

This program runs at 520 am Monday thru Friday

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

July 2017

Ways to Celebrate 4th of July in Parks

Monday, July 3rd, 2017

Tomorrow is The Fourth of July. It's when we observe the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress. Over the past 241 years, it's also become a reason for family and friends to gather for food and fun.

Texas State Parks are open July Fourth and welcome you and yours for picnicking, hiking, cycling, geocaching, swimming, fishing, and just plain relaxing.

A couple of parks have July Fourth Festivities, including the Sauer Beckmann Living History farm in Johnson City in the Hill Country, where you will celebrate like early Texans. The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens will have a huge fireworks display.

With fireworks in mind—park visitors are not allowed to bring them into the parks. Not even sparklers. They will be confiscated. Just a heads up. If you decide to camp overnight at a park, and you want to see fireworks, many of the communities around the parks have displays you can easily attend.

Or if the park is close to big cities like Dallas or Houston, you may be able to see their fireworks from the comfort of your campsite. Celebrate our nation's independence and your state parks this July Fourth. Find park information at texasstateparks.org.

TPW Magazine — Nature Play

Tuesday, July 4th, 2017

While all play benefits children, experts agree that nature play is best. Yet, we've seen kids disconnect from it.

And that disconnect has resulted in a myriad of different health issues, wellness issues – and then even [affects] becoming the next stewards to take care of our natural spaces and wild things.

Jennifer Bristol coordinates the Children in Nature program. The concept of nature play isn't new, but the collaboration to ensure children have access to it via a "playground" experience is.

Landscape architects, the childhood development people, and the playground designers all came together and said: 'Okay, let's create this space where children can interact with nature, but on a much smaller scale.'

Bristol said studies showed parents like playgrounds because they exist within defined boundaries, and parents can keep an eye on their kids.

Looking at that concept, the playground designer said, 'Okay, let's validate what the parents are feeling and that they need, but let's make the elements that they're playing with out of natural materials. Or, replicate things that they would find in nature, and use those to help them grow, develop their gross motor skills, problem solve, and then all the other elements when children actually are being active and playing in the outdoors.'

Jennifer Bristol wrote an article about the growth of Nature Play in Texas for the July issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

The [NatureRocksTexas.org](#) website lists all the parks, nature centers and activities where you can play, explore and connect with nature near you.

Nonnative Zebra Mussels Found in Canyon Lake

Wednesday, July 5th, 2017

Zebra mussels have high reproductive capabilities.

And then they also have the capability of attaching themselves to pretty much any hard substrate or surface found within the waterbodies.

Nonnative zebra mussels can have serious economic, environmental and recreational impacts. Biologist Brian Van Zee says 10 Texas Lakes are fully infested and another five are positive.

The ones that are listed 'infested' mean that they actually have a viable breeding population within the lakes. The lakes that are 'positive' are lakes where we have documented zebra mussels or their larvae on more than one occasion. So, we know they're present, but we may not have been able to fully verify whether or not they're reproducing.

Zebra mussels can clog public water intakes, and damage boats and motors left in infested waters. In June, they were discovered in [Canyon Lake](#).

We know that the zebra mussels in canyon lake are a result of a contaminated boat that was brought and launched on the lake at some point in time. The other way the zebra mussels will spread and move in Texas is simply through their downstream movement of larvae. If you get a lake or a reservoir that's on the upper portion of a river basin that becomes infested then, as water flows from those lakes and moves downstream, they will carry the larvae with them.

We can prevent the spread of zebra mussels when we [clean, drain and dry our boats](#) before leaving infested waters. More on that tomorrow.

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We can prevent the spread of zebra mussels when we [clean, drain and dry our boats](#) before leaving infested waters. More on that tomorrow.

Last month we discovered zebra mussels in Canyon Lake.

Every time you get a new infestation it's discouraging – it just really is. It just gets you down. And it's frustrating, because you know that if boaters and people who we know care about the lakes and rivers in this state, if they would just take some time, and be a little careful and make sure that they just clean, drain and dry their boat before they leave the lake every single time, that will go a long time towards preventing their spread.

Fisheries biologist Brian Van Zee says zebra mussels can clog public water intakes, and damage boats and motors left in infested waters.

You know, if boats are stored on the water in the marina, those are the ones where we're going to have colonies of adult zebra mussels attached to them. Those are the ones that boat owners need to take the time to have that boat fully cleaned and decontaminated; have it inspected by Parks and Wildlife before you go ahead and move it to a different lake.

Once in a river basin, zebra mussels are there to stay.

But, what we can do is we can prevent them from being spread to a new river basin. If we can get the word out to these boat owners and public and transporters in the state, and let them know we're trying to stop this spread, and prevent new infestations within new river basins – then we have a chance.

Find procedures to [clean, drain and dry your boat](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

TPW TV — Razing Cane

Friday, July 7th, 2017

Mike Eckert lives just outside of Fredericksburg. He's battling with an invasive plant called Giant Reed, or [Arrundo Donax](#) that's taking over a creek on his property.

As best as I understand, it's doesn't spread from seeds. It spreads from pieces washing out and lodging somewhere, and then starting to grow again.

Next week on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series](#) watch a segment called Razing Cane that explores the impact of this invader that threatens nearly every river system in Texas.

We're almost to the Pedernales. Another half mile and you'll hit the Pedernales down here. And they've got this stuff in the Pedernales, too. And it's spreading pretty quick. And it's all over. Everywhere you go, it's there. It's going to take a massive effort to wipe it out. And I'm not sure they'll ever wipe it out.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Aquatic invasive species specialist, Monica McGarrity and a team of biologists is fighting back. They're using an herbicide that will hopefully kill this introduced invasive weed.

Arrundo is a grass, but it's a grass on steroids. It grows 30 to 40 feet tall. Huge, dense canes. So dense that wildlife can't even get through it. And so this is a really aggressive plant, and it's important to take equally aggressive action to manage it.

View the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV segment Razing Cane next week on PBS. Check your local listings.

State Park Swimming Holes

Monday, July 10th, 2017

Summer is hot...but you don't have to be. Many of your Texas State Parks offer visitors a refreshing alternative to air-conditioned cabin fever with their swimming opportunities.

Public swimming pools can be fun, but if you prefer a more natural setting, float your cares away at [Blanco State Park](#), 40 miles north of San Antonio. Here you'll find cool, clear, spring-fed swimming for anyone seeking refuge from the long Texas summer.

Deep in the heart of the East Texas Pineywoods [Martin Dies, JR State Park](#) is on the northern edge of the Big Thicket, and at the forks of the Angelina and Neches rivers. The water is flowing and just right for swimming fun. Just keep an eye out for paddlers.

About one hour from Fort Worth, [Dinosaur Valley State Park](#) allows visitors to swim in the same Paluxy River where dinosaurs roamed 113-million years ago.

[Garner State Park](#) near Uvalde is home to 10 acres of Frio riverfront, giving visitors plenty of space to swim the clear water, scoot the rapids in inner tubes, or even rent pedal boats. Just arrive early so you can get in.

Find listings of state park swimming opportunities, and safety tips, when you log onto texasstateparks.org.

Historic Bison at Caprock Canyons State Park

Tuesday, July 11th, 2017

History walks on four legs at [Caprock Canyons State Park](#). It's where descendants of southern plains bison, from a herd started by rancher Charles Goodnight, roam free.

It's the official bison herd of the State of Texas. It's a herd started by Charles Goodnight back in 1878; these animals are direct descendants of those that he captured in the wild right here in this area.

Donald Beard is park superintendent.

These are the last true remaining example of the southern plains bison. Animals that were captured by him [Goodnight] in these canyons. Kept in these canyons and never had any influence from any other animals [bison] outside of this area. So, their genetics are basically the same as they were back in the 1870s.

No fences separate visitors to Caprock Canyons State Park from the approximately 150-plus bison on site.

Awe, it's amazing. You have to wait for them to cross the road. They can wander through your campsite. Go down to the lake while you're fishing and take a drink. They're just like any other wild animal in the park. You can experience them as they were – not behind a fence in an exhibition.

September 23 the 7th [Texas State Bison Music Fest](#) takes place in Quitaque. Find the music lineup and ticket information at bisonfest.com. Money raised funds bison research and conservation.

Face Time with Bison

Wednesday, July 12th, 2017

When you visit [Caprock Canyons State Park](#) you may come face-to-face with one or more of the over 150 bison roaming freely within on the park.

You do want to give them respect.

The animals make up the official Texas State Bison herd. Donald Beard is park superintendent, and says when on the grounds, remain aware of your surroundings – which is true even if there weren't one ton animals ambling about.

They are a wild animal and they are capable of running very fast. So, you want to give them at least a 50 yard buffer. Of course, they don't have to follow that rule, so they could come right up to you. And if that's the case, then what you want to do is just stand still; no sudden movements. And wait for them, they'll just pass right on by.

As tempting as it might be: do not approach the bison, and do not feed them.

This goes for all wildlife. Every one of these. You don't approach the wildlife. This is their territory. You have to respect that you're in their house. So, you just give them the right of way and let them do their thing.

And you can do your thing Saturday September 23 at the Annual Texas State Bison Music Fest in Quitaque. Money raised from ticket sales funds bison research and conservation. Find the music lineup and ticket information at bisonfest.com.

TPW Magazine — The New Natives

Thursday, July 13th, 2017

There's a provocative article in the July issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine I want to tell you about. In it, author Russell Roe essentially explores evolution.

He writes that the mix of plants and animals you see around you is not what people saw 100 years ago, and it won't be what people will see 100 years from now. He asks us to consider that "99.99 percent of all species that have lived on Earth have gone extinct."

This thought-provoking article explains how humans are accelerating ecological change by removing established species, introducing new species, and by diverting the flow of water,

among other things. He writes that by doing so, humans are rapidly changing the playing field for life in Texas.

In the article [The New Natives \[changed to New in Town\]](#) in the July issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, Russell Roe tells readers it's difficult to untangle the web of cause-and-effect that led to the mix of species we see today, adding that iconic species that once defined the character of natural regions have been lost not only from the landscape, but also from the collective memory of generations of Texans.

He closes the article by putting the spotlight on three of Texas' iconic species to illustrate how they have changed and adapted over time.

Find The New Natives in the July issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine is on newsstands now.

[TPW TV — The Bee Searcher](#)

Friday, July 14th, 2017

Jessica Beckham is on a quest to catch some fuzzy flying Insects.

Today we are out here surveying bumblebees in a little roadside area of Denton County.

She's been studying bumblebees at the University of North Texas while pursuing a Ph.D. in environmental science. Next week, the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#) follows her efforts in a segment called *The Bee Searcher*.

Here in Texas, we have sweat bees, digger bees, leaf cutter bees, resin bees. About 700 to 800 species of bees that are native bees. Including nine species of bumblebees.

We know about honeybees and colony collapse disorder, but Jessica Beckham wants to know more about the plight of native bumblebees.

I'm studying native pollinators, bumblebees in particular, because native pollinators may serve as an insurance policy against these losses of honeybees.

Insect pollinators, including bumblebees are responsible for about 80 percent of the pollination of wild flowering plants and about 75 percent of our agricultural plants.

Bumblebees are great pollinators, because the bees deliberately collect pollen and they have a lot more hair than honeybees, and they move a lot of pollen from flower to flower.

View the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV segment *The Bee Searcher* next week on PBS. Check your local listings.

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series.

Less Crowded State Park Gems

Monday, July 17th, 2017

With an increase in state park visitation by more than half a million over the past four years, parks stay pretty busy.

Some, too busy. In fact, the more popular parks in the system, such as Enchanted Rock, Garner, and Pedernales often close their gates early due to maximum visitor capacity.

To get around the crowds, try visiting during non-peak hours. Usually during the week. Check each park's social media for the latest closure updates.

Of course, if you're already there, instead of waiting in line for the gates to reopen, visitors are encouraged to consider the nearby alternatives to their favorite Texas state parks.

For example, if you find yourself on the wrong side of the gate at Garner State Park:

Lost Maples State Natural Area,

Hill Country State Natural Area, and

Kickapoo Cavern State Park are three sites located within an hour of Garner.

And, just south of Enchanted Rock State Natural Area and Pedernales Falls State Park lie four hidden gems waiting to be discovered:

Old Tunnel State Park,

Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site,

Blanco State Park, and

South Llano River State Park.

Find a map of all Texas State Parks at texasstateparks.org, or download the [**Texas State Parks Mobile App**](#), from iTunes or Google Play.

Alligator Ancho Relleno Recipe

Tuesday, July 18th, 2017

If you've never eaten alligator, its flesh is firm like pork, with a mild flavor of chicken and fish. Chef Jeff Martinez.

Most of the time when you get alligator meat, it's going to be the jaw or the tail.

Using ground alligator tail meat, Chef Jeff prepares a recipe for ancho alligator chile relleno.

I've got a hot pan here. We're going to add some extra virgin olive oil to the bottom. We're going to add our white onion that's been diced up. We're going to let this sauté.

Next Chef adds diced garlic, tomatoes and ground gator.

Alligator is a very lean meat, so the cooking time is minimal. So, we're going to add a little more flavor to this dish by throwing in some sliced green olives. And then we're going to add some of these raisins. And we're going to finish it off with slivered almonds that have been toasted, and fresh chopped parsley. And once you put that parsley in, you don't want to leave it on the stove cooking for too long, because you still want that brightness, that freshness from the parsley.

He salts to taste and then stuffs the mixture into ancho chiles that he rehydrated in hot water and brown sugar.

I'm going to make sure it's nice and full, but you want to leave enough room so you can take the ancho chile and wrap it back around the meat. And I'm going to set that into an oven proof baking dish.

That goes into a 400 degree oven for 10 minutes. When done, he garnishes them with crema and parsley.

Find the recipe and instructions at passporttotexas.org.

Prepare for the Season with Hunter Ed

Wednesday, July 19th, 2017

Being a successful hunter begins with hunter education.

Anybody who handles firearms or goes hunting or practices shooting sports should take hunter education.

Hunter education is mandatory for those born on or after September 2, 1971. Steve Hall oversees the program at Parks and Wildlife. The course both prepares hunters for the season, and keeps them in good standing with the law.

The number one ticket we write is for no hunter's education.

Andrew Alexander is a Texas Game Warden out of Bastrop County.

We write a lot of those [citations]. And the main thing we want there is—we don't want them to pay a fine. We want them to take the course. They have 90 days to take the course and get their certification. Show proof to the judge, and then that citation will be dismissed.

The Texas Hunter Education program is primarily focuses on younger hunters, that's not true of all states, which is important to understand if you hunt outside of Texas.

All fifty states require hunter education. We're reciprocal with all of those states. And the ones that get us the most are the Colorado bound hunters who have to take it [if they're born] on or after January 1, 1949. So, we get a lot of adults in our class that have it to have it to hunt in Colorado that may not need to have it to hunt in Texas.

Find [hunter education information](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

What to Bring into the Field When Hunting

Thursday, July 20th, 2017

Deer season is drawing near. Remember to [bring a valid hunting license](#) into the field with you.

Make sure it's the proper one. We get people that put their old license in their pocket sometimes, and those won't do them any good.

New licenses go on sale next month. In addition to your firearm, Game Warden Andrew Alexander reminds hunters of other items to carry into the field.

A driver's license, or [other] form of identification. A pen for writing down the information on your tag and on your harvest log. And also something to cut your dates out with.

Ensure you and your firearm are ready for what's to come by spending time at a shooting range before the season opener. If you're new to hunting, learn the regulations.

Once you shoot a deer, the law says tag it immediately upon kill. You'll find the proper tag. And then, you're going to need a pen with you. You're going to fill out the county that you are in, and the ranch that you harvested the animal. Tear it out—you will cut the dates out of it—you'll tag that animal on the spot. And you'll also fill out your harvest logs.

A harvest log is on the back of your hunting license.

And what the harvest log allows us to do, with the counties that have the antler restrictions, we're able to trace those and make sure they [hunters] are only taking what they're allowed. That's why the harvest log is so important.

Find regulations and season information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Hunters: Could This be Your Lucky Year?

Friday, July 21st, 2017

The upcoming hunting seasons may still be months away, but you can enter the [Big Time Texas Hunts drawing](#) to win one or more of nine premium guided hunt packages now.

These exclusive packages include food, lodging, a professional guide, as well as taxidermy in some cases.

The crown jewel of the program is the [Texas Grand Slam hunt package](#), which includes four separate hunts for Texas' most prized big game animals — the desert bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, mule deer and pronghorn.

Other popular guided hunt packages included in the Big Time Texas Hunt program are: [Ultimate Mule Deer Hunt](#), the [Premium Buck Hunt](#), the [Exotic Safari](#), the [Wild Hog Adventure](#) and more.

Entries for this year's Big Time Texas Hunts are available now online for just \$9 each online, or for \$10 each at license retailers. There is no limit to the number of entries an individual may purchase and all proceeds benefit conservation, wildlife management and public hunting. Deadline for entry is October 15.

Big Time Texas Hunts is made possible with support from Toyota and the Texas Bighorn Society.

Find more details on all nine premium hunts on the Texas parks and wildlife website.

[A Chaplain for Game Wardens](#)

Monday, July 24th, 2017

Scott McIntosh is a big man with a big heart. And he brought that heart with him to Texas Parks and Wildlife's law Enforcement Division as its lead chaplain. A position that didn't exist before July 2016.

I was sitting in my office in Orange, Texas and got a text message from a man that used to be in my congregation when I pastored here in Austin—Assistant Commander Cody Jones. And he said, 'Have you ever thought about being chaplain for Texas Game Wardens?' And I said, 'Man, I didn't know you even had those.' And he said, 'Well, we don't. But we're thinking about trying to get it going.'

Scott laughingly explained that starting a position from scratch is like flying a plane while building it. But he's since brought on some "co-pilots and riveters."

Right now, I have five volunteer chaplains around the state. My hope is to have at least one per region. We have nine regions, but we have eight that are geographic.

Game Wardens aren't the only people Scott McIntosh supports in his job as a Chaplain. He goes to the sites of accidents with game wardens.

The role of a chaplain is triage. When we get there, our job is to find out, okay, what are the needs of these people.

How Chaplain McIntosh supports Game Wardens. That's tomorrow.

The Chaplain is In

Tuesday, July 25th, 2017

Scott McIntosh is Lead Chaplain for Texas Parks and Wildlife's LE Division. He says game wardens reach out to him via email, text, phone calls and face-to-face.

The issues vary between family issues, stress issues, Interpersonal issues, peer-to-peer... It can be anything. And has been.

These peace officers, who refer to themselves as law enforcement off the pavement, have jobs that can put them in emotionally charged and dangerous situations.

Most of the time people that they run into are as armed, or even more armed, than they are. And so, they are trained and taught at dealing with these people. You don't rush up on someone with a deer rifle while waving a gun.

No matter how well trained and composed they remain, exposure to daily tense situations can stay with a person; that's why it's good to have someone to talk to.

Although I don't celebrate the fact that people have difficulties in life, I celebrate the fact tht they now have someone that they can call; I'm grateful that I'm that person.

Scott oversees five volunteer chaplains around the state who help game wardens who need it...to work through their difficulties.

I don't have all the answers. But I've got plenty of care and love in my heart to deal with any many people as I can.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation supports our series and helps keep Texas wild with support of proud members across the state. Find out more at tpwf.org

Help Halt Aquatic Invasive Species

Wednesday, July 26th, 2017

You know how Smokey Bear says:

[Smokey Bear] Remember: only you can prevent forest fires.

He's reminding us of our personal responsibility when we're outdoors. It's as true on the water as it is on the land.

Aquatic invasive species can quickly infect water bodies unless we take preventive measures. With summer boating season underway, Texas Parks and Wildlife asks boaters to help to stop the spread of giant salvinia and zebra mussels which can travel from lake to lake on boats and trailers.

Boaters: "Clean, Drain and Dry" your boats, trailers, and gear every time you travel from one waterbody to another. A video on the TPW YouTube channel demonstrates the proper steps.

First, inspect the boat, trailer and gear. Clean off any vegetation, mud or foreign objects that you find. Second, pull the plug and drain all the water from the boat, including the motor, the bilge, live wells, and bait buckets before leaving the lake. Third, open all compartments and live wells and allow your boat, trailer and gear to completely dry for a week or more before entering another water body.

For complete instructions on how to clean, drain and dry your boat and trailer to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, go to texasinvasives.org.

Beach Makeover

Thursday, July 27th, 2017

People get makeovers to feel better about themselves. But when the beach at [McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge](#) got a makeover recently, it was to bring in sand to restore dunes to protect its freshwater marsh ecosystem.

The lack of a sand dune has allowed salt water to move up inside the marsh, here. And what we have now, with no dune, the water's stacked and now it's finding a way back out and eroding the bank here even more.

Refuge manager, Doug Head.

McFaddin Refuge is a 60,000 acre national wildlife refuge. Not only do we provide great hunting habitat, but we also provide sanctuaries for migratory birds that are moving south for the winter or coming back across the Gulf of Mexico for the springtime. [03 ambience]

Hurricane Rita in 2005 and Ike in 2008 wiped out McFaddin's sand dunes, leaving miles of fragile marsh habitat unprotected. Texas General Land office Project Manager, Kelly Brooks.

So, we have freshwater wetlands right on top of beach. So now anytime we have any kind of tidal surges, they create wash over events into the marshes.

The reconstructed dunes will serve to protect the marsh at McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge from saltwater infiltration and degradation.

Creel Surveys

Friday, July 28th, 2017

If you're fishing on one of Texas many lakes, don't be surprised if some friendly Texas Parks and Wildlife fisheries technicians greet you on the water.

Hi, I'm Mike, and this is Carl, and today we're going to be doing a creel survey. [boat motor]

Mike Gore and Carl Vignali conduct creel surveys on Texas lakes. During a recent survey on Lake Conroe, they checked in with anglers regarding the length of time they'd been on the water, the fish they were targeting, as well as the number of fish they had caught.

[Mike] We're just conducting an angler survey. [Carl] We're with Parks and Wildlife. We're doing some angler surveys. You mind answering some questions? [Mike] Our creels are four hours each. The sections of the lake and the time that the creels are done, are generated at random. We either go clockwise, or counter-clockwise that day. We do a flip of a coin to see which way we're going to go—and that's the way we go.

Mike and Carl continue going clockwise or counter clockwise per the coin flip decision for the remainder of the creel survey.

With all that data that we compile, we can come up with a management plan for the lake.

Including harvest regulations, size limits, and obtaining funding for boat ramps.

The sport fish restoration program supports our series, and provides funding for boat ramps in Texas.

Summer Neighborhood Fishin' Means Catfish

Monday, July 31st, 2017

It's catfish stocking season in Texas, and thanks to the [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Neighborhood Fishin' program](#) families won't have to travel outside of the city to catch them.

Parks and Wildlife's Inland fisheries Department began [stocking catchable-sized catfish](#) this spring in 18 Neighborhood Fishin' lakes in Texas' metro areas.

The Neighborhood Fishin' program encourages people to get involved in the outdoors by creating fun, convenient, and close-to-home opportunities where families can catch fish anytime they are ready to go.

Each of the lakes will receive continuous stockings of channel catfish every two weeks through early November—with a brief pause in August. The stocking schedule ensures families looking to spend quality time fishing together outdoors can do so conveniently.

These urban area parks are the easiest places in Texas for families to catch a fish close to home. Eighty-five percent of us live near one of these small lakes and ponds. By making fishing accessible, we're helping create a whole new generation of anglers.

To find the Neighborhood Fishin' pond near you or to sign up for email updates, visit neighborhoodfishing.org.

August 2017

TPW TV Mobile Storytellers

Tuesday, August 1st, 2017

Dale Blasingame uses cell phones in his mobile storytelling class.

This mobile storytelling class is one that I pitched because it marries my 2 loves which are technology and being outdoors.

Blasingame teaches journalism at Texas State. He brought his class to [Garner State Park](#) so they could combine their journalistic skills and phones' cameras to tell stories.

They're going to be working primarily with their phone, shooting on their phone and then editing on their phone as well. These skills are just how it's done now. Texas Parks and Wildlife has said it needs help getting college-aged students into the parks. So that's what a lot of our video projects are going to focus on.

Some stories were immediately uploaded to social media.

Hi, I'm Katy! And I'm Dy from the School of Journalism and Mass Comm. And we're taking over the Texas State Snapchat.

Snapchat is a social media platform for sharing photos and videos.

So we're going to be interviewing people and learning about their experiences with the outdoors. With Snapchat I don't have to think too much and just kind of share what's going on right now.

Watch them in action next week on a [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV](#) segment on PBS called Mobile Storytellers; [check your local listings](#).

What I really like about mobile storytelling is that it's a lot easier to stay connected to where you are and what you're doing.

Panhandle Playas and the Ogallala Aquifer

Wednesday, August 2nd, 2017

A **playa lake is a natural landscape feature** of the vast, flat expanse of the Great Plains and Texas High Plains.

Really, what it is, is a low spot where rainwater collects.

More than a mere low spot, Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist Don Kahl says Texas playas are ephemeral wetlands, and vital recharge points for the **Ogallala Aquifer**.

They're really the most direct link between rainwater or rainfall to the Ogallala Aquifer below. The amount of water going into the aquifer is from 10 to 100 times greater in a playa basin as compared to surrounding soils or surrounding upland areas.

Kahl calls playas "self-contained watersheds", each playa is the center collection point of runoff from surrounding uplands. Most playas only exist for a brief time after it rains. Clay soil lines the bottoms of these shallow basins permitting the rainwater and runoff to collect and slowly filter into the aquifer below.

In combination with a healthy playa, having a grass buffer around it helps to filter out sediments and some of the contaminants running off of neighboring fields. You also get a secondary cleaning with the clay layer in the basin, helping to filter out other contaminants and nitrates as the water passes down into the aquifer.

Recharge rates are slow, and it takes years for rainwater to pass from playas, through soil, and into the aquifer.

The Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration program supports our series and funds diverse conservation projects throughout Texas.

Ephemeral Panhandle Wetlands

Thursday, August 3rd, 2017

Something that is ephemeral is random, and exists for a short time, such as the **playa lakes in Texas' High Plains**.

On average, playas are only wet one out of every ten years. And as we go from one side of the panhandle to the other, from west to east, our rainfall totals increase. So, the likelihood of a playa being wet increases as you go further east. On the western side of the panhandle, along the New Mexico border, it could be tens of years between wet spells for these playas.

Biologist Don Kahl says playas are the most direct link for rainfall to reach the Ogallala Aquifer. Yet, their importance goes further yet.

There's numerous plant species that can be found [around playas] – upwards to 350 plant species. And up to a couple hundred different bird species can be found around playas. So, they're very useful, especially in the high plains landscape.

Playa lakes are valuable to migrating waterfowl, too.

It's a very productive area for waterfowl whenever we do have the rain. Our mid-winter surveys in 2017, which were conducted this past January, set an all-time high for our estimate of the number of ducks for the High Plains of Texas, at about 1.4 million ducks in the Panhandle. So, this past year was good evidence of just how productive it can be for waterfowl.

The Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program supports our series and funds wildlife surveys throughout Texas.

Restoring the Playa Lakes

Friday, August 4th, 2017

Playa lakes are shallow clay basins bordered by native grasses that depend on rainfall to fill them. Panhandle playas provide a direct link for rainwater to reach the Ogallala Aquifer, and as stopovers for migrating waterfowl.

[But] land use has altered playas in many different ways. Some playas are completely barren and farmed through – which is one issue.

Biologist, Don Kahl says an initiative started in 2014 by a coalition of organizations is returning functionality to altered playas.

We're targeting the playas that have a grass buffer around them – that helps with that primary filtering – and playas that have pits that were dug into them. These pits typically aren't used anymore. They were used in irrigation practices back in the fifties. The easiest way to fix a playa that's pitted is basically to go back in and put the dirt back into the hole to seal off that clay layer.

Deep pits dug into playas force rainwater into limited areas, greatly reducing a basin's usefulness. But by backfilling the manmade pits...

It's going to: 1) help reestablish the filtering mechanism [for the aquifer], and 2) instead of all that water collecting in a deep pit in the middle, we're going to spread that water back across the playa to create that shallow water habitat that we want for waterfowl.

The Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program supports our series and funds wildlife surveys throughout Texas.

Buy a License, Feed the Hungry & Help a Veteran

Monday, August 7th, 2017

When [licenses go on sale August 15](#), Texas hunters and anglers may donate to one of two worthy non-profits.

You can make the voluntary contribution of either one dollar, five dollars, ten dollars or twenty dollars to either the Fund for Veterans Assistance, or to help feed Texas families with a donation to Hunters for the Hungry.

Justin Halvorsen is revenue director at Texas Parks and Wildlife, and says donating is voluntary and easy.

It's through any one of our sales channels. Either online, over the phone, at a retail agent, or any one of our parks and wildlife locations.

The agency keeps close tabs the donations.

And then, at the end of every month, it'll go into a separate pot, and we'll send it along to those respective entities [nonprofits].

The program debuted last season and Texans were generous; Texas Parks and Wildlife distributed, \$193-thousand to the Fund for Veteran's, and \$106-thousand to Hunters for the Hungry. You may ask: is my donation tax deductible?

That is a great question. And there will be a receipt that gets printed as part of this that specifically says that this is a donation to the Veteran's Fund or Hunters for the Hungry. And then, really, it's up to the individual and their tax preparer to make that ultimate decision.

Request an itemized receipt from retailers, and find more information on the TPW website.

Eye on the Sky for Meteor Showers

Tuesday, August 8th, 2017

Small fragments of cosmic debris that enter the earth's atmosphere at high rates of speed become visible as streaks of light we call meteors.

The Perseid meteor shower peaks mid-August. Enchanted Rock SNA will host a star festival August 12-13 to celebrate. It is a recognized Dark Sky Park, and you may see up to 75 meteors an hour. The festival runs from 6 to 11 p.m. on Saturday. Park hours will be extended until 3 am to view the Perseids.

The Orionids is another meteoric spectacle that takes place from early October through Mid-November. In a normal year 20-25 meteors an hour streak across the sky; in a great year, as many as 50/hr.

The Leonids, created by the comet Temple-Tuttle, are visible much of November. They have offered stunning meteor storms in the past, but expect only 15 meteors an hour through 2031; that's when the comet reappears.

The Geminids, visible from early to mid-December, are bright and intensely colored. Meteors start showing up before 10 p.m., so you don't have to get up in the middle of the night to see them.

Whether you see 1 or 100 meteors, it's always a thrill.

Promising Dove Season Ahead

Wednesday, August 9th, 2017

Wing shooters are finalizing their plans for the dove season opener, September 1 in the north and central zones, and September 22 in the south zone.

When we look at mourning harvests historically, we see the central part of the state has been very good along with south Texas. Those are really the two strongholds for good harvest counties when we look at distribution of harvest across the counties of Texas.

Shaun Oldenburger is the migratory shore and upland game bird program leader. He says data returned thus far suggests a good dove season statewide.

The great thing about doves is they're a generalist. So, no matter if you go to the Trans Pecos desert, or if you're in east Texas Pineywoods with 80-inches of rain the last couple of years, we've got doves. So, that's one thing that really makes dove hunting attractive to folks, is they can get out pretty much anywhere in the state and have success.

Oldenburger says dove hunting provides a gateway into the hunting tradition for folks new to the activity. And you just need the basics to get started.

You don't need a whole lot [of specialized gear] for dove hunting. You have to have your hunting license, and then also you need a shotgun and shotgun shells. And you need a spot to go. In reality – that's all you need for dove hunting.

How to prepare for the season ahead. That's next time.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series, and funds Mourning Dove Density, Distribution, and Harvest surveys in Texas.

Preparing for Dove Season

Thursday, August 10th, 2017

As the dove season opener approaches, hunters should ask themselves if they are ready to go into the field.

Make sure that you have all of your licenses before the hunting season. And also make sure that you have your hunter safety card.

Shaun Oldenburger is the migratory shore and upland game bird program leader. Licenses and hunter safety cards are just the beginning of preparedness.

Another thing we ask hunters to do before September first is to actually dust off that shotgun, get outside and shoot some clays. Practice a little bit with your shotgun. You know, a lot of folks stumble around August 31st trying to find all their gear before September first. But a couple of weeks prior, get your stuff together, spend a little time going through it. Get out and shoot some clays. Get out and practice a little bit with that shotgun. You can have a lot better experience on your first hunting day. Are you going to get out there this season? I hope so. I actually have a meeting in Kansas that week, but I'm definitely going to get out that weekend, and hopefully get an opportunity to harvest some white wing doves and mourning doves.

[Find season information and bag limits](#) for all fall hunting opportunities on the Texas parks and Wildlife website.

That's our show, funded in part by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Through your purchases of hunting and fishing equipment, and motorboat fuels, over 40 million dollars in conservation efforts are funded in Texas each year.

Good Timing & Skill = Successful Dove Season

Friday, August 11th, 2017

Beginning in September, dove hunters have 90 days to harvest this plentiful game bird.

We harvest over five million mourning doves annually – which is an amazing number if you think about it. We're the number one dove harvest state in the nation.

Shaun Oldenburger, migratory shore and upland game bird program leader, says that's just a small percentage of available birds.

We have a lot of biologists out there trapping birds right now. And we're seeing a lot of hatch year young – juvenile birds in the population – so that means it will be a good opening season for folks getting out September first, or whenever their opening day is in their zone.

Dove hunting is “front end loaded” meaning most hunters that want to hunt... do so early in the season.

In some places, especially our north zone, pretty much by the first week in October, 90 percent of the harvest has already occurred for that zone for the season. Now, we do have a 90 day season, so it's a long season. But, what we do is allow those other days to occur for other folks that may have an opportunity later on. We want to make those hunting seasons as flexible as possible for folks, because some people may enjoy going later when there's not as many hunters out. So we allot a lot of flexibility for dove hunting.

[Find bag limits and other hunting regulations](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

That's our show, The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series, and funds Mourning Dove Density, Distribution, and Harvest surveys in Texas.

[Landscaping to Save Water](#)

Monday, August 14th, 2017

It's possible to conserve water and have a lush landscape. And they prove that point every day in San Antonio.

The San Antonio Botanical Gardens is home to six miniature houses on Water Savers Lane, which showcase unique landscapes that feature water-saving designs. Sir Oliver Smith, a master naturalist, describes the typical landscape, complete with a water thirsty lawn.

This is what most people have. They have the traditional hedges at the door and all that manicuring you have to do every week. So this is probably what we don't want if you want to save on money and save on grass and save on water.

For comparison, he points out an attractive landscape that replaces turf with groundcover.

People like this look; it's a little less maintenance. And you're replacing some of the lawn with Asiatic jasmine, which takes no water.

While the jasmine isn't native, the others are. Native plants generally require less water to survive.

Everyone thinks native plants are just a sticky agarita and the yuccas and the sotols. But all the other things in this garden are native. Vitex and desert willow and redbud and there are a lot of other things that do very well with almost no water.

[Check out the Wildscapes plant guide](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website and discover which plants thrive in your area.

[LBJ — In His Own Words](#)

Tuesday, August 15th, 2017

Even though Lyndon Baines Johnson spent many memorable years in Washington DC, the Texas Hill Country held a special place in his heart.

Here is where I would always return, to the Pedernales River, the scenes of my childhood. There's something different about this country, from any other part of the nation.

LBJ often credited these pristine surroundings of his youth as a major influence in his life and presidency.

It is impossible to live on this land without being a part of it. Without being shaped by its qualities. This molds the character of the people here. But it is also a bold and beautiful land, where the air is clear and the water is pure and the wildflowers flashing in the sun

And it is where he returned when he left the White House.

I guess every person feels a part of the place where they were born, he wants to go back to the surroundings that he knew as a child and this is my country, the Hill Country of Texas.

The [LBJ State Park and Historic Site](#), located near Johnson City, gives visitors a chance to experience the land which President Johnson held dear.

There's something about this section that brings new life and new hope and really a balanced and better view point after you have been here a few days.

Learn more about the LBJ State Historic Site, log on to the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

[Cactus Moth: a Prickly Situation](#)

Wednesday, August 16th, 2017

There's a moth making its way to Texas from Florida whose larvae feed exclusively on prickly pear cactus.

The cactus moth has proven to be a really effective eradicator of prickly pear.

Invertebrate biologist, Michael Warriner, says Australian officials imported the cactus moth—native to South America—in the mid-1920s as a biological control against the invasive, nonnative coastal prickly pear.

And over a few years, it didn't totally eliminate it, but it reduced it substantially. So, it's proven to be one of the most successful biological control agents, as far as insects go.

The moth, discovered in the Florida Keys in 1989, may have arrived on imported prickly pears, and since then has spread up to South Carolina and as far west as Louisiana.

So, the concern is that if it makes it to the southwestern United States and Mexico that it could have a similar impact and eradicate or reduce prickly pear; and the fact is that—for Mexico especially—prickly pear is a major agricultural commodity in the tens of millions of dollars in terms of value. And it's worth millions of dollars in the US, too: for agriculture and biodiversity and landscaping.

Tomorrow: How to identify and prevent the spread of the cactus moth.

ID and Dispatch the Cactus Moth

Thursday, August 17th, 2017

Prickly pear cacti are economically important to Texas and Mexico. They're also the larval food of [the cactus moth](#), a voracious nonnative species that's heading westward toward our state.

As of 2009 it's south of New Orleans. So, it's just over 200 miles from the Texas border.

Invertebrate biologist Michael Warriner says the larvae of this prolific South American moth species can decimate prickly pear populations. The adult insect is non-descript and difficult to identify, but the larvae is easier to recognize.

Looking for the larvae or evidence of feeding damage is the best thing to look for. The caterpillars themselves are a bright orange to red coloration with black bands or spots. The larvae spend most of their time inside of the prickly pear pad, and they basically hollow it out. So the pad, as the larvae feed on it, will become transparent and they'll eventually just collapse.

Researchers are developing methods of managing the moth. Until then, if you see infested plants...

You can still control it by removing the infested pads and that would help. Disposing and burning them. Or simply enclosing them in some kind of plastic bag to heat up the larvae and kill them.

Find links to more information about the cactus moth at passporttotexas.org.

TPW TV — Hop for the Future

Friday, August 18th, 2017

According to Dr. Randy Simpson, kangaroo rats are...

They're about the handsomest rodent that you can find.

The problem is, you can't find them. At least not many of them, anyway. Simpson is Wildlife Biology Program Director at Texas State. During a Texas Parks and Wildlife TV segment airing

next week on PBS, graduate students, including Silas Ott, survey the species near the Texas/Oklahoma border.

So, it does seem to be pretty rare geographically. It's only been found in 11 counties in Texas. And within the past 20 years, it's only been found in five of those 11 counties.

Ott and his cohorts locate fresh burrows and set traps and cameras. Dr. Simpson.

Are we seeing just the last vestiges of populations that are hanging on? We don't know. I think that that's the reason Texas Parks and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service want to find that out.

Nathan Rains is a Wildlife Diversity Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. He's assisting Texas State, and says the agency helped to fund the research through its grant program.

It's obviously declining. We don't have a lot of great information on this species, so we're trying to learn as much as we can. But it's a species we're concerned about, and it's been a concern for awhile.

Catch the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV segment ***Hop for the Future*** next week on PBS. Check your local listings.

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series funds kangaroo rat surveys and management in Texas.

New Pictographs Discovered

Monday, August 21st, 2017

For thousands of years, people have trekked to the rock hills in far west Texas where they found rainwater pooled in natural basins called huecos.

Today, visitors to [**Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site**](#) enjoy the rock hills for bouldering, which is a form of rock climbing, and the rock paintings, or pictographs, left by those ancient people.

After a year-long survey using D-stretch image enhancement technology, researchers discovered previously unknown pictographs in 29 locations. These areas will remain closed to recreational activities to protect the fragile artwork from potential impacts.

A list of closed climbs has been provided to the guides and to visitors on the North Mountain.

The majority of the pictographs are in the Jornada style, named for the prehistoric Jornada Mogollon culture of western Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Mexico.

These Native Americans were the first farmers in the region, and it's believed they created the paintings about 550 to 1,000 years ago for use in prayers for rain. Some things never change.

Hueco Tanks is a significant cultural resource in the El Paso area that reflects at least 10,000 years of history. Find more information about the site at texasstateparks.org.

Texas State Bison Music Fest

Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017

Caprock Canyon State Park is home to the official state bison herd, comprised of descendants of the original southern plains bison that wandered the Great Plains.

We think we're at about 150 [bison], plus this year's calf crop, which should be about 30 or so.

Superintendent Donald Beard oversees this growing, free-roaming herd. Restoration efforts of the animals and their native habitat takes time and money. That's where the Texas State Bison Music Festival comes in.

We were just looking for a fun fundraiser, and we decided that this would be pretty fun. And by all means it is. This year we're headlining it with the Randy Rogers Band. But we also have Mark Powell, Zach Wilkerson, Sarah Hobbs, and Kevin Deal. It's a street dance; we close off part of the town. The festival is held in the town of Quitaque. We have all kinds of live music. Food vendors. Arts and crafts – and all day fun on a Saturday. This year it's going to be September 23rd.

Proceeds from The Texas State Bison Music Festival on September 23, go directly to bison research and habitat restoration at Caprock Canyons SP. Find complete details and ticket prices at bisonfest.com.

Small Town, Big Fun — Texas Bison Fest

Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017

On Saturday September 23 part of downtown Quitaque, Texas will be shut down...for the love of bison.

This is [for] the seventh annual Texas State Bison Music Festival.

Donald Beard is superintendent of [Caprock Canyons State Park](#), home to the official state bison herd. The festival raises awareness and funds for continued restoration of the animals and their habitat.

This year's event will be held in downtown Quitaque; the food and arts and crafts vendors will start at around nine o'clock. So, you can come do some shopping, buy some local goods, get

some great food. We'll have some historical reenactors so you can see what life was like in this area a couple of hundred years ago. Then, the music starts about three o'clock.

With five bands on the bill attendees will have plenty of opportunity for boot scooting. While the fun seems limitless, the tickets are not.

It's actually a small festival by festival standards. We don't want it to get real big. The max number of tickets we're selling is 12-hundred. And, last year we had a thousand or so people. So, we're getting to the point where we're almost getting ready to start selling out.

Find complete details and ticket prices for the September 23rd Texas State Bison Music Festival at bisonfest.org.

Think Globally, Play Locally

Thursday, August 24th, 2017

Texas Children in Nature is part of the larger – global – children in nature movement.

The concept is that there is a disconnect that has been happening for the past few decades between children and nature.

Texas' Children in Nature coordinator, Jennifer Bristol, says that disconnect is at the root of various health and wellness issues for our children. It also affects the future of environmental stewardship; but there is reason for hope.

Texas leads the way for the Children in Nature movement within the country. And we're very excited about the work that we have done throughout the entire state. We have really created some system changes in the way that we think about how do we care for children in our places like schools and daycare centers. How are we helping them have a connection while they're in those institutions, but also then – how are we looking at their play as a way to also help facilitate that connection with nature?

We're seeing more nature based play areas at schools and parks. Educators and health care providers promote time in nature as a prescription to help kids become healthier, happier and smarter.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation supports our series and helps keep Texas wild with support of proud members across the state. Find out more at tpwf.org

Reconnecting Children with Nature

Friday, August 25th, 2017

In one generation, we've seen kids go from days spent outdoors in nature to days spent indoors with media.

Time spent outdoors by ourselves is where we [previous generations] found our creativity. It's where we became problem solvers. Where we really shared in this long-running dialogue of imaginative play.

Jennifer Bristol, Texas Children in Nature Coordinator says excessive time indoors on these devices does not inspire kids to be healthier, happier and smarter the way nature play does; and parents are taking notice.

They wish that there was a space or a place that their children could experience that same sort of freedom. And disconnect from everything and play and come up with the games and revisit them over and over again.

The Texas Children in Nature program is a grassroots network that connects children and families with nature in Texas. One way is by creating nature play areas in state parks and community parks.

Government Canyon State Natural Area just installed a beautiful natural play area. They also combine it with having a discovery trail; and it's really scaled to a child's level. I really love that about it.

Visit the [Nature Rocks Texas.org](http://NatureRocksTexas.org) website to find all the parks, nature centers and activities where you can play, explore and connect with nature near you

The Making of an Endangered Species

Monday, August 28th, 2017

The Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle is the world's most critically endangered sea turtle.

And most nesting in the US by this species occurs in Texas.

Although a native nester in Texas, their primary nesting beach is in Mexico. Dr. Donna Shaver oversees sea turtle science and recovery at [Padre Island National Seashore](#).

The National Park Service along with Texas Parks and Wildlife and other partners had been working since the 1970s to form a secondary nesting colony of endangered Kemp's Ridley Turtles right here at Padre national Seashore.

They developed the secondary site as a safeguard against potential extinction and other catastrophes. Their population was nearly decimated in the 1940s.

The biggest threats over time – the largescale taking of the eggs from the nesting beach in Mexico. They were sold in markets as a supposed aphrodisiac. There was also loss of nesting turtles taken for food and then also the skin to make leather products. Then, though time, the loss of juveniles and adults incidental to fisheries operations; primarily shrimp trawling, but also some hook and line captures and other types of fisheries.

How we've protected Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles in Texas tomorrow.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series, and funds diverse conservation projects throughout Texas.

Ways we Protect the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle

Tuesday, August 29th, 2017

Nature ebbs and flows. A good example is the critically endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle. Conservation groups implemented a recovery plan that facilitated exponential growth of the animal's population.

The population modelers had predicted that exponential increase in the recovery plan would continue – but it did not. So, the expectations written in the plan are not exactly what the population has done.

Even so, Dr. Donna Shaver says the numbers are moving in the right direction. She oversees sea turtle science and recovery at [Padre Island National Seashore](#). One thing that's helped them is the mandatory turtle excluder devices used by shrimpers.

Turtle excluder devices were developed to shunt sea turtles out of the net while retaining shrimp in the shrimping net. And they've been very effective in doing that.

Seasonal area closures have also benefited the turtles.

Texas Parks and Wildlife instituted one when they revised their shrimp fishery management plan close to 20 years ago – taking into account, of course, the responsibilities to help manage the shrimping industry as well as endangered species.

Tomorrow: hard work pays off for the Kemp's Ridley.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series, and funds diverse conservation projects throughout Texas.

Hard Work Pays off for the Kemp's Ridley

Wednesday, August 30th, 2017

Since 1970 Kemp's Ridley sea turtles have been on the endangered species list. The NPS, TPW and other partners developed a plan to assist their recovery, including the creation of a secondary nesting site [the primary being in Mexico] at the Padre Island National Seashore [PINS].

The numbers are moving in the right direction, but we're not up to the milestones that are outlined in the recovery plan to even down list the species to threatened, much less to get it off the list entirely.

Dr. Donna Shaver oversees sea turtle science and recovery at [Padre Island National Seashore](#). Dr. Shaver says this year's annual survey identified 352 nests—from Galveston down to Mexico.

We've had more found at PINS and more found in the state of Texas this year than in the last two years combined. So, we're very excited about it.

Decades of conservation are paying off, or are we just getting better at finding sea the turtle nests?

We do think that we're seeing an actual significant increase compared to when I started and only one nest would be found every two or three years. And now, here to find more than 300 in Texas during a year, is a big accomplishment for conservation and recovery of the species.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series, and funds diverse conservation projects throughout Texas.

Texas Outdoor Annual App — a Friend in the Field

Thursday, August 31st, 2017

The Texas Outdoor Annual is a handy print and online guide loaded with useful information for hunters and anglers. It's also an app.

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 app takes the guesswork out of which regulations apply to your location.

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](#). Find a link at the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

That's our show, funded in part by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Through your purchases of hunting and fishing equipment, and motorboat fuels, over 40 million dollars in conservation efforts are funded in Texas each year.

September 2017

TPW TV — In Search of the Blue Sucker

Friday, September 1st, 2017

The Colorado River is home to a blue ghost: a fish called the Blue Sucker. It's a rare and threatened species, and for Mathew Acre, it's worth the days, weeks and months spent searching for it.

Currently the Blue Sucker status is somewhat unknown in the lower Colorado River, so we are not a hundred percent sure how the Blue Sucker is doing.

Acre is a PhD Student from Texas Tech, and works with a team – that includes Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist Dakus Geeslin – to search for this elusive fish.

So we are about ten miles east of Austin on the Colorado River, we are looking for that faster water, and some type of structure, they are really adept at swimming in fast water, they are great swimmers.

Blue suckers used to be found throughout North America, but dams and poor river quality have led to their dramatic decline.

It's unique in that it has this really elongated body and it hangs out in these fast flowing waters, shoots, and riffles, that most fish tend to avoid because they just don't have the energy budget to stay within that riffle.

Join the search for the blue sucker when you tune into the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS September 3-9.

Wow, finally! He was in that fast water just where we expected him to be! It just took us a couple of passes through there. You just have to be on your game. That is awesome dude!

Dove: Good Flavor Begins in the Field

Monday, September 4th, 2017

Jesse Morris is a hunter and professional chef; he traded his chef's jacket for a new career that allows him to spend more time with his family.

I felt that I needed to have a creative outlet to continue food. Two of my greatest passions were food and hunting, so I decided what better way to celebrate what I was doing than to put those together; and that's how Killer Chefs was born.

He shares these passions through the Killer Chefs website. Dove season is underway in the north and central zones. Jesse says: don't expect this bird to taste like chicken.

When people think about wild game, the thoughts in their head are: 'It tastes livery.' That's the word that they use. It has a flavor to it. But, what will give it that 'off taste' is not handling it properly.

Dove has a good flavor, but needs proper handling to ensure full enjoyment.

The very first thing in terms of food that you really want to think about, especially it being as hot as it is, is getting that animal cooled down. I always put the birds in a cooler right after they're shot. Getting that body temperature cooled down as quickly as possible – that's the most important thing.

That one act can mean the difference between delicious and disaster. Tomorrow: beyond bacon.

Beyond Bacon: Dove Carnitas a la Killer Chefs

Tuesday, September 5th, 2017

With dove season underway in the north and central zones, bacon wrapped dove breasts will soon show up on the tables of hunters everywhere.

People don't really like eating doves, they like eating bacon, if that's the only way that they cook it.

Jesse Morris is a hunter and chef with Killer Chefs in Richardson, Texas. He says there are more inventive ways to enjoy dove—including carnitas.

Everybody's go-to recipe—and there's nothing wrong with it – is bacon wrapped dove. It's nice to actually use all the bird. So, you can use the heart in the carnitas, and the legs, and the breast meat, and everything. Cooking that down low and slow; finishing it off, letting all the sugars come out in the product. It's something good.

If you're a new hunter and longtime foodie, you may be tempted to “go gourmet” when preparing dove or any game. Jesse recommends to start simply.

People get off on wanting to cover them in sauces or gravy, and things like that – when they're really not tasting the bird, or whatever game that it is that they're eating. When you're first starting out cooking wild game, cook it simply: grill it; salt and pepper. See what the flavors that the actual game is, and then work with that.

We have Jesse Morris' dove carnitas recipe at Passport to Texas dot com.

Developing an Ear for Backyard Birds

Wednesday, September 6th, 2017

It's not uncommon to find the white-throated sparrow and Carolina chickadee in backyards throughout Texas.

Most Texans have these – especially in the eastern two-thirds of the state

Cliff Shackelford, nongame ornithologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, says these birds are whistlers.

They have very clear, clean whistles. Sometimes you might even think it's the neighbor whistling – but it's a little bird!

If whistling like this comes from ground level, it's likely the white-throated sparrow.

If it's a little higher up– maybe up in the trees – it's probably the Carolina chickadee. We get a lot of phone calls from people saying: what is this bird with that has this crystal clear whistle in my backyard? And it's probably going to be one or the other – either the chickadee or the sparrow.

The chickadee is finch-sized with a gray body, white underside and black and white head. The sparrow is plump with a black and white head, white throat, gray underside and little yellow eyebrows.

You can hear the chickadee whistling year-round, but the white throated sparrow leaves for southern Canada where it's nice and cool in the summer while we're here melting in the summer months.

Learn more about Birds in Texas on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series and funds wildlife surveys throughout Texas.

Hunters and Anglers Help Feed Hungry Texans

Thursday, September 7th, 2017

Hunger is widespread in the US and in Texas.

Our food banks collectively provide food and other services to about 3.5 million Texans every year. They do that through a network of approximately 3,000 private charities. They manage to get food and other services out to hungry Texans in all 254 counties.

Celia Cole is CEO of [**Feeding Texas**](#).

Feeding Texas is the state association that represents all of the food banks in Texas – there are 21. And we're all part of a network called Feeding America.

Hunters for the Hungry is a program of Feeding Texas.

We work with hunters and meat processors to involve them in the program. Hunters donate excess venison they hunt, to the processor who then grinds it up and packages it and makes it available to our network for distribution to the hungry people we serve.

Last year, hunters donated about 55-thousand pounds of venison to the program.

We are really hopeful that we can greatly increase that amount. It's a matter of getting the word out to hunters that this program is available, and then also recruiting enough processors that there are enough outlets for hunters to take their deer to.

Learn how to help hungry Texans when you buy your next hunting or fishing license. That's tomorrow.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

[Buy Your License, Feed Hungry Texans](#)

Friday, September 8th, 2017

Hunters for the Hungry, a program of Feeding Texas, welcomes legally harvested and tagged deer from hunters to help feed hungry Texans.

This is a wonderful program that helps us fight hunger.

Celia Cole, CEO of [Feeding Texas](#) says a bill passed during the 2015 Texas Legislative session, allows hunters and anglers to make voluntary cash donations to the program when buying a license.

The option on the license is you can (voluntarily) donate one, five, ten or twenty dollars. In addition to the donations we've received through the hunting license option, individuals have supported the program through a donation option on our website.

Last year hunters and anglers, donated 110-thousand dollars to Hunters for the Hungry.

So, for the first time this year, we had funds to help reimburse processors for their costs of participating in the program. And that funding stream is what's going to allow us to greatly increase the pounds of venison that go through the program next year.

Even with limited promotion, hunters donated more than 55-thousand pounds of venison to the program.

Collectively, we serve 3.5 million Texans every year. About a million of those are kids. We're looking to grow [Hunters for the hungry] in those areas where there are lots of opportunities.

Find details at feedingtexas.org; click on the "get involved" tab, and then Hunters for the Hungry.

[Take a Hike at a Texas State Park](#)

Monday, September 11th, 2017

After spending the summer indoors in self-imposed air-conditioned exile, the promise of cooler fall temperatures is sure to call you outside again.

[Hiking in a state park](#) is a simple and enjoyable way to reengage the great outdoors, and experience our state's abundant natural resources.

Many parks have more than one trail, offering varying levels of difficulty.

A hike is not a race. So, slow down and take time to appreciate your surroundings. Trails are as varied as the parks they're in. Some follow streams or take you into the woods, or onto rocky ledges; they can be shaded or sun-drenched. And wildlife viewing opportunities while hiking are abundant.

When hiking, dress for the weather. Always wear comfortable close toed shoes. Use a hat and sunscreen to save your skin. Insect repellent is always a good call when hiking in heavily wooded and wet areas. And don't forget to bring water. Experts recommend you carry eight ounces of water with you for every hour you plan to be on the trail.

And always remember that if you pack in—pack it out. Leave no trace.

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

[TPW Magazine — Texas Brigades](#)

Tuesday, September 12th, 2017

[Texas Brigades](#) is a wildlife and natural resource focused leadership development program for youth, 13 to 17.

Texas Brigades has been around for 25 years. It started out as Bobwhite Brigade back in 1993, and then it just kind of morphed.

It's morphed into is eight summer camps, each with a different conservation focus. Aubry Buzek [Byu-zik] wrote about the Brigades for the October issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

What was really interesting is that these camps are not necessarily about learning about one particular species. At Bobwhite Brigade, they were learning a lot about quail—and they had biologists there teaching them about quail. But that wasn't the overall goal of the program. It was about being comfortable with public speaking, comfortable talking with their peers. Debating.

These five-day intensive camps incorporate military marching and cadence, and introduce students to experts and activities that challenge and

I talked to a lot of parents after graduation and they were like, 'Who is this kid?' I saw it too. That confidence. A lot of parents said they didn't expect their kid to know just so much. But, in

addition to that knowledge, these kids are loud, and they're marching, and they make a lot of friends. It really is a transformative camp.

Read Aubry Buzek's story about the Texas Brigades in the October issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

Texas Brigades Inspire Careers

Wednesday, September 13th, 2017

To categorize the [Texas Brigades](#) as "summer camp" is like calling a mountain lion "a kitty cat".

This is not a normal summer camp. This is meant to be a lot more than that.

Writer, Aubry Buzek wrote a story about the Brigades for the October issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

The editor of the magazine said, I want you to go to this summer camp and write about it. And I was thinking: Okay. There's going to be fun stuff happening; I get there and it's in the middle of a session on how conservation groups work in Texas....and conservation and hunters ethics. And I was like, Whoa!

The 5-day, cell-phone free, camps for youth build confidence and camaraderie with projects, public speaking and debates on conservation issues.

There are some really amazing instructors who come to this camp. There are instructors there who are wildlife biologists from Texas Parks and Wildlife, other private hunting ranches, water control authorities...just the gambit of [conservation] organizations in Texas. The kids get to meet people not easily accessible. Every instructor that I talked to said that they want these kids to pick up the phone and keep in touch with them. They want to help them grow now and into the future.

Aubry Buzek's story on the Texas Brigades appears in the October issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

Landscaping for the Birds

Thursday, September 14th, 2017

Putting out feeders is one way to attract wildlife to your yard. A better way is to create a wildscape.

What a wildscape is, is landscaping for wildlife.

Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford, says this includes native plants that provide food and shelter; most urban yards, however, traded native habitat for lawns.

So, any little help you can [give] by putting in a wildscape really helps. And even if you don't have a yard, you can do a wildscape on your patio with pots. I have seen hummingbirds go up to the 6th floor balcony of condos where someone has showy plants that say, "hummingbird come up here."

A variety of berry and nectar producing plants will draw wildlife to your yard—or balcony.

You want to always stick to natives because they're acclimated to the soil and the weather and the rainfall that you're going to give them. And then, you want to make sure that they have some value to wildlife: that they're going to give you the nectar to attract butterflies; they're going to have berries at the right time when the cedar waxwings come, and so forth.

Fall is the best time to plant native trees, woody shrubs and perennial flowering plants. [Find a list of native species that do well in your area](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

TPW TV — Parks Ranch, a Lone Star Land Steward

Friday, September 15th, 2017

Before we domesticated livestock, the land and water belonged to wildlife. Cattle took a toll on this habitat; but thanks to the efforts of landowners like David Crow, cattle and conservation coexist.

The ranch is our factory. The cattle are a part of the factory. The wildlife's part of the factory. And everything has to click together.

Crow operates the 5,600-acre Parks Ranch in Goliad County, and keeps the needs of wildlife top of mind.

I think one of the biggest detractors to wildlife is fragmentation of habitat. To be able to hold this ranch together is extremely important.

A 2016 Lone Star land Steward award-winner in the Gulf Prairies & Marshes region, Crow uses a variety of techniques to create greater density of native grasslands, which supports better diversity of native wildlife.

I'm pleased that my son has chosen his career in this business as well, because that means at least we're good for another generation.

Witness the success of Parks Ranch on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series next week on PBS. Check your local listings.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

[A Brighter Future Starts Outdoors](#)

Monday, September 18th, 2017

They say you can never go home again. Just don't tell that to Nicole Roque. After graduating college, she moved back to El Paso; in March, she took a job as an AmeriCorps volunteer with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

AmeriCorps is a national service program designed to alleviate poverty.

Headquartered at [Franklin Mountains State Park](#), Nicole says a question she usually gets is:

How are you alleviating poverty [via] parks?

Research supports the theory that people who engage the outdoors 30 minutes to one hour a day are happier, healthier and smarter.

Kids do better in school, they have higher self-esteem. They're just more confident in general. It's more than just going out and hiking.

A solid education, a high level of confidence and good self-esteem are all tools that help people to move beyond barriers and to lean into success.

We're definitely looking to help kids feel more welcome by environmental science careers and STEM careers in general – and strengthen them in that way.

Tomorrow Nicole tells us about a program where El Pasoans turn trash into art while learning about environmental stewardship.

[Trash to Treasure](#)

Tuesday, September 19th, 2017

A project in El Paso, has HS students and the local art community turning roadside trash to treasure.

It's called [It's Your World](#), and it's a really, really cool project.

Nicole Roque, an AmeriCorps volunteer with Texas Parks and Wildlife, based in El Paso, heard about El Dorado HS art teacher, Candace Printz who, with her students, created the project to improve their community.

She started It's Your World, and what they do is they go into the community and they do cleanups. They adopted a portion of highway and they went out a few months and cleaned it completely. And they kept statistic on what they found, and then they took all this trash back to their school, they cleaned it up, they separated it, and then used it as art supplies.

It's Your World compliments AmeriCorps' mission of improving the human condition. Nicole partnered with the project to develop art workshops.

And they've created some of the most amazing things I've ever seen. They recently had an art exhibition; I went to go see it, and it floors you to look at some of these really amazing things [made from trash]. And one of my favorite things that Candace told me is they opened their portable where they had all the supplies, and local artists were coming in to collect supplies for their art, and people were fighting over the trash.

One man's trash.... Learn more about [It's Your World](#)...we have a link to their website at passporttotexas.org.

Understanding the Roll of an Urban Biologist

Wednesday, September 20th, 2017

You may not think there's a much need for urban wildlife biologists in cities...

People hear "urban wildlife biologist" and they assume grackles and squirrels.

But Richard Heilbrun says they are much more than nuisance wildlife experts.

Urban wildlife biologists work in all of our major metropolitan areas throughout the state, and they work with municipal decision-makers on land management.

Heilbrun is team lead for the urban wildlife technical guidance program.

One day we might work with a parks department on which new property to acquire that's best for wildlife diversity. The next day, we might work with the City Council in alleviating some conflict between people and wildlife. And the third, day we might work with a home owners association to manage their greenbelt for maximum wildlife diversity.

The urban landscape is more diverse than you know.

So, in a city you might have golf courses, cemeteries, creeks, greenbelts, rivers, city parks, state parks, vacant lots. And then all those corridors that connect those neighborhoods together are usually really great wildlife habitat.

[Find an urban biologist in your area](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series and helps fund Wildlife technical guidance and assistance to urbanites of Texas.

The Ecosystem Functions of Wildlife

Thursday, September 21st, 2017

Golf courses, cemeteries, creeks, parks and greenbelts, all common in urban areas, provide habitat for wildlife.

In a typical greenbelt [for example], you'll find owls and hawks and songbirds and lizards and snakes and coyotes and bobcats. And all of those put together form a functional ecosystem that only exists in those urban areas.

Richard Heilbrun is team lead for the urban wildlife technical guidance program. These biologists work with communities to ensure humans and wildlife coexist comfortably.

Most people recognize that seeing wildlife is a great thing, and they feel fortunate to see that wildlife. Every once in a while we get folks who are nervous, but once they talk to our urban wildlife biologists, and are told this is a good thing, they change their perception fairly quickly. So, someone that might be nervous about seeing a coyote, when they call an urban wildlife biologist and are told that coyote populations perform an ecosystem function – they keep those rats at bay, or they make sure that the skunk populations don't go haywire. So, when they realize there's a benefit, their perception changes fairly quickly.

[Find your urban biologist when you log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

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Texas Outdoor Story – The Squirrel and the Snake

Friday, September 22nd, 2017

Ginger Turner enjoys paddling on Lady Bird Lake in Austin. Over the years, she says she's witnessed her share of unusual incidents on the water.

The one that was really funny and sticks out in my head. My friend and I were paddling and we saw something swimming and we couldn't figure out what it was. We get over there and it's a squirrel swimming over one of the widest parts of the lake. We're like, "let's get closer; get closer." So we follow him over and he ran up this tree that was leaning over in the water. As he was running up he ran smack dab into a snake that was curled up sunning on the tree. And it startled the squirrel, and it startled the snake and they both jumped about 10 ft. up in the air! And the snake plopped in the water and the squirrel we couldn't even find. Later we heard a rustling and we saw the squirrel had made it over to the shore. But it was hilarious, it was funny. But I didn't know that squirrels swam, but I guess they do. [laughs]

Thanks, Ginger. You never know what you might see when you get outside.

Do you have a funny or memorable Texas outdoor story to share? Go to passporttotexas.org, and let us know. We love to hear what you do outside!

Texas Two Step Against Fire Ants

Monday, September 25th, 2017

The imported red fire ant can ruin a beautiful spring or fall day outdoors.

We typically see most activity in the spring and in the fall. It's nice, and that's generally when we like being outside, too, unfortunately.

Elizabeth "Wizzie" Brown, an entomologist with AgriLife Extension says researchers continue to work on ways to manage this non-native pest, which is a threat to wildlife.

We have had things that we're working on...things like fungus, and there's organisms that live in the fire ant body that reduce the reproductive capabilities of the fire ants. They have brought in parasitizing flies, that are called phorid flies that they use that attack the fire ants and pretty much eat them from the inside out. So we are working on it, but the fire ants are here—they're always going to be here; these are just tools in our tool belts to help up manage those populations.

[Use the Texas two-step method to combat fire ants](#)... now through mid-October: first, broadcast an insecticide bait across your entire yard, and then treat individual mounds with an approved insecticidal drench, bait, granule or dust.

[Ethereal Caddo Lake WMA](#)

Tuesday, September 26th, 2017

When mist cloaks Caddo Lake it's easy to understand how the lore and legend about this east Texas water body came to pass.

Native American legend says a giant flood created Caddo Lake. Others say an earthquake was responsible.

Meanwhile, scientists believe the lake formed when floodwaters, blocked by massive log jams on the Red River, backed up into the Cypress Bayou watershed, forming the lake.

One thing that is true: Caddo Lake's beauty. And visitors to Caddo Lake State Park/WMA not only experience nature at her most beguiling, they also have a plethora of recreational opportunities — from hiking to hunting – to choose from.

With an annual public hunting permit, hunters may harvest deer, eastern wild turkey, and quail during appropriate seasons. Licensed anglers find largemouth bass, catfish and brim plentiful in the lake.

Find more on **[Caddo Lake SP/WMA](#)** at passporttotexas.org.

That's our show, made possible by the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration program providing funding for the operations and management of more than 50 wildlife management areas.

Miles and Miles of Texas

Wednesday, September 27th, 2017

Texas' fifty wildlife management areas encompass more than three-quarters of a million acres of land. They serve as living laboratories for students and professionals to develop habitat management techniques...

And [then] demonstrate those to private landowners in the area, so that they can replicate those management techniques on their own land, and help accomplish conservation in Texas.

Dennis Gissell is the Wildlife Management Area facilities coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife. He says we have 10 ecological regions in the state that represent different vegetation, habitat and wildlife.

Our goal is to acquire at least one WMA in each of those ecological regions so that we can study, understand and demonstrate techniques for conservation and management in each of those ecological regions to the landowners that live in those areas. We have eight right now. We just acquired three new WMAs. And, those will help achieve our goal; and we're getting very close.

As most Texas land is privately owned, landowners are a vital piece of the conservation puzzle. Learn about The Landowner Incentive Program on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series and helps to fund the management of Texas' 50 Wildlife Management Areas.

Landowners Learn Conservation on WMAs

Thursday, September 28th, 2017

Texas landowners are vital to long-term statewide habitat and wildlife conservation strategies.

Something that folks really are not aware of is that the water that they drink, the air tht they breathe, the clothes they wear, and even the fuels that provide energy for their vehicles and power plants, come from private lands in Texas.

Dennis Gissell is Wildlife Management Area facilities coordinator.

Private landowners really are stewarding not only the natural habitat, but they're providing the resources that we as humans must have to survive.

Texas Parks and Wildlife uses Wildlife Management Areas to educate landowners about conserving wildlife and habitat, including water.

When you're dealing with either surface water or groundwater, people need to be aware that that surface water is coming through lands that are owned by private landowners, and the extent to which they manage the vegetation and the habitat there, allows that water to be filtered naturally before it arrives at a lake or a river.

Texas landowners take stewardship seriously. Gissell says he hopes this remains true as ownership changes.

The former farms and ranches that were owned by some of the original settlement families in Texas are being sold off and broken up to some degree; we call that habitat fragmentation. As landowners acquire those lands, we think it is very important that they understand the role of stewardship, and managing and conserving wildlife habitat.

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series and helps to fund the management of Texas' 50 Wildlife Management Areas.

Big or Small, WMAs Are Places to Learn

Friday, September 29th, 2017

Texas Landowners learn how to manage their acreage by emulating wildlife biologists who keep the state's Wildlife Management Areas in top form.

Wildlife biologists go out on the WMAs and they take a look at what we have; what the baseline is. And then they take a look at historically what has been there in terms of vegetation and wild animals. They'll determine what it takes to restore that habitat, or to enhance that habitat.

Dennis Gissell is [Wildlife Management Area facilities coordinator](#). Texas Wildlife Management Areas' encompass about three-quarters of a million acres.

[The] largest WMA is in east Texas – the Sam Houston National Forest, which is actually a US Forest Service Property that we lease/license from them to manage. It's over 160-thousand acres. The smallest is near Corpus Christi.

And that WMA is only 36 acres! The aim is to have WMAs for teaching and research in each of the state's 10 ecoregions. Every one provides opportunities for discovery and learning, even when they are small.

These smaller tracts of land have really unique features. In this case – this particular property – has a wetland and a pond that has historically, been very attractive to waterfowl.

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

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series and helps to fund the management of Texas' 50 Wildlife Management Areas.