

# The Gazette

SEPTEMBER 2020  
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## NATURE WATCH

### WIZARD LIZARDS

*by Jim and Lynne Weber*



'Horny toad' is the colloquial name for three species of horned lizards that are present in Texas. The Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*) is the only one found in our area, with the Round-tailed Horned Lizard (*P. modestum*) occurring in West Texas and the Panhandle, and the Greater Short-horned Lizard (*P. hernandesii*) restricted to the higher elevations in the Trans-Pecos. All three species are protected by the state of Texas, with the Texas Horned Lizard being the first species in Texas to be granted this status.

With a proportionally small, spiny head with a blunt snout, a distinctly flattened body fringed with a double row of spiny scales, the dorsal or top side of the Texas Horned Lizard is covered with numerous small scales, each keeled or ridged down the center making them rough to the touch. The back of its head is bordered with 8 enlarged spines, four on each side, with the middle pair being the largest and often referred to as the lizard's 'horns.' Its overall color is gray or tan, with a light line down the center of its back, and a series of light-bordered brown spots on either side of the center line.

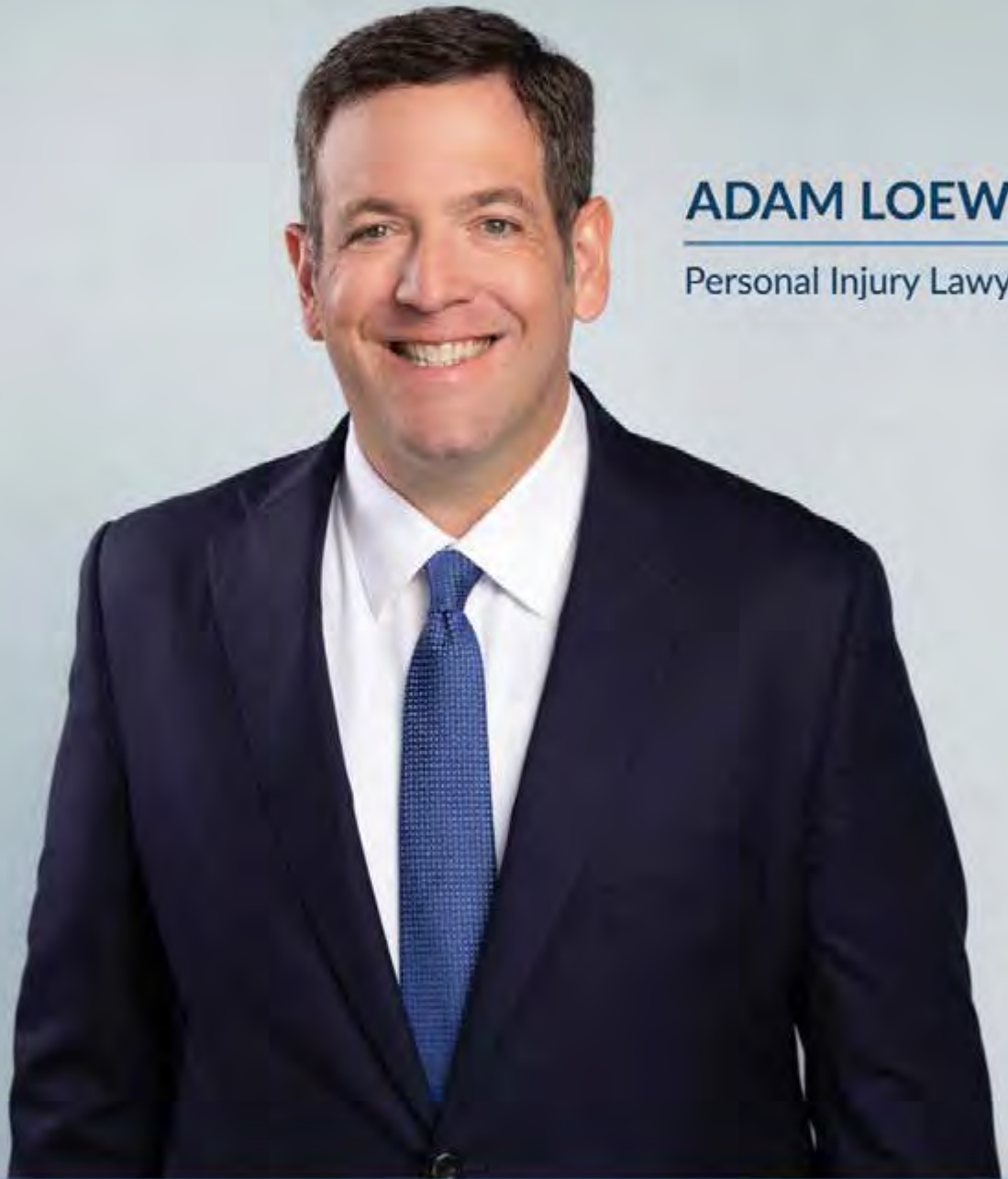
Active from late February to October, the Texas Horned Lizard is a strict dietary specialist, feeding almost exclusively of native

harvester ants in the genus *Pogonomyrmex*. Estimates show that one lizard requires 20 ant colonies, and it will feed by moving from one colony to the next, consuming about 20 or so ants at each. These lizards are wizards at avoiding predators, having a wide variety of defenses. They can flatten themselves against the ground and easily blend into a substrate or forcibly stab their head spines into the mouth of a predator, but the most fascinating defense is the ability to squirt blood from the corners of their eyes. They can aim a jet of blood directly into the face of a predator, and their blood elicits a powerful distaste that coyotes, foxes, bobcats, and even mountain lions cannot tolerate.

In the past, the Texas Horned Lizard was present in all parts of Texas except for the southeast and the extreme northeast portions of Texas. Populations began to decline after huge numbers of these lizards were shipped across the country as part of the commercial reptile trade, only to perish due to the lack of harvester ants as a main staple of their diet. Since then, the decline has continued, mainly as a result of broad pesticide use to control imported red fire ants that has also resulted in the loss of harvester ants from the landscape. Today, these lizards have largely been extirpated east of I-35 and I-37, except in a few localities with sandy soil. If you'd like to get involved in helping Texas Parks & Wildlife gather information on the presence, abundance and decline of this species, join the citizens science project by the Texas Nature Trackers called the Texas Horned Lizard Watch, which is available on their website.

Send your nature-related questions to [naturewatch@austin.rr.com](mailto:naturewatch@austin.rr.com) and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, *Nature Watch Austin*, *Nature Watch Big Bend*, and *Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies*, (all published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at [naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com](http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com).

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## LETTUCE RECYCLE!

by Dena Houston

### THE RECYCLED ORCHESTRA



Cateura is one of the poorest “slum” villages in Paraguay. It is located at the edge of Paraguay’s largest landfill into which three million pounds of trash are dumped daily.

This village suffers from severe poverty, lack of education among the young, high drug use, and a dangerously polluted water supply. When it rains in Cateura, the streets become a sea of trash.

Most of the people in the village make their living as “trash pickers,” earning five cents a pound for cardboard and ten cents a pound for plastic. In 2006, an environmental engineer named Favio Chavez went to Cateura to teach the trash pickers about recycling safety. He was also a musician and decided to teach music lessons to the children. He taught them outside, next to the landfill, in the heat and in the pouring rain. At first, he had two violins and three guitars for the 10 children who signed up. The kids had to share the instruments. They could not take them home to practice because the instruments were so valuable—more valuable than the houses the kids lived in—that they would surely be stolen.

Chavez asked one of the “pickers,” Cola Gomez, to help build some more instruments. Cola picked through the trash and found an old drum with a hole in it. He found X-ray film to cover the hole so the kids could play it. He made a violin for Ada Rios using a bent fork, metal sheets from a flattened paint can, and other recycled items. The story of Ada Rios is captured in a wonderful children’s book called *Ada’s Violin*.

Cola started experimenting with other materials to build instruments—water pipes became flutes, packing crates became guitars. He made a cello from an oil drum, a spoon, and the heel of a shoe.

Tito Romero put together trumpets, flutes, and trombones. He made a saxophone from a drainpipe, melted copper, spoon handles, cans, and bottle caps.

Soon, the orchestra performed concerts in Cateura and then in the capital of Asuncion. The audiences loved the orchestra and The Recycled Orchestra started to get invited to different countries. You can hear them perform at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTQQ0m8Ys8>.

Playing in the orchestra has changed the lives of many of the children in the village. Money from the concerts has helped the families build new and safer homes.

What started as a music class for 10 students has grown into a traveling orchestra and music school with 200 students and 25 instructors. Quoting Favio, “The world sends us garbage. We send back music.”

You can see a short documentary about the Recycled Orchestra (also called Landfill Harmonics) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYbORpgSmjg>.

References for this article:

- September 14, 2016, NPR’s All Things Considered – “From Trash to Triumph: The Recycled Orchestra”
- September 2019 Issue of Muse Magazine – “From Trash to Tunes”

## PLEASE REMEMBER – WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!!!

Here is a very informative City of Austin recycling website: <http://www.austintexas.gov/what-do-i-do>.

Stay tuned for future tips that will include creative ways to recycle or reuse. If you have any questions or recycling ideas, please send them to:

[recycling@hpwbana.org](mailto:recycling@hpwbana.org).





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The homes you see on both sides of this newsletter is some of the Squires Team's home-sales activity in Southwest Austin for the month of August, 2020.

KW  
KELLERWILLIAMS  
REAL ESTATE

Hey Southwest Austin, the market is extremely active right now, as buyers are back out in droves, placing all of our listings under contract and taking advantage of CHEAP interest rates! John has been getting his clients incredible interest rates, like 2.875% on a 30 year fixed rate mortgage! The Squires Team enforces and practices the strictest Covid protocol guidelines when listing homes and showing properties to buyers. If you would like to speak with John Squires to list your home for sale or help you in the purchase of your next home, please call/text him directly at (512) 970-1970.



Call John Squires' real estate 'sell' phone at (512) 970-1970 at any time or text for a quick response. Thanks!



6216 Tasajillo Trail of Circle C Ranch is **"JUST SOLD!"** by John. Priced at **\$529,000**. John Squires built the first two homes in Park West back in 1997, thus starting this gated, sub-neighborhood of Circle C Ranch. To learn more on Park West, just call John. He's the #1 real estate expert in Southwest Austin homes sales.



10 Borello is **"JUST SOLD!"** in Lakeway in Flintrock Falls on the 13th fairway. John's buyer is absolutely thrilled with this gorgeous condo John found for them, 3 blocks from the Hills Country Club. When you're ready for a life of golf and relaxation, call John to find your dream home. Listed at **\$749,000**.







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**Call John Squires at (512) 970-1970 to list your house for sale and/or buy another.**

**10212 Rhett Butler is "COMING SOON!"** John is listing this stunning Fedrick Harris Estate home "On The Park" on one of the most sought-after streets in all of Circle C Ranch. Just 1 block from the highly acclaimed Kiker Elementary. At over 3,700 square feet, it has all the room for a growing family. Call John for pricing and more information at (512) 970-1970.



**903 Newman is John's new listing. "UNDER CONTRACT" and was priced at \$699,000.** Sweet cottage in west Austin, close to town and hike/bike trails. Perfect for retiring to!



John Squires is the top agent in Southwest Austin and Circle C Ranch home sales over the last 23 years with over **740~** homes sold to date in the Southwest neighborhoods and **1115~** homes sold city-wide. **Only 1 number to call and John Squires answers his phone.** Move-up/down plans, flexible commissions offered. Call for a free, no-obligation market assessment on your valuable home. Only John works directly with all his clients and you will never be handed off to an assistant or another agent. 7 days or nights per week by appointment. **(512) 970-1970.**



**2304 Holly Street is "JUST SOLD!"** by John Squires. "John stuck with us for 2 years to find just the right house for us. This is our absolute dream home, with a pool, downtown access, yet secluded and near parks and the lake. John, you totally rock and we love working with you!" Janna Kenniston and Jeremy Rice. Listed at **\$1,000,000.**