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Greg Pleasant
Wildlife Biologist
Texas Parks and Wildlife
979-540-2744

Victor Gonzales
Game Warden
Texas Parks and Wildlife
Cell 979-540-0194
leecountywildlife.org

Fall Migration

I have heard from several people that they have been seeing lots of different birds than they usually see at this time of year. So, I thought I would get Brent Ortego, our diversity specialist and bird guru to put something together for me. Here is what he sent.

Migration of birds is an exciting natural phenomenon which typically occurs during spring and fall. Fall migration starts in late June as early nesting birds start leaving their breeding grounds and typically reaches its peak in September and October with it winding down by Thanksgiving. This fall's migration was accentuated by climatic extremes which created "Our Drought of Record" and large fires throughout the state. The drought and fires are causing birds to be displaced and show up in much larger numbers than normal just about anywhere that has water.

Extremely conspicuous this fall was the massive numbers of hummingbirds that were forced to feeders because of the scarcity of wild flowers during September. Some landowners were reported to be

feeding gallons of sugar water each day during the peak. Baltimore Orioles showed up at many back yards in above average numbers trying to handle oranges or compete with the hummers for sugar water. Buntings are expected in large numbers this fall at feeders if people can afford to put out millet and sunflowers.

As the migration of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds winds down in late October, landowners might be on the lookout for odd looking hummers. These birds will likely be western species that strayed to the East and are looking for winter homes. Each winter small numbers of Rufous, Allen's, Black-chinned, Anna's, Broad-tailed, Calliope and Buff-bellied hummingbirds winter in our area. They will likely overwinter if residences have numerous flowers and feeders on which to feed.

If you have any questions on birds, you can contact Brent Ortego at the Victoria TPWD office at brent.ortego@tpwd.state.tx.us

Keep the Wildlife Photo Contest in Mind

While you're out and about this fall and into the spring keep those cameras handy. We want to see your best wildlife photos at the spring meeting. We will be awarding the top three places this year for handheld and trail camera categories. This means more people have an opportunity to win.

You are welcome to send your photos to me as you take them, and I will start compiling a collection. Please be sure to have your name as part of the file name for each photo. I also need to know what WMA you are a member of and if the photos are trail camera or hand held if it isn't obvious. You can

enter as many photos as you want but please have the file names changed accordingly. I receive photos from members of Fayette County WMAs also, so help me make sure I get your photos to the correct file. The only rules are that the photo was taken in Lee County in the past year and isn't of a dead animal.

Please have your photos in to Greg Pleasant's office in person or e-mail by January 28. The photos will be judged and awards will be given during the **Annual Meeting on February 3rd**. My email address is tpwbiologist@bluebon.net

Drought and wildlife

I have had many people ask me about what is going to happen to the wildlife with this drought. There is no doubt that a lot of species are finding it more difficult to find all they want to eat; certainly of the foods they most prefer. The longer the drought continues the more of an impact it is going to have. Declining body conditions will lead to a reduction in reproduction, increased susceptibility to parasites and diseases and even some deaths. The lack of water in some areas is also a huge problem. Providing supplemental feed and water will help some of the animals. So if you are inclined you can do that as much as you can afford. Unfortunately even this act of kindness has its risks; concentrating animals can compound the transmission of parasites and diseases. Moving your feed and water stations often even by a few yards can help reduce some of these threats. An example of one of these diseases occurred last fall. There were several reported cases of hoof rot in deer in Southern Fayette County. If you have high deer numbers on your property reducing the numbers early in the season should help the remaining animals have less competition for what food is available. Hopefully we will get enough small showers the wildlife will be OK, because the long term forecast isn't looking too favorable. For the populations as a whole - we need rain!

The 7th Annual Lee County Youth Shooting Event

On Tuesday, October 18, the Lee County Wildlife Association and Texas Parks & Wildlife will be hosting our 7th Annual Shooting and Hunter Safety Program for middle and high school students at Nails Creek Park on Lake Somerville. This event actually runs for two days with Lee County students on the first day, followed by Washington County students on the second day run by Washington County volunteers. We can accommodate 68 students each day. Each student has the opportunity to shoot archery, shotgun, pistol and rifles, including black powder, in a safe and controlled situation. This is a fun and rewarding program that the students and the volunteers really enjoy. It takes about 25 volunteers per day to make this event happen. We can always use more help. So if you have any interest give me a call or contact one of your directors. Some firearms experience is preferred but not required. The expense of this event is paid for through grants received from the local chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, private donations and the Tejas Trading Post has also been a big help with ammunition and targets.



Voluntary Deer Check Stations

Deer check stations will be in place again this year across the 6 counties that started the Antler Regulations back in 2002 (Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee, and Washington). As you may remember, check stations were in place the first 6 years of the regulation but have been absent the last 3 years. The information collected at these check stations will help Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) determine what effect the antler regulation is having on both antler quality and age structure of harvested deer.

Check stations will be manned by TPWD personnel for the first 2 weekends of gun season (November 5-6th, and 12th-13th). Additionally, hunters will be able to self-register harvested deer when TPWD personnel are not present. TPWD biologists may contact you after self-registering in order to obtain additional records from your deer. If possible, please retain jawbones from your deer and hang them in a safe location to air dry.

For folks who bring their deer to a check station, there will be a raffle for various prizes. Prizes include a Lifetime Hunting OR Fishing License, various guns, feeders, and knives. We encourage you to bring all harvested bucks to the check station, whether they are spikes, bucks just over 13 inches, or wall hangers.

The Check Stations for Lee County should be in place by October 1 and are at the following locations:

Dime Box – K & C Quick Stop, 4293 Hwy 21, 979-884-0037

Giddings - Bread Basket Citgo, 791 N Main St 979-542-7507

Lexington - Herk's Country Store, 8603 N Hwy 77

Fall Co-op Meetings

South Lee, West Yegua, Blue Branch and East Yegua Co-ops have already held their meetings.

Two Creek will have its meeting October 21 at Lee County AgriLife extension office. They will have a catered meal. The Speaker will be: Judy Bishop Jurek who is a lifelong resident of Matagorda County and has been an avid outdoors person her entire life. She is a staff writer for Texas Trophy Hunter Magazine and is a regular contributor to the bi-monthly magazines of the Texas Deer Association and the North American Deer Farmers Association. Her articles have been featured in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, Texas Sportsman, Texas Wildlife,

Texas Fish and Game, Lone Star Outdoor News,
Saltwater Texas and many other publications.

Drought and Wildlife

It should go without saying, but I will anyway. We still have a lot of very dry vegetation around, so please keep that in mind as more people spend time outdoors this fall going into hunting season. Don't park your truck in tall grass or do anything that could potentially create a spark. It sounds far fetched, but I heard of one fire being started from someone shooting into an area with a lot of rocks. A bullet striking a rock creating a spark and that was all it took. Be safe out there and leave the land better than you found it, especially if you are hunting on someone else's property. You never know what doors might be opened to you by showing your appreciation and respect for the land.

Old Buck and Spike Contest

We will once again be awarding prizes for the oldest buck harvested by a member and a drawing from members who harvest a spike (at least one unbranched antler). To be eligible, all bucks must have been harvested in Lee County and be registered by a TPWD biologist.

Deer heads cannot be frozen at time of registration and the jaw bone must be attached. In the event of a tie for the oldest buck, the winner will be the buck with the highest gross Boone & Crockett score. Hunters entering spikes will have their names put into a random drawing to determine the winner. There haven't been many entries in the spike category in the past, so chances of getting drawn if you enter are high.

Call me to register your deer so I can collect age and antler measurements. **My phone numbers are 979- 540-2744 (office), and 979-255-8480 (cell). ~ Greg Pleasant**

Predator Calling Contest

The third annual predator calling contest in Lexington the last weekend in January. For more information contact Tommy Ramsey at 512-636-9488. He is also looking for sponsors for this event.

Coyote Bounty

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, 2012 will be excepted.

Prescribed Burn Workshop — December 10

A field day on the safe and effective use of fire to improve habitat for wildlife is the usual focus of this class but this year I will also focus on fuel management to mitigate the damage by wildfire. The objective of this class is to show landowners what benefits fire can provide for vegetation management, when and how fire can be used safely and what help is available to landowners who want to burn.

Topics will include site selection, preparation, the tools and equipment that are needed and all the how-to's. We will probably not be burning during this class due to drought stress on trees.

The workshop will be on December 10 in Lee County but is open to anyone interested. It will be held on my personal property. I have used prescribed burning on the property for several years. Therefore you will be able to see what impact *repeated* fire can have on manipulating vegetation. I will have photos and video of previous fires as reference to vegetation condition.

Coffee and lunch will be provided by the Lee County Wildlife Association. Please RSVP for this workshop by December 7 to Greg Pleasant at 979-540-2744 or e-mail tpwbiologist@bluebon.net. The address is 1757 CR 121 Giddings, call or e-mail for more directions or information.

Registration will start at 8:30 a.m. and the program will start at 9:00 a.m. Attendees should come dressed for the weather as the shop the class will be held in is not heated. We will walk the property and look at areas that have been burned over

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