



**Washington County Wildlife Society
Annual Meeting
January 16, 2010
at Camp for All**

(6301 Rehburg Rd. in Burton)
6:00 p.m. Social / 7:00 p.m. Stew Dinner

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

Featured Speaker: Lone Star Wildlife Rescue
“Stewardship through Rehabilitation”

Invite your neighbors that might like to join the Washington County Wildlife Society

Lone Star Wildlife Rescue
(979) 865-0763
Rebecca McKeever
Stephanie Lubianski
lonestarcwildlife.org



Bring your favorite dessert

If you haven't done so already, this would be a great opportunity to **RENEW your Wildlife Society membership for 2010!**

Lone Star Wildlife Rescue is a group of state and federally permitted rehabilitators who are dedicated to the care of injured and orphaned native Texas wildlife for the purpose of release back into the wild. We have several wildlife rehabilitation facilities and are able to serve the counties of Austin, Brazos, Colorado, Fayette, Waller, and Washington.

WASHINGTON COUNTY Wildlife Society

OFFICERS for 2009:

Richard Thames, Society President, (979) 278-3053
John Anderson, Vice-Director, (979) 289-0041
Tom Yates, Society Treasurer, (979) 836-7941
Judy Deaton, Society Secretary, (936) 878-9900

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Operation Game Thief, (800) 792-4263

 This Newsletter printed entirely on recycled paper.

President's Remarks

The season is upon us when we reflect on the events of the past year, and perhaps *resolve* to make certain commitments to better ourselves in the coming new year. Why not set a goal to spend more time with our families and friends outdoors learning how to live with the creatures that live around us.

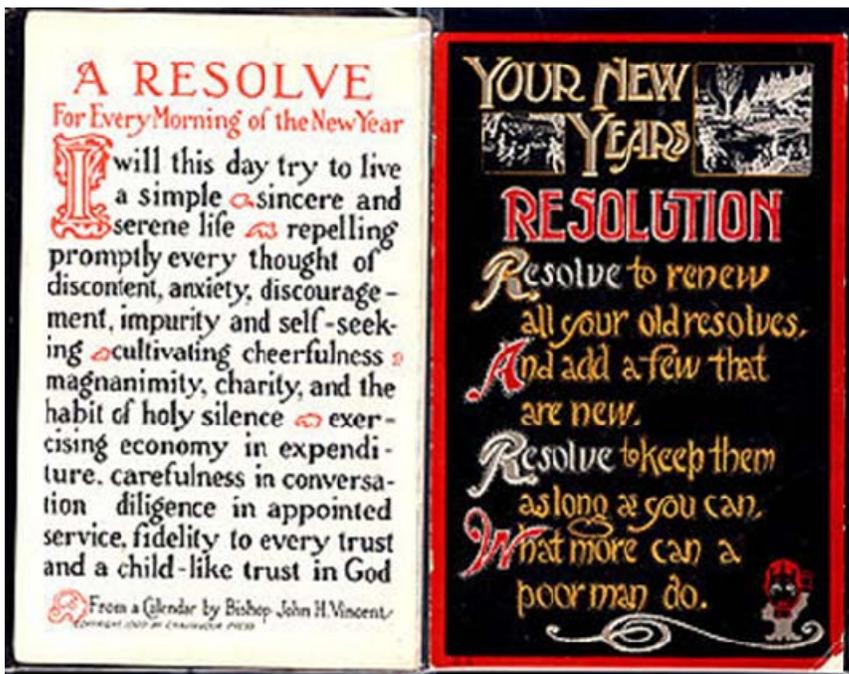


Richard Thames
Society President for 2010

Commit to a wildlife plan. To be a good steward of the land and help enhance wildlife around us, a wildlife plan is an excellent tool. The great thing about being a member of the Wildlife Society is the availability of resources. At WCWS we have three excellent advisors: County Extension Agent, Larry Pierce, Texas Parks & Wildlife Biologist, Stephanie Damron, and Veronica O'Donnell, District Conservationist with NRCS. These resources can help you set your goals for the year. Your WCWS Directors and Vice-Directors can also assist you finding the resources you need.

I would like to thank the directors from 2009 for their involvement and input into the Wildlife Society. Our sincere appreciation and a pat on the back goes to Weldon Moeller, Mike Busby, and Ralph Lilly. We are pleased that several Directors remain with the Society and new additions for 2010 are Robert Lehmann, Clint Duch, and Debbie Wellmann. We appreciate your resolution to make the Wildlife Society all it can be in the new year! (*See WMA Directors list for 2010 at left*)

There are many outlets for getting out and appreciating the beauty around us. Go ahead, make the effort in 2010!



Getting Ready for Purple Martins

By Stephanie Damron, TPWD Biologist

Purple Martins are attractive songbirds which have entertained country residents for countless hours with their singing and activities near their nests. They have spent hundreds of years in association with people and depend upon them to provide nest houses. They are a very popular songbird in Texas.

Purple Martins leave Texas in late summer and early fall for their South American winter grounds. They spend their winter foraging on insects over tropical landscapes and roost in massive concentrations at night. When they leave the roost site, the large number of birds can be observed on weather radars.

Small groups of adult males start returning from their winter homes in South America during January. They will be followed weeks later by adult females. Younger birds will start arriving later in the spring. **Will you be ready for them?**

Helpful hints to get you started are listed below from the Purple Martin Conservation Association www.purplemartin.org and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (The Purple Martin and its Management in Texas – booklet W7100-254).

Location for housing: Center of largest open spot available and about 30-120 feet from buildings. Nest houses should be no closer than 60 feet from trees. House placement near lakes or streams is preferred.

Poles: Nest houses should be placed on poles that telescope, or are equipped with a winch or lanyard to lift housing vertically 10-20 feet above the ground. This allows for weekly nest checks to take care of problems.

Housing: Can be natural or plastic gourds, or bird houses. Rooms in the bird houses should be at least 7 inches wide, 6 inches high and 12 inches deep. Gourds should be 8-13 inches in diameter. Martin managers have found that the traditional 6"X6"X6" rooms were too small for 2 adults and 5 babies and many people are switching to the larger room formats.

Entrance Holes: Construct 2-1/8 inch diameter entrances 1 inch above the floor.

How many rooms? Housing should provide at least 4 rooms because martins are social birds and are not likely to use sites with less housing.

Predators: Fire ants, snakes and raccoons are serious predators of martins and the poles under the houses should be equipped with animal climbing barriers.

(Continued on page 4)



Texas Master Naturalist

Gideon Lincecum Chapter

Texas Master Naturalist™ Training Class Gideon Lincecum Chapter

Do you have a love of the natural world and wish to help conserve the environment of this wonderful state of Texas for our future and that of our children?

The Gideon Lincecum Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist™, which includes Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lee and Washington counties, announces its new training class: February 6, 2010 to May - Monday evenings, from 6 to 9 p.m. at a venue to be announced shortly. One or two field trips form an integral part of training and are held on Saturdays.

The state-wide Texas Master Naturalist™ volunteers are supported by Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in their training and in their subsequent endeavors to restore and conserve native wildlife, habitat and historic natural areas through education, outreach to the community, and through their many local service projects.

Initial certification as a Texas Master Naturalist requires the completion of 40 hours of instruction, 40 hours of volunteer service, and 8 hours of advanced training. To re-certify annually, volunteers dedicate at least 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of advanced training. The chapter has a training fee of \$150 per person, which is reduced for couples sharing text and materials to \$250.

Class sessions include geology, ecology concepts, aquatic systems, hydrology and soils, weather and climate, forest, rangeland, and information about species of plants and animals relevant to our area.

This year, we plan to introduce an archeology session. For an application, or to receive more information about the program, please contact Judy Deaton at 936-878-9900 or by e-mail judith_deaton@yahoo.com. You can visit our chapter web site: <http://gideonlincecum.org>, or learn more about Texas Master Naturalist™ at <http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>.

Management Tip of the Month

Prescribed burning benefits more wildlife species than does almost any other habitat management technique. It sets back plant succession, returns nutrients to the soil, and creates a mosaic of habitat types. This encourages plant diversity for deer, quail, doves and turkeys. Before you begin a burn program, be sure you know about all state and local ordinances and obtain the required permits.

Animal group names

ants: nest, army, colony, swarm
 asses: pace, herd, drove
 beavers: family, colony
 bees: grist, swarm, nest, hive
 boars: sounder, singular
 buffalo: herd, troop, gang, obstinancy
 butterflies: flutter
 buzzards: wake
 cats: clowder, cluster, glaring, pounce
 caterpillars: army
 cattle: drove, herd
 chickens: brood, peep
 cockroaches: intrusion
 cormorants: gulp
 cows: kine
 crows: murder
 deer: herd
 dogs: pack
 doves: arc, dule, flight, pitying
 ducks: paddling, flock, raft
 eagles: aerie, convocation
 emus: mob
 fish: school, shoal, haul, catch
 flies: swarm, cloud, business

foxes: leash, skulk, troop
 frogs: army
 geese: gaggle, skein
 gnats: swarm, cloud, horde
 goats: flock, herd, tribe, trip
 goldfish: troubling
 grasshoppers: cloud
 gulls: colony
 hares: down, husk
 hawks: boil, cast, kettle
 herons: sedge, siege
 horses: herd, band, string, team, stable
 hounds: mute, brace, pack
 jays: band, party, scold
 larks: exaltation
 lizards: lounge
 mice: nest
 moles: labor
 mules: barren, span
 otters: romp
 oxen: team, yoke, drove
 owls: parliament, pandemonium
 pheasants: bouquet, nye
 pigs: drift, drove, sounder

porcupines: prickle
 quail: bevy, covey
 rabbits: nest, warren
 raccoons: gaze
 rattlesnakes: rhumba
 ravens: unkindness
 sheep: flock, pack, hurtle
 snakes: bed, knot, den, pit
 sparrows: host
 spiders: clutter
 squirrels: dray, scurry
 starlings: chattering, murmur-
 ration
 storks: mustering
 swallows: flight
 swans: bevy, herd, bank, wedge, flight
 swine: sounder, drift, herd
 toads: nest, knot
 trout: hover
 turkeys: rafter
 turtles: bale, dole
 weasels: pack, colony
 wolves: pack, rout
 woodpeckers: descent



Gulp! What do you call it when cormorants congregate?

Upcoming Extension Educational Programs

January 15, 2010—Multi-County Fruit Tree Program—Winedale Historical Complex. Monte Nesbitt, Extension Horticulture Specialist, will cover a wide range of topics, including site and variety selection, planting and pruning of fruit trees. The agenda will also include some visual demonstrations of these practices in Winedale's orchard. Registration is from 1-1:30 pm and the program will run from 1:30 to approximately 5 pm. The registration fee is \$10.00 per person. Contact the Washington County Extension office at (979) 277-6212.

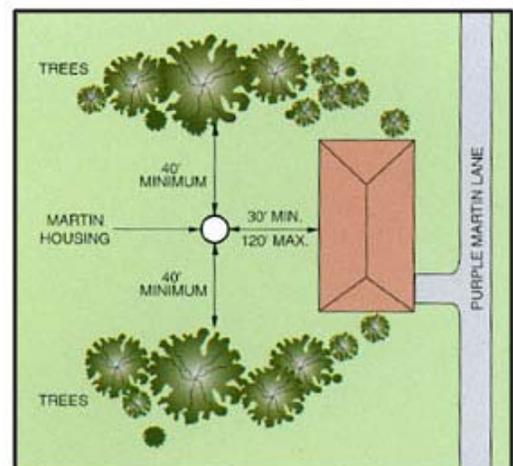
January 23, 2010—Quail Workshop—High Meadows Land & Cattle in Chappell Hill. Speakers include Johnny Kopycinski, a Chappell Hill rancher, Dr. Jim Cathey, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Wildlife Specialist, Stephanie Damron, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Larry Pierce, Washington County Extension Agent. Please RSVP if you plan on attending to the Washington County office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service at (979)277-6212 by January 15, 2010. This program is being offered at no charge to the public by the Chappell Hill Wildlife Conservation Committee.

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Open House Date: Housing should be ready for martin use in coastal Texas during January for sites which already have martins. Sites trying to attract martins should focus on attracting young males which will start arriving in March. Providing housing earlier than this allows for House Sparrows and starlings to occupy your bird houses/gourds before the martins arrive.

These were quick pointers to get you started. There are many issues you need to study in order to make sound decisions. Style of recommended housing and entrances vary depending on climates and competition for bird houses. Different styles of predator deterrents may be needed depending on which species are causing problems. Weekly nest checks are recommended to control serious problems before they destroy the martin colony.

If you would like to contact your local biologist, see our website at: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist>.



The Future of Water

By Wes Davenport, Director, Sandtown WMA

Sufficient potable water is considered to be the defining crisis of the Twenty-First Century. Most of us are aware that Atlanta, GA came very close to running out of water in 2007, but how bad was it really? Atlanta was down to a remaining water supply of 90 days with extreme conservation measures in place. Igor Shiklomanov, one of the world's leading hydrologists after studying mounds of data collected over many years, has concluded that: there will be a steadily narrowing gap between clean water supply and water demand, between water for drinking and water for food, for sanitation and for industry.

It is predicted that thirty-six states will face water shortages within 3 years and the cost of water will rise to frightening levels. So, how much water do we each need daily? The average person drinks about 1.5 gallon a day and uses 40 gallons for washing and flushing. Seems doable, doesn't it? However, in the USA the average daily use per person is 100 gallons and in Texas it is 200 gallons. Personal consumption is only part of the picture though. We, also, have to think about how much water is needed to grow and process our food. That number runs from 25 gallons for a single serving of rice to 1,320 gallons for a small steak. For those of you who enjoy a libation with your meal one glass of wine requires 66 gallons of water.

Adding everything up and including crops to clothe us as well as feed us, we need an average of 463,500 gallons of water a year per person. Here in North America, average availability of water is 2,377,530 gallons per person per year. Hot dog, we are in fat city, errrr are we? There are water shortages in many areas. Virtually all available rivers have been dammed and we already shift more water from place to place than anywhere else on Earth.

And there are a few other problems with our water sources:

- Aquifers depleted below recharge rates
- Reservoirs
 - ◊ Pollution
 - ◆ Agricultural runoff
 - ◆ Urban runoff
 - ◊ Silt
 - ◊ Salt
- Irrigation
- Population Growth

So what are our potential solutions? We can obtain additional water by importing it or desalination of sea water. We can reduce demand through conservation, pricing, or imaginative technologies. We can control our population growth. Finally, we can take it from others legally or by force.

Of these possibilities, which are the most ethically and economically viable? Most countries do not want to sell water to

anyone outside their homeland; they are concerned about their own people. Desalination has major problems including disposal of the salt and the enormous amounts of power consumed in the desalination process. In addition, most saltwater is on the coasts while the need for water is in the interior. Recently, I saw an editorial that said that we could desalinate all the water we need on the coasts and build pipelines to move it around the country just as we do for fuels. Interesting idea -- Yes, we do move a lot of oil, refined fuels and natural gas around, but look at the quantitative difference. Based on Department of Energy statistics for 2006, the average American uses 464 gallons of gasoline per year, but in that same year, the average American uses 463,000 gallons of water. Those would be some pipelines. In addition, we still have to dispose of the salt.

The other options also present their own set of challenges. With strict conservation and a new water ethic that deplores waste, we can move toward a solution, but with the rising prices, how do we provide for the poor? Population control would really help, but it is extremely difficult without resorting to draconian measures like those used in China. Imaginative technology may be on the horizon but I don't want to bet my life and that of the lives of my grandchildren on a technology miracle.

So, that leaves take it from others legally or illegally. Sadly, this is already happening. People are being conned into selling their water rights without really understanding the implications. In Texas, the Rule of Capture allows landowners to pump an aquifer dry without any consideration for their neighbor's water supply. This is a "legal" way to take water from others. Then there is the solution of acquiring water by military force. Water wars are certainly something we want to avoid. Many of the difficulties among Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine revolve around the availability of water. Obviously this is a morally undesirable and temporary way to solve a long term problem.

So, we have boiled down our potential solutions to conservation and a new water ethic. There are a myriad of ways to conserve: turn off the water when you brush your teeth, collect water in a container when you turn on the hot water while waiting for it to run hot, short showers using low flow shower heads, use native plants in your landscaping rather than exotics that require large amounts of water, etc. etc. A new water ethic for Texas will involve doing away with the Law of Capture, educating the public about the need for conservation, using all the water that comes to us as rainwater.

In future articles we will explore Rainwater Collection for home use, landscaping, livestock and wildlife.



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Common Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)

A medium-sized fox with grayish upperparts, reddish brown legs, tawny sides, and whitish throat, cheeks and mid-line of belly; sides of muzzle and lower jaw with distinct blackish patch; tail with distinct blackish stripe on upperside and black tip (no white on end of tail as in the red fox); tail roughly triangular, not round.

The gray fox, unlike the coyote, spends considerable amount of time in trees; it is able to climb quite well. Not vertical trunks like a cat, but it does manage to climb into trees with lower branches, and it will often rest and even sleep on larger branches.

The gray fox is the most omnivorous of the canids. Its diet varies from prey like small mammals, such as cottontails, mice and rats, to birds, snakes, frogs, and even insects. And during the fall when berries ripen, or when cactus fruits are available, it can take advantage of that food source as well. In late summer and fall, persimmons and acorns dominate its diet with insects, small mammals. The winter food of gray foxes include small mammals, insects, and wild birds and bird eggs.

In Texas, the breeding season begins in February and continues into March. Three to six pups are born in April or May. Although the pups are born blind and helpless, they grow rapidly and leave the den within a few weeks. They then seek shelter in rocky and brushy areas. It is during this period when the adults are most likely to be seen in the open as they search their neighborhood for food for their growing families.

The gray fox must be ever aware of its surroundings, as it often becomes prey to coyotes and bobcats, both predators that occur in the area. In fact, biologists believe that gray fox populations are generally held in check by predation, principally from coyotes. Plus, wild dogs, especially those in packs, also take their share of gray foxes.



Photo by Richard Thames, Sandtown