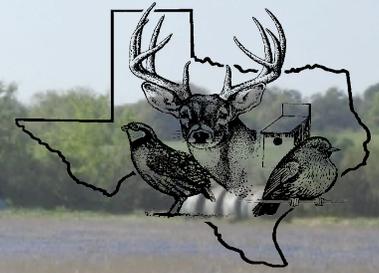


WASHINGTON COUNTY

Wildlife Society

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

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

Native Bees in Texas

By Michael Warriner for the Native Plant Society on June 10th, 2012

Although non-native honeybees tend to garner the most public attention, there are actually several hundred bee species that are native to Texas — species that were here long before the honeybee and that are essential to the state's diverse native plant communities.

Bumblebees are among the most familiar of these. Their black and yellow bodies are easy to recognize as they buzz from flower to flower. Like honeybees, bumblebees are social insects that live in colonies comprised of a queen and her daughter workers that will protect their nest site if disturbed. Bumblebee colonies are much smaller in size though, containing only 100-200 workers compared to the 15,000 or more workers in a honeybee colony.

Social bees are very much the exception when it comes to Texas bee diversity. Most native bees in the state are solitary with individual females establishing and provisioning nest sites all on their own. Unlike honeybees and bumblebees, solitary bees do not defend their nest sites. Solitary bees tend to be small and less frequently observed than their larger, social cousins. Although less well-known, solitary bees such as leaf-cutter bees (*Megachile* sp), mason bees (*Osmia* sp), mining bees (*Andrena* sp), squash bees (*Peponapis* sp), and sunflower bees (*Diadasia* sp) are responsible for a significant amount of pollination in agricultural and ecological systems.

Pollination is one of the most fundamental processes sustaining agriculture and natural ecosystems. In Texas, most plant pollination is carried out by bees. The European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) is our most well-known species, first brought to North America around 380 years ago by European colonists. Its more notorious relative, the Africanized honeybee, has spread across Texas and now constitutes a significant public health threat.

The European honeybee has been in a well-documented decline in the U.S. since the 1950s as a result of agricultural intensification, diseases, parasites, and pesticides. Unabated loss of this bee will have significant repercussions for large-scale, intensive agriculture to be sure. However, it will not be an ecological calamity. The conservation challenges facing native bees are where the real concerns for natural ecosystems lay.

Many native bees are now thought to be experiencing population declines. Research has documented range reductions for several bumblebee species across North America. Franklin's bumblebee (*Bombus franklini*) has been petitioned for protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Eighteen native bees are considered species of greatest conservation need by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

A principal factor driving native bee decline is widespread habitat destruction, specifically the loss of flower-rich grasslands, savannas, and woodlands. Open natural communities represent optimal habitat for native bees as they support diverse assemblages of flowering plants and relatively abundant nest sites.

Even if native bees are declining, why should we be concerned? The answer to that question is simple once one realizes most native plants in North America require pollination by insects to produce fruit and viable seed; fruit and seed that, in turn, support entire terrestrial ecosystems. That's not even taking into account the dozens of agricultural crops we humans use that require insect pollination.

Of all the insects that visit flowers, from beetles, butterflies, and wasps, bees are the most important pollinators.

Two traits make bees preeminent pollinators. First, they purposefully collect pollen to feed their offspring. The act of foraging for this food source results in the transfer of pollen from flower to flower. During a single day, a female bee may visit several hundred flowers, depositing pollen all along the way. Second, bees tend to be specific about the flowers they visit. During a foraging trip, a female bee may only visit the flowers of a particular plant species. The benefit of such foraging preferences is that the plants' pollen is not deposited on the flowers of a different plant species and wasted.

Native bee pollination is critical to the maintenance of Texas diverse ecosystems. Many of the berries, nuts, and seeds consumed by birds, mammals, and other insects are the result of bee pollination of native woody and herbaceous plants. Along with their substantial ecological contributions, native bees have proven to be more efficient and effective pollinators than honeybees for such agricultural crops as apples, blueberries, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes, and watermelons.

Continued on Page 4

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 Operation Game Thief, (800) 792-4263

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

WOW! All I can say at this moment is WOW!

What a wonderful organization you belong to. Only being president for a few months there is so much to learn. But I am doing my best. I want to thank all of you, especially your directors for doing what they do. They find awesome programs to share with your group, and provide a place to meet and eat. You have some outstanding leaders that care about what goes on in this county. Then to the executive board! You guys are amazing!

Our August semi-annual meeting came together like clock work. Thanks to all who came to support the fundraiser by buying and selling raffle tickets. A big thank you goes out to **Doodle Johnston** for getting some amazing raffle items. Thank you to all who came to set up the Event Center for the meal – and to **Ricky Mantey** for catering the meal. To the young **Brigades** who gave a talk on their summer experience at the Texas Brigade Wildlife Camps and also to **Margaret Lamar** for her vision of the Outdoor Education Initiative. I am proud to say that I belong.

I hope that you are all well and know that your support for this organization is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely

Cindy Lyles

Save the Date!

WCWS Annual Meeting

Friday, January 24, 2014

Social will begin at 6:00 pm with a stew dinner served at 7:00 pm.

**Washington County Fairgrounds
Events Center**

ADDRESS CHANGES: For address changes, or to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact **Lindsey Franklin**, (979) 277-6212, lindseyfranklin@ag.tamu.edu.

Whooping Cranes Beginning their Fall Journey to Texas

Contact: Mark Klym, 512-389-4644, mark.klym@tpwd.texas.gov
October 10, 2013

Endangered whooping cranes have begun their annual 2,400-mile fall migration from Canada to Texas. As the rare birds approach the Lone State, a citizen science initiative is inviting Texas residents and visitors to report whooper sightings.

Texas Whooper Watch (<http://tpwd.texas.gov/whoopingcranes/>) is a volunteer monitoring program that is a part of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Nature Trackers program. The program was developed to help the agency learn more about Whooping Cranes and their winter habitats in Texas.

Since beginning their slow recovery from a low of 16 birds in the 1940s, whoopers have wintered on the Texas coast on and near Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Recently though, several groups of whooping cranes expanded their wintering areas to include other coastal areas and some inland sites in Central Texas. This year, some of the whooping cranes from an experimental flock in Louisiana spent most of the summer months in Texas, and the Whooper Watch volunteers were able to provide valuable information to TPWD, Louisiana Game and Fish and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service about these birds.

This year biologists expect Whooping Cranes to start arriving in Texas in late October or early November. Texas Whooper Watch will also help improve the accuracy of surveys on the wintering grounds, as the growth of the flock has made traditional census methods more difficult.



There are many birds, that at a distance, appear similar to Whooping Cranes. To see bird species that can be mistaken for Whooping Cranes, visit <http://tpwd.texas.gov/whoopingcranes/>.

Whoopers usually follow a migratory path through North and Central Texas that includes cities such as Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, Waco, Austin, and Victoria. During migration they often pause overnight to use wetlands for roosting and agricultural fields for feeding, but seldom remain more than one night. The typical sighting (71 percent of all observations) is fewer than three birds, but they may be seen roosting and feeding with large flocks of the smaller sandhill crane. Whoopers are the tallest birds in North America, standing nearly five feet. The cranes are solid white in color except for black wing-tips that are visible only in flight. They fly with necks and legs outstretched.

Citizens can help by reporting sightings of whooping cranes and by preventing disturbance of cranes when they remain overnight at roosting and feeding locations. Sightings can be reported to whoopingcranes@tpwd.texas.gov or 512-389-TXWW (8999). Observers are asked especially to note whether the cranes have colored leg bands on their legs. Volunteers interested in attending training sessions to become "Whooper Watchers" in order to collect more detailed data may also contact the TPWD at whoopingcranes@tpwd.texas.gov or 512-389-TXWW (8999).

Additional information, including photos of whooping crane look-alike species, can be found at <http://tpwd.texas.gov/whoopingcranes/> and at <http://www.whoopingcrane.com/report-a-sighting/>.

Poaching – you can't afford it!

Killing a white-tailed deer on private property without landowner consent –

- 1st offense: Parks and Wildlife Code State Jail Felony resulting in:
- Fines ranging from \$1,500 to \$10,000 and/or
 - Confinement in state jail from 180 days to two years
- 2nd offense: Parks and Wildlife Code Felony resulting in:
- Fines from \$2,000 to \$10,000, and/or
 - Confinement in TDC from 2 years to 10 years

If a violation is currently in progress call: **800-792-4263 [GAME]**

Hunting any wild bird or wild animal on any part of the road system of this state or hunting a game animal or bird with the aid of an artificial light –

- 1st offense: Class A Parks and Wildlife misdemeanor resulting in:
- Fines ranging from \$500 to \$4,000, and/or
 - Confinement in jail for up to one year
- 2nd offense: Parks and Wildlife State Jail Felony resulting in:
- Fines ranging from \$1,500 to \$15,000, and/or
 - Confinement in jail from 180 days to two years

Native Bees in Texas (cont. from page 1)

The pollination service provided to U.S. agriculture by native bees has been estimated in excess of \$3 billion annually. The added benefit to farmers from native bees is that their services are essentially free if adequate natural habitat is maintained around farm fields to support healthy populations of these pollinators.

Native Bee Needs

Native bees have two basic needs: food in the form of nectar and pollen from flowers and a suitable place to nest and lay eggs. By meeting one or both of these needs, private landowners, including home gardeners, can make contributions to native bee conservation.

While some native bees are only active for short, discrete periods, most species benefit from a diverse array of native herbaceous and woody plants that provide a succession of flowers from spring into early fall. Bumblebees, for instance, require a near continuous supply of nectar and pollen for up to nine months to complete colony development.

The nesting habits of native bees can be classified into two categories: deadwood-nesters and ground-nesters. The majority of native bees in Texas are members of the latter group and either nest in burrows dug of their own labor in bare ground, in preexisting underground cavities (rodent burrows), or within clumps of vegetation. Species that nest in dead wood generally live in tunnels left by wood-boring beetle larvae in standing dead trees, under the loose bark of downed wood, or in hollow stems.

Identify and Protect

Now that you know the basics of what native bees need, the next step is recognizing those resources on your property. Survey your property to see if it already contains patches of flowering herbaceous plants or groups of flowering shrubs and trees. Once you have identified likely sites, you can protect them and adjust management practices to preserve them over time.

Observe these patches at different times of day to see which plants are heavily used by bees and other flower-foragers. These are areas to protect within the framework of your property's management plan.

Existing nest resources will be a little harder to recognize than patches of flowers, but general nesting habitats across a

property can be identified and preserved. The safe and prudent retention of standing dead trees and downed wood will not only provide natural nesting sites for cavity-nesting bees but a range of other wildlife.

Well-drained, sparsely vegetated patches of bare ground are preferred nesting habitat for many solitary bees. While sparsely vegetated ground may seem unsightly, there are reasons some areas don't support much vegetation (thin soils, deep sands). Avoid ground disturbance (disking, tilling) in these sites to maintain and promote nesting aggregations of solitary bees.

Bumblebees, on the other hand, do not dig their own nests but rather take up residence in abandoned rodent burrows or tussocks of grass in areas of thick herbaceous vegetation. If possible, let open, grassy portions of your property grow unchecked and undisturbed for a few years.

Management practices, such as burning, grazing, and mowing, should be implemented with native bee needs in mind as these techniques have the potential to reduce or eliminate food and nest sites. Grazing should be low intensity, short duration, and limited to the end of the growing season to protect nectar and pollen sources. Mowing should also be restricted to the very end of the flowering season to maximize availability of these resources to native

bees. Prescribed burns should be conducted in the fall and winter. It is best to avoid applying any management practice to an entire site. Rather, only treat a portion of the property, say one-third to one-half. Untreated sections will serve as critical refugia for species to recolonize the burned, grazed, or mowed portion of the property.

Creating Resources

A survey of your property may reveal deficiencies in available foraging and nesting resources. There are steps you can take to augment these. Increasing the diversity of flowering plants is one of the more enjoyable and rewarding steps. Texas native plants are your best choices as these are the species native bees have used for hundreds of thousands of years and are the best adapted to the state's climate.

If you are creating a backyard flower bed or restoring a former pasture, work to establish plantings that will provide flowers over spring, summer, and early fall. Robust sources of nectar and pollen during these three seasons will help to meet the needs of a wide range of native bees, especially those with long-lived



This metallic green bee, one of more than 700 bee species native to Texas, is a sweat bee (Halictidae).

Native Bees in Texas (cont. from page 4)

colonies like bumblebees. Try to include as many plant species as possible since native bees vary in their preference for floral color, shape, and size.

A great online tool for determining which native plant species are best for your ecoregion of Texas can be found on The Pollinator Partnership's website (<http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm>). Simply type in your zip code and you will be directed to a downloadable ecoregional-specific planting guide.

The second piece of the puzzle in augmenting native bee populations is to increase available nesting habitats. Ground-nesting solitary bees need access to sunny, well-drained patches of bare ground. Suitable sites can be developed either by manually clearing vegetation from a small area or by creating a sand pit. For the latter, dig down one to two feet in an open, well-drained spot and fill with a sandy loam mix. Be sure to keep this area relatively free of vegetation. Keeping some portion of your flower bed free of mulch, exposing soil, is a quick and easy way to provide habitat for ground-nesting bees.

A lack of deadwood can be addressed by installing nest blocks, houses for bees essentially. Nest blocks should be constructed from untreated lumber (2x4, 4x4, to 4x8) and eight or more inches in height. Holes of varying diameters, from 1/4" to 3/8", should be drilled into the



blocks spaced 3/4" apart. Don't drill completely through but rather about 1/2" from the back of the block. Attach a roof to provide protection from intense sun and rain.

Blocks should be mounted at least three feet above the ground and firmly secured to a building, fence, or post, so as not to sway in the wind. The face of the nest block should be oriented to the southeast to catch the morning sun.

Although there are inherent dangers with having honeybee colonies in suburban and urban landscapes, bees that use nest blocks are all solitary species that do not defend their nests and are therefore much safer to have around your home. If you are lucky, leaf-cutting and mason bees will fill the drilled blocks with eggs, capping the entrance with mud or plant fibers. Blocks can be left in place throughout the winter or brought into an unheated garage to protect next year's crop of solitary bees from hungry woodpeckers. Be sure to return blocks outdoors in late winter or very early spring to allow the bees to exit their chambers.

Learn More

These guidelines and suggestions are not exhaustive and are, in fact, just the tip of the iceberg. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation has been leading the way in the recent push to conserve native bees. They have produced a wealth of detailed information that is available online (<http://www.xerces.org/bringbackthepollinators/>) and in print (*Attracting Native Pollinators: Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies*, Storey Publishing). For those interested in Texas-centric bumblebee efforts, visit <http://texasbumblebees.com> to learn more about these pollinators.



Habitips

November throughout May

- Control feral hogs.
- Preserve brushy fence rows, shelterbelts and herbaceous zones around playas and other critical cover for wildlife.
- Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the greatest number of birds to a feeder
- The best cover for white-tailed deer is a pattern or mosaic of woody brush and trees interspersed within open areas at an approximate 1:1 ratio of open area to woody cover.
- Clumps or strips of brush should be wide enough so that an observer cannot see through them from one side to the other during the winter months when deciduous species are bare of leaves.
- Cover strips should be as continuous as possible to provide travel lanes.
- Continue predator control activities

November

- Monitor grazing pressure on rangelands and adjust or move livestock accordingly.

- Monitor use and condition of key vegetation, especially browse, going into the winter period.
- Move livestock off fall food plots for wildlife.
- Disc fire lanes as needed.
- Order tree/shrub seedlings for spring plantings.
- Evaluate areas needing prescribed fire treatment.
- Begin development of prescribed burn plan.
- Doe harvest should be initiated at opening of appropriate season.
- Plant trees and shrubs as needed for wildlife cover.
- Plant native grass and forb plants.

December

- Prepare fireguards for prescribed burn program.
- Disc in proximity to woody cover to provide good habitat interspersed for game birds.
- Get prescribed burn equipment ready for use.
- Manipulate inadequate woody cover to enhance new growth.
- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.
- Focus on providing travel lanes, secure cover and over-winter cover for birds.



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Washington
County
Appraisal
District

Washington County Wildlife Valuation Workshop

—NOVEMBER 22, 2013—

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Please join us for this informative workshop to be held at:

Blinn College - Rankin Agricultural Complex

Registration is \$10.00 per person and will include a catered lunch.

Registration must be completed by November 19, 2013

Seating limited to the first 100 individuals to RSVP.

Guest Speakers and Topics:

Washington County Appraisal District	<i>Willy Dilworth, Chief Appraiser Washington County Appraisal District</i>
Introduction to Wildlife Valuation	<i>Meredith Longoria, Wildlife Biologist Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>
Washington County Birds and Habitat	<i>Kelly Simon, Urban Wildlife Biologist Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>
Managing for Bats: Species Diversity, Habitat and Roost Structures	<i>Diana Foss, Urban Wildlife Biologist Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>
Managing for Small Mammals	<i>Mark Klym, Wildlife Diversity Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>
Feral Hog Management	<i>Jared Timmons, Extension Associate Texas A&M AgriLife Extension</i>
Habitat for Pollinators	<i>Michael Warriner, Invertebrate Biologist Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>
Panel Questions	<i>Panel</i>

For more information, call
979-277-3740

Fall WMA Meetings

Please bring your friends or neighbors who might be interested in joining the Society. Most WMA meetings are Free Will Donation dinners unless otherwise noted. See inside of front page for contact information.

Sandtown WMA	October 18 at Burton VFD - FM 1697 North of Burton 6:00 p.m. Social Hour, 7:00 p.m. Meal and Program Fried Chicken and sides will be provided Speaker: Bob Stogall ; Fire Arm Hunter Safety
New Years Creek / Post Oak WMAs	October 18 at Frieden's Church Meeting Hall - FM1155 and Bosse Rd. 6:00 p.m. Social Hour, 7:00 p.m. Meal and Program Potluck meal. Please bring a main dish, side or dessert. Beverages will be provided Speaker: Stephanie Lubianski , Lone Star Wildlife Rescue.
Sun Oil WMA	October 25 at Holt Park 6:00 p.m. Social Hour, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Program Meal Provided Speaker: Lexi Maxwell , Texas Forest Service
Greenvine WMA	October 25 at the Green Door Store 6:00 p.m. Social Hour, 7:00 p.m. Meal and Program Meal Provided Speaker: Blake Eikenhorst ; The Teachings of Aldo Leopold
Rocky Creek WMA	November 9 at Rocky Creek Fire Department 6:30 p.m. Social Hour, 7:00 Meal and Program Turkey Stew Supper provided. Bring your favorite dessert to share. Speaker: Blake Eikenhorst ; Native Grasses RSVP by November 6th to Waldo Neinstedt at 979-289-2393

Newsletter News

By Richard and Ann Thames

Over nine years ago, we attended our first Washington County Wildlife Society meeting at the Fairgrounds. It was well attended as they usually are. At the end of the meeting we signed up to help the Society by volunteering to work on a wildlife newsletter that was started by **Larry Wigham** and **Robert Lehmann**. Our goal with the newsletter is to bring timely information on Society events as well as informative articles to help us all attract and sustain wildlife on our properties. It is also a tool for our advisors and directors to relay information to you. We hope you have enjoyed reading it.

Over the years the newsletter has grown from a couple of black and white pages inserted in the TPWD Regional Newsletter to an 8-10 page stand-alone, full color periodical. It's been a fun project and very informative for us to learn as we research different aspects of wildlife, meet interesting members and experience life Washington County.

We thank all of you who contributed articles or sent in pictures or gave us ideas. What a great way to get accustomed to our surroundings and stay active in our community.

We feel it is time to move on though - to pass on this communication resource to other capable volunteer members who can breath some new life into the insights of the Society. This will be our final issue. We hope someone in the membership will step forward to take on this sometimes challenging and always rewarding endeavor.

After years of volunteering in WCWS, we will always remain members and continue to help with different events. We encourage all of you to get involved in any way you can.

If anyone is interested in taking on the Washington County Wildlife Society Newsletter, please contact us at: newsletter@wcwildlife.org or call us directly.

"Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those who sang best." -- Henry van Dyke

Doves and Pigeons

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

Completely different images come to mind when we hear the words pigeons and doves, but technically no difference exists between the two, and the terms often are used interchangeably. True, those small, fast-flying game birds, able to challenge the shooting skill of any bird hunter, are doves. However, that plump pigeon perched on a building ledge or waddling around the city park looking for a handout is also a dove – a rock dove.

All pigeons and doves are members of the Columbidae family. They have soft, thick plumage in a variety of colors and patterns, with most species displaying some type of iridescent glossing. No seasonal changes in coloration occur, and except for the somewhat duller hues of the female, the sexes are alike.

Adults eat seeds, fruit, and vegetable matter, and a few species also eat a variety of insects and other small invertebrates. Instead of drinking in the typical bird manner – taking a sip, tipping back the head, and allowing the water to trickle down the throat – the pigeon or dove immerses its bill and drinks with sustained sucking.

Of the 289 dove species found in the world, only 8 are considered full-time or part-time residents of Texas. Of these, only the mourning, white-winged, and white-tipped (white-fronted) doves are legal game birds.

If these eight species of doves and pigeons are to continue to call Texas home at least part of the year, we must all do our part to make sure their special habitats, especially the native brushlands in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, are protected and perhaps even restored. We cannot allow even one of them to follow the passenger pigeon into extinction.



Whitewings get their name from the white bars on their wings.



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