Region IV Wildlifer

A newsletter for landowners that fall within the 33 counties of Region IV, covering portions of Central and Coastal Texas

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

July 2025

District 8 Field Notes

BY DERRICK WOLTER

First and foremost, we extend our deepest condolences to all those affected by the catastrophic flooding in Texas. My heart goes out to families grieving the loss of loved ones, to communities faced with unimaginable devastation, and to those still awaiting news of missing relatives and friends. May those mourning be surrounded by support, find moments of peace, and feel the embrace of a community standing with them.

In the wildlife world, the district is experiencing another summer of good to excellent habitat conditions. Rainfall has been productive, resulting in slightly cooler temperatures and steady plant growth. The mix of lush grasses and blooming forbs has created an environment that benefits a wide range of native wildlife. This setting will support healthy populations of deer, doves, and other game animals. As a result, it's looking good for hunters later this year.

On that front, district biologists have been involved in regulatory activities since May, which will continue into September before staff see a brief break. Most see your biologist on the technical guidance (TG) side of his or her job, where they provide you with recommendations to help meet private lands goals. But wait, there's more! Regulatory activities include annual urban dove surveys, rural dove surveys, and dove banding activities that are all used to estimate statewide dove populations. In addition, biologists conduct hen-poult counts for turkey, conduct surveys for bobwhite quail, and all are involved in white-tailed deer surveys, which are now firing up. The information collected supports hunting seasons and bag limits for these animals at the local level.

On the TG side of things, biologists have stayed busy with private lands work related to a variety of landowner interests. The bulk of these visits have been with MLDP cooperators. And speaking of MLDP, get ready to find a reminder from your local biologist in your inbox soon; it's time to start collecting deer population data.

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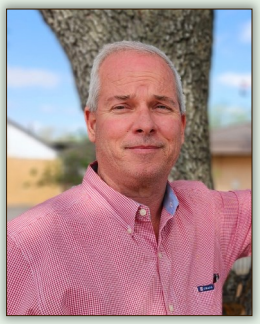
Derrick Wolter began his career with TPWD in 2000 working as a wildlife biologist within the Upper Coast Wetlands Ecosystem Project, where he worked with wetlands, waterfowl, and on several Wildlife Management Areas. In 2004, Derrick moved to Central Texas to serve as a district biologist for Bell, Coryell, Lampasas, and Williamson Counties. In 2020, he became the Senior Wildlife Biologist for the Hill Country District. In November 2023, Derrick became the Wildlife District 8 Leader. He received a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Science and a Master of Science in Wildlife Ecology from Texas A&M University.

District Field Notes, continued

Lastly, there have been no staff changes in the district. It's been a minute since I've been able to say that! However, not all news is positive. We are closely monitoring the potential return of the New World screwworm to Texas. More on that is coming up.



District 9 Field Notes

BY BOBBY EICHLER

Oh, how the weather has changed. In the April newsletter's 'District Notes', I commented on how the district was exceptionally dry coming out of winter and even during early spring. The period from May through early July has really turned things around from a moisture standpoint. While there may be pockets within the district that did not receive as large amounts of rain as others, I don't believe there are many areas that can complain about an overall lack of rain during this period. Much of the district is greener now than in many of the past Julys. The saying that Texas weather can be summarized as "constant drought with intermittent floods" has shown to be true over the last few weeks.

Switching subjects, district biologists have been busy with a variety of tasks. Doves keep our staff busy during much of June and July, whether it be Urban Dove Surveys, Modified Call Counts for Mourning Doves, or trapping and banding for both white-wing and mourning doves. All these tasks and data collection directly tie into hunting regulations on an annual basis.

Staff have also been busy with several workshops over the past few months. One of our highest-attended workshops, 'Thriving in Snake Country', was held in early June with over 65 attendees, and a list has already been started for folks who could not make the first workshop due to capacity restraints. District biologists also hosted workshops on wild turkey management, songbird management, and overall habitat management within the Post Oak Savannah. All had a good line-up of speakers and were well attended.

As always, staff training and continuing education are important. Staff participated in native grassland restoration methods as well as learning about New World screwworm (NWS); more on this in a bit.

Going forward, staff will start the 'deer season' process with deer type activities keeping us very busy starting July 15. This time of year, we will be running our annual spotlight surveys from county roads assisting Wildlife Management Associations as well as running our agency regulatory surveys. Our crews will be in Texas Parks and Wildlife trucks, have flashing safety lights, and reflective survey signs clearly visible. Please let our folks do their jobs if you encounter them. If you suspect someone else is spotlighting and/or poaching, call your sheriff's department dispatch or game warden directly.

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District Field Notes, continued

Our surveys start 30 minutes after sunset and can run as late as midnight or slightly longer.

Now back to the New World screwworm. For those of you who were alive prior to the late 1960's, this is the screwworm that you may have dealt with in your livestock. Within this newsletter you will find a fact sheet on NWS. These flies were eradicated in the United States and driven far south, to the Darian Gap, for the past 50+ years. Due to several compounding factors, the NWS has started moving north and is now in Mexico.

While it is not currently in the United States, it would be wise to start educating yourselves on them, particularly if you own livestock. While I do not want to sound alarms, it would benefit Texas for our folks to have some foreknowledge if the NWS were to show up in Texas. Within the fact sheet, there are several websites listed that are good resources.

For now, be careful of the heat, find a cool spot, and try to survive the dreaded "dog days of summer". Believe it or not, summer is halfway over. The good news is that dove season is just around the corner. Be safe and enjoy the outdoors, or maybe the indoors until September.

Dove banding. Photos©TPWD

Bobby Eichler is the District 9 leader for the Oak Savannah and Prairies District. He has Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Forestry both with emphasis in Game Management, from Stephen F. Austin State University. A native of Giddings, Bobby started his TPWD career in East Texas before moving to La Grange in 2007.

Grazing Lands Feng Shui

WRITTEN BY CULLOM SIMPSON

Livestock grazing plays an important role in managing vegetation across Texas. Grazing operations vary in class of livestock, acreage, use of pasture rotation, and goals. Pasture rotation varies from continuous grazing to rotational grazing across several pastures. The use of rotational grazing allows the land to rest and recover. Matching rotation, rest, and recovery to stocking rate is the harmonious balance or feng shui of grazing management. When this balance is met, the plants' above-ground growth and roots will ultimately thrive.

Figure 1. Achieving grazing feng shui will create a unique dance between the landowner, their livestock, and their land.

Knowing how many animals are appropriate for a given grazing situation is an important part of grazing management. If we don't know how many animals to stock on the landscape, we can't effectively manage the grass that is needed for a successful livestock operation. Determining how many animals to put on the landscape comes down to balancing the available forage on the landscape to the number of livestock. Stocking **rate** (animals or weight per acre) can be defined as the number of animals on the entire pasture for a duration of time. Determining stocking rates doesn't have to be complex. Several online platforms that have become available that simplify this process. These platforms estimate the amount of total available forage on the landscape through frequent satellite imagery, and based on size and class of animal, provide a stocking rate for a specified pasture. To view this platform, please visit Rangeland Analysis Platform and Rangeland Analysis Platform Training for Natural Resource Professionals.

Rotating animals is a key element to long-term grassland production and healthy diverse grasslands. This allows plants to rest and recover from being grazed. Continuous grazing allows animals to repeatedly graze plants without rest or recovery, which will result in the plant community shifting to less desirable plants. When plants are grazed nonstop and short, the plants' roots stop growing ultimately causing them to die and making way for lower-quality plants to dominate. Grasses respond to heavy grazing differently but can be placed into two general categories, decreaser and increaser. Decreaser plants include switchgrass, big bluestem, little bluestem, sideoats grama, Indian grass, eastern gamagrass, American basketflower, Maximillian sunflower, and partridge pea. When these plants are grazed heavily, they decrease in dominance on the landscape. Increaser plants include purple

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Grazing Feng Shui, continued

Figure 2. Achieving the proper stocking rate will result in maintaining healthy forage.

threeawn, dropseeds, Texas wintergrass, oldworld bluestems, annual broomweed, silverleaf nightshade, and prairie coneflower. These plants increase when grazed heavily due to the lack of competition and the increase in available space. Determining when to rotate and how much vegetation to leave on the landscape can be difficult, but a simple phrase can help clarify this. The phrase, take half, leave half is commonly used as an indicator of how much vegetation should be left on the landscape following a grazing event. The take portion includes a grazing efficiency of 25% and 25% trampling loss. Applying this rule typically results in leaving 6-8" of above-ground vegetation in our most desirable plants. A visual and practical way to keep track of this is to install a livestock exclosure. These areas are untouched by grazing and provide a comparison with adjacent grazed areas. Not all plants are preferred equally and when using height as an indicator, species being observed should be taken into consideration as the high-quality plants will be grazed before lesser-quality plants. For more information, please view Rangeland Monitoring Techniques for Livestock and Wildlife.

Figure 3. A grazing exclosure can help monitor the impacts of grazing on vegetation.

Plants need rest from grazing just as people need rest to live a healthy life. Ideally, plants are rested longer than they were grazed to finish their life cycle. If rest isn't received, the plants will diminish to the point of not being able to feed the roots and die. Droughts can prolong the required rest, as full vegetative production likely wouldn't occur until 2 years post-drought. Well-managed landscapes have spongy soils that encourage rainwater infiltration and hold moisture, whereas continuously grazed pastures often have hard- capped soil that shed water off the landscape. Healthy rested pastures respond well to grazing whereas pastures grazed all year take several years to recover.

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Grazing Feng Shui, continued

Figure 4. Resting pastures following grazing allows the vegetation to recover and maintain a healthy life.

Plants need rest and recovery to maintain healthy vigor. At the point where plants have been grazed in half, the length of time to recover depends on soils, soil moisture, time of year, plant species, past grazing and land uses. Once recovery has been met, the plants can be grazed without harming the plants or roots. Depending on management goals, spring grazing can be used to decrease cool season annuals (annual rye or Japanese brome) or Johnsongrass. If those cool season grasses are left ungrazed, those plants can form thick mats that prevent other plants from growing. Keeping cool-season plants grazed, can set the stage for forbs and warm-season plants to thrive without competing for light or space. While Johnsongrass can be toxic to livestock under certain conditions, it is often highly preferred, and this preference can be used to decrease the overall abundance in a pasture.

Figure 5. Recovery is important to make sure performance is 100% the next grazing cycle.

Healthy grasslands have healthy roots. On healthy landscapes, there is more below-ground biomass than above-ground biomass and on unhealthy landscapes there is less below-ground biomass than above-ground biomass. The more a plant is grazed, the harder it becomes for the plant to replace its roots due to less available plant material to synthesize sunlight. When a plant is grazed beyond 50% above ground, the root growth slows and as it is continuously grazed, the root growth will stop, leading to plant death. This is the reason for the adage

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Grazing Feng Shui, continued

take half, leave half. If you graze more than 50%, you negatively impact the roots and overall health of the plant. To maintain a healthy grassland, plants need to not be grazed below 50% to allow the plant to maintain proper function.

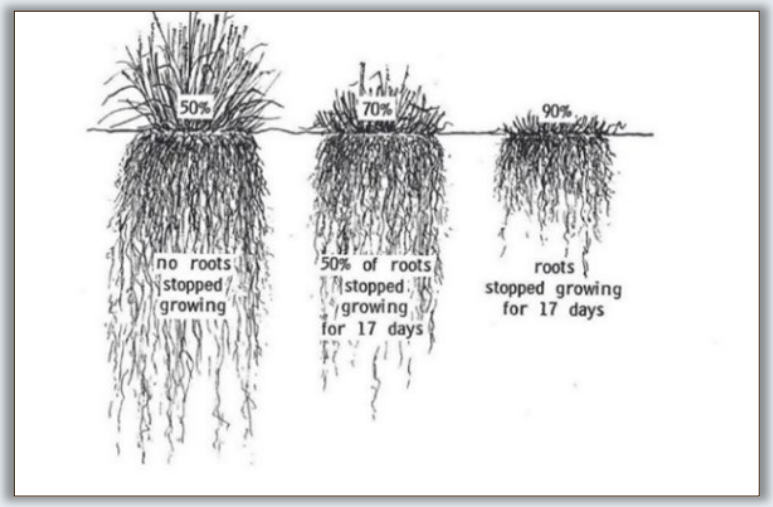

Figure 6. The take half, leave half approach ensures root growth will not be hindered from grazing.

Knowing the "R's" (rotation, rest, and recovery) of grazing management can benefit soil health, increase vegetation, and result in more productive and diverse plant and animal communities. Ultimately, helping to reach grazing feng shui!

Figure 7. By following the R's of grazing management, the rangeland can remain productive while staying healthy and having diverse landscapes.

References:
Natural Resource Conservation Service-South Dakota. 2022. Remember the R's for Resilient Ranches.

Cullom Simpson is a district biologist for Bell and Williamson Counties. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in 2016 from Tarleton State University and pursued his masters degree at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. Cullom was hired in 2021 and helps coordinate public hunts on Granger PHL and prairie restoration projects across the Hill Country and Southern blackland prairies.

Species Spotlight: Spiny Softshell Turtle

WRITTEN BY DRAKE RANGEL

When you think of Texas wildlife, images of big bucks, rattlesnakes, and mockingbirds might come to mind. But if you spend some time looking along riverbanks or lake edges with a keen eye, you just might catch sight of a creature that looks more like it belongs in prehistoric times than modern Texas waters. Allow me to introduce you to one of our oddest, fastest, and largest freshwater turtle species, the **spiny softshell turtle**.

With its flat, leathery shell and snorkel-like nose, the **spiny softshell turtle (*Apalone spinifera*)** is one of the most unique reptiles in Texas. Unlike the more familiar hard-shelled turtles, this species has a flexible, leathery carapace sporting its namesake small spiny projections (known as tubercles) along the front edge of the shell. Their shell can range in color from grey to brown and even olive with various markings or splotches. These turtles are built for stealth and speed, and speaking from experience, it's difficult to get a look at much less catch.

Top: Spiny softshell turtle Apalone spinifera. Bottom: Spiny softshell turtle tubercles. Photos©John Karges

Spiny softshells are a very widespread species, ranging from Northern Mexico, across much of the United States (including most of the Lone Star State), and into South-eastern Canada. This species is currently divided into 6 subspecies, multiple of which occur in Texas. They are highly aquatic, preferring sandy or muddy bottoms of slower-moving rivers, lakes, and streams. On occasion, they can be spotted basking on the edges of waterbodies or on top of logs, but I have most often seen them basking slightly submerged on top of floating mats of vegetation. Even then, these creatures are very flighty and will disappear into the water at lightning speed. They are a quintessential example of dispelling the 'slow as a turtle' trope.

Much of their life is spent underwater, alternating between an active hunter/forager and an ambush predator. When ambushing, the turtles will bury themselves in sediment and occasionally extend their long neck and snorkel-like noses to the surface to breathe. This ability to sit without moving for long periods serves them well as a generalist predator capitalizing on a variety of foods such as invertebrates, fish, mussels, frogs, carrion, and even plant material.

Another fascinating aspect of this turtle's biology is its ability to "breathe" through its skin, throat, and cloaca when underwater. This further aids its ability to stay submerged for long periods. Scientists call this **cutaneous respiration**, and it's one of the many adaptations that make this turtle a master of its environment.

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Species Spotlight: Spiny Softshell Turtle, continued

Females of the species grow much larger than males, often reaching up to 18 inches in shell length. Males, though smaller, sport longer tails and maintain more prominent tubercles into adulthood. These turtles won't begin breeding until they're 8-10 years old. Males court the females with head nudges and by waving their feet in front of the female's face. Should she accept the male's advances, they breed while swimming. A few months later, females crawl ashore to lay their eggs in sandy banks. The sex of the hatchlings isn't determined by temperature, like in many other turtles, but rather by a less common tactic among reptiles, genetics. This results in an average sex ratio of 1:1 in hatchling softshells.

While not currently considered threatened, spiny softshells do face challenges. Habitat degradation, water pollution, and riverbank disturbances can impact nesting and foraging areas. Additionally, they're sometimes caught unintentionally by anglers or mistaken for invasive species. Conservation of Texas waterways is key to keeping this species thriving.

So, the next time you're out paddling, fishing, or hiking near one of Texas' many water bodies, keep an eye out for the quick blur of a softshell turtle zooming away. Just remember — it may not look like your typical turtle, but this oddball reptile is a true Texan, through and through.

References:
Averill-Murray, Roy C. "Spiny Softshell (Apalone spinifera)." Sonoran Herpetologist 20 (2007): 9.
Ernst, Carl H., and Jeffrey E. Lovich. Turtles of the united states and Canada. JHU Press, 2009.

Drake Rangel is the Wildlife Biologist for Fayette County, officing out of the Region IV headquarters in La Grange. He started off studying Wildlife Biology at Texas State University before ultimately graduating from Texas A&M University-Kingsville with both a Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Wildlife and Range Management. His favorite parts of working for TPWD include helping landowners improve the habitat on their property, guiding sustainable use of natural resources, and conducting outreach programs.

Mottled Duck Banding

WRITTEN BY TREY MCCLINTON

TPWD Technician, Jacobi Orr, holds a mottled duck captured while night-lighting on the Justin Hurst Wildlife Management Area. Photo©TPWD

On a warm, moonless summer night, a group of ducks eases from a clump of cattails onto an open marsh flat. A roar steadily grows in the distance. Suddenly, the group is bathed in bright spotlights. As the roaring spotlights circle them, the ducks are collected from the water and placed in poultry crates. Moments later, they are taken from the crates and released back into the water. It's over as quickly as it began, and the bright roaring lights fade into the distance. It's June on the Texas coast, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) staff are doing their part to help ensure continued sustainable populations of the state's most unique waterfowl species.

Western Gulf Coast Mottled Ducks (*Anas fulvigula*) are a non-migratory waterfowl species whose range extends from northeast Mexico to Alabama (*Lancaster et al. 2023*). They primarily inhabit coastal wetland ecosystems but will also utilize other habitats such as seasonally flooded agriculture (e.g., rice), small depressional wetlands, and man-made stock tanks. Due to their unique non-migratory strategy, mottled ducks must meet all their life cycle needs within these systems. This year-round residency imposes local population stresses that are unique among waterfowl (*DeMaso et al. 2019*). The Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregions of Texas and Louisiana have been subject to urbanization and land-use changes in recent decades, which have contributed to population decline. In recognition of this decline, TPWD, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries initiated a cooperative banding effort in the mid-1990s (*Collins et al. 2024*). Biologists capture, band, and release mottled ducks annually from June through September, during what is known as the preseason banding window to monitor population metrics.

Capture methods generally consist of night-lighting, rocket-netting, and the use of swim-in traps. Biologists strategically apply these methods at different times throughout the summer to maximize success. When night-lighting, staff utilize airboats to travel through shallow wetland systems while shining spotlights to locate and capture birds. This method targets birds during flightless periods. During these periods, ducks typically spend daylight hours loafing in thick wetland vegetation waiting for the cover of night to venture out into open ponds/flats to forage. Juvenile mottled ducks do not become capable of flight until approximately 8 weeks of age. Additionally, adult ducks undergo an annual post-nuptial molt after breeding, which renders them flightless for a 3-4 week stretch every summer. Adult males will typically begin molting upon deserting their paired female towards the end of her incubation cycle. Adult females remain flighted while completing incubation and raising their broods. Once the ducklings fledge, adult females begin their molt. While large night-lighting captures hinge on locating groups of flightless ducks, this method can be very productive, as it allows staff to cover large areas looking for birds. Rocket-netting and swim-in traps both target flighted ducks.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Biologist Trey McClinton (left) and former intern, Ty Hehman (right), holding banded mottled ducks after a successful rocket net shoot. Photo©TPWD

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Mottled Duck Banding, continued

For these strategies, biologists first locate groups of birds in wetlands and then use bait, such as rice or chicken scratch, to further concentrate birds. If the birds are near the edge of a wetland, biologists would likely employ a rocket-netting setup. Rocket-netting consists of placing a large, folded net on the dry ground or vegetation near the edge of the water. Rope leads at the heel of this net are used to securely anchor it to the ground, while leads at the head of the net are shackled to metal rockets. These rockets are loaded with black powder charges and pull the net over a "capture area" when detonated. The disturbance from detonation can temporarily displace ducks, delaying subsequent captures. However, this setup is effective, allowing biologists to capture large numbers of flighted mottled ducks at one time. Swim-in traps vary greatly in style. At the Justin Hurst Wildlife Management Area, staff use "multi-paneled traps" which allow users to set up these large funnel traps in stages. This helps shy birds become accustomed to feeding within the structure of the trap for some time before it is ever set. The groups of mottled ducks captured in swim-in traps typically are not as large as those from night-lighting expeditions or rocket-netting efforts, but swim-traps can be deployed anywhere in a wetland and produce for

Figure 3-4. Immediately before and after a detonated a rocket net. Photos©TPWD

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Mottled Duck Banding, continued

weeks at a time.

Once captured, mottled ducks are assigned to an age class (AHY: after-hatch year, HY: hatch-year, or L: local), sexed (male or female), fit with a unique identifying U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) size 7A incoloy (metal alloy) butt-end leg band, and then released. After-hatch year birds are adult birds that were hatched during the previous calendar year or sooner. Hatch-year birds are juvenile birds hatched during the current calendar year that are capable of sustained flight. Local birds are juveniles hatched during the current calendar year that are not yet capable of sustained flight. Biologists assign birds to these different age and sex classes using a combination of cloacal and wing/body plumage characteristics.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and its partners use this information from this cooperative effort to quantify metrics such as harvest and survival rates, which in turn help inform management decisions. If you encounter a banded mottled duck, be sure to report it to the USGS's Bird Banding Laboratory at www.reportband.gov so you can contribute to this important work.

References:
Collins, D., K. Fleming, and T. Cooper. 2024. Western Gulf Coast Mottled Duck Population Status, 2024. United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

DeMaso, S. J., M. G. Brasher, and J. S. Gleason. 2019. GoMAMN Strategic Bird Monitoring Guidelines: Waterfowl. Pages 229–274 in R.R. Wilson, A. M. V. Fournier, J. S. Gleason, J.E. Lyons, and M. S. Woodrey, editors, Strategic Bird Monitoring Guidelines for the Northern Gulf of Mexico. Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Research Bulletin 1228, Mississippi State University. 324pp.

Lancaster, J.D., T. Anderson, M.G. Brasher, W.C. Conway, S.J. DeMaso, J.A. Moon, K.M. Ringelman, and B.C. Wilson. 2023. Gulf Coast Joint Venture Mottled Duck Conservation Plan Update. Gulf Coast Joint Venture, Lafayette, Louisiana, USA. 75pp., + Appendices

Trey McClinton is the wildlife biologist for TPWD stationed at the Justin Hurst Wildlife Management Area. Originally from Tomball, TX, Trey graduated from Tarleton State University in 2017 with a B.S. in Wildlife, Sustainability, and Ecosystem Sciences. He went on to receive an M.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University in 2021, where his research focused on waterfowl and hunter use of state managed wetlands. Today, as a member of the Central Coast Wetland Ecosystems Project, Trey oversees the day-to-day operations of the Justin Hurst WMA. This includes habitat management work, research and outreach initiatives, public hunts, and facility upkeep.

Honeybee Safety

WRITTEN BY PATRICK KOSTECKA

European honeybees are good pollinators, but feral colonies can create problems for humans. A honeybee colony consists of a queen, drones, and worker bees. They make their colonies in cavities of trees, gas tanks, car trunks, wood duck boxes, soffits of buildings to name a few locations. Entrances can be very small and the size of half dollars. Established colonies can reach 30,000 - 60,000+ bees in strength during spring/ summer.

These pictures below are active colonies, meaning established with brood, pollen, nectar/honey in a colony.

Photos©Patrick Kostecka, TPWD

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Honeybee Safety, continued

Colonies normally don't cause many issues, as some breeds of honeybees are docile. But in the Lonestar state we have Africanized honeybees that have made their way in the early 90's. The main difference is Africanized bees are very aggressive, have more guard bees in a colony, abscond, defend a larger zone around their colony and swarm often. If the genetic makeup of feral colonies has some Africanized traits in them, these colonies are more prone to attack if disturbed by a mower, weed eater, and other equipment.

As we are outdoors tending chores, site visits, etc. we need to be aware of our surroundings. Late April/May is a prime time for bee swarms. They can be triggered by weather and space in a current hive. Swarms are a natural split in bee biology. This swarm consists of 50-60% of the parent hive and old queen. A swarm will fly off and land on a nearby tree, fence, etc.

Note: swarms do not have a home to defend and are generally docile. They will send out scouts to find a new home and then leave usually in a few days.

Pictures below are all swarms.

Photos©Patrick Kostecka, TPWD

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Honeybee Safety, continued

If you find a swarm/ active hive. Let others know of the location to avoid the area. If it's a swarm it will leave in a few days as mentioned.

Medical attention

Humans

If you find yourself in a situation where you or someone is attacked by bees. Seek shelter in enclosed vehicle or house crank the AC as cold as possible. Move far away from hive location as possible. (the bees should return to hive) The bees will go to the windows (sunlight) and away from stinging you. Let them out of the vehicle/house if able to. Seek medical attention immediately if trouble breathing, swelling is severe and receive a lot of stings. If known allergic to bees, have EpiPen administered if needed. Benadryl is helpful with swelling from stings. Remove stingers ASAP as the venom sack will continue to pump venom in area of sting.

Animals

If livestock are trapped in a penned area. Open gate to allow escape from hive. Dogs and cats take indoors. Call a vet if animal has trouble breathing, swelling, etc.

Notes:

Any active colony will need to be removed by a bee professional. Just sealing off the entrance could create other issues, such as ants, decaying dead bees, and leftover wax/honey.

During a drought (Dearth) no flowering plants are available. Therefore, more foraging bees are in a beehive to protect it. Use more caution around any bee hive during this time. Because a gentle colony can become aggressive in a dearth.

Patrick Kostecka is the District 3 biologist for Erath and Eastland counties. He graduated from Tarleton State University in 2007 with his B.S. in Wildlife Management. His prior work before joining the department in 2021, was working as a wildlife manager for private landowners in the cross timbers region. He has 13 years of beekeeping experience.

Your Native Prairie Restoration Partner: Smaller Acreage Restoration Program (SARP)

SUBMITTED BY MARVELYN GRANGER

Regardless of the size of your land, you can play a vital role in restoring tallgrass prairie. The Fayette Prairie Chapter's Smaller Acreage Restoration Program (SARP) offers essential resources to support members in their prairie restoration efforts. With financial assistance, technical expertise, educational opportunities, and access to equipment and chapter resources, we are committed to promoting effective restoration and sustainable prairie maintenance.

Working closely with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), SARP tailors customized restoration plans for each steward and their land. Focused on prairies under 25 acres—the general cutoff for TPWD cost-sharing programs—we assist with upfront costs for materials such as herbicides, native grass and forb seeds identified specifically for our ecoregions, and contractor support. Our restoration plans also provide guidance, access to necessary equipment, and organized workdays to facilitate the completion of the restoration process. As more people move to rural areas and seek to nurture their land, SARP plays a crucial role in addressing the fragmentation of the Fayette Prairie and the surrounding Post Oak Savanna.

Restoring smaller-acreage prairies not only benefits pollinators and numerous bird species but also creates essential connectivity between larger restored areas and remnant tracts. Maximizing connectivity, projects also include available public spaces identified and adopted by Texas Master Naturalists. One such restoration is being directed by Megan Lowery and Nancy Rabensburg of the TMN Lost Pines Chapter with expert guidance from TPWD Biologists Rachel Patterson, Blake Hendon, and Tim Siegmund. Restoring three acres adjacent to Bob Bryant Park in Bastrop County will provide crucial habitat for wildlife and pollinators. While demonstrating the importance of native prairies to the public, it will also serve as encouragement to support pollinators in our own spaces. Together, we can establish a checkerboard of habitats that sustain the ecosystem.

While restoration can present challenges, our chapter provides invaluable education for land stewards eager to learn about the process, timing considerations, and how to identify personal goals. We invite you to join NPAT, the Fayette Prairie Chapter, and subscribe to our newsletter, where you will find support for your restoration and stewardship aspirations.

We are grateful to all our members who recognize the significance of prairie restoration and conservation across the state. We are eager to hear from landowners engaged in prairie restoration projects and from local sponsors who want to support this vital endeavor.

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Your Native Prairie Restoration Partner: Smaller Acreage Restoration Program (SARP)

To begin your journey toward restoring your land to native prairie, please visit **https://texasprairie.org/sarp/**. Your property could be an ideal candidate for the SARP program, and a restoration plan tailored by Texas Parks and Wildlife. If you have questions, contact Clare Fields, NPAT Lands Manager and SARP Coordinator, at **Clare_Fields@texasprairie.org**. We look forward to working with you!

Learn more about NPAT at texasprairie.org

Follow our chapter and join the newsletter

https://texasprairie.org/fayette-prairie-chapter/

Become an NPAT member and join our chapter

https://texasprairie.org/join/

Learn more about SARP and consider if your project may qualify

https://texasprairie.org/sarp/

Contact us for sponsorship opportunities to support this important work fayette@texasprairie.org

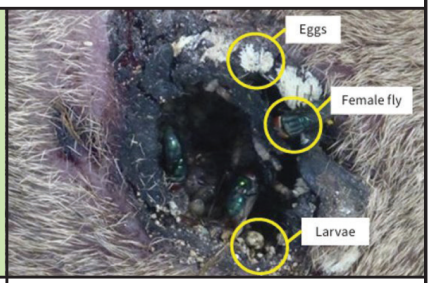
GENERAL WILDLIFE INFORMATION

New World Screwworm

WHAT ARE NEW WORLD SCREWWORMS?

New World screwworms (**NWS**) are parasitic flies (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) that lay eggs in open wounds or mucous membranes such as the nostrils, eyes or mouths of live warm-blooded animals. These eggs hatch into a type of parasitic larvae (maggots) that only feeds on living tissue, while other species of fly larvae prefer dead or necrotic tissue. NWS larvae burrow or "screw" into living tissue with sharp mouth hooks, giving them a screw-like appearance. Infested wounds quickly become infected and, if left untreated, will kill the infested animals.

If you see LIVE animals with LIVE maggots, report to local biologists. Early detection is key. Do not delay if you suspect a NWS infestation. Reporting is crucial to the implementation of management actions and eradication of NWS.



COMMONLY AFFECTED WILDLIFE SPECIES

- White-tail deer
- Rabbits (jackrabbits, cottontails)
- Small mammals
- Turkey

Note: All warm-blooded mammals can be infested

COMMON INFESTED AREAS

- Newborn animals' umbilical stump/navel
- Mucous membranes — genitalia, eyes, nose, ears, mouth
- Damaged skin — cuts, scrapes, stings, tick bites, antler/velvet shedding
- Management-related — dehorning, ear tagging, castration, branding

INFESTATION MIGHT LOOK LIKE

- Open sores or wounds with maggots
- Animals shaking heads or irritated demeanor
- Foul rotted flesh odor

Screwworm infestations occur year-round in temperate regions such as South Texas but are generally seasonal (Spring through Fall) in other areas like the Panhandle and farther north.

REPORTING IS CRITICAL! IF YOU SUSPECT NWS INFESTATION

Livestock or Domestic Pets
(800) 550-8242
Find the list of regional offices at *tahc.texas.gov/agency/contact.html#regions*

Wildlife
(512) 389-4505
Find wildlife biologists by county at *tpwd.texas.gov/wildlife*

Humans
(888) 963-7111
dshs.texas.gov/regional-local-health-operations/public-health-regions

Continued on page 19

MANAGING THE SPREAD

- Monitor animals on a regular basis for signs of NWS infestation and immediately report any suspected signs of infestation.
- If a living animal is infested with NWS, ensure all maggots are removed and destroyed to prevent them from dropping to the ground and pupating into adult NWS flies.
- Comply with all state and federal regulations related to animal movement into and out of NWS infested areas.
- Keep open wounds on animals and people clean and covered.
- Treat clothing, gear, and people with proper repellents.
- Consider scheduling management related activities during winter months when flies are less abundant to decrease the risk of NWS infestation.

COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

- Gently remove all maggots from within the wound.
- Maggots being submitted as a sample must be taken from the deepest part of the wound, placed in a vial or screw cap container and submerged in 70% alcohol. Containers must be sealed and placed in a plastic bag for shipment or handoff to your local wildlife biologist.
- Seek veterinary guidance to treat, bandage, and follow-up on wounds in captive living animals.
- The area surrounding the animal may be treated with an approved spray to kill any maggots that may have dropped from the infested wound. *See link under additional resources.*
- **For deceased animals,** cut out the entire affected area, place in a tightly sealed container or double bag, and freeze until pickup can be coordinated with TPWD staff.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

USDA-APHIS New World Screwworm Web Page
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm

Texas Animal Health Commission New World Screwworm Emergency Management Guide
https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/feverticks-pests/EMGuide-NewWorldScrewworm.pdf

Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory
https://tvmdl.tamu.edu/

History of the New World Screwworm in the U.S.
https://www.nal.usda.gov/exhibits/speccoll/exhibits/show/stop-screwworms--selections-fr/introduction

Pesticides to Potentially Use Against New World Screwworm (NWS, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*)
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pesticides-for-nws.pdf

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department mission balances outdoor recreation and sustainable use of resources with conservation and management of natural and cultural resources. The department operates 89 Texas state parks, natural areas and historic sites, more than 50 wildlife management areas, three saltwater fish hatcheries and five freshwater hatcheries. TPWD game wardens and wildlife and fisheries biologists work in every Texas county, enforcing laws and encouraging management to conserve fish and wildlife. The agency has 13 internal divisions: Wildlife, Coastal Fisheries, Inland Fisheries, Law Enforcement, Legal, State Parks, Infrastructure, Communications, Financial Resources, Human Resources, Support Resources, Information Technology, and the Executive Office. *www.tpwd.texas.gov*

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

HUNTER EDUCATION BASIC COURSE

Saturday
August 16, 2025
9:00 A.M. — 3:00 P.M.

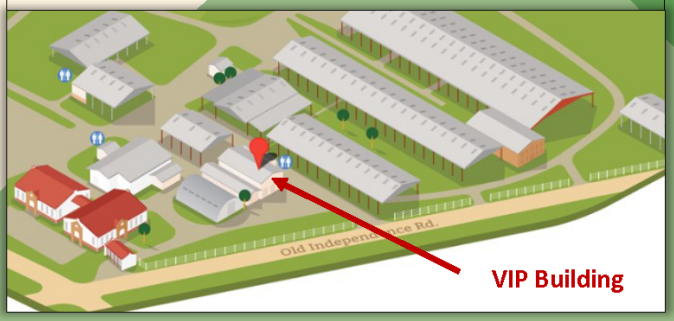
Washington County Expo VIP Building
1305 E. Blue Bell Rd.
Brenham, TX 77833

Instructor: Trevor Dickschat

Cost: $5 per person

Register online at:
Texas Parks and Wildlife
Hunter Education
Classroom Course-1661987
https://tpwd.elementlms.com/course/hunter-education-classroom-course-11647/
OR
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW

For more information contact:
Trevor Dickschat:
979-277-8353
Stephanie Damron:
979-277-6297 or
stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov



LUNCH SPONSORED BY:
Washington County Wildlife Society and Washington County 4-H

Washington County Wildlife Society

Washington County

Wildlife & Woodlands

Post Oak Savannah
2025 Landowner Workshops

Join us to learn about wildlife and habitat management in the Post Oak Savannah.

SAVE THE DATE:

Hallettsville, TX (Lavaca Co.)- July 11
Wheelock, TX (Robertson Co.) - August 1
Cat Spring, TX (Austin Co.) - August 8
Hilltop Lakes, TX (Leon Co.) - August 15
Caldwell, TX (Burleson Co.) - August 22

Questions? Contact:
Paul.Crump@tpwd.texas.gov | 512-389-8722

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

ARC Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

fort worth zoo

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2025 LANDOWNER SYMPOSIUM

Native Prairies Association of Texas
Fayette Prairie Chapter

Five Tools of Prairie Restoration

Aldo Leopold, the "Father of Wildlife Ecology," is a key figure in holistic, modern wildlife conservation and management. His insights on the value of land and wildlife inspire our work today.

Stewardship of private lands supports game and wildlife species, leading to healthier ecosystems and a sustainable future.

Discover how to apply these five tools in the modern landscape to nurture and restore our native prairies.

- Lessons from Leopold
- Moczygemba Rewild Ranch - Our Prairie Restoration Journey
- Brush Control of Invasive Plants
- Grazing for Native and Invasive Grasses
- Mechanical Disturbance for a Sustainable Food Plot
- Fire for Successional Diversity
- Managing Exotic and Native Wildlife
- An Ecologist's Toolbox for Holistic Stewardship

Friday, August 22, 2025
8:45 am - 5:00 pm
Casino Hall
254 N Jefferson St,
La Grange, TX 78945
$40, includes lunch

3 CEUs awarded
by A&M AgriLife Ext

Information:
Fayette@TexasPrairie.org

REGISTER: https://texasprairie.org/event/fp_landownersymposium2025/
SHAREABLE FLYER: https://tinyurl.com/2025FiveToolsSymposium

"Are we too poor in purse or spirit to apply some of it to keep the land pleasant to see, and good to live in?" Aldo Leopold

Our Texas Our Future H-E-B
WHF
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Texas Parks & Wildlife
N3T
LCRA Creekside Conservation Program
Plateau Land & Wildlife Management

Prescribed Burn School

Sponsored by South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association

August 15-16, 2025
Washington County Fairgrounds

September 5-6, 2025
Blinn College, Brenham

8:30AM-5:00PM
Brenham, Texas

General Registration
$120

Prescribed Burn Alliance of Texas

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Want to learn about prescribed burning or gain a general knowledge?

Join us this summer!

The Comprehensive program offers:

- TDA Curriculum + 6 hrs CFTs
- CIPBM Qualifying exam
- Hands on field experience
- Expert Instruction

Lead Burn Instructors
Greg Pleasant and Ray Hinnant

Whether new to prescribed burning or want to know more about why fire is important for ecological restoration and maintenance, this school is for you!

Register Now!

Upcoming Events

JULY

25 **Lee County Wildlife Expo**
Giddings High School
2335 N. Main St., Giddings, TX 78942
Begins at 8:00 a.m.
Contact Lee County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Office at 979-542-2753

31 **Deer Survey Methods - Webinar**
TPWD Webinar
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Contact Erin Wheland at
Erin.wehland@tpwd.texas.gov
HTTPS://TPWD.TEXAS.GOV/CALENDAR/WILDLIFE/2025_DEERSURVEYMETHODS

AUGUST

1 **Wildlife and Woodlands Post Oak Savannah Landowner Workshop Robertson County**
Wheelock Bloodworth Community Center
12403 FM 46, Wheelock, TX 77882
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
https://www.fortworthzoo.org/landowner-workshop-robertson-county

8 **Wildlife and Woodlands Post Oak Savannah Landowner Workshop Austin and Colorado Counties**
Cat Spring Agricultural Society Hall
13035 Hall Rd., Cat Spring, TX 78933
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
http://www.fortworthzoo.org/landowner-workshop-austin-and-colorado-county

9 **Alum Creek WMA Meeting**
Bastrop Public Library
Begins at 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Contact Roxanne Hernandez at 512-718-2286
https://www.alumcreekwma.org/

15 **Wildlife and Woodlands Post Oak Savannah Landowner Workshop Leon County**
Hilltop Lakes Community Center
1 Hilltop Lodge Dr., Normangee, TX 77871
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
https://www.fortworthzoo.org/landowner-workshop-leon-county

15 **Washington County Wildlife Society Semi-Annual Meeting**
Washington County Expo Event Center
1305 E. Blue Bell Rd., Brenham, TX 77833
Begins at 5:30 p.m.
Contact Stephanie Damron at 979-277-6297 or
Stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov

15 **Guadalupe County WMA Meeting**
Social begins at 6:00 p.m.
Dinner begins at 7:00 p.m.
Contact guadcountywma@gmail.com

16 **Post Oak Savannah PBA Annual Meeting**
Neasloney WMA
20700 SH 80 N., Gonzales TX 78629
Begins at 6:00 p.m.
Contact John Koenig at 214-755-8573
RSVP: pospba2023@gmail.com

16 **Central DeWitt County WMA Fall Meeting**
934 US-183, Cuero, TX 77954
Begins at 5:00 p.m.
Contact Karen Flip at 361-275-4502
cdcwma@gmail.com

22 **Wildlife and Woodlands Post Oak Savannah Landowner Workshop Milam and Burleson Counties**
Caldwell Civic Center
103 TX-21, Caldwell, TX 77836
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
https://www.fortworthzoo.org/landowner-workshop-milam-burleson-county

Continued on page 24

Upcoming Events, continued

AUGUST

23 **Lockhart State Park Open House & 4-H Kickoff**
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Contact Lauren Hartwick at 512-398-3479
https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lockhart

24 **Pin Oak Creek WMA Meeting**
St. Mary's Catholic Church Hall
732 FM 2104 Smithville, TX 78957
Begins 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Contact POCWMA at 737-881-5711
https://pocwma.org

SEPTEMBER

5 **Blue Branch/East Yegua WMA Meeting**
American Legion Hall
304 TX-123 Loop, Lexington, TX 78947
Social begins at 5:30 p.m.
Meal begins at 6:30 p.m.
Contact Alan Turner at 512-921-9860

6 **South Lee County WMA Meeting**
Serbin Picnic Grounds
Begins at 6:30 p.m.
Contact Philip Walther at 713-817-3784

6 **Sandy Creek WMA Meeting**
Weimar Civic Center
1754 IH-10, Weimar, TX 78962
Begins 10:30 a.m.
RSVP Required
Contact Ronnie Stock at 979-732-1004 or
ronniestock@hotmail.com

7 **West Yegua/ Two Creeks WMA Fall Meeting**
Lincoln Community Center
1066 Main St., Lincoln, TX 78948
Social begins at 5:00 p.m.
Meal begins at 6:00 p.m.
Contact Greg Sherrod at 512-431-3558

15 **Lavaca County WMA Meeting**
Knights of Columbus Hall
321 US Hwy. 77 S., Hallettsville, TX 77964
Begins at 10:00 a.m.
Contact Joel Wagner at 361-798-6506
lavacacountywma@gmail.com
www.lcwma.org

20 **Meyersville WMA Meeting**
13052 US Hwy. 183 South, Yorktown, TX 78164
Begins 5:00 p.m.
Contact Clay Haun at 361-243-6026 or
clay.haun@dow.com

OCTOBER

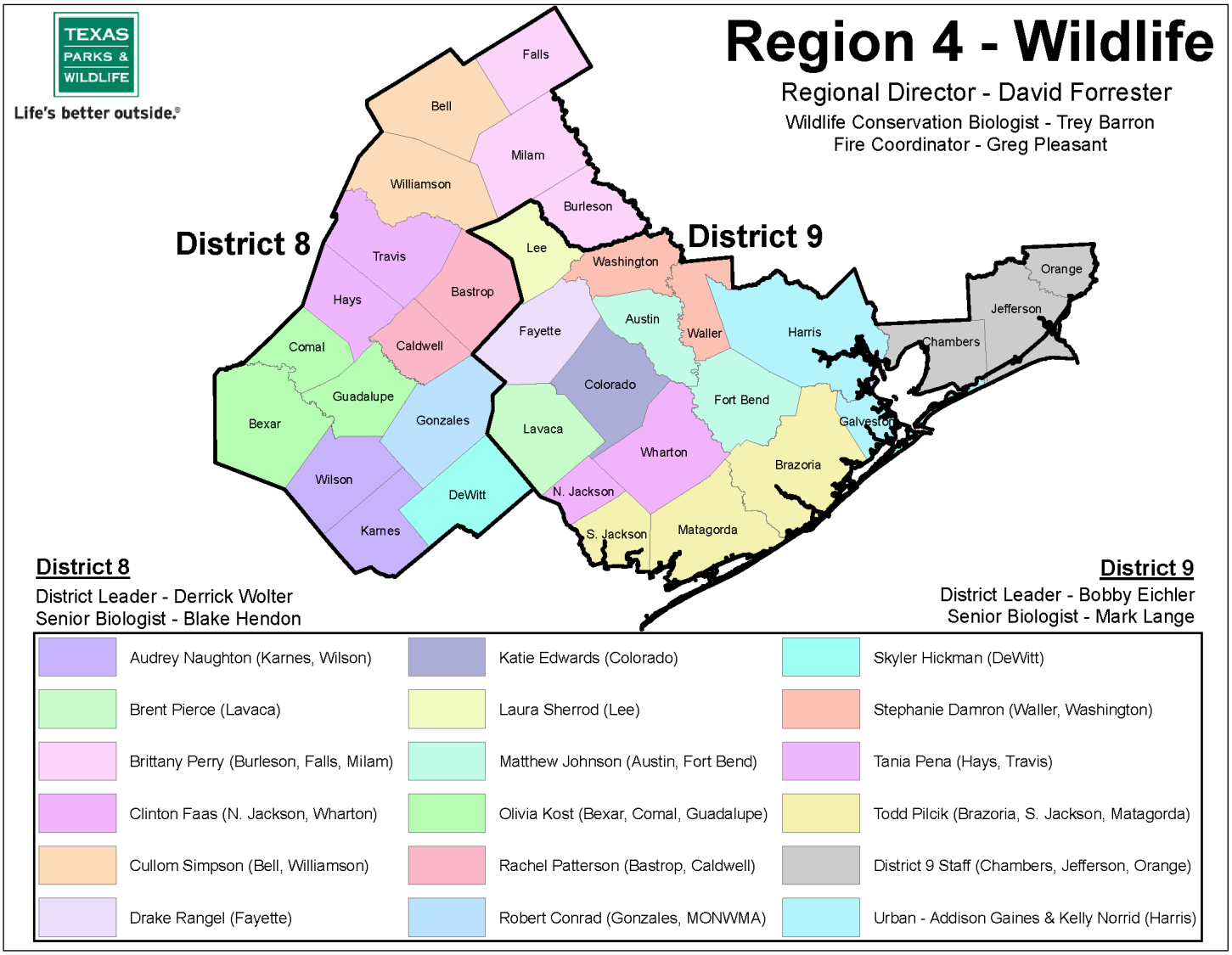
1-2 **Lee/Washington Counties Youth Firearms and Safety Field Day**
Nails Creek State Park
Begins at 8:00 a.m.
Contact Laura Sherrod at 979-716-6087

11 **Lockhart State Park Fall Festival & Native Plant Sale**
Begins 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Contact Lauren Hartwick at 512-398-3479
https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lockhart

24 **Guadalupe County Landowner Workshop**
Begins at 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Contact guadcountywma@gmail.com

Our Wildlife Biologists

Click on the map for your biologists contact information



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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."

You may view this publication, as well as other newsletters created by the department, through the TPWD website. Please visit www.tpwd.texas.gov/newsletters/ for more information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

All inquiries: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744, telephone (800) 792-1112 toll free, or (512) 389-4800 or visit our website for detailed information about TPWD programs:

www.tpwd.texas.gov

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