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Wildlife competitions teaches and entertains

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By: Staff and wire reports

Students across the Texas countryside look forward every year to a test where the classroom is the great outdoors and the skills help keep Texas wild.

At Camp Don D. Harrington, near Amarillo, Childress High School Sophomore Amy Inman and her class prepared for their first statewide wildlife competition, a contest that will test their knowledge on everything from animal skeletons to wildlife habitat.



"Mostly, I just compete in athletics and stuff but here you really have to think to do good," Inman said.

Future Farmers of America added popular wildlife classes to their agricultural lineup as Texas farmers and ranchers look for supplemental income. Money from hunting leases and other wildlife activities helps boost the bottom line. The FFA groups then compete in the wildlife competitions.

"Really, the point of it is to educate more youth about our native wildlife that we have here in Texas. I mean, it's sad when you go to schools and they can tell you more about African animals than they can about what's in their own county," Dana Wright of the Texas Parks and Wildlife said.

With more than half a dozen sponsoring organizations and \$2,000 in scholarship money on the line, there's a lot at stake. But it's also fun.

"People are really flocking to places like Austin, San Antonio, Houston and the Dallas metroplex. They move off the land they lose a little bit of their connection with the land, and somebody has to be left behind to take care of our wild spaces and the kids you saw here today are the generation that are going to be doing it," FFA instructor Russell Graves said.



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