

This program runs at 520 am Monday thru Friday

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

October 2017

TPW TV – Paddling the Trails at Port O’Connor

Monday, October 2nd, 2017

Port O’Connor offers [outdoor enthusiasts](#) an enticing paddling trail opportunity.

We are in Mule Slough in the back bay system of Port O’Connor, Texas. This is an isolated flat, and it is surrounded by black mangrove and cordgrass.

On a segment airing this week on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series](#), we follow Alan Raby with Dolphin [Kayaks](#) as he takes Xandra and Jade Alford on a tour of this unique place.

This is my backyard. My backyard’s always been outdoors with everything. And you get to sit in a kayak and get to see pelicans, [seagulls](#), herons – everything. You get to see it all.

Kayakers experience wildlife up close and personal.

[Alan] So, the Port O’Connor is unique in the way that it’s probably the most vast one on the Texas coast that’s easily accessible. There’s over 40 miles total of paddle trail. [Xandra] Look, Jade. Look at tht look. [Jade] That is just a camera ready loon. [Xandra] He’s getting his fifteen minutes in.

Alan Raby says the Port O’Connor trail, always feels new.

[Alan] It is an adventure almost every time you come. I mean, the saying goes, once you visit here once, you always come back a second time. [Xandra] You know, Port O’Connor has a way of bringing you back. It’s a great place to be.

Discover the Port O’Connor paddling Trail on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS through October seventh. [Check your local listings.](#)

2017 Texas Pollinator BioBlitz

Tuesday, October 3rd, 2017

Love bugs? There’s still time to participate in the [Pollinator BioBlitz, which continues through October 8th.](#)

[We have] two goals in mind: to [increase awareness](#) about pollinators, and about the habitat that they require.

Johnnie Smith is Conservation Education Manager. [Pollinators](#) include bees, butterflies, beetles, moths and other critters that move pollen while foraging.

If you participate in the pollinator bio-blitz, you're going to have an opportunity to observe pollinators at a site that you visit, like your local zoo or [aquarium](#) or nature center. And observe the pollinators that are there. Grab a picture of the pollinators you find, and you can post them onto Instagram. We're asking all of the participants to use the hashtag #savethepollinators.

Post [findings](#), on iNaturalist.org. Texas Parks and Wildlife's website, has pages dedicated to the Pollinator Bioblitz.

Where people can learn what pollinators might be in their area. Links to what might be blooming in your area right now—that's hosted out of the Wildflower center—and then also, to be aware of habitat you have that supports pollinators. And if you don't have habitat in or near your home, school library... We're encouraging people to try and get organized in planting pollinator habitat.

The Pollinator BioBlitz began September 23 and runs through October 8th.

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Climate Change Lottery and its Affects

Wednesday, October 4th, 2017

Texas wildlife has a stake in the climate change lottery.

Climate change is going to affect species that are found – and breed – in backyards here in Texas.

Former Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist, Cullen Hanks, says models that predict impacts of climate change on wildlife vary, so we need baseline information on each species.

To be able to document change, we need to know where things are before they change. And, this highlights the need of [documenting](#) the distribution of species that we have today in Texas. And, there aren't enough biologists to do all of that. And so, what we do is we reach out to citizens. That's exactly right! Texas is a big state with a lot of species, and the community of naturalists and citizens interested in wildlife in Texas can play a huge part in documenting wildlife in Texas.

Monitor backyard species, and then share your observations online.

ebird, a citizen science platform, created by the Cornell laboratory of Ornithology is a great way to maintain your [checklist](#) of birds. In addition, iNaturalist is a really useful platform for documenting your wildlife sightings of any species — not just birds.

Texas Parks and Wildlife has various projects on iNaturalist. Just go to the [Texas Nature Trackers](#) page on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website for details.

Helping Hummers After Hurricane Harvey

Thursday, October 5th, 2017

Rockport, hit hard by Hurricane Harvey, is famous as a fall/winter hummingbird migration stopover.

Hummingbirds are equipped to handle all kinds of environmental situations – [including] natural disasters. And, they are opportunistic: they look for opportunities in which to feed.

Urban wildlife biologist, Kelly Simon says residents are rightly focused on [recovery](#), and may not hang nectar filled feeders this season.

Hummingbirds have endured natural disasters like this for as long as there have been hummingbirds. And so, while we're focusing right now on human needs, the physical needs of hummingbirds will be met by the hummingbirds.

Folks along the migration path might consider hanging a few extra feeders, using a 3:1 ratio to increase energy content. However...

Hummingbirds don't live by sugar water alone. They actually require spiders and mites that the find in native plants in order to gain the fats and proteins that will help fuel their journey. That may be a thing that's hard for them to find. But, Corpus Christi is not that far away. And Corpus Christi has an abundance of flowers – they were not hit quite as hard. So, there's a lot of natural food out there. It may not be in Rockport, but adding about 100 miles on top of the journey, when you're looking at a 2-thousand mile journey, is probably not significant.

Hummingbirds, like those hit by Harvey, are survivors, but always appreciate help from their friends.

Wild Game for the Holidays

Friday, October 6th, 2017

This time of year [hunting seasons](#) begin to overlap: quail....duck...deer...you get the picture.

As a result, hunters—and those of us who benefit from knowing hunters—end up with freezers full of game meat. There are worse problems to have.

With the holidays on the horizon, wouldn't a dish featuring game be a nice addition to your feast? Heck, even the Great British Baking Show had their contestants bake festive game pies.

If you're stumped when it comes to preparing wild proteins for the holiday table...perhaps a little hands-on cooking class can set you on the right course.

Texas Parks and Wildlife collaborates with [Central Market Cooking Schools](#) statewide to offer hands on wild game and fish [cooking classes](#) to the public. November's class is all about dressing up game for the holidays.

Class participants will prepare: Grilled Quail with Red Chile Honey Glaze...Whiskey Spiced Duck with Swiss chard & [celery](#) root...and Venison Filet with Blueberry Pan Jus on Cheese Grits.

Tell me that doesn't sound like a party waiting to happen. The next class is November 14, and takes place in Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Southlake, and Plano. All locations are currently accepting [registrations](#).

Find more information at passporttotexas.org. That's our show for today... Funding provided in part by [Ram Trucks](#). Guts. Glory. Ram

Halloween in State Parks

Monday, October 9th, 2017

Get into the spirit of [Halloween at a Texas state park](#).

Plan an overnight stay at a nearby park with family and friends. When night falls, [build a campfire, huddle ‘round, and share scary stories](#) while the fire pops and crackles.

Campfire s’more take on a whole new look at Halloween with ghost shaped marshmallow peeps! Toast your ghost over the flames and then squish it between graham crackers and chocolate. Now who’s scary?

Invite wildlife to your party; it’s easy when you use animal call apps on your [smart phone](#). A raptor that’s usually spying on you anyway, is the screech [owl](#). If you play its call and wait, chances are it will join you.

You don’t have to set up camp to enjoy Halloween in parks. Just come for a few hours. Some parks will have activities including [Edible Creepy Crawlies](#), to Bat Themed crafts, to Trick-or-Treating in the park, to [Zombie Apocalypse Hikes](#) and more.

At Cleburne State Park, visitors 13 and older who wish to partake in trick or treating, the guided night hike, or the night sounds presentation, will have their [entrance fee waived when they bring a can of food for the food bank](#).

Find parks, dates, and complete details on [Halloween hijinks in State Parks at texasstateparks.org](#).

[Texas Aquatic Science Program](#)

Tuesday, October 10th, 2017

The [Texas Aquatic Science curriculum](#) covers a lot of ground, I mean, water. AmeriCorps Vista Volunteer, Colin Findley, coordinates the program for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

It’s getting people access to the outside world, and understanding the outside world in terms of water.

The program helps middle and high school teachers raise students’ awareness of the importance of water to life, aquatic [ecosystems](#), and the effort necessary to conserve it all.

With Texas aquatic science, there’s the classroom capacity, and then there’s also what are called Texas Aquatic Science Certified field sites, which are state parks and other organizations that have access to water tied to the curriculum. So, you know, once an educator teaches the curriculum in the classroom, they can then go out and get full support from these aquatic science field sites.

Findley says Texas Aquatic Science is a full curriculum.

From [sixth grade](#) all the way up to twelfth. It's TEKS (Texas [Essential Knowledge and Skills](#)) aligned. The [greatest thing](#) is that it's [completely free](#). So, the student textbooks online at texasaquaticscience.org, the teacher guides on the Texas Parks (and Wildlife) education page – it's all there for any educator to have.

The program starts by identifying communities of greatest need, and then cultivates a core of facilitators.

That then teach workshops to spread the curriculum to educators throughout the state.

Find more information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

[Become a Texas Waters Specialist](#)

Wednesday, October 11th, 2017

Water is a precious resource, and a new Texas Parks and Wildlife program helps citizens to **[become certified Texas Waters Specialists](#)**.

It comes down to appreciation for the natural world – to realize that everything's connected. From humans to wildlife; we all need water to survive.

Colin Findley, an AmeriCorps Vista Volunteer, oversees the program, which covers ecosystems to water law.

There's a curriculum, and also there's webinars. It's really just a matter of going to the Texas Parks [and Wildlife] website: tpwd.texas.gov. Search for Texas Water Specialist, and it will take you to that page.

Anyone may [register](#) for the course.

There are [specific requirements](#) for Texas Master Naturalist, so if you are a Master Naturalist, you go through the representative for Texas Waters for your program to log those hours. But if you're from the general public, it's completely free. It takes eight hours of different program requirements to get your certification. To renew it – it's all about community service. You have to do ten hours of water related community service each year.

Many [volunteer opportunities](#) exist for certified waters specialists.

Texas Stream Team. Texas Parks and Wildlife has different volunteer opportunities in terms of [water quality](#), habitat conservation, restoration and management, freshwater inflows. And then, you know, there's a lot of different coastal [restoration projects](#) as well.

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

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

TPW TV — New Season 2017-1018

Thursday, October 12th, 2017

The new season of Texas Parks and Wildlife Television kicks off October 15th, marking 32 years on the air.

Yeah, it's like older than one of the guys [that works](#) on the show, actually...

Even so, they keep it fresh. Series producer, Don Cash, says the program is not a hunting and fishing show.

We find interesting and unique people all across Texas who are into nature, who are into the outdoor, who are into wildlife – and we tell their stories.

Thirty-two years later, producers tell more stories thanks to new technology. Consider the upcoming segment about a [university student](#) who walked the 100 mile Lone Star Hiking Trail.

One of our producers took still cameras – you know, DSLRs – and was able to do a good portion of a hundred mile hike. So, it's cool that we have the technology and the smaller cameras that allow you to go do things like a hike – of 100 miles – that maybe you couldn't do [back in the day](#) when you had to carry a 35 pound camera.

Cash says he hopes stories like the 100 mile hike inspire people to experience the great Texas outdoors.

A lot of people are new to the state – a lot of people have been here a long time – and don't really know what all we've got. And that's what the show does. We show you all this cool stuff that you can do in the outdoors, and hopefully, maybe you'll go out there and discover it for yourself.

Discover the new season of the Texas Parks and Wildlife [TV series](#) the week of October 15. Check your local listings.

TPW TV — Finding the Story

Friday, October 13th, 2017

Get ready for the 32nd season of the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV Series on PBS.

We start our new season the week of October 15th, and [we've] got some new stuff this year.

If you've never seen the show, or aren't sure you'll like it, series producer, Don Cash, offers this reassurance.

We like to call it a magazine format. We don't just do one topic in a half hour show. We usually do three...or four...or five segments of different things in a show. So, if the first segment's not that interesting to you, maybe the next four will be.

It is a show about people like you who love the outdoors.

We find stories by going out in the [field](#) and working on other stories. You go out, you meet somebody, they say: Oh, you should meet so-and-so; they've got this thing going. And by going out in the field and going to the parks and going different places – that's how we find the stories. Now, sometimes, they come our way. Sometimes people let us know. But for the most part, we just find them when we're out there traveling the state.

Such as when they discovered a woman in remote [West Texas](#) who creates [habitat](#) for birds.

I mean, you've got to be a special person to live by yourself out in West Texas, up in the back of a canyon, and do all this work on your own – and the welcome people to come in – and look at the birds that come into your place. So, that's [the thing](#) that I enjoy about doing this.

We think you'll enjoy it, too. The new season of the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS begins the week of October 15.

[Whooper Week: Protections Since 1941](#)

Monday, October 16th, 2017

Pushed to the brink of extinction by unregulated hunting and loss of [habitat](#), federal and state protections on [Whooping Crane](#) breeding and wintering grounds were enacted in 1941 to save the remaining 21 [wild birds](#).

And we've steadily seen those whooping crane numbers come up farther and farther and farther. And currently now, when we look at Aransas national Wildlife Refuge on the coast of Texas, it is one of the major whooping crane [birding](#) spots in the world now.

Biologist, [Shaun](#) Oldenburger says the flock is currently 300 strong; it took a coordinated effort between the US and Canada to reach that number.

If we look back in the 1940s, the US Fish and Wildlife Service purchased Aransas National Wildlife Refuge – which was the major wintering grounds at the time for the last population that we had here in North America. Their breeding grounds also became a national park through Canada. Wood Buffalo National Park. And, also along through the migration corridor, there's also been protections and closures of [hunting seasons](#) in the past, and just doing lots of activities and education to make sure that those birds succeed in spring and fall migration from their wintering and breeding grounds.

More about this iconic species tomorrow when Passport to Texas Whooper Week continues.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Whooper Week: A Rare Bird

Tuesday, October 17th, 2017

Whooping cranes may be one of the rarest bird species in North America, but they're hard to miss.

When we look at whooping cranes, there's really nothing on the landscape its size. We do have lots of Sandhill cranes here, wintering in Texas. But, the whooping crane is somewhere in the neighborhood of over five [feet tall](#), and has a wing span of over seven feet. In reality, it's mostly white, so they really show up on the landscape, and they're very iconic. You can see them from a [long distance](#). And when they're flying, they appear to take up the sky. And so, they tend to be these iconic species that people are really drawn to.

Biologist, Shaun Oldenburger, says what really gives them away is their call. [Whooper call] Since the 1940s, we've gone from a low of 20 birds to 329 according to the 2015-2016 winter [survey](#).

And so, that is pretty substantial over the 20 birds or so during the 1940s. And what is even more incredible is if you think about these birds is they have very high [survival rates](#) and very low reproductive rates. And so, they only nest once per season. They usually lay two eggs per year and nine times out of ten you only have one bird that is successful in fledging. When you look at that, it's just really slow trying to bring the species back from the brink of extinction, and trying to bring those birds back to a recoverable level.

More good news tomorrow when Whooper Week continues.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Whooper Week: Population on the Rise

Wednesday, October 18th, 2017

Whooping cranes are headed to the Texas coast from their breeding grounds in Canada, and some of us might spot them along the way.

There's this [funnel](#) that happens just to the west of the Dallas-Fort Worth area that these birds funnel through and then come down to winter on [Aransas \[National Wildlife Refuge\]](#).

[Biologist](#) Shaun Oldenburger says it's not uncommon for the birds to "fall out" along their flight path.

Early October through late October, around the red River Region, some birds fall out there. And then make their way finally down to the coast. So, they start falling out there, but for the most part, all those birds will push to the coast at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge by November.

There will be more of them, too. During the last winter [survey](#) their population numbered 329 members.

20— This last year in Canada they produced 98 nests, which was a record. And of those 98 nests they had 63 birds fledge, which was an all-time record. And that was more than 15 birds over the previous record.

Whether you [view](#) the birds in transit... or at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge...

Just make sure you don't disturb them, keep your distance, and enjoy your time viewing them.

Despite Hurricane Harvey's impact on the coast, the Whooper's wintering grounds is ready to support them.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

[Whooper Week: Help Track Whooping Cranes](#)

Thursday, October 19th, 2017

October brings mild temperatures and Whooping Cranes to Texas.

Mid-October is when they start coming back to Texas. So, it's a great time to start looking for them.

Marsha May is a biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

They basically come through the central portion of the state. So, it's that route between Canada and Aransas National Wildlife refuge.

Marsha oversees several Texas Nature Tracker projects, including [Texas Whooper Watch](#).

Texas Whooper Watch started 2011, about the time we had that drought. Because we were seeing whooping cranes going to new locations that we had never seen before. They were showing up at Granger Lake; two or three hundred miles north of their natural wintering habitat.

If you catch sight of a whooper, join the growing ranks of citizen scientists: document your sighting with the iNaturalist app.

Citizen scientists with Texas Nature Trackers collect data using [iNaturalist](#). You can use your smart phone to take pictures of things and that data comes back into iNaturalist; and that's data that we can use for many different things.

More on Texas Nature Trackers and Whooper Watch tomorrow.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Whooper Week: Become a Whooper Watcher

Friday, October 20th, 2017

People of all ages can become citizen scientists through Texas Parks and Wildlife's Texas Nature Trackers program.

Texas Nature Trackers is a program that gets citizens involved in helping us [collect data](#) on rare species.

Marsha May is a biologist in the program, which includes [Texas Whooper Watch](#). When Whooper Watch started in 2011, the state was in drought; this affected wetlands at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, where the whoopers winter.

Their main diet down there is the blue [crab](#). But, that particular year [2011], there was not a lot of freshwater coming down to the coast, so the wetlands were really salty. So, a lot of the birds went further inland.

Two hundred miles farther inland at Granger Lake, where they ate mussels instead of their usual diet of crabs.

That's where Texas Whooper Watch comes in. We want to get [sightings of whoopers outside of their normal range](#) at Aransas. Is this something that's going to happen continually in the future? Are they expanding their range? These are [questions](#) we would really would like to see answered. Citizen scientists can get involved by [documenting](#) birds in the areas where they're not normally found.

Find details on Texas Whooper Watch on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Maximize Your Fall Camping Experience

Monday, October 23rd, 2017

Fall camping season is here. And Texas Outdoor Family coordinator, Robert Owen, says following a few simple suggestions will enhance your camping experience.

Plan ahead for your activities. Make sure you have a good pair of comfortable shoes to go along with your weekend; while you're spending time on the trail you'll want to keep your feet comfortable. Bring some water and sunscreen along regardless of the season. I like to bring along a GPS unit when I camp because I do enjoy Geocaching as a sport. Bring along that fishing equipment – the fish always tend to bite better in the cooler months. And also [bring some] binoculars – the winter months provide great opportunities for [bird watching](#) at Texas State Parks, and wildlife watching as well. Would you say that going to texasstateparks.org is a good place for people to begin their camping trip? Absolutely. It's broken down into [a map](#) view, so you can find a park that's nearby home or if you're looking for a reason to get out and explore someplace new. It will tell you all about what the park has to offer; you can check out the park map there, and get a feel for what each campsite may offer. And, there may be [a schedule](#) of [interpretive](#) activities as well.

Thanks, Robert.

Go to texasstateparks.org to plan your next campout.

Understanding the Value of Dark Skies

Tuesday, October 24th, 2017

Few of us have ever experienced [a truly dark sky](#).

A dark sky is what humanity saw for basically its entire history up until the invention of electric light a little more than a century ago.

While we may feel safer outdoors at night because artificial light illuminates our way, over time, it may actually do more harm than good, says John Barentine, with the International Dark Sky [Assn.](#)

We know that artificial light at night has a [measurable](#) impact on wildlife; we know that it has an impact on human health. Light governs the night and day cycles of all [organisms](#), so when we put light into the environment when our bodies aren't expecting it, there are inevitable results—some of which we are just beginning to learn – but turns out that it may be related (at least in humans) to incidents of some types of chronic disease.

Until the [advent](#) and widespread use of electric lighting, the sun, and to a lesser extent the moon, governed the cycle of day and night.

That set a rhythm among [living things](#) we've been disrupting ever since. And we'll have more about that tomorrow.

Dark Skies for Healthier Lives

Wednesday, October 25th, 2017

Few of us experience dark skies anymore because of light pollution.

Most often we see that [light pollution] in the form of what we call skyglow...[something] that people who live in or near cities will be familiar with.

Skyglow is hazy reflected light [hovering](#) over cities at night, disrupting nature's day/night cycle. John Barentine, with the [International Dark Sky Association](#) says light pollution isn't exactly benign.

It turns out that there are hormonal pathways throughout [the body](#) that are governed by that [day/night] cycle, and when we start disrupting them by putting light in at unusual times of the day, we disrupt those pathways and that's what we think leads to some of the [potential health] problems.

Blue light (in the spectrum), associated most with sunlight, is most disruptive to our internal clocks.

Blue light triggers this hormone that's called [melatonin](#); in the daytime when the sun comes up that relatively blue sunlight turns down the production of melatonin and tells us to wake up. And then at night, the result is that the production of melatonin goes up, and that's the [cue](#) that tells us to go to sleep. It's also regulating all these sub systems throughout the body.

We have a link to The [American Medical Association's report on light pollution](#) at passporttexas.org. What's being done to prevent light pollution. That's tomorrow.

Taking Back the Dark Skies

Thursday, October 26th, 2017

The night sky once offered stunning displays of twinkling stars and planets. These marvels still exist, but light pollution masks their brilliance.

Often what we see that in is the form of what we call skyglow.

Folks in [urban areas](#) know it best as a haze of light that hangs over their cities. John Barentine is with the [International Dark Sky Association](#).

Our mission as the IDSA is to preserve and protect that nighttime environment and heritage that we have of dark skies through environmentally responsible [outdoor lighting](#).

Awareness and simple [fixes](#) can help take back the night.

Some of the things that we try to do, is to get people to look at the quality of the lighting that they're using...to think about [whether] the amount of light that's being put on the ground sensible for the task at hand...and are all [the lights](#) fully shielded so we're not always blasting light [up into the night sky] from the ground.

[Experience dark skies at some Texas State Parks.](#)

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area in the Hill Country, and Copper Breaks State Park in North Texas. We have a very active chapter of our organization in Texas. I would say that the reason that this has all come about, is that Texas being largely rural, and having this tradition where — the stars at night are big and bright — that a lot of people consider the dark night sky to be part of the cultural history of the state, and find it worth preserving.

[Christmas Bird Count: From Killing to Counting](#)

Friday, October 27th, 2017

No 19th Century American hunting family's Christmas was complete without taking to forests and fields to binge kill birds and other woodland creatures, called the Christmas Side Hunt.

You competed against neighbors [to see] who had the biggest pile of birds.

Nongame [ornithologist](#), Cliff Shackelford, says no feathered animal was off limits in this competition of carnage.

We're not talking about things you eat. We're talking about all birds. Even [predators](#) like owls and hawks. Songbirds. Just wasted.

It was the early days of conservation then, and scientists and bird lovers, alike, expressed their concern.

The bird people said: 'This is not sustainable. Let's try something different. Let's get people out with binoculars, and count birds, and maybe [compare numbers](#) on a datasheet, instead of piles of dead birds.

Frank Chapman, an early ornithologist and officer of a new organization called the Audubon Society, proposed The Christmas Bird [Census](#) for a new century.

So that's how the Christmas Bird Count came about 118 years ago.

There were 25 Christmas Bird Counts the first year, with 90 species tallied on all counts combined. It continues even now, and we tell you [how to get involved](#) next week.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

[Circle the Birders and Start Counting](#)

Monday, October 30th, 2017

The annual Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, takes place any day between, and including, December 14th and January 5th.

There are over a hundred count circles in Texas, and they have them on different days where people can move around and visit multiple Christmas counts during that Christmas count season.

Nongame [ornithologist](#), Cliff Shackelford says many of the 15-mile diameter count circles are decades old.

Teams of birders go in that circle and they [repeat](#) that every year. And after decades, you have some really neat data to look at. You can see trends.

Audubon.com counting circles.

You can see which ducks are maybe on the increase – or on the decline. You can [even] see certain species that we can irruptive species – like red breasted nuthatch and [purple](#) finch.

A compiler picks a day for participants to count birds within a specific circle over a 24-hour period.

We use that information to determine where hot spots are for certain species.

It's easy to get involved. [Just go to audubon.org.](#)

Look for a Christmas Bird Count circle near you. And associated with that circle will be the compiler. Contact that person and say, 'Hey. I'd like to contribute. I'd like to be partnered with a team that maybe has some experts.' And that to me is the best way to learn birds: go out with experienced people. You will learn so much more than from a book.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Foraging for Food in the Wild

Tuesday, October 31st, 2017

By day, Mark Vorderbruggen is a chemist who works in research and development in Houston. By night he is Merriwether – plant forager extraordinaire.

Foraging is how we used to get food before HEB or Krogers or agriculture.

Foraging involves finding and harvesting food from the wild plants around you. Merriwether teaches people how to identify edible plants via his website Foraging Texas, and during workshops.

The running joke for years [was] that my classes were 50% hippies and 50% survivalists. In both cases, they were people that had some concerns about their food sources. It spread out from that into people who are just looking for new experiences, new flavors – looking for new ways to impress their friends.

Before you head outdoors to [forage](#) your next snack...

First thing you have to keep in mind is in the state of Texas, it is illegal to take [plant material](#) from a piece of property without the property owner's permission. I will tell you right now: state parks, [city parks](#) – you will never get permission there. They don't want people ripping up the plants.

Yet, state parks, Like [Washington-on-the-Brazos, invite Merriwether to facilitate edible plant identification walks](#).

He has two coming up November 4th, find details in the [calendar](#) section of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website or on tomorrow's show.

A Weed Walk on the Wild Side at WOB

Wednesday, November 1st, 2017

Try as she might, Perry Foskey's efforts to grow a vegetable garden in her East Texas backyard failed.

The weeds did really well. And I just got to looking around [and wondered]: why am I fighting this? And I started doing some research on the weeds and [discovered] they were actually edible.

Foskey—who works at Washington-on-the Brazos–Barrington Living History Farm—proposed a program for the historic site on identifying edible wild plants.

I thought it would be an excellent accent for the farm, itself. And visitors have liked that program, and it's been a great success.

Dr. Mark “Merriwether” Vorderbruggen of Foraging Texas will facilitate two wild edible plant identification walks at the site on Saturday, November fourth.

Dr. Merriwether...he's been foraging for a very, very long time. His parents even did it back in the depression; they subsidized their food source with foraging. He is one of the premier foragers in this area, and we're so lucky to have him come out and teach these classes.

The plant ID walks with Merriwether are nine to noon, and one to four on November 4th.
Interested? Give Perry Foskey a call.

And, we'll be glad to put them on the list. We recommend the classes should be for 12 years of age and up. And the classes are absolutely free.

TPW Magazine—After Hurricane Harvey

Thursday, November 2nd, 2017

The November issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine includes stories from Hurricane Harvey. But that wasn't the original plan.

By the time we write about something, send it off to press, get it back—months can go by. So, we had to really fast-track this November issue, and decided to remove a couple of stories. We don't have our usual travel feature or our wander list.

[Editor, Louie Bond](#), says she wanted to tell the story of Harvey from the Texas Parks and Wildlife standpoint.

We decided to forego all of the stuff that people had been seeing over and over again and just tell our own story—and that's what we did. So, we told the story from the perspective of game wardens and rescuers, from those who were being rescued. And the impact, of course, on state parks, wildlife management areas, and wildlife, itself.

Read about Game Warden Dustin Dockery, who spent days helping others, as his own home was consumed by floodwaters. Hear from Texas Parks and Wildlife Photographer Earl Nottingham, who also covered Hurricanes Ike and Katrina.

And I asked him what was different about Harvey. And he said he believed that the Texas spirit had never been more present. People would see the logo on his truck, and they would pull up with boats in the back of their trucks and say: Where can we go? What can we do? As the crisis is happening. They didn't waste a moment.

The November issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine is on newsstands now.

[TPW TV—Fort Richardson: Appreciating Our Past](#)

Friday, November 3rd, 2017

[Fort Richardson](#), established in 1867, was the northernmost frontier fort in what is now Texas; it was established to help protect the western movement of settlers. Tim Swagerty.

The fort system was really integral in being able to settle the state. So without the fort system, we would not have had a state of Texas. We would not have been able to defend it and be able inhabit it as we do now.

The [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#) takes viewers back in time to experience the Fort's and Texas' history. Annie Ellison.

We are giving visitors an opportunity to see what life was like back when this fort was operational. They get to see the soldiers in action and to see what activities might be available to the children who lived in the fort back in the day, it makes that connection to their history.

Having that multi-sensory experience helps to connect visitors to the fort's history, and helps them to understand why it is important to conserve that history.

Fort Richardson is really unique. And to keep it alive just as long as we possibly can, I think it is the best possible way to honor what has gone on out here and all the diverse cultures that have come through here and helped build this place.

The segment on Fort Richardson airs on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series the week of November fifth through eleventh on PBS. [Check your local listings.](#)

2017-18 Deer Season Outlook

Monday, November 6th, 2017

According to Alan Cain, Whitetail Program Leader at Texas Parks and Wildlife, the 2017 deer season is shaping up to be a good one.

We started off the winter and early spring with good habitat conditions, which sets the stage for good antler growth and good body condition and fawn production.

Late spring and early summer, Mother Nature was stingy with rainfall across the state, which Cain says, may mean only average antler growth.

But the deer population is very healthy. We have a robust deer population in Texas.

A robust deer population is good news for some rural Texas towns.

Deer hunting in Texas is a thriving industry and it really helps the rural towns out there where deer hunting is a big part of their everyday life.

Cain says in counties where deer populations are high, he encourages hunters to take the full bag limit.

And by doing so, it helps improve the habitat. If they don't want to put that meat in the freezer, they can certainly donate it to Hunters for the Hungry, or different charitable organizations around the state.

Whitetail season began November fourth in the north and south zones. The [Texas Outdoor Annual](#) provides hunters with necessary rules, regulations and bag limits. Find it on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Reporting

Tuesday, November 7th, 2017

Chronic wasting disease, or CWD, is a neurological illness not known to affect humans...but is eventually fatal to infected deer.

Chronic wasting disease has been a concern in Texas since 2012 since the first discovery in the Trans Pecos.

Alan Cain is whitetail program leader at Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas has three designated CWD zones:

West Texas, and one in the Panhandle, and one in South Central Texas. In each of those zones, it is mandatory sampling of hunter harvested deer, and also mandatory carcass movement restrictions. So, hunters are encouraged to go on our Parks and Wildlife website, and check out the CWD page, where they can find more information.

Although the agency requires hunters' cooperation when monitoring CWD in the three zones—that shouldn't stop anyone from getting into the field.

Sufficient rains and healthy habitat also boosted the mule deer populations in West Texas.

We've had some good rainfall out there in West Texas, and we expect hunters to have a good season out there, probably average, just as we'd expect for the whitetail deer hunting.

Whitetail season runs through January 7th in the North Zone and January 21 in the South Zone. Mule Deer season begins November 18 in the Panhandle, and November 24 in the Trans-Pecos.

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

[Campsite Considerations](#)

Wednesday, November 8th, 2017

Fall camping season is here, and Robert Owen—an avid camper who oversees the Texas Outdoor Family program—offers suggestions for [choosing a campsite for your overnight adventure](#).

What I look for in a campsite is a bit of privacy. I enjoy a quiet end of the park; a place where the family can settle down and enjoy peace and quiet of nature. Nearby nature trails – looking for a trail that offers the family something to do right off the back of the campsite is always a real benefit. Also, I always like to reasonably close to water if the park offers water so that all those recreational opportunities are there. I also look for a campsite that has level ground. There're no safety concerns like low hanging limbs or anything like that, that might interfere with my evening. And proximity to the restroom. You always want to make sure you're within a comfortable distance of the restroom.

One of the best ways to ensure that close proximity to the restroom is to reserve your campsite in advance.

Tomorrow sawing logs instead of counting sheep when sleeping under the stars. That's tomorrow.

Items to Bring on an Overnight Campout

Thursday, November 9th, 2017

Do you avoid overnight camping because you're afraid you won't get your beauty rest?

The folks that do avoid camping tend to think that it's not comfortable. Well, it doesn't have to be that way.

If you're concerned you'll be counting sheep instead of sawing logs on your overnight campout, Robert Owen with the Texas Outdoor Family Program says a blanket and pillow and a few other items will have you sleeping like a baby in Mother Nature's embrace.

I always like to bring either a foam pad to sleep on or an air mattress – and even cots are getting especially popular now. Sleeping bags often have a temperature rating on them, so you'll want to make sure that you know what your overnight lows are going to be; maybe even subtract a couple of degrees from that just to be safe, and make sure your sleeping bag is rated for that temperature. We have some tips for folks who are going to spend the night outdoors when the temperature starts to drop: air mattresses –they can actually cook you off over night. They might be very comfortable, but it's like sleeping on a pillow of cold air. If you can insulate yourself against that pillow of cold air, it's really going to make you more comfortable overnight. All that means is laying a blanket or sleeping bag below you – between you and the air mattress – and that goes a long way.

Reserve your site at your favorite state park at texasstateparks.org.

Outdoor Story: Otter Hissy Fit

Friday, November 10th, 2017

Leslie McGaha wanted to try out her new bass kayak on Sam Rayburn Lake. Shortly after she got on the water, she had company—an otter!

So it was about 9:30 in the morning and I paddled across a branch of the lake, and I was hot. And so I saw a shady spot and figured I would go ahead and park there and see what I could see. And it was amazing: I saw a giant black crawdad crawling out of the bank; I was listening to the fish noises and the birds; the gar. Then, all of a sudden there was this bright flash of silver off to my right and I thought it was a gar or a carp. I keep watching, and then I see this head pop up out of the lily pads and look straight at me. And it wasn't very happy that I was there, and he let me know. He made this sound like [makes hissing sound] And I didn't know what it was. And he went back down after he told me his displeasure and then he comes back up and he makes this noise at me again [makes noise]. So, I decided I wanted to play the game, too, and I hissed right back at him [hisses]. And then he stopped for a second and looks straight at me and he and he starts hissing, kind of like he's yelling at me. So I hissed back. So we have a pretty good conversation for a few minutes, and he pops down again, pops back up, and we start the whole

thing over again two or three times before he goes on his merry way a little bit farther up the creek channel. It was just the funniest thing that had ever happened to me; it was amazing.

Share your Texas outdoor story with us; just go passportotexas.org, and [click on Outdoor Stories](#).

Interacting With Wildlife

Monday, November 13th, 2017

There's only one way to see wildlife in its natural state.

You have to spend time where the animals are.

That means outside. Richard Heilbrun, a wildlife biologist with the wildlife diversity program, says cooler fall temperatures makes extended time outdoors more pleasant and improves your chance of seeing wild things.

And with a little bit of patience; a little bit of perseverance—and maybe some education—we can really enjoy, enjoying the wildlife.

Whether you check out the critters in your backyard, neighborhood, or spend the day at a Texas state park, Richard says, there are ways to enhance the experience.

The best thing to take with you when you go out into wildlife habitat is something to enjoy wildlife with—whether it's a digital camera, a pair of binoculars, or a field guide.

A sketch pad is also fun, and slows you down even more, so you can truly savor your wildlife viewing experience. The one thing you want to avoid, however, is direct contact with the animals.

The best way to enjoy wildlife is to enjoy it from a little bit of a distance. And that camera and binoculars really help you get close without actually needing to pick up that animal. Because, unless you know what you're handling, it's really a better idea just to observe them, draw them, photograph them, and watch them.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Go on a Nature Scavenger Hunt

Tuesday, November 14th, 2017

Most of us will overindulge during the long Thanksgiving weekend. Instead of letting the family collectively slip into a food-induced coma, get outside for some fresh air.

And maybe even have some fun in terms of a challenge or game or scavenger hunt.

Richard Heilbrun is a wildlife biologist with the wildlife diversity program. Personally, I'm intrigued by the sound of the scavenger hunt.

One of my favorite things to do with young kids is to give them a set of objectives: I want you to find a bug. For older kids: I want you to find a butterfly; I want you to find a moth; I want you to find this kind of caterpillar; I want you to observe ten different types of songbirds and tell me what they eat by what kind of bill they have.

Be sure to have a few field guides for reference, as well as binoculars, a digital camera and even a sketch book.

When you give them a challenge, it becomes a game. And they get into it and they get excited. Then, before you know it, they've spent their whole day interacting with nature, searching, discovering, and developing a sense of wonder with wildlife. And it's that sense of discovery that endears them to nature and wildlife and conservation as adults.

And it works up an appetite, too.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Monarch Malaise

Wednesday, November 15th, 2017

Habitat loss along its migration route may be one reason the Monarch butterfly is in decline. While feeding on nectar, Monarchs pollinate wildflowers along their route, which benefits our ecosystem.

There are two primary ways that habitat supports pollinators.

Johnnie Smith oversees outreach and education at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

And one is, the adult pollinators oftentimes feed on nectar of flowers. So, flowering plants that are a food source for the pollinator is very important. But also, is the food source that the pollinator's larvae rely on as they're growing up and becoming an adult. And so, that is just as important as the flowering plants that support the adults.

For Monarchs, native milkweed is an important plant. By cultivating them in our yards, along with other nectar and larval plants, we can all play a part in their survival.

There is no effort that is too small to be counted worthy. And there's no spot of land that is too small to contain pollinator habitat. So, we really want to empower everybody—that they can make a difference. Right where you stand. Right where you live—you can create pollinator habitat, and help turn around this negative trend with the monarchs.

Find native and adapted plants for pollinators on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

TPW Magazine's Rio Grande Valley Road Trip

Thursday, November 16th, 2017

To celebrate its 75th anniversary, Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine's staff spent a week in the Rio Grande Valley to discover its stories.

It's the craziest thing we've ever done. But, sometimes crazy is brilliant. And I'm hoping that's the case here.

Editor, Louie Bond, says the issue is a tribute to the folks who started the magazine 75 years ago in the midst of a world war.

And we thought about, what part of the state of Texas could we celebrate that embodies the spirit of Texas, and the multi-culturalism, and fantastic nature opportunities? And we unanimously agreed the Rio Grande Valley was the place to go.

Their inspiration came from an old issue of Norwegian Airlines magazine.

Who had taken the entire team to the most northern location that they fly to in Norway—which was actually a tiny little town within the Arctic Circle. But, for such a tiny town, a whole magazine was devoted to it, and it was the most fascinating thing I had ever seen.

In the end, Louie Bond says the December issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine is a love letter.

We call it a love letter to the Rio Grande Valley. And that's what I would like everyone to take away from it. You know, to look at the Rio Grande Valley through the eyes of a new visitor, who looks around and says: "Wow. I cannot believe what I found here."

The December issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine is on newsstands now.

TPW TV—Texas Clipper 10 Years Later

Friday, November 17th, 2017

Ten years ago, Texas Parks and Wildlife sent a ship called The Texas Clipper to the gulf floor to serve as an artificial reef.

Texas Parks & Wildlife has taken a section of the Gulf of Mexico that was once a barren desert, and created an enormous ecosystem of 180,000 square feet of substrate, to bring new life for both the fisherman and the divers.

Tim O'Leary takes sport divers out to explore the Texas Clipper which now teems with marine life.

This is a world class wreck. I want Texans and Texas to get excited.

The Clipper is an oasis for the marine life of the Gulf of Mexico. Dale Shively headed the project for Texas Parks and Wildlife.

This is quite an adventure to come back 10 years later and see that it's a tremendous dive opportunity, it's a great place for fishing, and it's a great place for marine habitat. I think it's a great dive destination. Lots of marine life, a lot of coral, juvenile reef species of all different types. You've got thousands and thousands of square feet of hard surface area and you can see that where the marine life is growing on the ship itself. I would consider this a big success for an artificial reef.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS airs a segment on the Texas Clipper, then and now, the week of November 19. Check local listings.

Food Week: 1850s Texas Fall Feast

Monday, November 20th, 2017

In 1850s Texas, when Anson Jones – the last President of the Republic – retired to his plantation in Barrington [at Washington-on-the-Brazos], Thanksgiving was not the nationally recognized holiday it is today.

But people certainly still had feast days, and they certainly celebrated fall.

Barb King, lead domestic interpreter at Barrington Living History Farm, says they celebrate fall on the farm with a feast, too. Everything's cooked on a hearth, including dark meat heritage turkeys raised and butchered on site and fresh produce from their garden.

Right now we're getting a lot of sweet potatoes in. We have some cucuzza gourds, which are an 1850s Italian delicacy that we're growing in the garden for the first time this year. We have pumpkins, so we'll probably do pumpkin pie. People in 1850 liked that as well. People ate much less sugar than we do today because you'd have to hunt a bee tree or go buy expensive sugar. So, we might do a spice cake or gingerbread is very popular, as is cider. Here, we might make pear cider. And, anytime Anson goes up north, he writes about bringing back barrels of apples.

The third Saturday of each month... Washington-on-the-Brazos presents [Living History Saturday](#)...which often includes a cooking demo.

Find more information in the calendar section of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Food Week: Christopher Kimball on Wild Game

Tuesday, November 21st, 2017

Christopher Kimball, former host of America's Test Kitchen (current host of Milk Street) on PBS TV, is a hunter. Yet, when he included an image of rabbits he shot on his TV show, it didn't go over well.

Years ago, I had a photograph of me holding up two or three rabbits that I had shot – because I do a lot of rabbit hunting in the winter. America Public Television distributes our show, and I think they sent out a warning indicating the stations may want to gray out that particular photograph. So, most people are not prepared for that, probably.

If you are prepared, and ready to become a hunters, find information to get you started on the TPW website.

You see more women hunting now than you did. And, I think in certain parts of the country there's more of it.

Kimball says when cooking game, you must know the optimal methods for each wild protein.

The tough, dark meat you braise slowly – like the back legs of the rabbit. But, the very lean tenderloin – or backstrap – that gets cooked in about five minutes. Some of that meat you can barely cook – like the tenderloin of a deer. You don't want to cook it much over medium rare. But, if you have other cuts of meat that are tougher and really need a long, slow cooking – you really have to think about the cuts that way. Because, game meat isn't fatty. And actually, that's why they larded. And I've done it – larded venison, because it needed the fat. It's not like a 300 pound pig that's got a lot of fat in it.

[Find game recipes on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

Food Week: Wild Game Ups His Chef Game

Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017

Hunters call them feral pigs. Chefs call them wild boars. Names don't matter as long as the end result is delicious.

We use wild boar for a lot of chilis and things like that.

Feral pigs cause millions of dollars in damage to cropland in Texas, and tear up wildlife habitat, too.

Chef and restaurateur, Jack Gilmore serves game dishes at his namesake restaurants Jack Allen's Kitchen in Austin and Round Rock, and says cooking wild boar offers challenges and rewards.

You really can't write a recipe for it, because each time it's different because it's wild. It might be a little gamier, or a little fatty – or it may not have enough fat in it. You really have to be a chef again and say: 'Well, if it doesn't have enough fat in it, we could add bacon to it. If it has too much fat in it, we have to render it.' You never know what a wild boar eats. You just don't

know. But, if they're raised in the Hill Country, you know they're eating persimmons; you know they're eating acorns; you know they're eating pretty good. But, sometimes you just have to realize what you've got and make it taste good.

Braising feral hog meat in the oven on low heat over a long period of time creates a tender and tasty result.

[Find wild game recipes on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

Food Week: Respecting the Source

Thursday, November 23rd, 2017

Holly Heyser, Communications director for California Waterfowl took up hunting to spend more time with her boyfriend who is a hunter, author and chef.

I got sick of being alone on weekends when he was out duck hunting all day long. He would get up at two in the morning and be out forever....well...it didn't take that for me to join him. What it took was for him to cooking a lot of ducks, and wild ducks, especially where we live in the Sacramento Valley. Amazing. Really great food.

It's appropriate that on Thanksgiving, Holly shares that hunting deepened her respect for animals and the meat they provide, and not just the wild ones.

Since I started hunting, I am so much less wasteful of meat. Even if I'm at a restaurant, if there's a burger on my plate, I will not leave one single bite of meat on my plate, because I know an animal died for that. And when it's animals you hunt, especially...we invest a lot of time. We can spend 12 hours and a lot of money on gas, to go and maybe get two ducks one day. That's a precious gift, and you don't waste it. So it's really made me understand the value of the food we eat. And, I appreciate it a lot more than I ever used to. And the fact that it's wild food and it's absolutely delicious is icing on the cake.

Wild game is free range, organic, sustainable, and nutritious.

[Find game recipes on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

Food Week: Flavor Forward Game Cookery

Friday, November 24th, 2017

To coax the best flavor from the deer hunters harvest this fall, proper care from field to plate, is a must. Just ask Marcus Paslay. He's chef and owner of Clay Pigeon Food & Drink in Fort Worth.

Every step of the way—the way it's handled—drastically affects flavor. You know, in the field, it's something you want to get cleaned out as soon as you can, and get it cold as soon as you can. It keeps that flavor a little bit more clean.

A bit more clean, and a lot less gamey – but not without some gaminess.

It is an acquired taste. So, I think whoever's eating it is going to have to have a sense of adventure to a certain extent. But there are ways to overcome it a little bit. I always like using brines. Soaking the meat in a sugar, citrus, salt bath overnight—or whatever it takes. That really helps out well with big game such as venison, or hog.

Brining is just one method Chef Paslay uses to impart flavor into game.

Another way I really love on venison is rubbing it down with coffee grounds. And the tannins in the coffee help break down the proteins and they also impart a pretty strong flavor themselves, which masks the gaminess of the meat.

Find a link to [Chef Marcus Paslay's recipe for coffee rubbed venison loin](http://passporttotexas.org) at passporttotexas.org.

Fall Fishing in Texas

Monday, November 27th, 2017

When was the last time you went fishing? Fall weather makes spending extended periods of time outdoors more pleasant, but beyond that: fishing is simply great this time of year – saltwater and freshwater.

While Hurricane Harvey stirred things up along the coast, saltwater fishing shines this time of year. Red drum—or redfish—are favorites of coastal anglers as they migrate into the beachfront waters of the gulf for their annual spawn.

According to veteran anglers, autumn is an ideal time to cast for tarpon and snook, too. You'll find those farther south.

Not a saltwater fisher? No worries—there's plenty of action in freshwater during the cooler months. With more great bass lakes than you can shake a stick at, expect to reel in some big fish as they move to shallower waters in fall.

Remember: if you reel in a largemouth bass weighing 13 pounds or more, consider donating it to the [Toyota Texas ShareLunker program](#) for use in the spawning program.

Some bass lakes to visit this fall include Lake Fork, Falcon Lake, and Choke Canyon Reservoir.

Any time is a good time to fish in Texas, and fall may just be the best time.

Less is More When Cooking Fresh Caught Fish

Tuesday, November 28th, 2017

You may be tired of eating those heavy, Thanksgiving leftovers by now. If that's true, it's easy to find a nearby fishing hole where you can reel in something light, fresh and delicious. Chef Cindy Haenel says there's nothing like catching your own dinner.

It's fabulous. I know exactly how old that fish is, when it came out of the water and how long it's been dead. And that's important with fish especially. Fresh is always best.

Cindy, an avid angler, is a chef instructor at Central Market in Austin.

I love the saltwater as well as freshwater. But the saltwater you have more variety. You never know what you're going to pull up. It's exciting – like Christmas morning.

Immediately place your catch on ice, and if there's a cleaning station on shore, Chef Cindy says consider doing the dirty work there. And when you get your catch back to the kitchen, be careful not to overcook it.

Most people, if they don't like the taste of fish, it's probably because they've overcooked it. And, as it cooks, and the oil of the fish starts to come out of the flesh, it burns very, very quickly. So, if you will undercook your fish, or protect that fish with either a salt crust, or even if it just has a little butter, or some kind of fat on the outside it still protecting that fish while it's cooking.

Find fish recipes from Chef Cindy as well as a link to other fish and game recipes at passporttotexas.org.

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series and works to increase fishing and boating opportunities in Texas.

Don't Blame the Termites for this Damage

Wednesday, November 29th, 2017

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

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 feathered culprits inflicting damage on homes with wood siding.

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.

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.

But they do. How to keep woodpeckers from damaging your home...that's tomorrow.

Solution to Woodpecker Damage to Home

Thursday, November 30th, 2017

As a rule, woodpeckers dig out cavities in dead trees, called snags. Once construction is done—they move in. The exception occurs when they mistake your home's wood 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 TPW. He says woodpecker damage occurs most often in urban and suburban areas where homeowners have removed the dead trees 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.

Find information and free blueprints to make your own woodpecker nest box at passporttotexas.org.

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.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

Passport to Texas December 2017

A Month of Holiday Fun Ahead at State Parks

Friday, December 1st, 2017

Texas State Parks have what you're looking for this holiday season.

On December 2 join the festivities at Lake Casa Blanca International State Park in Laredo, for the [Fourth Annual Christmas Boat Parade](#)! There's Music and games. Activities begin at 5:30 pm and the Boat Parade will begin at 7:30 pm.

Also on December 2, from 6 – 8 p.m. at Goliad SP & HS, Dr. James Lee directs the Beeville Community Chorus as they present [a selection of sacred and secular Christmas music inside the old mission chapel](#).

On December 9th, celebrate an 1850's [Christmas at Washington-on-the-Brazos SHS](#). Explore the farm. Fall in with rowdy revelers. Meet up with St. Nick. There's an evening service with a traveling minister and a barn dance, too. Reservations are encouraged.

December 15 from 6-8 p.m. enjoy a sparkly evening at [Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery State Historic Site](#) when you walk their 1/4-mile trail of lights that overlooks the city of La Grange. Experience the 1850s era home of German immigrant H.L. Kreische bedecked in German-Texas Christmas splendor of the period.

In the Galveston area? [On Christmas day join Ranger Lisa for 1.5 mile afternoon stroll](#) along the beach. Look for birds, dolphins, sea shells, or the occasional \$20 bill. It happens.

Find more events at texasstateparks.org/holidays.

[State Parks Offer Unique Holiday Fun](#)

Monday, December 4th, 2017

Get to a state park or historic site this holiday season.

When we get to go outside and integrate holiday nostalgia and mix that with the outdoors and Christmas lights and food—it creates a really unique experience.

Thomas Wilhelm, with state parks, says forty-three sites have planned more than 60 holiday-themed events.

Our historic sites are doing a lot of period appropriate recreations of Christmas. We'll have a lot of fun outdoors with decorated campsite events, Santa hikes, that sort of thing. We also have a lot of food themed events this year.

Such as a taffy pull and cookie walk. Experience other sweet events like A Very Marshy Christmas at Sea Rim State Park near Beaumont.

Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by airboat, and hang out with the kids and take pictures. Lake Mineral Wells State Park, near Fort Worth, they are having their Cross-Timbers Cowboy Christmas. And they'll have Christmas Cowboy Style. They're having a cowboy poet come in, a cowboy singer. And they'll gather 'round the campfire. Palo Duro Canyon is having their Balloon Glow event in the canyon, which is a really unique experience. And they are collecting

donations for the High Plains Food Bank, which is a great opportunity to participate in “the season of giving.”

Find all holiday events at texasstateparks.org/holidays.

Fishing for Flounder

Tuesday, December 5th, 2017

Flounder’s flat shape and ability to blend with its surroundings, makes it nearly invisible and difficult to catch—unless you’re Brian Treadway...

I think I’ve got a hit. Fish on! Fish on! I give you the southern Flounder. They live to be about six years of age. The state record’s 13 pounds. So, a 20-inch flounder’s considered a trophy fish.

Treadway fishes for flounder in Chocolate bayou, which he says is ideal flounder habitat.

The edge of the shoreline is a prime example of what you want to fish. It’s not flat. It’s simply curvy, and lots of points. Lots of edges. Drains are coming out of the marsh. It’s just a prime example of great, great terrain for the flounder.

December 1st -14th, the daily bag limit is two flounder, taken by any legal means. The current minimum size for a keeper is 14 inches with no maximum.

Oh, shoot. I stepped on him.

When Coe Parker’s not stepping on flounder in Christmas Bay, he’s gigging them.

The tools you need for gigging are a good gig—two prong preferably. I have mine marked off with the legal size limit. You have an underwater gig light, as well as a 12-volt deer feeder battery. That’s pretty much all you need.

Gigging with the best of them. Tomorrow.

Gigging After Dark for Flounder

Wednesday, December 6th, 2017

If you think fishing is a warm weather endeavor for the daytime hours, think again. Kelly Parker and his son Coe take to *Christmas Bay in the dark of night in fall and winter months to flounder—as in fishing for flounder.*

It’s nice and cool. You’re not worried about a sunburn. So, it’s relaxing. You aren’t working up a sweat. And it’s just very enjoyable. Very peaceful.

The Parker's wade into the bay armed with a gig and shining a light on the water. A gig is pole fitted with a multi-pronged spear for impaling the fish. Giggling is a legal means of harvesting flounder between December 1st and 14th. The bag limit is two fish per day.

[Kelly] Hurry. Hurry. Hurry before it goes. That cloud's going to get over it. Go! [splash] Yeah. There you go. [Coe] That actually looks like a Gulf flounder. [Kelly] I knew there was one hiding out here somewhere. [Coe] Yeah, they're very hard to find. And a lot of people first time giggling ask what they're looking for. And literally you're looking for what we call the imprint. It's the outline of the flounder. So, it looks like a football with a tail. That's how I kind of describe it to new people that are coming out to the sport.

This flatfish is skilled at laying low, and blending with its surroundings. Sometimes they're closer than you think.

[Coe] Oh shoot. [Kelly] Stepped on him? [Coe] I stepped on him. I missed him. Let me see if I can find another one real quick. I saw a few over here.

Watch your step, and [find fishing information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#).

Stocking Southern Flounder

Thursday, December 7th, 2017

Spotted sea trout, redfish and southern flounder are the top three popular sportfish. Sea trout and redfish populations are stable, but not so for Southern Flounder.

We've had a slow, but steady, decrease in flounder populations throughout the coast of Texas. It's been worse in some bays than it has in others. But it's just been a slow decline.

David Abrego oversees the hatchery program at Sea Center Texas. Data suggests fewer females, over fishing, and loss due to shrimp bycatch are some of the main issues affecting flounder. Coastal hatcheries are tasked with helping boost the Southern Flounder populations.

The whole point of the stocking enhancement program is to supplement the natural population with fish.

Former stocking team member, Shane Bonnot, says there's a learning curve with flounder.

Flounder is totally different than redfish and trout; it's a whole new ballgame. So, we're at the beginning stages of learning how to culture this fish.

The process begins with capturing male brooders to fertilize the eggs. And it's not easy to do.

You have so many factors that can go against you. Whether it's the wind, or a strong tide. And of course, visibility is not optimal.

They breed healthy males with females at the hatchery, and after three months, they release thousands of flounder fingerlings into the bays to supplement the wild population...for your angling pleasure.

TPW TV–Lone Star Hiking Trail

Friday, December 8th, 2017

Texas Parks and Wildlife TV producers go the distance to tell compelling stories. In, Jeffrey Buras' case, that distance was 100 miles for a segment called: The Hundred Mile Hike.

It is a challenge, because not only are you doing a 100-mile hike, but you're also trying to shoot a video of that hike. For Emily, she got to just enjoy it and experience it, but I was worried about angles and lighting and batteries.

The segment follows 20-year-old Emily Lozano, a former State Park Ambassador as she backpacks the Lone Star Hiking trail in Sam Houston National Forrest.

I've always loved the outdoors. So, this spring break I decided to try something a little bit new, and go on a backpacking trip. I'm going to do the Lone Star hiking Trail; it's extremely long. We'll see how it goes.

Emily is alone for most of her trek, and Jeffrey did his best to remove himself from her experience. But at the end of the day when recording voice over recaps...

It was funny because while we were doing those little recaps, she would say 'Oh, and then Jeffrey did this. Oh, I can't talk about Jeffrey.' Then she would say "Well, my imaginary friend did this...'. She kept referring to me as her imaginary friend.

Emily's experience is anything but imaginary. Join her on the trail next week on the Texas Parks and WildlifeTV series on PBS.

It was such a great spring break. Great in ways I wouldn't have expected it to be. I'm so glad I went.

And you'll be so glad you watched. Check your local listings.

Still Time to Get State Park Ornaments

Monday, December 11th, 2017

State park users look forward to this time of year because new Texas State park ornaments are available.

For the last several years, we've featured three unique parks each year. This year we're featuring Lake Arrowhead SP, Garner SP and Village Creek SP. Three very different parks from three very different regions.

Thomas Wilhelm, with state parks, says the American made laser engraved wooden ornaments include an iconic image associated with each featured site.

Each year we try to feature a historic site that has a Civilian Conservation Corps component...we [may also] feature either an animal or geography [on an ornament]. This year we're featuring Lake Arrowhead because of the prairie dog town there. So, the image is a prairie dog. And we try to do an activity as well. So, this year Village Creek, we're featuring paddling sports that happen there at Village Creek.

The CCC built dance terrace adorns the Garner SP ornament. Purchase ornaments individually or as a group. A limited number of ornaments from past years are also available.

Call our customer service center (512.389.8900) any time during the month of December, and they will walk you through the process, and make sure you get the ones that you're looking for. It's usually about a 10 day turnaround from order to receipt.

Find prices and additional information about all [Texas State Parks ornaments on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

[TPW Magazine – Featuring Epic Texas Challenges](#)

Tuesday, December 12th, 2017

Expect months of action-packed stories in [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.](#)

We have chosen as our theme for 2018: the year of epic Texas challenges.

Editor, Louie Bond. And just what are epic Texas challenges?

The biggest. The best. The most. The fastest. Whatever hyperbole you can come up with... You know, Texans love to brag [good natured] and challenge each other. So. We're going to play on that Texas spirit all year long.

Louie said the challenges align with the Texas Parks and Wildlife mission.

We thought about all of the things that we love to write about in the magazine, and we started looking at all the events that happen in Texas. We figured there was no way to make it all match up month-for-month with our publication. But you know the magic that happens. We found all the different categories and were able to place one in each month of the magazine. So, it just worked out perfectly.

In 2018, readers will paddle to the coast during the Texas Water Safari, bag big deer at the Muy Grande deer contest, push personal limits during the Howl at the Moon Relay, and hang on for dear life at the Hueco Tanks Rock Rodeo and more.

One thing readers might like to know is that if one particular month doesn't please them—each month is totally different. So, I hope that they hang on for an issue that piques their curiosity.

The latest issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine is on newsstands now.

TPW Magazine – Hueco Rock Rodeo

Wednesday, December 13th, 2017

The January 2018 issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#), features a story about the Hueco Rock Rodeo by Russell Roe.

The Hueco Tanks Rock Rodeo is a bouldering competition they hold every year at [Hueco Tanks State Park](#) outside El Paso. And it is the top bouldering competition in the nation, if not the world.

During four days in February, competitors cling to and climb boulders and small cliffs using nothing but their hands and feet.

Bouldering may lack the drama of scaling a high peak. The climbers are drawn to it because of the purity of the climbing and the powerful, graceful moves required, and the mental challenge of finding the best way to the top.

Climbers spot... and cheer on one another. Some climbs find competitors seemingly defying gravity.

At Hueco Tanks, they're really kind of finding the steepest thing they can climb. Which is often the roof of a cave. They're moving horizontally across the ground—holding on by their feet and their hands. And, it goes seem like it defies gravity.

Look for Russell Roe's Hueco Rock Rodeo story in the January issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine.

The history of Hueco Tanks, concerning bouldering, is so rich. And this competition celebrates bouldering and celebrates Hueco Tanks' history, and the development of that sport.

Clean Windows May be Dangerous to Birds

Thursday, December 14th, 2017

When ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford, visited the studio recently, he brought with him a small, lifeless bird.

And it turns out to be a yellow-bellied sapsucker.

The little woodpecker had flown into a window at Texas Parks and Wildlife headquarters. Cliff determined its sex and age by the smattering of red feathers on its head and white ones on its throat.

This is a female, yellow-bellied sapsucker, first year bird. I have a permit that allows me to salvage these and take them to a museum where it can be put up as a museum specimen for scientific use.

You've probably seen dead birds in your neighborhood.

Bird deaths are rampant in urban areas [from] windows and/or housecats. You can't take the killer out of a cat. And then windows: go outside—try to take the perspective of a bird. Look at the window. You'll see blue skies and white clouds, and the trees. It's all a reflection of what's behind you.

Birds, especially the young and inexperienced, fly into the reflection because it looks like clear passage.

The really sad part is, this bird doesn't breed in Texas or anywhere close to Texas. This is a winter bird. And actually, I haven't seen one yet this fall. It's sad that the first one [I see] is a dead one in my hand.

As a museum specimen, researchers will study the little bird to better understand her species.

Her death is not in vain, but tens of thousands of birds across the planet die every day by hitting windows.

As good a reason as any not to wash your windows. The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

Quail and Turkey Outlook for 2017-2018

Friday, December 15th, 2017

Last quail season, bobwhite were at an all-time high thanks to a few years of great weather in a row.

We saw something we hadn't seen in over 10 years, and it was quite special. And what comes up, must come down.

Robert Perez is Upland Bird Game Program Leader.

This past winter and spring we had average winter rains. Average spring rains. And so, we did have some quail production over the summer—that wasn't phenomenal. But what we did have

was so many birds that are still alive from last year that they carried over to this year. So, hunters can expect—in the bag—a lot of adult birds.

The season for Bobwhite, Scaled (blue) and Gambel's Quail runs through February 25, statewide.

Scaled quail were phenomenal as well. Way out west in the Trans Pecos. There will still be great hunting opportunities out west at our WMAs.

If turkey's more your bag, Perez says Rio Grande Turkey season is looking good.

Rio Grande turkey hunting in Texas is top notch. Populations in our state are at an all-time high. We'll have two year old, three year old birds. Maybe not so much production this past year—a little bit below average—but, overall, Texas populations of Rio Grande turkeys are just through the roof.

[Refer to the Outdoor Annual](#) for seasons and bag limits for all upland game birds.

The Christmas Tree in Texas

Monday, December 18th, 2017

The custom of decorating trees for Christmas took root in German villages during the sixteenth century.

A lot of Germans, as you know, settled Texas. And they brought a tradition with them of the tabletop Christmas tree.

Cynthia Brandimarte is program director for Texas historic sites.

When you look at interior photographs of Texas houses, you see many tabletop Christmas trees ornamented for the season, particularly in German households in the late nineteenth century Texas.

Ornaments were handmade then, and small gifts often dangled from branches. Eventually, the tabletop conifer gave way to larger trees that became “floor models,” and the decorations sometimes mirrored the day's events.

You saw more and more seven or eight feet trees that were placed on the floor. And because we had just ended the Spanish American war in victory, there was a fashion in the early part of the twentieth century to decorate trees with a few American flags here and there. We have photographic evidence for that.

[If you celebrate Christmas](#), we wish you a joyous holiday season. And if you do not, then it's the perfect time to immerse yourself in nature, because Life's Better Outside.

Road Ecology and Protecting Rare Species

Tuesday, December 19th, 2017

Roads provide convenient travel to work, school and home for humans—but not for wildlife.

You have habitat loss. And then that physical road can act as a barrier to wildlife. It can impact habitat connectivity. Which, then, in turn can impact genetic transfer of information between populations, and weaken the genetic background for a species.

Laura Zebehazy, program leader for [Wildlife Habitat Assessment](#), studies the impacts of roadways on wildlife, known as road ecology.

Basically, it is where biologists, engineers, landscape architects... try to evaluate the impacts that road infrastructure has on wildlife habitat connectivity, air pollution, noise pollution, and try to find solutions to alleviate those impacts from that type of development.

[Endangered ocelots](#) that live in Rio Grande Valley brush country have died on SH 100. Recently, TxDOT, in consultation with USFWS and Texas Parks and Wildlife..., completed four wildlife underpasses along this popular route to South Padre Island.

To allow ocelot and any other wildlife in the area to move under the road between the Bahia Grande to the south, and the Port of Brownsville area up north towards Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.

With wildlife cameras in place, TxDOT will collect data on these solutions and adjust as necessary [to save this \(and other\) rare species](#).

The Wildlife restoration Program supports our series.

The Problem With Pelicans

Wednesday, December 20th, 2017

You're driving the posted 75 MPH speed limit on SH 48 in south Texas. It's winter. Dusk. You're crossing the bridge. Suddenly, you see a pelican on the road; you barely miss it.

What happened?

In winter, what's been happening at the Gamin Bridge—at SH 48 in Bahia Grande—is strong northerly winds come through at dusk, when pelicans are coming from the coast; they want to go roost on the Bahia Grande, [but] the way the bridge as well as the concrete barriers is engineered, it's creating these wind vortexes that—if they don't get high enough loft—makes the birds lose loft, and they crash into the roadway.

Laura Zebehazy, program leader for Wildlife Habitat Assessment, studies the impacts of roadways on wildlife, known as road ecology. Researchers believe the structure of the SH 48 Bridge, along with the fluctuating tide, may impact the wind, and the pelicans' fate.

It is contributing, but now there needs to be further research that looks at what can we do to the bridge and those concrete barriers that's the most effective to alleviate the number of pelicans that are being impacted.

We'll learn more about that tomorrow.

The Wildlife restoration Program supports our series.

Protecting Pelicans from Deadly Downdrafts

Thursday, December 21st, 2017

Winter evenings, when north winds blow, brown pelicans perish along SH 48 between Brownsville and South Padre. The highway bridge, concrete barriers, and changing tides, contribute to downdrafts that cause the birds to crash onto the roadway enroute to their roost at Bahia Grande.

It's heartbreaking to see what's going on there.

Over the last year more than a hundred the birds died on SH 48. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, TxDOT, USFWS, nonprofits and citizen groups, have joined to develop solutions, says Laura Zebehazy, program leader for Wildlife Habitat Assessment at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

They're putting up temporary signage to ask the traveling public to slow down. Be aware: there's pelicans on the road. DPS is getting involved. There's folks who volunteer to flag people down to get them to slow down if they know a bird is on the roadway.

Earlier, TxDOT installed poles on the bridge, which forces the birds to fly higher.

Now, they're actually putting these flashing lights [on the poles] so the birds can see. All of these things trying to encourage the birds to move up as much as possible so, they can maybe avoid that tornado of winds that makes them fall to the roadway.

If you find yourself driving that stretch of road at dusk this winter, slow down; save lives.

The Wildlife restoration Program supports our series.

TPW TV — Mules of the Plains

Friday, December 22nd, 2017

The panhandle of Texas is the epitome of rural. And [mule deer](#) can be found nearly everywhere. Just ask local, Rodney Geissler.

It's not unusual to nearly be able to walk plumb up on a mule deer. [Truck door closes] Or drive up on one. If they're out in the field next to the highway you can stop and take pictures of them [camera clicks].

In fall and winter it's common to see groups of up to 200 mule deer grazing in wheat fields. And that interests biologists like Thomas Janke.

One of the big questions of this project is dealing with agriculture land versus the rangeland like you see behind me.

Janke is studying how mule deer movements and survival are influenced by panhandle agriculture.

Is there a difference in the nutritional value of the plants? Or is it the deer are picking it just because it's out here and they have a buffet.

During the week of December 24, the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#) will feature a segment on the mule deer study, which shows how they use helicopters to track and trap the animals.

We have deer that are radio collared that we captured back in 2015. The radio collars all transmit a signal. Those radio collars are allowing the helicopter crew to use radio telemetry and locate them.

[Check your local listings.](#)

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series, and funds mule deer research in Texas.

[Finding Your Resolve for 2018](#)

Monday, December 25th, 2017

As we approach the New Year we consider ways to improve our lives in the 12 months ahead.

More time outdoors often ranks near the top of everyone's list. Thirty minutes a day outdoors for adults, and an hour for children, improves overall physical and mental wellbeing.

Consider a daily walk 'round your neighborhood, or explore your own backyard. Discover what critters make their homes there. Create a game of counting the species you see. Do this every day to see if something new has arrived. Keep a list and compare the seasons.

Perhaps this New Year you'll become a citizen scientist. Texas Nature Tracker Programs can help. Sign up for Nature Trackers, choose from the rare species they're tracking, and share your

observations on [iNaturalist](#). Biologists use your data to broaden their knowledge, and improve the support they provide these species.

Perhaps this is the year you volunteer with one of the friends groups at a nearby Texas state park, or become a master naturalist, or even a certified Texas Wasters Specialist.

The New Year holds so much promise for you, your family, friends and community. Enrich your life when you spend time in nature solo or with others, because Life's Better Outside.

2018 First Day Hikes in State Parks

Tuesday, December 26th, 2017

When it comes to making New Year resolutions, success comes when you walk your talk. For the past few years, that's meant busting a move on state park trails during [First Day Hike events](#).

First Day Hikes is a nationwide initiative that Texas State Parks has been participating in for the last several years.

Thomas Wilhelm, with state parks, says most sites throughout Texas will host First Day Hikes.

Essentially, it's the concept of getting outside on January first, and doing something to kick the year off right. So, almost all of our parks have some sort of first day hike. A few of our parks take it a unique way. For example, Balmorhea state park—the swimming pool in West Texas—they have a first day dive. So, everybody jumps into Balmorhea, which is a polar dive sort of thing, but that's a unique experience. But many of our parks do have those first day hikes. And they're, of course, guided hikes with a park ranger. And it's just a way to start the year off right on the good foot. Literally.

Find all First Day Hike events at texasstateparks.org.

2018 Resolutions for Anglers

Wednesday, December 27th, 2017

When I asked Karen Marks and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Aquatic Education team if they had any New Year resolutions for anglers that they'd like to share with me, they did, and boiled them down to three little words:

Learn. Fish. Teach.

Learn to be safe on or near the water. Understand weather and water currents, and how to safely use your gear. Learn how to hold and release fish safely for you and the fish. Most of all, [learn about aquatic invasive species](#) and how as an angler you can prevent their spread.

Fish. Get outside and go fish. Buy a license and follow all regulations. [It's free to fish at state parks](#) with fishing opportunities. Use established trails to access shoreline, and pick up litter along the way. Leave every area better than you found it. And invite family and friends to join you; don't be surprised when they jump at the chance.

That brings us to teach. Volunteer at a local fishing event, help a scout group, volunteer with Parks and Wildlife or with a local veteran fishing organization like Heroes on the Water and Project Healing Waters.

Moreover, [consider becoming a certified TPWD Angler Education instructor](#). Share your knowledge, skills and proper attitudes towards our fishing heritage, and help create a brighter future for freshwater and saltwater fishing in Texas.

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

[2018 Resolutions for Hunters](#)

Thursday, December 28th, 2017

Today: resolutions for hunters. Hunter Education Director, Steve Hall, provided a list of resolutions that, when followed, will make it even more rewarding to be a hunter in Texas this New Year.

[Attend a hunter education course](#) and recommend the training to anyone who wants to learn more about firearm, hunting and outdoor safety as well as game laws, ethics and responsibilities.

Be safe and obey the laws such as [always practicing proper muzzle control](#), staying within a safe zone of fire and brushing up on game laws and regulations each year through the Outdoor Annual.

Practicing your shooting skills before you leave for your hunting trips; learn proper shot angles, shot placement, distance estimation and vital zones of the game you hunt.

Take care of your game from "field to table"; [learn how to properly field dress](#), transport, butcher, freeze and prepare your favorite wild game meals.

Take along someone new to hunting on your next trip; expose them to the joys of the outdoors and to taking their own healthy, organic meat for the table.

Become a hunter education instructor and give back your knowledge, skills and proper attitudes towards the hunting heritage and a brighter future for hunting and shooting sports.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.