



LEE COUNTY WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION



FALL NEWSLETTER 2013

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Agriculture/Natural Resources

979-542-2753

Keeton Ehrig

THE TREES ARE COMING!

Because of the massive loss of trees due to the drought, the Board of Directors approved a plan to purchase 2000 oak seedlings to be distributed to association members. We realize this is just a small number when compared to the huge loss; however it is a start at trying to turn back the disastrous effect the drought has had on wildlife habitat in Lee County. These trees will come from the same nursery that was the source of the trees given out at last year's annual meeting. Each tree will come in a container with a small root ball. **Members wanting to receive trees need to call into the Extension Office, (979)-542-2753** and sign-up.

The plan is for you to be able to pick up your trees at the Extension Office located at 310 S. Grimes in Giddings,

beginning December 3rd. Call to make sure they have arrived in case there is a delivery problem.

Since these trees have been on drip irrigation and anticipating the need for regular watering after planting; President Hasskarl and Extension Agent, Keeton Ehrig did some experiments to find the best way to accomplish this. It was found that using either a 5-gallon bucket or a livestock feeder tub with a 1/16 inch hole drilled at the bottom outside edge gave a watering rate of about 2 gallons per hour. Through the last two summers, 5+ gallons a week allowed trees like these to survive and grow when there is no rain.

(Continued on page 2)

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 Annual meeting. We will be **awarding the top three places** 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 during the past year and isn't of a dead animal.

Please bring photos to my office, at 200 S. Main, Room 203 or email me at: tpwbiologist@bluebon.net by January 25. Photos will be judged and awards will be given during the annual meeting on February 1st.

THE TREES ARE COMING! *Continued from page 1*

Commercial drippers achieved the same result, but there is of course a cost. Therefore you may want to round up some buckets or tubs to use in helping you water the trees. Getting them with lids is desirable because it keeps out debris that may clog the hole. Planting instructions and other recommendations will be provided when you pick up your trees.



The 9th Annual Lee County Youth Shooting Event

On Tuesday, October 22, the Lee County Wildlife Association and Texas Parks & Wildlife hosted our 9th 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 and their volunteers on the second day. We can accommodate 80 students each day. Every student has the opportunity to shoot archery, shotgun, pistol and rifles, including black powder, in a safe and controlled situation. We added two additional stations this year including trapping and herpetology.

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 firearm 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, Dime Box Sportsman's Club and 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 until last season. 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 2-3rd, and 9-10th). 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. Check Stations already for self registration are:

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

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

Fall Co-op Meetings

Fall Co-op meetings have been held by South Lee, West Yegua, and Blue Branch together with East Yegua. Members enjoyed great fellowship and good food!

Directors of **Two Creeks** are working on scheduling for its Co-op meeting and hope to send out announcements soon. Watch your mailboxes or feel free to contact any of your three directors.

Old Buck and Spike Contest

We have three categories in the buck contest this year. This is still an oldest buck contest but now up to 3 prizes will be awarded for oldest bucks and 1 drawing for a spike.

Youth, 16 and under
Adult, 17 and over
Archery

Prizes are awarded for the oldest buck harvested in Lee County by a member during the 2013-14 season. We will still have 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 number is 979-540-2744.**
~ Greg Pleasant

5th Annual Lexington Lone Star Varmint Tournament

January 25 & 26

Lexington Memorial Park-Hwy 77 in Lexington

This varmint calling contest just keeps getting bigger!

For more information contact Tommy Ramsey at 512-636-9488, or look it up on Facebook.

Sponsors are still needed!

Food Plot Seed Reimbursement

The reimbursement amount for wildlife food plots is \$35. It is not too late to plant fall food plots. Remember to take advantage of the food plot seed reimbursement program. Members purchasing seed for wildlife food plots can receive a reimbursement of up to half the cost, up to **Thirty-five dollars**.

Lee County Wildlife Association is doing this 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 fall food plot seed will be **December 1st**. Plants like winter peas, chicory, oats and turnips are all good choices for fall food plots.

Prescribed Burn Workshop — December 14

A field day on the safe and effective use of prescribed burning to improve habitat for wildlife and to mitigate the damage by wildfire. The objective of this class is to show landowners what benefits fire can provide for vegetation management, how and when to use fire 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. If conditions allow **we will be burning a pasture as part of the class**. This is a private property where the owner is using fire as a tool to help plant native grasses.

This workshop will be held December 14, in Fayette County but is open to anyone interested. The location is 8016 Bohuslav Road near Ammansville. Call or e-mail for directions or additional information. Registration begins at 8:30 am with program beginning at 9:00 am and concluding shortly after lunch, depending on burning conditions.

Coffee and snacks will be provided, but you should bring a lunch. Please RSVP for this workshop by December 5 to Greg Pleasant at 979-540-2744 or e-mail tpwbiologist@bluebon.net. Please dress for the weather and come prepared to participate. Jeans, work boots, gloves and long sleeve shirts are highly recommended.

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
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OAK-PRAIRIE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

WILDLIFE NEWS

Fall 2013

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEER HARVEST DURING DROUGHT

Bobby Eichler, TPWD Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange

During drought conditions, biologists often hear hunters express ideas such as, "I believe this year I will not harvest as many doe from my property due to the drought" or "since we are in a drought, I think I will pass on shooting spikes this year." Neither of these thoughts may be correct. The root of the issue is both carrying capacity and genetics, as I will try to explain.

Every property has a 'carrying capacity' for animals. Animals are often limited by at least one component of habitat (food, water, and shelter) and this is called the limiting factor. Take squirrels for example, they may be limited on a wooded property by how many cavities are found in the trees one year, and the next year the limiting factor may be mast availability (acorns). In the case of deer, for this part of Texas, a limiting factor may be forage availability and nutritional value, particularly during drought.

So, concerning doe harvest during drought years, would it make sense for a cattle producer to increase the number of cattle on his/her property during drought? Probably not. Normally most calves, and even some of the breeding stock, will go to the auction barn to reduce numbers and pressure on remaining grass and forage. The remaining cattle hopefully have enough forage to make it through the months ahead. This same reasoning should be applied to deer management. Over the past few years, and even this current fawning season, fawn survival has held up surprisingly well. Across the district, it is safe to say that last year's fawn crop was well over 50%, and this year will likely be at least 50%. If fawn recruitment was low (<35-40%) for several years it might make sense to keep doe harvest down, but this is not the case. From incidental observations, as well as August spotlight counts, there seems to be an abundance of fawns this year.

Does should be harvested as soon as legally possible in order to allow adequate forage for remaining deer. The 'bottle neck' for winter forage is normally late December through February. If there is no rainfall during winter to promote winter forbs, this period is extended on both

ends. If you wait six weeks from opening day to harvest your does, you just used up six weeks of forage for a deer.

Next is the issue with harvesting spikes during drought years. First, by definition for this article this will be all bucks with at least one unbranched antler born prior to the 2013 fawning season. We are not referring to 'nubbin' bucks which are this year's buck fawns. Most spikes will fall into the 1½ year old age category. Very few spikes will fall into older age classes. Many hunters think that a spike should be given a 'pass' during drought years since they are nutritionally stressed. Although they are nutritionally stressed, there is a genetic aspect that needs to be addressed.

Since the early 1980's wildlife biologists of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department have been collecting white-tailed deer age, weight and antler data from hunter harvested deer throughout the state. Analysis of this data has demonstrated that in years with good nutritional range conditions, fewer spikes were in the harvest. It also indicated those years in which range conditions were poor, there were more spikes in the harvest. Range nutrition was affecting antler production. However, this same data also indicated that even under poor range conditions, there were some deer that produced good antlers. It also demonstrated that under good range conditions, there were always some spike-antlered deer. From these data biologists concluded that there were three types of yearling deer on the range (1) deer that always produce fork antlers even under adverse conditions, (2) deer that always produced poor antler under good conditions and (3) deer that in good years produced forked-antlers and in poor years produce spike-antlers. Biologists named this third group of deer, "swing deer". From a management point of view, swing deer slow management gains because poor genetic traits are masked in good years. Researchers reasoned that if there was a genetic basis for these deer, then the frequency of swing deer in a population could be reduced through a

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selection program and more rapid antler improvement would result. A study titled, "Genetic/ Environmental Interaction in White-tailed Deer" was initiated to see if swing deer could be reduced or eliminated from a population

From 1992-2000, the Kerr Wildlife Management Area conducted this study. For the sake of not filling up this entire newsletter on this article, you may view the study and methods for more detail at: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_rp_w7000_0827.pdf (Pages 27-28).

Data from the study indicated a genetic/nutritional interaction that governs "swing deer". It also suggests the best time to harvest spikes and make genetic gain is during droughts or other periods of nutritional stress. One of the best times to harvest swing deer is when starting a

habitat management program on unmanaged ranches when deer numbers may be excessive and herd reduction is needed to improve habitat. Removing poorly performing stressed deer at this time will not only help accelerate genetic gains but will also remove deer for habitat improvement.

Lastly, this article only covered the importance of removing excess deer from your property during drought years. Landowners must also carry out basic range management practices when managing livestock to benefit deer populations and range condition. These practices would include, but not be limited to proper stocking rates, rotational grazing, and brush management. Proper range management practices are required to increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of range plants needed to support a productive and healthy deer population.

TEXAS BIG GAME AWARDS OFFICIAL SCORER CERTIFICATION SCHOOL

November 20, 2013 — Colorado County Services Facility

You are cordially invited to participate in a one-day course to train new scorers for the Texas Big Game Awards (TBGA). The course will be held Wednesday, November 20, 2013 at the Colorado County Services Facility from 9:00 a.m. to approximately 5:00 p.m. The Colorado County Services Facility is located at 305 Radio Lane, Columbus, TX 78934. Current scorers that need a refresher course are also welcome.

The course will be conducted by official Boone and Crockett scorers and TBGA scorers. Instruction will consist of both classroom and hands-on training in the scoring of typical and non-typical white-tailed deer, typical and non-typical mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and javelina. Although there is no fee for the course, there are supply costs that participants will incur.

Items you will need:

- A 1/4 inch steel measuring tape (marked in 1/8 inch increments)
- A 36-inch wire cable (bicycle brake cable works well)
- Two small alligator clips
- The Boone and Crockett Club's scoring manual "Measuring and Scoring North American Big Game Trophies" (3rd edition) or The Boone and Crockett Club's "Field Guide to Measuring and Judging Big Game". Both can be found at www.boone-crockett.org
- A folding carpenter's rule marked in 1/8 inch increments, preferably with a slide end (an extendable brass or plastic insert)

Cost of items and options:

- Participants will need to purchase and bring the above items to the class. You can find all of the items on the above Boone and Crockett web site www.boone-crockett.org
- If participants prefer, they can purchase the carpenter's rule with slide end at most local hardware stores for about \$15, or on the web at sites like www.coastaltool.com.

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer scorer for TBGA. I look forward to your participation in the upcoming training course. Please **RSVP by November 11** either by calling 979-968-6591 or 979-732-3458, or by email to David.Forrester@tpwd.texas.gov or Mark.Lange@tpwd.texas.gov

MIGRANT SONGBIRDS

Brent Ortego, TPWD Diversity Biologist, Victoria

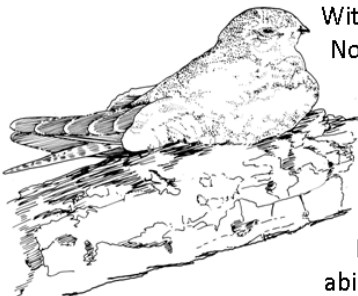
Have you ever sat outside at night during a full moon during the spring or fall and listened to the birds calling overhead? These are likely neotropical migrants. Neotropical migrants are birds which breed in North America and spend their winters in Mexico, and Central and South America. There are more than 200 species of Neotropical migrants, including very colorful songbirds, shorebirds, waterfowls and raptors.

Neotropical migrants typically have evolved in the tropics and have learned to take advantage of the abundant food and long days during the short growing seasons of North America over millions of years. To do this, these mostly very small birds have developed some amazing traits to migrate hundreds of miles, and in the case of the Common Tern 16,000 miles. Wow!

These species can accumulate and store fat over a few short weeks that almost double their body weight. They also have developed a metabolism that allows them to burn off all of this accumulated fat which is used as fuel. This allows them to fly nonstop for 2 days if needed in some cases.

Many neotrops are known to fly over the Gulf of Mexico and/or long stretches of the Atlantic Ocean during migration between the Americas. They do this by mostly migrating at night at altitudes of about 2,000 feet with assistance from tail winds. This provides more favorable flying conditions and helps them avoid predators. They are able to use the stars for migration and can relocate their breeding and wintering grounds which might be as small as a few acres with amazing accuracy.

Some of the more common neotropical migrants from your neighborhoods are Purple Martin, Barn Swallow, Turkey Vulture, Orchard Oriole, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Wood Thrush, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Painted Bunting and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.



With residences in both North and South America, and having to travel between them makes neotropical migrants very vulnerable to habitat changes. Despite having great ability to fly long distances

over inhospitable terrain, they still need high quality habitats with abundant food when they land. Growing human populations have caused major changes in land use for urban development, industry and agriculture across the Americas. These major habitat changes are detrimental to many of these birds.



If you would like to read more about neotropical migrants, look for *Gatherings of Angels: Migrating Birds and Their Ecology* by Kenneth P. Able. 1999, Cornell University Press, and *Living on the Wind* by Scott Weidensaul. 1999, North Point Press at your local bookstore.

Interesting Facts on Neotropical Bird Migration

- There are a number of explanations for migration: (1) Birds migrate to areas where food is more abundant, (2) there is less competition for nesting space, (3) the climate is milder, or (4) the daylight hours are longer.
- Many birds perish during migration and the winter season. It is believed that less than half the birds that leave the nesting grounds in fall migration will return the following spring.
- The principal wintering area for Neotropical Migrants extends through Mexico and Central America to Panama; it has the highest density of winter bird residents in the world.
- Migration has considerable ecological significance. It enables fast-moving animals to exploit fluctuating resources and to settle in areas where they could not live if incapable of rapid travel. On the other hand, peaks of food production would be unexploited without the periodic presence of migratory populations.
- Many migrant birds avoid primary equatorial forests where productivity is usually constant throughout the year and food surpluses do not occur. They do, however, congregate in savannas where productivity varies with the seasons.

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Cat Spring WMA

BASTROP COUNTY

Alum Creek WMA
Bartons Creek WMA
Paint Creek WMA
Pin Oak Creek WMA
Red Rock WMA

CALDWELL COUNTY

Clear Fork Creek WMA
Tri-Community WMA

COLORADO COUNTY

Central Colorado County WMA
Colorado River WMA
Harvey Creek WMA
Northeast Colorado County WMA
Oakridge Ranch WMA
Sandy Creek WMA

DEWITT COUNTY

Central DeWitt County WMA
Meyersville WMA
Western DeWitt County WMA

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Egypt WMA
Lost Prong WMA

