

Local

A&M runs 'floating classroom'

By WAYNE COOK
Battalion Reporter
A 174-foot steel classroom cruising through the Gulf of Mexico is a variation from the usual landlocked desks and chalkboards.

Texas A&M University's floating classroom is the Gyre, a research ship operated by the Texas A&M Department of Oceanography.

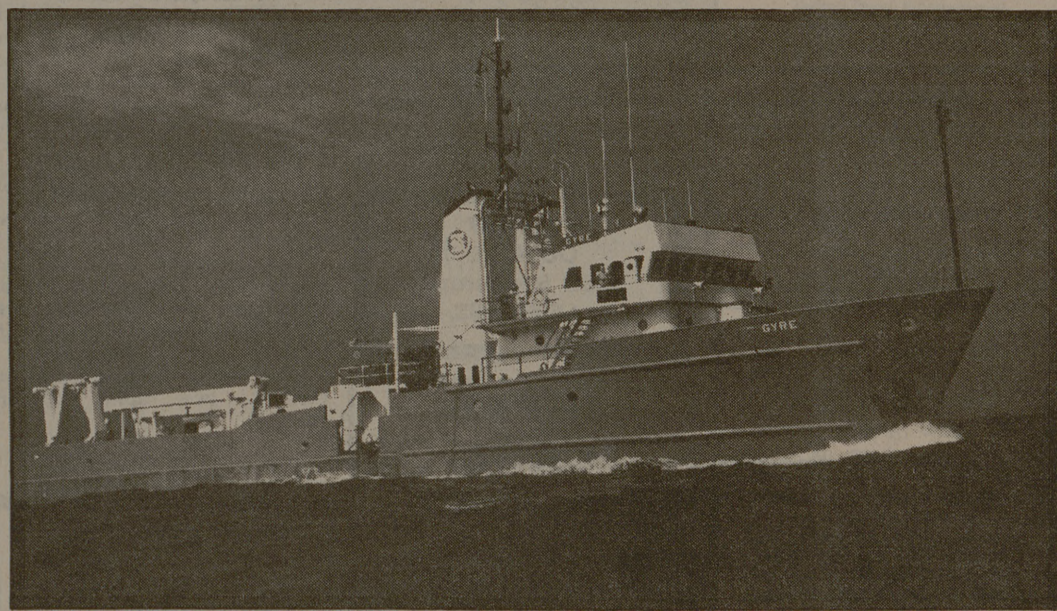
The Mitchell Campus of Texas A&M University at Galveston is the home port of the Gyre but the ship is seldom there. The Gyre is at sea nine to 10 months a year because of the demand for its facilities, said T.K. Treadwell, acting head of the oceanography department.

"We run it hard," Treadwell said. "It costs almost as much to keep it docked as it does to run it." Treadwell said it costs approximately \$6,000 a day for the ship to be at sea. He said the cost of operation over an average year is \$1.7 million.

It is not unusual for a university to have a ship dedicated to research, Treadwell said. The Texas A&M vessel is one of about 27 university vessels. Treadwell said the universities work together to combine resources and save money.

"During the last few years, there has been a lot of interchange between universities," Treadwell said. "It is much more a cooperative university fleet."

An inter-university organization, of which Treadwell is chairman, handles scheduling of the va-



A 174-foot Texas A&M research vessel Gyre cruises in the Gulf of Mexico. Because of demand for its facilities, the Gyre is at sea nine to ten months a year. It costs \$6,000 a

rious research vessels. The Gyre is a general-purpose research vessel with facilities capable of research in such areas as biology, chemistry and weather. A normal cruise includes 20 scientists and 10 crew members. "The Gyre is one of the best research ships in the business," Treadwell said, "considering science gained per dollar."

Normally, the Gyre is used only for basic research, but it has become involved in a project to search for the Titanic.

Treadwell said the only reason the Gyre has become involved with the project is that special equipment needed for the search will be permanently donated to the oceanography department by the group renting the ship. Also,

the ship was already scheduled for two other cruises in the same area. The special equipment to be donated to the department costs close to \$1 million, Treadwell said.

"It's equipment we couldn't afford on our own," he said.

The name Gyre refers to a term used in oceanography. A gyre is a circulating current of water. Treadwell said the ship received

this name since many of the scientists working onboard were studying gyres.

Primary support of the ship and research done on it comes from the National Science Foundation, Treadwell said. He said government agencies concerned with offshore resources also provide some funding. During an average year, 80 to 90 percent of the ship's funding is from federal sources.

Texas A&M University provides a smaller but important part of the funding, Treadwell said. The University pays for 25 to 30 days at sea each year for faculty and students. Oceanography 602, a formal three-hour course at the graduate level, includes one week at sea. For this reason, Treadwell refers to the Gyre as a "floating classroom."

"Texas A&M is better at providing sea-going facilities for students than any other university," Treadwell said.

Built for the U.S. Navy by Halter Marine Services, the Gyre was launched in 1973. The vessel began research operations in January 1974. The oceanography department operates the ship for the Texas A&M Research Foundation, which leases the ship from the Navy.

The Gyre has made cruises to the Mediterranean, central Pacific, tropical Atlantic and north-eastern Atlantic.

The Gyre is presently off the Mississippi Delta involved with geological research.

New class to stress leisure importance

A new Recreation and Parks 489A "Leisure and Society" course will be taught Monday evening 6 to 9 p.m. in Francis Hall during the 1981 fall term. It is designed to create an awareness of the personal and social significance of recreation and leisure.

In addition students will examine leisure time-planning and management and have an opportunity to formulate a personal philosophy of leisure.

Although vast amounts of time and money are spent on recreation goods and services, most students have not had an opportunity to learn how to get the most out of their leisure. The vital role leisure plays in the advancement of human learning, the promotion of good health and the development of a positive personality is not understood by most people.

Views differ over killing rare animals for study

By AUGUST SKOPIK
Battalion Reporter
The killing of animals on the endangered species list for the purpose of research is disputed among Texas A&M University researchers.

David Owens, an assistant biology professor studying the Pacific Ridley turtle, protests the killing of the endangered adult sea turtle.

However, some researchers at Texas A&M say there is justification of biological dissection if it is needed for their studies.

Owens said he saw the killing of the rare turtle in Mexico in a slaughterhouse. The capture and killing of the Pacific turtle is not legal in the United States.

Dr. John Bickham, wildlife science assistant professor, is doing a study on the yellow mud-turtle in Illinois. He said the "sacrifice" of a small percentage of turtles in that area was needed to make certain the turtles would remain in the area.

"There are different shell colors for the turtles in the different geographic regions," he said, "and now we know which turtles would survive if imported just in case something did happen and a large population was destroyed."

Dr. Bickham was hired by Monsanto because of fears that their chemical plant near Big Sand Mound, Iowa, would wipe out the

last population of that sub-species, then known as the Illinois mud-turtle.

"We discovered the turtle was as healthy in the area today as it has ever been," Bickham said. "Because of our research, the turtle was not listed on the endangered list."

Bickham said the 10 turtles sacrificed were a small percentage killed compared to the number of turtles that fell to natural predators.

He said there were over 2,000 turtles estimated in one population, with several populations of similar size observed in the area.

"Now if one of the populations became extinct we would be able to introduce the right genetical turtles," Bickham said.

Wildlife Science Professor

Keith Arnold said killing of the species was not justified in his study of the bald eagle.

"We were doing a field study concerned with disturbance of nesting pairs in Brazoria County," he said.

He said dissection was not needed in this instance, since the researchers were concerned with nest disturbances, which could be achieved from field observation.

"There were only seven bald eagle nests known in Texas until recently, when eight more were discovered," he said. "Unfortunately, four or five of the nests will not produce young this year."

"What we were trying to do is to develop management plans to help preserve the nesting places of this bird."

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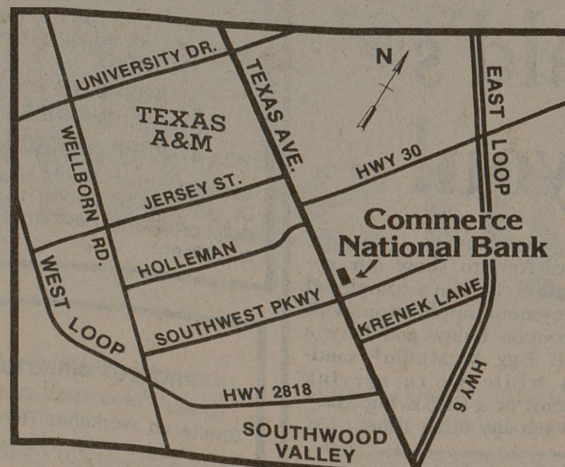
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