

This huge catfish shows there are still fish in Coke County! Tim Easley of Odessa reeled in this big 14 pound yellow cat September 3, 2011, while fishing on Oak Creek Lake.

their bodies has led to descriptions such as "armorplated opossum" and "opossum crossed with a turtle." Although not closely related to any of these animals, these common references to their appearance are fairly close to the technical description. Their family n a m e Dasypodidae roughly translates to "Turtle-Rabbit."

The natural fright response of the armadillo when startled is a vertical leap before fleeing, a dangerous reflex when approached by a vehicle that might otherwise pass over without harm. This fatal trait spawned the nickname "hillbilly speed bump," and made them a frequent highway casualty.

Prior to 1850, armadillos were not found north of the Rio Grande River except for fossilized evidence of extinct species. Due to a combination of factors, such as human colonization with its accompanying habitat alteration, extirpation of large predators, and intentional release or escape of captive animals, the armadillo has rapidly expanded its range at a rate 10 times that considered normal for mammals. Now abundant throughout most of Texas and other southern and southeastern states, armadillos have been observed as far north as Illinois and Nebraska, and westward to Colorado. Due to its abundance and wide distribution, armadillos have become a nuisance animal to many homeowners in suburban and residential developments, especially where wooded areas with favorable burrowing and nest sites are included or nearby.

Controlling armadillos on your property is not an easy task. In many cases it might be better to tolerate the occasional visitor than to take on the expense and possible collateral damage of control attempts. If frequent and serious damage is occurring, some action may be necessary. Removing individual

plates that cover and protect animals by trapping and relo- with pesticides to minimize

cation/elimination, use of food sources are some of the repellents, fencing of specific methods most commonly recareas (fencing must extend ommended. Any method used below ground), and control of has its limitations, with pracsoil insects and invertebrates ticality, environmental pollu-

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birds and fish.

tion, consumption (yes, sites by using search engines. armadillo meat is edible), or with leprosy, which may be Fisheries

tion, and long-term effective- communicable to humans by ness being major concerns. contact or by eating under-Whatever method is used, cooked meat. Handle the aniwhether mechanical or mals or meat with sanitary and chemical, be careful to do so culinary methods as you would in a manner that minimizes any wild game to prevent condanger to people, pets, or tracting communicable diseases other desirable wildlife, that may be present. Photos and detailed descriptions of control If handling of the animal is techniques and equipment can involved, either for reloca- be viewed on numerous web

Myron Wiley is a Biologist disposal, be aware they can Aide, Alabama Division of on rare occasion be infected Wildlife and Freshwater

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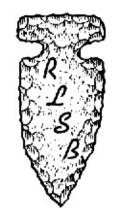
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