only been dead a short time," explained Debra, "and since she is obviously lactating, I cut her open to make sure she was not still carrying a fawn. Her fawn could be somewhere nearby, so I'll check the deer trails behind us. Even if we don't find her fawn, the nutrients and antibodies in this colostrum-rich milk will help us save another orphaned fawn's life. We have dozens right now."

Each year, more than 100 fawns are brought to Austin's Wildlife Rescue. Unlike the true orphan left behind by this unfortunate doe, many fawns are mistakenly "rescued" from the wild when in fact the mother deer may have left momentarily to feed or drink. The sad truth is that these fawns are most often fawnnapped; not rescued.

People who capture a fawn thinking they are performing an act of kindness are often surprised when the game warden comes calling to issue a fine and carry the fawn away. The fawns are taken to volunteer organizations, such as Wildlife Rescue, where they are cared for by trained rehabbers best prepared to reintroduce sick, orphaned or injured animals to the wild.

The wildlife rescue organizations throughout the state survive through donations of time and money. To receive a list of Texas wildlife rescue organizations,

and a reprint of "The Bambi Myth," *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, June 1985, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Texans for Wildlife Rescue, c/o *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, 3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, TX 78704.

Thanks!

*Susan Short*

Wow!

When I saw the cover of the June issue, I just said "Wow!" Thanks for the dreams and information.

Grady Goetz  
South Padre Island



**BEACH TRASH**

Thanks for your recent article on hiking in state parks (May). It spurred me to take the ferry to Matagorda Island and hike all around. It is a priceless place of beauty and solitude.

I left, however, with a burr under my saddle. As I walked the beaches I was angered and saddened at the immense amount of washed-up trash, mainly plastic bottles. At some places (and I do not exaggerate) it felt like walking through a landfill. As I looked out to sea from these fouled beaches I noted a large concentration of oil rigs. I realize this is circumstantial evidence, but where else could such a huge volume of spoilage come from? I live in Rockport where there also are rigs off the beaches, but we have no such volume of debris on our beaches.

Jonah Freedman  
Rockport

• Ronny Gallagher, park manager: "The beach management policy for Matagorda Island State Park is to allow the beach to be in its natural state. This policy is in practice so the island can continue to grow and mature.

When debris such as plastic bottles, drink cans, lumber, trees and seaweed wash up on the beach, it stays in its resting place. These items normally are covered by sand as the island continues to mature. Eventually, dunes form over this debris and then the dunes are covered with vegetation. Over time, the debris decomposes and breaks down. As a result of the policy, the beach at Matagorda Island is one of the few beaches along the Gulf Coast that is not eroding. Other beaches along the coast are raked and scraped on a daily basis. The cost of this activity is tremendous, both to the state and to local counties. Because of this, those beaches have almost no biological life on them.

"Twice a year Matagorda Island State Park participates in the Great Texas Beach Trash-Off. This activity usually draws 100 volunteers who clean two to 2½ miles of the beach, which generates about 10 to 12 tons of trash!

"Where does the trash come from? Most of the trash comes out of the rivers along the Gulf Coast and Mexico. This trash is washed down the Colorado, Trinity, Brazos, Mississippi and other rivers that flow through major metropolitan and rural areas. Other trash is from commercial shipping, recreation and commercial fishing, and oil and gas exploration.

"The only way to stop the trash from washing up on Texas beaches is to stop it from getting into the rivers. When trash is thrown on the ground, in a creek bed or in the river, it will find its way to the coast and on the beach."

**DISAPPEARING NIGHTHAWKS**

Your stated objective is to "manage and conserve."

A wonderful piece on land stewardship featuring Barbara Kana and Fielding Harwell (June) was followed by an article that missed your objective. The well-written piece on goatsuckers failed to discuss declining numbers.

I am not the only one saddened that "bullbats" and purple martins are not returning as before each spring. We scan the empty skies and listen in vain.

Dan Lay  
Nacogdoches

• Noreen Damude, Wildlife Division: "The North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) indeed shows both common nighthawk (bullbats) and purple martin populations are undergoing local long-term declines, especially in the northern portions of their breeding range. The reasons for these declines, however, are poorly understood and present a curious paradox. Unlike many other neotropical migratory



**L E T T E R S**

species, both birds have long enjoyed a positive association with human beings and urban landscapes. While there have been lots of theories put forward to explain the declines, there have been no convincing studies done to identify specific causes.

"As nighthawks are totally dependent on large numbers of aerial insects for food, any major decline in insect numbers on their wintering or breeding grounds would have a deleterious effect. Habitat loss and heavy pesticide use have been put forward as possible contributing factors. The suppression of forest fires also has been implicated as it reduced the availability of burned-over areas so favored for nesting in rural areas.

"Another intriguing theory for the recent decline of bullbats in the city is the change in urban architecture. There are no longer as many flat-topped apartment houses and businesses with open gravel ballast roofs. Many now have rubber roof material in place of the gravel. Moreover, with remodeling and expansion of other older buildings, gravel ballast roofs are increasingly replaced by rooftops filled with a clutter of pipes and rooftop units. For common nighthawks, it would be interesting to see if retaining the use of flat-topped gravel ballast roofs might restore numbers in urban areas."

**ERRATA:** An article in the April 1998 issue of Texas Parks & Wildlife mistakenly stated that Pierce Ranch operated Karankawa Plains Outfitting Company. Karankawa Plains Outfitting Company is not operated by Pierce Ranch, nor does Pierce Ranch receive any rents, fees or any other income whatsoever from the operation of the Karankawa Plains Outfitting Company. No Pierce Ranch employees are furnished by Pierce Ranch to the management or operations of the Karankawa Plains Outfitting Company, nor does Pierce Ranch sponsor or endorse the Karankawa Plains Outfitting Company in any way.

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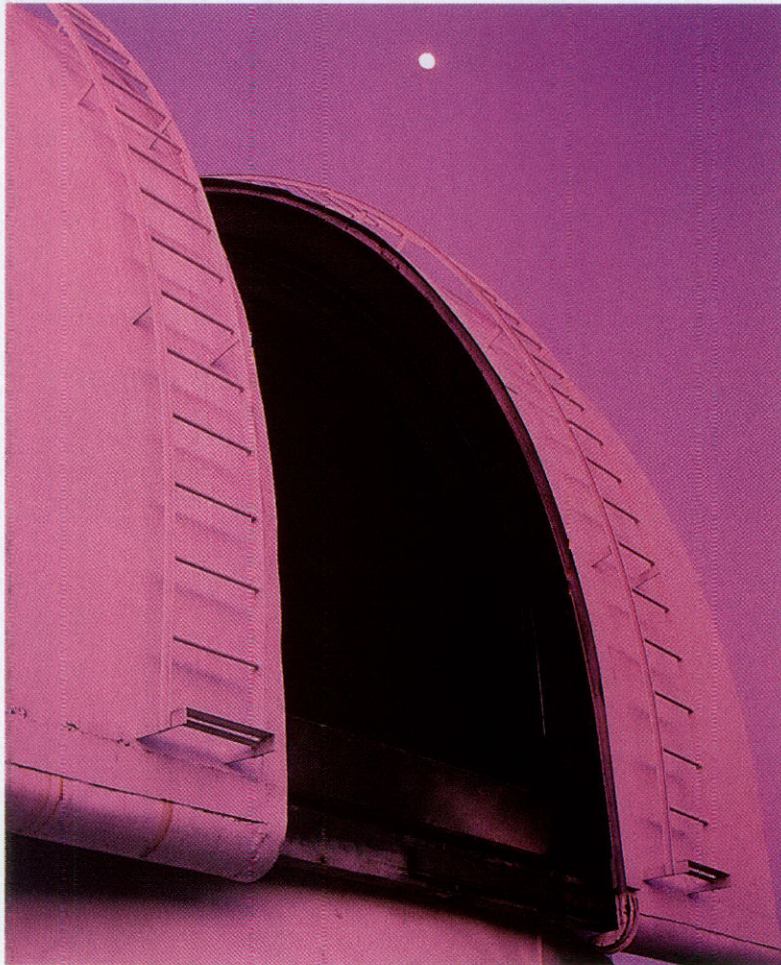
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# Trail Mix

Edited by Mary-Love Bigony



TEXAS DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION

## Seeing Stars at Brazos Bend

For Houstonians accustomed to looking up at the night sky and seeing a hazy nothingness, Astronomy Day at the George Observatory on Saturday, September 26, should open some eyes to the vastness of space.

Located in Brazos Bend State Park, some 55 miles from downtown Houston, the George Observatory is far enough away from the city lights to allow excellent viewing of the night sky. Astronomy Day activities begin at 4 p.m. and viewing begins at dusk. Events include a walk-through tour of a Solar System model, a tour of the observatory's dome and telescopes, a "virtual tour" of space via computers to see eclipses, planets and galaxies in a new perspective, and more.

Park entry fee is \$3; children 12 and younger are admitted free. There is no charge for Astronomy Day events. For more information call 713-639-4777.

For more on astronomy in state parks, see stories by Ann P. White and G. Elaine Acker beginning on page 41.

## Training the Trainers

Texasans who share a love for youth and aquatic resources are invited to participate in a Sportfishing Project training session September 18 through 20 at Camp Buckner, near Burnet. This train-the-youth-trainer workshop will equip volunteer and professional youth workers with the knowledge to serve as instructors and mentors to youth in their home counties. Each participant will have the opportunity to specialize in

one of the project's five disciplines: angling skills, aquatic ecology, tackle crafting, people and fish and project coordination.

The registration fee is \$80 per person, which includes meals, program materials and refreshments. Affordable lodging is available at the training site or at nearby campgrounds. Prospective trainees are encouraged to approach local organizations and businesses about

sponsoring their participation. Workshop organizers suggest starting with the county 4-H coordinator for suggestions of where local support may be found.

The workshop is sponsored by the Texas 4-H Youth Program and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. For more information call Larry Hysmith at 409-845-4865 or by e-mail at <lhysmith@tamu.edu>.



### Lake Mineral Wells Trailway is a Hit

The grand opening of Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway, made possible by a joint effort between Texas Parks and Wildlife, the city of Mineral Wells and the city of Weatherford, took place Saturday, June 6. It is the newest addition in a national movement led by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, which champions converting abandoned railway corridors to public trails. The 20-mile trail, which opened on March 21, is already a huge hit, according to Park Manager Steve Jones.

The trail's surface is compacted crushed limestone, suitable not only for bikers and walkers, but also for equestrians and wheelchair-bound individuals.

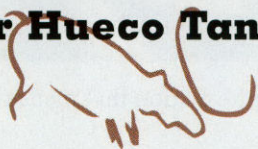
The scenic corridor runs primarily through farm and ranch land but also provides a transportation alternative for Mineral Wells citizens since it passes through business, school and residential areas within the city limits.

Also on June 6, Fort Richardson State Historical Park held the grand opening of its nine-mile hike, bike and equestri-

an trail that was created through a joint partnership between the city of Jacksboro, Jack County and Texas Parks and Wildlife. On the same day, Caprock Canyons State Park celebrated the ongoing success of its 64-mile trailway that opened in 1993.

For more information about the Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway, contact Andy Goldbloom, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Trails coordinator, at 512-389-4737 or the Lake Mineral Wells State Park and Trailway at 940-328-1171.

### New Rules for Hueco Tanks



After almost nine months of public input and staff review, Texas Parks and Wildlife leaders announced they will close some areas of Hueco Tanks State Historical Park and limit access to other areas to protect the park's priceless Native American rock art, archeological sites and other threatened resources. Beginning September 1, there will be two management zones in the park, a smaller area in the northwestern part of the park for unescorted access for approved activities, with escorted access only for most of the park. All access will be by advance reservation made through the park headquarters. All visitors will be required to attend a brief orientation before entering.

Several critically impacted areas will be closed immediately, including the areas known to climbers as 45-Degree Wall and Saint Vitus' Dance, as well as Archeological Site 17.

For more information on Hueco Tanks, call Carolina Ramos, El Paso State Park Complex manager, at 915-566-6441.



### Youngster Strums A Hit With Record Guitarfish

A 10-year-old boy fishing with his dad in the surf at Padre Island National Seashore in May broke a fish record. The youngster landed a 31.5-inch, 4.44-pound guitarfish, so named for its guitar-shaped body.

© A. J. GARCÉS



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## Selected Freshwater Fishes of Texas Poster

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## Trail Mix

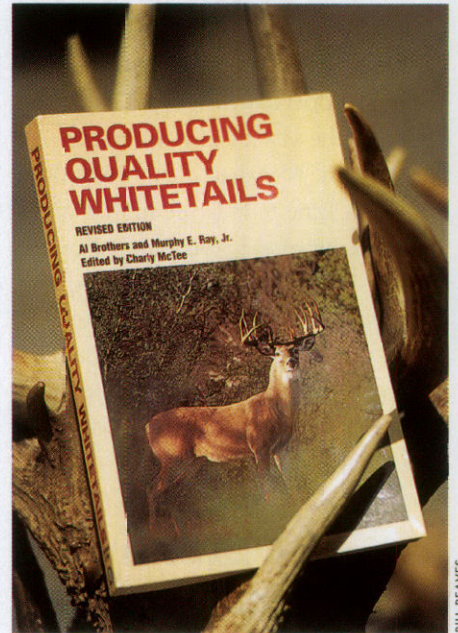
### Producing Quality Whitetails

A book that has been called "the bible of white-tailed deer management" has been revised and now is available.

Originally published in the 1970s, *Producing Quality Whitetails* became a classic among white-tailed deer enthusiasts. The new version, by biologists Al Brothers and Murphy E. Ray, Jr. and edited by Charly McTee, contains significant revisions and new material. The authors stress the economic importance of wildlife management to overall ranching operations and the integration of wildlife management with range and livestock management.

The authors revised the book because the Texas landscape has changed significantly since the original and because there still is a big demand for the common-sense information that made the original so popular.

*Producing Quality Whitetails* is available in soft cover for \$19.95, hard cover for \$29.95 and leather for \$99.95. For information call the Texas Wildlife Association at 800-460-5494.



BILL REAVES

## Jump In!

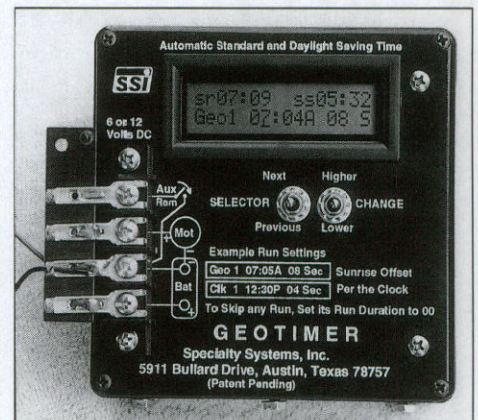
Join the 10th annual Frio River Cleanup on Saturday, September 12. Main staging points are at Leakey, Rio Frio and Concan. Volunteers will receive a souvenir and supper, and will be treated to entertainment in the evening at Garner State Park.

Advance registration and waiver are required. Call 830-232-6999 or e-mail <jm4999@sig.net>.

## Game Feeding Made Easy

The computer age has come to game feeding with a new product from Specialty Systems, Inc. in Austin. The microcomputer-based Geotimer recalculates sunrise and sunset times every day, changes to daylight savings time and back again and adjusts for leap years. Each feeding run can be programmed to have its own unique and precise run duration, from one to 99 seconds.

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P.O. Drawer K  
Orange, Texas  
77631-0267
- Pick up entry forms at participating  
Champion Boat and SUZUKI ATV  
Dealers.
- Via the Web at   
[www.americansportsman.com](http://www.americansportsman.com)  
or [www.adventureseries.com](http://www.adventureseries.com)

### WHO CAN FISH

Amateurs with a valid Texas or  
Louisiana (Toledo Bend only) fishing  
license. (Under 18 requires guardian consent)

### WHAT CAN YOU WIN

#### Qualifying Events

- Cash prizes at each tournament as  
listed above
- Fully-rigged Champion Boats with  
Mercury motors
- SUZUKI ATV's
- Trolling motors
- Rods, Reels, Tackle, Depth Finders, etc.

#### Championship Event

- \$100,000 in cash-1st place
- SUZUKI QuadRunner® 4x4
- SUZUKI QuadSport® 80

### THE CATEGORIES ARE

- Biggest Bass Per Hour  
(pays 7 places per hour)
- Even Weight Bass
- Noon Prize Drawings
- Ten Biggest Bass
- End of Day Drawings
- On-Site Public Drawings

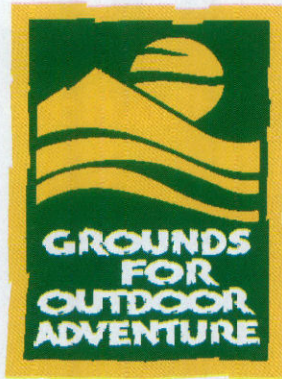
Watch FOX Sports Outdoors hosted by  
Nolan Ryan Sunday's 9am-11am on  
FOX Sports Southwest for additional  
information on The Big Bass Amateur  
Tournament Series.



TEXAS  
OUTDOOR  
ADVENTURE  
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or lock us up at: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

## Trail Mix

### Get Those Applications In

Hunters interested in applying for public hunts should mark the following dates on their calendars. They are the deadlines for getting applications to TPW.

Alligator, Aug. 4	Exotic, Oct. 6
Youth alligator, Aug. 4	Javelina, Oct. 6
Archery deer, Aug. 18	Youth javelina, Oct. 6
Archery exotic, Aug. 18	Guided exotic, Nov. 3
Pronghorn, Aug. 18	Feral hog, Nov. 3
Gun deer, Sept. 8	Spring turkey, Nov. 3
Youth deer, Sept. 8	

The *Applications for Drawings on Public Hunting Lands* booklet becomes available in mid-July at TPW offices across the state. Anyone who applied for hunts in last year's drawings will receive the booklet in the mail.

Licenses go on sale August 11. The best license deal is the \$49 SuperCombo, which consists of the combination hunting and fishing license and all seven state stamps. The SuperCombo can be purchased at thousands of retailers and TPW offices. Or call 1-800-TX-LIC-4-U and charge it to MasterCard® or Visa.®

### Did You Know?

Some 2.6 million people spent more than \$2.8 billion in Texas in 1996 on fishing equipment and fishing experiences.

Worldwide there are probably 15,000 to 20,000 species of butterflies; about 450 of these are known to live in Texas.

A moonbow is a rainbow that appears when the light of a full or almost full moon is refracted in a waterfall's mist.

The common Texas 'possum is unaffected by the bite of most poisonous snakes, including the copperhead, rattlesnake, and water moccasin.

In a study of 1,700 redhead ducks on the Laguna Madre, researchers found that the amount of gray head feathers on hens may provide definite clues in predicting their age.



### The Warden Chronicles

*Should I stay or should I go?*

While checking goose hunters in early January, Gray County warden Jerry Stucki saw a subject who had been hunting earlier that day take notice of him and take off in his truck. After a lengthy chase, Pampa police and DPS troopers finally stopped the subject. The man was cited for no seat belt, excessive speed and no insurance. When asked why he fled, the subject stated that he didn't have a hunting license.





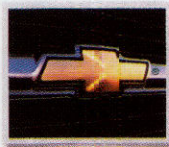
*The largest  
sport utility vehicle  
on the face  
of the planet.*

*Always was.*

*Still is.\**



CHEVY™ SUBURBAN®



LIKE A ROCK



# STATE PARK Scrapbook

“Y’ALL COME!”

BY ARLINDA ABBOTT

**I**N JUNE 1946 THE STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT reported that tourists were streaming into Texas in numbers exceeding the pre-war peak of 1941. To accommodate them, four visitors' stations were opened in the Texas border towns of Texarkana, Wichita Falls, Glenrio and Canutillo near El Paso.

Young war veterans attending the stations reported that some of the questions the tourists asked were “ridiculous.” Some wanted to know where the range wars were going on, or whether the country west of the Pecos was safe for the average tourist. One asked, “Will we need to carry our six-shooters on the streets of Ft. Worth?”

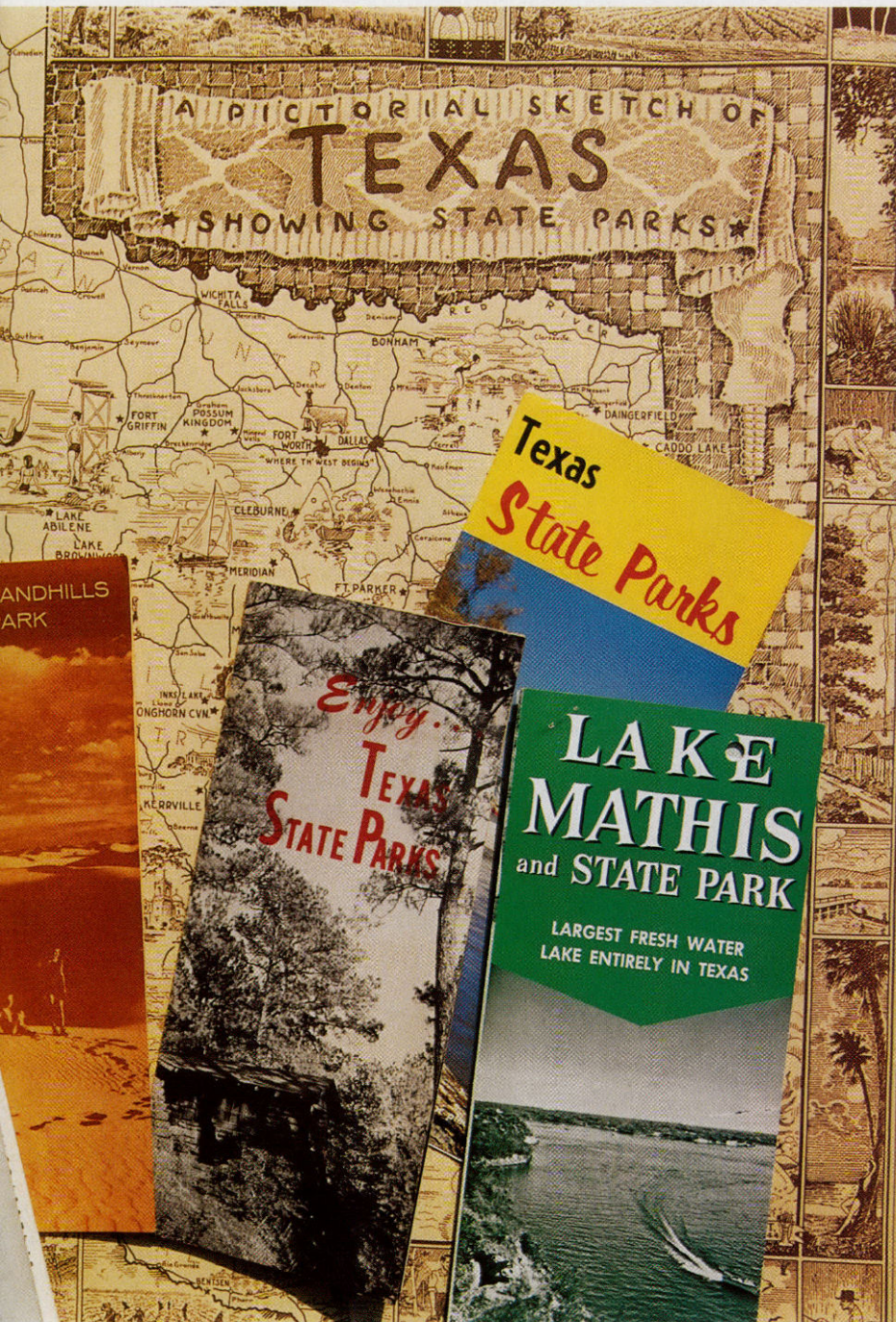
Among the literature tourists could receive at the information stations were state park brochures. The brochures presented here were issued between 1938 and 1962 when the parks were under the management of the Texas State Parks Board. They are not consistent in style, design or format; but the message is clear: Texas State Parks are rich in history and ideal for recreation. “Y’all come!”





STATE PARK BROCHURES

One of the earliest produced brochures was a two-color handout for Indian Lodge in Davis Mountains State Park. Dating from the late 1950s, this very simply designed brochure for Possum Kingdom State Park unfolds to reveal a detailed map of Possum Kingdom Lake. The brochure for Monahans Sandhills states: "For those who want the peace and solitude of the desert, there is always a quiet valley beyond the next dune where the sands lie quiet and rippling pure as if no one had ever set foot upon them." ENJOY TEXAS STATE PARKS, a mail-out folder, 1955-56, contained photographs and drawings highlighting activities state parks had to offer visitors. The full-color guide to Texas State Parks, circa 1962, probably was the last brochure produced for the Texas State Parks Board. In 1963 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was created by the consolidation of the State Parks Board and the Game, Fish and Oyster Commission.



**ANNIVERSARY  
EVENTS**

AUGUST

PINEYWOODS

**Aug. 8:** Celebration at Lake Raven, Huntsville SP, Huntsville, 409-295-5644

**Aug. 8:** 75th Anniversary Celebration, Tyler SP, Tyler, 903-597-5338

HILL COUNTRY

**Aug. 1:** Lava Fest, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643

**Aug. 5:** Roy B. Inks' Birthday Celebration, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

**Aug. 12:** Meteor Shower, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg, 915-247-3903

**Aug. 22:** Bat Flight at Green Cave, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342

SEPTEMBER

PANHANDLE-PLAINS

**Sept. 12:** Open House and Rededication, Abilene SP, Tuscola, 915-572-3204

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

**Sept. 12:** Cross Country Run for the Parks, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256

**Sept. 12:** 75th Anniversary Open House, Dinosaur Valley SP, Glen Rose, 254-897-4588

**Sept. 12:** 75th Anniversary Open House, Meridian SP, Meridian, 254-435-2536

**Sept. 12:** 75th Anniversary Celebration, Mother Neff SP, Moody, 254-853-2389

**Sept. 19:** "Return of Heroes" 150th Anniversary of Reburial, Monument Hill SHP (Kreische Brewery), La Grange, 409-968-5658

**Sept. 26:** Texian Days, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633

PINEYWOODS

**Sept. 6:** 75th Anniversary Celebration, Caddo Lake SP, Karnack, 903-679-3351

GULF COAST

**Sept. 5:** Triple Celebration, Lake Texana SP, Edna, 512-782-5718

**Sept. 12:** Surfing Contest, Mustang Island SP, Port Aransas, 512-749-5246

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

**Sept. 19-20:** Sebastopol's Pleasures and Pastimes, Sebastopol SHP, Seguin, 830-379-4833

**Sept. 26:** 75th Anniversary Celebration, Casa Navarro SHP, San Antonio, 210-226-4801

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

BILL REAVES



## S H O W M E

**A necklace of nine coastal state parks is bejeweled with prime access to the "big three" of salt-water angling: redfish, speckled trout and flounder.**

**by Turk Pipkin**

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT people who fish tend to divide themselves into two opposing camps: fans of the graceful fly rod vs. the good-old rod-n-reel; live bait vs. lures; freshwater or salt. And when the day is done, of course, there is the final division: those who caught fish and those who didn't. The secret of ending up in the first group usually lies in knowing where and when to go, and what to fish with when you get there.

The Texas Coast is one area where local knowledge is especially important. I should know. I grew up in dry West Texas and have since spent an inordinate amount of time unsuccessfully trying to catch up with the Old Salt learning curve. On one particularly bad day I decided my Gulf Coast mantra ought to echo Tom Cruise's Jerry McGuire, and I ran up and down the pier shouting, "Show me the fish! Show me the fish!"



# THEM MEET THE FISH!



MUEFANG ISLAND JETTY © GEORGE L. HOSEK



If you're also looking for a few good spots, you'll be happy to know that from Port Isabel Lighthouse in Brownsville to Sea Rim State Park near Port Arthur, nine state parks provide prime access to the big three of Texas saltwater fishing: redfish, speckled trout and flounder. Whether you're wade-fishing for the elusive redfish or dangling a baited hook beneath a pier, these parks provide a clean, safe and economical place to really catch some fish, as well as some spectacular scenery.

Although winter is not considered prime fishing time along the coast, this past February I embarked on a Sunday morning for a three-park fishing tour of the central coast between Port O'Connor and Port Aransas.

Matagorda Island State Park, one of

the wildest, most isolated areas in Texas, seemed like a good place to start. Accessible only by boat, the state park and wildlife management area at the north end of the island comprise almost 44,000 acres of pristine barrier island, providing some of the finest camping in the state.

Joining a dozen other birders, kayakers and fishermen on the state park ferry from Port O'Connor, we passed the half-hour boat ride watching majestic sandhill cranes and roseate spoonbills, and took turns leaning out over the bow to watch bottlenose dolphins dancing in the bow wake.

This is a real "Be prepared!" kind of park. There is no phone, electricity, food concession or drinking water. The ferry runs round-trip just three times a day,

Thursday through Sunday, and as I departed the captain gave me a friendly wave.

"Be back by four o'clock," he grins. "Or we'll see you Thursday morning."

The other visitors quickly boarded a van for the mile and a half shuttle ride past the lighthouse (built in 1852) and on to the rolling waves of the beach. Fishing rod, tackle and waders in hand, I took off on foot along the bay side and spent several arduous hours wading in 60-degree water.

Failing to find any fish at all, it was not until I returned to the dock area that a park employee told me to try the nearby Army Hole, only a 50-yard hike from where I'd started. Three casts later, I hooked into a sizable redfish, which I barely had time to bring to shore and

### Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park

This 57.6-acre park located in Jefferson County has excellent populations of redfish, speckled trout and flounder. A boat ramp provides access to Sabine Lake to the north and the Gulf of Mexico to the south. There also is a 1/4-mile waterfront for fishing and crabbing.

Location: 1.5 miles south of the City of Sabine Pass on Dowlen Road and 15 miles south of Port Arthur via State Highway 87.

Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park, c/o Sea Rim State Park, P. O. Box 1066, Sabine Pass, Texas 77655, 409-971-2451 (answering machine at the park), 409-971-2559 (Sea Rim State Park).

### Sea Rim State Park

15,373.3 acres of marshland with 5.2 miles of Gulf beach shoreline, Sea Rim State Park is in Jefferson County south of Port Arthur.

Fishing is permitted from both the Harrington Beach Unit and the Marshlands Unit.

Location: 20 miles south of Port Arthur on State

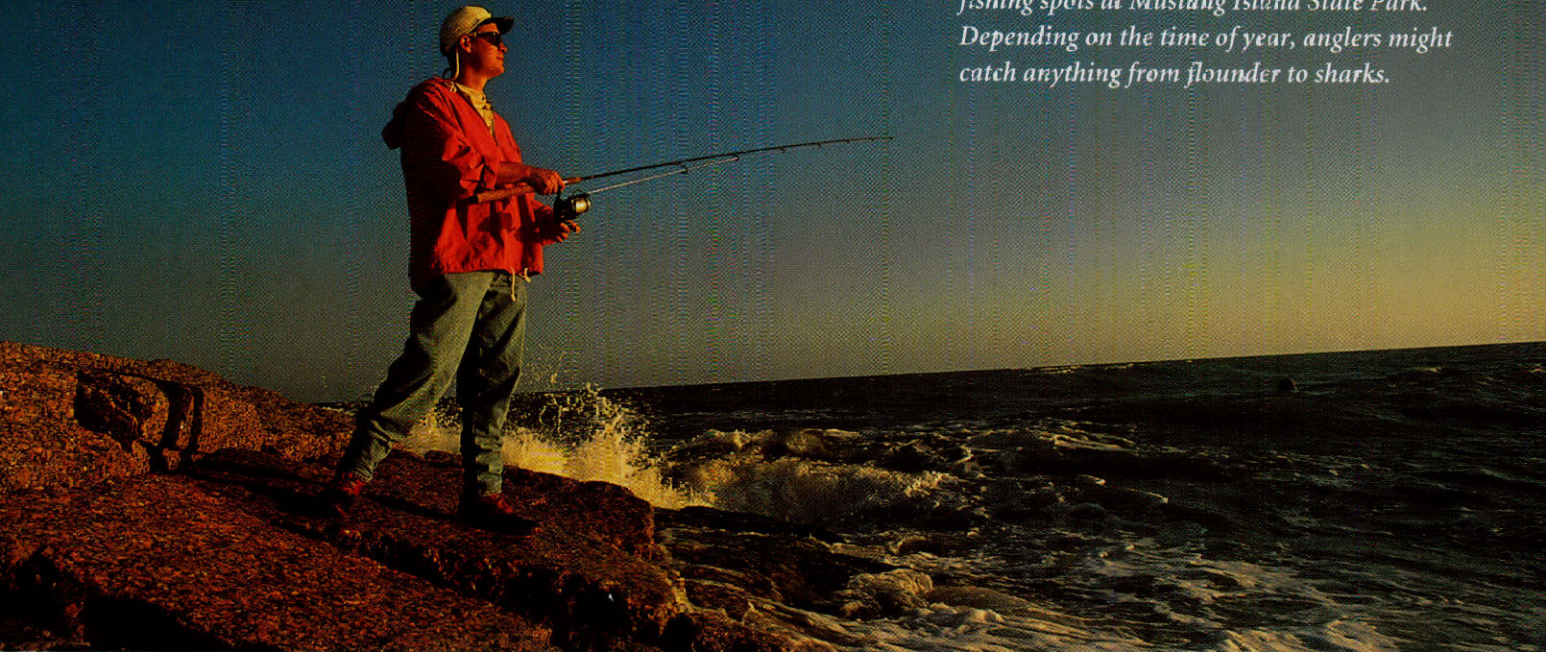
Highway 87.

Sea Rim State Park, P. O. Box 1066, Sabine Pass, Texas 77655, 409-971-2559.





*Granite jetties that reach several hundred feet into the Gulf of Mexico are popular fishing spots at Mustang Island State Park. Depending on the time of year, anglers might catch anything from flounder to sharks.*



© GEORGE EENCKENSTEIN



© GEORGE L. HOSEK

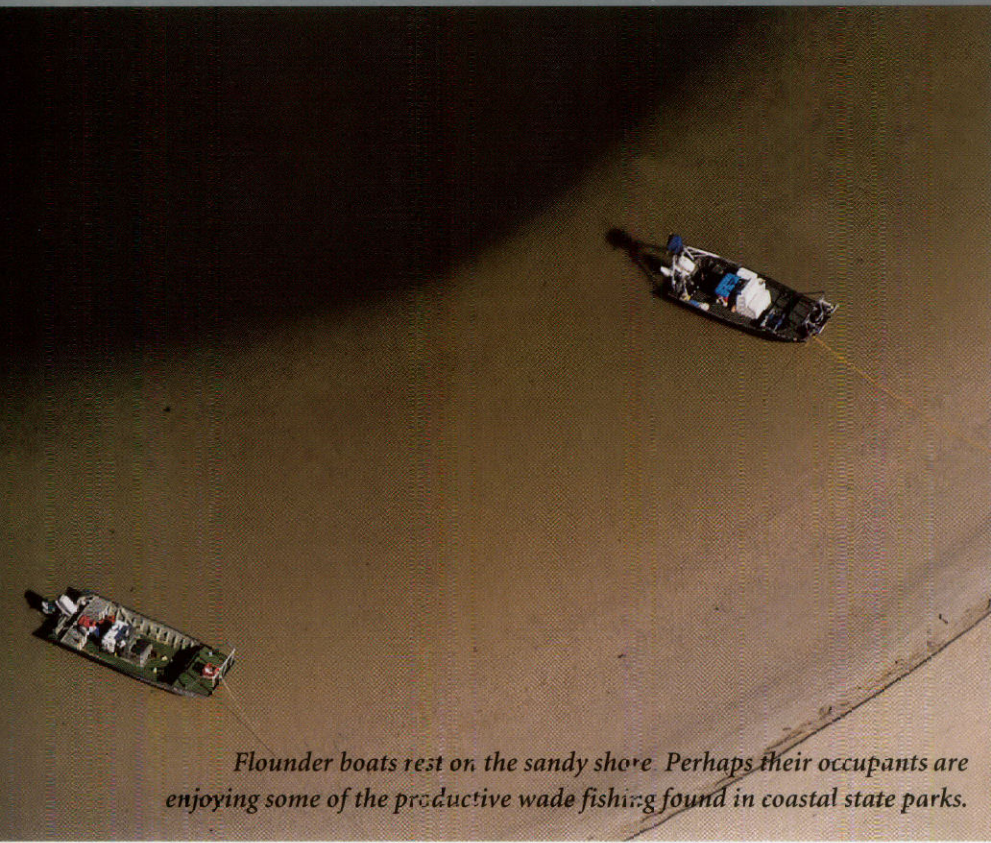
**Galveston Island State Park**

This 2,023-acre park provides beach or surf fishing for spotted seatrout, sandtrout, redfish, black drum, croaker and flounder. A concrete boat ramp is located at Pirates Cove adjacent to the park.

**Location:** From Seawall Boulevard go right (west) on Seawall (FM 3005) 10 miles to the park entrance.

Galveston Island State Park, 14901 FM 3005, Galveston, Texas 77554, 409-737-1222.





*Flounder boats rest on the sandy shore. Perhaps their occupants are enjoying some of the productive wade fishing found in coastal state parks.*

© GRADY ALLEN

release before making a mad dash for that last ferry.

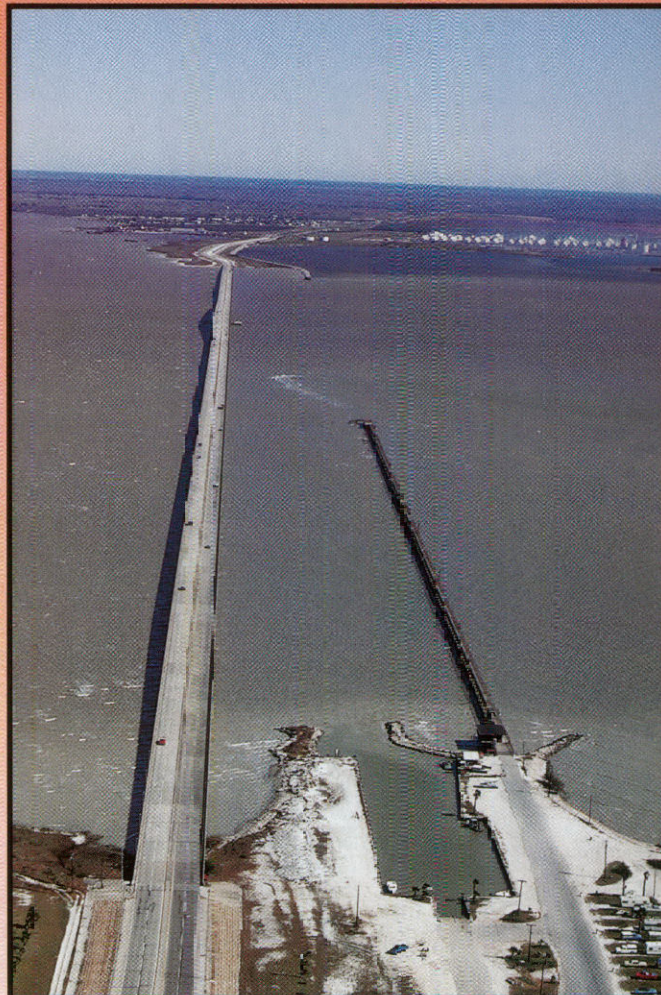
My plan for the evening was to head to Rockport and sit lazily on the pier at Copano Bay Fishing Pier, where I imagined that I'd be bringing in one trout after another by drifting live shrimp through the lighted waters below. But after finding no live bait at five different Rockport bait stands, I instead headed to the Boiling Pot for a big Cajun dinner of shrimp, sausage, corn and potatoes.

Feeling revived, I drove out to the pier to check out the action. Created in 1967 when the state cut out the middle section of the old causeway, Copano Bay Fishing Pier is comprised of the two remaining fishing piers, 2,500 and 6,200 feet long. The angling here is especially great in the spring when the trout move in from the Gulf, showing up first at the

### Port Lavaca State Fishing Pier

The old State Highway 35 causeway, which was destroyed in 1961 by Hurricane Carla, was converted into a 3,200-foot fishing pier. Facilities include lighted fishing pier, a restroom without showers, a nearby boat ramp, snack bar and a fish-cleaning facility.

Port Lavaca State Fishing Pier, 700 Lighthouse Beach Rd., Port Lavaca, Texas 77979. Operated by the City of Port Lavaca, 512-552-5311.



TPWD PHOTO





nearby Fulton Piers, then moving under the causeway into Copano Bay.

“Saturday nights it seems like half of San Antonio is fishing out here,” the manager of the southside pier told me as he took my \$2 fishing fee.

But late on a winter’s night, my only company was a billion stars and a brilliant white Milky Way, the bright likes of which I’ll never see from my home near the electric glow of Austin.

Once again, I was joined by a school of bottlenose dolphins gliding silently under the causeway, the only sound their exhalation as they arced above the surface. It was one of those glorious nights when I truly didn’t care if I caught any fish, which is probably why I actually caught trout after trout, just as I’d hoped, by casting a chartreuse plastic shad close to the pier’s pilings.

The next morning I discovered that everything had changed. A strong cold front had blasted through the Rockport area in the middle of the night, the temperature was in the mid-forties, and there was a steady gale blowing straight out of the north. This would, of course, be the day I’d be fishing from an open boat.

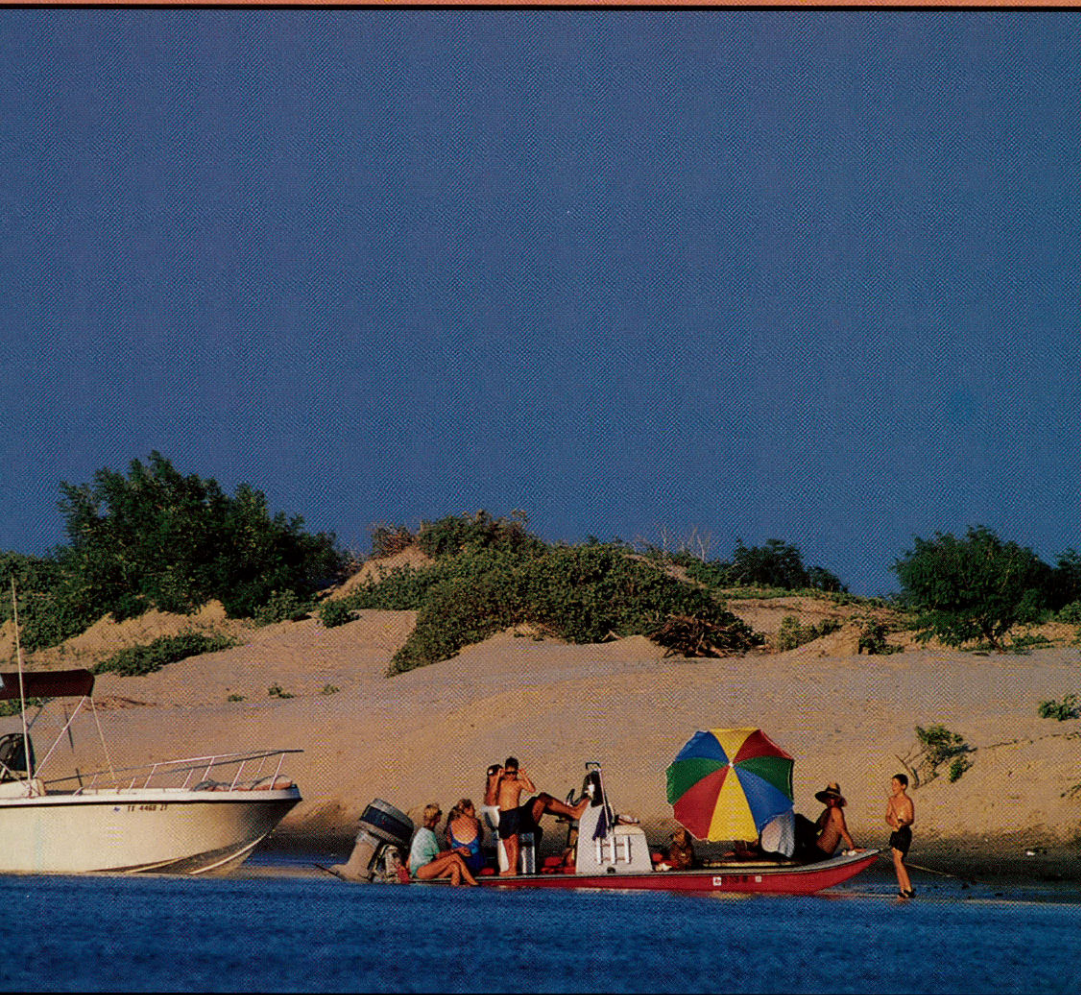
As local fishing guide Ethan Wells and I approached the boat ramp at Goose Island State Park, I was having serious doubts about the wisdom of our little fishing adventure.

Just five minutes north of Rockport–Fulton, Goose Island State Park has a lighted, 1,620-foot pier, access to a series of sandbars and reefs with excellent wadefishing, and a double-wide boat ramp that provides access to good fishing at Cedar Bayou, Mesquite Bay and a dozen other local hotspots.

**It was one of those glorious nights when I truly didn’t care if I caught any fish.**

With whitecaps on the water, soon Wells and I were racing across St. Charles Bay in his shallow-draft catamaran-hulled “Flat Scat.” Amazingly, the boat’s 125-horsepower outboard motor hydroplaned us right over the rough chop with hardly a bounce but alas, there was almost no protection against the bone-chilling wind.

Not far up the Intracoastal Canal, we stopped at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to photograph a majestic whooping crane. With many whooper pairs hav-



### **Matagorda Island State Park and Wildlife Management Area**

The park occupies 7,325 acres of the 43,893-acre park and wildlife management area. Activities include camping, hiking, bicycling, surfing, swimming, beach combing, bird-watching, nature study, fishing, a passenger ferry, on-island shuttle and scheduled tours.

There is a boat dock on the island, 38 miles of beachfront and 32 miles of paved, shell roadway for hiking, mountain biking and bicycling.

Ferry reservations and information available at 512-983-2215.

Primitive beach camping (no reservations) \$4/4 persons.

Group barracks (per person, per night) \$12.

Matagorda Island State Park and Wildlife Management Area, P.O. Box 117, 16th Street and I/C Canal, Port O’Connor, Texas 77982, 512-983-2215.

© GRADY ALLEN

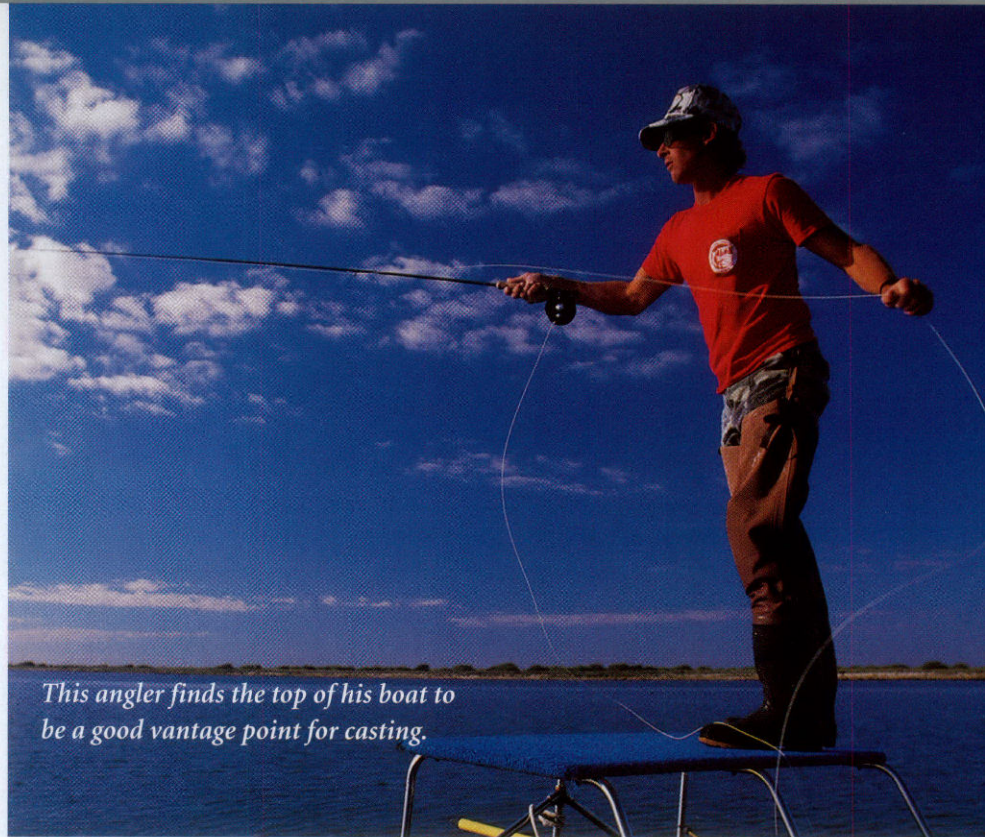


ing hatched and raised a rare two chicks each last year, last winter's count was up to a record 181 whoopers.

Here, as in most Texas bay waters, the secret to catching fish is to find a reef with clean blue or greer water and active baitfish. Finding neither on the wind-chopped waters of Mesquite Bay, we nevertheless began casting plastic lures as we drifted through the shallow water.

Because he is one of only two Texas members of the prestigious Orvis fly-fishing team, Ethan Wells is fortunate to guide a lot of good fishermen. Luckily for me, he also has patience for your average weekend klutz. After watching me make just one of my lazy sidearm casts, he silently swung the boat around, not even mentioning that he was doing it to keep my rod tip and lure out of his face.

Not expecting much action, I was



*This angler finds the top of his boat to be a good vantage point for casting.*

© ERICH SCHLEGEL

## Goose Island State Park

Located north of Rockport in Aransas County, the 321.4-acre park occupies two distinct areas — bay and uplands. During Christmas Audubon bird surveys, more species of birds are counted

here than at any other location in the U.S. There is a double-lane boat ramp; a 1,620-foot, lighted fishing pier, wade access to sandbars and reefs, and two fish-cleaning tables.

Location: 10 miles northeast

of Rockport on State Highway 35 to Park Road 13, then two miles east to park entrance.

Goose Island State Park, HC04, Box 105, Rockport, Texas 78382, 512-729-2858.



TPWD PHOTO





pleasantly surprised when I quickly hooked into a nice redfish, a sure sign that the right guy put me in the right spot with the right lure in my hand. The rest, of course, was the easy part.

Proving myself the fishing fool that I am, I began to rib Ethan about my having caught the first fish, at which time he promptly hauled in three nice speckled trout in a row, their black spots shining like a thousand eyes on their iridescent sides. Fully aware that one of the secrets to fishing is knowing when to keep your mouth shut, Ethan just grinned as he hauled in fish after fish.

Fishing guides on the Texas coast tend to fall into the Old Salt and Young Buck varieties. Partially because many of their customers insist upon it, the Old Salts seem to fish mostly with bait (live shrimp, when you can find it, being the preferred

**I was pleasantly surprised when I hooked into a nice redfish, a sure sign the guy had put me in the right spot with the right lure in my hand.**

choice). A 26-year-old graduate of Texas A&M and definitely one of the Young Bucks, Ethan Wells fishes only with artificial lures, “except with my Mom,” he added.

“Some of the other guides ask me how I get the clients to throw only artificials,” Ethan told me with a grin. “And I tell them I’m just a good teacher.”

One of the first things he taught me

was that in the winter on the Texas Coast you can hardly beat soft plastic lures, Bass Assassins with quarter-ounce leadheads being his preference. In the spring, Mirro-Lures are his top choice; in the summer, he likes to throw “Ghost” brand topwater plugs.

Looking for some shelter and a break from the cold wind, Ethan drifted down Cedar Bayou and beached the boat on the primitive campground at the south end of Matagorda Island State Park, a 26-mile hike from where I’d fished the day before. Assuming that you’ve got a boat to get here, this is a great spot for summer camping and fishing. Casting topwater plugs in the surf almost always will turn some luck, and lots of fish, some big sharks included, can be seen moving through the narrow pass from the ocean to the bay.



### **Copano Bay State Fishing Pier**

Two concession-operated piers have restrooms without showers, concession buildings (fishing supplies, bait, and a snack bar), a launching ramp, a lighted fishing pier and fish-cleaning facilities. The boat ramp is located adjacent to the south side pier.

Location: Five miles north of Rockport in Aransas County.

Copano Bay State Fishing Pier, P.O. Box 39, Fulton, Texas 78358, 512-729-7762.

TPWD PHOTO



The son of noted wildlife artist Ronnie Wells, Ethan decided to follow his dad's advice to find something he loved, then figure out how to make a living at it. This year he'll guide about 200 fishermen onto the waters near his Rockport home. There's even a new line of Wells Outfitters clothing featuring his logo and other paintings by his dad.

Walking across the broad, pristine beach, we gazed out at the surf rolling in from the Gulf, talking all the while about the passion and business of fishing, and the necessity for conservation of the resource.

"Just because the law says we can keep 10 trout and three redfish doesn't mean we have to," Ethan told me. "The minimums assure us that we'll always have a fishery, but is it the quality of fishery we want? In the summer, we've got 150 guides

**I was still hoping for a trophy redfish. And by "trophy" I don't mean one to mount on the wall but one to put in my mind.**

in Rockport alone, each bringing in with their customers 20 to 30 fish a day."

A freeze or the red tide, Ethan pointed out, generates a lot of publicity, but 3,000 fish a day also add up.

Even though fishing in Texas is now a \$2.8 billion business, Wells isn't naive enough to think that total catch-and-release will go over on the Texas coast. He does, however, know what group has some of the best knowledge concerning

fish populations.

"Parks and Wildlife has been really good about listening to the guides' input," Ethan added. "So it's up to us to find ways to build the fishery."

With the sun just peeking through the clouds, we hiked back to the boat to search for some more action. I was still hoping, as I have been for years, for a real trophy redfish. And by "trophy," I don't mean one to put on my table or mount on the wall, but one to put in my mind. Sure, taking freshly caught redfish home for the family dinner table is a satisfaction of its own sort, but there is a longer-lasting, sweeter-tasting satisfaction in the simple act of releasing a fish to the wild. For to feel a fish fight for its existence is to sense the fierce determination of all life to simply carry on, and to be reminded of our own not-so-distant past in the wild.

## Mustang Island State Park

Comprising 3,954 acres and approximately five miles of beach on the Gulf of Mexico, Mustang Island State Park features numerous activities including camping, picnicking, fishing, swimming, hiking and mountain biking on five miles of open beach, sunbathing and excellent birding, especially during spring and fall migrations.

Location: From Corpus Christi, take State Highway 358 to Padre Island; cross the JFK Causeway; continue one mile to traffic light; turn left onto State Highway 361 (used to be Park Road 53), and go five miles north to park headquarters.

Mustang Island State Park, P.O. Box 326, Port Aransas, Texas 78373, 512-749-5246.



© GEORGE L. HOSEK



*Two anglers ply the waters of the Gulf of Mexico as another day begins on the Texas coast.*



© GRADY ALLEN



© ERICH SCHLEGEL

### **Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historical Park**

Of the 16 lighthouses originally constructed along the Texas coast, Isabel is the only one open to the public. With a perch 50 feet above the ground, it is popular with photographers and other visitors for its views of South Padre Island and the beaches.

Public fishing is available just behind the lighthouse at The Fishing Pier, a privately operated, lighted fishing pier.

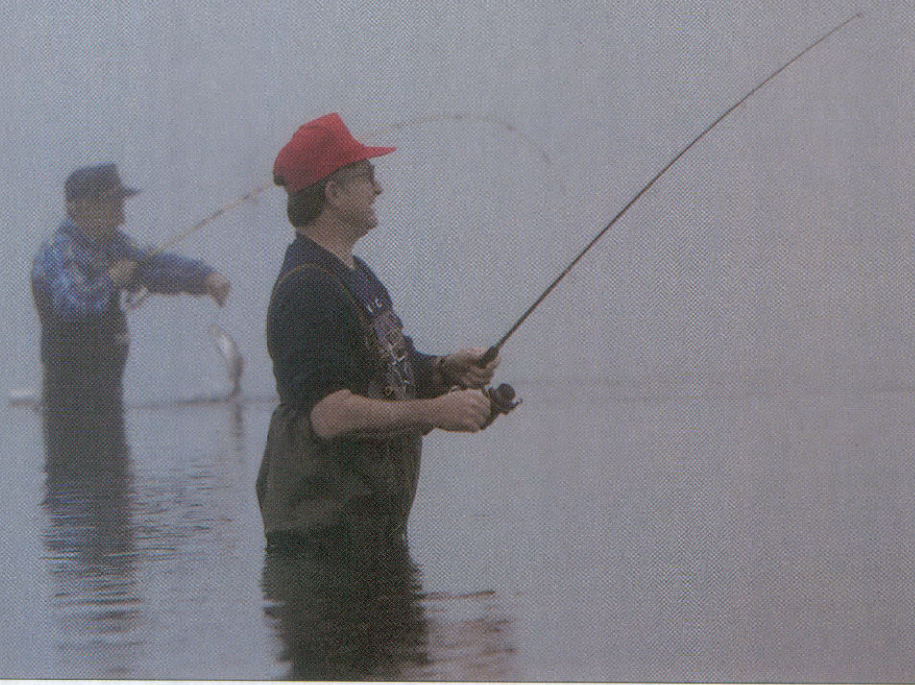
Location: on the Lower Laguna Madre in the City of Port Isabel, approximately 26 miles east of US Highway 77/83 on State Highway 100.

Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historical Park, 421 East Queen Isabella Blvd., Port Isabel, Texas 78578.

Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce, 800-527-6102, 956-943-2262.



Coastal state parks provide a clean, safe and economical way to really catch some fish.



In the greater sense of time, it has only been moments since we emerged from the wild ourselves. And since that time we have always felt the need to return to our ancient home, to walk upon untamed land, to gaze out upon unspoiled waters.

Whether to hear the call of an osprey or to search for a trophy redfish in a biting wind, it is in our parks that we renew our bond with a past that we can never leave behind.

Together Ethan and I shove the boat off the sand into the cold water and Ethan starts the motor.

"Show me the fish!" I command. And we're off. ★

*A better golfer than fisherman, TURK PIPKIN is the author of the novel, Fast Greens (Delta, 1997).*

© ERICH SCHLEGEL

### General Information

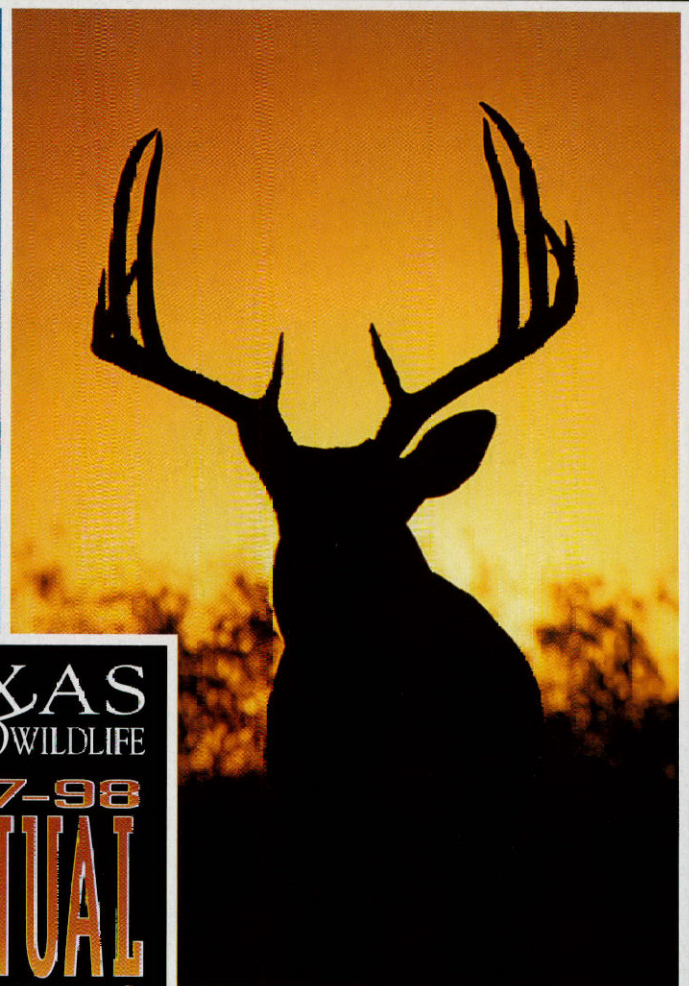
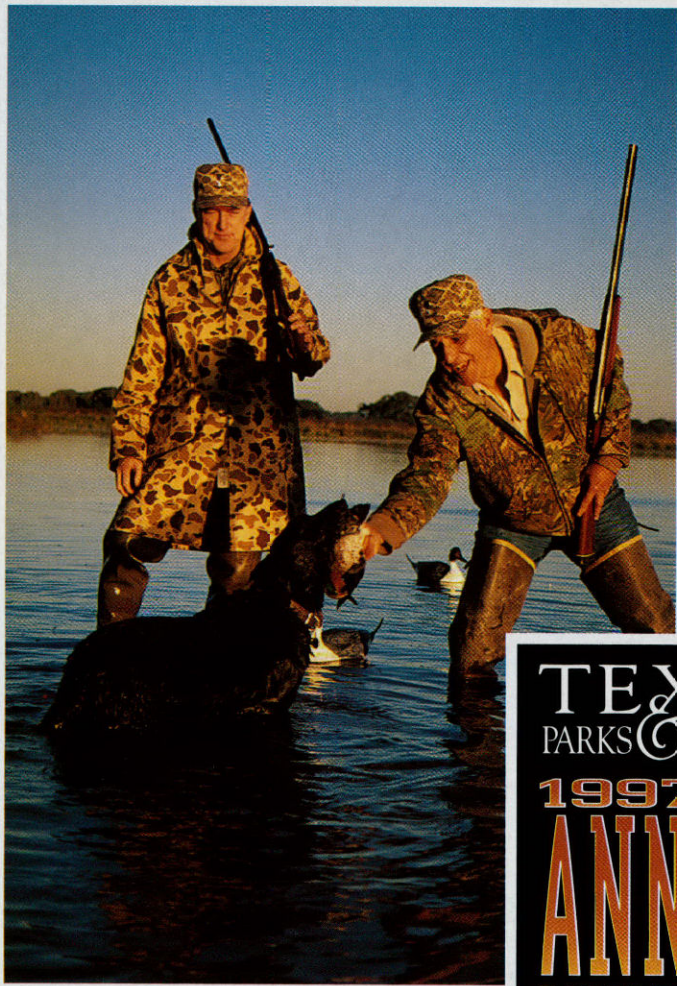
- Resident Fishing License:** \$19
- Saltwater Sportfishing Stamp:** \$7
- No license needed for those under 17 or those who turned 65 before September 1, 1995.
- Fishing Pier Fees:** Fee per rod, pole, throwline, etc., free – \$1.75
- Be sure to check fishing regulations for daily bag limit and protected length limits.

### Overnight Camping

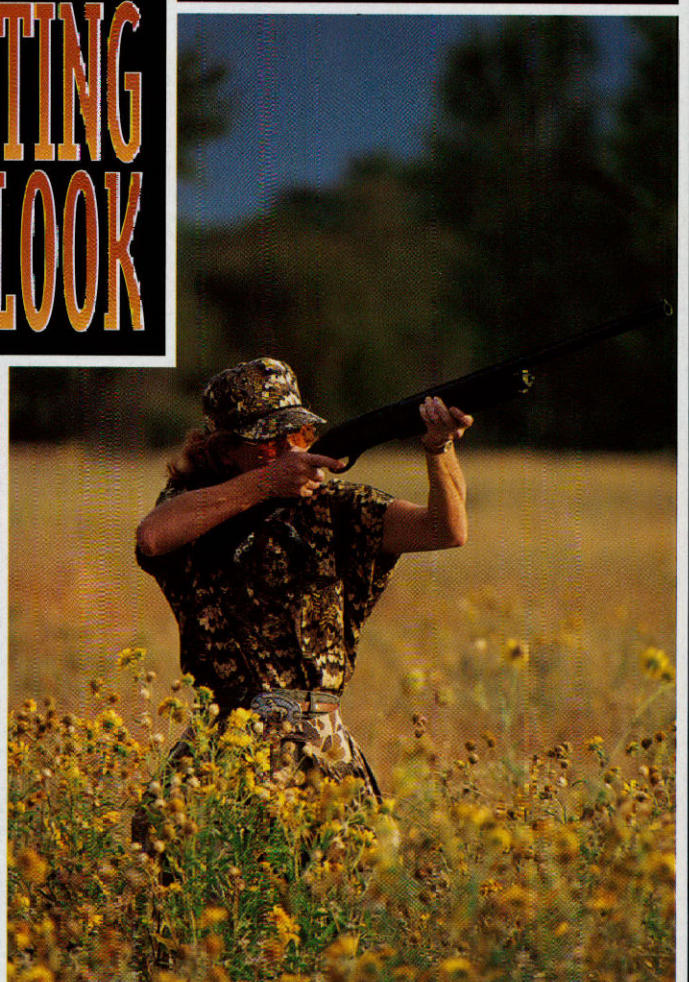
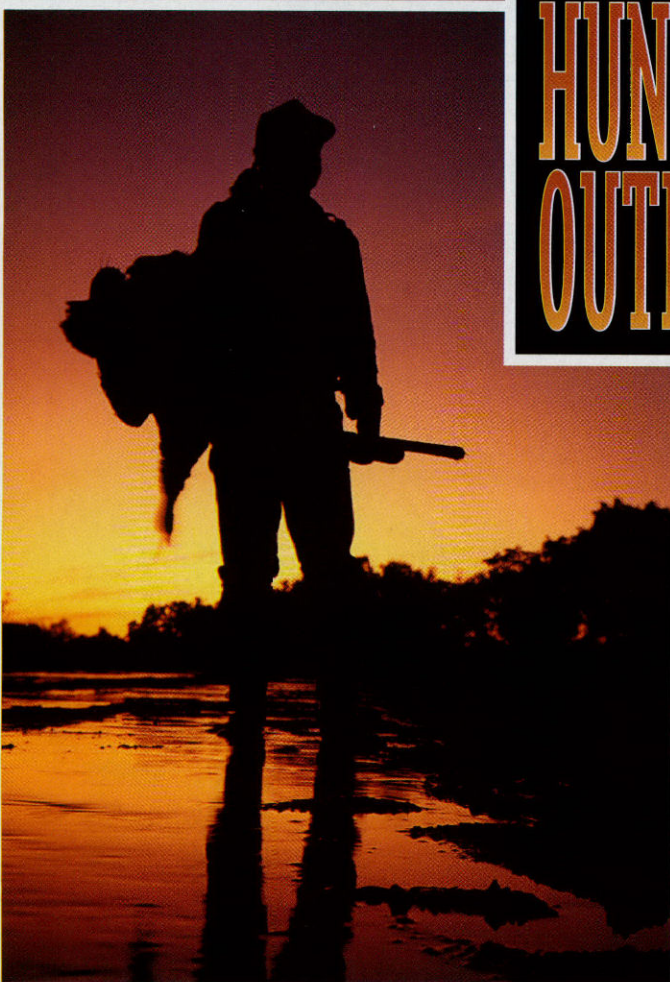
To reserve overnight facilities at most Texas State Parks call the Central Reservation Center, 512-389-8900.







TEXAS  
PARKS & WILDLIFE  
1997-98  
ANNUAL  
HUNTING  
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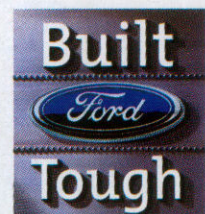


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## Build a Game Plan for Game

*Knowing what, when, and where to hunt can lead to a great hunting experience even in a year of spotty rainfall.*

*by Larry D. Hodge*

Texas hunters enjoyed a record year in 1997, but the outlook for the coming season is mixed. Some species, especially turkeys, will be numerous; but deer hunters face slimmer, if still fairly good prospects. There is a bountiful carryover of turkeys, pheasants and deer, but rains needed to nourish both antlers and the young of all species failed to come last spring. Conditions are especially unfavorable in the Trans-Pecos, where drought has diminished pronghorn numbers and slowed mule deer development.

Here's what Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists expect for this fall:

### WHITE-TAILED DEER

The only sure thing about Texas weather is that sooner or later, it will be dry. While wet years and lush conditions allow deer to prosper, those same conditions result in high fawn survival and stressed range conditions during the inevitable dry years. "There is much that landowners can do to improve habitat, but the bottom line in Texas is rainfall," says Butch Young, white-tailed deer coordinator for TPW. Although Young predicts an above-average 1998 hunting season in almost every region of the state, he

urges landowners and hunters to use TPW-approved management plans to keep deer numbers in balance with the carrying capacity of ranges.

Here are Young's predictions for white-tailed deer in the coming season, region-by-region.

**Edwards Plateau:** The Hill Country will be a bright spot again. On ranches where deer numbers were kept at the proper level, the prospects are excellent for a herd with above-average antler production and good body condition.

**Oak Prairie:** The acorn crop is a major factor in deer survival and reproduction in

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Pronghorn harvest is expected to be below average due to dry conditions in the Trans-Pecos.

the Oak Prairie. There was a good acorn crop in 1997, and it is likely that another is on the way. Antler development and deer numbers will be above average this year.

**Trans-Pecos:** The Trans-Pecos has not had significant rainfall since late 1997. Water sources, feeders and supplemental food crops will be productive for hunters, but whitetail antler development will be average.

**Post Oak:** Hunters can expect good fawn survival and above-average antler quality in most of the Post Oak region. Antlerless deer can be taken only by permit in much of the area. For those on management plans approved by TPW, this will be a good year to reduce doe numbers.

**South Texas:** The Brush Country is famous for big antlers. A King Ranch buck taken

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White-tailed deer hunting will be good in some parts of the state, not so good in others.

© MIKE SEARLES



last year netted 239<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> Boone and Crockett points (green score) and will rank among the top 10 non-typical deer ever taken in Texas. Prospects for 1998 are also good. The area should produce outstanding antlers in the older age classes.

**Cross Timbers:** Two good years in a row have brought deer numbers up, and older bucks are still around to produce good antlers. Another good acorn crop is likely. Antler growth will be above average.

**Pineywoods:** Plenty of rain has fallen on the northern portions of the East Texas Pineywoods this year, making the hunting outlook better than average.

**Panhandle:** The Panhandle area is a "sleeper" that may produce some high-quality deer in habitat that is considered to be on the edge of good range. Whitetails are in good supply, and a sizable fawn crop can be expected. Antler conditions for the area should be good. Hunting should be above average.

## PRONGHORNS

Predictions for the Trans-Pecos are bleak. "El Niño's rains have not impacted this part of the state at all," says Mike Hobson, TPW district leader in Alpine. "We are currently investigating losses of antelope in the Trans-Pecos. The losses appear to be due to malnutrition and related causes. If we don't get rainfall, we're going to lose animals that we gained last year. Antelope numbers and harvest will be below average."

## MULE DEER

Because mule deer can move to areas that have been greened by the spotty rains typical of West Texas, Hobson expects an average season in the Trans-Pecos. Five typical mule deer netting over 170 Boone and Crockett points were entered in the Trans-Pecos division of the Texas Big Game Awards program last season, an indication of the area's potential.

Prospects for mule deer are brighter



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**Javelinas are an untapped resource of South Texas. Populations generally are stable, and with few hunters competing for them there will be plenty to go around.**

in the Panhandle, especially in the area west of Lubbock, says district wildlife leader Danny Swepston of Canyon. Last year the area produced a new state record

**Javelinas are the only species of peccary found in the United States, so they make an unusual trophy.**

for a non-typical mule deer, a Ycakum County buck that scored 221 Boone and Crockett points.

Mule deer also are found along the Caprock's eastern side, where they benefit from extensive winter wheat fields. Several examples of the region's whitetails and mule deer have been put on view by owner-hunter Dale Henry at the Foard County Lumber Company in Crowell.

## JAVELINAS

"Javelinas are the Rodney Dangerfield

of big game animals," quips David Synatzske, manager of the Chaparral Wildlife Management Area near Cotulla. "They get no respect and aren't hunted as much as they could be. Javelinas are an untapped resource of South Texas."

TPW conservation scientist Joyce Moore of Dilley adds that, "The rains last year were good for javelinas. Numbers were up in 1997." Although most Texas hunters ignore javelinas, Moore says that increasing numbers are being targeted by visitors from out of state. "People who've never seen one find them interesting," she says. "They are the only species of peccary found in the United States, so they do make an unusual trophy."

Moore says that javelina numbers are generally stable. With few hunters competing for them, there will be plenty to go around this season.

## TURKEYS

Both Rio Grande and eastern turkeys are a Texas success story. Fall and spring turkey hunting should be excellent for the next several years. "What we had last



year was the highest production in several years," reports Dr. Markus Peterson of Austin, upland wildlife program leader for TPW. "That production is out there still. If things continue the way they are, I would expect another good year. The large number of birds on the ground ought to lead to a good fall season."

Restocking of eastern turkeys has created a hunter's heaven in the Pineywoods. "Hunters dream of hunting gobblers where nobody has hunted them in 25 years, and that's what we've got in East Texas," Peterson says.

**Hunters dream of hunting gobblers where nobody has hunted them in 25 years, and that's what we've got in East Texas.**

John Burk of Nacogdoches, eastern turkey program leader for TPW, predicts that hunting should keep getting better and better. "We're in a growth phase in the eastern turkey restoration program. We expect every year to have more birds than the year before. In the area where I hunt, three years ago it was a big deal to see a turkey. Now there's turkey sign everywhere."

## QUAIL

In outdoor math, rain equals quail. In most parts of Texas, rainy El Niño became the quail hunter's best friend in 1997. Bobwhites and blues rebounded from dismal numbers, and a mild winter allowed for good carryover populations. However, the lack of spring rains across much of South and West Texas will probably result in a poor hatch, meaning hunters will be pursuing last year's birds again this season.

"The biggest thing we're going to see this coming year is an excellent quail



**Fall and spring turkey hunting should be excellent for the next several years.**

© MIKE SEARLES



**Geese populations are strong for all species, and there should be lots of birds in Texas this fall.**

© JOHN R. FORD



hatch," says David Synatzske. "Many years we come out of winter with no ground moisture and no ground cover. Then it's easy to predict that you will not have many quail. But we look very good going into this time period. The brood stock is there, and if we get the timely rains we need for those chicks to get the insects they need, quail hunting will be excellent." The higher-than-average blue quail numbers noted in West Texas and the Panhandle during the 1997 season probably will be matched this year.

## WATERFOWL

Populations of most species of ducks and geese were at near record levels last year, observes Brian Sullivan, TPW waterfowl program leader. "We think there will be a large carryover of birds. The big question is how much production there will be. That has a lot to do with the fall flight and with regulations and limits." Large numbers of young-of-the-year generally mean more birds in the bag.

One sour note is the below-average snowfall last winter in the areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan that normally produce ducks for Panhandle hunters. However, nesting areas to the east fared better, and that bodes well for coastal hunting. "We might see a slight reduction in numbers, but we should have a long season, and hunting should be excellent," waterfowl expert Sullivan predicts. He expects that the bag limit for ducks will remain at six per day.

"Geese populations are really strong for all species," Sullivan notes. "Annual production is what affects success. Regardless of production, we should see lots of birds in Texas. Getting them to come to decoys is another matter."

Changes in regulations for snow goose hunting are still in a holding pattern over Washington, D.C. "The U.S.F.W.S. is working hard to try to offer new techniques to allow hunters to harvest more birds," Sullivan says. "However, the ear-



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**Quail rebounded following the rains of 1997, and a mild winter allowed for carryover populations. But lack of spring rains across much of South and West Texas probably will result in a poor hatch.**

liest anything might happen will probably be January 1999." In addition to possible changes in hunting methods, new regulations may allow for more public hunting on refuges, and management practices may be modified to make refuges less attractive to geese. For the latest information, contact TPW at 1-800-792-1112.

## PHEASANTS

The ideal environments for pheasants are irrigated grain fields, adjacent to lands idled under the Conservation Reserve Program. "We had a significant increase in pheasants earlier this year," says Danny Swenson, "but a lot of CRP land is being plowed up as the program ends, so I'm taking a wait-and-see attitude. I think we've had real good carry-

over and could be looking at a good year for pheasants and prairie chickens, but it can go either way."

Top counties for pheasants this year are likely to be Deaf Smith, Castro, Swisher, Moore, Sherman, Hansford and the western side of Hale County.

## WEBLESS MIGRATORY GAMEBIRDS

Jay Roberson of Austin, chief of the webless migratory gamebird program, has good news for Texas dove hunters. "I'm predicting that this should be a good hunting season, probably about the same as last year. I'm seeing good numbers of birds in Austin and places that I've traveled in South Texas." Aggressive leasing of public dove hunting areas throughout the state assures that hunters who buy the \$40 Annual



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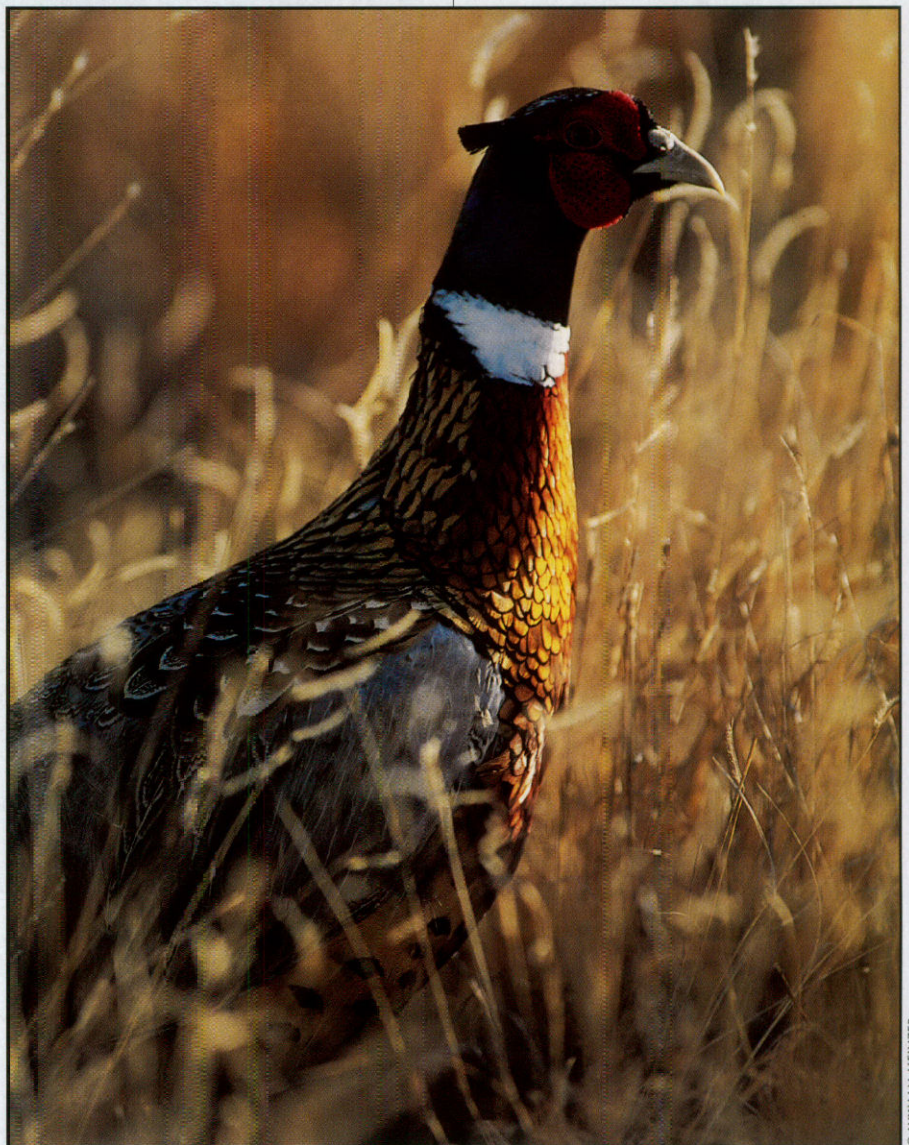


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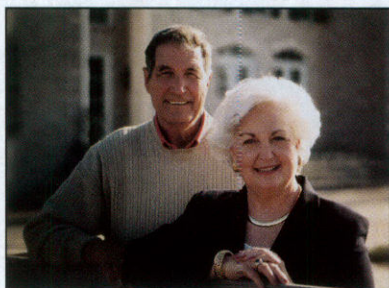
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**Pheasants had a good carryover and prospects for a good year are encouraging.**



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Other species of webless migratory birds — rails, gallinules, woodcock, sandhill cranes and snipe — generally are overlooked by Texas hunters. Roberson thinks that's a mistake, especially where snipe are concerned. "They offer tremendous sporting quality because of the way they fly," he says. "They flush, give a call and look like a little brown puff of feathers when they take off. Their flight is very rapid and erratic." Snipe hunters may use lead shot, and Roberson recommends loads and

chokes suitable for close-flushing quail.

**A Good, If Not a Trophy, Year.** Abundant white-tailed deer and a shortage of natural foods will make for good hunting, even though this fall may not be the season for taking the trophy of a hunter's dreams. Spotty rains will produce some outstanding animals in isolated locations, but for most hunters, 1998 will mainly be a year to recall the bounty of 1997 — and to dream of the time when the rains will return. ★

LARRY D. HODGE could not be reached for his bio; wife Sally says he's gone a-hunting.





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Before beginning your quest for a hunting lease, know what you're looking for and exactly what's important to you.

# Tracking Down a Hunt

From all-season leases to weekend guest ranches to day hunts on public lands, choices abound to get you afield.

by G. Elaine Acker

**A**ccording to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, more than one million hunters went afield in Texas last year. But when more than 95 percent of the state is privately owned, how do you locate a suitable hunting lease? While the beginning of hunting season may not be the best time to start searching for a lease, it is never too early to begin planning next year's successful season.

"There are no shortcuts to finding a lease," says Bill Olson, editor of *Texas Outdoors Journal* and board member of Operation Game Thief. "You need to establish a network of contacts. Don't be fooled by thinking there's a magic, published list of properties for lease." Olson suggests a networking approach

that will put you in the right place at the right time for leasing opportunities.

But before beginning your quest, know exactly what is important to you and write it down. In what region do you want to locate a lease? Some counties possess an abundance of game species that literally provide year-round hunting opportunities. Others are known for quality white-tailed deer. Will the lease be seasonal or annual? How much time can you spend there? How far is the property from your home? Is water available? What about camping or lodging facilities?

Once you know what you want, open the Sunday paper and browse the classifieds. "Look under the heading, 'Farms and Ranches,'" says Olson. "Also, look through weekly newspapers and stock-

men's publications. Most places are advertised by real estate brokers and are for sale, but the broker may know of leases available in that area. Local chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus and feed and sporting goods stores can be an important part of your network. When you call and ask for information, ask when you should call back. Some people end the conversation with, 'If you hear of anything will you call?' But that call is never made. Talk to outfitters. They look at tens of thousands of properties every year. The property may not fit their operation, but it may be perfect for the individual hunter. Plan to follow up on your leads. There are lots of dead ends, but eventually you can build a network in that area."





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Hunters should care for the property as if it were their own. Those who are considerate have a good chance of establishing a long-term lease.

Bob Zaiglin is a biologist and wildlife manager for Harrison Interests, Ltd. Every year he makes management recommendations that affect more than 200,000 acres of south central and south Texas rangeland. "A hunter should look for a lease with a landowner who has a solid reputation," says Zaiglin. "A hunter needs to feel he can trust the landowner. There are many flamboyant brochures that picture big deer, but that deer may not be on the lease. It's disheartening to spend time and money on a parcel that never had the animals nor the potential pictured in the brochure."

The promise of large deer lures Octavio Cortina into the South Texas brush country every fall, and he encourages hunters to personally inspect the land they are considering leasing. "I have leased the same 260 acres for 16 years, and enjoy deer hunting more than anything else," says Cortina. "My advice would be to walk the land and look for tracks. Make sure the deer, javelina or turkeys are there."

When you find a lease that sounds

promising, and you've met with the landowner to preview the property, contact local county extension agents and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists. Ask them if they are familiar with the area under consideration, or even with the particular property. Determine whether the property operates under a

**A hunter should look for a lease with a landowner who has a solid reputation.**

wildlife management plan and, if so, ask for harvest records.

Once you are convinced a particular lease is perfect for you, get your agreement in writing. While many hunters believe in a handshake agreement, a handshake often leaves a multitude of unanswered questions that can lead to problems later on. A written agreement answers questions before they arise and establishes clear communication between

the landowner and the hunter. "It's almost like a marriage," says Zaiglin. "Both landowners and hunters can be picky and have the right to be that way." Many landowners have agreements they prefer to use.

If you want to establish a long-term relationship with the landowner, spend time getting acquainted and ask the landowner what you will be allowed to do. "With a long-term lease, improvements may be part of your agreement," says Olson. "Will they allow planting of supplemental food plots? Does clearing need to be done? What are you allowed to harvest? How many guns are allowed?" By becoming involved in the landowner's plans and goals, the lessee becomes a partner with the owner and the state in implementing their management plan.

"Landowners want lessees who are appreciative of the land and resources, and who are aware of the sacrifices required to support game," says Zaiglin. "I look for hunters who have a conscientious desire to manage the resource. Every time a hunter pulls the trigger, he



## Public Hunting Lands Offer Opportunities



Public hunting opportunities can be found in almost every part of the state on property owned by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department or acreage leased from other state and federal agencies, forest products industries and private landowners. These lands include some of the best waterfowl, dove, quail, turkey and squirrel hunting in Texas and excellent opportunities for deer, feral hog and javelina hunting.

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Special Permit hunts are awarded by computer drawings. These are high-quality hunts for deer, exotics, javelinas, turkeys or feral hogs. Also, only those selected by drawing may hunt alligators and pronghorn antelope on public lands. The *Applications for Drawings on Public Hunting Lands* booklet becomes available in mid-July at TPWD offices across the state. Anyone who applied for hunts in last year's drawings will receive the booklet in the mail.

Also available are Regular Permits for small game and waterfowl hunts. These are issued at the hunt area on a first-come, first-served basis. Areas permitting hunting by Regular Permit are listed in the booklet with the Special Permit information.

The Public Hunting Lands Program offers the opportunity to participate in low-cost, family-oriented hunting for a variety of species on diverse lands throughout the state. For more information, call 1-800-792-1112, menu item 5 (wildlife), selection 1 (wildlife information).

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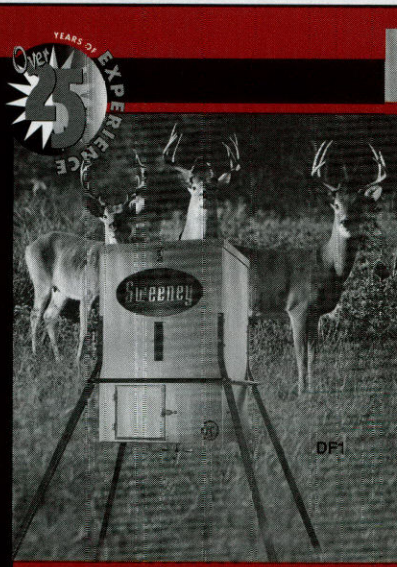
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The Diamond K Ranch, situated on 5,000 acres in Central Texas near Fredericksburg, offers two- and three-day hunts for a variety of species year-round. "Each hunter has his or her own guide," says Mark Watson, owner and president. "And when they're not hunting, our guests can fish or shoot sporting clays or trap." In the evenings guests enjoy gourmet meals prepared by San Antonio chefs, and sample wines from a cellar of more than 1,200 bottles. "It's a very special experience," he says. "This is for someone without a lot of time to go to the deer lease every weekend, but who is looking for a quality experience."

Watson's facilities include a main compound with an 1800s-style log cabin, game room and entertainment center, an African Safari-style tent camp, stocked fishing lakes and a 3,000-foot landing strip. "We started our program 10 years ago and the quality of our animals is outstanding," says Watson. "We take only 25 white-tailed deer hunters a year, and 25 hunters for non-native species." Rates range from \$1,000 to \$1,900, prices that do not include trophies. The charge for trophies depends on the animal, but range from \$1,500 for whitetails, up to \$10,000 for an African kudu antelope. Only one kudu is harvested from the ranch each year. "We create the best possible experience in ethical hunting environment, and that costs money," he says. "We're very sensitive about the animals harvested, and harvest only mature animals." Some of Watson's whitetails have scored 170, Boone and Crockett, and weighed in at 190 pounds. Other animals roaming the ranch include blackbuck antelope, more than

300 axis deer (the largest herd in Texas, according to Watson), fallow deer, and rare animals from Africa, China and Armenia.

"About 80 percent of our guests come back," says Watson. "We advertise it as the best wildlife experience in Texas and that's what we think it is." For information on the Diamond K Ranch, call 210-824-4546.

In North Texas, hunters may choose the Cullen ranch, located just 35 miles



© DAVE N. RICHARDS

east of Dallas in Quinlan, or the Rough Creek Lodge, located in Glen Rose. These are two of Texas' newest retreats and both have received top marks from their guests.

One hunter described the 2,000-acre Cullen Ranch as a "Disneyland for hunters." Guests may hunt bobwhite quail, chukar, pheasant and flighted mallard ducks, spend time on the challenging championship sporting clay course designed by world-renowned shooting instructor, Jay Herbert, or fish in 10 stocked ponds for trophy black bass. A stone and split-cedar lodge welcomes up to 12 guests at a time.

"We want every guest to feel right at home," says owner Meredith Cullen.

"Because our guests are accustomed to the finest surroundings, we have done our best to surround them with unprecedented luxury and comfort in a hunting facility including Persian rugs, a cigar aficionados room, original Cowan, Barnes and Booth paintings, vintage wines and spirits, and a long list of other amenities. There's absolutely nothing else around quite like the Cullen Ranch."

The Cullen Ranch offers both day hunts and multi-day packages that can range from \$345 to \$1,900. Other ranch activities include horseback riding, golf and conference facilities. For information, call 1-888-TEX-HUNT.

The Rough Creek Lodge Executive Retreat and Resort opened this past January. Located 90 minutes from the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, the resort offers hunting packages for chukar, Hungarian partridge, quail and pheasant, as well as tennis, an outdoor heated swimming pool, exercise and weight training facilities and massage therapy. "The lodge attracts the most discerning business executives and leisure travelers — especially those who are looking for something a little out of the ordinary," says Paul Boccafogli, general manager. For information, call 1-800-864-4705.

Greg Simon's Wildlife Systems offers guided hunts throughout Texas for white-tailed deer, turkey, javelina and aoudad. One of the most spectacular sites on which they conduct hunts is the Coralina Ranch, located between San Angelo and Sonora. Wildlife Systems' Justin Trail (see this month's "Legend, Lore & Legacy") also serves as range manager for the 20 sections of the Coralina that are owned by Hope Wilson Huffman; he is also developing an intensive lake management program for the Coralina, which will emphasize trophy-sized large-mouth bass. For information, visit Wildlife Systems' website at [www.wildlifesystems.com](http://www.wildlifesystems.com) or call 915-655-0877.



has made a management decision.”

Both Zaiglin and Olson urge hunters to care for the lease as though it were their own home. “Make sure gates are closed,” says Zaiglin. “It’s important, because the domestic livestock supports the landowner outside hunting season. Abide by the state laws. Things like this are incredibly important.”

Considerate hunters also have a better chance of establishing a long-term lease. “Remove trash, stay in touch, send cards,” says Olson. “These things go a long way toward establishing a long-term relationship, rather than having to go through the process all over again when the lease expires.”

Although Zaiglin says that you often get what you pay for, hunting should not be perceived as an expensive sport, only for the wealthy. There are a variety of inexpensive hunting opportunities available statewide. “I usually deal with serious sportsmen who are willing to pay for a quality hunting lease, but it’s important for hunters to realize there are inex-

pensive places available where the herd is healthy and well cared for.”

Nonhunters in the family can enjoy a lease, too. “Having a lease allows parents to take their kids into nature in the fashion we’ve done for eons, through hunting,” says Zaiglin. During the off-season, calling game brings hunters and nonhunters closer to nature.

There are inexpensive  
hunting opportunities  
available statewide.

Chris Bradshaw is an avid East Texas hunter who suggests that the best way to find a lease may still be good old-fashioned word-of-mouth. “Ask your friends and the people you work with if they know of leases available,” says Bradshaw. “We lease 426 acres that have exactly what I want: a creek, top-land, bottomland, ducks, squirrels, pigs,

deer and good fishing. We keep the place clean, and we respect the landowner’s rules. We have a written contract that we renew every year in June. And twice a year we have workdays to maintain the camp and make sure everything is ready for hunting season. If you have good communication and establish a friendship with the owner, you usually can keep a lease.”

Bradshaw has held this lease with his father, Earl, and a group of East Texas hunters for more than 10 years, and he now enjoys spending time there with his daughter. “The price of the lease is worth more than just a chance to hunt,” he says. “I get away, spend the night listening to coyotes, and ride four-wheelers with my daughter.”

Hunting leases can have all the advantages of land ownership, peace and tranquility, without headaches such as taxes and maintenance. By working closely with landowners, hunters can forge a partnership that leads to memorable hunting seasons for years to come. ★

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# A PRIMER

for

# WING SHOOTING

**It's almost unfair. The shotgunner's first shooting of fall features that erratic little gray speedster, the dove. It's like a baseball player trying to hit a 90-m.p.h. fastball the first time after a prolonged layoff.**

**E**ven though wing shooting is about 90 percent instinctive, it takes time and repetition to fine-tune these rusty instincts. The first time out the experience can be frustrating. Misses mount up. Lots of doves are missed because there are a lot of doves to miss.

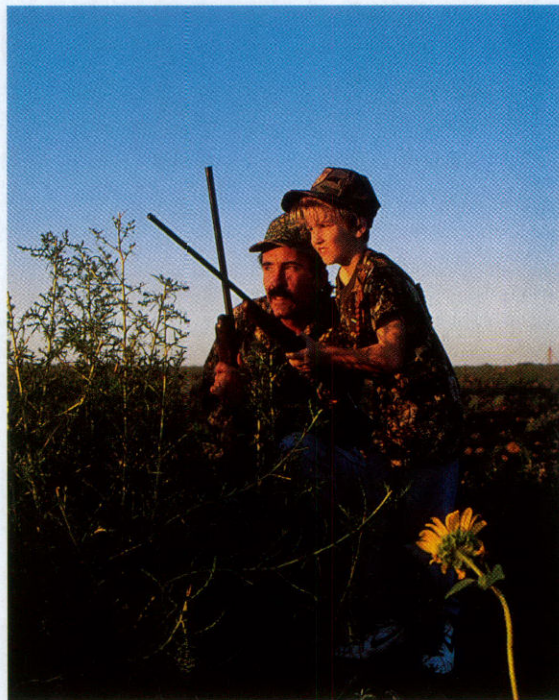
A hunter, however, can improve his percentages by understanding wing shooting fundamentals and a knowledge of how a shotgun functions.

First things first.

If a dove is loafing along within range and the shooter fires and misses, he probably is doing one of two things wrong — or both. When a shotgun is raised to the shoulder, the stock snuggles in where the shooter is looking right down the barrel or ventilated rib. The bead at the end of the barrel is hardly noticed, just a blur tracking the flying target. As the shooter pulls the trigger, he tends to raise his head to watch the bird to see if it is going to fall. If he doesn't maintain his posture, keeping his head down, most of the time he's going to miss, shooting under the dove.

Or behind it. With most gunners, lead out front of the fast-flying bird is insufficient. They shoot at where a bird is, not where it will be.

Everything considered, it is a wonder that the success per-



*Make sure your shotgun is in good shape for dove season.*

© WYMAN WEINER

centage — the number of birds downed in relation to total shots fired — is as good as it is. Target distance, speed and angle play a role, as do the mechanical aspects of shotgun shooting. But the real test comes in the field, shooting at unpredictable live targets. There is more to it than simply pointing and firing.

We must lead any moving target. The snap-shooting method is the most elementary. The shooter picks out a spot forward of where he instinctively thinks the pattern of shot will intercept the dove's flight and fires. Success depends on an almost subconscious snap decision.

More popular is the swing-and-lead method. The shooter tracks the bird with his gun barrel, an accelerated swing that speeds along the dove's flight line and catches up and passes the bird. As the dove is passed by the muzzle, instinct tells the shooter to pull the trigger. He has built up correct lead by swinging through, by using his shotgun like a paint brush. A sweeping follow-through is vital to getting a proper lead. Should the shooter hesitate or stop the swing (follow-through) as he pulls the trigger, he is going to be tardy, shooting behind the bird.

And if he raises his head off the gun stock to look as he fires, the shot pattern not only will be behind the bird, but below, too.

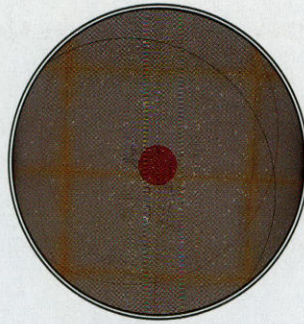
Shotgun efficiency doesn't depend entirely on the instinct

**BY RUSSELL TINSLEY**

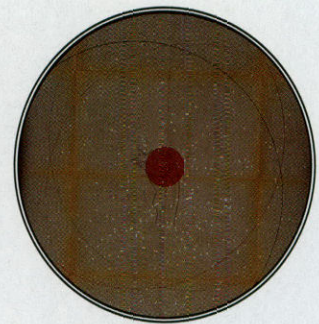




Improved-Cylinder Choke



Modified Choke



Full Choke

**The choke used on a shotgun determines how quickly the shot spreads. These three targets, shot at 40 yards, show the spread of 12-gauge No. 8 shot. These photos show shot spread on a stationary target. Fewer pellets would strike a flying bird because not all pellets in the shot swarm reach the target at the same time.**

factor. There are other factors, such as shot size and pattern for any given situation, similar to using different clubs for different golf shots. Pattern density is controlled by the constriction of the barrel at the muzzle, or what is called the choke, which holds the shotshell pellets in formation and keeps them organized out to a certain range. This is why there are shotguns with different chokes. Shooting at doves coming in at close range to a waterhole or those flying away in a pass-shooting mode requires a different pattern. Since modern shotguns come with interchangeable screw-in choke tubes, it is easy to adapt to specific needs by switching tubes. For hunting, there basically are three choke options: improved cylinder, modified and full. Other specialty chokes, although sometimes used for hunting purposes, are designed for clay target shooting competitions such as skeet and sporting clays.

The generally accepted standards for degrees of choke are what percentage of the shot in a load (shell) will be placed in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards. The percentage for improved cylinder is 40 to 50; for modified, 55 to 65; and full, 70 to 75.

Testing a choke involves patterning. Shoot at a mark on a large piece of cardboard, paper or a pattern target (available at some sporting goods stores) at measured distances, find the most dense part of a test pattern, and draw a 30-inch circle around it. Count the number of pellet holes in the circle and then subtract this number from the total amount of shot in the load used for test purposes. A quick look at a pattern will tell you how your shotgun is performing at different ranges — or specifically, how well the shot is distributed throughout the pattern. Shotgun efficiency is based on multiple hits or pattern density, not one large pellet striking a vital area.

Thus, if you are shooting at doves at a range of, say, 25 yards, you want the largest possible pattern with consistent density at this range—improved-cylinder choke for most shot-

guns. But a pattern of wide spread at this range will thin out faster than will a pattern that is small and dense at close range.

Many hunters compromise by using modified choke, since it delivers a fairly good pattern at intermediate ranges — 25 to 35 yards — where the highest percentage of shots at doves come.

Despite what you might have heard, a 12-gauge gun with full choke won't shoot farther than one with modified, nor will the full choke "shoot harder." The full choke downs birds at a longer range because it has a denser pattern at that distance and hits a bird with more pellets.

In addition to the choke there is something else to consider: the load or shotshell — the amount of powder in drams, and the size and number of shot. A 12-gauge load with 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-ounce of shot will put more pellets in the pattern than will a one-ounce load, and there will be more No. 8 shot than No. 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.

Choice of shot is a compromise. Larger shot penetrate better at longer ranges, but being fewer in number, they thin out the pattern. For comparison, there are 585 No. 9 pellets in an ounce of shot; 409 No. 8s; 350 No. 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>s; and 223 No. 6s. With doves, birds early in the season mostly are immature residents. They are not as skittish, so they fly closer at slower speeds and they are easier to bring down. By using small shot, 8 or 9, with improved cylinder choke, you are putting more shot in a larger pattern at closer ranges where most of your shots will be. There is less chance for error. Later in the season when the doves are spooky and may not come as close, modified choke with 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> shot is the better choice, providing a tighter pattern with more penetration at longer ranges. ★

RUSSELL TINSLEY of Mason has been writing about the Texas outdoors for 40 years.





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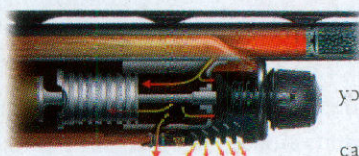
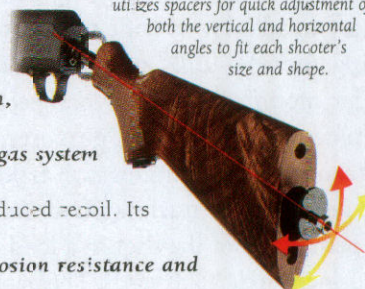
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# Where the Stars at Night Are Big and Bright

The dark skies in Texas State Parks offer great stargazing. by Ann P. White

**S**erious astronomy begins with a requirement that is at odds with modern living: dark skies. In pursuit of darkness, amateur and professional astronomers alike flee urbanized Texas for the countryside, where even 50 miles of distance can greatly improve viewing. State parks, especially in the plains and mountain areas, provide nearly ideal locales for stargazing. Several parks plan stargazing programs, offering visiting families a fun and educational activity for weekend nights. Others host star parties with astronomy groups or welcome informal gatherings of astronomers who want to set up their own telescopes.

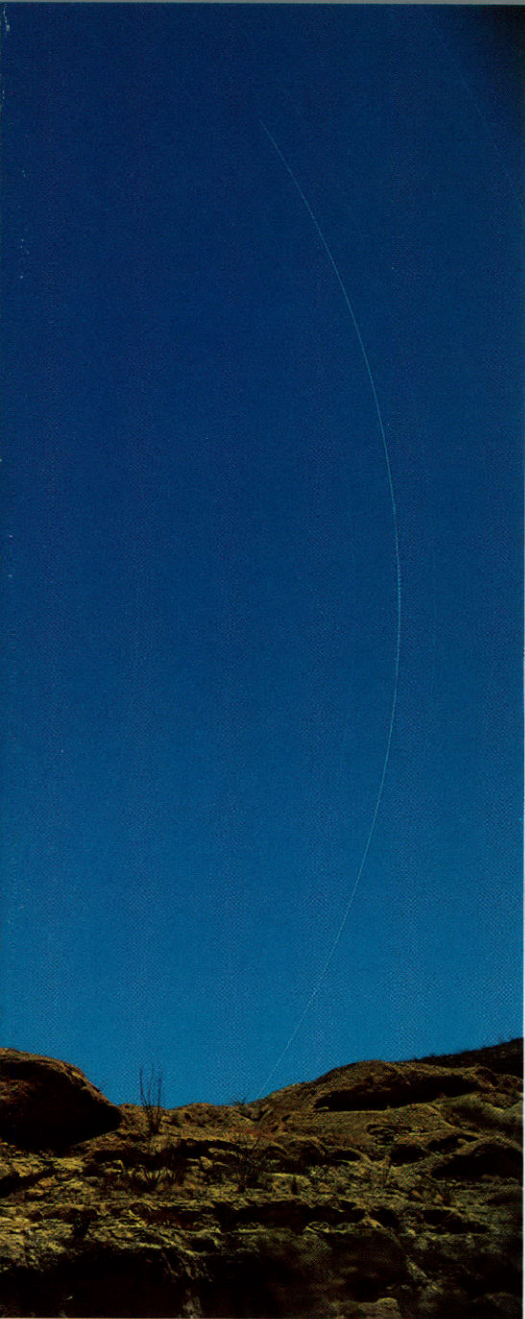




© JOE VOGT

The big nighttime Texas sky comes alive when you get out of the city and into rural areas. State parks provide safe places to stargaze and many offer organized activities for amateur astronomers. At left, visitors to Brazos Bend State Park view the moon.





© ED RANZAU

At the Isle du Bois unit of Ray Roberts Lake State Park last summer, two volunteer park hosts, Nancy Dennis and Pat Hamilton, began their program early in the evening with crafts for children. Their small guests created “comets,” made of Styrofoam balls on a stick, which they covered with sparkling glitter and silver streamers. As the sky darkened, Park Ranger Brad Dial explained meteor showers and comets and pointed out major constellations in the August skies. The program ended with park volunteer Elizabeth Means’ stories and legends of the stars. Afterwards, with Dial’s help, guests located some of the planets and constellations from diagrams of the summer sky. Similar programs are offered this summer.

The night skies at Copper Breaks State Park, 80 miles from the nearest city, are especially dark, with a high, open meeting place adjacent to the RV campground. Jeri Turner, wife of Park Manager David Turner, has been a serious hobby astronomer for the past 10 years, and last year regularly shared her considerable knowledge and enthusiasm with park guests. “I tried to give starwalks once a month, and at other times by request for groups ranging from cub scouts to adults,” she says. “We didn’t use binoculars or telescopes. I liked to keep it really simple at first and felt they could apply it later in a more advanced way.” During each walk, Turner guided her guests through the major constellations and told stories of Persian and Greek astral mythology, as observations by the Maya in our hemisphere. Turner has scheduled a starwalk for August 15.

In several North Texas state parks, a group called the Fort Worth Sidewalk Astronomers presents stargazing programs. Their schedules include once-a-month gatherings at such park locations as Dinosaur Valley, Fort Griffin and Possum Kingdom.

“Fort Griffin has beautiful dark skies with no nearby towns and the closest city, Abilene, some 60 miles away,” says Tim Black, who usually presents the program.

Black designs his programs to appeal to school-age children as well as to adults. He most often presents a slide show and a talk on space and the solar system, followed by a constellation tour and observations through large-aperture telescopes. He involves children in the program and they respond with enthusiasm. Members of the Sidewalk Astronomers bring their own telescopes, set them up and assist visitors in observing planets, galaxies and star clusters.

Other astronomy clubs convene at state parks for informal stargazing. The Johnson Space Center Astronomy Society

In several North Texas state parks, a group called the Fort Worth Sidewalk Astronomers presents stargazing programs.

has visited Fort McKavett, 75 miles distant from San Angelo, and stargazer groups from Lubbock and Amarillo have held outings at Caprock Canyons State Park, and Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

Stargazers who are drawn to the McDonald Observatory often stop at Davis Mountains State Park where they can set up their telescopes on the ridge at the end of Skyline Drive. Here they have a tremendous full-sky view. Park personnel usually close the road at 10 p.m., but special passes for late-night viewing can be obtained from the park office.

Astronomy instructors at colleges across the state often coordinate events with state parks. Last October, Cleburne State Park hosted the North Texas Skywatch, a project of Michael Hibbs, an instructor in physics and astronomy at Tarrant County Junior College in Fort Worth, and fellow astronomer Stan Ramirez. “The Cleburne location has an advantage of being less than an hour’s drive from most of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, but it is still far enough from the city to see some of the sky,” Hibbs explains.

The Skywatch began at noon with displays of new telescopes and accessories, information on local astronomy clubs, and a swap meet where amateur



astronomers had an opportunity to try out new equipment and share ideas. Several area colleges set up exhibits with course information, including Richland College in Dallas, Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, the Cook Center of Navarro College in Corsicana and the University of North Texas in Denton.

The park provided the large, grassy open area next to its amphitheater for the Skywatch event, which concluded with an evening slide show and program. Hibbs, who has organized star-watching sessions at Cleburne State Park since 1994, plans to host the next North Texas Skywatch at Cleburne on September 26.

The more people learn about this valuable resource, the more they will join the effort to preserve this treasure.

Other parks also have programs planned by college instructors of astronomy. The Johnson Branch unit of Ray Roberts Lake State Park has held stargazing programs led by Fred Eaton, instructor of astronomy at Brockhaven College in Dallas. At San Angelo State Park, programs have been organized by San Angelo State University's Dr. Mark Sonntag, who also teaches astronomy. "They have three to six telescopes available for audience viewing," says Park Manager John Culbertson. "The park provides the location, a beautiful open space away from city lights for the best dark skies. We also have six log cabin sleeping units available for those who would like to spend the night without setting up tents."

Brazos Bend State Park, located about 50 miles southwest of Houston near Needville, includes on its premises the George Observatory of the Houston Museum of Natural Science. The observatory sponsors public classes on Saturday nights and weeknights throughout the spring and summer. On Friday nights, by reservation, groups can see a slide show and stargaze through the 36-inch research telescope. A fee of \$5 is



© ANN P. WHITE

charged each viewer. Summer day classes on astronomy and space contain a variety of topics for grades one through 12. Tickets for Saturday night viewing through the 36-inch telescope go on sale at 5 p.m. on a first-come, first-served basis. Prices are \$1 for children and \$2 for adults. The observatory staff sets up other telescopes outdoors, with viewing at no charge.

"We have a strong interest in more state parks and astronomy clubs working together for stargazing events," says Barbara Wilson, staff astronomer and teacher for the George Observatory. "Texas has been known for its beautiful dark skies, but we are rapidly losing these skies to light pollution. People are seeking out the parks to find them. The more people learn about this valuable resource, the more they will join the effort to preserve this treasure."

Tim Black puts it this way: "As urban centers continue to expand, we astronomers are forced to go farther afield to escape what we call light pollu-

**A**t Cleburne State Park, Ray Benze of Tarrant County Junior College uses a solar filter to show visitors sun spots.



# McDonald Observatory

Situated on the summit of Mt. Locke, nearly 7,000 feet above sea level, the McDonald Observatory was founded after Paris, Texas, banker and amateur scientist W.J. McDonald left his estate to the University of Texas in 1926, with the request that his fortune be used for the promotion of astronomy. The first of the observatory's telescopes, the 82-inch Otto Struve reflector, was completed in 1939, and the largest, the Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET), situated on nearby Mt. Fowlkes, was dedicated in October 1997.

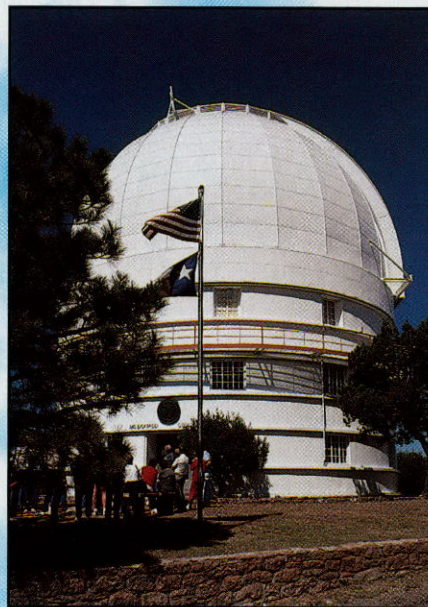
"We have nine research telescopes, and the two largest are open to visitors on tours," says Frank Cianciolo, one of the observatory's information specialists. "The HET technically is the largest reflecting telescope in the world since it has the largest array of mirrors, 433 inches. But because we don't use all of the mirror — the light-gathering surface area — at the same time, it's actually the third largest telescope in the world."

Futuristic white domes house these large telescopes. "We use white to reflect as much energy as possible, minimizing the heat building up inside the domes," says Cianciolo. "When you open the dome in the early evening, you're letting the hot air out, and mountain air cools rapidly, so there are two temperatures mixing. Looking through the telescope would be just like looking down the road on a hot sunny day when you see the air shimmering. If we didn't keep them cool, these big domes would take several hours for temperatures to equalize."

Cianciolo studied astronomy at the University of Texas at Austin. "I came out here from Austin as a summer student intern in 1989 and fell in love with the whole area: the high altitude and the semi-arid climate," he says. He returned four years ago as one of the university's professional staff. His talents, and those of other professionals working at the observatory, make the place a special one to visit. Visitors are warmly

welcomed into the scientists' realm.

Star parties are held every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday at sunset, and astronomers guide visitors in viewing the night sky. Participants view the moon and, using binoculars and telescopes, learn to recognize the constellations. "The temperatures here can dip into the 60s at night during the summer and turn bitterly cold in the winter," Cianciolo warns. "We encourage visitors to bring jackets to our



Futuristic white domes house the McDonald Observatory's research telescopes.

evening star parties." Cost is \$3 for each adult, \$2 for children 6-12; children 5 and under are admitted free. Family tickets cost \$8. Also, on Wednesday evenings nearest the full moon, the 107-inch Harlan J. Smith telescope offers guests a rare glimpse of the heavens usually reserved for celestial professionals. This popular event requires advance reservations and most dates fill months in advance.

The observatory is located in West Texas' Davis Mountains. From El Paso, take I-10 to Highway 118 south. Travel west on I-10, turn south on Highway 17 at Balmorhea to Fort Davis, then take Highway 118 north 16 miles to the

observatory. From Big Bend, take Highway 118 north through Alpine and Fort Davis to the observatory.

Daily tours of the telescopes are offered at 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m., and each tour lasts 90 minutes; tickets can be purchased at the visitors' center. Tour tickets are priced the same as the star parties. Guides explain how the telescopes operate and share the techniques professional astronomers use to explore the universe. Tour capacity is limited, and visitors are advised to arrive 30 minutes early.

Solar viewing sessions are held daily at 11 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the visitors' center, and are free. Using a telescope equipped with filters and a video camera, guides allow visitors to discover sun spots and the sun's turbulent atmosphere.

For those who want to learn more about the sky and current research projects, Cianciolo suggests a subscription to the observatory's magazine, *Stardate*. "It's a non-threatening, non-technical-jargon magazine written for an entry-level audience," he says. "It's a good place to get more information about what's in the sky, research and new findings." The observatory's website, which Cianciolo designed, offers extensive information on the observatory, and visitors can take a virtual tour of the white-domed telescopes. Visit it at [www.as.utexas.edu/mcdonald/vc/default.html](http://www.as.utexas.edu/mcdonald/vc/default.html) or the Stardate Web site at [www.stardate.utexas.edu](http://www.stardate.utexas.edu).

For brochures and complete information on the McDonald Observatory, write: W.L. Moody, Jr. Visitors' Information Center, P.O. Box 1337, Fort Davis, TX 79734-1337, or call 915-426-3640.

The nearby Davis Mountains State Park, located just 13 miles south of the observatory, offers dining and hotel accommodations at Indian Lodge, or camping facilities. For reservations and information, write: Box 786, Fort Davis, TX 79734, or call 915-426-3337.

— G. Elaine Acker



# Touring the Summer Skies with Deborah Byrd

For more than 20 years, Texas astronomer Deborah Byrd has shared her insights into the night sky through her syndicated radio programs such as "Earth & Sky." Byrd's career as an astronomer began in 1974 when, by mistake, she enrolled in a college physics class. The mistake turned to luck as she discovered a passion for physics. Her research led to 15 years with the McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mountains. "Anyone who gets a chance to visit the observatory should go," she says. "It's very dry, which is good for astronomy since you can't observe the sky through rain clouds, and it's the darkest place in the state. It's not as dark now as it was 20 years ago, but it's still dark. Back then, you could stand on top of the mountain, and you couldn't see any lights. There are a few lights now, but they've tried very hard to protect the area from too much light pollution."

While Byrd was with the observatory, the late Harlan Smith, Ph.D. asked her to write scripts for a telephone message service on astronomy. The scripts caught the attention of a local radio program director and in 1977 Byrd launched her first radio program, "Stardate," which now is produced by the University of Texas. Byrd left "Stardate" in the summer of 1991, and one month later, as producer and host, founded "Earth & Sky" with co-producer Joel Block. While "Stardate's" features are limited to astronomy programs, "Earth & Sky" features all sciences.

Funded by the National Science Foundation, "Earth & Sky" is broadcast on more than 700 stations nationwide. "When planning our programs, I use almanacs to see what's coming in the months ahead," said Byrd. "But I still let the sky tell me. Everything is scheduled around sky-watching since those events take place on specific

days." A list of affiliated radio stations, as well as the audio and text of each day's program, is available through the "Earth & Sky" website, <[www.earth-sky.com](http://www.earth-sky.com)>. Also on the site is a comprehensive sky-watching center, with star charts available for every day of the year. In August, sky-watchers' eyes may turn first to the summer triangle and the Milky Way. "The summer triangle, with the stars Vega, Deneb and Altair, is high overhead," Byrd notes. "Learn to locate one star or constellation, and then use it as a reference for locating other points in the sky."



Tools available to assist amateur astronomers include field guides and star charts. Binoculars are preferable to telescopes for beginners.

Traditionally, the Perseid Meteor Shower, the result of debris left behind in the orbit of Comet Swift-Tuttle, are one of August's highlights. "Unfortunately, the Perseid Meteor Shower won't be as good this year," says Byrd. "The moon will be in the way." Meteor showers build in intensity during the three or four days prior to their peak, and the best time to observe them is in the early morning hours. This year's shower peaks on August 11, but since the full moon appears on the seventh, the mornings before the peak will be full of moonlight. The Leonid Meteor Shower in November will be the one to watch in 1998.

"But there's plenty to see in August, even without the meteor showers,"

Byrd points out. "Orion has been known in many cultures as a giant, and is one of the sky's most easily identified constellations." Orion is visible in the east, just before dawn, and is easily identified by the "belt," a short, straight row of three stars that point nearly straight up from the eastern horizon. Located on either side of Orion's belt are two of the sky's brightest stars, Betelgeuse and Rigel.

"On August 23, Mercury rises in predawn sky," she continues. "When Mercury appears, you'll be able to see five planets simultaneously: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn." Jupiter and Saturn can be seen in the evening sky, but just before dawn all five planets are visible and bright enough to be seen with the eye alone or with binoculars.

Byrd urges beginning astronomers to choose a good pair of binoculars over a telescope. "Telescopes are complicated pieces of equipment that can be expensive and often end up in your closet," she says. "It's much easier to begin by using binoculars." Byrd recommends 7x35 or 7x50 binoculars for first-time buyers. The "seven" indicates the power of magnification. The numbers "35" and "50" refer to the amount of light gathered by the lens. "You can see fainter objects with the 7x50 binoculars," Byrd explains. "But the 7x50 binoculars are bigger and heavier. I usually suggest the seven-power binoculars, because if you go to higher powers, it's hard to hold them steady. After you've been looking at the sky for a year or so, and you've learned the bright stars and prominent constellations, you may want to consider buying a telescope. But until then, take that money you were going to spend on a telescope and spend it on a camping trip to a remote area with a dark sky. You'll have a much better experience with astronomy."

— G. Elaine Acker





© TIM BLACK

**T**he Orion Nebula, shown here, forms part of Orion's scabbard and is located directly below Orion's belt (not shown). A nebula is a hazy region of sky that contains clouds of gas or dust.

### For More Information

Call your favorite state park for a list of stargazing programs offered for 1998. Parks mentioned in this article are listed below, but many other parks across the state offer rich stargazing experiences:

<b>Brazos Bend</b>	409-553-5101
<b>Caprock Canyons</b>	806-455-1492
<b>Copper Breaks</b>	940-839-4331
<b>Davis Mountains</b>	915-426-3337
<b>Dinosaur Valley</b>	254-897-4588
<b>Fort Griffin</b>	915-762-3592
<b>Fort McKavett</b>	915-396-2358
<b>Lake Ray Roberts:</b>	
<b>Isle Du Bois unit</b>	940-686-2148
<b>Johnson unit</b>	940-637-2294
<b>Possum Kingdom</b>	940-549-1803
<b>San Angelo</b>	915-949-4757

tion. However, with better, more efficient lighting techniques, tons of energy could be saved and the beauty of the night sky preserved even within our cities. The International Dark Sky Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the night sky, is making a difference, but there is still much work to be done." The association has carried out this efficient lighting program in Tuscon, Arizona, and reports that you can stand downtown in the city at night and, with an unaided eye, see the Milky Way.

In the many metropolitan areas with rapid population growth and fast-spreading suburbs, the search for dark skies has become a treasure hunt. Participating in state park events organized by amateur astronomy groups offers an enjoyable way to learn more, understand the conservation issues involved and view Texas' star-studded, velvet skies. ★



# Rewarding Reclamation:

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SPECIES AND RESTORING HABITAT.

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

**D**orothy Mattiza remembers the afternoon in 1985 she tromped along the caliche slopes of her sprawling Hill Country ranch, pushing thick juniper out of the way as she searched for madrone trees that might yield seeds. To her delight, the hunt turned up something even better — 50 madrone saplings. It also attracted the attention of several hungry cows, who had followed Mattiza in hopes of a handout. She shooed the cattle away, marked the site, and later fenced off the area.

In the decade since, Mattiza has learned, “It takes nature an awfully long time to restore a piece of eroded land. The land doesn’t just heal itself after one or two years.”

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*The Landowner Incentive Program aims to save rare plants and animals on privately held lands by providing financial assistance for habitat restoration on eroded lands such as this.*





A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a barbed wire fence runs across the frame, supported by two weathered wooden posts. The ground is sandy and reddish-brown, with some sparse vegetation, including a prominent bush with bright yellow flowers in the lower right. The background shows a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds and some distant trees. The title "The Landowner Incentive Program" is overlaid in white serif font across the middle of the image.

# The Landowner Incentive Program





ENDANGERED ANCISTROCACTUS TOBUSCHI © DOROTHY MATTIZA

### DO YOU QUALIFY?

Do you think you may have spotted a Texas kangaroo rat scurrying along the ground in a remote area of your North Central Texas ranch? Or does a Texas snowbell grow in a limestone bluff above a small creek that trickles through your Hill Country property?

If so, and if you're interested in helping rare species survive, then you may be a prime candidate for the Landowner Incentive Program.

First, contact the Endangered Resources Branch (512-912-7011) and request a LIP brochure plus a list of rare species for your county. If a rare species of plant or animal inhabits your property, then call your regional biologist and request a site visit.

At least one rare species or its habitat must be enhanced by your proposed plan. Rare species include those listed as threatened or endangered as well as those named in the 1995 Texas Endangered Resources Action Plan.

More information about qualifying is available through your regional biologist.

Applications are reviewed in January and July by the Landowner Incentive Program committee. Projects are evaluated on how efficiently they will achieve conservation.



© GEYATA AILVSGI

Hill Country rancher Dorothy Mattiza received a LIP grant to fence and monitor four different habitats on her 540-acre Gunsight Mountain Ranch.

Mattiza, a self-taught naturalist, always meant to fence more sites with rare plants on Gunsight Mountain Ranch, located in Bandera County near Tarpley.

But she never had the time or the money to bring her plans to life. In 1997 a friend told her about the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), offered through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She applied for funds through the program, and less than five months later received a grant to fence and monitor four different habitats on her 540-acre ranch: a riparian habitat close to a small creek, a limestone bluff with shallow soils, a grassy prairie with seasonal wildflowers, and a hardwood-canopied Indian mound surrounded by prairie.

Each penned area will protect native vegetation, some rare, from grazing cat-

tle and deer. "We will be looking at a number of rare plants such as Tobusch fishhook cactus, big red sage, Texas mock-orange and bracted twistflower,

as well as some unique Central Texas eremicas that we are concerned are declining," says Linda Campbell, TPW endangered species biologist for Central Texas.

From Mattiza's perspective, LIP "is perfectly wonderful. It certainly provided the boost I needed to get these things done," she says. "If somebody's going to help finance it, then, by golly, I'm going to do it!"

The Hill Country rancher is one of 11 landowners who have received LIP funding since the program began early last year. The object of the program is to save rare plants and animals on privately held lands.

**"IT CERTAINLY PROVIDED THE BOOST I NEEDED TO GET THESE THINGS DONE. IF SOMEBODY'S GOING TO HELP FINANCE IT, THEN, BY GOLLY, I'M GOING TO DO IT!"**







© PAUL M. MONTGOMERY

*High-quality habitat on the Rio Grande Plains in South Texas will support a variety of wildlife and plant life*

“The program provides an incentive to protect rare species instead of a disincentive,” says biologist Peggy Horner, LIP coordinator. “It’s a carrot instead of a hammer.”

A five-year program, LIP annually awards a total of \$100,000 in federal funds provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The maximum amount per grant is \$10,000. Participants are encouraged to contribute at least 20 percent of the project’s total cost. TPW officials hope that corporations and foundations will contribute to expand the program’s reach.

Although federal regulations guard against killing endangered species and harming their habitat, stringent rules are not necessarily an effective way to accomplish those goals. Enter the LIP. Thanks to the proactive program, a patch of endangered Texas poppy mallow thrives behind a fence on a ranch 40 miles northeast of Big Spring in Mitchell

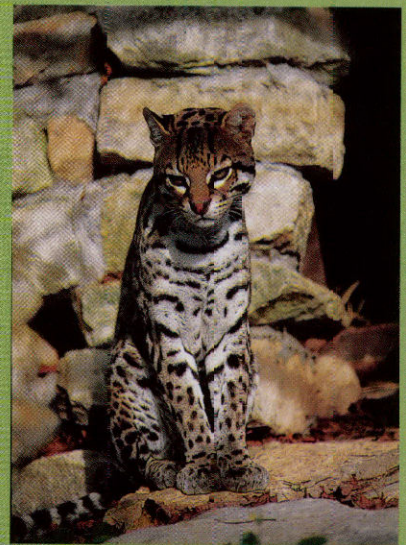
County. In the lower Rio Grande Valley, a landowner is reseeding portions of a family-owned ranch with the species of native thorn brush that endangered ocelot and jaguarundi use for cover.

“This program allows us to meet the demand for rare and endangered species conservation by working cooperatively with rural landowners,” says Dr. Gary Graham, director of TPW’s Endangered Resources Program. “It’s also turned a corner for us in working with landowners because we can do it in a way that’s compatible with their ranching.”

Adds Horner, “LIP also gives biologists another tool to use in working with landowners and encouraging them to do the right thing.”

No one had to beg James Blackwell to do the right thing. The Lubbock-area farmer was more than ready to get to work when he first heard about LIP.

“It was a real coincidence because I’d been wanting to buy and raise some



OCLOT © GFADY ALLEN

### WHAT IS AN ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES?

What does it mean that an animal is ‘endangered’? Who decides which plants are ‘threatened’?

‘Endangered’ means that a species may become extinct soon. A ‘threatened’ status indicates that a plant or animal could become endangered in the near future.

Using information gathered by biologists, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determines which species are threatened or endangered. The Federal Endangered Species Act, passed in 1973 and reauthorized in 1988, regulates potentially harmful activities (such as hunting, trapping, and selling) and protects those species that are listed in the Federal Register. State agencies, such as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, compile lists of species that are endangered or threatened in their jurisdictions.

Rare species, although not endangered or threatened, also may be covered by LIP projects. “Rare species have restricted range in Texas, but may be common in other places,” explains TPWD biologist Peggy Horner. “If we don’t pay attention to these sensitive species, they could decline in Texas.”





© PAUL M. MONTGOMERY

*Landowners who believe they have a rare species on their property can contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for information about receiving a grant under the Landowner Incentive Program for habitat improvement.*

prairie chickens, and let them run on the farm,” Blackwell recalls. “I checked all over the country, but I could find none for sale. Then I saw some on my property! Six months later, I read an article about the Landowner Incentive Program. I called the biologist that day.”

At first, TPW biologist Kevin Mote was skeptical of Blackwell’s report that he had spotted several lesser prairie chickens on his 2,500-acre farm near Littlefield in Hockley County. Although not endangered or threatened, the large ground-dwelling birds are considered to be rare.

“I told him that his country was not habitat and that he was unlikely to have any on his property,” Mote says. “But he insisted that he did, so as a courtesy,

I spent a day with him, riding around on his ranch. Finally, about sundown, we pulled up to a maize field, and he said, ‘stop here.’ Just then, three prairie chickens flew up.

“I learned never to say never,” Mote says.

Mote assisted Blackwell with LIP planning and application. Their efforts paid off. In June 1997, Blackwell became the first official LIP participant when he received \$10,000 to enhance habitat for the lesser prairie chicken. For three more years, the North Texas farmer will receive \$10,000 annually to offset the costs of planting maize on 20 acres and native grass on 160 acres, and for removing 25 acres from cotton production.

“If I hadn’t gotten some assistance, I couldn’t have afforded to lay out the 25 acres of cotton,” Blackwell says. “That would have cost me \$11,000. But I didn’t lose any money and, hopefully, we’re improving the habitat for the prairie chicken.”

As part of his contract with TPW, Blackwell regularly monitors, records and reports his observations of lesser prairie chickens to Mote. He also agreed to spread the word to his neighbors. Four of them have joined with Blackwell to form the Lesser Prairie Chicken Association. Each is in the process of signing a contract with LIP. “They’ll be doing the same things I’m doing, planting a food source and improving the habitat,” Blackwell says.



## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For more information, write to LIP coordinator Peggy Horner at 3000 South IH 35, Suite 100, Austin, TX 78704; call 512-912-7011 or 800-792-1112; email <peggy.horner@tpwd.state.tx.us>

On the web, plug into the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's site, where you can find these pages:

Landowner Incentive Program <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/lip/lip.htm>

Texas Threatened and Endangered Species Regulations <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/endang/txendang.htm>

Federal Endangered Species Act <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/endang/usendang.htm>

Texas Threatened and Endangered Species (list of plants and animals), <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/endang/endang.htm>

Questions and answers about threatened and endangered species <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/edu/enved/1&e\_educ.htm>

## REGIONAL BIOLOGISTS

### PANHANDLE:

Kev'n Mote  
Canyon, 806-655-3782

### NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS:

Peggy Horner  
Austin, 512-912-7047

### EAST TEXAS:

Ricky Maxey  
Nacogdoches, 409-560-6863

### SOUTH AND COASTAL TEXAS:

Lee Elliott  
Corpus Christi, 512-980-3246

### CENTRAL TEXAS:

Linda Campbell,  
Austin, 512-912-7044

### WEST TEXAS:

Bonnie McKinney  
Marathon, 915-376-2216

Mote also assisted rancher Billy Calley of Ira in Mitchell County in applying for LIP funds, which paid for new fencing. Calley's wire barrier protects a patch of endangered Texas poppy mallows and provides a means for his leaseholder to practice rotational cattle grazing. "He got a fence, which improved his range land, and we got better conservation of the Texas poppy mallow on that tract of land," Mote points out.

In far South Texas, Carlos and Delores Lopez of Freer hope to entice endangered ocelots and jaguarundis onto her family's 640-acre La Reforma Ranch, located just south of the King Ranch in Willacy County. Only 80 to 120 ocelots remain in the wild in South Texas. Using a \$5,650 LIP grant, the Lopezes selectively removed invasive mesquite trees from the property. This fall they will reseed targeted areas with native thorn brush.

"This will bring that habitat up to the quality of the brush on the rest of the

ranch," observes Lee Elliott, an endangered species biologist with TPW.

Carlos Lopez, superintendent of the Freer Independent School District, looks forward to seeing more wildlife on his wife's property.

"This is a way to improve habitat for all wildlife, birds and animals," he says.

"And I like things to stay as natural as possible."



Gesturing to her four plots of protected madrones, Hill Country rancher Mattiza says, "If we provide the plants necessary for wildlife as a protected seed source, then nature's systems — pollination, birds and small mammals — should spread

the seeds to appropriate habitats across the ranch.

"That's a win-win situation for plants, animals, and me ... for all of us." ★

SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS of Blanco writes about a wide range of outdoor and travel-related topics.

"THE PROGRAM PROVIDES AN INCENTIVE TO PROTECT RARE SPECIES INSTEAD OF A DISINCENTIVE IT'S A CARROT INSTEAD OF A HAMMER."



*Thanks to the Landowner Incentive Program, a patch of endangered Texas poppy mallows thrives behind a fence on a ranch northeast of Big Spring in Mitchell County.*



© JACKIE M. POOL



# The Outdoor Trails

*Justin and Tamara Trail have dedicated themselves to the outdoors as well as to each other.*

by Larry D. Hodge



© LARRY D. HODGE

Of all the tasks facing the outdoor recreation community today, two are key: providing places for people to enjoy quality outdoor experiences, and connecting people with those places.

Justin and Tamara Trail of San Angelo have chosen careers that allow them to do both those things daily. Justin, 27, and Tamara, 26, both have bachelors degrees in wildlife and fisheries sciences and masters degrees in rangeland ecology and management from Texas A&M

University. Justin works in the private sector, managing hunting properties for landowners. Tamara conducts hunter and fisher education workshops for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service in a cooperative program funded by Sport Fishing and Wildlife Restoration monies distributed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Both come naturally by their intense interest in the outdoors. "There are all kinds of pictures in the family photo

*The Trails, above, are among a new generation of outdoors educators who are proving they can combine their careers with their passion for the outdoors.*



album of my dad and me with fish," Tamara says. "My mom and dad both hunted, and from the time I could walk, I went with them." Tamara learned early the value of mentoring. "I had an uncle who had hunted the same place in Concho County for 50 years. The most memorable thing for me was sitting in a blind watching turkeys come off the roost in the distance, and him telling me they would pass near us in an hour. He also knew all the bucks on the place and where they hung out."

Fishing, though, was what caught Tamara's interest from an early age. "One of my cousins and I pretended we had a fishing show on TV. When one of us caught a fish, the other would narrate. You have to remember, we were just 10 years old," she smiles.

"From the time I was in elementary school, I wanted to go into wildlife," she recalls. While in high school she visited the Texas A&M wildlife department "and never looked back." She credits TAEX wildlife specialist Dr. Dale Rollins of San Angelo with getting her hooked on wildlife and people. "The human dimension of wildlife is very important," she says. "Partnerships among agencies, landowners and the public will become more important as demographics change and resources decline."

"It's going to take everybody out there teaming up to recruit the new participants we need in hunting, fishing and various other outdoor recreational activities to make this work long-term," Justin agrees.

He recalls when he was one of those new faces. "I grew up bird hunting with my dad near Mesquite," he says. "I had made up my mind to go into wildlife while I was in high school, but I talked myself out of it after talking to people and deciding that I couldn't make a living. But after I learned more about it in college, I realized that's what I wanted to do regard-

less of the financial rewards involved."

Justin and Tamara met while both were attending a wildlife law class at Texas A&M. "The next semester we took four or five classes together and became really good friends," Tamara says.

Their similar career tracks kept bringing them together. "We went hunting and fishing together a good deal before we really started dating." Married in 1995, the couple's busy careers prevented them from living in the same household until Tamara moved to San Angelo in January 1998.

Working with both the education department at TPWD and the wildlife and fisheries program at Texas A&M, Tamara's job is to teach hunting and fishing skills. "Everything we do is related to hunter or aquatic education," she explains. "I instruct at Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshops. I also certify hunt masters for the Texas Youth Hunting Association, conduct leader training for 4-H shooting sports and sportfishing programs, and work with county agents and TPWD biologists on outreach programs."

She also assists with shooting instruction and field studies at annual Bobwhite Brigade summer camps that teach high school students about quail. However, her chief duty is advanced training and adult leader training. "You multiply yourself when you teach leaders," she says. "My goal is to bring more people into all outdoor recreational activities, including hunting and fishing but not limited to that, and to help youth become responsible citizens with a good land ethic."

Justin's job as project development director for San Angelo-based Wildlife Systems, Inc., involves leasing properties for hunting, working with landowners to improve the habitat, recruiting hunters, guiding and maintaining the company's site on the World Wide Web. A current project involves mapping each

hunting property using a laptop computer and a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) device; when the project is completed, each map will show the precise location of every fence, ranch road and hunting blind.

Computers and the Internet play a big role at Wildlife Systems, Inc. "The Internet generates a tremendous number of inquiries — it's one of the most effective forms of advertising we have," Justin explains. "Most of our hunts are priced for middle income people, age 35 to 60, who have time to recreate and disposable income, and that demographic description overlaps well with people who have access to the Internet."

Both Tamara and Justin value most highly the intangible rewards of being involved with the outdoors. "The goals of Wildlife Systems, Inc., and my personal goals overlap," Justin says. "I want to be an ambassador for wildlife in all respects. In my job, I can be completely immersed in a person's life for two or three days, and do that with 150 people a year. I can be a teacher to them and learn from them as well. Also, we have the opportunity to be educated by every landowner we work with, and to educate them as well. I want to enjoy life; go, see, learn about all the things that other people seem to take for granted. I want to experience everything I can get my hands on."

"I want to go, see, do, too, but what really does it for me is seeing that smile on a kid's face when he catches his first fish, or being with another woman on her first deer hunt," Tamara says. "That's part of my job, but I'd do it in my spare time. Being a mentor to others in the outdoors is a neat way to appreciate life."

Most of us have dreamed of having a job that would pay us for doing something we love. Justin and Tamara Trail go that one better. They do it with the one they love. ★





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<b>Harlingen</b> KMBH, Ch. 60	Sun. 12:30
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<b>Houston:</b> KUHT, Ch. 8	Mor., 7:30
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<b>Killeen</b> KNCT, Ch. 46	Sun. 4:00
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<b>Lubbock</b> KXTX, Ch. 5	Sat. 7:00
<b>Odessa</b> KOCV, Ch. 36	Sat. 7:00
<i>Also serving Midland</i>	
<b>San Antonio</b> KLRN, Ch. 9	Thurs. 12:00
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# AUGUST

## PANHANDLE-PLAINS

JULY 3 – AUG. 15: **Summer Art Exhibition**, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

AUG. 1-22: **"Texas" Musical Drama**, daily except Sunday, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Canyon, 806-655-2181

AUG. 8: **Petroglyph Tour**, San Argelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

AUG. 14: **Stargazing Party**, San Argelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

AUG 15: **Starwalk**, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

AUG. 15: **Campfire Concert**, San Argelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

AUG. 15: **Dinosaur Walk**, San Argelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

AUG. 15: **Campfire Interpretive Program**, Abilene SP, Tuscola, 915-572-3204.

AUG. 29: **Macey's Ridge Hike**, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

## PRAIRIES AND LAKES

AUG.: **Historical Tour**, every Saturday and Sunday, Stephen F.

Austin SHF, San Felipe, 409-885-3613.

AUG.: **Guided Tours**, every weekend, Monument Hill SHP (Kreische Brewery), La Grange, 409-968-5658.

AUG.: **Traditional Cowboy Music Concert**, call for dates and times, Cleburne SP, 817-545-4215.

AUG. 8: **Creatures of the Night**, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256.

AUG. 8: **Stagecoach Rides**, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

AUG. 15: **Spiders-Friends or Foes?**, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, 903-595-3100.

AUG. 15: **Astronomy**, Dinosaur Valley SP, Glen Rose, 254-897-4588.

AUG. 15, 16: **Field Sports and Sporting Clays Expo**, Dallas, 561-562-5069.

AUG. 22: **Night Sounds**, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

## PINEYWOODS

JULY 28 – AUG. 31: **Music of the Past**, Governor Hogg Shrine SHP, Quitman, 903-763-2701.

AUG. 1, 8, 15, 22: **Guided Nature Trail Hike**, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322

AUG. 2, 9, 23, 30: **Take a Walk**

on the Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

AUG. 8, 22: **Caddo Lake Ecotour**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnak, 903-679-3743.

AUG. 8: **Celebration of Completion of the Dam by the CCC**, Tyler SP, Tyler, 903-597-5338.

AUG. 15, 16: **Canoeing the Forks**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

AUG. 22: **Outlaw Boat Races**, Atlanta SP, Atlanta, 903-796-6476.

AUG. 25, 26, 27: **Hunter Education**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

AUG. 29: **Steam Train Restoration Shop Tours**, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 1-800-442-8951.

## GULF COAST

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

AUG. 13, 23: **Beachcombing Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

AUG. 15, 22: **Wild Hog Management Hunt**, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 512-529-6600.

AUG. 16: **History Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

AUG. 22: **Marine Ecosystems Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

## HILL COUNTRY

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

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

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

AUG. 1: **Lava Fest**, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643.

AUG. 1, 29: **Devil's Sinkhole Observation and Bat Flight**, Devil's Sinkhole SNA, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

AUG. 5: **Roy B. Inks Birthday Celebration**, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

AUG. 6, 13: **Bat Watch**, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

AUG. 6, 13: **Devils' Waterhole Canoe Tour**, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

AUG. 7-9: **Western/Rodeo Weekend**, X Bar Ranch, off I-10 near Sonora, 888-853-2688.

AUG. 7: **Deer Management Seminars**, Kerr WMA, Hunt, 830-238-4483.

AUG. 8-9: **Chisholm Trail Texas Longhorn Show**, Austin, 830-693-8822.

AUG. 12: **Meteor Shower**, Enchanted Rock SP, Fredericksburg, 915-247-3903.

Aug. 14, 15, 28: **Green Cave Bat Flight Observation**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

AUG. 14, 15, 28: **Primitive Cave Tour**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

AUG. 22: **75th Anniversary**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

AUG. 27: **LBj's Birthday**, Lyndon B. Johnson SHP, Stonewall, 830-644-2252.

## BIG BEND COUNTRY

AUG.: **Bird Banding**, daily, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, 915-426-3897.

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

AUG.: **Birding Tour**, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Toyhvale, 915-375-2370.

AUG.: **Rock Art Tours**, daily, Hueco Tanks SP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

AUG. 1, 15: **Bus Tour**, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 512-389-8900.

AUG. 16: **Bird Identification Tour**, Hueco Tanks SP, El Paso, 915-857-1135.

## SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

AUG.: **Kiskadee Bus Tour**, every Tuesday and Friday, Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-519-6448.



AUG.: **Nature Tours**, every other Wednesday, Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-519-6448.

AUG. 1: **International Apple Festival**, Medina, 830-589-7224.

## SEPTEMBER

### PANHANDLE-PLAINS

SEPT. 12: **Living History**, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

SEPT. 19: **Dinosaur Walk**, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

SEPT. 19: **Campfire Interpretive Program**, Abilene SP, Tuscola, 915-572-3204.

SEPT. 26: **Nature Workshop**, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

SEPT. 27: **Buffalo Seminar**, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757.

### PRAIRIES AND LAKES

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

SEPT.: **Guided Tours**, every weekend, Monument Hill SHP (Kreische Brewery), La Grange, 409-968-5658.

SEPT.: **Traditional Cowboy Music Concert**, call for dates and times, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

SEPT. 5: **Hike The Hill/Nature Hike**, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256.

SEPT. 12: **Stagecoach Rides**, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

SEPT. 12, 13: **75th Anniversary Volksmarsch**, Meridian SP, Meridian, 254-435-2536.

SEPT. 12: **Sunset Nature Hike**, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, 903-395-3100.

SEPT. 12: **Cross Country Run**, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256.

SEPT. 12: **Astronomy**, Dinosaur

Valley SP, Glen Rose, 254-897-4588.

SEPT. 12: **Wild Bird Rehabilitation**, Dinosaur Valley SP, Glen Rose, 254-897-4588.

SEPT. 12: **75th Anniversary**, Mother Neff SP, Moody, 254-853-2389.

SEPT. 19, 20: **Pleasures and Pastimes**, Sebastopol SHP, Seguin, 830-379-4833.

SEPT. 19: **Cowboy Campfire, Poetry and Stories**, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

SEPT. 19: **Bug Safari**, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256.

SEPT. 19: **Return of Heroes**, Monument Hill SHP (Kreische Brewery), La Grange, 409-968-5658.

SEPT. 19: **Ice Cream Social and Dance**, Sebastopol SHP, Seguin, 830-379-4833.

SEPT. 26: **2nd Annual North Texas Amateur Astronomer's Star Party**, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

SEPT. 26: **Texian Days**, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 409-873-2633.

SEPT. 29: **Kids' Wilderness Survival**, Cleburne SP, Cleburne, 817-645-4215.

### PINEYWOODS

SEPT. 5, 12, 19: **Guided Nature Trail Hike**, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

SEPT. 5: **Texas Unsolved Mysteries**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

SEPT. 6: **Kids' Fishing Day, 5K Run and Canoe Races**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnack, 903-679-3351.

SEPT. 6: **Cowboy Poetry**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

SEPT. 6, 13, 27: **Take a Walk on the Wild Side**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

SEPT. 12, 26: **Caddo Lake Ecotour**, Caddo Lake SP, Karnack, 903-679-3743.

SEPT. 19, 20: **Canoeing the Forks**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

SEPT. 20: **Outlaw Boat Races**,

Atlanta SP, Atlanta, 903-796-6476.

SEPT. 26: **Steam Train Restoration Shop Tours**, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 1-800-442-8951.

SEPT. 26: **Color Your World**, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

### GULF COAST

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

SEPT.: **Hummingbird Hayride**, every Friday and Saturday, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 512-529-6600.

SEPT.: **Mission River Boat Trips**, every Saturday and Sunday, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 512-529-6600.

SEPT.: **Fall Hawk Watches**, every Saturday, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 512-529-6600.

SEPT. 5: **Triple Celebration**, Lake Texana SP, Edna, 512-782-5718.

SEPT. 5: **History Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

SEPT. 6: **Beachcombing Tour**, Matagorda Island SP, Port O'Connor, 512-983-2215.

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

SEPT. 12: **Surfing Contest**, Mustang Island SP, Port Aransas, 512-749-5246.

SEPT. 12: **Dick Dowling Day**, Sabine Pass Battleground SHP, Sabine Pass, 409-971-2559.

### HILL COUNTRY

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

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

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

SEPT. 3, 17: **Devils Waterhole Canoe Tour**, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223.

SEPT. 4-6: **Labor Day Weekend Special**, X Bar Ranch, off I-10 near Sonora, 888-853-2688.

SEPT. 11, 25: **Green Cave Bat Flight Observation**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

SEPT. 11, 25: **Primitive Cave Tour**, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

SEPT. 12: **10th Annual Frio River Cleanup**, 830-232-6999.

SEPT. 12, 26: **Devils Sinkhole Observation and Batflight**, Devil's Sinkhole SNA, Brackettville, 830-563-2342.

SEPT. 19: **Wildflower Day in the Fall**, Lyndon B. Johnson SHP, Stonewall, 830-644-2252.

### BIG BEND COUNTRY

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

SEPT.: **Birding Tour**, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Toyahvale, 915-375-2370.

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SEPT.: **Kiskadee Bus Tour**, every Tuesday and Friday, Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-519-6448.

SEPT.: **Nature Tours**, every other Wednesday, Bentsen-Rio Grande SP, Mission, 956-519-6448.

SEPT. 26: **Feria Navarro**, Casa Navarro SHP, San Antonio, 210-226-480

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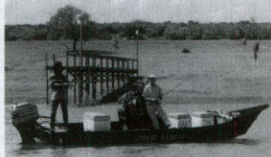


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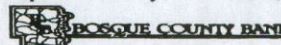
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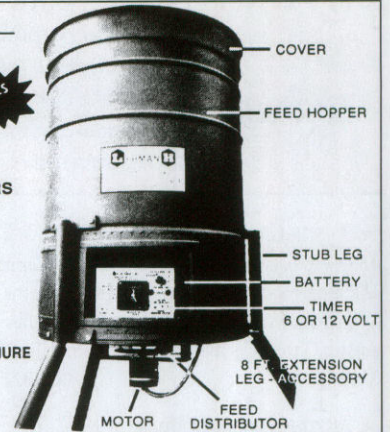
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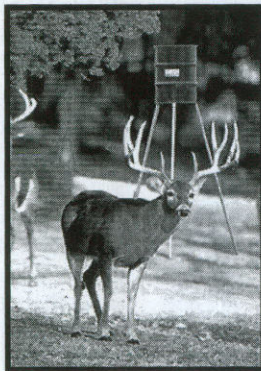
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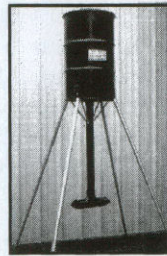


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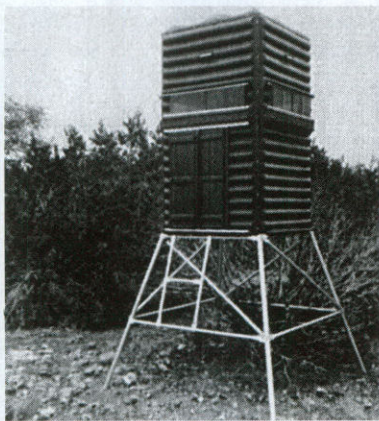
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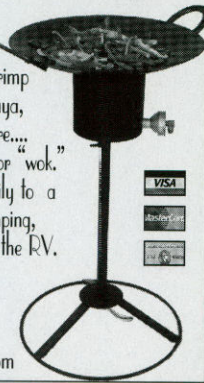
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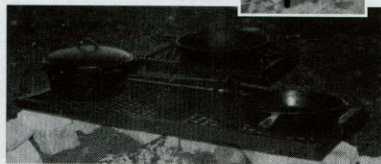
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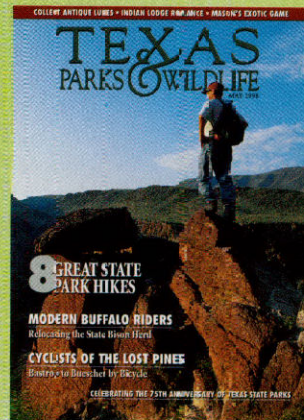
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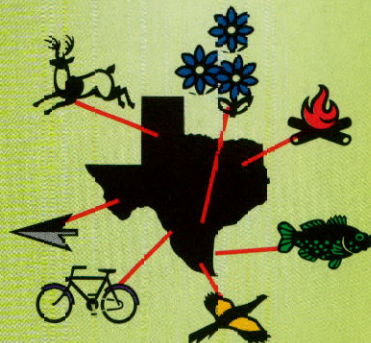
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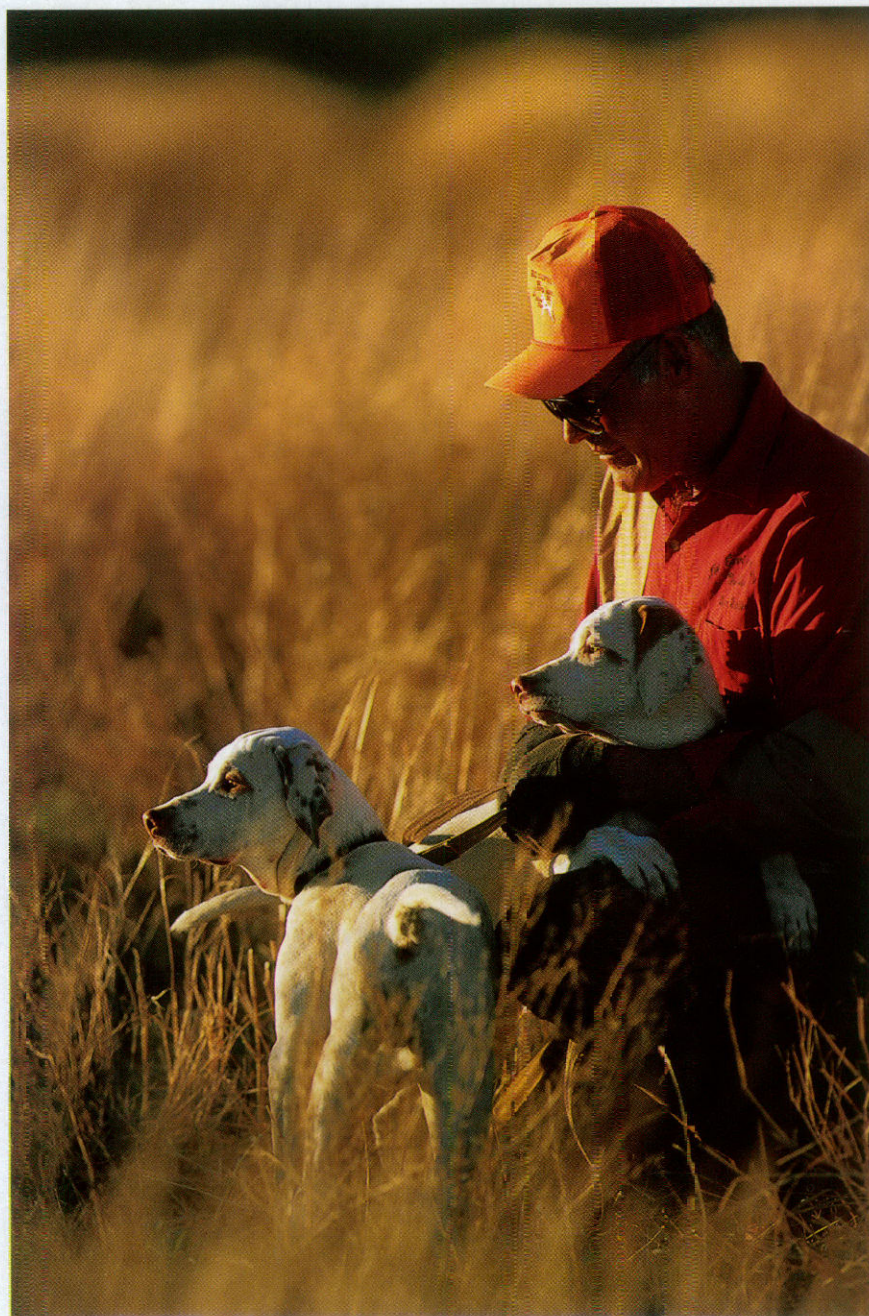
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