

TRACKS & TRAILS

A monthly newsletter for employees of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

“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.”

October 2009

Dove study adds public outreach component

Research is a cornerstone and necessary component of resource conservation. Often in the normal course of business, opportunities to share the important work we do are overlooked or not recognized. That was definitely the case with the dove lethality study.

Wildlife staff, with cooperation from research consultants, is investigating variables involving use of lead and non-lead shot for dove hunting. The study recently concluded its third year of sampling with 30-plus randomly drawn public hunters harvesting about 750 dove specimens using a variety of shotgun load types over a three-day period.

Trained observers, mostly TPWD staff, recorded shot data that will be used in connection with dove x-ray and necropsy findings in hopes of shedding insight into which shot types are most effective under real world hunting conditions in Texas.

While wildlife research is virtually never discussed until conclusions are reached, last year's collection activities generated a whirlwind of attention in the outdoor media and resulted in much controversy and criticism. Agency staff drew heat for not informing the public and the news media about plans to conduct the research, particularly collection of dove samples prior to hunting season, and consequently, much effort has been spent during the last 12 months devising and implementing communications strategies.

Initiatives to inform and educate stakeholders included notification of landowners in areas adjacent to the study sites, localized media relations around Brownwood and a public meeting in nearby Early to present information about the study. Wildlife staff also met with area game wardens and biologists to improve internal communication. Additionally, agency leadership met with key outdoor writers to share information about the study, details on the processes and timelines and to give the media an opportunity to ask questions and air concerns.

During the training certification exercises and prior to the collection events, those same reporters were invited to attend a half-day media workshop on site to receive study status updates, presentations from research consultants and staff, ask questions and observe and photograph actual field training.

Media reaction to efforts to make the study accessible has been positive, for the most part, and some good coverage for the program has resulted.

— Steve Lightfoot



Matt Symmank gauges the choke diameter of a shotgun, while Mark Klym looks on.

SHELLY KREMER

AFWA Annual Meeting brings conservation to Texas

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting came to Texas for the first time in many years Sept. 13–16, bringing some 600 attendees to Austin. For many at TPWD who can't go to out-of-state meetings, it was a rare chance to see the national conservation community grappling with the big issues of the day.

The opening plenary session launched the discussion with a high-profile panel featuring national alternative energy promoter T. Boone Pickens squaring off with King Ranch President Jack Hunt. Hunt laid out a fact-based case criticizing wind turbines and transmission lines, describing how they can kill birds and impact wildlife habitat, and challenging wind power's economic and practical viability. Pickens spent much of his time touting natural gas as America's best alternative energy option, though he did note the value of wind revenue for rural landowners and communities.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Dear Colleagues:

The AFWA conference started off with a rather provocative and packed plenary session jointly organized by AFWA and TPWD entitled, "It's Clean, but is it Green? How Compatible is Renewable Energy Development and Wildlife Management?" With TPWD's October magazine feature focused on wind energy and wildlife, the timing and setting couldn't have been more conducive for promoting a lively and spirited discourse among the speakers and the attendees.

Three speakers participated in the opening session, including noted Texas oilman T. Boone Pickens, King Ranch President and CEO Jack Hunt, and the new Interior Department Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Tom Strickland. Suffice to say, all three offered insightful remarks about a subject matter of enormous implications to land and resource managers throughout North America.

Tom Strickland kicked off the session with an overview of the Administration's commitment to developing additional renewable energy supplies, including solar, wind, geothermal and biofuels. As the steward of over 20 percent of the country's land base, the Interior Department plans to utilize their vast holdings, where feasible, to help facilitate this goal. Mr. Strickland was quick to acknowledge, however, that there must be a balance between promoting additional energy development and protecting the fish and wildlife resources the Interior Department is charged with stewarding.

King Ranch CEO Jack Hunt, a longstanding critic of the politics, economics and environmental tenets driving the development of wind energy, described his nearly quarter-of-a-century history with the industry. Suffice to say, Mr. Hunt pulled no punches in his address, characterizing wind energy as an ecologically inappropriate and inadequate solution to the nation's energy woes. Drawing on his experiences managing the Tejon Ranch in California near Altamont Pass, along with his recent experiences with the King Ranch along the Laguna Madre, Mr. Hunt let it be abundantly known where he stood on the plenary's overarching question of whether wind energy should be considered green and compatible with our commitment to taking care of our natural resources.

Last, but certainly not least, was 81-year-old entrepreneur and legendary wildcatter, T. Boone Pickens. Mr. Pickens took the opportunity with the rather rapt audience to share key elements of his energy plan for America, particularly his emphasis on decreasing the country's dependence on foreign oil, developing untapped natural gas supplies in places like the Rocky Mountain states, and converting 18-wheelers from diesel to propane. Mr. Pickens also addressed wind energy development, something he has aggressively promoted in the Texas Panhandle for the last few years. In this regard, he made it clear that while he did not favor encumbering his own ranch with an industrial wind plant, he was interested in assisting other Panhandle landowners with developing their wind resources.

Following the presentations, audience members were given an opportunity to ask questions of the assembled panel. And ask, they did! Suffice to say, the opening session was anything but dull and set the stage for what proved to be a very successful AFWA conference.

A special debt of gratitude is warranted for all TPWD staff who helped organize and facilitate this event. As the home state agency, TPWD played a major role in ensuring our colleagues from across the country were treated to the kind of hospitality our state is known for, far and wide. Once again, you all did that and much more.

Thanks for all you do for Texas' wild things and wild places. They need you more than ever.

Curtis Smith

TRACKS & TRAILS

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KUDOS

At the awards banquet of their 2009 annual meeting, held in Austin at the Hyatt Regency, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) presented a Special Recognition Award to **Dr. Mike Berger**, former TPWD Wildlife Division director, who recently retired from the agency. His outstanding accomplishments included the development and implementation of Texas' Wildlife Conservation Plan, the addition of over 7 million acres to the state's wildlife management plans, and the development of a proactive partnership with The Nature Conservancy to conserve key prairie chicken grasslands and habitats. Dr. Berger also served as the U.S. Chair of the Wildlife Table of the Border Governor's Conference, a bi-national forum to coordinate the conservation work of U.S. and Mexican states.



Also at the AFWA conference, the National Wild Turkey Federation sponsored a breakfast at which they presented TPWD Small Game and Habitat Assessment Program Leader **Vernon Bevell** with a print in recognition of his many years of service and leadership for turkey restoration and habitat management. Recently Vernon was also recognized by the Central Flyway Council, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Flyway Council, in ceremonies in Washington, D.C., for his many years of dedicated service to the waterfowl resources of North America. Mr. Bevell will retire in January following 40 years of conservation service, including 17 years in Texas.



"A New Deal for Texas Parks," an interactive Web site developed by State Parks Planner **Sarah Lisle** and a team from the Interpretation & Exhibits Branch of the State Parks Division, received First Place in the Web/Multimedia category of the 2009 Media Awards competition held annually by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). Award recipients will be recognized during the NAI National Workshop in Hartford, Connecticut, November 17-21. The new site is "live" as part of the State Parks section of the TPWD Web site.

HR POLICY CORNER

Employee Records

The Human Resources (HR) Division maintains all employees' master personnel records. Originals of all of the following documents shall be maintained in an employee's file: employment application and college transcripts, personnel action request forms (PWD 95), performance appraisals, personal information change forms, final documentation of disciplinary actions, EEO/Fraud compliance training documentation, dual employment requests and other documents determined by the Human Resources Director to be pertinent to the employee's employment. Supervisors may maintain local files, to include counseling memos, letters of appreciation and/or recommendation, training certificates, etc. Employee information that is expressly public under the Public Information Act includes: employee name, ethnicity, salary, job title and dates of employment. Other information that is not confidential is also considered public.



Anglers have fun, get “reel” at Falcon SP tourney

On August 1, nearly 460 adults and 300 kids attended the First Annual Falcon State Park “Kid Fish” Tournament. The event was supported and sponsored by TPW Commissioner Antonio Falcon. Local TPWD game wardens joined the efforts of park staff, Inland Fisheries, and the Starr County 4H Club to put on the event, with catfish contributed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery. “The event was a success, and everyone had a blast,” said Falcon State Park Superintendent Donald Beard. “We hope there will be many more to come!”



Families and kids of all ages shared a sunny day of fishing on the lake at Falcon SP.



Texas Game Warden Dennis Ray Gazaway, Jr., talks with tourney visitors relaxing in the shade of their umbrella.



PHOTOS BY CINDY BEARD



Alternative energy promoter T. Boone Pickens makes his point to a full room at the opening plenary session.

AFWA Annual Meeting

The AFWA Conference, held at the Hyatt Regency in Austin Sept. 13–16, brought together conservation leaders and AFWA members from all over the country to participate in wide-ranging sessions and committee meetings on topics such as Bio-Fuels, Game Birds, Human-Wildlife Conflict, Climate Change, Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism, Invasive Species, Education, Outreach & Diversity, and many other topics.



From left to right: TPWD Wildlife Division employees Rosie Roegner, Linda Campbell, Clayton Wolf and Clay Brewer (interim WL director) pose by Ladybird Lake with former WL director Mike Berger, TWA vice-president of Public Policy (and former TPWD employee) Kirby Brown, and Robert Abernathy of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

PHOTOS BY CHASE A. FOUNTAIN

MILESTONES



NEW EMPLOYEES

STATE PARKS

Marilyn Robertson
Adm. Asst. III, Lockhart
Darlene Jones
CSR II, Austin
John Towers
Park Rgr. III, Karnack

WILDLIFE

Jonah Evans
Program Spec. V, Alpine
Annaliese Scoggin
NRS II, Midland
Timothy Siegmund
NRS I, College Station
John Weaver
F&WT II, Tennessee Colony

UP THE LADDER

INLAND FISHERIES

Stephanie Shelton
Systems Analyst III to NRS VI

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Brenda Engledow
Adm. Asst. III to Adm. Asst. IV
Nereida Mercado
PCO I to PCO II
Irma Sanchez
PCO II to PCO III

STATE PARKS

Jessica Guidry
Clerk I to Clerk II
Linda Matthews
Clerk I to Clerk II
Jessica Rosalez
Adm. Asst. III to Adm. Asst. IV

Mary Smith
Adm. Asst. I to Adm. Asst. II

WILDLIFE

Calvin Richardson
Program Spec. V to NRS VI

SERVICE AWARDS

5 YEARS

James Booker, IF
Amy Hanna, Wild.
Karen Hardin, Wild.
Ignatz Ledwig, Jr., SP
James Mullenweg, SP
Estella Pena, SP
Crisela Rodriguez, SP
Yi Shen, CF
Hector Villanueva, SP

10 YEARS

Albert Cooksey III, SP
Susie Corralejo, IT
Mary Dean, HR
Westley Dutter, IF
Rebecca Gonzales, HR
Brenda Iniguez, SP
Michael Kleinert, SP
Heidi Kryger-Bailey, Wild.
Nathan Kuhn, CF
Peggy Kunze, IT
Jason Moore, IT
David Perry, Inf.
Lori Reiley, SP
John Theiss, LE
Will VanWisse, SP
William Whitus, LE
Flo Wong, SP

15 YEARS

Margaret Melton, SP
Richard Pike, Wild.
Michelle Valek, SP
Martha Yarbrough, SP

20 YEARS

Sherwanda Irvin, LE
Ramiro Medrano, IF
Richard Roberts, Comm.
Richard Walton, Inf.

25 YEARS

Ruben Cantu, Wild.
Jesse Carter, EO
Amos Cooper, Wild.
Janie Reeh, SP
Jimmy VanZandt, SP

30 YEARS

James Hoy, IF
Jack Ralph, IF

35 YEARS

Phil Durocher, IF

RETIREMENTS

George Bell
SP, 27 years
Daniel Flores
LE, 31 years
Willie Harrison, Jr.
SP, 31 years
Wendel Jones
IF, 12 years
Edward Litteken
LE, 27 years
Rollin MacRae
IF, 27 years
Andy Perez
LE, 27 years
Lynn Reed
SP, 20 years
Bryan Sharp
SP, 29 years
Sandra Sweeney
SP, 24 years

AFWA conference...

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The federal voice on the plenary panel was Assistant Interior Secretary Tom Strickland, who emphasized that siting (location) is the key with wind power. He said wind projects "will not get a free pass" because they are important for clean air and national security.

Strickland drew loud applause when he described Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's Treasured Landscapes plan to attain full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million by 2014.

Strickland also noted the selection of Sam Hamilton to head the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hamilton spent much of the 1990s in Austin dealing with endangered species and private property rights issues.

The AFWA plenary was webcast via live streaming video for the first time, with help from TPWD's video experts, bringing more than 300 other people to it online.

From there, the conference broke out into committee and subcommittee sessions focused on topics like Bio-Fuels, Game Birds, Human-Wildlife Conflict, Climate Change, Hunting & Shooting Sports Participation, Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism, Invasive Species, and Education, Outreach & Diversity, among others.

"A big buzz was the concept of landscape conservation cooperatives," said Ross Melinchuk, TPWD deputy executive director supervising the Wildlife and Fisheries divisions. "Also, pervading the conference was climate change, fish and wildlife adaptation to it, and funding to address it. It seems almost every state is struggling with the challenge to keep funds flowing to their agency to fulfill their mission—it's a challenge and an opportunity as well."

In the wind energy subcommittee, TPWD's Kathy Boydston shared the Texas model for proactive engagement with electric regulators and utilities, an attempt to coordinate early on turbine and transmission line projects and avoid habitat impacts and controversy later.

The invasive species committee heard about possible hazards from bio-fuels crops becoming invasive problems. The group also discussed whether there could be new federal rules coming creating enforcement responsibilities for states to keep recreational boaters from transporting invasives or dumping contaminants.

In the fisheries/water resources committee there was discussion about possibly creating an AFWA oceans committee or subcommittee to deal with issues coming out of the Obama administration regarding fisheries management, pollution, trade, coastal zone planning and other factors.

For more information about AFWA, visit the organization Web site at www.fishwildlife.org

— Tom Harvey

Preparing for Swine Flu Season

As you may recall from last spring, Governor Perry declared a public health emergency covering the entire state due to confirmed cases of H1N1 Influenza; many of you and/or close relatives, co-workers, friends, and associates may have been affected in some form or fashion by the H1N1 outbreak. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is anticipating even more flu cases during the upcoming winter season reflecting wider transmission of the H1N1 virus, in addition to a variety of seasonal flu strains. In preparation for the rapidly approaching flu season, TPWD has developed policy guidelines to minimize the interruption of agency services and protect the health and safety of all employees. **These guidelines are available on WILDnet.** Please take a few minutes to read and familiarize yourself with them.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Check the current training schedule online at <https://wildnet.tpwd.state.tx.us/ir/cs/train/calendar.phtml> or contact Andra Clark, technical trainer, at (512) 389-4782 for more information.

2009 EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

Vicki Sybert, Wildlife

Regional Interpretive Specialist

Vicki Sybert excels through her superb people skills, her can-do attitude and the great sense of humor that enables her to fill multiple demands from diverse constituencies. Vicki is an advisor and instructor for four Master Naturalist chapters, and received the Governor's Award for Exemplary Partnerships in Math, Science and Technology. Vicki is skilled at identifying events and groups that can help disseminate the agency's messages. She designed water-wise native landscape plans for local communities and helped organize work teams to install the xeriscapes. Vicki wrote almost a half-million dollars in grant proposals to provide interpretive materials, training and exhibits for projects initiated on WMAs, state parks and other public lands.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Chris Cummings, Inland Fisheries

Data Analyst

Chris Cummings taught himself a new programming language, completely redesigned an Internet server in that new language, and then proceeded to create tools that would help the other members of the team develop programs for the server. He is the primary architect of the framework for the Inland Fisheries GOFISH server, which houses the division's data and Web applications for stocking, fish monitoring, creel, age and growth, grass carp permits, procedure manuals, outreach, research and many other applications. The GOFISH server has served as an inspiration to Tennessee, Virginia, Oklahoma and Mississippi, among other states. The GOFISH project was awarded Honorable Mention by the Fisheries Administration Section of the American Fisheries Society.

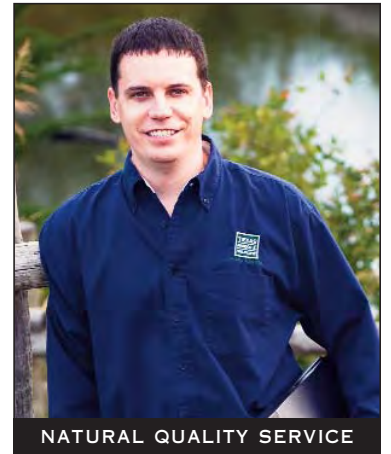


INNOVATION

Jeremy Leitz, Coastal Fisheries

Human Dimensions Specialist

As a human dimensions expert, Jeremy Leitz helps work groups focus on overarching agency issues that impact the way we do business. One of Jeremy's fishing surveys saved the agency \$40,000. Results from his surveys have shown that trophy carp fishing on Lady Bird Lake is of international interest and that by focusing our educational efforts in San Antonio, we can better protect the seagrass beds in Redfish Bay. Through research and analysis of other states' actions in comparison to our previous fee structure, Jeremy determined that a modest fee increase would be acceptable to our constituents. Jeremy has supported many Natural Leader projects and is a member of Natural Leaders Class VIII.



NATURAL QUALITY SERVICE

Brad Hood, State Parks

Regional Maintenance Specialist

Brad Hood manages over 100 state park minor repair projects totaling nearly \$800,000, while constantly seeking ways to improve operational efficiency. He has taken on the consuming task of keeping the Texas Outdoor Family fleet and equipment running. Brad's experience as a wastewater system installer has saved the state tens of thousands of dollars in work that would have otherwise been contracted to outside providers. He helped develop backcountry campsites and other facilities at Big Bend Ranch SP and led a team of park rangers in the response to Hurricane Ike. Brad serves many parks statewide by maintaining his Firefighter certification and being an ATV instructor.

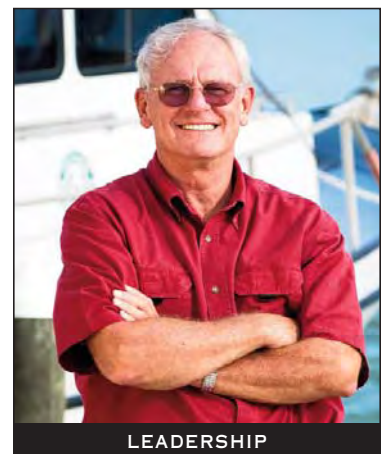


CUSTOMER SERVICE

Ed Hegen, Coastal Fisheries

Regional Director, Region 2

A two-time winner of the Leadership award, Ed Hegen is always initiating new ideas for the betterment of the agency. He led the way in developing sampling protocols that resulted in the nation's largest and most continuous fisheries-dependent and -independent databases. Ed requires each of his eco-leaders to go through the Natural Leaders program and has twice served as a mentor. His leadership in implementing the seagrass conservation plan will serve the state for years to come. Ed always encourages staff to pursue new challenges. Prime examples are the regionalization of the spotted seatrout regulations in the Lower Laguna Madre and the recent guiding license for paddle crafts.



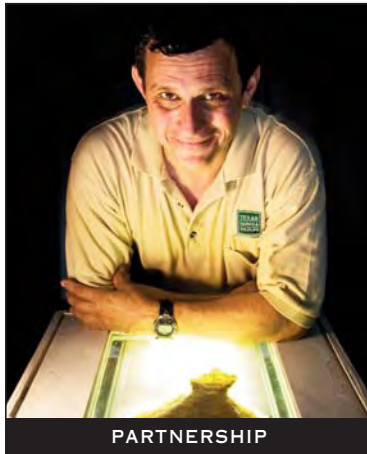
LEADERSHIP

Robert Vega, Coastal Fisheries

Stock Enhancement Director

Robert Vega works tirelessly to build relationships between TPWD, universities and organizations from around the world. He established formal research partnerships with Texas A&M and UT's Marine Science Institute to strengthen the scientific basis of marine stock enhancement.

Robert plays a key role in the relationship between TPWD and organizations such as the Coastal Conservation Association and the Seawater Enhancement Association, researchers from Norway to Nigeria, and the impressive number of volunteers who serve as an extension of the marine-conservation education program. The Marine Stock Enhancement program is regarded elsewhere in the United States and around the world as a model program.



PARTNERSHIP

Jackie Poole, Wildlife

Botanist

On a regular basis, Jackie Poole crawls in gullies, climbs cliff sides and gets wet in order to find and count the most rare of Texas native plants. For example, she found a variety of starviolet in the Chihuahuan Desert that is named for her—*Stenaria mullarae pooleanna*—and is also known as Jackie's bluet. Jackie is the lead author of *The Rare Plants of Texas*, cited as "the most reliable single source of rare plant information in existence." The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently recognized Jackie for her pioneering work on the conservation and recovery of Texas wild rice, the Tobusch fishhook, Texas snowbells and the Texas poppy-mallow.



CONSERVATION

Ervin Hartl, Wildlife

Fish and Wildlife Technician

Ervin Hartl is the only state employee on the 43,000-acre Matagorda Wildlife Management Area, which is accessible only by a nine-mile solitary boat trip. Due to the caustic and corrosive nature of his environment, equipment failure and malfunction are the norm; however, within the first six months of his tenure, Ervin brought all the trucks, generators, tractors and mowers to full operating mode. Ervin saves the agency thousands of dollars annually with his carpentry, electrical and plumbing expertise. Through his vast knowledge of the wildlife in the area, background in hunting and fishing, and helpful nature, he has developed a great reputation with our public.



SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS



OUTSTANDING TEAM

From left to right: Brett Johnson, Stephen Benn, Kelly Bender, Judit Green, John Davis, Lois Balin, Richard Heilbrun, Diana Foss and Keith Crenshaw. Not pictured: Jessica Alderson.

Urban Wildlife Program

Wildlife

The Urban Wildlife Program Team reaches tens of thousands of constituents each year through Master Naturalists, public presentations, technical guidance projects and media events. Whether it's working with partners to turn an old building into an urban bat roost, working with regional planners/developers to plan for connected open spaces, or creating habitat at school sites for teachers and kids, these biologists are constantly seeking new ways to connect us to our urban public and keep the department relevant to our state's urban constituency.



OUTSTANDING TEAM

From left to right: Douglas Porter, Angela Reed and Dennis Gerow.

CCC Web Site: Designing Texas State Parks Team

State Parks

The three members of the CCC Web Site: Designing Texas State Parks Team had never worked together nor had they worked on a project of this kind. In six short months, they gathered, analyzed and presented information and helped design an award-winning Web site about the Civilian Conservation Corps and its impact on our state parks. They invested close to 5,000 hours on the project, in addition to their regular duties. The Architectural Design Committee of the National Endowment for the Arts awarded \$35,000 for the Web site project, which was awarded the Texas Association of Museums' highest honor.