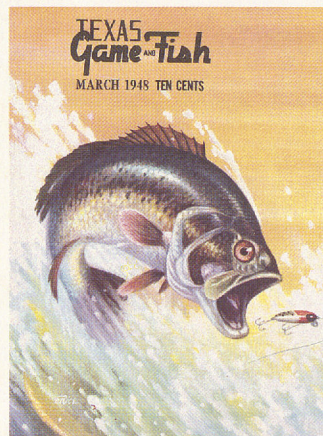
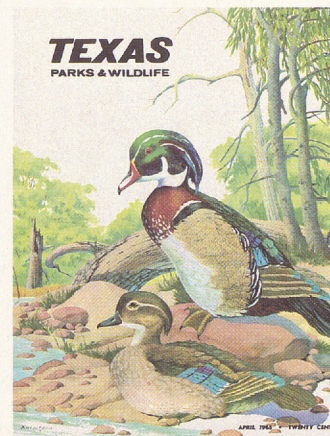


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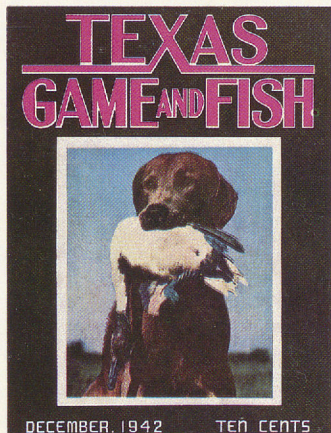
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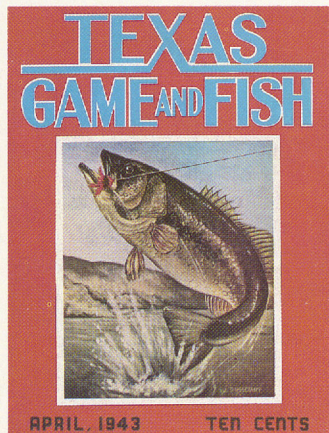
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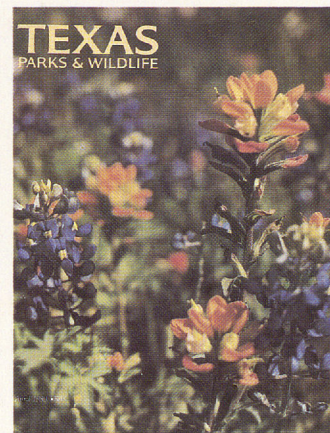
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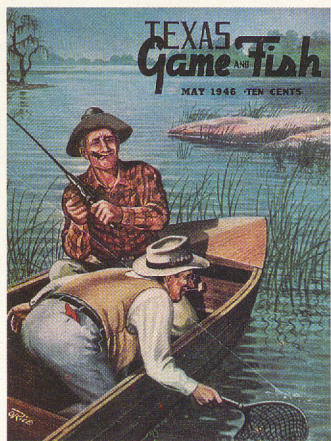
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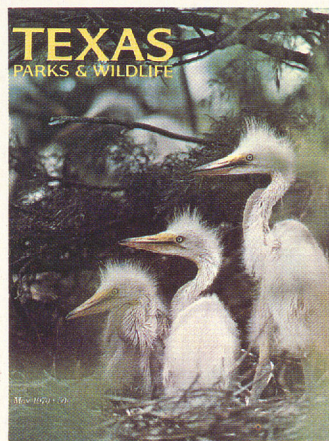
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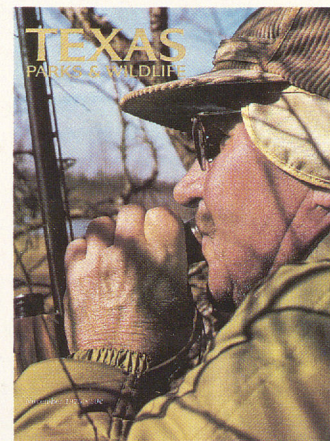
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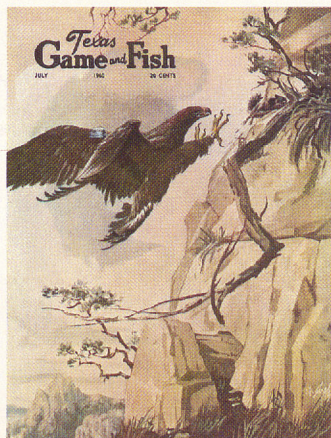
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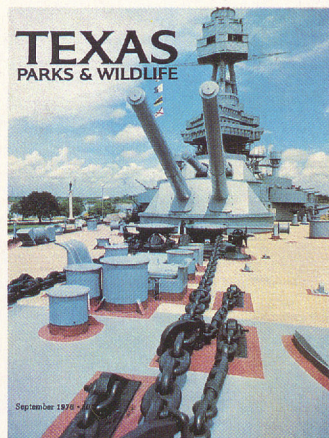
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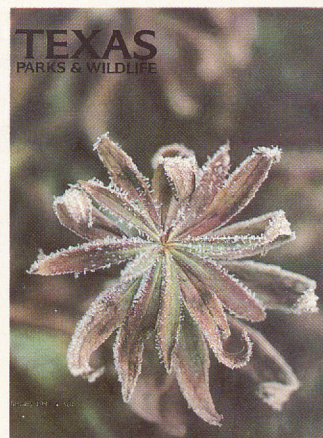
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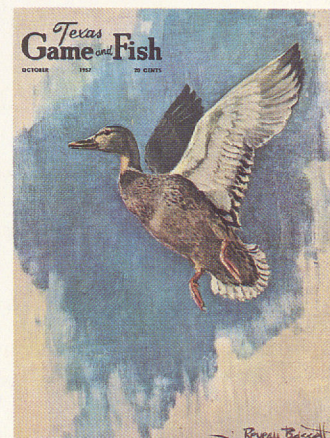
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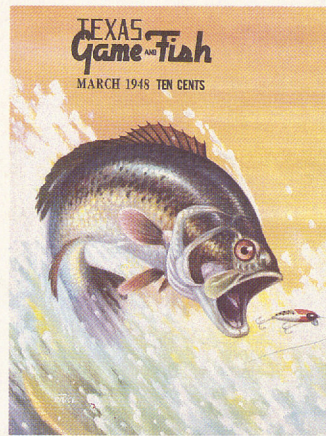
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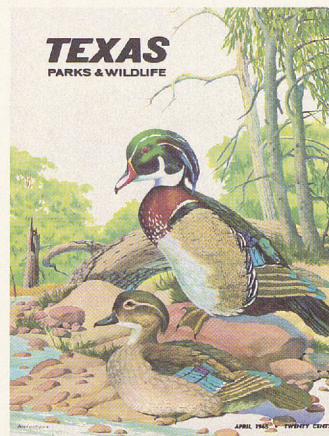
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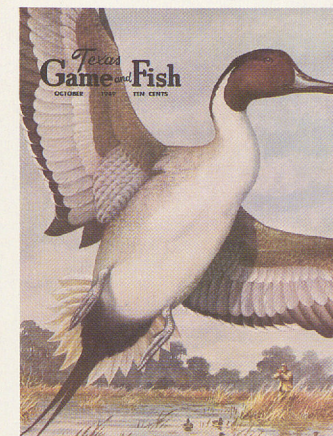
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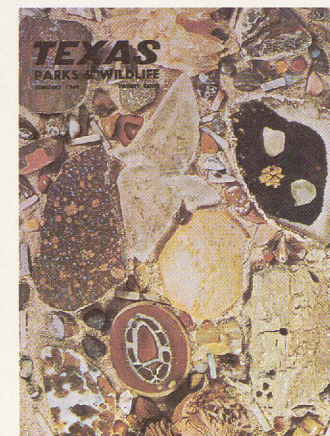
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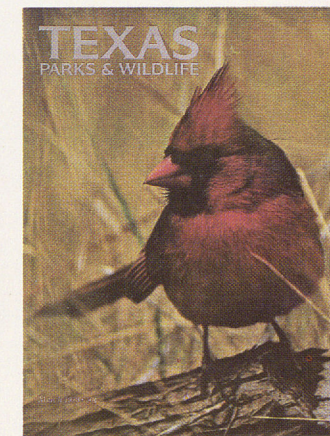
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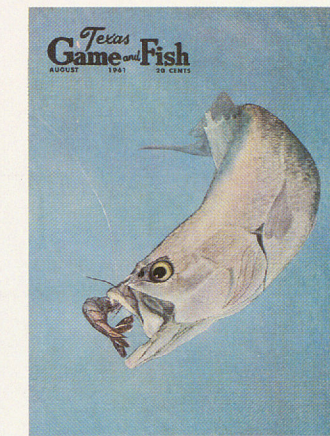
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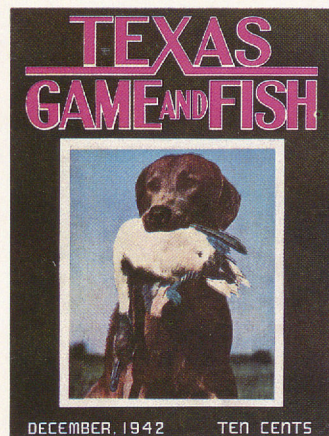
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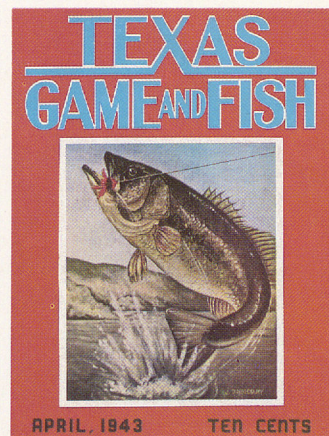
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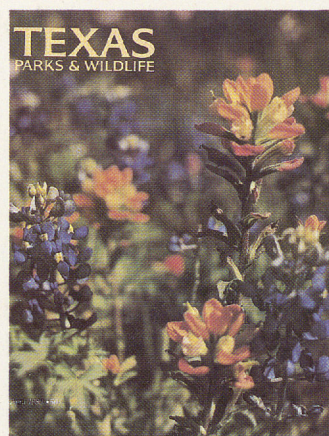
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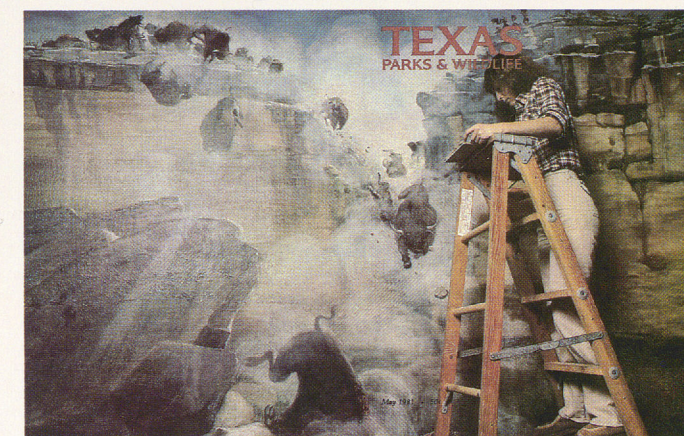
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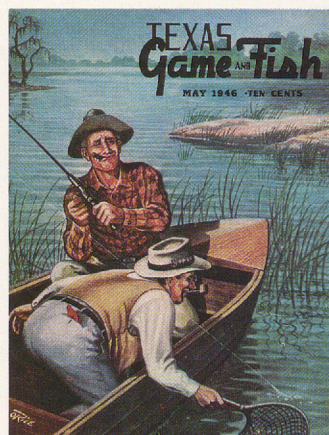
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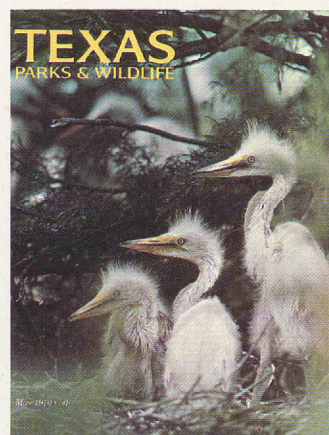
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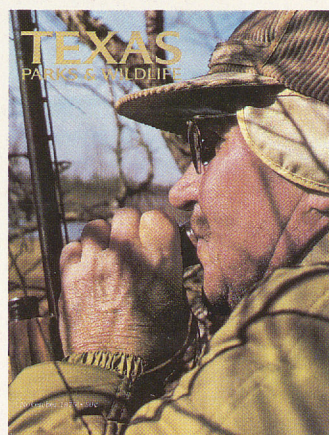
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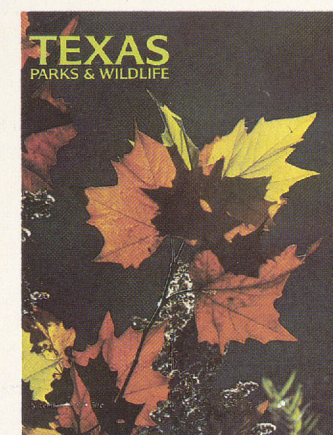
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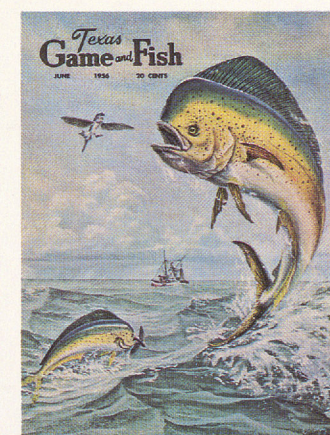
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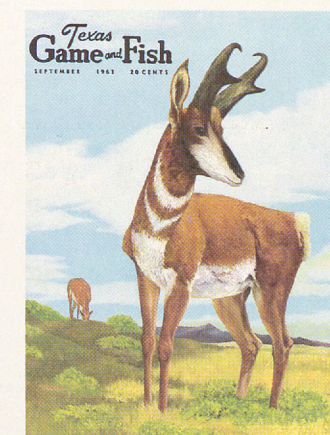
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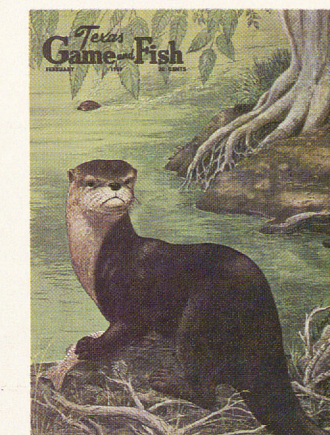
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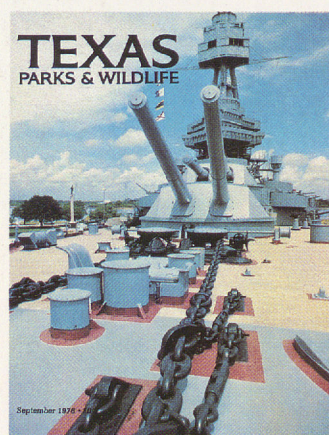
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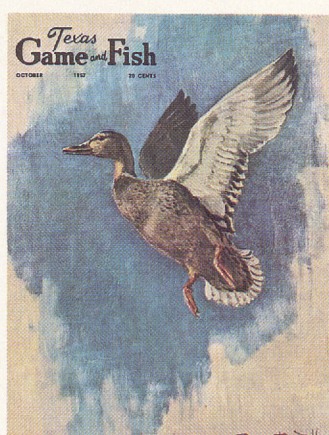
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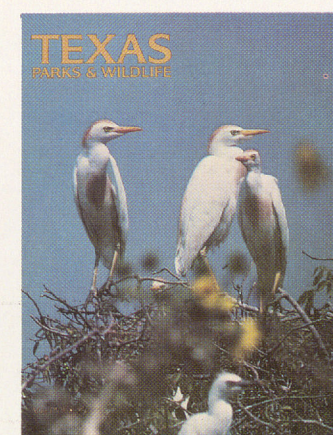
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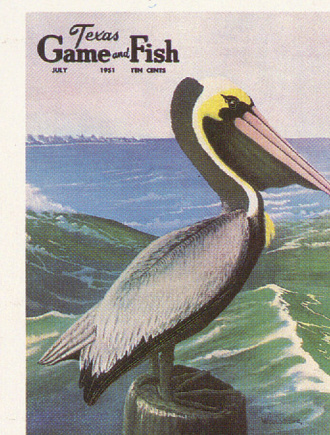
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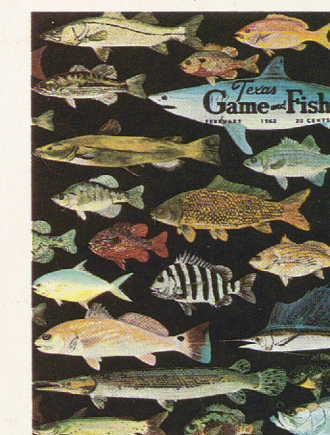
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January 1964



July 1951



February 1962



Give the grandeur of Texas this Christmas.

Think of all the people you want to remember this holiday season — your child's favorite teacher, the newspaper carrier who's always on time, the plumber you can call day or night, the doctor you know you can depend on. For all the people who make your life run smoothly, there's no better thank-you than a subscription to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, the gift that comes once a month.

Use the bound-in envelope to order, and we'll send your gift cards. Please enclose a check or money order, or charge the amount to your VISA or Master Card.

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

December 1982, Vol. 40, No. 12



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Front and Back Covers: This issue marks the 40th anniversary of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. Begun in December 1942 as *Texas Game & Fish*, the name was changed in 1965 after the Game and Fish Department and the Texas State Parks Board merged. (See story on page 2.)

Inside Front: This view from the Chisos Mountains on Big Bend National Park's South Rim Trail rewards the hiker who has the stamina to complete this trip. Photo by Bill Reaves.

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MAGAZINE

(ISSN 0040-4586)

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

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Leroy Williamson



OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY

by David Baxter

A lot was happening in Texas in 1942. Society was on a wartime footing and in the months following Pearl Harbor many of the state's youth were in uniform. Three-quarters of a million Texans served in World War II. Some already were in either the European or Pacific Theaters; others were en route with stopovers for training at Randolph Air Base or Third Army Headquarters in San Antonio, or the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station.

Many of those not in the military were busy working in industry either directly or indirectly related to the nation's defense. Almost all of the nation's resources were going to the war effort with very little left over for the consumers at home—just ask the folks who had to cope with gas ration stamps, meatless days and the frustra-

FOUR DECADES OF BRINGING YOU THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

tions of trying to buy a new set of tires for the family automobile.

Not exactly the time in our history you would expect a conservation-oriented magazine to make its debut. But in December 1942, for some of these very economic reasons, Volume I, Number 1 of the *TEXAS GAME and FISH* magazine was offered to Texas residents for 50 cents a year, \$1 a year for nonresidents. It succeeded the *Monthly Bulletin* published by the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission which had been distributed free of charge to a large list of readers.

Commission Executive William J. Tucker explained in the first issue's editorial that "... wartime economies demanded that we make savings in our printing budget, instead of discontinuing our monthly publication the Commission decided to enlarge it and make a charge that would pay for

the printing cost." That inaugural magazine went to 6,422 paid subscribers.

Tucker went on to write: "This war shall change many of our concepts and habits. One of the aims of *TEXAS GAME and FISH* during the war period shall be to inspire in all of us the traditional love of Texans for hunting, fishing and nature. After the harshness, brutalities and sacrifices of the present conflict the Texas man and womanhood that has succeeded in winning the war should return to a pleasanter place in which to live, with the invigorating influence of the out-of-doors doing its full share to cleanse their spirits and temper their character."

From advertising war bonds to expounding on the benefits of hunting and fishing as relaxation for war workers, *TEXAS GAME and FISH* in the early '40s was preoccupied with the war, as was the entire country. Take for instance the August 1943 editorial: "Those of us who know and love our outdoor America are well aware of the mental and physical benefits of fishing and hunting, the easing of taut nerves and the healthy tiredness after a day in the open air. Fishing is one of the things that keep men fit—and fit men build good bombers."

Well, a lot has happened since December 1942 to both the Texas outdoors and the state magazine founded to chronicle it. Most of the present-day staff was yet to be born in 1942 and much of what we know of those days we've learned by leafing through the yellowing pages of the early issues.

The December issue 40 years ago had 14 black-and-white pages with a full-color photo of a hunting dog on the cover. Three months later the inside pages were increased to 18, and during the next couple of years it varied from 18 to 34 pages.

As our budget permits, the modern *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE* magazine varies from 32 to 48 pages, and we hope to be a standard 48 pages before too much longer.

With the 1947 issue, full-color wildlife prints from the Orville Rice collection occasionally were bound into the mag-

azine, but it wasn't until October 1965 that the magazine had color photos on the inside pages. We've since gained the reputation of having some of the best outdoor photography in the country.

Of course, since the magazine is published by a state agency, its contents reflect the activities and changes within that agency. The Game and Fish Department and Texas State Parks Board were merged in 1963, but it wasn't until April 1965 that the magazine's name was changed to *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE*. Since that merger, stories about the state's rapidly expanding park system have appeared alongside hunting and fishing stories and pieces about Texas' wildlife. We even devote a good portion of a springtime issue to state parks, just when Texans are making plans for summer vacations and outings.

Our wildlife stories and photos remain the most popular of our editorial fare. Readers quickly remind us of that when we run stories on activities such as golfing in state parks or put a photo of a water skier on the front cover. *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE* magazine in recent years has been a forum for first-class wildlife photography and hopefully always will be, but there is a lot more to outdoor recreation in Texas than pictures of white-tailed deer and turkey. We're seasonal in our coverage of the outdoors. As you can tell from the past few issues we've had stories on waterfowl hunting, antelope and mule deer. And there are pieces coming on sandhill crane, spring turkey and squirrel hunting. But to cover these topics at the expense of water recreation, camping and backpacking would be giving short shrift to the ever-diversified Texas outdoor recreationists.

We have subscribers who favor the traditional deer-hunting and bass-fishing topics; then we have the canoeist, birder, backpacker and outdoor photographer. Some of our readers have let us know they take offense to stories on killing game species. I hope that we have been able to explain

through our stories the value of modern game management practices and the importance of controlled hunting.

You've probably heard it before, but it doesn't hurt to reiterate, Texas wildlife (and the nation's wildlife) is for the most part in better shape than it was 100 years ago, or even 40 years ago at the birth of this magazine. And it is the hunter and fisherman who are responsible. Our license revenue and firearm, ammunition and tackle excise taxes have underwritten game management programs across the country.

Ask your granddad about turkey hunting in East Texas or ring-necked pheasant hunting outside the Dakotas. In 1941, the spring season on eastern turkeys closed and didn't reopen until April 1977. In the early 1970s the Parks and Wildlife Department started trapping and restocking the eastern turkey in suitable habitat. Who footed the bill for most of this? Hunters, most of whom will never have an opportunity to see eastern turkeys much less hunt them, paid the tab.

Prior to the 1950s, ring-necked pheasants were relatively scarce in Texas. The birds drifted into the Panhandle, and they started to spread with the introduction of irrigation. The department began stocking areas with a release of pheasants in Matagorda County in 1963. In January 1977, the first pheasant season was held on the Texas coast. Who paid for it all? The people who buy hunting licenses, guns and ammunition.

If you read our October 1982 piece on pronghorns, you know that Texas' herds currently number some 15,000 animals. At the turn of the century the hunting season was closed on pronghorns and by 1924 they had reached an all-time low of 2,400 animals. Resurgence of these antelope is the result of restocking by this department.

The same goes for the ubiquitous white-tailed deer. A year after the first issue of this magazine, 1943, Texas ranked fifth in the nation in the number of whitetails with some 265,000. Now Texas has about three million deer,

more whitetails than any other state in the Union. Whether you hunt deer with a gun or a camera, you can thank the sportsman for this abundance.

Terrestrial wildlife species have prospered from the sportsmen's dollars, and Texas fish have done even better. Funds derived from tackle and license sales have underwritten many a fish research and management project in Texas. One of the best cases in point is that of the largemouth bass. In 1943, a 13½-pound largemouth was taken from Medina Lake near San Antonio. That record stood until 1980 when a 14-pound, 1½-ounce bass was caught at Lake Monticello in northeast Texas. The following year two record bass were taken from Lake Echo in North Texas. One weighed a little more than 14 pounds and the other, which weighed 15 pounds, eight ounces, is the current state record.

These three fish, and probably most largemouth bass that approach the state record, are Florida-strain fish introduced to many state waters in the 1970s by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

And back in the 1940s who even dreamed of fishing in Texas for striped bass, walleye, smallmouth bass or rainbow trout? They're here now. Sportsmen are responsible through their contributions of money, time and enthusiasm, and you've read about them all in *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE* magazine.

From the letters we receive and the comments at slide presentations made by the staff, there is no question that wildlife photography is the hallmark of *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE* magazine. It took a while for it to sink in, but we finally realized that many of our subscribers experience the outdoors vicariously through the pages and photos of this magazine.

There are active participants who, stimulated by a story, head for a state park, bass-fishing hotspot or hunting lease. But there seems to be a growing legion of those folks who are content to visit the outdoors through the pages of *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE*. To

me that's a shame, because we are limited in the amount of space we can devote to a subject. Even with top-quality photos, ink on paper is inadequate for capturing a West Texas sunset or the grace of a whitetail moving across a grassy Hill Country knoll. We can describe the racket made by a flock of snow geese coming into a rice field decoy spread, but you must be there, Browning or Nikon in hand, to experience the full dimension of the outdoors.

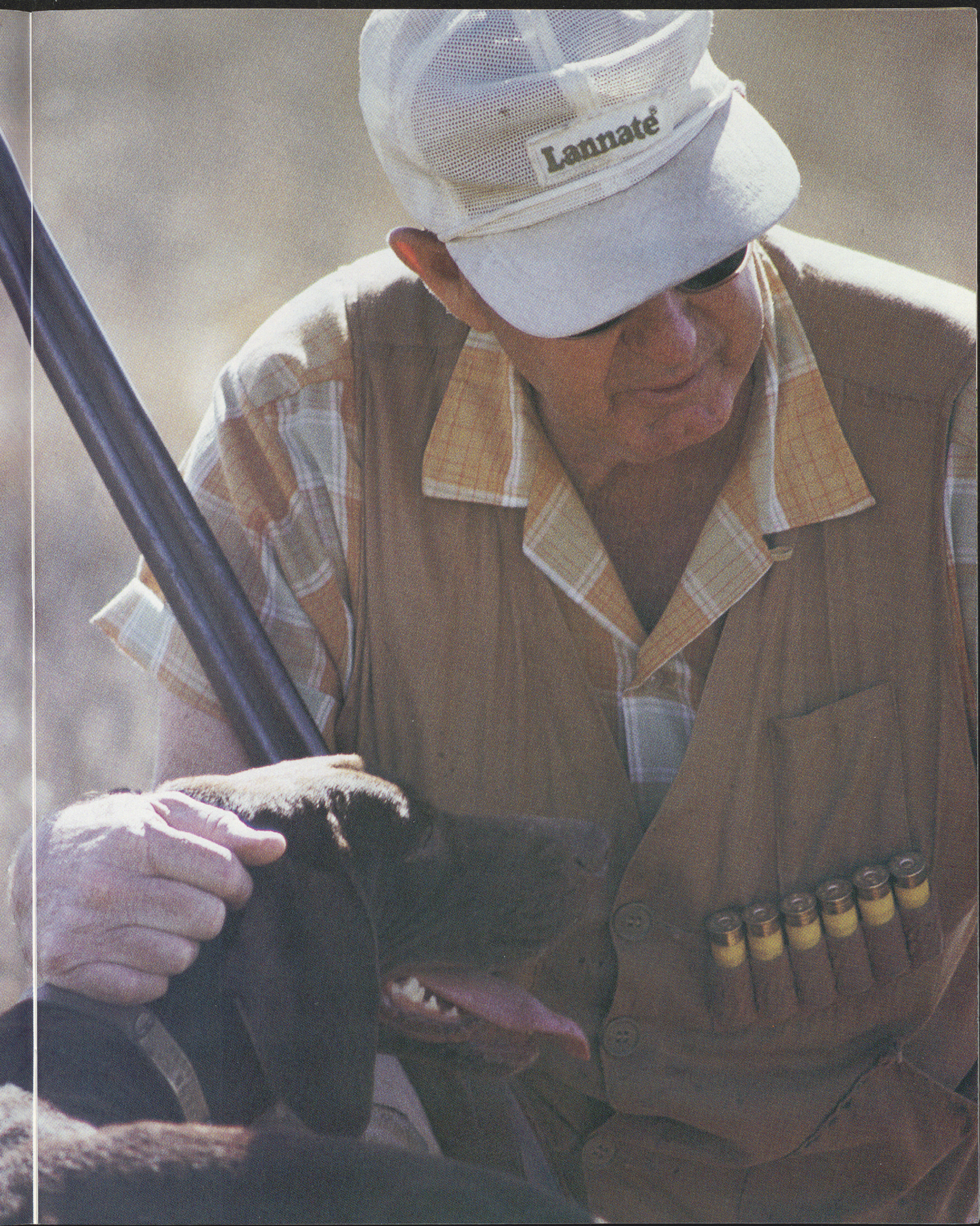
If this magazine is the only means you have of knowing Texas' wildlife and parks, well, we will do the best we can to bring it home each month. But the real purpose of the magazine is to get you out of the house, to get you involved. It's really beside the point whether you live for the duck season or find all hunting repugnant. If you stay home and do not take an active role in the outdoors, you'll look out the window one day and, as it goes in the song, find ". . . they've paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

That's the reason for our Young Naturalist feature. Anything that will get a child out from in front of the television and interested in some aspect of the Texas landscape is bound to pay off down the road. Besides that, we'll need them as subscribers and perhaps contributors and staff members one day.

Ever wonder how many other people besides yourself subscribe to *TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE* magazine? We have more than 130,000 paid subscribers, which is the highest our circulation has ever been. But that's not nearly enough, considering the number of folks moving to this state who need to know what the Texas outdoors has to offer.

For those of you who have been with us from Volume 1, Number 1, to those who are receiving Volume 40, Number 12 as a Christmas gift, we offer the following portfolio of what makes the Texas outdoors the best there is. As the man said 40 years ago, we hope it will cleanse your spirit and temper your character. **

Bill Reaves





Wyman P. Meinzer Jr.

Glen Mills





Glen Mills



Paul M. Montgomery





Glen Mills







Glen Mills





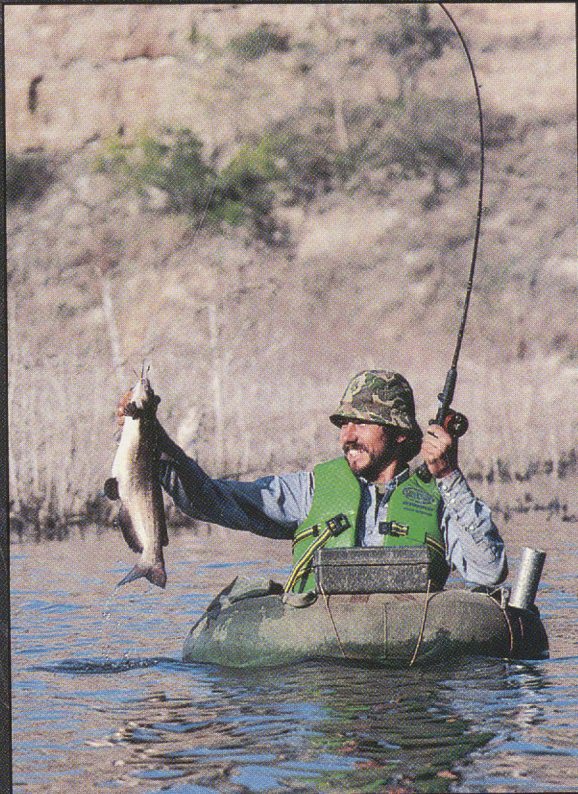
Bill Reaves



Glen Mills



Wyman P. Meinzer Jr.



YOUNG WHOOPING CRANE FOUND DEAD NEAR WACO

The whooping crane population at Aransas National Refuge on the Texas Gulf Coast will be one bird short this year.

Nyarling, a 15-month-old female, was found dead near the small community of Oglesby near the Coryell-McLennan County line east of Waco. She was delivered to Parks and Wildlife Department Game Warden Tommy Morgan on October 16.

Morgan estimated the bird had been dead less than 12 hours and showed no obvious cause of death.

Maurice "Andy" Anderson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, project leader for the Endangered Species Field Station at Pierce, South Dakota, guessed the young whooper flew into a power transmission line, similar to an incident in Canada that was fatal to a whooper last year.

Anderson said the bird was hatched in July 1981 at the Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada and made the trip to Aransas National Refuge with her parents last year. She apparently was making the trip again this year.

DON'T CUT THAT NET

Well-meaning fishermen who have discovered what they thought were illegal gill nets have made the mistake of cutting them.

Several negative things can result from this action. Biologist Joe Martin of Corpus Christi said that in some cases Texas Parks and Wildlife Department research nets have been destroyed by anglers who probably assumed the nets belonged to poachers.

Department nets ordinarily have half-gallon plastic jugs at each end inscribed with the agency name.

Martin said, "Even if the net is an illegal one, fishermen should not disturb it. Rather, they should contact a local game warden as soon as possible and give the net's location."

Also, Martin reminds anglers that anyone caught handling an illegal net is subject to arrest, even if it belongs to another.

Outdoor Roundup

COMPILED BY THE
PARKS AND WILDLIFE
DEPARTMENT'S NEWS SERVICE

CITIZEN TURNS DOWN GAME THIEF REWARD

A concerned citizen whose tipped game wardens to one of the largest illegal fish-netting cases of the past six months turned down the \$200 reward to which he was entitled under the state's Operation Game Thief program.

The Operation Game Thief Committee met at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department head-

quarters in October and authorized payment of \$1,400 in rewards to seven individuals whose information led to 36 game and fish law convictions against 24 persons.

The information provided by the unselfish citizen resulted in the arrest and conviction of three men who had been netting fish on Dallas area lakes. The trio pleaded guilty to 26 cases and paid \$1,971 in fines and costs.

Another person who called the Operation Game Thief

number—1-800-792-GAME—received a \$200 reward for information regarding a trio of poachers who were caught illegally taking catfish with their hands. Their fishing trip cost them \$1,484 in fines and costs.

Other Game Thief calls which resulted in convictions involved redfish importation violations and various hunting violations such as hunting deer at night, killing wild turkeys out of season and deer tagging violations.

Persons who witness a game or fish law violation may call the statewide toll-free Game Thief number anytime. Anonymity is guaranteed if the caller so desires.

Callers are asked to provide as much information as possible, including description of suspects, vehicle descriptions and license numbers, direction of travel and the like.

The Game Thief Committee meets in Austin twice a year to disburse rewards for flagrant cases. Funding for the program is from donations by individuals and sportsmen's organizations. The six-member committee serves without pay.

TP&WD BUYS ANOTHER TRACT FOR WHITEWINGS

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has purchased a 200-acre tract in Cameron County with funds from sales of the white-winged dove stamps required of whitewing hunters.

The tract, which is primarily cultivated cropland, will be reforested with native brush species and/or domestic sunflowers to provide nesting cover and food for whitewings. The purchase is the second this year, with a 119.5-acre tract in Hidalgo County being acquired last March.

The land adjacent to the Rio Grande and about one half mile south of Santa Maria. It was purchased from Ben Bearden of Harlingen.

Dove Program Leader Ron George said it is anticipated that public hunting will be allowed on portions of the tract in the future. He said the department still is investigating additional sites in the Lower Rio Grande Valley area for the habitat acquisition program.



ANGLERS CAUGHT 2.5 MILLION FISH

The popularity and importance of the spotted seatrout can be seen in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department data showing that of the approximately 2.5 million fish caught by coastal boat fishermen during a one-year period, about half were trout.

Spotted seatrout, referred to as "speckled trout" by most coastal anglers, was by far the major species reported in the creel survey. The survey covered the one-year period from May 15, 1981, to May 15, 1982.

Biologist Larry McEachron of Rockport said fishermen had to spend about 4.5 million man-hours to catch the 2.5 million fish reported, averaging about one-half fish per hour.

GAME WARDENS CATCH PANHANDLE POACHERS

A number of hunters in the Panhandle-South Plains area apparently were not satisfied with dove hunting during September, so they decided to open the season on some other species a bit early.

Weldon Fromm, regional law enforcement director for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in Lubbock, said in addition to dove hunting violations, game wardens during September arrested poachers in 28 quail cases. There also were eight violations for pheasant, five for duck and one for deer. "This is an unusually large number of out-of-season game cases for this region," Fromm said.

The largest dove poaching incident occurred on the North Zone opening day, September 1, when Game Warden Mel Reed of Levelland arrested three men in Cochran County in possession of 209 doves and three quail.

The arrest resulted in a total of 30 cases filed against the trio. The men paid \$1,500 in fines and court costs after arraignment in Morton.

TROUT TAGGING PROGRAM OFFERS REWARDS

Bay fishermen are reminded by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to be on the lookout for tagged speckled trout along the Upper Texas Coast.

Department workers, assisted by employees of Houston Lighting & Power Company, tagged 540 trout caught from the company's discharge facility in Trinity Bay during late spring and summer 1982.

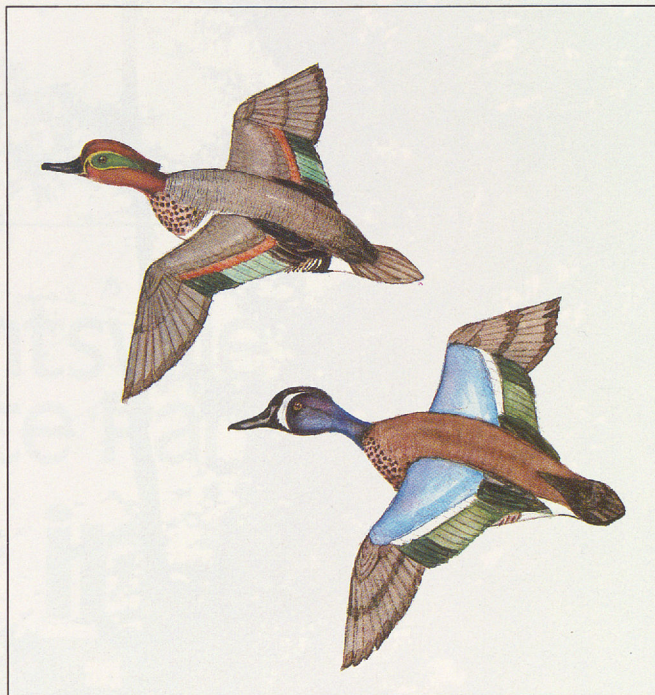
Returned tags bring rewards of \$1 to \$25, officials said. Reward money for the program is being provided by the Gulf Coast Conservation Association.

As of mid-August, anglers had returned 30 tags to the department. Tag returns have been located throughout the Galveston Bay system, with most coming from the lower bay areas. However, two were from the San Luis Pass area, about 50

miles from the release site.

Some anglers have had difficulty in recognizing tagged fish. Biologist Bill Baker said the fish are tagged behind and slightly below the pectoral fin with a small plastic spaghetti tag. The pectoral fins are just behind the gill cover on the side of the fish. The tag is a yellow plastic streamer anchored internally with a green, blue or orange rectangular disc. Each disc has a series of numbers on it with the words Texas Parks and Wildlife and either Seabrook or Rockport, Baker said.

Baker said if you catch a trout, red drum, flounder, black drum or sheephead which is tagged, remove the tag and return it by mail or in person to the department at either P.O. Box 8, Seabrook, Texas 77586, or P.O. Box 1707, Rockport, Texas 78382. The date and exact location of capture, as well as the length and weight of the fish also should be included.



SUCCESS RATES GOOD AT PUBLIC TEAL HUNT

Hunters who ventured into the marshlands of the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area during the September teal duck season had good shooting, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials.

Participation in the hunts was below average, with 67 hunters registering at the check station and spending 108 man-days hunting. However, the 2.24 bird-per-hunter success rate was well above the average for the 17 years that early teal hunts

have been held on the area, said manager David Lobpries.

Lobpries said he believes participation was low this season because of access problems related to low water and water hyacinth infestations.

Hunters fired a reported 957 shots to harvest 232 blue-winged teal and 10 green-winged teal for an average of four shots per bird bagged.

The early teal duck season, which was September 11-19 this year, is authorized to allow hunters to take advantage of early migrating flights of teal that arrive in Texas in advance of most larger duck species.

January in . . .

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Bighorn sheep have seen better days on their Trans-Pecos range. Unregulated market hunting, disease, predation and competition with domestic sheep have taken toll of these noble animals, and restoration efforts have suffered one setback after another. But don't sound the death knell for the bighorn yet. Help appears to be on the way from individuals and organizations that have pledged to save the species. In the January issue

we'll look at the problems that have beset the bighorn's past and the hopes for the future. Sandhill crane hunters have until January 30 to get in on some wing shooting action that rivals goose hunting for its thrills, and next month we'll have a story on that sport, along with information on a new sandhill crane hunting zone proposed for South Texas. Also next month are stories on horseback riding in Palo Duro Canyon State Park, white-tailed deer restocking, dedication of the James E. Daughtrey Wildlife Management Area and a Young Naturalist feature on rattlesnake fangs and venom.



Bill Reeves

Huntsville State Park

Park in the Pine Trees

by Stan Taft, Park Superintendent, Huntsville

For nearly half a century, Huntsville State Park has been a gathering place for outdoor enthusiasts. Surrounded by Sam Houston National Forest, this spot in the East Texas Pineywoods is a favorite park site.

Campsites and picnic tables are nestled along the shores of 210-acre Lake Raven. This small, picturesque lake was created by damming the confluence of three gently flowing streams: Big Chinquapin, for which a nature trail is named; Prairie Branch, for which a campground is named; and Little Chinquapin. Below the dam, Prairie Branch continues to make its way through the San Jacinto watershed and eventually feeds into Lake Conroe via the West Fork of the San Jacinto River. Named for General Sam Houston's Cherokee Indian name, Lake Raven is the park's focal point and attracts nearly half a million people every year who come to fish, canoe, boat and swim.

The lake, because of its size, has a boat speed limit of five miles per hour. Many visitors bring their fishing gear, and two piers give them easy access to the water. Bass fishermen cast their topwaters or plastic worms from their decked-out bass rigs for that elusive lunker just waiting to take the bait. It isn't unusual for three- to five-pound bass to be caught in Lake Raven. Large catfish also are plentiful. A 52-pound yellow cat was caught recently and several 30-pound cats have been caught by anglers with know-how and a lot of patience. Crappie fishing under the fish-attractor lights is a popular after-hours' sport, and many of those caught weigh three-quarters to 1½ pounds. Northern pike and tiger muskie were introduced experimentally, but they have not adapted well to Lake Raven's warm water and natural reproduction has been slow. The few caught from time to time usually are mistaken for alligator gar.



A.L. Bass

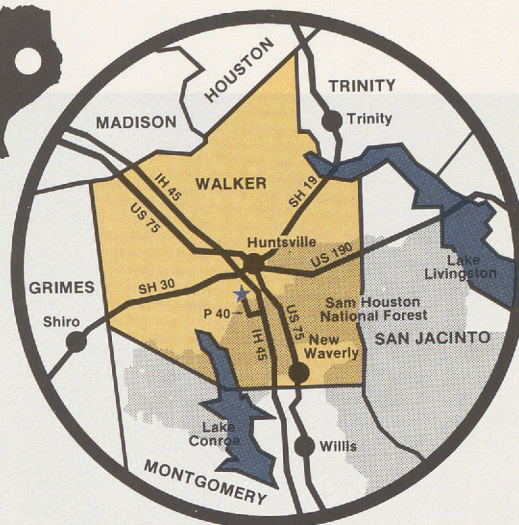


★ HUNTSVILLE STATE PARK

Location: Walker County, six miles southeast of Huntsville on IH 45 to Park Road 40 interchange.

Facilities: 105 picnic sites; 127 campsites; 64 campsites with water and electricity; 30 screened shelters; group picnic shelter; sanitary dump station; eight restrooms, five with and three without showers; bathhouse; snack bar; two fishing piers; two fish-cleaning tables; canoes and pedal boats available for rent; miniature golf; launching ramp; boat dock; playground; nature trail; bicycle trail; hiking trail.

For reservations or information: write Huntsville State Park, P.O. Box 508, Huntsville 77340 or call 713-295-5644.



A.L. Bass



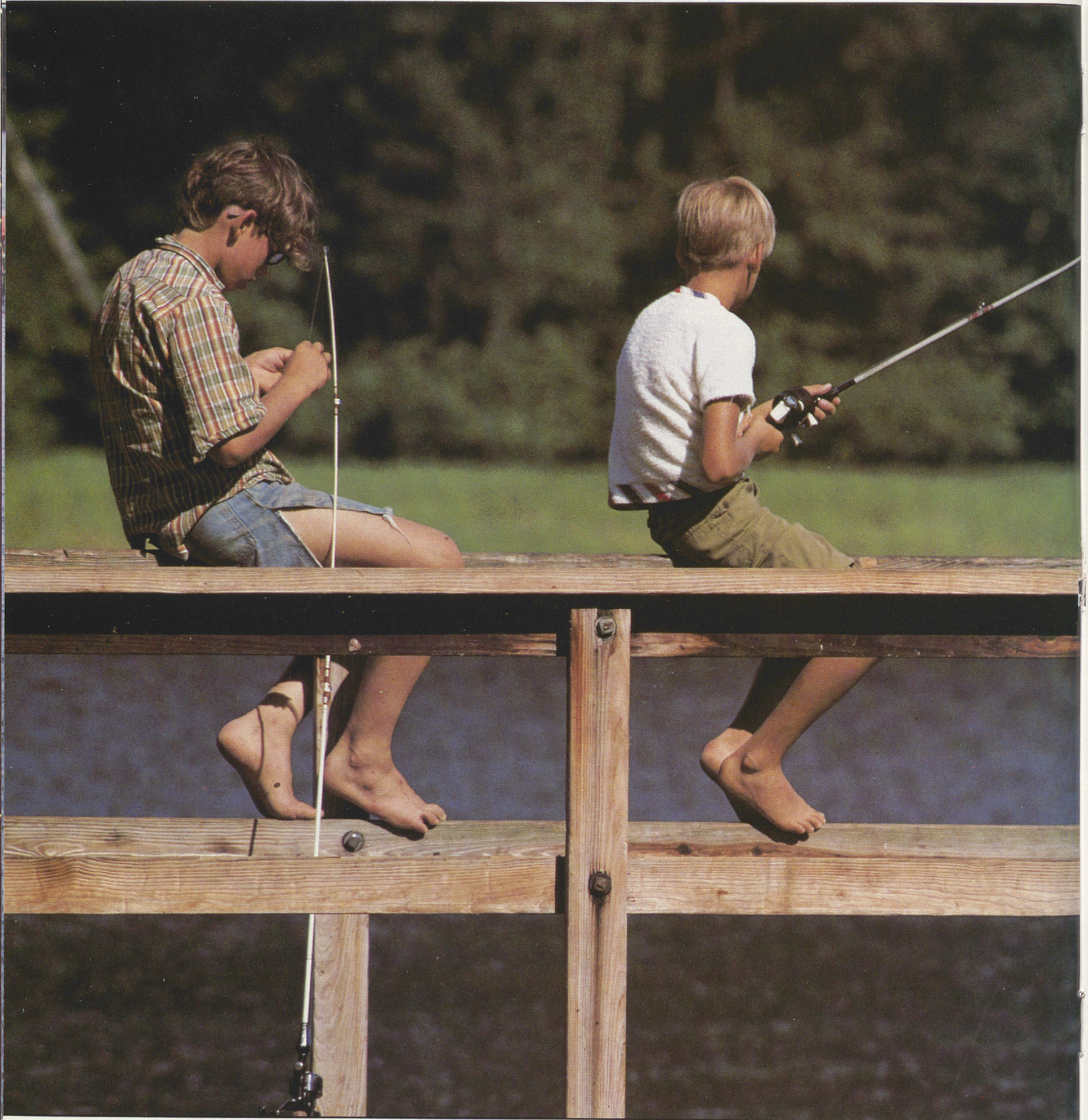
The biggest bass caught in 1982—nine pounds—was foul-hooked through the tail by a woman who just happened to come along with two friends to fish at the Prairie Branch pier. As they left, her two male companions were heard saying something about never taking her fishing again.

Lake Raven hasn't always been such a tranquil body of water. One day in November 1940, the dam broke when flood waters rushed in from the Elkins Lake following torrential rains which broke their dam. It wasn't until 1954 that the existing dam was constructed which restored the park's lake.

The swimming area in Lake Raven is roped off with buoys to keep out boat traffic. A 240-foot safety line on floats is located at the 4½-foot level to give children and nonswimmers a reference point between the bank and swimming platform.

Many people come back to Huntsville State Park year after year, so it's not uncommon to talk with third-generation park visitors. A lot of folks have seen the park grow from one with a few undesignated campsites available on a first-come first-served basis to the current 221 campsites handled by a reservation system. It's interesting to hear these long-time visitors talk about the way things were before camping was restricted: people stacked on top of

Leroy Williamson



A.L. Bass

Bill Reeves





people and tent stakes overlapping each other.

Huntsville State Park offers visitors an authentic slice of the East Texas Pineywoods. Dogwood trees begin to blossom in late March or early April, and their magnificent white flowers splash the woods with giant bouquets. Deer are abundant, and in June newborn fawns begin to appear. It's common to see deer ambling through the campsites early in the morning or late in the evening. Squirrels scamper about scolding lazy camp dogs and begging for handouts. Raccoons seem to be everywhere and can become a nuisance, so be sure food is in a safe container and secure your garbage can lid at night or you might be awakened by this critter's noisy clanging.

Reservations can be made 90 days in advance for all campsites and screened shelters. The group shelter can accommodate up to 75 people and is a day-use area only. It can be reserved any time during the calendar year.

Plans are underway to convert the old headquarters building into an interpretive center. Long-time Huntsville State Park visitors are invited to share their old photographs of the park with the park staff for possible display in the new interpretive center.

Pedal boats, canoes and flat-bottomed fishing boats are available for rent, and the minigolf course has just undergone renovation. The park store is well stocked and convenient.

Huntsville State Park continues to attract people to the placid shores of Lake Raven. When you visit, remember to take only pictures, leave only footprints and don't forget to pick up your film wrappers. **

DOC'S PRESCRIPTION FOR TASTY VENISON

Article and Photos by Ray Sasser

Dr. Carl Fink meticulously honed the knife blade against a butcher's steel. In the harsh light cast by the deer camp's single, naked bulb, the blade gleamed razor sharp. Doc, or the Old Gray Fox, as he's affectionately called around the Honey Creek Hunting Camp in Central Texas, tested the blade with an oversized thumb.

Satisfied, he went to work on the long, slender strip of venison backstrap, carefully paring away the fat, gristle and translucent connective tissue from the rich, red meat.

"You know, I made a mistake years ago," he said without looking up from his work. "I made the mistake of telling too many people that venison is good to eat. People used to bring me whole deer. If I want to eat venison nowadays, I have to shoot it myself."

That's really no problem for the retired veterinarian, who compounded his mistake by actually teaching scores of other hunters how to turn a deer in the field into a treat on the table.

"Work," he's fond of saying, "starts with a dead deer." The work he was doing now quickly resulted in a pile of red meat that was a carnivore's delight. Jim Smith, the designated venison fryer for the camp, already had a deep vat of grease heated to optimum warmth.

He laid Doc's thin slices of venison on a board and gave each piece a few obligatory whacks with a meat mallet. Then Smith dropped the meat into a paper bag containing flour, salt and pepper. He shook the contents to carefully coat each piece of venison and, with a group of hungry hunters circling like starving gray wolves after hapless prey, he dropped the venison into the hot grease.

A huge mound of french fries was pronounced done and the sourdough



It's a good idea to hang a deer and allow the body cavity to drain as much as possible after field dressing (above). A sharp knife is a necessary tool in processing your own venison; Dr. Carl Fink uses a butcher's steel to put the finishing touches on a sharp blade. Processing your own deer is a time-consuming process, but excellent meat is worth the trouble.

biscuits were browning nicely. The huge green salad that had been prepared earlier was retrieved from the camp refrigerator. It contained, in addition to the usual ingredients for such a salad, generous portions of turkey sausage and sharp cheddar cheese.

Smith eyed the frying venison more zealously than a highly paid French chef watches his own specialty. He retrieved each piece of meat just as it was done—but not overdone—a culinary sin Smith ranks two notches worse than serving warm Ripple wine with pheasant cordon bleu.

Finally, the meat was done and

none too soon. The platter was passed and conversation was suddenly lacking as the group put away far more food than seemed humanly possible.

It was Smith who seemed obliged to break the silence with his usual observation during such feasts: "I wonder what the poor folks are eatin'?"

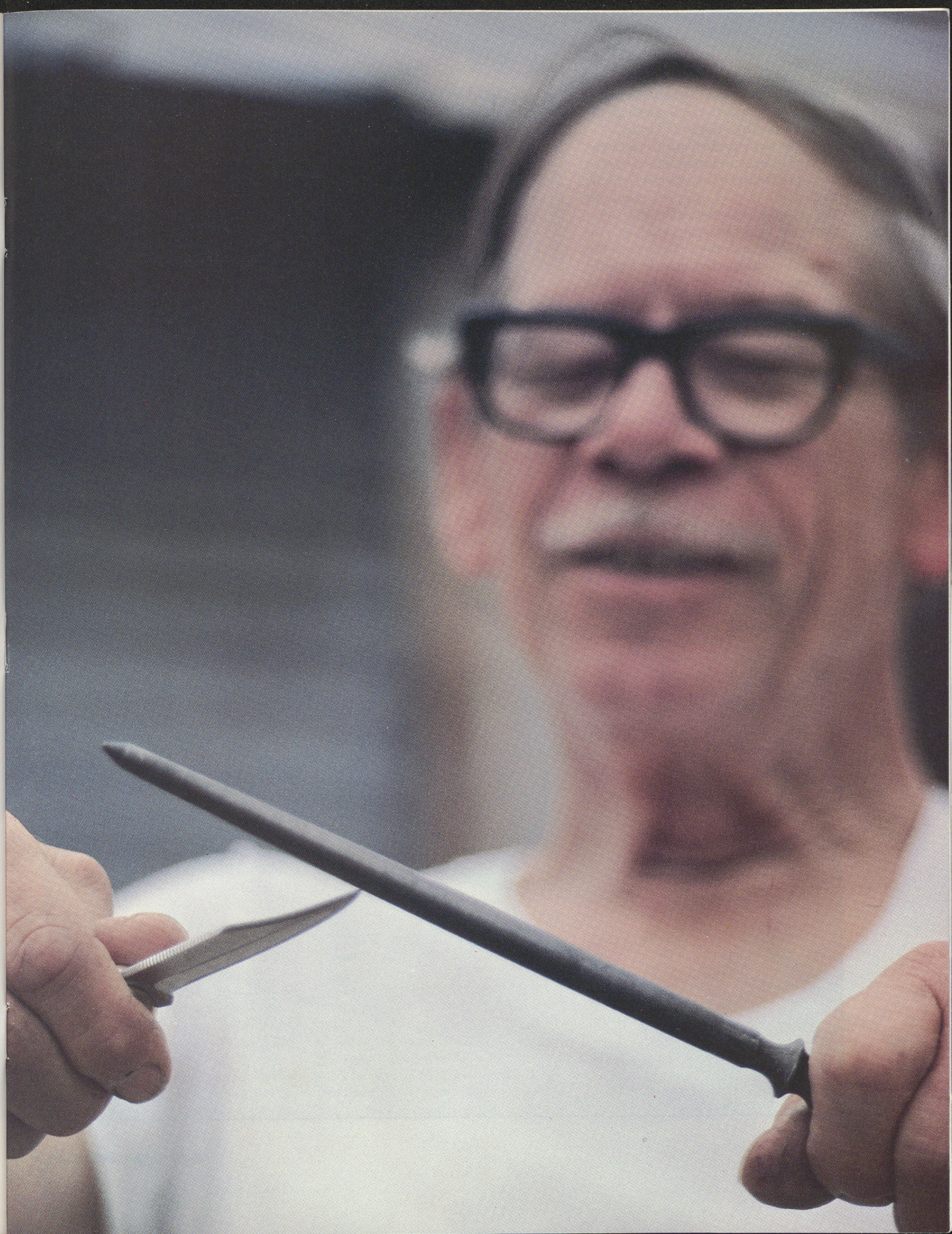
I personally wondered what the rich folks were eatin' and felt relatively convinced that it couldn't have been better than the fried venison. To me, it tasted like fried round steak, but better. Before the week was over, the camp crew would dine on an incredible venison stew and bring back, by popular demand, the fried venison menu.

Not long after I returned home from that hunt, I carefully pot-roasted a large muscle selected from a hindquarter of the buck I'd killed. Well seasoned and simmered for hours in a cast iron dutch oven, the roast came out as tender as a mother's love and just as tasty, to my palate, as an expensive cut of beef. Thick brown gravy was used to drown a side dish of brown rice. The only real difference I could tell between the venison roast and a beef roast was the lack of fat.

On a return trip to the deer camp, we dined on ground venison patties simmered in brown gravy and onions. Real mashed potatoes (as opposed to instant) were piled high on the plates, then contoured to hold ample lakes of gravy.

Most American hunters are not subsistence hunters. We're hunting because we love the sport. With the current costs of deer hunting, few people can justify it as a means of stocking the freezer with meat.

If I gave up deer hunting and all the associated expenses, I could easily buy enough ribeye steak to



replace the venison supply from the two deer I usually kill during the Texas hunting season.

But giving up deer hunting is out of the question for most dedicated hunters. While it's true that the kids aren't apt to go hungry if we don't bag a buck, it's also true that deer hunting costs just as much if you never shoot a deer or if you give the meat away as if you enjoy the bounty you've brought home, fairly and squarely.

So it certainly makes economic sense during spiralling grocery costs to eat the meat if you enjoy hunting. The only plausible reason for not eating venison is that you don't like the way it tastes.

I hear that complaint from a few hunters and, upon investigation, it's usually obvious that the fault lies not with the meat itself, but with the hunter.

Venison fat doesn't marble like beef and can be trimmed away from the rich, red meat (below). The fat contributes the gamey taste some people dislike. At right, Jim Smith and Dr. Fink prepare a deer camp specialty—fried venison.

Since deer are never killed under packing house conditions, special care is called for to insure that the meat arrives at the table in first-class condition.

Few people know better what to do with a dead deer than Dr. Fink. It seems ironic that the same veterinary surgical skill that saved hundreds of domestic animals over a long career serves perfectly for the hunter who's his own meat butcher. Not only does Doc know how to separate the various muscles in a deer's body, he knows the scientific name for most of them.

"Work literally does start as soon as a deer is killed," he explained. "You can forget about cutting the animal's throat. If the deer is still alive, you're risking serious injury just getting near it. If the deer is dead, its heart has stopped functioning and there's no purpose in cutting the throat.

"The first order of business, after you've made absolutely sure the deer is dead, is to properly tag the animals and then field dress it. Most hunters I've seen are fairly adept at field dressing. They know not to puncture the stomach or intestines, the con-

tents of which could contaminate the meat.

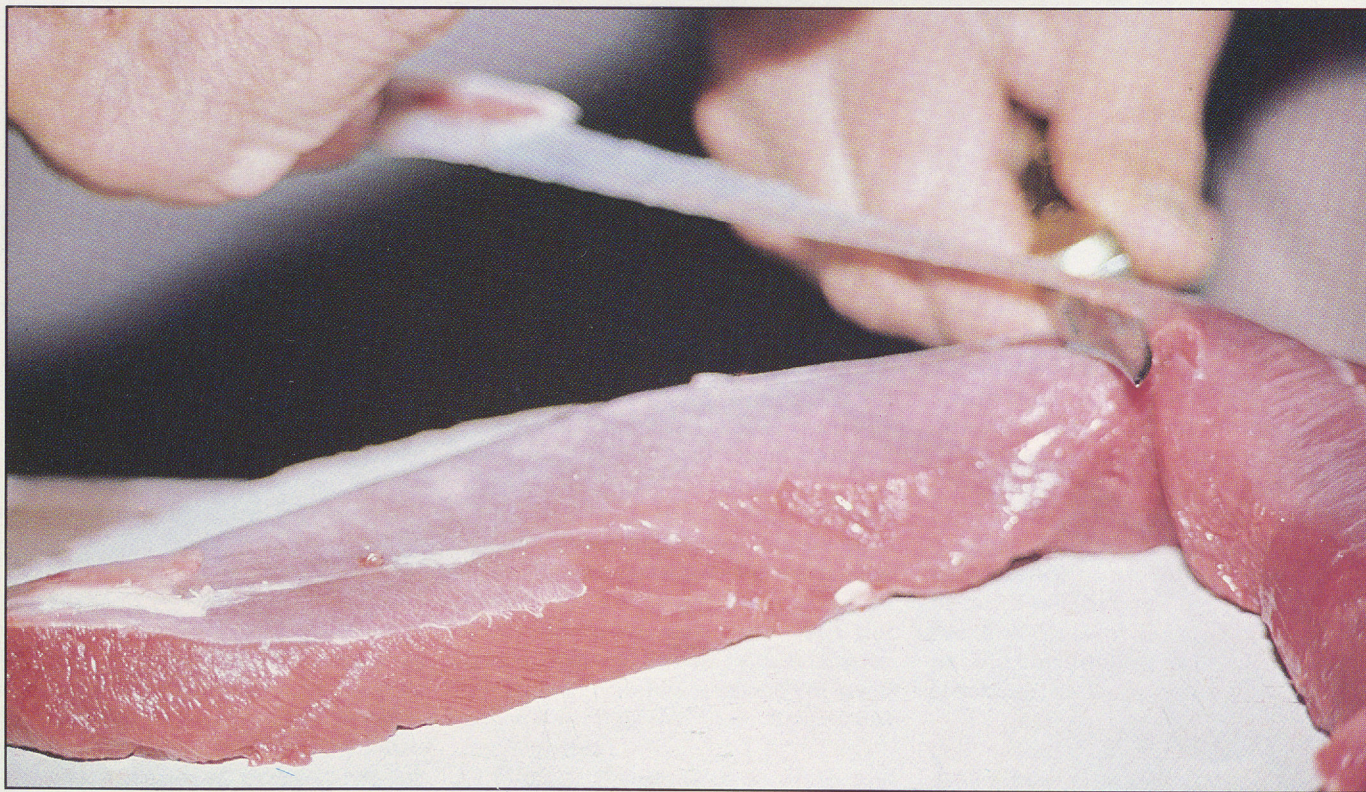
"After the animal is tagged and field dressed, it's a good idea to hang it in a tree to drain. Sometimes, of course, there are no trees handy and some deer are too heavy for a lone hunter to hang unless he has one of those small block and tackles made especially for the job.

"If the deer can't be hung, at least roll it over and drain as much blood as possible from the body cavity."

What happens next depends to a large degree on the weather and the facilities available where you hunt. The deer will keep just fine in cold weather, but in Texas and throughout much of the south, the weather is often unseasonably warm during deer season.

"In warm weather, if you can't get the deer promptly to cooling facilities, it's best to go ahead and skin the animal, quarter it according to regulations and put the quarters on ice as soon as possible."

Most of these instructions, of course, fall under the heading of common sense. So does transporting the deer from camp to home. In cold weather, you might get away with



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hauling the game in the open bed of a pickup truck or even lashed to the roof of a four-wheel-drive vehicle, if you only have a short distance to travel.

But I've seen deer hauled across Texas on interstate highways in the bright sunshine lashed to the roof of a Blazer or similar vehicle. Such treatment has probably done more to turn people against the flavor of venison than any other single factor, especially in the Lone Star State where it's not unusual to drive 300 to 500 miles for a deer hunt.

If you lashed a ribeye steak to the roof of your car and drove seven hours through sunshine and auto-

mobile heat, you could probably turn someone who didn't know better against eating prime beef.

The real secret to Doc's prescription for tasty venison comes when the meat is being prepared for the freezer. It'll seem like the hardest job of all for hunters accustomed to dropping their deer off at a commercial processing plant.

"The commercial plants treat a deer just like it was beef," Dr. Fink explained. "You'll get neat packages of meat, all right, but it'll be cut just the way a beef is butchered.

"The thing that gives the objectionable flavor to venison is the fat. Fat provides much of the flavor in

any meat and it can lend a strong, gamey taste to venison."

So what Doc does to insure against anything other than prime venison is to handle the deer himself from firing the shot to shutting the freezer door.

He bones his venison by separating the various muscles just as they developed on the bone. "When you pay attention, you can see the individual muscles and how to separate them."

Once the muscles are separated—the meat boned—Doc meticulously trims away all the fat, gristle and connective tissue he can possibly remove. Fortunately, venison doesn't marble like domestic meats. The fat occurs on the outside of the muscle and can be trimmed away.

It's a painstaking process but the result is excellent meat that has very little fat. It'll be delicious however you prefer your venison cooked.

"Of course, certain muscles of a deer lend themselves to be more tender, just as certain cuts of beef are better than other cuts," Dr. Fink explained. "The prime cuts of a deer are the tenderloins, the backstrap and the larger muscles of the hindquarters."

Doc, however, uses every bit of meat on the deer. The less choice shoulders become stew meat or the meat is ground for sausage or venison patties. The ribs are excellent if barbecued or the sparse meat can be trimmed from the ribcage and ground.

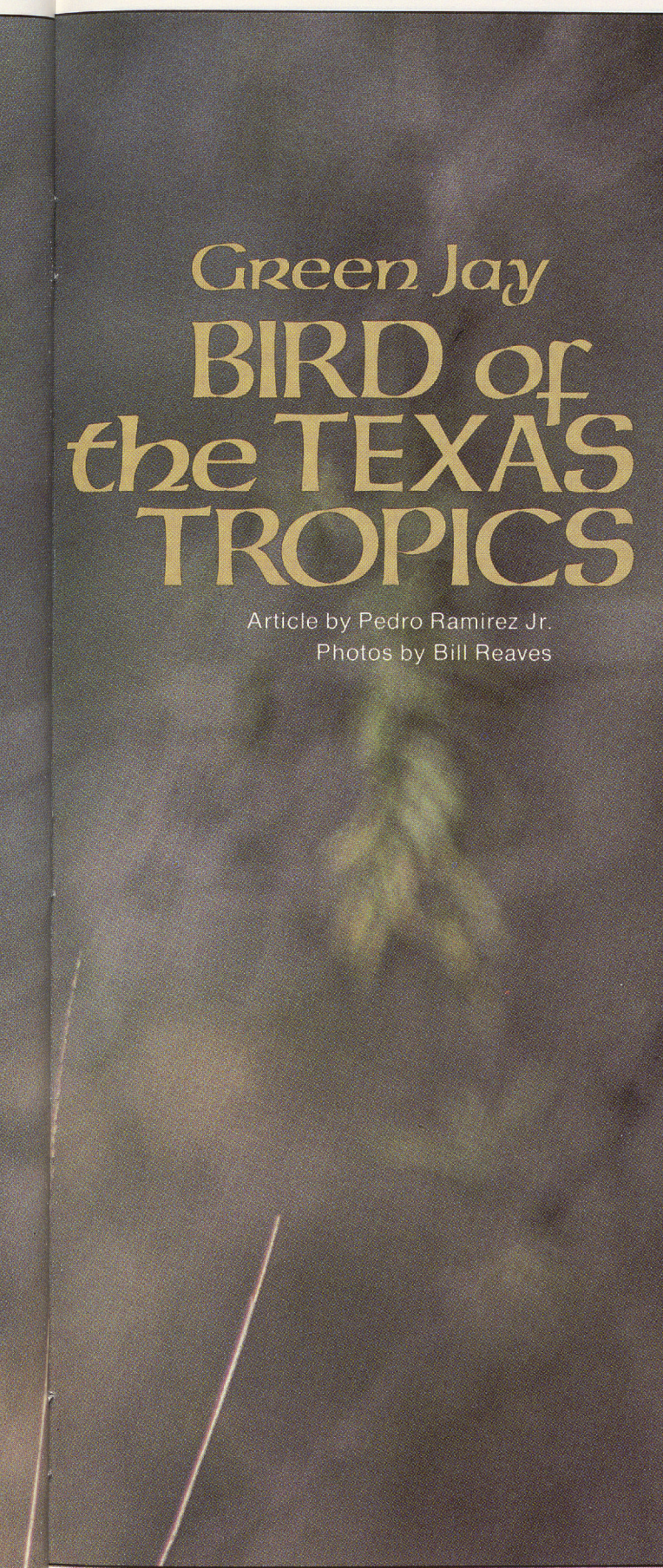
By trimming carefully, Doc leaves nothing but the bare bones and some of them are used for soup stock.

Modern deer hunters, for the most part, do not hunt to feed their families. But the annual deer harvest in Texas alone represents about 11 million pounds of boneless venison. It's impossible to say how much of that bounty is wasted through improper handling or discarded by people who find the taste of wild game objectionable.

One thing's for sure. Hunters who follow Doc's prescription for tasty venison won't be giving away their hard-earned deer and the end result is well worth the effort. **



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Green Jay
BIRD of
the TEXAS
TROPICS

Article by Pedro Ramirez Jr.
Photos by Bill Reaves

I first encountered a green jay on my father's South Texas ranch where I walked, binoculars in hand, along sandy cow paths which meandered through the thorny brush. During these walks I would admire the beauty of the vermilion flycatchers and painted buntings, but one spring day several years ago, I heard a new bird. Its raspy sound was unlike anything I had heard before. Tracing the source, I saw my first green jay and have been captivated by their beauty and character ever since.

The green jay is a tropical bird, ranging from northern Bolivia northward to the southern tip of Texas. It inhabits brush and woodlands, and two of the best places in the United States to see this brightly colored jay are the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park. Both preserves are bordered by the Rio Grande where dense thickets of acacia, mesquite, elm and hackberry attract not only green jays but other tropical birds found only as far north as the extreme southern tip of Texas.

These two sanctuaries are vestiges of what once was an extensive thicket of dense thorny brush. A.C. Bent, author of "Life Histories of North American Birds," visited the lower Rio Grande Valley in the early 1900s and expressed concern for the fate of the area's subtropical woodlands:

"I am wondering how much longer this bird paradise will last, for I have read that huge tractors have been uprooting the forest trees, clearing up the chaparral, and plowing up the rich land to make room for rapidly growing citrus orchards and other expanding agricultural interests. Thus will soon disappear the only chance we have of preserving on United States soil this unique fauna and flora; and all these interesting birds will have to retreat across the Mexican border, leaving our fauna that much poorer."

Today the productive farmlands that replaced the mesquite, huisache and guayacan are threatened by increased growth and uncontrolled land development.

Although green jays are brightly colored, their green and yellow feathers blend well with their tropical surroundings. But these bold and curious birds frequently venture into the open, making them easy to observe and photograph.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge are the best places in the United States to see green jays. These tropical birds range from Bolivia only as far north as the southern tip of Texas. At one time, the dense thickets that attract these birds were widespread in the lower Rio Grande Valley, but farmland has replaced much of the thorny brush.



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Noisy and conspicuous like other jays, the green jay announces its presence with loud raucous notes. Boldness, curiosity and an insatiable appetite make the green jay easy to observe and photograph. A daily supply of suet or sunflower seeds placed near a photography blind will bring the birds within range of the camera.

Although green jays primarily eat seeds and insects, they occasionally feed on carrion and have been accused of eating the eggs of other birds. In oak-covered areas of South Texas the green jay also eats acorns. Grasping the acorn with one foot, the bird pecks at it until it opens. Green jays could be considered opportunistic feeders, since they eat almost anything edible. Sometimes fellow jays will harass a green jay carrying food until it drops the morsel. Almost immediately the closest pursuer picks up the loot and becomes the object

of harassment until the food is eaten, lost or effectively hidden.

Beginning in April, nests are constructed with thorny twigs and lined with grass, rootlets and hair. They usually are well hidden in dense brush five to 10 feet above ground. Three to five grayish, greenish or buffy white eggs spotted with brown, gray and lavender are laid. Young green jays are born blind and naked. Juvenile plumage resembles the adult's, and males and females look alike.

Despite bright plumage, green jays blend well with their surroundings as their green and yellow feathers match the mesquite, hackberry and elm foliage. Only a sudden movement or noisy call reveal their presence, but fortunately for photographers and birders, the green jay is both noisy and bold and frequently ventures into the open. **



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Illustration by
Hal Irby

"That's a smart old coon."

Article and Photos by Grady Allen

"Isn't that the sweetest music you've ever heard?" questioned the crusty old veteran. "Well, I can't hear it for all those darn dogs yelping," replied the neophyte whose persistent requests to be taken on a coon hunt were finally, though reluctantly, granted.

Hound dog hunting, whether it be for coons, cats or coyotes, bonds those who avidly pursue it. But only with great difficulty is an outsider permitted to attend; then only a select few ever really are accepted.

Knowledgeable hound dog hunters are just as addicted to their sport as the most avid football or baseball fan. When the rules of the game are understood and you know the players, it becomes one of the most challenging of sports—complete with thrills, suspense, climax and sometimes defeat.

Each may find a particular aspect more suited to personal needs, but the companionship and pride of accomplishment is shared by all. Field trials are very popular, consisting of local, state, and national organizations, and they are a good place for interested individuals to learn about the activity.

Coon hunting with dogs can be enjoyed any time of the year by participants of any age. Even the handicapped find pleasure following the contest and being close to nature. By and large, the hound dog man is desperately trying to retain that independence that existed before the advent of an overdeveloping society. Our neophyte totally missed what the old gent was feeling so deeply.

The activity usually takes place on a clear, crisp, hopefully calm evening. Raccoons can be taken with only one dog, but a pack consists of three to six or more, and usually includes at least one or two young dogs in training. Knowledge of the terrain is always of great assistance to the dogs. Although transportation could be walking or horseback, the more accepted method today is a four-wheel-drive pickup.

The start, or strike, dogs are let out first. It is their job to find where the raccoon has left just a whisper of scent. Time lapse and scent conditions are the important factors now. The scent usually is found on a bush or the grass since it disappears first from the ground by any drying wind. How cold the trail is can be deter-

mined by which dog can smell it if the abilities of each individual dog are known.

Pancho has the trail; it must be cold because he is the only one able to detect the weakened aroma. He lets out an occasional mournful bawl, sometimes five minutes apart. Now Nancy and Rascal pick up the scent and circle out ahead of old reliable Pancho. This teamwork enables them to pick up the scent some 100 yards ahead without knocking out every track in between.

The pitch of their bawling gets higher and more frequent now, so we turn out some help. The soldiers go to the cries in a dead run, several sucking in that familiar odor immediately and joining in the chorus.

The coon is still ahead and planning his strategy; after all, we are playing this game in his backyard. He knows where he can take to the trees and go for 50 yards without

Daybreak signals the end of the coon hunt, and the hunter calls in his dogs. Coon hunts usually take place on clear, crisp, calm evenings. Hunters feel a special closeness with their dogs, and take pride in each dog's character and abilities.

coming down, or maybe he'll just hide in his favorite hollow way up high and not come down at all. He really isn't that pressed right now so he trots over to the lake. He has fished there nearly every day and knows all the shallows; he can run forever without touching dry land, or swim out to deep water if worse comes to worse.

The pups are in such an uproar by now we can't hear the old dogs. The trail is hot; no doubt it is a coon because old Rascal never lies. We release the pups and they vanish in the direction of the turmoil. Assured the coon is headed for the lake, we drive on around, keeping within hearing distance all the time. When we stop, every dog can be heard; they are right behind him. They have him running; can't be cautious now, and the telltale scent is left even stronger on each leaf that is brushed. In no time, the pack is at the water's edge, so noisy we can't hear each other speak. The dogs are running up and down the banks and some can be heard in the water.

The barking slows and even stops, but they haven't given up. The character of the dogs is what makes their master proud and he knows the hunt will be discussed at the coffee shop in the morning. The prowess of a good pack may be known for several hundred miles around.

After a lengthy wait, Nancy opens a few hundred yards around the lake. Ten minutes pass and Rascal opens, then Nancy again; the others dash in that direction and the coon is in trouble again. He would have preferred to stay on a bush out in the water, but the swimming dogs kept pushing him. He wanted to go to that big dead tree out there, but

the dogs checked it out before he had the chance. Now he is on shore and running as fast as he can to the safety of the trees in the large oak motte he calls home.

The dogs begin to trail again with a bawl here and there. Precious time has passed while the dogs were checking every possibility, and the coon has a good head start. But the dogs are together as a team again. The scouts out front open, and the rear guard moves up.

They would like to catch the coon on the ground, and sometimes they do. However, it is not to be on this night. There's too much lead to overcome. The trail is methodically

worked out over bare spots and down cow paths. Since we didn't pick up the pups, now is the time they are most vulnerable to start something wrong. A coyote could pull them off the coon trail and they could cause confusion among the most true. A hound is bred to hunt, run and catch what he hunts. There is a delicate balance to be maintained when breaking a young dog off all other quarry. This talent is reserved for only the best of dog trainers.

Our concern is eased as the grass becomes thicker and a little brush is encountered. Others in the pack will pick up the scent and be of help, keeping all minds on the task at



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hand. The pace quickens as the big black thicket looms ahead. We know now where we are going. All the old dogs can smell the coon and the juveniles are trying to be mature. The characteristic barking tells us they are trailing right into the mass of trees. At the rate they are traveling, we might have quite a walk ahead. Within a very short time, however, we are greatly relieved to hear the tune change. Trumpets skyward and stationary, nearly all at the same time, the familiar notes of "treed" ring out.

Flashlights and dog leashes in hand, we start for the tree. With leaves crackling underfoot and starlight streaming through the canopy overhead, there is no doubt why this ancient sport is still pursued. The light finally picks up the frenzy of dogs; two are even up in the branches

of a large oak. The pups and several other dogs are quickly leashed while the searching lights pan across the uppermost branches and leaves. We turn off the lights, expecting to see a silhouette through the brightly backlit cover. None is visible. In disbelief I climb the tree, shining my light in every accessible spot. Not even the flicker of a cautious eye is reflected. We have just witnessed a Super Bowl of coon hunting played to a draw.

Before it can go into overtime, and overjoyed by the excitement of the evening, Henry hollers out, "That's a smart old coon. He deserves his freedom. Better catch Pancho, Rascal and Nancy, too, before they pull out and start him again." We have been paid in full by the diligent effort put forth and the closeness of man and animal. **

Raccoons can be taken with only one dog, but a pack consists of three to six or more, and usually includes at least one or two young dogs in training. Knowledge of the terrain is always of great assistance to the dogs, but despite their skill this game is played in the coon's backyard and it has the advantage of knowing where to take to the trees and how to hide. When the dogs finally have the coon cornered the familiar notes of "treed" ring out from the pack.

Editor's Note: A valid hunting license is required of anyone who hunts any wild animal or bird outside his county of residence. In addition, a 1981 law requires a trapper's license of anyone who takes or attempts to take fur-bearing animals anywhere except landowners who take fur-bearing animals found depredating on agricultural crops, livestock, poultry or personal property. Fur-bearing animals such as raccoons, or their pelts, may not be possessed except during the open season (December 1 through January 31).

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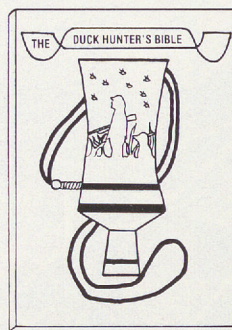
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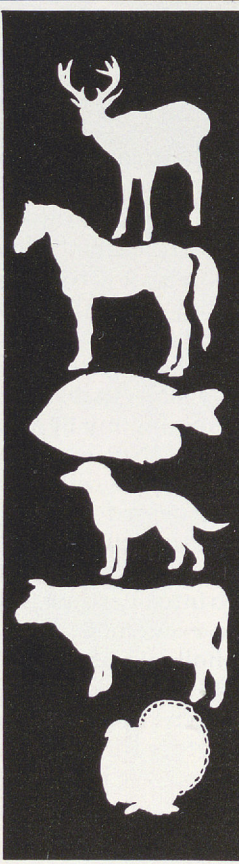
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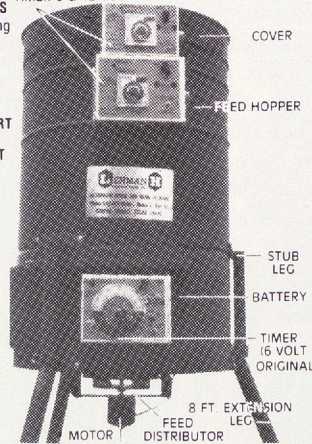
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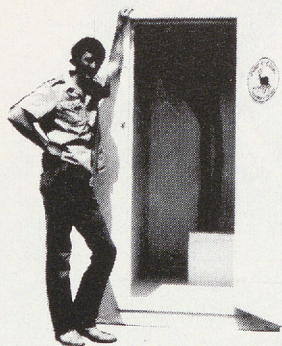
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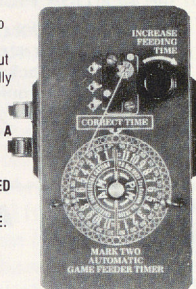
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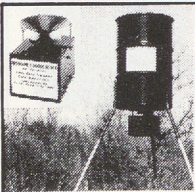
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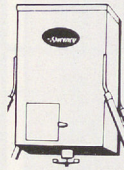
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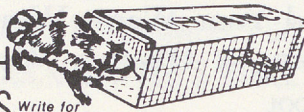
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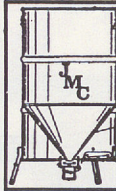
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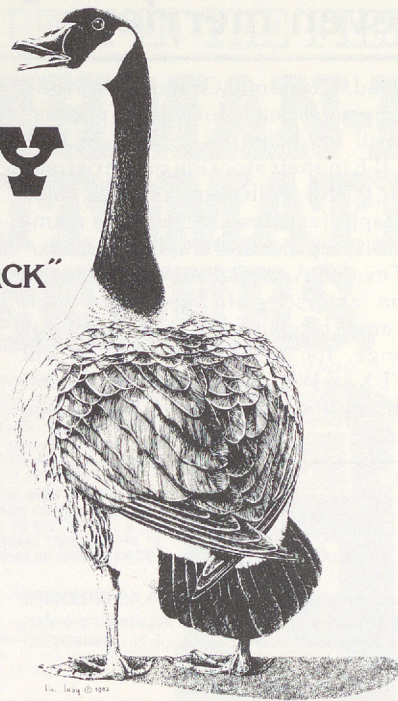
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Letters to the Editor

Good Hunting

I would like to commend your interesting and informative magazine. I am very satisfied with the hunting and fishing information as well as the Texas parks information you provide.

Last September 4 my two sons and I had the best day of white-winged dove hunting we have ever had here in the Rio Grande Valley. The doves were flying in flocks of 10 to 15, and we all got our 10-dove limit. But we went back on September 12 and the whitewings had already migrated to Mexico or Central America and there were only a few mourning doves to be found. I am very happy you have sanctuaries for white-wings along the Rio Grande. It really helps to preserve these birds for generations of hunters to come.

Enclosed is my check for another year's subscription.

Carlos H. Garcia
Brownsville

Beautiful

Just a note to thank you so very much for the beautiful July issue. The pictures were all great, especially the ones of the eagles.

Congratulations on a really super issue.

M.C. Palmer
Fort Worth

Eagle Photos

I just had to let you know how delighted I am with your July 1982 issue! The gorgeous eagle on the cover and the full-page shot inside are both simply breathtaking. I'll truly treasure this issue just a bit more than the others. We have every copy since we started subscribing.

Celia G. Frame
Jewell, Georgia

Renewing Under Protest

I am renewing my subscription, but under protest. I have been a subscriber since the 1940s, and am increasingly unhappy with the continuous drift of your magazine toward the liberal side. In the early days the articles were written for landowners who were interested in better game management. Now they are more and more for campers, canoeists

and backpackers, who in my judgement contribute nothing to our great state and pollute the land and waters we have fought for years to protect. In my judgement your magazine was begun originally to promote the welfare of our land and animals instead of promoting a magazine. I hope to see this change in the future.

Albert Weigand
Llano

Coyotes: Villains or Victims?

May I let Sharon Bartels (Letters to the Editor, July) know how one of your longtime subscribers feels?

It is my opinion that her statement about Mr. Meinzer is in poor taste. I have always found the staff of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine as well as its authors to be accurate and innovative with total dedication to the welfare of fish and wildlife of our state. Many people are misled by the propaganda of certain groups who feel that animals should not be hunted. To me this attitude is irrational. Our Texas Parks and Wildlife Department controls the harvesting of game, the object being to protect when there is an underpopulation and to prevent overpopulation.

I have seen the depredation of coyotes. These animals prefer living meat. They pull down a young, healthy calf and begin feeding on it while the calf bleats helplessly. I have seen this happen. They kill and devour fawns and raid chicken houses. They do not kill just the weak goats and sheep, they kill indiscriminately. Man is the coyote's only enemy and without human control they will multiply to intolerable numbers.

I cannot accept Sharon Bartels' approach to the menace. She should get out in the wild and find out what is really going on.

A.O. McCary, M.D.
Lake Jackson

Sharon Bartels isn't entirely alone in her defense of the coyote, but almost.

After observing man's behavior toward his fellow man during my 75 years,

I'm afraid there remains little hope for most of our wild animals. Time is running out for even the animals that sportsmen are "protecting."

The animal kingdom was created beautifully balanced, but man, with his bullets, poisoned bait, steel traps and greed, has changed that. Animals have "no rights." Their natural food and environment have been taken from them. Soon the bloody "bunny baseball" will be expanded to other animals, games to be played with glee by men, women and children.

John Muir wrote ". . . if a war of races should occur between the wild beasts and the Lord Man, I would be tempted to sympathize with the bears."

Olivia Lewis
San Antonio

Javelina Caution

I would like to elaborate on an item in the September issue. Accompanying the back cover photo of a pair of javelinas is a statement that these animals are not vicious. Although this is basically correct, it may be misleading to the growing number of lease hunters who are unfamiliar with the Brush Country. A band of javelinas that is surprised, shot at or harassed often becomes vicious in that they turn to their only defense, a good offense. It can be unnerving to hear the clatter of tusks and see the little fellows flit from bush to bush, and the uninformed person's response to run or shoot may well make matters worse.

Jim Mullen
Austin

Redfish Size Limits

I have recently moved to Texas from North Carolina, where I spent all my life fishing the outer banks for the world record redfish, or at least one close to that size. But what do I do if I catch that big fish here in Texas? Your laws state that all redfish over 30 inches in length must be released, hopefully in a viable condition. I would like to suggest that anglers who catch redfish over 30 inches long by hook and line on a conventional rod and reel be allowed to keep them, only for the purpose of mounting by a bona fide taxidermist. The fish could be registered with your department and a

record of the mounting sent to the department within one year, or a fine would be levied on the angler. I cannot promote the slaughter of these large breeder fish, but I also cannot suppress my desire to see a trophy redfish on my wall.

Skip Hudson
Boerne

■ We can sympathize with your desire to retain and mount a trophy red drum should you catch one, and our biologists knew the maximum size limit of 30 inches would be a disappointment to anglers interested in mounting their large redfish. However, we cannot allow any flexibility in this regulation yet. A loophole allowing fishermen to retain red drum longer than 30 inches would be too hard to enforce. But most important, the law was passed to protect our red drum population. Although commercial sale of red drum was prohibited in 1981 and removed about 75 percent of the pressure on the fish, it takes three to five years before red drum mature and migrate to the Gulf to spawn. Prior to 1981, the combined sport and commercial fishing pressure was about 85 percent, meaning only 15 percent of all one-year-old red drum had a chance of living to two years old. Also, there was a fish kill of more than 2,000 large red drum in 1981 of unknown causes. For these reasons, we felt it was important to protect all breeding age red drum. We hope that in two to three years the red drum population will recover and stabilize enough to go back to less restrictive measures.

In Search of Whip-poor-wills

Your June issue had a picture of a baby whip-poor-will on the inside back cover. I have never seen one of these birds, although at night I can hear them. You said they feed at night, and I was wondering if you could tell me how to recognize them. I see several kinds of night feeders, some of which I can identify.

Junie Williams
Gatesville

■ The whip-poor-will, along with the chuck-will's-widow, poor-will, pauraque and two species of nighthawks, all are members of the bird family Caprimulgidae, commonly known as goatsuckers. These species have large mouths and feed on flying insects at dusk and in early evening. The name goatsucker arose from the habit of some species to forage

near livestock, and folklore held that the birds sucked milk from the udders of goats and cattle. In flight, these species have deep wingbeats and swoop, wheel and dive in the process of catching insects. Flight appears similar among the species, but nighthawks have white slash marks on their wings whereas the other species lack such marks. With the exception of nighthawks, all the above species are named for their call and are often identified by sound. Whip-poor-wills, chuck-will's-widows and the common nighthawk all may be encountered in your area of Texas. Listen closely to distinguish their calls.

Pronghorns and Fences

I enjoyed the article "Back Home on the Range" by Mary-Love Bigony very much (October 1982). She mentions that antelope will jump through barbed wire fences but not over them. I've never seen a pronghorn go through a fence, but many times I have seen them go under one. The antelope flattens its body on the ground, and with its front feet sort of pulling and its rear feet pushing, it can go under a barbed wire fence in five or six seconds. It generally finds a place where the wire is higher from the ground and crosses there.

Vance Randolph
Abilene

Humpbacked Bass

I'm a black bass fisherman here on Lake Amistad, and have caught a number of black bass with a humped back. What causes them to have this deformity? I have caught this type mostly in the fall months.

Don Hanselman
Del Rio

■ Our biologists say largemouth bass with this "humped back" appearance generally are fish which encountered a period of stress at some point in their life. This stress could be either a lack of proper nutrition, disease or both. In addition to a sunken belly, the fish develop some curvature of the backbone as a result of the stress.

Tripletail

My grandparents own a lot a few miles outside of Sargent off Matagorda Bay. When we stayed there last summer, I saw a fish I had never seen before. It was a very small, yellow fish with black

spots. It looked a little like an angel fish but it looked more like a leaf. The little fish always drifted with the tide and stayed near the shore. It swam in and out of oyster shells eating them. From this description, can you tell me what it was?

Rhonda Sullivan
Houston

■ It probably was a tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*. Coloration of tripletails ranges from almost black to reddish-brown to yellow. The young also have black spots. They are called tripletails because the top (dorsal) and bottom (anal) fins are rounded and are almost as long as the tail (caudal) fin. The young fish often float on their sides at the water's surface with other floating debris and resemble a dead leaf. Tripletails may grow to 3½ feet in length and are good to eat. The state record weighs 28 pounds, eight ounces and is 38½ inches long with a girth of 34 inches.

Jumping Pronghorns

I recently received my first issue of your magazine, and enjoyed it immensely. You are to be congratulated on the quality of this publication. I suspect there is an error in the October issue's article on pronghorn antelope. The article states, "Although an occasional pronghorn has been known to jump as high as 27 feet . . ." Now I know Texans are prone to brag a little, but in California we figure an occasional jump (under stress) as high as seven feet to be quite a feat for our pronghorns.

Seriously, I love your magazine.

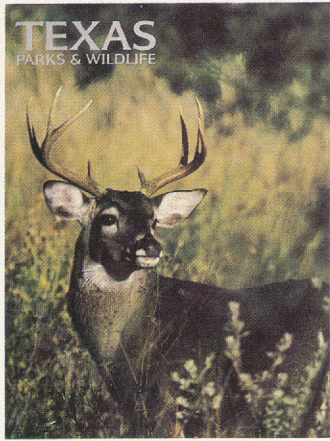
Bob Mapes
Sacramento, California

■ You're right. Even a Texas pronghorn can't jump 27 feet high. The sentence should have read, "Although an occasional pronghorn has been known to jump as far as 27 feet, as a rule a fence as low as three feet will stop them."

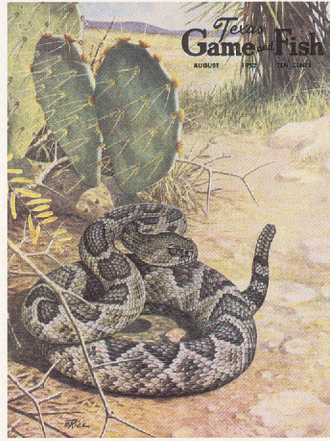
INSIDE BACK COVER

Horn rattling is one of the most exciting ways to hunt white-tailed deer. By striking a set of antlers together and then rattling them to imitate the sound of bucks fighting, the hunter may lure a big whitetail buck out of hiding. Photo by Bill Reaves.

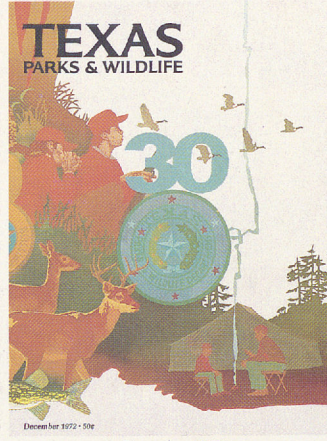




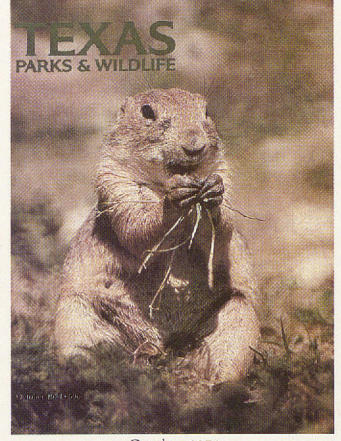
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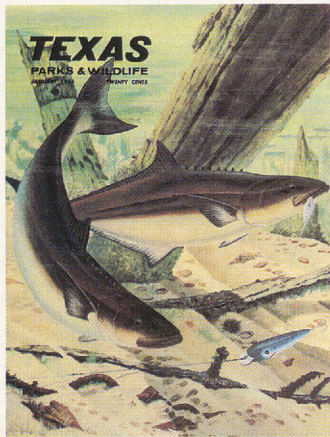
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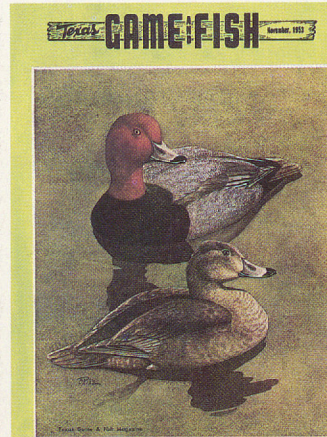
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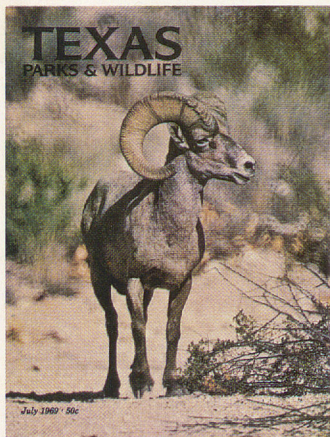
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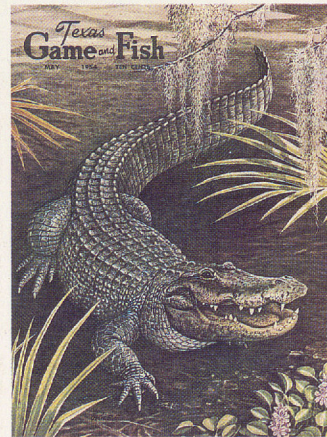
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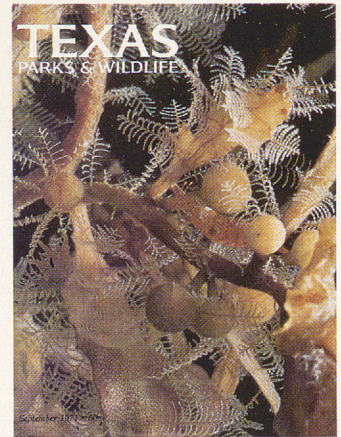
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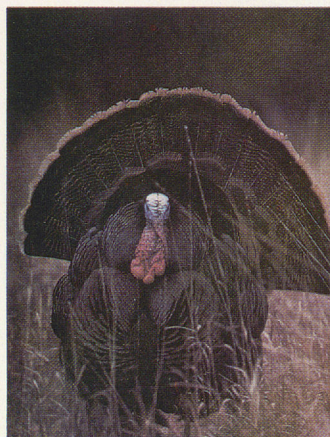
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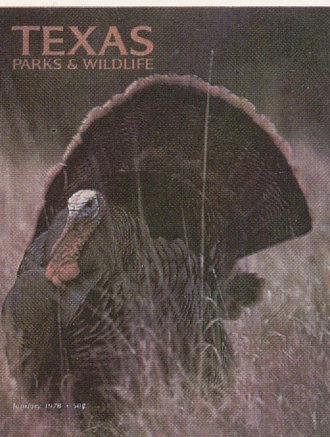
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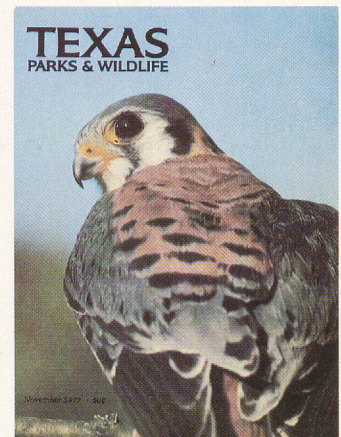
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