

TEXAS TRAVEL Log

TEXAS IN THE PRESS

The September issue of **Audubon** magazine ranks the **Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail** as **one of the best in the nation**. Although 19 birding trails are listed in the article, the Texas trail is one of only six destinations honored with a feature write-up. Here's a sample from the story: "Often called the great-granddaddy of birding trails, the Texas coastal trail was the first—and at approximately 2,110 miles, it's still the biggest—birding trail around."

The piece also mentions **Texas' two new wildlife trails**, which are scheduled to debut by early 2003. The **High Plains trail** in the Panhandle and the **Heart of Texas trail**, which stretches from Central Texas down to Laredo, will provide travelers with a road map to dozens of the areas' top spots for viewing birds and other wildlife.

Texas Parks and Wildlife has also begun work on a fourth trail—the **Prairies and Piney Woods Wildlife Trail**, which will be completed in 2004. For more information on any of the trails, see www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails.

Four Texas hotels scored a spot on **Travel + Leisure** magazine's list of the **top 100 hotels** in the United States and Canada. The results, based on a reader poll, appeared in the August issue.

- 17. **Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas**
- 29. **Havana Riverwalk Inn, San Antonio**
- 79. **Four Seasons Hotel, Austin**
- 80. **Hotel Crescent Court, Dallas**

PLACES

Five counties in Deep East Texas have joined forces to produce a **Fall Foliage Trail brochure** to guide visitors to some of the area's most scenic spots. According to Pam Fitch of the Nacogdoches CVB, the guide—which was first produced last year—was such a success that all the partners agreed to offer it again.

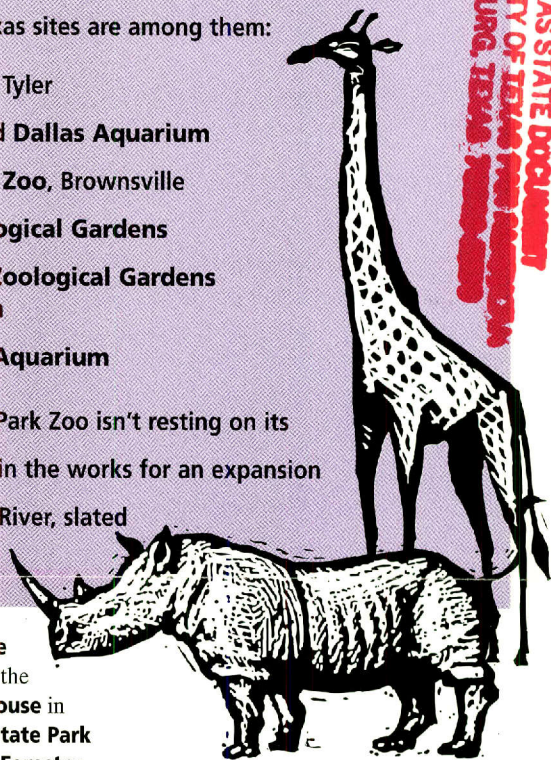
In addition to a map, the guide provides visitors with a list of attractions along the route:

ZOO NEWS Congratulations to Waco's Cameron Park Zoo, which recently became a member of the **World Association of Zoos and Aquariums**. According to zoo officials, Cameron Park Zoo is the only small facility in Texas to be recognized by this world-class organization. Fewer than 200 zoos and aquariums worldwide are WAZA members.

The following Texas sites are among them:

- ◆ **Caldwell Zoo, Tyler**
- ◆ **Dallas Zoo and Dallas Aquarium**
- ◆ **Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville**
- ◆ **Houston Zoological Gardens**
- ◆ **San Antonio Zoological Gardens and Aquarium**
- ◆ **Dallas World Aquarium**

The Cameron Park Zoo isn't resting on its laurels. Plans are in the works for an expansion along the Brazos River, slated to open in 2004.



TEXAS STATE DOCUMENT
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Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site near Alto, the **Shelby County Courthouse in Center**, **Mission Tejas State Park** near Weches, the **Texas Forestry Museum** in Lufkin, **Millard's Crossing Historic Village** in Nacogdoches, and **Mission Dolores** near San Augustine.

This year the Texas Forest Service predicts that the area's fall color will peak Nov. 17–30. For a free copy of the guide, contact any of the five sponsors:

- ◆ **Lufkin CVB**, 1-800-409-5659
- ◆ **Houston County Chamber of Commerce**, 1-888-269-2359
- ◆ **Nacogdoches CVB**, 1-888-564-7351
- ◆ **San Augustine County Chamber of Commerce**, (936) 275-3610
- ◆ **Shelby County Chamber of Commerce**, 1-800-854-5328

Camera crews with the **Food Network** and the **Travel Channel** hit Central Texas in September. For its popular show *The Best Of*, the Food Network taped segments in several **Austin**

locations: the **Driskill Grill**, **Hoover's Cooking**, **Penny's Pastries**, and **O's Campus Café**. The crew also hit the **Dorsett 221 Truck Stop** in Buda, **Schoepf's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que** in Killeen, and **Storm's Drive-In** in Lampasas.

The Travel Channel focused on two Austin hostelries for its *Great Hotels* show. **Hotel San José** and the **Driskill** enjoyed the spotlight, but the crew also shot footage at **Stubb's Bar-B-Q**, the **Capitol**, **Barton Springs**, and of the **bat flight** from the **Congress Avenue bridge**.

PARTNERSHIP

The **South West Texas Tourism Partnership** has been launched by businesses and organizations in Crockett, Schleicher, and Sutton counties, plus adjacent parts of Edwards, Kimble, and Tom Green counties. Towns in

TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

from *TxDOT's Travel Information Centers*

DENISON T.I.C. The center's grounds became the site of a "Field of Flags" memorial the week of Sept. 11. Law-enforcement officers, firefighters, and paramedics from both Texas and Oklahoma set up more than 3,000 American flags—one for each person lost in the attacks. At the end of the week, the flags were distributed to the public. According to travel counselor Devon Armstrong, the temporary memorial drew crowds of locals and travelers alike, resulting in many extra visitors at the center.

WASKOM T.I.C. Recently, after a bad wreck near Longview, I-20 was closed to traffic for several hours. The helpful staff at the center printed out directions to help travelers negotiate the detour. One couple took a look at the printed instructions, which said to take I-20 W. to Texas 135 N. to FM 1252 W., etc. As the woman read the directions aloud, she said, "After we get to Texas 135 we tune our radio to FM 1252, and they'll tell us where the detour is?" Her husband laughed and said, "No, honey—the FM is a road! It stands for 'farm to market.'" Either she's a city girl or she's not from Texas.

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

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the area include **Eldorado**, **Ozona**, and **Sonora**. The partnership's goal is to attract tourists to the region, and by working together, encourage them to stay longer in the area.

"This coalition is a **model of regional cooperation** and provides an excellent example for other chambers and groups to follow," says Andy Skadberg of Texas A&M's Recreation, Park and Tourism Department.

The group has adopted a professionally designed logo and a slogan—"Experience the Texas Way of Life." Among other projects, the partnership is also working on a Web site, a map to direct travelers to the region's services and attractions, and a Texas Friendly Hospitality Program. The partnership grew out of a Texas Department of Agriculture study designed to improve rural economic development in Texas.

For more information on the partnership, call (915) 392-3737.

MULTICULTURAL GUIDE

The **Greater Houston CVB** has published the **Greater Houston Multicultural Guide**—a 64-page, color publication that celebrates Houston's diversity and international flair. Divided into five sections, the guide describes Houston events

and attractions with ties to Africa, the Americas and the Islands, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The publication is a directory to some of Houston's most colorful offerings—festivals, cultural organizations, historic sites, performing arts, dining, and more.

Free copies of the guide are available at the Houston Visitors Center, located at 901 Bagby, or by calling (713) 437-5200 or 1-800-4HOUSTON.

ALL ABOARD

Galveston welcomed its first **passenger train** in nearly eight years on Labor Day weekend. An estimated 3,000 visitors used the service—which links **League City** and Galveston—over the weekend. The train, known as the Texas GulfLiner, is an Amtrak-operated charter service that will run only on selected holiday weekends. This experiment with passenger rail, scheduled to run through 2003, is designed to ease traffic on the Galveston Causeway.

Local partners supporting the rail experiment are: the Galveston Railroad Museum, the Galveston Historical Foundation, the Galveston Chamber of Commerce, the City of Galveston, the Galveston Park Board, the Historic Downtown/Strand

Partnership, the Galveston Economic Development Alliance, the University of Texas Medical Branch, and the Galveston CVB.

Discussions are under way about running the train service during Dickens on the Strand, Dec. 7–8. For more information about the train, call 1-877-425-7245.

MAZE CRAZE

Human mazes are cropping up in cornfields across the state, according to the Sept. 8 *Dallas Morning News*. Even in parts of Texas where corn isn't typically grown as a cash crop, farmers are cutting labyrinth-type mazes into cornfields and inviting paying visitors to get lost. According to the *News*, there are at least seven corn mazes operating in Texas this season, all hoping to cash in on a trend that caught on in Pennsylvania in 1993:

- ◆ **The Texas Maize at Dewberry Farm, Brookshire.** (281) 934-3276; www.texasmaze.com.
- ◆ **Moore Farms, Bullard.** (903) 894-1030; www.moorefarms.com.



MATAGORDA MARSHLANDS Thanks to a \$2 million grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife, the **Lower Colorado River Authority** will develop a new coastal park near Matagorda. The 1,598-acre **Matagorda Nature Park and Preserve** should open in 2004. Development will begin in 2003, and ultimately the park will offer hiking and paddling trails, wildlife-viewing platforms, fishing piers, a boardwalk, an environmental-learning center, lodging, RV camping, and a marina. But the vast majority of the parklands, including its ecologically valuable marshes, will remain undeveloped as a preserve. According to the LCRA's Bill McCann, the agency's Canyon of the Eagles Lodge and Nature Park will serve as a model for much of the planning at the new park.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife funding comes from its regional grant program, which is designed to encourage local partners to cooperate in developing major regional projects. In addition to LCRA, the regional partners involved in the park are Matagorda County, Matagorda Independent School District, Boling Independent School District, Port of Bay City Authority, Wharton Junior College, and Texas A&M University Sea Grant Program.

- ◆ **The Maze in De Leon.** (254) 893-2355; www.cornfieldmaze.com.
- ◆ **South Texas Maze, Hondo.** (830) 741-3968; www.cornfieldmaze.com.
- ◆ **Atldo Farms, Lubbock.** (806) 787-4222; www.cornfieldmaze.com.
- ◆ **The Maze, near Rockwall.** (903) 527-1133; www.zmaza.com.
- ◆ **Amazing Fun Mazes, Snyder.** (915) 573-4136.

This new form of "agritainment" is drawing visitors to rural areas. Many of the farms offer additional diversions, including scavenger hunts, petting zoos, hayrides, barrel trains and mini-mazes made of hay bales. Farmers also use the opportunity to educate kids about agriculture. The *News* reports that some mazes attract busloads of schoolchildren.

Although the season varies from farm to farm, most of these mazes will be open through the end of October or November.

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

In August TxDOT awarded the contract for the state's "Don't Mess with Texas" litter-prevention campaign to Tuerff-Davis EnviroMedia. The Austin-based advertising agency has held the contract since 1998 and has been responsible for redefining the image of the campaign.

Did you know that several travel-industry groups have signed on as **Don't Mess with Texas Partners?**

- ◆ **Schlitterbahn Waterpark Resort**
- ◆ **Eastex Canoe Trails**
- ◆ **Rolling Thunder Raceway**
- ◆ **Sabine County CVB**
- ◆ **TexasHiker.com**
- ◆ **Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce**

Of course all of us in the travel business have a vested interest in keeping Texas beautiful, but these groups have made it a commitment. For more information about becoming a partner, see www.dontmesswithtexas.org/partners.php or call (512) 486-5911.

LONE STAR LEGACY

Texas Parks and Wildlife is celebrating **Lone Star Legacy Weekend** Oct. 19–20 at more than 120 state parks and historic sites statewide. Many sites offer special activities—including fishing contests, concerts, living-history demonstrations, nature tours, and more. Park entry fees are waived during the event, but donations are accepted for the Lone Star Legacy campaign, which benefits the parks.

For more info about events taking place that weekend, see www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/tpwcal/lsl.htm.

OOPS!

Due to a printing error, part of one story in the September issue of *Texas Travel Log* was illegible. Here's a repeat of the unreadable information.

On Dec. 2 at 8 a.m., TxDOT will begin accepting applications from cities and tourism organizations interested in **free exhibit space** at one of the **Texas Travel Information Centers**. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until Dec. 20 at 5 p.m. CST. The next display period will be March–August 2003. For more information, and to download an application, see www.dot.state.tx.us/insdot/org/chart/trv/trvticdisplays.htm. Or call the Travel Services office at (512) 486-5800.

MUSEUM NEWS

Midland's **Petroleum Museum** will break ground Oct. 22 on its **new \$7.5 million, 19,000-square-foot Transportation Wing**. The centerpiece of the new wing will be the **Chaparral Gallery**, soon to be home to seven race cars built by the legendary Jim Hall. Hall, born in Abilene, revolutionized auto racing with the Chaparral cars he engineered, built, and drove in the 1960s. According to the museum, Hall's innovations—including the aerodynamic wing, ground effects, and

GARDEN TAKES FLIGHT Austin's Lady Bird Johnson

Wildflower Center will hold a grand opening for its new **Ann and O.J. Weber Butterfly Garden** Oct. 13. While some places have butterfly houses, the Wildflower Center's butterfly habitat will be an open-air, outdoor garden featuring about 300 butterfly-friendly plant species.

The visual centerpiece for the new area is the newly **restored 1885 carriage house**, now home to the **Margaret and Eugene McDermott Learning Center**. The historic structure, which was recently moved to the Wildflower Center's grounds, will house exhibits and provide space for meetings and a variety of visitor activities.

The Wildflower Center is at 4801 La Crosse Ave.; (512) 292-4200; www.wildflower.org.



lightweight materials—transformed both auto racing and passenger-car safety and fuel efficiency.

Construction should be complete by late 2003. The Petroleum Museum is at 1500 I-20 West; (915) 683-4403; www.petroleummuseum.org.

Dozens of Texas museums marked the anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, by participating in a program called *Museums Celebrate America's Freedoms: A Day of Remembrance*. The nationwide event, organized by the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, emphasized how museums provide us with places to examine our freedom to assemble, freedom to inquire, freedom to express ideas, and more.

The **Texas Association of Museums** promoted the effort by signing on as one of eight supporting organizations nationwide. In addition to offering special events and exhibits, many museums offered free admission on Sept. 11.

TEXAS TRIVIA

Who were the "Old Eighteen"?

You've probably heard of the Gonzales "Come and Take It" cannon—which was at the center of the conflict that led to the first action in the Texas Revolution on Oct. 2, 1835. Back in 1831, Mexican officials loaned the settlers in Gonzales a small cannon for protection from hostile Indians. Toward the end of September 1835, when tensions were mounting between Anglo colonists and the Mexican government, Mexican troops arrived to retrieve the cannon. The "Old Eighteen" were the Gonzales settlers who held the Mexican soldiers at bay while others rode for reinforcements. Determined to keep possession of the cannon, the reinforced Texans attacked the Mexican troops—who, according to *The Handbook of Texas Online*, were under orders to avoid open conflict. According to tradition, when the Mexicans asked that the cannon be returned, the settlers pointed to the heavily guarded gun and said, "Come and take it!" Ultimately, only a brief skirmish took place before the Mexican soldiers withdrew—but with those first shots, the Texas Revolution had begun. One of the "Old Eighteen," Thomas R. Miller, later died defending the Alamo on March 6, 1836.



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Dozens of Texas

state parks will soon be in the midst of major repairs, thanks to \$36.6 million in funding from Proposition 8—a bond package approved last fall by voters statewide.

Among the many facilities in line for major projects are

Indian Lodge (inside Davis Mountains State Park) and the following state parks: **Goliad, Caprock Canyons, Tyler, and Mustang Island**. Although some of the work is more high-profile (e.g., renovations to historic buildings), other plans—such as water and electric improvements—are also important for visitors.

Work will get under way on this round of projects over the next two years. Additional appropriations from the \$100 million bond package are expected for further repairs several years in the future.

NUMBERS as of August 31, 2002				
TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-Date	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	11,811	+3.14	96,831	+7.43
ANTHONY	12,153	-5.70	121,137	+4.6
DENISON	32,547	+32.81	257,259	+29.04
GAINESVILLE	30,564	-7.48	249,204	+8.99
LANGTRY	4,104	+11.04	53,061	+4.31
LAREDO	7,410	-5.98	64,302	-0.92
ORANGE	38,985	+0.69	373,755	+7.81
TEXARKANA	36,936	-14.29	308,112	+2.36
VALLEY	9,363	-31.59	180,780	-17.72
WASKOM	30,486	-4.16	281,892	+6.31
WICHITA FALLS	19,527	+0.82	144,774	+10.55
CAPITOL	7,875	+3.51	72,777	-6.86
CENTER TOTALS	241,761	-2.41	2,203,884	+5.38

*Compared to last year

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.–6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

www.traveltex.com • www.texashighways.com • www.dontmesswithtexas.org

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