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TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

HIGH ISLAND
FASHION SHOW:

Spring's Best- Dressed Birds



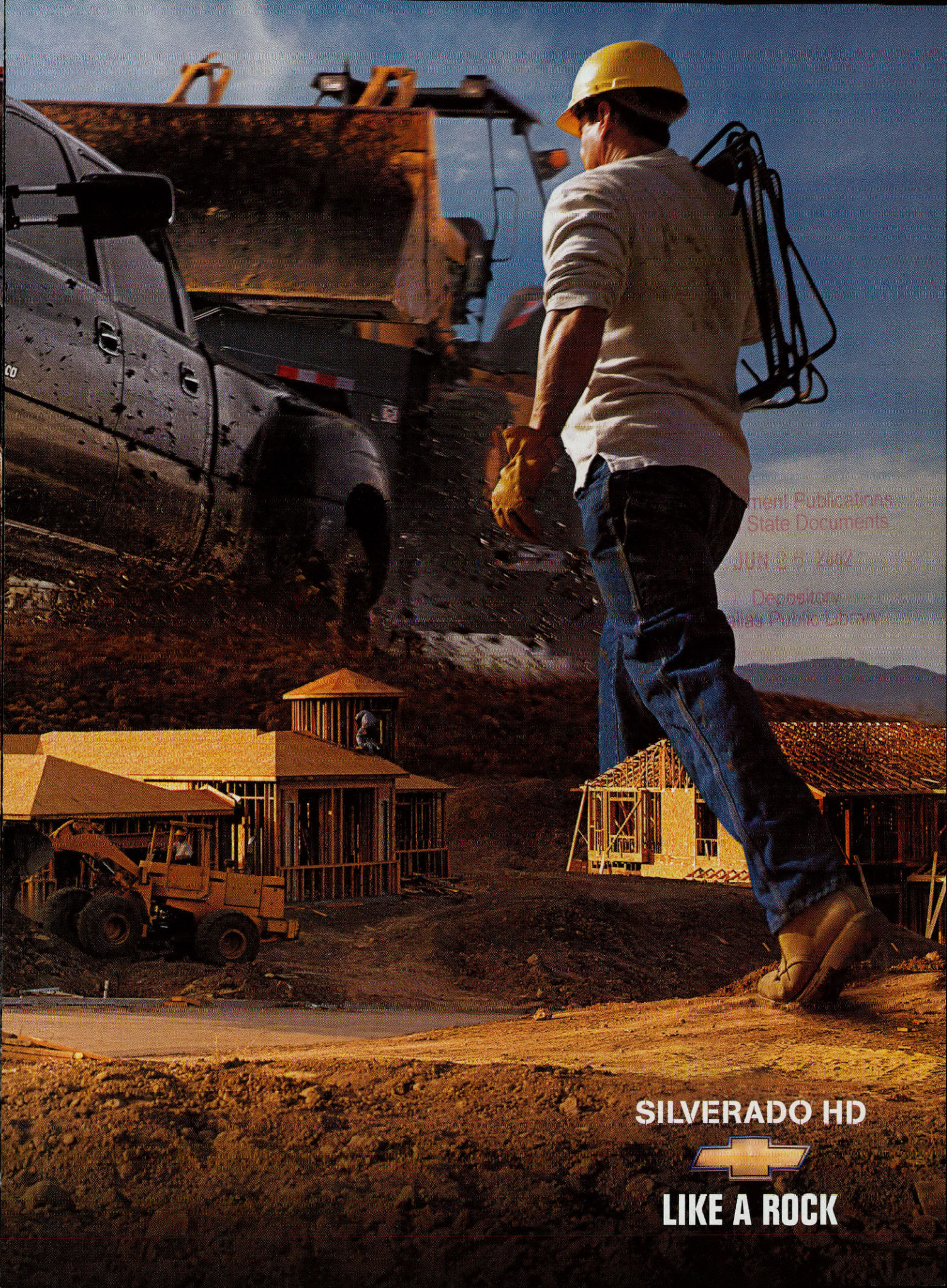
PLUS:

2002 GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CALENDAR
BROWN PELICANS REBOUND / A TURKEY RESTORATION
TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL / WHITE BASS RUN





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EVENTS

APRIL 2002

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Front: The handsome northern cardinal is a popular visitor to backyard bird feeders throughout most of the state. Turn to page 44 for a roundup of the year's best birding events. Photo © Bill Baker/KAC Productions.

Back: For a journey through Texas' dramatic past and colorful roadsides, take a drive along the Texas Independence Trail. See story on page 50. Photo © Laurence Parent.

For the latest and greatest parks and wildlife information, check out our Web site <www.tpwd.state.tx.us>.

AT ISSUE

From the Pen of Robert L. Cook

Land and water: That's what Texas is all about. With a land area in excess of 170 million acres, Texas is larger than many nations. Many people still consider Texas a land of wide-open spaces and vast, endless prairies. Our state's bays and estuaries rim almost 624 miles of coastline — uniquely protected by barrier islands and fed by brackish and freshwater marshes — providing a productive wetlands ecosystem, which results in a marine fisheries and waterfowl haven unequalled in North America. In addition, there are more than 191,000 miles of streams and rivers in Texas. In 1836, Davy Crockett referred to Texas as “the garden spot of the world.”

A naturalist's dream come true, right? Land and water and plenty of it.

Well, I did fail to mention one small issue: us. There are more than 20 million of us in Texas today. Demographers predict that there will be almost 35 million people in Texas by the year 2030.

Give us your thoughts and ideas to help us develop this plan for the future of natural and cultural resources in Texas; do this for your children and grandchildren.

The legislature has directed Texas Parks and Wildlife to create a land and water conservation and recreation plan, which will guide the ownership, management, use and development of lands and facilities owned and operated by TPW into the 21st century. How we will manage our parks, wildlife management areas, fish hatcheries, lakes, streams and oceans is critical to all Texans and future Texans. Given the state's growing population, additional lands for public access will be needed, not only places for us and for our children but also places for our children's children to enjoy picnicking, hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, birding and exploring the natural wonders of Texas.

On the other hand, TPW has seen that private landowners can and will provide the vast majority of the natural resource conservation needs of Texas in the foreseeable future. We support that endeavor through our statewide technical guidance programs for Texas landowners, which currently have more than 14 million acres of private land in approved wildlife management plans, resulting in improved habitat for fish, wildlife and water resources. It benefits all Texans that these programs are implemented at the landowners' expense.

Our commission chairman, Katharine Idsal, and her recently appointed committee, are guiding staff through the process of developing this strategic land and water plan. The first draft of this plan will be forthcoming soon. I invite you to get involved. Give us your thoughts and ideas to help us develop this plan for the future of natural and cultural resources in Texas; do this for your children and grandchildren.

How should we improve access and enhance conservation for Texans on our state parks, wildlife management areas and fish hatcheries? How can we improve access to public waters for recreation? How can TPW better tell the story of Texas through state historic sites? Should TPW acquire more land? If so, where should it be located? Should TPW divest itself of lands that we currently own but do not use if they could be better managed by others?

Please send your comments to: Land and Water Plan, Executive Office, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.



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To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas
for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.**

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APRIL 2002, VOL. 60, NO. 4

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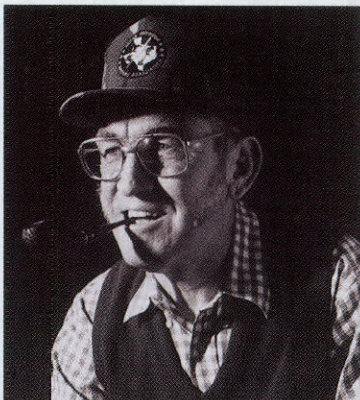
7 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. weekends



Suzanne Winckler was born in the West Texas town of Colorado City but grew up in the larger urban landscapes of Dallas and Houston. A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, her first was job at *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine in the 1960s. This put her in the path of Edgar Kincaid, about whom she writes in this issue. She spent five years helping Kincaid edit *The Bird Life of Texas* and under his tutelage became a birder. Currently a freelance writer, she lives in Mesa, Ariz., with her husband, dog and 12 chickens.



Russell Tinsley, who writes about the spring white bass run in this issue, has been writing about the outdoors for more than 35 years, 28 of them as outdoor editor for the *Austin American-Statesman*. He has had more than 2,000 freelance articles published in national, regional and state publications, including quite a few in *Texas Parks & Wildlife* and its predecessor, *Texas Game & Fish*. Tinsley currently writes a "Waters and Woods" column for *Texas Fish & Game* magazine. His 10 books include *Fishing Texas: An Angler's Guide*. Tinsley lives in the Hill Country town of Mason.



Joe Mac Hudspeth, Jr. of Brandon, Mississippi, has had photographs published in more than 700 state, regional and national publications. In 1993, his photo of a least bittern won the "Grand Prize for Wildlife" from the Roger Tory Peterson Institute for Natural

History. More recently, his work has been selected to appear on five Mississippi Duck Stamps and as well as six Mississippi Sportsman Licenses. His first book is scheduled for release in 2003.



IN THE FIELD

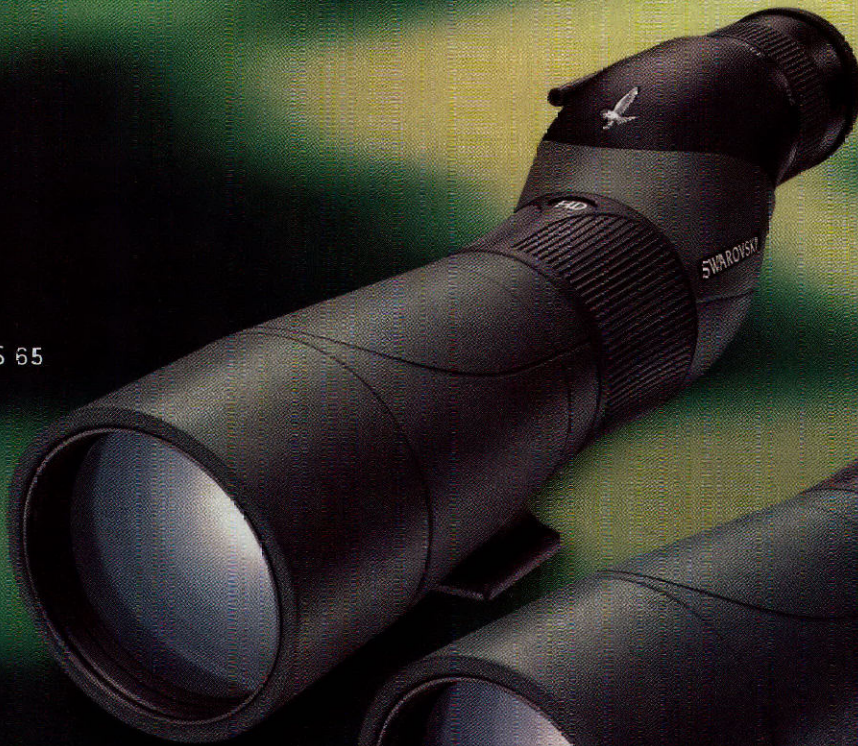
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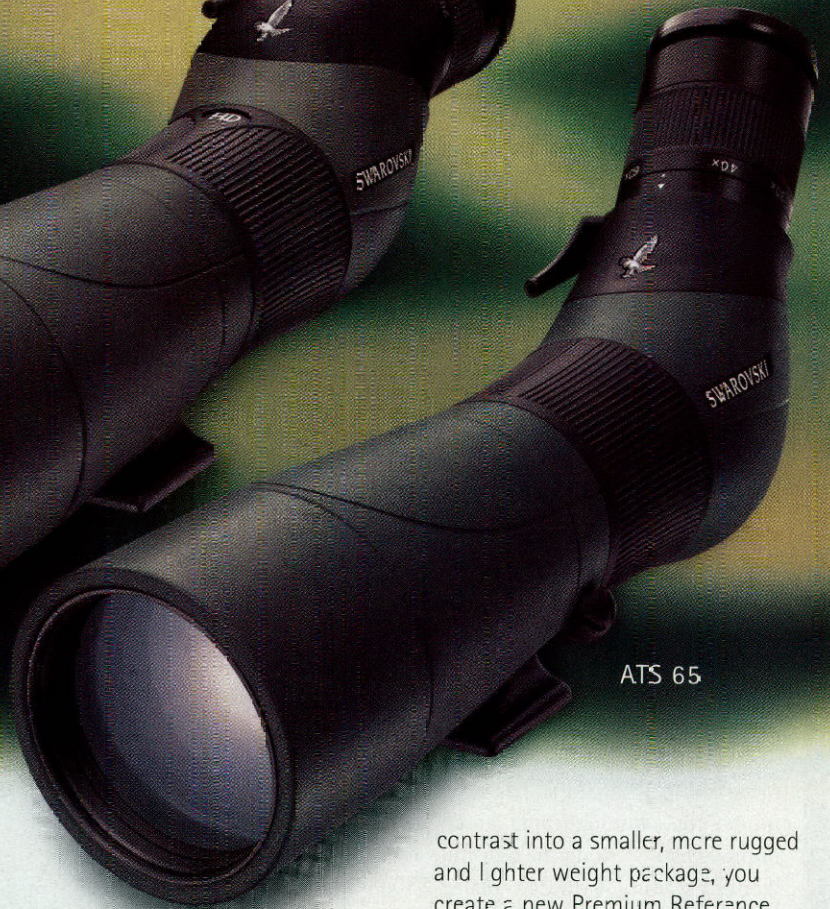
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MAIL CALL

Picks, Pans and Probes from Previous Issues

FORWARD

We do it in armchairs, wheelchairs and lawn chairs. If we're not sitting, we're standing, hiking, paddling, biking or horseback riding. We do it while pursuing other outdoor pastimes such as hunting, fishing, backpacking, camping and boating.

It's birding!

Nationally, birding has become the fastest growing and most popular outdoor recreational activities with more than 68 million active participants in 2000, according to the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment. Texas is home to the most diverse bird population in North America and the No. 1 birding destination in the United States. In the lower Rio Grande Valley alone, the economic impact of birding is close to \$90 million a year.

Small wonder. Of the 620 species of birds that can be spotted in Texas, almost 500 have been sighted in the Rio Grande Valley. That's why this year's Great Texas Birding Classic — billed as the biggest, longest and wildest birdwatching tournament in the United States — kicks off this year in McAllen on April 20 during the height of spring migration and winds up in Port Arthur on April 28.

The Birding Classic is a pretty special event. Since its inception in 1997, TPW has awarded \$250,000 in prize monies that winning teams can direct to buy, protect or improve habitat along the 624-mile Texas coast. This year's winning teams will direct a total of \$50,000 to habitat conservation prizes. It's pretty competitive, too: Last year's winning team, the Second-Basic WildBirders, spotted a total of 307 bird species in the week-long competition with the Dow Skimmers in hot pursuit at 296 species sighted. "The Great Texas Birding Classic is steadily attracting more support and attention from birders, coastal cities and corporate sponsors," says Gary Graham, director of TPW's Wildlife Division. "This is a flagship example of our strategy to show local communities that wildlife-based recreation means tourism dollars, but only if we protect the local wildlife habitat." To learn more about the Great Texas Birding Classic, visit <tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc> .

This April issue is our annual salute to Texas birding. We hope, wherever you are in the state, you'll take a moment to admire Texas' tiniest ambassadors and witness the spectacle of spring migration.

Susan Short

Unforgettable, That's What You Are

Thank you for publishing "The Forgotten Story" by Reginald Owens in the February 2002 issue. It is very insightful of your magazine to

recognize the contributions of African Americans to Texas. The article not only inspired me to visit Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Site and seek out other historical resources, but also to subscribe to your magazine.

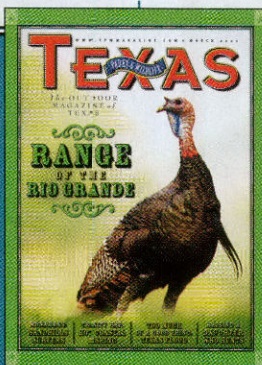
Although this article was the one that attracted me to your magazine, I was pleased to find some of the other articles also quite interesting.

I recently relocated to the Houston area after living in another state for many years. That state's "parks and wildlife" magazine is not nearly as interesting as yours, and I would glance through it only when I was sitting in a waiting room.

I sure hope the issue I enjoyed so much is representative of things to come. Thanks for a real treat.

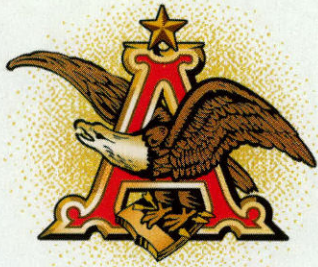
*Cedric B. Gardner
Houston*

LETTERS



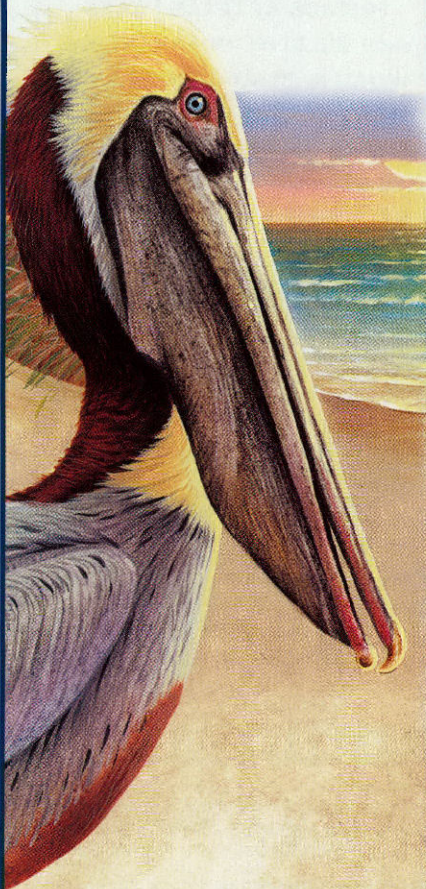
We enjoyed Executive Director Robert L. Cook's first "At Issue," (March 2002). I, too, grew up on a farm, and all the cousins from town loved to visit us. We still have a small farm and participate in Texian Market Days at the George Ranch Historical Park near Houston.

*The Voskamp Family,
Thompsons*



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MAIL CALL

König of the Hill (Country)

Sunday, Jan. 2, 1881. Today the Hill Country Shooting Club had [a] rifle match at our ranch. The winner was named King." So goes a translated entry in the diary of Fritz Schlameus, my great-grandfather. Allen Green's article in "A Blast From the Past" (February 2002) prompted me to hunt up the diary and reread it several times.

This northern Comal County Schuetzenverein had been formed the year before by the German farmers and ranchers around Fischer Store, according to the entry of July 4, 1880, which reads: "In the morning I hunted for the horses. In the afternoon the newly organized rifle club practiced for the first time at our place."

Fritz's father, Adolf, who immigrated from Lenzen, Germany, with his wife, Marie, and the first three of 11 children, was naturalized in the spring of 1858. He must have had some interest in either shooting or ridding the property of crop-destroying pests: "July 31, 1881. Papa had a rabbit hunt today. For every 5 rabbits one bottle beer and raccoons count double... I shot 9 rabbits and 4 raccoons."

Regarding the winner of that 1881 match, I understand that the Schuetzenvereinen in Germany still honor the best shot as *König*.

*Jim Myers
Pueblo, Colo.*

Kelly Rides On...

The February issue is exceptional, and Leslie Kelly's "The Aransas Bike" brought this senior citizen to unrestrained laughter. I, too, spent my summers at my grandmother's farm... the best days of my life.

Ray A. Morrison

We are so glad that Jonette Childs shared her wonderful find of Leslie Kelly's story, "The Aransas Bike." We live in Port Aransas, so we know about those kinds of bikes.

Our children were insistent when

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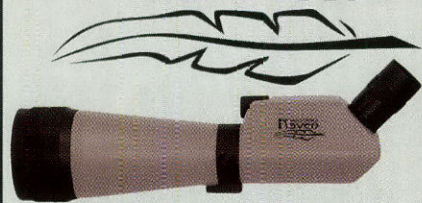
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Eagle Optics once again salutes the Great Texas Birding Classic in promoting birdwatching and for increasing public awareness of the need for habitat conservation and restoration.

Good luck to all the participating teams - especially the Eagle Eyes in the Roughwing competition!

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MAIL CALL

we moved here that they had to have new bikes. After being here for six months, their bikes have become Aransas bikes, and have many miles on them. They have transported fishing equipment to the piers, and fish back.

We loved the story, we live the story.

⚡ *Billy and Liz Tatum and family.*

Monahans Memories

I enjoyed Dan Oko's "Sand Blast" (March 2002). We took many family outings to Monahans Sandhills State Park. I had my own surfboard that my dad made; it was made of plywood with a carpeted top and a bottom covered with leftover linoleum that could be waxed super slick. I felt like I was flying when I sped down those hills. The wipe-out was just as much fun as the ride itself.

One of the rare winters that it actually snowed in West Texas made for a really memorable trip. Our whole family bundled up, took heavy-duty trash bags, and went out to the state park. If you think surfing in the heat of summer is fun, just try it on a trash bag when there's a sheet of ice over the dunes.

Next time I go home to visit my family, I'll have to go out to the park and see if I can still surf!

*Ginger Carrell
Arlington*

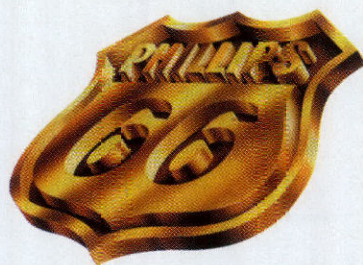
An Alternative to Septic Tanks

Both my parents spent youths in Blanco, as well as on the prairie east of the Balcones in San Marcos. Their and others' cattle — and later sheep and goats — depleted the sparse grass covering the thin limestone soil. Juniper then soaked up the rainfall, with bare caliche in the sloping areas.

Now comes man *en masse* with marginal septic tanks. The result is periodic closures of streams and springs due to *E.coli* contamination.

While visiting in Colorado, we discovered a composting toilet perfected in Sweden. In it, waste settled slowly to become, at the bottom, perfectly dry, odorless compost ready for the garden.

Continued on page 70



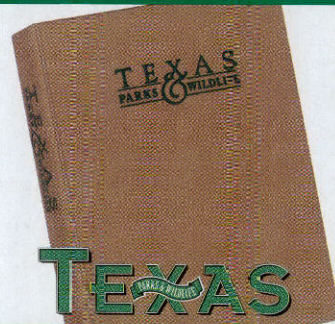
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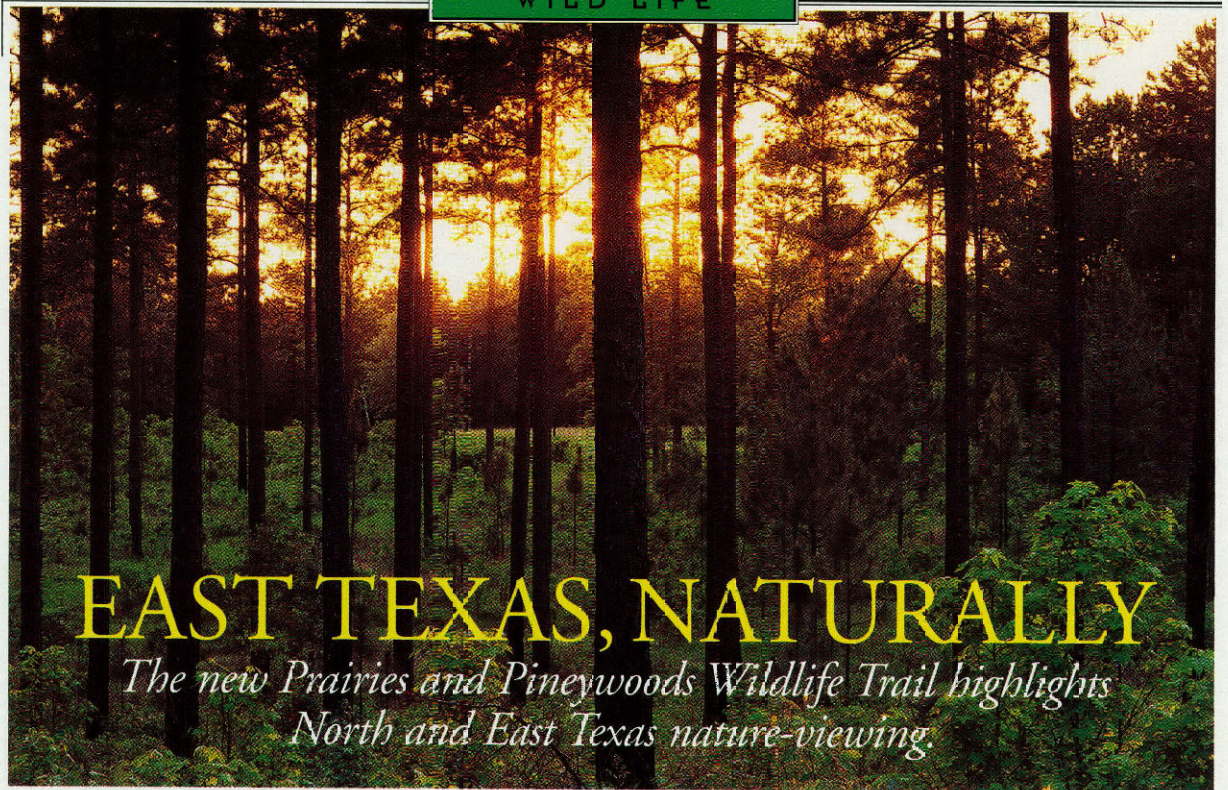
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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

WILD LIFE



EAST TEXAS, NATURALLY

The new Prairies and Pineywoods Wildlife Trail highlights North and East Texas nature-viewing.

YOU'VE JUST SPOTTED an indigo bunting and prothonotary warbler and, as you walk through the forest, you catch a glimpse of a doe with her fawn. Then you take out your wildlife trail map and head from Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area to Caddo Lake, where you paddle along a cypress-lined creek, spotting wood storks and egrets.

Nature-viewing amid the magnificent scenery of North and East Texas will be easier with the new Prairies and Pineywoods Wildlife Trail. Texas Parks and Wildlife recently received \$770,880 in federal transportation enhancement grants to fund the development of this new trail, and is seeking corporate, foundation and community sponsors to help fund the 20 percent match (\$192,720) required by the federal grant.

Modeled after the award-winning Great Texas Coastal

Birding Trail, it will provide road signs and a map that tell about the species that can be seen at each site. It is the latest trail in a series of wildlife-viewing trails designed to boost nature tourism and habitat conservation throughout rural Texas. The new Heart of Texas and High Plains wildlife trails, which stretch from the Panhandle through Central Texas to Laredo, are due to open in late 2002.

TPW is seeking additional site nominations for the Prairies and Pineywoods Wildlife Trail. For more information or to nominate a site, go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails or contact Linda Campbell, nature tourism coordinator, Texas Parks and Wildlife, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744, (512) 389-4396, e-mail linda.campbell@tpwd.state.tx.us.

— Elaine Robbins



CONSERVATION

Swamp Romp

Get your feet wet at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center's new wetlands exhibit.



FOR FIVE YEARS, the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens has entertained and educated visitors with more than 300,000 gallons of fun. Aquariums that represent the rivers, ponds and lakes of Texas in a natural-looking environment display a 42-pound blue catfish, 125-pound alligator gar, largemouth bass weighing more than 15 pounds and more than 40 other native Texas species. These displays are designed to get people interested in fish, fishing and the freshwater aquatic environment.

And in true Texas style, the center has now grown bigger and better with the opening of its new 20.7-acre wetlands interpretive area. The one-mile wetlands trail, scheduled to open April 20, allows visitors to explore another freshwater habitat and search for numerous species of vegetation and wildlife, including fish, frogs, snakes, turtles, herons, ducks, elms, oaks and cat tails.

"There's also a self-guided, quarter-mile hunter safety interpretive section along the trail," says TFFC director Allen Forshage. "The upper observation area is built like a duck blind, to facilitate birding and provide a unique experience for anyone who has never been in a duck blind."

One of the more fascinating and rare plants on display along the wetlands trail is the carnivorous pitcher plant. "We're recreating the pitcher-plant bogs, which are unique to the East Texas wetlands," says Forshage. "Each pitcher plant leaf is shaped somewhat like a trumpet, or pitcher, and contains a fluid. A food-seeking insect that enters is prevented from retreating and ultimately drowns in the fluid, then is digested by the plant."

But hidden amid the fun of this new attraction is an important educational message. As part of the facility's educational

outreach, staff and volunteers at TFFC will offer plant and animal identification activities and other hands-on programs for youth groups at a new timber-frame pavilion at the wetlands trailhead.

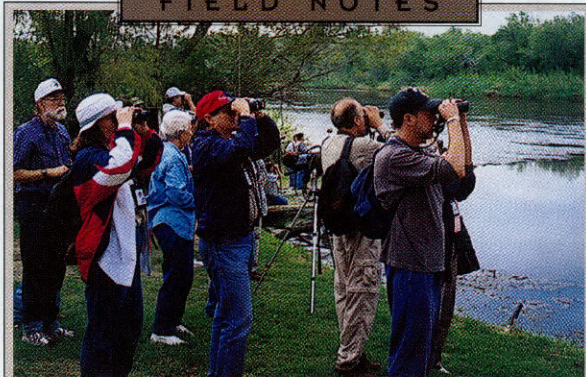
"This new area will inform visitors about the importance of wetland ecosystems to the overall environment," says Forshage. "We want our guests to understand that, in addition to providing habitat suitable for many types of wildlife, wetlands, through a natural filtration system, help to purify bodies of water, serve to help control flooding and can also help replenish underground water resources. This is a vital message for Texas landowners."

Historically, however, wetlands were often regarded as wastelands. In the past 200 years, Texas has lost 52 percent of its wetlands as they were converted into other land uses.

The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center is hopeful that the new wetlands interpretive area will help foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of these unique ecosystems.

— Erica H. Brassex

FIELD NOTES



BIRDING CLASSIC

THE GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC, the world's longest competitive birding identification event, will be held April 20–28. The tournament starts in McAllen and ends in Port Arthur. Teams compete to record the most species of birds seen in either the weeklong tournament or in one, two or three sectional tournament days. Prizes range from binoculars and scopes for competitors to cash rewards of up to \$20,000, donated to habitat conservation projects of the winners' choice. The early registration deadline for teams and individuals is April 5; late registration extends until April 20. For checklists, maps and more information, phone toll-free (888) TX-BIRDS or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc.



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

J. Carter King was an early advocate for Texas parks.

THINGS CHANGE. And then again, they don't. Seems state park officials still worry about the same issues they did four decades ago. For instance, back in the late 1950s, when J. Carter King Jr. served on the State Parks Board, funding for state parks was a big concern.

King, who died Jan. 16 at the age of 90, was a rancher, businessman and civic leader from Albany. Gov. Price Daniel appointed him to the board in 1957. Three years later he was named chairman. King spoke his mind unabashedly when it came to state park issues, namely, lobbying the Texas Legislature for more money. In September 1961, he told the *Dallas Morning News* that Texas "is lagging in the development of 48 state areas now dedicated to park purposes."

During King's tenure, annual salaries



for park managers rose from \$2,100 to \$2,800 with a new bonus — housing and utilities. The board also instigated a study on the state's water supply that led to construction of numerous reservoirs (such as Toledo Bend), which board members believed would expand the state's supply of water, create more needed outdoor recreation areas, and also boost tourism.

King went off the board in 1963 when the State Parks Board merged with the Texas Game and Fish Commission, creating the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Though he opposed the merger, King got his wish for more funding for state parks when the legislature passed a \$75 million parks bond issue in 1967. The bonds ultimately funded such state parks as Big Bend Ranch, Brazos Bend and Caprock Canyons.

Just as active in his hometown of Albany, King advocated such local projects as expansion of school facilities and construction of a hospital.

"I guess what made him tick was the whole issue of citizenship," says his son, J. Carter King III of Austin. "He believed in people, and he believed in civic responsibility."

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

TEXAS READER

New Peterson Guide

ROGER TORY PETERSON'S FIFTH EDITION of *Birds of Eastern and Central North America* (\$30 hardcover, \$22 paperback, Houghton Mifflin), is as much an artistic masterpiece as it is a monument to the genre he invented nearly 70 years ago.

Before publication of Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* in 1934, identifying birds in the wild was considered too arduous for the average citizen; only highly trained academicians would dare delve into it. Peterson's simple but brilliant invention was to point arrows at critical field marks, knowing these would assure a successful identification with only a fleeting glimpse of the bird. Nature-watching was forever changed.

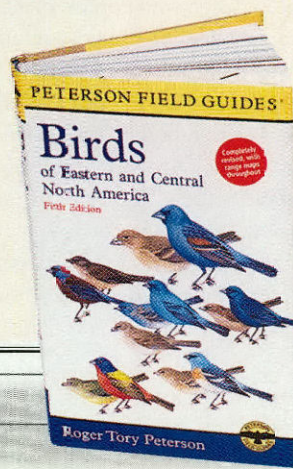
Now, six years after his death at age 87, this long-awaited classic and final edition is still quintessential Peterson: perfect attention to artistic detail, completely revised text, and with researched range maps. The main queries pertain to maintaining the 100th meridian species exclusion line. For example, the veery

is included, but not black-tailed gnatcatchers, even though they occur in the same habitat.

Really, though, this is a book of cherishable treasures. First, there is the touching and insightful introduction by world-revered wildlife artist Robert Bateman, who credits Peterson for his own start in the business. Then, Peterson's widow, Virginia, lovingly describes the master's last day of life as he toiled away, trying to finish a plate of accidental flycatchers, and how she worked tirelessly to finish the edition, bringing in numerous formidable authors and artists.

The most memorable page in the book, a tribute to his legacy and vision, is that final unfinished flycatcher plate. No one who turns to that page will be able to leave it without being transfixed by the artist's process, absorbed with wonder — and overcome with the sense of gratitude all of us who study nature owe this gentle innovator.

— Craig Farquhar



FIELD TEST

Hummingbird Feeders

Here's the buzz on some favorite feeders.

BY GIBBS MILLIKEN

TEXAS IS HUMMINGBIRD COUNTRY, with the greatest diversity of these tiny birds — 18 species — of any state in the United States. Hummingbirds are primarily attracted to proper habitat with environmental landscaping (see “10 Plants to Attract Wildlife,” March issue), but hanging feeders can be a good supplementary food source.

Hummers will visit almost any red-based feeder filled with sugar water. Some feeders, however, are better than others. Reliable designs are available from specialty shops, garden centers, discount stores or ordered directly online.

When you buy a feeder, look for a unit that is easy to take apart and clean, since you will need to clean it and replace the sugar solution every two to three days, especially in warm weather. Although gravity feeders are popular, some pan feeders are less likely to drip. One of the best is the **HummZinger Excel** (\$19.95, Aspects, (888) 277-3287), with six feeding ports and a 16-oz. basin container that is easy to pop open and clean. A smaller, 8-oz. version, the **HummZinger Mini** (\$15.95, Aspects), has three feeding ports. These feeders are made of durable, thick plastic and tend to be more ant-, bee- and wasp-resistant than other models.

For more than 50 years, one type of hummingbird feeder has been made and sold by Central Texas cottage industries. The original design, developed by Prentiss Swayze in Kerrville, was made out of an inverted, empty glass medical I.V. bottle. Today this same red-painted



Left to right: HummZinger Excel, Tejas Hummingbird Feeder, Brilliant Whisper.

metal design with improvements is manufactured in Frio Canyon and sold as the **Tejas Hummingbird Feeder** (\$16.95 for 16-oz., 4-port “Frio” model; \$18.95 for 32-oz., 8-port “Tejas” model; or \$35 for 48-oz., 16-port “Humm-origous” model, H & M Enterprises, <www.tejashummer.com>).

Less expensive is the popular glass **Pinch-Waist Feeder** (\$11.79 for 16-oz. model 210P, Perky-Pet Brand,

<www.perky-pet.com>) with red and yellow plastic parts. This unit has a hardened glass bottle, no-drip base with four feeding stations, removable perches and screw-off hanger cap. Another plastic-and-glass design, the **Best-1** (\$10.95, 32 oz., Best Feeders, (830) 742-3604) is a serviceable derivative of the hand-built Tejas Feeder.

Hand-blown glass hummingbird feeders, imported in a variety of decorative shapes and colors, are often more aesthetically pleasing than plastic, although harder to keep clean.

These single-opening units can be hung from rustic chains or long metal rod hooks. Two bulb-shaped models are the **Dew Drop** (\$39.99, Wild Birds Unlimited, <www.wbu.com>) and the **Brilliant Whisper** (\$14.99, PETSMART, (888) 839-9638) with a twisted glass reservoir and thick metal hanger ring. Keep in mind, though, that these inverted demand feeders can drip unless they are completely filled and the stopper securely sealed. All feeders require regular or weekly cleaning with a bottle brush to remove any mold or syrup residue.

Fill your feeder with a mixture of one part white cane sugar to four parts water. (Don't substitute honey and don't add food coloring — both can be harmful to hummers.) Boil the water for two to three minutes before mixing to delay fermentation. Allow the solution to cool and fill the feeder, storing the remainder in the refrigerator.

Hang the feeder in a shaded location with a clear view to the sky — and give hummers time to find it. Once they do, they are likely to be back every year. Leave the feeders up year-round. Contrary to popular belief, leaving the feeders up will not keep the birds from migrating. Their migratory instinct is strong, and they will faithfully head south as far as southern Mexico each winter. But, when flowers and their primary diet of tiny insects are scarce, your feeder will help these tiny but hardy birds get through tough times. ★



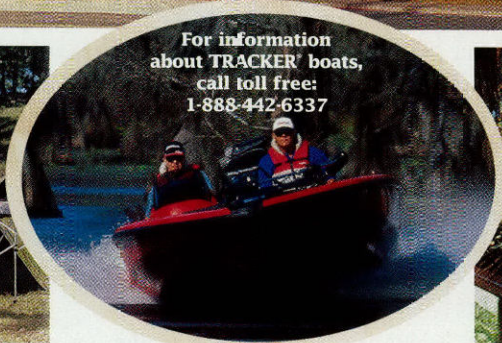
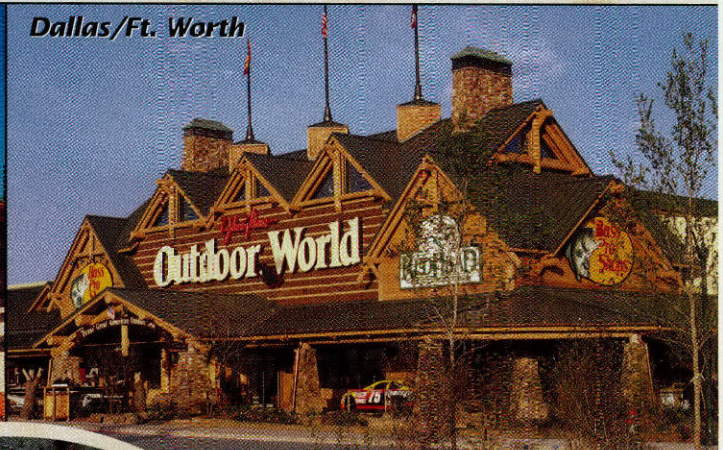
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SKILLBUILDER

Bluebird Nest Boxes

*How do you beckon bluebirds to your backyard?
Build it, and they will come.*

BY ERICA H. BRASSEUX
ILLUSTRATION BY NARDA LEBO

WITH THEIR VIBRANT COLOR and harmonious melodies, eastern bluebirds are a delight to the eye and ear. But these birds have experienced a precipitous population decline in the last half-century — as much as 90 percent, according to some experts. You can help eastern bluebirds thrive — and bring these beautiful birds a little closer to your home — by building a bluebird nesting box for your yard.

1. Cut the 4-foot board as shown in Figure 1. Start by cutting the board at the floor end, since the dimensions for the back are less critical. (Note: Don't use

pressure-treated lumber or wood preservatives. Linseed oil is a preservative and stain that's safe for bluebirds.)

2. Create an entrance hole in the front piece by drilling two 1½" holes and chiseling out the sides to form an oval (see Figure 2). Below the entrance hole inside and out, scratch horizontal lines in the wood with a nail to give the birds climbing traction.

3. Put the nest box together as shown in Figure 3. Use pivot screws at the top of one side to make it easy to open the nest box for cleaning and monitoring.

4. Drill small holes in the top, sides or back of the box to provide adequate ventilation. Drill drainage holes in the floor for drainage.

Mount the nesting box 5 to 10 feet off

the ground, away from heavy human traffic and areas that have been sprayed with insecticide. Point the entrance away from the hot afternoon sun and prevailing winds.

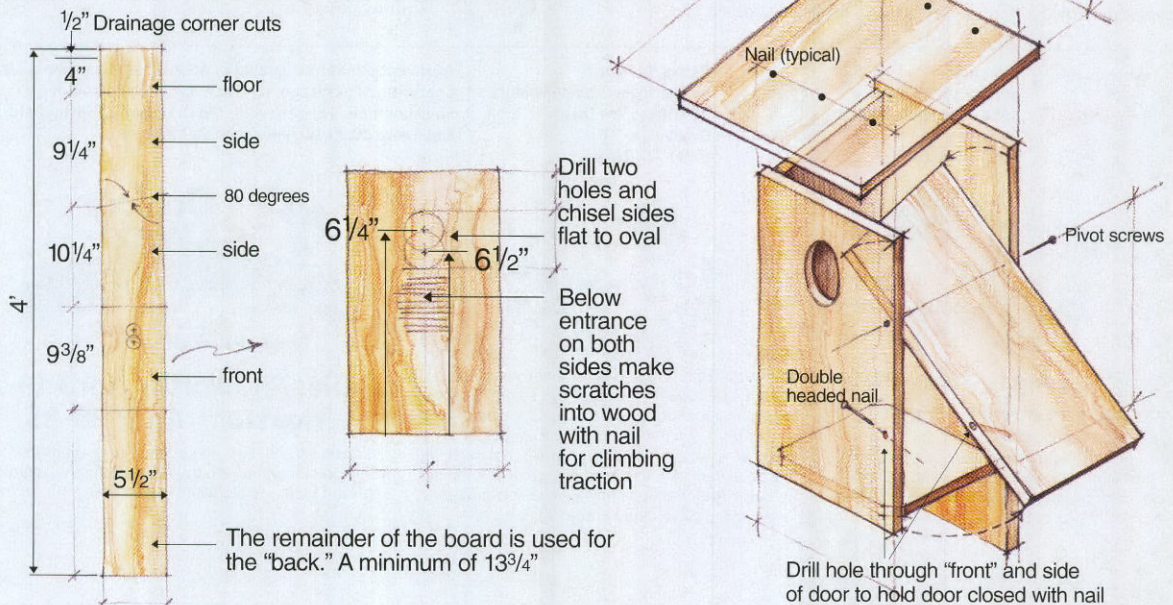
Once you've mounted the box, you must install effective predator guards to deter invasions by cats, snakes, raccoons and fire ants. For more information on predator guards, go to the North American Bluebird Society Web site: <www.nabluebirdsociety.com>.

For step-by-step instructions and diagrams on building an eastern bluebird nesting box, request a copy of *Bluebirds in Texas* from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Endangered Species Branch, 3000 S. IH-35, Suite 100, Austin, TX 78704, (512) 912-7011. A \$1 donation is appreciated. This 42-page pamphlet also contains contact information for bluebird societies, bluebird house manufacturers and mail-order catalogs.

Once your nest box is installed, you'll need to monitor it at least once a week during the nesting season and remove house sparrow nests. Although the maintenance of a bluebird nesting box takes time and effort, you'll see the reward when the bluebird of happiness arrives at your door. ★

Materials List:

- One 1" x 6" x 4' board (actual size ¾" x 5½")
 - One 1" x 10" x 10½" board (for roof) (actual size ¾" x 9¼")
 - Hole cutter 1½" diameter
 - 1¾" galvanized nails (about 20)
 - 1¾" galvanized screws (2, for pivot point)
 - Double-headed nail for holding door closed (1)
- Note: One 6'1" x 6" board makes two boxes.



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Los Dos Madres: Birds and Butterflies in Brownsville

The morning star is still shining when we spot our first bird on Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge — a swallow-tailed kite. An aplomado falcon, long-billed curlew, Botteri's sparrow and verdin follow shortly.

ELEVEN OF US are standing in a row along a pasture road scanning the brush for more birds when I spot motion in the grass perhaps 75 yards away. I train my binoculars on the object, and say quietly, "We've got a coyote coming straight at us at 11 o'clock." He looks to be about half-grown, and his inexperience quickly shows. Even though we are in plain sight, he is so focused on looking for insects on the ground that he is totally oblivious to our presence. When he is within 20 yards of us, he lunges into the grass and comes up chewing. As he rounds a bush perhaps 15 yards away, he suddenly stops and stares at us staring at him. You can almost see a thought unprintable in a family magazine flash through his mind before he turns tail and runs.

I've been wanting to get a close look at a chachalaca, and I strike paydirt at the birding blind near the refuge visitor center, where a watering and feeding station draws birds to within just a few feet. Green jays and white-tipped doves scatter as a flock of chachalacas arrives, chattering noisily. It's obvious that chachalacas rule: Every other bird yields the right of way. For the first time, I am able to photograph chachalacas at very close range and in light that reveals the olive-green iridescence of their feathers and the red throat patch.

I tear myself away and rejoin the group, heading for a waiting boat that will take us across the Laguna Madre to South Padre Island. At Adolph Tomae Park we board a pontoon boat on the Arroyo Colorado. As we cruise the Laguna Madre, the



Birders were elated to spot an aplomado falcon on their visit to Rancho Rincon de Anacahuitas, in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas.

air and the shoreline are filled with birds: great blue herons, great egrets and laughing gulls at water's edge, and Forster's terns, long-billed curlews and tricolored herons flying beside the boat.

The Laguna Atascosa NWR is the largest contiguous protected area of natural habitat on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande. On the Mexican side, that same distinction is held by the 30,000-acre Rancho Rincon de Anacahuitas (Corner of the Olive Trees). Stretching between them is the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where nearly 500 species of birds have been recorded. The Brownsville International Birding Festival in

July and the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival held each November in Harlingen are excellent ways to familiarize yourself with the area.

I'm here for the July birding and butterfly festival. Although it is sweltering by 9 a.m. this time of year, sea breezes keep the coastal area about 10 degrees cooler than it is inland. "This is really not a weird time of year to come to South Texas," says Steve Labuda, manager of the Laguna Atascosa NWR and the leader of our birding group. "It's the only time of year you'll get to see groove-billed anis, scissor-tailed flycatchers and some other local species."

We get to see all these and more on a visit to the Rancho Rincon de Anacahuatas, 45 miles south of Brownsville. By 6 a.m. our van is thumping along Mexico 101; light soon reveals the same endless sea of irrigated farm fields found north of the river. Owner Jorge Martinez gives us a primer on his ranch. It's one of the few remaining undisturbed patches of Tamaulipan thorn scrub and is home to mountain lions, bobcats, ocelots and jaguarundis. More than 420 species of birds, 85 of which are resident, have been documented on the ranch. The ranch contains 72 miles of shoreline, coastal marshes, freshwater ponds and grasslands as well as brush. It has been designated part of an International Site of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

It is a morning Steve characterizes as "decadent birding" because most of the sightings take place from the comfort of our air-conditioned van. By 8 a.m. we've seen Chihuahuan

ravens, a curve-billed thrasher, lark sparrows, mourning doves, common ground doves, bronzed cowbirds, Altamira orioles, horned larks, red-winged blackbirds, groove-billed anis and yellow-billed cuckoos. Everywhere we look there are birds — ladder-backed woodpeckers, scissor-tailed flycatchers, Couch's kingbird, a great horned owl, hooded orioles, northern bobwhite quail, olive sparrows.

We walk the last half-mile to the coast, spotting birds as we go. A thatched-roof palapa perches atop the tallest loma. "Lunch," says Jorge, pointing to a billow of smoke from beyond the palapa. When we get there, we find a pot of beans baking in a fire pit, while the *cocinero* tends chicken, beef ribs and sirloin steaks broiling over a mesquite fire. The palapa sits on a peninsula jutting a mile into the Laguna Madre, and there are magnificent views of water on three sides, a brisk, cooling sea breeze and a frantic, long-billed thrasher on the ridgepole of the palapa. He's afraid to make his getaway with people below, so he spends the entire lunch hour running back and forth along the pole.

After lunch we drive another four miles to a small fishing village on the Mexican Laguna Madre. A scattering of rickety buildings shelters four fishermen resting in hammocks slung between the support posts of a metal roof. Chickens and an assortment of scrawny dogs wander in and out. Perhaps five pounds of shrimp dry in the sun on a homemade rack. Jorge hires their boats to carry birders into the Laguna, hoping to involve local people in ecotourism.



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We board a deep-hulled, fiberglass fishing boat at a dock so dilapidated that it could well have been used in a scene from one of the Indiana Jones movies. As 15 people pile into the homemade craft, it settles onto the bottom and becomes firmly stuck. Only determined rocking back and forth by the passengers and the pushing of three anglers frees us. The whole scene would have been surreal, as though we had suddenly been transported to some foreign country, had this in fact not been the case.

The water is the color of molten gold.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Brownsville Convention and Visitors Bureau, (800) 626-2639; <www.brownsville.org/en/>.

Rio Grande Valley Chamber of Commerce, (956) 968-3141; <www.valleychamber.com/>.

Texas Parks and Wildlife, <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails/maps.htm>

For birding tours of the Laguna Madre by boat, call Captain Mike Kelley at (956) 761-8060.

For information on the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, visit <www.manomet.org/WHSRN/index.html>.

The Laguna Madre offers the opportunity to see a variety of birds by boat.

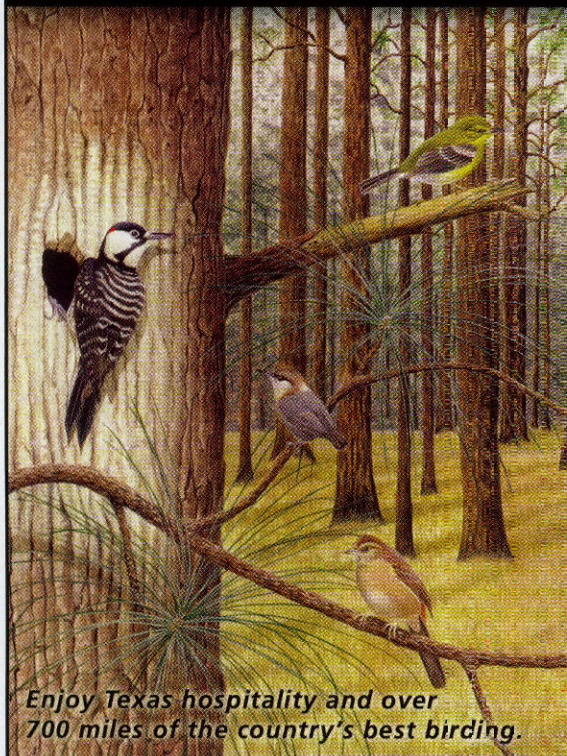
We pass some of the more than 600 islands Steve says dot the Mexican side of the Laguna Madre. The shores of the islands, and the numerous posts holding nets to guide fish into traps, hold dozens of birds: gull-billed, royal, Forster's and least terns; brown pelicans; olivaceous cormorants. Once back on land, we spook a mob of long-billed curlews in the shade of a tree by the road, and as they move off, we see crested caracaras in a tree in the distance. Exhausted birders snooze until someone

PHOTOS BY LARRY D. HODGE

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The butterfly garden at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend beckons butterflies.

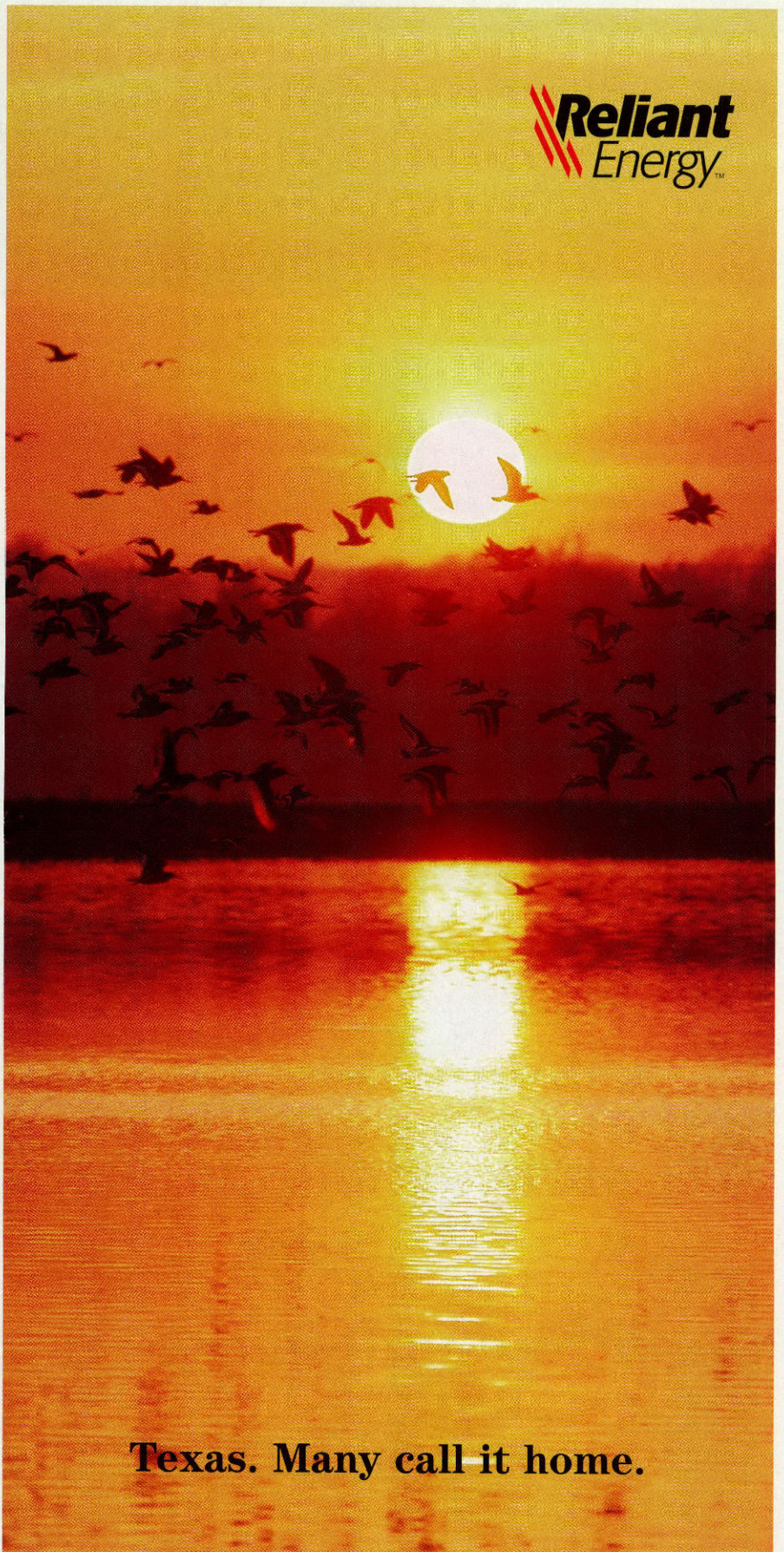
spots a flock of wood storks circling above one of Brownsville's numerous resacas. From start to finish, it's been a pretty wonderful day.

Next day I fall in love with butterflies. Butterflies can't fly until their temperature reaches about 80 degrees, so butterfly watchers can rise later than birders. To me, an even more alluring fact is that butterflies can taste with their feet. No wonder they prefer to land on beautiful flowers, which is where I delight in photographing them.

Butterfly expert Carrie Cate explains why the area is a great place to see butterflies. "More than 300 species of butterflies are found in South Texas," she says. "The four counties at the southern tip of the state — Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo and Starr — have more species than all the rest of the eastern United States combined."

She takes us to tour the grounds of The Inn at Chachalaca Bend, a bed-and-breakfast on 40 acres that appeals to both birders and butterflyers. Habitat ranges from a resaca to dense guayacan forest to an open grassland with a planted butterfly garden. I'm excited to see a chachalaca in the brush, and white-winged and mourning doves coo in the trees. There's a flock of black-bellied whistling-ducks on the resaca. We follow a trail to a gazebo in an open field surrounded by flowering plants, and suddenly eye candy fills the air. There are queen, snout, sulphur and soldier butterflies. Then someone spots a white peacock, followed shortly by a giant swallowtail, dainty sulphur, Texan crescent, gulf fritillary and bordered patch.

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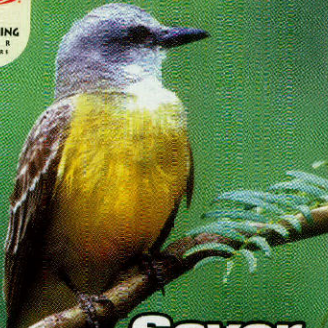


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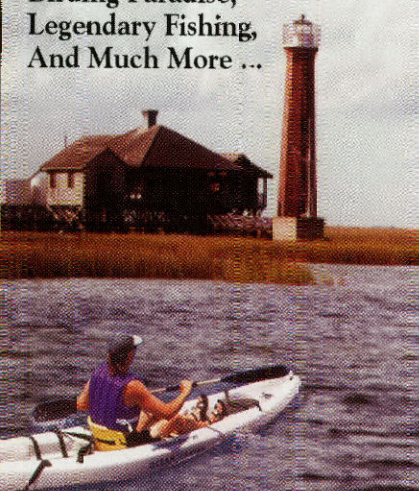
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WEARING
THIS SPRING?

IT'S HAPPY HOUR at a High Island mulberry tree, and a group of tired migrants are bellying up to the luscious berries after an exhausting trans-Gulf flight. After a quick dip into a woodland pool to cleanse the salt from flight-worn feathers, each bird primps and preens, glad to be alive, no doubt, to breed again this year. Coastal woodlot eateries host a cast of colorful characters from March to May, birds whose dazzling plumage spans the visual spectrum from red, orange, yellow, green and blue to violet. Birders from across the state have gathered here to welcome migrants back — and to marvel and exclaim at this annual avian springtime show.



SCARLET TANAGER © JOHN & GLORIA TYETEN/KAC PRODUCTIONS



A

A. AMERICAN GOLDFINCH | B. SCARLET TANAGER |
C. SUMMER TANAGER | D. NORTHERN CARDINAL |
E. PAINTED BUNTING | F. VERMILION FLYCATCHER

FLASHY FINCHES

When finding a mate is priority number one, the male steps out boldly and puts on the Ritz. The Day-Glo yellow suit of the American goldfinch catches the eye of prospective females, while warning rivals to keep away.

Although goldfinches are hard to miss in spring, we hardly notice them in winter. With no reason to advertise when cold sets in, males shed their brilliant and highly conspicuous colors. Neatly camouflaged in buff and olive-green touched with black, they look more like females and so escape the eyes of predators. In April, males dazzle us once again as they head north to breed, stunningly tripped out in glistening gold and black. This spring molting — think of buying a spring wardrobe — is the process birds use to both replace their worn-out old feathers and put on their finest for breeding season.



B D



SCARLET SIZZLERS

Red — very hot on its own, or in many variations: red crests, red accents, red eyes — makes receptive females stop and look. It's mainly the males that sport the gaudiest plumes, "strutting their stuff" in front of finicky females. Northern cardinals wear reds with panache, as do vermilion flycatchers, summer and scarlet tanagers. While males may help the dull-colored females rear the young, their main job is to woo and defend, and that is done best in g.c.w.i.n.g. Technicolor.



C



F



E

PRIMARY PATTERNS

Brave new color directions in plumage are a trademark of New World buntings, and the painted bunting may be the most resplendent of all. Dressed in vibrantly multicolored plumes of red, blue, green and yellow, the male boasts a masterful mix of pattern and effect. Yet he almost seems to disappear in sunlit landscapes. The art of disruptive coloration is at work here, masking the telltale avian shape from sharp-eyed predators. Perched among fluttering leaves in dancing light, a painted bunting male is oddly hard to spot for such a gaudy bird.



G

SLEEK SOPHISTICATE

Simple and sophisticated, red-winged blackbirds sport a sleek black and red look. Flashing their yellow-trimmed red epaulettes, puffed-up ebony males ward off intruders and signal to nubile females to come set up house-keeping on their land. A single alpha male may host as many as 12 females nesting on his territory. As a rule, the male helps only his first choice to feed the young — the secondary females are left to their own devices. Males of low standing are monogamous and help their mates care for the young, but this is rarely a female's first choice. She seems to prefer prime real estate to exclusivity from her mate.

IRIDESCENT OPULENCE

For sheer mastery of painterly colors and *trompe l'oeil*, the varied bunting may have no equal. Look beyond the surface and discover: the understated opulence, the invisible behind the visible, as the male changes prismatic color with each shifting angle of sunlight. Copper, malve, Tyrian purple and slate blue one minute, a modulation of grays and blacks the next when shadows fall — he is a changeling of great beauty and subtlety.

H



G. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD | H. VARIED BUNTING
I. RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD



I

ACROBATIC ARTIST

The male ruby-throated hummingbird will delight the eye and quickly win your heart. But don't expect him to hang around the nest. He's out to win as many females as he can attract with his parabolic aerial displays and hypnotic flashes of his ruby-red gorget. The silken shimmer that lends an iridescent glow to green back feathers resonates between satin-soft reflections and transparent effects. All are a part of the pyrotechnics designed to ignite passion in the female. Desire once sated, though, the male sets off to make other conquests, while she flies off to build her walnut-sized nest. A Casanova whose strategy works well for both sexes, the male ruby-throated hummer heads south to wintering grounds well before females and young are ready to leave.

BOLD STATEMENT

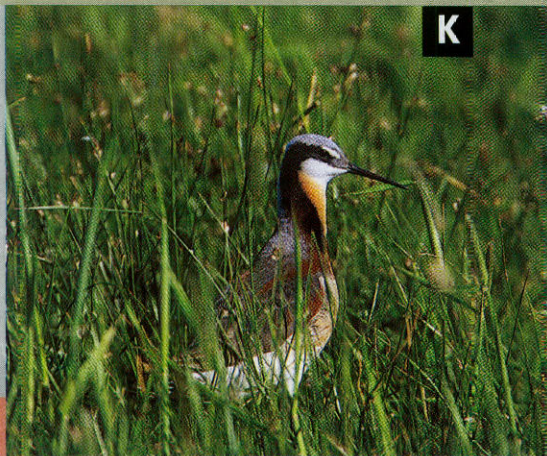
Who would ever combine a pink ensemble with rose-patched wings, carmine points and a blatantly jarring orange tail? Well, let's just say that some birds put colors together that most couturiers would shun.

Unusual color combinations do create bold new statements, though. In spring the roseate spoonbill creates a firebird symphony of pink. How do you set off such a flashy outfit? With a scaly chartreuse reptilian head, red eyes and a spatulate beige bill, of course.



J. ROSEATE SPOONBILL | K. WILSON'S PHALAROPE | L. MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD

K



DRESSING THE PART

In the world of birds, it is the male that traditionally dazzles the eye. He is often larger, more colorful, more extravagant in courtship and nuptial attire. But for every rule there are exceptions.

The phalaropes are among the few bird species in the world in which a single female mates with many males. Female phalaropes dress the part as well. With sex roles reversed, these female shorebirds don the colorful garb. Dressed in russets, browns and white, they set up and defend the territory, court and acquire males — as many as three — and leave the breeding grounds soon after laying the last clutch of eggs. Males are left behind to tend the young.

ACCESSORIZE AND ACCENT

Magnificent frigatebird males do just that, in groups of 20 or more. Ponchos, capes, stoles and balloon treatments at the throat — these are the frigatebirds' fashion accessories. Looking like creatures from the Cretaceous period, these black pterodactyl-like birds win their ladies by blowing off steam — into their scarlet throat pouches. Should a female happen by, the hoopla begins in earnest. In an ecstatic burst of excitement, the males quiver their wings and head, while vibrating their bills against the fully inflated pouch, producing a chorus of drumming sounds. Texans rarely see adult males in the spring, but frigatebirds wander north into Texas in August and September, especially females and young of the year.

L

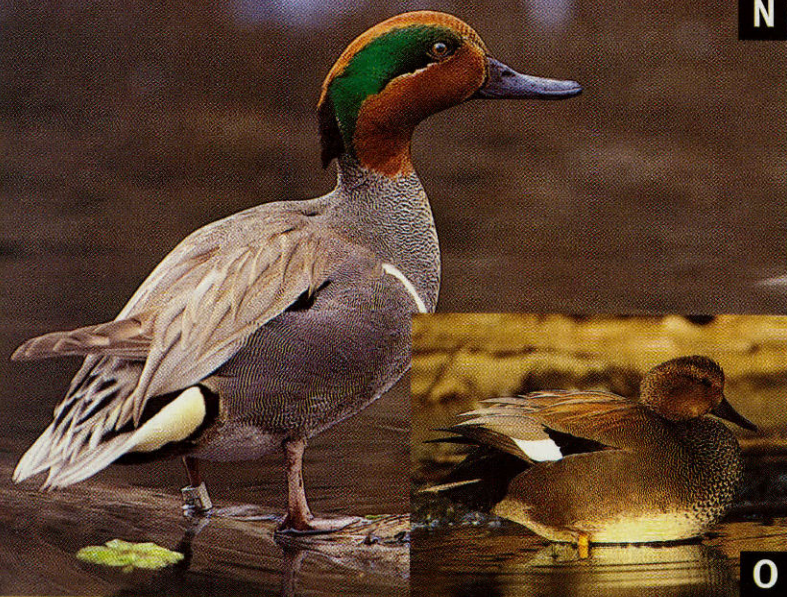


GO BRIGHT WITH WHITE

With colored skin and rakish crests, filmy aigrettes and feather spikes, the snowy egret claims center stage on the marsh or beach. The male's facial skin goes from yellow to bright red once he reaches peak breeding condition. This, combined with the elegant erect aigrettes (upper tail covert feathers), he strikes an irresistible pose. The fringe flying, bills and legs aglow — male herons and egrets make use of it all to win their mate's love. Within a week, the blush is gone, but his efforts have hit the mark — adult males invariably find suitable mates during this short window of opportunity.

SPECTACULAR SPECULA

Specula — bright patches of color on the wings — are accessories of choice for ducks. The look is spare and simple, the colors rich in iridescent or matte, the feathers compressed or fluffy. Green-winged teal figuratively call out their name by flashing brilliant metallic-green specula in flight. Male gadwalls, in classic herringbone patterns, are the ultimate in masculine understatement. Their Persian-carpet vermiculations and elegant chevrons create an intricate pattern of Middle Eastern seduction.

M**N****O**

BASIC BLACK

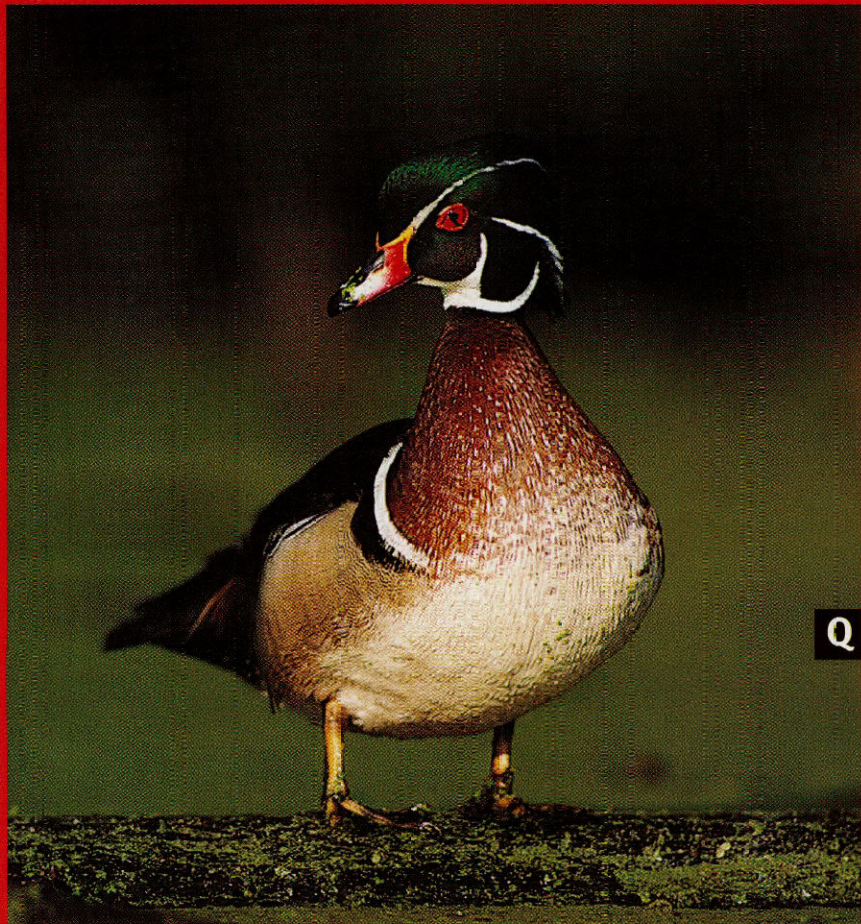
Truman Capote's legendary Black and White Ball reminds us that duotone patterns are the ultimate in elegance and sophistication. Black-bellied plovers, black skimmers, white-tailed kites and black-necked stilts all know that secret. The elegant black-bellied plover in nuptial dress is a prime example. The breeding male looks sensational in a classic ensemble of basic black set off smartly in white, with a silver, buff and black maculated wrap.

We seldom see them here in Texas in their nuptial plumage, but a few wintering birds dress up early before heading north to their tundra breeding grounds. Bolivar Flats is a good place to catch them before they leave.

P

TEXAS PARK

29



Q

ORIENTAL ORNAMENT

Arguably America's most ravishing duck, the male wood duck is perhaps second in beauty only to China's mandarin duck. The bold, dapper artistry of feathers is topped with a cap of emerald green. (The wood duck's scientific name, *Aix sponsa*, means "waterfowl in wedding raiment.")

The wood duck was nearly exterminated in the era of plume hunters, when its feathers were prized to adorn women's hats and to fashion fishing lures. Today, this exquisite dabbling duck has made a comeback, and once again it can be seen swimming on secluded woodland ponds with its mate.

So forget about winter's dusty drabs and come take a gander at what's on show at High Island this April. You'll see what's hot this spring, with plumage displays that are alluring, playful and unconventional. ✨

Freelance writer and environmental consultant NOREEN DAMUDE will be decked out in well-worn denim this spring.

Q. WOOD DUCK | R. WILD TURKEY

FLASH DANCE

Need ideas for making a grand entrance? Come in dancing! Tom turkeys do. The turkey gobbler is the "It" bird with a unique American style, making waves in open woodlands every spring. Feathers of knockout aubergine are mixed with daubs of green, bronze and buff. To complete the look, the naked bluish head is decked with reddish wattles at the base of upper beak, chin and throat. And who can resist those hefty spurred legs? It's military chic coming home to roost again. The fleshy parts of the Tom's face turn red as he puffs himself up and spreads his tail. Strutting back and forth in a frenzy, "The only thing a Tom turkey... can possibly be mistaken for," as Ted Williams once quipped, "is a politician."

R



Q © JOE MAC HUDSPETH; R © GRADY ALLEN

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PHOTO © GADWASSER.NET

BY
MATT
WHITE

WING OF THE COAST

ONCE PLUNGING TOWARD EXTINCTION, THE BROWN PELICAN HAS REGAINED ITS SEASHORE STRONGHOLD.

THE MORNING SUNLIGHT FILTERED through the broken cloud deck covering the November skies as Mike Ramsey and I bounced across the prairie-hay meadow in his beat-up old Jeep. An avid outdoorsman, Mike was eager to show me his stomping grounds near his home on Lake Tawakoni. Once on the shore, we had no sooner set up our scopes to look for ducks and other birds when Mike suddenly exclaimed, "Huh?"

There was something in his voice that sounded confused. "I see a pelican..." he continued as he peered through his scope.

"American white pelicans are common here," I offered, trying to answer his question.

"But this one is brown!" came the reply.

Sure enough, several hundred miles inland, well away from its preferred saltwater habitat, sat a brown pelican — a large, prehistoric-

looking bird with a massive bill — resting on a submerged tree stump. Normally found only along the coast, this bird seemed out of place in Northeast Texas.

Although the reasons are not clear, young brown pelicans are prone to wander after they are able to fly and feed themselves — occasionally flying to lakes and reservoirs from the Trans-Pecos to the Pineywoods. It is one more sign that brown pelicans are making their journey back from the brink of extinction.

In the 1960s, this now-common species nearly became extinct, and inland sightings all but vanished. As Americans contemplated President Kennedy's goal of landing a man on the moon, brown pelicans began to disappear mysteriously from their normal coastal haunts. The disappearance happened so fast that almost no one noticed. The population hit rock bottom in May 1968, when a Texas Parks and Wildlife census along the entire



LARGE PHOTO © DAVID J. SAMS; SMALLER PHOTOS © GRADY ALLEN

Brown pelicans build nests in low trees or on the ground, where the young stay for five to nine weeks after hatching. This channel marker provides a resting place for adult pelicans.



Texas coastline recorded a mere 13 brown pelicans — down from several thousand only a few years earlier.

That same year, *Texas Park & Wildlife* magazine staff editor Suzanne Winckler wrote a stirring epitaph to the brown pelican. She argued that their “zealful presence” was worth preserving — “because increasing his numbers would signify harmony along the Gulf Coast.”

The problem, it turned out, was chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides that were wreaking havoc on several bird species — including the brown pelican. The primary culprit was an invisible enemy called DDT, which was hitching a ride in the silty runoff that washed down once-pristine rivers and streams from the farmlands of Texas. It congregated in shallow bays and bayous, where it was absorbed into the ecosystem.

These pesticides, which were concentrated in the menhaden and the mullet that make up the bulk of the brown pelican's diet, rarely killed the birds, but prevented them from reproducing. The pesticides blocked calcium from developing in the birds' eggs, causing thin eggshells that prevented them from hatching. It was a sad tale, as the birds continued to go through the motions of raising a family, only to meet with failure. The same fate confronted bald eagles, ospreys and peregrine falcons, almost wiping them out as well.

Rachel Carson first brought the problem to America's attention in 1962, when she penned her now-famous tome, *Silent Spring*. This book, which stands as a testament to the power of the press to affect public policy, sounded the alarm about the dangers of

chemical pesticides such as DDT on bird populations. A decade later, in 1972, the use of DDT was banned in the United States — perhaps the biggest key to the eventual return of these birds.

But the damage had been done. Pelican populations were dangerously low throughout most of the United States, and many concerned biologists wondered if the birds could make a comeback in spite of such overwhelming odds. Almost no one was optimistic. By 1974, the situation was so bleak that the editors of Harry Oberholser's monumental *The Bird Life of Texas* wrote that brown pelicans had suffered what appeared to be an "irreversible collapse," adding that their presence in Texas would soon become "only a memory in the minds of ancient birdwatchers."

It was a sad story, indeed, but fortunately, the story does not end there. In neighboring Louisiana, where they were completely wiped out by the early 1960s, many folks were displeased with the notion of losing their state bird. To combat the disgrace, brown pelicans from Florida — the species' last stronghold in the United States, where an estimated 10,000 still lived — were imported in an effort to reintroduce a nesting population. However, the natural concern was that if birds were brought into an environment still contaminated by pesticides, these efforts would prove fruitless.

Although this program got off to a slow start — with some of the first introductions freezing to death in 1968 and others simply vanishing the next year — within a decade it was beginning to pay off, as brown pelican eggshells began to thicken, allowing more eggs to hatch. In 1973, federal protection under the newly passed Endangered Species Act was extended to brown pelicans, making illegal any harassment or vandalism of birds and their nesting colonies. As the Louisiana population increased, some no doubt wandered across the Sabine River into Texas, as did birds from south of the Rio Grande in Mexico — both of which are thought to account for some of the state's increase. Brown pelicans also have benefited from the creation of artificial barrier islands created with dredge material from the Intracoastal Waterway, which parallels the coast, knifing through the heart of their breeding areas. These barren sandbars mimic sites the pelicans use for roosting and loafing and even serve as nesting colonies.

Today, brown pelicans are back in force along the coastal waters where they belong. According to the Texas Colonial Bird Water Census, which has been recording total bird counts in coastal bays and estuaries since 1973, some 7,000 brown pelicans now reside and breed along Texas' Gulf Coast. Although no one is certain just how many brown pelicans made Texas

their home before the population was nearly wiped out, it is clear they have made a remarkable comeback.

Once again the flamboyant antics of these gaudy birds, dressed in outlandish plumage, decorate pilings and loiter along beaches and spoil islands along Texas' Gulf Coast. They fly over the water in magnificent linear formations that undulate like waves on the sea — or like formations of fighter jets heading off for some unknown mission. In breeding plumage, adults sport yellow or white heads that contrast with their multicolored bills, which are either carmine red or shades of brown and pink. When they are not breeding, they lose much of their color: their heads become mostly white and their bills fade to mostly brown, but are still show-stoppers that are eagerly sought by birders.

To watch a brown pelican fishing is to witness the seemingly impossible. From heights that often reach 30 feet or more, the bird suddenly wheels around a quarter turn and then dives straight into the water in pursuit of a hapless fish. While in the water, it uses its shovel-like bill — which can hold three and half gallons of water — to scoop up its prey. Emerging from the depths with a vigorous shake, which removes excess water from its feathers, it rights itself and then raises its bill skyward as though performing some ancient ceremony. This allows the water out and the fish to be positioned head-first before, in a final gulp, the bird swallows its dinner whole.

The brown pelican's comeback is a phenomenal success, but there is danger in assuming that there is safety in numbers — witness how quickly the population crashed once before. Perhaps the lesson is that the coastal waters and their inhabitants — from the people to the wildlife who depend upon them — do not exist in a vacuum. Although brown pelicans have rebounded and their numbers appear healthy, our vigilance is needed to ensure that future generations will enjoy these birds. Brown pelicans still face a variety of threats, ranging from oil spills to entanglement in discarded monofilament fishing line — an unfortunate, and needless, reality that kills many birds a year.

Its Latin name — *Pelicanus occidentalis* — means pelican of the western setting sun, but happily, the brown pelican was not destined to fly off into the sunset. It is a fitting moniker, and perhaps one that should be recalled in late evening as gangs of pelican silhouettes stream across Texas' bays and beaches, enlivening a blood-red western sky. ☆

MATT WHITE is a contributing editor to *Texas Birds* and the author of *Birds of Northeast Texas*, to be published by Texas A&M University Press in July.

A rustic wooden sign is mounted on two weathered wooden posts. The sign is rectangular with a brown border and a light-colored background. It features the text "The Inn at Chachalaca Bend" in a stylized, reddish-brown font. Below the main text is a smaller, horizontal arrow pointing to the right, also in a reddish-brown color. The sign is set against a backdrop of a clear blue sky, several palm trees, and a field of dry grass. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

The Inn at
Chachalaca
Bend



10 Birchy B&Bs

Veteran Texas birders chime in with a few of their favorite bed-and-breakfast destinations.

BY ERICA H. BRASSEUX

The Habitat Vacation Cabins

As you step outside, a bee-like buzzing is the only prelude to the approaching cloud of hundreds of tiny hummingbirds. Feeders are refilled up to eight times a day during September migration, as these tiny bundles of energy will put on two to three times their body weight in preparation for their 500-mile sprint across the Gulf of Mexico. Before dusk, make yourself a sandwich, curl up under an afghan on the screened front porch overlooking the lake — and watch the resident alligator and numerous turtles poke above the surface. Blue herons, kingfishers and egrets rest on the limbs of coastal live oak, as they, too, prepare to turn in for the night. Later, the moonlight may offer a peek at a doe and her fawn drinking from the water's edge, and you immerse yourself in the serenity of the moment. Located in the heart of Lamar Peninsula, Habitat is located a few blocks from St. Charles Bay and a short drive from Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (winter home of the whooping crane). Four log cabins with full kitchens and private baths are available for \$75 a night for double occupancy. For more information call (361) 729-2362 or visit www.virtualcities.com/vacation/tx/g/txg48v1.htm.



Bluebird Hill Bed-and-Breakfast & Hideaway Cabin

A staggered, 100-year-old cedar picket fence surrounds the two-story stucco home, giving even the bluebirds that splash and frolic in a rock pond fountain in the front yard a sense of privacy. With 13 nest boxes and several baths and feeders, it's no wonder the bluebirds make this their home year-round. Juniper, live oak and red oak are just a few of the trees that canopy the 250-acre ranch just west of Topia. Also, vermilion flycatchers, golden-cheeked warblers and even a red-tailed hawk, which rests in the top of an oak tree near the cabin, find harbor in Hidden Valley, a box canyon at the back of the property. There is a bluebird trail with nesting boxes and a hot tub downstairs in the garden room that provides a comfortable vantage point for uninterrupted wildlife viewing and late-night stargazing.

Between sunset bat tours, guided birding excursions, and nearby Garner State Park and Lost Maples State Natural Area, you, too, could make this your home

year-round. Rates per couple range from \$95 to \$115 a night for the bed-and-breakfast, and \$115 for the hideaway cabin. For more information visit www.friolodging.com or call (830) 966-2320.



Cibolo Creek Ranch

Perhaps no destination better captures the quintessential spirit of the Old West than Cibolo Creek, in the Chinati Mountains near Presidio. Sprawling over more than 30,000 acres of dramatic vistas, extraordinary mountain ranges and crimson plateaus of Big Bend country, this working ranch — with horses, longhorns and buffalo — provides a picturesque backdrop for boundless birding and numerous other ranch activities. A stretch of riparian woodland on the property is a unique find amid the area's typical desert-like surroundings, and gray vireos, flocks of warblers and other migratory birds frequent this area often. Three towering, 19th-century adobe forts, once used to fend off attacks by Indians and trail bandits, have been meticulously restored and now serve as a luxurious and secluded hideaway from the rigors of city life. Rooms and suites range from \$400 to \$600 per night for double occupancy, and include three mouth-watering gourmet meals per day. To find out more about Cibolo Creek Ranch call (915) 229-3737 or visit www.cibolocreekranch.com.

4 Brown Pelican Inn

Begin your morning island-style, with alfresco breakfast on the wrap-around porch overlooking the turquoise waters of Laguna Madre. As if cued each morning by the smell of gourmet coffee brewing at the inn, a group of brown pelicans and roseate spoonbills soar above the bay in search of an easy meal. Distinguished dinner

guests include dolphins, which feed in a nearby channel, and a peregrine that has made its home in the penthouse of the high-rise hotel next door. Go for a stroll along the boardwalk, join a private birding tour, or visit a nearby refuge, and when you return you can settle into a rocking chair for a colorful South Padre Islands sunset. Nightly rates for the inn's eight rooms range from \$90 to \$115 per person, except during peak season (March 1 – Labor Day) and holiday weekends. Group discounts and special birding packages are also available. Visit www.brownpelican.com or call (956) 761-2722 for more information.



5 Inn at El Canelo Ranch

Nestled amid more than 3,200 acres of rugged South Texas brush land, the hacienda-style Inn at El Canelo Ranch, with soaring ceilings and a stone fireplace, is a big place that somehow seems intimate. Just ask one of the more than 7,000 birdwatchers from all over the country who have come to stay at the ranch — most with hopes of seeing the pair of nesting ferruginous pygmy-ows in the courtyard. Located just south of the famous King Ranch, El Canelo Ranch hosts some 300 species of native and migratory birds and also offers ample hunting opportunities, tennis courts, bass fishing and a sporting clay range for the outdoor enthusiasts. Double rooms are \$125 per person/per night, and include accommodations, dinner and breakfast and self-guided birding. Single rate is \$150 per night. Can't stay the night? No problem! Day birding rates are \$35 per person. For more information visit www.elcaneloranch.com or call (956) 689-5042.



TOP PHOTO BY ELAINE ROBBINS; BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF BROWN PELICAN INN



Inn at Chachalaca Bend

You'll think your mind is playing tricks on you as you wander along the 1.5-mile hiking trail through this 40-acre park. About the time you stop at one of the many birding stations to rest your gaze on an Altamira oriole, a buff-bellied hummingbird or a ringed kingfisher, you'll spot something else — hopping through the trees — and quickly lose sight of it again. Wild chachalacas are abundant on the property, but with their dull brown color, are well-camouflaged and sometimes

Hummer House

6

Think you have a sweet tooth? At the Hummer House, located about 20 miles south of San Angelo, hummingbirds consume more than 700 pounds of sugar each year! In early spring up to 3,000 hungry hummers — the largest concentration in Texas — migrate to this private cottage, darting from feeder to feeder as they fuel up for the flight south in late summer. The ranch's natural setting of live oak and pecan also harbors more than 100 different species of birds, including up to 300 wild turkeys during the September to April breeding season, and a large number of white-tailed deer in the fall. With two bedrooms, two baths, a complete kitchen and a living area, this self-catered guest house is stocked for a light breakfast and lunch. Nightly rates Monday through Thursday are \$125 per couple; \$150 Friday through Sunday. For reservations call (915) 255-2254 or visit <www.hummerhouse-texas-gems.com>.

tricky to spot against the South Texas landscape. But you can always rely on their morning chorus of *chaa-chaa-laa-kaz* to alert you to their presence. The Inn at Chachalaca Bend is just a short drive from South Padre Island and the Rio Grande Valley's largest refuge, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. Rooms at this nine-bedroom retreat range from \$100 to \$350 per night and include a country buffet breakfast. Special event discount rates are available. Contact the Inn at Chachalaca Bend at (888) 612-6800 or visit www.chachalaca.com for more information.



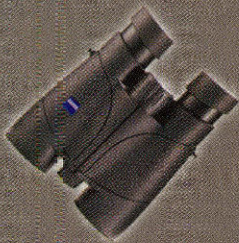
Cygnets

8

Leave the *Sounds of Nature* CDs at home. At this secluded country cottage in Rockport, you can sink back in the overstuffed chairs and let the sound of water flowing from the handmade bird fountain

filter through the open window. Or, fall asleep to rain tapping the tin roof during a late-night shower. With feeders hanging outside every window, you'll be birding before you ever step out the front door; spring brings as many as 25 varieties of warblers and other songbirds, and front porch rockers are an ideal venue for hummingbird viewing during fall migration. A stocked snack cupboard and fully equipped kitchen leave you with plenty of options for a brown bag lunch or mid-night snack. This spacious hideaway with redwood walls, a beamed ceiling and tile floors rents for \$72 a night and \$480 a week for double occupancy. Call (361) 729-7009 or visit <www.mainstreetrockportfulton.com/cygnets/> for more information or to make reservations.

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look up to 7%
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Victory 8x56



Victory 10x56



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*Based on blue, red and green light transmission tests. Data on file.



B-Bar-B Ranch Inn

Located on 80 acres just eight miles south of Kingsville, the B-Bar-B Ranch provides access to more than 400 avian species in the surrounding Rio Grande Valley. Mild year-round temperatures, abundant wildlife and genuine South Texas hospitality make this bed-and-breakfast a favorite among birders, hunters and anyone who likes homemade biscuits and gravy for breakfast and steak for dinner. Located on a working ranch, this 16-room lodge was originally part of the historic King Ranch. It is a stop on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail and a pick-up spot of the King Ranch Birding Tour. Room rates for double occupancy range from \$85 to \$125 per night, and day birders and dinner guests are also welcome by reservation. For more information call (361) 296-3331 or visit <www.b-bar-b.com>.



10 Queen Anne Bed-and-Breakfast

A three-story, 1905 home with original stained-glass windows, 12-foot ceilings, exquisite inlaid wood floors and fine antiques throughout, Galveston's



Queen Anne Bed-and-Breakfast truly is fit for a queen. And its proximity to Bolivar Flats, High Island and the free ferry landing make it ideally situated for birders. For early risers who don't want to waste a minute of prime-time birding, the innkeepers will provide breakfast-to-go in lieu of the traditional full gourmet breakfast, which is served on antique china and crystal stemware. If you miss out on the candlelight breakfast, you can make up for it with the daily afternoon tea or wine-and-cheese hour, followed by a little R&R on the screened porch or back deck. Weekend rates range from \$115 to \$180 per night for double occupancy and \$100 to \$165 per night for midweek. Reservations can be made online at <www.welcome.to/queenanne> or by calling (800) 472-0930. ★

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

FOR LINKS to other Texas bed-and-breakfasts, visit one of the Web sites below or contact the chamber of commerce in the area you wish to visit.

Bed & Breakfast Lodging Information:
<www.bbonline.com/tx>,
<www.bedandbreakfast.com>
or <www.virtualcities.com/vacation/tx/txvacdex.htm>

Historic & Hospitality Accommodations of Texas:

<www.hat.org>

WHEN INQUIRING about reservations, keep in mind that many B&Bs require a minimum two-night stay. Also, consider booking off-season (usually fall and winter) and weekdays, when rates are often lower and the properties are less crowded. Cancellation policies can be strict, and vary from place to place, so make sure you do your research before sending in your deposit.

Photo by Kevin T. Karlson



BRUNTON

∞ ETERNA

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GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CALENDAR

Compliments of the 2002 Great Texas Birding Classic sponsors:

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Year Round Events

Beginners' Bird Walks – Valley Nature Center, Weslaco. Second Saturday of each month, 10 a.m. \$2 adults, \$1 children. A brief introductory talk geared toward beginning birders, followed by a bird walk through the nature park. (956) 369-2475; <www.valleynaturecenter.org>.

Sea Center Texas Wetlands Walkway – Lake Jackson. Stroll the 600-foot boardwalk that extends over freshwater and saltwater marshes. Wildflower and hummingbird gardens surround a picnic pavilion. Daily November–March, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. April–October, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tours available on request. Free. (979) 292-0100; <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishing/hatch>.

Golden Triangle Audubon Society Meetings – Beaumont. Every third

Thursday, 7 p.m., Beaumont Garden Center. <goldtriangle.audubon.tripod.com>.

Katy Prairie Birding Platform – The Houston Sierra Club and Katy Prairie Conservancy built a viewing platform overlooking a roost pond on Katy Prairie conservation lands, the largest U.S. winter home for migratory waterfowl, as well as 250 other species. North of I-10, in Katy, on Sharp Road west of Katy Hockley Road at Waller County line. (281) 391-7116.

Houston Arboretum and Nature Center Birdwatchers Club – Second Monday of every month. Participants share resources, view films, discuss birding sites and field guides. Each month covers a different class of birds. Free. (713) 681-8433. <www.audubon.com/arboret>.

King Ranch Nature Tours – King Ranch Visitor Center, Kingsville. Guided nature tours at the 825,000-acre ranch including special programs for birdwatchers. Programs vary in length and cost, with half- and full-day tours available. (361) 592-8055; <www.king-ranch.com>.

Beginners' Bird Walks and Monthly Mitchell Lake Field Trip – San Antonio Audubon Society. Beginners' bird walk: Second Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Judson Nature Trail. Mitchell Lake field trip: Fourth Saturday of each month. San Antonio Audubon meets the first Thursday of each month, except May, at 7:30 p.m. (210) 308-6788; <www.saaudubon.org>.

March

March 15 – April 15

Santa Ana NWR Annual Hawkwatch. Birders are invited to help count and identify migrating raptors. A training session will be held March 9. Refuge visitors may stop by the Hawk Watch Station to learn about raptor identification and view migrating birds. Free. (956) 784-7522.

March 16, 23

Ferriessey Ranch Spring Nature Tours, Bayside. Explore everything from wildflowers to birds to Blue Moon night rides. Half day, \$18.90; full day, \$45.53 full day. (361) 529-6600.

March 21 – 24

Texas Tropics Nature Festival, McAllen. Chachalacas, green and ringed kingfishers, great kiskadees, long-billed thrashers, Altamira orioles, green jays and olive sparrows are just a few of the highlights of field

trips planned to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and Bensen–Rio Grande Valley State Park. Guided tours, seminars on cultural and natural history, migrating butterflies and a trade show. (877) McALLEN; <www.mcallencvb.com>

March 21 – May 16

Lunch with the Birds, Nature Discovery Center, Bellaire. Every Thursday, beginning with the third Thursday in March and continuing through the third Thursday in May. Noon to 1 p.m. Bring a lunch or just watch birds. The walks are led by staff or volunteers of the Nature Discovery Center. Loaner binoculars available. Free. (713) 667-6550; <www.naturediscoverycenter.org>

March 29 or 30

Houston Audubon Birdathon. Form a team of two to five birders, regardless of

birding experience, then ask friends, relatives and co-workers to contribute to your team's efforts by pledging an amount per species seen. This is a fun way to support the conservation work of the Houston Audubon Society. Prizes will be awarded. Free. (281) 997-3711; <www.houstonaudubon.org>

March 30 – 31

Yellow Rail Walks, Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Following a brief introduction on yellow rail ecology and management, guides will lead participants through salty prairie habitat in search of yellow rails. Bring waterproof boots, binoculars, drinking water and mosquito repellent. Be prepared for vigorous walking through difficult terrain. Meet at the Visitor Information Station. Space is limited. 4 p.m. on March 30; 7 a.m. on March 31. Free. (409) 267-3337; <http://southwest.fws.gov>

Below, American white pelicans; right, green jay.



MATAGORDA ISLAND STATE PARK and Wildlife Management Area, Migratory Bird Tour. Join us for a guided tour of the north end of the island to observe shorebirds, herons, egrets and migrating birds. Bring good walking shoes, water and binoculars. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Fees, in addition to the ferry fee, are \$2 for Texas Conservation Passport members, \$8 for non-members, \$4 for children 12 and under. Reservations required. Ferry fees: \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and under. Call for dates. (361) 983-2215.

April 6

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Earth Day, Lake Jackson. Volunteers are needed for the Bayou Bailout, Forest Trail Blazing, Handy Man Helpers, Trash Bashing and Mulching Madness. Bring a lawn chair, gloves, insect repellent and tools, if you have them, labeled with your name. Something for everyone, even birding. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free. (579) 480-3999; <www.gcbo.org>

April 6, 13, 20, 27

Birding on the Brazos. Stephen F. Austin State Park. 2 p.m. each Saturday in April. Join a walking tour of the park in search of the many resident bird species, including woodpeckers, birds of prey, wading birds and warblers. Loaner equipment available for free. (579) 885-3613, ext. 27.

April 13

Backyard Habitat Conanza, Nature Discovery Center, Bellaire. Tips, lectures and crafts to enhance your backyard habitat for birds and butterflies. Activities for children and adults. Birdwatching walks, birdbanding demonstrations, retailers with everything from birdhouses and feeders to gift items. The Bellaire Garden Club will be holding their annual spring plant sale. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free. (713) 667-6553; <www.naturediscoverycenter.org>

April 13

Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival, Eagle Lake. Located near the Attwater's Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, Eagle Lake honors this unique and gorgeous bird on the verge of extinction. Wildlife viewing tours are available throughout the area. Local artists display arts and crafts; information booths focus on natural history of the area. (979) 234-2780.



April 17 - 21

Nature Quest 2002, Concan. Programs, guided field trips and great fun highlight this weekend. Possible sightings include the golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo, black phoebe, Scott's oriole. The area is also rich in butterfly life. (800) 210-0380; <www.thcrr.com>

April 13, 27

Fennessey Ranch Spring Nature Tours - See March 15, 23

April 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 20, 27

Yellow Rail Walks - See March 30 - 31

April 20 - 28

Great Texas Birding Classic, Texas Coast. This week-long birding tournament has a \$50,000 Conservation Cash Grand Prize to benefit bird habitat protection; 400 species possible, including ferruginous pygmy-owl and green kingfisher. Sectional and week-long tournaments. Youth, adult and senior categories. Form a team of three to five birders, regardless of ability, and come out and enjoy this fun and unique conservation event. (888) 892-4737; <www.tp.wd.state.tx.us/gtc>

April 20

Ninth Annual Bluebird Festival, Wills Point. Home to more bluebirds than any place in Texas, Wills Point celebrates with educational and entertaining programs. Driving tours, arts and crafts, games, food and educational booths. (903) 873-3111; <www.flash.net/~junction/festival.htm>

April 20

Beginning birding class, Village Creek State Park, Lumberton. 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. \$5 per person. Group recreation area. Learn the basics of birding through slide pre-

sentations and lectures. See examples of equipment, including binoculars, books, scopes. (Fee includes birching tour on April 27.) (409) 755-7322.

April 25 - 28

Birding in the Big Thicket, Kountze. A birding celebration with workshops on beginning birding, photographing birds, birding on the Net and more. Tours offered to surrounding areas: Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, High Island, the Big Thicket. Children's workshop with hands-on projects, workshops on field guides and binoculars. Kountze Middle School/The Big Thicket. Individual workshops \$2 each, program pass \$15, tour prices vary. (866) 456-6689; <www.kountze.com>

April 27

Birding tour and walk, Village Creek State Park, Lumberton. Guided birding walk of state park and other birding sites in the area. Tour time depends on weather, birding opportunities and number of sites visited. Bring binoculars, field guide, water, insect repellent, and sack lunch. 9 a.m. to noon. \$5 per person. (409) 755-7322.

April 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27, 28

Birdwalks in Blucher Park, Corpus Christi. Members of the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi lead walks through Blucher Park and the expansive lawns of the Blucher homes. The park is the site of large fallouts during spring migration. 7:30 am. Free. (361) 991-9031; <www.kristiv.com/aoc>

April

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

PHOTO © LARRY DITTO

May

May 2 – 5

Ninth Annual Migration Celebration, Lake Jackson. Field trips to Brazoria, Big Boggy and San Bernard national wildlife refuges, Peach Point Wildlife Management Area, five county parks and 20 miles of Gulf Coast beaches, as well as a trade show and speakers. (800) 938-4853.

May 3 – 5

Texas Songbird Festival, Lago Vista. Field trips include the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge for golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos, Congress Avenue bridge to view bats, Hornsby Bend, Fredricksburg and Jonestown Park. \$10 per person. (512) 267-7952; <www.lagovista.org>.

May 4

Seventh Annual Southeast Texas Spring Migration Extravaganza, Martin Dies Jr. State Park, Jasper. Habitat includes large tracts of upland pine forests, mixed pine-hardwood forests and bottomland hardwood forests. Guided boat tours and walking bird tours. \$10 per person. Reservations required. (409) 384-5231; <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/martindi>.

May 9 – 15

Birding Week, The Children's Museum of Houston's PG&E Corporation EcoStation, Houston. The museum will conduct bird activities and workshops every day from 2 to 3 p.m. Free with museum admission. (713) 522-1138, ext. 280; <www.cmhouston.org>.

May 11

International Migratory Bird Day, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson. Bird-banding demonstration and volunteer work day on the sanctuary's prairie restoration plot. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free. (979) 480-0999; <www.gcbo.org>.

May 17 – 19

Third Annual Dragonfly Days, Valley Nature Center, Weslaco. An event focusing on odonata in the Rio Grande Valley. (956) 969-2475; <www.valleynaturecenter.org>.

May 22, 26

Breeding Birds of the Coastal Waters, Corpus Christi. For birders of all levels, with acclaimed birder and naturalist Gene Blacklock of the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program. Field trip will include a boat trip to two coastal waterbird nesting sites. (361) 852-2100; <www.ccbotanicalgardens.org>.

Below, groove-billed ani; opposite page, left to right: hooded oriole, Harris's hawk, Couch's kingbird, Lincoln's sparrow.

Aug. 15 – 17

Davis Mountains Hummingbird Round-Up, Prude Ranch, Fort Davis. See West Texas hummers at the peak of their fall migration and hear experts talk about hummingbirds and related birding subjects. Special access is arranged for high diversity areas. (800) 458-6232; prude@overland.net; <www.prude-ranch.com>.

Aug. 15 – Nov. 15

Corpus Christi Hawk Watch. HawkWatch International conducts full-season raptor migration counts at Hazel Bazemore County Park, about 17 miles west of Corpus. The migratory flight of

raptors through this Coastal Bend site is the most diverse and largest in North America north of Mexico. Free. (801) 484-6516; <www.hawkwatch.org>.

Aug. 15 – Nov. 15

Smith Point Hawk Watch, Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area. Hawk Watch International and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory conduct full-season raptor migration counts at Smith Point on Galveston Bay. On days with north winds, observers may be treated to the spectacle of thousands of broad-winged hawks and hundreds of accipiters. Free. (801) 484-6516; <www.hawkwatch.org>.

August

September

Sept. 7

Extreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson. Witness hundreds of migratory ruby-throated hummingbirds as they stock up on flower nectar or at feeders as they prepare for their southbound journey to the tropics. Lasting up to two weeks, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free. (979) 480-0999; <www.gcbo.org>.

Sept. 9

Beginning Bird ID Series, Corpus Christi. There will be 12 Monday evening classes beginning Sept. 9; includes six field trips with acclaimed birder and naturalist Gene Blacklock of the Coastal Bend

Bays and Estuaries Program. \$50 members; \$75 non-members. (361) 835-6247; <www.ccbotanicalgardens.org>.

Sept. 12 – 15

Hummer/Bird Celebration, Rockport. Speakers, programs, outdoor exhibits, a banding site, nature-related vendor booths, Hummer Home visits, birding boat excursions, guided field trips and much more highlight this annual festival along the Central Texas coast. \$2 per lecture/program. (800) 826-6441; <www.rockport-fulton.org>

Sept. 13, 14, 15, 28

Hummingbird Hayrides, Fennessey

Fanch Bayside Three-hour tours to the Mission River to observe hundreds of hummingbirds feeding on acres of Turk's caps. The Mission River is also a major migration path for hawks. 7:30 a.m. Prices range from \$18.90 for a half day to \$45.53 for a full day. (361) 529-6600.

Sept. 26 – 29

A Celebration of Flight, annual Corpus Christi Hawk Watch. Now in its fifth year, the event is held at Haze Bazemore Park in the Calallen area and is open to the public. The four-day celebration takes place during the peak of hawk migration and annually delivers the largest concentration of raptors. Last year's event recorded almost 800,000 broadwings. Free. (361) 881-1818 <www.corpuschristicvb.com>



October

Oct. 12

Celebrate our National Wildlife Refuges 2002, Aransas and Matagorda national wildlife refuges. Learn about bird-banding, reptiles and raptors, game-calling, fly fishing, sporting dogs and archery, while enjoying barbecue or dutch oven cuisine. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free. (361) 286-3559; <<http://southwest.fws.gov>>.

Oct. 17 – 20

Texas Butterfly Festival, Mission. Celebrate the Valley's 260-plus species of butterflies. Internationally renowned speakers, butterflies in their natural habitats, expert-guided field trips. Sponsored by the Greater Mission Chamber of Commerce. \$5 to \$65 per seminar or field trip. (800) 580-2700; <www.texasbutterfly.com>.

Oct. 31 – Nov. 3

Balmorhea Birdfest, Balmorhea. This festival offers birders the opportunity to explore private ranches and the nearby Davis Mountains in search of Montezuma quail, mountain chickadee and crissal thrasher as well as desert, montane water and wetland species of the Trans-Pecos. Speakers will be well-known Texas birders who are experts on birds of the area. (915) 375-2325; <birdingbalmorhea@hotmail.com>.

November

Nov. 6 – 10

Ninth Annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Harlingen. Join birders and nature lovers from around the world at the Rio Grande Valley's premier birding festival. Guided field trips, afternoon seminars, all-day workshops and evening keynote lectures. (800) 531-7346 or (956) 423-5440, <www.rgvbirdfest.com>.

December

Dec. 14 – Jan. 15

Golden Triangle Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Beginners and seasoned birders alike are welcome to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count. Teams are given a designated 15-mile radius on a given count day. <<http://goldtriaudubon.tripod.com>>.

February

Feb. 21 – 23, 2003

Celebration of Whooping Cranes & Other Birds, Port Aransas. Seminars, workshops, speakers. Boat tours include trips in bay and harbor, trips to view endangered whooping cranes, and nature boat excursions to watch special marine life. Guided tours of breeding centers, wetland habitats, art exhibits, trade show and great food make this festival memorable. (800) 45-COAST; <www.portaransas.org>.

FROM LEFT: © LARRY DITTO, © KATHY ADAMS CLARK/KAC PRODUCTIONS, LARRY DITTO, BILL BRAKER/KAC PRODUCTIONS



SPRING INT

TO SEE, FEEL AND EXPERIENCE HISTORY, TAKE A SPRING DRIVE

APRIL IS THE 166TH ANNIVERSARY OF TEXAS INDEPENDENCE, so what better time to experience both nature and history firsthand? Shucks, even for native Texans, it can be difficult to sort out all the events of the riveting drama of how a loose coalition of farmers, ranchers, country lawyers and adventurers struggled in a foreign land against daunting odds to win independence.

This spring, follow the trail of history and view spring migration and wildflowers along the back roads that traverse the region's coastal plains, hardwood bottomlands, rolling blackland

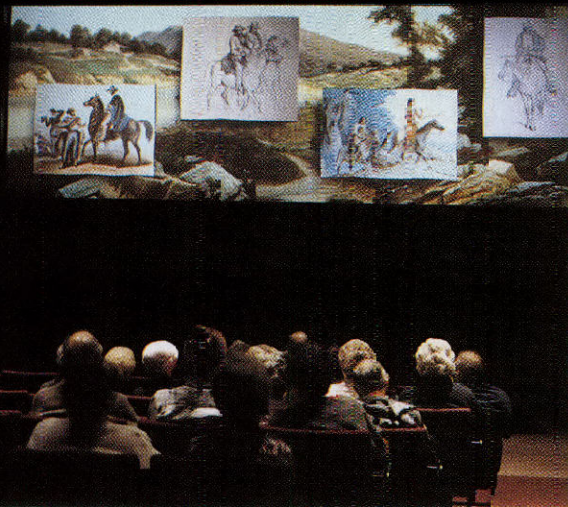


O HISTORY

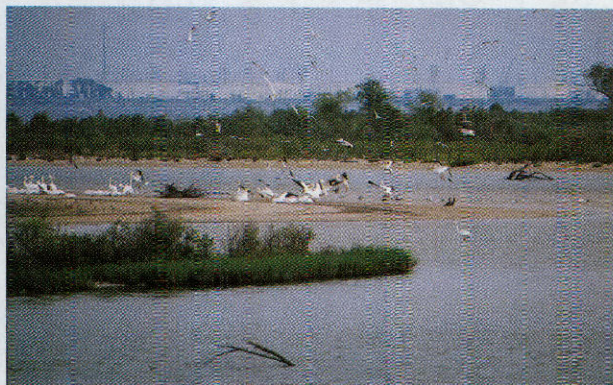
ALONG THE TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL. / BY ROB MCCORKLE

prairies and oak mottes, to the historical heart of the state known as “The Cradle of Liberty.”

Our road trips revolve around three key Texas independence sites, as well as nearby parks and nature refuges, that lend themselves to a day trip or weekend getaway destined to satisfy history buffs and outdoors enthusiasts alike. A visit to any one of these heritage hubs will reward you with insight into the people, the land and the events from Spanish colonial days to Texas’ entry into statehood in 1845, and delight you with the state’s incomparable natural beauty to boot.



"Texas Forever" brings to life the events leading up to the revolution. San Jacinto's marshes are being restored to more accurately depict the land at the time of the battle.



PERHAPS THE BEST PLACE to begin a jaunt through the pages of Texas history is the place where the fight for Texas independence culminated — on a spit of coastal prairie known as San Jacinto. San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, just 20 miles east of Houston, is one of 13 state parks along the Texas Independence Trail. It is here on the grassy prairie, river terrace and marshland where the San Jacinto River meets San Jacinto Bay that General Sam Houston's outnumbered Texian army on April 21, 1835, routed 1,200 Mexican troops under General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. It was this 18-minute battle that gave birth to the Republic of Texas. (This year's reenactment of the Battle of San Jacinto, featuring uniformed Mexican and Texian troops firing muskets and cannons and swinging swords, takes place on Saturday, April 20.)

Head straight for the base of the park's most visible landmark — the 570-foot-tall San Jacinto Monument. This 70-million-pound National Engineering Landmark is built of fossilized Cordova cream shellstone. Yes, everything is bigger in Texas, including this monolith, which stands 15 feet taller than the Washington Monument. For a bird's-eye view of the surrounding battlegrounds, marsh and bay — and on a clear day, the Houston skyline — take the elevator ride 489 feet to the monument's observation deck.

Head back down to the lobby for the must-see slide presentation "Texas Forever!" narrated by Charlton Heston. This engaging presentation covers the establishment of New Spain, Mexico's winning of independence from Spain, Mexican rule, the arrival of Anglo settlers under Stephen F. Austin in what would become Texas, Santa Anna's dictatorship, hostilities leading up to the Texian revolt and the decisive battle itself.

Proceed to the San Jacinto Museum of History, whose col-

lections range from the establishment of New Spain through the Mexican revolution, the Texian insurrection, Battle of San Jacinto and on through statehood and the Civil War era. Artifacts dating from the 1700s include a number of rare items such as Franciscan writings and paintings. Exhibits on Texas heroes Sam Houston, Lorenzo de Zavala, Mirabeau B. Lamar, as well as Santa Anna and others, bring history to life.

Back on the ground, take a drive through the park and note the various markers, rich with description, which help you visualize how the battle played out. Other granite markers note the spots in the uplands, oak mottas and knolls where the Texian troops camped out of view the night before the battle and from where they launched their deadly attack, as well as the location of the Mexican breastworks and encampment in the lowlands backing up to the tidal marshes and mudflats.

This choice of location proved to be Santa Anna's biggest tactical mistake. A planned restoration of the coastal tallgrass prairies will help park visitors better understand how Texans were able to so completely defeat the Mexican forces, many of whom tried to escape by fleeing across what they thought was solid ground, only to be bogged down in the soggy mudflats. The restoration, which will return the landscape to its 1836 look, should be aided by a \$12 million bond issue approved last year by Texas voters.

Some 100 acres of wetlands that have already been restored now attract a host of waders, shorebirds, tern and gull species. Follow the newly completed boardwalk into the restored tidal marsh, and you may catch a glimpse of the roseate spoonbills, reddish egrets, storks, pelicans, falcons and even river otters that now populate the wetlands. In the spring, the park's woodlands and open fields come alive with migrating birds on this designated stop on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

If you haven't had your fill of birding by the time you depart San Jacinto, visit the Baytown Nature Center, a mosaic of uplands and wetlands supporting a diverse wildlife population. A former housing subdivision in Baytown has been converted into this wildlife oasis with two new fishing piers and a butterfly garden.

Serious birders might want to visit Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area, which has been designated by the American Bird Conservancy as one of the nation's top 100 birding spots. Abshier is one of the first places in Texas to experience the spring "fall-out," when exhausted birds plummet from the sky after their migratory crossing of the Gulf of Mexico. In the fall, this is one of the best places in the state to see the southerly migration of raptors. To get there, take the Lynchburg Ferry from San Jacinto and head east on Interstate 10 for about an hour to the other side of Galveston Bay.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Leaving the park, take Texas Highway 105 west toward Brenham, the home of Blue Bell Creameries, and turn right on Farm Road 50. Follow the road until it intersects FM 390 (La Bahía Road) at the 1835 town of Independence, formerly called Cole Settlement, an often overlooked historical gem. The Baptist Church where Sam Houston worshiped and the home and burial vault of his widow, sit at the crossroads of this town.

The most attention-grabbing landmark in Independence is the grouping of four masonry columns perched on a hilltop — the site of Old Baylor (1845), the oldest university in Texas operating under its original name and the one that gave rise to Baylor University and Mary Hardin Baylor University. From atop bluebonnet-specked Old Baylor Hill, gaze south just across the highway, where a private residence marks Houston's original homesite, which includes the original corn crib and water well. Old Baylor Park also includes the John P. Coles Home (circa 1820s), an 1839 dogtrot cabin and the Old Gay Hill School attended by area African Americans from 1890 to 1950.

Campers, boaters, hikers and equestrians can end their Texas history quest with a relaxing visit to nearby Lake Somerville State Park Complex, whose two state parks (Nails Creek and Birch Creek) provide more than 150 campsites and a host of recreational opportunities on the edge of a 11,640-acre reservoir. The 13-mile Somerville Trail, which connects the two parks, caters to horseback riders and also accommodates hikers and cyclists. The park is another prime spot for seeing spring wildflowers.

THE EMERALD-GREEN, wildflower-covered rolling hills of Washington County provide a perfect opportunity to spend a day or two soaking up one of the state's most historic and scenic areas. Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, the "Philadelphias of Texas," commemorates the time in the bone-chilling winter of 1836 when 59 citizen-delegates gathered in the old La Bahía Road settlement overlooking the Brazos River to declare Texas' independence from Mexico.

A handsome limestone, state-of-the-art visitor center anchors the 293-acre park, which includes the old Washington townsite (a drafty frame building called Independence Hall), the Star of the Republic Museum and Barrington Living History Farm. Displays of Republic of Texas memorabilia and artifacts commingle with computerized interactive exhibits to provide insight into the compelling story of the "Founding Fathers of Texas," as well as the republic's various ethnic groups who lived and worked the land in the republic's capital until Texas' annexation in 1846. George Childress, the "Thomas Jefferson of Texas," penned the Texas Declaration of Independence adopted by delegates on March 2, 1836, as Santa Anna's troops laid siege to the Alamo.

Check out the wall map that shows the route of two of the most important early Texas trails — La Bahía Road and El

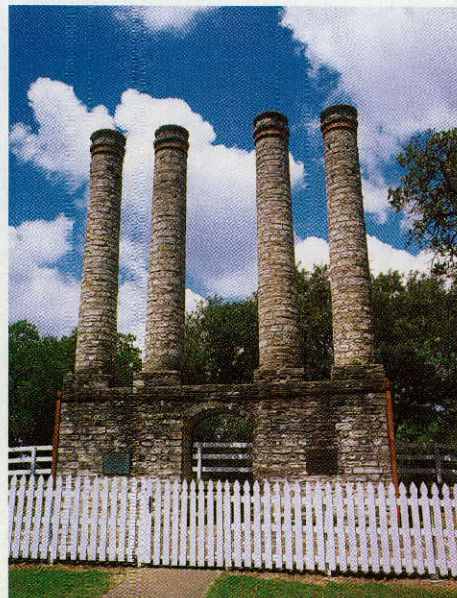
Camino Real. "The Nation's Last President & His Family" exhibit spotlights the life of Anson Jones, who ran an antebellum plantation in the Brazos River Valley in the 1850s, a story portrayed at the Barrington Living History Farm (see "The Forgotten Story," FEBRUARY 2002).

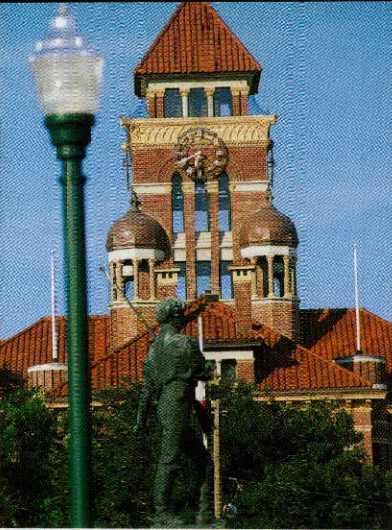
A new interpretive trail leads visitors to the Washington townsite and its "main street" — a grassy path skirting stands of magnolia trees. Take a short walk down the hill to a riverside observation deck marking the spot of the former Brazos River ferry landing. The ferry was established in the 1820s by Andrew Robinson, one of the Old Three Hundred, who were the settlers who received land grants in Stephen F. Austin's first colony in 1821. The park picnic area and children's playground in a pecan grove along the river provide a perfect outdoor setting to enjoy glorious spring weather amid bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, primrose and other wildflowers.

Inside the Star of the Republic Museum is the earliest known surviving Texas flag, currency from the Republic of Texas, a Bowie knife and the only known copy of *The Tarantula*, a Washington newspaper dated Feb. 9, 1942. Children will love taking the wheel of the replica of the Brazos riverboat, *The Yellowstone*, and going for a virtual ride down the river courtesy of a video screen.



A replica of Independence Hall commemorates the site where the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed. The ruins of Old Baylor University are in Independence.





Gonzales boasts a wealth of historical treasures and a springtime blanket of wildflowers.

GONZALES

THE “COME AND TAKE IT” CANNON that fired the first shot for Texas independence. The Immortal 32. The Runaway Scrape. The Sam Houston Oak. “The Lexington of Texas.” The pages of early Texas history resonate with the momentous events that took place in and around the town of Gonzales during Texas’ fight for independence.

Gonzales is an easy day trip from Austin and San Antonio. Here the first shot of the revolution was fired, and 32 men answered Travis’ desperate call for reinforcements at the Alamo. Days later, General Houston was in Gonzales when he received word that the Alamo had fallen, beginning his famous retreat to San Jacinto.

Start with a visit to the battleground on the banks of the lime-green Guadalupe where 13 Gonzales men under Joseph Clements held the ferry and defied the Mexican soldiers’ orders to return a small cannon given to the settlers to defend themselves against Karankawa Indian raids. To reach the site, take U.S. 87 west of Gonzales and proceed six miles to the First Shot of the Texas Revolution monument. Follow the spur about a mile to the river, where a flagpole and small gray granite marker denote the battleground. If you’ve got a canoe or small boat, this is an excellent spot to launch a boat into the lily pad-covered waters. Two small wooden piers provide a perfect fishing perch or a quiet place to reflect on historical events.

True to the Mexican survey of 1832, Gonzales remains the

only town in Texas that retains its original configuration of seven town squares. Just south of the main town plaza is the Old Jail Museum, and around the corner the stately county courthouse faces Texas Heroes Square just across U.S. 183. The smell of the Gonzales Food Market’s smoked barbecue wafting across the square may convince you to postpone the history tour for a while to satisfy more pressing cravings.

What Gonzales city fathers have recognized as the true “Come and Take It” cannon can be viewed at the Gonzales Memorial Museum at 414 Smith St. Curator Mary Arnold can expound on how the cannon came to rest at the museum, as well as point out other interesting memorabilia.

Spring is a good time to combine a tour of Gonzales County wildflower hotspots with tours of some of the town’s many historic residences. Five homes are open to the public during the historic homes tour: the last weekend in April.

Not part of the tour, but open by appointment, is the McLure-Braches Home. Located on County Road 361 about 10 miles east of town just off U.S. 90A (look for the roadside sign for the Sam Houston Oak), this former stage stop and 19th-century Gonzales County social gathering spot on Peach Creek rises like the ghost of Tara from its pastoral setting. A national and state landmark, the home was popularized by Janice Woods Winde in her historical novel *True Women*. This Greek Revival-style mansion (circa 1843), though restored during modern times, is

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Travelers will be delighted to learn that pockets of natural history in Gonzales County remain little changed from the days of Houston, Travis and Crockett. Two very different ecosystems offering various recreational opportunities exist within a short drive from Gonzales.

Palmetto State Park, located on U.S. Highway 183 about 30 miles north of Gonzales, is a Civilian Conservation Corps–built park tucked into a bend of the San Marcos River. Unusual vegetation, such as the park’s namesake fan-bladed palms and anaqua trees, gives this park a tropical feel sure to engage the most jaded naturalist. Birders can hope to spot some of the 240 bird species that have been documented in this riparian refuge, while canoeists will find a new trail that provides all-weather access to the San Marcos River. Canoes and pedal boats are available to rent for use on the park’s oxbow lake. Picnic areas, multi-use campsites, a group camping area and nature trails make this a great stopover on the Texas Independence Trail for the family.

More typical of the area’s flora is the M.O. Neasloney Wildlife Management Area, donated to Texas Parks and Wildlife for use as a wildlife demonstration area and outdoors education facility. Located in the uplands of the post oak savannah, Neasloney WMA is about 20 miles northwest of Gonzales off State Highway 80. It is open by prior arrangement only on weekdays (see sidebar). Recreational opportunities on the 100-acre tract, which includes a one-mile marked nature trail, are limited to wildlife viewing, hiking and wildlife ecology field tours.

According to WMA manager Jeff Bonner, springtime is the right time to visit “...if you like wildflowers and don’t want to have to view them through a vehicle window. We have 118 species of blooming forbs from March through mid-December,” he says. “You name it, it’s here.”

LEFT AND MIDDLE PHOTOS BY J. G. SMITH, TxDOT; RIGHT PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT

unfurnished and retains the raw look and feel of an antebellum prairie home. The upstairs window provides a picture-book view of the fabled Sam Houston Oak roughly 100 yards away, where the leader of the Texian Army is said to have rested during the early morning hours of March 13, 1836, after ordering the burning of Gonzales during the Runaway Scrape. Contact the Gonzales Chamber of Commerce (see sidebar) for a tour.

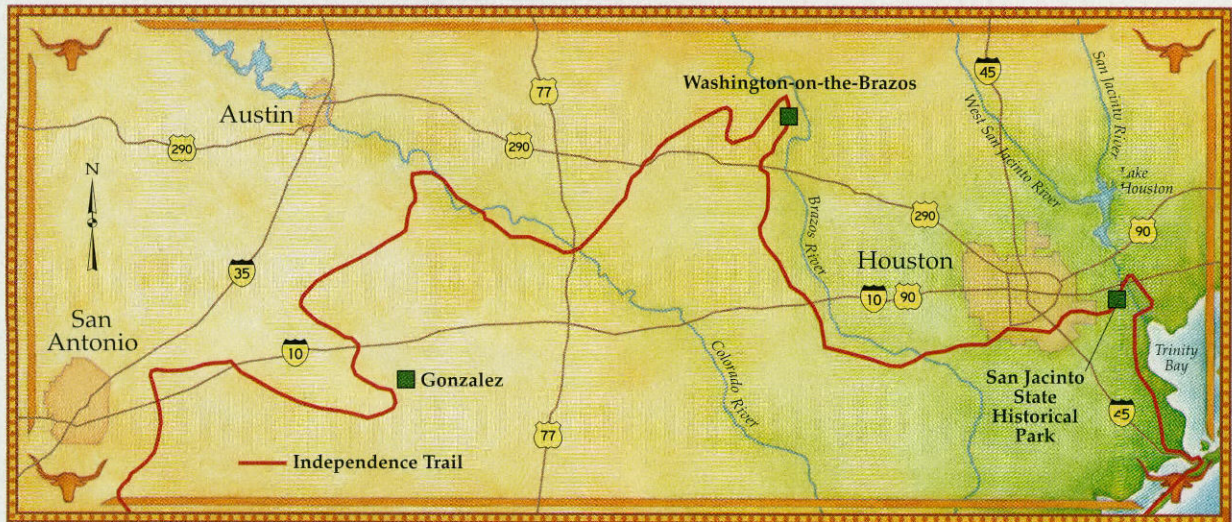
Spice up this year's wildflower-viewing and discover just how Texas came to be by spending a day or a weekend sampling a slice of history along today's paved "trails." ★

ROB McCORKLE is the media relations coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife and writes frequently about Texas state parks and history.

THE TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL

THE TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL Region travel guide is the second in a series being developed by the Texas Historical Commission to celebrate and promote the historical and cultural treasures in 10 trail regions. The Texas Travel Trails Regional Program lies at the heart of the commission's heritage tourism efforts designed to heighten the awareness of the importance of historic and cultural resources to the travel experience.

To learn more about heritage tourism in Texas or to obtain a free Texas Independence Trail Region travel guide, visit the THC Web site: <www.thc.state.tx.us>, or call toll-free (877) 55-TRAIL.



GETTING THERE

THE SAN JACINTO Battleground State Historic Site is 20 miles east of downtown Houston. From Loop 610, take Texas Highway 225 East for eight miles. Exit on Battleground Road and turn left. Admission is free to the park and the San Jacinto Museum of History. Nominal admission fees are charged for the Observation Floor, *Texas Forever!! The Battle of San Jacinto* and the Battleship *Texas*. For more information about San Jacinto Battleground and Battleship *Texas* state historic sites, call (281) 479-2431 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/battleship/>. For information about the San Jacinto Monument and Museum, call (281) 479-2421 or go to <www.sanjacinto-museum.org>.

To reach the Baytown Nature Center, take I-10 East toward Beaumont and take the Spur 330 exit (Decker Drive). Turn right on Bayway, go two miles and turn right on West Shreck. For more information, call (281) 420-7128.

Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area is located at Smith Point. From Houston, take I-10 East to Hankamer, then take Texas 61

south to its intersection with FM 562. Follow FM 562 south 22 miles to Smith Point. The area is open daily. For more information, call (409) 736-2551 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wma/wmarea/abshier.htm>.

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site is off State Highway 105 between Brenham and Navasota. The park is open daily; Barrington Living History Farm is closed Monday and Tuesday. The Star of the Republic Museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For more information, call the park at (936) 878-2214 or go to <www.birthplaceoftexas.com>.

To find out more about Washington County's bluebonnet trails and the other attractions of Washington County, including Independence, contact the chamber of commerce at (888) 273-6426, (979) 836-3695 or go to <www.brenhamtexas.com>. The chamber is at 314 S. Austin St. in downtown Brenham.

Lake Somerville State Park is approximately halfway between Houston and Austin, just north of U.S. Highway 290. The Birch Creek Unit is on the north side of the lake and the Nails Creek Unit is on the west side. For infor-

mation, call (800) 792-1112 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lakesome/>. To reserve campsites call (512) 389-8900 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/parks.htm> and click on "Make Park Reservations."

For information on exploring Gonzales, contact the Gonzales Chamber of Commerce, (888) 672-1095, visit the Web site, <www.gonzalestexas.com> or visit the Old Jail Museum just south of the main town plaza.

Palmetto State Park is located 10 miles northwest of Gonzales off U.S. Highway 183. For information, call the park at (830) 672-3266, the general information number at (800) 792-1112 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/palmetto/>. To reserve campsites call (512) 389-8900 or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/parks.htm> and click on "Make Park Reservations."

M.O. Neasloney WMA is 20 miles northwest of Gonzales just off State Highway 80. The WMA is open by prior arrangement only. Call (830) 424-3407 for more information or go to <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wma/wmarea/neasloney.htm>.

— Garland Levit



LONGBEARDS RETURN TO LONE STAR

WHEN TWO BROTHERS TOOK OVER MANAGEMENT OF THE FAMILY LAND IN THE PINEYWOODS, THE RETURN OF TURKEYS SIGNALLED THEIR SUCCESS.

By Todd H. Votteler

ON MARCH 28, 1997, after years of work and anticipation, I found the first turkey track at our family farm near Lone Star. I crouched down and turned on the video camera. The edges of this track in the middle of the sandy logging road were still sharp, telling me that it was fresh. Years of work had paid off, and the turkeys had returned.

Three years later, turkey hunting was reinstated in Morris County for the first time in more than 50 years. While the return of eastern turkeys and turkey hunting to East Texas began decades before, our little corner of East Texas played a role. In the process, we discovered how landowners can help ensure that turkeys are never again absent from the Pineywoods.

Our work began in 1993, when my brother Tad and I assumed the responsibility for managing 167 acres of land that we call The Farm, a property that has been owned by our family since the 1800s. Most of the land had been cleared by the 1930s. In the late 1960s, the fallow farm was planted in loblolly pines. Today the rolling hills are populated with a mixture of mature and sapling pines, with sweetgum, swamp tupelo and red, white and water oak in the bottoms along a sandy creek. The property is bisected by a wide powerline right-of-way.

When Tad and I took over management of the property, we decided to do so sustainably and for multiple uses. First, we decided that the remaining valuable natural amenities of the

property would be preserved and, when possible, expanded and enhanced. Second, our land would continue to provide a source of income to our family. And finally, we wanted our property to serve as an example to local landowners of how the wise management of natural resources can yield a profit while preserving the natural characteristics of the land.

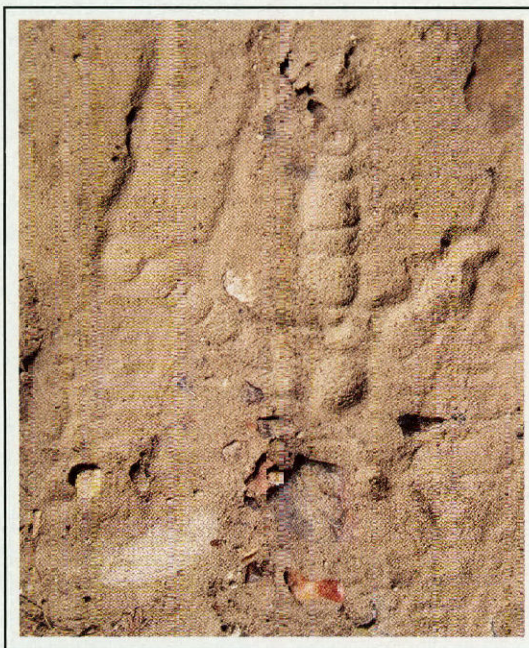
We were motivated in part by the knowledge that nearly 70 percent of the continental United States is privately owned, and

more than 900 million acres of this private land is cropland, pastureland or rangeland, which is managed by less than 2 percent of the population. In Texas, more than 90 percent of the land is privately owned. For these reasons, we believe that it is important for us to actively manage our land. We are guided by the ideas of Aldo Leopold (a pioneer in the science of game management and a leader in conservation philosophy) embodied in this quote:

The central thesis of Game Management is this: game can be restored by the creative use of the same tools which have heretofore destroyed it — axe, plow, cow, fire, and gun.

Aldo Leopold, *Game Management*, 1933

One of our first major decisions was to preserve the remaining natural habitat on the tract. Some 60 acres of mixed mature hardwoods and pines had been left alone for about 50 years. We regularly received unsolicited requests from independent loggers to cut this timber. Tad and I realized that the value of this habitat could be greatly enhanced by linking it to the wildlife openings (cleared areas where we planted food plots)



LEFT PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT; RIGHT PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN

MAKING TURKEY TRACTS

BROOD HABITAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LIMITING FACTOR in wild turkey populations. Wildlife openings can make good brood habitat. Some experts recommend three to five acres of wildlife openings for every 100 acres, ranging in size from one-half acre to 10 acres. The openings should be distributed throughout the property. Long, linear and, if possible, irregular shapes are better than square openings, because the edge effect is enhanced by shapes that have the most area where two or more habitat types are in contact. Roads and utility rights-of-way make ideal preexisting openings. Openings should be established where insect production is high; for example, near wetlands and streams.

Fire has always been a natural and extremely important factor in the development of forests in North America. Before the arrival of humans, fires were started primarily by lightning. Fire influences many factors, including the accumulation of dead leaves and twigs and other plant material called litter, the genetic adaptation of plants, plant diversity, and the presence and abundance of forest insects, parasites and fungi. Many native plants have evolved with fire and respond well after controlled burns. Fire increases the quantity and quality of food for wildlife because the new plant growth that sprouts after the fire is preferred by turkeys, deer and other animals.

Burned areas can also be rich in insects. Controlled burns are commonly used in Southeastern pine forests to open the ground level, or understory, by eliminating thick ground cover that can hide predators and make travel difficult for turkey poults. Fire also encourages the growth of grasses and forbs, which turkeys need. The long growing season in the South provides ideal conditions for the growth of tree and shrub growth in the understory, making periodic controlled burns very important.

The fragmentation of rural Texas lands into smaller and smaller tracts is a huge problem for wildlife managers. From 1982 to 1997, 2.6 million acres were converted from rural land to urban land. Fragmentation has been greatest in East Texas.

"In addition to habitat degradation, habitat fragmentation is the single most important factor impacting many wildlife species at the local state and national level," says John Burk, Turkey Program leader for TPW. "Species with large home ranges, such as turkeys, are especially impacted by fragmentation. Population declines and eventual extirpation are the end result of fragmentation as it impacts wild turkeys."

and habitats found elsewhere on the property. To preserve and enhance this linkage, we established streamside management zones, or SMZs, along our creek. SMZs are buffers along waterways where the trees are not harvested. This helps protect the quality of the stream by preventing soil and debris from entering the waterway. SMZs are also important for numerous species of wildlife, including turkeys, which like to roost in trees over water at night.

We introduced fire through the use of controlled burns, which can enhance the plant diversity that benefits wildlife and reduce the risk of wildfire by consuming excess vegetation without harming mature trees. Turkeys like to feed in areas that have recently been burned. In 1993, we burned a total of 104 acres. Prior to burning, fire breaks were plowed around the burn area, and water bars (humps across the dirt roads) were installed to reduce erosion after the burn.

One of the most important projects we undertook was the enhancement of wildlife openings — cleared areas where forbs and brush could grow. We planted a variety of plants in the clearings to provide food for turkeys at various times throughout the year. We seeded roadways with crimson clover and rye grass to further reduce erosion and serve as green fire breaks. Clover and rye grass produce large amounts of seed that attract insects needed by poults, and mature turkeys can eat both seeds and insects.

Food plots for turkeys and white-tailed deer were planted along the powerline right-of-way to make use of the manmade wildlife opening. Our plant of choice was chufa, a variety of nutsedge that is now a widely planted perennial for wildlife across the South. It produces underground tubers relished by turkeys. Turkeys feed on chufa from fall until it is gone, usually by early spring. Deer, hogs and raccoons covet chufa as well.

Our stands of loblolly pine were varied in age through multiple plantings to reduce their vulnerability to the southern pine beetle and to increase their value as wildlife habitat. Unevenaged stands of pine (planted with trees of different ages)

interspersed with SMZs provide a greater diversity of habitat for wildlife than large uninterrupted stands of evenaged pines.

As part of our efforts we enrolled The Farm in the Texas Forest Service's Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) in 1992 with the help of Michael Murphrey, who is the Conservation Education Forester for the TFS. The Farm became the first SIP tract in the Pittsburg District of the TFS. A forester with TFS comes out to your property, walks it with you and makes recommendations for hardwood planting, wildlife food plots and streamside management zones. The TFS also can assist in obtaining contractors to perform the services.

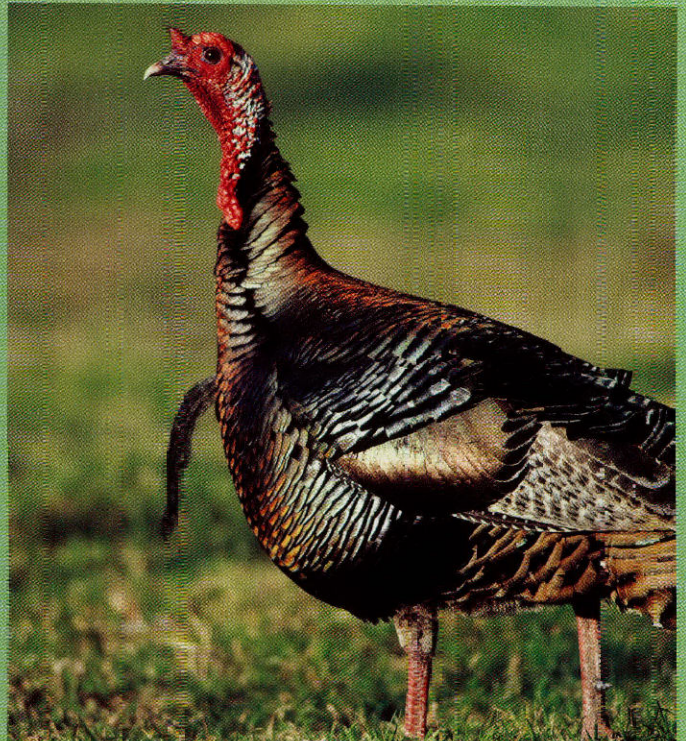
Before we began to prepare The Farm to host eastern turkeys, Texas Parks and Wildlife had attempted to transplant Rio Grande turkeys to East Texas. Rio Grandes are plentiful in the western half of Texas, and once flourished in East Texas. However, the effort to establish Rio Grandes in East Texas failed. John Burk, Turkey Program leader for TPW, notes that Rio Grande turkeys do best in areas that receive 18 to 35 inches of rainfall annually; East Texas gets 50 to 70 inches. Burk theorizes that Rio Grande hens nest near water, while eastern turkey hens nest in upland habitats. For this reason, transplanted Rio Grande turkeys may lose their nests when East Texas riparian areas flood.

Once TPW realized that eastern turkeys were needed to repopulate East Texas, turkeys were acquired through the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTFF) Target 2000 Program. Target 2000 was created for states like Texas that had large areas of suitable habitat, but no broodstock source to trap from and no species of wildlife to trade. Receiving states pay donor states the average annual cost of trapping and transferring turkeys or a replacement fee. Eastern turkeys are difficult to capture, so the average reimbursement to other states was \$525 per turkey. Broodstock turkeys were imported from Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin. The majority of the birds came from Iowa,



PHOTO © GRANT ALLEN

THE FRAGMENTATION OF LARGE, CONTIGUOUS TRACKS OF LAND INTO SMALLER DEVELOPED PARCELS IS A DETRIMENT TO TURKEY REINTRODUCTION.



IN THE SPRING OF 2000, TURKEY HUNTING WAS REINSTATED IN MORRIS COUNTY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MORE THAN 50 YEARS.

where it was easier to trap the turkeys in deep snow when they concentrated in large, vulnerable numbers near bait. More than 7,200 easterns were released in East Texas through Target 2000.

The closest eastern turkey release sites to The Farm were the bottoms in Camp County, Simpson Lake in the southwest corner of Cass County and the New Mountain release site in northeastern Upshur County. The first two release sites were about five miles from The Farm to the northwest and east, and the last site was about eight miles to the southwest. According to Burk, "All of these releases were completed five to 10 years ago, and subsequent reproduction and population expansion resulting from the original releases throughout East Texas will be sufficient to fill all available habitats.

"To have been considered a legitimate eastern turkey restoration release site, a property or group of properties needed to contain 5,000 acres of suitable eastern turkey habitat," he continues. "We have seen some preliminary evidence from an ongoing Rio Grande turkey study in the Edwards Plateau that the actual minimum acreage needed by turkeys may be much larger than 5,000 acres."

For this reason, the fragmentation of large, contiguous tracks of land into smaller developed parcels is a detriment to turkey reintroduction. Tad and I are hoping to put the profits from our timber sales into acquiring adjoining tracts with high habitat value to slow the land fragmentation trend in our own way.

"The future of the eastern turkey program in East Texas is in the hands of landowners," says Burk. "Turkeys must have mature timber throughout the year and knee-high grasses and weeds from April through June, or they cannot survive. Where responsible land management allows these components to exist on a larger scale, you will find turkeys. Where either of these

components have been removed, you will find none. There are healthy populations of turkeys in almost every one of the 57 counties stocked, but the best areas are along the Red River." Excellent turkey habitat in East Texas is also located on U.S. Forest Service lands, much of which is open to hunting.

Over the last 10 years, TPW and TFS have assisted Tad and me in realizing our goals. The land and wildlife have responded to the changes we made. Native plants are returning in the burned areas. Wood ducks are using nesting boxes placed at the pond. For several winters now a pair of bald eagles has returned to roost over the pond. Beavers have returned and have been creating new wetlands, sometimes to our chagrin.

While turkeys have returned, their numbers have a way to go before there are enough on our land to hunt, and a long way to go before they rival the populations that once occupied East Texas, as described in the following historical account from *Land of Bears and Honey* by Joe Truett and Daniel Lay:

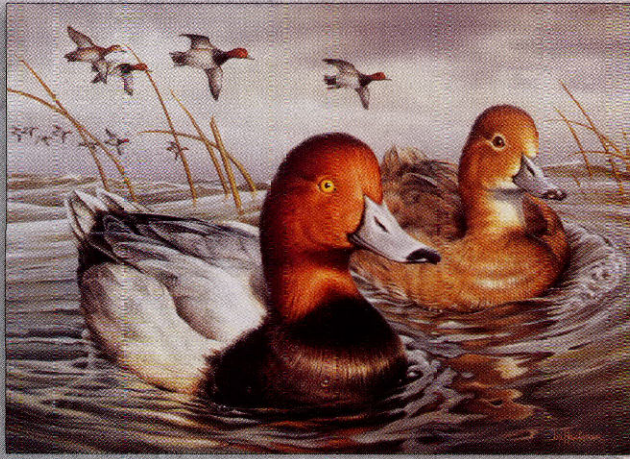
Turkeys swarmed over the countryside. Fray Juan Agustin Morin, a Spanish missionary to the East Texas Indians, left an account of them in the early 1700s: "Along the banks of the streams and the outskirts of the woods the droves of wild turkeys are so numerous that they disturb the traveler with their clucking."

In the 1830s in Jasper County, Sol Wright's grandfather "put bells on the horses and turned them out at night to graze, and in the spring, in turkey gobbling time, when he would go out in the early morning to drive them in, he could hardly hear the bells for the turkeys gobbling." ★

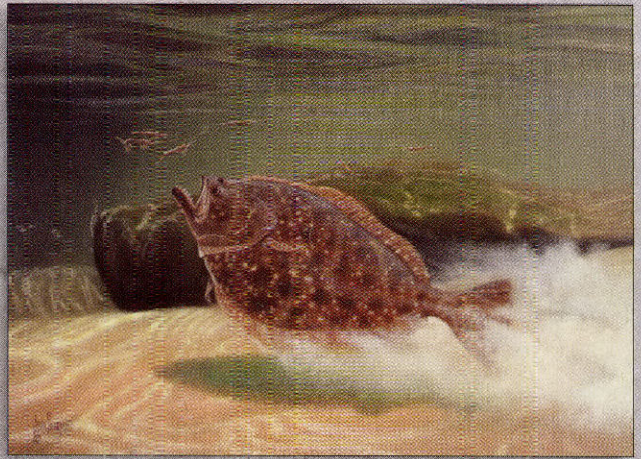
TODD VOTTELER was bitten by the turkey hunting bug in the spring of 1989, while sitting in the crown of a large live oak in Schleicher County near the San Saba River.



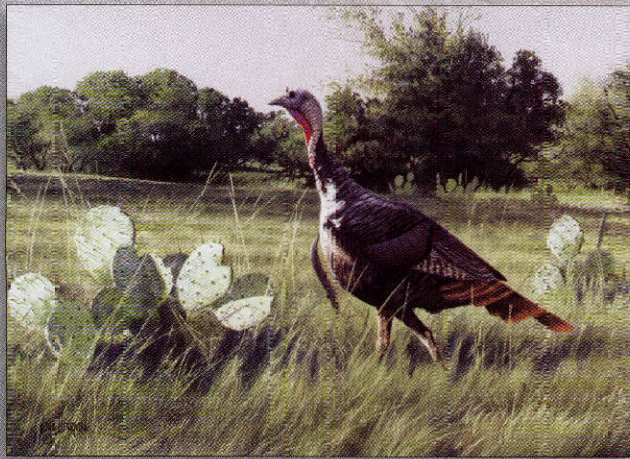
2002 STAMP PRINTS



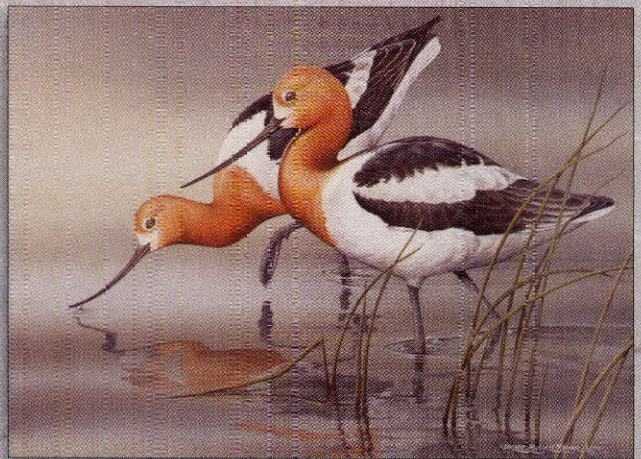
Texas Waterfowl Stamp Print by Joe Hartman



Texas Saltwater Stamp Print by John Dearman



Texas Turkey Stamp Print by John Dearman



Texas Nongame Stamp Print by Sherri Russell Meline



Texas Quail Stamp Print by Eldridge Harvie

Since the inception of the popular Texas Waterfowl Stamp & Print Program in 1981, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department—for their continuing conservation efforts—has received over \$6.5 million in print royalties and related stamp sales, making it the clear leader among conservation art programs in the country. The outstanding success of this program is a tribute to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, as well as the hunters, fishermen, and art collectors who support it.

Sales of the Texas Quail Stamp Print (left) benefit Quail Unlimited, an organization dedicated to quail research and conservation.

Signed and Numbered Print . . . \$145
Accompanying Stamp \$3
Image Size 6 1/2" x 9"
Overall Size 12 1/2" x 14"

Signed and Numbered Print . . . \$145
Accompanying Stamp \$5
Image Size 6 1/2" x 9"
Overall Size 12 1/2" x 14"

2002 TEXAS STAMP DEALERS

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 1779 Wells Branch Pkwy
 #110-B P.O. Box 330 78728
 512-458-63-3 800-34 DUCKS
 www.focal-point.net

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 Lone Star Gallery
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 361-993-7921
 www.lonestargallery.com
 Frame Factory & Gallery
 30 Parkdale Plaza 78411
 361-851-0062

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 www.friendswoodframe.com

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 www.thegalleryatmidlane.com

Fakco, Ltd.
 11555 Northwestway, Suite 148 77092
 713-686-2039

The Kipling Company
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 Sory Sloan's Wildlife Art Gallery
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 361-729-1967

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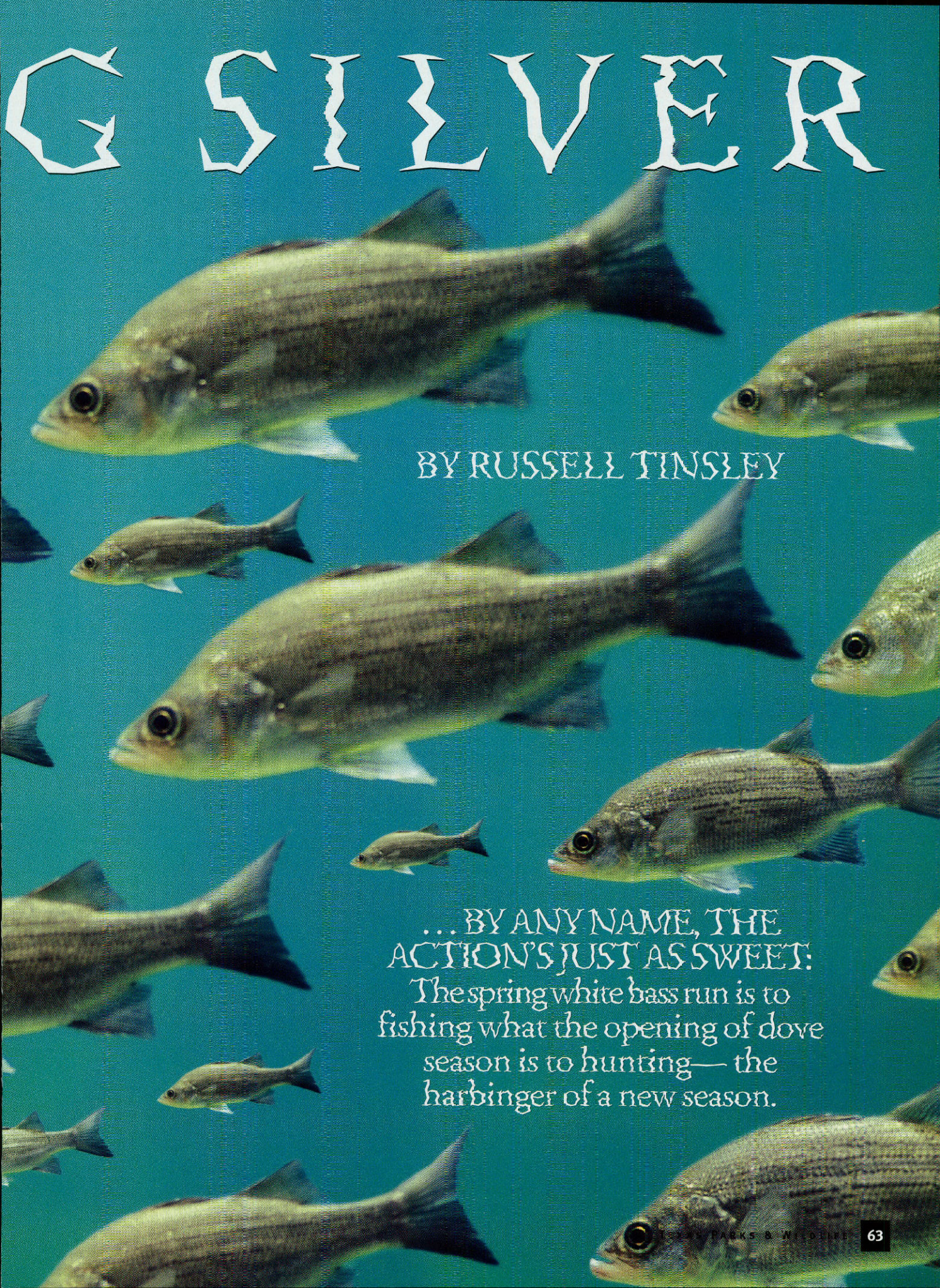
STRIKING

CALL 'EM WHITE BASS

CALL 'EM SANDIES

CALL 'EM SAND BASS...

G SILVER

A school of white bass swimming in clear blue water. The fish are shown in various sizes and orientations, creating a sense of movement and depth. The water is a vibrant, clear blue, and the fish have a silvery, striped appearance.

BY RUSSELL TINSLEY

... BY ANY NAME, THE
ACTION'S JUST AS SWEET:
The spring white bass run is to
fishing what the opening of dove
season is to hunting—the
harbinger of a new season.

The line of anglers arcs across the Colorado River in a horseshoe curve, looking like a living dam straining to hold back the flood of white bass swimming upstream to spawn.

STILL, THE FISHERS ARE LOSING THE BATTLE — badly — even though they are hauling in fish, sometimes two at a time. Fish stream past, even swimming between anglers' legs, driven by an ancient urge to reproduce. This abundance attracts a loyal following among anglers. In the days before limits, it was not unusual to see an angler dragging a stringer holding 50 or more white bass. Only a fraction of these, as far as the typical fisherman was concerned, ever got cleaned or made it to the skillet. The angler ran out of want-to before the cleaning job was finished. There was much waste along with pressure applied to the fishery.

Thanks to a change of attitude, white bass are now regulated like any other game fish. Statewide there is a minimum 10-inch legal length (12 inches in a few places), and the creel limit is a generous 25 fish per day.

THE FISH FOR THE REST OF US

If the largemouth bass could be called the luxury car of the fishing world, requiring a heavy investment of time and money, the white bass could be called the economy car. Fishing for white bass requires no expensive tackle and, during the spring run, some of the best fishing spots are accessible from the bank.

White bass are native to the central United States, including the Red River drainage. Thanks to stocking, they can now be found in Central Texas lakes and tributary streams from Canyon Lake to Lake Whitney, from Lake Somerville to Lake Buchanan. The popularity of white bass fishing is not damaged at all by the fact that fishers pursue them amid some of the state's prettiest scenery.

Of the three temperate basses found in Central Texas (white, striped and hybrid striped), only white bass reproduce in significant numbers. While white bass look somewhat like their cousins, they are easily distinguished from stripers and hybrids by the fact that white bass have only one tooth patch on the back of the tongue, while the others have two. In addition, white bass have only one stripe running along the side all the way to the tail, while the others have several. White bass bear several local nicknames, sand bass or sandies being the most common, but just follow the "rule of one" — one tooth patch, one stripe to the tail — and you can easily identify white bass.

Few white bass see their fifth birthday, and in fact, overharvest of sexually immature females in years past may have contributed to a decline in numbers. White bass grow rapidly, and females often reach harvestable size — and wind up on the dinner table — before reproducing. Therefore, in 1995 Texas Parks and Wildlife changed the minimum legal length from 10 inches to 12 inches on a number of lakes in order to allow the females to mature and reproduce.

FINDING SANDIES

Just as it was three decades ago, before length and creel limits were imposed to protect the resource, the supreme spawning

run is in the Colorado River above Lake Buchanan, the river stretch where Colorado Bend State Park is located now. (It was called Lemon's Camp before becoming a state park.) Of all the places I've fished the white bass run, this stretch of river is my favorite. It has the best mix of access, scenery, variety of waters and number of fish. (Strong spring runs of white bass also occur in streams feeding lakes Canyon, Georgetown, Granger, Limestone, Lyndon B. Johnson, Somerville, Travis, Waco, Whitney and Buchanan.)

Colorado Bend State Park marks the junction where the back-water of the lake meets the moderately flowing river. Some fishers come from Lake Buchanan via boat, but the trip is impractical. It is easier to drive to the park, which is halfway between Lampasas and San Saba on Ranch Road 580. Just follow signs to the park entrance; from there, you must walk to the fishing water. This is a primitive park with few facilities. For me, that is the charm of the place.

By March the whites will have worked their way from the lake up into the river, and they will also be accessible from Sulphur Springs Camp, a privately owned facility upstream of the state park. A dirt road parallels the river for most of the four-mile-long property, and this is productive water once the fish get up this far. Bring waders; you'll need them. Also bring a change of clothes. This is pay-attention wading on an uneven, rocky bottom, and a spill at some point during the day is likely.

The last access is Barefoot Camp, above Sulphur Springs. If water flow is adequate, there will be white bass on the run up this far by the time April shows on the calendar.

Private property blocks land access to fishing holes on some streams, such as the long stretch of the Trinity River above Lake Livingston and the east fork of the Trinity, which feeds Lake Ray Hubbard near Dallas. However, boat ramps on these lakes make it possible for boaters to reach the best areas.

One of the keys to successful fishing is to keep in contact with the pin-striped nomads as they make their way upstream. They will be here today and gone tomorrow until they wind up on the spawning grounds. If you see several fishers working a short stretch, this is a pretty good indication that they are into fish. If you join the bunch, mind your manners. Others were here first.

SANDIES ON THE MOVE

The key to successful white bass fishing lies in understanding their habits. Most of a white bass' year is spent roaming the open waters of a reservoir in search of food. White bass prefer larger bodies of water with sand flats (whence the fish got their common nicknames, sand bass or sandies). In late winter and early spring, though, there is a temporary change of routine. The fish migrate out of lakes into tributaries to spawn. In the case of streams that have been dammed, the fish congregate below dams or even over submerged islands and wind-blown points. The timing of peak concentrations will vary, depending on the part of the state. There is about a month between spawning



Any reservoir with a white bass population will have a spawning run of some intensity. You'll find fish in the same places at about the same time.

FOOLING FISH WITH FLIES

IF RAKING IN WHITE BASS two at a time with rod and reel is no longer a challenge enough for you, consider fly fishing. "Fly fishing rivers for white bass can be very productive when the fish are on their spawning run," says veteran fly fisher Joe Robinson, co-founder of The Austin Angler fly fishing store. His fishing hole of choice is the Colorado River above Lake Buchanan.

Robinson pioneered fly fishing for white bass. Although he no longer owns the store, he continues to teach fly fishing. The fundamentals are the same as fishing minuscule jigs with spinning gear, particularly when the water temperature rises above 60 degrees and the whites are in water two to four feet

deep. "To get action," Robinson says, "you might need a sinking or sink-tip line to complement floating line. White bass feed on or near the bottom in a river, and unless you can get a bait down to them, you are wasting time. Since the bass feed primarily on small river minnows, the most effective lure is a minnow imitation or a streamer in a hook size 6 through 12. It is important that the patterns be tied on hooks with snag guards, or tied so they run hook up in jig fashion; otherwise, you will be hanging constantly on the rocky bottom and losing flies."

While rods designed to cast 4- through 7-weight lines can be used, Robinson recommends a 6- or 7-weight as a more practical choice. "The wind can blow strong through

this canyon area," he points out.

TRACKING WHITE BASS

Most stream-fed reservoirs in Texas will have a spring white bass run into tributaries feeding the lake. You can check the status of the run for specific lakes all over the state by accessing the TPW weekly fishing report at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/fish.htm. For more information on white bass see www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish/species/wtb/wtb.htm.

For information tailored for fly fishers, check out *Flyfisher's Guide to Texas* by Phil Shoak (\$26.95, Wilderness Adventures Press, (800) 925-3339, www.wildadvc.com).

activity in Choke Canyon Reservoir in South Texas and in the lakes near the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

Actually, there are two white bass spawning runs. The first is the appearance of smallish males on the spawning grounds. Then about a month later comes the true run, when the females rendezvous with the males. For mating, they seek out the strongest current to suspend the eggs. If the river flow is inadequate, the whites will instead depend on the tailrace of a dam or wind action over a submerged island. Unlike black bass, whites do not build nests or protect their eggs. After being released, the eggs drift until they cling to vegetation or rocks and eventually hatch or die. The progeny produced get no protection.

I've been fishing the white bass run, at one place or another, for more than 30 years. The runs of today can't compare to the old days, the primary reason being inadequate water flows resulting from a combination of droughts and human manipulation of river flows. Rivers reduced to trickles, erratic releases of water through dams, and capricious winds don't provide the stable conditions needed for the fish to spawn consistently.

FISHING SMART

While there are not as many fish making the upstream pilgrimage, there are more than enough to satisfy demand. However, a high number of hungry fish packed into a small area doesn't make them a cinch to catch. As with other types of fishing, you have to know what you are doing.

First, fish in the right place. Any reservoir with a white bass population will have a spawning run of some intensity. These spots are pretty well-known, and any local bait shop will have this information. The calendar won't vary much over the years; you'll find fish in the same places at about the same time.

Second, think small. When whites move from the lake into a tributary, their dietary habits change. Shad make up the basic diet most of the year. But when the bass are in the rivers, the basic forage shifts to mostly river minnows and some crawfish, which are small. And the most effective bait, natural or artificial, is one that matches this diminutive size.

GEAR DOWN FOR SAND BASS

Most white bass fishers use spinning tackle. Floyd Clearman lives on the Pedernales arm of Lake Travis. "I've been fishing the white bass run for more than 40 years, and the most common mistake I've seen is using tackle too large," he says. "I fish a medium-sized reel on a light-action rod with four-pound-test line and a 1/8-ounce white bucktail jig. I never change color." Water clarity in the Pedernales is outstanding most of the time, and the light line definitely makes a difference. The jig usually produces best when there is a slight murkiness. When the water is spigot-clear, a live minnow seined from the same stretch of river you'll be prospecting is the better bait. These wild bait fish definitely are superior to store-bought minnows.

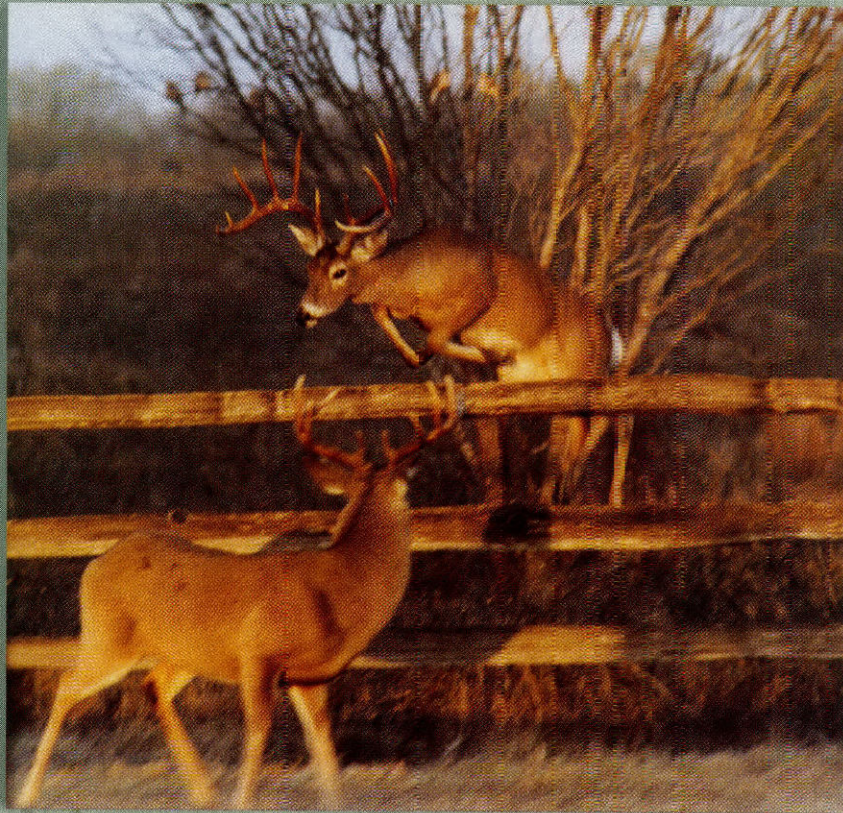
Fishing these lightweight baits can be tricky. Since whites in a river tend to feed on or near the bottom, you need to put a bait down with them. Minnows and even jigs are sometimes suspended by floats to keep them from snagging in bottom rocks. I prefer to fish sans a float so I can keep a jig right near the bottom in the most productive water. With larger-diameter monofilament it is more difficult to get the bait down and keep it down. Clearman prefers to wade and fish where he can get the bait at the proper depth. "I like to cast upstream into pockets of water — not right in the current — and let the jig sink and reel it back slowly. If you feel it bumping the bottom now and again, you are fishing the right places," he says.

If a 1/8-ounce jig is not working, go to a smaller 1/16- or even 1/32-ounce weight. White is the standard color, but other pale shades such as light blue, yellow and chartreuse also produce. Some fishers prefer the combination of a light-colored body and a dark head. "I like the combination of a chartreuse body and a black or orange head," says Johnny Procell, who guides on Ray Hubbard and some other reservoirs in the Metroplex. Size seems to be more crucial than color. If you have a problem with casting a crappie jig and getting the artificial near the bottom, try fishing a pair of jigs in tandem. You not only get the benefit of twice the weight, but if active fish are feeding, you sometimes will catch them two at a time.

As the buds on trees begin to swell and the days grow longer and warmer, a white bass fishing trip is the perfect way to begin the fishing season. ★



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Bird Man of Texas

Edgar Kincaid shared his passion for ornithology — and launched a generation of career birders.

By Suzanne Winckler

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUZANNE WINCKLER

Birding friends

often compared Edgar B. Kincaid, Jr., to the reddish egret. Tall, thin and nervous, he bore a striking resemblance to the lanky, jumpy coastal bird. Even Edgar's hair — an unruly silvery shock through which he frequently ran his hands — called to mind the flailing plumes of the egret's crest.

This man of odd behaviors and high passions was, from the early 1940s until his death in 1985, the Don Quixote of Texas birding. Years before conservationists like Rachel Carson sounded the alarm about environmental degradation, Kincaid voiced concerns about habitat destruction. He was chivalrous, dignified, eccentric and generous to a fault. His passion for birds was a gift he gave to others, and many of the young acolyte-birders he took under his wing have translated that passion into careers.

Wildlife artist Nancy McGowan credits Kincaid with instilling in her the importance of painting birds in their native habitats. The founders of two successful bird touring companies, Victor Emanuel (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours) and Rose Ann Rowlett and her brother John (Field Guides, Inc.), grew up birding with Edgar, who tutored them in the nuances of field identification.

"Edgar left us with many serious lessons, for instance about birding technique and the consequences of habitat loss," says David Braun, former director of the Nature Conservancy. "But it was his sheer enthusiasm for birds that affected me the most. I still feel a rush of excitement when I get a great look at even a common bird."

Of the many legacies Edgar Kincaid bequeathed to Texas birding and ornithology, the heftiest is *The Bird Life of Texas*, a two-volume, 10-pound masterpiece he spent 11 years editing. A project begun in the early 1900s by Harry Church Oberholser, the text had burgeoned to an unwieldy 3 million words by the time its obsessive author died in 1963.

Frank Wardlaw, then editor-in-chief of the University of Texas Press, implored Edgar to whittle the manuscript down to a manageable size, perhaps not realizing he was placing the bulky tome into the hands of an equally compulsive bird person. The brittle, yellowing pages of Oberholser's text were stored in orange boxes that occupied about six feet of shelving in the bookcase in Edgar's office at the press. Slowly but surely, and with the sup-

ported over the years from Texas to birders across the country. It is a wonderfully tribal tradition that gives each namesake a larger sense of self and a certain franchise to the clan of the wild world. Edgar may have resembled the reddish egret, but with his global knowledge of birds, he had in mind an even more appropriate totem, and so he christened himself the cassowary. It is a very tall (four to six feet), solitary, flightless bird of Australia and New Guinea — known for occasional displays of orneriness. ★

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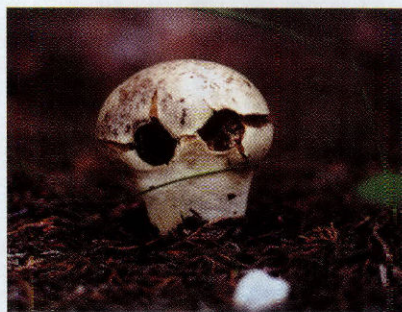
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MAIL CALL

Continued from page 10

What a great low-tech solution! No drain lines, plumbing problems, pollution or water woes. I would think YOU readers, who should care more than most that waters in streams remain pure, might be quite interested in such a device.

*Jack B. Kellam
Zellwood, Fla*



Spooky 'Shroom

On a family RV camping trip to Ray Roberts Lake State Park's Johnson Branch last June, I discovered what I thought was an animal skull as I was scouring the woods for photo opportunities. Not until I crept close enough to touch it did it occur to me that it was some sort of 'mushroom!

Here is a photograph of my find. Without pictures, who could believe how lifelike — or should I say deathlike? — this fungus appeared to be.

*Jeff E. Horne
Plano*

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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



The Front Line of News and Views

TELEVISION

Look for These Stories in the Coming Weeks:

March 31 – April 7:

Exploring the coral reefs in the Gulf of Mexico; Big Bend springs; a songbird sanctuary; Martha Daniels cooks skillet squirrel.

April 7 – 14:

Hallie Stillwell, who operated one of the largest, most successful ranches in the Big Bend; the white-tailed deer.

April 14 – 21:

The kingfisher; Houston's waterways; sea turtles stunned by the cold; managing Galveston Bay; birding at the garbage dump; glazed pecans.

April 21 – 28:

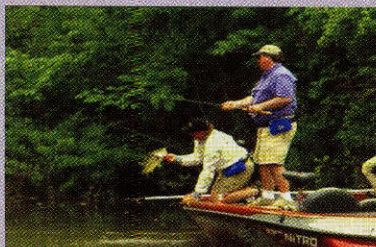
A day in the life of a fishing guide; the vanishing Houston toad; water conservation; Sea Center volunteer Clarence Porse; the Rio Grande turkey.

April 28 – May 5:

The endangered Attwater's prairie chicken; Spanish missions in Texas; the Sport Fish Restoration Act; coastal birds; Martha Daniels cooks Caribbean snow goose.

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- Austin:** KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 10 a.m. / Mon. 12:30 p.m. - KLRU-TOO, Cable Ch. 20 / Tues. 11 p.m.
- Bryan-College Station:** KAMU, Ch. 15 / Thurs. 7 p.m. / Sun. 5 p.m.
- Corpus Christi:** KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m. / Thurs. 11:30 p.m.
- El Paso:** KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 5 p.m.
- Dallas-Fort Worth:** KERA, Ch. 13 / Fri. 1:30 p.m. Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman
- Harlingen:** KMEH, Ch. 60 / Thurs. 8:30 p.m. Also serving McAllen, Mission, Brownsville
- Houston:** KUHT, Ch. 8 / Sun. 5 p.m. / Fri. 1 p.m. Also serving Beaumont/Port Arthur, Galveston, Texas City, Victoria
- Killeen:** KNCT, Ch. 46 / Sun. 5 p.m. Also serving Temple
- Lubbock:** KTXT, Ch. 5 / Sat. 6:30 p.m.
- Odessa-Midland:** KOCV, Ch. 36 / Sat. 5 p.m.
- Portales, N.M.:** KENW, Ch. 3 / Sun. 2 p.m. Also serving West Texas/Panhandle area
- San Antonio & Laredo:** KLRN, Ch. 9 / Thur. noon
- Waco:** KWBU, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3 p.m.

Check local listings. Times and dates are subject to change, especially during PBS membership drives.

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- Alpine:** KSRC-FM 92.7 / Thurs. - Sat. 9 p.m.
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- Bridgeport:** KBOC-FM 98.3 / 8:15 a.m. & 5:15 p.m.
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- Canton:** KVCI-AM 1510 / 6:40 a.m.
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SIGHTS & SOUNDS

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Columbus: KULM-FM 98.3 / 7:20 a.m., KNRG-FM 92.3 / 7:20 a.m.
Comanche: KCOM-AM 1550 / 6:30 a.m.
Commerce: KETR-FM 88.9 / 10:15 a.m.
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Dimmitt: KDHN-AM 1470 / 12:31 p.m.
Dumas: KDDD-FM 95.3 / 10:30 a.m., KDDD-AM 800 / 10:30 a.m.
Eagle Pass: KINL-FM 92.7 / 7:15 a.m.
Eastland: KEAS-AM 1590 / 5:51 a.m. & 5:51 p.m., KATX-FM 97.7 / 5:51 a.m. & 5:51 p.m.
Edna: KGUL-FM 96.1 / 6:50 a.m.
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Harlingen: KMBH-FM 88.9 / 4:58 p.m.
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Lampasas: KCYL-AM 1450 / 7:10 a.m., KACQ-FM 101.9 / 7:10 a.m.
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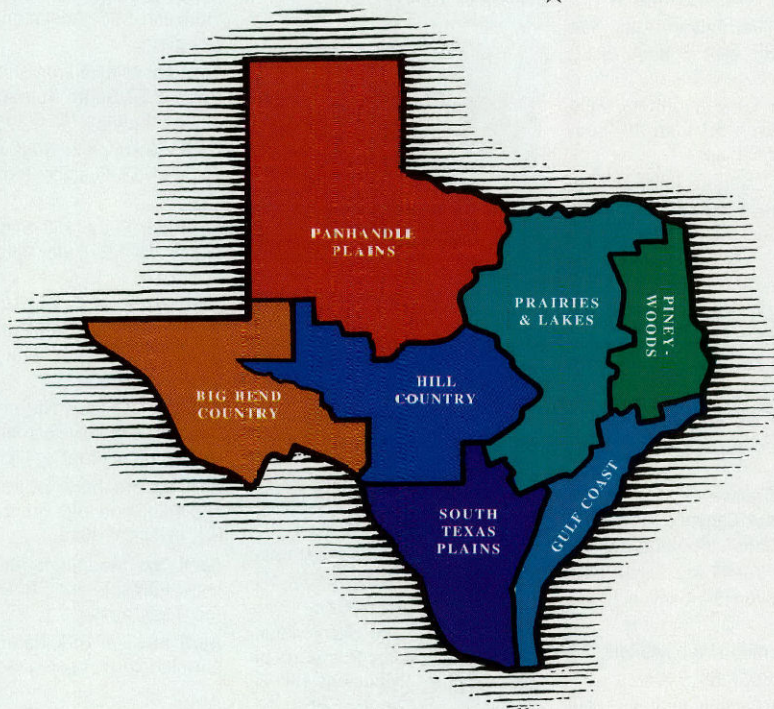
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- Mission Chamber of Commerce, pg. 23,** (800) 580-2700, www.missionchamber.com
- Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce Tourist and Convention Bureau, pg. 23,** (800) 45-COAST, www.portaransas.org
- Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau, pg. 22,** (800) 235-7822, www.portarthurtexas.com
- Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce, pg. 22,** (800) 826-6441, www.rockport-fulton.org
- Simpson Optics, pg. 9,** (888) 303-4425, www.simpsonoptics.com
- Spin-Cast Wildlife Feeders, pg. 79,** (800) 950-7087, www.spincastfeeders.com
- Southwest Texas Land Bank, pg. 67** (800) 663-2846, www.swtaca.com
- Swarovski Optik, pg. 7,** www.swarovskioptic.com
- Texas Hill Country River Region, pg. 23,** (800) 210-0380, www.thcrr.com
- Zeiss, pg. 41,** www.zeiss.com
- Weslaco Area Chamber of Commerce, pg. 22,** (888) 968-2102, www.weslaco.com

GETAWAYS

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BIG BEND COUNTRY

April: Fate Bell Cave Dwelling Tour, every Wednesday through Sunday, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, (915) 292-4464.

April: White Shaman Tour, every Saturday, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, (888) 525-9907.

April: Desert Garden Tours, by reservation only, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (915) 424-3327.

April: Bouldering Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also available Wednesday through Friday by advance request, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

April: Pictograph Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, also available Wednesday through Friday by advance request, Hueco Tanks

SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.

April: Bird Banding, call for dates, Davis Mountains SP, Fort Davis, (915) 426-3337.

April 1-30: Horse Riding Trail, Black Gap WMA, Alpine, (915) 376-2216.

April 1-30: Fishing on the Rio Grande, Black Gap WMA, Alpine, (915) 376-2216.

April 5-7: Longhorn Cattle Drive, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, (915) 229-3416.

April 6: Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, (915) 292-4464.

April 7: Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock, (915) 292-4464.

April 7, 14, 21: Big Bend Lecture Series, Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua, (915) 424-3327.

April 12-14: Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Workshop, Prude Ranch, (512) 335-8198.

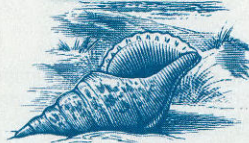
April 12-14: Photo Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, (915) 229-3416.

April 13: Stories of Spirits,

Magoffin Home SHS, El Paso, (915) 533-5147.

April 19-21, 22-24, 26-28: Spring Trail Ride, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio, (281) 486-8070.

April 21: Bird Identification Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso, (915) 849-6684.



GULF COAST

April: Weekend Programs, every Saturday, Lake Texana SP, Edna, (361) 782-5718.

April: Nature Programs, every Saturday and Sunday, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, (979) 553-5101.

April: Hatchery Tours, every Monday through Saturday, Coastal Conservation Association/Central Power and Light

Marine Development Center SFH, Corpus Christi, (361) 939-7784.

April: Aquarium and Hatchery Tours, every Tuesday through Sunday, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson, (979) 292-0100.

April 5, 14: Beach-combing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

April 6: Look for Swamp Things, Tony Houseman SP & WMA, (409) 886-4742.

April 6, 20: Wild Boar Safari, Fennessey Ranch, Bayside, (361) 529-6600.

April 6, 20: Nighttime Wildlife Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

April 7, 21: Migratory Bird Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

April 13: History Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

April 13, 27: Spring Migration Birding Count, Fennessey Ranch, Bayside, (361) 529-6600.

April 20: San Jacinto Day Celebration, San Jacinto Battleground SHS, LaPorte, (281) 479-2431.

April 20: Spring Birding Walk, Sea Rim SP, Sabine Pass, (409) 971-2559.

April 20: Earth Day, Lake Texana SP, Edna, (361) 782-5718.

April 20: Earth Day Celebration, Brazos Bend SP, Needville, (979) 553-5101.

April 25: Texas Amphibian Watch Monitoring Workshop, Houston, Texas, (713) 681-8433.

April 27: Texas Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor, (361) 983-2215.

April 27: Spring Beach Cleanup, Sea Rim SP, Sabine Pass, (409) 971-2559.

April 28: Texas Conservation Passport Birding Workshop, Guadalupe Delta WMA, Bay City, (361) 576-0022.



HILL COUNTRY

April: Bat Flights at Stuart Bat Cave, call for dates, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

April: Sinkhole Bat Flight Tour, call for dates, Devil's Sinkhole SNA, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

April: Birding Tour, by reservation only, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

April: Walking Wild Cave Tour, every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

April: Gorman Falls Tour, every Saturday and Sunday weather permitting, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

April: Birdwatching, daily except when park closed for hunting, Pedernales Falls SP, Johnson City, (830) 868-7304.

April: Wild Cave Tour, by reservation only, Kickapoo Cavern SP, Brackettville, (830) 563-2342.

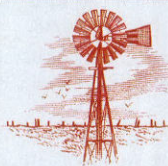
April 5: Range and Wildlife Seminar, Kerr WMA, Hunt, (830) 238-4483.

April 6: Crawling Wild Cave Tour, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

April 8-21: Pedernales Valley Wildflower Celebration, Fredericksburg, (830) 990-8080.

April 20: Earth Day 2002, Colorado Bend SP, Bend, (915) 628-3240.

April 20: Earth Day 2002 Home Tour, Austin, (512) 326-3391.



PANHANDLE-PLAINS

April 1-30: Trailway Challenge, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

April 5-6: Permian Basin Oilman's Bass Invitational, O.H. Ivie Lake, (915) 365-2333.

April 6: Springtime Birding, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

April 6: Great Texas Trash-off, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

April 6: Star Walk, Copper Breaks SP, Quanah, (940) 839-4331.

April 6: Nature Challenge, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

April 6: Evening Program, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

April 6: Petroglyph Tour, San Angelo SP, San Angelo, (915) 949-4757.

April 13: Canyon Critters, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

April 13: Campfire Tails, Abilene SP, Tuscola, (915) 572-3204.

April 13: Volunteer Day, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

April 20: River Walk, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

April 20: 5th Annual Master The Mountain Fun Run and Walk, Big Spring SP, Big Spring, (915) 263-4931.

April 27: Trailway Challenge Kick-off, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque, (806) 455-1492.

April 27: Wildflower Safari, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227.

April 27: Moon Walk, Abilene SP, Tuscola, (915) 572-3204.

April 27: Canyon Heritage, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon, (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.



PINEYWOODS

April 5: Nature Slide Program, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

April 5-7: Dogwood Steam Train Excursions, Texas State Railroad SP, Rusk, (800) 442-8951 or (903) 683-2561 outside Texas.

April 6: Hog's Hunt Run, Huntsville SP, Huntsville, (936) 295-5644.

April 7, 14, 28: Walk on the Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

April 11-12, 18-19, 25-26: School Excursions, Texas State Railroad SP, Rusk, (800) 442-8951 or (903) 683-2561 outside Texas.

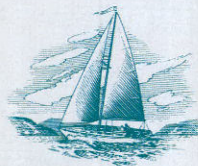
April 13: Guided Nature Trail

Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

April 20: Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper, (409) 384-5231.

April 20: Beginning Birder Class, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.

April 27: Birding Tour and Walk, Village Creek SP, Lumberton, (409) 755-7322.



PRAIRIES AND LAKES

April: Weekends at the Farm, Saturday and Sunday, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHS, Washington, (936) 878-2461 Ext. 245.

April: Birding on the Brazos, every Saturday, Stephen F. Austin SP, San Felipe, (979) 885-3613.

April: Evening Programs, every Saturday, Stephen F. Austin SP, San Felipe, (979) 885-3613.

April: Interpretive Programs, every Saturday, Purtil Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

April: Historic and Scenic Tour, by reservation only to groups of 10 or more, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658.

April: Kreische Brewery Tours, every Saturday and Sunday, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658.

April: Bluebonnet Trails, Ennis, (972) 878-4748

April 6: Penn Farm Tours, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940.

April 6: History of the Cooper Lake Area, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, (903) 395-3100.

April 6: Rattlesnake Adventure Race, Fort Parker SP, Mexia, (940) 256-0769.

April 6: Kids' Wilderness Survival, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171.

April 6: White-tailed Wonder-land, Purtil Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

April 6, 7, 14, 20, 21, 27, 28: Tours, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

April 6, 20, 27: Wildflower Walk, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940.

April 7, 14: Kreische House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange, (979) 968-5658.

April 12-13: 3rd Annual Astronomy Celebration, Lake Whitney SP, Whitney, (254) 694-3793.

April 13: Snakes Alive!, Purtil Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

April 13: Stagecoach Days, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson, (936) 873-2633.

April 20: Wildlife Program, Cooper Lake SP/South Sulphur Unit, Sulphur Springs, (903) 395-3100.

April 20: Armadillo Odyssey, Purtil Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

April 20: Cedar Hill Showcase, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill, (972) 291-5940.

April 27: Cowboy Campfire Music and Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells, (940) 328-1171.

April 27: Guided Nature Hike, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper, (903) 395-3100.

April 27: Granbury Nature Center and Wildlife Refuge Grand Opening, (817) 573-1622.

April 27: Moonlight Meanderings, Purtil Creek SP, Eustace, (903) 425-2332.

April 28: Elm Fork Nature Fest, Carrollton, (972) 466-3080.



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

April: Wildflower Days, with tours, cycling and more, Cuero, (361) 275-9942.

April 4-7: Total Recreation XPO, San Antonio, (866) 976-6468

April 7: Easter Concert, Goliad SP, Goliad, (361) 645-1228.

April 27: Spring Concert, Goliad SP, Goliad, (361) 645-1228.

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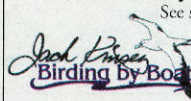
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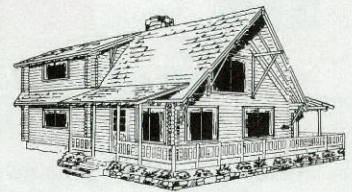
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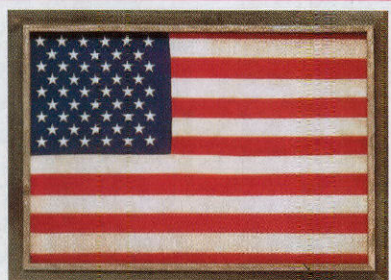
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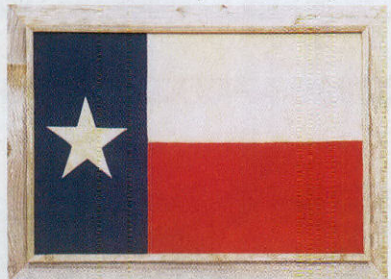
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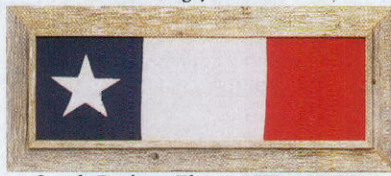
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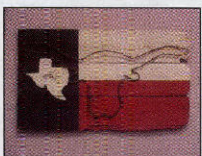
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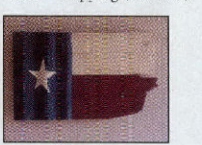
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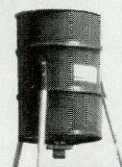
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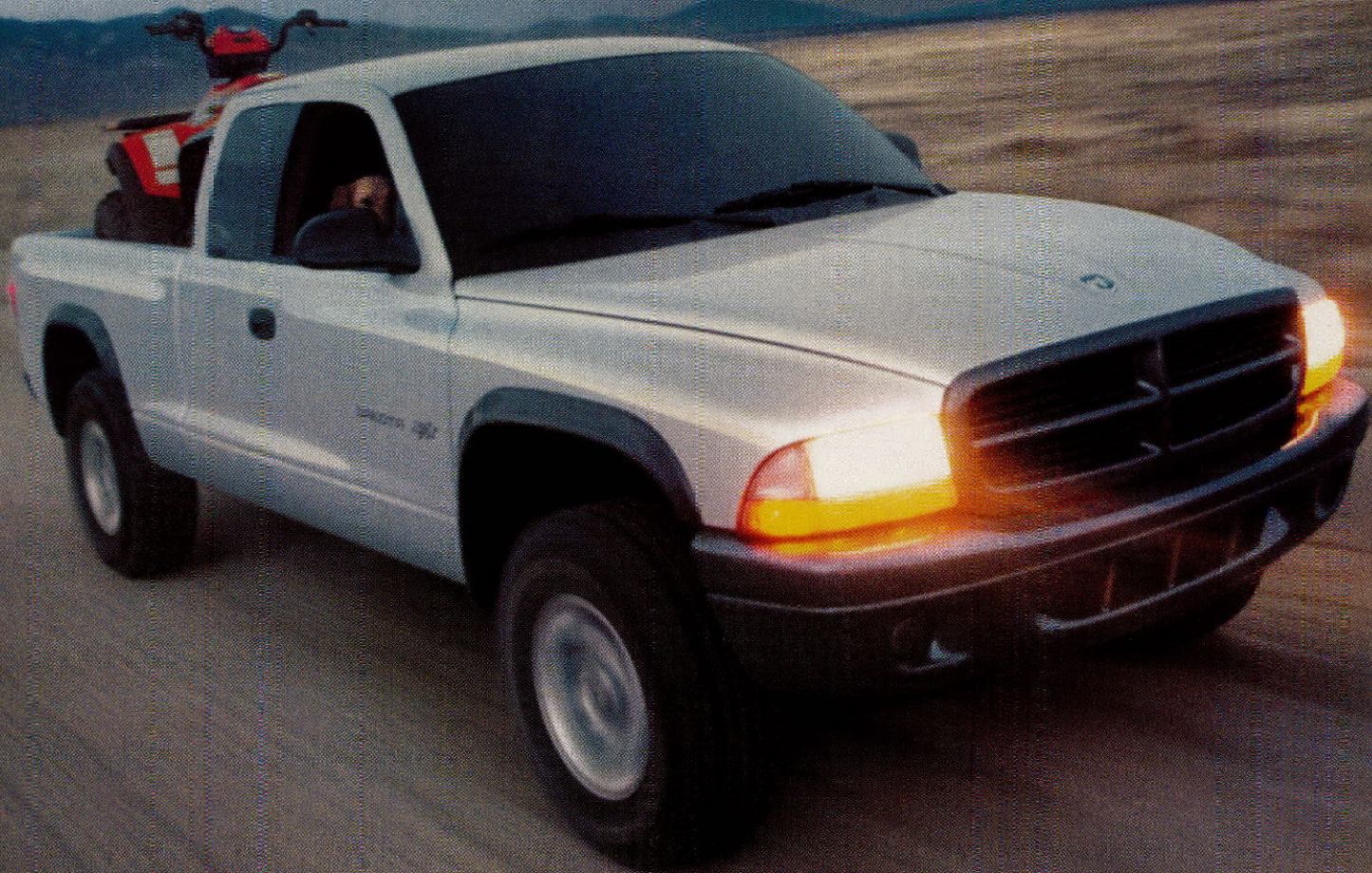
Photographer Greg Lasley and a friend were near McAllen when they spotted this burrowing owl resting in a culvert. "Burrowing owls winter in McAllen and look for mice to eat," says Lasley, a retired Austin police officer who is now a full-time freelance nature photographer. "We were in the truck when we saw the owl, and I took the picture through the truck's window."

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