



Oaks and Prairies Wildlifer

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

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

Spring 2019

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Our Wildlife Biologists

District Field Notes

BY DAVID FORRESTER

Another spring, and habitat conditions across the district are in decent shape. However, we hit a dry spell through February and most folks could use some rain. Hopefully, we'll receive timely rainfall to keep these good habitat conditions progressing into the summer.

Due to the wet conditions this last winter, we weren't able to conduct as many prescribed burns as we would have liked. Unfortunately, Mother Nature just didn't cooperate very often and our windows of opportunity were limited. The few burns we were able to conduct went well and the habitat has responded favorably. District staff enjoy conducting prescribed burns. It gets them out of the office and actually impacting habitat. It is also a great management tool and the burns provide a great educational opportunity for the landowners and managers we work with.

The 4-day antlerless proposal passed the commission in March. This hunting season we'll see a 4-day antlerless season starting on Thanksgiving Day and ending the following Sunday. This will give those not participating in the MLDP program the opportunity to harvest an antlerless deer with a firearm during the 4-day window. This will also give youth that are hunting on non-MLDP properties the ability to harvest an antlerless deer during the early and late youth seasons using their hunting license tags. There will be a two deer bag limit all seasons combined. This means that 2 antlerless deer can be harvested using your hunting license tags during archery season, youth seasons, the 4-day antlerless season at Thanksgiving, and the muzzleloader season. So, if you harvest a doe during archery season, you could harvest one more during the Thanksgiving time frame. If you harvest two doe during archery season, you're done.

With the antlerless season, there will also be a mandatory reporting requirement for all antlerless deer harvested using your hunting license tag. This does not impact MLDP cooperators. This does impact those hunting off their hunting license tags during archery season, youth seasons, Thanksgiving, and muzzleloader season. Reporting will be done via a mobile app or website. Reporting is required within 24 hours of harvest.

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District Field Notes, continued

We're working on ways to get this information out to the public so folks know they are required to report. More information on the web site and app will be forthcoming.

We start getting warmer this time of year and some days can get really warm. I'm good with that. The older I get the more the cold bothers me. Those that suffer from allergies may not appreciate some of these spring days as much as others. However, things are new and colors are vivid. Please get out and enjoy the wildlife and habitat on your piece of Texas.



Prescribed burn efforts on private lands from District 7 staff. Top left and right: Photos©Clint Faas, TPWD. Left: Photo©Bobby Eichler, TPWD



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.

Introduction to Exotic Grasses: Kleberg and KR Bluestem

WRITTEN BY MEAGAN LESAK

Diversity is an important factor in managing wildlife populations. Wildlife thrive in diverse environments because they have all of their needs taken care of: food, water, shelter, and space. Over the last several decades, human influence on wildlife habitat has created less diverse rangelands in some cases. The typical issue is exotic grasses encroaching rangelands and creating monocultures. Specifically for this article, Kleberg Bluestem (*Dichanthium annilatum* Forssk.) and KR bluestem (*Bothriochloa ischaemum* L.), which are cultivars of Old World Bluestems (OWB). These two are perennial grasses that originated from Europe and Asia. Records indicate that OWB arrived in Texas in the 1930s as a means for erosion control and grazing forage. Kleberg and KR bluestem are capable of establishing quickly and form dense monocultures reducing native plant and animal species diversity. In many cases, these grasses are now encroaching rangelands where they are not desired. This event is triggering landowners and managers to find ways to eliminate these species on their property.

Identification of these OWB is important for monitoring purposes. They are semi-erect grasses that are adapted to a variety of soils and are shade intolerant. OWB are bunchgrasses that grow from a flattened base. Plants typically reach a height of 24 to 48 inches. The leaves are linear with silky hairs on the upper surface. The terminal seedhead, which is purplish in color, contains two to eight branches with each branch about one to three inches long. They bloom spring to early summer into the fall.

The topic of OWB invasion is of great concern due to their ability to reduce native rangeland diversity in areas where they have invaded. Studies show that monocultures of exotic grass have less insect, bird, and mammal populations than a native rangeland. Most landowners in this area of Texas have a common interest in game species such as white-tailed deer, Northern bobwhite quail, and Rio Grande turkey. All of these species can be heavily influenced by an OWB invasion. White-tailed deer enjoy herbaceous growth, and OWB monocultures tend to have very few forb species growing in them. Quail require many things in order to be successful; one important aspect is the ability to maneuver through a given area. OWB can form dense flats of grass cover that are not easy for a six inch bird to walk in. Turkey love interspersed vegetation with diverse plant matter that brings a diversity and abundance of insects. If an area is heavily invaded by OWB, these game species might be limited.

Due to their aggressive nature, OWB often are promoted when disturbed, especially if it is a singular treatment. Studies have shown that certain practices when implemented as single treatments actually increase OWB presence; these practices include mowing (shredding), plowing, disking, and fire. These treatments expose the soil and leave it vulnerable to OWB invasion due to their ability to establish themselves on the rangeland more quickly than natives.

OWB Field. Photo©Meagan Lesak, TPWD



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Introduction to Exotic Grasses: Kleberg and KR Bluestem, continued

For example, repeated mowing of a stand of OWB will cause the plant to shift its growth form from bunch to prostrate (where stems begin to grow along the ground). Another common practice is disking, which leaves the soil exposed to invasion by seed dispersal as well as OWB seed establishing from what is currently present in the soil seedbank. Integrating a combination of treatments will be necessary to gain control of unwanted OWB. Following a plow treatment with a herbicide such as glyphosate, along with reseeding the area with native grasses and forbs specific to your area, will give the potential for more diversity. Each property should be evaluated individually to determine the best method of attack against OWB invasion.

Some areas that are not invaded and may not be heavily populated with OWB can be potentially controlled if addressed early in establishment period. Landowners with low encroachment should focus on protecting the rangeland from further invasion. Preventative practices should be key in these areas. Practices such as cleaning of equipment and spot spraying with herbicide on roads where these grasses may be starting to establish are essential to maintain the current level of encroachment. Any mechanical disturbance on an area not heavily invaded by OWB that still has an abundance of native grasses and forbs could potentially spark a rapid invasion of these unwanted exotic grasses. It is important to note what the vegetation is comprised of before embarking on any disturbance to a rangeland.



Left: OWB field during the growing season.

Below: OWB seedhead

Photos©Meagan Lesak, TPWD



Meagan Lesak is the wildlife biologist for DeWitt and Goliad Counties. She received her Bachelor of Science in Range & Wildlife Management and Master of Science in Animal Science from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. A Victoria County native, Meagan began her career with TPWD in January 2019.

Plant Profile: Indiangrass

WRITTEN BY ZNOBIA WOOTEN, NATIVE AMERICAN SEED

It is time to start thinking about warm season grasses. Whether you have pots, square feet, acres or sections your property should be evaluated seasonally to decide what should be improved and if more native plants could be added to create a more diversified environment. Just as humans like a varied diet so does the wildlife we hope to attract. By adding diversity, you can make sure that food and habitat are available year-round not just in the spring or fall.

Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*, is a perennial bunch grass that provides both cover and food for wildlife, and a valuable range indicator. It is a decreaser, meaning that with heavy grazing pressure it will decline. Only the best managed rangelands have significant stands of this nutritious grass. Indiangrass along with big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) make up the four major grasses once found in the Tallgrass prairie that covered the central United States. Indiangrass will grow in a variety of soils including sandy and gravely disturbed sites but thrives best in rich bottomland areas with adequate moisture ranging from Canada to Mexico. It will survive periodic flooding but not prolonged saturation and thrives after being burned. The active growing period for this warm season grass starts in mid-spring, end of March to early May here in Texas. All warm season grasses like for the soil temperatures to be above 50 degrees Fahrenheit before germinating. It also makes a wonderful accent or ornamental grass for home landscaping. The clump will grow to about 1 ft in diameter and the blue green foliage remains about 3-4 ft until the fall when seed heads will shoot up. The plume-like seed heads have a metallic golden sheen sometimes turning a bronze color. These beautiful seed heads mature between September and November and make a stunning fall accent.



Only the best managed rangelands have significant stands of this nutritious grass. Photo©Native American Seed



Indiangrass seed heads mature between Sept-Nov and make a stunning fall accent. Photo©Native American Seed

Species Spotlight: Mottled Duck

WRITTEN BY BRENT PIERCE

This past duck hunting season, many Texas waterfowlers anxiously awaited the migrating ducks that fly into our coastal prairies and marsh areas of Texas for a chance to harvest one of the many species.

However, due to the above average rainfall that began in September, waterfowl habitats increased and spread these birds out across their southern wintering grounds making it a slow season. Only a few hunters got to experience some exceptional hunts around areas that attracted a multitude of migrating ducks looking for areas to dabble in. While most ducks are migratory, there is one duck that does not fly south for the winters or fly north for the summers; it stays in Texas year-round; it's the mottled duck (*Anas fulvigula*).



Mottled duck awaiting banding. Photo@TPWD

The mottled duck is a permanent resident of the Gulf Coast. It lives year-round in areas of the Florida peninsula to the marshes of Louisiana, Texas, and northern Mexico. There are two distinct populations of mottled ducks, the Western Gulf Coast population and the Florida population. This non-migratory duck species prefers shallow (6-12 inches) brackish coastal marshes, freshwater wetlands, shallow water impoundments, and flooded rice fields near the coast. The mottled duck is considered a medium sized dabbling duck and unlike most species of ducks, the male and female are similar in color and difficult to distinguish. Both have a mottled brown body with a lighter-colored head, orange feet, and a greenish-blue speculum with little or no white borders in the wing. The color of their bill is the best method to distinguish between sexes. Males have a brighter yellowish bill, and the females have a dull orange bill that is usually covered with dark markings or splotches.

One interesting fact is that mottled ducks start forming pair bonds earlier than most ducks and have usually paired up by November. Once paired up, they fly around looking for suitable nesting habitat and then settle in and begin to enjoy a diverse array of plants, seeds, and invertebrates found in the shallow wetland areas. The female's diet consists mainly of invertebrates before nesting season, which occurs March-May. She will lay 8-12 eggs in a nest surrounded primarily by cordgrass (*Spartina spp.*). The eggs will hatch 26-28 days later, and newly hatched ducklings will journey to the wetlands to pursue and feed on aquatic insects for the first several weeks of their lives while the male defends their territory. As brood rearing comes to an end, the adult pairs begin their molt. During molt, they replace their flight feathers and are flightless for approximately one month. It's during the molting process that researchers rush out to capture, band, and release these birds. Researchers want to learn more about the mottled ducks decline which has been occurring for the past several decades, and also to use them as a gauge for the health of our coastal ecosystems. If you're an avid duck hunter and fortunate enough to harvest a banded mottled duck, please report it so information can be collected.

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Species Spotlight: Mottled Duck, continued

The most serious threat that mottled ducks and many other grassland birds are currently facing is loss of habitat due to fragmentation, degradation, and urbanization. Hybridization from feral mallard species is another concern, although this is not currently a big problem in Texas. One of the habitat concerns here in Texas is the invasive Chinese tallow tree (*Sapium sebiferum*). Tallow tree is taking over large portions of preferred nesting habitats in the coastal prairies. Knowledge is one of the best tools we can use to protect and conserve one of our most valuable and productive ecosystems, home to the mottled duck and to thousands of other species.

To learn more on how to manage your property for mottled ducks check out this article by clicking on the link below:

https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wetlands/central-coast/media/mottled_duck_management.pdf

Stutzenbaker, C. D. 1988. *The Mottled Duck: its life history, ecology and management*. Texas Parks Wildlife Dept., Austin.



Banding a mottled duck. Photos©TPWD



Brent Pierce is the wildlife biologist for Lavaca and Jackson County where he started in March 2016. He grew up in Galveston County in a town called Santa Fe, TX. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science in Rangeland Ecology and Management with a wildlife emphasis. Brent comes to us from the private sector where he has worked on private ranches managing habitat for deer and other wildlife species, as well as, guiding hunters and managing populations.

Keeping Your Wildlife Management Association Healthy

WRITTEN BY BOBBY EICHLER

Wildlife Management Association's (WMA's) have been an important part of wildlife management across South Central Texas since the early 1990's as well as an important partner with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Many of the WMA's that developed across this part of the state organized around deer management with the goal of improving deer populations and hunting. While deer management will stay an important part of the WMA's current and future goals, WMA's have an opportunity to diversify their approach to appeal with today's landowners.

From the 1970's through the early 2000's, the deer herd, land ownership size, and land management practices across South Central Texas has been somewhat unique when compared to other parts of the state. Parcel sizes have traditionally been smaller with farming and ranching being the major land uses. Up until 2005, most of the counties across this part of the state were considered '1 buck counties'. Doe harvest has been allowed either during archery season using your license tag or by permit only during the regular gun season. Deer populations across this area varied from low to high densities, mostly across smaller acreage properties. Some areas with lower deer densities were even restocked during the early 1990's and the WMA's played an important part in this process. The buck population experienced tremendous hunting pressure, resulting in 80% of the annual harvest comprised of bucks aging at 2 ½ years old or younger. What was the end result? A deer herd with more does than bucks, a drawn-out breeding and fawning season and low fawn survival. It was common to have a sex ratio of 10+ doe per buck during this time.

Starting around 1996, TPWD initiated the Managed Lands Deer Permits (MLDP's) program across the state to help landowners manage deer populations and habitat on private properties. By default, the MLDP program requirements tended to work best on larger properties and to some degree excluded small acreage. MLDP properties were, and still are, required to conduct annual population surveys as well as conduct annual habitat practices to receive customized harvest recommendations and permit issuance. Since population survey data was often inadequate on small properties to manage properly, and it could be difficult to meet the habitat management requirements, smaller properties were challenged to participate in the MLDP program.

Due to the variation in land ownership sizes, the dynamics of the county deer herd, restrictive county deer regulations, and the initiation of the MLDP program, the need for WMA's was realized. By forming WMA's, members could now join acreage and collect landscape-scale census and herd data, enabling local biologists to make harvest recommendations and issue MLDP's. Additionally, a management plan (required to participate in the MLDP program) could be developed for the area covering the membership's acreage. Member properties could now participate in MLDP if the survey estimates indicated that the deer population could sustain harvest and the landowner so desired. WMA's blossomed during the 1990's and continued to grow for many years with deer management being the cornerstone of their existence. Without the WMA model, the biologists would have had difficulty managing the number of landowners in their counties and fewer properties would have been able to receive doe permits over the past 20+ years in this part of the state.

Since the 1990's the deer herd throughout South Central Texas has continued to grow and prosper. WMA's were instrumental in working with TPWD in the early 2000's to implement an 'Experimental Antler Regulation' across 6 counties (Lavaca, Lee, Colorado, Austin, Fayette, and Washington). Without support from many WMA cooperators, this experimental regulation may not have been initiated.

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Keeping Your Wildlife Management Association Healthy, continued

The goal of this regulation was to, 1) improve age structure of the buck herd, 2) increase hunter opportunity, and 3) encourage landowners and hunters to become more involved in management. The 3-year experimental phase was initiated during the 2002-2003 hunting season and became permanent during the 2005-2006 season due to early success and promising results. Seventeen seasons later, antler regulations now cover 117 counties in Texas thanks to the history of cooperation between the WMA's and TPWD. Over the past 30 years, with the implementation of managed doe harvest and the protection of most of the younger bucks, the deer population is in much better shape but has room for further improvement across South Central Texas.

WMA's continue to actively work with cooperators to better manage deer herds within their respective areas. However, over the years of increased doe hunting, better buck numbers and overall better deer populations, it is getting harder to find the volunteers needed to conduct the most important aspects of deer management. Two of these are proper deer population surveys and herd composition counts. Traditionally, WMA's have conducted the population surveys (i.e. spotlight counts) throughout their area, while individual landowners collected the herd composition counts (i.e. incidental observations). Both counts are vital and work together to provide the biologist with the information needed to make sound harvest recommendations. The population surveys provide density estimates (acres per deer), and the incidental observations provide herd composition ratios (does per buck and fawn recruitment). WMA's are asked to conduct a minimum of 3 spotlight counts per year during July and August, not only for the biologist to better manage the herd, but also to fulfill the annual obligations of the MLDP program. To continue to monitor deer populations, biologists need WMA membership to reprioritize efforts on conducting spotlight surveys. Members wanting to receive permits need to collect their summertime incidental observations as directed by their biologist.

As WMA's and the deer herd have evolved over time, so have the methods that TPWD uses to manage the deer herd across the landscape. While TPWD values the partnership and years of working together with WMA's, the agency also serves constituents that are not members of a WMA. Where wildlife resources can be utilized without a negative effect, TPWD considers expansion of recreational opportunities for all constituents. Due to the recent passage of new regulations, during the 2019-2020 hunting season, landowners will have several tools available to harvest doe in these South Central Texas counties. These options include Conservation Option MLDP's, Harvest Option MLDP's, and now a 4-day doe season over the Thanksgiving holidays. The 4-day doe season may result in some landowners and their hunters opting to utilize hunting license tags, rather than MLDP to harvest doe. Regardless of the legal doe harvest method selected, there is value in landowners maintaining their local WMA membership. Getting to know their neighbors and attending educational events hosted by the WMA are important advantages of WMA membership. Hopefully, landowners see the value of being a member of a local landowner/hunter organization even if they aren't receiving deer permits. Also, hopefully, WMA's see the value in retaining/recruiting members even if they aren't interested in receiving deer permits.

For WMA's to stay healthy well into the future, WMA's should evolve with the local landowners needs, goals, concerns, and wishes within the county. While traditional land uses such as farming and ranching remain important, so is the small acreage landowner who wants to manage and enjoy the wildlife. WMA's can educate and cover many different aspects of land management. Some of these topics include: Grazing management; range management; surface water and ground water concerns; water quality; eminent domain; wildlife valuation for property tax purposes; wildlife management for species such as turkey, quail, and songbirds; predator control; hog control; prescribed burning; and hunter recruitment and retention. TPWD has and will continue to work with WMA's with workshops and field days to further educate the members and public.

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Keeping Your Wildlife Management Association Healthy, continued

Whether you serve on the Board of Directors, sit on back of a truck during spotlight lines, or help prepare for the next social event, your help is very much needed for WMAs to thrive in the future. WMA's are as diverse as the folks residing in our counties. Some WMA's are highly functional and organized, while others are more of a loose association. Many of the WMA's are intensely focused on deer harvest, while others have a variety of interests. You are encouraged to volunteer and become actively involved in your local WMA.



Bobby Eichler is the Technical Guidance Biologist for the Oak Prairie District. He has Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Forestry both with emphasis in Game Management, from Stephen F. Austin State University. A native of Giddings, Bobby started his TPWD career in East Texas before moving to La Grange in 2007.

Non-Game Notes: Meet the Siren

WRITTEN BY LAURA SHERROD

Have you ever dug out a pond and discovered some long, slimy-looking creatures wiggling around in the mud? Chances are you found sirens!

Sirens are one of those animals that most people are not even aware are in our area. Lesser sirens (*Siren intermedia*) are a fairly abundant species that we find across the eastern third of Texas, although there is a population of larger sirens in South Texas that has a threatened status. Sirens, a type of salamander, are very eel-like in appearance. Some have labeled the siren as such a “weird and primitive” salamander that it has been classified as a distinct group from salamanders in the past. Unlike most salamanders, sirens live both their juvenile and adult life underwater, although they can cross land on rare occasion. Sirens have two very small front limbs and no hind limbs. While most amphibians lose their gills when they metamorphosize into adults, the adult siren retains its feathery external gills in addition to having small lungs. Lesser sirens tend to be gray to almost black in color with a lighter colored belly, and they average 7-27 inches in length, depending on the subspecies.



Siren. Photo@Laura Sherrod, TPWD

One interesting feature of lesser sirens is their eating habits. They have a large skull that is beak-like and appears to be for crushing prey. Sirens lack teeth for holding and chewing their prey. Instead, they are more like mini vacuum cleaners, sucking in their prey and swallowing them whole! Prey includes small crawfish, worms, mollusks, and insects. Sirens are described as being partially herbivorous, another difference from other salamanders. Most amphibians are only carnivorous and prey on other animals, but plant matter has been found in the digestive system of sirens on several occasions. Sirens tend to hide out in the mud or vegetation during the day and do most of their hunting for prey at night. When it comes to reproduction, sirens tend to do things a bit differently. Since sirens are fully aquatic, they reproduce in the water. The female will lay several hundred eggs in a cavity underwater, and the male will fertilize them. Unlike many other salamander species, the males tend to be larger than the females, and their head is bigger due to an enlarged masseter muscle. Observations have been made of male sirens guarding the nest, which could be one reason why they tend to be larger than the females. Males will stay with hatchlings for up to 1 week after hatch. Hatchlings grow fast, but it will take approximately 2 years before they reach reproductive maturity.

Another feature that makes the siren so unique is their ability to aestivate. When summertime causes the pond to dry up and conditions become unfavorable, sirens can bury down into the mud. They will make a cocoon of sorts out of the mucous from their body. The cocoon will harden around all but the mouth of the siren, gills will shrink as the siren switches to using its lungs, and it can remain in this aestivation state for a few weeks up to over a year! Similarly, the siren can brumate, a state similar to hibernating, when conditions become too cold in the wintertime.

Sirens are rarely observed in the wild, and they are hard to catch under normal circumstances. Therefore, many are not even aware that we have them in many of the ponds and lakes throughout the eastern third of Texas. So, next time you are digging out your pond, be on the lookout for these strange creatures!



Laura Sherrod is the Wildlife Biologist for Lee and Fayette counties. She grew up in Dripping Springs and graduated from Texas State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Wildlife Biology. Laura was hired by Texas Parks & Wildlife in 2008, where she worked with the Big Game Program until accepting her current biologist position in April 2014. Laura offices in Giddings, and she enjoys helping landowners and wildlife management associations achieve their habitat and wildlife management goals throughout Lee and Fayette counties.

New Addition to the Oaks and Prairies Wildlifer

WRITTEN BY BOBBY EICHLER

Starting with this edition of the *Oaks and Prairies Wildlifer*, you will find a scanned page from historical bulletins dating all the way back to the period of 1937-1940. Yes, we are going a way's back. Excerpts will be taken from the *Monthly Bulletin* which was published by the Texas Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission, the predecessor for the current Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Often these bulletins were 6-8 pages, so our plan will be to insert 1, possibly 2 pages into each newsletter. At the District office, we have approximately 30-40 of these bulletins in electronic format.

The intent of these historical articles is to shine some light on the fish and wildlife culture in Texas during this period. While browsing through some of these publications, it is amazing to see how some of the issues we believe are of recent time actually occurred during the period early in the 1900's. The concern over quail populations, land fragmentation, overharvest of various fish and wildlife species, exploitation of natural resources, and the belief that wildlife have a value to the landowner are just a few of the topics you will see scattered through the early bulletins. Also, during this time, many fish and wildlife species were at all time lows. From the bulletins one will see that great efforts were being made to restock and rebuild these populations, as well as protecting them from poachers. This first addition actually has an article about restocking beaver into East Texas! Who would have ever thought there was a time when beaver was trapped from the Texas Hill Country and then restocked into the wettest portion of our state?

Within the bulletins, one will find methods of hunting and fishing that may or may not be legal today. At times the indiscriminate use of chemicals and traps for certain species would not go over well today (and hopefully it does not give anybody ideas). Also, during this time Texas counties had their own game laws that were proposed and voted in by the legislature. It was not uncommon for upwards of 100 or more laws to be passed each session dealing with fish and wildlife, and upwards of 600 laws throughout the state at any given time. At times we will insert some of these laws and the wide subject matter they covered.

Hopefully you will find this new addition to the *Wildlifer* educational and at times humorous. Lastly, realize these bulletins were written during a very different period and a different culture. What we may deem unacceptable by today's standards may have been an everyday part of the culture during this period and what was required at the time to survive another day. So, when reading these articles have both your 1940 glasses and your 2019 glasses on and your mind open. Hope you enjoy.



Bobby Eichler is the Technical Guidance Biologist for the Oak Prairie District. He has Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Forestry both with emphasis in Game Management, from Stephen F. Austin State University. A native of Giddings, Bobby started his TPWD career in East Texas before moving to La Grange in 2007.

Monthly Bulletin

OF THE

TEXAS GAME, FISH AND OYSTER COMMISSION

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AUSTIN, TEXAS, OCTOBER, 1939

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PLANT 45 BEAVER IN EASTERN TEXAS

Dam Builders Trapped in Kimble And Edwards Counties

Forty-five beaver trapped in Kimble and Edwards Counties, where there is an over-supply, have been planted on ten lakes and streams in Eastern Texas, it is announced by the executive secretary of the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission. The beaver were trapped by employees of the Texas Wildlife Research Unit at College Station and their distribution was supervised by the Game Department's regional game manager at Beaumont.

By trapping the busy little dam builders in Kimble and Edwards counties and transplanting them into East Texas a two-fold objective has been accomplished. Soil in Southwestern Texas is not conducive to solid dams as constructed by beaver, but the animals thrived and became over-abundant there, mainly due to protection.

Beaver, by building dams and thus producing ponds are considered very valuable and East Texans expressed a desire to have them. The ponds they build furnish fish habitats, provide watering places for deer and turkey, induce migratory birds to remain in areas where there is water and provide habitats for other fur-bearing animals.

The beaver were distributed in Eastern Texas as follows: White Creek, tributary of the Brazos River, Brazos County, five; Devil's Jump, tributary of the Navasota River, Robertson County, seven; Cedar Creek, tributary of the Navasota, Robertson County, three; Lewis Creek, tributary of the Angelina River, Jasper County, seven; Sandy Branch, tributary of Navasota, Leon County, three; Mill Creek, tributary of Navasota, Leon County, three; Black Creek, tributary of Neches River, Hardin County, six; Lost Indian Lake, Walker County, four; Rocky Creek, tributary of Sabine River, Houston County, three and Skull Creek, tributary of Colorado River, Colorado County, four.

Oil Shutdown Aided Wildlife in Texas

The state-wide fifteen-day shutdown of oil fields had more than one benefit, it is pointed out by the director of anti-pollution for the Game Department, who announced that many oil operators used what would have otherwise been idle labor for work in the fields which may do much to help prevent pollution of streams.

Many operators used the workmen who were being kept on the payrolls for repairing and enlarging their salt water pits and some built new pits to catch the waste matter from the wells. Salt water is held in pits until there are rises in streams which allow the operators to release the waters in such proportions that it will not kill fish.

Other oil operators took advantage of the shutdown to repair fire walls and burning pits and cleaning up their fields.

In Memoriam

Walter W. Boyd, director of the coastal division of the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission, and former commissioner of the department, succumbed at 5:30 p. m. Friday, Sept. 1 in a Corpus Christi hospital following an illness of six weeks. Mr. Boyd underwent a major operation in mid-July.

Mr. Boyd had served in the capacity of coastal director since 1932. He was game commissioner from 1921 through 1924 and it was during his administration that the game warden force was greatly increased. He also served in the state legislature in 1931 as a representative of Wise County.

The body was taken to Mr. Boyd's birthplace, Decatur, where final rites were held Sunday, Sept. 3.

The Game Department extends to his survivors its sincere sympathy.

PERMIT RECEIVED FOR BULKHEADING

A permit has been received from the United States Engineering Corps allowing the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission to proceed with bulkheading Corpus Christi Pass, which was recently reopened to allow more water to get into the upper Laguna Madre on the Gulf coast. Work, for which the contract has already been let, will start within thirty days, it was announced by the Chairman of the Commission.

Bulkheading Corpus Christi Pass was deemed necessary to help prevent it becoming filled with sand from the Gulf, as it did shortly after being opened by the Game Department's dredge AE last year. The bulkhead, built of 2x12 creosoted piling, will extend 150 feet into the Gulf and 500 feet inland.

The Game Department is attacking the salinity problem in the Laguna Madre from several angles. Salinity has killed hundreds of thousands of fish in the last two years. The Department's dredge is now working at Cedar Bayou, where another pass will be opened. Plans are under way to condemn land through Padre Island at Murdock's Landing, where still another pass will be opened.

GRAY FOX ROBS HUNTER

A gray fox, not satisfied with the two rats he had captured and was carrying away, pilfered a squirrel from Dr. C. M. Hall of Hico, he reported to the Game Department last week. Dr. Hall shot two squirrels and before he could reach them a fox came along, added one of them to the rats he was carrying and scampered away to his den in the hills along the Bosque River near Hico.

PRAIRIE CHICKENS HELP TO FARMERS

Eating of Army Worms in Cotton Fields Saved Panhandle Crops

Because the Lesser Prairie Chicken saved several landowners as much as a bale of cotton per 8 acres, those fine game birds are going to get much more protection in the Texas Panhandle in the future, or at least in Wheeler County, it is reported by the State Game Warden at Canadian. The Prairie Chickens devoured huge numbers of army worms which seriously threatened the cotton crop in that section of the State.

T. D. Key, owner of large holdings in Wheeler County and many of his neighbors are now planning to plant food for the Prairie Chickens as a result of the birds having moved into their cotton fields and totally destroyed the army worms. The worms had eaten about one-third of the leaves from Mr. Key's cotton when the birds moved in. As many as 500 Prairie Chickens invaded the forty-four acre field at a time and the result is that Mr. Key estimates they saved him as much as five bales of cotton. Many neighbors had the same experience and now have a higher regard for those game birds. They have announced there will be no hunting for prairie chickens in that section during the remainder of the five-year closed season placed on the birds by the Forty-fifth state legislature in 1937.

Mr. Key has planted seventy-one acres of sudan and red top cane for the birds to feed on and plans to raise as much maize and kaffir corn for them. Other Wheeler County landowners are also going to provide feed for the birds.

Birds Help Wipe Out Grasshoppers

Birds are being given considerable credit for the lack of grasshoppers in West Texas this year. Hordes of hoppers destroyed crops last year, but large flocks of Swainson's hawks and horned larks, as well as thousands of burrowing owls moved in on them and destroyed many of the pests, according to word received by the Executive Secretary of the Game Department from his game managers in the affected areas.

Not only did birds destroy vast numbers of grasshoppers, but one game manager observed a flock of Swainson's hawks numbering more than 1,000 feeding on mature hoppers recently and also scratching and digging around in the ground. After the flock flew away he checked the large field closely and was unable to find any egg pods. Thus is shown another good reason why the wildlife of Texas should be protected and why it is worth millions of dollars to landowners as well as sportsmen, the Executive Secretary pointed out.

Upcoming Events

April

- 27 West Navidad Wildlife Management Association Spring Meeting**
 Rock'n W Sale Barn on
 HWY 77 North of Schulenburg
 Social at 6 p.m., meal at 7 p.m.
 Contact Jessica Wick at 979-743-1903

May

- | | |
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| <p>5 Pin Oak Creek WMA - Fun Day
 Vernon Richards Riverbend Park
 107 Tx-71, Smithville, TX 78957
 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 Contact Lee Heselmeyer at 281-455-5517</p> | <p>25 Texas Big Game Awards Regions 4 and 8 Banquet
 Village Venue New Braunfels
 2032 Central Plaza, New Braunfels, TX 78130
 Doors open 2:00 p.m.
 Contact David Forrester at 979-698-6591 or david.forrester@tpwd.texas.gov
 http://www.texasbiggameawards.org/awards-banquets/</p> |
| <p>18 Texas Big Game Awards Regions 1, 2, and 3 Banquet
 Cabela's
 12901 Cabela Drive, Fort Worth, TX 76177
 Doors open 2:00 p.m.
 Contact David Forrester at 979-698-6591 or david.forrester@tpwd.texas.gov
 http://www.texasbiggameawards.org/awards-banquets/</p> | <p>31 Fur, Feather, Farming Workshop Series - "Grazing for Wildlife"
 Liedertafel Hall
 116 Lux Road Sealy, TX 77474
 Begins at 1:00 p.m.
 Contact Mark Lange at 979-732-3458 or mark.lange@tpwd.texas.gov</p> |
| <p>25 Goliad County Wildlife Management Association Spring Field Day
 Julie Wimberly Memorial Homemaking Building
 at Goliad Fairgrounds
 Check-in 7:45 a.m.
 Begins at 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
 Contact Brian Yanta at brian.yanta@ag.tamu.edu</p> | |

Continued on page 15

*Upcoming Events, continued***June**

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|---|--|
| <p>8 Red Rock WMA - Fundraiser
Sacred Heart Catholic Church- Holtman Hall
4045 FM 535, Rockne, TX 78602
Contact Jim Russel at 512-575-5056
https://rrwma.org/</p> <p>22 Texas Big Game Awards Regions
5, 6, and 7 Banquet
Pitser Garrison Convention Center
601 N. Second Street, Lufkin, TX 75901
Doors open 2:00 p.m.
Contact David Forrester at 979-698-6591 or
david.forrester@tpwd.texas.gov
http://www.texasbiggameawards.org/awards-banquets/</p> | <p>24 Guadalupe River North WMA Meeting
Pattie Dodson Health Center
2805 N. Navarro, Victoria, TX
Begins at 6:30 p.m.
Contact Shannon Lawrence at
Shannon.lawrence@tpwd.texas.gov</p> |
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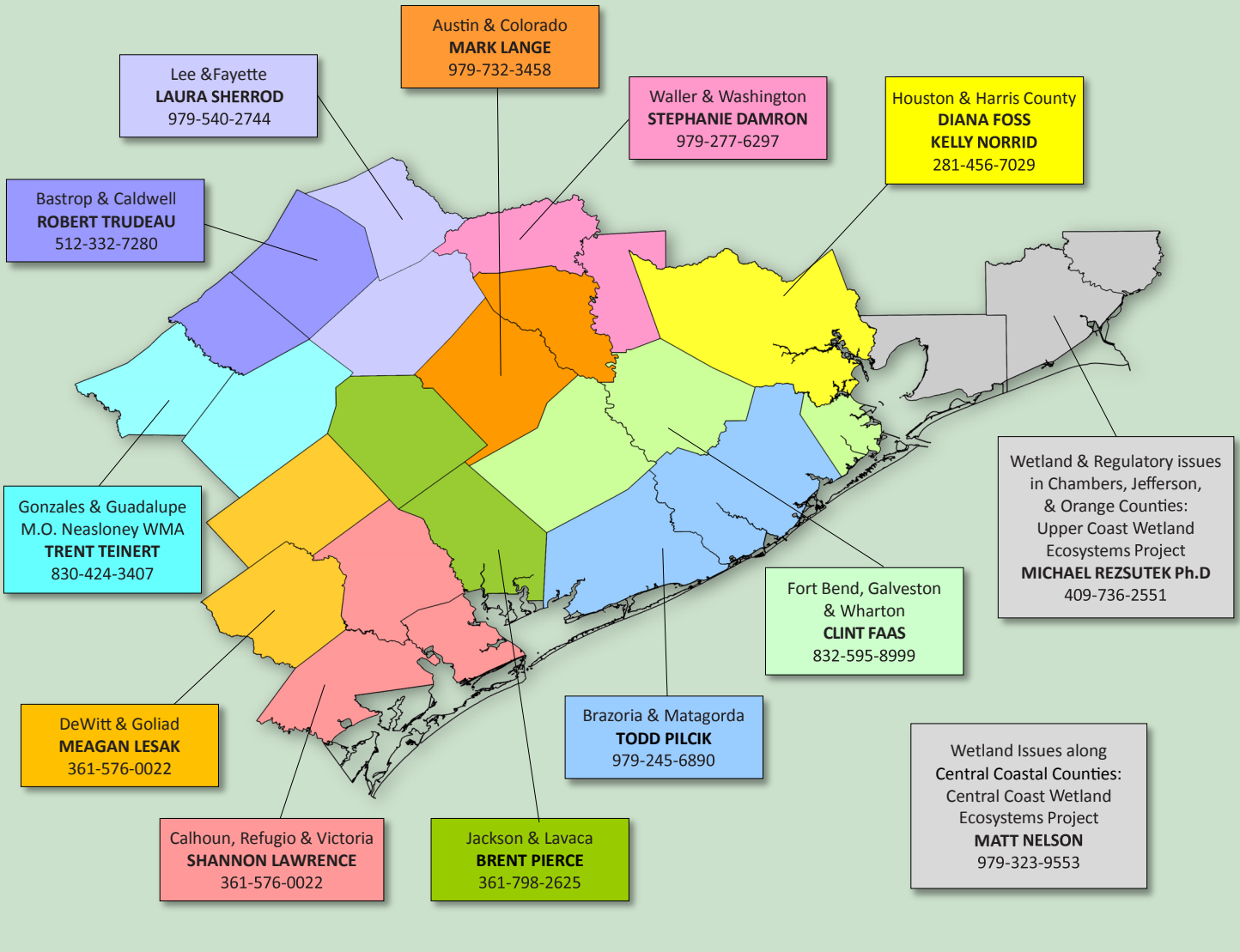
July

- 13** **Red Rock WMA - Summer Meeting**
Red Rock Community Center
114 Red Rock Road, Red Rock, TX 78602
Begins at 6:30 p.m.
Contact Jim Russel at 512-575-5056
<https://rrwma.org/>

October

- 8** **Clear Fork Creek WMM – Fall Meeting**
TBD
Begins at 6:00 p.m.
Contact Robert Trudeau at
Robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov

Our Wildlife Biologists



District 7 Leader	Technical Guidance Biologist	Wildlife Diversity Biologist
DAVID FORRESTER	BOBBY EICHLER	TREY BARRON
979-968-3501	979-968-9942	361-576-0022

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