

LONE STAR OUTDOOR NEWS

★ March 28, 2008

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Ranger Boats'
40th Anniversary



Special Section
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INSIDE FISHING



Winds and low tides have played havoc with coastal fishermen, but some are finding the bite.

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After a slow start, a lunker frenzy poured in from Texas lakes, including two lake-record bass at Lake Waco and Tyler State Park Lake.

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Turkey opener a bit early

South Texas birds still grouped up

By BILL MILLER

Opening the South Zone turkey season two weeks earlier than recent years provided no clear advantage to many hunters.

To them, the South Texas mating period for Rio Grande turkeys still seemed to be a few days off when the season got under way on March 15.

Despite unfavorable timing, a few hunters found a prescription for success.

Lane Brown of Austin popped a 20-pound tom with nearly 1-inch spurs and a 10-inch beard in Real County.

The bird came to the call in late morning after the toms got away from the groups of hens.

Wayne Brueggen, a Houston dentist, hunted with his friend Pink Logan near Cuero. "The birds were all together," Brueggen said. "I had scouted the week before, and we set up on the same path the birds had taken."

The plan worked. "About 20 hens flew down a few hundred yards from us," he said. "Then six toms came down. Pink called and three of them came to our decoy — two of them were nice, mature birds — as soon as he shot the one on the right, I shot the one on the left."

Robert Linder of Marble Falls said he hunted opening weekend near Telegraph, south of junction, but had no success.

See **OPENER**, Page 15



STRUTTING HIS STUFF: A few mature gobblers were taken during the South Texas opening weekend. Many hunters reported seeing large numbers of jakes. Photo by John Eriksson.

Spring Turkey Season Dates

RIO GRANDE TURKEY

North Zone March 29 - May 11
* Special Youth Season May 17-18
South Zone Mar. 15 - April 27
(54 counties)
* Special Youth Season May 3-4
1 - Turkey Bag Limit (8 counties) April 1 - 30

EASTERN TURKEY

Spring Season
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SPRING SAILFISH: Ben Schovajsa, a Texas A&M junior, spent his spring break fishing near Cancun, and the group boated nine sailfish. Photo by Jeremy Janda.

SPRING FLING

Students enjoy a break on the waters

By MARK ENGLAND

Joseph Douglas, a Baylor graduate student, and his friend J.P. Sonnenberg, a Texas A&M senior, had been looking forward to spring break for months.

They left at midnight on Thursday, March 6, and, fueled by Mountain Dew, drove eight hours to reach the Texas coast. After a nap, they were ready for action. You can probably guess what happened next. For the

next week and a half, they chased anything that moved — provided it had fins.

"J.P. and I can be pretty extreme," said Douglas, whose hometown is Athens. "We get up, go fishing and go to bed. It's not for everyone, I guess. I took some buddies once who didn't want to go back."

Sonnenberg, from Gatesville, said some of his friends don't get fishing eight to 10 hours a day.

See **BREAK**, Page 14

Fire torches 95 percent of Chaparral WMA

Most wildlife, structures spared

A massive wildfire at the 15,200-acre Chaparral Wildlife Management Area spared much of the wildlife on the state's premier public hunting site, according to initial

findings during aerial surveys by Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists.

Biologists flew the area on March 20 counting deer and other animals and will compare those findings with recent annual aerial survey results, which should provide an estimate of wildlife loss from the

See **BLAZE**, Page 21

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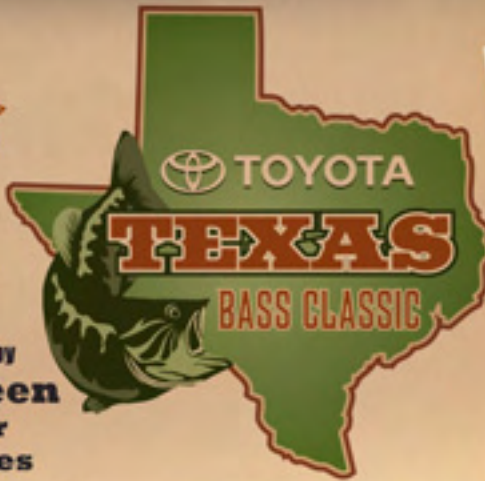
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NATIONAL

Deer plan emphasizes information, data collection

Nearly two years in the making, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission approved its Strategic White-tailed Deer Management Plan.

One of the goals of the plan is to "manage and maintain a healthy, stable deer herd appropriate for the habitat." The goal is statewide, but

its components vary across the state.

The plan calls for dividing the state into Deer Management Units. These are different from deer zones, which are used for hunting regulations, seasons and bag limits.

Within the DMUs, the wildlife management staff will "determine,

manage and monitor herd health and productivity by utilizing winter and summer herd health checks as needed, in conjunction with biological data collected from harvested deer." A major focus will be on checking for chronic wasting disease.

Deer management strategies will

be carried out on cooperative public lands along with AGFC and private lands cooperative projects like timber company lands.

Assistance and evaluation will be given private landowners who ask for it. The work of the private land biologists is free for landowners.

The current deer hunting zones

can be adjusted when needed, the plan specifies. The number of days for deer hunting, bag limits, buck and doe restrictions and antler details vary by zone according to strategies for reaching and maintaining the resource goals.

— Arkansas Game and Fish Commission report.

You stock it, you catch it

Wyoming biologist catches lake trout he helped stock in 1983

On a beautiful April day in 1983, Game and Fish biologist Bill Wengert spent time with other biologists stocking some 12,000 young lake trout in southwest Wyoming's Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

Almost a quarter-century later, Wengert caught one of the trout he released that afternoon.

Game and Fish spokeswoman Lucy Wold said Wengert was ice fishing recently in the Big Bend area of the 91-mile long Flaming Gorge Reservoir when he snagged a very skinny, 2.5-pound Mackinaw, or lake trout.

The fish measured just under 23 inches in length, she said. Upon examination of the fish, Wengert said he noticed the right pelvic fin had been clipped, so he knew the fish was stocked.

Examining old Game and Fish historical stocking data, Wengert determined the fish was stocked on April 14, 1983. He said most of the stocked fish averaged 8.3 inches in length.

"I have looked at thousands of fish in my career, and I never would have guessed that fish was so old," he said.

Wengert said long-lived fish such as lake trout are like humans in that they vary in size no matter how much food is available to them. He noted a fish's genes also determine how long they will grow to be.

Wengert noted a lake trout stocked at the same time that was caught by Green River angler Randy Calkins in 2004 measured 35 inches and weighed 17.1 pounds.

— Jeff Gearino, Casper Tribune



STOCKING UP: Fisheries Biologist Bill Wengert holds the small lake trout he caught through the ice at Flaming Gorge Reservoir nearly a quarter-century after he stocked the reservoir with the same group of fish. Photo by Wyoming Game and Fish.

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Publisher/Editor: **CRAIG NYHUS**

Design Editor: **DUDLEY GREEN**

Operations Mgr: **MIKE HUGHES**

Associate Editor: **MARK ENGLAND**

Business/Products Editor: **MARY HELEN AGUIRRE**

Advertising Sales: **BOB COLE**

LEE GRISHAM

Accounting: **NANCY HALPERN**

Web site: **BRUCE SOLEAU**

Founder & CEO: **DAVID J. SAMS**

CONTRIBUTORS

HAL BROWN	WILBUR LUNDEN	SCOTT SOMMERLATE
KYLE CARTER	PETER MATHERSEN	KYLE TOMAK
BINK GRIMES	BILL MILLER	CHUCK UZZEL
BOB HOOD	DAVID SIKES	RALPH WINDINGHAM
DIANA KUNDE	BRANDON SHULER	DANNO WISE

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CONSERVATION

Lifetime Sportsman Award

Park Cities Quail Unlimited honors Pickens, raises record funds

Park Cities Quail Unlimited honored legendary oil entrepreneur, conservationist and avid sportsman T. Boone Pickens as its 2008 Lifetime Sportsman Award winner. The banquet raised a record \$654,679 for conservation and research.

The local chapter, founded in 2005 to develop, preserve, restore and maintain upland game habitat throughout this region and to improve hunting opportunities for area sportsmen, lauded Mr. Pickens' life-long love of the outdoors, respect for natural resources and his extraordinary contributions to restoring quail habitat in Roberts Country.

Pickens' 68,000-acre Mesa Vista Ranch is a model for wildlife resource management.

Prior to Pickens' first Roberts County land purchase in 1971, the county's rolling hills, bluffs

'Quail hunting is a life-long passion tracking back to my father ... I shot my first quail when I was about 13 years old.'

— T. BOONE PICKENS

and creek beds suffered from consistent overgrazing. Pickens immediately began a multi-step program to help the land recover, over time investing about \$25 million in overall wildlife management strategies and

facilities, installing substantial water sources, food plots and native grass replanting and power infrastructure.

"Quail hunting is a life-long passion tracking back to my father, who always kept two bird dogs in a pen out back of our home in Holdenville, Okla.," the 2006 Horatio Alger award winner said. "That was big, open, country — pretty good quail territory. I shot my first quail when I was about 13 years old.

"Today, I am driven by a desire to conserve and reclaim overgrazed land for quail habitat, and to develop long-term wildlife management plans that can be used to improve land values through an expansion of recreational opportunities."

— Park Cities Quail Unlimited report.



LIFETIME HONOR: T. Boone Pickens, left, receives the Lifetime Sportsman Award from Bubba Wood during the Park Cities Quail Unlimited Banquet.

Texas Tech scientists help protect playas

New wetland management district proposed to defend ecosystems

A proposal by Texas Tech University researchers for a wetland management district to protect playa lakes is awaiting approval from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

These moves by university ecology scientists are intended to help clarify the big environmental picture on protecting playas — small, round depressions dotting the West Texas landscape that remain dry throughout much of the year and

emerge as recognizable wetlands only when filled with rainwater.

"If things continue and no changes are made from both a legal and an ethical point of view, we're going to have a collapse in the playa system relatively soon," said David Haukos, an adjunct wildlife ecology professor in Texas Tech University's Department of Natural Resources Management. "If that happens, then we'll have unforeseen impacts on society both in

terms of water quality and quantity, but also on wildlife and plants in this area."

There are approximately 22,000 playas on the Texas High Plains and in Eastern New Mexico, the largest concentration in the world.

Estimates suggest that 2 million waterfowl winter on High Plains playas, making it the second largest wintering site in interior North America for ducks and geese.

The most common threat to

playas is sedimentation from erosion of cultivated watersheds surrounding playas. Sedimentation fills playas, which reduces the volume and duration that water can be held in each playa.

"The wetland management district is the primary way to conserve and manage isolated wetlands, like playas," Haukos said. "It is totally a volunteer-type program, and provides options to the landowners, including purchase of the wet-

lands, which would open up the playa to public access and hunting, and conservation easements."

Funding would come from a number of sources, including federal and state grants and conservation organizations. "Approval would allow for a big umbrella management effort so all of the organizations could work together," Haukos said.

— Staff reports.

Applications being taken for Game Warden Academy

Texas Parks and Wildlife is taking applications for a game warden cadet class scheduled to start Nov. 1, 2008. Applications will be taken through April 30.

About 55 cadets will be accepted into the 54th Game Warden Academy, which will begin training in October. More than 400 people applied for the 40 positions in the previous cadet class.

Game warden recruiters are particularly interested in receiving applications from persons who are bilingual in Spanish and English.

Applicants must be 21 years old on or before

October 2008 and have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

To be accepted, applicants must meet the minimum eligibility requirements and successfully complete a regional interview, an extensive background investigation and a physical agility test. Applicants must successfully complete each step before advancing to the next step. For additional information, contact game warden recruiter Royce Wells at 1-877-229-2733.

— Texas Parks and Wildlife report.

Kleberg Institute director named to Elk Foundation board

Fred Bryant, director of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, was named to the board of directors for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, an organization devoted to ensuring the future of elk, other wildlife and their habitat.

Bryant was a professor of Range and Wildlife Management at Texas Tech from 1977-1996, and is the past president of the International Society for Range Management.

Other new board members included

Horace Smith, Jr. of Florida, Mary Webster of Minnesota, Richard C. Marr of Montana, Keith Ward of Montana, and Lee Swanson of Wisconsin.

Founded in 1984, the Elk Foundation and its partners have permanently protected or enhanced over 5.2 million acres. More than 500,000 acres previously closed to public access are now open for hunting, fishing and other recreation.

— Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation report.

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Habitat acquired at Brazoria County wildlife refuge

The San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge in Brazoria County will receive funding for the acquisition of 142 acres to provide habitat for wintering and migrating waterfowl species, including the mallard, gadwall, northern pintail, mottled duck and widgeon.

The funds used to purchase the land are part of more than \$29 million in federal funding for the protection and management of land under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

The grants are funded by annual Congressional appropriations; fines, penalties and forfeitures levied under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; interest accrued on funds under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act; and excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

— USFWS report.

HUNTING**THE DOMINANT TOM**

Choose the right gobbler when several come to the call

**TAKING CHARGE:** Two gobblers took turns beating up a jake decoy. After one gobbler was downed, the other tom came to assert its dominance over the dead bird. Photo by David J. Sams.By **BILL MILLER**

You just completed a command performance of your best impersonation of a turkey hen that is ... well ... available.

And it worked, because four lovesick toms are charging toward your well-camouflaged position.

So which one to shoot?

Well if you're going for a trophy, target the dominant tom —

typically the oldest and the biggest of the flock.

But if the toms are similarly sized, how can you tell the difference among them? Don't assume it all has to do with beard length, said Robert Linder of Marble Falls.

"When you see them coming in, watch for the one that struts first and who holds the strut the longest," Linder said. "He's going to be the older bird."

Linder knows; he's president of

the Texas State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and an avid turkey hunter.

While other gobblers in the flock also will strut, most believe they won't do it as long as the boss bird.

"They have battles over dominance before and during the breeding season," Linder said. "They're just like bull elk that won't let the other elk bugle as much or stay around the cows.

"They run them off, and an older gobbler will run off those jakes."

Preston Lawson of San Antonio said he identifies the dominant bird as the one that fans the most, and is always chasing off the other toms.

Ultimately, he said, the best trophy is simply the bird that offers the best "target of opportunity."

"I've been hunting them for 30

years," he said, "and, in practical hunting, the first one that comes in is the dominant one."

But in case you have any doubts about which is the dominant gobbler, Linder offers this post mortem test.

"After you shoot him, the other toms might jump on him," Linder said. "I've seen them spur him and stomp him because they're glad to see him go.

"They want to take his place."

Texas hunting accidents continue decline

SAFE HUNTING: Texas had 26 injuries from hunting accidents in 2007, two less than in 2006. The accident rate of three accidents per 10,000 hunters is down from 12 accidents per 10,000 hunters in 1966.

'The statistics show hunting is safe and getting safer in Texas'

Hunting accidents and fatalities in Texas continued their long-term decline in 2007, still down below three accidents per 10,000 hunters in recent years. That compares to about 12 accidents per 10,000 hunters in 1966, the year records began.

"Texas had 26 injuries from hunting accidents in 2007, two less than the year before. The state had four fatalities in 2007, the same as the previous year.

According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national survey, 1,112,099 people hunted in Texas in 2007.

"The statistics show hunting is safe and getting safer in Texas," said Steve Hall, education director for Texas Parks and Wildlife. "And we do believe that is directly related to hunter education." In 1988, hunter education became mandatory in Texas for anyone born on or after Sept. 2, 1971.

The state's worst year on record for hunting accidents was 1968, when 105

accidents were reported, including 37 fatalities.

Hall said even hunters who are not required to take the education course are more aware of basic safety principles than before.

"It's things like the '10 Commandments of Shooting Safety,' the very basic safety principles that are promoted a whole lot more now than 30 or even 20 years ago," Hall said. "Highlighting the accidents is an education in and of itself."

According to Hall, all of the accidents were preventable if the hunters had followed basic safety principles like those taught in hunter education courses.

"You know you're not going to stop accidents altogether," he said. "But you're going to help people build knowledge and skills to avoid accidents."

—Texas Parks and Wildlife report.

Texans aim for China skeet, trap Olympics

Four of eight spots filled by Lone Star shooters

Vincent Hancock of Eatonton, Ga., Sean McLelland of Mission and Kim Rhode of El Monte, Calif., earned spots on the 2008 U.S. Olympic Team in skeet at the 2008 U.S. Olympic Team Trials held at the Hill Country Shooting Sports Center in Kerrville.

Three-time Olympian Bret Erickson of Muenster, Dominic Grazioli of San Antonio, along with Corey Cogdell of Eagle River, Alaska, made the team in Men's and Women's Trap, and Glenn Eller of Katy and Jeff Holguin of Yorba Linda, Calif., joined the team in Double Trap.

Hancock, the 2007 World Cup Italy Champion, earned a berth to his first U.S. Olympic Team finishing with 511 targets. McLelland and Mark Weeks of Clinton Township, Mich., were tied at 478 targets going into the final, but McLelland earned the spot on the 2008 U.S. Olympic Team shooting 24 targets to Weeks' 22.

In Women's Skeet, three-time Olympic medalist (1996 and 2004 gold medalist, 2000 bronze medalist) Rhode made her fourth consecutive U.S. Olympic Team, finishing with 497 targets. Haley Dunn of Eddyville, Iowa, finished second with 496 targets, and two-time Olympian Connie Smotek of Bryan took third place with



IN HIS SIGHTS: Bret Erickson of Muenster takes aim at the Olympic Shooting Trials in Kerrville. Photo by USA Shooting.

See OLYMPICS, Page 15

Erickson set to participate in fourth games

By CRAIG NYHUS

Bret Erickson of Muenster qualified for his fourth Olympic Games in Men's Trap at the Olympic trials in Kerrville, but the time leading up to the 2004 Olympics nearly ended not only his shooting career, but his life.

"I was in the military at the time, and we were doing our PT tests," he said. "I was about one and one-half miles into the two-mile run — that's about all I remember."

Collapse before 2004 competition nearly took his life

Erickson collapsed during the run on June 28, 2004 and was revived by his teammates with CPR and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

"They thought at first that I had a heart attack," Erickson said. "It turned out it was a bifurcated block, which is like an electrical short. I guess your brain can't tell your heart to beat. They sent me to Walter Reed (Army Medical

Center) and I had a pacemaker put in by July 7."

Four weeks later, Erickson shot in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, and finished 13th. "I felt like I was ready leading up to the games," he said. "But I didn't shoot for two to three weeks before the event. With all that, I shot OK."

Erickson jokes about the events now. "I always told my friends back then that this running was

going to kill me — and it did for a little while."

After retiring in 1999 and making a comeback in 2001, Erickson increased his involvement in the sport. He helps recruit and coach the next generation of competitive shooters at the Willawalla Creek Shooting Center near St. Jo, Texas.

"It started as a trap training facility, but we have added stands, skeet, a five-stand, and we're now able to

give kids a chance to shoot and hold corporate events," he said.

But for now, the Olympics in Beijing, China are taking priority. Erickson and his teammates will travel to China for a World Cup event in April, and will head to the games around the first of August.

Erickson, 47, is hoping for a medal this time around, but is hoping to be healthy. "I'll have a chance to practice this time," he said. "I'll be the only athlete with a pacemaker again, and now maybe I'll be the oldest, too."



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FISHING

Coastal anglers battle breezes, tides

Getting to some of the fish is the challenge

By CRAIG NYHUS

Timing can mean everything to the coastal angler, especially in spring. While many anglers have struggled with high winds and extremely low tides — the speckled trout and redfish are still biting when the conditions are right, and even sometimes when they are wrong.

Jared Ramey and two of his fishing buddies hit West Matagorda Bay in 30-plus mph winds. "We almost didn't go," Ramey said. "But I'm glad we did."

Ramey was fishing away from the bank in deeper water, while his buddies were both catching redfish in shallower water. "They stopped to take some pictures," he said. "They told me to come to the inside."

The move paid off, as Ramey landed a 26-inch trout tight against the shoreline. "The winds were tough, but the water was up because of the big south wind that brought water into the bay," he said. "The water was clear and green — there was lots of bait. We just walked the shoreline and followed the baitfish."

The group released 18-20 redfish, and Ramey caught the trout on a bone super spook.

Near Seadrift, Kris Kelley of Castaway Lodge has been taking on the low tides with an airboat. "The tides have come up a bit this week," he said. "But the redfish are so shallow. The water has been feeding out into pools about 10-inches deep at the ends of the marshes, and we've been doing real well there."

The real shallow reds have been tough to catch. "You can't move around or they spook," he said. "It's even tough for the fly-fishermen because they can't move."

See COASTAL, Page 14



Trout time: Jared Ramey of San Antonio caught this 26-inch speckled trout in West Matagorda Bay. Photo by David J. Sams.

Baffin Bay bachelor party

Group heads to coast for premarital ritual

By CRAIG NYHUS

When his brother and best man, Kevin, asked what Eric Dunagan wanted to do for his bachelor party, his answer came quickly — he wanted to go fishing.

Dunagan, from Austin, said he loves to fish on the Texas coast. "I



PARTY TIME: Mitchell Jenkins holds a redfish and speckled trout caught in Baffin Bay during Eric Dunagan's unusual bachelor party.

wanted to fish rather than have the typical bachelor party," he said.

With seven of his friends and family from Houston, Dallas and College Station, the group headed to Baffin Bay, and spent a March Saturday fishing with guides Danny Gonzalez

and Kevin Akin and staying at the Reel 'Em Inn.

They met at the dock at sunup and were greeted by record-cold 34-degree temperatures. "It was blowing 25 to 30 from all different directions," Dunagan said. "We were fishing in chocolate milk."

The groups' expectations were low, but the fish warmed them up. "We were wading with artificial lures, and we caught about 20 fish — speckled trout and redfish," said groomsmen Nathan Daun of Dallas. "The biggest was a 7 3/4-pound trout that was 27 1/2 inches long. We felt pretty good about it, some of the other guides that came into the dock got skunked."

Appropriately, the groom-to-be caught the most fish. "Eric had a bait that was hot," Daun said. "Even the guide was asking him what he was using."

Dunagan said the bait was a roach-colored tout that the others wanted. "But I only had three of them."

The group hit several spots until the changing winds made a move necessary. "We waded the coast along the King Ranch," Daun said. "It was too windy and we didn't catch anything there, but it was cool to walk along the shore of the ranch."

It wasn't all fishing for the group, though. "We pitched a lot of wash-

See PARTY, Page 14

BIG BASS FRENZY

March produces wave of 13-plus pounders

One Texas lake produced its first ShareLunker bass on March 9, and the next day another produced its 238th. In a little more than a week, lake records were set at two lakes and seven giants were hauled in.

After a slow start, Texas lakes could be poised for a banner year of lunkers.

The frenzy began on March 9, when three lakes produced ShareLunkers: Amistad, Richland-Chambers and Waco.

Ricky Culverhouse of Waco, while fishing in a Robinson Bass Club tournament, landed a 13.87-pound largemouth on a black-and-red flake Baby Brushhog in about 6 feet of water. The fish was the first ShareLunker from the lake, and a lake record. The previous Lake Waco record was 12.89 pounds and was caught in 1996.

Later that day, Chris McEntyre of Devine landed a 13.39-pounder from Lake Amistad. And even later, Jeremy Bruton of Blooming Grove landed a 13.05-pounder from Richland-Chambers Reservoir while fishing in a Richland-Chambers Bass Club tournament. Bruton was using a Stanley Wedge spinnerbait in 3 to 4 feet of water.

The frenzy didn't stop on that day. On March 10, Cal Lamb of Forney pulled a 13.02-pounder from Lake Fork. Lamb was fishing about 8 feet deep

among stumps when the fish took his jig. The fish was 25 inches long and 21 inches in girth.

Another lunker came to the scale on March 11, when Brian Siebenmorgen of Eureka, Mo., brought in a 13.29-pound largemouth from Lake Fork. Every year, 15 or so members of the Tie One On Bass Club

near St. Louis drive 650 miles to go fishing at Lake Fork for a week.

"We always kid around about catching grandma so we can be part of the ShareLunker program," said Siebenmorgen, who caught the fish in 10 feet of water with a waterdog. "Once a year we come to Texas," he said. "And we love it."

Two days later, Robert ("Bob") Taylor was fishing in 5 feet of water with a red lizard on Sam Rayburn when he brought in a largemouth weighing 13.25 pounds.

But the biggest and the best was saved for last. Brett Harris of

Tyler was fishing at little Tyler State Park Lake on March 17 with some hometown lake knowledge. Knowing that rainbow trout are stocked in the lake during the winter to increase angling opportunities, Harris was throwing a rainbow-trout imitating swim bait in 3 feet of water. The result was a new lake record and the lake's second ShareLunker. The 14.5-

See FRENZY, Page 14



LAKE RECORD: Brett Harris of Tyler caught this 14.5-pound largemouth bass from Tyler State Park Lake March 17, a lake record. Photo by TPW.

A&M team takes Lone Star Collegiate Spring Breakout

A total of 29 teams representing eight Texas universities as well as teams from schools in Kentucky, Louisiana and Missouri competed at Lake Belton in the inaugural Lone Star Collegiate Spring Breakout bass tournament presented by BoatU.S. Angler.

The Texas A&M team of Justin

Rackley and Kenny Stewart won the event with a five bass limit weighing 13.40 pounds. Last fall, Rackley partnered with Trevor Knight at Lake Lewisville to win the BoatU.S. National Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship.

"We concentrated on finding pockets of warmer water and

found some in the 62-64 degree range," Rackley said. "That's where we'd find the shad and we caught our fish on baits in shad colors. Some came on a Lake Fork Tackle's Magic Shad swimbait and a Bomber 5A crankbait, but we also caught some quality keepers on spinnerbaits and white tubes

that we flipped around timber and lay-downs."

The Texas Tech team of Jacob Szot and Dustin Cotton finished second with 12.90 pounds, and Stephen F. Austin State University's Kyle Turner and Greg Fletcher finished third with 12.56 pounds. Tarleton State Univer-

sity's Cole Koenig and Kyle Barfield finished fourth with 12.15 pounds, and fifth place went to Texas A&M's Arthur Potts and Scott Edmonds with 11.80 pounds.

— Collegiate Bass Fishing News report.

Don't count on a free tow

Insurance good policy when boaters in distress

By MARK ENGLAND

The United States Coast Guard has a tip for stranded Texas boaters.

Don't count on them being your Plan B — if Plan A was your didn't expect to break down in the Gulf of Mexico.

"If there is distress, then there's no question about it, we will send help," said Richard Schaefer, chief of the Policy and Programs Branch, Office of Search and Rescue. "But if you break down or run out of gas and there are no particular other concerns, then the Coast Guard is not just going to jump up and tow you."

The policy is not inflexible. There are shades of gray — such as night falling, bad weather moving in or your boat conking out in a shipping lane. The Coast Guard has a checklist it follows in making towing decisions.

"At the very least, we'll be aware of your situation and can help if there's a turn for the worse," Schaefer said. "If we go through the procedures and agree we need to intervene, we'll have someone go out and get you."

Don't bank on it, however. In Texas' waters, the Coast Guard in 2007 only towed a little more than 3

percent of boaters in non-distress circumstances.

Nationwide, your chances of being towed were even less — about 2 percent.

Congress, under pressure from commercial boat towers, passed laws in the 1980s restricting the Coast Guard from towing boats not in distress.

Boaters are expected to either pay a towing company out-of-pocket, have insurance that will cover the cost or, if they're lucky, have an obliging friend with a boat equipped to bring theirs to shore.

Companies like BoatU.S., which

has been described as the AAA of the high seas, believe towing insurance is the way to go.

"If you're not a member of any organization, you're looking at an hourly rate of \$200 to have your boat towed," said Adam Wheeler, vice president of Towing Resources. "The average tow takes about three hours. That's \$600. If you do anything along the coast, you need to protect yourself from that kind of out-of-pocket expense."

BoatU.S. offers towing service plans that range from \$50, for basic, to \$116, for unlimited, plus the \$19 membership dues, Wheeler said.

Also available is a freshwater unlimited towing plan for \$34.

An unlimited towing plan covers all costs. Other plans pay up to a certain amount.

Towing insurance can also be obtained from regular insurance companies, such as Progressive. It offers towing insurance that will pay up to \$1,000 per occurrence.

Charles Harrington of La Porte owns an unlimited towing plan through BoatU.S. He and his brother, Pat, bought a 28-foot boat last October. While testing it in Galveston Bay, the boat stopped.

See TOW, Page 14

HOT SPOT



Matagorda

Even with the strong winds, Capt. Kyle Tornek (979) 240-9999 managed to find good numbers of red drum along protected, clear-water shorelines. Most fish hit light colored Super Spook topwater baits. Trout are fair on the south shoreline on red shad and plum Bass Assassins, Sand Eels and Trout Killers. Redfish are fair on the shorelines on gold spoons and MirOlures. Redfish are good in Oyster Lake with the high tides. See full fishing report on Page 19.

GAME WARDEN BLOTTER

HUNTERS CAUGHT IN THE ACT AGAIN

CONTRACTORS CAUGHT WITHOUT VALID FISHING LICENSE

Wise County Game Warden Penny Nixon checked two out-of-town contractors who were bass fishing on Lake Bridgeport during their lunch hour. Cases are pending for no valid fishing licenses.

RED SNAPPER ANGLER DIDN'T HAVE REQUIRED IFW PERMITS

Galveston County Game Warden Bobby Kana was called to assist with the inspection of a commercial snapper boat. The fisherman in question was caught in possession of red snapper without the required IFQ permits. A total of 264 pounds of red snapper and 850 pounds of B-liner were seized. Cases pending.

WARNING ISSUED FOR FAILURE TO MARK TRUCK PROPERLY

While at the boat barn performing equipment maintenance on their boats, Medina County Game Warden Jeff Benson, Bander County Game Warden Jeff Carter, and Deputy Game Warden Mark Dorrrough noticed a small truck with a freezer in the back pull up to Dorrrough's house. Durrrough, in plain clothes, asked what they were selling. Hearing that they had snapper, tilapia, and shrimp, the wardens contacted the man's employer, who advised that he had the necessary licenses at his place of business in San Antonio. A warning was written to the driver for failure to mark his truck properly, and the information was passed on to Bexar County game wardens.

NUMEROUS CASES PENDING AGAINST TRAPPER

Medina County Game Warden Jeff Benson received a request to assist the Uvalde County Sheriff's Office. Numerous deer hides and raccoon hides were found around a camper trailer located on the bank of a river. An illegal fish trap

Hockley County Game Warden Jay Oyler was called by a landowner watching a vehicle spotlight from the road. Oyler proceeded to the area and stopped

the truck. Five men were removed from the vehicle with the help of a Terry County deputy and a DPS trooper. The driver and front seat passenger are awaiting trial for

hunting from the road after being caught by Oyler and Lamb County Game Warden Lance May three months ago. New cases pending.

was found tied to the man's dock. It was believed the man would cross the river in a small boat to hunt and set traps on a neighboring ranch. Using his GPS, Benson came in through the ranch on the other side of the river. Benson located a quail trap, the remains of a deer carcass, numerous steel leg-hold traps, two illegally placed deer stands, a metal ammo can containing baggies of marijuana and marijuana seeds and a small concealed brush blind. Inside the blind was a 5-gallon bucket and a large plastic storage tub, which contained a meth lab complete with a small amount of already cooked meth. Cases pending for no hunting license, no fishing license, possession of illegal fish trap, possession of live furbearers, hunting without consent, taking protected non-game bird (cardinal), and taking game animal without landowner's consent and the drug information was provided to the sheriff's office.

SPOTLIGHTING HOG HUNTERS RUN INTO TROUBLE

Game Warden Jay Oyler was called about a vehicle spotlighting from the road. Oyler observed a slow moving vehicle coming from the area. The vehicle turned out its headlights and continued down the road. Oyler stopped the vehicle and found two men who admitted to be hunting hogs. The men were in possession of rifles and military style night vision goggles.

BROKEN STICK DIDN'T MEASURE UP
While working the Brazos River, Somerville County Game Warden Neal Bieler and Hill County Game Warden Mark Hammonds apprehended a man catching and keeping several undersized white bass. He was measuring them with a broken stick he thought was 10 inches long. Cases pending.

NERVOUS, DRENCHED ANGLER CITED FOR NO PFD

On Lake Leon in Eastland County, Brown County Game Warden Travis Allen and Callahan County Game Warden James Brown made contact with a man in a small boat who had been running his trot lines. Upon the water safety inspection of the vessel, it was determined the man didn't have a PFD. The wardens asked the man to meet with them at his dock. On the way to his dock, the wardens heard a big splash. The man had fallen into the water, losing his glasses and ruining his cell phone. The man said he was nervous and this had never happened before. He was cited for no PFD.

GILL NET WASN'T HIDDEN WELL
Zavala County Game Warden Chris Stautzenberger was patrolling along the banks of the Nueces River when he came across two fishermen in a boat. Stautzenberger performed a water safety inspection and found a small amount of monofilament webbing sticking

out from under a 5-gallon bucket that one of the men had been sitting on. A 75-foot piece of wet monofilament gill net was found in the bucket. Cases pending for the possession of the gill net, insufficient PFDs and no valid Texas boat registration.

DRIVER SINKS TRUCK, TRAILER

While patrolling Lake Coleman, Game Warden William Heath came upon a man standing at the boat ramp on Comanche Shores. The man said he had backed his trailer and S10 pickup down the ramp to load his boat. The pickup and trailer rolled into the lake and floated about 30 feet and then sank at the end of the ramp. Heath and the local fire department helped the man recover the pickup and trailer.

CONVERSATION LEADS TO ILLEGAL BUCKSHOT CITATION IN WMA

Williamson County Game Warden Brad Guinn was following up on a call about a man who was hunting hogs with a shotgun in the archery-only area of the Granger WMA. Guinn went into the area in plain clothes. He met the hunter on his way out and started up a conversation about hunting and the challenges about killing a hog in the area. The man told Guinn how he used the shotgun to take some hogs and produced some buck-

shot that he used from his pocket. He was cited for possession of the buckshot in the WMA. Case pending.

AFTER SAFETY CHECK, BOATERS FACES SEVERAL VIOLATIONS

Limestone County Game Warden Kurt Slaughter responded to a disabled boat at Lake Limestone. Slaughter reached the vessel just before it crashed into the rocks at the bridge due to 20-mph winds. After a safety check, several violations including no life jackets were found. Case pending.

WARDENS CATCH BARREL NETTERS

Bowie County Game Warden Shawn Hervey, Morris County Game Warden Billy Dodd, and Cass County Game Warden Dan Hill set up surveillance on suspected barrel netting on the Sulphur River. After several hours, two people arrived and were running one of the barrel nets. The men later admitted to having the nets. Cases pending and the nets were taken as evidence.

BOAT DRIFTS AWAY FROM GUIDE AND HIS PARTY

Aransas County Game Wardens Scott McLeod and Brandi Reeder were called to search for a local fishing guide and his party who did not return at their scheduled time. The wardens found the guide and his clients in the water, but safe. The guide and his clients decided to do some wade fishing. The wind picked up and broke the anchor free causing the boat to drift rapidly away. All VHF radios and cell phones were in the boat. The guide and his clients played it safe by not attempting to go after the boat and waiting for help.

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OUTDOOR DATEBOOK

HAVE AN EVENT?

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Apr. 2: The Houston Safari Club monthly meeting will be held at the J.W. Marriott Hotel, 5150 Westheimer, with Tom Hoffman as the featured speaker. For information, call Jennifer at (713) 623-8844 or e-mail Jennifer@houstonstarcub.org.



Apr. 3, 17: Bass Pro Shops in San Antonio will offer seminars on basic saltwater fishing for surf, jetty and pier at 7 p.m. Call (210) 253-8800 for information.

Apr. 3-6: The BASS Elite Series Lone Star Shootout will be held at Falcon Lake. For information, call (877) BASS-USA or visit bassmaster.com/attend.



Apr. 3: The Texas A&M CCA dinner will be held at the Brazos Center in Bryan. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 4: The Mainland CCA dinner will be held at the Nessler Center in Texas City. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr 5, 12, 19, 26: Bass Pro Shops in Garland will hold seminars on turkey calling techniques at 2 p.m. For information, call Debi Dowdall at (972) 691-5217.



Apr. 5-6: Austin Canoe and Kayak will host its demo day kayaking event at the Texas Ski Ranch in San Marcos. Visit austinakayak.com for details.

Apr. 5-6: Cabela's in Fort Worth will offer fly-casting lessons at Lone Star

Lake in front of the store. Call Stephanie Perry at (817) 337-2400 for information.



Apr. 5: A Texas hunter education course will be offered at Bass Pro Shops in Grapevine. To register, call Jesse Stevens at (817) 929-9285.

Apr. 5: The Lamar University DU banquet will be held at the I.B.E.W. Hall in Beaumont. Call (409) 651-3090 for information.



Apr. 5: The Coletto Bassmasters Club Invitational will be held at Coletto Creek. For information, call the Kerrville CVB at (800) 221-7958.

Apr. 5: The Hicks Whitetail Ranch 2nd annual TDA production sale and auction will be held. Call (512) 930-7100 for information.

Apr. 8: The Polk-Trinity County DU dinner will be held at the Livingston VFW. Contact Greg Smith at (936) 933-1723 or reeder@brookshirebros.com for information.

Apr. 10-12: A Women's Bassmaster Tour tournament will be held at Lewisville Lake. For information, call (877) BASS-USA or visit bassmaster.com/attend.

Apr. 10-13: The BASS Elite Series Battle on the Border will be held at Lake Amistad. For information, call (877) BASS-USA or visit bassmaster.com/attend.

Apr. 10: The South Plains NWTf dinner will be held at The Koko Place in Lubbock. Call Monty Sansom at (806) 789-6874 for information.



Apr. 10: The Rio Grande Valley CCA banquet will be held at the Pharr

Convention Center. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 10: The Central Houston CCA banquet will be held at the Hornberger Center. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 11: The Sugar Land CCA dinner will be held at the Sugar Land Civic Center. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 11: The Dallas Safari Club Wild Game Dinner will be held at Y.O. Ranch Steakhouse. Call (972) 980-9800 for information.

Apr. 12: A Texas boater education course will be offered at Cabela's in Fort Worth. To register, call Bruce at (817) 923-3547.

Apr. 12: The Dallas Woods and Waters Club dinner meeting will be held at the Sheraton North Dallas Hotel, featuring Marc Edwards speaking on turkey calling and conservation. Call (214) 570-8700 for information and reservations.

Apr. 12: The San Augustine DU dinner will be held at the San Augustin AG Building. Contact Luke Mathews at (936) 275-6442 or llmathews@sbcglobal.net.

Apr. 12: Bass Pro Shops in Garland will hold a seminar on St. Croix rods at 1 p.m. For information, call Debi Dowdall at (972) 691-5217.

Apr. 12: The Bastrop and Caldwell County wildlife management associations will host their 4th annual Wildlife Extravaganza at Riverbend Park in Smithville. Free admission, kid's activities and auction. Call Meredith Longoria at (512) 337-7280 for information.

Apr. 12: The San Angelo State University DU banquet will be held at Logan's Roadhouse. Call Catlin at (325) 277-2626 or e-mail croberts@ducks.org for information.

Apr. 12: The Rio Grande Valley DU Fun Shoot will be held at Mission Skeet and Trap Club. For in-

formation, call Brian Payne at (956) 369-1812.

Apr. 13: The Tejas Lone Star Bowhunters Association Archery Club tournament will be held in Corpus Christi. For information, e-mail david.stroup@ahbeck.com or visit tejasbowmen.com.

Apr. 16: The Dallas Safari Club Annual Trophy Awards will be held at Royal Oaks Country Club. For information, call (972) 980-9800 or e-mail debi@biggame.org.



Apr. 17: The Seguin DU dinner and dance with The Keith Davis Band will be held at Rio Cibolo Ranch. Call Keith Majors at (830) 556-6273 for information.

Apr. 17: The San Antonio CCA banquet will be held at the Freeman Coliseum. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 17: The McKinney DU dinner will be held at the Collin County Youth Barn. Call David Rogers at (972) 727-5892 for information.

Apr. 18: The Texoma DU chapter will hold a Texas Hold'em tournament at the Linex of Texoma. Contact Justin Dobbs at (903) 814-2448 for information.

Apr. 19-20: Cabela's in Fort Worth will hold Late Season Turkey Tactics seminars at 1:30 p.m. each day. Call Stephanie Perry at (817) 337-2400 for information.

Apr. 19: The Wheeler County NWTf dinner will be held at Mel's Diner in Wheeler. Call Ed Brooks at (806) 664-3583.

Apr. 19: The Redfish Bay CCA banquet will be held at the Port Aransas Civic Center. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 19: The Stephen F. Austin University DU dinner will be held at Banita Creek Hall. Call Evan at

(214) 868-7524 or e-mail croberts@ducks.org for information.

Apr. 22-27: The Spring Nature Quest Festival will be held in Uvalde County. Includes fly-fishing, field trips, workshops, seminars, activities, and more. For information, call (800) 210-0380 or visit thcr.com.

Apr. 22: The Georgetown DU dinner will be held in Georgetown. For location and information, contact Lee McIntosh at (830) 629-0594 or lee@mcintoshholdings.com.

Apr. 25-26: The 7th Annual Stephen McDaniel Memorial Shoot will be held, with a BBQ dinner at Rahr Brewery in Fort Worth on the 25th and a Sporting Clays Shoot at Johnson Ranch on the 26th. Contact Lon Loveless at (817) 371-3544 or lovelel@hotmail.com for information.

Apr. 26-27: Bowhunter education courses will be offered in Canton and Garland. For information, call (214) 358-0174.

Apr. 26: DUCK JAM 2008 will be held at Wolf Pen Creek in College Station featuring Roger Creager and other artists. Contact Cody Roberts at (512) 944-3828 or croberts@ducks.org, or visit budweiserduckjam.com.

Apr. 26: The NE Houston CCA dinner will be held at the Humble Expo Arena. Call (713) 626-4222 for information.

Apr. 26: The Permian Basin RMEF Big Game banquet will be held. Call Lynn Talley at (432) 687-1819 for information.

Apr. 27: The Golden Eagle Field Archery Club tournament will be held in LaFeria. For information, call Javier Escobedo at (956) 497-3730 or visit texasgefa.com.



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SHALLOW STRIKE: Red drum are biting despite low tides, but getting to them can be difficult. Photo by David J. Sams.

Coastal

Continued from Page 8

Kelley credits the airboat for getting to the shallow spots. "It gets where a boat can't," he said. "You could get a kayak back there but it's not much fun paddling a kayak 100 yards

that is dragging bottom the whole way." Ramey and three other friends headed to Baffin Bay a few days after fishing Matagorda, and caught good numbers of trout on Catch 5s and Corkies over chest-deep mud and grass, and over waist-deep rocks. "We got there the night before and it was still howling," he said. "But the wind laid down and we had a good day. No trophies though."

Break

Continued from Page 1

"They tell me they couldn't hang somewhere like that," he said. "They think it's more work than play, but everything about it gives me a kick. I'd rather do it than go somewhere and pay my money, drink and not remember anything. I can tell you that."

Someone who gets it is Ben Schovajsa. The Texas A&M junior went to Cancun over spring break — to fish for sailfish and vacation with his family.

"We went 21 miles out on a charter," said Schovajsa, who is from La

Grange. "I was with my sister's fiancée. We boated 9 sailfish and hooked 15. One sailfish took about 30 minutes to get in. I kept him at about 70 yards for about 15 minutes. I'd gain a little ground and he'd take it back. When I got him near the boat, he took off again on a run. That happened two or three times. After about 30 minutes, he finally gave up. I was pretty tired, but what fun."

Back in Texas, Douglas and Sonnenberg reeled in sheepshead, redfish, Spanish mackerel, trout and black drum.

Conditions weren't ideal at first, however.

"The first couple of days, it was pretty cold," Douglas said. "Later

on, it got windy and we got beat up the whole time."

They kept fishing, though. "Down there, there's always something biting," he said. "It was just a little more difficult to catch."

Improving weather made the fishing easier. The two men sometimes drifted in the Laguna Madre in Douglas' 21-foot Express and caught trout. Other times, they would set up in the channel off Port Mansfield, put some crab on a hook and catch black drum that weighed as much as 50 pounds.

At night, in a fishing cabin belonging to Douglas' uncle, they cooked some of their catch. It beat the frozen burritos and corndogs they brought with them.

Tow

Continued from Page 9

Thirty minutes later, they were being towed. It turned out their fuel gauge wasn't working.

"The invoice was for about \$192," Harrington said. "Our insurance paid for itself in one trip. It's one of the few things I've acquired in boating that I've been totally satisfied with."

Response times to boats with towing plans are not guaranteed. They depend on such things as how far out a boat is, how many service providers are in the area as well as how many calls they are answering.

"I think ours is pretty good, though, considering my car broke down the other day and I had to wait two hours for a tow," Wheeler said.

Party

Continued from Page 8

ers," Daun said. "Although we had to do it in the garage because of the wind. And we ate the fish we kept."

Daun didn't believe Dunagan when he pulled meat from the throat of the redfish. "They said it was good — I was sure they were pulling my leg," he said. "But it actually was good."

"We took some of the trout and sheepshead, soaked them in milk a few minutes, dipped them in cornmeal and fried them up," Sonnenberg said. "It was good eating."

If they didn't feel like cooking, a local restaurant turned their catch into a meal. They'd go home, shower and come back to eat. And both men swear they didn't give a second thought to the hubbub happening 70 miles south of them at South Padre Island, where about 80,000 college students partied their break away.

"I've had my fill of the beach," Douglas said. "I'd rather catch fish." Sonnenberg, too, doesn't think he missed anything.

"I thought, 'Man, we're quicker than this.'"

If requested, the Coast Guard will relay a stranded boater's call to a towing company, Schaefer said.

"You can ask us to call someone in particular," he said. "Otherwise, we'll just do a radio broadcast. All tow companies monitor the radio and will hear it."

Even with regulations and high towing prices, boaters can still get lucky. Auxiliary Coast Guard vehicles, which belong to volunteers who follow its regulations, are permitted to tow vehicles they come upon.

"If they're patrolling and come upon you, they can, if they want, assist you," Schaefer said. "Otherwise, we don't often tow in non-distress situations. A lot of other people do that. We find a lot of boaters are buying subscription plans because getting towed, just like on land, isn't cheap."

But there wasn't any of the "typical" bachelor party activities, except for lots of beer. "We were in the middle of nowhere," Daun said. "It kept us out of trouble."

"My fiancée was happy about that," Dunagan said. "All in all, it was pretty laid-back. I got lots of advice, from 'Are you sure you want to do this?' to 'Good luck,' from my soon-to-be brother-in-law. And we got to go fishing."

Dunagan will marry his fiancée, Katie, on April 5 in Brenham. "She's a good girl," he said. "She lets me hunt and fish all I want — for now, anyway."

"I've had my fair share of crazy times," he said. "I'll be 23 soon. I'm not saying I'm not young anymore, but I wasn't looking for an excuse to drive somewhere and do what I've already done. I wanted to put something in a box."

In Cancun, Schovajsa was even closer to the revelers and the "Girls Gone Wild" film crews. He didn't feel a bit of a tug to check out the scene. Not everyone understands that, he admits, but at least his friends do.

"They're more outdoorsmen like myself," Schovajsa said. "We enjoy being out in a field or a stream more than we do being in a bar."

You have to experience it to really get it, Douglas said.

Frenzy

Continued from Page 8

pound largemouth was 27.75 inches long and 20.25 inches in girth. The old lake record weighed 13.28 pounds and was caught in 2003.

Craig Bonds, TPW biologist from Tyler, said the barrage of big bass was due to a mixture of factors. "We have warmer water temperatures

and a lengthening photo period," he said.

"The spawn is starting and the females are moving in, and that means increased angler activity. With more hooks in the water and the fish in shallow, they are more vulnerable to being caught."

If you catch a fish over 13 pounds and wish to donate it, call Dave Campbell of The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center: (903) 681-0550 or (888) 784-0600.

— Staff reports.

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WINNING AIM: Glenn Eller of Katy earned a spot on his third consecutive Olympic team in Double Trap by winning the competition in the Olympic Trials. Photo by USA Shooting.

Olympics

Continued from Page 7
493 targets.

In Men's Trap, Erickson finished with a final score of 499 targets. The second U.S. Olympic team spot for Men's Trap came down to the final shot between Grazioli and John Mullins of Bremerton, Wash., with Grazioli claiming the spot with 491 targets, while Mullins finished in third place with 490 targets.

In Women's Trap, Cogdell, the 2007 Pan American Games and World Cup Korea bronze medalist, won the competition with 475 targets. Joetta Dement of Renton, Wash., finished in second place with 463 targets.

Eller finished the Double Trap competition with 615 targets, earning a spot on his third consecutive U.S. Olympic team. Holguin shot a perfect score of 50 targets in the final to earn his first berth on the U.S. Olympic team, finishing second with 612 targets.

Shotgun athletes were selected to the 2008 U.S. Olympic Team based on the aggregate score from both the Fall Selection competition held last August and the 2008 U.S. Olympic Team Trials.

The U.S. Olympic Shotgun team consists of two shooters in Men's Skeet, Trap, and Double Trap, and one shooter in Women's Skeet and Trap.

— USA Shooting report.

Opener

Continued from Page 1

Linder said on March 18 that he only knew of one hunter who got a bird.

"He more or less stumbled onto it," Linder said. "I talked to a number of people who were out guiding or hunting, and they were none pleased because they felt like the season opened too early.

"The toms weren't responding to calls. They were still in big groups with the hens. The weren't doing what turkeys normally do in spring."

But Mike Haring and his 10-year-old son Cole found jakes and more jakes near Bracketville. "We were near a feeder at a creek bottom," Haring said. "At first light we started hearing gobblers up on a ridge. One would gobble, then one by one the birds on the whole ridge would gobble. It was like the wave at a sporting event."

It wasn't long and the birds came to the creek bottom. "There were 10 jakes and two hens," he said. "Four of them had four-inch beards, and one was strutting. The jakes acted like junior high kids, they were chest-bumping and running into each other. Finally, something spooked them and they all gobbled at once. My son hit the strutting bird perfect."

And that wasn't all. "It wasn't long and another bird came up to the dead bird and stood over him," Haring said. "Cole shot him and he landed on top of the dead bird."

Paul Johnson of Vinegarroon Wildlife near Del Rio anticipated scant activity opening weekend, so he scheduled turkey hunts for a couple weeks later.

The South Zone season continues through April 27, and the North Zone season is March 29 through May 11.

"We didn't want to book any hunts this early," he said on March 20. "Last week, we didn't hear a gobble. We didn't want to start our hunters until (March) 28th anyway. I think we're going to hit it about right."

Mike Berger, TPW Wildlife Division director, explained that the agency selected an earlier South Zone opener because of reports that breeding activity was starting sooner in the region.

"And in the northern part of the state, the gobbling lasts later," Berger said. "So, we split the difference with a start in the south earlier and kept the north open later.

"But, if it turns out over a couple of seasons that it's not working, we can look at changing it again."

Meanwhile, Linder was optimistic about the rest of the season.


"We need for things to be greened up, with bluebonnets blooming," he said. "It shows that the timing is usually right. The hen has to be getting at least 12 hours of daylight, because she responds to light to go into the mating cycle.

"I don't think were too far off — just a little early."

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Moon Phases

Last	New	First	Full
Mar 29	Apr 5	Apr 12	Apr 28

Solar Table

Houston	Dallas	San Antonio	Amarillo
3:26	2:27	3:50	3:56
3:27	2:19	3:52	3:57
3:28	2:10	3:53	3:58
3:29	2:02	3:54	3:59
3:30	1:54	3:55	4:00
3:31	1:46	3:56	4:01
3:32	1:38	3:57	4:02
3:33	1:30	3:58	4:03
3:34	1:22	3:59	4:04
3:35	1:14	4:00	4:05
3:36	1:06	4:01	4:06
3:37	0:58	4:02	4:07
3:38	0:50	4:03	4:08
3:39	0:42	4:04	4:09
3:40	0:34	4:05	4:10
3:41	0:26	4:06	4:11
3:42	0:18	4:07	4:12
3:43	0:10	4:08	4:13
3:44	0:02	4:09	4:14
3:45	0:00	4:10	4:15

Tides

Subsidiary	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	
306	8:44 a.m.	12:42 a.m.	---	---	3:26	8:43 a.m.	12:32 a.m.	---	---	3:26	8:33 a.m.	---	---
307	10:05 a.m.	1:28 a.m.	---	---	3:27	10:06 a.m.	12:56 a.m.	---	---	3:27	10:14 a.m.	12:34 a.m.	---
308	2:36 p.m.	2:18 a.m.	---	---	3:28	2:37 p.m.	2:18 a.m.	---	---	3:28	2:45 p.m.	2:28 a.m.	---
309	2:55 p.m.	3:21 a.m.	---	---	3:29	2:56 p.m.	2:51 a.m.	---	---	3:29	3:04 p.m.	2:29 a.m.	---
310	2:56 p.m.	4:32 a.m.	---	---	3:30	2:57 p.m.	4:02 a.m.	---	---	3:30	2:45 p.m.	3:40 a.m.	---
311	2:57 p.m.	5:02 a.m.	---	---	3:31	2:58 p.m.	5:11 a.m.	---	---	3:31	2:31 p.m.	4:49 a.m.	---
312	2:58 p.m.	5:33 a.m.	11:11 p.m.	8:21 p.m.	4:1	2:59 p.m.	6:13 a.m.	11:12 p.m.	7:51 p.m.	4:2	2:53 p.m.	5:51 a.m.	11:20 p.m.
313	2:59 p.m.	6:07 a.m.	---	---	4:2	3:00 p.m.	7:07 a.m.	---	---	4:3	2:55 p.m.	6:45 a.m.	---
314	3:00 p.m.	6:43 a.m.	2:31 p.m.	8:51 p.m.	4:3	3:01 p.m.	8:07 a.m.	3:02 p.m.	8:01 p.m.	4:4	2:56 p.m.	7:39 p.m.	7:29 p.m.
315	3:01 p.m.	7:23 a.m.	2:36 p.m.	9:06 p.m.	4:4	3:02 p.m.	8:47 a.m.	3:03 p.m.	8:34 p.m.	4:5	2:58 p.m.	8:25 a.m.	8:12 p.m.
316	3:02 p.m.	8:07 a.m.	2:40 p.m.	9:40 p.m.	4:5	3:04 p.m.	9:30 a.m.	2:45 p.m.	9:13 p.m.	4:6	3:02 p.m.	9:06 a.m.	8:51 p.m.
317	3:03 p.m.	8:54 a.m.	2:44 p.m.	10:26 p.m.	4:6	3:05 p.m.	10:10 a.m.	2:48 p.m.	9:58 p.m.	4:7	3:04 p.m.	9:48 a.m.	9:34 p.m.
318	3:04 p.m.	9:44 a.m.	2:48 p.m.	11:12 p.m.	4:7	3:06 p.m.	11:26 a.m.	2:47 p.m.	10:42 p.m.	4:8	3:06 p.m.	10:04 a.m.	10:20 p.m.
319	3:05 p.m.	10:36 a.m.	2:51 p.m.	---	4:8	3:07 p.m.	12:28 p.m.	2:42 p.m.	11:31 p.m.	4:9	3:08 p.m.	11:04 a.m.	11:31 p.m.
320	3:06 p.m.	11:30 a.m.	---	---	4:9	3:08 p.m.	---	---	---	4:10	3:10 a.m.	---	---
321	3:07 p.m.	1:01 a.m.	---	---	4:10	3:09 p.m.	12:31 a.m.	---	---	4:11	3:12 a.m.	12:09 p.m.	---
322	3:08 p.m.	1:56 a.m.	---	---	4:11	3:10 p.m.	1:06 a.m.	---	---	4:12	3:14 a.m.	1:14 a.m.	---
323	3:09 p.m.	2:54 a.m.	---	---	4:12	3:12 p.m.	2:52 a.m.	---	---	4:13	3:17 p.m.	3:35 a.m.	---
324	3:10 p.m.	3:53 a.m.	11:11 p.m.	8:08 p.m.	4:13	3:13 p.m.	3:47 a.m.	11:12 p.m.	7:30 p.m.	4:14	3:19 p.m.	5:20 a.m.	10:59 p.m.
325	3:11 p.m.	4:54 a.m.	---	---	4:14	3:14 p.m.	4:44 a.m.	---	---	4:15	3:21 p.m.	6:32 a.m.	7:30 p.m.
326	3:12 p.m.	5:56 a.m.	---	---	4:15	3:15 p.m.	5:42 a.m.	---	---	---	---	---	---

Sun and Moon

Houston	Dallas	San Antonio	Amarillo
3:26	2:27	3:50	3:56
3:27	2:19	3:52	3:57
3:28	2:10	3:53	3:58
3:29	2:02	3:54	3:59
3:30	1:54	3:55	4:00
3:31	1:46	3:56	4:01
3:32	1:38	3:57	4:02
3:33	1:30	3:58	4:03
3:34	1:22	3:59	4:04
3:35	1:14	4:00	4:05
3:36	1:06	4:01	4:06
3:37	0:58	4:02	4:07
3:38	0:50	4:03	4:08
3:39	0:42	4:04	4:09
3:40	0:34	4:05	4:10
3:41	0:26	4:06	4:11
3:42	0:18	4:07	4:12
3:43	0:10	4:08	4:13
3:44	0:02	4:09	4:14
3:45	0:00	4:10	4:15

Moonrise/set

Houston	Dallas	San Antonio	Amarillo
3:26	2:27	3:50	3:56
3:27	2:19	3:52	3:57
3:28	2:10	3:53	3:58
3:29	2:02	3:54	3:59
3:30	1:54	3:55	4:00
3:31	1:46	3:56	4:01
3:32	1:38	3:57	4:02
3:33	1:30	3:58	4:03
3:34	1:22	3:59	4:04
3:35	1:14	4:00	4:05
3:36	1:06	4:01	4:06
3:37	0:58	4:02	4:07
3:38	0:50	4:03	4:08
3:39	0:42	4:04	4:09
3:40	0:34	4:05	4:10
3:41	0:26	4:06	4:11
3:42	0:18	4:07	4:12
3:43	0:10	4:08	4:13
3:44	0:02	4:09	4:14
3:45	0:00	4:10	4:15

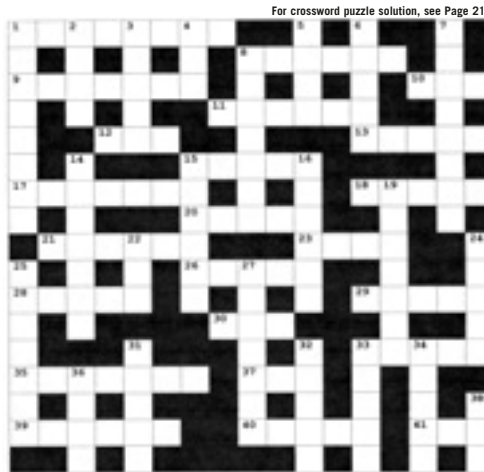
OUTDOOR PUZZLER

ACROSS

- Areas where whitetails are most frequent
- A wrong position for the deer hunter
- To travel seasonally in search of food
- A female bighorn
- A brand of mouth call
- Bowhunter does this in snow country
- Whitetail is most active in _____ morning
- An aiming aid
- A species of the brown bear
- Pulls the bowstring
- Do this to scouting and hunting routes
- Wild dogs will to a deer herd
- Well-placed arrow results in a clean one
- A predator to small game
- To force deer toward the shooters
- A bowhunter's quarry in Florida
- Shooting piece that protects the fingers
- You can get one that will move
- A breed of setter
- Unusual appendage on a muley
- A maker of ter stands
- Term for a deer drive
- A female sheep

DOWN

- Whitetails follow _____ trails
- Deer scent pieces
- To follow a deer



- A loop in a bowstring
- Whitetails can _____ several miles
- This will mask a human's scent
- Part of a deer's hooves
- Position of whitetail's tail when alarmed
- Name for an Arizona whitetail
- A danger to Florida bowhunters
- A difficult kill for a bowhunter
- To shoot an arrow
- Important to know this of a track
- A deer food source
- To stand ready to shoot
- Deer are _____ in a field
- Game allowed per hunter
- To slowly move closer to a game
- Term for shedded antlers
- Name for an Arizona whitetail
- Hunted animals and wildfowl
- A group of loke arrows

Outdoor Puzzler, Wilbur "Wib" Lundeen

WILD IN THE KITCHEN

Cajun Mardi Gras Wild Turkey Breast

4 to 6 servings

- Ingredients:
- 1 Pound bacon, diced into 1/4-inch pieces
 - Cajun poultry seasoning
 - 4 Tablespoons butter or margarine, divided
 - 1 1/2 Cups chopped onion
 - 1 (2-Pound) boneless turkey breast, cut into 1-inch chunks
 - 4 Tablespoons vegetable oil
 - 1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce



Instructions:

In a large, heavy skillet, add bacon and sprinkle it with Cajun seasoning. Fry until crisp. Drain, discard grease and set aside. In the same skillet, add 1 tablespoon of butter, and sauté the chopped onion until tender. Remove onion, and set aside. In a large bowl, combine turkey, 2 tablespoons of oil,

Worcestershire sauce and more seasoning. In the same skillet, heat remaining butter and oil until sizzling. Add turkey, bacon and onion. Sauté until turkey is brown and tender. Serve entree over rice.

Recipe from The National Wild Turkey Federation.

Baked Asian Flounder Packets

Makes 2 servings

- Ingredients:
- 2 Flounder fillets,
 - each about 1/4 pound
 - 1/8 Teaspoon pepper
 - 2 Teaspoons oil
 - 1 Package (10 ounces) Japanese or oriental style frozen vegetables, thawed or 2 cups mixed frozen vegetables, thawed
 - 1 Tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
 - 1 Teaspoon corn starch
 - Cooked rice

and place in baking dish. Heat oil in medium skillet or wok until hot. Add vegetables and stir-fry over high heat until tender-crisp, about 3 minutes. Combine soy sauce and corn starch, add and stir-fry about 1 minute longer. Spoon vegetable mixture over center third of fish, fold over ends of fish to enclose vegetables. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 degrees about 10 minutes or until fish flakes easily. Serve with rice.

Recipe from The National Fisheries Institute, aboutseafood.com.

Instructions: Pat fish dry, season with pepper

HEROES



LARRY HANSARD, who had hunted in Africa a number of times, harvested his first whitetail deer on the 5G Ranch in Stonewall County.



KAYLIE KUEHLER, 9, of Bulverde, poses with a black buck taken at the Kuehler Ranch near Roosevelt.



PATRICK RAYBURN shot his first deer on his Mills County Ranch south of Goldwaite.



RIKARD LUNDBERG of Sweden came to Texas and shot this 3-inch tusk pig while hunting with Mark Scheurer.



LINDSEY POWERS caught and released this bass at Lewisville Lake. Her largest ever, the fish was caught near the dam by drifting live bait off the bottom.

SHARE AN ADVENTURE

Want to share your great hunting or fishing photos with the Lone Star Outdoor News family? E-mail your photo, phone and caption information to editor@lonestaroutdoornews.com, or mail to: Heroes, Lone Star Outdoor News, 9304 Forest Lane, Suite 114 South, Dallas, TX, 75243.

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FISHING REPORT

HOT BITES

LARGEMOUTH BASS



AMISTAD: Black bass are very good on jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, Senkos, and deep running crankbaits and jigs.

FAYETTE: Black bass are good on watermelon and gold pumpkin Carolina rigged soft plastics, crankbaits, and Wacky Worms in reeds.

HOUSTON COUNTY: Black bass to 11 pounds are excellent on pumpkin-seed lizards and watermelon candy super flukes near the marina and dam in 3-5 feet.

TRAVIS: Black bass to 5 pounds are very good on Senkos, flukes, and crawfish crankbaits in 5-15 feet.

WHITE/HYBRID/STRIPER



BELTON: Hybrid stripers are good but small on minnows and stripers jigs. White bass are good on minnows.

BRAUNING: Striped bass are excellent on liver and shad at Dead Tree Point and near the pier, and down rigging silver and gold spoons and marble spinnerbaits near the jetty and dam.

BUCHANAN: Striped bass are good jigging and trolling jigs, crankbaits, and drifting live bait from Garrett Island to Paradise Point in 20-30 feet.

CATFISH



CALAVERAS: Channel and blue catfish are excellent on liver, shrimp, and cheesebait near the railroad trestle.

COLETO CREEK: Channel and blue catfish are good on perch, liver, and shrimp in 8-15 feet. Yellow catfish are good on trotlines baited with perch and liver in 8-15 feet.

POSSUM KINGDOM: Catfish are good on set lines baited with liver in the cover adjacent to Rock Creek and in the river two miles below the dam.

CRAPPIE



GRANGER: Crappie are good on Bass Assassin jigs in shallow coves.

NAVARRO MILLS: Crappie to 2.5 pounds are excellent on chartreuse tube jigs and minnows.

LAVON: Crappie are good on minnows and jigs.

SOMERVILLE: Crappie are excellent on minnows, and on green/black jigs.

ALAN HENRY: Water lightly stained; 58 degrees; 1.05' low. Black bass are fair on black/blue jigs and Texas-rigged green pumpkin soft plastics suspended in timber, and shad-colored crankbaits along rocky drop-offs.

AMISTAD: Water clear; 69 degrees; 6.90' low. Catfish are good on cheesebait, shrimp, and nightcrawlers in 40-100 feet.

ARROWHEAD: Water lightly stained; 53 degrees; 2.80' low. Black bass are fair on crankbaits and Texas-rigged soft plastic worms off shallow rocky areas. Blue catfish are good on jugs and drift fishing with shad or punch bait in the lower part of lake.

ATHENS: Water stained; 52-62 degrees; 0.79' high. Black bass are fair on Ring Frys, spinnerbaits and crankbaits. Catfish are good on prepared baits and nightcrawlers.

BASTROP: Water clear. Black bass are good on dark soft plastics, crankbaits, and spinnerbaits. Channel and blue catfish are good on stinkbait, shrimp, and minnows.

BELTON: Water clear; 62 degrees; 0.43' high. Black bass are very good on minnows and Rat-L-Traps. Crappie are good on minnows in 20 feet. Channel and blue catfish are good on trotlines baited with shrimp. Yellow catfish are good on trotlines baited with live perch.

BOB SANDLIN: Water off-color; 52-59 degrees; 0.82' high. Black bass are fair on soft plastic frogs, Texas rigs and jigs. Crappie are fair on live minnows and jigs.

BRAUNING: Water stained; 70 degrees. Black bass are good on crankbaits and dark soft plastic worms in the reeds and near the jetty and dam. Channel catfish are excellent on liver, shrimp, cheesebait, and cut bait near the dam and the discharge. Blue catfish are good on cut bait in 15 - 20 feet.

BRIDGEPORT: Water stained; 51-62 degrees; 2.02' low. Black bass are fair on spinnerbaits, Texas rigs and crankbaits. Channel catfish are good on cut and prepared baits.

BROWNWOOD: Water stained; 58 degrees; 1.88' low. Black bass are good on craw and black/blue jigs, crankbaits, and 4' worms along docks, between rocks, and over brush piles.

BUCHANAN: Water clear; 58 degrees; 2.95' low. Black bass are fair on hard jerkbaits, pumpkin Craws, and black/blue Whacky Sticks on jigsheads along ledges in 12-20 feet.

CADD: Water stained; 52-63 degrees; 2.01' high. Black bass are fair on flukes, Texas rigs and Senkos.

CALAVERAS: Water stained; 70 degrees. Black bass are good on dark soft plastic worms and crankbaits in reed beds and near the dam. Striped bass are excellent on spoons and jigs near the dam and the crappie wall in 15-20 feet.

CANYON LAKE: Water clear; 61 degrees; 0.11' high. Black bass are fair on jerkbaits, brown jigs, drop-shot worms, and worms on shaky jigsheads along break lines and ledges in 12-25 feet. Smallmouth bass are very good on smoked/leek flake tubes, tomato red curly tail grubs, and tomato red drop shot worms over rock piles in 12-25 feet.

CDAR CREEK: Water lightly stained; 52-63 degrees; 0.46' high. Black bass are fair on Rat-L-Traps, white spinnerbaits and Texas rigs. White bass are good on slabs.

CHOKE CANYON: Water stained in main lake, crappie upriver; 59 degrees; 1.12' low. Black bass are slow. White bass are good on minnows and jigs. Crappie are fair on minnows. Channel and blue catfish are good on stinkbait and live perch.

COLEMAN: Water clear; 62 degrees. Hybrid striped are good on minnows and chartreuse stripers jigs. Channel and blue catfish are good on stinkbait and cut bait.

CONROE: Water clear; 0.10' high. Black bass are fair on dark soft plastics, crankbaits, and Rat-L-Traps. Catfish are very good on stinkbait, cut bait, and frozen shrimp.

COOPER: Water lightly stained; 51-61 degrees; 3.51' high. Black bass are fair on Rat-L-Traps, crankbaits and shakly head jigs. White bass are fair to good on slabs.

FALCON: Water stained; 70 degrees. Black bass are fair on watermelon and chartreuse soft plastics, craw worms on 1/2 oz. jigs, and Brush Hogs in 12-18 feet. Channel and blue catfish are good on frozen shrimp and cut bait.

FAYETTE: Water lightly stained; 67 degrees. Channel and blue catfish are good on jugs/baits baited with shrimp and shad.

FORK: Water fairly clear; 52-62 degrees. Black bass are fair to good on Senkos, red Rat-L-Traps and Carolina rigs. Crappie are fair on jigs and minnows.

GRANBURY: Water clear; 0.43' low. Black bass are fair on watermelon red soft plastics, spinnerbaits, crankbaits, and Rat-L-Traps.

GRANGER: Water murky; 58 degrees; 0.47' high. Black bass are good on black soft plastic worms and jigs. White bass are good on minnows and white jigs near Dickerson's Bottom. Blue catfish are very good on jugs/baits with shad.

GRAPEVINE: Water stained to murky; 52-62 degrees; 4.71' high. White bass are fair to good on slabs and Humdingers.

GREENBELT: Water lightly stained; 46 degrees; 26.21' low. Crappie are good

on jigs and minnows. White bass are good on live baits and lipless crankbaits along riprap. Walleye are good on crankbaits and live baits. Catfish are good on live baits.

HOUSTON COUNTY: Water clear; 62 degrees; 0.73' high. Crappie are excellent on live minnows on the north side of the lake around brush and boat docks. White bass are good along the northeast shore.

HUBBARD CREEK: Water lightly stained; 65 degrees; 2.72' low. Crappie are fair on jigs and minnows. Catfish are good on live baits.

JOE POOL: Water off-color; 51-62 degrees; 1.97' high. Crappie are fair to good on minnows and jigs. White bass are fair to good on minnows and slabs.

LAKE OF THE PINES: Water stained to murky; 52-63 degrees; 1.01' high. Black bass are fair on flukes, Texas rigs, spinnerbaits and Rat-L-Traps. Crappie are fair on minnows and jigs.

LAVON: Water stained to murky; 52-62 degrees; 4.29' high. Black bass are fair to good on finesse jigs, small shad pattern crankbaits and Texas rigs. Catfish are fair to good on cut shad and prepared bait.

LBJ: Water stained; 60 degrees; 0.32' low. Black bass are good on black/blue jigs and watermelon tubes on docks. White bass are good on silver Park Minnows and Spoiler Shads near the power plant.

LEWISVILLE: Water off-color; 52-63 degrees; 2.01' high. Black bass are fair on spinnerbaits, drop shot jigs, Rat-L-Traps and shad pattern crankbaits. White bass are fair to good on slabs. Catfish are good on prepared bait and chartreuse (use Worm-Glo) nightcrawlers.

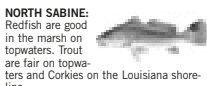
LIVINGSTON: Water murky; 61 degrees; 0.38' high. Black bass are good on spinnerbaits and soft plastics. White bass are good on net spoons, spec rigs, and Rat-L-Traps upriver. Crappie are good on minnows. Blue catfish are good on cut bait and prepared baits.

MEREDITH: Water lightly stained; 45 degrees; 75.47' low. Crappie are good on jigs and minnows. White bass are good on live bait, crankbaits and inline spinners. Walleye are good on chrome jerkbaits and live baits along riprap and drop-offs. Channel catfish are good on live baits.

MONTICELLO: Water fairly clear; 68-82 degrees; 0.7 low. Black bass are fair to good on Rat-L-Traps, flukes and spinnerbaits. Crappie are fair to good on minnows and jigs.

O.H. IVE: Water lightly stained; 58 degrees; 10.64' low. Black bass are fair on shad-colored crankbaits, white spinnerbaits, and live baits. Crappie are good on minnows and jigs. White bass are good on live baits and jerkbaits.

SALTWATER SCENE



NORTH SABINE: Redfish are good in the marsh on topwaters. Trout are fair on topwaters and Corkies on the Louisiana shoreline.

SOUTH SABINE: Trout are fair to good on red shad and glow Bass Assassins, Sand Eels and Trout Killers on the reef. Redfish and black drum are good on live shrimp at the jetty.

BOLIVAR: Trout are fair to good on the shorelines and at Rollover Pass on live shrimp. Redfish and black drum are fair to good at Rollover Pass on crabs and live shrimp.

TRINITY BAY: Trout are fair to good on the east shoreline shell on Corkies, Catch 2000s and topwaters. Stiff winds have made fishing tough.

EAST GALVESTON BAY: Black drum are fair to good along the Houston Ship Channel on live shrimp and cracked blue crabs. Redfish are fair to good on shrimp in Moses Lake.

WEST GALVESTON BAY: Trout are fair to good over shell and mud on glow/chartreuse and plum Bass Assassins, Sand Eels and Trout Killers. Black drum and sheepshead are fair to good at the jetty on crabs and live shrimp.

TEXAS CITY: Oversized black drum are good from the pier at the end of the dike on shrimp and crabs. Gafftop and sheepshead are good on shrimp around the rocks and pilings.

FREESTRIP: Flounder are fair to good on mud minnows and jigs worked along the muddy shorelines of Christmas Bay. Redfish and sheepshead are fair to good around structure on live shrimp and crabs.

EAST MATAGORDA: Trout are fair while drifting scattered shell on black, red shad and fire tiger Bass Assassins, Sand Eels and Trout Killers. Redfish and flounder are fair to good along the west shoreline on soft plastics tipped with shrimp.

PORT O'CONNOR: Trout are fair to good around Grass Island and the Baycous Flats on red shad and pumpkinsize Bass Assassins, Sand Eels and Trout Killers. Redfish, black drum and sheepshead are fair to good on shrimp at the jetty.

ROCKPORT: Trout are fair near Traylor Island and over the reefs in Copano Bay on live shrimp, Corkies, Catch 2000s and She Dogs. Redfish and black drum are fair to good in the channels and Intracoastal on crabs and live shrimp.

PORT ARANSAS: Redfish are fair to good at the North Jetty on live shrimp. Sheepshead and gafftop are good on live shrimp at the jetty. Gafftop, black drum, whiting and sharks are good on the beach-front.

CORPUS CHRISTI: Trout are fair to good in the channels along the causeway on live shrimp under a cork and limetreuse plastics in the Humble Channel and the Boathole. Black drum and redfish are fair to good at the Land Cut on live shrimp.

PORT MANSFIELD: Trout are fair to good while drifting grass flats on Trout Killers, Bass Assassins, Sand Eels and topwaters. Redfish are fair to good on topwaters and shrimp on the flats. Sheepshead and black drum are good on shrimp in around East Cut.

SOUTH PADRE: Trout, redfish and black drum are fair to good along the Intracoastal on live shrimp and mullet. Stiff winds have made fishing tough. Redfish are good on Gulps in Cullen Bay.

PORT ISABEL: Trout are fair to good at Airport Cove on shrimp, Corkies and She Dogs. Waders have taken trout and reds on leeward shores on topwaters.

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spoons. Catfish are good under cormorant roosts on prepared baits.

RICHLAND CHAMBERS: Water off-color; 52-63 degrees; 0.23' low. White bass are fair on slabs and live shad. Catfish are fair on prepared bait and night-crawlers.

SAM RAYBURN: Water stained; 68 degrees; 1.50' low. Black bass are fair on Carolina rigged watermelon red soft plastics and spinnerbaits. White bass are fair on live minnows and silver spoons. Catfish are good on frozen shrimp, live minnows, and stinkbait.

STILLHOUSE: Water clear; 64 degrees; 0.16' high. Crappie are fair on minnows. Channel and blue catfish are fair on shrimp and Spam.

TAWAKONI: Water lightly stained; 52-62 degrees; 2.13' high. Crappie are fair on minnows and jigs. White bass are fair on slabs. Catfish are fair on stink bait.

TEXOMA: Water off-color; 52-61 degrees; 0.84' high. Crappie are fair to good on minnows and jigs. Striped bass are fair on live shad and large Road Runners.

TOLEDO BEND: Water clear; 67 degrees; 1.80' low. Black bass are fair on chartreuse green and chartreuse blue soft plastics, spinnerbaits, and crankbaits. Channel and blue catfish are good on frozen shrimp, cut bait, and stinkbait.

TRAVIS: Water clear; 61 degrees; 0.03' high. White bass are good on chrome crankbaits, white grubs, and minnows in 8-20 feet. Crappie are good on minnows and pink tube jigs in 8-18 feet.

WALTER E. LONG: Water clear; 65 degrees. Black bass are good on red and green soft plastics. Hybrid stripers are good on minnows.

WEATHERFORD: Water stained; 53-61 degrees; 0.06' low. Black bass are fair on crankbaits and Texas rigs. Crappie are fair to good on minnows and jigs.

WHITNEY: Water stained; 6.57' low. Striped bass are fair on minnows and stripers jigs. Crappie are good on minnows and blue tube jigs.

See Hot Spot, Page 9.

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PRODUCTS

ALL-AROUND BINOCULARS: The **Excursion EX Binoculars** from **Bushnell** feature a lightweight double bridge design, improved optics and a wider field of view. Available in four models (8x36mm, 10x36mm, 8x42mm and 10x42mm), this new line's features include fully, multi-coated optics with PC-3 phase coating for improved resolution and contrast, a lockable focus knob, and soft touch thumb grip for comfortable handling. The 10x42mm model, which weighs 22.2 ounces, has a field-of-view of 330 feet. The binoculars cost from about \$230 to about \$320. For retailers, visit www.bushnell.com or call (800) 423-3537.



TRAILER WITH NEW DESIGN: **ShoreLand'r** has introduced a line of **Powersports** trailers for ATV and UTV owners. The trailer has an angled "beavertail" deck that reduces the loading angle and utilizes a smaller, quieter ramp. The beavertail design provides more usable space plus its ramp is easier to lift and reduces wind resistance for better fuel economy. Features include a fully-grounded wiring system, a welded, steel tube frame, adjustable axles, cast-iron machined hubs, welded spindles and 13-inch wheels. Available in five sizes (from 4 feet by 6 feet to 6 feet by 12 feet), the largest trailer can carry up to 2,200 pounds. Depending on size, the trailers start at about \$585 for the smallest trailer. For dealers, visit www.shorelandr.com or call (972) 998-1314.

NATURAL SOUND ENHANCEMENT:

The **SportEAR** is a micro-miniature open ear device that is light, comfortable and practically invisible. The digital device's design offers two tips: the open tip, perfect for bow hunters who only require hearing enhancement; and the foam tip, which also provides protection from the loud sounds of shooting. The SportEAR is available in three models ranging in price from about \$600 to about \$1,800. The device is left or right ear specific and comes in Realtree Advatage Max 4 HD camo, natural and tan. The company also will customize the SportEAR for those with hearing loss. For information about customizing, call (800) 530-0090. To order, visit www.sportear.com.



CASE WITH BACKBONE:

Nite Ize's new **Backbone Cases** will keep outdoorsmen's electronic devices (including GPS units, cellphones, cameras and MP3 players) safe during travel and on the field. The cases offer a fully enclosed design, molded "backbone" structure, durable ballistic nylon material, a soft no-scratch interior with pockets, plus water-resistant zippers. The cases attach with a 360-degree rotating clip, a fixed-position clip or a shoulder strap. Available in black or Mossy Oak Break-Up camo pattern, the Backbone Case comes in four sizes and costs from about \$15 to \$25, depending on size. Call (800) 678-6483 for more information.



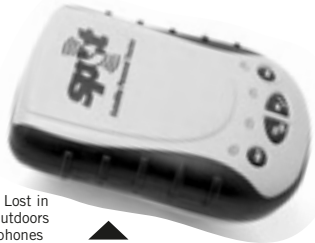
EASY ON THE EYES:

The **Carson Fish'n Grip** is a handy little magnifier to throw in your tackle box or tuck in a fishing vest pocket. The compact, 4-in-1 tool includes tweezers and a 4x magnifier to make it easier to see while tying a fly, making quick repairs, or threading a hook. The device has a built-in line clipper and a hook-eye cleaner. It costs about \$7. For retailers, call (631) 963-5000.



THE 7.37-OUNCE LIFESAVER:

Lost in the great outdoors where cellphones won't work? Whether you're on land or on water (or, even in the air), the **SPOT Satellite Personal Tracker** can help you keep in touch with friends or allow emergency responders to track you down. The orange messenger features a 911 alert, which once activated will send out your GPS coordinates via satellite technology to an emergency response center. The SPOT sells for about \$170, plus about \$100 per year for unlimited use of the Help, OK and 911 message functions. The optional tracking function is about \$50 more a year. For additional information, call (866) 651-7768.



DIAMOND-TOUGH: **Diamond Machining Technology's** new **Diafold Magna-Guide Sharpening System** will tackle any blade with its seven-angle adjustable clamp. The magnetic guide works with DMT's Double-Sided Diafold sharpener to help knife owners get finely honed edges consistently. The lightweight, portable guide has folding handles to keep fingers away from cutting edges while in use. The Magna-Guide Sharpening system sells for about \$50. For retailers, visit www.dmtsharp.com.

NEW GENERATION OF GENERATORS:

Yamaha Motor Corp.'s newest **EF4500iSE generator** is a mid-size portable model perfect for camping and RVing. An inverter generator, it is capable of running such amenities as an RV's air conditioner and microwave oven. But, it also is ideal for running satellite TV systems, computers, and other sophisticated electronic equipment. Designed for less noise and better fuel economy, it has the most powerful engine in its class, says the company, allowing for a very low engine speed of 2,600 rpm, which reduces fuel consumption, noise, vibration and engine wear. Its remote allows you to start the generator from up to 66 feet away. It sells for about \$3,200. For dealers, visit www.yamaha-motor.com or call (800) 889-2624.



POWERFUL PURIFIER:

The **SteriPEN Journey LCD Handheld Water Purifier**, by **Hydro-Photon Inc.**, destroys viruses, bacteria and protozoa with ultraviolet light. It takes the just-shy-of 5-ounce purifier 48 seconds to convert 16 ounces of clear stream water into pure, safe drinking water. The Journey has an integrated LCD screen that displays the user's dose selection (1/2 liter or one liter), battery status and countdown timer. The screen also tracks the number of uses and signals when lamp usage is approaching its life limit of 10,000 cycles. According to the company, this battery-operated model can purify one liter of water four times a day for seven years. It sells for about \$130. For retailers, call (888) 783-7473.





SCORCHED ACRES: Len Polasek and Joe Herrera of Texas Parks and Wildlife watch a line of wildfire burn across the Chaparral Wildlife Management Area. The fire burned about 95 percent of the 15,200-acre property in La Salle and Dimmit Counties south of San Antonio. Photo by TPW.

Blaze

Continued from Page 1

fire.

"I am amazed how adaptive wildlife can be during a natural disaster; we found very few carcasses and have observed a lot of live animals — horned lizards, whitetail deer, javelina and quail," said David Synatzske, Chaparral WMA manager. "We have between 20 and 25 wildlife biologists and technicians on the site and they are not finding dead animals. I drove the entire 30-mile perimeter fence line and found only two carcasses. Considering 95 percent of the area burned, that's incredible."

Synatzske said the fire, which started March 14, and was extinguished the following Monday, consumed about 50,000 acres in Dimmit and LaSalle counties, including portions of some of the state's most celebrated trophy whitetail hunting ranches. Yet, the blaze left some pockets untouched throughout the

WMA and he believes those areas likely provided refuge for wildlife.

A research building and some trailers were destroyed and the 30 miles of game-proof fencing around the perimeter will have to be replaced. The area also has 23 miles of PVC pipe feeding watering stations and irrigating pastures, and repairs have already started.

Eight parties of public hunters were on the Chaparral WMA when the fire started, but the two staff members on duty were able to evacuate all of them safely.

"Obviously, we are concerned about the short-term impact at the Chap from this wildfire, and we should be," said Carter Smith, TPW executive director. "But, the bigger story I think is whether these sorts of intense wildfires will be a growing pattern throughout South Texas."

Smith recalled that fire used to be a major part of the South Texas landscape, when it was more of a savannah-like system. "The tremendous amount of brush that we see now in

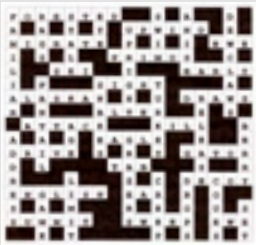
South Texas was not historically present there, but has built up over time as a result of overgrazing, changing land use patterns and suppression of fire," Smith said. "The exotic grasses that are now a major part of the understory are very flammable and, candidly, not adversely impacted by fire."

Research into how this ecosystem recovers from a large-scale fire will begin immediately on the Chaparral WMA, according to Synatzske, who said the area has now become a 15,000-acre research laboratory. "We're already seeing signs of green-up," his said. "So the process has begun."

"It should be interesting to see how the Chap responds, as well as what happens in the future on the wildfire front," Smith said. "That is going to impact the ecology and landscape of South Texas."

The exact cause of the fire is still under investigation.

— *Texas Parks and Wildlife report.*



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