

**This program runs at 520 am Monday thru Friday**

**Various days cover topics of Environment, Texas Heritage & History, and Wildlife Conservation.**

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**October – December 2015**

### **Big Time Texas Hunts 2015**

Thursday, October 1st, 2015

For nineteen years and counting, hunters from Texas and beyond have supported conservation projects in the state by submitting entries to [Big Time Texas Hunts](#).

*05—Big Time Texas Hunts is a pretty special program because it is essentially a conservation fundraiser.*

Hunters, 17 years and older, submit entries for a chance to win one of nine premier guided hunt packages. Justin Dreibelbis, director of private lands and public hunting, says the deadline for submissions is October 15.

*09—I can assure people out there that this money is going directly back into wildlife conservation on our wildlife management areas and for public hunting and research across the state.*

After program expenses, about \$400-thousand dollars goes back into wildlife conservation, research and public hunting in Texas. He says there's a new hunt this year that will stir some excitement.

*19—Our Ultimate Mule Deer Hunt. This hunt will be taking place at the newly acquired Yoakum Dunes Wildlife Management Area in Yoakum County. And the lucky winner will actually be hunting during the rut, which is a special hunting opportunity up there in the panhandle, too, for some really, really nice mule deer bucks. So, this is the first time we've had the mule deer hunt available.*

Entries are nine dollars online and ten dollars at license retailers. Hunters may submit multiple entries to win any of the Big Time Texas Hunt premier guided hunting packages. Find details on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

### **Hunt BIG with Big Time Texas Hunts**

Friday, October 2nd, 2015

As 95% of Texas is in private hands, it's not uncommon to spend big bucks for leases to hunt big bucks. Not everyone can. Yet, most of us can spare nine dollars for a chance to win a Big Time Texas Hunts package.

*13-These are premier guided hunts for a lot of the wildlife species across the state. Everything from mule deer to alligators to wild hogs—and, of course, really nice whitetail deer also.*

Justin Dreibelbis, director of private lands and public hunting at Texas Parks and Wildlife, says hunters can enter for as many hunt packages as they wish online for nine dollars each or at license retailers for ten.

*24-They're all premier guided hunts. It's all inclusive: you have lodging, food, and guides that understand the area, terrain and animals you'll be hunting. And a couple of really exciting packages that we have. One is the Texas Grand Slam; it's four separate hunts for mule deer, pronghorn antelope, whitetail deer, and desert big horn sheep, which not many people get to hunt.*

Some packages allow winners to bring hunting companions who are at least 8 years of age.

*08-Actually, their companions get to hunt as well. However, on the Grand Slam Hunt, they have a non-hunting guest that can accompany them.*

Entries are nine dollars online and ten dollars at license retailers. Submit entries by October 15. [Find complete details on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

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### [On the Road with the Outdoor Annual](#)

Monday, October 5th, 2015

People who buy hunting and fishing licenses rely on a printed booklet called the [Texas Outdoor Annual](#).

*04-And inside the printed booklet they'll find hunting and fishing regulations.*

You'll find those regulations on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website, too.

*04-[But] our website is hard to take with you if you're in the blind and you do not have cell service.*

Developing efficient ways to access information is among Tim Peterson's priorities. He's director of creative and interactive services at Parks and Wildlife. Making an electronic version of the outdoor annual, with simple, intuitive navigation—accessible in cell-challenged locations—necessitated creation of an app.

*22- Well, as you know, smart phones and tablets have become more popular among the general population, but we've also noticed that our hunters and anglers are also using those devices. And we are offering it, really, as another way for them to learn about regulations while they're in the field, and also be able to do searches based on location.*

The FREE Texas Outdoor Annual app is available for download for both apple and android devices wherever you get apps. Tim returns tomorrow to tell us about one of the many features of the app.

### [Into the Field With a New Mobile App](#)

Tuesday, October 6th, 2015

The Texas Outdoor Annual is a handy printed and online guide filled with valuable information for hunters and anglers. And now it's an app.

08- Smart phones and tablets have become more popular among the general population, and our hunters and anglers are also using those devices.

Tim Peterson-director of creative and interactive services at Texas Parks and Wildlife-says the new app takes the guesswork out of which regulations apply to your location.

*28-If an angler's sitting in a particular water body or lake, or near or water body or lake, they can use the GPS function in the APP, locate the lake that they're at or near, and they can see bag limits and exceptions for that particular lake. In addition, same goes for hunting. Same goes for hunting. If a hunter is in a blind, they can pull out the APP, and using the GPS functionality of their device, they could see which county they were in, and they would see the bag limits and season dates for that particular county.*

The app is free and available for download for apple and android devices. The Outdoor Annual app strives to provide hunters and anglers up-to-the minute information for a successful experience

Find information on where to [download the app for free](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series, and is funded by your purchase of fishing and hunting equipment and motorboat fuel.

## **Whoopers Flying into Texas**

Wednesday, October 7th, 2015

A flock of 308 endangered whooping cranes lives in Texas from October through April.

*06- We fully expect to see the first of our migrating whoopers come into Texas in mid-to-late October.*

The birds migrate from their summer breeding ground in Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada to their winter home at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.

Texas Whooper Watch coordinator, Mark Klym, says the species has rebounded from a low of just 15 cranes in the 1940s to about 600 today worldwide.

*21-There are also two other flocks in the US. One that migrates from Wisconsin to Florida, and a reintroduced flock in Louisiana. We really need at least one more flock before we can consider it relatively safe to start considering down-listing them. Or, we need a thousand birds in the Aransas to Wood Buffalo National Park flock.*

While the majority of Texas cranes spend the winter at the refuge, some end up in other parts of the state.

*13-In recent years we've seen them moving up and down the coast, as well as inland—as far as Wichita Falls for the winter. So, it is possible to see whooping cranes during the winter almost anywhere in the eastern half of the state.*

Be on the lookout for whoopers, and if you see them, add your observations to [Texas Whooper Watch](#). Find details in the Texas Nature Tracker section of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Grants to Get Folks Outside**

Thursday, October 8th, 2015

The [community outdoor outreach grants program](#) from Texas Parks and Wildlife funds projects that remove barriers to outdoor recreation for residents living in underserved areas.

*17-What we do is we support outdoor recreation. Things like: camping, hiking, backpacking, bird-watching, canoeing, kayaking, geocaching...and getting these underserved audiences involved and engaged.*

Cappy Smith coordinates this statewide program.

*22-The groups that are able to apply for this grant have to be tax exempt organizations, so that's nonprofits. But it also can be schools and municipalities. Some of them are focused on traditional camping and getting families and adults involved in the outdoors. People that wouldn't have been there before.*

The program has \$1.5 million dollars to award in 2016, with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 dollars.

*19-We're looking for groups that do a variety of different things. And, what always is sad is that we run out of funds before we run out of good projects. And, just about the time that you think that you've seen it all, somebody comes out with something that is incredibly novel—something, perhaps, we've never seen before.*

Find the grant submission deadline, grant workshops and other information about the community outdoor outreach grants program on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

### **Helping the Helpers Get People Outside**

Friday, October 9th, 2015

Barriers that prevent people from engaging the outdoors are as diverse as the individuals, themselves. The **Texas Co-Op Grant program** from Texas Parks and Wildlife enables non-profits to chip away at those walls.

*16-This grant program has been around for almost 20 years. And, it was designed to get underserved audiences involved in Texas Parks and Wildlife programs, activities and outdoor recreation opportunities.*

Cappy Smith coordinates the program, which has \$1.5 million dollars available in 2016 for reimbursement grants. She explains.

*18-They [the non-profits] have to have some of their own resources available to fund the program. Let's say that they are buying new mountain bikes. So, they buy those mountain bikes and then they submit the documentation to us. And then what we do is we reimburse them for that expense.*

Grants range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Cappy Smith says the Co-Op grant program provides assistance to those needing help writing their proposal.

*11-We do offer Co-Op grant writing classes. The workshops are free, and we invite people to come to those. We go through the application step-by-step.*

Find submission deadlines, workshop schedules and other information about the community outdoor outreach grants program on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

### **TPW Magazine: Seeds of Hope**

Monday, October 12th, 2015

Bill Neiman [NEE-man] started saving native seeds and plants when he realized Texas had been losing its indigenous flora to development.

*11- He's truly a visionary in this area. And there were a few people around the state, and he and his wife Jan-in the mid to late 80s-made it a point to seek out these people.*

Camille Wheeler wrote about Neiman for [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#). Neiman, who owned a landscaping business, watched non-native plants die without daily watering, when so-called native “weeds” thrived with nothing.

*10-He just immediately made the connection: these non-natives are water hogs. He started looking for other people like him.*

He found author and native landscaping expert, Sally Wasowski. They met in 1985 when Neiman attended a native plant conference where she gave the keynote.

*18-She was challenging the audience. She said: where can we find native plants, and who can be trusted to grow them? And Bill Neiman—he didn't even know he was going to do this—he just sprang to his feet and shouted out: I will do it! I have a nursery; I'm in Flower Mound, Texas and I'm converting the whole thing to native plants.*

There's more to this fascinating story, Seeds of Hope, by Camille Wheeler; find it in the October issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

## **Owl Nest Boxes**

Tuesday, October 13th, 2015

What would you call a wooden box intended for owls?

*02- It would be called an owl box.*

I really need to start making these questions harder. Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford says man-made owl boxes are a “stand in” for what nature provides.

*07-What these owls would do is look for a cavity in a tree—a hollow in a tree—and that's what this box is replacing.*

The Barn Owl and Eastern Screech Owl are two wide-ranging owl species in Texas, with different needs.

*15- They use different size boxes. The Barn Owl is much larger than the Eastern Screech Owl. And you can go online on the Parks and Wildlife website; we have blueprints on how to make these boxes for these birds. Or you can just go online [to other sites] and find other blueprints and make them [the nest boxes] to your liking.*

Owls make some people nervous because they are raptors and have strong hooked beaks and sharp talons, but Cliff Shackelford says, fear not.

*14-The good thing about owls: they're good neighbors to have because they eat a lot of rodents. Screech Owls eat a lot of roaches. The wood roaches. The big ones that are outside. So, it's good to have owls, because they're keeping these things that we consider pests in check.*

Cliff says owl boxes work best in areas where you have good tree cover. I have a [link where you can find the measurements for nest boxes and bird houses](#) appropriate for common species at [passporttexas.org](http://passporttexas.org).

## [Quail on the Rebound](#)

Wednesday, October 14th, 2015

Quail's short life span makes them vulnerable to extended drought.

*07-During dry years there's just not enough moisture to hatch out eggs, and there aren't enough insects to really feed chicks and raise a brood.*

Robert Perez is upland game bird program leader at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

*16-So, they shrink down on the landscape and then they're waiting on rain. How long do quail live? Their average lifespan is only several months. A better way to look at it is: each year's crop—everything that's produced in the summer—by the following spring, anywhere from 70 to 80% will be gone. They will be consumed, basically.*

Texas eventually got some rain; the timing of the rainfall was as important the rain itself.

*26-Late winter there was enough moisture to produce the forbes: all the plants that quail need to eat during January and February; those were available pretty much everywhere, and that gets those birds into breeding condition. And then as we moved into spring, it continued to rain. There was a flush of vegetation, lots of insects, soil moisture. And it kept raining intermittently: off and on, off and on, off and on—all the way up to about the second week of July for most of the entire state.*

And that created a huge window for quail to breed, which, hunters in most areas of the state will notice when the season opens at the end of the month, says Perez.

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## [Quail Going Gangbusters](#)

Thursday, October 15th, 2015

Late winter through early summer rainfall created ideal breeding conditions for quail in most parts of Texas.

*14-We're getting reports from all over from our staff that they've not seen this many quail in several years in some places—in other places, in decades. We're talking about a species that has the potential to boom. And I think in some part of the state that's what we're seeing.*

Before this, quail were in decline throughout much of the state, says upland game bird program leader, Robert Perez. Currently, large broods of chicks in all age classes dot the landscape.

*07-This tells us that the window of opportunity was wide [due to abundant resources], and that when bobwhite hens had a nest failure, they were able to start again.*

Perez is quick to point out that drought, alone, is not the cause of quail decline. Habitat loss is another factor.

*23-And that's where Parks and Wildlife has gone to great lengths to work with partners and landowners and*

wildlife cooperatives to bring quail back. And it's important to remember that the rangelands of south Texas and the rangelands of the Rolling Plains, up into the Panhandle—quail are there because its big open spaces, and the land use is [mostly] compatible with bobwhite quail. And when the weather is great, we see that response. But, in other parts of the state, we've really lost a lot of the available habitat.

Find [information about quail restoration](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

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## **TPW TV: Big Bend, Life on the Edge**

Friday, October 16th, 2015

The [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#) kicks off its 30th Anniversary season October 18 with a half hour film called Big Bend, Life on the Edge, narrated by Peter Coyote.

*11- I was on a camping trip with Hill Country Outdoors and some friends in November last year; and we went into the headquarters and saw this film showing, and it just blew me away.*

Don Cash is the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series producer.

*09-It was so beautiful, and so well done, I thought: you know people need to see it outside of having to come to the headquarters to watch the film.*

Don Cash sought and received permission to air the film on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series from the National Park service and the film's producers, Great Divide Pictures. He says viewers will experience Big Bend like never before.

*28-The film gives you a view of Big Bend that very few people are going to get. The aerial photography in this film is just beautiful and fantastic. Of course, everything is shot at the right time of day. The colors are beautiful. So, you get this just really unique perspective from the air. Plus you get to see the whole park. That's one thing that I enjoyed about it: I got to see it from a whole different perspective. It is a beautiful film, but frankly, it's better to go there and spend some time, and see it [Big Bend] for yourself.*

See Big Bend, Life on the Edge, narrated by Peter Coyote the week of October 18 on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings.

## **Merlin Tuttle is Batman**

Monday, October 19th, 2015

Merlin Tuttle was a curious kid destined to become a scientist. He lived near a bat cave in high school and started making observations.

*13- I found that the bats came in the spring and the fall, but were not there any other time of year. Yet, when I identified them, the field guides that I had said that this species of bat lived in one cave year round.*

He wanted this misinformation corrected.

16—So, I caught some. I actually made specimens of a couple of them so that I could prove that I had what I said I had. And convinced my mother, just as a teenager, to drive me to the Smithsonian so I could tell the guys that wrote the books that there was something wrong.

So began a 55 year career that's taken Dr. Tuttle around the world studying bats. He's engaged in hands on conservation and public education. One goal: remove the public's fear of bats.

26—People hear that bats are dangerous—they're going to cause you to get sick with some terrible malady. But in reality, bats have one of the finest safety records of any animal on our planet of living safely with humans. People like me, I've studied bats for 55 years now on every continent where they exist, spending literally hundreds if not thousands of hours actually in caves surrounded by millions of bats. And I'm still healthy!

Merlin Tuttle's written about his life with bats in ***THE SECRET LIVES OF BATS: My Adventures with the World's Most Misunderstood Mammals***. It comes out this week.

## **Halloween in State Parks**

Tuesday, October 20th, 2015

Life is unpredictable, unless, of course, it's October. That's because in October you can always predict a spell of Halloween hijinks at **Texas State Parks and Historic Sites**.

08—You'll find Halloween events in every corner of the state from far El Paso down to the Gulf, up to far North Texas.

Thomas Wilhelm is with state parks. He says there will, of course be trick-or-treating in the parks.

15—But there are also some other events—educational type events like: **Not so Creepy Critters**, where you can learn about spiders and owls and bugs. And then some downright spooky events, like the Wake of Henry Fanthorp at **Fanthorp Inn**. That event is 10 years old and up.

Historic sites will offer some of the more intriguing Halloween programs, suitable for mature audiences.

10—**Battleship Texas** is doing an event called *The Seedier Side of Battleship Texas*, where they talk about some of the shenanigans on board. And that's a twenty-one and up only event.

Well, we are talking about shenanigans, after all. State Parks and Historic sites; who knew, right? Find a full schedule of Halloween and fall events in State Parks by region at **texasstateparks.org/holidays**.

## **Halloween Hijinks in State Parks**

Wednesday, October 21st, 2015

Texas State Parks and Historic sites are pulling out the stops for **Halloween**.

13— There are some pretty unique events. **Eisenhower State Park** up on the Texas / Oklahoma border, for example, is having a *Zombie Apocalypse Hike*. So, it's an opportunity to not only get outdoors, but to learn some survival skills.

Survival skills like, maybe, how to outrun zombies so they don't eat your brains? Thomas Wilhelm, with state parks, says to expect more traditional activities as well.

23—[Lake Tawakoni](#) has Boo in the park, which is just trick-or-treat through the campground area. [Fort Richardson](#) is having a contest; their friends group is offering a hundred dollar prize for the best decorated campsite. [Estero Llano Grande](#) in the valley is having their ninth annual spooky science fest. The theme this year is Jurassic Estero; so, dinosaurs, costumes and all sorts of fun opportunities.

Most Texans live 90 minutes or less from a state park or historic site, making Halloween fun convenient, safe and affordable.

13—Most of these events are included with your park entrance. A few that are having special events are having either specials pricing—some there are no fees. Some are doing special per car pricing. Contact a park beforehand if you have questions about pricing.

Find a full schedule of Halloween and fall events in State Parks by region at [texasstateparks.org/holidays](http://texasstateparks.org/holidays).

## [Secondary Cavity Nesting Birds](#)

Thursday, October 22nd, 2015

My house is on land previously used for farming; except for a few young trees planted around my place, stands of large, mature trees are in short supply.

Despite the dearth of foliage, I do get bird visitors, including barn swallows, mockingbirds, scissor-tail flycatchers, mourning doves, and sparrows. I even get the occasional visit from robins, hummingbirds, woodpeckers and killdeer, to name a few.

One bird I have not yet seen, but am told is in my area: the [Eastern Bluebird](#). It is a small bird found in open woodlands and farmlands. I think it's one of the prettiest little birds in Texas with its electric blue back and tail feathers and rusty orange breast.

Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford, suggested how I might attract one to my yard.

16— *They need a box to nest in. They're birds that we call secondary cavity nesters that can't build a cavity on their own in a dead tree, like a woodpecker. So, they use old woodpecker holes, or old rotten limbs.*

They aren't alone. Cliff says other species prefer a roof over their heads, too.

15— *Bluebirds need it, titmice need it, and chickadees need it. So, you need to figure out first what birds are in your area, and which ones of those use boxes. And that's when you can target which one to build and put up in your yard.*

Find [a link that will take you to nest box dimensions](#) for various species at [passporttexas.org](http://passporttexas.org).

## [30th Anniversary Season of TPW TV on PBS](#)

Friday, October 23rd, 2015

The [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV show](#) celebrates 30 years on PBS with the new season that starts this month.

17- *That's an incredibly long time for a show to be on—especially one like this. A lot of states used to do shows like this, and a lot of them—for whatever reason—have dropped out. And we are one of the few starts that still does a show that still runs on public broadcasting in the state. So, we're pretty unique in that regard.*

Don Cash is series producer. He says throughout the 30th Anniversary season, viewers will enjoy vintage segments.

*19-Some of this stuff is going to seem fairly dated and maybe a little hokey; and that's what's kind of fun about it. The style of storytelling 30 years ago is different than what it is now. It was great storytelling; but we really focus more on telling stories through people now than when the show first started.*

Expect to meet show producers from the series' 30 year history talking about their favorite segments.

*13-And, we're going to let them introduce their favorite story from their time. Our show doesn't have a host; there's no real person to it. And this will maybe let some of the viewers actually put a face to some of the people that have worked on the show over the years.*

And that's just a small part of what to expect during the 30th Anniversary year of the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series. [Check your local listings.](#)

## [TPW Magazine: Hunting for Blue Topaz](#)

Monday, October 26th, 2015

How about going hunting on your next long weekend—hunting for Texas blue topaz, that is.

*05- Mason County is the only place where this particular gem is found.*

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, <http://www.sherylsmithrogers.com/>, wrote about Texas Blue Topaz in the October issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

*22-Texas blue topaz is our state gem. It was designated as that in 1969; and I guess I'd read about it through the years. And just decided that it would be cool to experience topaz hunting. There are three ranches there in the county that charge a daily fee. But you can go in and hunt for it.*

She set out one weekend to explore the town of Mason, and to hunt for the state gem. She thought she'd find one.

*04-I was determined to, but never happened.*

Texas Blue Topaz may have eluded her, but Smith-Rodgers says small town hospitality did not.

*19-People are so nice in Mason County; they have a lot of nice restaurant and you still get the feel of a small town. We stayed at a B&B right on the square, across from the courthouse. We went to see a movie—they have an old time movie theater. It's a great place just to get away for the weekend.*

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' article on hunting for Texas blue topaz is in the October issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

## [Hunter Education for Safety in the Field](#)

Tuesday, October 27th, 2015

If you're a hunter, or considering becoming one, completion of [a hunter education course is a must.](#)

13-Overall, what a person learns in Hunter Education is the safe, knowledgeable, responsible habits that hunters and shooting sports participants would need to responsibly handle a firearm from the home to the field and back again.

Steve Hall oversees hunter education at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

39-[The centerpiece for hunter education is the ten commandments of firearm safety](#). And those apply whether you're handling them around the gun safe at home, how to store them properly, transport them properly. And then when you're in the field, it's called hunter safety. For a reason. There's other kinds of things that come into play when you're in the field like where the other hunters are at, what kind of shooting you're doing; do you know beyond the line of fire of a shot? Is it on a hillside that you're shooting and you don't know what's on the other side? So there are lots of things that come into play. And then they all kind of center around knowing your firearm, knowing how to handle it safely, but also knowing the capability of those firearms as well.

Hunter education classes take place year round across the state. Find hunter education classes near you, or take it online, when you log onto the TPW website.

The Wildlife and sport fish restoration program supports our series.

## [Lifetime Licenses](#)

Wednesday, October 28th, 2015

Tim Brockway is an avid fisherman.

02-I fish about four days a week.

This competitive bass angler from Kaufman says he used to always buy an annual super combo license for hunting and fishing.

02-Because I think the money goes to a good cause.

The cause is conservation and habitat management in Texas. But, in 2010, Tim — a retired firefighter — spent five dollars online to enter Texas Parks and Wildlife's twice-a-year [Lifetime License drawing](#)—and won.

25-I told the guys up at the fire station: Hey, I bought a five dollar chance to win a lifetime license. And I get a call a few months later — and I would have bet anything one of the guys got their wives to call and mess with me — and I actually didn't believe them. I got off the phone and I called our local game warden that I know real well. He said: 'Give me the phone number they called you from and the person's name and I'll check on it.' Whenever I gave him the phone number and name, he said: 'Congratulations; I know the person and I know the number.'

Money from every five dollar entry goes toward conservation in Texas, which improves hunting, fishing and the outdoors for everyone.

09-I know your entries went up by about 30 right after I won mine from people at the fire station. I said: Come on guys; it's five bucks. You spend that much on a hamburger. It's well worth the chance.

The deadline for the next drawing is December 27, 2015. Entries are currently available online or at license retailers.

## [Legacy of a Lifetime License](#)

Thursday, October 29th, 2015

Hunting and fishing are deeply rooted traditions for Gabe Kulhanek of El Campo.

*04-It's just as stress relief to go hunting and fishing and get away from everything.*

The outdoors has been a lifelong pursuit for him, and something he shared early on with his son.

*11-He started hunting when he was probably four and a half years old. He shot his first deer at five years old with his own rifle. I never shot anything for him. He's always killed his own deer whenever he hunted.*

This past June Texas Parks and Wildlife drew Gabe's name as the winner of a Lifetime Super Combo License, giving him the right to hunt and fish in Texas without ever having to buy another state license. Instead of keeping it, he transferred it to his son, Joshua, as his legacy.

*05-It would benefit him more than anything, and it's something he can have and cherish the rest of his life.*

Entries for the [Lifetime License Drawing](#) are five dollars each and available online or at retailers. Enter as many times as you like; fees go toward conservation in Texas. The next drawing is December 27, 2015.

*04-It's a good opportunity. I never dreamed I would win it — it was the first time I entered.*

Is luck on your side? Find more information on the Lifetime License Drawing on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

## [Being Safe in the Company of Alligators](#)

Friday, October 30th, 2015

The [American Alligator](#) may be one of the most fearsome creatures roaming Texas. We find them in slow-moving rivers, ponds, lakes and swamps—and even in our neighborhoods, which prompts calls to Texas Parks and Wildlife saying:

*02- I've got an alligator here; what do I need to do.*

Steve Lightfoot, Texas Parks and Wildlife spokesperson, says the first thing we need to do is to be realistic.

*06-It's alligator country, and we're going to have more confrontations if we encroach on their space.*

Chance encounters increase as we encroach on alligator habitat with residential and commercial developments. Steve Lightfoot says if you see a gator, leave it alone; it will move on. However, if one does become a nuisance...

*23- If one's acting aggressively, if its making threatening moves towards you—back away slowly. We've got a lot of tips on our website that tell people common things to do when you're in confrontation with an alligator. Call our game wardens. We've got game wardens in every county—they're used to dealing with these kinds of things. They'll come out and assess the situation. If an alligator needs to be relocated—they'll take care of it.*

Find [tips for peaceful coexistence with the American alligator](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

## [Her First Hunt](#)

Monday, November 2nd, 2015

Ten years ago I went on my first deer hunt as an observer; it's something I'll never forget. Last year, my colleague, Stephanie Salinas, did more than observe. She shot her first deer and wrote about it for the [November 2015 issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

*49- I had a lot of mixed emotions. I took Hunter Ed, and learned a lot of things. I had never shot a rifle before going out there, so I actually went to the range and practiced. **So, now let's go to the day.** Yeah, there was one buck that emerged; I thought if I'm going to do this, that's going to be the deer. It was kind of like a connection. It's really odd to explain. I knew that he was going to be the one that I took. **So, when you made that decision, and you committed—what happened when you pulled the trigger?** Once I got positioned, and I knew that was the one I was going to get, as soon as I pulled the trigger, I didn't hear anything. Everything stopped. It was a moment in time that froze. And it was just me and my breath and realizing what had happened.*

To learn the rest of the story, read Stephanie Salinas' account of her hunt in the November issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

## [Unwrap the Wild](#)

Tuesday, November 3rd, 2015

Nature is a gift we give ourselves the moment we step outside. Share the beauty and Unwrap the Wild; give the gift of the Texas outdoors to others w/a state park pass.

*12-This is the second year that we've launched Unwrap the Wild. And it's an opportunity to give back to Texas by supporting your state parks, and to provide friends, family, loved ones—or yourself—with an annual parks pass.*

Anne (Annie) Brown is executive director with the Texas Parks and Wildlife foundation, the official non-profit partner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. During Unwrap the Wild a park pass only costs sixty-five dollars.

*12-Which is five dollars off what they usually cost. In addition, they can be purchased online and mailed directly here from our offices in Dallas to individuals for a holiday gift.*

Ninety state parks—many within a 90 minute drive or less for most of us—provide pass holders outdoor adventures that are close, convenient, and available a full 365 days.

*13-We launch our Unwrap the Wild on November third, and it will run through December 19th, to make sure that we can get all the park passes to homes before the holiday is here.*

Pass holders have a year from the day they redeem their certificate to use their State Parks Pass for waived entry fees for themselves and all the guests in their vehicle. Find details at [tpwf.org](http://tpwf.org).

## Nature Tourism in Texas

Wednesday, November 4th, 2015

Nature tourism, which for most of us includes wildlife viewing, gives the Texas economy a nice little bump.

*13-Right now, we have 4.4 million people who participate in wildlife watching. And that translates to about 13.8 billion dollars going towards the Texas Economy.*

Liz Tomberlin works in nature tourism at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

*08- [Nature tourism] is a non-consumptive form of exploring the great outdoors. You are not really taking anything; you are participating in it, which is great.*

The Texas outdoors is a big place; there's a lot to do and to see and that can be overwhelming for some, keeping them close to home. What if there was a simple and familiar item—or nine of them—available to everyone that could help guide users to outdoor discovery. Think that might help make the great Texas outdoors more manageable? There's a way to find out.

*17-[We have nine different maps for great Texas Wildlife trails covering all of Texas](#), in different regions. And they allow people to find sites that have been vetted by Texas Parks and Wildlife that will help them view wildlife within Texas, and get a great experience of the Texas outdoors.*

Liz Tomberlin returns with details about the maps tomorrow. Meanwhile, find interactive versions of the maps on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## Wildlife Trail Maps

Thursday, November 5th, 2015

Texas is a big place with lots to do and to see for the wildlife lover; knowing where to start can be a little overwhelming. No worries. Texas Parks and Wildlife has a solution.

*04-We have nine distinct maps; each covers a region of Texas.*

They are the [Great Texas Wildlife Trails Maps](#), and encompass more than 960 sites statewide. Liz Tomberlin works in nature tourism at Parks and Wildlife.

*20-And [the maps] cover everything from migratory bird watching spots—to burrowing owls—to the prairie chicken leks in the panhandle plains. The monarch migration—we've had some great spots to see monarchs. All the way through to bat-watching, and all sorts of other mammals and birds and amphibians that you can see throughout Texas.*

The agency updated the Heart of Texas West and East maps recently to ensure users have access to the most current information—information that goes beyond where to find native critters.

*17-Our maps include information for general tourists. There's information for convention bureaus and visitors' centers on there; each of our sites includes GPS coordinates; driving directions from major highways; a short description of the site and what you can expect to see there, and a phone number so you can contact someone.*

Find more information about [The Great Wildlife Trails Maps](#), including free, interactive versions of the maps on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## [Nature Rocks](#)

Friday, November 6th, 2015

In 2009, the Texas Children and Nature program developed a website called [Nature Rocks Texas](#).

*10-It's kind of a one-stop-shopping for families to find all of the nature centers, the zoos, the parks and green spaces that are near them, where they can take their families to get outdoors.*

Jennifer Bristol coordinates the Texas Children and Nature program. Parents can use the site to find nearby scheduled nature-based activities for the family to enjoy, or to the perfect spot to get outdoors and play.

*21-Sometimes people think nature is a faraway place; it's something that have you have to kind of really plan to go do, and spend a whole afternoon driving somewhere to have these larger experiences. We want people to know that nature is in their community. It's nearby them. It's in their neighborhood. It's around the corner. And you don't have to go far to find it.*

Jennifer says before you think Nature Rocks Texas only focuses on Texas state parks and events organized by Texas parks and Wildlife—think again.

*10-We also have our city parks, county parks, national parks, national wildlife refuges, nature centers. You name it; if there's a nature component to it, it is listed on there.*

Jennifer Bristol returns next time to tell us how technology isn't the enemy to the outdoors as once believed.

## [Nature Rocks Website](#)

Monday, November 9th, 2015

Kids—and even grownups—are spending lots of time in front of screens connected to the internet.

*06-Children today are spending on average seven to eleven hours per day indoors with media.*

Telling people to go outside and leave the devices at home doesn't fly.

*09-Oh, my gosh. You're exactly right. We used to tell people all the time: unplug, unplug, unplug. We just can't say that anymore. We are plugged in and it's here to stay, And that's fine.*

Jennifer Bristol, with Texas Children and Nature program, which curates the [Nature Rocks Texas website](#), says if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

*08-There are so many wonderful apps and devices out there now. So there's all kinds of technology that really can help kids now explore and be outside.*

The Nature Rocks Texas website got a makeover and debuts this month.

*27-We really wanted to give it a fresh look and really focus on our core concepts, which are: play, explore, and connect. So, we want families where they can find places where they can play in the outdoors and find all those*

*nature based activities that so many of our partners offer. Everything from star parties, to nature hikes, to group campouts. You name it. There are just all kinds of fun, nature based activities that are happening all the time throughout the state.*

A Nature Rocks Texas mobile app is coming in spring.

## **Partners in Conservation**

Tuesday, November 10th, 2015

The **Landowner Incentive Program**, or LIP, is a way for private landowners to partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife to achieve conservation goals on their property...

*08-...to meet the goals of the private landowners for their property, as well as conservation goals for species of concern.*

Arlene Kalmbach coordinates the LIP program for the agency.

*16-When we add the conservation layer of their land management plan, we're often assisting them with erosion control, invasive species control. In some cases prescribed burns. It really varies because every property's unique.*

As 95% of Texas land is in private hands, landowners play a vital role in maintaining the state's natural resources. Implementing conservation practices can enhance a landowner's management goals.

*05-Conservation can often enhance the property's value for the landowner.*

Tomorrow: Getting started with the landowner Incentive program.

## **Helping Landowners do the Right Thing**

Wednesday, November 11th, 2015

The **Texas Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)** offers funding opportunities for private landowners wishing to implement natural resource conservation practices on their lands.

*05-I usually send them to their local field biologist to start the relationship.*

Arlene Kalmbach [CALM-bock] coordinates the program. After the initial phone call, there's a site visit to...

*11-...get the goals that the landowner has for the property, and maybe get the biologist's perspective on what's there and what potential there is for some conservation work. And then they go from there.*

LIP efforts focus on projects aimed at creating, restoring, protecting and enhancing habitat for rare or at-risk species throughout the state, as well as activities that positively impact riparian areas and watersheds.

*10-Sometimes they may bring in other specialists. Riparian specialists—an invertebrate biologist. It really starts with the landowner's goals and what that property has to offer.*

Through funding partnerships, the program offers cost-sharing with private landowners on LIP projects. Texas Parks and Wildlife covers a percentage of the proposed project costs; landowners, meantime, must contribute a minimum percentage through in-kind labor, materials, or finances, for example.

Find Landowner Incentive Program application details on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## [Making Pollinators a Priority](#)

Thursday, November 12th, 2015

Honeybees, native bees, bats, butterflies and other insects are pollinators, and are vital to our economy, food security, and environmental health. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department [Landowner Incentive Program](#), or LIP, can help interested landowners manage their property for pollinators.

09-The LIP program at the moment is prioritizing projects that are directed at pollinators. [Pollinators are definitely hot](#).

Arlene Kalmbach coordinates the program.

*33-Pollinators got on the Landowner Incentive priority list based on the funding source. The landowner Incentive Program is funded by the Fish and Wildlife Service—partners for fish and wildlife program. And pollinator projects are a high priority for them, so they are a high priority for us. They would have been a high priority for us regardless of our funding source. But, it helps that everybody's on the same page. So, with this next round of projects, we hope to see a lot of pollinator targeted projects.*

Something to know about the LIP program is it does not have acreage restrictions.

*13-It really just depends on the resources you're trying to restore or protect. In the history of the program, I've seen us work on an urban lot to thousands of acres of West Texas.*

Have a project in mind? Find details on the Landowner Incentive Program on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## [TPW TV: The State of Quail](#)

Friday, November 13th, 2015

## [Thanksgiving & Christmas in State Parks](#)

Monday, November 16th, 2015

November is the gateway to the holiday season. And that means Texas State Parks will be bustling with festive activities.

*04—Yeah, we have a lot of fall activities happening in November.*

Thomas Wilhelm works with Texas State Parks.

*13—For example, at [Meridian State Park](#), which is just west of Waco, they're having a Thanksgiving recovery hike. So, the Saturday after Thanksgiving you can go out and hike off some of those calories that you may have picked up on Thanksgiving.*

Want to go in the other direction and consume calories instead of burn them? Learn to make food fit for a holiday camp out... including sweet treats.

*14—Palmetto State Park is having a harvest themed Dutch oven Cooking session, and [Lyndon Baines Johnson State Park](#) near Johnson City is having a holiday cookie decorating event as they start preparing for the Christmas season.*

The folks at LBJ State Park even shared an old fashioned cookie recipe with us. Find it at [passporttexas.org](http://passporttexas.org).

*11—The holidays tend to be so rushed—and they're so commercialized—so, parks offer an opportunity to slow down just a little bit. Take it in. And celebrate the holidays the way they were intended.*

Go to [texasstateparks.org/holidays](http://texasstateparks.org/holidays) for a list of all holiday events in parks.

## **[The Problem with Woodpeckers](#)**

Tuesday, November 17th, 2015

If you live in East Texas, and have noticed strange holes in the wood siding of your home... don't call the police; call an ornithologist.

*08—There are fifteen species of woodpeckers in Texas, eight of which are in the eastern third of Texas. And that's where we get most of our [calls of woodpecker damage](#).*

Non-game ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford, says the pileated and red bellied woodpeckers are among the culprits inflicting the damage to these homes.

*15—What happens a lot of time is that they see these houses that might be painted brown, they might have cedar siding, and this is very attractive to the birds to try to excavate a cavity. So, they're not looking for food when they're doing this; they're looking to make a cavity to call home.*

The pileated woodpecker, about the size of a crow, can excavate holes as big as a man's fist — and not just in the outside walls of your home, either.

*11—That's right. We've documented pileateds going through into the sheetrock and into the room of the house. Of course, they're very lost when they do that, they quickly go out. They're not looking to make a mess of the house.*

Keeping woodpeckers from damaging your home...that's tomorrow.

## **[Avoiding Woodpecker Damage](#)**

Wednesday, November 18th, 2015

As a rule, woodpeckers excavate cavities in dead trees, called snags, which they then live in. The exception to the rule occurs when in their home building zeal, they mistake dark colored house siding, for a snag. When they do—homeowners have problems.

*And it looks like cannon balls have been shot through the house. Maybe two or three; and we've seen some with fifteen, sixteen holes.*

Cliff Shackelford is a non-game ornithologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. He says [woodpecker damage occurs most often in urban and suburban areas](#) where homeowners removed dead wood from their property.

*What we recommend people to do with problems with woodpeckers is to put a nest box. If you're familiar with a bluebird box, it's just a larger version of that custom made for woodpeckers.*

Visit [passporttexas.org](http://passporttexas.org) for a [link to information](#) and free blueprints to make your own woodpecker nest box.

*People can build this in a couple of hours on the weekend, and put it up on the side of the house, and in all cases that we've done this – it's worked. And the woodpecker stops chiseling on the home, and goes to this next box, and is very content.*

## **TPW Magazine: Ducks and Dogs**

Thursday, November 19th, 2015

A great hunting dog will leave an indelible mark on the heart of the hunter who owns it.

*06—I hesitated to use the word love. But I don't think there's a better word than love for it.*

David Sikes is the outdoor writer at the Corpus Christi Caller Times. He wrote about [hunters and their dogs](#) for the November issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

*13—I've been duck hunting for a few decades now. So, I've sat beside many, many dog owners and their beloved hunting dogs, and I've become fascinated just by the relationship that they have.*

Sikes says these highly trained animals are also loyal family pets. But when they're in the field, they have a job to do. And when done well, they're a source of pride.

*26—The dog owners take such a sense of pride in what the dogs can accomplish. And, of course, they only take partial credit for that. Because they give the dogs credit for their intelligence. They do. The dogs that seem to perform best have more intelligence and more heart. And just more drive than others. And most of them, like some of the subjects of this story, have a special place for those special dogs they've had over the decades.*

Such as Jim Remley's black lab Kareem, or Rob Sawyer's Chesapeake, Nellie, or even Harvey Evans' Chesapeake named Taffy that also helped him sell crackers in the 1950s. Read about all of them in David Sikes piece in this month's Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine.

## **TPW TV: Finding Refuge in Nature**

Friday, November 20th, 2015

Difficulties in social interaction, anxiety, verbal and nonverbal communication are characteristic of individuals on the autism spectrum. Robin Bradberry lives with this condition.

*06— You always know deep down, you know you don't quite fit in, but you really want to, but you never will.*

Robin, who is married to Steve, finds spending time hunting together calms her. Meet the couple in a segment on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS as they hunt deer on public land.

19— *I like it, I've never hunted in any place quite this open before so I'm curious to see what shows up and how they move! Just getting settled in adjusting the blind windows, I think we've got it positioned where we can just ease the gun out there. Steve calls it nesting.*

Robin does better away from the high energy, high stress world, which makes a quiet hunt on public land good medicine.

23— *This is almost like therapy for me. It [autism] doesn't exist out here. It's more serene out here. You don't have all of the movement of people, and distractions. You come out here and you can focus on your surroundings more. And listen. And you can listen. Exactly. There's nothing. There's wind. There's crickets...*

View the segment with Robin and Steve Bradberry on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV Series on PBS the week of November 29.

## **City Girl Learns to Cook and Love Game**

Monday, November 23rd, 2015

Evin Cooper is a writer, cook and mom. She's a city girl who shares her life with Steven—a country boy who hunts. Their family eats what Steven brings home.

07— *I had to learn to deal with it. I had to figure out how to cook all the random stuff that he brought home.*

To Evin, meat had always come wrapped in plastic from the market. That changed when Steven challenged her perceptions about meat and her culinary skills with an unusual wild protein.

27— *He brought me a raccoon. And, he's like figure out how to cook it. So, I Googled, and read to soak it in milk for a day before you cook it. So, I soaked it in milk overnight. And then I opened the fridge, and I looked at it and I was like: 'Ah, one more night will do it good.' I soaked in milk for more night. And then I thought a third night would be great. I soaked it for so long it went bad.*

***Do you think that might have been a subconscious thing of not really wanting to eat a raccoon?***

*I don't even think it was subconscious. I think it was entirely conscious.*

Since then, Evin has consciously and happily prepared a wide variety of wild game, including cottontails.

05— *Cottontail's a very lean meat. And you have to cook it for a long time to really get the best quality out of it.*

Tomorrow: Evin Cooper shares her simple and delicious recipe for cottontail carnitas.

## **Evin Cooper's Cottontail Carnitas**

Tuesday, November 24th, 2015

In 1980, when word spread that author and celebrity chef, Julia Child, planned to prepare rabbit and leek pie on her PBS TV series, the public protested. Their reaction has since been termed: Easter Bunny Syndrome...it's when we decide which animals not to eat based on their perceived cuteness.

As writer, cook and mom, Evin Cooper tells us, [rabbits are as delicious](#) as they are cute, and even better than pork in carnitas. She says her first attempt using cottontails was a success, and began with two rabbits in a slow cooker.

45—*And, I stewed them all day with some beer and some homemade salsa, and let them cook and cook and cook. And then, let them cool—and then I deboned the meat. Then, I let the meat sit in the fridge overnight, and the next day I seasoned it up a little bit more with chili powder and cumin and all those wonderful Mexican spices. And I fried them in some hot oil—just the shredded meat—almost like hash browns. It got really crispy on the bottom, and I flipped it over and got it crispy on the other side—almost to the point of burnt. Then, I put it in warm corn tortillas with avocado slices and lime juice. It was so good. I mean, I’ve given up pork for my carnitas. And I want to use almost entirely cottontail now. It’s just delicious.*

Find Evin Cooper’s Cottontail Carnitas recipe at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

## [Putting “English” on Hunting in America](#)

Wednesday, November 25th, 2015

Simon Majumdar is an author, food writer, and judge on Food Network TV cooking competitions. This British born food lover also hunts and eats wild game.

12—*I love hunting. And hunting really speaks to the American identity, because without the first Pilgrims coming here and being taught how to hunt by the Native Americans, the Wampanoags, America wouldn’t exist.*

Based on personal invitations, Majumdar traveled the US exploring regional food traditions for his latest book **Fed, White and Blue: Finding America with My Fork**.

11—*I did actually do a little bit of hunting in Mississippi; I went out into the delta, and it was dove hunting season. We did some wild hog hunting. We didn’t catch much. I say, no animals were harmed during the making of my book.*

For Majumdar, hunting is about putting meat on the table.

14—*I would never go hunting just for sport. But if it’s to put food on the table... And actually, during the economic downturn, I have friends all over the country who used hunting to fill their families stomachs. And again, that proves it is part of the American identity.*

I asked Food Network TV’s Simon Majumdar if he would ever hunt in Texas.

09—*Well, I go wherever I’m invited. So, if people invite me, then I’ll go. I’m not claiming to be any good. But I’m safe. And I love doing it. I love the companionship of hunting.*

Simon Majumdar is great company in the field and in the kitchen.

## [Hunting and New World Independence](#)

Thursday, November 26th, 2015

This week we commemorate the first Thanksgiving. While our turkeys come from the store, Pilgrims hunted for theirs. Did you know that prior to the Pilgrim’s arrival in 1620 few of them had ever hunted wild game?

10—*The first people to come over wouldn’t have been able to hunt [in England] because the land was owned by the rich and that’s where you hunted. So, when they came to America and were able to hunt anywhere, it was actually a real expression of their new lives.*

Simon Majumdar is a hunter, food writer and judge on Food Network TV competitions. He says along with being deeply rooted in the American identity, hunting puts good food on the table.

*13—I'm a great believer if you hunt for food that you're going to eat some really amazing dishes. I mean, I've hunted many times in the UK: deer, wild birds...rabbit. I do a lot of rabbit hunting in the United Kingdom. And I think the food often just tastes better.*

Plus, he says, you know its origins. Simon Majumdar, author of *Fed, White and Blue: Finding America with My Fork* says despite our long history with hunting and eating wild game, some Americans remain reticent.

*10—I always blame Walt Disney. Walt Disney has a lot to answer for because everyone thinks of like Bambi and Thumper. And they're really just sources of food. So, I'm very unsentimental with it.*

Be sentimental when giving thanks this season, and pass the turkey.

## **Learning to “Play the Game”**

Friday, November 27th, 2015

Hunters are beginning to fill their freezers with venison.

*07—Most people will make stew out of it or they'll grind up what's left over and they'll make sausage out of it.*

Those traditional preparations are tasty, but Chef Austin Brown, owner of the Alcalde Grill in Gonzales challenges home cooks to get out of their comfort zones. And that means not using this common culinary crutch.

*15— Get away from the Italian dressings and use brines. A heavily salted water with some sort of acid—maybe a little flavored vinegar in it—lemon juice, lime juices. Those things do the exact same thing as a marinade.*

He says home cooks default to stews and sausages because those recipes mask the meat's perceived gamey flavor. But Chef Brown says a properly cooked venison back strap or leg file, for example, is sublime.

*20— I would brine it in salt water and cut it into individual steaks; season it with just salt and pepper...a little bit of garlic and a little bit of butter, and grill it on the grill. Or sear it in a pan, cooking it to about medium rare and eating it that way. Some of the best deer that you can eat is just seasoned with salt and pepper and seared in a pan.*

Find a recipe from Chef Austin Brown at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

## **Land Stewardship at Lavaca Rio Ranch**

Monday, November 30th, 2015

A group of coastal landowners in Jackson County turned their 5,000-acre ranch into what Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist Doug Jobes calls “the pinnacle of what natural resource management should be.”

*04—The practices that are taking place on that ranch, I'd put 'em up against any ranch in the state.*

Lavaca Rio Ranch is a [\*\*2015 Lone Star Land Steward Regional Award winner\*\*](#) for their land management, which Brent Friedrichs oversees.

11—*What's cool about this ranch is you've got these big, deep sand hills, and the vegetation is awesome. We've got little bluestem, switch grass, gulf coast muhly—which is all good nesting sites for quail.*

About 300 acres at Lavaca Rio Ranch is coastal prairie, and support rare plant communities, says Texas Parks and Wildlife botanist Jason Singhurst.

13—*They're high-quality prairies. They have a lot of plant diversity in them. And they have some plants that are very special within the state. Now we're down to about 150 thousand acres of coastal prairie, and the fact that this ranch has about 300 plus acres of intact prairie is unique.*

Know a landowner who's doing great work preserving their property? Nominate them for a Lone Star Land Steward Award. You can find information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

## **[Christmas in Texas State Parks](#)**

Tuesday, December 1st, 2015

It's not like we have to stay indoors huddled around a fireplace to stay warm during the holidays. It's Texas, after all. But you can warm your spirit outdoors with a trip to a state park this holiday season.

04— *We have over 47 parks participating this year, with over 65 events. So, lots of opportunities happening across the state.*

Thomas Wilhelm, with state parks, shares a few places where we can find seasonal fun across the state.

48—At **[Franklin Mountains State Park](#)** they're having an event called **[Howliday Hounds Hike](#)**, dressing up animals in Santa hats and going for hikes. **[LBJ State Park and Historic site](#)** here in Central Texas is having its **[46th Annual Christmas Tree lighting](#)**. That's been going on for a long time and it's a lot of fun. **[Stephen F. Austin State Park](#)**, out towards Houston, is having its family **[Breakfast with Santa](#)**. And **[Lake Mineral Wells State Park](#)** up towards the Dallas area is having a **[\[Cross-Timbers\] Cowboy Christmas](#)**. With Cowboy poets and storytellers coming in to sit around the campfire and tell stories. There are events happening at several of our Valley area parks. **[Estero Llano Grande](#)** is having—one of the birding centers—is having a **[Santa Bird Hike](#)**. And, **[Resaca de la Palma](#)**, also in the valley, is having a **[Jolly Night Hike](#)**. And they'll also have crafts and live performances by local talent.

Find a complete list of holiday events in state parks at **[www.texasstateparks.org/holidays](http://www.texasstateparks.org/holidays)**.

## **[Christmas at the Mission](#)**

Wednesday, December 2nd, 2015

Texas State Parks provide soul-satisfying getaways during the holiday season. Park spokesman, Thomas Wilhelm says on Saturday, December fifth, **[Goliad State Park and Historic Site](#)**, presents **[Christmas at Mission Espiritu Santo](#)**.

22— *Goliad's a beautiful park, and their Christmas event is really special. They are having their Christmas concert on December fifth. That's when the mission is decked out for Christmas. They have a local choir come in and they do a mixture of sacred and secular music. It's a really beautiful opportunity. Plus, the park is also decorated throughout the month of December. They call it History in Lights, where it's decorated for the Christmas season.*

And that's just one many holiday events and activities for your family and friends to enjoy at your state parks. Find more details at [texasstateparks.org/holidays](http://texasstateparks.org/holidays).

*22—The holidays are such a busy time. And so, it's a great opportunity if you can get outside and take a break and really enjoy a unique experience. Get out of the shopping malls. Get away from just the general craziness of the season, take a breath, and get to see a unique aspect of both the holidays and state parks. It's redefining both at one time.*

## **State Parks 2015 Christmas Ornaments**

Thursday, December 3rd, 2015

Tradition is what the holidays are about. And it's a tradition for Texas Parks and Wildlife to commemorate state parks this time of year with ornaments.

*12—That's right. We're on our 14th annual edition of our state park Christmas ornaments. This year we feature three different parks: [Brazos Bend State Park](#), [Mustang Island State Park](#), and [Blanco State Park](#).*

Thomas Wilhelm, spokesman for Texas state parks, says these rustic wooden, laser engraved ornaments tell each park's story. The Blanco State Park ornament has special meaning this year as it recovers from spring flooding.

*15—Blanco is having their own recovery story. The park is back open, but we did want to nod to the fact that they've had a tough year, but we wanted to commemorate that park and show off a little bit of their history and how they continue to thrive after the events of this spring.*

The 2015 ornaments are available individually or as a set.

*12—You can purchase the individual ornaments for \$8.95, or you can purchase the set for \$19.95. Call our customer service center **512.389.8900**, and they can take your order over the phone.*

The money raised helps support your state parks.

## **A Birders' Birder: Victor Emmanuel**

Friday, December 4th, 2015

Legendary birder, Victor Emmanuel, founded the Freeport Christmas Bird Count more than 50 years ago. Since 1976, Emanuel has operated a nature tourism company that takes people to birding hotspots around the globe.

And it all started with a desire to make his passion his work.

*51—I've been interested in birds and nature ever since I was a little boy. And I always wanted to know how I could find some way to make a living doing it. And I met a man named Peter Alton who was doing it for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and thought, well maybe I can do that. And then I had a gentleman call me and ask me to take he and his sister out birding when I lived in Houston. So, I thought there was some market for that in society. And then the National Audubon Society had their convention in New Orleans in 1975. And they asked me to plan some trips for them to Mexico. And, I had met George Plimpton through a bird count that I do down in Freeport; he introduced me to Peter Matheson. Peter Matheson went on one of my first tours as a celebrity leader. I got to know Roger Tory Peterson, who was kind of the person who developed bird watching as a hobby in the united states by his field guides. And he helped me. So, I had a lot of lucky breaks, and a lot of people joining me—friends of mine—who helped me get started.*

Learn more about [birding in Texas](#) when you go to the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## [TPW Magazine: Six-legged Nutrition](#)

Monday, December 7th, 2015

When certain insects show up at your picnic, don't shoo them away. Chew them away.

*04— They really do have a crunch [crunches]; really similar to roasted nuts.*

That's Robert Nathan Allen, crunching a toasted cricket. He's quoted in an article about [edible insects](#) in the December issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine. RNA as he's known, is founder of the Austin, Texas nonprofit Little Herds

*08—And we focus primarily educating the public and particularly children about edible insects and why and how we can adopt them into our diet.*

We call eating insects as food Entomophagy; it's commonplace among 80% of the world's population, and he's trying to convince the other 20% to take the leap.

*19—Once western societies started becoming very agriculturally based, particularly in northern climates, it just became ingrained in our society that insects are dirty. And so, that idea has continued to be passed down generation to generation in these western cultures. Whereas in the tropical environments where the habit has continued, it's just another food source.*

We eat more than 400 insects a year without knowing it. RNA says by intentionally substituting insect protein for animal protein, we can improve the environment and our nutrition. Learn more in the December issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

## [Eating Bugs for a Better World](#)

Tuesday, December 8th, 2015

Experts predict the world's population will increase to nine billion people by 2050. That's two billion more mouths to feed. And Robert Nathan Allen, or RNA, says insects provide eco-friendly protein to keep us fed.

*07— Compared to say a cow, where we can only really eat about forty percent of the cow, with insects we can eat most if not all of them.*

Allen founded the nonprofit Little Herds to educate the public about insects as a nutritious alternative food source. Insects are high in protein, fiber and micro-nutrients. 70% of agricultural land supports meat production, which limits the industry's future growth.

*15—So, with insects, we can raise them in a modular fashion vertically on a fraction of the land as traditional livestock, with a fraction of the water, with a fraction of the feed, and end up with more nutritionally valuable protein.*

Since founding Little Herds, RNA took a job with Aspire Foods Group; it farms edible insects in Ghana, Mexico and Austin, Texas. Forage for your own bugs in the wild, if you like, but RNA recommends eating farm raised bugs.

*11—That way we can assure that they're raised in a hygienic, safe, clean environment. We can make sure that there's no risk of diseases and parasites, and we can make sure that they're eating a clean, wholesome diet.*

[Learn more about edible insects](#) in the December issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

## **Texas Outdoor Family Reboot**

Wednesday, December 9th, 2015

The Texas Outdoor Family program from Texas Parks and Wildlife introduces families to the outdoors. Program coordinator, Robert Owen, says the program is entering a new phase, casting a wider net to encourage overnight park use by diverse audiences.

*12 — We noticed that state park visitation did not represent the diversity of Texas, and we wanted to see that change. So, we started to partner with community organizations that represent under-served audiences.*

Using grant money, they created a 3-year pilot program in Houston, and worked with partner non-profit organizations that shared the goals of getting folks outdoors to enjoy healthier, happier lifestyles.

*08—Houston is a wonderful melting pot. It represents cultures from all over the world, and a great diversity of Texas.*

Owen and staff trained their partners how to facilitate an outdoor family experience.

*12— We're not just going to ask people to get out into the field and lead a workshop for a hundred people with no training. Instead, we like to set folks up for success with our master outdoor leadership training.*

Robert Owen says, Texas Outdoor Family is now expanding the program to include DFW, Austin and San Antonio, and is looking for a few good partners.

*12— We're growing in those new markets. So, we are looking for those non-profit organizations that serve an audience that's 50% free or reduced lunch. Or, a recipient of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Co-op grant program.*

Find contact information at [texasstateparks.org/tof](http://texasstateparks.org/tof).

## **Partner with Texas Outdoor Families**

Thursday, December 10th, 2015

Being popular is a good problem to have for the Texas Outdoor Families program. It means lots of people want to learn how to engage the outdoors. To accommodate as many families as possible, program director, Robert Owen says Texas Outdoor Families is recruiting and training nonprofit community partners to facilitate the weekend campouts.

*13 — We're setting up these partners to run an event with some ranger guidance in the beginning, and then turning them loose after we feel confident in their abilities to have a safe, low, impact and fun time in a state park.*

After a successful 3-year pilot program in Houston, Owen says they're expanding to Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin and San Antonio.

14—*We're looking to grow by quite a few partners. In order for folks to get on board, would encourage them to give me a call to talk over the program and the opportunities and just hear where this organization is coming from—to see how our goals overlap.*

Owens says the program needs at least 10 nonprofit community partners in each region.

24— *We hope that organizations see the return in time spent outside. Some recent research has suggested that youth benefit from time spent outside through unstructured play, but also through the opportunity to make their own decisions and find themselves in a challenging environment. And camping does provide that. It's very much a growth experience.*

Find Robert Owen's contact information and details about the program at [texasstateparks.org/tof](http://texasstateparks.org/tof)

## **TPW TV: Coastal Expo Volunteer Family**

Friday, December 11th, 2015

Despite their busy home, school and work schedules, several times a year, the Gibson family of Bastrop, Texas, volunteers at the [Texas Parks and Wildlife Coastal Expo](#). Kris Shipman coordinates these events.

*If we didn't have volunteers like the Gibsons, we wouldn't*

*be able to reach all the kids and provide those first time experiences outdoors.*

Three thousands kids attend the weekend Expos to learn about the marine world. The entire Gibson clan is on hand to help. Meet them next week on a segment of the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV Series on PBS.

*[Kaylee Gibson] It's almost a little bit of an adrenaline rush.*

*[Chad Gibson] I'd say about 60 to 70 percent of the kids who come through there have never either been fishing, they've never been to the coast.*

*[Travis Gibson] Once you start learning—not only yourself but teaching other kids, it's really fun. You can develop a habit of teaching people instantly.*

*[Doriann Gibson] It is hard work. But we get so much more out of it than what we put into it.*

The Gibson family first started volunteering at Bastrop State Park in their hometown; and it's strengthened their bond.

*It allowed us to really have that quality time with our kids. It's fun. It's purposeful but we get to do it as a family.*

Meet the Gibson family next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings. The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

## **Hunger in Texas and How Hunters can Help**

Monday, December 14th, 2015

Food insecurity in Texas is more common than you might think.

*It, unfortunately, leaves no county untouched. We know that about one in five families struggle to afford food on a consistent basis.*

Celia Cole is the CEO of Feeding Texas (<http://www.feedingtexas.org/>)—a statewide association that represents Texas' 21 food banks. The food banks distribute food via its 3-thousand partner agencies

*And we support that work and represent them in public policy decisions.*

Donations from grocery store chains and the public allow Feeding Texas to provide food to hungry Texans.

*And we're grateful for that. But the foods that are most often requested by the people we serve are protein, dairy and fresh fruit and vegetables. So those are the ones we're least likely to get donated.*

Venison is a healthy wild protein. And, if you plan to hunt this season, consider donating an animal to Feeding Texas' Hunters for the Hungry program.

*This is a program that allows hunters to donate their deer to participating meat processors around the state.*

Details tomorrow.

## **[Hunters for the Hungry](#)**

Tuesday, December 15th, 2015

Imagine if you didn't know whether you could feed your family. One in five Texas families don't have to imagine.

*We know that it [hunger] affects children, seniors, people who are chronically unemployed, temporarily unemployed... It's a really extensive problem that's affecting every corner of our state.*

Celia Cole is the CEO of Feeding Texas—a statewide association that represents Texas' food banks. Its program, Hunters for the Hungry, allows hunters to donate deer to feed hungry Texans.

*It's a great opportunity for hunters to give back to their communities. It also helps landowners manage their deer population. So, it's a program that promotes environmental stewardship, at the same time it brings in a badly needed source of protein for the hungry families that we serve.*

Hunters donate legally tagged and field-dressed white-tailed or mule deer at participating meat processors.

*They contribute a small fee to cover the processing cost. That meal is then processed and distributed to the hunger relief agencies that we serve in that area.*

Hunting licenses come with five deer tags. Perhaps earmark one for Hunters for the Hungry, and help provide healthy venison to Texans in need.

*We are hopeful that potentially we'll have hunters going out and doing more hunting, because they know that they now the opportunity to donate in this way.*

Find donation details at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## [Feeding Texans by Sharing the Harvest](#)

Wednesday, December 16th, 2015

Hunters in Texas harvested close to 600,000 deer, and donated more than 100,000 pounds of venison to Hunters for the Hungry last season.

*This comes to us at a very low cost. We estimate it costs only about a dollar per pound to process and distribute this meat throughout our network.*

Hunters for the Hungry is a program of Feeding Texas—a statewide association that represents Texas food banks. Celia Cole is the non-profit's CEO.

*We estimate, since its inception two decades ago, that hunters have donated over two-million pounds of meat to feed hungry Texans.*

Hunters pay a modest fee to drop off legally harvested, tagged and field dressed animals at participating processors. Processors grind and package the meat and distribute it to local feeding programs.

*We'd like to see more hunters and processors involved everywhere. Obviously hunting is more prevalent in certain areas of the state than in others. So, we're focusing on those areas where there are lots of opportunities.*

Help get healthy protein to deserving Texans.

*If listeners want to learn more about the program...if they want to find out how to sign up as a processor, find out how to donate, they can come to our website [feedingtexas.org](http://feedingtexas.org). Increasing the number of processors around the state who are enrolled in the program is the key to us being able to grow it in the way that we want to.*

## [SB 1978 Will Help Feed Hungry Texans](#)

Thursday, December 17th, 2015

Last legislative session, SB1978 passed into law, which is good news for hungry Texans. Justin Halvorsen, Parks and Wildlife Revenue director explains.

*SB 1978 is a legislatively mandated bill that mandates that Parks and Wildlife allow a hunter to opt-in to donate to the Feeding Texas nonprofit, when they purchase a hunting license. And that money would go to that nonprofit, and to their program Hunters for the Hungry.*

Halvorsen and Feeding Texas are working out the details of the program, including how much hunters may donate.

*This would be at the time of purchase at the very end of the transaction. Either online or through any of our license agents—they will ask would you like to make a donation. It's almost like when you check out at the super market and they ask if you want to chip in a couple of bucks.*

Currently hunters pay a fee to processors when they donate an animal. Processors grind, package and then distribute the meat to local hunger relief agencies. Celia Cole is Executive Director at Feeding Texas.

*And right now, typically, when a hunter donates a deer, they pay up to \$40 to cover the processing. So, we hope ultimately we'll have enough revenue to be able to offset some of those costs, which also, I think, will increase the donations.*

Last year Texas hunters donated more than 100,000 pounds of healthy, lean venison to Hunters for the Hungry. Learn how to help at [feedingtexas.org](http://feedingtexas.org).

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## [First Day Hikes and More](#)

Friday, December 18th, 2015

Here we are again, straddling the threshold of a new year. How will you spend the first day? You could devote the first day of 2016 recovering from the last day of 2015. You might also decide to remain in your jammies, parked in front of the television for a day of football, movies, and snacking. There's nothing wrong with that... in theory.

But before you settle into that well-worn groove in the sofa and start brushing potato chip crumbs from your loungewear, change into your street clothes, and head out the door for a little fresh air and sunshine.

People who spend time outdoors are healthier, happier, and smarter. And [how we spend the first day of the year](#) is often indicative of how we'll spend the entire year. That's research talking, I'm just the messenger.

Go to the calendar section of the [Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#) to find outdoor opportunities for the first day of the New Year, including: [a List Birding Hike at Tyler State Park](#) in East Texas; [A First Day Mountain Bike Ride](#) for beginners at Franklin Mountains SP near El Paso; how about a [First Day Hike at the Hill Country State Natural Area](#); or the fifth annual [Stuffed Turkey Hike at Bonham SP](#) to help walk off some of those holiday treats.

Or, just go outside and take a walk around your neighborhood and appreciate where you live and with whom you share your life. The games and movies will be on...and the chips will be crisp when you get back.

Remember: Life's Better Outside. Happy New Year.

## [How a Non-Hunter Changed Her Tune](#)

Monday, December 21st, 2015

When Lily Raff McCaulou moved from NYC to Bend, Oregon to pursue a career in journalism, her beat covered a large rural area.

*I was there hoping to write about stories that mattered to them and their community.*

Something that mattered to the community was hunting.

*I didn't know any hunters growing up – and this was just so far from what I was used to. And there was a little bit of a danger element. These were people who knew how to use guns. People who owned guns. There was something kind of scary about that to me.*

It didn't take long for Lily to appreciate how hunting and land stewardship went hand-in-hand, or that her new neighbors were committed conservationists who had great compassion for the lives of the animals they harvested.

*So, when I was meeting these hunters, I realized a huge part of hunting for them was being out in the environment and interacting with the natural world. And that, as hard as it was to understand, and hard as it is*

*to explain, they actually had a huge amount of love for the animals that they hunted. There was not hate – it was actually the opposite of that – it was love and respect for these animals.*

Tomorrow – Lily pulls the trigger.

## **Lily Pulls the Trigger**

Tuesday, December 22nd, 2015

When you grow up in a hunting family, you learn to appreciate the tradition.

*It was so different from what I grew up with and from anything I knew, that I wanted to know more about it.*

Lily Raff McCaulou moved from NYC to Bend Oregon to write for a small newspaper, her readers included anglers and hunters. To connect with them and her food, Lily learned to hunt.

*You know, the locavore movement was starting to take hold, and I'd been a meat eater my whole life, and was wondering: do I really have what it takes to hunt and kill my own meat. And wanting to know what I could get from that experience — and that closeness to my food. So, it was a combination of all these different factors that made me decide this is something that I want to try.*

After hunter education and learning to shoot, she attended a Becoming an Outdoors Woman Workshop, which included a pheasant hunt. She thought she might not have the nerve to pull the trigger.

*All the other women in my group had shot a bird, and I just started feeling like, 'Hey, I've come all this way and it's been a year in the making, and I want to take a shot, too.' Eventually, all the stars aligned and the dog that I was with sniffed out a bird and held it on point [and when it flushed] , and I got it; I took the shot and the bird fell immediately. Rather than feeling all the guilt and remorse, I felt empowered.*

Lily Raff McCaulou wrote a book about her experience entitled: *Call of the Mild*.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## **Rods, Reels and Rainbows**

Wednesday, December 23rd, 2015

It's the holiday season; and we recommend celebrating with rods, reels and rainbows. Rainbow trout, that is.

*We do winter stockings when the water temperatures permit it, to provide an opportunity for anglers to catch trout in Texas. It's a species of fish that anglers wouldn't catch otherwise, so we stock them, and we intend them all to be caught out during the season.*

Carl Kittle (kitl) is a biologist with Inland Fisheries. He says thanks to abundant rainfall throughout most of the state, there's plenty of access to stock lakes and ponds.

*This year, things are pretty well back to normal. Looks like our normal level of stocking will happen.*

The agency will stock more than 290-thousand rainbow trout in about 150 sites statewide.

*We publish a schedule on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department webpage. Look for [the winter trout](#)*

## [stocking link.](#)

Carl Kittle says we stock rainbows in winter because these fish cannot survive our hot summers. So, when you reel one in this winter, take it home and eat it.

We have two trout recipes at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

The Sport fish restoration program supports our series and helps to fund rainbow trout stocking in Texas...

We record our series at The Block House in Austin, Texas and Joel Block engineers our program.

## [Catch a Rainbow this Holiday Season](#)

Thursday, December 24th, 2015

If you're an angler who likes to eat what you catch, then now's the time to reel in a rainbow trout.

*We stock them at a catchable and eatable size. They are good fighting fish; they're relatively easy to catch. We usually stock them in smaller bodies of water, so they're a good fishing, catching opportunity and good eating opportunity as well.*

Carl Kittle is a program director for Inland Fisheries, and oversees winter trout stocking in Texas, which began this month.

*We've been stocking [rainbow] trout around Texas for almost 40 years. One interesting note about trout is that we often say there are no established populations of trout in Texas, but actually, way out west in the Davis Mountains there's a small, tiny stream at high enough elevation that there is a reproducing population of rainbow trout.*

That's why we stock them in winter; most of Texas is too hot for the. Inland fisheries will distribute more than 290-thousand rainbows in 150 locations.

*And we have a special program; we actually stock somewhat larger trout in urban areas in our Neighborhood Fishin' Program. And that's something that you can specifically look for on our web page.*

With the winter holidays here, it's a great time go fishing with the kids. [Find the stocking schedule](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Sport Fish restoration program supports our series and funds rainbow trout stocking in Texas...

## [Fishing Hall of Fame](#)

Friday, December 25th, 2015

Rainbow trout may not survive in all parts of Texas, but they flourish in the Guadalupe River below Canyon Dam. The water there is cold, which rainbows need to survive.

*We've landed 27 and 28-inch rainbow trout out of this river, which is absolutely surreal. That's a big fish for anywhere.*

Chris Johnson is a River Guide. He talks about rainbows in a segment of the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#), which airs next week. Mark Dillow, Chapter President of Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited, is

in the segment, too.

*We encourage Catch-and-Release to return the fish to the river so that this resource can continue; so that the efforts Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited are putting into making this a world-class fishery can continue. And other people can have an opportunity catch the fish that you caught.*

In January 2015, Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited held its first youth trout camp where kids experienced fly fishing and river recreation on the Guadalupe River. And, Dakus Geeslin, Aquatic Scientist, at Texas Parks and Wildlife, says events like that create conservationists.

*If these kids enjoy the river, they start caring about the river, and the next thing you know they'll want to conserve and protect the river. What we saw was a conservation legacy being developed firsthand over that weekend of our trout camp.*

Catch the segment on rainbow trout and Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV show on PBS. Check your local listings.

The Sport Fish restoration program supports our series.

## **Do Something That Scares You in 2016**

Monday, December 28th, 2015

Hard to believe, but another new year is just days away. Karen Zimmerman, who is a State Park Ambassador, offers a couple of suggestions to help you connect with the outdoors and yourself in 2016.

*If you're not getting outside try to go outside – even if it's just walking outside. It's amazing the benefits that that can bring to our mind. If you need to think on a problem, you should just let it marinate in your head while you walk among some trees. But, if you're already into the outdoors recreation somewhat, and you want to take it a step further, I think the best resolution you can make to yourself is to try something that scares you. Because, there were so many things that I thought I just wasn't tough enough to do – like repelling. And you might cry a little bit while you do it, but then afterwards you are going to feel so good. And, there is nothing in the world that can boost your confidence for months than undertaking something that scares you like that – and succeeding – because it's actually not that hard, and you don't need to be in that great of shape to do most of these outdoor activities.*

Explore outdoor activities available in state parks and natural areas when you visit the [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **Outdoor Resolutions for 2016**

Tuesday, December 29th, 2015

There's big push to get children outdoors. But kids aren't the only ones who benefit from fresh air and sunshine. Survey says: Adults of all ages—as well as the kiddos—can achieve a better quality of life by committing to spending time in the wide open spaces...as well as the forested spaces...or watery spaces... Education and outreach director, Nancy Herron, shares some thoughts.

*When you spend time outdoors you can be healthier, happier and smarter.*

**Those are some big claims there, Nancy. What do we mean by that?**

*Actually there is a lot of research that's out there that shows that people of all ages actually do have benefits from being outside in nature, and that does include improvements to your health, your stress level, your sense of self esteem and confidence. Even being more cooperative. Can you believe that? Communities are more cooperative; families bond better in the out of doors. These are interesting things that we now know that we took for granted, and we just didn't realize. That there's a whole bevy of benefits from being outdoors.*

Get healthier... happier...and smarter in the New Year when you spend time outdoors. Because, Life's Better Outside...and so are you.

## **Hummingbird Roundup**

Wednesday, December 30th, 2015

Hear the word "roundup" and you might think of herding cattle. But Mark Klym, who coordinates the [Hummingbird Roundup](#), thinks of counting tiny birds.

*Well, the Hummingbird Roundup is a backyard survey of hummingbirds that we do every year. You can participate at any time. You can download the forms directly off of our website, or you can send us a letter. We appreciate a donation to help with the cost, but we can send you the forms and get you started.*

**And, so what does it mean to you as a scientist to get this kind of data back?**

*Well it's very important. It helps us to understand where the hummingbirds are being seen, when they're being seen. What resources they're using. It helps us to get an idea how people are responding to them, whether they're feeding them appropriately, and it gives us an opportunity also to learn a little bit about these hummingbirds. When the survey started, we thought we had 14 species in the state and that some of them were extremely rare. Now we're finding that these birds are not as rare as we thought, some of them are actually nesting in Texas, and we've got 18 species of hummingbird in Texas. These are native non-migrating species? Well, these are all migrating species, but they're all naturally occurring in the state of Texas.*

[Download the Hummingbird Roundup forms](#) from the Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Winter Hummers**

Thursday, December 31st, 2015

Fall hummingbird migration peaked in mid September, and spring migration won't peak until February. Until then what's a hummingbird lover to do—just wait?

*08—Not at all. A lot of people will take their feeders down in October, and that's really one of the worst things you can do, because we get hummingbirds here in Texas all year round.*

Mark Klym coordinates the Hummingbird Roundup, an ongoing citizen survey of backyard hummers. Some birds, he says, arrive in late summer and stay until spring.

*09—They're not going to go down into Mexico. And so, we can keep them fed and keep them sheltered, and if we have the right habitat, we can enjoy hummingbirds 365 days a year.*

You may see ruby-throats and black-chins in winter, but the Rufus and Buff bellies are more numerous in the colder months, and if your landscape has plenty of trees and shrubs, you may see some this winter. Just remember to keep your feeders refreshed and thawed.

20—During the winter, it's a good idea to increase the number of feeders that you have. Continue with that typical, one part sugar, four parts water solution—no red food coloring, please; that's not good for the birds. If we get a snow, which has happened a few times—yeah, you have to go out there and brush that snow off and get those feeders opened up. The birds need them; as soon as they wake up that's where they're going to head—for those feeders.

Find [more hummingbird information](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.