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TEXAS
PARKS & WILDLIFE
DECEMBER 1992



STATE
OF NATURE

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

AN ESSAY BY

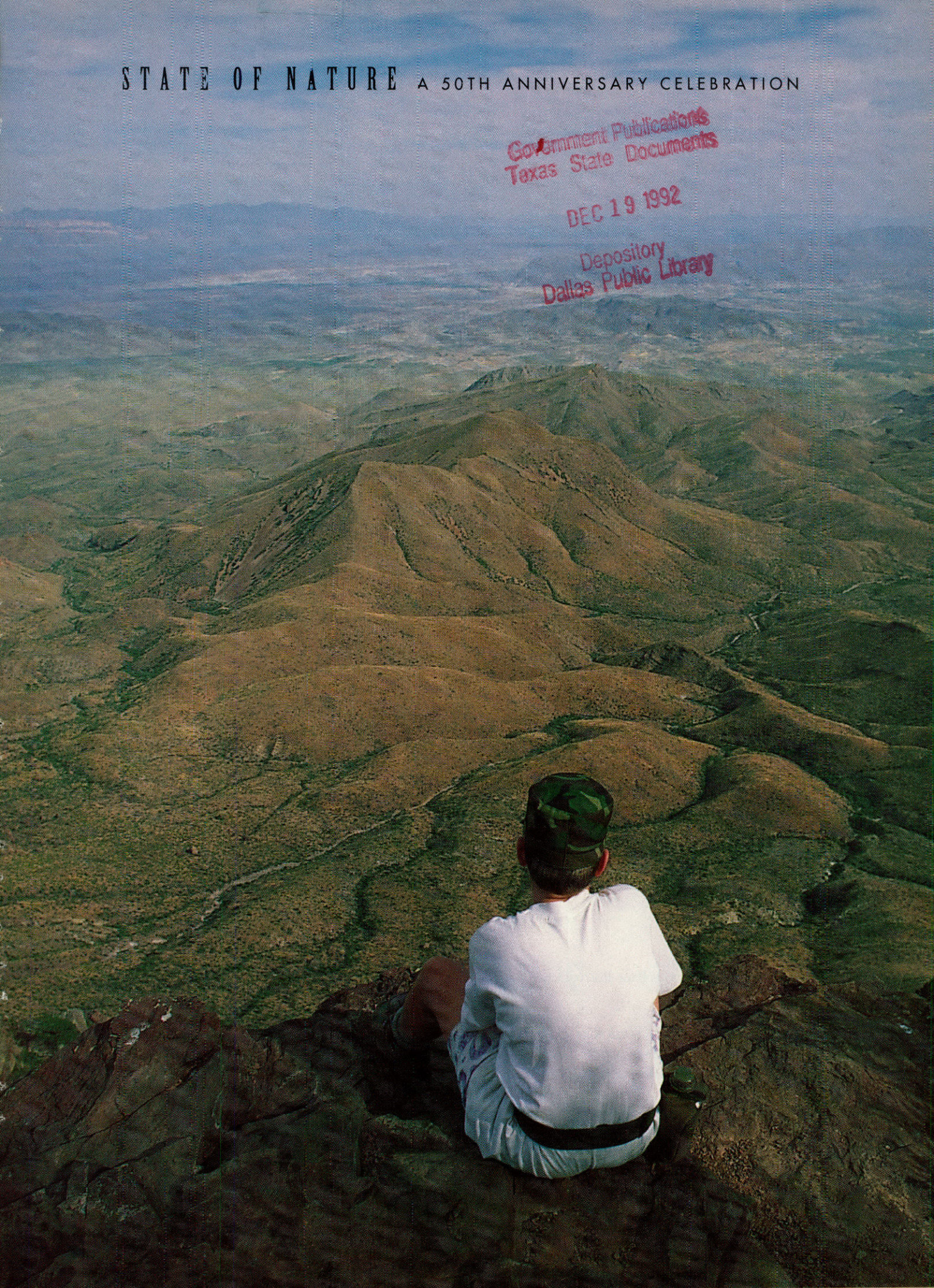
JOHN GRAVES

STATE OF NATURE A 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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TEXAS
PARKS & WILDLIFE

*Dedicated to the conservation and
enjoyment of Texas wildlife, parks,
waters and all outdoors.*

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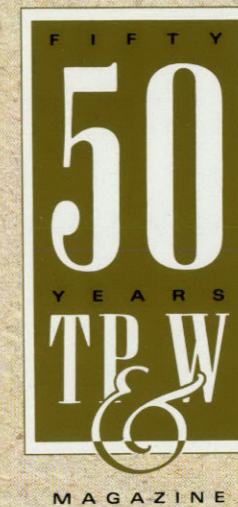
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JOHN GRAVES

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Thanks, folks.

PREVIOUS PAGE PHOTOGRAPH

*The view from the South Rim of the Chisos
Mountains in Big Bend National Park captures
the vastness and drama of far West Texas.*

EARL NOTTINGHAM

INTRODUCTION

How do we distill 50 years of reporting on the state's outdoors into a single 96-page magazine? Reprint a lot of old stories and covers? That would show where we've been but doesn't tell the story of where we plan to go. Publish lots of pretty photos? That would be popular but have little substance.

We've argued for months on how best to present the golden anniversary issue of what is now *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine—and still have enough money and energy left to publish the first issue of volume 51 in January.

No one ever has accused me of running a democracy on the magazine staff, but we all compromised a bit to finally settle on what we have. The photographers got their raft of world-class photos, the nostalgics got their old covers—we've run one each month since January 1992 with excerpts from old issues—and the writers got one of the best in the business, John Graves.

John Graves is a fellow I should have met about 20 years ago. He would have saved me a lot of time. I refer you to a profile we did on John in the October 1992 issue. As with most first-rate writers, John is a keen observer of the world about him. He watches, he reflects, and only after he distills his thoughts does he write.

He would have saved me a lot of time because only in the last few years have I come to understand even a small portion of the Texas outdoors. As editor of this magazine I come in contact with many views on what should be the proper stewardship of our outdoor heritage. You probably have read some of the viewpoints on our Letters page.

Graves has succinctly expressed in his essay what I have been seeking for so long—the Texas outdoors is a vast resource with room for everyone; all she asks is a little respect from those of us who venture forth.

That's not too hard to understand. But as with much that appears simple—a good golf swing, a smooth flyline cast—what looks so simple has taken years to master. It's easy to learn how to play a game of chess or shoot a round of skeet, but quite another to master them, and in doing so make it all appear effortless.

All the planning and work that went into this issue will be worthwhile if you take nothing from John's essay but this: "All people who truly cherish the outdoors, whatever they like to do there, have a stake in its preservation...." As I interpret it, regardless of whether you prefer to shoot a deer with a gun or a camera, you have a stake in where and how the deer lives. If the deer does not survive and prosper because of habitat loss, it will make little difference how you wish to shoot it, for it will not be there.

Over the years, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine has striven to offer something of the outdoors to every Texan, regardless of his or her bent. Just as there is room in the outdoors for all caring people, there is room in the pages of this magazine for a full panoply of outdoor activities.

Here is our vision for this magazine: We will continue to run stories on how to harvest the game and fish of Texas and how to enjoy that harvest; we will not abandon this vital heritage. At the same time we will stretch to interest the birder, biker, hiker and the whole spectrum of outdoorsman. Is that trying to be all things to all people? Yes, we have plenty of room for everyone, everyone who cares deeply about the Texas outdoor heritage.

I was chastised not long ago for attempting to publish both sides of a story rather than presenting the so-called party line. I would not presume to insult our readers so. A caring outdoorsman is an informed outdoorsman, and one capable of seeing through a one-sided presentation. This means we will stretch even further to bring you items of some controversy, for all is not well in our beloved state. Just as it is the responsibility of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to act as stewards for all the state's outdoors, it is the responsibility of its magazine to report on what's happening out there.

I hope you will come along on the journey for as far as you can go; it should prove to be interesting. Now, please turn the page and enjoy the prose of one of the nation's best writers, and the photos of some of the nation's best photographers.

— David Baxter



*S*now cloaks the rimrocks of Palo Duro Canyon in the High Plains. WYMAN MEINZER

The earth itself takes little note of political boundaries, except sometimes where ethnic views and needs make people behave better or worse toward land and creatures and plants on such a line's opposite sides. Our cherished state of Texas, at almost any rural point along its inland borders, is not much different in appearance or basic ecology from the areas just outside—our far western spur from those desert-and-mountain reaches of Old and New Mexico that adjoin it, our classic ranching country in near West Texas from the southern Great Plains of which it is the tip, our pine-hardwood forests in the Neches and Sabine basins from the woods that stretch east across the lower South, and so on.

The real differences are inside the state, and they derive from its sheer size, which spreads it over a number of zones of climate and topography and gives it a variety of natural regions, each with its own web of wildlife, vegetation, moisture, soils, rocks, hills and valleys, its own look and smell and feel. There are something over a dozen of these regions, the exact number depending on which authority you consult. They have such familiar names as the Trans-Pecos, the Pineywoods, the Blackland Prairies, and the Edwards Plateau, and most Texans have an idea of what they're like and where they lie. The transitions between them are sometimes subtle but often sharply defined, such as where the Panhandle's flat High Plains fall away in dramatic scarps and canyons to the Rolling Plains at the Caprock, or where the reddish volcanic stones and soils of the Llano Uplift suddenly supplant the Hill Country's layered white limestone.



*Spring brings bluebonnets and little
bluestem grasses to Inks Lake State Park in
the heart of the Hill Country.*

RICHARD REYNOLDS

Under the conditions that the early Indians knew and the first whites saw when they came here, the plants and wildlife found in the regions were of species that thousands of years of selection and adaptation had fitted into varying combinations of rainfall, temperature, soils and terrain. All of these things worked together to maintain a healthy whole. In the phrase used by ranchers and wildlife biologists, the regions were at “carrying capacity,” sustaining the maximum numbers of living things from year to year, decade to decade, century to century. And in terms of what is called biomass—the sheer volume and weight of life—carrying capacity back then, while not uniform across the regions, was far greater than it is now.

The tall, lush, diverse forests of the east and the moist, tree-thick riverbottoms of the central part of the present state teemed with the woodland wildlife that belonged there, predators and prey, great and small—deer, turkeys, quail, mountain lions, bears, squirrels, passenger pigeons . . . the whole array of creatures characteristic of the American Southeast. The tall and short grasslands that covered nearly all of the rest of the state supported enormous herds of bison, countless bands of antelope, billions of smaller creatures and birds, and the wolves and coyotes and such that fed upon that plenty.

The dry, rugged Trans-Pecos, with its wide desert stretches and its mountains, some standing high enough to intercept the moisture of clouds and to sustain pine forests, held a complement of wildlife attuned to that environment, including bighorn sheep, mule deer, mountain lions, antelopes and grizzlies. Behind the grassy, duned barrier islands along the coast, the estuarial bays boiled with fish, harbored seasonal swarms of big sea turtles and great flocks of shorebirds and cranes and other wading species, and were darkened by winter rafts of waterfowl. Here and there distinctive pockets held special arrays of wild things, one of the richest of these being a belt of low, thorny jungle along the lower Rio Grande with its jaguars, ocelots, coatis, javelinas and tropical and subtropical birds in infinite numbers and variety. Down toward the mouth of that river, old accounts tell us, a herd of Mexican manatees used to show up in summer, year after year.

That was paradise, we say ruefully of such conditions that we never saw and that

Goat's-foot morning glories bloom on Boca Chica beach on the southern tip of Texas (right).

LAURENCE PARENT

Cypress swamps lend an air of mystery to parts of East Texas (below).

BOB PARVIN



nobody will see again, and many of us can't look at a piece of countryside without trying to visualize it as it used to be. But the degree to which the conditions were paradise for the people who lived there in the beginning depended not only on the productivity of a given piece of territory, but also on the cultural advancement and skills of the people themselves. Agricultural Indians such as the Caddoans, inhabiting well-watered, game-filled forestlands and riverbottoms, lived fatly, with time and leisure to maintain an ordered, traditional existence. At an opposite extreme, though, the prehistoric natives of the country inland from the lower Gulf Coast, our present Brush Country, seem to have led a harshly marginal life, scratching and scrabbling for every morsel of food, despite the presence of much game. That region was then mainly subhumid prairies and savannahs, and grasslands were hard for these primitive pedestrians to cope with. Even on the meat-rich western buffalo ranges—where later the Comanches and other Plains tribesmen, having acquired Spanish horses and great skill in using them, would ride and hunt and fight for nearly two centuries as well-fed lords of the landscape—the original footbound Apaches appear to have had to work hard for a share of the wealth of hooved protein that roamed the neighborhood about them—roamed, often, a bit too fast to be followed and stalked and slain. The bands of these Indians who lived best not only hunted but farmed a little in places with water for irrigation.

After people of European stock showed up and started taking over, the kinds of country in which they settled influenced the forms of their lives and their attitudes and outlook. Until only a few decades ago, just about all Texans carried in their heads a catalog of regional stereotypes, including Pineywoods natives deeply Southern in their ways; leathery, dextrous Hispanic vaqueros of the Brush Country; two-mule cotton farmers in forlorn combat with drought in the red-dirt Rolling Plains; hardbitten fencepost-choppers in the cedar hills; full-fledged Western cowboys on the big ranches out toward the Caprock's canyons or in Big Bend. The *(continued on page 15)*



Early day Texas teemed with turkeys and other wildlife.

KEVIN PAINTER



Prairie dogs once numbered in the millions on the Texas High Plains. WYMAN MEINZER



Known as a biological crossroads, the Big Thicket National Preserve (above) contains a diverse collection of plants and wildlife.

LAURENCE PARENT

Rain over the Hueco Mountains (left) fills shallow depressions or huecos that have provided life-sustaining water for humans and wildlife for thousands of years.

LAURENCE PARENT

Although abundant, raccoons usually are nocturnal and seldom seen.

WYMAN MEINZER

Sunset over a Matagorda Island estuary (below).

STEPHAN MYERS



(continued from page 11) stereotypes were based on reality, and reality was based to a large extent on the kinds of country that helped to produce these people and their lives.

If the old Spaniards and Anglos and Germans and such were reshaped in part by the land, they reshaped the land also, unlike the Indians before them, who by and large had been content to leave the country as they found it. The Spanish came first and explored widely in present Texas, but in the long run intractable Apaches and Comanches confined most of the Spaniards' ranches and forts and missions to the country from San Antonio south, the erstwhile homeland of the primitive Coahuiltecan scroungers. Here the conquistadores' heirs ran long-horned cattle, using intricate skills that later would be learned by others and carried up the length of the Great Plains as a basis for Western ranching. The Anglo-Americans and the rest, arriving later along the coast and in East Texas, were slowed by Indians too, but eventually pushed into all corners of the state.

With livestock and plows and axes and firearms, the newcomers assaulted paradise with ambitious vigor—felling forests, clearing bottomlands, turning lush tallgrass prairies into fields of cotton and corn, building railroads from horizon to horizon, grazing big herds everywhere, killing off large predators and grass-eating beasts that competed with their livestock, or that had market value as meat or fur or leather. Often creatures were slain for the pure hell of it, for the fun of killing, a part of the frontier ethos that lasted well into our own century and is manifested in old photographs of proud, smiling hunters with large numbers of dead furred or finned or feathered things hung up in rows on display.

The prevailing notion seems to have been that nature's bounty was inexhaustible, a comforting idea perhaps, but faulty. Sooner or later, nearly all parts of Texas were much altered from what they had been in virgin days, and their carrying capacity plummeted. Cedar and mesquite and other invasive scrub growth crept onto eaten-down grassland. Much sloping terrain, denuded by the plow or by grazing or logging, washed to bedrock or barren subsoil. Deserts became more



Water from the Ogallala aquifer has brought changes to the Texas High Plains, once the domain of great herds of bison. But how long can the Ogallala hold out?

WYMAN MEINZER

desert than ever and expanded at their fringes. Grizzlies, wolves, bison, bighorn sheep, elk, manatees and sea turtles vanished, as did many smaller beasts; most other edible or predatory species were vastly reduced in numbers and distribution; and practically all of the land had been turned into farms and ranches, with towns and cities here and there.

In relatively recent times this continuing process has transformed such places as the lower Rio Grande Valley, where the bulldozing of brush to permit highly profitable farming, based on irrigation and a year-long growing season, has all but done away with the old thorn-forest environment that once harbored jaguars and such. Another region in which irrigation has wrought major change is the High Plains where, mainly after World War II, farmers began heavy pumping from the Ogallala aquifer that underlies that land on which great herds of bison used to graze and wander, before the market-slaughter of the 1870s wiped them out and sent the proud horse Indians to reservations. The flatter parts of this wide tableland—called “the baldies” by early cattlemen because it had no trees—now are a checkerboard of lush fields planted in food and forage and fiber crops. But the Ogallala is dwindling fast, and nobody seems to be sure what will happen when the water is gone. Some results already are clear enough, like soaring pumping costs as the water level drops, and shrunken flows in the copious springs that for ages have blessed some of the lovely sheltered canyons below the Caprock, making them a favored wintering ground of the Indians and the New Mexico *comancheros* who bickered with them there for goods and livestock stolen on raids south of the Rio Grande or along the Texas frontier.

Little changes creep in too, their origins often obscure. A bird-watching family living in the country, for instance, one spring may note the *(continued on page 31)*



The raucous blue jay is one of the noisiest of Texas's 542 bird species.

MASLOWSKI PHOTO



Elk (left) began to vanish from West Texas as settlers decreased the land's carrying capacity.

ED DUTCH

Agriculture brought changes to the Rio Grande Valley (below).

STEVE BENTSEN

Reservoirs such as Lake Wright Patman (right, in Atlanta State Park) brought changes to the eastern part of the state.

WILLARD CLAY





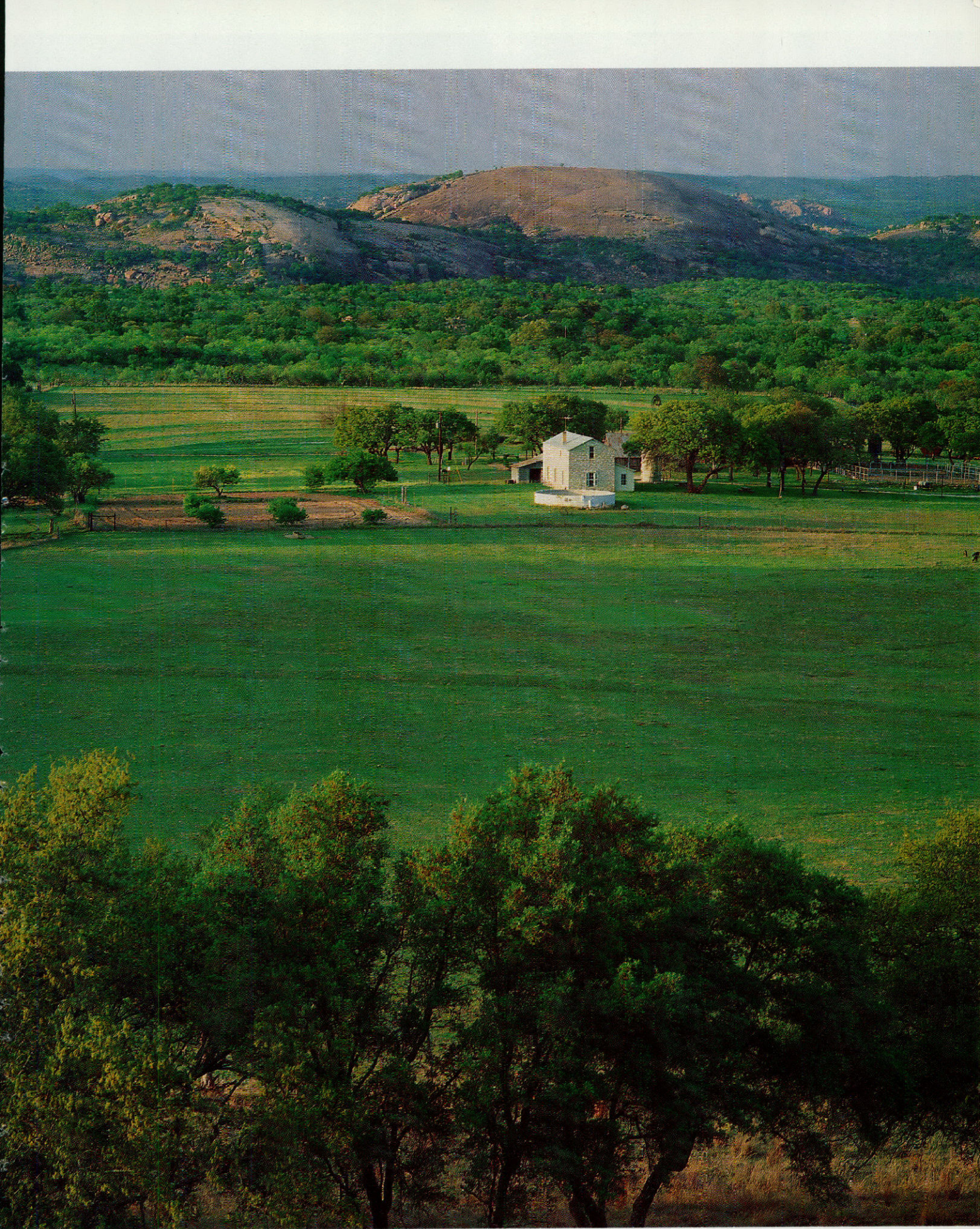


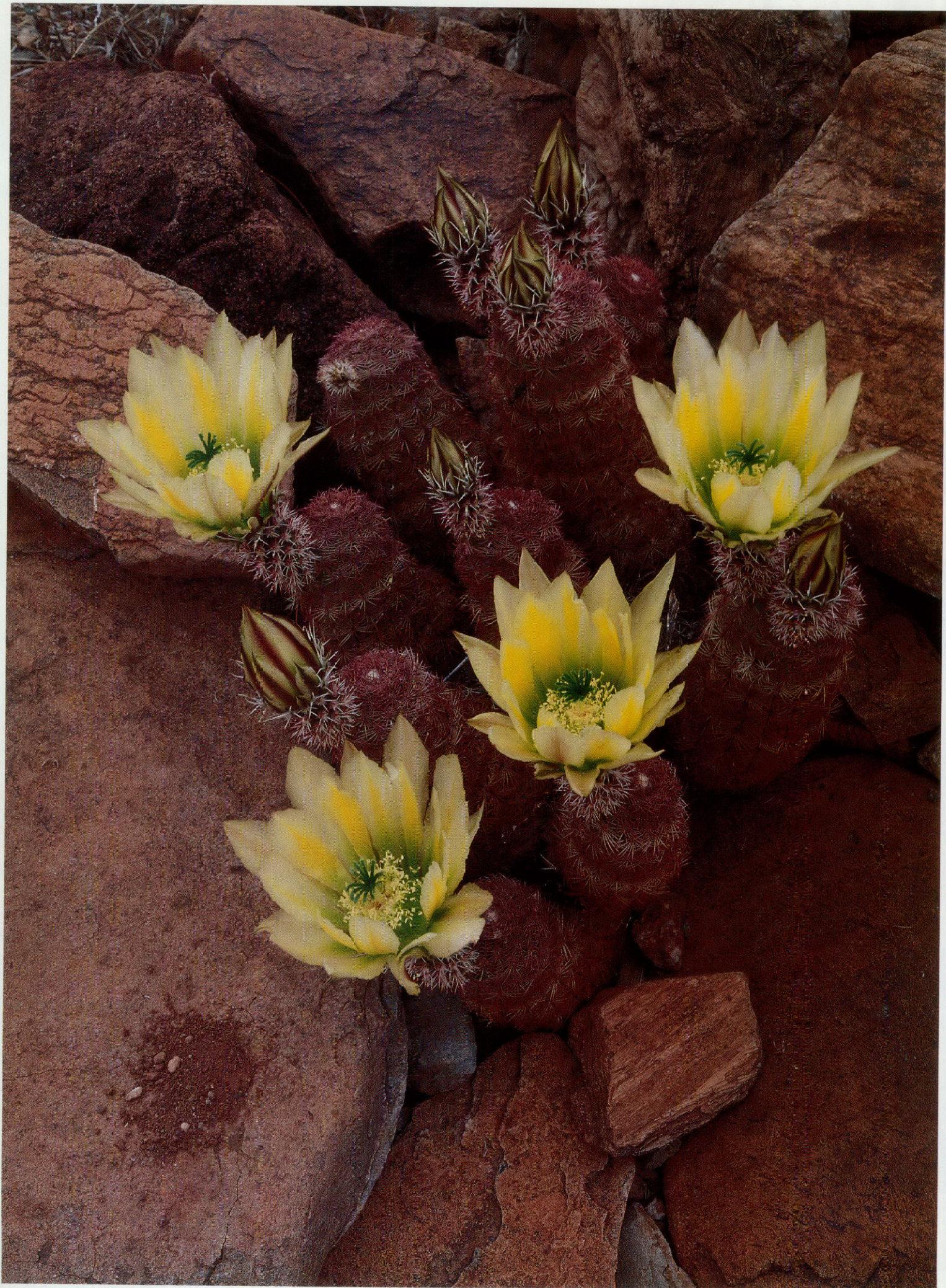
Common sunflowers and the leaves of a morning glory vine form a colorful autumn bouquet. RUSTY YATES

Enchanted Rock rises behind a pastoral Hill Country scene.

LAURENCE PARENT









Spanish moss drapes live oak trees in East Texas (above).

JOE LIGGIO

A copperhead conceals itself in a pile of fallen oak leaves (right).

GLEN MILLS

Texas rainbow cacti bloom near the Rio Grande in Big Bend National Park (left).

WILLARD CLAY





Turkeys parade across freshly fallen snow in the High Plains.

WYMAN MEINZER



Pronghorns (left) have returned to West Texas, thanks to restocking.

GRADY ALLEN

Spider lilies dot a rice field near Eagle Lake (right).

EARL NOTTINGHAM

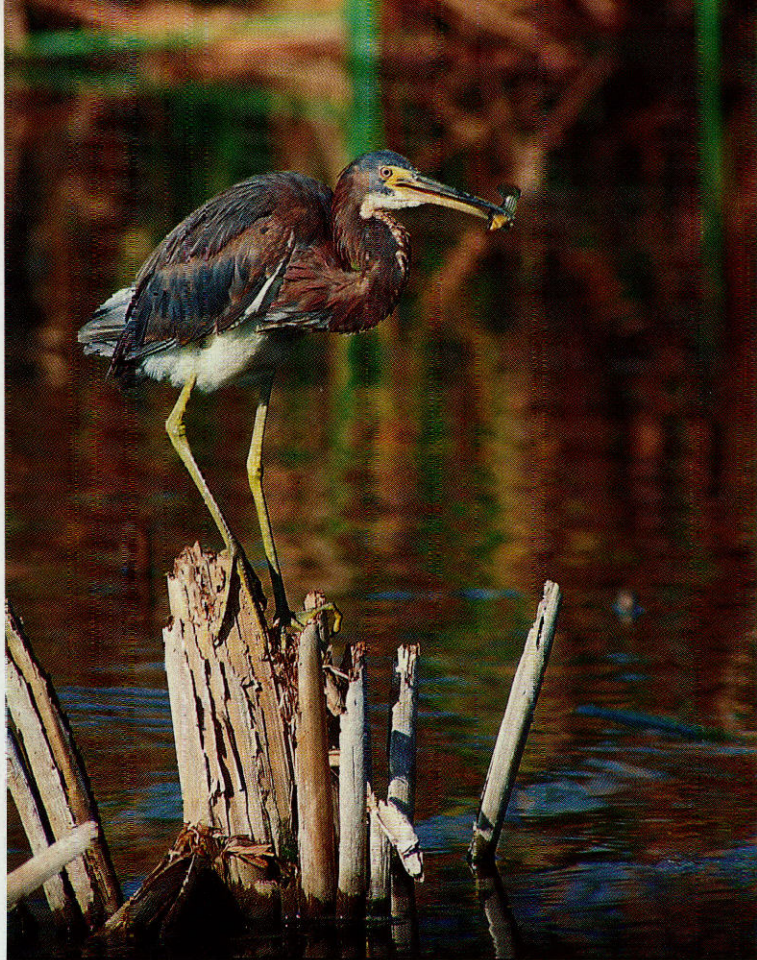


José Maria Spring, a tributary of Dolan Creek, is part of Devils River State Natural Area. LEROY WILLIAMSON





Best known for their spring flowers, dogwood trees also provide subtle fall colors. LAURENCE PARENT



A tricolored heron hunts in shallow coastal bays. ROB CURTIS



A lone hiker explores Franklin Mountains State Park high above the city of El Paso. LAURENCE PARENT



*C*ypress trees line the Frio River as it flows through Garner State Park in the Hill Country.

RALPH HOPKINS

(continued from page 17) absence of great crested flycatchers, or rough-winged swallows, or some particular warbler, and afterward may never see the species again, whether the disappearance has to do with logging and clearing in the Latin American rainforests, or pesticides in Mexico, or some other dim and distant force.

Thus the long era of exploitation is still barreling along, not only here but in most other habitable parts of the earth's surface as well. In the past its result generally has been considered progress, and many people still see it so, prizing the nearly 50 years of prosperity that we've had since World War II, and the swelling growth—based on things like petroleum, industry, business, mass communications, nuclear power, the burgeoning of great cities and of population—that has fostered the extended boom. Only rather lately have large numbers of folks begun to point accusing fingers at our way of life and its costs, exemplified in air and water and visual pollution, urban sprawl and blight, resource exhaustion, extinction of species, habitat destruction, global warming, ozone depletion, and on down the dreary list.

Despite all these ills, progress did bring a certain new richness to the Texas landscape. It is called history, and we've already looked at a good bit of it. Its chronicles and tales may not always be edifying fare, but for a good many of us, awareness of it is a main part of outdoor experience. We need to know, insofar as possible, what kinds of men and women were in a place long before our own time, and how they lived, and what kinds of things they did to one another and to the land.

It is a fine thing to stand at daybreak under tall cypresses in a valley between cedar-clad heights, watching crystalline, cool, purling Hill Country creek water in its flow, hearing the songs of mockingbirds and tanagers and golden-cheeked warblers, the chattering of squirrels, and the alarm-cough of white-tailed deer, seeing the slash of bass and the sprinkling shower of panicked minnows, with the knowledge that even through changes those things always have been there and, with luck, always will be. It is something else very fine, too, to know that on the brow of one of the hills Indian sentries chipped out flint tools and weapons as they watched for tribal enemies; that helmeted Spaniards rode through these valleys in



*Great egrets live in marshy areas
around Matagorda Bay.*

GLENN HAYES

a vain search for gold and silver, as did deadly Rangers in a search, not always vain, for raiding Comanches; and that the grayed, tumbledown stone walls surrounding the valley's small, overgrown patches of former cropland were laid up by a 19th-century East Prussian immigrant, testimony of his intention to install his bloodline on that land forever.

Or let's say that you're easing your boat along a marshy fringe of Matagorda Bay, past distrustful white egrets and roseate spoonbills poised for flight. As you watch intently for swirling or tailing redfish to which to cast your lure, all the while another part of you is aware that not far away, in 1685, the doomed French explorer La Salle, after losing both of his ships on the bay's shoals, built Fort St. Louis, where his people were later slaughtered by the region's tough Karankawa Indians. And that nearby Indianola, where hordes of early German settlers disembarked in Texas, was the chief bustling port of this coast until hurricanes in 1875 and 1886 destroyed it so thoroughly that now you can fish among the submerged foundations of its buildings.

And that Linnville, also near, had been just as completely obliterated by a huge Comanche raid in 1840. And . . . but maybe that's enough to make the point. History, like birds and beasts and vegetation, is all around.

Fifty years ago, in the lingering frontier tradition, most of us Texans who sought our pleasure outdoors did so with guns or fishing rods in hand. But the intervening period has seen an expansion of many other kinds of outdoor activity, each with enthusiastic adherents—hikers, climbers, photographers, canoeists, campers whether primitive or motorized, rubber-rafters through the canyons of the Rio Grande, birdwatchers in numbers unheard of in the old days, roarers up and down hills on ATVs or dirt bikes, botanizers, amateur archaeologists, rock hounds, water-skiers . . . who else?



Jetties at Port Aransas attract anglers by the thousands.

GRADY ALLEN



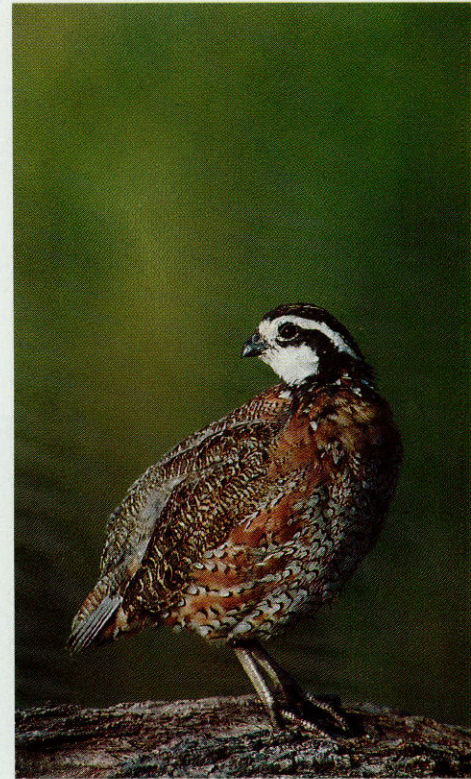
*W*hite-tailed deer number more than 3 million in Texas. D.K. LANGFORD

Some of us pursue two or more of these interests at the same time—compatible ones at least; it does seem unlikely, for instance, that a dirt-biker is going to have bird-watching binoculars dangling from his neck.

Whatever your outdoor preferences may be, you usually can find an outlet for them in most of the different regions of the state. Hunters, as an example, have a wide realm of choice. Although it's certain that nobody is ever again going to fell 20 buffalo in a morning, or drive home in a mule-drawn wagon heaped high with prairie chickens, some more adaptable game species are probably in better supply than they have been for 100 years or so, primarily because of recent good management by landowners and governmental agencies. Deer and turkey and quail and dove abound in the oldest-settled areas—the eastern forests and savannahs, the coastal prairies, the Hill Country, the brushy lands south of San Antonio. Waterfowl, their numbers in decline in recent years chiefly because of habitat disruption far to the north of Texas, are found along the coast, in rivers and ponds, on seasonal High Plains playa lakes, and on numerous big inland reservoirs constructed in the past few decades.

The ranches in the western reaches of the Edwards Plateau and in the Rolling Plains—old buffalo range—have their good share of standard species also. In the rough, dry, magnificent Trans-Pecos region, there are huntable populations of pronghorn antelope and mule deer, as there are also in some rolling reaches of the High Plains. On the irrigated, farm-checked stretches of this latter tableland, a bit ironically perhaps, one of the main creatures now hunted where the Comanches once ran bison is an exotic—the Asian ring-necked pheasant, a lovely and civilized and toothsome bird that thrives on the fringes of agriculture. A less felicitous alien is the aoudad, found in the Caprock canyonlands and beyond the Pecos and viewed darkly by biologists because it competes for forage with mule deer and other native browsers.

Largely because of the new reservoirs, fishing is a passion (*continued on page 47*)



Bobwhite quail are abundant throughout much of the state.

GRADY ALLEN

The sight of a white-tailed deer at sunrise stirs even veteran wildlife observers (right).

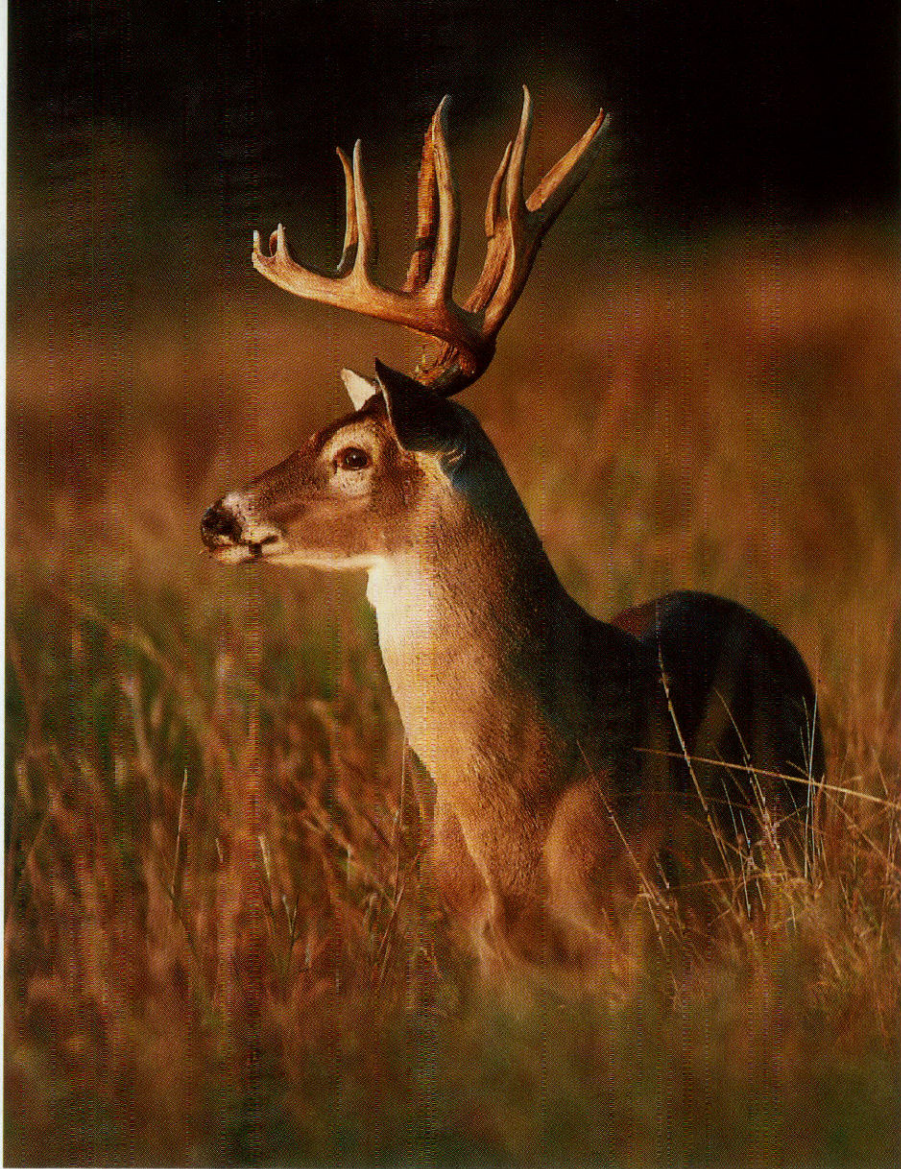
RICHARD HAVERLAH

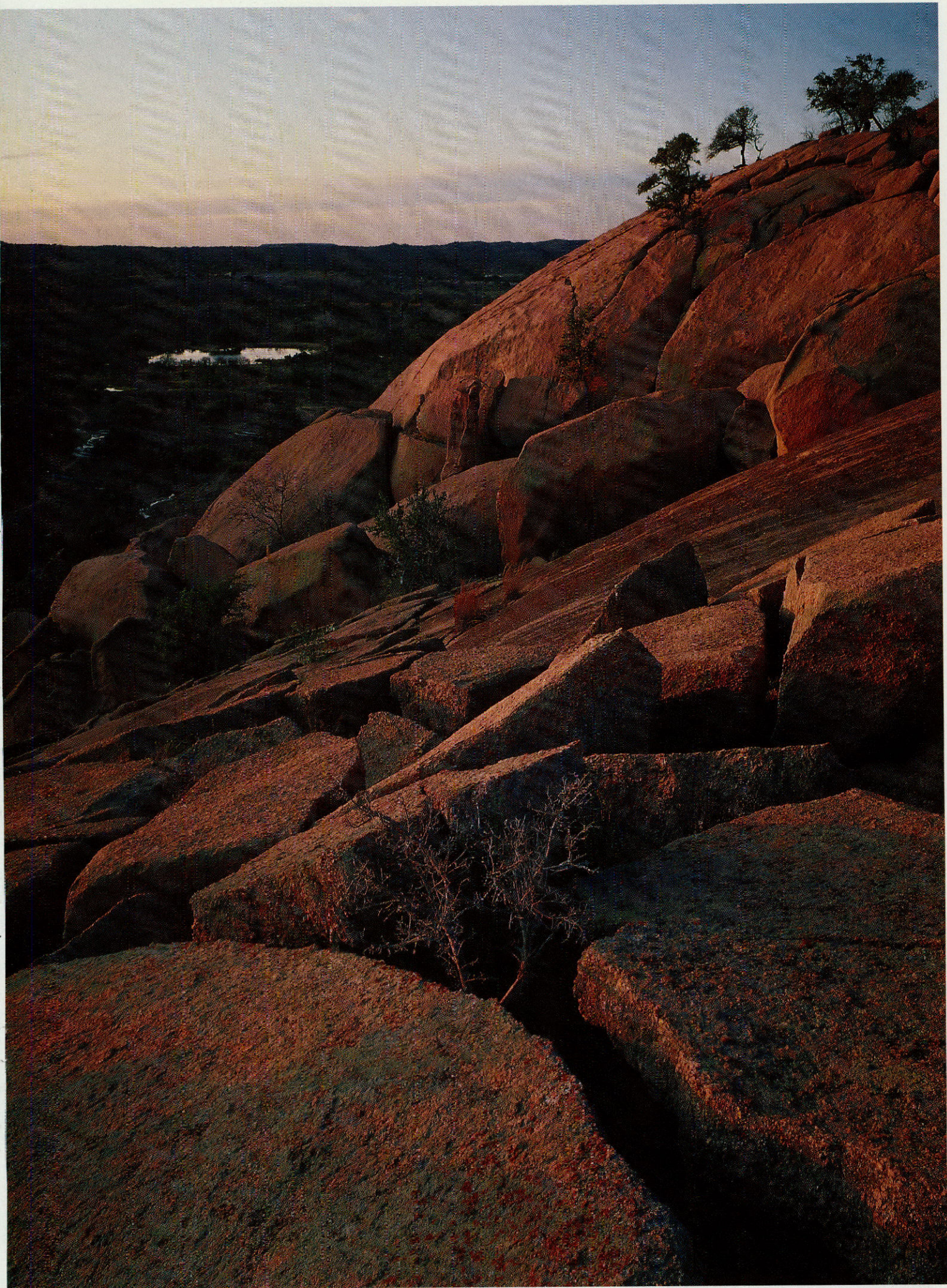
The theme music of the natural world includes the hollow bark of foxes (below).

ROB CURTIS

Native Americans believed Enchanted Rock (opposite) possessed supernatural powers.

RICHARD REYNOLDS







Dog Canyon's bigtooth maples bring autumn color to the Guadalupe Mountains (left).

JIM W. GRACE

Campfires (right) warm the hands and the spirit.

ED DUTCH

A gray squirrel nurses her young in a nest of twigs and leaves.

MASLOWSKI PHOTO



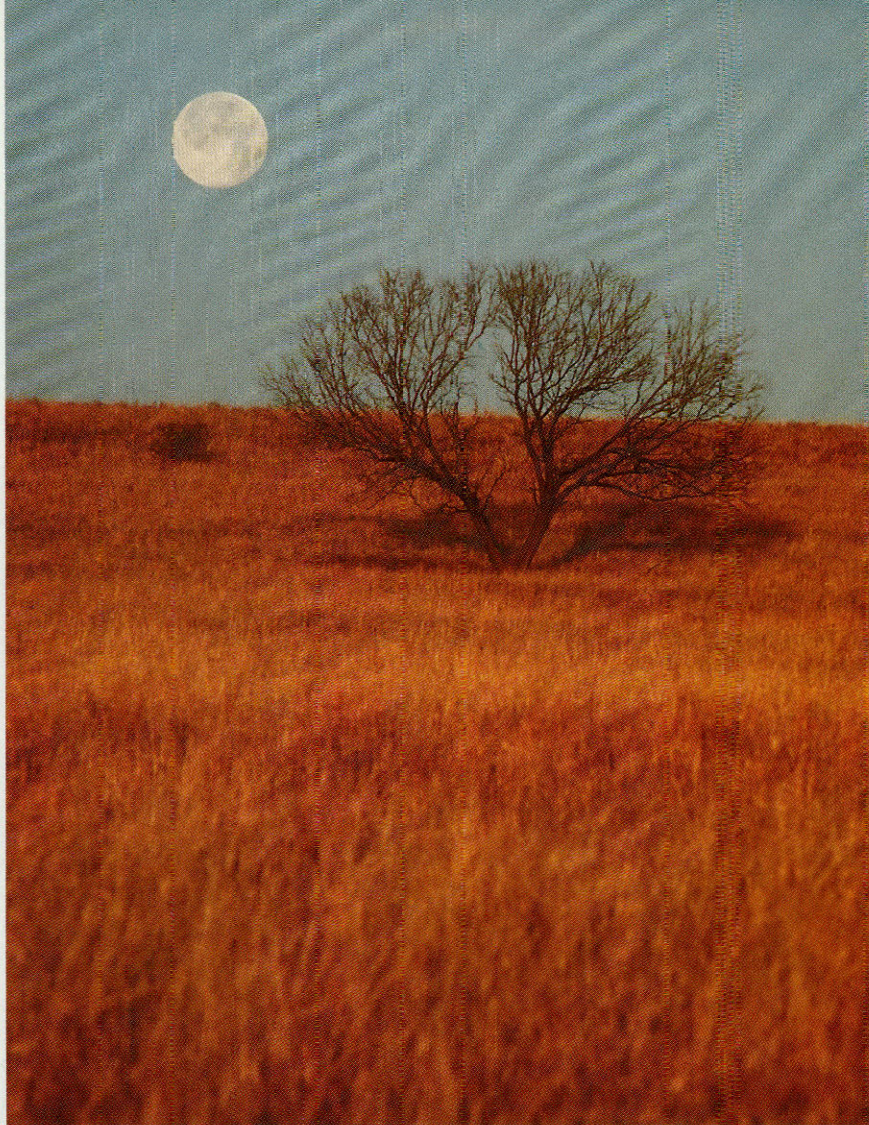


All people who cherish the outdoors—duck hunters to backpackers—have a stake in its preservation.

RAY SASSER



The ring-necked pheasant, an Asian import, thrives on the fringes of agriculture in the High Plains. RAY SASSER



The moon sets on a stark winter scene near Muenster in North-central Texas.

JEFF DILBECK



Sycamore leaves and cypress needles line a shallow pool. BOB PARVIN



Blue quail (above) thrive in the western part of the state.

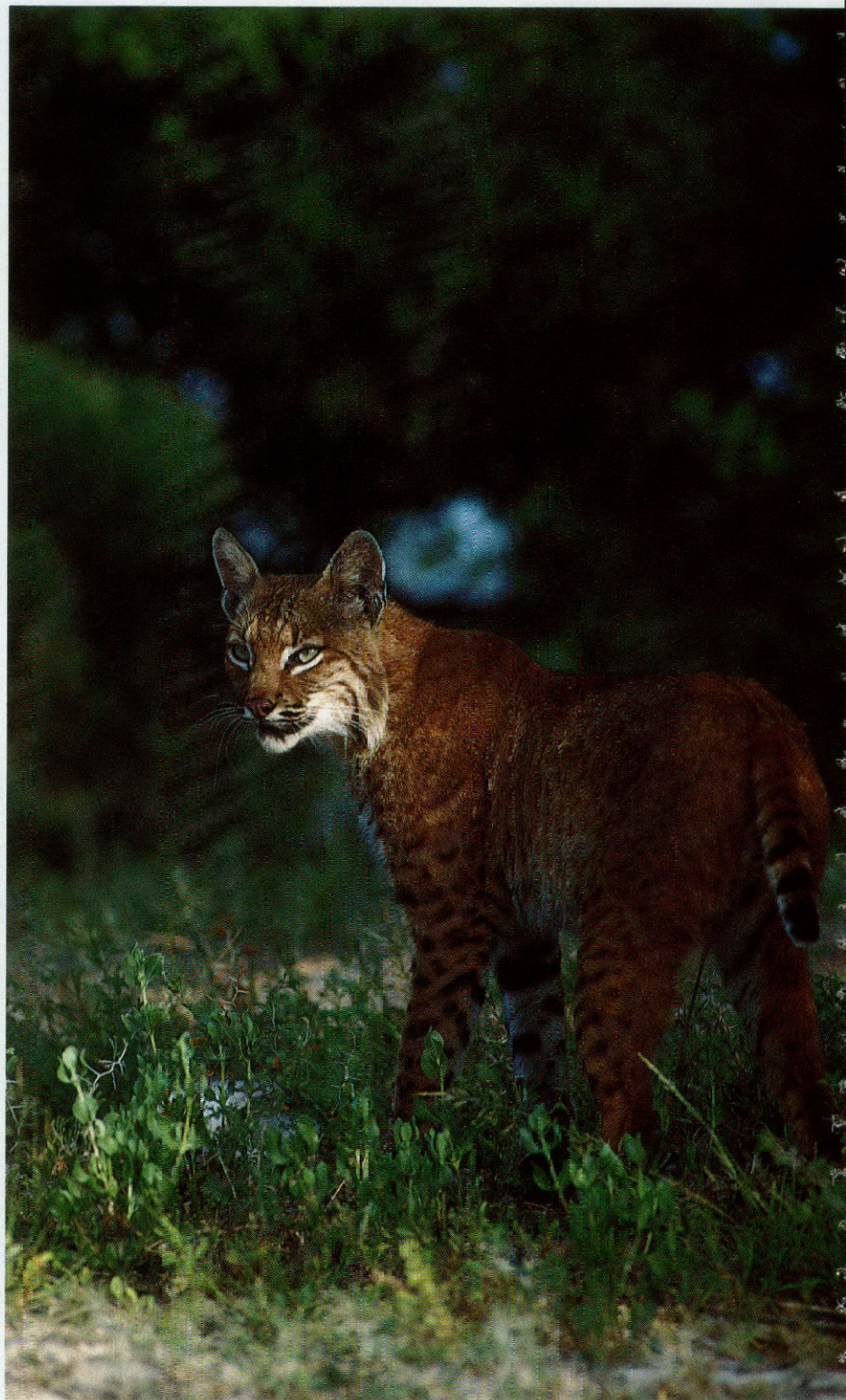
WYMAN MEINZER

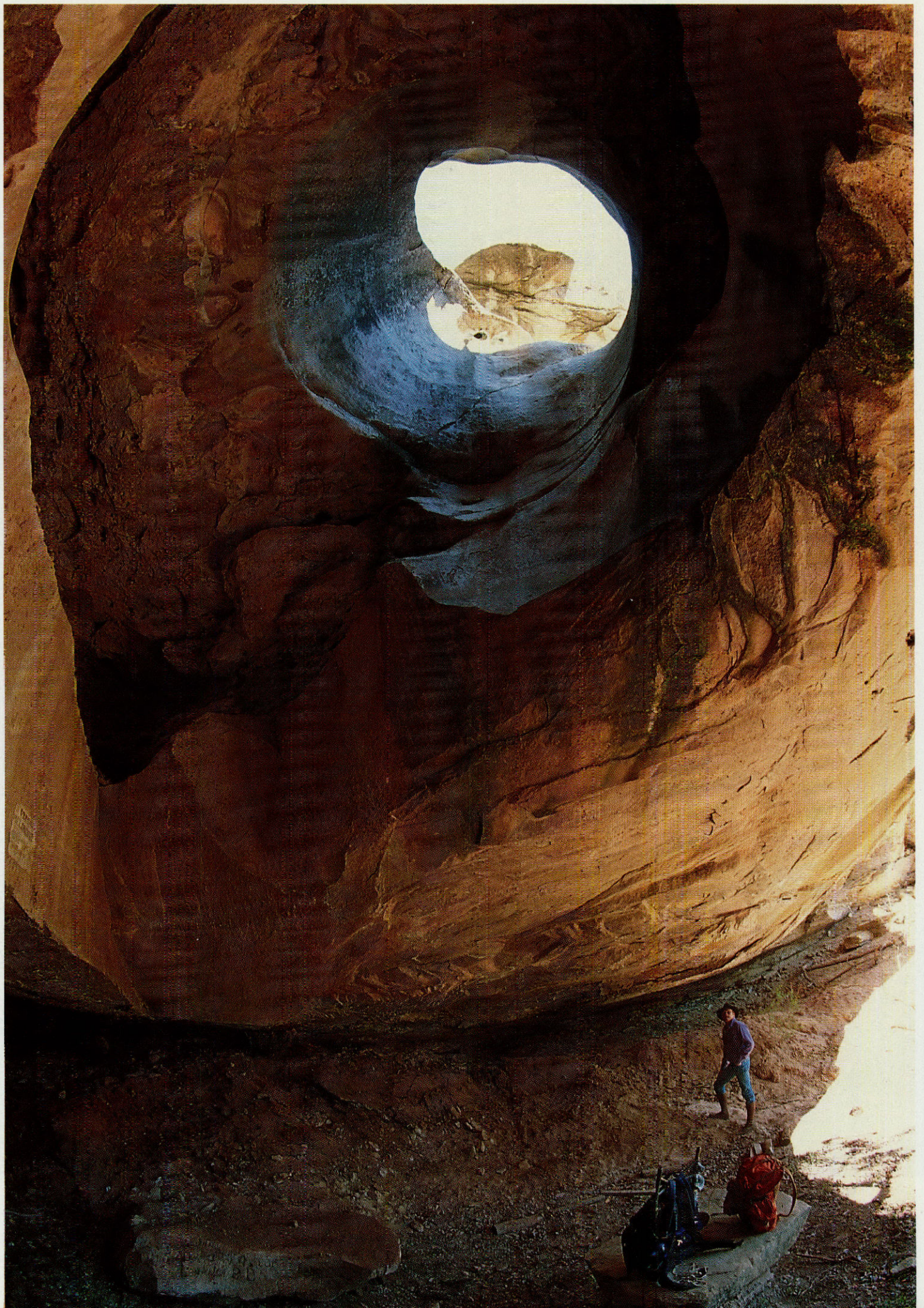
A bobcat stalks its prey in the South Texas brush.

STEVE BENTSEN

Flewing water carved this hole in the top of a cave in the upper reaches of Palo Duro Canyon.

WYMAN MEINZER







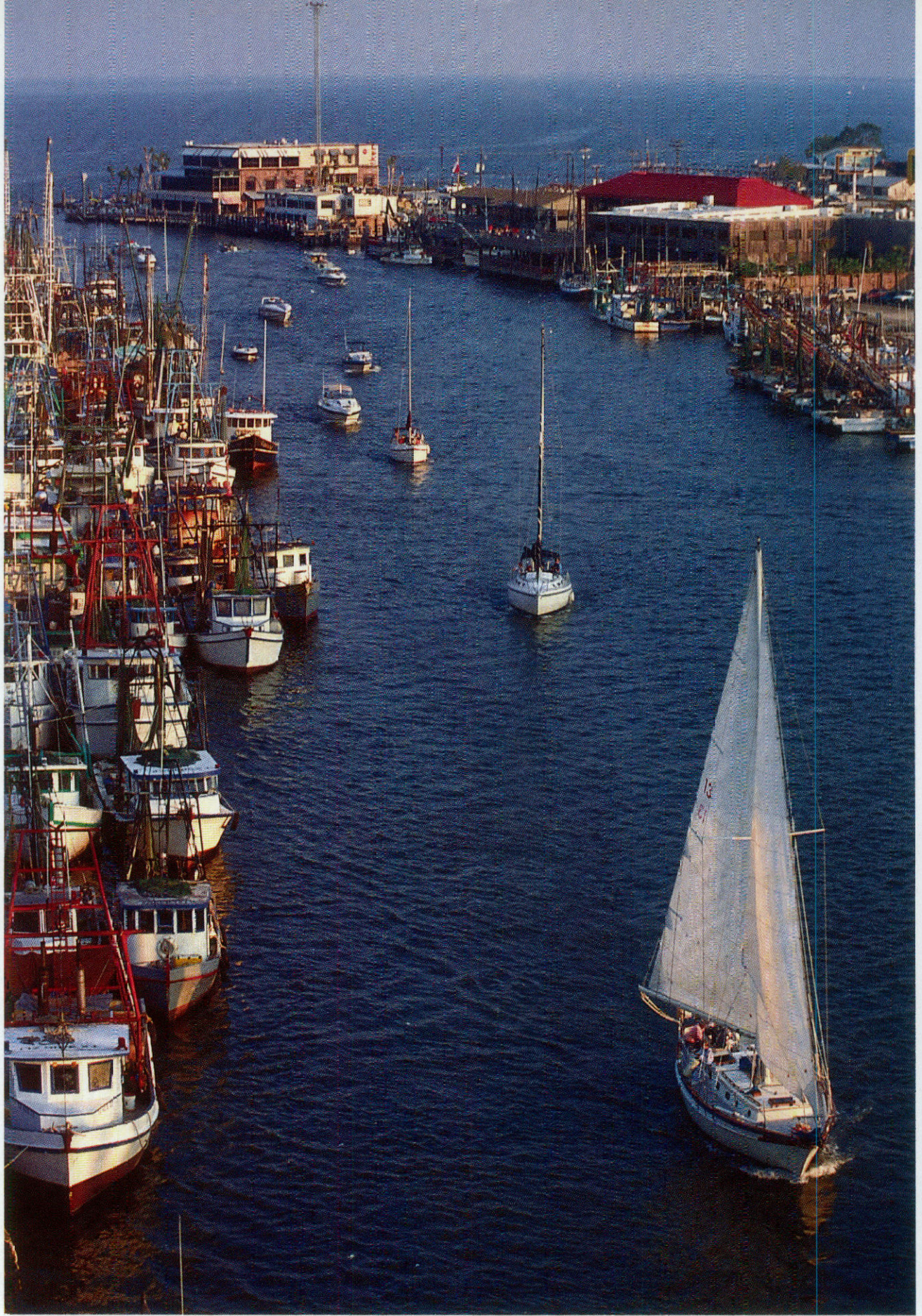
Whether on large reservoirs or quiet streams, fishing is a passion of Texans throughout the state.

RUSTY YATES

(continued from page 35) of many Texans now, even in dry western sections where a generation or so ago it was hard to find a place to wet a hook. Some of the impoundments form handsome lakes, especially in the forested east, and many have attracted thick shoreline development of summer homes, from which fast, powerful ski boats roar happily out across the waters. Most are highly productive of fish—as they ought to be, considering the thousands of acres of fertile riverbottom full of life, the most productive land of all, that have been drowned beneath each of them. On some, big annual bass fishing tournaments are held, with elaborately equipped boats, enormous cash prizes and professional contestants who follow the circuit of these events.

Unprogressively, some of us throwback types prefer when possible to do our freshwater angling more quietly on rivers and streams, in small state parks or private lakes, or even in the humble, willow-fringed ranch ponds known as “tanks,” where fast boats and water-skiers and such are rather scarce. But even we reactionaries have to admit that the reservoirs have improved the flowing sections of a number of rivers, by settling out the red-brown West Texas silt that within living memory used to keep them turbid most of the time, and had given the Red and the Colorado their names. You can canoe now with pleasure in clear running water, and find great bass and crappie and bream fishing in stretches of river where setting out trotlines and throwlines for catfish once was the chief productive form of angling.

The historical, rich, estuarial bays inside the coast’s barrier islands draw many fishermen, too, and always have. The bays, like many other places, have their troubles these days. Being at the bottom end of the Texas rivers’ drainage systems, a number are subject to pollution from cities and industries and agricultural runoff. Most suffer from the effects of shrimpers’ trawls and “bycatch” culling, in which shrimp are separated on deck from enormous numbers of usually immature fish taken incidentally in the trawls, the latter being dumped back overboard mostly dead. The propellers of careless boaters plow barren streaks through life-rich shallow grassbeds, and unpredictable lethal blights like “red tide” occasionally



Boats queue up at Seabrook on Galveston Bay. SCOTT TEVEN

bring devastation. Along the bays' edges vacation development has been rife, much of it based on a process known as "finger-filling," wherein a section of marshland is dredged into parallel alternate canals and spoil-banks for boats and houses. This loss represents major damage, for the teeming marshes are essential to the bays' function as estuaries, brackish nurseries for the young of many marine species—a function further disrupted in many places by a shrinkage of needed freshwater inflows from rivers that are dammed upstream.

In consequence, the bays are less productive of aquatic life than they were 50 years ago, when some of us can remember chugging in from a morning's fishing (back then you chugged rather than skimmed, a five-horse outboard being the standard means of propulsion) with a hundred or more speckled trout in the bottom of the skiff and no thought that such bounty would ever wane. Wane it did, however, and rather fast, as commercial and recreational fishing expanded in the bays following World War II and the other troubles began to multiply.

Even so, these waters do still possess much resilience, and they have been receiving a great deal of study and help. Because of strict size and bag-limit regulations, protection from commercial harvest and restocking programs, populations of redfish and trout are at least healthier than during the 1960s heyday of market netting and trotlining and continued hoggish sportfishing, a period too when DDT and other poisons were inflicting heavy damage. You can go there now with a reasonable expectation of finding the fish you're seeking—even tarpon, which are showing up again after long decades of scarcity.

The breadth of Texas and its location on major migration routes make it the finest state in the nation for bird study, if that is one of your favored pursuits. The Peterson "Field Guide to the Birds of Texas" lists 542

Queen angelfish congregate around the Flower Garden reefs.

ED DUTCH



A ghost crab scurries along the beach (right).

STEPHAN MYERS

Redheads and other waterfowl (below) flock to the Texas coast each fall.

GARY KRAMER



species sighted at one time or another, including rare accidentals, which is about three-fourths of the species recorded for the whole nation. This amplitude of avifauna is scattered across the state, with pockets of special abundance here and there, like the Matagorda-Aransas area of the coast (old La Salle's stomping ground again), where hordes of birds pass through in migration in spring and fall and many aquatic and shore and wading species spend the winter. The most celebrated of these are the majestic whooping cranes of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, whose wintering ground once stretched from Louisiana southwestward. Other pockets, such as a few surviving patches of thorn forest in the lower Rio Grande Valley and the deserts and slopes and pine-topped heights of the Trans-Pecos, hold birds such as chachalacas, groove-billed anis, green and Steller's jays, Altamira orioles, Colima warblers and Gambel's and Montezuma quail, not found elsewhere in the state or sometimes elsewhere in the country.

Maybe most of us who like to observe birds and other wildlife, however, exercise our enthusiasm in the regions where we happen to live—in our own backyards, on Sunday-morning Audubon walks in parks, while paddling softly down a green smooth river, or when strolling alone in wooded bottomland or through a pasture speckled with mesquites. In all these places and in all of Texas, there is plenty to see, from spring warblers and other small glories in the woodlands, to herons and ducks and shorebirds and even eagles along the watercourses, to roadrunners and quail and flycatchers and hawks and small buzzing finches on the grass.

Plenty to hear also—creatures' calls and sounds that are the theme music of the natural world. Anyone who has immersed himself in the full-throated, sweetly discordant daybreak chorus of springtime songbirds, or has lain out under stars and listened to the noises of the night, hearing chuck-will's-widows, tree frogs, three kinds of owls, the hollow bark of foxes, the yip-wails of coyotes, the squeals of caught rabbits and the whicker of plovers passing overhead, has brushed against a bit of *(continued on page 63)*

A young cottontail keeps a watchful eye on its surroundings.

WYMAN MEINZER





The painted bunting is a bird of many colors (above). STEVE BENTSEN

White and rose prickly poppies surround a mesquite tree in Atascosa County. RICHARD REYNOLDS





Cardinals such as this female reside throughout the state.

BILL DRAKER

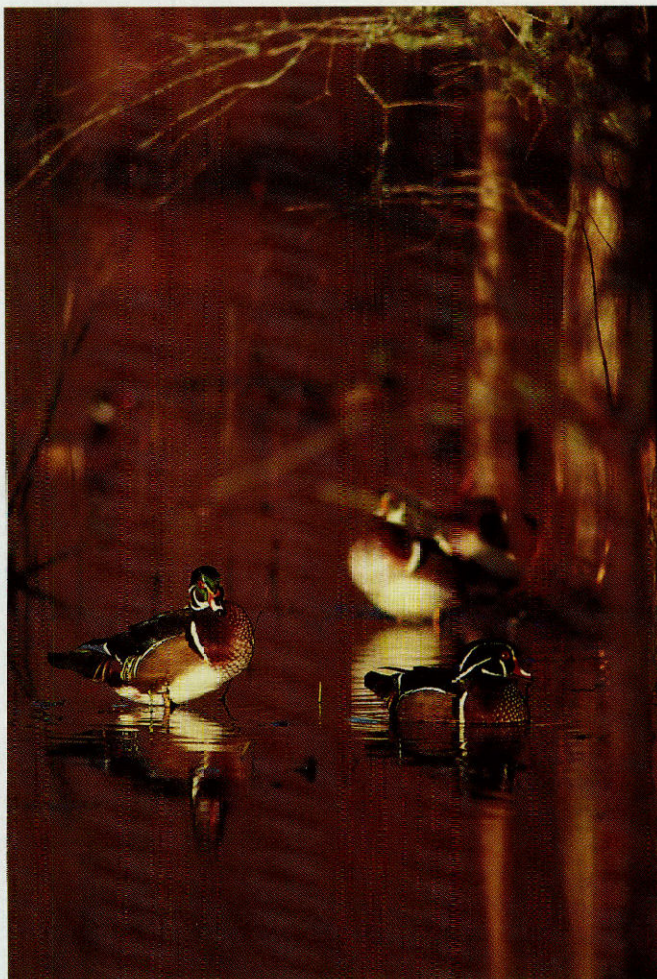
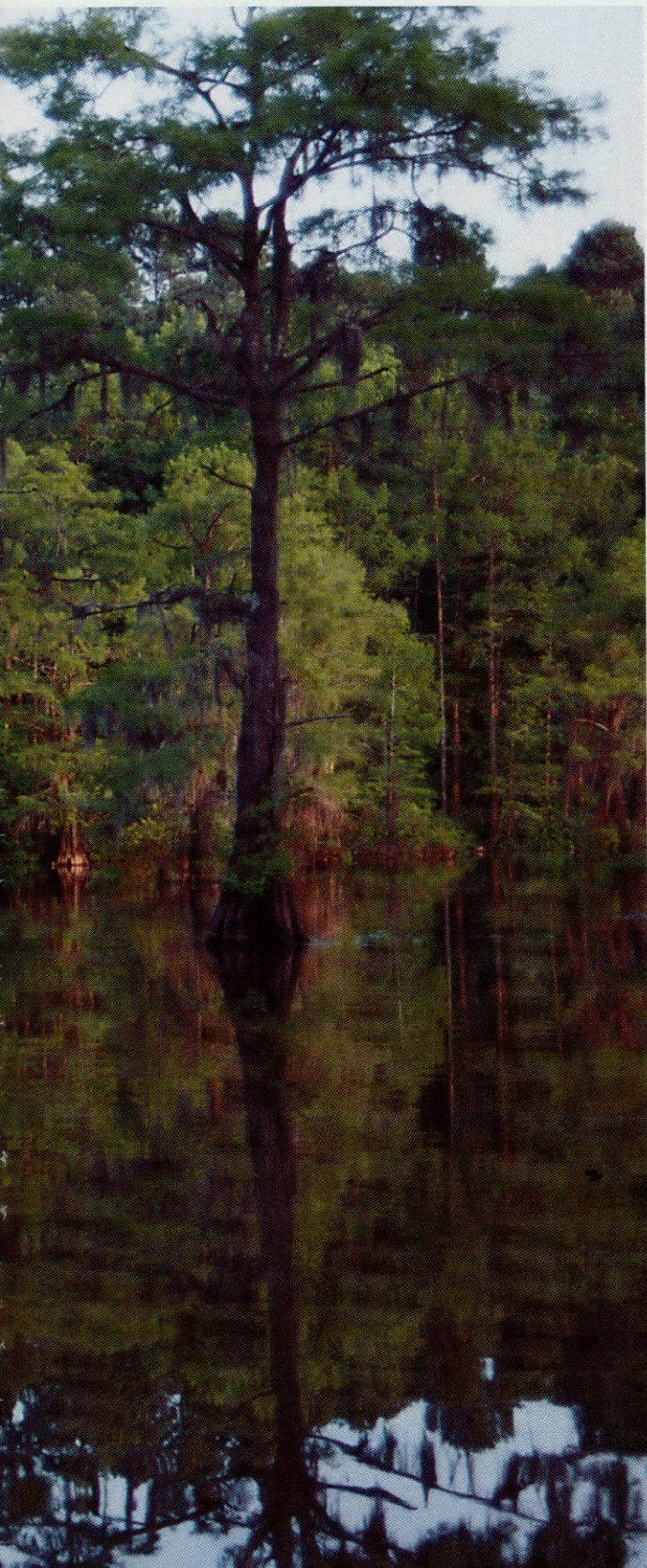


Lightning illuminates the night sky (above). ED DUTCH

Ceniza bushes bloom after a summer rain in Big Bend National Park (left).

EARL NOTTINGHAM





Striking colors and intricate face patterns are characteristics of the wood duck. LARRY DITTC



Bronze frogs are residents of damp, marshy areas in East Texas.

JOE LIGGIO

Canoeists pause for reflection on Caddo Lake (left).

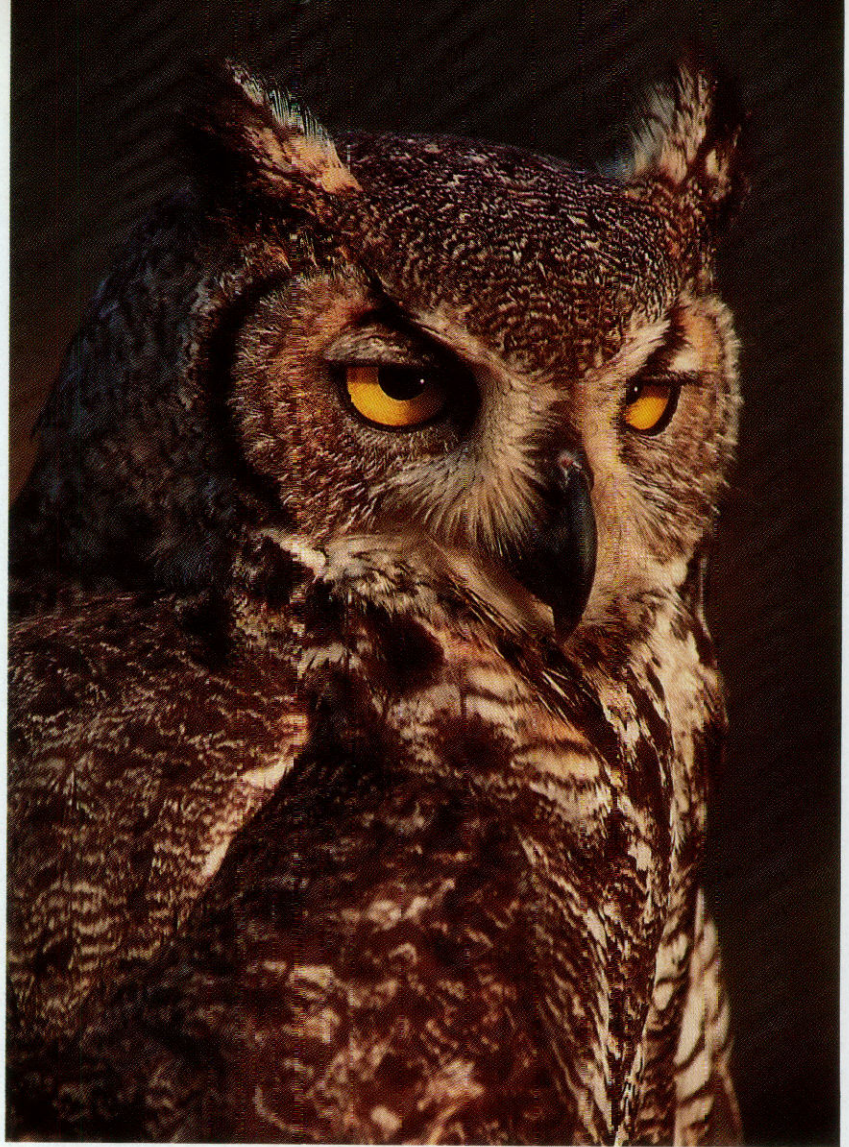
LEROY WILLIAMSON

Great-horned owls (right) rule the nighttime sky.

WYMAN MEINZER

A roadrunner delivers a horned lizard to its hungry nestling (below).

D. K. LANGFORD





Short-eared owls are birds of the marshes and coastal dunes. JOE COLE



A native eastern gamagrass prairie in Austin County. PAUL M. MONTGOMERY



The indigo bunting is one of Texas's most beautiful visitors.

MASLOWSKI PHOTO



A West Texas coyote in full winter pelage. WYMAN MEINZER

(continued from page 51) eternity. These sounds are a part of ancient reality, heard by the first white old-timers of that place when it was new, and before them by the Indians, and before the Indians by all beings back to the dim red dawn of things.

Having kept title to its own unpeopled sections when entering the Union and having disposed of most of them later, Texas does not have the vast expanses of federally owned land, encompassing deserts and rangeland and wooded mountains, that occupy much of the area of most western states and provide easy public access to wild or semiwild country. In terms of people's pursuit of outdoor pleasures this has to be seen as a lack, but it's a lack that has been much eased in the past few decades by government acquisitions of land and by the development of such practices as lease-hunting on private ranches and farms. Hundreds of thousands of acres in East Texas have been national forestland since the 1930s, and more than a million acres are administered by the National Park Service, from the Big Bend and the Guadalupe Mountains to Padre Island and the Big Thicket. Wildlife refuges, both state and federal; fishing and boating waters, whether salt or fresh; state parks scattered thickly through the regions and affording entry into all kinds of Texas landscapes, natural phenomena, and historic sites—all these are available for public use suited to their purposes. New tracts still are being added through activities of the state, the federals, and nonprofit organizations such as the Texas Nature Conservancy.

The outdoors has a lot of stubborn strength even after being abused, and in these accessible lands much of the old Texas richness survives or has been nurtured into new existence, giving us at least a glimpse of what the land was like when new. It also survives in many private holdings, some of them very large, where an approximation of the old conditions has been preserved or brought back by enlightened



Anglers cast for bass at Lake Fork on a foggy morning.

RAY SASSER

Rings of homemade sausage hang in the smokehouse (right) at Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm in Lyndon B. Johnson State Historic Park near Johnson City.

LAURENCE PARENT



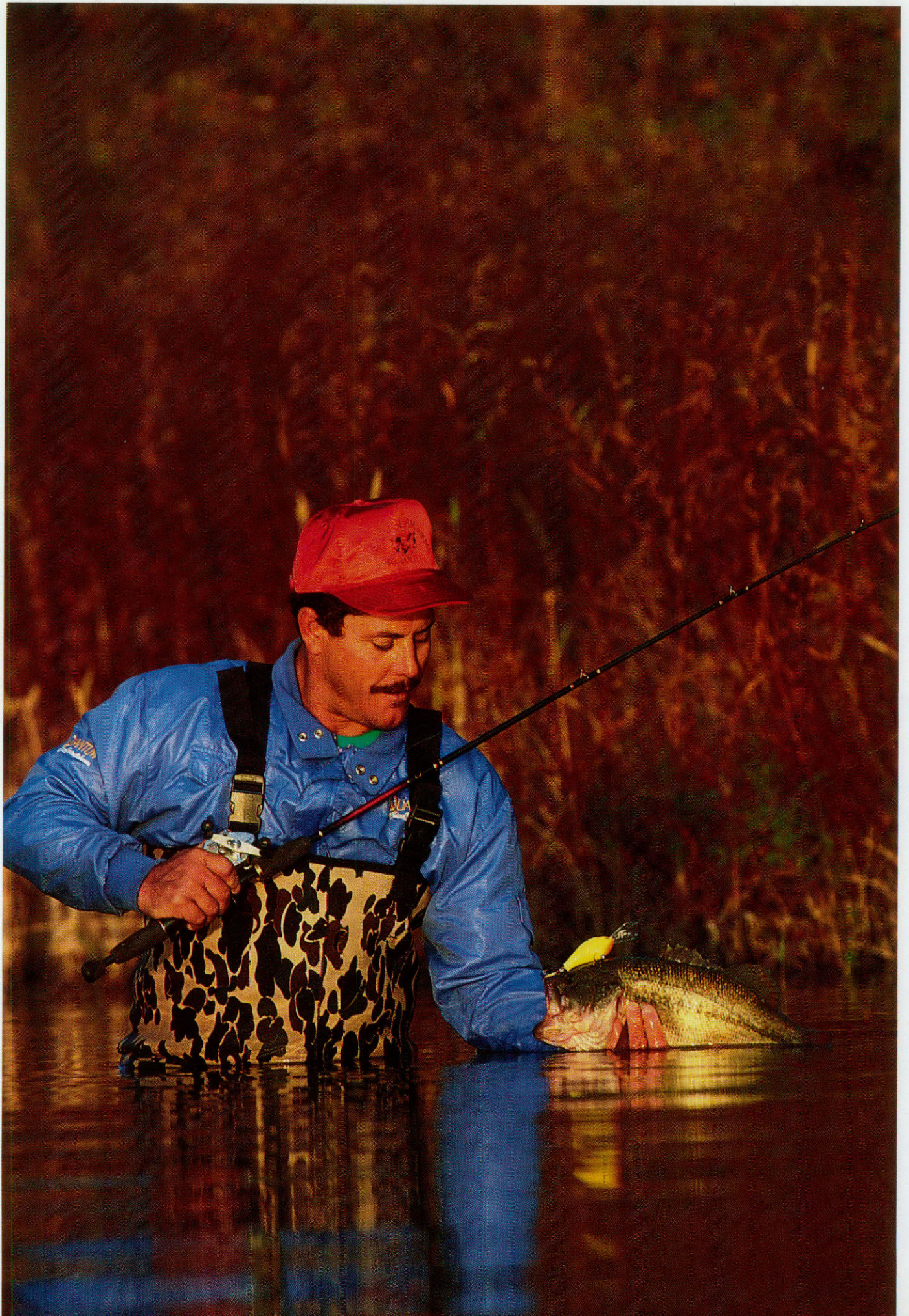
Demonstrations at the farm show how frontier families produced most of their own food, including fresh vegetables.

LAURENCE PARENT

owners. Behind much of the improvement on both public and private land lies a relatively new body of knowledge about the management of resources with conservation in mind. A lot of it was born of the desperation of the 1930s, when economic depression and the Dust Bowl drought wrought havoc on rural Texans and their old frontier ways of using land. This retribution for the sins of the past made starkly clear the need for new and enlightened approaches to farming and ranching and forestry, based not on exploitation of the soil but on sustainable yield.

In terms of wildlife and the environments it depends on, the same kind of realization, along with an explosion of scientific knowledge about the web of natural causes and effects, has led in recent times not only to a good bit of intelligent and needed protection for wild areas and beleaguered species, but also to an increasing awareness among outdoor laymen that misuse is destruction and, furthermore destruction of something they love. A notable number of us now seem capable not only of resenting, protesting and resisting what we see as misuse by others (ask the hunters and hikers and birders of East Texas, for example, what they think of clearcutting and pine monoculture in the national forests and elsewhere), but also of accepting restrictions on our own activities to minimize impact on the outdoor world. All people who truly cherish the outdoors, whatever they like to do there, have a stake in its preservation, and comprehension of this basic truth seems to be getting around.

Figures are hard to come by in relation to such a thing as a change of attitude. But it exists. Maybe it is most easily seen among practitioners of the “consumptive sports”—hunting and fishing—which as traditionally practiced were sometimes very destructive. Unfortunately, we still have no shortage of game hogs and poachers and their like, but wiser contemporary sportsmen often have led the fights for protection of species and habitat, examples being Ducks Unlimited’s continuing battle to protect the northern nesting grounds of waterfowl, and the Gulf Coast Conservation Association’s dogged, combative stand against coastal pollution, overdevelopment and the abuses of market fishermen—the latter being a whangdoodle of a fight, for



in the commercial fishing world the old concept of nature's unending bounty seems never to have been questioned.

Furthermore, many hunters and fishermen, possibly most of them, have come to see that if they want to have sport in the future they'd better not kill wild things in numbers that normal reproduction can't replace. Shooting seasons and bag limits and other restrictions are generally complied with now—less and less, one hopes, from fear of lurking game wardens, and more and more from awareness that the restrictions make sense. Sportfishermen accept such regulation also, and a lot of them now practice catch-and-release, freeing most fish they take and getting their main pleasure from the ritual of angling itself.



It is, of course, high time for gentler attitudes. Not only have nature's resources been battered and tattered over the years, but also there are a good many millions more of us now who want to enjoy them. In the half-century just behind us, the population of Texas has far more than doubled, and its distribution has changed from mainly rural to overwhelmingly urban. What this means, among other things, is that there are vastly greater numbers of people whose contact with the real outdoors is limited to excursions from the cities, and that most of their excursions involve the publicly accessible lands and waters we have mentioned. And what this sometimes means is damage to the landscape, and erosion of the quiet and solitude that many go outdoors to find.

The motorized forms of outdoor pleasure, generating harsh decibels and dust or wake-waves, are prime objects of antipathy among all of us quietness types, the natural enemy so to speak. But even where they are absent or banned, excessive numbers of pleasure-seekers can get on one another's nerves. It is a delightful thing to wade alone in a rocky river, casting a fly or lure to deeper *(continued on page 75)*

Jet skiers (above) enjoy the waters of Lake Meredith in the Texas Panhandle.

LAURENCE PARENT

Progressive fishery management has enabled Texas to produce some of the best largemouth bass fishing in the nation (opposite page).

WYMAN MEINZER



Rafters taking a break from a float trip through Santa Elena Canyon on the Rio Grande enjoy the cascading waters of San Carlos Creek.

MIKE SHEDLOCK



*Katydid*s add their characteristic chirping to summer evening chorales. ROB CURTIS



Late evening sunlight glows on a rocky Lake Texoma shoreline. LAURENCE PARENT



Colorado Bend State Park on the Colorado River above Lake Buchanan is a great place to camp or fish for white bass.

LAURENCE PARENT



An alligator suns itself beside a Chambers County marsh.

DANIEL LEE BROWN

The western, or ornate, box turtle (right) is one of many interesting and colorful turtle species found in Texas. KEVIN PAINTER





*The marshy lowlands at Palmetto State Park near Gonzales
have a decidedly tropical appearance.*

RICHARD REYNOLDS



Texas's shallow bays and estuaries continue to be at risk from man and his commerce, but coastal sportfishing currently appears to be enjoying a renaissance.

RUSTY YATES



A farm road winds through the Blanco River Valley near Wimberley.

BOB PARVIN



A farm road winds through the Blanco River Valley near Wimberley.

BOB PARVIN

(continued from page 67) blue spots and bringing in an occasional bass or bluegill, with birdsong all around you. It is a good bit less delightful to be there, trying to fish, when every few minutes canoeists or innertubers bear down from upstream, some of them as vainly desirous of nature's peace as you yourself, but others raucously happy on beer and boom-box music. Nor is there a strong likelihood, in a public campground chock-full of people, with its hum of conversation and electronics and RV air conditioners, that you're going to be listening to many of the eternal night sounds once heard by Comanches and frontiersmen.

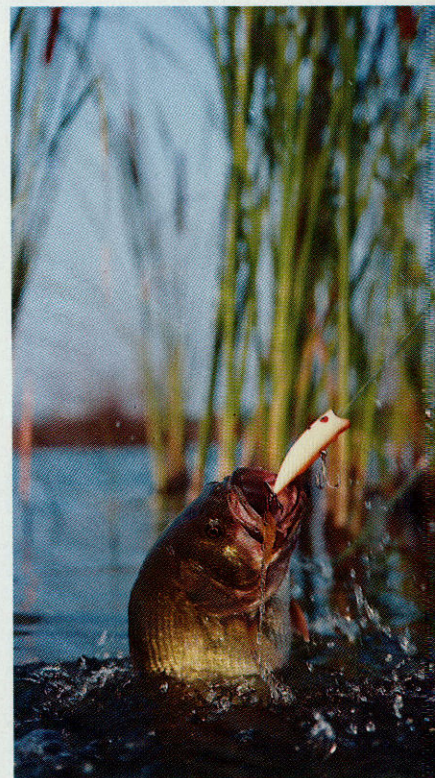
This is not a conflict that will go away by itself, for censuses keep on swelling, and with them the numbers of people who feel an empty space in the pattern of their city lives, and try to fill the lack through hiking, camping, boating, or some other rural pursuit. It is simply another item to be added to the list of outdoor ills and dangers, one that will have to be dealt with like the rest.

What the future holds—the kind and quality of outdoor experience that will be available to our children and grandchildren in the next 50 years—is a knotty question. Blessedly, parts and pieces of the old magnificence do now remain reasonably intact, and all of us who have had the privilege of touching and seeing and feeling them need to be grateful for that. More parts and pieces are being added all the time by planners and preservers. But in view of what we know about the many forces that continue to hack and tear at the fabric of nature, optimism about long-term prospects is bound to be a bit queasy. These are tough times for the natural world, in Texas and everywhere else.

Yet to someone like the aging angler-hunter-birdwatcher-etc. writing these lines, who has been around long enough to have witnessed a great deal of ecological decline and damage but also a degree of restitution, there does appear to be room for hope. Where it lies is in the shift toward understanding and gentler use we've noted in relation to hunters and fishermen, and which is going to have to prevail among all people who make use of the outdoors, if in the

Reservoir construction has destroyed many hardwood bottomlands, but has increased opportunities for fishing.

GRADY ALLEN





The endangered black-capped vireo, which nests only in Central Texas, is one of the key players in an ongoing dispute over land use.

LEROY WILLIAMSON

long run anything worth having is to be saved. These days such understanding governs the attitudes and activities of most who take part in managing wildlife, public lands and waters—park supervisors and rangers, game wardens, planners, biologists, and so on—and it has begun to loom large in the awareness of lawmakers and government agencies. Hence it will certainly play a part in future environmental action, as well as in rules and regulations. But none of that will mean very much unless a majority of the persons who seek their pleasure outdoors come to understand the scheme of nature and to care about it not ignorantly but with knowledge, and in consequence to act decently and responsibly toward it, demanding that others do the same.

This informed caring already exists widely, among people who have learned to view the outdoors in its entirety. Individuals may be avid about canoeing, hiking, fishing or whatever, but increasingly, it seems, many of them also are coming to know more about the creatures and rocks and plants and old human resonances that surround them where they walk, climb, paddle or sit beside a campfire. Students and observers of this sort reach comprehension of how natural things fit together into a whole; they move unobtrusively through the landscape, belonging there; and each in his or her own way wages war against the forces of destruction.

May they thrive and may their tribe immensely increase, especially among those children and grandchildren of ours. If there is hope for the healthy survival of the Texas outdoors we love, such people personify it. ★

John Graves (above) first captured the imagination of conservationists with his 1960 book "Goodbye to a River," dealing with the damming of the Brazos River. Graves, 70, considered by many to be Texas's most accomplished author, continues to write at his farm "Hard Scrabble" in Somervell County.



The slow-moving Texas alligator lizard (right) is a familiar sight to residents of Central Texas and the Edwards Plateau.

JOE LIGGIO

A laughing gull (below) wings its way over choppy Gulf waters.

DANIEL LEE EROWN





One of the state's lesser-known treasures is McKinney Falls State Park on Austin's southeast outskirts.

PATRICK FISCHER



One of the rarest sights in the brushlands of the Lower Rio Grande Valley is the coatiundi (above).

KEVIN PAINTER

Desert bighorn sheep (upper right) still are trying to gain a foothold in the Trans-Pecos.

GLEN MILLS

Dinosaur footprints are preserved in the Pailuxy River at Dinosaur Valley State Park near Glen Rose (right).

LAURENCE PARENT

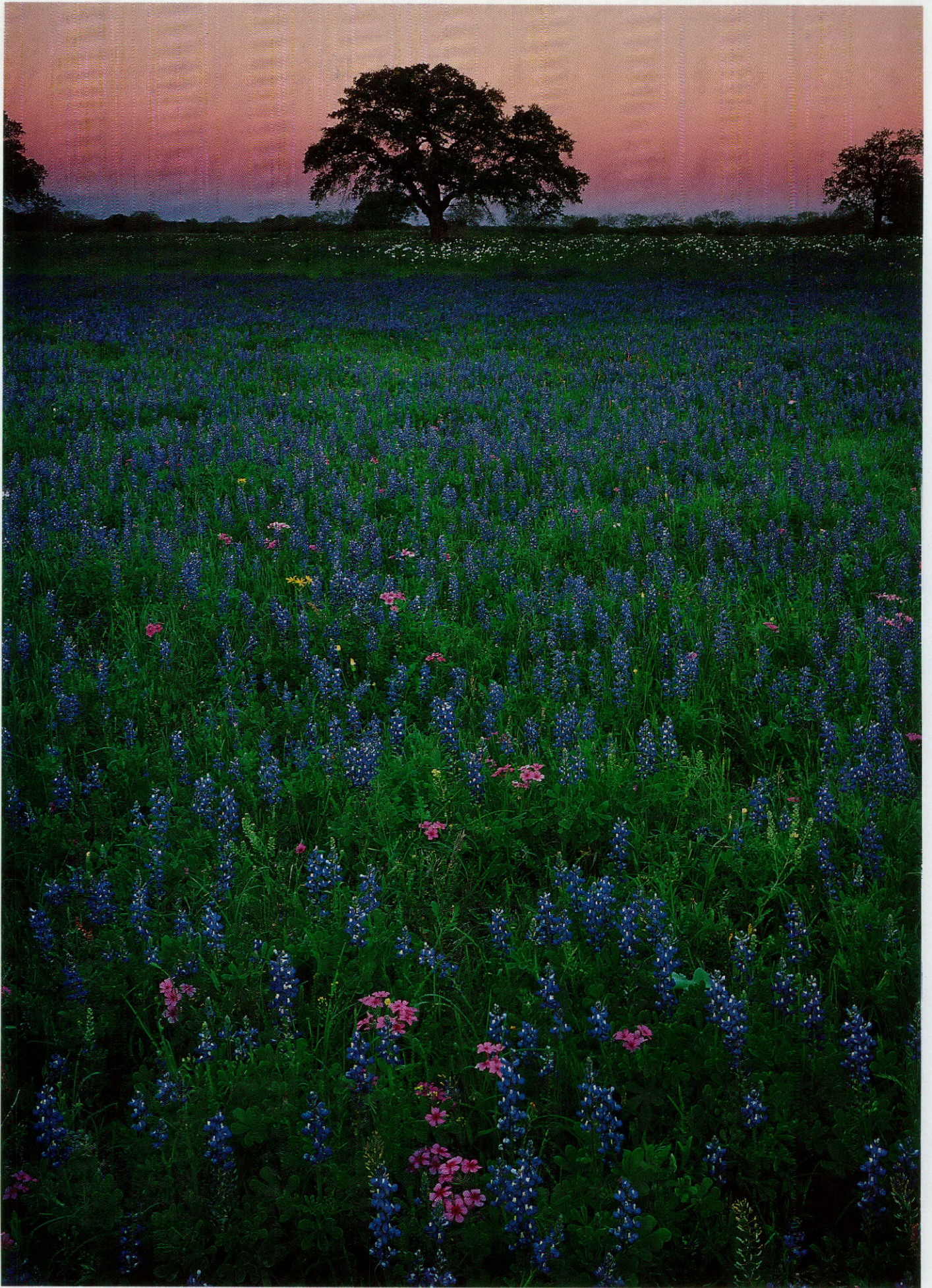




No Texas tour is complete without seeing the Rio Grande cutting through the Big Bend canyon country.

LAURENCE PARENT

Texas Parks & Wildlife 81





A field of bluebonnets in full flower in Gonzales County (opposite page).

WILLARD CLAY

A moss-covered fencepost marks a forgotten East Texas farm (left).

BILL TIFFANY

The Davis Mountains (below) seen from Mt. Livermore in Jeff Davis County.

PAUL MONTGOMERY



Red-tailed hawks (right) migrate in large numbers through Texas.

TOM C. WINN

Lake Meredith (below) is the only major reservoir in the Texas Panhandle.

LAURENCE FARENT





A field of bur-marigolds adds to fall colors at Martin Dies, Jr. State Park near Jasper.

WILLARD CLAY



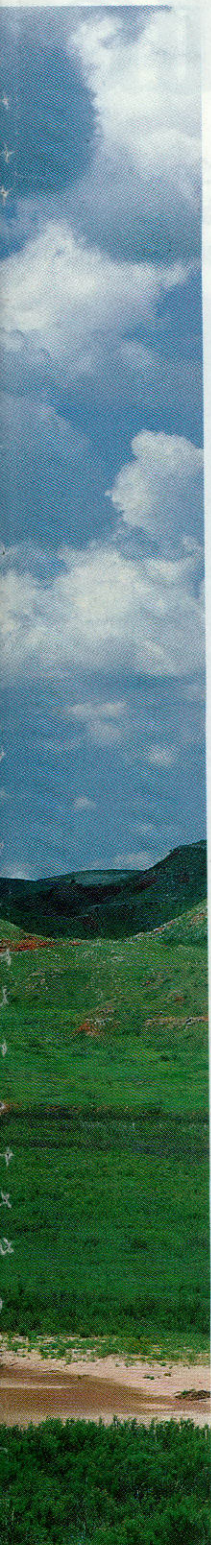


Hunting remains an integral part of Texas's outdoor heritage (above).

WYMAN MEINZER

The Canadian River (left) winds its slow path through Lake Meredith National Recreation Area in the Texas Panhandle.

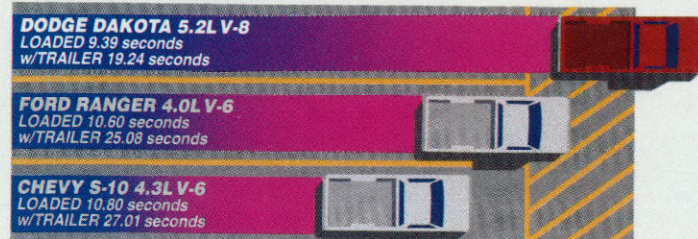
LAURENCE PARENT



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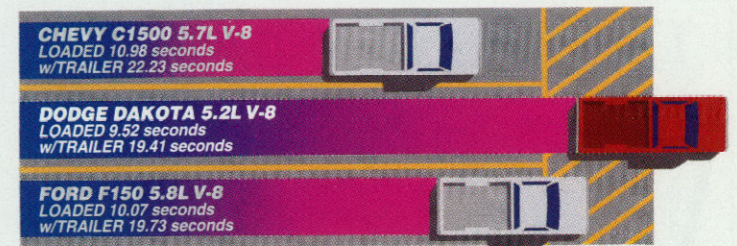
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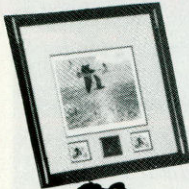
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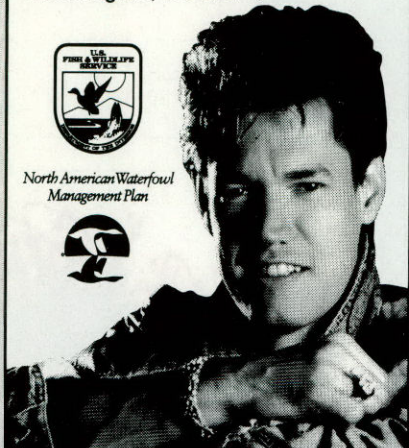
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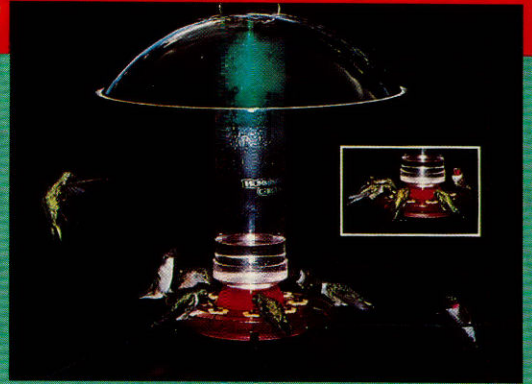


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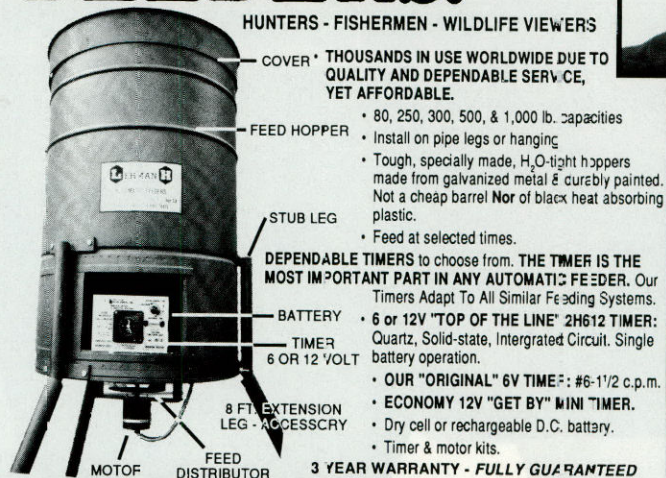
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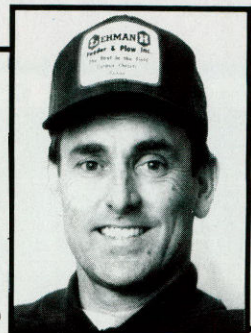
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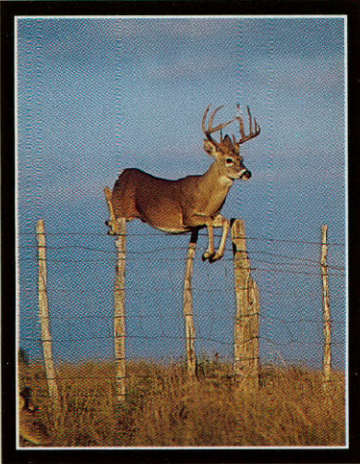
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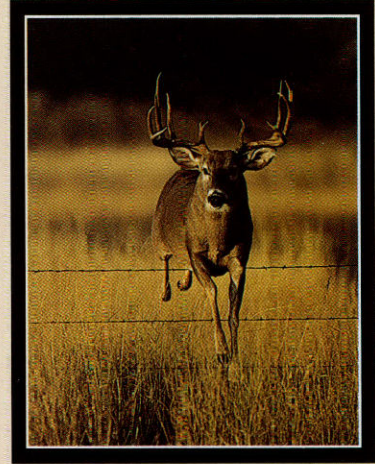
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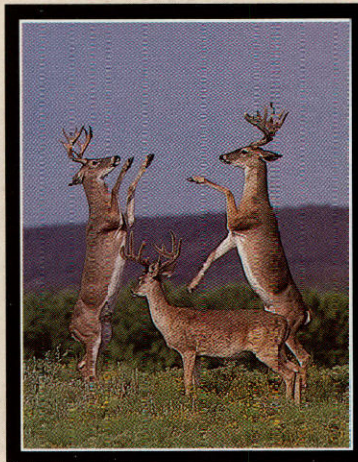
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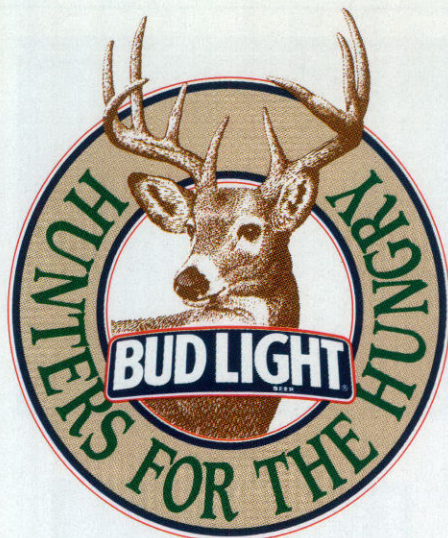
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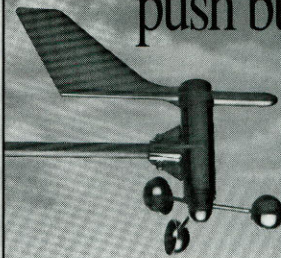


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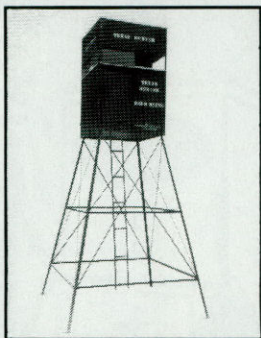
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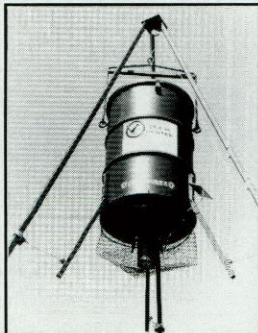
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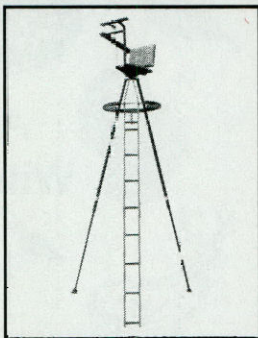


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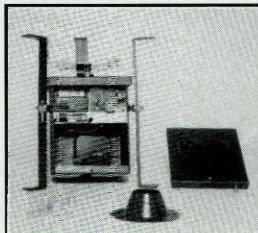
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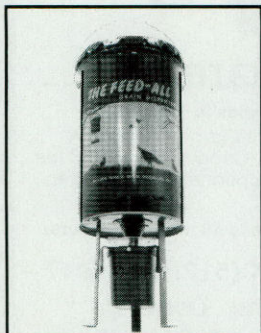
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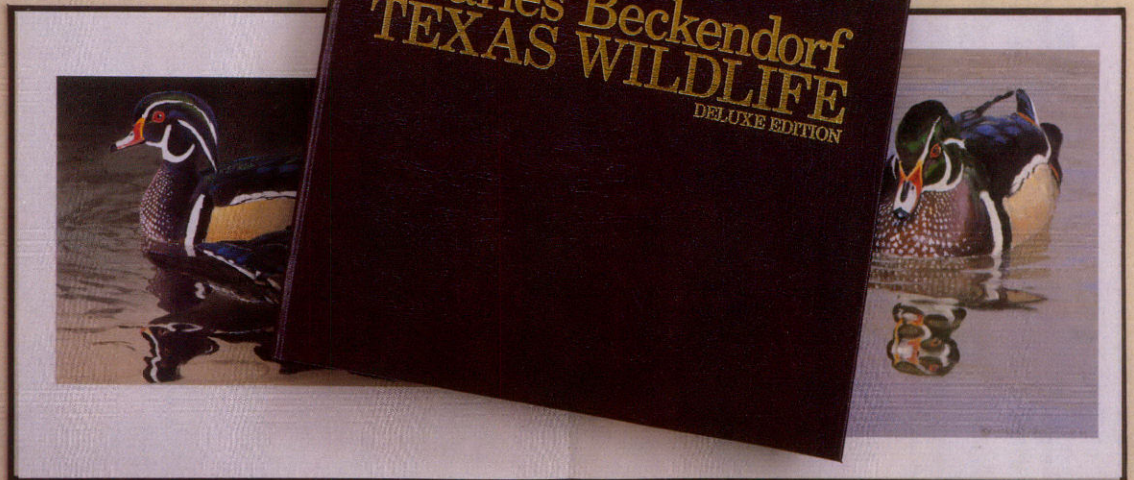
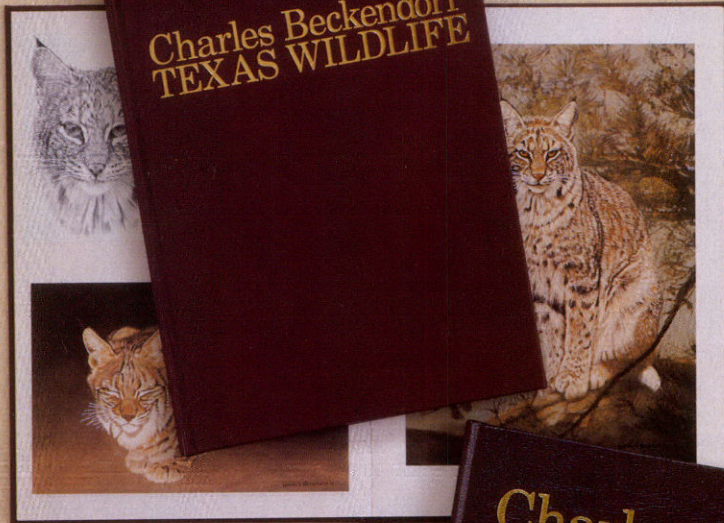
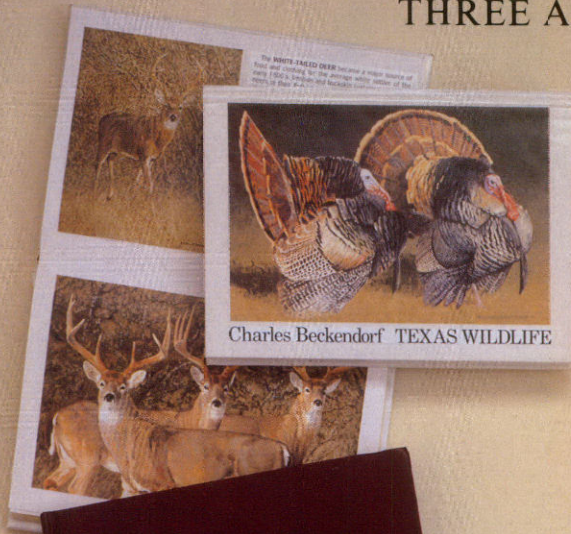
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