

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Wildlife Society



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Operation Game Thief targets poaching, wildlife crimes

[Operation Game Thief](#) is Texas' wildlife Crime-stoppers program, offering rewards of up to \$1,000.00 for information leading to the arrest and conviction for a wildlife crime. Begun in 1981 as a result of laws passed by the 67th Legislature to help curtail poaching, the program, a function of the law enforcement division of Texas Parks and Wildlife, is highly successful. In the last ten years OGT has provided over \$600,000 in grants to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for the purchase of specialized and technologically advanced equipment for Texas game wardens. Privately funded, the program is dependent on financial support from the public through the purchase of OGT memberships and merchandise, donations, sponsorships, and gifts.

Why Operation Game Thief Is Important

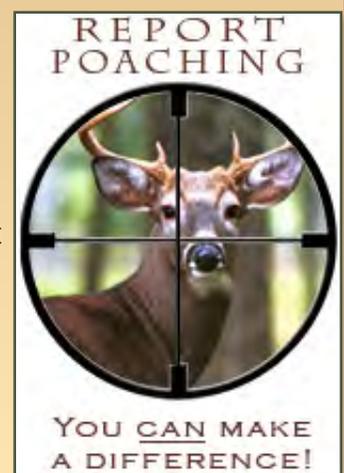
Texas, as we all know, is a vast State with an already huge, ever burgeoning population. There are over 24 million people inhabiting 254 counties that encompass 262,017 square miles of land area, and over 3 million surface acres of water. Currently, approximately 530 wardens, including supervisory personnel, are responsible for patrolling this vast area for the purposes of enforcement of our states hunting and fishing laws. It is evident from these figures that the wardens need all the eyes and ears they can get to assist in the intervention of the ever increasing, money driven, exploitation of the wildlife resources of this state.

Numerous examples of this exploitation exist. Mature white-tailed bucks are killed on midnight runs, then beheaded, leaving the meat behind, in anticipation of selling the bragging-sized rack to a well-to-do, unsuccessful hunter. Various freshwater and saltwater fish, including white bass, crappie, striped and hybrid striped bass, catfish, redfish, specked trout, flounder, black drum and others are being taken through the use of illegal nets in large quantities, and without regard for size or bag limits. Shrimp and oysters are often harvested in illegal quantities and from areas closed to harvest. The product is then sold, both in and out of state, to select restaurants, wholesale and retail fish dealers, even to individuals from vacant city lots located in high traffic metropolitan areas. Even birds, snakes, turtles, mussels, and protected plants fall prey to these unscrupulous operators.

Unlike the opportunist poacher who shoots a deer from the roadside after an unanticipated encounter on his way home, or the twice a year crappie fisherman who justifies his over the bag limit harvest to himself as "making up for the times he can't get off work to fish," these perpetrators are no more than thieves who steal all they can get while they can get it, all in the name of making money. And the best of them apply their trade with a skill steeped in years of experience, often using tricks of the trade passed on from one generation to the next. How large is the scope of this illegal commerce? No one knows for sure. While most of us tend to think of what is in our immediate area, the fact is that illegal operations routinely cross state lines, and ample evidence exists that many operations have global contacts.

What can you do to help resolve this problem? Get involved at your own level. Alert observation by concerned citizens such as yourself, followed by immediate reporting of the suspected violation, gives the local warden a much-needed edge in catching the bad guys. Operation Game Thief is the mechanism that allows you to get immediately involved and quickly get that information to the warden. Receiving a tip on illegal activity while it is occurring can make a significant difference in whether or not the violator is apprehended. Even if the offender has left the scene before the warden can get there, there may be critical evidence, or even other witnesses with important information, that can be used to make a case in court. Make the poachers know that you won't sit idly by while they exploit our resources. Pick up the phone and call **1-800-792-GAME**. Remember YOU can make a difference! The reward hotline is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Over the life of the program, more than 28,000 calls have been received and investigated.

For more information on the Operation Game Thief program, contact TPWD Game Warden, **Mark Frayser** at (979) 412-3140.



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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Many thanks to everyone for another successful fundraiser this past August, which would not have happened had it not been for the volunteer efforts and the support given to the Society. Also a hearty thank you to the speakers, **Celeste Dickschat, Brian Robert, Natalie James and Stephanie Damron** for their very informative talk regarding their agencies/groups and the volunteer opportunities within our community.



Thank you to the 35+ generous individuals and companies who have helped us raise \$10,920 so far. We were able to achieve our goal of \$10,000 for 2016 with over two months left in the year. This depth of financial support from so many donors is strong validation of our organization and its missions impact in the community. If you or someone that you know would enjoy supporting WCWS as a donor or volunteer, please let us know and we will be glad to help facilitate.

Washington County Wildlife Society would like to thank the following for their generous donations made at our 2016 Fundraiser:

AG Farms - Maurine & Bill Graham	Dr. Henry & Teddy Boehm
Appel Ford	Felder's Buy & Bye
Arnie Zernicek, CPA	H & H Agri-Service
ATS Irrigation	Honest To Goodness Growers
B K Auto Repair	Larry Joe & Joanne Doherty
Blue Bell Creameries	Mike Hopkins Distributing Premier
Bob Welker	MB/Budget Roll Offs
Brenham Chrysler Jeep Dodge	Rau's Meat Center
Brenham National Bank	RE/MAX Advantage - Boo Christensen
Brenham Produce	Robert's Service Station
Brenham Tire and Auto	T3 Trailers
Brick & Debby Peele	Texas Farm Credit
Capital Farm Credit - Bellville	Texas Wildlife Association
Cattleman's Supply, Inc.	Thrivent Financial - Marvin Spreen
Creekside Veterinary Services	Thrivent Financial - Ray Weiss
Dave & Jan Redden	Trails End, LLC - Nicholas Villarreal

Please take time to notice the list of generous donors to our 2016 fundraising campaign kick off and be sure to share your appreciation with them. We hope you enjoy this newsletter!

Richard Thames, Society President

ADDRESS CHANGES: For address changes, or to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact **Richard Thames**, (979) 278-3053, rbthames@industryinet.com

Food Plots for Wildlife

By Stephanie Damron, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Food plots may increase the value of hunting leases, make deer more visible for viewing opportunities, and improve the diet quality of deer. However, planting food plots is not a replacement for poor habitat management. Maintaining deer densities within the carrying capacity of the habitat, sound livestock grazing management, and maintaining quality habitat should be the first priorities of any management program.

Food plots should not be considered a substitute for good management. They should be considered as "supplements" to the native habitat, not as a "cure-all" for low quality or poorly managed habitats.

Landowners will need to decide what, when and where to plant depending on each individual situation. Perennials do not require planting every year, but they produce less forage than annuals. All food plots should be fenced from livestock and warm-season annual food plots should be protected from deer until they are established.

To improve diet quality, a ranch should have one cool-season and one warm-season food plot per square mile. Plot size depends on animal density and property size. The size and number of plots that can be established may be limited by lack of farmable soils. Rectangular-shaped plots are preferred to long, narrow plots. Food plots are the most productive if all woody plants inside the plots are removed. When planting legumes, care should be taken to inoculate them properly. In semiarid habitats, skip row planting may increase plant survival and reduce seed costs. In addition to the establishment and maintenance of native openings, supplemental forages (food plots) can be managed to improve diversity and production. Planted food plots can provide a highly nutritious food source that can be beneficial to wildlife during periods of stress. To minimize the distance that wildlife must travel, openings should be distributed across the property as much as possible. It is always best to establish a variety of plantings to provide more diversity and to insure against the failure of one type of planting. It is essential that food plots are properly fertilized and limed in order to receive the maximum benefit. Each food plot should have a soil test in order to determine the correct lime and fertilizer rates.

Since late summer and late winter are often stressful periods of the year for wildlife, both warm season and cool season food plots can be established. During the dry summer months, as plant growth slows, the nutrient levels in native vegetation are much lower than when the plants are actively growing during the spring. Warm season plantings include cowpeas, alyceclover and American jointvetch. While alyceclover, jointvetch, and cowpeas are annuals, the jointvetch will reseed if it is allowed to produce seed and then mowed in the fall. In order to insure proper growth, all warm season plantings should be planted on bottomland sites (if possible) where soil moisture will be sufficient during the summer to insure proper growth. Cool season plantings include combinations of elbon rye, clovers, rye grass, and wheat. Cereal grains such as rye and wheat will benefit quail, turkeys, and songbirds in the spring.

Planting food plots is an excellent way to improve available nutrition, increase the carrying capacity and concentrate wildlife on your property. Food plots do not take the place of habitat management in general, but are intended to augment the quantity and quality of food occurring naturally in an area.

What About Clover?

By Stephanie Damron, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Clovers are plants that are highly preferred by deer and other wildlife species. Clovers are classified as a legume and have the ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. There are many varieties of clover such as Arrowleaf, Ball, Berseem, Crimson, Red, Yellow, White, Sweet and Subterranean. Certain clovers are very particular to the pH and texture of the soil, the first step in planting clovers is to match the correct variety of clover to your soil. Many of the clovers are excellent re-seeder and replanting may not be necessary for several years.

Clover Planting Clovers should be planted in a prepared (disked) seedbed from mid-September to mid-October. Land preparation is necessary for early clover plantings to remove competition from summer weeds and grasses. This also allows for more precise clover seed placement which results in better stands. When over seeding into an undisturbed summer grass sod, planting should be delayed until early October to early November. The later planting date is necessary to reduce summer grass competition to the emerging clover seedlings. On a sandy soil, a light disking (2-3 in.) of a Bermuda grass or Bahia grass sod will improve clover establishment and early seedling growth.

What About Clover - Cont.

Clover Inoculation Clovers are only able to use nitrogen from the air if specific strains of Rhizobium bacteria are present in nodules on their roots. To ensure that the best strain of Rhizobium bacteria is present for each clover species, inoculants is applied to the clover seed before planting (inoculation process). Inoculants consist primarily of finely ground peat moss which acts as a carrier for the Rhizobium bacteria. Inoculants which also include an adhesive to hold the inoculants to the seed and aid in keeping the bacteria alive in dry soil are superior to inoculants without an adhesive. Good clover seed inoculation is especially important the first time a clover species is planted in a new area.

Step-by-Step Planting Guide

1. Select planting site, then soil test to determine soil pH and any nutrient deficiencies.
2. Select best adapted and otherwise suitable clover species for planting site.
3. Check with seed retailer at least 2 weeks before desired planting date in case selected clover species or inoculant is not in stock.
4. If planting on a disked seedbed, apply needed phosphorus, potassium, and minor nutrients before final land preparation. If planting on an undisturbed sod, delay fertilization until crop is up and has at least one leaf.
5. Inoculate clover seed within 24 hours of planting and store in shade until ready to plant. Sunlight and/or hot temperatures can kill the Rhizobia bacteria on the inoculated seed. If using coated preinoculated seed, store in a cool shaded area.
6. If clover is planted alone, do not apply any nitrogen fertilizer. If clover is planted with winter annual grasses some nitrogen fertilizer may be needed.

Planting information courtesy of Texas A&M University, Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Overton:
(<http://overton.tamu.edu/clover/guide/index.htm>).

WCWS Generously Supports Coastal Brigade Cadet**Connor Himly explains...**

This past summer I attended Coastal Brigades, a part of the Texas Brigades Program. Brigades is a 5-day leadership/conservation camp based on the study of wildlife conservation. Part of the learning process of Brigades is that after camp you reach out to the community and talk about what you learned at camp. On Friday, August 19, 2016, Cadets from the brigade's program were invited to the Washington County Wildlife Society meeting. At the meeting, we discussed the Texas Brigades program, the Texas L.A.N.D.S. program and the Outdoor Education program. At the end of the meeting I was provided an opportunity to discuss a monofilament recycling program. During Coastal Brigades camp we learned about the effects of the monofilament fishing line and our environment and the need to provide the ability to recycle this line. This prompted me to contact park rangers at Somerville Lake to provide the ability to set up monofilament recycle bins at Somerville Lake. What happened next left me speechless. Members of the Washington County Wildlife Society began donating money to help me start my recycling program. Through their generosity I will be able to build over 20 recycling bins to be placed at Somerville Lake. I want to thank the Washington County Wildlife Society for their support of the Texas Brigade and L.A.N.D.S. program and building future leaders today. If you would like to learn more about Texas Brigades at www.texasbrigades.org or the monofilament recycling program you can contact me, Connor Himly at chimly.monorecycle@gmail.com.

Every day, improperly discarded monofilament fishing line causes devastating problems for marine life and the environment. Marine mammals, sea turtles, fish and birds become injured from entanglements, or might ingest the line, often dying as a result. Human divers and swimmers are also at risk from entanglements and the line can also damage boat propellers.



Connor Himly displays his monofilament recycling bin

Prescribed Fire for Land Stewardship – Part 3 Making a Plan

By Dave Redden, Director, Washington County Coordinator, South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association

One of the distinguishing characteristics between a “prescribed burn” and what is sometimes called a “controlled burn” is that a prescribed burn has a written plan to achieve specific objectives. The objectives may be to improve the environment for wildlife or agriculture, or they may include the desire to reduce fuel loads to minimize the chance of wildfire. Whatever your objectives are, your plan for how you are going to use fire to achieve them should be written to help in communicating your plan to your helpers and to document that you are following accepted best practices in using fire as a tool for land management. There is no law that says you must have a written plan and there is no agency for you as a landowner to submit your plan so that you can get a “permit” to burn. Texas law allows you as a landowner to burn on your property if there is not a burn ban in effect or other restrictions that would prohibit it. County governments control when a burn ban is in effect, and most cities or towns prohibit outdoor burning in the city limits.

A written plan is for your benefit. It helps you coordinate the exercise and it helps insure you are not forgetting something that is considered an expectation of reasonable behavior. If your burn becomes a wildfire and you end up having to explain in a court why you were burning and why you thought this could be done safely, this is your documentation. All the state and federal agencies that use prescribed fire have their own standards for what should be included in the plan. However, they all contain similar elements, and these become the “standard of care” that you will be expected to follow in your burn.

Basic Elements of a Burn Plan

- General information on landowner’s name and contact information, location of the area to be burned, and information on who is going to be in charge of conducting the burn.
- Your objectives that you hope to achieve with the burn.
- County and state agencies that you will contact to notify prior to burning and sometimes after burning is complete.
- A list of neighbors with their contact information so that you can keep them informed of your plans so that they are not surprised when you ignite the pasture next to them.
- A description of the area you plan to burn, including how much fuel (usually grass), and any other factors that may affect fire behavior.
- A description of the protection plan you have for keeping the fire contained. This includes firebreaks and any other features that will prevent the fire from escaping the burn area.
- The number of helpers and a list of equipment that you plan to have available to conduct the burn.
- The range of weather conditions that you will need to get the fire behavior to achieve your objectives safely. This is usually wind speed, wind direction, temperature, relative humidity, and fuel moisture.
- Your smoke management plans so that you avoid putting smoke on roads or inhabited buildings.
- A map of the area showing how you plan to ignite the fire and keep it contained for the assumed weather conditions.

There are burn plan templates available from TPWD, NRCS and other agencies. The South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association has its own plan template with a user’s manual and can help you prepare a plan.

Next, you need to be weather sensitive to be able to burn safely. Stay tuned.



NRCS Improves Soils Data for Growing Customer Base

By Ben Garcia, NRCS District Conservationist

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) updated soil data for each of the 3,265 soil survey areas mapped over the last 118 years. This massive effort took fifteen months of programming that moved the many databases to a new data structure as well as updated all software to provide more efficient and cost-effective systems for future soil survey enhancements. The spatial (soil polygons) and tabular (physical and chemical properties) data for all soil survey areas are available free from Web Soil Survey (WSS) at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>. This site is the most widely used web site for accessing soil information used to make important land use decisions. This is the first major update of software and data since WSS came online in August 2005.

This updating has enhanced customer service, upgraded all software and databases, improved spatial data, and provided a complete suite of soil interpretations. In addition, the agency will implement an annual refresh of soil data to be done each October thereby providing customers assurance that they are using static, versioned, and official soils data in support of land use decisions.

Improvements to the spatial data include a complete spatial soil survey boundary layer and a map unit polygon layer with no gaps or overlays within the Continental United States. This is a major accomplishment in the Agency's desire to move to a truly seamless SSURGO spatial database. The National Soil Survey Center's GIS and digitizing unit staffs improved the quality assurance procedures and applications to help eliminate spatial errors. Customers can now be assured that soils information is complete for use in spatial analysis.

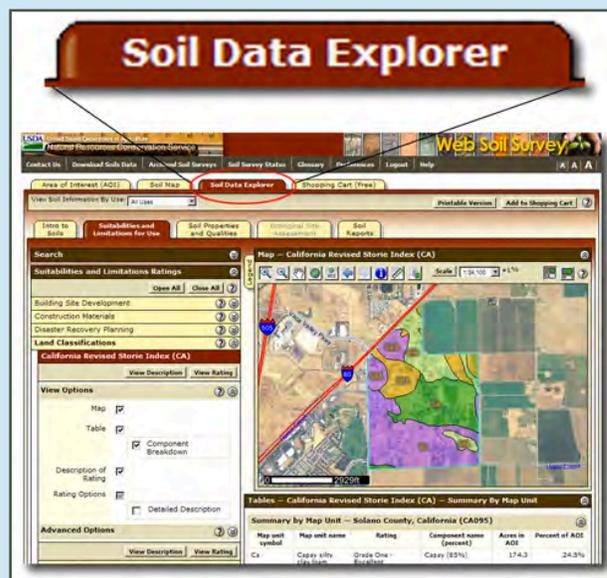
This release also includes the Resource Area (MLRA) update the initial phase of the soil are evaluated on a regional intent of improving soil data 100 years of data to a common soil data to flow seamlessly counties. Customers will begin of the soils data as the map boundaries.

State Soil Scientists exported Survey. Each soil survey now interpretations giving users the regionally, multi-state or across

The 53rd Congress originated Appropriations Act of 1896 for agricultural lands of the United important during the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s when the Soil Conservation Service needed soils information to improve conservation efforts to decrease soil erosion. The Congressional mandated United States soil survey has reached another major milestone in providing the information to Congress and land use planners necessary for the management of natural resources. The NRCS soil survey program has met the demands of an ever changing customer base and ever changing technology from its roots as an inventory of agricultural lands into a massive soil spatial and attribute database that no other country in the world possesses. NRCS is committed to delivering science-based soils information that helps people be good stewards of the Nation's soil, water, and related natural resources.

Every month more than 180,000 users access the Web Soil Survey, resulting in the creation of more than 20,000 printable soil survey reports and more than 75,000 individual soil property/interpretation reports. In addition, more than 25,000 soil survey data exports are downloaded, making the Web Soil Survey the most frequently used USDA web site. The systems that make up the Web Soil Survey needed updating to improve the end product. Customers now have new spatial and updated tabular soil data at their disposal. This gives the customer better tools for making their resource assessments and conservation plans.

Web Soil Survey now provides a tool to track updates for specific soil survey areas. Individuals interested in this feature can go to [Web Soil Survey](http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/) and click on "Subscribe" in the menu bar and follow the online directions.



first set of soil survey Major Land projects. This "harmonization" effort is survey update process. The map units scale identifying commonalities with the quality necessary to bring the more than standard. This update process allows across political boundaries, such as to see the improvement with this release units transcend county and state

3,265 soil surveys to the Web Soil contains a full complement of national ability to analyze interpretations the United States.

the soil survey in the Agricultural the purpose of inventorying the States. That soil inventory became

There Are Tons of Fireflies In Central Texas This Year. Here's Why.

When a lot of people suddenly notice the same thing at the same time, it might be worth looking into. This year in Central Texas that's what's happening with fireflies. There is an unusually large number of them lighting up the early evening, and people are wondering why.

"I think what we're looking at is the rain that we've been having," says Wizzie Brown, an entomologist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

She's not just talking about the rain this year. It turns out it takes time for a firefly to grow. They need a wet spring to lay a bunch of eggs. Then the larvae need moisture as they grow underground for at least a year before emerging.

"When we were in the drought cycle you hardly ever saw any fireflies at all. But now that we've had the really wet spring last year and were having the really torrential rains, it seems like they never end. They're definitely building up," she says.

That could go against a national trend. There's no hard data on this, but a lot of researchers think lightning bug numbers are declining in most of the country.

"Everything about the ways we are developing the land suggests that it would be eliminating fireflies," says Fitchberg State University's Dr. Chris Cratsley. He works on the citizen-science project FireFly Watch, where you can report firefly sightings online.

Cratsley is talking about big development, like digging up and paving the earth. But he says little things you do in your backyard can also have an impact. Cutting lawns too short can hurt the bugs, using pesticides might too.

Then there's light pollution. Too much light can confused the insects, causing them to emerge at the wrong time, or making it difficult for them to find each other in the night.

"With the fireflies a lot of them will do their flash signals to either find mates to breed, or they'll do it for finding food," Wizzie Brown says. "There are some species that will mimic the flash patterns of other fireflies to draw them in, and then they'll eat them. It's awesome!"

If you want to help out these sparkling, and only occasionally cannibalistic, beauties, there are some things you can do. Cratsley suggests leaving parts of your lawn a little wild, turning off your outdoor lights and maybe thinking twice before applying pesticides. If people follow those tips, and if downpours continue, we might see more lightning bugs a year from now.

(MOSE BUCHELE , KUT News)

FREE SCRAP TIRE COLLECTION EVENT

October 15th thru 29th 2016

Open to ALL Residents of Washington County including the cities of Brenham and Burton

Citizens Collection Station
2009 Old Chappell Hill Rd.
979-337-7455
Monday - Friday 8 am - 5 pm
Saturdays 8 am - 4 pm

ONLY UP TO 8 PASSENGER TIRES 20" & SMALLER ACCEPTED FREE PER HOUSEHOLD
Quantities greater than 8 tires and/or sizes above 20" please schedule with Collection Station
Attendant to bring in these tires at the end of the event if space is available.

PROOF OF RESIDENCY REQUIRED
Such as a utility bill or driver license

THIS EVENT IS NOT FOR COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS
Commercial accounts will be charged normal fees

Sponsored by
Washington County and the City of Brenham
in partnership with Keep Washington County Beautiful.



Funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality thru the Brazos Valley Council of Governments



Acorn 'Drops'

Have an oak tree near your house? Noticed the ground of your yard, driveway, or porch overrun with acorns? If so, folklore predicts that these same surfaces may be blanketed by snow this winter.

Not only the acorn, but its connoisseur -- the squirrel -- is also linked to winter weather. If squirrels are more active than usual, it's considered an indication that a severe winter is on its way. And its no wonder why. During the autumn and winter season, a squirrel's main task is gathering nuts and seeds for its storehouse, so if its efforts have noticeably increased, it could only mean he's preparing for the worst.

*Squirrels gathering nuts in a flurry,
Will cause snow to gather in a hurry.*

Woolly Worms - Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*)

The larvae of Isabella tiger moths -- more commonly known as woolly worms, or woolly bear caterpillars -- are easily recognized by their short, stiff bristles of reddish-brown and black hair. According to legend, the width of the middle brown band judges the severity of the upcoming winter. If the brown band is narrow, the winter will be cold and long. However, if the band is wide, then the winter will be a mild and short one.

Some consider the woolly's hair thickness to be another indicator, with a thicker coat signaling a harsher, and sparse hairs a milder winter season. (What's more, the woolly has exactly 13 segments to the length of his body -- the same number of weeks there are of winter.)

The woolly worm's talent was first discovered in the late 1940s by Dr. Charles Curran, former curator of insects at New York City's Museum of Natural History. By observing caterpillar markings and comparing these to winter weather forecasts (provided by a reporter at the New York Herald Tribune) Curran found that the width of reddish-brown hair correctly matched the winter type with 80% accuracy. Since then, researchers haven't been able to replicate Dr. Curran's success (coloration is said to have less to do with weather and more to do with a caterpillar's development stage and genetics), but this hasn't seemed to influence the woolly worm's popularity. In fact, annual festivals are held in its honor in the cities of Banner Elk, NC, Beattyville, KY, Vermilion, OH, and Lewisburg, PA!

Woolly worms are usually seen in autumn on sidewalks and roadways. If you do meet one, don't expect it to hang around for long. Woollys are busy creatures, always "on-the-go" searching for a cozy home underneath a rock or log to overwinter in. They move pretty fast too (as worms go)!

Isabella Tiger Moth



Adult



Woolly Bear caterpillar

