

Hunting & Fishing opportunities abound!



Photo by Payton McCormick

When it comes to the outdoors of Wilbarger County and the surrounding area it isn't hard to see what makes this North Central Texas county special. Formed in 1858, Wilbarger County is 978 square miles of diverse terrain such as open grasslands, mesquite, pasture and rugged forested river bottom land.

With thousands of acres of hunting land available, sportsmen from all over the state and even the country head this way for hunting expeditions.

The famous Waggoner Ranch starts on the southern side of the county with over 500,000 acres of fenced private land. Hunting land surrounding the ranch is the most coveted for big bucks during deer season.

But deer season isn't the only reason for hunters to come to

Vernon. The area is home to white tailed deer, mule deer, wild hogs, javelina, turkeys, dove, ducks, geese and other game birds, as well as many varmints like coyote, skunk, badger, and much more.

Farmers in Wilbarger County have a variety of crops that have helped wildlife flourish over the years such as wheat, corn, alfalfa, cotton, peanuts and other crops that give small and large animals a diverse diet.

Dove season is a great time of year in the area. With all the aforementioned reasons, dove flock to the area by the thousands. Bagging a limit of any legal species is a breeze on a regular basis as long as you have enough ammo or are a crack shot. Morning, White-winged and Eurasian dove are all prevalent in the area.



Vernon and Wilbarger County offer some of the best hunting opportunities in Texas thanks to an abundance of open grasslands, mesquite pasture and rugged, forested riverbottom land.

THE RED RIVER

The Red River is the northern boundary of Wilbarger County and also the boundary between the states of Texas and Oklahoma. It earned its name from the red color of the water. Every early explorer, regardless of his language, called it "Red" -- Rio Rojo and Rio Roxo in Spanish, Riviere Rouge in French, and Red River in English.

Even though the river was dangerous and sometimes a real menace to the early traveler because of its variable current and quicksand bottom, several important gateways developed along its length. One of the more famous of these is Doan's Crossing in northern Wilbarger County, it was the exit point from Texas for north-bound cattle drives. Even though the river is the state boundary, the river itself is considered to belong wholly to Oklahoma. An Oklahoma fishing license is required.

THE PEASE RIVER

The Pease River flows just to the north of Vernon on its way to the Red River. It begins in the caprock escarpment that separates the Rolling from the High Plains. The river begins as three branches -- the North Pease, Middle Pease and South Pease before heading east through the mesquite and prickly pear flats of north-



Photo by Whitney Jackson

Wyatt and Violet Jackson took part in an annual fishing contest at Copper Breaks State Park

west Texas. The three rivers join as one and eventually flow and join the Red River north of Vernon.

The river is named for Elisha Pease, twice governor of Texas in the 1800s.

For centuries the buffalo herds roamed the banks of the river. Deep soils and sub irrigated grassland flats provided forage and a bluff on the north side of the river offered protection from the wind in winter.

The river was a major Comanche highway through the heart of their territory (Comancheria). On the river, in December 1860 west of present day Vernon, future Sul Ross led the Texas Rangers in a raid that rescued Cynthia Ann Parker (mother of Comanche chief Quanah Parker).

The region's buffalo herds and sheltering canyons allowed the Comanche to thrive. The U.S. Army waged

decades long war with the Comanche at the end of the 19th century, pushing the Comanche onto reservations.

Even then Vernon remained a primary trading center for the Comanche for decades and many of Parkers descendants continue to live in the area.

COPPER BREAKS

Copper Breaks State Park is located about a half hour west of Vernon. This 1,933-acre state park offers camping, picnicking, and hiking and equestrian trails year-round. Fishing is allowed on the 60-acre Lake Copper Breaks. The park, whose name was derived from the copper deposits scattered throughout the area and the rugged, broken terrain, contains a visitor center with exhibits on bison and the Comanche. The park is also home to a Texas longhorn herd.