On October 8th “The Wish To Fish Foundation” welcomed the Gatica family, 18 year old Dakota and 12 year old Hayden to Lake Fork. Also seen in photo (lt. to rt.) Bart Martin dipping minnows, Chad Marsh, Director, father Jonathon Gatica, Rodney Ellis, Director, and mother Kristy Gatica. (Fisherman’s Guide Photo by Don Hampton)

Wish To Fish Foundation Welcomes Gatica Family

By Sue Hampton

We often hear the expression “angels here on earth”… we truly believe there are because we have been blessed with our “Wish To Fish” family, the Gatica’s from Fort Worth! We first met parents, Kristy & Jonathan and their two delightful boys Dakota who is now 18 and Hayden 12 when we invited them to Lake Fork for a day on the water in June 2013. Dakota and Hayden were both diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Dakota was 4 years old and Hayden was diagnosed while still in Kristy’s womb. DMD is a progressive neuromuscular disorder and symptoms include fatigue, muscle weakness and difficulty running and (See Wish to Fish...... Continued on Page 3-A)

Happy Thanksgiving

The heaviest bass 16” or less was also won in the last 15 minutes of the tournament! Joe Todd from Wichita Falls, TX., was almost the last one to the scales during the tournament when he brought the winner in weighing 2.95-lbs. For his catch he won $400 in the hour and a Skeeter ZX190 powered by a Yamaha SHO, Lowrance Electronics, PowerPole and MinnKota trolling motor. (Fisherman’s Guide Photo by Sue Hampton)
When It Comes To Thanksgiving, Bubba May Be The Turkey Full of Grace

By: Don Hampton

Bubba isn’t an individual that is asked to say the grace much when it comes to meals. Don’t get me wrong Bubba considers himself religious and is always thankful to the “Good Lord” for all his blessings. But, come on people, Bubba is Bubba!

If Bubba is asked to say the grace, you never know what kind of thanks you may hear. If he is really hungry you might hear, “Good bread, good meat, God Bless, let’s eat, AMEN!” If he is really hungry and not feeling like a bear just out of hibernation and in a good mood you might hear, “Rubby dub, dub, bring on the grub, Yeah God, AMEN!” But, if Bubba has had a snack just before meal time, like tasting the turkey as he is slicing it, get ready for a long winded grace like you’ve never heard before. During these blessings he would have a country revival preacher squirming in his seat. During this course you might hear Bubba throw in four or five AMENS. Not because she’s filled with the spirit or that she agrees with what Bubba is saying, but rather because she’s trying to shut him down. This is something one can really expect to hear at Thanksgiving at Bubba and Bubbette’s home.

Each year at Thanksgiving and Christmas, Bubba is the designated turkey smoker. He does smoke a mean turkey and all his relatives think he is the best and his smoked sweet potatoes and oyster dressing is a culinary delight also. The bad part of this is that the cook tastes his cooking before he will serve it. If you thought this would spoil his appetite, you are wrong. This just puts him at the table not being hungry as a bear and it being Bubba’s household the Thanksgiving blessing belongs to him.

The beginning and the end of his grace are book worthy. It is just all of those things in the middle that will have you starve before the last AMEN. Believe me when he says, “AMEN”, there is a chorus of “AMENS” around the table!

He will start by thanking God for all the blessings he has bestowed on his family and friends. He asked him to bless this great country we live in and for all the soldiers that defend our freedom and way of life. He will thank God for the food they are about to partake of and that he will nourish it to the goodness of their bodies, but then Bubba will say thanks for everything he feels important. He is liable to start off by thanking the “Good Lord” for Lake Fork and all of the good lakes he has fished throughout the year. He’ll be thankful for his sharp hooks, strong line, and prized possessions such as his rods and reels. He’ll put in how much he appreciated the fish biting and that they might on his future trips be as hungry as some of his kinfolk are getting at the table during his blessing. He will thank the Lord for his boat, motor, electronics and as always for his pickup truck. He’ll be thankful for the weather, the tournaments he won, the great guide trips he has been on, and on, and on, and on! Sometimes during these blessings Bubba would run down the EVERYDAY Bunny! I do believe he would stretch them out more if he wasn’t afraid his food would get cold!

Bubba is pretty smart in a sense the way he explained it to me. He said, “I’ve got a captive audience! No matter how long I say grace, none of my kinfolk are going to get up and leave a table full of good vittles!”

When Bubba finally says “AMEN”, I think the chorus of “AMENS” is basically because everyone’s so glad he’s finally come to an end, but probably to drown out Bubba putting in a P.S.

Bubba always finishes his prayer with sincere thanks. He is thankful for his life, his wife, his family and friends, for the great country we live in, and that all may be blessed with the Lord’s spirit.

Isn’t that something we all should put in our prayers!

“Happy Thanksgiving from our home to yours!”

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Wish To Fish Foundation Welcomes Gatica Family (Continued from Page 1-A)

jumping. Eventually, muscle weakness will progress causing loss of the ability to walk.

On Oct. 8th we invited this family back to Lake Fork for another day of fishing. The family came in on Friday night and one of our gracious sponsors, Danny & Joyce Azlin, owners of “Scenic 515 Cabins” provided their bunkhouse for the Gatica’s to stay in which accommodated them really well for two nights.

The Lord blessed us with a beautiful day on Saturday to fish.

We started the day with breakfast at 7 a.m. at one of our great sponsors, Oak Ridge Marina owned by Barry & Tracy Hatton. We launched from their pier and motored our pontoon boat around to the public ramp at Hwy 154 so we could use the floating ramp to maneuver boarding both wheel chairs. We were having just a slight difficulty loading and needed a board to make a small ramp to roll the chairs on so one of our volunteers to assist for the day was Bart Martin, owner of Fishermans Inn, made a quick run to his garage and cut a piece of ply board that he had on hand and without any other difficulty we were on our way. Rodney Ellis, owner of Quarterhorse Carwash & Storage, was our captain and he, Bart and our son Chad Marsh assisted the boys to make sure their rods & reels were working properly and of course kept their hooks baited with live bait furnished by John Heimgartner, owner of Fishermans One Stop, another one of our great sponsors. Subway sandwiches were provided by “The Fisherman’s Guide News” for lunch.

We always have at least one “911 boat” close by should there be any kind of emergency which was manned by Don “Bubba” Hampton. The boys both caught fish, probably got a little too much sun and definitely enjoyed the boat riding.

We completed our day with the delicious buffet at “A.J.’s Fish House owned by Andy & Carolyn Johnson, another one of our very much appreciated sponsors.

CEO/Founders of ‘The Wish To Fish Foundation’ Don and Sue Hampton may see the trips come to an end but never the friendship and love for the children and their families.
11th Annual Berkley Big Bass Tournament on Lake Fork on Oct. 15 & 16

By Don Hampton

The 11th Annual Berkley Big Bass Tournament presented by Bass Champs, Inc. was held on Lake Fork at Lake Fork Marina on October 15th and 16th. Twenty places per hour for the two days of the tournament were paid for the heaviest bass weighed in during each hour in celebration of their 11th Annual Tournament on Lake Fork. For the angler catching the heaviest bass over the 24” inch slot, that angler was guaranteed to be taking home the grand prize of a 2016 Skeeter ZX 200 powered by a Yamaha 200 SHO, equipped with Lowrance Electronics and MinnKota trolling motor and PowerPole. For the heaviest bass under the 16” slot the winner would be acquiring a 2016 Skeeter ZX 190 powered by a Yamaha 150, equipped with Lowrance Electronics and MinnKota trolling motor. The tournament drew over 1,128 anglers to Lake Fork to compete representing 19 states. Chad Potts, President of Bass Champs, Inc.

(Continued on Next Page)

Andrew Marks, Pure Fishing presented Hagan Thacker, 8 years old, from East Tawakoni TX., with an Abu Garcia Revo rod n’ reel for being the youngest angler in the tournament. (Fisherman’s Guide Photo)

Winners in the Ladies Division at the 11th Annual Berkley Tournament were (rt. to lt.) 1st Place Kathy Magers with 2.22-lbs.; 2nd Place Donna Biondi with 2.02-lbs.; 3rd Place Daphne Carter with 2.00-lbs. (Fisherman’s Guide Photo)

“Well that’s fishing!” Randy Horton (lt) from Russellville, AR., was winning with the heaviest bass over the slot with a 9.82-lb. and Billy Pritchett from Kerens, TX., was winning with heaviest under the slot with a 2.83-lb. until the last 15 minutes of the tournament. When you can lose a 2016 Skeeter boat and still smile, you are a true sportsman!

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November on Fork is a great fishing month (Continued from Page 6-A)

Mark Spaeth with Lake Fork

The winning bass under the slot was weighed in during the last 15 minutes of the tournament. Joe Todd from Wichita Falls, Texas brought his catch weighing 2.95-pounds to the scale knowing his would hold up for the grand prize for the heaviest bass under 16-inches. “I was fishing lillypads on the far north end of the lake catching small ones and bass in the slot. When I was reeling this one in, I was thinking it was a slot also. When I measured it I knew I had a chance so hurried to the weigh-in,” said Todd. His fish was a winner as the heaviest bass under the slot winning him not only the 2nd Place check of $400 for the hour but also a Skeeter 201 ZX 190 powered by a Yamaha SHO, Lowrance Electronics and Minn-Kota trolling motor.

The heaviest bass over the slot was caught by Walter Thomas, Jr. from Alba, Texas weighing 10.15-pounds. “I was in 30-feet of water and caught her off of a stump in about 17-feet of water” said Walter. His catch won him $1,000 in the hour, $100 for the BioBor and the grand prize of a 2016 Skeeter ZX 200 powered by a Yamaha 200 SHO, and equipped with Low-

(See 11th Annual Berkley... Continued on Page 21-A)
November on Fork is a great fishing month

By David Ozio

“Fall is finally upon us and the cold fronts are starting to roar in like a lion. This is actually code for “we need to be on the water”. Surface water temps have started to drop and are currently hovering in the low 70’s. The annual lake turnover is behind us and the bass are moving to the backs of the creeks as they always do at this time of the season. November is a great fishing month as the big largemouth largemouth bass start to feed up for the winter and Fork is the place to be if you are in the market for a wall hanger.

The lake is in great condition especially with some recent rain. Water clarity ranges from somewhat clear down south to very stained in the backs of the main creeks that feed the lake. Fork is about two foot low at the moment and I am already seeing the bass gang up on typical fall spots, points, humps and the mouths of major creeks. How you approach these bass will depend upon where you prefer to fish whether it’s main lake or in the far reaches of the main creek arms. With this in mind, the shallow bite is ramping up and big bass can be caught in all parts of the lake. Let’s start the morning searching for top water fish. Shallow vegetation is key to your success and now that the water is fairly stable, bank grass, milfoil, alligator grass and hydrilla will dominate the skinny water. In extreme off color water, use a noisy bait that stirs up the water. Prop baits are excellent choices in this case. If the water is only slightly stained in the backs of the creeks and pockets, tie on a Zara Spook, Yellow Magic or a Sammy and start covering water. Shad are also moving to the backs of these areas and big bass are right on their tail. Schooling activity is not uncommon in November so focus on using shad colors on most any lure you throw and hang on for some jolting strikes. Pick out secondary points or small points of vegetation. All should hold fish. Also, don’t be afraid to chunk a Spro frog around any vegetation you encounter. Huge bass can’t resist the way they move through the water.

As your hunt starts to reach mid morning, switch your strategy to baits that descend into the water column. If the water is heavily stained, throw the chatterbait, spinnerbait or squarebill in the same areas. If the water is slightly stained, use a five inch swimbait, swimjig or chatterbait. Hydrilla or milfoil will change the game slightly, use a lip less crankbait and key on the outer edges of the grass. As the water temps degrades throughout the month, switch your lipless colors to gold or red. As the afternoon approaches with the sun now high in the sky migrate your way out to deep water and graph the usual haunts, humps, ridges, roadbeds and structure. Fall on Fork has always been great fishing for these patterns during the

Answers on Page 21-A
In 2015, Kristy & Jonathan felt life was passing them by and they were just going through the motions. They took a leap of faith and decided to quit their jobs, cash in their life savings, purchase an RV and take the boys on a 48 state road trip across America from May to Nov. 2015! They wanted to give the boys a lifetime of memories and they wanted them to know that it doesn’t matter what disability you have, you can do anything you want to do or put your mind to. Remember my first paragraph when I spoke of angels here on earth… how many parents would do this for their children? You can visit their web site at HayKota.com for more details. They brought Don and I both a sack of unique goodies that can be purchased off their web site.

Both Dakota and Hayden are doing great! Their health has remained the same.

All of us from the “Wish to Fish” Foundation want to extend another very special “thank you” to our sponsors. We could not do this without you and we thank the Gatica family because after having met each one of you, our world is a better place and you have left an impression on our hearts forever.

In 2015, the Gatica family of Mineola, Texas decided to quit their jobs, cash in their life savings, purchase an RV and take the boys on a 48 state road trip across America from May to Nov. 2015! They wanted to give the boys a lifetime of memories and they wanted them to know that it doesn’t matter what disability you have, you can do anything you want to do or put your mind to. Remember my first paragraph when I spoke of angels here on earth… how many parents would do this for their children? You can visit their web site at HayKota.com for more details. They brought Don and I both a sack of unique goodies that can be purchased off their web site.

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It’s here – my very favorite time of year to fish! The couple of cool snaps we had in October was perfect to start these crappie into their fall transition. It definitely put them in a feeding mode, and they are really starting to fatten up.

This past week we’ve caught some of the nicest crappie I’ve seen in a long time! I’ll be very honest with you – there is NO “Magic Spot” right now. We are moving around a lot and getting a few here and a few there. Then the bass will move in and seems to run the crappie off. So, we just move on to the next spot. We’re also having some big bream move in to the brush piles and around the bridges. We are targeting 12 to 24 ft. of water – but, throughout the day they can be as shallow as 8 ft. or as deep as 22 ft. so really watch that depth finder to monitor any changes in depths of the fish and adjust your casts accordingly…(depth is very critical!) It won’t be long and they will be migrating up the creeks following the baitfish.

This time of year a good depth finder is priceless. I just put a Lowrance HDS12 Gen 3 on the front of my boat and it is awesome! That large screen is sure appreciated by these “old eyes”! Something else I’m sure appreciating is not having to jerk my trolling motor up and down 20 times a day – then to have the anchor button – “PRICELESS!”

MinnKota has got it going on! I’m amazing people every day when they see this Ulterra in action. It has definitely made my life easier and the older I get the more I like easier!

Now as far as the baits we’re using – Lake Fork Tackle’s “Live Baby Shad” w/paddle tail in just about anything with pink in it – like pink/pearl, pink/chartreuse and on darker days pink/black have been producing for us. Also it doesn’t hurt to tip it with a Berkley Power Nibble. Really watch your line – these crappie have been pushing the bait up. If you see slack line, it’s probably a fish!

It’s really been a fun month of fishing and my thanks to all of you! Don’t forget this is “Customer Appreciation” month at Lake Fork Marina. The rooms are $50 and 25% off all tackle, gifts and apparel. It’s a great time to start your Christmas shopping for the fishermen in your life.

My best to you all and “Happy Birthday” to my brother John and glad you’re feeling better Pops! Love to all!!
Scott Marler from Benton, L.A., was crappie fishing using a Bass Pro Crappie Maxx Ultra-light Rod on 17 lb test line using a baitcast reel in October on Lake Fork when he caught this monster flathead catfish weighing 58.6-pounds. Released to the Grease I’m sure!

Art Barboza from Sacramento, CA., came to Lake Fork to catch a double digit bass in October with guide Andrew Grills and accomplished his goal with this hawg. C.P.R. (Photo Courtesy Andrew Grills Guide Service)

Randy Horton from Russellville, AR., was winning the 11th Annual Berkley Big Bass Tournament with this beast tilting the scales at 9.82-lbs. until the last weigh-in of the tournament. (Fisherman’s Guide Photo by Sue Hampton)
Biotologists Battle Giant Salvinia Blocking Lake Access for Duck Hunters, Waterfowl

At North Toledo Bend Wildlife Management Area, giant salvinia covers about half of the WMA’s 500-acre wetland impoundment, blocking boat access for duck hunters and keeping migrating waterfowl from food and habitat. The problem would be worse without steady work to fight back the invasive floating fern, efforts that got a boost this year by recording funding from the Texas Legislature.

Hundreds of duck hunters will come to North Toledo Bend this winter, and they’ll still be able to hunt birds, but the giant salvinia problem does limit their options. According to WMA staff, it can literally depend on “which way the wind is blowing,” as floating mats of salvinia blow across the lake.

“In recent weeks the wind has been blowing from the east causing the western part of the WMA to be solid salvinia, with other smaller patches throughout the impoundment ranging in size from 10-15 square feet to several acres, and most of the sloughs or creeks have had some extent of salvinia in them,” said Bob Baker, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife biologist at North Toledo Bend.

“We try to keep it at bay using herbicide through a collaborative effort with our Inland Fisheries team,” Baker said, adding that this is complemented by $50,000 in gamebird stamp funds (paid by hunters) to help treat giant salvinia at North Toledo Bend this year and next. “The hope is that more duck habitat becomes available when salvinia is slower to grow in late fall and winter and begins to die and sink as a result of the herbicide work. Another issue is parts of Toledo Bend reservoir used by hunters to boat to the WMA may be packed with giant salvinia as well.”

Giant salvinia may be better known as a problem for fishers and boaters, but it affects hunters, lakeside landowners and many others too. And the hunting access problem is not limited to Toledo Bend.

“Giant salvinia is bad on Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area this year and has been consistently bad for the last four years at least,” said Vanessa Neace, Caddo Lake WMA wildlife biologist. “The closer to the big open water you go, the less salvinia there is. This still allows for some good duck hunting here, but the salvinia is another significant reason duck hunting is not what it once was at Caddo Lake.”

Neace points to an April 2016 photo of a duck blind placed in what hunters would have called a great duck hunting hole on Caddo Lake.

“This picture was taken after the 50-year Caddo Lake flood of March 2016,” Neace said. “The blind is draped in dead salvinia that was present during that March flood and simply clung to the blind as the water receded. I can show you photo after photo of this scene repeating at location after location, year after year, since about 2007. Getting to these locations requires a powerful air cooled boat engine and then it’s still not guaranteed you will get to that hole.”

Herbicide is also sprayed at Caddo Lake--EPA-approved herbicide that’s safe for use in water, doesn’t hurt wildlife and is sprayed directly on the problem plant by trained contractors. It’s part of a multi-faceted, statewide effort to slow the spread of aquatic invasive species. The success of this effort also relies on hunters, fishers and boaters to help take action to avoid spreading invasive species. And biologists have another tool in their arsenal--weevils that eat giant salvinia.

“Here on Caddo Lake, as at North Toledo Bend, the Inland Fisheries Aquatic Vegetation Management Program hires contractors to treat our salvinia,” said Neace. “They use herbicide and they grow giant salvinia weevils. Fortunately for Caddo Lake, we also have the Caddo Biocontrol Alliance and the Morley Hudson Weevil Greenhouse.”

Bio-controls will likely never completely replace... (See Biologists Battle Giant......Continued on Page 14-A)
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Biologists Battle Giant Salvinia (Continued from Page 10-A)

management tools like herbicide, but the weevils are showing progress. Some key boat lanes are more open now because of herbicide treatment, and there is evidence of giant salvinia damage caused by weevils. But once a plant like this becomes established, eradication becomes almost impossible, and that makes steady management a necessity.

That kind of management, plus research to understand problems and explore practical solutions, is being greatly expanded because of a record funding increase in state dollars to fight aquatic invaders in waterways. In 2015, the Texas Legislative appropriated $6.3 million to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the 2016-2017 biennium to manage aquatic invasive species, an increase from $1.1 million in the previous two-year funding cycle. Most of the funding is going for management actions to control multiple aquatic invasive species. But thanks to the increase, TPWD has also been able to fund a giant salvinia awareness campaign, which is also supported by contributions from the Sabine River Authority and Brazos River Authority. The campaign reminds people to “Clean, Drain and Dry” their boats, trailers, and gear before traveling from one water body to another.

More information about how to identify and help control giant salvinia and other invasive species is at www.texasinvasives.org. Anyone can find more information about Texas public hunting and hunting at state wildlife management areas on the TPWD website.
Rural Residents, Hunters in Northeast Texas Advised to Be Bear Aware

Wildlife biologists are advising hunters, ranchers and rural residents in Northeast Texas of a handful of confirmed black bear sightings recently.

At least four sightings have been documented on game trail cameras between June and late August in Bowie, Red River and Smith counties. Wildlife biologists with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) confirmed the sightings and speculate the bears, which appear to be young males, are looking to establish their own new home ranges and likely dispersed from Oklahoma or Arkansas where bear numbers have increased in recent years.

This is the first confirmed presence of black bears in East Texas since September 2011. Breeding black bear populations have been absent from this region for almost 100 years, but bears from Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana occasionally wander into East Texas.

"Once these bears figure out there’s no opportunity for companionship over here they will likely retreat," says Dave Holdermann, a non-game wildlife biologist with TPWD in Tyler.

Holdermann said as hunters in this area head to the field in preparation for deer season, some might see signs of bears attempting to enter camps where food is kept or wildlife feeders overturned. Bears eat mostly plant material and that’s probably their greatest source of protein; for example, seeds, acorns, nuts and even herbage has protein.

According to Holdermann, bears are normally shy and not aggressive to humans. But if a bear regularly visits a ranch or deer stand, people should try to scare it with rocks, a slingshot or air horn.

"If people encounter a bear at close range, they should talk calmly while backing away slowly. Don’t make direct eye contact, and don’t run away," he advised. "If a bear approaches you, stand your ground and raise your arms, backpack or jacket to appear larger and yell at the bear to scare it off."

Hunters are encouraged to study their game carefully to avoid mistaking a bear for a feral hog or other legal game animal. It is against the law to kill a black bear in Texas, with penalties of up to $10,000, added civil restitution fines, jail time and loss of all hunting privileges. The black bear, Ursus americanus, is listed as threatened by the State of Texas.

To minimize encounters with bears, hunters should keep camps clean to prevent odors that will attract bears and discard gut piles far from campsites. Placing deer corn in piles or in open feeders will attract more bears, while using an automated feeder hung out of reach of bears will decrease bear visits. Also, switching bait from corn to soybeans will reduce bear activity. And, planting food plots is the best way to attract deer and avoid bear visits.

More information about black bears in Texas, including safety tips, is available online at tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/resources/bear_safety/. Anyone observing black bears in East Texas is urged to contact Holdermann at 903-566-1626.

ext. 209 so wildlife experts can track trends in black bear populations and distributions.
Texas Quail Hunters Ready for the “Boom”

Quail live on the edge. In lean years when weather and habitat conditions conspire against them, the birds hunker down and then when things are right their numbers explode. Experts refer to this in simple terms, “boom or bust.” This is the year of the boom.

Hunting season opened October 29th statewide and continues through Feb. 26, with prospects in most of Texas quail country the brightest in many years. “If you took a ride across the core quail hunting regions today, it would be hard to imagine the terrible conditions brought on by the extreme droughts of 2010 - 2013 that hit Texas, Mexico and the Southeastern U.S. so hard,” said Robert Perez, upland game bird program leader for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). “Consecutive years of dry summer and winter conditions are especially problematic for short-lived birds like quail because they rely on each year’s crop of young to replenish the population. By the same token, consecutive years of above average rainfall and lower than average summer temperatures can produce quail ‘boom’ years.”

That’s exactly what has happened in the Rolling Plains, South Texas and Trans Pecos regions of Texas where both bobwhite and scaled quail (a.k.a. blue quail) have made a remarkable comeback. Much of the latest rebound can be attributed to the habitat as there are millions of acres of rangelands in these regions where the most common land use (livestock production) is generally compatible with quail. Good land stewardship and proper grazing are important to the persistence of these highly prized game birds, according to Perez, but even the best conservation efforts cannot overcome long-term exceptional drought.

“It’s important to recognize that bobwhite quail have all but disappeared from other regions of our state due to extensive changes in the quantity and quality of available habitat,” he explained. “TPWD is diligently working with conservation partners and land stewards within key quail focus areas to demonstrate that bobwhites can make a comeback. If we provide the habitat needs at a large enough scale to support viable populations, restoration is possible.”

Statewide surveys were initiated in 1978 to monitor quail populations. This index uses randomly selected, 20-mile roadside survey lines to determine annual quail population trends by ecological region. This trend information helps determine relative quail populations among the regions of Texas. Comparisons can be made between the mean (average) number of quail observed per route this year and the long term mean (LTM) for quail seen within an ecological region. The quail survey was not designed to predict relative abundance for any area smaller than the ecological region.

This year’s ‘boom’ is reflected in the survey, which showed record high bobwhite counts in the Rolling Plains region and healthy populations in South Texas, as well as near record highs for scaled quail in the Trans Pecos. The only region seeing a downward trend this year, the Coastal Prairies, suffered untimely flooding conditions that hurt nesting success.

A regional breakdown of this year’s TPWD quail index survey, including highlights and prospects, is available online at http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/planning/quail_forecast/forecast/.

The daily bag limit for quail is 15, with 45 in possession. Legal shooting hours for all non-migratory game birds are 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. The bag limit is the maximum number that may be killed during the legal shooting hours in one day.

If you have news or photos on Lake Fork Contact Us! “The Fisherman’s Guide News” Lake Fork’s Lines To Get Hooked On! 903-383-7747 or 903-360-6994 email: fishnews@lakefork.net
Late Whooping Crane Migration Expected in Texas

The iconic, endangered whooping crane has embarked on its annual fall migration and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is reminding Texans to expect these impressive birds to be moving through the state in the weeks ahead as they travel to wintering grounds along the Texas coast.

Standing at nearly five feet tall, whooping cranes are North America’s tallest bird and each year the flock follows a migratory path from nesting grounds in Woods Buffalo National Park in Alberta, Canada, to primary wintering range on and around the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Austwell, Texas. This trek takes the birds through North and Central Texas and traverses cities such as Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, Dallas, Waco, Austin and Victoria.

During their migration, whoopers often pause overnight in wetlands for roosting and agricultural fields for feeding, though it is rare for them to remain in the same place for more than one night. As a federally-protected species, it is illegal to harass or disturb whooping cranes and TPWD encourages the public to be mindful of these brief layovers and to use caution around these birds in order to decrease disturbance to the areas surrounding them.

“It appears it will be another late migration, so we are estimating the peak of migration in Texas likely won’t be until early to mid-November,” stated Wade Harrell, United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s whooping crane recovery coordinator. The late migration could mean that whooping cranes will be showing up in Texas as waterfowl and sandhill crane hunting seasons get under way across the state. It is vitally important for sportsmen to review the crane and waterfowl identification guide in the Texas Waterfowl Digest and familiarize themselves with the identifying characteristics between both hunted and protected migratory bird species.

Several birds may appear similar to whooping cranes, but if you look closely you can tell the difference. The sandhill crane, the whooping crane’s closest relative, is gray in color, not white. Also, sandhill cranes are somewhat smaller, with a wingspan of about five feet. Sandhill cranes occur in flocks of two to hundreds, whereas whooping cranes are most often seen in flocks of two to as many as 10 to 15, although they sometimes migrate with sandhill cranes.

Snow geese and white pelicans have black wing tips like the whooping crane but their profile is much more compact and their wing beats are faster. Here’s a video that details the difference between snow geese and whooping cranes www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvkAYGZnJ4Q&feature=youtu.be.

Last year, the whooping crane population was a record 329 birds, compared to the all-time low of just 15 birds that existed in 1941.

The public can help track whooping cranes by reporting sightings to TPWD’s Whooper Watch, a citizen-science based reporting system to track whooping crane migration and wintering locations throughout Texas. More information about Whooper Watch, including instructions for reporting sightings, can be found online at www.inaturalist.org/projects/texas-whooper-watch and by downloading the iNaturalist mobile app. These observations help biologists identify new migration and wintering locations and their associated habitats.
**“Pack of Knowledge” “Football Jigs Revisited”**

By Andrew Grills

I love cool weather! I always get excited this time of year because I know my favorite season has begun. Jig season. While other techniques might put more fish in the boat, its hard to beat a jig for quality fish.

A football jig is my big bass go to lure for November. I’ll be targeting fish in 20-30’ of water with it on main lake, offshore structure. Flipping and pitching jigs definitely have their place. However, I’ll be doing more of that as we approach winter and fish migrate into the creek channels.

Football jigs are popular across the country. Most of the various brands of football jigs are designed for lakes with less cover and smaller fish than what we’re used to here in east Texas. Many come with a light weedguard and a light wire hook. While these characteristics are great for the hookup ratio in deeper water, they’re not ideal for the size fish and cover here. That is why I choose to fish football jigs made with our bodies of water in mind.

The first thing I look at when choosing a football jig is the hook. I like a big, sharp, beefy hook because we’re dealing with big fish here on Lake Fork. The last thing you want is to lose a giant bass because the gap wasn’t big enough or the hook straightened out.

Choosing the right equipment is very important as well. I use 20lb test fluorocarbon line and a long, heavy action rod. The fluorocarbon line is a bit more sensitive than monofilament line. You’ll need all the added sensitivity you can get when you get a light bite in deep water. I prefer Seaguar Invizx fluorocarbon.

As for the rod, I use a 7’3” length so I can quickly take up slack on the hookset. When fishing the bottom in 25-30’ of water, there’s going to be a significant bow in the line. A longer rod will help make up for this. You’ll need a heavy action with an extra fast tip. The Kistler Helium 3 XH is a perfect jig rod for Lake Fork.

My color selection is pretty simple. I feel like many of us put too much emphasis on subtle color variations. During the fall, I like to stay with natural colors. Shades of green pumpkin, watermelon, and brown are great choices.

I use two types of retrieves with a football jig. If the fish are on or near the bottom I simply drag the jig back slowly. I feel like the rocks and roots along the bottom impart plenty of action, so I rarely do much with my rod other than a slow, steady crawl. The other retrieve I use is a “stroking” retrieve. Stroking a jig is ideal when fish are suspended a few feet off the bottom, or when its necessary to trigger a reaction bite. When stroking a jig, I snap the rod upwards on semi-slack line. I repeat this all the way back to the boat. I’ve caught a lot of big bass each way. I’ll usually try both retrieves when fishing an area.

There are some days when you can load the boat with good numbers of quality fish on a football jig. However, to me its a tool for bigger fish. Many come with a light weedguard and a light wire hook. While these characteristics are great for the hookup ratio in deeper water, they’re not ideal for the size fish and cover here. That is why I choose to fish football jigs made with our bodies of water in mind.

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By Don Hampton

Texas Trails Bassmasters of Lake Fork held their 33rd Semi Annual Open Bass Tournament on October 22nd hosted out of Oak Ridge Marina.

Fishing hours for the tournament were from 6 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. It was a five fish limit individual tournament. Texas Trails Bassmasters of Lake Fork paid back 80% of all entries. There was also a Big Bass Pot option to anglers. To get into the Big Bass pot it cost an additional $10 with 100% payback to the top three biggest bass.

Fortyfive anglers showed up to test their skills in an effort to win some of the monies TTB was paying back. Big Bass of the tournament winning $200 was a 2.23-pounds caught by Diane Vineyard; 2nd Big bass weighed 2.21-pounds worth $120 caught by John Goergen; 3rd Big bass was caught by Steven Wood worth $80 and weighed 2.16-pounds.

First place heavy stringer was caught by Steven Wood weighing 7.69-pounds winning him a check for $468; 2nd place heavy stringer weighed 7.61-pounds and was caught by Diane Vineyard winning her a check for $351; 3rd place was won with a stringer weight of 6.98-pounds for $234 by Doug Watson; 4th place and $117 with a stringer weight of 6.76-pounds by John Goergen. Fifth thru tenth places also received checks with tenth place stringer weighing 5.44-pounds.

Texas Trails Bassmasters is a highly motivated progressive bass fishing club with ties to the Wish to Fish Foundation and weight masters at the Wood County Kid Fish. If you are thinking of joining a bass club, you can’t go wrong with Texas Trails Bassmasters of Lake Fork. They will be starting off their new year on November 20th at Lake of The Pines. For more information go to www.texastrailsbassmasters.com. Or give Rodney Ellis, President, a call at 903-714-6473 or Don Hampton, Vice President/Tournament Director at 903-360-6994.

Winners of the 2016 fall open (lt to rt) Steven Wood 1st, Diane Vineyard 2nd, Doug Watson 3rd and John Goergen 4th. Don Hampton Tournament Director in the background.

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November on Fork is a great fishing month  (Continued from Page 6-A)

afternoon hours. Flutter spoons, jigging spoons, Carolina rigs, drop shots and football jigs will be the “go to” baits when you locate bass stacked up on any of these features. Pitch out a marker buoy and go to work. Gold is a great color for the spoons and a ten inch worm will get the job done on the C-rig. Blue fleck, redbug, green pumpkin and bambbug are all great colors to start with. The same colors apply to the football jig and I favor the Talon Carolina Worm in redbug for my drop shot. Barfish are the key to these deep spots. Find those on your graph and the bass will be mixed in with them.

If you are headed out to Lake Fork in November searching for the trophy of a lifetime, I would love to be a part of this trophy quest. I still have a few dates open in November and some in December. I also have gift certificates available if you have friends or loved one’s who have dreamt of landing a huge bass. You can contact me at 409 782-4269 or e-mail me at skeet21c@aol.com. You can follow me on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/LakeForkGuideDavidOzio. I post my daily trip results on this page. I run a Skeeter FX with a Yamaha 250SHO and would like to thank Skeeter for making my job on the lake the best in the country. I would also like to thank G-Loomis, Talon Lures and Shimano for making my job the blast that it is. A special shout out to Nautical Mile Marine in Tyler for all their help in keeping me on the water seven days a week, no issues. I hope to see a lot of you on the water. Romans 10:13, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”. I wish all of you a blessed day.”

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11th Annual Berkley (Continued from Page 5-A)

rance Electronics, and MinnKota trolling motor.

Andrew Marks of Berkley addressed the crowd before the presentation of the checks and prizes, and thanked everyone for their continued support of this event and for choosing Berkley/Sebile products for their fishing needs. Marks stated, “This event is always a learning experience for us. The feedback we receive helps us with product development, research and marketing. It also gives us a clearer idea of what our customers want from Berkley in the future. We look forward to seeing everyone next year.”

Highlights of the tournament will be re-capped on the WFN Network. For show times, follow the WFN link on www.BassChamps.com

For dates of other great tournaments BassChamps put on you can also find them on their website.

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H E M I N G W A Y  T O L K I E N
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Fish Friendly
Big Time Texas Hunts Winners Announced

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department announced the 14 lucky winners of this year’s Big Time Texas Hunts selected at random from entries in the drawing.

All told, hunters bought over 79,000 Big Time Texas Hunt entries during this year’s sales period, which ran May 15- Oct. 15. More than $737,000 in gross sales were generated and proceeds from the drawing go to support wildlife research, habitat management and public hunting.

This year’s winner of the Texas Grand Slam hunting package, Ed Bredemeyer of San Antonio, is making plans for four separate guided hunts for the state’s top four premier big game species - desert bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, pronghorn and mule deer.

“I told my wife this is the gift that keeps on giving, kind of like the jelly of the month club,” said Bredemeyer, who noted he has been entering the Big Time Texas Hunts for about 10 years. “I bought chances in other categories, too. I’ve been involved with hunting and conservation for years and the way I see it, if it’s good for wildlife, it’s good for me. I like supporting the people that support wildlife.”

Following are the winners of this year’s Big Time Texas Hunts.

--Texas Grand Slam - Ed Bredemeyer, San Antonio
--Ultimate Mule Deer Hunt - Stephen Howard, Houston
--Premium Buck Hunt - Dennis Koehler, Adkins
--Exotic Safari - Gary Clark, Childress
--Whitetail Bonanza - Timothy Ramsey, Spring; John Hamilton, Bandera; William Hoermann, Driftwood; David Sirmon, Amaarillo; Thomas Harris, Boerne; Harold Louvier, New Iberia, LA
--Big Time Bird Hunt - Patrick Haley, Porter

--Gator Hunt - William Smith II, Midland
--Texas Waterfowl Hunt - John Nicholson, Rockwall
--Wild Hog Adventure - Tanner Davis, Austin

All winners have been notified. Entries for next year’s Big Time Texas Hunts will go on sale May 15, 2017.
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On October 8th “The Wish To Fish Foundation” welcomed the Gatica family, 18 year old Dakota and 12 year old Hayden to Lake Fork. Also seen in photo (l to r) Bart Martin dipping minnows, Chad Marsh, Director, father Jonathon Gatica, Rodney Ellis, Director, and mother Kristy Gatica.

There were big smiles in the 11th Annual Berkley Big Bass Tournament but this might have been the happiest! Walter Thomas Jr. from Alba, TX., won for heaviest over the slot with this 10.15-lb bass in the last weigh-in. For his catch he won $1,000 plus $100 Biobor bonus for the hour plus a Skeeter ZX200, powered by Yamaha SHO, with Lowrance Electronics, PowerPole and MinnKota trolling motor. See full story on Page 4-A.

The heaviest bass 16” or less was also won in the last 15 minutes of the tournament! Joe Todd from Wichita Falls, TX., was almost the last one to the scales during the tournament when he brought the winner in weighing 2.95-lbs. For his catch he won $400 in the hour and a Skeeter ZX190 powered by a Yamaha SHO, Lowrance Electronics, and MinnKota trolling motor.

“Happy Thanksgiving”

By Sue Hampton

We often hear the expression “angels here on earth”… we truly believe there are because we have been blessed with our “Wish To Fish” family, the Gatica’s from Fort Worth! We first met parents, Kristy & Jonathan and their two delightful boys Dakota who is now 18 and Hayden 12 when we invited them to Lake Fork for a day on the water in June 2013.

Dakota and Hayden were both diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Dakota was 4 years old and Hayden was diagnosed while still in Kristy’s womb. DMD is a progressive neuromuscular disorder and symptoms include fatigue, muscle weakness and difficulty running and (See Wish to Fish...... Continued on Page 3-A)