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THE BACKWOODSMEN'S IMPACT ON THE BIG THICKET

*by Michael H. MacRoberts
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It is becoming clear that the time-honored view of the Big Thicket of southeastern Texas is inaccurate.¹ For nearly half a century the Big Thicket has been described as “the biological crossroad of North America,” “possibly the most biologically diverse area in the world,” and “species rich” with a “staggering number of flowering plants.”² Recent research, however, shows that it is none of these but simply the unexceptional western edge of the southeastern flora that begins in the Carolinas and extends across the south to eastern Texas.³ It is also widely believed that the Big Thicket was such a dense tangle of vegetation that not only the Indians but the French and Spanish avoided it, which means that the Big Thicket was a wilderness until the 1820's when Anglo-Americans moved into the region.⁴ But again, recent research reveals that there has been virtually no archeological investigation of the Big Thicket region, which limits the investigation of human activity there during the late Pleistocene and Holocene eras.⁵

Further, it is clear from an investigation of French and Spanish accounts that neither France nor Spain was interested in the Big Thicket region, just as they were not interested in many other regions of eastern Texas and western Louisiana.⁶

Another belief concerning the Big Thicket is that conservationists saved it as a preserve.⁷ While there is no doubt that the big oil and lumber companies had a tremendous impact on the Big Thicket, there is one group who escapes blame for destruction of the Big Thicket -- the “backwoodsmen” or “frontiersmen,” the first Anglo-American colonizers of the area.⁸ As a number of authors have stated: “for the first one or two generations following settlement, settlers’ impact on the Big Thicket was slight, with vegetation rapidly reclaiming small building sites or farmlands once they were abandoned.”⁹ At the same time, there is little debate that

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bear, cougar, passenger pigeons and other animals that had lived there for thousands of years went extinct.¹⁰ Many other authors say little or nothing about these early Anglo-American settlers; they mention their arrival and immediately skip to describing the exploitation of the Big Thicket by, first, lumbermen and later oilmen.¹¹ Their version is one of scattered, small, subsistence farmers who cultivated only a few acres and kept a few pigs and maybe a cow or two.

As part of a continuing study of the Big Thicket region, we examine the impact of man, specifically backwoodsmen, on the Big Thicket. Our purpose is to correct the impression that the lumber and oil companies were primarily responsible for the transformation of the Big Thicket from what it was in 1820 to what it is today.

In recent years, cultural geographers such as Terry Jordan and Thad Sitton have researched the life-style of the Big Thicket backwoodsmen between initial settlement in the 1820's and the 1950's, when stock laws came into effect.¹² The authors have shown that the vast majority of early settlers came from the southeast, notably the Carolinas, and brought with them a "frontier culture" characterized by a "diverse lifestyle of small farming, free-range stock raising, and subsistence-based hunting, fishing, and gathering..."¹³ Add to this "neglect of livestock, a combination of cattle and hogs on the same range, reliance on [stock] and hunting dogs, periodic range burning, and trapping,"¹⁴ extreme individualism, lack of hierarchical culture, fundamentalist religion, anti-intellectualism, and belligerence to outsiders, and the picture is complete.¹⁵ Two main principles guided such a lifestyle: "living off the land ... and the land belonged to everybody."¹⁶ Such modes of living occurred throughout "the South where wilderness, and the old lifeways based on wilderness, persisted,"¹⁷ and this lifeway persisted in the Big Thicket after it had ceased to exist elsewhere in the South.¹⁸ Such a culture, which developed in the piney woods along the Atlantic Coast, transplanted easily to eastern Texas because:

*the Texas Piney Woods region ... was almost exactly what the pine barrens herders from the Lower South had known back east. It was as close an environmental twin to the coastal plain of South Carolina as could be found in Texas, a setting in which Carolina's deep southern children could easily feel at home.*¹⁹

Thus, when settlers arrived in East Texas, they did not have to adapt to the land; they simply continued to live as they always had.²⁰

The backwoodsman was a "jack-of-all-trades." He had to be. Aside

from basic tools such as axes, cast iron cooking pots, guns, ammunition, seeds, dogs, and livestock, he came to the Big Thicket with little except the knowledge of how to live as a backwoodsman. His need for money was negligible except to obtain the few items that could not be grown, raised, or hunted. Thus, he trapped animals for pelts or engaged in short-term work such as making railroad ties, shingles, and barrel staves for sale.²¹ Del Weniger, the eminent Texas ecological historian, sets the stage:

*The first of modern man's actions to have a major effect upon [Texas] was his rapacious hunting. He had descended upon a new land filled to overflowing with animals, and regardless of his ethnic background and nationality, here he became first and foremost a hunter. Oh, how he hunted. And the effect upon the wildlife of the young Texas was horrendous.*²²

More is written about the bear and its demise in East Texas than any other animal.²³ Considered a predator because it killed hogs, and a competitor because it ate honey and mast, it was also a prized food and fur animal. Backwoodsmen not only hunted but trapped bear and other predators.²⁴ By the 1890s, it had become "an exotic big-game animal, and bear hunting became a famous sport."²⁵ This passage from Vernon Bailey's 1905 *Biological Survey of Texas* gives the flavor:

*In November, 1904, an old bear hunter, Ab Carter, living on the west edge of Tarkington Prairie, in Liberty County, told me that there were no bears at that time in Liberty County west of the Trinity River, but the active part taken by Mr. Carter in exterminating the bears in that locality makes his statement of peculiar interest. Forty-nine years ago he was born on the ranch he now owns, and his principal occupation, like that of his father, has been the keeping of hogs and killing bears. To a man with several hundred hogs running in the woods, bear killing was the most important part of the season's work, but it was not until about 1883 that the extermination of bears began in earnest. At that time Mr. Carter and a neighbor each got a pack of good bear hounds and in the following two years they killed 182 bears, mainly within a radius of 10 miles from their ranches. This reduced the number of bears so that later not more than ten or twenty were killed annually up to 1900, when Mr. Carter killed the last two in the vicinity. Two years ago he killed the last of his bear dogs, and now keeps only hog and wolf dogs, while his hogs eat acorns in safety over 100 square miles of magnificent forest and dense thicket.*²⁶

Bear are now extinct in the Big Thicket.²⁷

Deer, a prized food animal and, by all accounts, abundant from initial settlement until the 1880s, went the way of the bear in about the same amount of time.²⁸ Hunter prized deer not only for food but for their hides. In 1905, Vernon Bailey wrote:

*In the Big Thicket region of Liberty and Hardin counties deer are still common, owing to the dense forest and the tangle of vines, briars, palmettoes, and canes which afford them almost impenetrable cover. They are now hunted mainly with hounds, but formerly when more abundant night hunting with a headlight was the favorite method, and deer were wantonly slaughtered in great numbers. One hunter told me that he had no idea how many deer he had killed for their skins, but that in the fall of 1886 he remembered selling 69 skins of deer, the carcasses of which were left in the woods.*²⁹

By the 1920s and 1930s, deer became extinct. Some years later they were reintroduced to a generation who, when they first saw deer unloaded from box cars, had no idea what they were.³⁰ The extermination of the deer is interesting because hunters foresaw what over-hunting did to the deer population but, instead of holding back, they increased their effort to kill deer. Even when it was suggested that there be restraints on deer hunting, many “hunters did not stop hunting, however, and they pursued East Texas deer to virtual extinction...the hunt for the last deer ... had been relentless.”³¹ As one informant said: “There was a little bunch of deer in there, and they got to running ‘em with hounds. They killed all of ‘em. Then there was thirty years you didn’t see a deer track in this country.”³² However, as Doughty in *Wildlife and Man in Texas* has pointed out:

*The program of deer restoration has been highly successful. After being shot out for meat and hides and sold illegally up to the first years of the present century to the point of becoming endangered species, deer population have climbed back....By the 1950s, the deer population in East Texas has grown substantially through periodic restocking.*³³

This restocking involved southern and western Texas deer released in East Texas between the late 1930s and late 1960s.³⁴ East Texas deer diversity of 1850 was lost and replaced in the mid-twentieth century with non-native animals.

Backwoodsmen also hunted turkey, another prized game animal, to extinction. Common before the arrival of Anglo-Americans, it was essentially extirpated from Eastern Texas by the late nineteenth century.³⁵ “A successful restocking of the area with birds from Louisiana and

Mississippi was begun by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1978, aided by the National Wild Turkey Federation. This species is once again widespread in East Texas..."³⁶ but, like the deer, it lost its original genetic diversity.

The red wolf, considered to be vermin, had, by 1905, been so pursued that Vernon Bailey declared that while "common years ago, now very rare or quite extinct."³⁷ Not only did government trappers and hunters help exterminate the red wolf but the backwoodsmen communally hunted it. Today, the species has vanished not only because of habitat loss and persecution by man, but also from the fact that their numbers became so low that wolves began interbreeding with coyotes; thus, pure wolves no longer exist.³⁸

The fate of the cougar, always called "panthers" in East Texas and classified as vermin, is similar to that of the red wolf. As Sitton wrote: "For some, the hunt for the big predators became almost an obsession, and a few stockmen killed hundreds of bears and panthers during their careers."³⁹ In 1905, Bailey reported:

In most of eastern Texas panthers are reported as formerly common, but now are very rare or entirely extinct. Individuals have been killed, however, within a few years in the swamps nor far from Jefferson in the northeastern part and Sour Lake in the southeastern part of the State. At Tarkington Prairie [in the Big Thicket] Mr. A. W. Carter says there were a few panthers when he was a boy in 1860, but he has not seen one since. In the Big Thicket of Hardin County a few panthers have been killed in the past years, and Dan Griffin, who lives 7 miles northeast of Sour Lake, says a very large one occasionally passes his place. He saw its tracks in the winter of 1903-4.⁴⁰

Today, there are none of these globally rare animals left in the Big Thicket. Neither the jaguar nor the ocelot was ever common in East Texas. According to Bailey, a jaguar was "killed south of Jasper a few years before [1905]," and there were "reports of the former occurrence of the species along the Neches River near Beaumont and in the timber south of Conroe."⁴¹ Regarding the ocelot, Bailey reports that in 1902 at Sour Lake "several so-called leopard cats [were] killed near there" and that "near Beaumont Oberholser reported them as occasionally killed in the woods along the Neches River."⁴² Jaguar and ocelot have also been extirpated from this region.

Near-extinction also came for the alligator. "Neches Valley Woodsmen shot every alligator they could, and had deeper reasons than animals' predation on their livestock."⁴³ Apparently, alligators occasionally

killed a stock dog, an unpardonable sin, and settlers killed them on sight. By the twentieth century, over-hunting brought the alligator to near extinction, but in recent years, with federal help, the species has made a comeback.

Over-hunting affected small game as well. Hunters trapped and killed squirrel, mink, bobcat, fox, opossum, raccoon, and rabbit; some for food, some for pelts. During the high price years of the "fur boom," thousands of mink, raccoon, bobcat, and fox skins were shipped out of East Texas. At the same time, raccoon, rabbits, and squirrel were food in hard times, as during the Depression.⁴⁴

The Passenger Pigeon was once found in the millions in East Texas, but it was gone by the 1890s. Big Thicket backwoodsmen, like backwoodsmen elsewhere in East Texas, contributed to its demise.⁴⁵ Pigeon Roost Prairie, four miles south of Kountze, was named for the vast flocks that once roosted there and attests to their abundance in the Big Thicket. The wanton destruction of this bird is almost unbelievable. Reports are many and much the same: "farmers dreaded their coming, because they destroyed the acorn crop, leaving little mast for hogs. The birds were hunted persistently, largely by the use of flares and sticks, since this was the most economical method and did not require expenditure of funds or ammunition."⁴⁶ "All accounts emphasize that there were so many birds that the farmers and other inhabitants of the region killed large numbers every year, part of which were consumed as food, others fed to the hogs or thrown away spoiled."⁴⁷ J. D. Goodgame, who lived near Athens, Texas, said:

*Little heed was paid to the disappearance of the pigeons, at that time by a great many people, like myself, who had extensively participated in killing and destroying them by the millions merely for sport. It is a little astonishing that they existed here as long as they did, since the pigeon was used extensively for food and greatly relished.*⁴⁸

The last Passenger Pigeon died in a zoo in 1914.

Fish were a major food and item of export in the Big Thicket; fishermen took vast quantities of paddle fish, gar, buffalo, and cat-fish. According to Sitton, there was "a long folk tradition of no-holds-barred exploitation of river fish going back to settlement times" where "the rule seemed to be 'anything goes.'"⁴⁹ Settlers use multiple methods from pole fishing to trot lines to poisons. The ultimate effect on the fish population in mere speculation because there are no reliable estimates of fish numbers from the early 1800s.

Trapping in the Big Thicket equally contributed to specific loss. Trappers procured pelts and, occasionally, food; they took bear, raccoons, and rabbits for both food and pelts, but valued mink and beaver for their fur alone.

*Hunting and trapping for furbearing animals had a long history along the Neches; as an economic exploitation of the wilderness, closely linked to world markets, it long predated the coming of the Anglo Americans. French, Indian, and Hispanic trappers and hunters dominated the early fur trade, producing an impressive volume of furs and hides.*⁵⁰

For example, in 1830 it was “estimated that Indians had supplied 40,000 deer hides, 1,500 bearskins, 1,200 otter pelts, and 600 beaver pelts to Natchitoches merchants.”⁵¹ Unfortunately, there are no figures for other years or periods, but the flow of pelts and the destruction of animals lasted until the creatures were either extirpated or low population numbers made trapping unprofitable. Or fashions changed. Bailey, in 1905, speaks of “relentless trapping.”⁵² Because of the high commercial value of their pelts, beaver figured prominently in the early exploitation and settlement of Texas. Thousands of pelts were harvested, and by the 1850s, beaver were largely extirpated.⁵³ A century later, McCarley concluded that “the native beaver of East Texas is apparently extirpated.”⁵⁴ Restocking after 1959 has resulted in the return of beaver to East Texas.⁵⁵

While the Spanish brought both hogs and cattle to East Texas as early as the eighteenth century, it was not until the early nineteenth century that Anglo-Americans began flooding East Texas, and especially southeastern Texas, with cattle and hogs.⁵⁶ Frontiersmen brought small numbers of livestock and released them onto the open range where they were left to run free and forage for food on their own. They not only survived but prospered. “With little doubt, the woods along the Neches were filled to overflowing with feral hogs and cattle in the last decades of the open range [ca. 1920-1950]. Exactly how many we will never know. Many observers attested that hogs and cattle were everywhere in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s....”⁵⁷ However, in 1937 because stockmen were forced to bring their cattle out for dipping, observers estimated that in Jasper County alone there were at least 300,000 cattle or one per every two acres.⁵⁸ The number of hogs was even greater, but how many no one knows. The cattle fed on grass in both upland and river bottomlands, and hogs rooted everywhere, eating almost anything, including vast quantities of mast. Their effect on the environment is not known, but by analogy with today’s situation it is clear that the number of livestock and

their habits would have led to massive erosion and destruction of certain natural communities, such as prairies, by over-grazing. As Del Weniger said: "Neither the scope of [over-grazing] upon the natural landscape nor how early it began impinging upon the original flora is generally appreciated."⁵⁹ What is known is that anything that interfered with their livestock the backwoodmen summarily killed: Passenger Pigeons (competition for mast), cougars (predators), wolves (predators), bears (predators), and so on.

Backwoodsmen impact on East Texas timber was often indirect and, in some ways, marginal. He cleared timber to open fields in the forest, converted prairies to fields, cut timber for fences to keep cattle and hogs out of gardens and away from homesteads, cut timber to build homes, and to make shingles, barrel staves, and railroad ties for money.⁶¹ He sometimes engaged in small-time "peckerwood" sawmill operations, and, of course, used wood to heat and light his house, cook, and make charcoal. The burning of forested lands for livestock pasture was a common practice, but how woodburning differed from the "natural" pyrogenic regime of eastern Texas area is not entirely clear, but apparently it was done primarily in winter and was a common practice.

There is no question that backwoodsmen had an impact on the Big Thicket. Backwoodsmen entered an unoccupied landscape and like most colonizers overexploited the resources.⁶² They hunted game animals and predators alike to extinction. Truett and Lay in *Land of Bears and Honey* summarize the situation well: "In 1820 the mark of the white hunter upon the East Texas wilderness was faint. By 1900 he had skimmed the cream. Within three short decades after that, he had finished off all the bears and the panthers and most of the deer and turkeys."⁶³ He could have added pigeons and wolves as well. But even this was not enough: during the Depression years "when people were in dire need and game laws lacked teeth, the populations of deer, raccoons, and other wildlife species reached their lowest ebb in the twentieth century as people stripped the last resources of the bottoms for food."⁶⁴

Exploitation was relentless, obsessive, and excessive. As Del Weniger pointed out, "The first cause of such a decrease in animal life was the irresponsible hunting of the first Texans."⁶⁵ One of Sitton's informants adds: "They believed in killing whatever they could see."⁶⁶ Hunters truly puzzled Weigner: "As one reads through the reports of the many early hunters, one gets the distinct feeling that they believed they were doing some great favor in wiping out the wildlife of Texas."⁶⁷ He continues: "all

the settlers seemed to share [the compulsion] to eliminate all they could of these large animals in the wilderness."⁶⁸ The slaughter of the bison in North America best symbolized such mass destruction; the vast herds of the early 1800s were eliminated by 1880.⁶⁹ Doughty captures much of the attitude of early Eastern Texas in his *Wildlife and Man in Texas* in which typical passages such as these appear:

Living near Webberville, east of Austin, always-adventurous Noah Smithwick enjoyed 'rare-sport' by chasing black bears with his pack of dogs. Bears were his specialty in that cedar-brake country because they were the biggest game: the Indians were gone and likewise the buffalo.⁷⁰

Numerous tales existed about the fun, excitement, and adventure (and usefulness) of shooting the hardened killers [cougars] of stock.⁷¹ Killing high numbers of large-sized and predatory species drew recognition and respect.⁷²

While few people today would condone such an attitude to wildlife, it was apparently universal or nearly so in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The cultural values of the backwoodsmen also guided federal, state, and local predator control officers whose task it was to protect game and livestock. Doughty in *Wildlife and Man in Texas* expresses this:

By contrast, predatory mammals received short shrift from federal, state, and local agencies, who combined efforts and pooled resources to annihilate pestiferous canids and felids.... City and county wolf clubs, ranchers, stockmen, and government hunters waged a war of extermination by setting out poisons and traps, digging into dens and breeding places, and hunting cougars, wolves, and coyotes with dogs.⁷³

The backwoodsmen recognized no central authority. The "rules of the commons" prevailed: each man independent and making his own decisions.⁷⁴ Instead of romanticizing this lifestyle as many have done,⁷⁵ Doughty calls the frontier mentality the "tradition of thoughtless and unrestrained killing."⁷⁶ Gunter and Oelschlaeger, in an article "Need for a Texas Land Ethic," refer to the "strong anti-intellectualism," "exaggerated individualism," and "the casual expectation of unending surplus" as the ethic of the frontiersman.⁷⁷ But eventually outsiders (federal, state, conservationists, and even local governments) stepped in and put a stop to some of the excesses. Only if wilderness had extended indefinitely westward could this lifeway have continued, moving every half century or so into unoccupied land and beginning all over again. So a culture that

began in the Carolinas in the 1700s moved west and finally extinguished itself in the 1950s in East Texas, notably in the Big Thicket.⁷⁸

While many have written about the need to preserve, not over-hunt or over-trap, it is a little startling to realize that even during the time that Texas was under Mexican control, inklings that resources were limited began to be expressed. In 1835, Juan N. Almonte, as part of a report of his inspection of the Department of Nacogdoches, stated:

*All of Texas abounds in the same kind of game, but beaver and otter are more abundant in this department. There are so many hunters, however, that unless some measure is taken so that they may be hunted only during a given season of the year, the most valuable fur bearing animals will be exterminated.*⁷⁹

Even though the backwoodsmen recognized the declining resources, they showed no restraint and instead made an extra effort to kill the last deer and bear.

Recognition did not always change practice. Such sentiment arose as in a passage in Doughty: "As more people realized that game had been literally swept away from vast areas of East and Central Texas and that *useful, interesting mammals and birds* had been shot out, restoration programs gathered momentum."⁸⁰ Thus, native species were either "good" or "bad": the "useful" species (turkey and deer) to be protected and restocked, and the "useless" species (cougar and wolf) to be exterminated.

Perhaps the biggest change between the era of the backwoodsmen and today is that before the stock laws went into effect in the 1950s, the woods were filled not only with hogs and cattle but with people. As J.R. Cockrell, an old resident of the Neches Valley, said:

*The amazing thing about it [the effect of the stock laws], the most marked change that you can observe, is that fifty years ago you could go out in the woods and you'd see people all the time. I'd see more people in the woods than I can see now in town. You know, people had cattle and hogs, and they was hunting and fishing --- they was out in the woods all the time.*⁸¹

Now they are not.



¹ J.B. Callicott, M. Acevedo, P. Gunter, P. Harcombe, C. Lindquist, and M. Monticino, "Biocomplexity in the Big Thicket," *Ethics, Place, and Environment* 9 (2006), 21-45. These authors refer to "exaggerated (and undocumented) claims of biogeographical distinction" of the Big Thicket which "played a significant rhetorical role in the political struggle to preserve remnants of the aboriginal Big Thicket and continues to be significant in the current effort to expand [the Big

Thicket National Preserve] and protect it from the new challenges it now faces.”

² Pete A. Y. Gunter, *The Big Thicket, A Challenge for Conservation* (Austin, Jenkins Publishing Company, 1971); Pete A. Y. Gunter, *The Big Thicket: An Ecological Reevaluation* (Denton, University of North Texas Press, 1993); James J. Cozine, *Saving the Big Thicket: from Exploration to Preservation, 1685-2003* (Denton, University of North Texas Press, 2004); Callicott, Acevedo, Gunter, Harcombe, Lindquist, and Monticino, “Biocomplexity;” H. H. Peacock, *Nature Lover’s Guide to the Big Thicket*, (College Station, Texas A & M Press, 1994), H. Bloomfield, “Big Thicket: The Biological Crossroads of America,” *American Forests* 78 (1972). 24-27; T. Eisner, “The Big Thicket National Park,” *Science* 179 (1973). 525.

³Michael H. MacRoberts and Barbara R. MacRoberts, “The Big Thicket: Typical or Atypical?,” *East Texas Historical Association Journal* 42 (2004), 42-51; Michael H. MacRoberts and Barbara R. MacRoberts, “Phytogeography of the Big Thicket, East Texas,” *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas* 1 (2007), 1149-1155; Michael H. MacRoberts and Barbara R. MacRoberts, “The Big Thicket of Texas as Floristically Unique Habitat,” *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas* 2 (2008), 663-669.

⁴Callicott, Acevedo, Gunter, Harcombe, Lindquist, and Monticino, “Biocomplexity.”; Cozine, *Saving the Big Thicket*. See Del Weniger, *The Explorers’ Texas: The Lands and Waters* (Austin, Eakin Press, 1984) for a discussion of how “thickety” the Big Thicket was as described by early settlers.

⁵Michael H. MacRoberts and Barbara R. MacRoberts, “The Big Thicket: Pristine Wilderness or Archeologically Understudied?,” *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas* 2 (2008), pp. 1291-1293.

⁶Michael H. MacRoberts and Barbara R. MacRoberts, “The Big Thicket: Pristine Wilderness or Archeologically Understudied?,”

⁷Gunter, *The Big Thicket*; Pete A. Y. Gunter and Max Oelschlaeger, *Texas Land Ethics* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1997).

⁸Terry G. Jordan, *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1981); Terry G. Jordan, John L. Bean, and William M. Holmes, *Texas: A Geography* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1984); Thad Sitton, *Backwoodsmen: Stockmen and Hunters along a Big Thicket River Valley* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

⁹George M. Diggs, Barney L. Lipscomb, Monique D. Reed, and Robert J. O’Kennon, “Illustrated Flora of East Texas,” *Sida, Botanical Miscellany* 26 (2006), 186; W.A. Owen, “Introduction,” in B. Pittman and W.A. Owen, *The Natural World of the Texas Big Thicket* (College Station, Texas A & M Press, 1978).

¹⁰Robin W. Doughty, *Wildlife and Man in Texas* (College Station, Texas A & M Press, 1983), Diggs, Lipscomb, Reed, and O’Kennon, “Illustrated Flora of East Texas.”

¹¹Owen, *Introduction*; Gunter, *The Big Thicket*; Cozine, *Saving the Big Thicket*; Robert P. Price, *The Big Woods: Folklore from the Big Thicket of Southeast Texas* (Dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1975).

¹²Jordan, *Trails to Texas*; Jordan, Bean, and Holmes, *Texas*, Sitton,

Backwoodsmen.

- ¹³ Thad Sitton and C. E. Hunt, *Big Thicket People: Larry Jene Fisher's Photographs of the Last Southern Frontier* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2008), 3.
- ¹⁴ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*, 25.
- ¹⁵ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*, Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ¹⁶ Sitton and Hunt, *Big Thicket People*, 4.
- ¹⁷ Sitton and Hunt, *Big Thicket People*, 3.
- ¹⁸ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ¹⁹ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*, 107
- ²⁰ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*; Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ²¹ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*; Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ²² Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*, 176.
- ²³ Joe C. Truett and Daniel W. Lay, *Land of Bears and Honey: A Natural History of East Texas* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1984).
- ²⁴ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 59. 148.
- ²⁶ Vernon Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas* (North American Fauna No. 25; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Biological Survey, Washington, D.C., 1905) republished in David J. Schmidly, *Texas Natural History: A Century of Change* (Lubbock, Texas Tech University Press, 2002) 190.
- ²⁷ Schmidly, *Texas Natural History*.
- ²⁸ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ²⁹ Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas*, 61.
- ³⁰ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 258.
- ³¹ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 257.
- ³² Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 257.
- ³³ Doughty, *Wildlife and Man*, 196-197.
- ³⁴ Schmidly, *Texas Natural History*.
- ³⁵ Diggs, Lipscomb, Reed, and O'Kennon, "Illustrated Flora of East Texas."
- ³⁶ Diggs, Lipscomb, Reed, and O'Kennon, "Illustrated Flora of East Texas." 180.
- ³⁷ Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas*, 173.
- ³⁸ Schmidly, *Texas Natural History*.
- ³⁹ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 61
- ⁴⁰ Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas*, 163.
- ⁴¹ Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas*, 164.
- ⁴² Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas*, 166.
- ⁴³ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 227.
- ⁴⁴ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ⁴⁵ Harry C. Oberholser, *The Bird Life of Texas* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1974).
- ⁴⁶ Oberholser, *The Bird Life of Texas*, 418.
- ⁴⁷ Oberholser, *The Bird Life of Texas*, 418.
- ⁴⁸ Oberholser, *The Bird Life of Texas*, 420.
- ⁴⁹ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 176.
- ⁵⁰ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 168.

- ⁵¹ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 37.
- ⁵² Bailey, *Biological Survey of Texas*, p. 122.
- ⁵³ Schmidly, *Texas Natural History*.
- ⁵⁴ H. McCarley, "The Mammals of Eastern Texas," *Texas Journal of Science* 11 (1959), 404.
- ⁵⁵ McCarley, "The Mammals," 404.
- ⁵⁶ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*
- ⁵⁷ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 231.
- ⁵⁸ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 232.
- ⁵⁹ Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*, 182.
- ⁶⁰ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*; Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ⁶¹ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ⁶² Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York, Viking Press, 2005).
- ⁶³ Truett and Lay, *Land of Bears and Honey*, 91.
- ⁶⁴ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 79.
- ⁶⁵ Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*, 177.
- ⁶⁶ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 257-258.
- ⁶⁷ Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*, 177
- ⁶⁸ Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*, 177.
- ⁶⁹ Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas*.
- ⁷⁰ Doughry, *Wildlife and Man*, 88. (italics added)
- ⁷¹ Doughry, *Wildlife and Man*, 90-91. (italics added)
- ⁷² Doughry, *Wildlife and Man*, 91. (italics added)
- ⁷³ Doughry, *Wildlife and Man*, 206.
- ⁷⁴ Diamond, *Collapse*.
- ⁷⁵ F.E. Abernethy, *Tales from the Big Thicket* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1966); C. Loughmiller and L. Loughmiller. *Big Thicket Legacy*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1977); Geraldine E. Watson, *Reflections on the Neches: a Naturalist's Odyssey along the Big Thicket's Snow River* (Denton, University of North Texas Press, 2003).
- ⁷⁶ Doughry, *Wildlife and Man*, 156.
- ⁷⁷ P. A. Y. Gunter and M Oelschlaeger, "The Need for a Texas Land Ethic" Pp. 43-59. In R. C. Telfair II (ed.) *Texas Wildlife Resources and Land Use*. (Austin, University of Texas Press 1999), 43 and 46.
- ⁷⁸ Jordan, *Trails to Texas*; Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*.
- ⁷⁹ Juan N. Almonte, "Statistical Report on Texas," Translated by C. E. Casteneda, *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 28 (1925), 214-215.
- ⁸⁰ Doughry, *Wildlife and Man*, 179. (italics added)
- ⁸¹ Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*, 235.