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TEXAS

PARKS & WILDLIFE

The OUTDOOR MAGAZINE of TEXAS

Bois d'Arc Goodbye

A NEW RESERVOIR PROVOKES A FLOOD OF CHILDHOOD MEMORIES.

Plus:

- OCELOT SURVIVAL
- +
- BAT FUNGUS
- +
- FREDERICKSBURG
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- JOHN WINTER
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TEXAS

THE OUTDOOR MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

FEBRUARY 2010, VOL. 68, NO. 2

GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

Rick Perry

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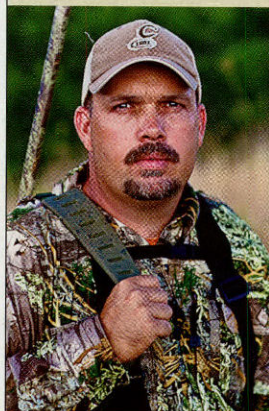
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In the Field

RUSSELL A. GRAVES

took his latest trip to Bois d'Arc Creek in late December 2009. He and his brother Bubba filmed river otters while finishing principal photography on their Bois d'Arc Creek video/photo project. While Russell has lived in the Texas Panhandle since the mid-1990s, he makes frequent trips back to his boyhood home



north of Dodd City to hunt and explore the creek bottom with his family. Russell chose to tackle losing the creek for his first attempt at documentary filmmaking. "My PawPaw made a living off the creek," says Russell. "He caught fish from the creek and hunted his food here, and even earned money from cutting and selling firewood and running cattle in the bottoms. This project will honor him and people like him."

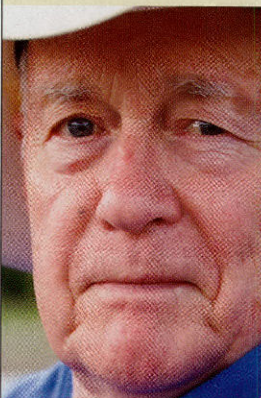
WENDEE HOLT CAMP

always loves traveling from her home base in suburban Houston to the Hill Country, but this time she got to show the "best of" to a first-timer (3 Days in the Field), including Enchanted Rock, Gorman Falls, the quaint shops of Fredericksburg and Old Tunnel WMA's bats. In "Attack of the Killer Fungus" she covers a new disease threatening bats. Holtcamp covers conservation in far-flung locales and has written for many publications. Wendee is an Animal Planet blogger: blogs.discovery.com/animal_news. Her first book, about making peace between evolution and Christianity, is due out in fall 2010 by Beacon Press.



JOHN JEFFERSON

once dreamed of hunting waterfowl the way his father and grandfather did. Later, entrusted with their Winchester 16-gauge shotgun, he began a lifelong affair with hunting. His grandmother gave him a subscription to a new magazine, *Texas Game and Fish* (subsequently *Texas Parks & Wildlife*), and he



began to dream about the places he saw pictured. She also bought him a Baby Brownie Special camera, the first step toward a photography career. When he learned about this duck hunter/photographer who had chronicled his varied outdoor excursions in multiple scrapbooks of photos and clippings, John felt a kinship. Researching a relatively obscure man who died in 1954 was challenging. But John Winter became alive to the author through those faded photos.

AT ISSUE

FROM THE PEN OF CARTER P. SMITH

"Buffalo meat and whiskey!" our little trio exclaimed in loud and proud unison.

My two oldest childhood friends, John Nelson and Robert Mickey, and I had just been asked by our schoolteacher what we were having for lunch that day. We were at the ripe old age of 5 at the time, and in kindergarten mind you, so before any of our mothers fire off a frantic letter of "explanation" to the editor, I should assure you that our kindergarten lunches at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church lacked any such exotic fare!

As the family lore goes, I was like most kids of my generation who delighted in telling wild and fanciful tales about grand cowboy and outdoor adventures. From what I can recall, the places I traveled in my mind at that tender age were always filled with wild horses, wilder animals, and the wildest of places, gunfights, horse rides, cattle drives and hunting expeditions. Transporting ourselves to earlier frontier times in Texas history was a time-honored daily part of our "game playing" as young kids growing up with one foot in the city and the other in the country.

I wish the same for kids today.

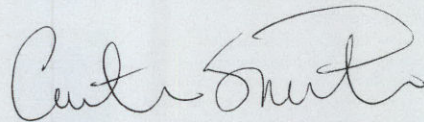
For those interested in learning about Texas' history and heritage, including living history farms, you can find no better place than one of your state parks. Within your 93 state parks, historic sites and natural areas are more than 600,000 acres of places that literally and figuratively tell the story, life and history of our great state. Within them, you can see:

- The vestiges of battles, big and small, won and lost
- Spanish and frontier forts that are still standing, and others that aren't
- The birthplace of Texas and the homeplace of presidents
- Missions and monuments
- Pioneer farms and pictographs
- Buffalo soldiers and bison herds
- Ranches and rancherías
- Grand canyons and grand calderas and much, much more

What all of these 93 places have in common is an overwhelming sense of place that captures the legacy of Texas' rich history, both the human and natural kind. It is a sense of place that was as relevant to those who lived it at the time as it is to those of us who care about it, and for it, today.

I hope you'll find some time this month or next to get out and experience some of that rich Texas history at one of your state parks. We will be there waiting for you.

Thanks for caring about Texas' wild things and wild places. They need you more than ever.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I was like most kids of my generation who delighted in telling wild and fanciful tales about grand cowboy and outdoor adventures.

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To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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OUTDOOR NOTES

FROM TEXAS GOVERNOR RICK PERRY

Texas faces a stealthy invasion of unwanted visitors that are threatening our state. Invasive species of non-native plants and animals threaten to choke out our beneficial native species, costing our economy millions, disrupting recreation and destroying our natural heritage.

Nationwide, invasive species cost the U.S. economy \$35 billion annually. Here in Texas, just one species, the red imported fire ant, causes more than \$256 million of damage every year.

Terrestrial plants, such as introduced sedge, tropical soda apple, Chinese tallow and salt cedar (tamarisk), out-compete and displace native vegetation that our native animals need for survival.

Water hyacinth, giant salvinia, hydrilla and other invasive aquatic plants reduce water quality, biodiversity and the productivity of aquatic habitat. They also can block recreational access to public waters. Floating mats of these water weeds get so thick, you can't even launch a boat.

How do invasive species get here? The unfortunate answer is that people unwittingly bring them in, as stowaways on boats or other vehicles.

Controlling these species once they're here is difficult and costly, and in some cases almost impossible. In November 2009, a floating mat of giant salvinia was pushed into Toledo Bend Reservoir by floodwaters, fouling large parts of the lake. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had to hire helicopter crews to spray the salvinia with EPA-approved herbicides. This one incident cost close to \$200,000.

Last summer, the Texas Legislature voted to budget an additional \$1.3 million per year to control aquatic invasives. This is a significant investment, but consider that Florida spends more than \$20 million per year to fight the same battle. Besides herbicides, the department uses mechanical controls like water draw-downs, which expose and kill aquatic plants, and is experimenting with biological controls like giant salvinia weevils, which eat them.

There are also things you and I can do about this that won't take a large investment in time and money, and will greatly help authorities facing the overwhelming scope and magnitude of this growing problem.

The bottom line: Preventing the arrival and spread of invasives is far better than trying to control them once they're established. Public education is critical to help Texans understand the problem and how we can help.

This spring, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will launch an education campaign targeting giant salvinia, which is threatening our eastern lakes, but has not yet spread as far as hydrilla and water hyacinth.

In April, we'll start to see TV ads, billboards and other communications with the message "Hello Giant Salvinia, Goodbye Fishing Hole." Boaters and anglers will be urged to clean boats and trailers to avoid transporting salvinia to other lakes.

As part of this effort, we'll see enhancement of what is already the most comprehensive invasive species website in our state, www.texasinvasives.org, where you can learn to identify, report and help clean up invasive plants.

We need to tap into our Texan pride and can-do spirit to control invasive species. If each of us does a little, together we can do a lot.

Preventing the arrival and spread of invasives is far better than trying to control them once they're established.

Rick Perry

RICK PERRY
TEXAS GOVERNOR

Texas Governor Rick Perry writes about outdoor issues four times a year for Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine.

MAIL CALL

PICKS, PANS AND PROBES FROM OUR READERS

LETTERS

COUNTING LEGS

Thank you so much for your January 2010 issue and the wonderful work of the five featured photographers and your staff photographers. On looking at the photos closely, I see that "Inspecting Insects" by Clive Varlack features a golden silk spider which, if I recall my high school biology right, is not an insect (six legs) but an arthropod (eight legs). It's a beautiful spider and we have similar ones in the Big Thicket. This is a tiny complaint about a gorgeous issue. These photographs say a lot.

LOU PARRIS
Houston

TP&W RESPONDS: You're correct, of course. TPWD invertebrate biologist Michael Warriner says: "A spider is not an insect, but an arachnid – both insects and spiders are arthropods."

EAGLE-EYED READERS ABOUND

I just received my first issue of your magazine and I read it from cover to cover and back again, immediately! Loved every page, with pictures *extraordinaire*. I also appreciate your Keep Texas Wild, directed toward children. It's never too early to teach children the advantages of native plants vs. non-native plants. Nandina could certainly be replaced with native Turk's cap, but, the picture is not Turk's cap. Thanks for the informative and beautifully orchestrated magazine – I'm thrilled to be on the receiving end. Hurry and send me my February issue!

DOROTHY THETFORD
Denton

TP&W RESPONDS: We regret the error, as well as the misidentification of water hyacinth and the incorrect use of wild hyacinth. Thanks!

THE STUFF OF INSPIRATION

I was touched by your tribute to John Tveten in the December 2009 issue ("Foreword"). I, too, appreciated the attention he devoted to our natural world

and the effort he expended to share that passion with us. There is another who spent many years sharing her photographs and words with us. Ann P. White, though not a native Texan, adopted our state with passion and became a prolific advocate for our state park system. Her trips across Texas resulted in numerous articles in her favorite magazine, *Texas Parks & Wildlife*. Ann died on August 11, 2009, leaving those who miss her very much, but who can treasure the many memories she has provided for us.

J.L.T. KECK
Iowa Park

TP&W RESPONDS: Look for an expanded tribute to John Tveten by Gary Clark in Legend, Lore & Legacy in the March issue. Your letter piqued our

curiosity about Ann P. White. Looking in our archives, we discovered several articles in the late 1990s, including a rigorous Big Bend adventure in 2000, when White would have been 77 years old. She even shot the photography for the spread. Thanks for reminding us of her contribution.

Sound off for "Mail Call!"

Let us hear from you!

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SCOUT

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE TEXAS OUTDOORS

DAWN OF THE LIVING DEAD ANTS

Phorid flies may wipe out fire ant populations.



Fire ants can quickly ruin a barefoot trapse through the woods or a picnic in the park. Now, studies show that South American phorid flies, which feed on the brains of these pesky creatures, could play a significant role in quelling fire ant populations.

Since the 1930s, when cargo ships from Brazil accidentally brought populations of red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis*

invicta), or RIFA, into the country, the invasive species has spread rapidly across the southern United States.

In North America the ants have no predators, and thus their population has increased, unhindered, at a tempestuous rate. As invasive species typically do, these troublesome ants have caused numerous problems for native plants and animals. Fire ants have been reported to invade

The phorid fly looks harmless, but it brings certain death to fire ants.

homes and buildings, causing damage to electrical equipment. They also damage grasses, flowers and other plants. It is estimated that every year they cause hundreds of millions of dollars in damages in Texas alone.

So how do you stop an exotic species



The fly larva in the ant's neck must feed on the ant's brain to survive, leaving a "zombie" ant behind to die.



with no natural predators? Bring in an exotic predator.

That's where the South American phorid fly enters the picture. Like their North American cousins, the genus *Pseudacteon* are parasitic flies that resemble fruit flies, but their reproductive method and diet make them much more valuable to us. The phorid fly's larvae require a living body in which to develop, and a fire ant makes an ideal incubator.

After being laid in the neck of the ant, the larva feeds on the ant's body fluids, eventually making its way to the head, where it eats part of the brain. Then, as if becoming a zombie, the ant simply begins walking away from the colony, continuing its aimless journey for up to two weeks. Once the fly is fully developed it releases an enzyme that causes the ant's head to fall off, and the fly escapes through the neck.

Researchers have been experimenting with phorid flies since 1997, and in April 2009, AgriLife researchers released a species that was raised by a team at the University of Texas at Austin. Previously released species

would attack only disturbed mounds, but the new species also targets undisturbed mounds and foraging ants. Other than a minimal amount of nectar consumption by adults, the phorid flies eat only fire ants, and each species of fly exclusively eats a certain species of ant.

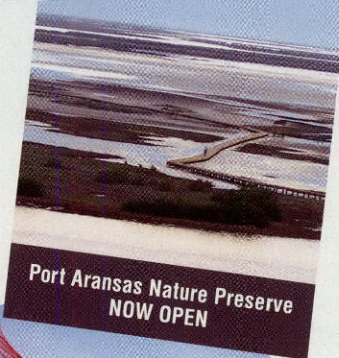
"For RIFA control, a more long-term solution like this is needed," says Mike Warriner, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department entomologist, "especially for control of these ants in areas where use of chemicals could be damaging to natural systems."

Since their introduction, the phorid flies have begun to spread throughout the entire RIFA-infested range in Texas. The damage done to the red imported fire ant population so far remains minimal. However, researchers believe that the flies' stalking of foraging ants is causing the ants to hide in their mounds rather than forage for food — resulting in food shortages and starvation in the colonies.

Researchers have reported that the older introduced species of phorid flies have spread to 97 counties and that the new species has already become established in 10 sites throughout Texas. ★

— Cameron Dodd

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Memories of War

Fort Richardson was home of Lost Battalion during WWII.



Visitors to Fort Richardson can enjoy a history lesson in natural surroundings.

Growing up, Les Young often listened to his parents who married in 1944, tell about the frightening years when World War II gripped the nation. “My father was a veteran, but thankfully he didn’t see combat,” says the Dallas resident. “So I feel very connected to that era through him.”

So connected, in fact, that Young — an architect by profession — devotes much of his leisure time to portraying the precarious lives of soldiers who fought in the global conflict. Using rifles, machine guns, pup tents, military jeeps and other period gear as props, WWII re-enactors — representing both sides — demonstrate battles, sleeping conditions and meager dining options.

“We want people to have an idea of how tough these guys had it and what they went

through,” Young explains.

This month, he and other members with the Texas Military Historical Society will host a two-day World War II Living History Event at Fort Richardson State Park near Jacksboro. Highlights will include an afternoon attack on Americans by Germans and a weapons demonstration.

But wait, modern warfare on the frontier? Interestingly enough, the fort — established in 1867 to subdue warring Plains Indians — does have a WWII connection. In 1940, the 26th Infantry Division with the Texas National Guard mobilized at the fort before shipping off. Caught at sea when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the 63-man unit (later named the “Lost Battalion”) was captured in March 1942, trying

to defend Java, and sent to labor camps, where eight died. The survivors returned home in 1945.

Abandoned as a fort in 1878, the 454-acre site became a state park in 1968. Seven restored structures include the post hospital, officers’ quarters, powder magazine, commissary, guardhouse, morgue and bakery, all furnished to depict the times. Two replica buildings house the officers’ and enlisted men’s barracks. Guided tours (fees apply) start at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily.

The fort offers more than history. Visitors can stay overnight in a screened shelter or pitch a tent in the campgrounds. Some sites also provide water and electricity. Five new equestrian campsites cater to horse lovers. Hiking trails meander through prairie lands and wooded areas. The Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway — a favorite with hikers, bikers and equestrians — runs 10 miles along Lost Creek and around Lost Creek Reservoir, which offers great fishing.

The WWII Living History Event runs 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 20, and 9 a.m. to noon Sunday, Feb. 21. Park entrance fees will be waived for WWII veterans and their families (they’ll also be treated to refreshments at the interpretive center).

Fort Richardson State Park is located a half-mile south of Jacksboro on U.S. Highway 281. For more information, call 940-567-3506 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fortrichardson. ★

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

TOP RIGHT © LANCE JARNELL; OPPOSITE LEFT © RUSTY RAY; OTHERS BY TPWD

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Whiff of Grape

Fragrant mountain laurels are cousins to bluebonnets.



Bluebonnets may steal the show every spring, but a whole field of them can't beat the sweet aroma of a single Texas mountain laurel in bloom. From late February into April, the purplish flower clusters of this native species perfume the air with the scent of grape soda, attracting scores of bees and butterflies, not to mention noses as well.

Sophora secundiflora occurs across southern, western and central Texas as an evergreen shrub or small tree with glossy green leaves. Though called a laurel, it's not. For that matter, neither is the mountain laurel that's native to eastern states; true laurels include sassafras, red bay and northern spicebush. Botanically speaking, Texas mountain laurels are members of the legume family, which make them kin to catclaw, mesquites, redbuds and — surprise! — bluebonnets.

Mescal-bean — another common (and perhaps more accurate) name for *Sophora secundiflora* — refers to the dubious attributes of its bright red seeds. Through trial and probably many deadly errors, Native Americans learned how to use them to make intoxicating beverages. (Caution: The beans, foliage and flowers are highly toxic to humans and animals.) They also prized the hard beans for trade items and jewelry making. To this day, artists still craft necklaces and bracelets from mescal beans.

Texas mountain laurels rarely survive being transplanted from the wild, but



↑ Bury your nose in these blooms for the surprising scent of grape soda.

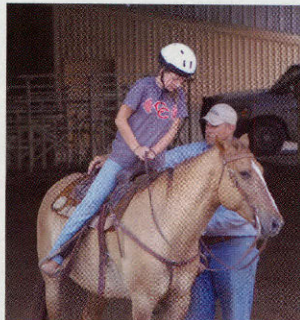
you may be able to germinate them from seeds. Gather some dry seedpods and plant them in the fall. Or remove the beans (soak the pods in warm water for easier removal), scarify with a file or knife,

then bag and store them in a cool, dry place; plant the beans in the spring. *Sophora secundiflora* grows slowly, so don't expect to smell grape soda for a few years. ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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Berry Maniacs



TELEVISION

LOOK FOR THESE STORIES IN THE COMING WEEKS:

Jan. 31 – Feb. 7:

Coastal educator Ken Rice; Choke Canyon State Park; firearm safety at home; long term quail management; wavy water.

Feb. 7 – 14:

Panhandle wildfire recovery; biking Palo Duro Canyon; coastal birding trails; understanding pintails; South Texas butterflies.

Feb. 14 – 21:

Pro anglers on Lake Fork; Cooper Lake State Park; camping fuel; WMA learning opportunities; digging Garner.

Feb. 21 – 28:

Search for the extinct ivory-billed woodpecker; hall of fame angler Paul Hinton; San Christoval Ranch grasslands; Stephen F. Austin State Park; Lake Bob Sandlin.



Biologists are working to stop the recent decline in pintail duck populations. Watch the week of February 7–14.

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RADIO

YOUR RADIO GUIDE TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Hiking and haikus at Government Canyon...saving North Deer Island for the birds...and creating a private pond on your property are some of the shows you'll hear in February on Passport to Texas. Listen online, or find a station that airs the series at www.passporttotexas.org.

PASSPORT TO TEXAS

Join host Cecilia Nasti weekdays for a 90-second excursion into the Texas Outdoors. Find a station near you, or listen on the Web at

www.passporttotexas.org



Cedar waxwings are ravenous for berries.



They rove together in tumultuous packs, black eyed and black masked, whistling shrilly as they hunt on the wing. Don't worry — your valuables aren't in danger. But count on those cedar waxwings to devour any berries left in the neighborhood!

That ravenous appetite for sugary berries — most notably those of the birds' namesake, juniper — affects the travel and behavior of *Bombycilla cedrorum*, a common winter resident across Texas. As soon as the fruit is stripped from a tree or bush, they're off again, looking for more. As naturalist John James Audubon once observed, cedar-birds (his name for the species) may "gorge themselves to such excess as sometimes to be unable to fly." Or fly straight, either, if they happen to get hold of fermented berries.

Gluttony aside, cedar waxwings — beautifully outfitted with head crests, brown plumes and yellow-tipped tails — can act charming, as described by the late ornithologist Harry Oberholser and others. Perched in a row, they'll pass a berry down the line and back until someone finally swallows it. Likewise, courting couples may exchange a berry repeatedly.

That fetish for fruit explains why cedar waxwings — which migrate north



The distinctively masked cedar waxwing eats berries until it can't fly.

to breed and return to Texas with the first cold fronts — mate long after other birds, usually in late summer when most fruits come into season. Nestlings eat insects the first day or two, then fruit thereafter. (When fruit's not around, adults chow down on insects, too.)

By the way, the name "waxwing" refers to the flat red globs of "sealing wax" (not really) that tip the ends of the birds' secondary wing feathers. No one's sure about their purpose, but they apparently indicate age (the older the bird, the more red tips) and could help in attracting mates. ★

— Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

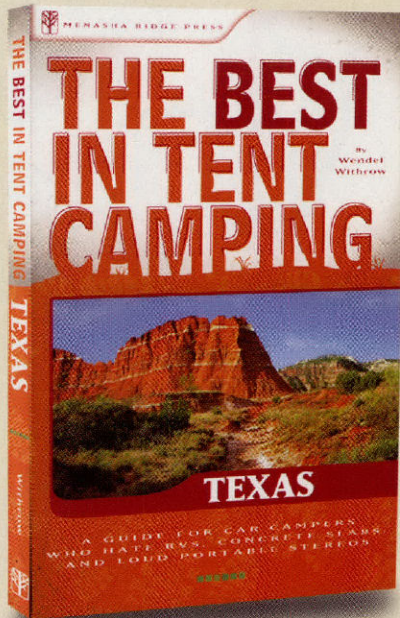
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In all the busyness and noise of modern society, finding a place of solitude, even in the parks and recreational areas at the farthest reaches of the state, can be a difficult feat. Fortunately, the car camper looking for a special campground or camping experience will no doubt find it in *The Best in Tent Camping: Texas*, a guide to 50 campgrounds in the seven regions of Texas.

"It may be a spectacular vista, a fiery sunset, a single flower bloom, or even the intoxicating smell of a campfire, but we all sense it as soon as we arrive," author Wendel Withrow writes.

The type of camper who prefers pup tents to RVs and bird song to portable stereos will appreciate Withrow's up-to-date and comprehensive reviews of Texas campgrounds. In addition to reservation and facilities information, Withrow includes details such as area



hiking or biking trails, scenic drives, commonly seen wildlife, related reading and recommendations such as when you should stake your tent down or secure your foodstuff from animal residents. Also included are driving directions and GPS coordinates for park or campground entrances, as well as ratings for beauty, privacy, spaciousness, quiet, security and cleanliness.

Withrow, a native Texan, has spent many years exploring the natural beauty of the Lone Star State and is currently the chair of the Dallas group of the Sierra Club.

"The good news is that Texas is so big that we can all find our own haven in the hills or valleys," he writes. "Whether you love the deepest woods, the driest desert, the tallest mountain, or the unlimited seashore, this book will help you find a place to claim as your own." ★

— Kathryn Hunter

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— Teresa Lynn, Master Naturalist

Do-It-Yourself Venison Jerky

Jerky can be tasty, but take care to avoid contamination.

“Always hang your venison jerky out to dry above the fly line” went the running joke among my father’s hunting circle, a rarified world of tricksters and “old coots.” One of my father’s contributions included sun-dried venison jerky. The joke he perpetrated among his peers was that he had figured out the proper height to hang his jerky, thus avoiding flies.

Encouraged by my mother (a biologist) to avoid giving the entire family a bad case of salmonellosis, he eventually added several health-conscious stages to his jerky-making. This included cooking the meat first and then drying it in an oven or smoker.

Jerky comes from the Quechua word *charqui* (which means “burnt meat”) and refers to a form of dried llama meat sold to travelers along the Incan roads during the pre-Columbian era. The cold, dry air and constant sun of the Andean highlands made for ideal freeze-drying conditions. The process is actually the oldest food preservation technique known and was used routinely throughout the ancient world.

The basics for making jerky haven’t really changed since: Slice meat into strips, season and dehydrate. The key is to remove as much moisture from the meat as possible, preserving it and dramatically reducing the conditions in which bacteria thrive. Contamination can be avoided by practicing cautious, sanitary techniques.

1. Always dress your game properly and keep it cool and clean before you



start to prepare it.

2. If meat is already frozen, thaw it in the refrigerator, not on the countertop.

3. To ensure tenderness, cut your meat strips across the muscle grain. Remove as much of the fat and connective tissue as possible.

4. Season with your favorite spice mix (simple salt and pepper works with a little red chili pepper) and then pound the strips with a meat cleaver.

5. Rather than soaking the meat in your favorite marinade overnight, try preparing the marinade fresh in a saucepan. Bring it to a boil, submerge the meat strips completely, bring the marinade back to the boiling point, then remove the strips with clean tongs before the meat cooks. Immersing the meat in a boiling marinade, rather than soaking it, will reduce the chance of bacteria growth. (For a classic marinade, try dried red chilies boiled for about 10 minutes. Transfer the chilies to a food processor, add fresh garlic cloves and salt, add some of the chili boiling water

and then blend.)

6. If you are not using the marinade boil, then pre-heat the meat strips to 160 degrees before drying in either a dehydrator or the oven.

7. If using a food dehydrator, place meat strips evenly on the drying racks. Avoid overlapping the strips.

8. Dehydrate at 145 degrees for a minimum of seven hours. For safety’s sake, place a calibrated thermometer on one of the drying racks so that you can monitor the temperature rather than relying strictly on the dehydrator’s gauge. Dehydration temperatures below 145 degrees are not recommended.

9. If using the oven, lay the meat on racks that allow full air circulation around them. Set the oven on 150 degrees and leave the oven door open an inch or so. Dehydrate for a minimum of nine hours.

10. Whether using the oven or the food dehydrator, don’t depend on set times to determine if your homemade jerky is thoroughly dried. Check it yourself. Allow several pieces to cool. Make sure no portions have remained moist or underdone. Jerky should crack but not break apart when you bend it. If anything looks suspicious, continue the drying process.

11. Bag and store jerky in the refrigerator overnight after the drying process and then check again the next day to make sure all pieces are properly dried. If not, continue to dry them.

12. Enjoy it now. Don’t wait until next deer season to eat it. The flavor quality starts to diminish after a few months. ★

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3 Days in the Field / By Wendee Holtcamp

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German Jewel

History and natural wonders abound near Fredericksburg.

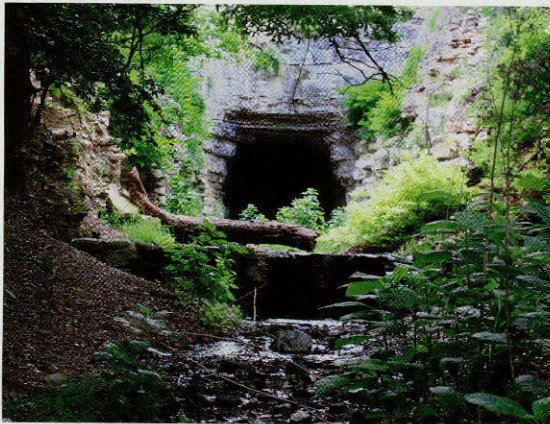


Water flows through the granite boulders after a rainfall at Enchanted Rock.

How do you show Texas to someone who has been living in the big city and hasn't seen the Lone Star State's natural beauty since moving here a couple of years ago? That was my challenge. I picked the Hill Country because of its diversity — waterfalls, bats, rocks for climbing, quaint towns, wine country and good food. We chose Fredericksburg as our home base.

Fredericksburg has a fascinating history as one of Texas' early German settlements. People settled where Barons Creek meets Town Creek, four miles from the Pedernales River. My friend Doug and I arrive in late evening at the 103-room Fredericksburg Inn & Suites, which sits on five acres bordering Barons Creek. The main building, hewn of whitewashed stone, is a registered Texas historic landmark built in 1848 — the old Mueller-Petmecky House. Fredericksburg's German settlers built *fachwerk* homes, constructed from timber frames with spaces filled with stone and painted white, and the inn's historic building is original *fachwerk*. The owners have created Texas flair at the modestly priced inn — iron lone stars for decor, an outdoor fireplace, and a beautiful pool and hot tub, which we climb into for a relaxing chat under the stars.

First stop the next morning is the Fredericksburg Herb Farm. A couple of wood and rock buildings are marked with hand-painted signs for "Restaurant" and "Shop," and in one of several garden beds kneels a slender, 50-something woman, weeding. She introduces herself as Rosemary Estenson and generously shows us around, telling us her plans for



Clockwise from top left: Rolling out the dough at the Sauer-Beckmann Farm; plants on display at the Fredericksburg Herb Farm; Becker Vineyards' award-winning vintages; the entrance to the Old Tunnel.



the place, offering us fresh-brewed coffee as we talk. She only recently purchased the herb farm out of bankruptcy, and plans to turn it into a bed-and-breakfast with Sunday House cottages, open by year's end. For now she continues the tradition of crafting delicious meals, for which the chef picks herbs and vegetables from the gardens, and creating homemade toiletries with fresh herbal infusions on site, along with offering spa treatments.

We drive about 20 miles to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area where, because we arrive early, we get a primo campsite — secluded, a few feet up a path and near a beautiful rock ledge. Doug wants to climb, but we have a schedule to keep!

After pitching camp, we drive about 60 miles north to Colorado Bend State Park, where I'll show Doug one of the most beautiful sights in Texas — Gorman Falls — a 60-foot waterfall over delicate calcite mineral deposits. It's always lush, green and mossy, some years wetter than others. We have time for a swim in the swiftly flowing but shallow Colorado River before the ranger-guided hike to the falls at 2 p.m. I dip my toe in, surprised at how warm the water is. Rocks line the bottom and one side of the river, which has a steep bluff on the opposite side. We frolic in the water for a while, floating downstream on the current before we climb out and change into our hiking clothes.

We follow the ranger's truck and a line of cars several miles down the road to the trailhead. The trail winds across desert-like Hill Country, then down a steep incline using a handrail. Everyone gets 30 minutes at the bottom to rest and snap photos, but Doug and I head back early and take a trail in the opposite direction to Gorman Spring, the waterfall's origin.

We finish our hike, then drive to the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area, a dozen miles southeast of Fredericksburg, where we will see millions of bats emerge at dusk. First, though, we dine at the Alamo Springs Café, opened by Mike Tangman five

years ago for families who arrive hungry. It's perfectly situated for bat viewers, but well worth the drive just for the food. We both order cheeseburgers, and I must say I see why they've earned their reputation as one of the best burgers in Texas. They're huge, juicy and delicious, and the homemade jalapeño cheese bun truly makes the meal. We also eat very flavorful fried portabella mushrooms. Funny signs bedeck the walls, and a live band plays outside. Tangman and his wife, Cindy, wear black T-shirts emblazoned on the back with "Jefe." I like their style!

Stuffed, we walk across the street to wait for the bats to emerge from the aptly named Old Tunnel. As we wait for the bats with a couple dozen adults and kids, TPWD biologist Nyta Brown gives an informative and interesting talk. Railroad workers carved the 920-foot tunnel straight through bedrock starting in 1913, but it's been abandoned since 1941. Bats arrived by the 1950s. It's a pseudomaternity cave because females arrive in April and May, leave to give birth elsewhere and then return once their pups are weaned. Unlike true maternity caves, males also roost here. Brown tells us that if you walk through the tunnel, which is cordoned off, you'll step in four feet of bat guano. She talks for 30 minutes, and then someone sees a bat fly overhead. Soon, more and more emerge, swirling in a "tornado of bats" flying out from the tunnel, which we are sitting atop. They fly southeast, into the wind. After about 15 minutes, most have emerged.

We arrive back to our campsite after dark, and Doug builds a campfire so we can make s'mores, though we're still stuffed from dinner. I point out some constellations I know to Doug, and then we head to bed. Note to self: When camping on stone, which this campsite is, don't forget the sleeping pad.

The next morning I rise early and sit on the rock face behind me to journal, while Doug sleeps. Then I wake him. The morning's getting on, and we have to climb Enchanted Rock. It's my

(continued on page 53)





Bois d'Arc Goodbye

New reservoir
brings a flood of
memories of
childhood explorations
along a creek.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
by RUSSELL A. GRAVES

IF I CLOSE MY EYES, I can almost hear the old country songs drifting through the dilapidated farmhouse near the tiny Texas community of Edhube.

Thirty years ago my family lived in this old dwelling. It came complete with well water, a barn with a loft, and a screened back porch, where I would sleep when the weather was mild. Out in the country, there wasn't much to do except roam the pastures and creek bottoms at the northern edge of the Blackland Prairie. That brings us to this story.

This is a story about how a creek, muddy and I suppose insignificant to most, transforms. The transformation affects not only the landscape, but people as well. This is a story about a creek's cultural, natural and historic importance to a rural part of Texas. This is a story about an attempt by me and my brother Bubba to record the creek in film, still images, writing and any other way we can before a lake project floods 16,000 acres of old-growth bottomland hardwoods and permanently alters the flow of the creek that helped shape who I am today.

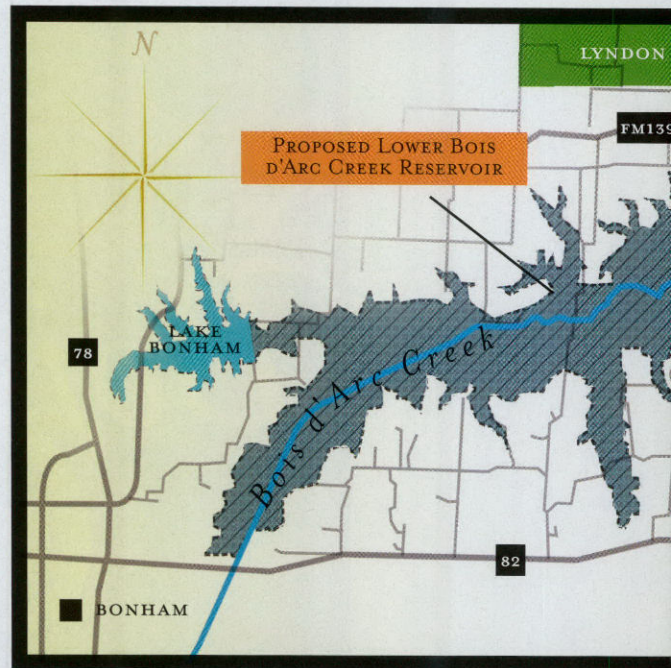
This is my story of Bois d'Arc Creek.

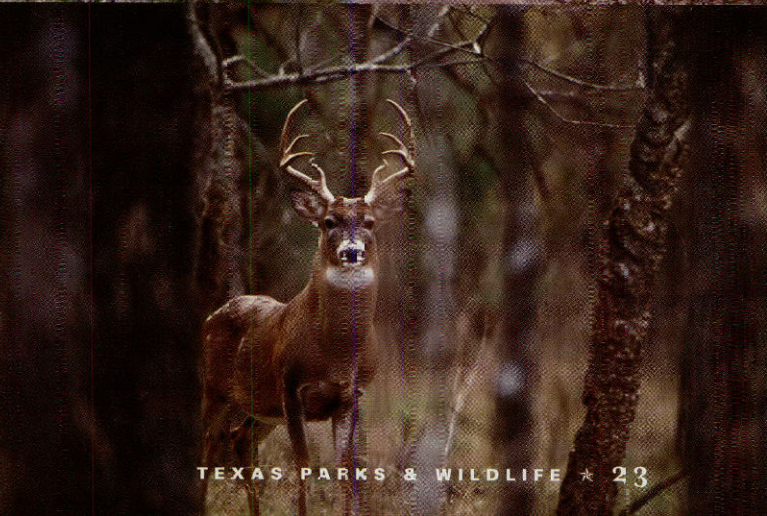
Early Days

AS CREEKS GO, Bois d'Arc is a big one. With headwaters around the soft, white-rock washes east of Whitewright, Bois d'Arc meanders quietly through deep, black dirt and cuts an impressively wide valley northeast through Fannin County before it empties into the Red River just northwest of Paris. The upper and lower parts of the creek have places where the water runs relatively clear because of its rocky bottom and steeper flow. Along the creek's long midsection, the topography flattens, the current slows, the bottom muddies, and so does the water.

Virtually no one lives along the creek's edge because of its propensity for occasional flooding. Therefore, most people identify the creek only where the highways intersect it. While I can't say I know the creek better than anyone else, I can say that I know it well. For the past 30-some-odd years, my brother and I have floated, fished, hunted and explored most of Bois d'Arc.

THE AUTHOR'S FAMILY HOME (BOTTOM CENTER), WITH KITCHEN AND A HORSESHOE ON THE WALL. THE CREEK IS NAMED FOR THE BOIS D'ARC TREES FOUND THERE (TOP) AND PROVIDES A HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE LIKE DEER (WHITE-TAILED BUCK, BOTTOM RIGHT) AND RACCOONS (TRACKS, CENTER). THE CROSS (FAR RIGHT) MARKS THE SPOT WHERE CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS WERE BURIED.







*We'd all shriek when
Daddy would shine his
spotlight in the weeds
and we'd see a pair of
eyes glowing eerily and
staring back.*





“Supper’s ready!” Mama’s voice resonated through the old-growth oaks and the giant ragweed, signaling it was time for Bubba and me to climb the hill and head back home. We were never too far away, but that didn’t matter. As long as we couldn’t see the house, we may as well have been out in the wilderness. Boys like us could imagine high adventure even though we remained within earshot of our mother.

We were and still are bona fide country kids. While I haven’t thought about it much, I suppose a great deal of my wanderlust formed as a boy in that old farmhouse near Edhube.

On one occasion, I can remember walking to the creek with Bubba. While he was checking some steel traps he’d laid to catch raccoons so he could sell their pelts, I stayed on the bank and looked for cool stuff. What I found was a big bur oak tree. Scattered underneath were huge, golf-ball-sized acorns. I can’t remember what fascinated me more — the sheer size of the acorns or their perfectly formed caps, which looked to me like ornate, basket-weaved cups. Whatever attracted me to those acorns didn’t really matter as I filled every pocket with them and took them home to smash them with a hammer to see what was inside.

Those acorns, small and insignificant to most, I suppose, are one of the things that attracted me to the outdoors. Things like that still do.

Family connections

WE DIDN’T LIVE in that little farmhouse near Edhube very long. For a short time, six months maybe, my family moved to the Dallas Metroplex so my dad could be closer to his job. It wasn’t long, though, until we moved back to Fannin County. This time, however, we moved farther down the creek, on a small patch of ground north of Dodd City. The place where I spent my remaining days growing up was just across the dirt road from the 250-acre farm where my grandparents lived.

While my family’s lineage doesn’t go back to the original county pioneers, the Graveses have been in the area for some time, starting with a land transaction my uncle made back in the 1960s, when he was the superintendent of Whitewright schools. When he bought the land (which then became my granddad’s home, along with a few hundred more acres about a half-mile away in the Bois d’Arc Creek bottom), parts of my extended family slowly filtered into the area. In 1979, my parents made our permanent home atop a black-dirt hill overlooking the Bois d’Arc Creek valley.

Well before 1979, I’d spend summers, weekends and school breaks at my grandparents’ house. Trips to PawPaw’s almost always included trips to the creek. My brothers and cousins and I would float the creek and run trotlines for catfish, follow coon dogs through the damp woodlots, or catch grasshoppers for fishbait off the “bloodweed” that grew in the small clearcuts in the ash woods, where PawPaw cut firewood. Some of the best times came around Halloween when we’d take a hayride through the bottoms, and my dad would tell us that we were in search of the Bois d’Arc Creek monster (in reference to the campy, 1970s docu-flick, *The Legend of Boggy Creek*). We’d all shriek when Daddy would shine his spotlight in the weeds and we’d see a pair of eyes glowing eerily and staring back. While now I know we were seeing a cow or a deer’s eyes, I think about those great times every time I head to the creek.

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: DAYFLOWERS GROW ALONG THE BOIS D’ARC; ASH CANOPY DURING WINTER; PANORAMIC SHOT OF THE CREEK BOTTOM; AN OPEN FRESHWATER MUSSEL SURROUNDED BY AUTUMN LEAVES.

The Float

BLACK MUD AND MURKY WATER make a good poultice for the soul, and on three occasions — separated by just a few months — Bubba and I have launched a canoe to float Bois d'Arc and slip through the sluggish creek to learn all we can about the tributary.

The politics of lakes and water law are complicated, and I do not profess to be an expert at either. Our trip and documentary projects have never meant to take a hardline stance on either side of the water issue. Instead, these trips are merely a personal project meant to capture the creek's ecological and personal importance before it's forever changed.

Depending on which account is accurate, somewhere between 62 percent and 90 percent of the old-growth hardwood bottomlands in Northeast and East Texas are gone. A 50-year lake-building frenzy has helped precipitate the demise of the bottomlands, and, ultimately, 16,000 acres of the Lower Bois d'Arc Creek bottomland will soon be gone as well.

I am not anti-growth, nor am I a staunch environmentalist who thinks that all wild lands should be left alone. Instead, I believe that there should be a happy medium — a way to conserve water so that a new reservoir isn't needed every decade. The needs of rural people and places should be considered just as important as their urban counterparts. The Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex needs water, and the area needs the prosperity. However, a workable compromise could slow the destruction of these bottomlands.

That thought lingers with me as Bubba pushes the canoe from the mud and takes his seat in the back of the Old Town 18-footer. Soon we are cruising through placid water dappled with splotches of light and dark from the arching canopy of hardwoods.

It is predictably quiet on the creek, as it always has been. Even though Fannin County has many small towns and a modest population of 33,000 countywide, there's hardly any development in the floodplain. As such, the creek creates thousands of acres of wilderness that's made up mostly of white ash trees growing in the deep, flat soils and a variety of oaks that grow in the higher, sandier elevations.

Periodically, we pass by a huge bois d'arc tree from which the creek gets its name. The area and its abundant bois d'arc trees were noted by the Red River expedition of 1806. About 30 years later, Anglos settled the area along the creek. Bailey English established a permanent settlement when he built a timber blockade on 1,250 acres along the creek. The original town he platted was known as Bois d'Arc, but in 1844, the town was renamed Bonham in honor of the fallen Alamo hero. Another Alamo hero, Davy Crockett, purportedly considered settling along the creek after the Alamo, as he wrote to his family in Tennessee extolling the richness of the area along "Bodark Bayou." Legend has it that he even wrote his name on a huge sandstone face that overlooks the creek on its upper end.

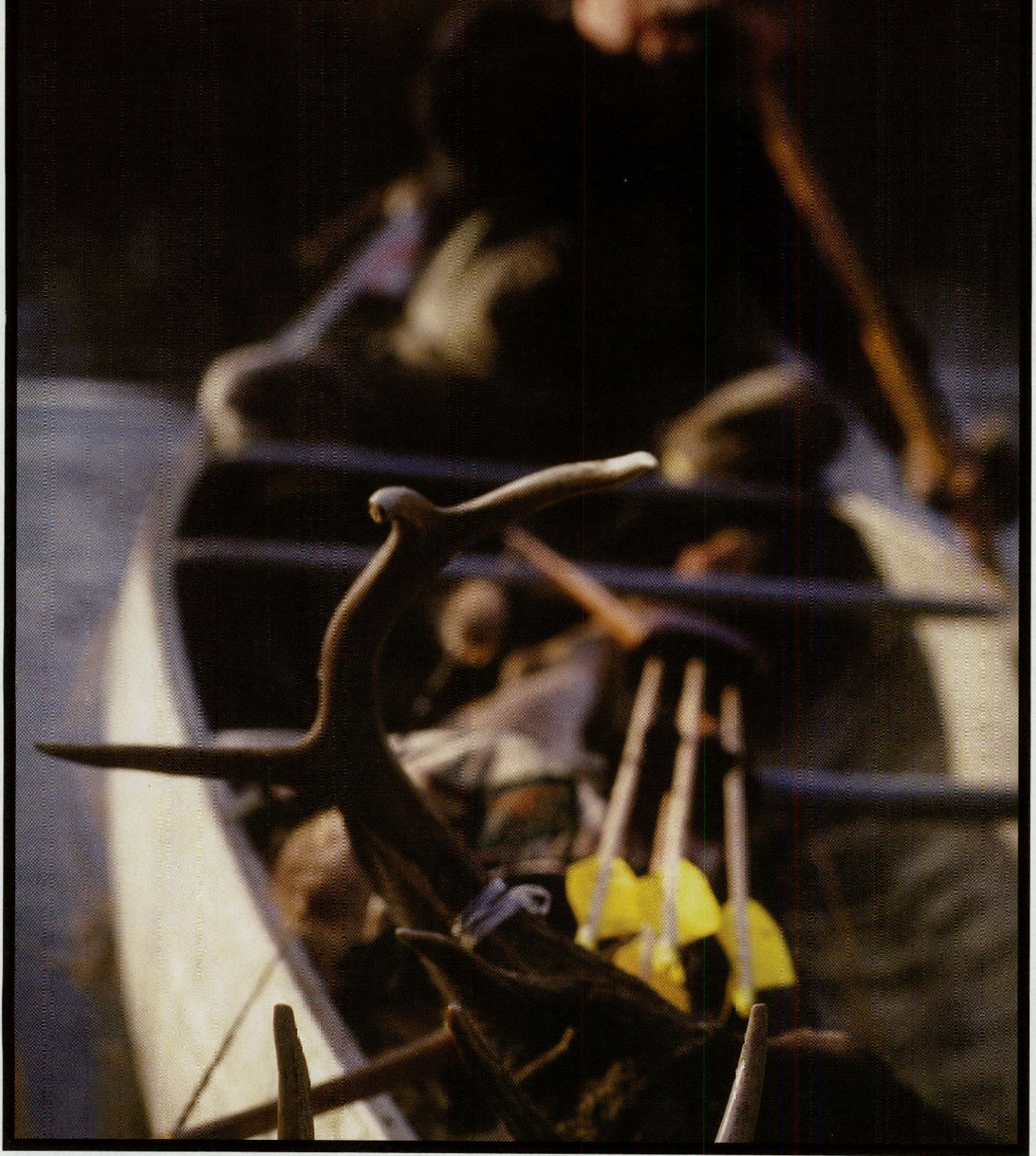
On our trips we see white-tailed deer staring at us curiously from the bank as we silently drift past or the occasional beaver chewing on a soft willow. Over the years, we've seen animals along the creek's margins that aren't even supposed to exist in Fannin County, if you believe most

THE AUTHOR'S FIRST DEER STAND (TOP), BUILT WITH HIS DAD IN THE MID-1980S, STILL STANDS TODAY, THOUGH MOST OF THE SURROUNDING TREES HAVE BEEN CUT DOWN FOR TIMBER. BUBBA WALKS ALONG A DRAW (RIGHT). ANTLERS OF A HARVESTED BUCK IN THEIR CANOE (OPPOSITE).



Over the years, we've seen animals along the creek's margins that aren't even supposed to exist in Fannin County...





biological texts. I've seen badgers and Bubba has seen river otters in the creek on at least three different occasions. After seeing these animals over the years, it makes me wonder what other species live in the wilderness.

We pass a few signs of human interaction, like the remnants of a rock weir dam where, in all likelihood, water was impounded for an old railroad line. We also pass a spot in the woods where, in 1982, my PawPaw felled the final trees and cut a quarter-mile road through the woods all the way to the creek. It was a feat that, as I recall, was celebrated by our family as if we'd just completed the Panama Canal.

While my family always sparingly cut the bottomland timber, I am dismayed to see the large swaths of clearcut timber on our canoe trips. While logically, the clearcutting makes sense

(landowners, who know their land will be taken under the guise of eminent domain, sell off all of their timber to make additional income before their land is sold for the lake project), it is still hard to see such large patches of the woods I love, gone.

On our three trips, we never pause in one place for too long. Mostly we float. Accompanied by gars that flank our canoe, we talk about our memories we've made along the creek. Memories and experiences that have ultimately shaped who we are and where we're headed. While a lake will ensure that the woods and the creek I know better than any other will soon be gone forever, there's not a dam big enough to flood the memories I've made on Bois D'Arc Creek. ★

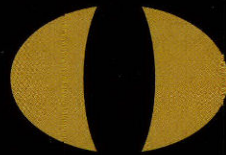
Bois d'Arc Goodbye, the documentary, is coming soon to www.russellgraves.com. See clips on www.tpwmagazine.com.





In the Blink of a Golden Eye

The ocelot is on the brink of U.S. extinction.

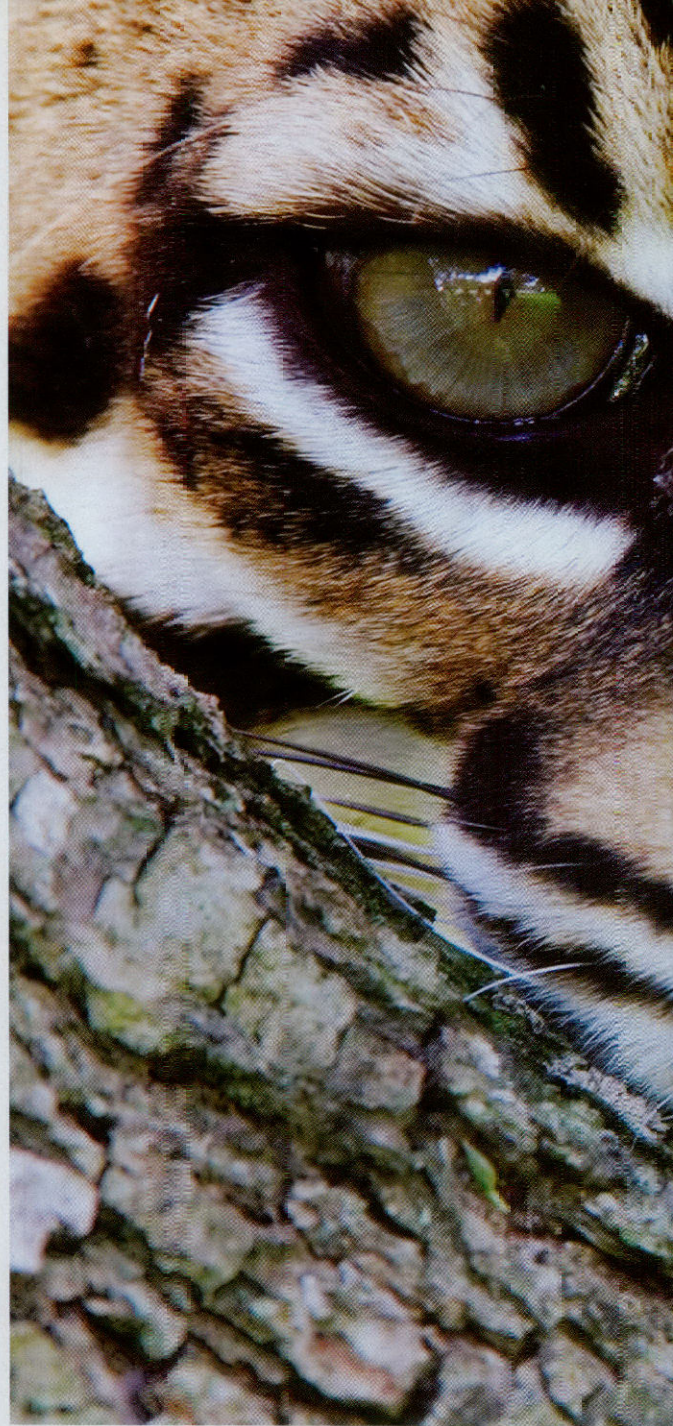


BY E. DAN KLEPPER

"ONLY TWO POPULATIONS OF OCELOT are left in the U.S. that we know of," biologist Jody Mays of the Rio Grande Valley's Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge reports. "Both are extremely small and at high risk of extinction." One population resides at the refuge, the other on private property farther north.

The ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), a mid-sized wild cat covered in spots and streaks, once roamed the southern states of America, including Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and Arizona. From here, their historic range extended into South America. But over the last century, the U.S. population has been dramatically reduced, and now the cats, along with their natural habitat, have reached a tipping point.

After 25 years of ocelot field research, biologists can confirm for certain only a small number of known ocelots surviving in America today. Past estimates were based on the amount of available habitat, confirmed kills and sightings and trapper surveys. Decades-old estimates suggested at the time that only 80 to 120 cats remained in the wilds of the United States. Today, when known ocelots are totaled from the remaining two populations in the Valley, verified by trapped cats in-hand and those photographed by wildlife trip cameras, the current confirmed count of ocelots in the country



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stands at less than a few dozen.

This grim reality is not new. The ocelot was designated an endangered species almost three decades ago. Its federal status afforded U.S. protection throughout the cat's historic range. But the ocelot is one of many species on the losing end of a battle with urban expansion, habitat destruction and vehicular mortality. Unfettered development and the human population explosion throughout the Rio Grande Valley have guaranteed the ocelot's decline, not only by eliminating the native South Texas chaparral it requires to survive, but also by dividing what remains of it into fragmented pieces.

Worse yet, the roadway that often splits habitat in two has frequently become the ocelot's last destination. Forty percent of the population's mortality is attributable to vehicular deaths. First hunted to near extinction



and then deprived of its habitat, our final ocelot population is now being reduced to road kill.

But Mays, with a smile that belies a deliberate resolve, believes there is still hope for the cat, a creature peppered with a beautiful pattern of dots and dashes that has inspired fashion — and helped spell the cat's decline — since the time of the Aztecs.

"It's still possible to reverse the trend and start it back toward recovery, but we better do something quick," Mays insists. "If we stick with the status quo, we are going to lose the ocelot in this country."

Mays has a reason for both urgency and optimism. In December 2008 one of the refuge's wildlife trip cameras caught an image of a female ocelot with her 6-month-old male kitten. It was the youngest ocelot documented on the refuge in almost 10 years, and

In 2008, one of the wildlife trip cameras caught an image of a female with her 6-month-old male kitten.

the first image to capture both mother and kitten together. The photograph confirmed the biologist's hope that ocelots are reproducing on the refuge. Since then, the ocelot kitten has been trapped, tagged with an electronic identification device, tested for diseases, vaccinated and radio-collared.

"He was about a year old when we finally caught him," says Mays. "He was healthy and seemed to be in good shape." Ocelot offspring will stay within the mother's

The ocelot's survival in the U.S. has been undermined by both the pet and fur trades.

territory, which can be anywhere from 250 to 1,500 acres, for about one to two years before finally breaking away to find their own turf. "This gives them time to bulk up," Mays says, "because they'll need to compete for their own territory."

Ocelots, adorable as kittens before maturing into sleek, stunning adults, showcase all the features that have helped draw attention to other endangered, charismatic species such as wolves and tigers, yet these advantages have had few positive results for this wild cat. Historically, the ocelot's survival in the United States has been undermined by both the pet and fur trades. However, our misguided engagement with the cat has endured over the centuries for a reason — the ocelot is, undeniably, an enchanted being.

"Eyeshine golden," William Henry Burt, author of *A Field Guide to Mammals*, stated in an unintentionally poetic notation about the ocelot. A brief synopsis follows, revealing the entire story: "Skins valuable as

trophies; offers sport to the hunter; does little damage because of rareness."

The ocelot has shadowed our own struggle for survival since humans arrived on the western continents. Its original range, from Texas to Argentina, guaranteed its presence in New World mythology. The name ocelot is derived from the Nahuatl word *ocelotl*, meaning jaguar. Nahuatl, the Mesoamerican language believed to have been spoken since the first decades A.D., was also the language of the Aztecs, who called the ocelot *tlalocelot*, meaning field tiger.

The Aztecs practiced a ritualized animism in which the ocelot, serving as an avatar, no doubt played a part. Its claws, meat, pelt and blood served as ritual components as well, a practice documented in Central America as late as the 1950s. Twentieth-century ocelot hunters were known to eat the meat, claiming it imparted strength and health. They also drank the dead ocelot's warm blood as it accumulated in the thorax.

Unfortunately, these kinds of supernatural beliefs continue to prevail in many parts of the world, to the detriment of ocelots and other wildlife. But it has been



ONE OF TWO remaining U.S. populations of ocelots can be found at the Rio Grande Valley's Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.







BIOLOGIST JODY MAYS holds an ocelot skull (left). A trail camera is located near a guzzler for ocelots at Atascosa NWR (right). Ocelot kittens are born in litters of one to three and stay with their mother for at least one year (below).



Populations beyond our southern border have fared better than those in America.

the material desire for the ocelot's exquisite fur that has dramatically accelerated the wild cat's downfall. The modern age has seen hundreds of thousands of ocelot pelts incorporated into coats, hats and purses. This ocelot fur trade became illegal in the U.S. after the ocelot acquired endangered status. It is also prohibited in some of the Central and South American countries, where healthier populations of ocelots survive. But in some parts of this historic range, the fur trade continues.

So far, ocelot populations beyond our southern border have fared better than those in America. But getting a population estimate throughout the cat's southern range is difficult.

"It's safe to say that it's probably in the tens of thousands based on the number per year once harvested for the fur trade," reports Dr. Michael Tewes, biologist and professor at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife

Research Institute. Tewes has specialized in wild cats for more than 25 years and has studied ocelots across the cat's entire range. "The cats are now receiving some protection under laws in Central and South America, but there is often a lack of enforcement. It's the biggest problem in many countries, particularly at the field level. This along with habitat loss, poaching, human encroachment on the wildlife preserves and the illegal fur trade all make the ocelot vulnerable throughout its southern range."

The initial estimate of 80 to 120 cats for the U.S. population came from Tewes and his research. Tewes studied ocelot distribution in the Valley between 1982 and 1984, initially capturing 12 ocelots total. "The ocelot situation in the U.S. today is dire," says Tewes, "and habitat fragmentation and destruction are the biggest culprits."

Habitat fragmentation isolates wildlife, causing inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity. It also increases mortality rates. The two populations in the Rio Grande Valley must negotiate gaps like subdivisions, urban development and major highways to access additional habitat, exposing them to potential harm. Establishing safe corridors between areas of natural habitat by factoring wildlife corridor construction costs into the budgeting process for highways would make a difference.

"We've identified some areas where wildlife crossings beneath roads need to be placed," Mays reveals, "and are working with Texas Department of Transportation to try and get some of those crossings built."



OCELOTS are medium-sized cats with moderately long tails. The pattern of their highly prized coats consists of spots, small rings, blotches and short bars.

An additional solution is to restore or conserve natural habitat along the Valley's many irrigation canals and drainage ditches.

"We are trying to encourage regional irrigation and drainage districts to leave or restore natural habitat along at least one side of these channel levees and ditches," Mays says. "It would not only be good for the ocelots, it would be good for all the wildlife."

But the most successful weapon in the battle to save the U.S. ocelot population is simple — halt the rapid decline of existing natural habitat. Loss of habitat spells the decline for healthy species as much as it does for endangered and threatened wildlife. The ocelot's thorn scrub and the surrounding coastal plains are home to a variety of Texas natives, including roseate spoonbills, alligators, hawks, pelicans and countless migratory waterfowl and songbirds. Lose the habitat and the wildlife that depends on it will vanish as well.

But Mays doesn't consider losing an option. "You don't give up just because it's difficult. You keep working at it."

Mays and other biologists believe that one of the best ways to preserve existing habitat is by partnering with

private property owners who may have native habitat present on their lands. Less than 5 percent of the original Tamaulipan thorn scrub that once covered the state's southern region remains, and much of it is in private hands.

"There's a big misconception out there that finding an endangered species on your private property means your property will be taken away or you will be told exactly what you can or can't do with your property, and that's just not true," says Mays.

"It's completely up to the landowner how they wish to participate," she explains. "Maybe they want to improve their habitat for hunting. Maybe they only want to involve just a strip of their property. Maybe they want some help re-establishing an old resaca or doing something with an abandoned field already on its way back to natural habitat. There is no rubber stamp way to do it. We want everyone to benefit."

A winning situation is needed for the South Texas ocelot, an animal nicknamed "the ghost cat" because of its secretive, nocturnal nature. But unless Texans are willing to reverse the decline in the ocelot's population, soon the name will also become its epitaph. ★



PHOTO COURTESY US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

BY WENDEE HOLT CAMP

ATTACK OF THE KILLER FUNGUS


WILL *WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME*
SPREAD TO TEXAS BATS?

DUSK SETTLES OVER AUSTIN'S Lady Bird Lake as a few hundred people mill about, talking, waiting and watching the sky. Some peer over the edge of the Congress Avenue Bridge. Others gather on a grassy knoll below. A man juggles to keep people entertained, and others sell glow sticks and snacks to excited kids. A handful of people stand nearby, examining the four-panel educational kiosk. It's my third visit, but I'm excited by the presence of my friend Doug, a first-timer. Soon, the reason why we have all gathered will become apparent. It's one of nature's most beautiful and inspiring spectacles — the nighttime emergence of hundreds of

thousands of bats. Bat watching, particularly in Austin, has become an international phenomenon.

But what if all these bats were to vanish?

A mysterious ailment, white-nose syndrome (WNS), has killed more than a million hibernating bats of six species since 2006. Its rapid spread radiated outward from New York, and by the winter of 2008–09, had killed bats in eight other states: Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Virginia and West Virginia. It has affected one endangered species, the Indiana bat, and imminently threatens three others.



Brown bat with
white-nose
syndrome

As WNS spreads across the country, Texas must sit and wait, watching a ticking time bomb. It's "the most precipitous wildlife decline in the past century in North America," according to a consensus statement by scientists who gathered in Austin in May 2008 to discuss WNS as they prepared for a June 4 presentation to the U.S. Congress to plead for research funds.

Doug and I walk from the grassy knoll up some stairs to the bridge itself, passing by a sign that says "Welcome to the World's Largest Urban Bat Colony." We join Bat Conservation International biologist Mylea Bayless. The sky has grown deep blue, and anticipation builds as people keep looking around for the spectacular acrobatic flying mammal night show.

Bayless shares some cool bat facts, including the many benefits that bats provide. I learn that the 100 million Mexican free-tailed bats in Central Texas eat 1,000 tons of insects every night, and the 1.5 million bats at this bridge alone eat 10,000 to 30,000 pounds of insects nightly. Texas boasts 32 of the nation's 45 bat species, including one federally endangered species. We're most famous for the Brazilian (or Mexican) free-tailed bats that dine mostly on moths. Scientists value the pest control that bats provide in the South Texas Plains' eight-county Winter Garden agricultural area at \$1.7 million. And then there's tourism. Austin's bats attract 100,000 people every year, yielding \$10 million in tourism revenue. There are nine other public bat-watching sites statewide. What would happen to Texas bats if WNS strikes here?

The story of WNS started when recreational cavers noticed fuzzy, white muzzles on several bats in Howes Cave outside Albany, N.Y., in February 2006. One snapped a photo but didn't share it with authorities right away.

The following winter, when bats should have been deep in hiber-

nation, people started observing bats flying about and then showing up dead on neighborhood lawns. The number of bat carcasses sent to health labs increased tenfold. At first, people suspected a rabies outbreak, but the carcasses showed no signs of rabies.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation took note of the strange happenings and started investigating in February 2007. What they found shocked them. At one site, Hailes Cave, thousands of bat carcasses littered the cavern floor. In the five caves searched, 81 to 100 percent of the hibernating bats had disappeared, and those still alive had telltale white muzzles. They called the baffling ailment white-nose syndrome.

As bats hibernated in their cool, humid caves, a never-before-seen fungus had started attacking them, invading their skin, wings, ears and other tissue. U.S. Geological Survey scientist David Blehert likens it to food in your refrigerator that has gone moldy. A small percentage of bats survive in WNS-stricken caves, but it's not certain whether they have immunity or end up dying the next year in hibernation. Some affected bats seem severely underweight compared with healthy bats, but not all infected bats show visible signs of infection.

It seems to be the era of killer fungi. Some have compared WNS to the cool-weather chytrid fungus that emerged in 1999, attacking amphibian populations worldwide. Scientists now partly blame a parasitic fungus for the "colony collapse disorder" that has devastated honeybees. And just this past summer, a new strain of the fungus that caused the Irish potato famine hit the northeast U.S. potato crop hard. In all these situations, scientists continue deciphering just what's causing such sudden and massive declines.

Blehert and his colleagues isolated and described the fungus on the afflicted bats, which was brand new to science. They named it *Geomyces destructans*. The discovery brought more questions. Was this an exotic species brought from another country, or did a native fungus mutate? Would it affect other animals, or even people?

"The fungus grows on the bats' wings and faces almost as if they were Petri dishes. We've never seen anything like it among any of the other species of fungi that grow on mammals," says Daniel Lindner of the U.S. Forest Service, who is collaborating with Blehert on WNS studies. Lindner is trying to find out whether *G. destructans* grows on cave walls, in soil or just on the bats, and also whether it can be transported on boots or equipment.

"At this point we're assuming the fungus is an introduced species, since it's acting like one, but we don't even know that for sure," says Lindner. Recently, photos of white muzzles on several European bat species surfaced, but apparently it hasn't killed those bats. The scientists are in the

process of determining whether that fungus is also *G. destructans*, and preliminary genetic evidence indicates that it is. When species get introduced to a

As white-nose syndrome spreads across the country, Texas must sit and wait, watching a ticking time bomb.

PHOTOS © GERRIT VYN



A Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist holds bats that have died from white-nose syndrome.



Endangered Indiana bats have died from WNS. This clustering in caves increases the threat of spreading the disease.

new locale, they can undergo an “ecological release” in which they expand their range, free of competitors, predators or pathogens that keep them in check in their native habitat. Common examples in Texas include recently imported fire ants. If *G. destructans* turns out to be an exotic

species, it will have ecological ramifications beyond bats.

Scientists do not know conclusively whether the fungus kills the bats or if lethality is a side effect of another factor weakening their immune systems. Blehert and colleagues looked for — but did not find — any other parasite or pathogen in bats affected by WNS. Also, the fungus seems to invade the skin but not any internal organs, so can that kill a healthy bat? One hypothesis is that the fungal infection causes the bats to rouse from hibernation and deplete critical fat stores, which leads to starvation.

Hibernating bats snuggle in dense aggregations, clearly an ideal scenario for spreading the fungus or any disease, and Blehert’s latest experiments show that the fungus can spread bat-to-bat. But how did it jump from caves in the Northeast all the way to Virginia and West Virginia

so quickly? Besides bat-to-bat transmission, another possibility is that people visiting caves might be spreading the fungus.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Forest Service became so alarmed that in spring 2009 they closed several caves across the country and strongly recommended that spelunkers voluntarily suspend activities in caves in affected regions and neighboring states, follow stringent decontamination procedures for gear and not bring gear ever used in affected caves or regions to non-affected regions.

“We recognize that the steps we are recommending will require sacrifice from the caving community and others,” said the USFWS in a March 2009 advisory statement. “However, the observed devastation to bat populations, exceeding 90 percent mortality at many

affected sites, and the evidence for human-assisted spread justifies that we exercise an abundance of caution in managing activities that impact caves and bats.”

“Cavers are coming from all over. They could use equipment from the East and could possibly bring WNS out,” says TPWD wildlife biologist John Young, who coordinates the state’s proactive WNS efforts. Since scientists aren’t certain that decontamination even works against these spores, it’s best to err on the side of caution. “Although TPWD doesn’t have a policy right now, we’d recommend people not go into caves where bats are known to occur.”

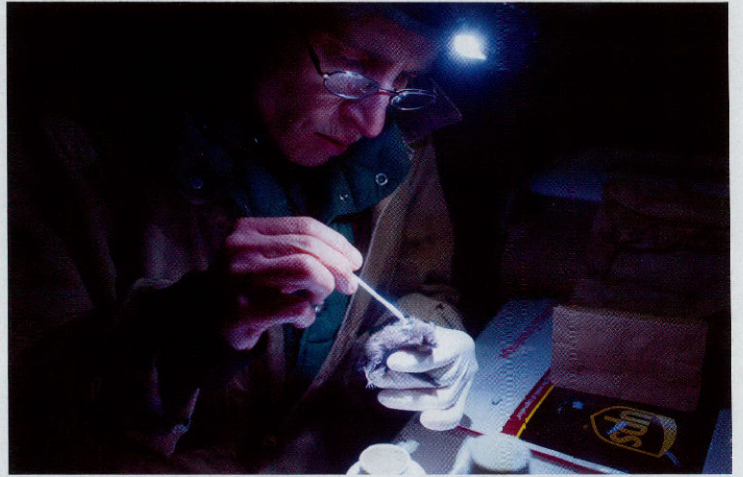
Young participates in the Western Bat Working Group, which is currently drafting guidelines to best deal with the threat of WNS for western states. He has already started contacting bat researchers and those working at the 10 public bat viewing sites throughout the state, sharing information on what they should look for that may indicate WNS: bats flying in deep winter, underweight bats, scarred and damaged wings and, of course, the telltale — but not always present — white noses.

As we finish talking with Bayless, I hear someone shout, “Lock!” and point to a bat flying out from the bridge, and people start chatting

excitedly. We look down to see hundreds of bats spiraling under the bridge’s north side. Before long, hundreds and then thousands start flying in a figure eight under the bridge columns, and then out into the sky along the lake, first in one line, then in three or four lines of bats. I’ve now seen bat emergences at three of Texas’ 10 public bat viewing sites, including Clarity Tunnel in the Panhandle and Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area in the Hill Country, which has freetails plus 3,000 cave myotis.

TPWD bat education specialist Nyra Brown has dozens of fascinating bat facts, but my favorite: the half-million bats from Old Tunnel eat insects weighing the equivalent of 200,000 hamburger patties per night. Freetails prefer moths to mosquitoes, but myotis

Besides bat-to-bat transmission, another possibility is that people visiting caves might be spreading the fungus.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Donate to Bat Conservation International's WNS rapid response fund. www.batcon.org/wnsdonate
- If you live in the Panhandle, where bats hibernate and you notice bats flying in winter, report them to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at WhiteNoseBats@fws.gov. If you live anywhere in Texas and see dead bats or notice anything unusual, report to TPWD at 512-389-8047.
- As always, never touch dead or dying bats, but call a wildlife rehabilitator or a rabies lab. Rabies is very rare in bats, but is a serious and deadly disease. Labs can determine the cause of death and will pass along this information to TPWD.
- Create homes for bats! Bat boxes and roosts are a great way to augment existing populations of bats, which eat pesky insects. Info at BCI: www.batcon.org/batrouse
- If you're a spelunker, read and follow the guidelines for decontamination. If you travel, consider renting local equipment rather than bringing your caving gear back to non-affected states.
- If you'd like to learn more, a list of hibernating and non-hibernating bats is available at www.fort.usgs.gov/WNS.

bats will eat 600 of the blood-suckers per hour.

Scientists have recently determined that *G. destructans*, the fungus associated with WNS, grows best between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and not at all above 68 degrees, so they do not suspect that Texas' many free-tailed bats are at high risk. Bayless is cautiously optimistic.

"If it is indeed the fungus — and we don't know that for sure — it does seem to be associated with cold weather environments," she says. "If southern bats spend less time in hibernation, they may be less susceptible to fungus from WNS." Bats that hibernate in the Panhandle, including the cave myotis (*Myotis velifer*) and pallid bat, are vulnerable.

Even if WNS never reaches Texas, declines in bat numbers elsewhere may increase insect abundance in neighboring states, which could cause problems with agriculture here. That, in turn, could affect food prices, especially if farmers compensate with more pesticides. Bats have only a single pup per year and live five to 20 years, so populations in affected regions will recover painstakingly slowly.

"We hope and pray there's some sort of southern threshold where the damage will be less severe, but we won't truly know that until we see it come," says Bayless. It's a waiting game.

The death of mass numbers of bats will have serious repercussions, especially since they are the only major predator of night-flying insects. As Scott Darling of Vermont's Fish and Wildlife Department said in his June 4 congressional testimony: "We are at the beginning of a nationwide ecological experiment in which we will find out how one part — bats — affects the whole ecosystem." ★

Clockwise from top: Closeup of a little brown myotis infected by WNS, hibernating in New York; a scientist attaches a radio transmitter to a bat; researchers examine one of thousands of dead bats outside a Vermont cave.

Keep**Texas Wild**

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BUILDING THE WEST

THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICANS TO SERVE in the U.S. military during a time of peace were called "Buffalo Soldiers" by the Cheyenne Indians. The soldiers were given this name because of their strength and courage in battle and their dark, curly hair, which resembled the mane of the buffalo. Life on the frontier was hard, but during the Indian War campaigns of 1866-1892, four regiments of Buffalo Soldiers lived and worked in some of the most remote and dangerous parts of the United States. Their dedication helped to build the American West.

BUFFALO

DAILY LIFE

SINCE WOMEN WERE NOT allowed to serve in the army in 1866, Cathay Williams changed her name to "William Cathay" and pretended to be a man. Williams was the first African-American woman to enlist in the U.S. Army, and the only known female Buffalo Soldier. Two years later, a doctor discovered her real identity and she was discharged. Today she is a famous and honored historical figure.



Famous figures
CATHAY WILLIAMS

SINCE MOST BUFFALO SOLDIERS had been slaves before the Civil War, very few had received formal education. Serving in the military gave them an opportunity to learn. Often chaplains (military preachers) taught the soldiers how to read and write. Playing cards, which had no written numbers in the late 1800s, were used to teach memorization and counting. For example, soldiers learned to count to six by counting the number of hearts, spades, clubs or diamonds on the card.



LEARNING

WHILE ON CAMPAIGN, Buffalo Soldiers lived and worked in military camps. These were arranged in a straight line, almost like a street. Most soldiers had to carry their own tents when they moved camps. The type of tent would vary according to the soldier's



OFTEN THE MOST DIFFICULT PART of being a Buffalo Soldier wasn't fighting battles or saving stagecoaches; it was the long weeks spent waiting for the next mission, the days spent doing routine assignments. In this way, the life of a Buffalo Soldier was very similar to our own. He even



"READY AND FORWARD!"

SOLDIERS

Life in Camp

rank. For example, pairs of enlisted men, the lowest rank, shared a tent and each man carried half of it. Even after a long day of traveling, Buffalo Soldiers liked to sing around the campfire before they went to sleep.

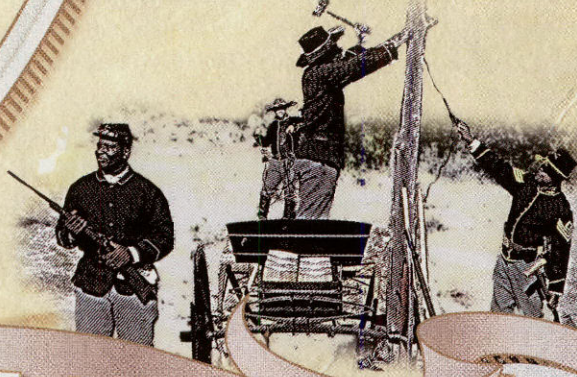


SERGEANT EMANUEL STANCE was the first African-American to receive the medal of honor after the Civil War. He was commended for leading two brave charges against Indians raiding wagons and trying to steal horses. During the Indian Wars, 18 Buffalo Soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the highest award of the U.S. military.



Famous figures
EMANUEL STANCE

IN ADDITION to protecting frontier outposts and railroads from attack, Buffalo Soldiers scouted out many of the roads we use today, aided officers in taking measurements and drawing maps, and built the first telegraph lines in Texas.



had to brush his teeth, though his toothbrush wasn't quite like the kind we buy at the store! The handle was made of wood or bone, and the brush was made of pig bristles or some other type of stiff, coarse animal hair that had been cleaned and boiled. For toothpaste, a soldier would use baking soda or even fire ash.

A SOLDIER'S LIFE



"WE CAN; WE WILL"



Spike's Activity Page



>> WILD SCIENCE



SINCE BUFFALO SOLDIERS were often on the move, they needed food stores that would stay good for a long time. A type of bread called "hardtack," which looks a lot like a Pop-Tart® with no frosting, would not mold and could be eaten up to several years after it was made.

Here's an experiment you can do at home. With your parents' help, make your own hardtack using the recipe below, and then test the hardtack in different conditions. For example, will the hardtack mold if it gets wet? How quickly does regular sliced bread mold under the same conditions? What do you think makes hardtack so special?

Ingredients:

- 4 cups flour (preferably whole wheat flour)
- 4 teaspoons salt
- Water (about 2 cups)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Mix the flour and salt together in a

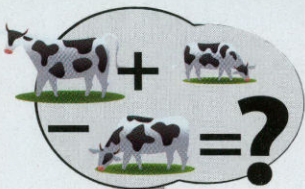
bowl. Add just enough water (less than two cups) so that the mixture will stick together, producing a dough that won't stick to your hands, rolling pin or pan. Mix the dough by hand. Roll the dough out, shaping it roughly into a rectangle. Cut the dough into 3-inch squares about 1/2-inch thick.

After cutting the squares, press a pattern of four rows or four holes into each square, using a nail or other such object. Do not punch through the dough. The appearance you want is similar to that of a modern saltine cracker. Turn each square over and do the same thing to the other side.

Place the squares on an ungreased cookie sheet in the oven and bake for 30 minutes. Turn each piece over and bake for another 30 minutes. The crackers should be slightly brown on both sides.

The fresh crackers are easily broken but as they dry, they harden and assume the consistency of fired brick. (Yield: 10 pieces)

>> WILD MATH



IN THE 1800s, it was difficult to transport meat out to a fort, which meant living cattle had to be brought where they were needed and butchered there. If the officers at the fort purchased \$400 of beef at 5 cents per pound, how many pounds of beef did they purchase?

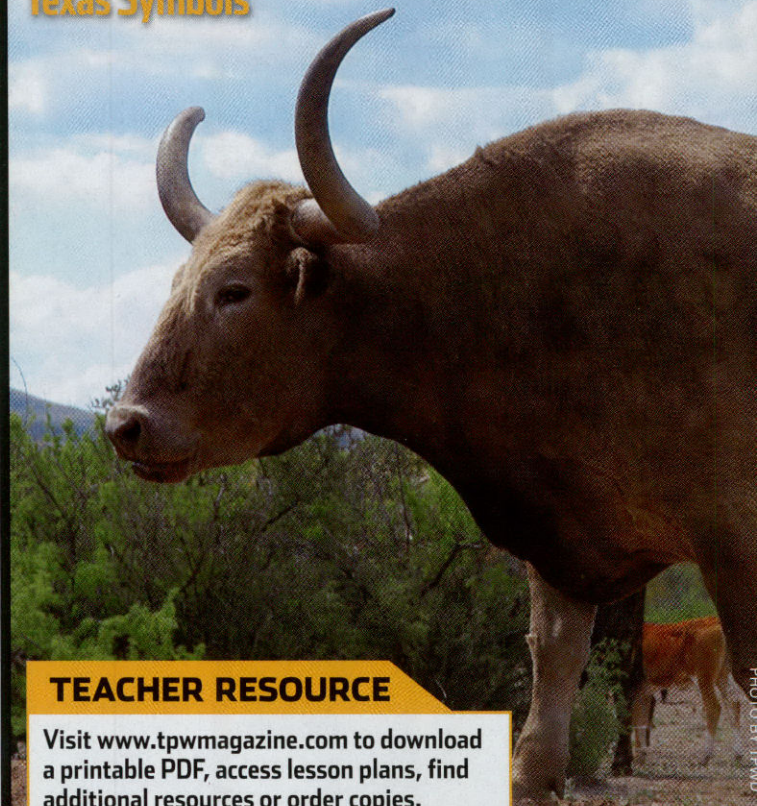


Participate!

You don't have to imagine what life must have been like as a Buffalo Soldier – you can experience it for yourself at one of the Texas Buffalo Soldiers' living history events! View their calendar at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/community_outreach_programs/buffalo_soldiers/calendar.phtml.



NEXT MONTH: Texas Symbols



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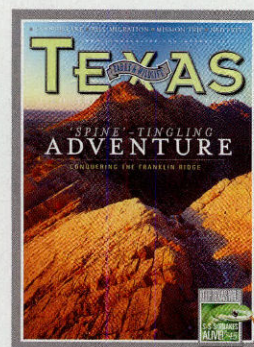
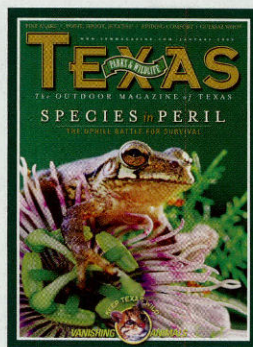
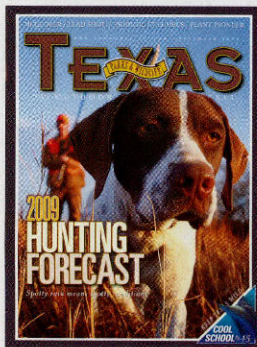


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John Winter:

ALL-AROUND COWBOY of the OUTDOORS

BY JOHN JEFFERSON

This Renaissance outdoorsman not only lived the good life, he chronicled it.

This is a story about a different time and place. Its principal character has been gone since 1954. Although he was a legend to the fortunate few who knew him personally and hundreds more who knew him through his outdoor exploits, his endeavors have dwelt in relative obscurity for half a century.

As far as anyone knows, John Winter never rode a bull to the buzzer or the wrinkles out of a bronc, never swung a loop or 'dogged a steer, but considering all the things at which he excelled as an early 20th-century sportsman, one can easily imagine that he could have been the all-around cowboy had that been his calling. But the closest he ever came to a rodeo was when he rode horseback to hunt ducks.

The first thing I learned about Winter was that he was a duck hunter. And was he ever! But he was also so much more.

Probably the single most significant aspect of his escapades — as far as history is concerned — was that he recorded all his adventures on still and movie cameras and an old, manual typewriter. Winter meticulously compiled hundreds of prints into volumes of scrapbooks, telling the story of his experiences in captioned photographs. Many take pictures; few catalog them for posterity as Winter did.

As Russell Lee's photography was to documenting the heartbreaking agony of the Depression and the Dust Bowl days, so was Winter to chronicling the pinnacle and decline of nearly unlimited duck hunting in Texas. Plus he was heavily involved in inland and coastal fishing, boat building and racing, the advent of air shows, swimming and lifesaving, commercial marine sales and window decorating.

Window decorating?

Yes, he did windows, from design to display. He worked in Beaumont doing windows for the E.L. Wilson Hardware Company and in

Houston for the C.L. and Theo Bering Company Hardware and Sporting Goods. He produced detailed depictions of his clients' merchandise, be it hunting paraphernalia, cooking utensils or common tools grouped in most uncommon patterns and kaleidoscopic arrangements. Perhaps none of his other passions or pastimes says as much about the man's complexity and creativity as his window work. There lies his acute attention to detail, his artistry and the enormous energy needed to complete intricate and laborious projects. Window displays often included hundreds of elements, like a miniature battleship he constructed out of hardware items sold by the store, or the duck-hunting scene that featured four live ducks in an actual pond in the window. Another was made of tediously arranged shotgun shells. People don't do windows like that anymore. Most never did.

The story begins in 1898 when John Winter's parents emigrated from Germany, bringing with them a young son and a Teutonic work ethic that no doubt influenced his life. They arrived in

WINTER METICULOUSLY COMPILED HUNDREDS OF PRINTS INTO VOLUMES OF SCRAPBOOKS, TELLING HIS STORY IN CAPTIONED PHOTOGRAPHS.



48
DUCKS
10.31.20



TACKS
POCKET



Winter's scrapbooks unfold in vivid detail, thanks to his unflinching attention to the anecdotes behind the photos.

Galveston and soon moved inland to Houston.

Fast forward to 2008. Rob Sawyer, a duck hunter originally from the Chesapeake Bay area in Maryland, but now a Houston geologist, went to Hempstead to buy a dog. Chet Beaty, the kennel owner, and Sawyer began talking duck hunting and Beaty showed Sawyer some old hunting photographs. Flint struck steel. Sawyer learned from Beaty that a wealth of duck-hunting lore was housed in the complete collection of John Winter's photographs, stewarded by Winter's grandson, Cliff Fisher, in Houston. That spark led Sawyer on a quest that will soon culminate in the publication of his book on Texas duck hunting, *Coastal Texas Waterfowl — Market and Sport Hunting from the 1800s to 1970*, to be published by Texas A&M University Press in 2010. Sawyer and Fisher have both been helpful in providing access to the photographs, family information and a peek at Sawyer's extremely well-researched manuscript.

One of Winter's first dated photos shows the pilot and plane that made the first flight ever into Texas on Feb. 18, 1910, landing on the prairie south of Houston. The following year, he shot a large air show (wearing a suit, tie and fedora). He later learned to fly, although it was nearly a fatal attraction for him.

Then came the "photo period" that cemented his place in history — waterfowl-hunting photography. One of Winter's pictures is captioned "First ducks — near Clodine — 1913." That bleak scene southwest of Houston taken on a "good day for ducks" inaugurated what was to be a great era for those interested in Texas duck hunting.

A section in one scrapbook reads "Duck Hunting — My Favorite Sport!" A picture in this sequence shows Winter and a couple of other hunters with 200 ducks. Another shot, taken by Winter, is of several hundred ducks rising off the water. Many of them are sprigs (pintails). Still another shows a gray sky that is darkened with ducks, maybe a thousand. The caption reads, "So many ducks it took two men to see them all." A closer frame of ducks taking off shows the birds so thick and close together that one shot with the right choke on a 12-gauge shotgun might have put the hunter over limit had modern-day limits been in force at the time.

When John Winter began hunting, the limit was 25 per day and 75 in possession, set by a 1907 state statute, as Sawyer's research reports. The Migratory Game Bird Treaty of 1918 changed that to 25 ducks per day and 25 in possession, according to David Sharp with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The limit was again changed in 1930 to 15 a day and 30 in possession. Currently, the limit is six ducks a day, but restrictions on several species lower the number a hunter may legally take in a day's hunt. The possession limit (the number a hunter may have in his possession after the second day of the hunt) is twice the daily bag limit.

A 1921 picture in front of Bering's Hardware showing Winter and another hunter standing proudly by the fruits of their hunt is captioned "191 ducks. No Game Laws Violated." We're not told how many hunters participated, which could have easily legalized the limit, but the fact that the two posed for pictures in downtown Houston strongly supports their claim of legality. Many other pictures showed strings of 225 ducks, 210 ducks, 54 mallards in one evening at Barrow's Camp, 150 at Cove, all with Winter and his hunting companions standing stoically in front of Bering's windows in suits, ties and hats. A dapper bunch of duck hunters,

indeed. Winter guided duck hunters throughout the area, including many notables, such as General Billy Mitchell and other military personnel.

Winter occasionally hunted out of sink boxes and used live decoys. Those were all legal then. They aren't now. Live decoys were just that: live ducks Winter raised in his backyard in Houston and anchored among his artificial decoys. A sink box was a floating (usually!) box in which the hunter laid down, feet toward the wind, and shot the ducks as they passed over and set their wings going into the wind to land. Rob Sawyer referred to sink boxes as more of a culture than an apparatus. It took nerve, balance and a lack of wave action to survive it. Some called them "floating coffins."

Hunting was tougher then than now. It's hard to imagine how Winter toted all the equipment it took to camp out in duck-hunting areas. Roads were poor, if they existed at all. Automobiles had skinny wheels, and off-road tires hadn't yet been invented. Horses and boats carried much of the gear. Getting there was not half the fun.



Clockwise from top left: Winter and friends formed a canoe club for fun; a Winter store window display; his winning racer, the Ankle Deep; Winters photographed some of the first air shows and was a pilot himself; with his Tele Graflex camera; calling ducks; showing off the catch of the day with friends.

On one trip across Trinity Bay, the wind and sleet were agonizing, and a wave swamped Winter's boat, causing him and his friends to spend a frigid night in a bayou near Anahuac. They answered the elements by shooting 200 ducks over the next couple of days. On a trip to Cove by plane, Winter's craft collided with another biplane. His scrapbook somberly says: "No ducks that day."

Winter's camera was a wood, metal and glass R.B. Tele Graflex with a long bellows. According to Jerry Sullivan at Precision Camera in Austin, it would have weighed 4 to 5 pounds. That was an added load.

Winter usually hunted in the early days with a Parker double-barrel 12-gauge, and took a case of shells. He also used a Remington Model 11 semi-automatic shotgun and occasionally a Winchester Model 12. Those were the "paper shell" days, too, so keeping the powder dry was more than a mere figure of speech. He was an excellent duck caller, using just his mouth much of the time, occasionally assisted by a call made by Charles Ditto of Illinois. A *Houston Chronicle* article said, "Johnny Winter used to call them to us when they were neither hungry nor lonesome."

Outdoor writing for newspapers and magazines, as we know it today, had not yet become a profession. This was before the days of Brister, Boughton, Holder, Klepper, Swann, Thompson and Tinsley. But Winter was considered such an expert in the outdoors that he regularly wrote for Houston papers. A December 1947 copy of a magazine called *Sports Round-up* carried his "Hints to Duck Hunters." It was as cur-

rent as most pieces you'll read today, especially on decoys and blind placement and construction. In it, he wrote that he was personally "strong for the 20-gauge and haven't shot anything else for 25 years."

Winter was a versatile outdoorsman. He built boats and won races in his "Ankle Deep," a long canoe with a three-horsepower engine. He designed and built a "Hydro-Glider" that attained 70 mph — one of the fastest boats in America. He helped develop races in Houston and San Antonio and was a vice commodore in the Texas Boating Racing Club. His boating expertise led him to become sales manager of the largest marine store in Texas, and along with C.B. Delhomme, he initiated the Houston Boat Show.

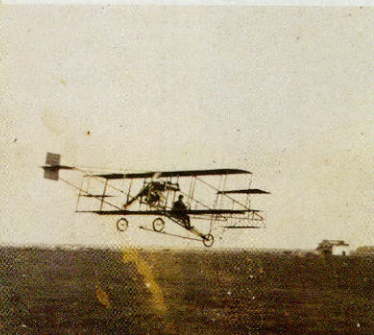
Winter was also an experienced fisherman. Pictures show him with 28 bass caught on a fly rod near China, Texas, in 1918, and 50 to 60 bass on a long stringer. His most astonishing catch, though, was a 2,500-pound sun ray he and two other men caught in a seine near Galveston!

As if all that wasn't enough, Winter taught swimming and lifesaving and formed a Red Cross Life Saving Corps of the Kodak Canoe Club, patrolling the San Jacinto River.

In his later years, his hunting and photography waned. Winter even commented in one of his articles that "many of us have quit duck hunting altogether as the limits are so small." He predicted, however, that some of the restrictions would be lifted in light of the "wonderful conservation programs" then in effect.

Sadly, however, his guns and cameras were being left on the shelf more and more. Like Puff the Magic Dragon, the day was

WINTER WAS ALSO AN EXPERIENCED FISHERMAN. HIS MOST ASTONISHING CATCH WAS A 2,500-POUND SUN RAY HE AND TWO OTHER MEN CAUGHT IN A SEINE NEAR GALVESTON!



approaching when Jackie Paper would come no more. His shotguns would soon "cease their fearless roar" for good. But like that make-believe magic dragon, his pictures will live forever.

No one seems to know what became of his cameras. Like many photographers, he may have "traded up" to other needs. One shotgun is still in the family.

His legacy, though, is in the aging black-and-white photos — the ones already mentioned and many others that recorded family history: his beautiful wife, Leta, gracefully seated in a long canoe wearing a long dress and a large hat and holding a baby; Leta walking precariously along logs out over the river; his beloved dogs; his family on vacations in Mexico and the West.

We have his photos, too. Were it not for John Winter's photographs, we would not know what parts of the upper Texas coast looked like a hundred years ago. We would not know that as we pass over the "Lost and Old Rivers" on Interstate 10 between Houston and Beaumont that the Cove community lies in its shadow, a mere fragment of the wildlife wonderland it once was.

And were it not for Winter's pictures, Rob Sawyer might have never been moved to write the history of coastal waterfowl hunting. Who knows what Sawyer's book will inspire?

My hope is that those reading it will adopt a deeper spirit of conservation for waterfowl and protect its ever-diminishing habitat.

Thank you, Mr. Winter. ☆

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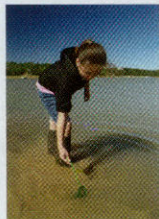
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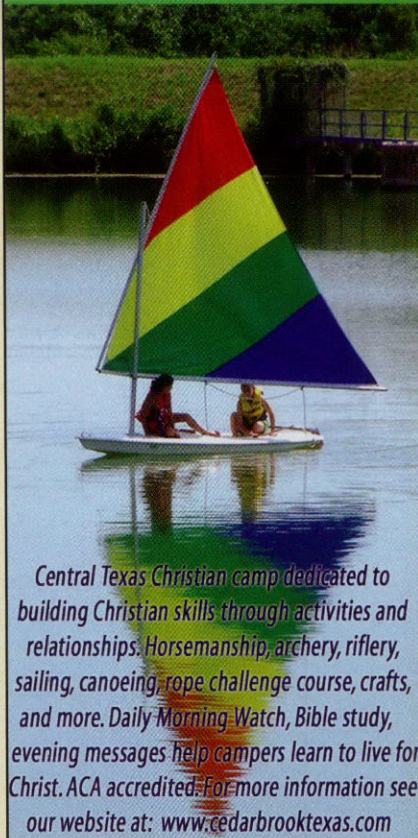
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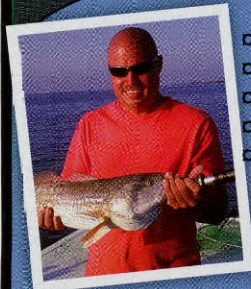
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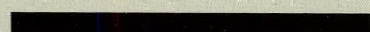
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2010 TEXAS CAMP GUIDE

SEE PAGES 50-51 FOR MORE INFO

(continued from page 19)

third time, and it's just as exhilarating as the first.

"From afar, it didn't look as steep as it does when you get here," Doug says.

The trail starts out gently but climbs steeply up the rock face, though not for very far. It takes only 30 minutes or so to get to the top, and I watch as he looks for the metal survey marker at 1,825 feet. It must have rained recently because the vernal pools are full of water and flush with colorful mosses and flowers.

We finish our climb around noon and head to Fredericksburg to grab brunch at Java Ranch Espresso Bar and Café, with walls painted in murals of ranchland and historic downtown Fredericksburg. We explore the shops for a bit, and when I can wrestle Doug from the old-time toy store, we head east to the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site.

The park has a self-guided audio tour on CD. First we check out the Sauer-Beckmann living history farm, which re-creates life from the early 1900s, the era Johnson lived here. Park Ranger Rita Carleton, dressed in full early-20th-century attire, speaks to an audience gathered on the porch.

"Our day at the farm begins with lighting the fire in the kitchen stove and starting the cowboy coffee," explains Carleton, who has worked here five years. Next, "the chickens are let out and someone has gone out to feed all the animals and milk the cow."

They wash clothes by hand, cook all meals from scratch, and butcher and prepare meat in winter. After we snap some photos, we take the driving tour of the working LBJ Ranch, operated by the National Park Service, the place where Johnson and Lady Bird spent their last years.

Just 14 miles out of Fredericksburg, we make one final stop at

Becker Vineyards, established by Dr. Richard Becker and his wife, Bunny, in 1992. The Hill Country has many wineries, and this one sells several award winners. Bunny shows us around the property, including the B&B, which is the original homestead of the Heinrick Peese family, the vineyards and lavender fields out back and the main building with a tasting room. I buy a half-dozen of the locally grown wines for gifts.

"I imagined it being more mountainous than it was," Doug says on the way home as we discuss what he saw versus what he'd expected. He also adds, "It's less of a desert than I thought it would be."

He'd been keen on seeing cactus, and we did see prickly pear throughout our excursions at Enchanted Rock and Colorado Bend State Park. Both desert and mountain increase the farther west one goes in Texas, but the Hill Country is fantastic because of its rivers, gently rolling hills, unique towns and many outdoor adventures to be had.

And this was just his humble introduction to the best of Texas. ★

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PARTINGSHOT



Photographer John C. Abbott says photographing bats is a real challenge technically, but they have so much character that they are easy subjects aesthetically. The trick is first finding where the bats are flying. These cave myotis (*Myotis velifer*), along with three other species, were flying in a pecan orchard near San Saba. Because bats fly so quickly, Abbott used a system of high-speed flashes to capture these images. The resulting flash exposures are 1/30,000 sec.

IMAGE SPECS:

Canon 50D, ISO 160, f/16 @ 1/30,000 sec. flash duration, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 macro lens.

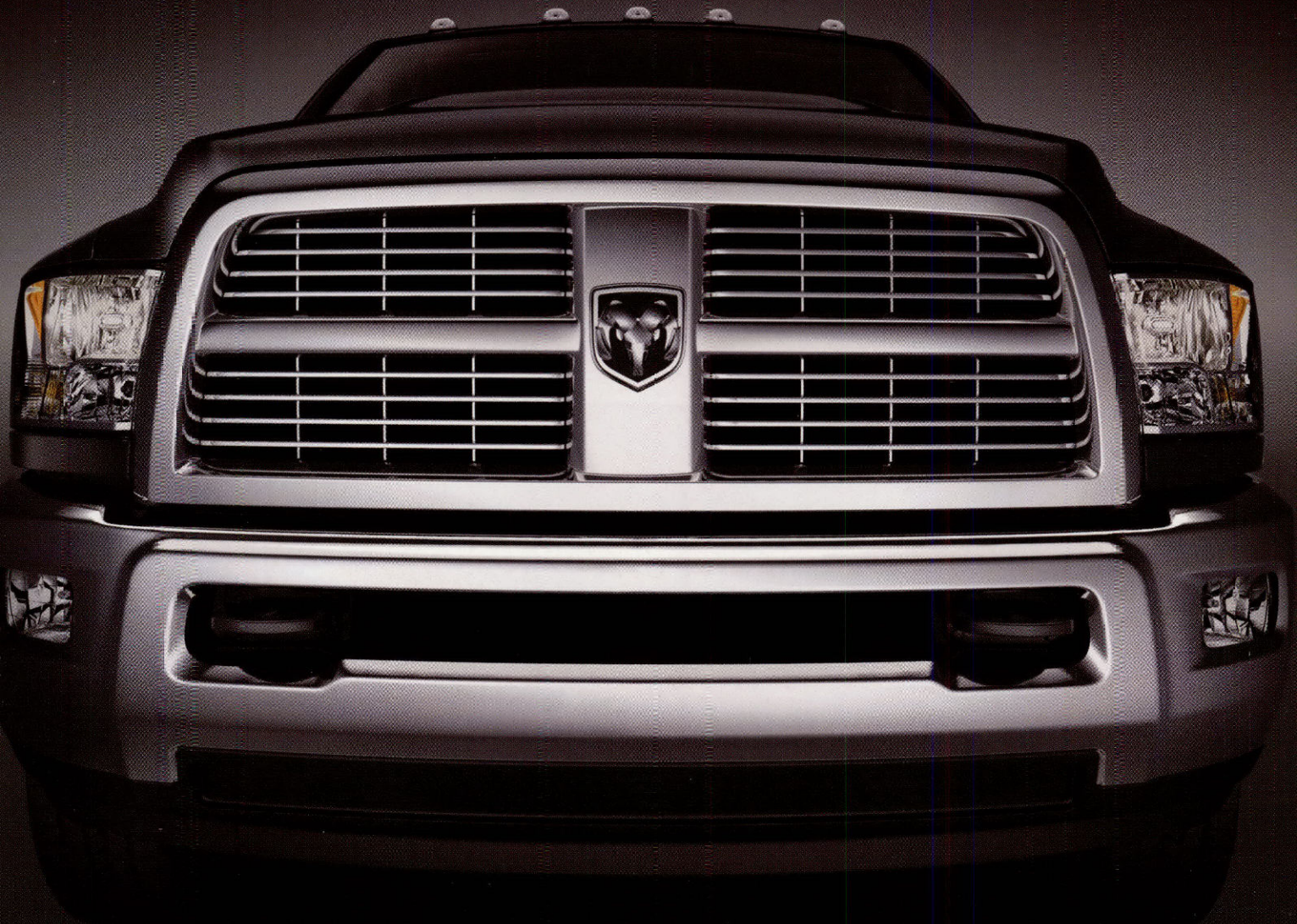


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