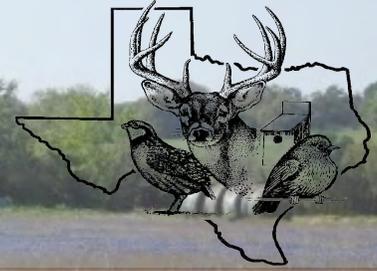


WASHINGTON COUNTY

Wildlife

1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, Texas 77833

Telephone 979-277-6212 Fax 979-277-6223 www.wcwildlife.org

Prescribed Fire for Land Stewardship

By Dave Redden, President of South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association

If you are reading this article, you have probably already been to at least a few workshops where some expert has told you that one of the best ways to improve your land for wildlife habitat is to burn it. This is not intuitive based on what most of us learned from talking bears and animated movies as we grew up. Instead we learned how destructive fire can be and how emotionally tragic it appears to be for wildlife. But now that we are adults and are being encouraged to burn based on scientific recommendations, we may gradually accept the idea. Then the hard part starts. So, how do we do it?

There are four basic paths to take. One of these paths is not recommend.

Do It Like Grandpa Did It. This is the method that is not recommended and the one most people think of when they hear someone refer to prescribed fire or "controlled fire." It seems that most stories of how it was done in yesteryear was for grandpa to decide one day when he woke up that it was a good day to burn some pasture that he had been waiting to burn. He would then maybe get a helper and ride around either on horseback or in an old pickup and toss matches into the pasture or drag burning objects such as old tires or burlap sacks soaked in diesel and set on fire. Grandpa got away with this frequently because when the fire escaped, it usually just burned up some of his neighbor's pasture, which needed to be burned anyway. Besides, the same thing would probably happen in reverse when the neighbor intentionally burned his pasture next year. Everyone understood that things happen like that.

Things changed when the grandsons went to college and got law degrees and came back to live on the old homestead, which was now about half or less the size that it used to be, and the neighbor now was someone retired from a major corporation in a large city who had built his dream house in the country and was not so keen on setting his improved grass pasture and wildflowers on fire.

The result was no more burning like grandpa did, in most cases.

Hire It Done. This is a common way to handle most jobs on the land these days because the land is often owned by folks with more money than time, interest, and skill in doing the work themselves. Think of the grandson with the law degree. The problem with this approach is that it is prohibitively expensive for small tracts (less than 100 acres) for many landowners who may not be quite as fortunate as the grandson with the law degree. There are companies that will burn your land for you on a turnkey basis, but it typically starts at around \$10/acre with a minimum of 200 acres. If you want to burn your 10 acres that you are converting to native grasses, it is going to cost about \$2000, as if you were burning 200 acres. The reason is that it takes the company the same amount of time to plan and execute a small burn as it does a larger burn. Plus, the liability insurance that they must have is the same regardless of the size of the burn. My numbers may be inaccurate, so check with a few professionals to get a better estimate on what it may cost you.

Hiring your prescribed burn done is feasible if you have large tracts that you are really using for production agriculture or you really want to improve your wildlife on large tracts of land.



Joe Cucuzza, Sandtown WMA member, helps with prescribed burn on his Carmine property

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ADDRESS CHANGES: For address changes, or to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact **Richard Thames**, (979) 278-3053, rbthames@industryinet.com

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

The Society has made a lot of progress this past year under the leadership expertise of Dr. Bill Eikenhorst. I sincerely appreciate his commitment to keeping us on track as well as the dedication of all of our board members. We have seen an increase in our membership through new members as well as returning members. Thank you to all who have made WCWS a success.



An interesting thought came to mind recently. When Ann and I first moved to Washington County in 2002 we did not know a soul here. So with the help of Larry Pierce, the county agent from Texas Extension (AgriLife) we were introduced to the Washington County Wildlife Society, which in turn introduced us to Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and USDA/NRCS Texas. What a great group of resources to have available to us. So with that in mind, we would like to reintroduce these services to you. The following pages, **Resources at your Service**, give you an inside story on the people behind these valuable resources. Kara, Stephanie and Ben, along with their departments, are here to provide technical assistance to private landowners and managers.

Last month, I was lucky enough to join the SCTPBA on a small control burn at Sandtown WMA members Joe & Bev Cucuzza's property. They burned a small 6-acre pasture of heavy native grasses that is under restoration from an improved pasture. The conditions were good, the help was plentiful and the burn went without a hitch. I would encourage our members and friends to look into SCTPBA, they too are a valuable resource.

We had a very successful fundraiser last year and look forward to our upcoming fund raiser meeting on Aug 19th, so mark it on your calendar. This year we received 8 scholarship applications from Brenham ISD and Burton ISD. We were thrilled to provide scholarships to five deserving high school seniors.

We strive to bring you programs, activities and information to help you with your wildlife and community needs. We are an all volunteer organization and your input and/or participation is greatly appreciated.

Richard Thames



Just a reminder...

If you haven't done so already, renew your wildlife membership for 2016!

Prescribed Fire for Land Stewardship

Continued from Page 1

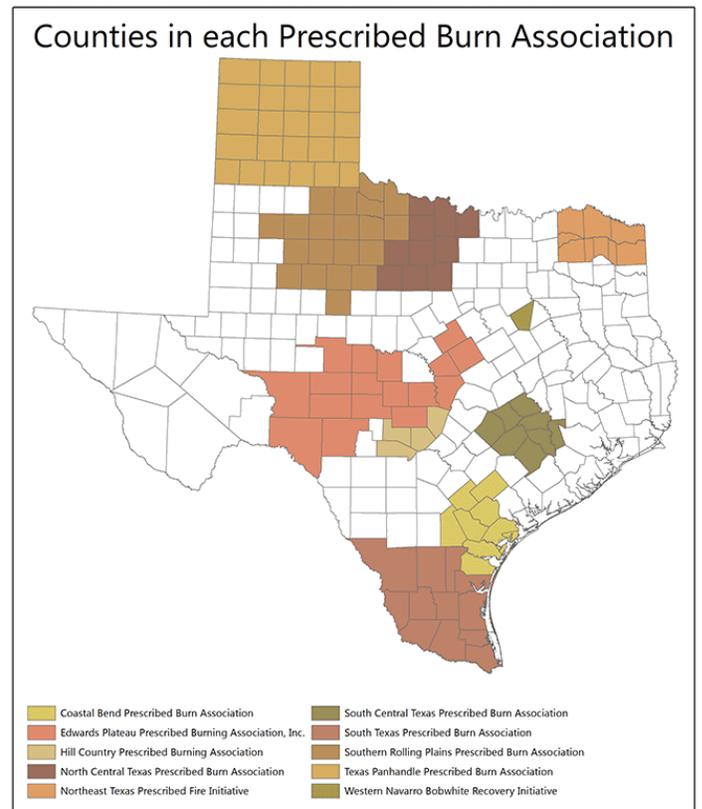
Get an Agency to Help You. In some cases, state or federal agencies will assist you with planning a burn and perhaps even executing a burn. Texas Parks and Wildlife, USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will sometimes offer support in planning a burn. They are certainly a good resource to advise you if burning would be beneficial to your objectives for managing your land. But if you have a small acreage that you want to burn (less than 50 acres or so), you may have difficulty finding help in executing the burn through one of the agencies. They are just spread too thin to take on every burn in the state, and they have to prioritize where they think they can do the most good with their time. That brings you to the option which you may find suitable for small and large acreage properties for most landowners of moderate means.

Join a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA). PBAs are volunteer support groups to help landowners learn how to burn safely and effectively. It is similar to the old concept of barn raising, a cooperative effort to accomplish a task that no one could do alone, but everyone needed to do.

There are PBAs throughout Texas. Ten of these have joined together to form the Prescribed Burn Alliance of Texas (PBAT). They have all agreed to common standards for planning and conducting burns.

Our local PBA is the South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association (SCTPBA), which currently works in 8 counties. The SCTPBA began in 2009 as a cooperative effort among a few landowners. Within a year it grew to around 150 members. In 2011 the group incorporated as a tax exempt non-profit organization in the state of Texas. In its fairly short history, SCTPBA has involved over 200 individuals in prescribed burning on 40 different properties impacting over 500 acres of land.

The SCTPBA is chartered as a non-profit educational organization with the objective of facilitating getting fire back into the ecosystem to improve land stewardship. If you think this may be useful for you, check out the website at www.sctpba.org.



Antelope horns, Green-flowered milkweed, (*Asclepias asperula*)

The leaves of milkweeds are the primary food source for the Monarch caterpillar and the flowers provide a nectar source for the adult butterfly that has a high glucose content.

Antelope horns is not finicky about water. It has a large tap root that develops quickly which allows it to flower even during years like this one when rainfall has been pretty scarce. It prefers to grow in well drained soil in full sun.



The same milky sap that the Native Americans used for medicinal purposes can also be toxic like so many modern medicines today. Not surprisingly, antelope-horn is normally deer resistant and livestock also tend to leave it alone because of the bad taste. Monarch caterpillars capitalize on this toxic trait because once the milkweed is ingested the caterpillars also taste bad.

One other interesting bit of milkweed trivia is that during WWII the silky down attached to the seeds was used for both regular life jackets and aviation life jackets. Milkweed silk is 5 to 6 times more buoyant than cork.

Native Plants, the key to great wildlife habitat

By Steve Nelle, wildlife biologist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service

Texans have many reasons to brag. One of the things Texas can boast about is our tremendous bounty of native plants. These trees, shrubs, vines, wildflowers, forbs, grasses, sedges and cacti provide habitat for an amazing array of wildlife species. This rich abundance of wildlife is absolutely dependent on native plants for their survival and well being.

Think about any particular species of wildlife, and begin to consider how many different native plants play a role in their life cycle. Take, for example, mockingbirds. First, they need a place to build their nest and conceal it from predators. Trees, shrubs or thickets are used for nest concealment and protection from the elements. The nest itself may be composed of twigs from various bushes as well as the leaf and stem of grasses, catkin tree flowers, fine roots and other plant fiber.

After the young babies are hatched, the parents must find a continuous source of insects to feed the young.

These may include grasshoppers, caterpillars, crickets, ants, bees, termites and beetles, to name a few. Each of these insects in turn needs a whole host of different plants for its own life requisites.

Mockingbirds also eat berries from a host of native plants. These may include hackberry, bumelia, algerita, pokeberry, Virginia creeper, Carolina snailseed, dewberry, mulberry, hawthorn, possumhaw, elbowbush, elderberry or greenbriar. The mockingbird then helps disseminate the seed of these plants by expelling the seed after the soft part of the berry has been digested.

Of course, everyone knows the mockingbird ego; they find the most prominent place possible to perch and sing. Dead trees (called snags), or tall trees with dead limbs provide their favorite perching locations. It would be easy to enumerate over 100 different native plant species that play a role in the life of a single mockingbird.

If this exercise is repeated for each of the bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species in Texas, it is clear that our diversity of native plant life is essential in maintaining healthy wildlife populations.

The Texas naturalist need not be overwhelmed by this complexity of native plants. Any given tract of land normally has 200 or fewer plant species.

Of that number, only about 50 will usually be the more common and important plants. Internet resources, books and local plant experts are all good ways to begin to learn the plants of your area.

And since 95 percent of Texas lands are privately owned, it is clear that stewardship and conservation by landowners is the key to maintaining this rich heritage of plants and animals.

Most Texas farmers and ranchers understand their role as caretakers of Texas plant life and wildlife, and take that role seriously. In addition to growing our food supply, and conserving soil and water, Texas landowners manage their land to maintain or restore native plants and wildlife habitat.

Because every drop counts!

The CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow) network is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to report rainfall, snowfall and hail information. You can let the National Weather Service, media, researchers, farmers, emergency managers, and a wide range of other users know how much rain, hail, or snow was observed in your backyard or schoolyard by joining the program. If you would like to contribute valuable precipitation information unique to your location, then this program is for you!

Observers record precipitation information using the recommended 4-inch rain gauge and enter their observations onto the CoCoRaHS webpage. This program will help a variety of users view and study the variability of precipitation across Texas and Oklahoma. The accumulated precipitation data will be available to anyone using the web. Become a piece of the meteorological puzzle and join the other 10,000 plus volunteers from across the nation by becoming a CoCoRaHS observer.

Please visit the CoCoRaHS website (<http://www.cocorahs.org/>) to learn more about the program. Then go through the on-line training to be on your way to become a part of the meteorological community.



Resources at your Service

Kara J. Matheney

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Washington County

It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to share a brief background on the AgriLife Extension Service with the members of the Washington County Wildlife Society. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a unique education agency with a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers, and county offices. It reaches into every Texas county to address local priority needs. Some of our major efforts are in mitigating drought impacts; conserving water use in homes, landscapes, and production agriculture; improving emergency management; enhancing food security; and protecting human health through education about diet, exercise, and disease prevention and management.

In Washington County we have a staff of :

- ◆ **3 - AgriLife Extension Agents** covering program areas including:
 - ◆ Agriculture and Natural Resources
 - ◆ Family and Consumer Science
 - ◆ 4-H and Youth Development
- ◆ **1 - Prairie View Cooperative Extension Agent** - Family and Consumer Science
- ◆ **2 - Office Support Staff**

Washington County is incredibly dynamic, and provides a vast array of educational opportunities for a diverse cross-section of topics. Program Area Committees for the county work collectively to offer educational programs in the areas of New Landowner Education, beef cattle and forage production, equine management, swine production, horticulture and landscape management, dairy cattle production, Master Gardeners, and Master Naturalists; to name just a few.

Highlighted Events for 2016:

- ◆ Multi-County New Landowner Educational Series (Monthly)
- ◆ South Central Texas Beef 706 (3 Part Series)
- ◆ Master Gardener Lunch and Learn Series (Monthly)
- ◆ 45th Annual South Central Texas Cow-Calf Clinic (October)
- ◆ Annual Tomato and Pepper Plant Sale (February/March)
- ◆ Private Applicator Training (Bi-Monthly)
- ◆ Pesticide Applicator Continuing Education (Monthly)

If there is ever anything we at the Extension Office can help you with please don't hesitate to call. From chickens to cattle, roses to turf, ponds, forages, pests and more we are a non-biased, research based, educational outlet for everyone!

We have an electronic Ag E-Newsletter and we would be glad to add anyone who is interested to it. Also, our website <http://washington.agrilife.org/> is full of information and details on upcoming events. Don't forget to check us out on Facebook as well, Washington County AgriLife Extension.



Pecan Field Day for Small Acreage Orchards – Cinco B Farms – April 26, 2016 (Flyer Attached) (2 CEUs)

****BRING A LAWN CHAIR****

The Washington County Horticulture Committee is hosting a Pecan Field Day on Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at Cinco B Farms in Burton. This event will be a great opportunity to see a commercial operation as well as learn more about small acreage pecan production in Washington County. Join us early for a tour of the orchard and a chance to visit with pecan producers in our area. Tours will begin at 5:00pm, registration at 5:30pm, and the program at 6:00pm. We will plan to serve light refreshments and encourage you to join us for an evening in the orchard! **The program is free with an RSVP on or before April 22, 2016; so be sure to let the Extension Office know you are attending so we have an accurate headcount for refreshments.** All pesticide applicators will be eligible to receive 2 CEUs (1 IPM; 1 GEN) at the conclusion of the meeting. For more information and to RSVP please contact the Washington County Extension Office at (979) 277-6212.

Resources at your Service

Stephanie Damron

*Texas Parks & Wildlife Natural Resource Specialist III
Washington and Waller Counties*

As a biologist in the Wildlife Division of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), I'm often asked 'how do you help landowners in Washington and Waller Counties' or 'what do you do?'. Often I joke that it changes with the season. But in reality, my day to day and season to season responsibilities do vary with the time of year.

I offer technical guidance and support for landowners looking to manage their property for wildlife and file for a wildlife tax valuation (a type of 1-D-1 Open Space Agriculture Valuation) with the Central Appraisal District (CAD). Most of these site visits occur during the time of year the CADs accept these applications from landowners, which is January 1-April 30. A typical site visit includes either walking or driving the property to get a feel for the habitat types and conditions present. Once that is complete we discuss goals and objectives for the property. I routinely provide a list of property-specific recommendations for improving or managing the habitat conditions on the property for wildlife. Though the time to file for wildlife tax valuation is January-April, I conduct site visits throughout the year for those interested in improving their land for wildlife.

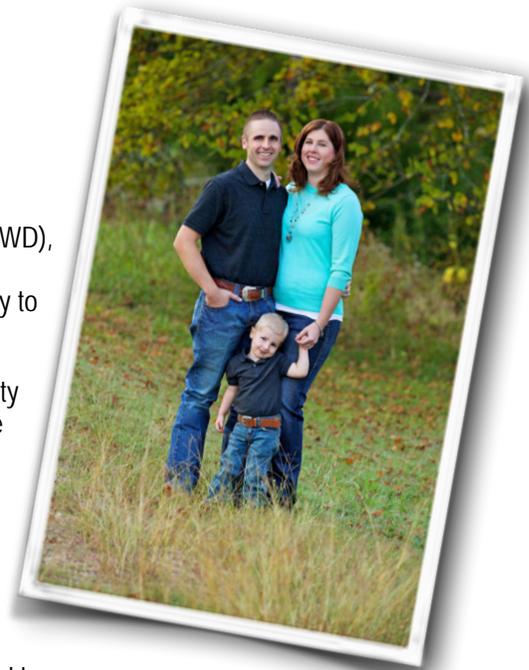
During May and June I conduct mourning and white-wing dove surveys required by US Fish and Wildlife Service. These surveys assist in setting the bag limits for dove hunting across the state. During June, July, and August dove banding takes place. We use walk-in traps and mist nets to trap and band birds. In August we set up our local public dove leases that are available for use to those who purchase an Annual Public Hunting Permit (\$48 plus the purchase of your annual hunting license).

Deer season begins in mid-July for biologists. I begin running spotlight surveys in late July to assess the county deer population. During August and September I issue doe and/or buck permits to private landowner cooperators that participate in the Managed Lands Deer Permit Program. To harvest doe outside of archery season you must have a permit issued by TPWD. There is no cost or fee to sign up. All that is required is a wildlife management plan and a census or population survey must be conducted to record the number of bucks, does and fawns seen on your property during the month of August. Once deer hunting season begins, I collect age, weight and antler data from local harvests. This past year we spent a large portion of our time collecting tissue samples to test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). I expect to be just as busy with CWD collection going into the 2016-2017 hunting season. As deer season ends, another wildlife valuation season begins.

Throughout the year I assist with various youth and adult outdoor education efforts. Texas Parks and Wildlife hosts a variety of educational opportunities including youth shooting events and Ag Days, landowner workshops, and maintaining educational displays at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and Washington County Fair. My involvement with youth also includes assisting with the local LANDS (Learning Across New Dimensions in Science) programs offered for the Brenham ISD 7th and 8th graders. Some of the local adult workshops we conduct are for wildlife tax valuation and prescribed burning, as well as for managing species such as quail, deer, pollinators, etc.

As you can see, our jobs take on many different aspects. If at any point you have questions or concerns about wildlife habitat management or about the wildlife you see on your property, please do not hesitate to give me a call. One thing I love about this job is that it gets me outside of my office on a regular basis, so if you miss me in the office leave a message and I'll get back to you.

Stephanie Damron started her career with TPWD in 2008 as the Natural Resource Specialist for Waller and Washington Counties. Stephanie received her Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management with a Minor in Biology from Tarleton State University in 2005 and her Master of Science in Wildlife Science from Texas Tech in 2007. Prior to working for TPWD, Stephanie worked with The Nature Conservancy at Fort Hood. Stephanie currently resides in Brenham with her husband Jeremy and sons Lane and Liam.



Resources at your Service

Ben Garcia

USDA-NRCS District Conservationist

I was born and raised in Alice, Texas - a mid-sized town made up of oil field businesses and farming and ranching as the primary sources of income. From a very early age I enjoyed being outdoors enjoying nature, working with animals and livestock, and just always have tried to help the land by leaving it better than I found it. I always took satisfaction in helping others by passing on the knowledge that I have acquired from school and personal experiences.

I attended and graduated from Texas A&M – Kingsville University in May of 2004. My degree is in Agriculture Science with two minors, Plant & Soil Science and Animal Science. I began working with the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service in the fall of 2004, and my duty stations have included stops in Cuero, Haskell, and Raymondville Texas. In The summer of 2011 I was promoted to Brenham and since then I have really enjoyed serving and working with the fine people in wonderful Washington County, Texas. My wife and I have three dogs and we enjoy being outdoors and spending time camping and bird watching together.



This year, 2016 promises to be a great year in the conservation industry, currently USDA-NRCS is accepting Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications. EQIP is a financial assistance program that offers technical and financial help to landowners who are trying to address and improve any natural resource concern issues they may have on their land. Our agency is really promoting the reintroduction of using pollinator native plants to aid pollinator species.

We encourage landowners to work with the local NRCS to develop a basic conservation plan which is tailored to their goals and objectives. The programs we have are tools in the toolbox to help someone reach their goals. Join me in "Helping People, Help the Land" one acre at a time!

Texas Brigades Adds First Coastal Camp to Educational Lineup

The camp is now accepting applications for its inaugural class

Texas Brigades is excited to add a new Coastal Brigade Camp to the mix in 2016. This 5-day program will encompass coastal habitat management, fisheries management, coastal ecology and saltwater fishing. The tried and true Brigades model of leadership development, education, and empowerment will continue at Coastal Brigade.

Coastal Brigade will select 30 of the brightest and best 13-17 year olds from across Texas to attend camp and become ambassadors of land stewardship and our coastal resources. At camp, cadets will participate in a number of hands-on activities covering a number of topics including fish identification, saltwater species collection techniques, water quality, habitat management, angling, boater safety, ethics and more. The other major components of Coastal Brigade are life-skills, including leadership, team-building, critical-thinking, public speaking, and communication.

After camp, cadets will return to their communities to give presentations and share their new found knowledge. In turn, they will be rewarded through scholarships and future experiences.



Brenham L.A.N.D.S. Intensive Water Field Day at Long Star Ranch

On April 5th over 300 8th grade science students from Brenham Junior High gathered at Long Star Ranch in Burton, Texas. The 8th grade science classes from BISD we're invited to participate in the Intensive Water/Erosion Field Investigation Day (FID) which was held at Larry Joe and Joanne Doherty's Long Star Ranch. The students, teachers and volunteers enjoyed a beautiful day exploring the subject on Water Quality and Erosion Causes which covered Aquatic Vertebrates – Water Salinity & Testing – Soil Erosion – Water Chemistry - Soils - Erosion Modeling - Watersheds.



Photos by Dave Redden and Leslie Wittenberg

Groups involved that day included 8th grade science teachers from Brenham, TWA-L.A.N.D.S., the USDA - NRCS Texas, the Texas Master Naturalists – Gideon Lincecum Chapter and other volunteers, some from WCWS, like Doodle Johnston and team.

WMA Calendar

Sun Oil WMA Spring Meeting

Thursday, April 21, 2016

Fireman's Kitchen in Fireman's Park, 910 N Park St., Brenham

6:30 PM – Meal and beverages will be served. Please bring a dessert to enjoy. Donations to cover the meal expenses are welcome.

Guest speaker will be **Michael Kelling** with **Central Texas Beekeepers Association**. Michael will be giving us some valuable information on basic beekeeping and its benefits.

Please RSVP to the AgriLife Extension office at **979-277-6212** or online [Sun Oil Spring Meeting](#). Come join us and bring a friend/neighbor to enjoy your Sun Oil Field WMA meeting.

Rocky Creek WMA Meeting

Saturday, April 23rd, 2016

Rocky Creek Volunteer Fire Department on at 9771 Longpoint Rd., Burton

Meal provided and served at 6:00 PM

Guest speaker will be **J.T. Gaskamp** with Land and Lake Services. J.T. will be giving us some valuable information on pond maintenance during drought conditions, and control of algae and pond health plus pond stocking and management ideas.

Come join us and bring friends/neighbors to enjoy your Rocky Creek WMA meeting.

Please RSVP to the AgriLife Extension office at **979-277-6212** or online [Rocky Creek Spring Meeting](#).

Please bring a dessert to share with neighbors.

Greenvine WMA Meeting

Saturday, April 30th, 2016

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

The Green Door - 5005 FM 2505, Greenvine, Texas

Guest speaker **Yoyo Scheel** – A continued discussion on controlled burn procedures and property fire protection considerations. Plus a bluebird talk on the property of **Chip & Cathy Ingham** present by **Richard & Ann Thames** to follow.

Lunch will be provided – A fried fresh catfish with hush puppies & beverage will be served.

Please RSVP to the AgriLife Extension office at **979-277-6212** or online [Greenvine Meeting](#). Donations to cover the meal expenses are welcome. Come join us and bring a friend/neighbor to enjoy your Greenvine WMA meeting.

SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, August 19th, 2016

Social at 6:00 p.m.

Dinner/Presentation at 7:00 p.m.

Washington County Fairground Events Center

Annual Fundraiser!

Like us on

Facebook!

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

The anhinga is a large bird that is about three feet in length. It has a long S-shaped neck and a long pointed bill. It has large wings with silver-white feathers on the top side. The male has grayish-black feathers with a greenish shine to them. The female has a tan head, neck, and chest, and a black stomach. Both the male and the female have long, fan-shaped tail feathers. When the anhinga is in its breeding plumage it has a blue ring around its eyes.

The anhinga has poorly developed oil glands, and its feathers aren't as waterproof as the feathers of other water birds. It perches in a tree with its wings open to dry its feathers and warm its body.

Anhingas can be found in freshwater ponds and swamps where there is thick vegetation and tall trees.

Using its sharp bill, the anhinga spears fish, flips them in the air, and swallows them head-first! Sometimes, the anhinga spears a fish so hard that it has to return to shore with the fish still stuck on its bill. The anhinga bangs the fish against a rock to get it off its bill!

The anhinga is also known as the snakebird. When it swims, its body is submerged under the water. It stretches its head and neck flat out on the surface of the water. When its head and neck are stretched out, it looks like a snake is gliding through the water.

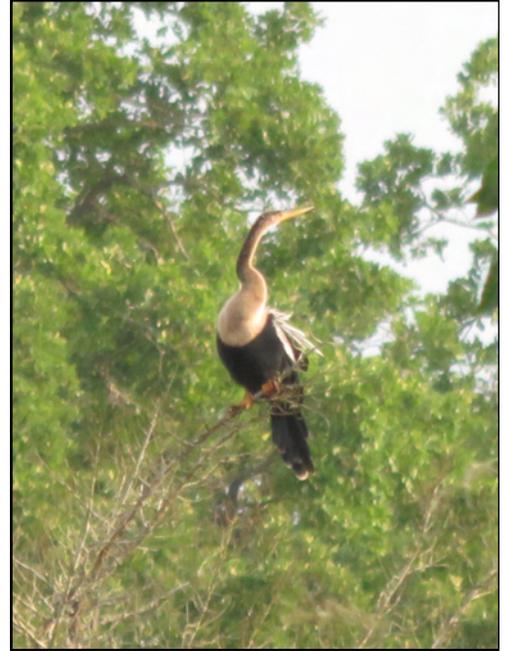


Photo by Ann Thames, Sandtown



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