



PINEYWOODS POST

*A publication of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
for landowners and outdoor enthusiasts of the Pineywoods.*

Fall/Winter 2010

It's finally fall in East Texas,

and hunting season is in full swing. Squirrels are caching acorns for the coming months. Hunters and biologists alike have been out in full force since the beginning of rifle season. Bowhunters have already been afield since October, and others are scouting for the best places to be when the sun rises on that well worn deer trail. In this edition of the *Pineywoods Post*, we bring you this year's hunting forecast, tips for planting longleaf pine, two stories on some rare critters in this neck of the woods and a biography of wildlife diversity biologist, Ricky Maxey.

Keep sending in your wildlife or habitat photos for the *Stewardship Snapshot*.

Thanks!
The editors



Planting Longleaf Pine for Wildlife and Profit

Rusty Wood, Pineywoods Forest Stewardship Biologist

History

The longleaf pine was once the dominant feature throughout the southeast covering nine states from Texas east to Florida and north to Virginia. Its range covered over 140,000 square miles and millions of acres. Fire determined where longleaf were found, and other southern pine species such as loblolly and slash were relegated to the wetter areas that burned less frequently, such as creek bottoms and around ponds and streams. By the mid twentieth century, 95 percent of the longleaf stands had been cut and converted to other species or other uses. Today, most of Texas' remnant stands are found in the southeastern counties on droughty, deep sand sites. While this is one of the sites where longleaf were historically found. They also had a variety of other sites and vegetation associations which includes longleaf-little bluestem savannah, which occur on sandy to loamy soils; longleaf-sandjack oak and longleaf-wetland savannah, which is characterized by clay pan soils that dry during droughty conditions and trap and hold water in wet conditions. The longleaf-sandjack oak community is considered a high priority for further protection, while the longleaf-wetland savannah is considered one of the rarest and also one of the most florally diverse communities of any ecoregion.

Establishment

Longleaf pines have an undeserved reputation of being hard to establish and slow growing. The fact is with today's improved containerized nursery stock and new planting techniques, many landowners are experiencing 90 plus percent survival rates, and new advances in herbicide applications are helping to shorten or bypass the grass stage altogether. Longleaf growth rates actually compare well to that of other southern pine species. On poor to average sites, longleaf will catch or surpass the growth rate of loblolly pine. On high index sites, longleaf often catch up to loblolly in height by age 15 to 20. When planting longleaf for wildlife, the recommended stocking is 550 trees/acre.

Prescribed fire can be introduced into the stand as early as two years after establishment. Prescribed

burning serves many purposes in a longleaf stand including reduced competition from other woody vegetation, the consumption of leaf litter, and return of nutrients into the soil. Prescribed burning keeps browse plants typically used by deer "knocked back" and within reach from the ground, as well as being more tender and palatable. Prescribed burning, on a two or three year rotation, will restore the understory to the native fire dependant species that were once abundant and are readily used by many wildlife species including several declining state species of concern.

Benefits

Longleaf pines produce high quality wood products. A twenty year data set from Mississippi showed that longleaf pine stands brought a 10 to 20 percent premium over their loblolly counterparts. Longleaf stands produce more utility pole classed logs per acre than the average loblolly pine stand and also have a denser specific gravity than other southern pine species. This equates to more money in your pocket when selling a product based on weight. Longleaf are the most drought resistant, insect and disease resistant, and fire resistant species of all southern pines.

Also of particular interest for counties in Southeast Texas, a study conducted by Mississippi State University after hurricane Katrina, showed longleaf to have had the least impacts from damage and the least loss of value. Trees that were left leaning or blown over, that had root systems left at least partially intact, maintained their value for a much longer period of time.

Species	Type of Hurricane Damage (%)			
	None	Snapped	Leaning	Blown over
Loblolly	16.3	75.9	5.7	2.0
Slash	52.4	38.1	7.8	1.7
Longleaf	64.0	8.9	16.9	10.2

There are many cost shares available for landowners wishing to restore longleaf to their land. The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) is a Texas Parks and Wildlife program that will pay 75 percent of the cost for stand establishment and maintenance. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Partners are cost share programs available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) respectively that will cost share 50 percent or more of stand establishment and maintenance.

Longleaf are also the perfect choice for uneven aged timber management. Uneven aged management means, selectively cutting single trees or small groups of trees for harvest while allowing the remaining trees to regenerate seedlings in the newly created openings. This method of harvesting and regenerating trees not only is aesthetically pleasing, but ensures a continuous long term supply of wood products and revenue. This method may be the perfect choice for landowners who don't like the looks of the clear cut method of forest regeneration. Uneven aged management also creates biodiversity within the stand that help support numerous plant and wildlife species.

Wildlife

Perhaps one of the most satisfying benefits of restoring longleaf to its native range is the numerous benefits to wildlife. Properly managed stands of longleaf often take on a park like appearance with a grassy understory filled with native grasses, clovers, legumes, wildflowers, and forbs. Many of the native plants and associated animals can only thrive in this type of environment with ample sunlight and prescribed burning. The typical commercial forest stand is stocked too densely for sunlight to penetrate to the ground, and is a virtual desert void of plants or wildlife once the canopy closes. There are a multitude of songbird species that are associated with this open pine/grassland habitat including Bachman's sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*); a species in decline and has been noted as a conservation priority in the State of Texas. Two game animals, the Bobwhite quail and Eastern Turkeys, use this habitat for nesting and brood rearing. Many reptiles and amphibians including the Louisiana pine snake (*Pituophis ruthveni*), also considered a conservation priority, make their home in these forests. Whitetail deer can readily be seen feeding in the understory of the forests, browsing on the early successional plants, kept young and tender by frequent fires.

When added together, the benefits of longleaf including the ecological, economical, aesthetic, and wildlife value, make planting longleaf a smart investment for enhancing your property's value.



“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.”

– Greek proverb

BIOLOGIST BIO - Ricky Maxey



Pineywoods wildlife biologist, Ricky Maxey. Photo courtesy of Ricky Maxey

For this edition of the *Pineywoods Post*, we caught up with the district's diversity biologist, Ricky Maxey. The first thing we asked him was, "What does a wildlife diversity biologist do?" Ricky's main job is to work with endangered, threatened and rare animal and plant species that occur within his district, and with native vegetative communities and/or ecosystems that occur there. Maxey's district is the East Texas Pineywoods, or Wildlife Division District 6. Basically, the job includes education and outreach, research and cooperative research, and working with federal and state agencies, private landowners, corporate landowners, and non-governmental conservation organizations to plan and implement management strategies aimed at conservation of these species and their habitats. Some of these strategies include the "Habitat Conservation Plan for Red-cockaded Woodpecker on Private Lands in the East Texas Pineywoods," the "East Texas Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan: 2005–2015," and working cooperatively with landowners to establish habitats through the Landowner Incentive Program, and the East Texas Black Bear Task Force's Hardwood Habitat Initiative.

Ricky's childhood experiences, as well as the leadership and example of his father, led him to his career in wildlife biology. He grew up in Carthage, Texas, which is a small town in the East Texas Pineywoods. His father was a public school administrator/teacher and an avid outdoorsman, who worked with Boy Scouts. Ricky comments on his early memories, "I can't really tell you when I first camped, hiked or fished, because I always did these things from my early childhood on." He further recalls that it was not until high school that he stayed in a hotel while on a school trip. As a child, Maxey experienced a large part of the United States while on vacations. Nights of camping in state parks,

national forests, national parks and private campgrounds fill his childhood memories. Ricky's father had a strong conservation ethic, which he instilled in Ricky and his siblings from a very early age. The elder Maxey's rule was, "if you kill it, you have to eat it." From age 11 through high school, Ricky focused on Boy Scouts and became an Eagle Scout in 1974 at age 13. He expounds, "It was those experiences, and a strong love of nature and the natural world, that led me to my career choice." Ricky also shares thoughts on his chosen profession, "It's not just a job, and it is a life's goal to conserve the natural world that God created."

As for his college career, Maxey started out close to home and spent a year at Panola Junior College in Carthage, Texas (1979–1980). He then transferred to Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas (1980), where he attended the College of Forestry from 1980 through 1987. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry Degree (BSF) in December 1983, and later a Master of Science in Forestry Degree (MSF) in May 1987.

Ricky began working for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) as a park technician at Fairfield Lake State Park (1983), and Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site (1984). While attending college, he took a break from TPWD and worked as a graduate teaching assistant at the College of Forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) from 1984 to 1986. After working at SFASU, he worked as a forestry technician on the Medicine Bow National Forest in Esterbrook, Wyoming, in the summers of 1985 and 1986. Ricky's formal starting point in natural resource management/wildlife biology started in 1983, which works out to a 27 year career in natural resource management. After graduating from college, Maxey went to work for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers as a park ranger at Lake O' the Pines project office in Jefferson, Texas, from 1987 through 1992. After which, he worked for

the National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve as a resource management specialist from 1992 through 1996 and started work in a full-time professional job as the ecologist for the East Texas Pineywoods in Nacogdoches, Texas, in April 1996. His office is now housed at the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters in Karnack, Texas.

Ricky was called a “crusader” as a student by one of his mentor professors. He wasn’t quite sure how to take the comment at the time, but as he continued in his career, Maxey began to see it as a compliment. Ricky shares, “It is my goal to conserve, restore and enhance as much of the natural world as I possibly can during my career. I certainly recognize that I can only do this by cooperating with marvelous landowners who share this vision.” Ricky says he has adopted a quote about conservation from Aldo Leopold (1947) as his marching orders; “The practice of conservation must spring from a conviction of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the community and the community includes the soil, waters, fauna, and flora, as well as the people.”

We continued by asking Ricky what he enjoys the most about his job. He explains that going to properties where the landowners have conserved later-successional, or old-growth forests, and are managing for those values, is one of the most rewarding aspects of his job. Ricky says that another positive is going to forests at all stages along the successional scale, where landowners are managing them properly with prescribed burning, and other appropriate management tools. Seeing rare animals and plants like red-cockaded woodpeckers, bald eagles, Texas trailing phlox and old growth longleaf pine trees, also give him satisfaction. Finally Ricky says, “It gives me true satisfaction to work with landowners to restore fallow pastures and other types of land uses back to things like bottomland hardwood forests, and longleaf and shortleaf pine savannahs.” Maxey is truly a conservationist.

What he finds the most challenging every day is to see forested habitats that he has watched

along the highways and backwoods roads being converted into other types of land uses like pastures or urban development. Ricky says, “The most depressing thing to a biologist is seeing habitat being lost at an alarming rate; a rate that seems to increase more rapidly as I get older.”

Lastly, we asked Ricky what advice he would give to students aspiring to be biologists. Ricky says, “First of all, pay attention to, and develop good reading, writing and math skills. You will need these as a biologist. Start now to learn about the natural world around you and to pay attention to what’s happening on the land. Take your hand and scoop up the soil where you’re at and feel of it, and smell it, and roll it in your hands. Look at the plants on the ground from the waist down, and learn as much as you can about them. See how things differ from one type of site to the next. Look at the plants from the waist up, to the middle of the forest crown, and learn as much as you can about them. Look up to the top of the forest at the canopy trees, and learn as much as you can about them. Watch the weather as it changes, and watch the processes that it goes through to make those changes. Don’t wait until you go to school or college to learn. Start learning now, and learn daily. The greatest teacher is observation! Take advantages of opportunities to volunteer in conservation related jobs and tasks. Networking is important. Make good grades. The best grades you can. Finally, never sell yourself short!”

Ricky’s personal interests include his wife, family and friends as well as his church and participating in choir. Ricky also enjoys camping, fishing and hunting; singing and playing guitar, mandolin, harmonica and dulcimer; American history and traveling.

Feel free to contact Ricky for advice on how to conserve and restore your habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife. For more information, contact Ricky via email at ricky.maxey@tpwd.state.tx.us by phone at (903) 679-9821 or by mail at P.O. Box 226 Karnack, TX 75661. To find your local biologist, look us up on the web at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/technical_guidance/biologists/

“In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, we will understand only what we are taught.”

– Baba Dioum, Senegalese conservationist

CONSERVATION Closeup

BLACK BEARS IN EAST TEXAS (Part 1)

by Ricky W. Maxey, Wildlife Diversity Biologist

The forests of East Texas, like forests throughout the southeast, are very diverse in animal and plant species. Two black bear subspecies that once occurred very abundantly within East Texas were the American black bear (*Ursus americanus, americanus*), and the Louisiana black bear (*U. americanus, luteolus*). The primary subspecies of black bear native to most of the East Texas Pineywoods was the Louisiana black bear. Human exploitation and habitat loss associated with settlement of the area, resulted in the loss or extirpation of the species throughout the region by the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Efforts in our neighboring states of Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma to conserve and restore black bear populations within areas of suitable remaining habitat have been successful. In addition, the Louisiana black bear was given protection as a threatened species under provisions of the Endangered Species Act, and is protected by federal and state laws in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Arkansas and Oklahoma both have regulated hunting seasons for expanding populations of American black bear. As a result, we are starting to see movement of individual bears, primarily young males, from neighboring states into East Texas. Most of these movements have been confined to large expansive forests of river basins, and areas of suitable habitat in close proximity to these areas.

Most people have an image in their mind of what a black bear looks like. Black bears are medium-sized stocky animals with powerful



short legs. Although the majority of these bears are black in color, they can also be various shades of brown as well. They can have tan colored muzzles, and patches of white on their chests. Adult males generally will weigh from 175 to 400 pounds, and adult females will range from 100 to over 200 pounds. They typically measure about 3 feet high at the shoulders and stand 4 to 5 feet when upright.

Black bears are typically solitary and secretive creatures except during breeding season, or when a female is with cubs. Female black bears can breed between age three and four, and may have one to four cubs every other year. Young are born in the winter, while the mother is denning, and may remain with her for two springs. Due to mild winters in the coastal plains of the southeast, black bears do not hibernate throughout the winter, but enter short-term periods of denning triggered by periodic occurrences of cold weather. These bears will typically den in rock

piles, overhangs, caves, tree bases and brush piles. Home ranges of black bears vary depending upon the quality of habitat and availability of food supplies.

The main event of a black bear's day is the continual search for food. Black bears are omnivores. They will capture and eat other animals, but most of their time is spent opportunistically feeding on vegetation (including acorns and fleshy fruits), insects and carrion. These animals have an extremely acute sense of smell that can readily locate available food sources. In addition, these bears will also utilize foods provided by man like agricultural crops, beehives, livestock and pet foods and garbage. Problems with bears feeding on these items can generally be managed by prohibiting or limiting access. Problems occur when bears lose their natural fear of man, and particularly, when they start associating man with food availability. (Article to be continued in the Spring 2011 issue.)

HABITAT Helper

East Texas Fall Hunting Forecast

by Penny Wilkerson, Regulatory Wildlife Biologist

Season openers have come and gone, but hunting is still going strong! Duck, deer and squirrels are the stars of this winter's hunting in the Pineywoods; let's see what the experts have to say about hunting prospects this year.

According to Gary Calkins, TPWD's Pineywoods' district leader in an interview with Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, expectations are "good" for deer hunting in East Texas. 2010 begins the fifth year of the antler restriction, which has worked to protect young bucks, allowing them to grow older and as a result, they now have bigger, better antlers.

Small game forecasting is a little less bright with localized booms and busts in squirrels and cottontails. Calkins says some areas will be good due to carry-over from last year's production, but some spots are not fairing quite as well. Squirrel season started on October 1st, and continues until the 6th of February. Rabbit season is open all the time. To participate in small game hunting, you simply need a regular hunting license to harvest any small game. As for hogs, well as usual, "there is no shortage" Calkins reports. I am sure most biologists agree, we hope everyone is a very successful hog hunter anytime of the year.

For our feathered friends forecast, we reference Dave Morrison's report to Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine. Morrison, TPWD's waterfowl program leader, says that waterfowl hunting in Texas is tied to conditions in the north, especially breeding habitat conditions. Morrison warns that it is very difficult to predict how duck hunting will be when conditions to the north determine so much. Data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates most duck species have declined slightly from last year, but are still far above continental averages. Species doing the best are green-wing teal, northern shovelers and red-heads, their numbers above average by 78, 76 and 63 percent respectively. Only three species, American widgeons, northern pintails and lesser scaups are mentioned to be below the North American average.

For a report on conditions in East Texas, we turn to waterfowl and wetlands specialist for the Pineywoods and Post Oak savannah region, Jared Laing. Laing says that we still need water to have a good year. The dry summer this year allowed for habitats to dry out and should show good vegetative response as soon as the rains come. Laing says, it is not too late for landowners to get out and manipulate your habitat. Shredding, disking and dozing thickets of buttonbush and cattails can do wonders for your duck numbers in the fall. Working on your habitat pays dividends for landowners during duck season. Laing reiterates that good habitat has to have the water to pull in ducks.

As any good duck hunter knows, you need the right weather for a successful duck hunt. Cold weather to the north and full ponds and lakes in our area will push ducks south and east to the Texas Pineywoods. According to the 2010 Farmer's Almanac, duck hunters will be pleased. The almanac predicts a colder and snowier than average winter in the northern Great Plains and a colder, wetter winter for Texas and the surrounding states. These weather predictions and favorable population estimates all point to a suitable waterfowl hunting experience.

Ducks Unlimited's (DU) website has already reported a large migration of birds moving south. On November 5, 2010, a cold front provided frigid winds, cold temperatures, rain and snow that pushed ducks and geese off grain fields in Canada and south toward the Dakotas. Laing also reports that birds moved into the northern part of the Texas at about this same time. Specifically, northern waterways like the Red, Sulphur and even the Sabine rivers, have waterfowl showing up and moving though. Farther to the south in the Angelina and Neches basins, there are birds but not as many as in the northern Pineywoods. DU has maps and reports of duck numbers throughout the country that can give hunters an overall picture of where and how birds are moving in real time. Check out <http://www.ducks.org/hunting/migration/> for more information. Good luck and good hunting!

CRITTER Corner

Mountain Lion: East Texas' most elusive cat. (Part 1)

By Gary Calkins, Pineywoods District Leader

It's that time of the year when folks are hitting the woods, dogs and kids get a little more energy due to the cool weather, and the game cameras are out in full force hoping for the picture of "the big one". At this time of year everyone seems to be talking deer, so there is plenty of prognosticating on that topic; so I will have to delve off into a different topic that seems to be a recurring theme in East Texas. One of the more common phone calls we receive year round is the sighting of a black panther. Now, before the uproar starts let me try to explain.

Historically, East Texas was home to a large cat that goes by numerous names. In biology, there are two schools of thought; the "lumpers" and the "splitters". The "lumpers" are those that try to fit all animals that look, act and live in a similar fashion into one genus and species. The "splitters" on the other hand like to look for any slight difference and use that to say they have a separate species or sub-species. All that said, the large cat that used to live here was the mountain lion, catamount, puma, or panther. All of those names essentially described the same animal. The scientific name for the mountain lion is *Felis concolor*, which basically means a cat of one color. That name can carry a couple of different connotations from the fact that the individual cat is only one color, to the fact that the species only comes in one color. Typically, mountain lions are a light tan to a tan/gray color. When seen in dim light such as late evening, they may appear

to be darker than they actually are due to the structure of their fur.

This large cream or tawny colored cat was a historic resident of the whole state, but East Texas probably never had a large population to begin with. This large predator, along with many others, was hunted and removed from the landscape due to early settlers' assumption that it would destroy their domestic livestock operations. Now, I won't deny that they probably lost a lot of stock to these animals, but as long as native prey was available, the mountain lion would typically work on those animals for the evening meal. In many cases, with the early days of settlement and predatory animals, bounties were offered to eliminate what was considered to be a terrible animal, and in many cases it worked. The mountain

lion in this area was no exception.

Today, there are some individuals of this species trying to make a comeback in the Pineywoods; however, the numbers are extremely low. In fact, out of our wildlife district with the number of field staff out there working, the number of hours worked, and the variety of hours worked, the number of sightings of mountain lions by these folks in the past 10 to 15 years can be counted on one hand. Even in West Texas, in high density areas, a person is only likely to spot a few during a full lifetime. When you factor in all of the vegetation in this area, how few cats there really are out here, and how secretive this cat is, the average person will never see a mountain lion in East Texas. (Article to be continued in the Spring 2011 issue.)



Former TPWD Employee, Billy Pat McKinney with a sedated mountain lion during a research project in West Texas. The cat was released shortly after this picture was taken.

Photo courtesy of TPWD

STEWARDSHIP Snapshots



A pair of blue wing teal loafing on the wetlands at Alazan Bayou WMA in Nacogdoches County. Courtesy of Ron Mize



My campsite neighbors found this interesting critter at Martin Creek Lake State Park (in Rusk County). TFS entomologist Joe Pase tells me it is a hickory horn devil, the caterpillar stage of the regal moth. Courtesy of Rusty Wood



Congrats to Jamie Lowry on her first hog kill. Way to bring home the bacon! Courtesy of Brian Lowry



Samantha Rhyne with her first crossbow kill, a spike buck from Cass County taken on opening day of archery season. – October 2, 2010
Courtesy of Carey Rhyne

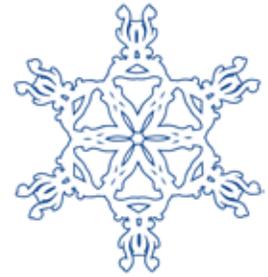
SUBMIT YOUR SNAPSHOT!!! We'll accept photos from your game camera, cell phone or regular camera, as long as you took it!! Just email it to Penny.Wilkerson@tpwd.state.tx.us or Rusty.Wood@tpwd.state.tx.us and tell us who took it, what it is, when, where, how and why!"

*“Knowing trees, I understand the meaning of patience.
Knowing grass, I can appreciate persistence.”*

– Hal Borland quote



Fall/Winter 2010



November		December		January	
TPWD biologists @ work	MLDP cooperators & landowners	TPWD biologists @ work	MLDP cooperators & landowners	TPWD biologists @ work	MLDP cooperators & landowners
Collect age, weight and antler (AWA) data at deer processors	White-tailed deer rifle season opens 11/6/10 – 1/2/11	Continue collecting AWA data & chronic wasting disease (CWD) samples	Disc firelanes to prepare for winter prescribed burns	Continue collecting AWA data & CWD samples	White-tailed deer youth & muzzleloader seasons January 3-16, 2011
Conduct White-tailed deer and feral hog hunts on state parks and wildlife management areas	Collect jawbones and harvest records for all MLDP deer harvested	Conduct white-tailed deer and feral hog hunts on state parks and wildlife management areas	North zone duck season (II) opens 12/11/10 to 1/23/11	Monitor MLDP cooperator habitat through browse sampling	End of north zone duck season (II) 1/23/11
Offer outreach programs to schools and groups	North zone duck season (I) opens 10/30 - 11/28/10				

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