

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

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

### **Campstravaganza**

**Monday, April 3rd, 2017**

This is Passport to Texas

The Texas State Park system has close to 8,000 campsites. In the April issue of [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#), father and son—Russell and Luke Roe—highlight the available prime “real estate”.

You know the places: great views, near water, or shaded by an ancient oak; spacious—or, perhaps, secluded.

In the section, the Roes reveal site and shelter numbers of these coveted spots: such as [Guale #2 at Big Bend Ranch State Park](#) in West Texas; this remote site, only accessible by four-wheeler, offers visitors spectacular views of sunsets that will change your life.

Site #65 at [Caprock Canyons State Park](#) in the Panhandle, offers solitude, the beauty of the shimmering red-rock Canyonlands, a covered picnic shelter, and a stunning view of Little Red River.

Site #92 at [Inks Lake State Park in the Hill Country](#) is everything you want a camping getaway to be, with the perfect balance of shade, convenience, privacy, scenery and lake access. Boaters can moor their boats at the site, and the sunsets will take your breath away.

The special section of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine has an illustrated Native American story you can tell around the campfire, tips on [setting up the perfect campsite, and eight new s'mores recipes!](#)

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

### **TPW TV — Hike Across Texas**

**Tuesday, April 4th, 2017**

This is Passport to Texas

For septuagenarian, Dave Roberts, an adventure that took him across Texas on foot, started a little more than two decades ago with a dream...

*In my dream, I died and I went to heaven. St. Peter looks at me and he looks down at his book and he looks at me again and says, 'Why didn't you take advantage of what they had to offer down there?' End of dream.*

A retired math teacher and computer programmer from Maryland, Dave soon quit his job to become a full-time volunteer, taking time off for adventures.

*I don't want to just sit at home and play card games on the computer and raid the refrigerator every ten minutes and get fat and lazy. I want to be outdoors, I want to breathe unfiltered air, I want the weather to affect me, I want to meet people I've never met, I want to go places I've never been, and that's the lifestyle that I've chosen for myself.*

That's how Dave Roberts ended up walking across Texas, visiting close to 30 state parks along the way.

*Visiting state parks has made my trip much more interesting. I made a spreadsheet: at 15 miles a day, how many state parks can I do? And I came out to 23 state parks. When I got to Tyler, I was like a week and a half ahead of schedule. I was doing 23 miles a day, not 15.*

Join Dave Roberts on his walk across Texas, and find out how it all started, this week on the award-winning Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings.

## **Growing as a Birder with the Birding Classic**

**Wednesday, April 5th, 2017**

This is Passport to Texas

Neither Bill Baker nor his teammates were birders 20 years ago when they participated in the very first Great Texas Birding Classic.

*We were so bad the first year, the Parks and Wildlife department staff felt sorry for us. And they gave us an award for being rookies of the year so we might think about coming back the next year.*

Back then he worked for Houston Lighting and Power managing a program called Environmental Partners.

*And the goal of that program was to leverage money to enhance wildlife and fishery habitat here in Texas. So, when I saw the Texas Birding Classic advertisement, I thought we could participate in the classic with the Parks and Wildlife Department. If, perchance, we would happen to win, we could leverage our company money with any winnings to enhance a project here in Texas.*

Bill may have been overly optimistic about his team's prospects that first year, but he said it opened his eyes to [what they needed to do to become competitive](#).

*So, that was the goal after year one. And it drove us to come back. It was like, 'Okay. We were embarrassed the first year. So let's see what we can do to close the gap.*

More with Bill Baker tomorrow. Meanwhile, The Great Texas Birding Classic gets underway April 15. Winning teams help decide the distribution of habitat restoration funds. Keep up with the action at [birdingclassic.org](#).

## [Road Tripping for the Birds](#)

Thursday, April 6th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Twenty years ago, Bill Baker and two teammates began a journey of discovery during the very first Great Texas Birding Classic.

*It was like the greatest scavenger hunt of all time—for birds! Being with your friends. Driving at a frantic pace. Covering habitat. Looking for different species. And learning. Our learning curve was so great.*

As total rookies, their performance was uncompetitive, at best, but since they had fun, they've returned year after year. Members of the current team, called the NRG Eco Eagles, bring with them specific skillsets.

*I can hear very well, even at my age. Tom—his vision is incredible. And Andy, the third member of our team now, has been a hunter most of his life. And he catches movement. He is really, really good at finding things. He can see movement, and has a skillset that really helps us as well. It is truly a team event in our case.*

During the classic, teams try to identify the most birds they can. The NRG Eco Eagles participates in the week-long tournament, which puts them on the road.

*That's what makes it so much fun for us. And it's very grueling. I'll give you an example—on day one—we end up driving about 750 miles. And we walk about 8 and a half to nine miles that first day.*

They sleep four hours and repeat...for an entire week. More with Bill Baker tomorrow. The Great Texas Birding Classic gets underway April 15. Keep up with the action at [birdingclassic.org](#).

## The Real Winners of the Birding Classic: Birds

Friday, April 7th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

For the past 20 years, the Great Texas Birding Classic has been the world's biggest, longest, and wildest birdwatching tournament in the U.S.!

*Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that I would do it for 20 straight years.*

Bill Baker's been participating in the Classic since the beginning, even though he says his team was an embarrassment their first time out.

Over the years Bill's team improved—a lot. And the NRG Eco-Eagles won the Week Long tournament 8 times, came in second one year and third another year for total winnings of just over \$170K, which went toward avian habitat enhancement.

*Texas has such diverse habitats, and such diverse birds. One of our team members lives in Pennsylvania. And the highlight of his year is coming down here, traveling Texas, to get to see the different species of birds that we have throughout the regions of Texas. We are blessed to have such habitat in our great state.*

Bill's passionate about the Classic, and thinks you can be, too.

*If you've never participated in this event, it will change your life. It's exciting. It's fun. You do this with friends. You learn. It contributes to enhancing avian habitat in the great state of Texas.*

The Great Texas Birding Classic gets underway April 15. Registration for this year has ended, but keep up with the action at [birdingclassic.org](http://birdingclassic.org), and start planning for next year.

## TPW TV – Prescribed Fire

Monday, April 10th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

The [Matador Wildlife Management Area](#) offers vistas of colorful rolling plains and canyons. Texas Parks and Wildlife maintains the beauty and balance of this 28-thousand acre natural landscape with the regular use of an ancient tool.

*Right now they are preparing to light a test fire. It gives us a pretty good indication of what the fire behavior is going to be like. And since it's a test, if it doesn't work out, we can put the fire out and go for it another day.*

Chris Schenck is part of Texas Parks and Wildlife's prescribed fire crew. A segment about prescribed fire airs next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Team member, *Derreck Holdstock, says fire is an important, natural process.*

*Whenever you don't have fire brush encroaches. The more brush there is, the higher the fire danger is going to be during a dry year. So the more fire you put on the ground the less the effects of a wildfire will be and the more controllable it will be.*

Prescribed fire has many jobs. It knocks back invasive plants, returns nutrients to the soil, and promotes native species, creating a balance of cover and forage for wildlife.

*Every time we do a fire I feel like we're taking a big chunk out of our management of that area. And then when you come back three months later and you have all this tall grass and you have all the wildflowers out there, it just kind of brings it all together and you realize what you've accomplished.*

Catch the segment on Prescribed Fires this week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. [Check your local listings.](#)

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

### **Wisdom of the Owl (pellets)**

Tuesday, April 11th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Owls symbolize wisdom – and we can learn much from them when pick their... pellets.

*It's more dignified than digging through poo because you'll be digging through vomit.*

Amy Kocurek and I have different ideas about what's dignified, but this interpretive ranger at Martin Dies Jr. SP, in East TX does know how to keep visitors engaged.

*The kids especially, they love it. Little furry, tin foiled wrapped up presents, that they get to unwrap and see what sort of mysterious surprises await inside.*

Wrapped in foil? Yes, because you can order them online.

*Most of them are from barn owls that people will collect from in their bars where owls just hack up these pellets; they'll collect them and sanitize them and sell them for teachers, mostly.*

Whether pellets are fresh or sanitized for your protection, those small, furry capsules have secrets to reveal.

*Because it contains these almost perfectly preserved pieces of bones and beaks and different things the owl ate, researchers can see what their main food source is in the area that they're living, if that food source is changing seasonally.... But also, if you're doing population studies on small mammals that will allow you to see how many different types of mammals are being eaten by owls. So, it can give you an all-round general idea of the population of animals in that ecosystem.*

[Dissect pellets with Amy Kocurek April 15 at Martin Dies Jr. SP](#); details at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

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

### [Paddle-in Campsites on Devils River](#)

Wednesday, April 12th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

The 37-thousand acre Devils River State Natural Area is primitive and isolated. Visitors to the site should be prepared for a rugged wilderness experience.

The waterway, for which it's named, is one of the state's most ecologically intact rivers. Paddling Devils River ranks high on many people's bucket lists.

While [limited access is available for paddlers](#) through the Devils River Access Permit system, paddling this river is not for the faint of heart. Due to its remote location, safe, reliable, and legal camp sites on the river are in short supply.

To help create safe conditions for the recreational use of the Devils River and minimize trespassing issues, the Texas Parks and Wildlife River Access and Conservation Area Program opened two [paddle-up-only camp sites](#) last month.

By adding the two new campsites, permitted paddlers can explore the river safely and maintain the high standards of river stewardship that will preserve its uniqueness.

Texas Parks and Wildlife is partnering with the Devils River Conservancy to collaborate on educational materials that will be distributed among local guides and vendors to prepare paddlers for overnight trips on the Devils River.

These camp sites are the newest additions to Texas Parks and Wildlife's statewide network of 19 River Access and Conservation Areas, offering improved angler and paddler access to more than 100 miles of Texas rivers.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program supports our series.

## [Field Guides for Better Birding](#)

Thursday, April 13th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Before long you'll see treetops dotted with color. Flowers? Nope. Feathers! Feathers of migrating bird species stopping over in Texas. To know what you're seeing, you'll need a good field guide.

*There are so many really good field guides out there. I always like to recommend the ones that cover the whole country, because that way you just spend \$20 or so, and you've got a book that's great for any trip, when you go visit California to Florida to New York or here in Texas.*

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

*So, I really like the National Geographic Society's Field Guide to the Birds of North America. The Sibley guide is very good. The Roger Tory Petersen guide is very good. And the Golden Guide to Birds of North America. So, there's really three or four. And the neat thing is, is to buy more than one; have one in the car, have one at home, and have one at the office. That way, you see different depictions of the birds, and then wherever you are that book is going to be at your fingertips.*

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

*We humans – we like to watch reality TV. You can have that experience out in your yard or at your local park, just looking to see what's going on in the life of a bird.*

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series.

## [Share Your Bird Sightings on eBird](#)

Friday, April 14th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

If bird watching is your passion, [consider sharing your sightings with the world on eBirds](#)...

*That the Cornell lab of Ornithology sponsors.*

Cliff Shackelford is Parks and Wildlife's non-game ornithologist. With spring migration underway, who knows what you'll see in the next few weeks.

*And you can easily – on your smart phone or your computer – enter your sightings. You can even start with eBird by setting up your yard as a hotspot or a patch that you frequent. And it's already in the system, and then all you have to do is you go and say, 'Okay; it's April 27th, and*

*we had a black-throated green warbler, and two Tennessee warblers, and a chestnut sided warbler. And other people can see that and get pretty excited.*

Of course if the hotspot is, say, your backyard, you may not want strangers walking up to your fence line with binoculars. You can be somewhat vague when inputting the location of your sighting, and still provide meaningful information to your fellow birding enthusiasts.

*If you're worried about people finding your secret patch, you can make it more of a broad brushstroke on the map, but still submit the data so people can say, 'Wow. That was Travis County and they had all those great birds.' So eBird is a real good tool.*

Find a bunch of birding information on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website. The WR Program supports our series.

## **Green Habits to Begin This Earth Day**

Monday, April 17th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans demonstrated for a healthy, sustainable environment...and thus began the annual celebration of the planet called Earth Day.

2017 marks the 47th Anniversary of Earth Day, and millions of people worldwide are gearing up for it. It's more important now than ever before to take personal responsibility for the care of our environment.

What kinds of things can you do to pay it forward for Mother Earth? Pick up and dispose of trash you find in parks or other public places. That's simple. Plant native plants that use less water; they also provide food and shelter for wildlife. You could always properly dispose of monofilament fishing line so it doesn't harm aquatic life.

When camping, leave your campsite in better shape than you found it. Or, your stewardship goal might be to spend time with your family outdoors instead of inside with the television—because a butt print in the sofa cushion offers no value to nature.

Mix it up, and regularly add new earth friendly activities to your list. As for me, I am going to do better with respect to composting kitchen waste and repurpose newspaper and cardboard as a weed barrier in my garden beds.

What will you do?

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



## They Fought to Preserve a Way of Life

Tuesday, April 18th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Six weeks after the fall of the Alamo General Sam Houston's Texas army took less than 30 minutes to overpower Santa Ana's militia, at what is now the [San Jacinto Battleground](#).

*San Jacinto is such a special place. It's where we won our Texas independence. It's where many scholars will argue that the history for not just Texas, but more so the United States — and even the world — was set with the Texian army winning that battle on April 21, 1836.*

Justin Rhodes is the Region Four Director for State Parks, which includes the San Jacinto.

*It's interesting to sit down and talk to other historians and hear the "what ifs." What if Texas did not win? Where would we be? Where would the United States be? Where would the world be without that victory that day? You know, where the battle occurred is right on — now — the Houston Ship Channel, which is one of the busier ports in the world.*

The Texian Army was a rag tag crew of untrained men, battling against Santa Anna's professional soldiers. Fighting on their home turf to preserve the lives they'd worked to achieve spurred them to victory.

*Any time someone tries to take something that's near and dear to your heart, you're going to have that spirit that flows through to make you fight that much harder. And that was the backbone of the Texian army.*

Celebrating the victory at San Jacinto is tomorrow.

## Celebrating a Pivotal Moment in Texas History

Wednesday, April 19th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

The Battle of San Jacinto was a game changer in Texas History. On April 21, 1836, an untrained Texian militia routed General Santa Anna's troops.

*The actual battle lasted less than half an hour; it carried on into the evening with clean up. But the main assault and the main fighting was done in less than half an hour.*

Justin Rhodes is Region Four Director for State Parks, which includes the San Jacinto Battlegrounds in LaPorte. On [Saturday, April 22th, the historic site celebrates this momentous battle](#) with a reenactment and festival.

*If you're planning on coming out, I would recommend you arrive early when the crowds are low. That will give you plenty of time to visit the festival and get set up for the reenactment. The reenactment will occur only once during the day.*

And that happens around 3 p.m. Rhodes hopes visitors leave with renewed appreciation for the sacrifices made on the battlefield in 1836.

*Ultimately we want visitors to take away an appreciation of the significance of the site, the event, the history tht brought us to where we are today. So much of what we do today and tomorrow is based on lessons from the past – from the sacrifices that these men and women brought forward. They teach us valuable life lessons moving into the future.*

The festival runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The reenactment is at 3 p.m. details at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## [Putting Texas Wildlife on the Map](#)

Thursday, April 20th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Now you can drive on the wild side of our state's prairies and forests using two newly updated Great Texas Wildlife Trail maps.

The updates of the Prairies and Pineywoods [East](#) and [West](#) maps mark the completion of the entire collection of wildlife trail maps, which feature more than 920 wildlife-viewing sites all across our great state.

There are nine wildlife trail maps in all, and each invites nature lovers like you to discover the best of Texas' native wildlife no matter where you are in the state.

In addition to physical copies of the maps, interactive maps are available online to explore various regions.

Each regional map details several smaller trail loops for easy driving trips throughout Texas.

The maps list contact information, entry fees and operating hours for attractions along the trails.

To [view all nine Great Texas Wildlife Trails maps](#) or to purchase a printed map, visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

The new wildlife maps were made possible in part from the support of a number of sponsors, including the Wildlife Diversity Conservation License Plate Program.

## **Step Softly and Look Out for Diamondbacks**

Friday, April 21st, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Now that spring is in full swing, you'll spend more time outdoors. When you do, my advice is to literally watch your step.

*Probably most people who spend any amount of time hiking in Texas have been within arm's reach of a diamondback and never knew it.*

Andy Gluesenkamp is a herpetologist [and Director of Conservation at the San Antonio Zoo]. Don't let what he just said about the big, scary venomous Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, which happens to be deadliest snake in North America, keep you locked up indoors.

*Diamondbacks would by and large much prefer to avoid contact than get in some sort of fistcuffs with a large animal like a human.*

These snakes play defense. They usually hang out in the vicinity of fallen logs, brush piles, and rocks. If they think you don't see them, they'll lie perfectly still and let you do a Dionne Warwick and walk on by.

*If they feel threatened by you, the first thing that they'll do is buzz that rattle. On rare occasions when somebody reaches their hands into a crevice, or is picking up firewood and grabs a snake or steps on a snake—then they're going to react violently. And that's when people tend to get bitten.*

So, avoid doing what he said. You'll be glad you did, or rather, didn't. Find more information about snakes on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Website.

Support for Passport to Texas comes from the Wildlife Restoration program...working to restore native habitat in Texas.

## **The Dark Skies of Texas**

Monday, April 24th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

An International Dark Sky Park is similar to a wildlife refuge. But instead of providing protection and habitat for animal species to thrive, these parks and surrounding communities protect the ebony backdrop of the night sky so stars can shine bright for our enjoyment.

Texas welcomed South Llano State Park, located outside of Junction, as its [third International Dark Sky Park](#). It joins Copper Breaks State Park in the Panhandle and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area in the Hill Country.

Five miles from the nearest town, South Llano River State Park ranks as a “3” on the [Bortle \[Dark Sky\] Scale](#), which ranks skies from 1 to 9. One includes the darkest skies and nine the least dark. The darkness at South Llano River State Park provides visitors with a spectacular view of the stars.

Regular Dark Sky programming, such as star parties will be hosted throughout the year at the park. It’s where visitors can learn about the importance of dark skies to wildlife and people. It also allows the public to view the night sky, celestial objects and constellations free from light pollution.

For more information on the dark skies at Texas State Parks, visit the [dark skies program page](#) on the Texas parks and Wildlife website.

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

## [Gardening with Natives](#)

Tuesday, April 25th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Everyone loves instant color when planting flowers and shrubs, but plants provide more than visual appeal.

*Usually they are producing fruits or nectar, some kind of food source that’s desirable.*

Botanist, Dana Price, says our choice of plants can affect Texas wildlife that depends on them.

*A lot of them are host plants for our native butterflies and monarchs; some of them are good hummingbird nectar sources. Many of them have berries that are good for birds. Native trees are hosts for all kinds of insects that are in turn food for our native birds.*

Native plants also serve us by providing low-maintenance upkeep, even in the harshest conditions—such as last year’s heat wave and drought.

*Our native plants are very well adapted to the climate in Texas, which yes is very extreme a lot of times.*

Planting and maintaining native vegetation for wildlife is called Wildscaping. The goal is to provide places for birds, small mammals, and other wildlife to feed and drink, and escape from predators, as well as raise their young.

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

The Wildlife Restoration program supports our series, and funds conservation work in Texas.

## **Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest**

Wednesday, April 26th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

For a decade, The Toyota Texas Bass Classic shined a light on Texas' world-class bass fisheries while raising funds for youth fishing programs. But that changes this year—sort of.

*The Toyota Texas Bass Classic, merged with a longstanding event called Bass Fest become the [Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest.](#)*

Dave Terre, with Inland Fisheries coordinates the event for the agency. He says despite the name change, the goal remains the same.

*This is a benefit event for Texas Parks and Wildlife at its very core. We expect the event will generate about \$250-thousand dollars this year to support Texas Parks and Wildlife—and specifically youth outreach programs tied to fishing.*

While The Bass Classic took place at Lake Fork with about 45 professional bass anglers, Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest heads to Lake Sam Rayburn, and more than doubles the number of participants.

*This new event is special in that it is going to be down at Sam Rayburn with 109 of the best bass anglers of the world. It is going to showcase our catch, weigh and immediately release format that was born at the Toyota Texas Bass Classic in 2007. And, it's going to be an exciting thing to see.*

The Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest is a free event, May 17th through 21st at Lake Sam Rayburn, east of Lufkin. And we have more about the event coming up tomorrow.

## **Big Bass Make a Splash at Lake Sam Rayburn**

Thursday, April 27th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

Texas receives high praise and recognition for its world class bass fisheries, like [Lake Sam Rayburn in East Texas](#).

*Absolutely. Sam Rayburn has a long history of good fisheries management and production of huge largemouth bass.*

One-hundred-nine professional bass anglers will be competing at Sam Rayburn during the [Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest May 17—21](#). It's a reimagining of Toyota Texas Bass Classic. Dave Terre is with Inland Fisheries and coordinates the event for the agency.

*Instead of a three day event that the Toyota Texas Bass Classic was famous for, this is actually going to be a four-day event. It's going to start on May 17 and it's going to be on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. And then the anglers are going to take off on Saturday to spend with the crowd, at our Expo in Lufkin. And then they're going to have a final round on Sunday.*

The Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest is a fundraiser for Texas Parks and Wildlife youth fishing programs. In addition to the competition, there's a family-friendly Expo.

*Learn all about fishing on Saturday. On Sunday, you'll get to meet your favorite pro anglers—the ones that are most famous in the tournament fishing world. And come down and interact with Texas Parks and Wildlife staff, and learn all about fishing and the outdoors. It's going to be a really exciting time.*

The Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest is free, and runs May 17th through 21st at Lake Sam Rayburn, with a family-friendly expo in Lufkin. The Sport Fish Restoration Program Supports our series and helps fund fisheries management in Texas.

## **Handling Fish at Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest**

Friday, April 28th, 2017

This is Passport to Texas

During the Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest, May 17 through 21st, Texas Parks and Wildlife will ensure the health of the fish professional anglers reel in from Lake Sam Rayburn. It begins with a judge on each boat.

*As professional anglers catch these fish, a judge is going to weigh and measure them and record each one. And then these fish are going to be immediately released instead of going to the scales as in staged-type weigh-ins.*

Dave Terre with inland fisheries says one-hundred-nine professional bass anglers will be competing in this year's tournament. Immediately releasing the fish is good for the fish and for fishing.

*Releasing these fish immediately helps in the survival of these fish. There's less stress on these fish, so these fish will survive again to be caught another day.*

And gives them more time to breed and potentially spawn even bigger bass. While the majority of the bass go right back in the water...

*We are going to allow the anglers to bring in one fish per day, over 21-inches in size to showcase these large fish that Sam Rayburn is famous for, so the audience can see some of these big fish up on stage. But 99% of the fish that are caught in this tournament are going to be released.*

The Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest—May 17-21 at Lake Sam Rayburn, is free to attend, and includes a family-friendly Expo in Lufkin. Find more information at [Bassmaster.com](http://Bassmaster.com). The Sport Fish Restoration Program Supports our series and helps funds fisheries management in Texas.

## **Some New Twists on Cooking Fish and Game**

Monday, May 1st, 2017

When Texas Parks and Wildlife collaborates with Central Market Cooking Schools on Wild Game and Fish cooking classes, we like to keep it interesting.

Take the May 9<sup>th</sup> class, for example: attendees will make Crawfish Beignets; Salt-baked Striped Bass with Olive Oil, Herbs, Lemon & Garlic Salsa; and Prosciutto-wrapped, Maple-glazed, Roasted Turkey Breast.

The meats used in the recipes are farm raised. Yet, each has a wild equivalent available for harvest with the right licenses and gear. May 14 is the last day of spring turkey hunting in the north zone for Rio Grande turkey—and for eastern wild turkey, too.

Crawfish and striped bass live in freshwater throughout Texas. Find crawfish around ponds, lakes, rivers and streambeds; tricky to catch, but lots of fun. Also check out the Texas Parks and Wildlife website for best striper lakes in the state.

A few seats remain for the May 9<sup>th</sup> Texas Parks and Wildlife & Central Market cooking classes in Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Dallas, Plano and Southlake **[Note: we just received notice the Southlake class has been cancelled.]**

Let me know where you live and the kinds of game and fish dishes that interest you. Find a link for cooking class registration and my contact details on the Passport website.

Find a Central Market Cooking Class Near You when you [visit their website](#).

## [Learning the Ropes \(Birds\) from a Ringer](#)

Tuesday, May 2nd, 2017

When I hear the word ringer, I think unfair advantage. Yet, ringers are encouraged in the Great Texas Birding Classic's Big Sit tournament.

*You can have a team with all people who are beginning, and then they just have to be sure they have a ringer or two on their team who can ID the bird for them for it to go on their list.*

TPW Nature Tourism coordinator, Shelly Plante oversees the event, and told me our colleague, Bob Sweeney, an attorney, is a Big Sit ringer.

*You know, I've been fascinated with birds since childhood, and even in high school I was out in the field and woods with my binoculars and my book. I just think it's an exciting, dynamic part of the natural world, and pretty easy if you're willing to put a little time into it to develop a minimum level of knowledge.*

Bob says he enjoys helping beginning birders gain knowledge and confidence.

*I think any teacher has a great feeling when they feel like someone in the class gets it. Someone snaps to it. That Eureka moment may come, not during the Big Sit, but it may be something that was learned during the Big Sit that is then used in the backyard, or used on a hike or communicated to another person who is wanting to start out, so maybe the light bulb when it goes on is the confidence to transmit that knowledge—I know what that is. I saw it in the Big Sit. And here's why I think it's that.*

The Great Texas Birding Classic is continues through May 15th. Stay on top of the action at [birdingclassic.org](http://birdingclassic.org).

## [A Fungus is Finally Among Us](#)

Wednesday, May 3rd, 2017



The fungus that causes [White nose Syndrome, a disease that affects hibernating bats](#) was detected for the first time in Texas earlier this year. Texas Parks and Wildlife mammalogist, Jonah Evans says it may have been present for up to a year...

*... but at levels too low to detect. So, when you look at the maps of the spread of the fungus across the United States, those maps are always going to be behind where the disease actually is.*

Researchers discovered six caves in six Panhandle counties with the fungus.

*These are locations where we had previously identified as the most likely for the fungus to turn up first. And sure enough, it did. And so, we had expected to see the disease and the fungus to slowly move across Oklahoma towards Texas. For me, personally, it was a bit of a surprise to have it suddenly one year we go there and it's all over the place.*

For the past six years, the caves in question have come up clean when surveyed.

*Likely, it came in at extremely low levels first, and slowly spread. And then, one winter's worth of growth of the fungus in all of these sites suddenly put it over that threshold where we are now able to detect it.*

Find more information on White Nose Syndrome in bats, and [decontamination protocol](#) if you go caving, on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **How a Fungus May Spread Among Bats**

Thursday, May 4th, 2017

Texas has the highest diversity of bats in the nation: 33 documented species in 4 families.

*And [Texas] is where a lot of eastern and western bats congregate.*

That's a problem, says mammalogist Jonah Evans, now that the fungus that causes the bat killing disease White Nose Syndrome was [discovered this year in six Panhandle counties](#).

*The other big concern is our Mexican Free-tailed bats, because they migrate and do not hibernate, they are not expected to suffer the same level of catastrophic impacts from the fungus. However, because they don't die when they are exposed to the fungus—potentially—that would make them even better at spreading it. It is sort of a bat Armageddon situation.*

Mexican Free-tail bats migrate in huge numbers across the Americas, creating concern they may spread the fungus.

*When really susceptible species get the fungus, usually about 80 percent of the mortality happens in the first year that the disease turns up. What that tells us is that we have to be very proactive*

*on the front end. We have to really start doing something soon. If we wait, we're going to be trying to treat these stragglers that are left over, and the bulk of the population will be lost.*

Researchers continue searching for treatments and cures. Find information about White Nose Syndrome, and [decontamination protocol](#) for cavers, on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **TPW TV- Don's Frog Pond**

Friday, May 5th, 2017

Don Cash is one of the producers of the [Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS](#). At work, he creates the shows. At home, he creates wildlife habitat.

*As a matter of fact, when I leave here and head home, I have my own little nature preserve waiting for me. This...is my frog pond.*

Don, who lives in southwestern Travis County, started his pond about 10 years ago, first filling it with goldfish.

*Now, the goldfish are really nice, but the pond attracts other animals as well. Every spring it seems [every frog in the neighborhood](#) hangs out here.*

Don wanted to know how frogs find his pond, when the nearest creek is three miles away, so he asked Andy Gluesenkamp, Director of Conservation at the San Antonio Zoo, to explain.

*Part of it is random chance, frogs finding it. But also, once a frog finds it, and there's a male calling, other frogs are going to be attracted to that.*

Andy says frogs aren't the only ones using the pond.

*When you build a fish pond you can expect other wildlife to show up. Birds will come and drink and bathe. Frogs will show up and breed and feed. And then snakes and other predators may show up and feed on those frogs.*

Leopard frogs, Gulf Coast toads and myriad other critters call Don Cash's frog pond home. And it's featured on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV show next week. [Check local listings](#).

## **A Mother's Day as Big as the Outdoors**

Monday, May 8th, 2017

A card and breakfast in bed is a fine way to show mom your appreciation on Mother's Day; but what about [packing a picnic](#) and taking mom to a state park instead?

With [more than ninety Texas State Parks](#), there's one close to you with plenty of outdoor opportunities for the entire family. But remember: keep the focus on mom.

Do you have an active mom? Then don some sturdy footwear and sunscreen and take to the trails for [an invigorating hike \[or nature walk\]](#). Or, [bring your bikes](#) and take a freewheeling whirl around your favorite—or new favorite—park.

[Remember the binoculars for wildlife viewing](#), and a camera so you can snap selfies with your mom in nature.

And that picnic? I have a link at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org) to [recipes that are perfect to take along on your Mother's Day outing](#).

It doesn't get much better than a picnic lunch surrounded by family and nature's beauty.

Oh, and you know that Mother's Day card you're going to give to mom no matter what? How about [tucking a State Park Pass into it](#) so she can visit Texas State Parks all year long for free. Do that, you'll be her favorite, for sure.

Find more information at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **Government Canyon: The Nearby Wilderness**

Tuesday, May 9th, 2017

Comprised of more than 12-thousand acres of mostly undeveloped land, [Government Canyon State Natural Area](#), outside of San Antonio, is not a state park.

*Although we're part of the Texas State Park system—we're actually a natural area. So, our focus is primarily natural and cultural resource management. However, we do provide recreational opportunities here. We have about 40 miles of hiking and biking trails.*

Superintendent Chris Holm says guests experience something entirely unique when they visit the site.

*It is a unique experience, as we're so close to the city of San Antonio. But yet, when you get out here and start hiking or biking into what we call the backcountry area, you think you're out in the great wilderness of the North or something.*

Open for visitation Friday through Monday only, Government Canyon frequently reaches maximum site occupancy on weekends.

*Almost every weekend we'll have a capacity closure because we get too many people coming out. We want people to experience Government Canyon. We want them to develop a love of the place. Stewardship. But at the same time we don't want it to be destroyed [from overuse]. And, so, there's a balancing act.*

Tuesdays through Thursdays, site staff focus on resource management. There's more info on Government Canyon at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **A Natural Area With a Place For Play**

Wednesday, May 10th, 2017

As San Antonio families with young children discover the close proximity of Government Canyon State Natural Area to their homes, more of them visit the site.

*We were here, and folks just didn't realize it. Now, we are being discovered. Folks are coming out from the local neighborhoods—and the word's getting out.*

Superintendent Chris Holm says the site offers 40 miles of rugged trails for hiking and biking. Yet, during periods of heavy rain, staff close the trails until they dry out. What's a family with kids to do? Since March, they've enjoyed a new ADA accessible playscape.

*Being that we are a natural area, we went more for not the regular swings and slides and monkey bars kind of playground—we wanted something that blended more with the natural area. And so, being able to offer things like logs and big boulders and rock steps and a little creek bed that kids can play in. It's been real popular.*

Last month Government Canyon State Natural Area also opened an all-weather, one and a quarter mile accessible interpretive nature trail.

*You can take a wheelchair on it. We don't allow bikes or dogs back there. Over the next year, we'll be adding in interpretive education signing to the trail as well. It's a really nice trail.*

Find more information about Government Canyon State Natural Area at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **Working Together for River Access**

Thursday, May 11th, 2017

**Chandler River Park** on the Neches River is a model for public/private partnerships that provide free access to our state's rivers, which can sometimes be hard to find.

*It's certainly going to be the model that I'm going to use in the future.*

Beginning in 2012, Richard Ott, an inland fisheries biologist based in Tyler, worked with a diverse group of public and private organizations to lease and develop the site.

*It was complete in 2013. We then were able to get some additional grants to improve the boat ramp on the south side of the bridge. And then in 2016, with another grant, we were able to put in a kayak launch. So, we've also got that as one of our paddling trail locations. So, it's a really multi-functional location.*

East Texas Woods and Water paid for the site's 20-year lease, says Ott. And TxDOT created safe parking and road improvements. Texas Parks and Wildlife develops sites based on angler input.

*This was a location that traditionally anglers had concentrated, and fished on the banks, on all four sides of the bridge. And once we located where the anglers and the fish interfaced, we knew that was where we wanted to develop these access sites.*

Find out where Texas Parks and Wildlife has agreements with landowners that allow public fishing and boating access through private property, on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#).

### **TPW TV – Coastal Birds and Birders**

Friday, May 12th, 2017

The Texas coast is rich with bird life and year-round birding opportunities. Next week discover what all the fuss is about on the award-winning Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS, when ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford takes a group of birders to what he calls a “mecca”.

*We are at Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary on Bolivar Peninsula in Galveston County and this is a mecca for birds, for water birds, for shorebirds that use the Texas coast.*

*[Alice Anne Odonell] Does everybody see the skimmer, going right down that very first wave? You can always go down to the beach and see anywhere from fifteen to thirty species of birds, no matter whether it's in the spring or the hot summer time.*

*[Cliff] There are birds here for many reasons, for foraging for roosting and some are even here for nesting. This time of year we have least terns and Willetts.*

*[Birder] I see it. The least tern went back to the nest.*

*[Cliff] Oh good, good, good, yes excellent!*

Coastal Birds and Birders airs next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. [Check your local listings](#).

## **Bust a Move Outdoors for Better Health**

Monday, May 15th, 2017

We have more than a million acres of parks and outdoor spaces in Texas, which means recreational opportunities abound, as do the health benefits of being active outside.

It's recommended adults get a full 30 minutes a day ... and children a full hour. Benefits of regular activity include: better overall bodily health as well as improved mental health.

Local and state parks offer something for everyone: from hike and bike trails, to swimming, rock climbing, paddling, and geocaching.

The opportunity for outdoor play is limited only by your imagination!

Being outside means breathing fresh air... and the varying terrain offers challenges to a workout you can't get from a treadmill at home.

Side stepping puddles, leaping up rocks, and traversing up and down hills exercise your balance and stability in addition to the cardiovascular system.

The outdoor alternative is also more affordable than the gym, as many state parks offer low-cost admission. So go ahead and get out, because life's better outside.

Find a park or scenic trail near you at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **ShareLunker Genetics — All in the Family**

Tuesday, May 16th, 2017

Anglers dream of reeling in largemouth bass that tip the scales at 13 or more pounds. Called "ShareLunkers" Texas Parks and Wildlife encourages folks who catch these big fish to donate them to [Toyota Texas Sharelunker selective breeding program](#).

*Since the inception of the program—we just finished our 30th year—we've stocked over a million fingerlings of those sharelunker offspring back into the reservoirs of Texas.*

Stocking lunker offspring into reservoirs increases an angler's chance of hooking trophy bass. Kyle Brookshear coordinates the ShareLunker program for the agency, and says biologists can trace lunker lineage.

*We're able to take a small tissue sample from each sharelunker that's caught. We can analyze that and determine who its parents are, or who its brothers and sisters are.*

This year, for the first time, [anglers caught "direct offspring" of previous lunkers](#). Although it's taken a long time to do, it proves: from big fish, come big fish.

*These ShareLunker's are about 10 to 12 years old on average [and over 13 pounds]. It's exciting to start to see results come in—and we should start to see more and more.*

Anglers donated the “direct offspring” back to the program where they'll become part of hatchery brood stock statewide, resulting in an increase of lunker-spawned fingerlings stocked in reservoirs.

*So long term what that means is, we'll go from stocking over a million fingerlings in the past 30 seasons of the program to stocking 6 to 8 million annually.*

### **Will the Pros Reel in a ShareLunker This Week?**

Wednesday, May 17th, 2017

When more than 100 professional bass anglers converge on one lake for a tournament, excitement runs high. And when the [Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest kicks off today at Lake Sam Rayburn](#), east of Lufkin, the excitement amps up with the possibility of reeling in a lunker.

*Well, it would be just awesome for our program.*

Dave Terre, with Inland Fisheries coordinates the tournament for the agency. A lunker is a largemouth bass that tips the scales at 13 or more pounds.

*For a lunker to be caught as part of this nationally broadcast TV program and this benefit event for Texas Parks and Wildlife, you know, it would be huge.*

The [Toyota Sharelunker program](#) works with anglers to promote the conservation and management of trophy bass fishing in Texas.

*Sam Rayburn has produced numerous Toyota ShareLunkers in the past. It would be an awesome thing [to reel one in during the Bassmaster]. But, you know what? I've made promises about catching a lunker for the past 10 years [of the Toyota Texas Bass Classic] and it has not happened. We've gotten close. And so, I've got my fingers crossed, and I'm a positive thinker—so it might happen.*

Let's cross our fingers and hope for the bass-t. The Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest is a free event that begins today and runs through May 21st at Lake Sam Rayburn. Details at [bassmaster.com](#).

### **Texas' Top Bass Lakes**

Thursday, May 18th, 2017

District fisheries biologists like Todd Driscoll monitor fish populations in public bodies of water.

*There are 15 other people like me in the state of Texas. And we primarily monitor the fish populations in public reservoirs, recommend fish stockings, habitat improvements, set length limits and bag limits relative to harvest...*

[Sam Rayburn](#) and [Toledo Bend](#) are two east Texas reservoirs under Driscoll's care. Both are nationally recognized bass lakes.

*It's all about the habitat. You know, over here in East Texas, we're blessed with fairly ample rainfall during a normal year, and that means we have fairly normal water levels in both of those manmade reservoirs. And normal water levels equal pretty good habitat. And good habitat leads to very consistent fish reproduction and consistent numbers of adult fish for anglers to catch.*

Twice now, Toledo Bend Reservoir claimed the number one spot on Bassmaster's list of 100 best bass lakes in the nation. And it's no accident.

*Inland fisheries at Texas Parks and Wildlife—we hire good people. And we tend to be on the cutting edge of the science. Our Heart of the Hills Research Center in Kerrville helps a lot with that. And, no doubt, that along with good productive watersheds and reservoirs in Texas all lead to good fishing.*

[Discover Texas' diverse fishing opportunities](#) across the state when you log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## [Caring for Tournament Caught Bass](#)

Friday, May 19th, 2017

During the Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest Tournament each professional angler has a judge onboard to weigh and immediately release their catch.

*During a typical tournament, you know, anglers are allowed to keep five legal fish per person in a live well in the boat.*

Inland fisheries district biologist, Todd Driscoll says immediately releasing them back into the lake reduces stress to the bass and the risk of livewell-related mortality.

*Study after study have shown that you can pretty much average that at about five percent. So, during one of these tournaments, if there's a hundred bass that are caught, weighed and immediately released, ninety-five of those bass are going to be plum fine and in great shape. Whereas, with a traditional tournament—bass held in live wells and taken to the scales—around 25 percent die. So, it's five percent versus twenty five percent. And that's what makes the catch, weigh and immediate release format so much better.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife perfected the format over 10 years of the Toyota Texas Bass Classic, where it was first implemented in a large, professional-level tournament—with only minor hesitation from pro anglers.



*When you implement that catch, weigh and immediate release format, the entire tournament results are predicated on what that judge does. So, they're highly trained; they absolutely know what they're doing. And after one event, nearly all the tournament anglers were behind that process.*

## **Bass Lakes in Texas**

Monday, May 22nd, 2017

Texas offers some of the finest bass fishing lakes around.

To the east, Sam Rayburn Reservoir is easily this state's most popular bass tournament destination. Sam Rayburn may be the most consistent bass lake in Texas, and just finished hosting the Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest.

Caddo Lake, on the border of Texas and Louisiana is a bass angler's dream. It's the state's only natural occurring lake. Caddo is shallow, so, if you like shallow water fishing—this lake's for you. Plenty of lunkers have come from Caddo, including one this past March that weighed in at a whopping 15.7 pounds.

Toledo Bend Reservoir is another lake we share with Louisiana, and it makes both states proud. It's been number one on Bassmasters top 100 bass lakes for two years. Over the past few years anglers have reeled in more than 100 10 pound bass from the water annually.

Down south, Falcon International Reservoir, which Texas shares with Mexico, has fish numbers that fluctuate along with the water level. Even so, Falcon's a favorite among many bass anglers because fishermen know that their next cast could produce a 10-pounder.

Find more Texas Bass lakes on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **Boat Safe, Boat Savvy**

Tuesday, May 23rd, 2017

It wasn't that long ago when drought conditions caused low lake levels that kept boats and other watercraft in dry dock.

*We have a lot more water now, so the lakes have changed.*

Good thing, too, because Texans love being out on the water in summer. And, the upcoming Memorial Day weekend is the unofficial start of summer boating season. Tim Spice, manager of boater education for Parks and Wildlife, says **being savvy about safety keeps everyone protected** when on the water.

*We can identify two major factors that you as a boater can affect in how you operate a vessel, and the things that you do in and around the water. One is wear a lifejacket. Eighty percent of*

*those people that die from falling in the water would be alive if they had a life jacket on. And then the second thin you can do is to not drink alcohol. Alcohol affects your judgment, and you can lose your driver's license—your vehicle driver's license—the court can take that away from you if you are found guilty of boating while intoxicated.*

The rules of the road as they pertain to boating, are similar but also different than those for driving a car.

*The rules on the road are all designed based on the type of vessel and the maneuverability of the vessel.*

Find those rules on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#)—and on tomorrow's show.

### **Boaters' Rules of the "Road"**

Wednesday, May 24th, 2017

If you plan on operating a boat, certain items are necessary to have on board for the safety of you and your passengers.

*You should have a sound producing device, and you should have a life jacket for every person that's on board. If you're boating at night, you should have the proper lights—that are working—and we suggest a first aid kit.*

Tim Spice, manager of boater education for Parks and Wildlife, says anyone born on or after September 1, 1993 is required to take boater education.

*We cover lots of different things, including safety aspects of boating; the different types of vessel you may have; the rules of the road; the required equipment. Again, everyone on board a vessel needs to have a lifejacket that's accessible. We define what accessible means by law so that you don't get in trouble when you're on the water and a game warden stops to give you a boating safety check.*

He advises filing a float plan with someone onshore that details where you'll be and when you plan to return, in case an emergency occurs while on the water. Remember: the rules for operating a boat are different than for a car.

*There's no lines on the road; there's no speed limits, per se. There are different signs and things you have to look out for that are very different than you would in your car.*

By [taking a boating safety course](#)—online or in a classroom—you'll learn those rules.

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

### **Texas River Access**

Thursday, May 25th, 2017

Legal access to Texas Rivers can be challenging.

*Texas is a private land state. Over 95% of the land in the state is privately owned, and that's reflected in ownership of banks along rivers.*

Tim Birdsong is a rivers biologist. Texas Parks and Wildlife's paddling trails program works with communities to create access to some of the 191,000 miles of Texas Rivers. Currently, we have 70 trails in the system.

*Seventy trails, 191,000 miles of rivers—that's a drop in the bucket. There are lots of high quality river segments that aren't accessible because of this preponderance of private lands ownership. So, we look for opportunities to bring landowners into the mix, and provide a win-win scenario where we can provide a cost share arrangement; provide payments to landowners to lease private lands for public access to rivers. And this is real similar to our public hunting program that we've had in place for years.*

This partnership with local landowners allows Texans to more fully enjoy the natural beauty that our rivers have to offer.

*We began leasing these private lands for access to bank, wade and kayak fishing in 2012. And now, we're up to 19 different lease-access sites statewide on 10 different rivers.*

Texas Parks and Wildlife seeks landowners with riverfront property strategically positioned to expand current Texas Paddling Trails, connect to parks, or provide connections to other public river access areas. Find program details on the TPW website.

### **[Taking Texas Rivers on the Road](#)**

Friday, May 26th, 2017

If you've fished, paddled or even picnicked along a Texas river, you know how special they are. Take that appreciation on the road with a new Texas Rivers conservation license plate.

*It's a really beautiful view of a Hill Country river with a kayaker and a fly angler off in the distance. It's just a really scenic landscape that points to the values that we all have for Texas rivers and rivers in general.*

Tim Birdsong is a rivers biologist.

*There are all these different aesthetic, and ecological and recreational and economic values tied to rivers, whether it's water supply, or flood abatement, or bank, wade or kayak fishing. Tubing. You name it. There are reasons we value rivers. And Parks and Wildlife works to conserve Texas rivers.*

Fish and wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and bank access for recreational use. The new Texas Rivers conservation plate helps to support it all.

*The sale of the license plate will generate \$22 for the department for every plate sold. And, that's non-federal funding that's really important in matching federal grants that we've been able to tap to support these programs. So, if you love Texas rivers, you can show your support, and support of Parks and Wildlife's river conservation programs by purchasing a plate.*

Find the Texas Rivers conservation plate and how the money's spent at [conservationplate.org](http://conservationplate.org).

## **Restoring Pronghorn to its Range**

Monday, May 29th, 2017

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

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

This includes orchestrating the restoration of these species to their native range. Earlier this year, Texas Parks and Wildlife successfully relocated 109 [pronghorn](#).

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

Texas Parks and Wildlife worked with partners to redistribute the animals. After trapping them, each received a health checkup; some got radio collars for monitoring.

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

Drought was a leading factor in the pronghorn's decline in the Trans Pecos; Shawn Gray is addressing it and other range issues to ensure the pronghorn's future.

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

## **Pronghorn Restoration Benefits Communities**

Tuesday, May 30th, 2017

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

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

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

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

The Trans-Pecos pronghorn population dipped below 3,000 in 2012, and Gray says through translocation, range management, and natural reproduction, they hope to see the number rise to 10,000.

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

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

## **2017 Free Fishing Day in Texas**

Wednesday, May 31st, 2017

During [\*\*National Fishing and Boating Week\*\*](#), most states offer free fishing days. These are days where anglers are allowed to fish on public bodies of water without a fishing license. Anyone who wishes to cast a line in fresh or saltwater may do so...freely.

This year free fishing day in Texas is June 3rd.

Every day is Free Fishing Day at Texas [\*\*state parks that have fishing opportunities\*\*](#). Once you pay the park entrance fee, you and yours can fish to your heart's content—while following bag limits and other regulations.

If you're not currently an angler, but want to give it a try, [\*\*some parks have tackle loaner programs\*\*](#). Borrow the tackle to use at the park, but bring your own bait. For very little investment, you can sample a sport that gets you outdoors and has the potential of putting food on the table.

On June 3rd in East Texas, the Texas freshwater Fisheries Center offers a day of free fishing, hot dogs, soft drinks and games. Other parks throughout the state offer Go Fish events and Kids fishing derbies on June 3rd, for a day of outdoor fun with family and friends.

Log onto the calendar page of the Texas Parks and Wildlife website for more angling opportunities.

We receive support for our program from the Sport Fish restoration Program... reminding you that Saturday June 3rd is Free Fishing Day in Texas.

June 2017

## **National Trails Day 2017**

Thursday, June 1st, 2017

National Trails Day is this Saturday, June 3rd. Observe the day by hiking a trail at one of your Texas State Parks.

*Our trails really give people an opportunity to experience everything about state parks.*

State Parks', Thomas Wilhelm, says hikers and walkers of all abilities can spend meaningful time on trails. All they need are sturdy shoes, sunscreen, water, perhaps a hiking partner and a sense of adventure.

*We have hikes from beginner level paved hikes all the way to very difficult hikes. So, regardless of your skills or your interests – there's a trail that's perfect for you [in a state park].*

This includes equestrian trails and ADA Accessible trails. The trails in Texas State Parks offer hikers opportunities to experience native plants and wildlife, as well as solitude, peace and calm. And, for those who like to exercise their brain along with their bodies...

*There's also opportunities with interpretive hikes that have panels along the way that explain what's happening. So, you're either learning something about nature or about history — or whatever it may be. So it's both a relaxing experience and an enlightening experience.*

Find state park and natural area, hiking opportunities and trail information at [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).

## **TPW TV — CWD Response Team**

Friday, June 2nd, 2017

The first case of [Chronic Wasting Disease](#), or CWD, was discovered in 2012 in free-ranging mule deer in an isolated area of far West Texas. Three years later...

*2015 the sky fell out. They found a positive in a deer breeding facility.*

CWD is a fatal, highly communicable neurological disease in deer. Ryan Shoeneberg is a wildlife program specialist, and part of Texas Parks and Wildlife's CWD response team. The

Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS features the team on this week's show. Paul Crossley is a license and permit specialist on the team.

*There is not treatment or cure. The only real management technique we have is containment.*

This meant shutting down TWIMS—the [Texas Wildlife Information Management Service](#)—the central database used to manage deer breeding in Texas. It essentially halted the transfer of deer from breeding facilities, which affected people's livelihoods.

*Our job is to nip it at the bud. Find it like a cancer. Wall it off, and not let it spread out.*

The team had the job of helping breeders get deer moving again.

*We were essentially given a deadline that said, look, we've got to get deer breeders moving again. We've got to get commerce going again—by deer hunting season. I think it was 57 days.*

The Texas Parks and Wildlife CWD Response TWIMS Reprogramming Team took action. Find out what they did this week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings. The Wildlife restoration program support our series.

## **[The Lives and Loves of Frogs](#)**

Monday, June 5th, 2017

*Amphibians are a remarkably unique life form.*

Texas State University Biologist Dr. Mike Forstner says in case you ever wondered how amphibians, romance one another, he can help.

*Amphibian or amphibios is a two-stage life. Those dual lives reflect water and land. When we think about the mating process or the management of the toad we have to take both in account the water and the land. All frogs and toads call. They make a unique advertisement call.*

You have probably heard male leopard frogs and bullfrogs advertising their interest in meeting members of the opposite sex without even realizing it. And if you were to find yourself in Central Texas, traveling through Bastrop...

*... further into the forest in Bastrop, we begin to hear a high-pitched trills that lasts a long time, up to 15 seconds for the Houston toad.*

Those calls allow the females to recognize the correct male for their species, and since the fire, we are beginning to hear a few more of these calls.

*And the females will hop toward the male call that they think is the most attractive. So there is female choice- not very different from what happened in the human world.*

Find more information about amphibians on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website.

## **VISTA Volunteers at Parks and Wildlife**

Tuesday, June 6th, 2017

Volunteers in Service to America's, or VISTA, began as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty in 1964.

*We must create a national service corps to help the economic handicapped of our own country, as the Peace Corps now helps those abroad.*

Nearly 30 years later, VISTA integrated with AmeriCorps. Individuals volunteer to spend a year in communities working on wide-ranging projects, including environmental stewardship.

*This [change] really could tie in greatly in getting VISTAs to come in and help us build some new programs and new projects that we haven't been able to do in the past.*

Kris Shipman, a former AmeriCorps VISTA, is volunteer manager at Texas Parks and Wildlife. She developed the agency's first VISTA program, which began this past April.

*We had to go through a Federal grant process. And, once we were accepted, we received 13 VISTA members. This project will be a three year project; we have a VISTA leader that will be here in Austin. The other 12 are all over the agency.*

Including, but not limited to state parks and Children in Nature. Erin Freiboth is Texas Parks and Wildlife's VISTA leader.

*We are here to create and develop foundations for projects and for programs that support and carry on the mission of Texas Parks and Wildlife.*

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

## **Volunteers Help Texans Connect to Nature**

Wednesday, June 7th, 2017

Texas Parks and Wildlife's [Americorps Vista program](#) got underway this year.

*Yeah. It's actually a brand new project that we started in April; we've never had AmeriCorps Vista members at Parks and Wildlife.*

People volunteer in communities to work on a wide array of projects. Kris Shipman, developed the TPWD program.



*I looked at a lot of the initiatives that we were trying to do in our efforts to get children outdoors; trying to increase the public use of green spaces—and all our conservation efforts. [I thought] that this really could tie in with getting VISTAs to come in.*

VISTAs like Erin Freiboth, who is the team lead, and coordinates 12 program volunteers statewide.

*So, I get to share with my VISTAs, and with the program, about developing project, networking with communities, and maintaining a diverse portfolio, while working on several different projects.*

Erin says one of the main goals of the program includes expanding user groups.

*We want Texas Parks and Wildlife to be able to represent all of Texas, and all of Texans' diversity. So, we want everybody from every economic sphere. Every diverse sphere. And every sphere possible to be represented in the use of these resources.*

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

### [Why, I Otter...](#)

Thursday, June 8th, 2017

Eight years ago when wildlife biologist Gary Calkins was conducting statewide otter surveys, we talked about it on our radio show; he invited listeners to send in their sightings.

*Really, when we started this thing, I sort of assumed that otters were pretty well just East Texas-centric, maybe in the Neches...Sabine River...Red River. That type of thing. But, man, the population that's in the Colorado River is way more than I had expected and a lot farther up the Colorado River than I ever expected, and then a lot farther up the Red [River] than I ever expected. [There are] just a lot more in general than I really thought there were out there just based on the number of people reporting stuff.*

Because of you, we know there's greater distribution of otters throughout Texas than previously thought. These mammals are surprisingly common in urban areas, such as Austin in Travis County and Houston in Harris County.

*Obviously, I think there are just more people out there are seeing them and reporting them. But those two counties—you've got Ladybird Lake, and all the different structures in the Colorado River. And then the thing with all the bayous that run through Houston, and so there're a lot of otters using that because it has been a created, perfect habitat.*

Gary Calkins welcomes all public otter sightings in Texas, ideally with photos. Find out how to get in touch at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

The Wildlife restoration program supports our series.

### [Next Time You See an Otter...](#)

Friday, June 9th, 2017

Wildlife biologist Gary Calkins could not have predicted eight years ago—when he invited radio listeners to send in their otter sightings—that it would change how we understand otter distribution in Texas, or that the sightings would continue coming in. He created a map using the data listeners supplied, and is confident it's accurate.

*Every sighting I get, I ask them [the public] I ask them to describe how the animal swam. Ask them if it made any vocalizations. Ask some questions about behavior—and better yet—can I get pictures or something. The only time I will count an animal to put it on this map, is if I am beyond a shadow doubt that it is an otter—based on vocalizations and the way it swam. I feel pretty comfortable that that map is representing otters and not mistaken identity. If it's something that I can't wrap my head around, that 'yeah, it's an otter,' then I won't put it on the map. I'll tell the people to keep looking and thank you. One of the things that I've done is that out of all the emails that I've receive, I've made myself respond to every single one of them. So that people aren't sending something to a black hole; and I think that's why it's kept momentum on sightings.*

Gary Calkins welcomes your otter sightings. Find out how submit them at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

### [Get Dad Outdoors for Father's Day](#)

Monday, June 12th, 2017

A lot of men don't want friends and family making a big fuss over them on special days – but we're going to do it for Father's Day anyway, Daddio, so deal with it.

Show your Dad what he means to you by giving him the gift of the great Texas outdoors on Father's Day, June 18th.

Maybe the kiddos could spring for a [Texas State Parks Pass](#) (which is really like a gift for the whole family); it allows unlimited access to all state parks for a year, discounts on camping, as well as discounts at state parks stores.

Or, you could [take Dad fishing](#) at a state park—because everyone fishes for free at Texas State Parks that have fishing opportunities. Some parks even have [tackle loaner programs](#). Just bring your own bait. Plus, you could catch something tasty for your Dad Day Dinner. How cool is that?

If your Dad prefers alone time with nature, and doesn't already have a [limited use permit from Parks and Wildlife](#), giving one to him provides access to a million acres of public land in Texas

where he can hike, mountain bike, do some wildlife viewing, fish—and in some cases—primitive camping.

Texas is a big state that offers an exciting world of outdoor opportunities. Doesn't your Dad deserve the best of Texas?

## **Noodling: Hands on Fishing**

Tuesday, June 13th, 2017

Hand fishing, commonly called noodling, became legal in Texas in 2011.

*What they do is they find holes that are typically on the bank, or in structure timber, what have you. And, fishermen will search around in the water blindly, feeling in holes until they find these fish, and then they'll pull them out with their hands.*

Fisheries biologist Kris Bodine says far from being a fringe activity, this technique is quite old.

*Before we had fishing poles, it was a way folks fished. They were just grabbing fish for food.*

Hand fishers are more efficient at catching trophy-sized fish using this technique.

*Big fish of any species—I don't care whether it's catfish, or bass or what have you—they're hard to find. And, so, this particular technique has offered folks a chance to catch more big fish than they would at any other time, because they're really concentrated in these areas.*

What impact does removing so many big fish have on the overall catfish population?

*There's a perception among anglers and among fisheries biologists that high harvest of trophy fish is majorly detrimental to the catfish population.*

Researchers conducted a study of hand fishers, with eye-opening results. Details tomorrow.

## **Is Hand Fishing Bad for Fisheries?**

Wednesday, June 14th, 2017

Hand fishers locate catfish nesting sites along river banks, reach in until a fish latches onto their arm, and then remove both arm and fish from the water.

*This is historically a controversial fishing method. First off, we're taking fish off of active nests, and some people don't like that. And, historically it's been illegal.*

Legal in Texas since 2011, hand fishers only make up about one percent of all anglers. Fisheries biologist, Kris Bodine says hand fishers regularly harvest trophy fish. The belief has been that their harvest of trophy fish is detrimental to the population.

*And if we want to have trophy fish, we have to protect the trophy fish [by catch and release], and since hand fishers are catching [harvesting] trophy fish, everybody viewed them as a problem.*

Thus prompting a study at [Lake Palestine](#). After analyzing results from the study, it turns out harvest was low; very low.

*For flatheads, which hand fishers tend to target, we were looking at around 3-4% [harvest rate]. And we were finding that the populations [in Lake Palestine] could withstand two or three maybe four times that, before any kind of problem started existing.*

This was a revelation. So if trophy cats don't need our protection, which ones do? That's tomorrow.

## [A New Way to Think About Trophy Fish](#)

Thursday, June 15th, 2017

The prevailing wisdom regarding trophy fish has been:

*If we want to have trophy fish [in the future] we have to protect the trophy fish [in the present].*

Fisheries biologist Kris Bodine says, as a rule, trophies aren't easy to find, let alone catch.

*And that's the thing. They're hard to come by. They're hard to find, because they're just rare in the population.*

Someone tell that to hand fishers. They can consistently find (or catch) trophy-sized catfish. Concerned about the effect removing trophy fish might have on the population, researchers conducted a study of flathead cats on Lake Palestine, which revealed something unexpected.

*It's not the trophy animals that need protecting. It's the animals that are going to produce the trophies. So, the young adults.*

Bodine says we should protect these younger fish because not only are they more abundant than their big sisters and brothers, they also have more life left in them.

*These big trophy fish—they're old. More of them are dying of old age than are being caught by anglers. And I don't care what fishing method we're talking about. I mean, throwing them [trophies] back probably isn't going to create more big fish. But throwing back the young adults would help your cause.*

Find the rules of hand fishing on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife website](#).

## [TPW TV – Steve Nelle: Biologist or Psychologist?](#)

Friday, June 16th, 2017

Author and Hill Country Land Trust member Jill Nokes holds Steve Nelle in high regard.

*He has this knack for connecting with people wherever they are.*

Nelle, a natural resource specialist is part biologist and part psychologist.

*Even though we're trained in the technical skills of plants and animals and soil and conservation, when we go onto farms and ranches, we're really more in the people business.*

This is especially true when evaluating damage following natural disasters. The Texas Parks and Wildlife TV Series on PBS [features a segment where Steve Nelle visits landowners](#), like Bill Johnson, affected by the Blanco Floods.

*[Bill Johnson] There was just devastation. The riparian area was stripped of all vegetation. With two big floods in one year, you get pretty down and you sort of feel hopeless almost. But he reminds you that nature is very resilient and it will recover.*

[Steve Nelle] I'll walk with the landowner across an area that's been devastated and find a few good things. And you can show them how nature's trying to recover and heal this area back up.

Catch the segment about Steve Nelle next week on the Texas Parks and Wildlife TV series on PBS. Check your local listings.

## [How to Behave Around Alligators](#)

Monday, June 19th, 2017

With more alligators spotted by the public in residential areas, you might think you'd be better off selling your home. The fact is... there's no need to panic if and when you see a gator in your neighborhood.

*We're just trying to help people put it in perspective. People will begin to see more and more alligators in the future and not every alligator is going to be a problem.*

Greg Creacy is a wildlife biologist based in Bastrop. He says horror movies and attacks by the more dangerous, and non-native crocodiles have caused people to be afraid of Texas alligators.

*The number of attacks by alligators in the US each year is less than injuries and fatalities from dogs, scorpions, snakes and sharks...all of those are much more dangerous to people than alligators.*

So what do you do if you see an alligator? Keep a safe distance from them and keep pets away from them. Don't swim in an area where there are alligators...and don't feed them.

*Because people have fed that alligator they've broken down their natural fear that alligator has for people.*

Find more [information on living with alligators](#) on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Website.

## **Texas Vultures**

Tuesday, June 20th, 2017

Some people call them buzzards, but Cliff Shackelford says the correct ornithological name for the large black birds that dine on road kill is: vulture.

*We have the turkey vulture and the black vulture.*

Shackelford is a non-game ornithologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

*And the best way to tell them apart when they're perched and sitting on that dead deer carcass on the roadside, is: look at the color of the head on the adults. The black vulture has a gray head and the turkey vulture, a red head.*

Vultures circle high above the land in search of a meal.

*The turkey vulture uses the sense of smell, and they'll smell their prey. The black vulture, though, uses sight, they'll look for prey, but they'll also cheat. They'll also look for where the turkey vultures are circling—[and decide] I'm going to bump in line. And with their numbers, usually the black vulture can overcome the turkey vulture and get the first little bites.*

More fun facts: vultures poop on their legs to cool off, and when threatened, they vomit.

*This is a defensive mechanism. They don't have fangs like a rattlesnake; they don't have claws like a bobcat. So, their best defense is to throw up what's in their stomach that was lying on the road for the last three days. And guess what? You're going to turn away; it's a great defense.*

Find out about all kinds of birds and birding on the Texas parks and Wildlife website.

## **Vulture Fun Facts**

Wednesday, June 21st, 2017

Vultures get a bad rap: maybe it's because they aren't "pretty birds", or because they eat road kill. Non-game Ornithologist, Cliff Shackelford, says they deserve our respect as they are a helpful, interesting species.

*Vultures have a role to play, what we call 'ecosystem services'. These are benefits to us; it's unfortunate that our cars hit animals—but think about what's left behind. The vultures are cleaning up all the mess and we have to commend them for that.*

How do vultures eat decaying carcasses and not get sick?

*Vultures don't get sick because they have certain bacteria and other flora in their guts that help them break down these carcasses.*

Although a migratory species, vultures live year-round in Texas. When road kill freezes up north, those vultures travel south.

*Because of our location, we not only host a lot more vultures in the winter season, we see a lot more passing through in the spring and fall migration.*

Vultures are social birds and roost together, preferring the tall structures that allow an easy entrance and exit.

*They like cell phone towers, rocky outcrops and ridges, an old tree that's standing up really high. They like the tallest roof in the area.*

Yet, they nest on the ground under fallen trees, and are excellent parents. Now that you're better acquainted, [we hope you'll give vultures a little respect](#).

## [Wildlife Tracking](#)

Thursday, June 22nd, 2017

When it comes to wildlife, there's more of it out there than meets the eye.

*Some of them are fairly secretive. A lot of times, we never even see the animal. Looking at the tracks and sign are the only way that we're able to determine that the animals are present.*

Heidi Baily is a wildlife biologist in east Texas. She says [tracking is a skill](#) she uses when conducting wildlife surveys.

*Wildlife tracking is getting out there and looking for not just the tracks or the imprints left by the feet of the animal, but it's also getting out there and looking for chew marks on a particular plant. Or, maybe scat—which is the highfalutin name for animal poop. Or a feeding sign, or anything that reveals that something has passed through.*

When tracking wildlife, Heidi says, it helps to think like the animal you're tracking.

*The best trackers are the ones who can put themselves in the mind of the animal, and be able to determine where it's been, what it's doing and where it's going. That's the fun part of the wildlife CSI of it: almost becoming the animal.*

Tracking isn't for wildlife biologists only. Heidi Baily says anyone can track wildlife, starting in their own backyard. Find field guide and [tracking app information](#) at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

## [Tracking Wildlife Beyond Footprints](#)

Friday, June 23rd, 2017

A lot of us, when tracking wildlife, search for footprints only.

*You know, the tracks, themselves, are the easy part as far as determining something's been there.*

East Texas wildlife biologist, Heidi Baily says the tracks alone tell only part of the story.

*In my experience, one of the toughest things for a tracker to learn, is to just take a step back and look at the scene as a whole rather than zooming in on one or two tracks. Sometimes it really helps to step back and look at where the animal's been going, and what he's been doing. You get a whole lot bigger picture as opposed to just kind of a snapshot and being able to say, 'Okay. That's a raccoon.'*

Heidi says when people start opening themselves to fully tracking wildlife—and not just the footprints—they begin to experience the outdoors in new ways.

*A lot of times, you may not see wildlife, but tracking just puts it in your mind that you're surrounded by wildlife whether you see it or not. And, it really gets your brain to churning trying to put yourself in the mind of that animal. It's a real treat, and a good time to get outside and enjoy it to the fullest.*

**[Enrich your outdoor experience with wildlife tracking.](#)** Find more information at [passporttotexas.org](http://passporttotexas.org).

## **Fourth of July Festivities**

Monday, June 26th, 2017

This July Fourth Weekend give yourself and your family a treat, and spend it at one of your state parks.

Pack a picnic and dine al fresco. Depending upon where you go, you'll dine under the shade of ancient oaks or pines or maples. Bring your hiking shoes or mountain bikes and enjoy the extensive trail systems.

Fishing is free in parks with fishing opportunities. Cast a line and see if you can reel in something tasty to for dinner so you can skip the grocery store on the way home.

If you live in Central Texas, the LBJ State Park and Historic site's **[Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm](#)** in Johnson City is the place to be on July Fourth. They plan to celebrate like early Texans. What does that mean? You have to go to find out.

For East Texas residents, one of the biggest fireworks display in your part of the state will light up the skies over the **[Texas Fresh Water Fisheries Center](#)** in Athens. Admission to the center is free after 4 p.m. And there's free fishing until 8:30 p.m.



Whether you go to a park to celebrate your own way, or attend one of these events: bring your family, bring your friends, bring some snacks, but leave the fireworks and sparklers at home. Don't worry, you'll still have a blast.

## **Mule Deer Restoration**

Tuesday, June 27th, 2017

The mule deer population is struggling in parts of the Big Bend region of far West Texas.

*We've been trying to boost our populations in the Black Gap area since about 2015.*

Shawn Gray oversees mule deer restoration. Unlike other mule deer populations, those at Black Gap never fully recovered after the last drought.

*We had been monitoring that population for years, and it just remained stagnant. And so, the next decision we made was, well, let's put some animals down there and try to boost it and see if we can't get the population trending upward.*

During population surveys last fall, biologists identified an available surplus of animals at Elephant Mountain Wildlife Wildlife Management, and one private ranch in Pecos County. Using the helicopter and net gun method, they trapped the animals.

*Once we caught them, we radio-collared and tagged them. We gave them a series of injections for health reason, and then loaded them in trailers and took them down to release them.*

Shawn Gray says this spring they moved 98 female mule deer to the Black Gap Wildlife Wildlife Management Area and to the adjacent El Carmen Land & Conservation Company, which together comprise 135,000 contiguous acres dedicated to wildlife and habitat conservation.

*Of those radio-collared animals, we monitor intensively, looking at survival and movement—habitat use. We use all those findings to help improve the habitat and help improve our survival.*

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

## **Introducing Mule Deer to their New Home**

Wednesday, June 28th, 2017

Shawn Gray oversees the mule deer restoration program for Texas Parks and Wildlife. Over the past two years, with the help of partners, the program identified available surplus animals on public and private land and moved them to [\*\*Black Gap Wildlife Management Area\*\*](#).

*We have moved over two hundred female mule deer.*

Gray says the program radio collars 30 to 40 percent of the animals before release.

Some captured deer had a “soft release” which involved keeping them in a fenced area for a couple of weeks allowing them to acclimate to their surroundings. Then, when freed...

*They don't go as far; they tend to stay where you released them.*

Other deer had a “hard release”. They were let out of the trailers and allowed to immediately run free.

*We have seen one or two of our [radio collared] translocated animals go back to where they were captured. Those were the ones that were hard released. The animals that we have soft released, we have not observed them going back to their home. We've observed them doing a lot of exploratory type movements. Figuring out their new home. But for the most part, those animals are staying in and around Black Gap Wildlife management Area.*

Which makes all the hard work, planning and coordination worth it.

The Wildlife Restoration Program supports our series.

### **Archery in Schools Levels the Playing Field**

Thursday, June 29th, 2017

Most individual and team sports demand a high level of physical agility or strength to compete—**unless that sport is archery.**

*All ages. All sizes. All genders. So, it doesn't matter; it really is an inclusive activity. And that's one of the things that makes it very unusual.*

Burnie Kessner is the archery coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife. More students are being exposed to the activity through the National Archery in Schools program.

*It's a non-traditional activity. It's a lot of fun. And so, it's very motivating for a student to want to do it. You know, you're now going to shoot a bow and arrow. And we do it inside the building. So, you're going to tell a sixth grader, 'Hey, we're going to shoot bows and arrows in the gym. [heh]'*

That's fun, right? Plus, archery has something in common with today's technology.

*It's great immediate feedback. And they do it themselves—individual skills. They pull the arrow back. Draw the bow back, and shoot the arrow and see immediate results. So it's great for today's generation. They click buttons and send texts and get on the internet and find information immediately. Even though it's an ancient sport and skill, it's immediate feedback just like sending a text, because you see results right away.*

Want to bring the Archery in Schools program to your district? Log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website to find out how.

The Wildlife restoration program support our show, and promotes the shooting sports in Texas.

### **Archery is a Sport for all Abilities**

Friday, June 30th, 2017

Participation in archery, helps kids develop various skills.

*Because you learn decision-making, and judging distances, and focusing—and tht sort of thing. So, there's a lot of life skills.*

Burnie Kessner is the archery coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife. The National Archery in Schools Program introduces students to the sport. What makes this sport and program special is that anyone of any ability can be successful.

*Physical limitations are addressed by adaptive devices on the bow and arrow. We do archery at Special Olympics—that audience can do it. And, at the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind [and Visually Impaired] in Austin, they do archery. So, all kinds of challenges can be overcome and still participate in archery.*

In fact, Kessner says visually impaired students have successfully competed in state and national school tournaments with everyone else.

*They can't see the bow and arrow they're holding. They can't see the target. They just need someone else to assist them and be their eyes and give them verbal cues—and they can shoot just like everybody else.*

Interested in bringing the Archery in Schools program to your district? [\*\*Log onto the Texas Parks and Wildlife website\*\*](#) and find out how.

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