

WASHINGTON COUNTY
Wildlife



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NEWSLETTER

Summer 2006

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Feral Hog Management

Program Presented By

Dr. Jim Cathey

Texas Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist



Female feral hogs may have as many as 10 to 13 piglets per litter. With adequate nutrition, a feral hog population can double in 4 months.

Dr. Jim Cathey, Ph.D., Certified Wildlife Biologist and current President of Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society as well as assistant professor and extension wildlife specialist.

Cathey, who received a doctoral degree in wildlife sciences from Texas Tech University in 1997, also holds master's and bachelor's degrees in wildlife and fisheries sciences from Texas A&M.

Feral hogs (or Wild Hogs) continue to grow in numbers in Texas and elsewhere. Because of their destructive feeding habits and potential to spread disease, feral hogs are a substantial liability to agriculture and native wildlife in Texas.

Please join us on **August the 25th** for this interesting and informative program. The program will be held at "Camp for All" in the Burton area (6301 Rehburg Rd.) The social will begin at 6:00 pm with fried fish and all of the trimmings served at 6:30 pm. Cost of the meal will be \$5 per person. The Camp for All staff, invites all to come early to view their Nature Center and facilities. **A dessert table will be available if you would like to bring your favorite dessert.**

Please RSVP to the Washington County Cooperative Extension office by August 18th.
(979) 277-6212

Presidents Remarks,

Hello Members,

Looks like Spring has given way to Summer. I want to thank everyone for sending in your wildlife surveys, we are gathering a lot of useful information. Soon we will start implementing some of these ideas so look for them in our upcoming newsletters and on our website www.wcwildlife.org.

Also, the Society is here to assist you in enhancing wildlife and its habitat for all to enjoy. We need to utilize the talents of existing membership. If anyone would like to take an active role please contact your director or myself, there is plenty of fun work to go around.

Lastly, I'd like to thank everyone for their donations made through the first part of the year and our newest lifetime members Nelson and Sara Byman of Greenvine.

Hope to see you Aug 25!!!
Billie Eckert

"A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children."

- Audubon

ENCOURAGE BAT HABITATS?

Meg Goodman, Texas Parks & Wildlife

Did you know that the Mexican free-tailed bat can fly at speeds of 60 mph, and eats 1,000 tons of insects every night. In fact the Mexican free-tailed bats are the Lance Armstrong of the bat world- very aerodynamic, high endurance and high speed flyers.

Texas has over 33 species of bats on record, according to bat expert Meg Goodman, Texas Parks and Wildlife's state bat coordinator. This is more than any other state in the United States.

You don't have to build a cave to invite bats on your land. A bat house or providing adequate water sources is a step in the right direction. According to Goodman, "even small steps toward bat conservation can have long term impacts on Texas' ecology". There are several ways to help bats: a. Provide water sources, which is critical for any wildlife creature. b. Leave snags and mature trees in the landscape. c. Leave old buildings or barns stand. These can be good bat houses for many species. d. Clean up trash from caves and water sources. By removing debris and trash this eliminates death traps for bats and birds as well.

Don't be misled by bat myths. Less than one half of 1 percent of bats contract rabies. According to Bat World Sanctuary --Bats are exceptionally long lived and some species can live up to 34 years. Most bats navigate with high-frequency sounds. They can detect obstacles as fine as a human hair in total darkness. No they do not attack people or become entangled in human hair, contrary to most beliefs. Seventy percent of all bats eat insects, while most of the remaining eat fruit, pollen and nectar. To learn more about bats, you can contact Meg Goodman with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (512) 912-7042, or e-mail meg.goodman@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Time to I. D. some Deer

Starting August 1st members should begin to log deer sightings within the county. See instructions on reverse side of enclosed form. Please take some time and go out and identify some deer, log them onto the form according to instructions.



Why do a Quail Survey in Washington County?

by Robert Lehmann, Texas Parks & Wildlife

The question of “Why Survey” has come up several times since the quail survey cards were mailed. Several members have said, “You don’t need a survey to tell there’s not any quail left in the county”. If this is true then let the survey speak, but on the other hand if there is a few remnant populations hanging on in the county then let them be identified also.

Robert Lehmann, Texas Parks & Wildlife Environmental Specialist believes there are some isolated spots that still have some wild quail within them, but things really don’t look very promising. Quail are a very unique bird because they prefer to walk throughout most of their daily routines, which creates a home range much smaller than most other bird species. If food is scarce in an area, many other species of birds will just fly to another area sometimes many miles away to find food. But for a quail all their food, water and cover must be located within walking distance and they must have a safe route to get them there.

On a positive note quail are ‘manageable’ if you have them and know where are. They will respond positively to any improvements you make to their lifestyle. This is why it is so very important to know if we still have quail and where they are. A few minor food and cover changes in the home range of a quail could be the difference of having or not having quail. Please take time to do a little listening and looking to help determine if there is any quail in the county. Please report quail sighting or males you hear calling so we can organize efforts to help and preserve what few quail we may have and hopefully expand the numbers and the areas they occupy.

If you have any questions or comments please contact Robert Lehmann (979) 277-6297 or visit his office at 1305 E. Bluebell in the Washington County Office Annex Bldg.

Guidelines for Qualification of Agricultural Land in Wildlife Management

To qualify for agricultural appraisal under the wildlife management use, first the **land must be qualified for agricultural appraisal under Chapter 23, Subchapter D, Tax Code** (also called 1-d-1 or open space agricultural appraisal), at the time the owner changes use to wildlife management use.

The second requirement for qualified wildlife management use is that the **land must be used to propagate a sustaining breeding, migrating or wintering population of *indigenous* wild animals** for human use, including food, medicine, or recreation.

Under the law, an owner must perform at least three of seven listed wildlife management activities on the land. An owner may qualify by doing more than three, but may not engage in fewer than three of the following activities:

- **Habitat Control (Habitat Management).** A wild animal's habitat is its surroundings as a whole, including plants, ground cover, shelter and other animals on the land. Habitat control—or habitat management—means actively using the land to create or promote an environment that is beneficial to wildlife on the land.
- **Erosion Control.** Any active practice that attempts to reduce or keep soil erosion to a minimum for the benefit of wildlife is erosion control.
- **Predator Control (Predator Management).** This term means practices intended to manage the population of predators to benefit the owner's target wildlife population. Predator control is usually not necessary unless the number of predators is harmful to the desired wildlife population.
- **Providing Supplemental Supplies of Water.** Natural water exists in all wildlife environments. Supplemental water is provided when the owner actively provides water in addition to the natural sources.
- **Providing Supplemental Supplies of Food.** Most wildlife environments have some natural food. An owner supplies supplemental food by providing food or nutrition in addition to the level naturally produced on the land.
- **Providing Shelter.** This term means actively creating or maintaining vegetation or artificial structures that provide shelter from the weather, nesting and breeding sites or “escape cover” from enemies.
- **Making Census Counts to Determine Population.** Census counts are periodic surveys and inventories to determine the number, composition or other relevant information about a wildlife population to measure if the current wildlife management practices are serving the targeted species.

These activities are explained in detail in the Comptroller's Manual for the Appraisal of Agricultural Land. Go to our website www.wcwildlife.org to access this document or to obtain a copy, write the Comptroller, Property Tax Division, P.O. Box 13528, Austin, TX 78711-5328.

WCWS Membership Survey Results – Spring 2006

*Dave Redden, Director, New Years Creek WMA
and Richard Thames, Society Secretary*

There was a strong response to our recent survey of WCWS membership survey of interest and practices. We received 90 responses from the 526 surveys sent out. That is a 17.11 % response, which is pretty impressive. The directors thank you for taking the time to give us your input on how you would like to see us direct our future programs and to tell us where you are directing your personal efforts for wildlife improvement. Here are our findings from the survey.

Reasons for membership in WCWS

Most of our members are interested in participating in WCWS to learn about wildlife for their personal enjoyment, with the emphasis being on observation (non-consumptive use) rather than harvesting game. The majority of members also appreciate the social aspect of the society and are eager to find ways to work with their neighbors to improve wildlife in the county. Most members have low or no interest in using wildlife for commercial purposes, either for hunting or eco-tourism.

Wildlife support activities

WCWS members responding to the survey are doing a lot to support wildlife. Bird feeding, nestbox building are common activities. Nestboxes are also popular ways to help wildlife, with bluebird boxes being the most common. Food plots for deer and other game are also popular ways to help.

Interest in future wildlife co-op programs

The ranking of the areas of interest are shown below with the most frequently suggested activity at the top to the least suggested activity at the bottom. The percentage besides each indicates the percentage of respondents indicating a preference for this type of activity. Since it was possible to vote form more than one activity, the total percentage is more than 100.

- More education on improving habitat - 70%
- Bird identification programs - 50%
- News on current TPWD and TCE programs and regulations - 44%
- Butterfly and wildflower programs - 44%
- More emphasis on social events - 17%
- Recruiting programs to attract new members - 24%
- More education on game harvest management - 14%
- Hunter safety programs - 12%
- Other - 8%

Some of the "other" ideas suggested were:

- Visiting others' properties to see their successes
- Visit herb farm at Festival Hill
- Pond improvement programs
- Feral hog control programs
- Native grass identification and education
- Education on how to get agricultural tax appraisal for wildlife management.

Are your neighbors members of Washington County Wildlife Society and your local co-op?

This question was intended to see how effective we are at attempting to have a broader impact on wildlife by forming cooperative efforts. Discontinuity of land with similar management practices reduces the effectiveness. Based on the response, it appears we have some opportunity to improve our cooperative efforts by getting more of our neighbors involved with us.

Thank you again for your support on this survey. We hope to make this an ongoing process to try to improve our cooperative efforts at wildlife support and management. We will use your feedback to structure our programs in the future. Check out the WCWS website at www.wcwildlife.org or wait for the next newsletter.

Instructions

- ★ 1. Observations are made by identifying (not guessing) the sex and age class of a deer or group of deer.
- ★ 2. Identify deer as bucks, doe or fawns. Use binoculars to aid in positive identification. (Five positively identified deer are better information than fifty guesses.) If possible log bucks by antler size, otherwise log as buck (other). If any deer has an ear tag, record color and number if possible.
- ★ 3. If the same group of deer are seen on different occasions, they should be recorded each time.
- ★ 4. If only part of a group can be identified, then none of that group should be recorded. (Example: If you see three deer standing at the edge of the woods and two run off before you can identify all three, then do not log any deer in that group.)
- ★ 5. Log observations from **August 1st** through **September 15th**, then fold, tape and place stamp for mailing.

First fold here

Place
Stamp
Here

Mr. Robert Lehmann
Texas Parks & Wildlife
1305 E. Blue Bell Rd.
Brenham TX. 77833

Second fold here

AUGUST						
	START	1 X	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 X
6 X	7 X	8 X	9 X	10 X	11 X	12 X
13 X	14 X	15 X	16 X	17 X	18 X	19 X
20 X	21 X	22 X	23 X	24 X	25 X	26 X
27 X	28 X	29 X	30 X	31 X		

SEPTEMBER						
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3 X	4 X	5 X	6 X	7 X	8 X	9 X
10 X	11 X	12 X	13 X	14 X	15 X	16 X
17 X	18 X	19 X	20 X	21 X	22 X	23 X
24 X	25 X	26 X	27 X	28 X	29 X	30 X