

This program runs at 520 am Monday thru Friday

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

Nature: Outdoor Resolutions for the New Year

Wednesday, January 1st, 2014

Don't you love the start of a new year? It's totally fresh and filled with possibilities. So, take a few minutes to consider how you're going to make this year better for you and your family.

One way would be to get outside more, because—as we like to say: life's better outside.

Spending time in the natural world has a way of resetting the brain and giving you a fresh perspective. Researchers have discovered that children who spend time in nature do better on exams, and are less disruptive in the classroom.

Bring a pair of walking shoes to the office, and during your lunch hour, stroll outdoors in the fresh air. Even if you're in a city, you can still observe the varied wildlife and plant life you see along the way. It's amazing how much nature you can actually find in a concrete jungle.

Spend time with friends or family at one of our many state parks. Most folks are within 90 minutes of a state park or natural area; many are much closer. Take a nature hike, ride a bike. Pitch a tent and sleep under the stars, or find a park with cabins and rough it indoors.

Commit to learning something new about Texas history by visiting one of the state's incredible historic sites.

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.

Birds/Wildlife: Attracting Backyard Birds

Thursday, January 2nd, 2014

Birding is a year-round activity in Texas that's growing in popularity among all age groups. The wide variety of species found here keeps it interesting.

08—Texas is Mecca for birders around the world because we are on the migration flyway for the entire Western hemisphere.

Valerie Staats is past Executive Director of the Travis Audubon Society. She says birds have very simple needs.

04—Birds need food, shelter, water, and a place to raise their young.

Ms. Staats offer a few simple ways to entice a wide range of bird life into your neighborhood.

28—In the ideal world if you want to bring birds to your backyard, you're going to have several feeders offering different types of food. Have water available- if anything, that's more important than food. The water alone will bring a lot of birds to the backyard. One thing that people often forget is that the birds need a shelter,

and by that I don't mean a home per se, but a way to be protected from their predators while they're enjoying what you're offering in the backyard.

Interested in birding? [Find birding information on the Texas Parks & Wildlife website.](#)

Wildlife/Angling: Fish Genetics

Friday, January 3rd, 2014

04—It's definitely high tech, cutting edge...we're really happy to have it.

Lorraine Fries is talking about a DNA Analyzer – a high tech piece of equipment used at the A.E. Wood laboratory in San Marcos. Ms. Fries was the site's lab director before retiring. Researchers use the analyzer to “fingerprint” hatchery raised fish.

14—We also can use the DNA analyzer for selective breeding programs. We can identify markers associated with traits that we're interested in and breed for those. We can use it to evaluate stocking success because we can tell what fish we stock.

They do that by simply analyzing a small piece of tissue from the animal.

10—One of the other really great things about DNA is that it's in all tissues.

Which means by taking a very small piece of fin, for example, researchers obtain as much DNA as needed. Before the analyzer, Fries says they performed liver biopsies on the fish.

04—Which is okay, but the fish don't like it too well. (laughter)

Understanding fish genetics allows fisheries biologists to improve fisheries.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series and funds fishery operations in Texas. For Texas Parks and Wildlife...

Outdoor Safety: Hypothermia

Monday, January 6th, 2014

Winter weather never kept a Texan from enjoying the great outdoors. Even so – everyone needs to exercise caution in the cold to prevent hypothermia.

Dorian Drigalla (Dre-gal-a) is an assistant professor of Emergency Medicine at Scott and White Memorial Hospital.

09—Hypothermia is a condition where the body's temperature drops below normal and certain physiologic changes happen the body because of that.

There are three stages of hypothermia that determine the severity.

41—Stage one, or mild hypothermia, is when the body's temperature drops from what is considered normal down between 1 and 3 degrees below that. Stage two – becomes a little bit more obvious in that the person starts to realize they are more than just cold and while they are still conscious, they do realize that they are

shivering more, the shivering becomes more noticeable and the rest of the body's movements are less coordinated. It's at this point that the body starts to appear more pale. Stage three is when the body temperature drops below ninety degrees. At this point, the body's reflexes start to fail, the shivering intended in the prior two stages to help warm the body starts to fail. Concentration, speaking and thinking become more difficult.

Severe hypothermia can lead to organ failure and death.

Backcountry treatment of hypothermia tomorrow.

Outdoor Safety: Treating Hypothermia

Tuesday, January 7th, 2014

Cold temperatures and strong winds increase the risk of hypothermia when outdoors this winter. It's a potentially serious condition whereby the body's core temperature drops below normal.

Dorian Drigalla (Dre-gal-a) is an assistant professor of emergency medicine at Scott and White Memorial Hospital with tips on combating this condition.

51—The first thing to try to do is to get the patient to the warmest possible environment, whether that be getting them out of the wind or out of the water. So the first two things to be concerned about on a hike or in the wilderness are basically to remove everything possible wet, get the patient dry and try and get them into a warmer environment. Even if that just means out of the wind behind shelter even of a hillside. Then you want to try additional measures, whether that's using insulating materials like a sleeping bag or dry clothing to warm the patient and also ingestion of warm liquids can help. If the person is cold and they're already in water, the water between them and their clothing is actually insulating. The heat is conducted out of the body and into the water but it's maintained between them and their clothing. And it's only if those clothes can come off and all the water can be removed that that's actually helpful.

Wildlife: Herpetology

Wednesday, January 8th, 2014

Herpetology is a branch of zoology concerned with amphibians and reptiles.

16—Amphibians are the species that are associated with water in their lifecycle. [They're] smooth skinned, and usually lay their eggs in water and often have a larval stage such as a tadpole for a frog. So frogs, salamanders, and an interesting creature called the caecilian are amphibians.

Leeann Linam is a biologist who recently retired from Parks and Wildlife. Reptiles are those species with scales that tend to lay hard-shelled eggs on land in dry nests.

13—And so we have several divisions of reptiles as well. We have the turtles, we have the lizards, and we have the snakes... And then there are a few other groups. The crocodilians and some others that are kind of unique.

Linam says scientists agree they need to give reptiles more consideration.

14—Lizards are a group of organisms that scientists have said: "You know, we really haven't paid much attention to what's going on with them. They are mostly eating insects in the environment, and so one can perhaps think of them as being sensitive to things like pesticides and habitat loss, as well as direct persecution, or killing, as areas are changed in terms of their use."

Before you spray or spread a pesticide on your lawn or garden, think of the lizards.

Nature: Trail Riding

Thursday, January 9th, 2014

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

17—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, McKnight says state parks offer the perfect opportunity for exploring while on horseback. But before you hit the trail, there are a few safety precautions you need to be aware of...

18—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.

Keep in mind horses are not allowed be ridden in the park until a Coggins test is verified at the park office during office hours.

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

Game Wardens: Operation Game Thief

Friday, January 10th, 2014

Since 1981, Operation Game Thief has been protecting Texas' natural resources with the help of the public that calls in with tips.

13—When our game wardens respond, and they can catch the individual, and make the arrest by citation—or physically take them to jail—upon their conviction, that individual can be eligible for a reward payment of up to one thousand dollars.

Eric Howard, Operation Game Thief program coordinator, says most people who call the Crime Stoppers-like hotline aren't interested in a reward.

17—It's more just pride—love of Texas' natural resources. When a person calls in, they're asked, do they want a reward. About 60-65% will say no, they're just calling in because they see something that they know isn't right and they just want it stopped.

Warden Howard tells us about an incident in which a man captured two hawks in Laredo and transported them to North Carolina.

21—Someone contacted the Operation Game Thief hotline number, and a Game Warden responded through a very lengthy investigation—not only through Texas Parks and Wildlife—but the USFWS, and NC Fish and game Service. It was determined that the person did not have a license, was not permitted to have the hawks and was not any kind of falconer.

And that made the trapping and transport illegal. Learn more about Operation Game Thief, and find the hotline number on the Texas parks and Wildlife website.

Hunting: Goose Hunting in Texas

Monday, January 13th, 2014

Texas has a great reputation when it comes to goose hunting.

04— Texas has long been known as the snow goose hunting capital of the world.

Dave Morrison is Small Game Program Director at Texas Parks and Wildlife. To hunt geese in Texas you'll need a hunting license, a migratory game bird stamp, a federal migratory bird stamp and HIP certification. You wouldn't necessarily hunt geese as you would ducks.

12—A lot of times you're hunting ducks over water, and in water. A lot of times you're hunting geese in dry conditions – dry fields. To goose hunt, you need lots of decoys, and you've got to have someone who really knows what they're doing on a call.

Historically, hunters harvest Canada geese in the panhandle, although snow geese are starting to appear on the landscape. The coast, meantime, offers a higher concentration of snow geese.

13—But understand that the snow geese that show up in the high plains are different than the snow geese that show up along the coast. Snow geese that show up on the coast are from the mid-continent flock, whereas those that show up in the high plains are the western arctic group.

They're still the same animal, they just come from different subsets of the population. Visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website for [hunting seasons](#) and all regulations.

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

Hunting: Goose Conservation Order

Tuesday, January 14th, 2014

In 1999 the US Fish and Wildlife Service, on the recommendation of scientists, implemented a light goose conservation order.

05— With intent to try to reduce the rate of growth of white geese.

Dave Morrison is Small Game Program Director at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

15—We were seeing problems in the arctic ecosystems whereby the numbers of light geese that were showing up were starting to do habitat degradation. So, in an effort to try to stem that tide, light goose conservation order began.

The conservation order—generally in effect after the end of the migratory bird hunting season—is not, itself, a hunting season.

33—It's a management action, so it doesn't fall under the same type of guidelines that our hunting seasons do. For example, the Light Goose Conservation Order –when it started – we increased the daily bag limit to no bag

limit. You were able to hunt 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset; you were able to use electronic calls; there's all sorts of things that came along with this conservation order as an effort to try to reduce the numbers of birds in the nests, and try to turn that population around to get it – instead of increasing to see a declining trend.

It's been fourteen years since the order was enacted. Has it worked? We'll find out tomorrow.

Hunting: Impact of Conservation Order

Wednesday, January 15th, 2014

By 1999 it was clear: an overpopulation of light geese was ravaging its arctic nesting grounds. Without intervention, scientists believed this unique ecosystem would collapse.

05— So, in an effort to try to stem that tide, the light goose conservation order began.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Small Game Program Director, Dave Morrison, says Texas was prepared to do its part.

08— When we started the conservation order, Texas' harvest during the conservation order was a little over a hundred thousand birds. So, when it started, we knew what to do.

For the past 14 years, this annual management action has occurred primarily in the country's three eastern flyways; engaging hunters from Canada to Texas.

10— Since that time, you've seen a decline in total harvest in Texas from about 100-thousand to about 12-thousand in the last hunting season; there are fewer geese being seen on the coastal zone of Texas.

There are fewer light geese coming to Texas, but their overall population continues to grow. Changes in agricultural practices in the flyway's midsection may put more food on the ground, and that may keep birds from coming this far south.

12— There are still increased numbers of white geese out there, to such an extent that we had the council vote to increase the daily bag limit during the regular season from 20 to 50.

What that will mean for Texas, tomorrow. The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series

Hunting: What's Next for Light Geese?

Thursday, January 16th, 2014

An enormous population of light geese is laying waste to its arctic breeding grounds.

06— You take a look along Hudson Bay – you're seeing transitions from quality habitat to sub quality habitat.

Dave Morrison is Texas Parks and Wildlife Small Game Program Director.

06— In the arctic, it's a very slow growing season, and it takes years upon years for something to recover.

A 1999 conservation order allows additional harvesting of geese throughout the flyway after the regular season. For reasons biologists are still trying to understand, while fewer birds come to Texas, they remain abundant to our north, and their population continues to grow.

23—Within the Central Flyway, this past year, we had the council vote to increase the daily bag limit during the regular season from 20 to 50. States north of us have the opportunity to shoot 50. Texas was certainly provided that same opportunity, but we felt it was prudent not to take that step. So, the commission maintained the option to maintain the daily bag limit at 20.

Despite best efforts, an overall increasing light goose population has biologists asking: what's next?

09—Is there something that we need to do? Or do we just simply sit back and say, 'These are very resilient birds, and try as we may, they're the ones that are going to control their destiny.'

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For Texas Parks and Wildlife,

TPW TV: Caddo Lake Paddling Trail

Friday, January 17th, 2014

Gliding along the paddling trails on Caddo Lake in East Texas is at once intimate and humbling: mist dances on the water; giant, moss-covered bald cypress rise up as silent sentinels along the banks; the chorus of bird songs serenade you as you pass by; habitat teems with diverse and abundant wildlife. It's a special place.

04— It's beyond words to describe how wonderful this place is.

Vanessa Adams is a natural resource specialist with parks and wildlife.

13— The paddling trails here on Caddo Lake will get you back into some habitat that is just not everywhere, it's unique. It gets you into a place that you may have never seen before.

Marshall, Texas resident, and Caddo Lake paddling enthusiast, Sandra Phillips, says she feels close to the earth when she's on this enigmatic lake.

09 – You can't find this well really anywhere else. All the network of canals and the swampyness of it.

Caddo Lake is different every season, says Vanessa Adams. Paddlers should return often to experience it fully.
[SFX – ambience]

05— You gotta get out on the boat, you gotta get in the swamp and you really gotta sit down and you gotta sit and listen.

Caddo Lake's Paddling trails are featured on the Texas Parks and Wildlife PBS TV series the week of January 19. Check local listings.

Hunting: Girls with Guns

Monday, January 20th, 2014

Early in my tenure at Texas Parks and Wildlife I was an observer on a women only hunting trip in the Hill Country. Tami Moore was Hunt Coordinator.

09-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.

The women's skill levels varied from novice to pro. Each woman brought a guide with them; first time hunter, Millissa Salinas of Austin, brought her father Ralph.

10-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 ropes and spend some special memories together.

Like all the women on the trip, Salinas was enthusiastic about the opportunity.

11-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 for some time now. So when the actual moment came, it was extremely exciting.

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

07-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.

Find hunting resources on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website. The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series and works to increase hunting and shooting opportunities in Texas.

Hunting: Women Learning to Hunt

Tuesday, January 21st, 2014

That's how a group of ten women started a weekend hunting trip at a Hill Country ranch – by taking practice shots at targets. Ranch manager Troy Calloway explains.

08—Sometimes we get people out here who have never shot before, so we set 'em up and assess the situation..... But everybody here is nailing it; we're good to go it looks like.

Hunt coordinator, Tami Moore, told me that women make up less than 10% of all licensed hunters, and she thinks she may know why.

10—I think a lot of women are afraid that they're going to fail, because they're just scared. And going out with another group of ladies, in a situation like we are this weekend, takes a lot of that out of it.

Kathy Keller of Austin is an experienced hunter. We spoke in her deer blind.

08—Oh, this is really great. And it's exciting to see that women are getting into this sport and learning about hunting and wildlife.

Kathy explains what it was like the first time she harvested an animal.

09—It was something that made me think. I've taken this life, and I had to think about why I was doing it. And I realized that it is a big responsibility.

Find hunting [information and resources on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#). The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series and works to increase hunting and shooting opportunities in Texas.

Nature: Barton Warnock Center

Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014

The [Barton Warnock Environmental Educational Center](#) in Terlingua is where the region's 570 million year history comes alive.

11—It was first the Lajitas Museum and Desert Garden. In 1990, the state of Texas bought it and it became the eastern entrance to the Big Bend Ranch State Park system.

David Long is superintendent at Barton Warnock. While West Texas has a mystique that's hard to define, the center takes on the challenge.

13—The exhibits focus on the geology of the area and the natural history of the Big Bend area. Geology brings together the vegetation, the biology, and all the natural resources here, and the culture in this whole area.

The cultural history of this region is just as fascinating as its geological and natural histories.

20—'Terlingua' – the name itself – means 'tres linguas,' and the three different languages, three different cultures that combine here are the Anglos, the Spanish, and the Indian cultures. These cultures have combined and created a unique border community. We call it the 'borderlands,' or if you're in Mexico, you'd call it the 'frontera.'

Whether you call it borderlands or frontera, the Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center in Terlingua is open to visitors who want to know more about this fascinating region. Find information about the center on the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

Endangered Wildlife: The Ocelot

Thursday, January 23rd, 2014

Ocelots once roamed throughout Texas, Mexico, and into Arkansas and Louisiana. Jody Mays says today, only a few survive in the thick brush and shelters of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

:14—As far as we know, there less than 100 ocelots left in the United States. The ocelot's range has disappeared, and now they only occur in the southern most tip of Texas, and that's the only place in the whole United States that they occur.

Mays is a Wildlife Biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service at Laguna Atascosa Natural Wildlife Refuge. She explains reasons for the population decline.

:41—Usually with an endangered species, you have multiple impacts that they get hit with. For the ocelot, the biggest one was the habitat loss. Some estimates say that over 95% of the native habitat in Texas has been altered. A lot of the thick habitats have been cleared for agriculture, and for development, and for other purposes. Another associated impact with that is habitat fragmentation, and that's where, you say, have one large piece of thick habitat that gets cut up into smaller pieces that are farther and farther apart. Loss of genetic diversity is another big issue, and that's as a result of this habitat loss and fragmentation.

That's our show for today...with support from the Wildlife Restoration Program... helping to fund the operations and management of more than 50 wildlife management areas in Texas.

TPW TV: Eye in the Sky

Friday, January 24th, 2014

Understanding where wildlife goes provides valuable information to help manage species. Dr. Donna Shaver uses the newest GPS technology in tandem with satellites orbiting 12-thousand miles above earth, [fade in ocean ambiance] to track endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles on the Texas coast.

07— We're conducting this tracking because we want to get an idea about the habitat usage by these adult females.

Dr. Shaver is with the National Park Service.

13— We want to see where they're going in the marine environment, which is where they spend the vast majority of their life; where they're going for migration as well as for foraging when they're done nesting.

[lab ambiance] It takes Dr. Shaver and her team about three hours to prepare a turtle for tracking.

18— We have to sand the shell; we put down the first layer of epoxy, then we'll affix the transmitter. Then when it's on there solid, we will paint the surface to help prevent barnacles from adhering onto that area where it [the transmitter] has been applied.

See how Dr. Donna Shaver uses GPS and satellite technology to track endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles on the TPW PBS TV series during the week of January 26. Check local listings.

08— We're one step closer towards recovering the species someday so that it can be enjoyed by future generations.

Conservation: Land Management

Monday, January 27th, 2014

The concept of land management and restoration varies depending on landowner objectives.

09—It depends of whether you're trying to restore forest, whether you're trying to restore woodland, whether you're trying to restore marsh or whether you're trying grassland.

David Riskind is director of the natural resources program for state parks. Landowners managing for conservation purposes use similar strategies as other landowners, with one important difference.

38—They use a lot of the same strategies as other landowners do. Whether you're in the forest business, the timber industry, the grass industry. But your objectives are different. In other words, you might weight it towards endangered species; you might weight it toward watershed protection, it might be toward songbird protection. But increasingly today, more and more people are getting involved in what's called eco-system management. That is, you have an integrated approach. You include soil, you include wildlife, you include watersheds, you include hydrology and you include man as well.

Ecosystem management means addressing the long-term consequences of today's decisions, and thinking of resources as interrelating parts of systems rather than as individual components to be managed separately.

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

Conservation: Land Restoration

Tuesday, January 28th, 2014

Returning land to near its original state –it’s condition prior to farming, grazing or development –takes years of planning and preparation.

07—Practically speaking it might take you a couple years to do some habitat assessment...to do some botanical assessment...

David Riskind... director of the natural resources program for state parks... says in most cases we can only approximate what the land looked like.

06—Most of the lands were previously forested...they were timbered...they were ranched...they’ve been modified.

One reason it takes two or more years to conduct assessments has to do with the state’s climate extremes.

14—We might acquire a piece of property, for example, during a drought year. We’d like to see what it looks like when it’s wet. So, before we do anything, we want to see what’s there. And quite often, we’re surprised at what recovers on a site after it has a chance to rest for a while.

After the land has had a chance to rest, then assessments take place.

13—We will do our baseline assessments. We may do some quantitative work... And then, for example, if it’s a grassland restoration project, it might take us another couple of years to gather the kinds of seed that we need to do restoration.

[Find landowner information on the TPW website.](#)

The Wildlife Restoration Program...supports our series and funds diverse conservations projects in Texas.

Habitat: Planting Native Trees

Wednesday, January 29th, 2014

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

08—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.

11—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.

:20—*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

Habitat: Tree Planting Tips

Thursday, January 30th, 2014

Trees are habitat for wildlife. And if you're adding new trees to your landscape, you need to know the rules.

19—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.

21—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.

12—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.

Angling: Tackle Loaner Program

Friday, January 31st, 2014

If one of your New Year's resolutions included trying your hand at angling... but you don't want to spend money on tackle until you know you're going to like the sport... Texas Parks and Wildlife has a [tackle loaner program](#) for folks like you.

15—The tackle loaner program is a program in which we provide different sites with basic fishing rods and reels and some very basic tackle so that citizens can borrow that equipment and go fishing.

Ann Miller oversaw aquatic education at parks and wildlife before retiring.

16—When you go to a tackle loaner site to check out equipment, you'll receive a little tackle box with basic hooks and bobbers and sinkers of different sizes. You'll also be able to check out a very basic spin casting rod and reel.

Anyone over 17 will need a fishing license to check out equipment. Persons under 18 must have an adult check out the tackle for them.

15—Each tackle loaner site has a simple form that the person who checks out the equipment would sign, saying that ‘yes’ they will bring the equipment back. And you will just leave an ID there –you can check it out for up to a week.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series and funds winter rainbow trout stocking in Texas. So borrow some tackle and reel one in.

Birding/Wildlife: Birding Classic, 1

Monday, February 3rd, 2014

What started 18 years ago as a way for Texas Parks and Wildlife to promote its Coastal Birding Trails and fund conservation projects, the Great Texas Birding Classic has since become one of the country’s premier birding tournaments.

08—The birding classic allows you to test your skills and see how you rank against other birders here, in one of the best birding locations in the world.

Shelly Plante oversees nature tourism for the agency. Once held exclusively along the Texas coast, in 2013 the tournament became statewide.

07—You can now go in your backyard; you can go down the street to your favorite park; you can travel wherever you wanted, and you can do this anywhere.

The Birding classic has an expanded date range.

17—From April 15th through May 15th. You get to pick what day you participate. You can pick that based on the weather, on your team’s schedules –whatever works for you. In the past we designated specific days for a tournament, and everybody had to compete on those specific days regardless of weather.

Register your team for the Great Texas Birding Classic by April 1, and compete April 15 through May 15. There’s more information at birdingclassic.org.

Birding/Wildlife: Birding Classic, 2

Tuesday, February 4th, 2014

Texas provides important habitat for species migrating throughout the US and North America. The annual Great Texas Birding Classic – April 15th through May 15th –raises money to conserve that habitat.

09—By paying entry fees, by getting a sponsor for your team, you are donating money to grants that we’re going to award for habitat projects here in our state.

Shelly Plant nature tourism manager for TPW, says the tournament is statewide this year, with an expanded date range, creating new opportunities for birders.

26—We have made this so easy for anyone, anywhere in the state to participate. You can now go in your backyard; you can go down the street to your favorite park. You can travel wherever you wanted and you can do this anywhere. In addition, by having it open from April 15 to May 15, it makes it very easy to blend with whatever your schedule is. So, hopefully, we’ll have more teams than ever before, which means more registration fees, which means larger grants than we’ve ever given, which is better for the birds.

There are tournaments for all ages, interests, and abilities...and registration fees are lower than they've ever been.

06—So, hopefully, by taking these steps, we've made this as easy as possible for anyone who likes bidding or birds to get out here and participate in the birding classic.

The Great Texas Birding Classic is April 15 through May 15, and registration deadline is April 1st. Find details at birdingclassic.org.

Conservation: Crab Trap Removal, 1

Wednesday, February 5th, 2014

Crab traps lost or forgotten in the gulf kill crabs as well as other marine and shore life.

04— But blue crabs, stone crabs, and sheepshead are the big three.

Throughout the years rogue traps have ensnared countless species of game and sport fish, says coastal biologist, Art Morris.

22— We've [also] seen things like Diamondback Terrapins—which are a species of special concern—as well as river prawns, other turtles (not sea turtles, but other freshwater turtles). We've removed the remains of an otter out of a trap; we've seen the remains of birds that have been caught in these traps once the traps have been washed onshore. These are prolific killing machines.

Prior to 2002, only Game Wardens or the trap owners could remove the devices legally from surf or shore. Until then, the derelict traps kept racking up kills. But in 2001, the Texas legislature stepped in.

19— The Texas Legislature saw to it that we [TPWD] needed authority to create an abandoned crab trap removal program. And the granted us the authority to do that. And what that looks like today is a 10 day closure for the use of traps; any traps that are left in the water [during that time] are considered abandoned and classified as litter. So, anybody can remove them.

We'll have details about the 2014 Crab Trap Cleanup – and how you can help – on tomorrow's show.

Conservation: Crab Trap Removal, 2

Thursday, February 6th, 2014

Crab traps—abandoned by their owners in Texas bays—continue to snare crabs, sport fish and other marine life. Since 2002 TPW, its partners and volunteers have removed traps annually during a 10 day cleanup.

04— And we've removed 30,449 traps to date.

Coastal biologist, Art Morris, says one derelict trap can ensnare 26 crabs a year; since the removal program, a half million crabs have been spared. This year's cleanup is February 21 through March second.

14— Anytime during that closure, anybody can remove traps from the bays. But, on Saturday the 22nd, we'll have our main event day, where we have our staff facilitating some of the sites on the coast and some of our partners will be facilitating some of our sites on the coast.

The program welcomes volunteers with boats, as well as those who wish to work on shore.

18—We will pass out gloves and tarps for people; we will have water available at our facilitated sites. All ages can participate. We've had boy scout troops come out and help out. We've had the elderly and everybody in between that's spent significant time doing this.

At some locations along the coast, partners and volunteers even have cleanup parties.

11— There are some places that have barbeques and hot dog and hamburger grills going. Some of these places have had a party every year and really get into it.

Contact your [local coastal fisheries field stations](#), or visit the TPW website for [details about getting involved](#).

The Sport Fish Restoration program Supports our series

TPW TV: Growing Pains

Friday, February 7th, 2014

Some of Texas' greatest thinkers, including San Antonio Businessman and Philanthropist, Louis Stutman, and Dr. Roger Tory Peterson, Ornithologist, Writer, Educator, talk about striking a crucial balance about the stewardship between our states' economy and our natural resources.

You're in an enormously changing environment – doubling a population in your lifetime. With that happening, you've got to be sure that those people have jobs, transportation; you've got to be sure they've got a place to live. And at the same time, to be sure that the wildlife and the other things aren't frozen out.

You see, we're the dominant primate; Everything else has to, you might say, do our bidding. The other things have no voice. They're like children. And it's a moral thing to protect them, because they have a right to live, too.

Well, certainly you have to make hard choices, but that doesn't mean they're impossible choices. As long as you can say to yourself, 'Look. I want to try to find a good solution,' rather than saying, 'this is the way you're going to do it' – that's no solution.

My problem is that I don't understand this thing of growth, because growth eventually kills itself jut by size.

Hear more from Mr. Stutman and Dr. Peterson on the [TPW TV series on your PBS station](#). Check local listings.

Fishing: Rethinking Catfish

Monday, February 10th, 2014

An old timey freshwater fish is gaining in popularity again. What is it?

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

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

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

[Catfish!](#) Was that so hard?

28—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. This begs the question: why?

15— 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.

Fishing: Managing Catfish for the Future

Tuesday, February 11th, 2014

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

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

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

05—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.

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

Over the next couple of years Texas Parks and Wildlife will develop management plans for catfish, and ask for public input. Until then, grab a rod and reel and cast for cats.

15— 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.

Lots of folks are interested in eating catfish, too. So Dave Terre says as the agency develops fisheries across the state, it's ensuring opportunities for the harvest of decent sized catfish for your dining pleasure.

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

Fishing: Drought and the Freshwater Forecast 2014

Wednesday, February 12th, 2014

Low water levels this year may have a negative effect on freshwater fishing in Texas.

15— Water levels, number one, affect whether boat ramps are accessible, and also affect where the fish will be when you're fishing. And as the water level changes, anglers sometimes have to learn new places to go to find fish.

On the other hand when water levels rise, anglers may find fish where they had not been before, says Larry Hodge, with the [Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens](#). Unfortunately, drought conditions continue in Texas.

18— When access becomes impossible because of dropping water levels, anglers may have to find a different lake to fish. And this is kind of hard for most people because research shows that most anglers have a favorite lake where they like to fish. They consider it kind of their home lake.

And if fishing is not available, many of these folks just don't fish.

14— We are trying to encourage people to take a look at other fishing locations in their area that they might get out on the water and catch some fish, and maybe learn a new favorite fishing hole.

Larry Hodge compiled a freshwater fishing forecast for 2014, available in the digital fishing issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine. Look for it at tpwmagazine.com.

Fishing: Finding a New Place to Fish

Thursday, February 13th, 2014

If your favorite lake is short on water, and reaching the fish is nearly impossible, Larry Hodge is here to help.

09— We are trying to encourage people with this fishing forecast to take a look at other fishing locations in their area.

Hodge, with the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, compiled a 2014 freshwater fishing forecast. Find it in [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#)'s digital fishing issue this month. In his article, you'll discover where Texas' most popular sport fish—[largemouth bass](#) – is plentiful and ready to take your bait.

48— There are a number of lakes across the state that are going to offer good largemouth bass fishing this year. [Lake Nasworthy](#) in San Angelo is a constant level lake, so it's a place you can always go to catch fish. [Lake Fork](#) is hot right now. It has just produced its third Toyota Sharelunker of the season. [Lake Palestine](#) is another east Texas lake that has plenty of water and lots of bass. Sam Rayburn, Toledo Bend, Kurth, Nacogdoches – all those east Texas lakes are in good shape. And one that I'd really like to mention is [Lake Naconiche](#); it's a new lake near Nacogdoches. It was built specifically for recreation by the county, and has some really good bass fishing coming on.

Tomorrow, we tell you about Texas lakes with fish you'll want to take home for dinner.

The WSFR Program supports our series...

Fishing: Freshwater Feast

Friday, February 14th, 2014

Some anglers like to reel in largemouth bass for the photo-op—or to donate them to the sharelunker program—and release them back into the lake. Then there are anglers who prefer to eat what they catch.

06— There are a couple that really fit into that category, and that would be catfish and hybrid striped bass.

Larry Hodge, with the TFFC in Athens, compiled a 2014 freshwater fishing forecast for the digital fishing issue of TPW magazine.

38— Cat fishing is available almost everywhere in Texas, because these fish are very adaptable, and can live in almost any water body large or small. Lake Wright Patman over in far NE Texas is good for cat fishing, so is Lake Fork, so is Lake Tawakoni. And Tawakoni is really a great lake to fish if you like to eat fish, because it has not only catfish, but also hybrid stripers. And those are a mix between stripe bass and white bass; and they're really good fighters and really good on the plate as well.

Find Larry Hodge's complete freshwater fishing forecast for 2014 in the digital fishing issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#).

Also in that issue find tips on freezing and cooking your catch.

History: Battleship Texas

Monday, February 17th, 2014

Moored in a slip at San Jacinto Battleground and State Historic site, [Battleship TEXAS](#) is impressive. Yet, looks alone don't tell the whole story of this 100 year old military dreadnought.

05— When it was commissioned in 1914, it was the most powerful weapon on the face of the planet.

Andy Smith oversees the care of the ship, which boasts many firsts.

26—It was the first US Battleship to launch an airplane; the first US Battleship to get RADAR; the first to get anti-aircraft guns. It's just amazing the amount of technological advances that occurred. When this ship first launched, they used kite balloons; so, basically [it was] a big old blimp that they strung from the end of the ship – and they used that to observe. By the time she was ready for decommissioning they were starting to use remote control airplanes.

The ship saw action in both world wars, and earned the nickname "Lucky T". During its more than 30 years of service, it was struck only twice by enemy fire; Helmsman, Chris Christiansen, was the sole casualty.

03—So it's a pretty lucky ship when you think about it.

It was lucky in more ways than one. After WWII the US Military had a surplus of "machines of war." The Navy offered namesake ships to their respective states and they scraped the rest.

18— Texans –being Texans – were the only ones that wanted their namesake ship; so, Texans raised the money to bring the Texas to San Jacinto Battleground. And it was decommissioned as a US Navy ship, and re-commissioned as the flagship of the Texas Navy at San Jacinto Battleground on April 21, 1948.

Where, today, it is a museum open to visitors.

History: Battleship Texas Needs a Makeover

Tuesday, February 18th, 2014

At 100 years old, Battleship TEXAS, moored in a slip at San Jacinto SP & HS in LaPorte, has seen better days.

06— TEXAS, being permanently moored at San Jacinto, we don't have the capability of taking it to a dry dock.

The ship—now a museum—experienced one dry dock cycle since its 1948 arrival at San Jacinto. Andy Smith, who oversees the care of the ship, says years spent submerged in brackish water, resting atop mud, damaged the craft.

22— They weren't able to patch all the leaks, and she slowly filled with water. Some of the internal structures are severely deteriorated, and that's some of the work we're doing right now: trying to repair those internal structures – but also her exterior. The shell plating – the hull – has so many leaks. And that keeps water coming in; water coming in creates more problems with deterioration on the inside. And it goes on and on.

Despite challenges involved in keeping this antique dreadnought repaired, the benefits of doing so are many.

14—It's a nice bookend between the monument that commemorates the battle of San Jacinto and the battleship that commemorates both WWI and WWII. You have a broad scope of both world history, US history, and Texas history.

Next month we celebrate the centennial of this venerated vessel with a Texas Uprising.

09—The [public family festival](#) that we're going to have on March 15 is going to be a party the likes of which we probably haven't seen before.

Proceeds from the event will fund repair work on the Battleship... festival details tomorrow.

Event: Battleship TEXAS Reunion and Uprising

Wednesday, February 19th, 2014

On March 12, 1914 the US Navy commissioned Battleship TEXAS. The TEXAS served in both world wars and is the last remaining “dreadnought.” Decommissioned in 1948, today the TEXAS serves as a museum, moored at San Jacinto SP&HS. Andy Smith oversees care of the ship.

14— She spent almost twice as much time as a museum ship as she did as an active warship. And the crew members of the TEXAS decided they would like to have their final, private crew member reunion on March 12th, the centennial of her commissioning.

The reunion of former crew members is private, but the [March 15 Texas Uprising](#) – an annual music festival organized by singer-songwriter, Robert Earl Keen — at San Jacinto SP&HS is open to the public.

14—He's bringing it out to the site – and he's very excited to help the Battleship Texas by having an event here on site to raise the awareness of the ship and its importance in some of the problems we have, and what the future holds for the ship.

Organized by the Battleship Texas Foundation in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife, it's a family-friendly event with activities for everyone. Proceeds from The Texas Uprising will help fund repair work on the historic Battleship TEXAS.

12— Artists that are performing throughout the day: Kelly Willis and Bruce Robison are going to play. Charlie Robison is going to play. Reckless Kelly... and then Robert Earl Keen will close the whole thing down, followed by an awesome fireworks display.

Find details, and ticket information, for the March 15th, Texas Uprising with headliner, Robert Earl Keen at battleshiptexas.org.

TPW TV/Hunting: Alligators

Thursday, February 20th, 2014

It's a hot muggy afternoon in an east Texas marsh, and it's time to hunt for alligators. We tag along with some lucky hunters that get a chance of a lifetime to hunt alligators at J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area.

54—The area that we're hunting in, it's a vast bayou of swamps and marshes, with canals running through. The adrenaline rush is way more than deer hunting or anything else because you're after something that can actually get you.

There's one probably about 10 foot and two seven footers right up here. In about 150 yards we're going to try and put a set.

Never been gator hunting before. You know you see 'em on TV. See the alligator shows. And, this is exactly what it looks like.

Our bait is chicken thigh quarters...

Those smell savory.

It's savory; that's for sure. Mmmm.

And we let 'em sit out in the sun for a day or two and it got quite ripe.

Upwind is better than downwind when you get those things out. [distant laughter] I am amped up; adrenaline's pumping, and then it's on!

Alligator hunting – it's just not like anything else I've ever done. You know, there's one on the line and you start pulling me in. I don't know. You get anxious, you get excited. You get nervous.

But did they get their gator? Find out on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series the week of February 23. Check local listings.

Hunt/Cook: Alligator Ancho Rellenos

Friday, February 21st, 2014

Hunting alligator in Texas is an adrenaline pumping experience, but cooking it shouldn't be. Chef Jeff Martinez, chef at El Chile Café y Cantina in Austin, whips up a Mexican inspired treat with alligator meat.

57—So, what I've done is I've taken the meat and I've ground it up in my food processor. And so what we're going to do with this today is we're going to make an alligator ancho chile relleno. I've got a hot pan here; we're going to start by adding extra virgin olive oil in the bottom. We're going to add our white onion which

has been diced up. We're going to add our garlic. Oh, I can smell it already; it's already starting to smell good. Okay, so after that, we're going to add our tomato. Now, we're going to go ahead and add our alligator meat. It's pretty much going to look the same as cooked chicken. And it doesn't take very long. And that's just about it. So, we're going to add a little bit more flavor to this dish by throwing in some sliced green olives; and then we're going to add some of these raisins, and we're going to finish it off with slivered almonds that have been toasted. You see everything in there and it looks great. There's a lot of color in there – a lot of color also means a lot of flavor. And then we're going to finish it off with some fresh chopped parsley that's going to add some freshness to the dish. And then to finish it off, we're going to salt – just to taste. And we are ready to stuff some chiles.

**See Chef Martinez in action, and find the complete recipe on the [TPW YouTube Channel](#).
[State Parks: Ambassadors](#)**

Tuesday, February 25th, 2014

If you're of a certain age, when you were growing up, the outdoors was your primary source of entertainment, and probably continues to play a role in your quality of life.

20— A decade back or so, we did a visitation study to get a sense of who are our most common visitors. What we found was a 48 year old couple with no children was the average visitor. In the years since, we saw that number go to 49 year olds. And that showed us that we were missing out on some of our younger generations, including kids and young adults.

Today, young people occupy themselves with electronic gadgetry, which keeps them willing captives indoors. Ky Harkey is the outdoor education and outreach coordinator for state parks.

19— We want to make sure that we have a new generation that's going to be stewards to the parks. [We want them to] get out and enjoy the parks. The younger generation today, is the next generation that will be raising kids, and they will have the choice to either take the kids to Texas State Parks or not. We want to make sure that the parks are on the radar of the younger generations already.

State parks developed an outreach program whereby it recruits young people currently engaged in the outdoors, and asks them to invite their peers to join in.

08— The millennial generation, if you will – roughly 16 to 28 year olds or so – is a particular focus for us. Trying to bring that audience into parks.

Ky Harkey returns tomorrow to tell us about the [Texas State Park Ambassador program](#).

[State Parks: Ambassadors and Millennials](#)

Wednesday, February 26th, 2014

If you're under 30 years old chances are you've spent less time outdoors than previous generations.

Ky Harkey is the outdoor education and outreach coordinator for state parks, and oversees the Texas State Park Ambassador Program, which targets these “millennials.”

21— The millennial generation, if you will—roughly 16 to 28 year olds or so—is a particular focus for us – trying to bring that audience into parks. The millennials that are out there right now that love Texas State

Parks, and are already our advocates, the Ambassador program gives them the tools that they need to help promote Texas State Parks, and the benefits of outdoor recreation with their peers.

Volunteer Ambassadors work to increase visitation of young adults in State Parks.

15— In a hyper, online digital world today, we see that actually word-of-mouth marketing is still one of the best ways to bring new audiences into our parks. Through videos, and photos and inspiring stories, it's trying to light a fire under these millennials that are not getting outdoors right now.

Ambassadors receive free admission and camping sites at state parks, and then share their experiences and help others create memories.

06— They have created videos promoting Texas State parks; they've hosted concerts in the parks. So, we see the success not only in the individual touches that they've had with new audiences, but in the work that they are doing to pioneer the future of the Ambassador program.

Visit texasstateparks.org and find out how to become a SP ambassador.

Art/Fish: The Fish Art Contest

Thursday, February 27th, 2014

The State Fish Art contest—a nationwide art competition, with support from the William E. Armentrout Foundation and Friends of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, is about more than pretty pictures.

05—The idea is to get the students involved in art and science and the out of doors

Zoeann Stinchcomb, with the Texas Freshwater Fisheries center in Athens, says K through twelfth graders may compete by submitting a drawing or painting of a state fish. (Unlike the fourth through twelfth grade participants, the K through third grade entrants will not be required to submit an essay.)

11—Our state fish in Texas is the Guadalupe Bass. However, Texas students are not limited to drawing just the Guadalupe Bass. They can draw any recognized state fish from around the country.

Students from across the nation compete for prizes and a chance to have their artwork reprinted on a conservation stamp.

22—The competition in Texas is stiff; we have more entries generally every year than any other state, and sometimes more than all the other states combined.

Why do you think that is Zoeann?

For one thing, we promote it quite a lot, and also we give good prizes, and we have a big state, and you know, I just think that for some reason the people in Texas have realized the value of the contest.

Deadline to submit an entry is March 31. Find contest details at www.statefishart.com.

That's our show... with support from the Sport fish and Wildlife Restoration program...providing funding for management of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center.

Art/Fish: Enter to State Fish Art Contest

Friday, February 28th, 2014

Budding artists [and fisheries biologists] take note: draw or paint any recognized state fish, include an essay on the species, and you might just win a great prize.

14—The Toyota Texas Bass Classic sponsors this, and they give us money for prizes.

Zoeann Stinchcomb, with the Texas Freshwater Fisheries center in Athens, says the competition is open to Kindergarten through twelfth graders.

14—This is one of my favorite times of the year, once we start getting the entries in, because I don't think most people realize how many talented students we have as far as artwork goes—it's amazing.

Students must also submit an essay [K-3rd grade are exempt] about the fish they draw in order for judges to consider their entry.

16—The idea on that is they have to do a little bit of research about the fish that they're going to be representing. And, they have to be able to tell us something about that fish: either the conservation status, the biology or ecology of that fish... And they can even put it in story form.

Deadline to submit an entry is March 31. Find contest details at www.statefishart.com.

That's our show... with support from the Sport fish and Wildlife Restoration program...providing funding for management of the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center.

Photography: State Park Photography Contest

Monday, March 3rd, 2014

What kind of camera do you take with you to a state park?

06—When I'm with my family out and about in parks or wherever, I use my phone – that's my primary camera – and I love it.

Chase Fountain works as a professional photographer for Texas Parks and Wildlife. While he uses sophisticated equipment on the job, he says point and shoot digital cameras as well as camera phones offer tools to help all users take well-composed shots.

16—My iPhone has a little option on there where you can put the grid on, and it displays the grid. If you have time, look into the concept of using the rule of thirds; it's about placing interesting subject matter in the intersecting points of your camera [grid] to increase the value of composition with your photos.

We love landscape images, yet photos that include people actively engaging the outdoors can be more compelling.

12—It's funny that you bring that up, because we are coming up with a state park contest; the theme of it is "Picture Yourself in State Parks." And it's really going to be focused on photographing you and your family out doing an activity in a state park.

So [grab your camera or camera phone and submit your entries](#) now through April 15th.

12—I saw a recent photo that a family submitted the other day, and it was just their silhouettes, or a shadow of them. And, they had all their shadows on the side of a rock at Enchanted Rock. That was a very fun way to engage a natural setting like that.

Tomorrow: A few contest rules and what the winner receives.

Photography: Picture Yourself in State Parks

Tuesday, March 4th, 2014

On your next trip to a state park, bring the family, a camera and start snapping; then enter your best shot in Texas Parks and Wildlife's state park photo contest.

03—The theme of it is “[Picture Yourself in State Parks](#).”

Chase Fountain –photographer with Texas Parks and Wildlife – says judges want to see how you engage the outdoors.

12—Imagine taking a selfie, and you're, for example, at Garner State Park. If you're walking up “Old Baldy” and you have your hiking poles behind you, and you're looking up...just taking a picture of yourself with that in the background says it all.

Photos don't have to look professional. They just need to show you enjoying Texas state parks.

09—We are looking for families having a great time in state parks. Capture those wonderful moments and share them with us. And we'll be happy to take a look at them – and maybe you might win!

Entries are being accepted now through April 15th. There are three categories.

19—One is 18 and over; and we're having a 17 and under category for all you kids out there. And, of course, we're doing an Instagram category as well. And in order to do the Instagram, you need to do #MyParkPick, and upload it. Whitney Bishop – our social media director over there – will take a look at them and get them ready for the contest.

Find rules and entry forms on the activities page of the TPW website. The person with the winning photo receives a Hero Edition Silver GoPro Camera.

Conservation: Restoring the Paddlefish

Wednesday, March 5th, 2014

Weather permitting, Texas Parks and Wildlife, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Caddo Lake Institute will release up to 50 [paddlefish](#) into Caddo Lake and Big Cypress Bayou in East Texas this week.

12—In Texas, it's listed as a threatened species. Much of its range has been interrupted by dams on rivers; so the habitat just really hasn't been there for the paddlefish to survive in Texas very well.

Predating dinosaurs, fisheries biologist, Tim Bister, calls the species “big river fish.” Populations exist in rivers like the Mississippi, but remain scarce in Texas waters.

13—It's been a long time since we've collected a paddlefish in the Big Cypress River or Caddo Lake. So, this reintroduction is really more of an experiment to see if paddlefish are going to stay in the system.

Bister says they'll "radio tag" the fish before release.

38—There're going to be radio transmitters; there's going to be three different towers down the stretch of the river, including one at the spillway of Caddo lake. So, every time a fish swims by one of these towers data will be collected. So, why now? What is it about this point in time that makes this seem like the right time? Well, for about the last 10 years, there have been several groups that have been working on establishing recommended flow patterns for The Big Cypress below lake of the Pine. So now that we've got some of these recommended flows in place, it's time to put some fish in there that respond to certain flows, and see how they perform.

Tomorrow: [in-stream flows and paddlefish](#).

Conservation: Creating Flow for Paddlefish

Thursday, March 6th, 2014

With a huge mouth and long paddle-shaped snout, the prehistoric paddlefish is a threatened species in Texas. In water systems like Big Cypress Bayou, their decline followed river modifications and dam construction [for Lake O' the Pines reservoir] which altered in-stream flows necessary for their survival.

18—The in-stream flows that are released from the Lake O' the Pines reservoir are critical for maintaining habitat within the river, as well as for initiating spawning conditions paddlefish need to reproduce.

Kevin Mayes, an aquatic biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, says after years of study and restoring key features of the Big Cypress system, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, [Caddo Lake Institute](#), TPW and others, are returning this "big river" species to the ecosystem.

16—Part of that [work] was identifying that paddlefish require spring spawning pulses to support their reproduction So, we integrated those pulses into a flow regime that we call "in-stream flow building blocks" for the Big Cypress Creek.

This spring, researchers plan to release up to 50 radio-tagged paddlefish into the newly restored system, monitoring their movements, and making adjustments to flows based on the data.

The Wildlife and Sport fish Restoration Program supports our series.

TPW TV: Turkey Calls

Friday, March 7th, 2014

Making sounds like a hen turkey can mean the difference between bagging a bird this spring and going home empty handed.

06—Now you want the call of a hen turkey to try and attract the Tom, or male turkey, over to your position.

Steve Hall, Executive Director of the International Hunter Education Association, says a box calls can make enticing sounds.

53—One is called the basic cluck [clucks]. Now, a cluck is a call that says: 'Hi. I'm here.' And if you put the cluck in a series of calls, it would be a yelp [yelps]. Now a yelp call says: 'Come over here; I'm having fun.' Now, a slate call is much the same as a box call and you can make that basic 'cut' sound [cut sound]. And, you can also make a purr, which says 'I'm on my daily rounds.' Now, I like to use a diaphragm call; it's a little more complicated

call. But it allows me, if I'm hunting, to move my arms and hands with my bow or my gun. It fits in the top of your mouth, and you can do it quite easily [cackle]. That was a cackle or a yelp. If you hear a 'put' though, that'll scare a bird away – and that's the alarm call [put call]. Put them all together and you can have fun imitating a flock of turkeys. [07-of turkey calls...fade]

More tips for talking turkey this week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife PBS TV Series. Check local listings.

Recreation: Spring Break in State Parks

Monday, March 10th, 2014

Sometimes things sneak up on us before we're ready. Take spring break, for example. Are you at a loss for what to do with the family this week? Robert Ramirez with Outreach and Education at Texas Parks and Wildlife says there's something for everyone [when you visit a state park](#).

There is something for everybody: everything from hikes to [geocaching](#), to stargazing at night. The little "techies" can grab their iPads and get out there and utilize them for those activities only. The adults will also have plenty to do. [There's a Go Fish program for the kids and adults](#); the Go Fish programs they teach families the basics of fishing.

And what if you don't have tackle?

Forty-three of our state parks have a [tackle loaner program available](#). So, just look online and check to see if the park you're going to visit has the tackle loaner program available to them.

And, speaking of online is that where people should start planning their trip?

Yes. Definitely. [Go to our website](#), and under the 'calendar' tab, click on 'kids' and the mid two weeks of March are chock full of events and activities and things for them to do.

Sometimes things sneak up on us before we're ready. Take spring break, for example. Are you at a loss for what to do with the family this week? Robert Ramirez with Outreach and Education at Texas Parks and Wildlife says there's something for everyone [when you visit a state park](#).

There is something for everybody: everything from hikes to [geocaching](#), to stargazing at night. The little "techies" can grab their iPads and get out there and utilize them for those activities only. The adults will also have plenty to do. [There's a Go Fish program for the kids and adults](#); the Go Fish programs they teach families the basics of fishing.

And what if you don't have tackle?

Forty-three of our state parks have a [tackle loaner program available](#). So, just look online and check to see if the park you're going to visit has the tackle loaner program available to them.

And, speaking of online is that where people should start planning their trip?

Yes. Definitely. [Go to our website](#), and under the 'calendar' tab, click on 'kids' and the mid two weeks of March are chock full of events and activities and things for them to do.

Event: Celebrating Battleship TEXAS at 100

Tuesday, March 11th, 2014

Wrap up spring break March 15 with a family to trip the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic site to celebrate the centennial of Battleship TEXAS.

08—The family festival that we're going to have on March 15, is going to be a party the likes of which we probably haven't seen out here before.

Andy Smith oversees the upkeep of the antique dreadnought (now a museum), which saw action in both World Wars. In addition to many family-friendly activities, there's live music throughout the day, featuring headliner Robert Earl Keen.

08—He's bringing his Texas Uprising, which is a music festival to the site. And he's very excited to help raise the awareness of the ship.

Kelly Willis and Bruce Robison, Reckless Kelly and Charlie Robison join the lineup at the site.

21—We have a 12-hundred acre facility here; we're going to have these festivities on and around the battleship – on the smaller side of the park. And it's going to be a really great event. Tickets are available right now and can be purchased at battleshiptexas.org, and that'll be march 15 starting at noon and running until 10 p.m. at San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site.

Andy Smith says money raised from the event will fund much needed repairs to the 100 year old vessel. For more information and tickets go to battleshiptexas.org.

Birding/Wildlife: Bird Migration

Wednesday, March 12th, 2014

Texans perk up as the monochromatic birds of winter give way to their colorful counterparts of spring.

11—Like the orange and black of the Baltimore Oriole, or the red and black of a Scarlet Tanager. So, all of a sudden you see this splash of color that you haven't seen in months, and it's very exciting.

Cliff Shackelford, Parks and Wildlife's non-game ornithologist, says to [witness these colorful migrants](#), location is only part of the equation.

14—Location is important, but if a storm hit – like a blue norther – in late April, that grounds those birds just like it would ground small aircraft. And so, they're seeking shelter, and that could be your backyard.

Public hot spots where you can view large concentrations of migratory birds are plentiful – the Texas coast is one of the best.

23— Places like High Island, Sabine Woods near Sabine Pass, Blucher Park near downtown Corpus Christi, the South Padre Island Convention Center. Birdwatchers go to those spots, typically in April and May. They can be very productive. Those are just a few of the really important hot spots we call "migrant traps" that are great for the birds and the bird watchers.

Find birding information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Birding/Wildlife: Where to See Migrating Birds

Thursday, March 13th, 2014

The Texas coast attracts a wide variety of species of birds during spring migration. But what if you live inland and don't have plans to visit the coast?

07— Folks that are inland can probably scout and look for big groves of trees and watch the weather.

Cliff Shackelford is Parks and Wildlife's non-game ornithologist.

23—I'm here in Nacogdoches, and we have a place in town called Pecan Park – it's right next to Stephen F. Austin State University – and it is a migrant trap. So what I do is I look at the weather; if it rained the night before during a window of time when I know birds are passing through, that would be late April, early May, I would immediately get out there at eight in the morning and see what's there.

Inclement weather grounds birds as it does some aircraft. Shackelford said a location with large trees and an open understory is ideal for birders to glimpse migrants high above in the canopy. Of course, if you want to encourage migrants to visit your backyard...

26— Provide a wildscape; that's landscaping for wildlife. And in that you'll start to see that 'hey if I want berry-eating birds like tanagers and grosbeaks and buntings, I should put some of these berry-giving shrubs and trees out. If you're wanting to attract fly-catching birds, then just having a wildscape means you're going to have a lot of insect fauna – flies and bees and things like that – that a lot of birds feed on.

Find wildscaping and birding information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Recreation: Runway Turned Bike Trail

Friday, March 14th, 2014

Back in 1939, the Army decided to build a military base to protect the Texas coast during World War II. That base was [located at Matagorda Island](#). But when it closed in 1977, many parts of the base remained...including the runways.

08—We have several runways, the longest one is 2 miles long. It was set up for B52s to do touch and goes.

And while Matagorda Island's former park manager, John Stuart, says planes are no longer allowed to use the runways, other types of vehicles are making use of them.

05—Kids use the runways for bicycles and skateboards... we get quite a few.

Cyclists are not the only users of the runways, so you need to be careful when sharing the area.

09—We get least terns nesting on the runway, and that would be a big fine if you went over one of those nests and cracked one of some endangered bird eggs.

Matagorda Island is just one of the many unique places where you can ride your bicycle.

Want to ride on a former railroad track or on a trail where dinosaurs once roamed? Visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website and find a [free on-line brochure on bicycling](#) in state parks.

TPW TV: Natural Wasteland

Monday, March 17th, 2014

On the second Saturday of every month, Eric Carpenter surveys birds with Travis Audubon, at Hornsby Bend, east of downtown Austin.

03—Hornsby is one of the better spots to bird in Central Texas.

Carpenter and cohorts have recorded more than 360 species of birds at the site over the years. Kevin Andersen runs the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby; an unlikely place for the genteel activity of bird watching.

07—Hornsby Bend is the facility that recycles all of Austin's sewage solids, which is a euphemism for poop.

Austin's sewage and yard waste is recycled at this unique, 1200 acre site along 3.5 miles of the Colorado River.

09—There's a farm and a bottomland forest, treatment ponds that are famous for birding. Many different things that we can use for environmental research.

Pathogens in the sludge are killed off naturally. Some solids, when mixed with recycled yard waste, become compost; the cleaned water goes into ponds, creating an environment attractive to wildlife and those who watch it — like photographer Greg Lasley.

16—Even though we're right near the city of Austin, there's an amazing variety of wildlife: butterflies, dragonflies, birds, reptiles and amphibians. My philosophy is if you just get out in nature and spend time looking, things show themselves to you.

See a segment about Hornsby Bend next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife PBS TV series. Check your local listings.

Recreation: Night Hikes

Tuesday, March 18th, 2014

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

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

Kelley Lauderdale is an interpretive specialist at [Ray Roberts Lake State Park](#) north of Denton. Among other things, she leads nighttime hikes called owl *prowls*.

18—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 recommends hiking with others on familiar trails, and to be prepared to experience wildlife by ear.

14—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.

14—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 nature.

Recreation: Calling Critters at Night

Wednesday, March 19th, 2014

Wildlife viewing at night presents a challenge. I mean, it is dark, after all. 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, Kelly 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 – 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.

Fishing: White Bass Run

Thursday, March 20th, 2014

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.

06—*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, which is something anglers eagerly anticipate each year.

10—*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.

27—*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.

How will the lingering drought affect this year's white bass run? That's tomorrow.

Fishing: Drought and the White Bass Run

Friday, March 21st, 2014

The springtime [white bass run](#) is among the most anticipated freshwater angling events in the state.

14—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. Water levels in reservoirs are at historic lows, and river flows are also down due to severe drought, and that spells trouble for spring's white bass run.

23—Because the water is so low, 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.

De Jesus says east Texas isn't experiencing flow issues like the Hill Country; so, there will be fish runs available in the state.

12—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.

Find the fishing forecast on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

TPW Magazine: Monarch Decline

Monday, March 24th, 2014

Extreme weather and vanishing habitat, have taken a toll on monarch butterflies.

14—To use the oft-worn cliché about a “perfect storm,” that's sort of what's happened to the monarchs, unfortunately, and has caused their populations to plummet almost 80% since the winter of 2012.

Rob McCorkle [wrote an article about the monarch decline for the March issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine](#). Monarchs migrate to Mexico from Canada and the US.

18—The first hit [to the monarchs] was in 2002 when they had a severe freeze in the mountains of Mexico where the population overwinters. Monarchs can take cold weather, but if it rains, or snows and they get wet – they can't survive. They died off by the millions that year.

Weather is only part of the equation. Habitat loss is the other.

33—That is being propelled by the elimination of grasslands in the Midwest to plant GMO soybean and corn crops, and to plant crops for biofuels. What that's done, obviously, is to limit the places where the monarchs go to fuel up for their migration. Also, the overwintering forests in the mountains of Central Mexico have been logged heavily and are being impacted by [tourism] people going to see the monarchs that overwinter there in the fir trees.

More on why monarchs are in decline and how to help — that's tomorrow.

Why Monarchs are in Decline

Tuesday, March 25th, 2014

Fragmentation and loss of habitat creates hardships for monarch butterflies during migration and hibernation.

14— That is being propelled by the elimination of grasslands in the Midwest [where monarchs fuel up during migration] to plant GMO (genetically modified organisms) soybean and corn crops, and to plant crops for biofuels.

Logging in the mountains of Mexico where monarchs overwinter also affects the species. Rob McCorkle wrote an article about the decline of the monarch population for the March issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine.

At their peak, a billion monarchs filled the skies; today that number is under 50-million. Yet, each of us along their migratory path can help them on their travels by doing one simple thing.

16— The most significant thing scientists say you that you can do is plant milkweed, because that is the sole species the monarchs depend on to lay eggs for emerging caterpillars to feed on.

Find more information about the kinds of milkweed to plant for monarchs at www.plantmilkweed.org. Tomorrow, the kinds of milkweed best suited for monarchs, and how the US, Canada and Mexico are working together to save this iconic species.

How to Help Monarchs

Wednesday, March 26th, 2014

Loss of grasslands to farming and development means fewer “refueling stations” for monarchs during their migration. Master naturalist and writer, Rob McCorkle, says when homeowners living along the butterfly's migratory route plant milkweed they provide food and habitat for adults and their young.

13— There are different milkweeds in Texas – there are about three predominant types of milkweed: antelope horn, green antelope horn and zizotes is the third one. They're now becoming more available.

Grasslands aren't the only monarch habitat disappearing. Logging of fir trees in Central Mexico where monarchs overwinter has severely reduced their roosts. So why provide food and shelter along their migration route if in the end, there's no place for them to hibernate?

27— That is a good point. The Mexican government in collaboration with the US and Canada have formed a trilateral commission that has studied this impact for several years now. And they've taken steps to limit logging and protect the remaining habitat – and have had some success. A single monarch female can lay 300 to 400 eggs. So, the potential is there for the population to rebound to some degree.

Find links to follow monarch's migration route, learn about installing a monarch friendly garden, and more at passporttotexas.org.

Wildlife: Baby Bird Down! Now What?

Thursday, March 27th, 2014

As spring approaches it's good to know what to do if you find a baby bird out of its nest. And the babies most likely to try and get a jump on spring are blue jays.

12— I don't know what happens. They just jump the nest a couple days early, and the problem is they're in the backyard where the dogs and cats and kids are. So you really have to focus on not trying to pick up the bird.

Cliff Shackelford, Parks and Wildlife's non-game ornithologist, says the baby is not abandoned; mom and dad are nearby.

16—The better thing to do would be to pull the cats, dogs and kids in for that day or two and let the baby blue jay make it on its own with mom and dad. Because the fate is not the same if you pick it up and try to rehabilitate it. Mom and dad know how to raise baby birds a lot better than we do.

Even so, it's good to be prepared if you do find a baby bird that is vulnerable and unattended.

14— On your refrigerator, where you have the numbers of 9-1-1 and poison control, you should have [the number for] your local rehabilitator on your refrigerator ahead of time. Once you do get that baby bird — you don't have a lot of time.

Find [a list of wildlife rehabilitators by county](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Wildlife: Working with Wildlife Rehabilitators

Friday, March 28th, 2014

Spring is in the air and so are some baby birds as they prematurely exit their nests. If you find one grounded in your yard, resist rescue. The parents may be nearby.

04— Mom and dad know how to raise baby birds a lot better than we do.

If the bird is a featherless nestling, return it to the nest. If it is a feathered, yet flightless fledgling, it may be under mom and dad's supervision. But if parents are absent, call a rehabilitator.

20—You would work with that person on trying to get the bird to them. Keep in mind the rehabilitator's busy 24/7 tending to the wildlife they have – so don't expect them to come all the way to you. So you should probably make the point of, 'Okay. I'm committed to this; I'm going to see it through. So, I'm going to drive the bird even though it's an hour away to the rehabilitator.

Rehabilitators are not evenly distributed, and the nearest one might be a two hour drive away, and Cliff says rescuers need to be prepared for that.

20— And we have on the Parks and Wildlife website, a list of the licensed rehabilitators in the state. That is something that has to be permitted. You have to have state and federal permits to be a rehabilitator. You don't just take it down the road to grandma and hope that she can do it, because the reason they're permitted is they have to go through training, and they have to have the right facilities to be successful.

Find that [list of wildlife rehabilitators listed by county](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

Fishing: Saltwater Fishing Forecast

Monday, March 31st, 2014

Saltwater anglers have a lot to look forward to in 2014.

08— 2014 looks great! We've got trout populations that are doing well. Flounder are showing signs of rebounding since the November gigging ban has been put in place.

And that's just the beginning, says Art Morris, fisheries outreach specialist with coastal fisheries.

20—Red drum are holding their own. Black drum are everywhere. Our trout numbers have risen recently in the last couple of years from a point where we had concerns – especially in the mid-coast. We're still watching those trends closely, and have recently proposed reducing the bag limit to five up the coast, as we currently have in the Lower Laguna Madre. Nevertheless, we should see some big trout coming in this year. Overall the number of fish are good on the coast.

Recent rains mean better environmental conditions. And when it's good for the fish, it's good for the fisherman.

20—Those seeking redfish are probably going to want to hit the mid-coast. We've got other species that are basically tropical in nature, like gray snapper –they're abundant. Hopefully, we'll have some tarpon this year; snook have been making the rounds up the coast in recent years due to the warmer winters. We've got a good variety and good numbers of fish. I think we'll have a good year in 2014.

Art Morris says coastal fishing is like the proverbial box of chocolates.

03— You never know what you're going to get. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: it's all going to be good.

Read more of Art Morris' [thoughts on the 2014 saltwater fishing forecast in TPW Magazine's February Digital Fishing issue](#). For Texas Parks and Wildlife