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The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

A River of Rainbows

Fly Fishing the Guadalupe River



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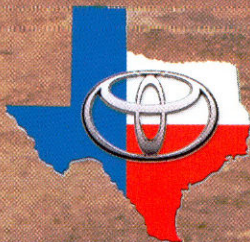
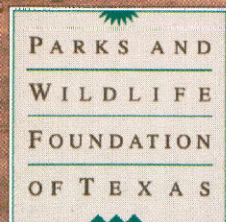
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JANUARY 2004

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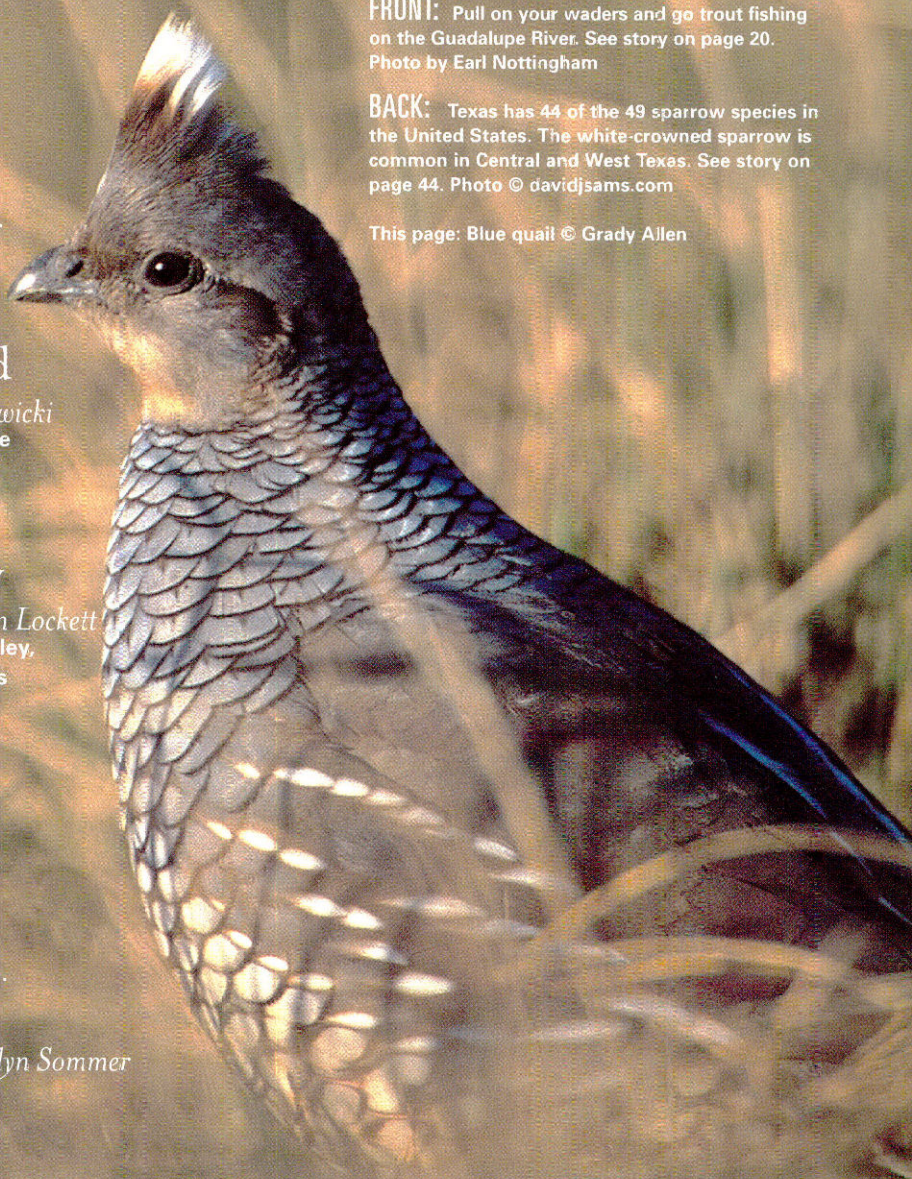
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FRONT: Pull on your waders and go trout fishing on the Guadalupe River. See story on page 20. Photo by Earl Nottingham

BACK: Texas has 44 of the 49 sparrow species in the United States. The white-crowned sparrow is common in Central and West Texas. See story on page 44. Photo © davidjsams.com

This page: Blue quail © Grady Allen



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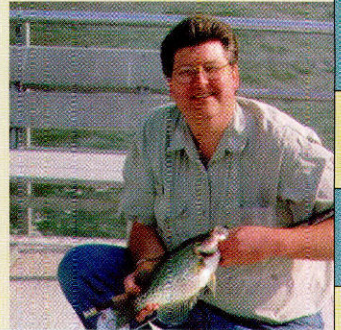
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In the Field

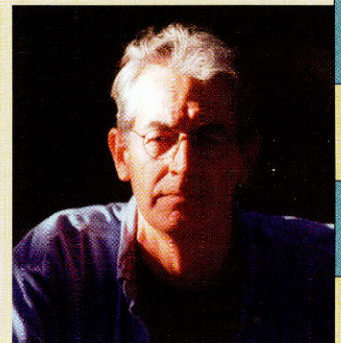
GREG BERLOCHER, author of *Texas Saltwater Classics—Fly Patterns for the Texas Coast*, says that fishing is a way of life for him. To date, he has caught 59 different species of fish; many of them on a fly rod. An award-winning writer, photographer and public speaker, this third-generation Texan has fly fished across much of the United States, targeting warm water, cold water and saltwater species. A member of the Texas Outdoor Writers Association, he has penned more than 300 fishing articles and serves as the fly fishing editor for several outdoor publications. In this issue's Skill Builder, Berlocher writes about how to tie the Balcones scud fly.



NOREEN DAMUDE who writes about Texas' wintering sparrows in this issue, is a freelance natural history writer and an environmental consultant who creates plant and bird lists for private landowners. Damude became a wildlife biologist in the 1980s after working as a translator for the oil and gas industry in Houston. She earned her master's degree in 1988, and has worked as a nongame biologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and as director of bird conservation for the Texas Audubon Society. An Austin resident, she works part-time at the Perry-Castaneda Library on the University of Texas campus and teaches classes on plant and bird identification.



JIM ANDERSON, of Austin (by way of Dallas and New York City), grew up on a farm in Northeast Texas, near Paris, where fly fishing was about as likely as Alpine skiing. The nearby rivers were the Sulphur and the Red, both of them sluggish and muddy, mostly suited for defining borders and relocating topsoil. His initiation into fly fishing happened at Boy Scout camp on the Glover River, a free-flowing, rock-bed stream in the Kiamichi foothills of Southeast Oklahoma. After a long stint in the advertising business, Anderson is now a freelance writer. In this issue he writes about fly fishing for rainbow trout on the Guadalupe River below Canyon Lake.



AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF ROBERT L. COOK

I've wanted to write about dogs in this column ever since I got here. When I saw the article on caring for your hunting dog in this issue, I knew the time was right.

I reckon that I never had a real hunting dog, like a retriever or a pointer. I just had dogs that hung around the yard on that rocky farm where I was raised. When I headed out to go hunting or fishing, I'd just about as soon the dogs would stay at the house. Still, they were my dogs and I would not go to the woods without them even though they scared off more game than they scared up. Invariably, those dad-gummed dogs would run ahead and dive into the stock tank where I was planning to fish or jump-shoot ducks.

Dad would admit that our dogs were pretty much worthless, but he called them our "watch dogs." That meant that they would usually bark when a car drove up to the house. I never did know what it was these dogs were "watching." I'm pretty sure they would have happily made best friends with the worst outlaw in the Southwest.

Our dogs didn't wear booties to protect their feet from stickers, or sweaters to ward off the cold. They slept under the house with the orphaned lambs and runt pigs that we were raising. We didn't buy low-fat dog food for them; they ate whatever was left over from our table. If we had pinto beans, cornbread and burned steak — which is still standard fare in that part of West Texas — the dogs had pinto beans, cornbread and burned steak.

Our dogs had names like Old Shep, Rusty, Snowball, Spot and Rooster. Shep would shake hands with you, and I swear he understood every word you said to him. Rusty, the little terrier, was the best on copperheads that you ever saw. We didn't have to worry about stumbling over a snake, day or night, if Rusty was along; he hated snakes. He got snakebit so often that it didn't even faze him. Ol' Snowball would find a squirrel or a rabbit if we'd give him a little time. Spot, the basset/beagle, was the best tracker I ever had. Get him on a trail that had one tiny speck of blood, and he would find your deer. Spot loved to ride in the front seat of the old Jeep with his long ears flapping in the wind. Rooster grew up with me — from a pup to an adult. He was the only dog I ever had that would roll over. What can I say? He and I were friends.

Dogs are part of our lives, our families and the great outdoors of Texas. Your old dog may not be the best hunting dog that ever barked up the wrong tree or ate your bird before he got back to you, but chances are he will listen to your troubles, and you probably think he is your best friend. Get outdoors this winter, take an old friend along and enjoy Texas.

*Spot, the
basset/beagle, was
the best tracker I ever
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Rooster grew up with
me — from a pup
to an adult.*


EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department mission statement:

To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The 2004 *Seasons & Seasonings* Calendar was developed by Sportsman's Finest, a new hunting and fishing store dedicated to the best in new and used firearms, in fly fishing gear, optics, clothing, accessories, even exotic expeditions.

Net proceeds from the sale of the 2004 *Seasons & Seasonings* Calendars are donated to the Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas, a non-profit organization that supports the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

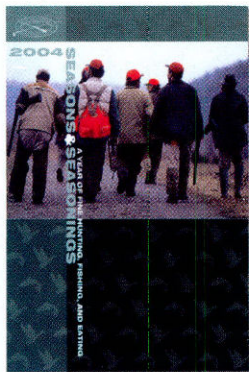


Lists days and events important to sportsmen and women across Texas, including the opening and closing of various hunting seasons by geographic area, Ducks Unlimited convention dates, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission meetings.

Dramatic imagery from nationally acclaimed photographer Ken Redding is showcased each month, as well. Ken's photography has graced the pages of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Outside* magazines and been commissioned by corporate clients from L.L. Bean and Orvis to Remington Firearms.

Each month features a wild game recipe from renowned chef Jeff Blank, whose "Hudson's on the Bend" restaurant has been praised in the *New York Times*, *Men's Journal*, *Field and Stream*, *Texas Monthly*, and *Gourmet Domain*, as well as ranked in the "Top 50 Restaurants in America" by *Condé Nast Traveler*.

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PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

FOREWORD

We're flying across San Antonio Bay, not in the sense of speeding, but I have the sensation of literally flying — the same squishy banking, the same engine noise, the feel — in the same sense as when I flew over this same bay years ago at the controls of a light plane, a stick-and-rudder Citabria. Only this time, we're flying not in three dimensions, but in two. It's not a Citabria or other light-wing craft, but an airboat.

And I'm not at the controls this time; Captain Jeff Larson is. And in the emerging light, his face is lit up with anticipation like a child's on Christmas morning, just before going downstairs to see what Santa brought.

At my right side is Larry Bozka, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine's saltwater contributing writer; our friend Mark Hall and Mark's young yellow Lab, Pearl, are to my left. As we fly over the bay in the predawn, I tap Hall on the shoulder and point to the heavens. He looks at me quizzically, and I tip his right earmuff just enough so he can hear me over the prop roar. Orion, I say, pointing. The constellation of the hunter. He is standing next to the full moon to bless our hunt this morning.

I drop his ear protection back in place. Hall gives me a nod, smile and thumbs up.

The sun is breaking the horizon, behind a small bank of clouds that fire off violet, magenta, tangerine and finally, a crescendo blaze of lemon-tinted silvery splendor before launching Thor's golden chariot into the heavens. Three dolphins leap at our airboat's side. Roseate spoonbills, ibises, great blue herons, egrets, and brown and white pelicans mount the sky. Two sandhill cranes flap their huge wings overhead. A pair of whooping cranes, with a reddish juvenile between them, watch us warily from the close shore but determine we are no threat. Ducks begin to fly too, thousands of them — redheads, pintails, wigeons, teal, gadwalls and more rising from their roosts as the world awakens.

As we enter the back bays of Matagorda Island, the water before us shudders and ripples with redfish, trout, mullet and myriad other creatures whose lives we have momentarily disrupted. Larson is sublimely gentle at the controls; his hands and feet flow into the controls like *thought*. By day, he's an accident investigator for the Houston Police Department, mainly dealing with collisions involving police cruisers or fatalities. This is my sanctuary, he says later, it's where I come to restore my spirit; I think a lot of folks would be better off if they spent one morning a week in the marsh as well as a morning in church.

We have come to the marsh to duck hunt, and we do well. It's "birding with consequences," I comment as we clean our game, as identification is so key. We saw plenty of pintails — even called in a flock so Bozka could "shoot" them with his Nikon, wings cupped and feet splayed to land amidst our decoys — but the season had not yet opened, so we kept our guns quiet and simply marveled at their beauty. We each took two redheads and our mixed bags also included gadwalls, blue-winged teal, a mottled duck, scaup and a few wigeons: fine table fare.

My teenagers will have a wonderful feast of wild birds, as will I. When I take these birds into my body, the sights and sounds of the marsh that feeds these beloved wild creatures will stir again within me, nourishing both body and soul.

LETTERS

BASS, BOOTH AND MARTINEZ

Wow! This issue has something for everyone (November 2003).

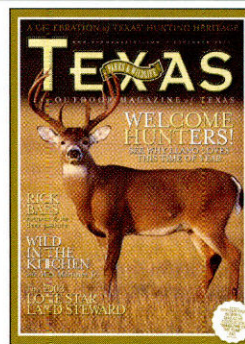
I enjoyed Rick Bass' "Return to the Deer Pasture" and Herb Booth's painting as well as the Matt Martinez feature. If we are fortunate enough get any winter meat this year, we will try his recipes.

When we go through Llano on our way to visit friends in Castell, we try to make it in time for lunch, so we can stop at Cooper's Barbecue.

We have deer on our property, along the creek bottom. A friend already got his winter meat, an eight-point buck, on opening day. He said he also saw some turkeys in the woods and ducks on the creek, so there should be some good hunting this year.

Best wishes and congratulations on the Katie Awards. They are well deserved!

— WILLIAM RAY GREEN



Rick Bass ("Return to the Deer Pasture," November 2003) so eloquently expresses the mystical side of hunting some of us feel but can never put into words. Thanks, Rick.

Eddie Miller
Kerrville

NATIVE PASTURE GRASS NEEDED

I moved away from Texas in 1982, but I own an 80-acre place near Fairfield. Frequent visits have made me painfully aware of the horrific changes to the range in East Texas. Planting of non-native pasture grass, too many cattle on the land, lignite strip mining and land reclamation by these lignite strippers resulting in more non-native grasses being planted. All of this seems to have resulted in creating kind of a biological desert on a lot of the pastureland, around Fairfield anyway. All of this spells very poor land stewardship by private landowners. I do not think that the TPWD is doing a very good job of condemning the bad land-use practices of the last 30 years of planting non-native invasive grasses in East Texas. Landowners, even though they may be

MAIL CALL

making money from these resulting pastures, need to be made aware that they have made a king-sized mistake over the last 30 or so years, even if it makes them angry to hear it.

MICHAEL McDONALD
Anchorage, Alaska

MATT WAGNER, TPWD TECHNICAL GUIDANCE BIOLOGIST replies: Congratulations! You have recognized one of the greatest threats to wildlife in the Post Oak Region: the conversion of native range to forage pasture, predominantly coastal Bermuda grass. From a livestock standpoint, Bermuda grass has been, and continues to be, the forage of choice for many ranchers and hay producers. However, from a wildlife perspective, in particular upland birds such as bobwhite quail, Bermuda grass has eliminated habitat over millions of acres. Fire ants, predators, weather and just about every other target gets the blame for the quail decline, when in reality we need to look at ourselves. Fortunately, TPWD is working with landowners through the Private Lands Program to educate them in restoring native grasslands. Several landowners are participating in cost-share programs such as the Pastures for Upland Birds and the Landowner Incentive Program. Check out these and other private land enhancement programs at <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/conserve>.

SEASON LEASEHOLDER SPEAKS

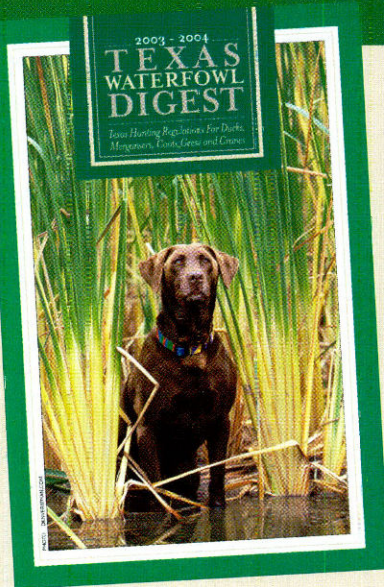
For the past 35 years, I've been hunting on two ranches — one on the western Edwards Plateau, and the other, near the Edwards Plateau. I've read with interest each year of the decline in the number of hunters. I believe the last year was the 11th in a row. If traffic on opening weekend is an indicator, I believe this year will show even a larger decline.

This brings me to your November 2003 issue, and Larry D. Hodge's story, "Welcome Hunters." These hunters Hodge writes about are the season lease hunters, and they are the ones dropping out each year as more ranches go to high fences.

The high fence hunters are hunting for a short period of time for a specific kill on a ranch where the deer are so accustomed to vehicles and people that in most cases you can drive or walk up to 100 yards or less of the animal. These hunters are there for a short period of time and spend no money locally as room and board, processing and other necessary items are furnished. I'm within a 45-minute drive of two

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towns at my lease, and I visit each one on a regular basis and spend lots of money throughout the year. The local feed and hardware stores told me that 70 percent of their annual income comes from season hunters. I never asked the grocers and restaurants but I would wager at least 50 percent of their income is the same. The 10 of us who share the lease make six to eight trips to town apiece each year out of hunting season and many more during the season. We buy lots of gas, corn, protein, groceries and hardware; we use meat-processing services and eat often in the restaurants. When we are working on the camp house we stay in the nearby motels.

One rancher told me that the landowner has the right to erect any kind of fence he wants. That may be true but cattle, horses and goats don't need a 7-foot fence. And the tax breaks he gets are because he is supposed to be a domestic animal rancher not a deer raiser. I drive 110 miles off the Interstate to get to my ranch, and in the last four years I've watched 80 miles of this come under high fence.

If ranches have a financial investment in exotics and need a high fence to protect these assets, fine, but they shouldn't allow whitetail hunting in these pastures. The last time I checked, the white-tailed deer are game, and game belongs to everyone.

➤ GLEN ROYA

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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

Birds of the Rolling and High Plains

From playa waterfowl to owls burrowing in prairie dog towns, Panhandle birders have a lot to see.

My daughter and I were taking a lunch break from a fall deer hunt when, instead of napping, we decided to check out the Taylor Lakes Wildlife Management Area east of Clarendon. From a blind overlooking one of the lakes, we watched hundreds of resting and feeding mallards, pintails, Canada geese and shorebirds of every size.

Until that day, Mary had taken little interest in birds. But now her eyes sparkled with wonder at the variety and beauty before us. We had discovered what serious birders have long known — that the Texas Panhandle offers great birding. Besides the wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, the Panhandle offers flocks of such western birds as the lark bunting, and specialties such as the lesser prairie chicken, burrowing owl and mountain plover. The Panhandle's playa lakes, prairies and cottonwood creek bottoms draw hundreds of bird species year-round. Bird clubs here routinely see 50 or more species in a day.

Panhandle birding spots are spread over hundreds of miles between great expanses of rolling plains. Here are a few suggestions for locations for birding within these vast horizons:

Each spring, the town of Canadian offers the rare chance to watch lesser prairie chickens booming on their mating leks, or assembly areas. "The prairie-chicken's springtime courtship display ranks as one of nature's greatest spectacles," writes John Tveten in *The Birds of Texas*. "The males patrol their sections of the lek, puffing out their orange neck pouches and dancing in competition for the females. Their feet beat so rapidly they are just a blur; the booming from the air sacs carries for half a mile."

In the summer, birders visit the Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area, where prairie dog towns offer habitat for the secretive burrowing owl. These small, round-headed, long-legged owls live in the prairie dog burrows, sometimes assembling in colonies. The prairie dog towns also attract raptors such as the ferruginous hawk, our largest buteo.



Watch lesser prairie chickens booming on their mating ground each spring. The city of Canadian offers this birding opportunity, one of many chances to see birds in the Texas Panhandle.

With the first cool fronts in the fall, waterfowl migrations bring hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese and sandhill cranes to the Panhandle. These species roost on the more than 13,000 playa lakes and feed in the surrounding corn, wheat and milo fields.

With the waterfowl come the raptors that prey upon them, including bald and golden eagles, ferruginous, rough-legged and red-tailed hawks, prairie falcons and American kestrels. Patient hawks and eagles will study flocks of resting ducks and geese, watching for injured or weak ones. When a raptor swoops into the flushing flock, it's focused on the bird it wants, often taking that duck or goose in mid-air.

Amarillo is a great headquarters for birders on their first visits. Amarillo city lakes draw thousands of ducks and geese. Wildcat Bluff, a 600-acre private wildlife area at the Amarillo city limits, provides guided nature tours within sight of the city.

I'm a relative newcomer to the Panhandle. In a region proud

of its sunsets, my favorite ones come each fall and continue through the winter, when I step outside my door to watch flocks of pintails and mallards whistling overhead and spiraling down to roost against a fiery sky.

—Lee Leschper

For more information on birding the Panhandle consult:

- The Texas Parks and Wildlife birding home page <tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding>
- Texas Ornithological Society <texasbirds.org>
- Partners in Flight <blm.gov/wildlife/pifplans.htm>
- Wildcat Bluff <wildcatbluff.com>
- Panhandle Bird Club <geocities.com/Yosemite/2965/index>
- Texas Panhandle Audubon Society <txpas.org>
- The Panhandle Plains Wildlife Trail map may be purchased for \$3 each through the Texas Cooperative Extension Bookstore Web site <tcebookstore.org> or by calling (888) 900-2577.

FIELD NOTES

Horny Toad Essays Wanted

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS can enter an essay contest about one of the state's most treasured animals, the Texas horned lizard, popularly known as the horny toad. Students can interview their elders, research local newspaper accounts, crop records and aerial photographs to shed light on the history, ecology and decline of the horned lizard. The deadline for entries is Jan. 15.

The 2003-2004 contest is open to Texas students in three groups: grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and high school. The three division winners each will be awarded outdoor learning kits valued at \$150, and the top classroom projects in each age group will win as much as \$1,000 to cover expenses for a field trip to a state wildlife management area. For more information, visit <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/htht> or call (800) 792-1112, ext. 7011.



A Touching Display

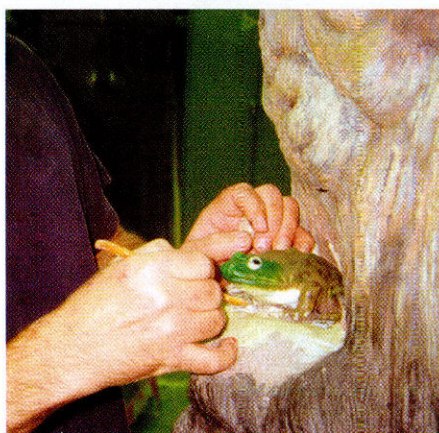
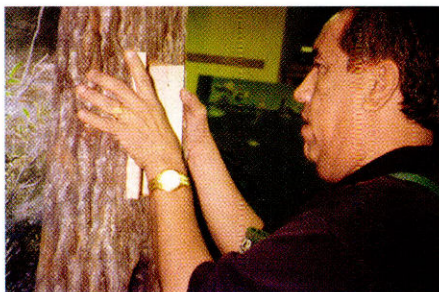
The new exhibits at Caddo Lake State Park take visitors by the hand.

Gone from the Caddo Lake State Park visitors center are the 40-year-old displays with toads soaking in jars and moth-eaten taxidermy specimens. Beginning this month, visitors can touch, explore, listen and learn about the natural and cultural history of Caddo Lake from what planners describe as a "lush, immersive exhibition." Animals and plants in the displays — most of them touchable — were sculpted and painted by professional artists after being researched for scientific and historical accuracy.

Near the entrance, a larger-than-life, hollow, baldcypress trunk beckons visitors into the exhibit hall. The hollow is large enough that an adult and child can sit together on a bench inside the tree trunk and read colorfully illustrated storybooks about how Caddo Lake formed. One tale recounts a dramatic legend from the Caddo Indians, while the other is based on up-to-date science.

Beyond the tree, three-dimensional murals recreate the habitats of Caddo Lake. In the dry, pine-sheltered uplands, touchable coyote and bobcat tracks cross the forest floor. At the bottomland hardwoods display, a rare Rafinesque's big-eared bat hides behind a secret door in an oak tree. Watchful visitors may catch a glimpse of the baby raccoon peeking out of a hollow log, or touch a marbled salamander — if they can find it hiding in the leaf litter.

More creatures lurk in the marsh, swamp and deep-water environments, where visitors get an alligator's view of life under-



Craftsman Pete Cano creates a hiding place for the Rafinesque's big-eared bat, top, while sculptor Mike O'Brien puts the finishing touches on a bullfrog that will croak when tapped.

water. Ever wonder what it's like inside a crawdad den? A cutaway reveals its underground swimming pool. Visitors can feel the rough hide of a life-size alligator replica floating among submerged cypress knees. An enormous (also touchable) alligator snapping turtle, jaws agape, fishes from its lair in a mud bank. Sculptures of endangered paddlefish swim through the gloom.

Rounding a tall canebrake, visitors see a Caddo Indian woman gathering cane, dressed in 1835 attire. Her clothes and jewelry show the transition between traditional ways and European, blending moccasins and leggings with calico and trade beads. This time period is not usually interpreted in exhibits, as it has been studied only recently. Artists worked closely with members of the Caddo Nation, archeologists and the Texas Historical Commission.

To pull together the history of Caddo Lake during the last 200 years, the tree-rings of a fallen cypress log have been matched to historic photographs of the giant logjam that formed the lake, the long-defunct steamboat trade, the "pearl rush" of 1914 and the Civilian Conservation Corps, which developed the park and many of its buildings during the 1930s. The

exhibits end with a display on current stewardship efforts that invites visitors to help conserve this natural treasure. You could call it the final touch.

—Julie Coombes

Solving the Riddles of Raptor Identification

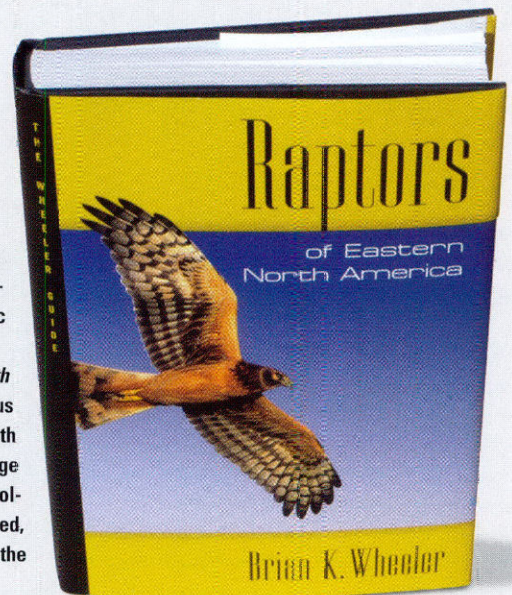
EVEN WELL-TRAINED BIRDERS tend to shrug when asked to identify hawks. Critical help arrived in the early 1980s with the publication of *A Field Guide to the Hawks of North America*, by William S. Clark and Brian K. Wheeler. This was the first field guide to address the myriad age- and sex-related raptor plumages that so confound bird watchers. Wheeler got his start as an illustrator for that guide, and during the intervening years writing other raptor guides with Clark, he acquired peerless photographic skills and broad knowledge of the vast array of North American raptor plumages.

With *Raptors of Western North America* (counterpart to his *Raptors of Eastern North America*, both from Princeton University Press, cloth, \$49.50) Brian Wheeler gives us arguably the most complete raptor identification guide in existence. The book opens with a useful, multi-subject glossary written in lay terms, and provides the most precise range maps yet published under one cover for these birds. But the real selling point is the collection of more than 600 tack-sharp, full-frame photographs, most never before published, of the 34 species (many divided by subspecies) of diurnal raptors found west of the Mississippi River.

These photos are accompanied by exhaustive descriptions of each of the known plumages by sex and age; problem plumages and similar species are also covered. In addition, Wheeler provides succinct summaries of habitat, behavior, diet, voice, status and conservation. Only in the voice section is there often too little information to assist accurate identification, largely because of the inherent problems in transcribing sounds to print.

A few years ago, a 3-pound guide like this would have been left at home, but now such densely informative tomes are the industry standard. If one doesn't drag it along in one's backpack it will certainly go everywhere the vehicle, or burro, will.

— Craig Farquhar



Tune in before you step out.

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

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv

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



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

Late-Season Snow Geese

Older and wiser, snows are more problematically plentiful than ever.

Every fall, the strident squawking of snow geese becomes a familiar sound throughout Texas coastal prairies and marshes. Thirty minutes before sunrise on the morning of Jan. 19, that ageless, distinctive din will grow significantly louder in the south segment of the East Zone.

The question the birds might ask, to repeat the old commercial refrain:

"Is it real, or is it Memorex®?"

Electronic calling units once were the exclusive domain of predator hunters, camo-clad specialists who play the sounds of everything from cottontails to fawns to songbirds in distress in their efforts to attract opportunistic furbearers. Relatively new in the sound libraries of call manufacturers is the recorded cackling of light geese on the roost.

With the advent of the first federally mandated "Special Light Goose Conservation Order" in January 1999, legally permitted electronic game-calling entered the field of waterfowling. Water-resistant speakers and specially designed cassette and CD players send skyward invitations that in some, but by no means all cases, bring inquisitive geese circling for a closer look.

Experienced late-season hunters understand that the incredibly wary snow, blue and Ross' geese at which the season is directed have become more difficult than ever to dupe with even the best of commercially produced recordings. There are several reasons why, says TPWD waterfowl program leader Dave Morrison.

"Production on the birds' Arctic nesting grounds has fallen in recent years," Morrison explains. "Although young geese are more receptive to electronic calls, production has been down the last few years."

The remaining birds are more educated than ever. Just as the first rag spread decoys of the mid-1950s gradually became less effective (see "From Rags to Riches," Sept. 2003), in a mere five years electronic calling has also lost some of its allure.

Eight-year-old snow geese are commonplace. They've heard electronic calls many times before, not only in Texas but also while migrating south. Hunters in Canada begin using electronic calls as early as October.

Regardless, any hunting impact on wintering light goose populations is good for the long-term future of the geese. In their summer breeding grounds in Canada, far too many birds are nesting in and feeding upon far too little habitat.

"They are literally eating themselves out of house and home," Morrison says. "Even though production is down, the number of light geese has increased roughly four-fold in the past two decades. The Arctic tundra is incredibly delicate, and the birds have done tremendous damage to the habitat. They 'grub' the vegetation, eating not only the tops but also the root systems. It takes years, maybe even a lifetime, for this eaten-out habitat to recover."



↑ Late-season hunting aims to reduce snow goose overpopulation, which is destroying habitat on the birds' nesting grounds.

According to Morrison, the mid-winter survey count of light geese (traditionally conducted in January) totaled about 650,000 birds in the late 1970s. "This year that count will rise to almost 3.5 million," he notes. "And bear in mind, these are not breeding numbers. They represent only the mid-continent population."

In Texas those numbers dwindle rapidly after New Year's Day, especially if winter weather conditions are unusually mild. Wintering light geese traditionally begin their northward migration in early February. Although the season extends through March 28, hunters who don't get their shooting done during the first 30 days are not likely to run short on shells.

Regulations are decidedly geared toward hunter success. As noted, electronic caller units — illegal during regular seasons — are allowed.

There is no daily bag limit, shooters may legally remove shotgun plugs that in other migratory bird scenarios limit magazine capacity to three shots, and shooting extends until 30 minutes after sunset.

Single geese or wandering doubles and triples are much more likely to respond to electronic callers. Still, successful waterfowling of any style is an exercise in patience. Even with a 10-gauge shotgun, the shooter should allow birds to come as close as possible before pulling the trigger.

The success of the special Light Goose Conservation Order ultimately boils down to reducing the light goose population one bird at a time. Considering what's at stake, hunters need to make every shot count.

—Larry Bozka

Outdoor Gloves

Get a grip and protect your hands at the same time.

Most outdoor activities involve constant and rigorous use of our hands. If left unprotected, irritating, painful and even serious injuries can occur that could have been easily prevented by using gloves.

For example, heavy-duty rubber gloves are great for keeping your hands free of noxious fish odors, slime, spines and sharp hooks. One of the best of this type is **The Glove** by Line Buster. This oversized, wide-top gauntlet allows one hand to be easily inserted and removed with the assistance of a belt-mounted Velcro keeper. The thick, rough-textured glove face helps control slippery fishes and, when not in use, hangs against your hip on a waterproof flap to keep fish residue off your pants. (\$11.99 pair, Line Buster gloves and belt-keeper/protector, Academy Sports & Outdoors, (877) 999-9856, <www.academy.com>)

Sport-specific gloves are manufactured in a vast array of styles and materials. **Camouflage Mesh Gloves** are made of light, synthetic netting in various patterns for concealment and air circulation while hunting in hot weather. The reinforced palms and fingers have non-slip vinyl dots for a secure grasp even when wet. (\$3.49 pair, Camo Mesh Gloves, The Allen Co., Model #1513, Academy Sports & Outdoors). **Deerslayer Archery Gloves** combine a traditional armguard and shooting glove. (\$10 per glove, Deerslayer Model: #394, Midwest Quality Gloves, Inc., (888) 754-3721, <www.midwestglove.com>)

Gloves should be comfortable and not bind or unnecessarily restrict hand movement. New stretch materials found in the thinner, non-insulated types such as **Camo Sveltz Gloves** provide skin protection along with maximum flexibility. In warm climates, these are great for diving among corals, paddle boating, fly fishing and hunting.

They have vinyl grip-dots for a secure hold and also can be used as washable inserts inside heavier gloves. For maximum waterproof protection in cold weather, the breathable **Sealskinz Fleece-Lined Gloves** are an excellent insulated, non-slip stretch design by the same maker. (\$12, Sveltz Advantage Camo, Style #3003 and \$49.95, Fleece-Lined Sealskinz, Style #1709, Danalco, Inc., (800) 868-2629, www.danalco.com)

Traditionalists love the look and feel of real leather and, for general field wear, it is hard to find better quality than the wrist-length **Filson Uplander Gloves**. These are made of soft, unlined, fine-grain goatskin that is tough, yet gives a good sense of touch; with use, they form-fit to the hands. (\$41, Filson, Model #935, C.C. Filson, (800) 297-1897, <www.filson.com>). **Equestrian Gauntlets** are still being made for traditional riders and frontier re-enactments. These smooth kid riding gloves offer excellent protection for hands and forearms either while on a horse or an ATV. (\$39, Gauntlet Gloves, Frazer Brothers, (214) 696-1865, <www.frazerbrothers.com>)

Fleece-back **Glacier Fingerless Gloves** keep your hands warm and camouflaged while keeping the fingers exposed for shooting. They are made of Polartec 200 with fleece-lined Neoprene palms and adjustable wrist closure for a secure fit. (\$14.95, Advantage Timber Camo, Glacier Glove, Style: #707 AT, (800) 728-8235, <www.glacierglove.com>)

Expect to see more innovations in materials and designs of specialized gloves that offer flexibility, minimal bulk and greater sensitivity. The best gloves provide the right protection while fitting like a second skin. ☆

1. Frazer Equestrian Gauntlet 2. The Glove by Line Buster 3. Deerslayer Archery Gloves 4. Camo Sveltz Glove 5. Sealskinz Fleece-lined Glove 6. Filson Uplander Glove 7. Allen Camouflage Mesh Glove 8. Glacier Fingerless Glove



Scud Primer

The Balcones Scud is easy to tie and represents something in the food chain that's available all year.

At some point in their lives, most fly fishers will stroll into a fly shop and utter the universal question: What is a good pattern to use around here? Texas fly fishers are no different. One great choice for fooling Texas trout is a scud pattern.

Scuds are interesting aquatic creatures that inhabit rivers and lakes. A member of class Crustacea, order Amphipoda, scuds are distant cousins to crayfish, sowbugs and shrimp. Mistakenly called freshwater shrimp, scuds are indeed crustaceans, but they are more closely related to dry-land crustaceans such as pill bugs.

Scuds are tiny things, rarely exceeding three-fourths inch in length. They have a hard, segmented exoskeleton somewhat resembling an armadillo's shell, two pairs of antennae and seven pairs of legs. Scuds molt several times in their lifetime, gleaning dissolved calcium from the water to create new shells.

Scuds breed prolifically; one adult pair can produce up to 20,000 offspring in a year. Biologists have documented densities of 10,000 scuds per square meter in vegetated lakes. Such fecundity is common in nature, especially in aquatic habitats. Species that live in areas prone to flooding help ensure their future existence by producing large numbers of offspring so that a percentage will survive and begin recolonization.

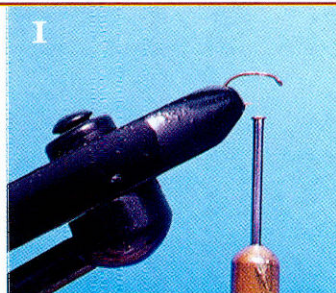
The Balcones Scud is easy to tie and a great fly for beginning fly-tiers. It represents something in the food chain that is available year-round, which is important when there are no insect hatches. Scuds occur in a variety of hues: green, olive, yellow, tan and brown. Although scuds aren't naturally white, Guadalupe trout respond well to the coloration of this fly.

Scuds do not like bright light and seek refuge in the marl of the streambed or under obstructions on the bottom. Scud patterns work best at dusk, dawn and on overcast days. Dead-drifting your fly or crawling it back slowly are both good techniques; never hesitate to mix in a few 3- to 4-inch strips. Since scuds are found on or near the bottom, allow the fly ample time to sink to the right depth before retrieving it; a split shot can be added to your leader to hasten the fly's descent. ★

Balcones Scud Recipe

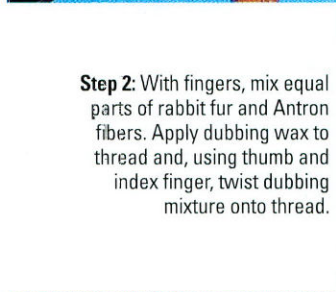
MATERIALS

- Hook: Tiemco 2457, size 14-20
- Thread: White
- Dubbing: Antron, white;
- Hareline, cream
- Dubbing wax
- Shell: E-Z Shape Sparkle Body, pearl



TYING INSTRUCTIONS

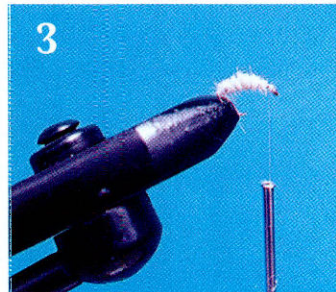
Step 1: Mount hook in vise. Lay down thread base on hook shank.



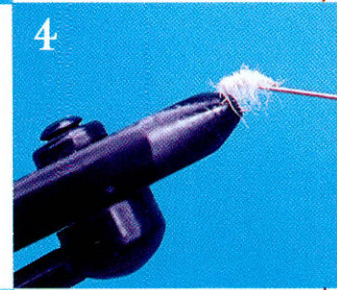
Step 2: With fingers, mix equal parts of rabbit fur and Antron fibers. Apply dubbing wax to thread and, using thumb and index finger, twist dubbing mixture onto thread.



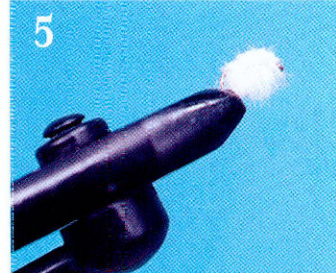
Step 3: Starting at the eye and working backward, build the fly body by wrapping dubbing around the shank of the hook. Remove leftover dubbing from thread when body is complete. Wrap thread forward toward eye of hook, creating segmented body. Whip finish and clip thread.



Step 4: With bodkin, make legs by picking out fibers from dubbed body.



Step 5: Trim fiber legs even with the bottom of the hook point.



Step 6: Add a thin bead of E-Z Shape Sparkle Body to back of fly to create shell. Use bodkin to shape and remove excess. Wait 15 minutes to handle.

3 Days in the Field / By Jennifer Nalewicki

DESTINATION: BASTROP

TRAVEL TIME FROM :

AMARILLO – 11 hours / AUSTIN – .5 hour / BROWNSVILLE – 7 hours / DALLAS – 4 hours / EL PASO – 11 hours
HOUSTON – 2.5 hours / SAN ANTONIO – 2 hours

Lost in the Pines

Whenever we drive into a pine forest, my mom and I have a tradition: we roll down the windows and let the fresh pine scent waft in, fulfilling our craving for a pine scent that can't be satisfied by Pine Sol.

This is exactly what we do as we navigate the twists and turns of the 12-mile-long scenic drive that connects Bastrop and Buescher state parks.

Olfactory pleasures aside, what draws visitors to this dense forest of tall loblolly pines and hardwoods is its isolation from others of its kind. The nearest pine forest is more than 100 miles away in East Texas, yet the Bastrop loblollies have thrived for centuries, giving them their name, the Lost Pines.

Although the reason for this isolation is unknown, theories have developed. Some say that a devastating forest fire seared the landscape, burning everything in its path and separating the Lost Pines from East Texas forests. Others say that American Indian tribes performed controlled burns in the area; and still

others say that birds may have transplanted seeds from East Texas to Bastrop. The generally held theory is that the Lost Pines are a relict forest left from the last ice age when the climate dried and warmed, leaving this westernmost stand of loblollies intact. However it originated, this 4,500-acre plot is a forest oasis amid the lakes and prairies of the Texas Prairies and Lakes region.

After making our way through Bastrop State Park, past its 18-hole golf course, freshwater swimming pool and dozens of campsites, we arrive at the cabin where we will be staying, the "Sam Houston." Built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the sturdy stone-and-log structure is one of 13 similar cabins nestled among the quiet woodlands. (Reservations are necessary, since the cabins get booked fast.) Our cabin stands out from the rest for its proximity to the lake, just a few steps from its back door. Several ducks take advantage

Bastrop State Park's cabins are nestled in the Lost Pines. The cabins are popular, so reservations are required.

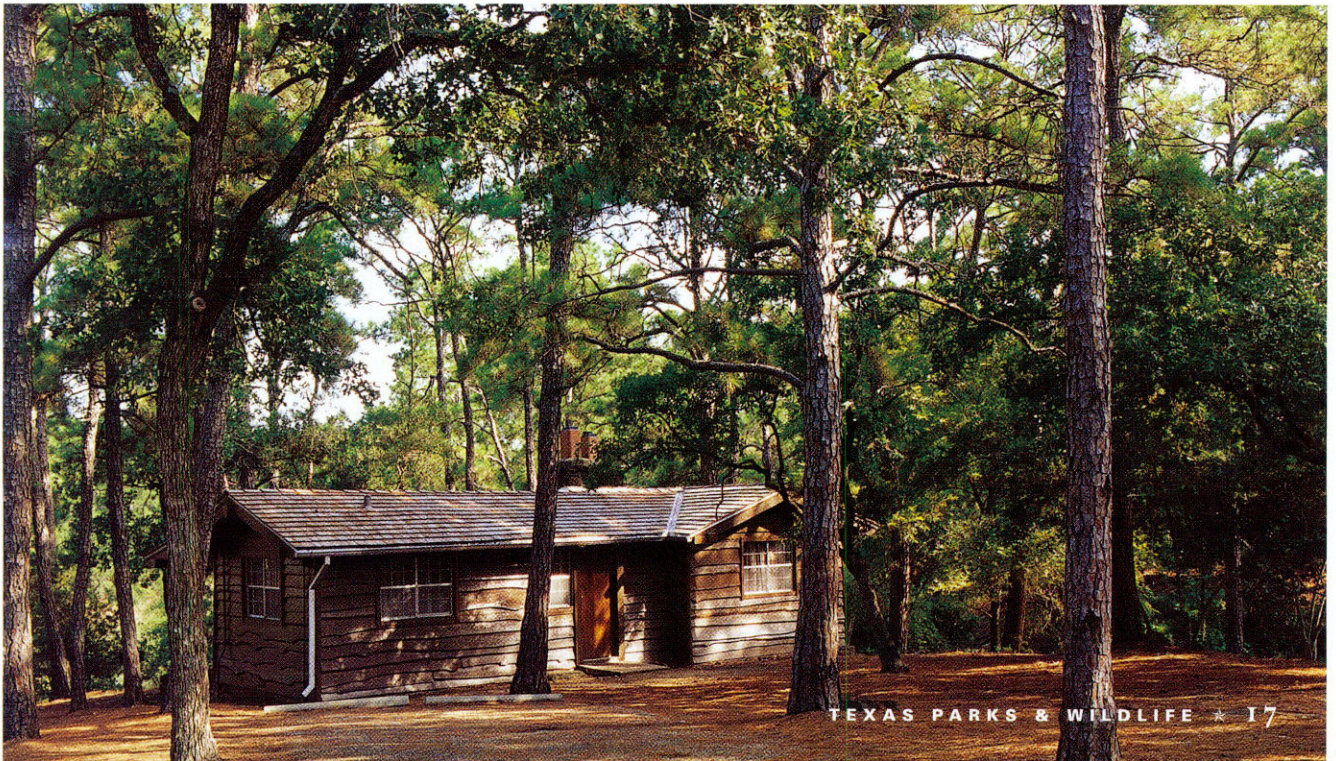


PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM



of the quiet morning as they preen their black-and-white feathers on the shore.

After spending a few moments taking in the scenery, I wander back into the cabin and find that my mom has already staked her claim on the master bedroom, leaving me the cozy side bedroom with a window facing the lake.

By the time we unpack and settle in, it's time for lunch, so we hop in the car and see what downtown Bastrop has to offer. It takes only a few minutes to drive from our cabin to Main Street, which is wonderful, considering our hunger pangs.

We eat lunch at Baxters on Main, a restaurant housed in a 112-year-old building, according to the marker for the National Register of Historic Places fastened to its brick façade. Named the Kesselus Building for the German immigrant whose tailoring business was once housed there, its aged wood floors and cracked brickwork give it all the charm of yesteryear. The Kesselus Building is just one of 125 registered historic structures in Bastrop, making it the most historic town in Texas, according to ePodunk, a Web site firm that specializes in information about small towns.

Next we visit the Bastrop County Historical Society Museum, where we learn that Bastrop has been continuously settled for more than 300 years. It was even considered for the state capital, but lost to Austin. The museum is housed in the 150-year-old former home of the operator of a Colorado River ferry.

Interesting artifacts and oddities fill the museum, such as a piece of artwork made completely of human hair, rifles of Confederate soldiers, the skull of a Mastodon, a doctor's wooden operating table and side saddles dating to the 1800s. My mom and I spend several hours peering into the museum's display cases and flipping through old photo albums.

Once we've finished with our history lesson, we head back to the cabin for a barbecue dinner and s'mores. We spend the evening enjoying the peace and quiet of the forest. The only



Bastrop State Park's cabins are located near the park's picturesque lake, top. The pileated woodpecker, above, is among the birds seen and heard along the Lost Pines Hiking Trail.

sound we hear is the rustling of a breeze through the trees.

We spot a group of white-tailed deer across the lake in search of dinner. Luckily my mom brought along her binoculars, so we are able to see the adult and four fawns up close. Also inhabiting the park are foxes, bobcats, opossums, armadillos, coral snakes, snapping turtles and the endangered Houston toad. The toads, which are 3 inches long and have brown and speckled skin, are unable to escape predators by leaping, because of their stubby legs, so they protect themselves by secreting a distasteful and sometimes poisonous chemical to ward off predators.

The next morning, we awaken with the sun and head out for a hike before it gets too hot. The hiking trails in the park are color-coded with metal trail markers. As we hike the green, red and

blue trails, we see bush after bush of American beautyberries, a shrub with vibrant lilac and magenta berries. My mom comments that the shades of purple are especially vibrant against the backdrop of forest greens that surround us.

As we make our way along the dirt trail, the dried loblolly pine needles crunching under our feet, we see cardinals, pileated woodpeckers and hummingbirds. The American beautyberry is a favorite snack for many birds, including cardinals.

After breakfast, we head to Lake Bastrop, known as one of the best spots for freshwater fishing in the state. With more than 900 surface acres of water, Lake Bastrop was originally built as a power-plant cooling pond in 1965. Today, it's an angler's paradise, stocked with blue catfish, perch, striped and white bass, Florida largemouth bass and crappie. Although bass can be caught year-round, the best time is between December and March. According to locals, the largest bass caught there weighed more than 12 pounds.

The lakes at Bastrop and Buescher state parks, although smaller in size, have catfish, bass and perch. Although neither

park permits gasoline-powered boats, electric motor boats are permitted.

Another spot to fish is the Colorado River, which has an abundance of Guadalupe bass, largemouth bass, spotted bass, channel and flathead catfish and perch. There are four public access points and fishing piers along the river in Bastrop County, including a boat ramp in Fisherman's Park in downtown Bastrop. Picnic and restroom facilities also are available in the park. The one-mile-long Bastrop Riverwalk trail connects the park to Ferry Park, a great place to take an evening stroll, which is what we do on our second night there.

Afterward, we head to the Yacht Club Restaurant and enjoy a magnificent hillside view of the Colorado River. By the time we get back to the cabin, it's too dark out to see much of the wildlife, so we lie down on the picnic table outside our cabin and gaze at the stars in the pitch-black night sky.

Our last morning in Bastrop, we take advantage of the forested trails in the park. Perhaps next time we'll head south to visit Kreische Brewery and Monument Hill state historic sites in nearby La Grange.

Sixteen of the 17 victims of the notorious "Black Bean Incident" are buried at Monument Hill. In 1843, Mexican General Santa Anna ordered the execution of 176 Texas prisoners who had tried to escape Mexican custody. The order was modified and one-tenth of the men were executed. To determine who would die, 17 black beans were put in a pot with 159 white beans. Those who drew the black beans were shot and the others were jailed until 1844. In 1848, the remains of these and other combatants of that era were returned from Mexico and buried in La Grange on a bluff overlooking the Colorado

River. The 17th man, John L. Shepard, survived the firing squad, escaped and was later shot at Saltillo, but his body was never found.

The historic site is also where Heinrich Kreische, a German immigrant, built one of Texas' first commercial breweries. By 1879, the brewery ranked third in production in the state. It went out of business in 1884, two years after Kreische was killed in an accident. Today visitors can see the remains of the brewery, once a three-story structure constructed of locally quarried sandstone.

As we head home, we decide to take one last drive through the Lost Pines. Without saying a word, my mom and I both roll down the car's windows and breathe in the fresh scent of pine. I wish I could bottle the scent and take it home with me as a reminder of this trip. As we head back onto the highway toward home, I look over at my mom, and I am sure she is making the same wish. ☆

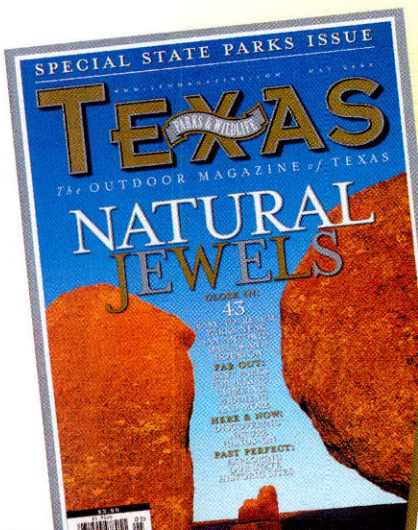
For More Information

- Bastrop Chamber of Commerce:** (512) 321-2419, <www.bastropchamber.com>
- Bastrop County Historical Society Museum:** (512) 303-0057, <www.bastrop texas.net/around_bastrop/bastrop_museum.htm>
- Bastrop State Park:** (512) 321-2101, <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/bastrop>
- Buescher State Park:** (512) 237-2241, <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/buescher>
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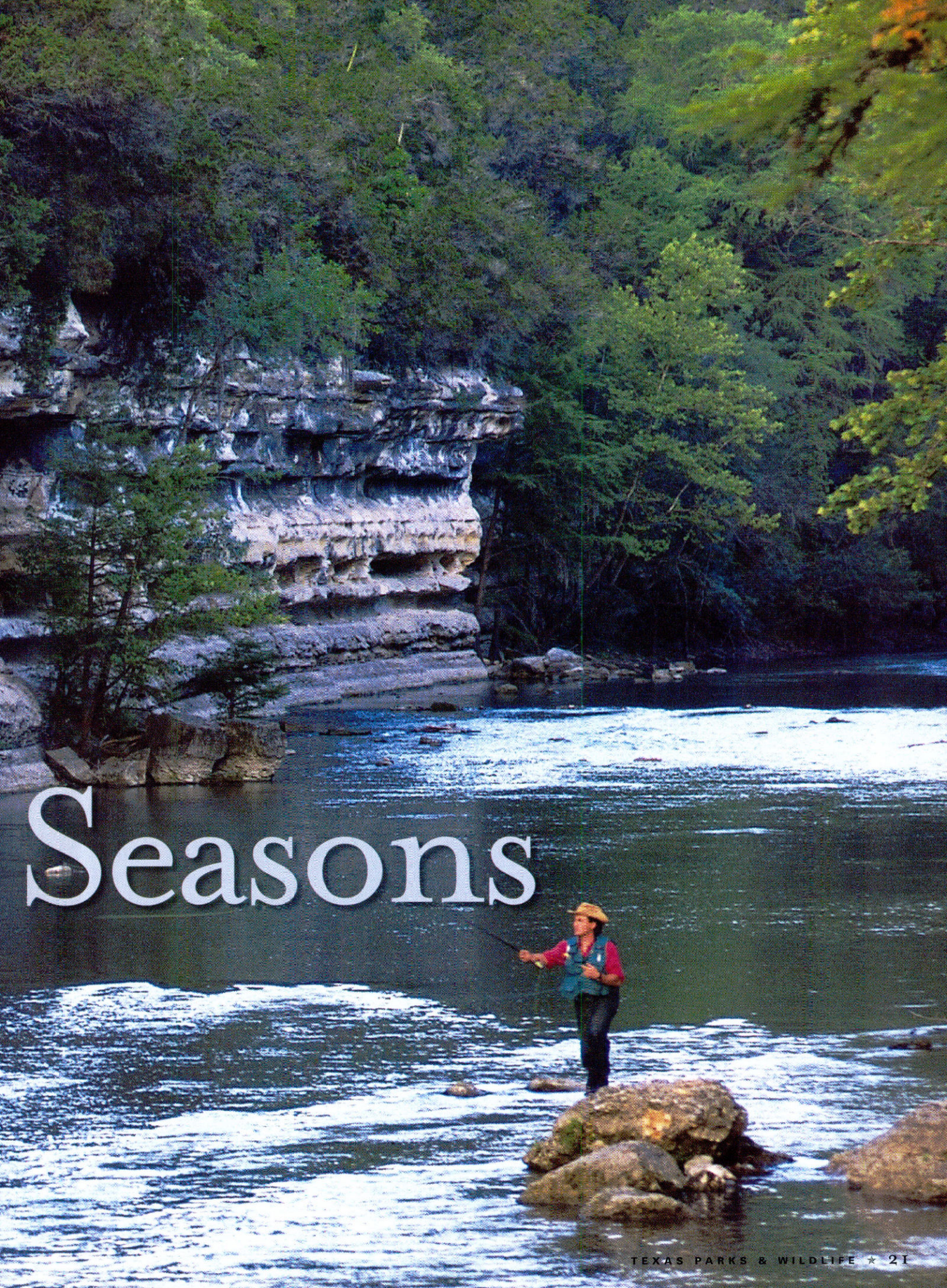
THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT



Trout for All

*The cold, reservoir-fed waters of the Guadalupe River
sustain rainbows and the people who fish for them.*

By Jim Anderson



Seasons

BEING IN THE RIVER IS THE THING, not near it, or beside it, or floating upon it, but standing knee-deep in the pulsing thing itself, feeling its tug on body and soul alike.



It's one of those Texas winter days that compensate for the summer's misery: the air still and pleasant, the sky achingly blue with a hard-etched clarity, dazzling kicks of sunlight on the water, a perfect number of crows. Bare cypress limbs throw lacy shadows across the fast water and steadfast rocks. A slow leak in the right foot of my waders provides just enough chill of reality to assure me I haven't been creamed by an 18-wheeler on I-35 and sent prematurely to fly fishing heaven. In heaven, I presume, waders never leak.

I shuffle quietly along a familiar limestone ledge. On this stretch I always fish the near water first, then work my way downstream. I have already hooked and landed two respectable 14-inch rainbow trout and missed three others. I am anticipating a deep slot where I know big trout usually queue up for the river's buffet. At the upper end of the run I check the knot on my prince nymph and add another tiny split-shot to the leader so the fly will sink well down into the deeper feeding zone.

I cast the prince and watch the current take it. The nymph drifts into the slot and sinks. The foam strike-indicator jerks

sideways. I lift my rod tip and a jolting, unmistakable message comes back up the line.

★

It's about as unlikely as polar bears in Aransas or sushi in Muleshoe, but I'm fishing a classic trout stream that is not in Montana or Wyoming, but in the heart of Texas in the Guadalupe River. Just below the Canyon Lake reservoir, where cactus thrives and flip-flops are considered shoes, fisheries managers have created an actual trout river, which forces us fly anglers, normally staunch advocates of wild rivers, to admit that not all dams are bad.

Hundreds of miles and several temperature zones from the nearest indigenous trout stream, trout lurk in the limestone-ledge, cypress-shaded lower Guadalupe, sustained by cold water from the depths of Canyon Lake. Typically, water comes through the dam's tailrace at a chilly 56 to 60 degrees, remaining cold enough for trout to survive 10 or more miles downstream. The result is a regionally unique ecosystem called a tail-water fishery. The battles with nature and water policy to bring





While GRTU can't do anything about floods, it has done something about the biggest threat to trout survival: low summer flows. In 2001, GRTU negotiated a hard-won agreement with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) that dramatically improved the prospects for a truly sustainable trout fishery.

In its simplest terms, the agreement, effective May 2003, commits the authority to releasing an average minimum flow of nearly 200 cubic feet per second from May through September, essentially doubling past summer flows. The promised water will not only sustain the trout fishery through the summer, it also will benefit the downstream bass and panfish populations, and feed additional fresh water vital to the nursery areas near the river's mouth in San Antonio Bay.

GRTU officers David Schroeder, Billy Trimble, Alan Bray and others worked long and hard to hammer out the deal with GBRA. "Only extreme drought can suspend the agreement, but otherwise the lake has the extra, uncommitted capacity," says Schroeder, the originator of the idea and lead negotiator for GRTU. "We took a lot of heat for being self-serving, but the agreement will help the multi-million-dollar recreation business along the lower river, and it'll improve the habitat all the way downstream to the Gulf."

While increased summer flows promise to be the salvation of the fishery, summer isn't the optimum fishing season; not because the trout don't bite, but because summer days, except for the early morning hours, are dominated by recreational float-tubers and kayakers, the infamous rubber hatch. (Unfortunately, tubers also ditch a fair amount of trash in the river, as if it's a water park with groundskeepers.) The prime fishing season on the Guadalupe runs from late fall to early spring. When the streams of the Rockies are snowed in or muddied out, the Guadalupe shines its brightest.

The key to the Guadalupe's success has been stocking the right trout in the river and the man chiefly responsible for that is fly

this stretch of river to this point have not been simple or easy.

Canyon Dam was completed in 1964. Flood control was one of its stated purposes, but every few years or so torrential rains have forced the dam's floodgates to be opened, inundating the lower river and destroying property. In July 2002, record rains hit the watershed and, even with the gates wide open, for the first time in the lake's history, water surged over the emergency spillway. The torrent carved a spectacular new canyon along the spill path to the lower river and altered the riverbed for miles downstream. Many riverside homes and businesses that had been rebuilt after the flood of 1997 were damaged or destroyed again. And as before, the trout were lost to the intolerably warm water. (It's remotely possible a few survived by holding near riverbed springs — not likely, but it's a charming theory.)

Restocking began the following winter. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) stocks thousands of rainbow trout here annually, and the Guadalupe River chapter of Trout Unlimited (GRTU) stocks many thousands more, generally larger and more mature than the state's stockers. Founded in the early 1970s, GRTU has grown into the largest chapter of Trout Unlimited in the country. The club's work on behalf of this, the nation's southernmost trout fishery, has been innovative and tireless for almost 30 years.

TOP PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM; BOTTOM PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN

fishing guide Scott Graham. Graham, who divides his time seasonally between Gulf redbfish and Guadalupe trout, has managed GRTU's stocking program for four years. Graham calls himself a trout bum but in truth, he's a passionate game-fish activist with detailed knowledge of trout biology and habitat requirements. His research to find the best hatchery stockers for the GRTU stocking program led him to Missouri and the Emerson strain of rainbows.

"More than any other strain, these fish are ideally suited for the Guadalupe," he says with fatherly pride. "They have a higher temperature tolerance, they're broad and hearty, they have a phenomenal growth rate and they're great fighters." (TPWD now also uses the Emerson strain for its Guadalupe stockings.)

"With the flow agreement and better cooperation on catch-and-release," Graham adds, "the Guadalupe eventually could rival the San Juan (the revered New Mexico tailwater stream) not in water volume, of course, but in quality of fishing."

Austin Angler store manager and guide Alvin Dedeaux, who wears the perpetual grin of a man who makes his living in fly fishing, admits that property damage is a price nobody would have willingly paid to improve the river, but he thinks the 2002 flood may have done just that. "Now, you see more varied structure and currents, and more gravel beds for spawning. Actually, it's a lot more like you'd want a real trout stream to be."

There's one other peculiar challenge the Guadalupe trout occasionally face: fire ants. Spring rains trigger the tiny brown demons to swarm in a mating cycle in which the winged members of the mound go looking for love and new places to terrorize. Lots of ants land on the river, the trout eat them and some die, not from internal stings, as was once supposed, but from the toxin the ants carry.

But enough already with the habitat/hydrology tutorial. Let's talk fishing.

As with all Texas rivers, public access is limited. A guided float trip offers the best shot, especially for first-timers. Several commercial campgrounds and tubing outfitters allow access for a fee, and a GRTU lease-access program reserves exclusive catch-and-release sites for its members for an annual fee.

Fishing techniques for the Guadalupe are similar to those for other tailwater trout streams, which means subsurface flies usually out-fish dries. But mayflies, caddis and other aquatic insects are gradually returning to the post-flood habitat, so naturally, if you see a hatch up and the fish are rising, tie on a reasonable facsimile of whatever's in the air, usually sufficed by a small Adams, blue-wing olive, light Cahill or elk-hair caddis.

Once they acclimate to the river, the Emersons seem to lose their gullible hatchery ways and revert to the native instincts of their species, making them picky feeders at times. So it's good to have an ace up your sleeve. Alvin Dedeaux's favorite skunk repellent is a No. 18 to No. 22 black midge larva. He says the tying recipe can be as simple as wrapping a nymph hook with larva-shaped layers of black thread. Add a couple of turns of peacock herl for a thorax, if you're a stickler for detail. And if you're inclined to fish double flies, the little black midge makes a good dropper below a slightly larger nymph like a bead-head hare's ear, zug bug, pheasant tail or prince, all good prospecting flies when fished in the classic dead-drift method with split shot and a strike indicator.

Scott Graham agrees with the nymph strategy described above, but prefers to match the midge larvae with a No. 18 to No. 22 brassie, which is wound with fine copper wire rather than black thread, plus a bit of peacock herl or dark dubbing for the thorax. If there's a hint of skunk in the air, he recommends the woolly bugger streamer in dark colors, a reliable day-saver on

almost any trout river.

In my several years of fishing the lower Guadalupe, I've salvaged more than one slow day with a red San Juan worm (speaking of easy flies to tie). One fine afternoon I netted and released three stout and rowdy 18-inch rainbows caught on three consecutive casts with that homely fly. And, as Graham says, I've found that woolly buggers work as advertised, fished dead-drift like a nymph or, even better, stripped to mimic a darting baitfish or a squirming leech. But I suggest replacing your nymph or dry fly tippet with stronger material such as 3X; inevitably the fish will hammer this streamer at the end of the downstream swing, which can snap a light tippet.

When adequately supplied with water, the Guadalupe River has ample forage, including aquatic insects, baitfish and other nutrient-rich organisms. There's no reason Guadalupe trout can't grow fast and large, and multiply to boot. In fact, it's happened in favorable seasons past. The state all-tackle record for rainbow trout came from the Guadalupe at a stunning 8.24 pounds, as well as the all-tackle record for brown trout at 7.12 pounds. Scott Graham holds the current state fly rod record, a Guadalupe rainbow of 5.63 pounds, but he says both he and his clients have probably beaten his record and didn't bother to file. Alvin Dedeaux and his clients have also caught plenty of fish in the 5-pound-plus class. My personal best was just shy of 4 pounds. These are fabulous trout in anybody's book, Montana chapters included.

With the GRTU/GBRA flow agreement, the Guadalupe is now primed for great potential. Scott Graham concludes: "It's been a long road, but definitely worth it. And hopefully, anglers will understand this isn't a put-and-take seasonal trout fishery, like other TPWD winter-stocked sites, but is a growing, year-round asset."

If you go, bear in mind that a section of 9.6 miles, from the eastern Highway 306 crossing downstream, is restricted to artificial lures or flies only, with a keeper limit of only one trout over 18 inches per day. Responsible spin anglers should cut treble hooks down to a single hook, and all anglers should crush their barbs. (Trust me, it won't diminish your catch rate; it only makes the release easier for you and less damaging to the fish.) If we practice careful catch-and-release and recycle those pink-and-silver beauties to grow and spawn, the best is yet to come.

On that crisp January afternoon, I let the fish run with just enough line to avoid a break-off, then I carefully reclaim line, give and take, thrust and parry, until the rainbow is within reach of my net. In less than two minutes, my fish has materialized from hopeful theory to flashing reality. I net the fish and, without lifting it from the water, slip the barbless hook from its jaw and set it free. One powerful flex of speckled body and the beautiful 17-inch Guadalupe rainbow melts back into the river. Overhead, a passing kingfisher chatters and fusses, scolding me for releasing such a lavish feast. ☆

Additional Resources

Book: *Fly Fishing the Texas Hill Country* by B. L. "Bud" Priddy
Guide Scott Graham: <www.flyfishingtexas.com> or (866) FLY CAST
Guide Alvin Dedeaux: alvin@austinangler.com or (512) 472-4553
Guide Harry Lane: sjtroutfitters@zianet.com or (515) 324-8149
Guadalupe River Chapter of Trout Unlimited: <www.grtu.org>
Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority: <www.gbrra.org>
For daily flow rates call the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers information line at (830) 964-3342. (For wading, flow rates above 300 CFS are considered risky and above 400 CFS are considered dangerous.)



FIELD CARE PRIMER

FOOTGEAR, HYDRATION
AND PROPER FIRST AID ARE
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FOR KEEPING YOUR BIRD
DOG HUNTING.

By Henry Chappell

Cactus, sand burrs, thorns, brush, rattlesnakes, porcupines, rough terrain, hot weather and freezing weather are the work environment of the Texas bird dog. Our favorite hunting partners earn every bird, and with a little care we can ensure that they end each day's hunt not only pleasantly tired but also healthy.



PHOTOS © RUSSELL A. GRAVES



Footgear

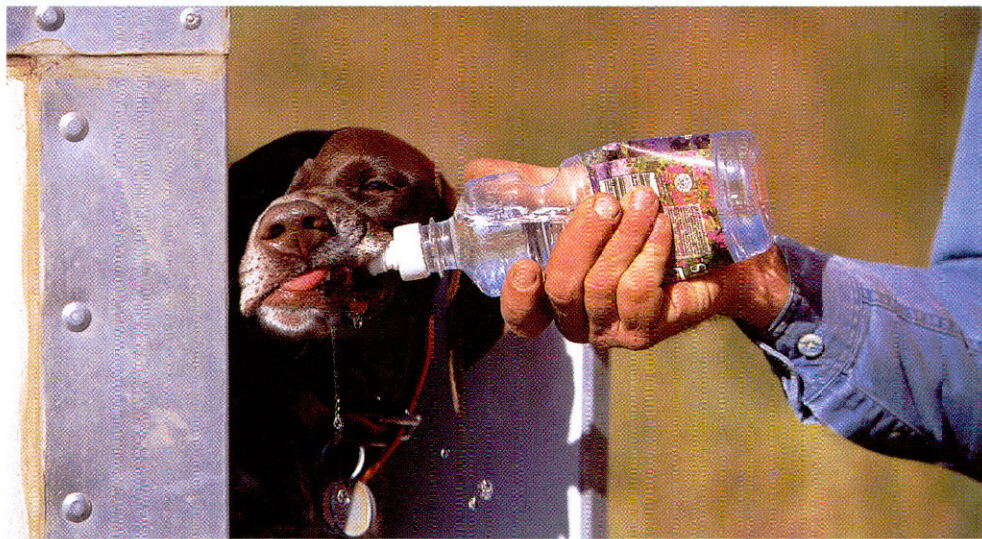
Few dogs start the season with properly conditioned feet. Rocky terrain, cactus and ice can cut a dog's pads and shorten that long-awaited hunting trip. Sand burrs will stop the toughest pointer ever whelped. When conditions warrant, experienced bird hunters put boots on their dogs.

Nylon dog boots (\$17 a set) seem comfortable, slip on easily and provide excellent protection from grass burrs. A Velcro strap tightens the boot around the dog's ankle, but all four will be lost within minutes if they aren't secured with duct tape. Although the reinforced bottoms protect dogs' feet on moderately rough ground, they're no match for large cactus spines and sharp rocks. Nevertheless, nylon boots are an excellent choice in most situations, since dogs quickly learn to avoid cactus.

Molded rubber boots are expensive (\$27 a set), noisy, hard to put on and require a careful tape job. But they're the only answer to extremely rocky terrain. They'll last an entire season and provide the ultimate in protection.

Budget-conscious hunters can boot their dogs with 8-inch sections of bicycle inner tube. Although a bit ungainly looking, these homemade boots provide excellent protection and can be taped on in the same manner as the other styles. Some hunters sew or staple the open ends shut to keep out debris, but this step is rarely necessary as long as the boots extend a couple of inches beyond the dog's toenails.

Regardless of boot style, the dog's ankles should first be wrapped with one-inch waterproof tape or, preferably, self-adhesive sports wrap. Pre-wrapping protects against chafing and forms a surface upon which to tape the boot. The boot can then be slipped on and secured with duct tape. Be sure to



finish taping behind the ankle so that the end of the tape is less likely to catch on brush. Wrap just tightly enough to keep the boots on.

In a pinch, duct tape can be fashioned into makeshift boots. Form a base by wrapping a strip around the ankle, then wrap the entire foot and ankle. Be sure to allow room for the foot to splay properly when the dog runs.

Hydration

Most dogs will slow down before they overheat. A lowered tail, non-stop panting or suddenly diminished vigor indicate the need for a water break — even if the hunting is fast and furious. Find a patch of shade, offer water and wipe any feathers or debris from the dog's mouth.

Plan hunting routes to take advantage of stock tanks and windmills. If in doubt, carry at least a quart of water. Many dogs learn to drink from a squirt bottle, but most hunters find a canteen and empty margarine tub more efficient. Dogs will also lap readily

from a cupped hand. It takes discipline to pause when scattered bobwhites are whistling just ahead, but during the course of a day, a well-rested and watered dog will put more birds in the bag.

Should a dog exhibit any sign of heat exhaustion — staggering, running in place, excessive drooling — use any means at hand to reduce its temperature. If possible, douse the dog in cool water and get it into an air-conditioned vehicle. Smelly upholstery can be cleaned; good dogs are unreplaceable.

Cuts and abrasions are unavoidable. According to Plano veterinarian and experienced hunter Terry Lee, minor wounds should be washed with hydrogen peroxide and then treated with an antibacterial ointment such as Panalog or Tritop. Antibiotic ointments designed for humans are equally effective but more expensive. "Mother Nature will take care of most of these small injuries," he says, "but they'll heal faster if they're properly attended to."

Field injuries are rarely serious enough to stop a hunt, but common sense should prevail. Long, deep cuts or wounds involving



muscle damage should be sutured. Bleeding should be stanching with a clean cloth and hand pressure, not a tourniquet. "If you can't quickly stop the bleeding with hand pressure, you'd better be hunting professional help," Lee says. "Keep pressure on the wound until you get to a vet."

Puncture wounds are troublesome because some or all of the puncturing object often remains in the wound. Lee recommends removing the foreign object only if it comes out easily. Then the wound can be treated the same as a minor cut. Otherwise, the object should be removed by a veterinarian. If swelling, redness or pus occurs—and this could happen several days later—something might still be in the wound.

Slings and Arrows

Porcupine quills and large cactus spines can be removed with a hemostat or small pliers. Tiny, hair-fine cactus spines are plucked more easily with tweezers. When in pain, even the gentlest dog may bite reflexively, so be prepared to muzzle the dog with

a bandanna, shoelace or belt. A dog with a mouthful of porcupine quills may need to be anesthetized before the quills can be removed safely.

The ears and undersides of long-haired dogs tend to collect burrs and debris. A large accumulation can cause severe irritation, especially in the genital area. Small scissors are handy for snipping out snarled clumps.

A snake-bitten dog should be rushed to a veterinarian and treated with antivenin. However, antivenin is very expensive, has a short shelf life and is not always readily available. Fortunately, most dogs will survive with fluid therapy, antibiotics, antihistamines and confinement. Lee discourages field treatment. "Most first-aid measures for snakebite are ineffective and often make matters worse. If you suspect your dog has been bitten by a poisonous snake—even if he seems fine—the hunt is over. Get him to a vet. And never, ever, cut your dog in an attempt to draw venom."

In the field, dogs' eyes are constantly subjected to dust, tiny seeds and abrasion.

Antibiotic ophthalmic ointment (without cortisone) applied under the eyelids at the end of the day reduces redness and irritation and fights infection. Be alert for squinting, pinpoint pupils, pawing and other signs of eye injury. Scratches on the cornea should be treated by a veterinarian.

On extended hunting trips, light doses of buffered aspirin (5 mg per pound, twice daily) can ease aching muscles and joints. Prescription arthritis drugs such as Rimadyl work wonders at keeping old-timers on the job.

Gun dogs are tough and devoted. They give their best even under the harshest conditions. They deserve no less from their owners. ★



BIRD HUNTER'S CHECKLIST

IN THE VEHICLE:

- sterile, non-stick gauze pads
- rolled gauze
- 1-inch waterproof tape
- clotting powder
- toenail clippers
- tape scissors
- hydrogen peroxide
- antibacterial ointment
- ophthalmic ointment
- duct tape
- self-adhering sports wrap
- phone number of local veterinarian

IN THE GAME VEST:

- hemostat
- tweezers
- small roll of duct tape
- spare dog boot
- canteen or water bottle
- small water cup

Sources for Gun Dog Supplies

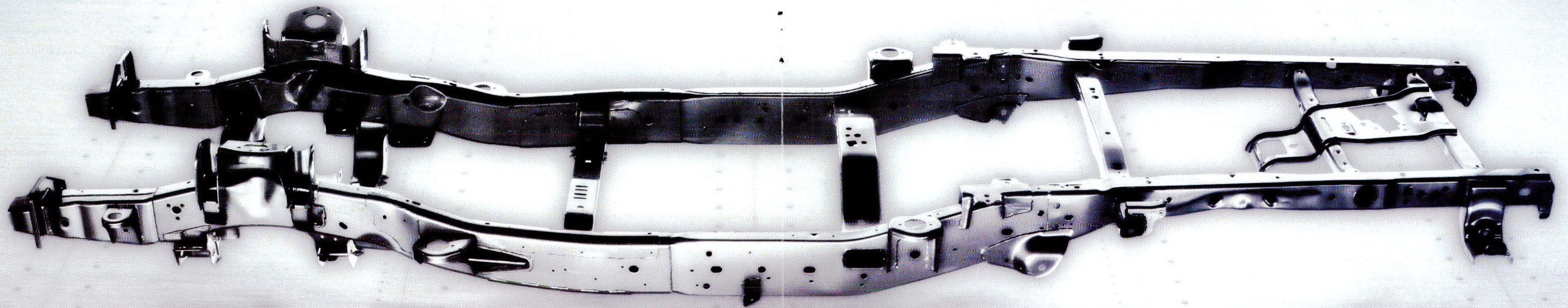
- Dunn's Inc. (800) 353-8621,
<www.dunns.com>
- Foster & Smith (800) 826-7206,
<www.DrsFosterSmith.com>
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Bonanza



of Blues

Whether you call them blue or scaled quail, cotton tops, scalies or coneheads, these hard-running birds are as unique as the country they inhabit, and this year they're proliferating.

By Henry Chappell

PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER/KAC PRODUCTIONS



Molly, my German shorthaired pointer, makes a second lap around the windmill, her stub tail whipping like a springing doorstop. Despite the stiff wind, I can hear her snuffling 30 yards away. On the northern horizon, across miles of shortgrass prairie — buffalo grass, blue grama, prickly pear, yucca, dry creeks, square buttes, caliche flats — a dark blue band of clouds portends a rough night in camp.

Molly breaks away from the windmill, following tendrils of air and ground scent over sparse tufts of grass. The birds are running. I jog after her, wondering, as always, where a covey of blue quail could hide in these open badlands. Molly begins to catwalk. I move up, anticipating her point. But she breaks and shifts into a higher gear. Sixty yards farther on, she slows to a creep, then breaks again. The pattern continues until her frantic snuffling ceases, and she regards me apologetically, tongue lolling.

After a drink of water and a breather, we hunt back toward the windmill. Molly makes a looping 150-yard cast to my right. On her way back in, she locks up tight, ears pricked, brow furrowed, eyes big as 12-gauge bores. No question about it this time.

The half-empty water bottle sloshes and 20-gauge shells rattle in my game

vest as I hurry toward the point. Forty yards away, I glimpse the erect white crest of a blue quail 6 feet ahead of Molly's nose. Unlike a bobwhite hunkered in cover, the bird eyes me and bobs its head. I slide my thumb toward the safety. The quail whirls away, offering a hard-right crossing shot. For once I keep my head down and swing. Molly brings the bird to hand, and I stroke the jaunty crest and overlapping breast feathers.

To the north, the approaching front seems much closer. My drying sweat leaves me chilled. I pocket the bird and hope my tent poles will still be upright come midnight.

Blue quail, scaled quail, blues, cotton tops, scalies, coneheads. Apt names that conjure images of slavering, wild-eyed bird dogs, rubber-legged hunters, heat mirage and dust devils. Like the country they inhabit, blues engender strong

opinions. Hardcore bird hunters either love them or hate them. Bobwhite purists scorn the blue quail's raffish preference for running instead of sitting tight for stylish pointing dogs. Other hunters gleefully screw in their modified and full choke tubes, stuff their game vests with water bottles and moleskin toe padding, and brag about dogs that do whatever it takes to put a few blues in the bag.

Although commonly lumped with Gambel's quail under the heading of "desert quail," blues actually are birds of the arid grasslands. Their range extends from western Kansas southward into Mexico, then westward across the High Plains in the north and the Chihuahuan Desert in the south. In Texas, blues are common in the western half of the Panhandle, the western edge of the Edwards Plateau, the South Texas Brush Country and the Trans-Pecos region. They share the eastern edge of their range with bobwhites and the western portion with Gambel's quail.

As their name suggests, blue quail are bluish-gray, save for their conspicuous white crests. The overlapping breast and mantle feathers, edged in black, earn the bird the common name "scaled quail." Although males and females are indistinguishable in flight, close examination



PHOTO © GARY KRAMER.NET



reveals that the male's throat feathers are a solid cream color while the hen's are cream with fine dark streaks. On average, blues are slightly larger than bobwhites and weigh about 7 ounces. The males of a subspecies common to South Texas and northern Mexico, called "chestnut-bellied scaled quail," sport a distinctive buff or chestnut-colored patch on their bellies. Blues are less vocal than bobwhites; their ventriloquial covey call — *chuc-ker, chuc-ker* — is difficult to locate.

Like bobwhites, blue quail are an edge species; they require a patchwork of open ground, seed-producing forbs, grass, herbaceous cover and low brush for overhead protection from avian predators. Dale Rollins, of the Texas Cooperative Extension, describes perfect blue quail habitat as ideal bobwhite habitat minus 50 percent of the grass.

Blue quail populations boom and bust

relative to rainfall. "They're much like bobwhites," says Steve DeMaso, upland game bird program leader for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "They face the same problems of weather and habitat." Although blues are well-adapted to arid rangeland, they require late-autumn moisture from rain or snow and April and May showers that bring on herbaceous cover and insects for brood rearing.

Coveys break up in early spring in preparation for mating. Nesting begins in May and can extend into October. Hens lay nine to 16 eggs in nests constructed in a variety of cover such as dead grass and cactus. Precocial chicks hatch 22 to 23 days later. If a nest fails because of predation or weather, the hen will nest again until she's successful or nesting season ends. Blue quail hens occasionally raise more than one brood per

year. The fast-growing young depend on an abundance of protein-rich insects. No rain means little herbaceous cover and few bugs. Hens may forgo nesting during severe drought.

Like all quail, blues follow a daily routine. Shortly after sunrise, the birds leave their roosts to feed until mid-morning, then loaf beneath screening cover such as javelina brush, lotebush, skunkbush, cholla, sandsage and even abandoned farm buildings and equipment. Late in the afternoon, the birds feed again, then roost on open ground amid sparse cover.

In spring and summer, blues feed on insects and green herbage. During hunting season, they rely on the fruits of woody shrubs and seeds of native grasses and forbs such as ragweed, sunflower, prickly poppy, croton and snakeweed. Blues also eat domestic grain when it's available.

TPWD biologist Scott Lerich offers this advice to novice blue quail hunters: "The first thing you have to understand is that you're not hunting bobwhites. Scaled quail typically won't hold while you stroll up for the flush. You'd better be prepared to move up quickly," Lerich should know. To earn his master's degree, he spent two years at Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area trapping and fitting blue quail with radio telemetry collars in order to study nesting ecology and sur-

Blues on State Lands

Although blue quail are native to the western half of Texas, Steve DeMaso recommends that hunters focus on the Trans-Pecos region and the South Texas Brush Country.

Because of adequate rainfall, Black Gap Wildlife Management Area in Brewster County is expected to offer excellent hunting for blue quail this season. Field staff report good hunting opportunities at Elephant Mountain WMA in West Texas. Chaparral WMA in LaSalle and Dimmit counties offers good hunting for both blues and bobwhites.

Hunters must possess an Annual Public Hunting Permit to hunt on Texas' wildlife management areas. Consult the Texas Parks and Wildlife *Outdoor Annual* for seasons and bag limits. For full details, contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at (800) 792-1112, or <www.tpwd.state.tx.us>.

vival. He's also an avid quail hunter.

Dale Rollins believes that habitat affects the birds' behavior. "In my opinion, blues need more grass than a lot of people realize. You see blues in some terribly overgrazed country where there's just nothing for them to stick in. Find them in some country with a little vegetation, break that covey up, and you can get some excellent dog work."

Because blues inhabit vast, open territory, their feeding and loafing sites can be harder to identify than those of bobwhites — especially in the sprawling Trans-Pecos region. "Creosote and tarbush flats don't support high numbers of quail," says TPWD biologist Mike Hobson, a serious blue quail hunter. "Just leave such areas alone. When you're hunting blues in the desert, your best bet is to work the draws and the water."

Although blue quail don't require surface water — they get adequate water from their food — they'll use it if it's available. Hobson recommends that hunters concentrate on windmills, stock tanks and guzzlers. Start around the water source, then work outward in concentric circles. If birds are nearby, dogs should scent them right away. Otherwise, move to the next tank.

Once the dogs get birdy, hustle up — run if necessary — to flush the covey and mark the singles. Scattered blues often

hold well for pointing dogs, especially after they've been flushed several times.

Running blues seem to melt away. In the course of a few hundred yards, birds peel off left and right until dogs and hunters are trailing one or two quail, which often as not flush out of shotgun range. Then the dogs snuffle around helplessly and the wheezing, disgusted hunters shuffle away in search of another covey. Instead, carefully hunt back the way you came. Often, the dogs will find the singles and doubles that peeled away from the covey.

Blues tend to hold on steep hillsides. "If I find a covey down in a draw, I always try to work it up a slope," Hobson says. "I've had some excellent shooting on rocky hillsides. Then again, sometimes the birds will just outrun me and disappear over the top, but that's just part of it."

Hobson stresses the importance of persistence. "Late in the season there are fewer coveys, but they can be large — 20 or 30 birds from several smaller coveys that have combined. My dog might get on a big covey at 9 o'clock in the morning and we'll still be working it at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Out here in the Trans-Pecos, the coveys are widely scattered. If you find one, don't give up on it too soon. It may be the only covey you find that day."

For blues, DeMaso, Rollins and

Hobson favor aggressive, adaptable dogs. Forget field-trial standards. A dog should point staunchly when birds hold, but break and trail running birds. Hobson's dog, a pointer- and German-shorthair cross or "crosshair," runs big on the desert flats — 200 yards or more — but can be called in to hunt close in the hills.

"A good blue-quail dog works almost like a sheep dog," says Rollins. "A few even learn to get out in front of running birds to stop or slow them down. But those dogs are few and far between."

Early quail season conditions — hot, dry and dusty — challenge the toughest dogs. Hunt early and late in the day when it's coolest and scenting conditions are best. Carry plenty of water for the dogs. Because of the water requirement, experienced blue quail hunters usually hunt with only one dog per gun — especially in the desert. Dog boots are a must in the rough terrain. The molded rubber variety affords the most protection in rocky hills.

Diehard blue quail hunters live for nasty weather. "If it's a horrible, miserable, snowy or rainy day, take that dog hunting," Hobson says. "The birds will hold. Some of my best hunts have been on nasty days on public land."

Blues often flush well ahead of dogs and hunters. Shotguns choked modified or improved cylinder work well in heavy scrub; open country calls for modified or full chokes. Size 6 or 7 shot minimizes crippling and lost birds.

Interest in blue quail has increased in recent years after populations declined because of habitat loss and drought. "I'm glad to see the birds finally getting some respect," says Rollins. "I've always called them the Rodney Dangerfield of quail species."

According to DeMaso, blues are making a comeback. The August 2003 roadside survey reported high numbers of blue quail in the Trans-Pecos region and average-to-good hatches in South Texas Plains. That's good news for landowners and hunters, especially as the price of quality bobwhite leases continues to rise. "Blue quail are definitely part of the future of quail hunting in Texas," says Scott Lerich. "Serious bird hunters will look west and adapt. Blues are great game birds that have been largely neglected."

A few footsore hunters and rangy, cactus-scarred dogs have known it all along. ★

HENRY CHAPPELL hopes that Maggie, his German shorthaired pointer puppy, will make a blue quail dog. They live in Plano.

Although blue quail don't require surface water — they get adequate water from their food — they'll use it if it's available. Hobson recommends that hunters concentrate on windmills, stock tanks and guzzlers. Start around the water source, then work outward in concentric circles. If birds are nearby, dogs should scent them right away. Otherwise, move to the next tank.



PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN

Venture down the trails —

watch out for the rabbit holes —

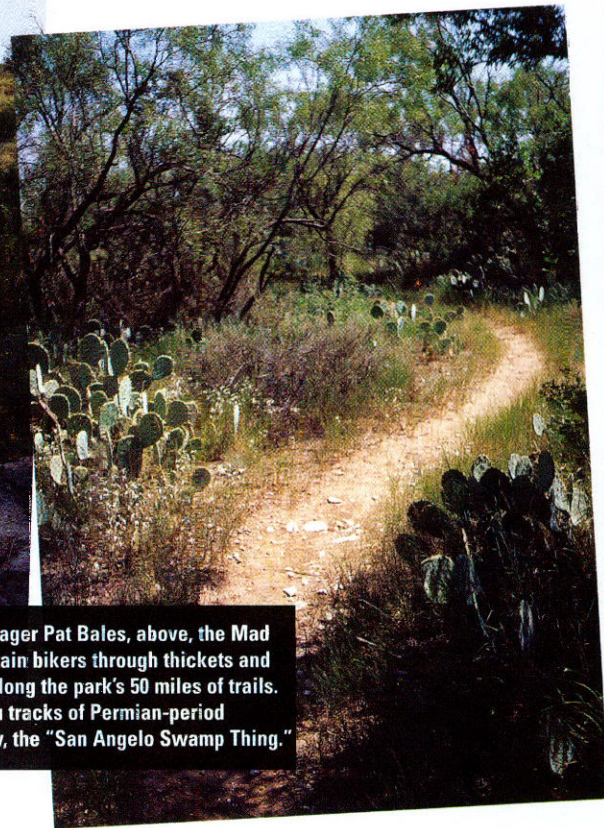
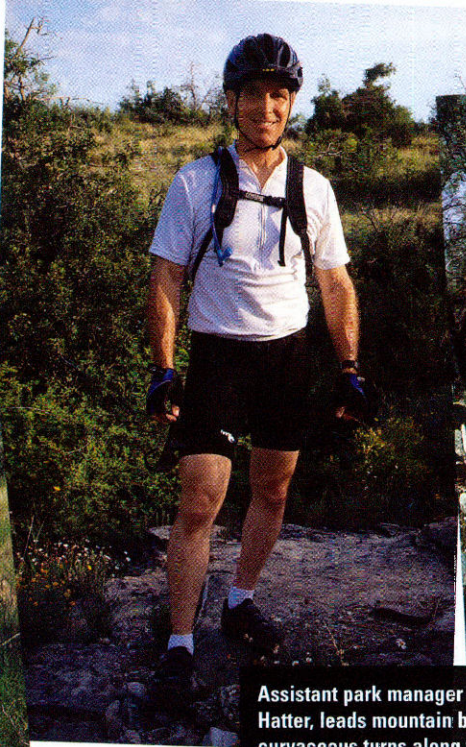
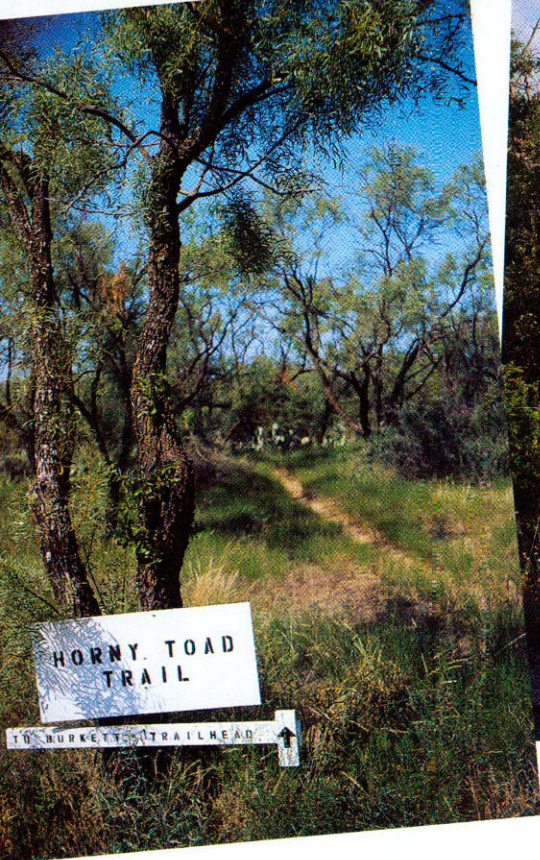
at San Angelo State Park.

Escape to Won

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY E. DAN KLEPPER

derland





Assistant park manager Pat Bales, above, the Mad Hatter, leads mountain bikers through thickets and curvaceous turns along the park's 50 miles of trails. He'll also show you tracks of Permian-period Pelycosaur, below, the "San Angelo Swamp Thing."

("Curiouser and Curiouser!" cried Alice...)

A

LICE WAS RIGHT. Things aren't always what they seem to suggest. Take, for instance, the O. C. Fisher Reservoir dam at San Angelo State Park. It appears to have been built to hold back water, in particular the floodwaters of the North Concho River, thereby creating a 5,400-acre recreational lake. Or ponder the shallow depressions patterning the dry creekbed of the state park's Little Foot Draw: simply scour spots in the creek bottom, of course. Or, for another example, consider Pat Bales. He appears to be a sane, gregarious and extremely knowledgeable assistant park manager. So it all seems.

But scrutiny reveals that, because of long-term drought, the lake has been reduced to a 400-acre paddle-and-splash. The dam, rather than curbing the flow of water, now keeps the growing city of San Angelo at bay and shields the river wilds from urban intrusion. The scooped-out impressions in the bedrock of the aforementioned draw are actually the footprints of 250 million-year-old swamp dwellers. And Bales? Down-to-earth and friendly and informative, but put him on a mountain bike and he turns into both the Mad Hatter and the March Hare.





Local mountain bikers who visit the park regularly say they see something new every time. Fifty miles of trails provide different riding levels and a popular venue for competitive events.

“I quite agree with you,” said the Duchess, “and the moral of that is — ‘Be what you would seem to be’ — or, if you’d like it put more simply — ‘Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise that what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.’”

Following a bike-mounted Pat Bales down San Angelo State Park’s own special version of Alice’s rabbit hole will definitely drive you mad — mad for more, that is. And it’s a good thing too, a very good thing for mountain biking enthusiasts, because San Angelo State Park offers some of the finest single-track in Texas.

“Fifty miles of trails!” Bales shouts across his backside as his front tire explodes off a mesquite log. “Level one through level three riding. Not only do recreational bikers use the park but also racing clubs. And competitive events love it. The park’s got it all.”

Bales is right. Challenging or smooth sailing — take your pick. Mountain bike through mesquite shadows, negotiate curvaceous turns or hydroplane across spongy red sand. Pump up bluffs of limestone chop or cruise through thickets of prickly pear so dense that all other vegetation has been squeezed and shut out. Badlands, creekbeds, river bottoms and grass-whipped pastures crosshatch with washouts and ruts. Ride the edges or run straight up through the middle and then — BAM! — you’re out on park pavement again wondering “Where on earth have I just been?”

With trail names such as Lanky Lackey, Horny Toad, Strawberry, Roller Coaster, Flintstone, Ghost Camp, Red Dam, Talley Valley and Kneeknocker, these trails can take you into all kinds of wild and wooly places. But fortunately for Texans, these trails begin and terminate in the 7,677-acre state park. Best yet, the park is approximately three driving hours from Lubbock, Fort Worth, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, Midland and Odessa and, of course, only a minute or two from San Angelo.

Who knew? Well, for starters, many avid Texas mountain

bikers have begun to figure it out.

“It’s got a good variety of hills, flats and sand and enough ups and downs to keep it interesting,” says Michael Anglin, a mountain bike veteran of 12 years. Anglin, along with his fellow San Angelans Nicole Brambila, Susie Seward, Ed Seward and John Grove, ride the single track almost every weekend.

“I like all the curves,” Grove offers.

“It’s always different,” says Brambila, “because the nature of the trails never stays exactly the same, especially after it rains. When you come out here you can expect something new every time.”

The trail system follows recently designed routes as well as old cow trails and remnant motorized dirt bike tracks. Members of the Friends of San Angelo State Park — also devoted cyclists — have taken on the responsibilities of cutting new trails and maintaining the entire system, including repairing eroded surfaces and installing erosion-control devices. The trails are meticulously marked and, at strategic intersections, even offer water fountains.

“You can ride year-round pretty much, too,” Susie Seward adds, “and sometimes you get the trails all to yourself!”

“There’s a really good spread of challenges for all riding levels,” says Ed Seward. “When you come out here for the first time you see these little hills and you don’t think there is much to it. But there is.”

The park’s varied riding terrain includes woodlands of pecan, oak and river bottom to the north and upland rolling slopes, jagged buttes, mesquite and lots of prickly pear to the south.

“Some of it’s not for the faint of heart,” Grove warns.

Brambila advises riders to bring tweezers.

“Watch for birdlife, too!” Bales yells as his bike flies through a motte of shin-slapping tasajillo and overhanging mesquite.

Uh, did he say Duck?

As with all wonderlands, San Angelo State Park offers multiple realities. For example, companion horseback riding trails travel adjacent and perpendicular to the mountain biking tracks, and all of them cross occasionally at water stations that provide troughs for horses and a faucet or fountain for people. Hikers, on the other hand, may choose to travel any of the trails. It is all part of the park’s charm — something for



the rock hoppers and stump jumpers and a whole lot of quiet for the pleasure seekers.

The park is home to a herd of livestock that loves to travel and a family of ranging mammals content to stay put rather than roam cross-country. These creatures are members of the official Texas State Longhorn and Texas State Bison herds. The longhorns, with pedigrees as long as those of racehorses, participate in periodic round-ups and take trailer trips to a variety of promotional programs. But the bison remain year-round in an 800-acre pasture on the park and enjoy it all to themselves.

Bison, the proper name for the ancient American ox, are the heaviest animals in North America. They can weigh up to 1 ton and can reach 6 feet at the shoulders. The park provides superb viewing opportunities — always from either the safe side of the bison-proof fencing or under the guidance of park personnel. But, more often than not, the bison are available for observation at the pleasure of Little Chief, the alpha male who may or may not decide to mosey up to the viewing pen. Once Little Chief makes a decision, all other members of the herd follow suit, including a few of his offspring. Gangly bison calves, of which the park's herd averages about two a year, are hard to beat for cute and cuddly. Enjoy the cute but avoid the cuddle.

"Bison are capable of causing severe bodily harm!" Bales calls out from his bike, his voice rising above the thwapping of bee brush and cenizo. (So might any attempt to out-ride Bales.)

"Bison can stand flat-footed and jump a 6-foot fence," he

continues as he and his bike speed down a muddy bank of river drainage. "They can run between 30 and 35 miles an hour and maintain that for 15 to 20 minutes, or they can run at a lope for just about 24 hours."

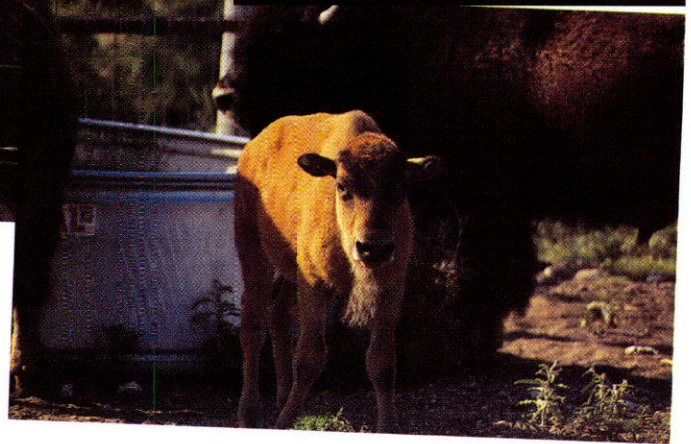
Bales pops up on the opposite side of the river bottom and into a swale of noggin-swatting Johnson grass. "You can't outrun 'em and you can't outmaneuver 'em," he shouts and then disappears. Is he talking about the bison or is he talking about Pat Bales? Hey, wait a minute!

"All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

Before the German immigrant farmers and Spanish explorers and the tattooed, pumpkin-growing Jumano Indians came here, San Angelo State Park harbored a primeval past, one that has revealed its mark despite a span of unfathomable time. Peel back the tranquil rolling plains of the 21st century by about 150 million years and uncover San Angelo's own Jurassic Park. Now scrape away another 100 million years and step into the ancient life of the park's



Elsewhere in the park, see a picnic spot that looks as if it were built by the Flintstones and animals from the Texas State Bison Herd.



Permian period. But tread gingerly. You will want, at all costs, to avoid disturbing traces of the San Angelo Swamp Things. These creatures inhabited the park long before bikers or bison did and were far larger, moved much more slowly and definitely ate more. The Pelycosaurs, meaning “basin lizards,” were early Synapsids that evolved into super-sized, lumbering beasts munching a lazy path through meat or potatoes, whichever they happened to be partial to and got in their way. More than a dozen of them crossed the park’s Little Foot Draw, leaving 26 fossilized trackways in the bed of the draw. Covered and preserved for millions of years, the trackways were exposed by natural erosion perhaps 2,000 to 10,000 years ago, finally coming to the attention of mammals (descendants of those tracklaying Synapsids) in the 20th century. One of those descendants, now an agile assistant park manager brimming with facts, will be happy to leave his mountain bike at home and take you and your entire family to view the trackways, where he can fill you in on more details.

feature is the park’s dual nature — a tranquil respite alongside an attendant and thriving metropolis.

“Twinkle, twinkle little bat!
How I wonder what you’re at!”
“...It goes on you know,” the Hatter continued,
“in this way: -
‘Up above the world you fly,
Like a teatray in the sky.’”

Just at this moment Alice felt a very curious sensation, which puzzled her a good deal until she made out what it was: she was beginning to grow larger again, and she thought at first she would get up and leave the court; but on second thought she decided to remain where she was as long as there was room for her.

A special brand of leisure comes about while relaxing in the park on a San Angelo twilight evening. A metronome for repose manifests in the ring of distant radio towers that embrace the park’s horizon and signals the surrounding urban gentility. The towers’ red lights beat lazily like palpitation points along the arteries — half-hearted yet composed and asynchronized with the pulse of the stars. Civilization sleeps soundly, and irrevocably, somewhere nearby, but never quite close enough to prevent the busy wild from going about its wildness. Every city should be so lucky. ☆

Thanks to its sizable acreage, the park’s opportunities beyond mountain biking and monster imagining include picnicking, fishing, orienteering, hunting and birding. There are stargazing parties and organized tours to see the dinosaur trackway, the bison and longhorn herds and the Indian petroglyphs. The facilities include group pavilions, a trailer dump station, showers, boat ramps and horse pens.

Accommodations range from shaded “primitive” campsites along the North Concho River to six simple air-conditioned and heated cabins. Many of the campsites include water and electricity and even the walk-in sites have picnic tables, grills, water and restrooms in the area. But, above all, the greatest

For More Information

San Angelo State Park is located at 3900-2 Mercedes, San Angelo, Texas 76901. The telephone number is (325) 949-4757 and email is sasp@wcc.net. To reserve a campsite call (512) 389-8900 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park and click on “Make Park Reservations.”

Preview all the park has to offer at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/sanangel/sanangel.htm. Don’t let the long Internet address or the Swamp Things deter you from planning a virtual or recreational visit!



“little brown jobbies”

By Noreen Damude

James Rising starts his book, The Sparrows of the United States and Canada, with this quote from Andy Rooney: “All birds look like sparrows to me. There are big sparrows, small sparrows, and gaily-colored sparrows. But they all look like sparrows.”

This thinly veiled defeatism sums up what a lot of folks think about sparrows. So when trying to determine just what those nondescript “little brown jobbies” disappearing into the thicket are, remember: No sparrow has ever been maimed by being misidentified. Habitat loss is far more damaging.



TEXAS BIRDERS ARE FORTUNATE TO RESIDE IN A VERITABLE SPARROW BAZAAR. Particularly during the winter months, when northern birders face landscapes devoid of summer breeding birds, we enjoy vast influxes of “snow birds” escaping northern winters. The good news is that Texas hosts more species of sparrows than any other state in the union. For those just starting out, of course, that’s also the bad news.

According to the latest Texas Ornithological Society Checklist, the Lone Star state boasts 629 documented species of birds. Of this total, 44 of the possible 49 species of sparrows that occur in the United States have been observed here, and a dozen more sparrow look-alikes add to the possibilities for confusion.

General Features of the Group

Sparrows, alas, are mostly small-to-medium-sized, gray-brown birds with lots of streaks. Mercifully, a few of them have colorful, highly distinctive plumage, making them easy to identify. In nuptial plumage, the lark bunting and the longspurs are brightly colored. Many Central American sparrows wear mostly green tones. Of those, only the olive sparrow is found in the United States. Sometimes called the Texas sparrow, it typically occurs in thorny, brushy habitats in South Texas and along the southern edge of the Edwards Plateau. The green-tailed towhee is predominantly green and can be seen in Central and West Texas. The spotted towhee is boldly marked and a snap to identify year-round.

First-year sparrows in juvenile plumage have streaked underparts. This is where a good sense of humor, high self-esteem and a calm acceptance of life’s harsh realities come into play. There will be times when correctly identifying individual sparrows is just not possible. Faced with a mixed-species flock of sparrows replete with streaky-chested juveniles, even expert birders

inevitably make mistakes.

All sparrows, drab or dandified, have a conical bill. They use it to crack open seeds, a major component of their winter diet. Most sparrows also consume insects and other small invertebrates when available, especially during nesting season. They also relish fruits and berries, particularly in fall and early winter.

Vocalizations

During the nesting season, males sing species-specific courtship songs, making identification much easier. In the winter, however, with rare exceptions, the birds tend to be silent. White-crowned sparrows may sing on sunny days throughout the winter, as will Brewer’s and black-throated sparrows. Sparrow call notes, on the other hand, are characteristically short, high *chips* or *seeps* uttered year-round. Although the calls of many

LE CONTE’S SPARROW. Very damp fields or very shallow marshes hide this shy, exquisitely colorful little sparrow. If disturbed, it flies weakly and low before dropping into the grass again. A sharp-tailed moppet, it sports orange-buff facial stripes around a gray cheek and a white, central stripe on a black crown. The gray nape has fine, pinkish stripes. These birds hunt for seeds and insects in wet, matted vegetation and prefer running to flying. Le Conte’s vaguely resembles the grasshopper sparrow, but shows sharp black streaks on its sides. The blue-gray of the cheek patch, or auricular, separates this species from Henslow’s, Baird’s and grasshopper sparrows. This is one of the truly beautiful sparrows to behold, and is well worth the trouble to see.



WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW. This elegant sparrow is very common in Central and West Texas, uncommon farther east. The wintering flocks live in thickets, woodland edges and deserts, and may sing in rambling chorus from bush tops on sunny winter days. Most white-crowns spend the summer in the far north. They are usually grayer overall than the white-throated, with a pink or yellow bill. Crown stripes are black and white on adults, chestnut and gray on first winter birds. The pattern in front of the eye varies with the range. Songs are variable, as there are many local dialects. Songs usually include clear whistles and buzzy or trilled notes. Call notes are a metallic *pink* and thin *seet*.



Variation within a Species

It is sobering to contemplate how variable “drab and nondescript” can be, even within the same species. On a local level, no two individual sparrows of the same species look exactly alike. Good examples include the song and savannah sparrows. Even the appearance of the same bird may change subtly during the winter because of recurrent molt and feather wear.

Sparrow Look-Alikes

Noting the overall size, color and shape of the bill can be very helpful in identifying sparrow look-alikes such as the female red-winged blackbird, pine siskin and American pipit. American pipits walk and don’t hop on the ground like sparrows, and they have very thin, dark bills. Pine siskins have thinner, darker bills and yellow patches in the wing. Female red-winged blackbirds are larger than sparrows, have bold dark-umber streaks and a dark, blackbird bill.

Female horned larks, dickcissels, house finches, Cassin’s finches and grosbeaks and, yes, even a single female house sparrow in a rural setting can sometimes fool you. Knowing where you are, the time of year and the habitat can help eliminate many of these wannabes. Female house finches, Cassin’s finches, purple finches and rose-breasted and black-headed grosbeaks are larger than sparrows and their bills are more massive. Dickcissels are seldom found in Texas during the winter.

Know the Habitat

Few people appreciate how helpful habitat can be in identify-

species superficially resemble one another and are difficult to describe, most are species-specific as well. Some calls, such as those of the song, white-throated and swamp sparrows, are easily learned, and serve as important aids to field identification. Skulking sparrows, in fact, are more often heard than seen. Most sparrows call softly in flight, especially when they take off. Longspurs give highly distinctive flight calls, a boon in sorting out the different species that forage together in large mixed flocks.

HARRIS’S SPARROW: On the southern plains in winter, Harris’s sparrows flock around thickets and woodland edges. Strays turn up elsewhere with other sparrows or juncos. In summer they retire to open spruce forests of central Canada. Adults are distinctively patterned. Immatures lack the black throat. Note the large size, buffy head, pink bill and bright, white belly. The relative amount of black confers status. Boldly marked birds with lots of black on head and chest are dominant. Their song is a slow series of clear whistles in a minor key. Their call notes consist of a sharp *pink*. Flocks make a musical *chug-up*, *chug-up* sound that is highly distinctive.





VESPER SPARROW. This pale, streaky sparrow favors open prairies, dry country and farm fields, so it is more common in central and western Texas than East Texas. Vesper sparrows almost never occur in large flocks, but may gather with other sparrows in winter. They sport white outer tail feathers that are hard to see until the bird flies. They have a heavy dark outline of cheek patch, white eye-ring and narrow streaks on the crown. A chestnut blotch on the tip of the shoulder is often hidden, but when visible, makes an excellent field mark.

ter of the chest? The presence or absence of streaky underparts cuts the possibilities by half.

Take note of the bird's overall shape. Is it chunky or more streamlined? Does it have long legs? Does the bird seem flat-headed and large-billed, like the grasshopper or Le Conte's sparrow? Does the tail look relatively short like that of the savannah sparrow, or is it long like that of the song sparrow? Next, observe the head pattern. Look for central or median stripes on the crown and dark whisker marks, called malar stripes, angling down from the bill. Does it have an eye-ring, eye

line or eye-stripe, or contrasting color on the throat? What color is the bill? Is it two-toned, pink or black? And finally, what color are the legs?



ing sparrows. Birds tend to prefer certain surroundings and sparrows are no exception. For some highly sought-after species such as Bachman's, Henslow's, Le Conte's, seaside and Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrows, habitat can narrow down the field considerably.

Simply knowing where you are — deep woods, longleaf pine savannah, short-cropped grassland, tall- or mixed-grass prairie, a reedy freshwater marsh, a coastal salt marsh or an impenetrable thicket or pile of brush — will provide valuable clues to the identity of the skulkers lurking within. Are you birding in West Texas, Central Texas, East Texas, the Panhandle, South Texas or the Gulf Coast?

Taking into account the time of year can quickly rule out a host of possibilities or zero in on the most likely two or three. So when confronted with 26 seemingly indistinguishable candidates, reduce the field to four or fewer, then make your best guess.

Of course, a few sparrows such as juncos, chipping and white-crowned sparrows, are widespread and may be found in various habitats.

Breaking the Code

Given the drabest of the drab, what does a birder look at first? Check the pattern of the chest and underparts. Is the bird streaked across the chest or down the sides, or does it have uniform buffy underparts, broken only with a single spot at the cen-

SPOTTED TOWHEE. This bird is very common both winter and summer in chaparral, open woods and brushy hillsides in Central Texas and farther west and south. They forage on the ground in the leaf-litter with both feet, making a ruckus as they go. Spotted towhees are rusty and white below, dark on the hood and back, with bold white spots on back, wings and tail corners. Upper parts and hood are black on males but usually dark gray on females. Call notes consist of harsh and peevish whines and an almost-catlike meow. Other behavioral characteristics are much like the eastern towhee from which it was recently separated.

PHOTOS © GREG W. LASLEY/KAC PRODUCTIONS



SEASIDE SPARROW. This large, gawky sparrow hugs the salt marshes of the Gulf Coast. Compared to the Nelson's sharp-tailed, with which it shares the coastal saltmarsh habitat, seaside sparrows prefer the wetter areas where the tides slide through muddy channels lined with coarse grasses and reeds. They are long-billed for a sparrow and have a short spiky tail. They also have a striking pale spot before the eye and a pale whisker stripe. Seaside sparrows usually look dark and drab, but color varies with range. Habitat — brackish spartina flats — is one of the best field marks. They have a distinctive wheezy, hissing *psshhh-tk* song that from a distance suggests a red-winged blackbird with a sore throat.

Signature Moves

Some sparrow species have characteristic behaviors. A few are strong, direct fliers, while others are floppy and discombobulated fliers, darting unsteadily a short distance, then dropping back into the grass to continue their escape by running along the ground. Le Conte's and Henslow's sparrows are notorious for this strategy. The sage sparrow constantly bobs its tail or runs along the ground with tail cocked high. Song sparrows pump their long tails when they fly. When flushed from its hiding place, the Lincoln's sparrow, a supreme thicket skulker, will cock its tail, raise its crown feathers, then cock its head to the side with a certain air of indignation before disappearing into the brambles.

Solitary or Flocking?

During the winter, certain species of sparrows are found in flocks, while others tend to remain solitary. Chipping sparrows, white-crowned sparrows, Harris's sparrows, juncos and field sparrows, along with most of the wintering larkspurs, are typi-

cally observed in large foraging flocks. Fox sparrows, song sparrows, swamp sparrows and towhees, on the other hand, tend to forage alone or in twos or threes. Flocks of sparrows in open country commonly consist of several individuals of the same species, but in brushy, old-field habitats where species diversity is generally higher, mixed-species flocks are the rule.

Final Advice

Before deciding a bird is a rare Palearctic vagrant, eliminate the most likely possibilities first. This requires studying field guides and getting to know the most common sparrows in your neck of the woods. Learn the savannah sparrow, song sparrow, chipping sparrow and white-throated sparrow by heart.

Although it's not that common, study the grasshopper sparrow for its tail length, head-and-bill shape and flight pattern. The six other Ammodramous sparrows seen in Texas (Le Conte's, Baird's, Henslow's, Nelson's sharp-tailed and seaside sparrows) all share the grasshopper sparrow's conformation, making them immediately recognizable and eliminating the rest.

Fine optics, Internet sources, tape recordings, CDs, DVDs, videos and easy-to-carry field guides are available for ambitious beginners. Some of my favorite field guides include Kenn Kaufman's *Focus Guides: The Birds of North America*, the fourth edition of *The National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, the *National Audubon Society's Sibley Guide to Birds* and Beadle and Rising's *Sparrows of the United States and Canada: A Photographic Guide*. ★

FOX SPARROW. Typically found on the ground under dense thickets, this big sparrow scratches in the leaf-litter with its feet. Birds are generally seen only in small numbers. Color varies from foxy red to gray-headed to sooty brown. The different forms may soon be named a separate species. In winter, Texas mostly hosts the red fox sparrow. The bird's large size and ground-scratching behavior are distinctive. Despite a rather plain face, fox sparrows show snappy triangular spots on the underparts. Most forms have a reddish tail like that of a hermit thrush. The bill is often two-toned. These sparrows are mostly seen in pairs and small family groups and rarely in flocks.



FOX SPARROW BY JAMES C. LEUFOLD/USFWS; SEASIDE SPARROW BY JAMES C. LEUFOLD/USFWS

LEGEND, *Lore* & LEGACY

La Salle's Lost Palms

By Landon Lockett

Jean-Baptiste Talon was a child when Karankawa Indians

overran the fort that French explorer René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle had established in 1685 on Garcitas Creek, near Victoria. They massacred the adults, but captured Talon and the other children, to raise them as Indians. Years later Talon was taken to France, where government officials interrogated him about Texas. Describing the Guadalupe River, where the Karankawas hid their women and children (including Talon) while warring against another tribe, he said, “There are a great number of palm trees and pines [cypresses] along the banks and in the surrounding area.”

Cypresses line the Guadalupe today, but not palm trees. Although the palms are gone, other evidence supports Talon’s report. The journal of Henri Joutel, La Salle’s historian, contains an account of the local flora and fauna, describing everything from horned lizards (which, Joutel correctly observed, “do not hop; they walk”) to roseate spoonbills. And Joutel’s account included palm trees. In references from 19th-century botanical literature, Ferdinand Lindheimer, the father of Texas botany, and George Engelmann of the Missouri Botanical Garden, reported palms with trunks of 20 to 40 feet along the rivers draining into the central coast.

Tree books say, however, that *Sabal mexicana* (formerly *Sabal texana*), Texas’ only native palm tree species, is not native north of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Although they reflect former belief regarding the range of *S. mexicana* (commonly called “sabal palms”), the books are mistaken. Botanists had forgotten the reports of Lindheimer and Engelmann, and a statement by Victoria naturalist J. D. Mitchell (who, while in the Texas Legislature, authored a bill that established the office of the State Fish and Oyster Commissioner, forerunner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) that he had seen “tall palmettos” in Jackson County as late as 1876. But other evidence remained. There was Joutel’s account, and the 1941 discovery by Houston botanist Robert Vines, of some palms up to 27 feet tall in a forest in Brazoria County, 240 miles northeast of the lower Rio Grande.

Most botanists believed the Brazoria palms were merely a trunked version of *Sabal minor*, the dwarf palmetto of eastern Texas.

Refusing to believe in a 27-foot dwarf palmetto, I contacted Smithsonian Institution palm specialist Robert Read. Read thought the Brazoria palms were an “aberrant” population of *S. mexicana*, but refused to conclude anything before visiting the site, and refused to do that until the fruit, a diagnostic feature, was ripe. Meanwhile, Read discovered the Mitchell statement and I looked for historical evidence of palm trees in the area and, hopefully, a living population. I soon found both.

Library research revealed the Joutel description. *The Victoria Advocate* ran a story on my search; then four fishermen reported there were palm trees on Garcitas Creek, the very creek on which La Salle established his colony. A trip up the creek, plus a visit to a creekfront ranch, confirmed the reports, and the 37-foot trunk of a fallen palm revealed that Lindheimer hadn’t exaggerated. When we told the rancher the palms on his ranch were not supposed to be there, he quoted Mark Twain: “Most people spend

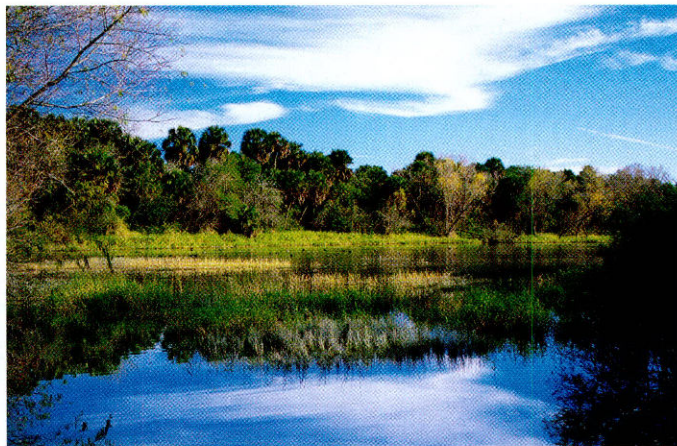
their lives learning things that ain’t so.”

Read came and confirmed that the Garcitas Creek palms were *S. mexicana*, then visited the Brazoria County site and concluded the trees there were not *S. mexicana* but hybrids of *Sabal mexicana* and *Sabal minor* (dwarf palmetto). That makes them the only *Sabal* hybrids known, and the only naturally occurring and reproducing palm hybrids in the continental United States. Given their uniqueness — they occur nowhere but Brazoria County, Texas — I was able to rally support for their protection, and 46 acres of the site are now part of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge.

Lindheimer and Engelmann didn’t say how far upriver the palms occurred, but in 1716, Fray Isidro Felix de Espinosa, a Mexican priest accompanying a Spanish expedition, reported them at San

Antonio Springs, in what is now San Antonio. Further, the palms speak for themselves. While people assume that, because they are palms, they are restricted to the southernmost fringe of Texas, *S. mexicana* has been planted, reproduces and escapes cultivation far up into Central Texas; there is a small escaped population now reproducing in the wild deep in the Hill Country.

But history also reveals the species fell victim to its own value. Its heart is edible, its trunk makes durable fence posts, and its wood resists the shipworm, which eats other



Sabal palms, *Sabal mexicana*, tower over the treetops at the Sabal Palm Audubon Center & Sanctuary near Brownsville.

woods when in salt water. This created an enormous demand for palm logs as pilings for wharves. The specifications of an 1872 report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on building jetties at the mouth of the Brazos River call for thousands of palm logs. Further, *S. mexicana* was used for ornamentals, and the result is seen in the many *S. mexicana* and their offspring adorning lawns across half of Texas today. Extirpation of the wild palms north of the Valley was so thorough they were totally forgotten.

Will wild palms raise their crowns above the live oaks along our rivers again? Today the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service is restoring *S. mexicana* along the Rio Grande, as part of the Lower Rio Grande Wildlife Corridor. If the species can be restored there, why not farther north? And restoration is exactly what I want to see accomplished. Meanwhile, you can plant Texas sabals in your yard, as many did 100 years ago. Being a native tree — one that can reach 50 feet — it has the hardiness we expect in natives, and bears a sweet fruit attractive to wildlife.

And keep an eye out for sabal palms when you’re in the woods. They hide in the thickest bottomland forest; other remnant stands may still await discovery. ☆

Continued from page 53

DENTON: KNTU-FM 88.1 / 10:58 a.m., 3:58 p.m., 11:59 p.m.

DIMMITT: KDHN-AM 1470 / 12:30 p.m.

EAGLE PASS: KINL-FM 92.7 / 3:30 p.m.

EASTLAND: KEAS-AM 1590 / 5:50 a.m., 5:50 p.m. KATX-FM 97.7 / 5:50 a.m. & 5:50 p.m.

EDNA: KGUL-FM 96.1 / 7:10 a.m.

EL CAMPO: KULP-AM 1390 / 2 p.m.

FAIRFIELD: KNES-FM 99.1 / 6:47 a.m.

FLORESVILLE: KULB-FM 89.7 / 1:30 p.m.

FORT STOCKTON: KFST-AM 860 / 12:55 p.m., KFST-FM 94.3 / 12:55 p.m.

GAINESVILLE: KGAF-AM 1580 / 10 a.m.

GRANBURY: KPIR-AM 1420 / 4:05 p.m.

GREENVILLE: KGVV-AM 1400 / 8:10 a.m.

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

HASKELL: KVRP-FM 97.1 / 9:30 a.m.; KVRP-AM 1400 / 9:30 a.m.

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

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

HILLSBORO: KHBR-AM 1560 / 9:35 a.m.

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

HUNTSVILLE: KSHU-FM 90.5 / 12:05 p.m., 5:05 p.m.

JACKSONVILLE: KEBE-AM 1400 / 7:15 a.m.

JUNCTION: KMBL-AM 1450 / 7:36 a.m., 12:46 p.m., 5:56 p.m., KOOK-FM 93.5 / 7:36 a.m., 12:46 p.m., 5:56 p.m.

KERRVILLE: KRNH-FM 92.3 / 5:31 a.m., 12:57 p.m., 7:35 p.m.; KMBL-AM 1450 / 5:49 a.m., 12:49 p.m., 5:49 p.m.; KERV-AM 1230 / 5:49 a.m., 12:49 p.m., 5:49 p.m.; KRVL-FM 94.3 / 5:49 a.m., 12:49 p.m., 5:49 p.m.

LA GRANGE: KBUK-FM 104.9 / 12:30 p.m.; KVLG-AM 1570 / 12:30 p.m.

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

LAREDO: KHOY-FM 88.1 / 2 p.m.

LEVELLAND: KLVT-AM 1230 / 12:05 p.m.

LUBBOCK: KJTV-AM 950 / 6:45 a.m.

LUFKIN: KUEZ-FM 100.1 / 10:30 a.m.; KYBI-FM 101.9 / 10:30 a.m.

MADISONVILLE: KMVL-AM 1220 / 7:45 a.m.; KMVL-FM 100.5 / 7:45 a.m.

MARSHALL: KCUL-FM 92.3 / 6:15 a.m.; KMHT-FM 103.9 / 6:35 a.m.; KMHT-AM 1459 / 6:35 a.m.

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

MESQUITE: KEOM-FM 88.5 / 5:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m. Mon.-Thu.; 5:30 a.m., 4:45 p.m. Fri.)

MEXIA: KYCX-AM 1580 / 3:15 p.m.; KYCX-FM 104.9 / 3:15 p.m.

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

MONAHANS: KLBO-AM 1330 / 6 a.m., noon, 3 p.m.

NACOGDOCHES: KSAU-FM 90.1 / 2:45 p.m.

NEW BRAUNFELS: KGNB-AM 1420 / 6:52 a.m., 5:24 p.m.

ODESSA: KCRS-AM 550 / 6:05 a.m., 5:15 p.m., KOCV-FM 91.3 / 7:37 a.m.

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

PLAINVIEW: KVOP-AM 1090 / 7:49 a.m.

PLEASANTON: KBUC-FM 95.7 / noon Sat.

ROCKDALE: KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:05 a.m.

SAN ANTONIO: KENS-AM 1160 / 6:25 p.m.; KSTX-FM 89.1 / 9:04 p.m., KRTU-FM 91.7 / noon

SEGUIN: KWED-AM 1580 / 7:55 a.m.

SONORA: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 10:13 a.m.; KYXX-FM 94.3 / 2:23 p.m.

STEPHENVILLE: KSTV-FM 93.1 / between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m.

SULPHUR SPRINGS: KSST-AM 1230 / 3:50 a.m., 11:20 a.m.

SWEETWATER: KXOX-FM 96.7 / 8:45 a.m.; KXOX-AM 1240 / 8:45 a.m.

TEMPLE: KTEM-AM 1400 / 10:20 a.m.

TEXARKANA: KTXK-FM 91.5 / 8 p.m.

UVALDE: KVOU-FM 104.9 / 8:30 a.m.

VICTORIA: KTXN-FM 98.7 / 6:50 a.m.; KZAM-FM 104.7 / 7:10 a.m.

WACO: KWTX-AM 1230 / 7 a.m., 7 p.m. Sat. and Sun.

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

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

BEDFORD: K-Meadow, Meadow Creek Elementary / noon

VIRTUAL RADIO eTUNZ: <www.etunz.net> / 10:10 a.m. & 2:10, 4:10 p.m.

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JANUARY HUNTING SEASONS

JAN. 5-18:

Late antlerless and spike season in the Edwards Plateau

JAN. 10-18:

Late antlerless and spike season in muzzleloader counties

JAN. 17-18:

Special youth antlerless season in all counties where the general or special late seasons have closed

JAN. 19-FEB. 1:

Late antlerless and spike season in the South Zone deer counties

JAN. 19-FEB. 2:

Duck falconry season in the South Zone

JAN. 19-MARCH 28

Light Geese Conservation Order in the East Zone (that portion that lies south of I-10 and east of I-35)

JAN. 26-FEB. 9:

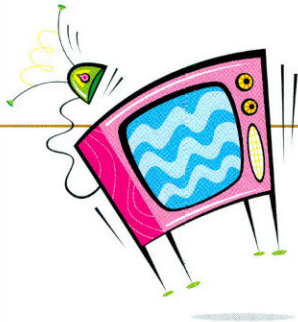
Duck falconry season in the North Zone

JAN. 26-MARCH 28:

Light Geese Conservation Order in the East Zone (that portion that lies north of I-10)

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT OUTDOOR ANNUAL OR CALL (512) 389-4505.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



THE FRONT LINE OF NEWS AND VIEWS



TELEVISION

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

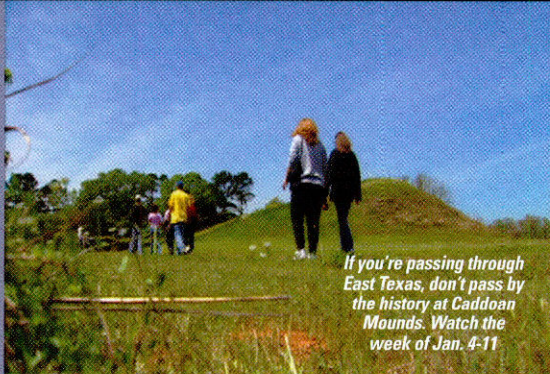
Dec. 28 - Jan. 4:
Living laboratories; Cooper Lake State Park; the great blue heron; saving water with Wildscapes; threatened turtles.

Jan. 4 - 11:
A day at Caddoan Mounds; Casa Navarro; rules for river access; restoring the grassland prairies; sands of West Texas.

Jan. 11 - 18:
Transporting Panhandle water; Admiral Nimitz Museum; calling secrets; hunting families; getting outdoors in the city.

Jan. 18 - 25:
West Texas oasis at Balmorhea; Washington-on-the-Brazos; boat ramp etiquette; connecting with Big Bend; snowy quail.

Jan. 25 - Feb. 1:
Forests of the river bottom; two sides to Galveston Island State Park; squawk of the hawk; hall of fame boats; Caddo Lake.



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AUSTIN: KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 10 a.m. / Mon. 12:30 p.m. KLRU-TOO, Cable Ch. 20 / Tues. 11 p.m.
BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION: KAMU, Ch. 15 / Thurs. 7 p.m. / Sun. 5 p.m., 10:30 p.m.
CORPUS CHRISTI: KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m. / Fri. 11:30 p.m.
DALLAS-FORT WORTH: KERA, Ch. 13 / Sat. 8:30 a.m.
Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman
EL PASO: KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 5:30 p.m.
(rotates with other programs; check listings)
HARLINGEN: KMBH, Ch. 60 / Sun. 5 p.m.
Also serving McAllen, Mission, Brownsville
HOUSTON: KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sat. 2:30 p.m. / Fri. 1 p.m.
Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria
KILLEEN: KNCT, Ch. 46 / Sun. 5 p.m.
Also serving Temple
LUBBOCK: KTXT, Ch. 5 / Sun. 5:30 p.m.
ODESSA-MIDLAND: KOCV, Ch. 36 / Sat. 5 p.m.
PORTALES, N.M.: KENW, Ch. 3 / Sun. 2 p.m.
Also serving West Texas/Panhandle area
SAN ANTONIO & LAREDO: KLRN, Ch. 9 / Friday noon, Sunday 1:30 p.m.
WACO: KWBU, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3 p.m.

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

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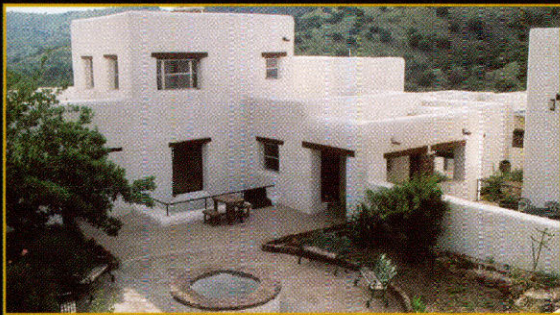
- ABILENE:** KACU-FM 89.7 / 7:04 a.m., 1:43 p.m., 6 p.m.; KWKC-AM 1340 / 6:30 a.m.
ALPINE: KSUR-AM 1670 / 9 p.m.
AMARILLO: KACV-FM 89.9 / 11:20 a.m.
ATLANTA: KPYN-AM 900 / 7:45 a.m.
AUSTIN: KVET-AM 1300 / between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. Sat.; K-Zilker 90.1 / 7:15 a.m., 2:45 p.m.
BEAUMONT: KLVI-AM 560 / 5:20 a.m.
BIG SPRING: KBST-AM 1490 / 10:50 a.m.
BONHAM: KFYN-AM 1420 / 10:10 a.m. KFYZ-FM 98.3 / 10:10 a.m.
BRADY: KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:20 a.m.; KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:20 a.m.
BRIDGEPORT: KBOC-FM 98.3 / 10:20 a.m.
BRYAN: KZNE-AM 1150 / 5:45 p.m.
CANYON: KWTS-FM 91.1 / noon, 4 p.m., 7 p.m.
CARTHAGE: KGAS-AM 1590 / 6:40 a.m.; KGAS-FM 104.3 / 6:30 a.m.
CENTER: KDET-AM 930 / 5:20 p.m.
COLUMBUS: KULM-FM 98.3 / 5:20 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 / 5:33 p.m.; KFTX-FM 97.5 / 5:40 a.m.; KVRT-FM 90.7 / 5:33 p.m.; KLUX-FM 89.5 / three to four times daily
CROCKETT: KIVY-AM 1290 / 7:45 a.m., KIVY-FM 92.7 / 7:45 a.m.
DENISON: KJIM-AM 1500 / 11:54 a.m.

Continued on page 52

Catch Cabin Fever



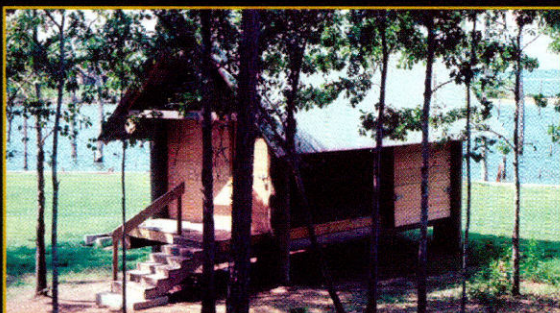
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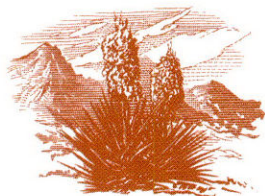
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GETAWAYS

FROM BIG BEND TO THE BIG THICKET AND THE RED TO THE RIO GRANDE



BIG BEND COUNTRY

JAN.: Desert Garden Tours, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, by reservation only, (432) 424-3327

JAN.: Bouldering Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, every Wednesday through Sunday, reservations required, (915) 849-6684

JAN.: Hiking Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, every Wednesday through Sunday, reservations required, (915) 849-6684

JAN.: Pictograph Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, every Wednesday through Sunday, reservations required, (915) 849-6684, (915) 857-1135

JAN.: Texas Camel Treks, Monahans Sandhills SP, Monahans, call for dates, (866) 6CAMELS

JAN.: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, every Wednesday through Sunday, (432) 292-4464

JAN.: White Shaman Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, every Saturday, (432) 292-4464

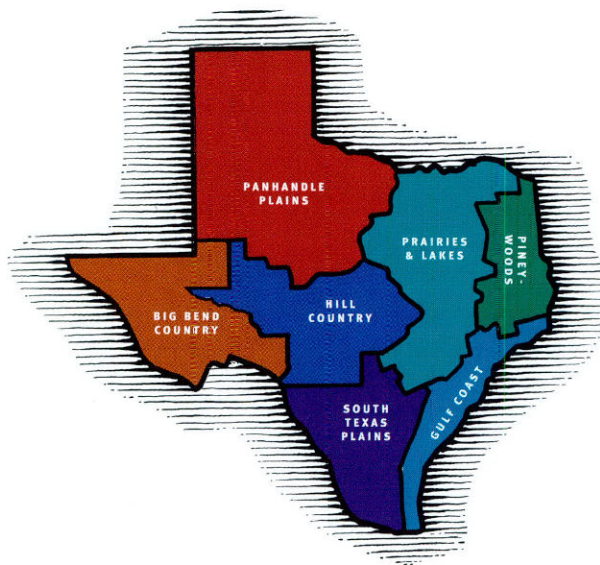
JAN. 3: Guale Mesa Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, reservations required, (432) 229-3416

JAN. 3-4, 17-18: Guided Tours, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso, reservations required, (915) 566-6441

JAN. 10: Stories of the Spirits, Magoffin Home SHS, El Paso, (915) 533-5147

JAN. 17: Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, (432) 292-4464

JAN. 18: Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS,



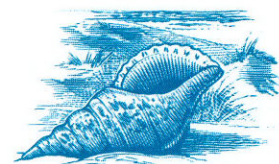
For more detailed information on outdoor getaways across the state, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us and click on "TPWD Events" in the center light blue area entitled "In the Parks."

Comstock, (432) 292-4464

JAN. 22-23: Wilderness Advanced First Aid Recertification, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, reservations required, (432) 371-2633

JAN. 24: Madrid Falls Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, reservations required, (432) 229-3416

JAN. 26-30: Wilderness Advanced First Aid, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, reservations required, (432) 371-2633



GULF COAST

JAN.: Aquarium and Hatchery Tours, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, every Tuesday through Sunday, hatchery tours by reservation only, (979) 292-0100

JAN. 3, 10, 16, 17, 24, 31: Story Time, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100

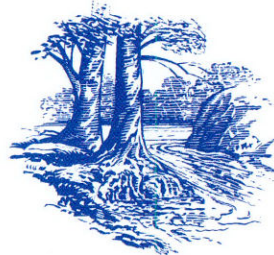
JAN. 4, 18: Beachcombing

and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

JAN. 11: History Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215

JAN. 17: Hard Hat Tour, Battleship *Texas* SHS, La Porte, reservations required, (281) 479-2431, Ext. 234

JAN. 31: Whooping Crane Bus Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, reservations required, (361) 983-2215



HILL COUNTRY

JAN.: Saturday Morning Interpretive Walk, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, every Saturday, (830) 438-2656

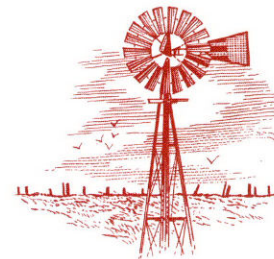
JAN. 9-11: 2nd Annual Hill Country Ultra Marathon and Dirty Dual Event, Hill Country SNA, Bandera, reservations

required, (830) 796-4413
JAN. 10: Living in the Now, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, reservations required, (877) 441-2283

JAN. 17: Trail Project, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg, (325) 247-3903 Ext. 8

JAN. 17: Simple Sounds, Concert in the Cave, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, reservations required, (877) 441-2283

JAN. 31: 11th Annual Kid Fish, Landmark Inn SHS, Castroville, (830) 931-2133



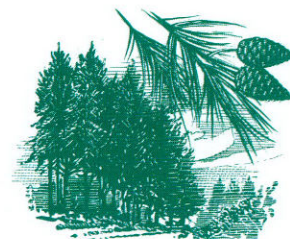
PANHANDLE PLAINS

JAN. 3: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (325) 949-4757

JAN. 10: Canyon Critters, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227

JAN. 17: Trout Family Fishing Day, Fort Richardson SP & HS Jacksboro, (940) 567-3506

JAN. 24: History Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227



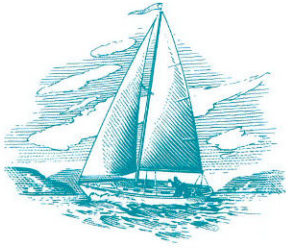
PINEYWOODS

JAN. 17: Canoeing the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper,

reservations required, (409) 384-5231

JAN. 24: Native American Food and Fibers, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394

JAN. 25: Archeology Tour, Mission Tejas SP, Grapeland, (936) 687-2394



PRAIRIES & LAKES

JAN.: Yegua and Nails Creek Canoe Tours, Lake Somerville SP & Trailway/Birch Creek Unit, Somerville, every Thursday, reservations required, (979) 535-7763

JAN.: Yegua and Nails Creek Canoe Tours, Lake Somerville SP & Trailway/Nails Creek Unit, Ledbetter, every Thursday, reservations required, (979) 535-7763

JAN.: Historic and Scenic Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, available by reservation only to groups of 10 or more, (979) 968-5658

JAN.: Kreische Brewery Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, (979) 968-5658

JAN.: Monument Hill Tour, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, by reservation only to groups of 10 or more, (979) 968-5658

JAN. 3-31: Annual Trout Harvest, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, every Tuesday through Sunday, (903) 676-BASS

JAN. 4, 11: Kreische House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658

JAN. 10: Skeletons of Winter – Tree Identification, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940

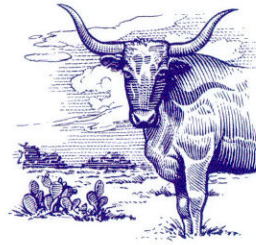
JAN. 18: Anson Jones' Birthday Celebration, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHS-Barrington Living History Farm, Washington, (936) 878-2213

JAN. 18: Garden Walk, Texas Discovery Garden, Fair Park, Dallas, (214) 428-7476

JAN. 31: Neatness of the Night, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, reservations required, (972) 291-5940

JAN. 31: Penn Farm Tour, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940

JAN. 31: Trout Fishing Day, Rusk/Palestine SP, Rusk, (903) 683-5126



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

JAN.: World Birding Center Kiskadee Birding Tours, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, every Tuesday and Friday, (956) 519-6448

JAN. 8, 24: World Birding Center Birding Basics Field Trip, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, reservations required, (945) 519-6448

JAN. 12-16: Gun Deer Either Sex Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by special drawn permit only, (830) 676-3413

JAN. 17: Los Pastores play, Goliad SP, Goliad, (361) 645-3405

JAN. 17: Mountain Biking 101, Government Canyon SNA, San Antonio, reservations required, (210) 688-9055. Government Canyon SNA currently is closed except for special events.

JAN. 17-18, 24-25: Quail Only Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by regular per-

mit or Annual Public Hunting permit (APH), (830) 676-3413

JAN. 23-25: Gun Javelina/Feral Hog Hunts, James E. Daughtrey WMA, Pleasanton, by special drawn permit only, (830) 569-8700

JAN. 24: Mountain Bike Maintenance, Government Canyon SNA, San Antonio, reservations required, (210) 688-9055. Government Canyon SNA currently is closed except for special events.

JAN. 31: Ride the Canyon, Government Canyon SNA, San Antonio, reservations required, (210) 688-9055. Government Canyon SNA currently is closed except for special events.

JAN. 31-FEB. 1: Youth Javelina Hunts, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, by special drawn permit only, (830) 676-3413

JAN. 31-FEB. 1: Gun Javelina/Feral Hog Hunts, James E. Daughtrey WMA, Pleasanton, by special drawn permit only, (830) 569-8700

SP	State Park
SHS	State Historical Site
SNA	State Natural Area
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
SFH	State Fish Hatchery

State Parks Offer Public Hunts

A number of state parks will offer special permit hunting this fall and winter. 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.

JAN. 3-4, 12-14, 19-21
Lake Houston SP
(281) 354-6881

JAN. 4-8, 11-15, 18-21, 25-28:
Hill Country SNA
(830) 796-4413

JAN. 4-9:
Fairfield Lake SP
(903) 389-4514
Lake Whitney SP
(254) 694-3793

JAN. 4-9, 11-16:
Enchanted Rock SNA
(325) 247-3903

Guadalupe River SP
(830) 438-2656

South Llano River SP
(325) 446-3994

JAN. 5-9:
Brazos Bend SP
(979) 553-5101

JAN. 5-9, 12-16:
Pedernales Falls SP
(830) 868-7304

JAN. 5-9, 12-16, 19-23:
Choke Canyon SP
Calliham Unit
(361) 786-3868

JAN. 5-9, 14-16:
Huntsville SP
(936) 295-5644

JAN. 6-8, 13-15, 20-22, 27-29:
Lake Brownwood SP
(325) 784-5223

JAN. 6-9, 13-16:
Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway
(806) 455-1492

JAN. 6-9, 13-16, 20-23:
Colorado Bend SP
(325) 628-3240

Lost Maples SNA
(830) 966-3413

JAN. 7-9, 14-16, 21-23:
Inks Lake SP
(512) 793-2223

Longhorn Cavern SP
(877) 441-2283

JAN. 8-10, 20-22:
Big Bend Ranch SP
(432) 229-3416

JAN. 11-16:
Devils River SNA
(830) 395-2133

JAN. 12-14, 14-16, 19-21, 21-23:
Davis Mountains SP
(432) 426-3337

JAN. 23-25:
Matagorda Island SP & WMA
(361) 983-2215

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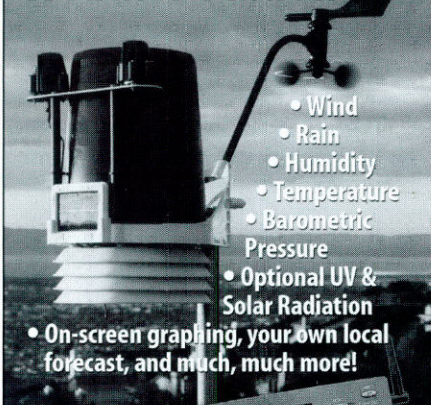
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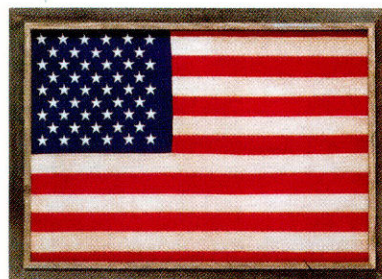
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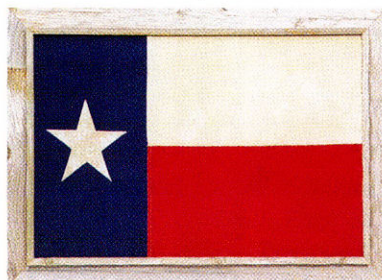
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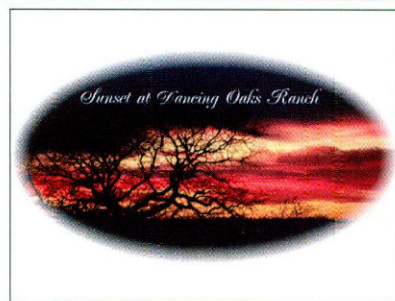


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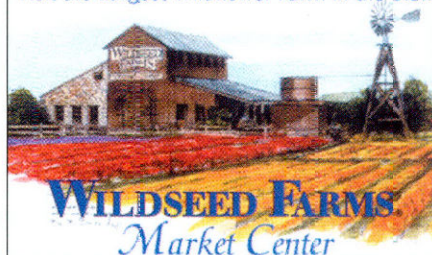
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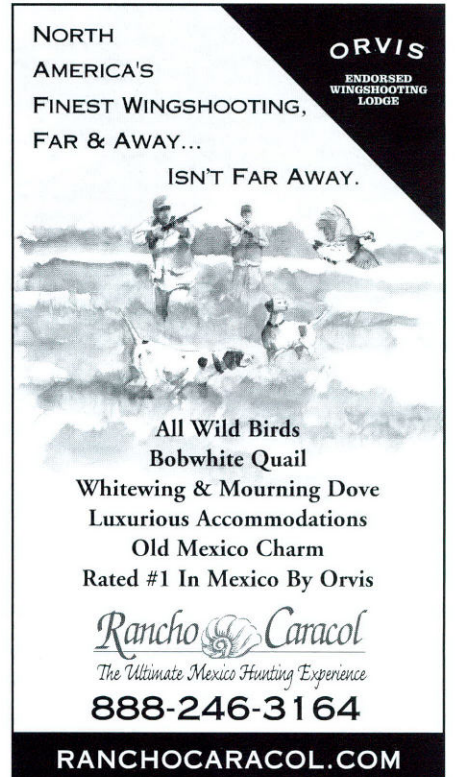
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