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HUTTER 'N HELL

TEXAS TARPON

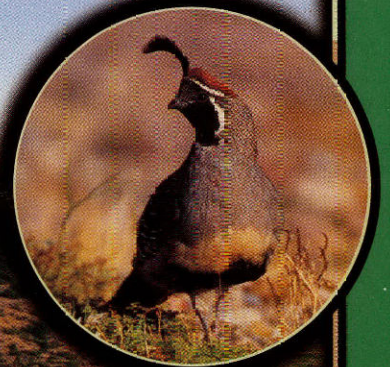
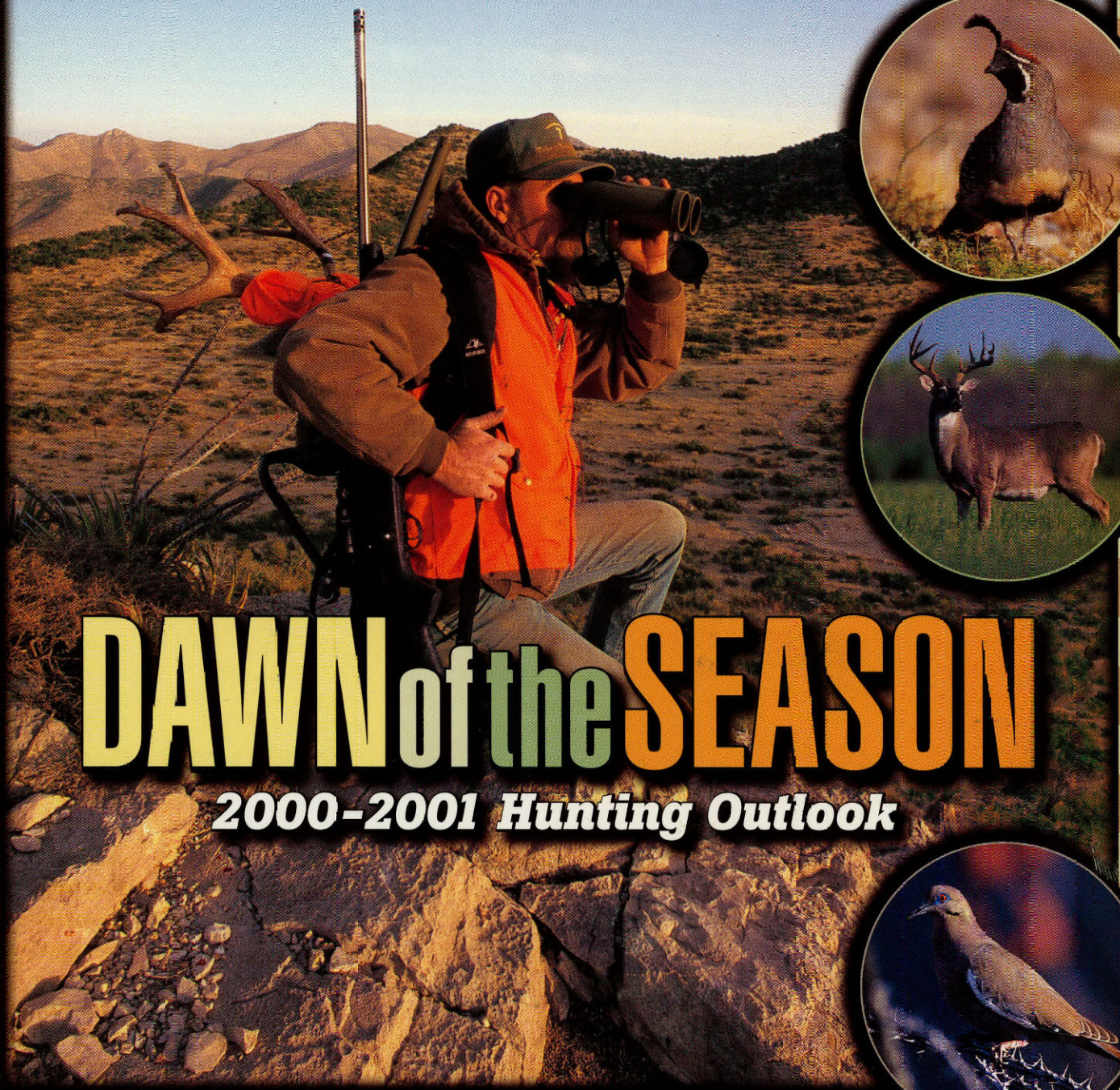
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The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS



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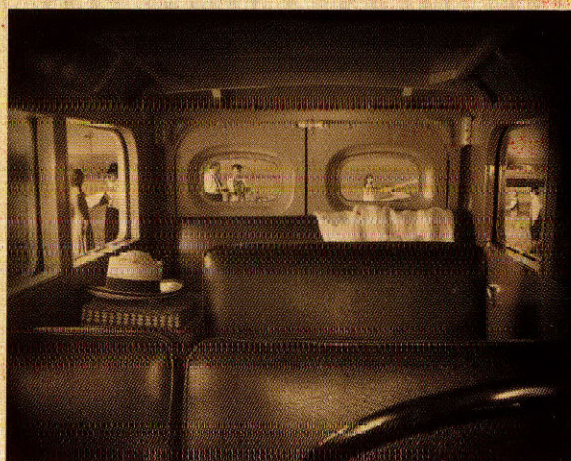
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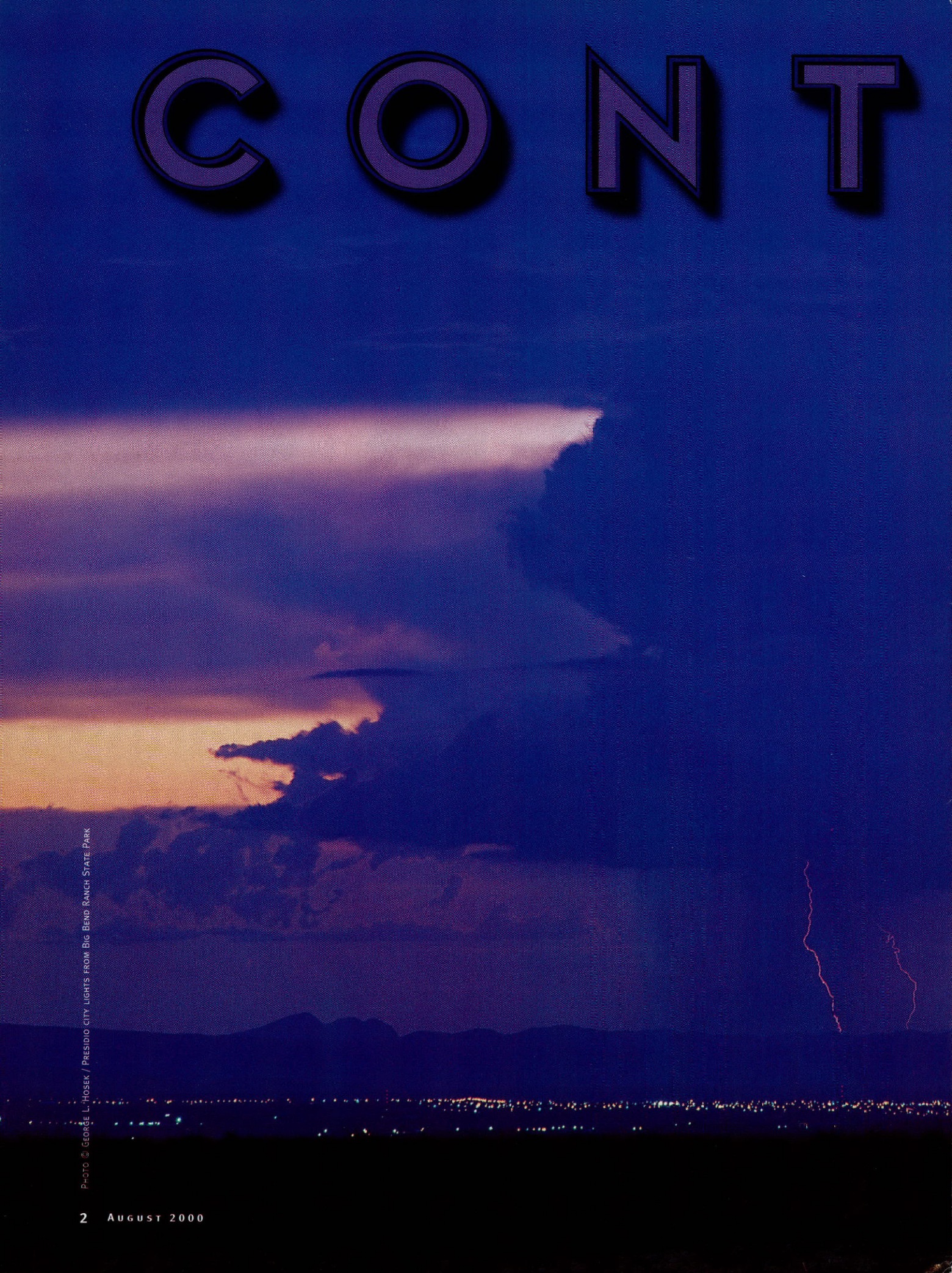


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AUGUST 2008

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Back: Are tarpon disappearing from Texas waters, or just moving farther offshore? Read about it beginning on page 50. Photo © David J. Sams.

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

AT ISSUE

From the Pen of Andrew Sansom

There was a time when every Texan still knew someone, or was related to someone, who had a farm or a ranch where you could go to be out in the country. Traditionally, family lands have provided us not only with a means of escape from the city but a collective reservoir of natural heritage including habitat for wildlife, open space, functioning watersheds and more.

Now, Texas is losing 1.2 million acres of agricultural land each year as family property disintegrates in the face of falling agricultural prices, urban sprawl, estate taxes and other factors.

Thankfully, there are families such as the Ayres, about whom you will read in this issue. Situated at the epicenter of development in western Travis County, the Ayres were caught

between the inexorable pressures of development in one of the fastest-growing regions in America and their relationship with a historic family ranch. This ranch not only is a blessing for them, it also is a crucial part of the drainage area that supplies crystal-clear water to Austin's fabled Barton Springs. Possessing a fierce desire to remain on the property, the Ayres family entered into a unique transaction with the City of Austin and the Nature Conservancy of Texas, which now preserves the ranch forever in private ownership through the use of a conservation easement.

For this action and much more, the Ayres family was recently named Lone Star Land Steward of the Year in Texas. Sponsored by the Federal Land Bank Association and the Natural Resources Foundation of Texas, the Lone Star Land Steward program is now in its fifth year.

As far as I know, the first person I ever met who had participated in a conservation easement was Jake Hershey, who passed away in Houston this spring. Jake owned property in the Texas Hill Country and the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, and he loved the land.

Jake was a great storyteller with the wit of a razor. He was a well-read philosopher and an accomplished sailor, having competed successfully during the '60s and '70s in some of America's most challenging regattas. He was, in fact, an ardent conservationist who helped found such influential institutions as the Galveston Bay Foundation, the Park People and more. He created a foundation that has been at the cutting edge of environmental philanthropy in Texas for many years.

And more than anything else, he steadfastly supported the relentless efforts of his wife Terry, a former member of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, whose passionate beliefs have gotten her into more than one scrape through the years. One of the most ardent of those beliefs was that conservation easements are a useful tool, which help protect the environment while keeping Texas families on the land they love.

Thanks to pioneers such as the Hersheys and the Ayres, many families will continue to be stewards of the land for years to come.

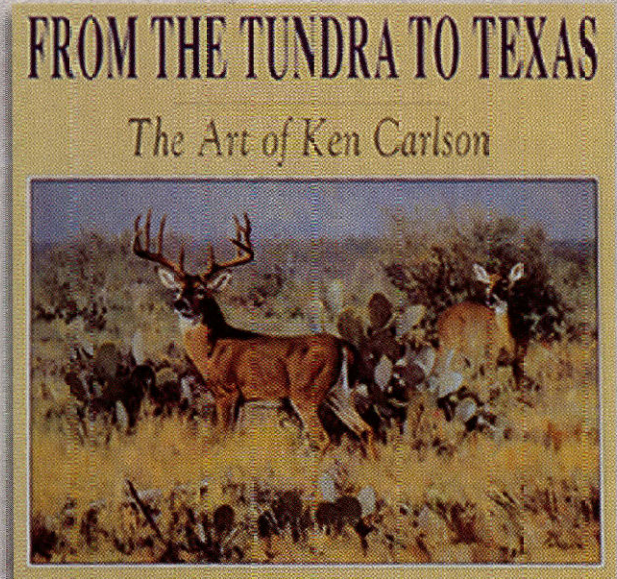
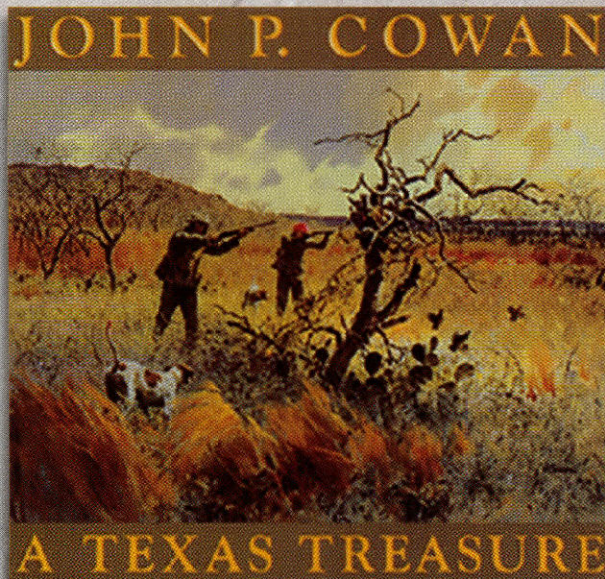
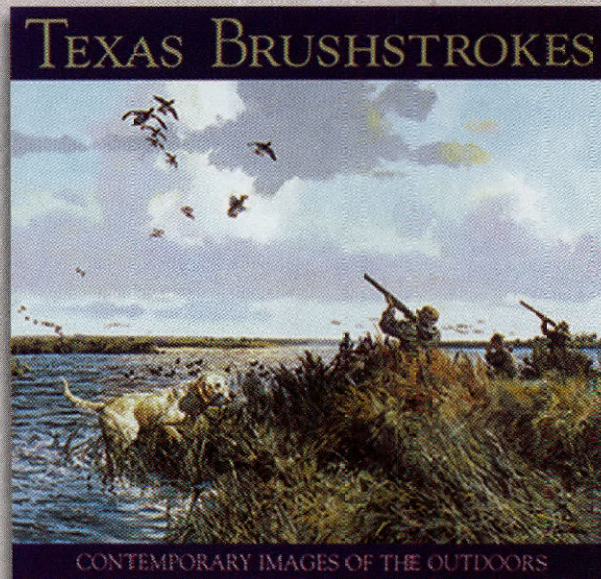
Andrew Sansom

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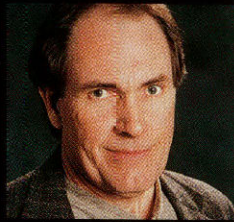
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James Hoggard, who has ridden in the Hotter'n Hell Hundred since its beginning, is a poet, novelist, essayist, translator and playwright. The McMurry Distinguished Professor of English at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, he has had 13 books published, most recently *Riding The Wind & Other Tales* (Texas A&M University Press), the novel *Trotter Ross* (Wings Press), *Medea In Taos & Other Poems* (Fecan Grove Press), and a collection of translations, *Stolen Verses & Other Poems* by Oscar Hahn (Northwestern University Press). The former two-term president of the Texas Institute of Letters has also had two of his plays produced in New York. During summers he takes a break from long-distance running to ride country roads on his bicycle, unless he's teaching, writing, translating, and "hemorrhaging all over" student papers. He says he's partial to the attitude of his ancestral friends in the Renaissance: "too much is just enough."



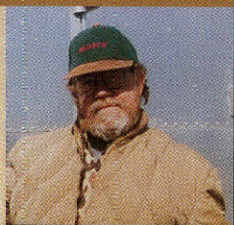
James Hoggard



David Alloway

David Alloway is head of interpretation at Big Bend Ranch State Park where, among other programs, he instructs the internationally renowned Desert Survival Workshop. Growing up in El Paso, Alloway and his two brothers spent most of their free time in the outdoors with their father doing everything from gold prospecting to coon hunting with their hounds. In 1996 Alloway became the first non-Australian to compete in the 200-kilometer Pilbara Trek in Western Australia, considered by many to be the toughest survival course in the world open to civilians. He is the author of *Desert Survival Skills* from University of Texas Press, and in October 1999 was named "the nation's leading desert survival instructor" by *Outside* magazine. His students range from elementary school teachers to the 10th Canadian to summit Mount Everest. He lives near Presidio with his two sons, Ian, 8 and Sean, 3. Alloway shares his survival expertise in this month's "Scout SkillBuilder."

Rich Haddaway and his wife, Kay, recently took a year off from their careers and wrote a guidebook, *Cities to Go*, which is just out from Avalon. He has returned to the work world as associate editor of *Boys' Life* magazine. Kay, a CPA, is the new vice president of marketing for Family Service, a Fort Worth social service agency. Haddaway is a native of Fort Worth and spent two decades as an editor and writer at the *Star-Telegram*, where he most recently was travel editor. In this month's issue he introduces us to the late Orville Rice, whose artwork graced the covers of this magazine in the 1940s and '50s when it was known as *Texas Game and Fish*. The Haddaways have one son, James, who is a realtor in Costa Rica.



Rich Haddaway

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AUGUST 2000, VOL. 58, NO. 8

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CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Grady Allen, Wyman Meinzer, Earl Nottingham and David J. Sams

EDITORIAL OFFICES:

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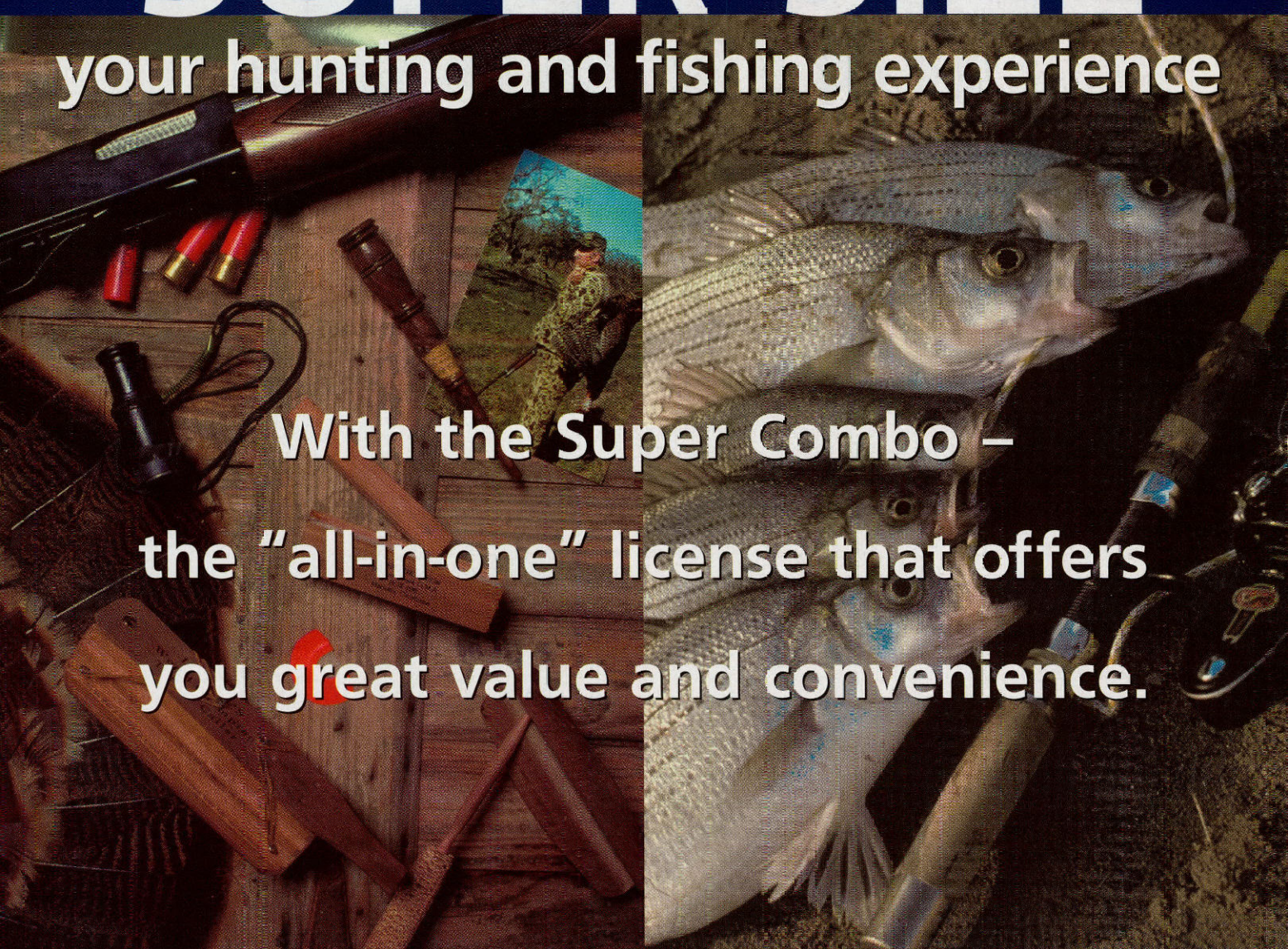
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MAIL CALL

Picks, Pans and Probes from Previous Issues



FOREWORD

DOVE HUNTING, as I discovered last year, can be quite a social event. Perhaps simply because it launches the hunting season; perhaps that hunters commune in fraternal clusters around a field; perhaps because a late-afternoon dove hunt still allows enough time to prepare the day's rewards as a hearty feast afterwards. All elements combine for a much-anticipated, and much-savored, experience.

Last September, I joined friends Shug and Bob Ferris at their lease, affectionately dubbed "The Middle-Aged Spread." A number of others, many of us who had become friends through the Texas Outdoor Writers Association, had gathered there from points across the state. Late afternoon found us taking our positions around the fence line, vying with each other for scarce shade, and waiting for the doves to arrive at the sunflower field we encircled. The thunderstorm cells dancing upon the distant horizon added color and depth to the sunset, and the companionship of good friends all contributed to a memorable day in the field.

I was fortunate to be in the field with experienced hunters, but as Steve Hall writes in this month's "Scout: The Human Side of Hunting Accident Statistics," even experienced hunters can suffer a lapse in safety habits. As with a staggering 44 percent of all hunting-related accidents, Carl Young wounded himself. Each of us, before going out in the field this year, owes it to ourselves and our colleagues to review and follow the "Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety" on page 14 of this issue. As they are two of Texas' most popular hunting activities, it happens that 30 percent of all accidents occur while hunting deer; and 24 percent while hunting doves. We all must think "safety, safety, safety" whenever we're out in the field. It will only add more pleasure and satisfaction to our hunting memories to remember each hunt as an accident-free one.

This issue marks the final recipe installment from Lawry's Test Kitchens — "Doves in Orange Sauce." With the September issue, our reader recipes cards will begin, starting with reader Paul Heft of Houston, and his recipe for "Venison Swiss Steak." We know this is a well-tested recipe, as Heft writes, "I'm 86 years old, and have taken at least one deer in each of the past 51 years. I will proudly wear my *Texas Parks & Wildlife* T-shirt."

Readers who wish to contribute their favorite fish or game recipe can still receive a T-shirt for their submission by sending the recipe along with name, address and daytime phone number to: *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, attn: Recipes, 3000 South IH35, Suite 120, Austin TX 78704.

LETTERS

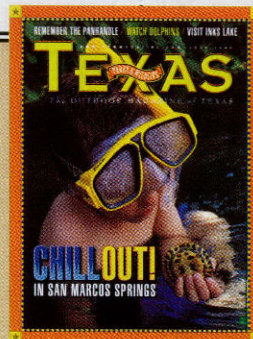
True Blue in Temple

Thank you for sending me my lost issues. After 47 years, this magazine, even though it is not a *Texas Game and Fish*, is like a member of my family and I can't live without it.

I am chapped when I read criticism of the magazine and I defend it at every opportunity.

I have subscribed to and have every issue of *Texas Game and Fish* and *Texas Parks & Wildlife* since 1953 when I was a freshman in high school.

Howell R. Baugh
Temple



I applaud *Texas Parks & Wildlife's* commitment to publish articles concerning nongame species, and hope to see more stories on insects and other attractive but less-obvious life forms.

Robert A. Behrstock
Houston

Sign Me Up!

I have been a casual reader of your magazine for years. I thoroughly enjoy it but have never got around to subscribing until today. I was motivated to subscribe as a result of a letter in the May "Mail Call" section. A

reader wrote to withdraw their subscription as a result of your occasional coverage of hunting opportunities in the state, an aspect of your magazine I enjoy.

I am one of the thousands of Texans who participate in many of the outdoor activities the state offers, including hunting. As you stated in your response to the aforementioned reader, hunting is a sport that offers benefits to both the

MAIL CALL

hunter and the hunted, as odd as this may sound to those that don't understand proper wildlife management. Also, as stated, hunters are often the only source of critical funds required to support conservation efforts.

Your coverage of Texas hunting opportunities may have cost you one subscription, but it has earned you mine and hopefully many more.

⚡ Greg Couch

Texas' Threadtail

Since Dr. Mitchell and I sent the article on Texas' threadtail damselflies that was published in the June issue of *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, Dr. Mitchell has collected another species of threadtail, *Neoneura amelia*, from an area just north of Brownsville. Dr. John Abbott (U.T. Department of Entomology) has also collected *N. amelia* here in Texas.

This is a particularly striking threadtail, with the red coloration extending back across the top of the head, thorax and over several segments of the abdomen.

We have placed scans of it (both male and female) on our Web site at <http://stephenville.tamu.edu/~fmitchel/damselfly/image/n_amelia.htm>. These collections mark a northern range extension for this species.

⚡ James L. Lasswell

Beef About "White Buffalo"

As an avid hunter and sniper for the Department of Justice, I was crushed when my favorite magazine printed an article in July's issue titled "The White Buffalo," glorifying the slaughter and almost complete extinction of the buffalo.

Anderson stated that "Moar was an unusually thoughtful man for a buffalo hunter." He also stated that he "played a large role in depleting the great herds of the upper plains... and was finishing off the herds of the lower range" and that he killed 22,000 head leaving "hardly enough buffalo left to

stage a decent Wild West show." Does that sound like a thoughtful man to you?

Anderson stated that Mooar employed four skinners who referred to themselves as "hide men." Apparently a lot of meat was wasted and left behind, showing poor management of our natural resources. Is this what we want to teach our young generation of hunters? I think not.

⚡ Spencer T. Smith

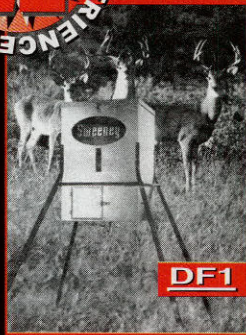
Weather To Go

Nearly all facets of recreation depend upon weather. Fishing in general, and fly fishing in particular, are no exceptions, as stated in the June 2000 *Texas Parks & Wildlife* article, "Fly Fishing on the Rocks," by Raymond Chapa, Jr.

Besides the Web sites listed for weather information, one of the more convenient ways to obtain current

weather observations, forecasts, buoy and tide information, plus sunrise and sunset times, is from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio (NWR) stations located throughout the U.S. There are 35 NWR stations located in Texas, transmitting from National Weather Service Offices on VHF frequencies between 162.400 MHz and 162.550 MHz. Since these frequencies are not found on AM or FM radio dials, a special receiver is required. Radios featuring the "weather band" are available at electronic outlets, department stores and discount chains statewide. Costs range from \$20 to \$80, depending upon features. Some portable, boat, auto and RV radios now come equipped with built-in weather bands.

Along the Texas coast, NWR stations located from Beaumont to Brownsville blanket most of the bays,



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*⚡ Larry Peabody
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Scott Manley, You da Man!

Thanks for publishing Scott Manley's essay "My Birthday Fishing Trip" in Mail Call (July 2000). At 12 years old, Scott is already both an accomplished outdoorsman and writer. His story brought back many fond memories of outings with my father, and took me back to my youth.

I hope we hear more from this talented young man. In a time when the news is filled with the misdeeds of a very small percentage of people in Scott's age group, it is quite refreshing to read about such father-son excursions, especially from a 12-year-old who took the time to put it into words. I'm seeing Dad tomorrow, and I'm going to share the story with him.

Thanks, Scott!

*⚡ David Alloway
Presidio*

ERRATA: In the July 2000 article "The Delights of Dolphins," the phrase "Dolphin offspring lactate for 18 months" should read "Dolphin offspring nurse..." Reader Terry Thompson pointed out this editing error. Texas Parks & Wildlife regrets the error. (Still, Mr. Thompson's witty e-mail did give us a good chuckle!)

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

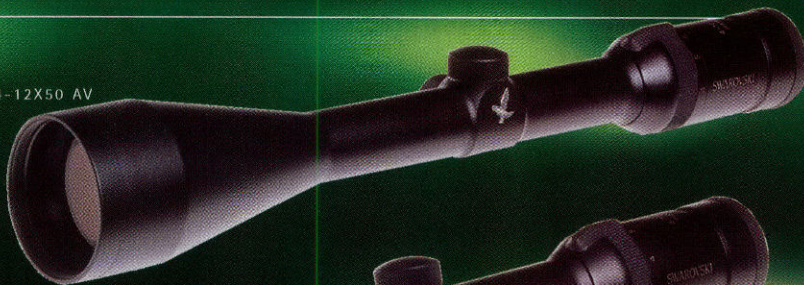
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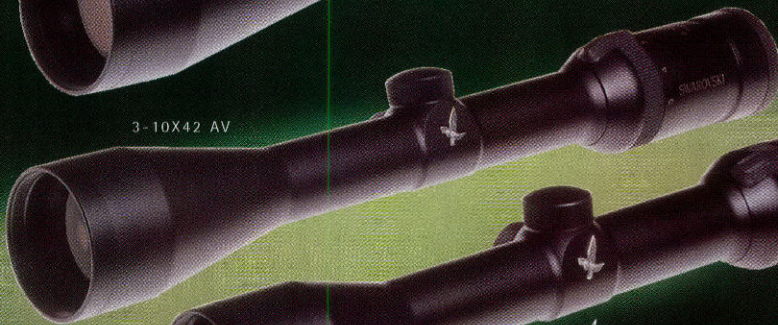
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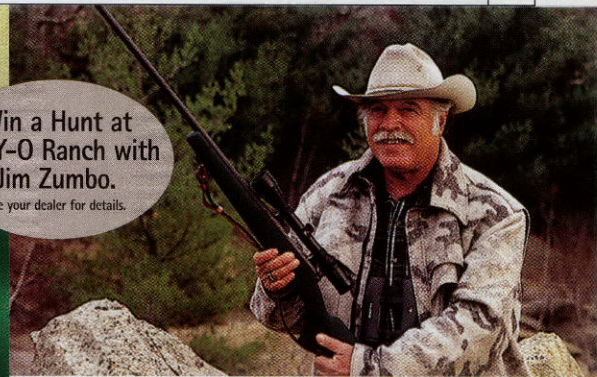
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ask me what's most important for rifle hunting success. I tell them dependability, and that means your physical conditioning, knowledge, a sharp knife and an accurate rifle with the very best scope you can afford. Swarovski AV scopes are waterproof with the turret caps off, rugged and bright as all daylight. They even have a Limited Lifetime Warranty* to back it all up, and the price is surprisingly low for the premium quality you get. Now, my suggestion is for you to visit your Swarovski Optik dealer or call 800-426-3089, and see for yourself. Dependable equipment, like a Swarovski AV riflescope, will go a long way toward your hunting success."



Jim Zumbo

*Original warranty card must be postmarked within 30 days of purchase from an authorized Swarovski dealer in good standing. Entire product must be returned with warranty claim by registered warranty holder.

SCOUT

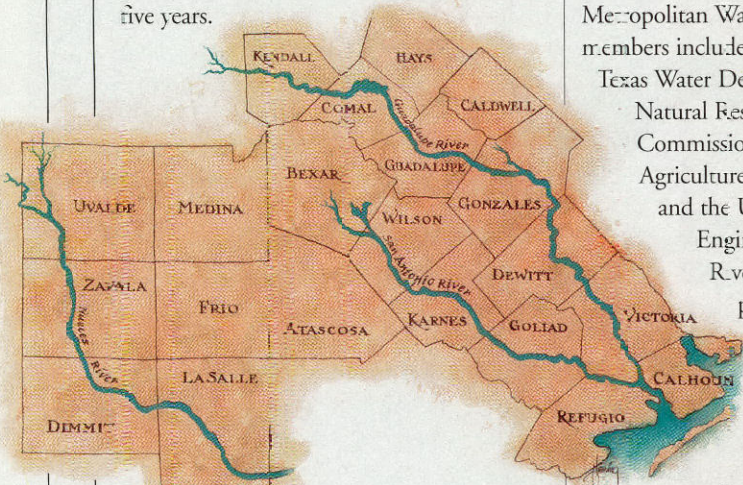
NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

WATER FUTURES

How do you plan for water needs in one of the fastest-growing regions in the country?

TEXAS' RUINOUS 1996 DROUGHT inspired the passage of Senate Bill 1, the omnibus water law. Signed by Governor George Bush in 1997, SB1 set into motion long-range, bottom-up planning for future needs across the state.

The Texas Water Development Board oversees and funds 16 regional water-planning groups. Each must submit a 50-year plan in January 2001. A year later, the board must send a state plan, with recommended water projects, to the Texas Legislature. Regional plans then will be updated every five years.



Across Texas, probably no region faces a greater challenge than the South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group, now in its third year. Its 21 nonpaid, voting members represent 11 broad interest groups in Atascosa, Bexar, Caldwell, Calhoun, Comal, DeWitt, Dimmit, Frio, Goliad,

Gonzales, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, La Salle, Medina, Refugio, Uvalde, Victoria, Wilson and Zavala counties plus part of Hays County. Region L includes three major river basins: Nueces, San Antonio and Guadalupe; four major aquifers: Trinity, Edwards, Carrizo and the Gulf Coast; and bays and estuaries along the Gulf.

At Region L's data-heavy meetings, a rancher or geologist from a rural county might sit beside a fellow planner from the San Antonio Water System or Bexar Metropolitan Water District. Nonvoting members include representatives of the Texas Water Development Board, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Parks and Wildlife and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The San Antonio River Authority is the regional planning group's administrator. Consulting engineers crunch big numbers in this fast-changing region. More than 2 million people now live in the region —

1,359,993 of them in Bexar County, home to San Antonio, the largest city in Texas relying solely on aquifer water. But the Edwards Aquifer also feeds two springs that are habitat to federally protected, endangered species. To protect those species, the Edwards Aquifer Authority is ▶



FIELD NOTES

The number of hunting-related fatalities/injuries continues to decline, from a high of 37 fatalities and 68 non-fatal injuries in 1968 to a low of two deaths and 29 injuries in 1996.

The incident rate based on 100,000 licenses sold continues to decline from 12.6 in 1965 to a low of 3.1 in 1996.

Hunters shot themselves in 24 percent of the incidents.

Most hunters involved in hunting accidents were not wearing blaze orange or had not taken a hunter education course to learn hunting/firearm safety knowledge and skills.

MAP ILLUSTRATION BY ROB FLEMING, TPW

**water futures** *continued...*

enforcing gradually reduced pumping.

Even if Region L succeeds in balancing short-term needs, it faces a daunting challenge in the future. By 2050, about 4.5 million people are expected to live in the region; even allowing for conservation, that adds up to a water shortfall of 400,000 acre-feet. (An acre-foot is about 325,860 gallons: a year's supply for about eight people.)

Region L chairperson Evelyn Bonavita is a League of Women Voters member experienced in resolving contentious San Antonio issues. "However," she admits, "the challenge of finding water resources for a rapidly growing region that is semi-arid in nature, and boasts a large metropolitan area with mandated limits on its water supply, can be daunting."

In some neighboring counties,

residents have protested the possible "mining" of aquifers or construction of large reservoirs that would displace farm families and maybe cripple the rural county's property-tax base.

Occasionally an urban-rural tension permeates Region L meetings. There have been interregional conflicts with other planning groups, too.

"The south-central region has most of the state's water issues concentrated in a 21-county area," public participation contractor Maggie Moorhouse observes. "Urban growth, declining aquifer levels, potential unmet irrigation demands, surface-water rights and environmental concerns are some of the issues facing planners."

Region L planners have gone to great lengths to analyze the water puzzle from various perspectives. They and their consultants from HDR Engineering have used theme-

driven "alternative" plans — unique among regional planning groups — to sift through nearly 60 water project options (some of which are holdovers from the water board's defunct Trans-Texas Water Program).

"From what I have seen thus far, I do not think everyone will get exactly what they want," says nonvoting planner Norman Boyd, a Texas Parks and Wildlife ecosystem leader in Port O'Connor. "However, all parties concerned realize that with the nature of the resource and the region, *compromise* will be the key word if future water needs are to be met."

Region L's official Web site is located at <www.watershedexperience.com>; in-depth news is archived at <www.wilsoncountynews.com>, "Water-Related Issues."

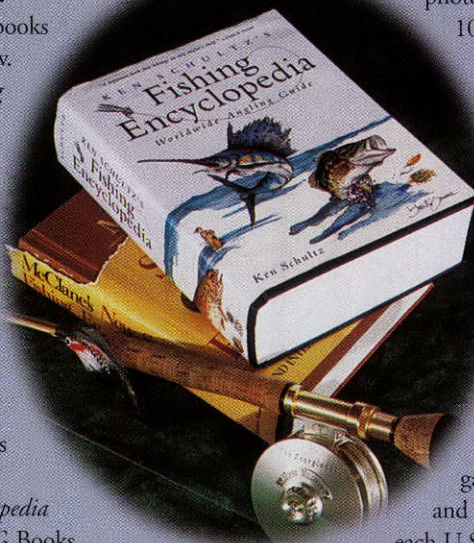
— Marty Kufus

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT FISHING

WANT AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FISHING?

ALL YOU NEED are two books — one classic and one new. *McClane's Standard Fishing Encyclopedia* (Henry Holt and Company, \$30), written 35 years ago by A. J. McClane, angling historian and longtime editor of both *Sports Afield* and *Field & Stream* magazines, is a well-illustrated standard. It has held center stage as an accurate information source for international angling since its first printing in 1965 and revision in 1974. This classic 1,158-page work is once again available as a reprint.

Ken Schultz's new *Fishing Encyclopedia and World Wide Angling Guide* (IDG Books, \$60), should also be on every serious angler's shelf. It contains all the most recent information about sport



fishing, plus a wealth of drawings, diagrams and photos in its nearly 2,000 pages. (At nearly 10 pounds, it outweighs most of the fish we catch.) Schultz, a staff fishing writer and editor with *Field & Stream* since 1973, is one of the most widely known and respected outdoor writers in the nation.

Perhaps the most useful material contained in this excellent reference is current information on fishing destinations around the world. Traveling fishermen can get a good idea of what to expect from each locale, including concise descriptions of geography, climate, and game-fishing opportunities in both fresh and saltwater, along with interesting facts on each U.S. state or foreign country. Texas, by the way, garners eight of the volume's 1,916 pages.

— Gibbs Milliken





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The Human Side of Hunting ACCIDENT STATISTICS

One safety lapse triggered a tragedy Carl Young never will forget.

CARL YOUNG SHOULD KNOW about the importance of hunting safety — he's lucky to be alive. Young was hunting on the Callahan Ranch near Laredo on a cool, crisp November day in 1999. He carried in his holster what he always carried with him at the hunting lease: a .454-caliber Casull revolver with an empty chamber cylinder. Young practiced many hours with the five-shooter and opted for the bigger gun when hunting deer and feral hogs in the dense South Texas Brush Country. In the foggy, mid-morning hours he spotted the deer his son had shot at earlier.

Quietly and skillfully, Young drew his handgun and cocked the hammer. At that moment, he heard a vehicle off in the distance. Knowing it was his wife and daughter, he hurriedly lowered the hammer and sheathed his sidearm. Young wanted to tell his wife some things before she departed. But, atypically for him, he forgot about the revolver's loaded chamber. This lapse in safety habit soon would have tragic consequences.

Young had developed the habit of always clearing the chamber of his handgun before holstering and moving around. But on this day, he hunched down to clear a low-lying limb. The exposed hammer of his gun caught on a stout branch. The force of his motion caused the hammer to lift, then pop back in place. The blow was enough to activate the primer of the big centerfire cartridge that he had forgotten to remove.

A large bullet rifled out of the muzzle, through his holster, down the back of his leg and through his ankle.

The wound was life-threatening because the bullet severed two large

arteries. Young was able to crawl to a clearing 70 yards away and flag down his family. A friend was summoned to drive the vehicle while Young's wife called 911 on her mobile phone. An ambulance met them at mile marker 23 on Interstate 35. After an emergency stay in Laredo, where game warden Henry Leal, Jr., assisted and prepared the accident report, Young was transferred to Brackenridge Hospital in Austin, where his right leg was amputated below the knee.

Since that time, Young has not wavered in his quest for game. He recently attended a hunter education course to comply with regulations in Colorado, where he is planning an upcoming hunt. The course provided him with far more than just compliance, though. Young had a personal, real-life story to share with the other students. Young's moment will live vividly in the minds of those who took the course with him.

Young doesn't mind sharing his experience. When people talk to him about the accident, he simply says, "You can dwell on it — or get on with your life. Just never get complacent about safety; that's all I can say." His attitude is a blessing to the 50,000 hunter education instructors across North America. He represents perhaps the best training aid — a person who can share firsthand knowledge of the need for safety.

While Young's accident wasn't necessarily the result of a violation of muzzle control, he admits that he did shortcut his usual safety repertoire. "The one thing that has helped me deal with the accident is that I did it to myself," Young says. "I'm not sure how I would have dealt with it if my son, a friend or someone else was the victim."

— Steve Hall



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SHOOTING SAFETY

1. Always point the muzzle of your firearm in a safe direction.
2. Treat every firearm with the same respect you would show a loaded firearm.
3. Be sure of your target and what is in front of and beyond your target — use binoculars.
4. Unload firearms when not in use; unload before you store and transport firearms.
5. Handle firearms carefully; unload before crossing obstacles or difficult terrain.
6. Know your "safe zone of fire" and stick to it, such as using proper field carries.
7. Control your emotions; show restraint by passing on unsafe shots.
8. Wear ear and eye protection when shooting, especially at the shooting range.
9. Don't take mood-altering drugs or alcohol before or while handling/shooting firearms.
10. Be aware of circumstances that require added caution or safety awareness.

For hunter education courses and information and copies of the Annual Hunting Accident Report, contact Texas Parks and Wildlife, 800-732-1112 (menu 6) or <www.tpwd.state.tx.us>.

For information about the Texas Youth Hunting Program, contact Jerry Warden, Coordinator, Texas Wildlife Association, 800-460-5494.



Seeing Red Over Snapper

CONTROVERSY FLARES OVER AGENCIES'
MANAGEMENT OF GULF RED SNAPPER POPULATIONS



THE SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES ACT, a 1996 revision of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act, gave strong marching orders for bodies that regulate fisheries to restore the nation's depleted fish stocks. Three years ago, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which regulates recreational red snapper fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, applied that mandate to the overfished red snapper, the most economically important reef fish in the Gulf.

Their efforts have drawn heated responses. The first-ever red snapper season closure came just after Thanksgiving 1997. This year the season opened April 21 and is slated to run until October 31. Minimum size is 16 inches, with a four-fish-per-angler bag limit. The State of Texas, which claims jurisdiction on waters out to roughly nine miles from shore, has pursued a different management strategy from federal regulations and set a 12-month open season, four-fish bag limit and 15-inch minimum size.

Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) officials and most serious snapper fishermen believe the Gulf should be managed in at least two zones for snapper, since NMFS estimates that about 33 percent of all the red snapper landed in the Gulf are caught in federal waters off Texas — and these fish are not migratory. A Port Aransas headboat operation has filed a lawsuit to force snapper season to remain open, arguing that NMFS and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management

Council used questionable data in their decision-making process.

Jim Smarr, Texas chairman of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), is one critic of current snapper management. RFA supports a 12-month snapper season, 13-inch minimum size with a four-fish bag limit (encouraging anglers to keep the first four fish and not "cull" for a better catch) and a three-year moratorium on regulation changes until better data can be collected.

Dr. Barbara Dorf, TPW natural resource specialist in Rockport, says some problems with current snapper management are related to gaps in data on discards and resulting mortality. In 1999 Dorf conducted a study of snapper discarded from headboats in three Texas ports. She found that 92 percent were discarded using the 18-inch size limit then in effect. Using current size limits, discards in 1999 would have been around 76 percent (16-inch federal) and 59 percent (15-inch Texas) respectively. Up to 50 percent of discarded snapper may die after being released.

Commercial red snapper fishing opened February 1 and will run for the first 10 days of each month until two-thirds of the commercial quota — 51 percent of the total quota for recreational and commercial catches combined — is reached. A second commercial season will open in the fall. When red snapper season is closed, however, commercial fishing for vermilion snapper, lane snapper and grouper is still

allowed, and the mortality rate on "throwback" red snapper in these fisheries is very high, say experienced snapper fishermen.

Shrimpboat bycatch is another problem. NMFS requires shrimp nets to be equipped with bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) to allow unwanted finfish to escape. Many shrimpers don't like BRDs, believing they lose too many valuable shrimp. The Texas Shrimp Association has a standing lawsuit asking for the recreational/commercial quota on red snapper to be lowered drastically to offset shrimp net bycatch.

A peaceful resolution does not appear to be in sight. Charterboat and headboat operators depend on snapper fishing for much of their income, and monies spent by recreational snapper anglers trickle through the economy in tackle, bait and boat sales; marina occupancy; hotel and motel bookings; restaurant and fuel sales. Many argue for the need for a system of Individual Transferable Quotas, which would grant a limited number of fishing allowances that fishers can sell or trade. Set at a sustainable level, it could help ensure survival of Gulf snapper for future generations.

— Mike Holmes



By Gibbs Milliken

FISHING GLASSES

Action Optics
Clip-ons, yellow

A NGLERS FIND CERTAIN ITEMS essential each time they go afield. Among these are sunglasses to protect the eyes and enhance vision. For the angler, polarized lenses greatly reduce the intense glare and water surface reflections that prevent seeing fish and underwater structure.

Sportfishing has progressed to the point that

most fishers tend to hunt and cast to individual fish rather than simply blind-cast hoping for a random take of the lure. Many fresh and saltwater game species are often in clear water and shy enough to require a stealthy approach. The angler, using the correct type of glasses, has the distinct advantage of spotting the fish before they spot him and dash for cover.

Lenses and Frames

Lens color is important.

The gray, green, amber and yellow lenses have specific functions. The location and species of fish are also important.

Redfish are more easily seen using amber glasses than with the gray or green tints. The very dark glasses in blue-gray do not function as well in low light as the slightly lighter values in the same hue. The darkest tints are for use in direct tropical sun on light sand, offshore waters, or bright snow conditions at higher altitudes.

If you wear prescription glasses then you must consider either an expensive second pair, clip-ons or fit-over accessory glasses. In any case, the most important thing to remember is that they have the polarized feature. The clip-on type should cover the lenses without abrasion or scratching and have the same shape and size. The fit-over type are good if they have side-vision panels to



Solarshield Ultra

reduce internal reflections yet allow for peripheral motion detection.

The polarized feature allows one to see through water reflections.

Regular tinted glass does not do this. The tint only reduces light intensity and blocks certain rays, but the reflections remain a problem without polarization. To check if glasses are indeed polarized, take a second pair of the same glasses and hold them up so you can look through the two pairs at the same time. Rotate one of the pairs and it will darken and lighten in the process, proving polarization.

Quality

The better polarized glasses are made from ophthalmic-grade lens material and are free of aberrations that cause eye-strain. These also should have anti-reflective coatings that reduce bouncing internal light and scratching so common in the softer, less-expensive

plastics. The polarizing film in good glasses is exactly centered between two thin layers of hard optical material. They cost more, but last a lot longer than the types selling for under \$10. A quick test of quality for any pair of sunglasses is to hold them slightly away from your face, look at a distant fixed object, and move the glasses up and down to see if the subject appears to move or distort. If the object jumps, the lens has some optical imperfection at that point.

Weight

It is best to buy the lightest possible glasses. Over long periods of wear, you should be able to forget that you even have them on. Heavy glasses are a constant source of irritation and fatigue. This is also true if they are not properly fitted at the nose, brow and temples. Most brands can be easily adjusted to fit, but getting a lightweight pair that still has quality construction in your style preference requires careful selection.

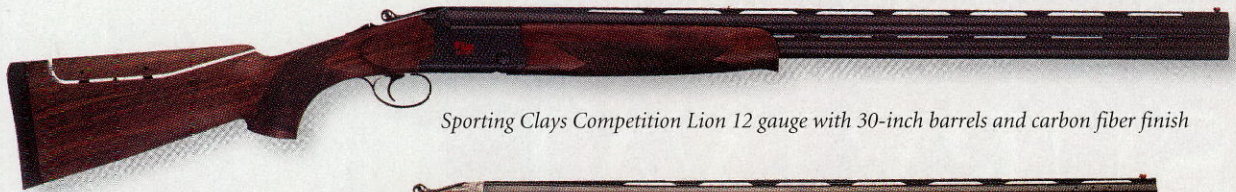
Variable Density Glasses

This is a new feature in some glasses. Indoors or in shade, the lens will lighten; outdoors in strong sunlight, the lens darkens. In some cases, this process is slow to take effect. Try them out before you decide if the extra cost is worth the convenience vs. the waiting time to change density.

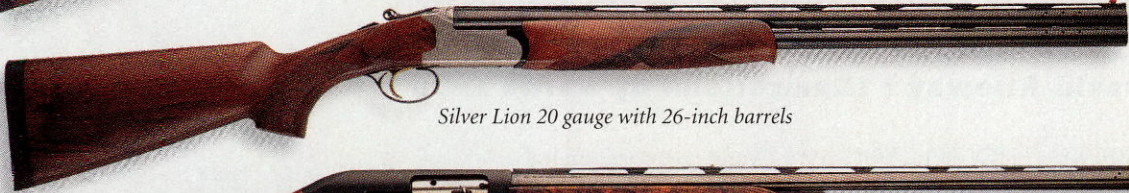
Action Optics
Clip-ons

Medical Concerns

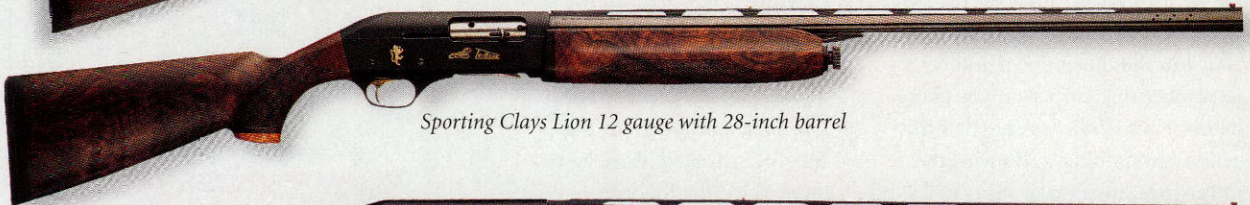
Outdoor sporting enthusiasts are being informed of new medical evidence indicating that the blocking of UV, A&B radiation present in daylight is important to long-term healthy vision. The better sunglasses will all have attached labels telling the purchaser exactly what percentage of the harmful rays these lenses will retard. It is recommended that sunglasses be worn any time you are exposed to long periods of sunlight. ★



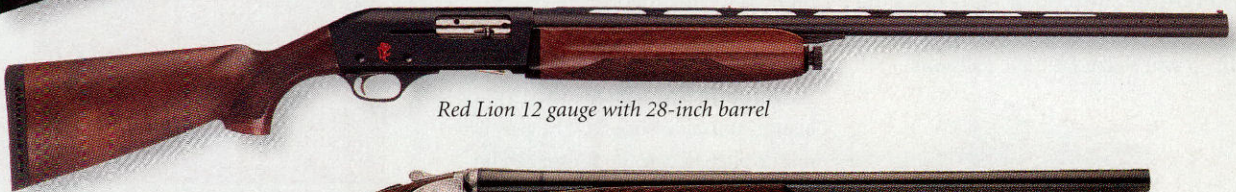
Sporting Clays Competition Lion 12 gauge with 30-inch barrels and carbon fiber finish



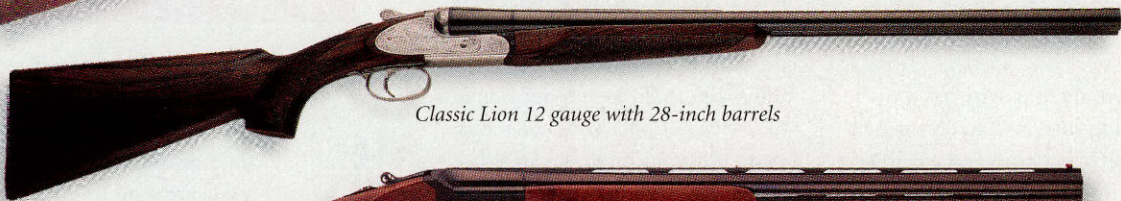
Silver Lion 20 gauge with 26-inch barrels



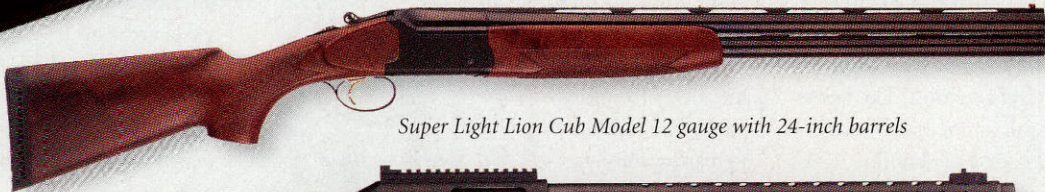
Sporting Clays Lion 12 gauge with 28-inch barrel



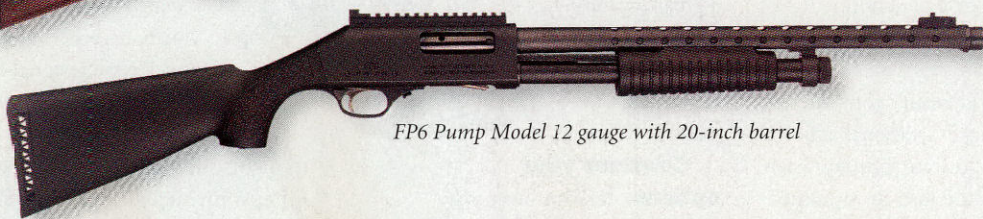
Red Lion 12 gauge with 28-inch barrel



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The ABC's of SURVIVAL

By David Alloway • Illustrations by Narda Lebo

IN SIBERIA, THEY TELL YOU THAT IF YOU GET LOST, you should sit down and try to remember the last person you shook hands with. While it's true that this action has nothing to do with the immediate situation, it starts the mind on a linear thought process that can help you make rational decisions.



No matter how experienced you are, any backcountry activity has the potential to turn into an emergency.

The initial actions you take often will determine whether the incident turns out to be a minor inconvenience or a true survival situation. The key is to conquer panic immediately and start a logical course of action. Although fear in itself is not a bad emotion — it can spur you to take measures that will ensure your safety — panic can trigger irrational actions. It causes people to start running when they realize they are lost, or to injure themselves while trying to get away from a harmless snake. In fact, scientific studies show that there is a logical basis for the Siberian survival trick: Panic has been shown to be an electrochemical reaction between the hemispheres of the brain that can be controlled by starting a mental task.



World-renowned survival instructor Bob Cooper of Australia teaches a course called "The ABCs of Survival." During a recent class at Big Bend Ranch State Park, he recommended the following course of action:

A: Accept the situation. Do not blame yourself or others. The past cannot be altered, but the future can be.

B: Brew a cup of tea. Yes, that is the typical Aussie solution to everything, but to do so you must build a fire. This not only gives you a task to occupy your mind; it can also provide warmth, a means of signaling for help, and a way to purify water. Fire can be a great psychological comfort as well, especially at night, when panic is frequent.

C: Consider your options. Take an inventory of your supplies — food, water and, hopefully, a survival kit. Would it be best to stay put? How can you attract attention to your plight?

D: Decide on a plan. Prioritize your needs, such as water, shelter or setting out signals. By now you should have a fire that can serve as an effective signal.

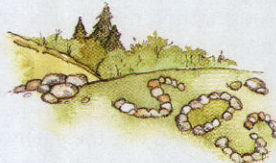
E: Execute the plan. It is usually best to stick with your original plan, if possible. Erratic behavior shifts can throw off search-and-rescue personnel, and changes can also lessen an individual's resolve to survive.



IN THE OUTDOORS, HE WHO PANICS IS LOST.

If you are stranded for a few days, boredom can become as dangerous as panic. Boredom could convince you to leave a safe area and try to cross dangerous obstacles in an attempt to get out. To stave off boredom, set a daily schedule with chores such as gathering firewood, keeping signal fires ready and keeping your campsite tidy. Do not fall victim to thoughts such as, "I must get back or I'll miss my niece's wedding." She would be much more upset if you died trying to get to the wedding than if you missed it.

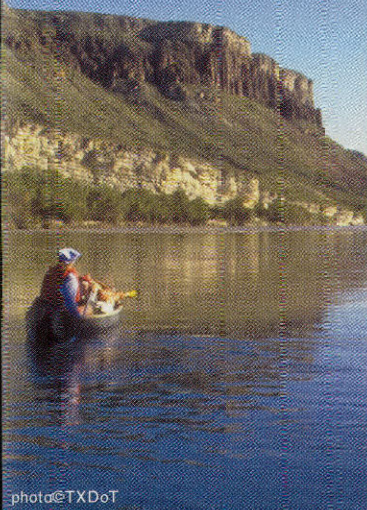
Rational thinking and a clear course of action will go much further in back-



country emergencies than all the fancy survival tricks and tools put together. There is a saying among pilots that is equally applicable to all emergencies: "Be afraid to panic." ★

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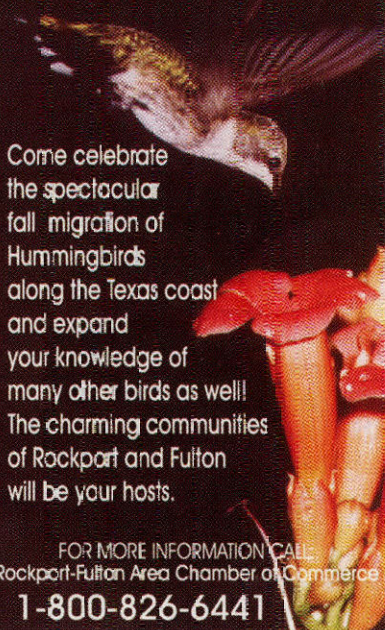
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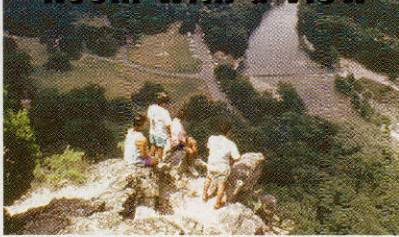
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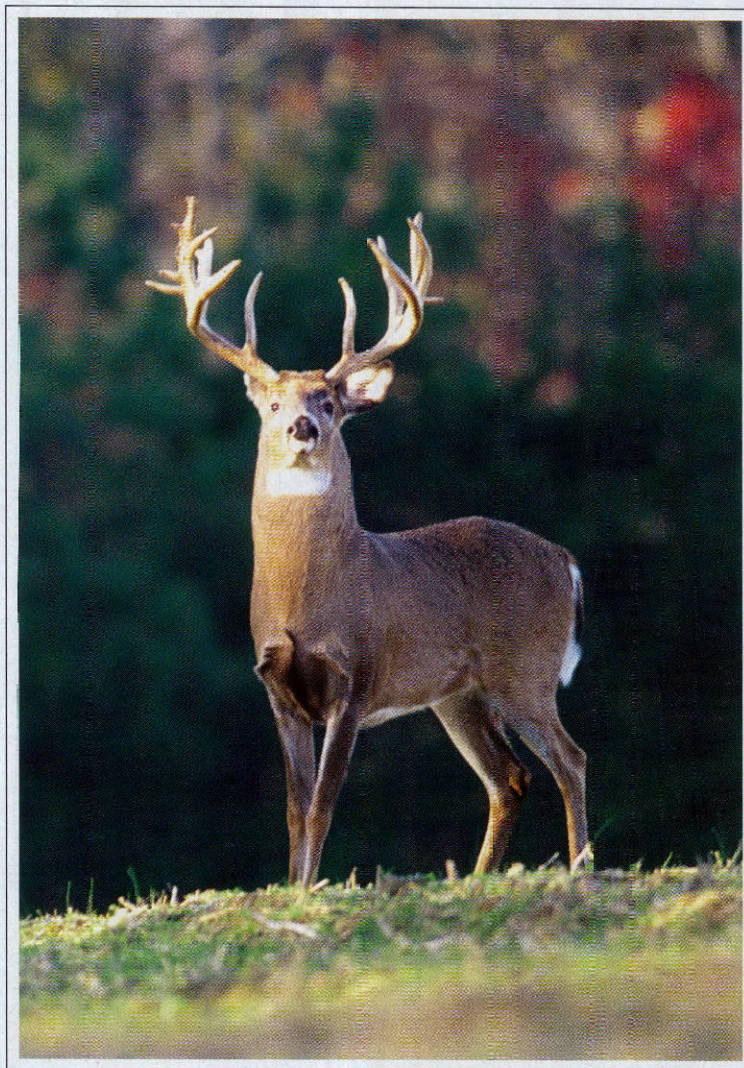
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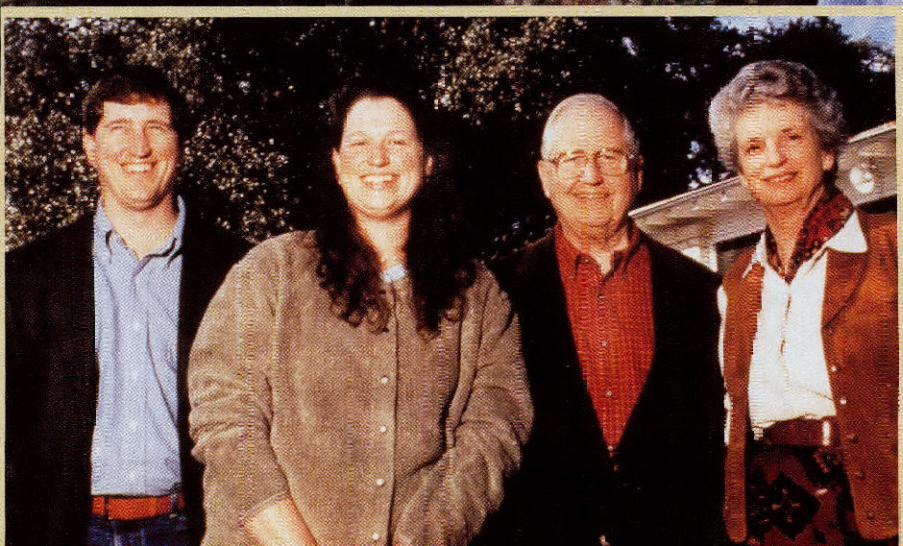
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BY SHERYL
SMITH-RODGERS



LARGE PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM; INSET PHOTO © DAN COHEN



As far back as he can remember, Robert A. Ayres has roamed the rolling wooded hills and grassy creek banks that form the sprawling Hill Country ranch his family has owned and nurtured for three generations. It's a special place he cherishes deeply, and one he and his family fiercely protect from the urban sprawl that is so changing the surrounding region.

“I VE ALWAYS LOVED BEING CUT HERE,” reflects Bob, who has managed the Shield Ranch since 1985. “As a kid, I spent a lot of time exploring along Barton Creek and hunting with my grandfather. When I was a teenager and saw the first houses going in around the ranch, I finally realized it wasn't always going to stay the same. It's been difficult watching the development, not only because we're losing our rural character, but because so much of the growth is done in a poor way. We're at risk of destroying the very qualities that attracted us to the Hill Country in the first place. It seems so shortsighted to me.”

Although there's little he can do about the construction beyond his family's fence line, Bob, his mother, Patricia Shield Ayres, his father, Robert M. Ayres and his sister Vera Ayres Bowen, have done all they can to preserve the natural environment and more than six miles of Barton Creek that lies within the 6,700-acre ranch. For their efforts, which reach back more than a decade, the Ayres family has been named the Lone Star Land Steward of the Year by Texas Parks and Wildlife.

The Land Steward program, launched in 1996, honors landowners for excellence in habitat management and wildlife conservation. For the program's fifth anniversary, TPW considered not only this year's 12 winners but Land Stewards from the previous four years. The Shield Ranch received the Land Steward award for the Edwards Plateau Region in 1997.

“We were thrilled three years ago with our regional award because we were excited about what we'd been doing,” says Patricia Ayres. “We were surprised and honored to be chosen this year. We hope the publicity will encourage others to take seriously the preservation of their own land and its natural species.”

As a child growing up in San Antonio, Patricia spent summers on the ranch her parents, Fred and Vera Shield, bought in 1938 in southwest Travis County, approximately 18 miles southwest of downtown Austin. Overgrazed and thickly covered with juniper, the ranch suffered from years of neglect. White-tailed deer were rarely seen. “From the beginning, my mother and father loved the land,” she recalls. “They wanted to take care of it and nurture it. They were interested in conservation, and so people would meet



out here often. It was a positive interest, not just a passive concern.”

Soon after they purchased the land, the Shields began clearing juniper and building fences. They implemented a range management program and grazed cattle, horses, sheep and goats. Gradually, the deer returned and increased in numbers even more when the Shields removed the sheep and goats during the '60s.

A turning point for the Shield Ranch came in 1987, sadly the year Fred Shield died and also when state highway officials contemplated construction of an outer loop around Austin. “At the time, they were looking at right-of-way across Barton Creek on the ranch,” Bob says. “We began to wonder and ask questions, like would that be a good thing or a bad thing? To answer those questions, we had to look at the ranch’s long-term future. In August 1987, we sat down with a land planner and a planning consultant. What we decided was that we wanted to own our ranch — not sell it — to protect what was important on the ranch, and address our relationship with Austin.”

To learn more about their land, the family commissioned a number of stud-

ies, including archaeological, hydrological and bird surveys. Discovery of golden-cheeked warbler habitat on neighboring land motivated the Ayres to initiate a juniper management program in areas on their ranch that bordered the endangered songbirds’ habitat. They also restored a rock cabin built on the ranch by settlers in the 1870s, put up more fences for rotational grazing, and allowed the City of Austin to take regular water samples from Barton Creek.

For 11 years, the Ayres have worked with TPW biologists to manage deer numbers. The management program, coupled with rotational grazing, has slowly brought the land back to its natural state. Browse lines under trees have disappeared and filled with understory. Native grasses have come back. Bluebonnets and Indian paintbrushes have returned, splashing whole fields with bright colors each spring.

“There are not many places in the Hill Country where you can find Spanish oak, redbud, hackberry and black cherry seedlings growing because they usually get eaten by deer,” says Mike Reagan, a TPW wildlife biologist who’s assisted the family for seven years. “But the ranch’s deer numbers are kept near the land’s

carrying capacity, which allows for regrowth of desirable plants.” Quality management programs have benefited not only wildlife, but have had a positive impact on the quality of water flowing in the creek and percolating into the aquifer.

Looking far into the future, the Ayres have made sure no construction or development will ever mar the Shield Ranch’s pristine beauty. In 1998 the family donated a conservation easement on nearly 4,700 acres to the Nature Conservancy of Texas. The following year, the City of Austin purchased a 1,676-acre conservation easement on the ranch to protect water quality in the Edwards Aquifer. Conservation easements restrict development while allowing landowners to retain ownership and continue traditional uses of the land.

“We feel responsible for what we own and we have a desire to impact what happens in the [Barton Creek] watershed,” Bob explains. “And our great desire was to know this land would never be developed.” ★

SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS *of Blanco writes and shoots photographs for a number of newspapers and magazines.*

SETTI

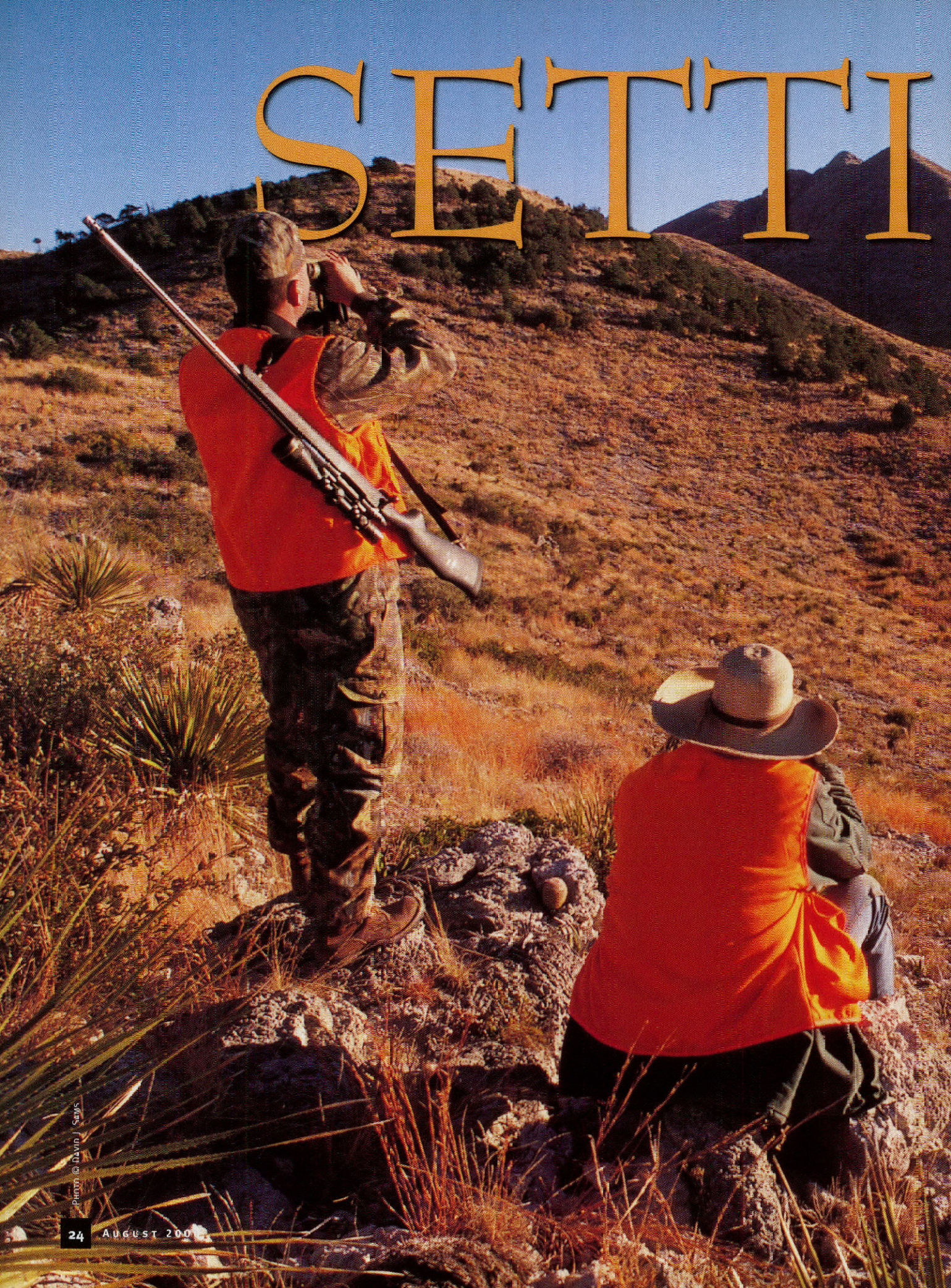


PHOTO © DAVID J. SEWIS

PHOTO © DAVID J. SEWIS

NING your SIGHTS

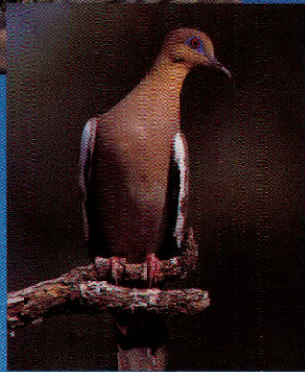
Tips from TPW biologists across the state will help you hunt this year where your chances of success will be greatest.

A truism among wildlife biologists is that a year with above-average rainfall makes every rancher look like a good wildlife manager. By the same token, a drought quickly reveals who's been naughty and who's been nice when it comes to taking care of wildlife habitat. The 2000 hunting season promises to be one that illustrates that delineation.

BY LARRY HODGE

For the first time in its history, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued a drought forecast in spring 2000. Spotty spring rains following the warmest winter ever recorded resulted in an uncertain long-range outlook, although many areas received above-average rains as of late June. Much of Texas is part of a swath extending from North Carolina to Arizona in which the NWS expected the drought to intensify. (For updates on the drought, visit the NWS Web site at www.noaa.gov.)





Hot, dry weather was expected to continue in Texas through August, said Ants Leetmaa, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center. Soil moisture in April in Texas as reported by NOAA ranged from slightly dry over most of the state to abnormally dry in the Trans-Pecos, with only the Pineywoods reporting abnormally moist conditions. Unfortunately for hunters, dry weather on top of dry soil means less food available for mature animals to develop to full potential and produce healthy young.

However, deer hunters can take some comfort from the situation. The extremely mild winter, followed by an early green-up in those areas that received spring rains, should have resulted

in lower losses of mature bucks to natural causes following the rut, so properties with good wildlife management programs and habitat may

One prediction can be made with assurance. Hunters will be out there no matter what the weather and range conditions.

Panhandle hunters enjoy pursuing the colorful ring-necked pheasant, while many public hunting lands offer good hunting for quail and doves.



BIG TIME TEXAS HUNTS

IN A STATE IN WHICH ONLY THREE PERCENT of the land is open for public use, it logically follows that hunting on private land overshadows hunting on public property. That situation began to change with the leasing of dove hunting land as part of the Annual Public Hunting Permit program, and it really took off with the success of the Texas Exotic Safari, hunts offered by drawing to remove exotic species from the Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

Today TPW offers drawings for a variety of hunts that give winners the opportunity to hunt either species or ranches that ordinarily are priced out of reach of most people.

Packages include guide service, food and lodging. Each application costs \$10, and you can enter as many times as you wish whenever licenses are sold. For information on the Big Time Texas Hunts listed below, visit the TPW Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us or call 800-792-1112, menu 5, choice 6.

- The Texas Grand Slam, valued at more than \$100,000, entitles the winner to hunt desert mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope and desert bighorn sheep. Taxidermy of trophies is provided.

- The Texas Exotic Safari offers two positions, with hunters allowed their choice of legal weapon. Each winner may hunt two of the following large African plains species: waterbuck, gemsbok, scimitar-horned oryx, greater kudu, sable and impala. Taxidermy of trophies is provided.

- The Texas Whitetail Bonanza offers 20 guided hunts on ranches offering the opportunity to take bucks in the 140-plus-class Boone and Crockett. The program has been expanded in 2000 to provide hunts on leased ranches for as many as 200 applicants who were not selected for one of the guided hunts.

- The Texas Waterfowl Adventure provides the winner and up to three guests with four guided goose and duck hunts.

- The Texas Big Time Bird Hunt is a shotgunner's dream, offering quail, pheasant and dove hunts to the winner and up to three guests, plus a spring turkey hunt for the winner and one guest.

Proceeds from the hunts go to provide additional public hunting opportunities and to fund wildlife research efforts.

— L.H.



PHEASANT HUNTING AND PHOTO TO RIGHT © DAVID J. SANS; QUAIL © GRADY ALLEN; WHITE-WINGED DOVE © BILL DRAPER/KAC PRODUCTIONS

HOME ON THE RANGE

THE FIRST HUNTING LODGES were surely those caves and rock shelters whose walls bear pictorial records of prehistoric hunts.

While time has not erased our need for a sociable end to a day's pursuit of game, it has certainly improved the facilities for such gatherings. Today's hunting lodges and the services they offer range from the basic bunk and community kitchen to accommodations and cuisine comparable to the offerings of luxury resorts. Many hunting guides are accomplished cooks, and the pricier lodges have chefs who can make your taste buds quiver. Amenities range from do-it-yourself barbecue grills to white tablecloths and fully stocked wine cellars. Let your pocketbook be your guide.

The growth of hunting lodges has been fueled by the trend toward package hunts, all-inclusive outings that provide a place to hunt, guides, food and lodging for a specified time for a fixed price. Rising prices for season leases are one factor in the change, but lack of time to spend outdoors is probably the driving force. If you book a hunt with an

outfitter who maintains a fully equipped hunting lodge, all you have to do is show up at the appointed time and write a check.

Talking with hunters and visit-

ing many hunting camps and lodges over the years reveals that two things stand out above all others in peoples' memories: food and fire. A hot meal is the best poultice for an ego wounded by the shot that missed the buck of a lifetime, and a glowing campfire tended by a good storyteller elevates even the humblest hunting lodge to four-star status.

A search for "Texas hunting lodges" on the Internet yields hundreds of possibilities. Another resource is the Texas Hunting Directory, which has its own Web site, www.texas-hunting.com. If you don't have access to the Internet, you can order by calling 800-676-5703. The annual guide has articles on hunting as well as advertisements for package hunts and ranches. The Texas ranch section provides details on the hunts and accommodations offered by each property.

However you locate a lodge, ask for and check references: Just as the grandeur of a ranch's entrance is seldom a reliable indicator of its acreage, slick advertising does not always translate into quality hunting and lodging.

— L.H.



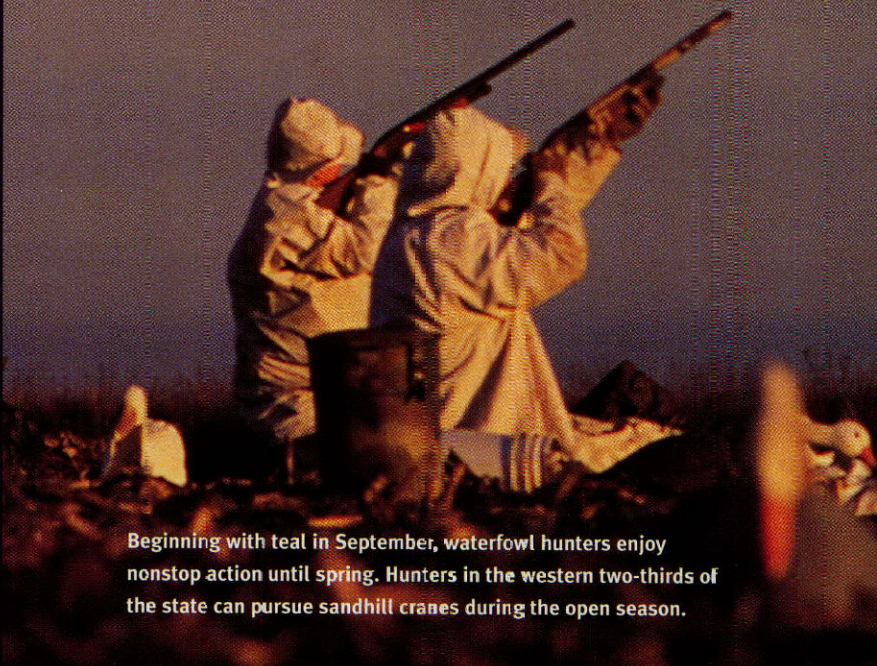
Teal move out with the first cool blast of fall, but the frigid air replaces them with other species as winter looms.

actually see higher numbers of mature bucks this season. In some areas, reduced natural food during the

hunting season will result in more deer taking advantage of the free lunch provided by feeders, increasing the opportunity to harvest animals. Antler development, however, is likely to be average at best. The Edwards Plateau west of a line from Junction to Brady to Abilene generally did not receive enough rain in spring to sprout new foods during the critical beginning of the antler-growing and brooding season.

An increase in the bag limit to five deer in the Edwards Plateau provides Hill Country hunters with the opportunity to reduce deer numbers in a region with a perennial overpopulation problem. Drought years are the ideal time to reduce overpopulations of does, spikes and poor quality older bucks, since doing so makes food they would have eaten available for use by the remaining animals.

One prediction can be made with assurance about the com-



Beginning with teal in September, waterfowl hunters enjoy nonstop action until spring. Hunters in the western two-thirds of the state can pursue sandhill cranes during the open season.

LARGE PHOTO © GLENN HAYES; ABOVE LEFT PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS; GREEN-WINGED TEAL © GARY KRAMER; SNOW GOOSE © GRADY ALLEN

ing hunting season: Hunters will be out no matter what the weather and range conditions. Wise ones will use the drought to advantage by hunting where the chances of success are greatest. Comments from TPW biologists from around the state give clues to where and when this year's hunters should concentrate their efforts.

Hunting season kicks off in September with dove and teal. Farmers breaking virgin prairie sod on the Great Plains a century ago believed "rain follows the plow," a notion disproved by the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. But today's wingshooters know that doves do indeed follow the plow, homing in on the state's central section, where extensive fields of grain sorghums attract the fleet flyers. Teal hunters seek out coastal wetlands and rice fields, but ducks can be found statewide on most bodies of water of any size. Cold fronts and water are the keys. Teal move out with the first cool blast of fall, but the frigid air replaces them with other species as winter looms, making for nonstop waterfowl hunting from September into spring.

"If it is dry in the fall, those who can manage their wetlands by pumping water can have excellent duck seasons, and those who rely on natural water will not have good seasons," advises Vernon Bevill, program director for migratory wildlife and wetland ecology. "When we lose



SANDHILL CRANE AND REDHEAD DUCK © GRADY ALLEN; CANADA GEESE © WYMAN MENZER

FINDING THE LEASE OF A LIFETIME

WE ALL DREAM OF IT — a perfect piece of land on which to hunt or fish, where we can take family and friends and get out of town for the weekend. For some it's a game-managed, high-fenced, South Texas ranch, but for others it may be a few wooded acres with a pond. No matter the type of land or its size, most Texans call the dream a "lease," because that's what we do — we lease it.

For me, an annual lease — one in which you have year-round access — is the only way to go. With an annual lease you've got a personal stake in how the land is treated and why and how animals are harvested.

In the past, finding a lease meant combing newspaper classified sections, calling chambers of commerce or just driving around in the area you wanted to hunt and asking for permission from landowners. But with the advent of the Internet, it's now possible to track down hunting leases at a number of Web sites dedicated to hunting and fishing.

No matter how you find a lead on a lease, a few questions need answering before driving halfway across the state to look at a piece of land that might not fulfill your heart's desire. The basic questions concern acreage, price, location and type (annual, day-hunt and seasonal). But more important to the lease experience are questions that many outdoorsmen forget to ask until they've already done the handshake:

- Are there preexisting facilities?
- Is there potable water?
- Is there electricity?
- How close is the nearest gas station or grocery store?
- Where is the nearest meat processor and the nearest taxidermist?
- Is the land game-managed?
- What is the buck-to-doe ratio?
- How many animals (and of what age and sex) were harvested last year?
- Is there livestock on the lease during hunting season?

Above all, determine the landowner's preferences. Does he want a signed contract, or are a handshake and a check good enough? Are guests allowed? Remember, the guy who owns/manages the land has the last word on what happens on his lease. Make sure you know how he feels before you commit.

Regardless of your budget, there is good hunting value to be found at every price point, if you thoroughly scout your quarry.

— Wade Jones



coastal habitat due to drought and saltwater intrusion, duck numbers may be high from early to mid-season and then begin to decline as ducks start moving farther south. I was told that the northern coast of South America was loaded with 'our' ducks this past winter because coastal Texas and Louisiana were so dry. The High and Rolling Plains continue to be the undiscovered country for hunting ducks, geese and doves. Also, our surveys indicate that a large percentage of the stock tanks all across Texas hold excellent numbers of ducks during the period from November to January. Duck hunters

could make better use of the stock tank opportunity.

"If spring comes early to the Arctic, we should have good to excellent goose production. Texas geese are generally near or above record high numbers, the exception being the Canadas coming to the eastern goose zone. We need a good cold winter from Kansas north to help our goose and duck hunting."

For white-tailed deer on private land, the Hill Country is

the place to be, especially for the October bow season. Key on water and food sources.

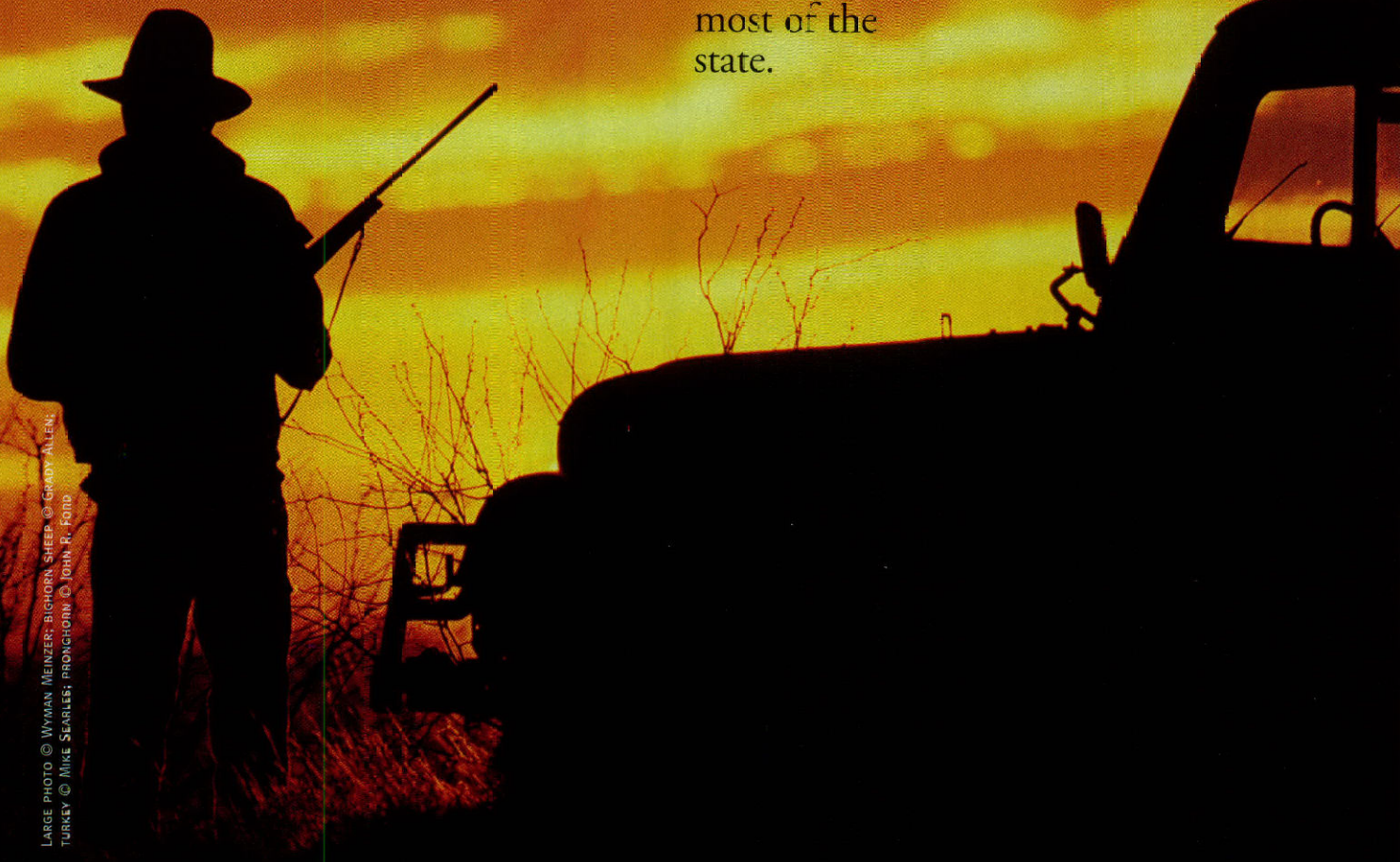
"Even if we were to see an increase in rainfall in the next few months, I feel it would be too late to change much in the outlook for fall," says Max Traweck, wildlife district leader in Kerrville. "Currently, the western half of the Hill

Country is in fair to poor condition, while the eastern half has received more rain and is in fair to good condition.


Whitetail body condition and antler development should be below average to average, but there should be plenty of mature animals for harvest."

For the best chance at white-tailed deer on public land, set

Turkey hunting on public land should be relatively good if near-normal rainfall is received over most of the state.



LARGE PHOTO © WYMAN MEINZER; BIGHORN SHEEP © GRADY ALLEN; TURKEY © MIKE SEARLES; PRONGHORN © JOHN R. FORD



The Texas Grand Slam winner gets to hunt a pronghorn and desert bighorn sheep, as well as a mule deer and white-tailed deer.

THE SAFEST COURSE

IN TEXAS, AS NATIONWIDE, hunting accidents have declined by more than 50 percent in recent years. Why the good news? Most hunting safety experts agree that the top three reasons are that more hunters are completing hunter education courses, wearing blaze orange clothing and carrying only unloaded firearms in or around vehicles.

But there are still many instances in which a hunter is the victim of an unplanned event or a mistake—a reminder that we are never totally accident-proof in the outdoors.

Hunter education instructors coach participants on hunter safety fundamentals, known as the “Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety,” during the minimum 10-hour course. Hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts must consciously learn, then unconsciously apply, rules that prevent injury or death to themselves or others.

It is a fact that accidents in hunting occur less frequently than in fishing, boating, waterskiing and swimming, and far less than injuries in baseball, basketball and football. Fatality rates per 100,000 participants show hunting at slightly less than one fatality, which is less than the rate for boating or bicycling (around eight deaths), swimming (15 fatalities) and hang-gliding and parachuting (more than 50 lives lost).

The reason for the sport's success dates back to 1949, when the state of New York imposed the first mandated hunter safety requirement aimed at reducing hunting accidents. In Texas a similar statute was enacted in 1987. Before that, mostly because of hunters traveling to other states required the training, Texas Parks and Wildlife voluntarily offered a nationally accepted certification course beginning in 1972.

Today, department staff recruits and trains hundreds of volunteers and professional educators each year, who, along with TPW game wardens, offer low-cost courses. The training is a requirement for those who were born on or after September 2, 1971, Texas' grandfather date. The primary lesson that was taught half a century ago is the same lesson that is being taught today—firearm and hunting safety.

According to Terry Erwin, hunter education coordinator for Texas, “Training emphasizes survival of the individual through safe storage, handling, transportation, carrying

and safe field and live-firing procedures with modern-day firearms.” The courses have evolved to include other safety aspects, including proper use of elevated hunting stands; safety with primitive sporting arms and accessories; outdoor preparedness including physical fitness, the proper use of clothing; and water safety and wilderness first aid.

“Hunter education also includes hunters' legal and ethical obligations, lessening the chance for him or her to be involved in an accident,” Erwin adds. “The three most significant recommendations I can offer hunters are to attend a hunter education course, wear blaze orange to be seen and carry only unloaded firearms in vehicles.”

Accidents in hunting occur less frequently than in fishing, boating, waterskiing and swimming, and far less than injuries in baseball, basketball and football.

A study conducted in 1999 by the Department of Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, supports Erwin's recommendations. According to the report, only seven percent of Texas hunters involved in hunting incidents had received hunter education training. Less than 10 percent of the victims were wearing any type of blaze orange clothing where it could have been a factor. Sixteen percent of the incidents occurred when the shooter placed a loaded firearm into, removed it from, or discharged it inside a vehicle.

Today, 49 of 50 states (Alaska is the exception) and 10 Canadian provinces or territories have some sort of mandatory law requiring hunter education training of its hunters. Many Texans also take the course to hunt in Colorado each year, a state that requires hunter education for those born on or after January 1, 1949.

“The one thing that would prevent more than 90 percent of all hunting accidents,” says Erwin, “is to always point the muzzle in a safe direction.”

— Steve Hall

GOING PUBLIC

GETTING ON SOME HUNTING LEASES requires a secret handshake, a blood relationship and a second mortgage. I'd like to invite you to one that doesn't: mine. My hunting lease is over a million acres, lets me hunt for every legal game species, is located all over the state, and costs just \$40 a year. It's the public hunting land owned, leased or operated by TPW, and I've had some of my most enjoyable and productive hunts there.

Public lands are the ideal place to introduce youngsters to hunting, especially for small game, since persons under the age of 17 may hunt for free when accompanied by a permitted adult. As a general rule, you will have public lands almost to yourself if you avoid opening days and weekends.

Each year about 6,000 hunts or wildlife management areas (WMAs) and state parks are offered through a computerized drawing. Enter by submitting forms from a booklet called Applications for Drawings on Public Hunting Lands, which is available from TPW each midsummer. Each hunter over the age of 17 pays a \$2 application fee for each hunt applied for; drawn hunters pay a hunt fee, usually \$50 or \$100, and are allowed to hunt only on specified dates. Call 800-792-1112, menu 5, choice 1.

TPW also offers unlimited dove hunting on about 150 leased parcels of public land, as well as unlimited hunting for a variety of other species, to holders of an Annual Public Hunting Permit, available for \$40 wherever hunting licenses are sold. Only purchasers of the Annual Public Hunting Permit and the \$10 companion Limited Public Use Permit, which provides access for adults who do not hunt or fish, receive a map booklet showing the locations of the lands and the legal species and seasons. Some of these lands are also open to hunting small game such as quail, dove, waterfowl and squirrel on specified days by purchase of a \$10 Regular Permit available on-site.

One of the factors limiting use of public lands has been lack of information about the recreational and hunting opportunities they offer. That will soon change, with publication of *The Official Guide to Texas Wildlife Management Areas*, a new book due out from Texas Parks and Wildlife Press in spring 2001. The book gives detailed descriptions of

51 WMAs and includes tips from wildlife biologists on hunting and fishing each area, as well as suggestions for birding, camping, hiking and biking.

Here are some of my favorite places to hunt different kinds of game. While all offer better-than-average game, my main criterion for selecting these WMAs is the quality of the hunting experiences I've had there. Always call ahead to check on conditions before making plans. Some of the hunts are open to anyone holding an Annual Public Hunting Permit; for others you must be selected by drawing.

WHITE-TAILED DEER: Chaparral, 830-676-3413; Daughtrey, 830-569-8700; Kerr, 830-238-4483; Granger, 512-859-2668.

MULE DEER: Matador, 806-492-3405; Sierra Diablo, 915-364-2228; Black Gap, 915-837-3251; Elephant Mountain, 915-364-2228;

FERAL HOGS: Granger, 512-859-2668; Matador, 806-492-3405; Guadalupe Delta, 409-244-7697; Alazan Bayou, 409-639-1879; Matagorda Island, 361-983-2215.

TURKEYS: Moore Plantation, 409-384-6894; Gene Howe, 806-323-8642; Kerr, 830-238-4483; Walter Buck, 830-238-4483.

QUAIL: Black Gap, 915-837-3251; Elephant Mountain, 915-364-2228; Matador, 806-492-3405; Chaparral, 830-676-3413; Daughtrey, 830-569-8700.

DUCKS: J. D. Murphree, 409-736-2551; Mad Island, 409-244-7697; Peach Point, 409-244-7697; Guadalupe Delta, 409-244-7697; White Oak Creek, 903-884-3800; Old Sabine Bottom, 903-566-1626; Cooper, 903-884-3800.

Herb Kothmann, director of public hunts for TPW, predicts relatively good hunting for white-tailed deer, turkeys, doves and waterfowl on public land if near-normal rainfall is received over most of the state. Regarding other species, he notes that "both bobwhite and scaled quail will need a couple of consecutive years of relatively good habitat conditions before they will regain anywhere near what hunters consider to be good population levels. Mule deer and pronghorn numbers are severely depressed by several years of drought and will take at least four or five years of normal rainfall and good production and survival to recover population numbers."

— L.H.

WHITETAIL AND JAVELINA © MIKE SEARLES; MULE DEER © LARRY DITTO; HUNTERS © DAVID J. SAMS



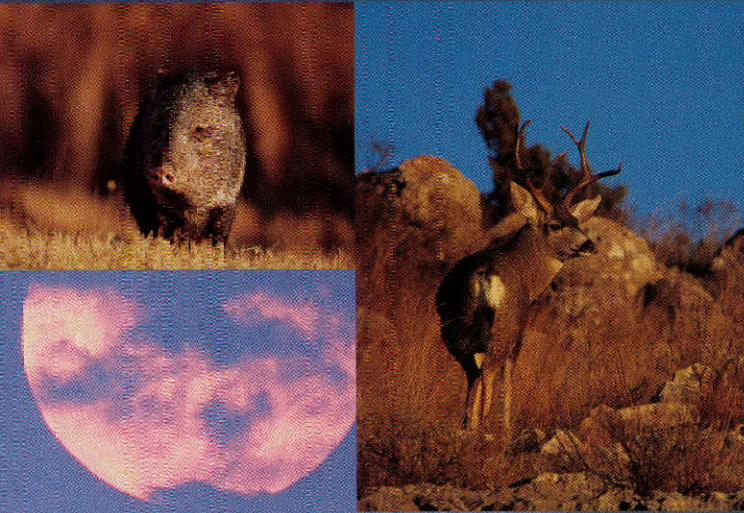
your sights on East Texas, especially wildlife management areas in national forests. "Prospects should be average to above average in the Pineywoods if we don't have a major drought this summer," says Clayton Wolf, wildlife district leader in Jasper. "We should see an increase in the number of 3.5-year-olds in the buck harvest due to a bumper fawn crop in 1997. Since this is the age when Pineywoods bucks begin to 'bloom,' folks should be satisfied with the number of larger bucks." November is prime time for the rut in the Pineywoods.

Deer aren't the only gray ghosts among the pines and post oaks in the fall. Squirrel hunting is a longstanding tradition in Texas, and a good nesting season last year means lots of tender young squirrels for hunting this year. "If we continue to receive adequate rainfall into the summer and fall months, good forage conditions should be available for deer, squirrels,

waterfowl and other wildlife in the Post Oak region of East Texas," says Kevin Herriman, wildlife district leader in Tyler.

December draws shotgunners to the Panhandle for wing-shooting unmatched anywhere in the state. Affordable deer hunting is limited, but pheasants, quail, ducks and geese are in season, providing plenty of low-cost hunting. "Recent rains have improved prospects for the Panhandle," says Danny Swepston, wildlife district leader in Canyon. In fact, the northern third of the Panhandle was the only part of Texas not considered to be in drought in spring 2000. "The rains will help early antler development and should provide early browse, forbs and seed plants for deer, pronghorn and ground-nesting birds. Turkeys and pheasants will be helped by the rains, but we need more runoff into the playas if we are to have water throughout the brooding period for ducks."

In short, the 2000 hunting season is a time to hunt smart. Let bucks walk unless they have obviously reached their peak potential and have begun to decline. Hunt with improving the habitat as your main objective. You'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you don't wait for wet years to be a good wildlife manager. And when the rains return, your reward just may appear in your scope. ★



Properties with good wildlife management programs and habitat may actually see higher numbers of mature bucks this season.



DRESSED to IMPRESS

A hunt for the beautiful Gambel's quail becomes a close encounter with shifting sands and cactus spines.

BY BRANDON RAY

GOD SPARED NOTHING when he painted the Gambel's quail. ● The male's elegant, jet-black head frames his eye-catching face markings and rich, rust-colored cap. ● The female's subtler style is distinguished by a gray face and cream-colored breast. ● Perhaps most striking is the hooked black plume worthy of a Parisian showgirl that dangles oddly from the forehead of both sexes. ● Just as notable as its fancy good looks are the bird's evasive maneuvers. ● A Gambel's quail would rather run like a busted bank robber than flush. ● And its favored terrain — desert country



— makes a hunt for this bird a boot camp-style trek up and down hot sand dunes, burning plenty of boot leather in the process.

Gambel's quail would rather run than flush, making hunting them in their thorn-infested habitat especially challenging.

Nevertheless, when my college buddy Kevin called me one January morning to invite me on a Gambel's quail hunting trip, I was sorely tempted to go. "Leave all that snow up there in the Panhandle behind and come out West for the weekend," he said. "The quail are everywhere."

The sales pitch was convincing. While I can hunt bobwhites and scaled quail within a few miles of my Panhandle home, the only way to hunt Texas' other quail is to head to the desert. What he never mentioned, however, were the obstacles that would make my first desert wingshooting adventure an obstacle-strewn desert hike.

The Trans-Pecos is the only region in Texas where the beautiful Gambel's quail can be found. It inhabits the Texas-Mexico border near the Rio Grande from Val Verde County to El Paso County. It is most numerous in the northern half of its range, in Culberson, Hudspeth and El Paso counties. While its Texas range is very limited, it is plentiful in similar desert country in northern Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Utah, Nevada and Colorado.

The West Texas desert presents many challenges for visiting quail hunters, but the potential reward is worth the hardships. Typical habitat consists of rocky arroyos and sandy washes. Gambel's often are found close to an oasis or similar water source. They often spend the heat of the day staying cool in the shade of mesquite thickets, where they are out of sight of aerial predators such as hawks. They usually stay in coveys of between 20 and 50 birds.

The locations we planned to hunt were not the rocky, mountainous terrain I'd envisioned, but rolling sand dunes. The native vegetation of this Chihuahuan Desert community consists of spiny mesquites, acacia, creosotebush, yucca and prickly pear.

Surrounding the rolling sand dunes were pecan orchards, irrigated wheat fields and plowed fields waiting for a cotton crop.

We were hunting solo without the aid of dogs. Some hard-core quail hunters consider hunting without well-trained pointers to be about as much fun as fishing without hooks, but we had little choice. Neither of us had our own dogs, and none of our quail-hunting buddies with good dogs wanted to travel halfway across the state just to shoot a new species of quail.

But the chance to have even a few of the most handsome quail on the planet weighing down my game vest made the decision to fly to El Paso easy. Whether or not I filled my day's legal limit of 15 quail was not important. I just wanted to be able to look back some day and say that I'd experienced Gambel's quail hunting within Texas' boundaries.

On the February day when our hunt



HUNTING PHOTOS © BRANDON RAY: QUAIL PHOTO © KATHY ADAMS CLARK

began, the calendar said winter but the thermometer said summer. By the time Kevin and I stepped out of the pickup just after noon, the temperature had already hit 80 degrees.

"There's a covey of about 25 birds hanging around this stock pond and this old corral," Kevin said as he shut the pickup door and dropped two shells into his Browning over-under. "I've seen them twice this week when I came out here after work. They're either around the water or back in those mesquites." We eased along the edge of the pond, walking through waist-high tumbleweeds and scanning the loose sand for tracks. Lots of pitchfork-shaped quail tracks crossed in and out of the creosotebush near the pond, and rabbit tracks and a single coyote print were visible near the water's edge.

We'd walked about a half-mile circle around the pond and through the thorn-infested vegetation when we started to lose hope that we'd easily find the covey. But as we started back toward the pickup, I spotted two birds just steps in front of me, crowded under a jumbled pile of tumbleweeds.

"Birds, right here!" I whispered loudly to my friend, who stood 10 yards away. Just then, about 15 birds exploded like a grenade from the brushpile. My first shot caught nothing but air. The second shot folded a bird just at the outer edge of my shotgun's range. Kevin had also scored a hit.

I knew going into this hunt that every bird in my game bag would be earned, and I wanted to savor the success of each one. My first Gambel's was a beautiful male with flawless plumage and not so much as a scrape on him. Kevin joked that perhaps I'd just scared the bird to death instead of actually hitting him, but that was fine with me. My first Gambel's was destined for the taxidermist, not the frying pan.

Gambel's quail have a nasty reputation of running instead of flushing, and when they do flush it's often at long range. Hitting a Gambel's is tougher than bagging the average bobwhite quail, which usually holds tight until the hunter is right on top of it. The fact that we'd caught this covey loafing in the middle of the day under a hot sun could have been part of the reason why they had waited so long to flush.

We managed to find some of the covey's scattered birds a short distance away in some dense mesquites, but a single bird I shot as he jetted out from under a creosotebush was the only other hit. Like the first bird I'd shot, this bird was equally striking, with a one-inch-long, teardrop-shaped plume dangling from his painted forehead. In my mind my trip was already a success, even though I had only two birds in my vest.

The next covey we would flush was on property located 10 miles from the first, a tract of sand covered in head-high mesquite and acacia trees bordered by an old pecan orchard. When we parked the pickup on the edge of the orchard, Kevin spotted quail on a nearby dune. As we scrambled to gather our gear, they started to run and then flushed. At least 50 birds scattered into the dense mesquites. Those



The female Gambel's coloration is subtler than the male's. Cactus spines are an ever-present problem for desert hunters, although the birds also can be found along ravines that border irrigated farmland.

By the end of our first day, I had collected more cactus spines in my legs and rear end than Gambel's quail in my game vest.

QUAIL PHOTO © GARY KRAMER; CACTUS PHOTO © BRANDON RAY





QUAIL DETAILS

The 2000-2001 quail season runs from November 4 to February 25. If you go to West Texas to hunt for Gambel's quail, it helps to have some insider information on where to find coveys. Because these birds exist in scattered locations in the desert, a tip from a rancher or farmer who spends time in the area every day can save you lots of walking. Contact regional Texas Parks and Wildlife offices in the Trans-Pecos for help in finding a rancher or outfitter to hunt with for desert quail.

Good dogs would certainly help to find quail, but because Gambel's tend to run or flush at long range, it's best to take only older, seasoned dogs that will hunt in close to hunters so they don't get too far ahead and accidentally flush coveys before the hunters can get to them. A dog is also useful for recovering wounded birds that fall into spiny mesquite thickets or cactus patches. Take plenty of water for your dogs, since weather conditions are likely to be sunny and hot in the desert, even late in the season.

Basic gear for a Gambel's quail hunt in the desert include brush pants or leather chaps to ward off cactus and mesquite thorns, comfortable hiking boots, a bird bag or vest, and either a blaze orange cap or vest.

birds had flushed when we were still 60 yards away!

Not willing to give up easily, Kevin and I eased through the dense thorns to try to relocate at least part of the huge covey. A hundred yards into the mesquites I caught a glimpse of several plump birds running through a small opening 30 yards ahead of me. I hollered at Kevin and we each charged toward the running quail. After a 50-yard sprint, a half-dozen Gambel's flushed in six different directions. Kevin dropped a bird on his first shot, but missed with his second. Both of my shots caught nothing but sky.

By the end of our first day, I had collected more cactus spines in my legs and rear end than Gambel's quail in my game vest. I had rubbed blisters on my heels from hours of walking across loose sand. I suffered from dehydration. Our day ended with a close encounter with an angry rattler and a herd of javelinas.

Day two would prove to be equally difficult. The temperature was slightly cooler, but now the winds were gusting up to 30 miles per hour, sending tiny grains of sharp sand into my unprotected eyes. We started our hunt near the pecan orchard where we'd seen so many birds the day before. But poor shooting and howling winds left us each with only a single bird in our bags after a couple of miles of walking.

Later in the day, we hunted three more farms in both El Paso and

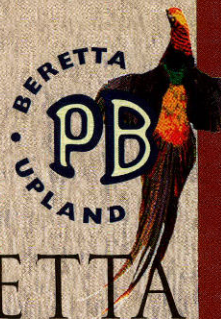
Hudspeth counties, and at each location we found birds. But the problems were the same as with all Gambel's hunts. At each location the birds flushed wildly at long range or never flushed at all, preferring to run in and out of the desert's spiny vegetation. We found birds near isolated water holes and in brush-choked ravines near corals where cattle feces often spilled on the ground, giving resourceful quail an easy supper.

It would be easy for a seasoned quail hunter to view my first Gambel's hunt as a failure. We not only didn't fill our day's limit of 15 birds apiece but barely shot enough quail to provide ourselves with one good meal. Nevertheless we considered the trip a total success. We'd found quail at every location we hunted, bagged a few of the prettiest game birds in the desert, and had the chance to talk about old times while carrying our favorite scatter-guns through some of Texas' hardest landscapes. We talked about the endless hours we'd spent in college hanging out at the local hunting store when we should have been studying, and how much we both missed the simpler days of being in school before we had to make a living. The success of all quail hunts is not measured by the weight of the bird bag at the end of the day. ★

BRANDON RAY is a staff writer for Texas Trophy Hunters and a contributing writer for Big Game Adventures.

Gambel's quail hunters often must contend with other desert wildlife, such as javelinas and rattlesnakes.

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WINGS OVER





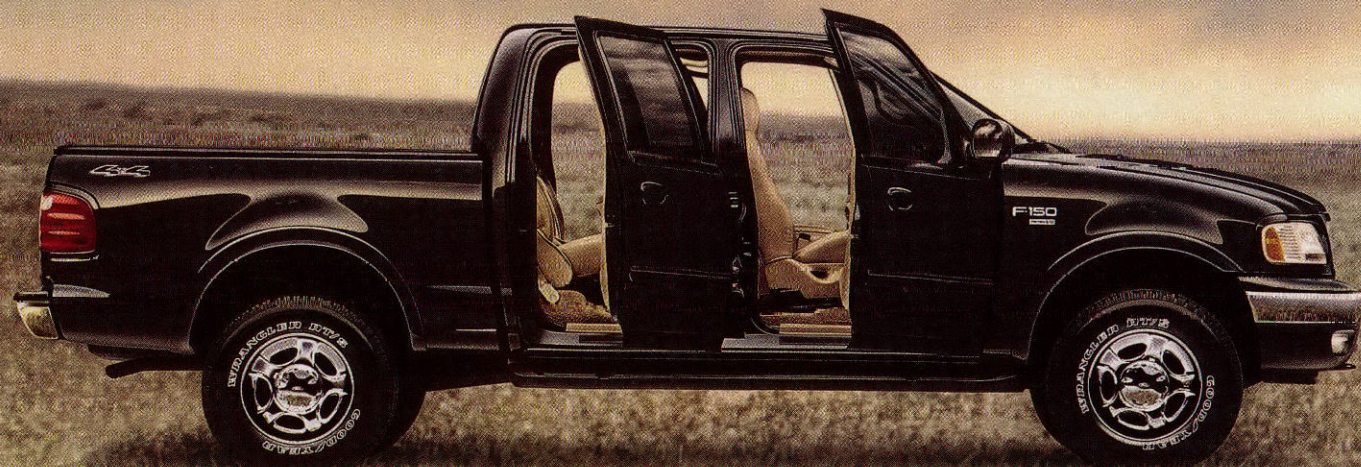
R UVALDE

When clouds of white-winged doves fly out from their downtown roosts, hunters are amazed at this almost surreal natural phenomenon.

ARTICLE BY STEVEN R. LAMASCUS
PHOTOS BY DAVID J. SAMS
ILLUSTRATION BY JIM LONGACRE

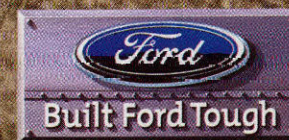
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All around the edges of the large, harvested maize field, hunters stood in small, impatient knots waiting for sunrise. The predawn darkness slowly lightened and low clouds scudded by, borne by a stiff southeasterly breeze. A



few minutes before the start of the hunt, I moved out into the field with the rest of the hunters in my group and positioned myself in a strip of still-standing grain stalks that the harvesters had missed. Now where were the doves?

FROM ACROSS THE FIELD the first few desultory pops of shotguns drifted through the gray mist of the late-September dawn. A solitary mourning dove made a low-level run from the safety of its roost to the enticing feed in the field. It almost made it. But one hunter, dressed in head-to-toe camouflage, was not asleep at his post and managed to swing his shotgun fast enough to roll the speeding dove into the field. A hundred yards away, another hunter in our large group shot and collected another mourning dove. But the question weighing on my mind as I crouched in the damp stalks, straining to see in the misty gloom, was: "Where are the promised hordes of whitewings?"

This was supposed to be a hunt for white-winged doves (locally called just whitewings) in the dove hunting mecca of southwest Texas — Uvalde, home to almost mythical numbers of the large birds. But if this was a representative sample, I was beginning to think that the splendor of the hunting around those parts had been, shall we say, overstated. I was contemplating a walk to the truck for a soda when I saw something low on the northern horizon. At first I thought it was a rain cloud.

"Just what I need," I thought. "Pathetic shooting like this, punctuated by a rainstorm. What's next, a plague of locusts?"

Then, with a start that sent a charge of adrenaline surging through my veins, I realized that the "rain cloud" was swirling, writhing, and changing shape. It moved like something alive. As it drew nearer, I could make out individual shapes in the cloud. I stood dumbfounded, staring upward, open-mouthed and saucer-eyed, as the first gigantic flock of the long-awaited white-winged doves poured over me and into the field like a feathered waterfall. Suddenly the sporadic shooting became a staccato roar as flock after huge, undulating flock of whitewings left their roosting sites in town, gained altitude, formed into squadrons and echelons like World War II bombers, and left the safety of the city for their morning feeding run. As the birds rose from their roosts, it looked like a dark, feathered hurricane was spinning above Uvalde.

About 100 yards to the east, a hunter wearing camouflage stood defiantly and shot, feeding fresh shells into his semi-auto as fast as he could dig them out of his shooting vest in what almost seemed like an act of self-defense. Nearer at hand, another member of the group, who had stayed near the vehicles waiting for the shooting to start, was now standing at the edge of the field, legs spread wide, cap tilted back on his head, shooting frantically at the doves thronging



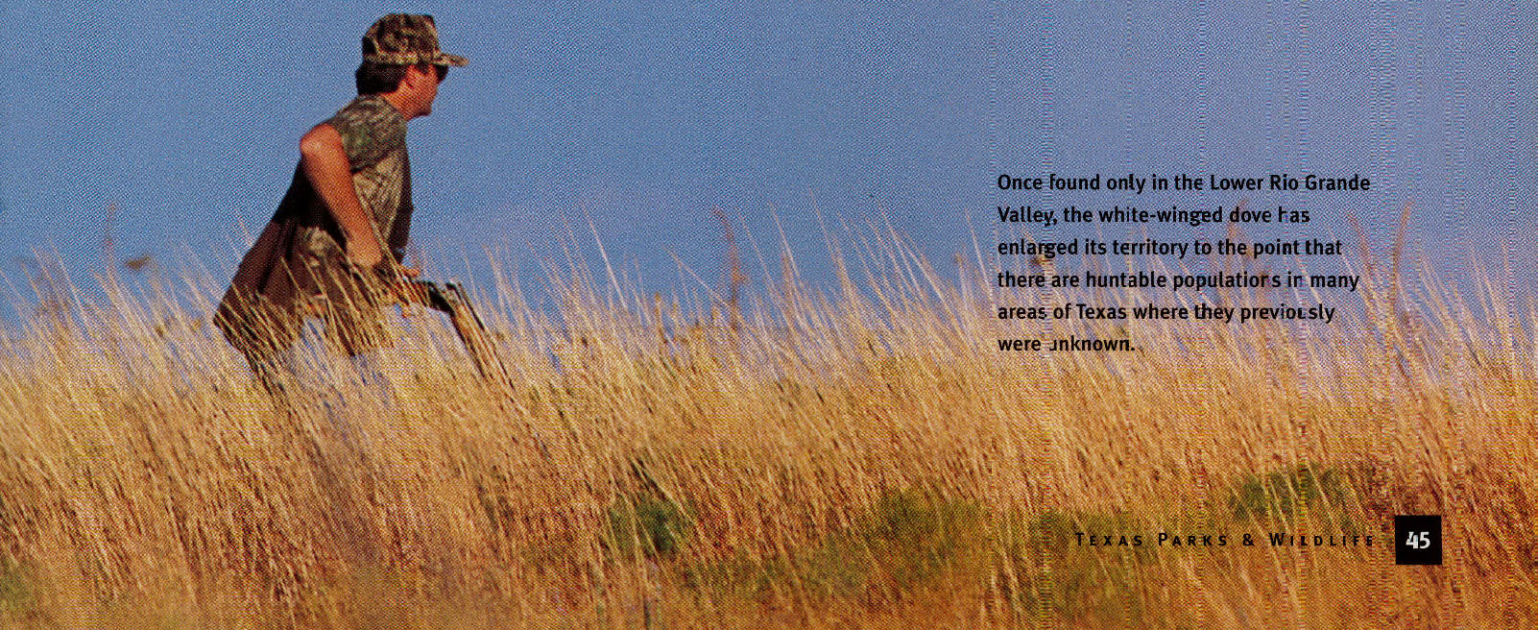
As the doves rose from their roosts, it looked like a dark, feathered hurricane was spinning above the city of Uvalde.

WHICH IS THE WHITEWING?

THE WHITE-WINGED DOVE is one of three huntable species of doves in Texas. The others are the ubiquitous mourning dove and the little-known white-tipped dove, once known

as the white-fronted dove. Most hunters are familiar with the mourning dove. The white-winged dove is a slightly larger bird, built along the same racy lines but with a jaunty white stripe on each wing. The white-winged dove displays a slightly less frenetic attitude in flight, making it appear slower and less maneuverable. Don't be fooled. The white-winged dove is a master at evading hunters, and anyone who thinks this bird is slow will go home with an empty game bag.

Once found only in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the white-winged dove has enlarged its territory to the point that there are huntable populations in many areas of Texas where they previously were unknown.



overhead. I watched as he shot a dove, ran to it, picked it up, stuffed it in his bag, shot another, and ran to it. The rapid-fire action was almost insane.

Nevertheless, I was very happy to notice that, even in the supercharged atmosphere of such unparalleled shooting, most of my companions were very careful to find each bird. And if one of them had trouble finding a well-hidden dove, someone else would stop shooting to help search until the bird was found. That told me what kind of sportsmen they were. It is very easy for a hunter to let the excitement of the moment

override good judgment. In such circumstances, it is imperative to find each bird before shooting another. Otherwise many birds are lost, which is an inexcusable waste. These seasoned hunters knew this, and each of them followed the unwritten rules of sportsmanship.

I stood dumbfounded, staring upward, as the first gigantic flock of the long-awaited white-winged doves poured over me and into the field like a feathered waterfall.

Forcing my mind back onto my own business, I picked up a single whitewing from a flock of a hundred or so. It was a little lower and behind the main body of the flock, which had been a bit too high to shoot at. I misjudged its speed and missed it with the first shot, but regained my composure and connected with the second barrel. Then, just as I dropped the second green plastic shell into the chamber of my shotgun, two lonely

whitewings came zipping along at high speed. I snapped the double shut, whipped it to my shoulder and tried desperately to swing fast enough to catch up to the speeding birds. I was lucky. My first shot felled a bird, as did my next shot; both doves folded cleanly in a small flurry of gray feathers and tumbled into a clear spot in the field. I found both birds about five feet apart.

In just a matter of minutes I had 10 big, beautiful whitewings in my bag, along with the two mourning doves. At that point, I decided to put away the shotgun in favor of a camera. I try never to judge the quality of a hunt by the weight of my game bag. I had enjoyed the fantastically fast shooting, and now I would enjoy watching the others shoot.

When I returned to the field with my camera, I saw that two of my fellow combatants had combined forces in a last stand near a large highline. They were sitting back to back and looked disturbingly like George and Tom Custer must have looked when the Sioux were about to overwhelm the Seventh Cavalry.

By now some of the hunters had taken their limit and had put away their shotguns in favor of fetching birds for those still shooting. I sat in the grain a few yards away from one small group and watched the almost surreal action as swarm after swarm of white-winged doves roared by the shooters, seemingly unaware of the turmoil they were causing on the ground. Each time a flock passed overhead, even my shell-shocked ears could hear the low, roaring sound of the wind in practically countless wings. I shot a few photos, then sat in the field and marveled at one of the true wonders of nature, as thousands of white-winged doves thronged hither and yon over the fields.

Then, much too quickly for everyone, the hunt was over.

White-winged doves are a little larger than the more familiar mourning dove. They also can be distinguished by a white stripe on each wing.



Their game bags bulging with plump, tasty whitewings, the hunters began to return to the trucks. The expressions of pure disbelief on their faces rather amused me. These were mostly experienced, bordering on jaded, members of the hunting fraternity, and they had just witnessed shooting beyond their previous experience. And I had thought it was going to be a slow day.

As we sat on the tailgates of the pickups or leaned against fenceposts and discussed the results of the hunt, the reactions were all the same — a mix of awe and ecstasy.

"My word, I wouldn't have believed it!"

"Yeah! Why haven't I heard of this place before?"

"I've hunted in Mexico and not had this quality of shooting!"

"I'm gonna remember this!"

"I know where I'm spending my vacation next year!"

"Unbelievable!"

This was the way it must have been in the glory days of the passenger pigeon, when the gigantic flocks darkened the skies and the only sound a hunter could hear was the roaring of many wings. But this bird is in no danger of extinction. The shooting does no damage to the population. If anything, it keeps the dove numbers down to levels that can be supported by the local environment without becoming a health hazard. Due to the combined efforts of farmers, ranchers, sportsmen and Texas Parks and Wildlife, the white-winged dove is increasing in numbers and will be with us a long, long time. And next September, I will be in Uvalde! ★

STEVEN R. LAMASCUS is an outdoor writer and photographer living in Brackettville.

THE URBAN DOVE PHENOMENON

IN THE LAST 15 YEARS, the Texas white-winged dove has, like many Americans, been making the transition from the country to the bright lights of the big city. Whereas in the past the white-winged dove was almost completely confined to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the species has begun to enlarge its territory.

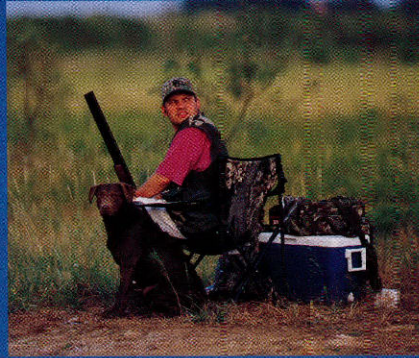
There are now huntable populations in many areas of Texas where they were formerly unknown. Strangely, these populations are practically all urban.

Why the lure of the city? Because these doves require fairly large trees for roosting. Outside the orchards of the Lower Valley, cities are the place where they find the vast majority of trees. In the brush country, and on north into the

plains, scrub mesquite and a few groves of stunted oak are about all the trees to be seen, except those planted for shade in towns. Whitewings also do much better in farming areas, where grain is raised, than in ranching areas.

Uvalde is a whitewing hotspot because it provides the two things the birds need most: many suitable places to roost and abundant food sources. Uvalde fits this description with thousands of giant oaks and pecans. Uvalde is also the center of a large farming area that produces a tremendous amount of various grains, including corn and maize, two of the dove's favorite foods. The birds roost in the city, then fly a couple of miles to the fields every morning and evening to fill up on grain.

— S.L.



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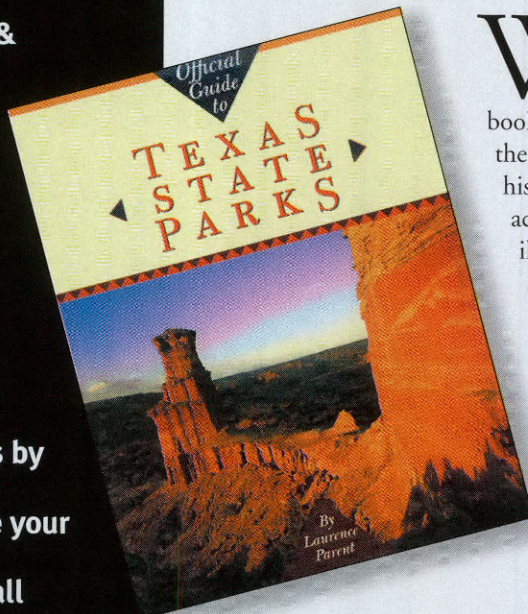
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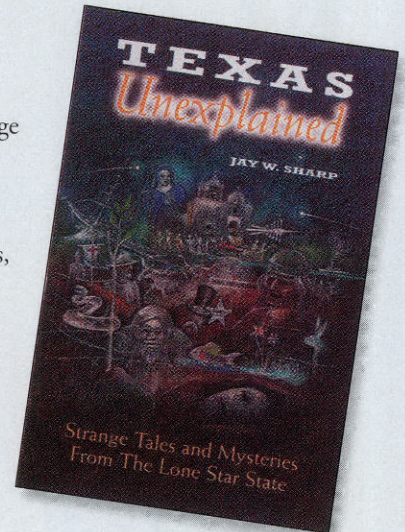


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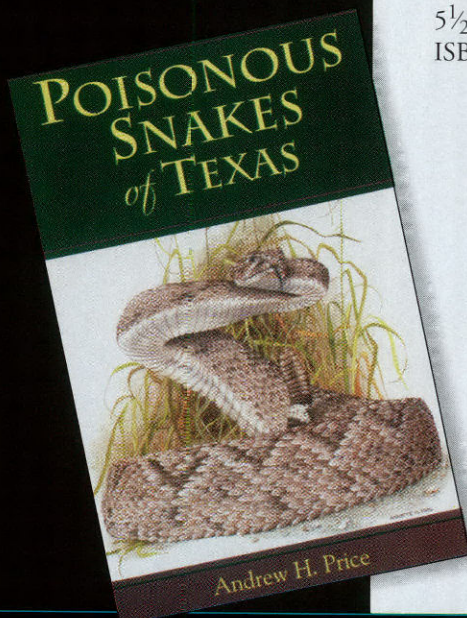
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TEXAS' Silver KING

**Has Texas' legendary tarpon fishery disappeared,
or have the fish just moved farther offshore?**



ARTICLE BY PAUL
A. CAÑADA

PHOTOS BY
DAVID J. SAMS

*For almost two hours
the tarpon gummed
our plugs and we
thrilled to the surging
power of the great
gamesters on the line.
They were all small*



Sorry I missed you.

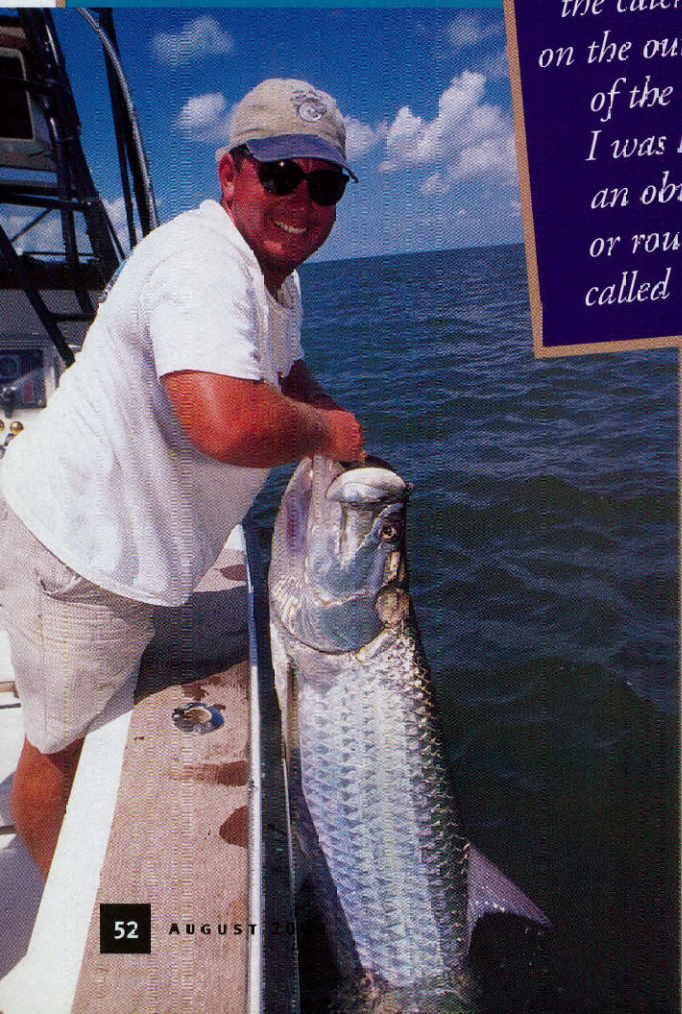


Gone Fishin'.

tarpon. We didn't see a one that would top five feet, which suited us fine. On our light casting tackle anything under 4½ feet was a "catching tarpon," one that put on a fine show but wasn't utterly unreasonable about giving up. A six-footer might have tied us up for an hour or more.

— HART STILLWELL, "Silver Savage Aboard,"
Field & Stream, May 1952

That scene depicted by Brownsville's Stillwell of hundreds of tarpon feeding on mullet at the mouth of the Rio Grande vividly illustrates Texas' tarpon fishery during the late 1940s and early '50s.



"I decided to draw a line connecting all the catches occurring on the outside perimeter of the map. What I was left with was an obvious pattern or route that I later called 'tarpon alley.'"

IN THE EARLY DECADES of the 20th century, great numbers of silver kings were found close to the Texas Coast — in the many estuaries and along the beachfronts. Texas' phenomenal tarpon fishery drew celebrated anglers from across the United States. Great numbers of tarpon were caught near the shore — from jetties, the surf and many piers. The world-class fishery found along the Port Aransas shore spawned a healthy tourism-based economy. The historic Tarpon Inn catered to the angling crowd and, to this day, the many relics adorning the walls of the resort hotel give testimony to the greatness of Texas' legendary tarpon fishery.

While tarpon are still found near the mouth of the Rio Grande and many other areas of their historic range, nearshore occurrences and numbers are no longer what they were at the turn of the century. Most anglers and fishery scientists agree that Texas' tarpon fishery has seen better days, but opinions as to how its demise came about vary. Most agree that the decline of the fishery began in the late '50s and early '60s.

The Great Tarpon Crash

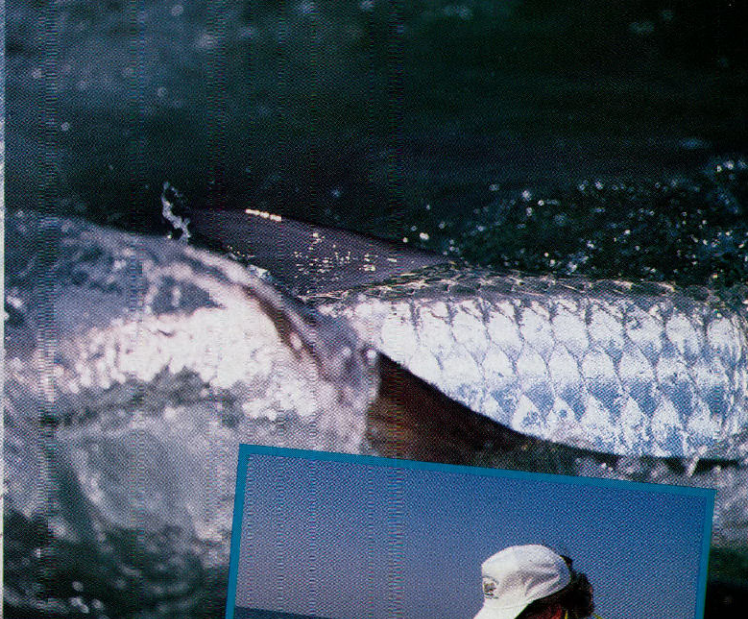
According to Larry McEachron, science director for Texas Parks Wildlife's Coastal Fisheries Division, the decline of nearshore tarpon has occurred throughout the Gulf of Mexico. "No one knows for certain why this happened," explains McEachron.

Almost immediately, sport fishers placed the blame on commercial fishermen working the bountiful waters south of the Texas Coast. While the maverick practices of Mexico's commercial fishermen were responsible for large losses, many experts doubt that overfishing was completely to blame. Most scientists and experienced tarpon anglers believe the decline was due to a number of events occurring along the U.S. coastline.

"For example," McEachron says, "the decline in nearshore numbers could have been caused by the excessive use of DDT in the '50s and '60s. We did see reductions in the spotted seatrout production in the Lower Laguna Madre caused by DDT. The chemical might have also affected the tarpon numbers."

The collapse of Texas' nearshore tarpon fishery corresponds suspiciously with the damming of Texas' large rivers such as the Rio Grande, the Sabine and the Trinity. Many experts, including McEachron, believe the diversion of nutrient-rich flows of freshwater certainly had some impact on the numbers of tarpon found nearshore. After all, most world-class tarpon fisheries are historically associated with the estuaries of large river systems.

Like many of his peers, Kirk Winemiller, an associate professor at Texas A&M University who specializes in the study of aquatic and estuarine ecology, believes that Texans indeed had a hand in the near demise of the nearshore tarpon fishery. "Due to the reduced freshwater flows and the host of ways we've changed the coastal landscape," he explains, "the natural fish communities have been altered, and the tarpon's prey base apparently is no longer there. For reasons that we clearly don't understand, the tarpon aren't as attracted to the nearshore waters as they were at the turn of the century."



The Fishery Today

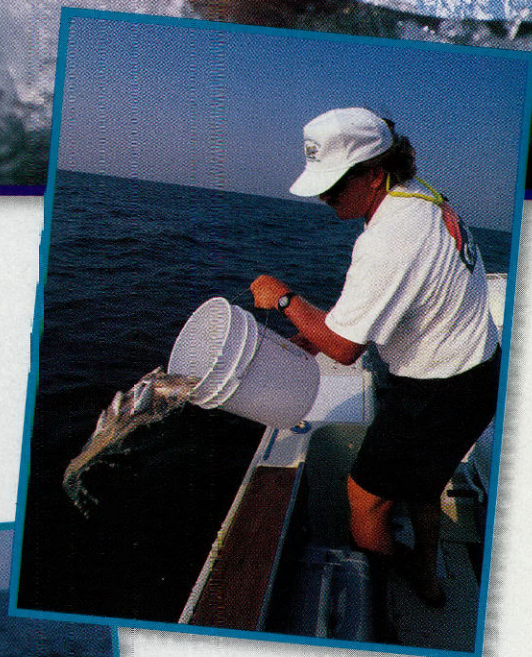
While many anglers continue to catch tarpon from the many jetties associated with Texas' famous inshore passes, the greatest numbers of tarpon are found offshore. According to world-renowned tarpon angler Thomas Gibson, much of the Gulf's tarpon population has moved to nearby offshore waters. "Although the tarpon we catch are found farther out," says Gibson, "the good news is the fish are bigger. Today, we're regularly catching fish that are 140 to 180 pounds. Back in the '50s and '60s, a 70- to 80-pound tarpon was considered large."

When it comes to trophy-sized silver kings, Gibson knows better than most — having documented 55 catches topping 200 pounds. He has successfully fished for tarpon for more than four decades. He holds a world line-class record (a 265-pound fish on 80-pound-test), the Texas record (210 pounds) and the Louisiana record (230 pounds). His pursuit of a 300-pound tarpon has led him to Africa, Mexico, South America — and up and down the Gulf Coast.

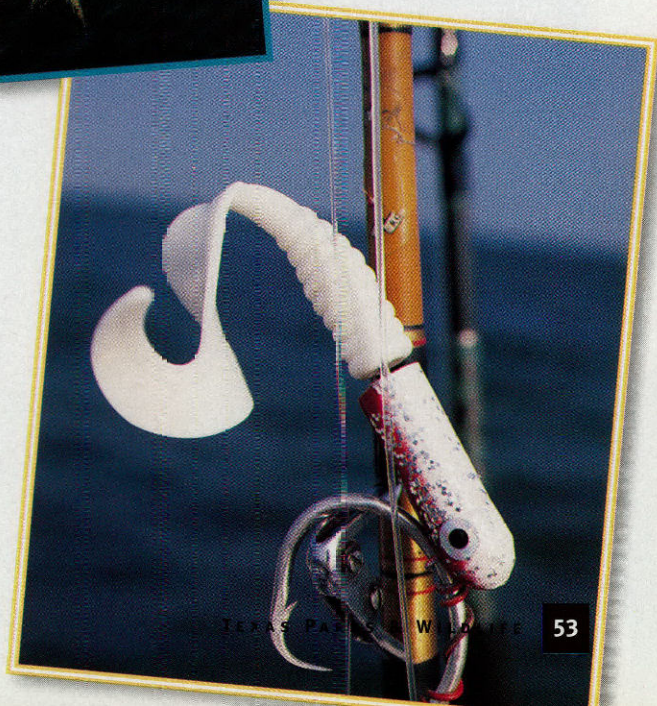
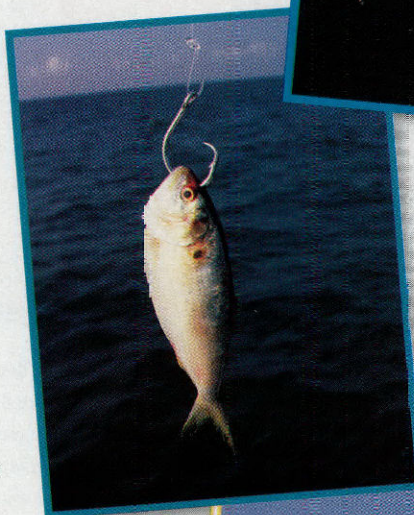
Gibson credits anglers such as Galveston's Mike Williams with rekindling the excitement over tarpon sport fishing along the upper Texas Coast. While many coastal guides strictly chase after nearshore tarpon, a number of guides deliberately move offshore for the larger silver kings. For nearly three decades, Williams has specialized in guiding anglers to offshore tarpon.

Many years ago, a resourceful Williams began cataloging unexpected catches of large tarpon, between 100 and 160 pounds, that were occurring offshore. He took the time to interview anglers, record valuable catch information, and mark their catches on a large map of the Texas Coast. The captain dutifully documented the catches of tarpon that many in the angling community considered incidental catches over a period of four years. Williams studied his maps, looking for something significant — water depth, features of the sea floor, or the like — that might tie the many catches together. Try as he might, the Galveston guide was unable to make any sense of the seemingly odd catches. Eventually, he chanced on what he believes is a migration route of sorts running alongside the coastline of Texas.

"For some reason," he says, "I decided to draw a line connecting catches occurring on the outside perimeter of the map. I then did



Some guides prefer live bait for tarpon fishing; others use artificials. The first wave of tarpon shows up on the lower coast in April. The fish then move up the coast toward the Mississippi River delta.



FISHING FOR TARPON

ACCORDING TO GUIDES ERIC GLASS and Mike Williams, the first wave of migrating tarpon show up off the southern Gulf Coast in late April. "In April and May," notes Glass, "you can go out to the jetties in the evening and see some big tarpon — six-footers — rolling. However, they seem to be passing through, because you will see them one evening and then the next couple of evenings they're gone."

In the summer, the biggest fish continue up the coast and toward the Mississippi River delta. Williams fishes the southernmost water early in the summer. He then follows the big fish as they migrate up the Texas Coast. Between May and October, smaller tarpon — 10 to 40 pounds — frequent Texas' many jetties and beachfronts.

"There's always a week or two in October when the passes are full of gigantic tarpon," says Glass. "Of course, that period varies from year to year. They will stay a couple of days and then continue on to their wintering grounds in Mexico."

Anglers interested in catching tarpon from Texas waters have two options. They can hook up with guides such as South Padre Island's Eric Glass and fish the nearshore jetties for smaller tarpon. Or they can connect with guides such as Mike Williams and hunt down larger offshore fish. With either option, nearshore or offshore, there are no guarantees that tarpon will be encountered.

"THERE'S ALWAYS A WEEK OR TWO IN OCTOBER WHEN THE PASSES ARE FULL OF GIGANTIC TARPON. THEY WILL STAY FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS AND THEN CONTINUE ON TO THEIR WINTERING GROUNDS IN MEXICO."

Glass specializes in putting fly anglers — sporting 10-weight fly outfits, a slow sinking fly line and streamer patterns — on tarpon. Conversely, Williams uses fresh bait to draw the big tarpon bite. His tactics vary, depending on the depth of the fish, between sinking, free-lining or using a balloon to drift fresh shad or croaker. Whether hooking giant tarpon on heavy offshore gear or smaller fish on a fly-fishing outfit, anglers will never forget the excitement of fighting Texas tarpon.

— P.C.

the same with all the inside catches. What I was left with was an obvious pattern or route that I later called 'tarpon alley.'"

Williams believes the tarpon annually use "tarpon alley" to move from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula up the western edge of the Gulf and on to the Mississippi River delta. After 20 years of recording catches and marking his maps, Williams insists that "tarpon alley" continues to prove accurate. He reflects, "When the tarpon all but disappeared from our nearshore waters, many anglers assumed it was because of overfishing or pollution. However, the fish hadn't completely disappeared. Their migration route had simply moved farther offshore."

Managing for Tomorrow

Considering the success experienced with Texas' red drum and speckled seatrout populations, anglers and fishery biologists alike can't help but ask: Can the tarpon fishery be returned to its pre-1950s nearshore condition? McEachron and his associate, Camilo Chavez, hatchery manager at Sea Center Texas, are counting on it. Chavez is involved in a joint project with TPW, the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), Texas A&M at Galveston and the University of Tabasco in Villahermosa,

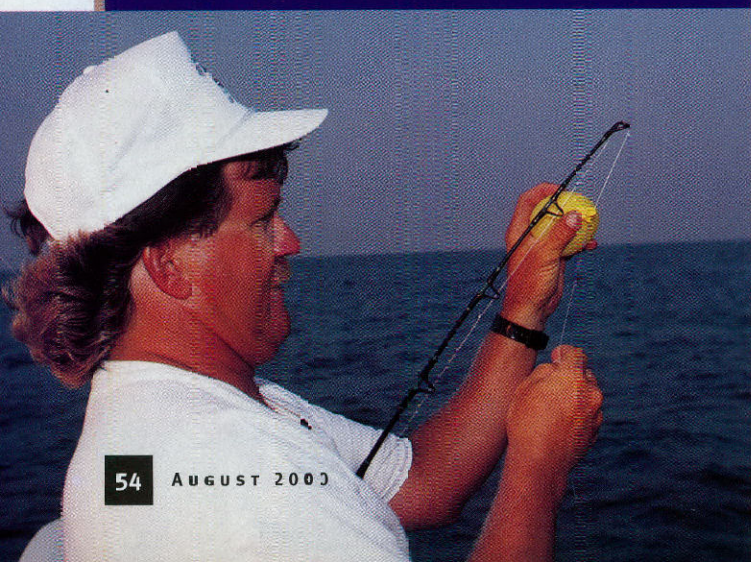
Mexico, that is designed to bring Texas' tarpon fishery back to its historic abundance. Chavez and a team of researchers from Texas recently joined peers from the University of Tabasco in the Bahía de Campeche, off the Yucatan Peninsula. Working with commercial long-line fishermen, the researchers attempted to strip-spawn sexually mature tarpon — a process that can produce indignities on both sides as they massage the bellies of 200-pound fish to coax out their eggs and milt.

Unfortunately, the weather did

not cooperate and the Texans were not able to successfully strip-spawn any fish. However, a team from the University of Tabasco will return in June to try again.

Researchers will try to determine what it will take to bring them back to their historic nearshore range.

For decades, successful fishermen have displayed tarpon scales on the walls of Port Aransas' Tarpon Inn. A hot breakfast at a local eatery is part of the tarpon fishing tradition on the Texas Coast.





The Tarpon Inn catered to the angling crowd, and relics adorning the walls testify to the greatness of Texas' tarpon fishery.

According to Chavez, Mexico's recreational fishermen do not target tarpon. "Fish hooked on their long-lines are incidental bycatch," he says. "The fishermen keep what they need and safely release the rest. That bycatch allows us access to sexually mature fish — ones more than six to seven feet long and better than 175 pounds — that we normally would not be able to access."

Normally, tarpon may spawn as far as 20 to 30 miles offshore. A special leptocephalus larvae hatches from the current-borne tarpon egg. After 45 to 60 days, the leptocephalus metamorphoses to an actual fish. Environmental conditions and currents must be right if the tarpon young are to make it safely to inshore habitat. Predictably, mortality is high between the spawn and the bays. Eventually, Chavez and his associates hope to reduce that initial mortality by stocking tarpon fingerlings raised at the TPW Sea Center hatchery directly into estuaries.

Admittedly, the plan has many inherent challenges, including the collection of spawn and milt and the successful rearing of the larvae. "The real challenge is trying to get past that metamorphic stage," notes McEachron. "We really don't know that much about the leptocephalus larvae."

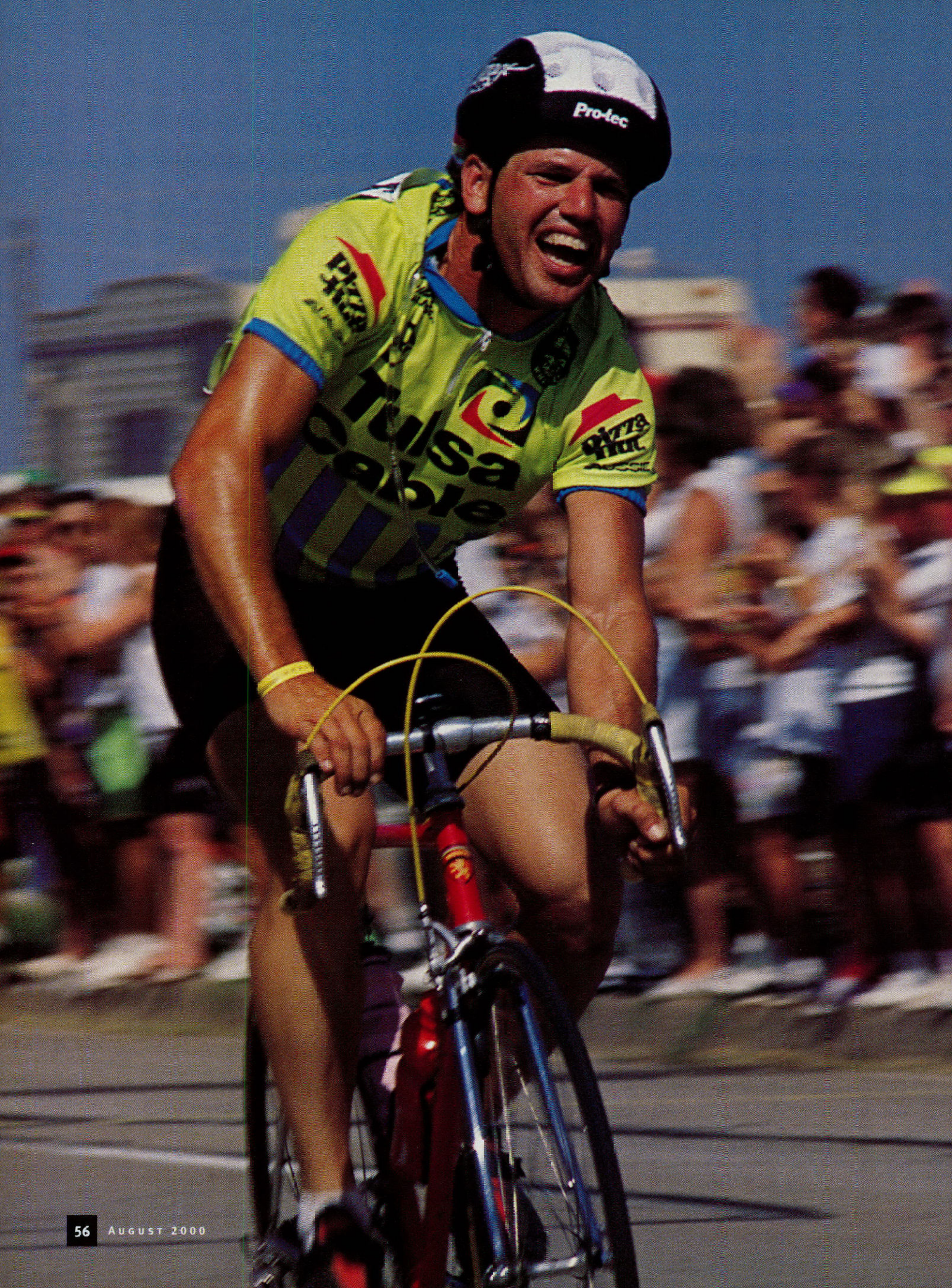
The lack of knowledge regarding the life history of pelagic

fish such as the tarpon makes this TPW project a topic among fishing experts. Winemiller and others are skeptical. They argue that the differences in dynamics between a closed system like a reservoir and an open system like the Gulf are tremendous. They worry that a supplemental stocking program might not address the real problems: those initial changes in the estuarine ecology and coastal landscape that eventually pushed the tarpon offshore. Chavez says they will consider these factors.

Researchers at Texas A&M at Galveston will attempt to determine what caused the tarpons' move to offshore waters in the early '60s. More important, they will try to determine what it will take to bring the fish back to their historic nearshore range.

McEachron acknowledges that the program is controversial, but he points to the initial controversy and eventual success of other TPW marine stocking programs. "Our philosophy is, if you don't try, you never know what is possible. Thanks to the Coastal Conservation Association, Texas A&M and Mexico, we have the funding and support to see if we can return our tarpon fishery back to its historic abundance." ★

PAUL A. CANADA is a fly fisher, photographer and illustrator and a contributing writer to the Dallas Morning News.





HOTTER'N
HELL
HUNDRED

ONLY MAD DOGS
AND ENGLISHMEN

AND CRAZY
CYCLISTS

WOULD RIDE
100 MILES IN THE
AUGUST SUN.

ARTICLE BY JAMES HOGGARD
PHOTOS BY WYMAN MEINZER



"IT LOOKED LIKE A WORLD WAR I TRIAGE TENT," MY FRIEND ALEX TOLD ME THE DAY AFTER THE RIDE. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE REST STOP BETWEEN THE 80- AND 90-MILE MARKS OF THE HOTTER'N HELL HUNDRED BICYCLE RIDE, AN EVENT THAT BEGINS AND ENDS IN DOWNTOWN WICHITA FALLS EACH YEAR ON THE LAST SATURDAY IN AUGUST.

M

ore than a dozen riders lay sprawled on cots in the shade of a tent by the road, looking dazed or distraught from exhaustion, wind or heat sickness. Some had IVs attached to them.

Others slumped in chairs.

A volunteer holding two pitchers of iced water asked a tall, fit-looking cyclist if he needed anything.

"Yes," he said, wiping a moan, "home."

The woman laughed and filled his water bottle, while another volunteer handed him a icy, wet towel, the same kind I had just pressed against my burning tape. Holding it in place,

I took an orange quarter from the pile on the table. I wolfed it down, and then ate another one. Joining other cyclists taking breaks in the welcome shade, I swigged cups of cold water.

The Hotter'n Hell Hundred (HHH) is the largest sanctioned one-day century ride in the Northern Hemisphere. One year more than 12,000 showed up. Last year, the event's 18th year, almost 8,500 people registered to ride.

Why do so many of us put ourselves through the ordeal? Who would ride in Texas at the hottest time of year — temperatures often top 100 degrees — with the wind resisting our efforts? Responses from riders and volunteer workers are often the same: "It's fun." "It's a challenge." "Don't know about you, buddy, but it's too much drama for me to turn down."

I know what they mean. I have ridden the HHH every year

but one since it began in 1982 as part of Wichita Falls' centennial celebration. At the time, bicycling in the Wichita Falls area was neither a notable sport nor a seriously profitable business. But this changed with the advent of the ride. Midwestern State University's cycling team became a national force, and the ride started to attract participants from across the country. Today the event is so popular that hotel rooms in the area for the HHH weekend are usually booked a year in advance.

Volunteers working the rest stops are famous for their friendliness and efficiency; some even don goofy costumes and post witty, Burma Shave-type signs along the course. Some 3,000 volunteers are spread out over 18 rest stops on the ride's several courses. They are joined by 300 medical personnel — doctors, nurses and Red Cross aides.

Planning sessions begin in winter, says Ron Longino, the longtime director of volunteer services. Engineering people and equipment for this event makes him feel "like I'm in the middle of Desert Storm," he says, "but I like seeing a plan come together." With help from area businesses, volunteers gather and serve 70,000 pounds of ice, 90 cases of sport drink, 250 cases of bananas, and 110 cases of oranges — and mobilize numerous tents, cots and folding chairs.

The ride employs a dozen sag wagons — vehicles that pick up riders suffering from heat exhaustion, fatigue or mechanical failure. "Usually the sag wagons carry 400 to 500 riders back to Wichita Falls," says Philip Miller, who organizes the pickup teams. "Some of them are disheartened when they see town," he says, "thinking they might have [finished] if they'd tried harder. But most of them are grateful for the help."

Many people regard the HHH as more of an endurance test than a scenic ride. Participants can choose from a variety of routes: 100 miles, 100 kilometers, 50 miles, 25 miles, plus 5- and 10-mile routes for children. In 1999 an off-road mountain biking trail was offered for the first time. Some veterans have described that course as "sadistic," according to Roby Christie,

founder and guiding spirit of the Hotter'n Hell Hundred, but others prefer to call it "thrilling."

When plans were being made for Wichita Falls' centennial, someone suggested a "marathon rocking chair competition" to commemorate the pioneer spirit of those who had settled the area. Christie thought that would be an insult to the hearty spirits the city wanted to honor. "What about a bicycle ride through some of the area towns? Why not a 100-mile bicycle race in August?" someone suggested. Was the idea a joke? Sometimes it's hard to tell. But when someone else chimed in and said, "It'll be hotter'n hell then," the idea — and the phrase — stuck.

More than 1,000 brave riders showed up at Memorial Stadium that August to begin the first ride. There weren't many cycling jerseys and Spandex shorts visible in those early years. I rode in blue-jean cutoffs, tennis shoes, a T-shirt and a yellow terrycloth fishing hat. My bicycle weighed 44 pounds and pulled to the right — a far cry from today's road bikes

with index shifting, 14 or more gears, and weighing less than 20 pounds.

I'd expected the ride marshals to set the pack off with a starting pistol that first year, and my son and I were ready. Instead, they used a cannon. I was so startled that I leaped in the air,



I'D EXPECTED THE RIDE MARSHALS TO SET THE PACK OFF WITH A STARTING PISTOL. INSTEAD, THEY USED A CANNON. I WAS SO STARTLED THAT I LEAPED IN THE AIR...





blanket. As July heats up, bindweed, looking like tiny white morning glories, hang stubbornly on, and the sunflowers bloom on their thick stalks. By the day of the ride, however, the spring wildflowers have gone to seed and died back, leaving only spindly roadside corpses. Aside from a few sunflowers, it seems that only Johnsongrass, mesquite, saltcedar and grasshoppers are able to survive in the scorching heat. The hot wind stings riders' sunscreens arms and faces, and grasshoppers leap into their paths. Some grasshoppers get caught in the spokes and twirl round and round like kids' toys, and others pop like tiny firecrackers under rolling tires.

Now and then riders talk as they ride along, and if someone is fixing a flat, another rider usually stops to help. People are generous with the extra inner tubes they carry, and it isn't unusual for someone driving by in a pickup to stop and ask if you'd like him to haul you and your rig somewhere.

Not everyone is friendly, of course. Every rider, it seems, has a story of someone having fun by pretending they're going to clip them with their fenders. Others are uglier. My wife, who was riding with a sizable crew early one weekday evening, had an unopened beer can thrown at her from a speeding white pickup. That happened near the same place where, for several years running, tacks were found scattered across the road. One year someone changed the turn signs at an intersection, sending several dozen riders off in the wrong direction until a volunteer caught up with them miles later to turn them around.

That diversion made for a good story later on, but it was easily beat by what happened last year. Near Electra, several riders were chased by — that's right — emus.

"Did anyone get caught?" I

**A LINE OF ABOUT
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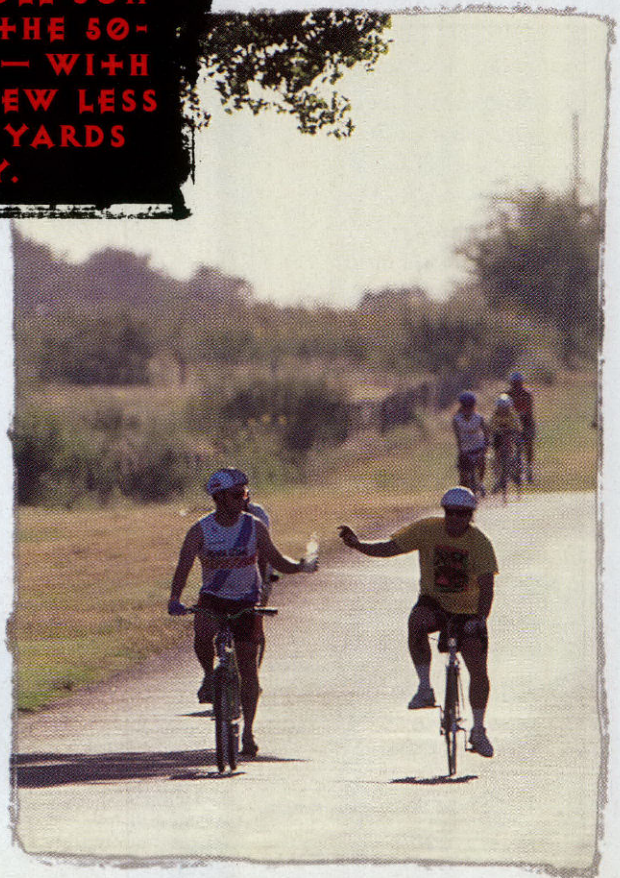
somehow landed astraddle the seat, and pedaled away before I really knew what I was doing.

Soon we were out of town.

Long stretches of country roads, alternating between flat and hilly, provided some diversion from the incessant pedaling. Oilfield pumpjacks coughed and bobbed up and down in red clay clearings like gigantic, long-tongued grasshoppers dipping down for a drink. Others stood still, slowly rusting, idled by downturns in the price of oil.

Sandstone boulders jutted out of ravines off the road in places, and mesquite pastures spread for acres. In other places, land had been cleared and plowed or let lie fallow. Cattle grazed placidly alongside barbed-wire fences. White cattle egrets perched on their backs locking for bugs, until they were spooked by the grinding noise of a rider's uncoiled chain.

Local riders train along the route for months, enjoying the wildflowers as they practice in various seasons. The bluebonnets and winecups of March and April are succeeded in May and June by oceans of purple thistle, coreopsis and Indian





WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS HOTTER'N HELL HUNDRED®

THE RIDE 2000

Wichita Falls, Saturday, August 26, 7:30 a.m.

Web site and online registration: <www.hh100.org>

Hotter'n Hell Hotline: 940-723-5800

GETTING READY FOR THE RIDE

WHEN YOU'RE WELL PREPARED, the Hotter'n Hell Hundred can be fun, but when you're not, there are few things worse. To enjoy the big day (as opposed to just enduring it), you need to take three things seriously: physical conditioning, water and diet and machine maintenance.

During the last weeks before the event, do at least one practice ride that's close to the distance you plan to ride in the Hotter'n Hell Hundred. Be even more diligent about riding each week (for numerous weeks) at least the distance you plan to ride on the big day. These practice rides serve three functions: they provide physical conditioning, develop confidence and sharpen self-knowledge. You don't want to be shocked by your limits on the day of the ride.

Water, or a good supply of sports drink, is crucially important. True, there are rest stops about every 10 miles where you can get plenty of water and food, but you'll need to stay hydrated well before you get to those sanctuaries. Carry several bottles of water — or even better, carry your water in a CamelBak. It's no accident that these insulated water bladders were inspired by this high-temperature event; they keep your drink cool for a couple of hours. Consume at least a quart of water every half hour. More's better.

To replenish your energy along the way, you might want to carry energy bars or gels, cookies and bananas, though there'll be plenty of those and more at the rest stops. Eating plenty of simple carbohydrates the night before the ride is a sensible ritual, but trainers recommend you start "carbo-loading" several days before the event.

Your bike should be in good repair. Make sure your chain is clean and well-lubricated and your wheels are trued (if they're not, they'll wobble and scrape against your brake pads). All nuts and cables should be tight and your seat height set right. A good seat height (top of seat to pedal at its lowest point) is .883 of the distance from your crotch to the bottom of your foot when you're standing upright. Carry an extra tube or two, and a small tool kit with tire levers for changing tubes if you have a flat. And don't forget to use liberal amounts of sunscreen. Under the blazing sun and facing high wind, you'll be glad to be well prepared.

— J.H.

asked the medical director of the ride, Dr. Lawrence Magruder, who was telling me about the incident.

"No," he said, "but one rider did end up in a ditch."

Roby Christie said he didn't think the 100-pound birds really intended to be threatening. "A lot of animals," he added, "just enjoy a good run."

As they passed through the towns along the route, cyclists yelled thanks to the policemen patrolling intersections. Children and their parents and grandparents cheered riders from curbs and lawns. Kids stretched their arms out to slap palms with riders speeding by. "Way to go!" they yelled, "looking good."

At the rest stop, two boys were directing streams of water into industrial-sized fans that blew mist onto hot riders as they walked toward the tent. I'd seen them, though, squirting riders directly. They squirted me, too, and the three of us had a good laugh. The temperature and wind were rising, and it wasn't long before I wished I could get sprayed again.

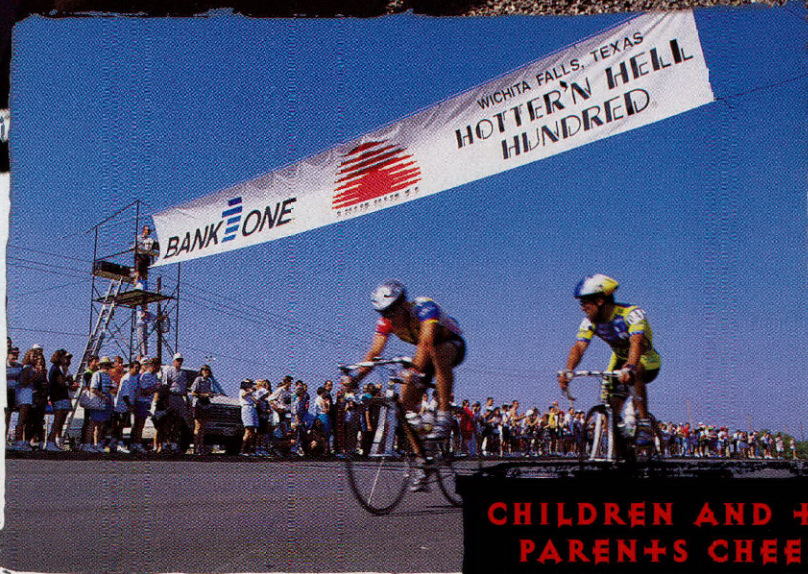
The official high for the ride last year was 105 degrees Fahrenheit, and incidences of heat sickness were up, Dr. Magruder said. No one had heat stroke or organ damage, he said, but "some people did have to go to the hospital for a day or two." Injuries included fractured collar bones, fractured



elbows and lots of road rash. "Medically, the thing that's most impressive is the few problems we've had going into extreme conditions. Riders seem to be handling themselves responsibly," he said.

A vivid image from years back flashed before me: a line of about 20 boys sprawled exhausted on their backs in full sun at about the 50-mile mark. They had hotdogged out fast, but they didn't have the endurance. A sizable spread of shade was in view less than 100 yards away, but they apparently didn't have enough power left to get that far. Too bad, I thought, pedaling past them.

Feet burning, neck and back stiff, I kept going. Sometimes a group whizzed by, and I hitched onto its draft or noticed that another rider was bird-dogging my rear wheel. We might



CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS CHEERED RIDERS FROM CURBS AND LAWNS. KIDS STRETCHED THEIR ARMS OUT TO SLAP PALMS WITH RIDERS SPEEDING BY. "WAY TO GO!" THEY YELLED.

become partners for a while and switch off leading before separating at a rest stop. I passed and got passed by many varying levels of riders and styles of bike. Fat-tired mountain bikes were out on the road with the more numerous road bikes, and each year the number of tandems seemed to increase, as have the recumbent bikes, which let you sit in a mesh bucket seat rather than on a padded wedge that feels increasingly rude as the day wears on.

Pushing into the wind, I noticed an old-fashioned velocipede up ahead, its huge front wheel attached by an arcing

metal frame to a small rear wheel. I pulled alongside it. When the rider found I was from the area, he said, "You must love it."

"Yeah, but why?"

"Most bike-friendly place I've seen."

Turning my attention back to his machine, I said, "Those velocipedes just have one gear, don't they?"

Nodding yes, he added with what sounded like a mixture of wit and will, "If you can't do it in one gear, you can't do it at all." Many of the people who were passing us now had 14 gears, and it had taken them 40 miles to catch him. All of us cut here on the sunny, windy road — cotton field on the right, bare field to the left — had our own limitations and our own notions of pleasure.

I wondered where Alex was.

He'd hooked up with a pace line a good ways back as I pulled alongside a man whose tiny bike, I discovered, folded up into a third of its present size.

"Does the smallness affect your speed?" I asked.

"Some," he replied laconically, and then we both picked up the pace. ☆

INTO THE WOODS

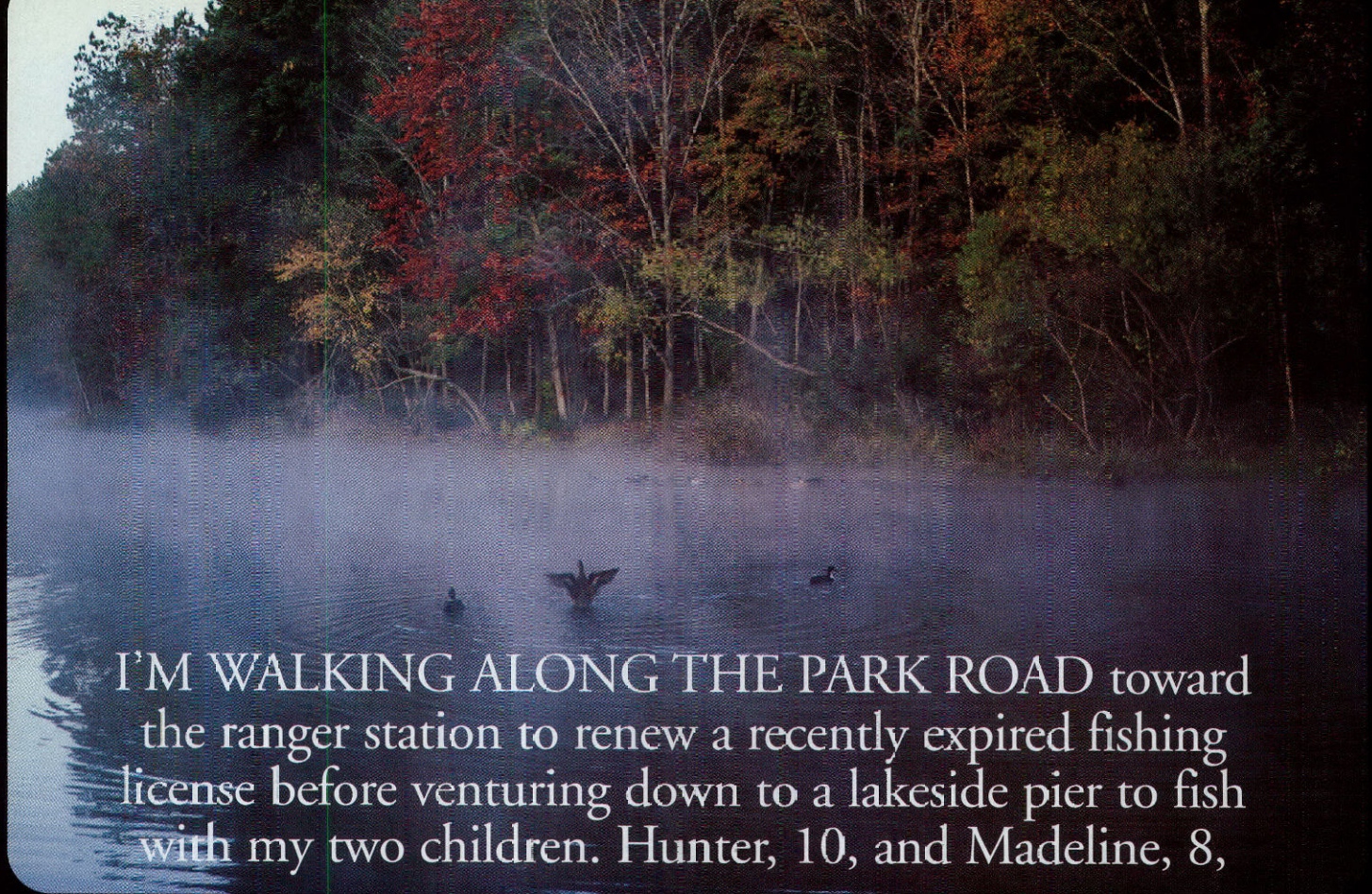
Just two hours from Dallas, Daingerfield State Park entices with forest trails, fishing and fall foliage.

BY JOHN H. OSTDICK

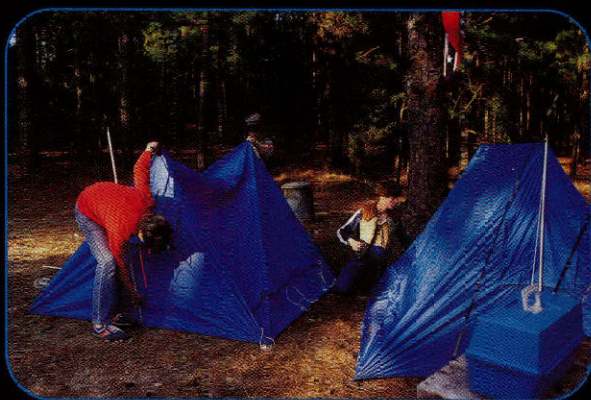


A NOVEMBER MORNING is just settling down to business at Daingerfield State Park in East Texas. Birds gossip back and forth across a clearing in the pine and hardwood forest. The crackly sound of dew evaporating off the fallen leaves is louder than the distant hum of motors and cars from the closest highway.





I'M WALKING ALONG THE PARK ROAD toward the ranger station to renew a recently expired fishing license before venturing down to a lakeside pier to fish with my two children. Hunter, 10, and Madeline, 8,



are still lolling in the bed of our cozy cabin, each engrossed in reading separate Harry Potter adventures.

It's a brisk, fill-your-lungs-with-bracing-air day, although temperate by November standards. A dry year and a warmer than normal fall have taken the edge off the brilliance of East Texas' usual autumn plumes, but the hues around me flirt robustly nonetheless.

The East Texas woodlands, part of the Great Southern Forest, contain a greater number and variety of tree species than even New England. According to the *Texas Almanac*, Texas' 22 million acres of forests and woodlands cover an area larg-

er than the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont combined. Although almost 50 percent of the forested acreage in Texas is privately owned, there are four national and five state forests — all in East Texas, which is 50 percent forested — where you can see the leaves change color in the fall. From the Red River to the Big Thicket, there are five distinct varieties of maples, 14 species of oak, six species of hickory, as well as sweetgum, walnut, birch, cogwood and sassafras.

Optimal East Texas color time is from about mid-October to mid-November,

but trees are still vividly colored through Thanksgiving. The blackgums, sumac and sassafras begin to turn first, followed by sweetgums and oaks.

We arrived in the dark the previous night, another family of refugees from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, to this 550-acre state park about 120 miles east of Dallas. About 70 percent of park visitors originate from DFW, according to park officials. It's no mystery why. One of East Texas' most picturesque state parks, Daingerfield is an ideal getaway for urbanites. It offers easy access to its 80-acre lake and hiking trails. There is limited camping space, with only three cab-

ins and 40 campsites, and a hall for group meetings. One cabin sleeps six; the others, two to four people. Our cabin has two double beds separated by a large bathroom. Equipped with a kitchenette and furnished with a dresser, table and lounge chairs, it's the lap of luxury compared with the Boy Scout camping expeditions Hunter and I are accustomed to.

Park manager Kim Ochs says that October 15 through Thanksgiving weekend is one of the park's busiest times. "We've got a mixture of hardwoods and pine forests," he says. "When the foliage is right, the sweetgums, silver leaf maple, oaks and sassafras leaves are just brilliant. The peak of the foliage generally occurs about Halloween, give or take a week. You've hit it just right this year. By next week, we'll begin to have significant leaf fall."

Of course, Daingerfield holds allure beyond the fall season. Springtime brings breathtaking bouquets through-

out the park's rolling hills, when dogwoods, redbuds and wisteria vines burst into bloom. It often holds seasonal festivities, such as an annual Easter egg hunt with more than 5,000 eggs. In the summer the lake, surrounded by the deep forest, provides an inviting respite from the Texas heat.

After my park briefing, a new license is procured and I'm on my way. "Good luck with the fishing," Ochs says. "A couple of fellows were catching a mess of bream about 18 to 20 deep off the pier earlier this week." We will have no such luck, but I attribute that to the short attention spans of two of our anglers rather than the willingness of the fish to play.

A breeze strews scattered leaves across the trail as we venture out on a hike. The still morning is mirrored on the park's glasslike lake, and temperatures in the upper 40s invigorate us.

Hikers especially enjoy the trails at Daingerfield. The 2½-mile marked

route we are following is designated as a nature trail (ask for a map at the headquarters). Other unmarked trails wind through the forest but are not part of the park's trail system.

A troupe of grasshoppers dive-bombs our legs, and daddy longlegs saunter from our path. We don't spy any of the pileated woodpeckers that can be found in the park, or hear them hammering away on the surrounding forest. The even rarer red-cockaded woodpecker also sometimes nests in the pines along the trail. But we do encounter signs of fox and deer traffic on the trail.

A couple in their late 50s zip past us, casting a friendly greeting before clicking off around the bend, their walking sticks providing a sort of marching band cadence.

"Isn't it pretty?" Madeline says, plopping down on a bench along the trail. She begins to write in her travel journal.

"My Hike in the Wild Life. By Madeline. I am walking on a trail. We



Camping and picnicking beneath the pines and hardwoods of Daingerfield State Park is particularly pleasant during the cool fall months.



GETTING THERE

TO GET TO DAINGERFIELD State Park from Dallas/Fort Worth, go east on I-30 to Mount Pleasant; then southeast on Texas 49 to Daingerfield. Watch for the park road exit.

Entrance fee is \$2 per person for all except senior citizens. Cabins run from \$50 to \$60 per day. Campsite rates depend on facilities.

Cabins have heat and air conditioning and kitchen facilities (linens and towels are furnished but dishes, utensils and silverware are not). Camping areas include restrooms with and without showers; picnic sites, including a group picnic area with tables (not covered); campsites with water; campsites with water and electricity; campsites with water, electricity and sewer; a group lodge, capacity 20, with five bedrooms and two baths; an overflow camping area; and a lake-side amphitheater.

Recreational facilities include a launching ramp; a boat dock (a five-m.p.h. speed limit is enforced on the lake); a fishing pier; a fish-cleaning facility; a 2½-mile hiking trail; and a playground. A seasonal concession (open March–October) rents paddleboats and canoes and sells ice drinks and snacks; there's also a Texas State Park Store.

Early reservations are advisable, especially on weekends and during summer months. Call 512-389-3900. For more information, contact Daingerfield State Park, Park Superintendent, R. 3, Box 286-B, Daingerfield 75638; or 903-645-2521.

are at a lake. It is early in the morning, and we are about to go fishing. Pinecones are all over the place. It is beautiful. Hunter is getting upset because he wants to go on. There are lily pads on the lake. And there are icky grasshoppers. Well, Hunter is being pre-teenish, so I have to go."

The weekend is one of those wonderful parental interludes, exhausting because both of them are relying on me to instigate all of our activity but delightful because everyone is generally in good humor. Their mother is enjoying a weekend at home to herself, taking long soaks in the bath with a book she is yearning to finish.

I lie on the shoreline laughing as Madeline and Hunter navigate a paddleboat around the lake, their conversations and laughter floating along its smooth surface to me. A family in two red rented canoes glides in front of a palette of red and orange leaves on the far shore. Hunter, striking a pose while standing

on the paddleboat, hollers, "Thank you verrrrrry muuuch" in his best Elvis imitation. Hunter and Madeline are on a loving, buddyish wavelength, and we thoroughly enjoy the hiking, biking on the road along the campsites, and a short fishing expedition.

According to local lore, in 1740 the first Europeans to visit the area camped by a spring near what is now the center of the town of Daingerfield. In 1830 Captain London Daingerfield and a band of about 100 men fought a bloody battle with Indians near the spring, and the good captain fell in battle. When a town began to grow in the area in the 1840s, it was named in his honor. Each year on the third weekend of October the town celebrates Captain Daingerfield Days with festivals, music and feasts. Among the more esoteric local places of interest are sites of the largest sweetgum, largest shortleaf pine, and largest wax myrtle in Texas, according to local chamber officials.

Sassafras leaves join those of sweetgums, maples and oaks to paint a palette of fall color. The lake offers opportunities for fishing and boating.





But Daingerfield doesn't have a 24-hour emergency medical facility. We find this out the hard way. As I am doing some dinner prep work inside the cabin for an evening feast of favorites, the Boy Scout among us is tending the steaks, venison sausage and corncobs roasting over a glowing bed of coals in the ring just outside. Just as the cooking is done, Hunter dashes into the cabin toward the kitchen sink, holding his thumb. Despite knowing better, he had picked up what he thought was an unlit piece of charcoal to toss into the ring, only to painfully find that it was fiery red on its bottom side. As he runs cold

tap water over the thumb, we try to assess the damage. Once we determine the burn is serious, we hurry off, hand emerged in a bowl of water and ice, in search of medical care.

The ranger station is closed, and although an emergency number is listed on the window, I see no pay phone. We drive into town and stop at the Dairy Queen to ask where the closest medical facilities are. Hunter is in pain, somewhat embarrassed but brave nonetheless. Forty minutes later we enter a packed Mount Pleasant emergency room just after a messy motorcycle accident. A couple of hours later, we emerge with

Hunter's second-degree burn treated, cream in hand, worn out and ready to tuck ourselves into bed.

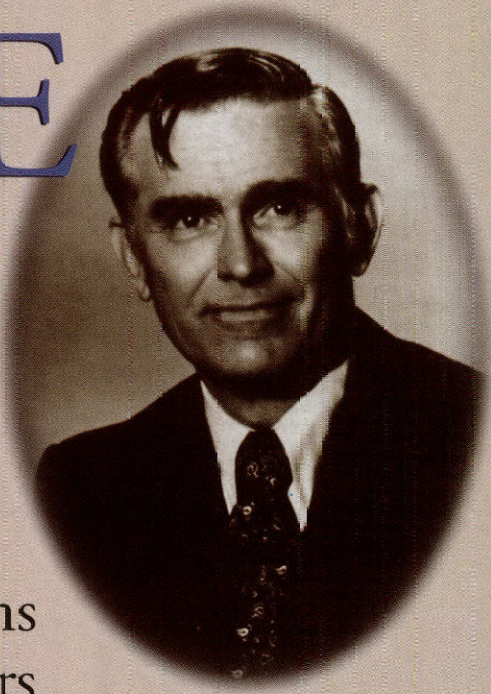
We return to find our untouched feast languishing on the cabin table. Hunter and Madeline make a beeline for the bed. As I dispatch the spoiled dinner to the trash without remorse, I smile as I hear Madeline ask Hunter sweetly, "Hunter, are you OK? Does it hurt very badly?" There are more important things, after all, than a perfect steak under the stars. ★

JOHN H. OSTDICK is a Dallas writer and editor.

LARGE PHOTOS © LAURENCE PARENT; OTHER PHOTOS BY JHW

ORVILLE RICE

BY RICH HADDAWAY



The wildlife artist's illustrations still have a fresh appeal 50 years after they appeared on the cover of this magazine.

The art of Orville Rice graced the covers of this magazine's predecessor — *Texas Game and Fish* — from the mid-1940s to the mid-'50s. All these years later it still speaks with charm and immediacy.

Interest in Rice was rekindled five years ago when the Texas Parks and Wildlife *Outdoor Annual* began using Rice's artwork on its covers. The *Outdoor Annual* is the booklet containing the state's hunting and fishing regulations, and 3.1 million copies of this popular guide are printed each year.

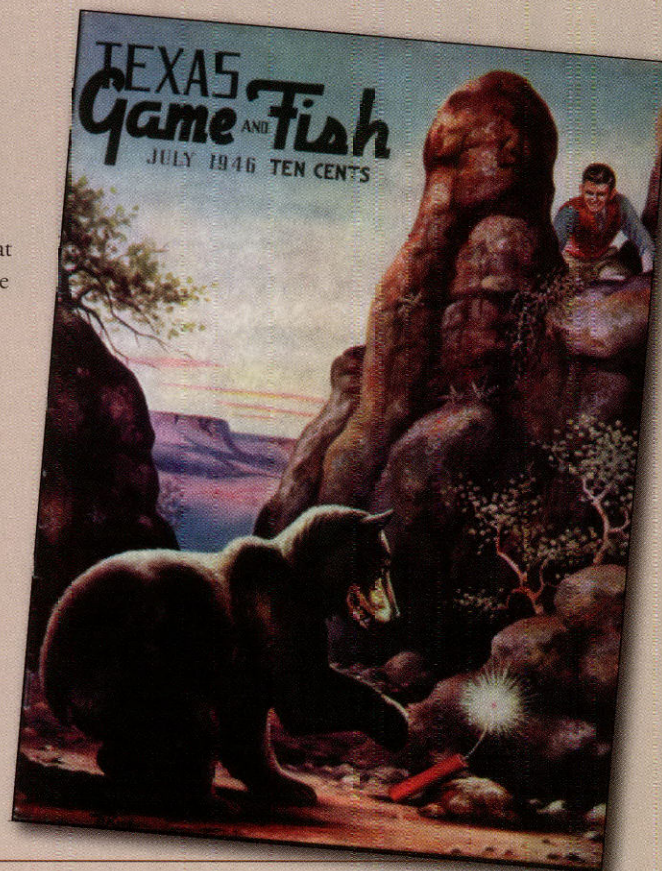
Ernie Gammage, director of TPW's Texas Wildlife Expo, features Rice's art on commemorative T-shirts. In 1997 Gammage began selecting 50-year-old covers from *Texas Game and Fish* that particularly impressed him, and they all happened to be the work of Rice. In 1997 the shirts depicted a pair of pheasants from the 1947 magazine. In 1998 it was a black bass striking at a

lure from the 1948 edition. Last year it was a bounding white-tailed deer from 1949. The new shirt for October hasn't been determined yet, but Gammage guarantees that it will be another Orville Rice rendition.

"He has a vigorous style that I think is appealing," he says.

Orville Rice was a native Texan, a self-taught artist and a natural-born naturalist. Born in 1919 in Yeakum, near Victoria, Rice early on felt a kinship with his rural surroundings, according to his widow, Zora Rice, 80. As a boy, he'd take sticks, jab them in the mud and draw pictures of birds.

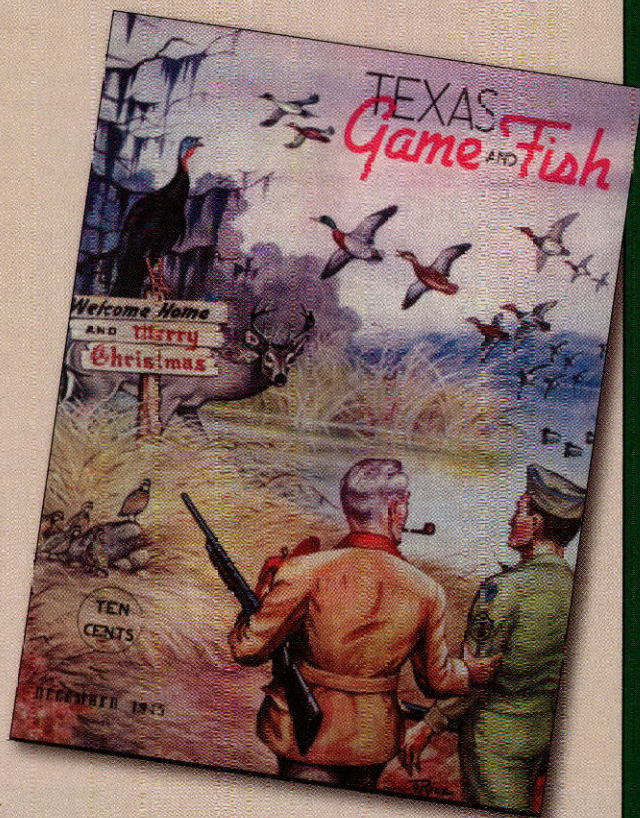
He won a scholarship





“We never knew what Dad might have in the freezer.”

VINTAGE COVERS
 JULY 1946,
 NOVEMBER 1947 AND
 DECEMBER 1945.
 TEXAS GAME AND FISH
 WAS THE
 PREDECESSOR OF
 TEXAS PARKS &
 WILDLIFE.



to the University of Texas in Austin, but he decided to pursue architecture rather than his first love, art. In those days the school had no art department, but even if it had, he probably would have made the same choice. His pragmatic parents had it drilled into him that art was no way to make a living.

After Rice graduated in 1943, he worked several years as a commercial artist, most notably for Boeing during the war years. Later, the Rices settled in Topeka, Kansas, where Orville established himself as a successful architect.

However, in spite of a demanding career and raising two daughters, Rice “could hardly wait to get back to his painting” each day. Zora Rice said most of his off hours were spent roaming the fields to watch birds and animals, and then returning home to give life to them with his watercolors on canvas.

“We went on lots of walks,” remembers his daughter Dirah Chancellor. “He taught me how to walk very quietly. I loved it.”

Daughter: Kathy Parsons recalls how

her father thought nothing of climbing up tall trees to check on the progress of hatchlings in nests. It was her job to be stationed on the ground and go for help in case dear old Dad came crashing down.

What distinguishes Rice’s art from the ordinary is his insistence on accuracy. He was an amateur ornithologist who counted among his friends the famed bird expert George M. Sutton of the University of Oklahoma.

Both daughters have fond memories of their father’s years as cover artist for *Texas Game and Fish*. Chancellor remembers when her father was sick in bed with the flu. He’d just finished a picture of a diamondback rattler (August 1952 issue), but he roused himself from the bed and started over on his painting when he realized he’d done the pattern of the scales all wrong.

He studied birds and animals in nature to get their poses just right, using his own photography as an aid. He’d stop on the highway to pick up run-over birds and take them home to study the pattern of their feathers. “We

never knew what Dad might have in the freezer,” Parsons says. Rice didn’t hunt, but his hunting friends would bring him specimens.

Parsons remembered how neighbors would bring injured birds to him for help with sprains and rehabilitation. She recalls a big cage in the living room containing a baby owl that would twist its neck almost all the way around, following her.

Rice’s art was not just of animals. He went through a Norman Rockwell period early on. The December 1945 issue shows a father welcoming his son home from the war. The young man is still in uniform as the two prepare for a hunting trip.

Rice would slip in a sense of humor occasionally, too. July 1946 shows a bear batting at a lit firecracker. There’s a portrait of a great horned owl in November 1947, but hidden in the pattern of the leaves is a witch on a broomstick. The girls delighted in discovering that.

By the mid-1950s, work “got to be too heavy a load on him,” says his wife.

Zora, and he quit doing covers for the magazine. "He was so pulled to go outside and paint his birds, but he put it all aside to make a living." Rice was senior architect in his firm, designing banks, schools and a variety of other buildings.

Nevertheless, Rice never lost his passion for nature. "His soul needed a walk in the woods," says Chancellor. Parsons remembers her father and Sutton "barreling down the highway at 70 miles per hour and then suddenly screeching on the brakes when they saw a bird." Rain or snow, it didn't matter — they'd tear off into the fields after it.

After his stint with the magazine, Rice continued with his art when he could, doing the sketches for several birding books. He'd

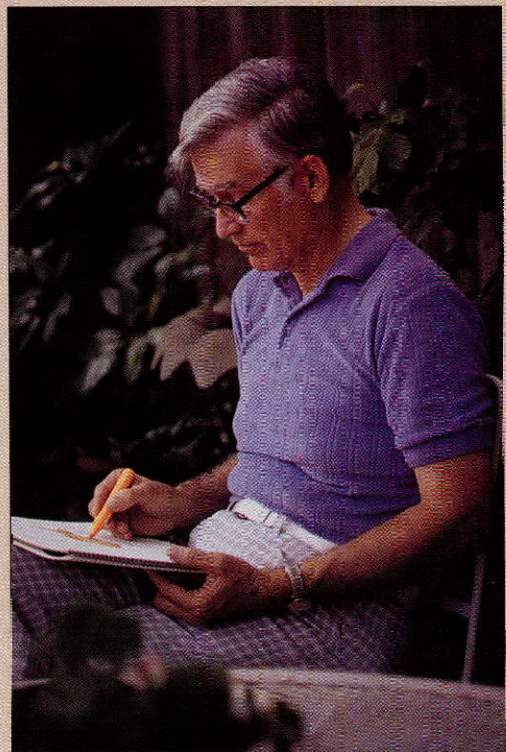
return once a year to his native Yoakum to roam the area's wetlands. He loved shorebirds.

Several galleries still carry Rice's artwork, and some of his paintings reside at the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin. Others hang on the walls in the headquarters of Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Orville Rice died in 1986 at the age of 66. Only the day before, Zora Rice says, he had been out on a nearby lake looking at eagles.

"He was interested in everything — that would be his epitaph," says Parsons. ★

Editor's note: If you'd like to order an Orville Rice T-shirt, call Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine at 512-912-7000.



What weighs less than 13 oz. but can carry you thousands of feet across any terrain?

With up to 80 times power Z-80 Superzoom Binoculars are the most powerful compact binoculars on the market.

by Shawn Peace



You're in the wilds of Montana, surrounded by the looming, snowy-white peaks of Glacier Park, dwarfed by an awe-inspiring view, when something stirs in the treetops. You

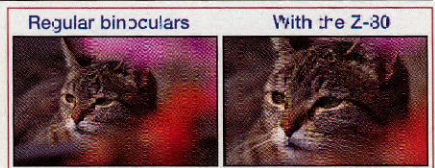
look up quickly and vaguely see the outline of a hawk or red heron lift-off...you can't distinguish the breed of bird. Frantically, you clutch your backpack and rummage for your binoculars, only to remember you left them in your RV because they were too bulky to carry in your backpack. If only you'd had your friend's featherweight, compact Superzoom Z-80's—the only binoculars built for power and easy transport on the trail or anywhere. Next time you'll borrow them, for sure, or better yet, get a pair for yourself.

Carson's new, ultralight Superzoom Z-80 compact binoculars have a higher zoom capacity than any other pair of compact binoculars on the market. They allow you to view at 20x magnification and then zoom in for pinpoint accuracy to 80 power, without ever losing sight of your object.

Complete with case, neck strap, lens cap and tripod adapter, the dynamic Superzoom Z-80 sports high performance prisms and super, fully-coated lenses that provide exceptionally sharp, high-contrast images. Plus, these state-of-the-art binoculars weigh less than 13 ounces and are small and durable enough for long-lasting use anywhere.

Take Control. The Superzoom Z-80's easy-to-use manual zoom lever puts you in control, letting you zoom in or out with the slightest touch of your finger. The superb specifications, utilizing BAK4 prisms, along with the precision and craftsmanship of the Superzoom Z-80, will ensure excellent performance under the most demanding conditions. If handled with care, the Superzoom Z-80 will provide years of trouble free-service.

Seeing Eye to Eye. The binoculars' ultra compact zoom is fitted with rubber eye cups designed to exclude extraneous external light. If you wear glasses, simply roll down the eye cups to bring your eyes closer to the binoculars' lens for improved field of vision. Up to 20x to 80x magnification sets the Superzoom Z-80 apart in a league of its own compared to other compact binoculars. With an objective 25mm lens and a field of view (m/1000m) of 30m to 13m, these



powerful binoculars are a "best buy" worth more than their price.

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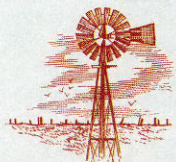
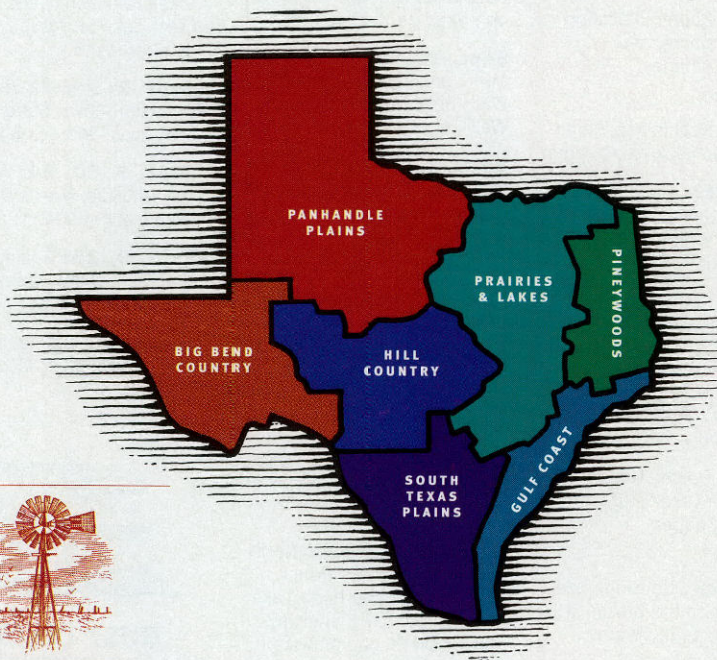
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GETAWAYS

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PANHANDLE-PLAINS

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: "Texas" musical drama, nightly except Sundays, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-655-2181

Aug.: Evening Programs, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Aug.: Llama Treks, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Aug.: Palo Duro Canyon Pioneers, every Saturday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Aug.: Worship Service, every Sunday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Aug. 5: Night Noises of the Canyon, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Aug. 5, 19: Nature Hike, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Aug. 5, 26: Family Nature

Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Aug. 5: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Aug. 5: Stargazing Party, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Aug. 5: Starwalk, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331

Aug. 11-12: 8th Annual Hoof-N-Hair Bar-B-Q Cookoff, Fort Richardson SHP, Jacksboro, 940-567-3506

Aug. 12, 26: Birding 101, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Aug. 12: Clarity Tunnel Adventure, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Aug. 12: Longhorn and Buffalo Seminar, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Aug. 12: Botany Basics, Palo

Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Aug. 19: Nature Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Aug. 19: Dino Walk, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Aug. 26: Canyon Ramblings, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Llama Treks, by reservation only, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-651-7346

Sept.: Palo Duro Canyon Pioneers, every Saturday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Sept.: Evening Programs, every Friday, Saturday & Sunday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Sept. 1: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505

Sept. 2: Starwalk, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331

Sept. 2: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Sept. 2: Family Nature Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Sept. 2, 16: Nature Hike, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Sept. 3: Campfire Gathering, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Sept. 9, 23: Birding 101, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Sept. 9: Clarity Tunnel Adventure, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Sept. 9: Botany Basics, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Sept. 9: Lone Star Legacy, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Sept. 16: Prairieland Tour, Lake Rita Blanca SP, Dalhart, 806-488-2227

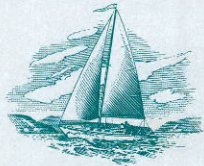
Sept. 16: Longhorn and Buffalo Seminar, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757

Sept. 16: Nature Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227

Sept. 23: Canyon Ramblings, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, 806-455-1492

Sept. 23: Stargazing Party, Fort Griffin SHP, Albany, 915-762-3592

Sept. 23: Dino Walk, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-4757



PRAIRIES AND LAKES

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Historic and Scenic Tour, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, 979-968-5658

Aug.: Kreische Brewery Tours, every Saturday & Sunday, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658

Aug.: Guided Tours, every weekend, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 936-873-2633

Aug.: Independence Hall Tours, daily, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP, Washington, 936-878-2214

Aug. 5: Cowboy Campfire Music and Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, 940-328-1171

Aug. 5: Animal Encounters, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 5: Walk on the Wild Side, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, 903-395-3100

Aug. 6, 13: Kreische House Tour, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658

Aug. 6: Sunrise Hike, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 12: Visit to the Galapagos Islands, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, 903-395-3100

Aug. 12: Coyote Howl, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 12: Stargazing-Beginning Astronomy, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, 940-328-1171

Aug. 13: Something's Fishy Here, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 19: 2nd Annual Adventure Race, Ray Roberts Lake SP/Isle du Bois Unit, Pilot Point, 940-686-2148

Aug. 19: Civilian Conservation Corps Reunion, Fort Parker SP, Mexia, 254-562-5751

Aug. 19: Guided Night Hike, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 19: Creatures of the Night, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256

Aug. 19: Boater Education, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793

Aug. 20: Boater Education Instructor Training, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793

Aug. 20: Reptile Rap, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 26-27: Building a Telescope Star Party, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793

Aug. 26: Star Watch, Dinosaur Valley SP, Glen Rose, 254-897-4588

Aug. 26: Calling All Owls, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

Aug. 26: Guided Nature Hike, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, 903-395-3100

Aug. 27-28: Shucking Bee, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP, Washington, 936-878-2214

Aug. 27: Going Batty, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, 972-291-3900

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Historic and Scenic Tour, by reservation only, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658

Sept.: Guided Tours, every weekend, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 936-873-2633

Sept.: Kreische Brewery Tours, every Saturday & Sunday, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, 979-968-5658

Sept.: Independence Hall Tours, daily, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP, Washington, 936-878-2214

Sept. 1: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505

Sept. 2: Guided Nature Hike, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256

Sept. 3, 10: Kreische House Tour, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658

Sept. 9: Venomous Animals and Poisonous Plants, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, 903-395-3100

Sept. 16: Jones Farm Jam, Ray Roberts Lake SP/Johnson Branch Unit, Valley View, 940-637-2294

Sept. 16: Buggy Whip Trail Hike, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, 903-945-5256

Sept. 16: Cowboy Campfire Music and Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, 940-328-1171

Sept. 23: Texian Days, Fanthorp Inn SHP, Anderson, 936-873-2633

Sept. 23-24: Cotton Harvest, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP, Washington, 936-878-2214

Sept. 23-24: Hunter Education Instructor Training, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793

Sept. 24: Hunter Education, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, 254-694-3793

Sept. 30: 4th Annual North Texas Skywatch Amateur Astronomer's Star Party, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, 940-328-1171

Hogg Family Reunion, Jim Hogg SHP, Rusk, 903-683-4850

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept. 1: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505

Sept. 2: Steam Engine Shop Tour, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 800-442-8951

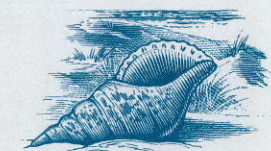
Sept. 2: 11th Annual Martin Creek Lake Perch Jerk, Martin Creek Lake SP, Tatum, 903-836-4336

Sept. 2: Starlight Steam Train Excursion, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 800-442-8951

Sept. 3, 10, 24: Walk On The Wildside, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231

Sept. 9, 23: Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322

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



GULF COAST

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Plantation house, barn and grounds tours, Wednesdays through Sundays, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 979-345-4656

Aug.: Weekend Nature Programs, every weekend, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, 979-553-5101

Aug. 2-6: Texas International Fishing Tournament, South Padre Island, 956-943-TIFT

Aug. 11-13: Ladies' Kingfish Tournament, South Padre Island, 956-761-4412

Aug. 12: Texas Big Game Awards Regional Banquet, El Campo, 800-839-9453

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Plantation house, barn and grounds tours, Wednesdays through Sundays, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 979-345-4656

Sept.: Weekend Nature Programs, every weekend, Brazos Bend SP, Richmond,



PINEYWOODS

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug. 2-5: Old Settlers Reunion, Governor Hogg Shrine SHP, Quitman, 903-763-2701

Aug. 5: Steam Engine Shop Tour, Texas State Railroad SHP, Rusk, 903-683-2561 outside Texas, 800-442-8951

Aug. 6, 13, 27: Walk On The Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231

Aug. 12, 19, 26: Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322

Aug. 19: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Lumberton, 409-384-5231

Aug. 26: Afro-American



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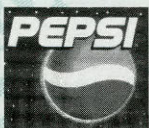
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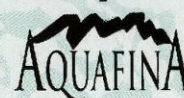


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Sept. 1-30: The Showing of the Quilts, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP, West Columbia, 979-345-4656

Sept. 9: Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600

Sept. 9,10: Dick Dowling Days, Sabine Pass Battleground SHP, Sabine Pass, 409-971-2559

Sept. 15, 16, 17: Hummingbird Hayride Tours, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600

Sept. 15, 16: Gatorfest 2000, Anahuac, 409-267-4190

Sept. 16: Texas Adopt-a-Beach Cleanup, South Padre Island, 512-475-1468

Sept. 23, 30: Hawk Watch, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600

Sept. 24: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505



HILL COUNTRY

AUGUST EVENTS

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

Aug.: Amphitheater Adventure, every Saturday, Guadalupe River SP, Spring Branch, 830-438-2656

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

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

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

Aug. 4: Range and Wildlife Management Seminar, Kerr WMA, Hunt, 830-238-4483

Aug. 10, 24: Devil's Waterhole Canoe Tour, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

Aug. 11: X Bar Dinner, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, 888-853-2688

Aug. 12, 19, 26: Stumpy Hollow Nature Hike, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

Aug. 12, 19, 26: Fish Seining, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

Aug. 13-18; 20-25: Scheduled Hunts, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240

Aug. 21: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, 512-918-1832

Aug. 27: LBJ's Birthday, Lyndon B. Johnson SHP, Stonewall, 830-644-2252

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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

Sept.: Wild Cave Tours, walking tour every Saturday & Sunday, crawling tour first Saturday of the month, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240

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

Sept.: Amphitheater Adventure, every Saturday, Guadalupe River SP, Boerne, 830-438-2656

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

Sept. 1: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505

Sept. 2: Stumpy Hollow Nature Hike, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

Sept. 2: Fish Seining, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

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

Sept. 14, 28: Devil's Waterhole Canoe Tour, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, 512-793-2223

Sept. 16: Guadalupe River Cleanup, 830-625-9500

Sept. 16-17: X Bar Ranch Shoot Out Mountain Bike Race, X Bar Ranch, 888-853-2688

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

Sept. 30: Kayak & Fly Fishing Day on the Guadalupe, 830-625-1505



BIG BEND COUNTRY

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Bird Banding, every Tuesday, Thursday, & Saturday, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, 915-426-3337

Aug.: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling Tour, every Wednesday-Saturday, Seminole Canyon SHP, Langtry, 915-292-4464

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

Aug.: White Shaman Tour, every Saturday, Seminole Canyon SHP, Langtry, 915-292-4464

Aug. 5, 6, 19, 20: Interpretive Tour, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso, 915-566-6441

Aug. 12: Stories Of Spirit, Magoffin Home SHP, El Paso, 915-533-5147

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Bird Banding, every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, 915-426-3337

Sept.: Birding Tour, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Balmorhea, 915-375-2370

Sept.: White Shaman Tour, every Saturday, Seminole Canyon SHP, Langtry, 915-292-4464

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

Sept. 1: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505

Sept. 2, 3, 16, 17: Interpretive Tour, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso, 915-566-6441

Sept. 2-3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10: On the Trail of Echols - Big Bend Camel Treks, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416

Sept. 9: Stories Of Spirit, Magoffin Home SHP, El Paso, 915-533-5147

Sept. 29-30: Living History Days, Fort Lancaster SHP, Ozona, 915-836-4391



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

AUGUST EVENTS

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

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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

Sept. 22: Wildlife Management Symposium, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, 830-676-3413

Sept. 22-23: Lonesome Dove Fest, Karnes City, 830-780-3283

Sept. 24: Dove season opens, 512-389-4505

State Parks Offer Public Hunts

A number of state parks will offer special permit hunting this fall. As in the past, the specially controlled public hunts are scheduled for Monday through Friday, a slow time at most parks during fall and winter. Most parks will be open on Saturdays and Sundays for camping, picnicking and similar activities.

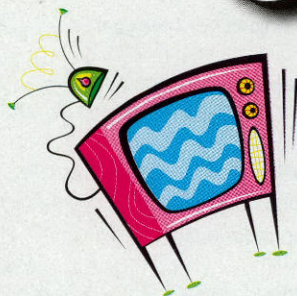
The following schedule lists the times and dates when public access is restricted. Call the park of your choice directly to make sure it will be open on the day you want to visit. Or call Texas Parks and Wildlife's information line, 800-792-1112, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Press 3 for park information or 5 for public hunt information.

Aug. 13-18; 20-25
Colorado Bend SP
915-628-3240

SP	STATE PARK
SHP	STATE HISTORICAL PARK
SNA	STATE NATURAL AREA
WMA	WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



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TELEVISION

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

July 30 – Aug. 6:

Astronomy in West Texas; the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail; the last real bayou in Houston.

Aug. 6 – 13:

Secrets from a world-class wildlife photographer; hummingbirds; the brave (and crazy) people who rescue victims from dangerous places.

Aug. 13 – 20:

Texas wildflowers; an ancient ceremony in an almost-ancient setting; the critically endangered Attwater's prairie chicken.

Aug. 20 – 27:

Volunteering for the environment; the finer points of stone skipping; transforming a playful puppy into a champion hunting dog.

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Amarillo: KACV, Ch. 2 / Sat. 4:30 p.m.

Austin: KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 10 a.m. / Mon. 12:30 p.m. KLRU-TOO, Cable Ch. 20 / Tues. 9:30 p.m. / Thurs. 3 p.m.

Bryan-College Station: KAMU, Ch. 15 / Sun. 6 p.m.

Corpus Christi: KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m.

Dallas/Fort Worth: KERA, Ch. 13 / off the air until fall.

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

El Paso: KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 5:30 p.m.

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

Houston: KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sun. 5 p.m. Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria, Lake Jackson/Clute

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

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

Odessa-Midland: KOCV, Ch. 36 / Sat. 5 p.m.

San Antonio & Laredo: KLRN, Ch. 9 / Thur. noon

Waco: KCTF, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3 p.m.

Schedules are subject to change, so check local listings.

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

Austin: KUT-FM 90.5 / 1:58 p.m., (12:58 p.m. Fr.), KVET-AM 1300 / 6:15 a.m. (Sat.) • *Austin American-Statesman's* Inside Line 512-416-5700 category 6287 (NATR)

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

Brady: KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:50 a.m. & 3:50 p.m., KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:50 a.m. & 3:50 p.m.

Bridgeport: KBOC-FM 98.3 / 3:45 a.m. & 5:25 p.m.

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

Canton: KVCI-AM 1510 / 6:40 a.m.

Canyon: KWTS-FM 91.1 / 6 a.m. – 9 a.m. hours

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

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

Coleman: KSTA-AM 1000 / 5:15 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eastland: KEAS-AM 1590 / 11:14 a.m., 2:14 p.m., KEAS-FM 97.7 / 1:14 a.m., 2:14 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hallettsville: KHLT-AM 1520 / 8:20 a.m., KTXM-FM 99.9 / 8:20 a.m.

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

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

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

Houston: KBME-AM 790 / 11:40 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

Malakoff: KLVQ-AM 1410 / 6:45 a.m.

Marshall: KCUL-AM 1410 / 7:10 a.m., KCUL-FM 92.3 / 7:10 a.m.

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

Mesquite: KEOM-FM 88.5 / 5:30 a.m. & 2:30, 8:30 p.m. M-Th. (5:30 a.m. & 4:45 p.m. Fr.)

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

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

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

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

Palestine: KLIS-FM 96.7 / 6:20 a.m.

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

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

Rockdale: KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:04 a.m. & 5:50 p.m.

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

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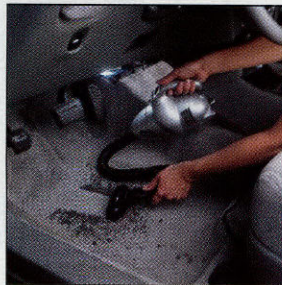
The Euro-Pro Shark provides the power of an upright in a hand-held vacuum and sucks dirt from places ordinary hand vacs can't reach.

by Sandra Brosberg

I'm a neat freak. I admit it. But with a cat, two dogs and two children, it's tough to keep everything clean. Everytime I turn around, there's a new mess on the kitchen floor, the living room carpet or the bathroom tile. Whenever I spotted a mess, I had to go to the closet and drag out the upright vacuum cleaner. Thank goodness I discovered the Shark Turbo hand vacuum! With seven times the suction of ordinary hand-held vacuums, it gives me the cleaning power of a top-of-the-line upright.

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Lightweight and versatile, the Shark is the perfect tool for cleaning your entire house—from automobile interiors to wooden floors! Unique 600-watt motor makes it seven times more powerful than other hand vacs.

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The Shark comes complete with two accessory brushes and a flexible hose to provide the ultimate in cleaning versatility. Its lightweight design is easy to hold and maneuver around even the tightest of corners. Plus, a convenient shoulder-strap makes cleaning a breeze! Once you've seen the powerful results you get from this amazing cleaner, you can leave that upright in the closet. It gives you the portability and practicality of a hand-held vacuum with the powerful suction of vacuum cleaners many times as large.

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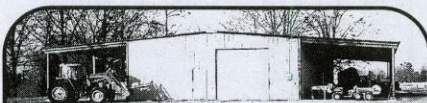
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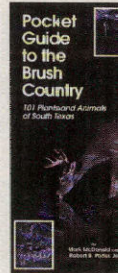
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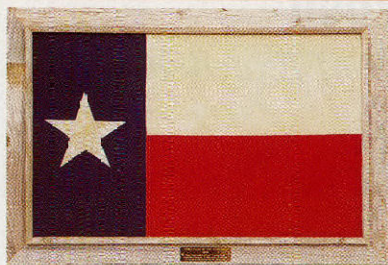
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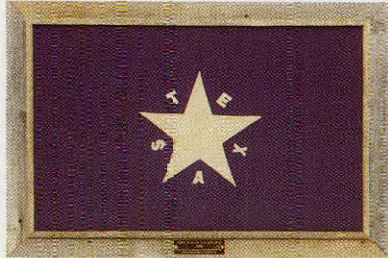


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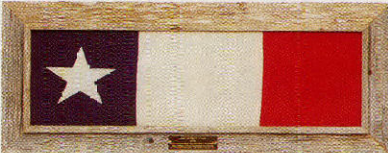
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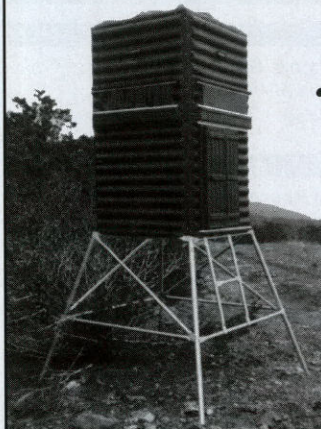
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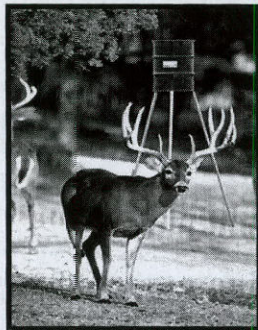
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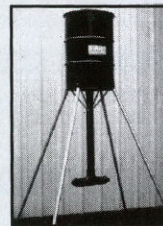
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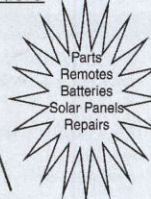
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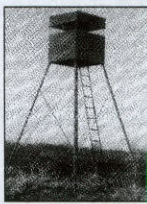


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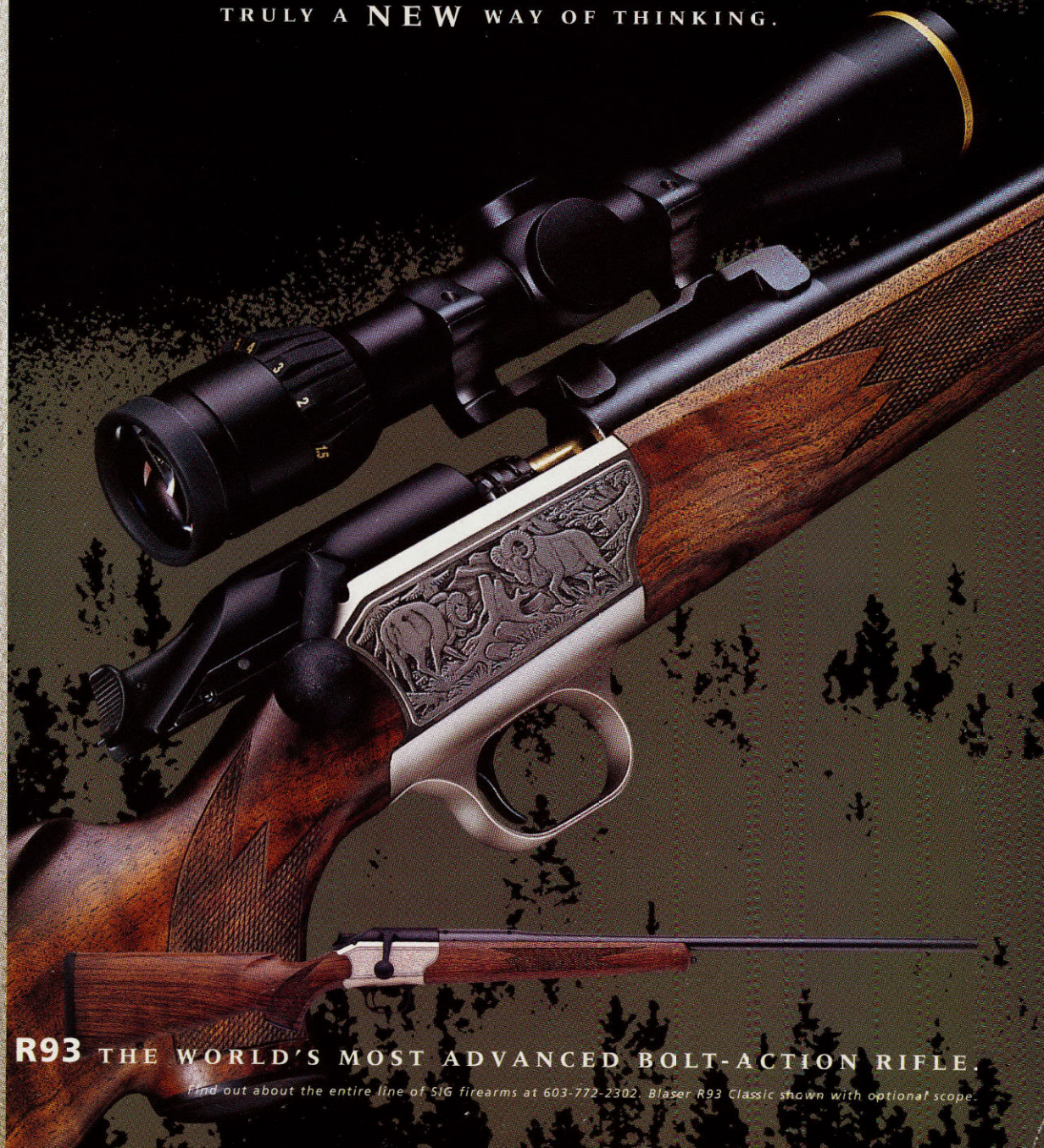
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