

# 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 Meeting January 19, 2018

### Washington County Fairgrounds Events Center

(1305 E. Bluebell Road, Brenham)

Social begins at 6:00p.m. with a short business meeting for election of officers for 2018

A stew dinner will follow at 6:45p.m.

#### Free Will Donation Dinner

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

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



### Featured Speaker: Garry Stephens with Wildlife Habitat Federation

Garry Stephens currently serves the Wildlife Habitat Federation (WHF) at Cat Spring, Texas their Program Director, overseeing and participating in restoration activities performed by their Habitat Action Teams (HATs) as well as their Seed Ecotype Enhancement & Development Program (SEED).

Garry received a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M. He retired from the federal service after 29 years of working for NRCS/USDA as a District Conservationist where he was responsible for carrying out all NRCS conservation programs in 4 south Texas counties, as well as having served as the Zone Wildlife Biologist for a 52 county work area in south Texas. In the private industry, he has managed ranches in Texas and Arkansas for both wildlife and livestock interests for many years, either primarily or secondarily to his day job.

As a part of WHF's Education Team, Garry is often called on to speak on natural resource related topics at various venues. He attributes any of his speaking abilities to the Texas Brigades! Near and dear to his heart for over twenty years, the Brigades is a wildlife-focused leadership development program for high school youth ages 13-17. He has served both the South Texas Bobwhite and the Buckskin Brigades in various capacities, from speaker to Committee levels.

At the present time, Garry is working with landowners to develop management/restoration plans on over 20,000 acres.



**It's Renewal time!** How you can pay your dues: Annual dues of \$20 may be paid online at [wcwildlife.org](http://wcwildlife.org) by logging in, by mail to 1305 E. Bluebell Rd, Suite 104, Brenham, TX 77833, or in person at the same address.

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Faith Ferreri, Society Coordinator, (979)820-1673,  
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**2018 WMA DIRECTORS:**Greenville

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Sun Oil Field

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Vice-Director—**OPEN**

Mt. Vernon

Director—**OPEN**

Vice-Director—**OPEN**

Sandtown

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Amy Thomsen, Vice-director, (713) 408-6135,  
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New Years Creek

Terry Atmar, Director, (281)303-6023, [terry.atmar@yahoo.com](mailto:terry.atmar@yahoo.com)

Vice-Director—**OPEN**

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**President's Remarks**

Happy New Year!

2017 was another fun and productive year. As a society, we currently have 442 paid members which include 32 new members, we are glad to have all of you! This year marks another successful fundraiser, we appreciate all the contribution made through out the year. Also, WCWS was able to make contributions to the Texas Brigades and awarded 2 scholarships to Brenham seniors.

I would like to thank the current directors , through their hard work the Society has benefited greatly. A big thanks to out going vice directors, **David Attwood** (Post Oak) and **Chip & Kathy Ingram** (Greenville) and extended hand to incoming vice directors **Cary Dietzmann** (Greenville) and **Amy Thomsen** (Sandtown). It has been a pleasure to serve as your president these last two years and I look forward to working with the incoming officer for 2018.

*Richard Thames*  
2016-2017

**Requests for Spring Newsletter Articles**

**We are trying something new!** We are collecting articles and images for our newsletter from our members! The Washington County Wildlife Society is not only here to provide information to it's members, it's also a social group to share experiences among those who can appreciate it with you.

What we hope our members will submit to share with the rest of us are what I will dub "*experience articles.*" I call them that because I hope that we will use them to share experiences with each other this way.

If you aren't much of a writer but would like to share something let me know and we can work on something together. Or if you prefer photography to writing send in a photo with a description.

**Members, please submit something to me.** We are a community of people who appreciate the outdoors in a variety of ways and we should be able to share that with each other more often than we do now. Please submit any articles you would like to appear in the Winter newsletter by December 1.

To submit an article or photograph you can mail it to 1305 E Blue Bell Rd, Brenham, TX 77833 or send it by email to [faith.wcwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:faith.wcwildlife@gmail.com).

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the newsletter by email so far and taking the opportunity to share your wildlife related experiences with the group. I hope our readers enjoy these articles as much as those who submit them and that I will receive more submissions in the future.

Thanks,

Faith

**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)

## Welcome to Southeast Texas Fall!

It is just beginning to look like autumn around Burton, Texas. It is most visible around the tranquil pond that we call "the lake". The cypress trees that we planted several years ago and the willow trees, which have appeared on their own accord, show leaves the color of a beautiful bed of coals....burnt orange, azo yellow, alizarin crimson reds. Some of the leaves have fallen into the lake and float in the clear and deep emerald green. The lake is beginning to take on the hue of winter. There are still some exotic blue dragon flies that appear around the lake to tease the big mouthed bass and sweet little crappies. The turtles stick their little triangular shaped heads out of the lake to check out what is happening in the world and then quickly go back to their familiar lairs. Mr. Kingfisher rattles from tree to tree as he hunts for thread-fin shad. He is so quick-he always catches something in his ferocious beak.

As I was walking several days ago, I breathed in autumn. The various Texas grasses are just beginning to turn autumnal gold and brown and the aroma is a subtle combination of damp sweet earth and decaying plant life. It is a wonderful experience to actually inhale the taste of the earth in the autumn of the year. The American beauty plants and the bitter weed, the sweet purple wood asters, the goat weed are all telling me that it is autumn in Texas.

Autumn is always bittersweet. The summer is over. The hope of happy experiences, summer soft ball games, and long walks extending into eventide, outdoor barbeques and laughter with friends gives way to shorter days and early darkness. Of course, there can be comfort in darkness. Perhaps, an unread book on the bedside table speaks to be read, long phone calls with old friends or aged parents, a sports game on television which can be shared with friends over popcorn and beer. Darkness can be a way to reconnect with oneself.....that is also bittersweet.

These days, life can be so hectic. It is easy to be caught in the rabble of madness that appears on the news each day....no matter the channel, no matter the political persuasion. Somehow" the news" becomes a soft sort of madness. Goya, the great Spanish artist, created a work of art called" The sleep of Reason brings forth monsters." It is a picture of a man with his head in his hands on his desk. In his dream, he is seeing monsters flying around his head, trying to take over his thoughts and his life. Don't we all feel that way sometimes?

The thing is.....that when walking in the beautiful Texas country side, seeing deer walking the same path that they have walked for generations, hearing the magical Kingfisher flying around his haunt, experiencing the stunning siting of a painted bunting, even hearing those wily wild boar snorting in the woods, one is reminded that life is important, life is beautiful, life is generous and life is absolutely what you believe and what you create on a daily basis. Texas isn't just a piece of beautiful property in the country side.....Texas is an attitude of hope and belief. There is still a feeling of frontier and "can do" in this place that cannot be denied by anyone but the most cynical of beings.

That is all that I have to say for this day.

My best regards,

**Dee Wolff, Rocky Creek WMA**

### Observations from the Grahams

We have been working at restoration since 1998. In all these years we have never seen the variation of plants as this year. No. 1 enemy, Johnson grass has come up in food plots where it has never been before.

Partridge Pea has also surprised us this year in abundance and length of time it was active.

Have seen several grasses that we have not identified yet! Have prepared wheat plots and planted wheat.

Hogs have showed up this year. First time in 6 or 7 years. Since the drought in 2010.

Deer have consumed over 1100 pounds of protein so far this year; Dove left with the flood.

**Bill and Maurine Graham, Amazing Grace Farms, Greenvine WMA**

**Giving Back:**

The money for the monofilament recycling tubes that you, the members of the **Washington County Wildlife Society**, donated last year was put to good use. I was able to make 25 tubes and have placed 5 of those at Lake Somerville and have given one to someone who works on fishing reels. I also reached out to Moore Supply in Brenham to order the supplies need to make the monofilament recycling bins. Moore Supply contacted some other their vendors and they ended getting all the fittings donated . The left over funds, you so graciously donated, I gave to **Coastal Brigades** for this year’s camp monofilament project. I would like to thank you for your generosity and continued support in the **Texas Brigades** and the conservation of Washington County and the surrounding areas.

**Connor Himly, Monofilament Recycler**



At lake Sommerville collecting monofilament



Texas Brigades added Coastal Brigade Camp to the line-up in 2016. This 5-day program encompasses coastal habitat management, fisheries management, coastal ecology and saltwater fishing. The tried and true Brigades model of leadership development, education, and empowerment continues at Coastal Brigade.



All 25 tubes made from donated material

**Washington County Wildlife Society 2017 Deer Report**

A big thank you goes out to all of the society members who spent time recording their incidental sightings in Washington County. The 2017 data set shows that co-op members identified and recorded a total of 8,540 deer resulting in 1,363 bucks, 5,703 does, and 1,474 fawns (Figure 1 Co-op Herd Composition). This calculates to 1 buck per 4.18 does and a county average of a 26% fawn survival rate which is down 11% from last year’s fawn survival rate (Figure 2). Post Oak reported the highest fawn crop of 40% (Figure 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 call if you have any questions.

Stephanie Damron  
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**Co-op Herd Composition 2017**

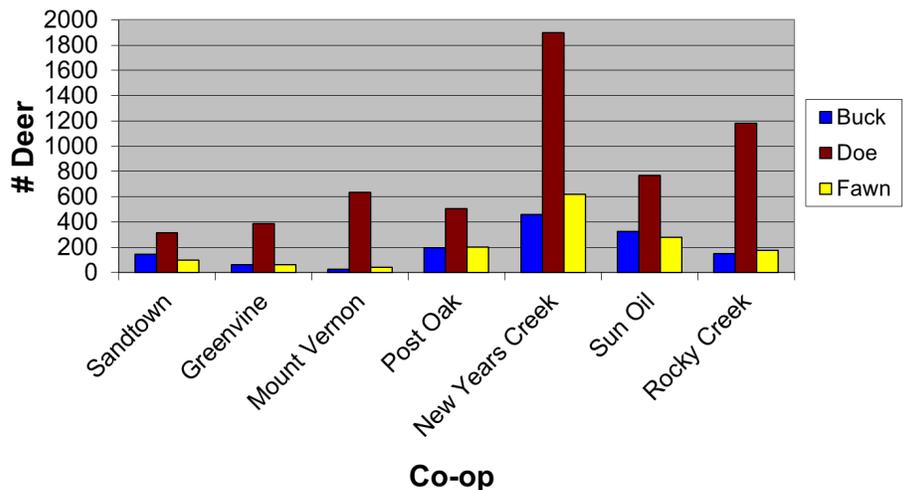
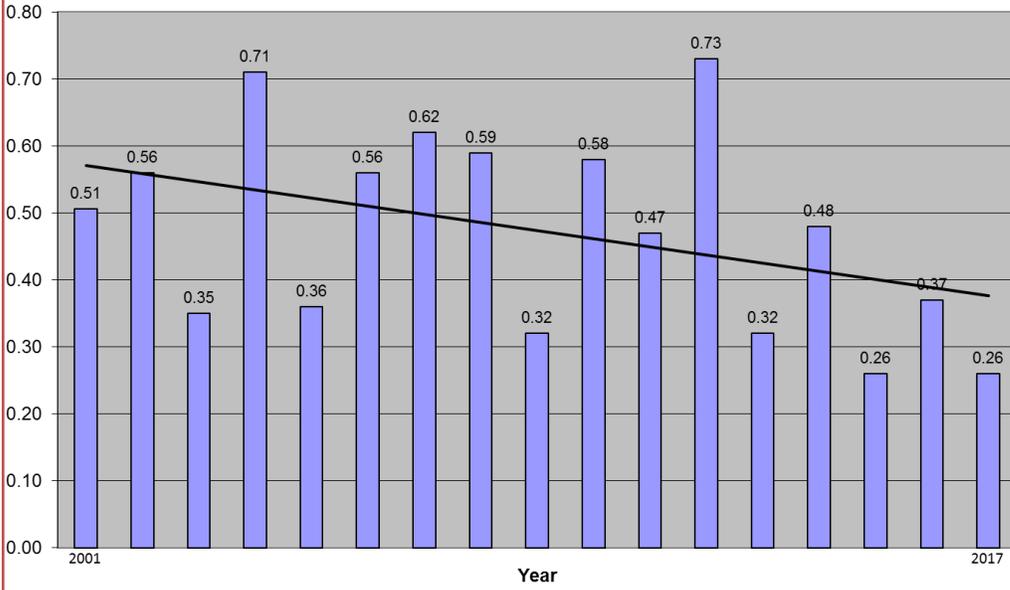


Figure 1

Washington County Percent Fawns  
All WMA's Combined 2001-2017



Washington County  
Wildlife Society 2017 Deer  
Report (continued)

Figure 2

WMA's 2017 PERCENT FAWN SURVIVAL RATE

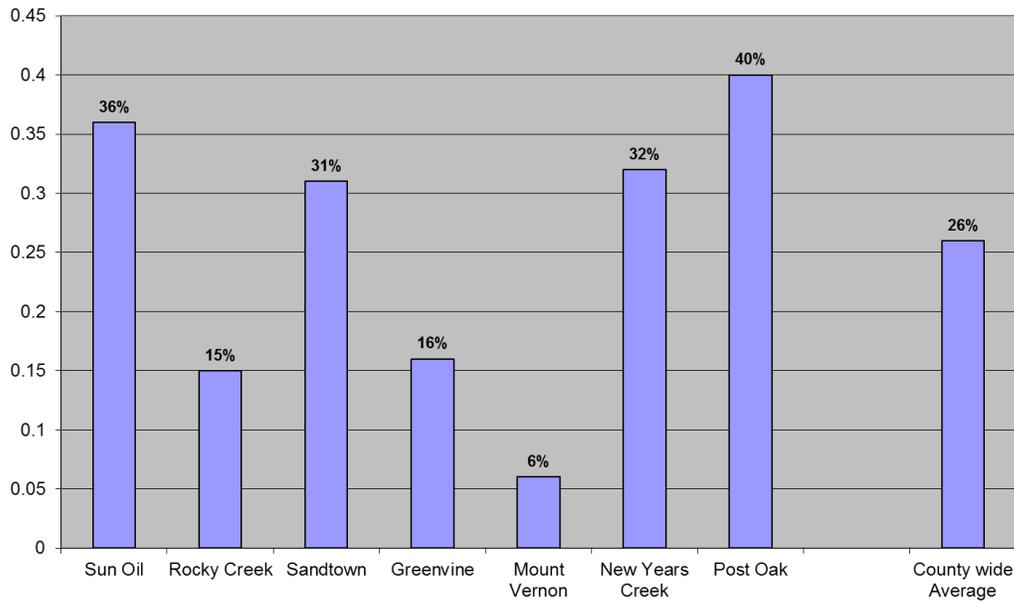


Figure 3



Find the  
Bug!

**A Butterfly in Danger – by Marcia Braun, Certified Master Naturalist**

A Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*) appeared to be stuck to the Purple Porterweed (*Stachytarpheta frantzii*) and was flapping wings but not flying away. I know.... I should have grabbed my phone and videoed the action... instead I grabbed the butterfly and plant for a closer look. In doing so, I freed the Sulphur which took off to visit another flower, seeming unconcerned and all back to normal. The culprit was a Jagged Ambush Bug (Genus *Phymata*) that managed to hide in four tiny purple flowers. Ambush bugs can handle much bigger prey than themselves, including bees and wasps, so butterflies are likely easy prey.

The scientific names are all from iNaturalist. I attended an excellent program at the state conference where Sam Kieschnick, an urban biologist from Ft. Worth, exhorted all Master Naturalists to start using iNaturalist. Since the action took place before the conference, I actually started the bug ID by remembering it was covered in a favorite book, Milkweed, Monarchs and More, by Ba Rea, Karen Oberhauser, and Michael A. Quinn. Further confirmation was made on BugGuide, another very useful website. Always learning!



## Bob, the Snake

I refer you to a picture titled **Have A Seat**. If you're like me on occasion and my wife Susan on far too many occasions and you don't see anything of real interest in the picture, I refer you to the picture titled Really, Have A Seat. You can see Susan through the window about 2 feet from the snake, which is the only way you will ever see Susan 2 feet from a snake. We saw this critter a total of 5 times with 2 on that bench. It was often enough to where Susan named it. Meet Bob.

Bob is your basic Texas Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*). Since I met him twice stretched out against a wall, I could pace off his length at about 4.5 feet. He was pretty laid back and tolerated me very well. However, we have lots of glue traps in the garage and workshop and I knew that some day I would see Bob again ..... on a glue trap. Indeed it happened.

It was a pretty interesting exercise to get him off that glue trap. His front was on a trap inside the garage door and the rest of him was wrapped around the garage wall. It took a non-trivial tug to pull him out. Then I had to use my ever handy Harbor Freight pick up tool to hold the glue trap (sprayed with Goo Gone) in one hand while holding onto Bob right near the trap so I could gently move him around to free him. Bob had about 1 foot worth on the trap leaving about 3.5 feet worth off the trap. He was pretty agitated and was really whipping around so it took 3 or 4 tries to finally grab him in the right spot. After the liberation was done, he slithered off into the flower bed and we never saw him again.

### Tom Scanio, Sun Oil Field WMA



Have a Seat!



Really, Have a Seat!



We are on the Wildlife Conservation Plan and this is a sunset view from our farm on Happy Hollow Lane in Brenham. I had been out driving on the golf cart checking on the deer feeders and motion detector cameras when I captured this.

Enjoy,  
**Marilyn Wolfe-Kirk, Greenvine  
 WMA**



Photos by Dana Banks, Greenvine WMA

### **Washington County Feral Hog Landowner Abatement Assistance Program**

In May of 2016 Washington County participated in the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) County Hog Out Management Program (CHOMP) and successfully qualified for grant funding to offer an additional bounty, contest, educational program, and landowner assistance program. These funds were used to provide a bounty program in Washington County from October 1, 2016 through May 31, 2017. Following the conclusion of the bounty program the remaining funds have been allocated to support a Feral Hog Abatement Cost-Share Program with Washington County Landowners. Each year it is estimated that feral hogs do more than \$500 million dollars in damage to land across the state of Texas. Efforts such as these offer a great opportunity for Texans to band together to protect our property from feral hogs and the immense amount of damage they cause.

**Beginning November 1, 2017 through January 15, 2018** (or until funds are depleted) Washington County will offer a cost-share program for landowners to receive assistance related to feral hog abatement and management. The cost-share rate will be \$75 from landowners and \$175 from the TDA grant funds for a total of \$250 per day (8 hours of services) per qualifying request. Qualifying property must be within Washington County and the claimant must be a Washington County resident or landowner. The Assistance Program will be actively managed by Texas Wildlife Services Department (TWS) with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. All requests will comply with TWS rules and regulations in order to be included in the cost-share program.

Requests will be honored on a first come, first serve basis and during the initial application timeframe only one request per landowner will be accepted. Should funds remain available for the program addition requests will be considered. Anyone wishing to participate is asked to complete the required forms, have the forms notarized within the rules and timeframe in the cost-share program details, and submit payment to the Washington County Courthouse. Completed forms and payment may be delivered to the Washington County Court House to the attention of Commissioner Hueske.

For more information please contact Commissioner Luther Hueske at [wccpct2@hotmail.com](mailto:wccpct2@hotmail.com) or by phone at [979\) 277-6200](tel:979-277-6200). To pick up forms please visit the Washington County Court House or the Washington County Extension Office. Forms can also be found online at <http://www.co.washington.tx.us/> or <http://washington.agrilife.org/>

### **The Great Backyard Bird Count**

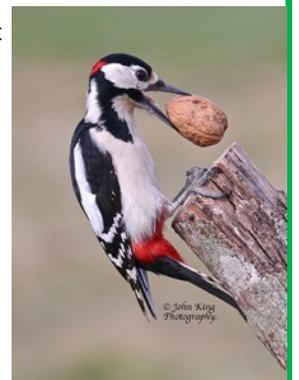
Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, **February 16-19, 2018**, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must [create a free online account](#) to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

[Click here for more info on how to get started.](http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/) (<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/>)



## Black Vulture Chick

by Carol Montgomery and Amy Thomsen, Sandtown WMA

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> this summer, Carol Montgomery our neighbor in the Sandtown Wildlife Area, alerted us to a very large unidentified baby bird in her hay manger. The hatchling was so strange looking; no one was sure what it was. "It really resembled an ant eater at first glance," said Carol.

Upon closer inspection, and some Internet research, the chick, which was not in a nest, or seem to have parents present, fit the description of a Black Vulture. We did not get close enough to get exact measurements of the chick, but it may have been in the range of 12-14" tall, and had a wingspan wider than that. The reason we believe it was a Black Vulture chick and not a Turkey Vulture chick was the tan coloring. Turkey Vulture chicks are much lighter – almost white in color.

Most baffling was, what was this chick doing all by itself in a grain trough, in a hay manger, and why was there no nest?

It turns out that Black Vultures don't really make any sort of recognizable nest. They often lay their eggs right on bare ground, or in this case, the mother may have laid the egg in the grain trough. When the chick heard our activity and we shined flashlights on it, it let us know it was not happy by standing up very tall, fully spreading its wings, and hissing. It seems mother nature's instincts for a vulture chick are to protect itself by appearing as large as possible and producing intimidating sounds.

We left the chick alone, which is the recommendation when you happen across one, and the next day when Carol checked on it, it was gone.

### Black Vultures Characteristics

- Belong to the family Cathartidae, a group of 7 species of New World Vultures.
- Are the heaviest vultures in the Eastern United States.
- Black Vultures, which rarely flap in flight, have broad plank-like wings that allow them to soar in small thermals.
- Search for carrion exclusively by sight. As a result of the Turkey Vulture's acute sense of smell, Black Vultures often follow Turkey Vultures to find food.
- Sometimes take live prey.
- Usually roost together in family units.
- Nest on the ground and on the floors of abandoned buildings.
- The range of Black Vultures has been expanding northwards since the 1950s.

(Hawk Mountain, <http://www.hawkmountain.org/raptorpedia/hawks-at-hawk-mountain/hawk-species-at-hawk-mountain/black-vulture/page.aspx?id=642>)

### Black Vultures versus Turkey Vultures

"Black Vultures have much shorter tails, ending at the toe tips, and they hold their wings nearly flat, unlike a Turkey Vulture's V-shaped posture. ... Red-tailed Hawks are usually pale below, with shorter tails and shorter, broader wings that they hold flat as they soar." [Turkey Vulture, Identification, All About Birds - Cornell Lab of Ornithology](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Turkey_Vulture/id)  
[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Turkey\\_Vulture/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Turkey_Vulture/id)



## Checkerboard Burns, By Gretta Sleeper, Wildlife Habitat Federation

Prescribed burning, especially when implemented in a checkerboard fashion, is a useful tool when it comes to improving your land, as well as enhancing habitat for wildlife. Also known as “patch burning”, this practice provides major benefits for quail and other upland birds. Prescribed burning in general helps to manage woody cover, such as yaupon, Chinese tallow and baccharis, that crowds out desirable native prairie grasses.

The process begins with the disking of fireguards around the perimeter of the burn area, as well as across the middle at specific intervals to create a series of squares, each bordered by a fireguard. The result looks like a tic-tac-toe board.



Photo 1– Prescribed Burn



Photo 2– Checkerboard Burn

The general rule of thumb is to burn 1/3rd or less of your habitat area per year. Thus, only some squares are burned (see photo #1), leaving 2/3rds of the area covered with adequate vertical plant species as nesting, screening, loafing and escape cover for wildlife.

The checkerboard pattern after the burn (photo # 2) has now increased our “edges” several fold. Wildlife can slip from taller cover into a more open space to feed and quickly run back under cover should a threat arise. Burning removes heavy thatch, making it easier for the birds to find seeds on the ground.

The additional fire lanes created with this checkerboard technique will stimulate the growth of forbs, i.e. wooly croton, western ragweed, sunflower, etc., which attract insects that are the major component of a young quail’s diet, and, later in the year, produce seed which is the major component of the diet for mature birds.

After burning (photo # 3), the existing grass plants produce new young shoots. Burning was used by the Indians to draw the bison herds and other wildlife to the palatable new growth. Similarly, current owners can allow their livestock to graze this land if properly managed. By the release of potassium and other inorganic nutrients from the ashes, vegetation in the burn areas responds more rapidly.



Photo 3– New Green Growth 19 Days after Burning

To learn more about practices that will benefit your property, go to [www.whf-texas.org](http://www.whf-texas.org).

*Always consult with qualified professionals, trained and certified, for prescribed burning.*

## HABITIPS

### January

- Prepare fireguards for prescribed burning program.
- Disk in proximity to woody cover to provide habitat interspersions for game birds.
- Get prescribed burn equipment ready.
- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.

### February

- Conduct prescribed burns as needed.
- Begin planting annual seedlings.
- Monitor turkey flocks.
- Conduct mechanical brush control as needed.
- Disk wetland areas to encourage moist soil plants as needed.
- Look for early spring wild-flower blooms - mostly gold colored flowers.
- Hummingbird migration begins.
- Repair and install nest boxes for the nesting season

### March

- If trained begin trapping brown-headed cowbirds.
- Plant native grasses, forbs and legumes.
- Conduct prescribed burns as needed.
- Watch for developing wildflower blooms.

## **Thoughts for the New Year!!!!—Just some thoughts from a guy in Wildlife Management...**

I've spent the better part of this year looking for ways that we can help every landowner get more out of their wildlife management. More enjoyment, more freedom, more flexibility, more effectiveness, more results, more security and more vision for the future. It's not something we think about all the time, but being in WM provides benefits and opportunities that we did not have when we were in traditional Ag. I'm able to take steps now that impact the legacy I leave and I can see some of those results well in advance of them being my legacy. That's pretty cool.

As I try to get my head around all that I want to do on my land I start thinking about how I am different now than I was when my property was being grazed heavily. How I look at my property differently and have higher expectations for the future of my land. I've gone from performing certain activities like feeding cows and shredding fields out of necessity to other activities like predator control and invasive plant management out of a desire to see my land reach its full potential. I've gone from visiting the property to take care of livestock and fences and then leaving, to not wanting to leave when my day's work of treating mesquite or building check dams is done. A change has definitely taken place. I've gone from ownership, to stewardship.

That word "stewardship" used to scare me to death. I thought it was something meant only for those who knew more than I did about the land, or had much better access to help and much deeper pockets than I did. Who was I to consider myself a "land steward"? How could I ever attain so lofty a title? Then I realized, being a steward is less about what I know and more about what is in my heart, what I want to see, what I desire for my land, and most importantly what I choose to do with that desire. I did not care this much about my land when my land was being grazed. Not because I didn't think the land was important and valuable and a legacy for my family, but because I didn't see any where that I could make a difference. Now I see opportunities all around me, and I kind of like thinking of myself as a "steward".

In case you also feel like the idea of being a land steward is beyond your reach, here are a few examples of what I consider good stewardship that I have witnessed in the last year.

- Thinned mesquite in a terribly overgrown area that was basically choked off by this invasive species. Did so with my kids and got to explain to them why we were leaving some mesquites for structure rather than clearing all without any thought about the end result. Half cut some of those mesquites and had a great conversation with another landowner about how I knew that would not kill them, and that was the point. We all learned something.
- Sat in a pop up blind with my daughter and documented various species of wildlife that happened by a baited area. Laughed hard when a hawk landed on the blind and I fell out of my seat. Talked about the health of the animals we saw and what we thought that might mean about the health of the property. Confirmed what I thought with a Biologist. We're doing OK.
- Checked nest boxes with my kids before and after breeding season. Found lots of evidence of activity in these, and a bunch of fledglings! Got to explain to my kiddos that it was OK to pick up the baby birds that hopped out of one nest box onto the ground. Pick them up and put them back in, they'll be fine.
- Disced part of a pasture and raked in some native grass seed. Went back to check on it and watched its progress much like you would a garden. Placed some of the same seed in a pot at the house so we could identify what we saw growing in the field. It's just a few strips for now, but it's a start.
- Set the kids out on a fire ant Easter egg hunt. Fire ant bait and cameras in hand. Most pictures got to choose where we ate on the way home. Getting video of fire ants taking bait into a mound was a bonus, and got to pick dessert. We've got to do all we can for those little birdies they now have a new appreciation for now.

As you can probably see, none of this took any special skill or even knowledge to accomplish, and this is just a piece of the fun we had on our place this year. It's not grand scale and it may not even be particularly meaningful to anyone other than me and my family, but steward we did. And stewards we will continue be, until the cows come home. And that'll probably be a while.

I knew very little about what was possible on my property until I became involved in my wildlife management program. I have the good fortune to work for Plateau Land & Wildlife which has certainly helped. I learned quickly that what seemed impossible was well within reach with a little creativity and planning. Watching and helping a property recover and knowing you had even a small part in stewarding that along is one of the greatest rewards of being in Wildlife Management. I wish you all good fortune and good stewardship.

**Tim Milligan, Landowner Services, Plateau Land and Wildlife Management.**

## Creature Feature — Eastern Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale putorius*)

The Eastern Spotted Skunk is quite different from the Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). The spotted skunk is smaller and thinner. Also as the name implies, it is spotted! It has a white spot on its forehead and a spot in front of each ear. It also has four lateral stripes on its back and the middle two are broken. There are two interrupted horizontal bands on the skunk's backend, has two spots on its rump and the end of the tail is white. A typical length for a male spotted skunk is 515mm (20.78in) from nose to tail and females are 473mm (18.62in). Their weights respectively is 680g (1.5lbs) and 450g (0.99lbs). They are nocturnal like other skunk species, but more alert and active .

Most often spotted skunks are found in rocky canyons and outcroppings in wooded areas and tall-grass prairies; also commonly found in old bars and abandon buildings. They are also skilled climbers so they may even be found in tree hollows or attics of old buildings and of course they can burrow in the ground. These skunks also rely heavily on agriculture for food, in the winter has a diet primarily of cottontail rabbits and corn; in the spring field mice and insects; in the summer insects and small mammals, fruits, birds, and birds' eggs; and in the fall, insects, mice, fruits and birds, so if you have a spotted skunk it will keep the mice away.



Photo by John and Gloria Tveten



Photo courtesy of eMammal

Generally, spotted skunks mate once a year in March but some females will produce a second litter in July and August. The gestation period is typically 50-65 days and a litter will typically have between 4-5 and up to 9 kits. The kits are blind , about the size of a ping pong ball, yet have very distinct markings. They grow very quickly and are nearly full grown at 3 months and sexual maturity is reached at 9-10 months.

Their predators are dogs, coyotes, foxes, cats, bobcats, owls, and guns. Before their most well know defense sprays out 4-5m (13-16ft) they do several handstands as a warning. The IUCN status is currently unknown but it is thought that the reduced number of insects caused by heavy use of insecticide and increasing fire ant colonies could be affecting populations across the species' distribution area. It should also be noted that there are only 41 "sightings" on iNaturalist and most of the photos provided are not of the living animal.

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