POST OAK SAVANNAH WILDLIFER

June 2014 Information for landowners and hunters in and around the Post Oak Savannah Volume 6, number 2

Photo by Billy Lambert

SUMMER, GO AWAY

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

Remember last month when surprisingly cool temperatures moved through the Post Oak? Well, keep on remembering because it's going to be a while before it happens again. William Shakespeare once wrote that "Summer's lease hath all too short a date". I never did like Shakespeare. Now that warmer temperatures are here, the only decent thing to do is go fishing and wait for Fall.

Really though, temperatures have been quite seasonal so far and one only has to think back over the past few years to remember how bad it *could* be. Although a little low, rainfall appears to be running close to average as well. After a good fall and winter (especially fall), we hit a bit of a dry spell in the spring until some big rains in May brought plenty of much-needed rainfall. Expect some dry spells over the long summer however.

There have been a few more changes within the department to tell you about. After working for close to 40 years with Texas Parks and Wildlife, David Sierra retired from the department in March. David spent the last 11 years working as the District Leader for the Post Oak Savannah and Blackland Prairie and will be missed.

John Silovsky was recently hired as the new Wildlife District 5 leader and started in mid-June. He previously worked for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism for over 20 years, most recently as the regional public lands supervisor, and has served on numerous boards and committees including the Kansas Prescribed Fire Council and the Kansas Forestry Association. We look forward to working with him. John can be reached at 903-566-1626 or at john.silovsky@tpwd.texas.gov.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. As always, feel free to distribute to any and all that are interested in reading it.

Quotable Quote

That the situation appears hopeless should not prevent us from doing our best.

Aldo Leopold

If you would like to unsubscribe to this newsletter or if you received this e-mail from someone other than TPWD and would like to subscribe, please send an e-mail indicating such to billy.lambert@tpwd.texas.gov

PLANT Profile


Photo by Billy Lambert

Eastern Prickly Pear

(Opuntia humifosa)

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

Some things you just can't forget, whether you want to or not. The exact year is in question, but it was either the spring of 1990 or 1991. A helicopter net-gunner had just shot a deer in a wide sendero in south Texas, but the net didn't entangle the deer's legs as intended and it was able to run into the brush dragging the net. Several of us on the ground crew took off on foot to get the deer before it was able to work its way out from under the net. Remember how you're not supposed to run with scissors? Well, you probably shouldn't run through prickly-pear-infested brushland either.

Just as I was approaching the deer, it zigged when I zagged, and I managed to end up sprawled out head-first in a prickly pear clump the size of a small house. The most painful part of the ordeal, though, was looking up at the hovering helicopter and seeing the ear-to-ear grin of the gunner. If you've never dropped your britches in the middle of nowhere to pull cactus thorns, you probably haven't spent enough time in south Texas.

Prickly pear are a group of cacti consisting of approximately 59 species native to North and South America, but widely distributed around the world. Depending on which taxonomic reference you look at, there are 28 species of prickly pear found in the United States, with 13 to 20 species found in Texas. Because different species are able to hybridize, differentiating specific prickly pear species becomes even more problematic.

Eastern prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) is a perennial succulent commonly found throughout East Texas and the Post Oak Savannah, and ranges from Montana down to New Mexico in the west over to New York and Florida in the east. Smaller than many of its counterparts found in other parts of the Texas, eastern prickly pear commonly grows at a height of less than 2 feet and does not have the thorn density of many of the other prickly pear species. It also tends to occur more as a solitary plant (or in small clusters), although large and sometimes dense colonies can develop over time.

The plant consists of a single broad and flattened stem that develops at the ground surface with a fibrous and spreading root system. Additional pads, called *nopales* (immature pads termed *nopalitos*), occur along the top of the original stem and the oval-round pads are usually less than an inch thick and are 2-5 inches long by 1-5 inches wide. Pads that become detached and fall from the plant can create new roots and generate a new plant. The hairless pads are green in color and prickly pear maintains its color throughout the year, thus making it a popular choice in ornamental and cactus gardens.


Photo by Billy Lambert

Small air holes or pores, called areoles, are distributed across the surface of the pads in a liner pattern and at these locations are where the leaves, spines, and bristles occur. Leaves, only 1 per areole, are green or brown in color, do not persist very long on the plant, and are only 1/8"-1/4" long. In addition to the leaves, each areole is surrounded by a cluster of sharp, barbed, brown bristles roughly 1/8" in size. And, although not every areole has spines, up to 2 spines that range from ½"-4" can occur.

Flowering occurs during late spring/early summer and lasts for 2-4 weeks, although each diurnal flower for a particular plant only lasts for a single day during full bloom. The 2-3" flowers occur along the top margin of the pad and are yellow/gold in color with several tepals. The inner surface of the tepals near the center of the flower are frequently orange in color. Each flower gives rise to a fruit, or tuna, that is red or brownish-red in color and is 1-2" long at maturity. The fruits persist through the year and contain up to 50 seeds.

Eastern prickly pear is very opportunistic and can grow under a variety of conditions, from open prairies and grasslands to woodlands. Although it does best in full sunlight, it does have some shade tolerance. Likewise, sandy or well-drained soils seem to be preferred, but not exclusively, and many plants can he found on heavier soils. Prickly pear does not do well in bottomland habitats that frequently flood. The plant is drought tolerant and also is able to withstand the cold temperatures of winter.

As eastern prickly pear is not as invasive as some of the other species occurring around the state, control measures typically are not needed. Besides, prickly pear is a very beneficial wildlife plant. Plus, many have learned the hard way that shredding a prickly pear patch tends to make matters worse as many of the fallen pads are able to root to make new plants. Livestock usually avoid prickly pear due to the spines.

As stated earlier, prickly pear is a useful plant when it comes to wildlife, both as a food source and as a habitat component. Many species of bees use the pollen and/or nectar from the flowers, and many animals, from insects all the way up to deer, eat the fruits and pads. Plus, since prickly pear is 85-90% water by weight, it can serve as a useful water supply for animals acquiring water from food resources. Prickly pear is also useful for providing beneficial cover for ground-nesting birds, small mammals, reptiles, and even fawning cover for deer.

Not only is prickly pear important for wildlife, the pads and fruits are also edible by people as well. Although the pads can be eaten raw, most are cooked first, and are high in Vitamin A, calcium, and carbohydrate. The *nopalitos*, or immature pads, reportedly are more desirable than older more mature pads. The fruit is also edible and, depending on ripeness, can range in flavor from bitter to sweet. Even higher in carbohydrate than the pads, the fruits are also high in Vitamin C. Archeological evidence and examination of coprolites (dried-up-people-poop) has shown that prickly pear has been a significant food source for people for hundreds of years.

A serious word of caution, however, is to be sure to completely remove the outer skin of both the pads and fruits before eating to remove thorns. Failure to do so, as documented by many, including accounts by Spanish explorers, could result in significant throat irritation and swelling, sometimes resulting in death. A much safer alternative is to buy spineless cactus that is now available at many supermarkets.

In addition to simple consumption, prickly pear also appears to have medicinal value. Consumption of *nopalitos*, for example, shows promise in the prevention and control of Type II diabetes. Other potential benefits include treatment of urinary tract infections, reduction in the effects of insulin shock, burn treatment, treatment of scar tissue, and even treatment of swollen prostate (although I'd recommend that you check with a doctor first before you stuff some cactus…well, never mind). Prickly pear also seems to have antibiotic properties as well as the ability to lower cholesterol.

Because of its many uses and value, both to humans as well as to wildlife, the state legislature in 1995 declared the prickly pear as the official state plant of Texas. In the same year, it was also proposed as the official state vegetable/fruit but did not make it past committee. Although the prickly pear is the official state plant, it was named so by House Concurrent Resolution and does not appear in Texas Statutes.

UPCOMING Event!

VAN ZANDT COUNTY WILDLIFE EXPO
August 23, 2014
Farm Bureau Building, Canton

TPWD and the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service would like to invite you to attend the upcoming Van Zandt County Wildlife Expo. Planned speakers will cover a variety of topics including wildlife tax valuation guidelines, white-tailed deer, waterfowl, and dove management, predator control, and more. For more information, contact Heidi Kryger at 903-963-5065 or Tommy Phillips at 903-567-4149.

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ESTABLISHED 1991

Regional Banquet Schedule

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JUNE 7, 2014 • LUBBOCK, TX
FOUR BAR K • 302 E. 82ND
Hotel block available: Hawthorne Suites 806.792.3600 • Group Code: TBGA

REGION 5 • 6 • 7

JUNE 28, 2014 • BRENHAM, TX
FIREMAN'S TRAINING CENTER • 1101 HWY 290 WEST

REGION 4 • 8

AUGUST 9, 2014 • KERRVILLE, TX
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Awardee: Free Adult Guests: $20 Youth Guests: $10

BIOLOGIST Bio

Since he was a young boy, **Jay Whiteside** has always been interested in learning about all wild things and being outdoors. The progression of his outdoor lifestyle began with such activities as chasing squirrels around a golf course near Granbury, scouring nearby creeks for crawfish and fossils, harassing neighborhood grackles with a BB gun, and then eventually to hunting doves and other wild game. Of course, fishing and sports also took up his spare time during his younger years. That simple outdoor journey led Jay down his pathway to promote conservation efforts, and towards his current profession as a Wildlife Biologist with TPWD.

Photo by Billy Lambert

Jay graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry in 1996 with a major in Forest Wildlife Management. Following college, he worked as the Supervising Forester/ Wildlife Manager for a private consultant in Crockett. In 2000, he was hired by TPWD as a Private Lands Biologist and is now the Technical Guidance Biologist for District 5 (Post Oak Savannah and Blackland Prairie).

During the past 14 years, in addition to assisting multiple landowners with the Managed Lands Deer Permit Program and with those interested in the Wildlife Property Tax Valuation, Jay has also worked with various government and non-profit agencies and organizations to deliver wildlife habitat conservation programs within the District.

Although Jay loves all aspects of his job, he is especially fond of working directly with landowners in delivering specific wildlife conservation projects such as native grassland restoration, prescribed burning, and brush management. One of Jay's proudest achievements to date has been his close involvement with the Western Navarro Bobwhite Recovery Initiative (WNBRI). The WNBRI is a coalition of private landowners (30,000+ acres) in the western portion of Navarro County who have banded together over the past 7 years to promote the recovery of bobwhite quail and other grassland bird populations through habitat restoration and/or enhancement. The WNBRI has been very successful in restoring and/or enhancing native grassland habitat on over 1,000 acres, and current projects are currently being instituted to restore even more acreage. In 2012, Jay received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Texas Section Society for Range Management as recognition for his conservation work with the WNBRI.

Outside of work, Jay enjoys hunting, fishing, bird watching and practicing sports with his wife and three children. He recognizes the importance of conservation efforts that promote good land stewardship so that many people in the future will enjoy nature the way he did when he was growing up. You can contact Jay at 254-578-3786 or at jay.whiteside@tpwd.texas.gov.

WILDLIFE Profile


Photo by Billy Lambert

Texas Brown Tarantula

(Aphonopelma hentzi)

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

Normally in the Wildlife Profile section, I show you a picture of a critter, tell you what species it is, and then tell you something about it. But, I can't really tell you for sure what this one is, other than it is a tarantula from the genus *Aphonopelma*. Best guess is the Texas brown tarantula (*Aphonopelma hentzi*). But, as it turns out, a positive identification can only be made through microscopic and postmortem examination of the genitalia (doesn't even sound fun when you're dead). So let's just assume that it is a Texas brown.

As of 2009, over 900 species of tarantula have been identified worldwide and more species are added each year. There are over 50 species of tarantulas native to the United States (plus an introduced species in Florida), ranging from California to Utah in the west over to Missouri and south to Louisiana. About 15 species occur in Texas where they are found in every county in the state. The Texas brown tarantula can be found in Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Colorado, Arizona, Kansas, and Missouri.

Texas brown tarantulas are a large spider with a leg span of up to 5 inches and a body weight of 3 ounces. The body of the spider is comprised of 2 segments approximately 1.5 inches in length, the cephalothorax (front) and the abdomen (back). Two mouthparts with large fangs to inject venom occur at the front of the cephalothorax. There are also 8 segmented legs originating from the cephalothroax, with an additional 2 forward-pointing leg-like structures called pedipalps. These pedipalps aid in digging and detecting prey items, but also contain the male sex organs. Because of this, the ends of male pedipalps appear swollen and are a useful characteristic for determining the sex of the spider. Sexually-mature males also have small claws or hooks on the underside of the front pair of legs and usually have smaller abdomens.

Although color varies to some degree, the body is typically black with black and brown hairs throughout the body. These sensitive hairs are used to detect prey items as well as potential threats as tarantulas do not have good eyesight. An interesting defense mechanism unique to tarantulas found in North and South America, as opposed to old-world countries, is the ability to use their legs to fling hairs from their abdomen. These urticating hairs can cause potentially-serious skin and eye irritation to unsuspecting predators.

Tarantulas do have an exoskeleton that is periodically shed or molted as the body grows. This occurs frequently in juveniles, but usually only yearly in adults. Freshly molted tarantulas may appear bluish in color, usually only lasting a few days. When a sexually-mature male molts for the final time, his body shape changes from stocky to long-legged and slim.

Tarantulas have a surprisingly long lifespan, although it does differ by sex. Females can live as long as 35 years while males are doing good to make it to 10 years, often


Photo by Billy Lambert

significantly less as their constant searching for females exposes them to much greater levels of predation. Males do not reach maturity for 3-7 years and then die shortly thereafter. After their final molt, males spend considerable time searching for a mate so that they can reproduce before they die.

Separate from most true spiders, tarantulas are considered mygalomorphs, meaning, among other things, that tarantulas do not construct webs to catch prey. They do, however, produce silk from spinnerets located on the abdomen. The silk is used to line the burrows that they live in, detect prey at the entrance of the burrow, and females use it to create a protective housing for the eggs.

Tarantulas prey mostly on insects, although they will consume anything that they can catch, including mice and birds. Common food items include crickets, grasshoppers, scorpions, cockroaches, beetles, caterpillars, lizards, and even other tarantulas. Once caught, the tarantula injects venom into the prey to subdue it and the digestive enzymes also serve the purpose of liquefying the tissues, which are then sucked out (kind of like a bug-gut smoothie).

Although there are arboreal tarantula species that spend considerable time in trees and shrubs, the Texas brown tarantula is more of a cave-dweller, spending most of its life in burrows either created or "borrowed". Other popular hangouts include rock crevices, deep soil cracks, and under fallen logs or rocks. Tarantulas are mostly nocturnal and while they may make small trips to search for prey when needed, most wait for potential food items to come to them. Females and immature males rarely desert their burrows unless forced out by other animals or due to flooding events. Mature males, however, leave the burrows and spend considerable time searching for females.

One fascinating aspect of behavior that is not well understood involves mass movements of tarantulas in which thousands of individuals move across the landscape at the same time. I was fortunate to observe one of these as a youngster in Dickens County. For several miles, the road we were traveling contained too many tarantulas to even think about trying to count, all moving in the same direction. While the exact cause of this unique phenomenon is not known, the leading theories center around simple migration, males looking for mates, and the after-effects of large rainfall events.

The mating season for tarantulas typically occurs in the spring. Once the female is fertilized, she can lay anywhere from 100 to 1,000 eggs that are protected by silk webbing within the burrow. Incubation lasts for 1.5 to 2 months before the eggs hatch in mid-late summer. Newly born tarantulas will stay around the female for up to a week until they move off to create their own burrows. Due to a variety of predators, mortality of the juvenile spiders is very high until they create their burrow.

Once past infancy, tarantulas face few predators, at least from the invertebrate world. The notable exception is the tarantula hawk, which is a wasp that, as the name implies, specializes in tarantulas. The wasp stings the tarantula to paralyze it, drags it to depression or burrow, and then lays eggs on the spider. The hatching larvae then feed on the tarantula as they mature. The largest threats to tarantulas, though, center around human encroachment, loss of habitat, and pesticide use.

Texas brown tarantulas are very docile and may be the least aggressive of all the tarantulas. This makes them a popular choice among exotic pet owners as they require little care and are easy to feed. Females are a better choice as they live much longer than males. They are easily handled once you get past the scary appearance and are considered harmless to both people and most pets, including dogs and cats. Bites from tarantulas are rare and there has never been a documented fatality from a tarantula bite (commonly described as similar to a bee sting).

Quotable Quote

Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free.

Aldo Leopold

LINKS OF INTEREST

Draw a boundary around the area of interest to calculate acreage:

http://tfsfrd.tamu.edu/MapMyProperty/

Information on the timing of the rut in Texas white-tailed deer by ecoregion:

http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/planning/rut_whitetailed_deer/

Information on hunter education including class dates:
http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/outdoor-learning/hunter-education/faq

Weekly saltwater and freshwater fishing reports:

http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/recreational/fishreport.phtml

Lone Star Longbeards Hunting Heritage Banquet

Join us on Friday, August 22, 2014
Brazos Center

3232 Briarcrest Drive, Bryan, TX 77802
Doors open at 6:00 PM
Dinner Starts at 7:30 PM

Ticket Prices

$60.00 Single
$85.00 Couple
$15.00 Jakes

$650.00 Gold Sponsor Table
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$500.00 Hunters Table
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NWTF - Dedicated to Making A Difference

Since 1973, the NWTF and its partners have raised and spent more than $331 million to conserve 15.9 million acres of habitat for all types of wildlife. In addition to wild turkeys, a multitude of species such as quail, woodcock, ruffed grouse, prairie chickens, pheasants and white-tailed deer benefit from the creation and enhancement of these wildlife habitats.

For more information, contact Darrin Allen at 979-219-0286

RESEARCH Summary

Landscape Habitat Suitability Index for Eastern Wild Turkeys

Jason A. Estrella

Despite restocking efforts dating back to the late 1970's, populations of Eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*) in East Texas have consistently remained low and fragmented. In 2007, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) funded research through Stephen F. Austin State University to test a super stocking model for restoring turkey populations, which showed promising results. Recently, TPWD reopened the Eastern wild turkey stocking program with a goal to restore wild turkeys to large tracks of suitable habitat utilizing this super stocking approach.

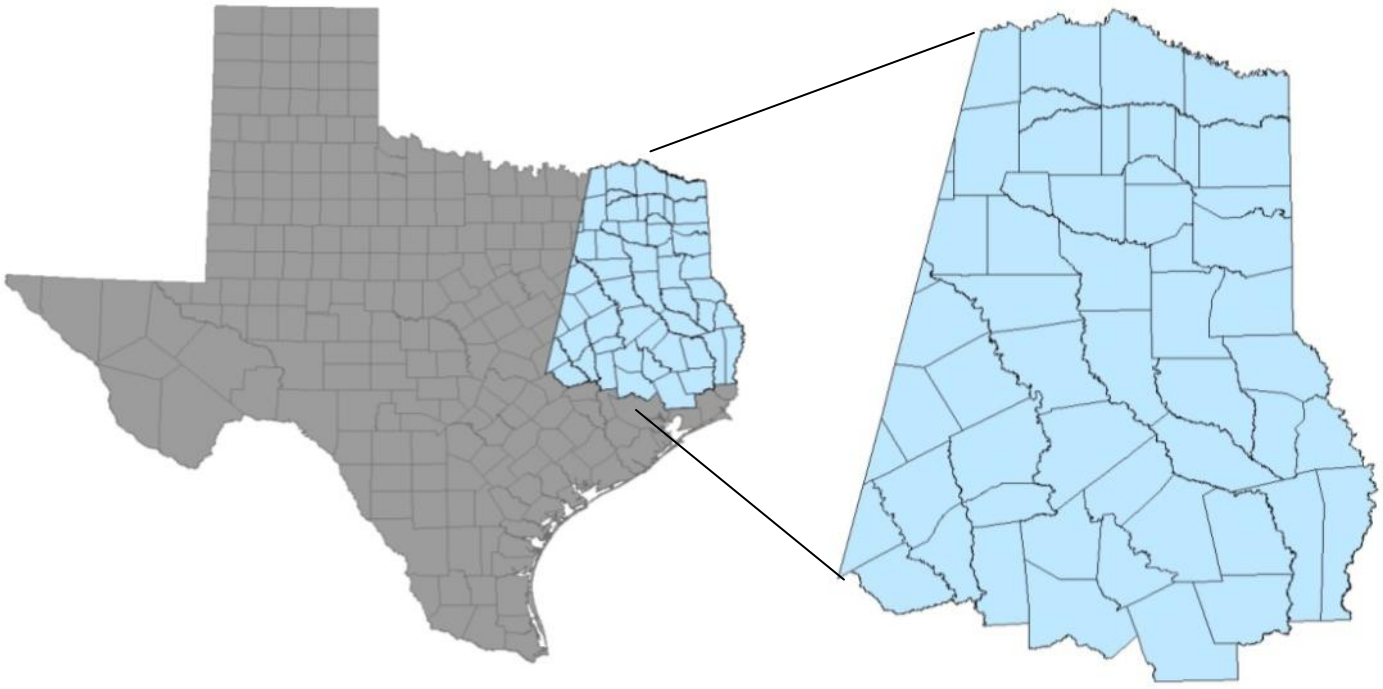
An ecological model is a simulated representation of a real world ecological system. They are frequently used as decision-making support tools, and often the only means for accurately and efficiently assessing complex ecological systems. The simplest model consistent with existing knowledge is likely to produce reliable insight with understanding that as a model develops, it needs to be explored and tested while remaining dynamic. Ecological modeling may serve as a helpful tool for guiding and focusing future eastern wild turkey restoration efforts.

A habitat suitability index (HSI) is an index evaluated on a number scale (commonly 0-1, with 1 being the best) that represents the capacity of a given area to support a selected species. Our objective was to develop landscape-scale HSI models for Eastern wild turkeys, utilizing available resources and spatial data, to serve as a decision support tool for ongoing habitat evaluation efforts as well as guiding and focusing future restocking and management efforts.

Our HSI models were developed for the Texas Parks and Wildlife East Texas region. The study area includes all or parts of 56 counties and encompasses approximately 26 million acres.

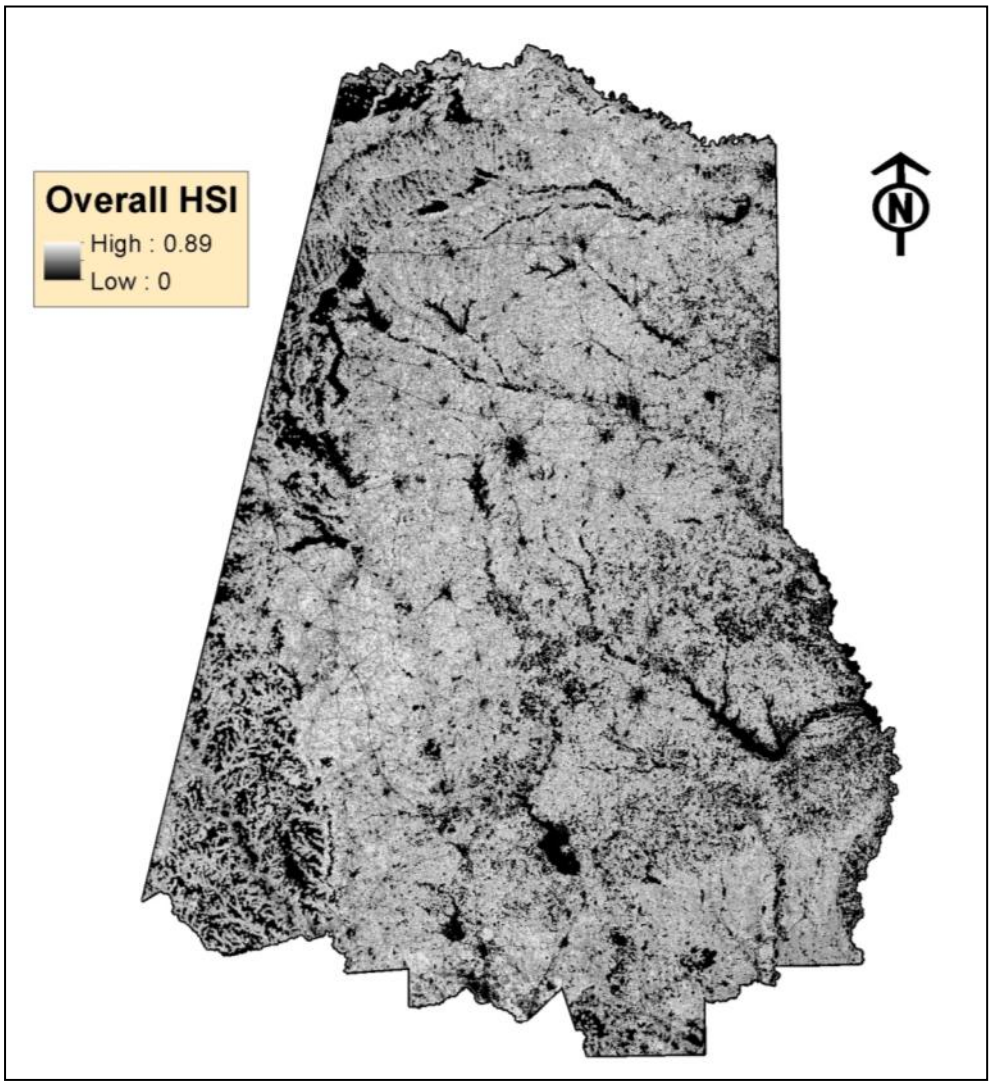
The philosophy underlying HSI models is that each species requires a distinctive set of physical environmental factors. These factors are often associated with certain structure and composition of specific vegetative communities. We used 3 factors; edge, avoidance, and landcover, to use in our models, as we felt these best covered the basic landscape-scale habitat needs required by turkeys.

Edge values were classified to reflect the ecotone (defined as the interface of forested and open habitats) as the most favorable habitat. Avoidance values were classified to reflect areas of least human activity (urban) as the most favorable for turkeys. Landcover types were categorized as Food, Brood, Nesting, Roosting, and Escape cover and



separated by season. Landcover was ranked for each season by 7 regional turkey and habitat experts.

Variables were then combined and calculated to an evaluation scale of 0-1, with 1 being the most favorable. HSI calculations were made for Spring/ Summer, Fall/ Winter, and a Yearly Overall average.



Our overall HSI for the region ranged from 0-0.89. Currently, our HSI model is preliminary and predictive accuracy is essential to its value in informing management; so we will test the validity of our models with actual turkey locations, collected from various ongoing research projects.

So what does all this mean, and how can it be used? First, it allows biologists to take a step back and look at the quality of the habitat in terms of turkeys from a large landscape perspective (though this in no way is a substitute for an "on the ground" evaluation). Staff can identify focal areas of large patches of quality habitat to focus conservation measures in a more proactive approach. Staff can also model areas outside of the release sites to predict turkey dispersal patterns, an important factor in re-establishing populations.

Finally, the conceptual framework, data availability, and the use of map outputs as visual aids can elevate the utility of large landscape HSI models and has the potential to enhance communication between government resource agencies, non-profit organizations, private landowners, and other partners; helping to deliver more "on the ground" conservation.

UPCOMING Event!

LANDOWNER WORKSHOP

August 22, 2014

Meyers Event Center, McKinney

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Collin County and Texas Parks and Wildlife are teaming up to host a landowner workshop at the Meyers Event Center, in McKinney. This year the workshop will be broke into 3 segments: Basic Wildlife Management-Grasslands (wildlife tax valuations, setting realistic expectations, grassland restoration and associated NRCS programs), Challenges and Opportunities of Hunting in Suburban Counties (role of hunting in suburban counties, realistic legal issues to landowners, expectations of hunters, and common legal issues encountered by the Game Wardens), and Realistic Feral Hog Management (biology and impacts of feral hogs, and what are expectations for population control efforts). For more information, contact Brett Johnson at brett.johnson@tpwd.texas.gov or at 972-293-3841.

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

2ND ANNUAL **TRI COUNTY CHAPTER**

HUNTING HERITAGE BANQUET

NWTF
Conserve. Hunt. Share.

6:00 pm
June 27, 2014
Jewett Civic Center

Live & Silent Auction
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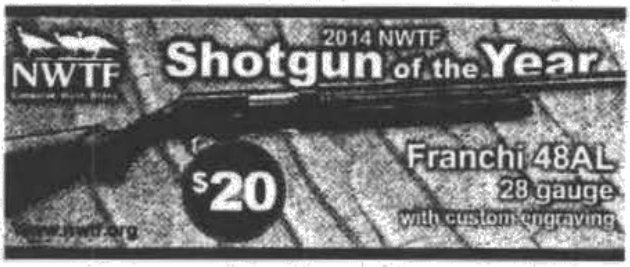
Door Prizes
Steak Dinner



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Only 100 tickets sold * Need not be present to win

Sponsor Table	$600 (8 meals, 8 memberships, starter pack of general raffle tickets & sponsor recognition)
Single Ticket	$55 (1 membership, 1 meal)
Couple Ticket	$75 (1 membership, 2 meals)
Youth age 13-17	$20 (1 membership, 1 meal)
Youth 12&under	Free

Contact a Committee Member for Tickets:

Jason Hardin	(903) 388-0623	Joe Hughes	(903) 477-3030
Robert Lane	(903) 391-8474	Gene Pruitt	(903) 388-1540
Jason Jones	(903) 391-5688	Ralph Lane	(903) 391-1045

Freestone, Leon & Limestone Counties

POST OAK SAVANNAH TURKEY STOCKING

Jason Hardin

The Eastern turkey was once numerous in East Texas. However, due to rapid changes in habitat and unregulated harvest the Eastern turkey was extirpated from the state around the turn of the 20th century. For decades, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) attempted to restore turkey populations to east Texas with little success.

The earliest stocking attempts utilized pen reared turkeys and later the Rio Grande subspecies trapped in the western half of Texas. Both methods failed to create a sustainable turkey population in east Texas. Beginning in the late 1970's, TPWD began releasing wild trapped Eastern turkeys from neighboring states. By 2003, over 7,000 Eastern turkeys had been stocked into east Texas utilizing a block stocking approach. This method called for stockings of 15-20 birds per site with 5-10 sites scattered across a particular county. While this method was successful in several areas of the state, the majority of the stocked birds disappeared without creating a sustainable turkey population.

Photo by Billy Lambert

In 2007, TPWD funded research through Stephen F. Austin State University to test a super stocking model for restoring turkey populations. After 3 years of research, this method has shown considerable merit. Therefore, TPWD has decided to reopen the Eastern Turkey Stocking Program. Requirements for eligibility are listed below.

Potentially-qualifying counties: Anderson, Angelina, Bowie, Brazos, Burleson, Camp, Cass, Chambers, Cherokee, Dallas, Delta, Ellis, Fannin, Franklin, Freestone, Gregg, Grimes, Hardin, Harrison, Henderson, Hopkins, Houston, Hunt, Jasper, Jefferson, Kaufman, Lamar, Leon, Liberty, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Milam, Montgomery, Morris, Nacogdoches, Navarro, Newton, Orange, Panola, Polk, Rains, Red River, Robertson, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Smith, Titus, Trinity, Tyler, Upshur, Van Zandt, Walker, and Wood.

Turkey cooperatives interested in a stocking must consist of a minimum of 10,000 acres of contiguous usable habitat. The proposed site can consist of single or multiple ownership of public, private, or a combination of land holdings. Turkey cooperatives consisting of multiple landowners must exist as a formal turkey cooperative. Interested parties must have management authority of the property.

Sites interested in a stocking must make a written request to TPWD's Upland Game Bird Program. Requests should be sent to Jason Hardin at jason.hardin@tpwd.texas.gov or by mail to P.O. Box 279, Buffalo, TX 75831.

Once organized, the cooperative must invite TPWD personnel to a landowner meeting. At this meeting, TPWD will determine the boundary of the proposed release site(s) and enter that information into a Geographic Information System (GIS). Cooperatives passing a GIS analysis will qualify for an on-the-ground evaluation of the cooperative area utilizing a TPWD Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). Those cooperatives ranking the highest and receiving a minimum score of 70 based on the HSI evaluation will be prioritized for future turkey stockings. Prior to a stocking, all participants in the turkey cooperative must possess a TPWD approved Management Plan.

What is a Formal Turkey Cooperative? A formal turkey cooperative exists when a group of landowners mutually agrees in writing to work cooperatively by a set of bylaws determining the leadership and management of the cooperative. These cooperatives can consist of already established wildlife cooperatives or they can be created strictly for the purpose of restoring and managing wild turkeys.


Photo by Blake Aldridge

During FY 2014, TPWD stocked 247 wild turkeys as part of the Eastern wild turkey restoration program. All stockings were funded by TPWD's Upland Game Bird Stamp. Turkeys were acquired from other state agencies across the southeastern U.S. through a partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation.

All turkeys were stocked utilizing a method known as Super Stockings. The name is derived from the high number of individuals released per site. At each release site the department attempted to release a minimum of 20 males and 60 females with a mix of juvenile and adult birds. All birds passed blood tests for Salmonella pullorum/typhoid and Avian Influenza and received a Certificate of Veterinarian Inspection as required by the Texas Animal Health Commission prior to release.

Release sites included a 15,000-acre ranch in Anderson County, a 10,000-acre TPWD Wildlife Management Area in Anderson County, and a 20,000-acre industrial site in Rusk County. All sites were evaluated and passed TPWD's Eastern Turkey Habitat Suitability Index. All released wild turkeys were banded and a percentage of the birds were fitted with GPS or VHF transmitters by Stephen F. Austin State University graduate student Kyle Hand to monitor distribution, habitat use, and survival. Kyle will be analyzing demographics associated with the marked birds as part of his graduate research. This project was funded by sportsmen's dollars through the Pittman-Robertson fund.

TPWD is currently evaluating potential release sites throughout east Texas. On-the-ground habitat evaluations began in May and will continue through the end of June. This time frame represents the primary nesting and brood rearing period. TPWD believes these life history requirements are key limiting factor to growing a wild turkey population. By conducting on the ground evaluations during this time period staff can more accurately assess habitat quality and quantity.

If you have questions about potential stockings in your area of the state feel free to contact Jason Hardin, Turkey Program Leader, at jason.hardin@tpwd.texas.gov or at 903-322-2770.

TROPHY Corner


Photo by James Dixon

Results of a fun opening weekend dove hunt for the Dixon family last September in Grimes county. Katie and Wesley, 4 and 6 years old, accompanied dad, James, on the hunt.


Photo by Ryan Flencher

Abigail Flencher, 7 years old, harvested her first deer in Burleson county last October with a crossbow The 7-point buck weighed in at 180 pounds. Also pictured is dad, Aaron.

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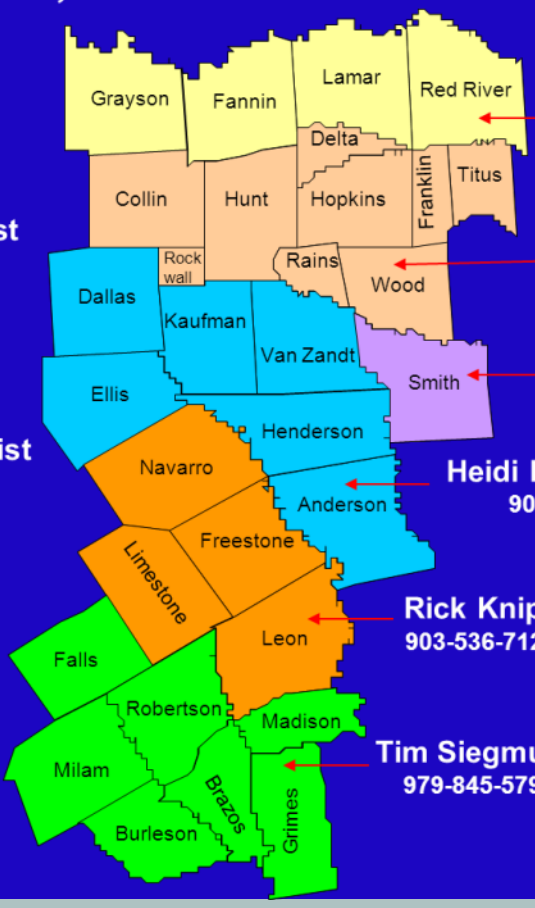

GUS ENGELING
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

1st Friday Wildlife Habitat Management Workshop

The Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area will host habitat workshops monthly from March thru August on the first Friday of each month. The workshops will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the Gus Engeling Wildlife Conservation Center. Attendees will receive a brief overview and history of the property and then will be taken on a guided tour of the WMA with a wildlife biologist. The tour will show attendees proper habitat management practices for the Post Oak Savannah Ecoregion. Attendees will see areas that show the progression of prescribed fire in various habitat types ranging from historically burned to entry level burns. Hardwood timber management techniques, strip disking and other mechanical treatments, harvest management, grazing management, and herbicide application will also be discussed. The workshops will be informal and open to discuss any further topics of interest by attendees. For more information, contact Eric Woolverton at 903-928-2251 or at eric.woolverton@tpwd.texas.gov.

Wildlife Habitat Management Calendar

January
Prescribed Fire (Cool)
Native Grass Planting
Hardwood Tree Planting
Light Disking and High Mowing
Feral Hog Removal
Brush Control (Grazing)

February
Prescribed Fire (Cool)
Native Grass Planting
Hardwood Tree Planting
Light Disking and High Mowing
Feral Hog Removal
Brush Control (Grazing)

March
Prescribed Fire (Cool)
Native Grass Planting
Hardwood Tree Planting
Overseed Legumes (Warm)
Feral Hog Removal
Brush Control (Grazing)

April
Native Grass Planting
Overseed Legumes (Warm)
Avoid Grass Cutting (Fawns, Turkeys)
Feral Hog Removal
Remove Livestock from Wildlife Area

May
Avoid Grass Cutting (Fawns, Turkeys)
Feral Hog Removal
Remove Livestock from Wildlife Area

June
Prescribed Fire (Warm)
Tame Grass Herbicide Work (Warm)
Avoid Grass Cutting (Fawns, Turkeys)
Feral Hog Removal
Waterfowl Planting

July
Prescribed Fire (Warm)
Tame Grass Herbicide Work (Warm)
Brush Control
Feral Hog Removal
Waterfowl Planting
Deer Surveys

August
Prescribed Fire (Warm)
Tame Grass Herbicide Work (Warm)
Feral Hog Removal
Waterfowl Planting
Deer Surveys

September
Reserve Hardwood Trees
Overseed Legumes (Cool)
Feral Hog Removal
Deer Surveys & Stand Maintenance
Mow around Ponds (Dove)

October
Reserve Hardwood Trees
Overseed Legumes (Cool)
Feral Hog Removal
Tame Grass Herbicide Work (Cool)
Harvest Management Deer
Plant Wildflowers

November
Prescribed Fire
Prepare Fire Guards
Feral Hog Removal
Deer Harvest

December
Prescribed Fire
Prepare Fire Guards
Feral Hog Removal
Deer Harvest

Resource Links:

Texas Parks and Wildlife:
www.tpwd.texas.gov

Texas A&M Forest Service:
www.texasforestservice.tamu.edu/main/default.aspx

NRCS Texas:
www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:
www.agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:
www.fws.gov

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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.tpwd.texas.gov

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