



January 2011

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leecountywildlife.org

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Game Warden

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Cell 979-540-0194

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County Extension Agent

Agriculture/Natural Resources

979-542-2753

It's Time For The Annual Meeting

It's hard to believe another year has come and gone and it is nearly time for the **Wildlife Association's annual meeting**. It will be held on **Friday, February 4** at the **Sons of Herman Hall** south of Giddings off Highway 77 at County Road 223. The **social hour** will get started at **5:00** and the **meal** around **6:30** p.m.

Come on out for some good chicken fried steak and great fellowship. As always, there will be plenty of door prizes as well as many nice raffle items so bring plenty of money. Door prizes will be given throughout the evening so come early. In an effort to expedite giving out **so many prizes** we ask that each family member sign in at their co-

op table to be eligible for the door prizes.

Meal tickets are only \$5 for adults. Kids up through high school still eat free, so bring the whole family. Tickets can be purchased at the time of registration.

Our guest speaker this year will be Mike Leggett, Outdoor Columnist, with the **Austin American-Statesman**.

We will have the annual photo contest and hopefully a few nice bucks on display. **If you have antlers or a mount you would like to share with the crowd, please bring it to be put on display.**

An unusual story about some lost Javelina

Back at the beginning of December, two javelina (Collard Peccary) showed up in Giddings. These two were seen on more than one occasion cruising around town presumably looking for handouts. I don't know the whole story but I was told that the police ended up cornering them in someone's garage and an animal control officer tranquilized them.

Lee County is not exactly Javelina territory although historical records indicate local hunters sometimes shot something they called a "musk hog", javelinas have a large musk gland on their back that emits a fowl odor when

they are alarmed.

The fact that we usually do not have javelina in Lee County, along with the unusual behavior of these critters hanging around town leads one to think that that they didn't get here on their own. Javelinas live in small family groups and do not do well when removed from those groups. We ended up relocating the two captured javelina to an area with others of their type.

Javelina are considered a game animal so all the same laws apply to them that do white tailed deer. It is not legal to trap or transport them. Lee County does

Lost Javelina Continued

not have a hunting season for them, so it's not legal to shoot them here. Javelina are not a pig, in fact they are not even related to pigs. They are not as destructive and they only have one litter per year of not more than 4 babies, but usually only two. The bulk of their diet is made up of prickly pear cactus.

After all that I assumed that was the end of the story, but I have received a couple of phone calls about other sightings in the county. The first was by a co-op member in the Old Dime Box area that had gotten a photo of a single javelina on his trail camera on Dec. 24th. On the 27th, about 3 miles to the north, another landowner's dogs cornered what might have been the same one in his barn. On the 30th, I was notified of another one that got shot in the same general area as the one on the trail camera.

I do not know if these incidents are related or not. I do not encourage anyone to relocate these, or any other animals, or shooting them where it is not legal. However, for biological records I would like to know of any information about the possible release of these animals, sightings or mortalities. I will keep the information confidential I would just like to know.

Oldest Buck Contest

If you shot a spike or an old buck this season in Lee County, and you are currently a member of one of the co-ops you are eligible for one of two prizes.

Since we didn't have check stations this year, you need to get your deer to Greg Pleasant for aging. Make sure I know about any spikes you shot to be entered into the spike drawing. My deadline for getting you entered will be January 21st.

The purpose of the current antler regulation is to allow more bucks to make it into older age classes by taking pressure off of the younger bucks. Hunters are encouraged to learn to estimate the age of a buck by their physical characteristics and behavior before shooting them.

Please bring your antlers and mounts to the annual meeting to be displayed for all to see. We will have the display walls on hand.



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We would like to thank the
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
for another year of support
and we look forward to
working together in the future!

Coyote Bounty Doubled for Members Again

The Lee County Wildlife Association will once again pay an additional \$10 dollar bounty in addition to the \$10 paid by the county for the first 100 pairs of ears turned in by Lee County Wildlife Association members.

To take advantage of this offer, request a copy of the county affidavit you sign when turning ears in to the county. Take this document to the Lee County AgriLife Extension Office to get registered. This is a first come, first serve program and once the \$1000 is gone that's it. Only affidavits dated after Jan. 1, 2011 will be accepted.

Second Annual Varmint Calling... Tournament January 29th

There will be a 2nd annual Varmint Hunting Tournament starting in Lexington beginning at noon on January 29. Last year's event drew nearly 100 participants. The first place team walked away with over \$1,300. Teams of up to four can register and can hunt anywhere in the state they want but must be back within 24 hours of the start of the hunt. For more information or to register contact KNOCKS BOW REPAIR at 512-636-9488 or call Bill Woodward at 512-217-0984.

The Wildlife Photo Contest Will have 6 Prizes This Year

We will be awarding prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place this year for each category. There's a better chance of winning so send in those photos! I haven't received many photo entries for this year's contest yet, so pick out your best and get them sent in. Everyone enjoys looking at wildlife photos so please share yours with the rest of us. Please submit your digital photos electronically, saving printing cost and simplifying delivery. Email them to me at tpwbiologist@bluebon.net. Enter as many as you like, but please have your name in the title of **each photo** and, if it's not obvious, which category.

Rules: the photos must be of a live animal taken in Lee County during 2010. There are two categories, general (hand held camera) and trail camera.

Deadline: You must have your photos in to Greg Pleasants office (*located in the Lee Co. Court House*) by **January 21st**.

Time To Check Bluebird Boxes

You should already have your boxes clean and ready to use for the new nesting season. Using predator guards and deterring fire ants are important steps in helping nesting success.

Most nesting won't start until March, but there are always some early nesters so check your boxes once a week and continue to do so through July. Just remember that when you see nest construction almost completed, do not disturb the box during the first three days of egg laying. After that you can check the box in the afternoon without bothering the female. The other critical period not to disturb the nest is just prior to the young leaving the box (when they are about 10 days old).

For more information about bluebird and purple martin nest box care and maintenance, please read past articles posted on the Lee County Wildlife Association's website at leecountywildlife.org.

Recent Workshops

We strive to provide educational and informative programs for landowners and the community throughout the year. Here are some of our recent programs:

Woman's firearm safety class:

We held a firearms safety and shooting class in September and had a great turn out. The ladies that attended said they really enjoyed it, that they learned a lot and hoped we do it again.

Youth Shooting and Hunter Education Event:

In October we held our 6th annual Youth Shooting and Hunter Education Event. This continues to be a great event and we are reaching youth that might not have the opportunity if we didn't provide this program. Grants and donations have continued to cover the expenses of this program.

Wildlife Tax Valuation Workshop:

A program was held at the Lincoln Community Center in December covering qualifying management practices. If your property has an exemption, but you would rather not run cattle anymore, there is another way to keep your tax rate the same. Call Greg Pleasant for more information.

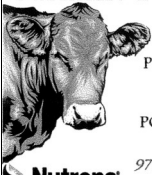
Prescribed Burn Workshop:

The fifth (and largest yet) annual Prescribed Burn Workshop was held in December to train landowners how to safely use fire as a habitat management tool. We covered how to limit your liability, the importance of weather before, during and after the fire, lighting techniques, establishing effective fire lines to contain the fire and tools that make the job easier and safer.

Cost Sharing for Food Plots

Mid-March is the time to plant spring food plots. Remember to take advantage of the food plot seed reimbursement program. Members purchasing seed for wildlife food plots can receive up to twenty-five dollars in reimbursement from the Lee County Wildlife Association in an effort to reward members for helping wildlife in Lee County and to possibly encourage others to do the same.

You can purchase the seed from any retailer but the seed must be planted in Lee County to qualify. The **deadline** to have **receipts to the Extension office** for **spring food plot** seed will be **May 1**.

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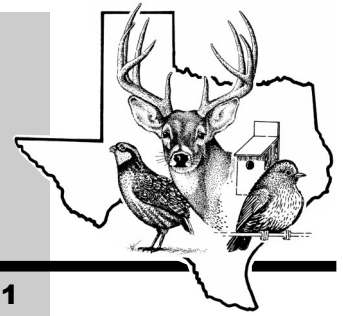
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WILDLIFE NEWS



January 2011

RANCHING AND WILDLIFE EXPO

By David Forrester, TPWD District 7 Leader, La Grange

The Ranching and Wildlife Expo will be held March 2-5, 2011 at Reliant Center in Houston. The Expo consists of three days of presentations covering various topics dealing with habitat and wildlife management, as well as vendor booths, a live auction, and a silent auction. The presentation schedule is below. If you are interested in more information please visit this website <http://www.rodeohouston.com/activities/ranching-wildlife-expo.aspx> or call the Texas Parks & Wildlife office at 979-968-6591.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2

- 10:00 a.m. Managing Farm and Ranch Ponds for Large Mouth Bass — Billy Higginbotham, Texas AgriLife Extension
- 11:00 a.m. Texas Feral Swine History, Status, and Research — Justin Foster, Research Coordinator, Region 2, Texas Parks & Wildlife
- 1:00 p.m. Patch Burn Grazing: Managing Wildlife Habitat with Cattle and Fire — Kurt Huffman, Rolling Plains Quail Research
- 2:00 p.m. Perspectives on Culling: Fact, Fiction or Just for Fun — Donnie Frels, Kerr Wildlife Management Area, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- 3:00 p.m. Waterfowl ID and the Prairie Wetlands Program — David Lobpries, Natural Resource Specialist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- 4:00 p.m. Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Deer Horns — Donnie Frels, Kerr Wildlife Management Area, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

THURSDAY, MARCH 3

- 10:00 a.m. The Landowner's Right to Use and/or Pump Water from Underneath His/Her Land — Judon Fambrough, Texas Real Estate Center, Texas A&M University
- 11:00 a.m. Qualification of Land for Appraisal Based on Wildlife Management Use — Meredith Longoria, Natural Resource Specialist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- 1:00 p.m. Prescribed Burning, How To and the Benefits — Kirk Feuerbacher, Texas Nature Conservancy.
- 2:00 p.m. Native Prairie Restoration--How to — Larry Pierce, Texas AgriLife Extension
- 3:00 p.m. Wildlife Management Associations; Starting One, Effectiveness, and Potential — Jon Hayes, Natural Resource Specialist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- 4:00 p.m. Water Presentation

FRIDAY, MARCH 4

- 2:00 p.m. Live Auction, Main Club, Reliant Center

SATURDAY, MARCH 5

Life's Better Outdoors; FFA Ranching and Wildlife Competition Presentations

MOUNTAIN LION IN TEXAS

The mountain lion, also known as cougar, panther, catamount or puma, has the widest distribution of any wild cat from Canada to South America. Prior to European settlement, mountain lions lived throughout Texas. By 1960, predator control, loss of habitat, and human settlement reduced mountain lion numbers and limited their distribution within Texas to the mountainous country in the Trans-Pecos region of West Texas. Since 1983, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has solicited and recorded voluntarily reported sightings and mortalities of mountain lions. Mountain lion sightings and mortality information, rather than actual population estimates is used to assess the presence of the cats in certain areas. Currently, sightings of mountain lions have occurred in all 254 Texas counties. However, not all sightings are confirmed. Mortalities provide a more accurate reflection of where mountain lions have lived. Mortalities have been recorded in 67 counties.

The mountain lion is a large, slender cat with a smallish head and noticeably long tail. Their color is a light, tawny brown, which can appear grey or almost black, depending on light conditions. Contrary to popular belief, there are no black panthers in Texas; no one has **EVER** captured or killed a black mountain lion. It's size (total length) range from about 6½ feet in females to as much as 8½ feet in males. Male mountain lions weigh between 100-150 pounds, and females weigh between 45-96 pounds. In the wild, mountain lions live about 10 to 11 years. Their range in Texas is primarily in the west, south and central regions.

Mountain lions are active in mornings and evenings as well as at night. They are solitary animals except during a short (3-5 day) breeding time, which can occur at any time of the year. Most litters are born in the summer and fall and average 2-3 kittens. Cubs stay with the female until they are 11 to 24 months of age, when they leave and begin looking for their own home range. The size of a lion's home range is determined by prey abundance and availability, topography, and the presence of other lions. Male home ranges usually encompass the range of several females and vary from 80 to 200 square miles. Males do not usually tolerate other male mountain lions in their home range. Female home ranges are normally 20 to 100 square miles and may overlap.

In Texas, mountain lions prey primarily on white-tailed deer and mule deer. Javelina, pronghorn antelope, feral

hogs, big horned sheep, raccoons, coyotes, porcupine, opossum, rabbits and a variety of other small mammals also supplement their diet. Mountain lions will occasionally take domestic livestock. Although cattle and horses are less vulnerable to lion predation once they have grown in excess of 500 pounds, sheep, goats, and pigs remain vulnerable for their lifetime.

The biologists across District 7 hear about mountain lion sightings on a very regular basis. However, it is hard to explain the very high number of unconfirmed sightings when you put into perspective the number of hunters in the field between October through January with rifles, and the number of remote cameras placed around deer feeders but yet no harvested cats or pictures within our district. Some folks claim to see these cats on a regular basis. We encourage you to take photos if indeed this is the case and contact your local biologist. This past fall, there was a documented mountain lion caught on a remote camera in deep East Texas while visiting a deer feeder. The documented case was near Carthage in Panola County. So, with that said, there may be rare occurrences of cats throughout this part of the state. If you do indeed get a picture of a mountain lion, your biologist will want to visit the field location to confirm the sighting. And if you harvest a mountain lion we would like to know.

To report evidence of a mountain lion call your local wildlife biologist or the district office in La Grange at 979-968-6591. If you see a one, try to find a track. Protect it by covering it with a bucket until the biologist arrives. Mountain lions are classified as non-game animals in Texas and it is legal to take them with a valid Texas hunting license.



Mountain lion sighting in Panola County, fall 2010

DIFFERENTIATING MOUNTAIN LION AND DOG TRACKS

By Jonah Evans

Trans-Pecos Wildlife Diversity Biologist, District 1

Mountain Lion



Size:

About 3-4" long x 3-5" wide (front and hind foot measurements combined).

Metacarpal pad:

The metacarpal pad in mountain lion tracks is trapezoidal shaped and fills a large portion of the track. The pad is usually as large as all four toes combined. The anterior portion of the pad is wide and may be flat or bi-lobed (often described as a letter "m" shape). Three lobes are usually visible in the posterior portion of the pad.

Symmetry:

The toes of mountain lion front feet are asymmetrically arranged around the pad, with toe three (your middle finger) longer than the rest (the thumb does not register). Front feet tend to be wider and more asymmetrical than the hind feet. The hind feet can be very symmetrical and may leave tracks that more closely resemble those of canines.

Claws:

Claws occasionally register in mountain lion tracks, but they are sharp and thin when compared to the large blunt claw marks in dog tracks.

Dog



Size:

Not useful. Large dog tracks can easily surpass the largest mountain lion tracks.

Metacarpal pad:

The metacarpal pad in dog tracks is triangular shaped and fills a much smaller portion of the overall track than in mountain lion tracks. The pad is usually about the size of three toes or smaller. This is one of the most useful characteristics for differentiating mountain lions from dogs. Two or three lobes may be visible in the posterior portion of the pad.

Symmetry:

Dog tracks are usually symmetrical. However, asymmetrical dog tracks happen on occasion. The asymmetry found in dog tracks is usually to a much lesser degree than what is found in mountain lion prints. As in mountain lion tracks, the front feet of dogs are wider and more likely to be asymmetrical than the hind feet.

Claws:

Dog tracks usually have large blunt claws. However, the lack of claws is NOT a reliable indicator for identification. Many dog tracks will not register claw marks.



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