

WASHINGTON COUNTY Wildlife Society

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

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



Washington County Wildlife Society 2018 Deer Report

By Stephanie Damron,
TPWD Biologist

A big thank you goes out to all of the society members who spent time recording their incidental sightings in Washington County. The 2018 data set shows that co-op members identified and recorded a total of 10,801 deer resulting in 1,505 bucks, 7,191 does, and 2,105 fawns (Figure 1 Co-op Herd Composition). This calculates to 1 buck per 4.78 does and a county average of a 29% fawn survival rate which is up 3% from last year's fawn survival rate (Figure 2). Sun Oil reported the highest fawn crop of 49% (Figure 3). Only one data sheet was returned from Mt. Vernon. You'll see that reflected in Figures 1-3.

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 contact me if you have any questions at (979) 277-6297 or Stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov

Figure 1.

Co-op Herd Composition 2018

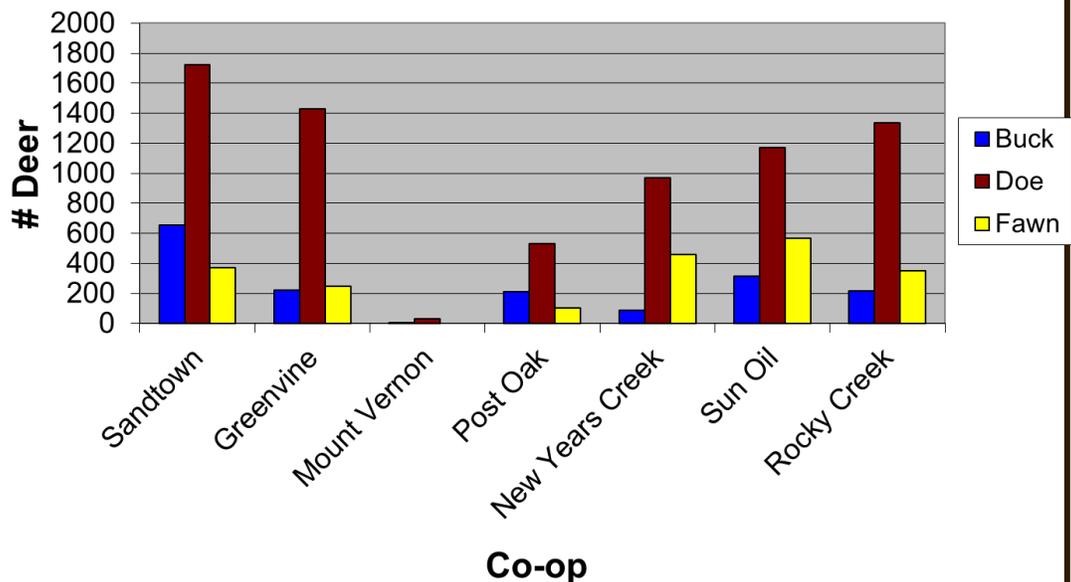
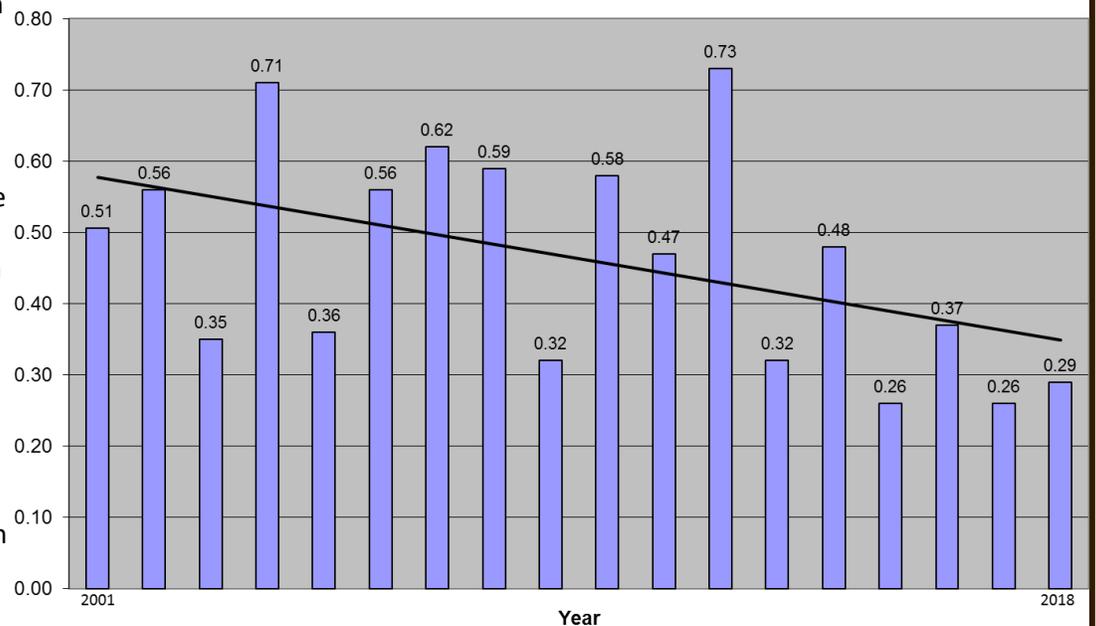


Figure 2.

Washington County Percent Fawns All WMA's Combined 2001-2018



WASHINGTON COUNTY Wildlife Society

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Faith Ferreri, WCWS Coordinator/Newsletter, (979) 820-1673,
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President's Remarks

Spring is among us again. I so enjoy the warmer weather and the sign of nature at its best. Admiring the beautiful colors of our wildflowers, the trees budding and leafing out, the sound of our pollinators and our wildlife scurrying around. With the great rains this Fall, our bluebonnets are just amazing. We are so blessed to be in a County where we can share this beauty with the many visitors who come here to see them.

I thank all those who attended the January Annual Meeting. We had a great time visiting, enjoying great stew and giving of some nice door prizes. I apologize in our miscommunication with our proposed speaker Kelly Conrad. Hopefully we can have her back next January. A huge Thank You to Senator Lois Kolkhorst and Biologist Stephanie Damron for their quick thinking, on the spot presentations. It is always a pleasure having our Senator at our meetings and knowing her hard work in our legislature is to our benefit. And of course, Stephanie is available for any of your wildlife concerns within the County.

I'm excited to be working with our new board for the next year and know they will be bringing some new ideas to the society. We welcome the new officers: President, Celeste Dickschat; Vice President, Trevor Dickschat; Secretary, Brick Peele; Treasurer, Ginger Bosse.

Be watching for information on your local Spring WMA meetings. If you have an idea for a speaker, project or field trip for your WMA meeting, please let your Director know. Also, if you have a personal wildlife or "nature" experience that you would like to share as a newsletter article, please write it up and send it in to Faith at faith.wcwildlife@gmail.com. We would love to read about it.

Finally, if you haven't paid your membership dues, please renew online on our website or you can mail it in.

"Spring adds new life and new beauty to all that is."

Celeste Dickschat

How you can pay your dues: Annual dues of \$20 may be paid online at wcwildlife.org by logging in, by mail to 1305 E. Bluebell Rd, Suite 104, Brenham, TX 77833, or in person at the same address.

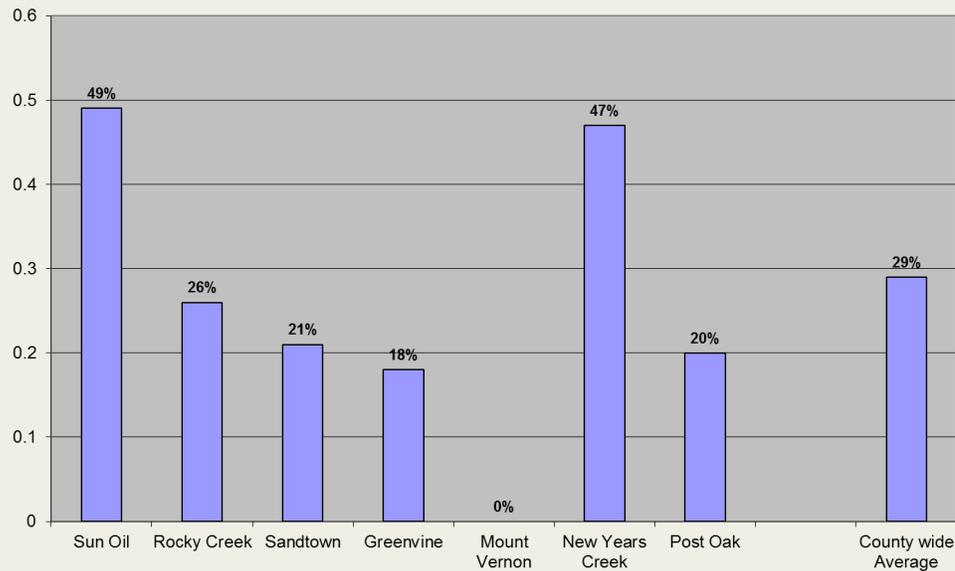
ADDRESS CHANGES

For address changes, or to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact Faith Ferreri, (979) 820-1673, faith.wcwildlife@gmail.com

Washington County Wildlife Society 2018 Deer Report (Continued)

Figure 3.

WMA's 2018 PERCENT FAWN SURVIVAL RATE



Deer Feeder Tips for Wildlife Observation by Terry Tiemann, member Rocky Creek

For years I had problems with raccoons stealing the expensive deer protein feed from my “all you can eat” feeder.

At \$13.00 plus per 50 pound bag the loss to coon theft can become quite expensive. I tried PVC covers on the feeder legs, grease on the leg covers and trapping the coons, all with little or no success.

After setting up my game cam on the feeder I found that I had photos of coons sitting on the feed nozzles and coons on the ground eating protein knocked out of the feeder by the coons sitting on the feed nozzles. None of the photos showed how the coons were getting on top of the feed nozzle. I changed the game cam to the video function and was surprised what it revealed. The coons were not climbing the legs but rather, the larger coons of the bunch would reach up and grab the nozzle pulling themselves up. Once on the nozzle they would eat protein and knock protein to the ground for those coons to small to reach up to the nozzle.

Now that I knew how the coons were getting on top of the nozzle I looked for a solution. First I tried digging a hole under the nozzle to make it more difficult for the coons to reach up and grab the nozzle. That had very little affect and made a mess when it rained. Next, I took the feeder down and shortened the nozzle tube by 10 inches thereby raising the nozzles 10 inches higher from the ground.

Problem solved! Now on the game camera photos I noticed that the deer have to strain a little to reach the nozzle but it does not appear to have discouraged the deer. On the other hand, I only occasionally see a coon at the feeder now, and those are there are only eating protein knocked to the ground by the deer. This has easily reduced the amount of protein fed by 50%.



Photo Journal from Wild Heart Ranch, Cheryl Craven, member New Year's Creek

15 deer (2 bucks, 13 does and fawn)



8 young bucks, 2 sparring

The Great Magnificent Buzzard Bird, by Dee Wolff, member Rocky Creek WMA

There is something quite mesmerizing about seeing a committee of buzzards drying their wings in the empty branches of trees in a winter's landscape. They appear as Chinese kites or warriors in kimonos....their outstretched wings moving gracefully in the breezes. They are elegant and silent in their dark garb, heads bobbing quietly in the morning sun. As they rise and alight into the sky, they are wind surfers greeting a sun-woven wave, rising, gliding, and circling the sky, in rhythmical enjoyment, sheer poetry in motion. They move in unison with determined purpose while they scour the land below for their next meal.

I recently asked one of our Burton neighborhood cattle ranchers, "What do you think about buzzards." After a thoughtful moment, he said, "Well, there are pros and cons. There are some things that buzzards do that are real good for the environment, like eating up the dead fish heads and debris that I throw out, but they can also be harmful to my cattle."

The New World Buzzard, including the red headed turkey buzzard and black buzzards that we see kettling (circling) in the skies around Texas, are members of the Cathartidae family. They are related to the ibis, the stork, and the California and Andean condors, all birds of mythical proportions. It is no wonder that they have distinguished relatives as they are quite distinguished themselves.

The red headed turkey buzzard, which is docile and sociable to humans, is known to be the bird with the most sophisticated sense of smell of all bird species. It has been recorded that out of 11,000 species of living birds, the turkey buzzard has the most developed olfactory lobes. With its' large nostrils, it can detect the scent of a mouse corpse beneath a pile of leaves from thousands of feet in the air. This proves to be a very useful accomplishment as the turkey buzzard scouts for carrion for the black buzzards with which he shares a true symbiotic relationship. As the turkey buzzard uses his keen sense of smell, he is followed by his cousins, who will be the first in line to descend on and devour the fruit of the hunt. After this wake, the keen scout is allowed to feast on the leftovers of the meal. This seems a bit ungrateful....but since the turkey buzzard has the distinction of regurgitating his last meal at will, he may have a way to repay his selfish cousins!!! Actually this regurgitation is a useful tool for scaring predators from the nest of his young as the foul odor surprises and disgusts.

On the positive list of buzzard attributes is the fact that scavenging black buzzards prefer fresh dead meat, but will also devour meat that is so rotted and diseased that it would be dangerous for other animals to eat. They rarely find prey that is too putrid to eat. In this way, they are a service to man and beast as they rid the countryside of dead carrion of all kind. This buzzard is so hardy that he can digest the venom of a poisonous snake without being harmed. Black buzzards use their keen sense of sight to hunt, and can see for a mile as they are kettling in the sky. If they spot food, they investigate immediately and then....it is time to feed! When buzzards are riding the thermals, they are "just looking" and not waiting for an animal to die. I was relieved to learn this as I no longer have to yell at buzzards in the sky overhead, "Not yet.....go away, it is not time!

One of the more horrific facts about black buzzards is that if they cannot find any other food source, they will attack vulnerable animals such as baby calves. This survival issue is most destructive to ranchers and dairy farmers during the spring and the fall while cows are calving. Permits are needed to capture or kill buzzards as they are listed as "migratory" birds and are thus protected by the Migratory Bird Act of 1918. However, because of the huge and costly nuisance to livestock producers, many states are issuing permits to help ranchers protect their herds. Since a buzzard will not fly within eyesight of another dead buzzard, some ranchers hang dead buzzards in effigy to keep the others away.

There are many interesting stories about buzzards or vultures, as they are also known which show that they have been an Mountain regions, called the buzzards "suli". They believed that the habit of eating rotten meat and the immunity from diseases gave the buzzards great power. The "suli" was regarded as the doctor among birds. A buzzard feather hanging over a doorway to a home

The Great Magnificent buzzard bird (continued)

The Old World Buzzards that live in Tibet are still considered sacred as they play a role in a traditional burial ritual called "Sky Burial". This sacred ritual dates back to the twelfth century where vultures are described as angels or "dakinis" in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. The body of a loved one is placed on a mountain top where "dakinis" are known to gather. The buzzards or "sky dancers" shred the remains of the body and take the pieces to a windy place where the soul is reincarnated into a new life.

There is so much more to learn about these fascinating scavengers. It seems that each thing, animals and plants alike, that we encounter on a daily basis, has a marvelous story which creates the entire beauty of our landscape. It is remarkable that a bird that seems so common in the everyday Texas landscape has such a venerable and long history. Knowing the pros and cons of the buzzard has helped me to appreciate this unseemly bird that makes flying in the clouds look too beautiful for words.

Spring WMA Meetings:

Sun Oil Field—Friday, April 26 at Weiss Store, 3755 FM 390, Brenham. Social begins at 5:30PM, Dinner of Chicken Spaghetti, Salad, and bread (min \$5 donation) at 6:15PM and please bring a dessert, speaker **Daniel Lewis** of the Texas Forest Service by 7PM.

Rocky Creek/Greenvine Joint—Saturday, May 18, White Horse Tavern, 400 N Main St, Burton. Social begins at 5:30 PM, Meal at 6 and bring a dessert, Program on "Pigs Plants, and hummingbirds: managing invasive species and providing for natives" including **Thomas Decker** with Texas Parks and Wildlife on Invasive Species, **Cary Dietzman** on NatureScaping and **William Amelang** of Texas Roots on sourcing native plants. Live Music to follow @ 8:00

Sandtown/Mt. Vernon Joint— Topic on **Wildlife Corridors of Sandtown and Mt. Vernon WMAs**, Date mid to late May, Time and Location TBA

Post Oak/New Years Creek Joint— **Pond Feasibility Planning, Pond Stocking and Pond Weed Management**, Date and Location TBA

Last Mail Out Notification, by the Washington County Wildlife Society Board Members and Directors

Due to the high cost of printing multiple pages and in color, and ever rising cost of postage, the Washington County Wildlife Society is choosing to print a limited number of Newsletters. These newsletters will be available for pick up at the Washington County Annex Building, 1305 E Blue Bell Rd, Brenham, TX 77833. We hope this change will meet the needs of our growing membership. Things we may be able to use the funds for are youth scholarships, speakers, supporting brigades, and WMA Meetings.

Lifetime Membership Awarded to Richard and Ann Thames

An Excerpt from our Annual Stew Dinner Spoken by Celeste Dickschat, WCWS President

"I reached out to quite a few Society members who served with this couple and these are the words they used to describe them: The Go To people, They are always there and willing to help, The Guy Friday, He is like a rock, always there...and my favorite: The backbone of the society. These words tell me how passionate they are about the wildlife society and genuinely how interested they are in being good land stewards. One person said "they are like duct tape, they do what you gotta do to keep the society together" Richard has graciously served the Sandtown WMA for quite a few years. He has served on the society board as president, secretary, and treasurer numerous times as well as filled in as an interim officer when needed, as he is currently. He was an asset along with **Gene Bishop** and **Jon Knapp** in helping implement our society webpage. We just want you two to know how much we truly appreciate your ongoing support and efforts to keep WCWS a functioning as a growing organization. Ann was, and I quote, "hired" as the first society secretary, even though she would not accept any pay and held that position for several years. I understand due to her background in office administration, she was one of the group of members who helped start our fantastic Wildlife Society newsletter (which I might add) was and still is very impressive. They both continue to help **Faith** who currently serves as our editor. Being the Go to Guy, he automatically stepped in and is our wildlife representative with our natural resource Super Groups such as the Lone Star Water Forum and The Habitat Restoration Corridor of which he just spoke about. They are members and very active with the Texas Native Plant Society and Texas Bluebird Society as well as others that I'm not aware of. With all this they still find time to run "Honest to Goodness Growers" Once again, when no one else steps forward, they always do! That's how dedicated they are about WCWS The Washington County Wildlife Society Board and directors are proud to honor Richard and Ann Thames with a lifetime membership to our Society." Unfortunately, Ann was unable to attend due to an ailing horse, Poppin' Gin.



A Million Pollinator Gardens Create Hot Spots to Help Bees and Butterflies,
from the National Wildlife Federation, submitted by Jim Dickson, member, Sun Oil Field WMA

This is a nationwide call to action to preserve and create gardens and landscapes that help revive the health of bees, butterflies, birds, bats and other pollinators. This collaboration provides hands-on opportunities for citizens to help wildlife as part of our larger monarch and pollinator work.

Participants in our Garden for Wildlife movement contributed a full one-third of the pollinator gardens counted under the Challenge. The efforts of these participants who registered their yards and gardens as Certified Wildlife Habitats®, along with those who did Butterfly Heroes™ and Trees for Wildlife™ plantings, all helped successfully reach the goal of the Challenge, as did mass networks of school gardens from our Schoolyard Habitats® and Eco-Schools USA campuses, and college Campus Pollinator Pledges. Leadership in over 450 municipalities enhanced and created new pollinator habitat across their towns and cities through our Mayor’s Monarch Pledge.

The result is a nationwide network of pollinator habitat within America’s cities, towns and neighborhoods. Municipalities with outstanding numbers of registered gardens have been designated as **Pollinator Gardening Hot Spots**. Concentrations of these gardens can create stepping stones of habitat between gardens and parks that, together with wildlands, maintain healthy pollinator populations. Research shows that these floral-rich, small-scale gardens are proven to increase pollinator abundance and diversity. .

This website provides a map of currently registered gardens and resources for native plants that pollinators will use. If you like seeing pollinators in your garden, around your house, please share this resource with friends and neighbors. Even those who live with in the city limits. Long-term pollinators are just as important as streets and other facilities within the city limits. Click [here](#) for more information

Insect Photos, by Patricia Combs, member Sandtown WMA

Save the Date: August 16, 2019

For the Washington County Wildlife Society Annual Fundraiser
at the Washington County Fairgrounds Event Center



Fawn Recruitment, by Cary Dieztman, Director, Greenvine WMA

Talk with any Biologist about Whitetail deer management and "FAWN RECRUITMENT" will be part of the conversation. What is "FAWN RECRUITMENT"? It is often defined as the number of fawns per doe surviving to six months of age. Two factors that have the biggest effect on fawn survivability are area habitat conditions and area predator populations.

Let's focus on the area habitat conditions. Obviously, quality habitat provides a higher level of nutrition to lactating deer. Better nutrition equals healthier/stronger faster growing fawns. The first four weeks of a fawn's life are critical to their ultimate survival. During this time, doe deer will hide their fawns in the best cover available. As a landowner you can contribute to the success of your deer management efforts by creating or enhancing areas of "FAWNING COVER".

What is "FAWNING COVER"? Hiding from predators during the first weeks of a Whitetail deer's life is critical for its survival. Fawns are born with natural defense mechanisms, like their spotted coat, (camouflage) which act to break up the fawns overall shape making it less identifiable to predators. However, unless the surrounding cover is adequate, their camouflage is ineffective.

Is this fawn hidden? Of course it isn't, so look at the vegetation surrounding the fawn in the photo. It is short and not dense enough to hide the fawn. Small locations and meadows filled with spring season grasses, weeds, and wildflowers tall enough to conceal the baby deer, are much more beneficial to a fawn's survival. Whitetail deer recognize the value of these areas and purposefully hide their fawns there.



So if your country property is short cut grass from fence line to fence line you have limited fawning cover. Large areas of grassy/herbaceous cover or multiple smaller areas distributed in the landscape greatly increase a fawn's survival percentages. Many studies support the fact that, "EDGE" habitat is beneficial to fawn survival. "EDGE" being a transitional area bordering woods, hay meadows, crop fields, hay meadows, fence lines, creeks/gullies, etc.

What are the fawns hiding from in our area? Coyotes, Bobcats, Dogs, Feral Hogs, Hawks, Owls, even Crows.

Providing quality "FAWNING COVER" is one of the most overlooked methods of management for deer. It is also one of the easiest practices to facilitate. Simply allocate specific areas for "FAWNING COVER" and allow those areas to go "fallow" during the spring fawning season. These areas of weeds, grasses, small shrubs etc grow dense enough to hide a fawn. GOOGLE "Early Successional Habitat" or visit the [Texas Parks & Wildlife](#) or the [QDMA](#) websites. Search for the June 19, 2017 QDMA article by Kip Adams "The Importance of Good Fawning Cover" on [QDMA.com](#)

On properties with open fields, meadows, or pastures, you can conduct late winter/early spring disking. I like "strip disking" around the edges of fence lines and brush lines. The width of these disked areas or "Edge Strips" is approximately 15-

30 feet. Sometimes I simply disk, then allow the native plant species to grow until mid July before I shred them down or let the strips stand until the fall. Other times I will broadcast Sorghum, Sun Flower, LabLab, wildflower or other seeds to create "Edge Plots". This year I am experimenting with "SUNN HEMP" as both a food plot source and cover source in my "Edge Strips".

The fawn in the photo is hiding in an "Edge Plot" of Milo or Sorghum near Brenham, in Washington County Texas.

If you have questions regarding "Fawn Cover" or "Edge Strips", or need assistance with the creation or evaluation of these areas on your property, send me an email. cary@acountryliferealestate.com



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Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla Vericolor*), by Faith Chase, WCWS Coordinator

This Spring I am featuring the **Gray Tree Frog**. This frog's range is across the Eastern half of the state, usually near creeks, rivers or woody areas. (Note: I was on the Sealy Prairie and I found this fella on a tan Buick). I chose this frog because I spotted one the other day and I got to take wonderful pictures! (And frogs are my favorite) Unfortunately, I didn't think to put anything in the photo for reference, but mature adults are typically 1-2 inches in length. In my photos, the tree frog is gray but it can also vary to an olive green. This species is nocturnal and forages in the trees and shrubs. They only come down to breed between March and July depending on the temperature. During the breeding season, the male's call is a loud quack and in late summer, they use a territorial call that is a slow trill. Also It should be noted that this species is nearly identical to Cope's Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*). They share the same range and physical characteristics. The only distinguishing feature is the call. Cope's Gray Tree Frog has a faster, higher pitched trill for their territorial call.

