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The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

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**FRONT:** Shed antlers lie on the ground at the Temple Ranch in South Texas. For thousands of years, people have put antlers to use for aesthetic and practical purposes. Photo by Chase A. Fountain / TPWD

**BACK:** Autumn leaves carpet the forest floor in East Texas. Photo by Earl Nottingham / TPWD

**PREVIOUS SPREAD:** Marked by fall foliage, Enchanted Rock is reflected in the waters of the park's Moss Lake. Photo by Chase A. Fountain / TPWD

**THIS PAGE:** A ruby-throated hummingbird hovers near some flowers. Ruby-throats migrate through coastal Texas from September to December. Photo © Larry Ditto

# TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

THE OUTDOOR MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

NOVEMBER 2014, VOL. 72, NO. 9

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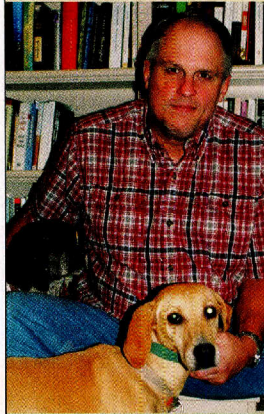
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# In the Field

## HENRY CHAPPELL

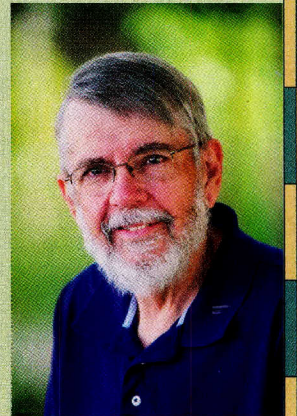
hasn't hunted deer in more than 20 years. "Nowadays, I hunt with dogs, or I don't hunt," says Henry, whose article this month looks at dogs that track wounded deer. "But watching a few good blood-tracking dogs work has made me realize that trailing and recovering wounded



deer is not only essential work, it's hunting. I could definitely get into it." A longtime *Texas Parks & Wildlife* contributor, Henry has written hundreds of articles for magazines such as *Field & Stream*, *Sports Afield*, *Orion*, *Texas Wildlife* and *The Land Report*. His eight books include *At Home on the Range with a Texas Hunter*, *Working Dogs of Texas* (with Wyman Meinzer) and, most recently, *Silent We Stood*, a novel. Henry lives in Parker with his wife, Jane, and hunting dogs Maggie and Cate.

## MIKE COX

, who writes in this issue about the spiritual and utilitarian history of deer antlers, took his first eight-point buck as a seventh-grader and thought then that his young life was complete. For years, he kept that first set of antlers and those of all the other bucks he harvested. Like most hunters, he saw antlers only as trophies — mementos of a good hunt. Decades went by before he finally came to realize that antlers are also cultural artifacts, objects of significance since prehistoric times. About a year ago he passed along most of his antlers to an artisan who makes custom deer antler knife handles. Mike is the award-winning author of more than 20 nonfiction books and the news team leader at TPWD.



## JENNIFER L. BRISTOL

is the state coordinator for Texas Children in Nature and is an advocate for increasing access to nature for children and families in Texas. She is the former program director for Camp Fire—Central Texas and the former natural resource manager for Bastrop State Park and has served on multiple national and local boards that foster youth exploration of the outdoors. While camping as a child in the crisp, cold nights of the Montana backcountry, she became the fire master of the family campfire so her feet would always be warm, and she tells us this month how to get a fire going. Whether in Texas or Montana, camping has been a constant in her life since a young age and is still something she and her husband enjoy together.



# AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF CARTER P. SMITH

**They hailed from every corner of the state** and came dressed for the occasion in their Sunday finery. Within their purview were the state's deserts, mountains, rivers, grasslands, forests and brush country. As a lot, they were as diverse as the lands that they live on and the wildlife they care for. Among them were ranchmen and tree farmers, quail enthusiasts and prescribed-fire bugs, nature advocates and extension specialists, water conservationists and watershed managers, philanthropists and property rights advocates.

To a one, they were also something else. Stewards. Lone Star Land Stewards, in fact.

This year, in an annual ceremony hosted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Private Lands Advisory Committee, we had the privilege of recognizing this exclusive group as Lone Star Land Steward Award winners. It is a longstanding tradition we have carried on since 1996 to help celebrate the best of the best in Texas' private lands stewardship. And, in a state that is filled with a rich history and heritage of private land management, it was no small feat indeed for them to receive such an honor.

By way of background, 95 percent of our state's habitats are proudly owned and managed by private landowners. On their lands, the raindrops fall, the aquifers recharge, and the springs and creeks flow. Their farms, forests, fields and pastures are where the blues and bobwhites, pronghorns and bighorns, deer and dove, waterfowl and wild turkey, songbirds and horned lizards, raptors and roadrunners, migratory birds and monarch butterflies reside and pass through. Within those very same fence lines, many young people pick up their first fishing pole, watch their first covey rise, take aim at their first buck and learn to appreciate the power of a good campfire, a breathtaking sunrise and a moonlit, star-filled night.

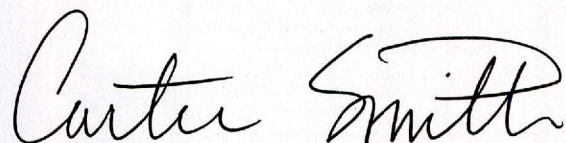
In short, they are where you find the wild things and wild places that our citizens so treasure.

The landowners who steward these places work hard to make it so. Each and every day, they practice what Aldo Leopold, the father of the science of wildlife management, aptly called "the land ethic." These men, women and families are on the front lines of where the prescribed fires are lit, the invasive and exotic plants are fought, the water sources are developed, the livestock are rotated, the forests are thinned, the native plants are restored, the soil is conserved, and the rangelands are improved.

The Lone Star Land Steward Awards program is our way of saying "thank you" to all the landowners who leave their lands, habitats and wildlife better than they found them. And so we proudly celebrate this year's Lone Star Land Stewards: Dixon Water Foundation's Bear Creek Ranch, Sycamore Canyon Ranch, Laborcitas Creek Ranch, Tanksley Land Company, Hillingdon, Laurels and Leslie Ranches, Sky Lewey, and the Winston 8 Ranch, the statewide Leopold Conservation Award winner.

On behalf of all of us at your Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, thanks for caring about our wild things and wild places. They need you now more than ever.

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Steward Awards program  
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# MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

## FOREWORD

**"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower,"** Albert Camus once wrote. And indeed, for many of us, Spring Fever runs a close second to Fall Fever, inciting us to wax poetic about the weather and find any excuse to head outdoors. For some, the chill in the air makes us dream of campfires and autumn leaves; for others, the dreams revolve around one particular animal — the white-tailed deer.

He's a magnificent creature, the white-tailed buck. He wears a crown that defies logic, at least to those like me who sometimes wonder about the intent of natural design. The deer that dwell in the shadows of my Hill Country woods slip quietly through, wary of the human inhabitants and our ever-inquisitive dogs. When traversing those thick woods myself, I often emerge scratched up and the worse for wear after becoming entangled in dense cedar and oak thickets. And yet, I've seen bucks with eight or more points fly through that same tangle with barely a flinch.

Beyond the backstrap, there's more than a desire to gain a trophy in our lust for whitetails. Since the earliest man hunted deer for meat and then discovered those useful tools provided by antlers, we've desired those racks that balance atop their heads. Perhaps it's their very beauty, even more than their usefulness, that feeds our fever. In this issue, we finish up a sort of two-part series (following Russell Graves' fine October article on the results of antler restrictions) by looking at the antlers themselves — culturally, historically and artistically.

An artistic look is quite appropriate this month as we welcome a new art team to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. As Pablo Picasso once said, "The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web." With this kind of inspiration fueling our fire, we asked Art Director Nathan Adams and Photo Editor Sonja Sommerfeld to help us present the vision of TPWD writer Mike Cox and magazine Chief Photographer Earl Nottingham in a creative way, resulting in the wonderful sepia-tinted layout you'll see in these pages.

November also brings our annual profile on the winner of the Aldo Leopold Award, the top honor of the Lone Star Land Steward Awards program. Every year, we read about how families transform tired ranchland back into its natural state — replanting grasses, removing invasive species and, in the case of the Winston 8, using prescribed burning and enlightened replanting to attract wildlife of all kinds.

In this issue, you can also learn about a historic butterfly invasion and visit Brenham, where you'll find even more art and nature to enjoy. There's no cure for Fall Fever, except to get out and enjoy the beauty of the season.

*Louie Bond*

LOUIE BOND, EDITOR

## LETTERS

### LEARNED A BIRD

I got my August/September 2014 issue of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* and was delighted to read the article by Cliff Shackelford on "12 Birds Every Texan Should Know." One morning I was sitting on my patio and saw a strange bird I had never seen before. I got my bird book out and couldn't find its picture. I told my son about it, and we both thought it might be a grackle.

When I read Cliff's article I found my answer. I have seen red-winged blackbirds most of my life. The bird I saw in my yard in Tyler was the female.

I read *Texas Parks & Wildlife* cover to cover. I hope more bird pictures come up.

ELIZABETH M. HALL  
Tyler



"I have been to many state parks in Texas, and this one is the best-kept secret."

DEBBIE MAHA  
Clear Lake

### DESERT MILESTONE

I would like to compliment you on your article "Ay, Chihuahua!" (August/September 2014) about the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute. Both the article and photographs did an outstanding job of highlighting this unique and vital institute tucked away in the Davis Mountains of the Trans-Pecos.

As we celebrate a milestone anniversary, we look back in amazement at what has been accomplished in the past 40 years, and in gratitude to the many founders, donors and researchers who have made the CDRI so successful.

Your article stated that my husband, James Scudday, was the founder of CDRI. Sadly he has passed away, but he would have wanted you to know that he and A. Michael Powell were co-founders of the CDRI. Others instrumental in the early

# MAIL CALL

days of CDRI were Grainger Hunt, Arthur Link, Dwight Deal and our first executive director, Dennie Miller.

LA FERNE SCUDDAY  
*Alpine*

## BEST-KEPT PARK SECRET

I just finished reading the article by Tara Humphreys called "West Texas Meets Hill Country" (August/September 2014). My family has been going to South Llano River State Park for over 20 years. I have been to many state parks in Texas, and this one is the best-kept secret. Birds are everywhere. Hummingbirds invade from late spring through August. Turkeys roam freely. Biking trails for casual bikers along the river are great. Mountain bikers are challenged by the trails on the hills. The river is calm and clean.

DEBBIE MAHA  
*Clear Lake*

## PROTECTING THE NECHES

I just finished reading the July 2014 *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. I thank you for the "River Revival" coverage. A

large and active group of river-bottom folk in East Texas are working diligently to save the Neches River — mainly between Lake Palestine and Steinhagen Dam, about 225 miles — as a Wild and Scenic River. That is an uphill battle. We have published a Neches River book that emphasizes river protection and revival. It is called *Let the River Run Wild!*

F.E. ABERNETHY  
*Nacogdoches*

## MAPPING TEXAS

Wow, I am delighted! On Page 28 of the August/September issue, you showed a little state of Texas and a dot to show where the article refers to. Oh, how I wish you would do this with every article that has a reference to a place in the state of Texas. It would be a quick reference and so meaningful. There would be no need to have to get our Texas map out and look it up.

You see, we lost our daughter to Texas. She loves Texas and has a very happy marriage and job. One way to keep in touch with her and her

family is to subscribe to your magazine to learn more about the state. When we visit twice a year I bring a folder of your articles that seem interesting and places we all might go and all enjoy. Frequently I have to go to our Texas atlas to find the place the article references. Your little pic of the state with the dot is an instant reference.

The quality of the articles and photography are most interesting, and the little history lessons are always appreciated.

DAVE ROBINSON  
*Hancock, N.H.*

## Sound off for Mail Call

### Let us hear from you!

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# SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

## CHASING BUTTERFLIES

*Volunteers count winged marvels in the Hill Country.*

**Deep azure skies** greet 46 butterfly enthusiasts who gather on a June morning at a Medina coffee shop for a dose of caffeine and last-minute instructions before embarking on the fifth annual North American Butterfly Association (NABA) count at Love Creek. Rebecca Flack of the Nature Conservancy divides up the record number of volunteers into eight teams and sends them afield to scour the Bandera County countryside for the colorful winged insects.

Leading our six-person team is expert Richard Kostecke, the Nature Conservancy's associate director of conservation, research and planning. Amateurs and experts alike participating in the day's count are all part of NABA's standardized national event to discern trends in North American butterfly populations.

The national count, says Kostecke, is patterned after the long-running national Christmas Bird Count but pegged to a Fourth of July season that stretches from June 1 through July 31. NABA also accepts U.S. butterfly data from spring and fall seasonal counts.



Kostecke's team, composed of myself and two couples, heads for the 2,000-acre Love Creek Preserve in the Bandera Canyonlands west of Medina. The former private ranch represents one of the nation's most diverse habitats of spring-fed creeks, scenic mountains and steep canyons harboring remnant stands of bigtooth maples, Texas madrone, rare tobusch cacti and other native flora.

At the top of the first hill, Kostecke strides into a field of native grasses, low-growing shrubs and oaks, his binoculars scanning for butterflies just beginning to become active on a pleasantly cool summer morning. With a checklist and notepad in hand and a camera sporting a telephoto lens slung over his shoulder, the entomologist looks like a consummate professional. The rest of us neophytes follow behind, trying to spot what in most cases is a fluttering insect no bigger than a dime. Kostecke calls out the names of species he sees — Reakirt's blue, Gulf fritillary, dainty sulphur — tallying as he goes.

"Love Creek counts typically result in an above-average individual count, but average for diversity," Kostecke says. "Out here, it's more art than science. The most important thing is consistency."

Our team spends most of the morning hiking along the rocky Love Creek bottomlands, where butterflies congregate to obtain moisture and to feed on the plentiful nectar plants. The checklist provided by noted butterfly expert Tom Collins begins to fill up: juniper hairstreak, red-spotted admiral, clouded skipper, dun skipper, zebra heliconian.

PHOTO © LARRY DITTO

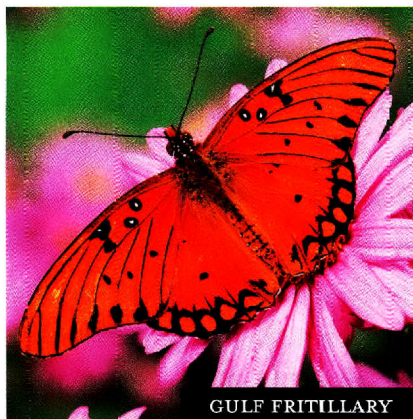


Volunteers gathered to count butterflies near Medina as part of a national effort to track butterfly population trends. The group exceeded its goal of recording 60 butterfly species.

I strain through binoculars to admire the dainty creatures' subtle spots and streaks on chalky powder-blue and yellow wings.

Overhead, a broad-winged hawk circles and a small flock of aoudad sheep glued precariously to a canyon wall look down before scampering up and over the precipice to the plateau high above. The count continues for another hour before we call it a day. We end the morning with a respectable 19 species and more than 200 individuals.

We point our sore feet toward our vehicles to head to the designated rendezvous spot — the Love Creek



GULF FRITILLARY

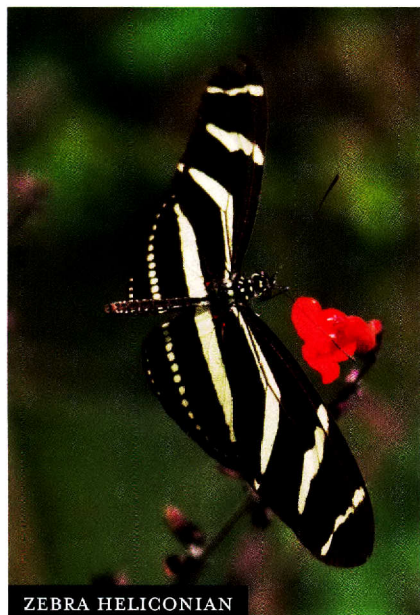
Apple Store in Medina. Other team leaders, who have returned from Medina Garden Nursery and nine private ranches, call out their species count for Collins to compile. The tally appears to have fallen just two shy of the 60-species goal, but several photographed, but yet unidentified, butterflies remain to be identified later.

A week later, an e-mail from Flack notes that the subsequent positive IDs do reveal three additional species, nudging the total count to a record-high 61 species. She also points out that the five-year combined total for the Love Creek count has hit 84 species, a figure that represents more than 10 percent of the total number of U.S. butterfly species.

In Texas, the Rio Grande Valley contains the greatest butterfly diversity — more than 300 different species. It's no wonder the three-county area is home to NABA's National Butterfly Center and Mission's Texas Butterfly Festival, held this year Nov. 1-4.

So grab a field guide, a good pair of binoculars and a camera and join a growing sport that one day may rival one of America's other favorite natural pastimes — birding. ★

— Rot McCorkle



ZEBRA HELICONIAN

## SIGHTS & SOUNDS

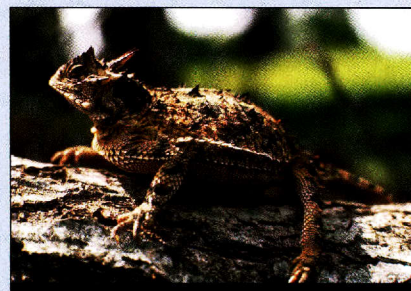
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### TELEVISION

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

- Oct. 26–Nov. 1:** Prehistoric paddlefish; Sky Lewey profile; San Jacinto archeology; biking McKinney Falls State Park.
- Nov. 2–8:** Flounder fishing; socializing outside; Tanksley Land Company water wranglers; Engeling WMA morning.
- Nov. 9–15:** Moving horned lizards; teaching young hunters; Hillingdon Ranch family connections; Stephen F. Austin State Park; Caprock Canyons moonset.
- Nov. 16–22:** East Texas black bears; snapping turtles; Palo Duro Canyon; tracking spring health; ducks in a row.
- Nov. 23–29:** Bear Creek prairies; big bass in Texas; Lake Arrowhead State Park; Balmorhea fish; Austin is the bat capital.



It's the return of the Texas horned lizard. Watch the week of Nov. 9-15.

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# Beyond the Dome

*Enchanted Rock offers more than a climb to the top.*

**OK, I admit it.** The only thing I did on my first trip to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area was hike to the top of the majestic pink granite dome for which the site is named.

After all, its massive size and spectacular beauty beckoned me to the summit for the awe-inspiring views. As I stood on top, trying to catch my breath, I could see for miles. It was indeed gorgeous, and many others

agree, making it one of the most frequently visited sites in the Texas state park system.

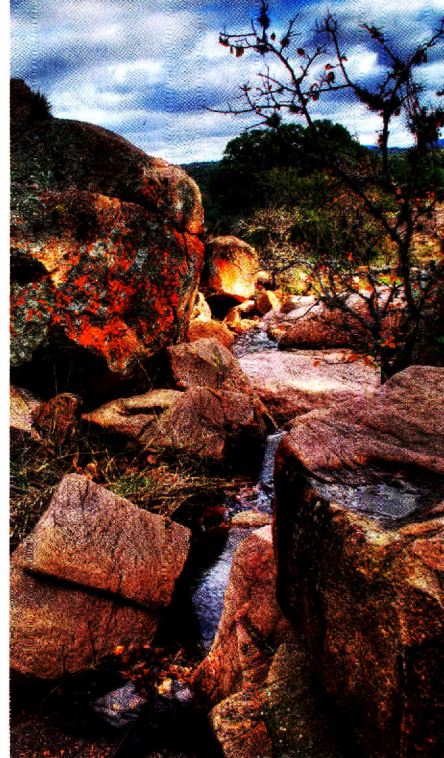
“Of the more than 250,000 visitors per year, a good number of those visitors hike to the top of Enchanted Rock, take in the view, turn around, hike down, cross it off the bucket list and then leave,” park interpreter Scott Whitener says.

However, there’s much more to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area than “just” the rock.

Since that first visit, I’ve hiked nearly all of the trails at Enchanted Rock. Several miles of trails weave around the majestic peaks of Enchanted Rock, Little Dome, Turkey Peak, Buzzard’s Roost and others, offering stunning scenery.

“The base trail that connects to Turkey Pass shows off one of the coolest exfoliation features on the rock and

**Park closures are possible on busy weekends and holidays for safety and resource protection; consider visiting on weekdays to avoid the crowds. The park is 18 miles north of Fredericksburg on Ranch Road 965, or from Llano, take Texas Highway 16 for 14 miles south and then go west on Ranch Road 965. For more information, call (830) 685-3636 or go to [www.tpwd.texas.gov/enchantedrock](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/enchantedrock).**



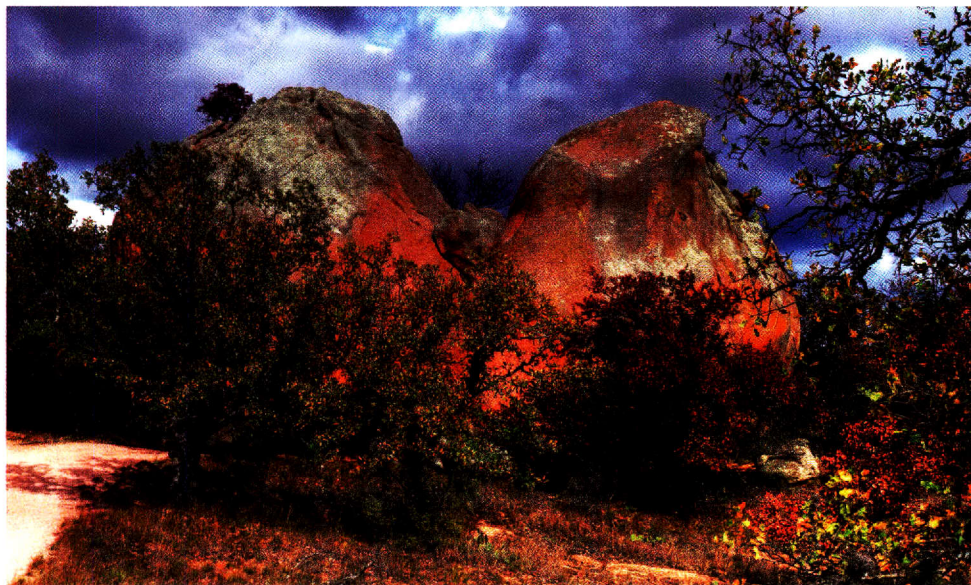
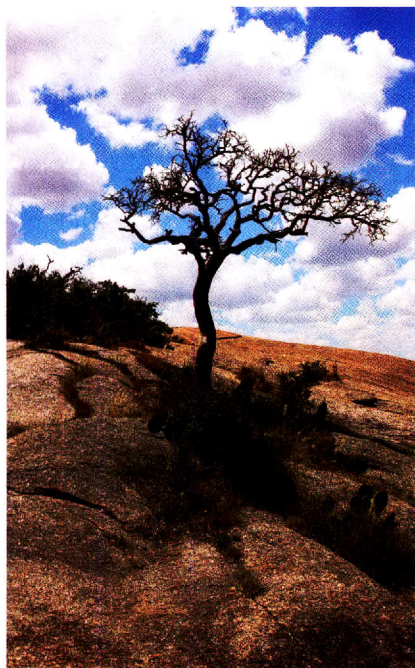
takes people through a well-shaded oak woodland,” Whitener says. “The hike up the back side of the Little Dome features granite amphitheaters and the feeling of solitude that early explorers to the area may have experienced.”

You don’t have to look far to spot a white-tailed deer, lizard or vulture. The diversity of plant life at Enchanted Rock is truly special because of the drier environment. Look for ferns, grasses, cacti, yuccas, shrubs and other plants that spring from cracks in the granite.

For another unique experience, wait until dark and look up. Removed from urban sprawl, you can easily see the stars, planets and constellations, even the Milky Way. To recognize the park’s spectacular night skies, the International Dark Sky Association recently certified Enchanted Rock as an International Dark Sky Park. It is currently one of only two Texas state parks (Copper Breaks State Park being the other) with this designation.

Enchanted Rock also offers ranger programs, camping, picnicking, rock climbing, geocaching and more. Your visit will be better if you’re prepared. Wear good footwear, bring lots of water and don’t forget that dogs need care, too. ★

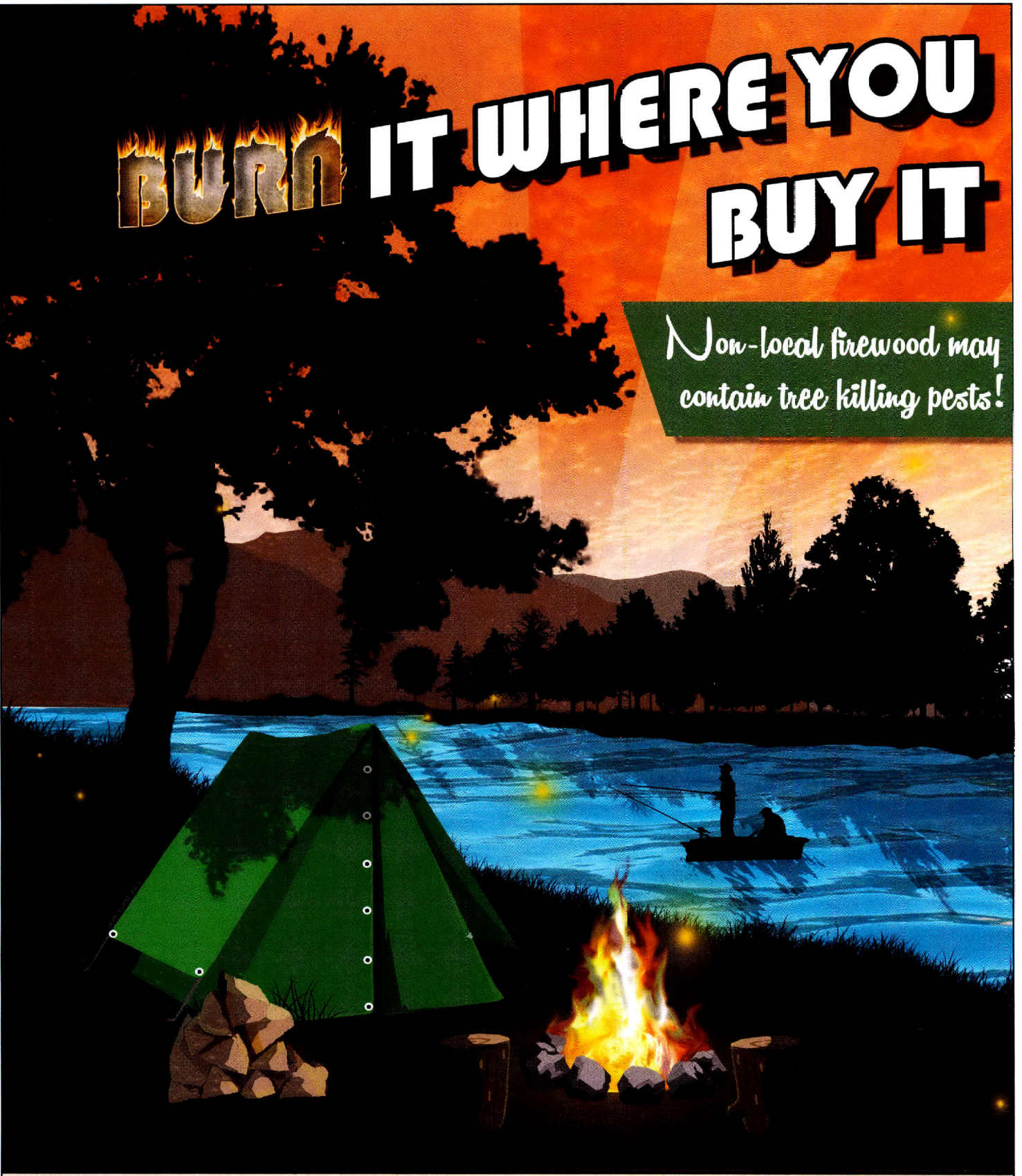
—Tara Humphreys



TOP AND BOTTOM PHOTO BY CHASE A. FOUNTAIN; MIDDLE PHOTO © JERRI STARBUCK

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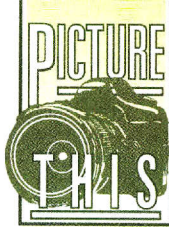
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# Winning Shots

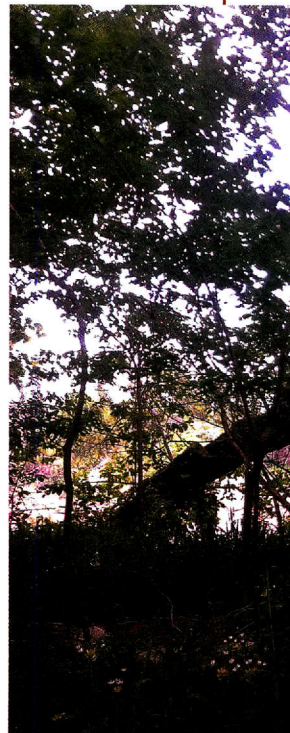
*Mother Nature's smile: Here are the winners  
from our Texas State Parks 2014 Photo Contest.*



**If you enjoy visiting** our Texas state parks, there's a pretty good chance you carry a camera with you when you go. From the West Texas desert to the Gulf Coast beaches to the East Texas piney woods, our parks and all of the activities they offer go hand in hand with photography. Based on the number of Texas State Parks 2014 Photo Contest entries, photo buffs were ready for the challenge of sharing their most playful moments in those parks. Entries were received from every corner of the state and illuminated the diverse beauty of our natural landscapes as well as the many ways in which to enjoy them.

The contest consisted of three categories: Over age 18, 17 and under, and Instagram. The Instagram category was added based on the popularity of the app for sharing outdoor experiences on social networking sites. All of the 1,300-plus entries were winners in their own right, and just as no two snowflakes are alike, the same could be said of the photographs. Each represented the distinct creative eye of its maker, which made judging all the more difficult. In the end, one first-place award was given for each of the three categories along with several honorable mentions. Winners received a GoPro camera. We are proud to share the category winners with our readers. ★

—Earl Nottingham







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AT LEFT: "New Day" taken at Monahans Sandhills State Park

ABOVE: "Untitled" taken at Caddo Lake State Park

BELOW: "Arched Tree" taken at Stephen F. Austin State Park

CATEGORY: Over 18

WINNER: Tommy Johnson

CATEGORY: Instagram

WINNER: Jake Kazmirski

CATEGORY: 17 and under

WINNER: Collin Hile

To see all of the contest winners and honorable mentions, as well as all of the other entries, go to: [www.tpwd.texas.gov/photography](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/photography).





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Ever-popular ash trees are threatened by invasive beetles.



**Ready for a road trip?** If you were to drive across the middle of Texas from the Pineywoods to the Chihuahuan Desert, you could cross the ranges of each of Texas' eight species of Texas ash. While ash is certainly widespread in Texas, its existence is in peril.

An impending threat to the survival of ash trees in Texas looms in the form of an invasive beetle, the emerald ash borer, an exotic invasive beetle from eastern Asia. It was accidentally introduced into the U.S. two decades ago in crates and pallets made of ash wood. Since 2002, it has killed tens of millions of ash trees throughout the eastern U.S. and is making its way west. Today, the beetle spreads through contaminated ash lumber and firewood. It hasn't made it to Texas yet, but has been found in Arkansas.

Ash trees tend to grow in swamps, along rivers, streams and creeks, and on slopes and in canyons near water. Although rarely the dominant species in a woodland, they are essential parts of the understory and mid-story of plant communities in which they occur. They can be found in most state parks in Texas.

Ash trees belong to the olive family. Ashes are easily identified by their winged fruit, called a samara which contains a single seed with a long

flattened wing. (Maples, in contrast, have two wings instead of one.) The winged seeds provide food for many kinds of birds and wildlife. Ash trees in Texas offer important stopover habitat for migratory birds using the Central Flyway.

Among hardwoods, ash wood is prized for its toughness, strength and elasticity. It is valued in electric guitar bodies because it produces a bright, cutting tone with a sustaining sound quality. The bodies of horse-drawn carriages and wagons were made of ash because of the wood's strength and ability to flex when suspended. In the early days of automobile manufacturing, car and even aircraft bodies were made using ash. Ash wood is used widely in meat smoking and barbecue.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and Texas Forest Service, has begun the Texas Ash Seed Conservation Project to collect and bank seeds of all Texas ash species as an insurance policy against the possible extinction of ash trees in Texas. Texas Master Naturalists, the Native Plant Society of Texas, Texas Society of Arborists and local community organizations are being engaged to help with the project. \*

—Karen Clay

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB HARMIS / UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PLANT RESOURCES CENTER



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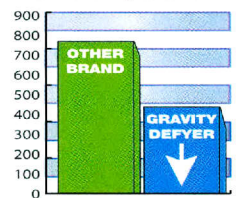
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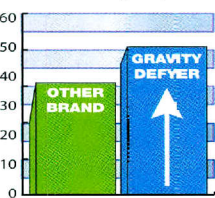
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# Tiny Fliers

*Bird-friendly plants entice ruby-throated hummingbirds.*

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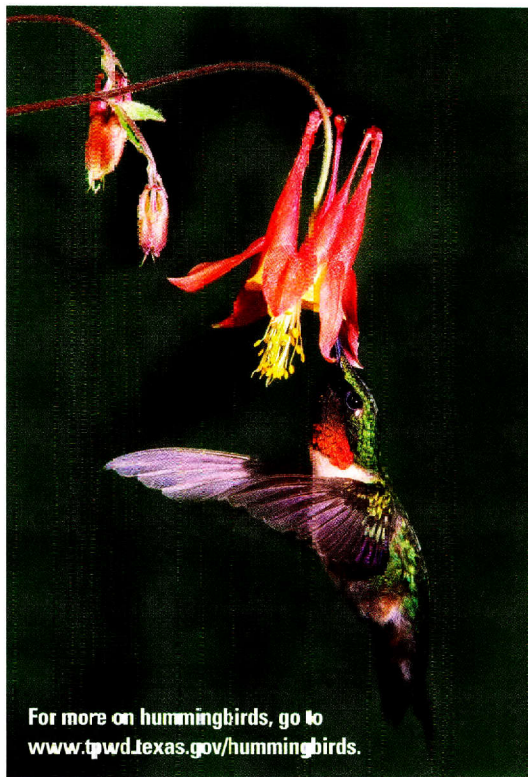
**The early fall mist is still rising off the bay** as we park the car in Rockport, the Hummingbird Capital of Texas. Getting out, our optics immediately fog over, and we wonder aloud how we're going to see the birds without clear binoculars or cameras.

Our question is answered almost immediately as the staccato roll of angry hummingbird chirps shatters the silence when we approach the grove of trees. Ruby-throated hummingbirds fill the air.

While found primarily in the eastern half of the state, with a huge migration each fall on the Coastal Bend, ruby-throated hummingbirds can be seen throughout Texas. It's not surprising when one shows up at a feeder in El Paso or Presidio. They are most numerous in Texas in early to mid-September, but can be found in good numbers April through mid-October.

The male is noted for a deep green head, moderately long, heavy bill and a black chin over its gorget, an area that may appear to be ruby red, orange, green, black or gold, depending on the light. The ruby-throated hummingbird tail is deeply forked, with the outer feathers extending obviously beyond the wing tips when resting. Female ruby-throated hummingbirds are more subtly colored, with an identifiable green crown.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds need shelter for nesting and escape, so a good hummingbird garden must begin with trees. Be sure to include plenty of their favorite plants: salvias (especially *salvia greggii*, or autumn sage), trumpet creeper, Turk's cap, penstemons and coral honeysuckle.



For more on hummingbirds, go to [www.tpwd.texas.gov/hummingbirds](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/hummingbirds).

While these plants take care of their nectar needs, studies now show that hummingbirds also require insects in their diet. Composites like echinacea, Mexican hat, coreopsis, daisies, sunflowers, etc., as well as lantana are good choices because they attract insects. Some of them, notably lantana, produce enough nectar for the hummingbirds to steal a sip now and again as well.

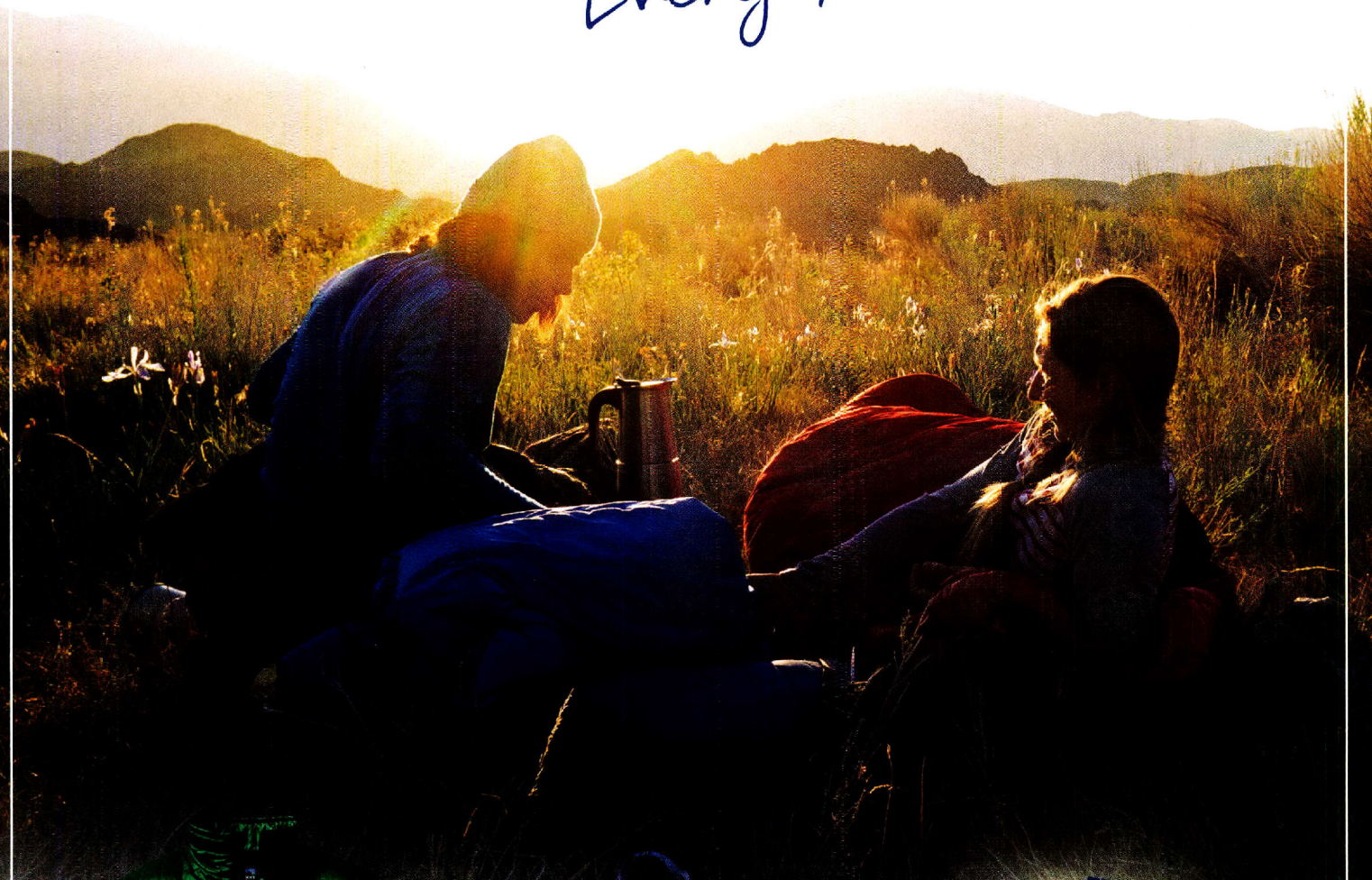
Low perching sites are also important for these birds, and native brushes can be useful in this role. American beautyberry, elbow bush and wax myrtles are good selections, as are short trees like dogwoods, sumacs, mountain laurels and redbuds.

If you want to attract hummingbirds during a drought, provide water. Water can best be provided by a mister, a bird bath with "water wiggler," a dripper or a fountain but keep them shallow. Then sit back and enjoy the hummingbird show. \*

—Mark Klym

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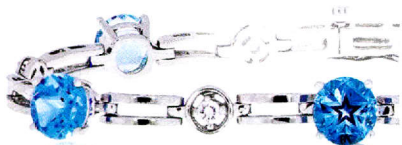
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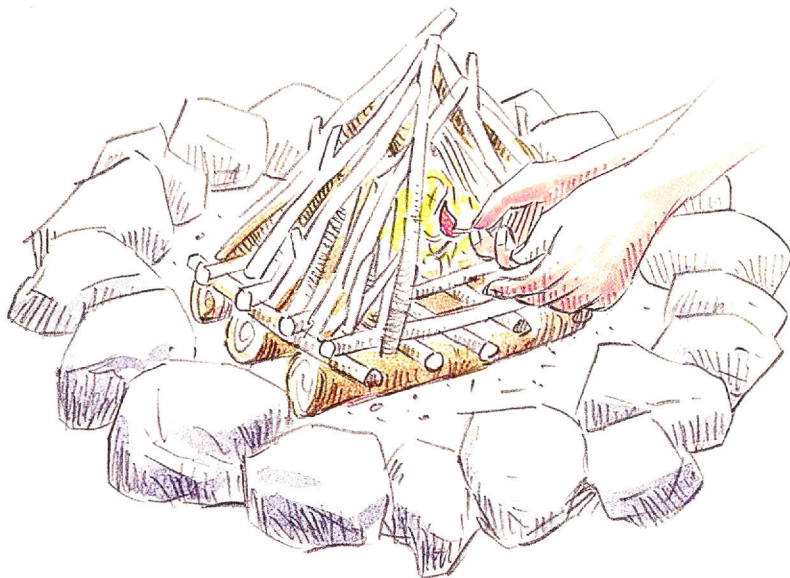
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# Firecraft 101

*Six easy steps to build the perfect fire.*



Since we first discovered how to blow a spark into a flame, people have gathered around campfires to stay warm on chilly nights. These days, meals cooked on fires are an away-from-home treat, and as the moon rises, the stories and songs float up like wisps of smoke.

What makes a perfect campfire?

**First**, select a good place to establish a fire ring away from low-hanging trees, shrubs or dried grasses. Many national, state and local parks will provide a space for a fire, but if you have to make your own, make sure you strip back the soil until you hit mineral earth. Line the circle with either a mound of dirt or large rocks to prevent the fire from creeping out of the circle. Make sure your tent is far enough away from the fire so that ash or embers don't get on the fabric.

**Second**, make a pile of tinder in the bottom of the fire circle in the space you want to place the wood. Tinder

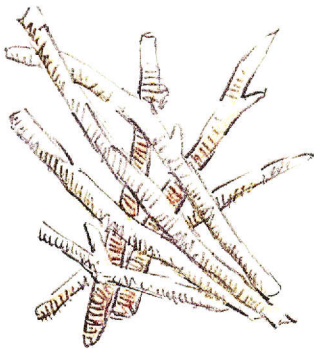
consists of dried grasses, leaves, pine duff or very small twigs. If you plan ahead, you can make your own tinder by packing empty toilet paper rolls with dryer lint. Always make sure whatever tinder you are using is securely placed under the larger logs so it does not float away from the fire once it is ignited. Newspaper or other lightweight paper is not a good tinder in the woods as it can float away too easily.

**Third**, place the larger logs over the tinder. You can either make a pyramid with the larger logs that you brought with you, or you can create a log cabin by stacking the logs in a box formation; both techniques have merit. Make sure the wood you bring or purchase at the camp store is dry and not infected with oak wilt. In most parks, gathering firewood is prohibited, so make sure you bring enough to meet your needs for your entire adventure. The best wood to use is from the local area.

**Fourth**, insert kindling wood between and under the logs, but make sure you allow enough space for air to move through. Kindling is any stick



**A good fire starts with tinder such as grass or leaves and then moves on to bigger sticks and logs.**



that is larger than tinder and smaller than a log; choose sticks that are about the size of your fingers for best results.

**Fifth**, light it up! If you have a good balance of tinder and kindling, you will not need lighter fluid or other flammable liquids. If you have only small matches, you can make a longer lighting tool by twisting some tinder together in a 6- to 8-inch-long bunch. Remember, fire needs air to fan the flames. If you want to blow on the fire to help it ignite, don't get too close to the flame or inhale the smoke too deeply.

**Sixth**, sit back and enjoy the warmth and comfort of the campfire and get ready to tell stories, make s'mores and make a memory. If you are using your fire to cook, light it an hour before cooking. You want to use the heat of the coals, not a large flame. Coals provide even heat to cook your camp cuisine thoroughly.

Children love campfires as much as adults do. Make sure you set up the rules and boundaries in advance of lighting the fire; don't be afraid to repeat those rules every hour. One way to make sure your kids respect the fire is to include them in a fun lighting-of-the-flame ceremony or allow them to have a role in building the fire. Engaging them will also ensure they become safe, skillful fire builders in the future.

The most important step is the last one. Put out your fire completely before you doze off under the stars or retreat into your cozy cabin. Water and soil are the enemies of fire and should be on hand before you light it up. Pour a healthy amount of water on the flame and coals first to cool the heat, then add a layer of soil to suffocate the rest of the fire. If you don't have much soil, use a long stick to spread out the coals in the fire ring so they don't touch anything that might ignite later. \*

# Brenham

## Washington County

*Children Laughing, Meeting Smile after Smile...*

**Dec. 6-7:** Christmas Stroll/Lighted Parade/Scavenger Hunt

**Dec. 7:** Texas Master Chorale

**Dec. 14:** Chappell Hill Holiday Home Tour  
The Nutcracker Ballet  
Candlelight Christmas  
Christmas at Winedale

**Dec. 31:** New Year's Eve Gala

**Jan. 18:** Uptown Swirl Wine Walk in Downtown Brenham

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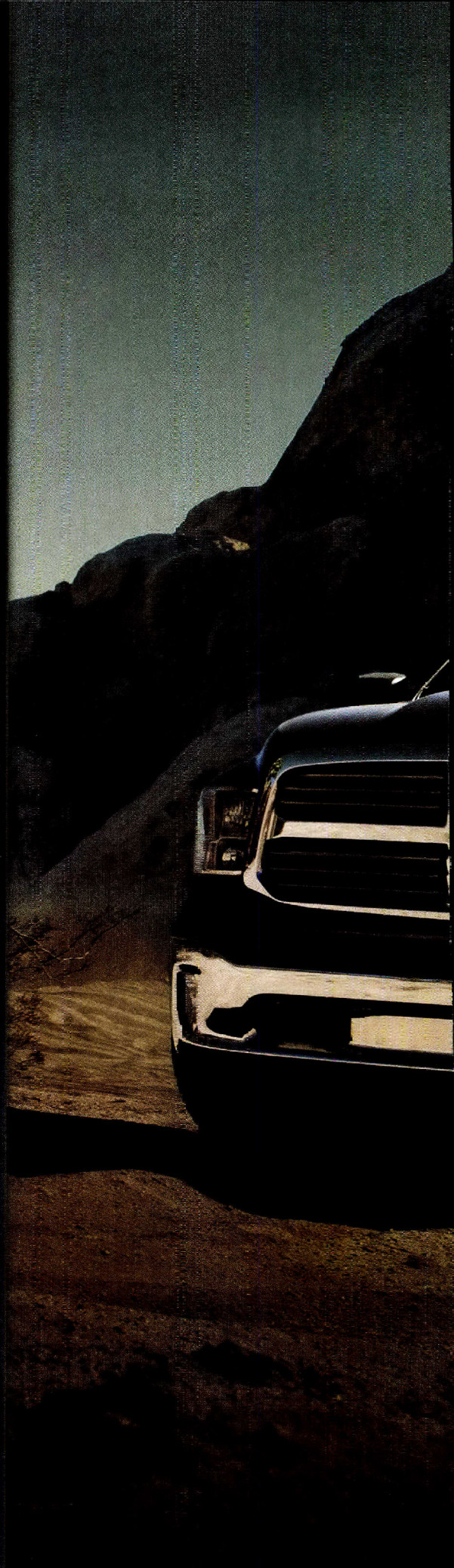
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# 3 Days in the Field / By Tom Harvey

DESTINATION: WASHINGTON COUNTY

TRAVEL TIME FROM:

AUSTIN – 1.5 hours / BROWNSVILLE – 5.5 hours / DALLAS – 3.25 hours

HOUSTON – 1.25 hours / SAN ANTONIO – 2.25 hours / LUBBOCK – 6.5 hours / EL PASO – 9 hours



## The Birthplace of Texas

*Brenham, Barrington and the Bard are among Washington County's delights.*

**The winding road to Brenham ends with put-the-top-down, bucolic scenery** — green, rolling farmland where wildflowers run riot in spring and cows graze contentedly. Just don't forget to enjoy the culture of the area as well, whether it's exploring the birthplace of Texas, indulging in first-class barbecue or a taking a seat in a barn to watch the immortal works of the Bard.

This is Brenham, home of Blue Bell ice cream and the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. From this delightful little city, radiating outward along country lanes, past the white fences of pastoral horse farms owned by Houston expatriates, are a dozen sister towns: Burton, Chappell Hill, Independence, Winedale, Round Top and others, each with unique charms.

We left Austin on a Thursday evening, feeling worn out by city life. In two hours, we were sliding back in time to a slower country pace. As evening shadowed the warmth of an August day, we wheeled our bags into the Ant Street Inn, a bed-and-breakfast in downtown Brenham.

Mile-high ceilings and red brick give this 1898 structure comfortable charm and a historical feel. The walls hold a hodgepodge of art, much of it focused on Texas history, along with American pioneer classics. A drawing of what appears to be John Smith marrying Pocahontas adorns the grand staircase that takes guests to 14 themed guest rooms on floor two.

The inn started life as a retail store for the mercantile business of Swiss immigrants Josef, Sigmund and Benedict Schmid. Suzy and Keith Hankins bought it in 2011, excited to continue the work of Pam and Tommy Traylor, who restored the Renaissance Revival-style building as a boutique hotel in the early 1990s. There's a lot of food and drink within easy walking distance of Ant Street. Brazos Valley Brewery is right around the corner on West First. Home Sweet Farm farmers market just down the street brings fresh-grown produce and artisan foods from area farms into town most weekdays.

The inn's fabulous back veranda sweeps the entire length

The sun sets on a pastoral scene in Independence.



PHOTO © ERIC W. POHL



Clockwise from top left: Pies are the specialty at Royers Cafe in Round Top; Shakespeare at Winedale features the Bard in a barn; history comes to life at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site's Independence Hall; The Prairie by Rachel Ashwell B&B is decorated in shabby chic style.



of the second story, overlooking a huge cottonwood in an inviting back garden with a trickling fountain. The morning we awoke there dawned misty, with low, foggy clouds draping the town and faraway trees showing gray through the white vapor.

We had determined to start our day at Washington-on-the-Brazos, a short drive north of Brenham. But first we sought a fortifying bolt of locally roasted Independence Coffee at the Must Be Heaven ice cream shop just one block away.

In 2003, Independence Coffee Co. owners Ragan and Christi Bond roasted their first 2,000 pounds.

"We gave away 1,800 pounds to friends and others willing to take the chance with a very 'green' product and company," Ragan said. "We drank the rest."

Today, Independence roasts more than 200,000 pounds a year, selling to big retailers like H-E-B and Whole Foods. The Bonds have some deliciously distinctive coffees, including Madalyn's Backyard Pecan, which boasts real pecan pieces and is named for their daughter, who used to gather pecans for this flavor.

A block from Mus: Be Heaven is the Washington County Visitor Center in the historical Simon Theater, the focus of a civic effort to fund a restored conference center and concert and film space. Here, visitors will find abundant maps and information for regional tourism.

We headed north to the birthplace of Texas. Three wonderful facilities bring history to life here: Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, its associated Barrington Living History Farm and the Star of the Republic Museum, run by Blinn College. It was in Independence Hall that the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed.

We sauntered into the cool indoor visitors center and perused the exhibits and artifacts. While telling stories of the past, this site embraces modern interactive tools. A Web-based game called "In Washington: Town" takes visitors to March 1836, where they play the role of young farm boy or girl, traveling to Washington town in search of his or her father, who is overdue from a supply trip.

The newer "Texas 1836" mobile phone app presents a virtual version of Washington. As you stroll the grounds pointing your smartphone, historical images and information emerge — you can even take a virtual photo standing next to Sam Houston. (Travel tip: Download the app at home; the park visitors center signal is fine for routine matters but too slow for big downloads.)

Sated with virtual history, we headed to the Barrington Living History Farm for the real deal. This fully functioning 19th century cotton farm centers on Barrington, the 1844 home of the last president of Texas, Anson Jones. The staff works the farm in full period dress, performing daily chores as if it

were 1850. Farm doings vary with the seasons, and the park hosts a series of special events focused on butchering, medicine, leatherwork, blacksmithing, gardening, hearth cooking and more.

We eventually ran into William Barrett Travis — the pig, that is, not the Alamo defender. The little 1-year-old Ossabaw Island hog had been born the previous July, and he was mighty skittish around strangers — no doubt why his breed has survived and stayed pure on their Georgia barrier island. After trying unsuccessfully to coax him out for a photo, we finally stopped bothering little Travis and moved on.

Our visit coincided with the annual Chappell Hill Lavender and Wine Fest, and we savored its varied bounties along country lanes, which even in August showcased fields of rolling green. For lunch we rolled into the town of Chappell Hill and bumped up the wooden porch into Bevers Kitchen, a classic down-home country dining establishment, where the folks are friendly and homemade pies call your name from a tall, glass-fronted cooler.

Early that evening, tired and a little wilted from the heat, we turned southwest toward Round Top and our chosen lodging for the night. The Prairie by Rachel Ashwell. This gorgeous green getaway boasts a bevy of cottages around an 1800s farmhouse.

Previous owner Lenore Prudhomme  
(Cont. next on Page 52)

THE ALLURE OF

AMT

PHOTO © RUTH HOYT



# ANTLERS

While most hunters today primarily view white-tailed deer as a source of lean meat and trophy racks, the antlers grown and shed every year from the foreheads of bucks are more than just symmetrical (or sometimes not) calcium formations intended by nature as a means of self-defense and as a symbol of genetic quality. Since before recorded history, antlers — either taken from harvested deer or picked up after they have been shed — have comforted and benefited man as spiritual icons and cultural artifacts ranging from tools to art.

**BY MIKE COX**

Somewhere between the *take-a-deer-or-go-hungry* days and the taming of the Texas frontier in the final quarter of the 19th century, the size of a buck's rack became a matter of hunter pride and bragging rights.



LEFT PHOTO © RUTH HOYT; RIGHT BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD





*Blessing Hotel in Blessing.*

*The formation of the hunter/conservationist group Boone and Crockett Club in 1887 by avid hunter and future "big stick" President Theodore Roosevelt happened about the time that hunting began its transition toward being more of a sporting activity than strictly a means to acquire meat on the cloven hoof. The club developed the numerical antler scoring system still used today.*

For hunter-gatherers, a deer's antlers amounted to the Home Depot raw material section of the day. The heavy end of a deer antler made a good knife handle, and the sharp tines could be used as awls. Pieces of antler also came in handy for digging and flint-knapping. These days, deer antlers are used mostly for ornamental purposes. One hunter's blog lists 51 things that can be done with antlers, the last (or should it be first?) being merely looking at them and remembering a great hunt. Some uses include: jewelry, buttons, drawer pulls, letter openers, wall hooks, lamp bases, dog chew toys and Asian medicine.



*Antler room at Kerr Wildlife Management Area outside Kerrville.*

LEFT PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD; PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY HODGE / TPWD; DEER © ROLF NUSSBAUMER / ROLFNUSSBAUMER.COM





**Following the sacred deer,** the first people emerge from the serpent-filled underwater world in the west. Lighting their way with torches, they walk east toward what they will come to call Dawn Mountain. Once they reach the high ground, the deer that willingly led them from the abyss beneficently sacrifices itself.

When the deer falls, its carcass suddenly blooms with peyote buttons. The vision-producing plant even grows from the tips of the deer's antlers. Eating the deer, the people become gods and the world begins.

— *Creation Myth*



Archaeologist Carolyn Boyd, who directs the Shumla rock art research and education program in Val Verde County, believes that this creation myth, originally ascribed to the Huichol culture of northern Mexico but now thought to be much older than that, is recorded in ancient rock art near the Rio Grande. Paintings found in the high rock canyons of the lower Pecos River often depict deer figures and human-like figures wearing antlers. If not every culture's view of cosmology, the roughly 4,000-year-old painting at the White Shaman site nevertheless represents the emergence of deer antlers as a cultural icon in the Southwest.

**In 1881**, German-Texan Albert Friedrich tired of working for someone else as a bartender and bellhop and decided to go into business for himself. With adult-like promotional acumen, the 17-year-old Alamo City teenager opened a saloon on Main Plaza in San Antonio.

He named it *The Buckhorn*.



At some point early in that venerable establishment's history (it's still in business), young Friedrich had a great marketing idea. Since many of the cowpokes and others who came to town had little more than a change of shirts in their saddlebags and even less in their pockets, Friedrich came up with the notion of offering a free drink to anyone who brought in a set of antlers he could hang on the wall of his saloon. As word spread of this arrangement, the watering hole acquired a Texas-size collection of antlers that appealed to the growing tourist trade.

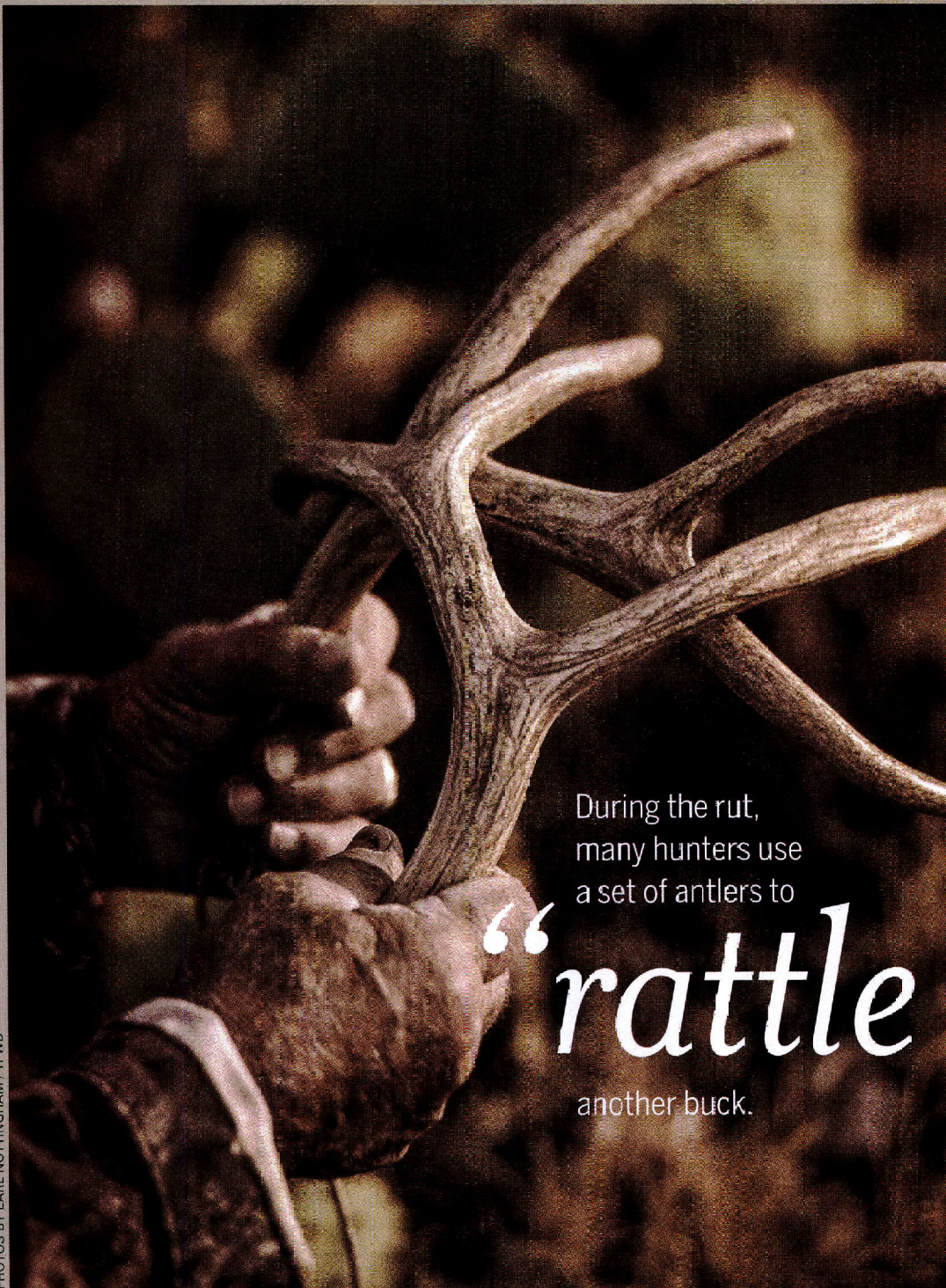
When Prohibition put most saloons out of business starting in 1922, deer antlers helped keep the Buckhorn open for business. Friedrich continued to use his still-growing collection of antlers to entice visitors. Instead of topping off beer mugs, the entrepreneurially minded San Antonioan sold lunches and nonalcoholic drinks. He also opened one of Texas' first curio shops, a big draw being his hall of horns.

Expanding on her husband's concept, Emilie Friedrich started swapping free drinks for rattlesnake rattles — minus the snake, of course. She then transformed rattles into souvenirs that out-of-state visitors could hardly resist taking home to show how wild Texas was.

*Friedrich could have used a little help with nomenclature in naming his saloon. Horns and antlers are not the same thing — bovines have horns, and deer sport antlers. Horns consist of material similar to fingernails and grow on both males and females; antlers are made of bone and, with rare exception, are particular only to bucks. That said, the BUCKHORN SALOON does have a better ring to it than BUCKANTLER SALOON.*



PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TWID



During the rut,  
many hunters use  
a set of antlers to

“*rattle up*”  
another buck.

Hearing the brittle clacking of antler-on-antler, a buck thinks another buck is fighting a rival for the favor of a nearby doe. Against what should be his better judgment, the opportunistic buck loopes to the scene expecting to win over the fair lady only to be felled by a waiting hunter who has set down his rattling horns and picked up his rifle.

And so, yet another set of antlers either goes up on the wall or gets turred into some other form of cultural artifact.

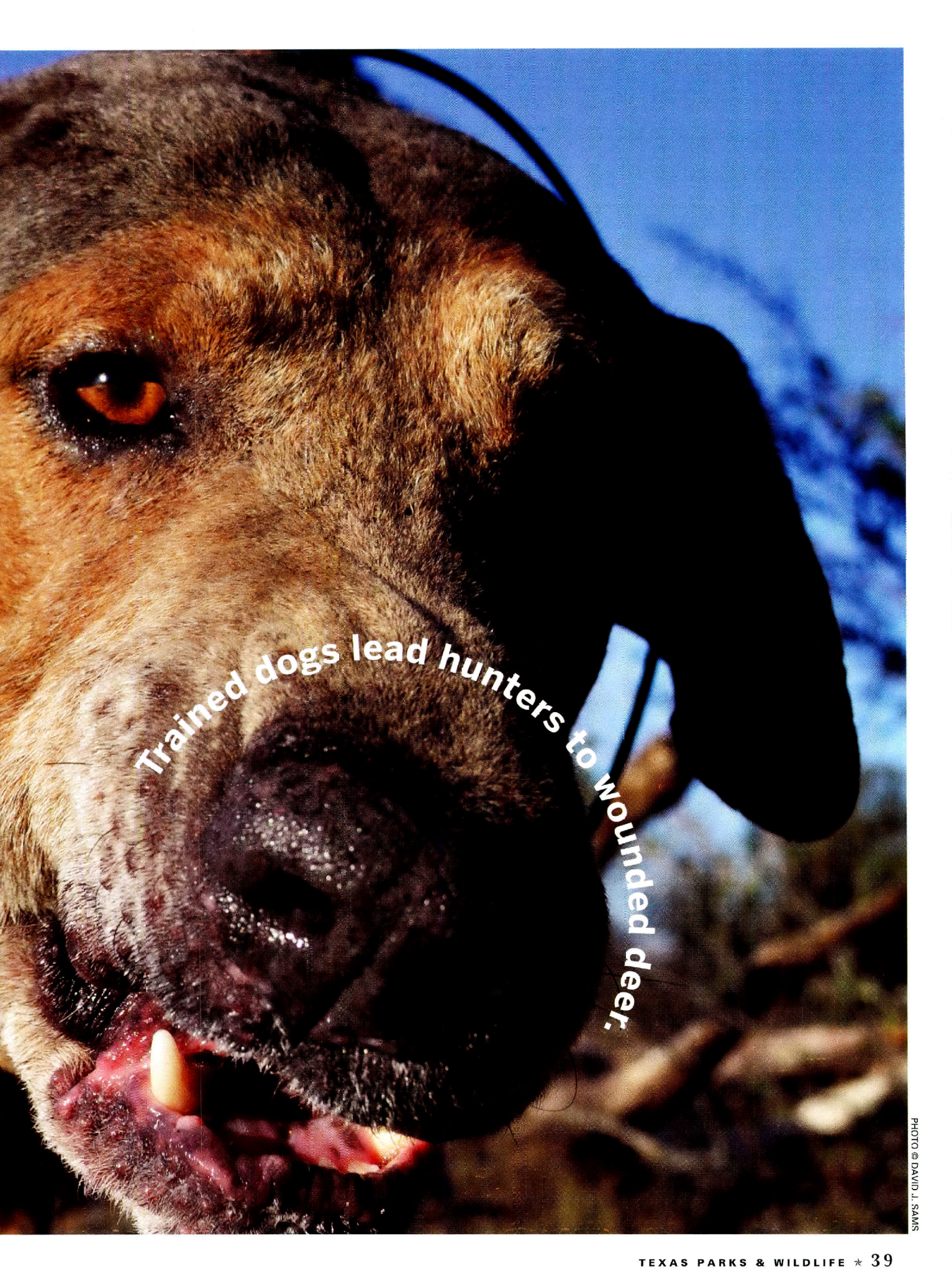


*Kerr Wildlife Management Area.*



# SCENT *to* HELP

BY HENRY CHAPPELL



Trained dogs lead hunters to wounded deer.

PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS

# Hunt deer long enough, and it'll eventually happen.

Maybe you simply shot the buck poorly. Maybe he jumped as you squeezed the trigger. In any case, the deer bolted, and you didn't see him fall.

After a half-hour wait, you follow up. Sure enough, you find blood spots, but the trail disappears after a few yards. A careful search turns up nothing.

You mentally replay the shot and try to convince yourself that you just nicked him. But you know the truth. If you don't find him, coyotes will.

You could call in your buddies to help with the search, but that'll take time, and the trail is growing fainter by the second. You'd best mark the blood spots and bring in a tracking dog.

Hunting deer with dogs is illegal in Texas, but using as many as two trained dogs to recover wounded deer is legal in all counties except a few in East Texas.

On a warm March day, I try to keep up with Bliss Lay and her dog Kya, a young blue lacy, while they work a blood trail across hilly, brushy ranchland near Hamilton. As the team disappears over a hill, I remind myself that Bliss is a little younger than I am. And my daughters. And she's five months pregnant.

Don't worry, we aren't hunting out of season. Kya is following a trail laid 12 hours before, part of a test sanctioned by United Blood Trackers (UBT). A deer hide awaits at the end of a winding trail. Between "first blood" and the end of a (minimum) 800-yard run, the testers had dribbled a maximum of 8 ounces of deer blood from a squirt bottle. The trail had been laid out with a GPS, so the testers knew every turn.

Kya splashes across a creek. Marlo Ondrej, the UBT judge, nods and says, "Good girl."

Marlo shows me the blood spots after Kya moved on. Dry and pale in the late

morning sun, they could've passed for natural coloring on the grass and rocks. I wouldn't have seen them on my own. Eight ounces of blood spreads awfully thin over 800 yards.

Young Kya looks uncertain in the high grass at the base of a hill. After a few minutes Bliss brings her back across the creek to "last blood."

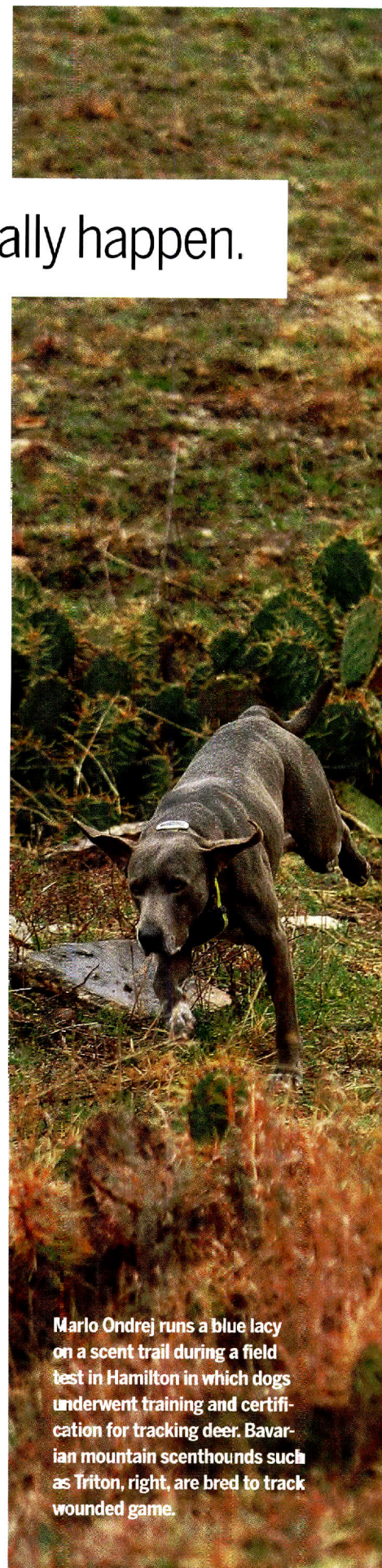
Kya regains her intensity and crosses the creek again. Back in the high grass, she tries working air scent more than ground scent this time. After a short search, she finds the deer hide. High-fives and whooping all around. Kya sniffs the hide excitedly while Bliss fusses over her newly credentialed tracking dog.

Back at the barn that serves as test headquarters, Bliss talks with me about Kya, hunting and blood tracking. Born and raised in a ranching and hunting family, Bliss now ranches with her husband near Stanton. She has also worked as a hunting guide for several years.

"I wanted an all-around ranch and hunting dog," she says. "I did some research and found the blue lacy, and just wasn't prepared for the energy and prey drive. Before that, I had a Lab, and he was like 'doe-de-doe-de-doe.' Just laid back. I was completely in the dark as to how to control her [Kya]."

She sought the help of Mike Chittum, a Fort Worth-area hunting dog enthusiast. After six weeks of obedience training, Kya returned home to start serious tracker training.

"The biggest thing is to trust your dog," Bliss says. "Most of the mistakes I've made on trails have come from second-guessing Kya. You have to build their confidence by not setting them up to fail."



Marlo Ondrej runs a blue lacy on a scent trail during a field test in Hamilton in which dogs underwent training and certification for tracking deer. Bavarian mountain scenthounds such as Triton, right, are bred to track wounded game.





Bliss started training Kya's puppies on a hot-dog trail at five weeks.

"We started on a two-foot trail," she explains. "I laid out a thick line of blood and let it warm up a little, and then laid pieces of hot dog on it. You just slowly make it longer. As they get older, make sure to have a big reward at the end, not in the middle. They have to finish the trail to get their reward."

Before her UBT qualification, Kya had already found two deer under actual hunting conditions, one after a 400-yard trail.

"I had shot a deer — not the greatest shot," Bliss says. "I had no idea where she went, but Kya found her really quick."

As we talked, other dogs and handlers awaited testing. I noticed a German shorthaired pointer, a Rhodesian ridgeback, a wirehaired dachshund, a German wirehaired pointer and, of course, other lacy dogs.

Wherever you find more than a few lacy dogs, you're likely to find Marlo Ondrej, surely the world's No. 1 lacy advocate. A lifelong hunter, hunting guide and hard-core dog nut, Marlo manages the Covered Gate Ranch near Uvalde. Since 1998, she has owned and maintained the Lacy Game Dog Registry.

Marlo's first tracking dog was an Australian shepherd mix.

"He just happened to be awesome at it," she says. "But I knew that it was just happenstance and that I'd need to find a dog bred for the job."

Research led her to the blue lacy. After she'd gotten involved with lacy dogs, she learned that she's a great-great-

granddaughter of Frank Lacy, one of the breed's founders. Thanks to Marlo's lobbying, the Texas Legislature designated the blue lacy the official state dog breed in 2005. Although "blue" or slate or gunmetal gray is the color most associated with the breed, lacy dogs can also be yellow, red or tri-color.

"For Texas conditions, lacy dogs are ideal," Marlo says. "Their short hair is perfect in our heat and in brushy, thorny country. They're big enough and

**HUNTING DEER WITH DOGS IS ILLEGAL IN TEXAS, BUT USING AS MANY AS TWO TRAINED DOGS TO RECOVER WOUNDED DEER IS LEGAL IN ALL COUNTIES EXCEPT A FEW IN EAST TEXAS.**



PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

Bliss Lay and her dog Kya, a young blue lacy, take a break from a training session on deer tracking. In the training, deer blood is dribbled along a trail for the dogs to follow.





**WHILE EARLY TRAINING IS IMPORTANT, BASIC OBEDIENCE SHOULD BE INSTILLED IN A DOG BEFORE HEADING AFIELD FOR SERIOUS TRAINING, LET ALONE REAL TRACKING.**

gritty enough to run off-lead, have a good nose and are very intelligent.”

Marlo’s first advice for beginners: Study *Tracking Dogs for Finding Wounded Deer* by John Jeanneney ([www.born-to-track.com](http://www.born-to-track.com)). “It’s the bible of blood tracking,” she says. “After that, it’s exposure and consistency.” Her lacy dogs get plenty of both.

Marlo stresses that while early training is important, basic obedience should be instilled in a dog before heading afield for serious training, let alone real tracking.

“But you have to make the training fun, get the dog up to a high energy level and make sure he knows why he’s out there,” she says. “Otherwise, he’ll think he’s just stumbled across some scent and there happens to be a deer hide at the end of the trail.”

A.J. Minns, a dog handler in Hunt, puts it this way: “When a dog is successful, handlers need to be

acting like kids on Christmas morning. It has to be fun.”

Ten years ago, A.J., a longtime deer hunter, had to call in a tracking team. The dog work impressed him so much that he decided his next dog would be a tracker. Research led him to the Bavarian mountain scenthound and,

ultimately, a trip to Poland to fetch home a puppy — Triton.

“The breed was developed in the mid-1800s, specifically for tracking wounded game,” A.J. says. “Triton is a very methodical tracker — much slower than lacy dogs and some of the other breeds — but he really shines on an old track.”

Sure enough. Most years, Triton and A.J. track down 20 to 30 deer.

Texans can run deer-tracking dogs off-leash. In many states, dogs must be kept on-leash, a less-than-satisfactory approach when the deer can still run.

Robbie Hurt, a South Texas rancher and houndsman, recovers around 60 wounded deer every season. More than half of those deer are still alive and have to be brought to bay.

“We’d almost never catch a deer if we

PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

had to keep dogs on a lead," he says.

Robbie runs a pack of bobcat hounds and always keeps a pair of deer dogs on hand. His first deer dog was a hound/border collie cross. Although some of his deer trackers are hounds, he likes hound/cowdog crosses because they're gritty enough to bay a big buck.

Robbie's dogs learn on the job. He sets up no artificial blood trails. He simply introduces the young dog to blood and encourages him to do what comes naturally, although he usually starts a young dog with an experienced dog.

"My pair of deer dogs usually consists of a solid dog and an up-and-coming dog," he says. "Just watching my older dog, I can see when my young dog gets off-track and I can correct him."

Like most handlers, Robbie wants his dogs silent on the trail to keep the deer on its bed as long as possible. Although hounds aren't known as paragons of obedience, Robbie expects his deer dogs to handle well.

"The thing I worry most about is one of my dogs getting off on a neighboring property when the hunters haven't alerted the landowner and gotten permission to pursue. That's about the only time I'll put my young dog on a lead," Robbie says. "I don't want to get into a trespassing situation."

Just how effective can deer-tracking dogs be?

A few years back, at daybreak, Robbie started his dogs after a wounded mule deer in the dry Trans-Pecos, near Sanderson. The track was 48 hours old. The dogs picked up the blood trail and tracked the deer into a dry valley while Robbie followed their progress with a GPS tracking collar. After two mountain crossings — and a distance of nearly 10 miles — the dogs brought the buck to bay so that it could be dispatched by the hunter.

That's exceptional dog work under harsh conditions. Even the best dogs can't pull it off every time.

Fortunately, they're rarely called on to do so. Deer mortally wounded by a rifle shot rarely go more than 500 yards.

"Hunters can help a tracking team by being honest with themselves," A.J. Minn says. "If you've made a bad shot, you know it the instant you pull the trigger. Mark the spot the deer was standing when you hit him, note the direction he ran and don't walk on the blood trail. The second you realize there's a problem — that's the time to contact a tracking team." ★

## HITTING THE TRAIL

The best way to learn about training blood-tracking dogs is to attend seminars and tests held by breed clubs and tracking organizations:

**UNITED BLOOD TRACKERS**  
[unitedbloodtrackers.org](http://unitedbloodtrackers.org)

**TEXAS LACY GAME DOG ASSOCIATION**  
[lacydog.org](http://lacydog.org)

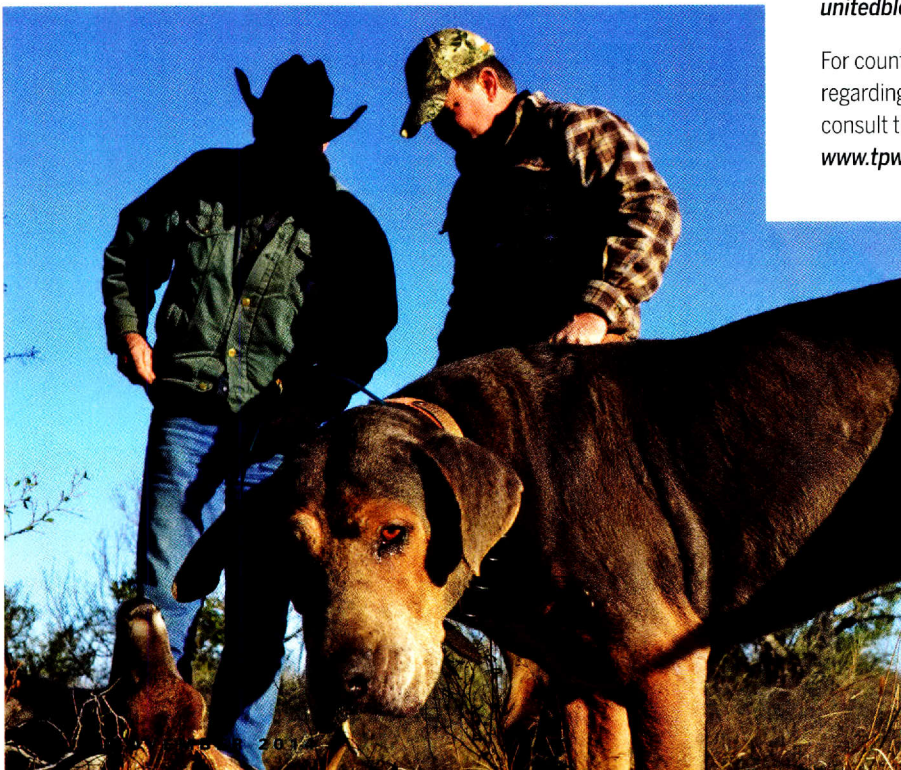
**LACY GAME DOG REGISTRY**  
[bluelacydogs.org](http://bluelacydogs.org)

For a list of tracking teams in your area:

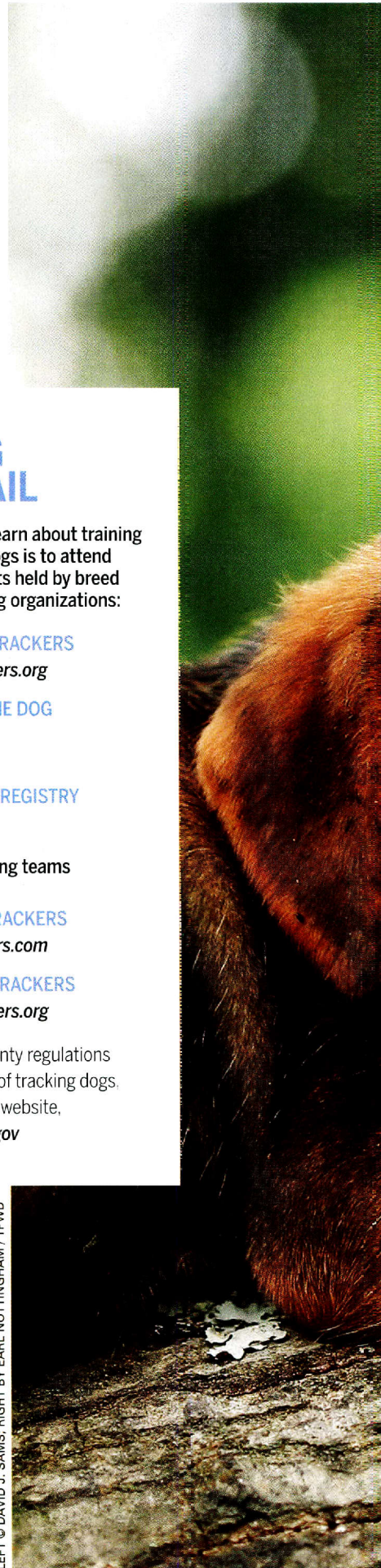
**TEXAS BLOOD TRACKERS**  
[texasbloodtrackers.com](http://texasbloodtrackers.com)

**UNITED BLOOD TRACKERS**  
[unitedbloodtrackers.org](http://unitedbloodtrackers.org)

For county-by-county regulations regarding the use of tracking dogs, consult the TPWD website, [www.tpwd.texas.gov](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov)



LEFT © DAVID J. SAMIS; RIGHT BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



**Opposite page:** Roy Hinde III and hunter Jason Phillips work with 8-year-old Shep to track deer.

**This page:** These beagle/feist puppies play in the East Texas woods, honing their skills for the day they can become tracking dogs.





BURNING RING OF

# FIRE

BY MIKE COX

## PRESCRIBED BURNING TURNS WATERMELON PATCH INTO AWARD-WINNING PROPERTY.

IMON WINSTON STARTS HIS PICKUP, and the country-and-western channel on his satellite radio kicks on with the late, deep-voiced Johnny Cash singing his classic *Ring of Fire*.

"And it burns, burns  
The ring of fire, the ring of fire. ."

Winston was parked on the highest point of land on his family's timber-studded farm five miles south of Nacogdoches to discuss with a visitor, among other things, the important role of prescribed burning in conservation. Cash's song could not have been more appropriate. Winston and his parents may not have burned in the shape of a ring, but their smart, safe use of fire has transformed the 3,418 acres surrounding him this summer morning in the pines:

"Before my parents owned it, we used to slip on to this place to steal watermelons," he says of his high school days in the 1970s. "That's all it was back then, basically just one big sandy watermelon patch with no trees."

These days, the only watermelon to be found on the Winston 8 farm comes from a grocery store.

What the Winstons have done with their property, one of the larger privately owned pieces of land in this part of East Texas, earned them the 2014 Leopold Conservation Award, the state's highest honor for private land conservation efforts.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the prestigious award is conferred each year by the Sand County Foundation, a nonprofit organization devoted to

private land conservation, in partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as part of its Lone Star Land Steward Awards program. In Texas, the Leopold Conservation Award program is sponsored by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Lee and Ramona Bass Foundation, DuPont Pioneer Farm Credit and the Mosaic Company.

Virginia H. Winston accepted the Leopold crystal award and a check for \$10,000 at the annual Lone Star Land Steward Awards dinner in Austin last spring.

The Winston 8, while sometimes called a ranch, is not a typical Texas spread. It has grass — native bluestem — but no cattle are growing fat on that grass. "Tree farm and wildlife preserve" would be a more appropriate moniker.



PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

**Left: Simon Winston on the Winston 8 Ranch in East Texas. Above: Winston and his mother, Virginia, do a controlled burn.**

When the late John Winston and his wife acquired the acreage in the 1970s, they began reforesting it. Today, the place is a verdant blend of loblolly pine with a growing number of longleaf pines. The Winstons kept some of the land clear — planted with native grass — to provide cover for a resurging population of bobwhite quail and Eastern wild turkeys. Wetlands provide habitat for migratory waterfowl.

"Thankfully for Texas, more and more landowners

are quietly yet diligently working to restore their property to benefit a host of habitats and fish and wildlife species," TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith said at the awards banquet. "The Winston family has absolutely led by example. Through a substantial commitment of time and effort, they have converted a close-cut tract of land into one of the state's finest examples of exemplary land stewardship."

Most of the Winston 8 and probably 99 percent of the rest of the timbered land in East Texas are covered with loblolly pine. But that's not the way it used to be.

"Originally, East Texas was mostly longleaf pine," Winston says. "After all the native timber had been taken, they went to planting loblolly pine, which grows faster."

But longleaf grows straighter and is generally acknowledged as a better variety of pine. And unlike loblolly, it won't be killed by surgical, prescribed burning. Because of that, the Winstons started planting longleafs.

"The nation benefits when private landowners seize opportunities to recover damaged land, as the Winstons have done," said Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation president. "Families like the Winstons show us that the ethic and spirit of Aldo Leopold's writing and work continue."

The Winston family was nominated for the Leopold Award by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Jeffrey A. Reid.

"The property has an active wildlife habitat improvement program that involves timber management, prescribed burning, invasive species control and native habitat restoration," he says. "It is obvious the Winston family is planning for the long term and not just immediate wants and needs."

Reid's nomination of the ranch noted these accomplishments:

» Restoring 180 acres of native longleaf pine, thinning 700-plus acres of loblolly pine to promote forest health, and clearing and seeding 93 acres for native grass and forbs, as well as undertaking significant efforts to rid the ranch of invasive Chinese tallow trees.

» Stocking 80 Eastern wild turkeys in 2007-08 and suspending turkey hunting on the property until the population expands and is sustainable beyond the boundaries of the ranch. Already, wild turkeys are frequently seen on the property.

» Managing the ranch's deer population to produce some trophy bucks. Additionally, 45 white-tailed does were released on the property to diversify the genetics of the deer herd on the ranch. Since the ranch is low-fenced, this also benefits the deer herd on surrounding properties.

» Employing innovative wildlife management techniques, such as creating clear spaces on the ranch to increase usable habitat for wild turkey hens. These openings, in addition to all pipeline and power line openings, have been planted with native grasses.







RANCH PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD; OTHERS BY CHASE A. FOUNTAIN / TPWD

The pine-studded Winston 8 Ranch won the state's top land steward award for 2014 for its wildlife habitat improvement.

» Using the ranch for research, educational and life-enrichment purposes. In addition to often providing access to other private landowners, youth groups and physically challenged individuals, the property is routinely used by state and federal agencies as a demonstration area for southern pine beetle hazard reduction, prescribed burning, thinning, longleaf pine restoration and native grass and forb restoration.

» Using prescribed burning to reduce the threat of wildfire.

With input from the Texas Forest Service and TPWD, Winston does controlled burns in 5- to 30-acre chunks on a two- to three-year rotation.

Winston tries to get his neighbors and other landowners in his part of the state interested in prescribed burning, but it's been a hard sell.

"A lot of them are more scared of controlling burning than a possum is can

## LAND STEWARD AWARDS

To nominate a landowner for a Lone Star Land Steward Award or to learn more about the awards, go to [www.tpwd.texas.gov/landsteward](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/landsteward). Nominations are due by Nov. 30.

ax handle," he says. "But it's what needs to be done. Just look at the wildfire they had in Bastrop in 2011. The places that didn't burn are where the underbrush had been reduced by prescribed burns."

Actually, other East Texas landowners don't have to go to Bastrop to see the benefits of prescribed burning and other conservation measures. All they have to do is visit the Winston 8.

"When John Winston acquired the property in the 1970s, it was largely a cutover tract of land," Reid said in his nomination. "Intensive planting, management and harvesting have led this property to be held up as one of the premier examples of multiple-use forest land and open pine management." ★

# Día de las Mariposas

HISTORIC 1921 FLOOD BROUGHT SUBSEQUENT BUTTERFLY DELUGE

by Joe O'Connell



**N**ov. 1, 1921. A mother looks to the South Texas sky, marveling at a cloud of ashes hurtling toward her, fluttering, falling, blotting out the sun. She peers more closely and realizes they are butterflies, *las mariposas*, and *la madre* falls to her knees and makes the sign of the cross as the insects fill the air around her. She knows this day is Día de los Angelitas, the part of the Día de los Muertos celebration set aside to honor dead children. She believes the children have returned on wings.

This particular butterfly story sprouts from seeds planted weeks earlier in tragedy. Central Texas languished in a bone-dry drought, and people begged the heavens for rain. Their answer came when remnants of a Category I hurricane left Mexico and moved north across Texas, where it rammed into a high-pressure system, lingered over an area from San Antonio to Temple, and roared.

Dave Owens, National Weather Service meteorologist, recalled the event in a 1970s talk to a Taylor-Thrall young farmers group: "At 4:19 p.m. on Sept. 9, 1921, a low rumble of thunder was heard to the south of Taylor. This was to mark the beginning of the greatest excessive

rainfall, not only in the Taylor area but also [for its time period] in the entire United States."

The onslaught of lightning and thunder terrified residents cowering in their homes.

"The rain came down in great sheets of water," 83-year-old Henry Rozacky Jr. recalled in the *Taylor Daily Press*, 57 years after the flood hit his home in the Friendship community near Taylor. "This wasn't a rain; it was water being poured down upon us. The thunder and lightning was a frightening thing. The lightning made all objects appear green."

The storm crashed atop the area by 7 p.m. All during its rampage there was a continuous roar, caused by thunder, falling rain and gusts of wind. Neither

thunder nor lightning ceased the entire night. In Taylor, 10.5 inches of rain fell in three hours before slowing down and allowing residents to hope for an end to the deluge. Instead, at 3 a.m. a second wave arrived.

Rain covered much of South and Central Texas, including along the Colorado River, which rose by 18.2 feet in Austin, leading to widespread damage as creeks overflowed and tore apart roads. Telephone and telegraph lines were down throughout the area, a 15- to 20-mile stretch of railroad was washed away, and bridges were destroyed.

In Friendship, Rozacky tried to herd pigs and sheep to higher ground.

"Soon we were sloshing in water no matter how high the ground," he said. "The dirty swirling water was above our knees, and all countryside became a solid ocean."

Since the telephone still worked, he called for insight on how high he could expect the water to go. He was told, "Don't worry; it'll never get any higher."

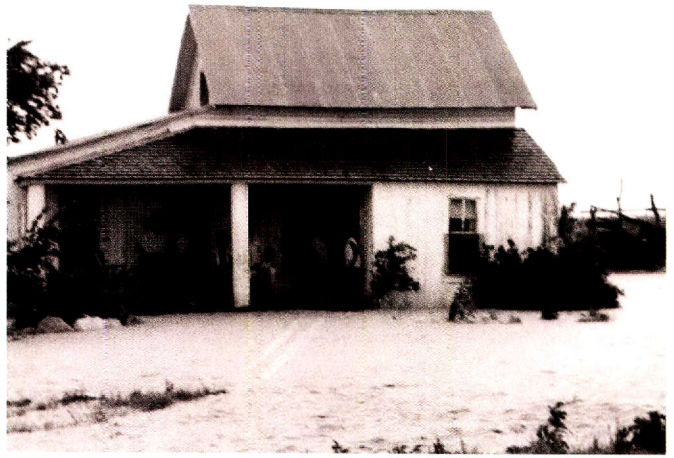
It kept rising.

Five miles north of Taylor, the town of Thrall officially got the worst of it, with 38.2 inches of rain falling in just 24 hours, for decades cited as a record for the continental United States.

F.A. Nolte, a cotton farmer near Thrall when the storm hit, recalled in



Looking South Washburn St.



a 1973 *Waco News-Tribune* article how his family reacted to the deluge. “Uncle Harmon would walk back and forth on the porch and look at the rain and say, ‘My God! When’s it going to quit?’ ”

Entire families drowned in the unexpected onslaught, including a clan camped on the banks of Brushy Creek.

“When the water started rising, they couldn’t get out and had to climb trees,” Nolte said. “They tied one of the little kids up in a tree so he wouldn’t fall out, and figured the water couldn’t get to him. But the water got over the trees and they were all drowned. When the water went down, they found the little kid’s body still tied to the tree.”

The San Gabriel River ran three miles wide, and the Little River near Temple was five miles across. The San Gabriel saw three surges of water, the first a four-foot wall of water that had the river rising two feet per minute until it jumped its banks, Owens said. Eighteen houses were seen floating past the Circleville community. Owens quoted a death toll of 159 people.

The storm was also something of an omen for Friendship. The community, which dated back to 1847, was mostly destroyed by the storm and rebuilt on higher ground, but in 1980 a dam was constructed, and the waters of what is now Granger Lake covered Friendship.

As the waters receded in 1921, men on horseback tried to rebuild bridges but sank into the mud up to their saddles. Many pigs had gone feral and had to be shot.

Central Texas slowly dried out, and two weeks later something seemingly magical

happened: Butterflies. Lots and lots of butterflies. First spotted near San Marcos, they filled the skies and covered everything in their path. Estimates are 25 million a minute flew for 18 days toward Mexico, as many as 6 billion total.

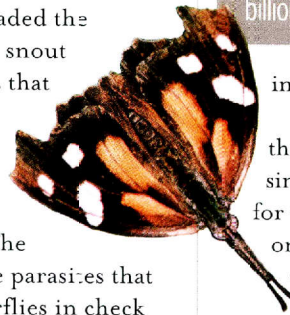
The species that invaded the area was the American snout butterfly. The belief is that snout butterflies react to extreme drought conditions followed by extreme rain by quickly multiplying. The reasons are many: The parasites that usually keep the butterflies in check are scaled back by the drought, and the snouts push the reproductive pause button in dry times but kick into action when it rains. Just as important, the wet weather brings to life the drought-resistant spiny hackberry, a common South Texas shrub that serves as a main host/food source for the snouts.

With its wings closed tight, the snout presents a drab gray color, giving it the appearance of a dead leaf. Once open-winged, a brilliant flash of orange, black and white is revealed. All the prettier for mating.

And the snout invasion was all about mating. Think of it like cool high school senior boys who date wice-eyed freshman girls. The freshman boys then have to look elsewhere for dates. So the sky was full of young male snouts seeking new mates while the freshly emerged females mated with the older butterflies.

Snouts can go from egg to adult butterfly in 16 days, so the explosion

The record 1921 floods brought destruction to Central and South Texas. In Taylor, left, streets got washed out. In Friendship, above, high water stranded homes. In the storm’s aftermath, billions of butterflies emerged.



in numbers makes sense.

There was a certain poetry in the timing of the butterfly, seen since Roman times as a symbol for the souls of the dead, arriving on the Day of the Dead, a two-day celebration that stems from an Aztec festival originally dedicated to the goddess Mictecacihuatl. On Nov. 1, children construct an altar to welcome the *angelitos*, the souls of lost children, back for a visit. The altars are filled with cookies, milk and toys for the lost children. The adult souls arrive one day later.

The lost children were said to live in the fourth of 13 Aztec heavens, a place filled with lush greenery where it is forever springtime. This heaven, called Tlalocan and ruled by Tlaloc, a water god, was the final home for people who died in water (as well as newborns and mothers who died in childbirth). During the spring, Aztec rain-making ceremonies gruesomely involved the sacrifice of newborns because their tears were considered pure.

A century ago, a mighty storm brought the souls of children on the wings of billions of snout butterflies to incredulous South Texas residents. Even today, every few years or so, the conditions are right for another snout invasion, incredible clouds of winged souls. ★



(Continued from Page 27)

and her partner, Danny Reibeling, painstakingly found, moved and restored the sprawling B&B's historical structures, formerly known as the Outpost at Cedar Creek. In the 2000s, Rachel Ashwell discovered the place on her recurring trips to the region's famed antique shows. When it came up for sale in 2010, she bought it and furnished all the rooms anew in her signature shabby chic style.

What is shabby chic, you ask? Imagine a snowstorm of white and pink curtains and bedspreads, along with distressed furniture and naturally rustic walls, floors and fixtures. In the Blue Bonnet Barn where we stayed, tall picture windows lined one wall of the front sitting room, where the golden light of morning came dappling in through lace curtains. The effect is romantic, nostalgic, captivating.

"My bed-and-breakfast is part aesthetic inspiration from Marie Antoinette, part authentic detail from *Coal Miner's Daughter* and part passion from *Gone with the Wind*," writes Ashwell in her 2011 coffee table book *Shabby Chic Inspirations*.

That night we had tickets to the

season finale of Shakespeare at Winedale, which turned out to be a rollicking rendition of *The Comedy of Errors*. For Texans who appreciate high culture in a down-home setting, this Lone Star original goes down sweet, like barbecue with champagne.

In 1970, University of Texas at Austin professor James B. "Doc" Ayres created a program, now housed in the English Department, to help students better understand Shakespeare by performing the plays. Each summer, 15 to 20 students spend 11 weeks living and breathing the Winedale experience, culminating in 24 performances during July and August.

The main performance space is a barn donated by Ima Hogg, who in 1965 created the Winedale Historical Complex in Round Top (southwest of Brenham) through a gift to the university. Today the 225-acre complex includes a 20-acre lake, historical houses and educational facilities, plus woods and pasture that provide the outdoor classroom for the Gideon Lincecum Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.

The next day we lunched at Royers Cafe in Round Top, a regional

culinary sensation. Folks cram into the little café for delicious Southern fare, including another delectable selection of homemade pies, in case you didn't get enough over at Bevers. The little town around it affords a delightful tourist stroll, with wine and gift shops that blend the comfortably upscale with quaint and authentic Texana.

Alas, it was finally time to depart for home. Regrettably, we hadn't been able to squeeze in all of the outstanding nature tourism adventures around Brenham, including birding, fishing, boating, bicycling and more. Camping and outdoor fun opportunities abound at nearby Lake Somerville State Park and Trailway, which has two separate units on the lake's western and northern shores. Plus there's the private Big Creek Resort Marina and Campground, while the lake's southeast shore offers three Corps of Engineers-operated camping parks — Rocky Creek, Yegua Creek and Overlook. We didn't make it to the historic tourist towns of Independence or Burton, either.

Luckily, the great thing about discovering a wonderful place to visit is ... you can always come back. ★

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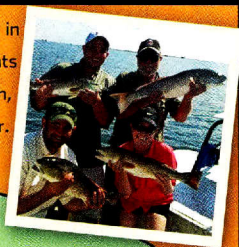
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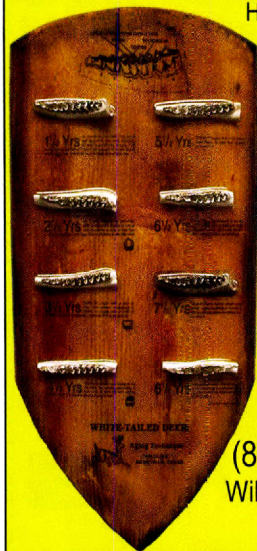
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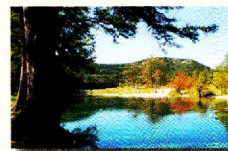


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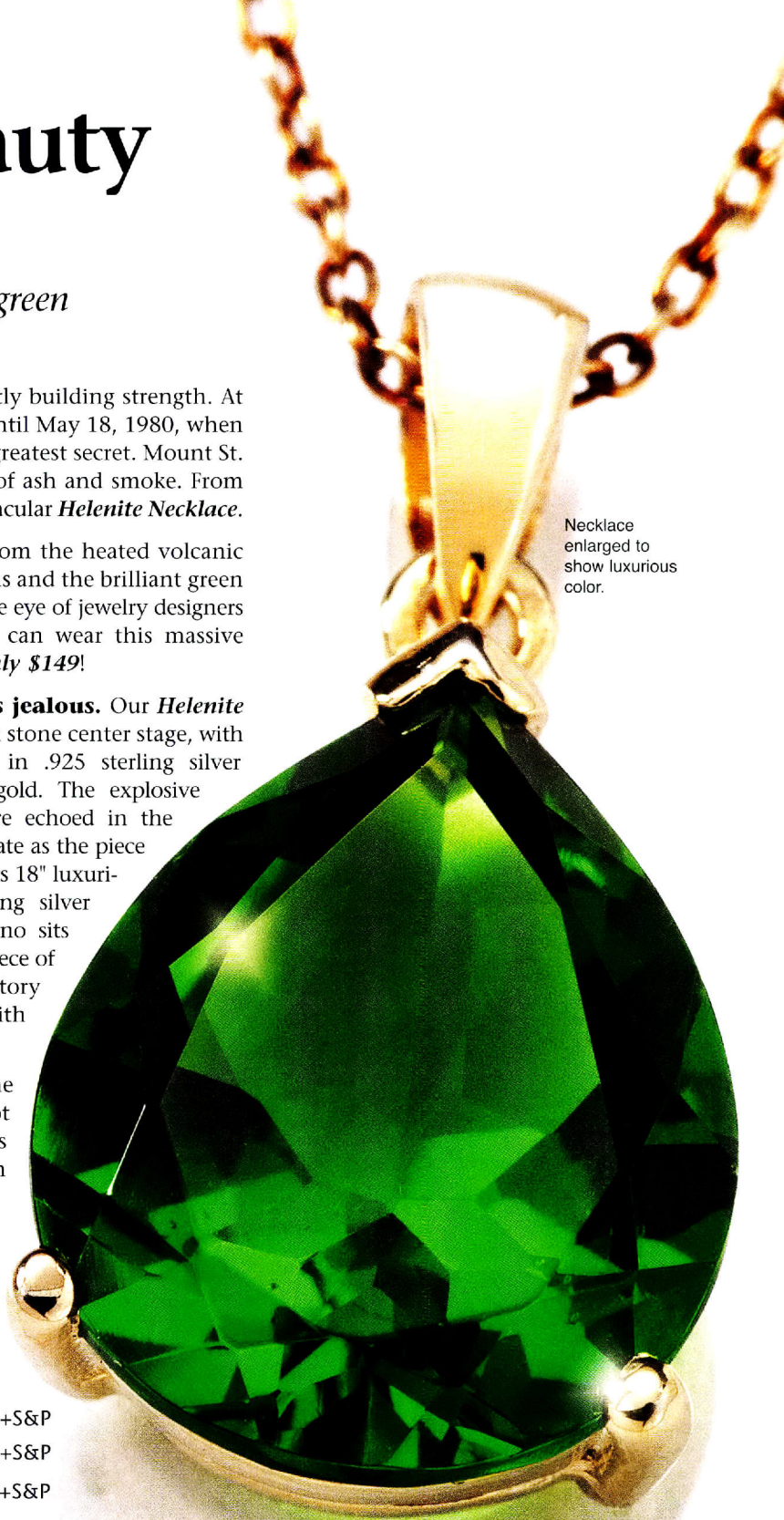
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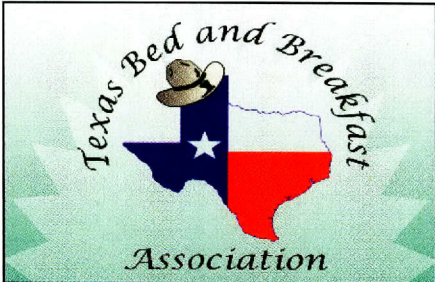
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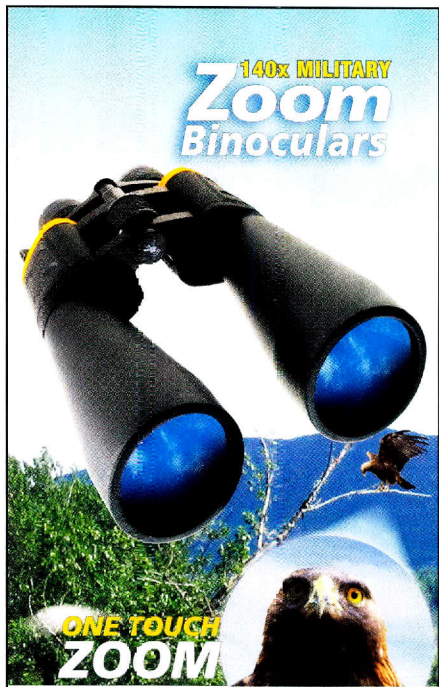
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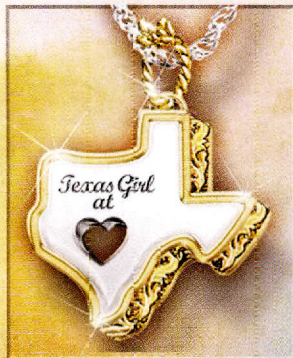
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
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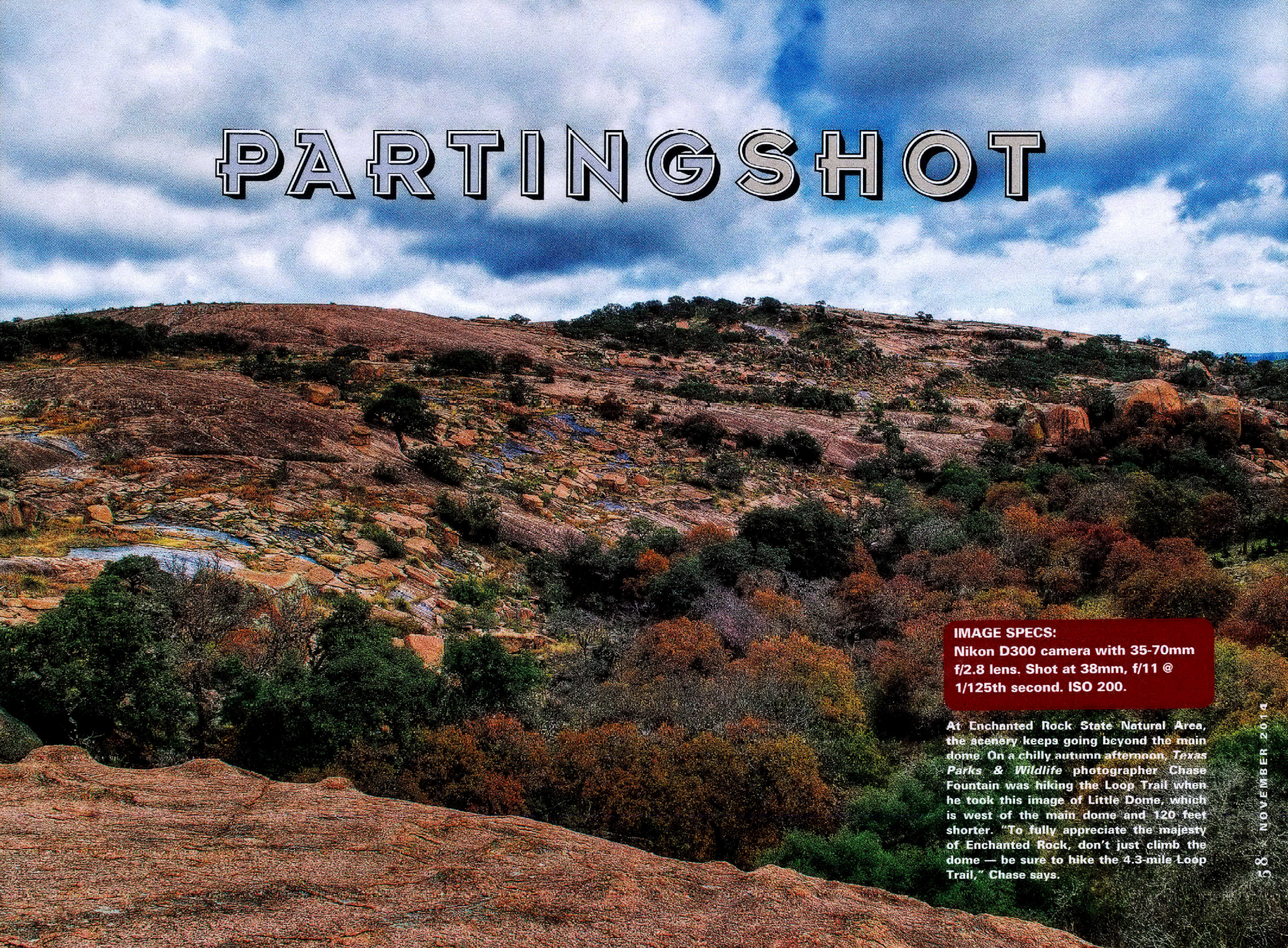
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At Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, the scenery keeps going beyond the main dome. On a chilly autumn afternoon, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* photographer Chase Fountain was hiking the Loop Trail when he took this image of Little Dome, which is west of the main dome and 120 feet shorter. "To fully appreciate the majesty of Enchanted Rock, don't just climb the dome — be sure to hike the 4.3-mile Loop Trail," Chase says.



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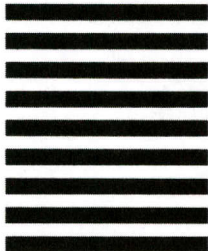
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