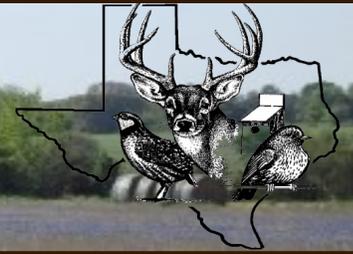


# WASHINGTON COUNTY Wildlife Society

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

Telephone 979-277-6212 Fax 979-277-6223 [www.wcwildlife.org](http://www.wcwildlife.org)



## Washington County Wildlife Society Annual Fundraiser Dinner & Raffle Friday, August 16, 2019

**Washington County Fairgrounds Events Center**

(1305 E. Bluebell Rd, Brenham, TX 77833)

Social begins at 5:30 pm with dinner and meeting at 6:15 pm. Program at 7 pm.

**Free Will Donation Dinner**

Chicken Fried Steak Dinner by Gary Goebel Catering

A dessert table will be available if you would like to bring your favorite dessert.

**RSVP at AgriLife Extension Office 979-277-6212 or online at [www.wcwildlife.org](http://www.wcwildlife.org)**

***"Increasing diversity for grassland wildlife and pollinators."***

**Featured Speaker Tim Siegmund of Texas Parks and Wildlife**



Tim was born and raised in Giddings, TX. A bachelor's degree and graduate research at Stephen F. Austin State University was followed by employment with TPWD in 2009. In College Station, Tim was responsible for 7 counties performing wildlife surveys, public outreach, technical guidance, prescribed fire assistance, public hunting opportunity, wildlife tax valuation planning and dealing with other wildlife issues. Tim was the TPWD field lead for the Pastures for Upland Birds program that focuses on native grassland restoration. He has facilitated the planting of over 4,000 acres of native grasses and forbs since 2011. Starting Nov 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 Tim began his role as the Private Lands Program Leader for TPWD dealing with private lands issues in a statewide capacity. Tim resides in College Station with his wife and two children.

## WASHINGTON COUNTY Wildlife Society

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Vice-Director-**OPEN**

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### **President's Remarks**

Our Wildlife Society has had another busy Spring promoting its "Good Works" programs. Once again thank you to all the wonderful directors, vice directors, board/committee persons and volunteers who help make the wildlife society Great. Your good deeds do not go unnoticed. We have been very busy spreading the news about your society by attending business after hour events and city planning meetings. One way you can help is to talk to your neighbors about joining the WCWS and then volunteering a little bit of your time with any of our programs.

We ended the school year helping with the 2 BISD LANDS programs; the 7<sup>th</sup> grade quail necropsy and 8<sup>th</sup> grade deer pluck (heart/lung dissection) giving 600 students the hands on opportunity to understand their anatomical systems and how they function. We awarded 4 College Scholarships to 3 Brenham High School students and one Burton High School student. And we are helping sponsor 10 cadets to their Texas Brigade Camps in which at the time of this newsletter, several of our local cadets received top awards at their respected camp so far.

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Lone Star Water Forum focused on Texas's useable drinking water. Speakers discussed how groundwater transfer affects you, your water rights and understanding groundwater districts.

I want to acknowledge Richard Thames, Amy Thomsen and Faith Chase on their continued hardwork on the Habitat Restoration Corridor program and hopefully in the near future will have an assessment plan in the works to assist our members on land evaluations.

Our Annual Summer Meeting is August 16, 2019 and we welcome guest Speaker Tim Siegmund, TPWD Private Lands Program Leader. His program is in line with what our Habitat Restoration Corridor program is focusing on. This is our fundraiser meeting. We will have bucket raffle items for you to purchase tickets. We need donated prizes. Please see page 6 for more information.

Lastly, I'm looking for volunteers to help your wildlife society. I want to form committees in the planning of our 2 annual meetings. These are simple tasks. Please see page 6 listing these committees. Also, we will have a joint booth with TPWD and other conservation and natural resource groups at the Washington County Fair. We will need a few volunteers each day of the fair to help man the booth. If interested in helping at either of these, please contact me via phone, text or email (left).

Have a great Summer and I will see you at our August meeting.

*Celeste Dickschat*

### 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](mailto:faith.wcwildlife@gmail.com)

**VIGNETTES OF COUNTRY LIFE by Dee Wolff**

A beautiful pileated woodpecker flies directly across my path as I turn into the driveway of the farm. He is elegant with his bold white stripes and flaming red crest and considerable wing span. He greets with his familiar piping staccato sound as he flies on his way to find a lunch of carpenter ants in one of the dead tree log restaurants on the property. After the last drought in Texas, he has his choice of country cuisine for himself and his family. My husband and I were once gifted on an early Sunday morning with the sight of a male, female and baby pileated woodpecker flying up from the lake, calling and singing their way into the woods behind the house.

Lavender morning mist rises from the lake. I think of the Chinese Emperor Fu His, who lived in 3000 B.C., he is credited with creating the *I Ching, Book of Wisdom*. He scripted the name "tui" as the younger daughter, joyous and laughing, to represent a lake. When the morning sunshine strikes and the water swirls with threadfin shad, I believe that the lake is laughing. The sweet little fish, nicknamed yellowtails, create eddies in the lake as their silver blue and white bodies turn and turn while hunting for plankton.

The warming light illuminates serpentine branches, slender and leafless tendrils woven into a lace like fabric, and shimmering droplets of dew on the glass-like spider webs. As the light rays change to rosy pink and gold, the lake becomes a deep emerald canvas filled with willows, oaks and reeds. A turtle head greets for an instant and then sinks into his world beneath. A gentle wind creates a conversation that causes a thousand memories of life to rush through the miles of circuits in my brain.

A flock of red birds is sometimes referred to as a "Vatican." How fitting that Mr. *Cardinalis cardinalis* wears the bright red robe and hat of that other group of Vatican dwellers. These exquisite creatures sing their hymns from the highest point of dead Junipers and flit to the feeders for sunflower seeds...one of their favorite morning delights. It is a beautiful sight to see both male and female land near the Prickly Pear Cactus blooming with brilliant yellow flowers disguised as carved roses. They add orange and red color strokes to the cheerful coreopsis, magenta Texas star flowers and the spindly legs of cat's claws. The little dotted blue eyed grass skirts around the edges of the garden and the rosemary purple flowers reach out with their lush aroma of good and of healing power. I painted our old kitchen cabinets with images of Cardinals, so that we can enjoy these creatures inside and outside of the house!

Musical sounds of coffee trickling its way down the filter in the glass pot, and the aroma of bacon and eggs, waft through the old house in the early hours of the day. Our bird friends are waiting to join us for breakfast at the feeder on the east side of the house. Deer run through the open meadow, greeting us with nods and stares. These are marvelous miracles...coffee, bacon, eggs, birds, deer and morning quiet. I am reminded each day of a 14<sup>th</sup> century poem: "Not twice this day, inch time foot gem. This day will not come again. Each minute is worth a priceless gem."

Our beloved cat friend, Samurai Bleu-the Warrior Kitty, calls us as we walk on our path through the woods. He makes an "ow, ow, ow" sound from somewhere in the thicket. It is his summons to us to remember that he is walking with us on this daily ritual. I call his name and he rushes out of the woods like a speeding bullet and greets me on the porch of the house as I catch up to him. He has once again successfully and bravely guarded us from harmful lizards and kamikaze birds. I reward him with some of the freshly cooked chicken breast pieces cooked just for him. He happily collapses onto his favorite red sofa, feet in the air. I love him..

Dragon flies skirting along the water's edge, back and forth, back and forth, appear as scouts or protectors of the water bank. In many cultures, dragon flies are a symbol of change and transformation. They are so industrious; it is no wonder that their life span is only six months. When I watch these delicate creatures, I think of beautiful Japanese kites and I also think of Leonard da Vinci. As early as 1490, Leonardo was convinced that one day man would fly. He created many drawings of flying contraptions for the theater in Florence and threw himself into these creative designs with great enthusiasm. As he studied birds for flying dynamics, surely, he relied on the dragon fly for his helicopter design?

There is so much country beauty to appreciate each day ...indeed in each moment "worth a priceless gem."

**Texas Master Naturalists are Never Just “On Vacation” by Lori Buffum, Master Naturalist**

My family did some unplanned citizen science work on the Gulf Coast (Surfside Beach) on May 16 when I photographed this unfamiliar bird. Then I realized there was a pair and look what I saw when I zoomed in on one! My brother-in-law Ken was looking up the bird and discovered the GCBO (Gulf Coast Bird Observatory) project studying and banding **American Oystercatchers**. <http://www.gcbo.org/avian-res.../american-oystercatcher-study/>. I sent my photos to the project director and was excited to hear back from her:

“Hi Lori,

Thanks for the oystercatcher sighting! WT was banded as a chick on Galveston Island in May 2014. So far it’s only been seen along Bolivar Peninsula and then your sighting today. I suspect it’s roaming around looking for a mate and a territory to breed in. Can you let me know where you saw it on Surfside, perhaps estimate a latitude longitude? We have a list on our website of all banded oystercatchers so you can look up information about them:

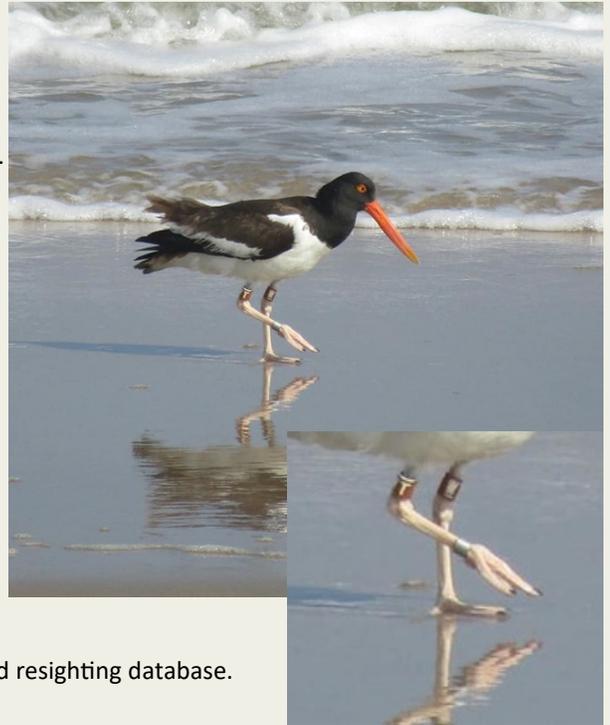
<http://www.gcbo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/GCBObandingdataweb.pdf>

but I would appreciate any sightings you have of banded birds.

You can also report them to the American Oystercatcher Working Group band resighting database.

<http://amoywg.org/banding-re-sighting/>

Thanks so much! Sue Heath

**Overview of the American Oystercatcher Study, by Faith Chase, Newsletter Editor**

So after receiving this interesting article from Lori, I wondered what the study was all about and I figured our members would too. The American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus palliatus*) is a migratory bird species of high concern. That means it’s protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty of 1918 and that it’s not endangered yet but could possibly be at risk. Studies have been conducted on the Atlantic oystercatchers but this study is being conducted to discover the habits of the Western subspecies of the American Oystercatcher. So far this study has revealed that “Western Gulf oystercatchers prefer to nest on bay islands. They are subject to overwash, predation, and human disturbance. Because they nest on islands near or within Laughing Gull colonies, avian predation is a much greater threat than mammalian predation and pairs nesting on islands without large Laughing Gull colonies fare better than those on larger islands unless there is a significant weather event that causes nests on smaller islands to be overwashed. Human disturbance from recreational boaters and fisherman exacerbates the gull predation problem because it causes eggs and chicks to be without parental protection. The few pairs we have found nesting on the mainland or on islands that are connected to the mainland at low tide have been subjected to a number of predators other than Laughing Gulls including: coyote, opossum, and domestic cat.” This study has color-banded over 350 oystercatchers in Texas and this is allowing us to learn much about their distribution. Adults are non-migratory though during the non-breeding season they wander to rich feeding areas along the coast. Oystercatchers do not breed until they are at least three years of age so the young birds spend about two and a half years after they leave their familial group wandering the coast. We have very little knowledge of where the young birds go at this point. Color banding is also giving us clues to how often birds switch mates, whether they are territorial year round, and whether reproductive success affects pairings. Public re-sighting of color bands is extremely important for this program. If you see a banded oystercatcher, please report it to Susan Heath.

You can follow along with our field season from mid-February through July on the [GCBO Blog](#) And even adopt an oystercatcher!

Credits:

Alexandra Munters, M.S. Texas Statue University 2014

*Nest Site Selection by American Oystercatchers (Haematopus palliatus) on the Upper Texas Coast*

Lianne Koczur, M.S. Texas A&M University Kingsville 2013

*Reproductive Success of the American Oystercatcher in Texas*

Amanda Anderson, M.S. University of Houston Clear Lake 2014

*The Factors Affecting Productivity and Parental Behavior of American Oystercatchers in Texas*

### Where are all the bluebirds??? An Investigation by Ann Thames, Sandtown Member

All of 2018 and this year Ann and many others around the county noticed that there were less bluebirds nesting than years past. Normally, the nest boxes would be full and bluebirds would be sighted nearly year-round. Ann and other bluebird enthusiasts reached out to the folks at Cornell Nest Watch and Texas Bluebird Society (TBS), below is the response they received from Keith Kridler (bio at the end of the article):

"If you look at the Abundance Animation on Ebird it would appear that Washington County is really on the border line for year round or week by week population/decent habitat for bluebirds to thrive 12 months out of the year. If you look closely notice that you can clearly see voids on the map for San Antonio, Austin and the DFW areas as compared to moving out further from urban sprawl. Personally I believe that these urban voids on the map are actually just a "flawed" data report as it is much easier to find and see bluebirds when there are only 50 people per square mile of habitat as bluebirds will tend to be seen in and around yards and in and around smaller homesteads as compared to finding, seeing and or hearing every bluebird when you have people living on 8,000 square foot lots or 6 houses per acre. Add in normal people traffic and the extra numbers of birds, colors and movement and you are not going to hear or see bluebirds that are living and nesting in the middle of even a single city block in backyard boxes.

Breeding season on the Ebird maps are too late for most of Texas. Look at the animation again and or click on each of the seasons from Jan to May. When you have air temperatures at 108°F as back in most annual June's till Sept. in central/south Texas nearly all successful breeding will stop. IF you lose the March to April breeding months due to weather you lose the excess bluebirds for next year.

Over the years if you are distributing nesting boxes at a rate of 10-20% of the numbers of "households" in a county then over the course of 5 to 10 years each household would have at least one nesting box that would still be usable. Only a very small population of these people would be monitoring and reporting any data. I would also look at population trends for the other native cavity nesters that use bluebird nesting boxes. Look at Cooper, Sharp Shinned Hawks numbers. Look at House Sparrow population trends. I have nesting boxes scattered over an area of 1,200 square miles or twice the area of Washington county and I use my boxes in several counties more as a barometer for small cavity nesting species. We have over 500 miles of blacktopped 40 MPH county and private roads, we have 134 cemeteries in our county also with about 33,000 people. These are better locations for finding bluebirds but bluebirds also nest along 70 and 80 MPH traffic highways.

Drought, floods, insect infestations and oak tree diseases, in addition to severe storm damage are leaving far more dead snags, people/farmers/landowners are allowing these to stand longer. Do a quick census on the numbers of big dead trees per mile of highways that you can easily see from the roads. Watch for locally and on Ebird maps the normal species of woodpeckers for your regions. These are also often creating cavities where bluebirds will nest and not be seen. Keith Kridler Mt. Pleasant, Texas"

Keith Kridler is a life-long bird lover and bluebird enthusiast extraordinaire! Since 1979, Keith and his wife, Sandy, have fledged upwards of 1200 bluebirds a year from trails around Mt. Pleasant and have donated thousands of nesting boxes to youth groups and landowners.. His bluebird trail is the oldest and most productive in Texas, and may well have fledged more birds than any other single trail in North America.

Keith is a Charter Member of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) formed in 1978, and is co-founder of the Texas Bluebird Society. Keith is co-author for Cornell University's "The Bluebird Monitor's Guide"



### Is it Citrus Greening....or Yellow Dragon Disease? Wait! What! By Faith Chase, Newsletter Editor

Citrus greening, also called Huanglongbing or yellow dragon disease, is one of the more serious diseases of citrus. This bacterial disease is thought to have originated in China in the early 1900s. There are three strains of the bacteria, an Asian, an African version, and a recently described American strain discovered in Brazil. The bacteria itself is not harmful to humans but the disease has harmed trees in Asia, Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and Brazil. The disease is primarily spread by two species of psyllid insects. One species, the Asian citrus psyllid, *Diaphorina citri*, has been present in Florida since 1998. The bacteria, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* was found in Florida in early September, 2005. To respond to the problem, USDA, APHIS, PPQ and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services deployed a

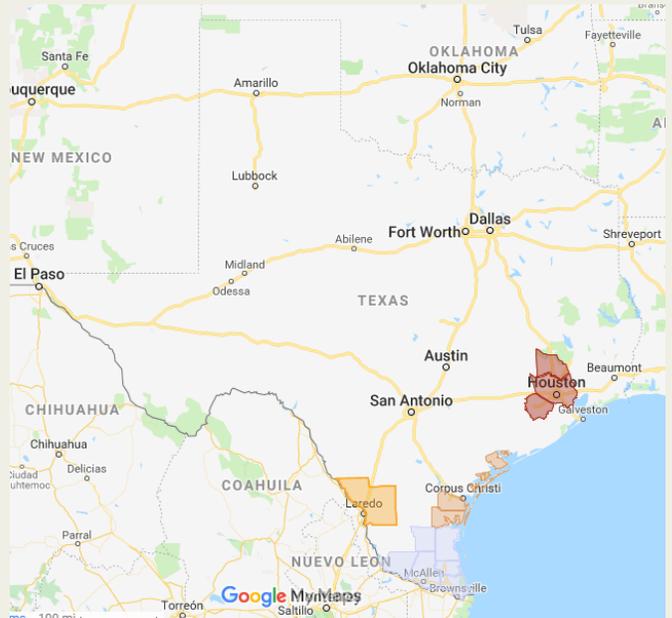


### Is it Citrus Greening....or Yellow Dragon Disease? Wait! What! By Faith Chase, Newsletter Editor (Cont.)

Citrus greening disease is a threat to the U.S. citrus industry. Citrus plants infected by the citrus greening bacteria may not show symptoms for years following infection. Initial symptoms frequently include the appearance of yellow shoots on a tree. As the bacteria move within the tree, the entire canopy progressively develops a yellow color. The most characteristic symptoms of citrus greening are a blotchy leaf mottle and vein yellowing that develop on leaves attached to shoots showing the overall yellow appearance (See photo right). These foliar symptoms may superficially resemble a zinc deficiency although the green and yellow contrast is not as vivid with greening as it is with zinc deficiency or another disease, citrus variegated chlorosis. Fruit from diseased trees are small, often misshapen, and typically some green color remains on ripened fruit. On Mandarin orange, fruit may develop an uneven ripening such that they appear half orange and half yellow. This symptom is the origin of the common name "greening." Yields are almost non-existent, and remaining fruit is rendered worthless due to small size, poor color, and bad taste. The only definitive method of diagnosis of trees suspected of infection by citrus greening pathogens is by analysis of DNA in an authorized plant diagnostic laboratory. Other than tree removal, there is no effective control once a tree is infected and there is no known cure for the disease. In areas of world affected by citrus greening the average productive lifespan of citrus trees has dropped from 50 or more years to 15 or less. The trees in the orchards usually die 3-5 years after becoming infected and require removal and replanting. For more information on citrus greening [click here](#).

Although there is no treatment for Citrus greening, you can treat for the Asian Citrus Psyllid using chemicals. These include foliar applications of Bifenthrin, Chlorpyrifos, Deltamethrin, Fenpropathrin, or Imidacloprid/Cyfluthrin. Soil Drench In-ground granular chemicals Dinotefuran or Imidacloprid can also be applied. ALWAYS FOLLOW CHEMICAL LABELS AND APPLICATION RATES.

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the first detection in Texas of citrus greening in 2012. TDA immediately placed an emergency quarantine on the entire area within for a 5-mile radius of the infected trees. Except under a compliance agreement or special permit issued by the department, no citrus nursery trees inside the quarantined area may be moved, and no citrus trees outside the quarantined area may be moved into the quarantined area. Since then the quarantine has been expanded to cover the red, orange, pink, and blue areas on the map. The most recent quarantine expansion occurred in June 2019. For more information on TDA's quarantine areas [click here](#).



#### WCWS donated items for bucket raffle:

Your Society's Summer Banquet Fundraiser will have bucket raffles. During the banquet, members will be able to purchase tickets to put in the bucket of the items of their choice. We are looking for donated items that will strike the attention of our WILDLIFE members. (ex: bluebird houses, deer feeders, wine sets, duck callers, sheath knives, bed & breakfast stays, \$25 or more gift cards, lawn/gardening supplies or decorations, deer corn, event tickets, homemade jellies/canned items/baked goods, or other great ideas of yours, etc.)

If you can help donate or have questions about donating, please contact Celeste Dickschat at 979-277-2331 or [maroon-out@hotmail.com](mailto:maroon-out@hotmail.com). You may leave your donated items at Stephanie Damron's TPWD office or the Agri-Life office.

#### Volunteers to help at WC fair booth:

Your WCWS plans to have partnership booth with TPWD and other conservation and Natural Resource organizations at the Washington County Fair this September. It will be an informational booth and we will need volunteers to help sit at the booth during special times Wednesday through Saturday of the fair. More information will follow in an email blast and at the summer Banquet.

**Hispid Cotton Rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*),** by Faith Chase, WCWS Coordinator

The Hispid Cotton rat is a moderately large, robust rat with an average total length of 270 mm, tail length of 110 mm and a weight of 80-150 g. Its tail is shorter than head and body, sparsely haired, and scales are clearly visible. Its ears are relatively small and blackish or grayish. The pelage is coarse and salt and pepper in color. The black guard hairs are stiff (hispid) and its underparts grayish white or buff. Its hind foot with three middle toes longer than outer two at a length of 31 mm.

This rat is found across the state in tall-grass areas where such grasses as bluestem (*Andropogon*), cordgrass (*Spartina*), or sedges (*Carex*) offer both freedom of movement under a protective canopy and an adequate food supply. In such situations, their runways form a network of interconnecting travelways about 5-8 cm wide. There are many types of habitat that may support small populations of cotton rats. Preferred sites are old fields, natural prairie, unmolested rights-of-way for roads and railroads, and other places not subject to flooding and where the vegetation grows rank and tall.

The rats place their nests either in chambers off underground burrows or above ground in dense clumps of grass, piles of brush, or other situations that offer some concealment and protection. The nests are globular, about 12 cm in diameter and composed of shredded grasses and weeds. Underground burrows are from 3-5 cm in diameter, simple in design, and seldom longer than 8 m. Occasionally, the rats take over and use the discarded burrows of pocket gophers and moles.

Their food is almost exclusively plant material, but there is some evidence that they feed also on the eggs of ground-nesting birds such as bobwhite and meadow lark. The telltale piles of grasses, sedges, and herbs cut into lengths of 5-8 cm and piled at their feeding stations along the runways give a good clue to their natural foods. In captivity, they are fond of most greens, rolled oats, corn, apples, potatoes, dog biscuits, and so forth. They are active the year round and do not store food for winter use.

The breeding season is nearly yearlong in the warmer parts of their range. An adult female may breed throughout the year in Texas when conditions are favorable. She may produce as many as nine litters of 10 young each (normally less). The gestation period is only 4 weeks, and the female breeds again within a few hours after giving birth.

At birth the young are hairless, for the most part, pink, blind, and weigh about 5 g. They develop rapidly. The eyes open in about 36 hours, the incisors erupt on the fifth or sixth day, and the young rats are usually weaned when 15 or 20 days old. They can be successfully weaned, however, as soon as the teeth have erupted (5-6 days). Sexual maturity is reached in about 40 days when the animals are still in juvenile pelage; 6-month-old rats are indistinguishable externally from adults.

Cotton rats are subject to violent fluctuations in numbers. The last serious outbreak in Texas occurred in 1958 when millions of these rodents seemed to appear from nowhere and caused serious losses to farm crops, particularly peas, peanuts, watermelons, and cauliflower — as much as 90% loss in some instances. Normally, cotton rats occur in moderate to low populations across the state where ground cover is present. The size of the population is correlated with the amount of suitable habitat, and suitable habitat in turn is correlated with the amount of rainfall. Peak populations are recorded about every 10 years in central Texas. before we know it.



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Arlene Kalmbach, TPWD, and Brendan Witt, USFWS, look over a completed LIP project benefiting a Hill County stream and riparian area.

## INVESTING IN CONSERVATION

Article by **TIM SIEGMUND**, *TPWD WL Private Lands Program Leader*,  
**ARLENE KALMBACH**, *TPWD WL LIP and PUB Coordinator*, **MEGAN BEAN**, *TPWD IF Watershed Ecologist*  
 Photos by **MEGAN BEAN**

**W**hen landowners and land managers in Texas look over their properties, their vision for the future is often as diverse as the sweeping landscapes before them. Almost all seek to make the property better than when it was received or to carry on the stewardship of their forebearers. This enthusiasm is sometimes hindered by the lack of funds needed to accomplish work of the scope or scale necessary to have a desired impact. As such, it is important for committed landowners to be aware of possible sources of assistance to accomplish management goals.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) employs biologists across the state who not only monitor wildlife populations but are also available to provide no-cost technical guidance on private lands. These wildlife biologists are assigned counties and work with landowners within those counties to craft wildlife management plans tailored to the uniqueness of

the property, the habitats required to support various species of wildlife and landowner goals.

Management plans go beyond describing the habitat as it currently exists and are meant to be a road map for implementation and decision making for long-term habitat and wildlife management. A good management plan identifies the best management practices best suited to the property and considers vegetation, soils, habitat condition, wildlife species and holistic management strategies.

In addition to written and verbal technical guidance, the TPWD Private Lands Program can sometimes offer interested landowners direct financial assistance as well as guidance on accessing financial assistance from other sources. Conservation is a priority for various government agencies and private non-profit organizations focused on wildlife and other natural resource concerns such as soil health, water quality and quantity,  
 (continued on page 9...)

(...continued from page 8)

riparian condition, food and fiber production, and exotic species control. The focus and funding priorities for these conservation assistance programs are usually shaped by a variety of influences often including watershed concerns, migration routes, habitat connectivity or listed species locations. Program administrators can provide greater detail to interested landowners.

TPWD's Arlene Kalmbach heads the effort on two incentive programs focused on restoring habitat for species or habitats of greatest conservation need. These two programs, the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) and Pastures for Upland Birds Program (PUB), are funded on an annual basis and available to private, non-federal landowners.

### LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The Landowner Incentive Program is focused on high-priority watersheds, federal trust species and species of greatest conservation need listed under the Texas Conservation Action Plan (TCAP). This program seeks to create, restore, protect and enhance habitat throughout the state and regularly funds projects that focus on upland, riparian (river and creek floodplains) and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds.

The Landowner Incentive Program is a cost-share program in which TPWD will cover a percentage of proposed project costs with landowners contributing the remaining share; landowner match can be provided through monetary contributions, in-kind contributions through labor and time commitments, materials or the use of other resources.

Projects that offer long-term protection, share collected data, partner with TPWD for long-term project monitoring and contribute more than the minimum landowner contribution are given priority during the funding review process. The LIP program employs a competitive project selection process. To apply for the next round of funding, interested landowners will need to work with their biologist to have a pre-proposal submitted by Feb. 15, 2019. There are no project



Tim Siegmund, TPWD, leads a field trip discussing grassland restoration methods in the Blackland Prairie ecoregion of Texas on a completed PUB project.



Tim Siegmund, TPWD, illustrates how proper seeding depth can impact plant establishment on a recently planted PUB project.

minimum acreage restrictions for this assistance program.

More information can be obtained from Tim Siegmund or Arlene Kalmbach whose information can be found at the end of this article. They may also contact their local TPWD biologist who

can be located via the "Find A Wildlife Biologist" section of the TPWD website. Additional LIP project descriptions as well as landowner testimonials, stories and personal experiences can be found on the TPWD website in the annual LIP Bulletin.



### TPWD PASTURES FOR UPLAND BIRDS PROGRAM

The TPWD Pastures for Upland Birds Program focuses on restoring grasslands in areas that were historically prairie or savannah. These areas have typically been converted to non-native forages such as Bermuda grass, bahia grass, Johnson grass or Old World bluestems which have minimal wildlife benefit due to their growth habit and tendency to form single species monocultures. In an effort to establish the structure and diversity that healthy native prairies provide to prairie dependent wildlife, the program incentivizes practices for establishing native grasses and wildflowers. These native plants provide the nectar and seeds required for native pollinators, songbirds, gamebirds and mammals.

The program offers landowners assistance with herbicide, seed selection, seed cost and specialized equipment for planting, when applicable. Participating landowners are responsible for providing the labor and equipment to carry out

most of the recommended management actions on the project sites.

Projects showing the greatest benefit, are a minimum of 25 acres in size and fall within the PUB focal area get priority for funding. These projects also come with a 10-year habitat retention and maintenance agreement. This program currently has a continuous application review and sign up process. PUB information can be found on the TPWD website.

### FARM BILL

TPWD's Private Lands Program also has a biologist specializing in the Farm Bill, Chuck Kowaleski. Kowaleski is available to discuss Farm Bill programs authorized by federal congressional action to be utilized for different conservation practices on private lands. These Farm Bill conservation programs focus on soil health, water quality, erosion, range management, wildlife and other resource concerns associated with private lands.

Program availability varies with the land's location and its current use. In

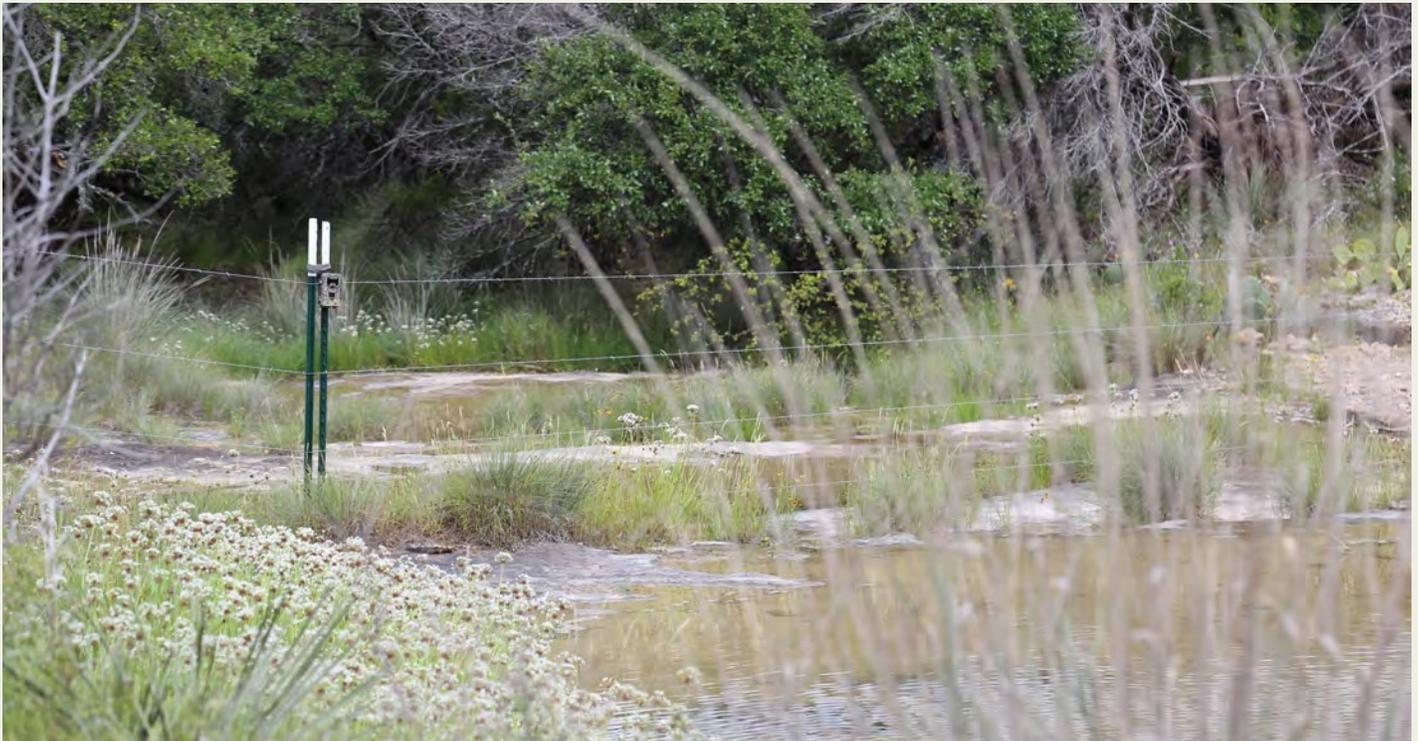
addition, Farm Bill programs can change between different versions of the bill itself. Kowaleski is an important asset for resource managers and landowners to explain the nuances of available programs and discuss landowner or property eligibility prior to applying for funding through Farm Bill programs.

The current reauthorization of the Farm Bill is in conference committee as the House and Senate try to reconcile their own versions of the bill. Once this is complete, Kowaleski will have a more complete picture of what is available for landowners over the coming years. Kowaleski's contact information can be found at the end of the article.

The experiences of individual landowners will vary by the programs and practices they choose to implement. Often these programs are the initial investment a landowner needs to get their conservation dreams off the ground or to get over a road block to their conservation and land stewardship goals. A savvy landowner will work with their biologist



A dry spring during the winter that has been impacted by Ashe juniper encroachment and a past history of livestock grazing.



A cross fence protecting the spring and associated riparian area led to increased water quantity and quality. Time lapse cameras were also installed to monitor and document the sites recovery over time.

to utilize the best fit program and sometimes multiple programs to further their conservation goals.

### PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

For example, in 2010 TPWD received project funding to support on-the-ground habitat restoration and enhancement projects in Edwards Plateau watersheds. Biologists decided to focus on projects that would address habitat degradation, erosion, land management and grazing, as well as spring and stream restoration.

Biologists contacted landowners who had existing TPWD Wildlife Management Plans to see if they would be interested in implementing identified management plan projects that would also support TPWD's goals for the project funding source. These landowners were able to quickly submit project applications to the LIP program for funding. Other landowners in the target watersheds were in the beginning stages of building a relationship with TPWD, and it took many site visits and meetings to build relationships and develop management plans and potential projects.



Habitat projects promote habitat continuity as Hill County upland savannahs transition to well managed and watered riparian areas and function as they would have historically.

One ranch was especially successful in working with TPWD to develop project plans, implement project scopes of work and partner in long-term project and species monitoring; the ranch has become a long-term conservation partner with TPWD. This ranch encompasses important riparian corridors, springs, and grassland and savannah habitats. TPWD and other agencies worked with the landowner to develop a holistic, landscape approach to conservation and ranching on the property. During the 2011 drought of record, the landowners removed cattle from the property allowing the habitat to rest and weather an extremely dry drought period.

After the drought ended, recommendations were made to the landowner to put cattle back on the ranch at a very conservative stocking rate and use a more effective rotational grazing system. Biologists also studied habitat recovery potential, the soils and conducted initial monitoring surveys for

vegetation and wildlife. In 2013, biologists worked with the landowner to implement the first phase of projects that included fencing off a spring and riparian area, and removing re-growth Ashe juniper.

The first round of projects went well, so the landowner returned to TPWD in 2014 to implement a second phase of projects including more Ashe juniper removal, spring fencing and seed purchases to enhance species diversity. In 2016, the landowner and biologists partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program to fund and implement the most recent phase which focused on removing of re-growth Ashe juniper and planting pollinator and riparian species in spring exclosures to increase species diversity. These sets of projects have been especially valuable to biologists because the landowner continues to grant access to the property and project sites for long-term monitoring.

The Private Lands Program at TPWD appreciates the opportunity to work with

willing landowners to implement on-the-ground habitat restoration projects. In a state dominated by private lands, voluntary partnerships with landowners are the most important avenue for habitat conservation. We encourage landowners to contact TPWD through the Landowner Incentive Program, Pastures for Upland Birds Program, or Farm Bill Liaison to begin their partnership with TPWD and to conserve the natural heritage of Texas by putting conservation on the ground.

*For more information, contact Tim Siegmund, TPWD Private Lands Program Leader at (903) 426-1834 or [tim.siegmund@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:tim.siegmund@tpwd.texas.gov); Arlene Kalmbach, TPWD Landowner Incentive Program Coordinator and Pastures for Upland Birds Administrator at (512) 924-6987 or [arlene.kalmbach@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:arlene.kalmbach@tpwd.texas.gov); or Chuck Kowaleski, TPWD Farm Bill Coordinator at (254) 718-7684 or [chuck.kowaleski@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:chuck.kowaleski@tpwd.texas.gov).*

TEXAS WILDLIFE      JANUARY 2019

## Finally we would like to congratulate our 2019 Scholarship Winners!!



Pictured from left to right : Hanna Warmke, Jon Wellman, WCWS Scholarship Chairman, Connor Himly, and Allen Schwartz. These students are Brenham High School Graduates.

Not Pictured is our Scholarship Recipient Arron Kohring, Burton High School Graduate.