Postcards from Nancy...  

By Sarah Stannard

Dear TWA,

About two weeks ago, Pedro the letter bat (he prefers to be called “postal carrier”) came swooping in to town with a whole heaping load of letters for me. There was a letter from PawPaw, a care package from Mom and Dad, and even a home-made post card from my crazy big brother Ned. But at the very bottom of the stack was a very official looking letter in a fancy envelope addressed to Ms. Nancy Novemcinctus Nineband. Now nobody but my Mother calls me by species name and she only does it when I am in trouble and so I was certainly surprised to see it all typed out.

"Dear Ms. Nineband", it read. "I read your postcards in Critter Connections every issue and am always interested to read about your adventures across our great state of Texas. I think it is great that a young armadillo like you is taking such an interest in natural resources and I would like to cordially invite you to visit me at my office in New Braunfels, Texas. Please contact my assistant, Bufo, to make an appointment.

Sincerely,
Gerald G. Bass, State Fish

Well I’m not much for politics but you could have knocked me over with a feather after I read that awesome letter! I packed up my walking stick and headed out for New Braunfels the next day.

I was more than a little nervous when I met Bufo Toad, Mr. Bass's assistant, outside his office on the Guadalupe River. I wasn’t sure that I would know what to talk about and I had always heard that Bass were famous for having big mouths! Bufo must have sensed that I had a case of the nerves because he told me a little about Mr. Bass as we walked along the river. “Mr. Bass,” said Bufo, “is a very important and busy fish. He is after all a Guadalupe Bass—the official State Fish of Texas. You should feel honored that he is taking the time to meet with you. However, there are probably a few things you should know about him in order to have a smooth meeting. First off, Mr. Bass is a fish on-the-go. He prefers living in fast moving streams and rivers and so he is constantly on the move. Other types of bass like largemouths prefer quiet, calm waters like lakes but not Mr. Bass! He prefers action over talk and so you will have to keep up with him or you will get left behind!"

I thanked Bufo and waited along the riverbank while Bufo hopped into the water to let Mr. Bass know that I was there. Mr. Bass came to the surface and said “Hi, Nancy” but then went right back into the water. Then he popped up and said “Glad you could make it” and sank back into the water. I was confused. I raced along the riverbank trying to guess where he might pop back up again. Bufo came hopping after me explaining that Mr. Bass—like all fish—had to stay under the water in order to breathe. From that point on, Mr. Bass and I took turns talking when he would surface. His green scales glittered in the sunlight every time he came up and you could tell that he was a fish of importance! He told me (two or three words at a time) that he and the other state critter representatives met along the Colorado River in Austin every month to try and discuss new ways to get kids more interested in the Texas outdoors. He was hoping that I might be able to help them come up with some ideas from a kid’s perspective. I told him that I would ask my friends at the Texas Brigades camps this summer and that I would also try to talk to other kids during the Little Lonestars events at WILD LIFE 2008. SO, put on your thinking caps, TWA and I’ll be seeing you in a few weeks to get your input on this important issue!!

Your friend,

Nancy Nine-band

Critter Connections is made possible by a grant from the San Antonio Livestock Exposition.
**Angler’s Ethics**
- Respect other anglers and non-anglers who are using those same resources.
- Keep only what you can use, release carefully what you do not need, and never waste fish.
- Never litter or pollute the water or areas around water.
- Learn, follow, and teach the rules and regulations of fishing.
- Be aware of public and private property.
- Promote fishing to others!

**Fishing License Facts**
Everyone over the age of 17 must have a fishing license to fish in the state of Texas. There are exceptions to this rule! The first Saturday of June is FREE FISHING DAY. Everyone, licensed or not, can fish on that day! Also, you do not have to have a fishing license if fishing from the bank in a state park. Fishing licenses come in a variety of options, based on the type of fishing you plan on doing, how long you would like to be licensed, where you live, and even your age. If you are fishing from private property into public waters, you need a license. You do not need a license if you are fishing on private property in a private pond if the landowner does not require it.

- Daily Bag limit – the maximum number of fish one person can catch and keep in a 24-hour period
- Possession limit – maximum number of fish a person can possess at one time, twice the daily bag limit

**When are the bass biting?**
- Striped – November to February and June to September
- White – Spring and summer
- Yellow – Spring and summer
- Largemouth – March to June, most active at dawn and dusk
- Smallmouth – Early summer and fall, most active at dawn
- Spotted – Fall

**Handling and Releasing**
Some tips on how to properly handle and release your catch – to protect you both!
When you catch bass, hold them by the jaw. Be careful and stay away from the front dorsal fin and gill cover, these parts are sharp!

- Always handle fish with wet hands. It might make it harder for you to hold on to them, but fish have a protective layer covering their bodies that you could damage with dry hands.
- Taking a fish out of water is like holding your breath; you can only last for so long! Return fish to water as soon as possible, whether you are keeping it or not.
- Take fish off the hook as soon as possible. The fewer stressors the fish has the quicker it can re-adjust to the water when released.
- When releasing, gently place the fish back into the water. If it does not immediately swim away you may need to revive it by holding it upright and slowly moving the fish back and forth to force water into the gills.

**How to correctly measure a fish:**
Turn the fish on its side on a flat surface and close its jaw. Then, squeeze the tail fin together so it comes to a point. Measure straight from the tip of its snout to the tip of the point of the (squeezed in) tail fin.
All About Bass!

BASS
CATCH AND
RELEASE
CURRENT
DORSAL
FRY
GUADALUPE
HYBRID
LARGEMOUTH

Prizes

Dollars Dynamo and Numbers Champ will each have their choice of one of the following Prizes:

1. A gift certificate valued at $100 to your choice of one of these awesome outfitters: Bass Pro Shops, Academy Sports & Outdoors, or Cabela's! Here you can purchase all of the hunting, fishing, outdoor gear and clothing you could ever dream of. Gift certificates may be used for online purchases.

2. Two 2008-09 Season Pass Tickets for one adult and one child to your choice of one of the following theme parks: SeaWorld San Antonio, Six Flags Fiesta Texas (San Antonio), Schlitterbahn Waterpark (New Braunfels), Six Flags Over Texas (Arlington), Six Flags SplashTown (Houston).

3. A Texas State Park Pass valid for 12 months. You and your guests can enjoy unlimited visits to more than 115 state parks and state historic sites without paying the daily entrance fee. You may bring as many guests as can ride in one non-commercial vehicle with you. Members also receive exciting "members only" discounts on camping, lodging, park store merchandise and recreational equipment rentals and are eligible for special promotions like waived activity fees, free programs, and a special subscription rate for the Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine.

Random Champ will receive a TWA t-shirt and baseball cap.

(Members will NOT receive contest "credit" for recruiting themselves. Upgraded members will NOT count toward the New Members Contest.)

Youth Sponsored New Members Contest!

Sign up new TWA members and win great prizes!

The contest runs from January 1, 2008 to June 27, 2008. For more contest details, contact TWA at 1-800-TEX-WILD.

Prizes will be awarded during the Saturday night banquet at WildLife 2008.

"Dollars Dynamo" -- The Youth member who is responsible for generating the most membership dollars by sponsoring NEW members (all levels).

"Numbers Champ" -- The Youth member who is responsible for generating the most NEW members (all levels).

"Random Champ" -- Any Youth member who recruits a single NEW member (all levels).
Bass fishing is BIG in Texas. However, how much do you know about your big catches? Read up on the bass found in Texas before you cast your next line!

Four species of bass make up the true bass family (Family Centrarchidae): striped, white, yellow, and hybrid striped. The true bass family share several characteristics, one being the structure of their dorsal fin. The dorsal fin, located on the top or back of the fish, separates into two portions, the spiny front and the soft-rayed rear. True bass all have horizontal lines running along the sides of their body. This characteristic can sometimes make it difficult to tell different species apart, especially when they are young. All live in large open water and, with the exception of the striped bass, prefer to lay their eggs, called spawning, in gravel or rocky areas upstream from where they live. The striped bass are special. They are capable of being anadromous, meaning they live in saltwater and spawn in freshwater. There are some striped bass that are “land-locked” and therefore do not have access to saltwater, so to survive they must be able to spawn upstream, miles away from where they live, to give their eggs time to mature by the time they reach the open water. True bass prefer to eat small shad, a freshwater fish.

The striped bass, more commonly known as stripers, are the largest of the true bass family. They are an olive-green color along their top line, silver along their sides, and white on their belly. On their side, you can count seven or eight darker, unbroken horizontal stripes. Their “bars” and spots create the patterns of black basses, as compared to the lines of true basses. Black bass live in clear streams and lakes. All, with the exception of the largemouth, do not mind and some even prefer, a current, meaning flowing water. Before spawning, males build nests in shallow or protected waters for eggs, and like true bass will guard the nest until the eggs hatch; some will stay with their young for several weeks after they hatch. Black bass feed on other fish, crayfish, and smaller bass.

Largemouth bass really do have a large mouth and they sure do use it too! The largemouth’s jawbone extends beyond the back of their eye! Largemouths are “top fish” in their aquatic food chain; they have very few predators. They prefer to live by themselves in calmer waters and will hide between plants and other vegetation and wait for their food to come near. Their top line is dark green, their sides are tan to light green, and their belly is a light green to white color. Along their sides, dark blotches create a horizontal stripe. The average size of a largemouth is one to ten pounds, but can get to twenty pounds. It is not uncommon for a largemouth to live to be 15 years old. The smallmouth’s jaw line never extends past the eye. Their body ranges from green to tan all over with dark vertical bars along their entire body. Smallmouths are much smaller than largemouths, usually one to four pounds but some have reached as large as ten pounds.

The Guadalupe bass is only found in Texas. Their coloring ranges from a light green to tan and they have two lines of dark blotches horizontal along their body. The lower of the two lines extends further down, past their midline, toward their white belly. Guadalupe bass are typically found in small streams and are therefore smaller in size, weighing around one pound, some growing up to four pounds.

The spotted bass, as you might have gathered from his name is spotted, but only on the top half of the body. Their top half is green while their bottom half is a light green or white. Like the largemouth bass, the spotted bass’ spots form a line along the middle of their side, so the easiest way to identify between the two is to look at the jaw line of the fish and see whether it extends past the eye, if not, then you have a spotted bass. They also resemble the Guadalupe bass with their blotches, but the Guadalupe’s blotches extend past his midline, whereas the spotted’s do not. Spotted usually weigh from one to four pounds, but can get up to eight pounds.

Now that you know where bass live, what they eat, their size, and how to identify them, remember to flip back to page 2 for more specifics on fishing and when the bass are biting!
Did you know that...

...you do not need a fishing license if you were born before September 1, 1930?

...the Guadalupe Bass is the official state fish of Texas?

...fry is the term for a fish that has just hatched?

Guadalupe Bass
Photos Courtesy of
Texas Parks and Wildlife

QUAIL CORRECTION! The Montezuma Quail is not endangered in the United States! They are endangered in Mexico.

FISH ANATOMY

Dorsal Fin

Caudal Fin

Eye

Mouth

Cheek

Gill cover

Pectoral Fin

Pelvic Fin

Anal Fin

Lateral Line

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Questionnaire

1. **What is your full name?** Maxwell Joseph Westheimer
2. **What city/town do you live in?** San Antonio, Texas
3. **How old are you?** 11
4. **What grade are you in?** 5th Grade
5. **What is your favorite school subject?** History because I like to learn about the past
6. **What is your least favorite school subject?** Math, because it is my worst subject
7. **What are some of your hobbies?** hunting, football and being organized
8. **What is your favorite outdoor activity?** Hunting and football
9. **What do you want to be when you grow up?** I want to be a business man and a rancher
10. **Who is your “hero”?** My Mom
11. **If you were granted one wish, what would you wish for?** I wish there was no aggravating people in the world.
12. **Describe yourself in three words.** Handsome, nice, respectful
13. **What is the best way for kids to get involved with the outdoors?** Go wildlife watching

Max Westheimer, son of Roxana & Carlos Rosado and Elaine Wolf & Michael Westheimer.

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We’re looking for some young outdoorsman to spotlight in *Critter Connections*. **Why not you?**

It is simple. Just answer the questions above and send your answers, along with 3-4 really good pictures of you pursuing your favorite outdoor activities! We will select one person each quarter to spin the spotlight on! The deadline for consideration is the 1st of the month, so send your spotlight in today!!

**Mail your information to:**
TWA
Attn: Critter Connections
2800 NE Loop 410, Ste. 105
San Antonio, TX 78218

**Or email it to:**
h_holdsworth@texas-wildlife.org
San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo

Let's Rodeo San Antonio

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San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo

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