

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

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

## **Passport to Texas January 2018**

### **[Learn to Cook Fish that Everyone Enjoys](#)**

Monday, January 1st, 2018

If one of your resolutions for 2018 includes catching, cooking and eating more fish, we're here to help.

Freshwater and saltwater fish and shellfish are a great source of omega 3 fatty acids, something most of us lack in our Standard American Diet...the acronym for which is SAD.

In Texas, we have fishing opportunities statewide. But once you've caught them, then what? Some of us don't have much experience preparing fish. So we steer clear.

However, this month's Texas Parks and Wildlife cooking class collaboration with [Central Market cooking schools](#), will help get you past this aversion. It's a hands-on class that will have you preparing fish like a pro—with a citrus twist.

The menu for this class includes Fried Oyster Tacos with Citrus Salsa; Roasted Red Snapper with Citrus & Pistachios; & Blackened Redfish with Quick Cabbage & Lemon Butter. Happy New Year, right?

Classes are Tuesday, January 9 in [Dallas](#), [Fort Worth](#), [Houston](#), [San Antonio](#), [Austin](#), [Plano](#) and [Southlake](#). Historically, fish and seafood classes tend to fill fast.

Find registration information at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org) [click on the links above to the school closest to you].

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

### **[Christmas Bird Count Winding down](#)**

Tuesday, January 2nd, 2018

The [National Audubon Society's](#) annual Christmas Bird Count began December 14 and ends this Friday—the last day to collect data.

*Teams of birders go in the circle and they repeat that every year. So the circle never changes. And after decades, you have some really neat data to look at.*

More than one-hundred, 15-mile diameter counting circles dot the state. Cliff Shackelford, non-game ornithologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, says circle organizers, called compilers, choose one day during the 3-week timeframe where observers tally species over a 24-hour period.

*Some of the circles with few observers, [those people] cover that whole area in that circle. Some of the circles that are in really populated areas with lots of bird watchers like down on the coast, they'll break up that circle into piece of pie: 'And this is your piece of pie. You stay in this section and you count all the birds you can.' If you want to get up at midnight and start counting one minute later, you can look for owls. Or listen for owls. It's a 24-hour counting period per circle.*

What happens to the collected and compiled data?

*We use information from the Christmas bird count to determine where hot spots are for wintering species.*

And with that knowledge researchers are better prepared to provide these birds with what they need to thrive.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## **Take a Hike with a Furry Friend**

Wednesday, January 3rd, 2018

Thursday mornings, visitors to Davis Mountains State Park in west Texas meet for **guided hikes—with homeless dogs**.

*We usually have more people than dogs. We usually give one dog to a family and then a third of the way through the walk we'll stop and then we'll switch the dogs to different people so everybody has a chance.*

Ranger, Tara Poloskey, says participants hike with shelter dogs from the Grand Companions Humane Society in Fort Davis.

*The visitors need dogs to walk when they leave their dogs at home and they're missing their dogs. And, also, the dogs at the shelter don't get a lot of socialization and maybe they've had some pretty hard histories. They need to get out and get socialized and learn how to walk on leashes to make them more adoptable.*

The program is popular with park visitors.

*Everyone is happy to see the dogs; visitors know they're helping the dogs. And, I do talk some about the park while we're walking, so it's a good mix of interpretation and dog walks. And, for the dogs, it's a wonderful way for them to socialize and get used to different people.*

Hikers sometimes even adopt the dogs.

*In fact, today we had two. A total of five, actually, over the course of a year, but today we had two.*

Find details about hikes with homeless dogs in the calendar section of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Learn Old Time Texas Cooking Techniques**

Thursday, January 4th, 2018

January 6th is your chance to cook like an early Texan. That's when [\*\*Barrington Living History Farm hosts a hands-on cooking school\*\*](#) where participants use the technology and ingredients of 1850s Texas to prepare a meal.

*They end up cooking inside on a hearth.*

Barb King is lead domestic interpreter at the Farm.

*We do a couple of different types of foods to show the different ways of cooking on a hearth. So, we'll do something that boils in a pot that hangs from the crane. We do a couple of baked goods that bake in Dutch ovens on the hearth, itself. And then we do a turkey or a chicken in a rotisserie—or a tin kitchen is more the period term. And that way people can see all kinds of methods of cooking as well.*

If the class is full when you try to register, your name will go on a waiting list.

*The joy of the class—since they've signed a waiver to do it—they get to eat what they cook. Normally when visitors come to the farm they don't get to eat what we cook, because we're cooking for the staff, and it's not an FDA approved kitchen.*

Barb King says the menu is seasonal—as it would have been in 1850s Texas.

*Lots of root vegetables. Onions. We'll do a roast that sometimes we'll wrap in bacon. We do cornbread, because that's a big staple in 1850—in the U.S. in general—but Texas in particular.*

Find details for Barrington Farm's cooking school in the calendar section of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Outlook for the end of Waterfowl Season**

Friday, January 5th, 2018

The regular [duck season continues through January 28](#), in most of the state. Wildlife biologist, Dave Morrison, says overall, you still have good hunting ahead of you.

*Total numbers of ducks are down. But when you take a look at the overall picture. We're still at numbers we've never seen before.*

The past five years offered “unbelievable” hunting, said Morrison. And while the populations of the ten species they surveyed this spring changed...it's not bad news.

*This year, five are up, five are down. But the good news is that—with the exception of pintails and scaup—all of them are above their long-term average. So, we're still anticipating ducks showing up in Texas.*

He says if you went out last season, then expect a similar outcome this season.

*When you think about what Texas has been through, something that's similar to last year is probably pretty good. Harvey wreaked havoc along our coast. But that habitat is recovering faster than anticipated. [1.5 seconds ambiance]*

And for goose hunters: light goose season ends Jan. 28 in the east zone and February 4 in the west zone.

*Texas is blessed; we've always had pretty good goose hunting here in this state. From the perspective of snow geese, we'll have probably about the same as last year, simply because the numbers really haven't changed.*

The Texas Outdoor Annual has seasons and bag limits for all waterfowl.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

### [Hog Butchery Class Circa 1850s Texas](#)

Monday, January 8th, 2018

In 1850s Texas people raised and butchered their own animals. Pigs were a popular choice back then.

*They reproduce quickly. They're useful for eating your garbage, and then you eat them. In that way, it's kind of a closed cycle of consumption—as a recycling source.*

Barb King, is lead domestic interpreter at [Barrington Living History Farm](#) at Washington-on-the-Brazos State park and Historic Site. Before refrigeration, Texans butchered animals in cold months. January 13 & 14 farm staff will demonstrate the process. They'll dispatch an animal before guests arrive, but visitors will see everything else beginning with evisceration...

*That's actually one of my favorite times to teach anatomy lessons, because [the pig's organs] are very close to human structures. So, we can talk about different organs, what their use is....*

Afterwards, Barb says, they divide the meat into cuts.

*Then, on Sunday, we grind a lot of the meat; visitors can help with that. Then we end up curing the meat on Sunday, as well. So, we show people the start of the process, and then we have a lot of people who go home and end up trying their own charcuterie at home. Or, they already make sausage, and they just want to see the beginning of the process. You know: how do you start with it on the hoof?*

The [Whole Hog demonstration is Saturday and Sunday, January 13th & 14th](#) at Barrington Living History Farm. The program is weather dependent, so call to confirm. Find details on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

### [TPW Magazine: Hiking the Rancherias Loop](#)

Tuesday, January 9th, 2018

Tom Harvey, deputy communications director at Texas Parks and Wildlife, planned several wilderness adventures to celebrate turning 60 last year.

*Well, I did one. So at least I got something.*

That one: backpacking the Rancherias Loop in Far West Texas with alumni from the state park youth ambassador program. He wrote about it for the current issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#). Near the end of the first day, Tom said an approaching storm forced the group to stop, set up camp and take cover.

*We barely got those tents up when the rain hit. And it was blowin' a gale. It was very tense; because the wind was so powerful, it would blow the tent entirely flat, like a giant hand was mashing it down. So, I'd be lying there on my back in my sleeping bag and the tent would come flapping down right onto my face. It was scary. I was really concerned that the wind was so strong that it was just going to peel those tents right off the mountain. And so here I was in my tent—not a happy camper—and what do I hear, but laughter. In the next tent over, there are these three young ladies, and I can hear them giggling. When the big wind would come and blow the tent flat, they would howl with laughter. And it shook me out of my black worry. And I thought to myself, they're choosing to laugh in the face of this storm. It just lifted my spirits.*

Read about the entire three day, two night backpacking adventure in the current issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

### [Laughter Lifted Spirits on a Mountain](#)

Wednesday, January 10th, 2018

Tom Harvey had a personal reason for backpacking the rugged Rancherías Loop at Big Bend Ranch State Park.

*Well, frankly, I turned 60, and I wanted to do some adventures before I got too old.*

Tall, lean and fit, Harvey is deputy communications director at Texas Parks and Wildlife. Joining him on the hike were 10 former state park youth ambassadors, all more than half his age.

*It's really, really beautiful to meet these young people that are just drawn to nature and wilderness. A lot of them are newbies to this—but they're drawn to it.*

Tom shares his experience in the current issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

*We settled on this because it seemed like something that was a big adventure, but doable. And the trail had been blazed. There was a clear route. And it was a classic that hadn't been written about much in the magazine—so I thought: why not? You know, we'll write about the Rancherías Loop.*

No stranger to wilderness backpacking, Tom says the first night they scrambled to set up camp ahead of a storm.

*Well, it was scary when it was happening. We barely got those tents up when the rain hit. And it was blowing a gale. It was very tense.*

Find out what happened to the backpackers in the January/February of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine; on newsstands now.

### **[Another Texas Park Gets Dark Sky Designation](#)**

Thursday, January 11th, 2018

Good news for star gazers: **[Big Bend Ranch State Park](#)** is the latest Texas State Park designated as a Dark Sky Park by the **[International Dark-Sky Association](#)**—or IDA.

It joins neighboring Big Bend National Park to form one of the largest contiguous areas under dark-skies protection in the United States.

This designation is an important step forward in the conservation of some of the darkest night skies remaining in the lower 48 states.

Now let this sink in: With the inclusion of Big Bend Ranch State Park, we have secured the protection of natural nighttime darkness in Texas over an area larger than the U.S. state of Rhode Island. Mind blown, right?

Big Bend Ranch SP, located in the remote and rugged Trans-Pecos region, is known for giving visitors an untamed, wilderness experience. Preserving the dark sky is key to that experience and something all visitors treasure.

BBRSP joins [Copper Breaks State Park](#), [South Llano River State Park](#) and [Enchanted Rock State Park](#) in holding the prestigious IDA designation.

Find more information about the Dark Skies program on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

### **TPW TV–El Paso Envoy**

Friday, January 12th, 2018

If you've been to Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site in El Paso, count yourself among the lucky.

*Hueco Tanks isn't the smallest state park, but it's definitely the most exclusive. It's capped at 72 people a day.*

Next week the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS explores the park with an enthusiastic El Paso native.

*I'm Clara Cobb, and I run a couple social media sites here in El Paso. What you really do [in social media] is tell stories. And that's my attraction—absolutely—to Hueco Tanks. It's a place where people have been telling stories for 10,000 years.*

The stories are still being told with the rock art left behind by early inhabitants who were drawn to the site because of the rainwater pooled in natural rock basins, or huecos. You can learn more on a pictograph tour...

*[Clara] Which takes you behind the scenes to some of the more exclusive places.*

*[Interpreter] Welcome to site 17. This is lower 17—also known as newspaper cave. You have above us these cream colored shapes that date back to Apache era, roughly, somewhere around two to 400 years old. A bit more recently than them, this orange-ish horse shape right here. Everyone always thinks that is native American cave art. It's not.*

Acquaint yourself with Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site on next week's Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings.

### **Field Dressing Game**

Monday, January 15th, 2018

Lee Smith comes from a hunting family. This longtime Austin resident and avid home cook, says from the start, he's hunted for meat not trophies.

*Once you've pulled the trigger and you've got an animal down, the work really begins.*

As soon as the animal's down, the clock starts ticking; [field dressing the animal is a race against spoilage](#).

*Meat spoils due to three things: heat, moisture and dirt. Getting those internal organs out is going to immediately start to let that carcass cool. Second thing is: the skin. Taking that skin off is going to get that animal cooler, and also allow it to dry quicker. Once you've got it back [to camp], and taken the skin off, you rinse out the interior chest cavity, and get it into that cooler.*

If you're hunting on public land, or there's no walk-in cooler at your lease, after field dressing and skinning the animal, quarter it.

*That's taking off the four quarters, the two backstraps, and the rear legs. That's what you are legally bound to take. If you don't take that, you can be ticketed for waste of game.*

Put the quarters into tall kitchen garbage bags, and then into coolers with ice. How to handle game when you get it home – that's tomorrow.

### [After the Shot: From Field to Kitchen](#)

Tuesday, January 16th, 2018

[Handled correctly from field to kitchen](#), venison can be tastier than store bought meat. Keep it cool and dry immediately after harvest.

*15—And then, the real poetry begins in the aging of that meat. If you can hang that meat for three to six days, some of the enzymes in the meat start to break it down, and you really get that tender, good tasting, concentrated flavor.*

Austin resident, Lee Smith, is a hunter and home cook. He recommends vacuum sealing the meat to keep it usable for up to a year in the freezer. While you may wish to elevate a venison dish, Smith says, simple has its merits.

*23—You're legally – depending upon what county you're hunting in – able to take five deer in Texas. And that can be a lot of meat. So, I can understand after a while, how you might want to change it up and have a little horseradish sauce, or some kind of port reduction with some mushrooms. But, I want to taste the meat; I don't want to throw a heavy sauce on it. In fact, tonight, we're having venison fajitas.*

Lee Smith says he usually marinates venison back strap briefly in olive oil and soy sauce, grills it, and ends up with something the whole family enjoys.

### [Chasing Rainbows in Texas](#)

Wednesday, January 17th, 2018



It's the New year; what better way to celebrate than with rainbows – rainbow trout, that is.

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

Carl Kittel is a program director for Inland Fisheries. Thanks to good rainfall throughout most of the state, we have fishing access to almost all waterbodies.

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

Kittel says the agency will stock about 160 sites around the state, distributing more than 310-thousand rainbow trout. The fish will be divided among the various locations, including urban neighborhood fishin' holes.

*We publish a schedule on the Texas parks and Wildlife Department webpage. Look for the winter trout stocking link.*

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

The Sport fish restoration program supports our series and helps to fund [rainbow trout stocking in Texas...](#)

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

## **Reel in a Rainbow Before They're Gone**

Thursday, January 18th, 2018

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

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

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

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

That's why we stock them in winter; most of Texas is too hot for the fish to survive. Inland fisheries will distribute more than 310-thousand rainbows in 160 locations.

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

With the New Year here, it's a great time add fishing to your to-do list this year. [Find the stocking schedule on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)

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

### [TPW TV – The Shrimping Life](#)

Friday, January 19th, 2018

When it comes to seafood, shrimp is king. And the Stringo Family—from Port O'Connor—are king-makers, having shrimped Texas Bays for decades.

*I was born here. That's all I've ever done—you know. Matagorda Bay, mainly.*

That's Anthony Stringo. He and his 75 year old father, Jesse, appear next week on a segment of the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Anthony says his dad's been shrimping the bays most of his life.

*Fifty years I'd say. Yeah. Probably one of the oldest left out here. There might be one or two more his age left.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife Fisheries Biologist, Mark Fisher, also on the show, says shrimping's changed since the Stringo family started working the bays.

*Shrimping in the nineteen fifties was a very good decade. A price of shrimp was very high, fuel, fuel was cheap, labor was abundant; there was almost no government regulation back then. If you could work hard and handle it, it was all for the taking.*

Anthony says shrimping's not as freewheeling or as lucrative today.

*These are the big shrimp, we ought to be getting four dollars a pound for them shrimp right there. But the markets not there because [consumers] get so much from overseas, [including] the farm raised shrimp.*

Last of the Stringos airs on next week's Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings.

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

## Managing for Monarchs

Monday, January 22nd, 2018

Monarch butterflies, which are beautiful, are declining. Yet, they're not especially good pollinators, or a significant food source for other critters. So, is being pretty reason enough to save them?

*I think it's important not to deemphasize how important this is. If you're ever out on a Texas river in the fall, and you have hundreds or thousands of monarchs coming through – that's a fabulous natural phenomenon.*

You make a good point Ben Hutchins. Ben is Texas Parks and Wildlife's invertebrate biologist. He says the insects have a practical value in Mexico where they overwinter.

*Overwintering monarchs are a really important source of economic income as tourists come from around the world to see them.*

Conserving monarchs also benefits other Texas species.

**Monarch conservation, benefits a whole suite of other species.** *So, for example, if you're managing a landscape to benefit monarchs, you're also going to be benefitting many other pollinators. They also benefit a host of larger species. For example, if you're managing habitat – keeping it open as a prairie or savannah – that's going to be benefitting upland bird species like quail; so there's really an economic incentive of for being conscious of monarchs when we're managing landscapes.*

Who knew, right? Tomorrow: a citizen science project to help monarchs.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## Citizens Monitor Monarchs

Tuesday, January 23rd, 2018

Why are monarch butterflies declining?

*The current thought is that it is actually several different factors that are contributing to the decline that we're seeing.*

Ben Hutchins is TPW's invertebrate biologist. Deforestation of their winter roosts in Mexico, cold winters, and prolonged drought along their migration path, has had negative effects.

*And then, finally, what this project is addressing is this widespread decline in availability of milkweed plants. That's due to a couple things: predominantly increased use of certain herbicides.*

Texas Milkweeds and Monarchs is a citizen science project where folks keep an eye out for the state's 37 different species of milkweeds –vital to the monarch's lifecycle – and then then share observations on [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).

*We have experts that are going to be looking at these observations and identifying those.*

Hutchins says more than a thousand contributors have logged more than seven thousand observations of all 37 milkweed species. Texas Parks and Wildlife also has guide to Texas milkweeds to help you ID the plants.

*It is available online, [with] pictures of all of the different species of milkweeds, distribution maps—to let you know if you're in the right part of the state—and also some of the key characteristics.*

Find it on the Nature Trackers page of the Texas Parks and Wildlifewebsite.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## **Reducing “Gaminess” in Game**

Wednesday, January 24th, 2018

If you take a pass when offered wild game and fish because you think it tastes funny...

*Most wild game and fish, if it's off-tasting, is ruined between the kill and the kitchen, and not in the kitchen, itself.*

Susan Ebert is a hunter, angler, forager and cook; she wrote the book Field to Table, a guide to growing, procuring, and preparing seasonal foods—including wild proteins.

*As good as the recipe might be, unless people know how to care for that game from the time it's harvested, to the time that they're ready to cook with it, they're going to be disappointed with the results.*

A clean kill, proper field dressing and getting everything on ice as soon as possible is vital. Once you have the meat at home...

*Venison and wild duck—I will dry age those. Maybe 48 hours. Set them over a drip pan, on a rack. And let them just dry age in the refrigerator uncovered, with air circulating around them.*

Ebert recommends brining rabbit and feral hog; brine can be as simple as sugar and salt dissolved in water.

*Let that brine for a couple of days. Then, sear it over the grill and then either move it over indirect heat or put in it the smoker at a low temperature...*

Until it is succulent. [Find wild game and fish recipes](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Get to Know the Smith's Longspur**

Thursday, January 25th, 2018

Texas is the place to see migrating bird species in the winter months. Just be prepared for seasonal changes in their plumage. The Smith's Longspur, for example, is usually a brightly patterned songbird.

*In the winter, they lose their bright, breeding plumage and they become very drab.*

Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford says another factor that makes this species somewhat of a challenge to spot is that it lays low.

*They're grassland skulkers, meaning: they don't sit up on fence posts or limbs very often, or at all. They really like to sit on the ground in the grass.*

Their drab winter feathers make them even harder to spot in the dry brown grasses. But it can be done—if but for a moment.

*So, the way to see a Smith's Longspur is to be in the right part of the state. Maybe Hunt county; that's a really good place. And, if you had the right grass at the right height—about ankle deep—you'll kick 'em up. And there'll be 50 to 500, and they'll fly, and they make a rattling sound. That's really all you get. You don't really get to look at them very well. When they land back down in the ground near you, they are in the grass and very hard to see.*

A decline in the Smith's Longspur in Texas...that's tomorrow.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

## **Smith's Longspur in Decline in Texas**

Friday, January 26th, 2018

The Smith's Longspur, a subarctic songbird, is the ultimate “snowbird”. It travels from Alaska and Canada to Northeast Texas where it spends the winter months.

*It's remarkable migration for a little bird the size of a chickadee. And he flies all the way by himself; he's been doing this for millennia.*

Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford says based on winter surveys, this grassland species is in decline.

*Parks and Wildlife has a project where we go out and we survey for Smith's Longspurs. There's several staff involved where we go out every winter and we spend several days looking for*

*Smith's Longspurs, and talking to landowners. We're trying to encourage them to leave native prairies for these species, and to be on the receiving grounds for this really neat wintering bird.*

Changes in land use can cause a reduction in habitat for this migrating bird.

*My hope for the Smith's Longspur is that it could be with Bobwhite and other grassland birds, poster children for protecting prairies and protecting them in big swaths. A lot of these grassland birds need a lot of real estate. So, we can't just do two acres here and five acres there. It needs to be hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands of acres, for these birds to survive.*

Landowners are key to the future of the Smith's Longspur and other native grassland species.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

### **Winter Shell Collecting in Texas**

Monday, January 29th, 2018

Nobody thinks twice about collecting shells from the beach. But I started to wonder if it's really okay since beaches are public land.

*It's okay to collect shells. The ones that are broken and come apart, they create the sand that's out there, but there is no law against it [collecting].*

Paul Hammerschmidt, retired from coastal fisheries, is a lifelong shell collector. He says collect responsibly to avoid creating problems for the environment or marine animals.

*I highly recommend that you only take shells that are from dead animals—not live animals.*

How can you determine if something is still alive? In the case of the popular sand dollar, small spines cover the shells of living animals...so look for smooth, spineless shells. If, like me, you've never found a sand dollar on the beach—there's good reason for it.

*I think it's because everybody wants to get a sand dollar. And, too, they're another very fragile shell. And when the waves are strong, they'll get broken up, and you'll just see fragments of them. A lot of times, the best time to find a sand dollar, is after a storm—and then very early in the morning—before anybody else gets out on the beach.*

More tips on when and where to go shelling tomorrow.

### **Setting Your Sights on Unusual Shells**

Tuesday, January 30th, 2018

Before you can sell seashells by the seashore, you first have to find them.

*I feel the best time to go shelling is in the wintertime.*

Paul Hammerschmidt is a lifelong shell collector. He says winter storms churn up the Gulf bottom, sending shells onto the beach. Improve your chances of finding intact shells when you avoid crowded shoreline.

*If you get a chance to go to some more isolated beaches, like down on Padres island, or something like that, where the population of humans is not quite so thick, you'll have a much better chance of finding some really unusual shells.*

Such as a sweet little shell called baby ears, or another special shell worth searching for called spirula.

*And it's a coiled, snail-like shell. But it doesn't belong to a snail—it belongs to a little squid. And it's inside the squid, and when the squid dies, that little thing has a lot of chambers in it with gas, and it floats and washes up on the beach. Those are very pretty, bright white, and they're very fragile, so you have to be careful with them.*

This winter, instead of heading to the slopes for skiing, go to the beach for shelling...you can still have hot cocoa when you're done.

Saturdays through the end of February Ranger Lisa leads shell hunting, identification and collecting workshops at Galveston Island SP. Find details in the calendar section of the TPW website.

The Sport Fish restoration program supports our series.

### **[New Lease Agreements = Angler Access](#)**

Wednesday, January 31st, 2018

Thanks to new agreements between Texas Parks and Wildlife and private landowners, anglers have easier access to The Canyon Reservoir Tailrace—one of the top trout fishing destinations in the United States.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department leased four access areas from private landowners along this coveted stretch of water, located below Canyon Reservoir on the Guadalupe River.

Stephan Magnelia, TPWD River Studies Program Director, said: "This portion of the Guadalupe River is a popular trout fishery and is likely the most fished reach of river in Texas."

By leasing prime fishing locations from private landowners Parks and Wildlife provide anglers with a unique trout fishing experience in Central Texas.

Through late spring, the "no fee" leases give anglers the opportunity for bank and wade fishing – as well as put-in and take out areas for kayaks and paddling equipment.

Texas Parks and Wildlife will continue to stock the Canyon Reservoir Tailrace with thousands of rainbow trout each week through late-January.

Visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website for the [locations of the new access points](#) along Canyon Reservoir Tailrace, and the full list of trout stocking dates.

The Sport Fish restoration program supports our series.

## **Passport to Texas February 2018**

### **Recognizing Texas' Buffalo Soldiers**

Thursday, February 1st, 2018

[singing] *I was once a captured slave. Now I'm just a black man who came to be...*

In the 19th Century, Black men who served in the 9th and 10th Regiments of Cavalry and 24th and 25th Regiments of Infantry of the United States Army were ...

*I am a Buffalo Soldier!*

It's said the Indians whom they fought during the Indian Wars gave troops the name because of their hair texture and their courage and ferocity in battle.

*He feared and respected the buffalo. And he learned to fear and respect the black soldier as well.*

That's Buffalo Soldier reenactor, John Olivera, who says Buffalo soldiers played a major role in settling Texas.

*Seventy-five percent of the soldiers that settled this area were Buffalo Soldiers. The only white men that were with them were the commanding officers. Almost all of the forts were manned and built by Buffalo Soldiers.*

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department offers [Texas Buffalo Soldier Outdoor Educational Programs](#).

[Find their schedule](#) on the Parks and Wildlife website.

*The Buffalo Soldiers fought not only the Indians, and outlaws, but racism and prejudice. We had a job to do, and we done it.*

### **TPW TV-Remembering Jacob Krebs**

Friday, February 2nd, 2018



A [tragic accident in 2013 took the life 18 year old Harper High School Senior, Jacob Krebs](#). Texas Parks and Wildlife, biologist, Joyce Moore.

*Will and Mary Krebs raised him to be active in all facets of the community. He was an Eagle Scout. He was a re-enactor at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg. Then he was a phenomenal athlete. He would run eight miles without any problem. He was training constantly. When Jacob died, Will Krebs came to me and he said, Joyce, I would like to memorialize my son. Could you help me? And so I said we should ask the Harper Wildlife Association if they would help us do this.*

And they did, by creating a Youth Hunt for Wounded Warriors in Memory of Jacob Krebs. All participants had a connection with the military. Jacob's mother, Mary.

*Jacob loved hunting and he also loved wounded warriors. He was so proud to acknowledge any veteran that he saw. He'd walk up to him and tell him thank you. And in memory of Jacob as well as the kids of veterans, we decided to honor them and have a youth hunt.*

Mary Krebs says, Jacob's impact didn't end there. He was also an organ donor.

*Jacob saved the lives of four people on April the 2, 2013 and he has greatly enhanced the lives of at least 80 more around the United States through tissue, bone and cornea donations.*

Learn about Jacob Krebs's lasting legacy next week on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV](#) series on PBS.

## **2018 Crab Trap Removal**

Monday, February 5th, 2018

Commercial crab fishermen use baited wire traps to lure their prey. Sometimes traps end up missing due to storms, or they are simply discarded.

These traps continue "ghost fishing" for months or years—capturing fish and other marine creatures, including endangered species, thus taking an environmental and economic toll on gulf fisheries.

In February of 2002, Texas Parks and Wildlife conducted the first [abandoned crab trap removal program](#). During a 10-day period in February volunteers like you, join Texas Parks and Wildlife staff and partners, in removing derelict traps.

More than 32,000 crab traps have been removed from the gulf since 2002, saving tens of thousands of marine organisms.

This year's cleanup is February 16th through the 25th. The big cleanup "push" is Saturday, February 17 from 10 to noon. The cleanup is the only time citizens may remove these traps from gulf waters.

Texas Parks and Wildlife facilitates roughly 20 coastal sites, and provides disposal facilities, tarps, gloves, crab trap hooks and other items to help volunteers remove troublesome traps.

To volunteer for this year's program visit the Abandoned Crab Trap Removal page on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

### **Still Time to Plant Trees Before Summer Heat**

Tuesday, February 6th, 2018

Theoretically, you can plant trees all year long. However, for the best outcome, do so while temperatures are cool.

*It's just much easier on them.*

Scott Harris is a certified arborist in Austin. Although fall the best time to plant trees, the best tree planting window in Texas runs from October through March.

*Getting the trees in the ground in the fall [and winter], they have the entire cool season, dormant season, to spread roots out before the big demands on roots and water start in the spring.*

There's still time to get your trees in the ground to take advantage of cool winter temperatures and spring rains. On another note: just because a tree will grow in Texas, doesn't mean it should grow here. Harris advises we stick with natives.

*The biggest thing to avoid is non-natives. Our natives have all of the features you would want, but they've spent thousands and thousands of years getting used to being here, and with all of the wildlife used to having them, too. It's all a web, and you can't tell which string you can pull out without upsetting things.*

Tomorrow tree planting tips to help your newly planted tree thrive.

### **Tree Planting Tips from Arborist Scott**

Wednesday, February 7th, 2018

Trees provide habitat for wildlife, as well as shade and beauty for us. If you're adding new trees to your landscape this year: know the rules.

*People frequently ask how close they can put a tree to the house, because shade on the house obviously is a huge energy savings. The general rule of thumb is you go no closer to the house than the eaves are high. So, if you measure up to the eaves of your house, and they're ten feet high, then you need to get ten feet back from the house.*

Scott Harris, a certified arborist in Austin, recommends planting native trees. For your tree to get the best start in life, he recommends the following:

*You always want to plant your trees at the exact level they were in the pot. Don't dig a big deep hole, dig a big wide hole. Always use the same soil you took out to backfill. But, you can put your compost underneath the mulch, and then all of that organic goodness will dribble down in the way that nature intended.*

Water your new trees infrequently and deeply; this helps them to develop extensive root systems.

*If you just have a little bit of water in one area, that's where the roots are going to go. But if you water very deeply, it'll spread into the surrounding soil, and the roots will follow that moisture out.*

A robust root system helps trees remain vigorous and able to better withstand Texas droughts.

## **What Monarchs Need**

Thursday, February 8th, 2018

Larval monarchs have very specific nutritional needs.

*Larval monarchs depend on milkweed species. Essentially, that's the only plant monarch caterpillars consume.*

Ben Hutchins, state invertebrate biologist, says availability of milkweed in Texas is vital to their survival.

*As monarchs migrate north from their overwintering grounds in Mexico, Texas is one of their first stops. And this is where they begin to reproduce. And so all of the monarchs that then migrate farther north through the US and Canada, those future generations depend on successful reproduction in the spring here in Texas.*

Yet, Texas is just one stop along their migration route.

*Monarchs also reproduce and depend on milkweed in the Midwestern states in the United States. And, we know that in many of those states—for example, in the corn belt region—that the availability of milkweed plants has declined substantially over the last several decades. And so, there is some pretty good science that suggests that decline in milkweed availability in the Midwest, directly relates to the monarch population declines that we have seen.*

We can all play a part in the monarch's survival when we plant milkweed and other nectar producing plants.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

## **TPW TV – El Camino Real de Los Tejas**

Friday, February 9th, 2018

El Camino Real de Los Tejas, is a historic trail from Spanish Colonial times that shaped Texas history. Learn more on a segment of the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#).

*I'm Steven Gonzales. I'm executive director of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association. El Camino Real de los Tejas is the old royal road that came up from Mexico City to establish Texas in Spanish colonial times. It's the road that led to the founding of Texas. There are many caminos reales that make up the Camino Real. In times past these roads have different names because of the places that they were going to. The Old San Antonio Road and the Nacogdoches Road, La Bahia Road and the Laredo Road. Every Texan of note that we can think of, all the way from Spaniards such as Alonzo de Leon to Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, Sam Houston, they all travelled along portions of the Camino Real at one time or another, and it's really elemental to the state's history. We think about things like the battle of the Alamo and Goliad, and we forget that those troops were actually travelling along roadways, pathways, and those were largely the Camino Real and segments of it. So one of our goals is to make the public more aware of it.*

El Camino Real de los Tejas: Tracing a Timeless Trail next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. [Check your local listings](#).

## **Learn to Camp—No Experience Required**

Monday, February 12th, 2018

This is Passport to Texas

Have your kids been begging you to take them on an overnight camping trip at a Texas State Park? Have they talked excitedly about sleeping in a tent and making s'mores over a campfire, or maybe even catching a fish? If you've been putting them off because you're out of practice, or never learned the skills in the first place—we can help.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department offers the [Texas Outdoor Family](#) program to help you to hone or to develop outdoor skills. During one or two-night workshops, state park staff lead families through the basics of setting up camp and getting the most out of their time in nature.

All camping gear and equipment required for an overnight stay at the park is included with each reservation! Just bring your family—that's up to six people—sheets, blankets and food and you are ready for a camping adventure.

But you need to register in advance, and workshops fill fast. [Workshops are scheduled in March](#) at Lake Tawakoni State Park, Galveston Island State Park, Buescher State Park, Lake Ray Roberts State Park, and Huntsville State Park. There are more workshops in April, May and June at other state parks.

Texas Outdoor Family Workshops are always fun; you'll leave the park with new confidence in your ability to enjoy overnight camping with your family and friends.

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

### **Re-homed on the Range**

Tuesday, February 13th, 2018

Wildlife biologist, Shawn Gray, stays busy most days in his role as Texas Parks and Wildlife pronghorn and mule deer program leader in the Trans Pecos.

*I get to oversee the management and research for the two species for Texas Parks and Wildlife.*

This includes orchestrating the restoration of these species to their native range. Last year, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department successfully relocated 109 pronghorn.

*Our surplus populations are located in the Northwest and Northeast Panhandle. We take animals from healthy populations there to boost our local populations in the Trans Pecos that have in recent years seen historic decline.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife worked with partners to redistribute the animals.

*Translocation has been one of the management tools we've been able to do to help those populations rebound. There's a whole suite of things that we do to improve populations. And, of course, we always need help from Mother Nature to make all those things work for us.*

Drought was a leading factor in the pronghorn's decline in the Trans Pecos, but Gray says the reasons are more complex than that alone. After trapping the animals, each received a health checkup; some were fitted with radio collars.

*Through time and our management practices, the populations have been responding well.*

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series and funds pronghorn restoration in Texas.

### **Pronghorn Restoration and Rural Economy**

Wednesday, February 14th, 2018

Wildlife biologist Shawn Gray finds pronghorns fascinating, and hopes you will, too.

*The pronghorn is a unique mammal of North America; it's the only one found in its family. It's the fastest mammal in North America. It's a big game species.*

Gray is the pronghorn program leader and oversees the Pronghorn Restoration Project. Because it's a game species, hunting them should pick up as their population grows, thus benefitting local communities.

*In 2008, we issued probably like 800 buck only hunting permits. And, shoot, in 2009 or 10, we were issuing less than 100. And there's a lot to that. Not only is it the money that they get for trespass access for hunting, but the hunters come into the local communities and spend time and spend money. So, there's a lot of those economic impacts as well with a much reduced pronghorn population out here.*

The Trans-Pecos pronghorn population dipped below 3K in 2012, and Gray says through translocation and natural reproduction, they hope to see the number rise to 10K.

*Most of the local communities in the Trans-Pecos really miss the pronghorn. And they really want to see pronghorn back on the landscape at numbers that they are used to seeing.*

With the continued success of the restoration project, they may get their wish.

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series and funds pronghorn restoration in Texas.

### **Changes to ShareLunker Program**

Thursday, February 15th, 2018

The ShareLunker Program is a promotion and enhancement program for Lunker bass fishing in Texas. It selectively breeds trophy largemouth bass donated by anglers.

*[Starting] this year we expanded that program to include eight pound bass, nine pound bass, ten pound bass, etc....all the way up and over thirteen pounds.*

Kyle Brookshear oversees the Toyota Texas Sharelunker Program. Why the change?

*We wanted to get involved with more anglers out there and begin to recognize them for their achievements. Because, really, a 13-pound bass is the fish of a lifetime, but so is an eight, nine, ten.... And so, we wanted to recognize anglers at other levels of achievement for their catches.*

In addition, Brookshear says collecting data on bass 8lb+ helps Texas Parks and Wildlife better understand the influence of ShareLunker genetics in each public water body. He says they'll continue to collect and spawn 13-pound bass, caught January 1st through March 31st.

*And then, we're not only stocking some of those fingerlings out into the lakes of Texas, but the new change is we are incorporating them into our brood stock development so that eventually, we'll greatly increase the number of fingerlings that are direct sharelunker descendants that are stocked out in Texas public lakes.*

Find details at [texassharelunker.com](http://texassharelunker.com).

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

## **Reel in a Lunker and Get Some “Loot”**

Friday, February 16th, 2018

This year, the Toyota Sharelunker program expanded to include largemouth bass eight pounds or more. Anglers may submit data year-round into one of four classes: Lunker, Lunker Elite, Lunker Legend and Lunker Legacy.

*And anglers can submit a fish into one of those four classes through our mobile app or our web based form.*

Kyle Brookshear oversees the program.

*Our mobile app allows an angler to enter the data field, such as the date and time that it was caught—the weight the length. And then document those with a photograph and submit those to us. And once they’re reviewed and confirmed, they’ll be entered into the program.*

Lunker Legacy class permits anglers to submit their data and loan 13+ pound lunkers caught during the January 1st—March 31st spawning window.

*For entering, an angler in any of those categories receives a catch kit. In addition to that, everyone who enters into one of those four categories, is included in a grand prize drawing of a \$5K shopping spree at the end of the year. Those anglers that enter the Legacy Class program are in an additional drawing for another \$5K shopping spree.*

Find details about the program changes as well as the items found in each catch kit, and how to submit your catch data at [texassharelunker.com](http://texassharelunker.com).

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

## **Feel the (Prescribed) Burn**

Monday, February 19th, 2018

Man mimics nature when he uses fire as a land management tool. He does this with controlled burning, and with prescribed fire.

David Riskin, director of natural resources for state parks, says there is a difference between the two.

*Controlled burning is a term that people use that you start at part A, and you burn until you get to part B. Professional land managers use the term prescribed fire because you have specific objectives, you have specific outcomes, you burn under very specific conditions. And so a*

*prescription is a planning document... you lay everything out ahead of time and you then implement it with very specific objectives in mind.*

Those objectives naturally have to do with land management, as well as a range of various objectives a landowner may hope to achieve.

*There can be a whole series of objectives. From very simple things like fuel load reduction. You can have specific habitat objectives...to change the vegetation structure and composition to support waterfowl, or to support antelope, or lesser prairie chickens...or Houston toads for that matter.*

Learn more about prescribed fire on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

## **Questions About Monarch Butterflies**

Tuesday, February 20th, 2018

Here's what you need to know about scientific discovery: it starts with a question. And that leads to—not answers—not immediately, anyway. It leads to more questions.

*They just keep coming.*

Ben Hutchins, the state's invertebrate biologist, has been asking a lot of questions lately about monarch butterflies.

*That's right. The more you know, the more you realize you don't know. And so, many of us that are involved in monarch conservation have been to a number of conferences, meetings, workshops, symposia. And a big emphasis is on all of the questions that we still have about monarch biology. I think the biggest question, particularly, for conservationists for natural resource managers is: what can we do to make the landscape good monarch habitat. How can we be good stewards of the land to make sure monarchs are getting what they need?*

See what I mean?

*We have lots of questions about how particular land management practices, like using controlled burns, or reseeding with native plants—how those practices can best be used to produce good monarch habitat. We have lots of questions about patch size, too.*

And if your next question is: what does Ben Hutchins mean by patch size? You'll have to listen next time to find out.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

## **Habitat for Monarchs and other Pollinators**



Wednesday, February 21st, 2018

For as long as biologists have been studying the iconic monarch butterfly, they've come up with more questions than answers about its biology and basic needs. The biggest question: do land management practices, like controlled burns and reseeding with native plants improve monarch habitat?

*We have lots of questions about patch size, too.*

That's Ben Hutchins, the state's invertebrate biologist. So, what is patch size?

*When I say 'patch size' what I mean is, how far will a monarch travel to get from one plot of nectar producing plants to another? How big of a prairie do we need to support healthy monarch populations? How many milkweed in it? What density do we need across the landscape to promote healthy breeding populations?*

Expansive patches of prairie are best, but hard to come by due to urbanization. Having said that—all is not lost.

*Even urban environments have lots of potential for habitat for monarchs moving through; so you have urban corridors. So, there's no property that's too big or too small to help out monarchs and other urban pollinators.*

That means even planting native nectar producing plants and milkweed in empty lots, on building rooftops, or in containers on your downtown balcony—you are playing a role in supporting monarch and native pollinators.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

## **City Nature Challenge**

Thursday, February 22nd, 2018

Game for some friendly competition? Then [\*\*join teams from 60 cities, on six continents\*\*](#), to compete during the City Nature Challenge—April 27-30th. Teams will attempt to document more plant and animal species in their regions than competitors in other regions.

*And we are using a format called iNaturalist, which is a real easy way of collecting data. All you have to do is take pictures of things. You don't even have to know what it is.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist and Austin area challenge coordinator, Marsha May, says they need more experts to help verify data.

*Professionals. People who know their plants. People who know their insects. Their invertebrates. Any of these organisms, to help us verify the data. You don't have to live in any of the regions.*

*Go to iNaturalist—especially those who use it regularly—because we need to get the data verified for it to count towards the contest.*

Seven regions in Texas are hosting teams. Find them on the Nature Trackers page of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

*It would be a good idea in advance, if people would check out iNaturalist.org. And join iNaturalist and see what it's all about—practice it. And then when the time comes, they would just join the project as they're collecting their data.*

How the City Nature Challenge works... tomorrow.

## **Compete in the City Nature Challenge**

Friday, February 23rd, 2018

Document local flora and fauna when you participant in the **Worldwide 2018 City Nature Challenge, April 27-30**.

*Each city will have a leader; that leader will bring in partners [like the city, county or environmental organization]. And they will ask participants to do bioblitzes within that city. A bioblitz is where you collect data on all the plants and the animals throughout the area.*

Marsha May is a biologist and Austin area challenge coordinator. Teams from six continents will **upload their observations to iNaturalist.org** in an attempt to document more species than their competitors.

*Then all that data is collected in iNaturalist, and it will be evaluated a week after the challenge is over, and a winner will be announced.*

Experts from various fields will verify the data. No prizes will be given to winners, but they will get bragging rights, and a chance to help researchers.

*We have many species in Texas that are species of greatest conservation need. And when we do these bioblitzes, oftentimes those species are identified within that project. And those species are very important for us to know where they're located, and how many there are out there. And this is just a way that citizens help quite a bit.*

For more details on the 2018 City Nature Challenge, April 27—30th go to **citynaturechallenge.org**.

## **Anglers Discover a New Favorite in an Old Fish**

Monday, February 26th, 2018

An old timey freshwater fish is getting new attention. What is it?

*A traditional fish that's been caught by anglers for many, many years.*

That's more of a clue than an answer, Dave Terre. Dave is chief of inland fisheries research and management. Here's another clue: Parks and Wildlife produces and then stocks this fish in Texas water bodies.

*Yes, we do produce many, many catfish in our state fish hatchery system in Texas.*

Catfish! But you knew that, right?

*As a matter of fact, we stock literally thousands of advanced size channel catfish in small ponds located throughout the state. One of those programs is our neighborhood Fishin' program, where we're stocking every two weeks adult channel catfish 12-inches or larger, into some 14 water bodies across the state to offer up great fishing opportunities for people who reside in urban areas of our state, which is definitely a group that we would like to reach out to.*

To the original point: serious anglers are rediscovering catfish...but why?

*Texas is changing. We're going to be experiencing more drought conditions in Texas; and what we know about catfish is they are able to deal with fluctuating water levels better than largemouth bass, which have been – and will continue to be – a popular sport fish in Texas.*

**With heavy stocking and a new eye toward management** catfish is a traditional species for changing times.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series and funds fisheries research in Texas.

### **Are Catfish the Future of Freshwater Fishing?**

Tuesday, February 27th, 2018

Largemouth bass is hands down the favorite sport fish among anglers in Texas

*Today in Texas about 50% of our anglers say they prefer largemouth bass.*

Dave Terre, chief of inland fisheries research and management, says one fish is gaining on largemouth.

*About 20 percent of anglers prefer fishing catfish in Texas.*

That's right – the humble catfish. Catfish are better able than largemouth bass to survive and thrive when water levels are low, such as during drought.

*We're trying to study catfish more intensively to determine how we can make fishing for catfish even better.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife developed a management to guide the future of this sport fish in Texas.

*Most people in Texas – when they think of a fish, they think of a catfish. I think that's the honest truth. Bass get more notoriety, but catfish are very important and I think a perfect fish to start new anglers on fishing, and to get a new generation of Texas interested in fishing.*

**[Texas is home to at least 10 species of catfish](#)**. Three provide important fishing opportunities to anglers: Channel, Blue, and Flathead Catfish. We have a link to the catfish management plan at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series and funds fisheries research in Texas.

### **Celebrate the Birth of Texas, Where it Began**

Wednesday, February 28th, 2018

March 2 is an important date in Texas history. It's when Texas declared its independence from Mexico. And each year we celebrate where it all began: **[Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park and Historic Site](#)**.

The **[Texas Independence Day Celebration](#)** is an annual two-day living history event; this year it's on Saturday and Sunday, March 3 and 4.

It's when we celebrate the day when 59 delegates met in 1836 to make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico in 1836.

This admission-free event features live music, food, demonstrations, living history presentations, kids' activities, and more.

Historical reenactors set up an accurate Texas Army camp where visitors may wander freely among the tents to learn how the soldiers and their families lived in 1836.

During that weekend, admission fees are waived for the site's attractions. Admission to the grounds, on-site shuttles and parking are also free.

Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site is halfway between Houston and Austin. Come out and celebrate with us on March 3rd and 4th. Find more details on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Passport to Texas March 2018**

### **What's for Dinner? Game and Fish!**

Thursday, March 1st, 2018

Every other month, Texas Parks and Wildlife teams up with [Central Market Cooking Schools](#) statewide to offer classes on wild game and fish cookery.

The next class is Tuesday, March 13.

Why do we do it? The reason is multi-faceted. We want to introduce folks to the wide variety of healthy, sustainable and delicious native proteins available in Texas.

We also want to let people know that hunting and fishing needn't be scary, difficult or costly. Plus, if you want to know where your food comes from, there's no doubt when you harvest it yourself.

And, of course, we want to let everyone know how Texas Parks and Wildlife works to conserve and manage species and habitat throughout the state for all Texans. That's why in each class we have a Texas Parks and Wildlife representative on hand to talk about the agency and answer your questions.

The March 13th Central Market / Texas Parks and Wildlife fish and game cooking class takes place in Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth, Plano and Southlake.

This month's menu: Crawfish Etouffee with Bacon; Roasted Prosciutto-wrapped Red Fish with Basil-Parsley Pesto; and Venison & Bacon Sausage with Red Pepper & Rosemary.

Find registration information at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

### **TPW TV — Building Habitat for Fish**

Friday, March 2nd, 2018

Most freshwater fishing in Texas happens in reservoirs.

*So we want to make sure we conserve the reservoirs and these fishing opportunities by restoring habitat.*

Marcos de Jesus is with For Texas Parks and Wildlife Inland Fisheries. On next week's For Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS, the agency and its partners renew underwater habitat in reservoirs for better angling.

*We can always supplement the woody debris, the vegetation, or any type of cover that fish need by cutting something like cedar trees. We can also use artificial habitat that different commercial producers make. These things are put together to mimic trees, that creates cover.*

Although TPW has the expertise...

*These projects can become expensive and they are labor intensive so we need partnerships to actually get these great projects on the water.*

Partnerships with groups like Friends of Reservoirs.

*Friends of Reservoirs is a great group. And these groups are usually composed of stakeholders that have the common interest of conservation and fishing. So they team up with Texas Parks and Wildlife; we do some great projects around the state.*

See reservoir renovation in action next week on the For Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings.

*If you want to get involved and help TPWD with conservation initiatives, feel free to call local district biologist. And get involved and help us in conservation. We can't do it alone.*

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

### **Spring Break Week: Get Outside**

Monday, March 5th, 2018

As nature begins to wake from her winter rest, Texans prepare to take time off from school and work to enjoy it. We call this time Spring Break, and for most of us, that's next week.

If your plans involve exploring Texas, but you're not sure where to start, you'll find ideas and resources on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Check out the state park section to discover which parks, historic sites and natural areas are near you. Click on the events tab of any page, and find guided tours, hikes and hands on activities happening while you're there.

For information on the go, download the [\*\*Texas State Park APP\*\*](#) to your smart phone; most of the time, no internet access required to use it.

Using the app, find parks with swimming, fishing, kayaking and other activities; locate cabins, lodges, shelters, RV sites, and tent camping sites; you can view parks with boat ramps, dump stations, showers and more.

The FREE app is available for iPhone and Android devices, and available at the Apple App Store and Google Play.

We have more ideas for enjoying spring break all week long week.

### **Spring Break: Family Fun at State Parks**

Tuesday, March 6th, 2018

Spend time with the family outdoors this spring break.

*I believe it's very important for families to spend time outdoors. Especially in the metropolitan areas, (where) people aren't able to fully experience nature in a natural setting.*

Doug Huggins works with state parks in the Houston area, but when we spoke, he worked at Bastrop State park. Parks buffer visitors from the hubbub of city life.

*It's a good place to see nature; to look at the flora and fauna, and get out of the city and feel like you're away from it all... and you can leave all the hustle, bustle and business behind, and slow down for a little while to think about what's going on right here right now.*

Spring break can be sunny and warm or cold and wet; whatever the weather you can enjoy the Texas outdoors. If an overnight stay is in your future, and the weather warrants, consider cabins—like those at Bastrop State Park.

*They're nice and cozy. They also have heaters and they have fire rings outside so you can have fires and roast marshmallows and make s'mores. It's a great place to spend time with the family; and in the winter time we still have some people that come out who take advantage of the bluebird days when it's mild and the sun is out, to look at what winter residents we have at the park.*

Find a link to state park information and reservations at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

### **Spring Break: Wilderness Near a Big City**

Wednesday, March 7th, 2018

For a lot of families, Spring Break means going camping. If you live in or near San Antonio you don't have far to go: [Government Canyon State Natural Area](#) is minutes from the bustling urban center of the Alamo City.

*We have about forty miles of hiking and biking trails right on the edge of the Hill Country. So, we have some beautiful area that people just love to come out and visit and hike and bike and do nature watching and it's just kind of an oasis just right on the outskirts of San Antonio.*

Chris Holm is site superintendent. Government Canyon is a special place: it is home to threatened and endangered species like the golden-cheeked warbler, and sits above the recharge zone for the Edwards Aquifer. The site offers visitors a wilderness experience close to home.

*It's not too, too rustic, though. I mean, you have access to facilities and there is staff around. And that's one of the neat things about state parks and state natural areas. You have staff available to assist if you need something — and you're five or ten minutes from home.*

You can reserve one of 23 walk-in tent campsites. Government Canyon also has two group walk-in tent campsites for up to 16 people.

Campgrounds are open Friday and Saturday nights only, but also open for additional nights around holidays; find more information at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **Spring Break: Neighborhood Fishin' Fun**

Thursday, March 8th, 2018

If the weather's good, and even if it isn't [this spring break](#), gather up the family and take them to Neighborhood Fishin' ponds for a day of fishing fun.

*We think it's a valuable thing for people to be connected with fishing and the outdoors, and we'd like to facilitate that connection.*

Former Texas Parks and Wildlife aquatic education training specialist, Caleb Harris, says the neighborhood fishin' program is one of many ways the agency facilitates a connection between people and nature.

*Every metropolitan center has a neighborhood fishin' pond. And all those locations are on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife] website.*

This time of year, the inland fisheries division begins to stock neighborhood fishin' ponds with catfish. Wouldn't your youngsters love to return to school with a fish story to tell? Harris says although spending time with family and friends catching fish is fun, something deeper takes place among those who connect with the outdoors.

*When people are connected to the outdoors in a way that they enjoy it – like fishing – they become stewards of it. They want to protect it. Conserve it. Be good users of it.*

[Find a neighborhood fishin' pond near you](#), as well as tackle loaner locations, and information on various fish species, when you log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

This project and our show is funded in part by a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration Program.

## **Spring Break: Photographing Nature**

Friday, March 9th, 2018

[Introduce youngsters to photography this spring break](#) as a fun and affordable way to get them interested in nature and the outdoors.

*I believe that all children have a basic connection with the outdoors and I do feel that photography is a good way to develop that bond. It can really enhance that experience altogether.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife photographer Chase Fountain says picture taking is a great way for kids to record and enhance their experiences in nature.



*Let's say you're out and about and you're on a family vacation... that's a great way for you to be able to record those memories and take them back with you. With today's technology and digital cameras only starting at \$20, it's affordable for almost any family to buy cameras for the kids and let them experience nature.*

The key to getting kids outside is to find something that makes going outdoors sound like even more fun.

*As far as utilizing photography... you know every kid is different and maybe some kids won't like photography, but for some that might just be the proper tool to get them outdoors.*

Visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website for more ideas on getting your kids engaged in the outdoors.

### **[If You Could Talk to the Animals](#)**

Monday, March 12th, 2018

Kissing the palm of your hand sounds like what a kid might do to practice for their first lip lock. But it's also useful for attracting wildlife...the four legged variety.

*I can do that to a bobcat that's sitting out there behind a bush at a hundred yards, and it'll start him towards me almost immediately. It just sounds delicious.*

Gerald Stewart is a consultant for Johnny Stewart wildlife calls. Gerald's dad, Johnny, created the business, which featured recorded animal sounds.

*Dad realized early on in the development of the business, that these sounds could be used by quite a wide variety of people. Photographers, nature lovers, bird watchers, hunters, researchers, or people that just want to simply show their grandkids the eyes of a raccoon coming through the grass at night...just for the joy of being able to see something wild, literally a few feet away from them.*

Screech owls are common in residential neighborhoods, and are a good animal to call when you're with children.

*It's easier to call screech owls with children around. Screech owls are a gregarious little bird, very social. And will put up with human presence. After a minute or two of being there, humans can just start talking and milling around and the little screech owl just sits in the tree.*

**[Learn about native wildlife](#)** by logging onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

### **[City Nature Challenge Seeks Experts](#)**

Tuesday, March 13th, 2018

In about a month, competitors from around the globe will head outside with their smart phones to photograph the flora and fauna of their regions, and then upload those images to iNaturalist as part of...

*The City Nature Challenge.*

Marsha May is a biologist and challenge coordinator for the Austin region—one of seven TX regions involved.

*And there are over 60 cities worldwide that are involved in this challenge.*

April 27th—30th, participants worldwide will try to “out-document” their competitors, for bragging rights.

*All that data is collected in iNaturalist, and it will be evaluated a week after the challenge is over.*

Regions can win for most observations, verified species or members. May said last year’s event drew nearly more competitors than they had experts to verify the data.

*We really needed more people to help with verifying the observations. That’s the call [to action] I would like to make. So, if you’re a herpetologist, a birder, a botanist and such—please, help us verify. Go to iNaturalist[.org] and look for the projects. You can go to any one of the cities and help verify these observations. Because, the more we get verified—that’s research grade observations—so those count more toward this contest.*

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## **Evolution of the Great Texas Birding Classic**

Wednesday, March 14th, 2018

Twenty eight marks the 22nd anniversary of the [\*\*Great Texas Birding Classic\*\*](#). Shelly Plante, Nature Tourism Manager for Parks and Wildlife, has been involved for 21 of those years.

In the beginning, Plante says most participants were “hard core” birders. Since becoming a statewide event, she says it’s evolved into a tournament for everyone.

*We have a lot of different categories. There are categories for beginners; categories for kids who are just getting started; categories families can take part in—or bird clubs can take part in. And so, I’ve seen this really huge growth in the generalist, which I think is fantastic. That’s who we would love to connect with nature. They may not have a connection. So, we’re hopefully making that connection for them with an event.*

The Great Texas Birding Classic is April 15 through May 15; registration deadline is April 1st. Money raised through fees and sponsorships goes toward conservation grants.

*The more money we raise through registration fees and sponsorships, the more money we are able to award to conservation grant projects throughout the state. So last year, we gave out 36-thousand dollars' worth of grants. And, some of the winning teams got to pick which projects received that funding. So, it's really a fun way to take part in conservation, and maybe even get to choose who gets those conservation dollars.*

Put together a team and register before April 1, at [birdingclassic.org](http://birdingclassic.org).

That's our show... Funding provided in part by Ram Trucks. Guts. Glory. Ram

### **[Sitting in Circles for the Birds](#)**

Thursday, March 15th, 2018

**[The Great Texas Birding Classic](#)** continues to attract seasoned and beginning birders to its flock.

*It's really crazy. We keep seeing amazing growth. I keep wondering when we might plateau, and it hasn't happened yet.*

Shelly Plante is Nature Tourism Manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife. The tournament had a growth spurt beginning in 2013 after it became statewide.

*We had the largest participation in over ten years in that first year that we were statewide. And that was 58 teams. Since then, we've grown every single year; last year in 2016, for our 20th anniversary, we had 113 teams.*

The money raised funds conservation grants. Birders have fun doing it, when they participate in various tournaments. One of the most popular is the Big Sit.

*And it is what it sounds like. You are sitting in a 17-foot diameter circle for 24 hours (or parts of 24-hours), to see how many birds come through that area. In 2016 of the 113 teams that were registered for the Birding Classic, 40 of those teams were Big Sit teams. And they took place in every region of the state.*

**[Register a team before April 1, at](#)** [birdingclassic.org](http://birdingclassic.org).

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](http://tpwf.org)

### **[Join in the Great Texas Birding Classic](#)**

Friday, March 16th, 2018

During **[The Great Texas Birding Classic](#)**, birding teams raise money for conservation while they compete for bragging rights against other teams...if there are other teams.

*If you wanted to know where I really feel like people need a challenge, I think the Panhandle. They want some competition up there.*

Shelly Plante is Nature Tourism Manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife. While the coast hosts a multitude of birding teams during the classic, regions like the Panhandle barely have any, and they aren't alone.

*Far west Texas—they want some competition. The DFW area only has a couple of teams participating. They could use some great competition. It would be wonderful to see those areas grow by leaps and bounds this year, and to see a real shift in people seeing birdwatching as an activity that they can do with their friends and family in spring as the Birding Classic.*

There are tournaments suitable for nearly every experience level. So, c'mon Panhandle, Far West Texas and DFW Metroplex, step up to the challenge and put together a team. You other regions, too. I'm not trying to bird-shame anyone, but you can all do so much better.

When you register, the fee you pay supports conservation, and you'll have fun outdoors with friends and family. Doesn't that sound better than watching *The Real Housewives* of wherever?

The Birding Classic is April 15 through May 15, and the registration deadline is April 1. Do it for the birds.

## **So Much Sargassum**

Monday, March 19th, 2018

Every spring and summer, visitors to the coast encounter piles of brown, wet, slimy vegetation on Texas beaches.

*It's a brown algae called sargassum.*

Paul Hammerschmidt, formerly with Coastal Fisheries, says sargassum may accumulate on tide lines for miles.

*It belongs to a whole group of plants that belong to the sargassum group. Most of those plants are attached to hard substrate – rocks, shells – that kind of thing. These particular species don't attach to anything; they're floating. They have little tiny gas bladders that help the plant float. So, periodically that breaks away and ends up on the Texas beach.*

Sargassum originates in the Sargasso Sea, in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean.

*...in a big floating gyre; a gyre is a big eddy. And this particular sea has no shoreline at all – no land shoreline. It's surrounded by four different ocean currents that keep that seaweed trapped in this one particular area.*

Yet, tons of sargassum escape and end up on Texas shores.

*Changes in the currents; winds and storms can occur in the area, and section of it actually break off and get into the main currents. Those main currents will bring them into the gulf and eventually onto the beaches.*

Tomorrow: the value of sargassum

## **Sargassum: Not Pretty, but Useful**

Tuesday, March 20th, 2018

The arrival of brown colored algae, called sargassum, to Texas beaches is nearly as predictable as the return of the swallows to Capistrano, but not as welcome.

*It shows up on the beach, late spring through early summer, and it can be a nuisance to your average partygoer.*

Paul Hammerschmidt, formerly with Coastal Fisheries, says tons of sargassum wash up on the Texas coast from the North Atlantic, hindering beachgoer access to the water. Yet, sargassum is far from being a mere nuisance. It provides habitat for other living things.

*There are many animals that only live in the sargassum weed in the Sargasso Sea. It also is a nursery area for a whole lot of game fish like Mahi Mahi, Marlin, Sailfish, that type of thing.*

On shore, Hammerschmidt says beachcombers discover shells and sea beans in the slimy tangle, as well as live animals. Cities and counties that obtain permits may move the seaweed to help rebuild sand dunes. If you get a hankering to bring home some Sargassum, it does make a good garden fertilizer – with one caveat.

*One thing you really do have to do is rinse the saltwater off of it. You don't want that saltwater in your garden; that's just not healthy for your garden.*

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

## **Spring White Bass Run**

Wednesday, March 21st, 2018

Beginning in late December and early January, white bass begin to congregate where rivers and reservoirs meet.

*And those fish are getting ready for those environmental cues to happen so they can actually all start migrating and running up river.*

Environmental cues like changes in temperature and water flows. Marcos De Jesus is a fisheries biologist. When conditions are right, **white bass move up river to spawn**—something anglers eagerly anticipate each year.

*Some of them go up pretty far – as far as they can swim to complete their spawning run. So, they become congregated and create excitement for the anglers, because once they're congregated they're really fun to catch.*

East and Central Texas offer many white bass fishing opportunities. De Jesus says while they're active year round, springtime runs, which continue through April, practically set up anglers for success.

*As we get into the springtime, they congregate towards the mouth of the river waiting for those cues. Right when they're at the mouth of the river, they're easy to catch. But, the easiest time to catch them is when they're running up river spawning in those shallow waters, because you can actually catch them from the bank. Do these fish give you a good fight? Definitely. They're very great fighters. They become aggressive, and they take on many types of lures and live bait. Once they hook on – they'll fight pretty hard.*

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

## **[How Drought Conditions Affect White Bass Run](#)**

Thursday, March 22nd, 2018

In springtime, the white bass run is among the most anticipated freshwater angling events in the state.

*Generations after generations seek these fish during this time, and it's a good way to get kids involved in fishing. So there are a lot of traditional values to this fishery. And, there's also a big economic impact by this fishery. It's very important to our economy.*

Marcos De Jesus is a fisheries biologist. When water levels in reservoirs are low, and river flows are down due to severe drought—that can spell trouble for the run.

*Because the connectivity between the lakes and the rivers are being lost. So, without the flows that the fish need, they're not running up river [to spawn]. So, our concern is the fishery is not there for our anglers, and number two, these fish are not reproducing properly. And that starts to concern us because these fish are short lived, and we need them to reproduce within the second or third year.*

Although the more than 40 percent of Texas is now in a moderate to severe drought, according to the latest data from the U.S. Drought Monitor, white bass are running.

*Anglers need to understand that these drought cycles occur, and that the fish still can be caught in the main reservoirs. It's just that they may not be able to catch them in those typical areas upriver where people traditionally catch them [during droughts].*

**[Find the fishing forecast on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#)**

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.

### **TPW TV: The Illumination**

Friday, March 23rd, 2018

Mission Espiritu Santo de Zuniga, part of [Goliad State Park & Historic Site](#), was established in 1749 by Franciscan priests. Next week the TPW TV Series on PBS takes you there to experience an annual event called “The Illumination”. Assistant Superintendent Jason Ramirez.

*In a lot of the Franciscan missions there is a documented event that will usually coincide with a solar event; a lot of the times it's one of the holy days of the Catholics. In our mission we have something that happens every year on April 16th; we don't really have an official explanation for it, but basically what happens is the sun will set in the 'window of the sun' as we call it, and cast a direct beam of light onto the Crucifix here. It happens every year on April 16th at around 7:00pm. One of the things we do know is that April 16th is an important holy day for Franciscans. It's the anniversary of the founding of the Franciscan Order, and so it's a very important day for the Franciscans. It's a day that they renew their vows and rededicate themselves to the faith. And so we think that this may have been something that the missionaries here planned to convert the native people here, also to celebrate their faith.*

Witness “The Illumination” next week on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series](#) on PBS.

### **Protectors of Woods, Water and Wildlife**

Monday, March 26th, 2018

Texas Parks and Wildlife is accepting nominations for its brand new Prosecutor of the Year Award. The award reflects the critical role legal professionals play in the protection of Texas woods, waters and wildlife.

Texas Game Wardens may spend months investigating and building cases against lawbreakers who kill endangered species, poach wildlife, or dump polluting chemicals in waterways. Partnership with local prosecutors ensures violators are brought to justice.

The Prosecutor of the Year Award aims to formally recognize a courtroom champion each year for exemplary efforts in prosecuting fish, wildlife, water safety, natural and cultural resource or other environmental crimes in Texas.

Nominees may include any prosecutor at the county, district, state or federal level whose action occurred during the previous two calendar years.

Nominations are due May 15 each year, and award recipients will be announced at the August meeting of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.

[Nomination forms and instructions are on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.](#) *[Find links to nomination forms and instructions on the homepage.]*

## [Feral Cats Wreak Havoc on Songbirds](#)

Tuesday, March 27th, 2018

It's estimated there are more than 100-million cats in America—both housecats and feral cats.

*A feral cat is not under the direct care of humans...they are the ones out roaming around.*

Kelly Simon is an Urban Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Feral cats regularly compete with wildlife predators for the same food sources...

*They outnumber them and they out-compete them. So they are using the same kinds of prey animals that our native predators, like hawks, are using; and they're exerting pressure on them.*

Small mammals, like mice, account for about 70 percent of a feral cats' prey, while birds account for at least 20 percent. A single cat can kill up to 1,000 animals a year.

*They can even cause the endangerment of some species, especially those species that are already under pressure from habitat loss or habitat derogation.*

Feral cats aren't the only feline predators decimating small wildlife. Even well-fed housecats—whose owners allow them outside—hunt and kill prey with precision and skill.

*From a wildlife management standpoint, we really should be keeping our cats indoors.*

We'll talk about that tomorrow. Find [information on cats and wildlife](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

That's our show for today... Funding provided in part by Ram Trucks. Guts. Glory. Ram.

## [Keep Kitty Indoors to Protect Wildlife](#)

Wednesday, March 28th, 2018

As cute and as cuddly as they are, cats are born killers.

*Some people estimate that cats will take a total of 39-million prey animals per year.*

Prey animals include invertebrates, small mammals, reptiles and birds. Kelly Simon is an Urban Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

*From a wildlife management standpoint, we really should be keeping our cats indoors... Indoor cats are safer, healthier and live longer than outdoor cats.*



If your cats roam free, place bird feeders and baths in open areas away from places where they can hide and ambush birds.

*...and realize that by not spaying or neutering our cats, we are producing an awful lot of predators each and every year.*

Finally, do not release your unwanted cats in rural areas. It is NOT more humane than taking them to a shelter where they will be housed, fed and with luck—rehomed.

Released in an unfamiliar setting, former housecats are confused, terrified and vulnerable. If they survive, that's when they become a threat to wildlife...and it's not their fault.

### **Bird Words with Cliff Shackelford: Cere**

Thursday, March 29th, 2018

There's a name for everything—including those things about which we don't give much thought. Like that little waxy lump between the beak and eyes of certain birds.

*And it's usually found in raptors and parrots.*

Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford calls this feature a cere (seer).

*Cere—c-e-r-e. And for people that like crossword puzzles, this might be a good one you might often see.*

If you have a pet parakeet, parrot, or cockatoo, you will see that waxy, hard covering around the nostrils.

*And that featherless hard area is the cere. People will see them in caged parrots, but in raptors, too. So, falconers will notice these unique features on these birds. And it's just a waxy, hard covering to expose the nostrils.*

So is this structure functional or just decorative?

*It's not very decorative, although it can be brightly colored in some raptors. But there's no real understanding why these groups of birds—raptors and parrots—have it and no one else does. There's another similar structure on a dove and a pigeon called an operculum; why don't all birds have that? So, there are certain things that not all birds have.*

Such as the cere (seer).

*And that's our word of the day here: cere.*

The more you know....

## Creating Habitat for Freshwater Fish

Friday, March 30th, 2018

As we age, it's natural to experience physical decline. That's what's happening to Texas' reservoirs.

Many Texas reservoirs were formed years ago by constructing dams across rivers. As water filled the low lying areas it submerged trees and shrubs, which became fish habitat.

That organic matter's been breaking down ever since—and has reached a breaking point in some reservoirs.

This past fall, with the help of local volunteers—and financial support from the Brazos River Authority (or BRA)—Inland Fisheries staff from TPWD [completed several projects to improve fish habitat](#) at Aquilla Lake, Lake Georgetown and Granger Lake.

Each water body received a different treatment, from replanting water willows and establishing new plant colonies, to creating artificial reefs, to sinking brush piles—all of which help to improve fishing.

These projects were completed with funding from the Brazos River Authority as part of a multi-year effort to improve all 11 BRA System reservoirs in the basin through 2020.

Learn about these habitat projects as well as others that have taken place in reservoirs across the state on the TPW website.

The Sport Fish Restoration program supports our series.