

Often Overlooked Opportunity

By Steven Bridges

Hunting opportunities abound in Mills County, but the excellent fishing is often overlooked by visitors. There are many places to fish including the Colorado River, Pecan Bayou and many smaller bodies of water locally called “tanks.”

Tank fishing was a staple of my summers growing up in Goldthwaite. We didn’t have all the summer activities kids have today. Vacation Bible School was about it, which was fine with me because I always had fishing on my mind in the summer anyway. (The story of “Jonah and the Whale” was my favorite story at Bible School.)

As a kid, I hiked and biked to every tank in the Goldthwaite Area. The Frog Pond on the southern end of Goldthwaite, the Rodeo Arena Tank and Pope’s Tank were among the tanks we often fished. Bobbers, worms

and Zebco 202’s on little rods were standard equipment.

We grew up knowing everyone in the area. And more importantly, everyone knew us. Ranchers would drive by, and they all had super cold ice water in big, round jugs in the backs of their trucks. I can still remember the “brain-freeze” headaches that resulted from gulping too much of the ice water.

I learned the term “farm pond” while at college at the University of Illinois. I never knew there was such a thing. I only knew of “tanks.” If I saw a nice tank from the road in Illinois, I’d stop at the next farm house. I’d knock on the door. A woman would yell something like, “Elmer! Get the door, I’m not presentable!” I guess there is not much to fix up for on a farm in the middle of nowhere.

When I’d ask a farmer in Illinois if I could fish in his tank, he would scratch his head and wrinkle his



Pictured above, Brady Westlund guides Flint Bridges on a somewhat chilly bass fishing excursion on the XTC Ranch in Mills County. The boys landed a double before their hands got too cold to cast!

brow in a questioning look. I’d then point to the tank and say, “That tank right over there.”

Most of the time the farmers took pity on me — the poor, slow kid who didn’t even know what a farm pond was — and let me fish. Before I could go fish though, he’d grab my arm and say, “Don’t tell anyone I let you fish my pond.” I’d scratch my head, and ask myself, “Does he mean the tank?”

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