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BASS ACT

ROBERT LILES

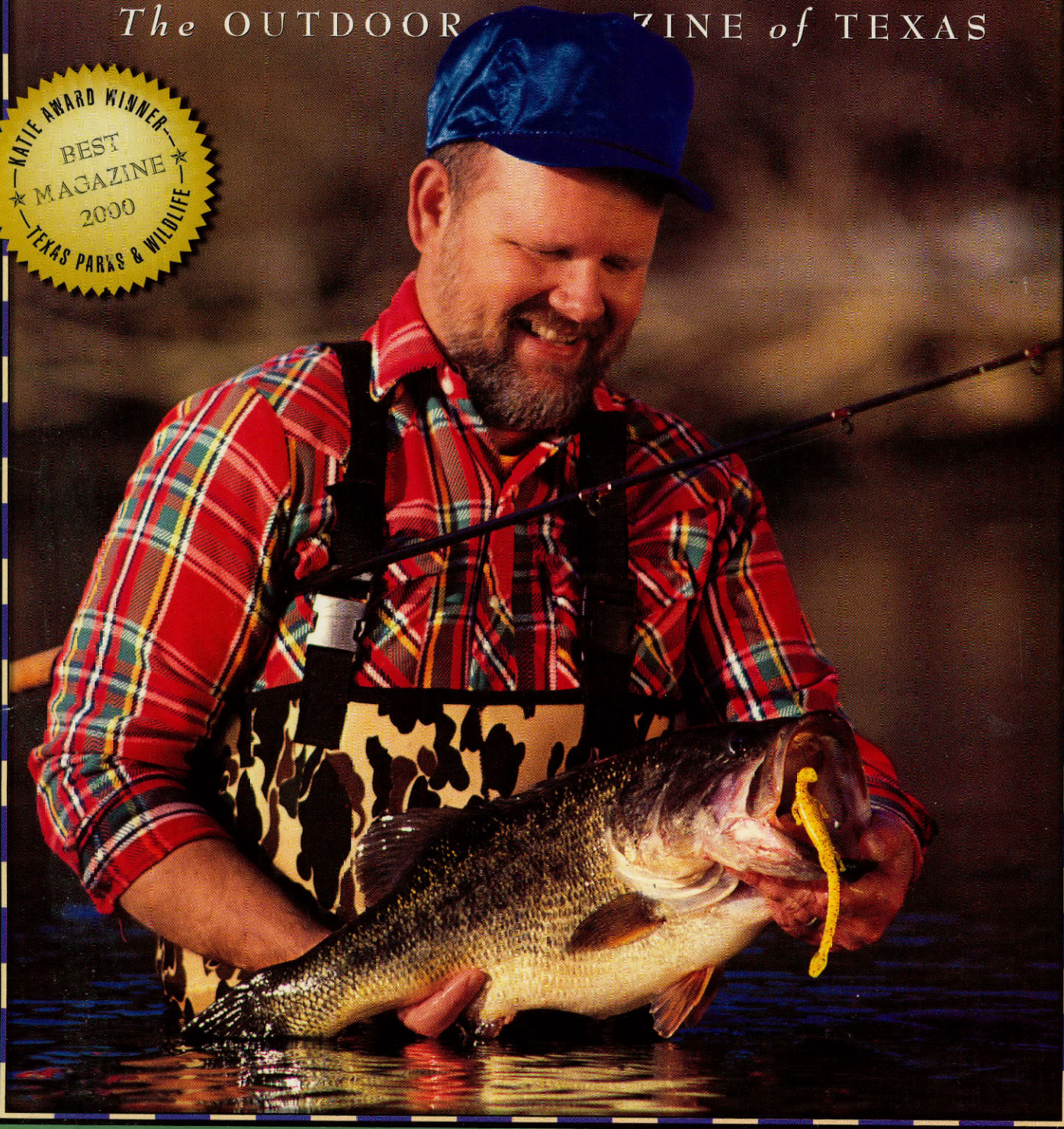
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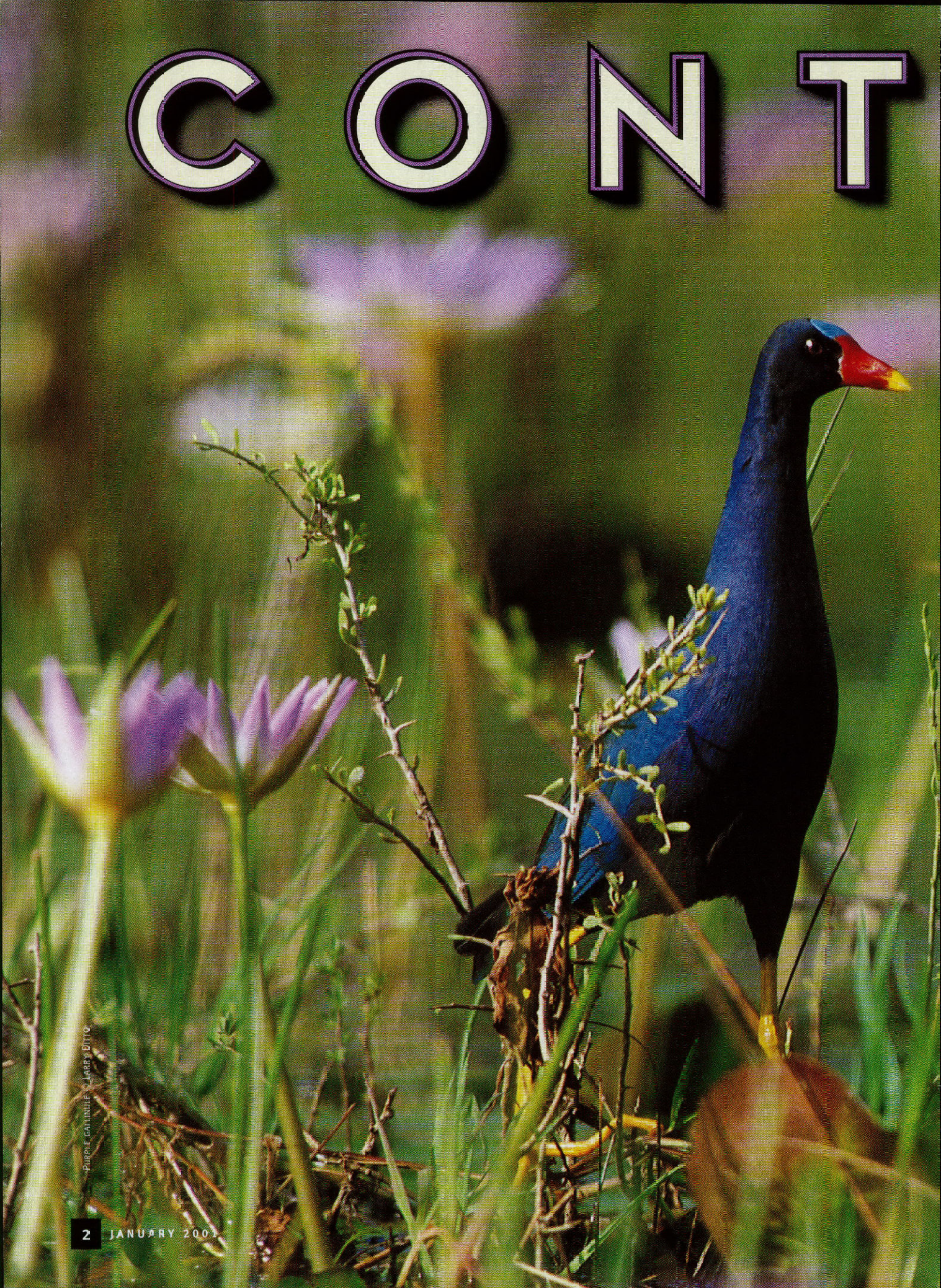
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CONT



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E N T S

JANUARY 2001

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COVERS

Front: Photographer Robert Liles, pictured here, accompanied fellow photographer Wyman Meinzer on many a bass fishing trip and other outdoor outings over the years. Liles and his son were killed in a motorcycle accident near their home in Graham on October 30, leaving a void in the hearts and lives of many. See some of Liles' work on page 18 and some of Meinzer's bass fishing photos beginning on page 26. Photo © Wyman Meinzer.

Back: The handsome Gambel's quail is at home in the desert borderlands of Trans-Pecos Texas. Photo © Gary Kramet.

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

AT ISSUE

From the Pen of Andrew Sansom

ON OCTOBER 20, 2000, JOHN LINDSEY CELEBRATED THE NEW MILLENNIUM up on Lake Meredith in the Texas Panhandle by catching a 14.14-pound largemouth bass with a fly rod. I was at a dinner in Fort Worth less than 24 hours later, and the tables were buzzing about this exciting feat and all its details, right down to the weight of the tippet tied to Lindsey's leader. You know it was thrilling for him, but it was also thrilling for the rest of us. We caught the fish vicariously many times over and will no doubt continue to do so for years to come.

Similar tales now come out of the boat ramps and marinas of Texas every year as our public waters continue to provide average anglers the opportunity to fish for bass in the big leagues.



Building on our success and a foundation of solid support, our goal will be that one day soon, an angler will catch the world-record bass in Texas.

It hasn't come by accident.

First, Texas Parks and Wildlife staff has doggedly pursued a progressive approach to bass management for the past 15 years that is based on sound science and has been consistently supported by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. In the process, these dedicated biologists have been subjected to name-calling and ridicule when their recommendations were not popular or universally supported.

Second, despite the often fractious and factional nature of the bass fishing community, its leadership and its rank and file have stepped forward again and again to support the program, to take the lead in promoting the concept of catch and release, and to do whatever has been necessary to help us make fishing better.

Finally, philanthropic institutions led by the Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas and the Anheuser-Busch Foundation have generously supplemented the revenues received by Texas Parks and Wildlife from anglers through the sale of fishing licenses, providing the necessary capital to move bass management in Texas to a higher level. This past year alone, with funding from Anheuser-Busch, 22 trophy bass, each weighing more than 13 pounds, were contributed live to the Budweiser Sharelunker Program by participating anglers. In their own spawning units at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, these big fish produced more than 93,000 fry, which will strengthen the genetics of big bass in the waters of our state.



Now, as Ken Kurzawski writes in this issue, we begin a new chapter: Operation World Record.

Building on our success and a foundation of solid support, our goal will be that one day soon, an angler will catch the world-record bass in Texas.

I know that fish will be out there in Texas waters in the years ahead, and I look forward to experiencing, with everyone else, the thrill of the angler who catches her and the pride of having produced her.

We are going to do this together.

Andrew Sansom

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE MISSION STATEMENT:
**To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas
 for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.**

TEXAS

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

JANUARY 2001, VOL. 59, NO. 1

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CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

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

EDITORIAL OFFICES:

3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, Texas 78704

Phone: 512-912-7000 Fax: 512-707-1913

E-mail: magazine@tpwd.state.tx.us

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West of Mississippi:

STONEWALLACE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.:

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RR 1, Box 1400, Stockton Springs, Maine 04981

Bill Warren, 207-469-1981; fax: 207-469-3050

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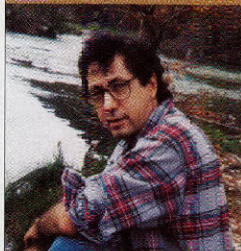
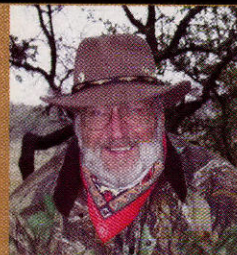
ABC
AUDITED



Carol Flake Chapman, in keeping with her Native American ancestors, writes frequently about animals and the natural world. She has written two books about horses, *Thoroughbred Kingdoms* and *Tarnished Crown*, and she once wrote a poem honoring a racing camel in Dubai that she read aloud for an audience of Bedouins and sheiks. She has ridden a bucking Bactrian camel in White Sands, New Mexico, and she has galloped a racehorse through the New Forest in England and a vineyard in Tuscany, among other settings. She is currently at work on a book about the place of Native American traditions in the modern world. In this issue she writes about a camel trek in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

IN THE FIELD

Jim Foster is a full-time outdoor writer/photographer. His travel photographs and articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines across the country, and in Europe. He currently writes a weekly column for *The Valley Morning Star*, *The Brownsville Herald*, and *The McAllen Monitor*. He is a popular lecturer and gives slide presentations on South Texas fishing, hunting and wildlife. Foster taught wildlife and nature photography at Texas State Technical College in Harlingen. He and his wife, Debra, live on a small ranch in South Texas, where he has a fine kennel of bird dogs and Debra operates a successful boarding kennel business. He writes about the new wave in shallow-water boats in this issue.



Dan Barton is a woodworker and building contractor who has restored and remodeled many older homes in Austin and Central Texas. The Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio and the Dougherty Arts Center in Austin have exhibited his hand-built early Texas-style furniture. He maintains an avid interest in the outdoors, which goes back to his childhood in rural Dallas County. He has hunted, fished, canoed and rafted in Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Mexico. In this issue he writes about a blue quail hunt on the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. He and his wife, Judith, a painter and a psychologist, live in Austin.

MAIL CALL

Picks, Pans and Probes from Previous Issues

FOREWORD

LETTERS

BOOKS ARE MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY GIFTS, both to give and to receive. Those authors aiming for this year's Texas Book Festival held in early November ensured that my family and friends would have a wide selection of new titles from which to choose, and so I have a handsome stash of new books to kick off the new year.

The most precious of these is *John Graves and the Making of Goodbye to a River: Selected Letters, 1957-1960*, a keepsake edition published by TaylorWilson Publishing to honor John Graves as the featured author of Texas Book Festival 2000 and to mark the 40th anniversary of *Goodbye to a River*. Edited by David S. Hamrick and designed by D.J. Stout, the smallish volume is illustrated with the photos Graves himself took with a Brownie camera on the Brazos trip in 1957.

These letters allow a fascinating glimpse into the mind of the man and the exacting attention to detail that is his hallmark. In a letter to J. Frank Dobie dated September 9, 1960, Graves comments on *Goodbye to a River*: "In it I tried to say a few things honestly, and as well as I could." That perfect sentence made me wish everyone who writes would end by writing that sentence and then signing their name.

The book is arranged into four chapters followed by an annotated bibliography, which I confess I turned to first to see what I might have missed over the years, and need to track down. It struck me how fortunate we are to have John Graves writing a Texas Rivers series for *Texas Parks & Wildlife* (his articles on the Canadian, Pecos and Llano rivers have run in the past year or so, and he'll soon have a piece on the Neches ready for your pleasure). It also struck me that I and this magazine's staff are merely the latest students in a lengthy series of publishers and editors who have been gently (but quite firmly!) molded through our discourse with John Graves: He has educated and improved us with his commitment to the written word.

This Texas Rivers series would not have come to pass without the vision and determination of Texas State Photographer Wyman Meinzer, whose photographs have accompanied John Graves' text on the Canadian, Pecos and Llano pieces and will grace future Texas Rivers installments. Meinzer also took the photograph on this issue's cover of Robert Liles, to whom he was both close friend and unselfish mentor.

We are honored to showcase the powerful talents of these three men, just a few of the many talented contributors who make this magazine great.



Loving "Life on the Llano"

A funny thing happened to me this morning as I flipped through your November 2000 issue. The gods guided my eyes and fingers to the Llano story.

Now, I take and enjoy your

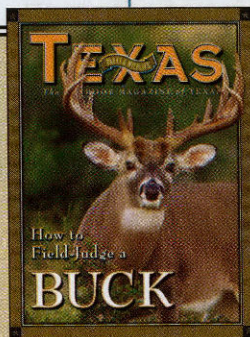
magazine and other Texas titles, but I've very seldom, if ever, found they could touch me with the magic of Joycean prose. On the contrary; quite often I find myself being aware that something else should have been said, or could have been better said.

But this was different. As I scanned along, I was cajoled into the cadence of the writer's voice, and I stopped scanning and started reading.

It was only after I finished reading that I looked back to see who had written it. John Graves! Graves was at Rice when I was

at Baylor. We shared a Texas, one now gone with the wind, the Texas of J. Frank Dobie, Tom Lea and others in and out of Texas. John Graves evoked it, and evokes it still. Thanks, Mr. Graves, it was lovely.

W.D. Julian
Crockett



John Graves was at Rice when I was at Baylor. We shared a Texas, one now gone with the wind, the Texas of J. Frank Dobie, Tom Lea and others in and out of Texas. John Graves evoked it, and evokes it still.

W.D. Julian
Crockett



MAIL CALL

John Graves' article on the Llano river was enjoyably written and the photography was outstanding. I think that perhaps I can shed some light on the origin and meaning of the river's name.

For the most part, the names given to rivers by Spanish explorers were descriptive; they referred to a river's appearance or to its characteristics. Good examples are *Rio Colorado*, *Rio Blanco*, *Rio Grande* and *Rio Frio* (Red River, White River, Big River and Cold River). Sometimes a river was named for something associated with it, such as *Rio de los Pedernales* and *Rio de los Nueces* (River of the Flints and River of the Nuts). English-speaking explorers would have naturally called these two the Flint River and the Pecan River.

My point is this: The names are essentially straightforward; they do not require a long etymological journey to arrive at their meaning. Neither does *Rio Llano*. It simply means "Flat River," and it is a perfectly sensible name, because it is not named for the terrain through which it flows, but for its own characteristics.

For most of its length, the river runs through fairly shallow and sandy land which is underlain by limestone in the upper reaches and granite in the lower. Unable to carve a deep channel in the hard rock, the river has made for itself a wide and shallow bed — a flat bed — which is much wider than the stream itself. This stream often changes its course, shifting from side to side within the banks, which are neither high nor steep, at least not on both sides at the same point. In short, it offers a pretty flat crossing in most places, and it's a river I have known, enjoyed and loved for more than 60 years.

*Willis McPherson
Rochelle*

Thank you folks most sincerely for John Graves' richly evocative article in your November 2000 issue. The Llano is indeed one of few relatively unspoiled

Texas rivers and is the heart and soul of a large portion of the Hill Country.

Mr. Graves proves once again that his writing has an innate ability to capture the spirit of a river and its banks. His awareness of the Comanche is nearly preternatural. However, his understanding of the presence of the Spanish in the area is in need of one minor correction, and the mistake is not his.

As Mr. Graves pointed out, some 275 years prior to his recent foray, the Spanish had indeed mined the region for silver. Slightly less than 100 years ago, the historian Bolton did fruitlessly attempt to extract riches from a mine he had found in the Riley Mountains south of Llano, believing it to be the famous Los Almagres.

Unfortunately, conventional wisdom holds that Bolton's misadventure on Honey Creek closed the book on the whereabouts of Los Almagres. Recent research performed under the financing auspices of the Texas Historical Foundation has established that Bolton was about a mile and a half away from the true site, or at least one true site, of Los Almagres.

In the last several years, a handful of shafts have been discovered on Packsaddle Mountain. These, it is now believed, are more accurately described as the famous Los Almagres mines. The Texas Historical Foundation and lead archaeologist Christopher Caran are undertaking a survey of the region to see if there are more such near-prehistoric mine shafts. In the meantime, you can read about our progress in *Heritage*, the magazine of the Texas Historical Foundation. You can contact us at 512-453-2154, or find us on the web at <texashf.org>.

Thank you again for a wonderful article, and thank you for the opportunity to toot our horn a little.

*Oliver Franklin, Executive Director
Texas Historical Foundation*

Make Tracks...

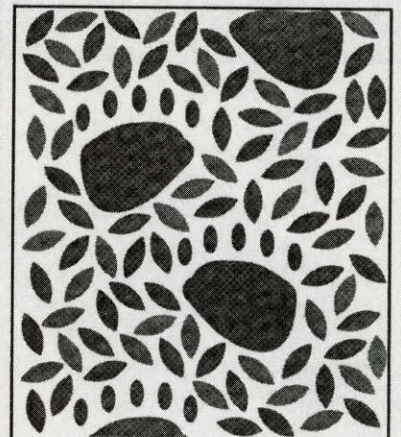


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MAIL CALL

Your article "Life on the Llano" in the November issue was super. I've traveled through that country for many years en route to Austin, San Antonio and Laredo and didn't know what I was missing. One question, where does the James River join the Llano?

Austin Roberts
Odessa

SUSAN L. EBERT replies: *The James River flows into the Llano in Mason County, just west of the bridge that crosses over the Llano River on RR 2389. Go south on RR 1723 from the city of Mason for about 2.4 miles until it intersects RR 2389. Head southwest on RR 2389 for 4.7 miles until you cross the bridge on the Llano River. The James merges with the Llano about a quarter-mile to the west of the bridge.*

A Dual Nature, or a Nature Duel?

I am not renewing because of your magazine's split personality. Texans who hike, love wildlife and go birding are not likely to be hunters and gunners. You need separate magazines for these conflicting tastes.

Jerry Franks
Midland

Mary Ann Baker's request for two magazines because she has to "endure the hunting and fishing issues" begs a reply.

She states, "there is at least one article that appeals to the conservationist/naturalist/science educator in every issue." Gosh, what makes her think being a hunter and/or fisherman excludes one from being a conservationist, naturalist or a science educator? Hunting and fishing go hand in hand with conservation, nature and education. It is well known that hunters and fishermen finance many, if not most, conservation efforts in Texas and the United States. As an engineering graduate of Texas Tech University, I

feel I know something about science education, besides having spent thousands and thousands of dollars in my 51 years on licenses, fees, ammunition, guns and fishing equipment. There are millions of others just like me out there, and I'll stack our efforts and spending up against Mary Ann and her associates anytime. The magazine is just fine the way it is.

⚡ Dalton Taylor

The Simple Joys of a Good Dog

Jim Anderson's Legend of "Simply Gus" was a sweet tribute to many a canine hunting companion. The teamwork of a hunter and dog borders on ESP (extrasensory perception) as they silently sit in a blind awaiting the game of the day. This hunting partnership, of reading each other's minds, has put many a fine meal on the table.

The story rekindled memories of my own dear Labrador retriever hunting companion, Black Diamond Abbey. And for you nature lovers: The idea of removing the "love of nature" from "hunting and fishing" is virtually impossible, not to mention barbaric and inhumane.

Peggie Kimberlin
Flower Mound

Sound off for "Mail Call!"

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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

WATER BOONDOGGLES

The biggest little water plan in Texas

POLITICIANS and engineers have long come up with grandiose plans for moving water from one place to another. One plan proposed towing icebergs from Antarctica to Saudi Arabia. And Alaska Governor Wally Hickel dreamed up a \$150 billion, 1,700-mile undersea pipeline to pipe water from Alaska to California. This month, when 15 regional water-planning groups submit their 50-year plans to the Texas Water Development Board for review, seems like a fitting time to look back at Texas' biggest water boondoggle to date — the 1968 Water Plan.

The 1968 plan involved developing an astounding supply of water — enough to submerge Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia to a depth of one foot (with some left over). The key features of the plan included a canal that would have tapped the Mississippi River below New Orleans, bringing 12 to 13 million acre-feet (one acre-foot is 325,851 gallons of water) hundreds of miles to

Texas. The soil and debris excavated to create the canal in Louisiana would have been used to create a massive levee to act as a barrier against inland flooding from hurricanes. The canal, they reasoned, could also be used for barge shipping between New Orleans and the Beaumont/Port Arthur/Crange area. The Sabine River, inconveniently cut of place, would be made to run backward to connect to the canal from Louisiana.

Once in Texas, the Mississippi River water would enter two cement-lined aqueducts called the Coastal Canal and the Trans-Texas Canal. These canals were to snake 1,200 miles across the northern and southern portions of Texas. The Coastal Canal would extend to the Rio Grande Valley. On the way, it would have had to “duck” underneath four major rivers and 142 minor streams along the Texas Gulf Coast.

The second canal, the Trans-Texas, would have transported the Mississippi River water to northeast

Texas, then uphill to Lubbock, with one spur veering off to New Mexico and another to the Trans-Pecos and then El Paso. The water would be pumped uphill more than 4,000 feet from the Mississippi River to Lubbock to meet the irrigation needs of the Texas High Plains. (At the time, the Ogallala Aquifer was expected to be depleted by 2020.

Thanks to conservation measures, it is now expected to provide water further into the future.)

To pump the water to its final destination, the project would have required 7 million kilowatts of electricity — more than a third of the generating capacity in Texas at the time. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which had its own even larger version

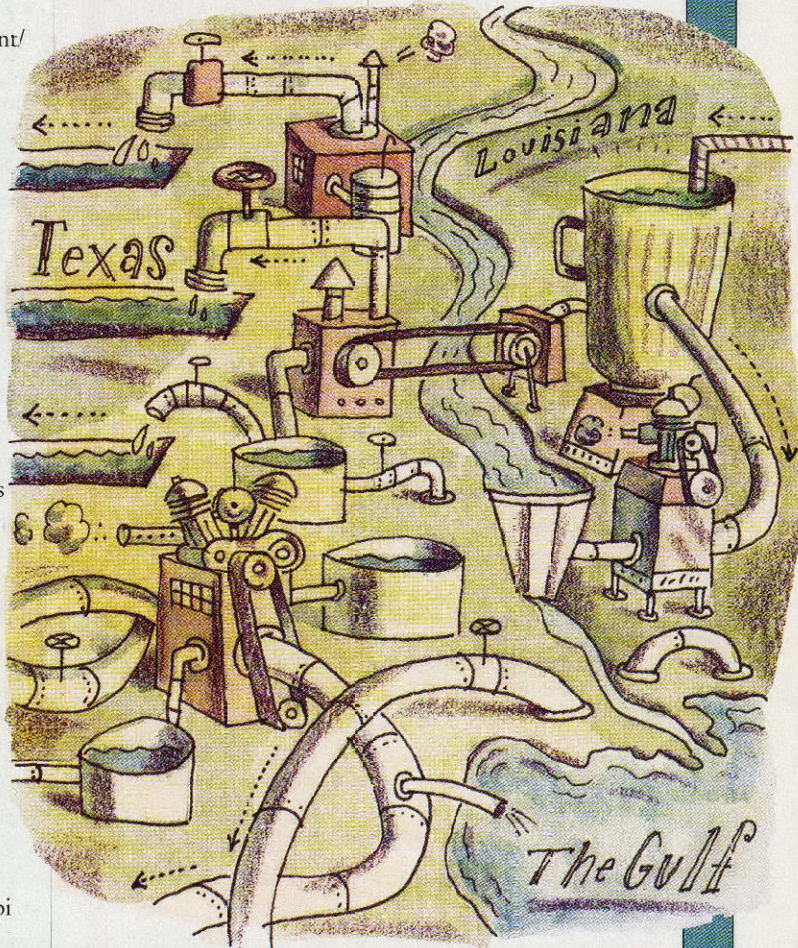


ILLUSTRATION BY PECAR DUMLAGIC



of the Texas Water Plan, calculated that 12 million kilowatts would be needed — and that 12 nuclear power plants would be necessary to provide the additional power because nuclear power would soon be “dirt cheap.”

In addition to the canals, 62 new reservoirs, mostly in East Texas, would have been constructed to capture another 4 million acre-feet of water for eventual shipment to Lubbock and the Rio Grande Valley. The new reservoirs would have covered 4,500 square miles of land. The Sulphur River in East Texas would have been dammed from the Louisiana border almost to Dallas. The plan also included the elimination of some 60 million acres of water-guzzling brush, including saltcedar and juniper.

In 1968 the cost to Texas for the plan was projected by the TWDB to be \$3.5 billion, with an additional \$5.5 billion to come from the federal government. Some estimated that the project would ultimately have cost close to \$14 billion in 1968 dollars.

For the plan to proceed, an amendment to the Texas Constitution was needed for the state to finance its share of the project. In the end, the plan was defeated at the ballot box — by only 6,000 votes. Thus it became the plan that never was, and thankfully so.

Today the 1968 Texas Water Plan stands as a monument to another time, when bigger was always better. Mark Twain’s words seem to apply to such endeavors when he said, “Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to.”

— Todd Vorteler



A SHORE THING

What’s that great sucking sound on the beach at Port Aransas? Sheepshead fishers finding ghost shrimp bait.

NICKNAMED THE “convict fish” for their striped, jail-like uniforms and their reputation for stealing bait, sheepshead have rows of dangerous human-like teeth and aren’t shy about using them. Sheepshead are easy fish to catch and will take just about anything edible off an angler’s line, no matter how much it costs or what special fish it’s aimed to catch. A favorite bait among some locals and wintering Texans is ghost shrimp, a free bait that sheepshead can’t resist.

Before sunrise on the beach

just behind the Casa del Cortez condominiums at Port Aransas, the view along the shoreline is of fishermen harvesting ghost shrimp. The tiny, one- to two-inch shrimp burrow into the sand where the surf washes in at low tide. They leave pencil-size holes and are buried within a foot of the surface.

How do you evict them from their holes? The easiest way is to use a “sand pump,” which consists of a three-inch-wide PVC pipe with a plunger inside attached to a crosspiece handle on the top, like a bicycle pump. They can be bought for \$20, or made for about \$7, and are relatively easy to use.

After the waves recede and the bubbles soak into the sand, small holes appear. Put the pump over a hole and press it into the wet sand while pulling on the plunger handle. It will sink about six inches deeper as it sucks the shrimp and sand into the tube. Squirt the contents back onto the beach. Pluck out the ghost shrimp, which are tiny, pinkish and nearly transparent. If the stunned

or wriggling morsel is too small, leave it to burrow back into the sand. The larger the shrimp, the better the sheepshead will see them.

Some anglers work together, one holding the pail while the other operates the pump. Those ghost shrimping alone often cut the top out of a plastic milk jug and strap their belt through the handle, leaving both hands free for holding the pump and pulling the plunger. Anglers are limited to taking 20 ghost shrimp daily and need a fishing license with a saltwater stamp.

Fisherman Louis Czech fishes for sheepshead around the jetties and piers of Port Aransas, where the waves are deep. Sheepshead like deep, clear pools and hang around anything coral will grow on.

To bait the line for sheepshead, first attach a heavy spiked weight to the end of the line, then hang a few ghost shrimp a foot or more apart so they’ll dangle up off the bottom and four to five feet below the surface. Ghost shrimp are fragile creatures, so don’t try casting with them. Just toss the line out fairly far and let it sink to the bottom. Then reel it back in to hook the weight in the mud. When the sheepshead takes the bait, it will pull the hook back out of the mud so you can reel it in.

In Texas, ghost shrimp and sheepshead are always in season. Sheepshead average two to three pounds, but can grow to 10 pounds. The minimum catch size is 12 inches, and the daily bag limit is five. And while they may look dangerous, their tasty meat — similar to drum — makes it worth the risk.

— Nancy V. Sont



FIELD NOTES

What better way to start off the New Year than by volunteering? Texas Parks and Wildlife has a few suggestions on how you and your family can join the volunteer effort while enjoying the great outdoors!

AMBASSADOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: Volunteers teach children fishing ethics and techniques, work at the casting pond, and serve as tour guides for groups wishing to visit the hatchery portion of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. For more information call 903-676-BASS.

TEXAS NATURE TRACKERS: Volunteers monitor populations of rare species in their area. Participants receive training and agree to collect data about a specific species for TPW on public property. Schools, clubs or community groups that would like information about volunteer opportunities can call 800-792-1112, ext. 7011.

STATE PARK VOLUNTEERS: Almost all state parks have opportunities for volunteers to get involved. Volunteer positions, ranging from tour guides to trail maintenance assistants, may be short-term for specific events or ongoing programs. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact the manager or volunteer coordinator at the park of your choice or call 800-792-1112, ext. 4415.

For more information about TPW volunteer opportunities, visit our Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

STAR LIGHT, BRIGHT?

TODAY MOST TEXANS are growing up unable to see the stars their grandparents knew so well. And scientists fear we could lose the view of the stars altogether unless cities learn to shine lights toward the ground instead of up into the night sky.

"Compared to a viewing location out in the country, people in cities get to see about 2 percent of all the stars visible. That's a 98 percent loss," says Dr. Fritz Benedict, a senior research scientist at the McDonald Observatory.

He knows firsthand the frustration of trying to stargaze within the city limits. "In the mid-'90s, two fairly bright comets visited the inner solar system. One evening Comet Hyakutake

was directly overhead. I went out to my Austin backyard, looked up and saw nothing but a bright orange glow from the local roads. Shortly thereafter, my wife and I moved 15 miles west of Austin to Lakeway. From there, the second comet, Hale-Bopp, was easily visible."

Light pollution is not just a problem here in Texas. Populated areas around the world are losing their view of the universe, say astronomers at the International Astronomical Union General Assembly. According to the National Academy of Scientists, the light that obscures the view of the night sky, also called "sky glow," comes from inefficient lighting sources that do little to increase nighttime safety, utility or security. The

academy says these lights cost more than \$1 billion annually in wasted energy in the United States alone.

Fortunately, something can be done to put the stars back in the sky. Astronomers urge cities to adopt better lighting design. Low-pressure sodium lights, for example, can replace existing fixtures for most streets, parking lots and other locations. They reduce glare and save money. On an individual level, residents can choose well-shielded fixtures and turn off lights when they're not needed.

To many, losing our view of the stars means losing an essential part of our humanity. "Every culture on earth has lived with a clear view of the Milky Way for at least a part of each month. Trying to explain the Milky Way defined us as human. Unfortunately, more than 70 percent of the people on this planet live in cities and never have a chance to look up and wonder."

— Erica House

Composite of satellite images showing the extent of outdoor lighting in the continental United States.



CHICKEN CO-OP

Thanks to the efforts of concerned landowners, the Attwater's prairie chicken is coming home to roost.

IF RANCHES WERE NAMED FOR the birds that populated them, the Elicks' place would have been called the Attwater's Prairie Chicken Ranch. A grouse species that once thrived on the 1,800-acre spread along the San Bernard River near Sealy, the Attwater's prairie chicken has become one of North America's most endangered birds. Once numbering more than a million, the population was down to a mere 50 birds last year.

But John Elick and fellow

ranchers in the area have joined an effort to bring the bird back, to restore something of a lost element to the important Gulf Coast prairie ecosystem. "I want to do something for wildlife," says Elick, one of eight landowners working to restore Texas' coastal prairie habitat on more than 17,800 acres. "I want to help create and maintain habitat for wildlife because I believe that what is good for the ecology of the land is good for me and my ranch."

The Coastal Prairie Conservation Initiative allows landowners to volunteer to receive cost-share incentives to carry out prairie habitat conservation practices such as brush control, grazing management and prescribed burning to improve the health of their rangeland.

Landowners can also sign a Safe Harbor agreement, which essentially immunizes them from liability under the Endangered Species Act if management practices attract endangered species.

Before he became involved, Elick worried that the federal government would infringe on his property rights if it was discovered that his property attracted such a splendid array of wildlife, including the prairie chicken and the

bald eagle. After hearing about the Safe Harbor agreements, Elick approached program representatives within the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the local Resource Conservation and Development Board.

"Basically," said Elick, "I learned that the Safe Harbor was designed to protect the ranch owner's property rights, and yet provide the government special use ranchland for endangered species habitat without the price tag of acquiring the land. Both the government and private landowner benefit."

Elick is looking forward to the day when the Attwater's prairie chicken comes home to roost. It's a piece of the past that's been missing from his ranch for too long.

—Ben Ikenson

CLOSE CALLS

THIS NEW VOLUME from Texas A&M University Press features 16 pieces by Texas writer Jan Reid that were originally published in *Texas Monthly*, *GQ*, *Esquire* and other national magazines. Reid is a native son with a detective's nose for telling detail and a novelist's skill with words. He sees past the inherent Texas swagger and observes the place for what it is, with its paradoxes of grit and gloss, tranquility and violence, poverty and wealth.

The landscape, nature and history of Texas are recurring characters in Reid's work. An account of a mule ride deep into Palo Duro Canyon includes not only the sights and sounds of the remarkable gorge but also its geology, flora and fauna, and human history. A canoe trip down the Devils River triggers musings on the peculiar legacy of Spanish land grants and an even-handed look at the conflict between river runners and private landowners.

Much of the appeal of this writing comes from the author's tendency to tackle subjects others might shy from, and his apparent willingness to accept a degree of risk. Here are compelling stories of inner-city cops patrolling the third watch, the tenacious remnants

of the Kickapoo tribe, a restless Vietnam vet turned Rambo-style jailbreaker, a backwoods cowgirl with an effective fist, an outbreak of coyote rabies, the backstage world of a big-hearted heavyweight champ and the movie-like story of a charismatic young boxer dogged by a past mistake.

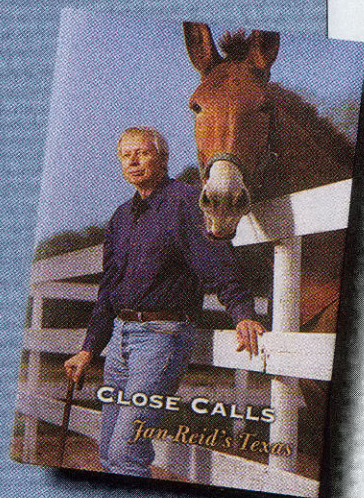
The choice of *Close Calls* as a title proves apt throughout, but especially so in the closing story, a chiller called "Left For Dead." In April 1998, Reid and companions were caught up in a Mexico City taxi hijacking that went from bad to worse and left him sprawled on the pavement with a .38 slug in his spine. Against exceedingly grim odds, his luck held and in time he recovered to walk — and write — again. His forthcoming book about

the experience is titled *The Bullet Meant for Me*.

Order *Close Calls* from Texas A&M University Press, 800-826-8911.

—Jim Anderson

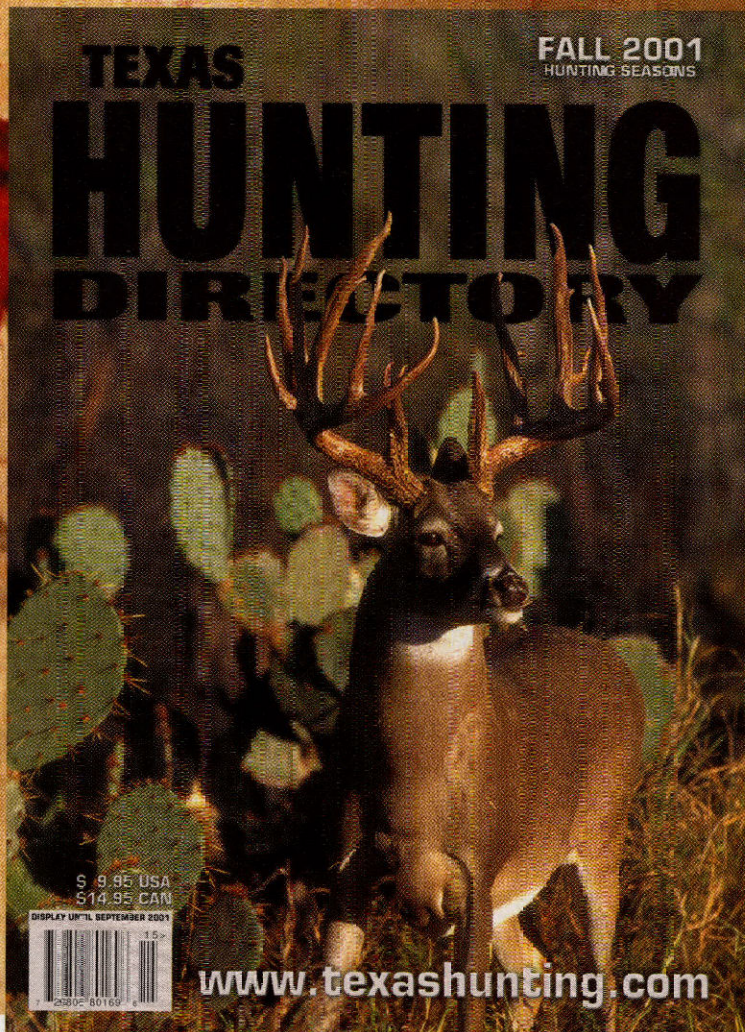
Author Jan Reid with the lovely Miss Patsy, owned by TPW staffer Tami Crawford.





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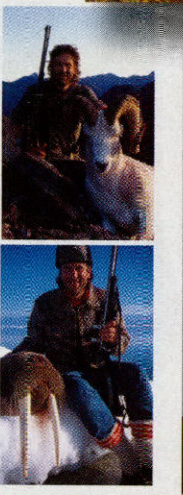
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FISHING VESTS

By Gibbs Milliken

NEXT TIME YOU grab just the right size leader material out of your fishing vest pocket, you can thank legendary fly fisherman Lee Wulff. In 1930 Wulff designed what has since become the traditional fishing vest. This short, lightweight, fast-drying garment keeps the arms free and has several pockets to hold all the small tackle bits and tools you need while fishing in a stream. To fully appreciate this improvement, you have to remember what anglers wore before Wulff's invention: a long, bulky, restrictive English waistcoat of wool or thick cotton that got heavy when water-soaked.

The basic style of the modern fishing vest has changed little over the years, but improvements in materials and construction give the current models some distinct advantages. Keep in mind, though, that the traditional fishing vest was designed mainly with the freshwater trout enthusiast in mind. In Texas, unless you are fishing in the cooler months, other systems — such as a multipocketed shirt, small shoulder bag, or waist or chest pack — provide more comfort.

The newest vests are designed for two climatic types. The northern or mountain models are made

of close-woven, water-resistant fabrics. Some also have shoulder/neck elastic yokes that greatly reduce fatigue when hiking and casting for long periods. The second is a partial mesh-vest, a well-ventilated garment suitable for warmer climates. This type of vest is great for wading, boating or open-water fishing in the coastal flats in the early or late season. In woodland situations, however, they tend to hang on every snag as you move along a narrow spring creek or brushy riverbank. The tighter mesh weaves are designed to hang up less than the large-holed net-mesh types. Top-of-the-line models from Orvis, Simms, Columbia, and Patagonia solve this problem by using a very lightweight, tear-resistant fabric.

A third style option, well-suited for Texas, is the chest-pack, which offers freedom of movement and plenty of ventilation. A quality example is the **C.C. Filson Foul Weather Vest** (\$130, Filson, 800-297-1897), made of waterproof cloth. This vest features two front pouches and adjustable harness straps combined with a center-back rucksack that provides just enough storage for the essentials — including a net, extra reel, point-and-shoot camera, snacks and raingear. The



Above: Orvis Inflatable Super Tac-L-Pack Vest
Below: Filson Foul Weather Vest



Above: Woss River Sidekick I and Sidekick Supreme
Below: Columbia Caddis Creek Mesh Vest





Sidekick Supreme (\$79, Wood River, 800-897-3474) is a smaller chest/shoulder/waist pack made of light, durable, synthetic fabric. It opens into a drop-front tray for easy access, selection and assembly of leaders and lures. Also available is a tiny belt-pouch, **Sidekick I** (\$49.50, Wood River), made of the same material and great for carrying minimal items on a day trip.

The more and larger the pockets, the bulkier and heavier the vest or pack gets. Fishers with a tendency for gadgets often carry too much stuff, resulting in load fatigue. In response, manufacturers are now creating minimalist vests for warmer regions, like the vertical pocket **Caddis Creek** (\$90, Columbia, 800-547-8066), with only a few pockets on a short mesh bodice — a design that eliminates bulk and casting interference. Other new designs include women's vests with pockets positioned to fit the feminine physique, and youth vests in scaled-down proportions.

Of course, you may want a traditional solid-cloth vest for those steelhead, salmon, and trout fishing trips out West or North. The **Inflatable Super Tac-L-Pack** (\$149, Orvis, 800-548-9548), a combination vest/pull-tab flotation device, is an excellent choice for safety while fishing dangerous rivers and deep wilderness lakes. Sure, you may carry too much stuff or slip and get wet, but thanks to Lee Wulff and new technology, your fishing vest won't weigh you down — and it can even help keep you afloat.

SKILL BUILDER



HOW TO SNAKE-BREAK YOUR DOG

By Allen Green

TEXANS LOVE THEIR DOGS. They hunt with them, work with them on farms and ranches or just enjoy their companionship. But dogs that get into the outdoors risk confrontations with a less companionable Texas native: the western diamondback rattlesnake. "I treat 50 to 60 dogs a year for rattlesnake-bite, and it can be a life-threatening problem for a dog," says veterinarian Wayne Deason of Floresville.

One way professional dog trainers combat this threat is to put dogs through snake awareness training — or "snake-breaking," as old-timers put it. The procedure starts by defanging the rattlesnakes (a temporary state, since nature gives them the ability to grow new fangs). The trainer then introduces the dog to the smell, sight and sound of the rattlers in a controlled environment.

Handlers lead the dog into the area where the snake is lying. Sooner or later, the dog will stick its nose into the snake for a smell. An electronic-shock collar is activated, giving the dog a mild shock. The dog, who thinks the snake caused the pain, quickly learns to avoid the perceived source of discomfort.

After the session, the effectiveness of the training is tested. The owner stands at the end of a 20-foot check cord, with a snake between him or her and the dog. The owner calls the dog, and the dog will make a wide circle around the snake to reach its owner.

The training has good results. Says Houston dog trainer Julian Weslow, "Out of the 21 years and 8,000 or so dogs I've snake-proofed, I've heard of only eight or 10 that have been bitten after being snake-broke."

Many hunting dog clubs have yearly training sessions hosted by professional dog trainers, but it's not just hunting dogs being sent for snake-training. Says Bonnie Sue Porter of Cibola Creek Kennels, "As suburbs are springing up farther out into the snake's habitat, more pets are at risk, not just hunting dogs. We are seeing more people bring their pets to our yearly clinic, from pugs to Maltese."

DOG TRAINERS WHO DO SNAKE-BREAKING:

San Antonio Area:

Bonnie Sue Porter, 210-659-0914.

Houston and Dallas Areas:

Julian Weslow, 361-568-3461.

Texas Valley (Kingsville):

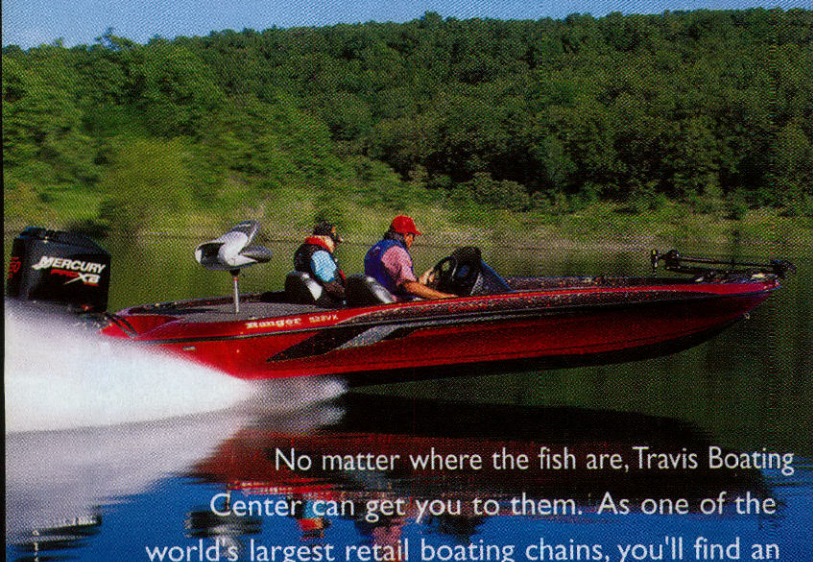
Luther Young, 361-296-3331.

Austin Area and Texas Wildlife Expo:

Harlan Winter, 512-263-2416.



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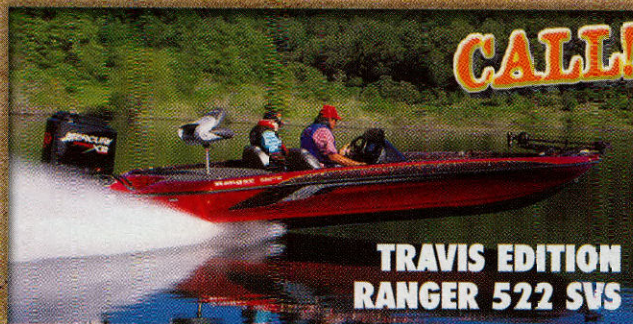


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 ■ Bow Storage ■ 12-volt Accessory Receptacle
 ■ Aluminum Radio Box ■ Trolling Motor Receptacle ■ Fiberglass Liner & Fiberglass Stringer System
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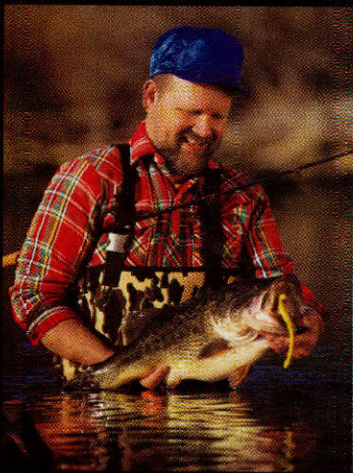
Many times Robert had to look no further for subjects than his son and daughter, Derek and Krystal, shown here several years ago.



16 NOVEMBER 1954 — 30 OCTOBER 2000

ROBERT LILES

FATHER, HUSBAND, TAXIDERMIST,
OUTDOORSMAN, HISTORIAN AND
PHOTOGRAPHER ARE ALL-ENCOM-
PASSING TERMS THAT DESCRIBE THE
LIFE AND TIMES OF ROBERT LILES.



I FIRST MET ROBERT while competing in a shooting match near Graham, Texas, some 12 years ago. Warmed by his engaging smile and hearty handshake, I quickly realized that I had met an original Texan with an exemplary love for

God, family and state.

In the ensuing years I developed a deep appreciation and love for this quiet man who gauged his success in life not by monetary achievements but instead by his love for family, friends and his church. Robert Liles leaves a legacy worthy of our highest praise — worthy of Texas. —*Wyman Meinzer*

Robert's varied interests in the Texas outdoors were reflected in the wide range of subjects that he chose for his photographs.





Some of his best photos were ones that captured everyday subjects and occurrences near his home in Graham, in Young County.

Krystal Liles and a friend of Robert's posed fishing on horseback. Hot-air balloons provided a colorful subject.





Love of family was a theme in Robert's life, and subjects in nature that captured this theme showed up in his photographs.



A BASS

**Texas has some of the best
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S A C T

**bass fishing in the world.
of half a century of savvy
ed anglers. BY KEN KURZAWSKI**

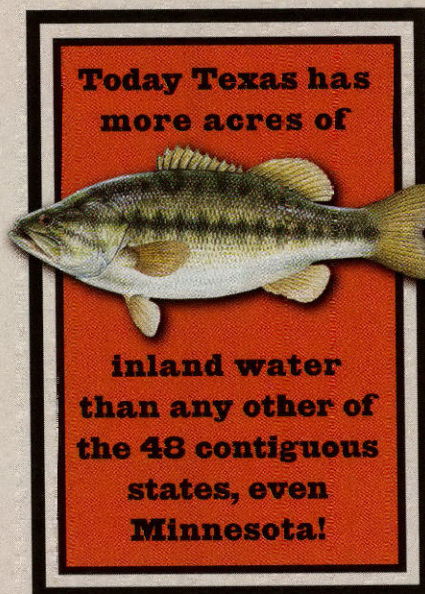
ILLUSTRATION BY CLEMENTE GUZMAN III

A

SK ANY TEXAS angler, and he'll probably tell you that we have some of the best bass fishing in the United States. That's not just Texas bragging. At the Black Bass 2000 symposium held in St. Louis last August, the experts seemed to agree. The conference brought biologists, anglers and fishing industry leaders together to discuss the status of black bass (the group of fishes that includes largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, spotted bass and Guadalupe bass). Not surprisingly, Texas got high marks for its progressive management strategies — and resulting high-quality fishing. Especially telling were the comments from pro bass anglers. They fish all over the country, and their advice to their own states on improving bass fishing always seemed to end with, "We ought to do what Texas did, because fishing there is great!"

How the Bass Lakes Were Born

HOW DID BASS FISHING IN TEXAS GET SO good? To answer this question, you have to look at the history of bass fishing and



bass management in Texas over the last 50 years or so. What you'll find is that its evolution mirrors the construction of reservoirs in the state.

Before the construction of reservoirs, largemouth bass habitat was limited to rivers, backwater areas and oxbow lakes formed by rivers. Reservoir construction began in earnest in the 1940s and peaked in the 1960s, when around 600,000 acres of new reservoirs were built. Today, at more than 1.7 million acres, Texas has more acres of inland water than any other of the 48 contiguous states, even Minnesota!

The habitat created by the new reservoirs made excellent fishing, especially for bass. Bass fishing popularity exploded in Texas and all across the South in the 1960s and '70s. New reservoirs typically grow lots of fish, and the supply of bass seemed endless. Texas' and other states' management strategies reflected that fact: harvest regulations were liberal or nonexistent. At the time,

Two factors have fueled the largemouth bass explosion in Texas: Florida bass introductions and length limits.



biologists believed that unlimited angler harvest couldn't damage a bass population. Fishing quality was measured by how many pounds of bass fillets anglers could put into their coolers.

Going Overboard

THAT SCENARIO BEGAN TO CHANGE in the 1970s. The rate of reservoir construction dropped substantially, and population grew rapidly. Perhaps most important, technological improvements made anglers more effective. Unlike in the 1950s, when outboard engines were small and trolling motors and depth finders were almost nonexistent, 100-horsepower and larger motors became commonplace. Bigger engines meant less traveling time between fishing spots, and this, combined with the use of depth finders and trolling motors, greatly increased the time anglers spent fishing rather than moving and searching for fish. As a result, they were catching more fish.

Biologists and anglers also began to notice declines in fishing quality. Evidence mounted that overharvesting was the cause of declines in bass populations. Lake Nacogdoches provides a dramatic example of this phenomenon. The lake opened to fishing with the then-statewide harvest limits for largemouth bass of 10 inches and a 10-fish daily bag limit. In just three months after the opening, anglers caught approximately 25 to 50 pounds of bass per acre from this 2,200-acre reservoir. Anglers complained so much about the poor fishing that the city of Nacogdoches, which controls the reservoir, closed the lake to fishing.

In 1979, Fayette County Lake near La Grange opened for angling. Lessons learned at Lake Nacogdoches enabled Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists to convince the TPW Commission to implement one of the first 16-inch minimum length and three-fish daily bag limits in Texas. Even with these restrictive limits, anglers harvested an estimated 17 tons of bass from this 2,400-acre reservoir in the first year. However, because a 16-inch minimum length

limit was in place, fishing did not decline to the extremely low levels experienced at Lake Nacogdoches.

When Lake Nacogdoches was reopened in 1979, 16-inch minimum length and three-fish daily bag limits were in effect. Eventually, the largemouth bass population rebounded under the reduced harvest. Because of these harvest limits, both Nacogdoches and Fayette have maintained high-quality bass angling. The experiences at these two reservoirs taught Texas biologists that

specialized limits could prevent initial overharvest in a reservoir, and that limits also were useful in rebuilding overfished bass populations.

Catch-and-Release Catches On

THE 1980S SAW A COMPLETE TRANSITION in bass management in Texas, from quantity (pounds of fillets) to quality (size of bass caught and released). In 1986, a statewide 14-inch minimum length limit and five-fish daily bag limit

TOP TEN

Reasons This Is Your Year to Catch a Trophy Bass

From our home office in North Zulch, Texas (sorry, David Letterman), we bring you our top 10 places to land a big bass this year. If you feel slighted that your favorite lake isn't on the list, don't be. That just means you'll have less competition from other anglers! One wild card in these predictions is water, or the lack of it. Continued drought in Texas may make it difficult if not impossible to access some reservoirs.

Don't let that stop you, however. Consider it your duty as a Texas angler to go out and keep pushing the state record upward. At the very least, you can use that as a good excuse as you head out the door for another weekend of fishing! Good luck!

- 10. Lake Austin** (Near Austin on the Colorado River) – Catch 10-plus-pound bass near downtown Austin. One Budweiser ShareLunker (13-plus-pound bass donated/loaned to TPW's program) caught in 2000.
- 9. Toledo Bend Reservoir** (Near Jasper on the Texas-Louisiana border) – Large size (181,600 acres) harbors lots of big bass. New lake record set in July 2000 (15.32 pounds).
- 8. Amistad Reservoir** (Near Del Rio on the Texas-Mexico border) – Low water levels are not hindering this perennial producer of big bass on the Rio Grande.
- 7. Lake Alan Henry** (Southeast of Post in Garza County) – One of the newer lakes on the list (impounded in 1993). Produced two lunkers in 2000.
- 6. Baylor Creek Lake** (West of Childress in Childress County) – Produced one lunker in each of the last two years.
- 5. Sam Rayburn Reservoir** (Near Jasper) – Bass angling is rebounding from an off year in 1999. One lunker caught in 2000.
- 4. Lake Jim Chapman** (formerly Cooper Lake, north of Sulphur Springs) – This newer lake may be coming into its own. Produced three lunkers in the last two years.
- 3. Lake Ray Roberts** (North of Denton) – Produced three lunkers in the last two years, including the lake record of 14.59 pounds.
- 2. O.H. Ivie Reservoir** (East of San Angelo on the Colorado River) – Angling was hot for large fish in deeper water during the early part of 2000 (lunkers caught). Declining water level is a concern.
- 1. Lake Fork** (Between Alba and Quitman; doesn't everyone know where Lake Fork is?) – Decimated by largemouth bass virus? Hardly. Produced seven lunkers in 2000. Lake Fork is still "the" place to go to catch trophy bass.

were implemented. Texas became the nationwide leader in experimenting with the use of higher minimum length limits (16, 18 and 21 inches) and protected (or "slot") length limits (14-18 inches, 14-21 inches, etc.) to provide quality angling. In many reservoirs, numerous bass that were caught had to be released.

Anglers, especially bass tournament anglers, wholeheartedly embraced the catch-and-release concept. Without angler support and belief that these regulations would result in better bass fishing, the various regulations would not have succeeded.

The other crucial component in the history of bass fishing in Texas was the stocking in the early 1970s of Florida-strain largemouth bass, a subspecies of largemouth bass native to Florida. This move was prompted by research in California that indicated Florida largemouth bass grow faster and to larger sizes than northern largemouth bass, the subspecies of largemouth bass native to Texas. Florida largemouth bass had evolved in the natural lakes of Florida, and biologists concluded they could adapt easily to the reservoirs in modern-day Texas. The northern largemouth

**Now, it takes a
bass weighing**



**more than 15.15
pounds to break
into the top 50
heaviest bass
caught in Texas.**

VIRUS UPDATE

Largemouth bass virus (LMBV) first gained attention in 1995, when it was implicated in a fish kill on Santee-Cooper Reservoir in South Carolina. The virus was responsible for kills on two popular trophy bass fisheries in Texas, Sam Rayburn Reservoir in 1998 and Lake Fork in 1999. It has been confirmed in three other Texas reservoirs. It has often been found in bass that show no signs of disease, which suggests that some fish might be infected but not become ill. Biologists are uncertain about how long the virus has been present in Texas waters, but the pattern of occurrence suggests that unusually hot summer temperatures may have been a catalyst in the die-offs.

The virus has caused fish kills on reservoirs from Texas to Georgia to Michigan during 1998 through 2000. In proportion to the overall bass populations at the lakes where they happened, the fish kills have been relatively minor, agency biologists say. Still, the die-offs were big enough to gain the attention of anglers, especially since almost all of the fatalities were large, adult bass.

Texas fisheries biologists conducted a study in summer 2000 to determine the extent to which LMBV occurs in Texas reservoirs. "We conducted the study to see where the virus is found in Texas," says Phil Durocher, TPW director of inland fisheries. "So far, we've found the virus everywhere we've looked [five reservoirs].

"We want to look at the long-term impacts it might have on fishing," adds Durocher. "We know that fishing can be poor for a little while after a kill, but then it picks up. The study will determine the distribution of the virus." Results of the study will be released sometime in early 2001.

Research pathologists studying LMBV do not know how the virus is spread from one fish to another or from one fishery to another. One theory is that anglers could unknowingly transport the virus in their livewells or bilges. Consequently, state agencies recommend that anglers drain and clean their boats thoroughly between fishing trips. They definitely advise against moving bass from one lake to another and releasing live bait, since other fish, and possibly even amphibians, could be carriers of LMBV. "Amphibians, reptiles or other fish species can be carriers in viruses like this," says Dr. John Grizzle of Auburn University. "There are at least two viruses that affect both fish and amphibians."

Whatever its reasons for manifesting in bass right now, LMBV poses no threat to humans. Infected fish can be safely handled and eaten, scientists say. They add, though, that common sense dictates that fish that are dead or dying, no matter what the reason, should not be used for human food.

bass native to Texas had evolved in the river and backwater areas that were the only suitable habitat in Texas prior to the reservoir construction boom in the 20th century.

A Bright Fishing Future

FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH STOCKINGS, in combination with specialized length limits, have had a substantial impact on the size of bass caught in Texas. The long-standing record of 13.5 pounds set in 1943 was broken in 1980 by a 14.1-pound Florida largemouth bass. Numerous bass over 13 pounds have been caught since. Now, it takes a bass weighing more than 15.15 pounds to break into the top 50 heaviest bass caught in Texas. Bass exceeding 13 pounds have been caught from some 55 public reservoirs.

TPW is committed to maintaining high-quality bass angling well into the future. This goal will not be easy, as there are numerous challenges. The justification for new reservoirs has diminished in recent times. Biologists will have to continue to develop innovative management schemes to get the best out of the existing resources. Stocking also will continue to be refined to make optimum use of this management tool (see sidebar on Operation World Record).



Surveys show that largemouth bass are the most popular fish among Texas freshwater anglers by a large margin.

Aquatic habitats will also need to be maintained if we expect reservoirs and rivers to continue to provide quality angling for bass and all freshwater fishes. TPW biologists are investigating methods of establishing beneficial habitat, such as native aquatic vegetation, and controlling problem vegetation. Good habitat, along with the quantity and quality of water available, is a crucial component of good fishing. The expanding population of Texas and the frequency and intensity of droughts will also create challenges. Water and who gets it promises to be a hot topic in the first decade of the 21st century.

Texas anglers can be confident that TPW biologists will strive to meet the challenges the future holds. Their track record thus far indicates that Texas anglers can look forward to continued excellence in bass fishing. ✧

KEN KURZAWSKI is a biologist with TPW's Inland Fisheries Division.

Operation World Record

Will a world-record bass be caught in Texas? Operation World Record, a TPW Inland Fisheries initiative started two years ago, seeks to provide the answer. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to have a Texas angler catch a largemouth bass that beats the world record of 22.25 pounds. This ambitious project will attempt to determine if fast growth and maximum size are heritable traits in largemouth bass and if these traits can be amplified through a selective breeding program.

The department's successful Budweiser ShareLunker program is an integral component of Operation World Record. Program officials believe the knowledge and experience gleaned from 14 years of borrowing trophy bass from Texas anglers for hatchery production and research, combined with resources at the state-of-the-art Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC), make this an attainable goal. Bass from the program are used by TFFC's hatchery staff in research and to produce potential trophy-

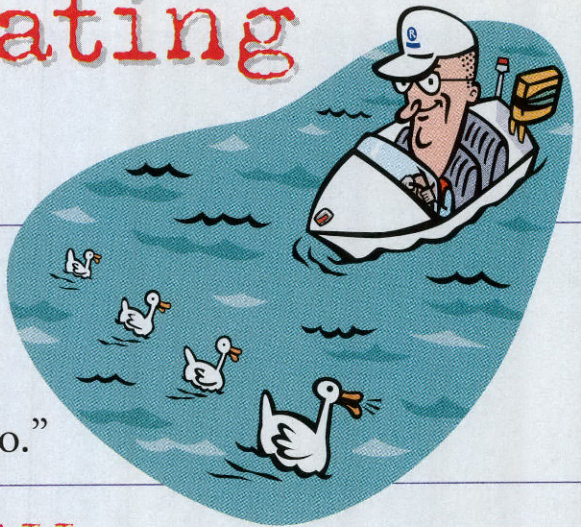
sized bass for stocking in Texas.

The Operation World Record plan proposes a two-pronged approach to achieve this goal. All lunkers donated to the program will get genetic fingerprinting using DNA. This will help biologists identify and track siblings and offspring in the wild. The other step is to design and implement a selective breeding plan to isolate and accentuate advantageous genetic traits in largemouth bass.

"Our ultimate goal is to break the world record in Texas," explains Allen Forshage, TFFC director. "To increase our chances, we want to stock lunker bass fingerlings in every suitable water body in the state. To be able to do that, we have to have the broodstock first, and the Budweiser ShareLunker program is a proven and effective means to deliver those fish."

When can anglers expect results? Success can be determined only in the long term, Forshage cautions. "Trophy bass can take up to 10 years to reach record sizes." — K.K.

Test Your Boating Knowledge



Do you know the “rules of the waterway?” Take this pop quiz to find out. And remember: It makes for a more enjoyable experience when you “know before you go.”

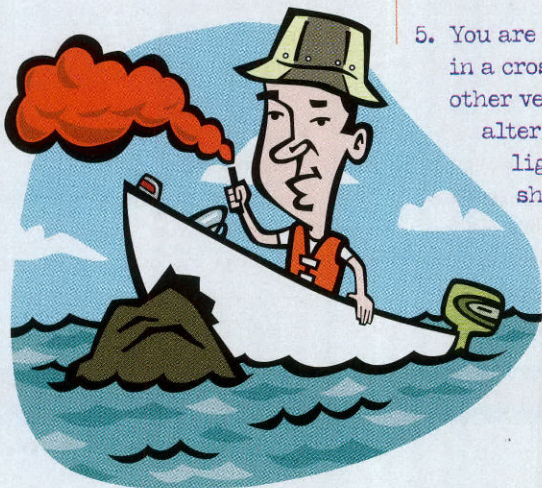
BY JACK DYESS AND STEVE HALL

DO YOU KNOW THE “RULES OF THE waterway” contained in the Texas Water Safety Act? If you’re one of the more than 6 million people who take to Texas’ public waterways each year — in everything from sailboat and motorboats to inner tubes, rubber rafts, canoes and kayaks — then test your knowledge with this pop quiz. It makes for a more enjoyable experience when you “know before you go.”

1. The number-one cause of boating accidents in Texas is:
A. Faulty hull or equipment.
B. No proper boat lookout.
C. Hazardous waterways.
D. Overloading the boat.
2. Most boating fatalities could have been prevented if the victim:
A. Carried on board the required safety equipment.
B. Operated away from other

- boats on the water body.
C. Didn't ride in an overloaded boat.
D. Wore a personal floatation device.
3. You are crossing a lake and see a boat displaying a flashing blue light. This indicates that the vessel is:
A. Transferring dangerous cargo.
B. A law enforcement vessel.
C. A work boat.
D. Engaged in a race.
4. While underway in a harbor you hear a boat sound a prolonged blast. This signal indicates that the vessel:
A. Wants to overtake your vessel.
B. Is at anchor.
C. Is backing her engine.
D. Is moving from a dock.
5. You are the stand-on vessel in a crossing situation. The other vessel is showing an alternating red and yellow light. What action should you take?
A. Stand on
B. Heave to
C. Alter course to assist
D. Yield

6. You are on the lake drifting toward a dangerous rocky shore and cannot start your engine. According to the Inland Navigation Rules, which of the following can you use as a distress signal?
A. Directing the beam of a search light at another vessel
B. A smoke signal giving off orange-colored smoke
C. A whistle signal of one prolonged and three short blasts
D. International Code Signal "FAN" spoken over radiotelephone
7. If you are the stand-on vessel in a crossing situation, you may take action to avoid collision by your maneuver alone. When may this action be taken?
A. At any time you feel it is appropriate
B. Only when you have reached extremis
C. When you determine that your present course will cross ahead of the other vessel
D. When it becomes apparent to you that the give-way vessel is not taking appropriate action



8. You are on the lake for the first time since having repairs made to your boat. You want to test the boat's performance. However, you must proceed at a safe speed:
- In restricted visibility.
 - In congested waters.
 - During darkness.
 - At all times.
9. You are seeing another vessel approaching, and its compass bearing does not significantly change. This would indicate that:
- You are the stand-on vessel.
 - Risk of collision exists.
 - A special circumstance situation exists.
 - The other vessel is dead in the water.
10. You are operating a power-driven vessel and notice a large sailing vessel approaching from astern. You should:
- Slow down.
 - Sound one short blast and change course to starboard.
 - Sound two short blasts and change course to port.
 - Hold your course and speed.
11. You are crossing a large bay at night and see a vessel's green sidelight bearing due east from you. The vessel is most likely heading:
- East
 - Northeast
 - Northwest
 - Southwest
12. You are 15 years of age and operating a personal water craft alone. On your vessel must be a Certificate of Number, a photo ID and a:
- Boat operating license.
 - Driver's permit.
 - Boater education certificate.
 - Certificate of ownership.
13. You are underway and hear a vessel continuously sounding her fog whistle. This indicates the other vessel:
- Desires to communicate by radio.
 - Desires a pilot.
 - Is in distress.
 - Is aground.
14. You are approaching a very congested area in a power-driven vessel. The Inland Navigation Rules require you to keep out of the way of a:
- Vessel not under command.
 - Vessel engaged in fishing.
 - Sailing vessel.
 - All of the above.
15. Two power-driven vessels are approaching each other near head on. What action should be taken to avoid collision?
- The first vessel to sight the other should give way.
 - The vessel making the slower speed should give way.
 - Both vessels should alter course to starboard.
 - Both vessels should alter course to port.

Game Rules and Prizes

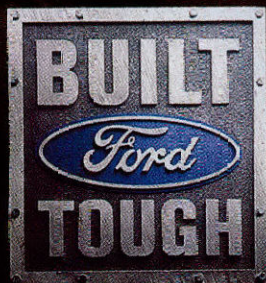
If you are one of the first 100 to send in your answers (by fax, e-mail or mail), you will receive a boat whistle just for participating. Send in a perfect score and your name will go into the hopper to be one of 20 entrants to win a Personal Floatation Device (PFD), or life jacket. Answers to the Boating Quiz will be featured next month. Send your answers to Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, 3000 S. IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, TX 78704, fax 512-707-1913, e-mail <magazine@tpwd.state.tx.us.> Employees of Texas Parks and Wildlife are not eligible to enter.

Boat Safe!

To learn more about boating, the navigation rules and the Texas Water Safety Act, take a boater education course. For more information call 800-792-1112, ext. 61, or go to the education page at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Web site: <www.tpwd.state.tx.us>. Courses are available in classroom-style, home study and Internet versions. Be sure to ask for your free Handbook of Boating Laws and Responsibilities and Digest of the Texas Water Safety Act.



FOUR SADDLES,

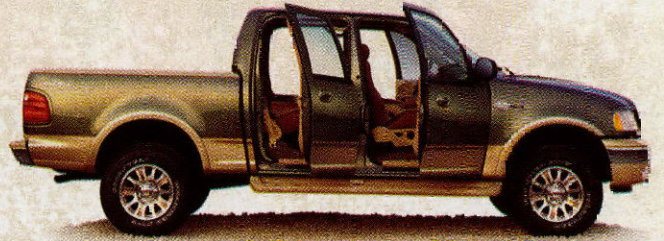


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THE NEW

THE NEW WAVE OF HIGH-TECH WATERCRAFT MAKE IT EASY



W WAVE

TO GET INTO SHALLOW COASTAL WATERS. BY JIM FOSTER



SHALLOW BAYS ALONG THE Texas coast offer some of the best saltwater fishing anywhere, especially for redfish and speckled trout. Yet until fairly recent times, getting to the fish required wading long distances. Larger specks and reds were many times found miles from deep water, and conventional watercraft just couldn't reach them. Waiting for a high tide didn't always work, because by the time the tide was right, the fish had moved onto shallow areas to feed.

In order to get to the fish, anglers needed a better boat — a boat designed to run in very shallow water. A number of inventive minds answered the call.

It would be almost impossible to name the person who started the shallow-water boat business in Texas. Much of the credit must go not to professional boat builders but to backyard and garage boat builders. These people were, in fact, frustrated fishers who longed to fish the waters they could not get to in conventional boats.

Russell Dargel, Sr. of Donna won't say he invented the type of boat known as the "scooter," but he was the innovator who made the idea available to the fishing public. His plans and drawings were used to construct some of the first personal scooters for the Lower Laguna Madre. Several other backyard builders in Harlingen had been experimenting with flat-bottom plywood boats with a slightly turned-up bow and a small outboard

motor. They looked like a kid's scooter, and the name stuck. The operator steered the scooter by shifting his weight right and left. These little boats worked very well, and some of the more adventurous anglers even took the little craft a short distance out into the Gulf.

Dargel built his first production scooter in 1958, and one appeared on the cover of *Outdoor Life* magazine the next year. The design was coming of age. Later a fiberglass model was introduced. "I had made up my mind that if I was going to build a boat, it was going to be the best boat I could build," reflects Dargel. "In the beginning, some of the other boat builders laughed at us. Later some of these same builders were copying our designs."

Fishing trends change. As more families started fishing, the "no-sides" design was replaced with larger craft with sides. The small scooter declined in popularity, and Dargel discontinued it in the early 1980s. However, the company recently reintroduced the Skooter, which is available in 13- and 16-foot models.

Another South Texas shallow water innovator, Willis Hudson, believed that a scooter-type boat could be built larger and faster and run smoother without losing its shallow-water capabilities. Hudson was a mechanical engineer who had worked in the boat-building industry. He designed an 18-foot tri-hull boat with two tunnels he called the Skipjack.

Hudson later refined his design to correct some steering problems, and the new

design is still being produced by the ShallowSport Boat Company in Los Fresnos.

Texas Parks and Wildlife records show

Shallow-Water Boat Manufacturers

Avocet Boats

NewWater Boat Works
4622 Sinclair Rd.
San Antonio, TX 78222
210-648-2206

Blue Wave Boats

Parks Manufacturing
Checotah, OK 74426
918-473-6768

Dargel Boat Works

Rt. 1, Box 124
Donna, TX 78537
956-464-2263
<www.dargel.com>

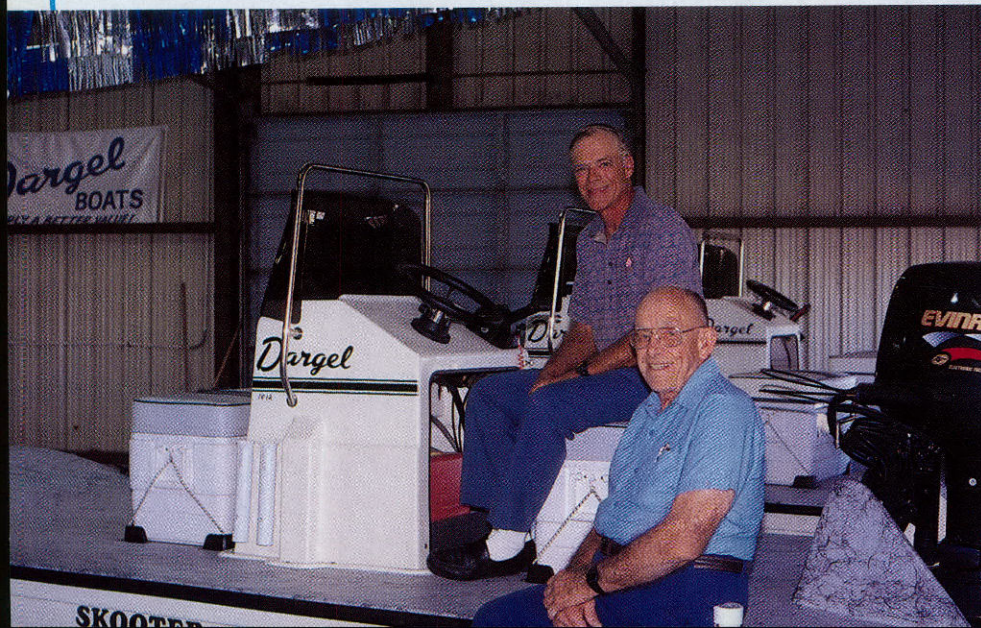
Maverick Boat Company

(Maverick/Pathfinder/Hewes)
3207 Industrial 29th St.
Ft. Pierce, FL 34946
561-465-0631 or 888-SHALLOW
<www.maverickboats.com>

ShallowSport Boats

Center Line Rd.
Los Fresnos, TX 78566
956-233-9489

Russell and Rusty Dargel of Donna pose with the Skooter, below. One of the first people to come up with ideas for a flat-bottom boat with a small outboard motor, Russell Dargel's plans were used to construct the first personal scooters for the Lower Laguna Madre.



the top-selling bay boat in Texas for the first quarter of the year 2000 was the Blue Wave. This shallow-water craft has proven itself able to get into the shallow water and get the anglers back out.

The Blue Wave Company is owned and operated by Pam and Roger Parks of Checotah, Oklahoma. Roger started building boats at age 13, emulating what his father did for a living. His dad provided him with scrap materials, and soon Roger had completed his first boat, a small one-person fishing boat. After finishing school, he spent the next 20 years working for two small boat companies. In 1992 he and Pam formed their own company, and the first Blue Wave was introduced in January 1993 at the Houston International Boat Show.

While scooters and tunnel boats were being designed and built for the Texas market, the design we commonly call the flats boat was being perfected in Florida's shallow waters. The Avocet, built by the NewWater Boat Works of San Antonio, began a line of new boats for the saltwater angler. The Avocet is constructed entirely with molded parts. No wood is used anywhere in the construction process, even the transom. Standard equipment includes plenty of storage space below decks covered with molded hatches that come with built-in drains. Other features include a multifaceted livewell. The Avocet also has molded-in steps on the stern to help wadefishers in and out.

The design provides a smooth ride and the ability to "get up" in very shallow water. It's a dry boat that is at its best on windy days on the Laguna Madre. It should be noted that the Avocet is not an entry-level boat but one that is designed for serious sportfishers.

Shallow-water fishing along the Texas coast continues to surge in popularity. The boat-building industry provides a variety of models designed to let you stalk elusive reds and specks. Of course, the boat will only get you to where the fish are. Then you have to catch them. ★

Outboard Motors

Each year, the Environmental Protection Agency raises its standards, making it tougher for manufacturers to design an outboard motor that will reduce pollution in our waterways. With the help of the Japanese automotive industry, four-stroke outboard engines are beginning to make wake by reducing emissions pollution up to 70 percent.

The older two-cycle engines would burn around 70 percent of their fuel, dumping up to a third of the raw oil and gas mixture into the lake. But the new four-stroke engines use more than 90 percent of their fuel efficiently. Yamaha, Suzuki and Honda are manufacturing engines similar to what would be found under the hood of a car.

Placing four-cycle engines on a boat isn't a new idea. Companies such as HomeLite had been trying to perfect the idea in the 1960s, and Honda has never made anything but four-stroke engines. The advantages of

four-stroke engines lie in maintenance and ease of starting. However, despite those advantages, they haven't been overly popular in the past because of price and horsepower-to-weight ratio.

But the new, smaller four-cycle engines are rapidly overcoming the advantages long held by two-cycle engines in price and horsepower-to-weight ratio. With manufacturers striving to reach 2006 and even 2008 standards, both the price and weight are dropping like an anchor. New metal alloys enable manufacturers to build the same four-cycle engine only 10 to 15 percent heavier than its counterpart — with very little price difference.

However, in the four-stroke engines, where the horses go, so goes the weight. The strongest engine available in a four-stroke is a 130 horsepower made by Honda. Suzuki and Yamaha each make a 115 horsepower. Anything above 130 horsepower weighs too much for average use. Yamaha also makes a two-stroke engine that uses a High Pressure Direct Injection System (HPDI) that has passed the EPA's 2006 standards and is lighter than its four-cycle competitors, but its emissions are still higher than those of a four-stroke engine.

"EPA standards have always been rough on the automotive industry," says George Gantt, owner of Tropical Marine in Marble Falls. "It was only a matter of time until some of that shifted to the marine industry. But you have to remember that the water we boat in is also the water we drink."

—RobRoy McDonald

An early day scooter demonstrates shallow-water running, below. As shallow-water fishing grows in popularity, the boat-building industry responds with a variety of models to meet the needs of Texas saltwater anglers.



DESERT QUAIL HUNT

A QUAIL HUNT AT BLACK GAP COMBINES THE RUGGED BEAUTY OF THE BIG BEND COUNTRY WITH A REMARKABLE PLACE TO HUNT AND CAMP IN SPLENDID SOLITUDE. • BY DAN BARTON

SUNRISE COMES LATE to the mouth of Maravillas Canyon in Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. High cliffs in Mexico, across the Rio Grande, shade rocky flats along the broad, dry creek bed until late morning. Thin clouds of mist still drift up from the river long after sunlight has illuminated the high, white cliffs of Dove Mountain.

One weekend morning last February, that bright desert sun rose over a small quail hunters' camp. A middle-aged outdoorsman was cooking breakfast. Another, somewhat younger, was setting up a camera tripod on a point above the river. Yet another was running across a creosote flat to the west, trying to flush a covey of scaled quail running just a little bit faster. And, on a dusty trail beside camp, some drowsy teenagers were bowling. But more about that later.

We had come to this remote and beautiful desert to hunt the fast and wary scaled quail, to camp out in this spectacular setting, and to get our four teenagers into the



PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN

neighborhood — if not the spirit — of quail hunting.

I first came to Texas Parks and Wildlife's Black Gap WMA 15 years ago to hunt javelinas. I fell in love with the place and have come back at least once a year ever since. Companions and I have hunted quail and mule deer and I've taken my son on a youth-only javelina hunt. We've hunted and camped over most of the area, but there are still parts of the vast 106,000-acre preserve I've never come near. Black Gap combines the beauty and wildness of the Big Bend

Add to their excellent camouflage the blue quail's tendency to run rather than flush and the ruggedness of the steep, rocky hillsides and dense, spiny thickets they inhabit, and you have a real hunting challenge.

country with a remarkable place to hunt and camp in splendid solitude — all for the cost of a \$40 Annual Public Hunting Permit.

Black Gap is northeast of Big Bend National Park and shares part of the park's northern boundary. Southwest of Black Gap, between it and the national park, is the Nature Conservancy's mountainous, almost inaccessible Big Brushy Canyon Preserve. The eastern boundary of Black Gap is 40 miles of Rio Grande, flowing northeast after making the great bend that gives the region its name. The terrain



and vegetation of Black Gap are very much like that of Big Bend National Park: spectacular limestone ranges spaced by broad desert flats, dominated here by the massive, black, jagged basalt ridge that gives the place its name.

Hunting quail on Black Gap WMA requires only checking in at the small registration building just outside the pipe fence surrounding the headquarters complex. Detailed maps of the area available inside show the locations of more than 50 primitive campsites (one of which is wheelchair-accessible); simply



pick a site and note its number on the sign-in card. Due to the rugged nature of this country, this is a vital step that could prove invaluable should you require assistance.

Booklets available at the check station contain information about area plant and animal species, including the rare mountain lion, the reintroduced desert bighorn sheep and the newly returned black bear. (A driving tour, open to all, follows FM 2627 from the entrance to the Rio Grande 10 miles farther on; obtain a printed guide from the box at the entrance.) The check-in station hasn't always been so welcoming. For many years there was a simple sign over the registration book: "Check in. Go hunting. Check out. Go home."

Hunting in this dry desert country is a very different experience from walking the pine forests of East Texas or the brushy plains south of San Antonio. The pale gray-blue color of scaled (also called blue) quail blends into the dry grass and rocky background of desert draws even better than the speckled browns of bobwhite quail do where they range. Add to their excellent camouflage the blue quail's tendency to run rather than flush and the ruggedness of the steep, rocky hillsides and dense, spiny thickets they inhabit, and you have a real hunting challenge.

Some quail hunters bring dogs to Black

Classic Chihuahuan Desert scenery is the backdrop for a scaled quail hunt at the remote Black Gap Wildlife Management Area.



Desert Darters

Scaled quail, members of the pheasant family, stand about two inches taller than the more familiar bobwhite, and while their ranges overlap in South Texas, the High Plains and the western Edwards Plateau, "scalies" are typically birds of the arid habitat of the Chihuahuan Desert. While their bluish tinge leads to one nickname, and the black semicircular edges on their breast and mantle feathers another, yet a third — "cotton-top" — comes from the tuft of white feathers they wear atop their heads like a 1950s crewcut.

Scaled quail visit water sources regularly — a fact of importance to both birders and hunters. They nest in the rainy season and may not breed during extremely dry summers. Hunters often see extremely large groups, perhaps 100 birds or more.

—Larry D. Hodge

Gap, but those trained on bobwhites sometimes find these running quail confusing. Dogs native to West Texas and accustomed to harsh ground, cactus, snakes, stickers and quail that almost refuse to flush generally do better.

My favorite method, developed by my hunting pal, John Vehko, is to range in wide circles from the guzzlers — wildlife watering stations scattered around the area and shown on the same map as the campgrounds. A guzzler consists of a low tin roof, shading nothing but the ground, that funnels rainwater into a metal tank. Water from the tank is piped to a basin with a float valve. Wildlife of all kinds depend on these simple devices, and the presence of one almost guarantees you will find quail in the area. Game trails radiate from the guzzlers like spokes from a hub, and you can pick out tracks of mule deer, javelinas, quail, coyotes, foxes, skunks and more in the dry, dusty paths.

My friends and I have learned about the plant life in Black Gap in a very personal way: by hunting through it. The hillsides are alternately blanketed with the low, spiny agave lechuguilla and

sparse, short forests of sotol yucca. False agave, a sort of wire-haired lechuguilla, speckled red, and candelilla — bundles of pale, waxy-looking rods that actually yield usable wax — dot the walls of arroyos. Creosotebush, a 10,000-year ecological disaster that has taken over much of the grasslands of West Texas, stands in aromatic clusters on the dry flats. An introduced variety of rushes, called river cane, lines much of the river in thickets that can hide bobcats, birds, javelinas and perhaps even a black bear.

There are few trees — some junipers and Mexican persimmons in the mountain draws and lots of stickery acacias near the river — and lots of cactus. The low, almost hidden, living rock cactus has no spines. All the rest do, particularly the variety commonly known as dog pear. This devilish plant has joints that break off the main body when brushed against by a boot and then “jump” onto



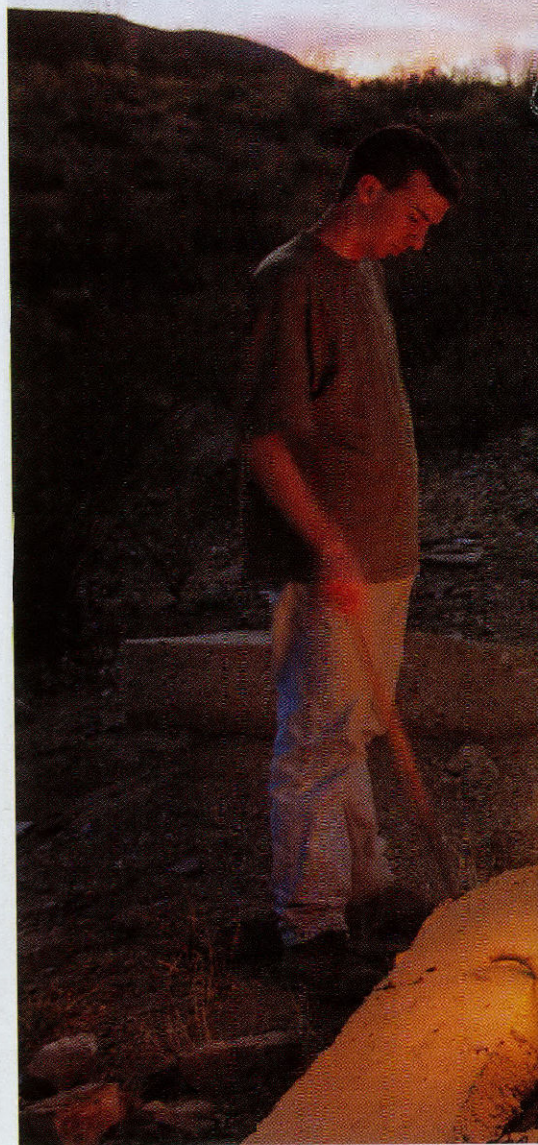
The Rio Grande, above, runs between Black Gap WMA and Mexico. Primitive camping is allowed in 56 designated campsites.

the backs of your legs with the next step.

This vegetation and scenery, besides being of interest for their beauty and perfection of place, must be considered when choosing clothing and footwear. A friend of mine came hunting here once wearing a pair of the lightweight nylon hunting boots then in vogue. He stepped into the inch-long spines of a *tasajillo* cactus right after getting out of his truck and spent the rest of the trip looking very carefully for the next place to step. Leather boots with hard, tough soles are essential, as the abrasive volcanic rock can shred soft materials in short order.

Desert nights and mornings can be cold in early spring — which arrives here shortly after the first of the year — but the days warm up quickly, and it's wise to dress in layers that can be shucked as the sun gets higher. Quail hunters must wear at least 400 square inches of safety orange clothing, and I find that a thorn-proof hunting vest, besides providing the required color, serves as a handy place to stow a sweater or heavy shirt.

Quail populations vary greatly from year to year anywhere in Texas, but the swings seem to be even more exaggerated here. Ten years ago, Black Gap was teeming with quail. The slopes of Stairway Mountain, in sight of area



headquarters, held birds so numerous that they gathered more in flocks than in coveys. Several coveys came daily to each of the guzzlers and windmills. In dry years the situation can be quite different, so on our last trip there I was surprised and pleased to see several healthy coveys. We saw quail all along the road into Maravillas Canyon and down the river road toward Outlaw Flats. Hunting at the end of the season, we found very wary quail with reflexes rather sharper than ours, but we still managed to get a few birds into the frying pan. Simply

Hunting Black Gap Blues

Black Gap WMA is located about 55 miles south of Marathon via U.S. 385 and FM 2627. Holders of a Texas hunting license and an Annual Public Hunting Permit may hunt quail on dates specified in the current “Public Hunting Lands Map Booklet,” which is supplied to purchasers of the APH permits.

Potable water is not available on the area, and only primitive campsites are available. Stillwell's Store, located on FM 2627 near the northern boundary of the area, has groceries, showers, camping supplies and RV hookups. An adjacent museum chronicles the life of Big Bend legend Hallie Stillwell. The Open Sky Café lies at the end of FM 2627 and serves a limited menu beneath an ocotillo arbor overlooking the Rio Grande. Bunkhouse facilities are available at the adjacent Heath Canyon Ranch.

Due to the remoteness of the area and the variability of quail populations, hunters should consider calling ahead before visiting the area. The Alpine office number is 915-837-3251.

—Larry D. Hodge



being there was worth the trip.

And about that bowling. Our trip photographer, Brad Carlson, and his daughter, Alex, are devotees of bocce, an ancient Italian bowling game played on smooth grass courts. Somehow Brad discovered that bocce can be interesting when played on any kind of outdoor surface, and he and Alex have played it for years on all sorts of terrain. He showed the rudiments of the game to the teenagers in our group, and there began the desert scrubland bowling experiment. The kids enjoyed it, along

My friends and I have learned about the plant life in Black Gap in a very personal way: by hunting through it. The hillsides are alternately blanketed with the low, spiny agave lechuguilla and sparse, short forests of sotol yucca.

with the rest of the camping experience, and they even got a little interested in quail hunting. We all had a great time and hope to get back there this February.

It's said that nostalgia for the Big Bend country is like "homesickness for a place that can never be your home." It's cheering to know that one can always return to Black Gap and call it home, if only for a little while. ★

DAN BARTON *lives in Austin, and is interested in Texas wildlife, Texas history and wildlife conservation.*

CAMEL

IN THE TEXAS



OUR INTREPID CORRESPONDENT FOLLOWS IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF A LEGEND WHO
PONDERS WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN. ARTICLE BY CAROL

TREK

AS SAHARA

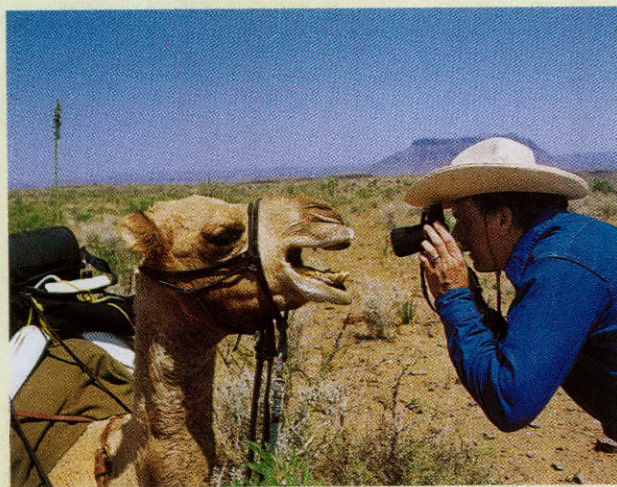


EPS OF EARLY CAMEL EXPEDITIONS IN THE BIG BEND – AND
FLAKE CHAPMAN ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

NOT LONG AFTER DAWN, I SPOT THE CAMELS. I arrived late last night at Sauceda, the complex of rustic buildings deep in the interior of Big Bend Ranch where we are to gather for the beginning of a two-day camel trek through the state park. And even though I knew they'd be there, it is still an astonishing sight on this bright West Texas morning to see four big buff-colored dromedaries lounging under the trees in a horse corral, calmly chewing their cud. One of the animals ambles over for a closer look, drawn by the half-eaten breakfast bar that I am brandishing in the air. He grasps a corner of the bar and tugs it away with his nimble, hare-like lips before dropping it disdainfully to the ground.

Some folks find camels to be aloof, with their snouts held so snootily in the air. Some find them clumsy and comical. And undoubtedly they carry the burden of a reputation for spitting and other obnoxious behavior. But I find them irresistible.

As a long-time camel fan, I've watched caravans lumber across the desert in Oman and racing camels galumph for gold around a racetrack in Dubai. I once camped out in the desert at a camel market in India, surrounded by thousands of camels that had been lovingly groomed and painted with brightly colored designs. For all their foibles, camels are wonders of desert survival, and I am eager to see how they'll fare in the challenging terrain of



Doug Baum, right, owner of Texas Camel Corps, leads the treks in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

the Trans-Pecos — and with passengers who've probably never even seen a camel up close, much less ridden one.

We won't actually be blazing new ground, however, by riding camels west of the Pecos. We'll be following in the camel prints of the U.S. Camel Corps, a little-known experiment in camel-teering by the U.S. Army that was based in Texas almost a century and a half ago. Some 75 camels were imported by the Army for use in exploration of the West, and they proved so hardy and reliable that Lieutenant Edward Fitzgerald Beale, who had been put in charge of the program, called them "the noblest brutes alive." The camels, which were purchased in North Africa, were brought ashore from ships at Indianola,

and they'd been headquartered at Camp Verde, south of Kerrville. Beale used them to find a westward route along the 35th parallel, forging the trail that was to become Route 66. Had the Civil War not disrupted the Army's experiment, some think, camels might have become as much a part of our Western mystique as horses.

Our expedition is going to be a bit more modest than those early explorations, of course. We'll be seeing parts of the park that folks don't ordinarily get to see, and we'll be camping out in tents. But we won't be expected to demonstrate any special survival skills and, more important, we've been told that no experience with camels — or even horses — is necessary.

Our two-day trip is the second of a series of five treks offered in September by the Texas Camel Corps, an outfit owned by former zookeeper Doug Baum, a cheerful, red-haired man with an infectious sense of humor and a seemingly unlimited enthusiasm for camels. "The camels are like family," he says, as he arrives to brush the animals and begin the rather complicated business of getting them saddled up and packed for the trek.

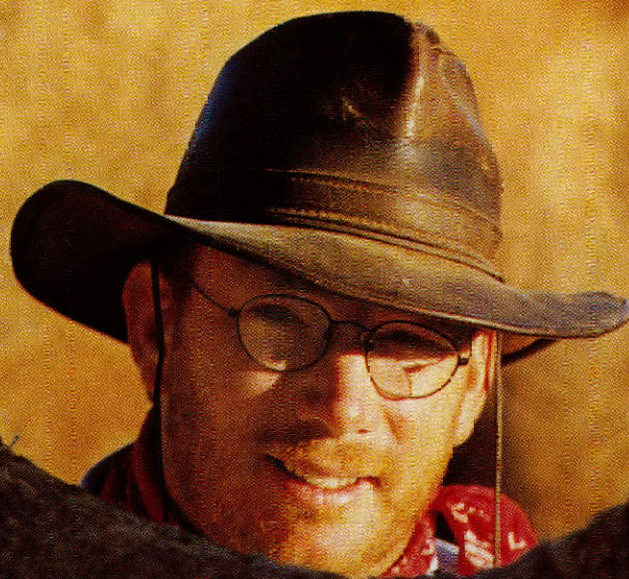
Baum's operation is located in Valley Mills, near Waco, where he is raising his own camels. He uses the animals for fairs, Christmas pageants, movies and photo shoots. What he really likes to do, though, is lead treks. Two years ago, the idea of camel trekking in Big Bend Ranch State Park was born when Baum went to the park to train three members of the Odyssey Exploration Society, from Calgary, Alberta, for a 900-mile camel trek across Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter. Baum teamed up for the training program with David Alloway, Big Bend Ranch State Park naturalist and desert survival specialist. The training went so well that the idea of reviving the history of the U.S. Camel Corps in West Texas seemed a natural.

The remaining human members of the expedition arrive, and we're ready for an introduction to the world of camels. Harl and Jim Assaf drove in from Dallas, and Bruce Kennedy has come in from Austin. As it happens, the entire state has been baking for days in a record-setting heat wave, and already the cool morning is heating up.

Baum introduces us to Brutus, Samson, Chug and Chewy, short for Chewbaca. (Chewbaca was named for the tall, hairy alien pilot in the movie *Star Wars*, whose strange way of talking — a sort of whining roar — had actually been inspired by camel sounds.) Harl will be riding Chewy, Bruce is assigned to Chug, and Joe gets Samson. I am delighted to be assigned to Brutus, although we'll be bringing up the rear of the pack.

Baum explains that the animals are dromedaries, the single-humped camels that hail originally from the deserts of Arabia and Africa. (Bactrians, the bigger and stockier two-humpers, are from the colder climates of Asia.) The animals' humps hold fat rather than water, he explains. These camels, he tells us, have even more unusual origins. They were rounded up as youngsters in the Australian Outback, where they had been roaming with one of the many herds of feral camels. The herds have survived in the outback since their ancestors were first turned loose there half a century ago, after their usefulness as riding and pack animals had run out. Shortly before the turn of the last century,

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THEIR SNOUTS HELD SO SNOOTILY IN THE
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BUT I FIND THEM IRRESISTIBLE.



Australians imported hundreds of camels for traversing the desert and, until the arrival of paved roads and cars and trucks, they proved invaluable for covering the country's vast, arid interior.

These animals are veterans as well of the Sonoran Desert in Arizona where they have worked as part of a program for troubled youth called VisionQuest. Camels, Baum says, make ideal companions for kids who are used to being able to lie or cheat their way out of trouble. "You can't lie to a camel," he says. "And you can't bully it to get it to do what you want."

Brutus and company actually seem rather sweet and mellow as we walk up and pat them. Each animal stands quietly as Baum secures the odd contraption of metal poles and straps that anchor the leather seat of the saddle just behind the hump. "My father-in-law made these," he says. "Kush," commands Baum, and all sink obediently to their knees, allowing us to climb aboard. Chug groans loudly as Bruce Kennady puts his foot in the stirrup to swing over the pommel in rather graceful fashion.

Chewy, with Harl aboard, lurches to his feet, and the rest of us pick up our animals' reins to follow. Baum doesn't employ the uncomfortable nose pegs used on camels in a number of desert cultures, but instead connects the reins to a simple halter. We could theoretically "guide" the animals with the reins, but in fact, the animals are tied to each other, with ropes linking their noses with the back of the saddle of the camel in front. In case of emergency, Baum tells us, if we needed to disconnect

from the camel behind or in front of us, we could simply yank on the rope to undo the quick-release knot. This arrangement gives us just enough responsibility to make us feel that we aren't passive passengers, but actual riders.

The first segment of the trek leads us along the main road to the Oso Loop trail, named for Oso Mountain (*oso* means "bear" in Spanish), the highest peak on the ranch, which we could see looming in the distance. The only sound we hear as we move along is the soft squish of the camels' feet on the gravel road, and it doesn't take long to start falling into a soothing rhythm. Camels' feet are padded rather than hooved and, despite their size, they move as quietly as cats, their feet flattening out like gel-filled pancakes as they touch the ground.

There is something timeless about camels and Big Bend, and as we leave Saucedo behind, we seem to be slipping back through the decades and then through the centuries. We pass a large flat-topped rock outcrop called the Cielo complex, where stores were placed in a pattern centuries ago, possibly as part of a ritual or to mark a sacred place. Atop our tall "ships of the desert," we are able to see much more of the landscape than if we'd been afoot or even aboard horses. A startled mule deer takes flight as we approach, but turns around for a moment, freezing in mid-motion, as though doing a double-take at the sight of the camels.

At our comfortable pace, well-supplied with water, our experience of the harsh, beautiful countryside is a bit different from



that of Lieutenant William H. Echols of the Topographical Engineers and 2nd Lieutenant Edward L. Hartz, who first traversed the area with a camel convoy in 1860. Echols was given the assignment of exploring the unknown territory between the Pecos River and the Rio Grande, mapping the best routes for travel and locating possible sites for forts. His mission was also to test the usefulness of camels for transportation in this arid, forbidding region.

For Echols and his men, the mountains and arroyos of the region were difficult barriers, despite the unexpected sure-footedness of the camels on the slopes and rocky ground. Describing his progress south from Fort Davis to Presidio, Echols noted in his diary the mountains that had "grown larger higher rougher, and more rocky since entering the cañon, which is generally, I am sorry to say, characteristic of every one you may descend. And of them this whole region is an interminable succession, all of them barren and bleak." The camels, however, he noted, found plenty to eat along the way, munching on the spiny cacti and bitter brush that the mules of the expedition ignored.

Our camels, too, seem inclined toward the thornier plants that come their way, and we sometimes have to pull their heads away from the temptations of plants lining the trail. When we stop later for a water break, the animals eagerly begin browsing on the catclaw and creosote that horses would avoid like the plague. "It's like having a car that runs on air," says Baum.

Before lunch, we set off on foot for a hike, led by the ranger to a scenic cliff-top view of some of Big Bend's miraculous *tenajas* ("earthen jars" in Spanish), which are deep water holes with narrow mouths that capture rainwater so efficiently they remain wet even during severe drought. Along the way, we encounter several Big Bend horse lubbers, which are enormous, rather friendly bright green grasshoppers with red wings that pose quietly on our fingertips.

After lunch, we mount up again for a trip to one of the most special sites on the ranch, a small rock complex known as the "birthing place" because of the 300-year-old pictographs that appear to portray scenes of women giving birth. Like most of the pictographs in the area, the images are abstract, almost geometric in form. It feels like an oasis from the heat and glare, with its shady refuge under a rocky overhang and a cool breeze that blows continuously through a wide crevice.

In this ancient place, it is easy to imagine a prehistoric landscape, millions of years ago, when the ancestors of today's camels actually lived here on what was to become Texas soil. Early versions of camels, from tiny to huge, roamed the American continent for millions of years, with a heavy concentration of them in the area of Texas, until they finally disappeared around 10,000 years ago. I love the idea that camels magically reappeared here on their old stomping grounds after being gone so long.



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Later, as we remount and march toward our campground, the temperature is 100 degrees and climbing, and it is getting a little easier to imagine Echols' experiences. In his journal, he admitted that he and his men came close to panic at one point, when they had been unable to find water for days, and even the camels began bellowing for water. The landscape, he wrote, was "a picture of barrenness and desolation, when the scathing fire of destruction has swept with its rabid flame mountains, cañons, ravines, precipices, cactus, soap weed, intense reflection from the limestone cliffs, and almost every barrier that one can conceive of." But just as Echols was about to disperse men and animals, leaving all to fend for themselves, they came upon the welcome sight of the mountain known, ironically, as Camel's Hump, where they knew they'd find water.

What we have in our sights this afternoon is a tall, picturesque wooden windmill and a large stone tank filled with cool water, near which Baum has already set up our tents. Also waiting is a big jug of ice tea, some great guacamole and later, a dinner of fajitas. We spend the rest of the afternoon and some of the early evening in quintessential West Texas fashion, spinning yarns, comparing our Texas roots, and talking about Texas music. None of us can top Baum, who once played drums at age 12 with a band led by country singer "Cornfed" Fred Crawford.

The next morning, we are joined by one of the state's better storytellers, Fort Leaton park ranger Evelyn Dorsey, whose enthusiasm for Big Bend rivals that of Baum for camels. "All of our plants out here are specialized," she says, describing the lechuguilla and other forbidding-looking plants that can actually be used either for food or tools. "The plants and people out here might have thorns," she says, "but we're well-adapted to the environment."

Later, as we proceed on camelback along the dramatic overlook known as Papalotito Escondido, with the camels making their way carefully down slippery, rocky slopes, Baum exclaims in admiration over their sure-footedness, much as Echols and Beale had. "They're more like mountain goats than 2,000-pound animals," says Baum. And I'm beginning to think that the camels, in fact, are an appropriate addition to Big Bend, since they, like the plants and sometimes the people out here, are incredibly specialized and even a little strange in their ability



The two-day trek is reminiscent of an 1860 camel convoy that was sent to explore West Texas.

to survive in a climate that, as Evelyn says, reduces things to their bare-boned essentials.

On our way back to Saucedo, the sun to our west begins casting shadows of our silhouettes along the side of the trail, and Baum remarks on the timeless nature of the shape of the camel outlines on the gravel and the rocks. "I get lost looking at those shadows," says Baum, "thinking about the colorful history of the camel, of the spice routes of Asia and the Orient." And then there's all the what-ifs. What if the camel experiment had not come to an untimely end, even after the camels had proven their mettle time and time again on some of the most demanding terrain in the West? "I look forward to the day when every mail route across the continent will be conducted altogether with this economic and noble brute," Edward Beale had once rhapsodized.

Instead, the camels were sold off after the Civil War for \$31 apiece for circuses and heavy mine and freight transport, and some were let loose to fend for themselves, turning up in tall tales and nearly as many sightings in later years as Elvis.

And now, as camel caravans across Big Bend Ranch resume, perhaps the legends will return, and we'll get another chance to discover what the camel might have meant to Texas. ★

Getting There

Camel treks are scheduled at Big Bend Ranch State Park March 10-11, 12-13, 15-16, 17-18 and 19-20. A schedule for September will be released later this year. Each two-day trek includes two guides, a cook and no more than six participants. Cost is \$650 per person, which includes meals and lodging. For information call 254-675-HUMP or e-mail txascalcorps@htcomp.net.

Big Bend Ranch State Park offers a wilderness experience in the Chihuahuan Desert. Activities include rafting and canoeing, camping, backpacking, day hiking and fishing. Visitors must check in at either Fort Leaton State Park near Presidio or Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center near Lajitas.

For information about Big Bend Ranch call 915-229-3416.

Map © Texas Parks and Wildlife Press, *Official Guide to Texas State Parks*.





LEGEND, LORE & LEGACY

The Great

BLACK-EYED PEA HOAX

By C.F. Eckhardt

ARE YOU going to eat black-eyed peas on the first day of the new year for good luck in the coming year? If so, you've been taken in by one of the best bits of flackery ever to come out of Texas.

The name Elmore Torn probably doesn't mean much to you unless you've been around Texas a long time. You might know Elmore's son, though. Elmore Jr. is the Texas-born actor Rip Torn.

Back in 1947, Elmore Sr. was pretty much all there was to the Athens/Henderson County Chamber of Commerce. That was, of course, in the days before Houston and Dallas "discovered" Athens. In those days you could buy just about all of Henderson County you wanted — sans mineral rights, of course — for about 10 bucks an acre. There weren't very many takers at that price.

The area industries at the time were oil, farming, oil, a pottery factory, oil, and a cannery. One of the products of the cannery was canned black-eyed peas.

Canned black-eyed peas, these days, aren't bad eatin' at all. They can't compare to fresh-off-the-vine, hulled and snapped on the back porch, cooked with genuine ham hocks, of course, but they're not bad. That wasn't the case in 1947. In those days canned black-eyed peas resembled nothing quite so much as grayish-tan, lumpy library paste with black spots scattered in it. The stuff tasted like library paste, too — with heavy overtones of tinsplate and salt. Elmore Torn was tasked with creating a market for lumpy, grayish-tan library paste that tasted like salty tin.

Perhaps no other flack in Texas was as suited to the task. Even the legendary Hondo Crouch, had he engaged in flackery, might have been hard put to do that — but not Elmore. He went to the cannery and had several dozen two-ounce cans of peas made up. There he sat down at his typewriter.

What came out of that typewriter was a stroke of sheer genius — the sort of success story a movie studio "biographer" could dream up when tasked with creating a romantic background for a kid from the Bronx who's never been farther from home than Flatbush. It was, of course, a work of pure fiction.

Eating black-eyed peas for good luck on New Year's Day, Elmore wrote, was a fine old antebellum Southern tradition that had been viciously suppressed by the damn Yankees during Reconstruction. Jeff Davis, Stonewall Jackson, Albert Sidney Johnston — even Marse Robert Lee himself — partook of the unique Southern delicacy known as the black-eyed pea every New Year's Day for good luck in the coming year. Why, the reason the South lost was a failure of the black-eyed pea crop in 1863, which led to the Confederate reverses in '64 and ultimately to the humiliation of Appomattox in April of '65. The tradition, he wrote, was hoary long before the war, but had been suppressed by the Yankees for the nine long years of Reconstruction in Texas. It was time for all good Southerners to rise up and reclaim this great, almost-lost bit of Southern heritage. Who knows, it might lead to the South rising once more. And, of course, what better way to serve

black-eyed peas for New Year's Day dinner than with convenient, tasty (he may have gagged slightly there), canned black-eyed peas from Athens, Texas?

Elmore had this printed as a brochure and wrapped his brochures around two-ounce cans of canned black-eyed peas from Athens. Then he sent a can and the con to the food editor of every newspaper in the South and in the Southern-leaning border states of Missouri, Kentucky and Maryland. Then he sat back and waited.

Now, to be truthful, President Davis and Generals Lee, Jackson and Johnston probably never ate black-eyed peas in their lives — but their horses did. Black-eyed peas, in the antebellum south, were po' folks' eats. Upper- and middle-class Southerners considered them livestock fodder.

A good many of those food editors must have been awfully hard up for copy the day the black-eyed pea scam arrived in the mailbox, because they printed Elmore's yarn. Slowly at first, then with gathering momentum, this "great old antebellum Southern tradition" took hold across Texas and the South.

Elmore moved on to better things, eventually becoming known as "The Sage of Circleville." Circleville, Texas, for the record, consisted — at least in the early 1960s — of a dilapidated cotton gin, a not-quite-so-dilapidated dance hall, and not much else, at the junction of Texas 95 and Texas 29 in Williamson County, just north of Taylor and a little east of Georgetown. Elmore insisted that Circleville, Texas, was a far more cosmopolitan place than



the Big Apple. After all, probably nobody in New York City had ever heard of Circleville, Texas — but might near everybody in Circleville had heard about New York at least once.

Still, the great black-eyed pea scam remains Elmore's lasting monument. Over the years Elmore Torn's Southern tradition has, in fact, become a Southern tradition. In the week between Christmas and New Year's, canned black-eyed

peas are one of the biggest sellers in grocery stores all across the South.

Yes, I eat black-eyed peas on New Year's — and during the rest of the year as well. I like 'em. Hillbilly as it might sound, there's nothing quite as good anywhere as sopping a wedge of hot cornbread in the potlikker from cooking black-eyed peas. Canned black-eyed peas have come a long way in the past half-century or so. But on

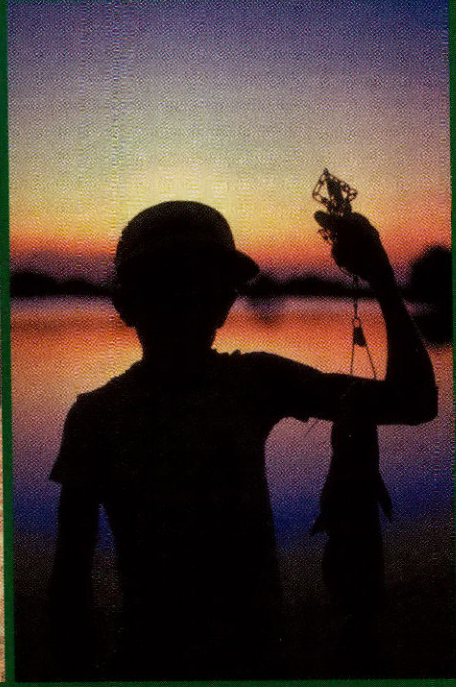
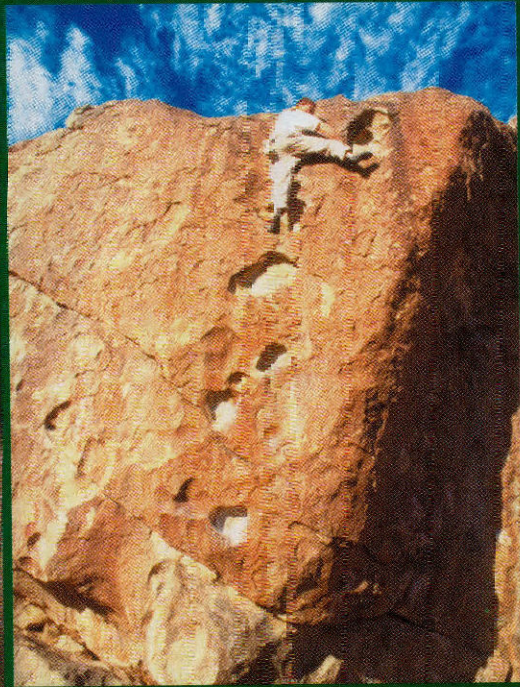
New Year's Day I eat them not for good luck, but to honor Elmore Torn, the man who created that "grand old Southern tradition." ☆

C. F. ECKHARDT writes about cowboying because it's easier than doing it. His latest book, *Texas Smoke: Muzzleloaders on the Frontier*, is due out next month from Texas Tech University Press.

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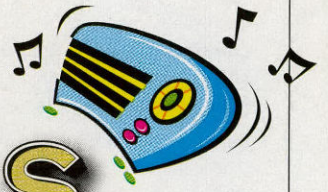
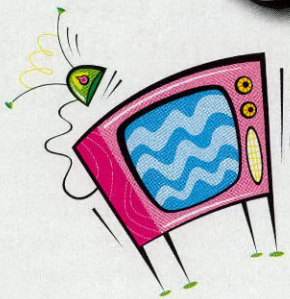


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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



The Front Line of News and Views

TELEVISION

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

Dec. 31 - Jan. 7:

The growth of shooting sports; gun safety; turkey fajitas; a 300-year-old road; tracking shellfish along the Guadalupe River.

Jan. 7 - 14:

Antelope in the Trans-Pecos; white-winged doves; golden-cheeked warblers; frog legs recipe.

Jan. 14 - 21:

A paraplegic man handcycling across the United States; the javelina; return of the bald eagle.

Jan. 21 - 28:

Walter Cronkite narrates the history of the Texas State Capitol.

Jan. 28 - Feb. 4:

Jellyfish; Floyd Mabry, the "Original Texas Fishing Machine;" preparing turkey fruit salad; a scenic tour of Texas.

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Amarillo: KACV, Ch. 2 / Sat. 5:30 p.m.

Austin: KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 10 a.m. / Mon. 12:30 p.m. KLRU-TOO, Cable Ch. 20 / Tues. 11 p.m., 12 p.m.

Bryan-College Station: KAMU, Ch. 15 / Thurs. 7 p.m.

Corpus Christi: KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m. / Thurs. 10 a.m. / Friday 11:30 p.m.

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

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

Harlingen: KMBH, Ch. 60 / Tues. 8 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. 4 p.m. Also serving Temple

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

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

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

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

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

Brady: KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:50 a.m. & 8:50 p.m., KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:50 a.m. & 8:50 p.m.

Bridgeport: KBOC-FM 98.3 / 8:45 a.m. & 5:25 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIGHTS & SOUNDS

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

Cuero: KVQC-FM 97.7 / 8:20 a.m.

Denison/Sherman: KJIM-AM 1500 / 9:04 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fort Worth: KTCU-FM 88.7 / 8:50 a.m. & 5:50 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Houston: KBME-AM 790 / 11:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Kerrville: KRNH-FM 92.3 / 5:31 a.m. & 12:57, 7:35 p.m.

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

Levelland: KLVF-AM 1230 / 12:06 p.m.

Lubbock: KJTV-AM 950 / 6:50 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Point Comfort/Port Lavaca: KAJI-FM 94.1 / TBA

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

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

San Antonio: KSTX-FM 89.1 / 9:04 p.m. Th., KENS-AM 1160 / 7:40 a.m., 12:30 & 5:45 p.m.

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

Sonora: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 12:09 p.m.

Sulphur Springs: KSST-AM 1230 / 4:45 p.m.

Texarkana: KTXK-FM 91.5 / noon hour

Uvalde: KVOU-AM 1400 / 5:33 a.m. KVOU-FM 105 / 5:33 a.m.

Victoria: KVRT-FM 90.7 / 5:34 p.m., KTXN-FM 98.7 / 6:45 a.m.

Waco: KBCT-FM 94.5 / 6:10 a.m.

Wichita Falls: KWFS-AM 1290 / 6:15 & 7:45 a.m.

Yoakum: KYKM-FM 92.5 / 8:20 a.m.

"Passport to Texas" is available at no cost to stations across the state. For information contact Donna Endres at 512-454-1922, fax 512-454-2552, or write to P.O. Box 5966, Austin, Texas 78763, e-mail <passport@io.com>.

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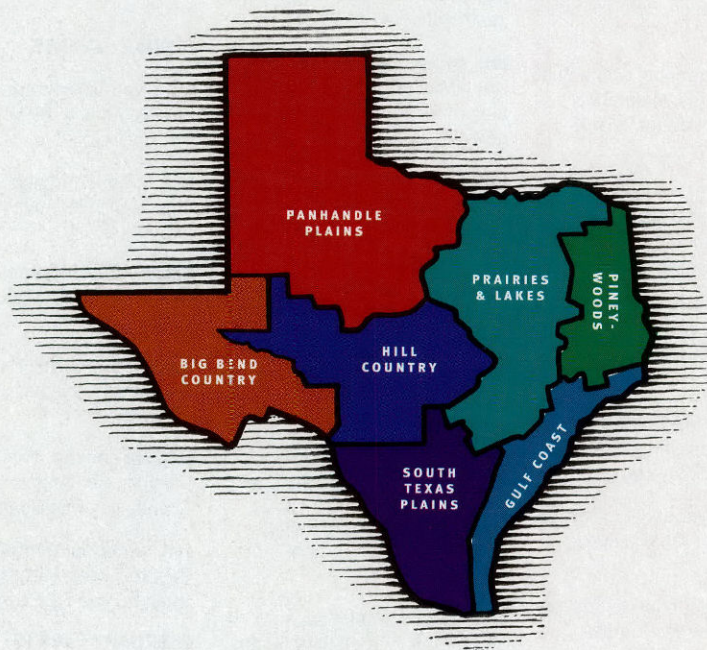
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BIG BEND COUNTRY

JANUARY EVENTS

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

Jan.: White Shaman Tour, every Saturday, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 888-525-9907.

Jan.: Bouldering Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-849-6684.

Jan.: Pictograph Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-849-6684.

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

Jan. 1-31: Quail Hunt, Black Gap WMA, Brewster County, 915-376-2216.

Jan. 1-31: Fishing on the Rio Grande, Black Gap WMA, Brewster County, 915-376-2216.

Jan. 13: Stories Of Spirit, Magoffin Home SHP, El Paso, 915-533-5147.

Jan. 20: Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Jan. 21: Bird Identification Tours, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-849-6684.

Jan. 21: Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, El Paso, 915-292-4464.

Jan. 22-26: Advanced Wilderness First Aid, Barton

Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-371-2633.

Jan. 26-27: Living History Days, Fort Leaton SHP, Presidio, 915-229-3613.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb.: Desert Garden Tours, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-424-3327.

Feb.: White Shaman Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 1-888-525-9907.

Feb.: Bouldering Tours, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-849-6684.

Feb.: Phantom Cave Springs and San Solomon Cienega Tour, Balmorhea SP, Balmorhea, 915-375-2370.

Feb.: Pictograph Tours, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-849-6684.

Feb.: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling

Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Feb. 1-25: Fishing on the Rio Grande, Black Gap WMA, Brewster County, 915-376-2216.

Feb. 1-25: Quail Hunt, Black Gap WMA, Brewster County, 915-376-2216.

Feb. 2-4: Hiking the High Country, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Feb. 2-4: Commercial Guide Training, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Feb. 3: Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Feb. 3, 4, 17, 18: Interpretive Tour, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso, 915-566-6441.

Feb. 10: Stories Of Spirit, Magoffin Home SHP, El Paso, 915-533-5147.

Feb. 10: Cowboy 101, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Feb. 10: Bat and Birdhouse Building, Fort Leaton SHP, Presidio, 915-229-3613.

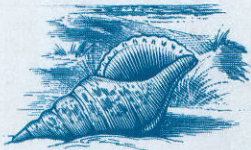
Feb. 10: Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SHP, Comstock, 915-292-4464.

Feb. 11, 18: Big Bend Lecture Series, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas, 915-424-3327.

Feb. 12: Special light goose conservation season opens in the Western Zone, 512-389-4505.

Feb. 17: Dutch Oven Cooking, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, 915-229-3416.

Feb. 18: Bird Identification Tours, Hueco Tanks SHP, El Paso, 915-849-6684.



GULF COAST

JANUARY EVENTS

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

Jan.: Tours, Tuesday through Sunday, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, 979-292-0100.

Jan.: Bird Walks, Every Wednesday through Saturday, Goose Island SP, Rockport, 361-729-2858.

Jan.: Weekend Nature Programs, every weekend, Lake Texana SP, Edna, 361-782-5718.

Jan. 10: Reenactment of the Spindletop Gusher, Beaumont, 409-839-2977.

Jan. 12, 15: Intracoastal Whooping Crane Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Jan. 13: Beach Combing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Jan. 14: History Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Jan. 15: Advanced Birding Series begins, Corpus Christi Botanical Garden, Corpus Christi, 361-852-2100.

Jan. 18: Whooping Crane Bus Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Jan. 20-21: Introduction to Coastal Bend Birds, Corpus Christi Botanical Garden, Corpus Christi, 361-852-2100.

Jan. 22: Special light goose conservation season opens in the Eastern Zone, 512-389-4505.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb.: Plantation house, barn and grounds tours, Wednesdays through Sundays, Varner-Hogg Plantation SHP,

West Columbia, 979-345-4656.

Feb.: Weekend Nature Programs, Lake Texana SP, Edna, 361-782-5718.

Feb.: Bird Walks, Goose Island SP, Rockport, 361-729-2858.

Feb. 3: Star Party, Lake Texana SP, Edna, 361-782-5718.

Feb. 3, 10: Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, 361-529-6600.

Feb. 9, 11: Whooping Crane Bus Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Feb. 9, 19: Intracoastal Whooping Crane Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Feb. 10: Beach Combing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, 361-983-2215.

Feb. 17: Creature Feature, Armand Bayou Nature Center, Houston, 281-474-2551.

Feb. 23-25: Whooping Crane Festival, Port Aransas, 800-45-COAST.

Feb. 24: Introduction to Coastal Bend Water Birds, Corpus Christi Botanical Garden, Corpus Christi, 361-852-2100.



HILL COUNTRY

JANUARY EVENTS

Jan.: Campfire Programs, Every Saturday, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643.

Jan.: Ranger Talk, Every Saturday, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643.

Jan. 6-27: Honey Creek Canyon Walk, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, 830-438-2656.

Jan. 6-28: Gorman Falls Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Jan. 6-28: Walking Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Jan. 6: Crawling Cave Tour,

Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Jan. 8: Late antlerless and spike buck season opens in 25 Edwards Plateau counties, 512-389-4505.

Jan. 15: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, Austin, 512-916-4393.

Jan. 18: Medina County in the Civil War, Landmark Inn SHP, Castroville, 830-931-2133.

Jan. 19-20: Sam Bass Treasure Hunt/Mystery Game, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, 877-441-2283.

Jan. 20: Enchanted Rock Trail Project Day, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg, 512-445-3862.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb.: Birding Tours, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, 888-853-2688.

Feb.: Nature and Historical Tours, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, 888-853-2688.

Feb.: Ranger Talk, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643.

Feb.: Honey Creek Canyon Walk, Honey Creek SNA, Spring Branch, 830-438-2656.

Feb.: Campfire Programs, McKinney Falls SP, Austin, 512-243-1643.

Feb. 3: Crawling Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Feb. 3: Birdhouse Day, Lyndon B. Johnson SHP, Stonewall, 830-644-2252.

Feb. 3-25: Walking Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

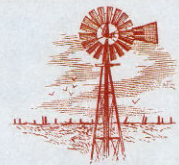
Feb. 3-25: Gorman Falls Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, 915-628-3240.

Feb. 12: Special light goose conservation season opens in the Western Zone, 512-389-4505.

Feb. 15: I've Never Met a Texas History I Didn't Like, Landmark Inn SHP, Castroville, 830-931-2133.

Feb. 17: Enchanted Rock Trail Project Day, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg, 512-445-3862.

Feb. 19: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, Austin, 512-916-4393.



PANHANDLE PLAINS

JANUARY EVENTS

Jan.: Nature Programs, call for details, Abilene SP, Abilene, 915-572-3204.

Jan. 6, 20: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-8935.

Jan. 13, 27: Dinosaur Walk, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-8935.

Jan. 13: Stargazing Party, Abilene SP, Abilene, 915-572-3204.

Jan. 20: Longhorn and Bison Seminar, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-8935.

Jan. 21-22: Hunter Safety Course, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, 940-839-4331.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb.: Llama Treks, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-651-7346.

Feb.: Nature Programs, Abilene SP, Abilene, 915-572-3204.

Feb. 3: Canyon Chat, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227.

Feb. 3, 17: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-8935.

Feb. 10: Family Nature Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227.

Feb. 10, 24: Dinosaur Walk, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-8935.

Feb. 12: Special light goose conservation season opens in the Western Zone, 512-389-4505.

Feb. 17: Longhorn and Bison Seminar, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, 915-949-8935.

Feb. 17: Canyon Critters, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, 806-488-2227.

Feb. 23-25: Becoming an





Outdoors-Woman Workshop, Butman Methodist Camp, Merkel, 512-389-8183.



PINEYWOODS

JANUARY EVENTS

Jan. 5, 19: Slide Show, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

Jan. 13, 27: Guided Nature Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

Jan. 20: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. Jasper, SP, 409-384-5231.

Jan. 22: Special light goose conservation season opens, Eastern Zone, 512-389-4505

Jan. 27: Annual Kid's Fishing Day, Lake Bob Sandlin SP, Pittsburg, 903-572-5531.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

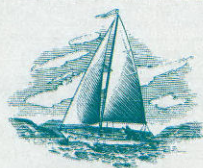
Feb. 2, 16: Slide Show, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

Feb. 3: Birdhouse Day, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.

Feb. 3: Birdhouse Day, Martin Creek Lake SP, Tatum, 903-836-4336.

Feb. 10, 24: Guided Nature Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, 409-755-7322.

Feb. 17: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, 409-384-5231.



PRAIRIES AND LAKES

JANUARY EVENTS

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

Jan.: Kreishe Brewery Tours, every Saturday and Sunday,

Monument Hill & Kreishe Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658.

Jan.: Campfire Programs, every Saturday, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Jan.: Historical Tours, every Sunday, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Jan. 6, 7, 20, 21: Birds of the Brazos Hike, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Jan. 7, 14: Kreishe House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreishe Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658.

Jan. 13, 20, 27: Bald Eagle Tour, Fairfield Lake SP, Fairfield, 903-389-4514.

Jan. 20-21: Origins Of The Cowboy, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP, Washington, 936-878-2213.

Jan. 20-21: Eagle Fest 2001, Emory, 800-561-1182.

Jan. 20-31: Vanishing Amphibians, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, 903-676-BASS

Jan. 20: Trout Clinic, Fort Parker SP, Mexia, 254-562-5751.

Jan. 22: Special light goose conservation season opens, Eastern Zone, 512-389-4505

Jan. 26: Fish-It's Fine Food, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, 903-676-BASS

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb.: Historic and Scenic Tour, Monument Hill & Kreishe Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658.

Feb.: Kreishe Brewery Tours, Monument Hill & Kreishe Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658.

Feb.: Campfire Programs, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Feb.: Historical Tours, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe. 979-885-3613.

Feb. 1-27: Vanishing Amphibians, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, 903-676-BASS.

Feb. 3: Birdhouse Day, Fairfield Lake SP, Fairfield, 903-389-4514.

Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24: Bald Eagle Tour, Fairfield Lake SP, Fairfield, 903-389-4514.

Feb. 3, 17: Forest Animal Hike, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Feb. 3, 17: Ecology Trail Hikes, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Feb. 4, 11: Kreishe House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreishe Brewery SHP, La Grange, 979-968-5658.

Feb. 4, 18: Life of the Karankawas, Stephen F. Austin SHP, San Felipe, 979-885-3613.

Feb. 10-11: A Stitch In Time, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHP/Barrington Living History Farm, 936-878-2213.



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

JANUARY EVENTS

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

Jan. 22: Special light goose conservation season opens, Eastern Zone, 512-389-4505.

Jan. 22: Late antlerless and spike buck season opens in 30 South Texas counties, 512-389-4505.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb.: Kiskadee Bus Tour, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission, 956-585-1107.

Feb. 3: 1880s Wild West Extravaganza, Presidio La Bahia, Goliad, 361-645-3752.

Feb. 5, 19: Bird Identification Tour, Choke Canyon SP/Calliham Unit, Calliham, 361-786-3868.

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

State Parks Offer Public Hunts

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

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

Jan. 9-11, 23-25	Big Bend Ranch SP 915-229-3416
Jan. 1-5, 8-12, 15-19, 22-26	Lake Brownwood SP 915-784-5223
Jan. 1-3, 3-5, 8-10, 10-12, 15-17, 17-19	Choke Canyon SP 361-786-3868
Jan. 2-5, 9-12, 16-19, 23-26	Colorado Bend SP 915-628-3240
Jan. 8-10, 10-12, 15-17, 17-19	Davis Mountains SP 915-426-3337
Jan. 3-5, 8-10, 10-12, 17-19	Guadalupe River SP 830-438-2656
Jan. 7-10, 14-17	Hill Country SNA 830-796-4413
Jan. 2-5, 7-12, 16-19	Honey Creek SNA 830-438-2656
Jan. 3-5, 8-12	Huntsville SP 409-295-5644
Jan. 3-5, 10-12, 17-19	Inks Lake/Longhorn Cavern SP 512-793-2223
Jan. 6-7, 8-10, 10-12	Lake Houston SP 281-354-6881
Jan. 2-4	Lake Mineral Wells SP 940-328-1171
Jan. 7-12	Lake Whitney SP 254-694-3793
Jan. 2-5, 8-12, 15-19, 22-26	Pedernales Falls SP 830-868-7304
Jan. 8-12, 10-12	South Llano River SP 915-446-3994



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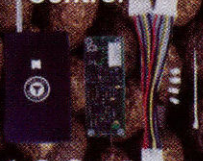
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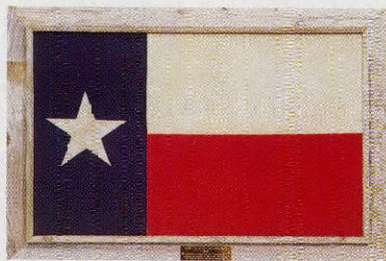
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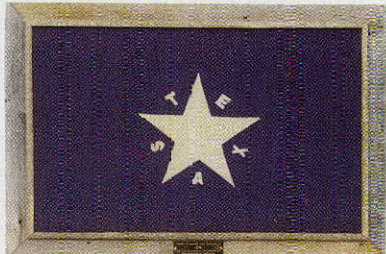
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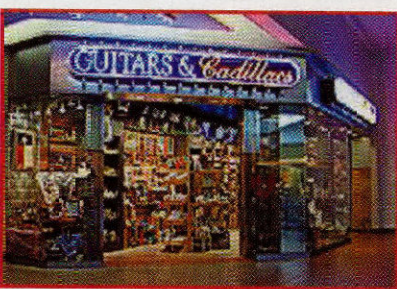


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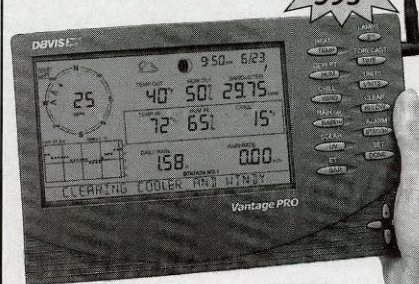
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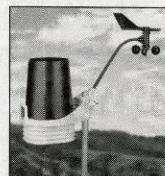
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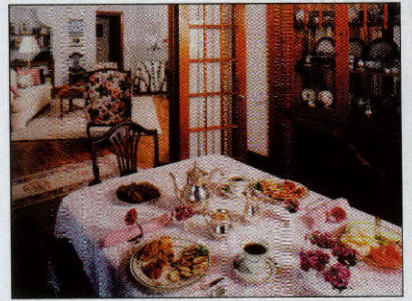
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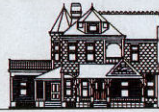
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