Welcome to the summer issue of the newsletter. So far, at least as I write this, the year is shaping up as pretty much an average one, which is good considering the past few we’ve had to endure. Temperatures, although actually seasonal, seem mild compared to recent years (especially July), and rainfall also appears to be running about average in some areas, a little below average in others. As the summer winds down and fall approaches, many will be out collecting survey data to prepare for the upcoming hunting season. Hopefully the year will bring good hatches, high fawn crops, and large antlers.

I think for the first time since the newsletter started there aren’t any personnel changes within the district to tell you about. Looks like you’re stuck with this crew at least for a little while. Be sure to read the article on the public hunting opportunities available through TPWD. This is very much an underutilized opportunity to hunt several quality areas around the state at minimal cost (no cost in some cases, especially the youth hunt categories). Application deadlines are coming up soon. I also added a new ‘section’ for this and future issues on helpful web links.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. As always, feel free to distribute to any and all that are interested in reading it.
Summer in the Post Oak Savannah can be tough. A general lack of precipitation combined with long, hot days, takes a toll on wildlife habitat in the area. As a result, the availability of beneficial forbs (quality food items for most wildlife species) declines substantially relative to spring months. Luckily, there are a few beneficial summer forbs to help wildlife through the tough times. One such plant is the partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*).

Partridge pea is a warm season annual legume from the pea family and is generally found throughout the Midwest and eastern United States. It provides beneficial wildlife habitat, is good for erosion control, and is a common ornamental. It reaches a height of 1 to 4 feet with several branches growing both prostrate and erect. Leaf arrangement is pinnately-compound and the green leaves consist of 10-15 pairs of leaflets. This, combined with a bright yellow flower, makes partridge pea an easy plant to identify in the field.

Flowering occurs during the summer beginning in June and lasting until the first frost, assuming some rainfall. The yellow flowers are a half-inch to 1-inch wide with up to 4 flowers clustered on the stem. The fruit or seed pod is flat, greenish-brown in color, and 2 to 3 inches long. The pod will split from 2 sides to drop the seeds when mature. The seeds are small and black and will persist as a food source for many months. There are 10 to 20 seeds per pod. Partridge pea is drought-tolerant and will produce seed even under droughty conditions.

Partridge pea can be found on almost any soil type, but seems to prefer sandy or sandy loam soils with a pH above 5.0. It does well in direct and full sunlight although plant growth and seed production increase with up to 30 percent shade. As a legume, partridge pea is able to fix nitrogen to improve soil fertility and fixation is highest during the flowering stage.

Partridge pea does extremely well on disturbed soils and recently-burned pastures. As such, it is considered a good plant for erosion control. The plants will decrease over time as other plants become established and the soil stabilizes, but periodic disking will re-establish stands, which can become fairly dense.

Partridge pea has tremendous wildlife value, both as forage and for cover. Because it can grow in dense colonies, the live plant growth and residual litter can provide substantial thermal and nesting cover for birds and small mammals. Deer and rabbits will readily consume the plant (leaves and seed pod) and the crude protein levels can approach 30%. The seeds are also highly digestible, are high in phosphorous and crude protein, and are used by many small mammal and bird species, especially quail. Seed availability...
usually remains high throughout the fall and winter months. Oftentimes overlooked, partridge pea is also a good pollen and nectar source for many insects, including bees, butterflies, ants, and others. However, although partridge pea is nutritious, it can be toxic to livestock if consumed in large quantities.

If planting partridge pea, remember to always include other species in the mix (a monoculture of anything, even desirable species, is not recommended). Seeds should be drilled around ½-inch deep at a rate of 5-10 pounds per acre. Alternatively, seeds can be broadcast, although at a higher seeding rate (10-20 pounds per acre), and lightly tilled. Because of the slower germination, planting should ideally occur early in the spring (February), although later plantings are possible. In a pasture setting, fertilization is not recommended as this tends to promote undesirable species (such as bermudagrass). In a garden or ornamental setting, fertilize according to soil sample recommendations.

Initial plantings usually provide good results, and the plants will reseed themselves each year. Commonly though, plants will diminish over the years. If this occurs, stands of partridge pea can easily be rejuvenated through light disking and/or prescribed burning. Follow-up management should occur during late winter (burning) and spring (disking).

Quotable Quote

All conservation of wildness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when enough have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish.

Aldo Leopold

TROPHY Corner

Tommy Hodges killed this impressive free-ranging 13-point from Milam county last season. The deer had 24-inch mainbeams, an inside spread of 18 7/8 inches and gross-scored 174 2/8.

Dylan Kerbow killed his first buck last season from Madison county. The big 8 point had 10- and 12-inch G2’s, gross-scored 129 5/8, and made the Texas Big Game Awards Program.

James Dixon and son, Wesley, harvested this tremendous alligator from Grimes county back in April. The alligator was a little over 12’ 4” and weighed in at 400 pounds.
**BIOLOGIST Bio**

**Tim Siegmund** was born and raised in Lee County in and around the town of Giddings. This rural setting allowed him to roam the pastures and fields fishing, hunting, and exploring as a boy. There was rarely a weekend or holiday that wasn’t spent running trotlines, fishing for largemouth bass, chasing feral hogs, calling predators, or hunting other game animals.

In high school he became aware of the profession of wildlife management, and began to research different university programs. Upon graduating high school, Tim attended Stephen F. Austin State University. Here Tim’s interest in plant identification, wildlife taxonomy, and the outdoors flourished. Numerous outdoor classroom sessions getting hands-on education, bird banding/mist netting, deer captures, small mammal trapping, vegetation sampling/ID, prepared him for his future profession with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

He graduated with a Bachelors of Science degree in Forest Wildlife Management in 2007. His interests eventually led to being accepted into the master’s program at Stephen F. Austin where he conducted 2 years of graduate research conducting habitat suitability and occupancy analysis of black bears in northeast Texas. This was the first graduate research conducted specifically for black bears in east Texas. Shortly after his final field season wrapped up, Tim accepted a position with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in College Station during August of 2009.

Since 2009, Tim has served as the Regulatory Biologist for the 7 southernmost counties in District 5, and offices on the TAMU campus in College Station. He has a variety of duties including deer spotlight surveys, mourning dove surveys, an alligator survey, mourning dove trapping/banding, leasing public hunting lands, and private lands technical guidance. Recently, Tim has begun working with private landowners and the USFWS in implementing conservation for the endangered Houston toad.

Further job functions include being the chapter advisor for the El Camino Real Master Naturalist Chapter in Milam County. The Pastures for Upland Birds Program (PUB) is also of great interest to Tim in delivering on the ground conservation. Over the last 3 years Tim has helped develop species mixes, planting procedures, seed drill delivery, and associated details to assist in the planting of approximately 450 acres of native grasses and forbs for the benefit of grassland wildlife species in his area.

Tim greatly enjoys his job, and hopes to be in the area for years to come. Tim’s interests besides hunting and fishing include playing rugby, bird watching, plant ID/prairie management, gardening and spending time with family. Tim met his wife, Kelsey, in college. They were married in 2009 and welcomed their first child, August, in 2010. You can contact Tim at 979-845-5798 or tim.siegmund@tpwd.texas.gov.
2013 NORTH TEXAS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Friday, August 23rd

Myers Park and Event Center (7117 County Road 166, McKinney)

Cost: $20/person (payable at the door by check or cash)
3 CEU hours provided to current TDA Private Applicators

SPEAKERS & TOPICS

8:00—8:45 a.m.  Registration
8:45—9:00 a.m.  Introductions
9:00—9:30 a.m.  Wildlife Tax Evaluations (Brett Johnson, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)
9:30—10:00 a.m. Predator Control for Wildlife Tax Evaluations (Steven Smith, Samuel R. Noble Foundation)
10:00—10:15 a.m. Break
10:15—11:00 a.m. Wetlands Management (Randy Moore, USDA-NRCS)
11:00—11:45 a.m. Prescribed Burning as a Wildlife Management Tool (Michael Covey, MEC Environmental)
12:00—1:00 p.m. Lunch—Gracy Catering Service
1:00—1:30 p.m.  Wildlife Census (Trevor Tanner, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)
1:30—2:30 p.m.  Supplemental Forage Management for White-tailed Deer (Dr. Billy Higginbotham, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension)

For more information on the Wildlife Program, call Collin County Extension at 972-548-4233 or email r-maxwell@tamu.edu

If attending, please RSVP on or before Tuesday, August 20 by calling the Collin County Extension Office.
Probably no other animal in the United States has as much of a love-hate relationship with people than that of the 'masked bandit'. While cute and seemingly lovable, they can also be quite destructive and a nuisance. But, whether you love them or hate them, raccoons (Procyon lotor) are here to stay.

The raccoon is the largest member of the procyonid family and is native only to North America. However, due to transplants and unintentional escapes, raccoons can now be found in many areas of Europe and Asia. In the US, raccoons are found across the nation with the exception of extremely mountainous terrain. They can be found in most other habitats (such as at my deer feeders), including urban areas (there are large populations that exist solely in cities).

Body size varies considerably, both regionally and seasonally. Adults range from 4 to 30 pounds, with males weighing 15% to 20% more than females. Fall animals (due to fat deposition) can weigh twice as much as the same animals in the spring. The record wild raccoon weighed in at a whopping 62.2 pounds (I think his cousin is the one eating all of my corn). Body lengths typically range from 15 to 38 inches, with an additional 8 to 16 inches of tail. The large raccoon referenced earlier measured 55 inches in length from nose to tail (in case you missed that, that’s a raccoon over 4 ½ feet long).

Easily, the most identifiable feature of a raccoon is the tail, with alternating rings of light and dark fur.

Raccoons are commonly found in the area (especially wherever I put a feeder), although this was not always the case. Populations were considered comparatively low as recently as the 1930’s and 1940’s. Several factors have resulted in a large increase in raccoon numbers over the past several decades including an increase in urbanization (raccoons thrive in populated areas due to pet foods and trash), increases in grain crops, transplanting, increased predator control, and the decline in the fur trade. It has been estimated that during the 5 decade period between

Photo by Billy Lambert
1930 and 1980 that the raccoon population increased over 20-fold.

As expected, the home range size varies quite a bit based on the habitat (and how many feeders I have working). For example, in cities, the home range for a raccoon can be as small as 7 acres while in open prairie, it can be as much as 20 square miles. Territories are not defended. Like the home range, animal densities vary substantially, ranging from 1 to 50 or more raccoons per square mile. Urban populations can be as high as 400 animals per square mile.

Raccoons are probably the classic example of a true omnivore, meaning that they will eat both plant and animal matter. They are also a good example of the opportunistic feeding strategy, meaning that whatever they come across may be a potential food item (such as the corn in my deer feeders). Spring and summer usually supply an abundance of fruit, agricultural crops, insects, worms, eggs, fish, amphibians, and crayfish, while nuts, berries, and other mast crops provide an abundance of food in the fall and winter (important for building fat reserves for the winter). Although raccoons will eat birds and small mammals, this occurs infrequently. Overall, the raccoon’s diet consists of about 40% invertebrates, 33% vegetative matter, and 27% vertebrates.

A common misconception is that raccoons need to wash their food or that they lack salivary glands needed to moisten food items. Indeed, in areas with sufficient water, raccoons have been observed dousing food items (I fully expect one day to see a raccoon at my feeder with a bottle of wine in hand). But, raccoons also forage effectively in the absence of water. This behavior is thought to be the raccoon, which has very sensitive and dexterous paws, examining food items. Submerging the paws in water softens the outer layer of the paw thus increasing sensitivity.

Although it varies, the breeding season is controlled by photoperiod and generally occurs late January through mid-March. Courtship occurs over 3 or 4 days and females will mate with multiple males. Dens consist of hollowed trees, rock crevices, or burrows. Gestation lasts from 54 to 70 days, after which 1 to 9 blind and deaf young, called kits or cubs, are born. Larger litters are common in areas with high mortality (making control measures difficult). Males do not assist with raising young and the young are weaned by 16 weeks of age. Juveniles may stay with the mother for up to a year (while she shows them how to eat corn at my feeder).

The average life expectancy for wild raccoons is 2 to 3 years, although captive animals have lived more than 20 years. Common causes of death include hunting, vehicular traffic, and diseases including distemper, rabies, leptospirosis, listeriosis, tetanus, and tularemia. Common natural predators include coyotes, bobcats, and great horned owls (and me cussing at them for eating all of my corn).

Raccoons are known for their intelligence. Research going back to 1908 has shown that raccoons can open complex locks (even when rearranged in a different order than they originally learned), remember solutions to tasks for up to 3 years, and use visual cues to instantly differentiate between identical and different symbols, even years after learned. It’s no wonder they’re able to get corn out of my feeder.

**LINKS OF INTEREST**

Information for pond management, aquatic plant identification, and invasive weed control:

http://aquaplant.tamu.edu/

Map your area of interest to generate reports on soil information, building or pond suitability, native vegetation, forage yields and more:

http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/
USE OF FIRE AND HERBICIDES TO CONTROL YAUPON IN THE POST OAK SAVANNAH

Billy C. Lambert, Jr.


The Post Oak Savannah region originally evolved as a dynamic prairie interspersed with a scattering of various hardwood trees. This savannah system was maintained primarily through massive fires that periodically moved through the landscape. Over the years however, a lack of fire combined with overgrazing has created thick upland woodlands with an associated dense understory layer of yaupon. These dense woodlots are not conducive to sustaining grassland habitats and the wildlife that they once supported.

Research was initiated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Tech University, and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in 2000 on the Gus Engeling WMA in Anderson county to determine the effects of prescribed fire and herbicides on controlling yaupon. Two study areas were selected; the first was burned in February 2000 and second was burned in February 2001.

Re-sprouting yaupon plants were selected from each burn area to represent 6-month and 18-month post-burn spray treatments. Additionally, 6 different spray treatments were tested: no spraying, spraying with diesel only, and spraying with 5%, 10%, 20%, and 25% Garlon 4 in diesel. A backpack sprayer was used to apply spray mixtures to the basal area (not a foliar application) of the yaupon plants during mid-July 2001. Plant mortality was observed 24 months after spraying.

As expected, prescribed burning alone was very successful in "top-killing" the yaupon. But, although canopy cover was reduced, many of the plants survived the fire and re-sprouted. Actual mortality could not be determined as none of the plants were individually marked prior to the burn. However, all of the follow-up spraying treatments of the re-sprouts resulted in very high mortality. In fact, the least effective spraying treatment (spraying diesel only 18 months post-burn) still resulted in a 60% kill of the yaupon sprouts.

The addition of just 5% Garlon 4 to the diesel resulted in a 92% kill rate 18 months post-burn and an even higher 96% 6 months post-burn. If a spray treatment is applied 6 months after a burn, there is no need to exceed 10% Garlon 4 in the mixture as kill of yaupon resprouts was maximized at the 10% level.

Considering cost as well as the effectiveness of treatments, if killing 84% of the yaupon sprouts is ‘good enough’, a basal application of diesel only (no Garlon 4) appears to be the most cost-effective treatment (the authors estimated a treatment cost of $0.17 per treated plant). If a complete kill (100%) is needed, the estimated cost per plant using the 10% Garlon 4 6 months post-burn was estimated to be $0.40 per treated yaupon.
Burn and post-burn photographs (January 2011 and May 2012 respectively) for 3 photopoints in Robertson county showing good vegetative response following a burning-only treatment. Little vegetative recovery occurred during the 2011 growing season due to severe drought conditions. Substantial herbaceous and woody growth occurred in 2012, however, following adequate winter and spring rainfall. All 3 areas were dominated by yaupon pre-burn and exhibited little herbaceous growth. Herbicides were not used post-burn and re-sprouting of yaupon has occurred. Follow-up burns or herbicide applications (or both) will be needed in the next few years to maintain the site. Photos by Billy Lambert.
Billy C. Lambert, Jr.

It’s no secret that hunting can be expensive. By the time you add up guns, ammunition bows, arrows, gas, lodging, lease costs, taxidermy, meat processing, corn/food, optics, clothing, and various gadgets usually geared more towards hunters than the game they are pursuing, the price per pound of meat would probably put caviar to shame. For most hunters, the most expensive component of hunting (or at least a big part) is the price of a lease. And as we all know, the more quality the hunting spot, the higher the price tends to be.

Surprisingly, many folks forget that many quality hunting areas exist within the public hunting programs through Texas Parks and Wildlife and the fees, if any, to enjoy this resource are minimal. Whether you’re after ducks and geese, quail and pheasant, feral hogs and coyotes, white-tailed deer and exotics, mule deer and pronghorn, or even the coveted desert bighorn sheep, there are opportunities out there for the taking. My first pheasant and chachalaca were taken on TPWD public lands, and currently my largest white-tailed deer and Rio Grande turkey were taken on public hunts as well.

The public hunting program can be broken down into 3 parts: Big Time Texas Hunts, Annual Public Hunting Permit, and the Public Hunt Drawing System.

Big Time Texas Hunts give hunters a chance to win 8 premium hunt packages on some of the finest private ranches and prime wildlife management areas in the state. The hunts include Grand Slam, Wild Hog Adventure, Premium Buck Hunt, Waterfowl Adventure, Whitetail Bonanza, Exotic Safari, Big Time Bird Hunt, and Gator Hunt. The much sought-after Grand Slam will give a hunter and non-hunting guest the opportunity to hunt desert bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, and mule deer. Plus, all food, lodging, and taxidermy are provided. This is an amazing opportunity as the desert bighorn sheep permits alone frequently bring $75,000 or more at auctions. Opportunities for the hunts can be purchased for $10 apiece ($9 online) and there is no limit to the number of entries you can buy. Proceeds from all permit sales help support wildlife conservation, habitat management, and public hunting in Texas. For more information, see http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/public/btth/.

The Annual Public Hunting Permit allows hunters, with the purchase of a $48 annual hunting permit, the opportunity to hunt close to 1 million acres across the state. Purchasers of the permit receive a book in the mail that details each hunting area and provides a map, available games species, seasons and bag limits, and any special regulations/restrictions for the area. In general, you’re free to come and go as you please, although some areas require on-site registration. As I write this, the new book isn’t quite finished yet, but using last year’s information, hunting opportunities were available on 179 areas, ranging in size from 46 to 115,000 acres, in 97 different counties across the state. Many of these are located in the Post Oak Savannah. Overall, game species available include deer, hogs, turkey, quail, pheasant, chachalaca, dove, squirrel, waterfowl and other legal species. For the most part, the game available, seasons, and bag limits follow the county regulations, but there are exceptions (most notably on the dove fields). Youth under the age of 17 are allowed to hunt free with a permitted adult. For more information, see http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/public/annual_public_hunting/.

Photo by David Lange

Steve Lange harvested this outstanding mule deer on a public hunt offered through the Public Hunting Draw System during the 2005-2006 hunting season.
The Public Hunting Draw System is the best opportunity for hunters to utilize many of the quality departmental lands in the state. The number of hunters is regulated through the draw system, so you don’t have to worry about other folks in your hunting area. In fact, only hunters listed on your permit application are allowed in your hunt area. Hunters apply (up to 4 hunters on an application in most cases) for various species/hunt categories for a nominal fee (usually $3 per hunter). If selected for a hunt (random drawing), hunters are then charged a small fee for the hunt (usually either $80 for a 3-day hunt or $130 for a 5-day hunt). Even if you’re not drawn for a hunt, hunters still have an opportunity to acquire a stand-by permit for those hunters that were drawn, but did not pay their fee or show up for the hunt. As an added bonus, each year that you apply for a hunt category and do not get drawn, you and members of your party each acquire a preference point that increases your odds of being drawn in successive years. There is no application fee or hunt fee for the youth hunt categories (no reason to not get the kids out hunting). For the upcoming season, there are 21 different hunt categories and an additional 8 youth hunt categories for species such as alligators, white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn, desert bighorn sheep, exotics, feral hogs, javelina, turkey, and more. For more information, see http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/public/public_hunt_drawing/.

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 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 and discussed. The workshop 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.state.gov.
UPCOMING Event!

The Lonestar Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation will hold their annual fundraising banquet at the Brazos Center in Bryan, TX at 6:00 pm on 30 August 2013. Help support wild turkey research, management, and restoration while enjoying an open bar and a steak dinner.

Silent and live auction items, door prizes, and many raffle items are all up for grabs. Highlights include a gun safe, rifles, shotguns, and pistols, many limited edition prints and sculptures, feeders, hunting blinds, knives, and many more outdoor-related items. Plus, stop by and visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife Operation Game Thief Trailer. Tickets include membership to NWTF and steak dinner meal with open bar. For more information, contact Darrin Allen at 979-219-0286.

Come out for a night of fun and entertainment while supporting the National Wild Turkey Federation.
# Wildlife Habitat Management Calendar

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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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PWS LF W7000-1674 (8/13)

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