

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 2010



Wildlife Intensive Leadership Development

By Larry Pierce, County AgriLIFE Extension Agent

Each year Texas Brigades seeks young cadets to participate in their summer camp program. The camps stress leadership development and conservation of our natural resources. They also teach life skills like critical thinking and team-building through fun and interesting activities that focus on a particular game species at each camp. Each camp usually has 30 youth ages 13 through 17.

The camps are ideal for young people seeking a wildlife sciences career offering an excellent start to a career in wildlife management. The camps provide aspiring conservationists with a taste of their chosen profession, and introduce them to a network of professionals who serve as valuable contacts for them in the future.

The camps are co-sponsored by the Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Quail Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Texas Deer Association, local soil and water conservation districts, private businesses, and landowners. Tuition is \$300 per cadet per camp. Applications are due by April 1 each year. Applications and more information are available at www.texasbrigades.org.

Washington County Wildlife Society has been a great supporter of Texas Brigades by providing scholarships for local cadets to attend camps. These local cadets are utilized as leaders in natural resources education in Washington County when they return home from camp. Currently, cadets are providing educational support to local youth and adult audiences through field day events, school curriculum enrichment programs, and presentations to local organizations.

Nestbox Survey Reminder

By Robert Lehmann, Vice-Director, Greenvine WMA

Here's a quick reminder that the "Bluebird Nest Box Survey" should be conducted February thru July. With the warm weather finally here the Bluebirds will soon be nesting.

In order for you to use "Making Census Counts to Determine Population" as one of your qualifying activities in your 1-d-1 Agricultural Wildlife Valuation Management Plan, a documented survey of nest box success needs to be done.

To do this, go to each box about every two weeks (February thru July) to see if there is any nesting activity in your boxes. Record the date visited and if the boxes are being used, also mark down if eggs or young birds are present.

Once a nest is successful, remove the old nest material and the birds may re-nest in the same box. In most cases not all boxes will be used but the fact that you are making periodic checks to document if the birds are using the boxes will qualify you for conducting the census.

This information does not need to be sent to anyone but needs to be kept on file if the county appraiser would ask or may be needed for an annual update to the appraisal districts.

If you have any questions or need assistance in conducting this survey, please contact **Robert Lehmann**, Wildlife Farm and Ranch Property Consulting Service, (979) 251-4340.



WASHINGTON COUNTY Wildlife Society

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This newsletter printed entirely on recycled paper.

President's Remarks

With the cooler temperatures past us, it is time to welcome in Spring and enjoy what Mother Nature provides to all of us!

Our Spring WMA meetings are in full swing. Ann and I enjoyed the joint meeting for New Years Creek and Post Oak in Chap-pell Hill... sorry we missed Rocky Creek for they were both on the same night.

Speaking of meetings we are planning our 2nd annual South Central Texas Water Conference in September. The 1st annual was a great success so we decided to host it again with all the organization involved, the "save the date" information can be found on page 6 of this newsletter. It should be an interesting and informative presentation on "What's Your Water Footprint?"

I would like to remind you that it is time to renew your Wildlife Society membership for 2010. Your dues help support and sponsor our local youth in wildlife camps, programs and educational activities. We are proud to announce that we have awarded our second wildlife scholarship to a student from Brenham.

Richard Thames



*Richard Thames
Society President for 2010*

WCWS Wants to Adopt-a-Highway

By Brian Burke, Director, Greenville WMA

The State of Texas pioneered the 'Adopt-a-Highway' program, whereby private citizens and civic groups can 'officially' pick up litter along state roads. Since the 1985 inception, it has spread to 49 of the United States and to six foreign countries.



WCWS wants to know if you would like to participate.

We spoke to the local Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) office about cleaning roadsides here in Washington County. Our priorities are road-side safety and zones which are – hopefully – active areas for wildlife.

With TxDOT's help we identified two candidate road segments; 4 miles of FM 1948 from Rocky Creek State Park on Lake Somerville to the intersection with State Highway 36 (near Yegua Creek State Park), and 3 miles of FM 1155 between FM 912 and State Highway 105 (including the entrance to Washington on the Brazos State Historical Park).

TxDOT provides safety vests, trash bags, volunteer safety training, traffic control/warning signs and announcement signs at each end of the 'adopted' road segments.

Our commitment would be to clean each side of each adopted roadway at least four times per year, for two years. Right now, we have requested these road segments, but have not made a final commitment to TxDOT.

If you are interested in participating, please contact **Brian Burke** (979-836-5258) before the end of April 2010. If there is enough support from our members, then TxDOT will gladly work with us on this project.

Managed Lands Deer Permit (MLDP) Program

By Stephanie Damron, TPWD Biologist

Do you have too many deer or DOE on your property? If so, are you interested in harvesting your own venison? The Texas Parks and Wildlife annual regulations state that you can legally harvest 2 doe (antlerless) deer during archery season. If you are not a bow hunter you can still harvest doe. How? All you need to do is become involved in the Managed Lands Deer Permit program.

The Managed Lands Deer Permit (MLDP) program allows landowners involved in a formal management program to have the state's most flexible seasons and increased harvest opportunities. The program is incentive based and habitat focused.

Participation in the MLDP program:

- ◆ Requires a written Wildlife Management Plan (WMP). Permits will not be issued unless the WMP has been approved by a TPWD biologist. Properties interested must be 50 acres or larger. Multiple, contiguous properties may apply together and form a management area. Permits would then be issued for all acres and divided among landowners.
- ◆ There are 3 levels of MLDPs (Level 1, 2, and 3). Higher levels offer additional harvest flexibility to the landowner, but also have more stringent requirements. All properties must start at Level 1.
- ◆ There is no fee or written application, other than the WMP.
- ◆ New applicants must contact TPWD biologist not later than July 1.
- ◆ Permits are valid only for the specific property for which they were issued.
- ◆ Each permit level requires current year population data (spotlight counts, incidental surveys, stand counts, herd composition data, etc.).
- ◆ Once permits are issued, all deer harvested (with the exception of buck deer on Level 1 properties) on that property must be tagged with the appropriate MLDP. Completion of the hunting license log and use of a hunting license tag are not required for deer harvested under the authority of an MLDP.

If you are interested in this program but hunting is not for you there is another option. You could offer your property for local kids to experience hunting, many for the first time. Youth hunting is falling by the wayside. Many local kids do not have an opportunity or a place to go hunt and having local landowners who are willing to allow access would be a great asset to Washington County kids. The Texas Youth Hunting Program (TYHP), sponsored by Texas Wildlife Association and Texas Parks and Wildlife

Department, is a program whose goal is to provide every youth in the state who wants to go hunting a safe and educational hunt. If you provide the place to hunt, TYHP will do the rest, regardless of ranch size or facilities. TYHP will provide liability insurance and run safe, mentored, educational youth hunts. TYHP needs all types of year-round hunts, which also can assist with your wildlife management plans to reduce does, hogs and other species.

If you are interested in knowing more about this program visit the TYHP website. <http://www.texas-wildlife.org/tyhp/>.

Contact Stephanie M. Damron, TPWD Wildlife Biologist for more information:

slmckenzie05@sbcglobal.net or (979) 277-6297.

Washington County Coop Spotlight Lines

Why run spotlight lines?

Stephanie Damron (TPWD biologist) has been approached by landowners concerned about rising doe numbers within the county. Initiating spotlight lines within the 7 coops will assist in estimating deer numbers within Washington County.

How can coop members help?

Each spotlight route will need to be run at least once in late July, August or September. Three to four volunteers will be needed to run the spotlight lines. We will meet (location TBA) at sunset and begin each spotlight line 30 minutes after sunset. Stephanie will provide the vehicle and spotlights. Spotlight routes will be conducted based on availability of volunteers

The map and dates can be found on the following page.

If you are interested please contact Stephanie Damron. stephanie.damron@tpwd.state.tx.us or (979) 277-6297.



Photos from Cherry Craven's wildlife cam



Washington County Coop Spotlight Line Dates and Map

Coop spotlight line dates have been set. Below you will find dates and times for each coop line. We will meet (location TBA) at sunset and begin each spotlight line 30 minutes after sunset. If you are interested, please call Stephanie Damron at (979) 277-6297 or email slmckenzie05@sbcglobal.net to be placed on the contact list. Dates and times are subject to change due to inclement weather. Three to four volunteers will be needed to run each line.



Photo: Cherry Craven, wildlife camera

New Years Creek

Line 1- July 15 (Thu.), meet at 8:30pm; start line at 9:00pm
Line 2- September 2 (Thu.), meet at 8:00pm; start line at 8:30pm

Greenville

Line 1- July 22 (Thu.), meet at 8:30pm; start line at 9:00pm
Line 2- September 9 (Thu.), meet at 7:45pm; start line 8:15pm

Mt. Vernon

Line 1- July 29 (Thu.), meet at 8:30pm; start line at 9:00pm
Line 2- September 16 (Thu.), meet at 7:30pm; start line at 8:00pm

Sandtown

Line 1- August 5 (Thu.), meet at 8:30pm; start line at 9:00pm

Rocky Creek

Line 1- August 12 (Thu.), meet at 8:15pm; start line at 8:45pm
Line 2- September 23 (Thu.), meet at 7:30pm; start line at 8:00pm

Sun Oil

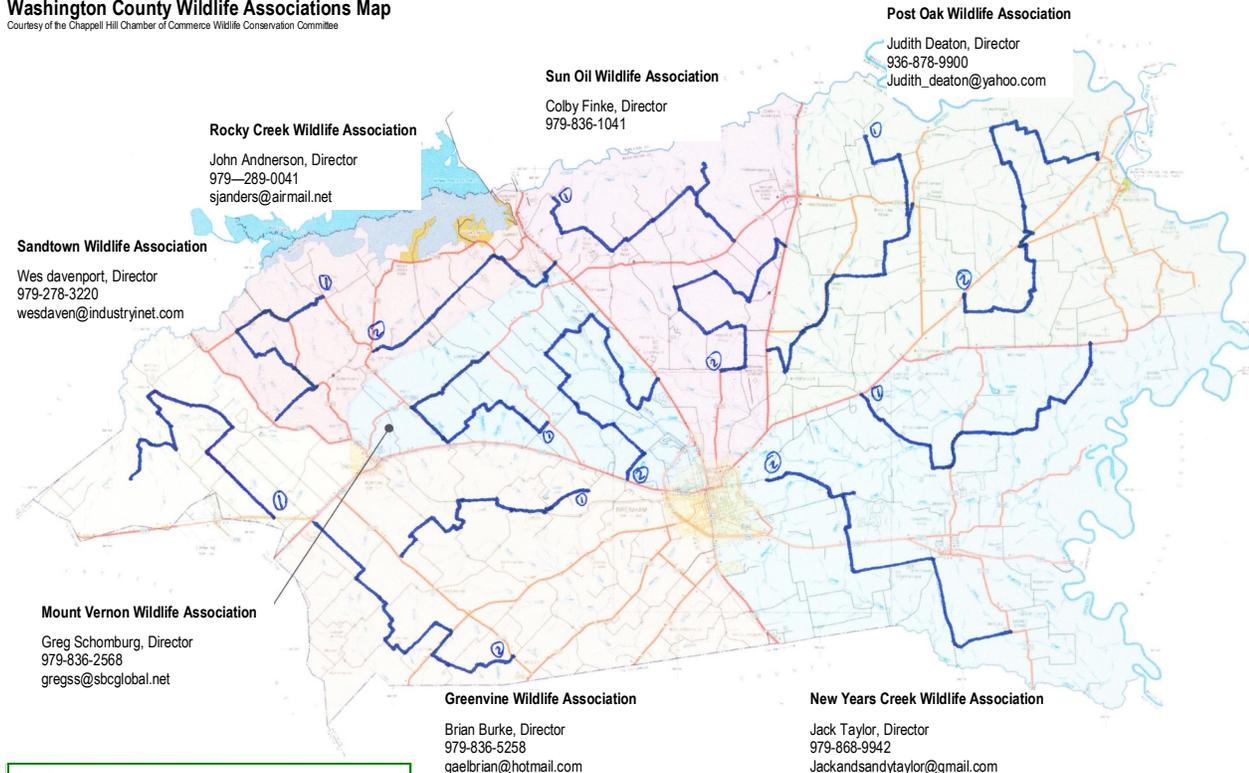
Line 1- August 19 (Thu.), meet at 8:00pm; start line at 8:30pm
Line 2- September 30 (Thu.), meet at 7:30pm; start line at 8:00pm

Post Oak

Line 1- August 26 (Thu.), meet at 8:00pm; start line at 8:30pm
Line 2- September 21 (Tuesday), meet at 7:30pm; start line at 8:00pm

Washington County Wildlife Associations Map

Courtesy of the Chappell Hill Chamber of Commerce Wildlife Conservation Committee



State Resources:
 Larry Pierce, Texas AgrLife Extension Agent
 lp-pierce@tamu.edu
 Stephanie Damron, Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept - Wildlife Biologist
 979-277-6297
 slmckenzie05@sbcglobal.net
 Alan Lee, TPWD Game Warden
 979-277-6251

Scale 1"=1 Mile @ Original Size 36"x48"
 0 1 2 3 4 5

The Future of Water—Solutions

By Wes Davenport, Director, Sandtown WMA

In the last issue, we looked at the overall Future of Water. In this issue we will first explore the projected water needs of Texas and the projected water supply. Then we will examine the proposed solutions.

All the charts shown are from the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. Taking 2040 as a sample year we find that our population is expected to grow to 36.9 million with a projected water demand of 20.1 million acre feet of water. Unfortunately, the projected water supply for 2040 will only provide 15.4 million acre feet of water leaving a shortfall of 4.7 million acre feet.

There are several ideas for solving the shortfall problem.

We could get more water by:

- Importing it from somewhere else
- Making more fresh water through desalination

We could reduce demand through:

- Conservation
- Pricing
- Creating a new water ethic plus imaginative technologies
- Controlling our population growth

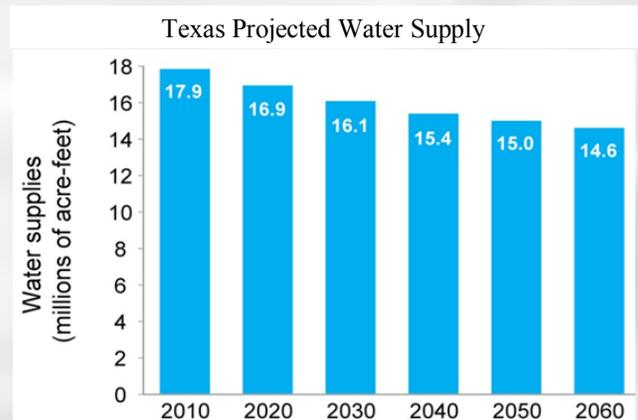
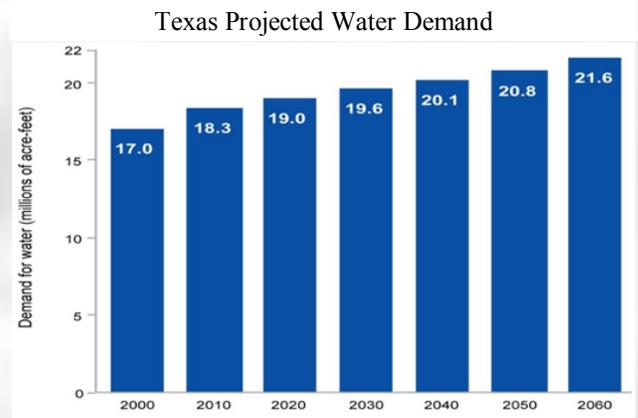
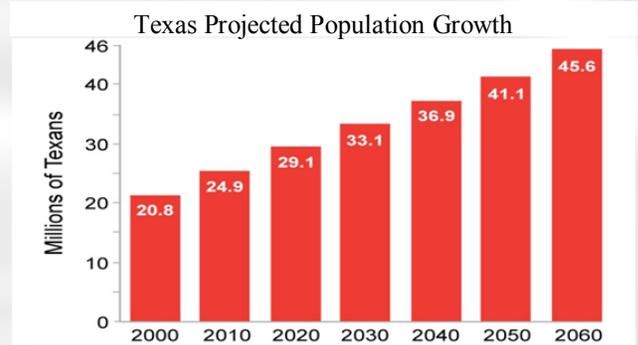
We could take water from others

- Legally
- Water wars

There are difficulties with each of these solutions. Others may not want to export water to use. Desalination costs \$1,000 - \$4,000 per acre foot compared to \$200 per acre foot for river water. Educating the public takes time and money, but ultimately it could be the best solution reducing consumption by 50%. If we price water according to what it is worth taking into account the development costs of delivery systems, the cost to the consumer could easily go up by 1,000%. Stop subsidizing the price of water for agriculture and ranching. Many irrigations systems waste 90% of the water they spray out and one pound of beef takes 25,000 lbs of water to grow. Of course then the cost of food would go up rapidly. Stop private corporations from buying up water and charging inflated prices for it. The Rule of Capture in Texas allows a property owner to take water from neighbors without compensating them or even notifying them. If you think Water Wars are unlikely, the only instance of a Governor using the National Guard against a neighboring state occurred in 1944 when Governor Benjamin Mouer dispatched the Arizona National Guard to stop the construction of the Parker dam. He claimed that California was illegally stealing water without Arizona's permission. The Supreme Court agreed; then Congress passed a retroactive bill making it legal.

In my judgment, a better solution is rainwater collection. You can collect rainwater from rooftops, from agricultural terraces, by diverting flash floods into ponds, by blocking gullies or by putting low earth embankments across hillsides or even around individual plants.

In closing, keep an eye on your legislators, encourage them to do away with the Rule of Capture and don't let some lobbyist convince them to ban rainwater collection by landowners (Colorado actually had a law against rainwater collection until recently) Next issue we will look at rainwater for landscaping, agricultural use and for wildlife.



What's Your Water Footprint?

Second

South Central Texas Water Conservation Conference

Hold the Date
Saturday, Sept 25
8:30 am—3:00 pm
\$15, includes lunch

Washington County
Event Center

For more information contact
Washington County
Wildlife Society



Presented by



Washington County
Wildlife Society



Texas Wildlife
Association



Gideon Lindecum
Master Naturalists



Bluebonnet
Master Gardeners



LaBahia Chapter
Native Plant Society



Springtime birding in Washington County

by Darrell Vollert

With springtime upon us, many of our permanent resident birds have begun nesting. Eastern Bluebirds begin checking out nest boxes in mid-February. Bluebirds begin sitting on eggs in early to mid-March and typically have two broods each nesting season. Bluebird boxes should be attached to ½ inch diameter metal poles that are buried 2 feet in the ground. The entrance hole to the nest box should be six feet above the ground. The boxes should be placed in open areas in the yard. Nest boxes that are attached to trees or fences make it very easy for predators like raccoons, squirrels, and snakes to get inside the box.

Carolina Wrens will readily use wren houses that are hung from the eaves of a house or hung on a tree limb. Carolina Wrens will raise two broods during the nesting season. Mourning Doves and Northern Cardinals begin building nests in March as well. Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Downy Woodpeckers begin drumming on trees in February and excavate cavities in early March.

Many neotropical migrants nest in our area. These are birds species which winter in Latin America and nest in North America. The first nesting neotropical migrant to arrive in our area is the Purple Martin. They typically begin arriving from the wintering grounds in Brazil in late February. Martins will nest in martin houses and gourds that are placed on poles 12 feet in length. Houses and gourds should be placed in open areas of the yard so martins can fly freely to and from the house/gourds.

Barn Swallows arrive shortly after Purple Martins. These swallows build nests formed from mud and attach them to porches, eaves of houses and barns. These birds make a mess, but they are very beneficial birds. During their stay in our area they eat many flying insects, including mosquitoes. Cliff Swallows and Cave Swallows arrive in March and build mud nests under bridges and in culverts. They also consume untold numbers of flying insects.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is one of the most well-known and beloved neotropical migrant that nests in the area. This flycatcher begins arriving from Mexico and Central America in our area the second half of March. They can often be seen perching on fences and powerlines in open areas. Scissor-tails often build their nests in Hercules Club trees, also known as

Toothache tree. Hercules Club often grows along fencelines. Hercules Club has pointy bark that is silver in coloration. This tree produces berries in the fall that are consumed by a large number of birds.

Another well-known neotropical migrant that nests here is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. These birds begin arriving in mid-March. Turk's cap, various salvias, coral honeysuckle, and butterfly weed are some of the native plants that Ruby-throats feed on.

Chimney Swifts begin arriving from their wintering grounds in Brazil in late March. These birds have a slender body with long tapered wings and they are sooty-colored. Swifts spend most of their lives on the wing eating untold numbers of flying insects. Chimney Swifts build nests that are affixed to the insides of uncapped chimneys, abandoned silos, and man-made chimney swift towers. After the nesting season has ended, Chimney Swifts will roost communally until they head south by the end of October.

Many other neotropical migrants nest in our area and pass through in the spring. Flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, buntings, and orioles will migrate through the area until late May. Pecan, hackberry, cottonwood, sycamore, mulberry, live oak, water oak, post oak, and Shumard oak are good trees to plant in the yard to attract these migrants. Neotropical migrants time their migration and arrival in the area to coincide with the emergence of caterpillars and other insects in these trees. Mulberry trees produce fruit in April and May and they are consumed by thrushes, tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles. Cedar Waxwings linger in our area into late May to take advantage of our mulberry crop.

Darrell will conduct a birding tour at Camp Allen in southern Grimes County on May 1st. Three major ecosystems converge at Camp Allen- Pine Forest, Blackland Prairie, and Post Oak Savannah. A mixture of pineywoods species and hardwood species nest at Camp Allen. This is a rare opportunity to bird a property that is normally off limits to individuals not staying at Camp Allen.

May 8th Darrell will conduct a birding tour on a 463-acre privately owned property in the Peach Creek community in southern Brazos County. The property is in the Navasota River bottom and much of it has never been cut. Several hard-to-find bird species nest on the property. Contact Darrell for details on these tours. 979-251-4986 or dvollert1967@yahoo.com.



Management
Tip

If you plan to establish warm-season food plots, order seed and fertilizer now. Plant 2 percent (2 of every 100 acres) of the habitat base.

Plant fewer and larger plots to reduce browsing pressure. Enclose the plots with wire so you can monitor deer use. Follow recommended seeding rates and planting procedures, including the inoculation of all legume seeds.

If supplemental rations are fed as part of an intensive management strategy, begin offering protein supplements now, especially if there has been little spring rain or range conditions are below average.



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Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

The Bobcat is a medium-sized, reddish brown or grayish cat. Its ears usually have small tufts at the tips, and its fur is longer on the sides of its head than on the rest of its body, forming a ruff. They have a short tail, long legs, and large feet.

The reclusive Bobcat is active largely at night, although they frequently leave cover and begin hunting long before sundown. The dens can be readily recognized by the strong odor emanating from them. Expert at climbing trees, Bobcats seek refuge in them when available.

Their diet consists mainly of small mammals and birds. Among the mammals, wood rats, ground squirrels, mice, and rabbits supply the bulk of the diet. Although deer occasionally are killed and eaten, most of the deer meat found in Bobcat stomachs has been carrion. They also prey upon domestic sheep, goats, and poultry but the damage done is rarely great.

The breeding season begins usually in February, and after a gestation period of about 60 days the two to seven young are born. Average litter size is three. The young are well-furred and spotted at birth; their eyes open in about 9 days. The kittens are weaned when about 2 months old. They remain with their mother until early fall, at which time they begin to fend for themselves.

Bobcats live in a variety of habitats, but they favor rocky canyons or outcrops when they are available. Otherwise, they choose thickets for protection and den sites. These cats are highly adaptable, and in most places have been able to thrive in spite of increasing habitat loss due to human settlement.

