



A World Apart

by Craig Kelly

Wylie is known for its proximity to the lakes and recreational water activities, but another body of water is quickly being discovered. Winding through the eastern edge of Wylie, a five and half mile stretch of the East Fork of the Trinity River connects Lake Lavon to the north and Lake Ray Hubbard to the south. Hickory, Willow, Sycamore, Juniper, Mesquite, Elm, Ash, Live Oak, and Pecan trees, as well as a wide variety of indigenous ground cover and vegetation flourish in the rich clay and sandy loam soils. A variety of insects and animals take refuge in this lush river bottomland that Caddo Indians once floated on trade routes.

"This section of the trinity watershed is a personal favorite—one of the most scenic rivers in North Texas. At nearly every bend there is something new," says B.J. Taylor, Dallas resident and avid kayaker who has paddled streams and rivers throughout Texas. "The water clarity is the best I've experienced east of Fort Worth.

There's also plenty of wildlife along this stretch--reptiles, amphibians, insects, birds and rumors of beavers. But if you get out there early enough you may even spot a coyote, bobcat or feral pig."

In July, the Yellow Mexican Water Lily bloom to the size of basketballs until the petals fall off near the end of August. Lily pads grow to more than three feet in diameter. In the spring, many different species of wildflower can be seen from the river. The native hibiscus grows only in the Trinity River Watershed. The river channel is home to many birds such as the Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Red Tailed Hawk and Kingfishers. Migrating birds including Cormorants, Coots and Grebes stop over for the winter in the northern part of Lake Ray Hubbard.

The East Fork of the Trinity River appears tranquil and calm, but Wylie Fire Chief Randy Corbin reminds residents that several people have drowned or required rescue while trying to navigate the East Fork, "Even though

it is close to civilization, the area between Lake Lavon and Lake Ray Hubbard is a confusing, vast area of thick vegetation and changing river channels. During periods of rain the river becomes swift, leaving its banks, making it difficult to navigate. Rescues are very challenging and dangerous...it's hard to locate people and rescues can take hours."

A trip to the upper Colorado River near Kremling in May of 2002, with Dallas artist Steven Shores, started B.J.'s obsession with rivers, fly fishing and exploring as many bodies of water as he could. When they weren't

in the Rockies, B.J. and Steven would explore rivers in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. "A guided trip with Trinity River Expeditions guide Charles Allen down the main stem of the Trinity River through downtown Dallas opened my eyes to the beauty of the Trinity River, debunking local belief that it's full of garbage and waste," says B.J. "But let 'em keep thinking that — more open water for us to enjoy."

Additional pictures of B.J.'s floats on the East Fork of the Trinity River and rivers throughout Texas can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/boltgrove/sets. •

Photos by B.J. Taylor



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