

# TOWA

The Official Publication of the **Texas Outdoor Writers Association**

## TOWA 2012 CONFERENCE UPDATE

# TOWA Conference Theme to Highlight “Inside the Outdoors 2012”

*By Ralph Winingham, Newsletter Editor*

Surrounded by the comfortable Hill Country style accommodations of the Courtyard by Marriott River Village on Sept. 11, TOWA board members were provided a preview of plans to help improve the outdoor communications skills and offer ideas for putting those skills to good use at our 2012 conference Feb. 23-26.

“What draws us to the conference is the opportunity to be mentored, educated and for the fellowship,” said TJ Greaney, conference program co-chairman.

“One of my favorite memories is the time I spent at one of my first conferences sitting in on a conversation with two writers telling their stories about how they had been writing for more than 20 years. That is when I created heartfelt ties to this organization,” he said.

With that in mind, the tentative schedule submitted by Greaney and David Sikes, the other conference program co-chairman, has been streamlined to conduct both the fishing and shooting breakouts on the hotel grounds, rather than require members to travel to other sites.

Among the possible conference agenda items under discussion include more workshop and education sessions; a tour of the Coleman factory at New Braunfels Coleman; and a dinner address by outdoor adventurer and author Walter “Yukon” Yates.

“The way the economy and budgets are going with our supporting members, we need to improve our value to them by becoming better writers,” Greaney said, adding that rather than focus on any hands-on activities, the conference in 2012 will be geared toward educational and skill-development opportunities.

“We already have more speakers than we have time on the schedule,” Sikes said.



TOP: Board Chairman John Goodspeed makes sure of the number of pillows on the bed in his room at the Courtyard Marriott River Village where some of the board members checked out the accommodations following the Sept. 11 board meeting. ABOVE: Getting ready to enjoy some fine German food at the Friesenhaus Restaurant in New Braunfels during a meal hosted by Nina Eastman of the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce.

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*TOWA News is published monthly for the Texas Outdoor Writers Association by Ralph Winingham. Layout by SusanEbertink, SusanEbertink@gmail.com. Contributors are urged to submit material by the 15th of each month. For advertising information, contact Ralph Winingham at (210) 764-2450 or [rwiningham@att.net](mailto:rwiningham@att.net). TOWA News is emailed to members and mailed first class from San Antonio. TOWA was formed in 1958 as a professional/social organization for those who communicate about hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits, as well as those in business and industry connected with the outdoors.*



The TOWA Newsletter is proudly sponsored by Gulf States Toyota. For information, go to [www.buytoyota.com](http://www.buytoyota.com).



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In other board action, the members unanimously approved a motion by Board Member Susan Ebert to relax the guidelines for active membership requirements. The suggested changes listed below must be approved by a vote of the general membership at the 2012 conference before they can be implemented:

- 1) Newspaper editor, writer, columnist, feature writer or freelancer: 36 published pieces paid by the publisher during the previous 12 months.
- 2) Cartoonist, illustrator or artist: A minimum of 12 paid published images of an outdoor nature during the previous 12 months or is a paid staff member of a newspaper/magazine. Some flexibility is allowed in this category based on judgment of the membership applicant screening committee depending on the amount of time involved. (No change)
- 3) Radio and Television: The applicant must be a host, writer and/or producer of a minimum of 8 shows of the 30-minute format, or 36 of the 2-5 minute format, or comparable exposure as determined by the applicant screening committee on a case-by-case basis.
- 4) Photography, Still: Applicant must have been duly paid for 12 published photographs during the past 12-month period. Movie: Production and sale of a feature film of at least 27 minutes within every 12-month period, or comparably exposure. Shorter features may be combined to meet the total time. This is a flexible category and is left solely to the judgment of the applicant screening committee.

5) Magazine, Editorial: Employee of recognized magazine with masthead credit, must be a fulltime employee. The publication must be primarily in the outdoor field or if not primarily an outdoor publication consistently must include outdoor coverage for which applicant is responsible. Freelance -- Six published pieces in the past 12 month period.

6) Book Author: Minimum of one outdoor book in each 24-month period or comparable publication by means of several outdoor booklets. (No change)

7) Lecturer: Twenty lectures within a 12-month period before a paying audience or on a scheduled for-pay basis. (No change)

8) Information: Fulltime employee of a state, federal or non-profit agency engaged in natural resource matters or outdoor recreational activities whose primary duties are communicating about the outdoors in press releases, videos, slide presentations, photos, tapes, media relations or other means of communicating the outdoor experiences. (No change)

9) Electronic Publishing: Web site producer who is responsible for content and material of an outdoor-oriented web site. Website photographer – 24 published, paid articles or photographs in the past 12 month period.

10) Educator/Instructor: Full-time instructor at an institution of higher learning in outdoor-related journalism, English or natural resources or is employed by an outdoor-related agency as a natural resource specialist whose principal job duty is to educate the public on natural resource issues. (No change)

TOWA members with any comments or suggestions about the changes may contact any member of the board to obtain further information.

The board also authorized Site Selection Chairwoman Jonette Childs to encourage representatives from potential host cities of future conferences to set up displays at New Braunfels to provide members with information about their sites.

Exhibit space will be made available for potential host cities during the Friday night mixer to allow for this face-to-face contact.

Childs said that the two cities under consideration at this time for the

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2013 conference are Rockport and Corpus Christi, based on the practice of alternating conference sites between inland and coastal locations. However, the consensus of the board was to expand the selection process to include all areas of the state each year in order to receive bids from more locations.

In addition, the board eliminated the \$89 per night cap on hotel room rates after Childs said the restriction that has been in place for many years has severely limited potential host cities. She was authorized to use her discretion in negotiating hotel rates that are more in line with current economic conditions.

TOWA members are also being asked to contact Childs if they have recommendations and contacts at possible host cities that might be interested in bidding on future conferences.

On the business and financial side of the board meeting, Executive Director Larry LeBlanc was authorized to proceed with finalizing the process to have TOWA declared a 501-c organization in order to clear up any possible Internal Revenue Service tax liabilities for past years' incomes.

LeBlanc pointed out that TOWA's current financial standing is sound with a total of \$60,507.15 in the organization's accounts.

"Last year's conference cost us about \$17,000 and we currently have more than \$25,000 in our checking account, so we are doing good," LeBlanc said.

He added that 105 active or associate members and 67 supporting members have paid their dues for 2011, with those who have not paid to be dropped from membership directory and website as part of the upgrade of the site (see ED report below). Invoices for 2012 dues will be going out later this fall.

Other actions by the board at the Sept. 11 meeting will be presented to TOWA members when the official meeting minutes are published in a future newsletter, as required by the bylaws.

## Hunters Can Keep "Facts at Hand" With NSSF Pocket Card

NEWTOWN, CT – At some point, nearly every hunter will be called on to point out the merits of hunting. Will you be up to the task of defending this great tradition by citing well-sourced facts in your discussion?

The National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry, can help outdoor enthusiasts make a point with its newly updated Hunter's Pocket Fact Card. The card is free and available online at [nssf.org/lit](http://nssf.org/lit). Cards in bulk quantities are available for hunting clubs, shooting ranges, conservation organizations or firearms retail stores.

Using statistics, pie charts and color photographs, the card points out the following:

- That sportsmen contribute nearly \$8 million daily to wildlife conservation through hunting license sales revenues, excise taxes collected on sporting equipment, the sale of Federal Duck Stamps and other revenue sources.
- That hunting helps support 600,000 jobs in the United States.
- That hunters and target shooters have paid \$6.8 billion in excise taxes since the inception in 1937 of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act.
- That game species such as white-tailed deer, waterfowl, Rocky Mountain Elk, wild turkeys and pronghorn antelope have been restored to healthy populations from dangerously low levels in the early 1900s.

"Hunters must be more than sportsmen, they must be spokespersons who speak up in defense of our traditions when that need arises," said NSSF President and Chief Executive Officer Steve Sanetti. "I keep a supply of our Hunter's Pocket Fact Cards handy. It's nice to leave a card with the person you've been talking to about hunting."

NSSF is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2011. To learn about the foundation's history visit [www.nssf.org/50](http://www.nssf.org/50) or contact Bill Brassard Jr. at (203) 426-1320.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Updated TOWA Membership Directory Awaits Fine Tuning by Members

*Larry LeBlanc, Executive Director*

Finally after three years of battling the membership list it is as accurate as I can make it. Now it is up to you to do the fine tuning.

The membership database on our website is the official and only database of our members. I would encourage each member to go to the online directory and check your information. If it is inaccurate in any way, change it. Anyone who does not feel comfortable changing their membership information on line, send the changes to me and I will change it for you.

In the information section where there is a brief statement of what you do, that needs to be no more than 250 characters (not words but characters) if you want to see it in its entirety in the hard copy directory for 2012. When approaching this section of the directory remember most people who want to know what you do will want the information brief and concise, or there is a very good chance that they will not read it.

All changes to the online directory must be submitted by Nov. 1 in order to get them in the 2012 hard copy directory that will be in your conference packet along with your 2012 membership card, name badge, a program of conference events and all of the other information from the Courtyard by Marriott River Village and the New Braunfels Convention and Visitors Bureau.

I wish to thank all of the members for helping me go from no directory at all to one that will be as accurate as you and I can make it.

# **TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION 2012 EXCELLENCE IN CRAFT ENTRY FORM**

The Excellence In Craft Contest is an opportunity for active members to receive special recognition for journalism excellence. Submission must be outdoor oriented and must have been published, broadcast or distributed in Texas. Associate members are not eligible.

*The TOWA Excellence in Craft Contest is proudly sponsored by Chevrolet.*

CATEGORY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name Of Publication and Circulation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Publication: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Role In Production (Video/TV Radio ONLY): \_\_\_\_\_

Distribution/Further Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Certified Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: (Purpose statement, technical data, etc. that might assist the judges in evaluating your entry)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Each entry in any category will require an entry fee of \$10. You may write one check for the total amount of all categories entered. All entries must be postmarked no later than Dec.1, 2011. Any entry received after this date will be returned unopened.

Send package and check (made out to TOWA) to: Kendal Hemphill  
TOWA EIC Chairman  
P.O. Box 1600  
Mason, TX 76856

## Bass Pro Shops Responds to EEOC Allegations

**SPRINGFIELD, MO** – Bass Pro Shops has denied allegations by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that the company discriminated against African American and Hispanic applicants in its employment practices and that it retaliated against any employees.

“The EEOC’s allegations are contrary to our profound respect for and commitment to our team of experienced and knowledgeable associates, and we are determined to prove them wrong,” said Mike Rowland, vice president of Human Resources. “Respect for our associates and our customers is central to the mission of our company, and it has been a key contributor to our success.”

Issues regarding discrimination and retaliation are taken very seriously by the company, he said.

Bass Pro has long been committed to full compliance with laws against employment discrimination and retaliation, and has policies and procedures to assure compliance with those laws. When violations are discovered, as is inevitable in any large organization with thousands of employees, they are promptly and firmly addressed, according to Rowland. He added that Bass Pro officials are extremely disappointed by the EEOC’s decision to take action.

“The company has cooperated with the EEOC throughout its investigation, providing extensive documentation and numerous witnesses,” Rowland said, emphasizing that Bass Pro vigorously denies the EEOC’s allegations that the company engaged in unlawful document destruction.

“It is our policy to retain all documents required by law. We provided more than 250,000 pages of documents to the EEOC,” Rowland said.

“Despite our cooperation, the EEOC made unrealistic demands during conciliation. The EEOC cannot or will not tell us the basis for the analysis they claim to have conducted,” he said. “Fundamental fairness and good faith should require that the EEOC reveal the evidence on which its claims are based before filing a lawsuit that will be long, expensive and disruptive.”

“This investigation and the EEOC’s conduct demonstrate a troubling tendency by the EEOC to stereotype those who love outdoor sports and support conservation as people who unlawfully discriminate or oppose equal opportunity for all,” Rowland said.

For example, EEOC staff investigators have suggested on several occasions that because Bass Pro sponsors a NASCAR race team the company is more likely to discriminate against minorities.

In addition, the EEOC staff raised questions about Bass Pro’s policy against hiring convicted felons, claiming it discriminates against certain minority groups, even though federal regulations prohibit convicted felons from handling firearms, and Bass Pro sells firearms, ammunition and explosives.

“Bass Pro has long been a significant supporter of numerous youth development and conservation programs that give outdoor opportunities to inner-city diverse youth. As we challenge these unfair and unfounded charges, we want to assure the millions of people from all walks of life who visit our stores annually that Bass Pro will continue to provide the one-of-a-kind experience they have come to expect,” Rowland said. “And we will do so while fully complying with the law.”

Further information about Bass Pro is available from Larry Whiteley at (417) 873-5022 or by email at [lwhiteley@basspro.com](mailto:lwhiteley@basspro.com).

## Men Jailed for Illegally Catching 260 Baby Alligators

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)** Officer David Straub and FWC Reserve Officer John Parrish surprised two Sumter County men early Thursday morning as the men came ashore in their airboat on Lake Apopka with a couple of sacks full of recently hatched alligators.

Robert “Bo” Martin Duval (DOB 02/06/79) and Christopher Cork Scroggins (DOB 05/08/89), both of Bushnell, were booked into Lake County jail early Thursday on felony possession/capture of hatchling alligators and misdemeanor conspiracy charges. Duval had additional felony charges of possession of firearms and ammunition by a convicted felon. The firearms were concealed under some vegetation in the boat.

FWC officers were on surveillance at the Montverde boat ramp when the two men returned from their night of capturing the hatching alligators on Lake Apopka in Lake County.

“You have got me, and I have a lot of alligator hatchlings,” Duval said as the officers approached him and Scroggins.

“Unfortunately, there is an illegal market for hatchling alligators, and people who participate in this type of poaching have no regard for our resources or the laws that protect them,” said Straub.

Officers returned the hatchlings to the lake alive. Duval and Scroggins later bailed out on \$13,000 and \$3,000 bonds, respectively.

Possessing/capturing hatchling alligators is a third-degree felony, which, on conviction, carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Possession of a firearm by a convicted felon is a second-degree felony, which carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

## West Monroe Man Pleads Guilty to Killing Bald Eagle

A West Monroe, La., man pled guilty for violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act in the Federal Western District Court of Louisiana in Monroe on Sept. 19.

Jeffrey M. Miles, 22, entered his guilty plea to U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen Hayes for shooting a mature bald eagle in Franklin Parish on April 4, 2011. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Enforcement Division agents initiated the investigation on April 4 after finding a dead bald eagle in a drainage ditch along Camphouse Road.

After a thorough investigation and receiving tips from the public through the department’s Operation Game Thief hotline, agents were able to cite Miles on April 22 for violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

“Getting a guilty plea in federal court proves that the investigative work our agents did was factual and sound,” said Col. Winton Vidrine, head of the LDWF Law Enforcement Division. “Utilizing the public tips, gathering crucial evidence and interviewing suspects or people with information about this case all led to a successful conviction.”

Hayes ordered a pre-sentencing investigation to be completed by federal investigators. A sentencing date has been set for Jan. 3, 2012 in Monroe. Violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act brings up to a \$100,000 fine and up to 12 months in jail.



# TOWA Teams With Dallas Safari Club to Promote Outdoor Writing Contest



The Texas Outdoor Writers Association has teamed up with the Dallas Safari Club's Dallas Ecological Foundation to promote the outdoors with good story telling through a writing contest for middle school and high school students of Texas. The Dallas Ecological Foundation will promote the contest within Metroplex schools involved in its Outdoor Adventures Education Program. The New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce has agreed to help recruit contestants within the host community for the 2012 TOWA conference. And the TOWA board of directors is asking association members to promote the contest at campuses in their respective communities.

Below are the contest rules and entry form. There is no entry fee. Cash prizes will be awarded for the top three stories from each age division, middle school and high school. A laptop computer will be given to the author of the overall best story chosen by a panel of judges. The overall winner will be recognized at the February 2012 TOWA Conference in New Braunfels.

Questions should be directed to Board Member TJ Greaney at (512) 292-1113 or tjgreaney1@gmail.com.

## Texas Outdoor Writers Association Junior Outdoor Journalist Adventure Story Writing Competition

*Sponsored in part by Dallas Safari Club's Dallas Ecological Foundation's Outdoor Adventures Education program*

The Texas Outdoor Writers Association and Dallas Ecological Foundation are pleased to announce our First Outdoor Experience Story Writing Contest for students. The contest opens Oct. 1, 2011. There will be two divisions, middle school grades 6-8, High School grades 9-12. **First Place** winners in each division will receive a \$100 cash prize, **Second Place** winners will receive a \$50 cash prize, and **Honorable Mentions** will receive \$25 cash prize. There will be one **Grand Prize** winner who will win a brand new laptop computer and an invitation to the 2012 TOWA Conference in New Braunfels on Feb. 25.

Stories will be judged on originality, creativity and writing style. Winning entries will be featured at the TOWA 2012 conference in New Braunfels where members and guests may read and enjoy them. All entries become property of TOWA and may be published in full or part in the TOWA and DSC newsletter, website or brochures. Winners will be notified by telephone or email, and a list of winners will also be posted in the April 2012 edition of the TOWA newsletter.

### OFFICIAL RULES:

1. Your story must be your own original work and be on the topic of – My Best Outdoor Adventure.
2. Type your story (minimum 12 point font), or print it in ink as neatly as possible (Entrants should type or print stories themselves; age-appropriate spelling and grammar mistakes, etc. are acceptable).
3. Use 8.5 x 11 inch paper, leaving a 1-1/2 inch margin on the left side.
4. Maximum word count should not exceed 500 words.
5. Do not include any artwork.
6. Only one story may be submitted per person.
7. Stories will not be returned.
8. Each contestant should submit her/his story to: **TOWA, attention TJ Greaney; 9508 Chisholm Trail, Austin, Texas 78748. All entries, whether delivered in person or by mail, must be received by 4 p.m. on Jan.15, 2012.** Stories not following these rules will not be accepted. No exceptions will be made.



### 1ST ANNUAL TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION JUNIOR OUTDOOR JOURNALIST ADVENTURE STORY WRITING COMPETITION

*(Please cut and clip to your story.)*

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Pages: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Street/P.O. Box: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number (No. 1): \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number (No. 2): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Story: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Words: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

# U.S. Celebrity Waterfowl Hunter Pleads Guilty to Federal Wildlife Charges

*This story, courtesy of the **Winnipeg Free Press**, is being reprinted for our TOWA members as a reminder that those in our chosen profession are required to maintain a higher standard when engaged in outdoor activities.*

*Any violation of game laws and outdoor ethics, whether intentional or not, by anyone who writes about, talks about or films their outdoor adventures reflects on all outdoor journalists who have chosen a career of highlighting and promoting the great outdoors.*

*When violators are exposed to public scrutiny as in this case below, the public perception of all outdoor journalists can suffer irreparable harm.*

*All TOWA members are encouraged to be aware of their responsibility as outdoor stewards every time they enjoy and share their outdoor experiences.*

— **Ralph Winingham, Newsletter Editor**

**EDMONTON** - An American celebrity hunter has pleaded guilty to federal charges including causing unnecessary pain and suffering to a bird.

Environment Canada laid 10 charges against Jeff Foiles in January under the Migratory Birds Act and the Criminal Code. Foiles, who makes commercial videos of his hunting trips, pleaded guilty Sept. 14 to six of the charges in an Edmonton court.

The charges included shooting more than his daily limit of ducks and geese during hunting trips in Alberta between 2004 and 2007. He was also accused of failing to immediately retrieve migratory game birds he had shot and failing to immediately kill birds he had wounded.

During one of the videotaped hunts, Foiles, who is from Pleasant Hill, Ill., is seen holding up a wounded duck on camera, abusing the bird by wrenching its neck and manipulating its head so the duck is looking at him.

“Mr. Foiles slaps the bird’s head a couple of times,” reads the agreed statement of facts in the case.

“Playing to the camera, Mr. Foiles opens the wounded ducks mouth several times and makes ‘quacking’ sounds. Mr. Foiles moves off camera and kills the duck.”

A wildlife expert testified that the duck was conscious, alive and suffering extreme pain and stress while it was being handled by Foiles. Dr. Karen Matchin also testified that birds experience pain similarly to humans and mammals.

During another hunt, Foiles is seen laughing on a video as he manipulates a wounded duck, whacking it in the head with a duck call. He then places his fingers over the bird’s nostrils and holds its beak closed, asking “Is this how you want to die?”

The cameraman is heard urging Foiles to kill the duck in a tone that suggests he doesn’t think what is happening is funny. Foiles abuses the duck for more than four minutes before killing it.

Foiles sells the videos under the brand name Fallin’ Skies. One of the slogans used to market the series says: “It’s not exactly the sky that’s falling, but Jeff Foiles and friends do their best to make it rain waterfowl.”

Foiles was also sentenced in an Illinois court on Sept. 21 to 13 months in jail and a \$100,000 fine after pleading guilty in June to violating U.S. federal wildlife laws. He is to be formally sentenced in Edmonton on the Canadian charges on Oct. 19.

Environment Canada says it worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for four years to investigate complaints made against Foiles. The evidence gathered led to charges being laid in both countries.

Martin Sharren, vice-president of the Alberta Fish and Game Association, said Foiles gives ethical hunters a bad name.

“Unfortunately, people will look at this guy and say ‘That is what hunters do,’” Sharren said.

“I can’t reiterate enough that this has absolutely nothing to do with hunting. It is just out and out breaking the law.”



## TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

FEB. 23-26, 2012

Courtyard by Marriott River Village, New Braunfels, Texas

### “Inside the Outdoors”

WOULD YOU LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF, your products or services to some of the most influential outdoor writers in the state of Texas?

Limited opportunities are available on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to approval by TOWA Board of Directors.

#### Meal Sponsorship Opportunities include:

- Introduction of yourself and your company.
- Display products, brochures and/or marketing items at tables or pass out during meal.
- Audio/Video devices available; please check in advance.
- Speakers for each meal service will be determined by the programming committee.

**BREAKFAST: \$1,200.** A favorite, this gives you the chance to spend the rest of the day marketing to your audience in a casual setting. One Year Membership included.

**LUNCH: \$1,500.** Engage the writers during the mid-day break. Introduce them to your products and services with plenty of time to converse and inform. One Year Membership included.

**Friday Night DINNER: \$2,500.** This is a formal banquet setting featuring the popular Dirty Dozen live auction and a guest speaker. One Year Membership included.

Partial sponsorships are available for each meal. Contact TJ Greaney at [tj@kidsoutdoorzone.com](mailto:tj@kidsoutdoorzone.com) or David Sikes at [SikesD@caller.com](mailto:SikesD@caller.com) for details. Please ask about other available sponsorship opportunities. Donations to live or silent auctions that benefit our Dan Klepper Memorial Youth Scholarship and Outdoor Education fund also provide excellent opportunities to display your products in a high-profile setting while being a part of this important event.

# TOWA Scholarship Winner Seeks Elusive Gators on Lake Worth

**TARRANT COUNTY** – Skimming the water of Lake Worth, Joe Lewis and his team can see all of the wildlife that scatters through North Texas...The deer grazing on the banks. The herons that stalk their next meal. And the cranes that swoop in front of their passing boat.

But Lewis has his eyes set on what lies below the surface. He's looking for alligators.

"The big thing, I hope it just sheds a little bit of light that alligators are becoming a little more of an urban population," he said. "They are starting to frequent a lot of major cities here in Texas."

Lake Worth is considered the far northwest tip of the alligator's natural habitat. There's plenty of water and shady spots to rest, but food sources and boat traffic make this a unique environment.

And it's a tough place to trap the elusive reptiles.

"We've caught turtles, carp. But usually when the door is down, something in it is strong enough to trip the trigger," Lewis explained.

He caught a female gator in June. His team had her weighed and measured, then tagged it with a device to record how — and where — she moves around the lake.

Tracking the gators usually requires a radio transmitter. But sometimes the best tools are a good set of eyes and a catch pole.

"We've had some 12-footers reported. We've had 14-footers reported," said Rob Denkhaus, who works with the Fort Worth Nature Center.

He thought there might be as many as 50 gators in Lake Worth. Even though the research is showing far fewer, he believes the city can learn a lot about the animals and the lake.

"Lake Worth is a drinking water supply and a recreational reservoir," Denkhaus said. "Any contaminants that are out there are in the alligators. And if our alligators are living long lives, healthy lives, then it's saying our water quality is pretty good."

Lewis believes the biggest benefit of his project will be what it teaches people around the lake.

The alligators are more interested in the next carp or gar than lurking through the marsh waiting to surprise humans.

"These things have been here a long time," Lewis said. "Most of the people don't even know they're there... and happy to be oblivious to that fact."

It's been a slow season for the alligator traps. They've been set and reset.

But Lewis is hunting an animal that's been here for thousands of years, and he knows to learn more about this underwater predator he has to be just as patient and adaptive as they are.

*Story courtesy of Casey Norton of WFAA-TV Dallas.*



Conducting alligator research at Lake Worth in Fort Worth, Joe Lewis, one of the 2011 TOWA Dan Klepper Memorial Scholarship recipients, was featured in a WFAA-TV segment that aired in July. Lewis is a graduate student with the Department of Biology and Environmental Science at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Photos Courtesy of Joe Lewis

## TOWA COPY COPS

This common error was spied in a recent issue of *Texas Wildlife* magazine:

**INCORRECT:** "Mourning doves are pickers, not scratchers, and eat a diet almost exclusively comprised of seeds."

**CORRECT:** "Mourning doves are pickers, not scratchers, and eat a diet almost exclusively comprising seeds."

**RULE:** To comprise means to contain or embrace; the whole (diet) comprises the parts (seeds). Just remember, if you're using "of" after comprise, you're using it wrong; you can correctly use "composed of," but never "comprised of." (Or opt out and just write "a diet almost exclusively made up of seeds.")

## CALENDAR

**Nov. 12** – Operation Orphans hunt for girls at Camp Gene Ashby near Mason. Volunteers and donations are needed. Call (325) 347-6745 for additional information.

**Nov. 19** – Operation Orphans hunt for boys at Camp Gene Ashby near Mason. Volunteers and donations are needed. Call (325) 347-6745 for additional information.

**Feb. 23-26, 2012** – Annual TOWA Conference with the Courtyard by Marriott River Village at 750 Interstate 35 North in New Braunfels as the host hotel. Conference information available from Executive Director Larry LeBlanc at (936) 524-0761 or by email at [towa@suddenlink.net](mailto:towa@suddenlink.net).