

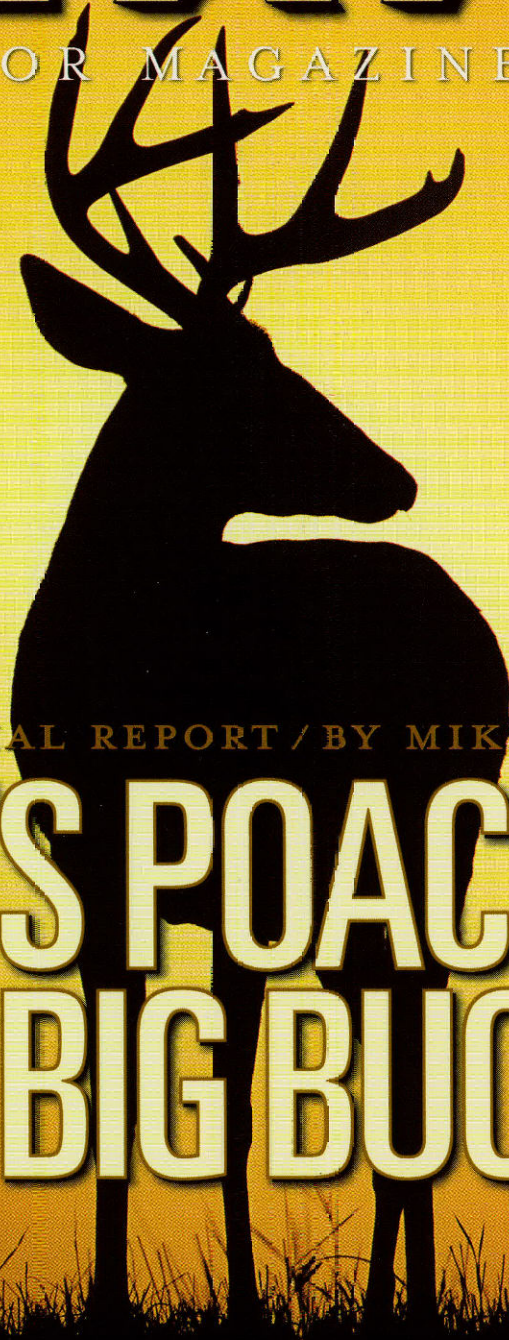
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# TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS



SPECIAL REPORT / BY MIKE COX

# WHO'S POACHING OUR BIG BUCKS?

FISHING PORT MANSFIELD WITH LARRY BOZKA

MARY-LOVE BIGONY FLOATS THE FORKS

A LOOK AT WILDLIFE COOPS BY LEE LESCHPER

HENRY CHAPPELL HUNTS BOBWHITE QUAIL



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# Features

## 32 Neighbor to Neighbor *by Lee Lescaber*

Teamwork among landowners in the form of wildlife cooperatives is improving rural landscapes for the common good of wildlife.

## 40 Gentleman Bob *by Henry Gaappell*

Unlike their mannerly cousins in the southeastern U.S., bobwhite quail in Texas will run from a point and flush so wildly that even a good dog misses.

## 48 Paradise Found *by Larry Bozka*

Port Mansfield visitors enjoy quiet fishing on the Lower Laguna Madre and a small-town ambience unlike anywhere else on the Texas Coast.

## 54 Floating the Forks *by Mary-Love Bigony*

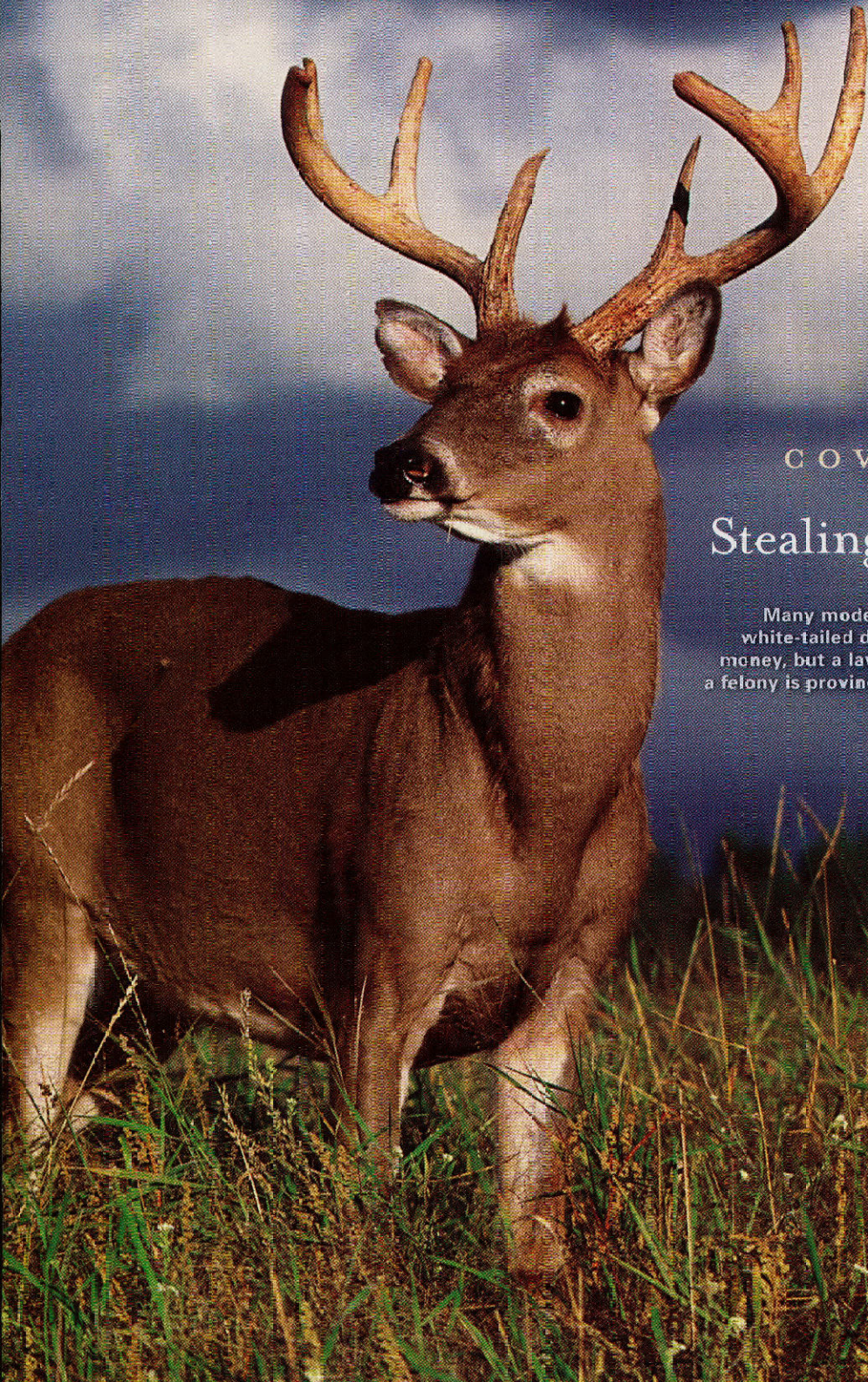
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# CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 2012



COVER STORY:

## Stealing Beauty

by Mike Cox

Many modern-day poachers of white-tailed deer are in it for the money, but a law making poaching a felony is proving to be a deterrent.

# 26

PHOTO © JOHN R. FORD



# Departments

## 6 At Issue

A message from the executive director.

## 8 Mail Call

Our readers respond.

## 13 Scout

### 13 BIG BUCKS IN SMALL TOWNS *by Brandon Ray*

Hunting season is a revenue boost for many rural areas.

### 14 FLOODS OF FISH *by Bobby Farquhar and Ken Kurzawski*

Rising water levels in reservoirs following a flood can translate into improved fishing.

### 15 GONE FISHIN' *by Emily Priest*

Enthusiasm runs high when game wardens in Snyder team up with special education students.

### 16 SHOOTING TO FAME, FUN AND FRIENDS

*by Larry D. Hodge*

Meet trapshooting champion Dick Lindsay

### 18 SKILL BUILDER

Larry D. Hodge tells how to treat blisters in the field.

### 20 FIELD TEST

Gibbs Milliken evaluates waterproof binoculars.

### 22 Three Days in the Field

Larry D. Hodge hunts in Sandia.

### 60 Legend, Lore & Legacy

Mary-Love Bigony tells tales of northers.

### 63 Sights & Sounds

Texas Parks and Wildlife's television and radio schedule.

### 65 Getaways

Things to do and places to go across the state.

### 72 Parting Shot

## Covers

**FRONT:** Who's poaching the big bucks? Turn to page 26. Photo © John R. Ford.

**BACK:** Texas bobwhites are a challenge to both hunters and dogs. See story on page 40. Photo © garykramer.net

**This page:** Photo © Grady Allen





# TEXAS

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

NOVEMBER 2002, VOL. 60, NO. 11

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*Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine is edited to inform readers, and to stimulate their enjoyment of the Texas outdoors. It reflects the many viewpoints of contributing readers, writers, photographers and illustrators. Only articles written by agency employees will always represent policies of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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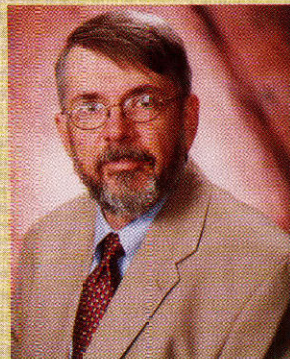
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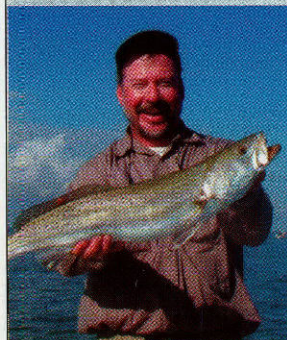
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# In the Field

**MIKE COX**, who writes about deer poaching in this issue, took his first buck in 1960. He was on a doe hunt with his grandfather, the late L. A. Wilke (a former editor of this magazine), and with his granddad at his side, Mike knocked down a doe. At least that's what they thought. It turned out to have two tiny nubs on its head. Harvesting a spike buck was illegal back then, but it clearly had been an accident and Mike was only 11, so the matter did not lead to a citation. Happily, the incident did not turn Mike toward a career of outlawry. He became a writer instead. The author of 11 books and scores of magazine articles, Cox was elected to membership in the Texas Institute of Letters in 1993. His day job is communications manager for the Texas Department of Transportation.



**LEE LESCHPER** learned to read on hard-earned outdoor magazines, when he was sneaking away from his home in Boerne to fish Cibolo Creek. He has been writing about the Texas outdoors for 15 years, combining careers in newspaper management and outdoor writing. He is both classified advertising manager and outdoor editor for the *Amarillo Globe-News*. His syndicated outdoor column appears each week in Texas newspapers from Amarillo to Zapata. He and his wife Beth have raised two avid outdoorsmen — son Will and daughter Mary Catherine. In this issue he writes about wildlife co-ops.



**MARY-LOVE BIGONY**, managing editor of *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, says her favorite day of the year is the day the first cold front of the season blows through. Accordingly, she writes about northers in this issue, as well as one of her favorite East Texas parks, Martin Dies, Jr. State Park. Celebrating her 25th anniversary with the magazine this year, she has received numerous awards for feature writing. She enjoys sharing her love of Texas and Texas history as a volunteer docent at the Texas State History Museum. A fourth-generation Texan, she is a native of Corsicana and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.





# AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF ROBERT L. COOK

**"My health is better in November."** Havilah Babcock said it first, and truer words have never been written by an outdoors person.

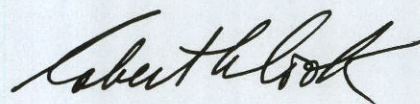
The benefits and pleasures of being outdoors in November are many. Sure, the family gatherings, the food, the football games, and the celebration of Thanksgiving are also wonderful — a really special time for all Texans. However, like Mr. Babcock, one of my all-time favorite outdoor writers, we "Outdoor Texans" really seem to have fewer aches and pains in November.

Normally asthmatic and reportedly of poor posture, I ascend small mountains with ease in November, and stand straight as an arrow just to breathe the crisp, clean air and to see the sunrise. It is no problem to hike through the better part of two or three counties with a nine-pound rifle and 10 pounds of gear before enjoying lunch in the field.

I spend every day possible in the outdoors this month attempting to look like a big clump of brush. Given a good hard frost later this winter, we won't be able to get to work because of the icy roads. But in November, rain, sleet, hail or snow does not deter us from spending the entire day wet, cold and hungry in dripping woods waiting for "Mr. Big." I'll walk all afternoon trying to kick up one more covey of quail in a blowing norther, and drive home late that night happier than a bunch of kids in the summer swimming hole.

During November, my medicine cabinet goes untouched for weeks and weeks. I don't catch colds, I eat untold quantities of camp food smothered in hot sauce, and I sleep like a baby. I don't recall that I've ever had an appointment with my doctor in November. I assume that, like me, none of his routinely hypochondriac patients need to see him this month because they are all out hunting, hiking, fishing, climbing, boating and camping. So, he simply locks his door, gives his staff a couple of months off, claims unemployment, and joins the rest of us having fun tromping around in the woods. He will get his revenge on me in March when there are no hunting seasons, no golden leaves, no campfires and fewer good excuses for us to be exposed to the wild places and back waters of Texas.

So, break out your old brush jacket, the felt hat, good boots and thermos. Forget about mowing the lawn, making the bed and what's for dinner. It's November. Join me in the Great Outdoors of Texas. It's good for what ails you.



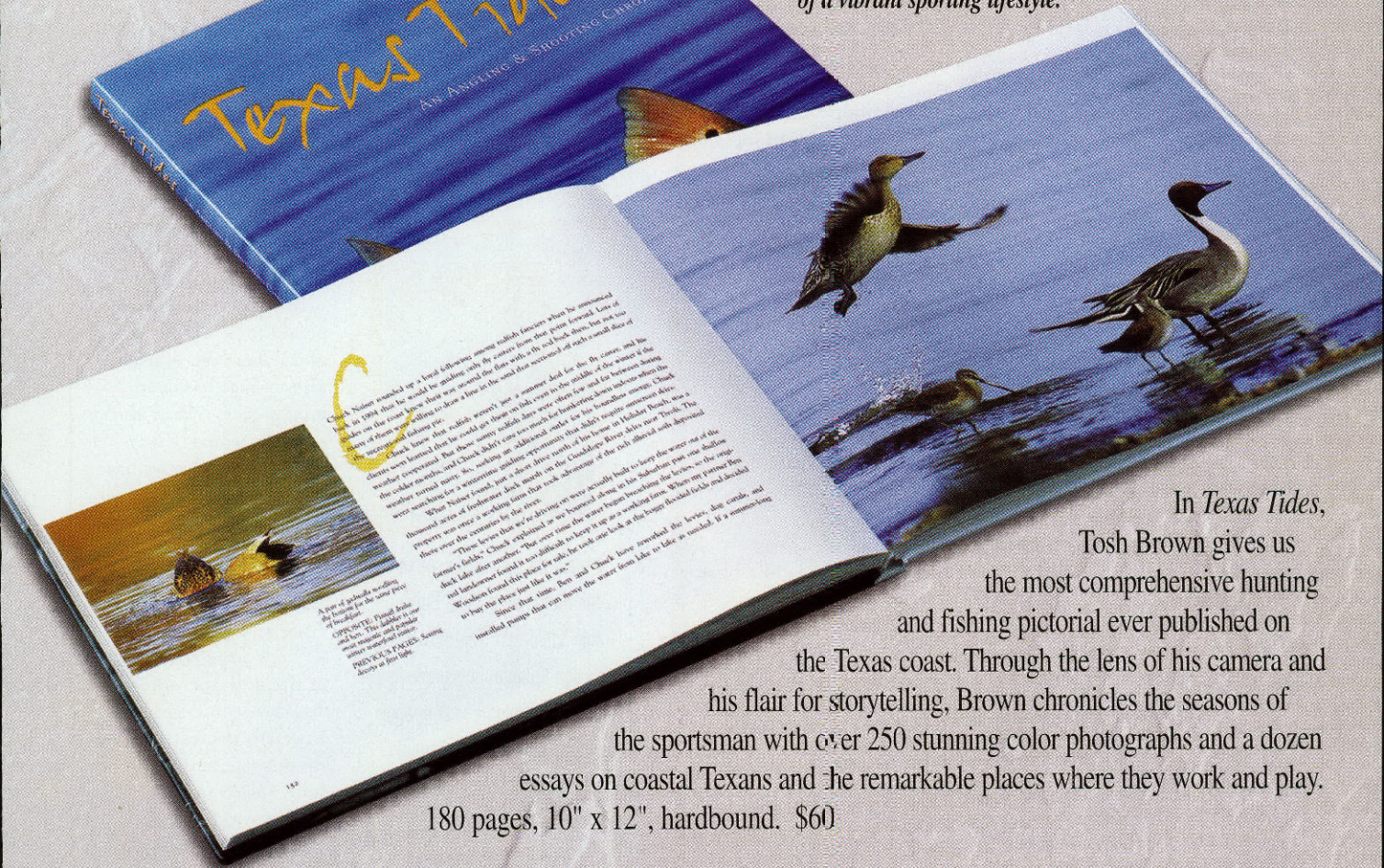
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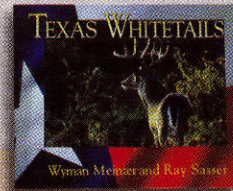
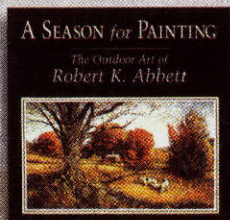
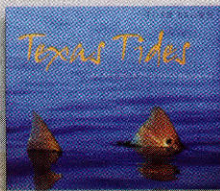
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# MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

## FOREWORD

In my September note, I spoke of my wish to hunt with a Labrador retriever equal to the fine three depicted on that month's cover by photographer Denver Bryan. My wish was answered twicfold.

In late September, I head into the coastal prairie marsh with a group of friends and outfitter Clifton Tyler of Clifton Tyler's Goose Hunting Club and Eagle Lake Lodge. At our side is an energetic yellow Lab, Astro.

As the last full moon of summer hovers over the western horizon, the sun rises, firing the sky with lavender, pink, yellow and tangerine hues. Two giant balls hang above opposite horizons for a few stunning moments. A light northeastern wind grazes the marsh. We pair up into the two-person blinds, simply absorbing the 360-degree view shot through with tender pastels as songbirds, herons, egrets, spoonbills, mottled ducks and a stunning black ibis and white ibis flying side by side pass overhead. Astro plows playfully through the marsh as Tyler pitches out the decoys, and then, as do we, settles into the emerging dawn to wait.

"The teal will come in from the north and circle from the west to land into the wind," the friend next to me explains. I think to myself, just as I land an airplane, into the wind. Watch; wait.

Soon, the organic whir of wings slices through the pregnant sky and the first squadron of blue-winged teal enters the landing pattern, focusing on the decoys arrayed before our blinds.


As shotguns pop around me, I hold my Beretta 391 Urika 20-gauge still. And watch what I came to see — Astro, charging, retrieving, then bounding back, duck in mouth, with the spray exploding around him like shards of silver in the dawn.

It is as if Denver Bryan's photo essay has come to life! Soon, I would enjoy the pleasure of Astro bringing my own downed teal back to me.

The next day finds me racing to Uvalde for a couple of days of dove hunting. The Labrador in our company is a caramel-eyed 4-year-old chocolate, Piloncillo, named for the Mexican brown sugar confection. Our first day afield, we're north of town in the rolling Central Zone, in heavy brush with violently blooming purple sage, white brush and thick, fat prickly pear laden with plump tunas. The whitewings come in high and fast, and Pelo charges into the brush, insistent on finding each downed bird. Her tender pads and bleeding muzzle bear witness to her noble effort.

The following day, we're in the South Zone near Batesville, laced around the perimeter of a milo field in the late afternoon. We are far apart from each other, and the stillness of the coming evening is both aching and pleasing. Pelo is too far away to retrieve our birds; we get our own. Still, I watch her from afar retrieving for her master: her joy in her mission warms me.

I have teal and dove in my freezer. I don't know yet when I will pull them out, but I reckon I'll know when and with whom to share them. Plus, I hope that family and friends with whom I will share this fine repast can taste just a glimpse of the sunrises, sunsets, good friends and stellar dogs that brought it all to be.



## LETTERS

### GOODBYE TO THE RIVERS?

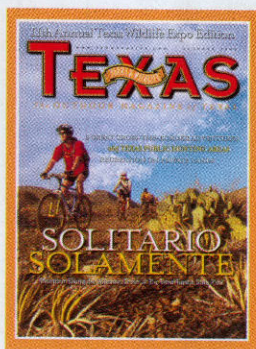
**T**exas Parks & Wildlife magazine deserves congratulations for the focus on "The State of Water" in the July 2002 issue. Let us hope this will be the beginning of a new awakening of the

need for immediate and significant actions to restore and preserve our Texas water resources.

In a state where we are proud to be Texans and of our heritage — a state where water has been fought over, valued and even cherished — it is tragic to see what we have allowed to happen to our rivers. For a long time, it has been obvious to me that "Don't Mess with Texas" does not apply to Texas rivers. Texas has very few large rivers for its size and one would think we would be especially protective of the ones we have. But sadly, that is not the case. No state west of the Mississippi and few east of that great river have allowed their river resources to deteriorate to the level we have in Texas and, as a matter of fact, most states are

proactive in protecting their river resources. With the possible exception of the Devils River and a few sections of the Guadalupe, virtually every river in Texas can be described as endangered if not destroyed. The Brazos, Concho, Colorado, Llano, Neches and our other rivers can be wonderful assets to our communities and to the state.

Big Bend Ranch State Park, Black Gap Wildlife Management Area and Big Bend National Park are among the special places that are cared for and



I enjoy the practical content in the magazine's "Skill Builder" and "Field Test" features. Even if I don't plan to buy snorkeling gear or a shooting vest or open an oyster in the foreseeable future, I read these pieces just for the up-to-date and complete information.

Steve Bass  
Lake Worth, Fla.



# MAIL CALL

protected. Why can't our rivers have that kind of care and respect? They are every bit as important to the future of the state, if not more so. The river authorities, the Riverside Landowners Association, the Texas Rivers Protection Association, the Sierra Club, the Texas Water Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Legislature and all others need to cease their petty politics, turf wars, bickering and self-preservation and focus on our rivers and what is in the best interest of the future of Texas.

John Graves was right on track in *Goodbye to a River*, and although he may have focused on the damming of our rivers, he knew what was happening and in his hardscrabble way, he sounded a clear warning. Too bad we did not heed his warning, because unless we do a better job of protecting the natural resources with which we have been so graciously provided, the day will come when the best use for what was once a living river will be to channelize it for sewer outfalls to serve our urban sprawl. Is that what is best for future generations of Texans? I think not.

Larry McKinney, in his thoughtful article "Water for the Future" states, "The most important message is that it is not too late." I agree that it's not too late; however, the fact is that we have not and are not now making any meaningful progress toward doing something about the problem, and significant obstacles must be cleared to accomplish what needs to be done.

Unless all the diverse interests — the associations, the authorities, the legislature and others — can join together with needed urgency, it will be Goodbye to the Rivers.

LAWRENCE A. WILSON  
*Nemo*

## SOLUTIONS NEEDED

I want to thank you for your July issue dedicated to Texas' water issues. It was a fascinating (albeit scary) read, and I would like to echo the sentiments of other letters to the editor suggesting that it be mandatory reading for anyone interested in the future of our state.

I did, however, find one shortcoming in the issue. It was extremely light on solutions.

I understand the difficulty of proposing answers that are almost

guaranteed to offend someone, but I also believe that the information you provided sets almost the perfect stage for the discussion of potential solutions. It may not be possible for a subscription-based magazine to tackle these issues, but perhaps when fault could be placed on a letter-writing citizen they can be broached.

I feel that there are at least two obvious approaches that might be used to tackle this problem before all our rivers, aquifers and hope are lost.

One would be a statewide study of sustainable land-use practices resulting in a voluntary zoning code of sorts that would show landowners what types of agricultural activities their land is best suited for, and then the establishment of incentive programs that encourage compliance. Secondly, and this is the tough one, we must do something to curb population growth! It takes only a token level of common sense to see that our environment cannot possibly continue to support the increasing

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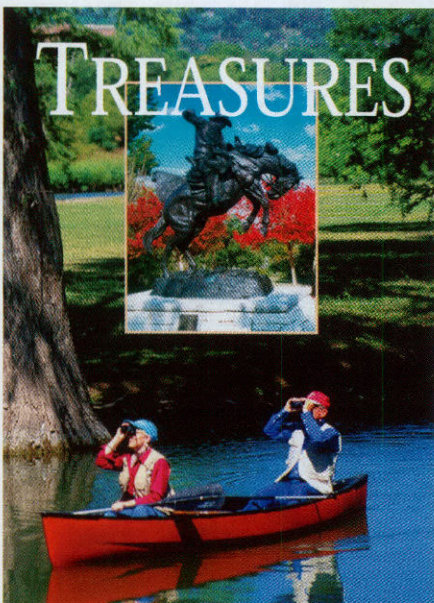
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## MAIL CALL

numbers of humans we force upon it. This issue hits close to home with almost everyone, and is impossible to approach without alienating a large portion of the population. But it is something that must be addressed if the quality of life as we know it is to be passed on to the next generation. Dealing with this problem will require a multi-faceted approach, but perhaps some logical starting points might be to teach the benefits of smaller family size actively and aggressively, and to remove financial incentives (such as tax credits) for having more children.

Even as I write this I realize the unlikelihood of an outdoor magazine attempting to tackle these issues, but the truth of the matter is that our environment will be the ultimate loser here. As "The State of Water" issue so elegantly stated, the degradation is already well advanced. We owe it to future generations to stand up and deal with it now!

DAVID WETZEL  
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### TRUE BLUE FOR TEXAS

Here's a photo I took this summer of a female bluebird feeding her young in a Texas decorative birdhouse. We have been winter Texans since 1997, and in 1999 we started renting a condominium in the Horseshoe Bay area. I bought the birdhouse in 2000 at LBJ National Park.

I hung the decorative birdhouse under the eaves of our cottage here in Michigan, never thinking that a bird – especially a bluebird! – would raise a family here. Bluebirds like a nest box in an open field, and prefer a box without a perch. So, we were quite surprised and pleased the bluebirds chose this house!

MELINDA S. HEIBERG  
Holland, Mich

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**TEXAS**  
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## MAIL CALL

### STREAMBED CONCERNS

The sacrifice of Texas streambeds to the transient pleasure derived from driving four-wheelers through and over them must not happen ("Balancing Act," October 2002). This earth is part of creation which, by its nature, is good, and over which we humans have domination. Domination is not to be confused with exploitation. This earth has been left in our hands as a sacred trust.

Yes, there are countless violations of that trust, but we have the option of deciding to stop one small part of the violation brought about by ATVs. May the Texas Legislature act wisely and pass laws that will protect the entire environment, but especially our precious streambeds.

ED GIFFORD

Austin

### SIMPLE PLEASURES OF YOUTH

I have fond memories of crabbing as a youth during the depression.

One thing we boys did was to find a barrel hoop, a worn-out burlap bag and some string. We sewed the burlap to the hoop, attached string in four places so it would hang evenly and then attached a long string to that. We sewed a chicken neck or fish head to the burlap and let the contraption down off a pier. When the crabs would gather, we brought it up slowly to the surface, hauled it in quickly and dumped the crabs in a bucket.

There was so much fun for us poor boys in the good old days! We never even knew that we were poor.

JIM RICHINGS

Maydelle

### THIS SIDE OF THE BORDER

I've been a reader of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine for years, but this is the first time I've felt the need to write.

I want to comment on two things about the October 2002 issue. First, the magazine is about Texas parks and wildlife; not Mexico. Let's stick to this side of the border, please. Second, is it just my imagination or is there really a lot more advertising lately? I realize that ads hold down subscription costs. It seems like there is an ad on every other page. Am I wrong?

MIKE KIRBY

Houston

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## MAIL CALL

SUSAN L. EBERT, PUBLISHER & EDITOR, RESPONDS: *As migratory songbirds, doves, butterflies and waterfowl know no national boundaries, their success depends upon not only upon our conservation efforts here in Texas and the rest of the United States but also upon Mexico's efforts to conserve and protect habitat. We believed that many of our readers would find a burgeoning nature tourism business south of the border to be of interest. The increased advertising in the October 2002 issue is this magazine's annual salute to the many corporations whose sponsorship makes Texas Wildlife Expo possible. Without their participation, TPWD would be unable to host this two-day, free-to-the-public event which draws nearly 50,000 guests annually.*

### DAY OF PRAYER AT SAN JACINTO

The weekend of Dia de los Muertos, All Soul's Day, will bring a day of healing to San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. An outdoor Mass on the point overlooking the San Jacinto Bayou will memorialize the more than 600 men who lost their lives in the 1836 Battle of San Jacinto and will consecrate the ground that became the final resting place of many of the fallen soldiers.

Following the Mass, an ecumenical prayer service will be held at 2:30 p.m. Historical commemorations will be held during the afternoon as well. In all, more than 2,000 Mexican and Texian soldiers perished during the Texas Revolution, leaving behind mourning mothers, widows and fatherless children.

The San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site is in La Porte, 22 miles east of Houston. Admission is free. For more information, call (281) 479-2421.

### Sound off for "Mail Call!"

Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine welcomes letters from our readers. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

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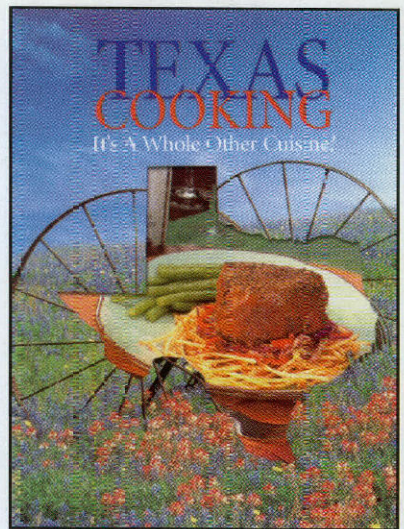
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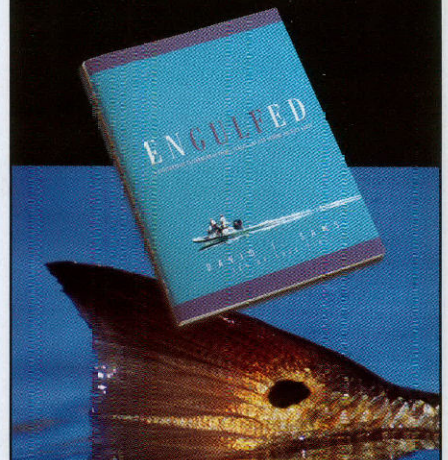
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# SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

## Big Bucks in Small Towns

Hunting leases pay dividends to landowners, habitat, wildlife and local economies.

I just got off the phone with a good friend of mine. It seems there is an opening on his deer lease, and he is seeking a new recruit. The lease, a choice piece of ground in North Texas, hosts good-sized white-tailed bucks, sounders of fat feral hogs, flocks of turkeys and, in wet years, loads of bobwhite quail. It also includes a double-wide trailer for base camp and a skinning shed. The price for a one-year membership for one hunter on the sprawling ranch: \$4,500.

Although I'd love to be a member, I can't afford it. Deer hunting is big business in the Lone Star State, and prices seem to climb every season. That same lease cost \$2,200 per member 10 years ago. I know, because I was once a member.

Leasing land for hunting is big business in Texas. Although no total figure for the amount spent on leases is available, researchers at Texas A&M University have found that South Texas leases run from \$7 to \$17 per acre. In the Hill Country, leasing is usually on a per-gun basis and ranges from \$600 to \$2,000 per hunter. It's safe to say the total figure is in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

But there's more to the story. The high cost of hunting leases can be viewed from both sides. The money paid for leases helps ranchers when livestock prices are low and during years of drought. Income from leasing also gives incentive for landowners to take good care of their land and wildlife. If they can grow bigger deer,

they will get bigger money. More covens of quail equal more dollar signs. Hunters, of course, benefit from increased numbers and quality of game.

Since some 94 percent of the land in Texas is privately owned, conservation of habitat on private lands is vitally important to wildlife. Money from leasing is the key. One gray-headed rancher in Central Texas told me that when his family started leasing for hunting in the early 1980s, the hunting income supplemented the ranch's total income. Today, that same rancher makes considerably more money off guided hunts for big whitetails than he could ever make off livestock. He manages for deer first, livestock second.

More and more Texas landowners are managing their property for white-tailed deer, and for some ranchers, income from leasing is greater than income from livestock.



PHOTO: MIKE SEARLES



Ranchers aren't the only ones to benefit from lease income. Research at TPWD wildlife management areas shows that properties managed for game species such as deer and quail are better able to support a variety of nongame species, including the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. And livestock grazing, properly managed, can play an important role in habitat improvement and maintenance.

The money that hunters spend also positively affects small-town cafes, motels, feed stores and gas stations. Many of these businesses report an increase in sales during the fall hunting season due to traffic from out-of-town hunters. Statewide, hunters spend a total of \$2.6 billion annually, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It's no wonder that banners in many small Hill Country towns read "WelCOME HUNTERS." Hunters are the key to those towns' survival.

—Brandon Ray

## Floods of Fish

*When drought-stricken reservoirs fill, the creation of new habitat can cause fish populations to explode.*

**To paraphrase an old saying,** "It's an ill rain that drops no good." Severe floods earlier this year caused damage to property and loss of life, but another result will be improved fishing in many Texas lakes.

Anglers are familiar with the negative impacts on fishing due to low water levels. Access becomes difficult as shrinking reservoirs leave boat ramps high and dry. As water levels drop, spawning may continue, but survival of young fish usually declines. Young fish are more vulnerable to predators because vegetation and cover along the shoreline die as water levels recede.

So what are the benefits to fish populations when water levels increase? When a drought-stricken reservoir fills, fish populations can respond in much the same way as those in new reservoirs. Most anglers know how good fishing can be in new reservoirs: fish populations explode with the creation of new habitat in the recently inundated areas. Fish are abundant and growth is excellent.

Newly refilled reservoirs experience the same conditions that caused angling to be good the first few years after construction. When water levels are down, vegetation grows on the lakebed and shoreline. This vegetation is flooded as a reservoir fills, creating cover for fish. Decomposing plants release nutrients that provide building blocks for the food chain that eventually leads to increased growth of game fish. Adult fish remaining in a reservoir provide a source of brood fish and usually respond by producing strong spawns. Young fish are hatched into a favorable environment rich in

food and cover, leading to excellent survival and growth.

Recent rains filled reservoirs in many areas of Texas where water levels had declined due to the severe drought of the 1990s. Choke Canyon Reservoir near Three Rivers had not been full for almost 10 years. During that period, the reservoir dropped to as low as 50 percent of capacity. Then the rains came in early summer 2002. As much as 30 inches of rain fell in parts of Choke Canyon's watershed. By mid-July, the reservoir was at 100 percent of capacity and then some. In just two weeks, the volume of water stored had increased by 79,579 acre-feet. That equals 25.9 billion gallons of water!

Brady Lake in McCulloch County is an example of how such an influx of water can improve angling. Two years ago, heavy rains filled the lake for the first time in several years. "Tournament stringers went from five bass with a combined weight of around 12 pounds to five-fish stringers weighing over 20 pounds," says San Angelo outdoor writer Russell Smith. "More anglers have been finding it easier to catch limits of bass than before the lake refilled."

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists use several management techniques to help take advantage of this boom caused by Mother Nature. After water levels increase, lakes are stocked with game fish such as largemouth bass and catfish, and occasionally with prey species such as shad and bluegill. Good conditions for survival of stocked fish also make this an excellent time to enhance the genetics of a population with the addition of Florida largemouth bass. Protective regulations often are added to protect the remaining brood fish.

With water levels up in many reservoirs in South and Central Texas and around Abilene, anglers can look forward to good fishing for several years to come. If the drought is still hanging on in your area, keep the faith and remember what happened to Choke Canyon. Sometimes, all it takes is one good rain.

Water levels in most Texas reservoirs can be checked by clicking on links to the USGS and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers under "Water Resources" on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department freshwater fishing page at <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish/index.htm](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish/index.htm)>. Statewide drought conditions are available at <[www.twdb.state.tx.us/data/drought/drought\\_toc.htm](http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/data/drought/drought_toc.htm)>.

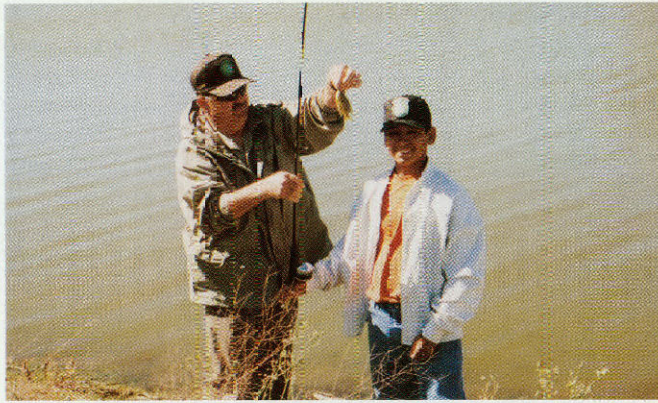
—Bobby Farquhar and Ken Kurzawski

**Better fishing can be the result when reservoirs rise due to flooding. TPWD biologists often stock game fish and prey species in newly refilled reservoirs.**

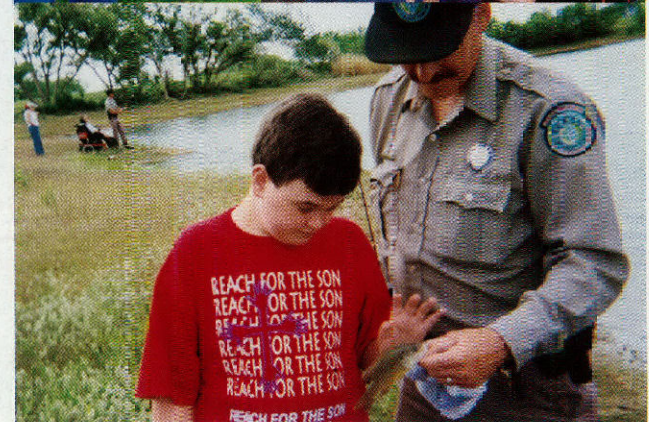


PHOTO © SPORTINGPHICS.COM — TOSH BROWN





Game wardens team up with Snyder youngsters for a day of fishing. Above: Warden Benjie Smith and Thenny DeLaCerde. Top right: Capt. Bruce Biederman and Tanner Hunter. Middle right: Warden Bobby Ferguson and Jonathan Barrow. Bottom right: Warden Jay Oyler and Cameron Brown.



# Gone Fishin'

*It's the ultimate dream of any outdoor-loving child: missing school to go fishing.*

**That's what junior high** and high school special education students in Snyder are doing, and they get to go fishing one-on-one with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens.

For the past seven years, special education students from Snyder Junior High School's life skills class have gone fishing each spring with volunteer game wardens at Snyder's local junior college pond. Fishing rods and tackle are supplied, and each game warden is paired with a student for the entire day.

The idea started when Jo Henry, a former special education aide in the junior high's life skills class, invited local game warden Mel Reed, whose brother is disabled, to speak to her class about outdoor safety. After several appearances, Henry and Reed toyed with the idea of taking the kids fishing at a local tank. Reed called Henry a few days later and said, "Jo, I've got this thing ready to go."

Looking back, Reed says he doesn't know how such an event has been pulled off each year with such success.

"I don't know why it works; it just does. It's one of those deals where the community and the state get together, and it works out," he says. "But I think it's the kids who really make it work and make it so great."

"It's a privilege. It's something [the kids] look forward to all year long," Henry adds. "If it starts raining, they won't quit. Three years it's drizzled, and they still do it. The kids had the option to leave, but wouldn't."

"I've done these kinds of things for 25 years," Reed says, "and those kids appreciate it more than anyone else. It's unbelievable how something so simple can make someone so excited. [The game wardens] see the kids in town and that's the first thing they say: 'When are we going fishing?'"

Kellye Starnes, principal of Snyder Junior High, says the program serves not only as a fun activity and gets the students out of the classroom, but also teaches them about enjoying the outdoors safely.

"We are excited to be able to provide this opportunity to the students," she says. "They develop lasting friendships, catch fish and learn safety. It's a unique experience."

"You just cannot imagine those kids when they catch these fish," says Henry. "It's something they've accomplished on their own, and it's a freedom that they can enjoy."

After the first few trips, game wardens began asking if students who had moved on to high school could come back. As a result, some high school students are included. Jonathan Barrow, who graduated in May 2001, participated for seven years. Suzanne Barrow, Jonathan's mother, says she was impressed with how the game wardens interacted with the children.

"The kids fell in love with the game wardens," she says. "It's just wonderful to see the smiles on the children's faces when they catch fish, and the game wardens are right there to congratulate them and give them high-fives."

—Emily Priest



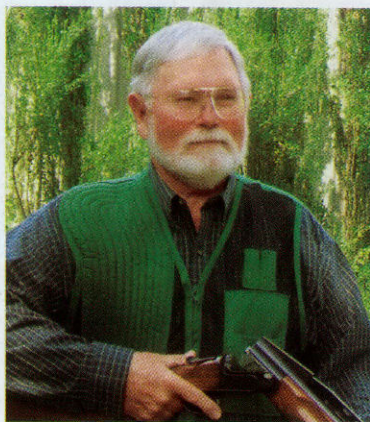
# Shooting to Fame, Fun and Friends

*Shooting trap can provide a lifetime of fun and friends — just ask Dick Lindsay.*

**Dick Lindsay of Graham** was inducted into the Texas Trapshooters Association Hall of Fame in July 2002, but he doesn't like to talk about that. He's also a little evasive when asked about the trophies he won at the Grand American International Trapshooting Finals in Vandalia, Ohio, in August. But if you ask Lindsay about why he enjoys shooting trap, you'd better be prepared to listen — and the reasons aren't what you might expect.

"The greatest rewards are my friends and family," he says. "My wife travels with me to shoots, and other shooters are my extended family. Every shoot is like a family reunion — I go more for that than for trying to win. I have a fine time shaking hands and hugging necks."

Since 1959, Lindsay has competed in 38 Texas state shoots and 27 Grand Americans — where any registered trap-



**Dick Lindsay of Graham says that every shoot is like a family reunion. Since 1959, he has competed in 38 Texas state shoots and 27 Grand Americans.**

shooter is welcome — and at age 71 he says, "I'm probably shooting as good right now as I ever have." In 2002 he was breaking better than 96 percent of his single targets, and at the Grand American he had the high all-around score for senior veterans.

Lindsay points out that trapshooting is a sport almost anyone can take part in. "It doesn't require great physical ability," Lindsay says. "If you can lift a shotgun and move from one shooting station to the next, you can shoot trap. My hero is James Foster of Duncanville." Foster, who has been confined to a wheelchair since 1970, started shooting trap in 1987 and by the next year was taking home trophies.

"Texas has a good many women shooters and some young people," Lindsay adds. "This year at the Texas state shoot there were 13 squads of youth shooters. I'm excited that organizations like Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, <[www.nssf.org](http://www.nssf.org)>, are doing something to get young people into the sport."

The Texas Trapshooters Association awards a four-year, \$4,000 college scholarship annually, and being a shooter is not one of the main requirements. "We look mainly at the need and the quality of the individual," Lindsay says.

Lindsay advises anyone interested in trapshooting to visit the Texas Trapshooters Association Web site, <[www.texastrap.com](http://www.texastrap.com)> and find a local gun club. "Show up; you will be welcomed. If you have no equipment, it will be loaned to you, and there will be no shortage of people to give instruction.

"Trapshooting is a lifetime deal," Lindsay says. "It appeals to all kinds of people. Whoever has the gun and the urge can participate."

—Larry D. Hodge

## TEXAS READER

### FACING CHANGE

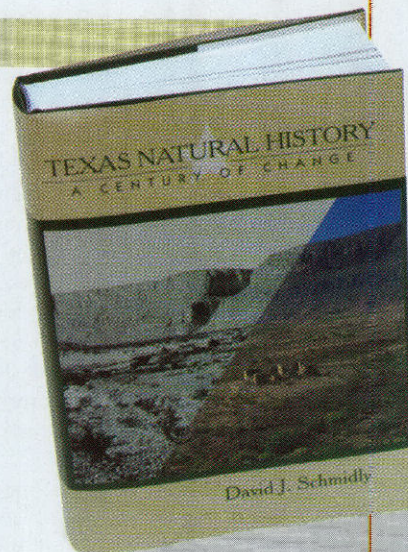
WHEN VERNON BAILEY and his colleagues published the *Biological Survey of Texas* 97 years ago, Texas was a far different place than it is today. Gray wolves, red wolves, black bears and cougars were common. Pronghorns were found from Alice to Dalhart, and jaguars wandered through central and southern Texas. Texas had a human population of fewer than 3 million people, mostly in the eastern regions. Vast lands in western regions were relatively undisturbed. Today, Texas has more than 20 million people. What impacts have these people had on Texas wildlife?

David J. Schmidly's fascinating new book, *Texas Natural History – A Century of Change* (Texas Tech University Press, hardcover, \$39.95) faithfully reprints Bailey's 1905 *Biological Survey of Texas*, adds a wealth of previously unpublished notes and photographs from Bailey's field work (which had been stored in the National Archives) and compares Bailey's findings with the wildlife species and their habitats that occur in Texas today.

Schmidly's book can be read and enjoyed from many perspectives. Historians will be fascinated by the old photographs and historical accounts. Biologists will be intrigued with the changes in plant and animal diversity, distribution and nomenclature. Hunters will marvel at opportunities gained and lost. Wildlife enthusiasts will gain a better understanding of the wildlife diversity we have in Texas today. Landowners and managers will recognize new economic incentives for wildlife conservation.

The final chapter of the book, "A Look to the Twenty-first Century – Challenges for Wildlife Conservation in Texas," offers an in-depth summary of the issues facing wildlife conservation today. The book also describes, in detail, the current efforts of private landowners, conservation organizations, universities and government agencies to conserve wildlife in Texas. This will not be an easy task. As Schmidly says, "Conserving wildlife, which recognizes neither ownership nor boundaries, calls for good science, first-rate technology, excellent management and a broad constituency willing to make some concessions to save it. The next hundred years will likely decide the future of wildlife in Texas."

—Ron George







## She's built her life - and her career - around caring for others.

Even before she became a physician, Jeana O'Brien, M.D., knew what mattered to her: caring for the people in her family and her community. For as long as she can remember, concern for the well-being of others has been a fundamental part of what makes life in Central Texas special. So after completing her undergraduate and medical school education at Texas A&M and a fellowship in Pulmonology and Critical Care Medicine, it was natural for this Central Texas native to return here to practice at Scott & White. Today, Dr. O'Brien is caring for patients, safeguarding the future by educating the doctors of tomorrow at Texas A&M and sharing life with her husband and two daughters. Commitment to family. Dedication to patients. Involvement in community. These are the values she puts into practice every day at Scott & White.



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# Sore Feet

*Don't let blisters ruin an outing.* / BY LARRY D. HODGE

**When I was a student athletic trainer** at the University of Texas at Austin in the early 1960s, I saw what blisters can do: reduce the biggest, toughest football player on the team to a little boy with tears in his eyes. Two-a-day practices in August heat generated blisters on top of blisters, and we spent a lot of time treating them.

Blisters are bad news. You don't want them, and later I'll point out some ways to prevent them. But blisters arrive quietly in your boots, often before you realize you have a problem. Knowing how to treat blisters in the field can mean the difference between a very painful walk back to camp or a comfortable continuation of your journey.

Friction between foot and footwear is the enemy. Friction generates heat, and forming blisters announce themselves as "hot spots." As soon as you feel a hot spot forming, stop and inspect your feet. If the skin is an angry red but no fluid sac has formed, you may be able to prevent a blister by applying a bandage over the place. If it is tender, fold the bandage in half and cut a half-circle in it to make a "doughnut." Place the hole over the hot spot. An adhesive strip or a piece of moleskin will work, or you can use one of several blister cushions available in the footcare section of your pharmacy. (These products can also be applied before a walk to prevent blisters; some will last for several days.)

If a blister is small and the fluid sac is unbroken, treat it as above. Topping the pad with the hole in it with another bandage will help prevent further irritation.

Large blisters that are unbroken need to be drained. Using a needle or a small pair of scissors sterilized in alcohol, puncture the fluid sac and press it gently to remove the fluid. Leave the layer of skin over the blister intact; this will help protect the area. Wash with soap and water if available, then apply zinc oxide ointment with a doughnut bandage covered by an over-bandage. Change the dressing once a day and leave it off at night to allow the blister to dry.

Seek medical attention if signs of infection develop (swelling, redness, tenderness, pus or fever). Diabetics or people with peripheral vascular disease should always see their doctor if they get blisters due to the risk of serious infection.

As noted, preventing blisters is much preferable to treating them. Prevention begins with your shoes. Shop for walking shoes right after a long walk, when your feet are swollen, and be sure there is half an inch between the end of your big toe and the shoe when you are standing. Good fit at the heel is also important; shoes should not slip on your feet when you walk. Avoid cotton socks, which hold moisture that softens the skin, making it more prone to blister. Choose socks of moisture-wicking fabric that fit your foot closely — no tube socks. Some people find that wearing a thin, moisture-wicking inner sock topped by a padded outer sock works well.

Eddie Day, assistant athletic trainer at the University of Texas at Austin, shares this trick: "Wear two pairs of socks, with the inside socks turned inside out. That way the socks rub each other, not the foot."

Before heading out for a hike, use one of several chafing-prevention agents. These lubricants are sold in stores that carry running gear. If your feet are tender, apply moleskin or blister cushions to probable trouble areas such as the heel and toes. And if your feet become wet from sweat or stream crossings, change into dry socks.

An old saw holds that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I'm pretty sure the writer was nursing a bad case of blisters at the time. ★

## FIELD TEST

# Waterproof Binoculars

*These binoculars can hold up under adverse field conditions.* / BY GIBBS MILLIKEN

**The latest top-quality binoculars** are waterproof, fog-proof, shockproof and completely sealed from dust and dirt. Other innovations include strong, lightweight construction, improved color correctness, superior sharpness and contrast, rapid and close-up focusing in a compact housing. In the larger, high-magnification models, electronic stabilization is available to dampen handshake, boat or vehicular movement. All have optical systems that perform excellently for anyone afield in less than ideal weather conditions.

One of the newest and best mid-size designs is the **Brunton Epoch Binoculars** (\$1,449, 7.5 X 43 or \$1,499, 10.5 X 43, Brunton, (800) 443-4871, <[www.brunton.com](http://www.brunton.com)>). These not only have excellent optical qualities, but also feature internal short-travel focusing for rapid subject acquisition and action-following. This unique design will close-focus down to 3 feet, making them especially useful for naturalists observing butterflies, tiny insects and spiders. The frame is a lightweight magnesium alloy and rubber-coated for a comfortable positive grip even when wet. Available as an accessory is a 2X Fieldscope attachment and tripod adapter that quickly transform the binoculars into a compact spotting scope. In addition, this product includes a lifetime guarantee and a Halo (rapid worldwide replacement service) policy with every unit. All features considered, this Brunton Epoch series is state-of-the-art in quality, performance and versatility.



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7 p.m. Thursday, November 14

At the home of Tom and Deborah Green

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Austin Marriott at the Capitol

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Clockwise from left: Brunton Epoch in waterproof case; Nikon 14 X 40 StabilEyes; Brunton Epoch showing 2X field scope and lens covers attached; Swarovski 10 X 25 pocket model.

The optical qualities of the **Swarovski EL Binoculars** (\$1,532.22, 8.5 X 42 and \$1,610, 10 X 42, Swarovski Optik North America, (800) 426-3089, <www.swarovskioptik.com>) offer exceptional viewing in a medium-size, lightweight, waterproof housing. Designed for both the birder and hunter, these have a full range of accessories including a 2X attachment for twice the power. Considerably less expensive and much smaller in size, the **Swarovski Pocket Models** (\$521.11, 8 X 20-P or \$576.66, 10 X 25-P in forest green or black, Swarovski) are ideal for the minimalist wanting binoculars that fold small enough to fit into a chest pocket. These watertight mini units have the high-quality construction, precision optics and guarantee that have made this brand world-renowned.

If larger size and weight are not a consideration, the new **Nikon StabilEyes** (\$1,795, 14 X 40, Nikon, (800) 645-6687, <www.nikonusa.com>) feature a dual-mode, vibration-reduction system for both land and boating conditions. This stabilization is powered by four AA batteries that are sealed in an easily accessible external compartment. When activated, tiny sensor motors effectively dampen both tilt and panning movements for steady viewing at any angle. They come in a powerful 14 X magnification that can be hand-held under most field situations. While these professional-grade binoculars are large and bulky, they are excellent for marine use, distant wildlife viewing or big game hunting where a close approach is not possible.

In a medium size and price range, there are other waterproof designs from makers like Nikon, Canon, Leica, Leupold, Kowa and Eagle that are fine optics. The most outstanding models we tested in this category were the **Eagle Optics Ranger – Platinum Class** (\$379, 8 X 42 and \$399,

10 X 42, Eagle Optics, (800) 289-1132, <www.eagleoptics.com>) that offer sharp, bright images, close focusing, and all-round serviceability that are hard to equal at twice the price.

With any binoculars, the desired magnification is a relative thing. Most users can hold a 7X or 8X steady enough for clear viewing. Beyond this point, some type of rest may be needed with conventional designs to reduce vibration. Also, in the larger powers, the field of view is reduced, making subject acquisition more difficult. In dim light, the higher magnifications need larger objective lenses and special coatings for brighter images. Many professional guides prefer the medium-power glasses for their lightness, smaller size and wide-field viewing. In any case, the waterproof/fogproof feature is a must for any top-quality optics to be effective under all field situations. ★

## FIELD NOTES

### Ride the Trail

**SUMMER SHOWERS** in Big Bend country are expected to boost the flow of desert springs in Big Bend Ranch State Park, which has scheduled the park's annual fall horseback trail rides for Nov. 8-10. This year's tour will take riders along backcountry trails inaccessible to most people who visit the 300,000-acre park in the high country of the Chihuahuan Desert. Cost is \$515 per person, which includes all meals, bunkhouse accommodations and park entry fees. To make a reservation or learn more about the trail rides, contact Jim Carr, (231) 486-8070 or <jc@c3ol.com>.

PHOTOS © GIBBS MILLIKEN



In *Goodbye to a River*, John Graves defined what it means to know a river—as a real place, as a landscape of memory and imagination, and as “a piece of country, [that] hunted and fished and roamed over, felt and remembered, can be company enough.” Readers who’ve taken that canoe trip down the Brazos with him have long wished to travel other rivers with John Graves. Those journeys now begin in *Texas Rivers*.

This book marries the work of two Texas legends. John Graves brings to *Texas Rivers* his ability to weave history, geography and culture into a vibrant portrait of a land and its people. Through photographs of rare beauty, Wyman Meinzer reveals the rivers as few will ever see them in person, distilling decades of experience in capturing light on film into a tour de force presentation of Texas landscapes.

In essays on the Canadian, Neches, Pecos, Llano, Clear Fork of the Brazos and Sabinal rivers, Graves captures the essence of what makes each river unique. While the Canadian is a river of the plains that runs through big ranch country, the Neches is a forested stream heavily impacted by human encroachment. The Llano and Sabinal remain largely unspoiled, though the forces of change ebb and flow about them. The Pecos shows ripples of its Old West heritage, while the Clear Fork of the Brazos flows through country still living in those times. Meinzer’s photographs offer a stunning visual counterpoint to Graves’ word portraits and, together, they show clearly that rivers have been central to the development of the unique character of Texas.

# T E X A S R I V E R S

by John Graves  
Photographs by  
Wyman Meinzer



*John Graves lives and writes in Glen Rose, Texas, in the Hard Scrabble country that has inspired so much of his work. A recipient of many honors for his writing (including a National Book Award nomination for Goodbye to a River), he is a former president of the Texas Institute of Letters and a past holder of both Guggenheim and Rockefeller fellowships. Wyman Meinzer has published numerous books of photographs of Texas and has the distinction of having been named Texas State Photographer by the Texas Legislature. His work appears in magazines nationwide; he is a frequent contributor to Texas Parks & Wildlife and Texas Highways.*

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# 3 Days in the Field / By Larry D. Hodge

DESTINATION: SANDIA

TRAVEL TIME FROM:

AMARILLO – 12 hours / AUSTIN – 3 hours / BROWNSVILLE – 3 hours / DALLAS – 6 hours / EL PASO – 10 hours  
HOUSTON – 3.5 hours / SAN ANTONIO – 2 hours

## Down on the Farm

I'll sleep tonight in a renovated dairy barn on Knolle Farm and Ranch, a bed-and-breakfast near Sandia that serves as the hub from which hunts for ducks and deer and quail depart.

When hunts are over, there will be good talk and good food and a good bed. As a bonus, good old cats and good old dogs roam the grounds and welcome being petted. "Sandia" means watermelon in Spanish, but this is not the watermelon farm where I labored as a youth; I'm here to have fun, not work.

The first order of business is to sharpen up my shotgunning skills for the duck hunt scheduled for the morrow. I'm hunting with a group of expert shotgunners who use antique

double guns. Made in England before 1900, these guns still represent the zenith of the gunmaker's art. And these people know how to shoot, which they quickly demonstrate as clay targets zip through openings between live oaks and find convenient branches to hide behind just as I pull the trigger. Beth Knolle joins us for the fun, and even as we shoot in the golden glow of evening, ducks settle onto ponds almost within range. We've come to the right place for ducks.

Next day's predawn finds us sharing the bed of guide James







Available Allison  
Transmission



## A SLEDGEHAMMER IN A BALLPEEN WORLD.

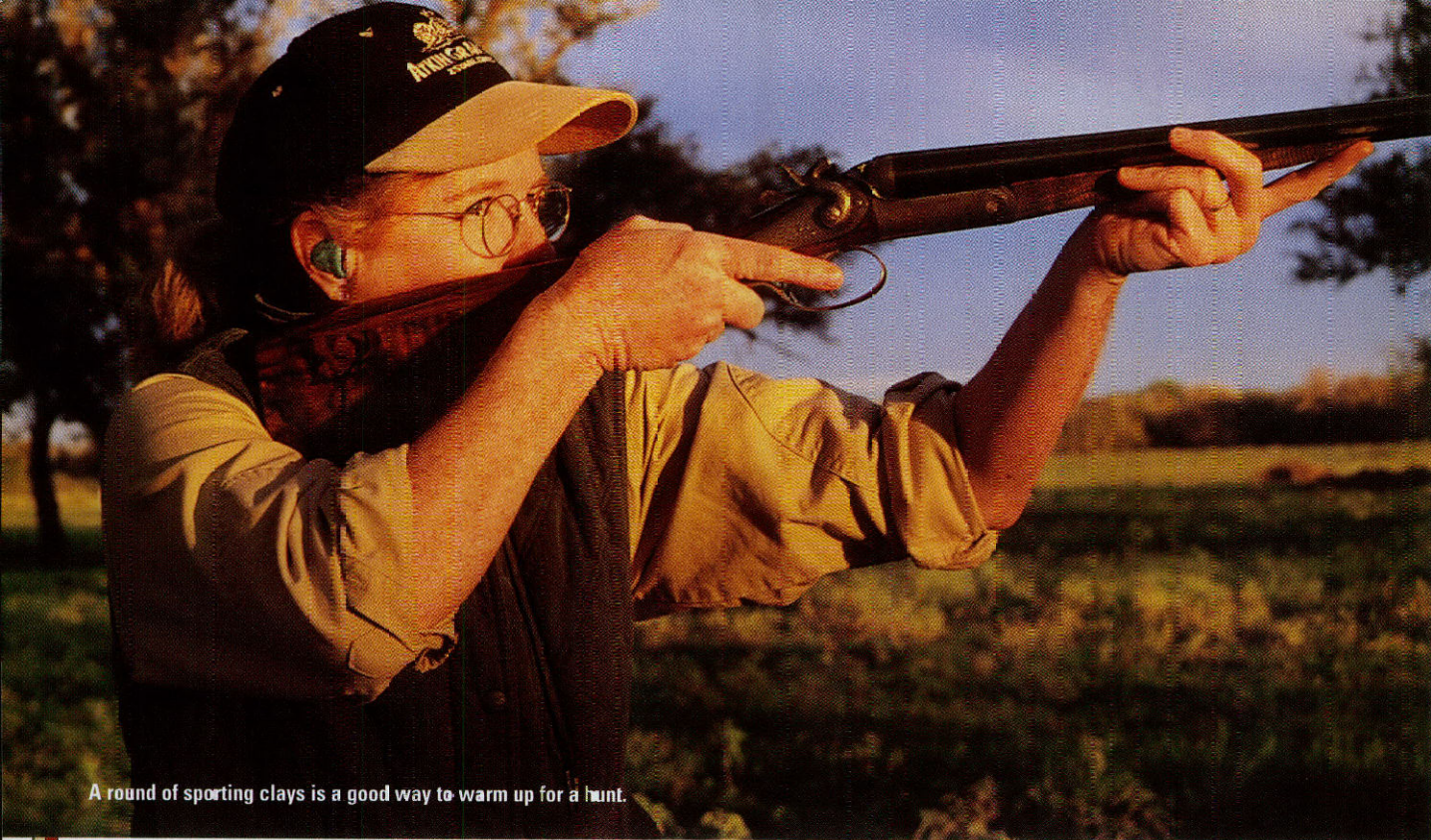
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A round of sporting clays is a good way to warm up for a hunt.

Curtis' pickup truck with decoys and Dixie the retriever for a short ride. The pond where we'll shoot would be within walking distance, were we not wearing clumsy waders. A few dozen decoys soon bob on the surface of a large pond. We sit on a bench inside a brush blind on the pond's edge, the wind at our backs. It's a perfect setup. Ducks — like planes — land into the wind, and they will be coming right at us when they arrive.

Arrive they do. Gadwalls, wigeons, blue-winged and green-winged teal seem to find the pond irresistible. Shooting is steady, and by sunup the six hunters are all nearing limits. The practice the evening before pays off. I demonstrate that a newer gun can down ducks, too, though perhaps not with as much style.

That afternoon, some guests take advantage of Knolle Farms' location on the Nueces River bottom to go for a horseback ride. The farm maintains a stable of gentle horses and all the necessary tack for the use of guests. Guests' horses are welcome also, but be sure to bring your Coggins papers. Other guests head to nearby Lake Corpus Christi State Park for an afternoon of birding. I begin preparing for my next adventure — a doe hunt on a nearby ranch, by making sure my rifle is sighted in. Later I meet Steven D. Naiser, who manages the property. Most hunters are interested in taking home a quality buck, and my doe hunt will furnish some excellent meat as well as help keep the ratio of bucks to does in balance. Naiser advises me to take my time and be selective, assuring me I will see a lot of deer.

I'm barely settled into my blind overlooking a brush line bordering an irregularly shaped opening when deer begin to materialize. As usual, yearling bucks are the first to appear — like most teenage boys, they seem to be hungry all the time. As the sun nears the horizon, young does and then older, more wary does tiptoe cautiously into view. As dusk begins to fall, bucks begin their darkling parade. While I see only younger bucks, most sport impressive antlers. It's obvious Naiser's herd management and supplemental feeding programs are paying off.

One of the amazing things about South Texas is the variety of habitat and game that can be found within a relatively small area. The next morning finds us in pursuit of wild bobwhite

quail on yet another nearby ranch. Loncito Cartwright meets us at the gate with a howdy and a truck full of dogs eager to bust some brush.

Donning shooting vests and filling pockets with shells, we spread out in a ragged line following Liz, a pointer, and Max, a Boykin. Keeping track of each other's whereabouts, much less that of the dogs, challenges our sight and hearing, but soon Loncito alerts us to a point. We close on Liz locked in a classic point, nose glued to a clump of grass at the base of a prickly pear. But as we draw near, she breaks the point and moves deeper into the brush, following a quail that would rather run than fly.

What follows is something I have never seen before and hardly expect ever to see again. As Liz nears another prickly pear, the quail bursts from hiding with a buzz of wings — and flies straight into the dog's mouth! Unfortunately, I'm the only one to see it, and I have some difficulty convincing my fellow hunters it happened.

Other points and flushes follow, and we get our chances to shoot. Quail hunting over dogs requires some knowledge of etiquette. On the sighting or announcing of a point, hunters converge on the dog from behind, forming as straight a line as thorny plants allow. During the approach, gun muzzles are pointed skyward for safety of hunters and dog. When all the hunters are in a safe position, the dog handler either gives the dog the command to flush the quail or does so personally. Each shooter restricts his or her zone of fire to a narrow wedge of sky directly in front. Safety is the main reason; the fire of hunters who have "their" quail shot out from in front of them may be secondary but carries a lot of weight as well. A quail that makes the mistake of flying directly down the line of hunters becomes fair game for everyone it passes; oddly, a fast-crossing bird often has a better chance of survival due to surprise and the fact that crossing shots require a longer lead than going-away shots. We prove this more than once.

As the morning warms, the air dries and the dogs have increasing difficulty picking up the scent of quail. We circle back to the trucks. Beth Knolle arrives promptly — cell phones can be





Knolle Farm and Ranch offers horseback riding and gourmet tailgate picnics.

wonderful — and spreads a tailgate lunch worthy of the finest dining room. Looking around at good friends old and new, and sampling roast tenderloin of feral hog with a sauce made from homemade jam, I wouldn't trade my spot by the tailgate for a seat in any restaurant on the globe. After lunch I head home with duck, venison and quail; memories of three excellent hunts — and a warm invitation to come back any time.

I intend to. I'll stay on this farm any time. ★

## SAVORING SANDIA

The land around Sandia was granted by the King of Spain to Juan Montemayor in 1807, and his family occupied the land until 1852. The town itself was founded in 1907 and named for the numerous watermelons grown in the area.

Knolle Farm and Ranch once was a major dairy operation supplying Corpus Christi; for three generations it boasted the world's largest herd of Jersey cattle. Today beef cattle roam the range along with visitors using the peaceful country refuge as a hub from which to sample area attractions. For information call (361) 547-2546 or go to <[www.knolle.com](http://www.knolle.com)>.

Nearby is Lake Corpus Christi State Park, located on a 21,000-acre lake formed by damming the Nueces River. The mixture of brush, lake shore and river bottom makes the area attractive to a variety of birds, including black-bellied whistling ducks, purple gallinules, pauraques, long-billed thrashers, pyrrhuloxias and black-throated sparrows. Anglers can cast for blue, channel and yellow catfish, sunfish, bass and crappie. For information about the park call (361) 547-2635 or go to <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lakecorp/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lakecorp/)>.

Slightly farther afield is Corpus Christi, the gateway to Baffin Bay and its fabled speckled seatrout and redfish along with other attractions such as the Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens, which includes wetlands as well as a bird and butterfly trail. Padre Island National Seashore is at the city's southern end, not far from the Hans A. Suter Wildlife Park, one of the state's prime areas to view shorebirds and waterfowl.

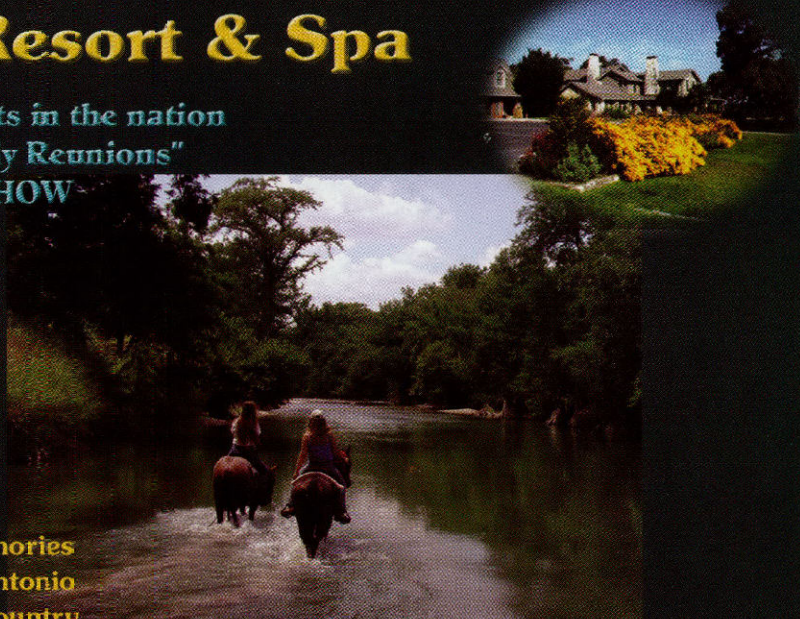
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# ALLING BEAUTY

## WHO'S POACHING THE BIG BUCKS?

BACKLIT BY A SMOKY CAMPFIRE SO ONLY HIS GIMME-CAPPED SILHOUETTE SHOWS UP ON THE VIDEO, "EDDY" DOES NOT NEED MUCH PROMPTING TO TALK FREELY ABOUT HIS FORMER LIFE AS A BRUSH COUNTRY OUTLAW — A POACHER WHO MADE BIG BUCKS OFF BIG BUCKS. / BY MIKE COX

PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN



# "MY BEST YEAR?"

HE RESPONDS TO THE MAN INTERVIEWING HIM. "FORTY-EIGHT BUCKS. I HAULED 'EM OUT EVERY DAY OF THE SEASON."

**N**OT THAT HE PAID ANY ATTENTION to the legal hunting season, except that it roughly parallels the time of year when bucks have their antlers.

Asked how many bucks he killed as a poacher, Eddy says he has to think about that for a minute.

"I don't know if I can add that high," he finally says. "A thousand, conservative 750, something like that." And as a "guide," who for \$4,000 to \$5,000 slipped wealthy clients on moonless nights onto big South Texas ranches to take trophy bucks, he says he was present when hundreds of other bucks were killed illegally.

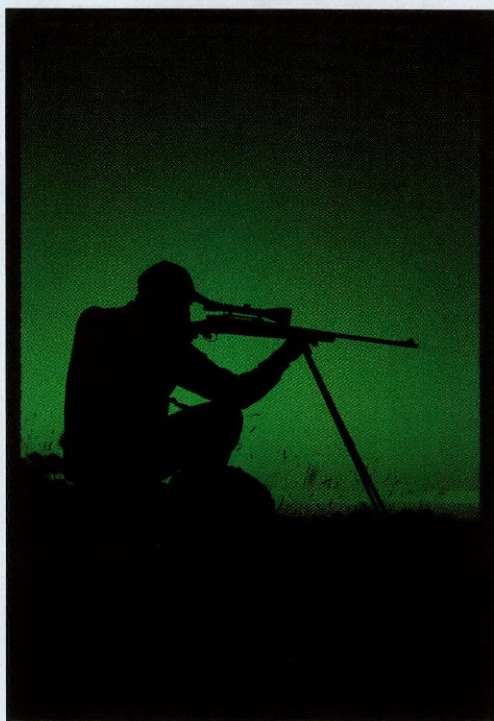
In a good year, Samuel, another former poacher, says he made \$60,000 routinely shooting deer most hunters would consider once-in-a-lifetime trophies, selling horns on the black market to wealthy collectors or unscrupulous hunters wanting to cash in on local big buck contests.

Eddy also killed for his own collection.

"I killed 20 or 30 [Boone and Crockett] gross-score 180-point bucks," he says with barely hidden pride. "I had three record-book bucks, and killed a dozen that missed the book by one point."

With a history of several arrests and a personal collection of 500 sets of big horns, Eddy, who learned the business from his peers, decided to retire from poaching when he reached his 40s. But 54-year-old Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game warden Mike Bradshaw of Carrizo Springs, who has spent more than half his life tracking men like Eddy, says plenty of other "Eddys" — who see a high fence not as a barrier but as an inviting target — are still in the outlaw business.

Poaching has been around since Robin Hood and his men gave the Sheriff of Nottingham fits in Sherwood Forest. William Shakespeare dealt specifically with deer poaching in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." In the bard's day, the deer belonged to the king. Killing a royal stag could cost an offender his head.



Stratford-Upon-Avon is a long way from Texas, where the deer and other game animals belong to the public. Poaching no longer is a chopping block offense, but landowners, game wardens and law-abiding hunters don't see anything merry about it in Texas.

So who's stealing your big bucks?

"I'd say they're 35 to 55 years old, middle-class, intelligent," says Jim Stinebaugh, TPWD director of law enforcement. "They have been handled before for game law violations, and they are... how can I say this... just eaten up with deer."

Bradshaw agrees. "They don't want to hurt the deer population," he says, "but if a big buck is out there, any poacher probably would want to shoot it. Most have an attitude, like bank robbers, that it's the rich ranchers controlling the herd, but the deer belong to everybody 'What does it hurt? I have to pay restitution in court, but ranchers get free use of deer.' This is the

rationale we're dealing with in poaching."

Some poachers are locals, others are from distant cities or out of state. Their common denominator is a love for hunting, but they don't see it as a sport. To their way of thinking, they are merely taking what's theirs. Though poachers have many similar characteristics, their motives can be split into three categories.

The first is the opportunist. He's usually a relatively law-abiding hunter, often from one of the state's metropolitan areas, who pays \$300 for a day hunt and doesn't see anything. On his way home, his ice chest empty except perhaps for a partially consumed six-pack of beer, he sees a fat doe or maybe a buck on the side of the road leading out of the ranch or on the highway right of way. He takes the deer, probably even tags it, and is on his way home, eager to tell his buddies about the deer he bagged.

A subset of this category, not nearly as common as he once was, is the meat hunter. The meat hunter likes fresh venison on the table and he doesn't care what time of year it is or whose land or right of way it is that he gets his groceries on. His daddy was a





PHOTO © GRADY ALLEN





poacher, and so was his granddaddy.

Longtime East Texas dog hunter L.C. Eason killed his first deer, a big doe, with a .22 back during the Depression. When a private game warden caught him deep in the Pineywoods with the illegal deer, Eason threatened to kill him. His family did not have any food, he said, and he was going to keep that doe. The horseback warden believed him.

"If it hadn't been for the game and fish in here, I wouldn't have lived," Eason later told writer Blair Pittman for his book *King of the Dog People*. "As long as gunpowder burns, they aren't takin' this land."

The second breed of poacher is someone who couldn't care less about meat. He wants a trophy rack. Unfortunately for ranchers, who these days depend on hunting income to stay in business, this outlaw is not interested in paying for that Boone and Crockett deer. But he is willing to go to quite a bit of effort to steal yours.

"I started out right out of high school," says Eddy. "I enjoyed it... it was wonderful. I didn't start out for money, but the money got pretty good."

The third variety of poacher is the rarest of the three but the worst: a professional in it primarily for the big money. This is what Eddy became.

"A Boone and Crockett rack of 180 points or better is worth a lot of money on the black market," Stinebaugh says. "For 200 points or more, you're talking serious money, pickup truck-buying money."

These money hunters are dead serious pros. They know what they're doing, and they're hard to catch. They don't leave tracks, but if they do, it's a set of fake tracks. Knowing that a shot can be heard for miles, they usually pull the trigger only once. That usually works out, because they've rattled a buck up so close they can hear him snorting. If they're hunting from a vehicle, they keep the muzzle inside to muffle the sound. They hunt when it's dark — it

provides good cover and that's when the big deer are out — and they stay off the beaten path.

"They wear full camo, face paint and netting," Bradshaw says. "They may have flown over the ranch looking for a big deer, marking where they see it with a global positioning device. And then they come backpacking in. They've got night vision goggles, infrared scopes, lights with red lenses."

Along with all their other state-of-the-art equipment, they use two-way radios, cell phones and pagers.

"In the old days, if we cut a poacher off from his vehicle, we had a good chance of catching him," Bradshaw says. "Now they call someone on the cell phone and tell them where to come pick them up."

Poaching big deer takes more than high-tech equipment.

"I'd do a lot of homework," Eddy says. "In the summer, I'd scout the ranches, learning where the gates are. I'd cut the chain on a gate that didn't get used too much and drive to a nearby city where a locksmith stayed up all night making me a key to the lock. Then I'd drive back and put the lock back on the gate. After that, I had a key to the ranch."

Eddy did not talk on the tape about the times he did get caught, but one time he eluded arrest sticks in his mind.

"I was looking over a real good buck, maybe 175 points with a long beam, when I saw a plane in the distance," he says. "When its lights went out, I knew I'd kept my light on too long. I knew he'd be radioing to his ground crew."

Eddy started moving out of the area as quickly and quietly as he could. "I knew the pastures like the back of my hand," he says. "Then I heard a radio squelch about 100 yards away."

The game wardens were between him and the gate he intended to use, but he knew where there was another gate four to five miles off.



"I made it to the gate and got out of there," he says. "When I got home, I listened on my scanner as they kept looking for me. About 3 or 4 a.m. I got tired and went to sleep."

Like Eddy, the best of the worst poachers know the country.

"They know every fence post," Bradshaw says. "They know right where to go."

Once they've killed the big buck they want, they remove its horns or cape. If they think it's too risky to pack out their illegally taken trophy, they hang it in a mesquite tree for the maggots and fire ants to clean and come back for it a few weeks later.

"A real pro won't mark the place with something obvious, like fresh orange tape," the warden continues. "He'll throw down something inconspicuous, like a piece of tire, or a turtle shell, or bleached-out survey sticks."

Just as younger bucks are more prone to make fatal mistakes than their heavier-horned elders, the less experienced poachers are the easiest to catch. But whether through the use of informants, surveillance or just doggedly following a trail, wardens are still making cases, even on the experienced, well-equipped professional outlaws.

"They get pretty smart around the campfire," Bradshaw says. "It's kind of a game with them, but when we get to laugh, it costs them plenty."

Warden Brad Meloni, stationed at Hebronville, has been a warden for only six years, but he's already handled quite a few poaching cases. Even in his relatively short career, he's seen things change.

"Road hunting has really slowed," he says. "People are shooting across a fence, or walking in, but the high fences have reduced hunting in the right of way."

Wardens refer to practitioners of this older methodology as those who do their illegal hunting by "burning a light." Thanks to high fences, which tend to keep deer off the roadway, the newer

result in two to 10 years in prison. Convicted trespass poachers also can have their hunting equipment forfeited, including their rifles, and see their hunting license revoked.

"Both forms of illegal hunting (trespassing and road hunting) are deplorable," says Darwin Avant of Cotulla, director of the Los Cazadores big game program. This big buck contest, started in 1986, is the state's largest and accepts entries from all over Texas and northern Mexico.

Avant believes the new law has had a significant impact. "I would guess that the number of arrests for illegal hunting has gradually been reduced over the past 10 years," he says.

Indeed, cases filed for hunting without a landowner's consent dropped from 458 in 1997 to 131 in 2000. Hunting from a vehicle cases decreased from 414 to 113 during the same time period, and night hunting cases went from 280 to 41.

"We are real pleased with it," Stinebaugh says of the new law. "It has a psychological effect. Sometimes they plead it down [to a misdemeanor], but it used to be a \$500 maximum fine. The new statute is a real strong deterrent."

So are sophisticated TPWD enforcement actions like Operation Venado Macho (Spanish for buck deer). Code name for an 18-month undercover operation which climaxed on Feb. 5-6, 1998, the investigation led to the filing of 115 criminal charges against 14 men involved in illegal trophy hunting in Webb, La Salle, McMullen and Duval counties. The effort was the largest such operation in Texas history.

"We have an undercover operations unit, and we are going to be doing more of these," Stinebaugh says.

But in the long run, Stinebaugh believes, honest hunters and others who don't sanction the breaking of any law are going to make the biggest difference.

"I'm convinced that the best thing we have going for us is peer pressure and hunters' ethics," Stinebaugh says. "Most poachers

**THESE MONEY HUNTERS ARE DEAD SERIOUS PROS. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING, AND THEY'RE HARD TO CATCH. THEY DON'T LEAVE TRACKS, BUT IF THEY DO, IT'S A SET OF FAKE TRACKS. KNOWING THAT A SHOT CAN BE HEARD FOR MILES, THEY USUALLY PULL THE TRIGGER ONLY ONCE. THAT USUALLY WORKS OUT, BECAUSE THEY'VE RATTLED A BUCK UP SO CLOSE THEY CAN HEAR HIM SNORTING.**

manifestation is dealing with those who trespass on a ranch, often on foot.

Some of these "walk-ins" are outlaw hunting guides, taking someone on a big ranch with big bucks so they can get a deer. Sometimes they drop them off and pick them up at a predetermined point, and sometimes they stay with them. On a moonlit night, they rattle up a buck or wait patiently with night vision equipment for a big deer to come to a feeder for a midnight snack.

Last year, Meloni said, one rancher in his county told him he had patched 40 holes in his high fence. Most, if not all of those holes, are presumed to have been made by poachers.

Until Sept. 1, 1999, all poaching-related violations were misdemeanors. Even the maximum fines amounted to little more than walking-around money for a serious violator. Now, someone caught hunting on private property without the landowner's permission faces a state jail felony conviction. That carries jail time of 180 days to two years and fines from \$1,500 to \$10,000.

Anyone taking a whitetail, mule deer, pronghorn antelope or desert bighorn sheep while hunting from a vehicle on a roadway or other public property, or at night, runs the risk of a similar penalty. A second offense of either of these two violations can

have friends who are 100 percent law-abiding. We need these people to speak up."

One way to do that is to call (800) 792-GAME (4263). Now 20 years old, Operation Game Thief, the outdoors version of the successful Crime Stoppers effort, has stopped or prevented a lot of poaching.

Another way to discourage trophy deer poaching is for the various big buck competitions to adhere to strict standards.

"Ever since Los Cazadores was started in 1986, we have annually mandated polygraph exams for some of our top winners," Avant says. "We ask them things like: Were you properly entered in the contest prior to harvesting your deer? Did you have permission from the landowner of the property on which you harvested this deer to hunt and harvest this deer? Did you follow TPWD rules and regulations? Did you not kill this deer at night?"

Avant says no hunter has ever failed the test, though one did decline to take it.

The only thing that stopped Eddy from poaching was a change in his attitude. But others are still in the business of stealing your deer. They think like Eddy used to think: "If I don't have a place to go hunting, any place is just fine." ☆





# NEIGHBOR t





TPWD PHOTOS

# o NEIGHBOR

When neighboring landowners band together in wildlife cooperatives, both habitat and wildlife benefit. // BY LEE LESCHPER

*A quiet revolution is reshaping wildlife management in Texas.*

THAT REVOLUTION IS WILDLIFE COOPERATIVES, a concept born in the Hill Country a generation ago and now improving millions of Texas acres for wildlife. The concept is simple — neighbors working together to improve their lands for the common good of wildlife.

The need for this cooperative teamwork boils down to one issue: the fragmentation of private lands in Texas. All over Texas, land parcels are becoming smaller as properties are broken up due to development or inheritance. The long-range implications are huge. “The fragmentation of large fam-

ily-owned farms and ranches poses perhaps the greatest single threat to our wildlife habitat...” according to “Taking Care of Texas,” the 2000 report of the Governor’s Task Force on Conservation.

Adding to the need is the trend for urbanites to move to rural areas or to buy land in the country for recreational use. “The role of co-ops is becoming even more important as people without traditional rural backgrounds become rural landowners,” says Mike Berger, chief of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Private Lands and Habitat branch. “It’s important

for them to have the opportunity to cooperate with people of similar interests. If people own 20 acres, it’s difficult to make an impact on animals that live over many more acres. By uniting and having common management over a much larger area, they are able to impact management of larger roaming species like deer and turkeys as well as many nongame species.”

At last count, 121 Texas co-ops totaling about 1.75 million acres were registered with TPWD. About 14.5 million Texas acres are under some form of wildlife management plan filed with TPWD. While the







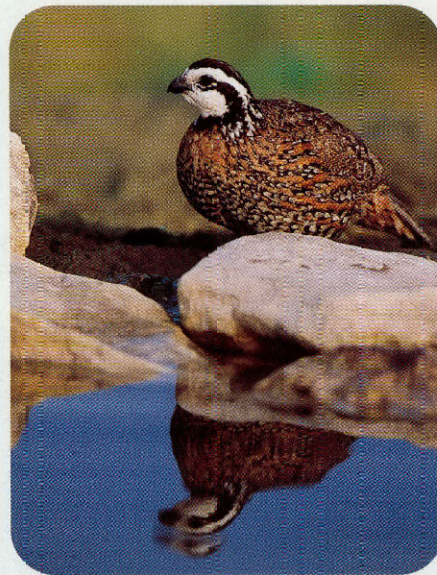
official name is wildlife management association, many of these groups call themselves co-ops.

Early co-ops focused almost exclusively on white-tailed deer and tactics to improve the quality and size of whitetail bucks. But landowners soon learned that what was good for deer was also good for other wildlife. "Many co-ops still have deer as a feature of what they manage," Berger says. "But in many areas we have smaller acreages involved, and the focus also may be on nongame birds, endangered species and smaller animals."

Wildlife co-ops are the epitome of democracy. Neighboring landowners agree to work together to enhance their habitat for wildlife. They elect officers, pay dues, draft a basic set of guidelines and goals, and begin work to put them into place. Although they are independent of any government agency, co-ops usually work closely with TPWD biologists.

Plans are based on what's best for wildlife on the entire block of land, not any single landowner's portion. The basic premise of all wildlife management is that taking care of the land ultimately will take care of the birds and animals living on it. "We always stress habitat," says TPWD biologist Len Polasek, who works with landowners in Bastrop, Caldwell and Fayette counties.

Brush like cedar and mesquite provides little beneficial cover or forage while robbing moisture from vegetation more valuable to wildlife. Removing excess brush and dead vegetation can spur new growth of beneficial forbs (weeds). But it's a delicate balancing act. Removing too much brush robs birds and animals of resting cover as well as protection from predators. Bobwhite quail without brushy hiding spots, for example, are extremely vulnerable to avian predators.



pressure is the No. 1 thing that works best," says Jack Holman, founder of Colorado County's Harvey's Creek Co-op. Holman worked neighbor-by-neighbor to build a 14,500-acre co-op that received TPWD's Lone Star Land Steward Award in 2001.

Hallettsville biologist Gene Rees agrees on the value of neighborly communication. "Anyone not willing to work with his neighbors will hear about it," he says. "He's got to see these folks at church or when he goes to town."

The social aspects of meetings are another important part of co-op success. The first Fayette County spring event grew into a full-blown outdoor festival and venison chili supper attracting more than 500 people. Countywide events in Lavaca and Washington counties have met with similar success. "We find that when you get people to join the associations and keep them involved, you can have more of an impact," says Polasek. "People participate in the program, follow our guidelines and start seeing results. Then the program sells itself."

Most co-ops still focus on white-tailed deer, but the landowners in each co-op determine its goals. In the Rolling Plains around Fisher County, the co-ops tend to be more quail-oriented. In northeast Texas, they're deer-oriented but also work with other wildlife, especially the restora-

**MOST CO-OPS STILL FOCUS ON WHITE-TAILED DEER, BUT THE LANDOWNERS IN EACH CO-OP DETERMINE ITS GOALS. IN THE ROLLING PLAINS AROUND FISHER COUNTY, THE CO-OPS TEND TO BE MORE QUAIL-ORIENTED.**

"It's common sense, like building a baseball stadium and the team will come. If you improve the habitat, the critters will come. The No. 1 reason I tell people they should be members of a wildlife management association is education. We try to teach people what good habitat is."

Helping landowners understand the intricacies of habitat management and improvement through association meetings, field days and presentations by TPWD biologists and guest speakers is one of the main functions of co-ops. In general, wildlife needs habitat that provides food, water, cover and space, both for adults and their young. The "improved pastures" that cover most of east and central Texas are really exotic grasses providing little benefit to wildlife. Deer are mainly browsers that cannot survive on the coastal Bermuda grass commonly planted in pastures for livestock. The grass is too dense and too short to provide cover for birds like quail and turkeys. The fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides needed to grow exotic grasses also are detrimental to wildlife, killing both birds and the insects they feed upon.

In addition to helping landowners learn how to improve habitat, co-ops help them avoid the need for another modern landmark of deer management in Texas — the deerproof fence. An 8-foot deerproof fence can cost \$10,000 or more per mile. Cooperative managing of a large block of land under the same rules for deer harvest means such a fence is not needed — though hunters have to learn to abide by harvest rules established by the co-ops. If the goal is to improve the quality of bucks harvested, hunters have to let young bucks walk. Co-ops work to educate landowners and hunters on how to age deer on the hoof, but another element is key to success. "Peer

tion of eastern wild turkeys. The co-ops just outside Dallas also focus on how to handle poaching. Along the Canadian River, landowners work together to improve riparian areas. The Newton County Landowners and Leaseholders Association furnishes cellular phones to local game wardens to help speed up response time to calls. In every case, the key to success is the voluntary involvement of private landowners. "It takes the individual landowners to get it rolling and keep it glued together," Jack Holman says.

Throughout Texas, rural areas near metro areas are becoming a patchwork of smaller and smaller plots of land as more

### IS A CO-OP FOR YOU?

For more information on wildlife co-ops in Texas, contact Mike Berger, branch chief, Private Lands and Habitat, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744. Program administrator Linda McMurry can be reached at (512) 389-4767.

A number of wildlife management associations meet each year to exchange ideas and information. To learn more about the Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations (TOWMA), go to <[www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org)> or contact Norman Schultz, 1123 McCormick, Fayetteville, TX 78940; e-mail <[nschultz@cvtv.net](mailto:nschultz@cvtv.net)>; phone (979) 249-3958.



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and more people move out of urban areas like Houston, Austin, San Antonio and Dallas into the country. Dubbed the "ex-urban environmental movement," this phenomenon is becoming a powerful force for habitat conservation where co-ops form. Instead of dotting the landscape with "ranchettes," which have little wildlife value, neighbors can join forces. Some co-ops focus on habitat for songbirds and on xeriscaping with native plants. Based on the success of co-ops and capitalizing on the desire of formerly urban residents who want to live close to nature, many developers are creating "wildlife neighborhoods" with planned development that takes wildlife habitat into consideration.

"Everybody wants the same thing," Holman says. "They want to see deer and raccoons and turkeys. They want to look at wildlife."

Many new rural landowners are also "weekend ranchers." In Washington, Lee, Bastrop and Fayette counties, most calls come from people coming out of Houston or Austin and buying land, biologist Polasek says. "I'll meet with these people who have 50 acres and want to manage for wildlife. And it's great to be able to say

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**ON SMALLER ACREAGES,  
THE FOCUS ALSO MAY  
BE ON NONGAME BIRDS,  
ENDANGERED SPECIES  
AND SMALLER ANIMALS.**

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'Hey, then you want to join the local wildlife association.'

"These people are the 'Discovery Channel generation,'" Polasek adds. "They're a whole new clientele. They want to communicate with the outdoors, they appreciate wildlife and they have disposable incomes. They want to see deer, but they also want to see songbirds and butterflies."

That definition fits most Texans. Regardless of where they live, and regardless of whether they hunt, fish, hike, bike or birdwatch, Texans care about wildlife. By giving neighbors a means to work together and to improve habitat across a larger landscape, co-ops will play a key role in the future of Texas wildlife.

"I think that there are three choices that a landowner can make," Holman says. "He or she can put up a gameproof fence, or allow fragmentation to continue, or become part of a co-op."

For Texans who care about the land and the wildlife living on it, the choice is clear. ★

## UNSUNG HEROES // By Larry D. Hodge

MANY NEW LANDOWNERS FIND THEY SHARE A COMMON CONCERN WITH LONGTIME RANCHERS: how to manage a piece of property so as to leave it better than they found it. The first question most people have is to whom to turn for help.

For some 450 landowners controlling 1.7 million acres, the answer to that question has been Fielding Harwell, a technical guidance biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Harwell has spent most of his 38 years with TPWD working with individual landowners seeking to improve the wildlife habitat on their property.

"When I went to work for the department in 1964, there was no technical guidance program," Harwell recalls. "The program was initiated in 1973 in response to increased landowner interest in management for deer, quail and waterfowl." As word of the success of the program spread and more landowners requested assistance, the number of technical guidance biologists increased from five to 10, although all field biologists have technical guidance responsibilities. Today, in excess of 14 million acres in Texas are under wildlife management plans developed by these professionals.

The underlying philosophy of the technical guidance program is that the best way to maximize the wildlife potential of a piece of property is to improve the quality of its wildlife habitat. "We work to increase the quantity, quality and diversity of range plants needed to support healthy and productive wildlife populations," Harwell explains. "Wildlife has gone from being supplemental income to a major source of income for ranchers."

Mike Berger, chief of TPWD's Private Lands and Habitat branch, stresses the importance of working with private landowners. "In a state where about 94 percent of the land is privately controlled," he says, "technical guidance to private landowners is the most important and productive thing we do, because private landowners control the habitat on which our wildlife depend."

Landowner participation in the program is strictly voluntary, and all information furnished by the landowner is kept confidential. "After being contacted by a landowner," explains Harwell, "we meet with them, discuss their interests, spend some time looking at the habitat and make recommendations in the form of a management plan. This is done for nongame as well as game animals, though here in the Hill Country where I work the driving force is white-tailed deer. But many times when we make recommendations for managing for deer and plant diversity, other species like the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo also benefit."

While the value to the landowner of improving wildlife habitat can be considerable, services of TPWD's technical guidance biologists are free. "My job is to go in and get a program jump-started," Harwell says. "We look at the place as a whole from the standpoint of food, cover and water availability." After working one-on-one with the landowner to get the management plan in place, the biologist continues to serve as a consultant when needed. Technical guidance biologists also hold field days and seminars and publish the results of research studies. "Having that type of diversity, dealing with mass communication as well as working one-on-one, has been a major driving force of the program," Harwell says. "The program establishes a network for promoting habitat management. The success of others encourages people to come into the program."

Although the services of TPWD biologists are free, habitat management does involve costs. "Habitat management involves manipulating the habitat to improve it for indigenous animals," Harwell says. "But when I consult with a person, I will not make outlandish recommendations they cannot follow. I will tailor the management plan to their needs and interests. It is possible to improve the habitat for deer, turkeys, quail and songbirds without major expense."

Harwell sees himself and landowners as partners in a project with a worthy goal: enhancing wildlife habitat on a long-term basis for the benefit of the next generation. "That is pretty much a universal objective," Harwell says. "Being a technical guidance biologist has been extremely rewarding. You monitor progress and actually get the opportunity to see how your recommendations work. I am working with 120 ranches right now, and 77 of those have been in the program for five years or more. People ask me when I'm going to retire, but right now is when I want to be here — to see how things turn out."

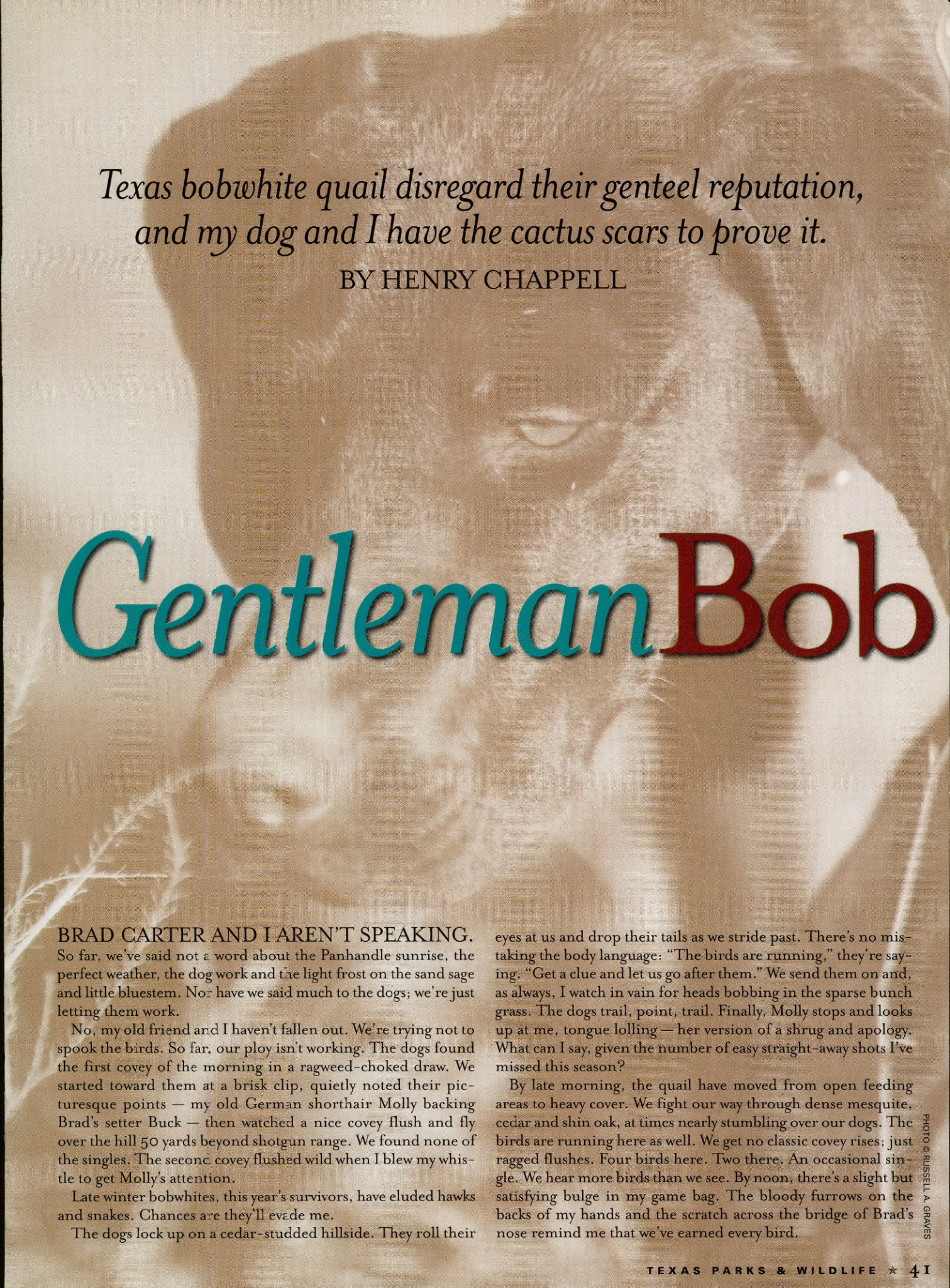
Harwell's efforts have not gone unnoticed. "Fielding has been recognized by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies as the outstanding biologist in the Southeast," says Berger. "He is a great example for all of us to look up to."

Fielding Harwell works out of the TPWD office in Kerrville. For the name of the technical guidance biologist serving your area, visit the TPWD Web site at <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/conserve/plep.htm](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/conserve/plep.htm)> or call (512) 389-4767.









*Texas bobwhite quail disregard their genteel reputation,  
and my dog and I have the cactus scars to prove it.*

BY HENRY CHAPPELL

# Gentleman Bob

## BRAD CARTER AND I AREN'T SPEAKING.

So far, we've said not a word about the Panhandle sunrise, the perfect weather, the dog work and the light frost on the sand sage and little bluestem. No, we have said much to the dogs; we're just letting them work.

No, my old friend and I haven't fallen out. We're trying not to spook the birds. So far, our ploy isn't working. The dogs found the first covey of the morning in a ragweed-choked draw. We started toward them at a brisk clip, quietly noted their picturesque points — my old German shorthair Molly backing Brad's setter Buck — then watched a nice covey flush and fly over the hill 50 yards beyond shotgun range. We found none of the singles. The second covey flushed wild when I blew my whistle to get Molly's attention.

Late winter bobwhites, this year's survivors, have eluded hawks and snakes. Chances are they'll evade me.

The dogs lock up on a cedar-studded hillside. They roll their

eyes at us and drop their tails as we stride past. There's no mistaking the body language: "The birds are running," they're saying. "Get a clue and let us go after them." We send them on and, as always, I watch in vain for heads bobbing in the sparse bunch grass. The dogs trail, point, trail. Finally, Molly stops and looks up at me, tongue lolling — her version of a shrug and apology. What can I say, given the number of easy straight-away shots I've missed this season?

By late morning, the quail have moved from open feeding areas to heavy cover. We fight our way through dense mesquite, cedar and shin oak, at times nearly stumbling over our dogs. The birds are running here as well. We get no classic covey rises; just ragged flushes. Four birds here. Two there. An occasional single. We hear more birds than we see. By noon, there's a slight but satisfying bulge in my game bag. The bloody furrows on the backs of my hands and the scratch across the bridge of Brad's nose remind me that we've earned every bird.

PHOTO © RUSSELL A. GRAVES



I GREW UP READING Nash Buckingham, Havilah Babcock and Robert Ruark, genteel hunters who wrote about the gentleman bobwhite, a bird that would hold obediently beneath the nose of a rigid pointer or setter while nattily clad hunters dismounted or stepped down from a mule-drawn wagon to stroll in for the shooting. The dog handler or assistant would flush the covey, which always flew straight away, the single birds spreading nicely and alighting in the open where they could be worked easily.

I never experienced that kind of hunting, but I believed in it and yearned for it. For me, quail hunting meant following my father's pointers and setters across the small Kentucky farms that provided near-perfect bobwhite habitat in the 1960s. There seemed to be little technique required for taking a 10-bird limit. Hunt the field edges early and late, fencerows, brush piles and bois d'arc during the middle of the day. On nasty days we might sit in the station wagon while our setter Toby or pointers Fanny and Sarah worked a small field.

By the time I started high school, the bobwhite hunting in my part of Kentucky was all but finished. Fescue pastures and clean fencerows had replaced weedy field edges and blackberry thickets. Dad's kennel stood empty. Most of my friends took up deer hunting. I graduated from college, moved to Texas and bought a pretty good German shorthair pup.

That first season, I found myself in some of the best bobwhite habitat in the country. But there were no familiar fencerows and overgrown fields—just thousands of acres of cactus, mesquite, shin oak, sand sage and bluestem. I had to learn to hunt. Fortunately, my year-old pup, Heidi, knew more about it than I did.

I learned right off that you'll rarely find domestic grain in a rangeland quail's crop. I bought a field guide and learned to identify bundle flower, croton, ragweed, sunflower, partridge pea and other native forbs that Texas bobwhites prefer. I still check the crop of nearly every quail I shoot.

Bobwhites follow a daily routine: feed, loaf, feed, roost. Shortly after sunrise, the covey will leave the roost to forage. As soon as the birds fill their crops, they head for loafing or screening cover—low brush that provides overhead protection from avian predators and enough open space at ground level for easy movement. Late afternoon, the birds feed again before roosting. In other words, hunt the open weedy patches early and late and the brushy areas during the middle of the day.

Like most game, quail prefer edges—areas where two types of habitat meet. Little wonder that Texas, with millions of acres of rough, brushy prairie, remains one of the bobwhite's last strongholds.

Heidi and I improved. She stopped wasting her time in the middle of open pastures, and I learned to shut up and let her hunt. Still, I wondered about false points and vanishing coveys—occurrences the old masters rarely mentioned.

★

Wildlife biologists divide quail research history into two eras: BT and AT—Before Telemetry and After Telemetry. Prior to the early 1980s, researchers relied on bands, tags, dyes and legwork to track quail movement. Legendary Texas biologist A.S. Jackson lived with bobwhite coveys for days at a time. These unsophisticated techniques worked; the experts were right far more often than not.

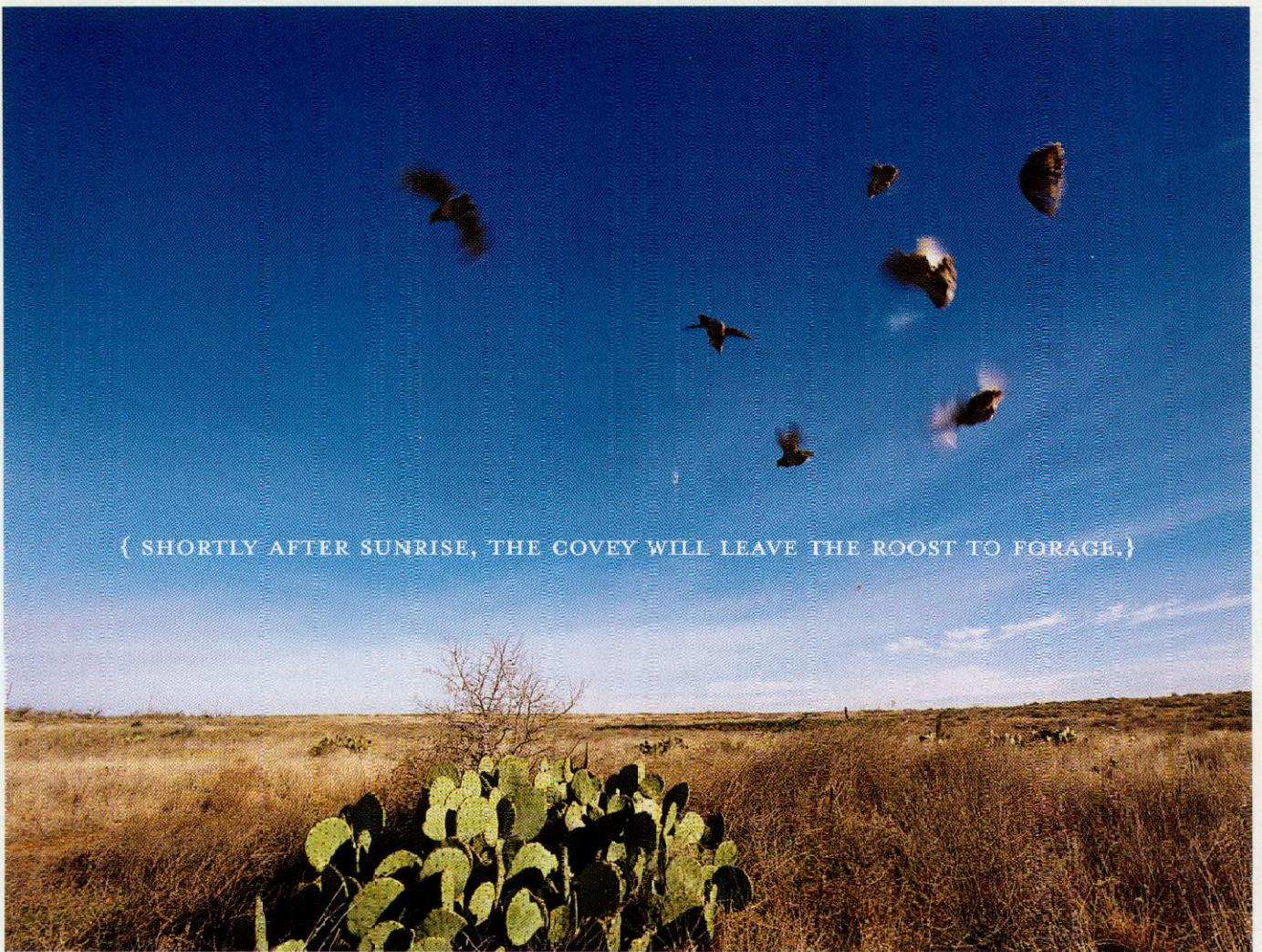
By the mid-1980s, researchers had developed a tiny radio collar that could be safely fitted to an adult quail. Suddenly, biologists were viewing the bobwhite's life with stunning clarity.

In his classic work, *The Old Man and the Boy*, Robert Ruark wrote that the bobwhite is a gentleman and must be approached gentleman to gentleman. I believe he spoke the truth in his day. But Gentleman Bob seems to have adapted. Today, he'll run from a point, then flush wild or hunker so tightly that even the best dogs miss him.

{ BIOLOGISTS ARE STUDYING THE EFFECTS OF HUNTERS AND DOGS ON BOBWHITE BEHAVIOR. }







{ SHORTLY AFTER SUNRISE, THE COVEY WILL LEAVE THE ROOST TO FORAGE. }

PHOTO © DAVIDSAMMS.COM

In the 1990s, biologists with the Auburn University Department of Zoology and Wildlife fitted radio collars on more than 3,500 bobwhites over an eight-year period under the Albany Area Quail Management Project, a telemetry study funded by quail plantations in the Deep South. The study included an investigation of the effectiveness of hunters and their dogs in locating bobwhite coveys on large plantations in southern Georgia.

According to project coordinator Clay Sisson, hunting parties, complete with horses, mule-drawn wagons and high-powered dogs, saw only about half the coveys along their hunting routes. Most coveys were missed because the dogs simply passed them by. About a third of the missed coveys ran, either as the dogs approached or after they had pointed, but before the hunters arrived. Many of the missed coveys flushed wild, both before and after being pointed. Four percent of the missed coveys were pointed but held so tight the hunters were unable to flush them.

Running birds caused most of the false points. Coveys often ran 100 yards or more, and the running and wild flushing increased as the season progressed.

Nonresident quail hunters long have accused Texas rangeland bobwhites of especially roguish behavior. We'll soon know the unseemly details. Researchers at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI) at Texas A&M University-Kingsville are using telemetry data and other tools to model bobwhite population responses to various natural and man-made factors. 'Ultimately, we should gain enough information to predict how bobwhite populations in South Texas respond to factors such as rainfall, predator abundance, habitat changes and hunting pressure,' says Fidel Hernandez

director of the South Texas Quail Research Project. Steve DeMaso, TPWD's upland game bird program leader, serves on the project advisory board and will perform much of the data analysis.

Concurrently with the South Texas Quail Research Project, CKWRI biologists are studying the effects of hunters and dogs on bobwhite behavior. Preliminary results seem to mirror those of the Auburn University study. 'Just as we've long thought and hunters predicted, the birds definitely gravitated toward thicker cover as the season progressed,' says CKWRI Endowed Chair for Quail Research Larry Brennan. 'Bobwhites definitely learn to avoid hunters.'

Jason Hardin, a master's degree candidate studying under Brennan, monitored 30 radio-collared coveys during hunts in South Texas. The dogs — English pointers — were outfitted with GPS units on their collars. As in Georgia, the dogs located only about half of the coveys.

Early in the season, the birds held well for the dogs. But in February, on one Brooks County ranch, nearly 30 percent ran. So much for Gentleman Bob.

The birds adjust. So can hunters. Clay Sisson offers several suggestions. First, trust your dogs. When a good one points, you can be certain that if birds aren't there now, they just left. Hurry to the point and make a good flushing attempt — especially upwind. If a vigorous attempt fails to produce birds, assume they're running. Recast the dogs and be ready to move up quickly. They might point several times before the birds hold — if they hold at all.

Coveys rarely leave their home range. If you strike out in a favorite spot, you've probably just missed them. Hunt the area carefully before moving on. If you come up empty in the morning, try again



later in the day and approach from a different direction. If you believe a covey has run or flown, put yourself in the birds' place and look for a likely escape route.

Flushed bobwhites almost always fly farther than they appear to. They'll set their wings and bank one way or another before disappearing behind a land feature or clump of cover. They prefer an obstacle between themselves and pursuers. Look for flushed birds on the far sides of creeks or draws or just beyond some natural barrier such as a strip of timber.

Single, air-washed birds seem to hunker in ground cover and vanish. Slow down and make your dog hunt thoroughly. If she gets birdy or false-points, assume the birds are nearby. Time and again, I've yelled at my dogs for apparently pottering over old scent, only to watch them lock up on a tight-holding single.

Why not improve your odds by baiting? The practice is common on large ranches in South Texas where visiting hunters pay top dollar to move 20 or more coveys per day. Corn or other quail food spread along roadsides and hunting routes is assumed to lure birds out of the thick brush and generally makes for easier gunning and dog work.

But according to a recent CKWRI study funded by the Houston chapter of Quail Unlimited, some gunners might want to spend less time in the quail rig and more time on their feet, actually hunting. Preliminary results suggest that baiting along ranch roads can decrease winter survival by concentrating the birds, which in turn draws abnormally large numbers of predators.

According to Fidel Hernandez, both raptor and mammalian predators were more abundant on baited areas than on unbaited sites. Over the September-February study period, bobwhite survival on the unbaited areas ran about 70 percent, while only about 20 percent of the birds survived on sites adjacent to baited roads.

Likewise, supplementing wild populations with pen-reared birds ultimately may do more harm than good. Hernandez and his colleagues released pen-reared birds in prime South Texas quail habitat, then compared wild bobwhite survival to that on similar areas where no pen-reared birds were released.

"As we were releasing the quail, we could see hawks appearing and perching on the brush," Hernandez says. "And pen-reared birds usually are released during hunting season, when we have huge hawk migrations into South Texas."

Not surprisingly, the researchers counted nearly twice as many hawks on the release area. September through February, mortality among wild bobwhites on the stocked areas ran about 70 percent, while the population on control areas suffered only about 37 percent mortality. The researchers also found that the home ranges of coveys in stocked areas tended to be larger than those on areas free of released birds. Hernandez suspects that the introduced birds somehow affect the social structure of the wild coveys.

★

I love sporting art, especially the bird hunting prints that invariably show a taut-muscled pointer backed by an elegant, high-headed setter. Each dog will have a paw stylishly lifted. Just ahead, a pair of bobwhites will be patiently awaiting an unseen hunter. A gentlemanly encounter.

I'll enjoy the scene, but I no longer yearn to experience it the way I did as a boy reading the classic literature. Instead, I'll picture my own cactus-scarred dogs. They'll be a little wild-eyed, in awkward, low-slung points, docked tails and hindquarters quivering like tuning forks. Often as not, one or the other will have an ear flipped back or a ring of dried slobber around her dark muzzle. I can never see the birds in my imagination. They're up ahead somewhere, running, skulking, reminding me why I call myself a hunter. ★

HENRY CHAPPELL'S *new historical novel* is *The Callings*, available from Texas Tech University Press.



PHOTO © DAVIDJISAMS.COM

## BRINGING BACK BOB

BOBWHITE QUAIL CONTINUE to decline throughout their range due to loss of habitat — even in Texas, which still offers the country's best quail hunting. The birds' future depends on sound wildlife management practices today and proper education of the next generation of hunter-conservationists.

TPWD addresses the issue of wildlife management practices by providing — for free — the services of technical guidance biologists. These experts work with landowners to develop plans to improve habitat. For the name of the technical guidance biologist in your area, call (512) 389-4767.

The Bobwhite Brigade, formed in 1993 under the

leadership of Dale Rollins, wildlife specialist with Texas Cooperative Extension, trains students age 13-17 in bobwhite biology and management at four-day camps held at various locations in Texas. TPWD cooperates in the effort, along with other organizations such as Quail Unlimited, USDA-NRCS, the Texas Wildlife Association and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

According to Rollins, Bobwhite Brigade has already educated some 600 students. "We're training these kids to be evangelists for wildlife conservation," he says. When they return to their home communities, the students share what they have learned with others in an effort to interest private

landowners in improving quail habitat.

For information on Bobwhite Brigade, check <[www.texasbrigades.org](http://www.texasbrigades.org)> or call (210) 467-6575.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION on hunting seasons and regulations, see the Texas Parks and Wildlife Outdoor Annual, available wherever hunting licenses are sold, or contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, (800) 792-1112; <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)>

Quail Unlimited, <[www.qu.org](http://www.qu.org)>  
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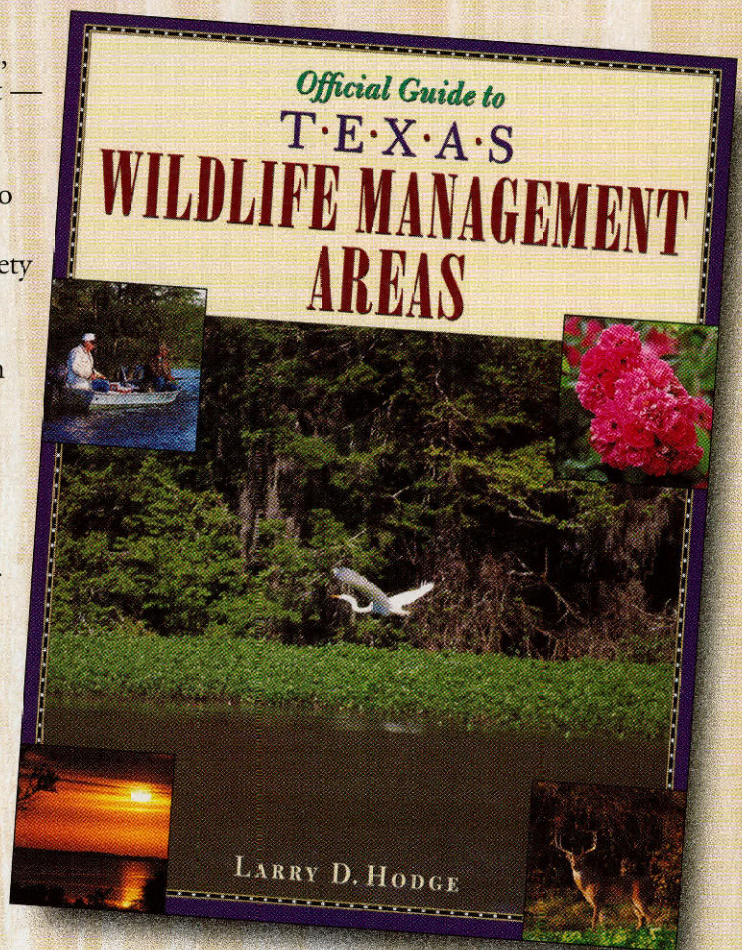
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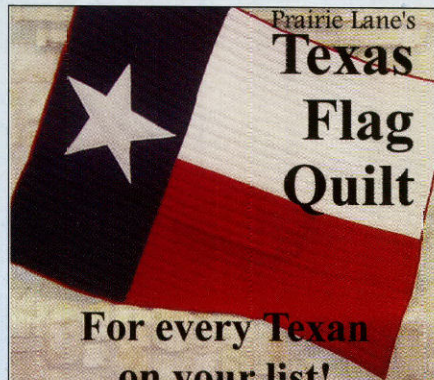
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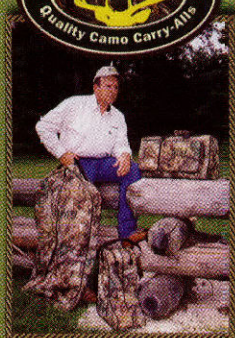
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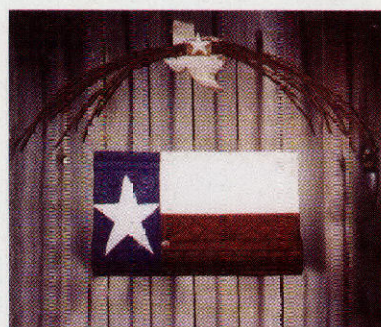
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# PARADISE

*The tiny village of Port Mansfield is paradise for anglers seeking*





# SE Found

*ing solitude and spectacular sight casting. // By Larry Bozka*





## Four days. For four long, insufferable days in August

of last year, the wind outside the condo bordering Port Mansfield's secluded harbor blasted sand through the front door, rocked boats in their moorings and howled like a rabid alley cat frantically trying to claw its way through a rusty tin roof.

Another few miles an hour, we joked, and the National Weather Service would have to give it a name. I already had a few monikers in mind, none of them printable.

Wind is no stranger to the tiny, remote South Texas village of Port Mansfield. Gusts to 20 knots are as commonplace as the squabbling flocks of brown pelicans that every evening hold court atop the nearby dock pilings and channel markers.

Day after day, the locals catch fish, anyway. While Galveston Bay anglers sit in coffee shops off I-45 sharing wistful tales of what might have been had the wind not blown so hard, Mansfield fishers are out on protected and grass-filtered flats casting soft plastic jerkbaits, weedless quarter-ounce spoons and even the occasional sinking fly to the dark, swimming shadows of speckled trout and gently wagging tails of bottom-rooting redfish.

Then again, maybe my previous Port Mansfield expedition had been a cruelly calculated set-up. It was too good, slowly stalking the meandering calf-deep shoreline near Gladys' Hole, knowing that the fish were bound to be there somewhere. One trio of tailing reds appeared, then another, and I started shaking like an anxious 15-year old kid on the way to pick up his first date. Call it, if you will, the flats fisher's equivalent of "buck fever."

Whatever the term, it brutally jangles your nerves while simultaneously sharpening your senses.

The chartreuse Clouser Minnow fly landed just over a yard in front of their blunt, rounded noses. Seemingly synchronized, the predatory flats fish raced to the lure. A hard pull on the line, the hook was set and the eight-weight Austin fly rod bowed deeply under pressure. Twenty-four inches of copper-colored bad attitude angrily rocketed fluorescent yellow fly line through air-clear water no deeper than my stir-gray boots.

The Port Mansfield paradise heals the soul of a dedicated salt-water sight-caster. It's utterly strange how a fish one has caught so many times in so many different scenarios suddenly can seem so unbelievably different. Part of it was the fly rod, the other part the terrain. But that particular late-summer morning, that particular redfish and the unforgettable way it was encountered, caught and released were anything but typical for a fanatical wade fisherman who grew up probing the deep and oft-crowded waters of the Galveston Bay system.

Carefully "palming" the reel to wear down the runaway red, I swore that moment that I would return as soon as possible.

So I did. This, however, was not wind, but a full-blown gale. And despite the most optimistic of hopes, it stubbornly refused to lessen.

Feeling more than a bit sorry for myself, I ambled over to The Cutpost late one evening to commiserate with other folks who might perhaps understand

SALTWATER ANGLERS ON THE UPPER TEXAS COAST USUALLY SEE MORE FISHERS AT THE BOAT RAMP ON A SINGLE MORNING THAN A MANSFIELD FLATS CASTER ENCOUNTERS IN A WEEK.



the inconsolable frustration of a blown-out flats fisherman. About 15 other anglers and tourists were there already, excitedly awaiting the arrival of the popular convenience store's most celebrated visitors.

"They'll be here any minute now," an elderly man told his wife.

"I know that, Harold," she answered, fidgeting with the settings on her video camera. "You think I just moved here?"

Harold looked at me and shrugged.

Sure enough, "they" showed up a few minutes later. Their deep ebony eyes reflected the sparkling glint of a brilliant orange sun as, one after another, an ambling parade of white-tailed deer nonchalantly trotted across the two-lane highway. They cut a tight circle behind the store, stopped for a second or two and, as always, sensing no danger, moved in to feed.

For years, these deer and their ancestors have been coming to enjoy dinner at The Outpost. Any thoughts of fishing-related frustration vaporized when, like wild and silent ghosts, the evenly mixed herd of bucks and does stopped to eat less than 20 yards away.

There easily were two dozen of them. Almost half were middle-aged bucks in the 4-year-old range. Their striking 10-point racks, heavily magnified by dense gray coats of nutrient-carrying velvet, etched sharp silhouettes in the rapidly setting sun.

Elsewhere about town, deer young and old converged on their customary evening haunts. At least a quarter of Port Mansfield's 600-plus permanent residents had settled into plastic lawn chairs and quietly creaking porch swings to relish the ritual. Long-bearded Rio Grande turkeys, many of them mature old gobblers with flaming red heads and wattles the size of buckshot, joined the hungry whitetails beneath the tall aluminum tripods of long-standing backyard corn feeders.

Back at The Outpost, a local fisherman noticed the camera body and telephoto lens strapped around my sunburned neck.

"You down here to write a story?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Great place to fish," he answered. "I moved down here in '89, right after I retired, and I ain't left since. Don't plan to, either.

"But," he cautioned, wagging a long and leathery index finger, "don't make too big a deal of it, okay? There's enough people knowing about this place as it is. It ain't like the old days; it's starting to get crowded out there."

I wasn't about to argue with him. What he doesn't realize, though, and what I didn't tell him, is that saltwater anglers on the upper Texas Coast usually see more fishers at the boat ramp on a single morning than a Mansfield flats caster encounters in a week. From Sabine Pass to South

**Port Mansfield may be the only sleepy little fishing village left on the Texas Coast. The only way to get there by land is on State Highway 186 from Raymondville.**

Padre Island, with the exception of the occasional stopover tournament, Port Mansfield's inshore angling is as private as it gets.

My finger-wagging friend likely would disagree. And admittedly, all things are relative. Compared to a decade ago, Port Mansfield now is a bustling port of call. Nonetheless, to this day it still stands in a remarkably quiet class of its own.

Charles R. Johnson, a local journalist, politician and entrepreneur who — believe it or not — actually fished these waters from horseback in the 1920s, once predicted that Port Mansfield someday would evolve into "a great coastal city" with a thriving industrial complex. Johnson and others did much to develop Port Mansfield, back then known simply as "Red Fish Landing." He was instrumental in establishing the Willacy County Navigation District, the governmental entity that to this day regulates the leasing and usage of Port Mansfield real estate.

Perhaps most noteworthy of all, Johnson didn't rest until the completion of an 18-foot-wide concrete road that linked Port Mansfield with the "big-city" town of Raymondville some 27 miles to the west. Highway 186, though vastly improved, remains the sole connecting vein between U.S. 77 and Port Mansfield.

Johnson's thriving port never blossomed. For that, we should all be immensely grateful. The more things have changed, the more they've remained the same. Where the highway ends, the fishing begins.

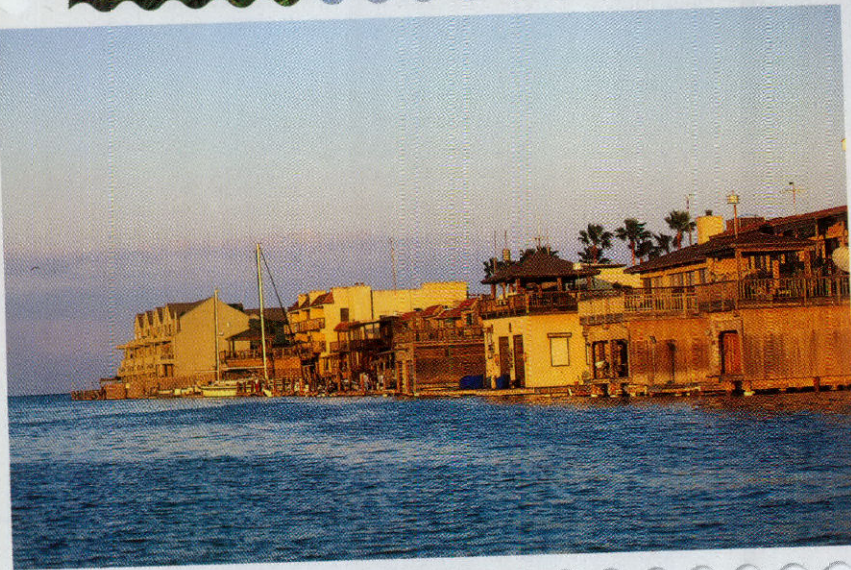
The Lower Laguna Madre is so consistently thin that innovative boaters of yesteryear eventually designed highly specialized craft to conquer the unforgiving shallows. Though now common to other Texas flats fishing locales, tunnel-hulled "scooters" hold historic roots in the sprawling, hypersaline waters outside Port Mansfield's harbor.

It was here that South Texas angling legend Capt. Bob Fuston developed the noisemaking "Mansfield Mauler" clicker cork in the early 1980s. Fuston designed the bright orange float with a stiff wire core to enhance both the action and sound of soft plastic shrimptails and shadtails. Today, generically known as "The Mauler," Fuston's novel angling accessory is regularly used by fishermen coast-wide.

A retired engineer who could live and fish anywhere he likes,







You have to remember, this isn't anything like the upper coast. Break out of the Mansfield jetties and you'll be in blue water no more than 20 miles out."

Redfish or red snapper, speckled trout or strutting turkeys, white marlin or white-tailed deer, there is no better locale in Texas from which to pursue, photograph or simply view such a remarkably broad spectrum of wildlife species.

"There are probably four deer for every full-time resident of Port Mansfield," Shuler says with a good-natured laugh. "The crowds love them. As for Shirley and me, we love 'em, too. But," he adds, "we have to keep the fence around the lodge in good shape or we'll lose our landscaping work overnight."

Fuston and his wife Fran still call Port Mansfield home. "I reckon we'll be here 'til we die," he says, still sporting a thick, salt-and-pepper beard and his trademark red bandana over a banana republic tan. "Seeing as how fishing is my life, there's no reason to go anywhere else."

Local entrepreneur Bruce Shuler and his wife, Shirley, enthusiastically concur with Fuston. Owners of Get-A-Way Adventures, the area's newest fishing lodge, the Shulers realized several years ago that Port Mansfield is arguably the sole remaining "sleepy little fishing village" on the Texas Coast.

Bruce, a Houston-area construction contractor, says the need for a full-service fishing lodge in such a remote and resource-rich area was glaringly apparent. "The demand was definitely here," he recalls. "Not only for flats fishing, but for birdwatching and even offshore fishing as well."

Its ageless ambience aside, Port Mansfield is gradually joining the modern world. Satellite dishes protrude from the roofs of everything from travel trailers to elaborate waterfront estates. Residents have access to DSL computer hookups. Rental condos are plentiful, and more are in the works.

Yet it's highly unlikely that this colorful coastal community will ever lose its inherent wildness. That untamed essence has always been, and always will be, the core element of the community that keeps visitors coming back time and time again.

Sure, even Port Mansfield can get "blown out" now and then. But if the price of fruitless fishing efforts is watching a mind-boggling array of wildlife stroll about carelessly on powder-white sand that's perpetually

kissed by what may be the cleanest and clearest saltwater in Texas, then so be it.

Just be sure not to tell anyone else. ★

COMPARED TO A DECADE AGO, PORT MANSFIELD IS NOW A BUSTLING PORT OF CALL. NONETHELESS, TO THIS DAY IT STILL STANDS IN A REMARKABLY QUIET CLASS OF ITS OWN.



Roseate spoonbills gather in the background as this angler casts on the East Cut. For a town its size (population 415), Port Mansfield offers a number of accommodations and fishing guides.



### GETTING THERE

For a village its size, Port Mansfield offers plentiful fishing guides and accommodations. For complete information, contact the Port Mansfield Chamber of Commerce at (956) 944-2354. Send mail to: Tricie Buchen, Port Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 75, Port Mansfield, TX 78596. Send e-mail to: shell@sta.com.



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# Float

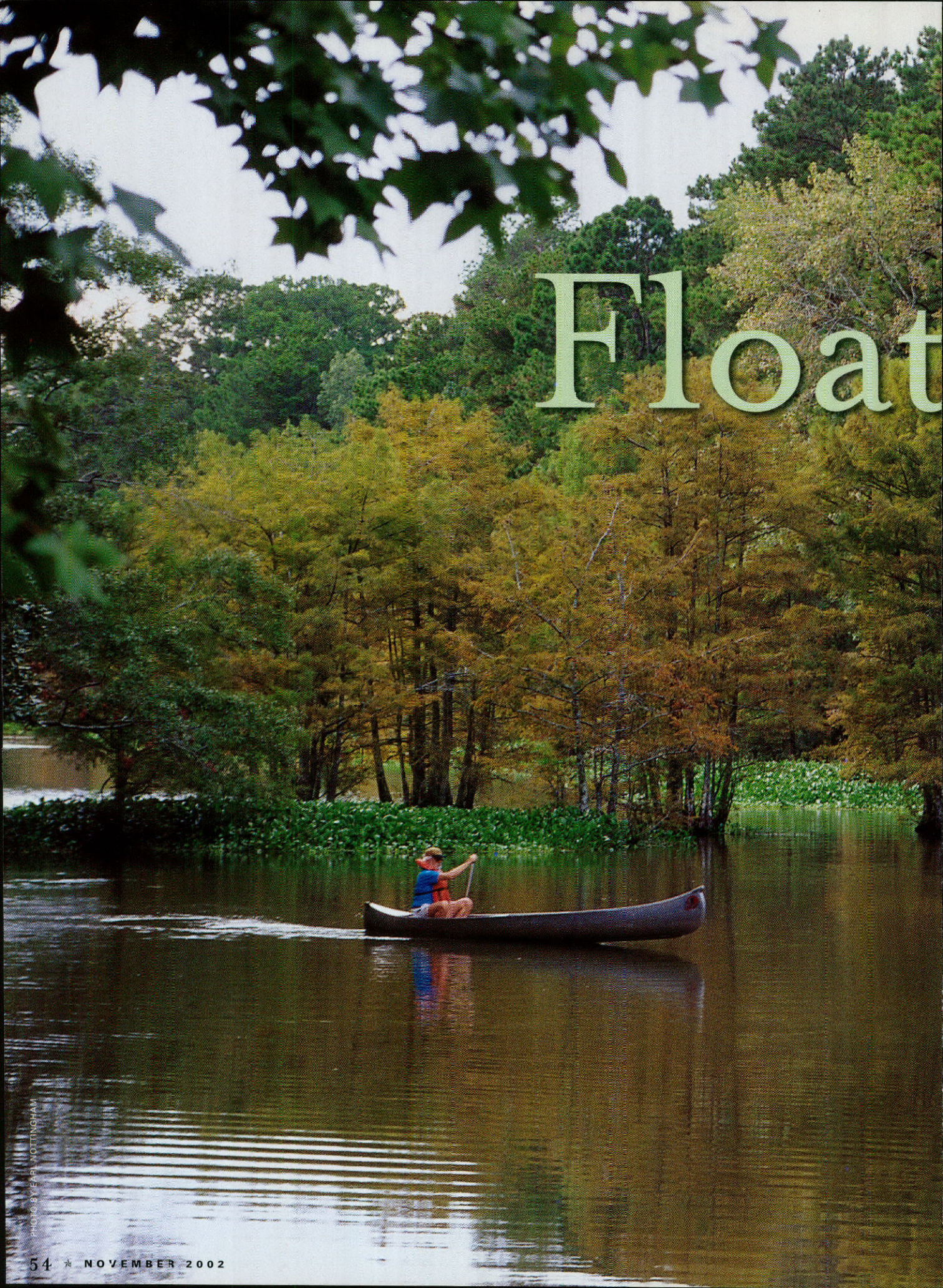
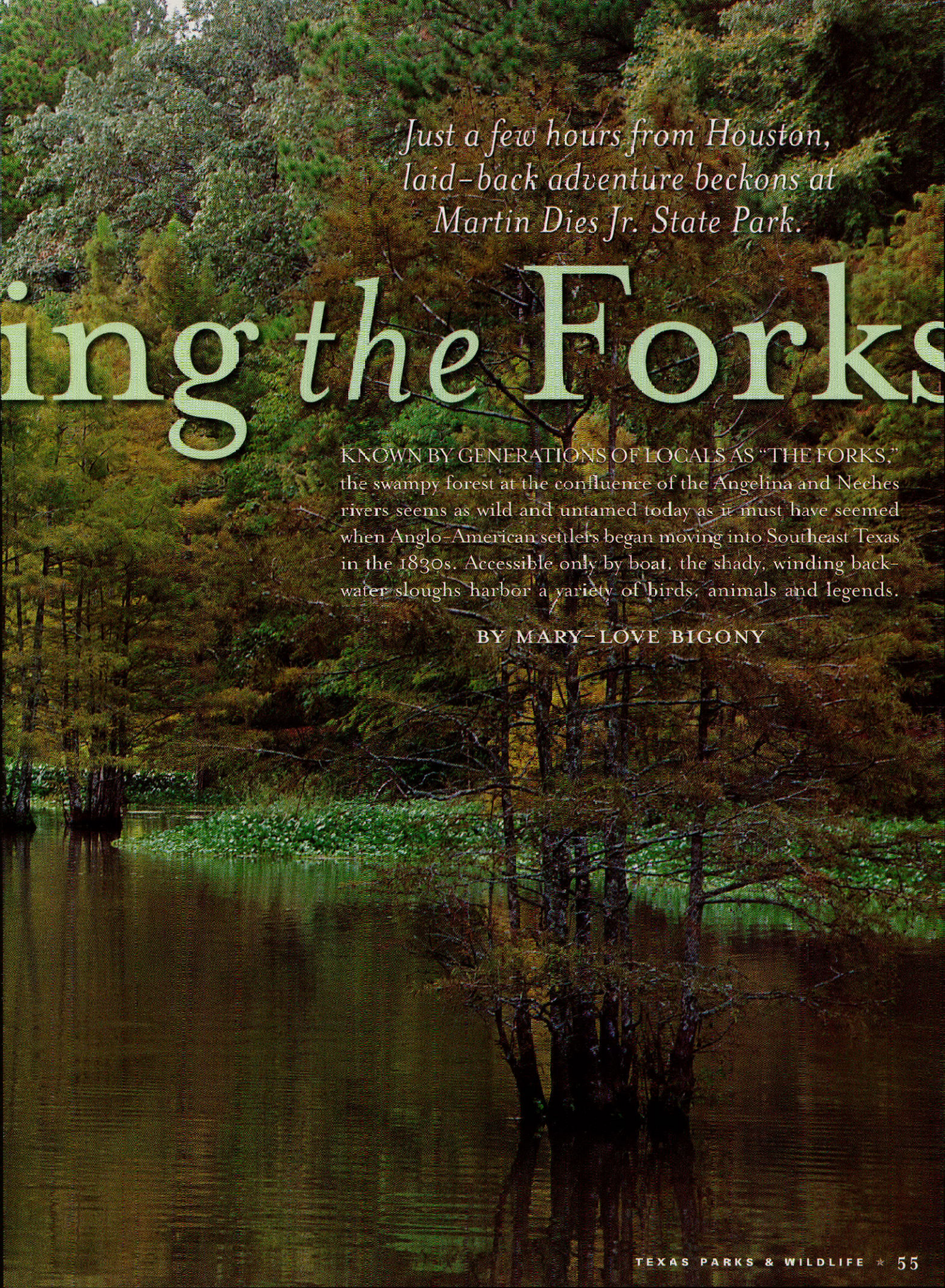


PHOTO BY PEARL VOTTINGHAM





*Just a few hours from Houston,  
laid-back adventure beckons at  
Martin Dies Jr. State Park.*

# ing the Forks

KNOWN BY GENERATIONS OF LOCALS AS "THE FORKS," the swampy forest at the confluence of the Angelina and Neches rivers seems as wild and untamed today as it must have seemed when Anglo-American settlers began moving into Southeast Texas in the 1830s. Accessible only by boat, the shady, winding back-water sloughs harbor a variety of birds, animals and legends.

BY MARY-LOVE BIGONY



# “The Forks was wild country,”

wrote the late Dan Lay of a boat trip he took through the area in 1938. “Endless sloughs snaked among cypress and tupelo gum trees, and oaks lined the banks. Alligators sank beneath the water. A few years before, deer hunters on one of the sloughs shot a ‘gator that weighed more than 1,200 pounds. According to legend, ivory-billed woodpeckers still lived there.”

Today the Forks and the acres surrounding it are part of the Angelina-Neches/Dam B Wildlife Management Area. Once a month, Martin Dies, Jr. State Park offers a guided canoe trip down the Angelina and Neches rivers and into the Forks. Together, the state park and adjacent wildlife management area provide a unique East Texas experience year-round for canoeists and kayakers, as well as campers, hikers, anglers and cyclists.

On a balmy June morning, participants in the Floating the Forks guided canoe trip meet at the park’s Walnut Ridge Unit. They pile into a small bus, canoes and paddles packed into the back, for a short ride to the

wildlife management area. I meet up with them in Bevilport, on the banks of the Angelina River, where the trip will begin. Bevilport was an important river navigation point from 1830 to 1860. Sam Houston bought the first lot in this townsite, but today little remains except a historical marker. “Bevilport shipped cotton, hides and other East Texas products to markets in New Orleans,” it says. “Its docks were busy with flatboats, keelboats — its stores packed with travelers.”

Park ranger Keith Hawkins helps us unload the canoes — you can bring your own or rent one from the park — and launch them into the clear water of the Angelina River. “The river was named for an Indian girl that Spanish missionaries called Angelina,” he tells us as we get underway. Keith says the park offers this trip year-round; thunderstorms with lightning are about the only thing that will deter it. “We started out one winter day when the temperature was 28 degrees,” he says. “By the afternoon, though, it was in the 60s.”

Our canoes glide along the clear river. Thick stands of oak, birch and sweet gum line the banks, and graceful branches of willow trees hang over the water. Lotus and water lilies dot the surface and moss-draped cypress trees provide an Old South ambience. A green heron takes flight, followed by another heron, the little blue.

After an hour or so, Keith motions the canoes to follow him to a nearby sandbar where he hops ashore and, with a mischievous grin, grabs hold of a rope tied to a tree, gets a running start, swings out over the river and drops in. A couple of enthusiastic youngsters take their turns on the swing, followed by young-at-heart grandmother Joyce Bush, a park volunteer who is helping Keith with today’s tour.

After the swimmers and we less-adventurous waders dry ourselves off, Keith unfolds a map, spreads it out on the ground and shows us how far we’ve come. Then we’re back on the river.

An hour or so later, as the canoes approach the Forks, Keith motions toward an opening in the dense tangle of trees and vines. “This is Bee Tree Slough,” he says. “Stay together, and watch out for snags.”

The water is sluggish and the vegetation is thick. Hardwood bottomland ecosystems such as this are rare in Texas today, but logging in the early 20th century was selective here. We wind around snags and cypress knees as if navigating an obstacle course, all the while keeping an eye out for alligators. A red-winged blackbird perches on a low cypress limb. Warblers sing a late-spring chorus, but are hidden from sight in the thick hardwoods. A woodpecker’s tapping echoes through the trees and somewhere in the distance a bullfrog croaks.

Emerging from the Forks into the Neches River, we paddle for a while longer before pulling off the river for a quick lunch. As we relax and chat, Keith points skyward and I grab my binoculars just in time to see a swallow-tailed kite soaring overhead.

Back on the water, we see a baby alligator swimming down the middle of the river, but that would be the only ‘gator spotted on this trip. “There have been days we’ve seen 12 or more alligators,” says Keith. “You just never know.”

Signs along the river bank indicate locations of Corps of Engineers campsites. Keith says these are primitive campsites, most of them accessible only by boat. For anyone looking for a genuine Huckleberry Finn experience, this would be it.

By early afternoon, the state park’s Walnut Ridge unit is in view. When we







[ WE WIND AROUND SNAGS AND CYPRESS KNEES AS IF NAVIGATING AN OBSTACLE COURSE, ALL THE WHILE KEEPING AN EYE OUT FOR ALLIGATORS. ]

PHOTO BY LAUREN PINE





reach the park everyone helps carry the canoes and paddles ashore. Some folks will head back home to nearby Houston, while others will spend the night at the state park.

The park has units on both sides of U.S. Highway 190, and most of the campsites have a picturesque view of 15,000-acre B.A. Steinhagen Reservoir. Built in the early 1950s, Steinhagen was at the vanguard of reservoir construction in East Texas and has a more intimate atmosphere than many of the larger impoundments. Large boats are absent in Steinhagen, due to the shallow water of the lake, and trees and other vegetation are dense, much like the nearby Big Thicket.

The Walnut Ridge unit, on the north side of the highway, has campsites along the scenic lakeshore, as well as some screened shelters and an air-conditioned mini-cabin. Park superintendent Ellen Buchanan says that families planning reunions often rent all the screened shelters, along with the nearby dining hall, which has a complete kitchen. The Hen House Ridge unit, south of the highway, also has lakeside campsites as well as some sites along the wooded shores of Gum Slough.

What do people come to this park to do? "Relax," says Ellen. "You can see it on their faces as soon as they drive through the gate." That does seem to be the case throughout the park. Canoeists take a leisurely paddle in the lake; visitors can rent canoes, kayaks and boats from the park for periods of a half-day up to two days. Each unit has a lighted fishing pier and a boat ramp, and anglers catch largemouth bass around stands of baldcypress trees. They also reel in plenty of catfish, crappie and sunfish, as well as the occasional chain pickerel. The Hen House Ridge unit has a swimming beach complete with sand. "When the lake is low," says Ellen, "the swimming area looks almost like the Gulf of Mexico with all the beach umbrellas and sand castles!"

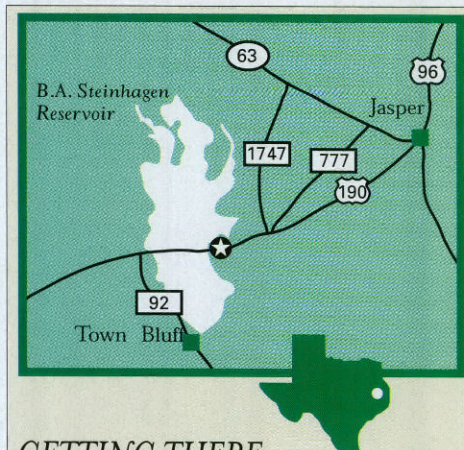
Martin Dies, Jr. State Park has an extensive network of trails, all of which are heavily used. The trail in the Hen House Ridge unit loops through the swamp area on the eastern edge of the park. The trail in the Walnut Ridge unit crosses a boardwalk over a slough, which is an excellent place to see a purple gallinule in the summer, waterfowl in the winter and dozens of other birds at all times of year. At the other end of the boardwalk, the trail continues into the wildlife management area, where there are two loop trails, one of which goes through all the ecosystem types on the WMA.

On the first, second and fourth Saturdays of each month, a park employee

leads a guided nature hike called "A Walk on the Wild Side," pointing out natural features unique to this part of the state. "The hike changes throughout the year, depending on what's in bloom and what birds are in the area," says Ellen.

Bicycles are an excellent way to explore the park and WMA. Visitors can bring their own bikes or rent one at the park. Vegetation changes with the seasons. Springtime brings blooming dogwood and magnolia trees. In the fall, cypress trees take on a golden hue, as do some of the beech and gum trees.

If you're looking for a scenic destination away from crowds and the demands of daily life where you can enjoy some solitude, this is it. If you're looking for a park with knowledgeable folks to take you on a hike or a guided canoe trip, this is it, too. ★



## GETTING THERE

Martin Dies, Jr. State Park is located about 2½ hours northeast of Houston. From Woodville take U.S. Highway 190 for about 17 miles. From Jasper take US 190 for about 12 miles.

Reservations are required for the Floating the Forks guided canoe tour, which takes place on the third Saturday of each month. Cost is \$30 per canoe per two people. For those who bring their own canoe the cost of the tour is \$25 per canoe per two people.

No reservations are required for the Walk on the Wild Side guided hike, and there is no fee.

To reserve a spot on one of the guided tours, call the park at (409) 384-5231. For more information about the park go to <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/martindi/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/martindi/)>. To reserve a campsite, call (512) 389-8900 or go to <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/admin/res/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/admin/res/)>.

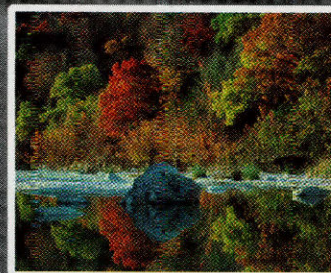
For state park information call (800) 792-1112 or go to <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/)>.

Martin Dies, Jr. State Park is site UTC 013 on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. For more information about the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail go to <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails/)>.

TOP PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT; MIDDLE PHOTOS © GRADY ALLEN; BOTTOM PHOTO BY TPWD



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*Peace on Earth*  
at a Texas State Park



*This holiday season, why not share some quiet time with family and friends in the great outdoors? The mild weather is perfect for hiking, visiting a famous landmark or just sitting around a campfire. Many sites also have special holiday events. This year, discover that there really is peace on earth.*



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LEGEND, *Lore*, & LEGACY

*A "blue norther" can drop temperatures  
50 degrees or more in just a few hours.*

BY MARY-LOVE BIGONY

# NORTHERS

PHOTO © WYMAN MEINZER



**O**ut of the north it comes, barreling toward Texas like a herd of wild mustangs. Before it arrives we're dressed in shorts, T-shirts and sandals. In its wake we've donned jeans, sweaters and heavy socks. The season's first norther brings relief to summer-weary Texans and provides a topic of conversation at coffee shops and water coolers from Texline to Tomball.

Sure, it gets cold in other states. But so much of Texas is warm for so much of the year — how often have you worn shorts well into November? — that the dramatic temperature drop that comes with a norther is often the lead story on local newscasts.

And besides, weather is a big deal to Texans. "Listen to any longtime resident of Texas talk about the weather, and you will be struck by the fact that the word *front* is a key element of his or her vocabulary," writes George W. Bomar in *Texas Weather*. He explains that in the type of cold front Texans call a norther, temperatures within the frontal zone change substantially over short distances.

Bomar writes of a September norther in which the thermometer plunged 50 degrees in just a few hours. "Temperatures in the middle of the afternoon eased near 100 from the southern High Plains eastward into the prairies and plateaus of Central Texas." By midafternoon, dark clouds were on the horizon and by the time the sun went down, readings were in the 50s.

Photographer Wyman Meinzer of Benjamin has worked outdoors all his life. "Many years ago I was on a six-mile cattle drive in Knox County, in the Rolling Plains," he says. "The weather was beautiful when we started out, with a warm wind stirring from the south. We had gone perhaps halfway when we noticed a blue haze to the north. Soon the wind began to shift and within minutes a stiff, freezing gale blew in from the north. I was so cold, I had to

◀ **A NORTHER IN FEBRUARY 1899 PARALYZED THE ENTIRE STATE. RIVERS FROM THE RED TO THE NUECES FROZE SOLID.**

get off my horse and lead him. My feet and hands were numb, and I had to turn around and walk backward."

The blue haze Meinzer saw off in the distance is where many people say we get the term "blue norther" — from the appearance of the front's leading edge. Meteorologist Robert Blaha of the National Weather Service, who says there are many explanations of the term blue norther, says it could come from clearing blue skies in the wake of the front. "Also," he adds, "the cold Arctic blast has been referred to as 'blue' because of the hardships it imposes on agriculture and other industries sensitive to the weather."

"Blue northers get their start when a bitterly cold air mass builds up not far from the North Pole," says Dave Thurlow of *The Weather Notebook*. "This usually happens beneath a dome of high pressure, which leads to light winds, clear skies and successively colder nights. Sometimes the high pressure builds up enough to spread south through sheer gravity, like a blob of maple syrup rolling across your pancakes. However, for a really intense norther, you need the jet stream to help push the air south." While a Polar air mass can take days and even weeks to form, it can speed from the U.S.-Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico in less than two days.

Nowadays, meteorologists can warn us when a norther is on the way. But travelers on the frontier often were lulled into complacency by the balmy temperatures only to be shocked by the cold blast that appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

J. Ross Browne traveled to the Texas-Mexico border in 1868 to investigate livestock smuggling. He kept a journal on that trip, which was published later that year in *Overland Monthly*. Browne arrived in Galveston in early March and took a steamer to

Houston. He missed the stage to Austin, and joined two other travelers to hire a wagon and horses. One of them was "a hunter, by the name of Johnson."

Midway through the trip, "Johnson observed that we had better put on our coats as a norther was coming," writes Browne. "I could see nothing of it, and was surprised that he should speak so confidently when the sky was quite clear and the air soft and warm. What instinct was it that taught him to judge by signs apparently invisible?"

"Don't you see," he observed, pointing towards the northern part of the horizon, "that band of cattle in the distance? Observe how they switch their tails in the air, and make for the woodland. They already feel it."

"In a few minutes little whirls of dust begin to rise from the bare places on the prairie," he continues. "The temperature suddenly fell. Before we could get our coats from under the seats the first blast of wind struck us like a shower-bath.... The wind blew in quick sharp blasts, growing colder and colder each moment till it became actually scathing.... In something less than half an hour, so intensely penetrating became the cold that I began to entertain some fear of being frozen...."

Even with warning, though, people can be surprised at the ferocity of a norther. Photographer Russell Graves of Childress remembers a 1997 norther. "The weather man in Amarillo had been tracking a big Canadian cold front pushing south," Graves says. "It was due to move into the Panhandle after sundown, so I made plans to get out early and take pictures." He got up at 3 a.m. and drove 60 miles in falling snow to Caprock Canyons State Park.

"I got to the park about an hour before sunrise," he continues. "Most of the park's roads were closed due to the steep grades and slippery conditions, so I was relegated to the front part of the park. I left the warmth of my truck for the buffalo pasture, and saw a big bull standing with his head facing into the wind. The actual temperature was around 10 degrees Fahrenheit with a stiff north wind of about 20 miles per hour. It was the coldest I think I had ever felt and the wind and snow stung my face like needles. When I started to photograph the buffalo the motor drive on my camera became sluggish and I thought it was going to quit on me. I spent a couple of rolls of film on the bull until I got too cold. When I got back in my truck and looked in the mirror, my goatee was coated in ice."

A norther in February 1899 paralyzed the entire state. Rivers from the Red to the Nueces froze solid. The Feb. 17, 1899, issue of the weekly *Corpus Christi Caller* carried this report: "It froze salt water in the bay out to the T-head. Fishing boats were encased in ice at the wharves; boys walked out on ice almost as far as the Central Wharf bath house. Nothing like it was ever seen before."

"Readings bottomed out below zero in virtually all of the northern two-thirds of Texas," writes Bomar of the 1899 front, "while in the usually tepid southern extremity of the state, temperatures skidded just short of 10 degrees Fahrenheit. No corner of the state — not even the partially insulated offshore islands — escaped the bone-numbing cold of this cold snap."

The blue norther is a fixture of Texas folklore. J. Frank Dobie, who also used the term "blue whistler," called it the meteorological pride of all Texas. In a case of profound understatement, land surveyors in what is now Brown County, trapped in 1850 by a blue norther, named the town where they were trapped Zephyr. But alas, the blue norther is not strictly a Texas phenomenon; it's common across the Great Plains. The name itself, however, is a "pure Texasism" says *The New Handbook of Texas*. Other states call it a blue darter, blue blizzard and even a Texas norther, but only in Texas is it called a blue norther. ★



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# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS



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## TELEVISION

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

**Oct. 27 – Nov. 3:** Beneath the surface at Sea Center; musical frogs; Ft. Griffin State Park and Historic Site; West Texas game wardens; High Island birds.

**Nov. 3 – 10:** A wildlife safari near Ft. Worth; canoe camping tips; Fort McKavett State Historic Site; avian and human migrants to South Texas; fall color.

**Nov. 10 – 17:** Living the cowboy life; call of the meadowlark; the Admiral Nimitz Museum; swift water rescue; turkeys.

**Nov. 17 – 24:** How to choose a PFD; tracking mountain lions; preserving Hueco Tanks; a half century of service; Devil's Sinkhole bats.

**Nov. 24 – Dec. 1:** The Barton Warnock Center; gobbler calls; flies, fins and feathers at South Llano River State Park; jellyfish; outdoor grants; coastal water birds.



Get a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the Barton Warnock Center. Watch the week of November 24.

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- AMARILLO:** KACV, Ch. 2 / Sat. 6 p.m.
- AUSTIN:** KLRU, Ch. 18 / Sun. 10 a.m. / Mon. 12:30 p.m. / KLRU-TOO. Cable Ch. 2C / Tues. 11 p.m.
- BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION:** KAMU, Ch. 15 / Thurs. 7 p.m. / Sun. 5 p.m., 10:30 p.m.
- CORPUS CHRISTI:** KEDT, Ch. 16 / Sun. 11 a.m. / Thurs. 1 p.m. / Fri. 8:30 p.m.
- DALLAS-FORT WORTH:** KERA, Ch. 13 / Sat. 8:30 a.m. Also serving Abilene, Denton, Longview, Marshall, San Angelo, Texarkana, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Sherman
- EL PASO:** KCOS, Ch. 13 / Sat. 5 p.m. (rotates with other programs; check listings)
- HARLINGEN:** KMBH, Ch. 60 / Sun. 5:30 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. noon
- 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 / Friday noon, Sunday 2 p.m.
- WACO:** KWBU, Ch. 34 / Sat. 3 p.m.

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

## RADIO

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- ABILENE:** KACU-FM 89.7 / 7:06 a.m. & 1:44, 6:01 p.m., KWKC-AM 1340 / 6:28 a.m.
- ATLANTA:** KAQC Cable Ch. 22 / 8:15 a.m.
- ALPINE:** KSRC-FM 92.7 / 9 a.m.
- AMARILLO:** KACV-FM 89.9 / 11:20 a.m.
- AUSTIN:** KUT-FM 90.5 / 1:04 p.m.
- BEAUMONT:** KLVI-AM 560 / 5:20 a.m.
- BIG SPRING:** KBST-AM 1490 / 10:55 a.m., cable ch. 23 / 10:55 a.m., KBST-FM 95.7 / 10:55 a.m.
- BRADY:** KNEL-AM 1490 / 7:20 a.m. & 8:50 p.m. (7:50 a.m. Sat.), KNEL-FM 95.3 / 7:20 a.m. & 8:50 p.m. (7:50 a.m. Sat.)
- BRIDGEPORT:** KBOC-FM 98.3 / 8:10 a.m. & 5:15 p.m.
- BRYAN:** KZNE-AM 1150 / 5:45 p.m.
- CANTON:** KVCI-AM 1510 / 6:40 a.m.
- CANYON:** KWTS-FM 91.1 / noon hour & 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- CARTHAGE:** KGAS-AM 1590 / 6:46 a.m., KGAS-FM 104.3 / 6:46 a.m.
- CENTER:** KDET-AM 930 / 12:25 p.m., KDET-FM 100.2 / 12:25 p.m.
- COLEMAN:** KSTA-AM 1000 / 5:05 p.m.
- COLUMBUS:** KULM-FM 98.3 / 7:20 a.m.
- COMANCHE:** KCOM-AM 1550 / 6:30 a.m.
- COMMERCE:** KETR-FM 88.9 / 10:15 a.m.
- CORPUS CHRISTI:** KEDT-FM 90.3 / 5:34 p.m., KFTX-FM 97.5 / 5:40 a.m., KBSO-FM 94.7 / 6:50 a.m.
- CROCKETT:** KIVY-AM 1290 / 8:15 a.m., KIVY-FM 92.7 / 8:15 a.m.
- CUERO:** KVCQ-FM 97.7 / 6:50 a.m.
- DEL RIO:** KWMC-AM 1490 / 5:50 p.m.
- DENISON/SHERMAN:** KJIM-AM 1500 / 8:55 a.m.
- DENTON/DALLAS/FT. WORTH:** KNTU-FM 88.1 / 10:30 a.m. & 2:30, 5:50 p.m.



**DIMITT:** 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.  
**EL CAMPO:** KULP-AM 1390 / 2 p.m.  
**FAIRFIELD:** KNES-FM 99.1 / 6:47 a.m.  
**FLORESVILLE:** KWCB-FM 89.7 / 1:30 p.m.  
**FORT STOCKTON:** KFST-AM 860 / 7:56 a.m. & 12:50 p.m., KFTS-FM 94.3 / 7:56 a.m. & 12:50 p.m.  
**FORT WORTH:** KTCU-FM 88.7 / 8:50 a.m. & 5:50 p.m.  
**GAINESVILLE:** KGAF-AM 1580 / 7 a.m.  
**GALVESTON:** KGBC-AM 1540 / 11:45 a.m.  
**GATESVILLE:** KASZ-FM 98.3 / 7:24 a.m.  
**GRANDBURY:** KPIR-AM 1420 / 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
**GREENVILLE:** KGVL-AM 1400 / 8:15 a.m.  
**HALLETTVILLE:** KHLT-AM 1520 / 6:50 a.m., KTXM-FM 99.9 / 6:50 a.m.  
**HASKELL:** KVRP-FM 97.1 / 9:30 a.m. M-F; KVRP-AM 1400 / 9:30 a.m. M-F  
**HARLINGEN:** KMBH-FM 88.9 / 4:58 p.m.  
**HEREFORD:** KPAN-AM 860 / 2:50 p.m., KPAN-FM 106.3 / 2:50 p.m.  
**HILLSBORO:** KHBR-AM 1560 / 9:30 a.m.  
**HOUSTON:** KCOH-AM 1430 / Saturday 4:30-6:30 a.m.  
**HUNTSVILLE:** KSHU-FM 90.5 / 11:55 a.m., 5:55 p.m.  
**JACKSONVILLE:** KEBE-AM 1400 / 7:15 a.m.  
**JOURDANTON:** KBUC-FM 95.7 / Sat. noon  
**JUNCTION:** KMBL-AM 1450 / 6:46 a.m. & 12:46, 5:46 p.m., KOOK-FM 93.5 / 6:46 a.m. & 12:46, 5:46 p.m.  
**KERRVILLE:** KITE-FM 92.3 / 11:51 a.m. & 12:51, 5:40, 8:40 p.m., KERV-AM 1230 / 6:50 a.m. & 12:50, 5:50 p.m., KRVL-FM 94.3 / 6:10 a.m. & 12:50, 5:50 p.m., KRNH-FM 92.3 / 5:31 a.m. & 12:57, 7:35 p.m.  
**LAMPASAS:** KCYL-AM 1450 / 7:10 a.m., KACO-FM 101.9 / 7:10 a.m.  
**LAREDO:** KHOY-FM 88.1 / 2 p.m. M-F  
**LEVELLAND:** KLVT-AM 1230 / 12:05 p.m.  
**LUBBOCK:** KJTV-AM 950 / 6:50 a.m.  
**MADISONVILLE:** KMVL-AM 1220 / 7:45 a.m., KMVL-FM100.5 / 7:45 a.m.  
**MARBLE FALLS:** KHLB-AM 1340 / 7:20 a.m., KHLB-FM 106.9 / 7:20 a.m.  
**MARSHALL:** KCUL-AM 1410 / 6:39 a.m., KCUL-FM 92.3 / 6:39 a.m.  
**MCALLEN:** KHID-FM 88.1 / 4:58 p.m.  
**MESQUITE:** KEOM-FM 88.5 / 5:30 a.m. & 2:30, 8:30 p.m. M-Th. (5:30 a.m. & 4:45 p.m. Friday)  
**MIDLAND/ODESSA:** KCRS-AM 550 / 6:15 a.m. & 5:50 p.m., KOCV-FM 91.3 / 7:37 a.m. Monday-Friday  
**MINEOLA:** KMOO-FM 99.9 / 5:15 p.m.  
**MONAHANS:** KLBO-AM 1330 / 8:50 a.m.  
**NACOGDOCHES:** KSAU-FM 90.1 / 3 p.m.  
**NEW BRAUNFELS:** KGNB-AM 1420 / 6:52 a.m.  
**OZONA:** KYXX-FM 94.3 / 6:46 a.m., noon & 3:46 p.m.  
**PECOS:** KIUN-AM 1400 / 10:30 a.m. & 5:20 p.m.  
**PLAINVIEW:** KKYN-AM 1090 / TBA

**ROCKDALE:** KRXT-FM 98.5 / 5:04 a.m. & 6:35 p.m.  
**SAN ANGELO:** KUTX-FM 90.1 / 1:04 p.m.  
**SAN ANTONIO:** KSTX-FM 89.1 / 9:04 p.m. Th., KENS-AM 1160 / 7:40 a.m., 12:26 & 5:45 p.m.  
**SAN AUGUSTINE:** KCOT-FM 92.5 / 12:25 p.m.  
**SEGUIN:** KWED-AM 1580 / 7:55 a.m.  
**SONORA:** KHOS-FM 92.1 / 6:22 p.m.  
**SCHULENBERG:** KTXM-FM 99.9 / 6:50 a.m.  
**STEPHENVILLE:** KSTV-FM 93.1 / 5 a.m. - 7 a.m.  
**SULPHUR SPRINGS:** KSST-AM 1230 / 2:50, 3:50 & 11:22 a.m.  
**TEMPLE:** KTEM-AM 1400 / 6:50 a.m.  
**TEXARKANA:** KTXK-FM 91.5 / noon hour  
**UVALDE:** KVOU-AM 1400 / 8:30 a.m. KVOU-FM 104.9 / 8:30 a.m.  
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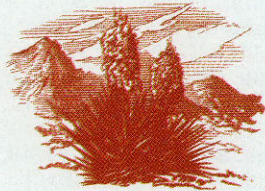
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## BIG BEND COUNTRY

**NOV.:** Desert Garden Tours. Available by request for groups of six or more. Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Terlingua. (915) 424-3327.

**NOV.:** Bouldering Tours, every Wednesday through Sunday by advance request only, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso. (915) 849-6684.

**NOV.:** Hiking Tours, every Wednesday through Sunday by advance request only, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso. (915) 849-6684.

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

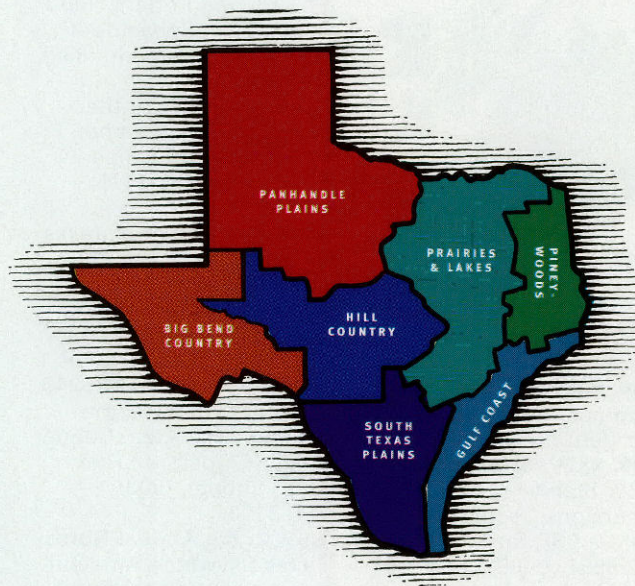
**NOV.:** Fate Bell Cave Dwelling Tour, every Wednesday through Sunday, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock. (915) 292-4464.

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

**NOV. 1-26:** Fishing on the Rio Grande, Black Gap WMA, Alpine. (915) 376-2216.

**Nov. 2, 16:** Birding Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. (915) 229-3416.

**NOV. 2, 3, 16, 17:** Guided Interpretive Tours, Franklin Mountains SP, El Paso. (915) 566-6441.



**NOV. 3, 17:** Guale Mesa Tour, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. (915) 229-3416.

**NOV. 8-10:** Fall Trail Ride, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. (281) 486-8070.

**NOV. 9:** Stories of Spirits, Magoffin Home SHS, El Paso. (915) 533-5147

**NOV. 15-17, NOV. 29-DEC. 1:** Desert Survival, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. (877) 371-2634.

**NOV. 16:** Presa Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock. (915) 292-4464.

**NOV. 17:** Bird Identification Tours, Hueco Tanks SHS, El Paso. (915) 849-6684.

**NOV. 17:** Upper Canyon Tour, Seminole Canyon SP & HS, Comstock. (915) 292-4464.

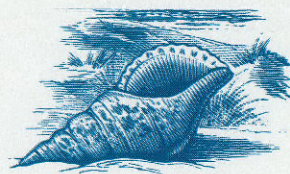
**NOV. 17-18:** Leonid Meteor Shower, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. (915) 229-3416.

**NOV. 23:** Trip to Madrid Falls, Big Bend Ranch SP, Presidio. (915) 229-3416.

**NOV. 23:** Basket Weaving

Workshop, Fort Leaton SHS, Presidio. (915) 229-3613.

**NOV. 30:** V V 75 Tour, Seminole Canyon SP&HS, Comstock. (915) 292-4464.



## GULF COAST

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

**NOV.:** Hatchery Tours, every Monday through Saturday, Coastal Conservation Association/Central Power and Light Marine Development Center SFH, Corpus Christi. (361) 939-

7784.

**NOV.:** Plantation House, Barn and Grounds Tours, Wednesdays through Sundays, Varner-Hogg Plantation SP, West Columbia. (979) 345-4656.

**NOV.:** Nature Programs, every Saturday and Sunday, Galveston Island SP, Galveston. (409) 737-1222.

**NOV.:** Aquarium and Hatchery Tours, Tuesday through Sunday, Sea Center Texas, Lake Jackson. Hatchery tours by reservation only. (979) 292-0100.

**NOV. 2:** 3rd Annual Learn Your History Day, Fulton Mansion SHS, Fulton. (361) 729-0386.

**NOV. 2:** Girl Scout Anniversary and Sing-Along, San Jacinto Battleground SHS, La Porte. (281) 479-2431.

**NOV. 3:** History Tour, Matagorda Is and SP & WMA, Port O'Connor. (361) 983-2215.

**NOV. 9:** Aquatic Wild Training, Galveston Island SP. (409) 737-5306.

**NOV. 10, 24:** Beach Combing and Shelling Tour, Matagorda Island SP & WMA, Port O'Connor. (361) 983-2215.

**NOV. 16:** Christmas Ornaments, Galveston Island SP, Galveston. (409) 737-1222.



## HILL COUNTRY

**NOV.:** Evening Interpretive



Programs, every Saturday, Guadalupe River SP, Spring Branch. (830) 438-2656.

**NOV.:** Birdwatching, Pedernales Falls SP, Johnson City. Daily year-round, except when park is closed for hunting. (830) 868-7304.

**NOV. 2, 9, 16, 23:** Hike the Hill Country, Inks Lake SP, Burnet. (512) 793-2223.

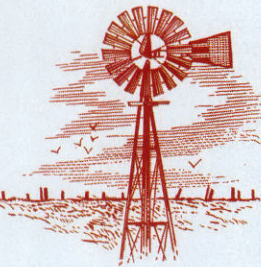
**NOV. 11:** Veterans Day Program, Admiral Nimitz SHS-National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg. (830) 997-4379.

**NOV. 16:** Enchanted Rock Trail Project Day, Enchanted Rock SNA, Fredericksburg. (512) 445-3862.

**NOV. 18:** Austin Fly Fishers meeting, Austin. (512) 918-1832.

**NOV. 23:** Giving Thanks for the Fall Harvest, Landmark Inn SHS, Castroville. (830) 931-2133.

**NOV. 29-30:** Island Assault 1944 Living History Program, Admiral Nimitz SHS-National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg. (830) 997-4379.



## PANHANDLE PLAINS

**NOV.:** Trailway Challenge, daily, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque. (806) 455-1492.

**NOV.:** Picnic Hike with Llamas, San Angelo SP, San Angelo. By reservation only through Jordan Llamas. (915) 651-7346.

**NOV. 2:** History Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon. (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

**NOV. 2:** Hunters Appreciation Dinner, Ballinger. (915) 365-2333.

**NOV. 9:** Veterans Day Celebration, Abilene SP, Tuscola. (915) 572-3204.

**NOV. 9:** Canyon Critters, Palo Duro Canyon SP,

Canyon. (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

**NOV. 16:** Nature Hike, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon. (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.

**NOV. 23:** Haynes Ridge Hike, Caprock Canyons SP & Trailway, Quitaque. (806) 455-1492

**NOV. 23:** Canyon Heritage, Palo Duro Canyon SP, Canyon. (806) 488-2227 Ext. 49.



## PINEYWOODS

**NOV. 1, 15:** Nature Slide Program, Village Creek SP, Lumberton. (409) 755-7322.

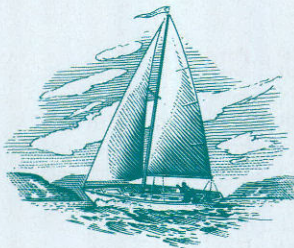
**NOV. 2, 9, 16, 23:** Autumn Color Steam Train Excursions, Texas State Railroad SP, Rusk. (800) 442-8951 or (903) 683-2561 outside Texas.

**NOV. 3, 10, 24:** Walk on the Wild Side, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper. (409) 384-5231.

**NOV. 9, 23:** Guided Nature Trail Hike, Village Creek SP, Lumberton. (409) 755-7322.

**NOV. 16:** Floating the Forks, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper. (409) 384-5231.

**NOV. 29:** 5th Annual Cowboy Campfire Stories, Poetry and Songs, Martin Dies, Jr. SP, Jasper. (409) 384-5231.



## PRAIRIES & LAKES

**NOV.:** Historic and Scenic Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La

Grange. Available by reservation only to groups of 10 or more. (979) 968-5658.

**NOV.:** Kreische Brewery Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, La Grange. Every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting. (979) 968-5658.

**NOV.:** Interpretive Programs, every Saturday and Sunday, Purtils Creek SP, Eustace. (903) 425-2332.

**NOV.:** Feat of Clay: Texas Pottery and Potters, 1850-1890, daily, Sebastopol House SHS, Seguin. (830) 379-4833.

**NOV.:** Evenings at the Amphitheater, Stephen F. Austin SP, San Felipe. Every Saturday. (979) 885-3613.

**NOV. 1-2:** Father of Texas Celebration, Stephen F. Austin SP, San Felipe. (979) 885-3613.

**NOV. 2:** Lone Star Legacy Trail Ride, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill. (972) 291-5940.

**NOV. 2:** Critters of the Cooper Lake Area, Cooper Lake SP/Doctors Creek Unit, Cooper. (903) 395-3100.

**NOV. 2:** 6th Annual North Texas Skywatch Amateur Astronomer's Star Party, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells. (940) 327-8950.

**NOV. 2:** A Stitch in Time, Washington-on-the-Brazos SHS, Washington. (936) 878-2214.

**NOV. 2-3, 10, 16-17, 23-24:** Inn Tours, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson. (936) 873-2633.

**NOV. 3, 10:** Kreische House Tours, Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery SHS, LaGrange. (979) 968-5658.

**NOV. 5-7:** Hunter Education Class, Bastrop SP, Bastrop. (512) 237-2241.

**NOV. 9:** Campfire and Sing-Along, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill. (972) 291-5940.

**NOV. 9:** Skeletons of Winter-Tree Identification, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill. (972) 291-5940.

**NOV. 9:** Stagecoach Days, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson. (936) 873-2633.

**NOV. 9:** Cowboy Campfire-Music and Poetry, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells.

(940) 328-1171.

**NOV. 9:** Ford Motor Company Cowboys of Color National Rodeo Finals, Mesquite Rodeo Arena, Mesquite. (817) 922-9999.

**NOV. 9:** Outdoor Writer and Photographer Workshop, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens. (903) 676-BASS.

**NOV. 16:** Storytelling Down in the Holler, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells. (940) 327-8950.

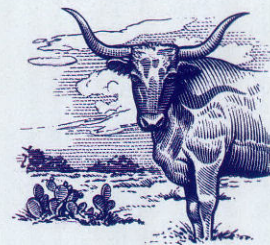
**NOV. 23:** Penn Farm Tour, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill. (972) 291-5940.

**NOV. 23:** Talala Trail Walk, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill. (972) 291-5940.

**NOV. 23:** Kids' Wilderness Survival, Lake Mineral Wells SP & Trailway, Mineral Wells. (940) 328-1171

**NOV. 30:** John Wynn in Concert, Cedar Hill SP, Cedar Hill. (972) 291-5940.

**NOV. 30:** Twilight - Firelight, Fanthorp Inn SHS, Anderson. (936) 873-2633



## SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

**NOV.:** Kiskadee Birding Tours, every Tuesday and Friday, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Mission. (956) 585-1107

**NOV. 2:** The Magic of Black Pots - Dutch Oven Cooking, Government Canyon SNA, San Antonio. (210) 688-9603.

**NOV. 6-10:** Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Harlingen. (800) 531-7346.

**NOV. 15-16:** Spanish Tracks and Trails, Goliad SP, Goliad. (361) 645-3405





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- SP** State Park
- SHS** State Historical Site
- SNA** State Natural Area
- WMA** Wildlife Management Area
- SFH** State Fish Hatchery

## State Parks Offer Public Hunts

A number of state parks will offer special permit hunting this fall. As in the past, the specially controlled public hunts are scheduled for Monday through Friday, a slow time at most parks during fall and winter. Most parks will be open on Saturdays and Sundays for camping, picnicking and similar activities.

The following schedule lists the times and dates when public access is restricted. Call the park of your choice directly to make sure it will be open on the day you want to visit. Or call Texas Parks and Wildlife's information line, (800) 792-1112, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

**NOV. 3-6**  
 Devil's Sinkhole SNA  
 (830) 563-2342  
 Hill Country SNA  
 (830) 796-4413

**NOV. 5-7**  
 Big Bend Ranch SP  
 (915) 229-3416

**NOV. 7-10**  
 Lake Somerville WMA  
 (979) 289-2392

**NOV. 9-11**  
 Big Bend Ranch SP  
 (915) 229-3416

**NOV. 10-13**  
 Devils River SNA  
 (830) 395-2133

Hill Country SNA  
 (830) 796-4413  
 Devil's Sinkhole SNA  
 (830) 563-2342

**NOV. 12-14:**  
 Lake Somerville SP &  
 Trailway/Nails Creek Unit  
 (979) 289-2392  
 Lake Somerville SP &  
 Trailway/Birch Creek Unit  
 (979) 535-7763

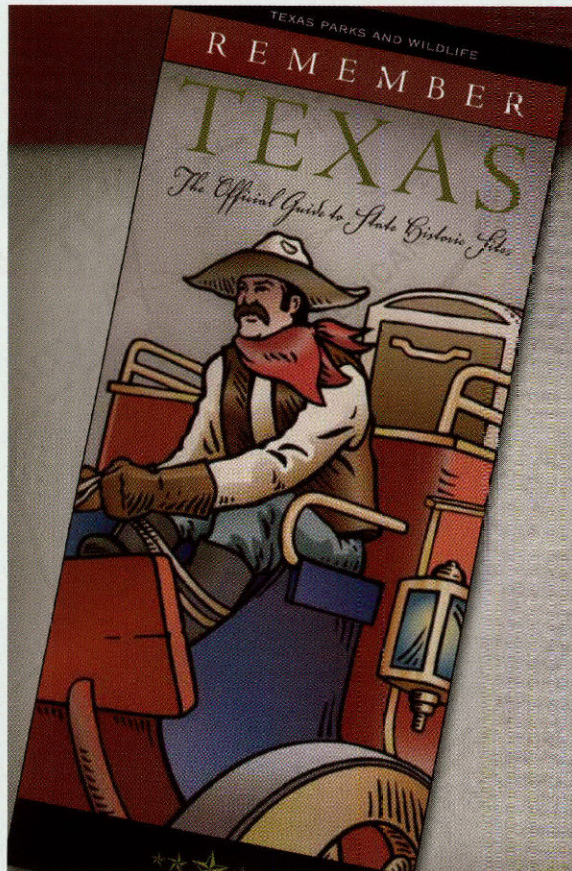
**NOV. 14-17:**  
 Lake Somerville WMA  
 (979) 289-2392

**NOV. 15-17**  
 Matagorda Island  
 SP & WMA  
 (361) 983-2215

**NOV. 17-20:**  
 Hill Country SNA  
 (830) 796-4413  
 Devils River SNA  
 (830) 395-2133

**NOV. 19-22:**  
 Caprock Canyons SP &  
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**NOV. 29-DEC. 1:**  
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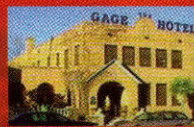
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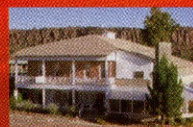
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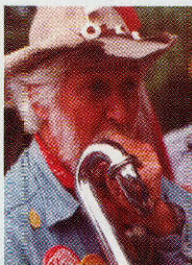
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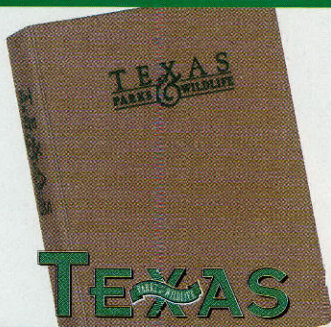
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**NOV. 2-JAN. 5:**  
White-tailed deer season in 200 North Texas counties; Rio Grande turkey season in 119 North Texas counties.

**NOV. 2-JAN. 19:**  
White-tailed deer season in 29 South Texas counties; Rio Grande turkey season in 25 South Texas counties.

**NOV. 2-FEB. 23:**  
Pheasant season in seven coastal counties; Rio Grande turkey season in Brooks, Kenedy and Kleberg counties; chachalaca season in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties.

**NOV. 2-DEC. 1, DEC. 7-JAN. 19:**  
Duck season in the South Zone.

**NOV. 9-10, NOV. 16-JAN. 26:**  
Duck season in the North Zone.

**NOV. 23-DEC. 8:**  
Mule deer season in 36 Panhandle counties and white-tailed deer season in six Panhandle counties.

**NOV. 23-DEC. 1:**  
Mule deer season in seven southwestern Panhandle counties.

**NOV. 30-DEC. 16:**  
Mule deer season in 19 Trans-Pecos counties

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT OUTDOOR ANNUAL OR CALL (512) 389-4505.

## UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

Publication Title: Texas Parks & Wildlife  
Publication Number: 0040-4586  
Filing Date: 09-26-02  
Issue Frequency: Monthly  
Number of Issues Published Annually: 12  
Annual Subscription Price: \$17.95  
Complete Mailing Address: 3000 South IH35, Ste. 120, Austin, Travis County, Texas, 78704  
Contact Person: Susan L. Ebert, Publisher & Editor  
Telephone: (512) 912-7001  
Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor: Susan L. Ebert, Publisher & Editor; Mary-Love Bigony, Managing Editor; Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine, 3000 South IH35, Ste. 120, Austin, Travis County, Texas, 78704  
Owner: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744  
Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None  
Tax Status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months

EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION	AVERAGE NO. COPIES	
	EACH ISSUE	NO. COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUE
	DURING PRECEDING PUBLISHED NEAREST 12 MONTHS	
	12 MONTHS	TO FILING DATE
Total Numbers of Copies (Net press run)	151,163	140,193
Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail-Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	132,771	123,825
Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	2,078	1,915
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	134,849	125,740
Free Distribution by Mail Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	4,119	3,952
Free Distribution Outside the Mail	9,822	8,576
Total Free Distribution	13,941	12,528
Total Distribution	148,790	138,268
Copies Not Distributed	2,372	1,925
Total	151,163	140,193
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	91%	91%

Publication of Statement of Ownership: Required publication will be in the November 2002 issue of Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine.



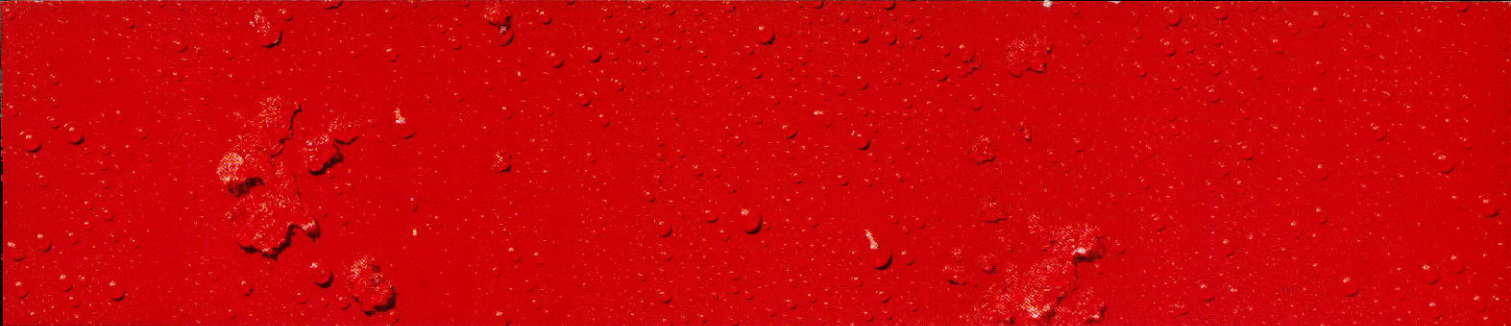
Photographer Lance Varnell of Houston captured this red saddlebags dragonfly at Jones Spring in Pedernales Falls State Park. He sat near the spring for nearly 30 minutes, watching the same dragonfly. "It kept landing on the same branch over and over again," says Varnell. "That allowed me to take time and set up the shot."

# PARTING SHOT

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