



# Oaks and Prairies Wildlifer

A newsletter for landowners in the Post Oak Savannah  
and Coastal Prairies Regions of Texas



Fall 2018

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## District Field Notes

BY DAVID FORRESTER

Spring was dry and relatively hot. Summer made sure we knew what dry and hot really is. Going into teal season, biologists on our coastal Wildlife Management Areas were meeting to discuss the possibility of closing some hunts due to lack of water. One week later, and they were meeting to discuss the possibility of closing some hunts due to too much water. What's the old saying? "If you don't like the weather in Texas, just wait a minute...". Appropriate for this transition from summer into fall. The coastal counties of the district certainly received some much needed rainfall and in some cases a considerable amount. About Interstate 10 was where the rainfall totals started to lessen and north of the interstate, most folks received rain in more modest amounts. There still may be locations that didn't get these showers and rainfall events, but most of the district drought situation has eased in the past few weeks.

Due to the dry conditions, we are seeing average antler development and average fawn survival in our deer herds. However, we have had some nice bucks harvested during archery season. You should find hunting over feeders challenging due to the recent rains and the bumper acorn crop.

We had to say goodbye to the biologist for DeWitt and Goliad counties. Doug Jobs left us to pursue an opportunity with Texas A&M-Kingsville and the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. He's going to manage their native plant program for the coastal prairie region of Texas. His last day with Texas Parks and Wildlife was September 11. We have his open position posted and it will close on October 22. Hopefully, we'll get a good batch of candidates and can have a new person in that position by the first of November or December for sure.

We are looking at the possibility of proposing doe days for most of District 7. This would impact those counties that currently have no doe season or have doe harvest by MLD permit only. The TPWD commission will be briefed on November 6, 2018 about a possible regulation proposal. Once that has occurred, we will be advertising scoping meetings open to the public, where we can present the proposal and the public can comment.



*David Forrester is the District 7 Leader in La Grange. He has been with TPWD since 2001 when he started his career as the TPWD wildlife biologist for Fort Bend and Wharton counties. David has a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics and a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, both from Texas A&M University, and a Master of Science in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M University-Kingsville.*

# Creating and Maintaining Firebreaks

WRITTEN BY ROBERT TRUDEAU

Approximately 730 miles wide and 790 miles long, from zero to 8,751 feet high, Texas is big! What's even bigger is our passion for doing our part to manage the natural beauty and abundance of our amazing state. Though we may be working on a smaller scale than the roughly 268,580 square miles we call Texas, each habitat management practice we implement adds up! From brush control to native grass restoration, from guzzler installation to moist soil management, and from nest boxes to shredding, the endless amount of management practices implemented all have value. Though some practices are extremely common, such as brush control, other management practices are often over looked. The installation of firebreaks and fuel breaks are activities that don't get much attention but are very important and provide many benefits.

Many of us that have implemented prescribed burns, or weathered a wildfire, are familiar with the significance of having quality firebreaks. As the name implies, prescribed burning and wildfire control efforts utilize firebreaks to control or prevent the spread of fire. We can simply define a firebreak as being a linear section of ground, either natural or manmade, that is devoid of fuel (combustible vegetation) and prevents, inhibits, or creates an obstacle to the spread of fire. Rivers, creeks, streams, marshes, canyons, and rock outcroppings are some examples of some natural firebreak features. Manmade features usually consist of roadways, railroads, stock tanks, and disked/plowed firebreaks.

While firebreaks are an effective part of controlling fires, fuel breaks are another activity that can be beneficial in such efforts. Fuel breaks are slightly different than firebreaks. Where firebreaks lack combustible fuels, fuel breaks are a change in vegetation composition and structure that inhibit the spread and intensity of a fire; not necessarily void of fuels. More times than not, fuel breaks are natural areas in which the habitat has naturally created a buffer to the spread rate and intensity of a fire. The transition from a grassland prairie to a hardwood river bottom or from an over-grown understory of a pine forest to an open grassland are two common, naturally occurring, fuel breaks. Our management of the property can create fuel breaks as well; whether it is clearing out the understory of a forest, mowing the fence lines, or even mowing and watering the yard.

As it is with most management activities, the designing of a firebreak/fuel break system requires some organization. For both types of breaks, we can further split them into primary and secondary. In most cases, primary breaks will be larger in size and encompass a majority of the property or unit.



*Above, grass was cut and raked away from the burn unit, creating a fuel break. This reduced the intensity of the fire, allowing the burn crew a safer position to operate. Photo©Robert Trudeau, TPWD.*



*Fuel break: The growth of grasses and forbs, in this once bare dirt firebreak, still proved to be an effective fuel break. The new vegetation coming in is a wide array of grass and forb species, soon to produce food for wildlife. Photo©Bobby Eichler, TPWD.*

*Continued on page 3*

### *Creating and Maintaining Firebreaks, continued*

Secondary breaks would be found within the primary breaks, allowing for a “subdivision” of the property/unit. The combination of primary and secondary breaks, can allow for contingency plans in the event something unwanted happens. The utilization of both firebreaks and fuel breaks together can be of value. To take an adaptive approach, one should take advantage of any features that may already exist. Driveways, access roads, fence lines, transmission lines, waterways, etc. can be a good start in organizing an effective system. In areas where breaks need to be installed, an evaluation of the vegetation and soils can assist with determining its suitability as a firebreak or a fuel break.

Effective breaks, more times than not, do not need to be excessively large. Their width and composition should always be based on the vegetation surrounding it. A common disked firebreak for a pasture could be anywhere from 6-12 feet wide, but a firebreak in an overgrown pine forest would probably need to be 12-20 ft. wide. Another important aspect for determining the width of a break would be to determine what type of equipment would be utilizing it. A 6-foot-wide break is fine for foot traffic and small vehicles (ATVs, UTVs, etc.), but would become increasingly hazardous for larger vehicles by limiting their access and mobility. The last main factor that we want to evaluate to determine the needed size of a break would be the local weather patterns. Areas that experience higher relative humidity and less wind could use smaller breaks when compared to areas that have low humidity and higher wind speeds.

The installation of fuel breaks and firebreaks takes time and patience; so, why not take advantage of it? For anyone that is interested in getting the most out of their efforts, fire/fuel breaks can be a rewarding activity. They can be utilized for other management activities as well. In addition to maintaining access roads and driveways, the installment of breaks can also increase the accessibility of the property for both us and our wildlife species. When creating fuel and firebreaks, the removed brush from the pasture or the forest understory can be utilized in the form of brush piles. A wide variety of wildlife species utilize these piles for escape cover from predators, thermal cover from the elements, and nesting cover. In the firebreaks, one could plant a wide variety of low-residue crops (soybean, milo, corn, sunflower, et.) and low-growing grasses and forbs (sideoats grama, buffalograss, bluebonnet, etc.) as a wildlife food plot. In areas where brush has been thinned to create a fuel break, we can implement some light disking to stimulate the growth of grasses and forbs and even seed the area to establish native plant species.



*Left: Having good firebreaks is critical; however, you want to avoid having snags and/or brush piles close to the break. Snags and brush piles can increase the size and number of embers produced when burning, increasing the chances of starting a fire outside of the burn unit.*

*Right: Firebreak- a linear section of ground, either natural or manmade, that is devoid of fuel (combustible vegetation) and prevents, inhibits, or creates an obstacle to the spread of fire. In this case, an access road was disked to create a bare dirt firebreak.*

*Photos©Bobby Eichler, TPWD.*

***Continued on page 4***

### Creating and Maintaining Firebreaks, continued



*Forest Management in the Wildland/Urban Interface continues to grow. Here a boundary service road was utilized as a fuel break for implementing a prescribed burn in the timber stand; while the mowed grass on the right created a fuel break between the forest and a neighborhood. Photo©Texas Forest Service (TFS).*

Native grasses and forbs not only provides food, but also provides the required nesting and brooding habitat for turkeys and other ground nesting birds. It also provides fawning cover for white-tailed deer.

The establishment of fuel and firebreaks is a commonly overlooked activity due to their association with prescribed burning and wildfires; however, they can provide a lot of other opportunities to both us and our wildlife. No matter what our land management objectives are, it is up to us to actively manage it. We can improve our habitat with the expanded opportunities and protect our investments by maintaining a basic system of fuel breaks and firebreaks. After all, the question is not if a wildfire will happen, but when.

For those that may be interested in learning more about firebreaks and fuel breaks, I urge you to reach out. There are several state and federal agencies that would be more than happy to help you as well.

Texas Forest Service (TFS)- <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/>  
 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service- <https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/>  
 Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov>  
 US Forest Service (USFS)- <https://www.fs.fed.us/>  
 US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)- <https://www.fws.gov/>



*Top: Fuel Break- In this event, a wildfire was approaching a subdivision; however, because of the mowed fuel break between the pasture and the wooden fence, personnel were able to prevent the fire from reaching the subdivision.*

*Bottom: Hidden Pines Wildfire -Bastrop County 2015- An aerial view of how fuel breaks and firebreaks can be valuable. By utilizing the natural fuel break between the forest and the hay pasture, wildland firefighters were able to install fire breaks to halt the progression of the wildfire. Photos©TFS.*



Robert Trudeau is the Wildlife Biologist for Bastrop and Caldwell counties and offices out of Bastrop. He graduated from Tarleton State University in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management and a minor in Biology. Robert was hired by TPWD in 2013, where he filled the position of Resource Specialist for the Lost Pines Complex until accepting his current biologist position in 2014. Prior to working for TPWD, Robert has also worked as a Biological Science Technician for the US Fish and Wildlife Service in South Dakota, Illinois, and Nebraska.

## Eastern Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)

WRITTEN BY TRENT TEINERT

**Eastern persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), also known as Common Persimmon, is wide spread across East Texas and reaches south into the Post Oak Savannah and west to Bexar county.**

Relatively isolated pockets of eastern persimmon are found throughout the eastern half of Texas and up into the panhandle. They are mostly found in areas with wet soil but can be found on upland sites as well. Their leaves are simple alternate about 3 to 6 inches long and mature trees average 15 to 40 feet tall. Being deciduous, leaves are shed in the fall. Trees are either male or female and produce flowers in the spring and summer which mature into fruit in the fall. The tree has a great taproot that can produce runners and subsequently new trees without being seeded by fruit. The fruit is about 1 to 2 inches in diameter, orange in color, and closely resembles larger cultivated persimmon varieties. It is edible to humans and many species of wildlife but can have a very bitter taste if not allowed to fully ripen. This tree should not be confused with its relative the Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*) which is found primarily in South Texas and into the southern Hill Country. Texas Persimmon has black fruit, slick bark, and typically matures at 5 to 15 feet tall as a small tree or shrub.

This ability to easily reproduce and the hardiness of its deep root system have made it undesirable to some, but its wildlife benefits outweigh its perceived nuisance. Fruit will cling to the branches and slowly fall off as it ripens. This makes it a mecca for wildlife in the fall, but it is often overlooked by humans.



*Eastern Persimmon.  
Photo@TrentTeinert, TPWD.*

*Eastern Persimmon bark.  
Photo@Brenda K. Loveless,  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.*



*Left: Eastern  
Persimmon leaves  
and fruit.  
Photo@Trent  
Teinert, TPWD.*



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***Eastern Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), continued***

For the wildlife manager, enthusiast, or photographer this is an extraordinary place to view wildlife. Many animals including birds, raccoons, ringtails, coyotes, and fox love to eat this fruit. Set up in a quiet location or place a game camera near a persimmon grove, and watch the wildlife come in! For the white-tailed deer hunter during archery season, this can be one of those secret places that deer frequent but is often overlooked. Set your tree stand downwind of a persimmon grove in October and you will be sure to see some activity!

***Citations:***

*Cox, Paul W. and P. Leslie 1999. Texas Trees: A Friendly Guide. Corona Publishing Company, San Antonio, TX, USA.*

*Simpson, Benny 1988. A Field Guide to Texas Trees. Texas Monthly Press, Austin, TX, USA.*



*Top Left: Persimmon in bloom.*

*Photo©Brenda K. Loveless, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.*

*Top Right: Persimmon flower.*

*Photo©Alan Cressler, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.*

*Bottom Left: Persimmon fruit. Photo©Trent Teinert, TPWD.*



*Trent Teinert has a B.S. and M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management both from Texas A&M-Kingsville. Trent started his career in 2011 with TPWD covering Victoria, Calhoun, and Refugio counties. In late 2013, Trent transferred over into the South Texas District and took on responsibilities in Karnes and Wilson Counties. District 7 was fortunate to be able to lure Trent back in 2015 and he began covering Gonzales and Guadalupe counties and caring for the Neasloney Wildlife Management Area. Trent resides in Seguin, Texas and is married to a wildlife biologist.*

# Biology of the Houston Toad

WRITTEN BY PAUL CRUMP

**I'll never forget the first time I heard a Houston toad calling in the wild. It was around 2 a.m., I think we'd stopped and listened at about 15 other ponds on this survey, and this was already the 8th survey of the 2008 field season. I was tired and closed my eyes as I leant on the side of the truck, partially to shut off my other senses and concentrate on listening, but mainly to rest my eyes.**



*Houston Toad. Photo©Rachel Rommel*

We'd been listening for about 3 of the 5-minute survey when we heard the long, high-pitched trill at a pond a few hundred feet away. This was it. I was in my second year chasing these toads, we had just discovered a new population, and, for a frog guy it doesn't get any better than that. I've studied amphibians in some cool places, such as Panama, Malaysia, and Canada, but my time on the back roads of Austin County trying to find Houston toads was my favorite fieldwork. Part of the enjoyment for us wildlife biologists comes from the challenge of trying to locate difficult to find species. Unfortunately for the Houston toad, it's not just difficult to find, it's pretty rare.

Houston toads are difficult to find for a few reasons but one of the main ones is that they are, what we call, "explosive breeders". Explosive breeders are common in nature and are species which respond to changes in the season or environmental conditions very rapidly, they congregate in large numbers and breed, and then disappear quickly. This defines the Houston toad's primary activity as adults. On a warm, wet night at any point between January and June (but usually in February, March, or April), male Houston toads will travel from the woods and gather around a pond and "sing" to attract females. Within a night or two the females join the party, eggs are laid in the pond, and they all disappear back into the woods. As all frog and toad species make a distinct mating call, it's easy to tell when Houston toads are breeding. However, because of this explosive activity, skipping surveys for a few days to enjoy a long weekend in Fredericksburg for your wife's birthday can mean you miss the entire annual breeding event. Some smart folks figured out that, in order to be confident that you would have detected a Houston toad if it were present, you need to do at least 16 surveys at a site. For years, the lack of humans with a predilection for both learning the calls of frogs and toads and skipping social events for the first half of year was a barrier to performing range-wide Houston toad surveys of adequate intensity. In the last 10 years, a remarkable breakthrough in automated sound recording equipment has largely solved that problem. Where access is possible, we can now tie a small waterproof recorder to a tree next to a pond and leave it to record sound, hopefully that of the Houston toad, completely automatic for at least 2 months at a time. At the same time as the hardware enabled field biologists some time with their families, the software became equally impressive. It is now possible to scan hours of audio recordings automatically and pick out the specific call of the Houston toad without listening to it manually.

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### *Biology of the Houston Toad, continued*

This truly was a revolution in monitoring for all animals who produce sound, not just Houston toads. Using this high-resolution data, the research team at Texas State believes that Houston toad activity is stimulated by drops in barometric pressure, rather than rainfall or humidity directly.

The reasons Houston toads are rare are numerous, but essentially come down to the fact that they require a rather specialized habitat. When you zoom out and look at the whole range of the Houston toad in Texas, it has only ever been known from a dozen or so counties. Records exist from Bastrop, Lee, Milam, Burleson, Brazos, Robertson, Leon, Fort Bend, Harris, and Liberty counties, in addition to Lavaca, Colorado and Austin. One of the unifying themes of the Houston toad range is deep sandy soils associated with a specific series of geological formations. Landowners in this country know how challenging it can be to work with these deep so-called “sugar sands”. While not completely understood, the sands role in the Houston toad’s life history is relatively straightforward. To escape the summer heat and to avoid predators, adult Houston toads use small “spades” on their heels to dig down into the loose sand. Sometimes they dig a small depression on the surface and hunker down under the leaf litter, but other times they can dig down and be completely buried. Due to the large spaces between sand particles, the sand hills have excellent water storage capacity and thus provide a humid refuge (important for an amphibian).

On a finer-scale and within the deep sand bands of the already mentioned counties, Houston toads do not occur extensively. The other critical component to their habitat is a functional and mature forest ecosystem. Toads aren’t fussy about whether pine or oaks make up the dominant overstory species, but they are fussy about some other aspects. For example, because they are toads and toads eat insects, they do better in a forest with a diverse ground cover layer. The advantage of a diverse forest floor vegetation community is that there is then a diverse forest floor insect community to provide food for the toads. This vegetative diversity also provides options as far as above ground shelter goes. In the absence of fire, the woodlands in eastern-central Texas gradually creep towards a shrub-dominated understory that eventually blocks light from reaching the grasses and forbs that grow

on the ground. Yaupon holly is especially effective at this in these forests, but so is cedar, and will eventually build up so much that it’s impossible for Houston toad’s to find sufficient food. Not only is a shrub-choked forest understory bad for toads, as well as a host of other game and nongame species, but it also is dangerous for people who live in and near these forests too. The wildfire in Bastrop Co. in September of 2011 was a horrible reminder of what happens when a fire suppressed woodland meets a severe drought. Thankfully it’s relatively easy, but not cheap, to mechanically thin these forests and maintain the understory with fire. This affinity for woodlands is also probably important because of the cooler temperatures and moister conditions underneath the canopy.

Most of the focus so far has been on adult habitat, but because they are amphibians, Houston toads also have an aquatic component to their life cycle that includes long egg strands and small black tadpoles (or toad-poles if you prefer). The aquatic environment that Houston toads breed in can vary from a tire rut to the edge of a large lake.

*Houston toad egg strand.*  
Photo@Maddy Marsh



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### *Biology of the Houston Toad, continued*

There doesn't appear to be any true preferences, but as stock tanks make up the majority of the wetlands on the landscape today, stock tanks are what they typically breed in. Based on this variability, the pond is most likely the least important part of the Houston toad life cycle. The minimum criteria are that it should hold water for a few months in the spring, long enough for the tadpoles to complete development (i.e., metamorphosis) and move onto land. Toadlets often emerge from the water in mass, in the hundreds or thousands and gather at the water's edge. This can be a challenging time as a few predators or even a wayward cows hoof can put a serious dent in the numbers of the next generation of toads. Because toads prefer some canopy cover, ponds that are in or at least close to a forest edge are more likely to allow the small toadlets to successfully move from the ponds edge into the woods. Adult toads can make it to a pond that is isolated out in a hay field, but the toadlets probably can't survive the journey back later in the year. Once the toadlets make it into the woods they spend about a year for males and 2 years for females eating insects and evading predators by hiding under downed trees and other woody debris. Once they reach adult size, they return to the ponds to start the cycle all over again. Most adult toads breed only once in their lifetimes before they die.

There are 9 species of toad that occur in Texas, but the Houston toad is the only toad that occurs only in Texas, even the Texas toad sneaks off into New Mexico. This species can coexist with our activity relatively easy and can be thought of as an indicator of the healthy woodland ecosystems that are both safe and beneficial to humans that live in and around them.



*Houston toad habitat. Photos©Paul Crump, TPWD.*



*Paul Crump is a herpetologist in the Nongame and Rare Species Program at TPWD. Before joining TPWD in 2018, Paul worked for 10 years in the herpetology and conservation departments at the Houston Zoo. He obtained a BSc in Genetics from the University of Cardiff in the UK and a PhD in Ecology from the University of New Brunswick in Canada. His interests include population monitoring of rare species and the effect of human activities on biodiversity.*

## Species Spotlight: Javelina

WRITTEN BY MARK LANGE

The great lands of Texas are rich with species of all sizes, shapes, colors, and all serve their purpose in the ecosystem in one way or another. Many of those species are very photogenic and capture the attention and appreciation of anyone while others possess less eye catching traits and are commonly underappreciated. The collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu (Linnaeus)*), or what most Texans know as the javelina, are commonly misidentified and misunderstood. The javelina is commonly misidentified as a feral hog (*Sus scrofa*) by the untrained eye. While both species share many of the same body characteristics, their history and purpose on the Texas landscape couldn't be more different. The obvious difference is that feral hogs are an introduced/exotic species while javelina are native to Texas. In fact, the javelina is the only member of the peccary family in North America and only two other species exist and inhabit South America.

The javelina's historic range in Texas was much broader than it is today. Javelina once inhabited much of Central and South Central Texas with even a small area of the historic range extending into Oklahoma. Currently the larger populations of javelina remain in portions of West Texas and South Texas where they existed historically. Javelina were hunted for their hide early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century until they were designated a game species in the late 1930's. Habitat loss and fragmentation is likely the best explanation as to why javelina are found in a smaller area of Texas today. Occasionally javelina are seen in areas deeper in the Post Oak Savannah region, but sightings are more common in counties closer to South Texas brush ecosystems.

Javelina can be identified by their pig-like shape and snout, grizzled black and grayish coat with a white collar on the shoulders of adults, and straight canine teeth. Javelina are strictly herbivorous with a diet that consists mostly of cacti (prickly pear), mesquite beans, and other succulent plants. In areas lacking sufficient cacti abundance javelina will also utilize mast crops. Contrary to the feeding style of feral hogs, javelina do not root deep into the soil but rather lightly rummage the surface in search of feeding opportunities. Like most ungulates, javelina are most active early and late in the day and a group will have a well defined home range marked by scent that seldom overlaps with more than one other group. Javelina breed throughout the year like no other native ungulate in the western hemisphere. Females reach sexual maturity in 33 to 34 weeks and males at 46 to 47 weeks. Each litter averages two young with gestation lasting about five months. Adult javelina range in weight from 25 pounds in younger mature animals to 55 pounds in older adults.

Javelina face many of the same threats to habitat as other species. Land fragmentation and the decline of quality habitat are concerns, but javelina are also directly impacted by the presence of feral hogs. As feral hog populations continue to climb throughout the state, less land becomes available for iconic species native to Texas like javelina. All the more reason for landowners throughout the state to use the most aggressive feral hog control methods possible on a consistent basis. It is important to mention that many of the counties in the Post Oak Savannah Region have a closed season on javelina, meaning there is no time of year they can be legally harvested.

*Javelina. Photo©TPWD.*



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**Species Spotlight: Javelina, continued**

Some counties have an open season so I would encourage you be familiar with your county’s season on javelina and also be careful when hunting feral hogs at night to avoid an accidental take of a javelina.

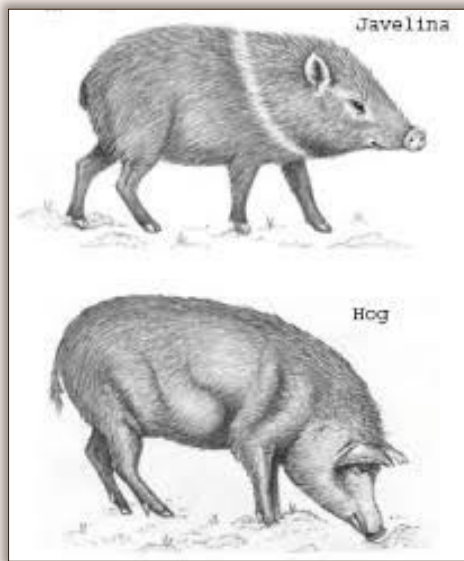
Javelina are recognized by the Texas Big Game Awards (TBGA). If you decide to hunt javelina and are lucky enough to harvest one, I would highly encourage you to have it measured and hopefully entered into TBGA for recognition. To find a list of certified TBGA scorers/measures visit: <http://www.texasbiggameawards.org/official-scorers/>.



*Top skull is the native javelina. Bottom skull is the non-native, feral hog. Photo©Mark Lange, TPWD.*

**Citation:**

Schmidly, David J. 2004. *The Mammals of Texas-Revised Edition*. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, USA.



*Left: Javelina and feral hog comparison. Below: Track comparison. Photos©TPWD.*



Mark Lange is the wildlife biologist for Colorado and Austin Counties where he started in June 2012. He grew up in the Texas panhandle in the small town of Nazareth. He attended West Texas A&M University where he completed his Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology/Wildlife Science in 2006 and his Masters of Science Degree in Biology in 2011. Mark offices out of the Columbus field office. Mark has diverse interests and enjoys working with landowners towards their management goals.

# When Things Go Right

WRITTEN BY HERMAN W. BRUNE

COLORADO COUNTY LANDOWNER AND PRESIDENT OF TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION

**The white heat of summer overcame the calm dawn. It was happening earlier each morning as the Dog Days approached. The herd of horses picked at the dry grass along Yaupon Creek and a half-dozen deer trotted between them headed in the opposite direction. My vantage point is behind a sliding glass door in the old farm house on top of the hill. Here I sit in my rocking chair, drinking coffee, watching, and listening to the echoes of the generations that were here before me. Nowadays, the memories come more often.**

In another time – Grandma saw the deer along the creek and fetched a round plow blade from the back porch. She held the worn piece of iron in one hand and beat a hammer against it. Then she began to whoop and holler, “Get out of here! You all need to go somewhere else! Go! Go! Shoo! Get out of here!”

This was confusing to my little young mind. Grandpa was a big hunter. Why was she running off the deer? “That was our potato garden,” Grandma said. “There were no deer around here when this country was all cotton and corn.” Then she looked at my bewildered sad face. “You don’t like me running off the deer do you?” I shook my head. “You like to see the deer down below the hill along the creek?” I nodded. “Ok – I’ll stop scaring them away. I suppose they don’t hurt anything these days,” and I smiled.

Uncle Munroe, her brother, was another study. The world was likewise changing in a fashion he disfavored. The outlying pastures that offered coon and deer hunts were being leased to folks from town. Where once the country boys had spent their nights following the hounds and their mornings waiting on a good buck – the bankers and developers were now paying for the privilege. It was as if he was losing a God-given freedom. “It’s wrong for people to lease land for hunting. That’s something that is supposed to be free. It’s like putting a price on air. How can people put a price on the outdoors?” he said.

A few years later and around another curve, Crockett Leyendecker whittled on a stick. “Boy,” he said. “When I was county commissioner we had a say in setting game limits and regulations. I’m not much on this notion that some jack-leg from the state can do a better job.” Looking around his farm would give credence to his comment. He had a vineyard, horses, cattle, pecan orchards, hunting dogs, and a passel of chickens. His main barn was still made from log construction. It would be hard to imagine anyone could know more about the surrounding woodlands. And as he predicted by the 1980’s landowners and anyone that cared about wildlife were looking for answers from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to dwindling deer populations.

However, putting all the clues on the table is the only means to gain honest perspective. From Grandma’s era to present society had moved from cast iron wood stoves and mule drawn plows to more bankers, lawyers, and a man on the moon. Where there were once cyphering bean-counters with tablets and pencils there were now accountants with computers the size of a double bed. When cotton and corn was king agriculture supplied adequate revenue to sustain the landowners and several families of tenant farmers. Now, pastureland with brush choked drainages provided barely enough income to pay property taxes. Deer hunting, which was always viewed as part of the Texas Heritage, was seemingly on the way to being lost.

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*When Things Go Right, continued*

In 2000, TPWD showed up with the logical answers. The wildlife problems would need cooperation from landowners. This gave the fledgling Cooperative program a shot in the arm. Up until now The Harvey's Creek Wildlife Co-op consisted of a handful of ranchers. Success would be dependent upon enlarging the coop. The word went out. Neighbors began talking to neighbors and soon agreements were signed. Within a year the Harvey's Creek Wildlife Co-op included all the properties on both sides of the Colorado River for the length of Shaw's Bend. The key ingredient to guaranteeing the TPWD experiment was human cooperation. People working together and being good sportsmen and neighbors would secure the health of the deer population and the future for other wildlife species.

Almost 20 years later our younger generation can't remember a time that selective harvest wasn't part of deer season – and now there's another idea scratching to get into the sunlight.

The question arises. "How come we don't have more turkeys?"

The consensus answers, "Obviously we don't know what we're doing."

Once again, people look towards TPWD. But a lesson has been freshly learned. This time folks also look towards the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf). Pamela Urban has taken the lead and asked for guidance from the leaders of NWTf. "Landowners want to learn how to supply turkey habitat," says Urban. "We all like to see turkeys, understand their needs, and learn about what critters cause depredation." To that extent she's headed up the new Post Oak Savannah NWTf Chapter. To contact Pamela Urban and join the Post Oak Savannah NWTf Chapter call 936-662-8709 or email at [purb674@gmail.com](mailto:purb674@gmail.com). To join and support NWTf you can visit [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org).

Building on the success of previous wildlife programs accomplished by like-minded outdoorsmen will be a key factor to whether the Post Oak Region will expand and sustain turkey populations. There's no doubt that it can be done. It only takes people working together. It's another curve in the road, and soon – we may be looking at the wildlife and Texas Heritage that came before our grandparents. We may be getting a glimpse of the time before cotton and corn was king.

#### History of National Wild Turkey Federation

When the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded in 1973, there were about 1.5 million wild turkeys in North America. After decades of dedicated work, that number hit an historic high of almost 7 million turkeys. The foundation of our success? Standing behind science-based conservation and hunters' rights.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of our dedicated volunteers, professional staff and committed partners, we have had many successes that advanced our mission. Together, we have facilitated the investment of \$488 million in wildlife conservation and the preservation of North America's hunting heritage. Our returns have included improving more than 17 million acres of wildlife habitat and introducing 100,000 people to the outdoors each year. -[www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org)



## Upcoming Events

### NOVEMBER

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>28 Wharton County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>The 409 Club<br/>107 N. Mechanic, El Campo, TX 77437<br/>Begins at 6:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Clint Faas at 832-595-8999 or<br/><a href="mailto:clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov">clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p> | <p><b>29 Victoria County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Patty Dodson Health Center<br/>2805 N. Navarro, Victoria, TX 77901<br/>Begins at 6:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Shannon Lawrence at 361-576-0022 or<br/><a href="mailto:shannon.lawrence@tpwd.texas.gov">shannon.lawrence@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p> |
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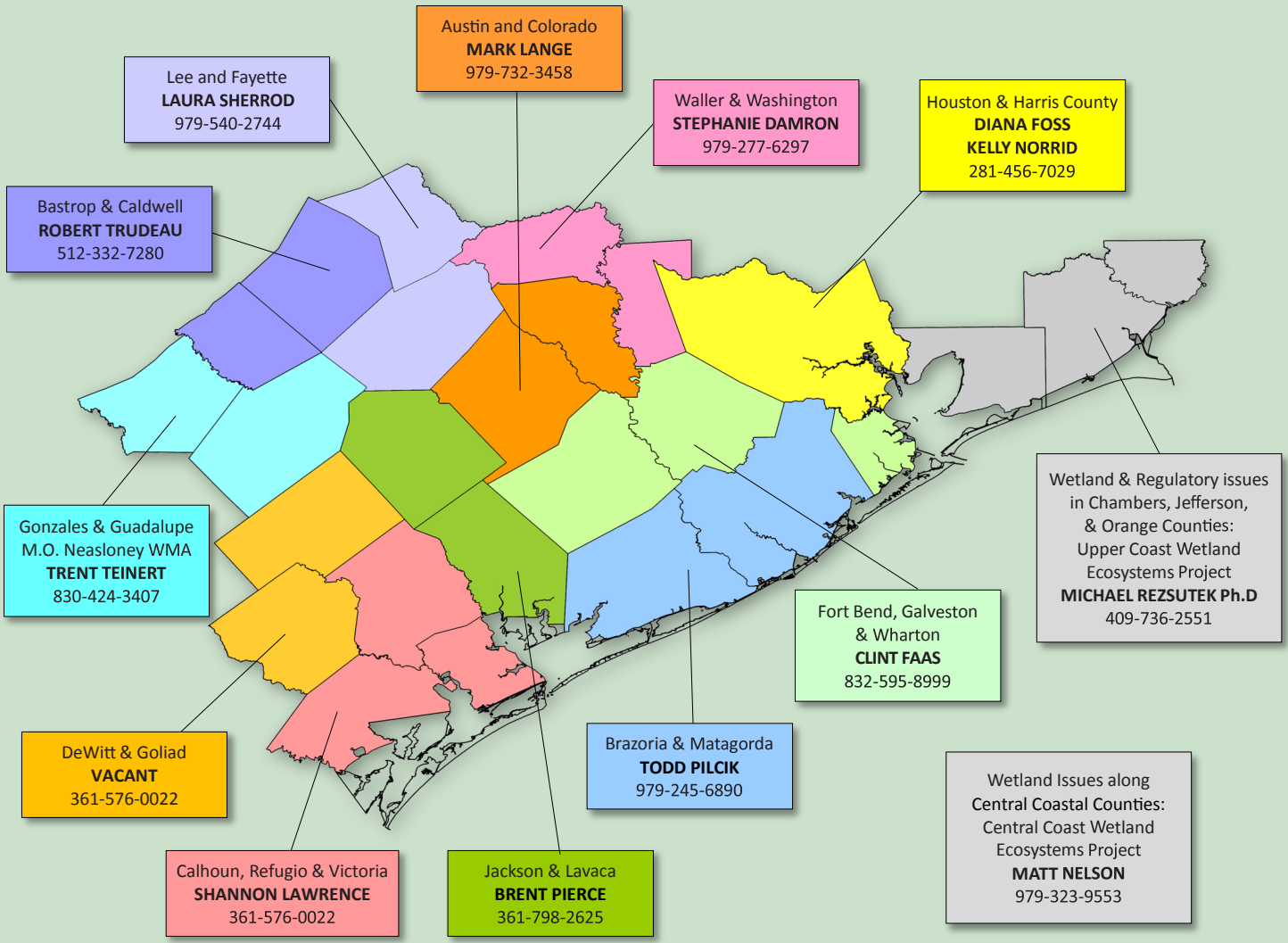
### DECEMBER

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| <p><b>3 Waller and Washington Counties Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Washington County Fairgrounds Event Center<br/>1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, TX 77833<br/>Begins at 6:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Stephanie Damron at 979-277-6297 or<br/><a href="mailto:stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov">stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p> | <p><b>11 Lavaca County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>County Annex Building Courtroom,<br/>412 N. Texana, Hallettsville, TX 77964<br/>Begins at 7:00 p.m.<br/>Contact Brent Pierce at 361-798-2625 or<br/><a href="mailto:brent.pierce@tpwd.texas.gov">brent.pierce@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p>                    |
| <p><b>4 Jackson County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Jackson County Services Building<br/>411 N. Wells Room, Edna, TX 77957<br/>Begins at 7:00 p.m.<br/>Contact Brent Pierce at 361-798-2625 or<br/><a href="mailto:brent.pierce@tpwd.texas.gov">brent.pierce@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p>  | <p><b>11 Austin County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Austin County Courthouse<br/>2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Courtroom<br/>1 East Main St., Bellville, TX 77418<br/>Begins at 7:00 p.m.<br/>Contact Mark Lange at 979-732-3458 or<br/><a href="mailto:mark.lange@tpwd.texas.gov">mark.lange@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p> |
| <p><b>6 Lee County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Texas A&amp;M AgriLife Extension Service<br/>310 S. Grimes St., Giddings, TX 78942<br/>Begins at 6:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Laura Sherrod at 979-540-2744 or<br/><a href="mailto:Laura.sherrod@tpwd.texas.gov">Laura.sherrod@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p>                                   | <p><b>12 Fayette County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Texas A&amp;M AgriLife Extension Service<br/>255 Svoboda Ln., La Grange, TX 78945<br/>Begins at 6:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Laura Sherrod at 979-540-2744 or<br/><a href="mailto:Laura.sherrod@tpwd.texas.gov">Laura.sherrod@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p>          |
| <p><b>11 Guadalupe County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Texas A&amp;M AgriLife Extension Service<br/>210 E. Live Oak St., Seguin, TX 78155<br/>Begins at 7:00 p.m.<br/>Contact Trent Teinert at 830-203-0896 or<br/><a href="mailto:trent.teinert@tpwd.texas.gov">trent.teinert@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p>                            | <p><b>18 Colorado County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Colorado County EMS Building, Room 100<br/>305 Radio Ln., Columbus, TX 78934<br/>Begins at 6:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Mark Lange at 979-732-3458 or<br/><a href="mailto:mark.lange@tpwd.texas.gov">mark.lange@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p>                       |

### JANUARY

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| <p><b>10 Wilson County Scoping Meeting</b><br/>Wilson County Annex<br/>1103 4<sup>th</sup> St., Floresville, TX 78114<br/>Contact Jamie Killian at 830-480-9043 or<br/><a href="mailto:Jamie.Killian@tpwd.texas.gov">Jamie.Killian@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p> | <p><b>18 Washington County Wildlife Society Winter Meeting</b><br/>Washington County Fairgrounds Event Center<br/>1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, TX 77833<br/>Begins at 5:30 p.m.<br/>Contact Stephanie Damron at 979-277-6297 or<br/><a href="mailto:stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov">stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov</a></p> |
|---|---|

# Our Wildlife Biologists



District 7 Leader	Technical Guidance Biologist	Wildlife Diversity Biologist
<b>DAVID FORRESTER</b>	<b>BOBBY EICHLER</b>	<b>TREY BARRON</b>
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*"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."*

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

All inquiries: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744, telephone (800) 792-1112 toll free, or (512) 389-4800 or visit our website for detailed information about TPWD programs:

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