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... Ring by RON HENRY STRAIT * E. DAN KLEPPER *Scouts the Alamosaurus*

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AUGUST 2001

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Front: What’s the outlook for quail hunting this fall? Check district biologists’ forecasts beginning on page 26. Photo © David J. Sams.

Back: A young hunter and his young Lab enjoy a fall day afield. Photo © DenverBryan.com

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

I remember the alligators at the Houston Zoo. Growing up, my folks would often take us up to Hermann Park from Brazoria County to spend an inexpensive but memorable day among the animals. The alligators were my favorites because there were so many of them and they seemed really large and threatening. My impression of them was made all the more indelible because I knew they lived in the woods, swamps and bayous down near the coast, which we inhabited as well.

In time, as the American alligator became an endangered species, visiting them at the zoo became a lesson in the consequences of poor stewardship and exploitation.



Already listed as one
of the five best
zoos in the nation,
the opening of
"Texas Wild!" places
the Fort Worth Zoo
squarely on the
frontier of American
conservation education.

In this issue, my colleague Ron Kabele will introduce you to the fundamental zoo experience taken to a new level in "Texas Wild!" the most provocative new zoo exhibit in America. Already listed as one of the five best zoos in the nation, the opening of "Texas Wild!" places the Fort Worth Zoo squarely on the frontier of American conservation education.

Conceived by a marvelous staff and conservationist/philanthropist Ramona Bass, the new exhibit combines state-of-the art cinematography, interactive media, compelling educational opportunities and just plain fun. The result is a bold effort to reach out to increasingly detached and jaded urbanites with the message that they are part of the natural world and that the natural world is a positive place to be.

That message — that humanity has had and will continue to have a positive impact on the environment — is a passion with Ms. Bass and her husband, Mr. Lee Bass, who has recently retired as Chairman of our Commission. Together, they have championed the cause of wildlife conservation across the world in collaboration with organizations as diverse as the Texas Wildlife Association and the Peregrine Fund. And they have embodied the concept of stewardship in enlightened management of their own lands.

Thanks to the two of them and the many other contributors to "Texas Wild!" thousands of families will come to know that the positive actions of responsible humans are the solution to our most daunting conservation problems.

And when the kids come to see the alligators in the Fort Worth Zoo, they will learn that this great species is no longer endangered because we cared enough to manage them well and to save them.

"Texas Wild!" is a message of hope.

Andrew Sansom

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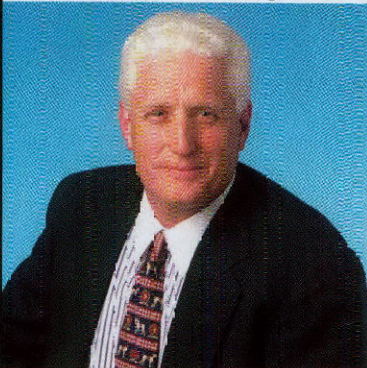
ABC AUDITED

Emily Willingham, who writes about the return of black bears to Big Bend in this issue, has logged many bear sightings across North America, including brown bears in Alaska's Denali National Park and black bears in Canada's Jasper National Park. A sixth-generation Texan, Willingham is a freelance writer and teacher living in Austin with her husband, Marshall Kunze, and their



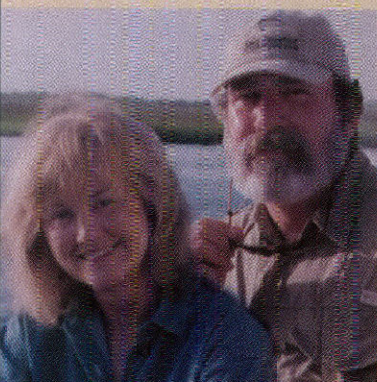
three-month-old son, Thomas Henry. She earned her Ph.D. in biology from the University of Texas at Austin in May 2001.

Ron Henry Strait, outdoor writer for the *San Antonio Express-News* and author of *The Outdoor Journal Guide to Fishing South Texas*, has won numerous awards for outdoor writing, photography and special publications. A native of San Antonio and a fifth-generation South Texan, Strait is a



graduate of Southwest Texas State University, a Navy veteran and the father of three daughters. In this issue he relates the reuniting force of a good campfire as hunters return to deer camp.

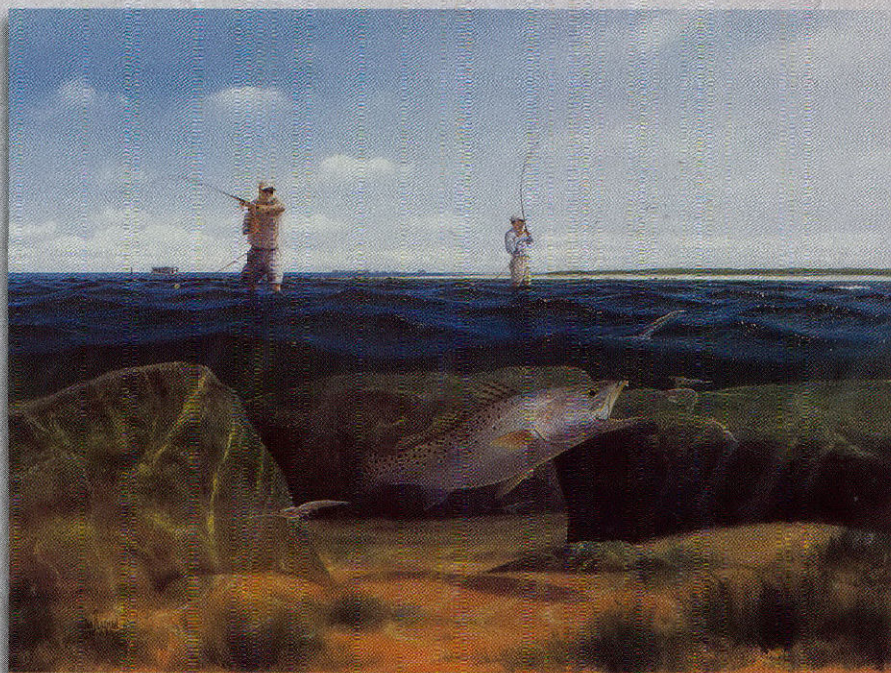
Leslie Kelly, editor of *Saltwater Texas*, along with **Jonette Childs**, publisher of *Saltwater Texas*, penned this month's feature on wade fishing the Texas coast. Saltwater fishing has been Kelly's lifelong passion. After serving his country in Vietnam, he quickly returned to coastal Texas. His knowledge and quick wit blend to make his articles



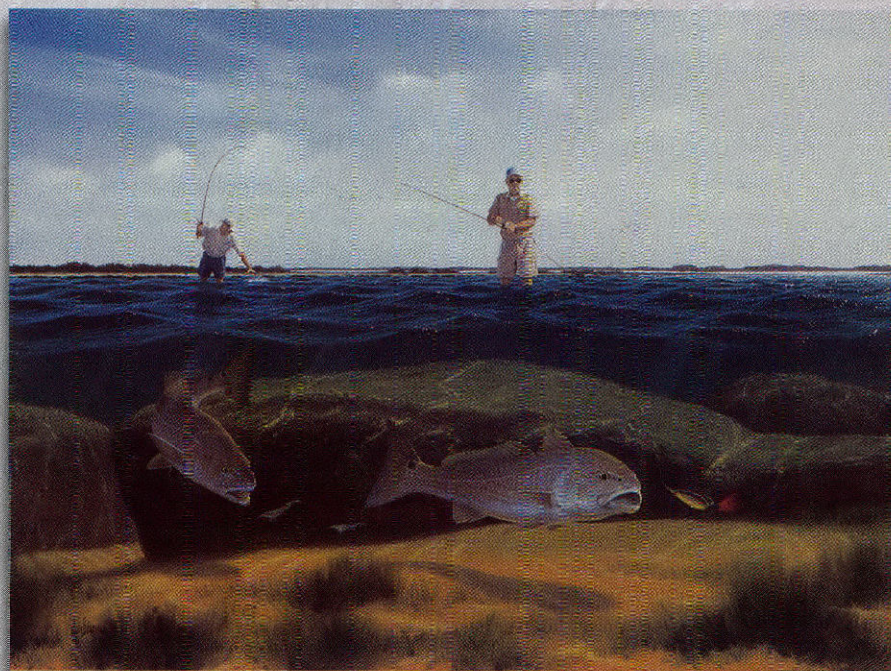
informative and entertaining. Childs, a native Texan, says that her concern for the environment and belief in conservation of the resource guide her journalistic endeavors.

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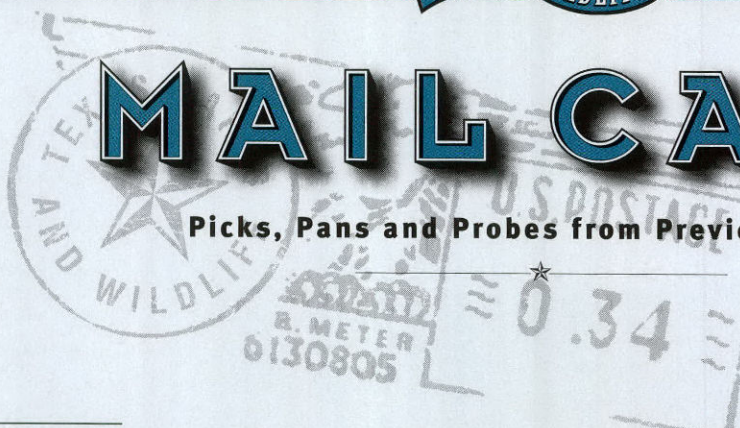
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MAIL CALL

Picks, Pans and Probes from Previous Issues



FOREWORD

Before returning to Texas, I spent eight years in Pennsylvania, working for Rodale Press, publishers of *Prevention*, *Organic Gardening*, *Bicycling*, *Men's Health*, *Backpacker*, *Scuba Diving*, *Runner's World* and other fine outdoors and health publications. I first worked with founder J.I. Rodale's son, Bob, and later with Bob's widow Ardie and their children David, Anthony, Maria, Heidi and Heather.

"It all comes back to the health of the soil and water," taught Bob. "We are in a battle with nature, and nature bats last. We can live better lives by being better stewards of our natural resources. Beginning with the health of soil and water, all health will flow."

Besides being a brilliant publisher, Bob Rodale was an angler, a hunter, a skilled marksman (Gold Medalist in the 1968 Olympics) and a gardener: a complex man suited for complex times. "At its core, it is so simple, so logical," warned Bob. "Take care of the land and its bounty; treat her gently." About publishing, Bob said, "It must all come back to the reader. Everything must lead to serving the reader."

I remain a student of Bob's philosophy.

Colleagues from Rodale and the nonprofit Rodale Institute were recently in Austin for the Organic Trade Show, "All Things Organic." There, I visited with John Haberern, a courtly, passionate gentleman who has served the Rodale vision for more than 40 years. Haberern remains convinced that the health of all creatures stems from clean water and clean soil. "That's why deer are disappearing in the Northeast," said Haberern. I told him about TPW's success in maintaining astounding huntable populations of white-tailed deer, and how TPW partners with private landowners to improve habitat.

"We can't eat the fish from many of our Northeast rivers," Haberern continued. I pointed south of the Austin Convention Center and said, "Two blocks away is one of the top 10 bass lakes in the state — in the heart of the city — and it is so clean you can eat what you catch. We celebrate water's importance to Texas; downtown Austin's north/south streets are named for major Texas rivers and the state's watershed is mapped in marble on the floor of the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport."

What we are accomplishing in Texas is remarkable; still, much remains to be done. As we take to the fields and forests to enjoy yet another season of Texas' bountiful wild harvest and astounding beauty, I will be renewing my commitment to protect and nurture the resource so that generations to come can enjoy it as we do. I hope you will be renewing yours, too.

Susan Short

LETTERS

For Birds, No Mews is Good News

Thank you for the article "The Feline Factor" by Jim Anderson (*May 2001*).

While reading the piece, I remembered articles my father, Capt. John R. Wood of Brownwood, had written for newspapers and saved in his very large scrapbook during his

40-plus years as a game warden, game warden school instructor, district chief and later regional director for Texas Parks and Wildlife. After retirement he wrote a book, *Texas Game Warden — My Story*.

His 113 newspaper articles entitled "With Our Wildlife" began August 8, 1938, and ran through April 30, 1943, in the *Brownwood Bulletin*. He closed almost every article with: 1) "Kill all wild house cats. They make good targets,"

2) "Trappers, kill all wild house cats that you see or catch in your traps," or simply 3) "Kill all wild house cats." I could list other closing quotes, but you get the idea.

Yes, he did have many "letters to the editor" opposing such a cruel idea; he kept those too. To rebut those letters, he wrote article number 45, June 8, 1939, "With Our Wildlife," and I quote:

Henry Chappell's "Wings of Change" (*July 2001*) was of particular interest. We live in Houston, and have noticed, for the past three years, that whitewings are now staying here all winter. Are they overwintering in other "new" locations?
Jack Keck, Houston

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"The U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey recently announced that wild house cats alone eat about 12 billion 193 million birds annually [according to my father's figures, your estimate is roughly 10.5 billion less than the 1939 report] in the United States. This bureau does not just pick up a pencil and write down a figure. These estimates are made by experts in game management and an average is taken all over the the United States. One would be surprised at the number of birds eaten by the so-called 'good old town cats.' Many say that they have tame cats that do not eat birds, but few know what the cat is doing while you are asleep. The May [1939] issue of the Southern Sportsman states: 'Stray cats on the farm cut down the birds that fight the insect pests.'"

The article continues, ending with (you guessed it) 'Kill all wild house cats.'

The wild house cat situation is not a new problem, as one might believe. Capt. John Wood tried to educate the public more than 60 years ago, trying his best to protect and save our wild environment.

*Jo Ann Du Vall
daughter of Capt. John Wood
Dallas*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers, I promise we're moving on from this house cat issue! Still, we've received quite a few more letters, and I thought you would find the one above of particular interest.

Impish Irish Immigrants

I enjoyed the article "Where Have All the Fireflies Gone?" (June 2001).

I remember as a young boy, nearly 60 years ago, living in the country and in the summertime watching the fireflies by the thousands flitting low over the grass in the pasture, their lights blinking like thousands of Christmas lights.

This was before the time of television and where we lived there was no electricity, so one of our

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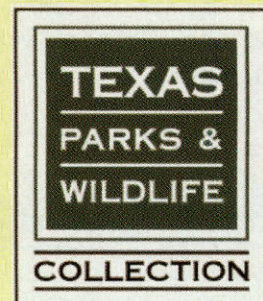
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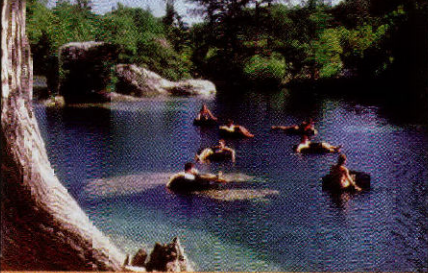


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MAIL CALL

pastimes after the evening meal was sitting in the front room by lamplight as Dad told stories of early day life; more or less an oral history lesson. Following is one story I remember him telling:

During the last half of the 19th century and early 20th century, many Europeans immigrated to the United States. Upon arriving here, they found many new plants, animals and even insects that were unknown to them in their home country.

New York was the main entry point for the immigrants; however, many entered the country through ports all down the eastern seaboard and across the Gulf Coast, Galveston being one of those ports.

Around 1900, two brothers arrived from Ireland. They had very little money; however, they had brought camping equipment with them, including a small tent. They were prepared to camp out and live off the land until they could find work and earn enough money to rent a place to live.

After leaving the ship in Galveston, they made their way to Houston, where they thought they might have a better chance of finding a job. They found a spot in a grove of trees just outside Houston, and prepared to make camp.

After getting their tent set up and what possessions they had stored in the tent, they prepared the evening meal. After finishing the meal and cleaning up they got out their bedrolls, ready for a good night's rest before looking for a job the next day.

This being in the summertime, the weather was hot and they decided to bed down in the open where they could get a little of the breeze off the gulf rather than trying to sleep in the stuffy tent. After bedding down, it didn't take the mosquitoes long to locate them and start biting. If you have ever spent much time along the Texas coast you know how bad the mosquitoes can be.



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MAIL CALL

The brothers soon decided it would be better to suffer the heat inside the tent rather than being bitten all night by the mosquitoes. So they got up and moved their bedrolls inside the tent and closed the flap to keep the mosquitoes out.

Sometime later, one of the brothers awoke and spotted two fireflies that had gotten inside the tent. They were flying all around the tent flashing their little lights. The young Irishman lay there a few minutes just watching the little lights flash all around the tent. This was something that he had never seen before back in Ireland and he was trying to figure out just what it was.

Thinking back to all the mosquito bites before they moved inside the tent, he finally realized what it was. Turning over, he started to shake his brother to wake him, saying, "Jake! Jake! Wake up. They're looking for us now with their lanterns."

*John Watson
Keene*

Copperhead Road

I read the article in the June 2001, issue about copperheads. Thought I would send you the story of my experience with this particular breed (or maybe I should say species).

I was born in Slocum (East Texas) and even though we rented wherever we were living in that area, I remember some exciting times. As you might know, a lot of the houses out in the country have, or had, big porches, which were usually at least three feet off the ground. Well... I was about 5 years old and, like so many children out on farms, I was trying to create my own fun. At one end of the porch I had little blocks of wood that were my cars and I was really having fun, making my roads in the sand. All of a sudden I looked at what I thought was a rock. This rock had two beady eyes and I realized it was a snake coiled up ready to strike and me with my little cars going all



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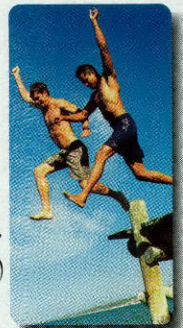
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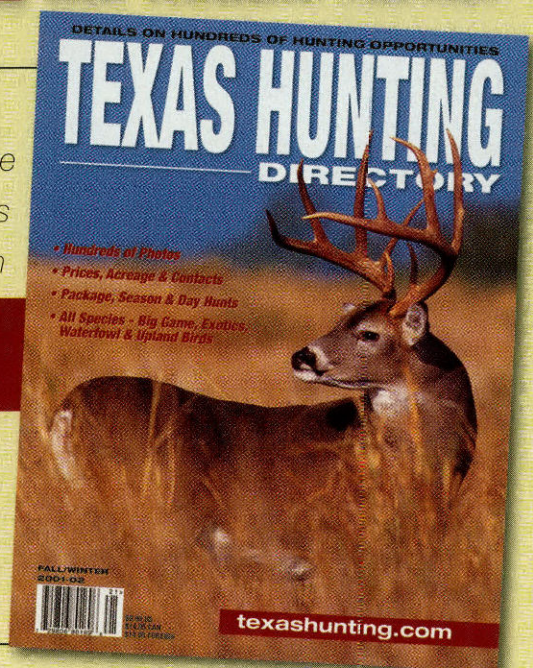
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MAIL CALL



around it. When I realized what was there, I went to tell my older brother Bobby that there was a snake. He looked and said "Naw — that's just a rock." I ran to my mother, who saw what was there. You know, I realized much later that the Lord was protecting me by keeping that snake right where it was.

*Mrs. Beverly J. Staley
Longview, Wash.*

Your "Master of Camouflage" (June 2001), was, in my opinion, a masterpiece.

I will be 80 years old on July 22, 2001. I was born in southeastern Kansas. When I was about 10 years old, I was bitten by a copperhead on the instep of my right foot. I still bear the scar. I'm living proof that a copperhead bite — though serious — is not life-threatening.

Also on the subject of snakes: As far as I know, I'm the only person

who has bred caged rattlesnakes.

I caught 31 baby rattlesnakes in South Texas one night, and kept them in a specially built cage. I separated out a male and a female, and they had eight babies when they were four years old and eight more when they were six. Then I separated them.

Yes, I've handled far more than a few snakes, both poisonous and harmless, for many, many years.

*Hal Swiggett
San Antonio*

Memories of Texas Summers Past

T*exas Parks & Wildlife* magazine brings back a rush of very pleasant memories.

My first 24 years of life were spent in Wichita Falls with that old red sand, the sizzling hot summers and the piercing cold winters.

We lived in town, but some of the happiest days of my life were the weekends that I spent on my

Grandfather Moody's truck farm on Covington Lane. That's where I learned to appreciate life, and to enjoy living in wide open spaces.

There were chickens, mallards, Canada geese, horny toads, snakes, red ants, sunflowers, cactus, climbing roses, a blackberry patch a wild plum thicket, a peach orchard, gigantic mulberry trees, a big garden, tire swings and a swimming hole. What more could a child want?

Following is a recent poem depicting some of those memories.

*Katherine Laningham Miller
Corpus Christi*

Texas Horned Lizard

*In the arid North Texas summer,
you flourished in the hot red sand
with rattlesnakes and other lizards
and the tumbleweeds on every hand.
Johnson grass and sunflowers*





MAIL CALL

*wilted in the hot, stagnant air.
The favorite food you chose to eat
were the giant red ants living there.*

*You wore a light brown lizard topcoat,
sprinkled with dark brown spots for trim;
You trailed a long slender tail to match
with spines and spikes in your head's rim.*

*Your round tummy was a light color,
with claw-like toes on your tiny feet;
Your favorite pastime was sunning
your little body after you would eat.*

*There's intriguing fascination with
your rumored secret weapon sly:
Are you a horned toad or a dragon?
Can you shoot blood right from your eye?*

*Oh, such fond memories now linger
of the days when I was still a child
on Granddad Moody's little truck farm
and a little horned lizard so wild.*

CALLING ALL CAMPERS

We need your input for an upcoming *Texas Parks & Wildlife* feature, "Texas' Best Outdoor Summer Camps." We'll consider all camps teaching outdoor skills, including wildlife biology, freshwater and marine biology, shooting and hunting skills, fishing, camping, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, climbing — you name it! We will include traditional permanent camps as well as a sampling of worthy overnight camps run by universities, YMCAs and other organizations.

Tell us about camps you know, and why they should be included. Include camp name, address and phone number (plus Web site if you know it) and what unique outdoors experiences the camp offers.

Send your ideas to: "Texas' Best Camps," c/o Garland Levit, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, 3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, TX,

78704 or e-mail them to <garland.levit@tpwd.state.tx.us>.

We appreciate your contributions to this exciting project, and know that parents across Texas will find this to be a valuable aid in planning terrific summers for their children!

Sound off for "Mail Call!"

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

Write to us at
Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine, 3000 South IH 35, Suite 120, Austin, TX 78704.

Or, fax us at 512-707-1913.

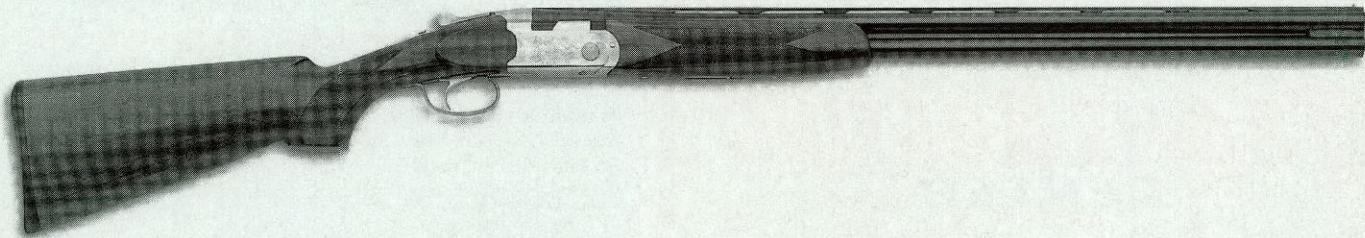
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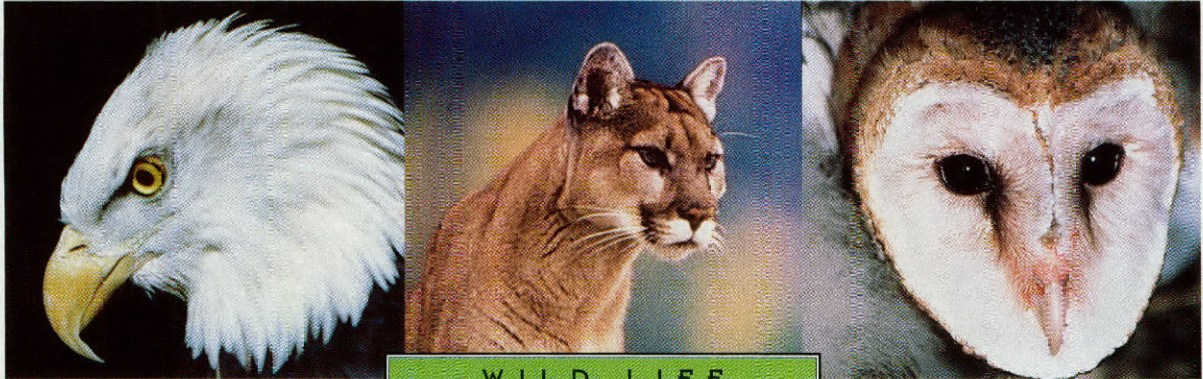
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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS



Texas WILD!

Have you ever wanted to see a mountain lion or a swift fox? At a new exhibit at the Fort Worth Zoo, you can see more Texas wildlife than most people see in a lifetime.

AT THE NEW \$40 MILLION permanent exhibit "Texas Wild!" which opened last month at the Fort Worth Zoo, river otters, alligators and black bears cavort in a replica of an abandoned East Texas sawmill camp. Swift foxes, black-footed ferrets, prairie dogs and burrowing owls ramble through a tornado-demolished house in the High Plains area.

"Texas Wild!" has everything you'd expect in a traditional zoo. You'll find pretty much everything that leaps, creeps, walks, stalks, flies or swims in the Lone Star State. What sets this exhibit apart is a consistent (and persistent) conservation message, discussing serious conservation issues and ways that man and nature are

inextricably linked. "Texas Wild" deals directly — and sometimes uncompromisingly — with how man's decisions impact our environment.

The museum-caliber displays deal with topics usually not included in zoological parks: how responsible land use and good ranching practices can positively affect the wild world, and how game conservation has been instrumental in the survival of many endangered species. There's some heady information here: still, the conservation message appears to be woven through effortlessly.

Among the 107 species in the exhibit is the swift fox. In order to study the animal's declining population, the zoo purchased a GPS unit that allowed biologists to depict the fox's statewide distribution. They

placed a special camera so the female and her kits could be unobtrusively observed deep inside the dens.

Visitors to "Texas Wild" can see swift foxes and some of their tunnels, as well as replicas of an abandoned mine shaft, a Spanish mission and a broken-down fishing bait shack — all of which serve as habitat. An old-fashioned carousel is on display, and numerous computer stations loaded with simulation games are located throughout the exhibit. In the near future, the zoo will conduct teacher seminars and children's workshops based on the exhibit.

It's a big place, so plan to spend about half a day touring the eight-acre facility. You'll see more Texas wildlife in a few hours than most people see in a lifetime.

— Ron Kabele



A DINO SOARS

How do you relocate a thousand-pound Alamosaurus bone without disturbing wilderness? Very carefully.



A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO, say 58 million or so, a 70-foot-long, 30-ton dinosaur lumbered across the ancient West Texas landscape of Big Bend National Park. Unlike the mountainous desert that exists in the region today, the dinosaur's environment consisted of a river floodplain that meandered across 200 miles of verdant earth and emptied into the sea.

The dinosaur, an *Alamosaurus* and member of the long-necked vegetarians known as sauropods, moved methodically through the landscape, pausing occasionally to munch on a favorite plant, while 90-foot trees swayed in the breeze. But one particular afternoon, the dinosaur collapsed and died. We may never know whether disease, lightning, or the mortal attack of an enemy struck the dinosaur down.

Despite the catastrophic climatic changes in the Big Bend region over the subsequent epochs, most of the dinosaur's neck vertebrae remained intact. The fossil's initial discovery in October of 1999 and its recent excavation have uncovered a wealth of information.

The string of vertebrae may also represent the largest *Alamosaurus* fossil of its kind ever found in the United States.

Seven of the 10 vertebrae that constituted the 27-foot-long fossil weighed between 500 and a thousand pounds apiece. Their location, within a proposed wilderness area of Big Bend National Park, required that all supplies be brought to the excavation site on foot. It also prevented the fossil's removal through land-based mechanical means, creating a dilemma for the National Park Service and scientists. To glean the maximum amount of information from the fossil, scientists needed to transport the vertebra to a laboratory for cleaning, measuring, and identifying.

So how does one relocate a thousand-pound dinosaur bone while minimizing the impact on the wilderness surrounding it? Enter Texas-based aircraft manufacturer Bell Helicopter.

"Bell volunteered its efforts for this project because we consider ourselves good corporate citizens," explains Jim Landry, who retired from Bell in March but stayed on long enough to

see this project completed.

Bell donated its expertise in airlifting heavy loads, its professional flight and ground personnel and its own modern-day pterodactyl — the 205B.

"Only two aircraft like this one exist in the world today," explains helicopter pilot John Honaker. "It has an 1,800-horsepower engine and the ability to carry 11,200 pounds. A thousand-pound fossil is a piece of cake."

Once the bones were excavated, wrapped in burlap strips dipped in plaster of Paris and bound with ropes, they were hooked to a 62-foot cable and airlifted to a waiting flatbed truck.

The fossil removal project, dubbed "Dinolift," required the cooperative efforts of Bell Helicopter, Big Bend National Park, the University of Texas at Dallas and the Dallas Museum of Natural History. Thanks to a concise "Dinolift Incident Action Plan" prepared by the National Park Service, the operation ran smoothly.

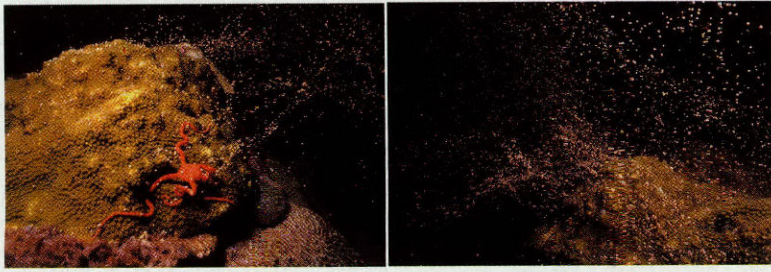
"Now we study the vertebrae one at a time," says Anthony Fiorillo, curator of earth sciences for the Dallas Museum of Natural History. "There are few records of what we call articulated or associated specimens like this one. The *Alamosaurus* is an incompletely known species; this neck bone helps fill in the blanks."

But what about the rest of the dinosaur?

"Ground-penetrating radar has detected other anomalies in the area," explains Fiorillo. "We could still find more of the dinosaur buried in the ground."

— E. Dan Klepper





Sex and the Sea

The coral spawning at the Flower Gardens is a one-night-a-year phenomenon.

ONE NIGHT EACH SUMMER, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, a reef 100 miles off the coast of Galveston is the site of one of the hottest ocean scenes — and one of the most wondrous natural phenomena — to be experienced anywhere. On a night that usually falls after the first full moon in August, the reef erupts in a flurry of coral spawning.

“It’s like being in a blizzard, except everything’s coming up at you rather than down on top of you,” says marine biologist Derek Hagman, Ph.D., who has studied the phenomenon. “Like in a dance club, there’s always a few that get things rolling. Once things get started, everybody’s out there having fun.”

The four-hour spawning event might begin when a star coral appears to “smoke” as it releases sperm into the water. Other coral broadcast eggs that look like tiny pearls. Brain corals release millions of buoyant bundles containing both eggs and sperm. Soon worms, sea stars and sponges join in.

This one-night-a-year coral spawning occurs at reefs throughout the Caribbean, but divers who’ve been lucky enough to experience it say it’s, well, bigger in Texas. “The density of coral at Flower Gardens is probably 10 times that of anywhere in the Caribbean,” says Hagman. “So with all the coral spawning together, it’s that much more intense than at the other spots.” Flower Garden Banks, the northernmost living coral reefs in the United States, was designated a national marine sanctuary in 1992.

— Elaine Robbins

FIELD NOTES

SUPER COMBO IS SUPER SAVER

Usually, the more you get, the more you pay. But here’s a twist for you: buy a Super Combo resident hunting and fishing license, and get more but pay less.

The Super Combo includes a resident combination hunting and fishing license and all seven state stamp fees: waterfowl, turkey, white-winged dove, archery, muzzleloader, salt water fishing and freshwater trout. The total cost is \$49; purchased separately, the cost is \$91. Seniors 65 and older pay just \$25.

I buy one every year, and I can attest that nowhere else can I spend so little and get so much enjoyment in return.

— Larry D. Hodge

LEST WE FORGET

Saburo Sakai was Japan’s leading ace pilot during World War II, credited with shooting down more than 60 enemy planes.

On August 17, Sakai’s family will present and donate his goggles, flight helmet and scarf to the Fredericksburg’s National Museum of the Pacific War. In the spirit of reconciliation that characterized Sakai’s life after the war, they will meet with the American tail gunner, Harold Jones, who hit Sakai, blinding him in one eye. The presentation begins at 11 a.m. and is open to the public without charge. For more information, call (830) 997-4379.

TEXAS READER

Anglos & Indians

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED in how the idea of “Indianness” developed in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, treat yourself to Sherry L. Smith’s *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans Through Anglo Eyes* (\$35, Oxford University Press).

SMU professor of history Smith deftly covers the work of 10 writers who depict Native Americans across the West: Charles Erskine Scott Wood, George Bird Grinnell, Walter McClintock and Frank Bird Linderman, who wrote about Indians of the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, the Northern Rockies and the Great Plains.

Smith traces American notions about Indians from the persistent “noble savage” of earlier centuries, and well into the 19th century, to the Indian New Deal of the 1930s; she captures these ideas and further places them within a context of the military and political history of U.S. Indian policy. The author explains how the writers in her study “used” Native American culture as an antidote to modernism: Indian ways represented “the simple life” when compared to a complex world that emphasized materialism, individualism and the worship of science and technology.

This book takes readers through a time in history when the prevailing attitude changed from one of assimilation of Indian lifeways into dominant Anglo American culture to one of appreciation of Native American life. Smith expresses gratitude that books by the writers in her study are still read. Likewise, today’s readers will want to pick up *Reimagining Indians*.

— Cynthia Brandimarte



FIELD TEST

Second Skin

Wade-fishers and duck hunters can have hours of comfort thanks to waders that are light, breathable and waterproof.

BY GIBBS MILLIKEN

WADERS HAVE LONG BEEN BULKY, heavy and — let's face it — uncomfortable for long hours of standing in surf or stream. But today, many of these traditional problems with waders and their accessories have been solved. What's the secret? New technology that introduces light, breathable material that's stretchable and waterproof.

The **Hodgman Stretchlite Breathable Waders** (\$299.95, Hodgman, (800) 323-5965) are the first to combine these features. Made of a composite material that flexes in all directions and discharges both heat and interior moisture, these waders are comfortable under most conditions. When the cold water or weather gets really severe, you can add insulating garments for extra protection.

Most waders, though, are breathable but without the stretch. These can still be bulky and poorly insulated, and they restrict your movements somewhat. But the larger cuts allow ample room for layering to meet variable conditions. Start the layering process with silk — or one of the new synthetic fabrics, such as Capilene — long underwear next to the skin. Don't use cotton; it retains moisture, which

wicks heat away from your body. In fall or winter, stretch technical fleece undergarments or the insulating **One-Piece Wader Suit** (\$129.95, Chuck Roast Mountainwear, (800) 533-1654) make thin waders usable on all but the most extremely cold days.

Perhaps the most comfortable of the non-stretchable designs are the **Simms Gore-Tex Guide Weight Stocking-foots** (\$375, Simms Fishing, (406) 585-3557), with their extra-soft supple fabric, attached suspenders and top that can be rolled down. Also good is the **Orvis Pro Guide Series** (\$265, Orvis, 800-541-3541), with features like built-in gravel guards and an attached waist belt. As a safety measure, always secure a belt closure around your chest or hips in case of a

From left: Pro Series Predator Reef Boots; Orvis Pro Guide Series Waders; Hodgman Stretchlite Waders; One-Piece Wader Suit; Stingaree II Surf & Reef Boots.

fall into deep or swift waters. Other sources of high-quality breathable non-stretch waders are Patagonia, Cabela's and Bass Pro Shops.

The most popular style of waders have the foot and ankle portion in a stocking shape of neoprene, a sponge-like material that offers flexibility, insulation, and wear resistance at this point of stress. The matching wading boots are sold separately because they come in a range of styles and functions. One of the best new designs is the quick-lacing **Chota STL Plus Boots** (\$110.95, Chota Outdoor Gear, (865) 690-1814), which have dark Polypropylene non-slip felt soles with steel cleats that can be easily added or removed for different surfaces and traction. For greater comfort in wading boots, select a pair that's a size or two larger than normal to allow space for socks, wader-foot, and athletic insole supports.

To avoid being speared by a stingray — a major concern while wading the Texas surf and coastal bays — you'll need additional foot, shin and lower-leg protection. None of the softer conventional shoes or waders will stop the painful strike of a long, barbed and poisonous stingray spine. Excellent lightweight protection is provided by **Sting Ray Guardz** (\$49.95, Crackshot Corporation, (800) 667-1753). Also available are tall, Kevlar-reinforced heavy-duty boots like the **Stingaree II Surf & Reef Boot**

(\$109.95, Hodgman, (800) 323-5965) or the **Pro Series Predator Reef Boots** (\$110, Aransas Outdoor Products, (210) 824-9994).

The new waders not only feel more comfortable, they have the advantage of folding small and packing light for air travel or a hike into the backcountry. ★



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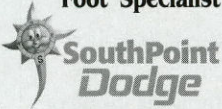
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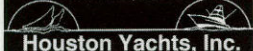
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SKILL BUILDER

When Lightning Strikes

Here are some tips for staying out of harm's way.

BY MARTY KUFUS

WHEN INFANTRY TROOPS want to estimate their distance

from an artillery barrage and determine if it is moving closer, they use a technique called "flash to bang."

When they see the explosion's flash, they immediately begin counting the seconds, "one thousand, two thousand, three thousand..." until the bang is heard.

Weather experts also recommend "flash to bang" to help protect yourself from nature's artillery: lightning. Don't rush the count; to be sure, time it on a watch. Five seconds of elapsed time equal approximately one mile of distance, accounting for the difference between the speeds of light and sound.

"On the average, six people die each year in Texas from lightning strikes," the state's Division of Emergency Management (DEM) reports. Nationally, lightning kills more people than tornadoes and hurricanes each year.

"Lightning tends to strike tall objects, and it tends to strike metal objects," says meteorologist Larry Eblen at the National Weather Service

Austin/San Antonio. "It travels through moist soil for 20 to 30 feet but travels little through dry soil."

Thunder can be heard as far as 15 miles away, and cloud-to-cloud lightning can be seen from as far away as 30 miles.

If lightning is near — less than eight miles (40 seconds) — pay attention to the thunderstorm's warnings. The experts advise taking the following steps to protect yourself:

- "If you feel your hair suddenly stand on end, it means you may be a lightning target," the DEM advises. Danger is imminent, so hunker down — now. "Crouch low on the balls of your feet and try not to touch the ground with your knees or hands."

- Even if a strike is not imminent, you must move off hills and high places; and avoid tall, solitary trees. Don't stand in water (a conductor) or on wet soil — even if you are wearing rubber-soled shoes — or sit on anything wet. Do not touch metal objects such as [aluminum] tennis rackets, baseball bats, and golf clubs," the DEM urges. "Do not ride bicycles, or lean against fences or metal sheds. Do not lean on a car or truck; get inside quickly."

- The interior of a car or bus offers some protection, Eblen says. "To be safe, don't touch metal on the inside of the vehicle. The cab of a truck is relatively safe, but the outside truck bed is a deadly and dangerous location." Vehicular shelter owes little to the tires. "The interiors are safer simply because their outside shells spread out the lightning charge, weakening it and leaking it to the ground."

- If you can, head for a sturdy building. Get inside, but avoid doors and windows. "For increased protection, don't touch electrical appliances or metal plumbing — and stay off the telephone," the meteorologist urges.

- If you are boating on a lake, head to shore (and shelter) as quickly and safely as possible, even if your boat's hull is nonmetallic. Eblen urges. You are the tallest object out there, surrounded by water, and there might be water or metallic objects in your boat. Swimming? Get out of, and well away from, the water.

Remember, don't wait until the storm is dangerously close to seek shelter; allow yourself several minutes' lead time. If you don't want to be a casualty of Mother Nature's artillery, don't let yourself become a target. ★



THE MORE RING

LESSONS LEARNED
AROUND THE CAMPFIRE
AT THE OPENING SEASON
OF DEER CAMP
ARE ABOUT
MORE THAN HUNTING.
BY RON HENRY STRAIT
ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC DINYER

LIMESTONE CAMP sits on the ragged lip of a meandering dry wash, halfway from its origin in the hills that rise behind the old ranch barn and the place where the wash empties into Welders Canyon. Up in the desert hills, the narrow draws are choked with scrub cedar and persimmon; down in the canyon, where the deer grow fat on acorns and low brush, there's a spring that lends life to an arid landscape. In between the highlands and the low places is our camp, and at the center of the camp is the fire ring.

I'LL TELL YOU A SECRET: DEER SEASON REALLY STARTS IN SEPTEMBER.

All over Texas hunters gather at deer camp for the dove season opener, but they're not there just to bag a few birds. There are repairs to be made, friendships to be joined and renewed, memories of seasons past to be shared. These are the topics of the fire ring.

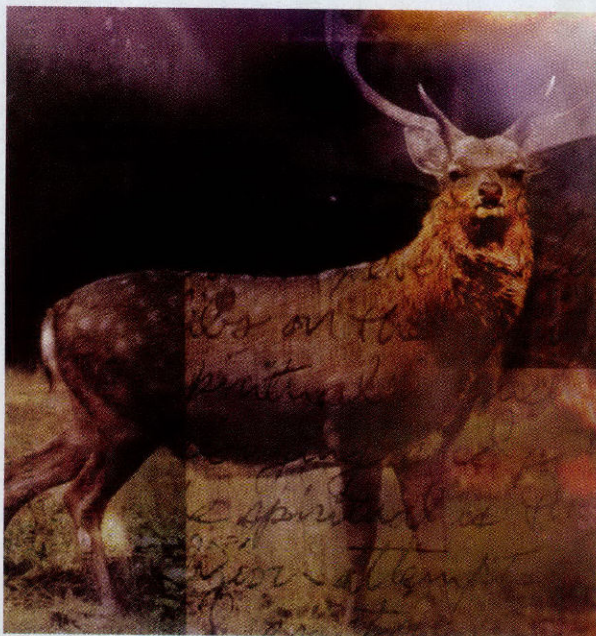
The fire ring at hunting camp is both a common space and a private domain. It is a place of anticipation and realization. The flickering flames and sparks cast shadows across the quiet, personal worlds of the hunters who gather around the fire.

THE IRISHMAN PEERED over the edge of the loft and looked down just as Cotton stepped through the doorway and into the shadows of the old barn. The uneven concrete floor and rough-cut plank siding said the barn was the oldest structure among the several buildings at the ranch headquarters.

"All that's up here is a rotten mule harness and a busted hay fork," the Irishman said.

"Leave 'em up there," Cotton said. "We already got enough junk in camp."

Ignoring good advice was one of the Irishman's strongest traits. "Heads up!" he said, and over the loft rail came the harness and the fork. The brittle leather of the harness cracked when it hit the floor, and black flakes scattered in the dust, but the fork came down with a solid



thud at Cotton's feet. The harness was worthless, for sure, but the smooth-worn ironwood of the fork handle had a natural attraction to it. What was left of its rusted tines looked like the perfect thing to poke a campfire with, and the Irishman, being a fire person himself, knew a good poker was as important to a fire ring as the mix of comfortable and uncomfortable chairs in the circle around it.

Cotton picked up the hay fork, walked back out into the morning sun and started down the hill

toward camp. It was hot as hell for September and, he reminded his old friend, there was plenty to do before opening day if the camp was going to be ready.

For Cotton and the Irishman, deer camp was mostly what deer season was all about anymore. Likewise, it was their shared view that a good fire is the heart of a good camp, and they intended to have many good fires. The opening of dove season was the time each year when they laid the foundation for the entire hunting season.

"You can poke coals with that all night and it won't catch fire," the Irishman said, "as long as you use the metal end."

Cotton took the verbal jab in stride. He and the Irishman had been comrades in the deer wars for nearly 20 years. Like inside jokes, the little cheap shots were part of the deal — "aggressive camaraderie," someone once called it.

Whatever it was, Cotton knew that if there was a tough

spot, literally or figuratively, in the road between now and the season opener, it likely would be the Irishman who would help get him out of it. Meanwhile, there was a leak under the kitchen sink waiting to be fixed, and a trailer full of firewood had to be unloaded.

"It'll be 110 by noon," said Cotton.

The Irishman turned to him. "We got 'til noon? Good. That gives us time for breakfast and a nap."

THE REMAINDER OF THE BIG FIRE in the camp circle beckons as the hunters file out of the cook house after supper. Sparks spiral skyward on a column of hot air and burn out against a field of a billion stars. The sweat and toil of a long-ago summer weekend spent splitting and stacking a ton of oak and green mesquite is repaid in the meager blaze that lights the faces around the fire ring.

"A good fire warms you twice," Michael says, remembering some line from an education misspent learning more about numbers than words. Michael is a driven fellow, new to the outdoors world and newer to hunting. His other life is spent mostly in the fast lanes of Houston commerce, but as his 30th year looms on the horizon, he finds himself looking at his first season on his first real deer lease.

Cotton scratches the sunburned spot on the back of his head where he once had a long black ponytail and then picks up the handle of the old hay fork and pokes the fire with a rusty tine.

The coating of gray ash collapses onto the heap of coals and a glowing ember rolls off to the side of the fire, coming to rest atop a piece of green mesquite bark.

A thin column of smoke snakes up from the bark and over the fire ring. The cool night air, which had held little opinion all day about where to go, shifts and blows the smoke toward young Archibald's chair. "Arch," as he wants to be called this year, is lanky, freckle-faced and 14 going on 21. He rubs his hands together and then heaves his shoulders so that the warm collar on his coat comes up over his ears. All that shows of his face from under his feed store hat are two glistening eyes.

The wind leaves as quickly as it had arrived. Smoke from the smoldering bark spirals upward, and the coal shoots sparks outside the fire ring. No one speaks until the bark finally catches flame.

"That's a good sign," the Irishman says. "The smoke picked Arch. He'll be the lucky one tomorrow morning."

The boy drops his shoulders and sits up as straight as the handle of the old hay fork. He looks for reaction in the other faces gathered at the fire ring. If the Irishman is joking about the smoke being a good sign, it doesn't show in his face or the faces of the other hunters. Arch sees serious looks on their faces, the same as last year when he killed his first deer. The other guys had become very quiet when they had seen Archibald kneel next to the animal and cry.

Cotton recalls the incident, too, as he leans on the old hay fork and stares into the fire. Arch is a great kid who is growing comfortably and confidently into young manhood in front of a bunch of men, the same men who showed up at his blind last season when the youngster killed his first deer. They had seen the boy try to hide his tears as he knelt next to the beautiful deer.

"That crying was a good sign," the Irishman had told Arch's dad that night. "There's nothing frivolous about death." The sentiment was real. The Irishman, a stout fellow with meat-hook hands and a sniper's eye, had learned that lesson in the worst of ways years ago in a faraway jungle.

Arch and his dad look half asleep in their seats around the fire ring.

Michael, lost in thought, shifts his chair a little closer to the fire. The still desert air, so warm during the day, now holds a chill.

"Time to rebuild the fire," Cotton says to himself. He pokes the glowing coals with the metal end of the old hay fork, and a tail of smoke

meanders skyward.

A puff of wind spins the tail toward young Arch. He watches the smoke and thinks about tomorrow. He has his own gun and a knife with a leaping buck pictured on the handle, and he had sharpened the knife himself. He had done other stuff, too, like sighting in his rifle. And he got to drive the truck from the gate at the highway down to camp this morning.

His dad was proud of him, Arch knew. His dad didn't hunt with just anybody, and tomorrow they were hunting together.

That was good sign, like being picked by the smoke from the green bark, and the comforting feel of Dad's arm around his shoulders as darkness reclaimed the still night around the fire ring. ★

RON HENRY STRAIT is outdoor editor for the San Antonio Express-News.

IT WAS THEIR
SHARED VIEW
THAT A
GOOD FIRE
IS THE HEART
OF A GOOD CAMP,
AND THEY
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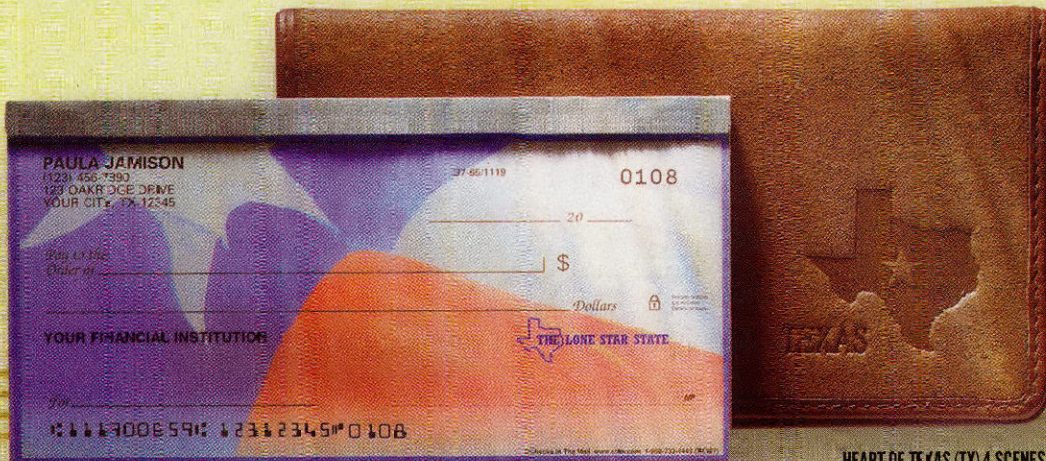
TEXAS



TOP LEFT PHOTO AND LARGE PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS; TOP RIGHT PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN

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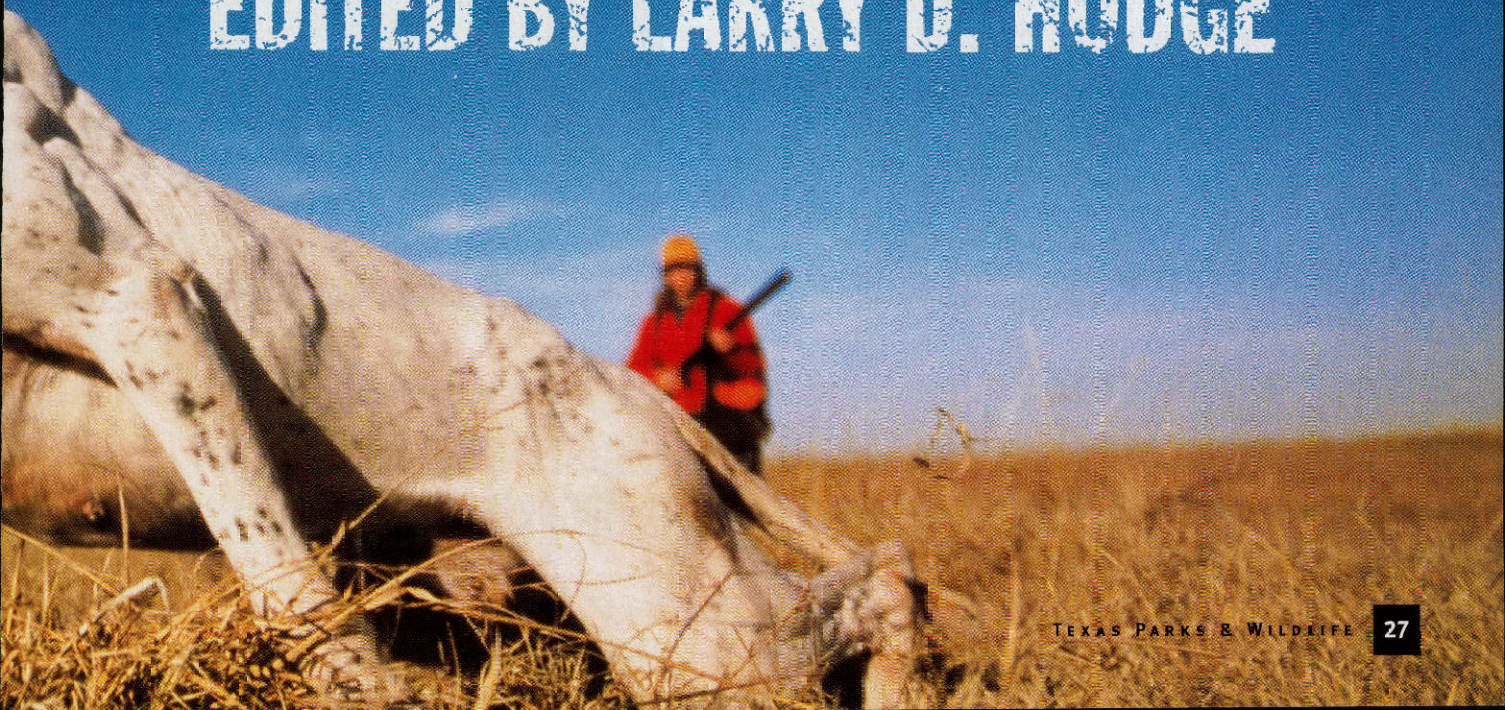




AFIELD!

BECAUSE LAST YEAR'S DROUGHT WAS FOLLOWED BY BOUNTIFUL RAINS IN THE FALL AND SPRING, TPW BIOLOGISTS ARE BULLISH ON THE 2001 HUNTING SEASON.

EDITED BY LARRY D. HODGE



PREDICTING HUNTING CONDITIONS

six months in advance is a risky business, as any wildlife biologist will tell you. That's certainly what I heard from TPW's eight district biologists when *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine asked what this coming season would bring. However, I pledged to begin this article with a disclaimer that weather, natural disasters or manmade calamities could still affect wildlife and hunting conditions this fall.

Without exception, these wildlife experts believe that the fall and spring rains following last year's severe drought have set the stage for a better hunting season this year than last. Much of the tale remains to be told at this writing, but if the bountiful rains continue, biologists agree that the 2001 hunting season could be one of the best in years.

Bob Carroll, TPW district biologist from La Grange, summed up the situation thusly: "An abundance of rain beginning in early October 2000 was just what the doctor ordered to counter the terribly hot and dry late summer of 2000. By late September 2000, the habitat was in as bad a condition as I have seen it in the last 30 years. Stock ponds were drying up, shrubs and trees were dying, and there were very few acorns to help the wildlife going into the fall. To say the least, the near future for wildlife looked bleak.

"Then the unpredictable Texas weather changed, and six months of above-average rainfall have wildlife biologists enthusiastic about the possibility of better-than-average white-tailed deer fawn survival and a good year for antler production."

For the latest on probable hunting conditions, watch for the annual Texas Parks and Wildlife hunting forecast published in local newspapers in mid-September. You can also find it on the Web at

<www.tpwd.state.tx.us>. Waterfowl hunters will find the outlook for duck and goose hunting in the September issue of *Texas Parks & Wildlife*.

Here, district by district, is what TPW biologists have to say about hunting prospects for this fall.

DISTRICT 1, TRANS-PECOS

Mike Hobson, Alpine

Since 1988 the Trans-Pecos region has been in a long-term dry cycle. The persistent effect of drought has resulted in a gradual decline in big game population levels and annual upland game bird populations. Annual population census surveys in the summer and fall of 2000 indicated mule deer



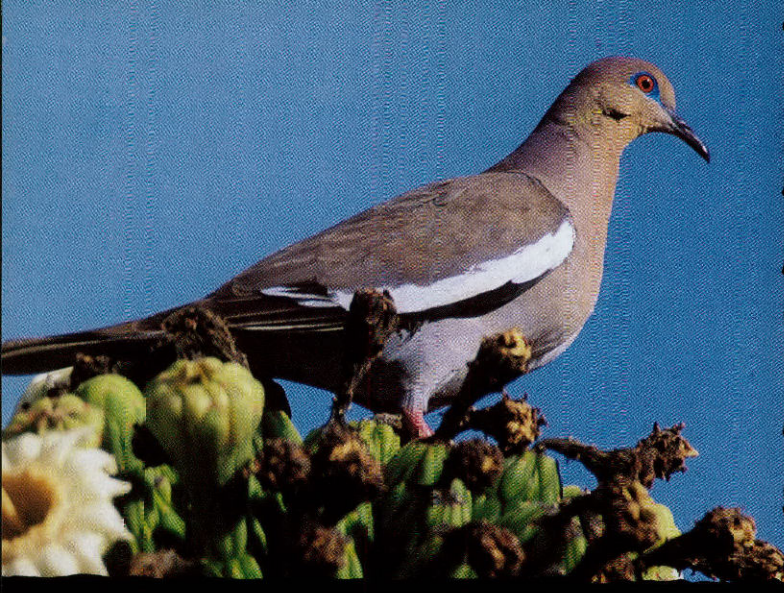
"IF THIS WINTER MOISTURE PERSISTS IN AREAS OF REDUCED POPULATIONS, WHITE-TAILED DEER SHOULD BE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION AND PRODUCE ABOVE AVERAGE ANTLERS."

— MIKE HOBSON, TRANS-PECOS

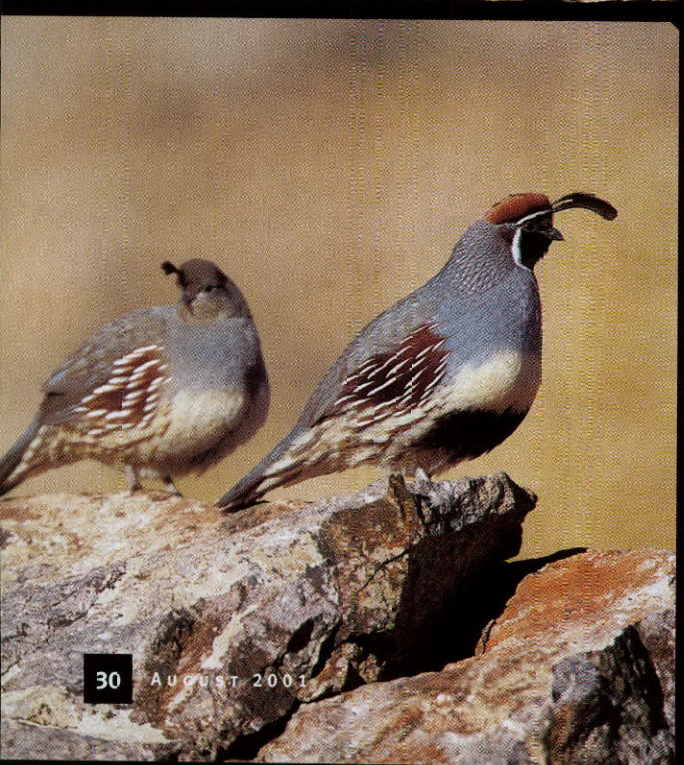


Despite low numbers of mule deer in the Trans-Pecos, adequate numbers of bucks should be available. Pronghorns could bounce back quickly with adequate rainfall.





Mourning doves are expected to be plentiful but scattered in the Trans-Pecos, and whitewings continue to nest successfully in towns.



numbers have fallen from 220,000 to 99,000 and antelope numbers from 17,000 to 5,000 in the last 13 years.

Even though mule deer numbers are low, adequate numbers of bucks will be available for hunters this season. Antler development is expected to be average to above average. Quality mule deer bucks continue to come from areas supporting low populations of deer. In addition to the reduced competition for forage, it is theorized that the trace minerals in these areas may contribute significantly to antler development. Culberson and Hudspeth counties normally produce some of the better mule deer bucks harvested each year in the Trans-Pecos region.

White-tailed deer occur primarily in the eastern half of the Trans-Pecos, with Pecos and Terrell counties having some of the best densities. "If this winter moisture persists in areas of reduced populations, white-tailed deer should be in excellent condition and produce above-average antlers," says David Altman, staff biologist working that area.

The antelope populations in the Trans-Pecos have the ability to bounce back quickly with adequate, timely rainfall. In spite of the dry cycle associated with antelope habitat in West Texas, a few Boone and Crockett-class animals continue to come from Culberson and Hudspeth counties.

Four species of quail (Mearns, bobwhite, scaled and Gambel's) occur in Texas, with seasons established for all but the Mearns quail. Unique to the Trans-Pecos is the fact that all four species are found in this area. Huntible Gambel's populations occur in Culberson, Hudspeth and El Paso counties along sandy, dry washes and drainages feeding into the Rio Grande. Bobwhite quail can be found in the northeast portion of the Trans-Pecos area in Ector, Upton and Midland counties.

Turkey poult production has been quite low the last three years. Limited recruitment into the populations means hunters will most likely be harvesting mature birds. If moisture continues through the spring period, we expect poult production to improve significantly.

High numbers of mourning doves currently occur in Terrell and Pecos counties because of winter forb production. Increased dove numbers may occur this season, but birds most likely will be scattered because of improved habitat conditions. Town nesting and fledging of white-winged doves has exceeded the nesting success of white-winged doves in native habitat during many years of the dry cycle. High numbers of white-winged doves occur in West Texas communities.

Javelina remain an untapped resource in most areas of the Trans-Pecos. Population numbers are not as high as in South Texas, but adequate numbers exist for the hunting public.

DISTRICT 2, PANHANDLE

Danny Swepton, Canyon

Especially in the counties north of Amarillo, both mule deer and whitetails may have been stressed by lack of early winter wheat and extended periods of snow and ice. However, herd densities should remain about the same throughout the district in 2001. Whitetails continue to expand their range westward in parts of the High Plains, and exceptional bucks have been taken in some of the low-density areas in the northwestern Panhandle. An early green-up should lead to improving body conditions and good antler development during the initial growth period through early summer. Should favorable moisture conditions continue, we can anticipate good to excellent antler production. However, if rainfall is curtailed during mid- to late summer, antler mass may be reduced, especially in mule deer in some western counties where they do not have access to irrigated agricultural crops.

Pronghorn populations should remain about the same as in 2001. Horn production in 2000 was average, but the additional moisture this winter should improve prospects for the coming season. Permit issuance cannot be predicted at this time since this is determined by mid-summer aerial surveys.

The long-term outlook for pheasants in the Panhandle is poor, as farmers move toward more efficient production methods. Lack of nesting cover over large areas is a problem. The major populations will continue to occur in those High Plains counties north of Plainview. An average hunting season for 2001 is the best that can be anticipated at this time.

The 2000–2001 quail season was good to excellent over most of the Panhandle. Scaled or blue quail showed a significant increase in several areas. However, the severe winter in the northern two-thirds of the Panhandle lasted into March, and that may have reduced the number of breeding birds. Overall, predictions for the 2001–2002 season are for an average year.

Turkey poult production was good in 2000 throughout most of the Rolling Plains. The early green-up and improved insect production should set the stage for another year of good nesting success, especially in the counties east and northeast of Amarillo, which contain the highest popu-

"FOUR SPECIES OF QUAIL (MEARNS, BOBWHITE, SCALED AND GAMBEL'S) OCCUR IN TEXAS WITH SEASONS ESTABLISHED FOR ALL BUT THE MEARNS QUAIL. UNIQUE TO THE TRANS-PECOS IS THE FACT THAT ALL FOUR SPECIES ARE FOUND IN THIS AREA."

—MIKE HOBSON, TRANS-PECOS

lations in the Panhandle. Prospects for the 2001–2002 hunting season should be good.

Lesser prairie chicken production should be enhanced in those counties west of Lubbock by the early moisture. The impact of the extended snow and ice on the northeastern population in Hemphill, Wheeler, Lipscomb and Donley counties will not be known until the April booming ground surveys. Overall, hunters should expect an average season.

Prospects for mourning doves appear good. As usual, the best hunting areas will occur below the Caprock in the Rolling Plains. Although hunting can be good in the High Plains at the start of the season, this can change rapidly by mid-September, depending on when the first cold fronts come through and start the doves moving south.

DISTRICT 3, POSSUM KINGDOM WILDLIFE DISTRICT

Steve Jester, Brownwood

Dove hunting is very popular and often very productive in this part of Texas. In recent years, as white-winged doves have begun nesting in area towns, more hunters have had the opportunity to take whitewings in addition to the more common mourning doves. It is a good idea for hunters to purchase the white-winged dove stamp or Super Combo license, especially if they plan to hunt doves within 30 miles of a population center of 15,000 to 20,000 people or more. Whitewings nest in these cities and feed in the surrounding countryside.

Abundant rainfall during the fall and winter, on top of two drought years, has the potential to create better-than-average early fall dove habitat across the region. This situation is good for the birds but often makes it tougher on the hunters, as the birds tend to be more dispersed.

At the time of this writing, conditions are shaping up to be much improved for white-tailed deer when compared to the previous two years, at least in the central and eastern portions of the district. The western portion of the district has suffered from almost continuous drought over the last nine years, and the rebound will not be as quick. Deer cut deeply into the browse resource over much of 1999 and 2000. If good rainfall continues, both body condition and antler development should be much better this year.

Deer on leases managed for a limited harvest of older age class bucks should see better antler production this year. The downside to this scenario is hunter success. If native forage remains in good supply throughout the fall, hunting likely will be much harder around feeders or food plots.

Drier than normal conditions have kept Rio Grande

turkey reproduction well below average in much of the district since 1997. During the last three hunting seasons, hunters have seen good numbers of mature birds, but hunters should expect to see fewer birds during the fall and winter of 2001–2002.

Quail reproduction and hunting conditions can be hard to predict, even during an open quail season! The last two years have been disappointing in the district despite an occasional bright spot. The majority of quail available for harvest each fall were born earlier that summer, so reproduction is always the key.

Quail reproduction is heavily dependent upon the weather and individual ranch management practices. Even during the drought of 1999–2000, some ranches that caught a few rains and were well managed (from a quail's point of view) had good quail hunting. Even though quail foods probably will be at a three- or four-year high in many areas, ranches with adequate nesting cover may be in short supply. Producers interested in quail should consider nesting cover before restocking their range. Better quail hunting historically occurs in the central and western parts of the district (the Rolling Plains and Edwards Plateau ecological areas).

Small game species such as rabbits and squirrels are locally abundant and offer an opportunity that has been underutilized by hunters in recent years.

DISTRICT 4, HILL COUNTRY

Max Traweck, Kerrville

Whitetail antler quality and body condition should be average to above average this fall, depending on how the summer weather plays out. The wet winter and early spring laid the foundation for better-than-average antler quality in the white-tailed buck segment, no matter what the weather throws at us the next several months. Body condition of deer, though, depends more closely on range conditions in existence just prior to and during the fall and winter hunting periods.

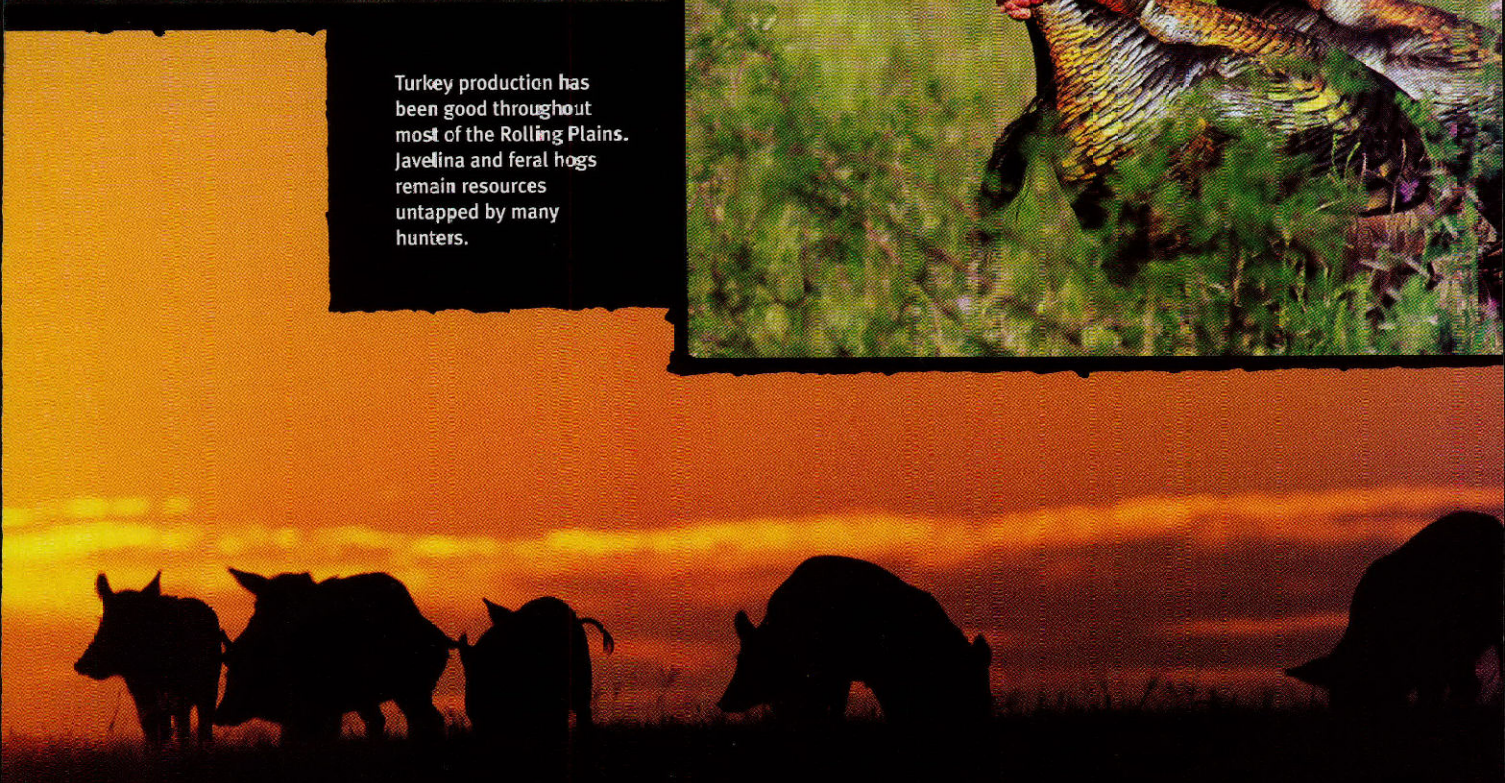
Deer hunting success can also be impacted heavily by range conditions existing at the start of the general season. Good to excellent range conditions or an abundance of acorns usually results in hard hunting here in the Hill Country, especially where baited blinds are the main population control method employed. Deer tend to be less active and more scattered when ranges are

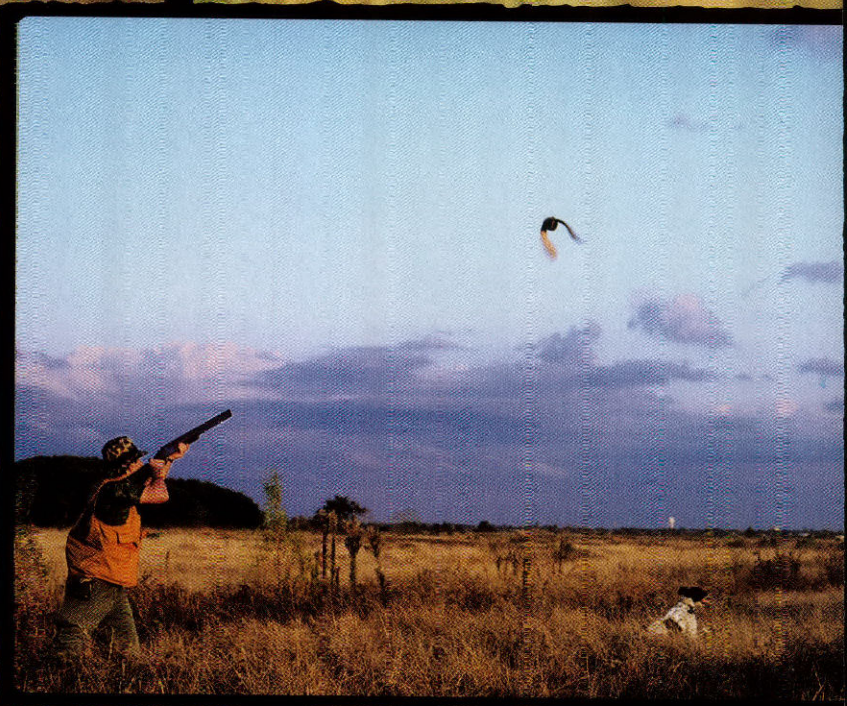
IT IS A GOOD IDEA FOR HUNTERS TO PURCHASE THE WHITE-WINGED DOVE STAMP OR SUPER COMBO LICENSE, ESPECIALLY IF THEY PLAN TO HUNT DOVES WITHIN 30 MILES OF A POPULATION CENTER OF 15,000 TO 20,000 PEOPLE OR MORE.

—STEVE JESTER, POSSUM KINGDOM



Turkey production has been good throughout most of the Rolling Plains. Javelina and feral hogs remain resources untapped by many hunters.





Pheasant hunting prospects are average at best, due to a lack of nesting cover. Hunters also should expect an average season for lesser prairie chickens.



good or acorns are plentiful, similar to the way doves are harder to come by in the fall when temporary water sites are numerous and widely distributed. Therefore, you should expect difficult hunting, but a tradeoff in better-than-average quality animals, if the summer and fall months turn out to be as favorable weather-wise as the end of last year and the start of this year have been.

No matter how hard or easy hunting may be this fall, it is very important in the Hill Country to harvest adequate numbers of deer. Good habitat for all forms of wildlife, not just deer, can be achieved only by maintaining a proper balance between the number of large grazing and browsing animals (deer, exotics and domestic livestock) present and the naturally occurring vegetation that all of them depend on for food and cover.

The limited quail areas occurring here in the Hill Country — in the north central counties, mainly — should see good production and survival this year also, again assuming no major drought months this summer. Dove hunting is usually very spotty in our area, and availability of birds hinges heavily on production occurring in other regions of the state and in other states.

DISTRICT 5, POST OAK SAVANNAH **Kevin R. Herriman, Tyler**

The Post Oak Savannah deer herd came out of the 2000 deer season in fairly good shape and should provide good hunting opportunities in the 2001 season. If normal rainfall and weather patterns manifest themselves throughout the year, the 2001 deer season should result in deer with weights and antlers slightly above the

long-term averages.

The counties in the upper Post Oak region support the best eastern wild turkey populations. The 2000 hatch was above average, which will put a lot of jakes in the population for the spring 2001 season.

Good dove hunting opportunities in the district will probably be scattered, with the best hunts located where food, water and cover are located in close proximity. A little

pre-season scouting will provide the best chances for good dove hunting opportunities.

Squirrel hunting conditions in the district will be average to slightly below average this season. The mast crop (acorns and hickory nuts) throughout the Post Oak Savannah was spotty in the fall of 2000. Years of good mast production are typically followed by years of good squirrel reproduction. Therefore, your best squirrel hunting opportunities this season will be in localities with better mast production last year.

DISTRICT 6, PINEYWOODS

Clayton R. Wolf, Jasper

The drought of the last few years has negatively impacted wildlife all across Texas, but these impacts have been less severe in the eastern part of the state, where average annual rainfall is higher.

The prospect for a few more mature bucks in the harvest appears likely for this upcoming season. Although only a small percentage of Pineywoods bucks harvested are ever more than 3½ years old, the number of 4½-year-old bucks is expected to increase in the 2001–2002 season. In 1997 Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists recorded more fawns on spotlight counts than they had seen in two decades. The prevalence of this cohort of animals continues to show up each successive year, with more 3½-year-old bucks in last year's harvest than had ever been recorded. This bumper crop of fawns in '97 resulted in 176 Texas Big Game Awards (TBGA) entries for the Pineywoods this past season, the second-highest number of entries on record. The 2001–2002 hunting season should be another good year for TBGA entries.

Squirrel hunters can expect to find fewer squirrels in the woods this fall, primarily due to last year's poor acorn crop. Hunters can still expect to find suitable hunting in areas of good habitat. Some of the better stands of bottomland hardwoods are on Texas Parks and Wildlife wildlife management areas (WMAs), as well as on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Purchase of a \$40 Annual Public Hunting Permit gives access to hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the Pineywoods.

An abundance of public hunting lands, coupled with relatively liberal hunting regulations, allows for some often-overlooked hunting opportunities in the Pineywoods. Almost all WMAs and other public hunting lands in the Pineywoods allow the use of dogs to hunt squirrels, rabbits,

THIS BUMPER CROP OF FAWNS IN '97 RESULTED IN 176 TEXAS BIG GAME AWARDS (TBGA) ENTRIES FOR THE PINEYWOODS THIS PAST SEASON, THE SECOND-HIGHEST NUMBER OF ENTRIES ON RECORD. THE 2001-2002 HUNTING SEASON SHOULD BE ANOTHER GOOD YEAR FOR TBGA ENTRIES.

— CLAYTON R. WOLF, PINEYWOODS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: © GARY KRAMER; © GRADY ALLEN; © GRADY ALLEN; © DENVERBRYAN.COM

furbearers, predatory animals and game birds.

Probably the most overlooked game bird for those with pointing dogs is the American woodcock. Although bag limits are quite conservative, and these creatures inhabit less-hospitable habitat from a human standpoint, these birds provide some of the only chances to work a pointing dog on wild birds east of the Trinity River.

DISTRICT 7, COASTAL PRAIRIES AND MARSHES

Bob Carroll, La Grange

The late fall and winter rains produced an abundance of winter forbs (weeds), which set the stage for a good reproductive year. Winter forbs are a critical component in the reproductive cycles of quail and turkey. Summer weeds and grasses provide hiding cover for white-tailed deer fawns and nesting sites for quail and turkeys. This is the reason overgrazed pastures and well-manicured ranches are not good for rearing and maintaining wildlife populations.

White-tailed deer generate the most interest among hunters and landowners in this part of Texas. This interest and recognition of the need to improve wildlife habitat have created rapid growth of wildlife management co-ops in this district. There are 39 wildlife management co-ops in District 7, and they are making a difference for wildlife in this part of the state. The goals of the co-ops range from increasing numbers of deer in low deer density areas to increasing the age and quality of bucks.

Enormous strides have been made toward increasing age and quality of bucks in Lavaca and Colorado counties by wildlife management co-ops. Hunters should seek out landowners who belong to these co-ops and get

involved with their management programs. Counties with active co-ops include Austin, Colorado, Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette, Lee, Lavaca, Washington, Goliad, Guadalupe, DeWitt and Jackson.

The Rio Grande turkey population in DeWitt, Goliad, Refugio, Gonzales and Guadalupe counties provides a limited number of hunting opportunities. Some bobwhite quail hunting is available in the coastal prairie counties.

The hunting season of 2001–2002 could be very good. It might be one of the best ever. Just remember that Texas weather is fickle. Temperatures and rainfall throughout the year are important factors that contribute to the health of wildlife populations that provide successful hunting seasons.

DISTRICT 8, SOUTH TEXAS

Joe G. Herrera, Pleasanton

Current range conditions should favor antler development in buck deer for the coming year. Although broad-leaf forbs may not be available if drought returns, the diverse woody plant community found in South Texas gives the region a definite advantage over most other ecological areas when it comes to deer herd health, production and antler development.

Turkey production has been low in South Texas since 1997 due to drought conditions. But 2001 has the potential to nearly double the population with a good hatch. Lush conditions will provide excellent cover for nesting hens and the right humidity necessary for the eggs to hatch. Cover will offer poult protection from predators, not to mention the smorgasbord of insects that should abound.

The ground moisture prior to the nesting and brood-rearing season that is so important to turkeys should also produce a good quail hatch for 2001

in South Texas. Aside from the excellent nesting cover, there should be an abundance of seed-producing plants (sunflower, croton, ragweed) favored by quail. Adult quail and chicks, though, will still have to weather the July, August and early September stress periods in South Texas in order for 2001 to be a good quail year. Areas in South Texas that produced or maintained average or better quail numbers last year will fare better this coming year because of the higher carryover rate of adult birds. Those areas with lower numbers will have a tougher time catching up. Boom years happen only with consecutive years of above-average quail production and survival.

Mourning and white-winged doves remain abundant due to the excellent habitat mosaic created by land-use patterns in South Texas. Plentiful fallow fields, stock tanks, pastures, croplands and rangeland provide all the necessary life requirements of doves — food, water and roosting cover. Doves will benefit from the same abundant seed-producing plants favored by quail.

Hunters should take advantage of Texas Parks and Wildlife's public dove hunting program. A \$40 Annual Public Hunting Permit allows hunters access to private lands leased by Texas Parks and Wildlife for dove hunting. Under this program last year, South Texas offered 34 sites ranging from 20 acres to 1,400 acres. Excellent dove hunting sites were located in Karnes, Wilson, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Kleberg, Frio, Jim Wells, Live Oak, La Salle and Zavala counties.

Range conditions early in 2001 will benefit most wildlife species. Other game species that may pique hunters' interest in South Texas for 2001 include rabbits, javelina, feral hogs and (in the Lower Rio Grande Valley) chachalacas. ★

THE GROUND MOISTURE PRIOR TO THE NESTING AND BROOD-REARING SEASON THAT IS SO IMPORTANT TO TURKEYS SHOULD ALSO PRODUCE A GOOD QUAIL HATCH FOR 2001 IN SOUTH TEXAS.

—JOE G. HERRERA, SOUTH TEXAS



Rabbits and squirrels are locally abundant and offer an opportunity that has been underutilized by hunters in recent years. Chachalacas provide a unique South Texas hunting experience. Bighorn sheep hunting is by permit only.

WAD

A man in a light-colored shirt, dark shorts, and a cap is wading in the ocean, holding a fishing rod. The background is a bright, golden-yellow sky over the water. Large, white, stylized letters 'WAD' are overlaid on the sky.

Want to spice up your fishing? Get out of your boat and go wade fishing.

By Leslie C. Kelly
and Jonette W. Childs

PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS

A sunset over the ocean with large white letters spelling 'DEER' overlaid on the sky. The sky is a warm, golden yellow, and the ocean below has dark, choppy waves. The letters are large and stylized, with the 'D' partially cut off on the left edge of the page.

DEER

In my younger days I was an enthusiastic, even rabid, deer hunter. My first blind was a sturdy plank nailed in the fork of a tree. With each season came improvements to my deer blind, which took my hunting into an entirely new realm of "sport." The plank was replaced with the seat from an old school bus. The improvements and creature comforts grew exponentially and yearly from thereon.

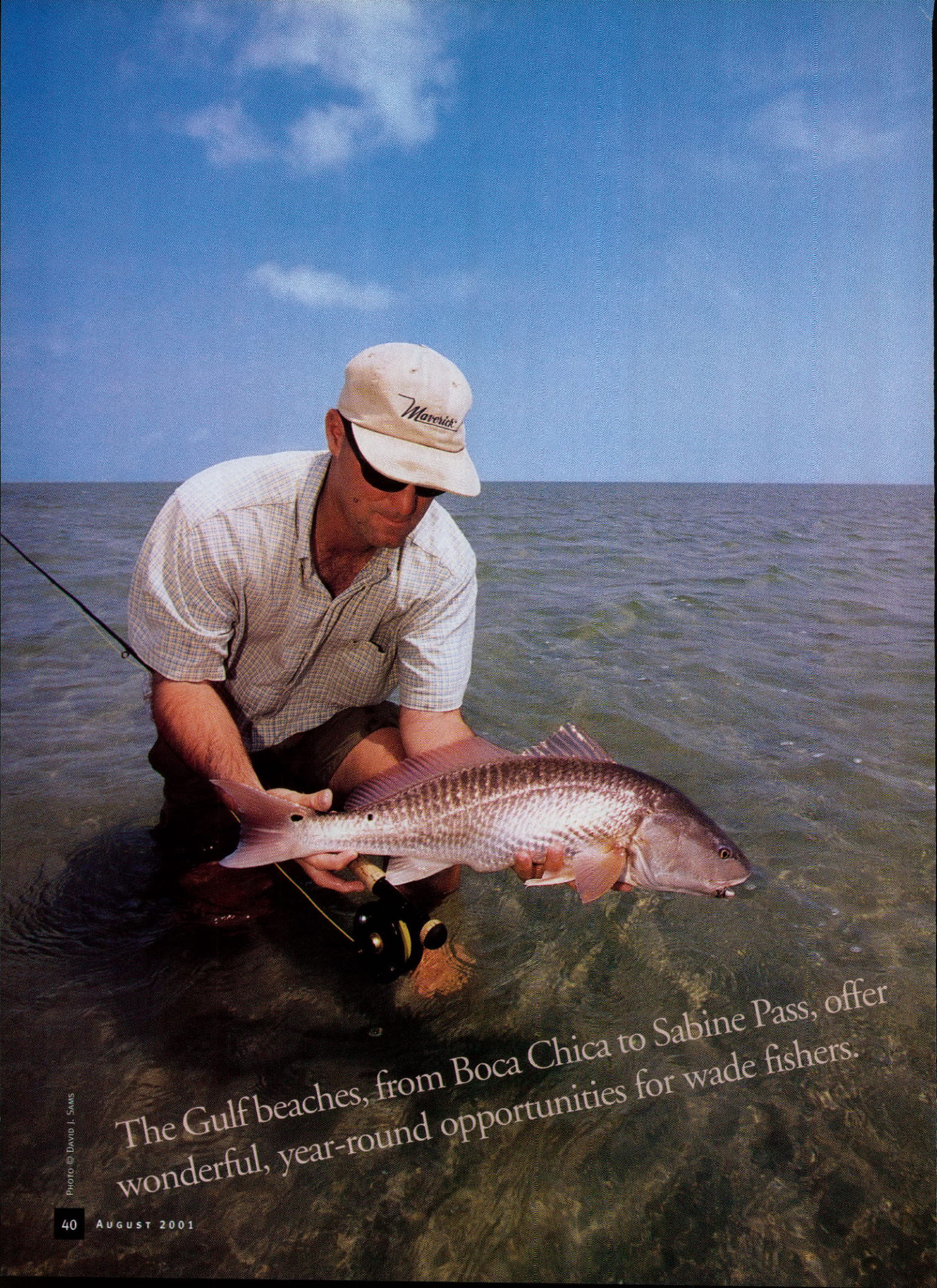


PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMIS

The Gulf beaches, from Boca Chica to Sabine Pass, offer wonderful, year-round opportunities for wade fishers.

As time passed, my blinds became, if not miniature Taj Mahals, at least improvements over some of my first apartments. Over the years, my blind became a carpeted, heated and insulated palace with jalousied windows on all sides and a sound system rivaling the one in my truck. Batteries provided power for early-morning reading as well as afternoon and evening televised games.

GRADUALLY I FOUND MYSELF doing less and less deer hunting each year. It just wasn't as much fun as it once had been, nowhere near the sport it was in my younger days. To tell the truth, I had taken it to the point where the push for comfort had pretty much taken precedence over the sport of the hunt.

When I brought the subject up around the campfire one night, one of my lease-mates said he thought he had the answer to my problem, and he was right. The next weekend found us on my friend's South Texas lease preparing to rattle up my first buck. I wasn't disappointed, and the excitement returned to my deer hunting. Actually, this is pretty much of an understatement. Having a mad, snorting and pawing 10-point buck charge into a clearing not 25 feet away brought a whole new meaning to the definition of excitement. Aside from being my first "rattled-up" deer, this was the most exciting hunt of my life.

Want to spice up your fishing a bit? Do the same thing. Get out of your



boat and right in the middle of your environment. Try wade fishing. It will open up a whole new realm of angling enjoyment.

Many of the best, most successful saltwater fishers in Texas today participate in the TroutMasters tournament circuit. Several hundreds of these accomplished anglers gather monthly at a number of venues up and down the coast for some big-money tournaments. This popular tournament circuit gives away, among other things, a

boat, motor and trailer at each event.

These fishers have taken to wade fishing for a number of different reasons. They know that boats running in shallow water scare fish away. They are also aware that long-term damage to the environment results from boats' propellers plowing up seagrass beds.

One of the big reasons a lot of anglers take up wade fishing is monetary. By leaving the boat at home or by not even owning one, you'll obviously save money. The money saved by wade fishing can be substantial when you figure in the cost of gas and oil for the boat, launch fees, boat maintenance, insurance and such.

Wade fishers also will find their overall well-being enhanced by the opportunity to spend more time fishing. Eliminating time spent preparing the boat, launching the boat and finding an angling companion who is ready and able to tag along allows wade fishers more fishing opportunities with fewer hassles. By being prepared to go at the drop of a hat, anglers find themselves taking more one- or two-hour excursions, those short trips that we all know gladden the heart and enrich the soul.

On a personal level, I am one of the lucky Texans who live right on the water. Even in the midst of frantic madness known as "deadline," I can stop everything, grab my rod

and reel and be wading the bountiful waters of Copano Bay in a matter of a few short minutes. I can be back at my desk in an hour or less, refreshed, rejuvenated and ready for whatever the remainder of the day tosses my way.

Unlike many styles of saltwater angling, wade fishing requires a minimum financial investment. With a rod and reel, a pair of old tennis shoes and a sturdy wading belt, you're good to go. Wade-fishers can spend as little or as much money as they desire getting

outfitted. A pair of cas-off tennis shoes will do the job, but wading boots in the summer or neoprene waders in colder weather work even better. A wading belt can be a simple sturdy belt used to hold your rod while baiting a hook or handling a fish, or it can be accessorized with stringer, net, tackle box, water bottle, pliers and other items. The rod you normally use for bay fishing will work, but a 7- to 7½-foot, medium-action rod with a pistol-grip handle works best.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Texans enjoy a wonderful embarrassment of riches when it comes to prime wade fishing areas. Most coastal towns have a beachfront that allows fishing. State parks on the water offer miles of excellent wade fishing opportunities. Inquire at local tackle shops and bait

dealers if you are new to an area. A wide variety of books and maps detailing fishing areas along the Texas coast is also available.

Look for maps that show the make-up of the bottom in the particular location you will be wading. This is one of the most important factors in choosing where to wade. Avoid areas with a mud or shell bottom. These are difficult to wade. Instead, choose places where the bottom consists of hard sand with scattered grassy spots. Places where you can wade to the edge of oyster reefs and muddy spots will provide structure on which to concentrate. Deep holes, channels and underwater troughs will usually hold fish in any type of weather.

The Gulf beaches, from Boca Chica on Texas' southern tip to Sabine Pass

on the eastern border, offer wonderful, year-round opportunities for wade fishers. Speckled trout, redfish, southern flounder, black drum and gafftopsail catfish account for catches during the colder half of the year. Warm-weather bounty offers these as well as Spanish mackerel, ladyfish and all species of jackfish and sharks. When the water is exceptionally clear — usually in the warm, late summers — tarpon may move into the surf in large schools to feed. This provides the wader, whether using fly gear or conventional tackle, the chance to experience one of the most thrilling adventures available to anglers anywhere.

Like major windward bay beaches, Gulf beaches have a series of natural troughs caused by wave action. These troughs, or guts, run parallel to the

“Being close enough to watch and follow the fish as they move is a mo

shore and become progressively deeper as you venture out from the beach.

The guts are separated by sandbars that offer fishers a smooth, solid base from which to cast. The guts themselves act as virtual fish highways. Fish use the guts to move up and down the beach, and the deeper water protects them from temperature extremes.

The conventional tactic is to stand on the sandbar and cast to the trough beyond. Live bait, either free-lined or weighted with a one-ounce barrel or pyramic weight, will bring the best results when fished in the second gut or beyond. Almost any type of bright, flashy artificial bait will work when the water becomes crystal clear. The more aggressive predators of the Gulf waters will strike anything even remotely resembling a meal and will often attack

out of sheer viciousness or curiosity.

At certain times, particularly from late August through October, fly fishers are blessed with magical fall days when the wind dies down or switches to the west. The surf becomes smooth and sluggish, and a person standing in four feet of water can see her toes. Phil Shook, one of the preeminent fly fishing authorities on the Gulf Coast, recommends larger, flashier flies on an 8- to 10-weight rod. Shook also recommends the ecologically friendly circle hooks for surf flies. They're larger and heavier, making it easier to get them down into the water column, and they invariably end up in the corner of the prey's mouth. These revolutionary hooks make it a lot easier on the fish as well as the fisher when practicing catch and release.

Both fly fishers and those utilizing conventional tackle will enjoy several benefits over those fishing from a boat, whether fishing the bay or the surf.

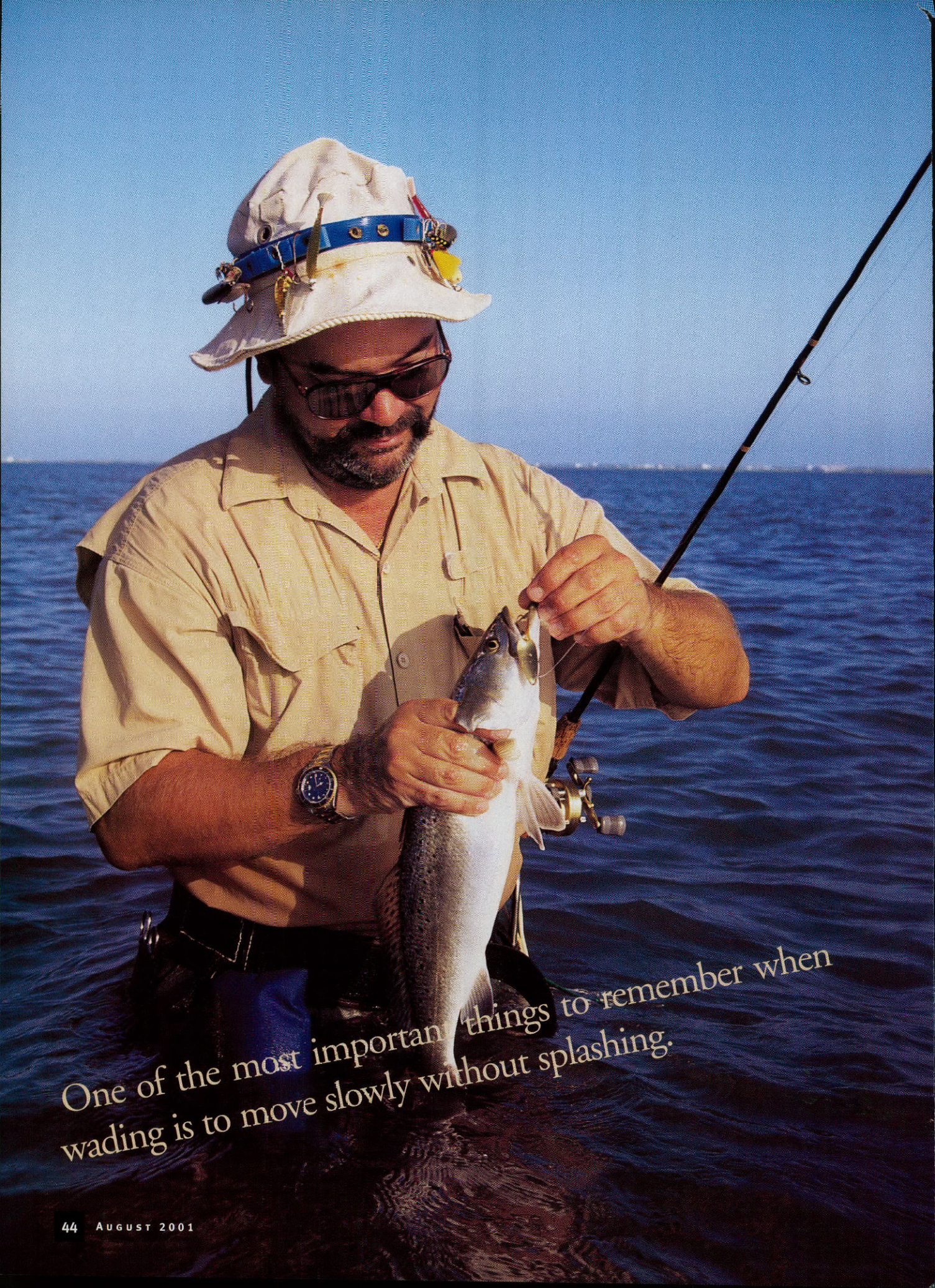
Probably the most important of these is stealth. Wade fishers can move through the water more quietly than someone fishing from a boat. One of the most important things to remember when wading is to move slowly without splashing. If you can hear yourself moving, so can the fish.

Always practice the wader's shuffle. When taking a step, slide your feet across the bottom, never lifting your feet. This will save you from the unspeakable agony of stepping on a stingray and being stuck with the toxic barb on the animal's tail. Sliding your feet across the bottom makes the ray move out of your path safely and



intimate, exciting experience," says wade fishing fanatic Drew Jenkins.

PHOTO © DAVID J. SIMS



One of the most important things to remember when wading is to move slowly without splashing.

without harm. Stingray guards or boots to protect your lower legs from harm can be purchased through your tackle supplier. Made from the same material as snake leggings, they afford the wearer a high degree of both actual protection and mental reassurance. The problem with most of these guards is that they are bulky and sometimes uncomfortable. The stingray shuffle is a safe alternative when practiced conscientiously. I've routinely used this manner of wading the bays since I was a young boy and, even at times when I've seen several stingrays concentrated in one area, I've never been struck.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Serious fans of wade fishing cite different reasons for their preference. High on their list is the opportunity to catch more and bigger fish. As stated earlier, waders have several advantages over those fishing from the bank or a boat. Chief among these are stealth and maneuverability. Wade fishers can reach places a boat can't go. They can work a particular spot silently and carefully, making unlimited casts. They will sense the need to change baits to lure a balky fish into striking. Being in the water

also gives waders a better awareness of tidal movement and changes in water temperature, factors always important to fishing success. Many say the appeal of the quiet relaxation found in wading helps to relieve the stress of everyday life. Another obvious benefit of wade fishing is the fresh air and exercise.

Jim Franklin of Angleton is widely recognized as one of the best fishers in coastal Texas. The winner of several TroutMasters tournaments, he feels that stealth is probably the biggest factor in catching trophy speckled trout. "Trout spend all their lives in shallow water and are very sensitive to sound," says Franklin. "Boat noise, such as trolling motors, waves slapping on the

tinues Franklin. "The wader is out in the open and doesn't have to maneuver himself and the fish around the boat, motor and anchor. Another advantage is thoroughness. When I won the Rockport tournament last year, I fished one 200-yard area all day. I knew the fish were there — I could see them. I just stayed with them and kept plugging until they finally started biting."

Drew Jenkins is a TPW fish and wildlife technician in Port O'Connor and a self-described "wade fishing fanatic." While Franklin's primary target is speckled trout, Jenkins prefers redfish on a fly rod. His favorite fishing areas are the back lakes behind Matagorda Island. "I prefer wading

because I like to be in the same element as the fish. Being close enough to watch and follow the fish as they move is a more intimate, exciting experience for me.

Often, when you hook a redfish on a fly, the rest of the school will move away a hundred yards or so. It's a lot easier to catch up to the school on foot

than it is in a boat. Especially in very skinny water, the fly fisher on foot has every advantage over someone in a boat," says Jenkins enthusiastically. "I use a boat to get to where I'm going to fish, but as soon as I get there, I anchor the boat and do all my fishing on foot."

If you've never been a wader, do yourself a favor and give it a try. You'll open up a whole new realm of fishing and take your level of enjoyment up a step or two. Remember the words of the television action hero, "Become one with your environment, Grasshopper." You'll be glad you did. You'll find the more you understand your surroundings, the more enjoyment you'll receive from them. You'll also become a much better, more successful fisher in the bargain. You just can't beat a deal like that. ★

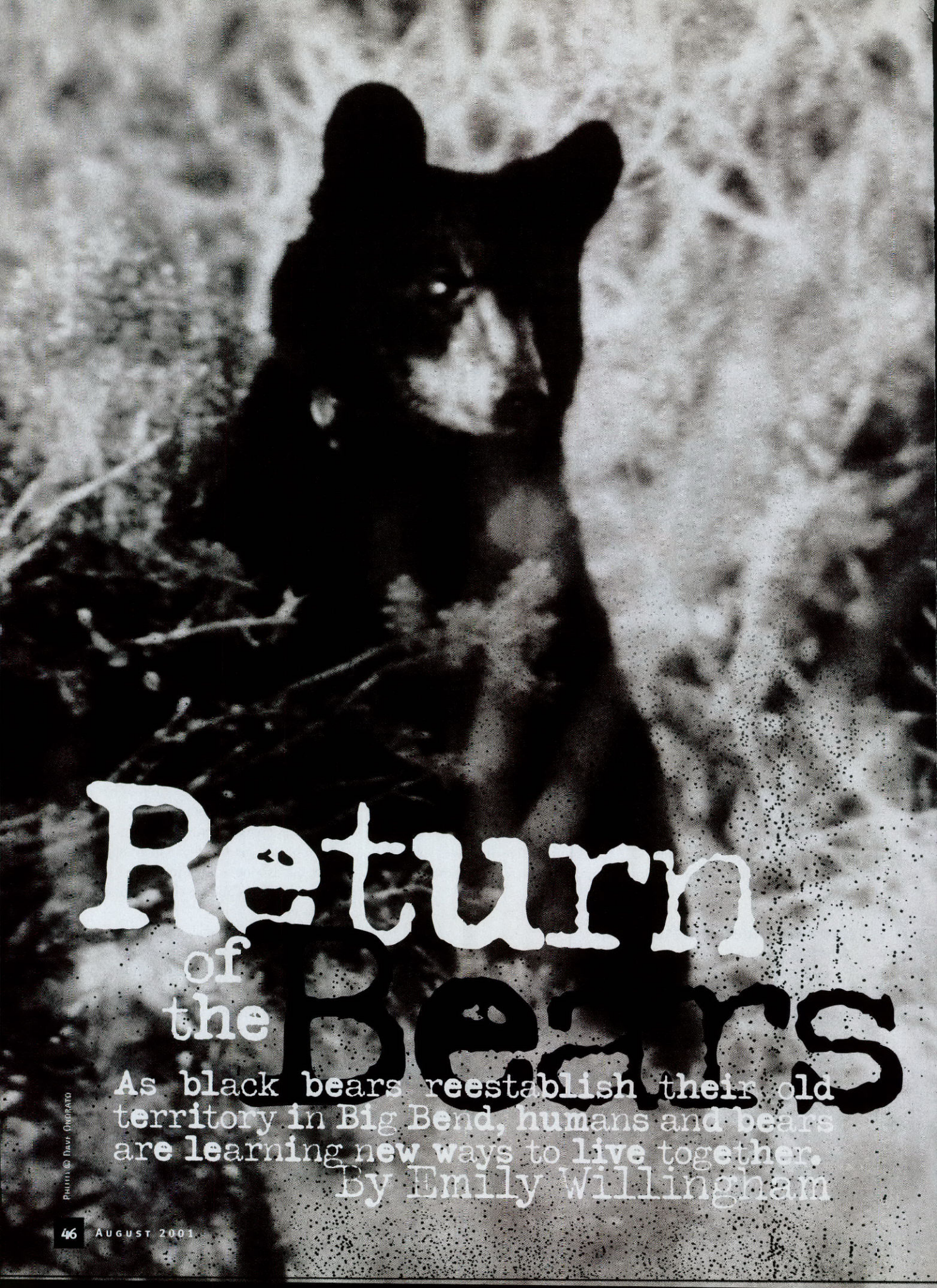


hull and people moving around dropping anchors and such, makes a lot of noise. That's what scares the bigger, smarter fish away."

Another edge the wader has comes into play when landing the fish, con-

Recommended Wading Gear

1. PROTECT your feet with tennis shoes, wading booties or waders.
2. WADING BELTS come in several different styles. They should have a pocket large enough to hold a box of spare lures or other tackle. Rod holders, water holder and plenty of snap rings for carrying a landing net and stringer are nice to have handy. Several styles of good wading belts are made by Eagle Claw and Nu-Mark. The best I've ever used comes from Wade-Aid in San Antonio.
3. ALWAYS WEAR the best polarized sunglasses you can afford. Without them, you'll never spot fish. Styles with side shades are best at blocking out glare.
4. A GOOD short-handled landing net will save you a lot of grief. Redfish and trout are fairly easy for experienced fishers to land by hand, but flounders are almost impossible for the average angler. A net will make it much easier.
5. THERE ARE several good brands of live bait boxes available. Pick one that will hold a quart of live shrimp with room to spare.



Return of the Bears

As black bears reestablish their old territory in Big Bend, humans and bears are learning new ways to live together.

By Emily Willingham

Hunger

drove Candy from the mountains of northern Mexico, spurred her across huge stretches of uncharitable desert, compelled her to swim the Rio Grande, and pushed her across more rugged ground before she finally reached the promised land of the Chisos Basin in the Big Bend of Texas.

One day in the 1980s, she did what no other female Mexican black bear had done in 50 years: She made the Big Bend her home.

Eventually, fanciful humans named her Candy, although scientifically she's known as Bear #7.

"She's the matriarch," says Dave Onorato, a doctoral student from Oklahoma State University who has spent the last three years studying the bears in Big Bend. It's his day off and his father's come to visit, but Onorato is taking the time to explain his work and show me one of his bear traps. His enthusiasm for the bears emerges in his willingness to venture forth on a freezing morning just to talk about these animals. We take his truck to a trap site, and as he listens for signals from collared bears in the park, he talks about Bear #7. "She came here in about 1984 and started to reproduce in 1988," he says, which was an important event that helped establish the area as bear habitat. Onorato's work with the bears indicates that Bear #7 contributed her genes to much of the local population. Although scientists are expected to be dry and detached in their work, he has named each bear. Today, we are listening for Hershey's sig-

ago. "There's a lot of optimism as the bears recolonize West Texas," says Skiles. "Now we would like to live with them. They enrich our lives, and landowners are willing to consider strategies for managing livestock with bears."

What if bears do become a problem? (See "Being on Your Best Bear Behavior," page 51.) "Landowners will always have to have some options for dealing with individuals that aren't compatible," he says, "but for all parties concerned, we have the attitude that we can get along."

The bears' preferred habitat might make that truce a little easier to honor. Their best food sources lie in the park, and the population centers within the park's boundaries. But how long the bears will stay put in the Big Bend region is another story.

Onorato tells the story as I follow him to the bear trap on an unseasonably frigid October morning in Big Bend. Later in the day, a winter storm will lock the desert in ice — an unexpected event a just a week after highs in the area hit 100 degrees. "This year, they've begun a fall migration," Onorato says about the bears as we make our way through low-hanging tree limbs and lingering mist. "They're taking long fall journeys starting around mid-August, and they're expected to return in mid-November to the natal site. The question is whether or not they'll come back." He hopes they will, but reports that already, four collared bears have died in Mexico. Black bears are protected in Texas.

"We've seen a different feeling of more welcome from society since the bears came back, especially compared to what we find in the records from the turn of the century."

nal. He is a small yearling male and, at 40 pounds, he is about 20 pounds underweight for this time of year.

Before the advent of Bear #7, the conspicuous absence of black bears in West Texas engraved itself as a permanent fact in the minds of residents and visitors alike. Bear #7 and the comeback bears that followed surprised West Texans and the National Park Service. Many of us Texans had learned that in the Trans-Pecos, bears had gone the way of the wolf. When a friend of mine, known for his tall tales, claimed to have seen a black bear in Big Bend National Park in 1988, I secretly dismissed his story as an exaggerated javelina sighting. But these days, a yellow sign with a bear silhouette warns of a new presence in the park, and provides unmistakable evidence that the bears are indeed back.

Raymond Skiles, park wildlife biologist, says that just as the comeback bears have changed attitudes about living in the Big Bend area, the people in the area have changed their attitudes about the bears. "We've seen a different feeling of more welcome from society since the bears came back," he says, "especially compared to what we find in the records from the turn of the century." In the early 1900s, black bears disappeared from the area, largely because people killed them or moved into their territories. The bears retreated to Mexico and stayed for decades before beginning a tentative return to Texas.

It's a different Texas from the one they left behind decades

The fall migration caused the population of bears in the Big Bend area to shift in 2000. Estimates early in the year put the number of bears at about 30, but by November that estimate dropped to 10 or 15. Females are trekking back to northern Mexico, covering the kind of acreage usually reserved for the more enterprising males. "One female has migrated 100 kilometers [60 miles]," Onorato says, "and that's very far for a female. Usually, more than 50 kilometers is a long way for them to go."

Why are the bears leaving? The reason is simple: food. For two consecutive years, the leaf oakworm caterpillar has decimated oaks in key habitat, depriving the bears of acorns, a preferred food. Drought decreased other forage, including the juniper and madrone berries the bears particularly target. As we hike to the bear trap just off the Basin road, Onorato points out the madrones. The deep red bark stands out against green leaves, but it's true — no berries are in sight.

"In the fall, it's important for the bears to put on a lot of weight," Skiles says. "When acorns are low, they target madrone trees. It's clear that more wooded, wet areas are very important." The lingering drought has deprived the bears of this important habitat, possibly sending them south.

Food may have been what drew them north from Mexico in the '80s. "The population stayed strong in Mexico" even after people decimated the bears on the Texas side of the border, says Skiles. "In the '40s, the habitat in Big Bend National Park began

to recover from grazing, logging and people living there. It's hard to say whether the protection of the bears was important or the habitat needed to recover, but after 50 years of seeing mostly migratory males, we started to have more bear sightings." The population in Mexico may have grown too large for the local food supply, he adds, and fires in the Sierra del Carmen could have joined the forces that sent the bears northward.

Skiles says that by 1988, the park had 25 sightings in a year, a number that climbed to 572 sightings in 1996. The evening before my hike to the bear trap, a small male appeared just outside the lodge dining hall, pulling visitors away from their dinners as they excitedly watched him through the window.

The small male was breaking the rules, and his appearance so close to civilization in the park was unusual. But, as the Park Service likes to say, there are no problem bears, just problem people. "We're extremely pleased with the result of our proactive approach to bear management," Skiles says. "We've had only a few cases where bears have entered a campsite and attempted to get food." Leaving food around for bears is a people problem that becomes an animal-management issue.

But the park had the advantage of being able to manage an animal population before it was even established. "When the bear population started to grow, we decided we wanted to be the first national park in the country to implement cutting-edge technology before we had a problem," Skiles says. The park service has had a history of doing things wrong when it came to bears — pictures of grizzlies dining at the garbage

dumps in Yellowstone presaged the park's bear-management difficulties. "The visitors who watched bears at the garbage dumps didn't see the aftermath of the ones who got so aggressive that the rangers had to kill them," Skiles says. "These parks had to go through a painful process to separate people and bears, and they could tell us what we needed to do. But no one had ever done this before the problem started."

Skiles describes a multipronged approach to bear management. Education is key. "We want to teach people how to visit the park without having conflict with the bears," he says. And visitors get an eyeful in every visitor center and in every brochure they see. The park newspaper features a two-page spread on bears, giving advice on how to live safely with wild animals (see sidebar) and providing updates on bear research. The park even offers a special brochure on the return of the black bear.

In addition to education, Skiles lists staff training, research and facilities that discourage bear/people contact as paramount in keeping the bears wild. "We train staff to capture and move bears humanely and safely, we've changed our waste management from open-top trashcans to bear-proof dumpsters, and we're using research to develop a scientific basis for our management actions. Our goal is to have a bear population that is wild and is not influenced by human activity."

But bears can occasionally send even the best-laid management plans awry. "We have had one occasion to relocate a bear," Skiles relates. "It was an orphan bear that found a great food source — acorns in a tree near cabins in the park. It was up a

"We decided we wanted to be the first national park in the country to implement cutting-edge technology before we had a problem."

Coexisting with Black Bears in Texas

NOBODY CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN why bears have returned to their former historic range in western Texas. Regardless, black bears are living and peacefully coexisting on ranches and private lands. The reestablishment of a breeding population there is a reflection of good land stewardship by landowners and state and federal property managers, because the country has to be well taken care of for a black bear to find ample food, cover and water. Bears roam widely, and they don't stay within the boundaries of state-owned lands or national parks. Today, without landowner cooperation and their continued willingness to work with Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW), black bears would not be on the increase in the region.

Black bears are primarily vegetarians; they feed on a wide array of vegetation consisting of nuts, berries, grasses and fruits. They will also scavenge animals killed by other predators. Under certain conditions — such as during an extended drought, when natural foods are scarce — bears may prey on domestic livestock. A good rule of thumb is, "Bears sometimes kill livestock, but not all bears are livestock killers." Occasionally a problem will arise, resulting in a livestock or property danger. TPW is committed to assist and help resolve all bear-related problems as quickly as possible. It is the only agency authorized to trap, capture, handle, relocate or destroy a black bear in Texas.

Many landowners in western Texas are now finding themselves living in bear country and coexisting with minimal conflicts. This willingness by the landowners in the Trans-Pecos to coexist with black

bears is an example of what can happen when landowners and TPW work together. Landowners are contributing important information on bear distribution, as well as notifying authorities concerning problems that may occur with black bears. Landowners help in other ways as well. For example, if they had not provided water for livestock during severe drought — which in turn provided water to black bears as well as other wildlife — western Texas might have lost its bears.

In East Texas, landowners and the public are also learning to coexist with increasing black bear populations. In the Pineywoods and Post Oak Savannah country of East Texas, black bears continue to be observed on rare occasions in counties near the borders of Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. TPW is working with landowners and the public to record bear sightings. More than a dozen reliable sightings were documented in eastern Texas in the 1990s. For example, in 1999 a subadult male bear was killed by a collision on I-30 just west of Mount Vernon. As bear populations continue to recover, expand and grow in bordering states, bears will continue to move into this region. A bear habitat suitability study conducted by TPW in the mid-1990s indicates that there is still enough suitable habitat in that region to support a small population of black bears with minimum of human conflicts.

Black bears belong to everyone, not to any particular agency, park or ranch. The continued natural recovery of black bears for future generations of Texans to enjoy will depend on cooperative efforts between landowners and TPW.

— Bonnie Reynolds McKinney



TOP: The Basin at Big Bend National Park
BOTTOM: Mother and cubs



TOP PHOTO © DAVE OROGATO; BOTTOM PHOTO © JEFF HERVATZ



TOP: Lucky, captured June 1999
BOTTOM: Dumbo, released after evaluation in June 2000



LOWER RIGHT: ILLUSTRATION BY PHILIP C. BROWN; STRIPES: JONAS BARKER; CAT: DAVID QUINN

Black Bear Research at Black Gap

NATURAL RECOVERY OF ANIMAL POPULATIONS rarely occurs without human intervention. But black bears slowly began to reestablish a small population on 106,000-acre Black Gap Wildlife Management Area — and in adjacent mountain ranges as far east as Val Verde County — in the late 1980s and early '90s. In the mountains of Coahuila, Mexico, just across the Rio Grande, the black bear population increased dramatically in the '80s, which probably spurred northward expansion. This reestablishment of a state threatened species prompted Texas Parks and Wildlife to initiate research that would allow sound bear management on state and private lands.

By spring 2001, 19 black bears — ranging in age from less than 6 months to 16 years — had been captured. Thirteen bears have been fitted with radio-telemetry collars, which enabled scientists to track their movements by ground and air. Pertinent biological information has been collected from each bear, and vegetation plots are sampled monthly to determine food availability. Their diet is determined by scat analysis.

Preliminary results show that black bears on Black Gap are resident, with reproduction occurring in lower elevations. The project provided the first documented record of subadult bears moving from Texas to Coahuila. This movement is common and increases genetic diversity.

The research at Black Gap has contributed a great deal to our knowledge of black bear ecology in a desert environment. Four black bear studies are being conducted in western Texas and Mexico. By working cooperatively, we hope to develop management recommendations that continue to support black bear recovery in the region. Much of this work would have been impossible without landowner cooperation.

— Bonnie Reynolds McKinney, Michael T. Pittman and Nathan P. Garner

Being on Your Best Bear Behavior

THE PARK SERVICE REMINDS VISITORS that there are no “problem bears,” only problem people. To avoid becoming a problem:

- STORE all food, trash, toiletries and other scented items in a hard-sided vehicle or in the bear-proof storage lockers at campsites.
- IF you're staying at the lodge, don't leave anything outside your room, on the balcony or on the porch.
- NEVER leave food or toiletries in the bed of a pickup — they should be placed in the cab with the windows up and the doors locked.
- FOOD should never be left unattended, even if it's in a cooler.
- DON'T take food or toiletries into your tent.
- IN the backcountry, store all food, trash, toiletry items and cooking gear in the bear-proof storage box at the campsite.
- WHEN hiking or backcountry camping, avoid carrying food or toiletries with strong odors.
- WHILE camping, prepare food away from sleeping areas and clean up all food scraps.
- IF you're backcountry camping, pack out all of your trash, even biodegradable trash such as orange peels.

If you see a bear:

- STAY calm. Do not run.
- STAY at least 100 yards away. Do not approach a bear.
- IF the bear approaches you, scare it away by shouting or throwing stones or sticks toward it.
- LOOK for cubs. If you see cubs, back away slowly.
- REPORT any bear sightings to a ranger.

— E.W.

"We wanted to teach people how to visit the park without having conflict with the bears," says wildlife biologist Raymond Skiles.

tree, drawing a heck of a crowd. People started showing up with picnic baskets, and the fear was that people might feed the bear. So we relocated it to another drainage nearby, hoping it would find another tree. It wasn't really a problem bear, and the solution seems to have worked."

Even though the park service's efforts have been a success, the success of the bear population is not assured. Because Bear #7 may be the Mother of All Big Bend Bears, the park population could be closely related. Problems with inbreeding and a lack of variation may arise. "Even under the best conditions, this will be a small population," Skiles says, "although the genetic quality may be OK if migrants from other mountain regions come in. We'll do whatever is needed in the best interest of the bears here."

Onorato traps the bears using a combination of irresistible bear attractants, including sardines and Alaskan fish fertilizer, which he sprays around the traps. When he's trapped a bear, Onorato takes blood samples and analyzes them to establish family connections based on DNA. The results — which indicate close relationships — underscore the potential fragility of the Big Bend population. "We want to get a handle on what the genetic integrity of this population is so we'll know if the population is diverse enough to sustain itself," Skiles says. "Our outlook is positive, but guarded."

But success is not guaranteed, even with all of the careful

efforts of the park service. This year alone has seen the loss of one of the park's most famous bears — Little Mama — and her cubs. Newspaper stories about bears in the park had featured Little Mama's picture, and she was something of a celebrity. "They died in September," Onorato says, shaking his head. "She died in the desert in a wash, and there were cub prints behind her. We suspect dehydration."

Little Mama and her kind are members of a keystone species, a species that anchors the ecosystem of an area. If they disappear, the ecosystem gets out of whack. "Black bears eat mostly vegetation, but they are also top predators," Skiles says, "and they have a big effect on the vegetation community and what is growing where. Their return has made a big step forward."

The big step forward has not left the bears in the clear. Skiles estimates that the park can support a population of about 30 bears. A small population of only 30 bears can make a big difference in the ecological balance of the Big Bend area. "During the period they were missing, there was a big gap," Skiles says. "When they weren't here, the park was not complete."

The bears balance the park for visitors, too. Visitors in the '80s were delighted by the occasional javelina sighting or frightened by the sound of a unseen rattlesnake, but nothing compares to driving into the Chisos Basin and seeing the now-familiar sign with a black bear silhouette set against a yellow background. The park wouldn't be complete without it. ★



PHOTOS © J. STEPHEN LAY

SWITCHBACKS

BACK

By Thad Sitton

CYCLING

The 52-mile bike loop from Garner State Park

to Vanderpool combines adrenaline-pumping hilltops

and switchbacks with spectacular scenery.

STEEP HILLS LIE IN FRONT OF ME AS I PEDAL OUT OF LEAKEY ON THE FABLED - AMONG CYCLISTS AT LEAST - FM 337. PSALM 121 COMES TO MIND: "I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES UNTO THE HILLS, FROM WHICH COMETH MY HELP." WELL, I HOPE SO.

I'M DEEP IN THE SOUTHERN TEXAS HILL COUNTRY, in the Frio River Canyon. The hills of the eastern Hill Country are scarred with development, but not these heavily timbered slopes. Here, the hills are higher, the valleys are deeper, and the downhills more precipitous. A little nervous, I stop to check my tire pressures and brake adjustments as I had done before leaving Garner State Park a few miles back.

These are the best hills in Texas, according to many cyclists. As I approach the first ascent, I recall the old saying, "If you want to know the road up the mountain, ask the man who goes back and forth on it every day." Good advice, perhaps, but in this instance not particularly consoling. The cyclists who frequent this road the most, the hardcore, long-distance riders of the Ultra Marathon Cycling Association, call a longer version of my route the "Leakey death ride."

This is hyperbole, I tell myself, intended to impress flatlanders from Houston, but the grade up ahead looks long and steep. I ride a recumbent bicycle with very low gearing and cranks four inches higher than the base of my seat. My riding position is armchair comfortable, and my "grannie gear" is low enough to get almost anybody's grandmother up the hill. But I can't use my body weight on the pedals, and on very steep grades (this one feels close to 10 percent) my spinning feet point disconcertingly toward the sky. Breathing deeply, looking rather like a beetle flipped over on

its back, I spin my way up the first grade, then the next, passing around a series of switchbacks, watching as the scenery turns mountainous.

I crest the first big ridge and stop to look around. I have yet to see an automobile, and the hilltop is silent except for muted bird songs and the breeze blowing through mountain junipers. Yellow grass, just turning green again with the first fall rains, covers the land under the junipers and Hill Country oaks in a way no longer common farther east.

But enough gazing about. Now I face the first major downhill and the reason for my nervous fiddling with tires and brakes. Although recumbent bicycles are slower climbers, when going downhill they actually roll faster than standard bikes. On my first cautious visit to the Leakey-Vanderpool hills, this is more a problem than an advantage. The faster you go, the harder it is to control your speed. I speed downhill, repeatedly letting the bike run up to 30 mph, then slowing with hard braking, carefully staying to the inside on the curves and switchbacks, since one rancher in his pickup or a tourist in her SUV coming the other way can ruin my whole day. Moreover, I don't know what lies unseen beyond the next bend.

Then I'm down and preparing myself for what I see up ahead. Once again, the roller coaster of FM 337 twists upward

THE HARD-CORE, LONG-DISTANCE RIDER

State Parks

GARNER STATE PARK This popular, 1,420-acre park is especially busy during spring and summer and on fall weekends. It features large campgrounds with partial hookups. Reservations are recommended, especially in summer. Other facilities include cabins, screened shelters, nature trails, a seasonal park store, an 18-hole miniature golf course and paddleboat rentals. Activities include golf, swimming, tubing, canoeing, fishing, picnicking, hiking and cycling. Limited visitor services are available in Leakey, full services in Uvalde. For information contact Garner State Park, HCR 70, Box 599, Concan, TX 78838, (830) 232-6132.



LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA Crowded from mid-October to mid-November, especially on weekends, 2,174-acre Lost Maples has a small developed campground with partial hookups and showers, along with primitive campsites for backpackers. The park has a picnic area,

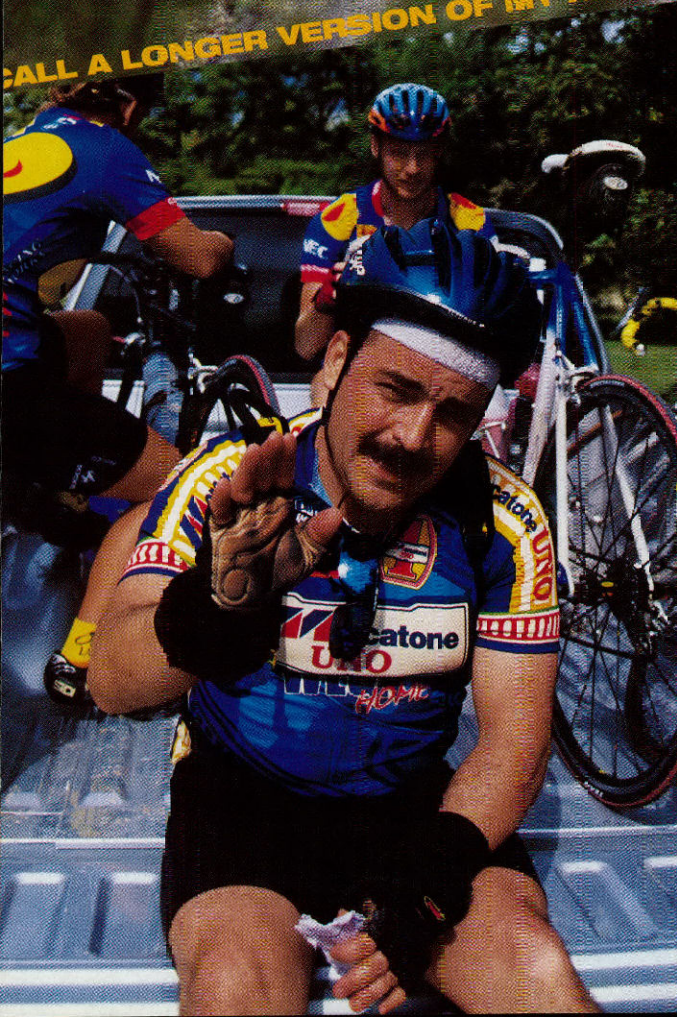
nature trail and 10 miles of hiking trails for backcountry explorations. Fall color usually occurs between mid-October and mid-November, but quality varies from year to year. The park is very popular, especially in fall foliage season. To avoid crowds visitors should reserve campsites well ahead of time, arrive early in the day, and if possible come during the week. Limited food, lodging and gas are available in Vanderpool, Leakey and Utopia. More extensive visitor services may be had in Kerrville, Bandera and Uvalde. For information contact Lost Maples Natural Area, HC 01, Box 156, Vanderpool, TX 78885, (830) 966-3413.

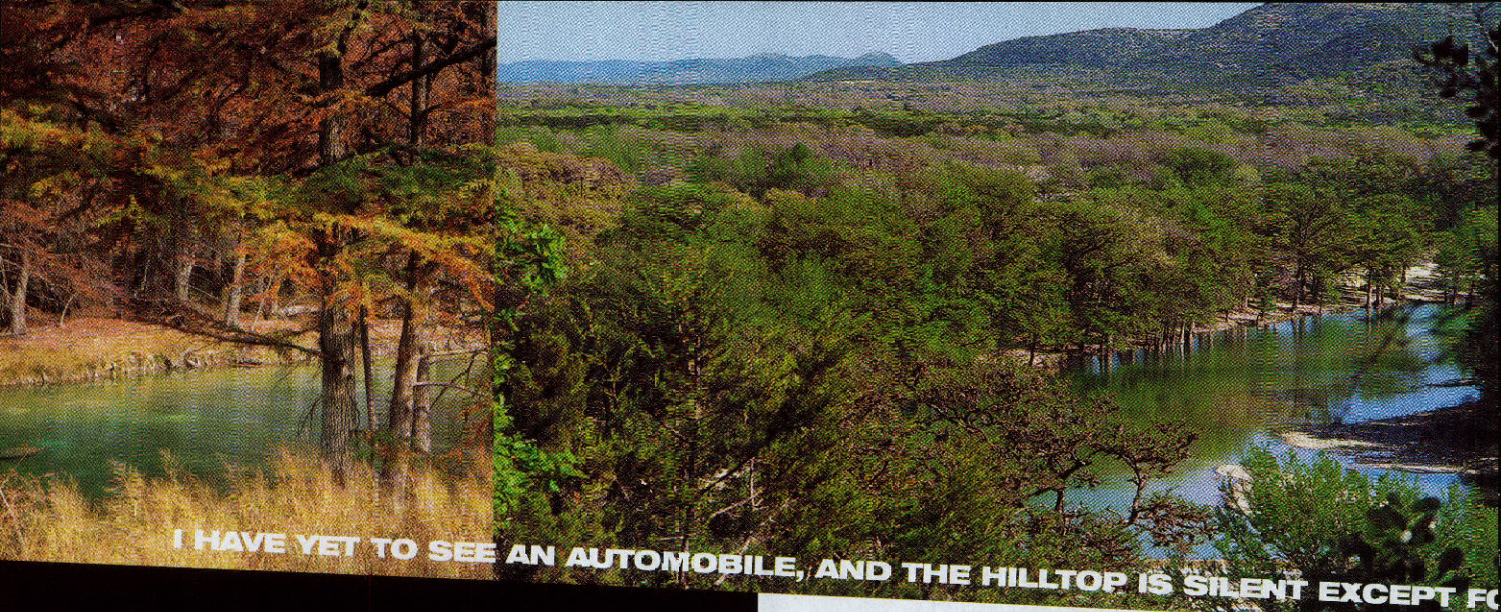
To reserve campsites in either park, call (512) 389-8900 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/admin/res.

— T.S.



CALL A LONGER VERSION OF MY ROUTE THE "LEAKY DEATH RIDE."





I HAVE YET TO SEE AN AUTOMOBILE, AND THE HILLTOP IS SILENT EXCEPT FOR

Riding Tips

IF YOU PLAN to “lift up your eyes unto” these Leakey–Vanderpool hills, some riding tips are in order, since most Texas cyclists have little experience in a landscape as rugged as this one. In general, Hill Country riding requires low gears, good brakes and a sense of caution. Uphill and downhill techniques are different. Riding up long hills requires a positive attitude and low gears that allow you to spin your way up with a measured, constant, sustainable effort. Trying to “hurry the hill” by forcing your way up in too high a gear (or by spinning too fast, for that matter) is doomed to failure. Standing on the pedals to force your way up quickly is also a bad idea; unless you are a highly trained, extremely fit cyclist, these hills are too long for standing.

The descent techniques are more critical. If you fail to make the hill on the climb, all you have to do is get off and push. But if you “fail to make the hill” on the way down, you’re in trouble!

Start your descent with well-adjusted brakes and nearly new tires and tubes. Descend cautiously, especially if you don’t know the road, intermittently braking hard and letting the bike run free. Don’t brake constantly on these mile-long downhills, since that can, as the cyclists say, “burn out your brakes.” Brakes overheated from constant application tend to lose effectiveness. Or they may, in an ultimate bad scenario, heat your rims so much by friction that you blow a tube. During the free rolls between braking episodes, levitate most of your weight off the saddle so your arm and leg muscles can work as shock absorbers. Always stay strictly in your lane on blind curves, even if you haven’t seen a car in a long time. Finally, if it rains, or if the pavement is still wet, consider choosing some other local route.

If you are unfamiliar with the area and have become perturbed by all this talk of “death trips” and downhills, consider visiting these “best hills of Texas” during the annual Texas Hill Country River Region Classic. This organized event with hill-riding instruction, rest stops, roving bike mechanics and sag wagons leaves from Garner State Park one weekend in October. For information on the classic, which benefits, among other worthy organizations, The Friends of Garner State Park, call (800) 210-0380 or go to their Web site, <www.thcrr.com>.

Experienced cyclist Lawrence Walker of Coyote Bicycle Tours, (830) 792-4192, <www.coyoteguy.com>, runs organized, multiple-day trips in the Bandera–Vanderpool–Leakey area.

— T.S.

out of sight, heading for another distant hilltop and a downhill beyond that. I shift into my lowest gear and spin my way slowly upward, trying to miss all the big yellow grasshoppers sitting foolishly in the road.

Miles pass. Since I’m in no hurry and there’s no social pressure to ride harder and better, I stop several times on hilltops to look around and rest. Finally, I top one last hill and roll a long, straight, steep grade down to the Sabinal River Valley and the village of Vanderpool, where I turn south. That’s my quota of the “Leaky death ride” for this 52-mile jaunt, and I move into easier Hill Country landscapes, though still scenic and remote. To the left, as I take its leave, the awesome FM 337 climbs back into the hills and heads east toward the community of Medina in the river valley of that name.

I ride south on FM 187 for miles, crossing and recrossing the beautiful Sabinal River Valley, then turn west on FM 1050 into a gentler range of hills on my way back to Garner State Park. The Hill Country abounds in wildlife, but I can’t recall ever seeing so much of it as along this route. White-tailed deer appear so commonly that you hardly give them a glance. Nine-banded armadillos plod the roadside ditches every mile or so, foraging for bugs, and more than one flock of turkeys crosses the road. Tall fences to left and right alert travelers to look behind them for a view of more exotic fauna. I see a menagerie of unfamiliar deer and antelopes. Elsewhere in the Hill Country I’ve seen elk, camels (one hump or two, take your pick), llamas, African ostriches and big white sheep dogs, presumably guarding all these exotic animals from hungry coyotes. An occasional mountain lion, although seldom seen, still roams remote slopes of the Hill Country hills, though I doubt if one would bother to attack a camel or an elk, with so much venison available to eat.

Jackrabbits also abound, and yesterday while scouting 337 from Medina, I spotted what I thought were some particularly big ones in a pasture beside the road. Then I took another look, stopped, walked to the fence, and



PUT BIRD SONGS AND THE BREEZE BLOWING THROUGH MOUNTAIN JUNIPERS.

gazed at a Hill Country first — gray kangaroos, or perhaps large wallabies, leaping about. As I cycle west on FM 1050, nothing I see could surprise me very much.

Ghosts, traces of the past, are always there, if you know how to look. A Texas historian by trade, I look for the marks of human history on this landscape and find them faint and far between. A few old ranch houses up side canyons brace themselves against the slopes. Native Americans had been here for 10,000 years before the first American settlers moved in to cut balccypress for shingles in the river valleys, clear narrow bottomlands for cotton, and range cattle, sheep and goats across the hills. Settlers fought fiercely for two decades with the inheritors of those early Native American traditions, the formidable Apaches and Comanches. Gradually, towns, farms and roads developed along the river valleys, while a ranching economy dominated the uplands.

Now, in the 21st century, this southwestern Hill Country is a strange mix of authentic, still-viable, western ranching culture and an overlay of tourism, which includes kangaroo-raising hobbyists and brightly clad cyclists on strange, laid-back bicycles. I passed a horseman some ways back. We exchanged friendly waves, but we seemed to be traveling two centuries apart.

We are alike in one way. As a stealth vehicle, the bicycle rivals the horse or the canoe as a great way to sneak up on cougars and kangaroos and to see more than you expected to see. But it is more than that. In his foreword to an early guidebook of Hill Country cycling, Texas author Stephen Harrigan wrote: “The bicycle is more than just a mode of transportation. It is a machine that restores the intimacy and dignity of travel, and that moves efficiently through the landscape without disturbing the ghosts.” ★

Historian and writer THAD SETTCN lives in Austin. His most recent book, The Texas Sheriff, is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Routes from the State Parks

LEAKEY QUADRANGLE: The 52-mile route described in the story traces a quadrangle beginning at Garner State Park, goes north on RR 350, RR 2748 and RR 1120 to Leakey, turns right (east) on RR 337 to Vanderpool, turns right (south) on RR 187 to Utopia, and turns right (west) on RR 1050 back to Garner State Park.

Another good jumping-off place for the Leakey quadrangle, the western half of the famous “Leakey death trip,” is Lost Maples State Natural Area, just north of Vanderpool on RR 187. The 15 miles of RR 337 involve some of the most challenging hill climbs in Texas. Traffic is generally light, especially on RR 337.

LEAKEY DEATH TRIP: Not satisfied? Truly determined to challenge yourself? If you’re an experienced rider wishing to double the hills and thrills, ride the above route to Vanderpool, and continue east on RR 337 to Medina. Turn right on TX 15 to RR 2828, turn right on RR 2828 to RR 3240, turn left on RR 3240 to Bandera and TX 16. From there, turn right on TX 16 (riding west) to RR 470, turn left on RR 470 through Tarpley back to RR 187. Turn left on RR 187 to Utopia, then resume the Leakey Quadrangle Route back to Garner State Park. Upon arrival at the park, you will have ridden 107 miles of the hardest hill riding in Texas.

HILL COUNTRY CLASSIC: A 68-mile ride of easy-to-moderate difficulty begins at Garner State Park, turns right (east) on RR 1050 to Utopia, turns right (south) on RR 187 to Sabinal, turns right (northwest) on RR 127 to Concar, and turns right (north) on RR 83 back to Garner State Park. The southern third of this route, RR 187 and RR 127 nearest to Sabinal, passes out of the Hill Country proper into a flatter landscape. This 68-mile route is generally a much easier trip than the Leakey Quadrangle 52-mile route. It does have more automobile traffic, especially on RR 127.

GARNER STATE PARK TO UTOPIA OUT-AND-BACK: This 34-mile route east on RR 1050 from Garner State Park to Utopia and back is a beautiful Hill Country ride on a road with light traffic and a good warm-up for the harder rides. The climbs and roll-downs are interesting but nothing like the ones on RR 337.

— T.S.

Shelterbelts

The Dust Bowl brought untold hardships to the people of the Panhandle. But it also inspired the planting of 100-mile-wide tree breaks that still provide a valuable haven for wildlife.

By Russell A. Graves

IT MUST HAVE BEEN A SURREAL SIGHT: drought refugees from Texas and Oklahoma crawling across the heart of the Panhandle on Route 66, old trucks loaded to the hilt. All had a singular purpose: to flee the plains. They sought a better life out west in California, where jobs and prosperity were promised but seldom delivered. Highway 66 was the path of a people in flight, refugees from dust and shrinking land, “from the twisting winds that blow out of Texas,” wrote John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Ten years of drought and depression drove nearly 1 million people from the heartland of the United States in the 1930s.

Once consisting of enormous stretches of shortgrass prairie, the plains by that time had become a patchwork of tenant farms and homesteads. Due to the elemental forces of wind and drought and the man-made forces of economic turmoil and free-for-all tillage practices, much of the southern plains eventually became vast stretches of sand dunes.

The 1930s were especially hard on the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles, southeastern Colorado and southwestern Kansas. A Dumas, Texas, welfare official was quoted as saying that things were so bad, that it was “an impossible task to describe the utter destruction: roads obliterated, the crops are all gone, there is no hope or ambition left and many farmers are near starvation.” In 1935, the area became forever engrained in our popular lexicon when an Associated Press reporter dubbed the region The Dust Bowl.

Notions were passed around that included everything from plastering much of the plains to dumping used cars and trash on it to keep the soil from blowing.

The press wasn't the only one taking note. Farther east in the nation's capital, President Roosevelt recognized the plight of the plains inhabitants and began to lobby Congress to take action. In 1933, Congress took a step toward conservation with establishment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, the precursor to today's Natural Resource Conservation Service. In 1934, Congress appropriated \$500 million to spend on drought relief in the plains as a part of Roosevelt's New Deal plan for pulling the country out of economic depression.

With money in place, many began to size up options for controlling the eastward expansion of the desert that the Great Plains was becoming. Notions circulated that included everything from plastering much of the plains to dumping used cars and trash on it to keep the soil from blowing.

The idea that stuck, however, was simple: Plant a line of trees along the edge of a plowed field that would shelter the land from the winds that plagued the region. A debate ensued about where to plant the trees. Roosevelt wanted to plant them on the plains to make the area more hospitable. Forest Service scientists thought the plains to be too dry to propagate trees successfully.

Finally, in March 1935, the zone in which shelterbelts would be planted was agreed upon. Starting just south of

Childress, Texas, it would extend northward along the 100th meridian. A 100-mile-wide swath of trees flanking the edge of the plains, it was postulated, would stop the eastward march of desertification.

By 1936, the program was in full swing. The Prairie States Forestry Project, as it was called, used laborers from Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration to plant rows of trees that nurseries from all over the country supplied. For the paltry sum of a little more than \$20 an acre, including labor and supplies, a farm could reap the benefits of a well-planned shelterbelt. When mature, the belts would cut the winds for a distance of eight times the height of the trees, reducing soil siltation and preventing precious moisture from wicking away from crops. The typical shelterbelt, when mature, would have the shape of an inverted V. Two rows of cottonwoods stood as anchors of the middle of the belt. Supporting them on each side were rows of soapberry, ash, honey locust, walnut, desert willow and bois d'arc.

The legacy of the Prairie States Forestry Project is still evident, and many mature shelterbelts still perform the job they were designed to do so long ago. They stand as a living monument to the fight against an expanding Dust Bowl.

Although planting is not as extensive as it once was, shelterbelts still perform an important function. “Shelterbelts are still a tool we use in our battle with wind erosion and are as important today as they were in the 1930s,” says Royce Siebman, resource conservationist for the Natural Resource

Conservation Service (NRCS). “We still have a shelterbelt standard in our list of conservation practices for the NRCS, but we now call them windbreaks.”

Today, a variety of wildlife uses shelterbelts for cover and travel corridors. It is not unusual to see a number of different species of songbirds, turkeys, mule and white-tailed deer, and numerous other species near these wooded breaks. In fact, some landowners are replanting shelterbelts as a way to encourage wildlife diversity on a piece of property.

Not everyone sees the benefit of shelterbelts. Many have been fragmented due to years of neglect and cutting trees for firewood. And modern tillage and conservation practices have curbed the need for the long stretch of trees, as wind erosion is no longer a severe problem as it once was.

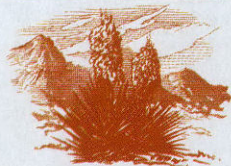
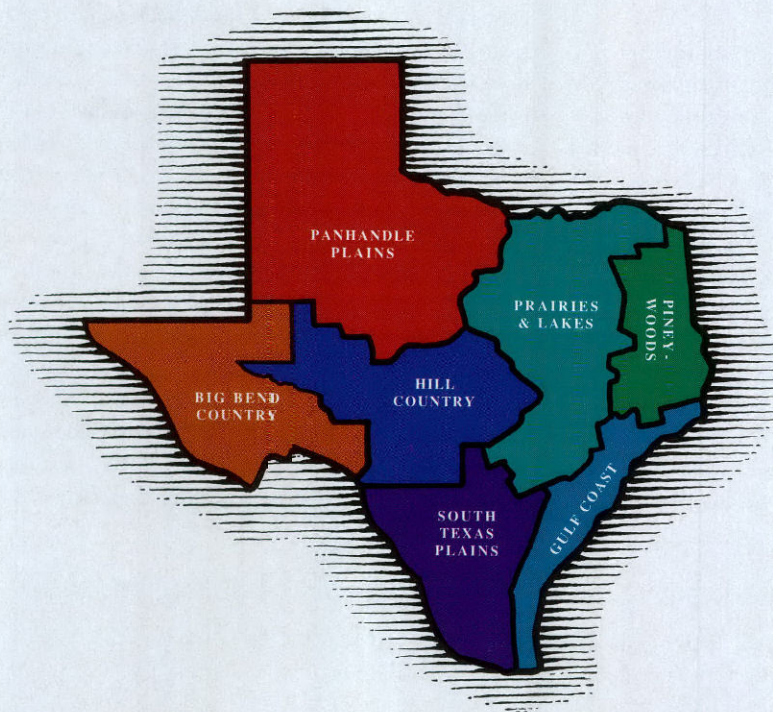
“Shelterbelts are mostly being removed due to large-scale farming,” adds Siebman. “Big equipment can get across a field much faster than a single row-breaking plow pulled by a team of mules.

“So, it seems, farmers either love them or hate them. It's mainly the older folks who really appreciate them for what they meant to the Panhandle in the '30s.” ★

RUSSELL A. GRAVES was raised near Bonham, where bois d'arc trees were commercially grown in the '30s for shelterbelts.

GETAWAYS

From Big Bend to the Big Thicket and the Red to the Rio Grande



BIG BEND COUNTRY

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Bouldering Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also available Wednesday through Friday by advance request, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

Aug.: Pictograph Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also available Wednesday through Friday by advance request, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

Aug.: Bird Banding, call for dates, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, (915) 426-3337.

Aug.: Maravillas Canyon-Rio Grande Equestrian Trail Ride, call for dates, Black Gap WMA,

Alpine, (915) 376-2216.

Aug.: Desert Garden Walks, call for dates, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (915) 424-3327.

Aug.: Phantom Cave Springs and San Solomon Cienega Hike, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Toyahvale, (915) 375-2370.

Aug.: Fishing on the Rio Grande, call for dates, Black Gap WMA, Brewster County, (915) 376-2216.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Bouldering Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also available Wednesday through Friday by advance request, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

Sept.: Phantom Cave Springs and San Solomon Cienega Hike, every Saturday, Balmorhea SP, Toyahvale, (915) 375-2370.

Sept.: Desert Garden Walks, by reservation only, Barton

Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (915) 424-3327.

Sept.: Pictograph Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also available Wednesday through Friday by advance request, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

Sept.: Fishing on the Rio Grande, call for more information during business hours, Black Gap WMA, Alpine, (915) 376-2216.

Sept.: Public Dove Hunting, call for more information during business hours, Black Gap WMA, Alpine, (915) 376-2216.

Sept.: Bird Banding, call for dates, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, (915) 426-3337.

Sept. 1-2, 15-16: Guided Hike, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso, (915) 566-6441.

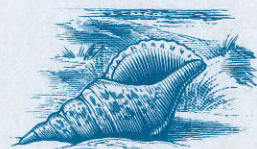
Sept. 1, 15: Bats of the Big Bend, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (915) 424-3327.

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

Sept. 8: Fun Day, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, (915) 229-3416.

Sept. 16: Bird Identification Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

Sept. 22-23: 25th Annual Fort Davis Cyclefest, Prude Ranch, Ft. Davis, (800) 373-4764.



GULF COAST

AUGUST EVENTS

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

Aug.: Nature Programs, every Saturday and Sunday, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, (979) 553-5101.

Aug.: Sea Center Tours, every Tuesday through Saturday, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100.

Aug. 11: Texas Big Game Awards Regional Banquet, Hallettsville, (800) 839-9453, ext. 114.

Aug. 11: Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens, "Water Gardens for Your Yard," Corpus Christi, (361) 852-2100.

Aug. 25: Creature Feature, Armand Bayou Nature Center, Houston, (281) 474-2551.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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

Sept.: Sea Center Tours, Tuesday through Saturday, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100.

Sept.: Nature Programs, every Saturday and Sunday, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, (979) 553-5101.

Sept. 1: 20th Anniversary and Labor Day Celebration, Lake Texana SP, Edna, (361) 782-5718.

Sept. 1, 8: Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, Bayside, (361) 529-6600.

Sept. 14, 15, 16: Hummingbird Hayrides, Fennessey Ranch, Bayside, (361) 529-6600.

Sept. 20, 28, 30: Beach Combing Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

Sept. 22, 29: Fall Migration Hawk Watch, Fennessey Ranch, Bayside, (361) 529-6600.

Sept. 29: History Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.



HILL COUNTRY

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Kickapoo Cavern Tour, by reservation only, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

Aug.: Geology Programs, every Thursday, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

Aug.: Wild Caves Tour, every Thursday through Saturday by reservation only, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

Aug.: Mountain Biking for Beginners, every Monday, Kerrville-Schreiner SP, Kerrville, (830) 896-6864.

Aug.: Stumpy Hollow Mystery Hike, every Saturday, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, (512) 793-2223.

Aug.: Somethin' Fishy Going On, every Saturday, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, (512) 793-2223.

Aug.: Saturday Evening Programs, every Saturday, Guadalupe River SP, Spring Branch, (830) 438-2656.

Aug.: Guided Hiking Trail Tours, every Saturday, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

Aug.: Walking Wild Cave Tour, every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

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

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

Aug.: Bird Watching, daily, Pedernales Falls SP, Johnson City, (830) 868-7304.

Aug.: Flying with the Freetails, every Thursday and Saturday, Old Tunnel WMA, Comfort, (830) 644-2478.

Aug. 20: Austin Fly Fishers meeting, Austin, (512) 918-1832.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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

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

Sept.: Mountain Biking for Beginners, every Monday, Kerrville-Schreiner SP, Kerrville, (830) 896-6864.

Sept.: Walking Wild Cave Tour, every Saturday and Sunday weather permitting, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

Sept.: Kickapoo Cavern Tour, by reservation only, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

Sept.: Wild Caves Tour, Thursday through Saturday, Longhorn Cavern SP, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

Sept.: Guided Hiking Trail Tours, every Saturday, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

Sept.: Geology Programs, every Thursday, Longhorn Cavern SP, Burnet, (877) 441-2283 or (512) 756-4680.

Sept.: Bird Watching, daily, Pedernales Falls SP, Johnson City, (830) 868-7304.

Sept.: Flying with the Freetails, every Thursday and Saturday, Old Tunnel WMA, Comfort, (830) 644-2478.

Sept.: Saturday Evening Programs, Guadalupe River SP, Spring Branch, (830) 438-2656.

Sept. 1: Crawling Wild Cave

Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

Sept. 1: Close Encounter of a Natural Kind, Kerrville-Schreiner SP, Kerrville, (830) 257-5392.

Sept. 1: Let Us Gather at the River, Kerrville-Schreiner SP, Kerrville, (830) 257-5392.

Sept. 1-2: Island Assault 1944 Living History Program, National Museum of the Pacific War SHS (Admiral Nimitz), Fredericksburg, (830) 997-4379.

Sept. 8, 15, 22, 29: Stumpy Hollow Mystery Hike, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, (512) 793-2223.

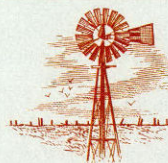
Sept. 13, 27: Devil's Waterhole Canoe Tour, Inks Lake SP, Burnet, (512) 793-2223.

Sept. 15-16: X Bar Shoot-Out Mountain Bike Race, X Bar Ranch, Eldorado, (888) 853-2688.

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

Sept. 18: Hill Country Chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), Membership Meeting, New Braunfels, (830) 905-2589.

Sept. 22-23: Annual Symposium: Pacific D-Days, National Museum of the Pacific War SHS (Admiral Nimitz), Fredericksburg, (830) 997-4379.



PANHANDLE-PLAINS

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Llama Treks, by reservation only through Jordan Llamas, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 651-7346.

Aug.: "Texas" every Thursday through Tuesday, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 655-2181 or (806) 488-2227.

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

Aug. 1-19: Annual Summer Art Exhibition, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

Aug. 1, 25: Canyon Heritage, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 3: Canyon Rock, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-

2227.

Aug. 3, 17: Fireside Tales, Abilene SP, Tuscola, (915) 572-3204.

Aug. 4: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-8935.

Aug. 4: River Walk, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 4: Palo Duro Pioneers, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 4-5: Hunter Safety Course, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

Aug. 7, 14: Sunset Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 8: Canyon Chat, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 10: Trail Talk, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 11: Family Nature Hike, Caprock Canyons SP and Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

Aug. 11: Evening Interpretive Presentation, Caprock Canyons SP and Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

Aug. 11: Nature Challenge, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Aug. 13: Dinosaur Walk, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-8935.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Llama Treks, by reservation only through Jordan Llamas, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 651-7346.

Sept. 1: Nature Challenge, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Sept. 1: Canyon Campfire, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

Sept. 2, 23: Canyon Heritage, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Sept. 8: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-8935.

Sept. 8: Legacy Celebration 2001, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Sept. 14: Storytelling Festival, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Sept. 15: Texas Big Game Awards Regional Banquet, Plainview, (800) 839-9453, ext. 114.

Sept. 15: Family Nature Hike, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

Sept. 15: Evening Interpretive Presentation, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

Sept. 15: Star Walk, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

Sept. 15, 29: Dinosaur Walk, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-8935.

Sept. 22: Falconry, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

Sept. 22: Longhorn and Bison Seminar, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-8935.

Sept. 29: Harvest Saturday, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, (915) 263-4931.

Sept. 29: "Indian Summer," Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.



PINEYWOODS

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug. 3, 17: Slide Presentation, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

Aug. 4, 18: Steam Engine Shop Tours, Texas State Railroad SHS, Rusk, (800) 442-8951 or (903) 683-2561 outside Texas.

Aug. 5, 12, 26: Walk on the Wildside, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

Aug. 11: Campfire Programs, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

Aug. 11, 25: Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

Aug. 18: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept. 1: 12th Annual Martin Creek Lake Perch Jerk, Martin Creek Lake SP, Tatum, (903) 836-4336.

Sept. 1, 15: Steam Engine Shop Tours, Texas State Railroad SHS, Rusk, (800) 442-8951 or (903) 683-2561 outside Texas.

Sept. 1, 15: Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP,

Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

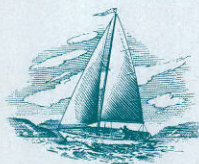
Sept. 2, 9, 23, 30: Walk on the Wildside, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

Sept. 7, 21: Slide Presentation, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

Sept. 15: Quitman Outdoor Quilt Show, Governor Hogg Shrine HS, Quitman, (903) 763-2701.

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

Sept. 22: Campfire Programs, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.



PRAIRIES AND LAKES

AUGUST EVENTS

Aug.: Weekend Programs, every Saturday, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-3900.

Aug.: Nature, Education and Interpretive Programs, call for more information, Lake Somerville SP and Trailway/Nails Creek Unit, Ledbetter, (979) 289-2392.

Aug.: Nature, Education and Interpretive Programs, call for more information, Lake Somerville SP and Trailway/Birch Creek Unit, Somerville, (979) 535-7763.

Aug.: Kreische Brewery Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also on other days by advance reservation, Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658.

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

Aug.: Guided Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Sept.: Guided Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

Sept.: Nature, Education and Interpretive Programs, call for more information, Lake Somerville SP & Trailway/Nails

Creek Unit, Ledbetter, (979) 289-2392.

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

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

Sept.: Weekend Programs, every Saturday, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-3900.

Sept.: Nature, Education and Interpretive Programs, call for more information, Lake Somerville SP & Trailway/Birch Creek Unit, Somerville, (979) 535-7763.

Sept. 1: Guided Nature Hike, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, (903) 945-5256.

Sept. 1: 2001 Southwestern Tour-Fort Worth Cowboys of Color Rodeo, Fort Worth, (972) 647-5700.

Sept. 1: Labor Day Fest, Purts Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

Sept. 1: Night Sounds, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 327-8950.

Sept. 2: Cowboy Campfire-Music and Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 327-8950.

Sept. 2, 9: Kreische House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658.

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

Sept. 15: Storytelling Down in the Holler, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 327-8950.

Sept. 15: Guided Nature Hike, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, (903) 395-3100.

Sept. 22: Big Fish Bluegill Tournament, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, (903) 676-BASS.

Sept. 22: 5th Annual North Texas Skywatch Amateur Astronomer's Star Party, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 327-8950.

Sept. 22: Texian Days, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

Sept. 22: Texas Big Game Awards Regional Banquet, Athens, (800) 839-9453, ext. 114

Sept. 29: Kids' Wilderness Survival, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171.



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

AUGUST EVENTS

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

Aug. 18: Texas Big Game Awards Regional Banquet, Carrizo Springs, (800) 839-9453 ext. 114.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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

Sept. 20: Annual Wildlife Management Symposium, Chaparral WMA, Artesia Wells, (830) 676-3413.



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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



The Front Line of News and Views

TELEVISION

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

July 29 – Aug. 5:

Jellyfish; Floyd Mabry, the Original Texas Fishing Machine; turkey fruit salad; Texas' growing population.

Aug. 5 – 12:

Results of a 25-year deer study; a new recipe for frying fish; founder of the first all-woman bass tournament; nature photographer Leroy Williamson.

Aug. 12 – Aug. 19:

Restoring native shortgrass prairies; changing landscape of the Gulf Coast; a biologist who helped create good fishing in Texas.

Aug. 19 – 26:

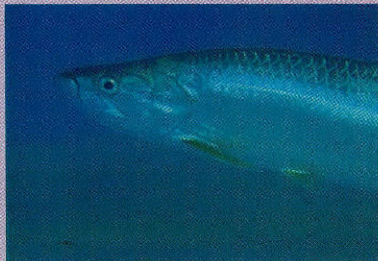
Galveston Bay marshes; a deer hunt with Roger Clemens; teaching kids to fish; venison jerky.

Aug. 26 – Sept. 2:

Mysteries of the the tarpon; Armand Bayou Nature Center; crawfish étouffée, coyotes in West Texas, an undercover game warden sting.

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Mysteries of the tarpon will be revealed the week of August 26.

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. / Tues. 10 p.m. & 11:30 p.m.

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

El Paso: KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 5:30 p.m. (check local listing)

Harlingen: KMBH, Ch. 60 / Thurs. 8:30 p.m. / Sun. 12:30 p.m.

Also serving McAllen, Mission, Brownsville

Houston: KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sun. 5 p.m. / Fri. 1 p.m.

Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria

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

Also serving Temple

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

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

Portales, N.M.: KENW, Ch. 3 / Sun. 2 p.m.

Also serving West Texas/Panhandle

San Antonio & Laredo: KLRN, Ch. 9 / Wed. 4 p.m. / Thur. noon

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

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Alexandria, La.: KLSA-FM 90.7 / 5:33 a.m.

Alpine: KSRC-FM 92.7 / Thurs. – Sat. 9 p.m.

Amarillo: KACV-FM 89.9 / 11:20 a.m.

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

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

Big Spring: KBST-AM 1490 / 8:25 a.m., cable ch. 23 / 8:25 a.m., KBS-FM 95.7 / 8:25 a.m.

Brady: KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:20 a.m. / Sat. 7:50 a.m., KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:20 a.m. / Sat. 7:50 a.m.

Bridgeport: KBOC-FM 98.3 / 1:15 p.m.

Bryan: KZNE-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 / TBA

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

SIGHTS & SOUNDS

Columbus: KULM-FM 98.3 / 7:20 a.m., KNRG-FM 92.3 / 7:20 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fairfield: KNES-FM 99.1 / 6:49 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.

Galveston: KGBC-AM 1540 / 11:45 a.m.

Greenville: KGVF-AM 1400 / 8:15 a.m.

Hallettsville: KHLT-AM 1520 / 6:50 a.m., KTXM-FM 99.9 / 6:50 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., 5:55 p.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: KLVT-AM 1230 / 12:05 p.m.

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

Lufkin: KLDN-FM 88.9 / 5:33 a.m.

Marshall: KCUL-AM 1410 / 6:39 a.m., KCUL-FM 92.3 / 6:39 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/Odessa: KCRS-AM 550 / 6:15 a.m. & 5:50 p.m.

Mineola: KMOO-FM 99.9 / 5:15 p.m.

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

New Braunfels: KGNB-AM 1420 / 6:52 a.m.

Ozona: KYXX-FM 94.3 / 6:22 p.m.

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

Rockdale: KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:04 a.m. & 6:35 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.

San Augustine: KCOT-FM 92.5 / TBA

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Shreveport: KDAQ-FM 89.9 / 5:33 a.m.

Sonora: KHOS-FM 92.1 / 6:22 p.m.

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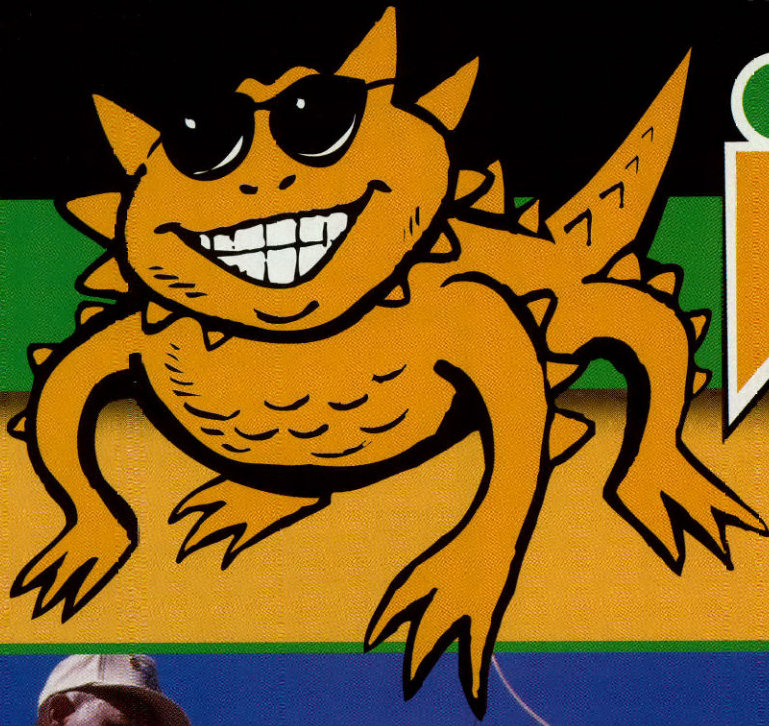
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outdoor kids

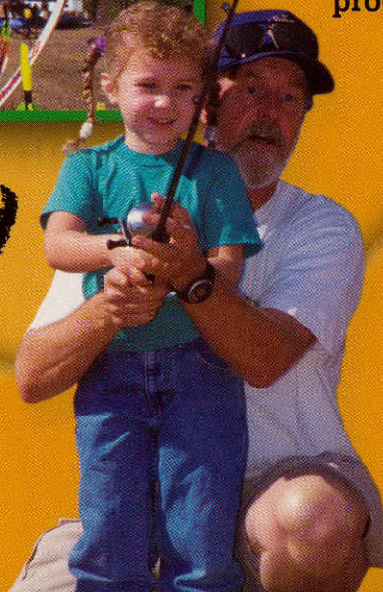


Every child should get a chance to experience the fun of Texas outdoors. Hunting. Fishing. Hiking. Or seeing those famous Texas landmarks up close. But discovering the real nature of Texas also means appreciating it. Learning the importance of conservation, and understanding that preserving our natural and cultural resources is everyone's responsibility. That's what

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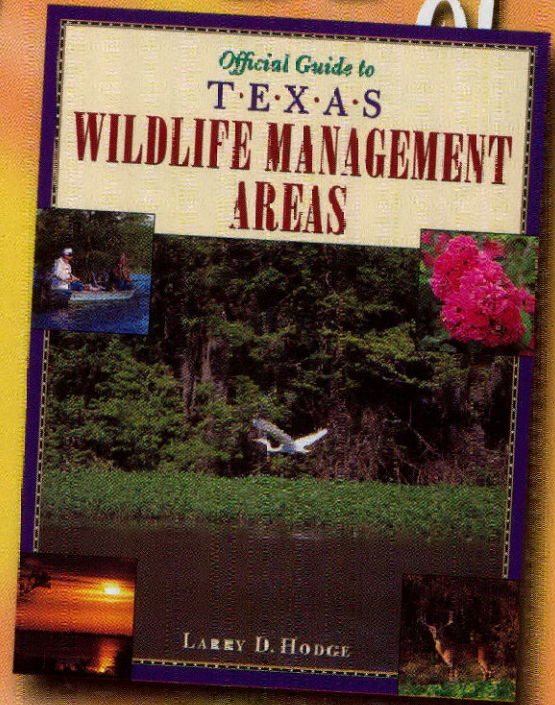
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Summer Reading

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The Official Guide to Texas Wildlife Management Areas
 Birders, hunters and those just seeking the solitude of wild Texas will enjoy this guide to the more than 1 million acres of public land in Texas wildlife management areas. The book tells where to see endangered species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo as well as how and where to hunt a variety of game animals. Hikers, bikers, campers and fishers will also find valuable information on where to make the most of their outdoor excursions. Each of 51 areas is profiled with tips on the best places to go for different activities, and color photographs enhance the descriptions. The book is organized by region of the state to make trip planning easy. Written and photographed by Larry D. Hodge. 8 1/2" x 11", 274 pages, color photographs throughout, paperback



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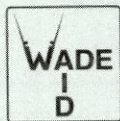
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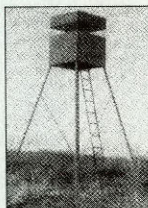
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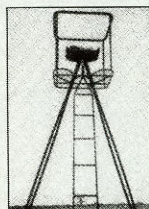
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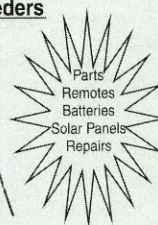
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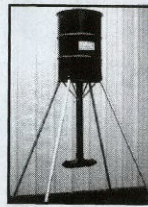


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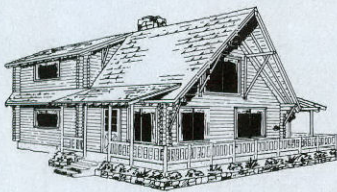
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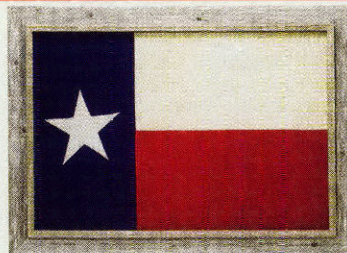
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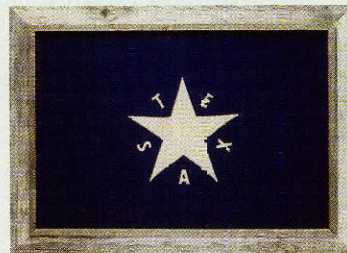
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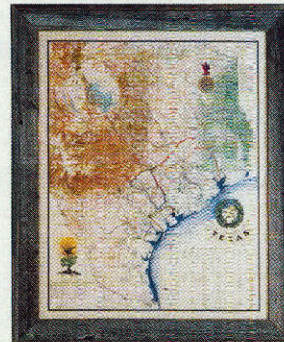
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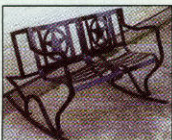
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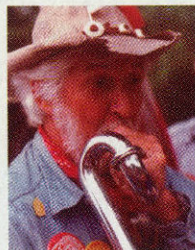
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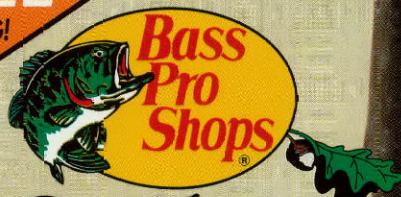
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PARTING SHOT



Dave N. Richards photographed these battling bucks late last August in South Texas. "These two mature bucks are fighting to establish dominance and keep their place in the pecking order," says Richards. While their antlers are in velvet, he says, bucks avoid doing anything that would damage the delicate tissue. "They'll vocalize first," he says, "then lay their ears back. If that doesn't work, they'll stand up and bat at each other, like a fist fight." Come fall, the bucks will shed the velvet, polish their antlers and prepare for the fall rut.

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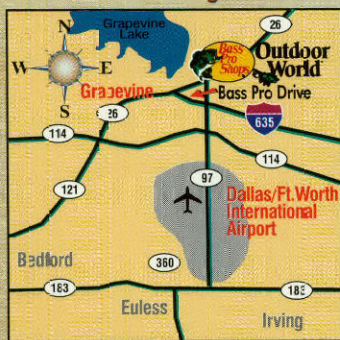
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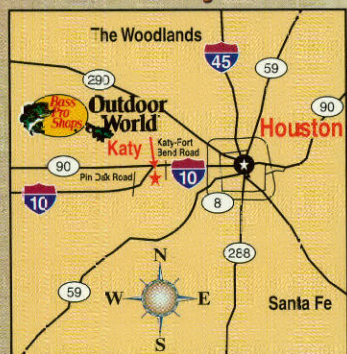
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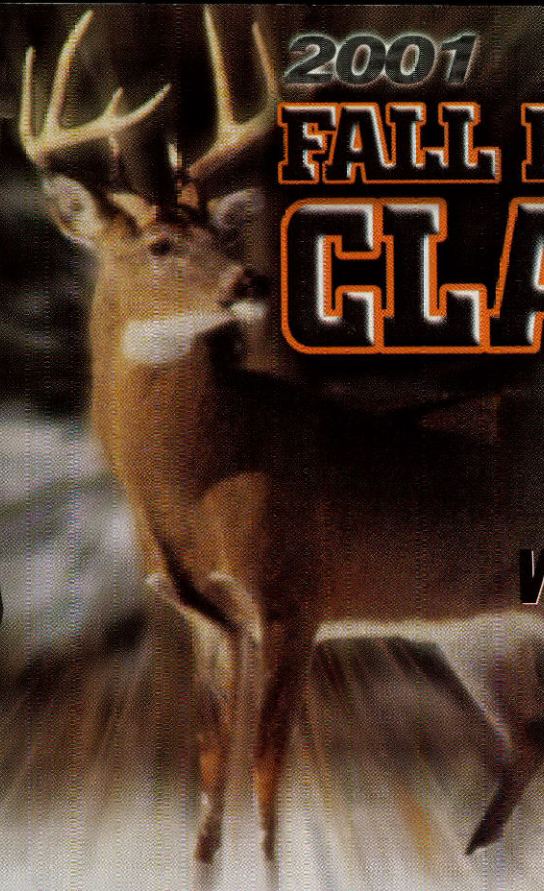


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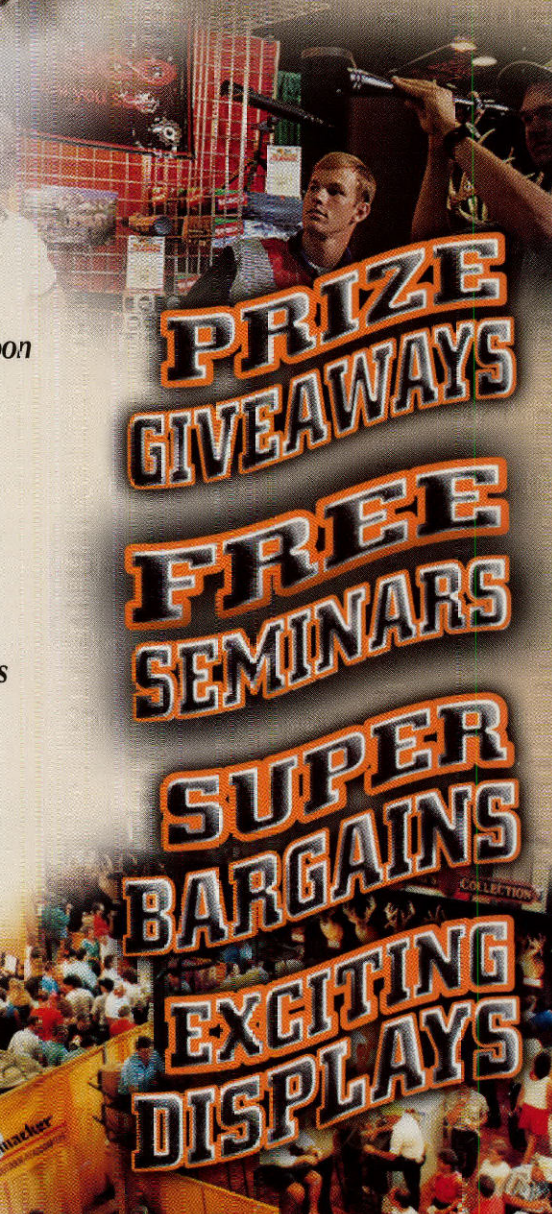
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