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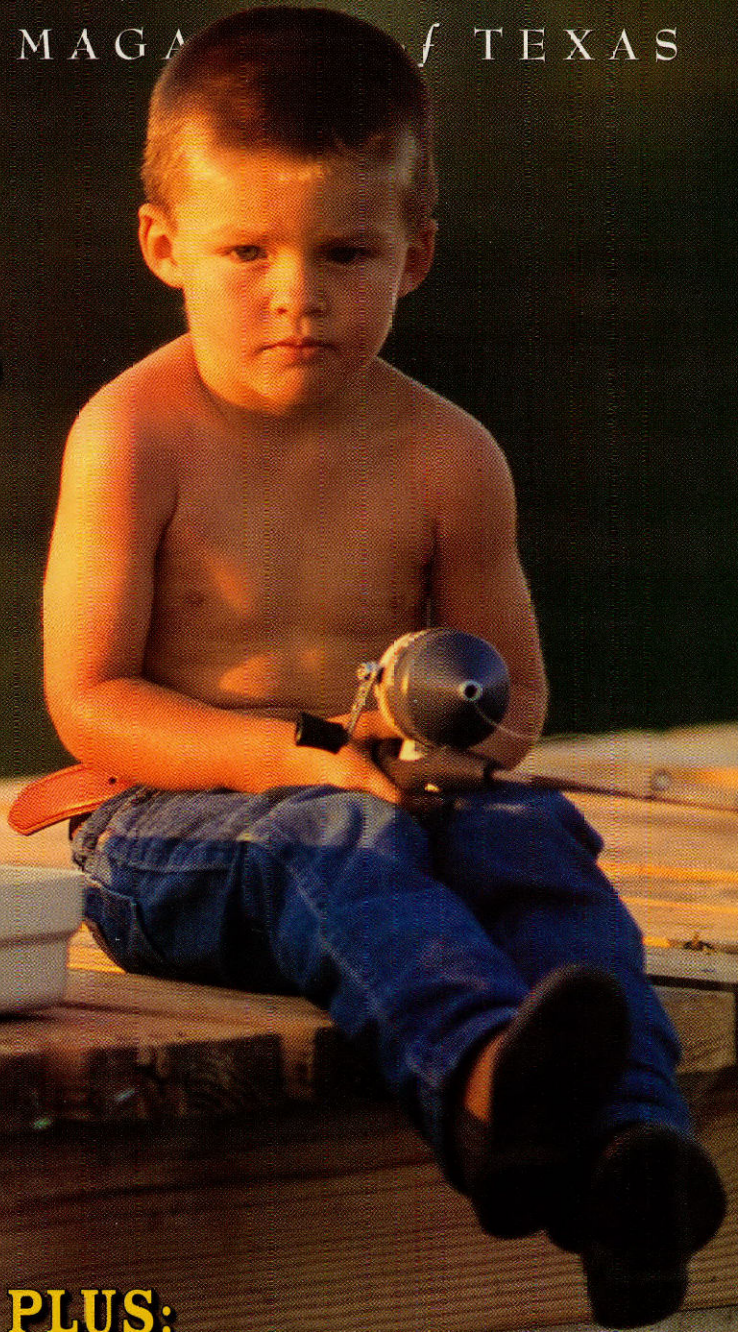
TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

**PAUL CAÑADA'S
SUNFISH
MEMORIES**

**HOW TO STALK
MONSTER
CATFISH**



PLUS:

**SECRETS OF THE BIG BUCKS / LUBBOCK IRONMAN
COOLING OFF AT COLORADO BEND**

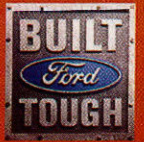


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C O N T



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JUNE 2001

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Back: Cool off this summer at Colorado Bend State Park. See story on page 30. Photo © Lance Varnell.

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

AT ISSUE

From the Pen of Robert L. Cook

When was the last time somebody looked you right square in the eye and said, "You're just getting a little too big for your britches, aren't you?" Maybe it was your mom or your wife who decided that it was high time you take a good look at yourself and your life. Sometimes we all get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of our busy working lives that we forget what's really important.

Like fishing.

As you'll see in this issue, fishing is important to Texas. Plus, it's good for you; there's nothing like being out in the fresh air with a line in the water. It's good for your body and good for your soul. My doctor would say it's good for what ails you.



Fishing is important to Texas. Plus, it's good for you; there's nothing like being out in the fresh air with a line in the water. It's good for your body and good for your soul.



The problem for many of us, though, is that fishing — like hunting, camping, biking and lots of other outdoor recreation — has gotten increasingly complicated and costly. Take a look at my tackle box, for example. There's at least \$200 worth of lures, hooks and plastic globs that used to be artificial worms. My rod and reel cost almost as much as my first car, and I don't even claim to be a serious angler. I fish for the same reason that I hunt, because I like to get away in the outdoors.

A while back, I took a good long look in the mirror and decided that I was just getting too big for my britches. After careful consideration, I figured the cure would require a fishing trip. With some kids, cane poles, perch hooks and old-fashioned fishing worms. No rods, no reels and no lures. That would be much too complicated for my 3-year-old and 6-year-old companions.

These kids had never been fishing. They watched with wide eyes and wrinkled-up noses as I threaded the worm on the hook, tossed the line out a few feet from the bank, and handed them each a pole. When I said "Watch the cork, and pull up when it goes under," they looked at me like I was from Mars. Fortunately, these children were my lovely granddaughters and were much too sweet and trusting to doubt anything that I told them. So, they just fished and fished and fished and pulled up when the cork went under. They caught a bucket full of perch no larger than my hand. I've never heard as much squealing and giggling over a mess of perch!

We cleaned and skinned the perch, and fried them for supper that evening. I don't think I've ever eaten better food with better company. After dinner we all sat together on the porch and listened to the owls and nighthawks until both my little anglers went to sleep in my lap.

True to form, those perch get bigger every time they tell the story.

Perhaps we all get a little big for our britches sometimes. Take the cure. Take a kid fishing. You'll have as much fun as they do, and it will remind you what's really important in this life.

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ABC AUDITED

Bill Harvey, Ph.D. is a Fort Worth native who grew up fishing and canoeing the rivers and streams of Texas. A 17-year employee of Texas Parks and Wildlife, he currently serves in the Resource Protection Division. He enjoys fly fishing and teaches it in several TPW education and

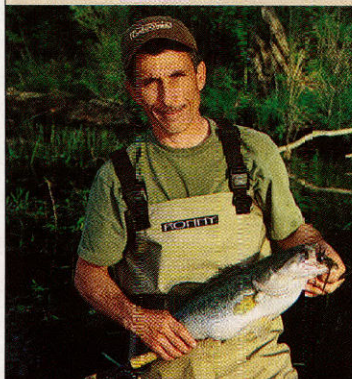


outreach programs. A member of the Texas Outdoor Writers Association, Harvey makes his home in Austin — when he's not paddling his kayak in search of tailing red drum. In this issue he discloses the ultimate fishing knots.

Brandon Weaver knew the first time he watched NBC's two-hour coverage of the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon that he had to do one. The broadcast featured a man whose 7-year-old daughter had died from cancer only months earlier. One of her last wishes was for her daddy to complete the 140-mile race. Exhausted at the end of the race, he was asked how he felt. Remembering his daughter he said, "I can't go any faster, but I wish I could go slower and hold on to this memory forever." This inspired Weaver to pursue his own Ironman dreams. In this issue he takes the first step by competing in an Ironman qualifying race in Lubbock.



Paul A. Cañada of Fort Worth is a freelance writer/photographer and high school wrestling coach. He co-authored Tehabi Böcks' *Hooked! America's Passion for Bass Fishing*, has written more than 600 articles on salt-water and freshwater fishing since 1994 and has lectured on fly fishing and bass fishing. He's currently



working on two books, *Fly Fishing Strategies for Largemouth Bass* and *The Ten Principles of Championship Wrestling*. In this issue he writes about the pleasures of fishing for sunfish.

IN THE FIELD

MAIL CALL

Picks, Pans and Probes from Previous Issues

FOREWORD

There are no rivers to run in Israel.

Actually, there are no major rivers at all: I learned this over breakfast one morning recently in Wimberley. I was there to meet Kelly Watson of Texas River Bass for a day of fishing and floating the Blanco, and he'd brought along a former Israeli army tank instructor for the day.

A strikingly pretty 21-year-old former Israeli army tank instructor named Keren Fedida.

Keren was on her first visit to Texas. She had never been on a river before, so this day would be another first.

"I've lost seven friends in battle in the two months I've been in America," Keren said quietly over breakfast, "and I have no way even to get in touch with their parents to tell them how deeply I share their grief." An infant during the 1982 war, she has faced the harsh brutality of conflict for her entire life. The wariness of her posture as we ate certainly bespoke her years of military training, as well as her catlike grace. She sat facing the door.

The mists had yet to burn off as we put in amidst the cypress. Keren fretted that it would not be a good day to be on the water; Kelly and I knew otherwise. As the sun warmed us, Keren and I began wading, stalking smallmouth bass as Kelly coached from the canoe and pointed out shelves and rocks where, with his river-wise eyes, he saw fish.

Soon, Keren is whoopin' and hollerin' like a bona fide Texan as she hooks up with a juvenile largemouth, perch, smallies and hybrids as we parade down the Blanco. Kelly is taking pictures she can send home to her parents in Afula, Israel, of her air-kissing her first bass.

Yeah, I had fun fishing, too; I've never had a bad day on the water. But the real joy I experienced that day was watching the river reflect in the eyes of this brave young woman, and hearing her laughter blend with the voice of the Blanco as it chattered over rock.

In this issue, my esteemed colleague Paul Cañada shares how badly his young life was going awry before he was invited on his first fishing trip. It is a revealing and personal story, and I admire Paul's honesty in sharing so much with all of you *Texas Parks & Wildlife* readers.

Water *does* work wonders.

Why don't you make a promise to yourself, today, to take someone fishing? A son, a daughter, a parent or grandparent or co-worker; even a total stranger. My friend Jonette Childs of *Saltwater Texas* sometimes takes out those who are wheelchair bound or cannot otherwise get out to fish; I invite you to do the same.

Take someone fishing, and watch the light dance in their eyes. It's the one true way to catch your limit every time.



LETTERS

Army Salute

As a native Texan, I am always thankful for the articles and resources your magazine provides. A recent article, "Birds in the Hood" (December 2001), caught my attention as I had just read an article in *Soldier's* magazine about the cowbird situation. As a soldier, I am aware of the U.S. Army's continuing effort to take care of their land and foster ties with the surrounding communities. Thank you for highlighting this in your magazine and for depicting the Army not as an abuser, but as a caretaker of the environment.

I equally enjoyed the author's vivid description of the M1A2 Tank, except the M1A2 does not have guided missiles. Its large cannon suffices for firepower. It is the M2A2 that sports the guided missiles. Thank you again for a great magazine and for this article.

Sgt. Tom Jackson
Fort Irwin, Calif.

Bentsen Buddies

After 22 years or so of receiving my issues of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* elsewhere, I have moved back to Texas. Although I am now getting my current issues at my Georgetown residence, I recently received the February issue, which was forwarded from my last address out of state.

In that issue you had requested comments or stories about RVing in Texas state parks. This issue also told me about plans to close Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park to RVers to restore the habitat in the park.

MAIL CALL

Bentsen is our favorite park; the birds and animals can keep one occupied all day and most of the nights, as my following story will show. It is really sad this wonderful place will no longer be available to RVers. It was hard enough getting reservations during the months we could be there.

In December a year ago, my wife and I made one of our annual trips from out of state to

get a little bit of South Texas RVing. Arriving at Bentsen-Rio Grande in the afternoon we set up camp and got the feeders going. The afternoon and early evening passed with a lovely display of colors and songs, and visual displays of birds and animals that you can only see at Bentsen.

Because of the long trip we called it a day, but not before refilling the feeders and putting an ample supply of seeds on the ground outside. We had just closed our eyes when the gosh-awfulest ruckus started; it was so bad, it shook the RV.

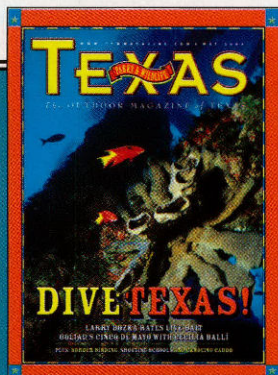
The scene that greeted me when I opened the door was something right out of a traveling pig farmer's nightmare. At least 10 or 15 feral hogs of different sizes were at my doorstep. As I cautiously took stock of what was happening, two large ones, at least 300 pounds (I thought at the time), jumped from the gas bottles that were mounted on the front of the travel trailer. As they scattered I tried to make sense of what had happened and why the scent of an out-of-state travel trailer

would make them attack us. I figured it might have been the Razorback smell, since our vehicles had Arkansas tags.

When all appeared clear, I went outside to find a reminder to all of us who don't like pigs with big teeth. Don't put food anywhere that a pig can reach. I don't know what stool they used, but they managed to climb four or five feet to the top of the gas bottles where I had stored a bag of bird seed.

End of story? Not yet! We returned to bed only to hear a squeal outside. I got up, turned the outside light on, and slowly opened the door. There grazed side-by-side one tusker and a skunk. I turned to grab the camera, and the skunk took off. This would have made me sad had not a raccoon taken its place to calmly have brunch with the hog!

E. R. Rainey
Georgetown



The Dive Valhalla abandoned missile silo site near Abilene is the only one in Texas and is considered the most diver-friendly in the country. However, there is another, limited public access Titan I Missile Silo site near Royal City, Wash.

Erica Brasseux,
Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine

SETTING IT STRAIGHT: Due to reporting errors in "Deep Down Texas," (May 2002), the entrance/exit points for accessing the Comal River in New Braunfels should have been listed as at various locations in Prince Solms Park at Hinman Island and at the Garden Street Bridge.

In the same story, although the Dive Valhalla abandoned missile silo site near Abilene is the only one in Texas and is considered the most diver-friendly in the country, there is another, a limited public access Titan I Missile

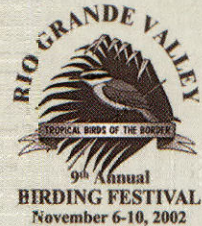
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BLUEBIRD NEST BOX REVISIONS: The April 2002 issue included the plans for building a bluebird nest box. The Texas Bluebird Society Web page,

<www.texasbluebirdsociety.org>, contains nest box plans designed for the Texas heat. To modify the NABS boxes for Texas:

1) Cut 1/2 inch off the side pieces, providing 1/2-inch ventilation at the top of the box. If the box is already mounted, drill several 1/2-inch holes along the top edge of each side.

2) Increase the tapered cut on the floor. Consider drilling additional holes in the bottom for drainage.

3) Increase the size of the roof to 8" by 9", or add an additional roof of this size.

4) Add a larger back to the nest box, or add a second back to existing boxes, extending 1 1/2" to 2" above the nest box and several inches below

Heavier lumber, about 3/4-inch thickness, should be used.

These changes will be reflected in the next edition of the Bluebirds in Texas booklet. The editors of that booklet apologize for the confusion.

Sound off for "Mail Call!"

Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine welcomes letters from our readers. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

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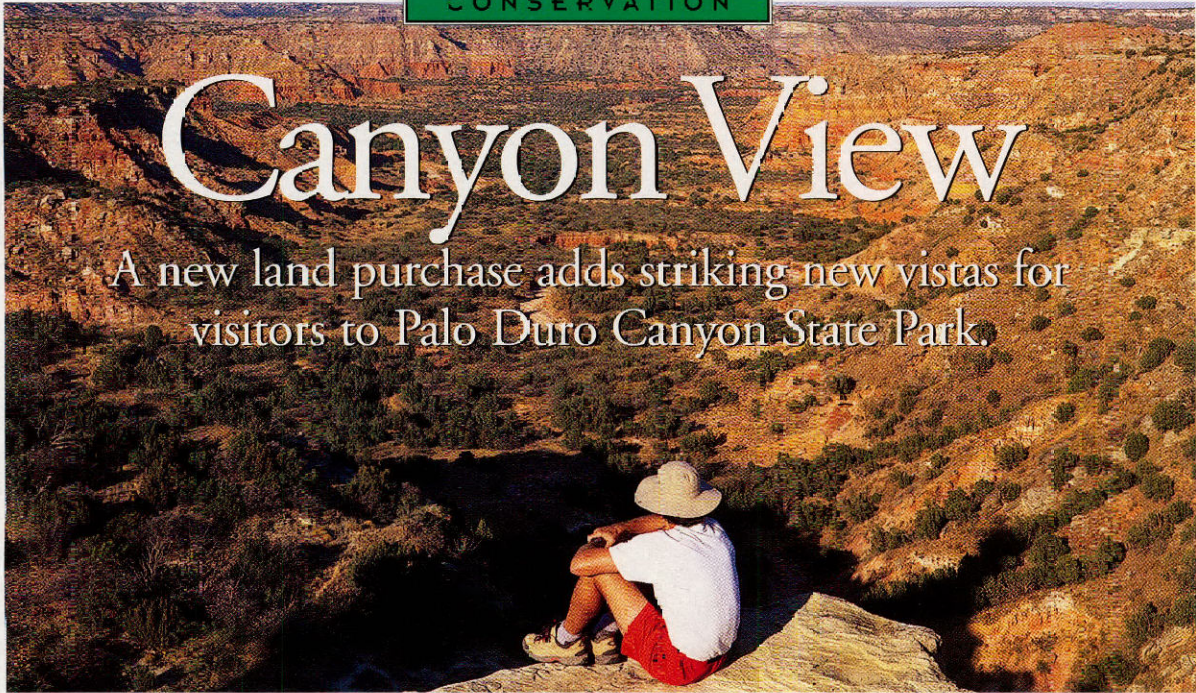
SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

CONSERVATION

Canyon View

A new land purchase adds striking new vistas for visitors to Palo Duro Canyon State Park.



The rich habitats of Palo Duro Canyon State Park, 20 miles south of Amarillo, recently became even more diverse. Earlier this year, Texas Parks and Wildlife purchased a 2,036-acre plot of land adjacent to the park's southern boundary known as Cañoncita Ranch.

The property is off-limits to the public, but after a planning stage it will be open with restricted access. Once unveiled it will offer visitors an opportunity to step into a strikingly beautiful ecosystem with engaging views that cannot be observed from the current park grounds. For example, from the present park grounds, a visitor's gaze can be directed only at Palo Duro Canyon, for the most part. From the ranch, however, people will be able to see the rare spectacle of Palo Duro Canyon converging with North Cita Canyon and South Cita Canyon.

"The view is impressive and unique from the Cañoncita Ranch grounds," says Hi Newby, park manager at Palo Duro Canyon. "The ecosystem there is totally different

from that of the main park entrance."

Cañoncita Ranch sports juniper-covered cliffs and galleries of cottonwood trees throughout the canyon floor. Canyon edge and prairie fuse together to house wildlife such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, boudard sheep, coyotes and even the Palo Duro mouse, which is on the state's endangered species list. Birds routinely spotted include raptors like the Cooper's hawk, prairie birds such as the horned lark and brush species like buntings and robins.

The property includes 350 acres of shortgrass prairie, which is a native habitat to this area yet is not found in the existing park. Newby believes that a sound burn plan will aid in conserving the shortgrass prairie habitat on the ranch.

"It is very critical to sustain the shortgrass prairie here," says Newby. "Because of development for farmland and cities, there isn't a lot of prairie land left, so it is important to preserve a native habitat that has had a legacy in this region for hundreds of years."

— *Gariand Levit*



CONSERVATION

CITIZENS PROTECTING WILDLIFE

TPW's Operation Game Thief program celebrates 20 years.



\$1,000 reward, and when word of the incident got out in the community, people were quick to call in and provide information that helped identify the 10 people ultimately charged in the case." According to state and federal law enforcement officials, the slaughter was the single largest illegal killing of game in Texas in many years and could be the single largest illegal killing of antelope ever recorded in the United States.

From the opportunist crappie fisherman who chalks his over-the-bag-limit catch to "making up for the times he can't get off work to fish," to the commercialized rings of trophy deer poachers, numerous types of wildlife exploitation exist. And while some 450 game wardens help protect our wildlife and safeguard the properties of millions of Texans, it's simply too large a task to be handled alone. Thanks to phone

More than 500 guests are expected to head to Houston on Saturday, June 1, for the "Salutin' and Boot Scootin'" 20th anniversary celebration and fundraising event for Operation Game Thief, Texas' official conservation crime stoppers program.

And if the auction of top-notch hunting and fishing trips and live entertainment by country music star Jerry Jeff Walker aren't enough to keep the guests engaged, the unique decor certainly will.

"The 'Wall of Shame' exhibit includes all kinds of illegal poaching paraphernalia, from fish-shocking devices to guns that were taken as part of illegal hunting operations," says Buddy Turner, assistant chief of wildlife enforcement for Texas Parks and Wildlife. "Taxidermy mounts that were seized as a result of illegal action are also on display. OGT takes this exhibit to more than 30 locations each year with the hopes of educating the public about the extent of poaching activity in Texas."

Authorized in 1981 as a result of laws passed by the 67th Texas Legislature to help curtail poaching, OGT, a function of the law enforcement division of Texas Parks and Wildlife, has proven highly successful. During the past two decades OGT has received more than 24,000 phone calls, paid out more than \$150,000 in anonymous rewards and helped make cases to levy more than \$1 million in fines.

"One of the most recent, rather large cases was in the Texas Panhandle last December," says Turner. "A number of people, some from out of state, were involved in the illegal killing of about two dozen antelope. OGT immediately posted a

tips provided by citizens, OGT has helped bring to trial some of the highest profile Texas conservation crime cases of the 20th century.

"The support from the public has been great," says Turner. "They realize that wardens can't be everywhere at once and that we need all the eyes and ears out there that we can get. If a person's tip provides us with enough information to obtain a conviction, we'll award them up to \$1,000."

For more information, contact Buddy Turner at (512) 389-4626 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/enforce/ogt/index.htm>. Citizens with knowledge of a flagrant game or fish violation are encouraged to call OGT's 24-hour hotline at (800) 792-GAME (4263).

— Erica H. Brasseur

FIELD NOTES

ANNIE, GET YOUR GUN!

TPW's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program offers weekend workshops for women that include a core curriculum of activities from shooting sports and horsemanship to camping, backpacking and first aid. Depending on the workshop location, additional classes such as sailing, kayaking, boating, fishing and falconry also are available. Upcoming seminars will be held in Wimberley Aug. 16 - 18 and in Brownwood Oct. 25 - 27. For more information on this year's BOW programs visit <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/edu/baow/> or call (512) 389-8198.



LIFE SAVERS

Kill switches on motorboats save lives.

When Alfonso Campos compiles boating accident data, the most chilling types of mishaps he reads about are those in which a boater falls out of his vessel and is struck by his own motor.

"We had several instances in 2001 where the operator fell out of a boat that continued in a circular path, killing or injuring the operator in the water," says Campos, assistant chief of marine enforcement for Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Most boats, including personal watercraft (PWCs), come equipped with a kill switch — also known as a shut/cut-off switch, ignition safety device or safety lanyard. A personal watercraft operator is required to have attached to him or to his clothing a kill switch while operating on public waters. Once properly attached, the device acts to "kill" the engine if he inadvertently gets dumped into the lake, river or bay.

Originally invented to avert an incident of a passengerless boat torpedoing toward a shoreline, a crowded swimming area or a dock, the device is now considered one of the most important accessories aboard a vessel. "Along with personal flotation devices, which are the number-one way to reduce water fatalities, I would rate kill switches as high on the list of equipment that saves lives," says Campos.

The most common boating accidents, according to data kept by Texas Parks and Wildlife, involve excessive speeds and no proper boat lookout. In some of these types of accidents, and in some near misses, the operator is ejected from the boat

because of a sudden stop or swerve. This is where the kill switch could save his life and, perhaps, the lives of others.

Up until a decade ago, many of these types of accidents would occur each year. Boat manufacturers, especially those developing new and exciting PWCs, heeded the call to provide ignition safety switches for all watercraft. The lanyards are part of the boating safety lexicon of retailers, too. According to Terry Cox of Sail & Ski in Austin, "We stress boating safety and the use of safety lanyards in all of our new boat orientations. It also is in our customer pre-delivery checklist."



Much like the use of safety belts in automobiles, some boat operators ignore the advice and fail to wear the lanyard while cruising on Texas waters. "I notice in some of the boats stored at our facility that there are unused lanyards still affixed to the control units," says Cox.

But you won't find Mark Woods out on the water without his kill switch. "I'm personally a believer," says Woods, who owns Woods Fun Center in Austin. "I once was tossed from a boat long before safety lanyards came out. If it weren't for my dad's quick actions, I, too, may have been a statistic."

— Steve Hall

To register for TPW's boater education course, call (800) 792-1112 (menu 62) or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us>. Boaters under age 18 born on or after Sept. 1, 1984, must pass the course to operate legally on Texas public waters. Certain exemptions apply.

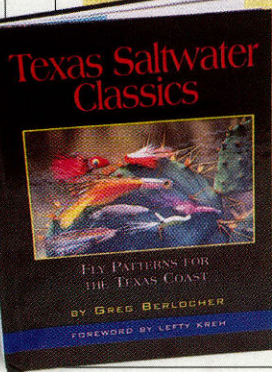
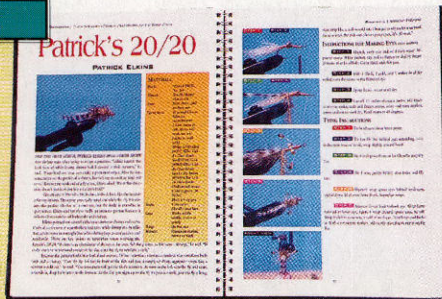
TEXAS READER

Father's Day Tie

Looking for a new twist on an old favorite this Father's Day? Pick up Greg Berlocher's *Texas Saltwater Classics: Fly Patterns for the Texas Coast* (\$29.95, Texas Fish and Game Publishing).

Berlocher makes each spread both entertaining and instructive, with personal bios of fly tyers on the left-hand pages, and detailed step-by-step instructions on replicating the fly on the right. As an added benefit, the book is hardcovered and spiral-bound, so it can be propped up and opened flat by your tying vise. Some of Texas' premier fly anglers are featured, with a foreword by the legendary Lefty Kreh. This book is destined to be a keepsake for any serious fly fisher; I'm already looking forward to Volume II.

— Susan L. Ebert



TOP PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMIS; BOOK PHOTOS BY BILL REAVES

FIELD TEST

Bait Buckets

These handy, portable buckets keep bait fresh and frisky.

BY GIBBS MILLIKEN

Remember those squeaky, rusty metal bait buckets from your childhood? They are now a thing of the past — replaced by durable plastic containers that are like portable life-support systems in themselves. Most of the new designs incorporate small, battery-powered aeration pumps and chemical additives that help delicate bait like minnows, shad, croaker and shrimp stay lively even on hot summer days.

The convenient **Flow Troll** (\$10.99, Model #4501, Frabill, (800) 558-1005, www.frabill.com) six-quart container is a proven design that may be towed at trolling speeds or used attached to a belt for wade fishing. The hydrodynamic, torpedo-shaped bucket glides through the water without rolling or flipping over and automatically aerates the bait. A weighted keel keeps the bucket floating upright for easy access to the spring-loaded push lid, door lock and retracting handle. When the bucket is carried away from water, a small aerator can be added to supply oxygen. The Flow Troll holds only a small quantity of bait, but it is about the right size for an individual fishing alone.

The larger, 10-quart **Four Seasons Live Bait Bucket** (\$12.99, Model

#4505, Frabill) is a two-piece traditional unit with a solid outer container and perforated inner shell that may be removed and floated separately for natural aeration. Bait is accessed through a manual, snap-closing lid. During transport, insert a weighted air stone attached by tubing to an aeration device on the bucket's side.

Both of these models have a tendency to slosh water when you carry them. It is best to place them in a second open container, like a five-gallon plastic utility pail, that can later double as a seat or fish receptacle.

The **Cool Bubbles** system (\$46.15, Model CB-5, Marine Metal Products, (727) 461-5575, www.marinemetal.com) is sturdy and excellent. It includes an insulated 11.5-quart low-profile pail with a detachable Big Bubbles 1.5-volt watertight aerator and accessories. The lid is well constructed with extra insulation and positive snap closure. The Styrofoam liner helps keep the temperature consistent and may be removed from the pail for cleaning. The manufacturer claims the pump runs reliably in both fresh and salt water for more than 80 hours on one set of 2-D alkaline batteries.

One of the newest and largest portable units is the **Aqualife Bait Station** (\$64.99, Model #1406, Frabill), consisting of a six-gallon insulated container with air-pump and batteries sealed in a watertight lid. The interior has no exposed cords or tubes, allowing easy retrieval of the bait — even at night, with a light that automatically turns on when the lid is opened. The system runs on one or two D-size alkaline batteries or converts to a 12-volt system with a special adapter included in the kit. The combined weight of the pail with water and hardware is considerable, but also ideal for many fishing situations.

For additional care in keeping bait alive, add a small amount of formula like **Bait Saver** (\$3.29, two-ounce size, Professional Sporting Goods, (800) 835-2248) to the container water to control toxic ammonia waste, chlorine and heavy-metal contamination. This product also stimulates the production of protective mucus coating on bait fish and calms their behavior. An even simpler solution is the new **Aqualung Packet** (\$5.99, three packages, Model #1043, Frabill), which turns any one- or two-gallon bucket into an aerated bait well for up to nine hours without accessories or power. In each package, dissolving tablets supply the correct dosage of oxygenation and water-conditioning ingredients.

For best results with any live bait system, try to keep the water temperature within a constant plus or minus 10 degrees of the original water source. Every few hours, especially in warm weather, exchange about one-third of the water in a closed system. ★

From left: Flow Troll container with a thick braided poly-rope attached; Four Seasons Live Bait Bucket; Cool Bubbles system; Aqualife Bait Station.

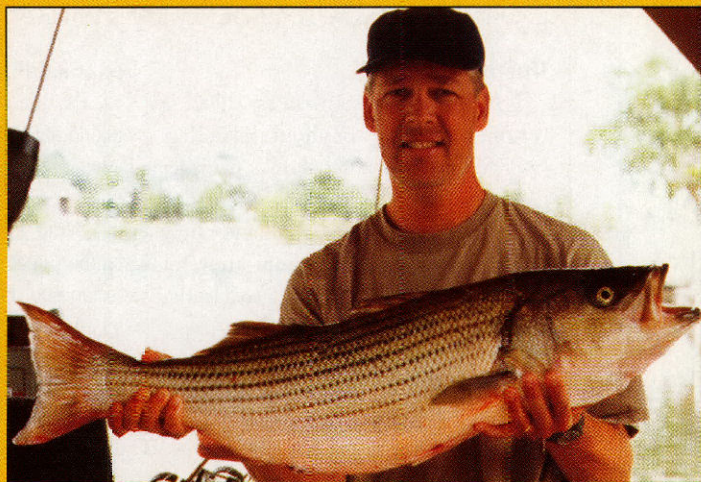


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Knots to Know

Here are three great fishing knots that go beyond the basics.

BY BILL HARVEY

ILLUSTRATION BY NARDA LEBO

In the summer of 1999, I hooked my first red drum on a fly. As the fish neared my reach, it made one last run — and never stopped running. The knot I had tied to secure the fly to the leader slipped and then came undone. As the old saying goes, “A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.”

The same goes for fishing tackle. Here are three resilient knots that are easy to tie and highly effective for various angling situations.

Uni-Knot

The uni-knot (sometimes called a “grinner knot”) is just about the perfect knot for securing lures, hooks or other tackle to your fishing line. When tied correctly, it will not slip at all and rarely fails. I routinely use the uni-knot for securing larger, saltwater flies to a leader and for lures of just about every type. Tying this knot is a breeze.

1. Thread the tag end through the eye of the hook, swivel or lure about six inches and then fold it back to form two parallel lines. Then bring the tag end (the part of the line to which the lure is tied) back in a circle toward the eye.

2. Make five or six turns with the tag end around the double line and through the circle. Grasp the doubled line at the point where it passes through the eye, and pull the tag to snug the turns.

3. Pull the standing line (the part of the line fixed to the reel) to slide the knot up against the eye and pull until tight.

4. Trim the tag end.

Blood Knot

The blood knot is a great way to connect two sections of monofilament fishing line of equal or unequal diameter. As such, it is a favorite among fishermen who create their own leaders from several sections of unequal diameter line. It has good knot strength and, when tied correctly, is quite streamlined, so it runs through the guides of a

rod smoothly.

1. Lay the sections of line you are connecting parallel to each other with about six inches of tag line overlapping in both directions.

2. Wrap the first tag around the other standing line about five turns. Then bring the tag end back toward the first turn and slip it between the two line sections.

3. Repeat the process with the second tag line.

4. Grasp both tag ends and both standing lines and pull the knot until it is snug. Trim the tag.

Palomar Knot

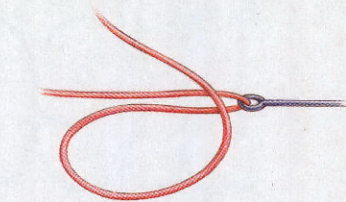
I use the palomar knot most often for securing swivels, snaps, hooks and small artificial lures. The double-wrap nature of the knot adds resilience and strength. This easy-to-tie knot is great for beginners and children.

1. Double the line to form a loop about three inches long. Pass the loop end through the eye of the hook.

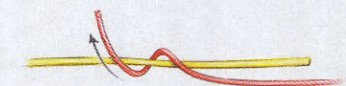
2. Hold the standing line between your thumb and finger, grasp the loop with the free hand and form a simple overhand knot.

3. Here is the cool part: Pass the hook through the loop and pull the line away from the hook while slipping the loop over the eye.

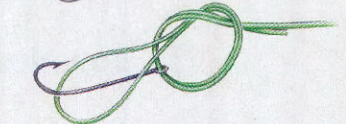
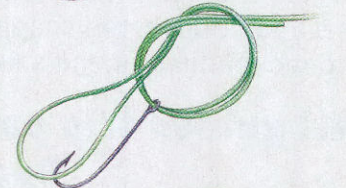
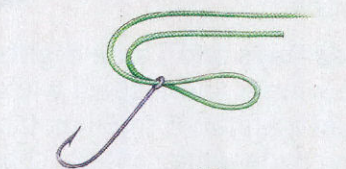
4. Pull the tag to secure the knot snugly, and trim the tag. ★



Uni-Knot



Blood Knot



Palomar Knot



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Adrift in Seadrift

The water off Indianola is green to the beach, always a good sign when you are fishing for speckled trout and redfish.

But my quarry this afternoon is more elusive: history. Of all the historic places in Texas, Indianola is one of my favorites. At midday the curving white oyster-shell beach is mostly deserted, but just south of the last deep blue picnic shelter, an old man and

a boy tend four surf rods from the shade of a camper shell on their pickup. Near this same site some 300 years earlier, Karankawa Indians, using fish traps woven from cane, looked up from their catch to see a strange sight: three boats, far larger than the dugout canoes they used, with white sails puffed out and the French flag snapping in the February breeze.

Today a statue stands where the explorer LaSalle is believed to have stepped ashore that day. After LaSalle — and the Spanish who arrived a few years later seeking to eradicate the French presence, a job already taken care of by the Indians — little happened here for nearly two centuries. Boatloads of German immigrants began arriving in 1844, on their way to found New Braunfels and Fredericksburg. In those days, history moved at a glacial pace incomprehensible in today's world of instant messaging and voicemail. The contrast goes far to explain the charm of this spot.

Later arrivals included members of the United States Boundary Commission, on their way to survey the line between the United States and Mexico after the Mexican War; two shiploads of camels used as experimental cargo carriers by the U.S. Army for a time; and blocks of

ice quarried in New England and shipped south to alleviate the brutal heat of the Texas summer.

Indianola, with a population of 5,000, boomed as the second-busiest seaport in Texas until September 16, 1875, when a powerful hurricane wiped it out. The city was rebuilt, but little more



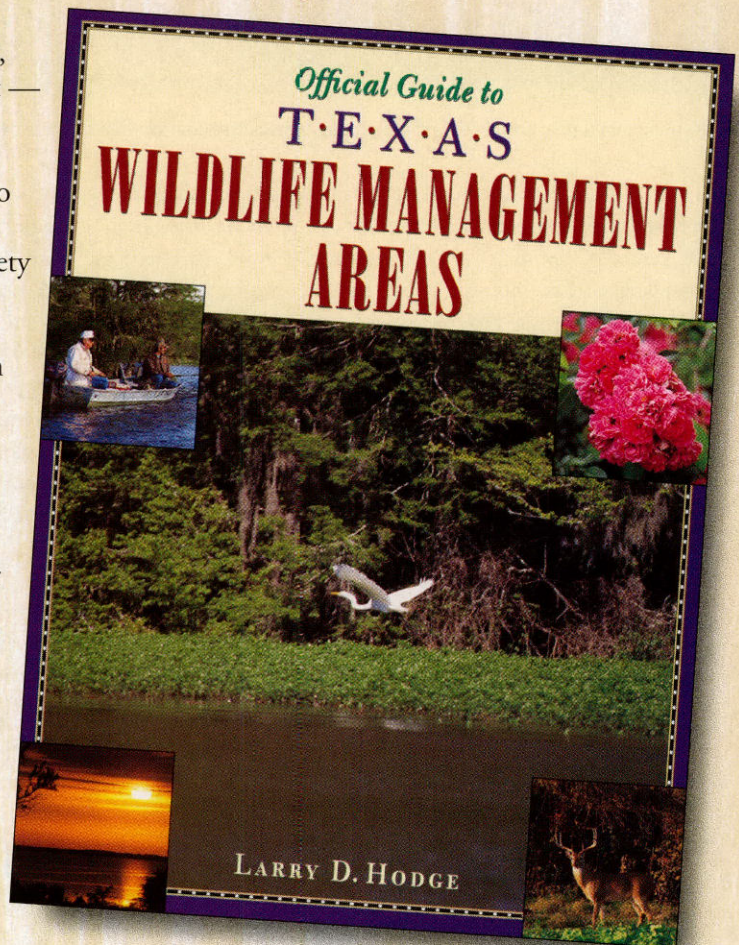
YOUR GUIDE TO WILD TEXAS

OFFICIAL GUIDE TO TEXAS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS



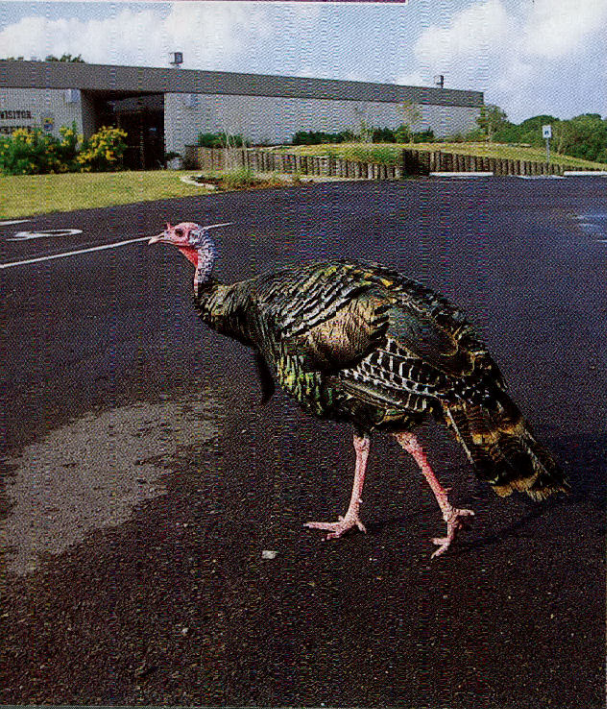
Here's an insider's look at Texas' undiscovered places to bird, hike, bike, camp, canoe, fish and hunt — the 51 Texas wildlife management areas. Larry D. Hodge shares tips from guides, biologists and recreational users on how to enjoy the many activities offered by these unspoiled areas. Learn where to see a variety of wildlife near major cities, camp in magnificent isolation in the Big Bend or canoe amid towering trees. The profile on each WMA includes information on history, geography, nearby state parks, recreational facilities, outdoor activities available and wheelchair accessibility. Handy locator maps and easy-to-follow driving directions are included. Full-color photographs enhance the descriptions. Each chapter includes pointers from pros on the best places for each kind of activity and a feature on some interesting aspect of the area.

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275 pp., color photographs throughout,
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A young tom turkey patrols the parking lot at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Back in Seadrift, murals around town portray community history.

than 10 years later another Gulf storm, accompanied by fire, wreaked total destruction. Vestiges remain: a few tombstones in the cemetery, remnants of concrete cisterns using oyster shells for aggregate. But you walk on the bones of history here.

I stop by and visit with the fishers I'd spotted, Henry DeDear of Kenedy and his grandson, Steven Miller of Ingleside. Fishing is slow except for the hardhead catfish and eels stealing the shrimp off their hooks. Bottle-nosed dolphins cruise the shoreline, but the trout and redfish seem to be on vacation, although a small red darts at my spinnerbait on my first cast. I fish for an hour, then head for Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area, almost due west across the peninsula.

The sun hangs low in the west as I reach the wildlife viewing platform (Great Coastal Birding Trail site CTC 036) on Texas 35 overlooking Buffalo Lake. This wetland area is probably the single best birding site in the area. It holds thousands of birds year-round and offers what is at times the best public duck hunting on the coast in the winter. But I'm here for the wood storks, and they are present in plenty. To my surprise, however, they are accompanied by a color guard of roseate spoonbills. The spoonbills' pink is almost shocking compared to the wood storks' black and white.

The next morning I head for the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge under skies black with both night and rain. Drops pounce my windshield as I pull into the visitor center parking lot at 6:45 a.m. The rain slackens in a few minutes, and soon there's enough light for photographs, so I head out on the 16-mile driving loop.

What follows is one of the most magical mornings I have ever experienced. The ending of the rain apparently sparked animals to move about and feed, and everywhere I look I see another animal. In less than an hour and a half I see, by actual count, 68 white-tailed deer (13 of them bucks), one cottontail rabbit, three javelinas, six feral hogs and a turkey hen with four poults. The

trip confirms the value of prescribed burns for enhancing wildlife habitat, for fully two-thirds of the deer are on recently burned land.

A rainbow is a welcome bonus, as are the alligators I find when I hike the Rail Trail. A slough runs alongside the trail, and after a couple of double takes, I realize that what looks like a log isn't always one. Sometimes it's an alligator pretending to be a log, waiting for breakfast. I spot four in a 50-yard stretch of the slough, all showing just eyes and snout or part of a tail through the blanket of duckweed covering the water.

But the best is yet to come. I am totally unprepared for what greets me in the parking lot of the visitor center — a young tom turkey, or jake, that seems to have appointed himself official greeter and vehicle inspector for the refuge. I spot him as I pull into a parking space, and I quickly reach for my camera to snap a picture before he flees. I don't have to worry. He dogs my tracks, pecks at the bumper sticker on my truck, poses for my camera, and at one point appears almost ready to jump into my truck. He's still there when I come out of the visitor center.

The visitor center offers explanations of each of the kinds of habitat on the refuge, and mounted animals are integrated with painted backgrounds to show what lives where. It's a good way to start your tour if you aren't familiar with the kinds of animals you'll be seeing. Another good reason to start with the visitor center is that they have loaner binoculars available. Also, if you plan to fish the shoreline, you'll need to talk to a park ranger, who will show you where fishing is allowed. All fishing is done by wading only; no boats are allowed.

I've learned there is a secret to successful fishing on the Texas coast: Hire a guide. You'll pay \$250 or so for a day on the water, but guides provide three things essential to catching fish: bait, boat and beaucoup places to fish. Without a guide you'll run right past the best fishing places; with a guide, you'll prospect a series of probable places until one works. Numerous guides

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Port Lavaca/Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce,
P.O. Box 528, Port Lavaca, TX 77979; (800) 556-7678;
<www.calhountx.org>.

Coastal Bend Guides Association, <www.cbga.org>.

Bay Flats Waterfowl and Fishing Guide Service, (888)
677-4868; <www.bayflatswaterfowl.com>.

work out of Port O'Connor, Port Lavaca and Seadrift, the three principal towns in the area. (If you're a diehard do-it-yourselfer, pick up a copy of the *Calhoun County Guide to Good Fishing* from the Port Lavaca Chamber of Commerce, or take the Texas Parks and Wildlife ferry from Port O'Connor out to Matagorda Island State Park. During the trip you can get fishing tips from the crew.)

The downside to fishing with a guide is the hours they keep. Most prefer to be fishing when the sky first begins to lighten, requiring you to be on the water by 5:30 a.m. during summer months. But the sight of a speckled trout blowing up on a top-water lure, or the singing of a reel as a redfish strips line, makes the early hour worthwhile. I fish out of Seadrift with Captain T.J. Christensen of Bay Flats Lodge, and we are into trout before the sun comes up. A shower drenches us to the skin, but fishing with water running down your back while you are battling a fish is a refreshing experience. When a 20-inch trout smacks the croaker on my hook and then makes a break for the Conti Lake shoreline, I forget all about being wet.

Already soaked, we slip over the side and wade in water up to

mid-thigh. Wade fishing is like swimming without all the work and with the added fun of being able to catch fish. Mullet are going crazy in the water all around us, and T.J. comments that the fish are feeding. Our catch in the next half-hour proves it, as we pull in not only trout but also a flounder, some hardhead and gafftopsail catfish, and a 27-inch redfish.

The redfish itself is a minor miracle. During the so-called Redfish Wars of the 1970s, Seadrift was the epicenter of resistance by commercial fishers to efforts to end commercial harvest of red drum. Today the redfish are back in numbers and sizes undreamed of prior to passage of the law, and Seadrift welcomes recreational fishers while still supporting shrimp and oyster boats. Murals on buildings around town portray various facets of community history from happier times. I exit Barkett's Restaurant — where I've just discovered fried softshell crabs — in time to see the latest mural going up on the wall of the Bay Motel across the street. Owners Gaye and Ken Corwin answer my query as to whether I can take pictures with, "Sure, if you'll help put it up." Minutes later, artist Betty Moone appears to point out little secret touches in the mural: Gaye's name on one of the boats, the motel's phone number as the boat number on another. By the time you see it, Betty promises to have fixed one detail she overlooked: white rubber boots on the deckhand of the shrimp boat.

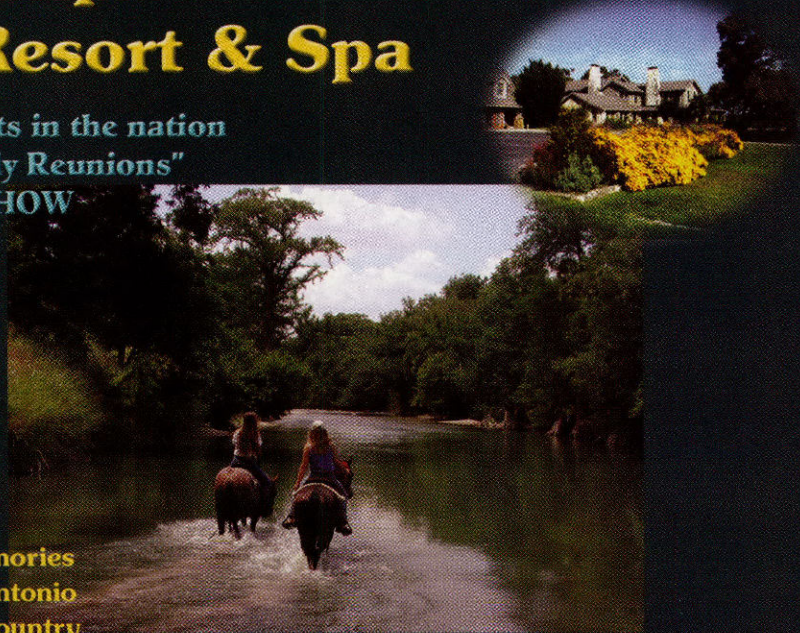
From Seadrift to Indianola, this whole peninsula, hemmed by San Antonio, Espíritu Santo, Matagorda and Lavaca bays, is full of little secret places waiting to be discovered and savored. The Port O'Connor Chamber of Commerce calls the area "the natural place to be." That's more truth than hype. ☆

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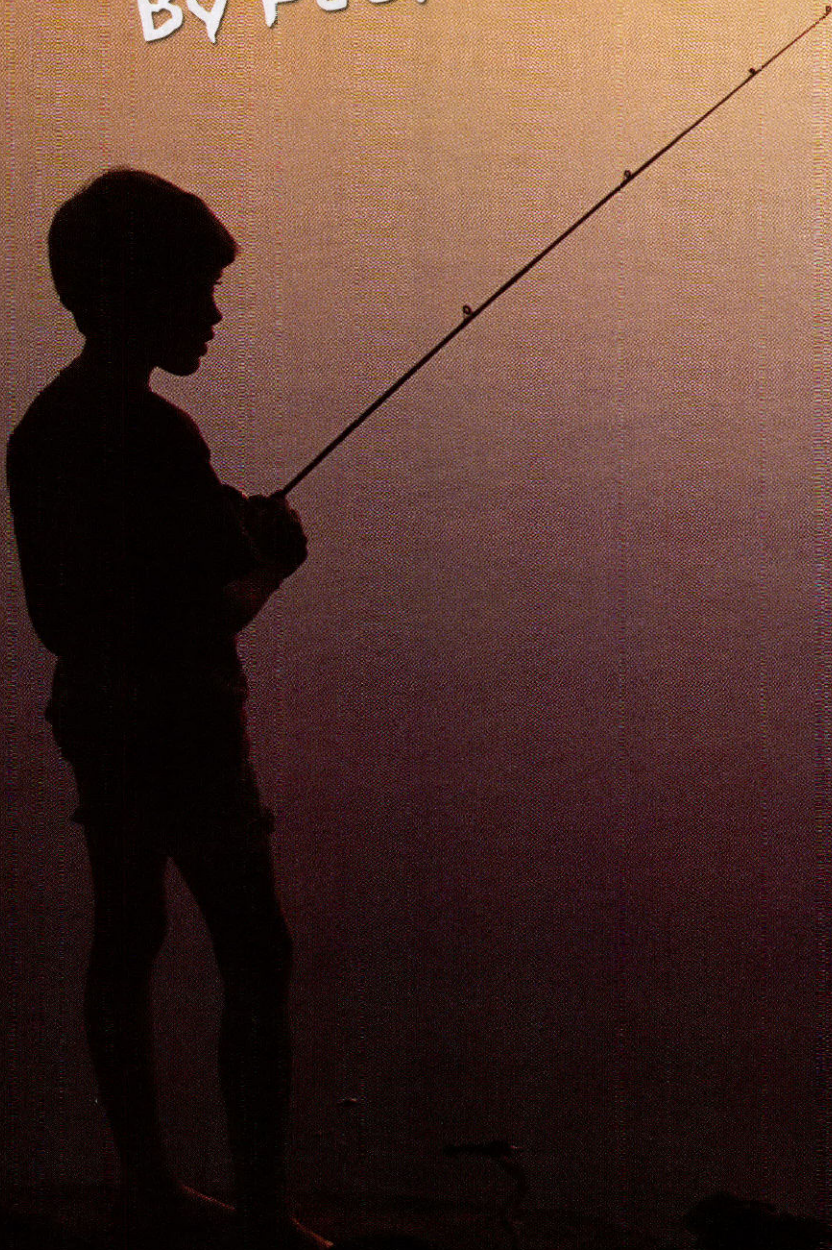


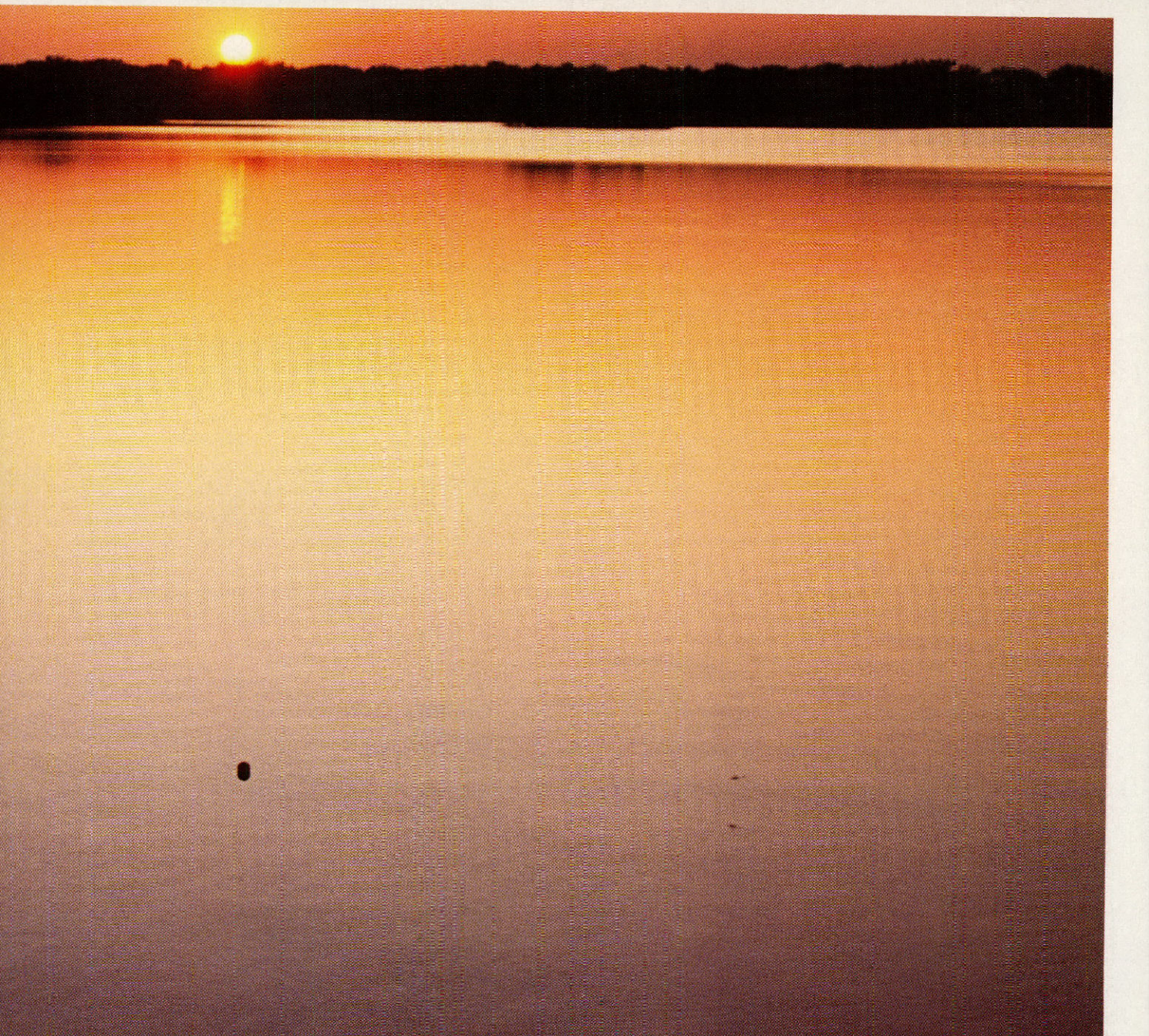
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Here Comes the Sun

Sunfishing opens up new horizons for young anglers — and creates a lifetime of memories.

By Paul A. Cañada





There were four of us that summer
— Kelvin, David, Alan and me.

For most people, the summer of 1970 was a troublesome time. The war in Vietnam continued to take American lives and antiwar protests were spilling off college campuses and into the streets. But when there are jackrabbits to chase, horned lizards to trap and sunfish to catch, a young boy's mind rarely considers the affairs of faraway places.

The four of us

had just finished our sixth year of school and were looking forward to summer. At 12 years of age, each of us had a healthy curiosity of yet-undiscovered places and a great need for outdoor adventures. Despite obvious differences in our backgrounds and personalities, we were as close as any four friends could possibly be.

One hot summer day, Kelvin suggested we all sleep over his house and go fishing the next morning. Although I had never actually wet a line, I accepted Kelvin's invitation. Following dinner, I gathered up my pillow, blanket and transistor radio and raced over to Kelvin's backyard, where his dad was putting up the family tent.

I didn't own a sleeping bag, rod, reel or any tackle. Like most of my friends' dads, my father was stationed abroad and serving his country, while my mother was left to raise three difficult boys. The sparse money the military paid my father barely covered the house payments and seldom put enough food on the table. Despite my mother's best efforts, I had already been arrested twice for shoplifting and suspended from school a half-dozen times for fighting. Looking back, I can see now how desperately I needed a father's stern but helpful hand.

Thankfully, Kelvin had plenty of fishing equipment and promised to lend me an older fishing outfit. Having grown up in the country, Kelvin knew how to catch fish and, more important, how to hunt down the bait. When it got late, the four of us combed our front yards for crickets and earthworms. I had never collected bait before, but after an hour, I had successfully contributed a dozen large worms to the red coffee can. I figured that if fishing was as much fun as hunting bait, I was sure to have a great time in the morning.

We collected the coffee can and cricket basket and gathered in the tall tent. Flashlights illuminated the bartering that took place on the canvas floor as tackle collections were proudly displayed. Kelvin's dad startled us all when he unexpectedly swung open the tent flap and flipped a tin box into my lap. "Here you go, Pee-Wee," he said, smiling.

Mr. Breeden had filled a rusted tea tin with split-shot, a half-dozen Aberdeen hooks, a red-and-white spoon and a couple of small spinners. Kelvin's father couldn't have anticipated how his small act of generosity would spark the curiosity in his neighbor's young boy.

Celebrating the Sunfish

While Texas Parks and Wildlife's Dick Luebke is better known for his knowledge and research on trophy largemouth bass, his personal angling pursuits are strictly focused on the many species of sunfish that inhabit Texas waters. Luebke, the research program director at the Heart of the Hills Research Station, has fond memories of growing up in Wisconsin and spending summers pursuing sunfish with his father.

"I grew up in the north, where panfish are extremely popular, and many anglers specialize in fishing strictly for sunfish," recalls Luebke. "Like most kids, fishing for bluegills was my introduction to the sport. Of course, like many anglers in the

north, I still enjoy fishing for sunfish."

The sunfish is indeed the novice angler's treasure. Few sport fish do more to build an angler's skill and confidence, as well as cultivate a love for fishing and the outdoors, than sunfish. Like a floppy-eared puppy racing across a yard to fetch a ball, the sunfish seems eager to chase down every lure that happens by.

Unlike fishing for the always-persnickety largemouth, the willing sunfish seldom requires a specific lure, an exact retrieval speed or the precise placement of the bait. Bluegill, redear and warmouth alike will readily strike at a passing spinner, take a drowned cricket or nibble at a lifeless wad of breadcrumb.

Moreover, the sunfish cares even less about the size of an angler's wallet. While it's true many sunfish aficionados prefer the sensitivity of a pricey composite rod, an inexpensive spin-cast outfit often produces similar results. Many trophy-sized sunfish were hooked and landed on outfits sporting reels that closely resembled a talking mouse, pizza-eating turtle or purple dinosaur.

Of course, the popularity of sunfish throughout the United States is due chiefly to the fish's accessibility. In most fisheries, sunfish populations are prolific and inhabit most of the available shallow-water habitat in a pond, lake or impoundment. Any shallow weed bed, rip-rap wall or boat dock will hold its fair share of aggressive panfish. The fish's preference for shallow cover places great numbers of hungry fish well within the casting range of most boaters and shorebound anglers — adults and children alike.

"I mean no offense to those who might differ with me," says Luebke, "but I am not interested in making cast after cast, hour after hour, for a few bass. I want my rod bent and line tight all the time. Sunfish were especially made for that kind of fishing. It doesn't matter what species of sunfish you're targeting. They're all aggressive and fight real hard."

Locating Spawning "Bulls"

Predictably, a fishery's largest sunfish are most accessible to shorebound anglers during the spawn. Beginning in late spring, when water temperatures consistently reach between 64 and 75 degrees, sunfish begin moving into the shallow pocket water of protected bays and coves to spawn. It's during this time that the "bulls" (trophy-sized males and females) are the easiest to locate. More important, the big fish are aggressive and willing to take both live bait and artificial lures.

While locating spawning sunfish isn't much of a problem, finding the bigger "bulls" can be a bit tougher. Trophy-sized sunfish spawn in different areas than do the smaller, more abundant versions. The smaller fish nest in fairly shallow water and in close proximity to the bank. Because great numbers of the smaller fish nest in close proximity to each other, the colonies are fairly easy to locate.

The smaller fish often choose nesting sites that provide very little protection from weather or predators. Large colony sites look more like a single, cleared flat rather than a number of individual nests. Understandably, a spawning colony of bluegill or



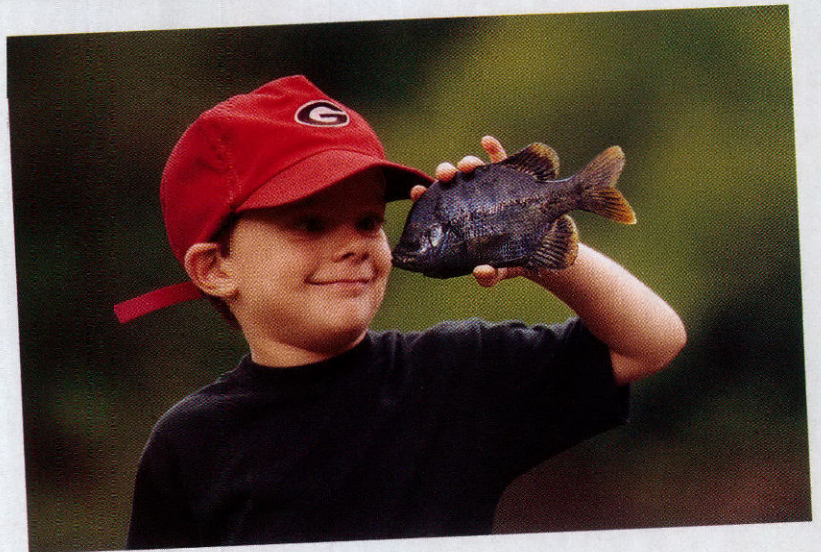


Because artificial lures cover promising water faster, they're often the best choice of bait when anglers are searching for concentrations of fish. More important, pint-sized versions of crankbaits, spinners, plastic tube baits and grubs will catch all sizes and species of sunfish. However, large spawners can be somewhat wary, so live bait often produces greater numbers of trophy-sized fish.

After the Spawn

Following the spawn, the larger "bulls" quickly move out to relatively deeper water. While some large fish do remain shallow, the majority of the trophy-sized fish move to deeper habitat. Of course, deep is relative. In many shallow ponds, a 4-foot to 6-foot depth will hold sizable fish. Conversely, big reservoir fish might be as deep as 15 to 30 feet.

According to Luebke, the larger sunfish have fewer predators and so are more apt to abandon the safety of shallow cover for the advantages of



recreational sunfish can provide some memorable fishing for child and adult alike.

Conversely, the larger "bulls" or "porkers" prefer the safety of relatively deeper (3 to 8 feet) water and will set nests as deep as sunlight penetrates. Of course, the warming rays of the sun penetrate deeper in clearer water, allowing the bigger sunfish to spawn in water as deep as 15 feet. The biggest males prefer nesting sites with a relatively firm bottom (sand, clay or hard loam), where they can sweep a disc-shaped area clear of silt and decaying material. The best sites will offer spawning fish protection from both weather and marauding predators.

Luebke finds truly trophy-sized sunfish place nests alongside cover — such as timber, aquatic plants or the foundation or piling of a boat dock — whenever possible. When nesting in and around aquatic vegetation, such as hydrilla or lily pads, the large, saucer-shaped nests are fairly visible. The lighter color of the sunfish's nest contrasts nicely with the darker surrounding vegetation, making the deeper sites easier to identify. Like the smaller sunfish, "bulls" appear to prefer company and will often spawn in small groupings of a half-dozen or more pairs

deep water. The deeper open water provides the bigger bulls with more preferred-size prey, ideal water temperatures and dissolved oxygen levels.

"Like bass," notes Luebke, "big sunfish normally relate to deep structural edges such as ridges, bluffs and points. During summer months, I typically find the bulls suspending out over deep water and relating to the thermocline. Although they don't form large schools, the big fish do congregate in good numbers."

The smallest fish remain shallow, moving toward the closest available cover. "The smaller fish are restricted to the shallow water by the larger predators, such as bass and catfish," he explains. "They use the shallow cover for concealment and feed on the aquatic insects and small crustaceans found nearby."

No matter the water depth, post-spawn fish are very aggressive and nearly always willing to feed. "The biggest problem isn't trying to determine what bait to use, or getting the fish to

strike,” notes Luebke. “Rather, the real problem is finding the right size of fish to catch.”

Although small artificial lures do catch deep fish, the baits are fairly difficult to fish — manipulate and control — when presented in relatively deep water. Also, because it’s equally tough to detect strikes in the deeper water, most experienced anglers prefer live baits — crickets, meal worms and grubs — over artificial lures when targeting deeper fish.

A meal worm or cricket, weighted by small split-shot and hanging below a thin, European-style float, allows the angler to precisely place baits in the strike zone of suspended fish. The same baits, hooked to a floating jig and dragged behind a heavier split-shot, will tempt those fish holding near the bottom.

When given a choice, Luebke prefers fishing live baits to artificial lures. He finds big sunfish are always willing to eat a cricket or meal worm, and the live baits are considerably cheaper than the artificial lures. And so, on any given Friday night in fall, the accomplished researcher may be found scurrying back and forth, frantically chasing down crickets below the lamps of a store’s parking lot. “That’s a real kick for kids,” he adds. “The

collection of bait is a big part of the adventure. And like many adults, I never outgrew my love for adventure or sunfish.”

The feisty bluegills I caught that day long ago with Kelvin and his father added fuel to the spark kindled the night before by Mr. Breeden’s act of kindness. The angling flame lit that memorable day has burned for decades, nurturing my career as an outdoor writer and creating a legacy to pass down to my own children. Sunfish remain a personal favorite.

Indeed, few anglers ever outgrow the diminutive but always feisty sunfish. Tonight, my youngest son and daughter will join me in the backyard for a ritual of sorts. With flashlights in hand, they will giggle and scream as they push bushes and flowering plants aside in search of bait. Little fingers with mud-encrusted fingernails will tightly hold every cricket and worm they find, as if it were lost bullion.

Tomorrow, we will celebrate every time our feather-like floats dip below the water line and we catch another sunfish. I will remember Mr. Breeden, that rusty tea tin and my first bluegill, as in our family the adventure we call “sunfishing” continues. ☆

INTRODUCING CHILDREN TO FISHING

As parents, grandparents, relatives or family friends, we all want to see the youngsters in our lives enjoy fishing as much we do. Unfortunately, despite our good intentions, many of us struggle to capture the interests of the younger, computer-driven generation. Longtime Lake Fork guide Cheryl Davenport, well-known for her work with introducing fishing to children, offers a few tips to get children hooked on fishing:

Pick the right gear for children. A spin-cast outfit is easy to cast and rarely backlashes. Try a bobbing float — it is entertaining and helps the child detect strikes.

Choose your location and target species carefully for the best chance of success. “A well-managed stock tank or pond full of sunfish is ideal,” says Davenport.

Give younger children your undivided attention. This usually means you need to leave your own rod and reel at home. “You can’t possibly attend to the child’s needs if you’re busy fishing,” she says.

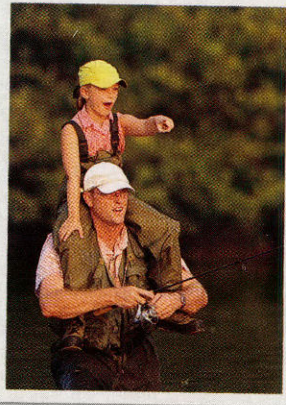
Make the trip entertaining by combining fishing with other fun activities. Allow children to explore their surroundings, skip stones, search for arrowheads or play with the live bait.

Remain flexible, and be ready to end the trip when the child becomes fatigued or bored. A two- to four-hour trip is best for very young children.

SUNFISHING IN STATE PARKS

As is the case with bass, some fisheries produce greater numbers of trophy-sized sunfish. Because sunfish tend to be fairly prolific, they can quickly overpopulate a fishery’s prime habitat. A large population of sunfish, competing for a limited food source, can result in slower growth rates and smaller adults.

“The better fisheries will have a variety of predators — bass, large catfish, striped bass and birds, excellent habitat and a variety of food sources,” notes Luebke. “If the sunfish numbers aren’t held in check by



angler harvest or predators, the population can become stunted.”

Below is a partial list of Texas state parks that provide anglers excellent access to fairly good populations of sunfish.

Caddo Lake State Park, (903) 679-3351. Caddo Lake offers excellent sunfishing. Acres and acres of cypress swamps give bream plenty of food and cover.

Choke Canyon State Park, (361) 786-3868. Choke Canyon Reservoir has good numbers of trophy-sized sunfish. The reservoir has a variety of aquatic vegetation, prey items and predators.

Daingerfield State Park, (903) 645-2921. The lake at Daingerfield offers sunfish plenty of shallow cover, and the population is kept in check by both bass and chain pickerel.

Fairfield Lake State Park, (903) 389-4514. Good shoreline cover and plenty of aquatic vegetation — along with numerous large predators like bass, hybrid striped bass and large catfish — keep sunfish populations strong at Fairfield Lake.

Huntsville State Park, (936) 295-5644. An excellent forage base and nutrient-rich water, aquatic vegetation and predators add up to an excellent fishery.

Meridian State Park, (254) 435-2536. This is north-central Texas’ hot spot for sizable sunfish. The plentiful shoreline vegetation provides bream with plenty of terrestrial food items.

Purtis Creek State Park, (903) 425-2332. A lake full of timber and hydrilla, along with a trophy bass fishery and nutrient-rich waters, have created one of the better sunfish populations in the state. Purtis Creek produced the state record bluegill, 11.5 inches long and weighing 1.81 pounds.

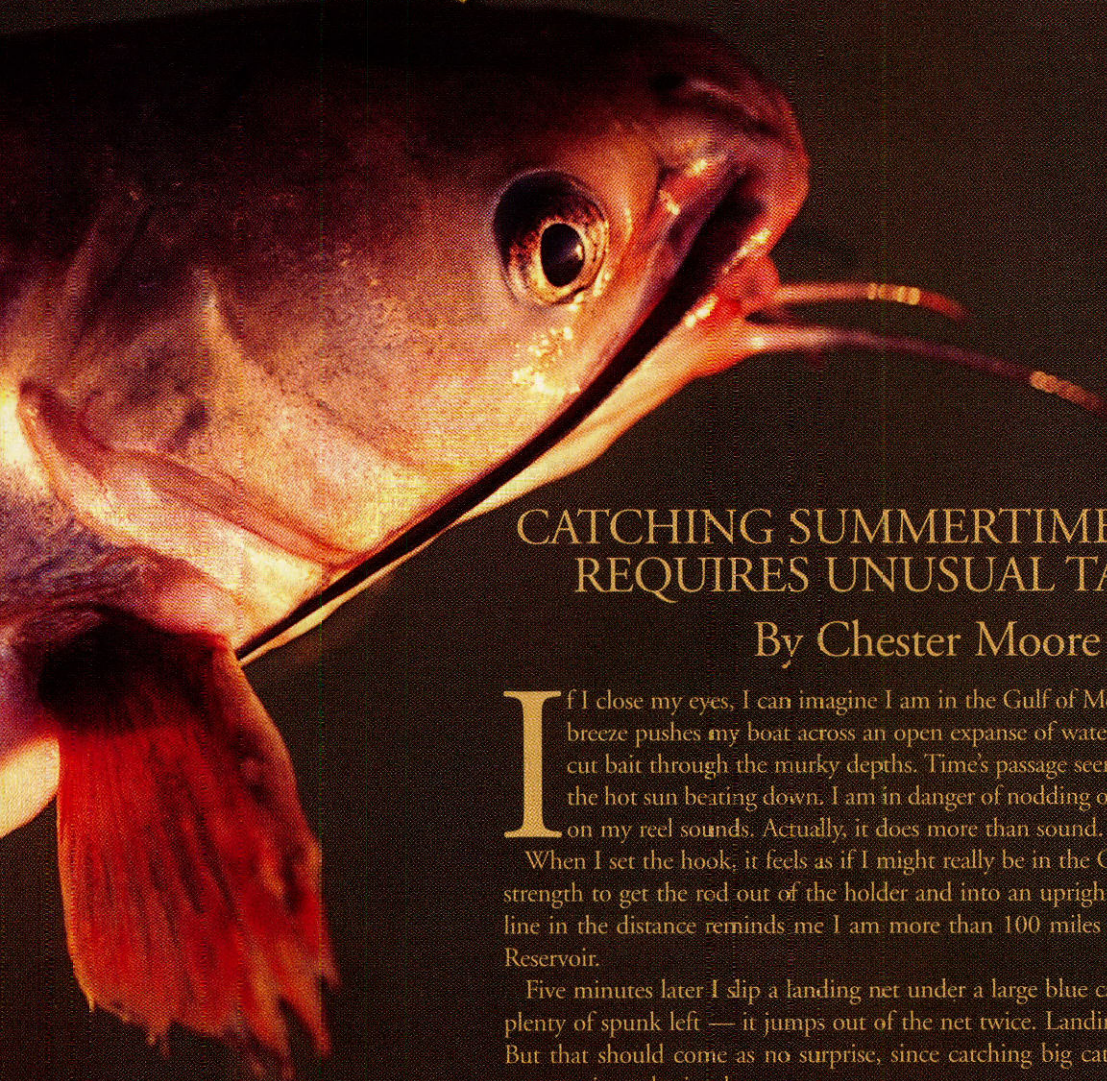
Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, (903) 676-BASS. Nearby Lake Athens has an excellent population of sunfish, including lots of “bull” bluegills. TFFC will host a sunfish tournament on Sept. 28. Call for information.

Stalking



PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS

Big Cats



CATCHING SUMMERTIME CATFISH
REQUIRES UNUSUAL TACTICS.

By Chester Moore

If I close my eyes, I can imagine I am in the Gulf of Mexico. A gentle southerly breeze pushes my boat across an open expanse of water as I drift a big hunk of cut bait through the murky depths. Time's passage seems to be made slower by the hot sun beating down. I am in danger of nodding off — until the line alarm on my reel sounds. Actually, it does more than sound. It screams.

When I set the hook, it feels as if I might really be in the Gulf. I have to use all my strength to get the rod out of the holder and into an upright position. Only the tree line in the distance reminds me I am more than 100 miles inland, on Toledo Bend Reservoir.

Five minutes later I slip a landing net under a large blue catfish that seems to have plenty of spunk left — it jumps out of the net twice. Landing this fish was not easy. But that should come as no surprise, since catching big catfish on reservoirs in the summer is rarely simple.

During spring and fall, anglers target shallow water to find spawning cats, but shallow water action cools off as the water heats up. Like bass, catfish head toward deeper, cooler water and remain concentrated or “stacked” there, visiting the shallows mainly after nightfall.

Anglers must adjust their tactics when stalking big cats in the summer. The following strategies may be alien to many Texas anglers, but the results are what count. And those results might just be some of the best catfish action to be found any time of year.

COOL CATS

Tom Whitlock of Granbury, a catfish guide on north-central Texas reservoirs and maker of Mr. Whiskers catfish baits, says locating a reservoir's thermocline (the area in the water column where the decrease in water temperature is the greatest) is a great way to locate catfish during summer months. "All reservoirs stratify to some extent in the summer, and it isn't unusual to find cats schooling shallow over the deepest parts of the lake, usually near a main river channel," he says. "A lot of people are aware that blue cats will suspend over deep water, but there are plenty of channel cats there, too. You just have to know how to fish them."

Whitlock finds that channel cats normally suspend deeper than blues, seeking some sort of structure such as a drop-off. Such structure, as well as suspended fish, can be located easily using a fish finder. "A good rule of thumb is to fish halfway down the water column," he advises. "If you're fishing in 40 feet of water, position the bait about 20 feet below the surface. That's where a lot of the channels will be in the hottest parts of the summer."

Whitlock uses a No. 8 treble hook to fish with stink bait he makes and fishes it straight down beneath the boat. Once the fish start biting, he adds a slip float set at the proper depth, making it easy to put the bait at the right depth every time. The float also serves as a bite detector.

Another area to look for suspended cats is over humps and ridges in a lake. Often lake maps will pinpoint these, or you can find them with a fish finder. Shad often bunch up around these spots and draw good numbers of catfish.

Gerald Burleigh of Orangefield likes to fish humps and ridges on Toledo Bend, Lake Livingston and Lake Palestine, because they are prime locations to find channel cats. "I heard years ago that these areas were covered with dead shad and that the cats were thick around there. And once I began to fish there, I found that to be true," he says.

Burleigh likes to anchor on top of the hump and make long casts toward the deep water with a slip rig. He fishes with a slip float near the boat. "I throw the weighted rig out to deep water to get the cats that are feeding on the bottom," he says. "The slip float rig is used to catch

the fish that are suspended and holding between feedings on the bottom."

Another way to catch cats on humps is by drifting a chunk of cut bait on a free-line. A free-line simply consists of a hook and bait. Sometimes this rig won't sink quickly enough, so don't be afraid to modify it by pinching on a split-shot weight a foot above the hook. Anchor on top of the hump and pitch the free-lined bait into the deep water. If your boat is equipped with a trolling motor, set it on low and troll slowly through these spots.

GETTING CHUMMY WITH CATS

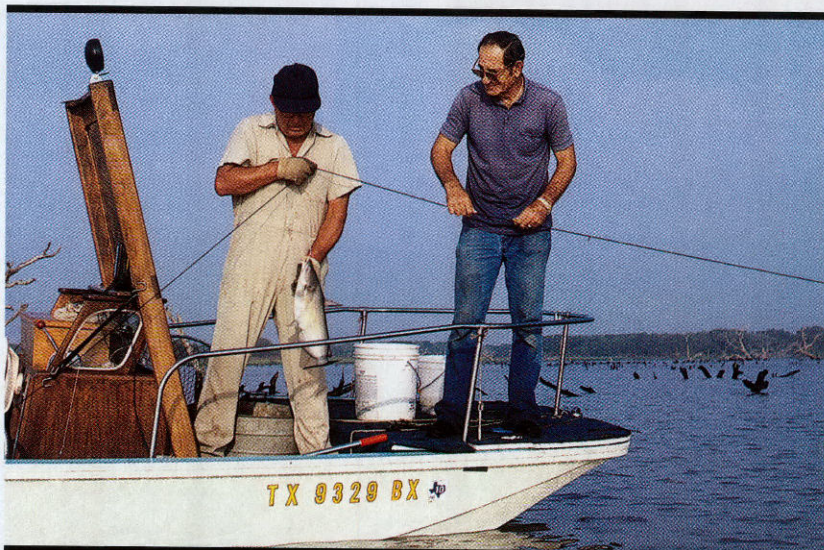
Many anglers sweeten up an already good catfish hole by chumming. In fact, more cats are probably caught while fishing over chum in Texas waters than aren't.

In South and Central Texas, soured milo and wheat are the most popular types of chum. Most of the time the grain is spread out over a flat, a ledge or around boat docks where landbound anglers can get in on the action. Simply empty a coffee can full of chum overboard and begin fishing. If there's no action in 20 or 30 minutes, move. Serious fishers bait two or three places within an area, then fish

them in succession, moving to the next baited spot when the action cools off.

On Lakes Buchanan, Amistad and Falcon there are "community chumming spots," locations where many people bait holes. You can recognize such spots by the numerous plastic jugs or buoys tied to lines anchored to the bottom. Tie onto a line, throw out some chum, and start catching fish. Local bait shops can give you directions to these locations.

In East Texas, cottonseed cake is the

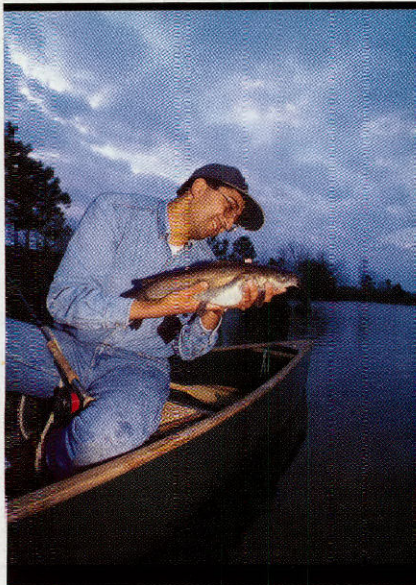


LIMB LINES

Many East Texas catfishers use limb lines. The tactic simply involves tying a hooked line to a tree. Along the coast, where trees are scarce, enterprising anglers use bamboo poles stuck in the bank. The general practice is to tie the line off at the limber top part of the pole and then run the line down to the middle and tie it off there, too. This is done for two reasons.

First, alligator gars are common in these areas and are known to break flimsy limb lines. Gars weighing as much as 150 pounds are caught on limb lines in the region, so all precautions need to be taken. Second, there are some really big blue catfish in these areas.

The secret to keeping a big fish on a limb line is to use a heavy circle hook. I use a 14/0 circle hook on all of my limb lines.



'NETTING FOR CATFISH

Every fishing trip should start with a visit to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/fish.htm. You'll find a wealth of information that can increase your angling success.

Catfishers should click on "Freshwater," which will take them to a page with "Fishing Links" listed on the left. Click on "Lakes" or "Rivers," depending on where you want to fish. You will then be shown a map of the regions of Texas; click on the area where you want to fish for a list of bodies of water. Click on the name of the lake or river for a description.

Included is information on the relative abundance of various fish species and suggested fishing techniques. To find out what's biting and what baits are working best, click on "Fishing Reports" and scroll through the alphabetical list to the lake or river you want.

These additional links can also increase your catfishing success.

General catfish information: catfisherman.com

Catfish Association: www.catfishassoc.org

How to jugline catfish: members.aol.com/jackfish7/jugline.html

Flathead catfish home page: www.flatheadcat.com

East Texas Catfishers: www.geocities.com/degfish2359/index.html

most widely used chum. The cake (also called range cubes, available at feed stores) is usually put in a burlap sack weighted with rocks and then tied off to a tree, or it is sunk under a buoy and left to do its work overnight. By morning it usually will have drawn enough cats to make fishing interesting. This method was first popularized by crappie fishers on lakes Livingston and Sam Rayburn, but reports of catfish being caught in these areas prompted catfish anglers to give it a try.

Another method of chumming doesn't really involve chumming at all. It simply entails fishing around natural chum. Elroy Krueger, a fishing guide on Choke Canyon Reservoir, started bringing his clients to fish around cormorant roosts and sparked a virtual catfish revolution in the Lone Star State.

"I got to figuring that cormorants eat fish and then poop over the water where they roost," Krueger says. "A person can smell a roost from a good distance, so I figured a catfish must be able to detect these areas as well. Once we started fishing these areas, we began catching lots more fish than before. Cats can't resist a good cormorant roost." Krueger said that targeting cormorant roosts is now popular on big East Texas reservoirs and has spread to Central Texas lakes, where the fish-eating birds are extremely abundant.

David Kinser of Anahuac has come up with what may be the most unusual, high-tech chumming system — the Oxy Chum. This system consists of oxygen-filled bottles that are connected through long plastic hoses to a diffusing stone.

Oxygen is released slowly, producing tiny bubbles, which creates an oxygen-enriched environment under water. I field-tested the Oxy Chum with Kinser in summer 2000 at the Lakes of Danbury. Baitfish began concentrating in the area after the unit had been in the water for only a few minutes. Shad, minnows and juvenile catfish began schooling around the boat in great numbers, indicating there was something attractive about all that oxygen.

UP A CREEK

Creeks are easy to find, and they are good places to begin a search for reservoir-dwelling channel cats during summer. The best action will take place after dark. Channel cats often migrate from their daytime deep-water haunts into the mouths of creeks at night, and often can be located in water as shallow as 2 feet and sometimes even shallower. Anglers are best advised to anchor out in deeper water and cast toward the shallows to avoid spooking the cats.

I often avoid spooking the fish by wading. Traveling slowly through the water on foot is quieter than using a boat, so it allows me to move into shallow creeks. By working my way through Indian Creek on Toledo Bend and the sloughs along the Neches River, I've caught some impressive numbers of catfish.

My gear is simple. I usually fish with a medium-heavy-action popping rod and use a casting reel rigged with 17-pound-test line finished off with a weighted popping cork rigged above a 5/0 wide-circle

hook. For bait I use either cut carp or blood bait.

As I cruise the shoreline, I cast parallel to the bank and out toward the creek channel. I pop the cork every 20 or 30 seconds, slowly reel it in about 20 feet, and pop it again. Then I retrieve the bait and cast again. It may take as long as 30 minutes to work 100 yards of shore, but it can pay off.

Keith Warren, host of "Fishing and Outdoor Adventures," likes to fish for channel cats in creeks by walking the shoreline and fishing with a Texas rig. This consists of a bullet weight rigged above a hook baited with shrimp or a wad of nightcrawlers. "Channel cats are out there moving around, looking for bait in creeks," he explains. "They're on the prowl and not concentrated in one spot, which is why I use this rig. I throw it out and work it like I would a plastic worm, slowly bumping it across the bottom. This allows me to cover lots of water and come into contact with many fish. And don't think the movement bothers the cats. They have good vision and don't mind hitting a moving bait."

While some of these methods may be relatively new to Texas waters, they have been employed in northern and western states for years. Geography doesn't matter to catfish. They're just looking for an easy meal. Put your bait in the right place, using the right tactics, and you'll put food on your table, too. ★

CHESTER MOORE is a freelance outdoor writer from Orange.





CLASSIC COLORADO BEND



WITH CAVES, WATERFALLS, GREAT HIKES
AND FISHING, COLORADO BEND STATE PARK
IS AN UNSPOILED HILL COUNTRY GEM.

The desolate, 10-mile gravel road to Colorado Bend's main entrance gives no hint of the wonderland waiting around the last turn of the bend. This rugged canyon land, where bald eagles return to find refuge each winter, remains virtually untouched by modern progress. The Colorado River still flows undammed, cutting a deep gorge through the limestone-rimmed canyons. Two spring-fed creeks yield an oasis of crystal-clear swimming holes along more than 12 miles of scenic trails. Located at the most upstream end of Lake Buchanan, the first of the chain of Highland Lakes, Colorado Bend State Park truly is a timeless beauty.



By Erica H. Brasseur

FOUND ON THE MAP SOMEWHERE BETWEEN LAMPASAS AND SAN SABA, THOUGH NOT REALLY CLOSE TO EITHER — OR TO ANYTHING ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER — COLORADO BEND REMAINS ONE OF TEXAS' WILD AND UNTOUCHED DESTINATIONS. A PLACE SO PRISTINE, IN FACT, THAT IT WAS ALMOST NEVER OPENED FOR PUBLIC USE.

PHOTOS © LANCE VARNELL



After acquiring the 740-acre Gorman Falls area in 1984 (now part of Colorado Bend State Park), the state immediately began making plans to turn the area into a state park. First, however, they had to ensure that public visitation would not damage or destroy sensitive areas around the falls. A team of archaeologists examined the site and discovered Indian artifacts that were buried in redeposited limestone in the plateau above the falls. Later findings by wildlife biologists revealed that a large colony of endangered golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos occupied the area, and a pure strain of the Guadalupe black bass inhabited Gorman Creek. The team advised Texas Parks and Wildlife that Gorman Falls was too sensitive to be opened to the general public.

But thanks to park ranger Dave Paddie, who felt that it was a waste to have something so beautiful and not let anyone see it, TPW reconsidered its decision. In 1987 the state purchased the adjoining 4,300 acres, previously Lemons Fishing Camp, and Colorado Bend State Park was opened later that year.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Today I have the chance to experience this Hill Country jewel for myself. On Sunday morning, assistant park manager Jon Byrd is our guide for a tour of





Gorman Falls, a 60-foot waterfall located on the western bank of the Colorado River. On our last 100 feet of the arduous 1½-mile hike to the falls, we encounter a fairly steep climb down the side of a rocky bluff. A safety rope stretches from the top to the base, serving as a hand-rail for support. I'm careful of my footing as I ease my way down, but every near-stumble along the way is a small price to pay for this humbling view.

Like a scenic postcard from the lush jungles of Costa Rica, a waterfall cascades from the cliff high above, continuously misting the blanket of maidenhair ferns, moss and other Hill Country vegetation that surround it. A twisting myriad of roots from the towering oak trees expose themselves along the quiet pools at the base, which support miniature aquatic communities. Vines of all shapes and textures curtain the perimeter of the observation deck where we stand and admire this breathtaking view.

Unlike most waterfalls, which over time slowly erode from the constantly flowing water, Gorman Falls is actually growing. Walking around at the falls is prohib-

ited, a precaution taken to ensure its beauty for future generations.

"The entire waterfall is made up of travertine, which is a fancy term for calcium deposits," explains Byrd. "As the water flows, the calcite precipitates out of the solution, actually allowing the waterfall to grow, up and out toward the river. The top two to three inches is very fragile, kind of like crackers, so walking on it would crush the top layers, stopping the waterfall's growth."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

After the tour I hit the trails — a great way to explore the park's more than 5,000 acres of rugged Hill Country terrain. Miles of scenic trails wind through a verdant landscape of large oaks, pecans, willows and elms, offering a peaceful sanctuary for hiking, biking, birding and wildlife viewing.

My favorite, the 2.7-mile Spicewood Springs Trail, begins at the main camping area and follows a sparkling stream down to the Colorado River. Along the way, many blue-lagoon swimming holes offer respite for tired feet, or tired bodies, for that matter. Today a father

**THE COLORADO RIVER STILL FLOWS UNDAMMED,
CUTTING A DEEP GORGE THROUGH THE CANYONS.**

and son stop to cool off under a small trickling waterfall in one of the pools. A husky golden retriever, accompanied by his owners, carefully checks his footing on the smooth, slippery rocks before also plunging in. (Leashed pets are welcome in the camping and hiking areas except during tours.)

There's wildlife at almost every turn of the 5.7-mile Upper Gorman Creek Trail, which loops through woodlands, leading you to the higher levels of the park overlooking the river. It has several offshoot trails that allow you to customize distance. Although my attempts to see the endangered golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos that live in the area prove fruitless, I do eye two cardinals seemingly engaging in a game of chase as they dart from branch to branch. Though April and May are the best months for birding, more than 150 bird species make their home in the park throughout the year.

A herd of eight or so deer grazing down by the river are undisturbed by my presence, though I catch a pair of cottontail rabbits off-guard and they scurry off into a distant patch of dense brush. Another hiker's miniature terrier barks ferociously — well, as ferociously as a miniature terrier can bark — at a squirrel in an adjacent treetop. During the spring, the area is crawling with armadillos, and on weekdays, when the park is often deserted, these trails are a great place to see wildlife.

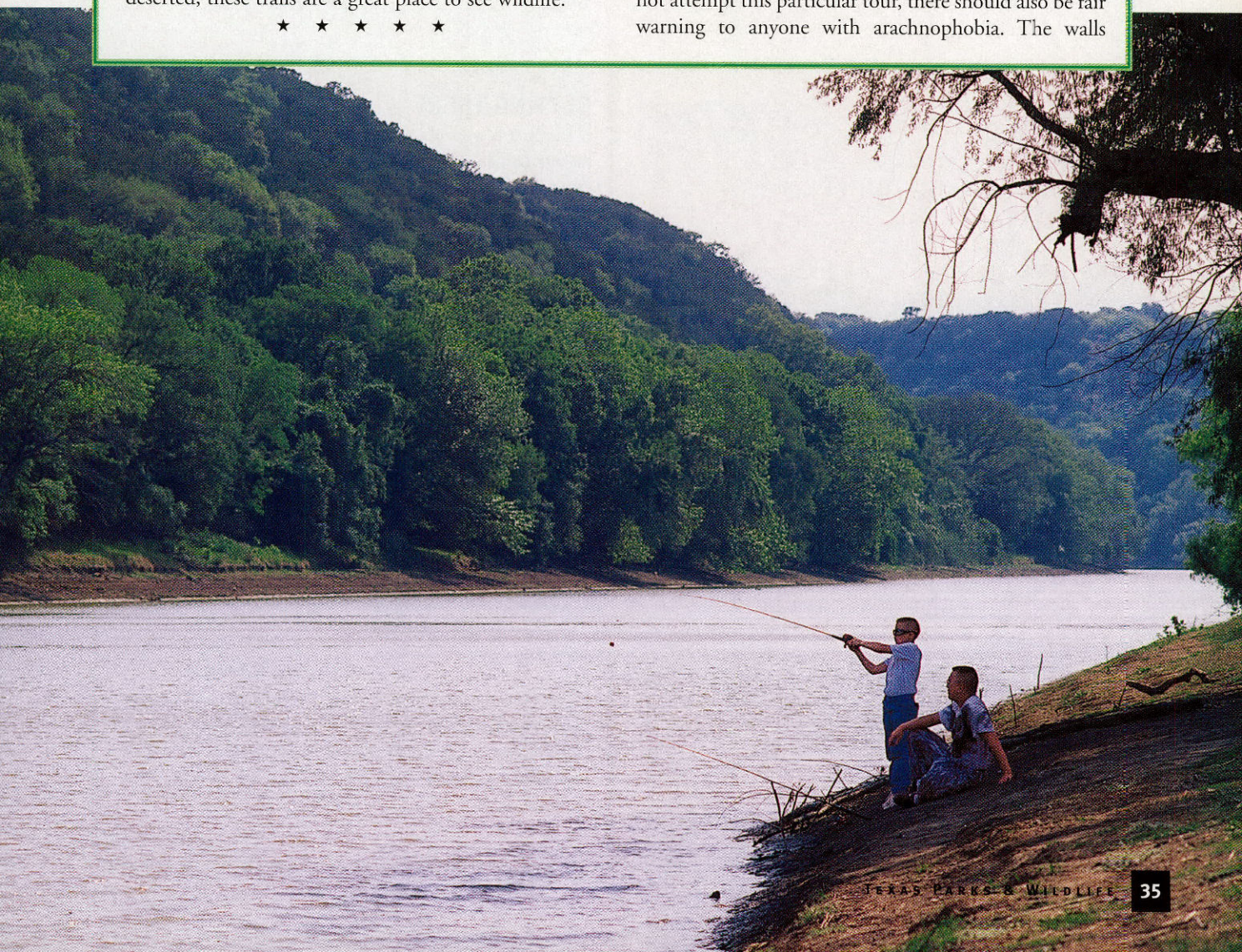
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Crawling cave tours, offered almost nowhere else in the country, are available to adventuresome visitors who don't mind getting a little muddy. Of the park's more than 150 caves, only five are available for touring — one by walking and four by crawling. And at 68 degrees year-round, the atmosphere is comfortable regardless of the season. On today's guided four-hour tour, we explore Turtle Shell and Cicurina.

I feel a little silly gearing up in grubby clothes, kneepads, elbow pads and hard hat. But as I wriggle along on my forearms and knees, bumping my head against projecting rocks along the way, I am grateful for the protective gear.

Flashlights in hand, we tunnel like a parade of ants carrying little lanterns through a maze of narrow openings and corridors, some of them only slightly bigger around than the average man. On our stomachs in a head-to-foot line, we slosh through cool, dark mud and, at some points, up to three to four inches of water. During several parts of the tour, the tight squeezes open up into large rooms where we can stand up, stretch and explore. Byrd, who is again our tour guide, points out rock formations such as stalagmites and flowstones along the way.

While anyone with claustrophobia should probably not attempt this particular tour, there should also be fair warning to anyone with arachnophobia. The walls



along the entrance of both caves prove a popular hang-out for harmless but abundant daddy longlegs. Most first-time spelunkers choose the out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach as they close their eyes and shimmy down the first few feet of the tunnel. The encounter is brief, however, and well worth any shortlived inconvenience. Idiosyncrasies like this one, however, add to the total caving experience. It's unspoiled and natural — and it's certainly no picnic in the park.

For many people on the trip, the cave crawl was a once-in-a-lifetime, been-there, done-that experience. "Our guests on the tour are either really excited about crawling through the caves — or they are never going into another cave in their life!" says park manager Cory Evans. "Some are a little unsure of the caves altogether and prefer to just sit at the entrance. Either way, the funniest part of any crawling cave tour is that everyone is completely covered in mud afterward!"

For visitors who want to explore a cave but prefer to do so upright, a tour of Gorman Cave, the park's largest cave, is the answer. Accessible only by guided tours on Saturday and Sunday mornings, this cave offers an up-close view of the same formations and geological points

of interest that you'd find in the crawling caves, though on a much grander scale. And because this 3½-hour tour 800 feet into the cave is far less strenuous, the guides have more time for explanations and question-and-answer sessions. A small stream that winds through the cave allows visitors to literally get their feet wet in what is for many their first noncommercial caving adventure.

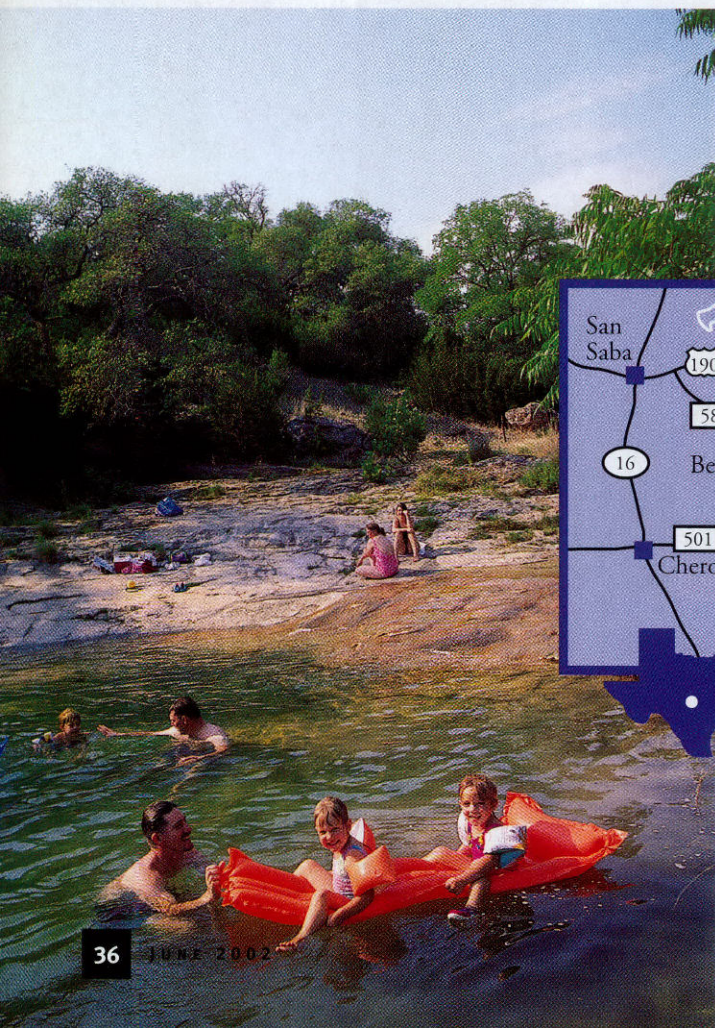
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As we back the boat into the river from the park's onsite boat ramp, a fisherman gears up in waders, his pole and tackle in tow. Our ski boat putters slowly downstream, where 10 miles ahead the Colorado River feeds into Lake Buchanan. Boaters and paddlers alike can enjoy navigating the river, but only when the water in Lake Buchanan is at normal level. The fisherman continues to trek through the waist-deep water, searching for his "sweet spot" where he hopes to land a yellow, channel or blue catfish — fish that bite year-round.

The park is busiest during the spring white bass run, which begins in earnest sometime in February, peaks in March, and peters out by April's end. This fishing phenomenon occurs when the white bass migrate upstream

OF THE PARK'S MORE THAN 150 CAVES, ONLY FIVE ARE AVAILABLE FOR TOURING.

PHOTOS © LAURENCE PARENT



GETTING THERE

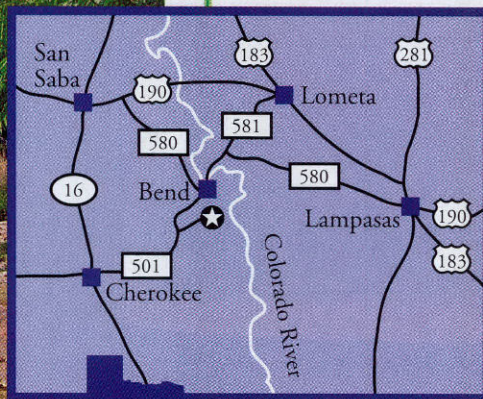
The park is west of Lampasas, southeast of San Saba. From the intersection of U.S. Highways 281 and 183 in Lampasas, take FM 580 west 24 miles to Bend and follow the signs four miles to the park entrance. From San Saba, take U.S. Highway 190 about four miles to FM 580 and follow the park signs 13 miles to Bend.

The headquarters and main camping area are six miles past the entrance on the gravel road (unmarked County Road 442).

The campground area is operated on a reservation basis and includes tables, fire rings, water taps, chemical toilets and fish-cleaning stations. A primitive backpacking area and two group areas also are available. There are no fueling stations for some 30 miles, so plan accordingly. The park is open every day, year-round from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. except during public hunts. A day-use fee of \$3 per person is required.

Call Colorado Bend State Park at (915) 628-3240 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/colorado for more information.

To reserve a campsite call (512) 389-8900 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/ and click on "Make Park Reservations."



from Lake Buchanan in thick concentrations as they perform their annual reproductive ritual (see “Striking Silver,” April 2002). Fishermen often book campsites months in advance, so plan your trip accordingly, or visit on weekdays.

As we push onward through the slow-moving water and the beautiful canyon country of the Colorado, we encounter a surprise as we round the first bend of the river. A slightly smaller version of Gorman Falls spills into the river from the top of a high canyon wall. For a moment we are speechless as we move in closer. Post Oak Falls, we later find out, is visible only from the river. We continue to circle the area, snapping pictures in front of this picturesque backdrop.

Half a roll of film later, we continue our journey toward the lake. Our progress is slow, however, as we spend a great deal of time taking turns waterskiing on the river’s rippling surface. By late afternoon we reach Fall Creek Falls, which greets us as we enter a cove at the entrance of Lake Buchanan. Our sunny afternoon is quickly being replaced by a pinkish hue that fills the evening sky as the sun sinks slowly behind the canyon walls. We take one last plunge into the river before beginning the 10-mile return trip to the park. ★

ERICA H. BRASSEUX is associate editor of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine.

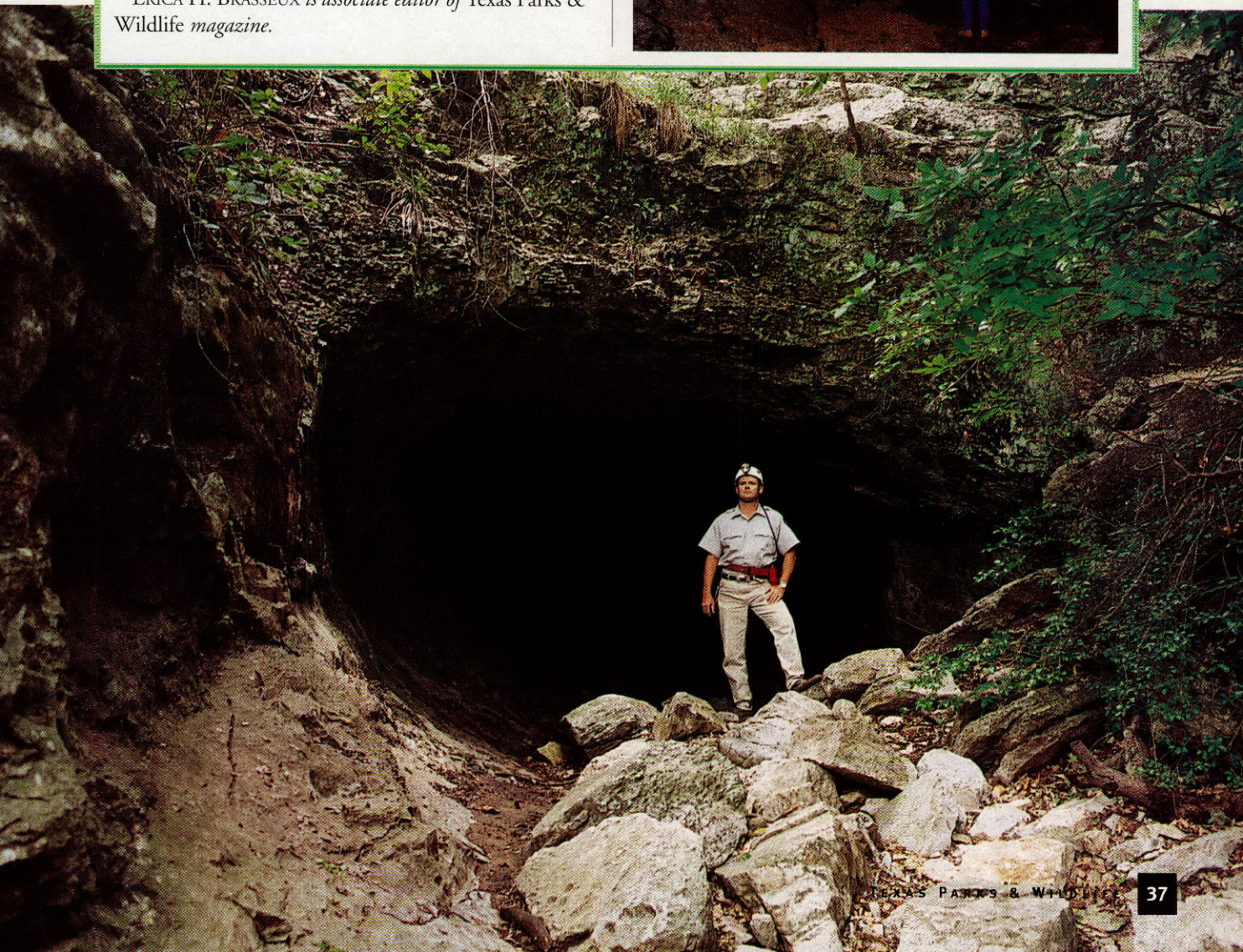
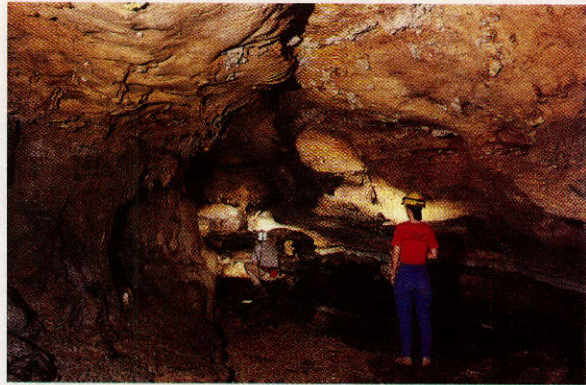
CAVE TOURS

The caving opportunities at Colorado Bend are one of the things that make this park so special, but to protect fragile ecosystems and due to various hazards in the caves such as low oxygen levels and poisonous gases, all caves in the park are closed except through guided tours. Reservations are highly recommended for all tours; the crawling cave tour often requires reservations up to two months in advance. Contact the park at (915) 628-3240 to make reservations and to check questionable weather conditions. Substantial footwear is recommended for all tours. The schedules below are weather and resource permitting.

Gorman Falls Tours – Saturday 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m.

Gorman Cave Walking Tours – Saturday and Sunday, 9:15 a.m.

Crawling Cave Tours – First Saturday of each month, 1:30 p.m.



The SECRET of BIG

Think you know a few
things about whitetails?
Ready to learn a few more?
By Larry D. Hodge



LIVES BUCKS



FEW THINGS hold more fascination for hunters than white-tailed deer, especially big bucks. Yet despite all the attention they receive in print, video and deer-hunters' dreams, we actually know very little about many aspects of bucks' lives.

The mystery is part of the fascination these phantoms of the forest hold for hunters. On some level, I think we understand that the hunter who brings home a buck is taking part in a saga that spans aeons and yet reaches its denouement in seconds. Holding an antler, we clutch the physical manifestation of a natural process the understanding of which eludes our grasp. In the final analysis, a hunt for a buck offers perhaps the most intense and personal connection to the little-understood ways of nature most of us are ever likely to have.

Why deer have antlers at all is a mystery, says Bob Brown, chair of the department of wildlife and fisheries sciences at Texas A&M University. "Why are antlers necessary? Why do deer expend so many resources on growing antlers? We'll probably never really understand that — that's why they are so fascinating." While we don't know much about why deer grow antlers — and only members of the deer family, including elk, moose, and caribou, do — we know quite a bit about how they do it. Here again, though, some mystery — and perhaps a bit of magic — remains.

The yearly beginning of antler growth in white-tailed deer is related to the fact that the earth is tilted on its axis. As the earth travels around the sun and begins to point its north pole at the sun, days in the Northern Hemisphere grow longer. The lengthening photoperiod stimulates a buck's pituitary gland to begin producing hormones that control skeletal growth, and the first bone begins to grow from the pedicels, or bases, atop the deer's head. The process begins a few months after the old set of antlers is dropped; in Texas, sheds begin to hit the ground anywhere from late December to late March.

Deer native to equatorial regions, such as axis deer, grow and lose their antlers at different times of the year and have a year-round breeding system. White-tailed deer in the Southern

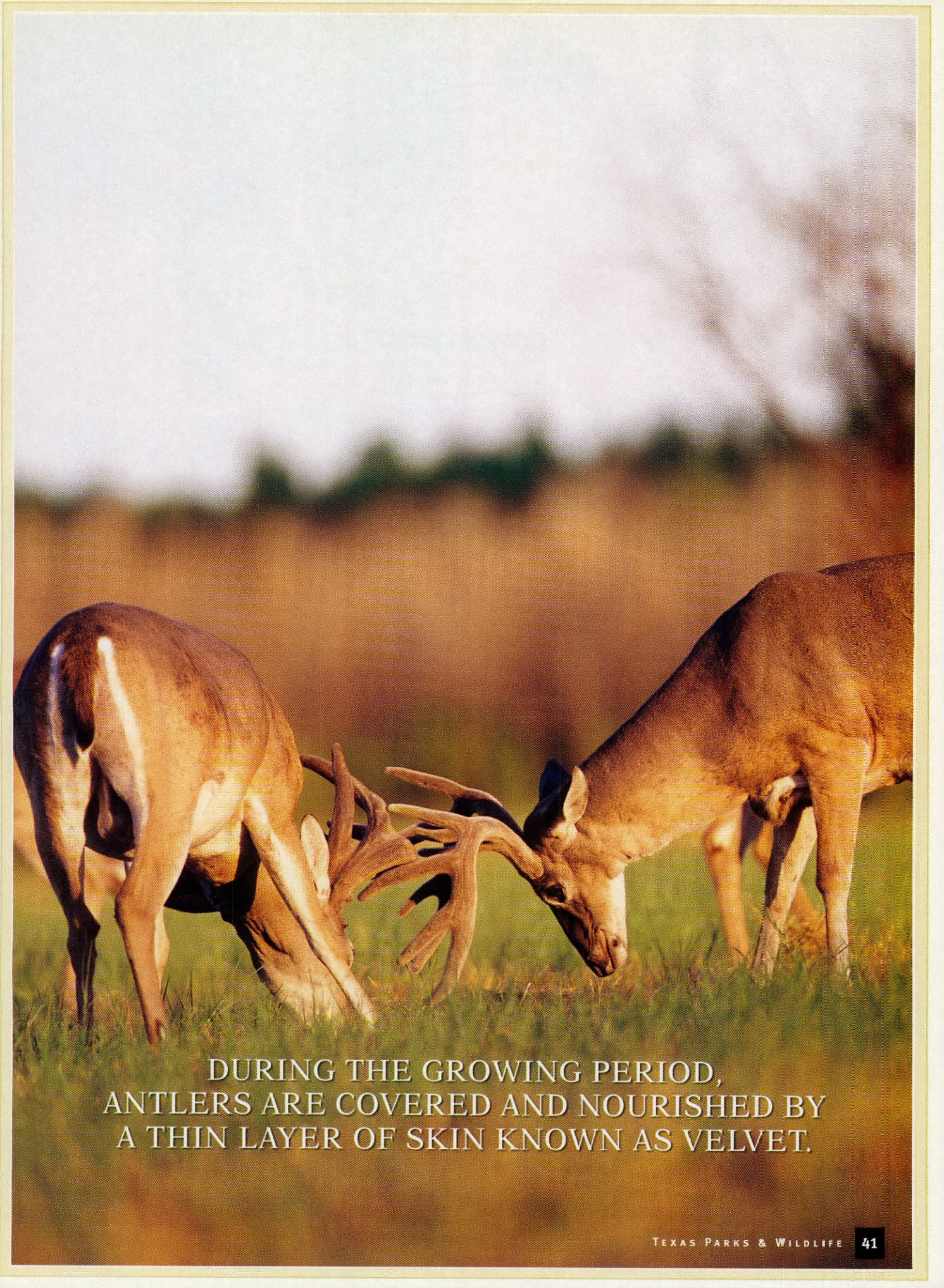
Hemisphere follow a similar pattern to their northern kin, although the seasons are reversed and they drop their antlers just as bucks in the Northern Hemisphere are coming into the breeding season.

Why are lengthening days the stimulus for the most important event in a white-tailed buck's year?

Bill Armstrong, a Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist on the Kerr Wildlife Management Area, speculates that natural selection may be the answer. Over extremely long periods of time, bucks outside the equatorial region that passed on their genes were those that bred at the time of year that resulted in fawns being born in early summer, when food was plentiful and fawn survival was higher. Near the equator, seasons are less pronounced, and the availability of food does not fluctuate as much. Therefore, the timing of births is not as critical to survival of the offspring. "Different animals interpret the photoperiod differently," Armstrong says. "You have a genetically controlled photoperiod, but you also have environmental influences that sometimes override that photoperiod."

The entire story of a buck's life is in fact, a constant balancing act between hormonally induced changes in its body and the struggle for physical survival. These two opposing forces clash most dramatically during the time bucks are growing antlers. Ironically, this is the Dark Age of bucks' lives, a time little studied or understood, since most people find bucks far more interesting after they already have racks. But the changes that take place in the buck's body — and atop his head — from April through September determine whether he becomes just another deer or a bad case of antler avarice come hunting season.

"About the first of March, the lengthening photoperiod says, 'Antlers fall off,'" says Armstrong. "Then the buck begins to rebuild his body from the stress of the rut." (Bucks eat little during the breeding season and may lose 25 to 30 percent of their body weight.) Testosterone production almost ceases when

A photograph of two deer in a grassy field. The deer on the left is facing right, and the deer on the right is facing left. They are both looking down at the ground. Their antlers are covered in a soft, fuzzy material called velvet. The background is a blurred field of tall grass under a bright sky.

DURING THE GROWING PERIOD,
ANTLERS ARE COVERED AND NOURISHED BY
A THIN LAYER OF SKIN KNOWN AS VELVET.



Antler growth, said to be the most rapid growth in the animal kingdom, begins in March and is complete by September. Velvet covers the new antlers, nourishing them as they grow.



When antlers finish growing, the velvet sloughs off and the buck polishes his new rack. Bucks in poor body condition after the rut must start growing new antlers almost immediately after dropping the old ones.



TOP PHOTO © DAVID J. SWAN; OTHER PHOTOS © MIKE SEARLES

antlers are shed, and bucks become more docile and social. They go from being combative loners ready to take on all comers to just one of the guys in a bachelor group. “It makes sense when you put it all together,” says Donnie Frels, manager of the Kerr WMA. “Your antlers fall off, and you become a lot nicer, because it wouldn’t be good to be aggressive around other bucks that still have their antlers.”

Dramatic physical changes take place. Bucks begin losing their winter hair and start growing a summer coat lighter in both color and thickness. Hair is mostly protein, so a diet high in protein is required. Spring forbs and browse supply the protein, but antlers are bone tissue, and there is no readily available source of calcium and phosphorus in the quantities needed.

“Some of the bigger deer will grow more than 170 inches of antlers between March and the end of August,” Armstrong says. “That’s like you cutting off both your legs and growing them back in three months.” Since the deer can’t get all the raw material they need for this rapid growth of antlers from their food, they borrow it from within their bodies. In a process similar to osteoporosis in humans, minerals are taken from ribs, sternum and skull and redeposited in the antlers. Bone density may decrease as much as 30 percent.

Growing antlers and hair at the same time puts tremendous demands on the buck’s body, and eating dominates the agenda. Deer raised in the Kerr WMA’s experimental pens begin eating heavily in April, and by late August are eating about seven pounds of food a day. Early on, much of the food is converted to hair and replacement bone. “Antler growth is really slow at first and stays slow until about the third week in June,” says Gene Fuchs, a biologist on the Kerr. “Then some deer will put on four to five inches in three weeks, as much as half an inch a day on each point. As a rule, deer 2½ years old or older will have all their points showing by the middle of July.” Antler formation is said to be the most rapid growth known in the animal kingdom. (As impressive as white-tailed antler growth is, it is tiny compared to that of elk and moose.)

During the growing period, antlers are covered and nourished by a thin layer of skin known as velvet. (Happily for the deer, the blood-rich velvet serves as a sort of radiator, helping cool the deer’s body during the summer.) The antlers appear to be sensitive and are easily damaged, so bucks tend to protect them. This may be one reason for their lack of aggression during this time. If bucks do fight during this period, they flail at each other with their forefeet, much as does do. If an antler base (or pedicel) is damaged while in velvet, somehow the deformity that results becomes “remembered” by the nervous system and will be replicated in future years.

Social standing within a group of bucks becomes established as the antlers develop. Conventional wisdom holds that the deer with the biggest antlers will dominate the others. But there may be a surprise lurking here, too, says Bob Brown. “Even when deer don’t have their antlers, there are still dominant animals. One European study shows that large antlers may be the result of being the dominant buck, not the cause,” he says. Possible explanations are that dominant animals may get more to eat and that antler-growing hormones are both the cause and result of social dominance.



DOES SIZE MATTER?

To humans fixated on large antlers, it seems reasonable that the buck with the biggest rack will dominate bucks with smaller antlers when it comes to breeding. However, this will remain speculation until results are received from a research project carried out on Mason Mountain WMA during the 1999 – 2000 breeding season.

Bucks of known age and antler size were released into two separate high-fenced pastures along with does. All deer not part of the study were removed. Bucks released were evenly distributed among four groups: yearlings with low antler quality, yearlings with high antler quality, bucks five years old or older with antlers scoring less than 100 points Boone and Crockett, and bucks five or older scoring more than 120. All bucks were DNA-typed prior to release.

Following the breeding season, does were removed from the pastures and DNA extracted from their embryos. The DNA is in the process of being typed to determine paternity. If more than 25 percent of the fawns were sired by older bucks with large antlers, it can be inferred that age or size do indeed matter.

WHY DO ANTLERS ATTRACT?

I suspect the attraction of antlers is embedded in human genes. Cave art depicts shamans with headresses of deer antlers, which were clearly symbols of power or magic. It seems reasonable to me that hunters who killed bucks were judged superior to those who did not. They were therefore more likely to be able to provide for a family and were thus privileged — as were bucks with larger antlers — to pass on their genes.

If my theory is correct, natural selection over millennia produced in us today an inexplicable preference for shooting anything with “horns” as opposed to antlerless animals. Somewhere in the spiral helix of our DNA may be encoded the belief that the white bags big buck wins fair maid. Am I crazy? Think of yourself with the choice of shooting a doe or a buck. Most of you in that situation will, I believe, shoot the buck. Why? Because you want those “horns.”

It’s worth noting here that horns and antlers are not the same. Horns are made of keratin, the same substance in fingernails and hooves, and, with the exception only of the pronghorn antelope, are permanent. Antlers are bone and are shed and regrown annually. Cows, goats and sheep have horns. Deer, elk, caribou and moose have antlers, but many people refer to them as horns.



ONE EUROPEAN STUDY SHOWS THAT
LARGE ANTLERS MAY BE THE RESULT OF BEING
THE DOMINANT BUCK, NOT THE CAUSE.

While humans tend to recognize particular bucks by their antlers, the deer themselves recognize each other with or without antlers. However, their interactions with each other depend partly on which has the bigger headgear. Bucks in the research pens at the Kerr have their antlers sawed off each October before the rut begins, to keep the deer from hurting each other. Dramatic changes in behavior sometimes result. “We have 2-year-old deer that will fight 5-year-old deer after we saw their antlers off,” says Gene Fuchs. “When they fight without antlers — which doesn’t start until about a month after the antlers are sawed off — little bucks don’t back away from the older deer.”

Attitude may play a part, says Bill Armstrong. “I think there are some deer that just think they are bad. They are like the 5-foot 1-inch guy who goes into a bar and walks up to a 7-footer and gets whipped.”

By about the first of September, antler growth is complete. Suddenly bucks undergo a transformation. A sharp rise in testosterone level triggers a shutdown of the blood supply to the velvet. The velvet dies and sloughs off with amazing speed. “Velvet is shed and antlers are completely polished [by rubbing on brush or weeds] within 24 hours,” says Fuchs. “Some velvet comes off just like a rotten banana peel without any rubbing. I’ve seen deer at 10 a.m. one day with no sign of shedding velvet that had completely polished antlers at 9 a.m. the next day.”

The growth of antlers in white-tailed deer is closely linked to the ability to breed. Not until growth of the antlers is complete is a buck capable of producing sperm. Loss of the velvet signals that a buck is capable of breeding. Bucks lose interest in eating, reducing their food intake by half to three-quarters. Now reproduction is the name of the game. By this time all the bucks in a given territory know each other and the rank of each within the hierarchy, so real fights between them are few. All-out battles generally occur only between bucks that are strangers to each other and meet when one invades another’s territory while searching for does. “Bucks probably use the time they spend in bachelor groups to figure out who is boss,” says Bill Armstrong.

The objective of being the boss probably is related to the drive to reproduce. Dominant bucks — whether they have the biggest antlers or not — are believed to do most of the breeding. (Confirmation may come from a recent TPW study. See sidebar “Does Size Matter?”) But there is no doubt what a buck’s role in life is. “A buck’s job is to breed does,” says Armstrong. “The rest of the year they are just mountain lion food.”

That assessment, while biologically apt, fails to convey the wonder of an animal whose whole life — and success therein — revolves around how many inches of bone it can sprout from its skull during a five-month period each year. This daunting task is made more difficult by the fact that the process begins in winter and peaks in late summer, the two times of the year when the quantity and quality of food available are at their lowest. Production of a massive set of antlers under such adverse conditions truly is the mark of a creature superior to others of its kind. Perhaps that, more than anything else, explains why antlers fascinate and excite human observers. ★

LARRY D. HODGE is wildlife editor of Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine and executive editor of Texas Parks and Wildlife Press.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Year-round supplemental feeding of deer in hopes of helping bucks grow bigger antlers is a common practice, especially on high-fenced properties. Pelletized feeds with a minimum protein content of 16 percent are the norm.

However, much of the money spent on such feeds may be wasted, says Texas A&M University’s Bob Brown. “Bucks have a voluntary decrease in food consumption when their testosterone level goes up in the fall,” he says. “They don’t get their appetite back until around April. They can survive on next to nothing for some time. If they are not growing antlers, they don’t care about eating. If people want to supplement feed during the winter, I recommend they use a low-protein, low-cost feed like a 10 percent protein oat/corn/molasses mix.”

By the same token, good nutrition, preferably from the natural habitat or maybe food plots, will produce the greatest benefits during the spring and summer for both bucks and does — and buck fawns that are born healthy and fed well tend to produce better quality antlers not only in their first but also in succeeding years. “During the winter months, does are in the second trimester of pregnancy, the fetus is only the size of your thumb, and extra nutrition is not that important,” says Brown. “The critical period for does is April through June.”

Studies also show that as much as half the feed put out for deer during the winter is consumed by other animals, primarily raccoons. Feeding expensive high-protein rations from October through March makes sense only if you are ranching raccoons.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

No matter how big or how small they are, all white-tailed deer antlers come in three basic configurations: basket, wide, and high.

Basket-shaped antlers are arguably some of the most attractive. The main beams curve toward each other, and the tips may almost touch. The tines also angle inward, making for a very pleasing rack.

Wide antlers are just that. The main beams grow outward from the head at a slight upward angle before curving forward and paralleling each other, making a rack that gapes open when seen head-on.

A high rack has main beams that grow up past the tips of the deer’s ears at about a 45-degree angle before curving forward while maintaining an upward trend.

A deer’s first set of antlers is a good predictor of antler potential, although it will probably add points and mass each year until development peaks. Individual bucks can be recognized from year to year by their antlers, and the characteristics of their racks are passed on to their offspring. However, does also contribute at least half the genes that control antler growth.





**THE BUFFALO SPRINGS
HALF IRONMAN BRINGS
THE HAWAIIAN ADVENTURE
TO — THAT'S RIGHT —
LUBBOCK.**

BY BRANDON WEAVER
PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIGHTROOM.COM

“ARE LUBBOCK AND HAWAII REALLY THAT SIMILAR?”

A REPORTER FROM THE *LUBBOCK AVALANCHE-JOURNAL* ASKS TRIATHLETE TIM KEY. “YES,” ANSWERS KEY, AN IRONIC GRIN ON THIS FACE. “EXCEPT INSTEAD OF LAVA FIELDS, WE HAVE COTTON FIELDS.” AN ABSURD COMPARISON BY ANY STRETCH, BUT ONE THAT MAKES MORE THAN 1,000 ATHLETES FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD FLOCK TO LUBBOCK EACH JUNE.

For the last seven years, the city has hosted the Buffalo Springs Lake Half Ironman Triathlon, a qualifying race for the annual Ironman Triathlon World Championship in Kona, Hawaii. The grueling Hawaiian race, held each October, consists of three legs: a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike race, and a 26.2-mile run, the standard Ironman race distance. To gain one of the 1,600 coveted slots in the prestigious race, participants must qualify at one of the 21 Ironman races around the world. Only six of these qualifying races are held in the continental United States, and Lubbock's Buffalo Springs triathlon is the only one in the central U.S.

Inside Triathlon magazine rates Buffalo Springs as the “Ironman qualifier that best simulates the race conditions in Kona.” Why? Despite the lack of good surf, Lubbock in late June is a very hot and windy place. In October, the desolate lava fields of Kona share the same propensity for hot and windy conditions. Nobody knows this better than Tim Key, the 33-year-old hometown favorite. He's competed at both the Buffalo Springs and Hawaii Ironmans five times.

Key gets off the phone with the reporter and breathes a heavy sigh. “I'd like to know where those guys [the local media] are the other 51 weeks a year when I'm training my rear off for other races,” says a frustrated Key. It's Friday afternoon, and I'm sitting across the desk from him in his training studio, located just a couple of miles from Texas Tech University. Since Buffalo Springs is his home turf, he feels an extra bit of pressure to do well, and the added media attention doesn't help. He'd like nothing more than to win the local race, but he knows it will be difficult. Some of the fastest pros from around the country will be competing.

Key has parlayed his 14 years of endurance racing experience into a successful multisport coaching operation called Pro Fitness. He trains all types of athletes, from beginning runners to ultra-marathoners who run 50- to 100-mile races. Key's been training me for the last six months, and I'm here to get some last-minute advice for Sunday's Half Ironman, which is half the distance of a full Ironman. I'm hoping to complete the 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike, and 13.1-mile run in under six hours. This is my first attempt at the massive distance.

Chris Brogan is preparing for his third attempt at completing the long race. He competed at Buffalo Springs in 1998 and 2000, and both times failed to make the eight-hour cutoff. This year he's expecting to come up short again. Undaunted, he continues to make the long trip from England just for the honor to participate in a race he calls “magical.” But it's not the distance

he travels that makes his endeavor impressive. It's the fact that he's paralyzed from the waist down. As a member of the elite British military unit, the Special Boat Service, or SBS (similar to the Navy SEALs), Brogan was injured in 1989 while conducting training operations in the jungles of Belize. He was rappelling from the skid of a helicopter when the strap on his weapon caught an obstruction and knocked him unconscious, leaving him dangling from his neck 60 feet in the air by the strap of his rifle. A crewmember on the chopper cut the strap without thinking, and Brogan fell to the jungle floor, sustaining a compression fracture. He's one of the six physically challenged athletes competing in what's called the handcycle division.

It's 6:35 a.m., and I'm on the beach at Buffalo Springs Lake waiting for my age group to start. The lake, five miles southeast of Lubbock, sits in Yellow House Canyon. Mike and Marti Greer, the race directors, have laid out a bike and run course that climbs in and out of the canyon 11 times on several different roads.

A total of 1,400 athletes have signed up, selling out the event. We're started in waves according to our age groups. I'm in the third wave, which is due to start at 6:40 a.m. While I wait for the clock to count down, one of my fellow competitors asks me something men don't typically request from one another. “Hey, would you mind zipping me up?” He turns around, and I zip up his wetsuit. The neoprene suit provides added buoyancy and enables a swimmer to go much faster.

The race starts, and the 100 athletes in my group bound off into the cool waters of Buffalo Springs Lake. The murky, green lake limits visibility, giving me a strange sense of isolation from my fellow competitors. Racers bump unexpectedly into one another, resulting in unintentional slaps on the back and kicks to the ribs and head.

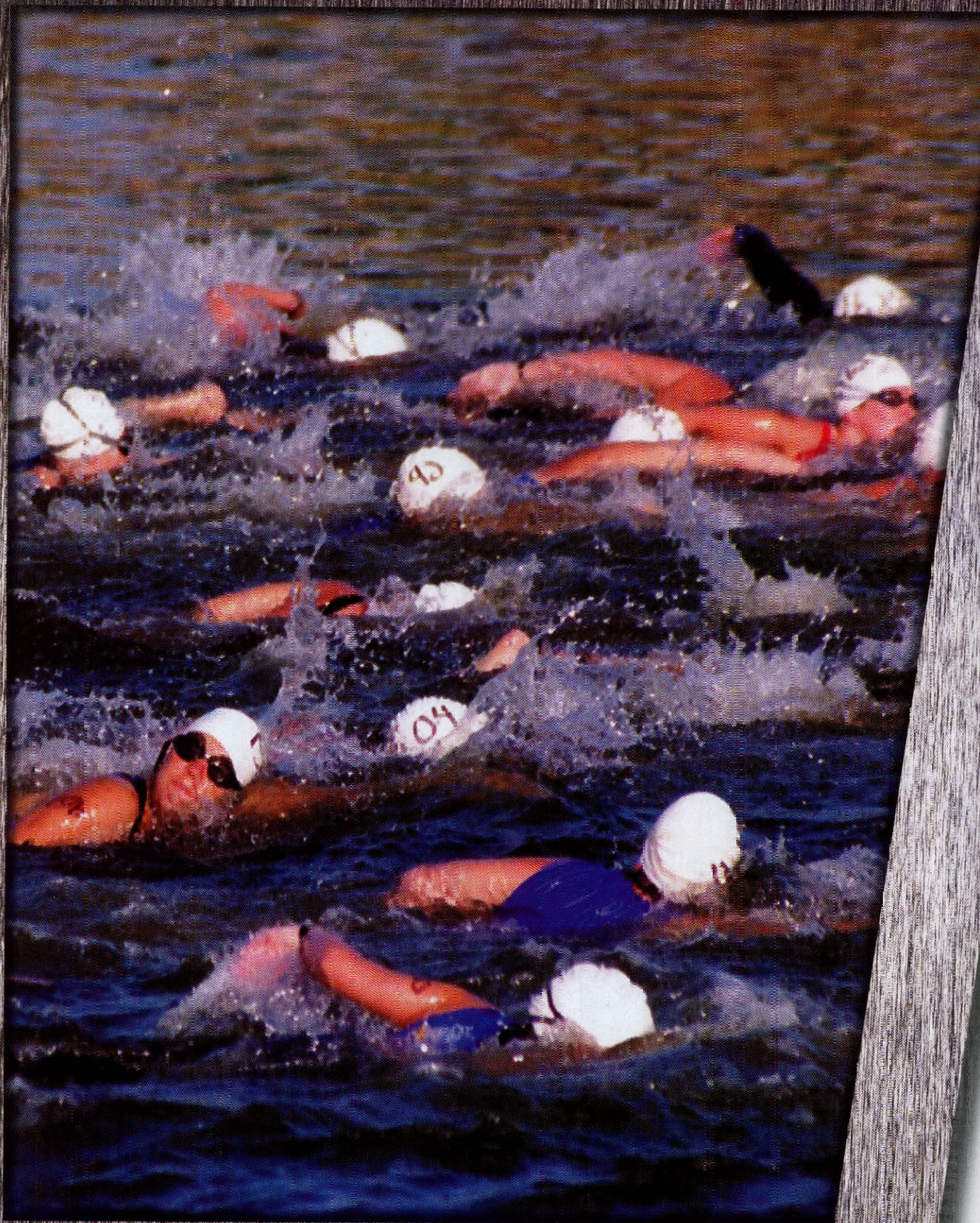
After 19 minutes of swimming, I reach the turnaround buoy and begin the last half of the swim. The water trapped between my skin and the neoprene of my wetsuit is boiling from my elevated body temperature. As I breathe on my right side in between strokes, I watch the sun rise over the canyon wall.

Tim Key is stepping out of the water five minutes behind the leader in seventh position and is running up the boat ramp while peeling off his wetsuit. He's grouped with three other pros who are racing through the transition area vying to be the first out for the 56-mile bike leg. While the others frantically slip into bike shoes and put their helmets on, Key calmly does the same without appearing to be rushed. He's visualized this a hundred times and, as a result, he's the first one of his group to leave the bike transition.

Chris Brogan exits the water 45 minutes later, after spending more than an hour completing the swim. When he reaches the



INSIDE TRIATHLON MAGAZINE RATES BUFFALO SPRINGS AS THE "IRONMAN QUALIFIER THAT BEST SIMULATES THE RACE CONDITIONS IN KONA."



THE WATER TRAPPED BETWEEN MY SKIN AND THE NEOPRENE OF MY WETSUIT IS BOILING FROM MY ELEVATED BODY TEMPERATURE.

boat ramp, two race volunteers pick him up and carry him to his wheelchair, where he'll push himself to the transition area and get in his handcycle. The Australian-born 49-year-old is built like a power lifter with thick arms and a bulging chest. He'll use every ounce of that muscle propelling himself through the entire race using his upper body. Once he's secure in his three-wheeled handcycle, he proceeds to the first steep incline just 200 yards from the transition area. He uses the smallest of his 24 gears and slowly cranks out of the canyon.

Averaging over 22 mph, Key is 40 miles into the bike course and maintaining his seventh-place position. He's realizing that he'll be no threat to the race leaders today. His training has suffered due to the increased demands of his growing business. A little disappointed, he's hoping to maintain the time gap between him and the frontrunners.

I stand on my pedals and begin my fifth climb of the day out of Yellow House Canyon and hear a loud *ping* from my rear wheel. I ride another six miles before I realize I've broken a spoke and my rear tire is slowly losing air. It's not completely flat, but just soft enough to make the 40 mph descents down the canyon roads frightening. The thought of crashing begins to consume me, and I decide it's best if I change the tire.

Key is three miles into the run and ascending out the canyon on a 14 percent grade hill. The run course has doubled back on itself and he sees Joanna Zeiger, the lead woman, catching him rapidly. The Baltimore resident is one of the fastest woman triathletes in the world. She placed fourth in the Sydney Olympics, the best American finish male or female in the triathlon's Olympic debut. She eventually catches and passes Key.

The flags at the Texas Air Museum just outside of Slaton are blowing briskly in the late morning wind. Brogan looks up and notices the Stars and Stripes flapping in the breeze. He estimates it's only about a 12 mph wind, but it feels more like 20 mph. Sitting upright and cranking the machine forward with his arms, Brogan takes the wind square in the chest. By the time he reaches the 40-mile mark, he's 5½ hours into the race. A stabilizing bar that keeps his front wheel straight has broken, and he's

been fighting to keep the handcycle from veering off the road. It's hindered his pace just a little, but in a race this long, every second counts. The eight-hour cutoff is looming.

As I'm completing the first mile of the run, I meet Key beginning his last mile. He maintains his seventh-place position and finishes in four hours, 35 minutes. My race starts to fall apart on the last half of the 13.1-mile run. I haven't taken in enough salt, and my legs are beginning to cramp. The pain becomes unbearable, and my run takes on a Frankenstein-like gait. I finish the final miles hobbling along like I'm being chased by a pack of angry villagers. My two-hour, 17-minute run pushes me past my six-hour goal by 14 minutes.

It's been 7½ hours since the first racers hit the water this morning. Nearly everyone is finished, and a trail of athletes is wearily pushing bikes up the hill to the parking area. Chris Brogan is just coming in from the bike course and meets the line of slow-moving finishers. Everyone stops and starts applauding and cheering Brogan. "Keep going! You're looking awesome!" The inspiration is flowing in both directions. Brogan's endless determination is inspiring them, while their admiration is in turn motivating his desire to not quit. With his shoulders burning from fatigue and screaming to stop, he continues, pushing his racing wheelchair another five miles before eventually stopping 45 minutes past the time limit.

The next day Brogan tells me about encountering a 72-year-old man finishing the race just as he was heading out for the run. The elderly gentleman was hunched over and shuffling along, trying to finish the last few strides. Brogan thinks to himself, "Good on ya, mate! You keep at it." It's the athletes finishing the race in seven hours, 59 minutes and 59 seconds that he finds truly amazing. "That, to me, takes heart," says Brogan. "It just goes to show good flaming determination."

I suddenly realize he has no idea he stirs the same emotion. And if you were to tell him that, he'd simply answer, "No dramas, mate." Meaning, it's not really that big a deal. He simply loves the challenge and expects no special attention. Regardless of whether Brogan ever finishes Buffalo Springs, he's found victory in never giving up. That is the true spirit of triathlon. ★

TEXAS PROVING GROUNDS

The Texas pros pick their favorite state parks for training.

First-place winner Mike Lovato likes to divert his 100-mile training rides through Bastrop State Park's scenic, 12-mile road through the Lost Pines. "After a couple of hours riding in 100 degrees, with 4 million percent humidity, I relish the relatively cool, breezy, scenic jaunt through Bastrop."

Andrea Fisher, second-place pro woman,

also trains in Bastrop. "When training for Ironman races, I have to ride five to six hours, so I can easily ride through Bastrop on my way home to Austin. And if I don't want to ride home, I rent a cabin. That way I can ride and run in the park right from my cabin door. It's awesome!"

Palo Duro Canyon State Park is a favorite of racer and trainer Tim Key. "The scenery at Palo Duro is absolutely amazing," he says. "Several years ago I completed a 50-mile

trail run in the canyon. The only thing that kept me going the last 10 miles was the sheer grandeur of the red canyon walls."

While I'm not pro, I'll throw my selection in as well. Balmorhea State Park is the perfect place for a weekend training camp. San Solomon Springs offers great open-water swimming with the safety of a pool environment. The cycling in the nearby Davis Mountains is outstanding.

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<www.lubbocktriathlon.org>

Contact: Mike or Marti Greer

Ironman and Triathlon Training Advice
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Contact: Tim Key

Watch the Ironman Triathlon World
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November 23, 2002, on NBC.

WELL-KEMPED WATERS

How did Texas get some of the best sport fishing in the nation? Thank a visionary biologist with some pretty unorthodox ideas.

By Jim Anderson



The late Bob Kemp, center, pictured here with former TPW commission chairman Edwin L. Cox, Jr. and former TPW executive director Charles D. Travis, revolutionized fishing in Texas.

IN THE EYEBLINK OF TIME between the 1960s and the 1980s, Texas was transformed from a sparsely populated land of agriculture, oil and modest trades into a pedal-to-the-metal, urban-oriented economic machine. New glass skylines rose, and new freeways reached out to old cotton fields and cow pastures where pastel tract houses were suddenly the preferred crop. The terms “sunbelt” and “lifestyle” were coined and immediately put to use alongside the word “Texas.” And people came in droves.

During the same period, creeks and rivers all over the state were dammed, creating dozens of new lakes to control flooding and meet the escalating water demands. With the new lakes came new opportunities and responsibilities for Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW).

One TPW biologist had a head full of ideas for all that new water, some of which were unorthodox for the time. Although he was a scientist, not an industrialist, he ultimately helped start a multibillion-dollar industry that rivals any in the state. Today that industry provides hundreds of jobs without depleting natural resources — and it’s the quintessential example of good, clean fun. The industry is sport fishing, and the man for the job was Bob Kemp.

In retrospect, Kemp’s vision seems simple enough. He just wanted to help make sport fishing in Texas — both inland and coastal — as productive as possible. A fisheries expert who also loved to fish, he possessed an ideal combination of preparation and inspiration.

Kemp came up with the first of his unorthodox ideas in the 1960s, while he was regional director of fisheries management and hatcheries. Based on the available research, he was convinced that the Florida strain of largemouth bass not only would thrive in Texas lakes, but would grow faster and bigger than our native northern strain. His superiors, however, disagreed. There would be no money allotted for such tomfoolery.

Luckily for Texas anglers, he persevered. Spending his own money, Kemp arranged to have a batch of Florida bass fingerlings flown to the TPW hatchery in Tyler for comparison studies. Flip the calendar pages forward a few decades, and the Florida strain of largemouth has become the gold standard for freshwater gamefish in Texas. These days, bass anglers from as far away as Japan dream of a trip to one of the legendary

walleye, a fish prized for both rod and skillet. Smallmouths were stocked in lakes and streams in the western half of the state and walleye in the northwestern quadrant, beginning with Lake Meredith in the Panhandle.

Meanwhile in the Gulf, a sudden craze for Cajun-style blackened redfish was depleting the redfish (red drum) population at an alarming rate. The numbers of speckled trout (spotted seatrout) were declining for similar reasons. In what was probably the toughest battle of his career, Kemp and his staff began to conduct annual saltwater fish harvest reports and net surveys. This work was not welcomed by the commercial fishing industry; it confirmed the sharp population decline and laid the groundwork for new regulations. In 1977, legislation was passed setting harvest limits on redfish. Eventually the commercial sale of redfish and speckled trout was prohibited altogether.

Kemp played a pivotal role in pulling together conservation groups and private industry to fund and build the world’s only redfish hatchery, in Corpus Christi. The dramatic comeback of the species is yet another testament to his foresight and tenacity.

Phil Durocher, current director of the TPW Inland Fisheries Division, and Allen Forshage, director of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, both worked for Kemp in those days. Both considered him an exacting boss, but fair-minded, and a good friend to boot. Durocher recalls times when Kemp didn’t share his staff’s enthusiasm for a particular idea or project, but if they made a strong enough case, he usually gave them his support. He figures Kemp never forgot what it was like to buck the status quo.

Kemp retired in 1986, slowed by chronic heart trouble. Allen Forshage remembers calling him in the hospital later that year, after Kemp had suffered another setback.

“Even though he was retired and having health problems, he always wanted to know how things were going. I had just been notified that a new state record Florida largemouth had been caught at Lake Fork. I called him in his hospital room, and we had a good talk. He was thrilled to hear about the new record. I’ll always be glad I called him, because he died the following day.”

So if you’re flipping a Texas rig to the backwater structure at

So if you’re flipping a Texas rig to the backwater structure at Lake Fork, nursing a bad case of lunker fever, pause a moment to think about Bob Kemp.

hotspots of Texas bass fishing.

Shortly after his self-funded gamble with the Florida bass introduction, Kemp lobbied to import striped bass from the East Coast. This time, his proposal was eyed with fresh respect by the policymakers. Stripers were first stocked in Spence and Granbury lakes in 1972.

In 1973, Kemp was promoted to director of TPW’s Fisheries Division. On a roll, he pushed for the introduction of two more highly esteemed northern species: the smallmouth bass, known for its sporting challenge and fighting spunk; and the

Lake Fork, nursing a bad case of lunker fever, pause a moment to think about Bob Kemp. Or if you’re trolling on Texoma, watching the downrigger for the strike of a monster striper, or fly-casting a streamer to smallmouth in a Hill Country river, or frying up a mess of fat Lake Meredith walleye, or stalking a pod of tailing redfish in the Gulf flats, think of Bob Kemp. Because he was once thinking of you. ★

Austin-based freelancer JIM ANDERSON writes about natural history and fishing for regional magazines.

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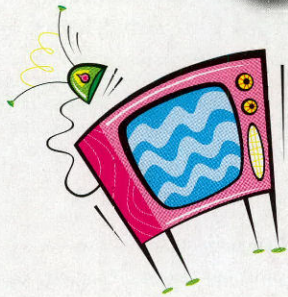
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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



The Front Line of News and Views



TELEVISION

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

May 26 – June 2:

Preserving a Mexican cloud forest; grabbing 'gators for grades; Gulf Coast biologists; competitive turkey calling.

June 2 – 9:

Life along the Texas/Mexico border; talking to the animals; the Rio Grande turkey; building community hiking trails.

May 12 – 19:

East Texas habitat of the red-cockaded woodpecker; Jurassic tracks at Dinosaur Valley State Park; life among artificial reefs; good bugs; remembering Pearl Harbor.

June 16 – 23:

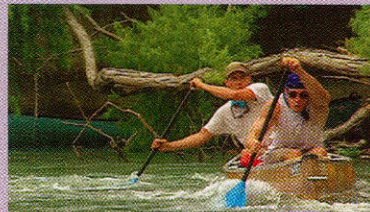
Unique approaches to environmental education; making peace with prairie dogs; the Texas Water Safari; floating cabins.

June 23 – 30:

Traveling El Camino Real; buffalo at Caprock Canyons State Park; a photo essay of the Texas outdoors; the plight of the horned lizard.

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Amarillo: KACV, Ch. 2 / Sat. 3:30 p.m.

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.

Corpus Christi: KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m. / Thurs. 1 p.m.

El Paso: KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 5 p.m. (rotates with other programs; check listings)

Dallas-Fort Worth: KERA, Ch. 13 / Fri. 1:30 p.m. Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman

Harlingen: KMBH, Ch. 60 / Thurs. 8:30 p.m. Also serving McAllen, Mission, Brownsville

Houston: KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sun. 5 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 / Sat. 6:30 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 / Thur. noon

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

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



SIGHTS & SOUNDS

Corpus Christi: KEDT-FM 90.3 / 5:34 p.m., KFTX-FM 97.5 / 5:35 a.m., KBSO-FM 94.7 / 6:50 a.m.

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

Cuero: KVCQ-FM 97.7 / 6:50 a.m.

Del Rio: KWMC-AM 1490 / 5:50 p.m.

Denison/Sherman: KJIM-AM 1500 / 8:55 a.m.

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

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

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

Eastland: KEAS-AM 1590 / 5:51 a.m. & 5:51 p.m., KATX-FM 97.7 / 5:51 a.m. & 5:51 p.m.

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

El Dorado, Ark.: KBSA-FM 90.9 / 5:33 a.m.

El Paso: KXCR-FM 89.5 / 12:20 p.m.

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

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

Fort Stockton: KFST-AM 860 / 7:56 a.m. & 12:50 p.m., KFTS-FM 94.3 / 7:56 a.m. & 12:50 p.m.

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

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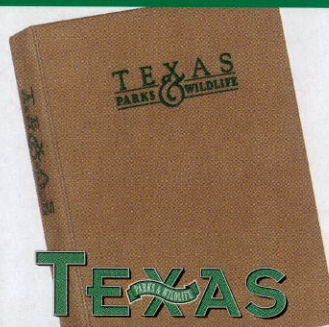
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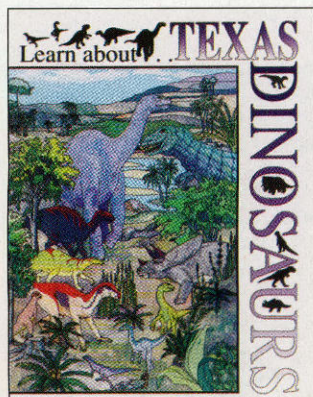
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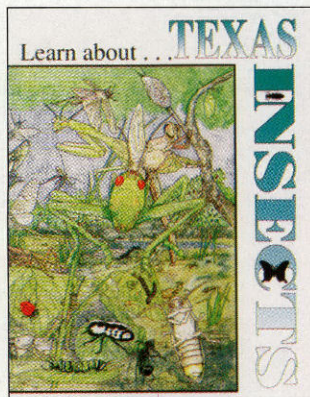
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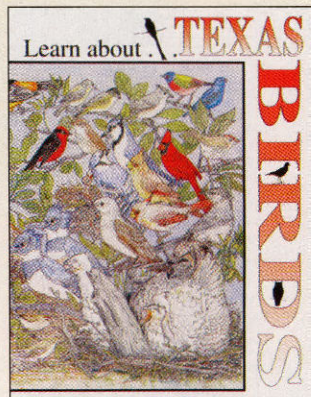
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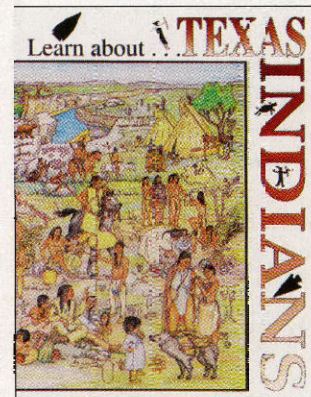
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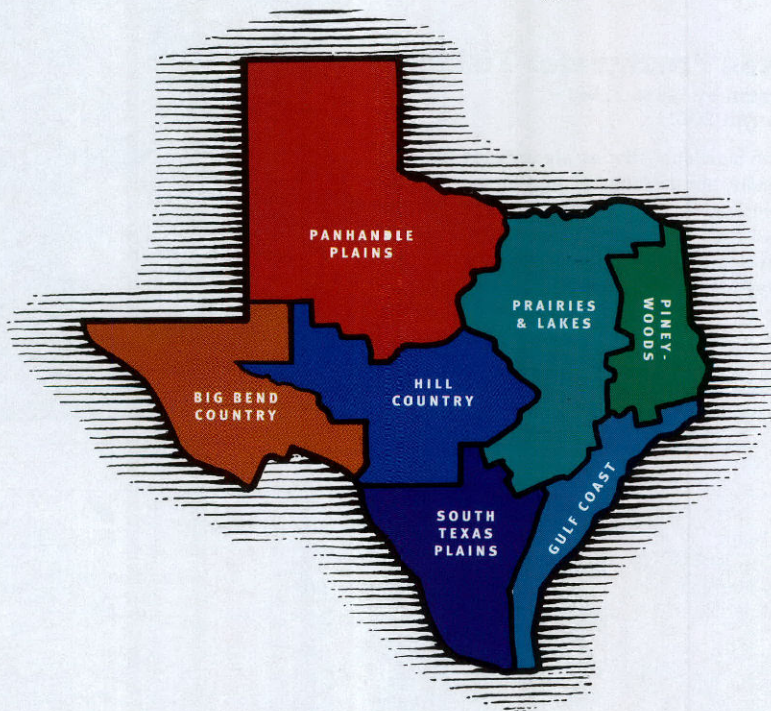
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June: Summer Amphitheater

Programs, call for dates, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, (915) 426-3337.

June: Desert Garden Tours, by reservation only, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (915) 424-3327

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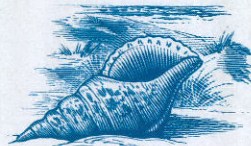
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June 8: Stories of Spirits, Magoffin Home SHS, El Paso, (915) 533-5147.

June 8, 22: Trip to Madrid Falls, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, (915) 229-3416.

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June: Gorman Falls Tour, every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

June: Sinkhole Bat Flight Tour, call for dates, Devil's Sinkhole SNA, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

June: Birdwatching, daily except when park closed for hunting, Pedernales Falls SP, Johnson City, (830) 868-7304.

June 1: National Trails Day, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, (888) 853-2688.

June 1: Fishing with a Ranger, Lake Texana SP, Edna, (361) 782-5718.

June 1: Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, Bayside, (361) 529-6600.

June 1: History Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

June 1: Fishing on National Fishing Day, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100.

June 1: Nighttime Alligator Count and Swamp Tour, J.D. Murphree WMA, Port Arthur, (409) 736-2551.

June 8, 22: Beach Combing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

June 15: Nighttime Alligator Count, J.D. Murphree WMA, Port Arthur, (409) 736-2551.

June 15: Flag Retirement Ceremony, Lake Texana SP, Edna, (361) 782-5718.

June 15, 29: Nighttime Wildlife Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

June 1: Crawling Wild Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

June 1, 15: Bat Flights at Stuart Bat Cave, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

June 1, 15: Birding Tour, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

June 1, 15: Wild Cave Tour, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

June 1, 15, 22, 29: Stumpy Hollow Nature Hike, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, (512) 793-2223.

June 6, 13, 20, 27: Devil's Waterhole Canoe Tour, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, (512) 793-2223.

June 7: Range and Wildlife Seminar, Kerr WMA, Hunt, (830) 238-4483.

June 14-16: Weekend With Dad, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, (888) 853-2688.

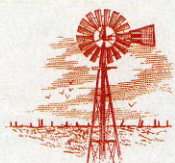
June 14-16: Sabinal Canyon – 150 Years, Utopia, (866) 839-3378.

June 15: Enchanted Rock Trail Project Day, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg, (512) 445-3862.

June 17: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, Austin, (512) 918-1832.

June 22: Capt. Perry Texas Ranger Living History Picnic, Johnson City, (830) 868-7684.

June 29: X Bar Dinner Show, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, (888) 853-2688.



PANHANDLE-PLAINS

June: "Texas" Outdoor Musical Drama, every Thursday through Tuesday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 655-2181.

June: Stargazing Night, call for date, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, (915) 263-4931.

June: Trailway Challenge, call for information, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

June 1: Annual Rough Fish Contest, Lake Arrowhead SP, Wichita Falls, (940) 528-2211.

June 1: National Trails Day Hike, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

June 1: Free Fishing Day, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

June 1: 10th Annual Kids' Fishing Tournament, Lake Arrowhead SP,

Wichita Falls, (940) 528-2211.

June 1: National Trails Day, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

June 1: Star Walk, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

June 1: Longhorn and Bison Seminar, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-4757.

June 1, 8, 15, 22: Sunset Nature Walks, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, (915) 263-4931.

June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Nature Challenge, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 4, 11, 25: River Walk, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 5: Reptiles of the Canyon, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 6, 13, 20, 27: Family Nature Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 7, 14, 21, 28: Palo Duro Pioneers, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 8: Smilin' Sunshine Adventure Race, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 256-0769 or (940) 839-4331.

June 8: Campfire Tails, Abilene SP, Tuscola, (915) 572-3204.

June 9, 16, 23, 30: Worship Service, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 12: Panhandle Stargazing, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 15: Wildflower Tour, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

June 19: Butterfly Basics, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 22: Moon Walk, Abilene SP, Tuscola, (915) 572-3204.

June 26: Canyon Heritage, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

June 29: Wildflower Walk, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

June 29: Evening Program, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.



PINEYWOODS

June 1: Free Fishing Day, Huntsville SP, Huntsville, (936) 295-5644.

June 1: Shop Tour, Texas State

Railroad SP, Rusk, (800) 442-8951 or (903) 683-2561 outside Texas.

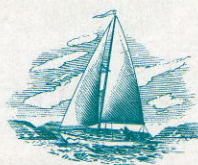
June 1: 12th Annual Kids' Fish Flop Fishing Tournament, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

June 2, 9, 23, 30: Henhouse Ridge Nature Hike, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

June 7, 21: Nature Slide Program, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

June 15: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

June 15, 29: Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.



PRAIRIES AND LAKES

June: Weekends at the Farm, every Saturday and Sunday, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHS, Washington, (936) 878-2461 Ext. 245.

June: Interpretive Programs, every Saturday, Purtils Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

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

June: Evening Programs, every Saturday, Stephen F. Austin SP, San Felipe, (979) 885-3613.

June 1: Kids' Wilderness Survival, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171.

June 1: Kids Fishing Day, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, (903) 395-3100.

June 1: White-tailed Wonderland, Purtils Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

June 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 22-23: Kreische Brewery Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658.

June 1-2, 9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30: Tours, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

June 2, 9: Kreische House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange, (979) 968-5658.

June 3-6, 10-13: Palmetto's Wild Outdoor Adventure and Ecology Program, Palmetto SP, Gonzales, (830) 672-3266.

June 8: Stagecoach Days, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

June 8: Stargazing, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940.

June 8: Star Party, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, (254) 694-3793.

June 8: 9th Annual Kids' Fish 'n' Play Day, Purtils Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

June 8: Creatures of the Night, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, (903) 395-3100.

June 8-9: Taste of Summer, Sebastopol House SHS, Seguin, (830) 379-4833.

June 15: Wildlife Program, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, (903) 395-3100.

June 15: Stargazing Beginning Astronomy, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171.

June 22: Cowboy Campfire-Music and Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171.

June 22: Moonlight Meanderings, Purtils Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

June 22: Penn Farm Tours, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940.

June 22: Common Trees of the Cooper Lake Area, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, (903) 395-3100.

June 29: Snakes Alive! Purtils Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

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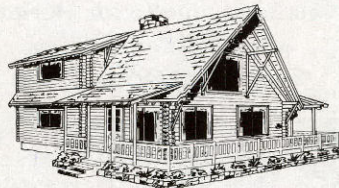
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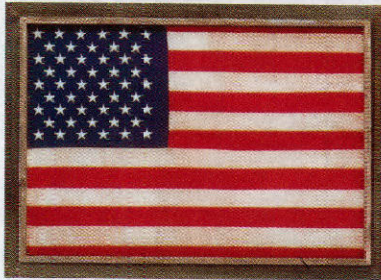
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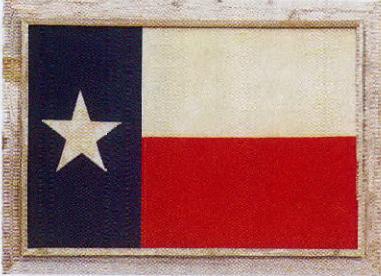
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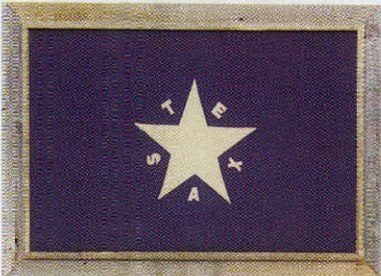
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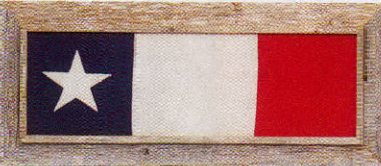
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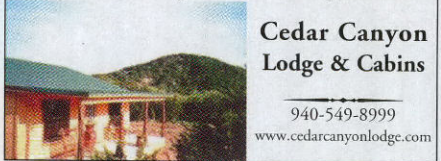
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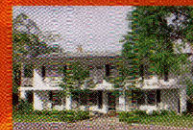
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The husband and wife photography team of John and Gloria Tveten had been attending the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival for years, but one of their most exciting discoveries was this rare blue metalmark, with its iridescent turquoise wings, which they photographed at the festival a few years back. "Sightings of blue metalmarks are rare in the United States, and are typically limited to the southern Rio Grande Valley," John says. "We heard there were three or four of them in the butterfly garden across the street from the civic auditorium. We went and saw them and came back the next day to photograph them."

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