Jones a man with a plan

Career decision pays off with Classic win for Texas angler

By Josh Ward

“I think I got it.” 

Alton Jones’ words couldn’t have come at a better time for Dick Hart, a long-time friend of the newly crowned Bassmaster Classic champion. For Hart, who had been in attendance at the Classic earlier in the week before returning home to Texas, anxiously awaiting the results had resigned him to living on pins and needles.

When Jones called from the truck that carried him from Lake Hartwell to the weigh-in at the B-Lo Center to say that he had a five-fish limit in the livewell, the guy who never forgets who he is was on the verge of becoming something he’d never been before: a world champion.

Like most people, Jones has most often been defined by what he did: computer salesman, fishing guide and professional angler. Before he hoisted the Bassmaster Classic trophy on a Greenville, S.C., stage, painting him with such broad strokes may have been easy. For Jones, the answer to who he is and how he does it is a much richer story.

And it starts with a plan.

About 30 years earlier, he penned a note to a Hart thanking him for a day of fishing and letting it be known that it would be the “dream of a lifetime.”

Nearly every lake or city has one or more bass clubs, offering everything from a chance to learn — either from more experienced fishermen or to learn about the lakes in their area — to the chance to compete in a road to a major fishing tour.

Some fishermen rise to pro ranks

By Craig Nylus

Nearly every lake or city has one or more bass clubs, offering everything from a chance to learn — either from more experienced fishermen or to learn about the lakes in their area — to the chance to compete in a road to a major fishing tour.

“Most people join bass clubs for the chance to learn — either from more experienced fishermen or to learn about the lakes in their area,” said Philip Webb, regional director for the Northeast Texas Bassmaster Federation Nation. “A lot of our guys

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Fishermen numbers hold true for opener

Conditions improved, future bright

By Bill Miller

The March 15 spring turkey opener in South Texas promises a lot of excitement, but next season could be phenomenal if the state doesn’t slip back into drought, according to state biologist and guides.

“We’re seeing a lot of birds,” said outfitter Bill Whitfield of San Antonio, who runs hunting operations throughout the state. “We have a lot of mature toms.

But what we hunt is what was hatched two or three years ago.”

Everyone recalls those were very dry years.

But an estimated 300,000 Rio Grande turkeys and about 10,000 Eastern turkeys managed to survive this year, said Jason Hardin of Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Hardin, the turkey program manager, said Turkey hunters should expect numbers of toms at least as good as last year’s harvest numbers of 22,948 Rio Grande turkeys and 123 Eastern turkeys.

See TURKEY, Page 30

TOM TIME: Turkey hunters should expect numbers of toms at least as good as last year’s spring harvest numbers of 22,948 Rio Grande turkeys and 123 Eastern turkeys. Photo by David J. Sams.

Bass Classic

SEE SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE

President/CEO

Bassmaster Tournament Director

CEO of Harris Fly Fishing

President of the Bassmaster Angler Association

Classic Special Section

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See CLASSIFIEDS, Page 12
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Baier earns conservationist of the year honors

Boone and Crockett Club President Lowell E. Baier was named the 2008 Budweiser Conservationist of the Year, an honor that comes with a $50,000 grant for a wildlife or habitat project of Baier’s choice. Baier was selected over three other nominees in an open-ballot vote on the company’s Web site.

Baier was the leader in drafting President Bush’s wildlife conservation legislation, and a delegate to the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation as well as the U.S. Forest Service Centennial Steering Committee. Baier also spearheaded a collaborative effort to protect Theodore Roosevelt’s historic 23,550-acre Elkhorn Ranch in North Dakota, a project that came to fruition in 2007.

Roosevelt established Elkhorn Ranch in 1884 and founded the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887.

“Proceeds from this award will go into the habitat restoration and interpretive fund for the ranch, which is now held by the U.S. Forest Service.”

— Boone and Crockett Club report.

NWTF honors Cabela’s

The National Wild Turkey Federation awarded Cabela’s the Corporate Achievement Award, recognizing its efforts to promote wild turkey conservation and hunting.

An NWTF partner since 2001, Cabela’s sponsors the annual NWTF Turkey Shoot and offers a chapter clothing program that helps local chapters put their names and logos on high-quality shirts and other apparel. Cabela’s has contributed nearly a half-million dollars for the NWTF’s on-the-ground conservation work and outreach programs.

Duggins appointed to TPW Commission

Gov. Rick Perry appointed Ralph H. Duggins of Fort Worth to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. The commission preserves and promotes Texas’ natural resources and oversees sporting and recreational opportunities in the state.

Duggins is a senior partner at Cantey Hanger L.L.P. He is a director of the Lena Pope Foundation Inc. and the Texas Supreme Court Advisory Committee. He is also a director of the Lena Pope Foundation Inc. and the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show.

Additionally, Duggins is past chairman of the Cook Children’s Healthcare System. Duggins grew up in Central Missouri, attended SMU, and has lived in Fort Worth since 1978.

He is an avid hunter and angler, and lists fly-fishing for tarpon and bonefish, spring bass fishing, and quail, deer and elk hunting as his favorite activities. “I’m very excited about the opportunity to work with Carter Smith, the Parks and Wildlife staff, and Peter Holt and a great group of commissioners,” he said.


— Texas Parks and Wildlife report.
HUNTING

Off and running
Puppy along for the ride makes first quail retrieve

By Ralph Winningham

The exact instant that little Goldie’s eyes locked onto a fluttering quail just inches from her nose, the English Cocker Spaniel’s entire world was changed forever.

The joy and excitement of the 4-month-old puppy just looking to play and scamper was replaced by the natural hunting instinct that flowed into her veins from generations of hunting dogs who had gone before her.

From the all-business look in her eyes to her professional demeanor with the other dogs and shooters working on coveys of quail at the Tonkaway Ranch during a late February hunt, Goldie had suddenly transformed into a hunter.

Retrieving that first bird, which was quite a mouthful for a little puppy, and then instinctive-ly working with the other dogs to flush and find other downed quail, Goldie was an awesome sight to behold.

The other dogs did not seem to notice the magic of the moment, but each hunter in the group softly smiled and nodded their approval of the chest-pumping, heart-pumping experience.

“People who don’t get out in the field enough to watch dogs work just don’t have the chance to share this kind of moments,” said Kyle Kacal, guide and operator of the family-owned 2,400-acre ranch.

“I go through a lot of dogs and train a lot of dogs for my friends. Young and old, they all add to the overall enjoyment of a hunt. I want my hunters to share that social experience.”

“It is just fun to watch a father and son, a grandfather and grandson or a mother and daughter sharing what can be the best time of their life,” Todd said. “All of OTC’s courses are taught by professional instructors. "Pros can walk into a group and teach to any level," Todd said. "All their days are filled with learning about outdoor activities indoors, briefly, and then putting those new skills into practice outdoors. All of OTC's courses are taught by professional instructors."

Two men await sentencing in ‘deer laundering’ case

By Bill Miller

“Deer laundering” is how one federal prosecutor described the 2006 case in which a Grimes County game rancher planned to stock his property with a dozen whitetail bucks for paying clients.

But these weren’t Texas white-tails. One of two shipments from Minnesota was intercepted in October 2006 by Texas game wardens and special agents for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Bringing the deer across the Texas state line violated federal Lacey Act provisions aimed at preventing the spread of deer ailments like tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease.

The two suspects, Robert Eichenour, 53, of Bedias, and Brian Becker, 37, of Madelia, Minn., pleaded guilty on Feb. 26 before a federal magistrate in Sherman. They will be sentenced later this spring for illegally importing wildlife.

“A good number of Texas kids have discovered the Outdoor Texas Camp, which operates from Stoney Creek Ranch near Columbus,” said Kyle Kacal, guide and operator of the family-owned 2,400-acre ranch.

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A handful of Texans who recognized the benefits of outdoor recreation, and who saw a business opportunity therein, have created themed-dedicated summer camps where children spend their time hunting or fishing instead of toasting marshmallows or weaving baskets.

"Seems to me that many more private, outdoors camps have sprung up recently," said Ernie Gammage, branch chief, urban outdoor programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife. "I recently," said Ernie Gammage, branch chief, urban outdoor programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife. "I

FIRST FETCH: Goldie, a 4-month-old English Cocker Spaniel, fetches her first bobwhite quail. At left, Goldie brings the bird to handler Kyle Kacal’s hand. Photos by Ralph Winningham.

"I looked around and didn’t see anything like this,” said David Todd, OTC founder.

Todd schedules four week-long sessions each summer, two dedicated to fishing and two to hunting, and he’s added a saltwater camp for 2008 that will operate from a new coastal location.

His camps are divided into small-cabin-sized groups overseen by counselors, same as anywhere. Their days are filled with learning about outdoor activities indoors, briefly, and then putting those new skills into practice outdoors. All of OTC’s courses are taught by professional instructors.

“Pros can walk into a group and teach to any level,” Todd said. “All of OTC’s courses are taught by professional instructors."
Billy Yargus of Ewing, Mo., won first place in the 2008 Wild Turkey Bourbon/National Wild Turkey Federation Grand National Calling Championships.

Yargus has been competing in the Seniors Division for 10 years, and while he has done well, he hadn’t won the Wild Turkey Bourbon/NWTF Grand National Seniors Division.

“I can’t describe the feelings, but it feels great,” Yargus said. “I’m lost for words. There’s no other feeling like this in the world. It’s fantastic.”

All of the calling contests were held during the NWTF’s annual Convention and Sport Show at the Georgia World Congress Center. Callers from across the country earned their way to the championships by winning NWTF-sanctioned turkey-calling contests throughout the year.

In addition to a championship trophy, Yargus won a championship ring and $5,000.

Kerry Terrell of Brooklet, Ga., won the Rare Breed Champion of Champions, comprised of an elite category of callers including past Grand National Senior Champions, past World Open Division Champions, or past Natural Voice World Champions.

Contestants were judged by experts in the world of turkey hunting on their ability to imitate the natural sounds of the wild turkey.

“The title explains it — the Champion of Champions,” Terrell said. “You have to learn how to master all kind of calls. I think that it’s a talent to have to learn all of those, not just the mouth calls. It’s tough. I’ve been wanting this one.”

In other competition, Stephan Richardson of Springdale, Ark., won the 2008 Grand National Gobbling Championships.

Richardson earned the Gobbling Title during his second year of competition in the Grand National Gobbling Division, competing against many of his mentors.

“It’s an absolutely humbling experience,” Richardson said. “Many of these guys are the ones who inspired me when I was learning to turkey call. It’s been a real blessing.”

In the Grand National Intermediate Turkey Calling Championships, Dakota Clouser from Danville, Pa., earned top honors.

Young callers must master the intricacies of their instruments: the slate, diaphragm and box turkey calls. The intermediate division is for callers 16 to 20 years old; the junior division is for callers 15 and younger. The types of calls contestants must imitate are not announced until the day before the competition, so participants must be prepared for several different calls.

Clouser is a four-time winner of the Junior Division, but this is the first year he has competed in the Intermediate Division. Hailey Long of York, Ala., finished second.

At the Grand National Junior Turkey Calling Championships, Jimmy Pollard from Fort Smith, Ark., topped the field, and Cory Hoone of Smithville, Pa., finished second.

“It’s great to finally win this,” Pollard said. “I’ve come in second twice, and this just feels awesome.”

— NWTF report.
FISHING

Back on the water for a cause

Tournaments scheduled to supply coastal fish hatcheries

BY BRANDON D. SHULER

The TPW Coastal Fisheries Division has developed the Coastal Fisheries Bay Team to provide an opportunity for coastal anglers to get back on the water for a cause — supplying coastal hatcheries with much-needed speckled trout and flounder.

Sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife and Anheuser Busch, the CFBT gives Texas saltwater anglers the opportunity to contribute to the coastal fishery hatcheries through six first-come-first-serve 'tournaments' from South Padre Island to Port Arthur.

Anglers compete by catching and releasing their fish into the CFBT tanks dockside. Fish then move to one of the coastal fishery hatcheries along the coast.

"The fish, removed from the rigors of survival and avoiding predation, will receive daily meals and inherit one simple job for the next four years — eat and make babies," said Robert Vega, head of the Coastal Fisheries Division. "After that time, we release them back into the wild."

The first sixty anglers to arrive at one of the six events can register to participate free; however, anglers must be more than twenty-one years of age. Eligible anglers may contribute up to three fish in any combination of speckled trout or flounder.

Any angler contributing live fish participate in a drawing to win prizes, including a Shimano Calcutta 200B on a Texas Tackle Factory Rod, a Garmin Etrex GPS, a Boga grip and a Cruxis Reel.

Coastal Fisheries personnel will be on hand to instruct anglers on safe and proper fish handling skills.

"A healthy, properly handled 17-inch speckled trout can produce upwards of two million eggs over a spawning season," said Sea Center Texas biologist Cliff O'Neal. "And in the safety of a controlled environment, the survival rate for hatchlings is increased and conditions may be manipulated to squeeze out a few more eggs."

Robert Adami of the Coastal Fisheries Bay Team said the hatchlings will be placed back in the areas the fish were caught. "This is a good way to give back and take part in a program that will help better our fisheries for your kids and grandkids to enjoy tomorrow," he said. "That's what it's all about."

Nueces River access plan rejected

Plan would have allowed vehicles in riverbed

Texas Parks and Wildlife has rejected a plan to establish more vehicle crossing sites along the Nueces River in South Texas. Zavala County Commissioners had approved a plan that would have let vehicles drive through the riverbed.

"The agency's belief is that the intent of the law is to preclude people driving in the riverbeds of Texas," said Scott Boruff, TPW's chief operating officer. "We believe this plan didn't comport with that intent."

Boruff said TPW appreciated Zavala County's effort to open up the Nueces River to more people, however, he said its plan would "basically destroy habitat that fish and other species depend on in that ecosystem."

Ruby Brown, the executive vice president of the Texas Wildlife Association, applauded the decision.

"From our standpoint, we're gratified that Texas Parks and Wildlife has weighed the critical issues of public participation, landowner participation and impact to the river resources and denied this request," Brown said.

Zavala County's access plan would have been detrimental to wildlife, Brown said. "The wildlife in that part of the country concentrate on those parts of the river they concentrate on."

Classic winner Jones headlines pond management seminar

When was the last time you had the chance to talk one-on-one with a professional bass angler who had just won $500,000? That's what anglers and landowners can do at seminar set for March 28-29 at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens.

Bassmaster Classic winner Alton Jones of Waco will speak on fishing techniques for largemouth bass in small impoundments at the Athens meeting following the Friday evening fish fry put on by the Texas Game Warden Association.

Even though Jones spends most of his professional fishing time on large reservoirs, he developed his interest in fishing on private lakes. "I am a member of the West Lakes Club, and that’s where I learned to fish," he said. "My grandfather joined the club in 1928, so I have a long family history of fishing private lakes."

The seminar will focus on how to grow and catch bigger largemouth bass in private ponds. A panel of experts will detail how to grow big fish. Jones will tell how to catch them.

Bass Pro Shops is providing door prizes that will be awarded on both days of the seminar.


For a seminar schedule or to register, call Dr. Billy Higginbotham at (903) 834-6919.
March 14, 2008
*Page 9

John Weatherly, fishing with partner Cliff Brown in the Bass Champs Central Region event at Lake Belton, caught a 10.96-pound bass — the team's fourth fish of the day — and the fish represented more than half of the team's total of 20.80 pounds. He then lost the rod and reel used to catch the fish.

“It caught the limb of a tree as we were passing by,” he said. “It slipped out of the boat in an instant.”

The brief spell of bad luck didn’t hamper the team, and they boated their fifth fish shortly before heading to the weigh-in. The team's total was enough to capture first place and the winning check of $20,000, plus $1,000 for catching the biggest bass.

Weatherly and Brown used black and blue True Tungsten jigs, and Weatherly caught the big bass over a submerged tree in 15 feet of water.

The father-son team of Joe and Brandon Bray took second place with 17.36 pounds, using Rat-L-Traps and brush hogs.

Randy Hibler and Randall Christian captured third place with 16.96 pounds, using spinnerbaits and pumpkinseseed brush hogs in shallow creeks.

“We caught about 30 fish today, and 20 of them were keepers,” Hibler said.

—Bass Champs report.

HITE wins FLW tour season opener

Brett Hite of Phoenix, Ariz., caught a final-round two-day total of 10 bass weighing 18 pounds, 5 ounces to win $125,000 in the Wal-Mart FLW Tour season opener on Lake Toho, Fla.

Hite topped Carl Svebek III of Siloam Springs, Ark., by 20 pounds, 4 ounces to set the record for the largest margin of victory in the history of the FLW Tour.

Weights were cleared on Day Three and Hite caught five bass weighing 25-02 to advance to the final day of competition in first place with a giant 12-pound, 13-ounce advantage.

“I'm ecstatic about setting the record,” Hite said. “Fishing against this caliber of fishermen and to be that far ahead going into the last day is unbelievable. These guys are the best of the best.”

Hite keyed on lanes cut through thick hydrilla in Kissimmee Lake, using a Phoenix vibrating jig with a trailer — a Chatterbait-like lure with a green pumpkin skirt and black blade. “It looks like a baitfish coming through the water,” he said. “But the fish also seemed to be keying on the bait’s vibration.”

Svebek caught a final-round total of 10 bass weighing 18 pounds, 5 ounces to claim second place and $50,000.

Ron Shaderfield of Bismarck, Ark., finished third with 15 pounds, 13 ounces, and Andy Morgan of Dayton, Tenn., finished fourth with 15 pounds, 10 ounces.

Shinichi Fukae of Mineola finished fifth with 8 bass totaling 15 pounds, 6 ounces to win $20,000.

—FLW report.

Bass are schooling in the discharge for the first 2-3 hours, biting on small, finesse lures near the surface and Carolina rigs down below, said Mike Hastings of Git Bit Guide Service, (512) 773-7401. Bass are biting all over the lake out of the shallow eel grass on minnows and black/blue tube jigs over brush piles. Channel and blue catfish are good on stinkbait, shrimp and nightcrawlers. See full fishing report on Page 13.

HOT SPOT

Bastrop

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Casting for Recovery

Diagnosed with breast cancer in her late 30s, Jo Ann Brewer was searching the Internet for resources when she stumbled on Casting for Recovery.

A couple of years later, Brewer was standing in a creek, waders on, fly-fishing for the first time, along with 13 other breast cancer survivors — courtesy of the volunteers and supporters of the national nonprofit’s Texas branch.

“It was just an amazing time of friendship and learning a new skill,” said Brewer, a Sachse resident who caught two fish that Sunday in the Hill Country.

Twelve-year-old Casting for Recovery has treated 3,000 breast cancer survivors nationwide to cost-free weekends of friendship, support and a course in fly-fishing. This is the fourth year for the program in Texas, with 14 participants chosen at random each year. The fly-fishing weekends at Joshua Creek Ranch are supported by donations.

That’s what was going on the first Saturday in March at Tailwaters Fly Fishing for Recovery at Joshua Creek Ranch in Boerne. Photo by Mary Roby.

Fly-fishing therapy for breast-cancer victims

BY DIANA KINDE

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QUAIL TRAPPERS CAUGHT
A rancher provided information to Game Warden Robert French about a vehicle and two people he said had been trapping quail in Winkler County. French and Game Warden Lance Lindsey were able to locate the vehicle and the violators, who had a quail, quail trap, corn and some protected species parts. Cases pending.

STUFFED HAWK ON OFFICE WALL
Game Warden Dustin Barrett was looking through some commercial fish paperwork from a retailer in El Paso County. He was shown to an office where he could see records were being retrieved from a storage facility. On the wall in the office was a stuff hawk. Case pending.

TRESPASSERS SEEKING GOOD FISHING CATCH CHARGES
Maverick County Game Warden Oscar Jaimez received a call about hunters on a local ranch. Jaimez responded and upon arrival located 10 people fishing at a stock tank on the ranch. The three adults and seven juveniles had parked their vehicles off the highway and walked onto ranch property to go fishing. A local resident had informed them of good fishing at this location. Two of the adults had recent arrests for burglary and felony possession of marijuana. Appropriate charges were filed by the landowner.

BASKETBALL GOAL NETS VIOLATOR
Hale County Game Warden Mark Collins filed charges on a man after a lengthy investigation. In January, Collins received a call about a headless deer carcass that had been dumped and covered with a large cardboard box. Collins found the deer, the box, two rubber gloves and a beer can. The box had contained a portable basketball goal. Collins drove to a nearby subdivision and found a new basketball goal at a residence. He then went to the local Wal-Mart and found that they had sold five of the goals recently, one to the resident with the new goal. Contact with the manufacturer revealed that each goalpost was marked with an individual number that would be located on the goal and on the box. Collins visited the residence, and learned the man’s brother-in-law actually dumped the deer, and that a total of nine deer had been killed, some legally and some not. The violator’s only question was “How did you know it was us?”

CHARGES FILED AGAINST NIGHTTIME HUNTERS
DeWitt County Game Warden Mike Hanscom responded to a landowner who had his truck and trailer parked across a road, blocking hog hunters from exiting his property. Several charges were filed on the group. Later, Shelby County Game Warden Derek Nall had more enforcement action against the group when they returned to the same area. Cases pending.

ROAD HUNTING INCIDENT LEADS WARDEN TO FAMILIAR FACE
DeWitt County Game Warden Mike Hoffmann received information from the Lavaca County Sheriff’s Office about possible road hunting on one of the county roads. Hoffmann had dealt with one of the men before, and he happened to be in jail at the time. The inmate admitted to hunting the previous week for squirrels and raccoons. His hunting license had been suspended for five years from previous charges Hoffman had filed against him. Cases pending.

ESCAPEE CAUGHT TRYING TO STEAL WARDEN’S TRUCK
On Valentine’s Day, Game Warden Jeff Cox, and learned the group did not have permission to remove the deer heads from the property. Cases pending.

LONGHORN CALF RESCUED
A rancher contacted Game Warden Dustin Barrett concerning a longhorn calf. The calf had been left behind by the mother. Warden Barrett responded and began to herd the animal to a nearby road. The calf’s mother was heard following in the background. Warden Barrett then herded the calf into the road to be transferred to the nearby road. The mother spent a few minutes following the calf and then moved away on the main road. Warden Barrett released the calf back to the property. The animal was reported to be fine and healthy.

GROUP IN CAPSIZED BOAT RESCUED
Leon County Game Warden Danny Flores and Limestone County Game Warden Kurt Slaughter responded to a call for assistance on Lake Limestone. A boat had capsized and the three passengers were being lifted. Approximately 60 freshly baited traps were picked up. Cases pending.

BOAT FLIPS, SIX RESCUED
• Smith County Game Warden Leanne Winkenweder investigated a boat accident on Lake Palestine. A lake wind advisory was in effect and a group of six was fishing in the 3-foot swells. Their 22-foot boat flipped over, and all fell into the cold water. Employees of the Villages Marina went out to rescue them within minutes.

HUNTER IN BIG BUCK CONTEST RECEIVED ANTLERS FROM FRIEND
Bell County Game Warden Ronnie Langford investigated a man who had entered a set of deer antlers in a local big buck contest. Langford knew the man and wanted to learn how the deer was taken. The man admitted to entering the antlers in the contest but said he had received them from a friend who shot the deer two years ago in Caldwell County. Upon inspection, the tag on the antlers reflected that the man was telling the truth. The man was not allowed to continue in the contest.

The group had booked its hunt on the Internet. The ranch was then contacted by Game Warden Jeff Cox, and learned the group did not have permission to remove the deer heads from the property. Cases pending.

CRABBER CAUGHT SETTING TRAPS DURING CLOSED SEASON
• Aransas County Game Warden Richard “ Marty” Martin, Scott McLeod, and Ben Friebele found a commercial crabber setting out traps prior to the season closure being lifted. Approximately 60 freshly baited traps were picked up. Cases pending.

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Clubs

Continued from Page 1

aren't interested in the competitive aspect of it, but like to learn and like the conservation and charitable things the clubs do.

Travel is an obstacle for some clubs. In West Texas, the Permian Bass Club has to travel more than 120 miles to get to the closest of their 10 events, and has nearly 200 members.

Other clubs exist for a cause. The East Texas Christian Bass Club uses fishing to introduce inner-city kids to the sport, a half-dozen tournaments, and helps Osprey Bass Club in Fort Worth hosts the major bass tours. The B.A.S.S. Federation Nation holds state and six divisional tournaments, and the B.A.S.S. Federation Nation Championship. Through the championship, six anglers qualify each year to fish the Bassmaster Classic.

And for some, it's more than just a berth in the Classic. Last year, Terry McWilliams qualified for the Classic through the Federation Nation after 18 years of trying, and wound up finishing fourth. And in 1994, Federation Nation qualifier Ryan Kirk of Connecticut won the Classic.

A separate organization, The Bass Federation (TBF) also offers a path to the FLW signature event, the Forrest Wood Cup. "Anglers can fish in our state-qualifying event, do well there, and compete in the divisional tournament," said TBF president Tom Enloe. "Our 12 top state finishers will win a sponsored trip to the divisional TBF competition on Lewis and Clark Reservoir in Nebraska."

The clubs don't have to choose between the national organizations. "A club can join both groups," Webb said. The TBF Texas state-qualifying event will be held May 2-3 on Richland-Chambers Reservoir near Corsicana.

Enloe said the deadline for bass clubs to join TBF this year is March 31.
FISHING REPORT

HOT BITES

LARGEMOUTH BASS

HOUSTON COUNTY: Black bass are good on watermelon green and watermelon red soft plastics near the dam.

Comroe: Black bass are very good on pumpkinseed soft plastics and spinners.

Livingston: Black bass are very good on white spinnerbaits and soft plastics.

TOLEDO BEND: Black bass are good on Texas rigs and jigs, swim baits and Rat-L-Traps.

Giddings: Black bass are very good on Texas rigs and jigs, swim baits and Rat-L-Traps.

GRAYBURN: Black bass are very good on Texas rigs and jigs, swim baits and Rat-L-Traps.

BRAHMA: Channel catfish are very good on live shad and shad pattern crankbaits.

SALTONTRA: Channel catfish are very good on live shrimp and shad pattern crankbaits.

CREEK: Channel catfish are very good on live shad, shad pattern crankbaits and Rat-L-Traps.

CRAPPIE

MACKENZIE: Crappie are fair to good on the East Flats on live shrimp, BassAssassin’s and Humdingers.

PORT COMIN: Crappie are fair to good on the south shoreline on live shrimp, BassAssassin’s and Humdingers.

LAKE O’ THE PINES: Crappie are fair to good around the east side of the lake, on crappie jigs and Texas jigs.

BRIDGE: Crappie are fair around the north end of the lake.

SOUTH PADRE: Crappie are fair around the north end of the lake.

ROCKPORT: Crappie are fair on Rollover Pass and Sand Eels.

TRINITY BAY: Crappie are fair on Rollover Pass and Sand Eels.

SALTWATER SCENE

North Sabine: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

South Sabine: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

East Galveston Bay: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

West Galveston Bay: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

Bayou St. John: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

Corpus Christi: Spotted trout and redfish are fair to good in the north channel.

Galveston Bay: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

Shrimp: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

Port Isabel: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

South Padre: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

Trinity Bay: Trout are fair to good on top dogs, Corkies and Catch 2000s. Redfish are fair in the south channel.

Texas City: Black drum are fair to good on red crabs and drum.

FREESTONE: Spotted trout and redfish are fair to good on the north end of the lake.

GULF: Trout are fair to good around the north end of the lake.

PORT COMIN: Trout are fair to good on the south shoreline on live shrimp, BassAssassin’s and Humdingers.

LAKE O’ THE PINES: Crappie are fair to good around the north end of the lake.

BRIDGE: Crappie are fair to good on the north end of the lake.

SOUTH PADRE: Crappie are fair to good around the north end of the lake.

ROCKPORT: Crappie are fair on Rollover Pass and Sand Eels.

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What powered Team Yamaha’s Alton Jones’ 2008 Bassmaster® Classic Championship win? His own reliable Yamaha powered Skeeter.

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- Alton Jones, 2008 Bassmaster® Classic Champion

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Reliability Starts Here.™
Jones makes Bassmaster Classic comeback

When Alton Jones motored back into Lake Hartwell’s Portman Marina in South Carolina, he wasn’t sure he had enough fish weight in his livewell to win the Bassmaster Classic.

“I thought I had an outside chance,” Jones said. “I never dreamed that would be enough for a victory, based on what had been caught the first two days.”

In the end, no one else’s catches could keep up with Jones’. In his 11th Classic, the Waco pro came back from 10th place on Day One to claim the $500,000 top prize in the biggest event in bass fishing.

“This is the fulfillment of a dream I’ve had since childhood,” he told a near-capacity crowd at the 15,000-seat Bi-Lo Center. “My grandfather taught me how to fish, and I wish he could be here to see this.”

As it turned out, Jones’ bag of five bass weighing 13 pounds, 7 ounces was the third biggest in the 25-angler field for Sunday’s final day, and the best among the top seven finishers. His three-day total was 49-7.

The Classic victory is the fifth BASS tournament win for Jones, whose highest previous Classic finish was 7th place in 2000 and 2003.

Cliff Pace of Petal, Miss., who entered the day in third place, finished second with 44-5.

“I fished one of the cleanest tournaments of my life,” said Pace, who was competing in his second Classic. “But if I had to lose to anybody, it would be Alton, for a lot of reasons.”

Kevin VanDam entered the day in fourth place, 3-15 behind Jones, and moved up one spot to third, with 43-8. VanDam said he made a mistake by going back to the area near the dam where he’d caught a 20-3 bag on the first day of the tournament.

“I spent three hours where the fish were biting,” VanDam said. “The rest of the day I went where I couldn’t get a bite. But I felt like I needed to be where those big fish bit the first day. It was a really bad decision.”

Jones said he kept repeating out loud three mantras to himself all day: 1) Catch the next bass; 2) Make every cast count; and 3) Back to the basics. When he didn’t get a bite in his first two areas, he tried to focus on just catching one, and not think about catching a limit.

“I had a good practice,” Jones said. “But I never dreamed I’d be sitting here on the final day.

Jones targeted bass on the inside edge of the standing timber submerged in Lake Hartwell. They were 25- to 35- feet deep.

“I wanted to fish deep, but as shallow as I could be, so I moved to the shallowest edge of the timber,” Jones said. “Out to 25 feet, it was a moonscape. Then it looked like a forest.”

Jones used three lures to catch his bass: a Booyah Pigskin jig and a Booyah AJ’s Gek jig, both rigged with a Yum trailer, and a Cotton Cordell CC Spoon.

“I looked at those banners of past Classic champions hanging in the Bi-Lo Center, and I am humbled,” Jones said. “Fishing is important to me.

“There are a lot of responsibilities that go with this title. I’m honored to be a spokesperson for the sport of bass fishing.”

— BASS Communications report.

Louisiana’s Wong claims women’s title

Despite cold water temperatures, Judy Wong of Many, La., coaxed enough fish out of a “hot hole” she had been fishing the entire tournament on Lake Oconee in South Carolina to claim the 2008 Women’s Bassmaster Tour Championship Presented by Academy Sports & Outdoors by a mere 6 ounces.

Wong, formerly of Sugar Land, who caught the majority of her fish from the warm-water outflow of the Oconee Nuclear Station, weighed in a five-bass limit at 6 pounds, 5 ounces to give her a three-day total of 26 pounds, 10 ounces.

Wong, who had one of the shortest fishing careers of any angler in this year’s Classic, had only two days of practice, spending 10 hours on the water.

Wong caught most of her larger spotted bass on a Gary Yamamoto Senko in watermelon red or silver metal-flake rigged wacky-style.

Wong will take home a fully-rigged Triton boat and $10,000 in cash, a total prize package of $60,000.

“I’m happy to have all that, but the title means so much more to me,” Wong said. “The women in this group, we all have this passion. We come out here and give it our all. To win this championship, getting to this position — it means so much when we do win.”

The leader going into Saturday’s round, 2006 Toyota WBT Angler of the Year Dianna Clark of Bumpus Mills, Tenn., struggled with the change from rainy, cold weather to a bluebird day. She managed only two fish and finished in third place with 23 pounds, 15 ounces.

“I just couldn’t locate the baitfish,” Clark said. “They left the area I was fishing. When the baitfish moved, the spotted bass moved. I tried moving back into deeper water and moving up. They just moved on me, and I didn’t make the adjustment.”

On the non-boater side, Karol Whitehurst of Winniebom didn’t have to catch a fish on the final day to claim the title, but did manage to put two fish in the boat to add to her three-day total, which ended up at 15 pounds, 8 ounces.

Laura Elkins of Amarillo finished fourth in the non-boater division with 10 pounds, 7 ounces.

— BASS Communications report.
2008 BASSMASTER CLASSIC

2008 Bassmaster Classic Champion
ALTON JONES
WACO
Total: 15 bass, 49 pounds, 7 ounces
Payday: $500,000

Jones came into the 2008 Bassmaster Classic focused on deep fish, and the first day’s cold temperatures and blowing rain didn’t upset that pattern. He caught 35 fish on day one and weighed in a five-fish limit, but a lack of big bites put him in 16th place. Even with the sun making its first appearance for a short time on day two, Jones stuck with dragging big Ropyah Pikes and AJ’s Go2 jigs through ditches and along the inside edges of submerged timber. He also used spoons to get to deep fish in certain places and wound up with a larger margin of victory (5 pounds, 2 ounces) than his largest fish.

He Said It: “I didn’t have a Plan B. I had one type of location and two types of baits, and I knew it was going to be a grind. When you’re only getting seven or eight bites a day, execution is definitely important.”

24th Place
GARY KLEIN
WEATHERFORD
Total: 13 bass, 31 pounds, 13 ounces
Payday: $12,100

One of the greatest anglers of all time, Klein left his 26th Bassmaster Classic again without a win. With colder-than-normal temperatures coupled with wind and rain throughout the event, the West Coast transplant expected to do well, targeting deep bass around structure. Using a deep-jig bite in the ditches and a dropshot to coax bass out of flooded timber, Klein fished deep all three days and brought five-fish limits to the weigh-in stand on each of the first two days before weighting in three fish on the final day.

He Said It: “I was in areas with lots of fish, and I thought I had them figured out by the end of the first day. I never found my 20-pound bag so I had to hunt and peck to try to stay in contention. I really felt like I was one cast away from really figuring it out.”

25th Place
TODD FAIRCLOTH
JASPER
Total: 9 bass, 27 pounds, 8 ounces
Payday: $13,000

On day one of the Bassmaster Classic, Faircloth brought a five-fish limit to the weigh-in stand that weighed 17 pounds, 10 ounces — anchored by a 6 pound, 2 ounce bass that wound up being the second-largest fish caught during the three-day event. One of the few pros who parlayed a shallow crankbait bite into a Top 10 position after the first day, Faircloth was certain that the day two’s sunny conditions would improve his standing. But he caught only three keepers on the second day and one on the final day.

He Said It: “I just didn’t get any bites after the first day. I really thought the sun would help. I was fishing shallow and I thought it would pull more fish up. It might have later in the second day, but it was a little too late.”

36th Place
Takahiro Omori
EMORY
Total: 10 bass, 19 pounds, 5 ounces
Payday: $10,000

Even with the unstable weather conditions, Omori had no problem getting fish in the boat during his two days of competition at the Classic. But while numbers were easy to come by, quality bites eluded the Japanese-born Omori. Trying to make the most of a crankbait bite using a Lucky Craft BC 1.5 and a flat-sided crankbait, Omori, the 2004 Bassmaster Classic champion, brought a five-fish limit to the weigh-in stand each day, but failed to make the Top 25 cut.

He Said It: “Everything looked good. The shad were there and the cover was there. I should have stayed off the bank, I guess. Maybe the bigger fish were behind me in open water. I have no regrets, I did all I could.”
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Hunting II - July 27 - Aug 2

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NEW JIGHEAD: The Strike King Lure Company's Shaky Head and Football Shaky Head jigheads are well-suited for rigging baits for shaky-style fishing techniques. A barb on the jig helps plastic baits and tubes stand up for better “shaky-head” action. The jigheads have a 60-degree flat-eye Gamakatsu hook. They are available in various sizes and in three powder-coated colors. They cost about $4 per package (four per package unpainted or three per package painted). For dealers, visit www.strikeking.com.

1,001 HOT SPOTS: “So Many Fish, So Little Time” (Harper Collins, publisher; $19.95) takes you to 1,001 of the world’s greatest honeyholes. Author and expert angler Mark D. Williams will be your guide on trips to the bountiful and fish-laden waters of such places as Spain’s Basque country, the Seychelles, Guatemala and Florida. The 880-page book is available at most booksellers. For information, call (253) 820-8790 for information.

PRODUCTS

STAIN-RESISTANT BEDLINER: Keep your pickup looking good by protecting the truck’s cargo area with a Stain-Resistant Bedliner by Wise Industries, Inc. Whether you’re hauling gear, hunting dogs or a prized deer, rest assured that once home you can hose all the mess away. The bedliner, which the company says is impervious to water, organic material, chemicals and petroleum products, is molded from water-resistant, closed-cell polypropylene foam with polypropylene fiber that’s stain-resistant. Its foam bottom conforms to the ribs in the bed, making it comfortable enough to sleep on during camping trips. The bedliner, which installs with hook-and-loop fasteners, sells for about $395. For dealers, call (800) 462-8435.

TURKEY HUNTING PACK: Mother’s Stil Hunting Light Pack combines the technical features of mountaineering packs, such as suspension systems that distribute load weight to the hips and hydration compatibility, with the functionality of vests. The pack features magnetic pocket closures for silent and easy access to its ample storage. But, what turkey hunters will appreciate is the pack’s Slip Seat, which deploys with a tug and stays by pulling on toggles on the shoulder straps (without having to take the pack off). Hydration reservoirs are sold separately. The Turkey Stil Hunting Light pack costs about $100. Call (253) 820-8790 for information.

SUNGLASSES FOR THE OUTDOORSMAN: The Whirlwind polarized sunglasses by Panoptx Eyewear, Inc., were designed for outdoor pursuits. The frames feature the company’s proprietary eyecup technology that provides a shield from harmful light and glare with foam-lined vents to filter out intrants. The sunglasses, which fit medium to large faces, offer a complete wrap for excellent peripheral vision. The sunglasses are available in Dark Tortoise, Glossy Black and Gray Tortoise frames and a variety of lenses. The MSRP ranges from $125 to $250 (depending on lens). For retailers, call (925) 484-0292.

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THE BIG FISH LURE: The B.F.L by D.O.A. Fishing Lures has arrived. The nearly 8-inch-long soft plastic swim bait features the most realistic swimming action, according to the company, it has adjustable front lips that can be easily removed and a super-sharp treble hook. It is available in five styles (original, red head, hot spot, trout or bass) for about $16. For information, call (977) 362-5873.

LIGHTWEIGHT AND FAST: Cabela's Outfitter Series Pursuer XP Bow Kit A offers bowhunters 300-fps performance in a lightweight 32 1/2-inch package. Features include dual-sealed bearings in the ARC cam for smoothness plus Xtreme Parallel limb technology and Limbsavers dampening accessories to reduce vibration and shot noise. The kit includes sight, rest, quiver, stabilizer and peep. The bow is available in Section 3D camo finish. It sells for about $500 at www.cabelas.com. For information, call (800) 237-4444.

STAIN-RESISTANT BEDLINER: Keep your pickup looking good by protecting the truck’s cargo area with a Stain-Resistant Bedliner by Wise Industries, Inc. Whether you’re hauling gear, hunting dogs or a prized deer, rest assured that once home you can hose all the mess away. The bedliner, which the company says is impervious to water, organic material, chemicals and petroleum products, is molded from water-resistant, closed-cell polypropylene foam with polypropylene fiber that’s stain-resistant. Its foam bottom conforms to the ribs in the bed, making it comfortable enough to sleep on during camping trips. The bedliner, which installs with hook-and-loop fasteners, sells for about $395. For dealers, call (800) 462-8435.

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WEATHER

OUTDOOR PUZZLER

ACROSS
1. A fighting freshwater fish
5. To place feathers in an arrow
9. The line grommet on a fish rod
10. Marksmen will ___ a trigger back
11. They are into more shooting sports now
13. Unwritten rules and regulations of the outdoors
14. Steelhead is a species of this fish
15. The fur-seeker's gear
16. A type of camp fireplace
17. A species of deer
18. A type of sight
19. A type of campfire
20. The gun-safety device
21. A big game hideaway
22. A big game hideaway
23. Dog breed trained to hunt deer
25. This is large on the muley
26. The main fin on a fish
27. A type of sight
28. The deer loon
29. A species of wild sheep
31. A wood used in arrow shafts
32. A type of sight
33. A boar's protection in a fight
34. A floating stock indicator for fishermen
35. A type of ice auger
36. A very large bass species
37. A male turkey
38. A type of energy from the muzzle
39. A boar's protection in a fight
40. A male turkey
42. An excellent walleye bait
43. Components that exit from the muzzle
44. A dry fly
45. A type of campfire
46. A type of campfire
47. A male turkey
48. A sight nearest to the eye
49. A type of campfire
50. A type of sight
51. A good ice-fishing bait

DOWN
1. A female bear
2. A male mountain goat
3. A duck species
4. A root of a fired gun
5. A female bear
6. A type of campfire
7. A NRA gun activist
8. A sight nearest to the eye
9. A keen sense of most game
10. A keen sense of most game
11. A good ice-fishing bait
12. A dry fly
13. A type of wind
14. A type of campfire
15. A type of wind
16. A type of wind
17. A type of wind
18. A type of wind
19. A type of wind
20. A type of wind
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WILD IN THE KITCHEN

Midnight Oyster Miga Omelet

Ingredients:
4 Bacon slices, cut into 1-inch squares
4 Tortillas
1 Cup corn tortillas
2 Garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1/2 Teaspoon salt
1/2 Teaspoon pepper
4 Eggs
1-1/2 Cups Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

Instructions:
Preheat Oven to 400°F. In a cast-iron or other oven-proof skillet, fry the bacon until crisp, then drain on paper towels. Leave approximately 3 tablespoons of drippings in the skillet.
Cut or tear the tortillas into one-inch pieces, and fry them in the skillet with the bacon drippings until the tortillas are gently crisp. Add the onions, garlic and jalapeños. Sauté until the onions are translucent.
Chop the oysters in halves or quarters, and sprinkle them evenly throughout the pan without mixing them into the other ingredients.
Mix together the tomatoes, salt, pepper and eggs. Add the tomato/egg mixture to the skillet, pouring evenly across the pan without mixing. Add cheese, and place the skillet in the oven 3 to 4 minutes, allowing the eggs to set.
Serving suggestion: side with sliced tomatoes, drizzle with vinegar and oil, and sprinkle with cilantro.

Recipe from The Texas Department of Agriculture and Chef Matt Martines, Matt's El Rancho.

Blackened Snapper BLT

Ingredients:
4 6- to 8-ounce fish fillets
3 Tablespoons melted butter
1 Teaspoon garlic powder
1 Teaspoon onion powder
1/2 Teaspoon each dried thyme, cayenne pepper, black pepper, white pepper
1/2 Teaspoon salt
4 Sandwich rolls
8 Slices cooked bacon
Shredded lettuce

Instructions: Coat fillets with melted butter. Combine seasonings and dust fish in seasonings. When skillet is very hot, carefully add fillets to pan. Cook for about 2 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fillets, or until charred. Flip fish over, and continue cooking until the fillets are cooked through. Place the fish on each roll, add bacon, lettuce, and mayonnaise on sandwich rolls, add sliced tomato, bacon, lettuce and blackened fish.

Hunting, fishing, major economic force in Texas

Hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers in Texas collectively are a major economic force, according to new findings by Southwick Associates, a Florida-based research firm specializing in economic and business statistics related to fish and wildlife resources.

Texas Parks and Wildlife's Wildlife Division commissioned the Southwick group to ascertain the economic effect from fish and wildlife-related recreation in Texas, based on data in the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. The firm recently completed its Texas-focused report.

According to the Southwick report, the economic effect from Texas hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers was estimated to be $14.4 billion.

"These new findings demonstrate the significant roles hunting and fishing play in Texas' economy," said Gene McCarty, TPW deputy executive director. "They also put into perspective our challenge as the state agency charged with managing the natural resources these industries rely upon."

According to Southwick, the total Texas economic impact from sport-fishing amounted to $4.73 billion ($2.93 billion from freshwater and $1.79 billion from saltwater), with $4.63 billion and $5.12 billion from hunting and wildlife-watching, respectively. The Southwick report also stated that, since outdoor recreation dollars are often spent in rural or lightly populated areas, the economic contributions of fish and wildlife resources can be especially important to rural and outlying economies.

In 2006, there were 1.3 million hunters (residents and nonresidents), hunting a total of 14 million days in Texas. Of the total hunters in Texas, 978,697 were state residents and 122,589 were nonresidents. Ironically, despite Texas' reputation for big bass, catfish were targeted most by anglers, according to the findings. In 2006, there were 1.8 million freshwater anglers (residents and nonresidents), fishing a total of 26.9 million days in Texas. Of the total freshwater anglers in Texas, 1.7 million were state residents and 142,821 were nonresidents. There were 1.1 million saltwater anglers (residents and nonresidents), fishing a total of 13.1 million days in Texas, the survey indicated.

— Texas Parks and Wildlife report.

Elk callers win world titles

More than 50 callers from 10 states competed in the RMEF Dickies/CamoWest World Elk Calling Championships, held at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation’s 24th Annual Elk Camp & Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Expo in Reno. Next year, the championships will move to Fort Worth.

In the event, callers had 30-45 seconds to mimic cow elk sounds, followed by bull sounds. Professional-level competitors were required to make specific calls such as barks, whistles and screaming bugles. Most callers blew across a latex reed placed inside the mouth.

In the natural-voice division, however, no calling devices were allowed. A variety of plastic tubes are used like megaphones, giving the sounds realistic resonance.

RESULTS

Professional Division
2. Al Morris, Springville, Utah

Men’s Division
1. Greg Hubbell, Belmont, Calif.
2. Dirk Durham, Moscow, Idaho
3. Thomas Diesing, Loveland, Colo.

Voice Division
1. Michael James Hatten, Elko, Nev.
2. Isaac Jacobsen, Boise, Idaho

Women’s Division
1. Misty Waggener, Sandpoint, Idaho
2. Deb Bungay, Kalispell, Mont.

Youth Division
1. Gregory Hubbell Jr., Belmont, Calif.
2. Patrick Whitaker, Lebanon, Ore.

— A RMEF report.

Hunting, fishing, major economic force in Texas
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HEROES

MILES LUCAS, 8, of Aledo, took this buck near Throckmorton. Miles shot his buck at 125 yards with a .223.

STEPHEN BEATS, smiling between the antlers, is shown with his sons STEEN and JAKE. It was Steen’s second buck and Jake’s first deer. With them is RICO WOODS.

SCOTT HENNEKE shot this buck in south Texas.

MARLIN WALKUP, 9, of Dallas, shot this wild boar with his .243 at 55 yards near Winnie.

BROOKE, 10, and CHASE, 13, JOLLEY of Allen, show off a couple of mallard drake taken at Pintail Farms.

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Fishing in Dallas. The store hosted a fly-casting clinic led by instructor Stacy Lynn Trimble from Aransas Pass, with afternoon seminars on knot tying, gear and Texas fishing sites. Tailwaters will use the proceeds to fund a $1,000 scholarship for one participant, said retail manager Travis Moore.

“Eighty percent of our support comes from the fly-fishing community,” said Susan Gaetz, Casting for Recovery’s volunteer Texas retreats coordinator. That’s despite the fact that men still outnumber women in the sport.

“So many of the fly-fishing men I’ve met have moms, wives or daughters who’ve been affected by breast cancer,” she said. “It’s a way for them to do something through their sport.”

Any fly-fisher can talk about the almost Zen-like focus that comes from an afternoon fishing a river for trout or bass. The act of casting itself is also good, gentle exercise for joint and soft tissue mobility, Gaetz said.

In addition to fly-fishing instructors and river guides, Austin oncologist Brenda Towell is on hand at the Texas retreats, along with another healthcare specialist and two counselors. All are volunteers.

Friday night and Saturday are for learning fly-fishing basics and bonding. On Sunday, each woman is paired with a volunteer guide on the water.

“Everyone I know (who’s had breast cancer), I tell about it,” said Brewer. “It’s something they’ll remember for the rest of their lives.

A full-time college student as well as a mother of five, she said she doesn’t get much time to go fishing, but continues to practice casting in her backyard.

Roughly 20-30 percent of past program participants continue to participate in the sport, said Trimble, the casting instructor who has volunteered since the program began.

“That’s really remarkable, because most haven’t even participated before.”

One who has kept up is Christina Casal, a school psychologist from San Antonio whose husband and son are avid anglers.

“After having had cancer, different life experiences become even more precious,” Casal said. “I kind of have a list. Life is fragile, and I’d better do the things I want to do.”

Fly-fishing had been on her list.

Sharon O’Reilly of Austin was on the first Texas retreat in 2005, and she, too, has added fly-fishing to her life. “Being out there with God and nature is so relaxing. You go to a different place, I think, when you’re out there fly-fishing,” she said.

O’Reilly will be at this year’s retreat in April as a volunteer river guide.

At Tailwaters on Saturday, Patty Hauglum was considering signing up for a future retreat. Cancer-free after her second bout, Hauglum said she was ready to “step outside my comfort zone.”

There’s a creek not far from her Dallas home, Hauglum said. Maybe, that afternoon, she’d check it out.

## Algae bloom prompts closing of three bays to shellfish harvesting

The Texas Department of State Health Services closed Aransas, Corpus Christi and Copano bays to shellfish harvesting on Mar. 7, and has issued a recall of oysters, clams and mussels because of an algae bloom.

DSHS officials say high concentrations of the Dinophysis organism have been found in several locations in the area. The toxin produced by this algae bloom, okadaic acid, can accumulate in shellfish tissue and cause diarhetic shellfish poisoning in people who consume oysters, clams or mussels. Cooking does not destroy the toxin.

Shellfish harvested from these bays on March 1 or later are included in the recall. Consumers who purchased shellfish March 1 or later are advised not to eat them. The toxin does not affect other seafood.

DSHS will monitor and determine when it is safe to reopen the shellfish areas.

DSP symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea and cramping. Symptoms, which usually last two to three days, can begin from 30 minutes to 12 hours after eating shellfish containing the toxin. DSP usually is not life-threatening and does not generally cause long-term effects. DSHS is not aware of any illnesses associated with this algae bloom.

— DSHS report.
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**Bassmaster Elite Series**

**McClelland catches up to take Sunshine Showdown**

Mike McClelland of Bella Vista, Ark., came full circle as he took home the winner’s trophy in the Bassmaster Elite Series’ season opener, the Sunshine Showdown on Florida’s Harris Chain of Lakes, where his Bassmaster career started 20 years ago.

McClelland fished lily pads and grass on and around the Dead River and Lake Eustis with a Zoom trick worm throughout the event. On the final day, he brought in a five-fish limit of 15 pounds for a four-day total of 59 pounds, 2 ounces.

“I didn’t have a keeper until 11 o’clock,” McClelland said. “I didn’t panic, went to my secondary area, and that ended up being one of the best areas I had all week.”

With the victory Sunday, McClelland won $100,000, pushing his BASS career earnings to more than $845,000.

Brian Snowden of Reeds Spring, Mo., held a seemingly insurmountable lead of nearly 10 pounds going into the final day, but came up empty-handed and finished with 54 pounds. The Lane brothers from Lakeland, Fla., ended up taking third and fourth — Bobby with 53 pounds, 4 ounces and Chris with 52 pounds, 10 ounces. Todd Faircloth of Jasper, the only Texan to make the cut, finished eighth.

— BASS Communications report.

**Nueces**

*Continued from Page 8*

want to open up,” he said. “Vehicles running up and down the river all the time would have a huge impact on them.”

Zavala County’s plan would have linked four vehicle access points, letting vehicles drive in a 13-mile stretch of the Nueces River. It was the first major effort to open Texas rivers to vehicles since the Legislature banned the practice of driving in riverbeds — except for two rivers in the Panhandle — in 2003.

County Judge Joe Luna of Zavala County did not return a phone call requesting an interview.

Last month, Luna denied the plan was intended to accommodate four-wheeling. Luna told the San Antonio Express-News the plan limited tire heights to 38 inches, steered vehicles to rock and gravel bars, limited their speed to 15 mph and only let vehicles into the riverbed if they were crossing.

Melissa Parker, river conservation coordinator, said TPW had to look at the overall impact of Zavala County’s proposal.

“Multiple public access sites allow the public to enjoy the river,” Parker said. “If people want to paddle down the river, they can put in at various locations as well as get out at them. It allows for day trips. But there’s also a safety issue. You can be hard-pressed to get out of the way of a vehicle if you’re in a kayak. Also, we have to be particularly sensitive to the riparian habitat. That’s what stabilizes things. We want to build up rather than degrade the banks.”

Texas law provides numerous protections for the state’s riverbeds. However, it does allow local governments to establish access points provided they protect fish, wildlife, water quality and private property rights. TPW is the final arbiter, though.

Kelly Knight, an organizer of the Friends of the Nueces, said Zavala County’s plan would have forced vehicles to drive onto private property — a conclusion that TPW also reached.

“The only place people could have driven would have been on the riverbed or on private property.” Boruff said. “Either drivers would have not been complying with the law, or they would have been trespassing on private property.”

Several landowners wrote TPW criticizing Zavala County’s vehicular access plan and claiming they were not consulted about it, Parker said.

“From what I can tell, there was not a whole lot of coordination done on that end,” Parker said.
NATIONAL

Two fish break in Oklahoma’s new lake records program

Allen Gifford from Davis, Okla., caught a 14 pound, 8 ounce largemouth bass on Feb. 27 at Arbuckle Lake by Denny Halgren of Illinois.

The two fish are the first record-setting fish to be landed since the launch of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation’s new Lake Record Fish Program.

Gifford landed his bass using a Terminator spinnerbait. “As soon as I set the hook, I knew it was big,” Gifford said. “But I didn’t know how big.”

The bass has a girth of nearly 23 inches, is over 25 inches long and falls just over three ounces shy of the state record from Broken Bow Lake in 1999.

Halgren landed his lake-record blue catfish with natural bait. The fish was released, but had a length of 43 inches and a girth of 28.5 inches.

The Lake Record Fish Program was initiated Feb. 1 to recognize the biggest fish from certain reservoirs and the anglers who catch them. Currently, 13 major lakes are included in the pilot program.

Anglers who catch a potential record from a participating lake should contact designated business locations around the lake that are enrolled as lake record keepers. A listing of official lake record keepers is available on wildlife部门.com.

—Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation report

Gray wolf no longer endangered species

States planning wolf-hunting seasons

Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett announced the gray wolf population in the Northern Rocky Mountains is thriving and no longer requires the protection of the Endangered Species Act. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the species from the federal list of threatened and endangered species.

“The wolf population in the Northern Rockies has far exceeded its recovery goal and continues to increase,” Scarlett said, noting there are currently more than 1,300 wolves and at least 100 breeding pairs in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

As a result, for the first time ever, Montana has scheduled a wolf-hunting season.

However, the decision to delist is expected to be litigated, which could tie up the matter in court. The 2008 hunting season is scheduled for Oct. 26 through Dec. 31.

Hunters will not be allowed to use dogs to hunt wolves, bait the animals or use artificial scents or lures.

Montana is home to an estimated 417 wolves, which includes 38 breeding pairs, according to preliminary 2007 information, well above the minimum population requirements of 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves for the species to be removed from federal protection.

Idaho hunters would be allowed to kill somewhere between 100 and 300 gray wolves this fall under a plan proposed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Idaho had an estimated 732 wolves at the end of 2007, said Steve Nadeau, large carnivore coordinator for the department. He predicted the population will increase 15 to 20 percent by this fall. He said the department’s goal for the next five years is to keep the Idaho population between the 518 counted in 2005 and 732.

—Staff reports

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“I could tell he was serious about fishing,” Hart said. “He really enjoyed it and was good at it.”

Jones enjoyed it so much that he fantasized about being a Bassmaster Classic champion. The dream stuck, all the way into Jones’ collegiate school, and his winnings counted for a big trophy, but because he saw something in young Alton.

A big trophy, but because he saw something in young Alton.

Baylor, Jones met his future wife, Jimmye Sue. After the two were married, Jones had a computer business, sold some insurance and even did some guiding. But all the while, he was beginning to explore the tournament circuit — and something to every event in their home on wheels. While Alton competes or practices, Jimmye Sue home schools Alton Jr., Kristen and Jamie.

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Turkey
Continued from Page 7

leader, said ranges and pinoy woods still held back tracts that were minimised by the record-breaking rains of 2012.

The result was lots of cover for nesting hens and insects for them to eat. “It should be a pretty good year, especially for Rion,” Hardin said. “Although Eastern birds might have an average year because the east stars pretty well anyway.”

The optimism was shared by outfitters in West Texas, including Warren Wallace of the Cinco Casco Ranch, 20 miles east of Sonora. “We have a pretty good crop of mature toms and actually quite a few jakes,” Wallace said. “We normally have a better crop than most folks because our turkeys are in a draw with lots of trees for them to roost.”

But that’s only part of the story.

Hardin said 2009, “absolutely will be better if it stays wet.”

With reasonably good bird populations, this season could at least mirror 2007’s turkey harvests. Hardin said the state’s small game survey showed that 22,948 Rion were bagged last spring, along with 123 Eastern turkeys. By comparison, the fall season netted 19,749 Rion, the survey said. But that’s only part of the story.

Whitfield said on March 6, “I drove from Palo Pinto County to San Antonio yesterday afternoon and every little town had a burn ban sign.”

He was glad, however, for snow and rain that was sweeping his operations that day in North Texas. “My guys said there is snow all over the ground today,” he said, “which is good for everything.”

“This is when we start building for next year.”
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512.295.1121
Store Hours:
Monday-Saturday 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.