POST OAK SAVANNAH WILDLIFER

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

February 2014 Information for landowners and hunters in and around the Post Oak Savannah Volume 6, number 1

Photo by Billy Lambert

WINTERTIME BLUES

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

Welcome to the first ever winter issue of the newsletter! The original intent was to use a different critter in the upper right-hand corner of this page to reflect the different seasons of the year (turkey in the spring, horned lizard in the summer, deer in the fall, and duck in the winter). The duck finally gets to make an appearance, but I guess the deer is still waiting patiently. Hopefully, they don't become extinct before I can manage to work up a fall issue.

Last year turned out to be pretty much average. Temperatures were what you'd expect them to be, with some surprisingly cooler weather in July. August and September warmed up quite a bit, but regular fronts starting coming down in October bringing cooler temperatures, and strong cold fronts followed in both December and January. Rainfall finished the year less than an inch below the yearly average. Of course, there were some dry spells, but overall, precipitation was better than in previous years. Several good rains in October and November brought over 20 inches of rain to the Brazos Valley. As a result, expect a good wildflower display this spring.

Unfortunately for many of us, winter means that the hunting seasons are winding down. Hopefully many were able to spend some quality time outdoors, especially with friends and family. Many tremendous deer were killed in the Post Oak this season, making this one of the best deer seasons in the 13 since I've been around (2005 was pretty good as well). While the big one managed to elude me for the 43rd year in a row, the freezer is full of does. Plus, after years of trying, I was finally able to shoot a few canvasbacks. I guess now it's time to start thinking about big ol' bass and long-bearded turkey.

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

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

PLANT Profile


Photo by Billy Lambert

Henbit

(Lamium amplexicaule)

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

Ever get the urge to just go out in the yard, pull up a weed, and eat it? Well, me neither. But for those that are into that sort of thing, henbit is right up your alley.

Henbit, or henbit deadnettle (*Lamium amplexicaule*), is a cool season annual forb from the mint family. While it does not have the aromatic smell of many of the mint species, the leaves, stem, and flowers of henbit are edible with a taste reportedly similar to spinach or raw kale. Henbit is most commonly eaten fresh in salads or wraps, but can also be cooked, and has even been used in teas and green smoothies (just as a side note, if you ever see me out grazing in the yard, you better run and take cover because something pretty bad is about to happen).

Although native to Europe, Asia, and Africa, henbit has spread around the world (even into the Arctic Circle) and is commonly found throughout the United States. Henbit tends to be a spreading and low-growing plant, although some stems can grow erect up to 18 inches. Most plants do not reach this height however as the multiple stems branching from the base typically grow outward along the ground.

Henbit has a shallow root system beginning with a taproot but then branching out in a fibrous manner. The short stems are characteristically square and slightly hairy. Stem color varies from green to reddish-brown or purple and tend to darken as the plant matures. Longer stems, typically prostrate, can reach up to 24 inches and can root at the nodes adjoining the ground.

The hairy leaves are green and grow in opposite pairs that are roughly 1" across. They are usually circular, oval, or kidney-shaped with shallow lobes and rounded teeth. The recessed veins on the leaves give the plant a wrinkled appearance. Lower leaves have distinct petioles but decrease in length higher on the stem. Upper leaves wrap around the stem and do not have petioles.

The tubular flowers (characteristic of the mint family) are small, up to 5/8" long, and are pink to purple in color.

Flowering primarily occurs in early spring and lasts for a few months, although sometimes you will see henbit bloom in fall. Because henbit blooms very early in the year when many pollinators are absent, henbit can self-pollinate. Each flower gives rise to an oblong 4-seeded fruit or pod called a mericarp and henbit can produce as many as 2,000 seeds per plant.

Seedlings initially emerge in the fall and growth continues throughout the winter and spring. It commonly dominates many lawns and is often considered invasive and a nuisance (it is usually one of the first "weeds" to appear in lawns). Henbit can grow in a variety of conditions and soil types but prefers disturbed areas and is most commonly


Photo by Billy Lambert

seen in lawns, gardens, croplands, fields, and waste areas. Plants begin to phase out as summer approaches and daytime temperatures rise.

Because of the large number of seeds produced and the aggressive manner in which it spreads, henbit can be difficult to control. For the same reasons, though, it can be useful in helping to slow erosion. Henbit can be controlled with herbicides and the most effective time is in the fall when plants are immature and other beneficial plants are dormant.

As mentioned previously, the plant is not toxic and is edible and nutritious. But, it reportedly causes "staggers" in livestock (I had the staggers once, but I'm pretty sure it had more to do with alcohol than eating henbit). Henbit is high in iron, vitamins, and fiber and crude protein and digestibility during the flowering stage are also good at 20% and 78%, respectively. It is also listed as anti-rheumatic, diaphoretic, excitant, febrifuge, laxative, and stimulant by the Natural Medicinal Herbs web site. The oil from the seeds has also shown antioxidant properties.

Although henbit tends to bloom early, it can be a good source of nectar and pollen for hummingbirds, bees, and other insects. The leaves, stems, and flowers are also consumed by a variety of wildlife, from voles and box turtles up to and including deer. The seeds are also readily consumed by many bird species and the name was derived from chickens consuming the seeds.

Photo by Billy Lambert

TROPHY Corner

Photo by Billy Lambert

On his first day of hunting this season, 9-year-old Luke Catching harvested his first deer, a nice doe, from Madison county.

Photo by Aaron Flencher

Great Burleson county hunt for Josh Flencher, Josh Legg, Ryan Flencher, and Aaron Flencher (not pictured). Final hunt tally included a 4-man limit of ducks and 2 feral hogs.

Photo by Wade Balentine

Cody Beaver killed this tremendous deer from Rains county last October. With a green gross score of 187 7/8 and a net score of 178 6/8, the 20-point archery kill easily qualifies for both Texas Big Game Awards and Pope and Young Club.

TROPHY Corner *PLUS*

Similar to fishing, it's no secret that many stories, tall tales, and exaggerations are generated each hunting season. A few of them may accidently even be true from time to time. But, what may turn out to be the best hunting story of the 2013-2014 hunting season is all true.

The story began in early October as Chuck Kelly motored a boat down the Trinity River. As he rounded a bend, he noticed 4 bucks crossing the river, and one of them was huge. He was able to get quite close to the swimming bucks and managed to take the photo below. That in itself is a pretty good story, finding yourself 3 feet from a potential Boone and Crockett deer swimming in a river. But, it gets better.

The photo made the internet rounds and hunting forums pretty fast, along with much speculation on its authenticity, when and where the photo was taken, etc. Two people the photo eventually made its way to were 15-year-old Makayla Hay and her father Jim. Needless to say, both were exited to know that this deer was photographed in the same area that they hunt. As they set out on opening morning of deer season, Makayla's goal was to find that deer.

Some people wait a lifetime before realizing their goal, but for Makayla it only took about 30 minutes. Knowing the big deer was out there somewhere, Makayla passed on a pretty respectable 18-inch 8-point that was later harvested by another hunter on the same property. It tuned out to be a good idea as the big buck came out and presented Makayla with a shot. A quick comparison of the deer with the photo from the river showed it to be the very same deer.

The 5.5 year-old deer has an 11-point typical frame that grosses 166 0/8 plus 12 non-typical points (23 total points total) adding another 49 4/8 inches. Following the 60-day official drying period, the final scores are 215 4/8 gross and 205 0/8 net non-typical, easily meeting the minimum needed for the Boone & Crockett record book. As an added bonus, after a quick search of the Texas Big Game Awards records, it appears that Makayla now holds the record for the largest free-ranging deer killed by a youth hunter in the state of Texas and the second-largest deer ever killed in Madison county.

As for Jim, he is more than exited for his daughter and is glad she is getting the attention. But, after mentioning to her that he still needed to get his buck for the year, Makayla replied with a smile that there was still a 6-point coming to the feeder that he could have.

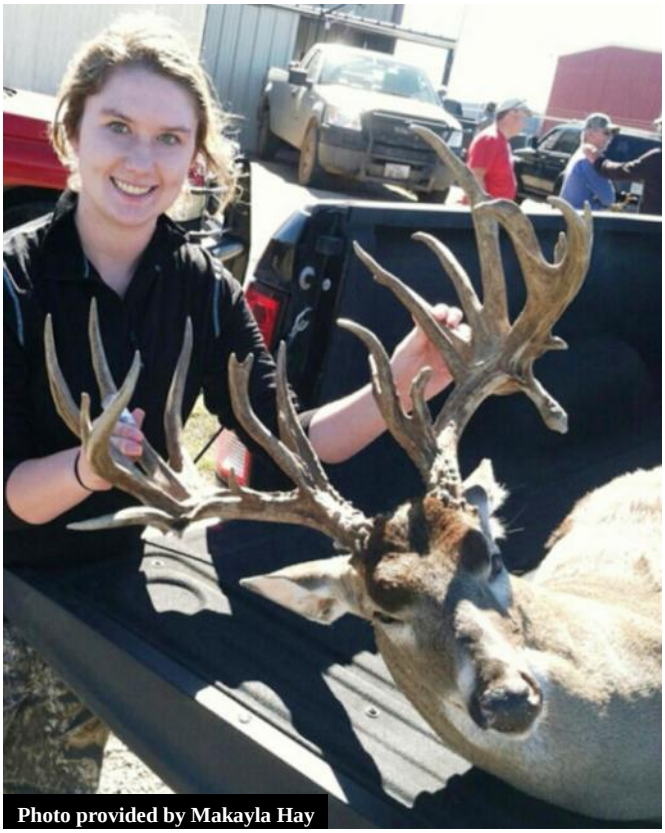


Photo provided by Makayla Hay

Photo by Chuck Kelly

TEXAS DEER STUDY GROUP

Great Expectations: Optimizing Deer Management in the Post Oak Savanna and Gulf-Coast Prairies

Life's better outside.®

Artwork courtesy of Mike Childress and TBGA

DAY 1 *Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. & dinner begins at 6:00 p.m.*

- **History of Deer Management in the Post Oak Savanna and Gulf-Coast Prairies**
- **Habitat changes in the Post Oak Savanna and Gulf-Coast Prairies**
- **Goals and Objectives: Formulating realistic expectations**
- **Managing Deer on Small Acerage: The CO-OP model**
- **Harvest Strategies - "Micro CO-OPs": Managing beyond antler restrictions**
- **Deer Management in "Farmland" Habitat**
- **Doe Harvest**
- **Value of Wildlife: Managing deer from a new perspective**
- **Who Breeds Who**
- **Buck Movement in Regards to Hunting**
- **White-tailed deer Breeding chronology**
- **Good Science, Bad Science, No Science At All**
- **Weird deer**
- **An overview on deer nutrition**
- **Hunter and Landowner Ethic – How Big is Big Enough?**

DAY 2

- Field Tour on J3J4 Ranch with habitat management techniques, native and introduced vegetation identification/value and deer necropsy.

Agenda subject to change

Date: **April 10-11, 2014**

Location: **Knights of Columbus Hall 3845 Columbus, TX, 78934**

Fees: *Fees include meals and handout materials)*

Pre Registration (Before 3/31) - $75

Late Registration (After 3/31) - $100

No refunds after 4/10

Hotels

America's Best Value Inn – (979) 732-6293
Comfort Inn and Suites – (979) 732-3785
La Quinta Inn and Suites – (979) 733-0522
Holiday Inn Express – (979) 733-9800

Name

Organization or ranch affiliation (if applicable)

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone

Email (print CLEARLY)
For registration confirmation and all future communication regarding Texas Deer Study Group

Register online at
www.texas-wildlife.org/resources/events/texas-deer-study-group

Mail form and payment to:
TWA-TDSG
3660 Thousand Oaks Dr., #126
San Antonio, TX 78247

Do you plan to attend Friday's Field Day at J3J4 Ranch?
_____ YES ____ NO

Early (Before 3/31): $75 ☐
Late (After 3/31): $100 ☐

Amount enclosed: _____

Payment Form: ☐ Check ☐ Visa ☐ AmEx ☐ M/C

Make Checks payable to: TWA–TDSG

Credit Card Number

Exp. date Security code Billing Zip

Signature

For more information, contact
Clint Faas (cfaas@texas-wildlife.org) or (979) 541-9803

BIOLOGIST Bio

Ragan White was born in Paris, TX in Lamar County and raised in Red River, Wood, and Hopkins counties until he completed high school. He then moved to Freestone County and as he states, "it would be an accurate assumption to say that East Texas runs deep in the blood." Ragan was raised on various cattle ranches where he was allowed to hunt and fish and these interests eventually developed into a passion.

Ragan's collegiate road included Navarro Community College, Texas Tech University, and eventually, Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches where he graduated with a Bachelors of Science Forestry degree in Wildlife Management and a minor in Biology. He was an officer in the university's chapter of The Wildlife Society and inducted into the Xi Sigma Pi Forestry Honors Society. As an undergraduate at the university, Ragan served as a wildlife technician on an alligator research project and upon graduation, he continued work as a university wildlife technician on an Eastern Turkey research project.

Photo by Michelle White

Ragan had the opportunity to work in various wildlife jobs throughout college, most notable of which was a position as a wildlife manager on an East Texas ranch in Freestone County. This is where he had the opportunity to explore his passion for wildlife management on private land. Some of the various wildlife habitat enhancement practices, such as hog trapping, Managed Lands Deer Program, prescribed burning, and fisheries lake management, combined with commercial livestock production, all came together as the benefits and challenges were realized.

In April of 2007, fate would have him return to where it all started as he began working for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as a Regulatory Wildlife Biologist assigned to Red River, Lamar, Fannin, and Grayson counties. His job duties include private landowner assistance and all aspects of wildlife and habitat management. "I emphasize overall habitat enhancement and my goal is to provide landowners with the best recommendations possible for their property, keeping their goals and objectives in mind. I am a supporter of prescribed fire and thinning for wildlife as well and native grass restoration and feral hog removal." Ragan's other job duties include white-tailed deer surveys, black bear investigations, public hunting dove lease negotiations, and various outreach programs and seminars to name a few.

Ragan has been married to his wife, Michelle, for 14 wonderful years and they have been blessed with 2 daughters, Taylor and Jordan, and 1 son, Riley. His other interests, besides hunting and fishing, include birding, shooting sports, trapping, and spending time with his family. They live near Powderly, TX in Lamar County and Ragan indicates that he plans to be there for many years to come. Contact Ragan at 903-784-2610 or at ragan.white@tpwd.texas.gov.

WILDLIFE Profile


Photo by Billy Lambert

Eastern Bluebird

(Sialia sialis)

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

When you ask people which bird most signifies springtime, 2 species are most frequently mentioned. One is the American robin and the other is the eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*).

The bluebird is a small bird from the thrush family. Native only to North and Central America, eastern bluebirds are found throughout the eastern 2/3 of the United States, southern Canada, and south to Nicaragua. The 2 other similar species, western and mountain bluebirds, are found on the west side of the eastern's range. The eastern is the state bird of both Missouri and New York.

Body lengths range from 6 to 8 inches with a total wingspan of 9 to 13 inches. Body weight is slightly over 1 ounce. Males are distinctly dark blue above with a cinnamon chest and throat and a white or cream underside. As with many species of birds, males are more brightly-colored than females who are more gray above and on the head. A white eye ring is noticeable on females and juveniles. Juvenile bluebirds display even less coloration than females and are grayish-brown with a mottled white chest. A tinge of blue is noticeable on the wings.

Bluebirds prefer open areas typically associated with savannah habitats and agricultural areas. The presence of trees is important both for nesting cavities and as perching sites. But, bluebirds tend to avoid heavily-forested areas and areas with thick understory habitats. Also utilizing parks, roadsides, orchards, and residential areas, they have adapted fairly well to human encroachment, although they must compete with starlings and house sparrows for nesting sites in urban areas.

The majority of the bluebird's diet (60%) consists of insects and invertebrates. They hunt by perching on tree limbs and can spot prey up to 60 feet away. Most prey items are taken on the ground, although bluebirds will occasionally take insects from the air. During winter or other times when insect abundance is low, bluebirds feed primarily on berries and fruits. Larger prey items, such as tree frogs, salamanders, shrews, and snakes, have been documented.

Typically seen during the spring and summer as solitary birds or pairs, eastern bluebirds can form large groups, up to 100 birds, in the winter. But, as the breeding season approaches, the birds become territorial and both sexes will defend the area. Home ranges vary in size from 2 to 25 acres. Within a breeding season, bluebirds are monogamous and pairs may stay together for successive years.


Photo by Billy Lambert

Nesting occurs in the spring and summer months, typically from February through July. Males locate potential nest site cavities, defend them, and display at the location to attract females. The male will also bring nest material to the cavity, although nest construction is completed only by the female. Nests are small and cup-like and the entire nest is constructed in 4 to 7 days.

Females usually produce up to 3 broods per year, with 2 to 7 eggs per brood. The eggs are 3/4-1 inch long and are usually blue in color, although a small percentage of bluebirds produce white eggs. Eggs are laid at a rate of 1 per day and incubation begins only after the last egg is laid. Males do not assist with incubation.

All eggs hatch in 1 day in the order that they were laid 11-19 days after the last egg was produced. The young are born completely helpless but are able to fledge at 15-20 days. Young produced early in the spring typically leave the parents, but those born later in the year tend to stay with the parents over winter and may even assist with the raising of the next brood. Juvenile bluebirds are able to breed the year after they were hatched.

Eastern bluebird mortality is high, with a significant number not surviving through their first year. Although wild bluebirds can live for 4-6 years, the average lifespan is only 2 years. The oldest recorded bluebird lived for over 10 years.

Bluebirds face a number of mortality factors from the egg stage all the way through adulthood. Common predators of eggs and juvenile birds include raccoons, snakes, fire ants and other nest predators. Adult birds suffer losses from housecats and avian predators, such as hawks, kestrels, and falcons. Even environmental factors can cause significant losses (especially among juvenile birds), with freezing and exposure for northern birds and excessive heat for southern birds.

Currently, the breeding population is estimated at 22 million birds although this wasn't always the case. The population declined significantly beginning in the 1930's and many feared possible extinction by the 1960's. Reasons for the decline are speculative, but leading causes included habitat loss, use of pesticides, and competition for nesting sites by introduced species such as house sparrows and European starlings. But, primarily due to the efforts of ordinary citizens utilizing specially-made nest boxes, the eastern bluebird population increased at a rate of 2% per year between 1966 and 2010.

Quotable Quote

A land ethic...reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity.

Aldo Leopold

Photo by Billy Lambert

LINKS OF INTEREST

Click on the county to find your local Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologist:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/technical_guidance/biologists/

Select the county from the drop-down box to find your local Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game warden:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/warden/

Purchase your hunting and fishing licenses and stamps online:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/licenses/online_sales/

Select the county to locate licensed wildlife rehabilitators in your area:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/list/

UPCOMING Event!

Wildlife Management Workshop

TPWD and the Anderson-Houston Soil and Water Conservation District will sponsor a workshop on managing small acreages for wildlife on Friday, April 18th, at the Gus Engeling WMA north of Palestine on U.S. Hwy 287.

The workshop is designed for landowners interested in wildlife management on properties of 250 acres or less or those interested in wildlife tax valuations. The workshop will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Cost is $15.00, which includes refreshments and lunch. Space is limited, and payment must be made in advance. RSVP by mailing a letter with your name, property county, contact information, email address and $15 per person (check made payable to Anderson-Houston SWCD) to Gus Engeling WMA, 16149 N. U.S. HWY 287, Tennessee Colony, TX 75861. For more information contact Eric Woolverton, Tucker Slack or Jennifer Ganter at (903) 928-2251.

Texas Big Game Awards

2014 Regional Banquet Schedule

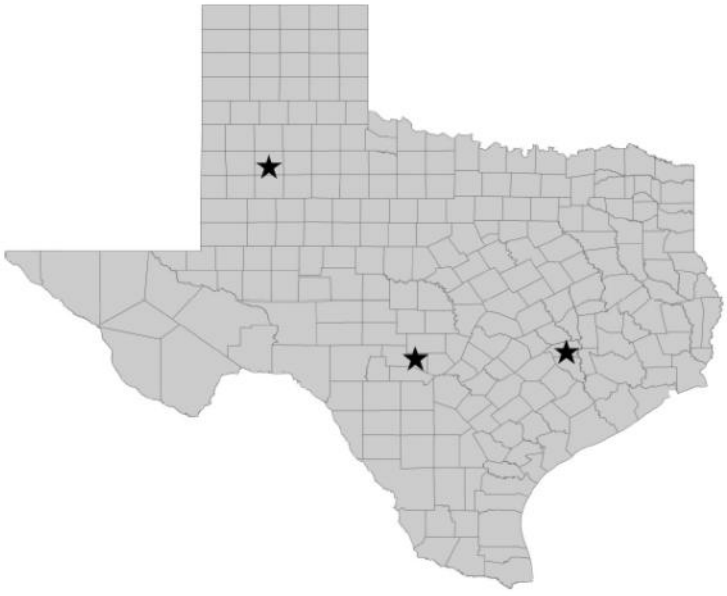
Region 1,2,3
June 7 - Lubbock, TX
Four Bar K
302 E. 82nd

Hotel block available:
Hawthorne Suites - (806) 792-3600
Group Code: TBGA

Region 5,6,7
June 28 - Brenham, TX
Fireman's Training Center
1101 Hwy 290 West

Region 4 &8
August 9 - Kerrville, TX
Y.O. Ranch Hotel & Conf. Center
2033 Sidney Baker

Hotel block available:
Y.O. Ranch Hotel - (877) 967-3767
Group Code: TBGA2014



Come see the largest deer killed from each region and participate in the many activities.
For more information, contact Justin Dreibelbis at 512-551-3004.

RESEARCH Summary

ESTIMATING ACORN PRODUCTION AND YIELD

Tim Siegmund

Goodrum, P.D., Reid, V.H., and Boyd, C.E. 1971."Acorn Yields, Characteristics, and Management Criteria of Oaks for Wildlife." Journal of Wildlife Management 35(3): 520 -532.

Acorn consumption is an important dietary component of native wildlife species. Songbirds, game birds, small mammals, and big game alike all make use of these high calorie food items. There are many prognosticators, soothsayers, and other self appointed experts who try and predict the acorn crop each year based on rainfall, temperature, and other environmental factors. In order to try and put some science behind the guesswork, researchers with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, US Forest Service, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, and US Bureau of Sport Fish and Wildlife began a long term research study from 1950-1967 examining acorn yield from oaks of various species, size classes, and locations.

The research was conducted in Kisatchie National Forest in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, Sabine National Forest in Sabine County, Texas, and the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest in Nacogdoches County, TX. Acorn traps were established underneath oak trees and checked weekly between late September and early February. Collected acorns were then standardized using oven dry weights for each species to find the number of acorns necessary to equate to one pound of acorns. In this way comparisons could be made across species of oaks as acorn size varied by species, individuals of same species, and even on individual trees.

Acorn production, diameter at breast height, crown radius, radial growth, and age measurements were taken from 7 different species of oak trees. The trees sampled were comprised of two groups of oaks: white oaks (which flower and produce seed in one growing season) and red oaks (which flower one growing season and produce seed the second growing season). The white oak group included swamp chestnut oak, white oak, and post oak. The red oak group included blackjack oak, sandjack/bluejack oak, water oak, and southern red oak.

Over the course of the study, great variations were found in acorn production between years, species, and size classes. Of the measurements taken, age, size class, and crown radius of individual trees seemed to be the greatest predictors of good acorn production. Generally, acorn production was best between 50-100 years of age. Open grown trees were more consistent producers than trees in a closed canopy forest, and some trees were just inherently poor producers of acorns regardless of age, diameter, or crown radius. Oaks with diameters of 10-12 inches and larger were preferable, as trees in these size classes more consistently produced acorns each year. These trees, due to their larger size and age, also consistently produced larger acorn crops on a per pound basis.

The most interesting result of the study was that in the 18 years of data collection there was never a complete mast failure. When environmental variables such as precipitation and temperature were taken into account there appeared to be little correlation between these factors and acorn production. This held particularly true for the precipitation variable as it appeared to have minimal to no impact on acorn production. Temperature did have one noticeable effect during the year of 1955. During this time the temperature dropped to 25 degrees on March 29th & 30th at two of the study sites. Here the newly emerged

Photo by Billy Lambert

	White Oaks				Red Oaks					Average
Year	Swamp	White	Post	Average	Blackjack	Sandjack	Red	Water	Average	All Oaks
1950	-	3.5 (29)	0.6 (67)	2.0 (48)	0.6 (64)	4.2 (100)	2.9 (75)	0.9 (82)	2.1 (80)	2.1 (69)
1951	5.9 (60)	13.3 (54)	4.8 (80)	8.0 (65)	0.8 (50)	3.6 (94)	0.9 (46)	5.0 (56)	2.6 (61)	4.9 (63)
1952	1.0 (60)	0.7 (36)	2.3 (60)	1.3 (52)	0.4 (41)	2.7 (100)	1.5 (64)	9.7 (69)	3.6 (68)	2.6 (61)
1953	6.9 (60)	11.2 (54)	0.5 (49)	6.2 (54)	1.6 (66)	3.9 (94)	6.2 (82)	12.3 (81)	6.0 (81)	6.1 (69)
1954	8.2 (60)	6.5 (73)	3.9 (81)	6.2 (71)	2.4 (74)	0.7 (61)	4.1 (64)	10.2 (100)	4.3 (75)	5.1 (73)
1955	-	-	0.1 (23)	0.1 (8)	1.4 (81)	1.4 (93)	6.7 (81)	4.2 (82)	3.4 (84)	2.0 (51)
1956	-	-	2.9 (66)	2.9 (66)	0.1 (33)	-	0.09 (25)	-	0.09 (29)	1.0 (41)
1957	-	-	2.2 (72)	2.2 (72)	0.2 (44)	-	0.05 (22)	-	0.1 (33)	0.8 (46)
1958	-	-	0.5 (15)	0.5 (15)	0.3 (47)	-	1.7 (71)	-	2.0 (59)	0.8 (44)
1959	-	-	4.1 (83)	4.1 (83)	2.0 (92)	-	11.3 (86)	-	6.6 (89)	5.8 (87)
1960	-	-	0.3 (19)	0.3 (19)	0.4 (64)	-	16.8 (95)	-	8.6 (79)	5.8 (59)
1961	-	-	7.6 (95)	7.6 (95)	0.2 (69)	-	6.0 (86)	-	3.1 (77)	4.6 (83)
1962	-	-	0.07 (24)	0.07 (24)	0.3 (83)	-	1.1 (73)	-	0.7 (78)	0.5 (60)
1963	-	-	8.5 (88)	8.5 (88)	0.2 (67)	-	0.4 (33)	-	0.3 (50)	3.0 (63)
1964	-	-	1.4 (83)	1.4 (83)	0.08 (33)	-	0.4 (67)	-	0.2 (50)	0.6 (61)
1965	-	-	9.7 (98)	9.7 (98)	0.6 (86)	-	1.1 (67)	-	0.8 (76)	3.8 (84)
1966	-	-	0.4 (27)	0.4 (27)	0.2 (63)	-	0.1 (33)	-	0.1 (48)	0.2 (41)
1967	-	-	6.8 (83)	6.8 (83)	0.1 (61)	-	0.3 (33)	-	0.2 (47)	2.4 (59)

Average number of pounds of acorns produced per tree by species and year. The number in parentheses is the percentage of trees producing acorns.

leaves on the trees were frozen off, and new growth was heavily damaged. This had an effect on the 1955 white oak acorn crop and the 1956 red oak acorn crop, greatly reducing both. Thus, it can be assumed that late freezes can, and do, have an adverse effect on acorn production. All other temperature data gathered had no conclusive effects on overall acorn production. So, even with late freezes and variable weather patterns, there was always at least some production of acorns available for wildlife consumption. Plus, the study did not account for acorns that never reached the ground having been consumed by arboreal predators such as squirrels, raccoons, possums, and birds such as crows and bluejays. It is safe to assume that there should always be some acorns available for wildlife regardless of environmental conditions, but some years will be better than others. When combining all oaks used in the research, the worst year in terms of mast production still resulted in 41% of the trees producing acorns (although at a rate of only 0.2 pounds of acorns per tree).

As a management recommendation, the authors, and other studies they highlighted, recommended leaving between 3-15 well-formed oak trees at least 10 inches in diameter at breast height per acre to meet the dietary needs of wildlife such as squirrels, turkey, deer, quail, and non-game species. A mixture of both white oaks and red oaks is suggested to protect against mast failure in any particular year due to their different seed reproduction strategies. Furthermore, they did not suggest that there was any consistent way to predict future/yearly acorn production. However, by managing for trees greater than 20-25 years of age, diameters of 10 inches or larger at breast height, and open growing conditions, forest managers would most likely have adequate acorn production on a yearly basis.

UPCOMING Event!

EAST TEXAS PRESCRIBED FIRE WORKSHOP
March 7, 2014
Canton, TX

Morning session will include classroom instruction and demonstration burns will be conducted in the afternoon, weather permitting. For more information, contact the Van Zandt County Agrilife Extension Service at 903-963-5065 or 903-567-4149. Sponsored by TPWD and TAEX.

BUILDING A BLUEBIRD HOUSE

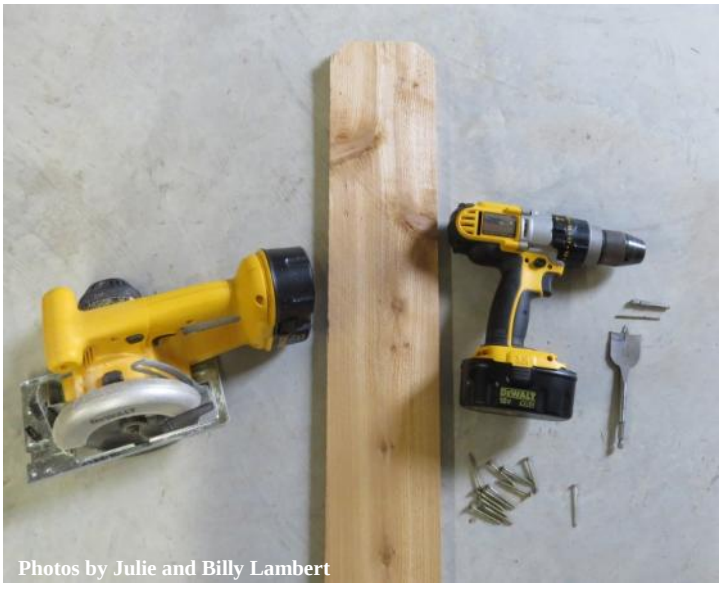
Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

With tax season upon us, many folks with the 1-D-1w wildlife property tax valuation are preparing management plans to submit to county tax appraisers. These management plans lay out various techniques and management activities that landowners and managers intend to implement that will qualify them for the valuation.

Under the Supplemental Shelter section of the management plan, the use of bird houses is a popular activity in that they are relatively inexpensive, serve a useful purpose, and are fun to keep tabs on and monitor. Also, building the birdhouses can be an enjoyable activity, especially for those with youngsters who want to be involved with wildlife management activities.

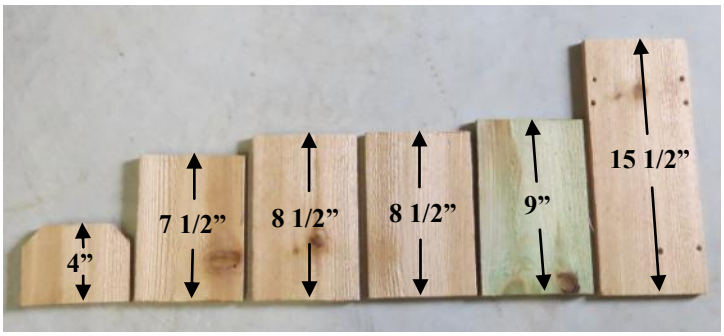
There are many different houses or shelters one can use, but the most popular by far are bluebird-style houses (many other species besides bluebirds will potentially use the house as well). They are also the easiest to build. Several building plans are available and a quick internet search should provide many options. For our area, houses that include ventilation slots are recommended due to the hot summer temperatures. It is also generally a good idea to include cutouts for drainage in the floor of the house. A simple, but effective, plan is described here.

Materials needed are fairly simple as the entire house can be constructed from a single 6-foot cedar fence picket available from most hardware stores (5/8" X 5 1/2" X 72" actual dimension). Throw in a few 1 1/4" screws and 1 nail and the entire project should cost less than $4.00 per house. You'll also need a 1 1/2" spade bit, small drill bit, saw, and drill.



Photos by Julie and Billy Lambert

To start, cut the board into the lengths illustrated below. The floor of the house should be cut from the end of the board with the established diagonal cuts. The remainder of the board can be used for another birdhouse or other project.

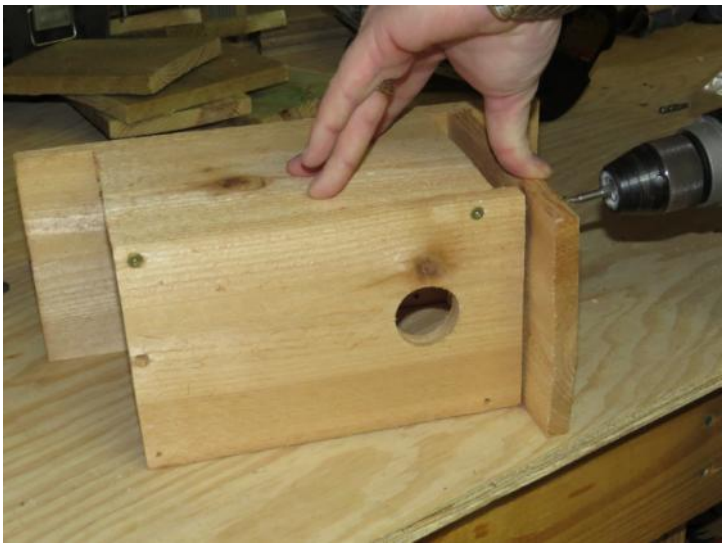


Using the spade bit, cut the entrance hole through the front (9") panel. The center of the hole should be 2 1/4 inches from the top of the board.

Use 2 screws to attach the right (8 1/2") panel to the back (15 1/2") panel. The bottom of the right panel should be roughly 2 inches above the bottom of the back panel.

Attach the front panel to the right panel by aligning the bottom of each board and attach with 2 screws.

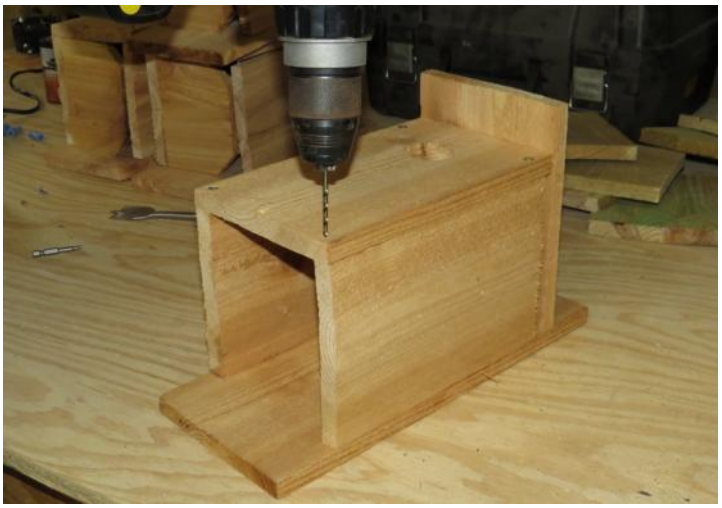
Attach the top (7 1/2”) panel to front panel using 2 screws, leaving a 1/2-inch space between the right panel and the top panel.



Also attach the top panel to the back panel using 2 screws.

Align the bottom of the left (8 1/2”) panel with the bottom of the front panel and attach using 2 screws (1 through the front panel and 1 through he back panel), forming a pivot hinge. Note that the screws should be located the same distance from the top of the board so that the right panel can be pivoted out for cleaning.

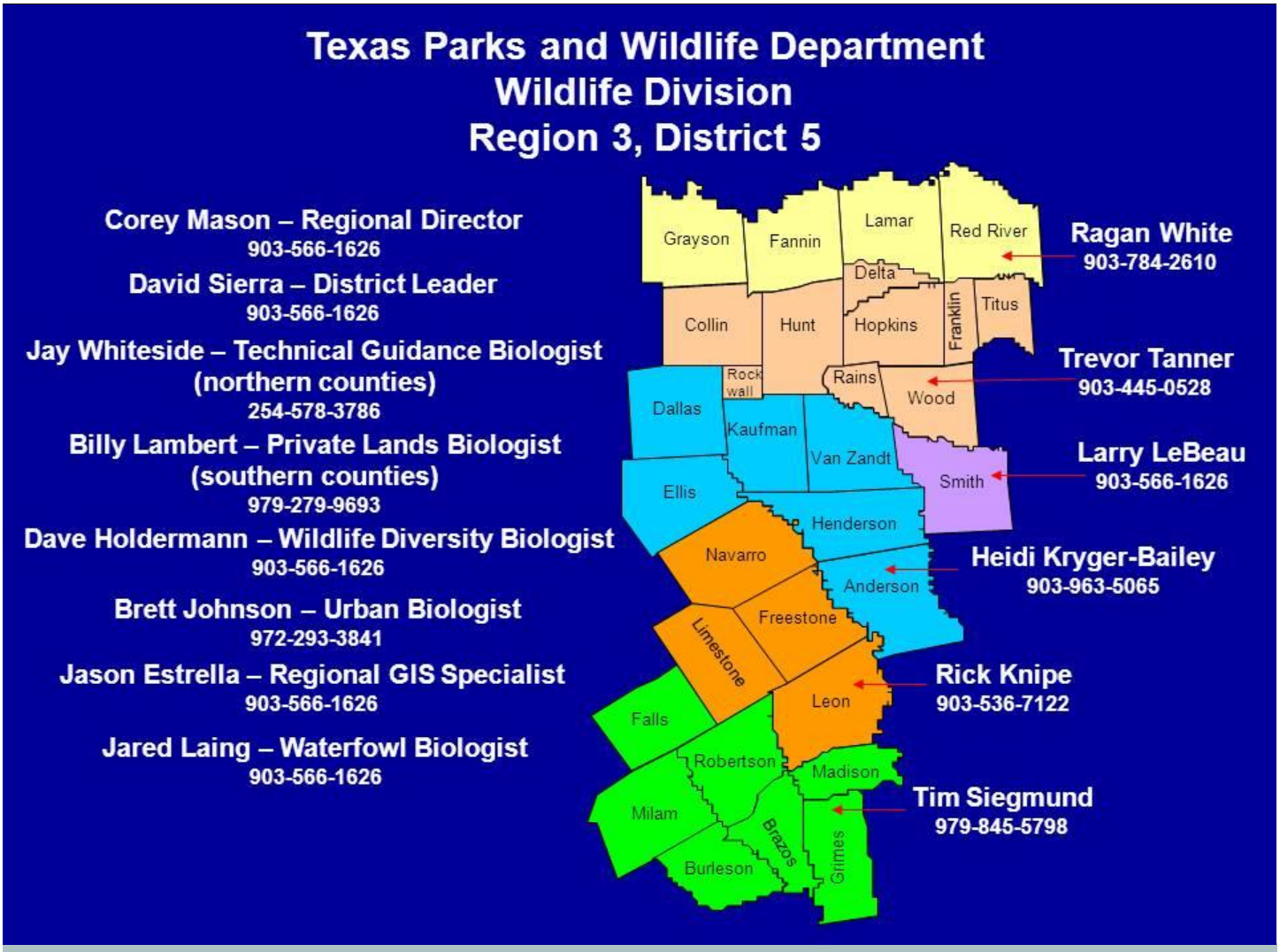
Use a small-diameter bit to drill a hole through the front panel and into the bottom of the left panel. Use a small nail to pin the 2 boards so that the left panel does not open accidentally. The nail should fit snugly enough into the hole so that it does not fall out but not so tight that it cannot be removed.



Last, attach the bottom (4”) panel to the right panel, front panel, and back panel using 3 screws.

A picture showing what a completed birdhouse is supposed to look like…….

……and a picture showing what a completed birdhouse looks like after your wife gets ahold of it.



GUS ENGELING
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

1st Friday Wildlife Habitat Management Workshop

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

Wildlife Habitat Management Calendar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

November
Prescribed Fire
Prepare Fire Guards
Feral Hog Removal
Deer Harvest

December
Prescribed Fire
Prepare Fire Guards
Feral Hog Removal
Deer Harvest

Resource Links http://

Texas Parks and Wildlife:
tpwd.state.tx.us/

Texas Forest Service:
texasforestservice.tamu.edu/main/default.aspx

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

AgriLife Extension:
agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/

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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

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

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