



**Wildlife and Habitat Management:  
 A King Ranch Perspective**

**Marc Bartoskewitz** - Marc has a B.S. Degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Management from Texas Tech University (1997) and M.S. Degree in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M University-Kingsville (2001). He joined the King Ranch Wildlife Department staff during May, 2001 to serve as the wildlife biologist for the *Santa Gertrudis Heritage Society* and their 205,000 acres. He has authored or co-authored 6 scientific publications and several popular articles.

**WCWS Annual Meeting**

January 17, 2009

6:00 p.m. Social / 7:00 p.m. Stew Dinner  
 (bring a dessert to share)

**Camp For All**

(6301 Rehburg Rd. in Burton)

Come early and take a tour of the Camp for All Facilities

Our Featured Speaker:

**Marc Bartoskewitz, Assistant Area  
 Manager Natural Resource, King Ranch**

King Ranch has a long history of habitat and brush management dating back to the early 1900's. Innovation and leadership have been the forefront of King Ranch management throughout its 155 years of existence. Aside from leading the cattle and horse industries for decades, King Ranch was the first to experiment with brush control and mechanical habitat management techniques. According to Aldo Leopold (1947), considered by many to be the Father of Wildlife Management, "King Ranch does one of the best jobs of wildlife restoration on the continent, and has unparalleled opportunities for both management and research."



**BOBCAT**



**BOBWHITE QUAIL**



**MATURE WHITE-TAILED  
 DEER BUCK**



Camp For All, located in the rolling hills of Washington County, Texas, is a unique camping and retreat facility that strives to enrich the lives of people with special needs. A not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, Camp For All works in partnership with special needs groups whose members gain self-esteem, self-awareness and independence by participating in programs that are recreational, therapeutic and educational. The camp provides a fully-accessible environment and programs that are tailored to meet the needs of campers of all ages, interests and abilities.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

# Wildlife Society

## **OFFICERS for 2009:**

Richard Thames, Society President, (979) 278-3053  
Ralph Lilly, Society Vice President, (936) 878-9944  
Tom Yates, Society Treasurer, (979) 836-7941  
Judy Deaton, Society Secretary, (936) 878-9900

## **WMA DIRECTORS for 2009:**

### **Greenvine WMA**

Weldon Moeller, Director, (979) 277-2677  
Brian Burke, Vice-Director, (979) 251-7887,  
gaelbrian@hotmail.com

### **Sun Oil Field WMA**

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### **Rocky Creek WMA**

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### **Post Oak WMA**

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### **Sandtown WMA**

Jennifer Mohr, Director, (979) 278-3394,  
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### **Mt. Vernon WMA**

Greg Schomburg, Director, (979) 836-2568

### **New Years Creek WMA**

Jack Taylor, Director, (936) 878-9942,  
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Tom Yates, Vice-Director, (979) 836-7941,  
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## **RESOURCE CONTACTS:**

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Stephanie McKenzie, Texas Parks and Wildlife De-  
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Ann Thames, WCWS Office Secretary  
(979) 203-3455, semahta@yahoo.com

## President's Remarks

**I**t's 2009 already! Where has the time gone? As parting president, let me say I have enjoyed the last two years serving you and the Washington County Wildlife Society. I have become good friends with the 2008 board members and am very pleased that many of them are staying on as committee members. I will be assuming the position of Events Chairman and will be planning the Annual and Semi-annual meetings as well as working with Larry Pierce and Stephanie McKenzie to offer you additional field days and educational programs. I will also be overseeing the website at [www.wcwildlife.org](http://www.wcwildlife.org) starting this month. I welcome your calls at 979-830-8555 with any input you may have to make our organization better. Many thanks to the 2008 WCWS board members for the effort they put in this past year to make the needs of our wildlife a priority in this county. I am leaving you under the capable leadership of Richard Thames and I can assure you he has a heart for the conservation of wildlife and will strive to see that this society continues to make a difference for the wildlife of Washington County.



I would like to invite you to attend the January 17, 2009 Annual Meeting to be held at Camp for All in the Burton area and meet our new Texas Parks and Wildlife director, Stephanie McKenzie. She has some fabulous plans for programs and I am looking forward to working with her. Our January speaker will be Marc Bartoskewitz from the King Ranch so I am sure you will want to learn the practices such a successful ranch uses to preserve it's wildlife habitat.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in January. Come out for a great meal and a great program!

*Sara Byman*

President, Washington County Wildlife Society

## **COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES:**

**Membership Committee:** Aaron Moeller, (979) 251-2293, aaron@totallyexposed.com,  
Bill Kenisell, (713) 446-2142, wkenisell@hotmail.com

**Newsletter & Website Committee:** Ann Thames, Brian Burke, Sara Byman,  
(979) 830-8555, sara@kangablue.com

**Budget & Finance Committee:** Richard Thames, Tom Yates

**Activities & Events Committee:** Sara Byman, Ann Thames

**Scholarship Committee:** Jack Taylor

**Volunteer!** It's a great way to have fun, meet new people and support WCWS.  
*Contact a committee member to join.*

# Effects of Grazing on Your Rangeland

By Stephanie McKenzie, TPWD Wildlife Biologist

In rural Texas, cattle are a way of life. But, is it a healthy life for YOUR rangeland? Think back to the last drive you had down a rural highway, how much tall grass prairie did you see? Many properties in rural Texas are victims of overgrazing by livestock. We must begin to focus on quality land management rather than solely on livestock production so that we may promote diversity in the range and create better land stewardship. We can start by understanding how our rangeland becomes stressed and overgrazed.



that elevates above ground level soon after growth begins (low grazing resistance). Forbs contain growing points close to the ground in the early growing season and woody browse species house growing points that are elevated above ground making them much more accessible to browsing animals.

Many of the improved pastures seen in cattle operations are comprised of bermudagrass, which contain stolons (aboveground) and rhizomes (below ground). This allows the plant to recover faster than a native plant that is overgrazed because that growing point is lower to the ground making it more inaccessible to animals.

In order to effectively manage your rangeland you must first know what plants comprise your rangeland. Then, based on the growing point and grazing resistance of those plants you can begin to define a proper stocking rate. The amount and quality of forage available as well as seasonal patterns must also be considered when defining your stocking rate. Remember, you must also consider the wildlife population when defining a stocking rate because they utilize the range as well.

Overstocking your rangeland will lead to overgrazing which will decrease your plant productivity because you have increased pressure on the plants. If these plants are unable to stay productive you have less seed produced and fewer seedlings of desirable plants. This allows less palatable plants to invade thereby decreasing the quality of your rangeland.

Whether you're an avid cattleperson or a wildlife enthusiast the plants on your range feed the animals in your area and decrease soil erosion. Proper management and good land stewardship should be the main goal so that we may continue to conserve our soil and plant resources.

Plants contain several growing points. Grasses for example have a main growth point in the crown of the plant, also called the plant base. As the grass begins to develop this point will continue to develop and eventually produce a seed head. Grasses also have a secondary growth point at each joint (or node) at the base of each leaf blade. These produce leaf, sheath and stem growth.

Plants can only produce leaves at an intact growing point. The closer the growing point is to the ground the more successful the plant will be at producing a seed head because it is more protected from being eaten. Destruction of the plant by grazing when its growing points are elevated reduces new leaf production thereby decreasing the plants ability to produce food and tolerate grazing. Excessive grazing also prevents the production of seed heads and new seedlings.

Unfortunately, plants are not created equal. Timing and the elevation of growth points on grasses, forbs (weeds), and browse (woody shrubs and trees) vary greatly. For example, little bluestem has a growing point close to the ground until the seed head is ready to emerge (moderate grazing resistance), whereas yellow indiagrass has a growing point



## Habitips:

- Develop fireguards for prescribed burn program.
- Clean out and repair martin houses, bluebird boxes and wood duck nesting boxes.
- Gather and compile deer harvest records; record sex, age, weight, body condition and antler size – this helps to monitor the health of the deer herd.
- 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.
- Plant trees and shrubs as needed for wildlife cover.



Brush habitat for small mammals



## Painted Bunting- The Rainbow Bird

**E**arly Spanish settlers named the Painted Bunting *Mariposa pintada*, which means Painted Butterfly. French colonists used the word nonpareil (without equal) to describe the bird. One never forgets the first time they saw a Painted Bunting. When I give talks to school children about birds, images are projected on a screen of each bird we talk about. I ask them what they would name the Painted Bunting when this colorful bird's image is shown. The children always say "The Rainbow Bird". This is a good name for this species, as the male is three different colors. Its head is dark blue and a red eye-ring. The underparts and rump are red and the back is chartreuse. It takes the male two years to attain this colorful plumage. Once this plumage is attained, the male does not molt into dull plumage for the winter season like some other species do. The female of the species is green with a yellow wash on the underparts.

The Central Brazos Valley is very fortunate to have the Painted Bunting as an abundant nesting bird. These colorful gems begin arriving in the Brazos Valley in mid-April. Washington County and the surrounding area have an abundance of the habitat this species prefers- woodland edge habitat. Painted Buntings are primarily seed eaters. They build their nests in yaupon holly and other small trees adjacent to weedy fields. A pair usually have one brood per nesting season, but if the first clutch fails a second set of eggs will be laid. Painted Buntings have a strong site fidelity, that is they return to the same nesting site year after year as long as the habitat remains unaltered. Males will sing from a high perch, but their bright colors camouflage surprising well. The males begin migrating south from our area by mid-

August and have all departed by early September. Females and young are here until mid-September.

Sadly, the Painted Bunting is in decline over much of its range due to loss of habitat. The illegal bird trade plays a major roll in the decline of this species as well. Countless Painted Buntings are trapped in Mexico during the non-breeding season and sold overseas. Free roaming cats kill untold numbers of buntings and other bird species each year.

We should do what we can now to preserve habitat for this colorful bird

Photo by Marsha Seyffert



and other bird species for future generations. It would be a sad day if our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren never saw a Painted Bunting- The Rainbow Bird.

Darrell Vollert Copyright 2009

### New WMA Directors for 2009

Please welcome our newest directors and vice directors to WSWS. We look forward to their involvement in helping to promote wildlife awareness in your co-ops. The new directors were elected at the fall co-op meetings. Feel free to contact them with any question or if you would like to help within your particular co-op.

#### Greenvine WMA

Brian Burke, Vice-Director, (979) 251-7887, [gaelbrian@hotmail.com](mailto:gaelbrian@hotmail.com)

#### Rocky Creek WMA

John Anderson, Vice-Director, (979) 289-0041, [sjanders@airmail.net](mailto:sjanders@airmail.net)

#### Post Oak WMA

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Judith Deaton, Vice-Director, (936) 878-9900, [Judith\\_deaton@yahoo.com](mailto:Judith_deaton@yahoo.com)

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Tom Yates, Vice-Director, (979) 836-7941, [tmy@hughes.net](mailto:tmy@hughes.net)

*(The full list of WCWS co-op directors and vice directors can be found on page 2)*

### Upcoming Events

February 13-16, 2009—**Join the Great Backyard Bird Count**—Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

April 26, 2009—(7:30a.m.—1:00 p.m.) **Washington County Birding Trip with Darrell Vollert**—This trip is an exclusive for WCWS members and their families. The trip will coincide with the peak of spring migration for neotropical migrant birds. The tour is be limited to 15 participants at a rate of \$20 per person. Contact Darrell Vollert at [dvollert1967@yahoo.com](mailto:dvollert1967@yahoo.com) or 979 251-4986 with questions or to sign up. Additional information: [www.darrellvollertnaturetours.com](http://www.darrellvollertnaturetours.com) or [www.wcwildlife.org](http://www.wcwildlife.org).