



Brian Treadwell (pictured) and his father, John, took a “fixer-upper” ranch and used a holistic approach to restore its natural beauty.



2006

## LONE STAR LAND STEWARD

\*\*\*\*\*

The Treadwell family transformed 8,000 acres of rocky, cedar-choked land into a lush landscape brimming with wildlife. BY TOM HARVEY

**T**HE RANCHING TRADITION runs deep for John and Brian Treadwell, a father-son team who in seven years transformed a “beat-up sheep ranch that didn’t have any grass on it” into a conservation showpiece, earning them the title of Lone Star Land Steward for 2006.

After the Civil War, John’s great-grandfather, W.W. Treadwell, first acquired ranchland near Abbott, north of Killeen. His story showcases the family spirit of dogged determination. W.W. and his partner rounded up a trainload of steers for the Chicago market. The partner headed north with the cattle while W.W. held down the fort. Unfortunately, the partner forgot to come back with the money. (He was located 20 years later and claimed amnesia. Brian jokingly envisions him saying: “You’re vaguely familiar to me. I think I recognize your six-shooter.”)

Because the partner ran off with the cash, W.W. lost the ranch near Abbott. But here’s where the story’s moral unfolds: Old W.W. refused to quit.

In 1886, he acquired a township of 36 sections six miles north of Fort McKavett, now a state historic site. W.W. bought it from the state for “a pittance down and a promise to pay,” John said.

More than a century later, the Treadwells still operate

part of the original property as the Treadwell Roadside Ranch, 8,000 acres in Menard and Schleicher counties. However, this original ranch is not the focus of John and Brian’s amazing turnaround story.

In 1999, father and son bought another ranch, dubbed the Treadwell Brady Ranch since it came from the Nancy Brady estate.

“I took dad to see it almost a year before we bought it, and it was a hammered parking lot — there wasn’t any grass growing on it,” Brian said. “We couldn’t afford a ranch that was already fixed up. We were looking for a complete canvas of brush that we could come in and sculpt. We didn’t intend to buy one that was as abused as what we got. We were a bit naïve about that.”

What they got was 8,000 acres in Menard and McCulloch counties, conveniently close to the original family ranch. It had a valuable quarter-mile of San Saba River frontage and good groundwater. But the landscape was eroded and rocky, choked with prickly pear, cedar and mesquite from years of overgrazing. It had little good topsoil or grass and no running springs or creeks.

In this unlikely venture they staked the greater part of their hopes and dreams. John had built and operated movie theaters in Dallas and Waco for years, but he and Brian decided to leave that behind and make the new ranch their family business.

PHOTOS BY CHASE FOUNTAIN/TPWD

# NEW LONGHORN COLLECTION



## PENDANT & EARRINGS

The perfect way to celebrate your Texas pride - the Longhorn pendant & earrings. Beautifully set with a Clustina "cristal" apatite lens and diamond hooves.

PD-154 New Longhorn Pendant.....\$1,750  
 ER-154 New Longhorn Earrings.....\$2,000  
 CH-006 18" Snake Chain.....\$295



PD-154



ER-154



RG-01

## NEW LONGHORN RING



RG-02

Limited Edition  
 6 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 10 mm

A new addition - finely detailed with custom-cut Clustina "cristal" apatites & fine quality diamonds.

RG-01 X-Large Ring size: 7 to 10.....\$2,295  
 RG-01 X-Large Ring size: 10.5 to 12.....\$2,395  
 RG-02 Large Ring size: 7 to 10.....\$1,895  
 RG-02 Large Ring size: 10.5 to 12.....\$1,995  
 RG-03 Small Ring size: 5 to 9.....\$1,395  
 RG-04 Mid Ring size: 4 to 7.....\$1,295

Other styles available.

Select styles in yellow, white or orange gold.

1-800-299-5475

In Austin: 346-1760

**C. Kirk Root Designs**

At The Arboretum  
 10000 Research Blvd • Suite 126  
 Austin, TX 78759

HOME OF TEXAS' BRIGHTEST STAR

www.kirkrootdesigns.com

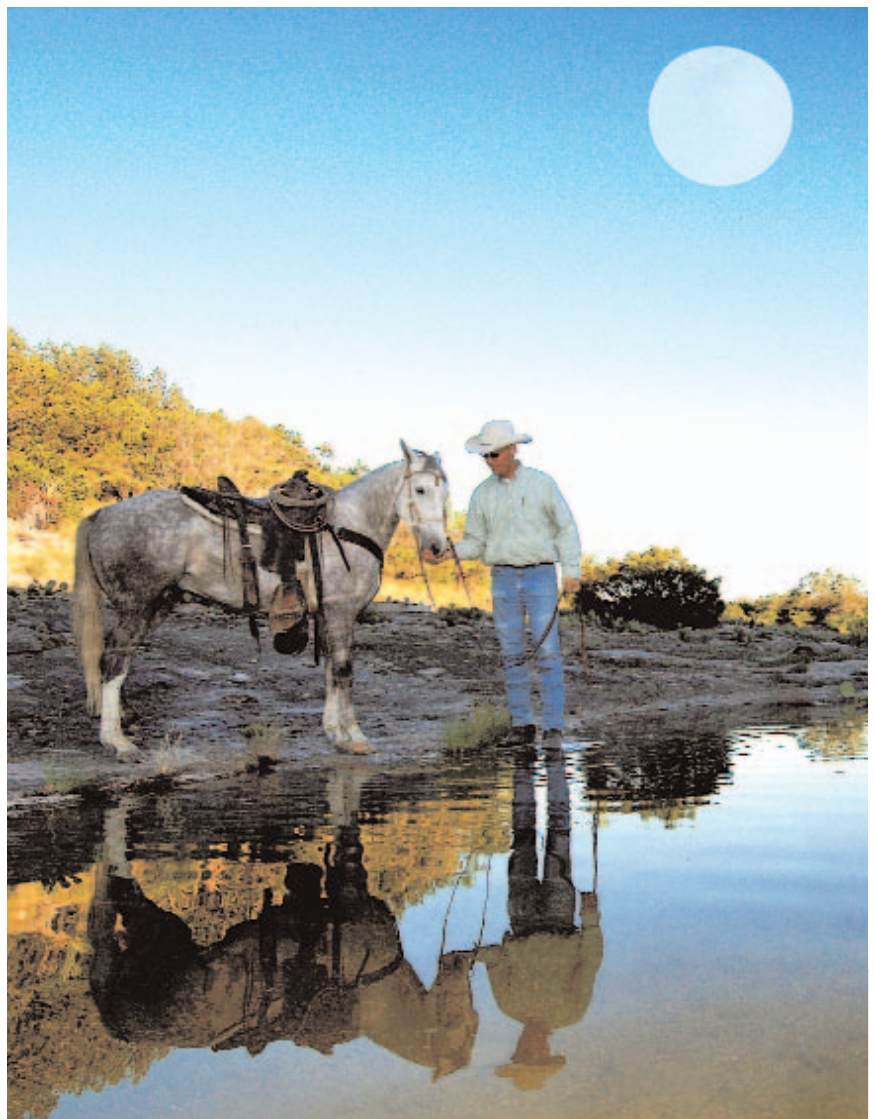


PHOTO BY CHASE FOUNTAIN/TMO

*The result is an increasingly lush spread of native grasses. These act like a sponge, holding and slowly filtering rainfall, sending cleaner water flowing downstream and recharging underground aquifers.*

"This is a better place to raise a kid than Dallas," said Brian, who's raising his two young children — Jamie Maverick and Allie Kate — on the ranch with his wife, Ginger, the McCulloch County attorney. "Building a fence all day is better than sweeping up popcorn in a movie theater at midnight."

The Treadwells proceeded to employ with a vengeance Aldo Leopold's famous five conservation tools — axe, cow, plow, fire and gun.

Chemical herbicides to get rid of

the invasive plants choking the land were too expensive, and they didn't want to use chemicals anyway. So the Treadwells used diesel fuel to start prescribed burns, mimicking natural prairie fires that used to sweep the landscape, controlling invasives and rejuvenating the soil.

Employing high-intensity, short-duration grazing, they rotated the cattle every two weeks from one pasture to another to allow the land to rest. They built miles of new fence, going from seven to 30 pastures so

they could rotate more often. This approximates the historic effect of bison. It's more work, but it produces better land restoration faster.

"I haven't played golf in seven years," Brian said. "But the English model of just watching cattle graze in the same pasture all year long just won't work for what we're trying to do."

The Treadwells "grubbed" 1,000 acres of mesquite and prickly pear flats by bulldozer and reseeded the newly opened ground with prairie grasses. They also cut 3,200 acres of cedar. The flats and cedar-cut areas were then burned again.

The result is an increasingly lush spread of native grasses. These act like a sponge, holding and slowly filtering rainfall, sending cleaner water flowing downstream and recharging underground aquifers.

The Treadwells got Landowner Incentive Program cost-share assistance from TPWD to clear about 400

acres of cedar infesting their Cedar Hollow Creek watershed. A trickle of water now runs there except in the driest of times.

They got more help from the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to mitigate the costs of their mesquite grubbing and cedar cutting. They were so impressed with the results, they continued cutting on their own.

"We also cut most of the cedar on the Greenhead Creek watershed," Brian says. "We haven't got the water going but believe that eventually it will flow. At some point, you cut back just one more water-sucking shrub and the water will start trickling."

The Treadwells practice a holistic approach. John sits on the board of Holistic Resource Management (HRM), an organization that he says "does educational work, trying to beguile other ranchers and new

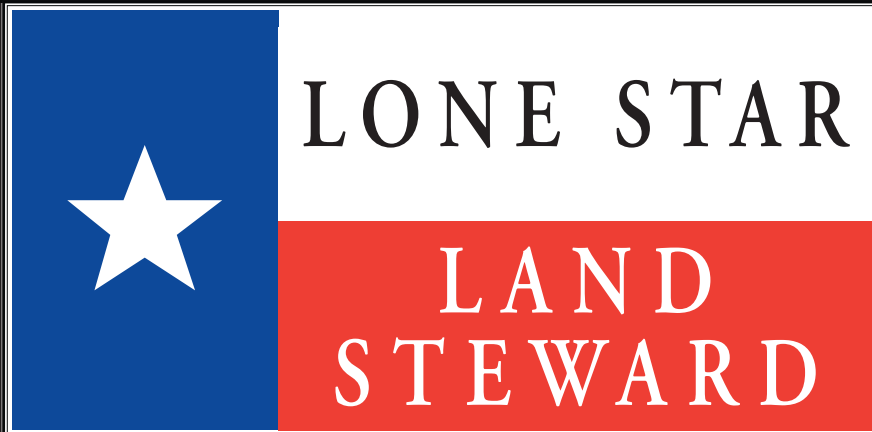
landowners into using their properties in a good way." Other HRM practitioners include the Hackleys, last year's Lone Land Steward, and the Reeds, Blackland Prairie eco-region award recipients in 2001.

"We find that what benefits the cattle also works for the deer, and it helps the black-capped vireo and the Texas horned lizard," Brian said.

The numbers bear this out. They doubled their cow herd in four years, yet the pastures have more grass. The ranch's white-tailed deer herd started at 200 seven years ago; today they harvest about 200 deer to keep a healthy, growing population in check.

TPWD started the Lone Star Land Steward Awards to recognize and promote wildlife conservation on private land. For more information, including how to nominate a property, visit <[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/private/lone\\_star\\_land\\_steward](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/private/lone_star_land_steward)>. ☆

## TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE



To find out more about becoming a sponsor of the **Lone Star Land Steward Awards**, or to learn more about special programs designed to help private landowners, please visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/consERVE/private\\_lands](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/consERVE/private_lands) or contact Linda Campbell at (512) 389-4395 or [linda.campbell@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:linda.campbell@tpwd.state.tx.us)

### Thanks to our 2006 Sponsors



Yturria Land & Cattle Company