WASHINGTON COUNTY
Wildlife Society

1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, Texas 77833
Telephone 979-277-6212 Fax 979-277-6223 www.wcwildlife.org

2013 Washington County Wildlife Society Winter Meeting!

Friday, January 25th

Social hour will start at 6:00pm

with **Stew Dinner** beginning promptly after the business meeting

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

Washington County Fairgrounds Event Center
(1305 East Blue Bell Road in Brenham)

Please check-in at your WMA table first and tell us of all changes to your contact information. Also, it will be time for most of us to pay 2013 dues ($20)

We will start a business meeting around 7:00pm and elect 2013 officers to all positions (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary)

~Free-will donation dinner~

Presentation by **Bill Eikenhorst, DVM**, who will speak to us about land stewardship for both human and wildlife benefit

Please call 979-277-6212 to tell us your name and that you either (1) plan to attend and the number included in your group, or (2) plan to not attend

WCWS Contact Info:

OFFICERS for 2012:

Brian Burke, Society President, (979), 836-5258, gaelbrian@hotmail.com
Robert Lehmann, Society Vice Pres., (979) 251-4340, rlehmanndeer@yahoo.com
Richard Thames, Society Treasurer, (979) 278-3053, rbthames@industryinet.com
Gael Burke, Society Secretary, (979) 836-5258, gullywiatt@gmail.com

WMA DIRECTORS for 2013:

Greenvine WMA
Gene Bishop, Director, (512) 771-3322, gbishop@austin.rr.com
Gary Lee, Vice-Director, (713) 208-5970, glee2614@comcast.net

Sun Oil Field WMA
Director - OPEN
Vice-Director - OPEN

Rocky Creek WMA
Waldo Nienstedt, Director, (979) 289-2393
Jon Knapp, Vice-Director, (979) 289-5533, jknapp@pachouston.com

Post Oak WMA
Devin Holum, Director, (281) 807-0679, bismark98@yahoo.com
Bill Deaton, Vice-Director, (936) 878-9900, williamdeaton8181@gmail.com

Sandtown WMA
Doodle Johnston, Director, (979) 278-3855, cj_cattle@yahoo.com
Paul Layne, Vice-Director, (713) 598-8822, kels618@aol.com

Mt. Vernon WMA
Rob Johnston, Director, (832) 368-8076, robj709@gmail.com
Vice-Director - OPEN

New Years Creek WMA
George Bishop, Director, 713-305-5510, george_bishop@sbcglobal.net
Monterey White, Vice-Director, (979) 836-3418, whiteoakfarm@gmail.com

RESOURCE CONTACTS:

Larry Pierce, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent-Agriculture/Natural Resources, (979) 277-6212, lw-pierce@tamu.edu

Stephanie M. Damron, TPWD Natural Resource Specialist II, Washington & Waller Counties, (979) 277-6297, stephanie.damron@tpwd.state.tx.us

Ben Garcia, NRCS District Conservationist, (979) 830-7123 ext. 3, ben.garcia@tx.usda.gov

Debbie Wellmann, Washington Co. Appraisal District, (979) 277-3740, debbiew@brenhamisd.net

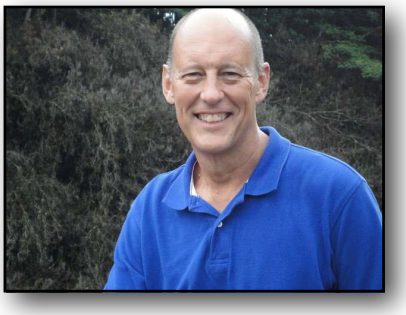
Ann Thames, WCWS Newsletter, (979) 203-3455, newsletter@wcwildlife.org

Jon Wellmann, Youth Liaison, (936) 419-3910, jonwellmann@live.com

Eddie Hines, WC Game Warden, (979) 412-3140, eddie.hines@tpwd.state.tx.us

Operation Game Thief, (800) 792-4263

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS



On November 30th and December 1st, 2012 Society members joined Burleson County Wildlife Association, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and other volunteers for a deer hunt at Lake Somerville. The event is called the Challenged Hunt, and this is the 24th year that local residents have made it possible for physically challenged Texans to hunt. The safety record for this hunt remains unblemished. This year 17 men and one young lady hunted, and they were most grateful for the opportunity. It is one example of Society involvement that is very gratifying to me.

Our next big Society event will be the Winter Meeting on Friday, 25 January 2013. We'll meet at the Washington County Event Center, where we met last August. See a meeting announcement elsewhere in this Newsletter, and please join us there!

We will elect new Society officers on 25 January. Please consider how you can be more involved, because your contribution is truly needed. We're an all-volunteer group, and there is much room for more widespread member support.

I thank all of our 2011 & 2012 Society officers. They made learning my job much easier and I will always appreciate them. Gael and I were pleased to serve the Society these last two years, and send our best wishes to your and your family.

God Bless and Happy New Year!

Brian Burke,

Society President

Texas Master Naturalist Class of 2013

The Gideon Lincecum Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist is planning its Class of 2013 and is accepting applications at this time.

The weekly classes will start on Monday, January 28th and will finish on April 29th – ($165 and $300 for couples sharing materials). The program is taught by experts in their fields, many who come from A&M and from among the ranks of Texas Master Naturalists who have specialist vocations or training. You may wish to explore our website http://txmn.org/glc or contact recruiting: **Judith Deaton** at judithdeaton@gmail.com.

ADDRESS CHANGES: For address changes, or to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact **Gael Burke**, (979) 836-5258, gullywiatt@gmail.com.

ExxonMobil Corporation Supports South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association

ExxonMobil has recently given a $2500 grant to the South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association reports **Dave Redden**, (center) president of SCTPBA. **Ken Gwyn**, Treasurer (right) and **Larry Joe Doherty**, Vice President (left), happily accept the grant on behalf of the organization. The unrestricted grant was given as part of ExxonMobil's efforts to encourage its employees and retirees to participate in community volunteer projects. The grant to the non-profit association is in recognition of volunteer service by Redden and **Tom Grahmann**, ExxonMobil employees and active members of SCTPBA.

SCTPBA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed to encourage and support the safe use of fire in managing land for agriculture and wildlife. Safely removing excess fuel from the landscape also improves public safety by reducing the chance of wildfire and making fire suppression easier if wildfires do occur. There are over 100 active SCTPBA members from 8 counties (Austin, Bastrop, Burleson, Colorado, Fayette, Lee, Waller, and Washington). SCTPBA is one of 11 active prescribed burn associations in Texas covering 115 counties. Read more about SCTPBA at WWW.SCTPBA.ORG.

WCWS members Larry Joe Doherty, Dave Redden and Ken Gwyn

Dave Redden, President
South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association, Inc.
936-878-1988 (home)
979-218-0493 (mob)
www.sctpba.org

SKILL BUILDER: DEAD WOOD SUPPORTS LIFE

By Mary O. Parker for Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine, August 2011

That rotting stump in your yard could be a critter condo.

Would it surprise you to learn that dead wood sustains as much life as living trees? In fact, what looks like waste to us supports hundreds of Texas species.

Dead trees left standing to decompose naturally are called snags. Logs are what we call wood that's down on the ground. Think about including both in your backyard to mimic what occurs in nature.

Snags provide plenty of crevices and hollows where critters can live, hide or store food. They also make great places for birds, such as woodpeckers, to find good eats, or spots for eagle-eyed raptors, like red-tailed hawks (which keep rodent populations in check), to perch in search of supper.

In Texas, snags attract eastern bluebirds, Carolina chickadees, pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers, nuthatches, barred owls, tufted titmouses, tree swallows, warblers, wrens and raptors, as well as raccoons, squirrels and mosquito-eating bats. Many songbirds, like our state singer, the mockingbird, especially like to show off when they've got snags for stages.

"Snags are important to woodpeckers and nuthatches for not only foraging, but for nesting and roosting, too," explains Cliff Shackelford, a nongame ornithologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "Their abandoned cavities also provide homes for other vertebrates and invertebrates, including over 80 species of birds in North America that are secondary cavity nesters, which need hollows but cannot create them."

Once the snag rots enough to fall to the ground, it creates a new ecosystem where moisture plays a crucial role. For example, holes created by a woodpecker's bill become tiny "tanks" in wooden pastures that give rise to fungi, microorganisms and invertebrates such as earthworms and fireflies. These creatures, in turn, sustain salamanders, toads, anoles, tree frogs, birds and others. As logs decompose, they recycle nutrients back into the soil, all while coexisting in symbiotic relationships with the animals they support.

Michael Warriner, inverterbrate biologist with TPWD, emphasizes the substantial contributions that dead wood makes to forest biodiversity.

Continued on page 5

CAN FOXES CLIMB TREES?

The gray fox does it all the time, and the red fox does it occasionally. The gray fox climbs trees so often it is also called the "tree fox."

The tree climbing ability of gray fox is unique. The gray fox climbs trees the same way cats do, hanging on and digging in with its front legs and pushing with the rear. Grays can climb trees that are straight up and they do not require leaning trees to climb. These fox will climb trees at times to escape predators and they also climb because they seem just to like to. At times, gray fox will climb trees to take a nap in a sunny location, and they have been known to hide or sleep in hawk and owl nests. Rarely, gray fox will also raise their litter twenty or more feet above ground in a hollow tree. Gray fox climb trees head first, and they have the ability to descend a tree either tail first or head first.

In eastern Texas, one was found denning about 30 feet above the ground in a large hollow oak. In central Texas, a den was found in a hollow live oak with the entrance about 3 feet above the ground.

Photo by Brick Peele, Sandtown member

HOW IS POISON IVY BENEFICIAL TO ANYONE BESIDES BEING A PEST TO GARDENERS, HIKERS, AND CHILDREN?

Considering how violent some reactions to its oils can be, it's hard to imagine poison ivy serving any good purpose for anyone.

The English colonist John Smith, in 1609, wrote home about his run-in with this dreaded toxic plant:

"The poisonous weed, being in shape, but very little different, from our English Yvie; but being touched causeth reddness, itchinge and lastly blysters, the which however after a while they pass away of themselves with out further harme."

Despite the misery it causes, poison ivy does have significant wildlife value, most importantly as a food source. Many small animals and deer are not allergic to it and consume all parts of the plant, leaves, berries, and twigs.

Birds depend on poison ivy berries during the fall and winter months when food is scarce. Furthermore, this plant is very adaptable and can grow as a bush or a vine. Insects use the woody vines as pathways and protective structures up and down trees, and small animals can seek shelter under poison ivy in its bush form.

Poison ivy (leaves of 3) and Virginia creeper (leaves of 5).

For these reasons, wildlife groups will never weed it out of state parks and national forests.

That means it's up to you to know how to identify poison ivy so you can protect yourself from it.

Besides taking precautions with clothing, and staying on hiking paths, it's best to know what you're looking for so you don't stumble into it inadvertently. Poison ivy is a crafty little plant that can grow in several different incarnations.

It can look like ground cover, a vine, or a shrub. It often grows along and over fences with other rambling weeds. The leaves can be smooth and waxy, or they can be dull and rough-textured, with jagged edges. They can grow up to ten inches in length, or they can be as small as an inch or two.

The leaves are red in autumn and when they are young, but they're green through the summer. As you can see, it can be a very confusing plant to identify. But here's something to look out for: all poison ivy, no matter the leaf size or color, has three leaves per stem.

Two of the leaves are opposite one another and growing in different directions. One leaf is at the top and has a longer stem than the two side leaves. Remember the old adage, "Leaves of three, let them be," and leave the playing in poison ivy to the wildlife.

Dead Wood cont. from page 3

"Of the various organisms that make use of dead wood, insects represent one of the most species-rich and abundant components," he explains. "Some insects spend the majority of their life cycle living within, and feeding on, dead wood. Others feed only on wood-decaying fungi or prey on other insects within dead wood. Dead wood is critically important to these insects, and reductions in this resource can lead to real conservation issues for those species."

If your log hasn't yet seen the handiwork of a woodpecker or needs help holding its water, nudge nature along by drilling a hole or two. You can also fast-forward the ecosystem by encouraging native vines to get attached and by trapping soil along the wood's edge.

What if termites also find your log lovely? Of the two types of termites, subterranean and drywood, chances are that any residing in this special habitat will be the drywood sort, which usually stay put (to be eaten by toads, birds and other wildlife) unless a trail of moisture entices them elsewhere. Thus, to keep them from adventurous walk-abouts, place logs a reasonable distance from unintended water sources.

Along the same lines, keep logs and snags from resting against structures to discourage fungi or unwanted guests from coming in contact with your abode. Of course, make sure snags don't hover over a neighbor's fence, yard or vehicle. If you find that the snag must be sawed, don't forget to use it as a log.

You don't need acreage to bring the dead to life; a snag or log in even the smallest of yards can add animation. And, when company comes for a patio dinner and the words "a lump on a log" arise, you'll know it's not a lack of vitality they're discussing — it's that cool critter someone spotted in your backyard!

Visitor

poem by Laura Quinn Guidry, Sandtown member
Reprinted with permission from Texas Poetry Calendar 2013

When I raise the window shade
a grey fox the color of morning
ambles away. Rain comes down hard
after five months. Thunder cracks.
Clocks flash. A window leaks.
We mop up with towels, retire
to the den to watch a video.
Rain pelts the metal roof, eases.
Stop the movie, you say. *Come see this.*

A pileated woodpecker has landed
in the oak closest to the house.
Uncommon, wary bird, big as a crow,
back as black, crested with red feathers
tall and thick like hair. White-faced,
the black line off its eye is like a mask,
the line off the base of its bill
turns downward as in a grimace.
A jester, a mad clown.

Not exactly pretty, you remark.
Better than pretty, I say.
The bird ratchets the tree
and is gone. Its call rises

to a wild laugh. Then, in the clearing,
we see the wide, white underwing
gleaming like the moon
beneath storm clouds.

Strange Little Known Texas Facts

- ★ Brazoria County has more species of birds than any other area in North America.
- ★ Aransas Wildlife Refuge is the winter home of North America 's only remaining flock of whooping cranes.
- ★ A Live Oak tree near Fulton is estimated to be 1500 years old.
- ★ Caddo Lake is the only natural lake in the state.
- ★ The State Mascot is the Armadillo. An interesting bit of trivia about the armadillo is they always have four babies. They have one egg, which splits into four, and they either have four males or four females.

Great Backyard Bird Count Goes Global in 2013

Bird watchers worldwide can take part for the first time

After 15 years of success in North America, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will open up to the entire world for the first time in 2013. Anyone, from anywhere on earth, can participate by visiting www.birdcount.org and reporting the kinds and numbers of birds they see during the 16th annual count, February 15-–18, 2013.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with partner Bird Studies Canada, the four-day count typically receives sightings from tens of thousands of people reporting more than 600 bird species in the United States and Canada alone.

"This year's count will give us a whole new perspective as sightings pour in from around the globe in real time," said Marshall Iliff at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Millions of people encounter birds every day all over the world. Imagine what scientists will learn if each one of us shares observations from our own area!"

During the 2012 count, participants reported 17.4 million bird observations on 104,000 checklists. Snowy Owls thrilled many participants when these striking birds-of-prey ventured south from the Arctic in record numbers. In 2013, scientists predict that U.S. and Canadian bird watchers will see an influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches and winter finches (such as Pine Siskins) because of scarce food supplies on their northern wintering grounds.

"The GBBC is an ideal opportunity for young and old to connect with nature by discovering birds and to participate in a huge science project," said Gary Langham, Audubon's Chief Scientist. "This year, we hope people on all seven continents, oceans, and islands, will head out into their neighborhoods, rural areas, parks, and wilderness to further our understanding of birds across the hemispheres."

Participating is easy. Simply watch birds for at least 15 minutes at the location of your choice on one or more of the count days. Estimate the number of birds you see for each species you can identify. You'll select your location on a map, answer a few questions, enter your tallies, and then submit your data to share your sightings with others around the world.

The global capacity for the count will be powered by eBird, an online checklist program for all of the world's 10,240 bird species. Participants will be able to view what others are seeing on interactive maps, keep their own records, and have their tallies recorded for perpetuity.

Red-breasted Nuthatch, Christine Haines, WA, 2012 GBBC

"The popularity of the Great Backyard Bird Count grows each year," said Dick Cannings, Senior Projects Officer at Bird Studies Canada, "and with the new features, participation will be even more exciting."

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited.

HABITIPS

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

January

- Prepare fireguards for prescribed burning program.
- Disk in proximity to woody cover to provide habitat interspersion for game birds.
- Get prescribed burn equipment ready.
- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.
- Focus on providing travel lanes and cover for birds.

Febuary

- 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 nestboxes 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.
- De-water flooded areas to encourage wetland vegetation.

AQUAPLANT (*http://aquaplant.tamu.edu/*) is designed to help pond owners and their advisors in the identification and management of aquatic vegetation. Aquatic vegetation management can be a perplexing problem. The first part of that problem is proper identification. Management of most aquatic plant species depends on properly identifying the desirable or nuisance plant.

WCWS Membership Summary 2012

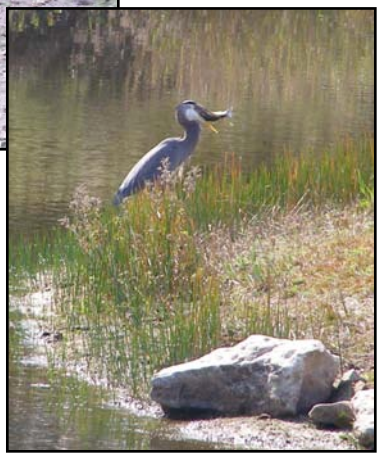
Co-Op	Total # Members	Total Acreage
Sandtown	74	6,425.62
New Years Creek	66	5,151.38
Sun Oil	85	8,386.37
Rocky Creek	83	5,692.71
Mount Vernon	26	1,624.76
Post Oak	83	7,943.03
Greenvine	154	11,137.74
	571	46,388.61

One of the most rewarding ways to enjoy animals, wildlife and nature is through the art of photography. And one of the best ways to enjoy photography is by sharing your work with others.

send your photos to:
photo@wcwildlife.org

Photos from Joe and Bev Cucuzza, Sandtown members. 32 hogs over 19 days were trapped!

Member Photos



Great Blue Heron making a meal of pond bass

Mediterranean Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*)

The Mediterranean gecko is an introduced species native to Southern Europe and Northern Africa. Geckos have adapted well to living in and around homes. For this reason, their numbers and range seem to be on the increase in many areas in the Southeastern United States.

The Mediterranean gecko helps provide year-round insect pest control in our landscapes and homes by feeding on cockroaches and a wide variety of other insects.

Mediterranean Geckos have toes that are equipped with claws and sticky toe pads to aid in climbing. They are expert tree climbers. Their sticky toe pads also allow them to climb walls as well as navigate across glass and screens. They are often observed perched on walls around outside lights, waiting to grab insects attracted to the light. By day, these lizards hide in cracks, crevices and under tree bark.

Mediterranean Geckos have a long breeding season of about 4-to-5 months. Each adult female may lay several clutches of 2 hard-shelled eggs per year. Eggs are often laid in communal nests. Eggs are about ¼ inch long and are initially soft-textured, but harden quickly.

An important and intriguing characteristic of the Mediterranean gecko is its ability to cast off its tail in defense and regenerate a new one. Once it has been cast off, it will continue to move violently for several minutes until it slows down and stops, thus giving the Mediterranean Gecko fair time to escape. The tail has several sections on it where it can break off at any given moment. It takes approximately 3 weeks for these geckos to completely regenerate a new tail, although, it is usually never as long as the original tail.

If you're lucky enough to have a Mediterranean gecko in your yard, leave him or her alone. Speaking of luck, in parts of Southeast Asia, geckos are regarded as harbingers of luck and good fortune. The same thing can be said of a Mediterranean Gecko in gardens throughout Texas!

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