



TEXAS' FLORA AND FAUNA:

Texas Timberdoodles - where do they come from?



Photo by Kent Frick

Every species is odd in its own way, taking advantage of a unique ecological niche. However, the American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) seems exceedingly odd - an upside down brain, short legs, ears in front of its eyes, and gargantuan rear-placed eyes which allow the bird to bury its prehensile bill deep in the soil while still keeping watch for predators. Even its wing molt is different, being the only North American shorebird to not exhibit evolutionary loss of a fifth secondary feather. Far different from oth-

er shorebirds that are typically wetland-dependent specialists, inhabiting lightly vegetated areas, the woodcock prefers forested habitats. It has been best defined as being a “forest-dwelling shorebird”. Further, the natural history of the species is even more confusing – it is widely known for its foraging specialization on earthworms. However, most of its known breeding range covers a geographic region in which there are no known native earthworms. Prior to European settlement, the recently glaciated northern breeding range of the woodcock was considered to be completely devoid of earthworms. Only after the introduction of Old World earthworms has this food source been regionally available. So how did woodcock become so tightly associated with earthworms? How did their migration system evolve? These questions remain largely unanswered. Woodcock begin to arrive in eastern Texas in late October reaching peak wintering populations in late December/January. Most woodcock depart East Texas by the end of February. During winter, they remain

hidden in the dense thickets by day and may use open field habitats at night for feeding and their famous courtship display, brought to life by Leopold in “A Sand County Almanac”. Male woodcock in East Texas typically begin undertaking “sky dance” displays in early January and it is not uncommon for woodcock to nest in East Texas in February when adequate conditions are met. Central Louisiana and eastern Texas are one of three areas that winter the greatest number of woodcock, as indicated by Christmas Bird Count Data, and includes the Delmarva Peninsula and the coastal plain of South Carolina. The area surrounding the Atchafalaya basin in Louisiana winters some of the greatest densities of American woodcock, but widespread loss of bottomland hardwood forest habitat (80%) along the Mississippi River has greatly reduced the amount of regionally available habitat. In East Texas, forest habitat abounds in the form of loblolly pine plantations, as well as U.S. National Forests. Logging practices on pine plantations create dense thickets of early successional habitats and mature pine stands found on National Forest property provide dense understory

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WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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EDITOR, JENNIFER M. KORN

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society Newsletter is electronically published in January, April, July, and October. Contributions on any topic pertaining to wildlife, announcements of interest to members, or Chapter business are welcome and should be submitted to the Editor (Jennifer Korn, jennifer.korn@students.tamuk.edu) by the 15th of the preceding month. Change of e-mail address should be sent to the Listserv Coordinator (Cristy Burch, cburch@tpwd.state.tx.us). Membership in the Chapter is \$15/yr for students and \$25/yr for regular members, payable to the Treasurer (Terry Blankenship).

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to the heat of the summer!! It's July and most of you are probably in the midst of hot and dry weather – here's hoping we catch a cumulative break and get some much needed rain soon. Since our last newsletter, many of us have finished classes, been out in the field, working on summer management plans, enjoying some traveling, or even retirement – but I am sure all have received formal word of the presence of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Texas. I know many Texas Chapter members and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department personnel are working with private and public landowners on strategies to manage this issue. The news splashed across the “wires” and undoubtedly will remain a hot topic – I urge Texas Chapter members to keep current on the issue, as many of us will be fielding calls and email - particularly over the next few months.

On to other news....the 2012 edition (and 18th) of the Wildlife Conservation Camp was recently held at Camp Tyler from July 7-14, and from my first-hand experience and visiting with many of the campers and professionals that participated and assisted – the camp was a very successful endeavor this year!! Please join me in providing sincere appreciation and thanks to Michelle Wood-Ramirez, who was tireless in her organization, planning, and delivery of the Camp this year. Her leadership was critical to this year's Camp, and I really appreciate her dedication and efforts. Also, thank you to Annaliese Scoggin, Richard Heilbrun, and so many other Texas Chapter members, returning campers, and student leaders who volunteered their time, energy, and their passion to the Camp and campers this year. I had the opportunity to spend some time with the campers this year, and it was a great experience for me – and hopefully, they were able to gain some knowledge and perspective from me. The interest and knowledge that many of them exhibited during my short time with them was truly inspirational to me – and I believe the campers' experiences will be something they will retain the rest of their lives. There was some discussion at the Summer Board meeting about reconnecting with past campers in time for the 20th Camp in 2014....

In this newsletter, please see the first call for papers, Cottam applications, publication awards and Excellence in Wildlife Conservation – here in July, it may be difficult to be thinking of preparing abstracts and applications – but those deadlines will be upon us quickly! In line with the East Texas flavor this year, please take a look at the article on American woodcock – (although not written by Monty!), a species that is certainly fun to pursue, but equally unusual in its ecology and behavior. Finally, our Executive Director, Doug Slack, has maintained his presence for the Chapter in Austin and elsewhere – please read his column in the next few pages.

Look forward to the next several months – be on the lookout for 2013 meeting information as the summer moves into fall.

Until next time,

Warren Conway, President

TEXAS' FLORA AND FAUNA

thickets of beautyberry, yaupon holly, wax myrtle, Chinese privet, and cane along riparian edges. All of these habitats may be readily used by woodcock if favorable soil conditions are met that allow access to earthworm prey. On the slopes of small stream drainages and depressions throughout the region, optimal soil moisture can be attained across periods of varying precipitation. Although populations are not as dense as may be found in portions of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley, the larger expanses of forested habitat across the landscape in the Pineywoods and western Louisiana likely winter a substantial portion of the population.

American woodcock are a popular webless migratory gamebird, and have a devoted following by hunters throughout the eastern portion of the U.S. However, hunting effort is regionalized with most effort occurring in the Great Lake States, New England, and Louisiana. During the 2011-2012 season, >500,000 hunter days were spent harvesting >300,000 woodcock; both considerable for a species with a 3-bird bag and 45 day season. Unlike waterfowl, banding efforts are less concentrated, and numbers of banded woodcock are dramatically less than waterfowl annually. Between 1959-2011, 27 bands were recovered from woodcock migrating to or from Texas. Of these, 2 were banded in Texas, both of which were later recovered in Texas, and of the 25 banded outside of Texas, 13 were banded in Wisconsin, 2 in Minnesota, 5 in Michigan, 2 in Maine, 2 in Louisiana, and 1 from Indiana. Although sample sizes are small, there appears to be some connectivity for Texas wintering woodcock to breeding areas directly north, but also rangewide. Recently, researchers from the Arkansas Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit tracked woodcock during fall migration and documented specific migratory routes using an airplane and 13 radio-marked woodcock. Two birds were found in Illinois and Missouri, 21 days and 16 days after departure; 5 birds were located in southern Arkansas 15-48 days after departure, and one woodcock migrated >1,400 km from Wisconsin to northeastern Texas in <16 days.

This underscores the curious nature of woodcock migration behavior. To truly understand migration, all available

tools must be used, and the development of Stable Isotope Analyses has proven fruitful in this regard for a number of migratory birds. Considering that large sample sizes can be obtained from Parts Collection Surveys for woodcock, linkages can be inferred at a rangewide level. These analyses are used to develop connectivity estimates between breeding and wintering ranges, as ratios of stable isotopes vary among landscapes due to precipitation patterns, anthropogenic factors, and photosynthetic pathways used by plants. Migratory bird feathers carry isotopic signatures indicative of molt origin to spatiotemporally distinct locations. For example, stable isotopes of hydrogen are commonly used in bird migration studies because the amount of deuterium in precipitation follows a latitudinal gradient across North America, values mostly decreasing from the Southeast to the Northwest. Current research at Stephen F. Austin State University is attempting to define these linkages and indirectly estimate frequency



of southern breeding using subadult feathers obtained from local hunters in Texas and Louisiana as well as from wings collected from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service Parts Collection Surveys. Understanding continental population sources of American woodcock is important as they occasionally nest in the southern U.S. and nesting grounds may also be moving north outside of the principle breeding region surveyed by Singing Ground Surveys. The extent of southern breeding is not well understood and is highly variable among years, but contributions from southern breeding grounds should be quantified. To date, >250 feather samples have been analyzed. Comparable with other recent migratory research, the woodcock likely shows considerable within species variance in migratory behavior and should not be categorized holistically. Initial analyses indicate that it may exhibit some combination of leapfrog, facultative, and stepping stone migration patterns. How they developed these migration patterns remain unknown, and final analyses are not complete, but woodcock remain an unusual forest-dwelling shorebird that continues to baffle ecologists.

THOUGHTS FROM THE WILD

R. DOUGLAS SLACK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Representing the Texas Chapter of TWS, I was an invited participant in a Non-game Coalition meeting in Cedar Hill, Texas hosted by the North Texas Master Naturalist program. Texas Chapter member, Richard Heilbrun (TPWD Urban Program Leader) coordinated the meeting and the workshop was facilitated by Naomi Edelson from the National Wildlife Federation. The purpose of the meeting was to begin rebuilding the Teaming With Wildlife coalition and to develop a stable and enhanced funding stream for the conservation of nongame wildlife and plants in Texas. The Texas Chapter was a Teaming With Wildlife coalition member in the 1990s. I am sure that you will hear more about the development of a coalition of partners to enhance the conservation of Texas' rich natural legacy.

Deer breeding regulations continue to receive strong interest. I testified before the Texas House of Representatives House Committee on Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. The testimony was invited by the Committee Chair, Representative Ryan Guillen, on the topic of deer breeder compliance with existing regulations. Our recommendations were: (1) support statutes and rules that safeguard the health of wild populations of deer, (2) maintain strict adherence to regulations which tightly control the movement of deer both within and into the state, (3) retain regulations that ensure the visual field identification of captive-raised deer, (4) continue strict adherence to administrative procedures necessary for tracking captive-raised deer moved within Texas and (5) enhance and require education for all permittees prior to permit issuance and/or permit renewal.

Another portion of the testimony follows: We face a lack of compliance with regulations designed to protect the health of native wildlife species (white-tailed deer) and domestic animals. These illegal acts threaten the economic and cultural well-being of entire rural communities. There are now 18 states and 2 Canadian provinces with reports of Chronic Wasting Disease in their cervid herds. Chronic Wasting Disease, a fatal neurological disease, is

similar to mad-cow disease or scrapie in sheep. Protecting our native white-tailed deer from exposure to deer with Chronic Wasting Disease and other diseases such as bovine TB must be our highest priority. For example, a population of native white-tailed deer that contacts deer illegally imported to Texas, and who carry Chronic Wasting Disease, would likely jeopardize a population's health as well as create an environment that discourages the legal harvest of the animals. [Since my testimony the State of New Mexico has reported that CWD has been identified in mule deer from a population residing in New Mexico less than 1 mile from the Texas border.]

You will continue to hear about the conservation values of private land ownership in Texas. Texas Chapter members and former Texas Chapter Presidents, Fred Bryant, Ruben Cantu, and Neal Wilkins spoke during an educational seminar on the Texas Wildlife Association Public Values of Wildlife on Private Lands Initiative, at the TWA annual meeting in June 2012. After the seminar, I was invited to represent the Texas Chapter at a meeting of stakeholder groups to discuss the TWA's Resolution.

I also represented the Texas Chapter at the Austin Woods and Water Club and thanked them for their long-term continued monetary support of the Chapter's summer conservation camp. In addition, I represented the Texas Chapter at the Conservation Design Workshop sponsored by the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute campus.

Keep Texas wildlife wild!
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CHAPTER BUSINESS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SOUTHWEST SECTION

Submitted by Carol Chambers, TWS Council Representative

Many of us are busy with summer field work and I hope you are enjoying time in the field since that's what got most of us into the wildlife profession. I'm back in Nicaragua working on a radio telemetry project with bats. Yesterday I looked up into a termite mound about 15 feet above ground at 3 bats in a maternity roost. With the skills of the Nicaraguan photographer I am working with we could even see the transmitter on the bat.

We continue to have lots going on with TWS. Our Executive Director Michael Hutchins, President Paul Krausman, and other TWS personnel have met with USGS Cooperative Studies Units, US Forest Service National Wildlife Ecologist Sandy Boyce, President of the Wildlife Habitat Council Robert Johnson, and US FWS Director Dan Ashe to discuss issues of mutual interest and opportunities for collaboration. TWS has also met with Vince Burke, Science Editor for Johns Hopkins University Press to discuss joint book publishing efforts. Publication of the 7th edition of the Wildlife Techniques Manual was the first collaborative project, but many more are in progress, including the second edition of the Human Dimensions text and a new textbook on wildlife management.

TWS signed a coalition letter and also submitted an independent letter to Congress to stress the importance of participation by federal employees in meetings held by scientific and professional societies such as TWS.

As of end of May, TWS membership was almost 10,500, up about 1000 from the previous year. We take this as a sign of the value TWS offers members. Consider becoming an investor in TWS - The Investors Campaign for 2012 revolves around the 75th Anniversary of TWS. Members are being asked to donate \$75 in honor of 75 years of TWS. You can attend the 75th Anniversary meeting in Portland this year – look for registration to open up at the end of June. Students - June marks the deadline for Student Research in Progress poster session, Student Chapter of the Year, Student Travel Grants deadlines as well as many subunits' student travel grant

deadlines. We encourage all subunits to review the list of subunit student travel grants at <http://wildlifesociety.org/student-travel-grants/> and contact Shannon Pederson at Shannon@wildlife.org if there is any missing. And by the way, the IV International Wildlife Management Congress is doing well and will be held in Durban, South Africa in July this year.

Look for the next Wildlife Professional to focus on invasive species and African wildlife conservation. The fall 2012 issue will commemorate the 75th anniversary of The Wildlife Society. That issue will feature more than 15 articles documenting the history of TWS, its pioneers, its contributions to the literature on wildlife management and conservation, and its accomplishments in policy, international outreach, and student outreach.

Check out the new TWS web site (<http://www.wildlife.org/>) – it has been redesigned and was launched in late May. Early anecdotal evidence (comments from members and users) suggest that it is being very well received and is easier to use and more attractive than the old format.

Don't forget to support our publications by subscribing to them - especially the Wildlife Society Bulletin!



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CHAPTER BUSINESS

EXCELLENCE IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AWARDS CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD:

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nominations for the Educator of the year Award. The Educator of the Year Award recognizes wildlife professionals for outstanding achievements in wildlife conservation education. Please submit a narrative explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible) to: Ben Koerth, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, Box 6109, Nacogdoches, TX 75962, or bkoerth@sfasu.edu. The deadline for nominations is 31 October 2012.

LAND STEWARDSHIP AWARD:

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nominations for the Land Stewardship Award. The Land Stewardship Award recognizes landowners or other appropriate individuals for their wildlife conservation efforts, pictures are appreciated along with nomination. Please submit a letter of nomination explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award to: Ben Koerth, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, Box 6109, Nacogdoches, TX 75962, or bkoerth@sfasu.edu. The deadline for nominations is 31 October 2012.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nominations for the Outstanding Achievement Award. The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes wildlife professionals for their outstanding achievements during the course of their involvement with natural resources management and conservation. Please submit a letter of nomination explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible) to: Ben Koerth, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, Box 6109, Nacogdoches, TX 75962, or bkoerth@sfasu.edu. The deadline for nominations is 31 October 2012.

Publication Awards Call for Nominations

This is the first call for nominations of exceptional publications that include a Texas Chapter, TWS member as one of the top three authors and were (or will be) published within the last 3 years. Categories include:

- Books (published 2009 - 2012)
- Peer-reviewed Journal Articles (2009 - 2012)
- Technical Publications and Bulletins (2009 - 2012)
- Electronic Media (i.e. websites, CD's, and DVDs)
- Popular articles or other publications (2009 - 2012)

The deadline for submission is 15 November 2012. To nominate a publication, please submit 5 copies to the Publications Committee Chair: Clint Boal, Texas Tech University, 218 Agriculture Science, MS 2120, Lubbock, TX 79409-2120; email: clint.boal@ttu.edu; tel 806-742-2851.

CHAPTER BUSINESS

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS FOR THE 49TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

PRESENTED PAPER AND POSTER PRESENTATION

Abstracts are now being accepted for the technical paper and the poster presentation sessions at the 2012 Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society meeting in Houston, Texas.

In addition to the Plenary session, the meeting will offer technical paper sessions, and an expanded poster presentation session for students (undergraduate or graduate) and wildlife professionals.

Best poster presentation by an undergraduate and graduate will be awarded as in previous years. Papers/posters presenting the results of wildlife field investigations and analyses as well as topic reviews of interest to wildlife students and professionals in Texas are encouraged. Abstracts should be submitted via the abstract submission website, <http://tctws.tamu.edu/>.

Deadline for receipt of abstracts is 30 November 2012.

Please indicate, where requested, your preference for presentation format (i.e., paper, poster, or no preference) and session. For those entering no preference, a decision will be made by the program committee and presenter notified via email. Any questions pertaining to abstract submission should be directed to the Program Chair: Chris Comer, Stephen F. Austin State University, Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, PO Box 6109, SFA Station, Nacadoches, Texas 75962.

E-mail: comerce@sfasu.edu.

Contributed papers will be scheduled at 15-minute intervals to include time (2-3 minutes) for questions and comments. All presenters will be notified of the day, time, and location of their presentations, and instructions on how to prepare for the sessions.

Clarence Cottam presentations will be judged on topic originality, scientific procedures, quality of display, accuracy of conclusions, and response to question from judges. Students wishing to submit should review the instructions for Cottam submissions posted on the website, <http://tinyurl.com/cottamaward>. Abstracts should be submitted via the abstract submission website, <http://tctws.tamu.edu/>.

CHAPTER BUSINESS

Abstract Format

Abstracts should be no longer than 250 words and follow The Journal of Wildlife Management format. Abstract should be concise and include general problem statement, brief review of methods/experimental design, results, and management implications. For statistical significance statement, report P-values only (no need for exact statistical test results). Please follow formatting instructions on the abstract submission website. Program chair will notify persons submitting abstracts soon after their receipt via e-mail.

Short title example:

Effect of domestic rabbit urine on trap response in cottontail rabbits. Jonathan G. Young and Scott E. Henke.

Long Title:

Effect of domestic rabbit urine on trap response in cottontail rabbits.

Jonathan G. Young, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Department of Animal and Wildlife Sciences, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX 78363, USA

Scott E. Henke, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Department of Animal and Wildlife Sciences, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX 78363, USA

Abstract: Low capture rates of cottontail rabbits (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) are common. We hypothesized that urine as an olfactory attractant would increase trapping success because rabbits scent-mark their territories with urine. We assessed trap response in cottontail rabbits using clean traps (control), traps baited with food, traps baited with block salt and minerals, and traps baited with urine from non-pregnant domestic rabbit does. We caught 314 cottontail rabbits during 2,000 trap-nights conducted from July-August 1996. We captured more cottontails in traps baited with rabbit urine ($P < 0.001$) than in the others, suggesting that olfactory cues are important in the behavior of cottontail rabbits. Capture frequencies were 2.8, 13.4, 17.0, and 29.6% for control traps and traps baited with food, salt, and urine, respectively. Sex ratios of captured rabbits did not deviate from a 1:1 relationship for each bait or for all baits combined.

COTTAM SUBMISSIONS CALL FOR ABSTRACTS & REQUIREMENTS

The Clarence Cottam award is given to recognize outstanding student research. Papers and presentations at the Annual Meeting will be judged for significance and originality, creativity of research design and implementation, quality of methodology, validity of conclusions, and neatness and conformity to JWM style and format. A \$500 scholarship is given to the winner by the Welder Wildlife Foundation. Second and third prizes will be awarded if more than 6 papers are accepted, and are sponsored by the Texas Chapter. A maximum of 8 papers will be included in the competition, excess submissions will be included in the regular sessions.

Deadline for receipt of abstracts is midnight 30 November 2012. Cottam entries will be accepted through the TCTWS Annual Meeting Abstract Submission website: <http://tctws.tamu.edu/>

The abbreviated abstract should follow instructions outlined in the general call for abstract submission from the program committee. Cottam entries must also submit an extended abstract through the website. For additional information regarding the Clarence Cottam Award, follow the scholarship link on the TCTWS web page (www.tctws.org) or contact Corey Mason at Corey.Mason@tpwd.state.tx.us

CHAPTER BUSINESS

MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

The 2012-2013 Membership Committee wants to remind anyone who has forgotten or who has not paid 2012-2013 annual dues, to please do so by going to the TCTWS website. Dues are \$25.00 for professionals or \$15.00 for students. You can update your annual dues electronically, or by mailing your completed form with payment via check/money order to our Treasurer:

Terry Blankenship, Director
Welder Wildlife Foundation
P.O. Box 140
Sinton, TX 78387
361-364-2643

Thank you and have a great summer!
Nathan Grigsby
Membership Committee Chair

UPCOMING MEETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



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