

## WCWS ANNUAL MEETING

January 23, 2015

Washington County Fairgrounds Event Center

6:00 pm

Come join us on Friday evening, January 23rd at the Washington County Fairgrounds Event Center for our annual stew "free will donation" dinner (*desserts welcomed*), social starts at 6 pm with a short business meeting to elect 2015 officers at 6:45 pm We will have a panel discussion starting at 7:00 pm from the First Responders of Washington County which include the following:



*Washington County  
Sheriff  
Otto Hanak*



*Brenham Police  
Chief  
Rex Phelps*



*Washington County  
EMS Director  
Kevin Deramus*



*Burton Fire Chief  
Ronnie Stanley*

It should be an interesting evening, so invite your friends and neighbors to join us, you can RSVP by calling the County Extension office 979-277-6212 or at [www.wcwildlife.org](http://www.wcwildlife.org). If you haven't already, this would be a great opportunity to **RENEW your Wildlife Society Membership for 2015.**

**WCWS CONTACT INFO:****OFFICERS for 2014:**

*(New officers will be elected at the Jan. 23rd meeting)*

Cindy Lyles, Society President, (979) 251-4720,  
[cindylyles27@gmail.com](mailto:cindylyles27@gmail.com)

Dr. Bill Eikenhorst, Society Vice Pres., (979-830-3814)  
[vetdocbill@hotmail.com](mailto:vetdocbill@hotmail.com)

Devin Holum, Society Treasurer, (281)807-0679,  
[bismark98@yahoo.com](mailto:bismark98@yahoo.com)

Monterey White, Society Secretary, (979) 836-3418,  
[whiteoakfarm@gmail.com](mailto:whiteoakfarm@gmail.com)

**WMA DIRECTORS for 2015:****Greenvine WMA**

Adam Seilheimer, Director (979) 830-3960,  
[texastrophyscapes@yahoo.com](mailto:texastrophyscapes@yahoo.com)

Vice-Director-OPEN

**Sun Oil Field WMA**

Jim Dickson, Director, (713) 817-1482

Vice-Director—OPEN

**Rocky Creek WMA**

Jon Knapp, Director, (979) 289-5533,  
[jknapp@pachouston.com](mailto:jknapp@pachouston.com)

William Amelang, Vice-Director, (979) 337-4283

**Post Oak WMA**

Jon Wellmann, Director, (936) 419-3910,  
[jonwellmann@live.com](mailto:jonwellmann@live.com)

Russell Borgstedte, Vice-Director, (936) 878-9933

**Sandtown WMA**

Brick Peele, Director, (979) 278-3778,  
[brickpeelee@aol.com](mailto:brickpeelee@aol.com)

Tom Drummond, Vice Director, (979) 278-3811,  
[thomd@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto:george.bishop@sbcglobal.net)

Terry Atmar, Vice-Director, (281) 303-6023,  
[terry.atmar@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov)

Kara J. Matheney, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent-Agriculture/Natural  
Resources, (979) 277-6212, [kjmatheney@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kjmatheney@ag.tamu.edu)

Ben Garcia, NRCS District Conservationist, (979) 830-7123 ext. 3,  
[ben.garcia@tx.usda.gov](mailto:ben.garcia@tx.usda.gov)

Willie Dilworth Washington Co., Appraisal District,  
(979) 277-3740, [wldilworth@brenhamk-12.net](mailto:wldilworth@brenhamk-12.net)

Richard Thames, WCWS Membership Committee, (979) 278-3053  
[rbthames@industrinet.com](mailto:rbthames@industrinet.com)

Janet Barnett, WCWS Newsletter Editor, 979-830-8350,  
[barnett-p@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barnett-p@sbcglobal.net)

Eddie Hines, WC Game Warden, (979) 412-3140,  
[eddie.hines@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:eddie.hines@tpwd.state.tx.us)

**A MESSAGE FROM  
OUR PRESIDENT**

Dear Washington County Wildlife Society,

I just want to take this time to say..... Thank You! Thank you for allowing me to be your President. Not knowing exactly what this society was all about --I learned that it was about community and helping others with the land and its creatures that live off of it. I learned that it was stewardship to help keep it living and providing the resources for all of God's creatures. It was a time of learning what this society was all about and a time for serving our community in helping with the youth events --stepping in to help wherever I was needed.

I thank Stephanie, the Board, and Officers for a job well done. This past year has not been the best year with the death of my mom and then having a stroke. It has been sort of a rough year and trying to keep my outside activities in tack has been a challenge. However, with the advice of doctors and family members - I need to slow down.

So with that I have had to let some things go. I appreciate Dr. Bill for taking over as President- - he has done a terrific job. Thanks again for everything and hope to see you all soon.

Sincerely,

*Cindy Lyles*

**WASHINGTON COUNTY  
WILDLIFE SOCIETY WEBSITE**

**[www.wcwildlife.org](http://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.

## WILD TURKEYS IN TEXAS

*Prepared by Stephanie Damron  
Texas Parks and Wildlife*

Today wild turkeys can be found throughout Texas, less than 100 years ago that was not the case. Overharvest coupled with expanding human populations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had major impacts on turkey populations. As settlers expanded westward, turkey habitat was affected in various ways. The first game laws in Texas protecting turkeys occurred in 1903 when a bag limit of 25 turkeys per day was established over a 5 month season. Very liberal laws and little enforcement led to all time lows in turkey population by the 1920's. In 1919, the legislature reduced bag limits to 3 bearded gobblers per season. Since then tougher restrictions and enforcement, coupled with restocking efforts have enabled populations to increase greatly. Successful restocking efforts were mainly due to the release of wild-trapped birds, not pen raised birds. Landowners should not restock turkeys by releasing pen raised birds. This practice is harmful to existing populations and against the law.

Texas is home to 3 different subspecies of the American wild turkey, the subspecies are; Rio Grande, eastern, and Merriam. The Rio Grande is the most abundant of the subspecies and can be found in south, central, and north Texas. Rios typically can be found in areas of the state that average between 18-35 inches of rainfall annually. Highest populations are normally associated near river and creek drainages. The eastern subspecies is found in the eastern 1/3 of the state in areas of the Post Oak Savannah, Pineywoods, and Gulf Coast Prairies. Eastern turkeys are located in areas which exceed 35 inches of annual rainfall. Merriam's are found in small isolated populations in mountainous regions of far west Texas where rainfall ranges between 15 – 23 inches annually.

Normally, eastern turkeys are slightly larger and darker in appearance than the Rio. Eastern gobblers average 19-21 pounds while Rio's average 16-18 pounds. Hens are roughly half the size of the gobblers. Gobblers grow characteristic 'beards' which grow with age and roughly 15% of hens also have beards.

Turkeys are primarily herbivorous but during certain times of the year, they depend heavily on insects. Major food sources during the spring and summer include insects, buds, flowers, weeds, and grasses. Poults diets are near 100% insects for the first 2 weeks of live and then decreases as they age. During the fall and winter, turkey diets tend to contain more mast (acorns, pecans, etc), fruits, and green forage such as clover, oats, and wheat.



On average, turkeys will live for 2-3 years with highest mortality occurring to the eggs and poults (young of the year). Annually, mortality rates are highest for gobblers during the breeding season and for hens during the nesting season. Hens nest on the ground and incubation is 28 days, during this period the hen seldom leaves the nest. Turkey populations are heavily dependent upon annual recruitment so adequate nesting and brooding habitat is critical.

Typical habitat for turkeys varies by season. Regardless of subspecies, a vital part of nesting and brooding roadsides, fencerows, and on edges of woodlands. Brooding habitat consist of knee high grasses and weeds so that broods can forage for insects while having 'screening' cover from mammalian predators as well as overhead avian predators. Prime fall habitat consists of areas with high mast production. Preferred areas would be river and creek bottoms. Depending on subspecies and location, roosting habitat can be critical. Eastern turkeys are rarely limited by roost sites but the Rio Grand turkey can be limited if there is a lack of roost trees.



## NESTING AND BROODING HABITAT FOR TURKEYS

*Prepared by Stephanie Damron  
Texas Parks and Wildlife*

Annual reproduction is critical to wild turkey populations, because of this, nesting and brood rearing habitat are possibly the most important components of turkey habitat. In order to better understand the habitat requirements for wild turkey, behaviors of the turkey need to be understood.

Turkeys are ground nesters and they nest during the spring. After mating, hens actively start looking for nesting habitat. Once a hen finds a suitable area, she will start laying 1 egg per day and will average 10-12 eggs on her first attempt. During this process the hen will only visit the nest for short daily periods to lay 1 egg; she may lightly cover the nest before leaving. After the laying process, the hen will begin incubation which takes 28 days. During incubation, the hen will only leave the nests for very brief periods. A successful nesting attempt averages 40-50 days.

Within the Oak-Prairie District, most nesting occurs in April and May. A common characteristic of nesting habitat, regardless of location or subspecies of turkey, is the presence of knee high grasses and weeds. Hens seek out areas such as fallen limbs, shrubby fence rows, road sides, and edges of pastures and woodlands to nest. The eastern subspecies prefer to nest under small shrubs within or adjacent to wooded tracts. The Rio Grande subspecies will nest in pastures with scattered mesquite or other types of shrubs, often near drainages. Once again, the most critical factor is knee high grasses. The abundance of nesting habitat in the Rios territory can easily be correlated with the amount of winter and spring precipitation. Dry winters normally mean poor nesting habitat and poor reproduction. Easterns are not as dependent upon rainfall.

Brood habitat is very similar to nesting habitat since knee high herbaceous cover is also critical. Remember, turkey poults live almost entirely on insects there first 8 weeks of life, because of this brood habitat must be able to provide

three important factors:

- 1) adequate herbaceous coverage to support high insect populations,
- 2) cover must allow hens and poults efficient



foraging, and 3) cover should enable turkeys to detect and escape predators. Basically to check for brood habitat, kneel down, if you can see 40-60 feet through the grass but not much more, that is deal.



Nesting and brood habitat can be created and maintained in various ways. Areas should be set aside around woodlands and pastures to allow the growth of small thickets. These areas are good for nesting. Leaving buffers of at least 30 feet around meadows would be ideal. A major problem with nesting is that it coincides with the 1<sup>st</sup> hay cutting in the spring. Hopefully by maintaining buffers around hay meadows, turkey hens will avoid nesting in the middle of the meadow and will seek the buffers.

If you have woodlands on your property, for turkeys they need to be somewhat open in the midstory and have a well developed herbaceous forest floor. In order to have a herbaceous understory, dominant tree canopies should only cover 60-70%. When opening up the canopy, you basically have to walk a fine line to keep the stand open enough for turkeys but not turn into an overgrown thicket. Prescribed burning of the woodlands on a 3-5 year rotation is probably the best maintenance method.

Lastly, grazing can be integrated with turkey management. Once again, the key is to maintain knee high grasses through mid-June and to leave scattered brush throughout the property for nest sites. Ideal grazing would consist of rotational grazing, this would help all species of wildlife as well as your cattle herd.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Friday, January 23**

Washington County Wildlife Society Annual Meeting  
Annual Stew "free will donation Dinner" @ Washington Co. Fairgrounds Event Center  
6:00 pm social—6:45 pm business meeting—7:00 pm Presentation by First Responders of Washington County: Sheriff Otto Hanak, Brenham Police Chief Rex Phelps, EMS Director Kevin Deramus and Burton Fire Chief Ronnie Stanley

**Monday, January 26**

Mill Creek Watershed Partnership Event (*Mill Creek Water Quality Project*)  
Bleiberville Volunteer Fire Department 3342 FM 2502, Bleiberville, TX  
5:30pm –8pm

## URGENT

### Community Involvement Needed on Mill Creek Water Quality Project

According to the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service, "Mill Creek was identified on the state's most recent list of impaired waters (2012) due to elevated levels of bacteria". This list, known as the Texas Integrated Report 303(d) list, is compiled every two years using the most recent 7 years of water quality sampling data collected through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Clean Rivers Program."

There are two events designed to raise awareness and facilitate community involvement with the state and local efforts to monitor and improve the water quality of the Mill Creek Watershed. The first event was held January 9th—TX Watershed Steward Workshop in Bellville, TX.

The second is the Mill Creek Watershed Partnership (FREE) which will be held at the Bleiberville Volunteer Fire Department (3342 FM 2502, Bleiberville, TX 78931) on January 26th, from 5:30pm-8pm.

**Please educate yourself on this very important matter and do everything you can to help preserve this cornerstone of our health and well-being.**

## L.A.N.D.S. (LEARNING ACROSS NEW DIMENSIONS IN SCIENCE)

On December 3 Brenham Jr. High School 8th Grade Advanced Science LANDS Deer Field Investigation had a very successful L.A.N.D.S. Field Investigation. Mrs. Allison Bentke's advanced science classes attended their white-tailed deer investigation at Rocky Creek State Park.

During the six-hour field investigation, over 140 students rotated through guided hands-on stations that offered students an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the anatomy, behavior, and habitat of the white-tailed deer, as well as stewardship of local resources.

Students were led by a dedicated group of volunteers that understand the importance of working with students to increase their understanding of the local environment. Volunteers from Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas Master Naturalists, Texas Brigades, Washington County Wildlife Society, Washington County Animal Clinic and other private businesses dedicated their time to prepare for and lead the stations.



If you are interesting in helping students and teachers connect to Washington County's natural resources through planning, preparing materials or teaching please contact Natalie James at [njames@brenhamk-12.net](mailto:njames@brenhamk-12.net).



# WINTER FORAGE

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

In the great state of Texas there is a large diversity of ecosystems and climates that ranges from western mountains to eastern swamp forests, with each region having developed and maintained unique habitats that generate a veritable buffet for the plant and animal life that must forage there for food. People often come into our nursery asking, "Which species of trees and plants should I buy to attract wildlife?" Many people want to attract colorful songbirds and deer, although in some areas deer are so prevalent that many people can't keep them out of their flowerbeds and gardens. (Wild hogs are another issue altogether. As a wise man said, "There are only two types of ranchers in Texas: Those that have wild hogs, and those that *will* have wild hogs.") Squirrels, rabbits, bees, and butterflies must all forage their niche environments for sustenance.

Rather than stick to the old standby feeders that also feed non-target animals, there are certain plants that can beautify your surroundings while at the same time attract and feed the wildlife in your area. Let's look at some trees first.

Oak trees are prevalent in our local forest ecology and this means that each year they provide food in the form of acorns. Groups of fowl such as jays, pigeons, ducks and

woodpeckers are known to eat acorns. Jays and squirrels will hoard them which is an effective dispersal method for new oak trees. Other such as deer and pigs count on acorns as staples of their diets. (It should be mentioned here that horses and cows will also eat acorns, which can be poisonous to them in large amounts but they are unlikely to do so unless their preferred food supplies are extremely scarce.)

Different varieties of oaks also shed acorns at different times. Post oaks, Live oaks and other members of the white oak group drop acorns every year, while acorns from members of the red or black oak group (known mostly by their red fall leaf color or the dark color of their bark) such as Shumard oak (*Quercus shumardii*), and Texas Red oak (*Quercus texana*) can take up to two years to fully mature before dropping. Some years are more bountiful than others, and if wildlife and ornament are both important, the Chinquapin oak is a good choice of white oak that produces acorns every year and has pretty fall color. Although acorns are one of the mainstays of the natural food available to wildlife in Texas, there are many others that play vital roles providing not only food but also shelter from predators and the elements.

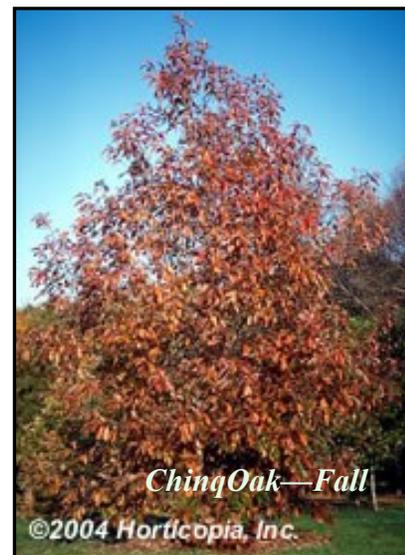


*Chinquapin Oak Leaf and Acorn*

UGA2148081



*White Oak Tree*



*Chinquapin—Fall*

©2004 Hortcopia, Inc.

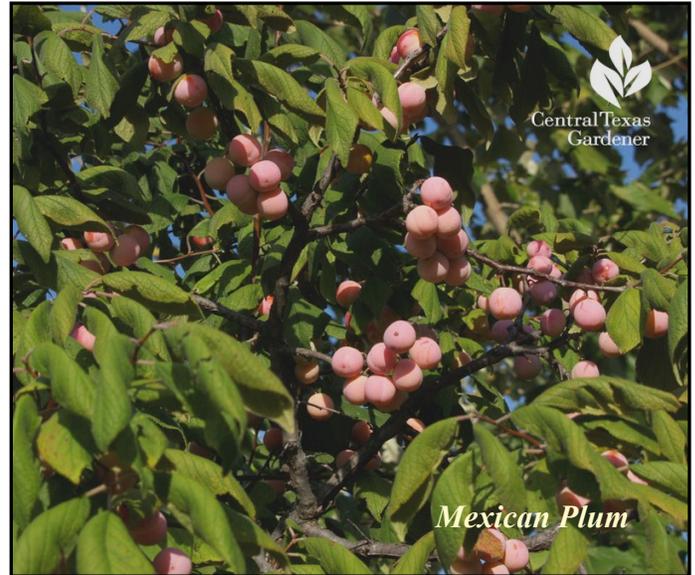
Continued on Page 7

(Continued from page 6)

Trees in the Cypress family such as Bald Cypress and Montezuma Cypress serve this purpose as well, but when planted near water form groves that provide a rich environment and habitat for fish, insects, and other aquatic species.



In addition to those important canopy trees, there are also several understory trees that fill niches in the food supply and at the same time add a striking and impressive addition to your landscape. Many but not all understory trees form fruits known as drupes, the most common of which include Plum, Cherry, Holly and Dogwood. Since cherry trees are not native or naturalized to this area, we will dismiss them for now. The Roughleaf Dogwood tree forms white flowers in the spring that provide pollen for bees and



butterflies, and these flowers give way to berries that are eaten by over 40 species of birds. Chicksaw plums (*Prunus angustifolia*) and Mexican plums (*Prunus mexicana*) grow well in our area and if you don't know how to tell if they are ripe, the birds will let you know. The same goes for peaches and squirrels. The Yaupon Holly is a small tree or bush that is a favorite of the bluebirds. The red "berries" ripen each fall and provide a good source of food for birds into the winter when other plants have fruited and gone dormant. There are male and female Yaupons, but only the females make berries. Fall and winter are the best times to buy a Yaupon because you will see the berries and make sure it is female. The Pride of Houston Yaupon is an all-female cultivar of yaupon so you can buy them any time of year and be assured of berries in the fall.

If you do choose to provide supplemental feed to your wildlife, make sure to continue throughout the winter. When the cold of January and February set in, the animals will not quickly forget where they got their last meal when they don't have to search hard for it.

On the other hand, it is a great time of year to plant trees. The roots continue to grow over the winter and when spring comes around they are ready to go. If you'd like more information about this plant material and how to obtain it, come by or give us a call and we'll be happy to help you.

# Washington County Wildlife Society 2014 Deer Report

*By Stephanie Damron, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

A big thank you goes out to all of the society members who spent time recording their incidental sightings for deer in Washington County. The 2014 data set shows that co-op members identified and recorded a total of 8,138 deer resulting in 931 bucks, 4,861 does, and 2,346 fawns (Figure 1 Co-op herd composition). This calculates to 1 buck per 5.2 does and a county average of a 48% fawn survival rate. The 48% fawn survival rate is up 16% from last year's low of 32% fawn survival rate. Figure 2 illustrates that the fawn survival rate is stable. Sun Oil reported the highest fawn crop of 71%. See Figure 3.

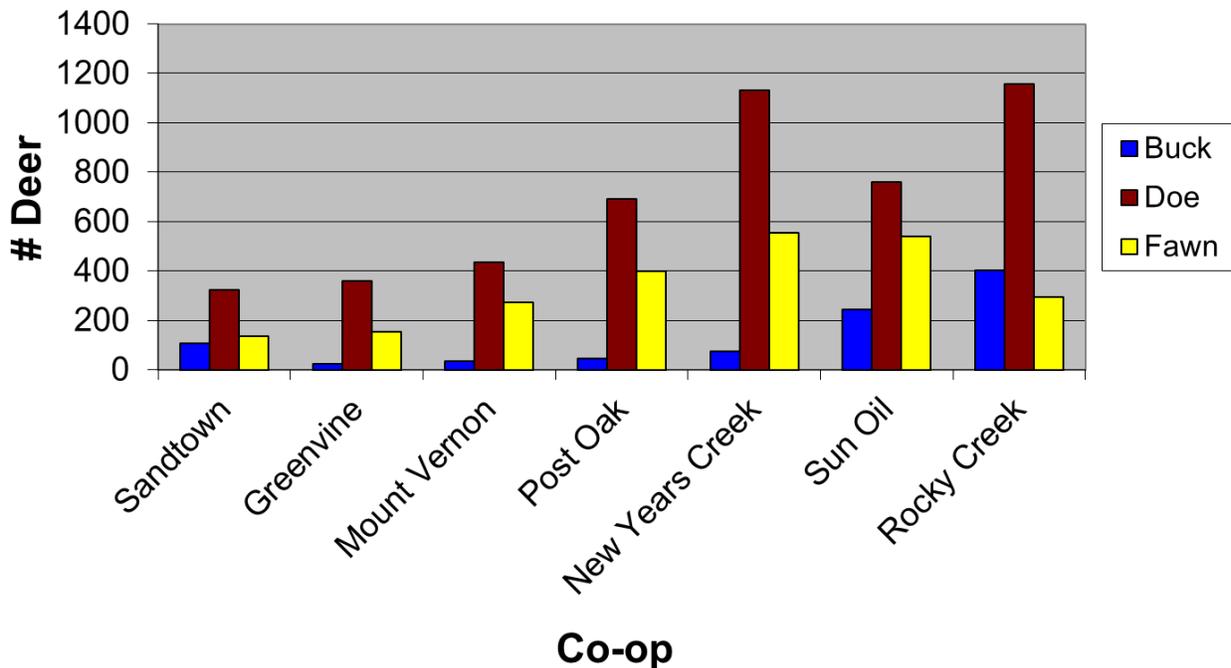
The results of this survey demonstrate that the efforts of co-op members and others are having a positive impact on the deer herd. There is a direct correlation between fawn survival rates and the deer population increasing within the county. Without replacement fawns a deer population will not increase. It is very important to provide adequate fawning cover and proper nutrition during the fawning period to keep the fawn survival rates up.

I want to say a special thanks to the members who sent in daytime sightings, this valuable data can reflect the overall health of the herd and assist in making recommendations to benefit the deer population within the county.

Keep up the good work and feel free to call if you have any questions.

**Figure 1**

## Co-op Herd Composition 2014

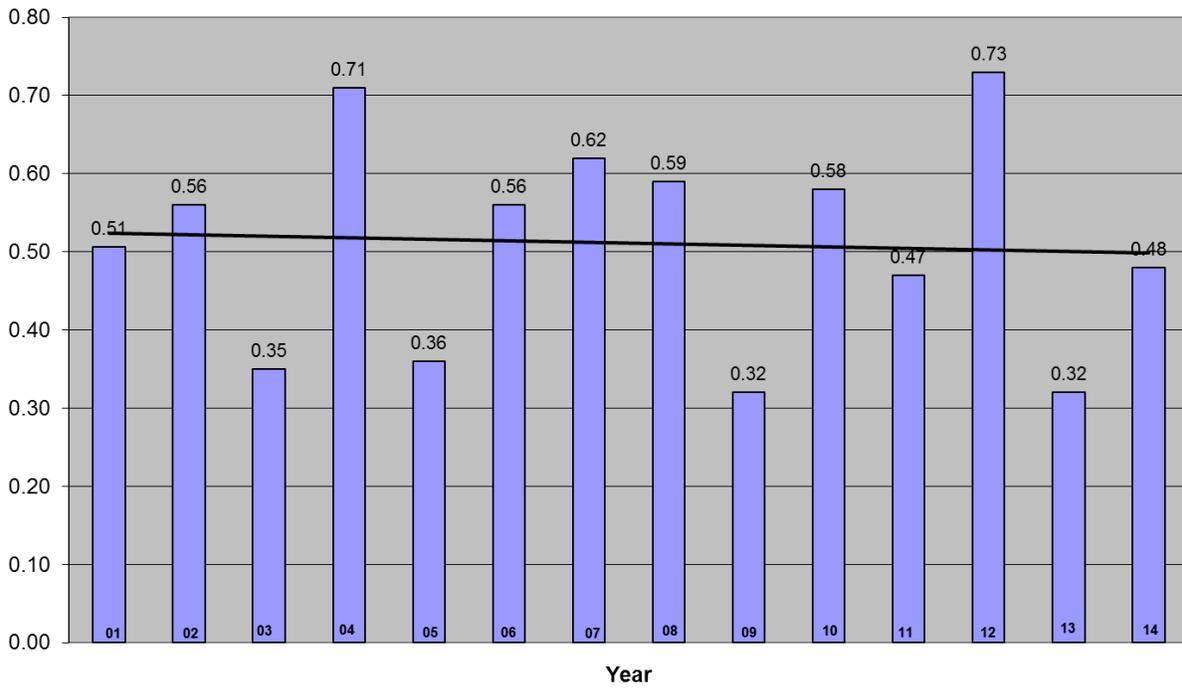


*Continued page 9*

Continued from page 8

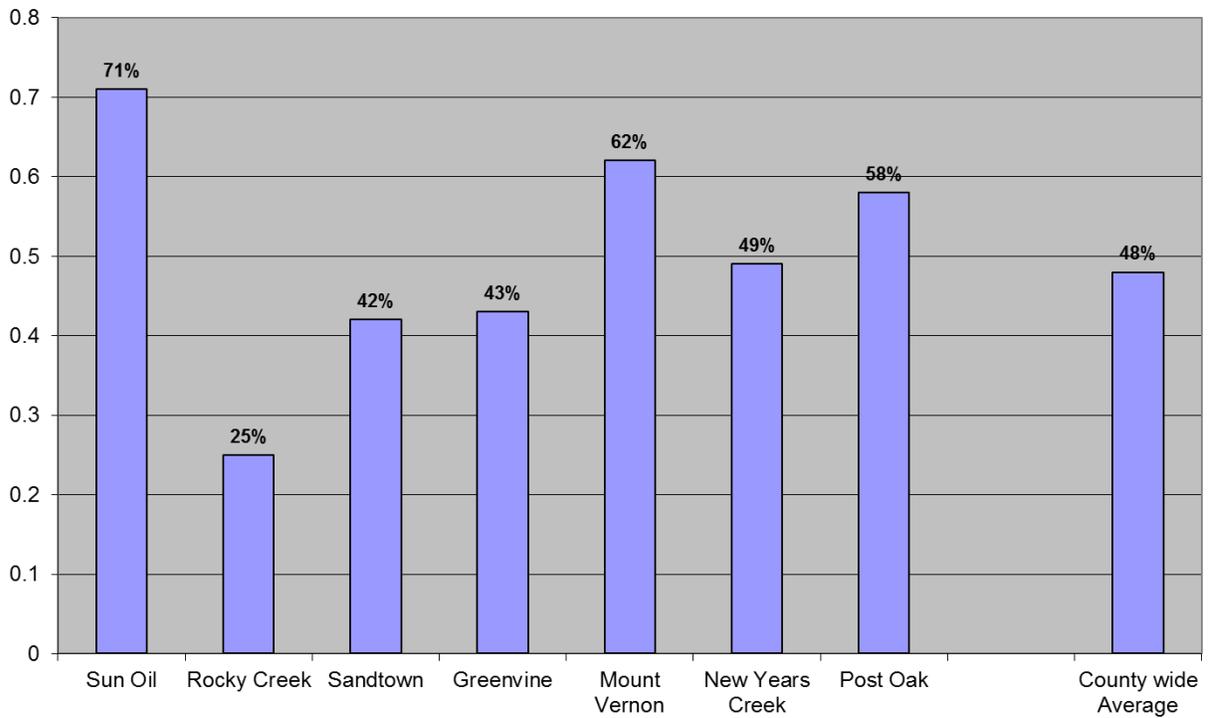
**Figure 2**

Washington County Percent Fawns  
All WMA's Combined 2001-2014



**Figure 3**

WMA's 2014 PERCENT FAWN SURVIVAL RATE



## SUSAN SELECTS SPECIAL SITES SO SIALIA SIALIS SUCCEED!

*By Susan Tartaglio from Texas Blues*

*For the last four years Susan has been monitoring bird nests on her 200+ acre home in Alvord, Texas. In that short time 135 blue-birds plus a variety of other species have fledged. Susan shares her success stories for selecting bluebird nestbox locations in a variety of habitats on her acreage located northeast of Ft. Worth. Of course, if you live in another part of the state, your selection criteria can vary depending on your local environment.*

**Bluebirds** can make do with all sorts of unsuitable nesting areas, and sometimes they have no choice. But with your help, they can raise their chicks in the perfect spot, or a very good spot, or at least a not-so-bad spot. Here are some considerations:

**Your own convenience.** Along a pathway or a road will make the box easier to monitor, or visible from your house for your own enjoyment. Start with this and then think about the following:

**Aesthetics.** Best ignored! One of my first boxes was next to a lovely shaded lake set amidst a cluster of flowering plums. Oops! Both the nearby water and the plums attracted all sorts of predators. Fortunately, the bluebirds seemed to know that too and never used it..... I've since moved it to a better spot.

**Orienting the entry hole.** Consider the direction from which the spring and summer storms come, and orient the entry hole away from it. For example, in North Central Texas the summer winds and storms come in from the south. I lost one brood of chicks after a big storm. The entry hole, which faced south, allowed the strong winds to blow rain into the box; the chicks got wet and died.

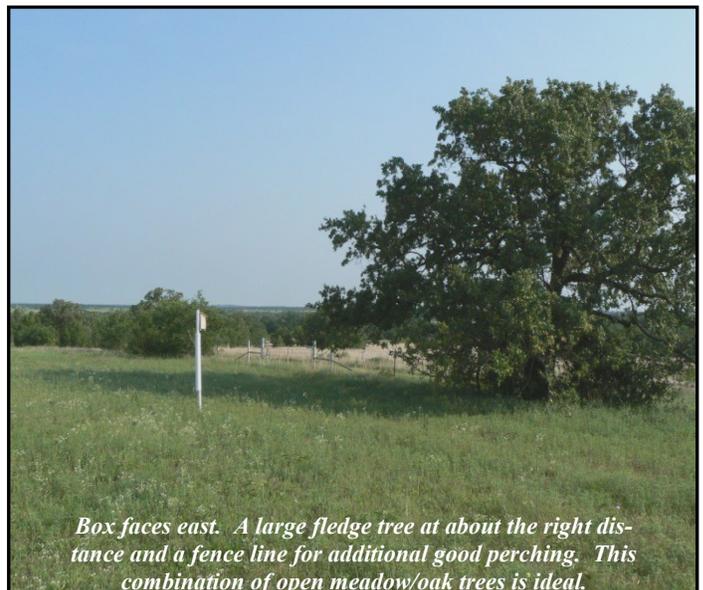
In Texas, west-facing is also a bad idea. In the long hot afternoons the summer sun will shine into the entry hole and raise the temperature in the box.

That leaves east or north. Our winter storms come in from the north. This is a consideration because blue-birds and other birds will use the boxes for shelter during severe winter weather. That leaves east as ideal, with northeast or north as a second choice.

**The fledge tree.** A few days before fledging, young bluebirds start spending time looking out the entry hole. This gives them a head start on that brand new world into which they must soon fly. If there's a big tree such as a post oak within their range of vision, it will begin to look familiar to them and they will usually fly directly to it. Their parents will gather all the chicks together high up in the tree and feed them there until gradually they make their way lower down in the branches and finally start feeding themselves on the ground.

**How close should the fledge tree be to the nest-box?** Too far, and the fledglings can't fly there easily, too close and predators can use the tree to get to the box. About 15 to 20 feet would be a good place to start. Lacking a fledge tree, a large shrub or fence line will work in a pinch. But what if there's only grass within the chicks' range of vision? They will fly out into the grass and their parents will have to coax them into a large nearby tree. I have watched a pair of bluebirds do this and it took them an entire day, a day better spent feeding those hungry mouths. One chick never made it. Still, you may have no other option. The bluebirds can deal with it. Just make sure there are some large trees nearby.

**Perches for parents.** The fledge tree works, but even better are telephone wires, which allow an unobstructed field of view around the area of the nestbox.



*Box faces east. A large fledge tree at about the right distance and a fence line for additional good perching. This combination of open meadow/oak trees is ideal.*

*Continue on page 11*

*Continue from page 10)*

**An open area.** My 29 nestboxes are spread over more than 200 acres. There's all sorts of terrain: dense woods, open meadows, ravines, hills and hollows. One day I stumbled upon what seemed the perfect nestbox site. It is a small meadow (about an acre) off a much larger meadow, surrounded on two sides by woods and on the other side by a few big trees. I call it Hidden Meadow. As I was preparing the PVC pole a beautiful male bluebird landed on the box to check it out, even though it was still lying on the ground. This turned out to be my best-producing box of last summer. Three broods, five eggs each, every egg hatched and every chick fledged.

**But not too open.** A box on the high point of a large hill with a single tree (a good fledge tree, however) was not occupied till late spring.

**Shade.** I don't worry about it any more, although I do consider it. Trouble is, trees and shrubs near enough to provide afternoon shade can also allow predators to jump or drop onto the box, especially snakes and squirrels.

**Distance from other boxes.** I consider 100 yards a minimum unless the boxes are out of sight of each other. My two home boxes are only about 90 feet apart but the house is in between them so the blue-birds can't see each other. I often have two pairs simultaneously raising chicks.

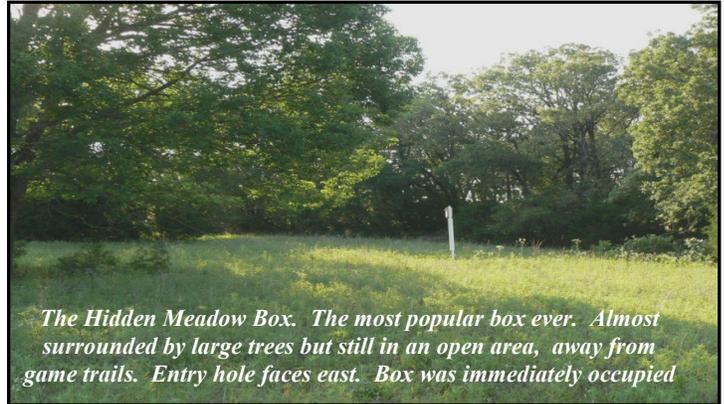
**Safety from predators.** What are the usual nestbox predators in your area? Squirrels? Raccoons? Snakes? Cats? Or aerial predators like the House Sparrow?

In my area, which is out in the country, raccoons and House sparrows are the big problems. The House sparrows I deal with by placing my nestboxes more than 1/4 mile away (most are 1/2 mile away) from their main food source, which is a hobby farm down the road with horses and poultry. (Make sure you're not feeding them yourself.)

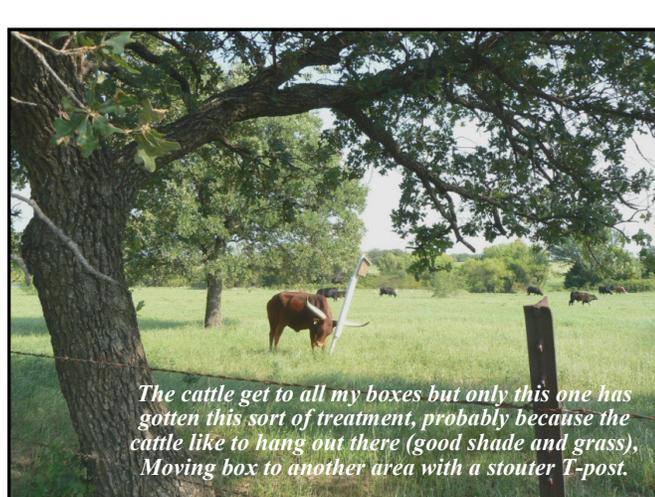
The raccoons I deal with by placing the nestboxes away from the cow paths and game paths - even 15 feet off the path is helpful, along with active control when needed. For the same reason, stay away from water edges. Predators follow the easiest path. If you put a nestbox right next to a path they are going to investigate.

People tell me that the raccoons need to eat too. To them I say, like Marie Antoinette, "Let them eat House Sparrows."

**Good feeding areas.** This is what makes your back yard so attractive! That short, mowed grass makes finding bugs lots easier. But open patches of dirt and road margins (quiet country roads preferably) also work well.



*The Hidden Meadow Box. The most popular box ever. Almost surrounded by large trees but still in an open area, away from game trails. Entry hole faces east. Box was immediately occupied*



*The cattle get to all my boxes but only this one has gotten this sort of treatment, probably because the cattle like to hang out there (good shade and grass), Moving box to another area with a stouter T-post.*

**Lastly, get that box up early!** That means in the fall, or at least during the winter months, where the local bluebirds can find it and get accustomed to it. Having said that, I'm usually late with new boxes, and even those I put up after the first broods are out often get used.

**Remember to record your nestbox activity.**

## Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*)

Maximilian sunflowers are tall perennials with one or more stalks and long, narrow, pale green leaves. They produce larvae up to three inches across in a spiral around the stem. This common urban plant grows from 1 - 10 feet high, but are usually around 4 - 6 feet tall.

Maximilian sunflowers are yellow flowered perennials that provide food and shelter for a wide variety of wildlife. Butterflies enjoy the nectar from the masses of late summer blooms that form a spiral around the stalk. Birds, deer and other wildlife enjoy the seeds produced in the fall.

Most sunflowers are annuals, which means that they live for only one year, but Maximilian sunflowers are perennials and come back for many years from their roots. A single plant will slowly form a growing circular colony over a number of years.

Sunflowers are heliotropes (sun lovers) and the flower heads turn to follow the sun as it moves across the sky. Look at the next field of sunflowers that you see. On a sunny day all of the flowers will be facing the same direction.



Maximilian sunflowers are found in seasonally moist ditches or depressions on prairies.

This species is found in central and eastern Texas north to southern Canada and east as far as the prairies extend.

Native Americans grew sunflowers as a source of food, oil, dye and thread. Early pioneers planted sunflowers near their homes. They believed that sunflowers repelled mosquitoes and that a bath in boiled sunflower blossoms relieved arthritis pain.

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

