



Oaks and Prairies Wildlifer

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

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PARKS &
WILDLIFE

April 2023

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District Field Notes

BY DAVID FORRESTER

As I'm writing this, we are experiencing some of the best rain we've received in a few weeks. I think most of the district was in ok shape. Although the western portion of the district was getting dry. Hopefully this rain will help alleviate any droughty conditions and we'll continue to receive good moisture for the rest of the spring. The wildflowers this year were brilliant, and I thought persisted for a good while. Decent moisture will promote good forb and browse growth which will enhance antler production and body conditions in deer. Fawns will have good cover and plenty of milk. Turkeys and quail will have good ground cover for nesting and brooding.

Chronic Wasting Disease is still a concern for the state. Unfortunately, we've had new detections of CWD in several counties over the last few weeks. The press release associated with three of these positives can be viewed [here](#). All these detections are tied to deer breeding facilities. The most recent positives are in Washington, Gonzales, Zavala, Frio, and Hamilton counties. Washington and Gonzales counties fall within our District 7 boundary. During the March commission meeting TPWD staff presented a proposal to establish new CWD Surveillance Zones (SZ) in response to these recent detections of CWD. The proposed SZ boundaries would encompass a two-mile radius around each of the properties where the CWD positives were detected. All properties that are wholly or partially located within that two-mile zone would be subject to CWD Surveillance Zone rules which include mandatory sampling of hunter-harvested deer and carcass movement restrictions, as well as certain restrictions on live-animal movements of deer. This would mean that any animals harvested within the zone would need to be tested for CWD and the animal would need to be quartered out before exiting the zone. Any hunter wishing to mount a head / antlers could take a head from the zone to a taxidermist after receiving a TPWD head waiver from a TPWD official at a CWD check station.

The Department understands the inconvenience to hunters and landowners affected by these CWD zones and has developed new SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) to drastically reduce zone size where CWD has only been detected in a deer breeding facility.

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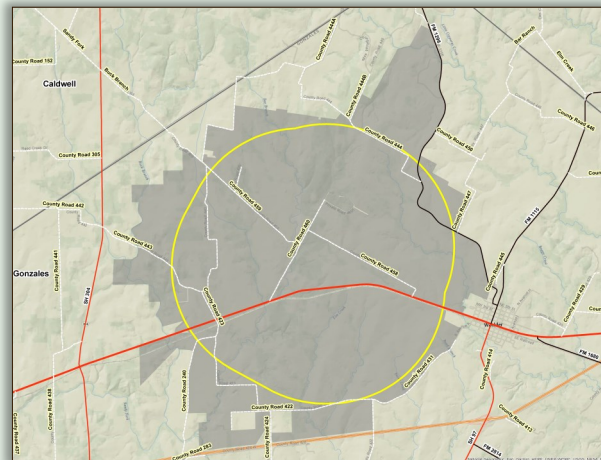
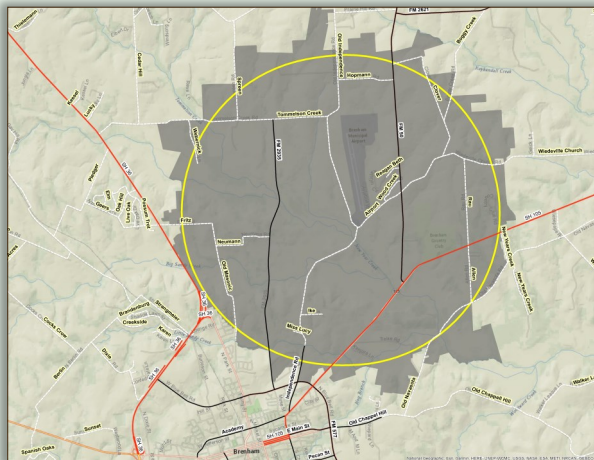
State of the District, continued

Prior to these new SOPs CWD zones were much larger in size, often several hundred thousand acres or larger. These new proposed zone changes would impact far fewer landowners while allowing TPWD to focus surveillance efforts on the areas of greatest concern. This new zone approach would increase the likelihood of adequate CWD sample distribution and representation, thereby increasing the detection probability if the disease exists in the native, free-ranging deer population. This would help staff justify dissolution of SZ's established in response to the detection of CWD in deer breeding facilities in the event no positive test results are received after achieving the desired sampling goal. This new proposal should be up for public comment sometime in late April or early May. You will be able to go to The [TPWD website for public comment](#) once the proposal is active. The TPWD Commission will meet in May to consider adoption of these proposals. Below are the two proposed zones in District 7, one in Washington County and one in Gonzales County.

TPWD biologists would also want to get their hands on any deer that die of other causes within these zones, so we would appreciate local residents reporting road killed deer or injured deer to our TPWD biologists. We are currently discussing the best approaches on how to staff and deal with these proposed new zones assuming the commission adopts this new approach. We should have a good plan of attack formulated by this summer if this all comes to fruition, so pay attention to the July newsletter which should have more specific information. Additionally, we will be holding public meetings in those counties impacted as we get closer to hunting season.

Although the above is not the best of news, the bright spot is that these animals tested positive prior to being moved to different locations and released. The antemortem testing which is performed on live deer prior to them being released, did work, and allowed us to identify CWD positive animals before they left the breeding facility.

Hopefully you're receiving some beneficial rain and the bluebonnets and paintbrushes have been spectacular. Even though this may be a bad time of year for those allergy sufferers, make sure you have your allergy medication with you and get out and enjoy your piece of Texas.



Left: Washington County 2 mile zone. Right: Gonzales County 2 mile zone. Photos©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.

Spring Management for Rio Grande Turkeys

WRITTEN BY LEE WILLIAMSON

Spring has arrived throughout the Post Oak Savannah, and Rio Grande turkeys have left their winter roosts to pursue springtime forage, breed, and nest. As another annual turkey season gets to its final weeks, however, many landowners are left scratching their heads as they go another year without seeing a single Rio Grande turkey on their property at any time much less during the spring hunting season.

In counties with relatively abundant Rio Grande turkey populations, it is common to see plenty of individuals on a single property and not a single one on neighboring properties. Turkeys can be very selective about the habitat they utilize, and their habitat needs in the spring and summer largely differ from those in the fall and winter. Understanding how turkeys utilize and select their habitat during the spring breeding season may help landowners manage their property to increase their likelihood of seeing turkeys during turkey season.



*Male Rio Grande turkey displaying.
Photo©TPWD*

The important factors of quality springtime habitat for Rio Grande turkeys are cover, food, and water. Food and cover can largely be provided by grasses and shrubs just 1½-2 feet in height. Vegetation at this height provides visual obstruction from predators for gobblers, hens, and poults as they forage on the ground. Just as importantly, vegetation at this height provides crucial nesting habitat for hens as they incubate their eggs. When it comes to managing vegetation on your property to provide cover, a good rule of thumb is to keep the vegetation tall enough that it would make it very difficult to see a hen that was bedded down, but short enough that the hen will have a good view if she stands up to check her surroundings. Make sure this vegetation obstructs predator vision without impeding turkey movement, that way they can still evade any predators that locate them. Plants that provide good ground cover for turkeys include native grasses such as little bluestem, switchgrass, Indian grass, and other native grasses. A variety of shrub species can provide good cover for Rio Grande turkeys as long as they are



Female Rio Grande turkey with poults. Photo©TPWD

maintained below 2 feet in height and spread out enough to not impede turkey movement. Woody brush species that grow rapidly and form dense thickets should be strictly controlled. The exact shrubs to avoid will vary based on your location, but landowners throughout the Post Oak Savannah should keep an eye on any yaupon, mesquite, huisache, or cedar growing on their property. Maintaining vegetation structure that provides good screening cover in riparian areas and near large roosting trees will give landowners better returns on their effort spent as turkeys are more likely to utilize these areas.

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Spring Management for Rio Grande Turkeys, continued

By managing vegetation that provides good cover for Rio Grande turkeys in the spring and summer, landowners can protect the food resources that make up the majority of a turkey's diet at this time of year. Adults will consume new growth of grasses and forbs in the early springtime, and the fruits and seeds of different forbs and browse species as they become available later in the spring and into the summer. This vegetation serves as habitat for insects which are an important component of adult turkey diet and make up the majority of the diet for young poults. Landowners can further provide foraging opportunities for Rio Grande turkeys by clearing understory growth in any wooded portions of their property. Leaving areas with mature trees but sparsely vegetated understories can promote the growth of a variety of grasses, forbs, and brush species that aren't often found in completely open spaces.



*Quality Rio Grande turkey nesting habitat.
Photo©Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

Additionally, these areas can provide a substantial litter layer which will contain more insects for turkeys to consume. Shallow disking can also promote the growth of annual grasses and forbs that provide more foraging opportunities for Rio Grande turkeys.



*Wildlife accessible water.
Photo©Texas Redoubt*

Water is another habitat requirement that should not be overlooked. Wild turkeys can get some of the water they need through foraging. This will not be enough to completely fulfill their needs, however, especially during the heat of the summer. Wild turkeys are not usually found in habitat where water is lacking. In fact, some studies conducted in Texas indicate that the majority of Rio Grande turkeys nest within 1 mile of water and are often as close as ¼ mile from a water source. Turkeys will drink from ponds and guzzlers. Distributing these at least every mile, but preferably even closer together, is a requirement for good Rio Grande turkey habitat.

In the end, cover, food, and water are all equally important requirements for turkeys in the springtime, and habitat that does not provide all these components will likely not see any use by turkeys during this time of year.

Creating exceptional habitat for Rio Grande turkeys takes time and effort, but doing so is a landowner's best bet for seeing Rio Grande turkeys on their property. Following these guidelines over several years, however, will provide landowners with the greatest likelihood of seeing Rio Grande turkeys during the spring hunting season.

Lee Williamson is the biologist for DeWitt County. He has a bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's in Wildlife Ecology from Texas State University. Originally from Wichita Falls, Lee Williamson started with TPWD at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area in 2021 before moving to his current position in late 2022.



Air Rifles - A New Spin on an Old Projectile

WRITTEN BY TRENT TEINERT

In a world where ammunition is expensive and scarce, air rifles are really beginning to come into their own as an option to provide cheap target practice and increase hunting opportunities. Recently, this became really apparent as I searched for some of my favorite hunting ammunition with no success. I started exploring other options that would allow me to keep target shooting and provide some increased opportunity. That is when I discovered a new world of which I was scarcely aware. Since my childhood days plinking with BB guns, air rifle offerings have expanded exponentially. At first it didn't seem very exciting, there is no explosion, the projectiles seem smaller, and generally the guns look a little funny. As I researched further, I began to see example after example of people taking animals from squirrels to wildebeest and began to realize the possibilities. I also learned that powerful air rifles existed since the 1700s. In fact, air rifles were used as military arms over 200 years ago. Lewis and Clark utilized air rifles in their expedition after the Louisiana purchase. Mechanically, their rifles used many of the same concepts that modern air rifles use. They also had a capacity over 20 shots and a range of over 100 yards.



Example of a modern large caliber air rifle.

Photo©Alan Cain, TPWD

Price

Air guns can be purchased for reasonable prices. Quality air guns start under two hundred dollars for a small caliber rifle that can take small game like squirrels and rabbits. Comparable to firearms, air rifles can cost well over one to two thousand dollars for high end models. The biggest cost savings comes in the form of ammunition. Since many air rifles generate or store energy from human power, they eliminate the need for powder, primers, cases, and the labor to load those components together. Air rifles only require a projectile. Thus, buying five hundred rounds of small caliber pellets, .177 or .22, typically cost around ten to twenty dollars. Fifty rounds of large .50 caliber pellets typically cost thirty to forty dollars.

Availability

Air guns can be purchased at many big box stores or online sporting goods stores making them readily available. Pellets are usually available during ammunition shortages at many local hardware, sporting goods, or big box stores. When purchasing pellets online, they are typically cheaper to ship than conventional ammunition since they weigh less and do not contain explosives. In Texas you are only required to show an ID to prove that you are 18 years of age or older to purchase an air rifle.

Less Maintenance

Air rifles generally require less maintenance. They tend to have few moving parts to wear out and, because gun powder is not used, they do not get as dirty as conventional firearms. Generally, they only require a light oiling on metal parts and running an oil patch down the barrel to keep them in good condition.

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Air Rifles - A New Spin on an Old Projectile, continued

Effectiveness and Usability

The biggest hesitation most people have about using air rifles is their prospective effectiveness. A person's mind drifts to the experiences they had with air rifles used when they were kids and questions arise to how an air rifle could be effective on a squirrel, much less big game. Accuracy, velocity, and projectile options have come a long way from the Red Ryder. There are more pellet options available now that incorporate features like hollow points, ballistic tips, and many other intriguing designs. These designs are effective on a wide range of game and provide more opportunity. Modern air rifles are quieter than a standard rifle but can still have a report.

Even so, they generally do not require hearing protection. Many incorporate a type of suppressor that can make them even quieter. Because air rifles are not considered firearms, these suppressors are not regulated by the National Firearms Act and do not require registration. This may be a great option for people looking for a quiet hunting rifle but do not want the hassle of registering a firearms suppressor. Air rifles also have very little recoil. They are perfect for youth or people who are sensitive to recoil, providing hours of shooting experiences without sore shoulders.

Hunting

Air rifles are not just for plinking anymore. In 2018 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) legalized big game hunting with air rifles. To pursue big and small game, projectiles must meet minimum weights and velocities set by TPWD. These minimums are different for different species to ensure effectiveness on the target animal. When big game hunting with air rifles, one must account for the decreased velocity and subsequently decreased range of air rifles. Traditional firearms rely on velocity driven projectile expansion to kill game. Even though modern air rifle projectiles offer very well-designed bullets that are extremely effective, practice and determination to make an ethical shot, is critical to success.

As you pursue small game and big game this year, consider enjoying your pursuit with an air rifle. With a little practice, I am sure that you will find new opportunities to enjoy an old pursuit with the added challenge of air rifle hunting. Always practice safety. Remember to treat all firearms as if they're loaded and with these new air rifles, you can certainly do more than just "put your eye out." Please see below for a citation of regulations from the TPWD Outdoor Annual.

Alligator, game animals, furbearers, squirrels, and non-migratory game birds (**except** Eastern Turkey) may be hunted with air guns and arrow guns provided:

- Alligators, bighorn sheep, javelina, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, and turkey (**except** Eastern Turkey) may be taken only with pre-charged pneumatic arrow guns, or pre-charged pneumatic air guns.
 - Pre-charged pneumatic air guns must fire a projectile of at least 30 caliber in diameter and at least 150 grains in weight with a minimum muzzle velocity of 800 feet per second or any combination of bullet weight and muzzle velocity that produces muzzle energy of at least 215 foot pounds of energy.



Examples of the wide variety of modern air rifle ammunition available today. Photo©Trent Teinert, TPWD

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Air Rifles - A New Spin on an Old Projectile, continued

- Squirrels, pheasant, quail, and chachalaca may be hunted with air guns that fire a projectile of at least .177 caliber (4.5mm) in diameter producing a muzzle velocity of at least 600 feet per second.
- Arrows or bolts used with an arrow gun must conform to the same standards for projectiles for archery.
- Arrow guns may not be used to hunt deer or turkey during archery season.



Top: Modern large caliber air rifle slugs recovered after target practice. Bottom: Spike harvested using a .308 caliber air rifle. Photo©Trent Teinert, TPWD

[Outdoor Annual Air Gun Regulations](#)

[History of the Air Rifle](#)



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.

American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)

WRITTEN BY LEE WILLIAMSON

The immense size of Texas allows our state to cover many different ecological regions that contain thousands of unique plant species. Even with a diverse array of species, it can be difficult to think of one that is native to Texas, grows abundantly in its native range, is of high value to wildlife and people, and looks pretty good to boot. American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), however, checks all these boxes.

American beautyberry is a plant native to eastern and southeastern Texas. It is a deciduous shrub averaging around 3-5' tall. It produces slender, arching stems with large, fuzzy-feeling leaves that are oppositely arranged. In the spring, the plant is covered in small white flowers. By mid-summer these flowers will give way to the conspicuous purple berries for which this plant is named. American beautyberry is commonly found growing as an understory shrub or along the edges of dense brush thickets. These areas provide ideal conditions for American beautyberry. The plant thrives in warm areas that are open to semi-shaded and contain moist, well-drained soils. In these conditions, American beautyberry grows abundantly and will respond quickly after a fire, timber harvest, or other disturbance. In the years immediately following such a disturbance, American beautyberry is often the most common woody shrub species present.



American beautyberry. Photo©TPWD

While some landowners may express concern about the rate at which American beautyberry spreads, none would dispute that this plant is of high value to wildlife. Its berries are consumed by a variety of birds, particularly northern bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*), and mammals such as squirrels, raccoons, foxes, opossums, rodents and more. The flowers serve as a valuable source of nectar for pollinators such as honeybees and hummingbirds.

American beautyberry is also a first choice browse species for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). All above-ground parts of the plant are highly palatable for deer, but the leaves and twigs are especially nutritious with a high protein content in the spring and early summer. During this time, the protein content of the leaves can reach over 21%. This is higher than that of many commercial deer feeds. It also provides valuable cover for deer as they move across the landscape. Cattle will occasionally browse the leaves as well.

Finally, as many people who live where this plant grows already know, American beautyberry may act as an effective insect repellent. There are reports, going as far back as the 1800s, of ranchers sticking crushed beautyberry leaves in the saddles and harnesses of horses to keep mosquitos away. This folk-remedy inspired a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) study that evaluated the insect-repelling properties of beautyberry. This study found that beautyberry leaves contain several compounds that repel insects. Most potent among these is a compound the researchers named callicarpenal. This compound has since been found to effectively repel mosquitos and fire ants, and act as a weak repellent for ticks.

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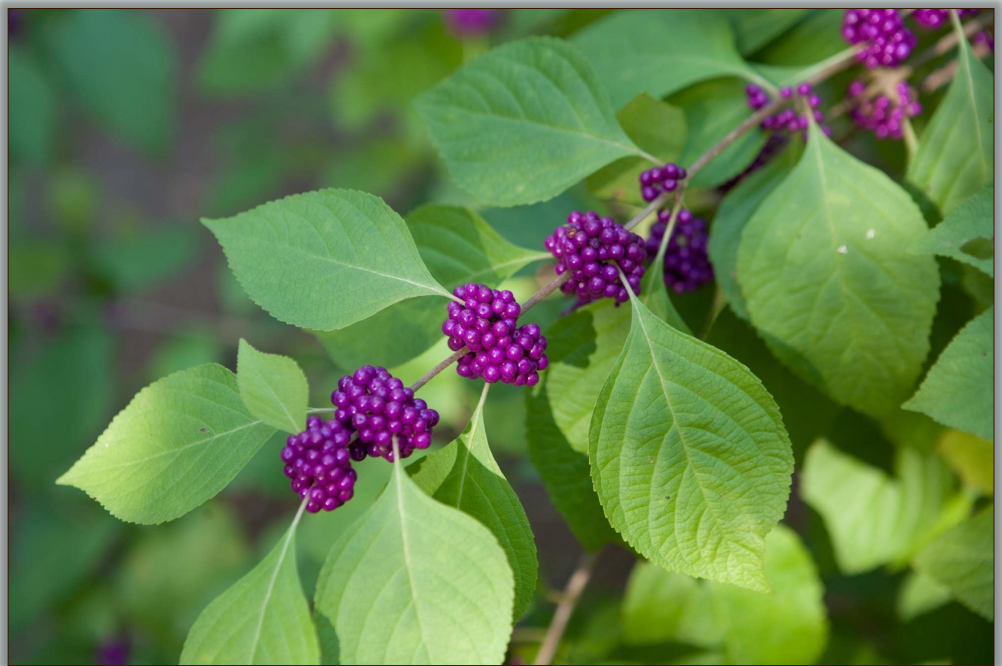
American Beautyberry (Callicarpa americana), continued

Currently, callicarpenal does not seem to repel insects quite as effectively as DEET, and there are no consumer insect repellents that contain callicarpenal. USDA researchers, however, continue to study callicarpenal to optimize its insect-repelling properties, understand any potential health risks to people, and find a way to synthesize the substance at a large scale.

Between its high value for wildlife and interesting research implications for people, American beautyberry is not a plant that should be overlooked. As spring approaches, keep an eye out for the white blooms of American beautyberry shrubs growing along creeks and at the edges of woodlands on your property. As summer gets underway and these flowers become showy, purple berries, these plants may become hotspots for wildlife activity on your property.

Isolation and Identification of Mosquito Bite Deterrent Terpenoids from Leaves of American (Callicarpa americana) and Japanese (Callicarpa japonica) Beautyberry. Cantrell, C.L., J.A. Klun, C.T. Bryson, M. Kobaisy, and S.O. Duke. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*. 2005 53(15), 5948-5953. [Article link](#).

Scientists Confirm Folk Remedy Repels Mosquitoes. ScienceDaily July 3, 2006 [Article link](#).



American beautyberry fruit clusters. Photo©Earl Nottingham, TPWD



Lee Williamson is the biologist for DeWitt County. He has a bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's in Wildlife Ecology from Texas State University. Originally from Wichita Falls, Lee Williamson started with TPWD at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area in 2021 before moving to his current position in late 2022.

Spring and Summer Supplemental Feeding – Pros and Cons

WRITTEN BY MARK LANGE

Human nature drives us to care for animals and ensure they have sufficient access to food. However, is the “good” feeling we get from feeding deer year around worth the effort, expense, and potential negative side effects that come with supplemental feeding? When conditions are good, food is rarely if ever a limiting resource for wildlife. If we have average rainfall in the spring and summer, browse plants and warm season forbs should be readily available, assuming they do not have competition from other species like cattle. So, what is the benefit of supplemental feeding?

During antler development, protein feed offers an additional source of nutrition when it is most beneficial to bucks. Once bucks shed velvet in the fall there will be little benefit outside of the protein feeder acting as a 24/7 attractant. That constant access to feed can keep deer from using corn feeders during daylight hours of hunting season. More times than not, if range conditions are good, interest in protein feeders is average at best because deer are simply choosing browse and forbs over supplemental food. With prices of feeds constantly increasing, landowners risk financial loss if the feed gets wet from spring rains then molds. When conditions are not good, like the summer of 2022, deer will empty protein feeders almost as fast as you can fill them. It is also important to consider the quality and quantity of habitat you have in place if you feed year around. Having more deer frequent your property will increase the utilization of browse plants and in some situations lead to over utilization.

Common food plot plants can be high in nutrition and benefit both bucks and doe when protein demand is highest in the spring and summer. They can be a significant attractant if implemented at a large enough scale to sustain heavy pressure in high deer density areas. When we discuss food plots in most situations, there is a saying that almost always gets brought up.... “when you can grow them you don’t need them and when you need them you can’t grow them.” If spring and summer rains are even at average rates, you can grow a food plot with the right planning but then all the native plants deer are accustomed to eating are thriving on the landscape which will decrease the importance of a food plot. If we experience a drought like 2022, native plants will not thrive, but unless you can irrigate a food plot it would not thrive either.

Hopefully by now you know that corn offers little nutritional benefit to deer. Much like people eating ice cream, it just tastes good but has little nutritional benefit. Like children to ice cream, deer will be drawn to corn feeders

Food plot planted at the Gus Engeling WMA. Photo@TPWD



unless they are in peak body condition. In late spring and early summer, that irresistible urge for corn will obviously draw in doe and by that time many of the fawns are mobile enough to not be far behind or even lead the way. It is not by coincidence that many hunters get a higher abundance of photos of bobcats and coyotes around feeders during this time. Those predators are simply being predators. If prey is congregated at a location offering a higher chance of a successful kill, that is where predators will try their luck most often.

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Spring and Summer Supplemental Feeding – Pros and Cons, continued

Supplemental feeding locations also increase the potential of spreading disease. Like children in classrooms or people on airplanes for example, when we are near others the potential of disease spread increases. Obviously, we use corn feeders during hunting season to increase hunting opportunity but feeding in the spring and summer may congregate deer when we are not in hunting season and increase the risk of spreading diseases like hoof rot, mange, chronic wasting disease, and any other disease that is spread by direct contact with other deer or the substrate an infected deer has contacted.

Simply put, all types of supplemental feeding come with pros and cons. I am not trying to say you should stop supplemental feeding in the spring or summer but understand what the pros and cons are of supplemental feeding and try to mitigate those cons. It is very understandable that people enjoy having a supplemental feeder close to their house where they can enjoy the wildlife that may frequent it while sipping their morning coffee. However, understand that it may not always work out the way you planned it and if a predator arrives you may have to witness nature being nature.



Left: Corn feeder with a timer. Photo©TPWD. Right: Free-choice, gravity fed protein feeder. Photo©Mark Lange, TPWD.



Mark Lange is the wildlife biologist for Colorado County 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.

Species Profile: Western Coachwhip

WRITTEN BY ROBERT TRUDEAU

Texas is home to approximately one hundred different species of snakes and with the warmer weather inbound, they will become more active as they come out of their brumation phase (the period of inactivity exhibited by reptiles during the wintertime). Many people are familiar with the venomous snake species; however, these venomous snakes only compose fifteen percent of all the snake species in Texas. The non-venomous portion of the snake population is composed of a wide variety of interesting, unique, and highly beneficial group of snakes. The western coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum testaceus*) is one of these interesting non-venomous species. Western coachwhips can be found within a wide variety of habitats, such as old pastures and farmlands, prairies and grasslands, woodlands and forests, chaparral and scrublands, and even wetlands and swamplands. There are 6 subspecies of coachwhip snakes that range throughout an expansive portion of North America, but it is the western subspecies that is most prominent within the southern United States.

Western coachwhips are a long, slender bodied snake and are one of the largest snake species in the United States. Like other snakes, adults can vary in color but typically display light brown to dark brown in color depending on the habitat in which they reside. In some cases, especially out in west Texas, they are also known to exhibit a prominent pink-reddish hue because their habitat consists mostly of reddish colored soils. Juveniles are typically a solid light-brown to dark-brown with white flecking on their snouts. Scales and scale patterning are usually the quickest way to identify this snake species. The scales are smooth and broad, with flecking on the edges. With the combination of scale coloring and size, the scales give the snake a braided, whip-like visual appearance that resembles the whip one would find on a stagecoach in the early days.

Living an average of 13 years in the wild, these snakes can regularly reach up to 7 feet in length, with some even reaching up to 8-8 ½ feet in length. The slender body profile and the astonishing length, when combined, give these snakes another impressive record to hold... They're FAST! Though they tend to do most of their prowling at

Western coachwhip eating a bullsnake. Photo@TPWD



less than a half mile per hour, these amazing snakes have been regularly clocked chasing prey at 4-7 miles per hour on average; with the occasional personal defense burst up to 11 miles per hour. This makes it one of the fastest snakes in North America.

Western coachwhips are a highly motile and solitary species. Being a diurnal species as well, they are most active during the daytime and unlike most snakes, they usually remain active during the hottest portion of the day. The western coachwhip is no exception to the beneficial role that snakes have in our environment.

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Species Profile: Western Coachwhip, continued

Western coachwhips are curious snakes and have a keen sense of eyesight due to its large eyes. This makes them an active hunter, constantly prowling about in search of their meal. Not only do they hunt along the ground, but they are commonly found adventuring up into bushes, trees, and other elevated structures. These characteristic traits make it an effective hunter of lizards, other snakes, small rodents, insects, and even small birds. When it comes to capturing food, western coachwhips do not constrict their prey like the constrictor snake species do. Instead, they subdue their prey by striking, grasping, and thrashing their prey until it is ready to ingest.

When it comes to the snakes' senses, coachwhips rely heavily on their motor, olfactory, and visual senses. Not only for hunting, but for safety as well. The tasting of odors with the flick of their tongue, keeping their keen eyesight on their surroundings, and having a sensitive feeling to the vibrations around them, western coachwhips are viewed as a wary snake species that are proficient at avoiding predation. They are well known, with help of their speed, to immediately flee from any threat they sense. Human-related predation is their biggest threat (i.e. getting hit by vehicles) and contrary to popular myth, these snakes would rather flee than fight. That's not to say they won't put up a fight if they feel cornered. As with all snakes, they are better left to their natural activities, unaided by human influence.



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.

TEXAS
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MAY 12, 2023
 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 Sand Hill Farm
 Golf & Conference Center
 14812 Mathis Rd.
 Waller, Texas 77484

PRAIRIE WORKSHOP

SPONSORED BY:
SAND HILL FARM
AUSTIN COUNTY WMA

MUSTANG

CAT

TOPICS

Prairie Restoration
 Texas Native Seeds
 Prairie Walk
 Small Acreage Management

SPEAKERS

TBD

Texas Native Seeds

Tim Siegmund
 Texas Parks and Wildlife

Jason Singhurst
 Texas Parks and Wildlife

Jon McLeod
 Texas Parks and Wildlife

REGISTRATION

Stephanie Damron at

979-277-6297 or stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov

OR

Jon McLeod at

832-595-8999 or jon.mcleod@tpwd.texas.gov

Grassland Wildlife Management on the Coastal Prairie

Landowner Workshop

Mad Island WMA

Friday May 19th 2023

8:30 am to approx. 1:00 pm

Topics covered:

Brush Control

Grazing for Wildlife

Prescribed Fire

Native Grasslands

Meet at Mad Island WMA Check Station at 8:30 am

1102 CR 374, Collegeport, TX

Come through gate and follow signs to WMA Check Station (3 miles)

Dress for the field and bring water and snacks

Free to attend, but please RSVP by May 12 to Clinton Faas at

Clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov

Upcoming Events

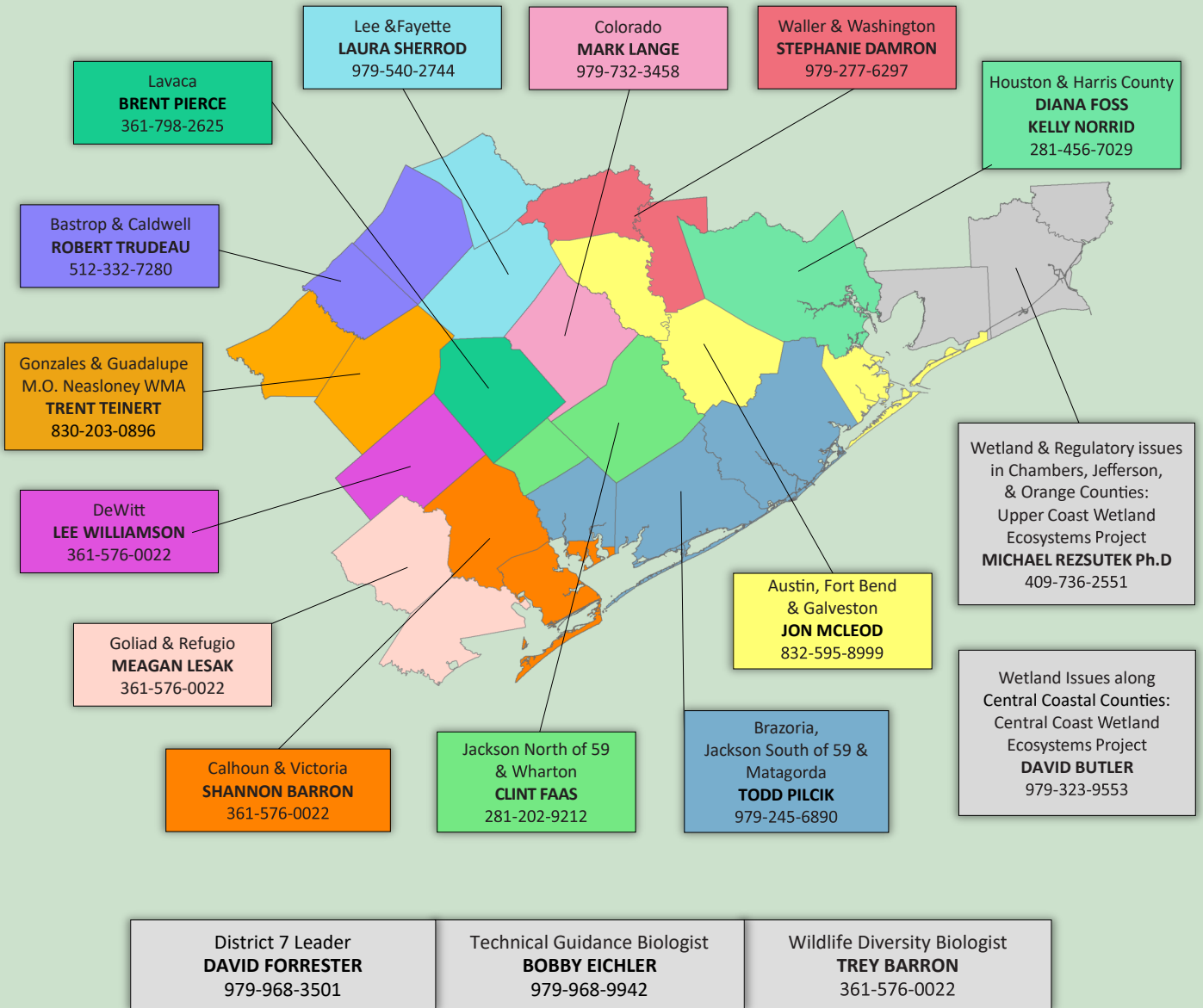
MAY

- 6 Goliad County WMA Spring Field Day**
Start at Ander-Weser VFD
3306 E FM 1961, Goliad, TX 77963
Doors open at 8:30 am
Conclude at 12:30pm
Contact Alethea Albrecht at Alethea.albrecht@ag.tamu.edu or 361-645-8204
More information on the Goliad County Wildlife Management Association Facebook page
- 12 Prairie Workshop**
Sand Hill Farm
14812 Mathis Rd., Waller, TX 77484
Begins at 12:30 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.
Contact Stephanie Damron at stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov or Jon McLeod at jon.mcleod@tpwd.texas.gov
- 19 Grassland Wildlife Management on the Coastal Prairie – Landowner Workshop**
Mad Island WMA
Begins at 8:30 - 1:00
Contact Clinton Faas at clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov

JUNE

- 17 Texas Big Game Awards-Regions 5, 6, 7**
Ice House on Main
800 N. Main St., Bryan, TX
Doors open at 4:00 p.m.
Banquet dinner at 6:00 p.m.
Followed by awards ceremony
Awardees are free with all other guests at \$25 per person.
Deadline to RSVP is June 7
Visit the [Texas Big Game Awards](#) website to register.
- 24 Gonzales WMA Meeting**
Elks Lodge
1222 E. Sarah DeWitt Dr., Gonzales, TX 78629
Begins at 6:00 p.m.
Contact Ty Tinsley at 830-857-4842
[Gonzales County WMA Facebook](#)

Our Wildlife Biologists



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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PWD LF W7000-2068 (4/23)

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