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M A R C H 2 0 1 2



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PREVIOUS SPREAD: Bluebonnets blanket the rolling countryside of the 77 Ranch south of Dallas. Photo by Earl Nottingham/TPWD

THIS PAGE: Jars of goodies are offered for sale at the Apple Shack near the Texas-New Mexico border northwest of Muleshoe. Photo by Chase A. Fountain/TPWD



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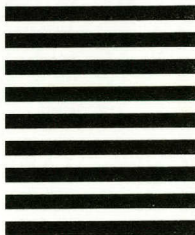
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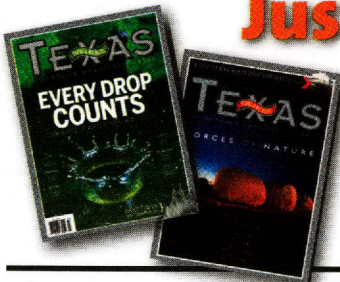


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MARCH 2012, VOL. 70, NO. 2

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In the Field

CLEMENTE GUZMAN

has had the opportunity to bring his love of nature to the canvas as a TPWD staff artist for the past 24 years. His artwork is featured in this month's cover and article on turkey hunting. He created these illustrations using acrylic wash and black India ink on crescent illustration board. He used paintbrushes for the acrylic wash, a croquil pen



to apply the black strokes and a toothbrush for the splatter effect. Clemente has painted 29 Texas game stamps and has illustrated numerous books such as *Scout the Christmas Dog*, *Hummingbirds of Texas* and *Birds of the Texas Hill Country*. Clemente started drawing in the third grade — mostly hot rods and fancy lettering. His first wildlife painting was a sparrow, done with watercolor on bond paper. When his dad saw it, he thought Clemente might have a future in art.

KIKI CORRY

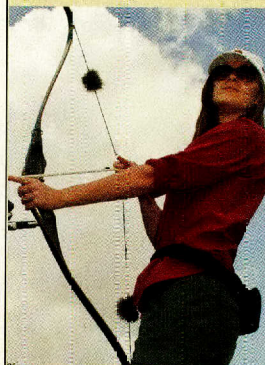
serves as the Project WILD coordinator for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, training and supporting facilitators across the state for the program, which focuses on conservation education for students.

Kiki, who contributed this month's Skill Builder on using field guides, has been both a formal and an informal educator, teaching along the trails of a nature preserve, in summer camps, in fourth- through eighth-grade classrooms and at the university level. She serves on the board of the Science Teacher Association of Texas and chairs the Texas Environmental Education Advisory Committee to the Texas Education Agency.



AMBER CONRAD

who works in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's news and information group, loves a good fishing story, especially when some of the parts are true. For her article this month on bow fishing, she promises no tall tales as she and her companions take on monstrous alligator gar with bows and arrows. Bow fishing



and other primitive hunting techniques are gaining popularity in the United States as sportsmen put away the thermal scopes and underwater radar and opt for spears and sometimes their bare hands to fell game. Before this story, Amber's closest encounter with wild game was when she walked into a sleeping deer on the Texas State University golf course just before dawn one day.

AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF CARTER P. SMITH

For most of us, quail season started and ended with more of a whimper than a bang this year. Save and except for a few pockets of sandy country in deep South Texas, much of the state's bobwhite quail range was bereft of the very thing hunters and their dogs desired — quail. For all who cherish the sound of a rooster's penetrating "bob-white" cry on a crisp winter morning and the sight of an exploding covey rise over a good point, that's a real shame.

Another casualty of the now famous, or infamous, dry spell of 2011, statewide bobwhite quail populations are estimated by TPWD biologists to be as low as they have been in decades. Regrettably, it is another step backward for a prized game bird that has seen its population decline steadily across its range from New Jersey to the southern Great Plains.

The bird's predicament has been the subject of considerable discussion — and debate, I might add — in chat rooms, emails and conference rooms and at coffee shops and kitchen tables from Pampa to Albany to Coleman to Kingsville. Quail hunters are anything but shy and retiring when it comes to their favorite game bird, and this year has been no exception. That's a good thing, because let me assure you, complacency is not an option.

So, how did we get to where we are today?

It is important to note that Texas is situated at the western terminus of the bird's range. Quail populations, like other species of fish and wildlife, are more susceptible to the annual boom and bust cycles of nature when they're at the margins. In any one year, assuming suitable habitat exists in sufficient quality and quantity, most population variability in bobwhite populations can be explained by the timing and amount of rainfall. This axiom holds true for much of the state, except for the eastern portion, where rainfall is not a limiting factor but suitable available habitat is.

That's not to say that suitable habitat is not a limiting factor elsewhere in Texas. The pernicious effects of widespread habitat fragmentation, proliferation of exotic and invasive grasses and conversion of native habitat to improved pasture are all taking their toll.

And, as hard as it is to imagine in a state revered for its wide-open spaces and vast places, scale may be a problem as well. Researchers at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute have suggested that in order to maintain sustainable populations of bobwhite quail, we may need to maintain large blocks of contiguous habitat to the tune of hundreds of thousands of acres. Such is certainly true of other grassland bird species, including upland game birds like the lesser prairie-chicken, which is fighting an uphill battle to hang on in the wake of significant long-term habitat changes across its range.

Some quail enthusiasts and researchers, while acknowledging the unavoidable weather and habitat parts of the quail equation, have suggested that there may be other insidious forces to blame. Exploding feral hog populations or a cryptic disease or endo-parasite may also be negatively affecting quail populations. Or, perhaps just as likely, it may be a combination of "all of the above."

If you are worried about the effects of hunting, let me quickly take that off your worry list. There are simply far too few quail hunters to make an impact at a statewide, population-level scale.

While hunters are not the cause of this decline, they absolutely will be a big part of the solution. Thanks to their investments in the upland game bird stamp, which funds the important work of wildlife biologists across the state, as well as their support of groups like the Quail Coalition and the efforts of research institutions like the Kleberg institute, the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch and Quail-Tech, hunters will help us get to the bottom of this most vexing of wildlife concerns.

I am grateful that hunters and anglers care so passionately for our wild things and wild places. We need them now more than ever.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carter P. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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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.

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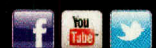


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PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

FOREWORD

"50 Ways to Get Kids Hooked on the Outdoors," our March 2008 cover story, was so popular that we ran out of extra copies long before we ran out of requests for them from parents, grandparents and educators. At about the same time, I became aware of a new book by Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, a modern classic that trailblazed a popular national movement to get kids outside.

It was as though we had awoken collectively and realized the folly of our ways. We had become too comfortable in our climate-controlled homes, snug on the sofa with a bowl of chips in front of our large-screen TVs, kids happily zapping electronic aliens and battling digital monsters in their rooms.

Where were the grass-stained knees, ruddy cheeks and breathless energy that we used to enjoy when we played outdoors as children? When was the last time we loaded up the car with sandwiches and fishing poles to make sure our kids felt the thrill of that first tug on the line, that first flash of slippery silver emerging from the water before their eyes?

As the bluebonnets awaken from their wintry slumber, it's time for us to shake the sleep out of our eyes as well. It's a safe bet those video games won't be missed for long by a child belly-flopped in the dirt, eye to eye with his first anole, poking her first antlion hole with a stick or climbing a tree, surveying the world from a new perspective.

Don't know where to begin? That's what the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is here for! Start your journey back to the wild side of life at www.texasstateparks.org. Find a park near you, lace up your sneakers and off you go. You can even bring along those danged electronics, as most parks and natural areas offer opportunities to go geocaching, the popular new spin on scavenger hunting. Buy a parks pass as you enter the gate — you'll want to return again and again, or perhaps explore new parks you've read about here.

Has it been decades since you tried your hand at fishing? No worries. Many parks offer loaner gear, and TPWD websites provide instructional videos and lots of helpful information to get you started. We link to many of these sites in our recent digital fishing edition at www.tpwmagazine.com/fishing2012. Did you know that you can fish without a license in state parks? Check out www.tpwd.state.tx.us/familyfish.

Besides the obvious benefits of health and happiness you gain from being outdoors, every penny you spend buying a fishing license or a parks pass goes to ensure that your grandchildren and their grandchildren will have an opportunity to enjoy the same natural pleasures that your grandparents did. Every time you step through the doorway of a state park cabin or sit at a picnic table, think about the generations who preceded you and the ones to follow.

Our state parks need your help, and kids need to get outdoors. It's a match made in heaven and carried out here on this exquisite planet.

Louie Bond

LOUIE BOND
EDITOR

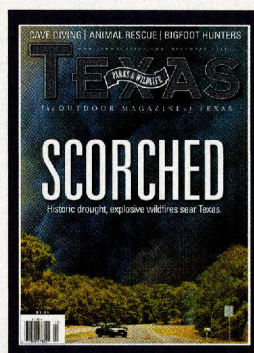
LETTERS

DIVING IN

I sincerely hope that *TP&W* magazine keeps us readers updated about the Goodenough Springs Exploration Project ("Deep, Dark and Dangerous," December 2011). I was completely fascinated by the story and very much want to learn more about the exploration of the spring.

I am not a diver, but have always wanted to learn, and I found that reading about the spring was just like being there. I could not help thinking the whole time how the story would make a great IMAX educational movie.

DON KOETHER
La Grange



I was completely fascinated by the story and very much want to learn more about the exploration of the spring.

DON KOETHER
La Grange

CAN'T GET A HUNT

I am writing in reference to the September edition of *TP&W* magazine. The article was titled "Hunting for a Place to Hunt?" In that article, David Synatzske says, "If you really just want to go on a

hunt, there are some places where you've got better than even odds of getting selected. You probably have pretty good odds of getting selected to hunt every other year."

I don't think so. I have been applying for those better-than-even hunts for 20 years and haven't been selected yet. I applied for Copper Breaks this year (28 applications last year) with 20 so-called preference points and was not selected. I have 20 "gun deer either sex" points and 38 in other categories and am convinced that I could never live long enough to draw. With 20 points in a real preference point system, a person would draw the most coveted hunt in the West.

I've supported TPWD for 50 years with my license fees, etc. Please don't contin-

MAIL CALL

ue insulting our intelligence pretending you have a preference point system.

JOE WHITE
Tenaha

KELLY EDMISTON OF TPWD'S PUBLIC HUNTING PROGRAM RESPONDS: We appreciate your participation in the TPWD public hunting program. Our goal is to provide maximum opportunity at a relatively low cost for those participating in the program.

Preference points were created to give an increased probability of being drawn — not a guarantee of being drawn. Applicants who enter each year will have an increased probability of being drawn as compared to first-time applicants or people previously selected.

This season, we processed more than 45,000 applications for about 5,500 permits. Even with a weighted system (and depending on the popularity of the hunt category), the wait can be long because of the sheer volume of applicants compared with the number of permits. You can evaluate each hunt offering by comparing the number of applicants to the number of permits. Last season's application information is provided in each year's booklet, and several years' worth of application

history is posted on the Web.

We work hard to find ways to maximize opportunity on the public and private lands for which we have access. We share your concerns about our preference point system and are working on changes that will make our public hunt system operate more fairly and provide more choices for hunters.

Thanks again for letting us know your concerns and thank you for your participation in the public hunting program. I hope you will continue to enjoy great hunting in Texas.

SMELLING THE SMOKE

Did you include a hidden "scratch-and-sniff" in the December 2011 article "Scorched"? I swear I could smell the smoke! Great article and photography! This year has been so hard on our farmers, ranchers, communities and firefighters.

MICHAEL MILLER
Sherman

HELP OUR BIRDS

I was just reading your article "Backyard Bird Buffet" (December 2011) and need to speak to the issue of when to feed

birds. Supplying food in winter is wonderful, but the time of year when they need help the most is in the spring before the plants put out their fruits or seeds. Spring is the season when the stores of their food are most depleted.

Birds will come to your feeders year-round. If you keep the feeders out all year, you will have the pleasure of seeing them bring their young to the feeders.

If you love birds, please don't abandon them at the time of their greatest need.

SUSAN STONE
El Paso

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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

NO PLACE TO RUN

An agreement between states keeps sportsmen from flouting game laws.



Suppose that a young man from Texas was hunting in Colorado. He was a conscientious hunter and a good citizen in most respects. He never intentionally broke the law, he paid his bills on time, and he treated his dogs well.

Laws in other states can be a little confusing, however, and this young man misunderstood a requirement in the state regulations where he was hunting. He

didn't know he had done anything wrong until a game warden appeared and wrote him a citation. Then the warden took him to town to see the judge.

A hunter or angler in his home state would receive only the citation, which he could contest or pay. In the past, some nonresident hunters across America ignored the citations they received, perhaps assuming they would

not be extradited over a minor game violation. Therefore, taking them immediately before a judge was the only recourse. If the person was found guilty, the judge could assess a fine and expect payment. If the fine couldn't be paid, jail time was an option — not to mention a heck of an inconvenience.

Having to pursue justice in this way affected enforcement. Wardens had to drive into town to take the violator to court, arrange for a meeting with the judge and then drive back later. According to state Game Warden Jim Lindeman, that process could take anywhere from 30 minutes to four hours, depending on where the violation occurred. In larger counties, it could take considerably longer. If the judge was busy, the warden might have to wait, leaving game and fish resources unprotected, perhaps during a busy season.

Luckily, a better method of handling minor violations was on its way. In the early 1980s, authorities in western states began discussing a possible solution patterned after the Driver's License Compact and Non-Resident Violator Compact. Under those compacts, non-resident speeders could receive a ticket instead of going before a judge, and information regarding the citation would be shared with the violator's home state. If the violator did not comply with the citation's terms, the home state could take action such as suspending the person's driver's license.

In 1989, Colorado, Nevada and Oregon passed Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact legislation, with those states forming the core of the compact.

In Texas, the Legislature's Sunset Commission report discussed the advan-

tages of the compact and authorized the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to join. The TPW Commission adopted Texas' entrance into the compact in November 2009, and the compact ratified its membership on May 30, 2010.

The Sunset Commission noted that of the 1.1 million hunters in Texas, 123,000 were nonresidents. That's 11 percent. There were also 218,000 non-resident fishermen out of an estimated 2.5 million total fishermen, or 8.7 percent, based on 2006 figures, the most current numbers available at that time. The commission reported that enforcing game and fish laws against out-of-state violators was a time-consuming endeavor for wardens, with 1,803 citations issued to nonresidents, or 8.2 percent of all citations issued by Texas wardens. Calls to Operation Game Thief (800-792-GAME) no doubt helped increase investigations.

The commission acknowledged that without a better system, arrests were required because of the difficulty of collecting a judgment after an offender had left the state. The compact provided that better system. It worked both ways — Texans hunting or fishing in other states could also just receive a citation and settle it on or before the appearance date instead of going to straight to court.

Under the compact's terms, an accused violator who did not make an appearance to pay the fine or contest the charge could have his hunting or fishing license suspended. Under the terms of the compact, once a license is suspended in one state, it is suspended in all participating states.

So far, 37 states have joined the compact. Arkansas, Nebraska, both Carolinas, Virginia and Maine are in the process of joining. Only the New England states haven't.

Out of 302,000 Texans who hunt or fish out of state, seven have had their licenses suspended for "failure to appear" in other compact states, according to Scott Vaca, TPWD assistant chief of wildlife enforcement, who supervises the compact in Texas. One had his license suspended because of nine violations for false information on license applications as well as hunting a mountain lion without a non-resident license. His hunting, fishing and trapping privileges are suspended until 2016 in all compact states.

Under the compact, if a Texas hunter has his license suspended in



Opposite and above: The Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact gives Texas a tool for enforcing game laws and offers hunters and anglers flexibility when dealing with a violation.

another state for a violation that is not against the law in Texas — like hunting deer over bait — Texas may still suspend the license.

The compact benefits sportsmen who honor their responsibilities. It has teeth for those who don't. ★

—John Jefferson



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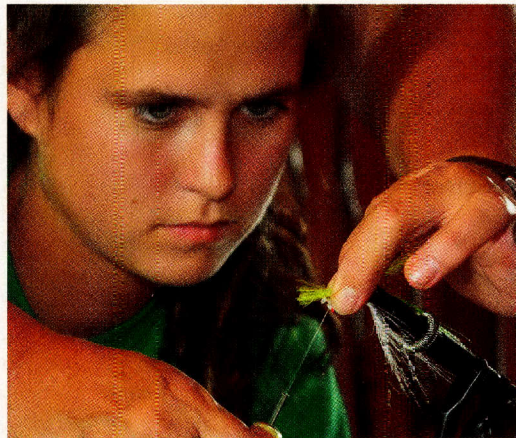
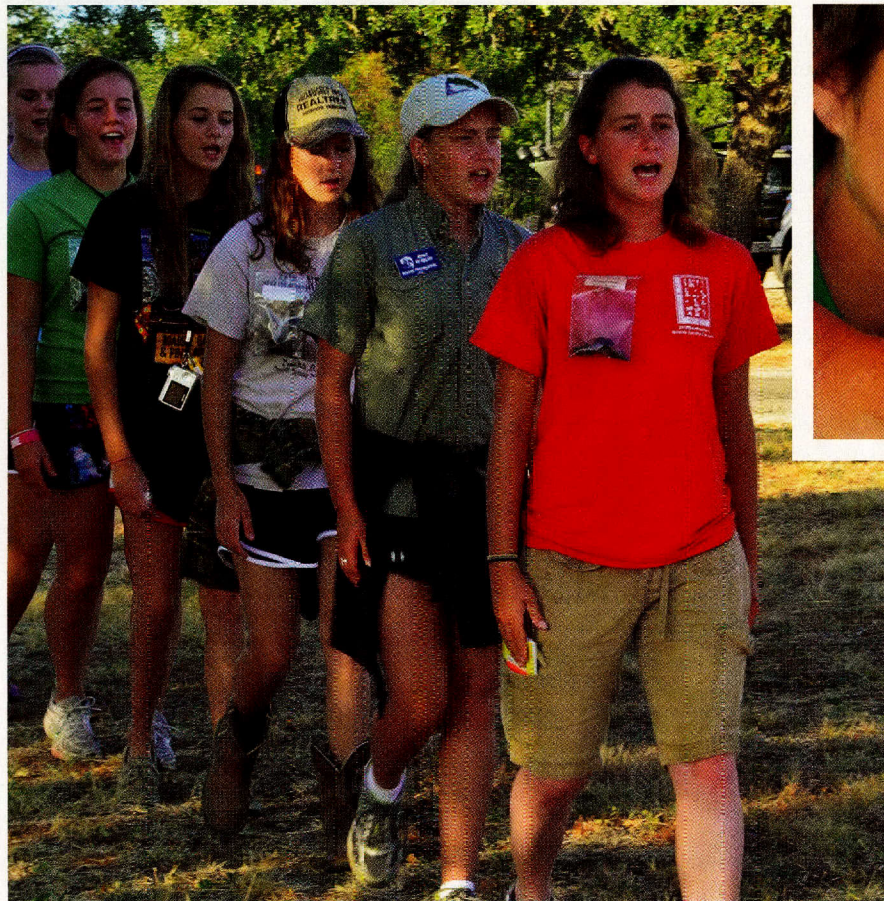


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Wildlife Camp

Texas Brigades teaches teens about plants, animals, leadership and more.



“Tell me, and I forget. Show me, and I remember. Involve me, and I understand.”

For 20 years, the Texas Brigades motto has resonated with teens from across the state who voluntarily give up nearly a week of their summer vacation to learn more about wildlife, fisheries and land stewardship. Each camp or “brigade” offers a special focus: Bobwhite Brigade, Buckskin Brigade, Bass Brigade and Waterfowl Brigade (coming in 2012).

I was a cadet of the 2011 Rolling Plains Bobwhite Brigade, 19th Battalion, and the hands-on involvement definitely left a lasting impression on me. Like the other teens in my group, I willingly gave up my electronic devices and stayed up late to work on “homework” projects. There was no idle time — every moment was filled with adventurous activities and games. I absorbed a large amount of information about plant and seed identification, anatomy and habitat evaluation.

Quail-related topics were not the only subjects. I learned interviewing skills,

developed confidence and improved my ability to give presentations. Team-building activities encouraged me to work with my assigned group to win the “top covey” distinction.

Dale Rollins, Texas AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist, started the program in 1993 to develop wildlife ambassadors. It has expanded from one camp, the Bobwhite Brigade, to four, with additional camps in the planning stages. Current camps spotlight quail, white-tailed deer, bass and waterfowl. Private ranches throughout Texas host these outstanding camps. The programs are so successful that they’ve been copied by other states.

The Texas Brigades experience was a life-changing event for me. I became more focused on my goal — to become an ornithologist — and realized my responsibility to conserve wildlife and habitat. I hope to return as an assistant leader, a position that must be earned by giving presentations and completing projects that showcase the Brigades and skills I learned there. I will also compete

▲ **Camp activities and subjects such as fly-tying and fish anatomy fill a Texas Brigades camp. The camps focus on wildlife, fisheries and land stewardship.**

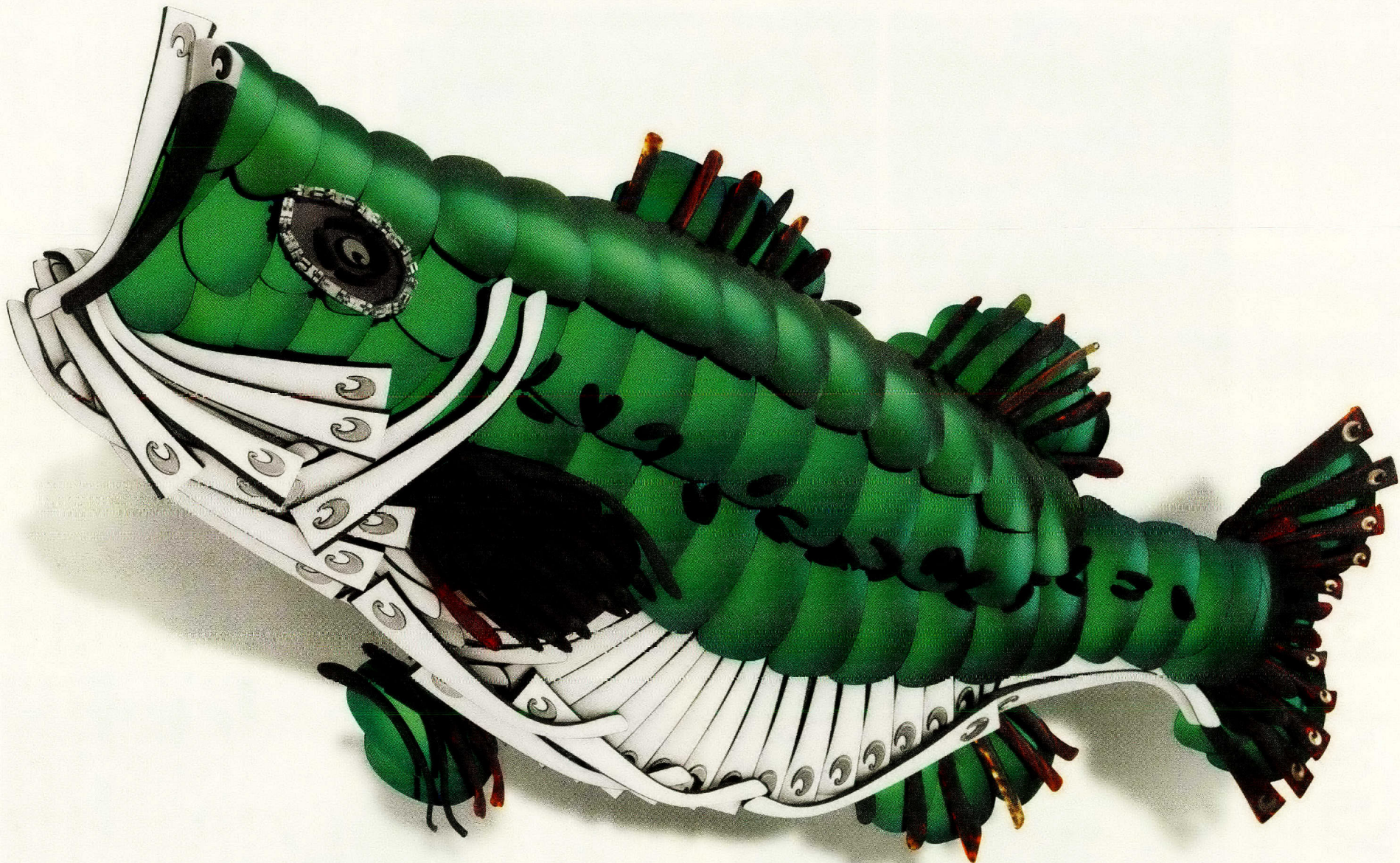
for college scholarships offered through the Brigades.

As the Texas Brigades marks its 20th anniversary, be a part of the celebration.

“Parents should send their kids to the Brigades to fast-forward their youth’s leadership abilities, like communication and teamwork skills, and build confidence,” Rollins says.

Apply for one of the five camps at www.texasbrigades.org; the deadline is March 15. Not just for students 13–17, the Texas Brigades also encourages adult volunteers to serve as leaders and/or instructors. Other ways to help include donating funds and supplies to the program, recruiting new participants and purchasing prints and books that benefit Texas Brigades. ★

— Alexandria Simpson



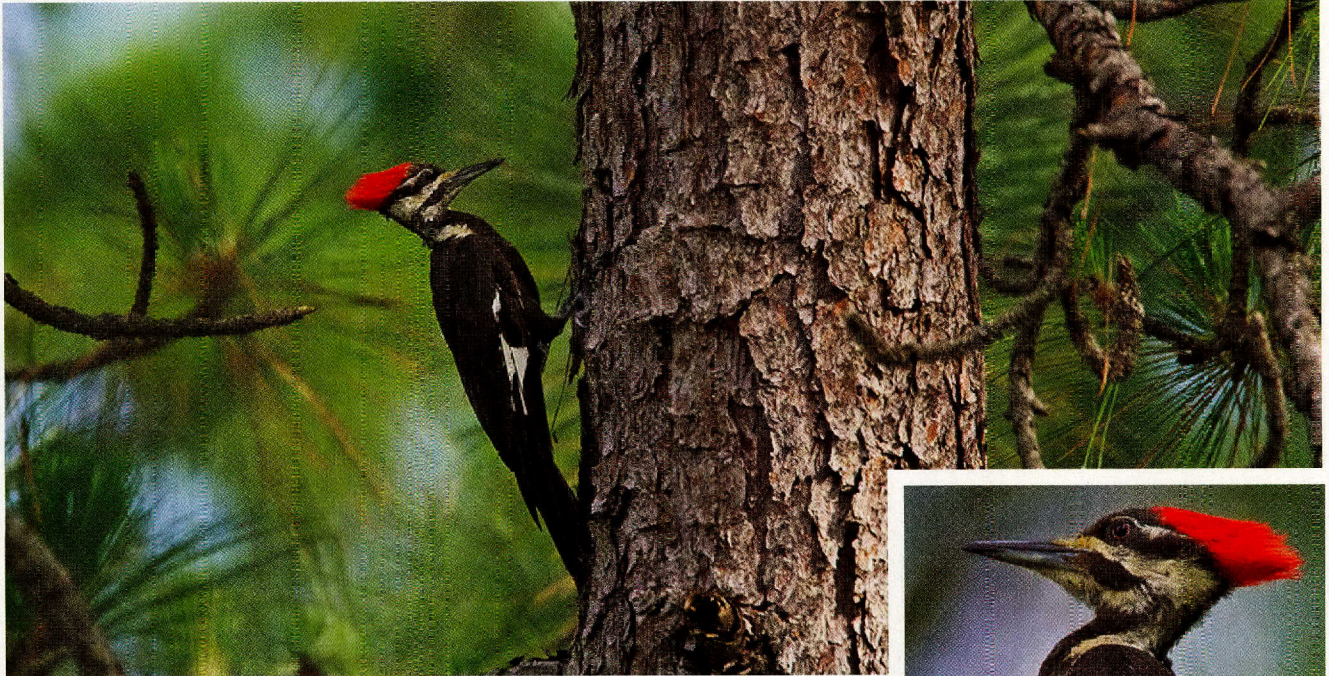
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Knock, Knock!

The striking pileated woodpecker drums loudly while searching for insects.



The distinctive-looking pileated woodpecker is the largest woodpecker in most of North America.

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“Good-god!” There’s a good reason that the pileated woodpecker has this unusual nickname. “Good-god!” is what many observers exclaim the first time they see this large, striking bird with stark black-and-white plumage accentuated by splashes of red on its head.

That’s certainly the way I felt as a 9-year-old, staring in wonder at a pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) at our family farm in Cherokee County. I couldn’t believe a bird could be that large, and I was hooked on bird watching from that day forward.

Old-timers once called this bird “Indian hen.” The first part of that name refers to the Native American tradition of drumming and the bird’s ability to drum loudly. “Hen” refers to one of the bird’s vocalizations, usually heard when the woodpecker is annoyed, which sounds like a chicken *cluck-cluck-clucking* up in a tree.

Sometimes confused with the larger ivory-billed woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*), a species with few credible sightings in the past century, the pileated woodpecker is fairly widespread in forested parts of the eastern third of Texas. One sign of its presence is a large oval or rectangular carving into dead or dying wood, created as it searches for insects, mainly carpenter ants, nesting deep

inside the tree. Woodpeckers don’t kill trees, as the old wives’ tale says — they are simply hungry for the ants, beetles and other insects involved in the decay process of dead or dying tree limbs.

If you want to observe pileated woodpeckers, there are several state parks or wildlife management areas where they can sometimes be spotted. Be prepared for the excitement of a “Good-god!” moment of your own. ★

— Cliff Shackelford



Metroplex Getaway

Cedar Hill State Park offers a wilderness experience, just minutes from DFW.



During the past two decades, perhaps no place has come to epitomize the importance of urban green space more than Cedar Hill State Park. Surrounded by more than 6 million people in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, Cedar Hill has endured as a convenient, relaxing getaway among the juniper- and oak-lined hills of Dallas and Tarrant counties, in stark contrast to the nearby bustling highways and crowded neighborhoods.

Despite being only a 30-minute drive away from the Dallas skyline and within veritable earshot of Cowboys Stadium, the park's 300-plus campsites and more than 10 miles of hike-and-bike trails give visitors a feeling of wilderness. The park is home to five invaluable remnants of native tallgrass prairie — a vanishing ecosystem in North Texas — and habitat for dozens of bird species, including painted buntings, indigo buntings and eastern bluebirds.

Cedar Hill has long been a popular Metroplex fishing destination, with a marina and access to the 7,500 surface acres of Joe Pool Reservoir. And it has become known as one of the area's top mountain biking destinations.

Cedar Hill State Park is, quite simply, a 1,800-acre island of nature, outdoor recreation and peaceful retreat in the ocean of human development that encircles it.

"I see this place as kind of like what Central Park is to New York City," said Cedar Hill State Park Superintendent Mike Spradling, a 35-year veteran of the Texas state park system. "Before long we all know this metro area is

going to expand to fully surround the park, and we'll represent some of the only green space for miles around. That's why this park is so important."

Penn Farm, an original homestead established in 1854, is located within the park's boundary. Numerous historical structures and replicas depict the region's rural farm life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Interpretive farm tours are offered bimonthly for the public or on request for organized tours, ensuring that founder John Penn's legacy lives on.

The park's recent 20th anniversary celebration also marked the completion of more than \$6 million in renovations and upgrades. As part of a larger \$40 million capital repair and improvement campaign statewide (using funds appropriated in previous years), Cedar Hill transformed 150 campsites by adding full

water, electric and sewer utility hookups to accommodate increasing demand by recreational vehicle customers. The park also boasts some of the largest, widest RV pads anywhere in the state park system, increasing accessibility for today's larger motorhomes and trailers.

In addition, the park added a new public restroom complex near the entrance gate, expanded the park's headquarters building, resurfaced interior park roads and repaired the solar water heating system for all campground showers.

Today, much of the landscape around the nation's fourth-most-populated metropolitan area looks a lot different than it did 20 years ago. Thanks to local visionaries and state leaders, the scenic tree-covered outcroppings outside the once-small town of Cedar Hill don't.

For more information about Cedar Hill State Park, call (972) 291-3900, or visit www.texasstateparks.org. ★

—Bryan Frazier

PHOTO BY BILL REAVES/TPWD

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Critter Cam

Game cameras — keeping watch for wildlife — are smaller and better than ever.

Optics have become an integral part of the way we view, and enjoy, the outdoors. For the wildlife watcher, binoculars, spotting scopes, magnifying glasses and cameras are the mainstays that allow us to see every feather and count every hair — their high magnification factors allowing us to easily view naturally wary animals at great distances without disturbing them.

However, even with the best optics, the ability to watch animals is usually lost as soon as it gets dark or the animal is spooked. Wouldn't it be great to watch animals from just a few feet away or see what they do after the sun goes down? Enter the game camera.

Game cameras (also called trail cameras) have been around several years now and have evolved from bulky battery-heavy boxes to smaller, higher quality digital devices. Usually triggered by infrared sensors and utilizing an infrared flash, they work alone, night and day, and offer an alternative method of observing wildlife not possible with traditional cameras and lenses.

The original game cameras relied on regular film and constantly had to be reloaded, meaning the cost of film and processing was an issue when a whole roll was taken of one animal.

Thanks to digital sensors, photos and videos are now saved to inexpensive and erasable memory cards — providing thousands of images or hours of video — and have become valuable tools for different viewing purposes.

For game managers, the time, date and weather information recorded along with each image provides valuable population and behavioral information on the various resident species. For the hunter, the game camera affords the ability to passively scout and pattern animals well ahead of the hunt. Even landowners have found that the game camera is a great tool for documenting



www.bresser.com

The Bresser camera offers a wide field of view. Leupold uses a controller that plugs into the camera.



www.leupold.com

“two-legged” animals who decide to poach on their property.

I recently attended the National Shooting Sports Foundation's SHOT Show, a showcase for new outdoor products. One of my goals was to check out the latest and greatest offerings and improvements in game cameras. I was not disappointed!

In a nutshell: Most manufacturers are making smaller, more compact cameras that require smaller and fewer batteries, yet produce higher resolution stills and video. Many offer a separate con-

troller/interface that allows the user to set the camera controls as well as download pictures without having to open the camera. More choices are also available for wider angles of coverage. One impressive find was a model from Bresser that covers 360 degrees.

The newer game cameras make it easier than ever to enjoy wildlife that we wouldn't normally see. ★

—Earl Nottingham

Please send questions and comments to Earl at earl.nottingham@tpwd.state.tx.us

To see video reports on game and trail cameras from the SHOT Show, go to www.tpwmagazine.com/gearguide

For more on TP&W magazine photography, go to www.tpwmagazine.com/photography



Blue Heaven

Bluebonnets blanket Texas roadsides and state parks for spring viewing.

*When the pastures are green in the springtime
And the birds are singing their sonnets
You may look to the hills and the valleys
And they're covered with lovely bluebonnets.*

Those words penned by Julia D. Booth (and put to music by Lora C. Crockett) were true in 1933 when Texas adopted it as the Texas state flower song. The words were true in 1901, when the bluebonnet became the state flower. And they're true today, as modern travelers cross country routes in search of the loveliest fields of blue for photography or for just pure enjoyment.

Texas boasts five species of bluebonnet — *Lupinus subcarneus*, *L. texensis*, *L. havardii*, *L. concinnus* and *L. plattensis* — but *L. texensis* is the one most people refer to when describing the blue fields of Central Texas in springtime. This species has larger leaflets with sharper points than those of the other species. The leaves are usually composed of five leaflets radiating from a central point.

The stems grow to heights of 6 to 18 inches, topped by a cluster of up to 50 blue and white flowers.

The name "bluebonnet" comes from the familiar shape, like a bonnet, and from the color, though rare white and pink varieties have been cultivated. Other names for the bluebonnet include buffalo clover and wolf flower. Sow seeds in early fall for spring blooms.

For decades, the Texas Department of Transportation has planted or nurtured bluebonnets and other wildflowers along the state's roadways. Peak season for blooms typically is during the first two weeks of April in the Hill Country.

Some of the best state parks for viewing common species include LBJ State Park, Inks Lake State Park, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Site, Dinosaur Valley State Park, Meridian State Park and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. Other parks offer good viewing some years, depending on the weather: Goliad State Park, Big Bend



Fields of blue are a sought-after sight for many Texans. Be sure to cue up the state flower song on your next spring drive.

Ranch State Park, Lake Corpus Christi State Park, McKinney Falls State Park and Stephen F. Austin State Park. See www.texasstateparks.org for more information on these locations. ☆

—Louie Bond

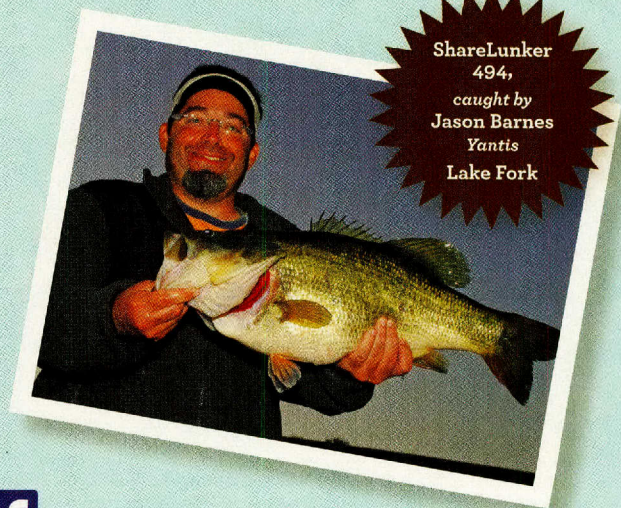
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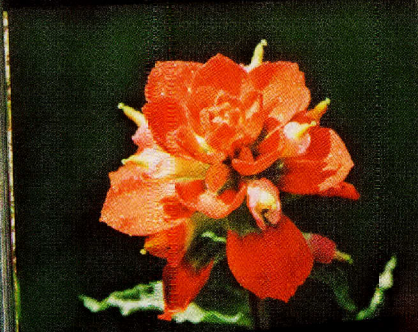


Name That Flower

Knowing how to use a field guide is like carrying a botanist in your pocket.



FINE-LEAF BLUETS



TEXAS PAINTBRUSH



FINE-LEAF BLUETS (*Hedyotis nigricans*)
Madder Family (Rubiaceae)

Bloom Period: April–November
Description: Upright to sprawling, smooth, delicate perennial 2–20 in. (5–50 cm) high from stout taproot; stems slender, solitary or few from base and forming clump; opposite-branched in upper portion. **Flower** to 3/8 in. (1 cm) long; pink, purplish, or occasionally white; trumpet-shaped, 4-lobed at rim. **Flowers** few to numerous, in clusters at ends of stiff branches. **Leaves** few to numerous, in clusters at ends of stiff branches. **Leaves** few to numerous, in clusters at ends of stiff branches. **Leaves** few to numerous, in clusters at ends of stiff branches. **Leaves** few to numerous, in clusters at ends of stiff branches.

Habitat: In dry or moist sandy or calcareous soils of prairies, woodlands, rocky hillsides and slopes. Throughout.

Note: Represented in Texas by three varieties, the species is highly variable but well distributed throughout the state. *H. nigricans* is so named because the leaves turn black as they dry. *Praine bluets* is another common name.

TEXAS PAINTBRUSH (*Castilleja indivisa*)
Figwort Family (Scrophulariaceae)

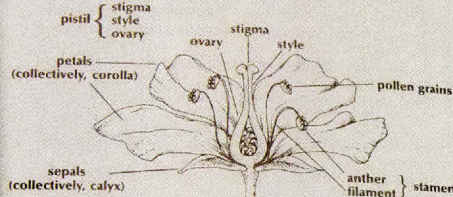
Bloom Period: May–June, sporadically until fall
Description: Upright, hairy annual or biennial to 36 in. (4 dm); stems usually several from base and forming clump, unbranched. **Flower** to 1 in. (25 mm) long, whitish or greenish, tubular, very slender, 2-lipped, subtended by conspicuous red-tipped, leaflike bracts. **Flowers** and bracts numerous, the whole forming showy terminal spike. **Leaves** 1.4 in. (2.5–4 cm) long, alternate, stalkless, narrow, entire or sometimes with few lobes near base.

Habitat: Moist sandy loams in prairies, pastures and on hillsides, but especially along roadsides. In all except PH, FW.

Note: Texas paintbrush gets its common name from a resemblance to a ragged brush dipped in paint. The roots of the plant grow until they touch the roots of other plants, frequently grasses, then they penetrate the roots of the "host" plant and obtain a portion of their needed nutrients; hence, they are considered semiparasitic. This is our only annual species of *Castilleja*; the other eight species which occur in the state are all perennials. The genus name honors the Spanish botanist Juan Castillejo. Also called *indian paintbrush*.

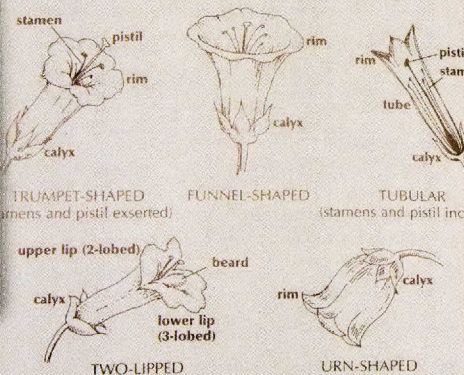
ILLUSTRATED GLOSSARY

Floral Structures



HYPOTHETICAL FLOWER

SOME COMMON CALYX OR COROLLA SHAPES



396

Being familiar with how a field guide is organized will make it easier to use once you're out in the field. The details of the flowers will distinguish one from another.

"It's got yellow petals, pointy leaves and some brown in the center." This description fits so many of our Texas wildflowers. Sunflower? Daisy? Aster? Dandelion?

Wildflowers are simpler to describe and remember when you know their names. The easiest and best way to become acquainted with wildflowers is by expert identification. Not many of us carry botanists in our back pockets, so we must find other ways of naming our favorite blooms. Field guides are the next best things. A multitude of field guides can be purchased or borrowed from libraries, so there is no excuse not

to get one and go have some fun.

Before you take your field guide for a test-run, take a moment to familiarize yourself with the way it is organized and laid out. Some even have a brief explanation of how to use the guide. It is worth the effort to read how the author intended the book to be used. Some are sorted by color, others by plant family and others by region or habitat type. If you have a choice, the color-sorted type is the easiest for the beginner.

Look at how the pictures are grouped. Are all the pictures clustered for easy comparison on a few color pages? Or does each flower have its own page with

photo and text together? There are advantages to each.

With book in hand, get as close to the flower as reasonable. First look at the general shape and color of the flower. Flip through the guide looking at pictures to find similar ones. (Yes, just looking at pictures counts as using the guide!)

Now, rather than thinking about what the flower is, eliminate as many things as you can that it is not. If the photo is on the same page as the text, check the region and bloom time and general size. If it doesn't occur where you are, shouldn't be blooming now or is a different scale, flip to another page. If the photos or pictures are grouped apart from the text, look closely at the shape of the flower and leaves and how they are arranged on the stem.

Many common wildflowers are a variation on the daisy/sunflower theme. If it has a heavy disk center or clusters of petals, you most likely have a member of the composite or aster family, such as sunflowers and dandelions.

When you look at the leaves, notice whether they come out all along the stem or are clustered at the bottom. Do the leaves emerge across from each other or are they staggered down the stem? Also look at the general shape of the leaf — is it long and narrow like a feather, or do the veins come out from the middle like fingers from the palm of your hand? Is it rather plain, or frilly?

Those are the details that will help you distinguish one from another. When you have eliminated all but a few on the page, turn to the text to check region, bloom time and dimensions.

When you have a likely candidate, read the full description of the flower and plant. If the language is too technical, read the nontechnical part aloud, focusing on the overall size and appearance of the plant. If you don't find a match on the first try, file that one in your memory and try again. Remember, part of the fun is working out the puzzle while enjoying the sun on your back and a book full of beautiful pictures. ★

SIGHTS & SOUNDS

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TELEVISION

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Shorebird survival; technology in time of crisis; boxing moorhens; Cactus Creek Ranch; Lake Livingston State Park.

March 4–10:

Rebuilding North Deer Island; O2 Ranch; Cedar Hill State Park; nocturnal animals; scouts at camp.

March 11–17:

Reclaiming a river; discover Village Creek; Colorado County wildlife management

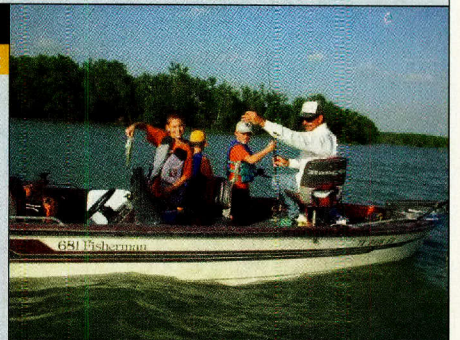
association; dove hunting; Pedernales Falls State Park bird blind.

March 18–24:

Fishing for cats; gorgeous Garner State Park; corporate conservation; Balmorhea, the desert oasis; sunrises of the Texas coast.

March 25–31:

The crappie guys; crappie cooking; fleet and radio team; ocelots along the Rio Grande; Watson Preserve plants.



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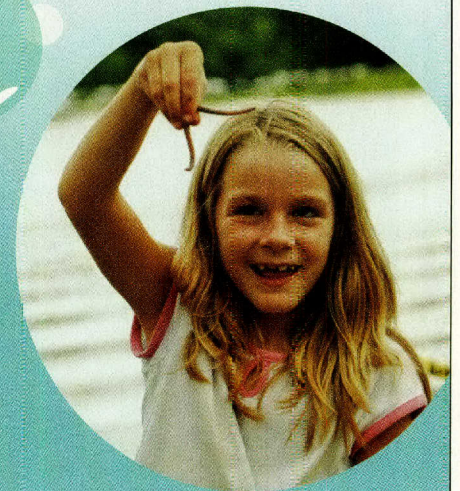


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3 Days in the Field / By Dyanne Fry Cortez

DESTINATION: MULESHOE

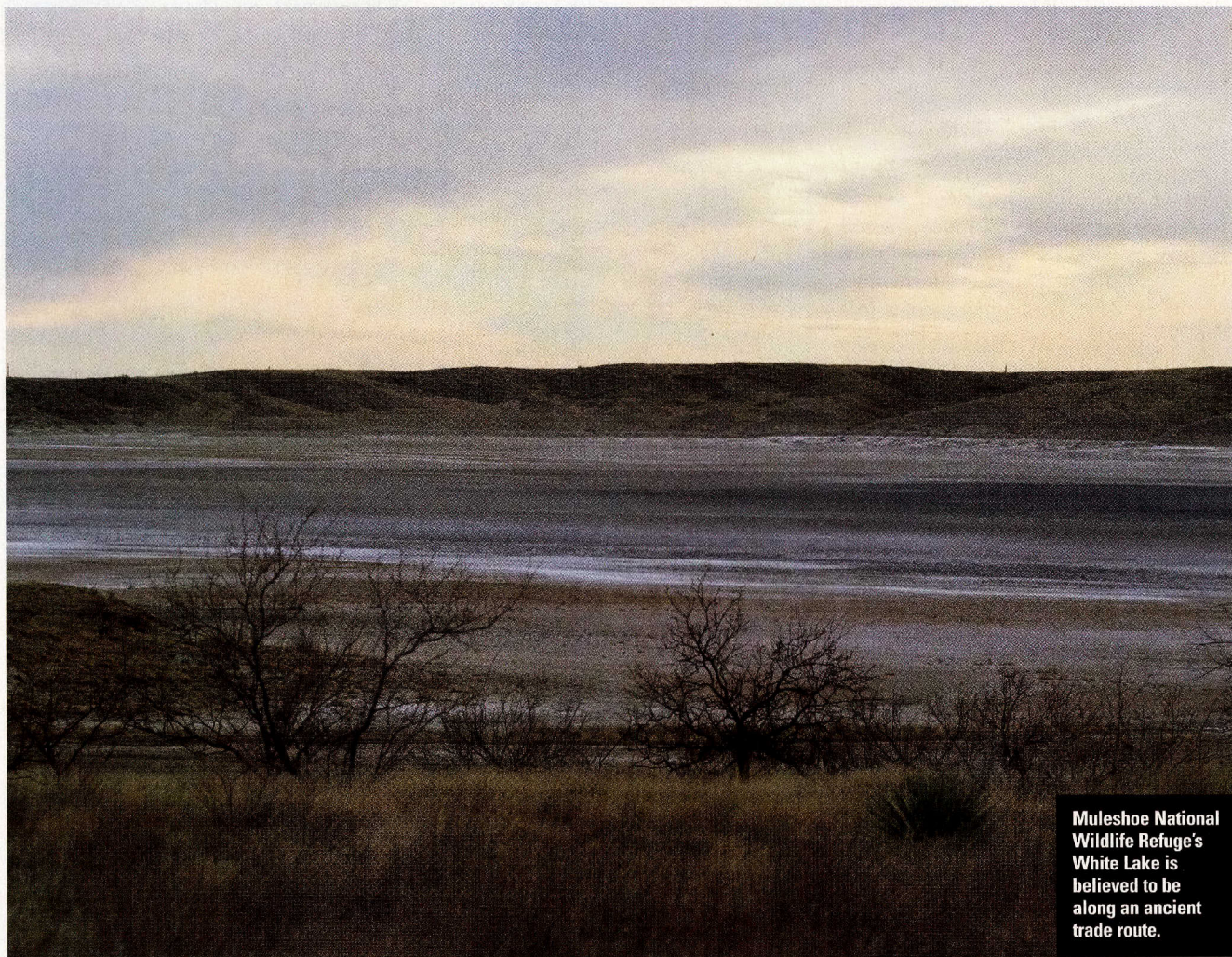
TRAVEL TIME FROM:

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Deep in the West

Once part of the XIT Ranch, Muleshoe is home to sandhill cranes and prairie dogs.



Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge's White Lake is believed to be along an ancient trade route.

Don't be put off by the name.

While it may sound like little more than a dusty hoofprint in a field, Muleshoe offers a colorful history and abundant wildlife opportunities for those who make the trek.

Muleshoe is almost at the edge of Texas, perched on the High Plains of the Panhandle, occupying land that once was part of the vast XIT Ranch.

The city is named for the Muleshoe Ranch, owned by E.K. Warren and his son Charles, who bought several pieces of the old XIT. The town sprang up in 1913 when the railroad tracks came through.

Almost a century later, Muleshoe is proud of its ranching heritage and slightly quirky name. At the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture,

there's a life-sized statue and historical marker dedicated to the mule, which is also the school mascot. Giant mule shoes mark the entrance to the Muleshoe Heritage Center, where the old Muleshoe Ranch cookhouse is one of several restored buildings on display.

On this trip, our first stop is the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge 20

miles south of town. Established in 1935, it's a great place for bird watching. Three saline lakes and a handful of playa lakes provide a winter home for sandhill cranes and a rest area for ducks and geese that travel the North American Central Flyway.

Or they might, if they had any water. We're visiting in the fall of 2011, a year of exceptional drought. Still, refuge manager Jude Smith isn't ready to give up on the water-fowl season just yet. The place caught a little rain in August, courtesy of the New Mexico monsoons. Some ducks stopped by in September. A storm front is headed this way, expected to arrive tonight. Everyone hopes it will bring more rain.

Cranes aren't the only attraction here. There are 320 species on the bird checklist, including the lesser prairie-chicken, which is known to nest in the area. A prairie dog town is popular with visitors.

"The dogs have never been shot at, so they don't fear people. They'll sit up and bark at you," says Smith. The refuge is open every day for

bird and wildlife watching. Public roads offer drive-up access to the larger lakes, the prairie dog viewing zone and a picnic/camping area. An additional 20 miles of trails and service roads are reserved for hikers and nonmotorized bikes.

At the visitor center, we meet Sammie Simpson, chair of the Bailey County Historical Commission and one of the refuge's interpretive volunteers.

Simpson doesn't claim to be a wildlife expert. She's after the human story. Before settlers moved in, planted crops and learned to pump water from the Ogallala Aquifer, this dry plateau was a forbidding place. Army Capt. R.B. Marcy, commander of the 1849 Santa Fe Expedition, described it as "a land where no man, either savage or civilized, permanently abides ... even the savages dare not venture to cross it except at two or three places, where they know water can be found."

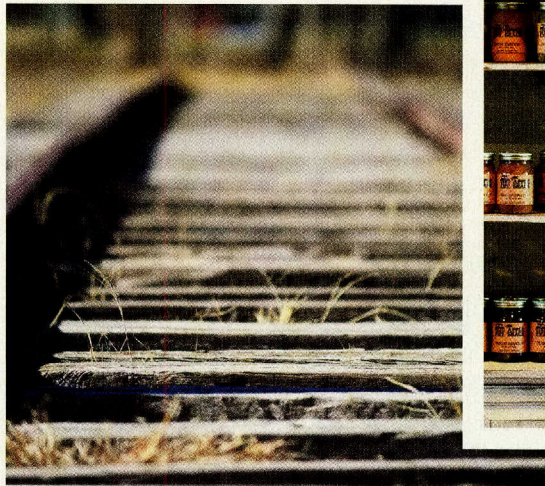
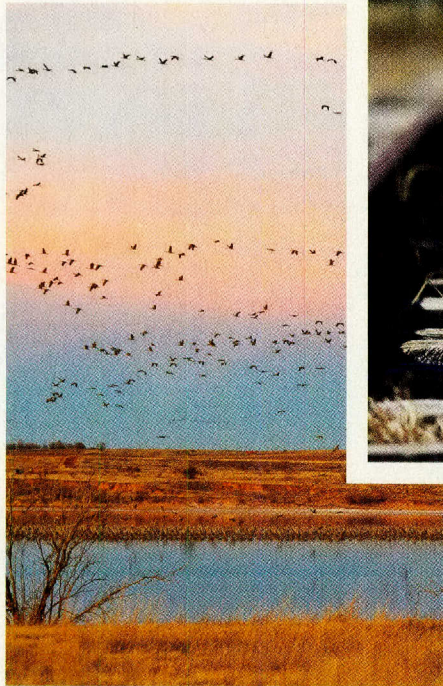
One of those routes went from present-day Portales, N.M., to

the general vicinity of Lubbock. Known first as the Trail of Living Water, then as the Comanchero trade route and eventually as the Fort Sumner Road, the route was used by prehistoric toolmakers, nomadic Kiowa and Comanche tribes, Army survey crews and other peoples who passed this way.

"It is just an ancient trail," says Simpson. Local historians have strong evidence that the route went through the refuge at White Lake.

Simpson takes us on a tour of the maintenance barn and manager's residence, built by the Works Progress Administration in 1938.

(continued on Page 51)



Clockwise from upper right: Shelves of sauces and jams tempt shoppers at the Apple Shack in Farwall; oversized mule shoes welcome visitors to the Muleshoe Heritage Center; sandhill cranes arrive for the winter at upper Paul's Lake at Muleshoe NWR; Muleshoe came into existence in the early 20th century when the railroad came through.



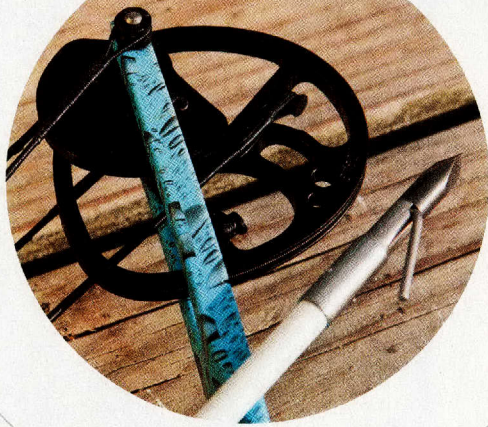


SHOOT THAT FISH

BOW FISHING DRAWS ON PRIMITIVE METHODS TO TURN ANGLER INTO ARCHER.

BY AMBER CONRAD

PHOTOS BY CHASE A. FOUNTAIN



Have you ever stood atop a flat-bottom boat and pondered your chances of hitting fish with a bow and arrow? There's something primitive and ancient inside all of us that sparks thoughts of our ancestors' methods of hunting and fishing. We wonder if we could have survived with only sticks and stones and our wits as the tools to feed ourselves. Why not take a bow and arrow and try your luck at catching an enormous alligator gar?

I grew up fishing. I learned to cast down our suburban street with a washer tied to my line, refining my form in the waters of Lake Buchanan on summer holidays. I caught a lot of driftwood, but then again, I also caught a lot of fish. I grew up listening to hundreds of boxed crickets eat away at sliced red potatoes out in the laundry room the night before my family went out for a day of fishing at the Landfords' stock tank. In all those years, it never crossed our minds to combine archery with fishing.

I've been content to watch bobbers bob or to reel in a cast hoping for a tug at the other end. Little did I know my traditional rod-and-reel approach could be considered a ho-hum concept made for those content to sit and wait. Bow fishing is for stand-up-on-your-boat-ready-to-shoot-a-fish doers. Sure, bow fishing is like shooting fish in a barrel — but it's a million-gallon barrel.

Captain Mark Malfa frequents some of the best-kept-secret gar spots around the state on his custom 20-foot flat-bottom boat. I joined him and a group of bow-fishing enthusiasts last summer to try our luck in Southeast Texas near Palacios.

We geared up, and they handed me a Fred Bear recurve bow with a Zebco

808 reel. As I tested the pull-through, I discovered I was never going to fully draw those 40 pounds. I made a mental note to buy a pull-up bar and start drinking protein shakes. I did manage to pull about half the weight, allowing me to fake it as the other guys easily pulled their 45 to 60 pounds.

Laws prohibiting the discharge of weapons along certain navigable rivers and streams in Texas unintentionally prohibited bow fishing in some places, but this oversight was corrected during the 2011 legislative session. The practice is described in a bill analysis as a sport involving "spearing fish by discharging a barbed fishing arrow from a bow equipped with a reel." The impact of the bill was minor, but the legislative bow fishing action grabbed my attention.

The bill specifies the type of archery equipment that must be used. The bow and arrows you donned for a period costume at the Renaissance festival aren't going to cut it, though I suppose you could still dress up and go medieval on some carp with the appropriate equipment.

With expanded legality, bow fishing is practiced all over the state and in waterways across the nation.

Fishing with archery equipment is just one way people are trying to recreate the practices of the early days of

The author stands at alert for signs of alligator gar, armed with a recurve bow, fishing reel and barbed fishing arrow.



Little did I know my traditional rod-and-reel approach could be considered a ho-hum concept made for those content to sit and wait. Bow fishing is for stand-up-on-your-boat-ready-to-shoot-a-fish doers.

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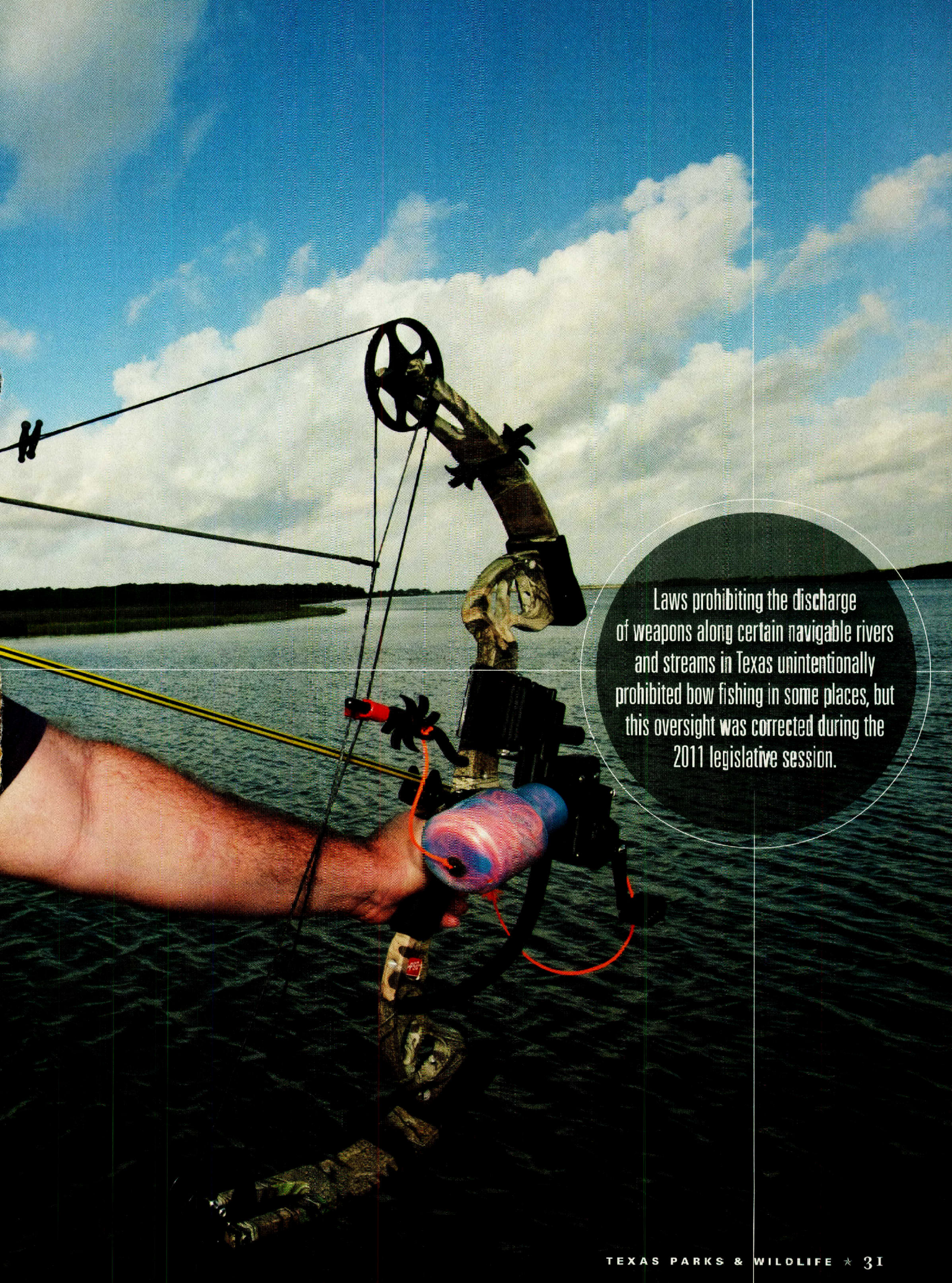
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Bow fishing angler Jacob Garrett gets ready to let his arrow fly.



Laws prohibiting the discharge of weapons along certain navigable rivers and streams in Texas unintentionally prohibited bow fishing in some places, but this oversight was corrected during the 2011 legislative session.

GAUGE

6-

5-

4-

3-

2-

1-

A whale of an alligator gar came within an arm's length of our boat, just inches from the surface on the starboard side. Salsman's arrow flew, and he hit it square in the flank as the fish attempted to roll just a split-second too late.



BOATING LAWS

APPROVED LIFE JACKETS REQUIRED FOR ALL PERSONS ON BOARD CHILDREN UNDER 16 MUST WEAR LIFE JACKETS IN MOTORBOATS
CERTIFICATE OF NUMBERING REQUIRED FOR ALL BOATS
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WHILE TOWING A SKI OR WATER SKIER, THE BOAT OPERATOR MUST BE AT LEAST 100 FEET AHEAD
FIRE EXTINGUISHER REQUIRED FOR ALL BOATS
WITHOUT STORAGE CONTAINERS
NO PERSON MAY OPERATE A BOAT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR A HAZARDOUS WAKE
PROPER LIGHTS REQUIRED FOR ALL BOATS
BOATING ACCIDENTS MUST BE REPORTED TO THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

THIS IS A PARTIAL LISTING

CAUTION



NO WAKE
NO FISHING

Rob Salsman's arrow found its target, snagging an alligator gar that measured more than 5 feet. At right, Captain Malfa leads his clients to where the gar are.

hunting. Primitive hunting enthusiasts are flint-knapping their own spear points to stalk eels in Massachusetts and hunt feral hogs in Texas. Silicon Valley CEO-types are attending workshops out in the mountains of California learning how to get back to nature and unlock their inner carnivore. Even Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg got into the primitive hunting game, vowing last summer to only eat meat he personally kills for a year.

My new interest in bow fishing prompted some thoughtful conversations with my fishing buddies. One of them, Jacob Garrett, suggested that perhaps hunters feel that hunting has become too easy, with sophisticated gear like laser scopes and techniques like fly-over hog hunting. Bow fishing and other primitive sports might be a response to our ultra-modern world.

Garrett, a bow fisherman for about a decade, got his schoolyard friend Rob Salsman into the sport just this year. Salsman's reasoning behind the move to try a primitive sport like bow fishing is simple.

"I like fishing and I like hunting. It was the best way to combine the two in the summer," he says. "Besides, there's just more action than sitting and catching a sunburn on a boat all day."

More action is an understatement.

We slowed to our first fishing spot, and the guys started to break out the equipment. Salsman's neon orange line promptly bunched when he fired off a test arrow. Garrett pointed out the rookie mistake and instructed Salsman to wet his line.

Malfa began pointing out the gar, flapping their tails on the surface of the calm morning water. Trophy alligator gar will do a quick roll and disappear as soon as you spot them, making landing one a game of luck and well-



oiled reflexes. A flap and a tap on the water and Garrett's arrow flew after a 3-foot gar. Salsman is seconds behind him, but the shots are too low and the fish is gone.

The trick is to aim below the fish because the surface tension of the water warps the shot's trajectory. You also have to take into account the fish's depth and use the appropriate bow force.

"There's no way I could penetrate a bigger gar without a compound bow with a draw of at least 30 pounds," Garrett explained as he stood with bow drawn.

The other alternative fishing method to gain legislative attention in 2011 is hand fishing, otherwise known as noodling. Noodling, now legalized, involves wading out to chest-deep waters and poking around until you find a hefty catfish resting in a catfish hole. Then you take a breath, dive under and grab it by the mouth and wrestle it up onto your boat.

We made a few jokes about noodling, moved to a different spot and drifted with the current as we hunted. Malfa made casual notes about technique, pointing out fish and suggesting shots. A tail flap and the *fishuu* of an arrow hitting water occasionally broke the

silence as the sun opened its eyes on the tall grass along the riverbanks.

A lull settled over the water. But then a whale of an alligator gar came within an arm's length of our boat, just inches from the surface on the starboard side. Salsman's arrow flew, and he hit it square in the flank as the fish attempted to roll just a split-second too late. The gar started flailing, Salsman started hollering, and we all clambered around to help. Garrett shot the gar again farther down its body so it wouldn't slip off Salsman's arrow. Together they reeled it up to the boat, where Malfa was waiting to pull it up and onto the boat floor.

The gar was as long as I am tall, more than 5 feet from tip to tail. Its crocodile-green scales were gorgeous and altogether unworldly.

We caught a couple of smaller gar (the statewide daily bag limit is one) but none that resembled our party's spectacular morning catch. My personal best was a medium-sized clump of spongy weed, though I did catch an interest in going out bow fishing again, and set up a trip of my own with some friends. I don't know if I'll ever sneak up on a feral hog armed only with my homemade spear and all my mother's prayers, but I'll spend a day on a boat bow fishing anytime. ★





ARE YOU KING OF THE ROOST?

BY BEN REHDER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CLEMENTE GUZMAN

ACING THIS QUIZ ON
TURKEY HUNTING LAWS
WOULD BE A REAL
FEATHER IN YOUR CAP.

TAKE THE
TURKEY QUIZ

SPRING TURKEY HUNTING SEASON STARTS SOON.

ARE YOU READY FOR A SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE HUNT?
TAKE THIS QUIZ TO FIND OUT, AND MAYBE
EVEN LEARN SOMETHING NEW ALONG THE WAY.
FIND THE ANSWERS ON PAGE 39.



1 There are three subspecies of wild turkey found in Texas. Which subspecies is specified on tag No. 2 of a Texas resident hunting license?

2 You have a turkey hunt planned for Saturday afternoon, but you haven't had a chance to get a hunting license yet. So, on Saturday morning, you decide to buy your license online. Will you be able to hunt turkey legally later that day?

3 You have a great hunt and bag two turkeys legally. Can you give one to a friend?

4 What kind of stamp endorsement does a Texas resident need to hunt turkey?

- a. **Migratory game bird stamp**
- b. **Upland game bird stamp**
- c. **Archery stamp**
- d. **An Elvis stamp**

5 You plan to take your 13-year-old son on a turkey hunt with several other children and their parents. Just days before the hunt, one of the other parents mentions that his daughter recently completed a hunter education training course required by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Your son hasn't completed the course. Can he legally hunt?

6 When hunting turkey (or other game animals, except for squirrel) with a bow or crossbow, your projectile must be equipped with a broadhead hunting point. What is the minimum width the broadhead must meet?

7 You are celebrating the taking of a large Rio Grande tom turkey when a game warden arrives to check licenses. You show your bird proudly, and you point to the tag,

where you've filled out the name and location of the property where you are hunting. You've also blacked out the correct month and date of the kill with a ballpoint pen. Think you'll pass the warden's inspection?

8 About 10,000 eastern wild turkeys live in the forests of East Texas. These birds may be hunted in 28 counties, but there are some special regulations. Can you list the regulations?

9 The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department offers many low-cost, family-oriented opportunities to hunt on public lands — including state parks and wildlife management areas — throughout the state. Are you required to wear blaze orange while on these hunts?

10 Do you need an archery stamp endorsement to hunt turkey with a bow or crossbow during the general hunting season?

11 You are about to leave for a turkey hunt when you realize you can't find your hunting license. What should you do?

- a. **Go buy another one.**
- b. **Hunt without your license. If you happen to get checked by a game warden, he or she will be able to access records that show you purchased a license.**
- c. **Get a replacement for the original.**
- d. **Attempt to somehow place the blame on your spouse.**

12 You've just finished hunting with a group. You didn't get a turkey, but several of your fellow hunters did. They offer you a few feathers as a memento of the hunt. Can you accept the feathers and possess them legally?

13 Your cousin from Louisiana is planning to join you for a three-day deer hunt in December. He wants the option to take a turkey if he sees one. What type of license does he need to buy?

- a. **Nonresident five-day special hunting license**
- b. **Nonresident special hunting license**
- c. **Nonresident general hunting license, with an upland game bird stamp**
- d. **Nonresident spring turkey license**

14 The general spring turkey season hasn't opened yet, but a friend of yours mentions that his son bagged a trophy gobbler the previous weekend. What is the possible explanation for this?

15 What was the bag limit for turkey in 1903?

- a. **Three per season.**
- b. **One in the spring, one in the fall.**
- c. **None. They couldn't be hunted.**
- d. **25 per day.**

16 You're hunting for mule deer near the Davis Mountains when you spot a turkey that looks a little different than the common Rio Grande subspecies you're used to seeing. This bird is a bit larger, with white-tipped tail feathers. You come to the conclusion that it is a Merriam's turkey. You hadn't planned on shooting a turkey, but this is such a beautiful bird, you consider taking advantage of this chance sighting. Can you shoot this bird legally?

**TURN THE PAGE
FOR ANSWERS**



HERE ARE THE ANSWERS

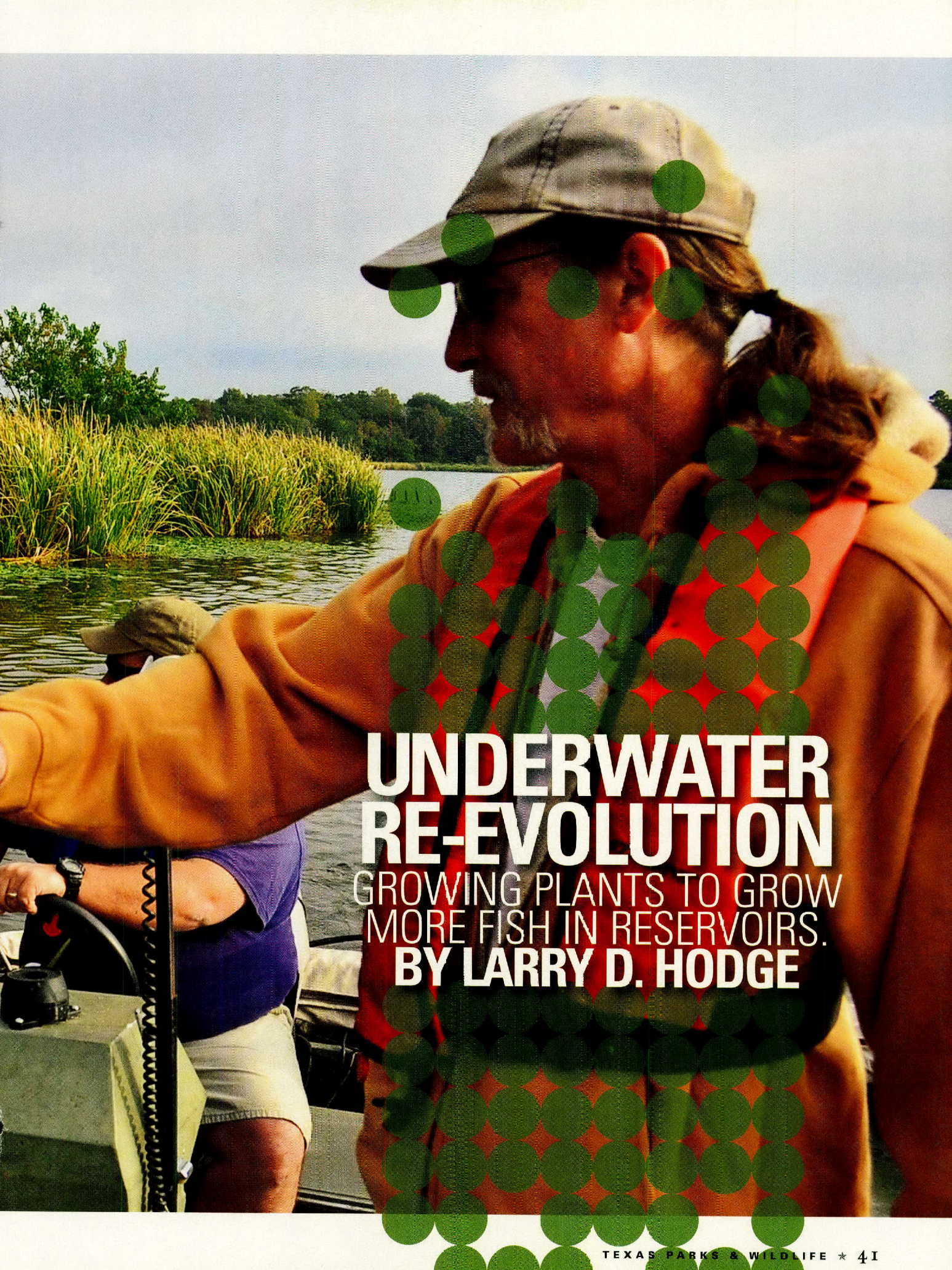
The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department reminds readers that the answers to these questions are based on the scenarios presented. If a scenario changes, the answer may change. The provisions of the law governing game animals are subject to changes by the Texas Legislature and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission; therefore, answers to these questions are subject to change. The answers were verified by Jason Hardin, TPWD upland game bird specialist. To study the hunting laws in full, visit the TPWD website at www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

ANSWERS:

- 1** The Rio Grande turkey, which is by far the most populous and widest-ranging wild turkey subspecies in our state. The other two subspecies with populations in Texas are the eastern turkey and the Merriam's turkey.
- 2** Buying a hunting license online offers convenience and flexibility, and in some cases, you can use your license immediately. But if you are planning to hunt a species that requires tagging (i.e. deer or turkey) you will either have to wait until you receive your license in the mail or purchase your license in person at more than 1,700 locations across the state.
- 3** Sure, you can give all or part of your legally taken turkey to another person, but you'll need to provide your friend with a wildlife resource document (WRD). The WRD — which includes contact information and other pertinent details — must remain with the turkey until it reaches its final destination and is finally processed. You can obtain a copy of a WRD in the *Outdoor Annual* or on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website.
- 4** Upland game bird stamp. You also need that stamp to hunt pheasant, quail or chachalaca. Exceptions: Holders of a nonresident spring turkey license, youth license, lifetime hunting license or super combo license don't need an upland game bird stamp to hunt turkey.
- 5** Anyone born on or after Sept. 2, 1971, who wishes to hunt in Texas must successfully complete the hunter education training course. But your son can still hunt, with the proper accompaniment. The accompanying person must have a Texas hunting license, must be at least 17 and must have passed the training course (or be exempt). Your son must remain within normal voice control of the other person during the hunt.
- 6** Your broadhead — fixed or mechanical — must be at least 7/8 of an inch in width and must have at least two cutting edges.
- 7** You might receive a citation. The month and date must be cut out, not blacked out.
- 8** Shotguns are the only legal firearm that may be used to hunt eastern turkey; no rifles or handguns. Bows and crossbows are lawful. Hunting over bait is not allowed. Turkeys must be taken to a check station within 24 hours after they are killed. Harvested turkeys may be field-dressed but must otherwise remain intact. Eastern turkeys may be hunted in the spring, and the bag limit is one.
- 9** Depends on what and where you're hunting. In most cases, when you are hunting turkey or migratory game birds on state land, blaze orange — also known as hunter orange — is not required. To learn more about these public hunts, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/public.
- 10** No, you need the archery stamp endorsement only if you are hunting turkey (or deer) with a bow or crossbow during an archery-only open season.
- 11** Get a replacement. Licenses and stamp endorsements that have been lost or destroyed can be replaced at any license sales location. You'll need to sign an affidavit and pay a small fee. Under no circumstances should you hunt turkey without a license.
- 12** Yes, you may possess the feathers legally, and the feathers may be sold or purchased, assuming the turkeys were harvested legally. Keep in mind that the feathers and other parts of protected birds — hawks, owls, eagles and almost all other nongame birds and songbirds — may not be possessed or sold.
- 13** Your cousin needs a nonresident general hunting license, with an upland game bird stamp. The special licenses listed are not valid for deer or turkey, and, of course, the spring turkey license isn't valid in the fall.
- 14** Your friend's son probably took part in the youth-only spring season, which provides expanded turkey hunting opportunities for licensed hunters 16 years of age or younger. There are also youth hunting seasons for deer, squirrel and waterfowl.
- 15** Amazingly, it was 25 per day. By the late 19th century, all subspecies of turkey in Texas had been virtually wiped out by overhunting. So, in 1903, a bag limit of 25 per day was established, and the season was shortened to five months. No surprise that these extremely liberal regulations — and few game wardens to enforce them — did little to reverse the decline in numbers. Tighter laws enacted in 1919, along with landowner cooperation and restocking efforts by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, helped the Rio Grande and eastern turkey populations make a strong comeback in their respective ranges.
- 16** As with Rio Grande and eastern turkeys, heavy hunting pressure on Merriam's turkeys more than a hundred years ago took its toll on this subspecies. Now, after restocking efforts, there are a few small populations of Merriam's turkeys living in isolated pockets of West Texas and the Panhandle. In a county with an open fall season, you may harvest a Merriam's turkey (tagging it with a Rio Grande turkey tag) if you are hunting legally in an area that also has Rio Grande turkeys. ★



TPWD fisheries biologist Richard Ott surveys enclosures protecting founder colonies of native plants on Lake Bellwood in Tyler. Lake Bellwood was the proving ground as biologists developed techniques for establishing native plants in reservoirs.



UNDERWATER RE-EVOLUTION

GROWING PLANTS TO GROW
MORE FISH IN RESERVOIRS.
BY LARRY D. HODGE



This page: Native aquatic plants are grown in nurseries before being transplanted into lakes, where they will jump-start the food chain.

Opposite: Fisheries biologist Kevin Storey carries plastic pots that will be filled with plants.

A REVOLUTION IS BREWING AMONG BIOLOGISTS MANAGING FRESHWATER FISHERIES IN RESERVOIRS. OR, PUT ANOTHER WAY, A RE-EVOLUTION OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IS TAKING ROOT.

RATHER THAN APPLYING A TOP-DOWN APPROACH TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BY STOCKING FISH, BIOLOGISTS ARE GOING BOTTOM-UP BY STOCKING PLANTS AND PUTTING IN FISH ATTRACTORS TO CREATE HABITAT, SORT OF AN "IF WE BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME" APPROACH.

The movement to improve fish habitat in reservoirs falls on particularly fertile ground in Texas, where hundreds of constructed reservoirs dominate the landscape in a state that has only one natural lake of significant size but more inland water than any other state (except Alaska).

Dave Terre, chief of research and management for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Inland Fisheries Division, is a leader in the nationwide movement to improve fish habitat in reservoirs.

"About four years ago people from

state wildlife agencies across the United States had the idea of creating a habitat partnership focused on reservoirs," he explains. "That movement became the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP). The goal is to improve fish habitat in reservoir systems, including the river above and the tailrace below, recognizing that you can't always just do something in the reservoir and expect a positive change."

Reservoirs are unnatural systems, often lacking in native aquatic plants. Darning a stream and flooding the terrestrial habitat around it creates a bizarre sub-

merged waterscape of dead trees, brush, old roadbeds and whatever else was built on the land. Decaying vegetation releases nutrients into the water that jump-start the fishery and maintain it for a time, but reservoir fisheries typically decline over time as the flooded vegetation degrades. Stocking fish into this alien world creates a fishery, but one not likely to be sustainable or able to reach its full potential.

The importance of plants in reservoirs is difficult to overstate.

"The function of plants is to capture sunlight and turn it into food," says Richard Ott, a fisheries biologist for the



Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "Everything starts with aquatic plants. Some are food for fish directly, but more importantly, they are also food for insects and invertebrates that are eaten by small fish that are eaten by big fish and then by us. Plants provide cover for small fish to hide in and grow. They generate oxygen, buffer changes in pH, slow wave action and filter water."

Plants do much more for reservoirs, their watersheds and the people who live there than just provide for the needs of fish.

"Tying down the shoreline and reservoir bottom with native vegetation

reduces erosion and the amount of suspended sediment in the water," TPWD fisheries biologist Mark Webb points out. "Because plants are taking nutrients out of the water, algal growth is reduced, which helps improve the quality of drinking water. Once well-established, native plants give a great amount of benefit for low cost."

Native plants also help fight invasive nonnative species such as hydrilla.

"We try to fill a niche," says Ott. "If you have a bare piece of ground and want to keep it that way, you have to be doing something all the time to kill stuff trying to fill that open niche. If we

can fill that niche with native species, it makes it harder for exotic species to get established. Waterfront property owners may object to having any plants, but they should understand that plants outside a bulkhead area dissipate wave energy, which means they don't have to replace expensive bulkheads as often. Once they see native plants as being a lesser evil than exotic species, they get on our side."

Partnerships are key to the effort.

"Funding these projects is a huge problem for many states," Terre observes. "The only way we can do that is through partners. We created a 501(c)3

"EVERYTHING STARTS WITH AQUATIC PLANTS. SOME ARE FOOD FOR FISH DIRECTLY, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY ARE ALSO FOOD FOR INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES THAT ARE EATEN BY SMALL FISH THAT ARE EATEN BY BIG FISH AND THEN BY US."



TPWD Inland Fisheries staff spent a day potting and planting plants at a small impoundment at the Big Brown Mine near Fairfield. These plants, grown temporarily in wading pools, were then used to establish founder colonies in other reservoirs.

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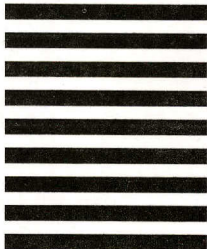
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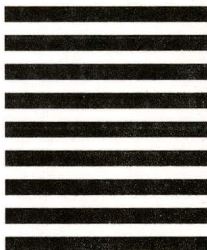
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corporation, Friends of Reservoirs, to be the financial arm of the RFHP. We are reaching out to organizations such as bass clubs, watershed groups, homeowners associations, individuals — anybody who is interested in improving fish habitat to benefit water quality, fish and the quality of life of the American people.”

Ott and Webb have been in the forefront of efforts to introduce native aquatic plants into Texas reservoirs, following the lead of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Michael Smart, head of the Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility.

“When Dr. Smart suggested that we should stock native aquatic plants for the same reasons we stock fish, we wanted to kick ourselves for not having seen the obvious,” Ott smiles. “You have to ask yourself when you stock fish: Where will they live and what will they eat?”

“There are aquatic plants native to Texas that will survive in reservoirs,” he continues. “These plants lived in wetland areas and backwaters of streams. But you can’t plant them just anywhere. In reservoirs you have to deal with fluctuations in water levels. Plants have to be matched to the water depth and clarity they need. They have to get sufficient sunlight to grow, but they can’t be planted so shallow they will be dry at the times they need to be growing.”

Using plants from Smart’s Lewisville facility, Webb and Ott experimented on seven Texas reservoirs that represent a cross-section of conditions across the state to develop a list of native Texas plants that will survive under a variety of conditions. They also experimented with techniques to aid survival of these plants

under reservoir conditions different from those of natural lakes.

Like Smart, they decided that a founder-colony approach works best. Plants are raised in a nursery in plastic pots before being transplanted to a reservoir, where they are enclosed in a wire cage to prevent being eaten by turtles, fish or land-based herbivores. Over time the plants spread outside the cages.

After this first phase, biologist made plantings in Lake Bellwood, a former water-supply lake for the city of Tyler, to demonstrate what they had learned.

Stocking plants in reservoirs throughout Texas presents a tremendous challenge. The first hurdle to overcome is establishing a reliable and affordable supply of plants. Nursery facilities have been set up at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, at the Lake Waco wetlands and on San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) property at Lake Conroe. The latter furnishes the model for how the Friends of Reservoirs process is envisioned to work.

“The Seven Coves Bass Club on Lake Conroe has been one of our major partners,” Webb says. “Seven Coves members approached me to ask about stocking fish, and I steered them toward native vegetation. It was not a tough sell. They are really conservation-minded. I explained that the lake has good water quality, good nutrients and good spawning areas, but it did not have good habitat for small fish to hide in. Club members saw we had a huge increase in our bass production after we planted some shoreline vegetation, and they really got excited.”

Former Seven Coves President Ron

Gunter recalls: “We got a grant through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation that let us create a native aquatic plant nursery at the SJRA Lake Conroe property. The SJRA donated the land. We purchased the construction materials and built raceways for the nursery and got plants from the Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility. We put half the first shipment of plants in the lake and kept the second half for seed stock.”

Involvement with the project brought public exposure that helped increase Seven Coves membership from 17 people in 2005 to nearly 70 at present. Seven Coves Bass Club is now the first organization in the nation to be granted chapter membership in the Friends of Reservoirs.

“We intend to continue with the native plant restoration project in hopes we can sustain what we consider to be an excellent fishery in Lake Conroe,” Gunter says. “The payoff is knowing that we’ve done something that can make a change for future generations. We’re not looking for immediate dividends; we’re trying to make it possible for our children and grandchildren to enjoy Lake Conroe like we’ve been able to.”

Other projects carried out by the Seven Coves Bass Club include a grass carp removal tournament with the assistance of the Texas Bow Anglers Association, the installation of more than 700 cinder-block-and-bamboo fish attractors and the introduction of native plants along miles of shoreline.

The fish attractors and the plants are two sides of the same coin. “The spider blocks are the temporary habitat; the aquatic plants will be the permanent

“YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN YOU STOCK FISH:
WHERE WILL THEY LIVE AND WHAT WILL THEY EAT?”



"THE PAYOFF IS KNOWING THAT WE'VE DONE SOMETHING THAT CAN MAKE A CHANGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS."



The TPWD staff loads native plants into wire enclosures so the plants can get established without being eaten by fish and other animals. The plants will provide habitat and food for fish.

habitat,” Gunter says.

Funding projects through the Friends of Reservoirs allows local groups to raise money under the organization’s 501(c)3 umbrella, making it easier to attract corporate donors. All funds raised by a group are earmarked for the group’s projects and are not shared with anyone else, which helps maintain local control.

“The Friends of Reservoirs is a great deal in that regard,” says Gunter. “Check it out and then get out and beat the bushes for funds.”

It’s often said that “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” but with water, what happens in a watershed ends up in a reservoir. Friends of Reservoirs projects will coordinate programs targeting land management practices in watersheds to improve the quality and quantity of runoff into reservoirs.

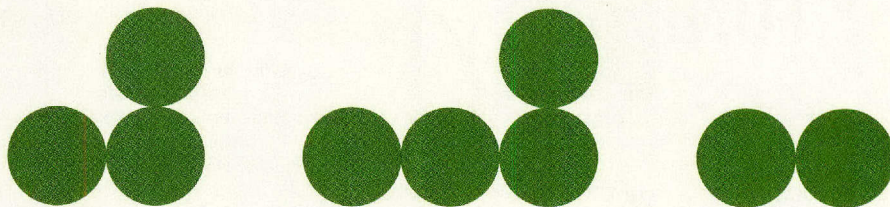
“Re-establishing native vegetation in Lake Conroe will have some beneficial effect from the standpoint of water quality,” says SJRA Lake Conroe division manager Blake Kellum, “but primarily what we recognize is benefit to the ecology of the reservoir. We view ourselves as stewards of the reservoir and want to take a balanced approach to the management of that resource. We are trying to put as much effort into native plant restoration as we did trying to control invasive species on the front side.”

It’s a team effort. “Scaling up for big projects will require more equipment

and labor,” says Ott. “That’s where volunteer groups can really help out. If a group wants to take on a project, we have the expertise and the plants. If they can provide the people, it becomes fairly simple. Historically, that’s how we’ve manipulated fish populations, by regulations directing harvest to the size fish we need to have removed. All along, anglers have been the ones pulling the plow while we walk along behind directing where the plow should go.”

The Friends of Reservoirs program makes it possible for everyone interested in a lake to help pull the plow. Anglers, boaters, area property and business owners, water utilities and consumers and anyone involved in water-based industries will benefit from improved water quality, control of invasive aquatic species and reduced maintenance and operation costs from lower rates of erosion and sedimentation.

“There are already lots of groups out there working with their fisheries biologists planting native vegetation or placing brush piles,” Terre says. “All of those could be a Friends of Reservoirs chapter. This is not a governmental organization, but rather partners from across the United States who are interested in improving fish habitat. Reservoir partnerships are the way all those people will connect to work with each other. I really believe we can make a difference.” ★



WANT TO GROW MORE FISH?

Setting up a chapter of the Friends of Reservoirs requires working with your local fisheries biologist, completion of an application form, payment of a membership application fee of \$25 and annual dues of \$25. Other membership categories are available.

Learn how to set up a local chapter of Friends of Reservoirs: www.waterhabitatlife.org. For more information, contact Dave Terre at (512) 389-4855.

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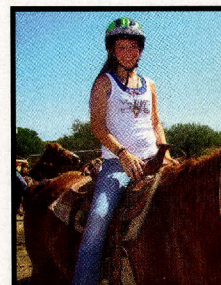
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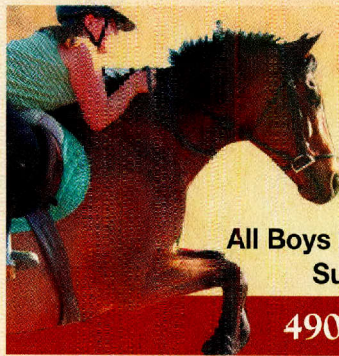
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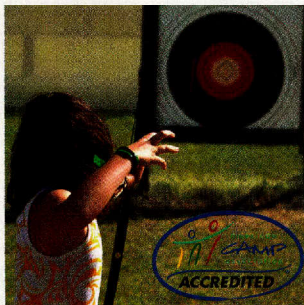
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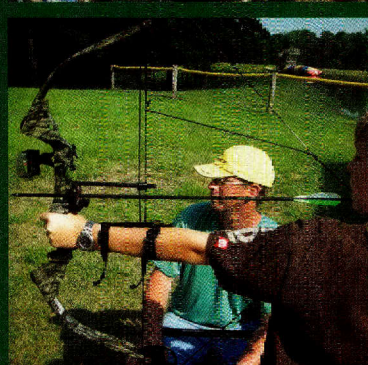
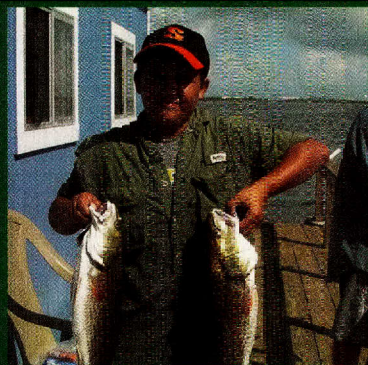
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(continued from Page 23)

The barn is still in use. The house is currently unoccupied; historians are restoring two rooms to their original condition. WPA workers also planted trees, built roads and constructed dikes to help retain water in the saline lakes. A small exhibit shows the tools they had to work with: a wheelbarrow and a horse-drawn Fresno Scrapper. "The rest was done by hand," says Simpson.

Walking back to the visitor center, we lean into a strong wind that threatens to push us backward. "Does it blow like this all the time?" I ask.

"No," says Simpson, "but it does it a lot." We'd figured on camping here tonight, but we're having second thoughts. Cooking dinner in this gale would not be fun — and there's that storm forecast. We decide to drive into town and get a room at the Heritage House Inn.

Heading out, we spy an ornate box turtle crossing the road. It seems untroubled by our truck, but when I lean out the window with a camera, the turtle speeds up and fades into the roadside vegetation.

The storm hits around 2 a.m. Daylight brings chill gray skies and puddles on the parking lot. No problem: we brought jackets.

After a visit to the mule monument, we take a ride up U.S. 84 to Farwell, the last town this side of the Texas-New Mexico state line. We find the Apple Shack, a modern country store with baskets of red apples and shelves stocked with sauces and jams. The front counter tempts us with free samples. We leave with a bottle of jalapeño ketchup and a jar of strawberry preserves.

Back in Muleshoe, we lunch at the Dinner Bell, which has a noon buffet every day of the week. Today it's fried chicken, mashed potatoes, enchiladas, tostadas, a salad bar, slices of watermelon and a pink cake with cherries on top. The regular menu features sandwiches and char-broiled steaks. I order a patty melt, while my spouse gets a burger and fries. Our plates contain more than enough food to fortify us for an afternoon of sightseeing.

The Muleshoe Heritage Center began with a Santa Fe Railway depot. The station closed in 1982. The railroad offered to donate the depot if the community would pay to move it. Two organizations were born: a Student Community Action Club and the nonprofit Muleshoe Heritage Foundation. The county donated a plot of land, and volunteers got busy fixing up the depot as an office and community meeting hall.

"We thought it was the only building we would have," says Dolores Harvey, hostess and tour guide at the Heritage Center. It didn't turn out that way. When the restored depot was dedicated in 1987, the foundation had also acquired the Muleshoe Ranch cookhouse and a two-story house from the John N. Janes ranch east of town. Today, the center is a village of historical structures, most relocated from somewhere in Bailey County. The display includes a one-room schoolhouse, a WPA-era granary, a half dugout and a boarding house that hosted prospective land buyers in the early 1900s.

Buildings look almost lived-in with period furniture and décor, historically appropriate table settings and vintage readers on the schoolhouse desks. Some items come with first-hand memories attached. A former student built a clay model of the outhouse that once stood on the school grounds. A woman who lived with her grandpar-

ents in the Figure 4 Ranch house donated her old bedroom suite, with the bedspread she made as a 4-H project years ago.

The Janes house is a grand place with a ballroom upstairs and a walk-in safe in the basement. It was one of the first homes in the area to have indoor bathrooms. Some original fixtures are still there, as is the original kitchen sink. The house was built in 1915 from a mail-order kit. Pre-cut lumber and other components were shipped by rail and assembled on site. Several years after acquiring the house, the foundation located a copy of the original sales order: total cost \$2,763.53.

Volunteers have done much of the work at the Heritage Center, but the organizations that support it have also raised money to buy additional land and finance future projects. One major fundraiser is the Tour de Muleshoe, a bike ride held each year on the second Saturday in June. It's a ride, not a race, Harvey says. Last year, more than 200 riders paid the \$25 entry fee.

Leal's Mexican Restaurant is a Muleshoe landmark. It grew out of Jesse and Irma Leal's tortilla factory in the 1950s and was the first in a family-owned chain that now operates restaurants in Amarillo, Plainview, Henrietta and Clovis, N.M. Locals tell us it's a good place to eat, but we never get there. Daylight is waning, and we want to see what's happening at the wildlife refuge after last night's rain.

Yesterday's wind has settled to a refreshing breeze. As we approach Paul's Lake, a flock of ducks rises from the upstream side of the dike. The depth gauge reads just less than 6 inches. The lower lake is a wide, flat pool, so still that clouds are reflected on its mirror-like surface.

The campground contains a dozen picnic tables set at intervals around a circular drive, three water faucets, barbecue grills of various sizes and two sturdy outhouses. There are a few small trees, none big enough to provide shade, but we don't need shade just now.

Our weekend wildlife tally includes a covey of barely seen quail, a Harris's hawk, three box turtles, a half-dozen prairie dogs, some unidentified ducks, a fast-moving coyote, one hairy tarantula and several colonies of red harvester ants going quietly about their business.

Retreating clouds fan across the eastern horizon, turning brilliant pink in the last rays of the setting sun. Stars appear in the clear sky overhead. There's dampness in the draw below and a smell of sage on the air. I could stay here for days, if the wind didn't blow too hard. ★

DETAILS:

- **Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, 806-946-3341, www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/muleshoe**
- **Muleshoe Heritage Center, 806-272-5873, www.muleshoeheritagefoundation.org**
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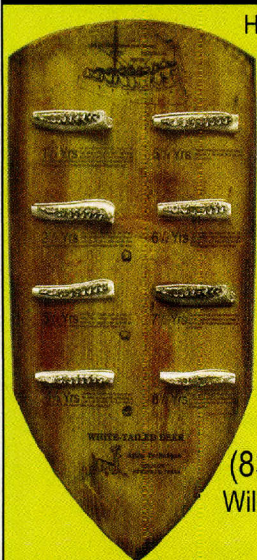
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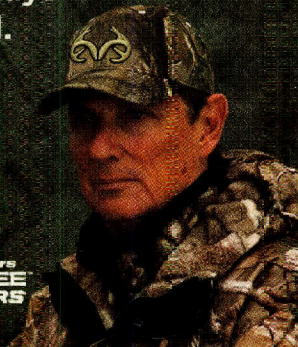
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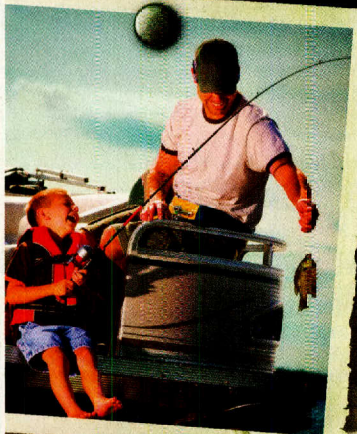
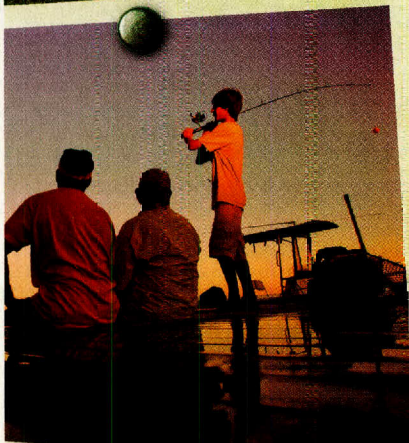
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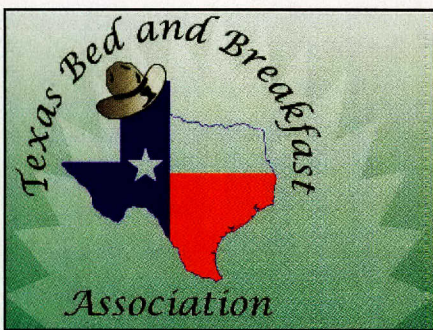
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Texas Parks & Wildlife photographer Chase A. Fountain had just wrapped up a session of photographing wintering sandhill cranes at upper Paul's Lake in the Panhandle's Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge and was hiking back to his truck when he was awestruck by the amber glow of the setting sun. As he was setting up to take a photo of the sunset, a band of sandhill cranes entered into his frame, completing the shot perfectly.

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