

# THE BIG NEWS

## Big Bend

Texas is a big place, with lots of different environmental conditions – soil, temperature, rainfall and topography – that produce unique tree species. Those found only in Texas are considered *endemic*, which is one reason our state boasts so many national champions. One place known for its unique set of tree species is Big Bend National Park, and TFS foresters periodically travel to Big Bend to find and remeasure the national champions in the park, many of which were discovered in the early 1980's by former Chief Ranger Jim Liles.

One species took a couple of trips to update: Drooping Juniper (*Juniperus flaccida*). In May 2006, TFS regional urban forester, Oscar Mestas, and program coordinator, Pete Smith, found and remeasured the listed national champ in a narrow draw above Lower Juniper Spring. Records indicated another possible champ on Casa Grande that hadn't been measured since its discovery in 1982. So Oscar and Pete set out in November to climb Casa Grande and find the tree, using best-guess GPS coordinates, an old map and photo, and a healthy dose of determination. The trip was worth it. The tree was not only still alive, but had grown enough to rival the champ, making them both national co-champions!



TFS forester Oscar Mestas and the national co-champion Drooping Juniper above Lower Juniper Spring



Pete Smith and the new national co-champ Drooping Juniper on Casa Grande

## Photo Essays Available

To see more pictures from Big Bend and other big tree hunting trips, check out the new photo galleries at <http://texaschampiontrees.snapfish.com>. Just type in the user name "bigtrees@tfs.tamu.edu" and the password "champion" to gain access to the site, or create your own account to get automatic updates when new photos are added.

## Quarterly List Published

TFS publishes the latest Texas Big Tree Registry quarterly, at <http://texasforests.tamu.edu>. Here's a snapshot of the new champs or co-champs crowned since October 1, 2006:

Species	Cir.	Height	Spread	Tree Index	County	Owner
Juniper, Drooping	110	28	36	147	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Madrone, Texas	118	41	48	171	Uvalde	Estrella Ranch
Sweetgum	244	91	96	359	Van Zandt	Tommy & Sherry Barton

## In Memorium

Some listed champions haven't been inspected since they were discovered. Recent searches for the national champion Littleleaf Leucaena (aka. goldenball leadtree, *Leucaena retusa*) and Roemer Catclaw Acacia (*Acacia roemeriana*) turned up empty. With no replacement on file, those species now have no champion. If you know of a candidate specimen, fill out a nomination form or contact the program coordinator at [bigtrees@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:bigtrees@tfs.tamu.edu).