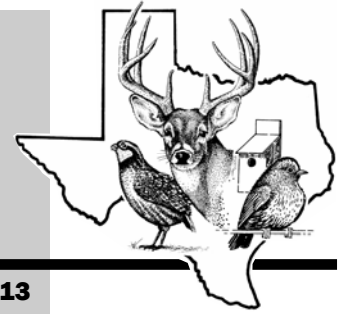


OAK-PRAIRIE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

WILDLIFE NEWS



July 2013

**SUMMARY OF DEER SEASON 2012-13**

*Bobby Eichler, TPWD Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange*

This past season seems to have been an above-average season on antler quality and an average season on total harvest. Below-average buck harvest during the preceding seasons resulted in more bucks reaching the 4½+ age class and this, combined with ideal weather conditions during spring and summer of 2012, likely contributed to above-average antler quality of harvested bucks. From the data collected at check stations across the original six-county antler regulation area (Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee, and Washington Counties), bucks at least 5½ years and older comprised 26% of the reported bucks. A total of 468 bucks were entered at the local check stations this past year; the breakdown by county was as follows: Austin 14, Colorado 139, Fayette 157, Lavaca 47, Lee 71, and Washington 40.

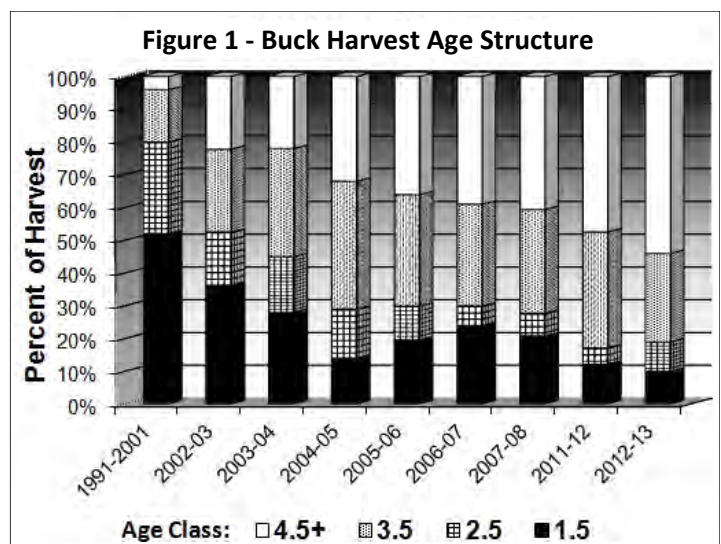
Some of the more interesting check station facts about this past season include:

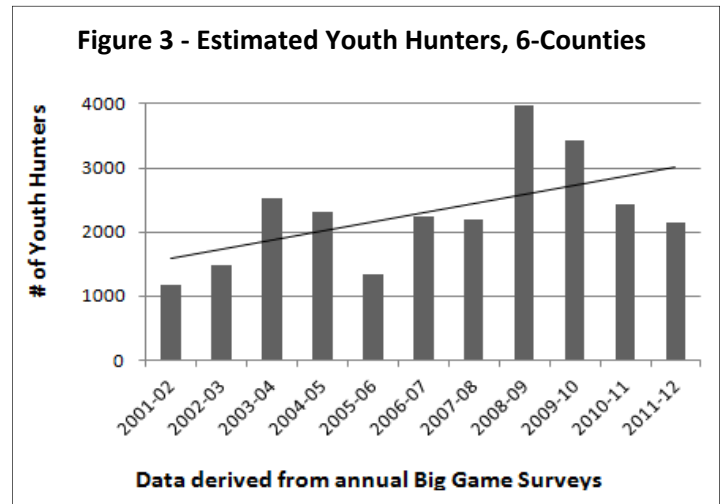
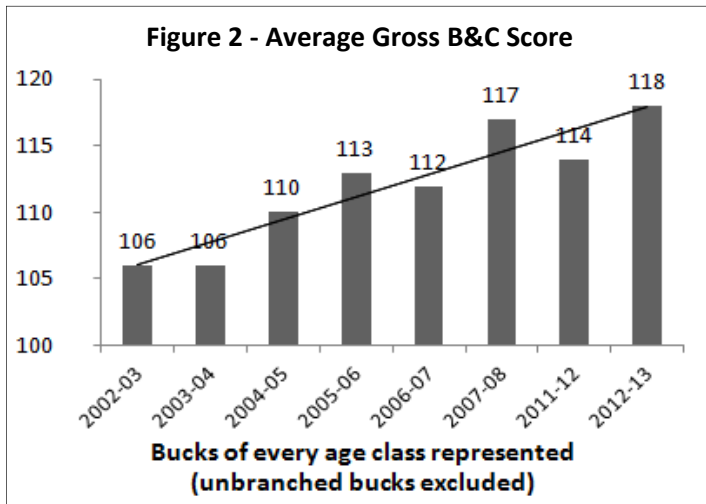
- Of the 308 bucks that were at least 3½ years old and scored and aged by a qualified scorer, 73 (23.7%) scored greater than 130 gross Boone and Crockett (B&C).
- Ten bucks scored greater than 150 gross B&C.
- Washington County produced a buck harvested in early December that had 13 measurable points, and inside spread of 19 5/8, and gross B&C of 167 4/8 (4½ years old).
- Fayette County produced a buck harvested in early November that had 13 measurable points, an inside spread of 15 6/8, and a Gross B&C score of 169 5/8 (6½ years old).
- Biologists across the six counties know of quite a few more bucks scoring over 150 that were never entered into the check stations. While check stations are not mandatory, we would like to try and age and score these bucks.

This past season completed the 11th year of the antler regulation. This six-county area has been under antler regulations longer than any other area in the state. Monitoring the age structure of the harvest, antler quality,

and youth hunter opportunity has been important since day one of this regulation. Here are some important notes from analyzing check station data since 2002, as well as the annual Texas Big Game Harvest Survey (TBGHS), :

- The age structure of the harvest has steadily improved (**Figure 1**) since the implementation of the regulation. During the 2012 season, 54% of the bucks brought to check stations were 4.5 years and older. On the flip side, the percentage of immature bucks being harvested has decreased significantly.
- The Gross Boone and Crockett Score of harvested bucks has also trended upwards since 2002 (**Figure 2**) with the 2012-13 season average being 118 B&C. This figure includes bucks from every age group (1½ years and older) lumped together. Although the regulation was implemented to increase the age structure of the buck herd, it is important to monitor antler quality over time.
- One goal of the antler regulation was to have no long-term negative impact on hunter opportunity and recreation; youth hunting was a very important aspect of this goal. From TBGHS data, youth participation has not been negatively impacted since the implementation of the antler regulation (**Figure 3**). As hunting goes, there have been some “up and down” years, but overall the trend has increased. This same trend is occurring with adult hunters within the six-county area.





**RELEASING ‘FEED STORE’ WILD TURKEYS**

*Bobby Eichler, TPWD Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange*

Frequently, most years around May, staff biologists are contacted by landowners who ‘think’ they are helping out the wild turkey population by releasing pen-raised birds. This activity is apparently practiced at a relatively high level across most counties in the district. This practice is not only potentially harmful to our wild turkey population, but it is also illegal. Texas Parks and Wildlife urges you, as a land manager, to please refrain from releasing pen-raised birds into the wild.

If you do not have wild turkeys or see wild turkeys on your property, it is probably because something is lacking on the property or surrounding landscape from a habitat standpoint. Two of the biggest issues across our district include; 1) lack of suitable nesting habitat (knee high grasses). We lack this nesting cover for a couple of main reasons. One, we lack the native bunch grasses on the landscape because many pastures have been converted to improved grasses such as Tifton Bermuda or others. Two, we also can lack good nesting cover because grazing or mowing has occurred at a level that reduces grass height too low for that turkey hen to feel camouflaged and comfortable; 2) the second issue is too thick or dense an understory such as yaupon and cedar in the post oak woodlands. This dense understory renders much of our woodlands useless from a turkey stand point. Turkeys need to “feel” concealed, but they need to be able to see adequately and be able to escape predators, so that woodland needs to be more open with scattered woody brush species and grasses underneath.

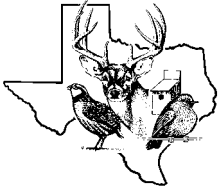
If you are interested in trying to see turkeys on your property, staff biologists can give habitat recommendations to make your property more attractive to them. One good thing about turkeys, they travel quite a bit across the landscape with periodic movements up to 20 or 30 miles not unheard of. Because of this, if you manage properly and

create a home, you stand a good chance of at least seeing turkeys utilize your property during certain times of the year.

There are two main reasons why releasing pen-raised turkeys is not good. First, no matter what type of turkey you purchase, they are still pen-raised turkeys and do not have the innate behavior to forage, nest, and avoid predators on a long-term basis. Most released birds won’t persist on the landscape long enough to initiate nesting and reproduction. Also, often times these released birds will ‘set up shop’ near human habitations, whether it is your neighbors’ yard several miles down the road, your own yard, or on someone’s parked car. Once this occurs the birds are a real nuisance.

We’ve had several calls from landowners complaining about groups of turkey which are roosting on vehicles or congregating in amongst their poultry operation. This commingling of pen-raised turkey with other people’s domestic chickens, turkey, or ducks highlights the second major reason that releasing pen-raised turkey is not a good idea and is illegal. Disease introduction into the wild bird population is a definite risk. Pen-raised birds can carry diseases due to the fact they are raised in close proximity to one another. Some of these diseases are found in the wild, but often these diseases are more common in domesticated birds that you would find in a commercial operation.

One disease that we are hearing more about is Lymphoproliferative disease (LPDV). This disease occurs in domestic turkeys in Europe and Israel but has now been found in wild turkeys in the United States starting in 2009. LPDV is a viral disease that causes scabby nodules on the skin of the legs and head of turkey. Infected birds that are still alive will exhibit weakness and lethargy. It is rapidly fatal to infected birds. The significance to our wild turkey populations is unknown right now and more monitoring needed. Introduced diseases can be just one more negative issue our wild turkeys have to battle, so please do not be a contributing factor .



# Bastrop-Caldwell County Wildlife Management Associations *Caldwell County*



## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 14, Issue 2

July, 2013

## Bastrop-Caldwell County WMA News

### **Bastrop County Wildlife Management Associations**

Alum Creek WMA  
Michael Baumann  
817-422-3207

Barton's Creek Game  
Management Co-op  
Victor Moberg  
512-659-4608

Paint Creek WMA  
Hershel Lee  
512-332-2103

Pin Oak Creek WMA  
Lee Heselmeyer  
281-455-5517

Red Rock WMA  
Jim Russell  
512-601-1344

### **Caldwell County Wildlife Management Associations**

Clear Fork Creek WMA  
Lynnette Ross  
956-244-1027

Tri-Community WMA  
Walt Elson  
281-382-5593

The 9th Annual Wildlife Extravaganza took place on April 20th at Riverbend Park in Smithville and was most likely the most successful, best attended and best supported Extravaganza yet! We had over 700 people in attendance, including vendors and exhibitors. Vendor and exhibitor booths filled up both the indoor Pavilion area as well as the Chuck Wagon Square, with a variety of exhibits and wares. We especially would like to give a big THANK YOU to all of our sponsors this year, as well as all of our volunteers and members who put forth time and effort either selling pre-sale raffle tickets, soliciting sponsorships & donations, helping to set up, clean up, and run the event! The event raised significantly more money than in years past that will go towards scholarships (\$4000 total in scholarship money will be awarded to the 4 applicants from the 2012-13 graduating class), sponsorships for youth to attend nature and conservation oriented outdoor camps (Texas Brigades, McKinney Roughs Nature Camp, and The Wildlife Society's Wildlife Conservation Camp), sponsorship of hunter education classes that will resume again toward the end of this summer (stay tuned), and will go to-

wards sponsoring hog control efforts in both Bastrop and Caldwell Counties among other ways of assisting in local wildlife conservation efforts.

A portion of the proceeds as always will go towards next year's 10th Annual Wildlife Extravaganza that will take place on April 19th at Riverbend Park in Smithville. We hope next year's Extravaganza will top even this year's

event, and we want you to be a part of it! Please mark your calendars. We fell a little short with volunteers this year at the event and will be looking for more help with next years' event. As always, volunteers are provided t-shirts and of course free hotdogs and BBQ sausage and chicken.

Volunteers will also be needed this year to help with hosting a Hunter Education course free to youth (fee covered by B-CCWMA), in the form of certified hunter ed instructors, assistants to help with the field portion as well as in the classroom, and with setup and cleanup. We have not set a date as of yet, but anticipate it will take place in mid-August before school starts. If you or anyone you know is a certified hunter ed instructor that would be willing to assist, please contact Meredith Longoria at 512-332-7280 or at [meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov).

Elections of officers took place in May 2013 and our new Executive Officers of Bastrop-Caldwell County WMA include Clinton McPhaul (Paint Creek and Pin Oak Creek WMA) as President, Hershel Lee (Paint Creek WMA) as Vice-President, and Roxanne Hernandez (Alum Creek and Paint Creek WMA) as Secretary-Treasurer. Congratulations to our newly elected officers and thank you for your dedication! If you wish to represent your Wildlife

*We especially would like to give a big THANK YOU to all of our sponsors this year, as well as all of our volunteers and members who put forth time and effort either selling pre-sale raffle tickets, soliciting sponsorships & donations, helping to set up, clean up, and run the event!*

Management Association as a part of the B-CCWMA Advisory Board, please contact Meredith Longoria (512-332-7280 or [meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov)) to let her know to add you to the Advisory Board Email List so that you will be notified of upcoming meetings. There are many ways to get involved and we need your input!

## News From The Associations

### Tri-Community Wildlife Management Association:

President: Walt Elson

A big thank you to all of you who helped with the Wildlife Extravaganza. The new format was a success with attendance and revenue up significantly.

Around my place the spring rains, while spotty, have been enough to keep it green with weeds and wildflowers in abundance. Just what the critters like. My fall planting of oats, wheat and rye produced well and the seeds are all but gone. The cowpeas planted in April were hit by the deer as soon as the first two leaves appeared. With the last rain it looks like they will re-sprout. Hope yours have done as well. The deer look to be in good shape and I am encouraged by the increase in turkey this year.

Don't forget that August is census month. Forms for reporting deer, turkey and hogs are enclosed. These reports are very important in tracking the success of our management practices. Everyone submitting reports to Meredith will be entered into a drawing for a prize.

Also we will be conducting spotlight surveys on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup>. We will be traveling a new route this year so it will be important to have a new baseline count. If you can help on any of those dates please call James Stone at 512-398-7786.

Our next meeting will be in October. This is a particularly important meeting, as we will be electing officers and directors to guide the association for the next two years. This is your chance and responsibility to input your ideas on the direction that you want the association to go. Any member in good standing, i.e. dues are paid, can serve as an officer. Any member can nominate someone including him or herself for a position. If you wish to nominate someone for one or all of the positions please be sure that they will serve then contact me with the information at 281-382-5593 or better at [walt.elson@gmail.com](mailto:walt.elson@gmail.com).

## Central Texas Restoration & Recovery Program

The Texas A&M Forest Service also has a program for helping to distribute a variety of trees at low cost to help offset the tree losses we have been and still are experiencing from the extended drought conditions. They will begin taking orders in August and will send out order forms for approximately 4500 trees total, including the following tree species:

American Elm, Bald Cypress, Bur Oak, Cedar Elm, Common Hackberry, Eastern Redbud, Green Ash, Monterrey Oak, Osage Orange, Red Mulberry, Roughleaf Dogwood, Sugar Hackberry

They will be sold in bundles of 10 per species for \$40 in deepots (with the exception of Monterrey Oak which will be in tall gallon containers). Delivery will be either the last week of October or the first week of November and the drop-off locations will be Buda, Granbury, Hamilton, Johnson City, Kerrville, La Grange, Round Rock, and San Antonio. I will receive a copy of the order forms to distribute once they are made available. You can contact me at 512-332-7280 or [meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov) to let me know you'd like more information, and I will provide it once it becomes available.

## Assistance with Feral Hog Control

*by Nick Dornak*

Fast and Furious: A Feral Hog Task Force, an Action Plan, Aerial Control and Wireless Traps Now Available for Hays and Caldwell County Citizens Battling an Invasive Problem

What began in January as an ad hoc group of a dozen or so landowners, government agency representatives and local citizens with a common cause, has now officially become the Caldwell County Feral Hog Task Force (CCFHTF) with an acronym to rival BCCWMA. Following the establishment of a Leadership Committee voted on by members to oversee CCFHTF activities, on May 28, 2013, the Caldwell County Commissioner's Court unanimously approved the adoption of the CCFHTF as an official county program. The resolution safeguards technical and financial support from the County for up to 5 years. The amount of funding for the CCFHTF will come through a separate court action. The elected Leadership Committee members consist of local landowners, Meredith Longoria, TPWD Biologist, Nick Dornak, Plum Creek Watershed Coordinator, and Tom Bonn, Caldwell County Judge, who was appointed to the Leadership Committee by the Commissioner's Court. Hays County also has plans to appoint a representative to the Leadership Committee.

Encouraged by the development of the CCFHTF and a Feral Hog Action Plan for Hays and Caldwell County, Mike Bodenchuk, Director of Texas Wildlife Services (TWS), offered to get the project started by providing aerial control of feral swine for participating landowners in Caldwell County this winter. Mr. Bodenchuk would like TWS to fly Caldwell County somewhere between December 2013 and February 2014. Landowners wishing to participate in this great opportunity should contact Nick Dornak or Meredith Longoria for details. Registration begins in July. Participating landowners will be asked for a one-time donation to the CCFHTF. Suggested donations include a \$25 processing fee and 10¢/acre. Just under 20,000 acres of the Plum Creek Watershed in Caldwell County were flown by TWS in 2010 with a harvest rate of 10.82 individuals/sq. mile.

Another exciting opportunity emerged in June for the CCFHF. The Texas Department of Agriculture unveiled a new grant program that provides up to \$30,000 in matching funds for feral hog management projects to selected Texas counties. The County Hog Abatement Matching Program (CHAMP) is designed to encourage counties to work together to reduce the feral hog population and the damage caused by these invasive animals. To come up with the matching funds, the CCFHTF has built a coalition of seven funding project partners in Hays and Caldwell County who have pledged a total of \$31,000 to date. Award letters will be issued to selected counties in August 2013. CCFHTF members will be keeping their fingers crossed that their application, "Implementing the Hays and Caldwell County Feral Hog Action Plan" is chosen for funding.

In other news, the CCFHTF is working with its members, local Wildlife Management Associations and Texas's leading feral hog experts to develop a feral hog survey for Caldwell County. The purpose of the survey will be to assess the property damage caused by feral hogs over time and to determine baseline harvest data among other things. From the results collected, the Hays and Caldwell County Feral Hog Action Plan will be scrutinized for effectiveness and revised if necessary.

Finally, if you have ever wanted to try out one of those hog traps that you trigger with your cell phone, but didn't want to spend thousands of dollars, now may be your chance. The CCFHTF has purchased a Wireless Traps™ feral hog trapping system with a portion of the funds received through a separate \$5,000 TDA Hog Out County Grant. This trapping system will be available, on a month-to-month basis to any Caldwell County landowner with a feral hog problem for a \$50/month donation to the CCFHTF. This is to cover the cost of the server that stores and transmits realtime information from the trap. These traps can be very effective and there are plans to purchase at least two more. The CCFHTF is also looking into the purchase of a drop net for catching feral hogs if funds become available. Landowners interested in utilizing the wireless trap on their property should contact Nick Dornak to sign up ASAP.

Nick Dornak,  
Plum Creek Watershed Coordinator and  
CCFHTF Leadership Committee  
512-213-7389  
ndornak@plumcreekwatershed.org

# Audacity - A Tutorial

by Larry Gfeller

Scourge of animal feeders, ornery pests, talented entertainers, family pets, wild game, thieving varmints. . . squirrels are regarded many ways. At our place, it depends on who's doing the interpreting. My wife loves them almost like grandchildren, chasing one another through the trees, leaping from bough to bough, high wire daredevils—cute as stuffed toys. To my little runt dog, squirrels are infectious viruses, germs that cause incessant barking and maniacal fits of staged insanity—a common affliction if you're descended from wolves. For me, they're cunning opponents in an unceasing battle of wits; the bird feeder Olympics! Don't misunderstand, we all want and *need* our squirrels here. It can get lonely and secluded these days. Our trees are sparse, only a scattering of oaks and a couple loblollies around our house remain. Shortly after the fire, three baby squirrels claimed our homestead as their own. They were vagabonds—gypsies from afar—looking for fun, travel and adventure. They commandeered our land as squatters. Now there are five. And why not? We provide food, water, shelter, recreation and a certain warmth of family. As it turned out. . . these sprightly orphans adopted us.

I've never seen a glum or morose squirrel. Life bolts from their being like ragged shards of lightening from a broiling thundercloud. Impetuous, daring and irreverent, existence for them is one continuous bachelor party. What a simple and glorious amusement, these five. Be it in the early morning or the plum blush of dusk, food draws out impulsive ancestral foraging skills developed over eons. Our screen porch acts as an invisibility cloak. The squirrels think

they are alone on their own private island. Bowls of shelled corn affixed to our two surviving loblollies. . . often sit ignored, untouched. Only losers eat from squirrel feeders! You see, they're all pirates at heart. . . bird feeders are what they crave! Mere birds are no contest. Squirrels would rather match wits with the crows or each other in open combat for the spoils of two platform bird feeders. Every meal is an adventure, a new episode of *Survivor*. Who will get voted off the island this week? But it's the suspended feeders, isolated, impenetrable and forbidden, that really juice their creativity.

Behind the shadow of screening, I watch as a wicked plot is hatched to raid a free standing bird feeder. First, you have to case the joint. . . the squirrel spraddle-walks on the ground with its head down, sniffing the fallen leftovers—braced on all fours, like a miniature tawny bear. The scariest moment is just before you start. Without warning, it lurches and snags the loblolly, hanging there, dark eyes ablaze, tail whipping. Birdbath at 2 o'clock! No sweat. Easily taken. Skill renders the whole concept of rehearsal meaningless. Then leap for the nearby suet feeder, swinging wildly. . . patience while it stabilizes. The wheels are turning. This is the big one. The final gamble—a huge vault to the distant dangling feeder—a superhuman feat by proportional standards. I think to myself: "Don't do it, you fool!" Good advice sometimes just passes you by and all you can do is wave. The landing is nailed in one giant suicidal pounce! Confident and beaming, he gobbles the hard-won prize. . . black oil sunflower seeds.

Ours are eastern red fox squirrels, the bigger cousins of the grey squirrels that inhabit the bottomland forests of east Texas. Fox squirrels get their name from golden tinted fur on their underbelly. The grey squirrel's tummy is. . . well, grey. The fox squirrel nests in trees, preferring hollowed out trunks to an exposed leaf nest, but sometimes they will have both. They prefer tree holes for raising young in winter. They've also been known to inhabit owl nest boxes, apparently wagering a time-share with the owls. This is brassy—a timing mistake—and the squirrel is lunch.

One interesting difference between fox and grey squirrels is how they respond to danger. Greys do not hang around. Greys boogie. . . they run, jump, climb and do whatever it takes in an eruption of gymnastic skill, deftly putting distance between them and their pursuer. Foxes, by contrast, are bolder—almost condescending—playing games of hide-and-seek, making sure there is always some obstacle (like a tree trunk) between them and their foe. Fox squirrels either believe solidly in the power of camouflage, or they are supremely confident—freezing on the spot, sometimes only a feet away from you. . . come on sucker. . . make a move!

Clearly fox squirrels are impressive jumpers, easily spanning fifteen feet in horizontal leaps and free-falling twenty feet or more to a soft landing on a limb or trunk. The little scamps are prolific. . . they breed all year long, although the romantic peak season is late summer and mid-winter. Babies usually come in groups of two to four and are born within six weeks of breeding. They develop more slowly than other rodents; however, within a year, the young squirrels are ready to begin the cycle again.

Fox squirrels have very sharp claws, strong forearms and extensors which help them in climbing. Their favorite food is tree



Audacity - by Larry Gfeller



How a Loser Eats - by Larry Gfeller

seeds (acorns), but can make a meal out of almost anything organic: fruits, buds, insects, grain, small snakes, lizards, bird eggs and all manner of bulbs and roots. Caches of acorns and hickory nuts are heavily used in winter. Despite being expert climbers, fox squirrels spend most of their time on the ground. They have an acute sense of smell and hearing as well as excellent eyesight. They use scent marking to communicate with other fox squirrels. They also have several sets of *vibrissae*—thick hairs or whiskers that are used as touch receptors—to sense the environment. These are found above and below their eyes, on their chin and nose, and on their forearms. I had an uncle like that once!

Folks generally don't consider attracting squirrels a primary goal of their wildlife management plan; however, in our burned out fire zone with no deer, opossum, raccoons, etc., we treasure our young family of squirrels. They are easy to attract. If you want fox squirrels, all you need is a snag or two, a few trees, food and water. Brush piles are appreciated too. If you offer a welcoming atmosphere—and provide the basics—chances are you'll be rewarded with an intimate and entertaining bond in short order. Because fox squirrels hold their ground and are keenly intelligent, they soon come to know their humans. . . . waiting patiently on the opposite side of a trunk while a feeder is replenished, or, flattening spread-eagle in plain view on the cool concrete of a shaded porch, in the fug of summer's heat.



Lunch Box - by Larry Gfeller

My favorite spectator sport is watching the backyard action from the private box that is our screen porch. To appreciate squirrels with the right measure of reverence requires an animal frame of mind. Most children innately have this animal frame of mind. But with the passage of time, routine and reason grinds down the sharp edges of our adult lives. Squirrels are entirely composed of sharp edges—and do not suffer the debilities of routine. Watching squirrel horseplay restores my edges and pulls me into a simpler, happy time, when thinking like an animal came naturally.

## Drought in a Riparian Area *by Steve Nelle, Retired from NRCS*

Drought is one of the harshest natural calamities for Texans, and especially for those who live on the land. Although drought is a normal and recurring part of our climate and ecology, no one is ever fully prepared for it.

All parts of the landscape are hit hard by drought. Dryland crops fail to produce. Yards and pastures become parched. Livestock and wildlife suffer from the heat, poor food supply, or lack of water. Even hardy plant species may die or become weak. Springs cease flowing. Water levels drop in wells, ponds and lakes. Creeks and rivers are reduced to a trickle or dry up completely. No one will dispute the consequences of a severe drought.

But in many riparian areas, there is a glimmer of optimism even in the midst of a drought. A healthy riparian area is dominated by dense vegetation. These riparian areas and the vegetation are usually connected to an unseen water table. In fact, most creeks are in direct contact with these shallow aquifers. As the water level in these aquifers drop due to drought, riparian plants chase the receding water by expanding their root systems. As these water-loving plants seek to stay in contact with sub-surface water, they put all available energy into new root growth. The new roots grow laterally under the channel providing a denser and stronger “root basket” to reinforce the channel. The roots also grow deeper, seeking to stay in contact with wet soil. These dense networks of interwoven roots are what provide stability to banks and channels. The more roots there are, the more resistance to erosion and flood damage. Riparian plants equipped with underground rhizomes are especially well suited to rapid expansion.

Another response of drought in riparian areas is the recruitment of large wood into the channel and floodplain. Those who study creeks, rivers and riparian areas have discovered that large logs and fallen trees are important and necessary parts of a functional riparian area. These large dead trees, which fall into the channel, act like retaining walls, helping to dissipate energy, stabilize banks and trap moving sediment. Over time, many of these logs become partially or completely buried in sediments. During severe drought, some old large trees inevitably die. No one enjoys seeing a huge old tree die and fall over, but this is a natural and essential process. After these trees die and their root systems begin to deteriorate, they are susceptible to falling into the creek. Some people may think this is unsightly. Some well-meaning landowners often remove these dead trees under the impression that they clog the creek. However dead trees are vital to the proper function of many riparian areas and dead trees and logs should generally be left in place unless they pose a safety hazard downstream. As these trees and logs become entrapped and locked into the channel by other trees, they provide a matrix of strong wood that can eventually assist in the restoration of the creek or river.

No one eagerly anticipates a drought; we just wish they would end. But just like your dad probably taught you, hardship and suffering are what build character and make you a stronger person. In a similar way, drought does seem to have underlying purposes to help expand riparian root systems and add large wood.

# Oak Prairie Region Wildlife Habitat Management Workshop

**When?** August 3, 2013  
**Where?** El Campo Civic Center/2350 N. Mechanic St.  
**Cost?** \$20 Registration Fee before July 26<sup>th</sup>/\$30 late registration-pay at the door

*Catered meal provided/3 CEU Credits. Call 979-732-2082 to RSVP.*

## Agenda

7:00-8:30- Check in/Vendor set up

8:30- Welcoming Comments/Presentations begin

### **Presentation Topics Include:**

- QUAIL HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN THE OAK PRAIRIE REGION-Doug Jobes/Mark Lange (TPWD)
- FERAL HOG AND PREDATOR CONTROL- T.J. Muir (Wildlife Damage Management Biologist-Texas Agrilife Extension)
- HABITAT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR WHITE-TAILED DEER-Brendan Witt (TPWD)
- HISTORY AND FUTURE OF TURKEY MANAGEMENT IN THE OAK PRAIRIE REGION - David Lobpries/ Jason Hardin (TPWD)
- ABILITIES OF THE WILDLIFE HABITAT FEDERATION TO ASSIST LANDOWNERS IN HABITAT RESTORATION- Jim Willis (WHF)
- TECHNIQUES TO CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE AND SAFE PRESCRIBED BURN-Greg Pleasant (TPWD)
- SUCCESS OF A PROPER PRESCRIBED BURN REGIMEN ON MAD ISLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA -Lange Alford (TPWD)
- GRAZING MANAGEMENT TO ENCOURAGE AND PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT-Corrie Bowen (Texas Agrilife Extension)

*Event will also include habitat restoration experiences by area landowners, habitat restoration equipment demonstration, and a Q&A session. The workshop should wrap up by 4pm.*



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## HERD COMPOSITION DATA

Herd Composition data (often called incidental observations) may be the most valuable data collected on a deer herd. When properly collected, herd composition data can reflect the overall health of a herd and help guide the manager in making proper harvest recommendations.

**Herd composition data should be collected between August 1 and September 15.**

The fawns have become a part of the herd by this time, yet they are small enough to be easily distinguished from adult deer. Observations outside this period may result in inaccurate data. Observations may be collected any time during the day. However, the first and last hours of daylight are often the most productive.

**All deer recorded must be viewed through binoculars or a spotting scope.**

Small antlers are easily overlooked without optical aids. Fawns whose spots have started to fade are also hard to distinguish when they are observed alone. Be sure to look at the hips of deer that you think could possibly be fawns because the hips are the last place to lose spots.

**Ideally, a minimum of 150 deer should be identified.** If possible, a larger sample size is desirable to strengthen the data and increase the confidence in the harvest recommendations. Observations can be made during routine ranch operations or as a special effort. Observing the same deer recorded on a previous count is not a concern. If a conscientious effort is made to record accurate data, a small amount of duplicate recording should not affect the ratios. All deer should be recorded as a buck, doe, or fawn. Recording bucks according to number of antler points is also beneficial. The occurrence of inferior animals versus multi point animals can be used to measure progress in the quality of the deer herd over time.

Use the enclosed herd composition survey form to report your observations.

Submit data by **September 15<sup>th</sup>** to: Meredith Longoria  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
901 Pecan St.  
Bastrop, TX 78602  
512-332-7280 office, 512-581-7187 fax  
or scan and email it to [meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:meredith.longoria@tpwd.texas.gov)

## HERD COMPOSITION / INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS

Ranch Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Acres: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ County/WMA: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	2-3 Point Bucks	4-7 Point Bucks	8+ Point Bucks	Undetermined Bucks	Does	Fawns	Comments
8/5		###			### ## 	###	Example
Totals:							

## RANGELAND WATERSHEDS - THE MAJOR SOURCE OF WATER FOR TEXANS

By K. Brian Hayes, Brandon J. Leister, Barron S. Rector, Larry D. White (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension)

Where does your drinking water come from? It is not just from the tap. The majority of the water for Texans comes from a land resource called rangeland, the State's largest watershed.

Rangelands comprise sixty percent or ninety million acres of Texas land. Rangelands consist of grasslands, shrub lands, marsh areas, deserts, and woodlands which are not used for commercial timber production (Ragsdale 1984). Rangelands support livestock production as well as provide habitat for native wildlife, but their most important function to Texans is as the State's watershed.

The precipitation that falls on Texas rangeland is a major source of surface flow and aquifer recharge. The majority of rivers and streams in Texas originate or flow through rangeland. As precipitation is the ultimate source of all fresh water, it has many destinations. In an average rainfall year, it is estimated that forty-two percent of the precipitation falling on Texas is evaporated directly back into the atmosphere. An additional forty-seven percent is lost or used through transpiration (for plant growth). Only a little over one percent of the annual precipitation recharges aquifers and the remaining ten percent runs off to become stream flow (TSSWCB 1991). Thus, precipitation that is currently captured directly for human use as fresh water in aquifers and surface water represents only a small proportion of the annual precipitation received, but management of the rangeland vegetation can redirect these percentages and is very critical to sustaining ample "Water for Texans".

The use and management of rangelands can have major impacts on the water available in Texas. Rangeland in a state of good health will provide Texans with a high quality water source, promote infiltration for ground water recharge, filter overland flow of water, provide forage for livestock production, and provide wildlife habitat.

Rangeland that is in an unhealthy state will have increased runoff with high nutrient and sediment content, and will not maintain as much soil moisture which is needed for the production of native plants required by domestic livestock and native wildlife.

Precipitation that falls on rangeland contributes to the supply of water found in our many rivers, streams and lakes. These water resources provide Texans with opportunities for fishing, swimming, boating, and in many cases water for municipal, industrial and agricultural uses. Likewise, water that percolates through rangeland soils and geological substrata contributes to spring flow and aquifer recharge. Is water yield from rangeland dependable? Texas rangelands

do not receive a predictable amount of water for estimating aquifer recharge and surface flow. The quantity of water coming from the rangeland resource is highly variable and governed by the amount of water received in the form of precipitation. Texas rangeland is classified as a semi-arid to arid. Generally, the annual rainfall is below average with a few years providing above normal rainfall where large quantities can recharge the aquifers and fill streams and reservoirs. True drought has been defined as seventy-five percent or less of the average annual rainfall. Moving from east to far west Texas, this occurs from sixteen to forty-five percent of the time (TAEX 1996). Because of this variability the State's rangeland must be kept in a healthy condition in order to capture these periodic above normal rainfall events.

The intensity, duration, and quantity of a rainfall event along with the vegetative cover, soil type, topography, and geology of the rangeland will determine the amount of water that can be captured for human use during a rainfall event.

With an ever increasing Texas population - expected to double to thirty-six million people by 2050 (TWDB 1997) - how we use and maintain our rangeland resource will have an important impact on the availability of a high quantity and quality of water.

Texans are now faced with many decisions and issues related to capturing and using water from rangelands. A broadened public interest and understanding of Texas rangelands and their management is needed to ensure a healthy system that can continue to provide water and other uses for Texas. Water for Texans means properly maintaining and improving our rangeland resources to help ensure an adequate quantity and quality of water for all Texans for years to come.

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