Eye on Nature

SPRING, 2000 A publication of the Wildlife Diversity Program *Getting Texans Involved*

Commercial Nongame Regulations Appear on the Scene

by Rosie Roegner

It was bound to happen sooner or later. Gone are the days when nongame (for lack of a better descriptive term) wildlife could be collected, bartered and sold in unlimited numbers with nothing more than a hunting or perhaps a fishing license. What happened? And why?

For decades, wildlife conservation efforts have been focused on the preservation of game species because funding was available to insure that these species remained "renewable resources" for present and future generations to enjoy. Some special groups of nongame animals were singled out for protection (read, regulation) such as migratory birds and endangered species. However, no such protection was afforded most nongame wildlife, a category encompassing the lion's share of vertebrate and invertebrate species in Texas.

It soon became apparent that a resource purportedly belonging to the people of this state was in danger of becoming depleted.

The set of creatures that we dub "nongame" is about as diverse a group as you are likely to encounter, spanning the animal kingdom from butterflies to bobcats. By introducing protection for this group of animals, Texas joins a growing number of states across the country that have declared nongame wildlife to be an important, valuable resource. This attitudinal change has been reinforced by the creation last year of new regulations governing the collection, trade and sale of formerly unregulated wildlife.

The change, which came into effect January 1, 1999, was brought about primarily because of data and anecdotal evidence gathered by Texas Parks and Wildlife's Nongame Program that showed, in some instances, a thriving trade in many species of nongame wildlife. Many of the animals reported were taken from the wild and sold out-of-state and even overseas. Especially popular amongst them were novelty pets like flying squirrels and prairie dogs, as well as animals sold for food — primarily aquatic turtles.

Dealers from states where collecting is restricted or prohibited found a haven in Texas. With nothing more than a nonresident hunting license, they were able to take all the animals they could catch or purchase from locals for sale elsewhere. It soon became apparent that a resource purportedly belonging to the people of this state was in danger of becoming depleted, at least so far as the more popular species targeted for collection were concerned. Couple collecting pressure with diminishing quantity and quality of habitat, and the net result is loss of abundance and variety of our nongame wildlife. Something needed to be done.

That something came in the form of new regulations governing take of nongame for commercial purposes. The outcry from previously unregulated constituents was swift and vocal. Especially upset were captive herp (reptile and amphibian) breeders. They saw no reason why snakes, lizards or turtles bred in captivity should be regulated

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Spring Cleaning!

We are in the process of purging our database. If you have not sent in the Reader Survey from the last issue, please turn to page 6.

Tell us which newsletters you would like to receive (or continue to receive). You also have the option of printed or electronic (e-mail) formats. Thank you.

Capital Area Texas Master Naturalist Program

For more information on this challenging class, contact the Texas Master Naturalist Program at 409-458-2034.

by Cynthia Wright

Surrounded by November foliage of orange and dusky rose, 30 new Texas Master Naturalist volunteers, diverse in background, united in purpose — listened as their host, J. David Bamberger, challenged them to continue on the path they had begun in September when they entered the Capital Area Master Naturalist (CAMN) chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

A first-hand example of natural habitat restoration, Bamberger Ranch was a fitting setting for the final session of this third graduating class of CAMN. The day culminated eight Saturdays of field trips and lectures from experts in botany, geology, hydrology, ecology, biology, wildlife (birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, spiders, insects, including endangered species), geography and archeology — all with emphasis on the Central Texas area.

The goal of the program is to produce well-informed volunteers who, as self directed Texas Master Naturalists will work with schools and organizations in their communities to heighten the public's awareness, understanding and appreciation of its natural resources. Be it rare plant rescue, cave clean-up, gardening for wildlife or teaching, volunteers promote environmental stewardship and the principles of responsible, sustainable development and renewable natural resources, to help people make responsible decisions and mitigate damage done to their planet.

As part of its outreach, the CAMNs recently adopted Richard Moya, a Travis County Park, where members will survey plants, animals, trees and amphibians. Along with maintenance work, they plan to develop self-guided nature trails.

Each spring and fall, the CAMN program accepts 40 students. Following 40 class hours, graduates must complete 40 hours of approved volunteer activities and 8 hours of advanced education within a calendar year and every year thereafter to become and remain a certified Texas Master Naturalist. Spring 2000 classes begin Saturday, February 26th and run — excluding April 22 — until April 29th. Cost for the program is $60.

CAMN is one of seven statewide chapters under the Texas Master Naturalist Program. Other chapters operate in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, San Marcos, Denton and Houston. The Texas Agricultural Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife sponsor the Texas Master Naturalist Program at the state level, along with a variety of local organizations. For more information contact Michelle Haggerty, Texas Master Naturalist Program coordinator at 409-458-2034.

Cynthia Wright is a volunteer with Capital Area Master Naturalists.

[Commercial Nongame Regulations continued]

by the state of Texas. However the precedent was already established for other animals that normally occur in the wild, and which even if domestically raised, are still considered to be wild animals and therefore under the jurisdiction of Texas Parks and Wildlife. Species which require possession and/or sale permits no matter how many generations they've been captive-bred include white-tailed and mule deer, native quail and ducks, alligators and "furbearing" animals.

Consequently, the new regulations for commercial use of nongame mammals and herps essentially standardized the requirements the department maintains for the sale and breeding of indigenous wildlife. Unlike captive-reared deer, quail, ducks or pheasants however, there is not really a satisfactory way to mark nongame reptiles and amphibians in particular, making enforcement of the regulations a problem.

In order to assist Law Enforcement in determining whether it is *likely* that an individual is collecting or holding for commercial purposes, a possession limit was established for nongame. Effective January 1, 1999, anyone possessing more than 10 specimens of a given species or subspecies, or more than 25 specimens in the aggregate, must obtain a "nongame collection permit" available through the point-of-sale (POS) system for $15 a year. People buying *for resale of the same animals* must apply for a Nongame Dealer Permit ($50) which is issued out of TPW Austin headquarters. Nonresidents pay $50 and $200 respectively for these permits. Reports required in connection with these licenses will help staff determine what species are most popular with collectors and predict possible long-term effects of collecting on those species. Species needing more active management will also be more easily noted.

A hunting license is still necessary to take nongame from the wild, and both collection and dealer permits have annual reporting requirements. The rules do not apply to "finally processed products," such as dried bones, skins or turtle shells — but they do apply to meat from nongame wildlife that has been refrigerated or frozen for use as food. Grade school teachers and kids aged 16 and younger are exempt from permit requirements unless they are involved in trading or selling animals they possess. For more information on the new non-game regulations please call 1-800-792-1112 extension 4644 or 512-389-4644.

Rosie Roegner is Wildlife Permits Coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife, working out of our Austin offices.

School Habitats...
an Invitation to the Natural World

by Diana Foss

Can you imagine the thrill of watching a colorful songbird eat berries from a shrub you just planted? Or the joy of discovering tadpoles swimming in the pond you filled with water a few days before? Children who have never enjoyed the wonder of nature can experience the fascinating interactions between plants and animals on a daily basis in a school habitat.

The creation of school habitats is a growing trend in Texas, particularly among urban schools. The driving force behind the trend may be the fact that today's children seem to be spending less time in the outdoors than previous generations, or that natural green space may be lacking in highly urban neighborhoods. School habitats provide an inviting door to the natural world, within the safety of a school setting. The hope is that children who understand habitat issues on a local level will eventually expand that knowledge to the state, national, and global level.

What makes a "good" school habitat? Quality sites vary in size and location; however, successful habitats have a few things in common. Native species of insects, birds and other wildlife are encouraged to flourish among the native vegetation. The vegetation reflects naturally occurring local habitats. The site is easily accessible, for both people and wildlife. All grade levels and subject disciplines within the school use the habitat on a regular basis as an extension of the classroom. Active involvement in the habitat by students, parents and the community ensures its long-term survival. Continued involvement fosters a sense of pride and ownership among the students.

Texas Parks and Wildlife

Enthusiastic, well-informed teachers are a key component of a successful school habitat. The Wildlife Division's Urban Program is willing to offer technical assistance to schools wishing to start or improve a habitat. Urban biologists in Houston, Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley will conduct teacher workshops during the year 2000. These trained teachers will share their knowledge and experience with their students, who will then spread that knowledge among their peers. Workshops provide informative presentations by local experts on the steps to create a habitat, plant identification and selection to provide wildlife benefits, pond management and much more. The group may travel to several established school sites to gather ideas for their own site. The workshop may even include an outdoor "hands-on, get dirty" component where teachers learn first hand about the habitat components by installing them on a demonstration site. For example, thirty teachers from ten schools in Houston spent a Saturday this fall digging a pond, installing a liner and planting trees. These teachers also designed master plans for their own sites to facilitate the development of their site next year.

I hear and I forget,
I see and I learn,
I do and I understand.
– Confucius

If you know a special place on a school grounds near you that could become a wonderful home for wildlife, and this adventure sounds exciting to you, contact the Urban Program office closest to you for information about school habitat workshops in your area.

Diana Foss is an Urban Biologist working out of our Houston office.

Environmental Education

by Chuck Kowaleski

Most of us learned to enjoy the delights of the outdoors through the actions of a mentor. This mentor was often a family member or friend who loved the outdoors. Through their guidance we delighted in observing plants and animals in their natural habitats that were but a few steps from our own back door. We used books and television shows to increase our own knowledge and answer questions that puzzled us.

Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Most children now live in cities. Their mentor is a narrator and their observations are often done in front of a TV instead of in the woods. The habitats they see are on different continents thousands of miles away.

What can we do about this? We can take the time to introduce children to the natural world around them. First, get them interested in nature through programs like Outdoor Kids, Project WILD or Rare and WILD. Then take them to any of almost 125 Texas State Parks and encourage them to ask questions on what they find. You'll be amazed how much both of you learn! I guarantee that the time spent introducing your children to the natural world will be most satisfying you'll ever spend together!

Check out the wealth of information on Texas State Parks, plants, animals and environmental education programs and materials at our web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us or call us at (800) 792-1112 for more information on a specific subject.

Chuck Kowaleski is project WILD coordinator at the Austin office.

Species Profiles:
The Black Bear

by Paul Robertson

Black Bears occurred almost everywhere in Texas until the early part of this century. They were particularly common in the Big Thicket region of East Texas and in the mountains of the Trans-Pecos. We usually think of black bears as woodland species, but they do surprisingly well in the desert canyons, arid mountain woodlands, and desert grasslands of the Trans-Pecos.

Black bears differ from mountain lions, the other big predator still surviving in Texas, in two important respects that have a major influence on both their abundance and their interaction with humans. First, they are omnivores with a decided preference for the plant end of the food spectrum and, second, they are not nearly as territorial as mountain lions. Consequently, they are less of a threat to livestock and their tolerance of other bears means that there can be lots of bears where food is abundant. Intense territoriality keeps mountain lions from ever becoming very common in an area.

Unfortunately for bears, they were highly prized by protein hungry settlers for their dark meat. In addition, their body fat was rendered to fine oil highly prized for both its taste and its liquid state at room temperature. In the late 1800s, bears were sufficiently common in East Texas for the establishment of a small bear hunting industry. Killing bears provided food and oil, protected livestock and made the Texas frontier a little less frightening. So, despite their original abundance and minimal threat to livestock and humans, bears were eventually banished to the Big Bend region, and even there they were rarer than the mountain lion.

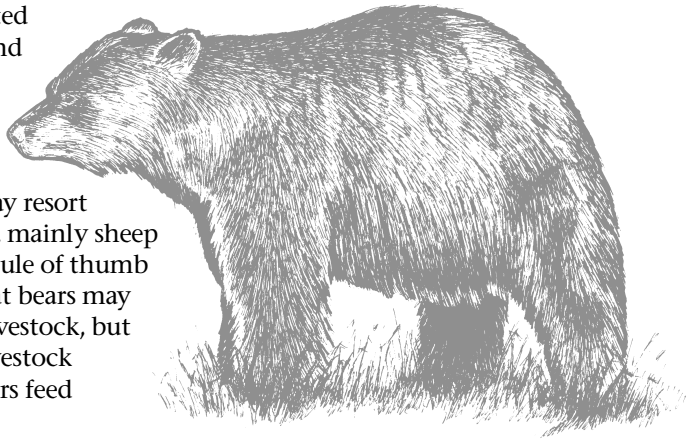
About the same time numbers started declining in Texas, they also did so in Mexico. Unregulated hunting and predator control by American ranchers in northern Mexico took a huge toll on black bear numbers. Small remnant populations of black bears managed to persist in remote pockets of the mountains south of Big Bend. In 1986, Mexico put the black bear on their endangered species list. All hunting seasons were closed and by then the American ranchers had moved out of Mexico for the most part. Texas followed suit in 1987 placing the black bear on the state's endangered list. In the last decade, small breeding populations have become established in the Trans-Pecos. Black bears have also started to move back into East Texas from the adjacent states and it probably won't be long before there is a breeding population in East Texas too.

In Texas, female black bears weigh 120-160 lbs. and the males usually fall in the 200-300 lbs. range; old males sometimes exceed 400 lbs. Texas bears vary in color from black to cinnamon-brown. Their diverse diet consists mostly of plant products such as berries, nuts, acorns, tubers, cactus fruit, and mesquite beans. This is supplemented with grubs, eggs, and any small animal they can catch. When natural foods are not abundant bears may resort to killing livestock, mainly sheep and goats. A good rule of thumb to remember is that bears may occasionally kill livestock, but not all bears are livestock killers. Because bears feed occasionally on carrion, they are often blamed for livestock they did not actually kill.

Most Texas bears are active year-round, but pregnant females always find a den in a small cave, in a hollow tree or under a big tree-fall in which to have their babies. The cubs, usually two but occasionally as many as four, are born in February and weigh less than a pound at birth, which is very small compared to the size of the mother. They stay in the den for several months while growing quickly. Youngsters travel with their mother for almost two years before weaning. Except for the brief mating period, the males lead a solitary life.

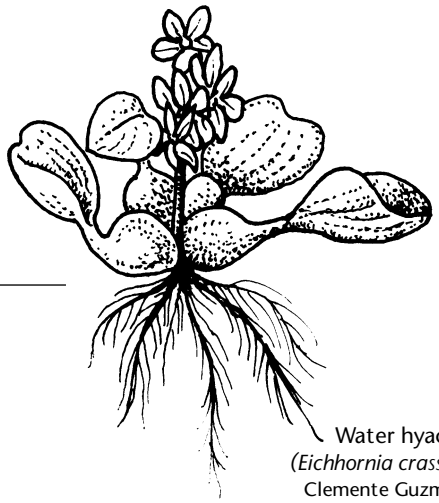
Where there are sufficient wildlands, bears and humans can coexist with a minimum of conflict and with a great deal to be gained for the quality of life. Humans can do bears a big favor by not feeding them and securing garbage and foodstuffs such that bears cannot get to them. Bears deserve to be left wild; that's where they're the safest and do the most for our spirits.

Paul Robertson is a mammalogist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, Austin office.



Clemente Guzman III

Alien Invasion!



Water hyacinth
(Eichhornia crassipes)
Clemente Guzman III

by Kelly Bender

They come by air, by land and by sea. They infest our lands and waterways, robbing them of diversity and identity. No place is safe from this alien invasion. Who — or what — is the insidious intruder?

Plants. More specifically, exotic (or alien, non-native) plants. All plants have a range throughout which they naturally occur, and plants within this native range are naturally adapted to their environment. Native plants are also subject to natural population controls like disease and predators. Therefore, plants within their native range may have health problems, but rarely become a pest in any one area.

While most exotic species introduced to an area pose little threat to the ecosystem, some have very invasive tendencies. These species spread rampantly through an area, competing with the native species for water, sun and space. Some exotics even change the chemistry of the soil, which makes it more difficult for native species to grow in that area.

Exotic species are also detrimental to wildlife that depend on native plants for food or cover. The well-loved monarch butterfly caterpillar, for example, depends on native milkweed species (*Asclepias spp.*) for food. Additionally, researchers in Chicago have found that songbird nests in exotic species like Japanese Honeysuckle were preyed upon more often than nests built in native shrub and vine species.

What can you do to prevent this alien invasion?

Know your garden and manage it for native and non-invasive exotic species. *Just because a plant grows without having been planted by humans does not mean it is a "native species."*

Protect wild areas from disturbance and alien invasion.

Prevent the spread of exotic species by cleaning camping and boating equipment before traveling, never releasing pets of plants (garden or aquarium) into the wild, and resisting the temptation to take plants, soil, fruit or seeds from state to state or country to country.

For more information on exotic plants, see the Plant Conservation Alliance Alien Plant Working Group online at http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/ . Other sources of information include Randy Westbrook's *Invasive Plants: changing the landscape of America: fact book* (Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds, 1998) and *America's Least Wanted: Alien Species Invasions of U. S. Ecosystems* (Bruce A. Stein and Stephanie R. Flack, eds, The Nature Conservancy, 1996).

Kelly Bender is an Urban Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife, Austin office.

Even though some exotic species were originally invited into our gardens, they have overstayed their welcome in our waterways and natural areas. Some common garden exotics you may want to consider removing:

Johnsongrass
(Sorghum halepense)

Chinese tallow
(Sepium sebiferum)

Bermudagrass
(Cyondon dactylon)

Chinaberry
(Melia azedarach)

Elephant ears
(Colocasia spp.)

Water hyacinth
(Eichhornia crassipes)

Japanese honeysuckle
(Lonicera japonica)

Chinese privit
(Ligustrum sinensis)

Wood Thrush in Common Buckthorn
(Rhamnus cathartica)
Ken Schmidt (Memphis TN)

The Texas Hummingbird Roundup

by Mark Klym

January 2000 marked the start of the seventh season for this survey of hummingbird activity in back yards of Texas homes. The survey is providing valuable information on the 18 species of hummingbirds found in Texas.

Volunteers in the program donate $6.00 to offset the cost of printing and postage. In exchange they receive a packet containing the survey forms, information on the hummingbirds of Texas, feeder care information, a packet of *salvia coccina* seed (a hummingbird favorite), and early access to the annual Texas Hummer publication.

For more information on the Hummingbird Roundup please call 1-800-792-1112 and ask for extension 4644.

Mark Klym is coordinator of the Hummingbird Roundup working out of the Austin office.

Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail Completed!

by Linda Campbell

The highway signs are up, the viewing platforms constructed and a new four-color map is hot off the press! It's time to announce the completion of the $1.4 million dollar Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. The Trail is a 600-mile driving trail that highlights many of the wonderful wildlife viewing sites along the Texas coast. It extends from the Louisiana border, along the coast to Brownsville, and up the Rio Grande River to Laredo. The project has taken five years to complete.

The third and final map for the lower portion of the Texas coast and the Rio Grande Valley is now available. It features 88 wildlife viewing sites on federal, state, county, city and private properties. The map has directions to each site, along with a description of the birds and habitats that are found there. Visitor information and contact numbers are also provided. Look for the map at state parks and wildlife refuges along the coast, Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and Texas Department of Transportation Travel Information Centers. For more information contact Linda Campbell, Nature Tourism Coordinator, or call 1-800-TX-BIRDS to be placed on the mailing list to receive the new map.

Linda Campbell is Nature Tourism coordinator in the Austin office.

The Wildlife Diversity Program sends out a number of newsletters each year relating to specific interests and activities within the program. Some of these newsletters are listed below. Please indicate those you would like more information about and whether you prefer to receive printed or electronic (e-mail) information. Mail to: Texas Parks and Wildlife, Wildlife Diversity Program, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744-3291.

		Eye on Nature
		Hummingbird Roundup
		Partners in Flight
		Texas Nature Trackers
		Monarch Watch
		Bats
		Attwater's Prairie Chicken

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail address (if applicable) _____

Texas Nature Trackers UPDATE

Mussel Monitors Make Historic Finds

by Ann Miller and LeeAnn Linam

Ann Miller

Watch this section of "Eye on Nature" for future Texas Nature Trackers updates.

This past year, Texas Mussel Watch volunteers provided information of significant scientific importance to Bob Howells, Texas' freshwater mussel expert.

First, Andy Laybay found the largest Tampico pearlymussel documented to date in the central Colorado River drainage. He also found very recently dead shells of Texas pimpleback, which was known from only three surviving populations, and Texas fawnsfoot that had not been confirmed in the Colorado drainage since the mid-1960s.

Second, Melba Sexton, a teacher from Luling, found a living golden orb and a recently dead shell from three-ridge in the San Marcos River upstream of Luling. Despite over 40 collections made by TPW in the San Marcos and Blanco rivers since 1992, no living mussels had been found (and none confirmed since 1977). These specimens indicate that a river recently thought to have lost its entire mussel fauna does indeed have at least a few remaining.

Another volunteer found over 35 Texas fawnsfoot specimens in the Brazos River upstream of College Station. All were very recently dead, suggesting that there is a significant population in the area. Very few Texas fawnsfoot specimens have been documented in this part of the Brazos in recent decades and never such a large number at one time anywhere!

Collection of data such as these demonstrate how important volunteer efforts can be! Thanks to all those Texas Mussel Watch volunteers who sent in data, whether or not it has resulted in a significant addition to the record books. All information is important since we are just beginning to understand freshwater mussel populations in Texas.

Texas Nature Trackers is a program composed of eight different volunteer monitoring projects. (See the list to the right.) Volunteers with each of the projects receive materials and training (if needed) to collect data about different species of plants and animals on their own property or on public lands. Biologists use the data to help us better understand the trends and management needs of various species in the state.

All of our previous volunteers should have received the Y2000 response card to indicate which projects they want to do this year. If you have an interest in any of our monitoring projects and would like more information about them or about workshops to aid in doing the projects, please contact us at 512-912-7011 or via our web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/trackers

Join us!
Volunteer monitoring is fun!

____ Texas Horned Lizard Watch
____ Texas Hummingbird Round-up
____ Texas Monarch Watch
____ Texas Mussel Watch
____ Texas Amphibian Watch
____ Swallow-tailed Kite Project
____ Project Prairie Birds
____ Mid-Winter Bald Eagle Survey

Ann Miller is Volunteer Coordinator for the Nature Trackers Program. Lee Ann Linam is a Natural Resources Scientist with the Nature Trackers Program. Both work out of the Austin office.

Year 2000 Great Texas Birding Classic brings birders, binoculars and fun to the Texas coast!

by Matt Dozier

Dates are set and host cities selected for the 4th edition of the largest birdwatching tournament in the United States! The 2000 Birding Classic starts April 7, 2000 in Brownsville Texas with registration and the Opening Ceremony. The event moves up the coast to Port Aransas on April 13 with the VIP birding tour and Community Appreciation Cruise. We wrap up in Texas City with the Awards brunch and Closing Ceremony on April 16.

THE GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC

The Great Texas Birding Classic offers a unique opportunity for birders of every age and skill level. Categories include Roughwing competitors (8-13 years old) Gliders (14-18 years old) Adult (19 and over) and 65 and over. Teams compete for prizes in the 3 individual sections of the coast, or in all 3 sections for the Conservation Cash Grand Prize (CCGP). The real winners each year are the birds, with $150,000, through the first three years going to habitat conservation or wildlife viewing enhancement projects.

Come join the fun and help preserve the unique opportunity that Texas has to offer birders. For more information on the Great Texas Birding Classic 2000, please call 1-888-TXBIRDS or visit us on the web at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc

Matt Dozier is the Outreach Coordinator for the Great Texas Birding Classic.

KEEP TEXAS *wild!*

The Back Porch

by John Herron

The first spring of a new millennium. We survived Y2K.

For all the blitz associated with "Millenium Fever," most of my millennium thoughts have been about our natural world. It's clear to see where humans have been and how nature has had to change, but where do things go from here?

Think about Texas 1,000 years ago. The state was still complex of desert, grasslands, oak, scrub, pine woods and wetlands. But wherever you live, it was probably a degree or two cooler with a bit more precipitation. Native Americans lived throughout Texas, their native cultures well established. They depended on native fish, wildlife and plants for their day-to-day needs. Buffalo, antelope, elk, bear and wolves flourished. This time of year, prairie chickens boomed throughout portions of the state. Waterfowl were as thick as smoke, winging northward to their breeding grounds, followed by songbirds, raptors and other feathered relatives. Monarch butterflies were not far behind, fluttering across the state on their trek north.

Fast forward to Texas just 100 years ago. A lot of the natural setting has changed. It's a period of general prosperity in Texas — the industrial age and advances in science have led to improvements in agriculture, animal husbandry and human health. But making a living off the land is still a challenge. Game animals are still a significant part of the diet, whether hunted directly, or purchased at the market. Texans still rely on the land for many, but not all, of their day-to-day needs. But the forests and grasslands have changed, largely modified for human use, but still leaving room for wildlife in most cases. Rabbits, quail and squirrels are generally living not too far from most people's back porch, along with other wild relatives too small for the cook pot.

But as we peer through this window to Texas one hundred years ago, we can see that some species of wildlife that were once common have become rare. The buffalo are gone from Texas, except for a few captive herds protected by alert ranchers like Jesse Chisholm. East of Texas, the passenger pigeon and Carolina parakeet, whose flocks once numbered millions, are nearly gone from the skies. Wolves and bears only eek out a living in the more remote corners of the state. Folks still view nature as something without limit and aren't ready to believe that humans are gaining the upper hand in the relationship with nature.

Since that point 100 years ago, Texas has changed fast. There are now nearly 20 million humans in Texas. Wildlife has gone through the bust of the Dustbowl days. Many species like deer, turkey and waterfowl have recovered tremendously. Game and fish management became sciences. Still, today there are hundreds of species of wildlife (and plants) doing less well — species getting edged out as people continue to change the face of Texas.

The past thousand years has taken us from the Stone Age, to the Iron Age, through the Industrial Revolution and on to the electronic and information ages. With this transition, Texas has changed also, accommodating millions of people, as well as the plants and animals that call Texas home.

What's next? What will the next hundred years bring — better conditions for wildlife, or worse? What about the next one thousand years?

You are the ones who will determine that future. Is it possible to have the next era be "The Nature Age?" Or an age of cooperation, or co-existence? Whatever the title, I hope the next century and the next millennium continue to allow room for wildlife, flowers and those of us who enjoy them. But that's up to you, and what you'd like to see from your back porch.

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

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