

# Ghost Town Hangout

By Chet Garner

I'm sitting in the desert at the edge of Texas, enjoying grilled quail amid an assembly that includes artists, dropouts, backpackers and notable ranchers. Over my right shoulder I can see a stuffed goat that once served as the mayor of nearby Lajitas, and in front of me a troubadour sings a lament to the moon. It's Friday night at the Starlight Theatre in the Terlingua ghost town.

This rocky village sits about 10 miles from the Mexico border, but it seems more like another universe, one defined by incongruous elements such as a pirate ship and rough metal folk art. When it was founded

more than a century ago, Terlingua was defined by a quicksilver mine, but the village faded after the mine went bust. By the 1960s artists and freethinkers found they could thrive there without society's constraints.

Like many of those gathered here, I'm fresh off the trails of Big Bend National Park. In pursuit of a good meal, I stop at the Starlight for dinner before heading home. The building served as the town's theater into the 1930s but was abandoned. After 30 years its four walls remained, but the roof was gone. The adobe shell became an open-air music venue. With the West Texas stars for a

ceiling, the Starlight earned its new name.

After a few more decades, the owner decided to add a roof and create a proper restaurant. Now the Starlight is possibly the best place west of the Pecos for distinctive dining, boasting creative dishes like chicken-fried wild boar, axis burgers and bowls of classic Texas chili.

After dinner I grab a cold beer from the Terlingua Trading Company next door and join the characters on the expansive porch to enjoy the West Texas breeze and listen to yarns that stretch across the Rio Grande.

*Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of The Daytripper on PBS. This article can be viewed online at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).*

**Game Wardens wrap up busy Memorial Day weekend**

The Memorial Day weekend proved extremely busy for Texas Game Wardens, despite severe weather including storms, downpours and flooded rivers in some areas. Boating incidents statewide surpassed last year's Memorial Day weekend numbers in almost every category.

"The increase in boating safety incidents over the Memorial Day weekend is attributed in part to many variables including the increase in new boaters since the start of the pandemic in 2020, severe weather, lack of use of life vests, abuse of alcohol, and not following general rules of safe boating," said Cody Jones, Assistant Commander of Marine Enforcement for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). "Flooding, heavy rains, storms, high winds and tornados in parts of Texas — coupled with the higher-than-usual anticipated holiday-seekers on the waterways and elsewhere - kept Texas Game Wardens on heightened alert."

Game wardens conducted safety checks on more than 11,283 vessels state-wide between Friday and Monday and issued 1,283 citations. Wardens also issued 1,639 warnings for various boating safety law violations, arrested 36 individuals for Boating While Intoxicated and filed another five charges for Driving While Intoxicated. Additionally, another 42 people were arrested for various other crimes.

Furthermore, game wardens investigated 17 boating accidents across the state and responded to three boating-related fatalities that occurred on Lake O' Pines, Toledo Bend and Canyon Lake. Game wardens also responded to six open water drownings.

"Drownings and deaths on the water are never easy to deal with, and arguably one of the toughest, least desirable parts of the job, since we'd like to see everyone return home safely...we know, though, that it's even more challenging for the families who've unexpectedly lost their loved ones," said Jones.

Over the weekend, game wardens were involved with medical emergencies on the water, sinking vessels, jet ski incidents, and boater/water rescues - among others. Due to heavy rains, flooding posed some issues

throughout the state. Two kayakers without personal floatation devices (PFD) were stranded in the flooded Sabine River currents were rescued and returned to safety in Longview area. Game wardens made another water rescue on the Sabine river and rescued two adults and a two-year old baby as a result of an overturned kayak on Lake Livingston.

"A number of water safety incidents over the busy Memorial

Day boating weekend could have been avoided by using life vests and taking boater education," said Kimberly Sorensen, TPWD boating education manager.

On more than one occasion, game wardens also were involved in search and rescue activities, responding to boating accidents, and engaging in kayak rescues in which PFDs were not being worn.

In addition to the boating incidents over Memorial Day,

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