

YOUTH HUNT | LONG-LINE WARS | THREE-PARK WEEKEND

WWW.TPWMAGAZINE.COM ★ OCTOBER 2014

# TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS



## WAITING *in the* WOODS

DO ANTLER  
RESTRICTIONS  
REALLY MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE?

\$4.95 10>

0 09128 47805 0



OFFICIAL VEHICLE OF  
THE TEXAS PARKS AND  
WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



OFFICIAL VEHICLE OF  
THE TOYOTA TEXAS  
BASS CLASSIC



SOMETHING EVERY



**CAMPSITE**

CAN USE MORE OF,

— L U X U R Y . —

**THE NEW 2015 TUNDRA.** Built in Texas\* with an available 5.7L V8 and all the bells and whistles like Bluetooth®, back-up monitor and more. Ready to take on hunting, fishing or whatever the great outdoors brings, in style. Find yours at [toyota.com](http://toyota.com).

 **TOYOTA**  
*Let's Go Places*

\*Assembled in Texas with U.S. and globally sourced parts.



# Features

COVER STORY

## 26 Growing Bigger Trophies

*By Russell A. Graves*

Restrictions in East Texas counties are leading to better antler production.

## 36 First Hunt

*By Karen Loke*

Youth hunting event changes the lives of young participants, including my son.

## 42 Hooking Poachers

*By Mike Cox*

Game wardens thwart illegal long-line fishing in the Gulf.

Visit our online archive at [www.tpwmagazine.com](http://www.tpwmagazine.com). Find us on Facebook. For the latest information on Texas' parks and wild-life, visit the department's website: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us).

# CONTENTS

OCTOBER 2014

# Departments

## 8 At Issue

By Carter P. Smith

## 10 Foreword/Mail Call

Our readers share their ideas.

## 12 Scout: Bears Without Borders

Cross-border educators meet to coordinate conservation activities.

By Maria Araujo

## 14 Park Pick: Tropical Paradise

Palmetto State Park offers a nature-filled getaway in Central Texas.

By Ben Horstmann

## 16 Picture This: Zooming In

'Digiscoping' marries cameras and magnifying optics to create close-up shots.

By Earl Nottingham

## 18 Flora Fact: Play Misty for Me

Brightly colored mistflowers attract swarms of butterflies.

By Jason Singhurst

## 20 Wild Thing: Stuff of Nightmares

The giant redheaded centipede is one of Texas' most terrifying critters.

By Ben Hutchins

## 21 Skill Builder: Lock Away Danger

Proper gun storage is essential for safety.

By Robert Ramirez

## 22 Three Days in the Field: Three Parks in Three Days

A weekend Hill Country getaway features lakes, caverns and waterfalls.

By Stephanie M. Salinas

## 50 Legend, Lore & Legacy: Los Misteriosos

Three Texas ghost stories passed down through generations.

By Stephanie M. Salinas

## 58 Parting Shot

By Chase A. Fountain

## Covers

**FRONT:** A white-tailed buck is silhouetted in the evening light. Photo © Russell A. Graves

**BACK:** Trees and grasses create a scene of green at Palmetto State Park near Gonzales. Photo © Lance Varnell

**PREVIOUS SPREAD:** Palmetto State Park gets its name from the dwarf palmettos found there. Photo © Lance Varnell

**THIS PAGE:** Is that a legal buck? Antler restrictions in many counties mean hunters need to take a close look. Photo © Grady Allen



# TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

THE OUTDOOR MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

OCTOBER 2014, VOL. 72, NO. 8

GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

Rick Perry

## COMMISSION

Dan Allen Hughes Jr., Chairman **Beeville**  
Ralph H. Duggins, Vice Chairman **Fort Worth**  
T. Dan Friedkin, Chairman-Emeritus **Houston**  
Roberto De Hoyos **Houston** Bill Jones **Austin**  
James H. Lee **Houston** Margaret Martin **Boerne**  
S. Reed Morian **Houston** Dick Scott **Wimberley**  
Lee M. Bass, Chairman-Emeritus **Fort Worth**

Executive Director Carter P. Smith  
Communications Director Josh M. Havens

## MAGAZINE STAFF:

Randy Brudnicki Publisher  
Louie Bond Editor  
Russell Roe Managing Editor  
Sonja Sommerfeld Photo Editor  
Mark Mahorsky Layout Design  
Earl Nottingham Chief Photographer  
Chase A. Fountain Photographer  
Traci Anderson Business Manager  
Alayna Alvarez Editorial Intern  
Catherine Groth Photography Intern

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Mike Cox, Steve Lightfoot, Rob McCorkle,  
Larry D. Hodge, Dyanne Fry Cortez, Stephanie Salinas

## CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Russell A. Graves, Erich Schlegel

## EDITORIAL OFFICES:

4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744  
Phone: (512) 389-TPWD Fax: (512) 389-8397  
E-mail: magazine@tpwd.texas.gov

## ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES:

STONEWALLACE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.  
c/o TP&W magazine  
4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744  
Fax: (512) 389-8397  
Jim Stone, Advertising Director (512) 799-1045  
E-mail: jim.stone@tpwd.texas.gov

## SUBSCRIPTIONS:

(800) 937-9393

*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine (ISSN 0040-4586) is published monthly with combined issues in January/February and August/September by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, Texas 78744. The inclusion of advertising is considered a service to subscribers and is not an endorsement of products or concurrence with advertising claims. Copyright © 2014 by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. No part of the contents of this magazine may be reproduced by any means without the permission of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. The magazine is not responsible for the return of unsolicited materials provided for editorial consideration.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$18/year; foreign subscription rate: \$27.95/year. POSTMASTER: If undeliverable, please send notices by form 3579 to Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine, P.O. Box 421103, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1103. Periodicals Postage Paid at Austin, Texas, with additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIBER: If the Postal Service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year.

*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine is edited to inform readers and to stimulate their enjoyment of the Texas outdoors. It reflects the many viewpoints of contributing readers, writers, photographers and illustrators. Only articles written by agency employees will always represent policies of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.



## SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES ONLY, PLEASE.

PHONE: (800) 937-9393

7 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Monday-Friday



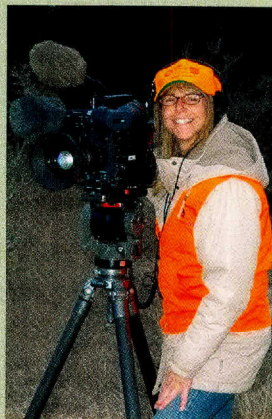
# In the Field

**STEPHANIE SALINAS**, while growing up in South Texas, was told the old folk tales that Juan Sauvageau chronicles in his books, *Stories That Must Not Die*. Those books became some of Stephanie's most beloved pieces of literature after her parents exposed her to the tales. In this month's Legend, Lore &



Legacy, she shares three of her favorite stories from the first volume of Sauvageau's books. Also in this issue, Stephanie, who works in TPWD's news and information group, and her father explore three Texas Hill Country state parks in three days. The pair visit the Devil's Waterhole in Inks Lake State Park, learn the history of one of Burnet's hidden gems, Longhorn Cavern State Park, and discover the beaches and falls of Pedernales Falls State Park.

**KAREN LOKE** is the television news producer for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, producing, shooting and writing news stories for the agency and contributing to the *Texas Parks & Wildlife* PBS show. She has been with TPWD for 22 years. Karen graduated from the University of Texas with degrees in both broadcast journalism and television production, not knowing if she would land a job in front of the lens or behind it. She has won three regional Emmys, including two for a documentary about the capture and relocation of the last Southern Plains bison. Karen is also a single mom of 18-year-old Eli. She writes about his youth hunting experiences in this issue.



**MARIA ARAUJO**, the international affairs director for TPWD, writes this month about Mexico-TPWD collaboration, her area of work since the mid-1980s, when she spearheaded the U.S.-Mexico Border States Conference on Recreation, Protected Areas and Wildlife. That forum was followed by the Wildlife Work Table of the Border Governors

Conference in 2004 to strengthen cooperation among the 10 border state wildlife agencies. In the 1990s, Maria implemented cross-border Texas Conservation Passport tours to visit Mexican treasures such as El Cielo Biosphere Reserve in Tamaulipas, Sierra Picachos in Nuevo León and Cuatrociénegas in Coahuila. Her other priority is Hispanic outreach, especially teaching hunter education to Spanish-speaking hunters.



# AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF CARTER P. SMITH

**My wife and I have vastly different circadian rhythms.** I am an early-to-bed, early-to-rise kind of person. She is not. When we embark upon any kind of an outdoors-related adventure, I have long since learned that afternoons are best for preserving marital bliss. Mostly.

So there I found myself one December afternoon waiting and waiting in the truck for her to come out of the ranch house. It was the middle of the rut, and the weather was cold, damp and overcast with a slight north wind. It was perfect deer hunting weather, and, I must confess, my patience was running low.

Just as I was about to take the rather ill-advised step of honking the horn to try to hurry her along, she emerged from the house looking resplendent in her hunting get-up. I couldn't help but notice that in stark contrast to my 2-day-old stubble, grimy camo hat and mud-stained coveralls, her hair was perfect, as was her make-up. I was stewing inside as I thought about the time that had been expended on such frivolities when we could have been sitting fruitfully in a deer blind.

It was the height of the rut, after all, not date night.

In a rare display of wisdom, I managed to restrain myself from commenting about what we might have seen had we been a bit less dilatory in getting to the blind. We were finally off, and besides, she told me earlier that day that she was going to get serious about trying to take a buck. If so, it would be her first. She had long since taken her first wild hog, but up until then, she had contented herself with merely watching deer, not hunting them.

We settled into a blind juxtaposed between two big canyons and accompanying hillsides. Not only was the setting picturesque, but it generally harbored a lot of deer, a consideration not lost upon her impatient husband-guide, who was now supremely focused on trying to locate a buck for his better, and I dare say, better dressed, half.

True to form, the animals were moving. Early on, a group of does, fawns and young fork horns marched by in choreographed procession. A band of toms scurried about under a motte of oaks, scratching around for an errant acorn. A big, coal-black boar hog came barreling down one of the drainages, moving too quickly to draw any kind of fire from us. Four axis deer quietly slipped over a distant hilltop, disappearing as quickly as they had appeared. Late in the afternoon, we spotted a young buck on a hillside staring intently into one of the draws.

We quickly saw what he was looking at. A doe came darting out of the draw, pursued by a much-larger buck. For 20 minutes or so, they kept flitting into sight, always moving and always partially obscured by brush. Stacy had long since grabbed her gun, a Ruger bolt-action .243 that I had purchased for her in the hopes that she might have some use for it at a time like this.

Alas, both deer disappeared into one of the brushy canyons. Meanwhile, the light of the day was quickly waning. To her credit, Stacy kept a tight grip on the gun and her gaze focused on the hillside that she was sure the buck would ultimately ascend. Sure enough, as on cue, the doe moved up the hill with the buck in hot pursuit.

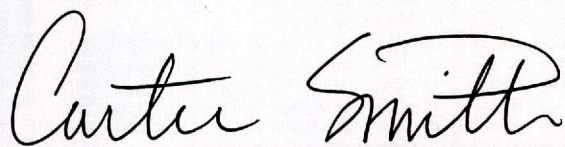
I threw up my rangefinder and marked a big juniper halfway up the hill. It was about 250 yards away, a little long for her first shot. But I told her it was ultimately her call. She didn't need to be told twice. Just as I was finishing my pronouncement, the buck reached the tree, stopped and turned broadside, and I heard the telltale sound of the thump of the bullet hitting the buck behind the shoulder. He dropped in his tracks, and I let out a whoop that shook the blind.

We reached her buck with the last rays of light in the western sky. When I asked her to sit down by the deer so I could take her picture, she gave me that all-knowing smile and quipped with all her radiant charm, "Now do you understand why it took me so long to get ready?"

Deer season opens soon across Texas. May it find you, your family and your friends in a deer camp somewhere enjoying the abundant game our state has to offer and making memories that will last a lifetime.

Thanks for caring about our wild things and wild places. They need you now more than ever.

*She told me earlier that day that she was going to get serious about trying to take a buck.*



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department mission statement:*

**To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.**





# optics crafted for the **ULTIMATE OUTDOORSMAN**

Witness clear images in varying conditions with the Nikon Monarch 7 10x42 ATB Binoculars, which feature extra-low dispersion prism glass with a dielectric multi-layered coating for bright images and phase-correction coating for clear, high-resolution images. Find a comfortable fit for your eyes with the multi-setting click-stop eyecups, and bring images into focus with the ergonomic central focus knob. These binoculars are designed to handle most environments with their durable rubber-armored coating, and close-focus capability allows for sharp viewing as low as 8.2' away.



 **Academy**<sup>®</sup>  
SPORTS+OUTDOORS

shop [academy.com](https://www.academy.com)

stay connected     

**RIGHT STUFF. LOW PRICE. EVERYDAY!**

# MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

## FOREWORD

**Some stories turn out to be well worth the wait.** TPWD videographer Karen Loke suggested her worthy tale to me several years ago when I approached our TV/video/radio staff and asked them to consider contributing their talents to the magazine.

The team was justifiably a little nervous about experimenting with other forms of storytelling. After all, they had spent years honing their craft and letting their chosen stories unfold visually — while winning handfuls of awards for the effort. Still, the challenge intrigued them, and they gathered up their courage and took a stab at telling stories with quotation marks and paragraphs instead of moving pictures and voiceovers.

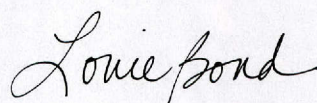
Karen's story is a compelling one that epitomizes our mission here at TPWD. A single mother who adores her son Eli but worries about some of his challenges, she decided to pursue a path toward future happiness that she had witnessed through her work — hunting. She turned to the Cave Creek Youth Hunt in Stonewall to get him started. Though it's billed as the largest hunt of its kind, the kids who participate get the kind of one-on-one attention needed for a successful first hunt. At 12, Eli wasn't thrilled with the prospect of killing an animal, but under the gentle mentorship of Steve Hall, his perspective changed.

Returning year after year, Eli grew in ways that stretched beyond the hunting fields. Now a high school graduate and Eagle Scout, he mentors other young hunters, passing on the tradition. And that mentoring, whether from an adult or a knowledgeable peer, is a hard-to-find but necessary part of keeping hunting alive.

Do you know a young person who could benefit from participating in hunting? It's not an activity that is easy to pursue without some assistance getting started. TPWD offers hunter education classes and videos, as well as connections to opportunities like the Cave Creek hunt. Offering up your companionship and advice can make a difference in the life of a young relative or neighbor. It's difficult to gauge the effect that participating in hunting can have on our youth, but Eli's story is not necessarily unique. You can make a difference in a kid's life, too.

And there's more to enjoy in this issue. Russell Graves is one of those adults who took on the mantle of youth mentor, formerly as a teacher (of statewide renown) and now as a father. This month, however, he takes a look at how TPWD's antler restriction policies have grown bigger racks on the bucks in several East Texas counties. Our third feature takes a look at our courageous game wardens as they try to eradicate unlawful fishing practices in the Gulf.

Also contributing to this issue is one of our youngest writers, Stephanie Salinas, who contributes an energetic 3 Days in the Field with her dad and a Clemente Guzman-illustrated Legend, Lore & Legacy perfect for this Halloween month.



LOUIE BOND, EDITOR

## LETTERS

### SERIOUS WATER ISSUES

All I can say about the July issue is outstanding! With the wide coverage that your magazine has, it is nice to see an entire issue devoted to the water issues and recreational use of easements that exist here in Texas.

As a director of a water board in Houston, I see firsthand some of the water usage issues that we are facing. Water conservation efforts and the use of the bayou easements for recreational purposes are regular topics at our board meetings, and I expect that this will continue to be an important item for years.

Every person in our wonderful state needs to come to terms with our long-term drought conditions and become actively involved in water conservation. As an avid outdoorsman, I also know that without water, many of our fishing and hunting activities will not

exist for future generations if we do not solve our water problems now.

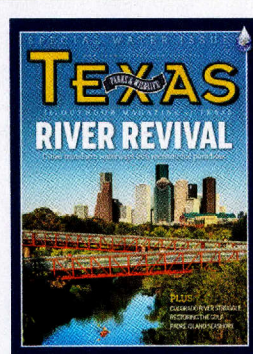
DONALD E. BEASLEY  
Houston

### RIVERS DESERVE PROTECTION

Thank you for your recent article about the Texas "River Revival." I am thrilled to know that we Texans are beautifying our cities' rivers and waterways. They can add such an accent to the cities instead of being an eyesore.

I love seeing my monthly magazine in the mail. I take them to the barbershop and laundry to pass on the support.

MARK DUFFEE  
Dallas



"Every person in our wonderful state needs to come to terms with our long-term drought conditions and become actively involved in water conservation."

DONALD E. BEASLEY, Houston

# MAIL CALL

## MUCH-NEEDED HELP ON TRINITY

In the '60s we built rafts of inner tubes and old plywood doors that we floated down Fossil Creek and the Trinity. Great fun, but we had some laughs and challenges when a raft hung up on a hot water heater or washing machine that had been dumped in the river. And raindrops created soap bubbles. Wonderful news to see the Trinity at last being improved and used for canoeing ("Love at Second Sight," July 2014).

BRIAN SMITH  
*McAllen*

## MAKING PLANS TO VISIT TEXAS

The executive director's remarks and July issue contents got this Boston native/past Texas visitor planning an October trip this fall. Since 2001 I have probably been to about 30 state parks — Big Bend, Goliad, Rio Grande Valley, San Angelo, Panhandle — to go bird watching in seven trips to the Lone Star State. This time I will fly to Dallas for the Bush Center at SMU and look over

the Trinity River Corridor Project. In 2004 I toured the entire Gulf Coast from Sea Rim to South Padre Island. High Island, Galveston, Brazos Bend, Bastrop Bayou and Palacios are some of my favorite memories!

I saw my first painted buntings in Abilene in 2006. In 2011, Daingerfield was closed for renovations, so I braved a funnel cloud and lightning storm in Atlanta State Park instead. At San Angelo (fourth visit), Pat Bales gave me the tour and offered his wildflower expertise. It is my good impression that the department is making great strides in its efforts to improve things.

CHRIS DALEY  
*Westford, Mass.*

## ROCKPORT AND THE ARTS

In the 3 Days in the Field article in your June 2014 issue, I was interviewed as the docent who explained our fabulous "Birds in Art" exhibit at the Rockport Center for the Arts. However, my name was printed incorrectly as Nancy Allen. Nancy Callan is the

correct spelling, and my whole circle of friends have had great fun calling me by that misspelling in the article. If possible, please correct the spelling. Only then will I be able to regain my sanity!

By the way, I love your magazine and have subscribed to it for many years. I even send it to friends and family as gifts. I want to thank that wonderful Rob McCorkle for taking the time to visit Rockport and reporting how fabulous our city is for all who visit.

NANCY CALLAN  
*Rockport*

## Sound off for Mail Call

### Let us hear from you!

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

### Write to us at

Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine,  
4200 Smith School Road,  
Austin, TX 78744.

Fax us at 512-389-8397

Email us at [magazine@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:magazine@tpwd.texas.gov)

We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

IT'S **TEXAS HUNTER**

"A New Direction in Feeding"



TEXAS HUNTER PRODUCTS  
Auto-Adjustable TROPHY FEEDERS

TEXAS HUNTER  
DIRECTIONAL TIMER INCLUDED

NEW!  
Stand & Fill  
Directional  
Feeders

FEED PATTERN  
CORN  
30' x 50'

FEEDER

US Utility Patent #7222583

ANNIVERSARY  
PRODUCTS  
ONLINE

Hunting Blinds

Protein Feeders

Fish Feeders

Wildlife Feeders

Game Feeder Kits

Road Feeders

**TEXAS HUNTER**  
PRODUCTS

3350 IH 35 N, San Antonio, TX 78219 • 800.969.3337

CELEBRATING

60  
YEARS

800.969.3337

See Us at [www.TexasHunter.com](http://www.TexasHunter.com)

# SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

## BEARS WITHOUT BORDERS

*Cross-border educators meet to coordinate conservation activities.*



**"Su oso es mi oso,"** David Veale told a group of Mexican biologists, ranchers and hunting club members. The group had gathered at Chaparral Wildlife Management Area in South Texas to coordinate wildlife conservation activities along the border and to sharpen their skills as hunter education instructors.

"Black bears from Mexico use a number of cross-border corridors, particularly young bears looking for a new home," said Veale, South Texas district leader for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Wildlife Division.

TPWD reported five bear incidents during a four-month period in an

area along the border stretching from Maverick County down to Starr County. Two bears were trapped and relocated to remote habitat, and one was killed by a motorist near Laredo.

On the Mexican side, human-bear conflicts were numerous.

"Since 2008, the Nuevo León state parks and wildlife agency has received more than 200 bear reports, and approximately half of those cases involved trapping and relocating," reported Guillermo Herrera, wildlife biologist. Those numbers do not include activities conducted by Cumbres de Monterrey National Park and Consejo Estatal de Flora y Fauna Silvestre de Nuevo León,

a nongovernmental organization that works with ranchers.

For better management, Nuevo León's policy is to microchip all trapped bears, and Herrera encouraged Texas to do the same. The group exchanged valuable information on aversive treatments for relocated bears.

"We really can't do much to change a bear habituated to trash and an easy meal," Veale said. "The best approach is to educate people so they can help us keep bears and other wildlife wild, and in the wild where they belong."

The meeting's skill-building activity focused on animal track identification.

"Don't expect to learn how to age an



**Opposite page:** Jonah Evans, TPWD mammalogist, teaches group members field techniques to identify tracks. **This page:** Bears are a cross-border issue for the Texas-Mexico group, which met in South Texas.

old animal track to the nearest hour," said Jonah Evans. TPWD mammalogist. "You see this on TV, but it's completely unrealistic."

Evans debunked other tracking myths and taught the group members simple track identification rules to enhance the field techniques they use in their hunter education courses.

Since 2008, hunter education instructors from Mexico and Texas have met at least once a year to further their skills as instructors and exchange information on how to help one another. It is a binational collaboration that evolved from the Wildlife Work Table of the Border Governors Conference, a forum of the 10 state wildlife agencies along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Omar Treviño, hunting commission president of Club Deportivo Cazadores Monterrey, spearheaded these binational hunter education workshops and is now honorary area chief of the Texas Hunter Education Program.

"Since our training under International Hunter Education Association standards in 2008 as part of Mexico's Hunting Federation, we have taught and certified over 15,000 people in Mexico to be safe and ethical hunters," Treviño said.

Treviño translated hunter education materials to Spanish and offered to team-teach classes in Spanish to help reach the Hispanic community in Texas.

"It's rewarding to help families pursue this sport safely," he said, recounting the story of a doctor who attended his class with her husband and her son. The doctor's father, a surgeon, had his medical career cut short by an accident that



occurred when he improperly handled a firearm while crossing a fence.

Cooperation is always fostered at these gatherings. Dr. Alejandro Treviño, a Mexican landowner, and his son will teach a hunter education class in McAllen with Ignacio Perez.

"My wife and I want to teach a class in Spanish in its entirety at least once a year," said Perez, "and now we'll be able to meet that demand in our area."

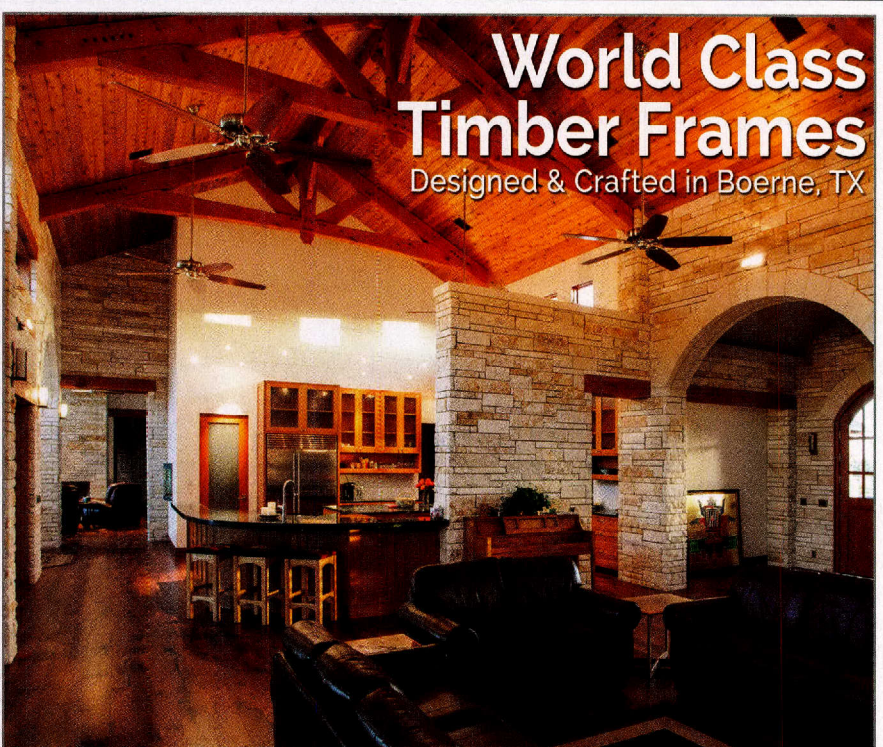
Javier Medina-Fernandez, a Monterrey native now living in San Antonio, invited Jorge Villarreal, secretary general of Nuevo León's Council on Flora and Fauna, to help in his hunter education classes.

"I'm proud of the collaboration between Texas and Mexico, and it's important that our Hispanic community hears about it from our Mexican colleagues," Medina-Fernandez said.

Nearby, Jorge Villarreal advised Alejandro Treviño Jr., a college freshman, about wildlife management careers and encouraged him to apply for an internship at Chaparral WMA.

When the group meets again, it will be to study another cross-border issue, feral hog control. They also decided that with so many pressing issues, the meetings should now occur more than once a year. ★

— Maria Araujo



## World Class Timber Frames

Designed & Crafted in Boerne, TX

Request Catalog:

877-680-1680

www.texastimberframes.com

613 Highway 46 East | Boerne, TX 78006





# Tropical Paradise

Palmetto State Park offers a nature-filled getaway in Central Texas.



## SIGHTS & SOUNDS

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE TV AND RADIO

### TELEVISION

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

**Sept. 28–Oct. 4:** Beneath the surface of Texas; restoring coastal prairies; Lake Livingston State Park; deer feeding in a field.

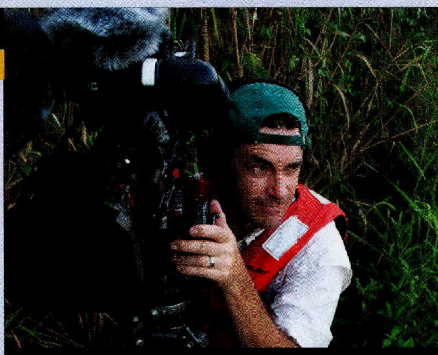
**Oct. 5–11:** Effluent water is for the birds; tree stand safety; water reflections in black & white; bald eagles recover; Bastrop's Johnny Appleseed.

**Oct. 12–18:** San Marcos to Seadrift

paddling race; discover birding with Father Tom; stone skipping competition.

**Oct. 19–25:** Tracking whooping cranes; Winston 8 woods conservation; game warden water training; Caddo rain; state park volunteers.

**Oct. 26–Nov. 1:** Prehistoric paddlefish; Sky Lewey profile; San Jacinto archeology; biking McKinney Falls.



A new season of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* begins the week of Oct. 19-25.

### TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Winner of 12 Emmy Awards, our television series is broadcast throughout Texas on local PBS affiliates. In stereo with closed captions.

[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tv)



### RADIO

YOUR RADIO GUIDE TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Passport to Texas is your guide to the great Texas outdoors. Any time you tune in, you'll remember why you love Texas. Go to [www.passporttotexas.org](http://www.passporttotexas.org) to find a station near you that airs the series.

### PASSPORT TO TEXAS

Join host Cecilia Nasti weekdays for a 90-second excursion into the Texas Outdoors. Find a station near you, or listen on the Web at

[www.passporttotexas.org](http://www.passporttotexas.org)



Imagine a Texas swamp, fed by warm mineral springs and occasional river flooding, that provides a home to unique plant and animal life, some seen almost nowhere else in Texas. Back in the early 1930s, a small piece of that swamp near Gonzales became Palmetto State Park. Through the Civilian Conservation Corps' efforts to blend nature into their construction, the park today looks almost as natural as it did eight decades ago.

Just an hour from Austin or San Antonio and two hours from Houston, this picturesque park is a quick car ride for many Texans and easily accessible off of Interstate 10. If you're looking for more than just a day trip, extend your retreat with a night of camping or a stay in the park's quaint cabin.

The first thing I look for at a park is a trail to hike or bike, and the winding, well-manicured trails at Palmetto State Park offer plenty to see. The Ottine Swamp Trail and Palmetto Interpretive Trail have boardwalks and bridges so you can wind through swamps filled with the park's namesake dwarf palmettos. You'll feel as if you're in a tropical paradise.

The San Marcos River Trail leads you along the high banks of the San Marcos River, where towering cottonwoods



Dwarf palmettos and other lush vegetation (opposite page) give Palmetto State Park a tropical feel. The Civilian Conservation Corps built the park and facilities, including the water tower at left, in the 1930s.



and sycamore trees stand guard. The Mesquite Flats Trail offers a look at the drier, savannah-like parts of the park, where prickly pear cactus finds a home.

When you get finished exploring the park on land, enjoy the water. The always-fun Oxbow Lake offers calm water to cast a fishing line in search of catfish or sunfish. Try out a paddleboat, kayak or canoe, or take a swim in the cool water. The San Marcos River low-water crossing is a great place to either splash around in the water or take a tube for a 20- to 30-minute float around the park. Make sure you check river conditions with park staff.

Didn't bring gear? The park staff has you covered with rentals of life jackets, kayaks, canoes, tubes and hydro-cycles (basically bikes with pontoons). The park also participates in the tackle loaner program, allowing you to borrow fishing poles free of charge.

The staff and volunteers at Palmetto State Park are eager to show you a safe and relaxing experience. Make sure you check in with them at park headquarters on your way in. While you're there, pick up a souvenir at the well-stocked park store. Also, check out the park's website or Facebook page for maps and more detailed, up-to-date information to help you enjoy your stay. ★

—Ben Horstmann

# HUNT ON THE EDGE

*Texas begins here!*

Located at MM1 of IH-35, you'll find yourself deep in the heart of South Texas brush country. Laredo is home to some of the most outstanding ranches and a vast array of wildlife.

## Laredo TEXAS

800.361.3360  
www.visitlaredo.com

LAREDO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

# Zooming In

*'Digiscoping' marries cameras and magnifying optics to create close-up shots.*

**Most wildlife watchers**, when looking through a spotting scope or binoculars, have thought at some point: "Hey, if I hold a camera up to the back of the eyepiece, maybe I can take a close-up picture." What usually follows is an exercise in fumbling futility as the photographer tries to get the camera lined up with the rear lens while blocking out any extraneous light as well as keeping the critter centered in the frame. Impromptu solutions are sometimes employed in an effort to join the two. Duct tape is often involved.

Some consolation can be gained, however, in knowing that the process of mating a camera to a separate magnified optic device can be done properly and even has the bona-fide name of "digiscoping."

While astronomers and other telescope enthusiasts have connected 35mm cameras to their devices for many years, the ability to capture good photographs

through consumer-grade spotting scopes and binoculars has been elusive because of the mediocre optics of the scopes and the limited resolution and light-gathering capabilities of earlier digital cameras.



Like other scope makers, Swarovski offers a simple mounting solution for most smartphones.

However, serious digiscoping has finally come of age with better optics in scopes (spurred by demands of the wildlife viewing community, especially birders), quantum leaps in the image quality of digital cameras and the proliferation of smartphone cameras. The developments afford many possibilities for taking good quality, highly magnified photographs that can rival images taken by professional (and very expensive) telephoto camera lenses. Magnifications of the camera-to-scope configuration typically can equal the magnification of a 1000 to 3000mm lens on a 35mm camera, making digiscoping a very affordable alternative to high-dollar camera lenses.




Here is what you need to get started digiscoping.

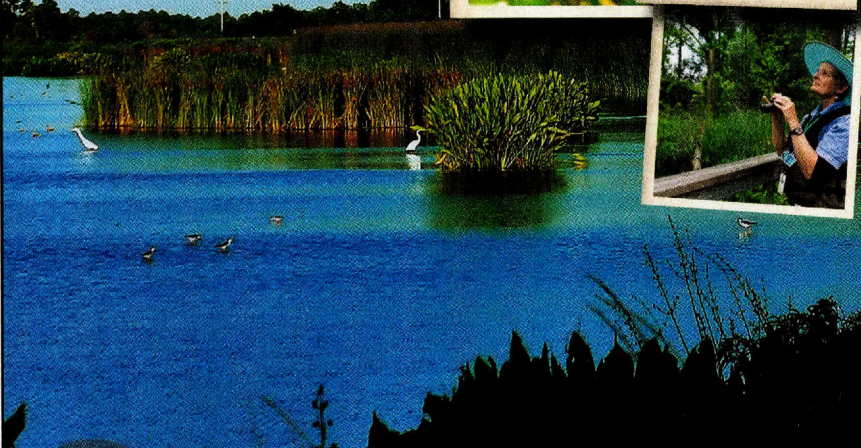
**1. Spotting scope.** Start with a good quality spotting scope (typical brands include Alpen, Bushnell, Kowa, Leupold, Nikon and Swarovski). Invest in a scope with a zoom lens (approximately 20-60X). Best results will usually be at the lower zoom range. At higher zoom ranges, less light is available through the lens, resulting in slower shutter speeds on the camera that could show camera or subject movement.


**2. Digital camera.** Most DSLRs, point-and-shoot cameras with zoom lenses (up to 4X) or smartphones with built-in cameras will work just fine for digiscoping. The camera's zoom lens in combination with the zoom on the scope can result in extremely close-

## BEAUMONT

YOUR BIRDING HEADQUARTERS  
IN SOUTHEAST TEXAS





**BIRDERS WELCOME**

Cattail Marsh Wetlands • Hillebrandt Bayou • Big Thicket National Preserve  
Sabine Woods • McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge • Sea Rim State Park  
Neches River Boat Tours • Beaumont Botanical Gardens • Sabine Pass

Planning for The Great Texas Birding Classic? Visit [BeaumontCVB.com/birding](http://BeaumontCVB.com/birding)  
to check out Southeast Texas birding trail maps and hotel information.

1-800-392-4401





A typical DSLR camera can be mounted to a Kowa spotting scope with a digiscoping adapter.



Wildlife gets the close-up treatment: These Inca doves were photographed with a Bushnell spotting scope and Canon G-12 point-and-shoot camera.

4. **Tripod.** A quality tripod is a must for sharp images. High-magnification lenses that aren't stabilized will inevitably produce blurred photographs. Every effort to stabilize the camera and scope should be taken. Even with a good tripod, motion can still be induced just by pressing on the camera shutter button. For DSLR or point-and-shoot cameras, consider using an electronic cable release to mitigate vibration. For iPhones, you can connect the ear buds and use the volume control as a shutter release. If you intend to shoot video, consider a fluid head, which will make camera movement much smoother than the typical pan and tilt tripod head.

...

For the birder, hunter or anyone else who enjoys the outdoors, digiscoping brings a new dimension to the enjoyment of watching wildlife by preserving the moment with a photograph or video that can be shared with others. ★

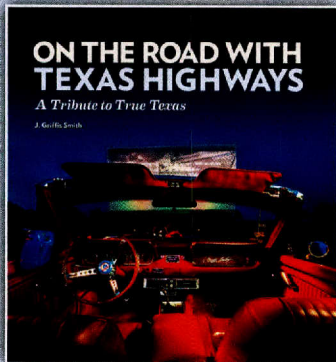
— Earl Nottingham

Please send questions and comments to Earl at [earl.nottingham@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:earl.nottingham@tpwd.texas.gov). For more tips on outdoor photography, visit the magazine's photography page at [www.tpwmagazine.com/photography](http://www.tpwmagazine.com/photography).

up images. However, you will need to experiment with different zoom combinations to find the sweet spot for your particular camera/scope setup.

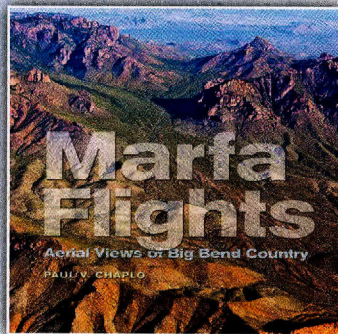
3. **Adapters.** Many scope, camera and third-party manufacturers offer a variety of digiscope adapters and connectors for most cameras, including

smartphones. For simple point-and-shoot cameras, an inexpensive bracket is often used to brace the camera next to the scope's rear lens. For full-size DSLRs, most camera and scope makers (like Kowa, above) offer proprietary digiscoping systems. Visit their websites to see their solutions.

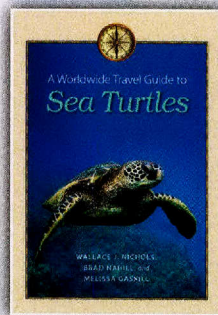


**On the Road with Texas Highways**  
A Tribute to True Texas  
J. Griffis Smith  
Introduction by E. Dan Klepper  
Foreword by Charles J. Lohrmann  
Celebrating the roaming life of a professional magazine photographer, *Texas Highways* and long-time photographer Smith have assembled a collection of signature images from three decades of work, including memorable pictures of Texas icons, landscapes, people, and historical and cultural destinations.  
10x11. 224 pp. 294 color photos.  
Index. \$29.95 flexbound

## New books from Texas A&M Press



**Marfa Flights**  
Aerial Views of Big Bend Country  
Paul V. Chaplo  
Flying from Marfa, and hanging precariously from the open door of an aircraft, Chaplo shares a hawk's eye view of a fiercely beautiful region, revealing the stark and magnificent landscapes carved by the force of eons of wind and water on the arid, mountainous country along the Rio Grande.  
10x10. 192 pp. 121 color photos. Map.  
Index. \$39.95 flexbound



**A Worldwide Travel Guide to Sea Turtles**  
Wallace J. Nichols, Brad Nahill, and Melissa Gaskill  
A scientist, a conservationist, and a journalist have come together to provide a guide to the places where people can view sea turtles and participate in authentic conservation projects.  
5½x8½. 240 pp. 31 color photos.  
8 maps. Index. \$25.00 flexbound

### Texas Seashells

*A Field Guide*  
John W. Tunnell Jr., Noe C. Barrera, and Fabio Moretzsohn  
With more than 600 detailed and data-rich color photographs, *Texas Seashells* is an essential companion for anyone interested in identifying and collecting shells.  
5½x8½. 352 pp. 302 color photos. Table.  
Bib. Index. \$25.00 flexbound

### Texas Aquatic Science

Rudolph A. Rosen  
This classroom resource provides clear, concise scientific information in an understandable and enjoyable way about water and aquatic life. Spanning the hydrologic cycle from rain to watersheds, aquifers to springs, rivers to estuaries, ample illustrations promote understanding of important concepts and clarify major ideas.  
7x10. 233 pp. 140 color photos. Glossary.  
Index. \$24.95 flexbound

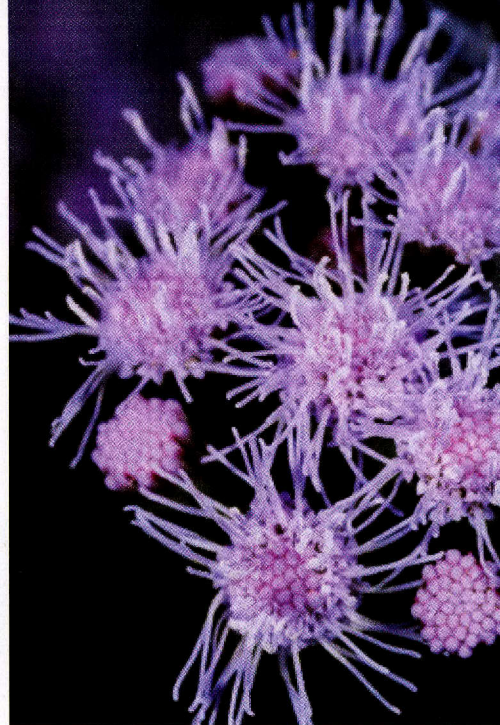


**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESS**

800.826.8911 Fax: 888.617.2421 [www.tamupress.com](http://www.tamupress.com)



# Play Misty for Me



Brightly colored mistflowers attract swarms of butterflies.

## As young boys, my best friend

David Ilfrey (now a Texas horticulturalist) and I explored Spring Creek, a lovely perennial stream that flows over Austin chalk limestone in Collin County in North Texas. When we tired of trying to catch crayfish or bullhead catfish, we examined the plants along the creek.

We first encountered blue mistflower in the fall of 1983. We were struck by the bright blue of the fuzzy clusters of flowers swarming with butterflies as they lined a seasonal seep flowing into the creek.

Mistflowers are native herbaceous plants that grow 1 to 3 feet tall and have blue to violet flowers that are infrequently white. Mistflowers acquired their name by being well adapted to moist areas. The genus *Conoclinium* is in the sunflower family and contains four species, three in the United

States and one in northern Mexico.

**Blue mistflower** (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) is native to eastern North America from Ontario south to Florida and west to Texas. In Texas, blue mistflower occurs in the eastern third of the state along creeks, bottomlands, edges of ponds, prairie potholes and bogs.

Blue mistflower plants can grow to 3 feet high and flower from August through October. They attract bees, butterflies and day-flying moths to their late-season nectar. Blue mistflowers are often grown as garden plants and have a tendency to spread.

**Gregg's mistflower** (*Conoclinium greggii*) is distributed in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Gregg's mistflower occurs in arroyos, springs, woodlands, thornscrub and canyon bottoms in far West and Southwest Texas. This species can

grow to 2 feet tall with palmate leaves that are deeply divided into three lobes and contain small, purplish-blue clusters of flowers. Gregg's mistflower flowers from August through October. Monarch butterflies are highly attracted to Gregg's mistflower during fall migration.

**Betony-leaf mistflower** (*Conoclinium betonicifolium*) is distributed along the middle and lower coast of Texas and in Mexico. It can be found in sandy coastal prairies, in sandhills on the Texas Sand Sheet (at the southern tip of the state) and in dunes. Betony-leaf mistflower roots at nodes in sand or sandy clay and has flowering stems that curve upwards, with leaf blades that are fleshy with toothed margins. The flowers are small, bluish, flat-top clusters. This species flowers from April through November.

The plants typically thrive and flower in full sun but will still produce in partial shade.

If you happen to be traveling in eastern Texas this fall, you could visit Brazos Bend, Caddo Lake, Cedar Hill, Fairfield Lake, Fort Parker, Tyler, McKinney Falls, Stephen F. Austin or Village Creek state parks to find blue mistflower. If you are traveling in West or Southwest Texas this fall, check Davis Mountains, Devil's River or Seminole Canyon state parks (and Big Bend National Park) for Gregg's mistflower. Along the coast, search for betony-leaf mistflower at Goose Island and Mustang Island state parks or on Padre Island National Seashore. ★

—Jason Singhurst

PHOTO © CAROLYN FANNON, LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
2004-2014

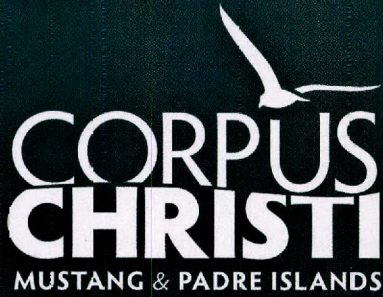
**YOU HAVE THE DREAM.  
WE HAVE THE BARN.**

WOOD BARN & BARN HOMES

Free catalog & planning guide! 888-489-1680  
sandcreekpostandbeam.com

**SAND CREEK Post & Beam**

f p g+



# MEMORIES MADE HERE

We welcome *all* visitors to Corpus Christi. Including this little hatchling, an endangered Kemps Ridley Sea Turtle who's now living the good life in the waters off Corpus Christi, thanks to the protective efforts of the Padre Island National Seashore. Come watch a turtle release during nesting season from April to July. Like us, they

love to dig in the sand, lounge on the beach,

feel the warm sun, smell the salty air,

and take a dip in the

sparkling waters of

Texas. Bring *your* little

ones, and don't forget

the flip flops and a camera,

because memories are made here.



Visit [CorpusChristiTX.org](http://CorpusChristiTX.org)  
800.766.BEACH (2322)

# Stuff of Nightmares

*The giant redheaded centipede is one of Texas' most terrifying critters.*

Many of us have a primal, involuntary aversion to "creepy-crawlies." If that irrational fear is ever warranted, surely the giant redheaded centipede (*Scolopendra heros*) gives us justification for a healthy dose of chilopodophobia, a fear of centipedes.

These centipedes exhibit a frightening array of characteristics: bright coloration (what biologists call aposematism), formidable equipment for biting and a whole lot of legs that undulate in an unnerving manner. And what's with the appendages on the back end: Are those stingers? Shudder.

No doubt about it, as far as invertebrates go, the giant redheaded centipede is one bad dude. But what threat, if any, does it pose to humans?

In the wild, these centipedes may reach 8 inches in length, and they can get even bigger in captivity. They have been recorded preying on invertebrates and even a variety of small vertebrates, including rodents, snakes, lizards and toads.

Famously, their larger South American cousins have been recorded catching bats, and the giant redheaded centipede is capable of snatching flying insects out of the air, too.

They use their legs to grasp prey while feeding, and their "fangs" (actually an additional pair of highly modified legs) are capable of piercing the skin and injecting a painful toxin. The walking legs also seem to be equipped with a venom delivery system, and are capable of piercing skin and causing pain and swelling.

The caudal legs (the stinger-like appendages on the rear end) are prehensile, capable of grasping prey or pinching would-be predators. When aggravated, the centipedes usually flee, but may take a defensive posture, lifting the caudal legs in warning.

Giant redheaded centipedes are usually found resting under logs, rocks or leaf litter, but they are often

active during the day and occasionally enter houses, so encounters with humans are not infrequent.

An account from the Civil War suggests that such encounters may indeed be horrific. There's an old legend that a soldier was awakened during the night after a centipede crawled over his chest.

The animal left a track of red, painful punctures where it walked, resulting in two days of agony before the soldier finally died.

Luckily, this story appears to be no more than a tall tale, and giant redheaded centipede bites have never resulted in a confirmed death. Bites are usually rather mild, resulting in a sharp, painful sting that is sometimes accompanied by swelling, usually subsiding after a few hours.

In rarer cases, bites cause minor skin necrosis, dizziness, nausea and headaches. In only a few cases, bites have caused muscle tissue damage, kidney failure and heart attack. Consider centipede bites to be similar to bee stings: usually mild, but occasionally resulting in acute reactions.

So, while caution is certainly warranted when dealing with the giant redheaded centipede, downright terror is probably an overreaction.

As my entomology professor used to say, "It's good to be big." Relative to centipedes, we humans are big indeed, and even a giant centipede is no match for a shoe.

But before going for the kill, the next time you come across one of these fearsome-looking critters, take a moment to appreciate an organism that is equipped, literally from head to tail, for hunting. Just be happy that it's not the one wearing shoes — lots and lots and lots of shoes.

— Ben Hutchins



# Lock Away Danger

*Proper gun storage is essential for safety.*

Those who enjoy hunting and shooting sports bear the responsibility of securing and storing their firearms safely when not in use. Safe storage protects you and the people around you. As a matter of fact, it is against the law to store, transport or abandon an unsecured firearm in a place where children are likely to obtain access to it.

Here are some safe gun storage principles to ensure that your firearm is secure and will be operational for your next outdoor adventure.

- Firearms must be stored unloaded. Make sure that the action is cleared, with the magazine removed or empty. Do not hesitate to ask a friend or hunting partner to verify the status of the firearm. Use a gun lock to render the action inoperable. Never rely on the gun's safety to perform this function.

- Firearms should be cleaned after use with a light coat of oil before storing.

- Firearms should be stored in a cool, clean and dry gun cabinet or safe.

Desiccants can be added to the gun safe to keep moisture at bay. Never store a gun in a scabbard or closed case because moisture can accumulate inside.

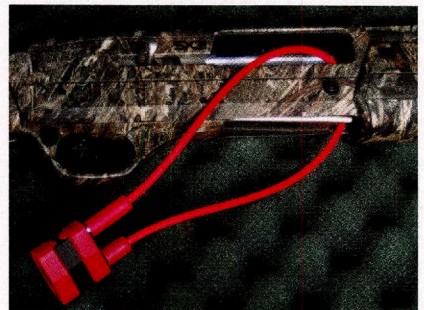
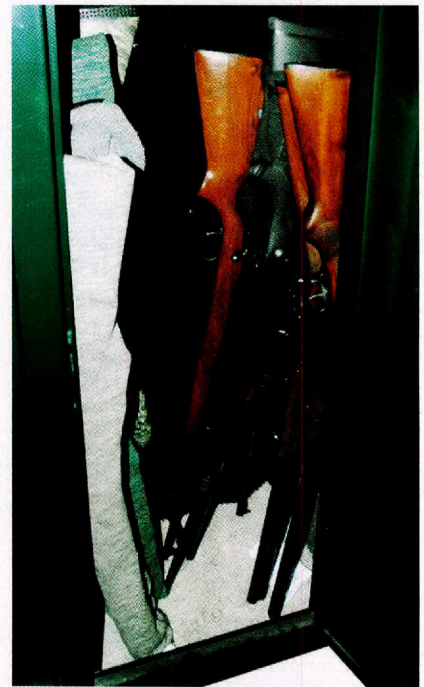
- Store guns horizontally or with the barrel down. This will keep the oil from accumulating in the action or softening the wood gunstock.

- Refrain from displaying guns in glass cabinets or wall racks as that can serve as an open invitation for the firearms to fall into the wrong hands.

- Always store ammunition in a cool, dry place to prevent corrosion, and keep it separate from firearms.

By following these guidelines, you can ensure that your family will be safe and that your firearm will be ready to use for your next hunting trip. ★

**One recommended way to store a gun is in a gun cabinet with the barrel down. Gun locks add a layer of safety.**



## BIG TIME TEXAS HUNTS

LIFE'S SHORT, HUNT BIG

Enter by  
October  
15

### WIN THE TEXAS HUNT OF A LIFETIME!

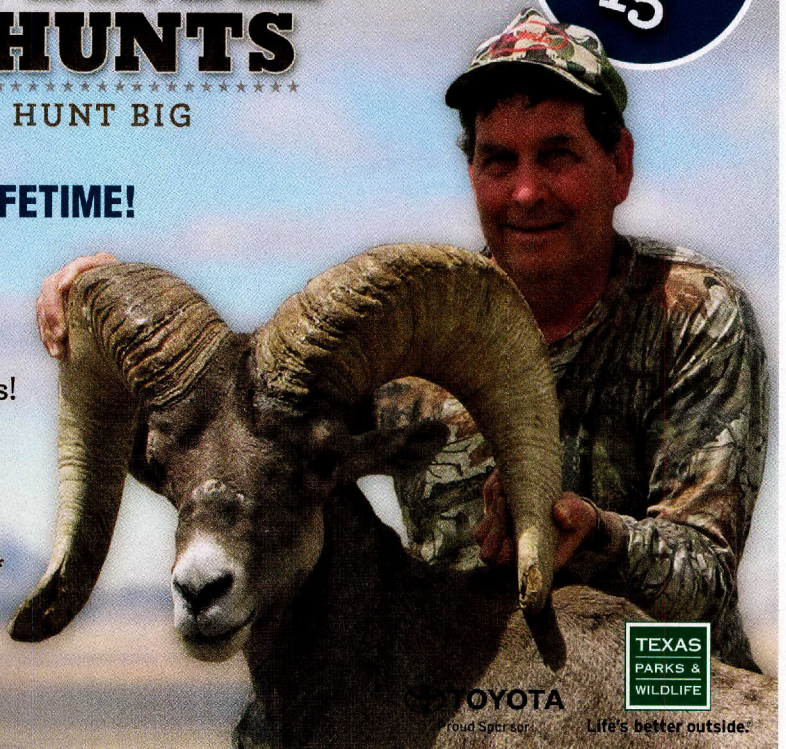
Choose from 8 premium guided hunt packages. Bighorn sheep, mule deer, whitetails, waterfowl, birds, exotics, gators, and wild hogs!

ONLY **\$9** PER ENTRY ONLINE

or \$10 per entry at (800) 895-4248 and wherever hunting licenses are sold.\*

[www.tpwd.texas.gov/win](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/win)

\*A \$5 administrative fee is charged per online or phone transaction. You may purchase multiple items in one transaction.



TOYOTA  
Ford Sponsor

TEXAS  
PARKS &  
WILDLIFE

Life's better outside.

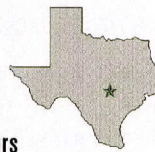
# 3 Days in the Field / By Stephanie M. Salinas

**DESTINATION:** HILL COUNTRY PARKS

**TRAVEL TIME FROM:**

AUSTIN – 1 hour / BROWNSVILLE – 5.5 hours / DALLAS – 3.5 hours

HOUSTON – 3.5 hours / SAN ANTONIO – 1.5 hours / LUBBOCK – 5.25 hours / EL PASO – 7.5 hours



## Three Parks in Three Days

*A weekend Hill Country getaway features lakes, caverns and waterfalls.*

**Only an hour's drive from Austin,** three state parks offer a variety of natural wonders for an enchanting and relaxing weekend away.

Inks Lake State Park, Longhorn Cavern State Park and Pedernales Falls State Park were our hosts one weekend as my father and I did a little exploring, spending some quality time together while unwinding from our busy work schedules.

Inks Lake State Park, located in the chain of Highland Lakes near Marble Falls, welcomed us on a Friday afternoon. After we traversed a roller coaster of hills, the lake appeared before us, glistening in the late afternoon sun.

Surrounded by hills and granite outcrops, the park opened to the public in 1950. It covers more than 1,200 acres of recreational space and offers incredible hiking, fishing, boating and camping.

Soon after arriving, we hit the trails and took a short hike along Spring Creek to the Devil's Waterhole. Along the way, we saw a variety of bird species, including a family of cardinals, and rubbings from the white-tailed deer hiding in the brush. Underneath a canopy of trees, we reached the waterhole. Located in a small portion of the lake that is almost completely enclosed by pink granite, the Devil's Waterhole tempts daredevils to jump off the cliffs and swim.

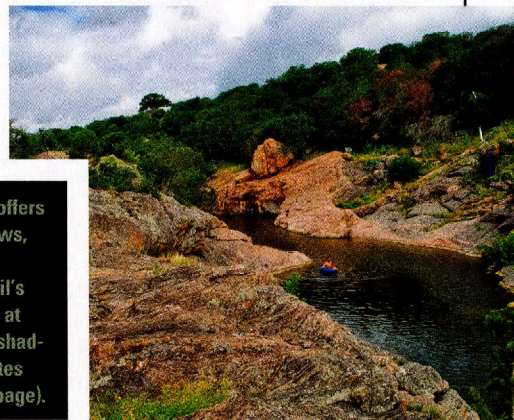
After our hike, we visited the park store to buy bait and rent fishing poles and tackle for the weekend through the tackle loaner program that is offered in many state parks. We decided to take our chances with fishing from the shore for our first day, but after getting only a few nibbles, we knew that it just wasn't our lucky day.

Starving, we fired up the grill at our

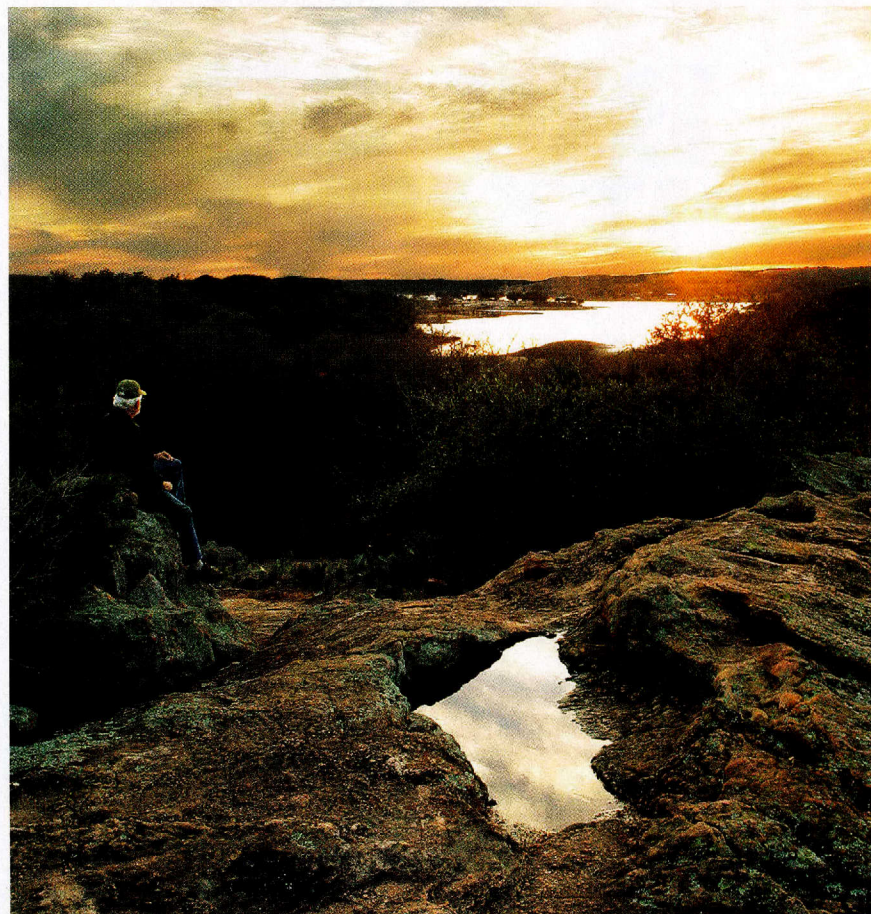
lakeside cabin. My dad, ever the grill master, whipped up two plates of steaks, potatoes and beans that were the cherry on top of a perfect day. The remainder of the evening was spent talking underneath a canopy of stars.

Saturday morning, after waking up to the sounds of ducks on the lake, we headed out to Marble Falls for breakfast.

Blue Bonnet Café, located on Main Street



Inks Lake offers scenic views, swimming holes (Devil's Waterhole at right) and shaded campsites (opposite page).



TOP PHOTO BY CHASE A. FOUNTAIN / TPWD; BOTTOM PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



in the heart of the town, is owned by John and Belinda Kemper and has been in business since 1929. The café has gained a legendary reputation and is the recipient of numerous awards. Famous customers — President George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and first lady Anita Perry, Willie Nelson, Darrell Royal and Roger Staubach — have enjoyed the culinary pleasures there as well.

When we walked in, the pies immediately caught our attention. The huge, meringue-topped creations made me want to abandon my diet. Instead (it was breakfast, after all) I ordered a Western omelet, and dad chose a stack of buttermilk pancakes that melted as soon as he put them in his mouth.

Stuffed, we headed out to Longhorn Cavern State Park. Located less than 10 miles from Inks Lake, the cave has a colorful history.

In 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps began hauling more than 2.5 tons of debris, silt and guano out of the cave. The limestone cavern was formed by an underground river (one of the few river-formed caverns in Texas) and stays at a constant temperature of 68 degrees year-round. Portions of the cave are covered in crystals that tricked some CCC workers into thinking they had found a diamond mine.

The cultural history of the cave is just as captivating as the crystal halls and marble-like ceilings.

Comanche Indians, who used the largest room in the cave for tribal



gatherings, were perhaps the cave's first occupants. Today, that space is known as the Indian Council Room. During the Civil War, the cave was used as a stronghold for Confederate soldiers, who manufactured gunpowder there in secret. Legend holds that the cave also played host to Wild West outlaw Sam Bass; it's rumored that he hid treasure in a portion of the cave before he was killed by the Texas Rangers. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the cave was used as a dance hall, nightclub and restaurant, equipped with a bandstand and a bar made from the cavern rock.

You've never really experienced total darkness until you go underground.

Longhorn Cavern was formed by an underground river. The CCC cleared out the cave and built stairs into it.

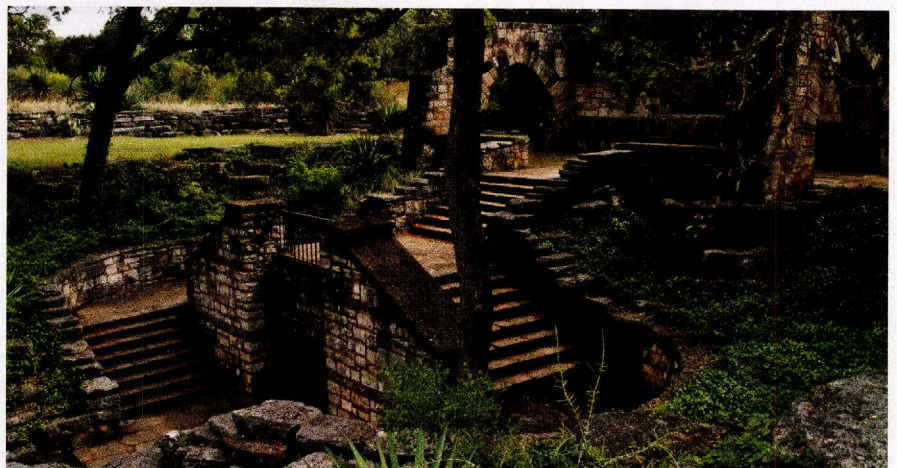
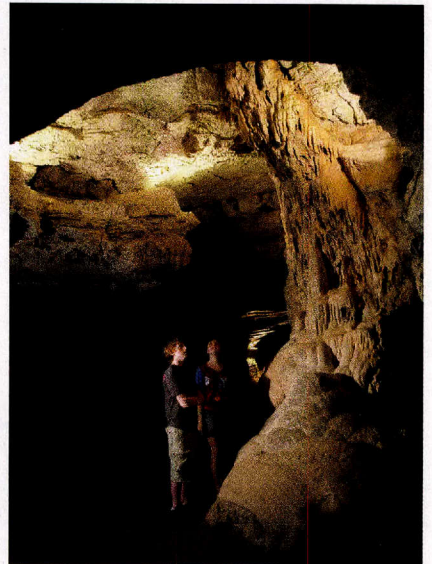


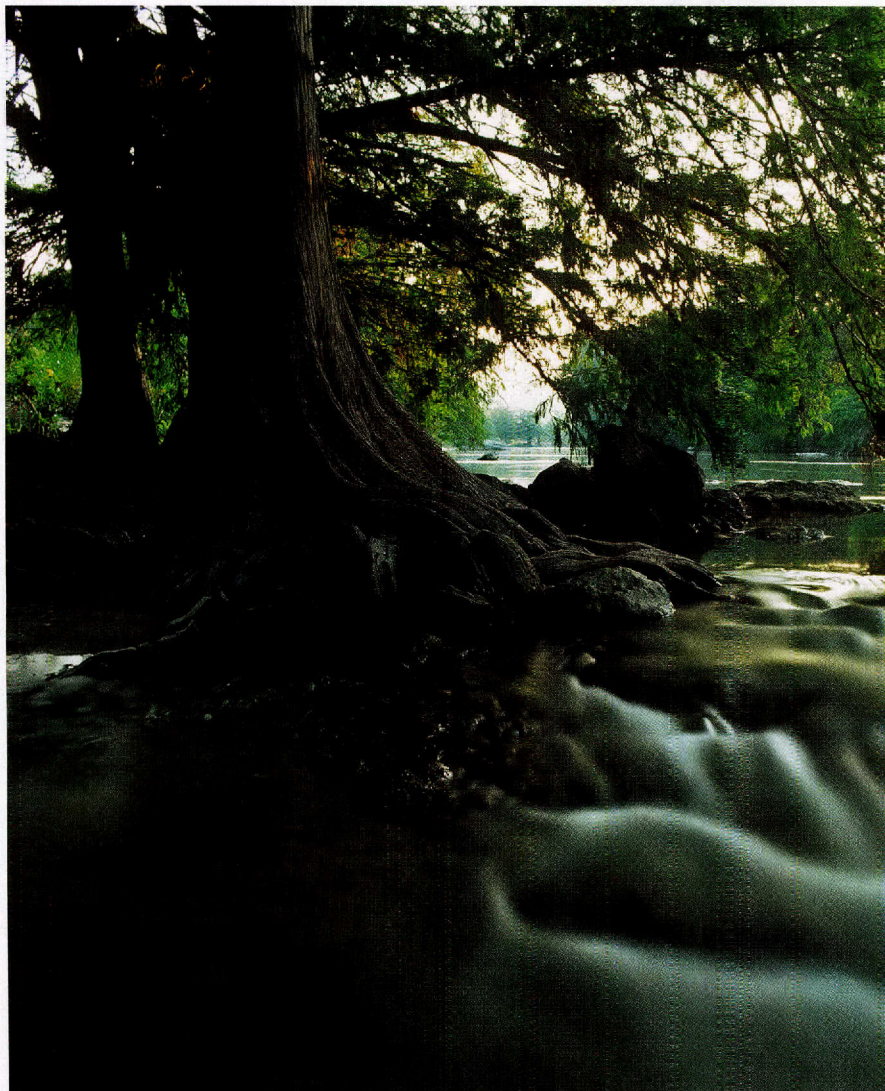
To show us how dark it really was down there, our guide instructed us to put our hands in front of our faces before she shut off the lights. Our hands disappeared, and I was terrified. I wiggled my fingers around an inch in front of my face and still did not see a thing. Then she flipped a switch, and we could see again. Our guide also explained that lights would automatically turn off behind us as we continued forward to protect the cave walls from damage.

We ate lunch at the restaurant in the visitors center by the stone fireplace, perusing an array of photographs and yellowed newspaper clippings about the cave's unique history.

The cave offers several special tours, such as the Wild Cave Tour, which takes you through the nooks and crannies of the cave, and the Paranormal Tour, conducted once a month during the evening hours for those intrigued by the supernatural.

A three-story rock observation tower offers a 360-degree view of the Hill Country, including Inks Lake and Falkenstein Castle, a private





home built to resemble a medieval Bavarian castle.

My father and I spent the remainder of the afternoon on the fishing pier at Inks Lake. After several close calls, we returned to our cabin empty-handed but relaxed and satisfied. The next morning, we checked out of our cabin, returned to the Blue Bonnet Café for another hearty breakfast and proceeded to Pedernales Falls State Park, the third leg of our trifecta.

Located near Johnson City, Pedernales Falls State Park is home to nearly 20 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails, 10 miles of horseback riding trails and another 14 miles of trails open only to hikers and backpackers. More than 150 bird species have been spotted at the park, including roadrunners, bald eagles and the endangered golden-cheeked warbler, but the main attraction of the park is the falls, a series of tilted limestone formations that are 300 million years old.

With no shortage of trails to choose from, we decide to take the quarter-mile trek to Twin Falls, a small waterfall not far from the campground. After a quick hike, we reached the falls and sat on the observation deck listening to the water cascade over the rocks and into the pool below.

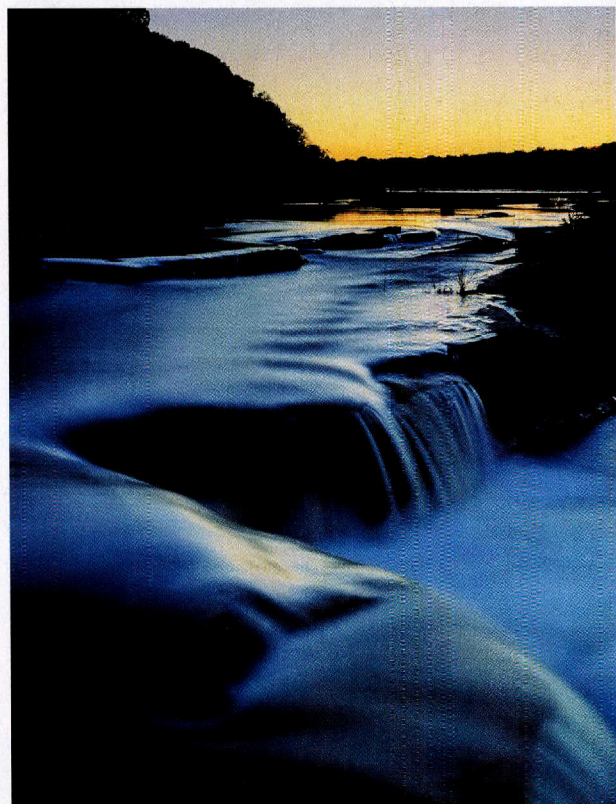
Afterward, we went to find the famed Pedernales Falls, located in the northern end of the park. At the scenic overlook, we could see the large limestone slabs that create the falls as well as several pools of water and gravel beaches. We followed one of the trails adjacent to the overlook, climbing over the towering rocks for a closer view of the falls.

After an adventurous (yet still relaxing) weekend, we knew that it was time to head home.

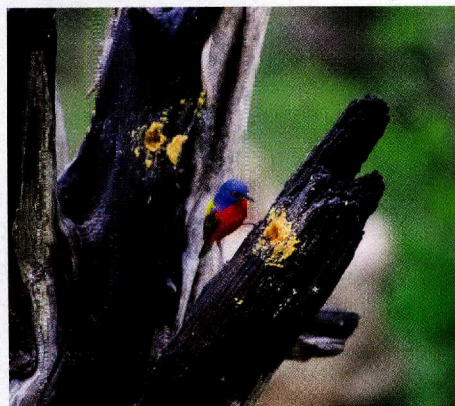
We packed our hiking boots and headed back down U.S. Highway 281 toward looming deadlines at work. This weekend together helped

us realize how important it is to stray from the everyday routine and take a minute to catch your breath.

With so much more to discover at each location, we made plans to return soon to take in all these three parks have to offer. ★



At Pedernales Falls State Park, bald cypress trees line the banks of the Pedernales River, which cascades over limestone ledges. Colorful painted buntings and many other species of birds can be found at the park.





# EX FFICIO®

The Sol Cool™ Hooded Zippy has the highest sun protection rating, UPF 50+, so you can play all day out in the sun.



ExOfficio BugsAway® and Sun Protective Clothing keeps you protected while you're enjoying life outdoors.



**Outfitting Texans since 1970 for  
Adventure, Travel & Fun!**

**STORE LOCATIONS**

Austin · Dallas · Houston  
San Antonio · Southlake

**WholeEarthProvision.com**



PHOTO © RUSSELL



GROWING  
**BIGGER  
TROPHIES**

RESTRICTIONS IN EAST TEXAS COUNTIES  
ARE LEADING TO BETTER ANTLER PRODUCTION.

BY RUSSELL A. GRAVES

## **“That’s five mature bucks**

we’ve seen so far,” my brother whispers to me as we hunt through the wet understory, watching a nice eight-point drift through the woods.

Since Thanksgiving Day, rain has slowly fallen, soaking and softening the otherwise dry and crunchy oak and ash leaves that carpet the creek bottom. Just two days past the holiday, the Fannin County whitetail rut is in full swing. Conditions for a mobile and active hunt are perfect: the dappling rain and wet vegetation hide our sound and our smell while the frenzy of the rut has deer paying attention to everything else but us.

Everywhere we look we see nice, mature bucks. That’s a far cry from November 1989 when I killed my first deer on this property. Back then we were lucky to see any deer at all during an entire season. Steadily, however, the deer numbers increased, countywide and statewide. Each season we saw more and more deer, but the quality remained substandard compared to other places in Texas.

Now, however, with the county deer population reaching a critical mass, it seems as though the antler quality and age structure have found a balancing point. The thanks for this hunting delight is owed to antler restrictions.

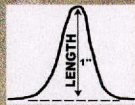
PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES



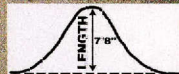
## TPWD antler restrictions

According to TPWD's antler regulations, covering 117 counties, a legal buck deer is defined as having a hardened antler protruding through the skin and one of the following:

- At least one unbranched antler.
- An inside spread measurement between main beams of 13 inches or greater.



**Legal Point**



**Not a Point**



Ears in alert position are approximately 13 inches apart and may be used to judge the inside spread.

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>LEGAL</b><br/>at least one unbranched antler</p> | <p><b>LEGAL</b><br/>at least one unbranched antler</p> | <p><b>LEGAL</b><br/>inside spread of 13 inches or greater</p> | <p><b>LEGAL</b><br/>inside spread of 13 inches or greater</p> |
|--|--|---|---|

## IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

In some areas of Texas, particularly east of Interstate 35, deer hunting is relegated mainly to small land parcels. Unlike the thousands of contiguous acres under single ownership on ranches in South and West Texas, land in the eastern half of the state is more fragmented. The more the land is divided, the harder it is to develop a cohesive management and hunting strategy. It is difficult to manipulate whitetail age structure on a county or area-wide level.

"The problem we were experiencing is that we'd see plenty of deer, but the quality of the antlers was poor," says Brian Strickland, who hunts family-owned land in Wood County where antler restrictions have been in place since 2006. "We'd see lots of yearling bucks, but beyond that, it was pretty rare to see very many mature deer. They just weren't there."

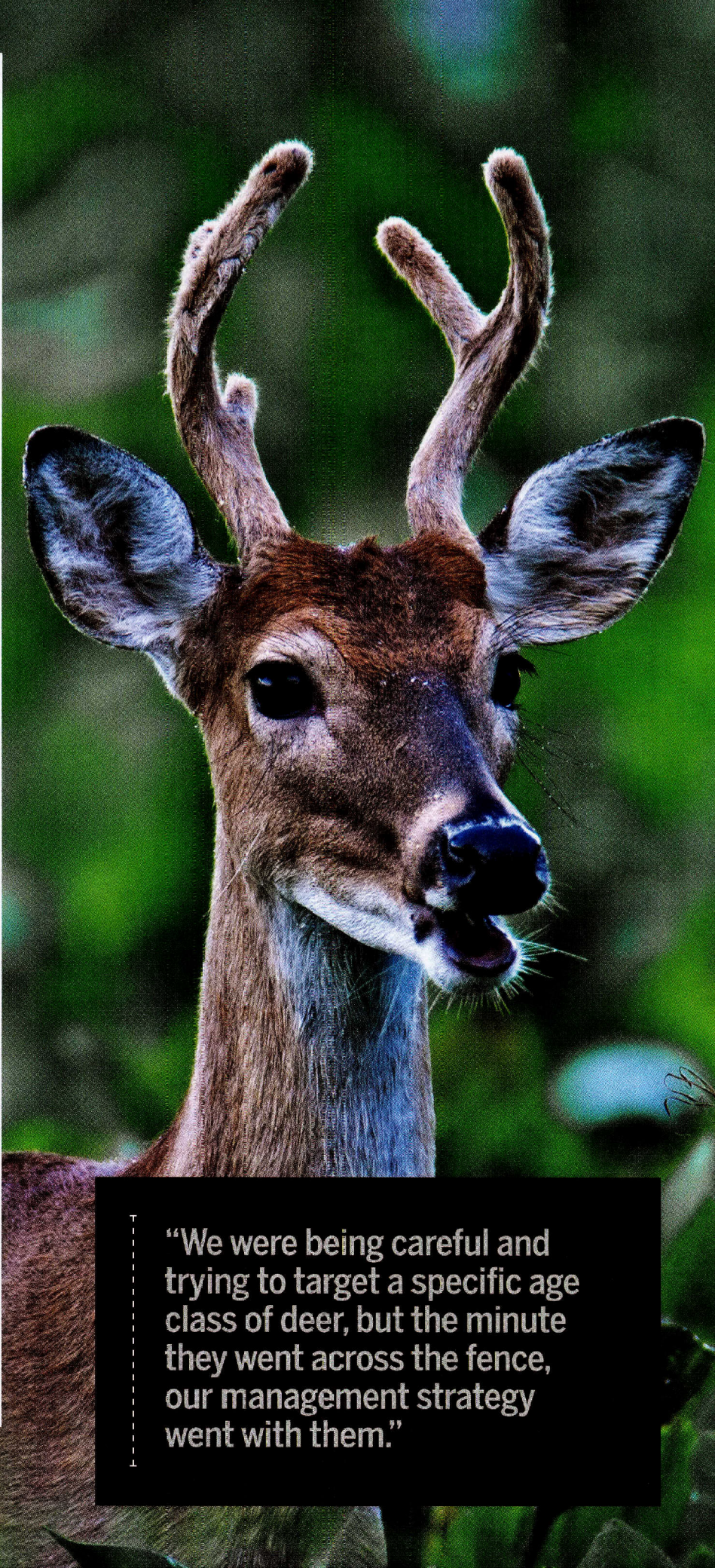
Strickland's report was one that echoed throughout the East Texas hardwoods. While hunters down south and out west were experiencing a deer revival (and the ensuing antler quality was reaffirming Texas' place as a free-ranging, world-class whitetail destination), hunters in the eastern half of the state weren't faring as well. Fragmented property lines and a small deer population that allowed for only a single buck harvest per hunter in most counties made mitigating the age and antler quality problem tricky.

"Since our place is relatively small, we share the same deer with landowners around us," says Fannin County whitetail enthusiast Garrett Amlin, referring to a deer's propensity for movement within a square-mile home range.

"We were being careful and trying to target a specific age class of deer, but the minute they went across the fence, our management strategy went with them. There were never any guarantees that any of our neighbors shared our management philosophy," Amlin explains.

Prior to antler restrictions, Amlin says, many hunters in the area would shoot any buck just to harvest a deer. The indiscriminate harvest put undue pressure

LEFT PHOTO © TODD STEELE; RIGHT PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES



"We were being careful and trying to target a specific age class of deer, but the minute they went across the fence, our management strategy went with them."



on bucks of all age classes. As a result, young bucks were never allowed to grow and reach their full genetic potential for body size or antler growth.

"You'd see big deer being taken from all over the state, and we'd wonder why we didn't have that here," Amlin says. "We had the habitat, we had the deer, but we just didn't have the quality you'd expect to see. Particularly when one county over, world-class bucks are harvested every single year." One county over is Grayson County, whose archery-only season limits the overall harvest, thus allowing deer to reach their full genetic potential and a higher average age class.

The impetus for countywide antler restrictions began — at least in an official, state-sanctioned capacity — in the late 1990s, when hunters and landowners in six counties east of Austin began talking to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials about implementing regulations to protect immature bucks. After years of studying the problem, TPWD biologists began experimental antler restrictions in those six counties in 2002.

The change was simple, yet targeted. According to TPWD's original antler regulations, a legal buck deer was defined as having a hardened antler protruding through the skin and one of the following:

- **At least one unbranched antler.**
- **An inside spread measurement between main beams of 13 inches or greater.**
- **Six points or more on one antler.**

The primary goals of the experimental antler restriction were to improve the age structure of the buck herd, increase hunter opportunity and encourage landowners and hunters to become more actively involved in better habitat management.

To provide guidance, the department suggested that a buck whose antlers have a spread that grows beyond both ear tips meets the minimum width requirement — a guideline that still is in play today.

By 2006, the experiment had proved successful.

According to TPWD research, 52 percent of bucks harvested in the 1990s in counties under the initial, experimental guidelines were 1½ years old. By 2008, the percentage of

harvested bucks in that age class had dropped to 21 percent.

Conversely, in the 1990s, only 4 percent of the bucks were 4½ years or older. By 2008, 41 percent of the deer harvested fell into that advanced age class.

Following the success of the initial counties, these same regulations began to creep into other counties in the region.

"The regulation was implemented in the northern 16 counties of the Pineywoods District in 2006 and in the southern 11 counties in 2009," says Gary Calkins, TPWD district leader for the area. "Now, all 27 counties in the Pineywoods are under harvest regulations."

By the end of the decade during which antler restrictions were implemented, TPWD had introduced the restrictions in even more counties. By the 2014 season, that number grew to include nearly half of the counties where whitetails are hunted in Texas, 117 in all. Although most of the counties are in eastern Texas, a growing number of Central and Northwest Texas counties have been added to the list.



Most counties will allow you to harvest two bucks: one with an unbranched antler and another with a spread of 13 inches or greater.



# LOOKING AHEAD

In the Pineywoods, where harvest numbers and antler quality haven't been comparable to other parts of the state, Calkins says the implementation of antler restrictions has been positive.

"Our age, weight and antler data is showing an increasing trend in the male segment age structure," he explains. "Our year-and-a-half-old numbers are staying about the same, but we have shifted harvest from nearly all that age being forked antler to nearly all being spikes [unbranched antlers]. We have drastically shifted harvest off of the 2.5-year-old segment and are seeing a sizable increase in the 4.5 and older classes."

Since the early adoption of antler restrictions, the guidelines have been mostly unmodified, though the six-points-or-more allotment has been dropped. Most counties will allow you to harvest two bucks: one with an unbranched antler and another with a spread of 13 inches or greater. In effect, the antler restrictions have created a slot limit like those common in fishing regulations.

Calkins says that when antler restrictions were imposed, a few people opposed them, but not many.

"We did scoping meetings prior to ever moving forward with the regulations," Calkins says. "We asked a series of questions relative to how the public would perceive the regulation in this area. The acceptance rate for the regulation ran from above 90 percent in the northern portion of the district to about 60 percent or so in the south. Even those places that were not too much in favor at first are now giving positive feedback."

In Fannin County, Amlin is passionate about the success of antler restrictions, though he does concede some possible downsides.

"I think antler restrictions could discourage kids that are new to hunting," he says. "I have kids that are coming of hunting age. If we see a nice little six- or eight-point that will not make 13 inches,



LEFT PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES; RIGHT PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN



“The restrictions cause me to study the deer I’m shooting a lot more. Instead of making a split-second decision on whether or not I’ll shoot a deer, I am a lot more likely to study him for a while and ensure that he’s a legal deer.”



PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES

it will be frustrating for my kids when they are told they can't shoot it. It is hard to get young kids on deer, so that could be the only opportunity they get all season."

Furthermore, he thinks that some deer possibly could be wasted because of the restriction. He can see where a hunter might accidentally shoot a borderline legal buck but leave it there rather than risk a ticket by tagging and removing the deer.

Strickland, of Wood County, says that because of the effort to avoid shooting a sub-legal buck brought on by antler restrictions, he has become a better hunter.

"The restrictions cause me to study the deer I'm shooting a lot more," he says. "Instead of making a split-second decision on whether or not I'll shoot a deer, I am a lot more likely to study him for a while and ensure that he's a legal deer."

Even in counties that do not fall under a harvest restriction, Strickland says he watches deer longer and studies their movements more and has learned more about them in the process.

While the age structure of the deer in the affected counties continues to improve in terms of wildlife management and hunter satisfaction, the drought in Texas threatens to dampen, but not disrupt, the progress made.

"The most noticeable impact of drought on deer populations is decreased fawn recruitment, which in turn results in a reduction in the population or slower population growth over the short term," says TPWD white-tailed deer program leader Alan Cain.

"Droughts often don't last long enough to have a long-term effect on statewide deer populations," he says. "Typically, in drought years it would not be uncommon to see fawn production less than 20 to 25 percent in many areas of the state, while averages are usually closer to 40 to 45 percent."

This loss of fawn production means that whole age classes of deer may be affected in an area. Therefore, hunters aren't likely to have as many opportunities on deer within that specific age class. Cain says that there's little to worry about and that the numbers will rebound once normal rainfall patterns return.

"Hunters are often concerned about die-offs of adult deer related to the drought," he says. "While this is quite possible, keep in mind that deer have survived through some pretty tough times, including the drought of the 1950s."

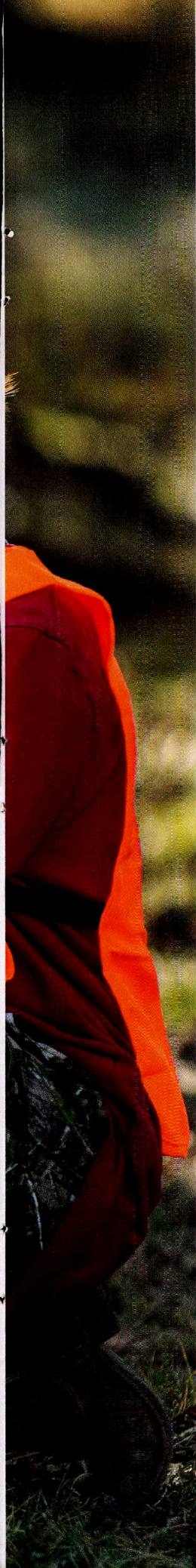
Despite the lack of rainfall, Amlin says he's really pleased at what the antler restrictions have done for the deer herds in his county.

"The quality of deer here has gotten better during the last four or five years and continues to get better," he says. "Undoubtedly, it has a lot to do with the restrictions in place. In addition, I think that hunters and land managers are simply practicing better deer management." ★



Eighteen-year-old Eli Loke Gray and young hunter Matthew Groff examine a shed deer antler during the 2014 Cave Creek youth hunt.

PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



# FIRST HUNT

**YOUTH HUNTING EVENT CHANGES THE LIVES  
OF YOUNG PARTICIPANTS, INCLUDING MY SON.**

**by KAREN LOKE**

**AS WE DRIVE UP A DIRT ROAD INTO A SEA OF ORANGE, I GLANCE AT MY SON ELI, 12, SITTING QUIETLY IN BORROWED CAMOUFLAGE. IT'S HIS FIRST DEER HUNT, AND HE'S MORE THAN A LITTLE APPREHENSIVE. "BUT, MOM, WHY DO I HAVE TO SHOOT A DEER?" HE ASKS ME.**



LEFT BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD; BELOW BY CLEMENTE GUZMAN / TPWD

have enough food, water and shelter to survive.

While filming those hunting segments, I saw kids take their first deer and listened to their stories about overcoming the fear of firearms and the pride they felt when they brought home fresh venison.

I knew I wanted that experience for my son.

The Cave Creek Youth Hunt in Stonewall is designed for first-time hunters. The Texas Youth Hunting Program (run by the Texas Wildlife Association and TPWD) calls it the largest youth hunt in the world, as well as the safest. Five dozen huntmasters, all volunteers, escort 60 youth (and one parent each) to deer blinds on the 15 ranches that form the Cave Creek Wildlife Management Association Cooperative. These landowners,

"See all these people in hunter orange caps and vests?" I ask him. "They're master hunters, and they're going to show you how to hunt safely and use your great-grandfather's rifle."

He looks down at the floorboard where the 1897 Winchester rests inside the old leather carrying case, and his mood seems to lift a little.

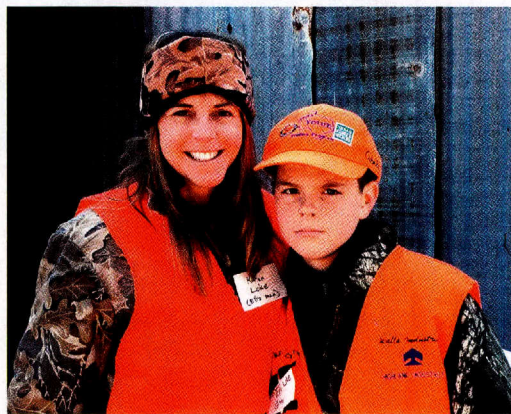
"Besides, you don't have to shoot a deer," I reassure him. "And if you don't like it, you never have to go again."

Fast-forward several years. Today, my now-18-year-old has taken five deer, his first buck and a few doves. Eli now serves as a mentor to other youth on this same youth hunt. That first day, I never realized the impact that the Texas Youth Hunting Program would have on him.

It's tough to raise a son alone, and my challenge is increased because Eli has attention deficit disorder and borderline autism spectrum disorder. One thing I learned early in the process was that being outdoors was soothing for

both of us. Activities with the Boy Scouts of America became an important part of our lives.

I grew up camping, hiking and swimming but not hunting. As a television producer for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for more than 20 years, I have spent a lot of time around a lot of hunters. I have been fortunate to work with those who teach hunter safety as well as those who tackle wildlife management. Along the way I learned how habitat supports only a certain number of deer, and I learned the sad reality of what happens to those deer that don't



most of German descent, have relatively small acreages individually. Combined, they have more than 45,000 acres, and by managing the deer herds together, they cultivate a much healthier deer popu-

lation. When hunting season comes around, they can add profit to their ranching heritage with hunter dollars.

"See those eight or nine deer around that feeder?" my son's huntmaster, Steve Hall, asks Eli as they sit quietly in a blind on a freezing Hill Country morning on Eli's first hunt. It's still too dark to shoot.

Eli doesn't answer, but he looks up. I'm there, too, with a video camera, a



**“BESIDES, YOU DON’T HAVE TO SHOOT A DEER,” I REASSURE HIM.  
 “AND IF YOU DON’T LIKE IT, YOU NEVER HAVE TO GO AGAIN.”**

little worried that Eli is going to insist on leaving because it’s too cold and he’s not having any fun. But Steve is a pro and a father himself, so he’s patient and distracts Eli with some facts.

“That’s too many,” he tells Eli. “Your job is to take one of those does so the others can have a better life. That’s why Mr. Klein is letting you come on his property. And you get to take home some meat. Think you can do that?” Steve gives his own gloves to Eli to warm his hands.

Eli falls asleep until the morning sun comes up with the sounds of dove, wild turkey and distant buck snorts.

**Opposite page:** It’s a sea of orange in the Cave Creek Youth Hunt group photo. Author Karen Loke and Eli, 12, at Eli’s first hunt.

**This page:** Eli helps a younger hunter identify a possible shot from a deer blind at the 2014 hunt. Huntmaster Steve Hall goes over firearm safety with a father and son.

PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



The herd has left the feeder, but Eli will have another chance to hunt that evening. We head back to the main camp where the others have gathered, many with their morning harvest. They begin the hard work of cleaning their deer, quartering the meat and saving the hides for trophies. What stories they will tell Monday morning at school!

Understandably, 60 kids with guns sounds a little scary, but the organizers have a system in place that ensures everyone's well-being. Kids must first pass a hunter safety course that focuses on gun control and hunting ethics. They must earn a marksmanship certificate and learn how to track an animal that has been shot. The main goals are to keep the hunters safe, prevent waste of an animal and teach responsibility.

The rest of the afternoon is spent pursuing various hunt-related activities. At one station, kids learn about flint knapping; at another, a game warden talks about the rules of hunting on private lands, crossing fences and the practice of leaving no trace behind. One favorite station is sausage-making, run by one of the landowners, Ronnie Ottmer, who leads this activity every year. Ronnie makes sure that the kids

get their freshly washed hands on the meat, feeding the venison through the grinder and filling the casings to prepare part of that night's banquet.

A historic old schoolhouse on the property is the site of all this activity. It was built in 1881, and children once learned reading, writing and arithmetic here. This weekend, kids will bunk here to rest for another learning experience.

After making sausage, we head to the range, where Eli makes sure his rifle is in line for that evening's hunt. I watch as he focuses intently on the target.

"The range is hot!" yells the range manager.

Eli breathes deeply.

"Safety off! Fire when ready!"

Eli exhales and pulls the trigger. The target is 75 yards away, so we can't see if he made the shot yet. Eli takes two more shots before we check it out. I follow with my camera to catch his reaction, good or bad. The range manager takes down the target and shows it to us.

"Hot dang, that's the best I've seen yet!" he exclaims. Eli beams broadly and shakes his hand. In a rare display of delight, he turns and smiles at me and the camera.

That afternoon, Steve, Eli and I head

back to the same blind. Eli's feeling much more confident now with his recent marksmanship success. It's warm and comfortable, and there is time to settle in, look through binoculars, tell some stories and have a snack. Steve and Eli talk about the TV commercials that promote the snacks they're eating and laugh. I do a quick interview with Steve about all the kids he's taken on their first hunt and how exciting it is to see them develop. Steve falls asleep.

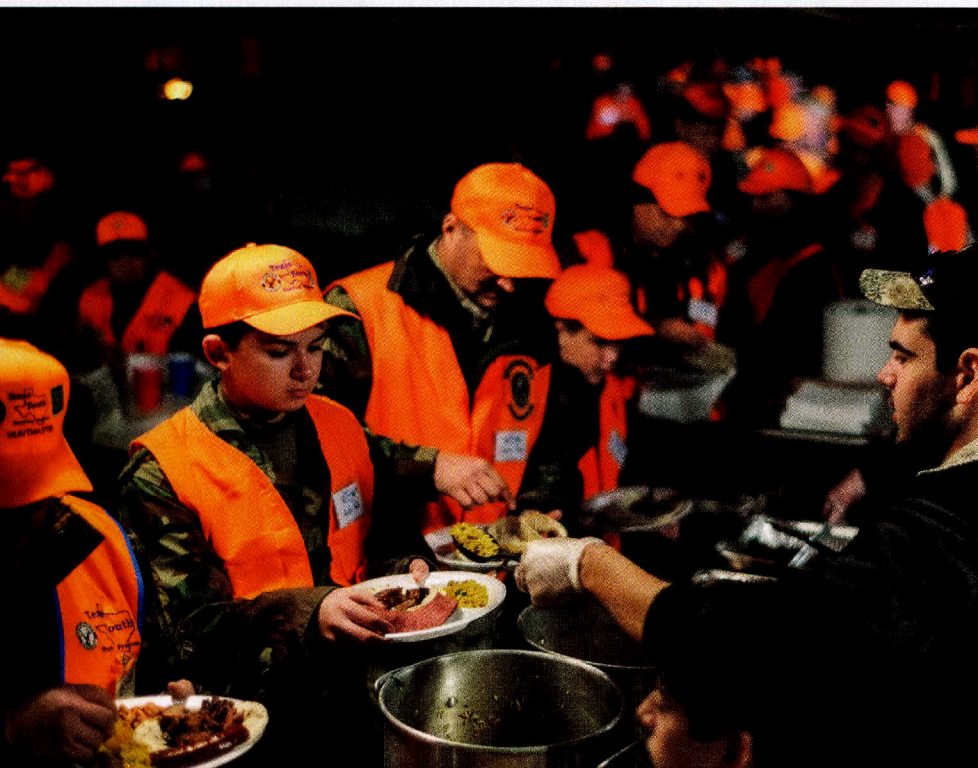
Eli, trying to be quiet, stares at me and sticks his tongue in and out in rhythm to a song he is humming. He plays with his shadow on the blind's walls, bobs his head back and forth and drums on his cheeks with his hands while pursing his lips to make a funny sound.

"Is that your bongo imitation?" Steve asks with his eyes still closed.

"Have you ever been asleep when someone has shot their first deer?" Eli asks.

This time, Eli is fully awake to hear the sounds of wildlife stir. The feeder releases its contents of corn, Steve rouses himself, and the two of them start to get seriously focused. Steve tells Eli to check his safety switch, put in his round of ammo and get his safety

## I WASN'T SURE IF ELI COULD TAKE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER LIVING THING WHEN THE MOMENT CAME, BUT HE HAD BEEN TRAINED AND HE WAS READY.



glasses on. A buck snorts.

"Did you hear that?" Steve asks Eli.

"He's barking at you." Eli grins.

It's fascinating for me to watch my ADD son focus intently as a herd of axis deer walks past our blind. They're too close and on the wrong side of the blind to shoot, so we wait longer. As the sun starts to set, we hear distant shots from other youths taking their chances. I start to fear that Eli won't get his shot tonight either, but Eli seems calm and unworried.

**Hungry hunters (at left) are well-fed after a day's hunt at Cave Creek. At age 14, Eli (opposite page) returned to the Cave Creek hunt and took a fine doe with huntmaster Steve Hall.**





TOP BY KAREN LOCKE / TPWD, BOTTOM BY CLEMENTE GUZMAN / TPWD, OPPOSITE BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

My son has had trouble at school for being unable to focus, distracting others, squirming in his seat and falling asleep in class. Medicine helped keep him compliant in the classroom but turned him into what he called a “zombie,” so he refused to continue taking it. It was wonderful to see how the time spent in the blind watching deer seemed to calm him like a kind of natural medicine.

At long last, a single axis doe comes to the feeder. She’s not huge, but she is big enough to take (and just in time, before she produces more offspring of the exotic species taking over the native white-tailed deer habitat).

I focus my camera on the doe but find myself instead locking away from the lens to watch my son.

I wasn’t sure if Eli could take the life of another living thing when the moment came, but he had been trained and he was ready.

The shot is clean, right through the

doe’s heart. She runs a few feet across the creek just as they had prepared him for in class.

“Great shot!” Steve tells Eli and pats him on the back.

We wait a few minutes before leaving the blind to track her down. It’s getting dark now, and Steve pulls out his light. We find her a few yards away, lying still on her side. Eli pokes her with a stick.

“Yep, she’s dead,” Steve says.

Eli holds the light while Steve guts the doe. Next time, Eli will do it himself.

When we return to camp, a banquet is underway. Landowners, huntmasters, hunters and families enjoy fresh venison, certificates of appreciation and memories of the day’s hunt.

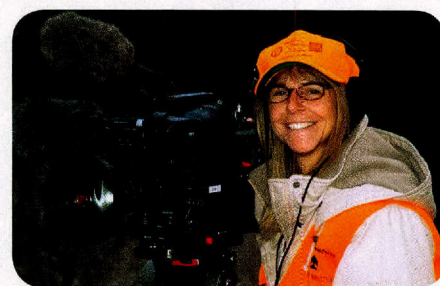
Afterward, everyone gathers for a group shot.

“Everyone say ‘backstrap!’” yells Doug Dubois, the youth hunt organizer.

Today, Eli is an Eagle Scout and a high school graduate. He’s still a hunter.

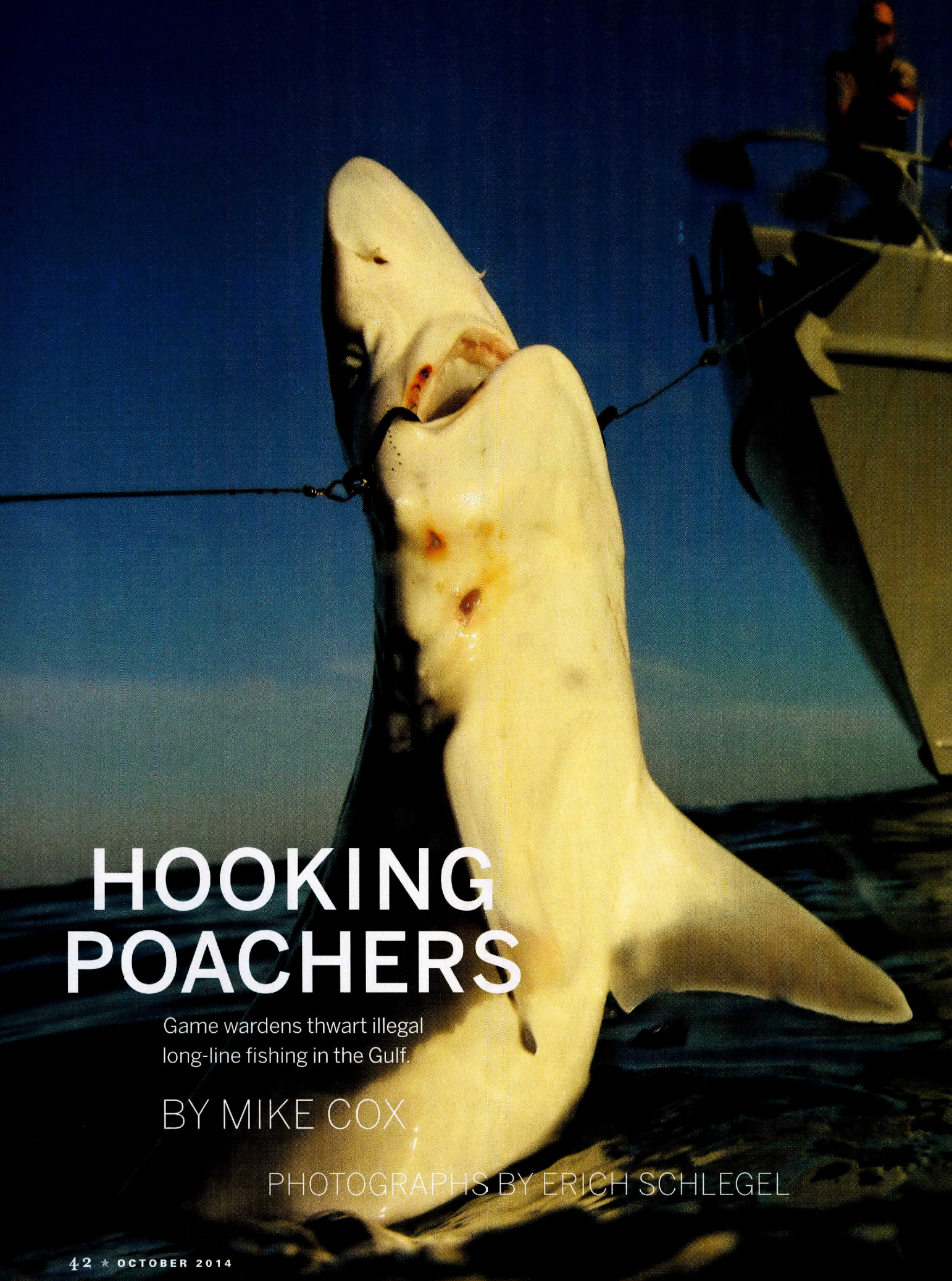
Of course, you don’t have to be a sin-

gle mother or work for a wildlife agency to take your kid hunting. The Texas Youth Hunting Program offers hunts year-round for a very low price. Check out the website ([texasyouthhunting.com](http://texasyouthhunting.com)) for information and places to hunt all over Texas. ★



## WATCH THE VIDEO

▶ Want to see more of Eli’s adventure? Go to: <http://youtu.be/6D1Lvb2suFo>

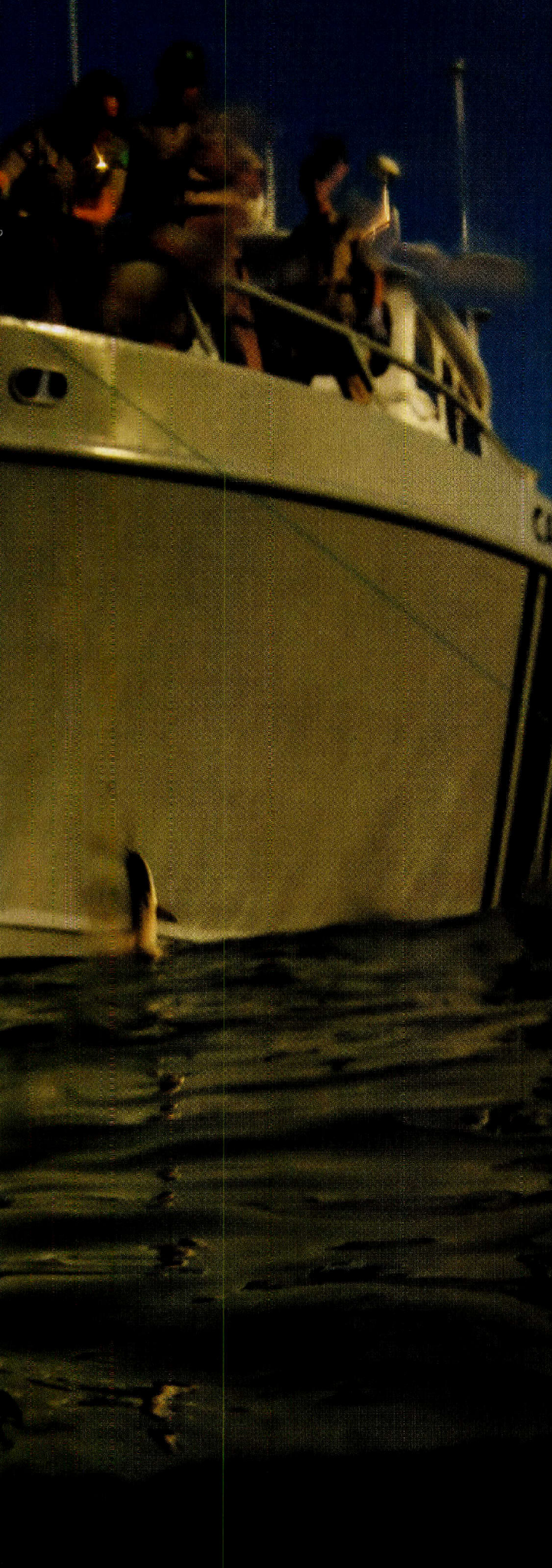


# HOOKING POACHERS

Game wardens thwart illegal  
long-line fishing in the Gulf.

BY MIKE COX

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL



## GAME WARDEN CARMEN PEREZ

stood outside the wheelhouse of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department patrol vessel Captain Williams, salt spray flying into her face as the 65-footer cut through a choppy sea.

The Gulf water stung her eyes, but at least it had a cooling effect. On a hot August day during shrimp season, she and three other game wardens were cruising in U.S. waters off the southern tip of Texas not far from the international line — a liquid border visible only on the navigational map displayed on the screen inside the air-conditioned cabin where Sgt. Luis Sosa sat at the helm.

When Perez spotted the clear plastic water bottle bobbing in the blue-green water, she pounded a flat hand on the exterior bulkhead to let Sosa know she had seen something. He throttled the twin diesel engines back to an idle as the gray-and-white boat with an authoritative black slash on either side of its prow coasted toward the small object, something no bigger than a short-lived patch of white foam made by a falling wave. Only practiced eyes would have even noticed it.

Most of the time, a piece of trash found floating in open water off the South Texas coast is nothing but man-made flotsam that sooner or later will end up littering a sandy beach. But not this time.

**PROBING** under the bottle with a long boat hook, Perez let out an excited yell when she found a line attached to it, going straight down. The innocent-looking, hard-to-see object marked the location of a decidedly illegal device.

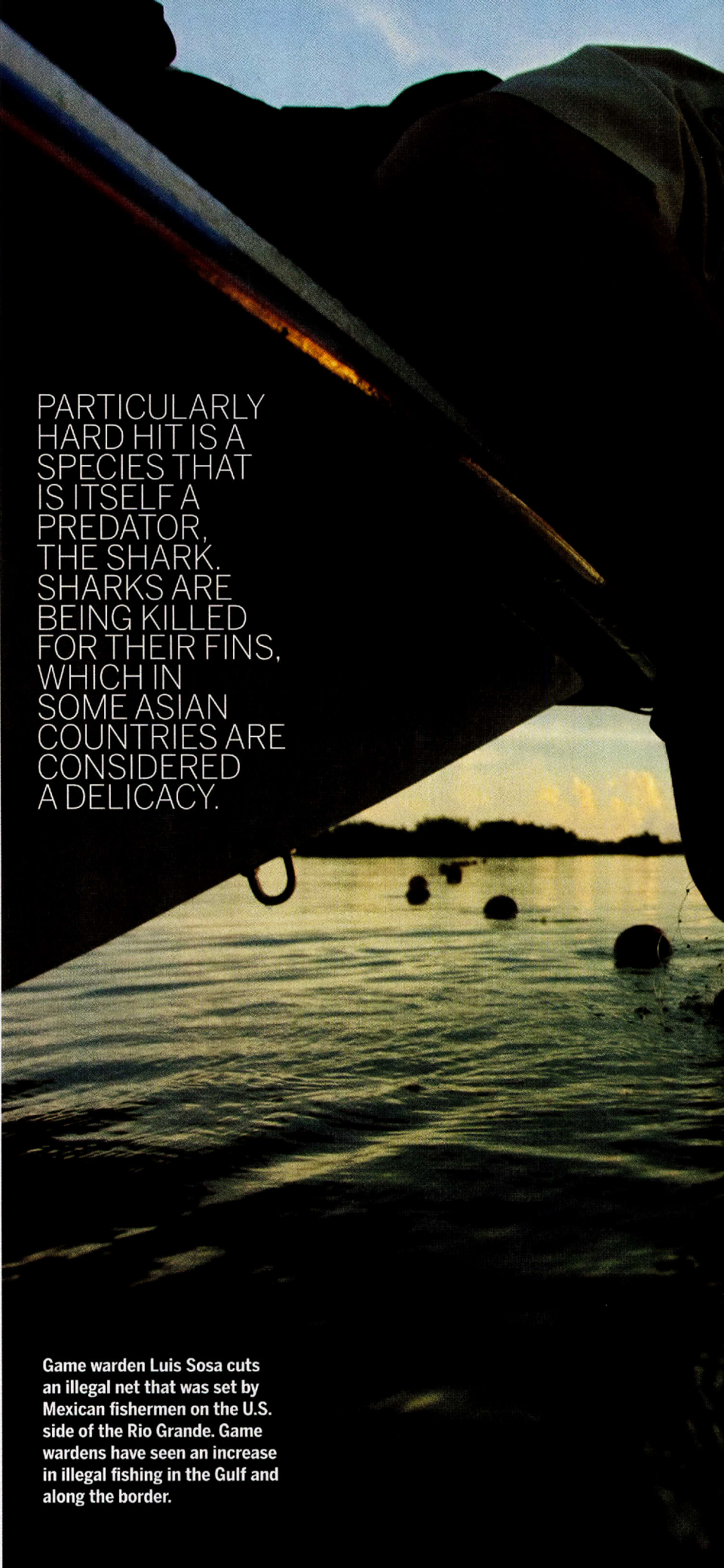
Game wardens, the U.S. Coast Guard and legally operating commercial fishermen call it a long line — a deadly efficient fish-catching apparatus stretching underwater for a mile or more and bristling with hundreds of rusty hooks. The people who slip into Texas and U.S. waters in open 28-foot *lanchas* (Spanish for “launch”) to poach state and federally protected fish species know it as a way of life. These environmental pirates earn very little in depriving honest anglers and commercial fishermen, not to mention the Gulf fishery, of very much.

Soon, all hands were on deck to retrieve the long line Perez had discovered. It took several hours to get the entire line and the fish it claimed on board.

Had the fishermen from Mexico returned to their line before the Captain Williams found the water bottle that marked it, they would have collected all the game fish as quickly as possible before cranking up their high-horsepower engine and racing back to the safety of Mexican waters. Once ashore at a small village known as Playa Bagdad (an old community nine miles below the mouth of the Rio Grande that served as a lively port for smugglers during the Civil War), the fish change hands, as does money, in a literal food chain that will likely end on a plate in a seafood restaurant in Matamoros.

Particularly hard hit is a species that is itself a predator, the shark. Sharks are being killed for their fins, which in some Asian countries are considered a delicacy.

The men in the *lanchas* slice off the fins with sharp knives, and then usually toss the sharks back into the Gulf, where they sink into the depths to become part of another food chain. Back in Playa Bagdad, the shark fins enter a black market that will see them sold for increasingly higher prices until they end up in a bowl of soup halfway around the world from the waters off Texas.



PARTICULARLY  
HARD HIT IS A  
SPECIES THAT  
IS ITSELF A  
PREDATOR,  
THE SHARK.  
SHARKS ARE  
BEING KILLED  
FOR THEIR FINS,  
WHICH IN  
SOME ASIAN  
COUNTRIES ARE  
CONSIDERED  
A DELICACY.

Game warden Luis Sosa cuts an illegal net that was set by Mexican fishermen on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande. Game wardens have seen an increase in illegal fishing in the Gulf and along the border.





**Game wardens haul in an illegal gill net during a patrol on the Rio Grande near Brownsville.**

Illegal long-line fishing in Texas or federal waters is nothing new, but game wardens and the Coast Guard have noted a striking increase in its incidence, particularly in the illegal harvesting of sharks. When arrested, the poachers all say the same thing: Mexican waters no longer hold as many commercially valuable fish. They come to U.S. waters because state and federal regulations aimed at conservation have preserved a vital fishery, no thanks to them.

Since law enforcement does not know how many pounds of red snapper, shark, drum, mackerel, grouper and other species are clandestinely taken in these maritime border incursions, the environmental and economic toll is hard to reckon. Even so, the yearly loss to long lines or gill nets is estimated at hundreds of thousands of pounds of fish worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

A 2005 study by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Coast Guard estimated that nearly 2,000 *lancha* incursions were occurring per year in the earlier part of the decade. Assuming each long line resulted in the hooking of 30 sharks, that's nearly 60,000 sharks a year. Using even a conservative estimate of 20 pounds per shark, the total loss reaches 1.1 million pounds a year. And the pace is known to have picked up since then.

On Nov. 7, 2012, the Captain Williams discovered a three-mile-long gill net, a device some call "the wall of death," about six miles north of Brazos Santiago Pass and seven miles offshore. Dropping 30 feet down, the net held 17 greater hammerhead sharks, 13 unidentified sharks (due to their advanced decomposition), eight black drum, six tripletail, one large red drum and several hundred triggerfish.

In February 2013, a four-day game warden enforcement effort dubbed Operation Shark Fin resulted in the seizure of one *lancha* and 17,500 feet of long lines in the Gulf. The Coast Guard seized another boat.

Last July 1, a swept-wing HU-25 Falcon Coast Guard jet on a routine surveillance flight observed a mile-long gill net in the Gulf about 20 miles off South Padre Island. A patrol boat made its way to the location and found 65 dead sharks trapped in the net.

Since October 2013, the Coast Guard has seized 28 *lanchas* and forced 34 others back into Mexican waters. In the process, it retrieved more than 12 nautical miles of long lines and gill nets.

Game wardens stationed in the Lower Rio Grande Valley have a wide range of responsibilities, from assisting the Texas Department of Public Safety and U.S. Homeland Security with border

WHEN ARRESTED,  
THE POACHERS  
ALL SAY THE SAME  
THING: MEXICAN  
WATERS NO  
LONGER HOLD  
AS MANY  
COMMERCIALY  
VALUABLE FISH.

operations to checking fish brought in for weighing at fishing tournaments to other routine conservation law enforcement activities. One of their more challenging duties is patrolling Texas waters (which extend nine miles into the Gulf of Mexico) and U.S. waters 200 miles offshore looking for illegal long lines and gill nets or anything else they encounter that needs checking.

Often the Captain Williams and other TPWD vessels out of Corpus Christi and Galveston will go out on multiday patrols, especially during

shrimping season. As frequently as possible, TPWD's seaworthy vessels will focus on recovering illegal fishing devices and interdicting any illegal traffic they may encounter.

A typical Gulf patrol begins before dawn. Game wardens who will make the run show up with sleeping bags, backpacks stuffed with gear and extra clothes and their standard-issue M-4 .223 rifles — just in case. After gear and groceries are stowed, Sgt. Sosa presides over a safety meeting, using what's known as the GAR (green, amber, red) model to assess the level of danger.

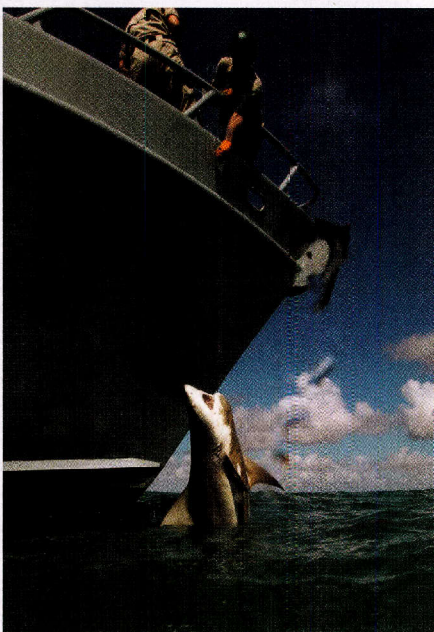
Working on one more cup of coffee, the sergeant first goes over the objective. On this late spring day, with shrimp season closed, the mission is to patrol a segment of the Gulf historically popular with Mexican commercial fishermen. Intelligence shared by the Coast Guard, based on aerial reconnaissance and other sources, indicates that the illegal fishermen have become more brazen, placing their long lines much farther north than they have been known to in the past.

Today, the Captain Williams will work through Texas waters into U.S. waters, roughly paralleling the international line. If they find nothing in that area, Sosa will lay a course northward through U.S. waters toward Port Mansfield. He'll anchor in the Port Mansfield cut for the night and resume operations offshore early the next morning.

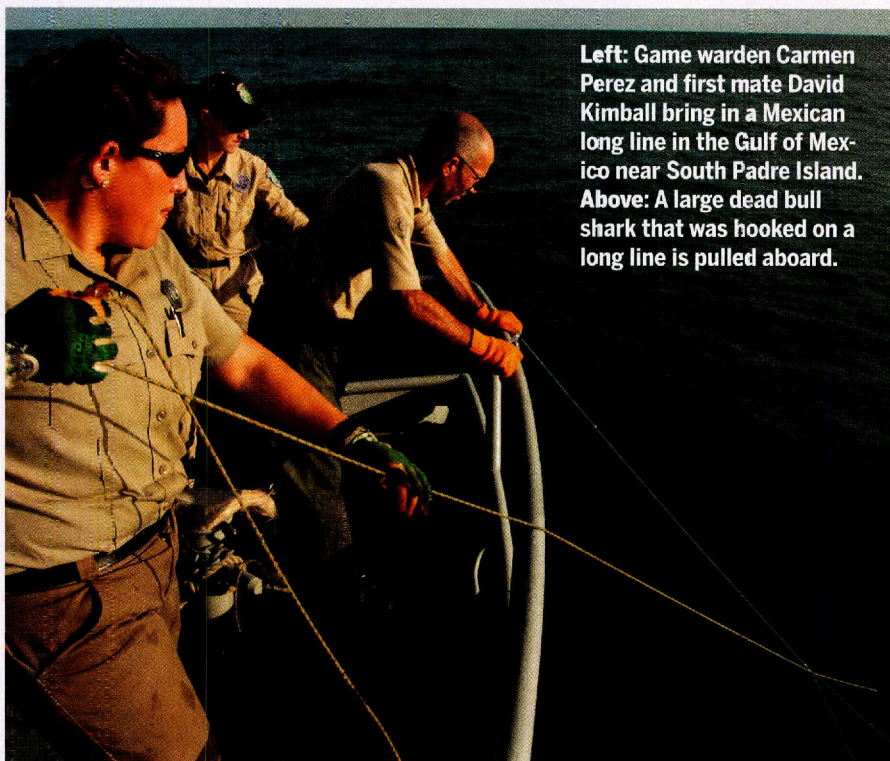
Sosa and the crew assess several factors important to this or any mission — supervision, weather, planning, team selection, team fitness and the event (or situation) and its complexity. Assigning a numerical value for each consideration on a scale of 1 to 10, they come up with a risk factor of 31. That puts the mission at the "amber" level, meaning they should proceed with caution.

What has nudged the operation out of the optimal green level this day is the weather. The wind is already up, and 4- to 5-foot seas are forecast. That may not sound like particularly high waves, but when the boat you're in is making its way against those waves at 20-plus knots, it's not a ride for those prone to seasickness.

Despite the rough seas, there's no doubt that *lanchas* have recently been operating in U.S. waters. In fact, only the



**Left:** Game warden Carmen Perez and first mate David Kimball bring in a Mexican long line in the Gulf of Mexico near South Padre Island. **Above:** A large dead bull shark that was hooked on a long line is pulled aboard.





Game warden Dan Cantu confiscates an illegal gill net with a snook caught in it on the Rio Grande.

day before, the Port Isabel-based Coast Guard cutter *Amberjack* had sighted a Mexican *lancha* in federal waters in the general vicinity of where the Captain Williams would be working today. The white-hulled 87-footer had pursued the smaller, faster boat until its occupants safely made it back into Mexican waters and the U.S. vessel could legally proceed no farther. Maybe, Sosa hoped, they had managed to sink line and would be back today expecting to haul in their catch.

At the Coast Guard station on South Padre Island, which is where the Captain Williams is moored, there's a large fenced-in area that "coasties" and game wardens call the "bone yard." That secure enclosure is the temporary and sometimes final resting place of the various *lanchas*, long lines and tangles of gill nets that have been confiscated in recent years. The fiberglass boats are held in case they are needed for evidence and to keep them from being used again. One of the seized boats has even been spiffed up for use in training operations.

The typical *lancha* is 25 to 29 feet long. It's an open boat with a 150- to 200-horsepower outboard motor that can push it fast. Typically manned by three to four fishermen, the boat is

equipped with extra gasoline tanks but little else other than bottles of water and gear. The fishermen don't own these boats; players in an organized network in Mexico do. Law enforcement believes the *lancha* operators are merely cartel pawns. If not bringing in stolen fish, they smuggle drugs or humans.

Most of the time, *lanchas* venture out at night, set their lines and return to Mexico. While they usually mark their lines with an empty plastic container, wardens have even found lines marked by cruelly hooking a live brown pelican to serve as a natural-looking buoy. However they've marked their line, early the following morning, using a handheld GPS to get them to the general area, the poachers come back to retrieve their lines and illegal catch.

The distinctive boats are small compared with most open-water vessels, but they have enough of a profile to be picked up by the radar on the Captain Williams. When a *lancha* is found and boarded, the boat, illegal gear and catch are seized and the crew taken to the Coast Guard station for identification and processing. Those on board are usually filed on for possessing an illegal fishing device and operating an unregistered boat, each only a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$500. After

laying out the fine in jail, they are deported to Mexico. Soon they are back in U.S. waters; many have been arrested numerous times.

More often, it's not a *lancha* but the line that game wardens encounter. The most extensive seizure through last summer happened on the afternoon of July 31, when the vessel's crew came across an illegal long line believed to have been placed by fishermen out of Mexico. The line the wardens hauled on board stretched for 1.5 miles. Wardens recovered and released from the line 23 red snapper, 17 sharks and one smooth puffer "rabbitfish."

On the patrol earlier in the summer, the Captain Williams checked several radar contacts, but each turned out to be a commercial fishing vessel operating legally, a recreational craft or an oil tanker. No enforcement action had to be taken.

The two-day patrol did not come up with any violators, but the Gulf is big and the makeshift buoys used by the men in the *lanchas* are small and intended to look innocuous. Despite the dry run, Sosa knows the fishermen from Mexico are well aware that TPWD game wardens patrol the waters where they try to steal fish.

"Our goal is for them to be afraid of the little gray boat," he says. ★



## HELP WILDLIFE

Anyone operating a vessel in Texas coastal waters who sees gill nets or long lines is urged to call the

**Operation Game Thief hotline**

(800) 792-GAME (4263),

contact a game warden or notify the U.S. Coast Guard.





# LOS MISTERIOSOS

*Three Texas ghost stories passed down through generations.*

BY STEPHANIE M. SALINAS  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLEMENTE GUZMAN

**Folk tales, stories passed down** through the generations, shed light on times past and give places and towns a colorful history. As time ticks on, many stories have been forgotten, and many of the original tales have been lost in translation.

In hopes of saving these folk tales, Juan Sauvageau, former professor at Texas A&M University in Kingsville, published *Stories That Must Not Die*, a series of books that chronicle Texas mysterious legends as recounted by people who lived in the towns where the stories were first told.

Tales featured in the books, like "Dancing with a Ghost (*Bailando Con Un Fantasma*)," "The Mysterious Mirror (*El Espejo Misterioso*)" and "The Sobbing Woman (*La Llorona*)," are still shared by older folks with children in South Texas.

## "Dancing with a Ghost (*Bailando Con Un Fantasma*)"

Manuel left his home near Benavides to attend a dance. On the way, he saw a woman in an old-fashioned dress standing by the side of the road.

He stopped and asked if he could assist her with anything, and she said that she wanted to go to a dance but needed a ride. Since he just happened to be on his way to a dance, he invited her to join him, and she happily accepted and climbed into his truck.

Saying her name was María, she told Manuel that she was not known in the area because she had been away for a decade.

When they got to the dance, Manuel noticed that she did not do well with new dances like the cumbia, but she was one of the best polka dancers that onlookers had ever seen. After midnight, the musicians stopped playing and María sighed as if she wished they would never stop. When the rest of the partygoers left for home, Manuel and María walked back to his truck. The night grew cool, and he put his coat over her shoulders.

María told Manuel to drop her off at the same spot where he picked her up. But Manuel noticed that there were no lights around there and didn't want to leave her by herself. She thanked him for taking her to the dance but insisted on



being left alone. He then urged her to keep his coat and said he would pick it up in the morning.

The next day, Manuel, eager to see María, drove back to the area where he dropped her off. Spotting a little white house about a quarter-mile away, he drove down the dirt road and parked in front of the porch.

A woman opened the door, and Manuel asked if he could see María. Turning pale, the woman said, "María ... María! My dear María died 10 years ago!"

"But, señorita, this is impossible!" Manuel said. "I took her to a dance last night! We had a good time. She is a great dancer. She was wearing a pink dress."

The woman broke into tears.

"My daughter was buried in a pretty pink dress," she said. "She was a very good dancer, especially when they played polkas and corridos, but I'm telling you, she died in an accident 10 years ago."

Manuel insisted that María was the woman he had been dancing with the night before, and told the woman that he had loaned her his coat.

Unable to convince Manuel that

María had died, the woman took him to the nearby family cemetery to show him her grave. They walked in silence to the cemetery until they reached a stone that read:

"María Lozano 1920-1940, RIP."

Resting on the grave was Manuel's coat.

### **"The Sobbing Woman (La Llorona)"**

One of the most frequently told stories in South Texas is about a woman called "La Llorona." Passed down through generations, the Sobbing Woman tale has been interpreted in many ways, and the plot varies depending on who tells it.

One version commonly heard around Laredo describes a very poor woman who lived in a neighborhood called the Devil's Corner. She had three children and lived in a small shack that seemed to hang off a cliff on the banks of the Rio Grande. Her husband often spent his time and money across the river in Nuevo Laredo.

She ironed and washed clothes for others, and even resorted to begging to provide just one meal a day for her chil-

dren. She ate practically nothing herself, in order to save the food for them.

The poor woman's sad life brought new miseries every day. She asked nothing for herself, and it broke her heart to see her children suffer. Her greatest hope was that her husband would come back and that life would be happier.

One day, her husband returned from across the river, but he brought only more sorrow, saying he was leaving his suffering wife and their children for another woman.

Seeing no end to her agony, she stared at the peaceful river below. She didn't want her children to live a life of misery as she had, and felt her children would be much better off in heaven.

"God would clothe them, feed them, surround them with love," she thought. "They would be happy up there forever."

On an impulse, she pushed all three children over the cliff. They fell into the water, floated for a while and disappeared. She smiled for the first time in months, thinking that she had done the right thing.

She could see all three of them with a shiny halo already, up there eating a big

plate of strawberry ice cream, she thought to herself.

She went to bed happy and fell fast asleep. The next morning, she looked for her children and, in a moment of sanity, realized what she had done and wept. Deciding to join them, she threw herself into the river and drowned.

Many people believe that when the moon is full, the moaning and sobbing of La Llorona, still looking for her children, can be heard on the riverbank.

### **"The Mysterious Mirror (El Espejo Misterioso)"**

Ten years after the death of her husband, Bridget Wagner ruled her ranch with an iron hand.

Powerful companies were trying to buy land in her area, and they had their sights set on her property next. They did everything they could to get her to sell, but she met every challenge and managed to keep her land.

One night, while returning home, Bridget's pickup truck overturned and she died. Her only surviving heir was her daughter, Gretchen.

As soon as Bridget was buried, lawyers went to the ranch and offered low prices for the land. The lawyers told Gretchen she had to accept their offer or risk losing everything.

Since her mother did not leave a will and she didn't know where the deeds were, she cried out in desperation:

"Mamma! Why didn't you write a will? Now we are going to lose everything!"

Four weeks later, the lawyers told her she had one day left to sell or they would evict her.

Throughout the day, Gretchen sensed her mother's presence. That night, she had trouble sleeping and had the feeling again that her mother was nearby. Around midnight, there was a noise in the downstairs hall, and she clearly heard her mother's voice.

"Gretchen," the voice said. "Don't be afraid. I came to help you."

At her bedroom door, there was a whitish, almost translucent figure leading her down the stairs.

A large mirror in the hall was shaking violently, and it shattered as soon as she reached the bottom of the stairs. In the wall behind the mirror was a safe. The tumbler moved as it was being unlocked: two turns to the left, one to the right, and then the door of the safe opened.

"I will never again be allowed to talk to you," the ghostly voice intoned. "You'll find everything you need in the safe. Goodbye."

And with that, the form disappeared. In the safe, Gretchen found her mother's will, the deeds to the property and a fortune in war bonds.

Instead of going back to sleep, she sat on the porch, waiting happily for the lawyers. ★



Want a fun way to show your kids what it means to be a Texan?

## Bring history to life at Texas State Parks!

Many state parks offer guided and interactive experiences that tell the story of Texas. From the birthplace of Texas to pioneer farms, Spanish missions, frontier forts and rock art sites ... history is better outside!

Life's better outside.®

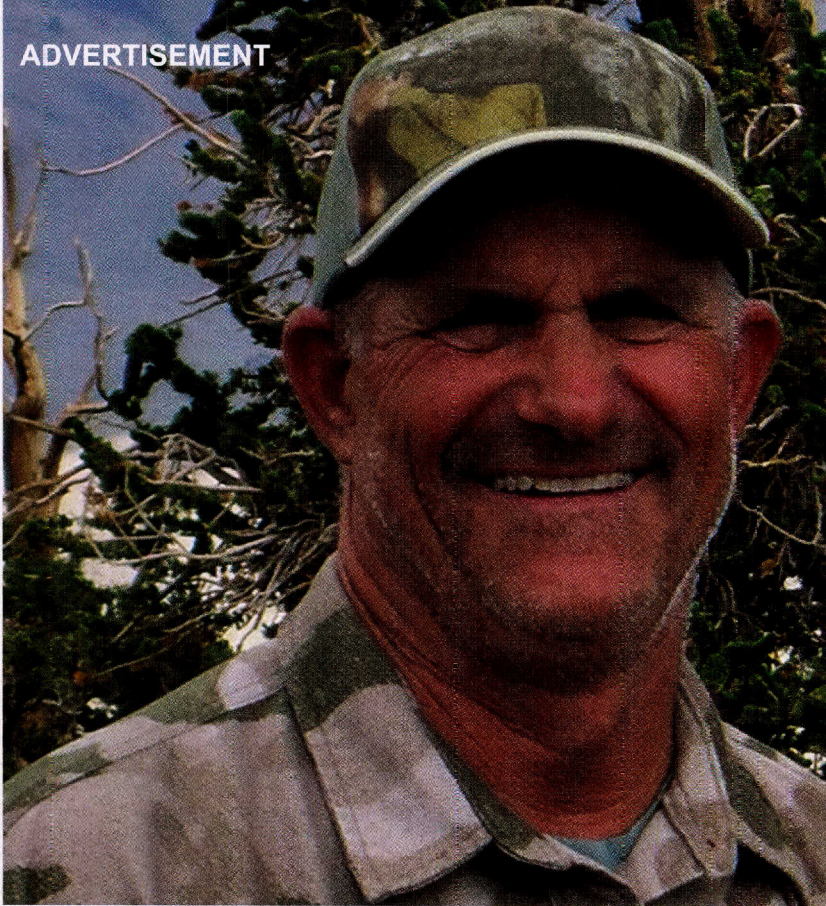
Find events and information at:  
[texasstateparks.org/history](http://texasstateparks.org/history)

Kids 12 and under get free admission to state parks.

Outdoor Activity of the Month

Sign up for Texas State Parks updates to receive monthly ideas for outdoor activity events and places to play in nature: [tpwd.texas.gov/email](http://tpwd.texas.gov/email)

## ClaroxanPRO, Cliff St. Martin



"I first started taking **Claroxan** years ago. I was skeptical that something in a magazine could help but the kind representative had me give it a try. It took about a month to notice a difference but I noticed improvement. On the hunts, I typically spend about eight hours per day looking through binoculars and I find that when I am using **Claroxan**, my eyes don't tire as fast and my vision feels sharper and crisper. Surprisingly, I can pick up targets better now than when I was in my twenties! I have even recommended it to my clients and they see the benefits too. I need that extra inch in visual acuity as the years pass on and **Claroxan** helps me keep that competitive edge to go another year. Happy trails!"

## DEAR CLIFF:

*I just got home from a frustrating, almost infuriating two-week hunt in the Marble Mountains. My buddy was able to lock in on the marks way before me, and I barely got a shot off the whole trip.*

*I finally asked him how the heck he was beatin' me like a rented mule, and he pulled out a bottle of **Claroxan**. He told me that I might want to learn about it if I wanted to get on his level. Do you know anything about **Claroxan**?*

GREG - Sierra, CA

Greg,

Not only do I know about **Claroxan** — I actually use it every day. Being a hunting guide, I know that perfect visual acuity is an asset I can't afford to lose. I discovered **Claroxan** a few years ago, soon after my client Tim's bighorn tag finally came.

I furiously scouted, but I felt we needed an extra edge. I asked a fellow guide for help, and he told me to try **Claroxan**. He explained its benefits and said his long-range focus and depth perception vastly improved after just a few short weeks.

I checked into it and it seemed to be the answer I was looking for. I decided, "Why not try it?" I'm glad I did.

Fast forward a few months, and it was off to the Mojave Desert in eastern California. As the sun rose on Opening Day, I vividly remember that first glance at the incredible, desolate canyons, savoring the sweet dawn breeze, as we set out on foot into the magnificent Kingston Mts. I knew my vision was sharper — I could focus in on objects in the distance like a hawk.

On the 14th day of the 15-day trek, nearly worn out, we entered a remote area with anticipation of locating the elusive desert sheep. The air scent was overwhelming — we were close!

Then, I peered through my spotting scope and somehow spotted a great ram from what had to be three miles away!

We carefully moved closer, stalking cautiously, until Tim motioned that the sheep was lined up perfectly in his crosshairs. With the ram broadside to our position, the first shot knocked it on its back, legs kicking. The next .300 Win Mag round penetrated its chest, ending all movement.

Hootin' and hollerin', we rushed to Tim's ram. He now was one step closer to his North American Grand Slam! And, I can tell you this: I know I wouldn't have spotted that ram without **Claroxan**. Tim could have missed his chance! Since that day, I've recommended **Claroxan** to clients and fellow guides alike.

**Claroxan** is an easy to digest, once-a-day tablet, comprised of a unique proprietary formula of carotenoids, powerful antioxidants, and other essential nutrients and extracts that may help improve visual acuity and nourish your eyes.\*

**Claroxan** is not available on the shelf. To find out what thousands of hunters already know about this dominant formula, you'll have to call the distributor, Pacific Health.

To learn more about Pacific Health's exclusive **Claroxan** products or to place an order, call, toll-free **855.820.4067** seven days a week or visit them online at [www.CLAROXAN.com](http://www.CLAROXAN.com) while supplies last.

To Your Next Mark,

*Cliff St. Martin*

GOODS AND SERVICES FOR THE OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST

# OUTDOOR

M A R K E T P L A C E

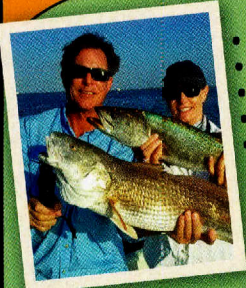
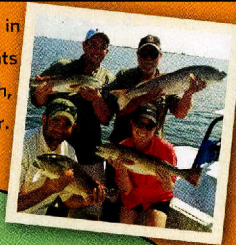
CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION & MECHANICAL SPECIFICATIONS: (512) 799-1045

## FISHING

### Rockport RedRunner

Captain Chad Verburgt

Specializing in shallow water flats fishing for redfish, trout & flounder.



- Full Day / Half Day
- Baffin trips
- Kayak Rentals
- Kayaks Shuttle Drop off / pick up
- Nature Boat Trips for Photography and Private Whooping Crane Tours

Call (361) 463-6545  
rockportredrunner@yahoo.com  
www.rockportredrunner.com

## PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

### OUTDOOR RUSTIC COOLERS AND STUFF



Unique outdoor and indoor coolers available  
Hand made out of real "barn wood"  
Hand-crafted in Texas  
Includes Official Igloo Brand Ice Chest  
Customize your cooler with adornments

OUTDOOR RUSTIC COOLERS.COM  
800-833-5998

## HUNTING

**Yearling** **Immature** **Post Mature** **Mature**

**Head Triangulation**

**Field Guide for BUCK DEER**

### Field Guide for Buck Deer

12" X 15" Laminated poster details physical characteristics for Yearling, Immature, Mature and Post Mature Buck Deer

\$6.95 ea

ideal for deer blinds!

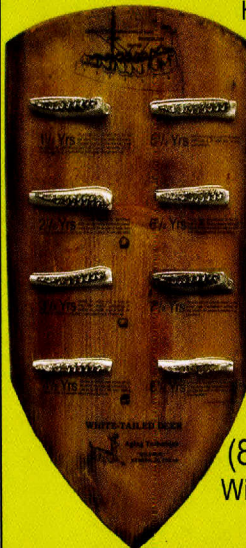
(830)257-4538

Wildlife Enterprises, Kerrville, TX

www.wildlifeenterprises.com

### Deer Aging Plaque

Handcrafted plaque displays dental wear patterns to determine age



great gift!

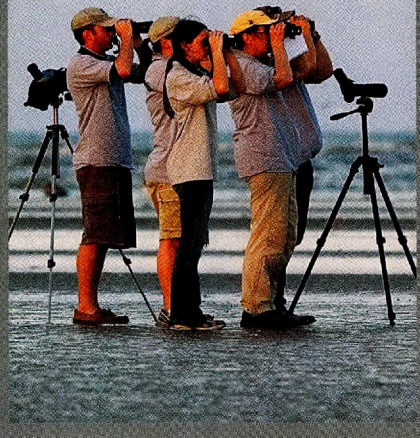
(830)257-4538  
Wildlife Enterprises  
Kerrville, TX

www.wildlifeenterprises.com



Look for us on Facebook

www.tpwmagazine.com



### CRAWFORD & COMPANY



Hand Crafted, Personalized Boot Jacks and Coaster Sets.

P.O. Box 126, Uvalde, TX 78802  
Visa/Mastercard, Call to order a Free Brochure  
Toll Free (888) 301-1967  
www.crawjacks.com

### Granite Oaks Ranch Trophy Hunts

Mason, TX

Rifle and Bow Hunters Welcome

graniteoaksranch.com  
hunt@graniteoaksranch.com  
(325) 258-4447

Burn **SAFELY** with the Stainless Steel

# Portable Burn-Cage™

**Perfect For:** Old Leaves and Branches  
Sensitive Financial Documents  
Burnable Household Waste



**CLEANER MORE EFFICIENT FIRES.** Perforated lid and sidewalls maximize airflow and trap burning embers. High burn temperatures mean thorough incineration with less residue and ash.

**LIGHT-WEIGHT** and portable.

**PEACE OF MIND.** It's the SAFE way to burn.



No more UNSAFE rusty barrel!



Folds for easy storage

85106X © 2014

Now burn **MORE**, even **FASTER**, with our **NEW XL MODEL!**

CALL TODAY for **FREE** Information Kit, Pricing and Factory Direct Coupon.  
TOLL FREE **888-212-0725**

Burncage.com



## ACCOMMODATIONS

### COMFORT

★ **Meyer B&B.** On Cypress Creek, Hill Country, mid-1800s stage stop, Texas landmark. Pool, hot tub, fireplaces, golf.  
[www.meyerbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.meyerbedandbreakfast.com) (888) 995-6100

### FREDERICKSBURG

★ **Palo Alto Creek Farm.** Landmark historic German-Texas farmstead on the creek. Ancient oaks, abundant wildlife, Hill Country tranquility. Beautifully renovated log cabin, barn, farmhouse, all with private spa therapy rooms.  
[www.paloaltocreekfarm.com](http://www.paloaltocreekfarm.com) (800) 997-0089

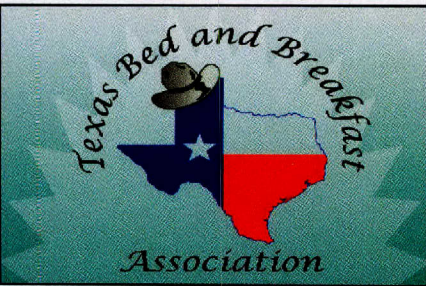
★ **Settler's Crossing Bed and Breakfast.** Private historic log cabins and cottages spread over 35 park-like acres, just minutes from town.

### ROCKPORT

**HOOPES' HOUSE**  
ROCKPORT, TEXAS  
(800) 924-1008



[www.hoopeshouse.com](http://www.hoopeshouse.com)  
NATIONALLY HISTORIC VICTORIAN HOME.  
EIGHT ROOMS EACH WITH PRIVATE BATH.  
FULL BREAKFAST INCLUDED. CALL FOR BROCHURE.



### NEW BRAUNFELS

★ **Historic Kuebler-Waldrip Haus & Danville Schoolhouse.** 43-acre deer haven near Gruene, rivers. Getaways, reunions, weddings, corporate retreats. 10 luxurious rooms, Jazzuizis. Delicious breakfasts.  
[www.kueblerwaldrip.com](http://www.kueblerwaldrip.com) (800) 299-8372

### GRUENE

★ **The Lamb's Rest Inn.** Located on the Guadalupe River. Featuring garden with fountain, pool, and hot tub, private balconies and fireplaces. Delightful breakfasts often served *al fresco*.  
[www.lambstrestinn.com](http://www.lambstrestinn.com) (888) 609-3932

## 31st Annual Czechfest

OCTOBER 5th at St. Thomas the Apostle Church  
16602 FM 624, Robstown, TX  
(3.5 miles west of 5-Points Shopping Center)

Big Live auction and Silent Auction beginning at 1p.m. until all is sold.

Come and enjoy the bingo, cake walk, arts & crafts, snacks, and children's games.  
Country Store will sell homemade *Kolaches* for \$6 for half-dozen.

## ONE OF THE BIGGEST FESTIVALS AND FUN FAMILY EVENTS IN SOUTH TEXAS

Lunch will be served 11 a.m.-2 p.m.: BBQ beef, potato salad and beans or traditional Czech dinner of sausage, sauerkraut, green beans with homemade kolaches. \$9 per plate.

Czechfest Mass at 11 a.m.

Bring the family and enjoy a wonderful day with friends!  
All activities begin at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning.

For more information, please contact:  
Anna Ramos @ church office  
(361) 387-1312, [aramos@christon624.com](mailto:aramos@christon624.com)

## WORLD'S FASTEST SPLITTER!

Try a DR® at Home for One Year!



PATENT PENDING

DR® RAPIDFIRE™ KINETIC LOG SPLITTER

**SIX TIMES FASTER** than ordinary log splitters.

**NEW MODELS**

Now Starting at **HALF THE PRICE!**

**KINETIC POWER**  
The RapidFire stores energy in a hefty cast-iron flywheel system that blasts logs apart in just one second!

85105X © 2014

Call for a **FREE DVD and Catalog!**

TOLL-FREE

**888-212-0725**

[DRlogsplitters.com](http://DRlogsplitters.com)



**0% MONTHLY INTEREST & FREE 36 MONTHS SHIPPING**  
LIMITED TIME OFFER

**LOWEST PRICE EVER on DR® Leaf Vacuums!**



- ✓ **Rated #1 in Vacuum Power**
- ✓ **Easy, 1-Hand Dumping**
- ✓ **Stores Flat in Minutes**
- ✓ **Converts to a Utility Trailer**

The **NEW DR® Leaf Vacuum** is designed from the top down to make yard clean up easier, faster, and more thorough than ever before. And for a limited time you can **TRY ONE FOR 1 YEAR ON YOUR OWN PROPERTY!**

**NEW MODELS!**  
Now Starting at **\$1,299<sup>99</sup>**  
**PLUS FREE SHIPPING!**

85104X © 2014

Call for a **FREE DVD and Catalog!**

TOLL-FREE

**888-212-0725**

[DRstumpgrinder.com](http://DRstumpgrinder.com)



# How to Tell Time Like a Man

Our digital-analog hybrid has two sides... tough and tougher.  
Get it now for an unbelievable \$59!

Your watch shouldn't cost more than your car. It should look and feel like a power tool and not a piece of bling. Wearing it shouldn't make you think twice about swinging a hammer or changing a tire. A real man's timepiece needs to be ready for anything. But that's just my opinion. If you agree, maybe you're ready for the *Stauer Centurion Hybrid*. Use your Exclusive Insider Promotional Code below and I'll send it to you today for **ONLY \$59**.

**This watch doesn't do dainty.** And neither do I. Call me old-fashioned, but I want my boots to be leather, my tires to be deep-tread monsters, and my steak thick and rare. Inspiration for a man's watch should come from things like fast cars, firefighters and power tools. And if you want to talk beauty, then let's discuss a 428 cubic inch V8.

**Did I mention the \$59 price tag?** This is a LOT of machine for not a lot of money. The *Stauer Centurion Hybrid* sports a heavy-duty alloy body, chromed and detailed with a rotating bezel that allows you to track direction. The luminous hour and minute hands mean you can keep working into the night. And the dual digital displays give this watch a hybrid ability. The LCD windows displays the time, day and date, includes a stopwatch function, and features a bright green electro-luminescent backlight. We previously offered the *Centurion* for \$199, but with the exclusive promotional code it's yours for **ONLY \$59!**

**No matter what, this watch can keep up.** Thanks to the Stauer 30-day Money Back Guarantee, you've got time to prove it. If you're not totally satisfied, return it for a full refund of the purchase price. You also get a 2-year replacement guarantee on both movements. But I have a feeling the only problem you'll have is deciding whether to keep the *Stauer Centurion* on your dresser or tucked inside your toolbox.



*"I work in the surveying and construction industry...*

*This is my work horse watch and I am proud to wear it."*

— C.S. from Fort Worth, TX



**TAKE 70% OFF  
INSTANTLY!**  
When you use your  
Promotional Code

Stauer Centurion Hybrid Watch— ~~\$199~~  
**Promotional Code Price Only \$59**

or two payments of **\$29<sup>50</sup>** + S&P

Order now to take advantage of this fantastic low price.

**1-800-333-2057**

Your Insider Promotional Code: **CNW301-03**  
Please use this code when you order to receive your discount.



**Stauer®** 14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. CNW301-03  
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)

Digital-Analog Hybrid • Dual digital displays • Heavy-duty chromed body • 3 ATM Water Resistant  
LCD windows for time, date and day • Luminous hands • Contrast Stitch Band fits a 7 1/4"-9 1/4" wrist

Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices™



# This Necklace is NOT for Sale...

...It's yours for **FREE\***

*No kidding. Only Stauer can give you 200 carats of genuine amethyst for NOTHING.*

You may think you understood the concept of "priceless" jewelry. For years, "priceless" meant "astronomically expensive." Owning "priceless" treasures was a rare privilege reserved for celebrities, billionaires, and royalty. The best most of us could do was dream. Until now...

Stauer smashes the luxury status quo with the release of our **FREE\*** 200-ctw *Lusso Amethyst Necklace*. That's right, we said **FREE...** as in "priceless." No charge.\* **ZERO** dollars.\* Call now and we'll send you this impressive helping of genuine amethyst (independently appraised at \$295) for **FREE**. We cut the price 100% and you pay only \$19.95, our charge for shipping, processing and insurance. There are no tricks or gimmicks. You aren't obligated to spend another dime or dollar with us... although we make it **VERY** hard to resist.

**Why give away jewelry?** We want your attention. Once you get a closer look at our rare gemstone treasures and vintage-inspired watches, and once you discover the guilt-free fun of getting "Luxury for Less," we're betting that you'll fall in love with Stauer. If not? Keep your **FREE Lusso Amethyst Necklace** anyway. No hard feelings.

**A collection of purple perfection.** Your *Lusso Amethyst Necklace* is a 200-ctw symphony of smooth purple genuine gemstones. Each gemstone's shape and translucence ignites the velvety, violet hues. The polished amethysts are hand-set on double-knotted jeweler's thread, and the stunning 18" necklace (with 2" extender) secures with a gold-finished lobster clasp. Once you wear it, you'll see that it hangs with the same weight and elegance as similar strands that sell for hundreds more.

**One more surprise...** If we had our way, we'd send your *Lusso Amethyst Necklace* with no shipping charge. Unfortunately, the rising cost of gas and freight makes that impossible. But, to sweeten the deal, we'll include a **\$20 Stauer Gift Coupon** with your **FREE** necklace. Amethyst is one of the world's most coveted gemstones and our supply is extremely limited. An offer this good will not last very long. Call to reserve your **FREE Lusso Amethyst Necklace** today and treat yourself (or someone you love) to a brilliant new definition of priceless luxury!

**Lusso Amethyst Necklace** (200 ctw) **\$199\*\***

**Your Cost With Offer Code—FREE\***

\*pay only shipping & processing of \$19.95.

You must use the offer code below to receive this special free necklace.

**1-800-859-1680**

**Offer Code LAN159-01**

Please mention this code when you call.



Necklace enlarged to show luxurious detail.

**200 carats of pure luxury appraised at \$295†... yours FREE!\***

**200 ctw of genuine amethyst • Gold-finished spacers • 18" + 2" length necklace**

\* This offer is valid in the United States (and Puerto Rico) except in TX, FL, CO, OK, RI, NH, WV, OR, SC, VA and ID. These state residents will be charged one cent (\$.01) + shipping & processing for the item. Void where prohibited or restricted by law. Offer subject to state and local regulations. Not valid with any other offers and only while supplies last. This offer is limited to one item per shipping address. \*\* Free is only for customers who use the offer code versus the original Stauer.com price. † For more information concerning the appraisal, visit <http://www.stauer.com/appraisedvalues.asp>.

**Stauer®** 14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. LAN159-01, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)

Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices™

# PARTING SHOT

**IMAGE SPECS:**

Nikon D3s camera with 70-200 mm f/2.8 lens. Shot at 200mm, f/5 @ 1/500th second. ISO 500.

Located in the heart of the Hill Country and surrounded by granite hills, Inks Lake State Park is one of the most popular parks in Texas. While on vacation, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* photographer Chase Fountain captured this image of his two daughters kayaking. "As my daughters were coming back from Devil's Waterhole, the reflections on the water, juxtaposed with the diffused highlights in the trees, caught my eye, so I grabbed my camera and took this image," Chase says.



SAVE TODAY. **S'MORES TOMORROW.**

See how much you could save on RV insurance.

**GEICO**® *for your RV*

geico.com | 1-877-434-2678 | local office

