

Celebrating Animals

After I moved to South Africa in 1984, some friends took me into the bush, and that was it—I was hooked on wildlife. Twenty-five years later, I still get a charge out of going into a beautiful area and photographing wild animals.

One of my favorite Texas spots for viewing wildlife is the Santa Clara Ranch in the Rio Grande Valley. The ranch belongs to a practicing doctor and photographer who purchased the 300 acres of pristine brushland to provide lifelong sanctuary to its wild inhabitants. No hunting is allowed, but by opening the ranch to photographers and bird-watchers, the owner hopes to earn enough to maintain the property.

On a visit to the ranch in July, I waited three days to capture this image of a bobcat stopping by a water hole in the early morning. At one point, she spied me sitting in the blind and approached, seeming more curious than afraid.

I hope pictures like this will convince people to stop killing bobcats—they're widely viewed as vermin by local cattle ranchers, even though they play a vital ecological role by controlling rodent populations. And I hope people will come to the Rio Grande Valley to photograph and watch wildlife. If ranchers can make money through ecotourism, they may be encouraged to turn their lands back to nature and welcome the return of native species.

— *Jeremy Woodhouse, McKinney, Texas*

YOUR BEST SHOT

Do you have an inspiring photo of a favorite pet or wild animal? Send it to us for possible

publication in *All Animals*, along with an explanation of 150 words or fewer about why it's meaningful to you. Photos should be at least 300 dpi at a size of 5-by-7" and at least 2 MB.

To upload your photo and information, visit humansociety.org/yourbestshot. Send hard copy submissions to *All Animals—Your Best Shot*, The HSUS, 700 Professional Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20879. (Hard copies cannot be returned.)