

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

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

**Texas Passport January 2016**

### [More Outdoor Resolutions for the New Year](#)

Friday, January 1st, 2016

Happy New Year, everyone! Welcome to 52 weeks fresh possibilities. So, let's consider how to make 2016 better for ourselves and our loved ones.

Of course, [we could all get outside more because life's better outside](#). But you knew that.

Time in nature has a way of resetting the brain. And researchers say children who spend time outdoors do better on exams and are less disruptive in the classroom. So, if we can't give teachers pay raises, let's at least give them kids that can concentrate class. Am I right?

And you. Bring a pair of walking shoes to the office; stroll outdoors in the fresh air during your breaks. It's amazing how much nature actually exists in a concrete jungle.

We have 95 state parks, most of which are 90 minutes away, or less, from most of us. Grab family and friends and take a nature hike, ride a bike. Pitch a tent and sleep under the stars, or fish free in these natural playgrounds.

Commit to learning something new about [Texas history](#), but not from a book. Visit one of the state's incredible historic sites where it all went down.

There's a world of wonder out there, and once you spend more time outdoors, you'll wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

### [Seasonal Bird Counts](#)

Monday, January 4th, 2016

The Christmas Bird count, wraps up Tuesday. Volunteer counters add the understanding of wintering species, says biologist Marsha May.

*16—Well, this is a great way to look at the bird populations in the winter time—the wintering species. And we're able to look at changes through time; this count's been going on since 1900, so we're looking at lot of good data there.*

Did you miss the Christmas Bird Count? Marsha says more opportunities are on the way.

*33—There are other counts that look at spring birds, and then also at breeding birds in the summer. The North American Breeding Bird survey through USGS is another way of looking at breeding birds in the summertime. Then, local Audubon societies hold bird-a-thons in the spring, and that's looking at all your migratory spring birds. So, there's lots of things to do with birding, and we do have good birding information on our website. As*

*well as information on the Birding Classic. So, if you really want to get competitive, I'd recommend you get out there and try the Great Texas Birding Classic.*

The [Great Texas Birding Classic](#) Is April 15 through May 15 and celebrating its 20th year!

Find registration information for the Birding Classic, as well as videos about the birding on the Texas Parks and Wildlife YouTube channel.

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## [Outdoor Story: From Birds to Bugs](#)

Tuesday, January 5th, 2016

Mike Quinn is an entomologist whose interest in bugs developed through his family's interest in birds.

*My parents were birdwatchers, and I had an interest in outdoors as a child. But it wasn't until I was in my twenties... I was helping ornithologists at UT study painted buntings at McKinney Falls State Park, and walked around the bend, and we saw this large butterfly there sunning itself—absolutely gorgeous in the sun—and Anita Fauquier says, "I think that's a giant swallowtail." And it hit me like a ton of bricks. It was an epiphany for me that you could put a name on an insect. Why that was a revelation to me I still don't quite know, because I could identify birds by sight and sound, and plants and herps and etcetera. But putting a name on an insect was somehow a foreign concept. And I went home and I borrowed my mother's butterfly field guide (which I haven't quite returned yet), and just from that point on I started paying much closer attention to insects, and that led me to my degree now that I have in entomology.*

Do you have an Outdoor Story? Go to [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org), and share it with us...and we might share it with Texas.

## [Blue Quail Translocation](#)

Wednesday, January 6th, 2016

*Five...four...three...two...one... [Birds flutter].*

That's Dale Rollins Director of the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch. Along with Texas Parks and Wildlife his group released 88 wild-caught blue quail on the Matador Wildlife Management Area early last year.

*So we've been trapping wild birds out in the San Angelo area and moving those here and testing two release styles to see which one, if either, is going to be an effective way of restoring blue quail to this country.*

Blue quail, once plentiful in the Rolling Plains, have been absent for years. Various partners joined to reestablish populations of blue quail on public and private land. Researchers outfitted thirty-nine of the birds with tiny radio collars to track their movements. Texas Parks and Wildlife Biologist, Kara Campbell.

*We'll try and keep tabs on them, are they staying on the area, are they leaving the area, where they are moving and also survival. We're just really excited to be part of it. This is the beginning stages and so you know it phase one pilot stage. And to be part of that is pretty neat. And we'll see where it goes in the future.*

Learn about blue quail on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#).

## [Purple Martins](#)

Thursday, January 7th, 2016

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation supports our series and helps to keep Texas wild [with the support of proud members across the state](#). Find out more at [www.tpwf.org](http://www.tpwf.org)

Purple Martins begin to travel across Texas this month, stopping to nest in birdhouses designed for them. They rely on our help because they've adapted to manmade "nest boxes" originally constructed from gourds by Native Americans.

Yet, opinions vary about how this relationship between bird and man began. Some believe native people placed gourds on the ends of their teepee poles to intentionally attract the purple martins. The birds provided insect control, and chased off creatures that tried to eat game left out to dry by the hunters.

Other martin enthusiasts believe the relationship was accidental. Native Americans hung gourds high off the ground to prevent rotting, and rodents from chewing holes in them. The clever rodents found and chewed holes in the gourds, just the same.

The purple martins, while hunting for a nesting cavity spotted openings in the gourds, and nested inside them. Living close to man meant fewer predators—and they did eat pesky insects. Their symbiotic relationship allegedly evolved from there.

Whatever the truth, today's purple martin houses are either "gourd-type" single-family dwellings made from polyethylene, or "house-type" multi-family units made out of aluminum, or wood. And they remain a great bird to have around the house.

## [Trail Riding](#)

Friday, January 8th, 2016

While driving is the way most folks enter a state park... Barbara McKnight says once inside... you can see more of the natural beauty of your surroundings... on hay power.

*Something about riding a horse...looking at things is so much better. You're more likely to see wildlife. We see bobcats and other things that will hear the engine of a car or smell it and they'll leave.*

As a member of the Texas Equestrian Trail Riders Association, she says [state parks offer the perfect opportunity for exploring while on a horse](#). But before you hit the trail, there are a few safety precautions you need to be aware of...

*The horse you want for trail riding needs to be completely unflappable, things shouldn't scare it. It should be brave about walking up a hill, through water and over bridges. And the main thing you need to be sure and understand that horse and know how to control it.*

Find a list of state parks with equestrian facilities on the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

We record our series in Austin at the Block House. Joel Block engineers our program.

## [Teach a Person to Fish...](#)

**Monday, January 11th, 2016**

As more people gravitate toward fishing, the need for [trained angler education instructors](#) increases.

*Our strategy is to equip people so that they can bring fishing activities and events and outdoor experiences to their own communities.*

Caleb Harris is an aquatic education training specialist. He trains interested folks how to host fishing events.

*What we offer is some training to equip people to bring that to their own communities – whether it be their city, their church, their scout group... And then we can train them how to put on those events and we can give them the resources to successfully do it.*

Interested in becoming a volunteer angler education instructor? Start with a skills workshop.

*There's at least one or two happening each month somewhere in the state. And our workshops are free, too, to people who are interested in them. So, people can contact us directly and ask when the next workshop is, or they can follow the calendar of events on Texas Parks and Wildlife website. They'll all be posted there, too.*

Harris says the people who reach out to the agency for training are enthusiastic, and believe in fishing as a way to engage the outdoors and bring families together.

*Our volunteers are pretty incredible, actually, how motivated they are to help families get outside and have a good experience in fishing.*

A grant from the Sport Fish Restoration Program helps fund this project and our show. [Find an angler education workshop](#) near you on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## [Learn How to Fish](#)

**Tuesday, January 12th, 2016**

Why is fishing growing in popularity?

*Access Is there. It's not expensive. There's a draw to water. And young kids are excited to get into fishing typically, [because] it's weird. [laughs].*

Caleb Harris, an aquatic education training specialist, says access may be the top reason why people fish.

*There's significant access to fishing in Texas. We have lots of lakes and lots of parks. Within ten minutes of most homes you can find a place to stick a hook in the water.*

Find neighborhood fishing locations on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website. And, if you're new to fishing attend a Go Fish Event at Texas State Parks.

*The Go Fish events are free events in the park, and they start in the morning – typically – and they'll have education stations. And, they're very specific for exactly those people who say I'm interested in fishing but I really don't even know where to start. And after about an hour and a half to two hours of basic hands on activities to learn these things, then there's an opportunity to borrow some fishing poles and go fishing right there in the park. And after that, most people would have an example of where they could fish, what type of bait to use, how to tie on lures and hooks, what different fish they could expect to catch with certain types of bait – they would get that information at these events. It really is a good starting point.*

[Find Go Fish events in the calendar section](#) of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

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

### [TPW Magazine: 95 Parks in 365 Days](#)

Wednesday, January 13th, 2016

A dream is a wish your heart makes. So says the song from the 1950s Disney classic, Cinderella. Perhaps the night Dale Blasingame had a dream about driving around the country—his heart was revealing its deepest wish.

*I woke up that next day, and it was all I could think about—and I was coming to the end of the semester and I was about to have a break. And so I just decided to go for it. And so, I went on this trip across the entire west.*

During his travels, Dale—a social journalism lecturer at Texas State University—visited national parks.

*When I got home, it was one of those vacation blues type things, where I was just kind of bored. And a friend of mine suggested that I go to a state park. And, that kind of spawned the whole thing.*

That *thing*: visit Texas' 95 state parks in a single year. [He writes about his journey](#) in the January/February issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

*I really didn't do a ton of planning. There were a couple of times I took big, huge trips and I would hit 15 or 18 parks at one time. But it really just kind of started as: 'Okay, here's this one. This is the next closest one—I'm going to go there...' I'd wake up on a Saturday morning, or I'd think about it the Friday the night before, and ask: 'Where am I going to go tomorrow?'*

Tomorrow Dale Blasingame tells us how he found a hiking buddy. Read his story, *One is Not Enough*, in the January/February issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine.

## [Park and Bark: A Canine Hiking Buddy](#)

Thursday, January 14th, 2016

Texas State University lecturer, Dale Blasingame visited all 95 Texas state parks in just one year; he wrote about it for the [January/February issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

*I got the essence of the parks, even though there were some of them that I didn't spend a ton of time at.*

Dale spent most of his time in parks with diverse hiking opportunities, and preferred going solo.

*I like to travel alone. I'm kind of weird like that. I like being on my own schedule and not having to worry about if other people are having fun. I realize I'm kind of a pain in the "you know what" to travel with because I'm always going off path to try and go see something.*

One day, while hiking at Buescher State Park he met a man hiking with his dog.

*And we didn't really talk much, but just silently hiked together. And I was watching his dog the whole time, and when we got to the end of the trail where he was heading out, I turned and I said: Do you like hiking with that thing? And he goes, Aw man. You will never regret it.*

On the way home, Dale noticed a rescue dog adoption day at his neighborhood pet store, which is where he met and adopted 1-year-old Lucy.

*She's been to about 50 parks with me. So, one of my goals is I want to take her to the rest of the parks that she hasn't been to. I don't think she'll care, but it would matter to me. I've only had her for about a year. But, I cannot think of what life was like without her.*

Read Dale Blasingame's article *One is Not Enough* in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine.

## [TPW TV: Trailblazer](#)

Friday, January 15th, 2016

Seventy-nine year old retired math teacher Robert Newman looks after the Franklin Mountains; he hand builds the trails visitors enjoy.

*I just take it day-by-day. One Rock at a time. Ah...it looks alright.*

For fifteen years, Robert has done this difficult work on his own. And says he doesn't mind because the surroundings are beautiful.

*Now this is going to be a pretty rough ride, I'm going to go very slow. Today we are at the Tom Mays unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park, and we're going on up to where we are working on a new trail. There's existing trails, well actually old bulldozed roads basically. That are really tough, so I'm trying to put in one that's more user friendly!*

Robert takes his old jeep up the side of the mountain as far as it will go, before walking the last half mile over rocky terrain to his work site where, with simple tools, creates trails.

*When I'm out here working on a trail I have basically three settings: the first setting is very slow. The second setting is even slower, and the third setting is stopped. And stopped eats up more time than the other two put together. When I'm out here working most of the time I'm sitting and I'll just sit and look in awe at what's out here.*

Enjoy the scenery and meet Robert Newman on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS next week. Check your local listings.

## **[TPW Magazine: Franklin Mountains State Park](#)**

**Monday, January 18th, 2016**

Franklin Mountains State Park shares similarities to the Big Bend region, minus the isolation.

*It's big, and it's a desert type environment, and it's mountains and it's remote. If you hike into the basin and up into the mountains and get away from the city, you're out in sort of a wilderness; you can really get away from it all. And within 30 minutes you can go get a soda at a drive-through. Or a hamburger. [laughs]*

Melissa Gaskill wrote about the park for the current issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine. She says the park's Wyler Ariel Tramway gives visitors a four-minute trip past 600 million years of geologic history; including some very old rocks.

*Precambrian rock—more than a billion year old—that's from the formation of the earth, pretty much. And then uplifts and faults exposed these. If you're into geology, it's a definite must for your bucket list.*

Gaskill says once on the mountain there are plenty of hiking trails from which to choose.

*I was astonished to find out how much hiking there is in the park—and how big the park is. It's 37 square miles. And there's more than 125 miles of trails. I really only scratched the surface—I'd love to go back and do more. But given that, I felt that hiking was the thing to do there.*

Melissa Gaskill is back tomorrow.

## **[History in the Franklin Mountains](#)**

**Tuesday, January 19th, 2016**

When you think of mountains, do you think of El Paso?

*Probably people don't think of Texas as having mountains. And if they do, they think that they're in Big Bend. But here, the Franklin Mountains are a pretty, sizable, impressive mountain range worth visiting. And, they're right there in the city, and really easy to get to.*

Melissa Gaskill visited El Paso and Franklin Mountains SP, and wrote about it for the current issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine. The mountains have a rich geologic history—as mountains do—dating back to the Precambrian era; woven into that history... are the human stories.

*I do love the fact that there's really rich history there. It's not far from Hueco Tanks, which has that really cool rock art. There's some rock art in this park as well, although it's not as easy to find. El Paso is a pass between these mountains that people have been passing through for thousands of years. So, it's also pretty cool people-history-wise.*

Not everyone has mountains in their backyards, but El Pasoans do, and Gaskill hopes they explore them.

*It's literally looming over them. I don't know how many of them take advantage of it, but I hope that maybe this article will encourage more of them to do so. Because it's so close and it's so cool. There's so much there to offer, and they don't have to drive too far to enjoy [it].*

Read the article, *Views Around Every Bend*, by Melissa Gaskill in the January/February issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

## [Neighborhood Fishin'](#)

Wednesday, January 20th, 2016

*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.*

Aquatic education training specialist, Caleb Harris, says the neighborhood fishin' program is one of many ways Texas Parks and Wildlife facilitates that 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.*

He's referring to the Texas Parks and Wildlife website. This time of year, the inland fisheries division stocks neighborhood fishin' ponds with rainbow trout. 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 places to fish, as well as tackle loaner locations, learn to fish classes, and information on various species of fish when you [log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#).

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

## [Borrowing Tackle via the Tackle Loaner Program](#)

Thursday, January 21st, 2016

It's winter, but that doesn't mean you can't go fishing. In fact, winter is the only time Texas Parks and Wildlife stocks rainbow trout. Plus, when you fish at Texas State Parks, fishing is free. You're new to angling and don't have tackle? No problem.

*Many of our state parks that have water for fishing, have fishing poles that people can borrow.*

Caleb Harris is an aquatic education training specialist. He says it's easy to borrow rods, reels and tackle boxes with hooks, sinkers and bobbers.

*[Just] sign a paper that says they'll bring the fishing poles back, and they can borrow the fishing poles for up to a week, sometimes, as they're camping in the park. Or, if they just come for the day, they can borrow them and return them back to the park.*

You are responsible for your own bait, but I hear rainbow trout bite on most anything; so load your hook with pieces of your picnic lunch. Nothing is easier than fishing for free in state parks with borrowed tackle.

*If people are interested in getting into fishing, we try to make that accessible as much as possible.*

[Find state parks with fishing opportunities, tackle loaner programs, and fishing classes](#) when you log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

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

## [TPW TV: Richland Creek](#)

**Friday, January 22nd, 2016**

*To work for twenty years on one project and see it go from a design on paper to over 2,000 acres of wetlands, functioning as designed is extremely rewarding.*

Jeff Gunnels, with the Middle Trinity River Ecosystem Project, leads a Texas Parks and Wildlife team that reconstructed wetlands in the Richland Creek Wildlife management area; wildlife biologist, Matthew Symmank.

*We pump water from the Trinity River into a series of sediment basins and then we flow it through a series of wetland cells. The wetland plant community and the wetlands themselves act as a filter, filtering out the nutrients.*

Gunnels said algae blooms would occur if that water flowed directly into a reservoir.

*So, we're using those wetlands to take up those nutrients and clean this water, and that water is re-lifted into the Richland Chambers Reservoir and ultimately pumped back to the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex.*

The ecosystem project provides clean drinking water to the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex and to wildlife. And that creates outstanding hunting opportunities, says wildlife technician Edwin Bowman.

*For the average public hunter that comes in, they see it and they're like, "Man, it looks amazing". Just knowing how much time behind the scenes it takes to make it look amazing is pretty cool, how much work and sweat and dedication we have out here.*

## [Wade Fishing in Texas](#)

**Monday, January 25th, 2016**

With eight bay systems to choose from, and almost 400 miles of beach or bay access, wade fishing opportunities in Texas are vast.

*We're fishing the Upper Laguna Madre today, just south of Corpus Christi.*

Before he retired from Texas Parks and Wildlife last year, Art Morris worked in Coastal fisheries, and one of his jobs was to generate interest in wade fishing.

*[Corpus Christi Bay] is one of the premier bays on the Texas coast to wade fish. It's got miles and miles of shallow grass flats, with an average depth of three feet. There's tons of opportunities for wade fishermen to come down here and try their luck.*

Minimal gear, bait and a good location are all you need for wade fishing. The location Nick Meyers prefers is North Padre Island National Seashore, with 65 miles of undeveloped beach and surf.

*The beauty of this beach is, you've got such a variety of fish as you go through the seasons. From the pompano as in the fall and winter. Trout. Redfish. Jackfish. There's everything in this water. It's more than likely the most fertile bit of water you can get.*

Find other wade [fishing opportunities](#) along the Texas coast on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series. Through your purchases of hunting and fishing equipment, and motorboat fuels, over 40 million dollars in conservation efforts are funded in Texas each year.

## **Shooting Sporting Clays**

**Tuesday, January 26th, 2016**

Sporting clays came to the US from Britain in the 1960s and gained a fast following; one that continues to grow—especially in Texas.

*Texas is the Mecca of the clay target sports.*

San Antonio is home to the National Sporting Clays Association and the National Skeet Shooting Association, and from 1987-2002 Mike Hampton was its executive director. A thousand shooters from across the globe travel to the site annually for the National Sporting Clays Championship—shooting more than a half million clay pigeons in 4 days.

*The national complex in San Antonio is the largest all around shooting facility in the world.*

Competition isn't the only objective at the facility. Texas Parks and Wildlife Hunter Ed director, Steve Hall, says shooters also visit year-round to hone their skills and learn safety.

*Statistically, sporting clays are very safe. In fact, we use the shooting sports to teach safety—especially to youngsters. We have many programs that combine the shooting sports with firearm safety and safe firearm handling.*

Sporting clays isn't just about turning the pigeons to dust. Charlie Wilson, a shooting instructor, says, it's about enjoying the outdoors.

*They get out into the outdoors—it's good, it's clean, it's healthy...and it's fun.*

## **Tree Stand Safety**

**Wednesday, January 27th, 2016**

To be “up a tree” is usually a bad thing—unless, of course, you're a hunter in a tree stand.

*Did you know that the number one cause of hunting injury and fatality in North America is falls from tree stands?*

In this instance, being up the tree isn't the problem... falling from it is. Steve Hall, Texas Parks and Wildlife Hunter Education Coordinator, offers three simple rules to prevent falls.

*One, use a good climbing system. Two, a harness while you're in the stand. And three, a haul line to haul up your equipment and lower it back down to the ground.*

Hall says climbing to the tree stand is when most accidents occur.

*You want to make sure you have three points of contact while you're climbing on a ladder or into a stand. You also want to step down onto the platform of that stand before you strap yourself in, in terms of the tree and the harness.*

Once a hunter is in the stand, Hall says he or she needs to be sure the tether is nice and taut.

*If he does happen to fall off the platform, this will keep his legs near the platform.*

This allows the hunter to easily step back onto the platform. There's more hunter safety information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Jace and Jack say: No More Cups**

**Thursday, January 28th, 2016**

This is Passport to Texas

Urban trash creates problems for freshwater and salt water ecosystems. Heavy rains, such as we had last year, sweep debris into our waterways.

*You know, any trash that goes into the bay, like plastics, it takes many, many years for that to be able to biodegrade. And it's not pretty to see, but it's also bad for the animals.*

Jace Tunnell of Corpus Christi and his son Jack frequent their local coastal park and see this problem first hand. During a rainstorm, Jace documented the issue using his video camera.

*It blew my mind to see how much trash was coming out. And, unfortunately, that's just the stuff that floats. I was showing it to Jack and his eyes just opened up and he said: "Whoa!"*

Together, father and son created a short video they titled All the Cups and posted it to YouTube to raise awareness.

*We want people to stop throwing trash everywhere. And....that's all.*

Coincidentally, as their video hit YouTube, the city of Corpus Christi launched its own antilitter campaign. Lawrence Mikolajczyk [Mick-o-laj-check] oversees the city's solid waste operations.

*The overall goal of it is to bring litter awareness to everyone in the city. We do have a beautiful city and we want to keep it that way. We want it to remain the sparkling city by the sea.*

Urban trash in our waterways is a national problem. By recycling, or at least properly disposing of trash, we can all make a difference.

## [Southern Flounder](#)

Friday, January 29th, 2016

Brian Treadway fishes for flounder in Chocolate Bayou in West Galveston Bay.

*Chocolate Bayou is an excellent spot for flounder. We have one of the shallowest bays in all the coast. And really and truly, we have the absolute best place to fish in the world right in our own backyard.*

[Southern flounder](#) accounts for more than 95 percent of the flounder harvest in Texas. Sampling surveys indicate while populations of redfish and spotted sea trout are strong, southern flounder's in decline.

*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 with the Sea Center Texas Fish Hatchery, says data suggests issues affecting southern flounder decline include a lower number of females, overfishing and loss due to shrimp bycatch. Coastal fish hatcheries use brood stock to produce thousands of small flounder that will eventually go back into the bays.

*If we're able to stock fish into areas that are needed. Then, that is just another additional tool that can help the population recover.*

Find bag limits and other regulations for fishing for flounder and other species on the Texas parks and Wildlife website.

## **Texas Passport February 2016**

### [Buffalo Soldiers: Unsung Texas Heroes](#)

Monday, February 1st, 2016

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

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.*

## **Buffalo Soldiers a Positive Influence on Youth**

Tuesday, February 2nd, 2016

Buffalo soldiers were heroes in their time; examples of courage and hard work. But their accomplishments, seldom taught in classrooms, leave many young African American students, like Greg McClanahan, with a limited sense of their history.

*They didn't teach us anything in school but that we were slaves. They didn't teach us that we were heroes or nothing. In history, all you ever heard about was slaves this, and slaves that. You didn't hear about no black heroes.*

When we met, McClanahan was attending public school in Kerrville, where he was introduced to Buffalo Soldier reenactors from Parks and Wildlife.

*What we are doing is taking the legacy of the Buffalo Soldier into the cities and into the schools. And we feel that sharing this story, that we can instill some pride and some resolve in them.*

Ken Pollard retired from coordinating Buffalo Soldiers Heritage & Community Outreach for Parks and Wildlife. He said he found out about the Buffalo Soldiers as an adult, but wished he'd known about them earlier.

*My relatives and kinfolk were cowboys, man. We didn't have any black cowboys or soldiers, you know, to really look up to. For me, to have the black heroes there when I was growing up, that sense of pride would have been instilled in me. But if I had grown up with that—they would have been my heroes.*

Find information about [\*\*Buffalo Soldiers Heritage & Community Outreach\*\*](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Southern Edwards Aquifer**

Wednesday, February 3rd, 2016

An ecosystem is a complex set of interrelationships among plants, animals, microorganisms, land, and water. And Texas Parks and Wildlife is a collaborator on a conservation plan to protect a special ecosystem: the Southern Edwards Aquifer.

*The Edwards aquifer is home to many, many rare species, including eight federally listed threatened and endangered species.*

Cindy Loeffler is water resources branch chief at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

*Some of the most visible endangered species associated with the Edwards Aquifer are Texas Wild Rice – it's only found in the upper two miles of the San Marcos River. Also, fountain daters, small fish that are found in the San Marcos River and the Comal River, and a number of cave-dwelling species you might not see just recreating in the rivers – but they're there.*

Loeffler worked on the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan. Some of the species she mentioned are unique to the Edwards Aquifer Ecosystem.

*It's important to protect these species for that reason, but also, this is a major water supply for many of us here in Texas, so finding a way to share that resource –finding the proper balance – that's what the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program has been about.*

What's in the plan to help protect endangered species? We look at that tomorrow.

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

## **Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan**

Thursday, February 4th, 2016

Two million people – from Central to Southwest Texas – depend on the Edwards Aquifer for their drinking water.

*It also supplies important water sources for industry, agriculture, recreation...a number of things.*

Cindy Loeffler, water resources branch chief at Texas Parks and Wildlife, says eight federally listed endangered species call the aquifer home; some of them exist in this location only. The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan intends to protect them, and allow Texans' continued use of the shared resource by implementing a mixture of strategies.

*Water conservation is a key part of it...but also [part of it is] looking at different ways to manage water. For example, we do currently have different levels of conservation that kick in to action as drought increases, and also many measures to help make the ecosystems more resilient. Things like removing non-native species, [and] helping to restore habitat that's been compromised. One notable thing, especially for folks who recreate on the San Marcos River that's been done, is to create a state scientific area that makes it unlawful to uproot Texas Wild Rice, a federally protected plant.*

It is easy to be dismissive of a plan to protect species which exist in very small numbers or that we do not often see. Tomorrow we talk about the value of these species.

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## **Water for Humans and Endangered Species**

Friday, February 5th, 2016

The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan permits what's necessary to ensure the survival of rare, threatened and endangered species that depend on the Aquifer and the San Marcos and Comal Rivers while allowing continued use of the resource by the rest of us.

*There's federal law requiring this, but it's the right thing to do in terms of protecting the resource for all of us into the future.*

Cindy Loeffler is water resources branch chief at Texas Parks and Wildlife and one of the architects of the protection plan. Convincing people to do the right thing – like modifying their water usage based on the needs of rare species – can be a hard sell.

The plan includes ongoing water conservation—especially during times of drought—removing invasive species, and declaring a portion of the San Marcos River a state scientific area that would make it illegal to uproot endangered Texas Wild Rice.

But Loeffler says these protected species are indicators of a healthy ecosystem – which benefits everyone.

*By providing these protections for these species, that helps ensure the San Marcos river, the Comal River will keep flowing. Keeping these springs flowing is really at the heart and soul of the work done by the recovery implementation program. And so that benefits the species, of course, but also benefits people as well.*

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

## [On the Hunt for Snipe](#)

Monday, February 8th, 2016

An invitation to participate in a snipe hunt fills young hearts with anticipation and anxiety. In my youth, snipe hunts were cloaked in mystery; and that's what made them deliciously terrifying.

Taken at night to a wooded area and outfitted with a burlap bag...a flashlight with weak batteries...and a whistle to call for help... hunters enter the woods alone in search of dreaded snipes. And how would they recognize them? They would know them when they saw them.

Before long, panicked whistles and screams from deep within the woods pierced the silence, as vivid imaginations got the best of the young snipe hunters. Eventually everyone, including the hunter, had a good laugh.

Today we know snipe are small, long billed, brownish shorebirds in the sandpiper family. Their habitat includes freshwater marshes, ponds and flooded fields. They breed across much of North America, but like to spend their winters in the southern states, including Texas.

Snipe are game birds here, and the season to hunt snipe ends on February 14th. So if you want to go snipe hunting, and not be left holding the bag, time is running out.

Learn more about snipe and see an image of this not so terrifying creature when you log onto our web site: [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

## [Plant Native Trees Before Spring](#)

Tuesday, February 9th, 2016

Now is an ideal time to plant trees throughout most of Texas...and you might wonder why.

*Two reasons: the two most important constituents in tree planting—the people planting the trees and the trees. It's just much easier on them.*

Scott Harris is a certified arborist in Austin. Tree planting season in Texas started in October and continues 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.*

Just because a tree will grow in Texas, doesn't mean it should grow here. Harris advises that we all exercise caution about what we plant in our yards.

*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 we'll have a few tree planting tips to help you and your newly planted tree enjoy a long and happy life together

## **Rules for Tree Planting**

Wednesday, February 10th, 2016

Trees are habitat for wildlife. And if you're adding new trees to your landscape, you need to 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 it's ten feet high, then you need to get ten feet back from the house.*

Scott Harris, a certified arborist in Austin, recommends planting only native specimens.

*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.*

By watering infrequently and deeply, we can help new trees 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.*

Strong root systems help trees remain strong and withstand drought.

## **2016 Crab Trap Clean-up**

Thursday, February 11th, 2016

**Lost and abandoned crab traps** become hazards to marine life in Texas bays.

*We are particularly concerned because of the ghost fishing effects; they continue fishing unmaintained.*

When something gets in the trap and dies, it acts as bait, attracting more marine life, which in turn suffers the same fate. Art Morris coordinated the annual cleanup of derelict traps during his time with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

*And what we do once a year in February, is get volunteers together up and down the coast, and we try to remove all those traps that have been lost, or vandalized or whatever that are potentially ghost fishing.*

Volunteers have removed more than 31-thousand traps in the cleanup's 15 year history. The cleanup traditionally starts on the third Friday of February and continues for 10 days.

*We don't have any kind of salvage laws in Texas, and once you put out a trap—it's your property and nobody is supposed to touch that. So, in order to get to these derelict traps, we have a legislative, mandated closure.*

This mandate gives citizens permission to remove derelict traps from their favorite fishing holes during that 10-day period. Find details volunteering for this year's cleanup on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

## **[TPW TV: Oil Spill Team](#)**

Friday, February 12th, 2016

On March 22nd, 2014 two vessels collided in the Houston ship channel. And that's when the TPW Oil Spill Response team sprang to action.

*[Winston Denton] There was a timing issue with an incoming inbound ship and a barge and tug crossing the channel.*

*[Steven Mitchell] The crew members started reporting that they had oil leaking from the barge.*

*[Rebecca Hensley] We had about 170,000 gallons of fuel that was spilled into the ship channel.*

*[Don Pitts] Any large spill like this, we get notified by the Coast Guard or the General Land Office to come and assist in the role of Natural Resource Advisors.*

*[Heather Biggs] Since it was a large event, we did pull people from Austin, from Corpus, even down from Brownsville we had folks coming in to help us.*

*[Angela Schrifft] We coordinated, figured out what we'd need. Got the materials together and got down to the coast as soon as we could.*

Meet the team, and find out what happened next, when you view their story next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV Series on PBS.

## **[Rock On: Because You Can](#)**

Monday, February 15th, 2016

Brad Bell doesn't think twice when you ask him why anyone would climb a rock.

*Why would someone wanna...Because a it's there (laugh)...*

The Austin resident teaches the sport of rock climbing. He says although you don't need rock-hard abs to climb — before you attempt this sport — a little weight training may be in order first...

*Upper body strength is good and leg strength is even more of a plus. (Nat sound) "There ya go...push your hand and then move your hand up to the next one...there ya go (screams) pull on up...good!"*

And even though rock climbing offers climbers a feeling of solitude, it's critical – whether you're a novice or a seasoned climber — never go alone.

*You should always have team partners... because you have to have a partner to help you belay and help you repel down and basically it's a team effort all the way up.*

Four Texas state parks offer rock climbing: Enchanted Rock, north of Fredericksburg, Hueco Tanks, just north of El Paso, Caprock Canyons southeast of Amarillo and Lake Mineral Wells.

[Find your next climbing adventure on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Website.](#)

## [Shell Collecting Tips](#)

Tuesday, February 16th, 2016

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 is a lifelong shell collector, and former coastal fisheries biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. 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.*

When and where to go shelling on tomorrow's show.

## [Benefits of Winter Beachcombing](#)

Wednesday, February 17th, 2016

Before you sell seashells by the seashore, you first have to find them. Surprisingly, summer beachcombing may not yield the results you desire.

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

Paul Hammerschmidt is a lifelong shell collector and former coastal fisheries biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. He says winter storms churn up the Gulf bottom, sending marine critters and their calciferous

containments onto the beach. To improve your chances of finding a variety of intact shells, Hammerschmidt says stay clear of crowded beaches.

*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 pretty little shell called baby ears—which looks like...well...baby ears. Or, there's 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 time of year, before it warms up, is a terrific time to go beach-combing.

That's our show for today...remember: Life's Better Outside.

## **[Prescription to Burn](#)**

Thursday, February 18th, 2016

Man mimics nature when he uses fire as a land management tool. One way to use fire is through controlled burning; another way is to use prescribed fire.

According to David Riskind, director of natural resources for state parks, 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.*

Riskind adds that those objectives usually have to do with land management.

*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 burns](#)** on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series and works to increase fishing, hunting, shooting and boating opportunities in Texas.

## **[Celebrating Texas Independence](#)**

Friday, February 19th, 2016

Texas Independence Day is March 2. And Washington on the Brazos is where it all started.

*This town was chosen as the site of the general convention, which met on March 1, 1836, and adjourned on March 17.*

Janice Campbell, former interpreter at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, said those seventeen days in 1836, paved the way for Texas future.

*In those seventeen days, the elected delegates that came here, they declared their independence from Mexico; they wrote a constitution; and they elected some officers for a government. So, I guess you could say the groundwork of the government of the Republic of Texas was created right here in Washington.*

Campbell said one cannot help but feel a deep connection to the past when visiting Washington-on-the-Brazos.

*It's pretty awesome to be able to walk out there, and walk along the main thoroughfare of the town and know that we are walking in the footsteps of history...right here in Washington.*

[Check out the Texas Parks and Wildlife Calendar of events](#) to see when Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site plans to celebrate Texas' Independence.

We record our series at the Block House in Austin and Joel Block engineers our program.

## [Volunteer with Texas State Parks](#)

Monday, February 22nd, 2016

Volunteers donate more than a half-million hours of service worth over \$17-million dollars annually to all Texas Parks and Wildlife programs.

*They get to work with really friendly and knowledgeable staff, and they have a great time just being outside and enjoying nature, themselves, as part of their giving back.*

Audrey Muntz is the new volunteer coordinator for Texas state parks, and says [anyone with an interest can find a volunteer opportunity](#) in parks that suits them.

*We have hundreds of opportunities throughout the state at state parks. Some of them are one time; some of them are short term. And, the majority of them are ongoing.*

One of the most coveted long-term volunteer jobs is state park host. In exchange for their services, they receive a campground site.

*Those individuals serve up to 24-30 hours a week in exchange for being able to keep their RV in the campground. And so they can help with a huge variety of things, from keeping the grounds clean, to fee collection. And they are the face of the park in many ways, and help campers get to know and learn the park and keep it as beautiful and clean as they can for all of our visitors.*

Park host commitments range from two to six months; and, established volunteers often move from one park to another.

## [A Flood of Volunteer Spirit](#)

Tuesday, February 23rd, 2016

Texans are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and pitch in when their state parks need them: such as after the 2015 Memorial Day Floods.

*A lot of our friends groups were leading a lot of those efforts.*

Audrey Muntz is the volunteer coordinator for Texas state parks. She says she expects opportunities to help flood damaged parks will continue for some time.

*Especially for areas where there has been major trail damage, or major damage to work areas or campgrounds.*

The floods may have happened eight months ago, but volunteer opportunities to get them sorted are ongoing. And Audrey Muntz says volunteers participate in various projects throughout the year for personal reasons.

*There's this really deep desire to make sure we're providing this for future generations. So, I really see that through these volunteer efforts.*

**[Interested in becoming a volunteer at your Texas State Parks?](#)** Log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website and register to become a volunteer, receive updates, and search a wide variety of available projects.

## **No Country for Old Cowbirds**

Wednesday, February 24th, 2016

The **[brown-headed cowbird](#)** migrated with bison across the Great Plains, and because it's hard to raise a family on the road, cowbirds laid their eggs in other birds' nests; host birds unwittingly raised cowbird young.

*The problem with the cowbird eggs is that normally they're big eggs; they hatch earlier than the host eggs do; and they're very vocal and hungry and beg for food.*

Biologist, Marsha May, says the cowbird hatchlings out compete the host's offspring for food, starving them out, and reducing populations of that species. Back when bison roamed, cowbirds didn't have quite the same impact.

*Black-capped vireos, which are an endangered species now, evolved where if they were parasitized by a brown-headed cowbird, they would leave that nest and re-nest – start a new nest. Well, if the cowbirds had already moved through, that would have worked.*

Without bison, cowbirds hang with cows. Because cows are fenced in and don't migrate, neither do cowbirds.

*They're parasitizing all the birds in that area – their nests – and they're having a major impact on some species like the black capped vireo, because the black-capped vireo keeps re-nesting and that's wasting a lot of energy, and if it's constantly being parasitized, then no young will be reproduced at all that year.*

## **Women Hunters and Why They Hunt**

Thursday, February 25th, 2016

Although I am not a hunter, I attended an all-woman hunting trip to the Texas Hill Country to learn about it.

I met women on the trip who were long-time hunters as well as others who were on their first hunts. Tami Crawford was the hunt coordinator, and explained the purpose of the event.

*We're trying to get women involved in the outdoors, and to take some of the mystery out of the sport of hunting. Before it's just been something that the guys go do.*

Ten women in all went on the trip. Each brought a guide with them. First time hunter, Millissa Salinas of Austin, brought her father Ralph.

*I've always wanted to experience the outdoors, and I thought the perfect opportunity to bond with my father would be this event so he could show me the rope and experience some special memories together.*

Millissa, like all of the women on the trip, was enthusiastic about the experience.

*It was extremely exciting. We'd been preparing for it for about a month. He had taken me target shooting, I had borrowed a rifle. So I'd been anticipating the whole excitement for some time now. So when the actual moment came to pull the trigger, it was extremely exciting.*

Millissa harvested two deer on that trip. Hunting with other women and her father made for an experience that Millissa intends to recreate with other family members.

*We definitely want to get involved more in the outdoors. And I have a younger sister that we're going to try to encourage to join us.*

### **Conservation Leader: Tim Birdsong**

Friday, February 26th, 2016

Tim Birdsong is Chief of Habitat Conservation for Inland Fisheries at Parks and Wildlife.

*I feel like it's my job as a rivers biologist here at Texas Parks and Wildlife to help people understand what would be lost if we didn't take care of these resources.*

He works closely with landowners to develop projects to preserve healthy, flowing waters in Texas.

*Since 2010, We've entered into agreements with over 100 landowners to do stream corridor conservation projects to conserve these lands along these flowing waters like you see here. In my personal life, I love to get out and recreate on rivers and streams, and so I don't really feel like my job is work. So conserving those natural resources is about conserving that relationship that I want to pass down to my own children.*

Conservation is hard work for all involved, and can at times seem like one step forward and two steps back. But people like Tim Birdsong never lose focus or faith.

*I feel like I've made a difference. I feel like the team that I work with has made a difference. I associate my work with not just conserving fish and wildlife, but preserving a way of life. If I can have a role in helping more people get out and experience the outdoors, or promote a way of life that's going to lead to a healthier, happier society then I'm all for it.*

Meet Tim next week in a segment on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV show on PBS, Check your local listings.

### **Texas Outdoor Stories: Time in a Bottle**

Monday, February 29th, 2016

Terri McDonald of Rockport, responded to our request for listeners' stories about their favorite Texas State Parks, historic sites or wildlife management areas. Her favorite is Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area.

*Absolutely love it. There's no cars...very few people...it's just like going back in time to a beach a hundred years ago.*

The slow pace leaves a lot of time for one of Terri's favorite pastimes — beach combing.

*We've found tons of seashells, beautiful driftwood, four messages in bottles.... You just never know what you're going to find out there.*

Terri says she's contacted three of the people whose message she found in the bottles.

*The oldest one was from 1969. A soldier in the Vietnam War had dropped it off of Cape Canaveral. And we found it at the bottom of a dune that had been sheared off by a storm. So it had been buried under sixteen feet of sand for years and years. So we got in touch with him through the help of the Corpus Christi Caller Times Military Reporter. And the poor guy almost had a heart attack. It was a long time ago – he had almost forgotten doing it.*

Now it's your turn. [Visit the Outdoor Stories link](#) at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org) and send us an email with your memory of the Great Texas Outdoors.

## **Texas Passport March 2016**

### **[Texas State Parks Official Guide](#)**

Tuesday, March 1st, 2016

Most of us are within an hour's drive of a state park. And when you download the new app for the Texas State Parks Official Guide to your phone or device, your next park getaway is within your reach.

*It will allow them to do what we call a 'filtered search' to find the perfect park for them that they'd like to explore. And we're hoping that not only will it make people more inclined to discover more parks, but really bring some younger people and more diverse people to the parks. It's a really exciting resource that we're now able to offer.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife marketing director Darcy Bontempo says not knowing which parks are nearby, or what activities and amenities are available, may keep some folks from visiting parks. The app can change that.

*This is just going to remove those obstacles and make them feel like they're the expert on state parks. They can get that information easily and quickly. They can even look at videos of the park. Photos of the park... I think what's going to be exciting is for people to almost customize the park experience. And that can change. In fall you might want to go hiking, and in summer, you might want to go swimming. It just puts the power right there in your hand in terms of you figuring out where you want to go.*

Using the new app—which is available for apple and android devices—you can even create a “favorites list” of parks you've visited or want to visit.

*We're all about making it as easy as possible for people to get to parks and enjoy parks.*

Download the Texas State Parks Official Guide at [texasstateparks.org/app](http://texasstateparks.org/app)

### **[Spring Break: Kayaking](#)**

**Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016**

Looking for a fun outdoor activity you can do solo or with friends this spring break? James Graham says traveling aboard a kayak is the ultimate means of individual navigation.

*It's what we call people power... it's a way to experience waters that are less crowded, that are more pristine.*

The Houston kayaking instructor teaches folks the finer points of paddling. Since these boats don't use motors to move, they can access more places than ...say... a powerboat...

*And that's one of the things fishermen are really appreciating now...they can get up into some very, very shallow water...the fish aren't used to people in those areas and you can really enjoy a lot of Texas this way*

He says there is a perception that kayaks are dangerous because people see them going over white water rapids on TV...

*Well white water is only a small part of the sport...in fact kayaks are more stable than canoes because you are sitting lower in the water, the center of gravity is lower, your balance is better.*

[Learn more about kayaking and canoeing](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

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

That's our show for today...the Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series and works to increase fishing and boating opportunities in Texas.

### [Spring Break: Best Footwear for Hiking](#)

**Thursday, March 3rd, 2016**

If your spring break includes hiking along trails, you'll need something sturdier and safer than flip flops to protect and support your feet and ankles.

A light hiking shoe may suffice if trekking along a smooth, well maintained trail. They're a more robust version of a running shoe, with good support and a flexible mid sole for comfort.

For more support, try hiking boots. These can be mid or high cut and take time to break in. Both the low and high cuts wrap around the ankle. Overall, wear this foot gear on day hikes when carrying light loads. If you commonly carry 40 pounds or more when hiking, a high cut boot will give you the best support.

The next boot in the lineup is the backpacking boot. They get two thumbs up when it comes to support and durability. They generally have a stiff mid sole and may be mid to high cut to help prevent ankle roll when carrying heavier loads.

The sturdiest boot on the market is the mountaineering boot. This is outdoor footwear at its toughest. They're heavier boots made to help you carry heavier loads. They're also able to accommodate crampons should you find yourself scuttling up a glacier.

### [Spring Break: Wildlife Trail Maps & Migration](#)

**Friday, March 4th, 2016**

Beginning in February and continuing through May, birders watch the sky for spring migrants.

*Texas is unique in that it has a great funnel of flyways. Spring migration is a great time to go and experience all the different birds that come through Texas.*

Liz Tomberlin works in Nature Tourism at Texas Parks and Wildlife. From casual birders to listers, these maps have something for everyone! There are well-known sites such as High Island as well as lesser-known local gems and private ranches. To find the road less traveled—[grab a Wildlife Trail map](#).

*And what our Wildlife Trail maps do is give them more of an individual experience and give them places that might be hidden gems in the community where they can go and avoid the crowds and see all the birds in a different spot that's not so well known.*

Which of the nine illustrated maps would Liz suggest?

*Definitely upper Texas coast, central Texas Coast, and Lower Texas Coast, are some of the best places to see the spring migrants. Will these maps also tell people what birds to look out for? Yes, it does! Each site description tells you different times when you can see these birds, what you can expect to see at the site, and where to go to actually view them. It's a great tool to have if you want to come and see the spring migration.*

**Download free digital versions of the maps** from the Texas Parks and Wildlife website; hard copies may be purchased. Find information at the TPW website.

## **[Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation](#)**

**Monday, March 7th, 2016**

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation is the official non-profit partner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

*And we fund transformational projects to benefit the people of Texas.*

Anne (Annie) Brown is executive director of the foundation, which works to ensure the continued vitality of Texas lands, waters, and wildlife for the benefit of all Texans. She invites interested persons to consider membership in the foundation.

*It's really a way for individuals to help conserve Texas wild things and wild places for generations to come. All of the funds that are raised in our membership program go into special projects.*

Special requests from parks, such as for bird blinds, or youth hunting programs, and neighborhood fishing opportunities are just a few of the projects membership helps to fund.

*So this is really funding that is made available for special projects that benefit the land, water and wildlife in Texas.*

Find out how to become a member when you log onto the Texas parks and Wildlife foundation website at [tpwf.org](http://tpwf.org).

*We try to make it easy. We have two levels.*

Membership has its privileges. That's tomorrow.

## Membership Has its Privileges

Tuesday, March 8th, 2016

Volunteers are vital to the work of Texas Parks and Wildlife. If you don't have time to volunteer but still want to help, there's always membership in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

*Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation is the official non-profit partner of Texas parks and Wildlife. And we fund transformational projects that benefit the people of Texas.*

Anne (Annie) Brown is executive director of the foundation; membership dues help fund conservation of Texas' wild things and places, for generations to come.

*We have two levels. We have a hundred dollar level, and that's for individual/family. And then we have a forty-five dollar level. And the difference between those is the hundred dollar level, you receive a subscription to Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine, and at the forty-five dollar level you do not.*

Supporters receive members-only communication, special invitations, and updates about Texas parks and Wildlife from Director, Carter Smith. The best benefit is the diverse projects members help to fund.

*So, Powderhorn Ranch is one of our largest initiatives, and that will hopefully be complete in March of this year. That was a 49-million dollar acquisition. Our pronghorn restoration project in West Texas—trans-relocating pronghorns to their natural area in West Texas. Our Guadalupe Bass program that we do in Central Texas with the department on Central Texas rivers, restocking native Guadalupe Bass to those rivers....*

Find information on becoming a Texas parks and Wildlife Foundation member at [tpwf.org](http://tpwf.org).

## Turkey at the Matador

Wednesday, March 9th, 2016

Seven miles north of Paducah... in the Texas Panhandle... the [Matador Wildlife Management Area](#) offers about 28-thousand acres of rolling grasslands.

Former assistant area manager, Bill Adams, said it's open to the public.

*It's open throughout the year for hiking, bird watching, nature tours, horseback riding... We have 76-miles of road on the area, and it will take you through a diversity of landscapes.*

The site is off limits to the casual visitor only a few times a year.

*We have a few hunts during the year that it's closed. And those are our gun hunts for feral hogs, and deer and also for our spring turkey hunts.*

Adams says turkey hunting is strictly regulated on the Matador.

*We've got three good roosting sites for those turkeys, but they're range is limited to those roost sites. We have to regulate the number of hunters we allow to take those Toms. We also have to consider natural mortality of the turkey population in the area. We want to be careful with what we harvest. Regulating that harvest is a way we can provide for public hunting but also provide for betterment of the turkey population on the Matador.*

That's our show... made possible in part by the Wildlife Restoration Program... helping to fund the operations and management of more than 50 wildlife management areas.

## [Rio Grande Turkeys](#)

Thursday, March 10th, 2016

Everything's big in Texas – including the Rio Grande turkey population.

*The Rio Grande is really a neat bird from a Texas standpoint, because Texas has, by far, most of the Rio Grandes in the country. There are Rio Grande turkey populations in Oklahoma and Kansas as well, but they're very small compared to the Texas population.*

Former upland game bird specialist T. Wayne Schwertner currently serves as Assistant Professor of Wildlife, Sustainability, and Ecosystem Sciences at Tarleton State University.

*So, the Rio Grande turkey is a uniquely Texas bird. It's adapted to the arid conditions of the western part of the state, to the brush lands and prairies. Versus the eastern turkey which is much more adapted to the forests of east Texas and the east United States.*

Spring Rio Grande season varies by zone, with the [South Zone kicking off March 19](#) and the North April 2. Hunters will find the bulk of the birds west of I-35.

*The Rio Grandes occupy the central half of the state, from about I-35 to the Pecos River, and all the way from the Panhandle down to the Rio Grande Valley.*

## [TPW TV: Hueco Tanks](#)

Friday, March 11th, 2016

[Hueco Tanks](#), about 30 miles east of El Paso, is one of the most important pictograph sites in the Southwest, with the largest collection of painted faces in North America.

*There really is no other place like Hueco Tanks, in terms of the nature and the number of the pictograph images. And for a tiny place of only eight hundred and sixty acres there's just an amazing number of separate pictograph sites.*

We visit the park next week during a segment of the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#).

*This mask that we sometimes call starry eyed man has been staring out of his little niche in the rocks for between six hundred and eighteen hundred years. Um, it's amazing that it's in such good condition.*

Vandals damaged several paintings with graffiti. During the TV segment, we watch as scientists, use high tech devices to restore the pictographs.

*This is pre-Colombian, and the graffiti is about fifty years old. We're using infrared light, and it's the similar technology that's used in tattoo removal to take tattoos off, so you can be very precise with the laser. The work is going really well, it's really difficult for me to stop because it's really exciting!*

Check out the segment about Hueco Tanks next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV Series on PBS. Check your local listings.

## [The Forgotten City Beneath a Lake](#)

Monday, March 14th, 2016

In 1832, Dr. Francis F. Wells—a member of Stephen F. Austin’s Old 300—founded a town along a bend of the Navidad River, which eventually became known as Texana.

*This was the western most settlement of Austin.*

Cindy Baker served as an interpretive ranger at the former Lake Texana State Park. Texana was a thriving community; it was in a good location, had abundant natural resources, and a shallow water port. It could have been great if not for short-sighted decisions by its founding father.

*Two brothers showed up and offered for 100-thousand dollars to buy the town. Mr. Wells said, ‘No. We want 200-thousand. We love our town.’ And the two brothers—wanted to build a deep water port—so they went east, they found the Buffalo Bayou, they dug their deep water port, and they called it Houston.*

And, in 1883 the New York, Texas and Mexican Railway bypassed the settlement.

*A man named Telferner came through and said, ‘For 30-thousand dollars, I’d like to put my railroad stop here in your town.’ And they said, ‘A railroad? We have a port. We don’t want your dirty old railroad.’ He moved seven miles north, and he named that stop after his daughter Edna. Within two years, everyone picked up and moved to Edna.*

Texana became a ghost town, which today rests at the bottom of Lake Texana, created in 1979 when the Lavaca-Navidad River Authority built a damn on the Navidad River.

## [White Bass Run = Fishing Fun](#)

Tuesday, March 15th, 2016

In December and January, while we’re busy with the holidays and staying warm indoors, 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 the time is right, white bass move up river to spawn.

*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 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.*

Find out when and where white bass are biting when you log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Texas Master Naturalists**

Wednesday, March 16th, 2016

They say you never forget your first love. For writer Sheryl Smith Rogers, her first love had eight legs.

*Spiders are my first love, and from there I grew into plants and animals.*

Eager to fully understand the natural world around her, Smith Rogers completed Texas Master Naturalist training.

*I'm with the Highland lakes chapter, which is based out of Burnet. So you learn about your own ecosystems in your region. I'm learning about the plants that are indigenous to this area. Whereas, if you live on the coast, you'll be learning about those kinds of plants. So, we're all learning what's important to our area.*

Trainees learn about living things in their ecosystem, as well as their region's geology, hydrology and more. After receiving certification, Smith Rogers says Master Naturalists volunteer in their communities where needed.

*Volunteers go to ranches and survey the plant species, and they offer land management advice. In a city, volunteers might go into a city park and create a butterfly garden. For instance, here in Blanco – at Blanco State Park – the Master Naturalists help put on program every May for third graders. They do so many different things [laughs].*

Find details on becoming a master Naturalist on the Texas parks and Wildlife Website.

## **Become a Partner with Nature**

Thursday, March 17th, 2016

When you're a certified Texas Master Naturalist you learn to understand the natural world and share it with others. Writer, Sheryl Smith Rogers, says increasing public awareness about the nature benefits everyone.

*You know, our state's undergoing so much growth, and we're losing so much of our natural ecosystems to subdivisions and shopping centers. People like master naturalists who have more of an awareness of how important those elements are to our overall lifestyle, they're going to share what they know with others and just raise awareness that we need to protect these areas.*

Master Naturalists undergo weeks of training, says Smith Rogers, who, herself, is a certified Master Naturalist.

*The classes cover geology, native grasses... Last spring I took my training from March into May. We went to different places. You don't just sit in a classroom. You have field outings; you go out and actually look at the native grasses. We went to Jacob's Well near Wimberley and talked about hydrology. You just cover a whole lot of different topics.*

Once certified, citizens volunteer in their communities. There are more than 40 chapters statewide. Find more information on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#).

## [The Wonder of Wildflowers](#)

Friday, March 18th, 2016

Texas roadsides will be awash in colorful wildflowers soon. Dr. Damon Waitt, former senior botanist at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and current Director at the North Carolina Botanical Garden, says these and other native plants have a place in the built landscape as well as nature's landscape.

*Natives provide really important ecosystem services for local wildlife, pollinators. They filter storm water and rainwater, so they provide all these services to the ecosystem, and they can provide similar services in the built landscape, and reduce things like water use, pesticide use and fertilizer use. In addition, they have the aesthetic qualities that we want people to learn to appreciate, so they're not looking for that next exotic ornamental—that they're more interested in finding that next native plant that looks great and functions perfectly in their environment. There are a lot of people who might look at wildflowers and native plants and say, gosh, how do those fit into my idea of a formal landscape. That's something we're really trying to fight—that concept that if you're a native plant enthusiast, then your yard must look wild and unkempt. At the wildflower center, we model different design styles using native plants, and you can use native plants in very high designs and very formal designs if that's the look you're going for.*

Find plants that are right for you at [wildflower.org](http://wildflower.org).

## [Citizen Scientists Take Biological Inventories](#)

Monday, March 21st, 2016

With the help of [biological inventory teams of citizen scientists](#), Texas Parks and Wildlife monitors plants... herps...

*Which are the amphibians and reptiles...*

...birds and invertebrates...

*...and that would mainly be: butterflies, dragonflies, beetles, bumblebees and such....*

...in Texas' 8 wildlife districts; Biologist Marsha May oversees the program. She says she's recruiting experts statewide to join these monitoring teams.

*Mostly, we're looking at hobbyists; people who have joined herp societies. They know their herps. As well as birders. There're people involved in Audubon Society that know their birds. So those are the types of people [as well as those with expertise in native plants and invertebrates] that we're looking for, for these projects.*

These biological inventory teams will monitor species on private land.

*So, my plan is to start with organizing teams throughout the state. And once we get good, solid teams in place, then we're going to go out there and open it up to the landowners, and let them know that these teams are available to come and do surveys on their property.*

Knowing what's on the land helps landowners become better stewards. Find out how to volunteer when you log visit the Nature Trackers page on the TPW website.

## [Volunteer to Count Critters](#)

Tuesday, March 22nd, 2016

Texas Parks and Wildlife is recruiting citizen experts to volunteer for [biological inventory teams](#) to monitor four species groups on private lands.

*We're wanting to put together teams of experts throughout the state to work within each wildlife district to monitor four groups of species: one for herps, one for plants, one for invertebrates and then, also, one for birds.*

Biologist and program coordinator, Marsha May, says the data Biological Inventory Teams collect will become part of the Texas Natural Diversity Database.

*That database includes information on rare species throughout the state—their locations—and that information is used by various entities. Well, that database has a lot of holes; we're hoping to fill in a lot of those holes with information collected by these volunteers.*

Anyone with expertise with the previously mentioned species groups may volunteer. Individuals will participate in an orientation, and may choose the counties they wish to work.

*We would have a training to give them information on what is expected, what type of monitoring that would be required. The protocol involved each group of species.*

Find complete details on volunteering for biological inventory teams on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website under Texas Nature Trackers.

## [Texas State Parks Official Guide](#)

Wednesday, March 23rd, 2016

Most of us are within an hour's drive of a state park. And when you download the new app for the Texas State Parks Official Guide to your phone or device, your next park getaway is within your reach.

*17— It will allow them to do what we call a 'filtered search' to find the perfect park for them that they'd like to explore. And we're hoping that not only will it make people more inclined to discover more parks, but really bring some younger people and more diverse people to the parks. It's a really exciting resource that we're now able to offer.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife marketing director Darcy Bontempo says not knowing which parks are nearby, or what activities and amenities are available, may keep some folks from visiting parks. The app can change that.

*15— This is just going to remove those obstacles and make them feel like they're the expert on state parks. They can get that information easily and quickly. They can even look at videos of the park. Photos of the park... I think what's going to be exciting is for people to almost customize the park experience. And that can change. In fall you might want to go hiking, and in summer, you might want to go swimming. It just puts the power right there in your hand in terms of you figuring out where you want to go.*

Using the new app—which is available for apple and android devices—you can even create a “favorites list” of parks you've visited or want to visit.

*07—We're all about making it as easy as possible for people to get to parks and enjoy parks.*

Download the Texas State Parks Official Guide at [texasstateparks.org/app](https://texasstateparks.org/app)

## **The Birding Classic is Back for Year 20**

Thursday, March 24th, 2016

Calling all twitchers, listers and dudes... The **20th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic** invites you to form a team to watch birds.

*It's a really great win-win, where people are able to go birding with their friends or family. And then they're raising money for a really great cause: conservation right here in the state of Texas.*

Shelly Plante, nature tourism manager, says teams go into the field and ID bird species from a checklist over the course of a few hours or even a few days. Tournament winners determine which avian habitat conservation projects receive preservation and restoration grants.

*And the more habitat we're able to preserve here in the state, the more birding opportunities there are going to be for birders.*

Birders of all ages and skill levels that register at [birdingclassic.org](http://birdingclassic.org) by the April first deadline may participate in this statewide series of tournaments.

*Go online. Fill out your registration form. Pay online. And then you're ready to go. Everything I do is through email: I'm going to email you updates; I'm going to email you how to submit your checklists to be in the running for the prizes; I'm going to let you know who won, where the award ceremonies are. So, it's all done online to save on costs so as much of this money goes to habitat conservation as possible.*

Celebrate 20 years of great birding with The Great Texas Birding Classic, April 15 through May 15, is for beginners and advanced birders.

## **TPW TV: Buffalo Soldiers**

Friday, March 25th, 2016

After graduating from college, but before entering the working world, Devonte Hill—who has a passion for storytelling—volunteered with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Buffalo Soldier program.

*I was a Texas state parks youth ambassador and got turned on to the Buffalo Soldiers program. I'm always open to new experiences.*

Buffalo Soldiers entered Texas history in 1866; these African American men assisted and protected settlement as it moved westward. Texas parks and Wildlife developed the Buffalo Soldier program to preserve that history. As a volunteer, Devonte wore a soldier's uniform to help bring history to life for grade school students.

*I don't have too much experience with kids besides my cousins; so it will be interesting dealing with the little people. [laughs]*

The program uses the Buffalo Soldier's rich heritage and history to connect urban audiences to the outdoors. This is important because, as Devonte points out...

*When you see things on TV about outdoors and things like that, all you really see is a certain type of demographic. And so you kind of get raised thinking those things are not for me.*

Devonte Hill has gone on to a job in television, and says his work with the Buffalo Soldiers was life changing.

*Hopefully this is the first step to me continuing my training and practice at being a storyteller. And this is part of my story.*

See a segment with Devonte Hill and other Buffalo Soldier volunteers next week on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#).

## [Texas Nature Trackers Amphibian Watch](#)

Monday, March 28th, 2016

[Texas Amphibian Watch](#) is a statewide volunteer program in which citizen scientists monitor frogs and toads to help prevent the extinction of species currently in decline. Here are some ways you can help:

*There are different levels of monitoring. The easiest of which is whenever you see an amphibian, you write down the time of day, the weather, the rough location, and then once a year you send that in to Parks and Wildlife and they'll add that into one database.*

Scott Kiester is a Texas Amphibian Watch volunteer.

*There's a program called 'Adopt a [Frog] Pond,' where you agree to go and listen and record the species you hear at a specific location. [start sfx] Once a month, sometimes more often than that, I'll take 15 minutes and go out in the evening and listen to who's out in the neighborhood croaking away. Frogs are a lot more active and do a lot more calling in that period of time after a rain, particularly if you can do it the day after a rain or if you get a rain in the afternoon go out and do it that evening. They just croak away.*

Hop over to the calendar section of the Texas Parks & Wildlife website where you can find upcoming Amphibian Watch workshops.

## [Getting to Know Native Amphibians](#)

Tuesday, March 29th, 2016

Did you know Texas is home more than 40 different frog species, and other myriad other amphibians?

Scott Kiester, Texas Amphibian Watch volunteer, says you don't have to travel far to find a frog or toad. In fact, he says they may be closer than you think.

*The Gulf Coast Toad you'll find anywhere where he's got a moist place he can hide in the daytime and come out at night and hunt bugs. The Rio Grande Chirping Frog is endemic to the southern valley. They're about as big as the joint on your little finger and they hang out in plants. They like particularly Bromeliads.*

Not only can we identify these creatures by their habitats, we can also identify them by their distinct calls.

*Different frogs and toads call at different times of the year. There are some that are year-round: the Bullfrog, [bullfrog sfx] the Southern Leopard Frog, and the Northern Cricket Frog. They may not breed year-round, but you can hear them. There are other species, like the Spring Peeper, [spring peeper sfx] and the Upland and Spotted Chorus Frogs; you will only hear when the weather is cool. Their idea of a perfect day is fifties and rainy. Frogs mostly call to attract mates. In fact, only really male frogs call.*

If you're interested in the education and conservation of indigenous amphibians, consider becoming a [Texas Amphibian Watch](#) volunteer. Find details on the Texas Parks & Wildlife website.

## Hikes After Dark

Wednesday, March 30th, 2016

This is Passport to Texas

Don't let the dark keep you indoors. With a flashlight, a friend, and a little daring, a [night hike in a state park](#) can be exhilarating.

*One thing that's really kind of fun, too, is to not use your flashlight.*

When we spoke, Kelley Lauderdale was an interpretive specialist at Ray Roberts Lake State Park north of Denton.

*If you let your eyes adjust to the dark and the moonlight, you'd be surprised at how well you can actually see. And sometimes when you do it that way, it really reveals a whole new wilderness. You see a lot more than when you get this tunnel vision with the flashlight and only see what's illuminated.*

Kelly recommended hiking with others on familiar trails, and to be prepared to experience wildlife by ear.

*There are lots of amphibians that are active at night. And that's one of the really fun things to listen for, because they're pretty easy to hear. And oftentimes, once you learn to identify the sound of an amphibian, you'll say: "Hey! That's what I've been hearing all this time? I know that!"*

Frogs and toads aren't the only animals active at night.

*There are owls that are active. Eastern screech owls are very nocturnal. Another bird that a lot of people hear at night is the Chuck Wills Widow; and they'll sing and call all night long. Sometimes campers get a little bit tired of it if it's really close to their campsite.*

So step outside when the sun sets and get an earful of wildlife.

## Calling Critters at Night

Thursday, March 31st, 2016

Wildlife viewing at night presents a challenge. Yet, some species become more vocal when the sun sets, and will "talk to you" and even come into view if you know how to speak their language. State park interpreter, Kelley Lauderdale, has a few tips for enticing wildlife to come out of the shadows.

*There are apps you can download for free or for minimal cost – like Audubon Reptiles. I use it for my night hikes to play those calls and to identify those different calls. Visitors can easily use those themselves. And this is what I do on my hike: I play the call, and do it for a little while and see if anything answers. If using a recorded call – and animals might call back – but does that ever draw the animals to you? And if it does, what should you do? I have had success with calling in an eastern screech owl. So, I play the call, it answers back, and it comes in. If you're lucky you may be able to see the full owl sitting up in the tree talking to you. In that case – enjoy it! Don't shine your flashlight up and blind him or her. Just sit and listen and enjoy and then go on.*

State parks frequently offer guided night hikes. Find one near you on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.