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# texas parks & wildlife news

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744

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## STOCKED REDFISH BEING RECOVERED

AUSTIN -- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists believe recoveries of small red drum (redfish) by fisheries crews at St. Charles Bay near Corpus Christi are proving the recent redfish stocking program is succeeding.

So far, 103 young redfish have been captured and determined to be hatchery fish because of their size, since wild redfish spawned in the fall would have been much larger.

But the most convincing evidence was the capture of five reds, averaging about nine inches long, which had electronically detectible tags in their noses.

Biologist Hugh Goodrich of Rockport said recovery of the five tagged fish indicates that a significant percentage of the 994,000 fingerlings is surviving, growing and dispersing in the bay. Only 29,176 of the fingerlings were equipped with the tiny nose tags.

The recoveries of small redfish represent icing on the cake for the department biologists, who during 1979 produced more young redfish in captivity than has ever been accomplished anywhere in the world. Delicate manipulations of light and water temperature conditions in indoor tanks stimulated the captive fish to spawn, and the year's total production was 1.4 million raised in ponds to fingerling size and 16.8 million stocked as fry.

The reds were distributed in selected bay areas along the entire Texas Gulf Coast. Department officials hope the stocking program, along with young fish spawned in the wild, will help restore redfish after almost a decade of declining populations.

HUBBARD TIRE REEF  
THE LARGEST EVER

DALLAS -- Many fish records have toppled this year, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the most recent occurred at Lake Ray Hubbard outside of Dallas.

The record is not a fish but a fish reef -- the largest ever built in freshwater in the state.

Nearly 10,000 old tires, from worn steel-belted radials to blown-out strips of rubber, were dumped in the reservoir at locations lacking natural cover. Biologists Steve Smith and Gary Pickett, both of Tyler, headed the project and were assisted by local bass club members.

They endured scattered showers, high winds and temperatures in the mid-40's during an unseasonably winterlike weekend in April.

The clubs include Garland, Gar-Tex and Forney Engineering with assistance from the Dallas Parks & Recreation Department.

Four of the reefs were placed near Robertson Park and will be marked later with permanent floating buoys. "Some are within casting distance of the bank," said Kirby Gholson, P&WD project leader for fish reefs.

An estimated 1,000 tires were placed along the old Highway 66 bridge crossing, a section of the old bridge which is now used as a fishing pier.

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WILDLIFE SOCIETY  
HONORS TRIO

AUSTIN -- Three Texans have received the "Outstanding Conservationist of the Year" award from the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

The annual awards go to persons who have made outstanding contributions to the well-being of Texas wildlife, but who are not professional biologists, educators, managers or researchers.

Herbert Ward of Dimmit County has been a devotee of wildlife conservation for most of his 82 years. A former Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game warden and cadet instructor, Ward consistently campaigned for wildlife conservation, chapter officials said.

Walter Hairgrove manages a 1,900-acre ranch in Henderson County, where he instituted a number of management practices to aid wildlife in concert with beef production.

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WILDLIFE SOCIETY, cont'd.

John Lovell of Donley County manages approximately 20,000 acres in the Texas Panhandle, and his property has consistently produced high-quality mule deer because of good range management practices, the chapter said. Lovell also makes his ranch available for research projects by personnel from the Range and Wildlife Department of Texas Tech University.

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COASTAL FISHERIES  
NEWS BRIEFS

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AUSTIN -- Swimmers and fishermen along the Texas Gulf Coast should be aware of the presence of Portuguese man-o-war jellyfish. These balloonlike organisms have tentacles which can cause intense localized pain on contact with the skin. The tentacles can sting even after the animal's death, according to biologist Larry McEachron of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. If stung, apply rubbing alcohol on the inflamed area, and follow that with an application of any food-seasoning product containing monosodium glutamate to relieve the stinging.

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AUSTIN -- Recent catches of sheephead in the South Padre Island and Port Isabel areas have been outstanding, reports biologist Joe Breuer of Harlingen. Large strings have been reported from charter and head boats, and along bay fishing piers, Breuer said. The fish are ranging in size from a few ounces to five pounds, and most are caught on live shrimp.

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DISCARDED TIRES  
PUT TO USE

DALLAS -- Ask a service station owner what he does with old automobile tires, and he will quickly tell of the problems. While some can be sold and later recapped, most end up at a city landfill, and the owner must pay a dumping fee.

Once at the landfill, the tires occupy too much space and are absolutely nonbiodegradable. They will be there from now on.

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DISCARDED TIRES, cont'd.

However, these qualities have been turned into advantages by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. By a simple "recycling" method, the tires are used as artificial fish reefs in reservoirs which lack natural cover.

Once in the water, the tires do not decompose. They provide fish with shelter and eventually promote a vegetative growth which starts a food chain.

Thus far this year, artificial fish reefs have been installed at several Texas reservoirs, including Lakes Texoma, Belton, Ray Hubbard and Tawakoni.

Within six weeks, attractors will be placed in Lake Cypress Springs and San Augustine, at Calaveras.

With each fish attractor project, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department supplies a 25-foot barge for transporting the tires to deep water, along with tools and other equipment. The project is staffed almost exclusively by volunteers from bass clubs, high school groups and service organizations.

"Each year the momentum gets greater," said Kirby Gholson, P&WD project leader for artificial fish reefs. "Last year was the biggest -- we installed a total of 24,000 tires in 13 lakes and made 37 reefs.

That required 300 volunteers, who spent an estimated 4,000 man-hours to build the reefs. "Their time does not take into account transporting the tires to the lakes," he said.

The 1979 record of 24,000 tires has already been surpassed during the first four months this year, according to Gholson's estimates.

By summer, he hopes to have several brochures available which will show the locations of the fish reefs, along with other fishing information.

A surprising number of Texas reservoirs lack natural habitat and can benefit from manmade reefs. For additional information on the adopt-a-lake program, groups should contact Gholson at 134 Braniff, San Antonio, Tx. 78216 or call (512) 349-2174.

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TP&W MAGAZINE  
PLANS LAKE SERIES

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AUSTIN -- Of the many good fishing lakes in Texas, only a handful have gained statewide recognition among anglers. But many lesser known and underutilized lakes provide considerable recreation, with the added benefit of being easily accessible.

With its May issue, TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE magazine begins a series of angler's guides to good fishing lakes in every part of the state. The articles will feature both large and small lakes, and will focus on a different lake each month. Information includes how to get there, kinds of fish to be found and tips on how to catch them. A map of each lake will show locations of boat ramps, fish attractors and parks. Lake Lavon in Collin County kicks off the series.

Other articles in the May issue, describe bear hunting at the turn of the century, a dramatic part of early East Texas culture; Westcave Preserve, a semitropical grotto in the Texas Hill Country; and the ground-dwelling rock squirrel. There are step-by-step instructions for making a hand-split, custom bamboo fly rod, and dewberries are the subject of a photo story. The Young Naturalist feature concerns chemical communication in the animal kingdom, the invisible language of odors.

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE magazine is \$5 for a one-year subscription and \$9 for two years. To subscribe, send check or money order to 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744, or call toll-free 1-800-252-9327 (Austin residents call 475-4888) and charge the subscription to VISA or Master Charge.

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MAY SQUIRREL HUNTS  
SET FOR WILDLIFE AREA

AUSTIN -- The outlook for four public squirrel hunts looks better than average at the Engeling Wildlife Management Area near Palestine.

The dates are May 9, 10, 16 and 17, and a \$4 registration fee will be charged to help defray costs of conducting the hunts.

The check station will open at approximately 5:30 a.m. and close 30 minutes after sunset.

"We have moved the location of the check station, so participants should go to the main office on U.S. Highway 287 and follow the signs," said David Synatzske, department biologist.

Only shotguns or .22 rifles are legal, and all hunters must wear 400 square inches of fluorescent orange. This requirement is normally met by wearing vinyl orange vests.

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MAY SQUIRREL HUNT, cont'd.

Both fox and cat squirrels are present on the 10,000-acre area, and Synatzske expects a good carryover from last year because of the mild winter. "I think the majority will be large adults," he said.

Last year's squirrel hunt set new records for hunter success during the spring hunt. Some 115 hunters averaged 3.17 squirrels each, which is considered exceptional for a public hunt.

The Engeling Wildlife Management Area is located on U.S. Highway 287 about 40 miles southeast of Corsicana and 20 miles northwest of Palestine.

Persons 12 through 17 years of age must be accompanied by an adult sponsor. For additional information, call Synatzske at (214) 928-2251.

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#### SHARKS COMMON ON TEXAS COAST

AUSTIN -- It might be alarming to some Texans to learn that at least 25 shark species are known to occur in the state's coastal waters.

Fortunately, sharks which frequent near-shore areas are small, nonaggressive and pose little threat to humans.

Biologist Lee M. Green of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at Rockport said although sharks are basically deepwater fish, some species are found in bays and the surf. One species, the bull shark, sometimes even ventures into freshwater river channels.

The most common sharks along the Texas coast are the blacktip, Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead and bull shark.

Green pointed out that most sharks found in bays or the surf are immature, and they ordinarily spend only the warm weather months in the shallow waters.

"There have been very few documented cases of shark attacks on the Texas coast in the past 20 years," Green commented. "Most of the sharks encountered in the surf or in bays are scavengers. They eat crabs, shrimp, mollusks and small fish, and they could hardly be considered dangerous."

Green said the main caution for coastal visitors would be to avoid wading in the bays, or surf trailing a string of fish, since sharks could be attracted by the fishes' blood.

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SHARKS, cont'd.

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Of course, sharks are constantly on the minds of swimmers and other coastal recreationists in Texas and elsewhere. Offshore fishermen and divers frequently encounter species such as hammerheads which have been known to attack humans in certain situations. But Green pointed out that their appearances in near-shore areas are rare.

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