WASHINGTON COUNTY
Wildlife Society

1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, Texas 77833
Telephone 979-277-6212 Fax 979-277-6223
www.wcwildlife.org"

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2015

Exploring our "Sense of Place"

Welcome to The Spring 2015 Edition of the WCWS Newsletter, we hope that this newsletter will be informative as well as educational. We seek your interactive input and feedback on the content of this edition and future editions. Looking back at the lineup of very popular speakers and well attended programs from our recent Society meetings, it appeared there was a strong common theme….. Sense of Place. That phrase seems simple enough to understand on the surface, but like many aspects of our natural world, when we probe more deeply, we find it is more confounded than it appears.
To better define this …. Sense of Place…. I visited one of "my places".

The soft sounds of creek waters gurgling over well-worn moss covered stone ledges comfort my spirit. This particular place on the headwaters of New Year's Creek is more than a comfort; it is part of my soul. I found this spot in my early teens when I was searching for a strayed calf. It is hard to believe that summer job was almost 45 years ago. I followed the calf's tracks through a rickety water gap down the creek to this spot. He was bedded under some yaupon and I am not sure who was more surprised by our encounter.

It was an easy job to herd the now lonely calf back upstream to his unhappy mother. The water gap took the rest of the morning to repair and when I finished I took my sack lunch and walked back to this spot to cool off in the deep shade along the bank. I came back several times that summer to sit on the fallen cedar tree that was lodged against an old sycamore in a way that let me sit comfortably right over the middle of the stream. That tree is now dead, but the trunk is strong and well -worn from the steady passage of time and periodic flood waters.

My summer job ended, but I didn't forget this place. I was lucky enough to be able to come back to the farm to haul hay or fish in the farm ponds which let me drop in on my place from time to time. Veterinary school and the demands of my early career interrupted my visits and my expectation was that this would be a place I wouldn't see again except in my mind.

Fate intervened; however, when the property was put up for sale. I looked at the listing, but the price was beyond my means and I promptly dismissed the idea of trying to buy the farm. As luck would have it a few years went by and part of the farm was sold, but the part with this place remained on the market and by the late 1980's the price lowered and we were able to buy the farm for our new home.

I would like to tell you that I come here all the time, but I don't. I reserve this place for very special times, both happy and sad, whenever I feel a need to find direction in my life. This was the place where I knew with certainty that I wanted to become a Veterinarian and committed to that goal. It seems fitting that I would return here when I find myself searching for guidance or heading in a new direction.

I am glad to be able to hear the gurgling stream back in full resonance after it lay dry and muzzled in the 2011 drought thru early last fall. The north wind has picked up now and there is a cold, drizzly fog that seems much worse "out there" than here in this special place. The coming darkness has put the cedar wax wings and mocking birds that protested my arrival and perch here to roost, so once again it's time to leave this place, my place, alone with its secret stories and special wisdom until next time.

(continued page 3)

WCWS CONTACT INFO:

OFFICERS for 2015:

Dr. Bill Eikenhorst, President (979-830-3814)
vetdocbill@hotmail.com
Dave Redden, Vice President (979-218-0493)
dredden00@gmail.com
John Knapp, Society Treasurer, (979-289-5533)
jknapp@pachouston.com
Brick Peele, Society Secretary, (979-278-3778)
brickpeele@aol.com

WMA DIRECTORS for 2015:

Greenvine WMA
Adam Seilheimer, Director (979- 830-3960)
texastrophyscapes@yahoo.com
Chip & Cathy Ingram, Vice-Directors (281-870-0154)
cathy@texasgardendreams.com

Sun Oil Field WMA
Jim Dickson, Director, (713-817-1482)
james.dickson29@gmail.com
Joseph Ordner,Vice-Director, (979-421-2334)
chesterdogmine@yahoo.com

Rocky Creek WMA
Jon Knapp, Director, (979-289-5533,
jknapp@pachouston.com
William Amelang, Vice-Director, (979-337-4283)
disctree@yahoo.com

Post Oak WMA
Jon Wellmann, Director, (936-419-3910)
jonwellmann@live.com
Russell Borgstedte, Vice-Director, (936-878-9933)
maryborgstedte@centurylink.com

Sandtown WMA
Brick Peele, Director, (979-278-3778
brickpeele@aol.com
Tom Drummond, Vice Director (979-278-3811)
thomd@aol.com

Mt. Vernon WMA
Director—OPEN
Vice-Director– OPEN

New Years Creek WMA
George Bishop, Director, (713-305-5510)
george.bishop@sbcglobal.net
Terry Atmar, Vice-Director, (281-303-6023
terry.atmar@yahoo.com

RESOURCE CONTACTS:

Stephanie M Damron, TPWD Natural Resource Specialist II, Washington & Waller Counties (979) 277-6297, stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov
Kara J. Matheney, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent-Agriculture/Natural Resources, (979) 277-6212, kjmatheney@ag.tamu.edu
Ben Garcia, NRCS District Conservationist, (979) 830-7123 ext. 3, ben.garcia@tx.usda.gov
Willie Dilworth Washington Co., Appraisal District, (979) 277-3740, wdilworth@brenhamk-12.net
Richard Thames, WCWS Membership Committee, (979) 278-3053 rbthames@industrinet.com
Gene Bishop, WCWS Web Administrator gbishop@austin.rr.com
Janet Barnett, WCWS Newsletter Editor, 979-830-8350, barnett-p@sbcglobal.net
Eddie Hines, WC Game Warden, (979) 412-3140, eddie.hines@tpwd.state.tx.us

WASHINGTON COUNTY WILDLIFE SOCIETY WEBSITE

www.wcwildlife.org

A REMINDER TO YOU

Take advantage of this website designed for our Washington County Wildlife Society.
Check out the website for updates, news and upcoming events throughout the year.

SPRING IS HERE!

It is a special time of the year for all of us….we see the wonders of nature unfold….the beauty of our Sense of Place and Space.

REMINDERS

- Log your Bluebird nest box activities into your Bluebird Nest Box Log
- Log all the wildlife sightings in your Wildlife Census Log
- Log your activities into your Wildlife Management Activity Log
- Keep your monitors up to date
- Keep those cameras clicking for those special photos

AND enjoy this Spring with Nature all around us each day!

AND when you have that special "Place or Space", *SHARE* it with all of us.
Send to Janet, WCWS Newsletter Editor, *barnett-p@sbcglobal.net*.

(Continued from page 1)

Becoming your Washington County Wildlife Society President represents a new direction for me and I am grateful for a good excuse to revisit one of my very special places. "Place" can take on many different meanings in our lives and even within our Society as well as our community. We hope to spend some time talking about these in this edition and future WCWS newsletters. Please take time to share your special places in word and pictures with us to enhance the values we all share.

We all **FEEL** it. We all **KNOW** there are certain places that we are attracted to in ways that make these places "special" to us. We all **SHARE** deep connections to special places. But do we really **UNDERSTAND** why these places are so special? What are the essential elements of **"place bonding"?**

A quick Google search of "sense of place" results in an overwhelming list of responses. One response ***What is Sense of Place?*** By Jennifer E Cross from Colorado State University caught my attention. Although the essay is too long to share in its entirety in this newsletter you may want to access and read the article through the link provided. Excerpts of the article provided below may help clarify our common deep rooted connection(s) to place(s).
PDF]What is Sense of Place? - Western State College *western.edu/.../cross_headwatersXII.p.*

In summary, the author defines and addresses two separate but related aspects of our "Sense of Place"; Relationships to Place and Community Attachments.

Relationships to Place:

Relationship	Type of Bond	Process
Biographical (9)	historical and familial	being born in and living in a place, develops over time
Spiritual	emotional, intangible	feeling a sense of belonging, simply felt rather than created
Ideological	moral and ethical	living according moral guidelines for human responsibility to place, guidelines may be religious or secular
Narrative (9)	mythical	learning about a place through stories, including: creation myths, family histories, political accounts, and fictional accounts
Commodified	cognitive (based on choice and desirability)	choosing a place based a list of desirable traits and lifestyle preferences, comparison of actual places with ideal
Dependent (9)	material	constrained by lack of choice, dependency on another person or economic opportunity

Community Attachments: Revised Sense of Place Typology

SENSE OF PLACE	SATISFACTION	HOME AS INSIDEDNESS	LOCAL IDENTITY	TYPE OF ATTACHMENT	FUTURE DESIRES
Rootedness Cohesive	high	here (physical, spiritual, emotional)	strong	biographical spiritual ideological	Continued residence
Rootedness Divided	variable	here and there (physical, spiritual, emotional)	split	biographical spiritual dependent	variable
Place Alienation	low	there (physical, spiritual, emotional)	weak	dependent	desire to leave, but unable
Relativity	Variable	anywhere	moderate	commodified (biographical) (dependent)	to live in ideal place, wherever that may be
Uncommitted Placelessness	(moderate)	anywhere/nowhere	weak	none	no specific expectations of place

After reading this essay and/or reviewing the summary provided here it is easy to see that a deep and complete understanding of "Sense of Place" is complicated but expanding our understanding seems to provide a prime opportunity to advance our connection not only to the land, waters and wildlife of Washington County but also our community as a whole. We hope that this article will stimulate a desire to learn more about our individual and collective "Relationships to Place" and the related "Community Attachments".

Examining the words Place and Space in greater depth may help us gain greater insight into how place and space not only affect us and our human community but how they affect the land, water wildlife communities we all care about.

Dr. Bill

SAVE THE DATE

WCWS Semi-Annual Meeting
Friday, August 28, 2015
Washington Co. Fairgrounds Events Center

We Welcome!

Glenn Hegar, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, as our featured speaker. Mr. Hegar is a vigilant steward of Texas tax dollars and a strong advocate for job growth in our economy. As a former member of the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate, Mr. Hegar worked on a wide range of common sense solutions that impact everyday citizens, such as public education, transportation, tax cuts, property tax reforms, water and tort reform. Hegar is a sixth generation Texan, who grew up farming land that has been in his family since the mid-1800s. His upbringing taught him the core values of character, honesty, integrity and hard work.

Mark Your Calendar– August 28

Invite your friends and neighbors as we welcome Texas Comptroller, Glenn Hegar to our WCWS Semi-Annual Meeting.

Our social will begin at 6:00 pm with a *Free Will Donation Dinner* of catfish, chicken tenders and all the trimmings at 7:00 pm. A dessert table will be available for you to bring your favorite dessert.
RSVP by calling the AgriLife Extension Office at 979.277.6212 or on our website at www.wcwildlife.org.

YOUTH NEWS

The wonderful rain is so welcoming, however, rain did interrupt the Quail Field Day for our 7th grade students at Brenham Jr. High. The Quail Field Day Field Day has been re-scheduled for April 27. Our next newsletter will bring you an update.

The Brenham Jr. High 8th LANDS class will have their deer pluck-that is the heart and lung dissection- on April 9. We will have an update from our 8th graders in our next issue. Our summer newsletter will also catch up with the Brigades.

Lots of news about our youth coming soon!

ON THE CALENDAR Our Spring Meetings Are Here!

RSVP to the County Extension Office at 979-277-6212 or on the website at membership@wcwildlife.org
Mark your calendar!

Sun Oil Field Wildlife Management Association Spring Meeting

Date: Friday, April 17, 2015
Location: Fireman's Park in the Rock Building behind Carousel, 910 N Park St., Brenham
Time: 6:00 PM - A meal and beverages will be served. Please bring a dessert to enjoy.
Guest speaker will be Jon Hayes with TPWD on Native Grassland Ecosystems.
Donations to cover the meal expenses are welcome. Come join us and bring a friend/neighbor to enjoy your Sun Oil Field WMA meeting. RSVP by April 15.

Jim Dickson,
Director, 713-817-1482

Joseph Ordner
Vice Director, 979-421-2334

Greenvine, Sandtown & Mt. Vernon Wildlife Management Association Spring Meeting

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2015 at 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Location: The Green Door - 5005 FM 2505, Greenvine, Texas
Program: The guest speaker will be J T Gaskamp – Pond Stocking & Management Different types and sizes of fish on hand for demonstration. Lunch to be provided – Fried fresh catfish with hush puppies & beverages will be served.
Donations to cover the meal expenses are welcome. RSVP by April 15. Come join us and bring a friend/neighbor.

Adam Seilheimer
Greenvine Director, 979-830-3960

Chip & Cathy Ingham
Greenvine Vice Directors, 281-870-0154

Brick Peele
Sandtown Director, 979-278-3778

Tom Drummond,
Sandtown Vice Director, 979-278-3811

Rocky Creek Wildlife Management Association Spring Meeting Mill Creek Watershed Partnership

Date: Saturday, May 2, 2015
Location: Rocky Creek Volunteer Fire Department on at 9771 Longpoint Rd., Burton
Time: Social at 6:00 PM; meal served at 6:30 PM, Speaker at 7:00PM –
A catered chicken fajitas meal will be served. Please bring a dessert to share with neighbors.
William Amelang, Rocky Creek WMA will discuss the newly formed Mill Creek Water Project and watershed protection plans which are designed to use best management practices to restore and protect surface waters affected by pollution.
RSVP by April 28. Come join us and bring a friend/neighbor.

John Knapp
Director, 979-289-5533

William Amelang
Vice Director, 979-337-4283

Post Oak and New Years Creek Wildlife Management Association Spring Meeting

Date: Saturday, May 2, 2015
Location: Washington on the Brazos State Park
Time: 6:00 PM
Watch your mail for more details.

Jon Wellman, Post Oak Director, 936-419-3910
Russell Borgstedte, Post Oak Vice Director, 936-878-9933

George Bishop, New Years Creek Director, 713-305-5510
Terry Atmar, News Years Creek ViceDirector, 281-303-6023

Prepared by: Stephanie M. Damron
TPWD Natural Resource Specialist II, Washington and Waller Counties

Fawn Production and Abandoned Fawns

It is approaching that time of year when you should start seeing whitetails fawns popping up. An adult doe in excellent habitat will normally have 2 fawns in late spring. These fawns are typically kept some distance apart and are hidden in tall grass if available. Fawns have little scent and will remain hidden if supplied with sufficient milk. When they become 4 or 5 weeks old they will begin to follow the doe. Fawns are usually weaned between 4 and 6 months old.

Most doe fawns will reach 6 months of age while the rut is in progress. With adequate nutrition as many as two-thirds of the doe fawns have been known to breed. If bred, doe fawns usually have only one fawn. Under less than optimal conditions or where deer are competing heavily with livestock or other deer, less than 10% of doe fawns will breed and adult does often will have only one fawn.

The number of deer, quality of habitat, degree of livestock competition and weather are common factors in determining the health of a fawn. If these factors are not favorable the fawn will not be born healthy and the doe will not supply enough milk. The fawn then may succumb to exposure and disease, or wander from its hiding place and be killed by predators.

Because of poor habitat management that results in improper nutrition and lack of tall grass cover, fawn production in our area typically averages less than 40%. In other words only 1 fawn is raised per 3 does. This low production is unnecessary. With proper habitat management, addressing the food and tall grass cover requirements, the fawn production can be increased to near 100%.

It is very important that during the time period when fawns are on the ground to keep an eye out for them on the road and when shredding or mowing hay. If it is possible, hold off shredding fields until mid-July to provide cover for does to hide their fawn's. If you find a fawn that is not injured and is not in imminent danger from something harming it, please leave them alone. Needlessly hundreds of fawns are taken to licensed rehabilitator each year that are not injured, but most likely **"kidnapped"** from their mothers. People presume their efforts are well meaning, but normally are misguided attempts to "save" a seemingly abandoned fawn. The truth is that for the first two weeks of a fawn's life the doe leaves her fawns hidden, returning every 2 to 12 hours to nurse them (when she feels it is safe to return).

If you find a fawn that is not injured or seems ill or dehydrated, just leave it alone the mother will return and feed it. Please share this information with other people in your community. Remember, a young animal's best chance for survival is with its natural parents who, better than anyone else, can ensure that it retains all of its natural faculties and behaviors for survival in the wild. If you have any questions or would like more information contact your local Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Biologist at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist.

Brown-headed Cowbirds

nestwatch.com

The Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) is a brood parasite, meaning that it lays its eggs in nests of other species. A female cowbird quietly searches for female birds of other species that are actively laying eggs. Once she has found a suitable host, the cowbird will sneak onto the resident bird's nest when it is away, usually damage or remove one (or more) egg, and replace that egg with one (or more) of her own. The foster parents then unknowingly raise the young cowbirds, usually at the expense of their own offspring. Cowbird eggs require a shorter incubation period than most other songbirds and thus usually hatch first. Cowbird nestlings also grow large very quickly. These advantages allow them to command the most food from their foster parents, usually resulting in reduced nesting success of the host species.

Male Brown-headed Cowbird
Photo © Burline Pullin

Female Brown-headed Cowbird
Photo © Raymond Lee Photography

Brown-headed Cowbirds are native to the United States and prefer open grasslands, as well as agricultural, urban, and suburban habitats where grain or cattle-disturbed soil are readily available. Historically they followed herds of bison, eating insects kicked up by the animals' hooves. It is unknown whether they developed their breeding strategy because they had to move frequently to keep up with the bison herds, or whether they were able to follow the herds because their breeding strategy gave them the freedom to do so. Expansion of agricultural areas and removal of forest cover have greatly benefited this species by providing more overall habitat and by giving cowbirds access to new host species that have not developed defensive strategies against nest parasitism. While it is clear that cowbirds have benefited from forest fragmentation, their role in population-level declines of many forest birds is less certain.

The cowbird does not depend exclusively on a single host species; it has been known to parasitize over 220 different species of North American birds and therefore spreads its impact across many populations. Although cowbirds have been implicated in the population declines of several rare species, such as Kirtland's Warbler and Black-capped Vireo, habitat loss and fragmentation likely play a much larger role in causing songbird declines. This is evidenced by the fact that cowbird control alone did not increase populations of the endangered Kirtland's Warbler; only when cowbird control was combined with habitat management for young Jack Pine forests did the warblers rebound.

Because cowbirds are native to the U.S., they are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and in most instances it is unlawful to use lethal control without a permit, including the removal of their eggs from a nest. However, unpermitted control of cowbirds is occasionally permissible under special circumstances outlined in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Additionally, in some states, such as Michigan and Texas, permits can be obtained to trap cowbirds to protect endangered species like Kirtland's Warbler, Golden-cheeked Warbler, and Black-capped Vireo. Please check with your state's wildlife management agency for local regulations.

Some species, such as the Yellow Warbler, can recognize cowbird eggs and will reject them or build a new nest on top of them. Those species which accept cowbird eggs either do not notice the new eggs, or as new evidence suggests, accept them as a defense against total nest destruction. Cowbirds may "punish" egg-rejectors by destroying the entire nest, whereas it is possible for egg-acceptors to raise some of their own young in addition to the cowbird young (see Birdscope 2008).

This fledgling Brown-headed Cowbird dwarfs the adult Common Yellowthroat acting as dad.
Photo © Darin Ziegler

To deter Brown-headed Cowbirds:
Use feeders that are made for smaller birds, such as tube feeders that have short perches, smaller ports, and no catch basin on the bottom. Avoid platform trays, and do not spread food on the ground. Cowbirds prefer sunflower seeds, cracked corn, and millet; offer nyjer seeds, suet, nectar, whole peanuts, or safflower seeds instead. Clean up seed spills on the ground below feeders. Don't search for or visit a nest when cowbirds are around.

How do you know if you have cowbird parasitism to report in your NestWatch data?

First, look for any eggs that appear different or out of place. Cowbird eggs are sometimes, but not always, larger than those of the host bird. This is especially true of warblers and small birds, but cowbird eggs are the same size as Northern Cardinal eggs. Cowbird eggs are white to grayish-white with brown or gray spots or streaks. Many species' eggs resemble cowbird eggs, so you may not be able to tell if the nest is parasitized until after the eggs hatch. Look for intact eggs on the ground under active nests. Female cowbirds often evict one or more of the host eggs before they lay their own. However, she may eat the egg instead or damage it and leave it in the nest.

When nestlings are present, look for a slightly larger nestling that begs vigorously with a bright red "gape" (the brightly colored areas in the corners of a nestling's open mouth). Most songbird chicks have a yellow or pale gape.

Cowbird young develop in about 8-13 days, so they may fledge before you expect the host species to have fledged. If you accidentally "force fledge" a cowbird, the parents will continue to feed it on the ground. Putting it back in the nest will probably result in the cowbird jumping out again. The parents usually will also continue to feed the young that remain in the nest until they are old enough to leave. Fledgling cowbirds are a dull grayish-brown color, and will be nearly their adult size (about the size of a starling), which often means parents will be feeding a youngster larger than themselves.

Prepared by: Stephanie M. Damron
TPWD Natural Resource Specialist II, Washington and Waller Counties

What are Bats Worth - to You?

Most of us seldom notice bats, and we rarely think about them much unless we hear a story on the television or read about them in the newspaper. In most cases, bats make the news for something negative. But the real news story that often goes untold is the largely unseen and rarely considered economic and aesthetic value bats bring to our agricultural fields and our neighborhoods. While most people are aware of the pest control benefits of bats in general (i.e. more bats = fewer mosquitoes), new research has concluded that bats represent a gold mine in annual savings to Texas agriculture. In a study conducted in an eight county region in southwestern Texas, researchers concluded that the 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) that captured insects over the area's cotton fields saved farmers up to $1.7 million annually. The savings came primarily from a reduced need for chemical pesticides. The bats ate millions of cotton bollworm moths through the summer months, thus reducing the number of moth larvae that survived to eat the cotton crops. In addition to the economic value of the reduced pesticide purchases, the reduction in pesticide use also means a healthier land, with fewer chemicals in crops, soil, surface water, and groundwater.

The Mexican free-tailed bat is just one of 32 bat species found in Texas. Our bat diversity results from the wonderful variety of natural habitats here in the state. Bats are aerial acrobats, with extremely flexible wings and lightweight bodies, just made for capturing insect prey in dark skies. Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight. All the bats in Texas, with one exception, capture and eat huge amounts of insects. For example, the Mexican free-tailed bat colony from Bracken Cave near San Antonio consumes an estimated 250 tons of insects each night during summer months. Several bat species specialize in eating larger insects that are common pests, including roaches, centipedes, scorpions, beetles, grasshoppers, and stinkbugs. Texas is also home to an important bat plant pollinator, the Mexican long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*), which feeds on nectar from night-blooming agave and other cacti flowers in West and South Texas, plus Mexico.


www.batcon.org

We share our natural space with bats every day. Bats may live nearby in both urban and rural settings using a wide variety of habitat, including cliff faces, caves, tree cavities, among tree branches, bridges, and in man-made bat houses. By erecting a bat house, you're putting out the welcome mat and encouraging bats to live and consume insects on your property. Bat house designs mimic the natural roosting preferences of many bat species, with narrow sheltered spaces between ¾ inch and one inch in width, and temperatures ranging from 80 to 100 degrees F daily. To encourage bat house occupancy, choose a site where the house receives at least six hours of direct sunlight each day, from first morning light to early afternoon. Place the bat house 12 to 15 feet off the ground, on a metal pole to discourage climbing predators. Avoid shady areas or those beneath overhanging tree limbs. Locations near ponds or other water sources increase bat house success in attracting resident bats.

Bats, like any mammal, can contract the rabies virus. In wild populations, the incidence of rabies is very low (less than half of one percent), and having one bat in a colony that is rabid does not mean the entire colony will become rabid. For more information about bats, bat house plans, bat house research results, and bat exclusion information, visit the Bat Conservation International website: www.batcon.org. And the next time you spot a bat flying the evening skies, sit back and enjoy the nightly pest control in action.


Texas Bat Preserve near Mason,TX

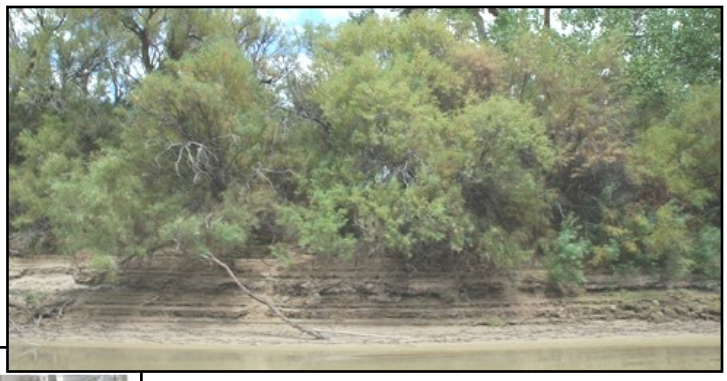
LOVE FOR THE LOCALS ····THE DANGERS OF INVASIVE SPECIES

Prepared by: William Amelang
Rocky Creek WMA, Vice President, Nursery Manager Discount Trees of Brenham

Although one hardly needs trees in order to be reminded of how spring vigor lifts the spirits or how autumn eases us through the welcome transition to the pace and feel of the holidays, there are some less conspicuous ways in which a good nursery serves its community – like carrying plants that contribute to the ecological health of our land, and do not offset its delicate balance. Indigenous plants, animals, and insects work in harmony with their local climate to ensure that no one species goes unchecked. When exotic species (like Chinese Tallow, fire ants, or feral hogs) become established in an area where there are no natural controls, you begin to see widespread economic and environmental damage. According to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, in Texas alone feral hogs cause approximately $52 million in damages to agricultural enterprises every year[1], and total damages attributed to imported fire ants are estimated at $1.2 billion annually[2].

Measuring the impact of invasive species in the wild sometimes seems less threatening due to the fact that much of the land area at stake is not being used for economic gain but rather as habitat for wildlife, and for the preservation of air and water quality. But though we suffer massive economic losses due to feral hogs (and Texas is home to nearly 1/3 of all the feral swine in the U.S.), our predicted water demands indicate that it is our wetlands that require our immediate attention. Water quality is the cornerstone of all ecosystems, and 24% (8 out of 33) of the world's most invasive species are wetland species. When our wetlands are compromised by invasives that alter habitat structure and food webs, we begin to see the degeneration of integral components of life on earth – like loss of biodiversity and healthy water cycles – while pests and diseases enjoy new vectors, and the already overburdened budgets allotted to proper management of nature brace for the impact of compounded damages.

Jim Collins wrote in his seminal work *Good to Great*, that the long-term success of a business can be likened to the inertia and momentum of a flywheel. When you set out to get the flywheel going it takes a tremendous amount of effort to produce the slightest movement. But as you continue your work it becomes easier as the weight of the enormous stone begins to work in your favor, until eventually just the occasional push is all that is needed to keep your endeavor clipping along at high-speed. Although he applies this concept to the free market (ostensibly because it has proven to be one of the most powerful vehicles for change of any kind), the metaphor is relevant to all change where human behavior is the key ingredient. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, as it were. We now stand on the shoulders of giants, and we have a flywheel of change that is picking up speed.



These days it is easier than ever to tie in to a group of people achieving measurable success in your community. There are many excellent projects around the state of Texas – meaningful and effective communities "hitting the nail on head" in regards to water stewardship, invasive species, and best management practices for wildlife and agriculture. To learn more, start by looking into the Native Plant Society Of Texas, the Texas Water Development Board, http://www.texasinvasives.org/ by Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, just to name a pertinent few.

Stay connected to these bright spots of positive change. Remember to talk about it over lunch, think about it the next time you look out on the countryside. What looks like tranquil harmony is in fact a slow-motion life-and-death competition, between species that help maintain balance and species that sabotage the well-being of everything connected to the land. We *do* play a role in that balance, whether we do so by conscious endeavor or by apathy.

[1]http://wildlife.tamu.edu/wildlifemanagement/feral-hog/
[2]http://fireant.tamu.edu/
[3]"Causes and Consequences of Invasive Plants in Wetlands: Opportunities, Opportunists, and Outcomes", Joy B. Zedlera & Suzanne Kercher

White Bass (*Morone chrysops)*

Other Names—Sand Bass, Barfish, Streaker, Silver Bass

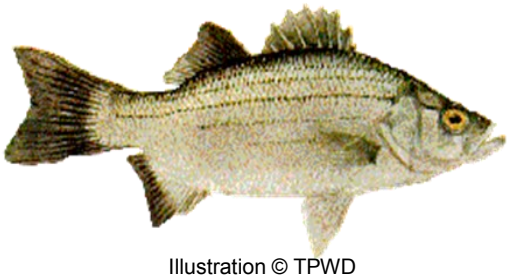


Illustration © TPWD

Morone is of unknown derivation. The species epithet chrysops is Greek meaning " golden eye." As with other true basses, the dorsal fin is clearly double, separated into spiny and soft-rayed portions. White bass are silvery shading from dark-gray or black on the back to white on the belly. Several incomplete lines or stripes run horizontally on each side of the body. Adults resemble young striped bass, and the two are often confused. However, striped bass have two distinct tooth patches on the back of the tongue, and white bass have one tooth patch. Striped bass have two sharp points on each gill cover, as opposed to white bass which have one, and the second spine on the anal fin is about half the length of the third spine in striped bass, whereas it is about two-thirds the length of the third spine in white bass.

White bass are active early spring spawners. Schools of males migrate upstream to spawning areas as much as a month before females. There is no nest preparation. Spawning occurs either near the surface, or in midwater. Running water with a gravel or rock substrate is preferred. Females rise to the surface and several males crowd around as the eggs and sperm are released. Large females sometimes release nearly a million small eggs during the spawning season. After release eggs sink to the bottom and become attached to rocks, hatching in 2-3 days. Fry grow rapidly, feeding on small invertebrates. White bass may grow eight or nine inches during the first year. Adults are usually found in schools. Feeding occurs near the surface where fish, crustaceans, and emerging insects are found in abundance. Gizzard and threadfin shad are the preferred food items. White bass more than four years of age are rare.

White bass are native to the the central US west of the Appalachians, including the Great Lakes, as well as river systems in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys. In Texas the species is native to the Red River drainage.

White bass are the fifth most preferred species among licensed Texas anglers. Schools of white bass feeding on shad generate much excitement in the fishing community. Once a school has been located, successful anglers often fish the surface with spoons or spinners. Bottom fishing at night with live bait may also produce great success. White bass are excellent fighters, and are considered superb table fare.

Washington County Wildlife Society
1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, Texas 77833
Telephone 979-277-6212 Fax 979-277-6223
www.wcwildlife.org