

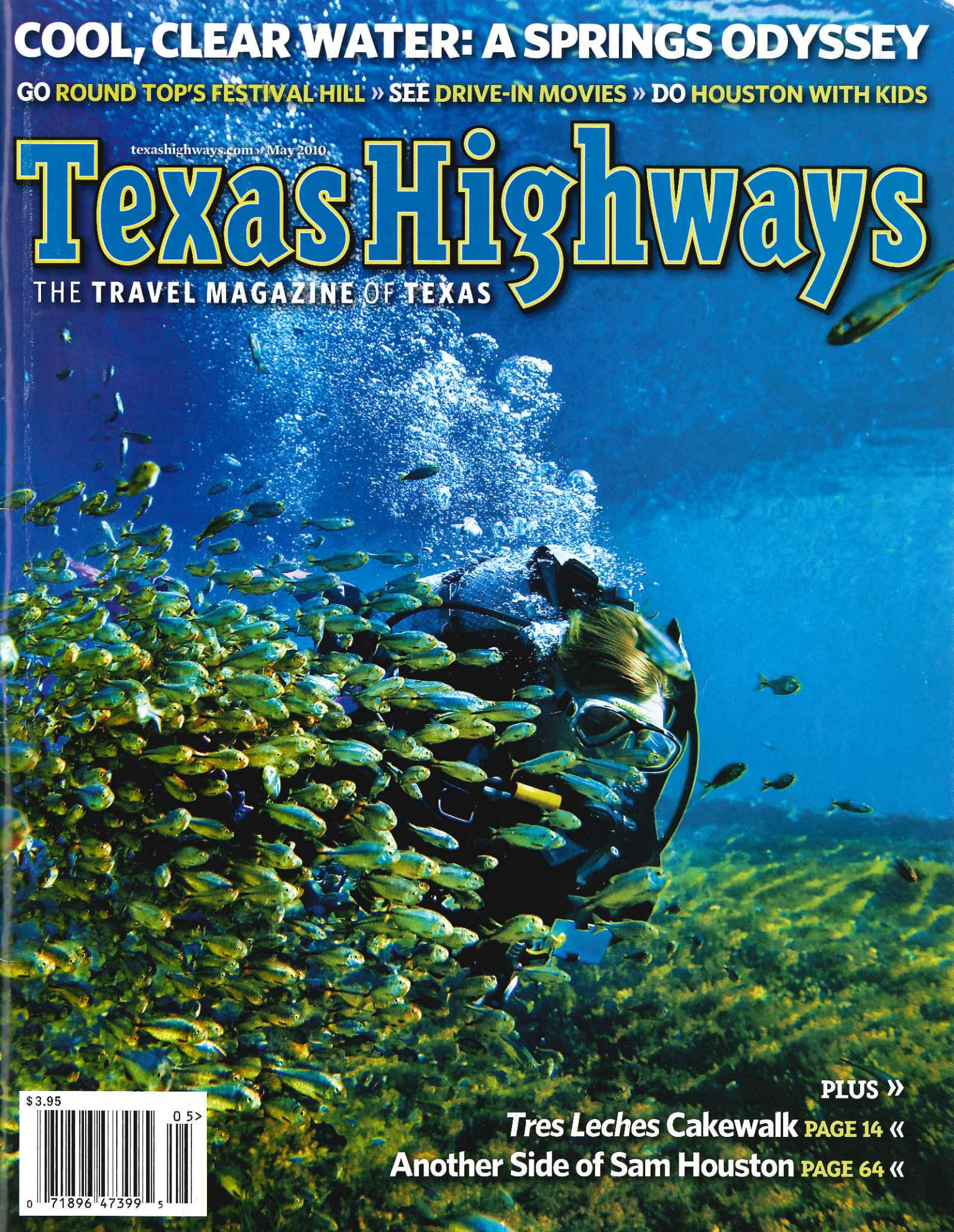
COOL, CLEAR WATER: A SPRINGS ODYSSEY

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The Gruene Scene

The Gruene National Historic District celebrates 35 years

THE CENTRAL TEXAS HAMLET OF GRUENE—first settled in the mid-1840s and now a vibrant tourist destination—celebrates year round, as anyone who wanders into its famous 1880s dance hall or tubes its lazy stretch of the Guadalupe River can attest.

But 2010 is a special year for Gruene, as it marks the 35th anniversary of its transformation from ghost town to Shindig Central. For after a successful run as a cotton community in the late 1800s and early 20th Century, the Great Depression and the boll weevil spelled economic disaster for Gruene, and most of the businesses closed. In 1975, though, businessman Pat Molak purchased and restored the historic dance hall, and that same year, the entire Gruene Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. More than 90 percent of the original buildings are still standing, and today operate as restaurants, bars, tea rooms, coffee houses, boutiques, antiques shops, artists' studios, and other enticements for visitors.

"May will be the big month for celebrating the 35-year milestone," says Molak, "since that's the anniversary month of the first



big dance we had at Gruene Hall." Scheduled acts at Gruene Hall include Jerry Jeff Walker (May 13), the Joe Ely Band (May 15), Asleep at the Wheel (May 22), and Aaron Watson (May 30). See www.gruenetexas.com.

Gruene's got it going on—shopping, dancing, drinking, eating, and history.

—Lori Moffatt

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continued from page 91 heighten public awareness of the birds, hosting guided van tours and hikes as part of its annual Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival in April. And visitors can look for birds year round on two hiking trails and a five-mile driving loop. "It has been gratifying to see the Attwater's population slowly increase," he says.

I am itching to be outside; if it's my lucky day, maybe I will spot one of these rare birds. But first I linger in the refuge visitor center to watch videos of the courtship ritual and of chicks hatching. In the wild, hens incubate eggs for 26 days and then keep the chicks close and warm for up to six weeks, until they are old enough to fend for themselves. Now, most chicks are hatched in captivity, nurtured into early adulthood, and then released.

The first successful captive breeding in Texas took place in the early 1990s at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. Janet Johnson, Fossil Rim's avian supervisor, tells me, "We released 104 chicks to the wild last year, and we have 23 breeding pairs in residence this year. Our education staff leads