

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: **Robin Doughty** (RD)

INTERVIEWER: David Todd (DT)

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My name is David Todd. I'm here for the Conservation History Association of Texas on April 10th, year 2002 and we're in Austin, Texas at the home of Robin Doughty, who has been a professor of geography at the University of Texas and has written a number of books and taught many courses about views of the land, relationships with the land, and with wildlife. I wanted to thank you for taking the time to talk about some of your exploits and your life and I hope that we can address some of this today. Thanks very much.

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RD: Thank you for coming.

DT: We usually start these interviews with an open-ended question about how your childhood might have given you some early exposure and introduction to the outdoors or wildlife or some view of nature.

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RD: I was—I was born in East Yorkshire, England, as you can probably tell from my accent, and we had a pretty cluttered and cluttered upbringing. And one of the ways that I avoided that was to go down to a local lake that was very close to my home, maybe a couple of miles away, and so I took to the habit of getting outdoors and getting away and just basically getting around the lake. And my father, bless his heart, bought me a pair of binoculars at a very young age—I must have been six or seven—and so I used to go around and try to figure out what these ducks were and the birds were and so forth. And—and that grew—it grew into a—an avocation just to go and look and watch and listen to what was going on around me. And that translated then to building birdhouses and—and looking at tit mice and chickadees and trying to see how they were occupying those spaces that I put up in trees and—and fences and so forth. So really it's been a—a long, um, childhood initiation into the ways of nature and the cycles of the seasons.

DT: Can you give us some examples of some of your experiences with birding or building these nests?

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RD: Oh, well the lake is a place called Hansmea and it's a natural Pleistocene Ice Age lake, the last one in—in the whole of Yorkshire. And it's only a hundred miles—sorry, a hundred miles—it's a mile from the coast and so on these big storms,)and there's some very, very big storms that come up in the North Sea), some of these seabirds would come into the lake, even some of the Albatross-like birds, and so I used to go down to the lake

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and people would call the authorities and say there was this great big ton a bird in the lake, what was it doing, what was it, and so I would be called down to—to look at a Gannet or an osprey or something that was really quite unusual in those days to find inland at all. You know, these are pelagic birds that would be storm driven and come into the lake.

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There would be birds such as loons that would be going north back into Scandinavia and Scotland to breed and they would be breeding plumage and calling on the lake. So, it was a wonderful place to find the common garden birds but also some remarkably rare birds for that—for that place.

DT: Some of these nest boxes, were they different sizes and materials and you'd put them in different places?

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RD: The chickadee in England is called the—the—the blue tit, the great tit, there's all kinds of tit mice and so I used to make boxes with certain apertures that would exclude sparrows but allow these species and—or that species to come in. So I got very proficient at—at figuring out if there was a bird around that—could I entice it to nest in the garden? And often I did and sometimes I didn't—it was a lot of fun.

DT: Did you feed birds as well?

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RD: Uh, my father was a big feeder of birds. He—he would bring in stale bread from a bakery that he was involved with at—as a commercial venture. And he would scatter in the winter, I remember, he would scatter great big chunks of loaves and whatever and the gulls and—and the crows—I mean it was just a maelstrom of birds would come down.

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This wasn't, you know, sort of appropriate garden feeding birds, this was just getting rid of stale bread and—and confectionary of all kinds. And these would—the birds would come in from miles around, it was a blizzard of birds. I never really followed that myself. I just used to watch at a distance, especially winter when it was snowy or icy, it's always like that in England, and—and enjoy—enjoy that—that spectacle.

DT: Was this a hobby that you carried into your school and college years?

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RD: I did, I did—I—I—I, when I went over to [University of] California – Berkley, I was fascinated by being exposed to new species in North America. And when I came to Texas, I was even more interested in looking at things like whooping cranes that I always read about as a—as a—as a child. And so that avocation, that personal hobby has-has enlivened and I think enriched some of the books I've—I've published about whooping cranes and mockingbirds and, a recent one now on the Purple Martins. So I've tried to bring those

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birds into geography, which is my professional degree. Why? Because I'm interested in how people transform habitats in which wildlife live. I'm interested in how people re—reevaluate and utilize and conserve and protect different wildlife species, especially bird species such as the whooping crane. So I think this is part of the geographical equation as well—what people do to the environments around them and how they've perceive them.

DT: Well, I understand that you've done some thinking and writing about some of the early perceptions and views of Texas, your adopted state, and I was wondering if you might be able to tell us a little bit about some of the images that were used to attract people to

Texas—maybe like you—some of the stories that were told that might have been attractive.
08:14- 2175

RD: Yeah, I—one of the re—one of the reasons I—I started writing about Texas is because being a non-Texan gets you fascinated by Texans and their sense of identity and their pride in—in what is Texas. So rather than looking over my shoulders to sort of—well I’m not really Texan and I’m looking back to the—across the pond to—to Europe, I thought well, jump in and find out what makes Texas tick and how has the landscape of Texas been changed, especially through the Austin Col—Colonial Impresario Angontanits, so that’s what has sort of motivated me to get involved and immersed and
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try to understand, although I’ll never be a Texan, but try to understand how Texans think about their own linkages with the environment.

And what I found was that in the Austin case, you had basically people coming in with an opportunity to have free or very cheap land, a new start, they were escaping various authorities perhaps across the Sabine in Louisiana or elsewhere. And Austin of course, I—I tend to idealize him a little bit by thinking of him as—as a sort of Puritan patriarch
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who wanted to bring people into his land grant in order to redeem the chaos that he saw Texas—as a natural chaos, a sort of redemptive act by which people would redeem the wilderness and create a garden—or find a garden and actually plant it with those functional and—and beautiful things that everybody knew—knew about—about back east. So there were basically three zones into which people divided Texas. You came in from the coast if you could afford to buy—via New Orleans and Galveston, and you came into coast—the coastal zone, which very quickly became a febrile zone—this is where mal—
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malaria resided. And people found then that these places like Indianola and Brazosport and—and Galveston were not places to stay and to terry. In fact, people were instructed very quickly to get out of that malaria febrile zone into what they call the rolling prairies. Now the rolling prairies started from the Sabine, went to Nacogdoches, it was really the piney woods and then gradually on the Canary Isles you went west towards Austin and San Antonio which was the—the great metropolis then. The—the piney woods, the—the overarching darkness of conifer and oak extended to give way to clearing and then to prairies. And when you get to places like Austin and Bastrop, these became very, very desirable because they were full of—of color in the spring, walking birds, voices as well, they had this wonderful combination of oak and land and wood. So you could actually set down there and think you were in some kind of, in a sense, a—a—a European if not Mediterranean landscape. And people really honed in on this and found this very attractive in deed.
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In fact Austin’s colony is planted as you can see between the Brazos and Colorado watersheds. You know, he—he knew what he was doing I think in terms of picking potentially good—good land to—to site settlements in. That was a second zone then, that rolling prairies. The third zone began essentially at the Colorado River here in Austin and went westwards into God knows where. It was always a transition zone to someplace else—California, New Mexico, Santa Fe, call it what you will—where the end of Texas—

where Texas ended and some other part of the world you might have dropped off, began; you didn't know. So really West Texas was a place you avoided or you put forts there and went there in large groups in order to get through an area that had, uh, difficult people and also difficult plants and animals to deal with. The—this is a—West

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Texas was seen as the land of extremes and I think until the Civil War this third zone, mountain zone, or West Texas it was called, was—was not a place where people went very easily or willingly except then as ranchers and cattle raisers rather than as farmers and growers of cotton and corn.

DT: Maybe you could follow up on that by talking about how people's attitudes, the settlers who actually arrived here changed and it seems like now we view Texas as a pretty settled, in some cases, at least in a natural sense, a fragile place that needs to be cared for and preserved. I guess at that time it was maybe more of a threatening place and it had various obstacles to being settled and, as you say, being put in order. Can you describe a little bit of that—what a typical settler might have faced?

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RD: Well the—the two ways to look at this is the way you just indicated that—that you're on the anvil of the frontiers as a Wagnerian sense of you're being tested by the—the isolation and extremes of—of you know, weather and—and water and—and so on. And therefore you grew resilient and you became independent and the community orientated because you're on the edge of a frontier. Although there's another way that I find very attractive and that is a way that Bedichek—Roy Bedichek who was a UT staff member here for many years and has written that wonderful book called *Adventures With The Texas Naturalists in the 1940's* here. Bedichek, in his book *Adventures* talks about the settlers as loving the places they were in and actually celebrating the fecundity and—

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and—and really enjoying the variety and the opportunities that they were accorded. And that the—rather than use it up, there was a—a—a sense, he says and I have no reason to disagree with him, that the earliest pioneers really loved doing what they were doing, which in a sense was change in the landscape of Texas, but it was changing it in a—in a managerial way, in a—in a way that was not going to simply run-run it out and run it down, but rather inset oneself in and—and treat it as a garden—a garden to be—to be planted with those things that were gonna be useful to you and on a sustained basis.

DT: So you think that a lot of the settlement in Texas was intended to be sustainable and not so much of a boom bus cycle that we've seen in some parts these days?

15:04- 2175

RD: That's a good question. I—I personally think it was, but maybe I'm a little bit being an idealist here. But some of the people who are entered into the Impresario Land Grants are still there—their families are still there—they take great pride I think in—in being, you know, a member of the old three hundred or whoever it was. And so there's still that (inaudible) not simply to use it up and move on, although a lot of people like to do that. I think the other (inaudible) not only enjoyed planting the garden but they wanted to do it again (inaudible).

DT: (Inaudible) and whether people stayed or went on.

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RD: Yeah one—one of the things that got me into it a little bit, and this is perhaps unpegged

or anything, but I was fascinated by looking at domesticated animals that were imported into the frontier. And you've got dogs, you've got books on dog—there's a book on dogs at the frontier, you know, and—and you realize what happened in the social situation in these settlements and these places and the answer is the men folk just talked about dogs—this was the pedigree of their hunting dogs. They would use dogs in recreational hunting of course, not only was it functionally useful for getting meat, but it was en—enormously a great outlet for—for masculine recreation. Right, you could take off and say I'm going hunting and disappear for weeks, I mean, certainly days. And they would take their dogs with them. Well, I came across a picture, a—a painting of New Braunfels, um, I think it's in one of my books, in which there's a cat, and there's a cat

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sort of peeping out of a woman's skirt and she's milking one of the cows in, you know, early New Braunfels, and I'm thinking that's only the third cat I've ever come across in my reading about Texas. And so one of the questions was, why don't you hear about cats on the frontier? There's no book.

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So, I figured it—I think I figured it out by reference to this pleasure that some people had in moving on and doing it all again, not in wasting it and running it out, but basically having tidied up a farm, having created a space that can be useable and you can grow your traditional crops in to move on and do it again. And this character does this and he heads towards I believe Saint Angelo or—or place—a place further west than he was. And he says load up the wagon and get the dog. And the dog goes trotting a—behind the—the—the group. The cat, he says, goes with the place. And the cat is left behind. It isn't cat's are dysfunctional; I think they're very useful especially around the cabins

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and—for rodents and so on. But the cat is left, the cat goes with the place, the dog goes with the person. So that sort of got me into looking at this idea of moving on and what did you take when you moved on to begin again.

DT: (Inaudible) legal term about what's a fixture and what's not.

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RD: The cat is not the fixture, I think it's—well I guess the cat is the fixture and the dog moves on.

DT: You don't see a great tradition of this using up of kind of a farm and needing to go on, but rather choosing to go on to sort of go through this whole sod busting and clearing effort that I guess gave them some pleasure of redeeming the land.

RD: Well I—I—I think clearly there was, especially in East Texas where these quote redlanders are the people who, you know, create that redland, which is not good land in—in these piney woods, and they're always sort of looked at rather askance and you go through that area pretty quickly because it's really been already abandoned and it's not good land I think. There's that aspect too. And in reading some of the earlier accounts from the southeast, from Georgia, it's very clear that people are doing this—this is out of

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the sudden cultivation of the journals you see. There are ideas of getting out, you know; you've wasted it, you've used it up, let's go west. And some of the—the—the discussion is, well what do we do to stop this happening? Are there crop rotations, are there kind of fertilizers, are there things that our brothers in Europe are doing. There's a lot of

information being exchanged funny enough, uh, between the quote gentlemen farmers of—of England and their—their—their brethren in the colonies in the—in the—in the Carolinas and Georgia about this very issue of—of soil fertility and—and the ability to keep—to keep things fertile.

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Texas, I think, is always blessed right from the beginning as this vision of hugeness, you know, a vast size that—that gives everybody a chance to get in and locate in some pretty

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rich and—and good areas. And the black land is one of them clearly and so are parts of the coastal zone. Although the black land funny enough is also seen as an area of malaria. When you start trying to dig up the sod in the black land and turn it, then you expose yourself to these, uh, vapors and fevers that may be part of that febrile environment. It's not clear then that opening up grasslands is—is entirely a good thing.

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Rather you—you started to clear the woodland because the soil was more manageable—you could get through it, you can root out, cut down trees, root out, um, roots and start to occupy that space. When it came to prairies, people were much more daunted because of course you got a—a thick grass sod to get through as well, which was not always easy. And the idea of fevers, uh, accompanied that sometimes.

DT: You've mentioned the coastal prairie and hill country and some of the piney woods and black land prairie. Can you talk about the diversity of Texas, and I guess one of the reasons why people consider it unique as a state?

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RD: Well, the—the—think of the location of Texas in terms of its sheer geography—that southwest position, you know, it's got a lot of the climatic and vegetational features of—of northern Mexico. It's got the Rocky Mountain basin range country across the Pecos. It's got the high plains that go all the way in—into Canada—Alberta, Saskatchewan. It's got the—the rolling plains that go into Chicago, it's—and—and of course you've got the piney woods that go eastwards to the Gulf and Atlantic shores. So

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it is really, in many people's eyes, I think correctly so the biological crossroads of North America. And with that kind of identity, you can come and find a microcosm of almost anyplace in the nation here in Texas, partly due to its size, but al—also due this idea of convergence—the convergence of plant vegetation and soil and relief—the whole physical appearance of landscape sort of combining here to give you all kinds of opportunities as well as challenges.

DT: One of the challenges I think that a lot of the early settlers faced was trying to control wildlife, in particular, predators. And I was hoping that you might be able to talk a little bit about the early efforts to control and extirpate wolves and bear, mountain lion—can you mention some of those?

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RD: I see this—I see this as—as sort of a regional issue and that is if you are coming to the coastal zone, you're gonna get the opportunity of entering what people call, in winter, was the nation of geese. So you could come in and literally live off the land. Further back from the coast were prairie chickens by the million. So this was a bounty that one could tap into,

and this was the good. Well the—the flipside of that, wolves are things that are in the way are likely to be challenging to you. Alligators were another one

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that people were quite leery about when they crossed some of these rivers and were seen as impediments to progress. So the idea of good and bad I think is etched very early on and it's brought in of course about what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. And anything therefore that is an impediment or a threat to the usual sort of Anglo settlement process I think is—is seen as something to be got rid of both for personal reasons, also for—as a public good. So that very early on people begin to see alligators and wolves

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and cougars as things to shoot, things to trap, things to barter as well. Wolf skins, fur, is an en—enormously prized commodity and people will use it for both family and—and commercial reasons. So that it isn't just eradicating predators for their intrinsic evilness and badness, it's also seeing some of them as quite functionally useful—like the bison as well, it's not a predator, but it is extremely useful, but it's also an obstacle for a number of reasons to the settlement of, you know, West Texas or the plains—plains country.

DT: Can you give any examples of how some of these buffalo were hunted or the wolves were trapped—how were they controlled?

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RD: The access to bison I think in Texas was facilitated by the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad in the 1870's when professional hunters, as well as well healed aristocrats from Europe and Russia would come in and just take this monarch of the plains out—they would just shoot it even from the—the railroad tracks. And so once you got transportation access, you've got all kinds of markets opening up I think for hides and ultimately the bones of the bison that were—were ground up as well. That's a transportation issue.

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In terms of wolves, I think you get the Federal Government coming in and this is more recent now, this is after the turn of the 1900's, about 1910 and 1912, who actually in the settlement of the west generally begin to help offering bounties on things like wolves that are seen to be intrinsic stock killers—sheep and goat raisers are worried about them from the 1880's when they come into the hill country. The Lobo Wolf was a—a cattle killer on the plains. And so they're literally stories of these vaqueros—these wolvers going in—into the dens in the breaks, the Canadian—along the Canadian River for example, and pulling out these young wolf cubs, or running down wolves across the plains in successive relays of horses. So that there was no—there was no quarter given to these—these animals, they were seen to be in need of extirpation and in—indeed by the 1920's,

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essentially the big plains wolf was gone from Texas. It was a—a local, a county, and then a federally in a sense mandated operation that resulted not only in trapping, but also in a great deal of poisoning and that was—that included prairie dogs and other rodents—jackrabbits too. They were seen simply to be in the way and—and competing for stock for valuable forage.

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DT: Maybe you could mention a little bit about the livestock I guess that has populated the state -whether it's cattle, sheep, or goats. It seems like the margins among them have changed over the years from what I've understood is generally heading west. Can you tell

us a little bit about that?

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RD: Well, there's a lot of wildcat in here, there's a lot of mustangs on the—on the loose and these were of course left over escapes, plants from Hispanic expeditions and colonial efforts. And I think what my reading was that really after the Civil War you have this Chisum Trail opened up. And in Austin Texas it was a monopolist—very

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monopolist bridge system. That was one of the big crossings to get cattle out, walk them north to the trailheads, to the railroad heads in—in Kansas and Oklahoma. And you get millions of cattle walked out in the 70's and 80's as—as essentially free goods. These are—these are mossyhorn, these are longhorns, these are animals that do spread diseases as they apparently go. They not only walked to the trailheads, they walked as far as Nebraska. They were put on steamships and hauled off to New Orleans. They're—

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they're canned in rock ports and beef and—and sort of soups. And after that—after they've finished there on the coast, they turn to sea turtles and can those as well in the same places, Fulton was one of them.

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So I think the livestock industry is—is treated as a free resource initially and then it's replaced by those more appropriate animals—the good new crossbreeds, the Herefords, what ultimately start to become the Angus. And then the 1880's, the sheep and goat, the angora people start to occupy the hill country. And this George Wilkins Kendall brings

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in Merino sheep into Kendall County, Texas. So, basically what you're doing in this third zone after the Civil War, is sort of tidying it up and bringing in those true and tested livestock breeds whether they're cattle or sheep or even goats and working with them in a new environment that is initially extremely rich, extremely fertile, extremely well grassed. But it doesn't take long to over-graze—over-graze many of these ranges,

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especially when you start to enclose them with barbed-wire and start to, you know, populate them in more and more dense—dense numbers.

DT: You talked some about free goods and I was curious if you could talk a little bit about the attitude towards game in the state. I understood for instance that some of the wild hogs and animals in East Texas were considered sort of, I guess, both domestic and wild—were considered free to roam here and these because the land was considered common. Is that true?

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RD: I—I think so. You mentioned feral hogs, yeah, they—-they were brought in and released and they would take off and they would simply go wild and then as they still are, be a means of—of support, a means of recreation, a means of—of food. My sense is that as you spread from east to west, you lived off the land. You cleared up, you cleaned the place, you cleared up the farm, you—you brought in the hogs and the cotton and the corn. But while you were doing that, you were having to make ends meet through barter,

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through hunting, through trapping, through living off essentially what you hoped was an abundant and super-abundant resource. The idea of running out in the early days was not

possible because the—the sense of wildlife abundance I think was—was generally excepted. As I mentioned the nation of geese. This was a seasonal movement of—of free good, free waterfowl, that would come down the north wind and would never run out.

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And it took a long time I think for that, the idea of super-abundance to be actually challenged—it took really into the 1880's, 1890's when the first game laws suggest that there are limits after all to the quail and to turkey and to deer and ultimately antelope. But as you know these—these game laws were not enforced until after—essentially after the turn of this last century. So people I think just understood that this was theirs to take and in fact they extirpated the wild turkey out of East Texas completely, it was

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reintroduced to East Texas, not from central and south Texas, because the—you brought turkeys from these places into East Texas. They all died, they all disappeared because they cannot deal with the humidity of what the piney woods habitat has. So ultimately the repopulation of the wild turkey in East Texas came out of—out of the eastern states through Parks And Wildlife in the 1920's, getting serious about putting turkeys back into East Texas. They've all been shoot out and hunted out as part of this free good, this access to game.

DT: Can you talk about some of the reasons that some of the game disappeared. I think you touched on the hunting for food but what about market hunting or plume collection—could you mention some of those factors too?

RD: I think there are—there are two things, there's this direct exploitation that results in you and I going out with our friends and hunting bear in New Braunfels for example. New Braunfels was a great—great place for getting bear—the German hill country was full of bears at that time. So we go out and we—we, you know, bag bears, we come back get a degree of community solidarity and—and admiration. We—we—we, you know, we—we'll divide up the spoils. And then there's the—the increase in transportation. I mentioned the railroads, you've got refrigeration that gives us a chance then to do this commercially. We can become market met. We may by part time fisherman, but in

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season we're out there clobbering things and trying to grab them as, you know, as—as—as easily as possible. And that means satisfying the growing markets of Galveston and—and Houston with geese, with swans, with shorebirds, with—with robins, with meadowlarks. These were all game animals. And so basically we can make a living

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simply by tapping into and having sufficient knowledge in woodcraft to—to know where these animals are and cap them off for commercial reasons. And we can ship them, as they did sea turtles, which they call—caught in very large number at one time in Nueces Bay. We'll ship them to—to Galveston, we'll turn em turtle and put em on steamers, ship em, you know, as far as New York City if we want. So this was a—a—a remarkable and I think very successful commercial decision to exploit those mammals and birds that were highly esteemed.

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But then on the other hand you've got the habitat issue as well. You—you are, in many cases, you know, turning habitat, plowing it up, cutting down the trees, and so the indigenous species that are dependent or specifically adapted to these, what we could call I

suppose, climax situation, they're gonna be affected by this expansion of settlement and changes in land use. They're crop, you know, new cropping regimes and—and the habitat itself and I think starts to limit the, both distribution and numbers of—of some of these animals as well.

RD: And then when the game laws started to be introduced and enforcement took hold, can you tell us anything about the struggle to enforce those laws and the resistance that those laws met in different parts of Texas?

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RD: I think there was a lot of resistance because there was a lot of denial—the denial that, you know, things were not really running out, they're just moved. They could be found, you know, in the next country or farther north or farther west. But once those laws got to be passed and initially those laws were all about fish and oysters, it was a Game, Fish, And Oyster Commission—or Fish And Oyster Commission, the word “game” came in after the 1900's, which shows you something about the mindset—game, what do we need game laws for especially when there's a lot of game still to be found

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in—and huntable game, recreational game certainly. So I think those laws were not enforced out of the reasons of denial and when they were enforced I think the feds had a lot to do with it because you had the federal laws about migratory—bird conservation. You know, and these were migratory game—these were federal game wardens, not local

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game wardens who ha-whose job was to stamp out poaching and to arrest people in the community that they may have known and take the abuse or the kinds of threats that were also meted out. So I—I have a feeling that it was in fact non-local people that were perhaps most affected in shifting behavior into a more, what we call, managerial conservation minded set of values.

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DT: You've mentioned the federal game wardens in the state and county ones. Did you do any research or writing about the pasture riders, some of the private game stewards that I guess were protecting game, hunting clubs.

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RD: No, the—the—the only sort of non-governmental people I looked at were the Audubon people. They had—the Audubon society was founded in this state in 1899. The ladies who founded it were unfortunately both killed by the Galveston Hurricane in 1900. And so it wasn't revitalized for a little bit, but when it was, near Waco—Waco actually, a man called Captain Davis he was in touch the National Association of

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Audubon in New York City, and very soon the National Office re-recognized that Texas had some very, very valuable colonies of egrets that were under a great deal of pressure for their plumes and their feathers at that time. And so it sent game wardens and tried to come to terms and make agreements with private land o—owners to—to protect, especially bird colonies on—on—on—in areas of—of the coast especially.

DT: (Inaudible) along the...

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RD: The Laguna—yeah, Green Island and—I—I—some of the Laguna Madre Islands and some of the islands in—in the bays. They were important. And of course afterwards, in the

1930's, you had Aransas, you had these official migratory bird refuges, like the Aransas wildlife estuary for the whooping crane and we had a—a dozen or more of those sort of brought on line beginning it in the late 1930's that have been en—enormously important in terms of retaining habitat and raising public consciousness about the need to protect endangered and threatened species.

DT: Considering that Texas has so much private land. It has a mindset and tradition that I think is protective of that situation. Can you tell us anything about the struggle to try and set aside some of this land and was it met with resistance or did people sort of welcome the idea of having these sanctuaries?

42:04- 2175

RD: The Texas, what becomes the Wildlife Commission today, The Parks and the Wildlife Commission is beginning in the 1915, 1920's and there was some very. I think, thoughtful people on that commission. What became Parks and Wildlife the Texas Fish and Game Commission recognized I think that they were in an—they were in the—in the business of restoration. This wasn't just stopping people from inappropriate behavior, but—but this re—this was a—an attempt to rebuild those, especially game populations, that had been basically extirpated, and that included deer, which were in very, very bad

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shape—it included the prong-horned antelope as well as that eastern turkey—wild turkey I mentioned. So I think people like Caesar Kleberg, were very powerfully committed and I think appropriately recognized as people who have private property, who understood the needs to protect game animals and made a concerted effort on an institutional basis to bring back and rebuild, especially game populations.

DT: Can you tell a little bit about those efforts to recover some of the species? I think you mentioned white-tailed deer had—deer populations had collapsed.

43:33- 2175

RD: Well for example, white-tailed deer, as soon as they—they purchase, this was appropriations that have been, I think, left over in the Federal Fish and Wild—sorry U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, F.D.R. basically declares the Aransas Wildlife Refuge. One thing that I think in the 1930's was important was again the federal move to assist game restoration was in the, what is called the P.R, the Pittman Robertson Act, which

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essentially helped Texas a great deal because it took taxes from arms and ammunition, the sort of expenditures that hunters make, took it all in a centralized part and then gave it back to the states according to the size of the state and the number of hunters in that state. So Texas has always benefited by getting a lot of money back from the federal government in order to pursue through Parks and Wildlife a—a game management and restoration policy. And so some of that money has gone into research. Some of it,

45:07 - 2175

although not a lot I don't think, has gone into actually the purchase of—of land in terms of management units. Although this has always been a political issue in the state about whether the state should be in the business of buying up land to be publicly owned. Cause as you've said the Feds have less than two percent of Texas as—as federal land. It was always one of the articles for entering the union to begin with in 1848 was that no land would be ceded to federal government. And so Texas always, being very careful to—to prioritize privately owned land in that sense. And so in the wildlife arena there's been some

reluctance, although there is land owned by the state for game management and game rehabilitation, but generally the money has gone into research and some of the harvesting strategies rather than into—into land purchase.

46:07 – 2175

DT: You mentioned that one of the conditions for Texas joining the union was that no private lands be ceded to the state. And I was curious why so much of the land in the state was sold off somehow to end up in private hands in the years following 1845.

46:23 – 2175

RD: Well, it was not private land would be ceded but public land would not be ceded. The public land was going to be settled upon and as the counties were formed and—and as people moved in, they were given the right to homestead and to claim that land on a familial and a private basis. The land that became federal, such as Big Bend and some of the national forests in East Texas, it was land that was negotiated and—and—and

47:11 – 2175

appropriated very slowly through negotiated—negotiations through other nature conservancy issues such as the Big Bend Ranch. The biggest landowners as far as I know in—in Texas, federal land owned, is the military at Fort Hood is one of them. They—they have enormous amounts of land. But as—as you said, most people resisted this idea of ceded any land to—to the federal government.

DT: Maybe you could fill in the details of how this worked, but I understood that the state of Texas following its joining the union, paid for a lot of its wartime debt and for building the capital and they were operating the day to day running of the government by selling land to ranchers and others. Is that correct?

48:13- 2175

RD: I think—I think so. And also the railroads received a lot of land when they started to come in as well, which was generally in the west anyhow that the—they would be given rights of way and they would be—this idea was to open up and to—to encourage the settlement and the promotion of—of these areas, yeah, yeah.

DT: Earlier you were talking about reintroducing white-tailed deer and turkeys. I was wondering if you could also talk about some of the efforts to restore some non-game species. I know that you worked and studied a lot about the recovery of the whooping crane and I think you've also written about Atwater prairie chickens. I was curious if you could mention some of those efforts—some that have worked, some that haven't.

49:06- 2175

RD: Well the prairie chicken and the whooping crane were essentially game species that were sort of removed from the game list and—it wasn't until 1966 as you probably know, that the feds passed the first Endangered Species Act. And it was the '69 act, as amended, that is really carried this idea forward to the idea of non-game protection and non-game management. And the state of Texas at that time, al—also passed a state law dealing with endangered species, which—many of which are non-game—not all, but

49:52 – 2175

many are. And so I think it was really a 60's onwards effort to broaden the—the—the purviews of what is an appropriate animal or plant in that—in some cases, to—to value. And so we have now, as you know, a—a number of very important icons, the whooping crane is one of them, that was protected and successfully I think as far back as 1913 and 1916 as part of a migra—migratory treaty act with Canada but th—then basically was

rescued in extremes I think on—on the Aransas Refuge because this was the last known
50:31 - 2175

wintering ground for that remnant population of birds that kept coming somehow down the north wind. No one knew where they were nesting until the 1950's and then—then th—it was found by accident. They'd been looking for the nesting ground but not finding any.

50:47- 2175

So basically the Whooping Crane becomes, I think, a very important icon and remains that way of the federal government saying we will not let this bird die. And they have, over the last thirty years, gone to enormous lengths, enormous expense to—to save the whooping crane—very much by intervening and raising these birds in captivities and—and tracing and tracking them—placing them in strange places. This is not necessarily

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a—a Texas phenomenon because I think Whooping Crane happens to be in Texas. But things like the Golden Cheeked Warbler, which is (inaudible) in Texas, and the Black Capped Vireo, which is virtually, but not completely, restricted to breeding in Texas. These are important animals I think that do bring an extra flavor of diversity and interest to—to the non-game arena—and they've been, I think, increasingly valued and they're increasing and controversial because most of the habitat in which the Golden Cheek breeds has to be on—on private ranch land in the hill country. And so there's this dialogue of, you know, property rights and—and critical habitat and so forth we have not, I think, really resolved this issue yet. But it's an exciting area to—to look at I think.

DT: You mentioned this controversy of private property rights. Can you mention anything about the Take Back Texas movement and the property rights movement that I guess sprung up in the 80's?

52:29- 2175

RD: Well it wasn't—you could tell me perhaps, wasn't it really a function of trying to—to prevent the—the expansion or the intrusion of—of other people, either the state or the federal agencies, into decision made about property; individual decision made about actually ranches or—or—or areas that—that people found themselves unable to do what they want to do—whether it's chopping down trees or mining or hunting or whatever.

50:34 - 2175

And this is, as I said, not—not been—not been resolved I think, except I think we are moving in the traditional way of setting up wildlife refuges for non-game species, such as the golden cheek so that we are purchasing land in a traditional sense, a federal land, to set aside as a—as a zone in which these birds, plants, and animals can in fact have some respite from habitat loss or habitat impingement.

DT: If that's the general trend and pattern is that you set off these islands of protected habitat and then, in the rest of the state and the rest of the country, things sort of go on as they were before...

53:55- 2175

RD: I—I think this is the—the trend that we have sort of fallen into and I think it's a very unfortunate trend because it—it—it—it sort of divides the "we" and the "they." Sort of we can have parking lots and then we have little is—islands of "pristine wild habitat." My belief is that what you need to do is to talk to land owners, talk to a generation of Texans about the need to become kin to—to work with, to understand how

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plants and animals can, and have traditionally, gone about their lives within our presence, around us and to set it up as an either, or, yours, mine, I—I think is a wrong way of—of living with. And I think living with is an educational—it's a—it's almost an art by which we can simply start to talk about eco-tourism, is one way of—of moving that—that, in a sense doesn't solve, but I think softens this idea of ec—economics versus aesthetics. There's a lot of interest in now in wildlife related tourism, bird watching, people coming in for non-consumptive access to landscape and the plants and animals and the insects on these landscapes.

55:27- 2175

I myself have been involved a little bit in—in international tourism that right now in April in Texas is the place that people from all over the world come and these tourists, they'll get these big vans and go roaring off to the valley to watch bird migration and Green Jays and Chakalackas and they'll come back to the hill country to look at Golden Cheeks and Black Caps and then they'll even come to the Austin sewage ponds to—to waste water treatment plant which is one of my favorite habitats here to—to look at long distance shorebirds that are on their way to Alaska and having the pampas of Argentina,

56:03 - 2175

you know, weeks—maybe a month or so ago. They're hell bent for—for the Arctic and you can watch them within the urban perimeter. So I think this whole idea of urban wildlife and wildlife that can coexist in habitats are sometimes are—are humanly made, not necessarily quote wild—wild. Animals and plants are opportunist and when we recognize that and I think can learn to live with instead of assuming that we have all the rights and no responsibilities, then I think we're into a interesting—perhaps an interesting (?) more fruitful one.

DT: Can you talk a little bit about those creatures that seem to have coexisted or found a niche within the urban context and whether it's raccoons or possums or squirrels as opposed to some of the game and non-game species we talked about before?

57:06- 2175

RD: Well, we've got game right in here—Westlake and—I mean look at Lakeway. I mean we've got game animals just wandering around the road and—and becoming, you know, traffic fatalities. So—so this is an issue that I...

DT: (Inaudible)

57:20- 2175

RD: Yeah, this—this is an issue that I think is very interesting and one that I—I—I—I—I still am struggling with. The two things that I think are very important, and I have some students working in that area. Number one is urban wildlife. There are more—certainly in Europe it's true—there are more birds and mammal species within Metropolitan areas than outside of them at the moment. certainly in—in Europe it's true because with the intensification of agriculture and these mono-crops that have been grown, the thought of birds in rural areas for example, I 'm thinking of England now,

57:51 - 2175

there's more—there's more habitat within an area—a city limit, than there is outside it because the—the demand to intensify food production and to specialize crops to spray them and to get rid of hedges and habitat that is non-functional, I think is there and has—has grown certainly since the Second World War, which is creating a lot of issues about

where have all the skylarks gone, you know—they're disappeared from England in very large numbers.

58:20- 2175

So, the urban wildlife and urban habitats I think are very, very interesting places in which you have a puddling, a literally puddling of the native and the introduced—the exotic and the opportunistic. And I mentioned the—the Hornsby Bend Wastewater Treatment plant at the moment which are three hundred acres, many of which are mud and—and wastewater and they are very, very attractive habitats for ducks, we've even had a Whooping Crane there once—stopped once, a long time ago now—Shorebirds, Herons,

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these birds pop in. They see these places and pop in as refueling stops or even wintering stops for a season or for weeks. And these are animals that you can approach quite closely because if they realize not being killed or not being accosted, they prefer to sit around and watch you take photographs out of a c—car window or get a—a pair of binoculars on them and—and they will be doing what they do in terms of courtship and feeding and—and resting. So these are extremely important I think educational as well as biological opportunities for these—for these organisms.

59:36- 2175

The issue that I am not resolved yet, and I'm struggling with is—is this rather purist attitude of something that is native and something that is not. It comes to me very sharply because my recent book on the Purple Martin is a—is a, really an exercise is what happens when you not only protect these birds and—and make them almost part of the extended family that—the backyard and garden by erecting houses and very successful ones, but then you bring in the exotic house sparrow and the European Starling, and you see all hell breaks loose because these birds are very, very troublesome to the indigenous Martin. So I've got to get—my problem is what do I do about this rather purist attitude I

1:00:19 - 2175

have about native, non-native, you know, re—resident and alien. This—this idea as we have—soon I look at the new tree, I look at the—the fish species, look at birds, look at mammals, we have brought in a veritable Noah's Ark of animals and plants and organisms generally not only into Texas but into many, many places where European and colonial mindsets have sort of wanted to recreate temperate latitude environments, you

1:00:55 - 2175

know whether it's Australian and New Zealand—they're all little England's, you know. And we brought in a lot of the plants and animals that are—are appropriate to those habitats and we have not been very care-cautious and seen what happens to the indigenous species. And now it's too late. So we have these strange plant and animal communities that are new under the sun, you know, and we—we haven't yet learned sort of to appreciate them or wander what is going on or—or study them for themselves. We tend to take rather again in our research I think we tend to think of native or non-native and we tend to—to look at native as opposed to native or non-native. And these are issues that I still am worried about. What we do with the Monk Parakeet in Austin? You know, it's very successful and every baseball diamond has its stick nest and so on and so

1:01:48 - 2175

forth. Are they okay? Do we leave them alone? Do we do anything? Maybe we don't, we just say, well it was a Monk Parakeet, now it's replaced the Carolina Parakeet that was once

here. But it happens to be from Argentina in this case.

DT: Can you give some examples of how some of these exotics might have come in whether it's the Sparrow or the Starling or the Nandina or Privet or the Monk Parakeet—the Nilgai or (?), how do these species come here? Is it for hunting or is it for just ornament?

[End of Reel 2175]

1:06 – 2176

RD: ...Salvias for hummingbirds, so I got—I bought fifty-three species of Salvii at one time of the year—I love Salvia simply because hummingbirds like them. So I got into salvias.

DT: (Inaudible)

RD: Yeah.

DT: Let's return to the exotics and how they were introduced (inaudible).

1:33 – 2176

RD: Well, you know, I think it's a very good question because in this day and age you always say, well, you know, I can't do anything and it doesn't matter. The juggernaut of some one other, you know, federal government or society, well, when you start picking away at these exotics, you realize that some individual often, for some funky or fanatical reason, had a thing about, say, the house sparrow and his name—this is not new by any

2:08 – 2176

means, but Eugene Sheafin, who lived on Madison Avenue. One of the reasons that the house sparrow got across the Atlantic was because he wanted to reintroduce all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare. And so the English sparrow is one of these birds that is a literary moment, motif. It wasn't the only reason but—but, you know, it was a reason why some individual gets it into their minds that this is gonna be really good and in the case of the house sparrow, it was really gonna be good because it was gonna solve the problem of these inch bugs in shade trees, you know, are defoliating shade trees in

2:49 – 2176

downtown areas of New York where the, you know, self respecting naked birds wouldn't go anymore. It was also gonna be a reminder to immigrants of their roots, the chirping house sparrow. Well the house sparrow became literally I think the winged rat within thirty years of being introduced, and everybody has one. Galveston gets them from Liverpool in 1867, you know, brought straight over and released as a sign of progress. And these an—these animals, a) don't do the jobs they were supposed to do, and b) start to beat up on indigenous species like Purple Martins and—and Bluebirds. So how does this bird get here? Because some individual or some moment or some group decided that

3:32 – 2176

they thought it would be a—a big improvement. Similarly the eucalyptus in California gets there because some individual, his name was EL—Elwood, I've forgotten his last name now (Walker was it?) in Santa Barbara, saw some in a nursery and thought they would be wonderful. Elwood Cooper was his name, and he writes to the expert in Australia who pushes them out, you know, by the bucket full of seeds to anybody who asks him for them. So really these individuals do make a difference I've found. And—

4:07 – 2176

and likewise some of these game animals are gifts from one family to another and they become status symbols or ornaments or ultimately opportunities to—to expand ones economic base by running cattle with—with exotic antelope for example. So, it varies a great deal.

DT: Who do you think is the Pandora's Box (inaudible)?

4:42 - 2176

RD: I—I—I don't know. I—the English sparrow can never be reversed—although they always say the Model T Ford did them in. That is, once you shifted from horse drawn vehicles to the internal combustion engine, all that surplus grain that was in downtown New York and downtown Washington, these inner city areas of course disappears. So, you've got still the cavities where Sparrows are nesting, but you've got the—the grain—abundant grain food certainly gets depleted as you switch to vehicles and

5:16 - 2176

non-horse drawn vehicles. So maybe that brings about some kind of parody, some kind of control. But often—such you look at the nutria brought into—into Louisiana initially by the McIlhenny family, you know, and—and escape in some kind of—it was going to be a—a complement to muskrat fur. This Argentinean rodent then escapes and is thought to be a real—also a real improvement. Can you eradicate nutria and the answer is no—or Sparrows, or Starlings—let's not talk about starlings either. So, a lot of these—I think you are in a Pandora's Box situation. You open it and there's no going back. That's why it's interesting to look at this new system of plant and animal assembly to see exactly

6:05 - 2176

how it works over the short and longer terms if you can figure out how these new components play off each other. Because we—we're dealing with a case of, I think, sort of Russian roulette. We really don't know or nor can we predict how these things are gonna really work out in the longer term on a ecological basis.

DT: Maybe you can discuss sort of as a case study, how the Nilgai and the Axis Deer and the white-tail have interacted from some of your studies.

6:39- 2176

RD: Well I'm not sure that I'm qualified to talk about the behavioral and ecological exchanges. There's a—a couple of books that—the—the A & M people have worked on, but essentially I think the Nilgai was brought in to the King Range as a—a sort of interesting gift in the 30's and is still basically I think located mainly on the—on the King Ranch. But this brings in the—the whole new ballgame of not only having exotics that

7:09 - 2176

may be Indian or African doing very well here in Texas, and I include ostriches as well, which I think are remarkable, or giraffes looking at you from live oak, you know, over a small live oak tree they've got a giraffe looking down at you—very remarkable. But these things I think are—are not always known. There's a—attempt to—to put them in quarantine and use Caesar Antonio's Zoo as a—as a sort of a breeding ground so you can then ship out to new owners the offspring of these exotics because you're not sure what diseases they may be carrying or not carrying.

7:51 - 2176

But really we don't know I think. It depends again on the—on the conditions. People argue that some of these an—antelope will, in a time of drought, out compete the white-tail deer easily—Eland for example, which are African animals, much better adapted to aridity situations and much more, perhaps more economically in terms of water use and ability to—to store water. In—in a time of drought they can maybe survive and white-tails won't. You need to get to the—the ecologists and the behaviorists, big game people, to answer all those questions. But, I don't think we know the—the—the answers.

8:29 – 2176

Besides, some of these animals are not only—they're outside the deer proof fences now. A lot of them have got out, are now breeding on their own or hybridizing, we don't know. And so they are beyond our—our ability to control them.

DT: Maybe you could turn to just talking briefly about how it is that you ask yourself these questions and how you keep score and develop your book. Something about your research and writing process.

9:04 – 2176

RD: Yeah. Two things that have enlivened me. One is, professionally, as a geographer, I'm interested in how people alter the landscapes in which they live. You know, this human role in transforming the face of the earth and we are ecological dominance in all kinds of ways through the settlement processes—through land use changes and through the direct and indirect things we do to those places in which we—

9:36 – 2176

we locate ourselves. So, professionally I can be very comfortable in looking at impacts on birds or game or—or even plants. And then of course I've got my personal curiosity, especially about birds and how my own affection and interest and curiosity is—is sort of reflected by other people that I meet. We have this innate curiosity about the world around us and I think for me birds have always been, ever since I was kid, a means of—of sort of looking at cycle and season and looking at myself in a—in a longer term because they all have their agendas, they're all doing things whether I'm there or not and it's nice to—to sort of, perhaps vicariously, live in their lives for a little while. So that I

10:23 – 2176

can come back to mine perhaps more refreshed than I was and more relaxed and yet equally curious.

DT: How do you pass on this curiosity to your students? You're a professor at UT and how do you...

10:38 – 2176

RD: Well, that's a good question. I'm—I'm teaching now a—a capstone course, it's the last course that most of our major will—will take before they leave and we try to be—develop, you know, our “philosophy of geography.” The—these students have been exposed for three or so years to various aspects of the physical environment and the

10:58 – 2176

social environment and the—and the biological environment, and—and the question is well, what does it mean? How—how do you place yourself and explain to other people who you are? And my simple advise, admonition to them, is get out and learn to look at details. Get out and notice, in your daily routines, the small things. It hasn't to be—you don't have to be a hero, you don't have to go to Mount St. Helens and wait or go to Antarctica and watch a great big iceberg being formed. But everything in your daily existence has something to say. There's a story going on, things happening, and your job I think—not your job but your—the ammunition I give is to go and look and listen and be curious and—and—and poke about your local environment and see—see how it works if you can.

11:54 – 2176

One thing that interests me about this sense of being a geographer every day, not just professionally but in your daily life, being curious, geography is everywhere approach, is to say, you know, we leave a building and walk across campus and there's a mockingbird

singing. Why? What's happening? What—what time of the year is this? What's it doing? Which way is it facing? Can you think of a nest that may be around or—or you see a—other birds flying over campus—the night hawks or the chimney sweeps that

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come back. These are sort of tokens, these are moments, in which you can really enjoy and get out of yourself and sort of look at something else and see how it conducts its life, how it goes about being what it is and enjoy it and admire it and respect it for that—for that very reason. That's that sort of awareness that gets you out of this rather fixated humdrum need to go from one class to another and gives one a chance I think to catch ones breath and perhaps relax and let oneself go a little bit.

12:56 - 2176

DT: One question we often ask people is just how do folks in this sort of busy, hurley burley world, go and find a place to relax—especially a place in nature and I was curious if you have a location that you like to go that gives you solace and some kind of serenity? If you could describe that.

13:22 - 2176

RD: There are a number of places. The one I've been going to for the last ten, almost fifteen years now, is every Sunday I go to the Austin Wastewater Treatment Plant and I just love to go, rain or shine, I go really early in the morning, hopefully not too many other birders are there, and I'll just go there and sometimes I'll go there on my own after—after school or after work, and just sit and watch—I do count—I—I am a bit compulsive about identifying the species and counting now and putting them on a graph

13:57 - 2176

and seeing what goes up and what goes down from year to year. But I do enjoy looking at these organisms, these ducks, these different birds, and sometimes I can I—identify them individually and just watch what they're doing—looking into their eyes and just enjoying watching them and getting quite poetic about it. I do quite a lot of poetry writing and I've written, I think some quite descent poems by—by referring to moments when you're very still, very quite, and very watchful. And that's what I like again about Bedichek that I mentioned earlier on. Bedichek is always celebrating the small things in

14:36 - 2176

Texas, you know, the—the Hummingbird, the—the small flower, the Inca Dove. He's not interested in the rock-em-sock-em Longhorn and—and these sorts of things. It's the quite things and he says that associate together and he doesn't talk about competitions so much as talking about organisms, plants and animals, clumping together, associating to cooperate. Cooperation is much more use—usual in nature than competition. And I like that vision. I always carry it around with me because a lot of these organisms, I see these birds, aren't cooperating with each other. There may be the odd faint and the odd—odd

15:15 - 2176

nod and wink, but generally they're going about, there'll warn each other if there's a problem or they'll be feeding together or they'll be—there's a lot of cooperation going on and I like that, I think it—it sort of gives you another side of this—this need to be an individual and to—to place oneself always at the center of ones—ones existence in every way possible.

DT: You mentioned that going to the Wastewater Treatment Plant often gets you inspired to write some poetry and I was wondering if there is a poem or maybe a passage from one

of your books that you could conclude with by reading.

15:51 – 2176

RD: Well thank you, I'd like to do that. This is my whooping crane book here, which I won't hold up because it's out of print. And I have a—a two poems I'd like to quote, It's very audacious of me to actually put these in the book, but I did and I—I realize now that you—you shouldn't do this lightly, but I do love writing poetry because I think it gives you a—a way of saying things and I love language, a way of pulling things together in a

16:23 – 2176

very succinct and yet hopefully meaningful way. The first poem is from the book *The Whooping Crane*, it's called "Aransas Norther."

October rain is sharp glass, blasted in tumult.

Gulls scabble sands.

Terns hunker.

Tormented songbirds rack.

The shout that all whirling things start up.

Wind whips leaves, zings wires.

Palms lash the air needing legs.

This sky hurls breathes cranes

whose guttural chevrons will sound the change to wintertime.

17:06 – 2176

This was I remember in October when I was in one of those Northers come to—through Port Aransas and it rained for three days and afterwards the cranes had started to come into the—the refuge. They'd—they'd use this Norther to—to migrate south and—and come into their winter quarters. And the final one is actually looking at cranes as they walk—as they're sort of walking about. It's called "Cranes on Point Pasture Road," which is down the Blackjack Peninsula on the refuge.

17:50 – 2176

They prance, as two year olds heading for the gallops.

The joy of smooth footfall.

No Oxeyes, Spartinia.

Live oak brush endless;

Hawk lifts deliberate steps to find food

and I, adults, who punish territorial transgressions.

They skeeter almost as do yearlings, all legs unhitched to anything,

ready to race, gambol, above all to dance with blood-curdling calls,

white whirls, wings drooping, greeting right, mating right, season.

Only to troop back to rank vegetation.

Thank you.

DT: Thank you very much, I appreciate your time.

[End of Reel 2176]

[End of interview with Robin Doughty]