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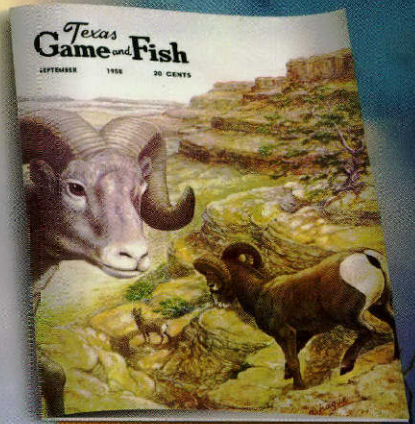
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# TEXAS parks & wildlife



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Let's  
Go  
Places



APRIL 2017

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27

A 16-PAGE SPECIAL SECTION

# Prime State Park Campsites

The best places to pitch a tent,  
plus camping tips, campfire  
stories and s'mores.

by Russell and Luke Roe

#### ON THE COVER:

We returned to West Texas to update our cover from September 1958. The bighorns have been replaced by tents (at Big Bend Ranch State Park) to reflect our cover story on state park campsites. Photo © E. Dan Klepper

## 44 Wildflower Heavens

April is the pinnacle of Texas' spring wildflower explosion. A Wanderlist special.

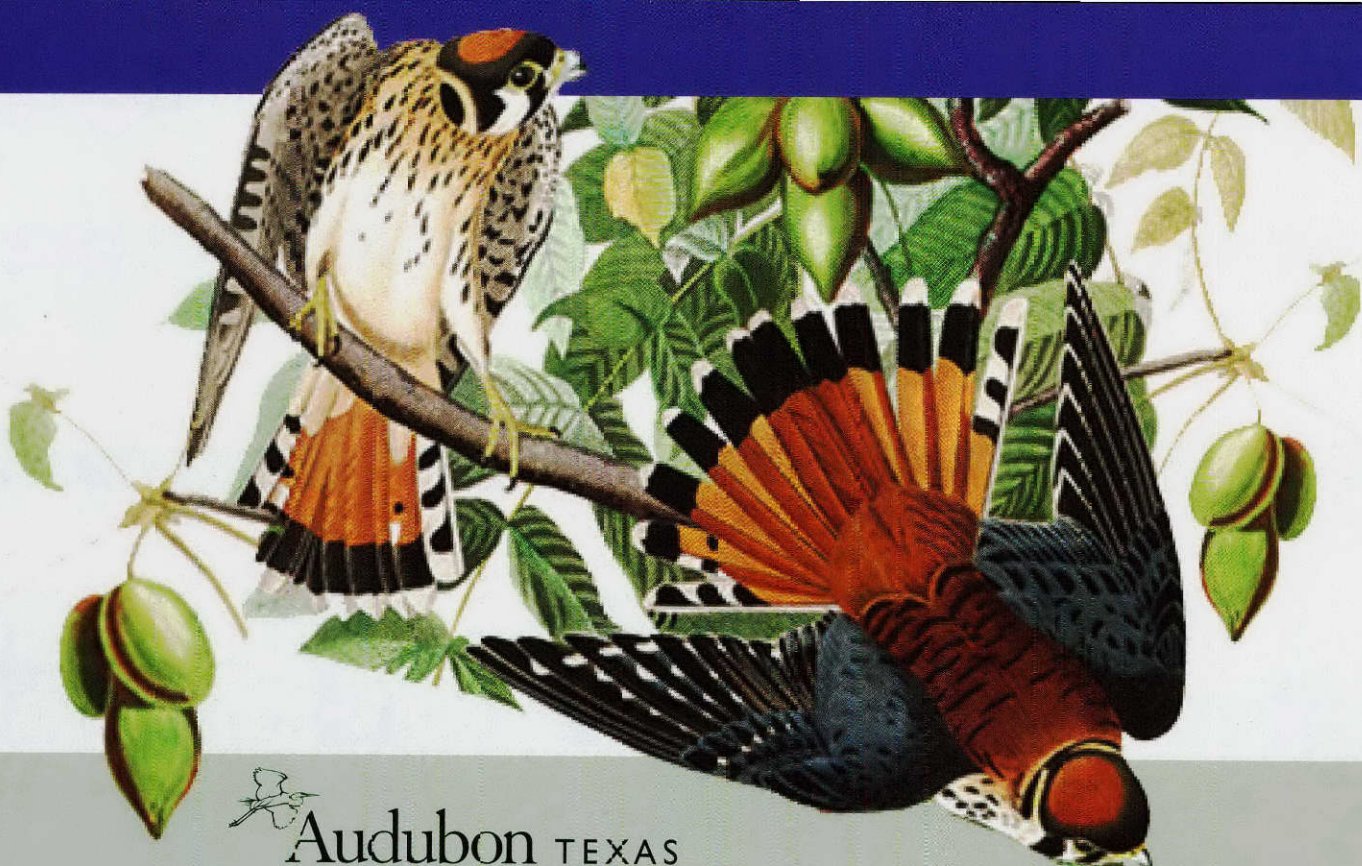
by Emily Moskal


## 50 In Unlikely Places

Austin's Hornsby Bend does double duty as a sewage plant and wildlife mecca.

by Camille Wheeler





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**A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION LED BY WOMEN**

Audubon's Texas Women in Conservation program debuted in 2015 to honor the role that women play in the conservation field in the lone star state. A key highlight of the program is the Terry Hershey Award which recognizes outstanding women leaders. In addition to the award, the program supports opportunities in Texas for girls and women to become more involved in conservation and environmental sciences and engages women on important issues related to conservation in Texas.

Congratulations to our 2017 Terry Hershey Award recipients:



**BLAIR FITZSIMONS**

*Chief Executive Officer, Texas Agricultural Land Trust*



**KAREN HIXON**

*Conservationist & Philanthropist*



**SUSAN HUGHES**

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*Environmentalist & Community Advocate*

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↑ “GETTING OUR BEARINGS IN THE URBAN WASTELANDS IS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT WITHIN THE AMERICAN CONTEXT OF NATURE APPRECIATION, BECAUSE OUR FOUNDATIONAL MYTH OF NATURE IS WILDERNESS, NATURE UNTOUCHED BY HUMANS.”

— KEVIN ANDERSON



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FROM THE EDITOR

**WE'RE REELIN' IN THE YEARS** here at *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, decade by decade, during the yearlong celebration of our 75th anniversary. This April issue brings us to the 1950s, with the post-war economic upswing and the baby boom at its peak.

Texans took their growing families in their station wagons out on the new interstate highways, leaving suburban homes for weekend camping trips to enjoy the outdoors and escape the pressures of the work week. Sounds familiar, but camping looked a bit different six decades ago.

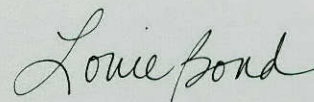
Remember those old-fashioned canvas tents? They took forever to set up and were so heavy. Longtime tent-maker Eureka found a solution late in the 1950s when it designed the first quick-setup freestanding tent. Coleman compact stoves, invented for war purposes in the '40s, have evolved into a fold-up version that makes camp cooking a breeze. And, on the cooling side, Coleman introduced an insulated cooler in the '50s to replace the old, inefficient steel bins.

While you can see/read more about the 1950s in our Legacy scrapbook, we'll zoom forward in time to the present day in our special camping section in the middle of the magazine. Unfold the gatefold covers to discover what might be the best tips we've ever offered — the best of the best state park campsites. You'll find those "secret" spots where the view's spectacular, the shade and breeze offer sweet respite and the isolation offers your own private paradise.

As editor, I was delighted to find 16-year-old Luke Roe accompanying his dad, Managing Editor Russell Roe, crisscrossing the state to interview park superintendents and check out the camping accommodations for themselves. Luke first wrote for the magazine in fourth grade, helping us out with a cats and dogs edition of *Keep Texas Wild*, an educational feature we published 2008–11. Together, the father-son team used their experience and perspective (not to mention a little wheedling to get folks to share their secrets) to find the sweet spot at many of our parks. At present, specific campsites can't be reserved in advance, so plan ahead and arrive early.

"But that's not all!" as TV infomercials claim. We've pulled together fun tips for setting up the perfect campsite, turned a favorite campfire story into a comic strip and offered eight new ways to transform traditional s'mores (first offered up in a Girl Scout manual in 1927).

Elsewhere in this jam-packed issue: an extended Wanderlist (with accompanying flower ID chart) on Wildflower Heavens this spring, a profile of sewage plant/wildlife mecca Hornsby Bend, a visit to Big Bend area attractions, a primer on freshwater kayak fishing in Get Out and so much more. Thanks for reading!



Louie Bond, Editor



# THE WAR ON AQUATIC INVASIVES

## A POSSE OF VILLAINS IS ON THE PROWL IN TEXAS

**WATERS.** They hitchhike unseen on boat propellers, bring their obnoxious relatives to your party as uninvited guests and just generally do their best to excel at destruction and devastation. They don't belong here, yet they're spreading like a plague across the state. The photos of these scoundrels — hydrilla, zebra mussels, giant salvinia, salt cedar and more — may not appear on post office "most wanted" signs, but they pose a great threat to our lifestyles.

Although most Texans tend to view invasive species primarily as an issue affecting native species, ecological systems or water recreation, the negative effects of invasive species are much more far-reaching. For example, aquatic invasive species negatively affect water infrastructure (zebra mussels clog water intakes, floating plants clog intakes for hydropower generation), water supply (floating mats of plants prevent agricultural water conveyance in canals) and lakefront property values (floating mats of plants cause decreases in recreational value and scenic appeal).

The annual economic impact of aquatic invasive species in Texas is estimated at billions of dollars, including the threat to the recreational freshwater fishing industry, worth more than \$4 billion. Recognizing what's at stake, Texas lawmakers in the last legislative session appropriated \$6.3 million for the 2016-2017 biennium to address statewide management of aquatic invasive species. Between fall 2015 and winter 2016-17, more than 60 aquatic invasive species management projects were mounted statewide. Funding allows the projects to continue until fall 2017.

Here are some of the successes, by the numbers:

- 713,993 giant salvinia weevils were produced and stocked in East Texas lakes to control giant salvinia.
- 550,000 registered boaters received "Clean, Drain and Dry" invasive species outreach and prevention materials.
- 50 lakes and rivers were managed to control infestations of aquatic invasive plants.
- Five rapid response events successfully contained introductions of giant salvinia at Lake Fork, Falcon Lake, Brandy Branch Reservoir and Martin Creek Reservoir.
- 25 miles along the Llano River were managed to control invasive elephant ear.
- 17,643 acres of giant salvinia were treated with herbicides on East Texas lakes, including Toledo Bend Reservoir and Caddo Lake.
- 80 marinas were visited as part of an outreach program to promote invasive species prevention partnerships.
- 334 landowner partners supported efforts to treat *Arundo* on their properties along more than 100 miles of Hill Country rivers.
- 1,960 boats were inspected at 57 boat ramps on lakes infested with or at high risk for zebra mussels.
- 3,500 acres of salt cedar were treated along 112 miles of the upper Brazos River to restore habitats for wildlife, including game birds and endangered fishes.
- 56 high-risk lakes were monitored to ensure early detection of zebra mussels.
- 177 million impressions were made through social media, outdoor advertising and print materials as part of the giant salvinia and zebra mussel public outreach campaigns.

It's a problem that isn't going away; it requires constant attention and management. TPWD's Aquatic Invasive Species Working Group utilizes diverse partnerships involving river authorities, landowners, universities, nonprofits, water utilities, anglers, hunters, boaters and others to address the problem. Through these partnerships and funding from the Texas Legislature, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has gained ground in the battle against aquatic invasives by enlisting the help of Texans like you.

If you'd like to learn more about how you can help, visit [texasinvasives.org](http://texasinvasives.org).

Thank you for your efforts to keep our waterways free from villainous invasives, both today and for generations to come. Our wild places and wild things need you more than ever.



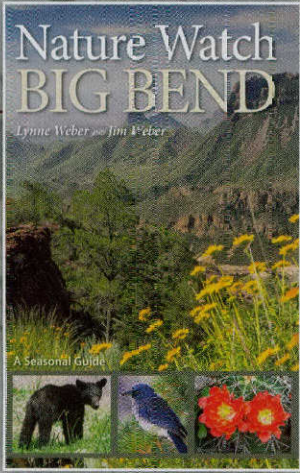
Louie Bond, Editor

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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.*



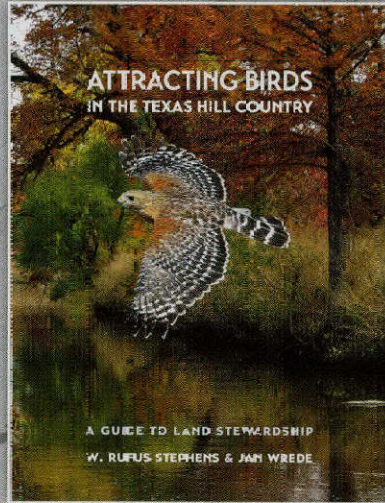
## New books from Texas A&M Press



### Nature Watch Big Bend A Seasonal Guide

**Lynne Weber and Jim Weber**  
In this information-packed, month-to-month guide to the wildlife, plants and natural events that define the seasonal cycles in Big Bend National Park, naturalists Lynne and Jim Weber offer a richly illustrated guide to the natural rhythms of this beautiful and remote region in far West Texas.

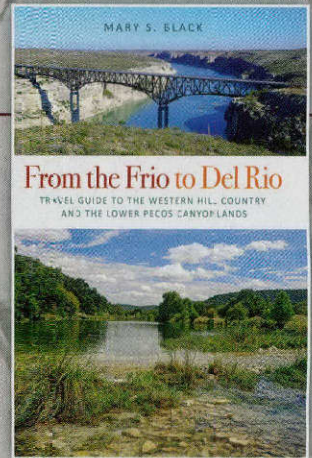
260 color photos, 50 color drawings,  
3 maps, 14 tables, Bib. Index.  
Flexbound (with flaps) \$24.95



### Attracting Birds in the Texas Hill Country

**A Guide to Land Stewardship**  
**W. Rufus Stephens and Jan Wrede**  
Rufus Stephens and Jan Wrede have teamed together to write a practical handbook that focuses on how to make habitat improvements to attract and keep birds on both small and large properties in twenty-eight Central Texas counties. It also offers landowners the ideal "how to manual" for writing an effective Wildlife Tax Valuation plan.

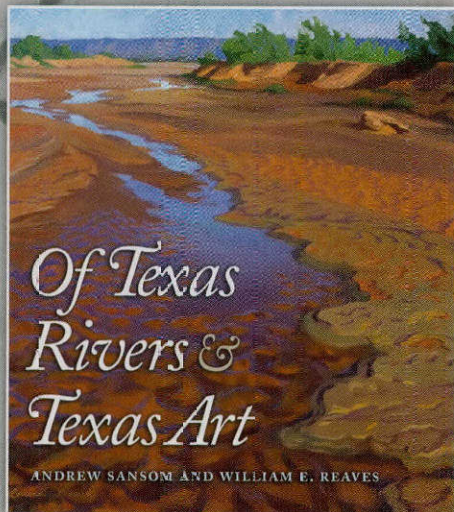
8x10, 512 pp., 272 color photos,  
12 Figures, Map, 40 Tables, Bib. Index.  
Flexbound (with flaps) \$39.95



### From the Frio to Del Rio Travel Guide to the Western Hill Country and the Lower Pecos Canyonlands

**Mary S. Black**  
Mary S. Black serves up the best of this region's special adventures and secret treasures. *From the Frio to Del Rio* is chock-full of helpful maps, engaging descriptions of points of interest, colorful photography, and tips on where to stay, what to do, and how to get there.

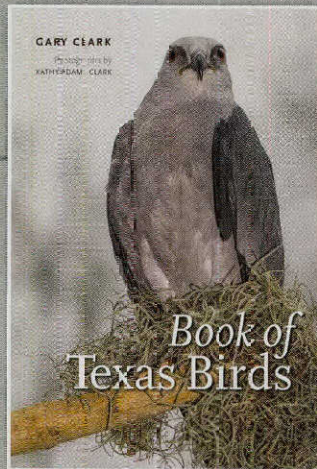
114 color photos, 3 maps, 1 tables.  
Flexbound (with flaps) \$24.95



### Of Texas Rivers & Texas Art

**Andrew Sansom and William E. Reeves**  
In *Of Texas Rivers and Texas Art*, Andrew Sansom, a leading Texas conservationist, and William E. Reeves, an influential Texas art collector and historian, have teamed up to showcase some of the finest contemporary river art detailing the gorgeous traits of Texas landscapes.

9x10, 69 color art, Index of rivers, Cloth \$35.00

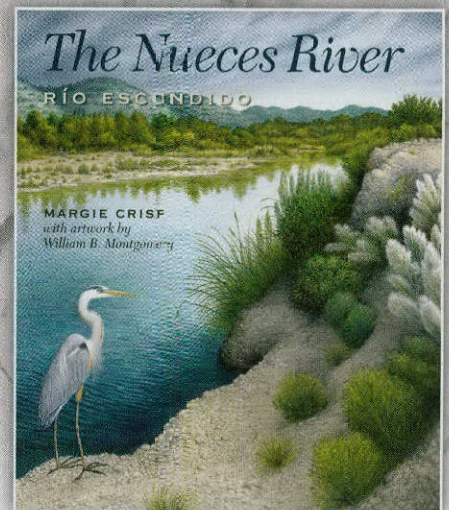


### Book of Texas Birds

**Gary Clark**  
Photographs by Kathy Adams Clark

This book is full of information about more than four hundred species of birds in Texas, most all of which author Gary Clark has seen first hand. Organized in the standard taxonomic order familiar to most birders, the book is written in a conversational tone that yields a wide-ranging discussion of each bird's life history as well as an intimate look at some of its special characteristics and habits.

7x10, 512 pp., 500 color photos, Bib. Index, Flexbound (with flaps) \$39.95

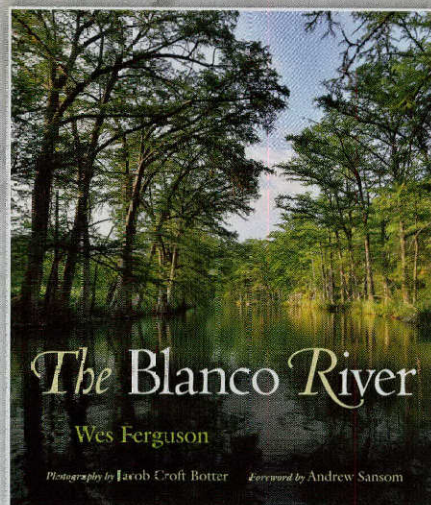


### The Nueces River

*Rio Escondido*  
**Margie Crisp**  
Artwork by William B. Montgomery

Through vivid prose and paintings, Margie Crisp and William B. Montgomery record their travels as they explore the length of the river on foot, in kayaks, and fishing boat, ultimately weaving a portrait of today's Nueces.

9x10, 37 color illus., 25 color art, 5 b&w art, 8 maps, Bib. Index, Flexbound (with flaps) \$29.95



### The Blanco River Wes Ferguson

**Photography by Jacob Croft Botter**  
River travelers Ferguson and Botter tell the remarkable story of this changeable river, confronting challenges and dangers as well as rare opportunities to see parts of the river few have seen.

9x10, 61 color photos, Map, Index,  
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## DELICIOUS NUTRIA

I was much impressed with your January/February 2017 magazine and as a result sorted through many of my records stored away after I retired from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1995.

During my nearly 40-year spar. working with wetlands and migratory birds, I was able to publish several books along with a number of magazine articles.

To the best of my recollection, I wrote 26 articles starting with *Texas Game and Fish* magazine back in 1963, when the magazine sold for 20 cents each. In my files, I have been able to find 19 issues of the magazine containing 20 articles.

In 1975, Leroy Williamson (staff photographer), Ilo Hiller and I jointly prepared an article on cooking nutria. I am interested in finding that article because the barbecue was done at my home. Leroy took a picture of my young daughter holding a leg of nutria.

**CHARLES STUTZENBAKER**  
Port Arthur

an incorrect statement regarding bees “aiding plants in their asexual reproduction efforts.” The industrious honeybee is a real lifesaver for many crops as it moves from flower to flower, all the while transmitting viable pollen spores to the female pistil of the female portion of the flower. Absent that or adequate wind or other vector, many seeds would never form.

My suggestion would be to have stated it as follows: “aiding plants in their sexual reproductive efforts.”

**W. WAYNE ALLEN, PH.D.**  
Wharton

### GREAT COVER!

Just got my copy of the magazine (January/February 2017) out of the mailbox. Love the cover!

**LINDA JO CONN**  
Lex'ngton

### CONQUERING TEXAS' MOUNTAINS

Just a huge word of thanks to *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine for always giving readers the best of Texas. As one of your most devoted readers and park visitors, I wanted to share with y'all that I have just one more major mountain range in Texas to cover — then I will have summited and

hiked/backpacked them all solo.

From the peak of the Guads to the Outer Mountain Loop of Big Bend and the sky islands of Davis Mountains ... now for Franklin Mountains this spring and that'll be a wrap for Texas.

**AMANDA ASHER**  
Boerne

### THE FLOWERS AND THE BEES

Thanks for another beautiful and interesting issue of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine!

Interestingly enough, the article “Minding the Hive” by Russell Graves in the December 2016 issue has

### CHOKO CANYON MEMORIES

When I was a little boy, my family and I were in *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. It was 1986 when Choke Canyon opened up. There was a photo showing a couple with a little boy on his dad's shoulders watching a boat go out. I have a little boy now, and I wanted to find it for him. Thank you for your help in locating it. That picture brings back so many memories. Fishing in Texas parks has always been in my life — it's just something we always were doing.

**BRIAN MCGEE**  
Sanger



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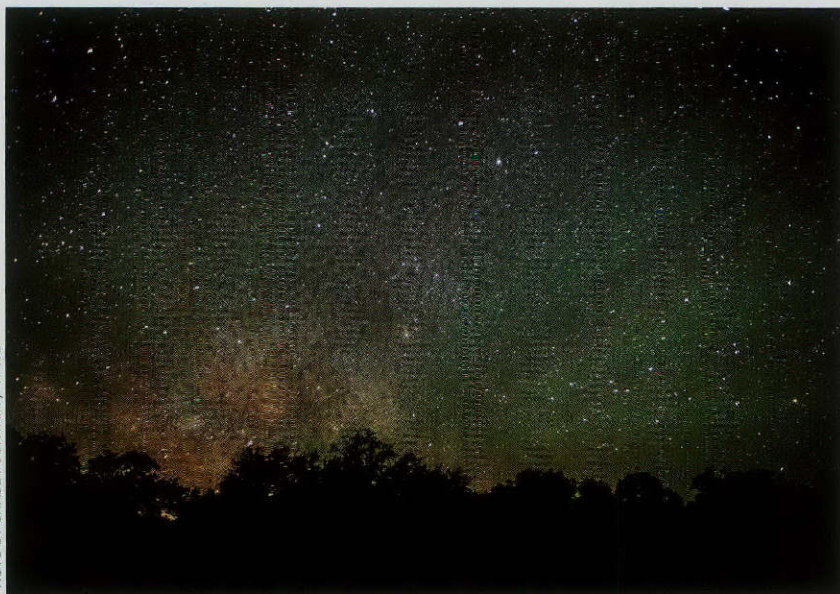
[www.LaRue.com](http://www.LaRue.com)

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PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD



## New 'Dark Sky' State Park

**SOUTH LLAND RIVER STATE PARK** is the third Texas state park to be designated as an International Dark Sky Park, joining Copper Breaks State Park and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area as places where the stars shine bright.

"The park has set a leadership example in pursuit of dark skies and quality outdoor lighting we hope others in Texas and around the world will look toward for inspiration," says J. Scott Feierabend, International Dark-Sky Association executive director.

Located 5 miles from the nearest town, South Llano River State Park ranks as a 3 on the Bortle Scale, which ranks skies from 1 to 9, with 1 being

the darkest skies and 9 being the least dark. The darkness at the park provides visitors with a spectacular view of the stars.

As part of the dark sky initiative, a stargazing tab was created on the park's webpage; resources found there include a clear sky chart and real-time dark sky monitoring from the park's permanently installed Sky Quality Meter.

Local astronomers and park staff will partner with the Mason Star Gazers, a regional astronomy club, and Texas Tech University at Junction's Outdoor School to provide park star parties, where visitors can learn about the importance of dark skies to wildlife and people.

## Which Texas City is the Wildest?

**CITIES ACROSS TEXAS** and the nation will compete this month to see which one can boast having the most species of wildlife. Want to participate and help your city win? Grab your smartphone and head outdoors!

The City Nature Challenge, April 14–18, takes place in Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin and Houston. It's easy to participate by joining an event or just making observations on your own, using the iNaturalist app. Just take a picture of a plant or animal and post it to iNaturalist, and the online community will help accurately identify the species.

Any observation in the greater metropolitan area of each city will count during the five-day challenge. You can explore the life in your backyard, in your local park or on a field trip with your local group or club. TPWD, the Audubon Society and many others will be joining in this fun challenge.

Go to [www.tpwd.texas.gov/naturechallenge](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/naturechallenge) to watch the leaderboards or learn more about how you can participate.

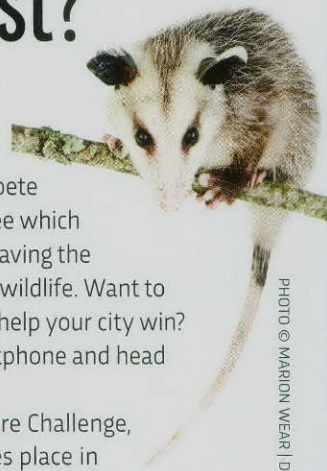


PHOTO © MARION WEAR | DREAMSTIME.COM

## Lake Livingston State Park Hosts Birds of Prey

**GET A THRILLING LOOK** at the masters of the sky — raptors — at Lake Livingston State Park's Birds of Prey program April 1. Presented in partnership with EarthQuest, an environmental education nonprofit, five birds of prey (including falcons, hawks, eagles and more) will be on display under the guidance of a trained falconer.

These formidable birds will demonstrate their hunting prowess as they effortlessly soar and dive at speeds of more than 150 mph. Between the 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. presentations, a falconer and ranger will be on hand to take photos, answer questions and

share information about the birds.

EarthQuest offers this experience at no cost to park visitors; donations to further its educational and rescue programs will be accepted. Regular park entrance fees of \$5 per adult apply. Children 12 and under are free.





PHOTO BY TPWD

# Release the Kraken!

**TPWD'S ARTIFICIAL REEF PROGRAM** sank a 371-foot cargo vessel on Jan. 20. Dubbed the Kraken after the mythical, squid-like sea monster immortalized on film and in literature, the vessel was sunk 67 miles off the coast of

Galveston to create a new artificial reef. Over time, this sunken ship will attract fish, coral and other invertebrates as well as divers and anglers. Watch a video of the sinking at <https://youtu.be/bjWuSyFKOR8>.

## ON TV

**MARCH 26–APRIL 1:**

Helping horned lizards; teaching young hunters; explore Purtil Creek; leave no trace.

**APRIL 2–8:**

Walker o' Texas ranges; paddling Port O'Connor; Davis Mountains wildflowers.

**APRIL 9–15:**

Chester Island erosion; prescribed fire crew improving state parks; beach sunset.

**APRIL 16–22:**

Weekday camping; catching copperheads; dove hunt; biking at Ray Roberts Lake; wind and water.

**APRIL 23–29:**

Good guzzlers; conservation art; hermit crabs; David Bamberger's conservation vision.



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# MISSION: FISHIN'

*Mission Tejas combines CCC history and outdoor fun.*

**A PIECE OF RAW BACON** and an old Zebco tucked in my pockets, I jumped on the bike, an empty bucket dangling from the handlebars, and headed in search of Beans Creek sunfish. Armed with that stolen bacon from the family fridge and a fishing pole that had seen better days, I was equipped for an entire day. That is, until mom stood on the front porch and called us home for dinner.

*In keeping with this month's 1950s theme, our Park Pick features a park acquired in the '50s: Mission Tejas, in 1957.*

**BY JUSTIN RHODES**

Now that I'm grown, I live with my family in a city where such encounters with nature are not so spontaneous. Getting outdoors often requires parental planning and kids willing to set aside organized sports and school activities in order to explore the outdoors. Lucky for us, state parks make that easier.

One of my favorites, Mission Tejas State Park, offers a quick escape, just a 2.5-hour drive from both Houston and Dallas, and an unusual landscape and rich history. Nestled in East Texas, the 660-acre park was set aside for outdoor recreation and to commemorate an early Spanish mission in the area.

Visitors to Mission Tejas can participate in interpretive programs about the Civilian Conservation Corps, which developed the

park, or learn about area folkways from an experienced ranger. They may hike the path of Davy Crockett, Stephen F. Austin and other Texas legends, who trekked on the historic El Camino Real that winds through the park. Visitors may admire the craftsmanship of the CCC and appreciate the simple elegance of the 1820s Rice Family Home. They can walk the banks of San Pedro Creek that skirts the park's western border and, of course, dip a line in the oak-stained pond just outside the camping loop.

Mission Tejas State Park will soon offer even more attractions. Thanks to a successful grant application to the Texas Department of Transportation, a new visitors center with state-of-the-art exhibits will interpret the historic route. Mountain bike and hiking trails will be extended to showcase both stunning views and sharp elevation changes throughout the mature, mixed pine-and-hardwood forest.

So grab your bacon, load up your bikes and make your reservations to spend a few days at Mission Tejas. If you find a good fishing spot on the creek, be sure to let me know. ★



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## Folk Festival

Experience pioneer life firsthand during Mission Tejas State Park's annual Folk Festival on April 29. Hear the clack of the weaver's loom and smell the hot iron of the blacksmith's forge. Youngsters can test their rope-making skills, then take a ringside seat for the outlaw shoot-'em-up. Admission is the standard park entrance fee.



PHOTOS BY TPWD

Make an afternoon of shopping at Chip and Jo's Magnolia Market at the Silos. Hop on the Silo District trolley to explore even more stores, restaurants, and attractions.



# Go Waco

**Time to get fizzy with it.**

Enjoy a weekend of fun in the heart of Texas, starting with a hand-pulled float at the

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# DEVIL'S DARNING NEEDLES

*Giant darners are the largest dragonflies in the U.S.*

BY EVELYN MORENO

## COMMON NAME

*Giant darner dragonfly*

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Anax walsinghami*

## HABITAT

*Ponds, marshes, streams and pools; primarily in western Texas and the southwestern U.S.*

## DIET

*Adults eat mosquitos, cn'ts, flies and wasps.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Dragonflies have superb vision. Their eyes contain up to 30,000 honeycombed facets, allowing them to see at almost every angle (except behind them).*





## 300 MILLION YEARS AGO,

dragonflies were as large as seagulls. The Carboniferous period, part of the Paleozoic era, gave rise to massive plants, reptiles and insects. During this time, insects developed wings and the ability to fly. A fossil of a dragonfly from that period shows a wingspan of 2.5 feet.

The dragonflies we see today are not as large as their ancestors, but Texas is home to a smaller "giant" — the giant darner dragonfly. With a wingspan of up to 5 inches and a long abdomen, it's the largest dragonfly found in North America. A giant darner is easily identified by its bright green head and arched abdomen that makes up two-thirds of its body length. Its abdomen is mostly brown, with females displaying green spots and males blue.

Rarely found resting, giant darners sport clear-veined wings that propel them to speeds of 20 mph, slower than most dragonflies, which can reach speeds up to 35 mph. Giant darners can fly in any direction, even upside-down. Four wings enable them to hover, like a helicopter, so they can eat (and even mate) mid-air.

Both dragonflies and damselflies belong to the order Odonata, Greek for "toothed one," referring to their jagged teeth. There are more than 450 North American species identified in the U.S. and Canada. Texas is home to 238 of those species, more than in any other state.

Unlike other insects, dragonflies do not typically bite. The small handful that are capable of attacking do so as a defense mechanism but do not have strong enough mandibles to tear through human skin. However, these harmless insects have been negatively viewed by some throughout history. European folklore refers to them as "ear cutters" and "devil's darning needles" because of the myth that their claspers would stitch up the ears, mouths and eyes of children who misbehaved or of adults who cursed.

Thankfully, we now know we have nothing to fear. Rather than torment us, dragonflies do us a favor. They control pesky insect populations by consuming dozens to hundreds of insects per day. Giant darners catch prey with their feet, rip off its wings with their strong jaws and instantly devour it. The next time you come in from the outdoors without any bug bites, thank our natural pest control, the dragonfly. ★

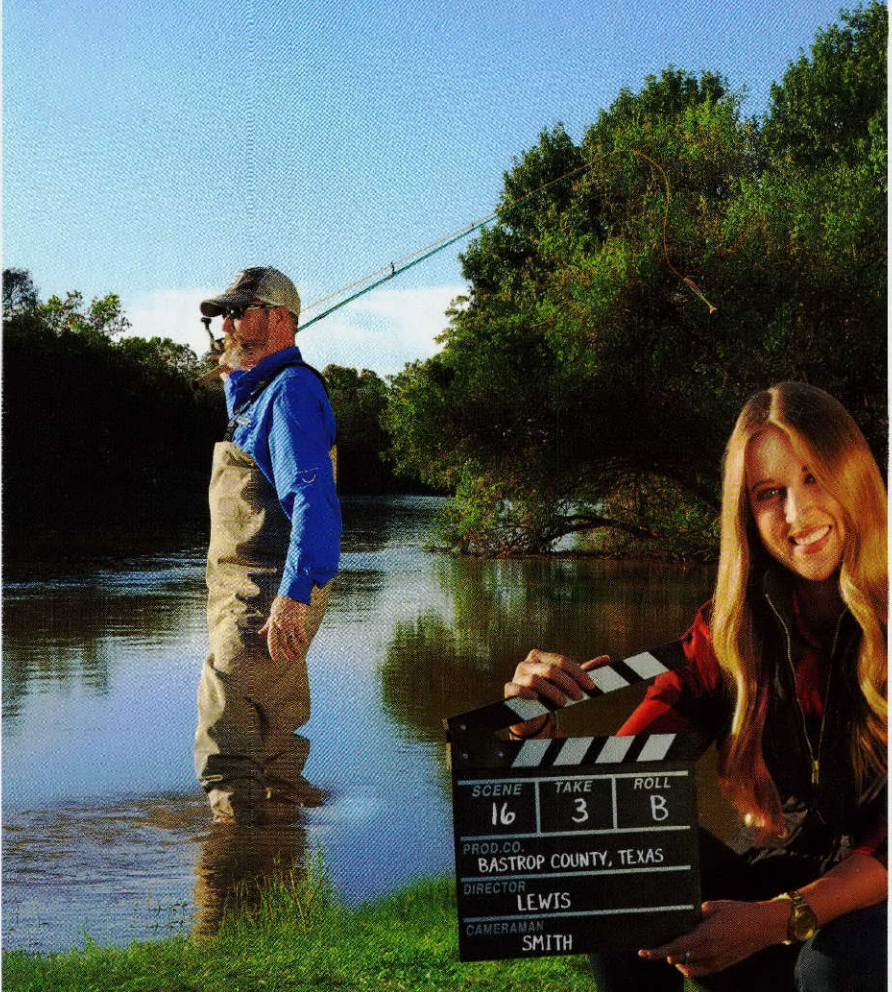
# FIELD GUIDE *to* BASTROP COUNTY

ISSUE No 19



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\*Please don't slam the clapperboard. You'll scare the fish.





# LITTLE AND LOW

Get down on your belly to find rare Texas meadow-rue.

BY JASON SINGHURST



PHOTOS BY JASON SINGHURST / TPWD

**FOR A BOTANIST**, the best days are the ones we spend outdoors, on the hunt for rare plants. It was on such a day that I wandered along a Lick Creek Park trail in College Station through majestic post oaks, blackjack oaks, black hickory trees and prairie openings to a terrace just above the creek, searching for globally rare Texas meadow-rue.

"How hard could it be?" I thought. After all, I was familiar with several of the larger members of the genus *Thalictrum*, and I had the location of a known population mapped. I was sure I could locate this plant in just a few minutes.

Wrong. After pacing back and forth over a few acres for about an hour, I was ready to give up.

Then it dawned on me: I needed to get down to this plant's level. Low. Very low.

I got down on my belly, army-style, and slithered around through the sedges and grasses until I got my first glimpse of the purple sepals and yellow anthers of this late winter-flowering gem.

"Aha!"



Found in only a narrow strip of the state, Texas meadow-rue (*Thalictrum texanum*) is a dioecious (separate female and male plants) herbaceous perennial that grows very close to the ground (15 to 35 cm in height) with tiny leaflets.

Currently, six species of meadow-rue are recognized as occurring in Texas. Two of these, purple meadow-rue and waxleaf meadow-rue, are of widespread distribution in East Texas, while Fendler's meadow-rue is restricted to the peaks of a few West Texas mountains. Arkansas meadow-rue, another rare species, is limited in distribution to southern Arkansas, southeastern Oklahoma and adjacent northeast Texas. The other eastern species, rue anemone, is known from only Bowie, Lamar and Red River counties in northeast Texas and has only recently been discovered in the state.

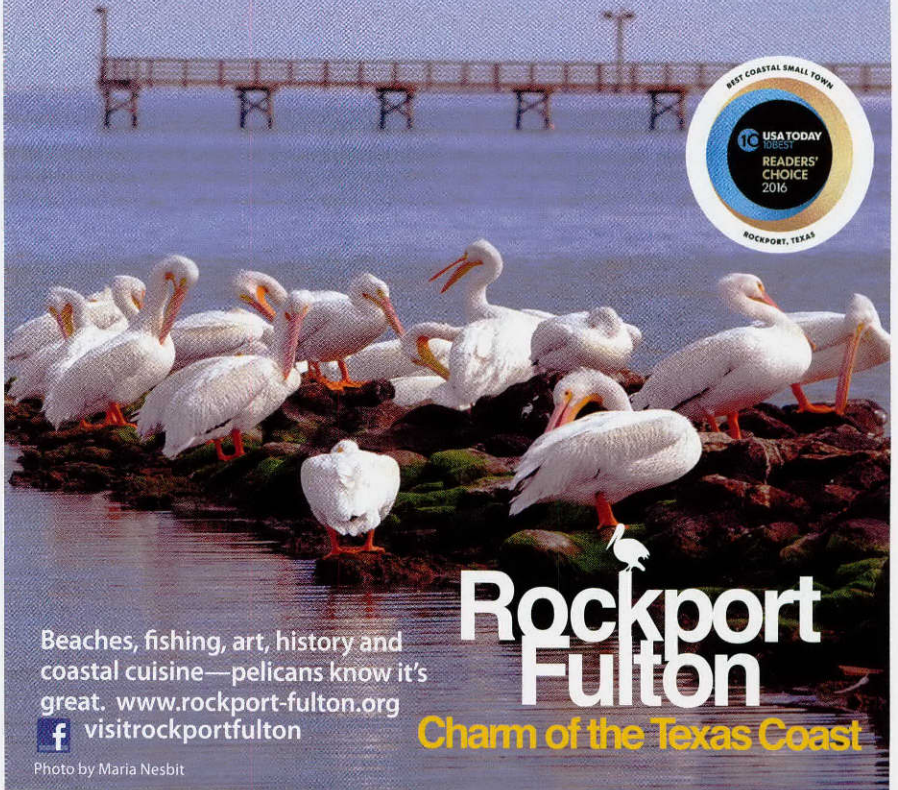
Texas meadow-rue (*Thalictrum texanum*) is a Texas endemic (found only in the state), classified as a plant species of concern. Texas meadow-rue was first documented in Harris County (Houston area) in 1872, and persists in claypan post oak savannahs, alluvial bottomland hardwood forest terraces and on pimple mounds in coastal prairies. Populations have been documented at only 10 sites. Texas meadow-rue appears in December and flowers from late January through April. I've seen white-tailed deer and several moth caterpillars browse on the foliage.

Texas meadow-rue stems are erect and range from 14 to 35 cm tall. Leaves are generally clustered near the base. The flowers have showy white to purplish sepals, and the 10 to 14 stamens (male flowers) have pinkish filaments. The pistils (female flowers) have pinkish styles/stigmas. The tiny achene fruits range from 3 to 4 mm.

Another population can be seen at Stephen F. Austin State Park in Austin County. A new population of Texas meadow-rue was found in Washington County last year; the TPWD Wildlife Diversity Program is interested in finding additional populations of this rare plant.

So look low to the ground and maybe you'll find a new population of Texas meadow-rue. Please tell us if you do! ☆

# It's a wingding on the bay!



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**Charm of the Texas Coast**

Photo by Maria Nesbit

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# SHOOTING BLOOMS

*Smartphones boost options for flower photo creativity.*

**BY EARL NOTTINGHAM**

**WHILE IT MAY BE TRUE** that April showers bring May flowers, photographers who enjoy using their smartphones to photograph flowers will be glad to know that, just in time for a banner spring bloom, there is a perfect storm brewing with the combination of several new smartphone camera features and new apps that are guaranteed to open the floodgates of creativity.

On the technology front, smartphone manufacturers are including more professional features in their cameras to allow the user to manually set many of the traditional automatic features such as focus, exposure and white balance (all extremely important in getting those detailed close-up images). Additionally, third-party camera apps such as Pro Camera and Camera+ add many additional shooting options to their menus, such as image stabilization and — get ready for this — “raw” files for photographers who want to work with high-quality images in an editing application such as Photoshop.

Here are some tips to get better wildflower pics that incorporate some of the newer camera controls and some basic shooting practices for tack-sharp and colorful creations.



*Wildflower close-ups require proper camera stabilization.*

PHOTOS BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

**Stabilization:** Use a tripod if possible, especially for close-up macro images. If you don't have a tripod, brace the camera as steady as possible. Utilize the camera (or camera app's) stabilization features.

**Focus/exposure:** Become familiar with the dual reticles, which allow you to set the focus and exposure points independently. This allows you to move the focus away from the center of the frame, providing more dynamic composition by moving the subject (focal point) to an area other than dead center, which is typically static (and boring). As you move the exposure reticle around the frame, you will see how the image darkens or lightens, allowing you to select the “feeling” you want the image to invoke.





*"In a way, nobody sees a flower, really; it is so small. It takes time — we haven't time — and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time."*

— Georgia O'Keeffe

**White balance:** Smartphones have traditionally used "Auto White Balance" (AWB) to adjust the overall color of a photo, which can change drastically with different light conditions such as sunlight, cloudy days, shade or indoor lighting like tungsten or fluorescents. However, AWB can be fooled when shooting isolated close-ups of colorful subjects such as flowers. Many cameras, especially when using the third-party apps like those previously mentioned, allow you to manually set and lock in the white balance using icons such as sun, clouds, shade or other light conditions. Once you set the white balance to your existing lighting situation, you can be assured that the true color of your subject will be accurate and true to life.

**Light:** While everyone loves a sunny spring day with a blue sky, flowers typically photograph better in soft light, such as an overcast day or diffused sunlight. Bright sunlight will create harsh shadows and produce a very "contrasty" photograph, which is usually not artistically pleasing. When shooting close-ups on a bright day, consider using a diffuser (such as a cotton cloth or frosted shower curtain) between the sun and the subject. Also, find an angle that will put the predominant light behind the flower, allowing the light to trans-illuminate any delicate petals. Don't forget that those golden hours around sunrise or sunset are ideal for flowers. If shooting indoors, window light (no direct sun) is a classic light source that can be very artistic.

**Angle:** Look for a variety of angles other than just straight into the face of a flower, which is referred to as a

"bulls-eye" shot. This will usually mean getting down very low to the ground for "profile" shots or even putting the camera on the ground and shooting up

**Simplicity:** Try to simplify the inherent beauty of a flower by eliminating any distracting objects in the foreground or background of the frame such as blades of grass, stems, people or structures. This is usually solved by moving the camera just a fraction of an inch or using the camera's zoom feature.



**Creativity:** Snapping the shutter is only the beginning. There are an infinite number of creative looks you can give your image with post-processing. The native camera's selection of artistic looks or filters and those from numerous third-party apps are ideal for flower photos. They range from simple changes in cropping, color balance and saturation to artsy looks such as oil paintings and watercolor. Snapseed, Glaze and RollWorld are three apps with lots of creative possibilities. ★

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

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## WIDE OPEN SPACES

BY MELISSA GASKILL

PHOTOS BY SONJA SOMMERFELD

*Brewster County judge takes the backroads on two wheels to find peace and quiet.*



The largest county in Texas, Brewster County covers 6,169 square miles yet has only about 10,000 residents. This makes it perfect for people looking to get away from it all.

### AUSTIN

6 hours

### DALLAS

7.5 hours

### EL PASO

3.5 hours

### SAN ANTONIO

5.5 hours

### BROWNSVILLE

9.5 hours

### LUBBOCK

4.5 hours

Sometimes, Brewster County Judge Eleazar Cano is one of them.

"In my work, I'm around people all the time, constantly engaged," he explains. "So I'm drawn to the remote places. I like the quiet, being away from civilization."

One way he does so is riding his Yamaha 1600 motorcycle. One night, he followed Texas Highway 118, a two-lane road that bends around hills and dips across broad valleys for 80 miles between Alpine and Study Butte, through countryside little touched by human hands. He felt the ground shake and turned to see a herd of horses thundering through the dark.

"I got a spiritual feeling, like being part of something bigger than yourself," he recalls.

I don't have a motorcycle, but the judge assures me the county offers many ways to get that same feeling. He suggests an evening on the porch at the Starlight Theatre restaurant in Terlingua. Early in the 20th century, this area produced much of the nation's mercury or quicksilver. A movie house the mining company built for its workers became the restaurant, and the adjoining company store now houses the Terlingua Trading Company. The establishments share a large porch with a sweeping view of the mountains of Big Bend and Mexico. Locals and tourists hang out to socialize as light



fades from the sky. Someone usually plays guitar, and music spills out the door of the Starlight — tonight's band is A Few Too Many from Alpine — while the local dog population mingles with the crowd.

"The porch is one of my favorite places in the world," Cano says. "It's a very Zen thing, a peace and tranquility I can't describe."

Cano grew up in Alpine, his mother from Presidio and his father from Chihuahua, Mexico. After graduating from high school in 1984, he attended local Sul Ross State University for two years before heading east to Austin. There, he earned a degree in criminal justice at

Tonya passed away in 2010. Feeling it was time for a change, Cano ran for county judge, taking office in January 2015. By that time, he had remarried, and he and his wife, Shay, had a son, Koa. Cano looks forward to showing his youngest around their sprawling county.

He'll probably start with Brewster County's most famous attraction, Big Bend National Park, and his favorite part of it, the Chisos Basin, a bowl surrounded by mountain peaks ranging from 5,600 to 7,800 feet. Rainfall in the Basin drains through the Window, a notch between Ward and Vernon Bailey peaks. The Window Trail, a 5.6-mile round-trip,

This short route provides a taste of the 7-mile gash the Rio Grande cut through 1,500-foot high Mesa de Anguila. Sheer cliffs rise on either side of the narrow river, which divides the national park from Mexico.

I also wander Cottonwood Campground, where the tall trees attract a wealth of birds. In a matter of minutes, I see a vermilion flycatcher, yellow-rumped warbler, golden-fronted woodpecker and a great-horned owl.

At least a half-dozen other hikes beckon along the road, but with time for only one more, I choose Balanced Rock. Its trailhead lies almost 8 miles down unpaved Grapevine Hills

PHOTO © TONY DREWERY



## FEATURED ATTRACTIONS (LEFT - RIGHT):

- ★ Brewster County Judge Eleazar Cano at the Alpine courthouse
- ★ Holland Avenue in Alpine
- ★ Museum of the Big Bend
- ★ Starlight Theatre restaurant in Terlingua

St. Edward's University, got married and had three daughters. He tried law school but found his passion in mental health counseling. He and his wife, Tonya, came back to Alpine so he could earn a master's degree at Sul Ross.

When they drove over the hill into town, Cano remembers thinking how beautiful it was. "I looked at it as coming back home," he says.

descends through scattered juniper and pine into a narrow, wooded canyon that becomes rocky before ending at the pour-off, 4,600 feet above the desert below.

Cano took his daughters, Alyssa, Katrina and Elena, to hike this trail when they were young. All three, now young women, have returned on their own. We make the hike on a partly sunny winter's day, with Mexican jays and titmice flitting through the bushes and the distinctive song of canyon wrens echoing off the walls. Oak Creek trickles through the rocks near the pour-off, where people line up to take pictures of the stunning westward view through the notch.

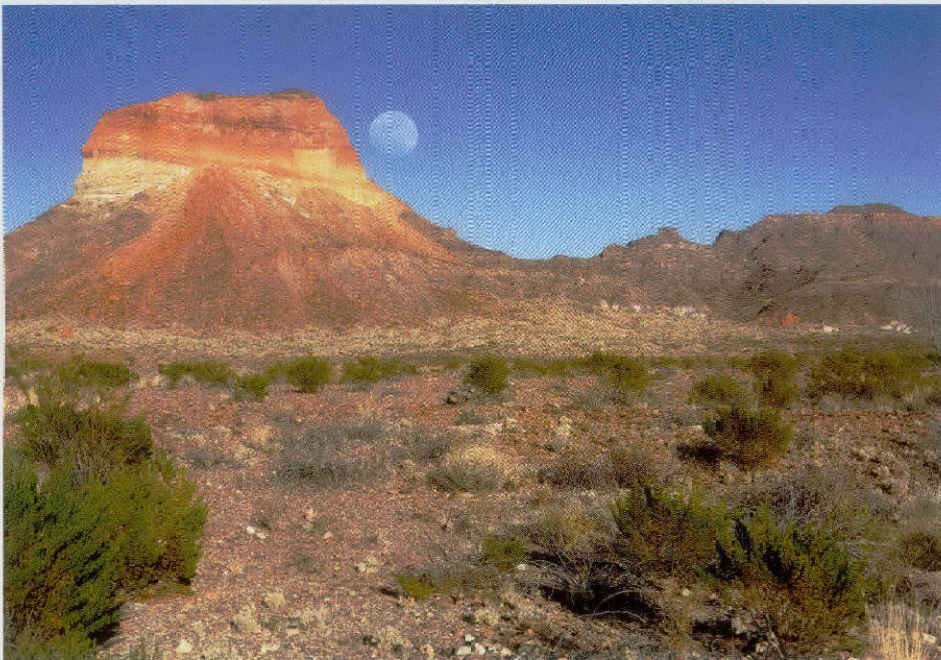
One hike barely scratches the surface of this 800,000-acre national park, of course. So, I spend the better part of a day on the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, taking in Sam Nail Ranch, Mule Ears Viewpoint and the iconic Santa Elena Canyon Trail.

Road, which starts just west of the turnoff to the Basin. The Grapevine Hills Trail follows a sandy wash for three-quarters of a mile through a canyon of granite rocks eroded into fantastic shapes. The final quarter-mile is a scramble up to an enormous rock perched atop one column and leaning against another. It frames a view of miles and miles of wildness and distant mountains, awash in quiet and solitude.

Back in Alpine, Cano recommends a stop at the Museum of the Big Bend on the Sul Ross campus.

"It's a real gem. Folks come from all over the place to see the things they have on display," he says. Housed in an imposing rock building dating to 1936, the museum packs a lot in a small area. Its permanent Big Bend Legacy exhibit covers the area's natural and human history, beginning with the Texas pterosaur, or *Quetzalcoatlus northropi*, a fossil discovered in the





*A statue of Sul Ross, former Civil War general and Texas governor, gets a makeover at Sul Ross State University. The moon peeks out behind a butte in Big Bend National Park off Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive.*

national park in 1971. Pterosaurs lived in the Late Cretaceous, some 68 million years ago and this individual's wingspan stretched more than 36 feet, making it the largest-known flying creature ever.

The museum's timeline continues with a re-created rock shelter painting and moves on to the Jumano Indians, European explorers, the Mexican War of Independence, the Texas Revolution, the formation of the national park, cowboy life, mining, the cancelilla harvest, the establishment of Sul Ross and more.

There's even a replica of the Window for those not fortunate enough to hike to the real thing.

To balance all that solitude with some socializing, we pop into the Saddle Club on Alpine's main drag, Holland Avenue. Colorful tables and an eclectic collection of chairs line a wall opposite a long bar (where one of the seats is an actual saddle), with a shaded patio in the back. "Good appetizers, good atmosphere, good music," Cano describes it. We missed Taco Tuesday, but thanks to a daily tapas menu, burger of the week and Epic Fries (beer-battered fries topped with queso, BBQ brisket, bacon, roasted red pepper aioli and green chili sauce), no one goes hungry.

Cano also frequents Reata Restaurant, on the corner of West Avenue and Fifth Street a short walk from his courthouse office. Its self-described "sophisticated cowboy cooking cuisine" includes originals such as tenderloin tamales along with classics — enchiladas, chile rellenos, chicken-fried steak. The judge's favorite dish is the rib-eye, medium rare, eaten on the patio when weather permits (which it usually does). Named for the ranch in the movie *Giant*, filmed in this area in the 1950s, the Reata was the brainchild of local rancher Al Micallef and Fort Worth businessman Mike Evans.

For special occasions, the Cano family heads down the road to Marathon and the 12 Gage Restaurant at the Gage Hotel. Rancher Alfred Gage built this Mission-style structure, designed by El Paso architect Henry Trost, in 1927, and Houston oilman J.P. Bryan restored it in the late 1970s. The 12 Gage menu emphasizes seasonal and locally sourced wild game, beef and fowl complemented by fresh vegetables and herbs. Here, too, Cano gravitates to the outdoor patio, which features fireplaces and fountains.

"You notice a lot of places in the county have outdoor sitting areas," he points out. "Because of our weather, you can be out of doors for nine or 10 solid months."



**MORE INFO:**

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**SADDLE CLUB**

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

**REATA RESTAURANT**

[www.reata.net/alpine](http://www.reata.net/alpine)

**GAGE HOTEL**

(800) 884-4243 ; [gagehotel.com](http://gagehotel.com)

Just east of the Gage lies another of the judge's favorite motorcycle rides, the 5-mile Post Road from U.S. Highway 90 to Post Park. Officials at Fort Davis established Camp Peña Colorado here in 1879 to protect freighters and wagon trains plying the Chihuahua Trail. Today, tall cottonwoods line a spring-fed pool created by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. "The stargazing there is incredible," says Cano.

That can be said of most of the county, which boasts some of the darkest skies in the country. Marathon offers stargazing programs at the Marathon Motel using a 24-inch Dobsonian telescope. Big Bend National Park received official designation as an International Dark Sky Park and offers plenty of spots to lie back and look up at the Milky Way. The galaxy is even visible just a short walk from the Starlight porch in Terlingua.

"Brewster County is just so beautiful, the openness, being off the beaten path," Cano sums up. "I love how everybody knows everybody." It seems a perfect combination: plenty of wide open space to roam and friendly folks waiting back on the porch. ★



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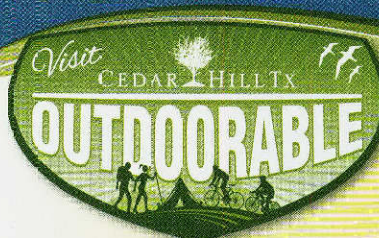
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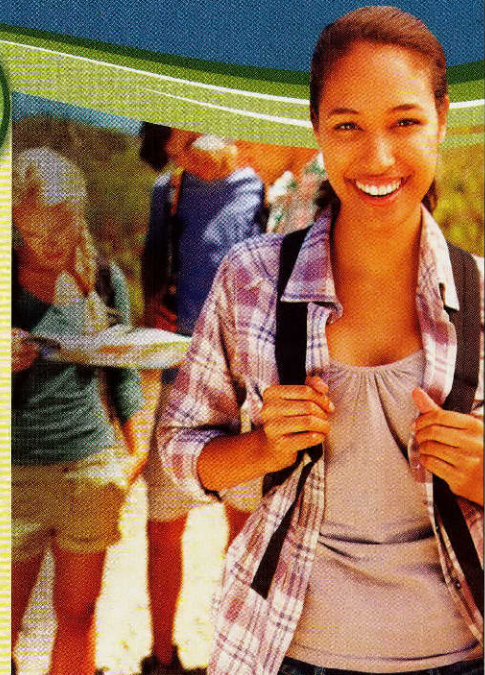
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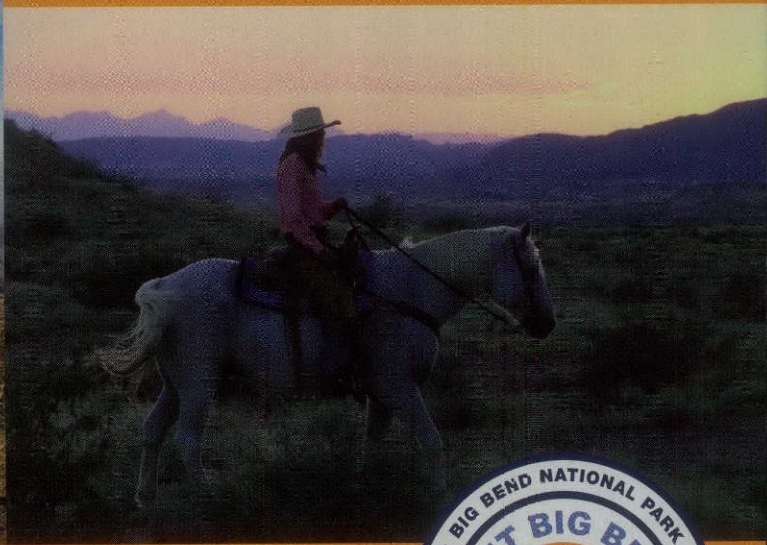
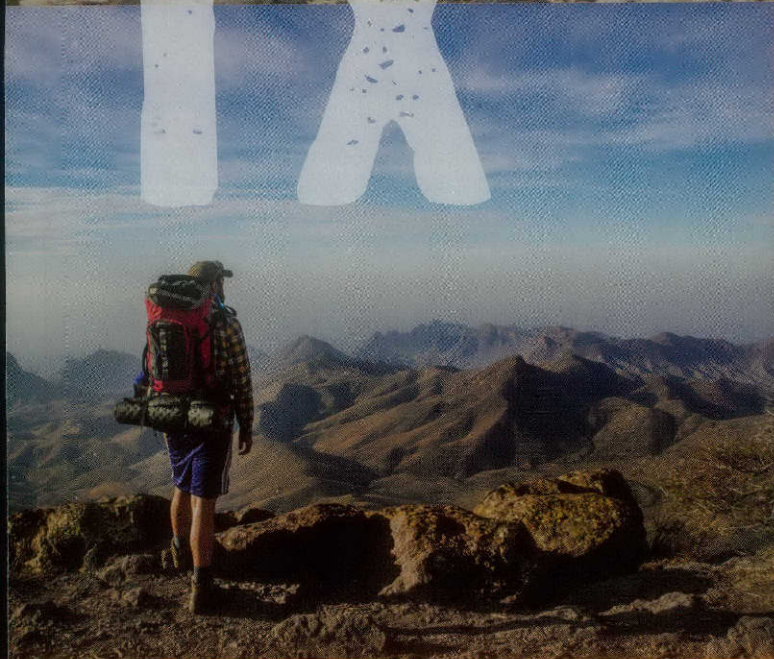
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# CATCH AN OCEAN BREEZE OR A CANYON SUNSET IN ONE OF TEXAS' BEST PLACES TO PITCH A TENT.



PHOTO © F. DAN KI PEPFER

Steve and Sandra Tolley of Katy return to the same Inks Lake State Park campsite year after year for their anniversary. It's that special.

"This is the prime spot," Steve says of the waterfront site. "We've been coming to this campsite for the past 10 years."

Texas has lots of "prime spots" to camp. Campers who visit Texas state parks can catch the sunrise from atop a desert mountain, enjoy a campfire along a Hill Country river or relax in a hammock under the East Texas pines.

The state park system has 7,379 campsites to choose from. Some of those sites are pretty incredible. You know the ones we're talking about — those sites that have great views, sit right next to the water, are shaded by a grand old tree or come with extra space or extra privacy to make them feel special.

We traveled the state as a father-and-son team to find those special sites, visiting dozens of state parks across Texas. (We also got invaluable help from many fine folks who work for state parks.)

Chris Beckcom, senior park planner at the Texas

Parks and Wildlife Department, says that when he visits parks during the week, he sees people camped in two kinds of places — in the really nice spot that everybody wants, and in the site right next to the bathroom. Both spots have their advantages, we suppose. Picking the best campsite is a pretty subjective process.

Our selections favor some of the more out-of-the-way sites — we're tent campers and not RVers — but we tried to include something for everyone. We considered factors such as scenery, privacy, spaciousness, shade, access to bathrooms, proximity to park attractions and a totally subjective "wow" factor.

State parks are more popular than ever, and it's important to make your reservations early to get a spot at your favorite park. With more than 2.3 million overnight visitors to state parks last year, you'll want to plan ahead to have the best camping trip possible.

We hope you'll explore our parks and discover more great campsites. Happy camping.



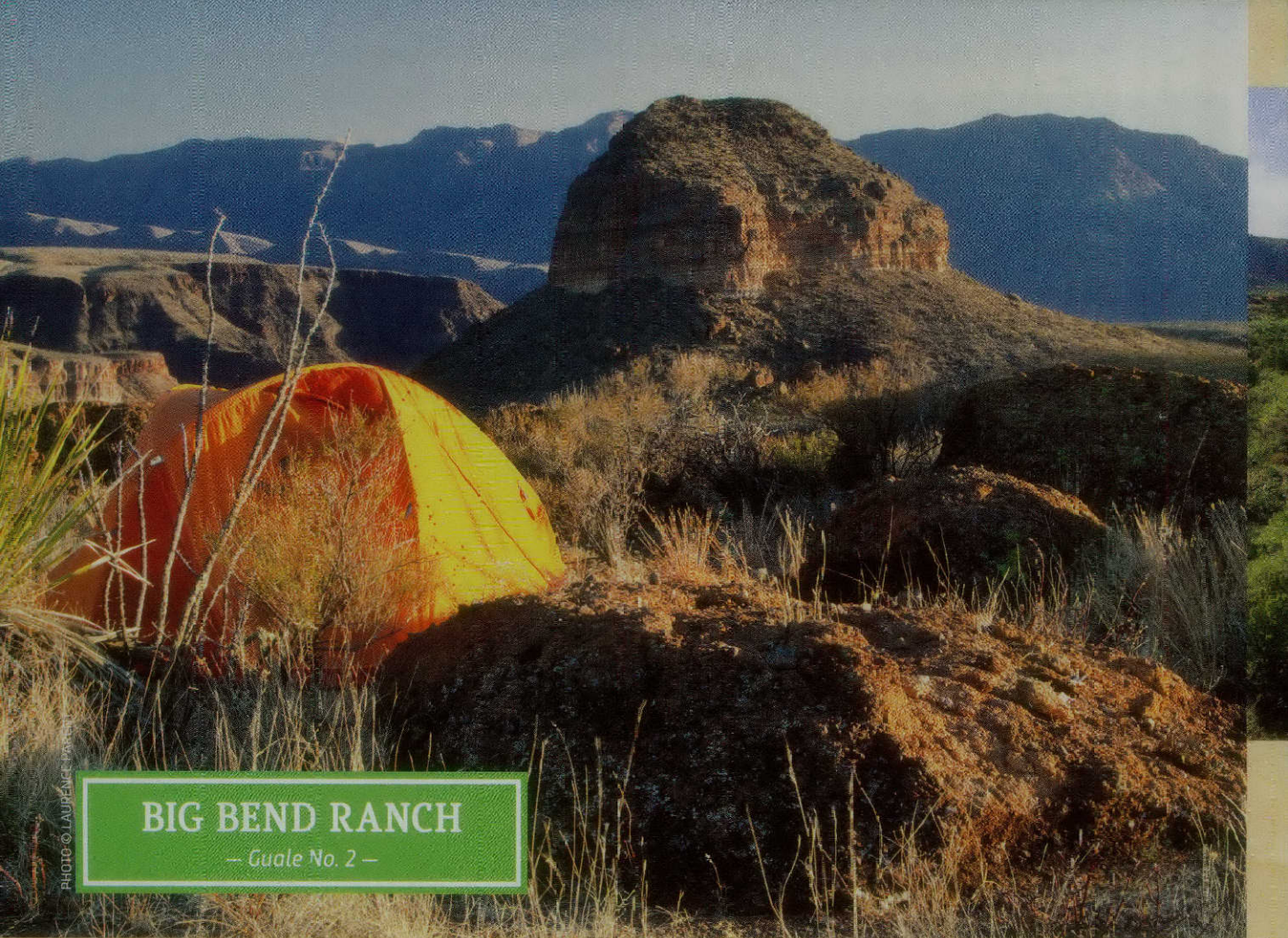


PHOTO © LAURENCE BARTON

**BIG BEND RANCH**  
— Guale No. 2 —

Dramatic vistas in every direction await campers at Guale No. 2, one of Big Bend Ranch's most spectacular sites, located on Guale Mesa near the edge of Rancherías Canyon. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are needed to reach this spot, which is one of the most remote campsites in one of the most remote parks in the state. The park's campsite guide describes it this way: "It has it all: millions of years of volcanic geology to study, views into Mexico, solitude that is deafening and sunrises and sunsets that will change the way campers think about color forever."



PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

**MARTIN DIES JR.**  
— Site No. 9 —

A wealth of paddling opportunities awaits canoeists and kayakers in this extraordinary ecosystem: at the edge of the Big Thicket. Scenic sloughs meander through the park, offering intriguing places to explore and providing the backdrop for site No. 9, one of the park's most popular. Diversity is the name of the game here, with a unique blend of plants and animals coming together at this biological crossroads. Magnolia trees mix with pine, oak, sweetgum and maple. Edd cypress trees add their statuesque beauty to the swampy areas, home to frogs, turtles, fish and alligators.





PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

## CAPROCK CANYONS

— Site No. 65 —

The drama of this Panhandle park cranks up a few notches once you start heading down into the red-rock canyonlands from the prairie uplands. After passing a prairie dog town and the historic state bison herd, the road begins to descend into canyon country. One turn off the main road takes you to the Little Red Tent Camping Area, where campsites offer views of rock outcrops, the Caprock escarpment and the Little Red River canyon. Site No. 65, with a covered picnic table, is perched on a point overlooking the Little Red River.



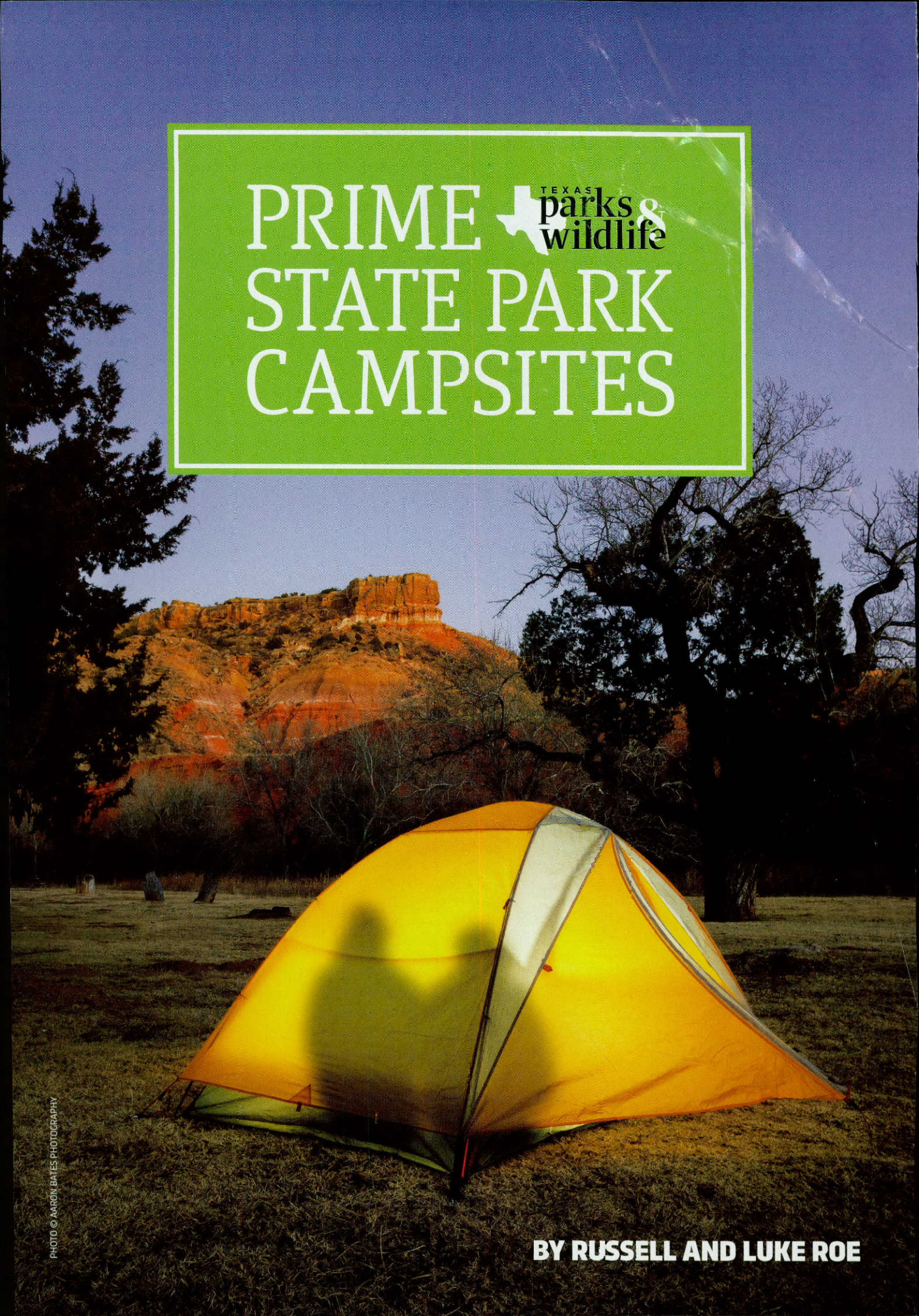
PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

## CADDO LAKE

— Site No. 65 —

The water and cypress trees of Caddo Lake hold the secrets of those who were there before you. Caddo is a mystical place, one that feels old and is particularly beautiful. Site No. 65 provides the perfect platform for the beauty and mystery of East Texas to capture your heart. It sits on the edge of the water, one of the few sites to do so. Canoe rentals are nearby, and there is a break in the trees near the campsite that functions as a canoe dock. After a long day you can relax around the campfire and let the waning light filtering through the moss-covered trees provide you with a sense of peace. Life is good in site 65.






PRIME  STATE PARK  
CAMPSITES

PHOTO © AARON BATES PHOTOGRAPHY

BY RUSSELL AND LUKE ROE



# HUNTSVILLE

— Site No. 70 —

It's hard to go wrong with pine trees and an East Texas lake. Campers flock to this East Texas park to hike, bike, paddle and swim. Lake Raven serves as the heart of the park, with tall pines towering over the shoreline. At site No. 70, the lake is at your doorstep, offering plenty of room, plenty of shade and views of the day-use area across the cove. Our nighttime canoe trip on the lake offered just the right blend of relaxation and adventure, something this park provides quite well.

PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD



## CAMPFIRE STORIES

with Ranger Kristen

Stories are the silk threads that connect all humans together. We continue this tradition by hosting campfire programs at many of our Texas state parks. You can join me as I tell stories under the stars at Bastrop and Buescher state parks!

Here is one of *my* favorite stories based on a Native American tale.



When the Earth was new, our side of the world was covered in darkness so deep ...



... all the animals would bump into each other.



COMING THROUGH! Sorry!

Oops! BEG YOUR PARDON. My bad.

Excuse me! EEP?



## DEVILS RIVER

— Del Norte Unit, San Pedro Point —

This primitive campsite on the beautiful and rugged Devils River is available only to those who arrive by canoe or kayak (and have the appropriate permit). After enduring many grueling miles on the river, paddlers are sure to welcome the break. The setting is pretty spectacular — on the banks of the crystal-clear river, surrounded by desert mountains and canyons with no one else in sight. Nearby, massive springs gush out of the ground, in contrast with the dry desert terrain all around. In March, TPWD opened two new paddle-up sites on leased private land along the river in addition to the paddle-up sites at the two state park units.

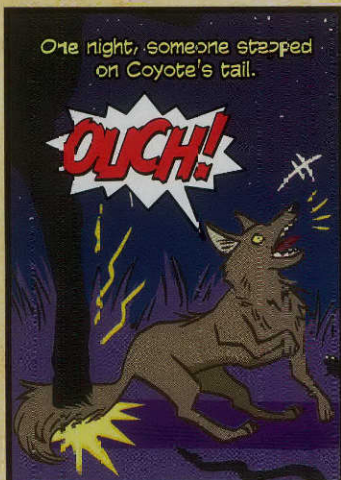






PHOTO BY TPWD

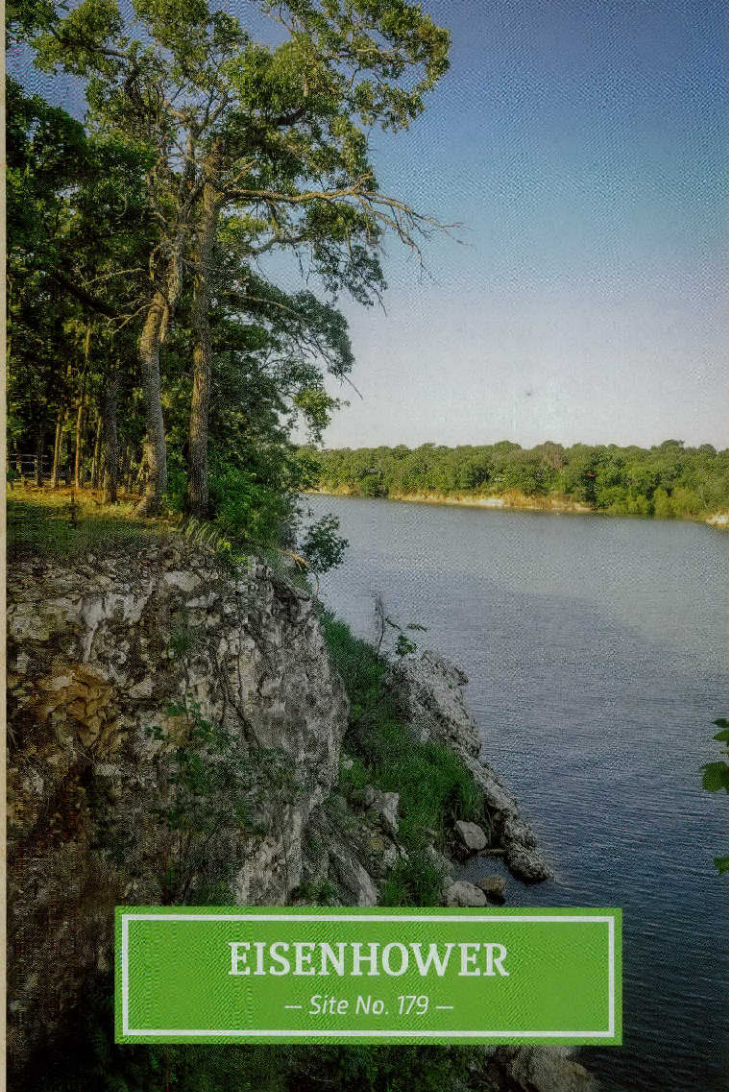
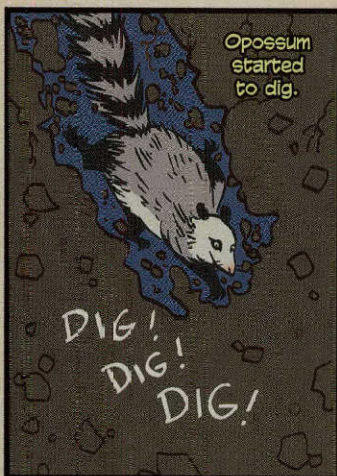
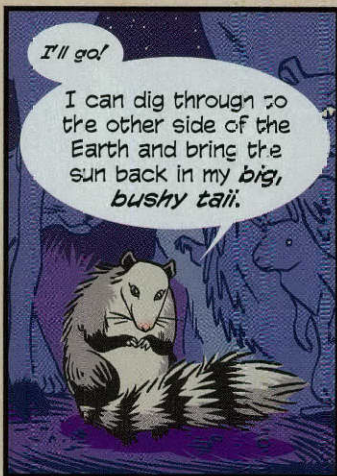
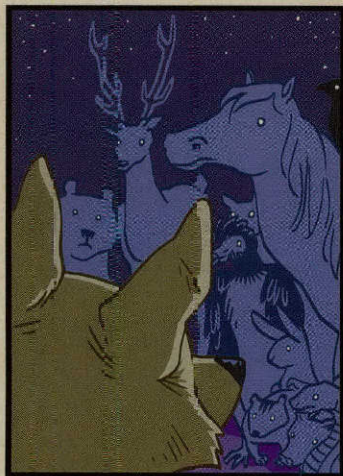


PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

**EISENHOWER**  
 — Site No. 179 —

Site No. 179 juts out on an elevated peninsula overlooking the surrounding Lake Texoma. The view is magical at all times of day — caves burrow into the white limestone cliffs across the cove, the sun's rays glitter as they reflect off Lake Texoma's blue water, and the rocks glow in the setting sun. The site has just enough tree cover to keep you cool and for you to still enjoy the view. There is a steep and rocky but short walk to the swim area in the cove below the site. String a hammock across some trees, sit back, relax and enjoy the view of Lake Texoma.





## LAKE MINERAL WELLS

— Screened Shelter No. 3 —

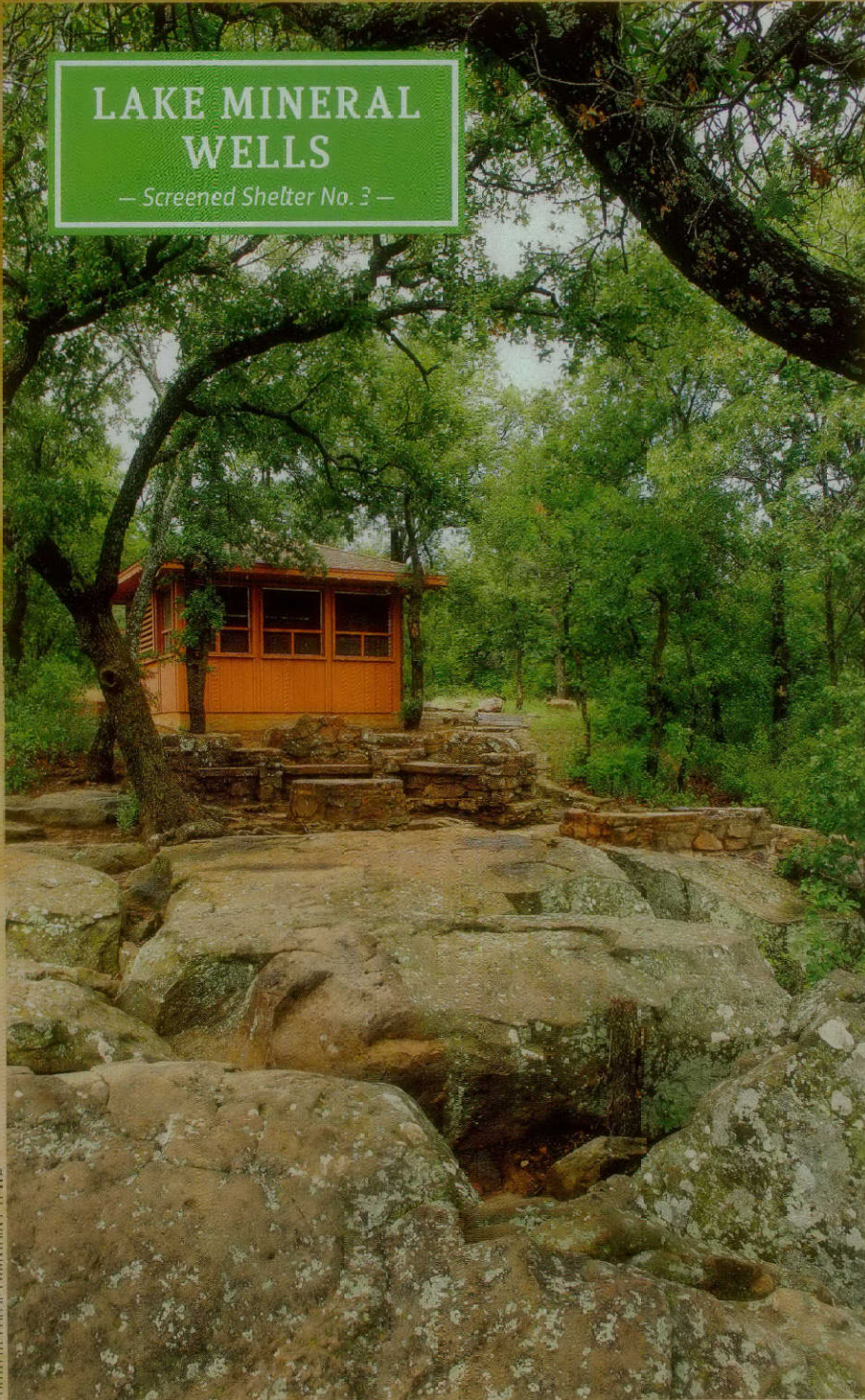


PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN / TPWD

This shelter has a unique feel. It's home to stone benches built by the Civil Works Administration in the 1930s. It's on a point on the lake and offers stunning views of Lake Mineral Wells and the surrounding hills. Big sandstone boulders rise up along the shoreline. The backyard bench-and-firepit area is shaded by oak trees during the hot summer days. The shelter is located in a cul-de-sac of sorts, and it's not far from the main road that can take you all around the park and to Penitentiary Hollow, the climbing area that's a natural playground and one of the park's main attractions.

## INKS LAKE

— Site No. 92 —

The park's most popular site hits the sweet spot with the right blend of scenery, shade, privacy and convenience. You've got the lake on two sides, with the popular Devil's Waterhole a short paddle away. Boaters can moor their boats just off the site. The sunsets will take your breath away; this site offers a front-row seat. "It's hard to find a flaw with this one," says park ranger Chris Hall. Fishing, boating, swimming and exploring the pink-rock outcroppings will fill out your day.







PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT

## HILL COUNTRY

— Site No. 129 —

Rugged limestone hills surround you in this Hill Country park. Site No. 129 is a huge, comfortable campsite shaded by trees and full of potential hammock spots. There's plenty of room to spread out, and plenty of privacy, too. The site, which backs up to West Verde Creek, is an oasis in this scenic and secluded park. The park and the site are very primitive, so bring your own water and food. Hill Country State Natural Area is known as an equestrian park, but there is actually much more to it. The park offers numerous trails for hiking and mountain biking.

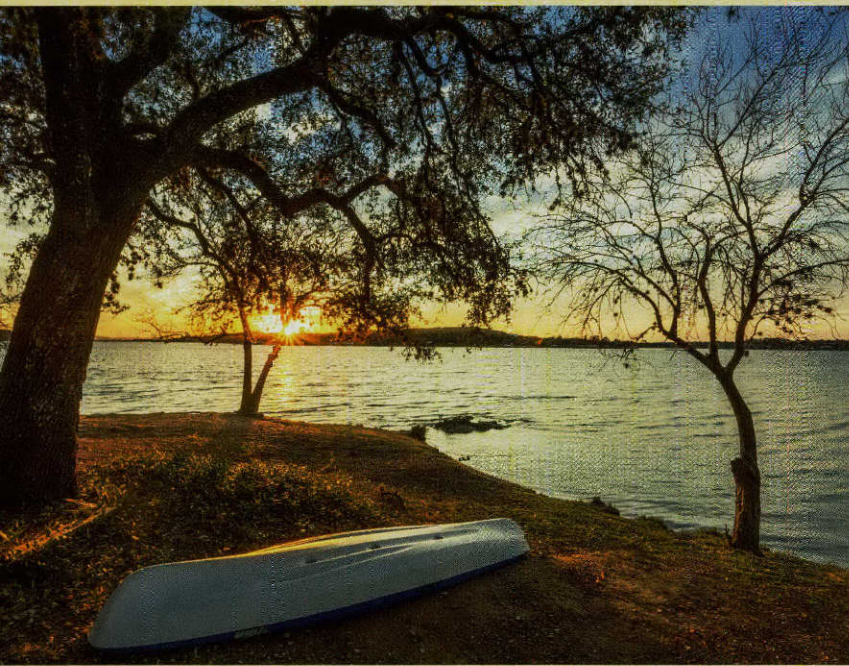


PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT



PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT





## TYLER

— Site No. 37 —



This gem in the Pineywoods of East Texas offers plenty to do — paddling, fishing, swimming, hiking and biking amid a beautiful pine/hardwood forest, a spring-fed lake and some surprising hills. The sites along the scenic lakeshore are always the first to be chosen, and it's hard to go wrong with any of them. No. 37, on a small arm of the lake, provides a little more privacy than the others, and hey, it's closer to the bathroom as well. Summer's a popular time to enjoy the park, but don't overlook autumn and the colors that come with it.

## DAVIS MOUNTAINS

— Site No. 81 —

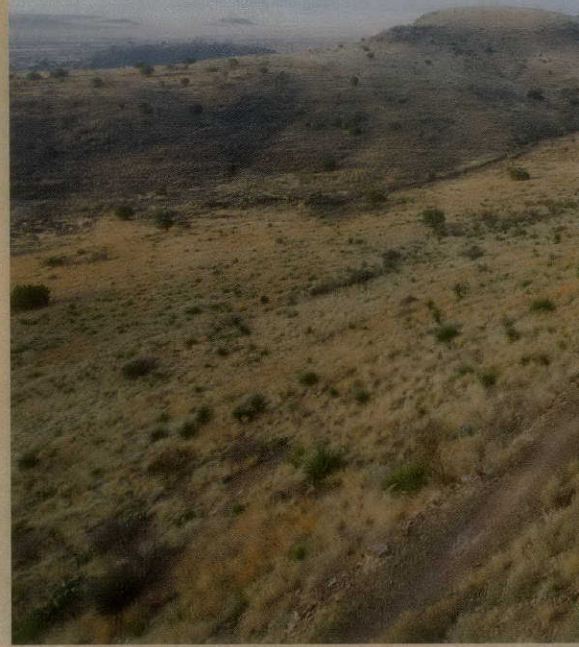


PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD







PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT

This beautiful and historic park sits nestled in a valley of West Texas' Davis Mountains. Grasslands and juniper-oak woodlands cover the rugged terrain, with volcanic rock outcroppings adding to the scenic value. Site No. 81 backs up to Keesey Creek, which runs through the park. The site is one of the more private ones in the park, and the trees provide good shade. Keep an eye out for the park's abundant wildlife. Javelinas might come wandering through, or maybe you'll spot a mule deer across the creek. It's possible that you'll get lucky and catch a glimpse of a lovely Montezuma quail. Elf owls can often be seen in a nearby tree.

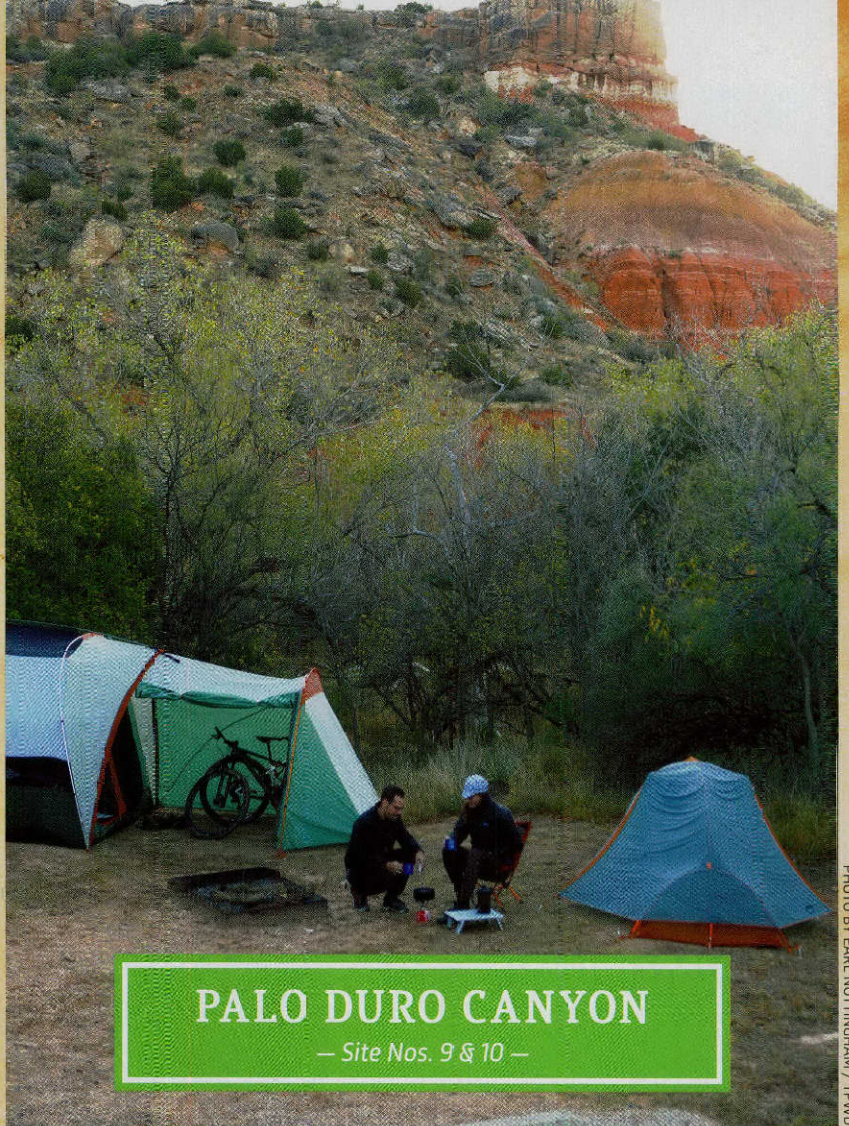


PHOTO BY EARL NOTTINGHAM / TPWD

**PALO DURO CANYON**  
— Site Nos. 9 & 10 —

The second-largest canyon in the country is bursting with scenery and history. The Lighthouse formation stands tall as one of the most iconic sights in all our state parks, and the outdoor musical drama *Texas* has entertained crowds for generations. The Hackberry Camp Area is one of the older campgrounds in this Parkhandle park, and the trees are a little bigger here, providing welcome shade and cover. Cottonwoods shade site No. 9, which offers room to spread out. Site No. 10 provides a covered picnic table and a greater degree of privacy. The Prairie Dog Fork of the Red River flows behind the sites, and both offer canyon views.

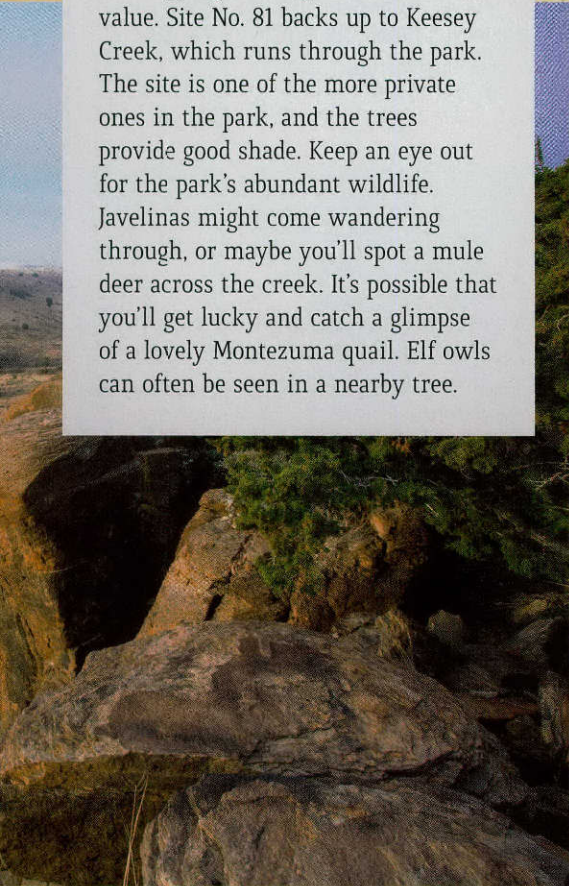
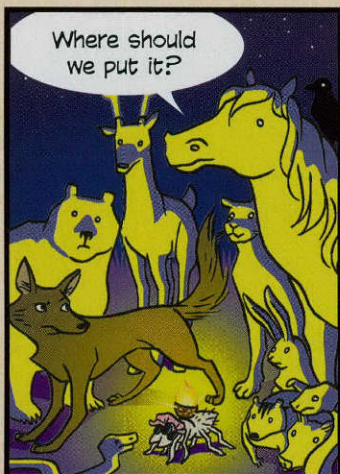


PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT



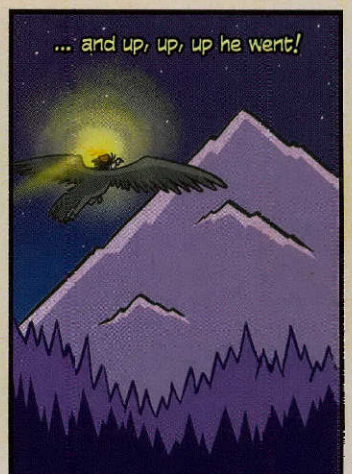
Where should we put it?



I can put it on the peak of the *highest mountain* for *all* to enjoy!



So Grandmother Spider placed the basket on Vulture's thickly-feathered head ...



... and up, up, up he went!





## ENCHANTED ROCK

— Site No. 23 —

Enchanted Rock is a favorite of many Texans, and it's definitely a favorite in my family. We've always loved the campsites that sit right up against the flanks of Little Dome, and No. 23 is one of the best. You can't get any closer to the rock than this. The granite dome at your doorstep invites unfettered exploration through a wonderland of boulders, caves, hoodoos and outcrops. A covered picnic table provides a base of operations for your stay.

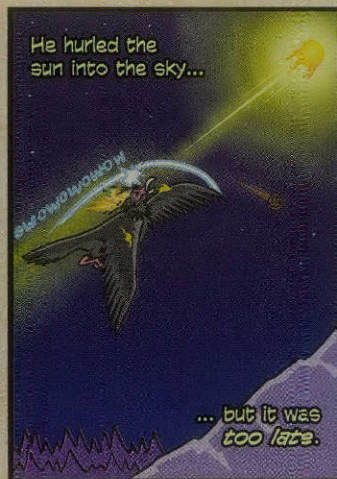
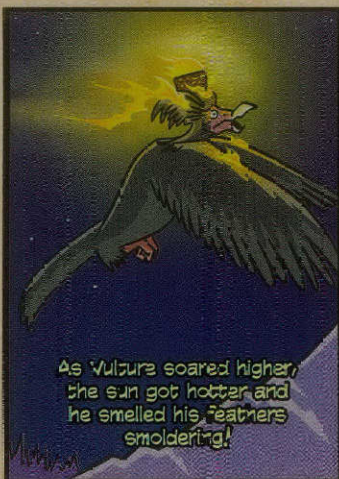
## FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS

— Site No. C5 —

This campground doesn't get as many visitors as it should, and maybe that's because of its primitive nature: no water and no electricity. And that's a shame. Sunsets blaze across the sky, and after dark, the city lights of El Paso twinkle in the distance. It all feels grand up in this mountain hideaway. Despite being in the El Paso city limits, the park immerses you in the natural world. This campsite is just across the valley from the Aztec Caves, a popular hiking destination. Bring your bike for some world-class mountain biking. There's even a crag for rock climbing.



PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT





## CAMPING EXTRA

# MORE S'MORES

Tired of the same old s'mores? Maybe not, but some adventurous eaters out there have been reinventing this campfire favorite with new flavor combinations. See what you think...



### PEANUT BUTTER S'MORES

Start off simple by putting peanut butter on your graham cracker before adding the traditional chocolate and marshmallow. Nutella and cookie butter can also work.



### RICE KRISPIE S'MORES

You probably loved Rice Krispie treats as a kid, and maybe you still do. Substitute Rice Krispie treats for graham crackers and open wide. (Hint: Make the treats as thin as possible for easier eating.)



### REESE'S S'MORES

Try this chocolate and peanut butter treat with your marshmallow and graham cracker.



### STRAWBERRY/BANANA S'MORES

Take your s'mores up a notch by adding strawberries and banana slices to your chocolate and marshmallow treat.



### OREO S'MORES

Open an Oreo just as you usually do, but instead of scraping off the icing with your teeth, slide in a roasted marshmallow instead.



### MINTY S'MORES

For a change of pace, use mint chocolate instead of regular chocolate.



### SAMOA S'MORES

If you like those Girl Scout Samoa/Caramel deLite cookies, you might want to try this: Add caramel and toasted coconut to your s'more.



### ELVIS S'MORES

Take care of business by adding peanut butter and banana slices to your graham cracker along with the chocolate and marshmallow (bacon optional).



# SETTING UP THE PERFECT CAMP

**LOOK DOWN AND LOOK UP.** Make sure you're not setting up your tent on an ant bed or other hazard. Also make sure there are no dead branches overhead that could fall on your tent.

**PICK A TENT SPOT THAT'S LEVEL AND IS FREE OF ROCKS, BRANCHES AND ROOTS.** Sliding toward one side of the tent is no fun, and discovering a rock under your sleeping bag after you've set up the tent is a sure source of frustration. Use trees or boulders as wind blocks.

A good pair of **HEAVY-DUTY, HEAT-RESISTANT GLOVES** will make it a breeze to take hot pots off the fire or move campfire grates. They're great for handling cast iron while cooking.

If your ground cloth is bigger than your tent, **FOLD THE EXCESS CLOTH UNDERNEATH THE TENT.** Otherwise, it will catch and pool any rainwater.

In cold weather, putting an **EXTRA BLANKET ON THE FLOOR OF THE TENT** will add a layer of insulation and keep you warmer.

**A FOLDING SHOVEL** works well as a tool for moving coals, adjusting logs and spreading out the fire's remains when you leave.

**DON'T WEAR SHOES INSIDE THE TENT.** Keeping shoes outside the tent will help keep your tent clean. Place a mat outside the tent door to minimize tracking in debris.



# THE CAMP SITE


**SINCE MUCH OF OUR WEATHER IN TEXAS IS WARM OR DOWNRIGHT HOT**, a nice shade tree can make a huge difference in comfort while camping. Look for a site with good tree cover (even if it's cloudy or dark when you're looking for a site).

**AVOID VALLEYS** that might funnel water toward your tent. Look for signs of flooding, washouts or debris and avoid those spots so you don't wake up in a pool of water.

**ANTICIPATE WHERE THE SUN WILL COME UP IN THE MORNING.** If you don't want to be blasted by the sun right at sunrise, choose a place with some tree or brush cover.

**IF YOU CAN'T BRING YOUR OWN FIREWOOD**, most state parks have firewood for sale -- either from the camp store or a park host. If you don't have kindling, you can obtain smaller pieces of wood by using a hatchet or knife to cut smaller pieces from the bigger logs you brought or purchased. Organizing the different sizes of wood into piles will help make building a fire go more smoothly.

**BEING NEAR THE BATHROOM** is convenient, but it can also be noisy, and campers may be walking by your site all day. Finding the right balance of convenience and privacy is key.



When setting up your tent, **NOTICE WHICH WAY THE WIND IS BLOWING** and where the fire ring is. Pick a spot where smoke won't be blowing into your tent all evening.

**FOIL!** You can cook all kinds of things in foil, including dinners and desserts, and using foil means you won't have to wash as many dishes. Foil used inside pots and pans also will make cleanup easier.

**PUT A CORK** on the end of your roasting stick when it's not in use to keep it from poking you or your equipment.

**IN YOUR ICE CHEST, USE FROZEN WATER JUGS AS ICE.** They'll stay frozen longer than cubes, and you can drink the water when it melts. Plus, you won't have to worry about your food getting soaked by melting ice. Keeping a separate cooler for drinks may simplify things and allow your ice to last longer.

**PREPARE FOOD AHEAD OF TIME.** If your dinner requires a lot of chopping, do as much as you can before you leave home. Doing prep work in a kitchen will be easier and will save time at camp. Making soups or stews ahead of time and freezing them will provide you with a quick, easy meal during your trip. Prepping meats in your home kitchen will be more sanitary than at camp and will allow for easier cleanup.



## Making reservations

Campsite reservations can be made 11 months in advance by going online at [tpwd.texas.gov/reserve](http://tpwd.texas.gov/reserve) or by calling (512) 389-8900. At present, specific sites cannot be reserved; once you make a reservation at a park, spots are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

## DAINGERFIELD

— No. 17 —

## MORE PRIME PICKS

**BLANCO, SHELTER NO. 41:** You're definitely not out in the wilderness here, but this screened shelter on the banks of the river will provide you with a perfectly pleasant Hill Country weekend.

**BUESCHER, NO. 48:** This large site backs up to the park's lake, where you can launch a canoe or kayak. Lots of trees provide plenty of shade.

**COLORADO BEND, NO. 15 OR 18:** Enjoy the views of the Colorado River and the cliffs on the opposite shore at this former fishing camp, or take a hike to Gorman Falls or the scenic Spicewood Springs area.

**DAINGERFIELD, NO. 17:** Step out of the car and smell the pines. This East Texas park's most popular site offers seclusion and lake views.

**DINOSAUR VALLEY, NO. 17:** You can hear the Paluxy River gurgling below from this site perched on a bluff above the river. Cedar and cedar elm trees provide the shade at this spacious spot. Be sure to visit the dinosaur tracks upstream.

**LAKE LIVINGSTON, NO. 57:** Despite the name, only a few of this park's campsites are on the lake. This one is at the end of a row, offering a refreshing retreat under the trees, with grand views of the lake.

**MERIDIAN, NO. 32:** This pleasant spot sits apart from the other campsites in the park. It's not far from the day-use and swim areas, and it's located on a nice little lake inlet. A bridge built by the Civilian Conservation Corps adds visual appeal.

**MUSTANG ISLAND, BEACH SITES:** Drive down the beach until you find the spot that looks just right along the dunes. You'll wake up to crashing waves and the sunrise over the Gulf.


**PEDERNALES FALLS, GROUP SITE:** You may feel as if you have your own private state park at this secluded Hill Country site. A private entrance road leads you to a spacious camping area, which also has its own trail down to the river. It's available only for sponsored youth groups.

**POSSUM KINGDOM, NO. 80:** People come to this North Texas park to enjoy the lake, and the great views and breeze at this site will keep them coming back. A covered picnic table seals the deal.



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**APRIL IS TEXAS STATE PARKS MONTH  
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Make a donation during the month of April at  
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# WILDFLOWER HEAVENS

## April is the pinnacle of Texas' spring wildflower explosion.

More than 5,000 species of wildflowers (including six species of bluebonnets) bloom in Texas. By April, most of the state is transformed into riotous fields dotted with all colors of the rainbow, as if there were a great confetti machine in the clouds spewing mightily. After a gray winter, it's like opening Dorothy's farmhouse door and seeing Oz in all its Technicolor splendor.

The bloom season usually progresses in a wave from early March in Big Bend to mid-March in coastal cities, late March in Houston, early to mid-April in Central Texas and late April in the Panhandle. This year, the season started early and may spread out over several months, according to the Lady

Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Remember, whether you're stopping to smell the primroses or take family portraits, watch where you're stepping: Stay off private property, look for hazardous wildlife and don't trample the flowers. While it's not illegal to pick bluebonnets or other wildflowers, many parks prohibit it, and these annual beauties need the chance to seed next year's crop. For more wildflower information, visit the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's collection of Texas natives displayed on 279 acres in Austin or browse its online database: [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org).

Wildflower sightings vary year to year, but these routes and hot spots are known for spectacular displays.

PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER

BY EMILY MOSKAL





PHOTO © JIM STONE

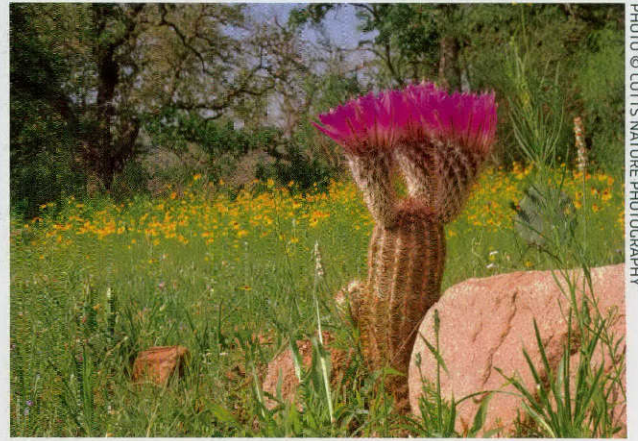


PHOTO © CUTTS NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

**WILLOW CITY LOOP,  
LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
STATE PARK & HISTORIC SITE**

Snag a photo of the Official Texas State Longhorn Herd or a historical cabin in a blanket of bluebonnets at the park. Continue west on U.S. Highway 290 to Fredericksburg, head north on Texas Highway 16, east on FM 1323, then turn left: on Willow City Loop. This 13-mile two-lane ranch road gets busy on weekends but is worth it for the views of exquisite geology and blazing fields of sunset-colored Indian paintbrushes and Indian blankets.

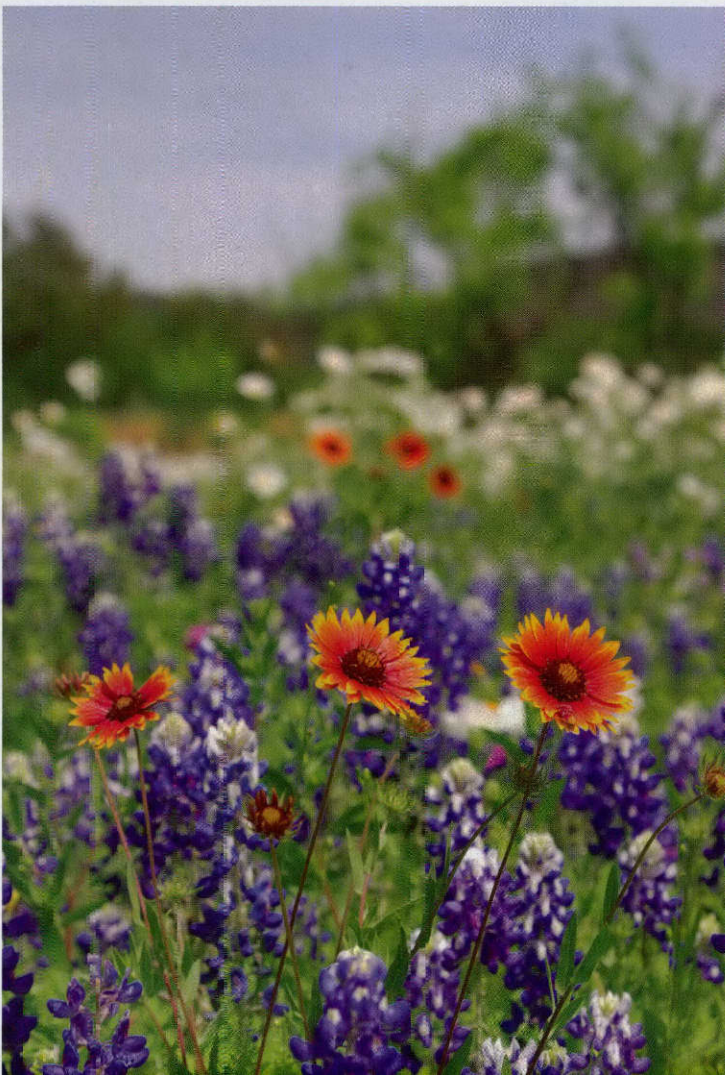


PHOTO © CAROLYN WHITESIDE



PHOTO © JIM STONE



**HIGHLAND LAKES BLUEBONNET TRAIL,  
INKS LAKE STATE PARK**

Inks Lake is in the middle of the popular Highland Lakes Bluebonnet Trail that winds through the upper Highland Lakes towns of Llano, Kingsland, Marble Falls and Burnet. On Park Road 4 through the park, you'll find blankets of azure-blue, cloud-tipped bluebonnets across a pink granite backdrop. Continue 15 minutes on Texas Highway 29 to Burnet, where the official "Bluebonnet Capital of Texas" holds an annual Bluebonnet Festival the second weekend of April.



**GET LOST  
IN THE RIGHT  
DIRECTION.**

**ESCAPE TO  
MARBLEFALLS.ORG**



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Lakeside charm  
with downtown flair.





PHOTO © E. DAN KLEPPER

**RIVER ROAD (FM 170),  
BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK**

In these rocky, yucca-studded canyons, desert marigolds, hip-high Big Bend bluebonnets and scarlet-colored claret cups fill the park. The spring flowering season starts along the Rio Grande corridor, and showers of color creep up into the mountains by late April. Follow the Rio Grande on the 50-mile drive on FM 170 between Lajitas and Presidio, and be sure to visit the Barton Warnock Visitor Center's botanical garden.

PHOTO © AARON BATES PHOTOGRAPHY



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San Marcos, TX is a groove. A way of living. Where you can experience a new band or dance the night away to an old favorite. Come check out the festivals on our Downtown Square.

**April 7-9: Swing On The Square** features all things Western Swing.

**April 8: Brew Hop** showcases craft beers and food pairings.

**April 28-29: MR Fest** spotlights local and regional indie artists.

There's even more to do – just visit [TourSanMarcos.com](http://TourSanMarcos.com)!

**SAN MARCOS**  
f t p i v y  
/TourSanMarcos





PHOTO © QUINN REISHAW



PHOTO © ERIC W. POHL

**↑ ENNIS BLUEBONNET TRAILS,  
ENNIS**

Designated by the Texas Legislature as the “Official Bluebonnet City of Texas” and home of the “Official Texas Bluebonnet Trail,” Ennis has one of the oldest established bluebonnet trails. From April 1–30, Ennis showcases more than 40 miles of well-marked and mapped driving bluebonnet trails, sponsored by the Ennis Garden Club. Stop by the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau to get the latest wildflower hot spots, scouted each week.

**← WASHINGTON COUNTY  
BLUEBONNET TRAIL,  
BRENHAM & CHAPPELL HILL**

This route through Burton, Independence, Washington-on-the-Brazos, Chappell Hill and Brenham is covered in bluebonnets, coneflowers, prairie verbena and skullcaps. Together, Brenham and Chappell Hill are self-described as “The Heart of Bluebonnet Country.” This year Chappell Hill hosts the 53rd Annual Bluebonnet Festival during the second weekend of April.



A GUIDE TO  
COMMON  
TEXAS

# April Blooms



PHOTO © THERESA DIMENNO

**TEXAS BLUEBONNET**  
*Lupinus texensis*



PHOTO © BRUCE LEANDER/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**INDIAN PAINTBRUSH**  
*Castilleja indivisa*



PHOTO © KIM YARBROUGH/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**MEXICAN HAT**  
*Ratibida columnaris*



PHOTO © SALLY & ANDY WASOWSKI/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**WINECUP**  
*Callirhoe involucrata*



PHOTO © SALLY & ANDY WASOWSKI/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**PINK EVENING PRIMROSE**  
*Oenothera speciosa*



PHOTO © BRUCE LEANDER/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**INDIAN BLANKET**  
*Gaillardia puchella*



PHOTO © ALAN FRESSLER/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**PRAIRIE VERBENA**  
*Glandularia bipinnatifida*



PHOTO BY SONIA SOMMERFELD/TPWD

**DRUMMOND'S PHLOX**  
*Phlox drummondii*



PHOTO © KIMBERLY KLINE/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**SPOTTED BEEBALM**  
*Monarda punctata*



PHOTO © KIM YARBROUGH/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**COREOPSIS**  
*Coreopsis tinctoria*



PHOTO © JOSEPH MARCUS/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**WHITE PRICKLY POPPY**  
*Argemone albiflora*



PHOTO © WD & DOI PHIA BRANSFORD/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**TEXAS DANDELION**  
*Pyrrophappus carolinianus*



PHOTO © BRUCE LEANDER/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**BLACKFOOT DAISY**  
*Melampodium leucanthum*



PHOTO © ERIC W. POHL

**FLOWERING DOGWOOD**  
*Cornus florida*



PHOTO BY SONIA SOMMERFELD/TPWD

**BIG BEND BLUEBONNET**  
*Lupinus havardii*



PHOTO © DOUG SHERMAN/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**OCOTILLO**  
*Foucaeria splendens*



PHOTO © PAUL COX/LBI WILDFLOWER CENTER

**GIANT DAGGER YUCCA**  
*Yucca faxoniana*



PHOTO © ANDREW R. SLATON

**CLARET CUP CACTUS**  
*Echinocereus triglochidiatus*



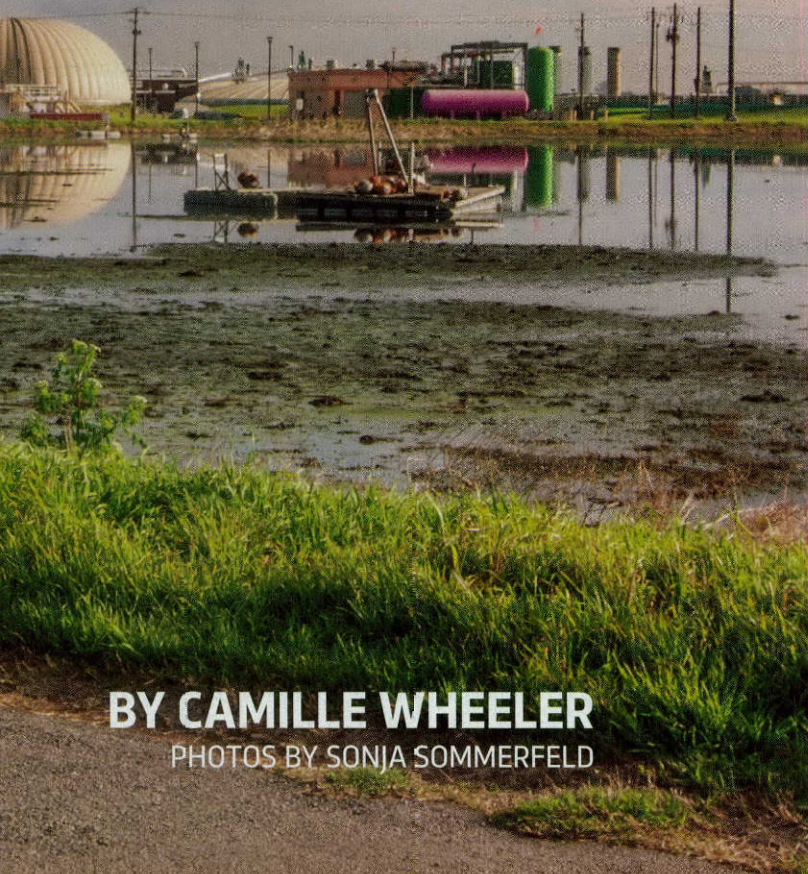
# IN UNUSUAL PLACES

Austin's Hornsby Bend does double duty as a sewage plant and wildlife mecca.

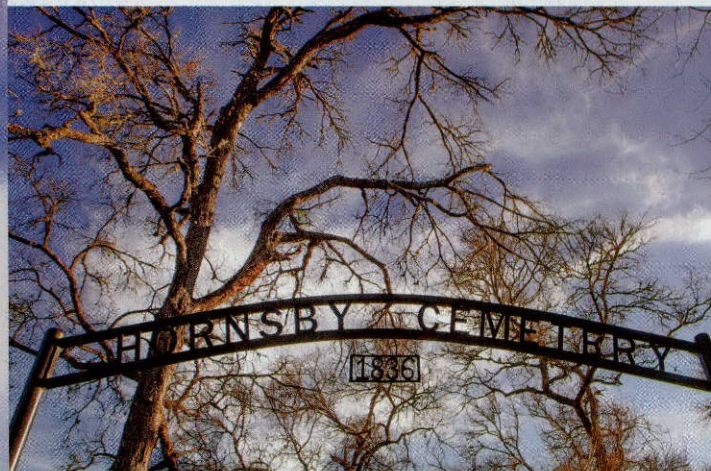




# LY ACES



**BY CAMILLE WHEELER**  
PHOTOS BY SONJA SOMMERFELD



A dense thicket of oaks, brush and briars shades the narrow gravel road that leads to the Hornsby Cemetery east of downtown Austin. Even on a sunny day, there's a feeling of darkness on the half-mile drive from FM 969 to the cemetery gate. Here, in the spooky gloom of spindly tree shadows, it's easy to imagine once-present bears, wolves and Comanches hiding in the woods.

Near the back of the cemetery, on the upper alluvial terrace of the Colorado River, stands the headstone of the cemetery's namesake: Reuben Hornsby, a Stephen F. Austin colonist and surveyor who in 1832 claimed the horseshoe-shaped bend of the river three miles to the southeast as the backbone for the first permanent Anglo settlement in soon-to-be-established Travis County.

Hornsby's settlement was a "beautiful tract of land," author J.W. Wilbarger wrote in his 1889 book *Indian Depredations in Texas*. "Washed on the west by the Colorado, it stretches over a level valley about three miles wide to the east ... covered with wild rye, and looking like one vast green wheat field."

In the decades since Hornsby's arrival, this place has changed, time and again. As Anglo settlements took hold, much of the riverside bottomland forest was felled to build cabins





and forts and eventually to help build the City of Austin, established in 1839. The bottomland became farm fields and cattle pastures. The modern era brought gravel-pit operations.

Today, what once was Hornsby's roughly 4,600-acre Mexican land grant is carved into plots for family descendants, industrial businesses and residential subdivisions serving urban population growth in rural eastern Travis County just northeast of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

The most incongruent piece of this land-division puzzle is owned and operated by the City of Austin: the Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Plant.

Defying conventional narratives of nature, Hornsby Bend is acclaimed as an award-winning sewage sludge recycling plant and as a mecca for bird-watchers, anglers, river paddlers and nature lovers in general as a Central Texas ecotourism destination on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Heart of Texas East Wildlife Trail.

The Colorado River's bend forms the western and southern boundaries of the 1,200-acre Hornsby Bend facility. The plant recycles all of the sewage sludge produced by Austin. Every day, 15 million gallons of sludge — the solid material removed from treated wastewater — is piped to Hornsby Bend from the city's two major wastewater treatment plants.

Hornsby Bend is most famous for its two man-made features: the popular Dillo Dirt compost produced on-site — sewage sludge, or treated human waste, is combined with yard trimmings into an EPA-certified soil conditioner — and the facility's pond system that the City of Austin constructed from 1956 through 1958 to receive excess sewage sludge from the now-

defunct Govalle Sewage Treatment Plant.

As birders have been learning since 1959, when large numbers of waterfowl were first discovered on Hornsby Bend's ponds, the nutrient-rich ponds attract a wide diversity of migrating birds. Historically, more than 350 avian species have been documented on the property.

Victor Emanuel, whose Austin-based Victor Emanuel Nature Tours offers worldwide excursions, has been coming to Hornsby Bend since 1961. Emanuel created one of his favorite Hornsby Bend memories in summer 2015 when he packed a picnic for a sunset meal beside the ponds.

"The light on over a dozen species of shorebirds was marvelous," the 76-year-old Emanuel recalls, describing one gobetrotting bird, a buff-breasted sandpiper that breeds near the Arctic Ocean and winters in southern South America.

The idea of a picnic next to the sewage ponds sounds bizarre to most people, Emanuel says. But for him, it was heavenly: nature at its finest.

This duality of nature — of "good" nature vs. "bad" nature — defines Hornsby Bend a place that doesn't fit the traditional category for nature appreciation, explains Kevin Anderson, coordinator of the Austin Water Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend.

Hornsby Bend is not a park or preserve. As clearly stated on an entrance sign on FM 973, Hornsby Bend is a wastewater sludge treatment facility. Yet almost every week, confused first-time birding visitors to Hornsby Bend come to Anderson's office, asking where the bird sanctuary is.

Anderson, who as a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 1990s helped map the riparian forest of Hungary's upper Tisza River, cheerily directs the



birders to Hornsby Bend's ponds and the woods and river beyond, encouraging them to wander the trails that bear his yellow directional signs.

Anderson swats away the presumption that there's a certain type of nature here. There is no bird sanctuary, he stresses. Not in the usual sense, anyway.

But sanctuary there is, for glossy ibises, black-bellied whistling-ducks, barred owls, coyotes, spiny softshell turtles, bumblebees, rattlesnakes, white-tailed deer, bobcats and a host of other wildlife.

Hornsby Bend is sanctuary as well for the 54-year-old Anderson, a nature-loving philosopher who first visited, and birded, here in 1995 while pursuing a doctoral degree in geography at the University of Texas in Austin.

Anderson's 2009 dissertation, "Marginal Nature: Urban Wastelands and the Geography of Nature," examines Hornsby Bend and similar places. The dissertation explores what Anderson, who holds a master's degree in philosophy, calls "marginal nature": a hybrid type of nature, he writes, that is "both weedy and wild ... the unintended product of human activity and nature's unflagging opportunism."

As Anderson explains, the marginal nature found at Hornsby Bend, where flies buzz around sewage ponds and native and introduced plant species are part of a bottomland forest regeneration, does not match the aesthetic of romanticized nature.

"Getting our bearings in the urban wastelands is even more difficult within the American context of nature appreciation, because our foundational myth of nature is wilderness, nature untouched by humans," Anderson wrote in his dissertation. Marginal nature, he continued, "is not the kind of nature that we are supposed to cherish."

And yet wildlife and wildlife watchers co-exist at Hornsby Bend, a cultural landscape shaped by humans, and a landscape that in turn shapes the lives of those who come here.

Renowned nature photographer Greg Lasley of Dripping Springs first visited Hornsby Bend in 1975 with binoculars, but no camera. On an April afternoon last year, photographing the Hornsby Bend dragonflies that he delights in chasing, Lasley recounted the day in October 1977 when he was sure he had spotted a rare Sabine's gull on Hornsby Bend's remote Pond 3.

But fellow birders doubted Lasley, telling him there was no record of the bird in Central Texas.

"I decided to get a camera," Lasley says, "because that way, if I got a picture of something, somebody would believe me."



**Opposite:** Hornsby Bend's blend of nature doesn't fit traditional categories. It's a regenerating bottomland forest that's "both weedy and wild," according to Kevin Anderson, coordinator of the Austin Water Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend.

**Left:** Hornsby Bend's trails wind through a forest and along the Colorado River.

**Below:** Kevin Anderson appreciates Hornsby Bend's "marginal nature."

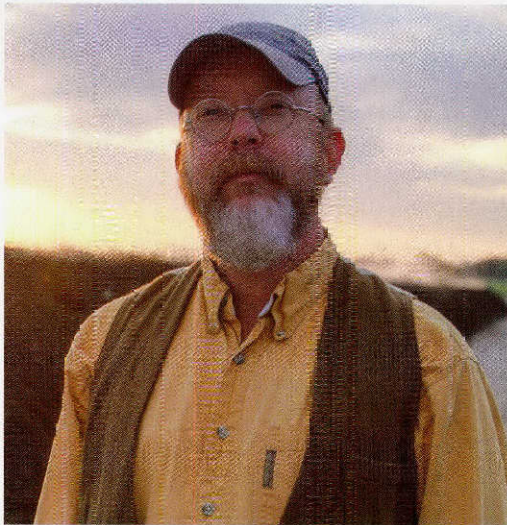


PHOTO © CAMILLE WHEELER

In October 1978 at Hornsby Bend, Lasley again saw what he believed to be a Sabine's gull on Pond 3. This time, armed with a camera, he captured the bird on the water and in flight. The Texas Bird Records Committee used Lasley's photographs as documentation of the first recorded Sabine's gull in the Austin area.

Hornsby Bend also holds special meaning for Austinite Eric Carpenter, secretary of the Texas Bird Records Committee who in 2003 documented a record 505 bird species in Texas in one calendar year. But it wasn't until 2005, when Carpenter's Big Year at Hornsby Bend yielded a record 249 bird species that he fully explored the property.





**Above:** Hornsby Bend's sewage ponds offer a view of downtown Austin. They also serve as a bird-watching hot spot.

During migration, Carpenter has counted as many as 130 bird species in one day at Hornsby Bend. He expresses surprise that more birders don't venture beyond the facility's ponds, where treasures are waiting to be found.

One day in spring 2016 at Hornsby Bend, Carpenter raised and lowered his binoculars, pointing to a small bush and the body shape and yellow beak of a pyrrhuloxia: a bird found in the Southwest and Mexico making an unusual appearance at Hornsby Bend.

Hornsby Bend's true essence is found on a journey through its bottomland forest remnants. Inhabited by native peoples thousands of years before Spanish explorers or Anglo settlers arrived, this ancient forest has long felt the impact of humans and the environmental influences of flooding, fire and drought.

Now, courtesy of hands-off habitat restoration in which only trails are mowed and trees are allowed to grow, Anderson sees Hornsby Bend's bottomland forest putting itself back together. But Anderson pushes back against what he calls a false narrative: that somehow, per some pastoral notion, the forest is going back to what it once was.

The ecology of nature, Anderson stresses constantly moves, but never just backward.

"Some of it's forward, some of it's backward,

some of it's up, some of it's down, some of it's catastrophic, and then it moves on," he says, observing such motion in play at Hornsby Bend, where reata and mesquite brush have been allowed to return.

Over time, the ecological system will adjust itself, Anderson explains with the regrowth of hackberry trees shading out the brush and the gradual development of a tree canopy spurring more forest regeneration.

In light of the Colorado River Corridor Plan being prepared by Travis County, City of Austin and Lower Colorado River Authority officials, Anderson encourages those tasked with managing land to ask: What does the land want? What does it seek to be?

"Hornsby Bend," he says, "wants to be a bottomland forest."

As Hornsby Bend exits a period of disturbance, "the land begins to heal itself, back into that basic ecological unit," Anderson says. "The system has relatively young members and relatively ancient members, and they're all working out new relationships and finding it to be a great moment."

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*Camille Wheeler is a freelance writer in Austin and a wildlife and outdoors enthusiast.*



Looking back at...

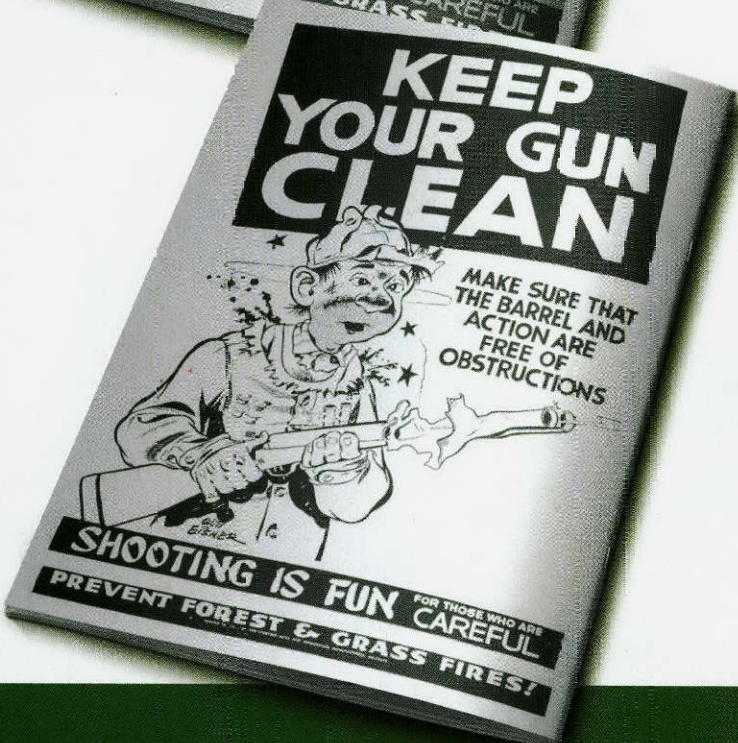
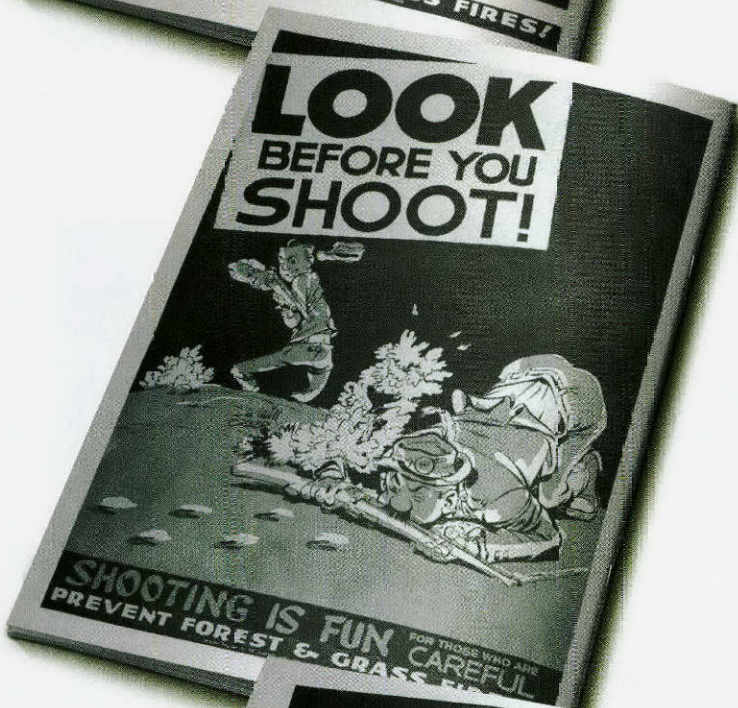
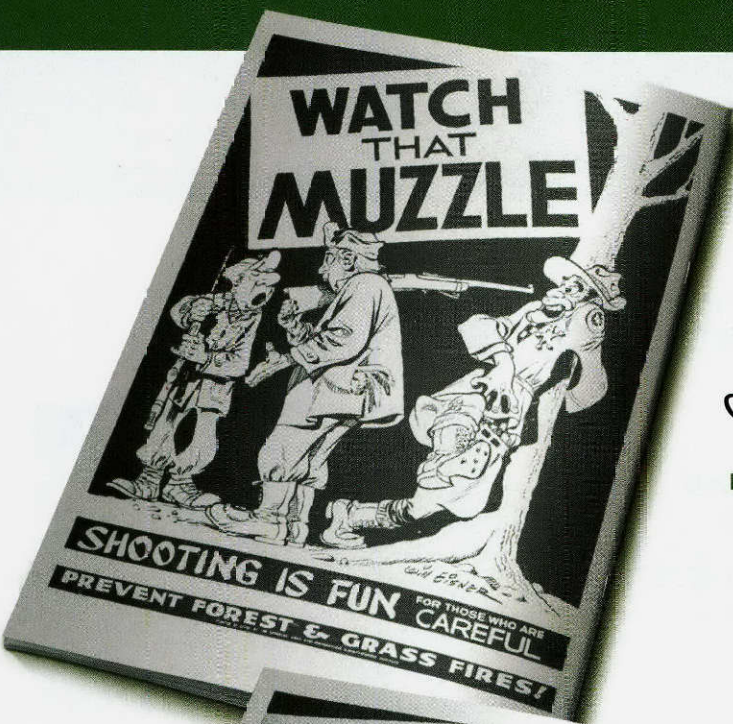
# THE 1950s

The historic drought of the 1950s hit Texas hard. Agriculture was devastated, and lakes dried up. It was “the time it never rained,” as chronicled in the classic Elmer Kelton book. The movie musical *Sir, gin' in the Rain* came out in 1952, but folks sure weren't doing that here. In fact, Lubbock didn't record a single drop of rain in 1952. Despite those hard times, the Texas population increased by 24 percent over the decade. Texas enjoyed the prosperity of the 1950s along with the rest of the United States. The nation was booming after World War II, with the economy, the suburbs and the population all on the rise. Rock 'n' roll was starting to come alive, featuring Buddy Holly's fresh new sound busting out of the Panhandle Plains. Texas state parks faced an onslaught of visitors despite the drought, and hunting, fishing and other recreation enjoyed a rising tide of popularity. *Texas Game and Fish* magazine continued its evolution, growing from its origins in the 1940s into a more established publication.

## **GUN SAFETY: THAT'S THE SPIRIT!**

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1950, JANUARY 1951

Comics great Will Eisner (*The Spirit*) illustrated these hunter safety ads that ran on the back cover and inside the magazine in the early 1950s. The images were also available as posters from the Sporting Arms & Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute of New York.

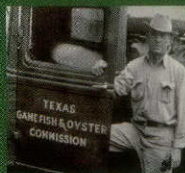




**A TIMELINE OF THE TEXAS OUTDOORS**



**August 1950**  
Whataburger opens. Last-second camp food is changed forever.



**1951**  
The "Oyster" is dropped from the name of the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission.

# LOOKING BACK AT OUR AWKWARD TEEN YEARS...

**HEADLINES OF THE DECADE**

Let's Declare  
**WAR**



JANUARY 1954

*Don't Throw  
Gran'pa Back*

MARCH 1951

**THAT'S RIGHT, WE SAID IT...**

"Few people wish to loaf openly. Angling has the unusual advantage of being a socially acceptable dignified way of doing nothing."

From July 1956

**'POSSUMS: Dumb But Numerous**

FEBRUARY 1951

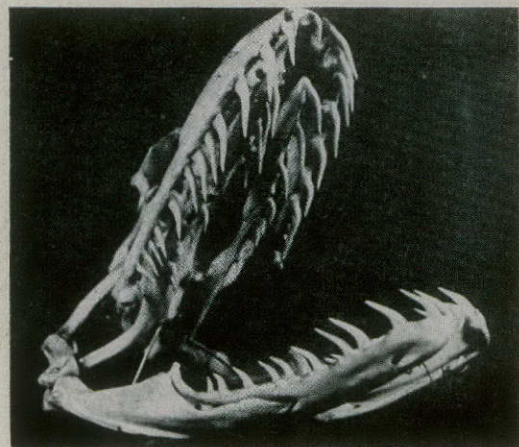
**THEN AND NOW: CAMPING**

APRIL 1950 AND APRIL 2017

Camping in Texas has changed a lot in 67 years, as evidenced by this month's cover story.

**DEFINE "HARMLESS SNAKE"**

FEBRUARY 1950



Skull of a harmless snake. The teeth of the most non-poisonous snakes are of almost uniform size and usually arranged in six rows — four in the upper jaw and two in the lower.





**1954**  
Atlanta, Eisenhower and Lake Whitney state parks are acquired.

Announcing  
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These newly revised production costs during the past 12 months have raised the price of this publication from \$1.00 per year to \$2.00 per year. This new rate of \$2.00 per year will be in effect for the year 1954. The new rate of \$2.00 per year will be in effect for the year 1955. The new rate of \$2.00 per year will be in effect for the year 1956. The new rate of \$2.00 per year will be in effect for the year 1957. We, therefore, announce with regret the following new rates:

**January 1956**  
Subscription price for *Texas Game and Fish* magazine increases from \$1 per year to \$2 per year.



**1959**  
The Creme Lure Co., maker of the famous plastic worm bass lure, relocates to Tyler.

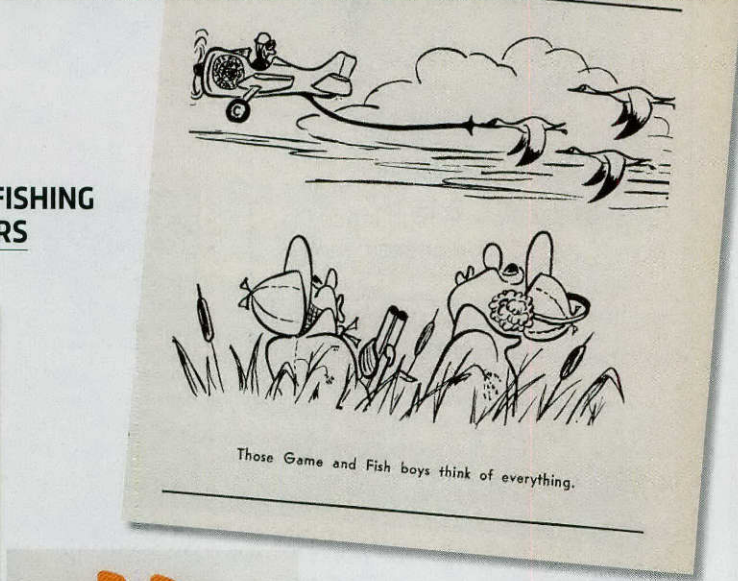
**HUNTING AND FISHING BY THE NUMBERS**

JANUARY 1957

**1 in every 4 persons in Texas (27%) hunted or fished in 1955 (aged 17 or over)**

**15 % fished only**  
**3 1/2 % hunted only**  
**8 1/2 % did both**  
**27 % of all Texans**

*(National average 1 in every 5 — 21%)*



FEBRUARY 1957

**Texas hunters and fishermen spent an average of \$101.57 each hunting and fishing in 1955**

*(National average \$714.42)*

**SHE'S A KEEPER**

SEPTEMBER 1957



**WHAT THE WELL-DRESSED SQUIRREL IS(N'T) WEARING**

NOVEMBER 1953

There is a little chigger, and he isn't any bigger Than the point of a very small pin. But the bump that he raises itches like blazes And that's where the rub comes in.

JULY 1950

**THAT'S RIGHT, WE SAID IT...**

"The shrew is a most valuable species of wildlife in that when we become distressed over rising food costs, atom bombs and fast living, we can be thankful we are no. one."

**From March 1952**



**UNDRESSING BR'ER SQUIRREL**

*If difficulty in dressing squirrels is spoiling your hunting fun, here in easy one, two, three order is a favorite method of the veterans*

By JOHN MADSON  
*The Iowa Conservationist*  
Illustrated by BILL NEALE

When you don't know how, skinning a squirrel can be one of the meanest, most discouraging, cussedest jobs in the world. You spend half an hour shaking off the tough hide, only to find that a good portion of meat has come off with it. What's left is covered with small hairs that your wife has to pick off one by one. But when you know how, there's nothing to it. Squirrel hunting is a lazy man's calling, and you owe it to the honor of the sport to do things the easy way. Just as most experts kill their lumps of squirrels by simply sitting down somewhere, so they also completely clean a squirrel in less than a minute.

There are several ways of doing this, but we are only concerned with the quickest, laziest and cleanest method. With a sharp knife, cut through the underside of the tail next to the body, cutting through the bone but not through the skin at the top of the tail. Extend this cut along each side of the squirrel's back for about an inch.

Take the two hind feet in your right hand and place your right foot on the squirrel's tail. With a saw-sawing motion, pull up on the hind legs until the skin peels tightly up against the shoulders. Change the hind feet to your left hand (all standing on the tail).

With your right forefinger and thumb dress out the front legs and neck, cut off the head, but don't cut off the front feet or pull off the skin. The resulting loop of skin on the front of the squirrel can be thrown over the top of any convenient fence post, hanging the squirrel up where you can easily work on it.

Insert the knife under the point of the unpeeled fur on the stomach and pull the skin over the hindquarters and legs. Make a full-length incision along the belly of the squirrel and remove all innards. Cut off the feet and tail and the job is done.

And if it's done right, there won't be a hair on the squirrel's carcass. It's a good idea to wipe excess blood out of the body cavity, but don't wash the meat in the field. As the carcass dries it will have a glaze that will protect the meat until you get home. Carry the dressed squirrels in clean canvas sugar sacks to protect them from dirt and dust.

Many hunters prefer to clean each squirrel in the field as they shoot it, saving a job at the end of the day. The best way is the easiest way, and leave it to squirrel hunters to find it.

1. The secret of easy squirrel skinning with this method is in making the first cut exactly as shown at left. DO NOT cut through the skin on the upper side of the tail bone. Cut carefully through the tail bone at the underside of the squirrel's tail.
2. Step on the squirrel's tail. Take the hind legs in both hands and pull to peel the skin back to the shoulders. Leave feet attached.
3. While still standing on the tail, pull the forelegs through the skin. Catch the V-shaped skin flap where it comes to a point in the center of the stomach and pull it off over the hind legs. Cut off the head and skin at the neck, clip off all four feet, and the skinning process is complete.



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Once a lost art, we sought out a knifemaker who has resurrected the craftsmanship of Damascus steel to create the *Legend Knife*. The genuine Damascus steel blade folds into a tri-colored pakkawood handle that's prepared to resist the ravages of the great outdoors. When not in use or on display, The *Legend Knife* stays protected in the included genuine leather sheath.

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— knifeart.com

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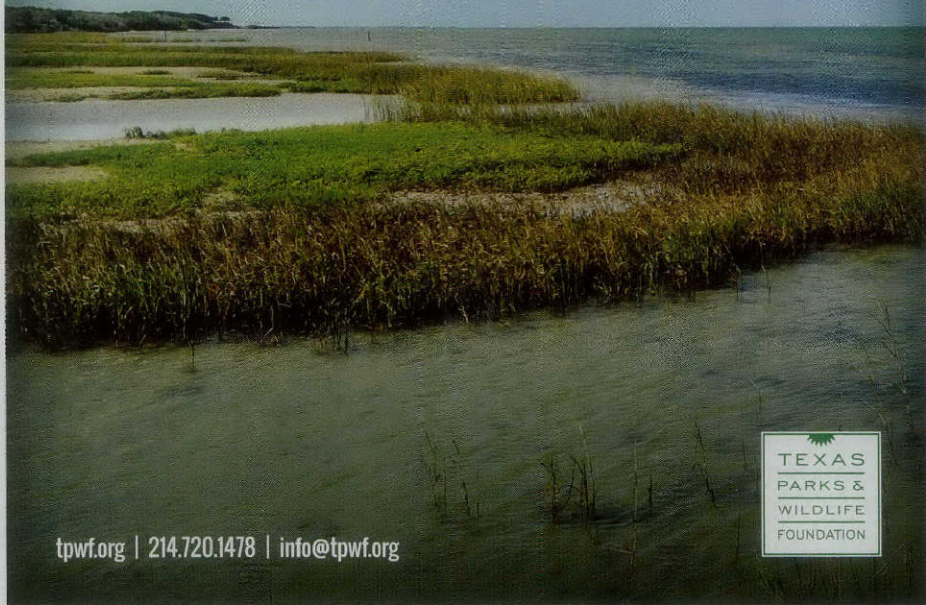
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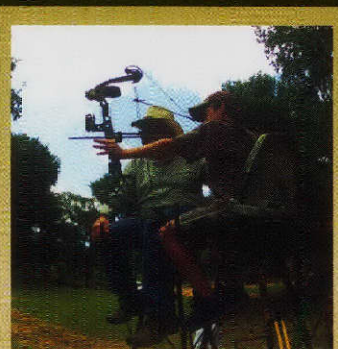
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GET OUT!

FRESHWATER

# Kayak Fishing

ILLUSTRATION © JESSICA B. ANK

**THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME** to get into kayak fishing. Increasingly, anglers are discovering the joys — not to mention the cost-effectiveness — of trading a souped-up bass boat for a stable sit-on-top kayak.

Whether the focus is lakes, rivers or smaller streams, kayaks provide excellent access to shallow structure and shoreline brush likely to hold feisty fish. Because kayaks are so versatile, they also make excellent craft to pursue deep-water quarry like stripers and crappie on reservoirs.

“Kayaking gives you freedom over the medium of water,” says Michael Banks, a retired dentist from Jacksonville, who landed a 13.6-pound largemouth bass on Purtil Creek a few years ago. “If I can catch a fish like that from a kayak, why do I need a bass boat?”

The growth of the Texas Paddling Trails program and new angler leases on private property are offering more opportunity for freshwater kayak fishing than ever before.

*By Dan Oko*

## WHERE TO GO

### PURTIS CREEK STATE PARK

Be like Mike, and chase largemouth bass on this no-wake East Texas reservoir with limited motorboat traffic.

### COLORADO RIVER, BASTROP

Choose between the 14.3-mile Wilbarger Paddling Trail and the 6-mile El Camino Real Paddling Trail. Abundant game fish include Guadalupe bass, sunfish and largemouth bass.

### WEST FORK, TRINITY RIVER

The beginner-friendly Bridgeport Falls Paddling Trail is a 5.8-mile up-and-back stretch of river about an hour west of Dallas-Fort Worth offering a chance to cast light tackle for a variety of fish, including carp, bass and crappie.

### UPPER SABINE RIVER

Try the 12-mile Mineola Bigfoot Paddling Trail; camp overnight at the Mineola Nature Preserve.

## GEAR UP



### BOAT & PADDLE

Every kayak manufacturer produces at least one model especially designed for anglers (with pole mounts and ports for fish finders and other electronics). Many have a rudder to help steer. Hobie markets a

kayak that uses a foot pedal-drive system so your hands are always free. Most kayaks sold in Texas are sit-on-top, which are stable and don't overheat you in the summer sun. Models range in price from less than \$600 to more than \$2,000. Before you buy, rent a boat or attend one of the demo days at retailers.



### LIFE JACKET



### TETHERS

to protect your gear in case the kayak flips.



### SMALL ANCHOR

to hold the boat steady over a hole in a mild current.

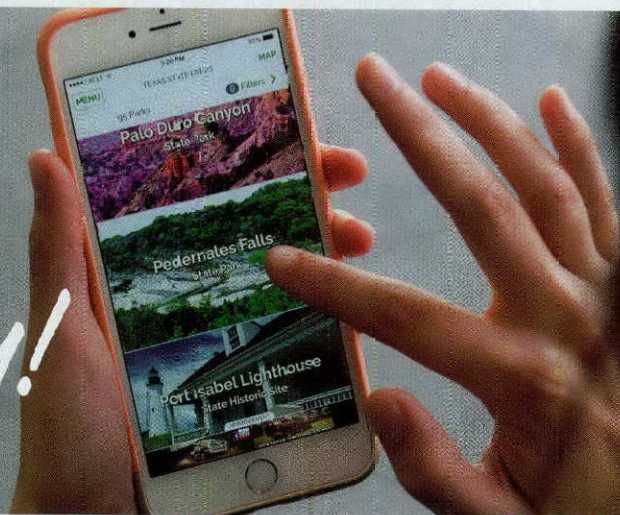


### FISHING GEAR





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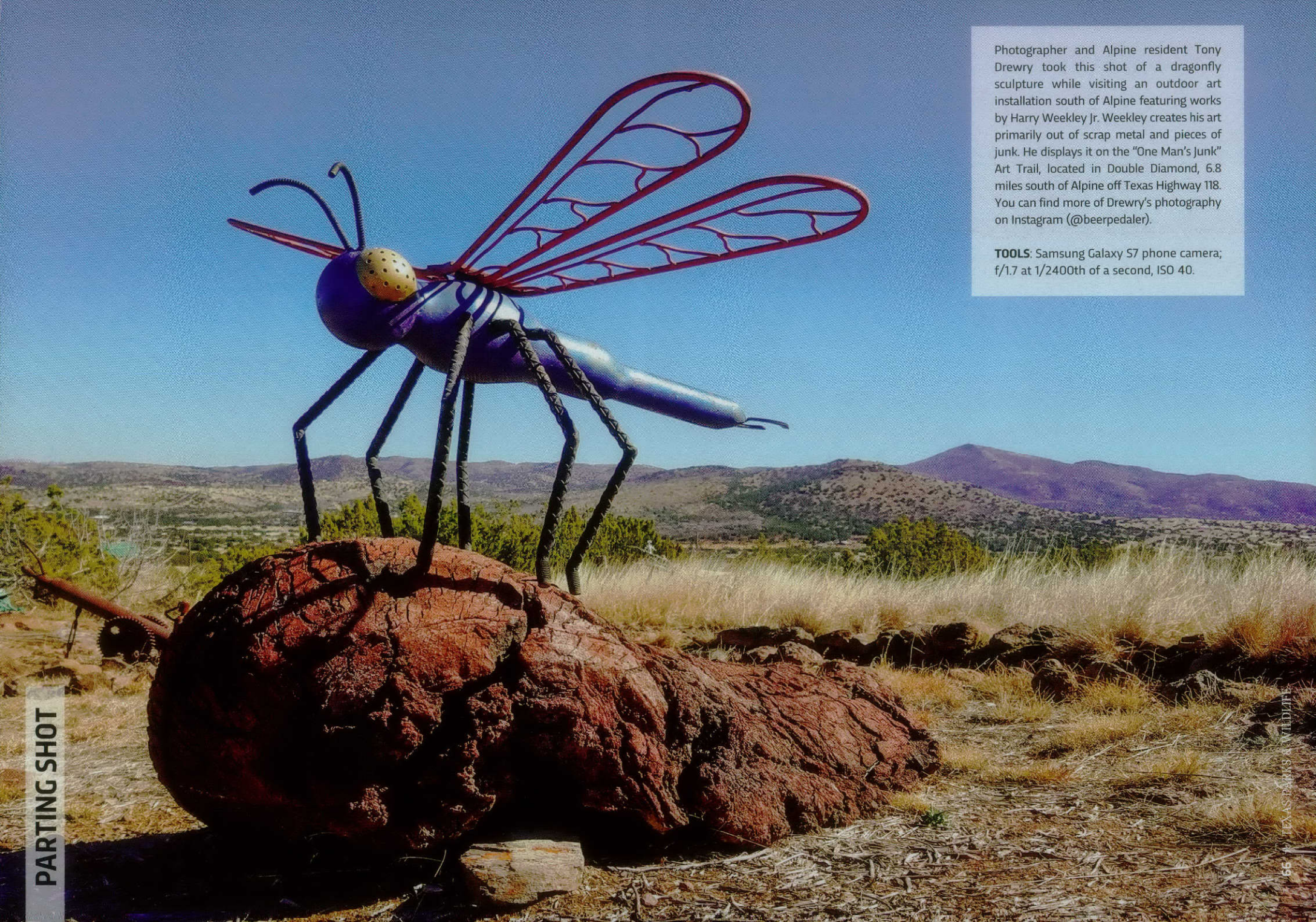
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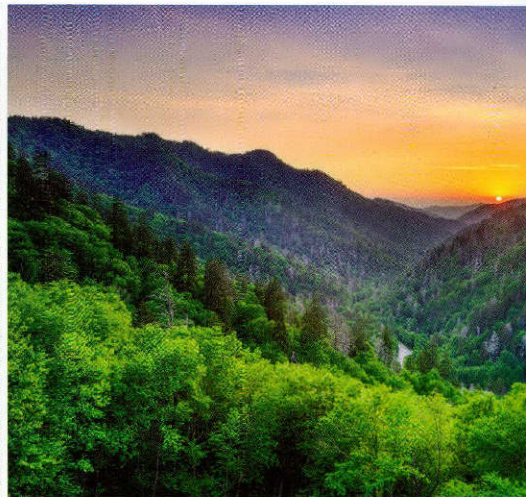
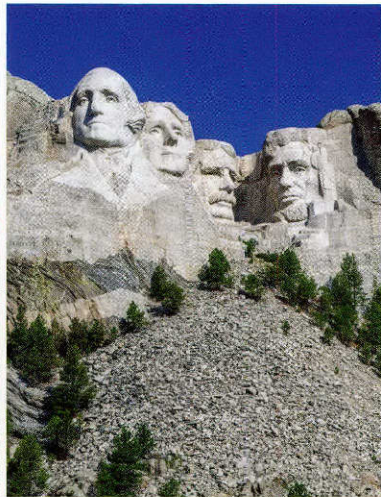
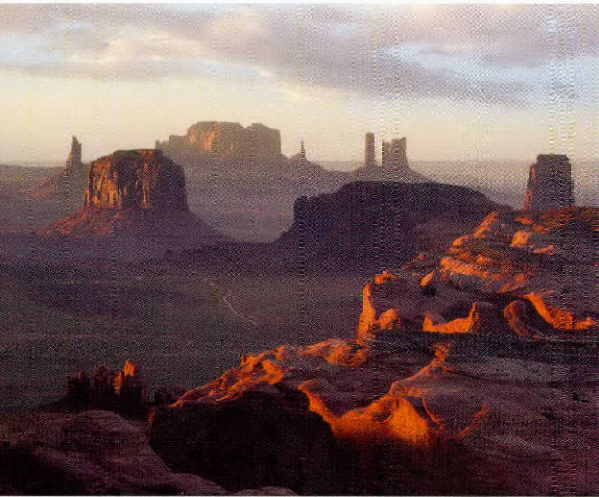




Photographer and Alpine resident Tony Drewry took this shot of a dragonfly sculpture while visiting an outdoor art installation south of Alpine featuring works by Harry Weekley Jr. Weekley creates his art primarily out of scrap metal and pieces of junk. He displays it on the "One Man's Junk" Art Trail, located in Double Diamond, 6.8 miles south of Alpine off Texas Highway 118. You can find more of Drewry's photography on Instagram (@beerpedaler).

**TOOLS:** Samsung Galaxy S7 phone camera; f/1.7 at 1/2400th of a second, ISO 40.





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