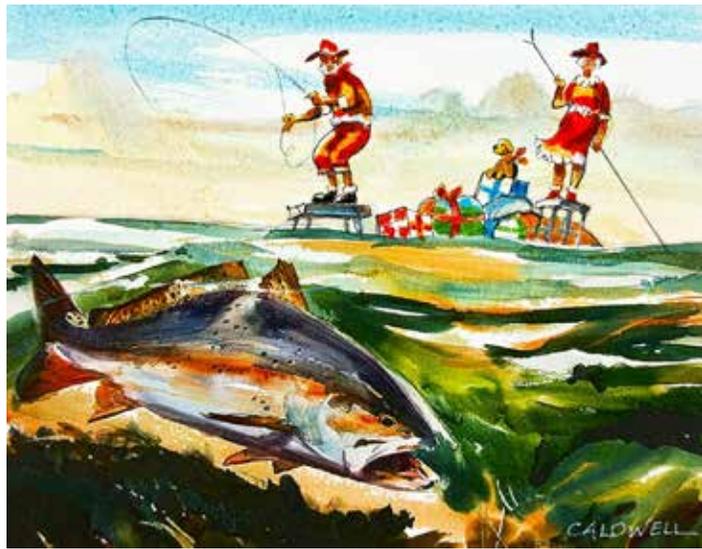


Top awards for CCA and Caldwell from the TOWA Conference in Rockport

John Blaha's feature article, "Respect the Resource and Respect One Another" took second place in the important Outdoor News Reporting category.

First Place and 2nd Place for ART and three Honorable mentions for CURRENTS photography were awarded to Sam Caldwell.



Habitat Today for Fish Tomorrow

Respect the Resource and Respect One Another

By John Blaha, CCA Texas Director of Habitat

The Texas Gulf Coast offers some of the most diverse, healthy and used waters along the entire Gulf Coast. The Upper Coast features areas with deeper waters in some areas, bays with lots of oysters, bays that often receive a lot of freshwater runoffs from the Sabine, Trinity, Brazos, and Colorado rivers, industrial and urban development neighbors, and heavy use by the area recreational and commercial fishing populations.

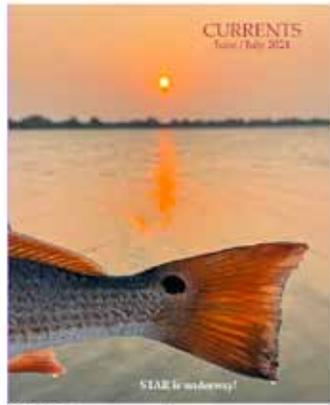
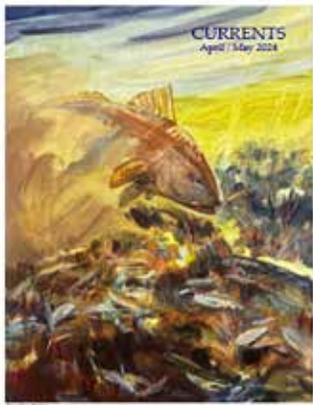
As you move down the middle coast towards Port O'Connor, Rockport and Corpus Christi, the bays begin to become shallower although deeper waters still come into play, you see more seagrass habitat, and you still have an abundance of oysters in some areas, less industrial neighbors, and still heavy use by the area recreational and commercial fishing populations. Further down the coast through the Upper Laguna Madre, Baffin Bay, Nine-Mile Hole and Lower Laguna Madre, you see miles and miles of shallow water flats, seagrass beds, few oyster reefs, very little freshwater runoff, practically no industrial neighbors and until you reach the far end of Lower Laguna Madre, not many urban development neighbors. But you still see heavy use by the area's recreational and commercial fishing populations. What is the common theme above? Heavy use by area recreational and commercial fishing populations.

Many predict the Texas Gulf Coast population will double in the next twenty years. Can the resource and fellow anglers handle this continuing population explosion along the Texas Gulf Coast? The keyword to this concern and growing trend is simply RESPECT. As recreational anglers and conservationists, we want to continue to fish and enjoy what the Texas coast has to offer every day we can. Respect the resource, respect the efforts to conserve and protect the resource, and respect one another.

2024 marks 47 years for Coastal Conservation Association Texas. We all know the story of how CCA Texas started from the desire of a handful of recreational fishermen who turned the tide and made the coastal resources of Texas bountiful and healthy once again. A big part of that effort was simply RESPECT. Respect for the resources at their hands and the desire to see those resources flourish for their generation and generations to come. It was a long and hard road traveled to first get licenses and limits established for redfish, in both recreational and commercial fisheries in 1979, and eventually game fish status for redfish and speckled trout in 1981.

Along with the establishment of game fish status for redfish and speckled trout came the ban of gill nets in Texas coastal waters. While respect between the commercial and recreational fishermen was lost, these early conservationists earned respect at the Texas State Capitol and their efforts led to the tide-turning legislative actions in these early formative years of the organization. Although respect may still be lost between some of the early parties in those early years, one must respect the efforts and the accomplishments of a few determined individuals which has now grown to over 70,000 members. These efforts truly saved the Texas coastal resources enjoyed by so many today.

Going back to the common theme in the opening paragraph, people are not leaving the Texas coast, they are coming at it full speed ahead. The sale of new boats, tackle, and other fishing equipment continues to grow. The development continues to grow at incredible paces in some



About John Blaha's reporting achievement:

John Blaha's reporting achievement is a testament to his dedication and passion for environmental journalism. His article, "Respect the Resource and Respect One Another," provides a comprehensive look at the challenges facing the Texas Gulf Coast and offers practical solutions for conservation. Blaha's clear and engaging writing style makes this piece a must-read for anyone interested in coastal management and sustainable fishing practices.

Photo by Sam Caldwell:

This photograph captures a moment of tranquility on the water. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, creating a serene and picturesque atmosphere. The water is calm, reflecting the vibrant colors of the sky. In the foreground, a small boat is visible, with a person standing on deck, looking out towards the horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative, highlighting the beauty of the coastal environment.



A TRIBUTE TO THE COAST'S CRAB MAN, RONNIE LUSTER

Ronnie Ogilvy Luster developed and headed up the CCA's successful Abandoned Crab Trap Program from its inception in 2007 to 2024.

CLICK HERE FOR A VIDEO AND WITH RONNIE LUSTER, RONNIE JR. AND CEDIE THOMPSON



Caldwell's CCA art and stories can be visited on his website: [Click here.](http://www.samcaldwell.com)
www.samcaldwell.com